

# Waikato District

## Play, Active Recreation Sport Plan 2024-2034

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## Executive Summary

New Zealanders individually and collectively value the role physical activity plays in their lives. The provision of high-quality physical activity opportunities through play, active recreation and sport, has an important role in creating healthy, vibrant, connected communities.

Within the Waikato District 59% of Waikato District's adults and 52% of Waikato youth (5–17-year-olds) participate in enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing, however 76% of adults and 70% of young people suggest they would like to do more physical activity than they currently do (Active NZ 2021).

Waikato District Council and Sport Waikato would like to work together to support the provision of play, active recreation and sport opportunities for the Waikato District community. The Waikato District (similar to the Waikato Region and New Zealand as a whole) faces a number of challenges that necessitate improved decision-making and collaborative planning. These include:

- Limited funding
- Climate change
- Maintaining aging assets, facility sustainability and optimisation
- Planning for growth
- Changing participation preferences
- Improving collaborative and partnered approaches
- Working with neighbouring local authorities

The Waikato District had a population of 75,618 people at the 2018 census and is projected to have a growing population for the next 30 years. A growing and aging population, with more than half being rural residents presents challenges when thinking about providing for play, active recreation and sport, particularly when considering access and provision that meets the needs of a growing, changing and often distanced community.

**Methodology** The process of developing The Waikato District Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan included three areas of focus including surveying of community members, clubs and regional sporting organisations, secondary data analysis (identifying trends in activity preferences and district demographics) and community feedback.

**Strategic priorities and recommendations:** The plan aligns with Moving Waikato – the region's strategy for physical activity, which has a vision of 'everyone active' and sets out the organisational goal of having 75% of all Waikato adults and young people active enough to positively impact their wellbeing by 2030. Additional relevant plans have been reviewed to ensure the Waikato District Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan supports their goals and objectives:

Strategic priorities and recommendations are included within each section for play, active recreation sport and physical activity spaces, along with an action plan that outlines the focus area, task, lead responsibility, funding and priority timeframes.

### How to use this Document

**To be written, but will make mention of the surveys used, recommendations and resulting action table.**

**Strategic priorities and recommendations:**

#### Play:

- Conduct a play space/facility stocktake to ensure existing network of play facilities meet the needs of users

- Capitalise on the network of Waikato District parks and their proximity to residents to create community play spaces that are close to home, safe, inclusive and easy to access for all ages and abilities
- Explore different ways to provide for community play that are based on sensory exploration, water play and built infrastructure
- Work with schools to open and promote access to community use of play spaces
- When planning new, built community play spaces, look at ways of incorporating space and provision for adults to play alongside their children
- Consider Play Trailers or other mobile forms of play opportunities

### **Active Recreation**

- Consider options to support safe walking, cycling, skateboarding and scootering routes near schools to support sustained and increased active transport among young people
- Consider ways to better connect parks and reserves, shared paths and cycleways to extend the active recreation network and enable active transitions between spaces for walkers, runners/joggers, cyclists and those using skateboards and scooters
- Continue to support connections between the Waikato District communities and the natural environment – lakes, rivers, bush – for active recreation, including the provision of cycling, walking/running and hiking trails and safe access to natural bodies of water
- Undertake an active recreation space/facility stocktake to ensure existing network of active recreation facilities meet the needs of users (e.g., provision of seating, shade, amenities)
- Consider provision for the horse-riding community

### **Sport**

- Consider options to influence and support shared services and co-location among clubs. This will help to reduce costs and make sport more accessible
- Look for ways to lower the 'cost' of participation in sport both financially and from a time commitment perspective. This could include alternative competition structures and pop-up, localised and less formal opportunities for engagement
- Support increased engagement between sports clubs/organisations and the community. This could include increasing connections between clubs and schools, and supporting clubs to communicate well with audiences and to connect with volunteer workforces
- Support future planning for sport provision via the use of insights. This could include focusing on multi-use facilities planning and governance/leadership

### **Physical Activity in Space and Place**

- Enhance existing physical activity spaces and places with amenities that encourage social connection and provide for family-friendly opportunities
- Ensure safe access to natural spaces and places for physical activity
- Improve satisfaction levels of those using aquatic facilities in the district
- Apply principles of accessibility and inclusion to new and existing spaces and places

# Introduction

## Overview and Purpose

Physical activity through play, active recreation and sport has a crucial role in supporting community health and wellbeing outcomes. It plays an important part in building communities that are healthy, vibrant, resilient and connected while helping people to improve their overall physical, mental, social and emotional health. As a collective, New Zealanders value the role that physical activity plays in their lives and in the Waikato region specifically, 84% of adults (18+) feel that being physically active is important and 89% of young people (5-17 years) understand why taking part in physical activity is good for them. In Waikato, 52% of young people (5-17 years) and 59% of adults (18+) do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing (Active NZ, 2021).

The Waikato region (and Aotearoa/New Zealand more broadly) has some fantastic natural resources (e.g., lakes, rivers, waterways and coastlines) and publicly-provided/managed facilities (e.g., indoor and outdoor courts, aquatic facilities, parks and open spaces, playgrounds and play spaces, skateparks, BMX tracks, cycleways and walkways) to support people to be active, but we have some work to do to raise activity rates among people and communities in ways that help to lower our high rates of non-communicable health issues and instances of psychological stress that lead to poor and declining mental health (Ministry of Health, 2020).

Despite understanding the benefits of being active, barriers to participation remain for people and communities, reflecting rapid changes within our society where people are increasingly time-poor and cash-strapped and therefore, the ways they desire to or can participate are changing. Future planning needs to recognise these changing needs and demands and help to provide for participants in ways that support access to quality opportunities to be physically active via play, active recreation and sport for life.

The purpose of this Plan is to provide guidance and direction in the provision of play, active recreation and sport in the Waikato District. It provides a strategic framework for investment in play, active recreation and sport in the district using evidence from a range of national, regional and local sources (e.g., local play, active recreation and sport providers, community members) to map current and future priorities that will enhance the participation levels and experiences of people and communities in Waikato. For Council, the Plan provides direction on what should be done and crucially, focusing thinking on the maximising of current assets, supporting evidence-based decision-making about current facility provision and potential future needs, opportunities for partnership and responding to changing participation trends and preferences. For both Sport Waikato and Council, the Plan provides guidance on strategic approaches to the delivery of services to improve experiences of participants, grow participation and support sustainability.

Waikato District Council and Sport Waikato work in partnership for the delivery of services that support the people of the district to access play, active recreation and sport opportunities. By working together as lead agencies of the Plan, we will deliver a coordinated and clear pathway of activity for the provision of play active recreation and sport for the Waikato District.

## How to use this document

In the development and execution of business cases and LTP

Surveys include; Community Survey, Club Survey, RSO Survey. Active NZ, Census 2018

## Alignment to Strategic Focuses

### **Waikato District Council**

Waikato District Council has a vision to work together as a district to build liveable, thriving and connected communities as townships continue to grow.

- **Liveable communities** are well-planned and people-centric, providing for a range of quality residential options, social infrastructure, walkways, and open spaces. They reflect what's important to people and support a shared sense of belonging both to the local community and the wider district
- **Thriving communities** participate in Council decision-making and community-led projects, provide input into the management of their local assets, and sustain the local business sector that provides local employment
- **Connected communities** have fit for-purpose infrastructure to create liveable, thriving communities. Connectivity through roads, cycleways, walkways, and digital capabilities that enable rapid information sharing, and engaging in activities together. By these means, people in connected communities access services and amenities that meet their social, health, education, and employment needs

Together with Community Boards and Committees, Council developed the following community outcomes to guide decision-making:

- **Supporting our communities: Kia tautoko ki a tātoi hāpori**
  - We consider the wellbeing of all our people in all our planning and activities. We support and plan for the development of complete and connected communities
- **Building our economy: Ka hānga a tātoi ōhanga**
  - We attract diverse enterprise/ business; creating jobs and opportunities for our community. We continue to support our existing industry. We support others who leverage our location to ensure tourism brings benefits to a range of people in our communities
- **Sustaining our environment: Kia toitū to tātou taiao**
  - We are a community that believes in environmental sustainability; we pursue and promote related ideas and manage regulatory processes to safeguard and improve our district
- **Working together with you: Kia mahi tahi tātou**
  - Our communities work with us so we are collectively focused on the right things at the right time
- **Providing value for money: Ka whai painga mot e pūtea**
  - Residents and ratepayers get value for money because we find innovative ways to deliver strategic, timely and fit for purpose infrastructure and services at the most effective cost

Council understands the provision of and investment in play, active recreation and sport to be an important component to achieving these aims and supporting its strategic focuses.

## **Sport Waikato**

Sport Waikato is a Regional Sports Trust, whose mandate is to grow the physical activity levels of people and communities in the Waikato through play, active recreation and sport. The work of Sport Waikato is guided by Moving Waikato – the region's strategy for physical activity, which has a vision of 'everyone active' and sets out the organisational goal of having 75% of all Waikato adults and young people active enough to positively impact their wellbeing by 2030.

The strategy sets out 3 strategic pillars:

- **OUR PEOPLE:** A focus on the provision of quality opportunities that meet the needs of the people of our region – more physically active tamariki, rangatahi and whaanau
- **BUILDING COMMUNITIES:** A focus on quality local delivery of play, active recreation and sport experiences – helping communities to help themselves
- **REGIONAL LEADERSHIP:** A focus on regional and national partners working together to lead change and enhance outcomes – leading and delivering change

The current Horizon of Moving Waikato focuses on rangatahi (12-17 years), tamariki (5-11 years) with the inclusion of tamariki mokopuna (under 5s) in education, play, active recreation and sport (e.g., community) settings.

**Insert graphic with two visions side by side**

## Strategic Context

The Waikato District (not unlike the Waikato Region and Aotearoa/New Zealand as a whole) faces a number of challenges in the future that necessitate the use of a planned and collaborative approach to the delivery of opportunities for play, active recreation and sport. Equally, there are a number of opportunities to entice and grow participation that can and should be realised. These challenges and opportunities are outlined below.

### A Growing, Aging Population with Communities in Medium Deprivation

The Waikato district has a usual resident population of 75,618 people made up of over 25,026 households (Statistics New Zealand, 2018) with 54% of these households located rurally. This population figure is up 19% from the last census in 2013, which shows growth in the number of New Zealanders calling the Waikato district their home. Within the Waikato District we are likely to see continued population growth and there is preparation to expect population growth to increase to approximately 98,835 by 2031 and rise to between 128,500 and 149,500 by 2060 with growth across all age groups (NIDEA, 20xx). Most of this growth is expected to be seen in the North of the district as a result of the effects of the roading changes between Auckland and Hamilton.

On top of this, the demographic trends show that the population is aging. Indeed, along with the rest of New Zealand, Waikato's population is projected to age over the next 30 years. The number of youth (aged under 15) is projected to hold steady at around 20,000 until the late 2030s, and thereafter, gradually increase as a result of net migration, births and population of childbearing age (a subset of the working age population). The population aged 65 years and older is projected to grow strongly, from 9,800 in 2018 to 26,000 in 2048, outnumbering youth throughout the projected period (Stats NZ, 2023).

People identifying as Maaori in the Waikato District comprise 26% of the district population, which is higher than both the Waikato regional average of 24% and national average of 17%. The Waikato District comprises 37 SA2 areas (Statistical Area 2), with 12 of these reporting high levels of deprivation, totalling 26,898 people, or 36% of the population (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2018) with a median income of \$34,700 p/a (Census, 2018).

Of course, a growing and aging population, with more than half being rural residents presents challenges when thinking about providing for play, active recreation and sport, particularly when considering access and provision that meets the needs of a growing, changing and often rurally distanced community.

### The Value of Sport and Physical Activity

Sport and recreation opportunities are essential to effectively manage and enhance the overall wellbeing of communities as well as to minimise any negative social issues. Research has consistently

demonstrated the value of sport and recreation in the lives of people and communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sport NZ 2018 – The Value of Sport):

- 92% of people believe being active keeps them physically fit and healthy, and helps relieve stress
- 88% of people believe that sport and other physical activities provide them with opportunities to achieve and help build confidence
- 84% of people believe sport brings people together and creates a sense of belonging
- 74% of people say sport help builds vibrant and stimulating communities
- Sport and physical activity can reduce rates of many physical health related disorders and improve health outcomes as a result
- Evidence indicates a positive association between children’s physical activity participation and academic achievement
- Participation in sport has been linked with greater employability in graduates from universities
- There is a link between sport participation, improved social capital, feelings of social cohesion and community identity

Of course, an understanding and appreciation of participation trends, preferences and barriers is essential to enabling communities through sport and active recreation.

### **Alignment to Other Regional and Local Strategies and Plans**

The following plans have been reviewed to ensure the Waikato District Play, Active Recreation and Sport Plan supports and aligns with their goals and objectives:

- Moving Waikato
- Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan 2023
- Waikato District Council Recreation and Sport Strategy 2023
- General Policy Reserve Management Plan
- Connectivity Strategy
- Nature (Taio) Strategy
- Community Facilities Strategy (Draft)
- Waikato District Blueprints

### **Challenges:**

#### **Changing Play, Active Recreation and Sport Preferences, Trends and Barriers**

How people like to be physically active is consistently changing, as are their barriers to participation. Recent figures from Active NZ (2021) suggest that 52% of young people (5-17 years) and 59% of adults in the Waikato District do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing, with 70% of young people and 76% of adults suggesting they would like to do more physical activity than they currently do (Active NZ, 2021).

Active recreation and play are the preferred modes of physical activity for Waikato residents with activities such as running/jogging, walking for fitness, games (e.g., four square, tag, bullrush, dodgeball), swimming and playing (e.g., running around, climbing trees, make-believe) among the preferences for young people and walking, gardening, individual workouts with equipment, running/jogging and playing games (e.g. with kids) topping the list of preferred physical activities among adults. Additionally, 18% of young people in the Waikato District are using active transport to travel to and from school (Active NZ, 2021).

Sport does not rank in the top 5 activities for young people, nor the top 5 activities for adults. Interestingly, however, while sport ranks low when it comes to activity preferences, 23% of young people are active while training or practising with a coach/instructor, with a similar percentage (25%) being active for extra exercise or training or practicing without a coach/instructor present. This likely demonstrates the role that formal sport offerings play in encouraging additional and personally driven physical activity for fitness, skill and social reasons away from planned sessions. Given the physical activity preferences of Waikato's residents, it is not surprising that most people are active at home, school, out in nature, and/or using public facilities (Active NZ, 2021).

Yet, while at a glance, many of Waikato's young people and adults are doing enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing, and indeed 86% of adults in the district understand the benefits of physical activity for their mental or emotional wellbeing, there are a number of barriers that prevent both young people and adults from being as active as they would like to be (Active NZ, 2021). In particular, young people are struggling with weather (29%), being/feeling too busy (26%), impacts of covid (25%) lack of the necessary equipment (21%) and lack of fellow participants to undertake activity with (19%).

For some (14%) the financial cost of participation is too high such that their families cannot afford to pay for their engagement (Active NZ, 2021). Despite challenges for young people, there is a desire to be involved. Regionally, 64% of rangatahi/teenagers in Year 7 want to do more physical activity in school, a figure which decreases by age for in-school activity but rises in the community setting, such that by Year 13 67% of Rangatahi/teenagers want to be active outside of school (Active NZ, 2021).

Adults are also challenged, with 56% citing other commitments (e.g., work and family) needing to take priority over physical activity, feeling too tired (24%) and struggling to motivate themselves (24%) as barriers to participation (Active NZ, 2021).

The social benefits and opportunities associated with physical activity participation are important to Waikato residents with many adults and young people choosing to be active with family and/or friends. Recent figures suggest that 70% of young people have been active over a 7-day period through play or while hanging out with family or friends (Active NZ, 2021).

Noting these trends, preferences and barriers, an inter-agency approach to supporting physical activity participation through play, active recreation and sport is necessary to enhance community wellbeing. Equally, as people's lives change (e.g., increasing demands on time and financial resources) new and innovative approaches to support physical activity participation are required. For example, prioritisation of low-cost, low-commitment, family-friendly and fun play, active recreation and sport opportunities are increasingly more likely to satisfy the participation needs of both young people and adults as user groups.

### **Maintaining Assets, Facility Sustainability and Service Levels**

In many communities in the Waikato District (and nationally) facilities are aging and maintenance costs to keep these facilities functioning can become increasingly high and burdensome. The ongoing sustainability of facility and service provision is likely to become increasingly difficult in some locations, especially those where populations are decreasing or aging. Equally, those areas with a number of facilities for the same sport and with no multi-sport usage require careful thought and planning to ensure a robust and sustainable district facilities network.

### **Improving Collaborative Approaches and Working with Neighbouring Local Authorities**

Historically, decision-making in the sport and recreation sector, particularly around facility development, has been made on an ad hoc basis and with little foresight about sub-regional use and/or the potential of collaborative models of operations and investment.



In the Waikato region, 70% of respondents to recent community play, active recreation and sport community surveys suggested they travel outside of their district to be physically active, with migration noted across multiple districts within and outside of the region (Sport Waikato, 2022). 77% of respondents to the Waikato Community Survey indicated they travel outside of their district to be physically active. Indeed, as the Waikato regional population remains increasingly mobile, community members' participation does and can cross district and regional boundaries more frequently. The Waikato District neighbours Hamilton Hauraki, Matamata-Piako, Waipa and Otorohanga districts of the Waikato region, as well as Auckland to the north, making it an area ripe for cross-boundary physical activity participation. In fact, the Waikato Community Survey highlighted the level of migration of people and communities of the district, with 27% of respondents travelling to Hamilton City, 26% to Auckland and 17% to the Bay of Plenty to be active via play (5%), active recreation (67%) and sport (31%)<sup>1</sup>. In light of such migration, collaborating with other district and city councils will become increasingly necessary to make sure that quality facilities, experiences and services are provided for the community while reducing unnecessary duplication.

Additionally, collaborative approaches to facility provision and the combining of current clubs should be considered in the future to boost participation and to help relieve both financial and human resource (e.g., volunteer) burdens to support increased sustainability.

Collaboration should be considered an option between local authorities, communities and community groups, and schools/education.

## Covid-19

In 2020, Aotearoa/New Zealand and the world experienced significant and unprecedented challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic had considerable effects on individuals and the active recreation and sport sectors, including disruption to the delivery of sport, changes in the patterns and types of physical activity of people, as well as increased fiscal strain at both the level of individuals and the sector. The increased financial demands on people and families, post Covid-19 are still being felt by many as the cost of living bolstered by the rate of inflation has increased significantly, placing incredible strain on things like food security for a number of communities.

From this major global event, there are many learnings that should be taken forward when thinking about systems, structures and models of sport and the provision of and access to play, active recreation and sport for people and communities.

## Climate Change

Climate change is and will continue to have an impact on the ways people choose to be physically active, as well as on sport and active recreation infrastructure. For example, the impact of rising sea levels and coastal erosion are already proving to be key factors in some districts, as is increasing (and traditionally unseasonal) rainfall. Equally as social consciousness focuses more on the impacts of climate change globally, and particularly on how to minimise these, it will become increasingly important to reduce the dependence on vehicles that produce greenhouse gas emissions when planning spaces and places for sport and recreation. Provision of active transport and shared pathways will become increasingly important with the move toward more sustainable facility design as well as environmental policies and practices.

## Methodology

To support the development of the Plan, a project team was established to oversee the development of a strategic and partnered approach to growing participation in play, active recreation and sport

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<sup>1</sup> There were also lower levels of migration identified to other districts in the Waikato region as well.

participation among people and communities in the Waikato District. Representatives of both Waikato District Council and Sport Waikato were involved in the plan development process.

The process of developing the Plan included three key areas of focus including survey assessment, secondary data analysis (trends in play, active recreation and sport and district demographics) and community engagement. This approach provided the best means to gather comprehensive, robust and triangulated information to inform decisions made in developing the Plan.

## The Information Gathering Process

Three separate surveys were distributed to support the development of this Plan and in particular, to gain local insight about the preferences, challenges and trends of play, active recreation and sport in the district – these surveys included a Regional Sports Organisation Survey (distributed at a regional level and including those National Sports Organisations based in the Waikato), Local Club Survey and Community Survey.

The Regional Sports Organisation Survey was sent via email to all Regional Sports Organisations in the Waikato region and the Local Club Survey was sent via email to clubs in the Waikato District (accessed via Sport Waikato's online club database). These surveys sought to highlight the key priorities of both regional and local sporting organisations with respect to facilities development and maintenance, as well as challenges and opportunities such as membership growth/decline, volunteer recruitment and retention, and priorities linked to service provision and sustainability.

The Community Survey canvassed a greater breadth of topics with the main aim being a deeper understanding of how Waikato residents and their families are physically active, what their participation barriers are and any opportunities to increase engagement, as well as how spaces and places for play, active recreation and sport are accessed and enjoyed. These surveys were promoted via social media in an effort to reach diverse communities and people of a range of ages, ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds.

In addition to the surveys administered specifically for the purpose of forming this Plan, we have also utilised other survey sources, including both Sport NZ's Active NZ survey and the 2018 census. Sport Waikato invests heavily in boosting the Waikato region's sample size for Active NZ, which ensures access to survey data from both adults and young people that is distinguishable by district. In 2021, we had 986 young people and 5339 adults from the Waikato Region share their experiences of play, active recreation and sport outside of our Plan-specific data gathering process.

Following analysis of Active NZ data, the 2018 census information and the capture of information from survey sources, a draft plan was formed collaboratively between Waikato District Council and Sport Waikato. This draft was then presented for community feedback, where additional community input was sought and fed into the Plan process.

## An Overview of Respondents

### **Regional Sports Organisation and Local Club Surveys**

A total of 52 Regional and National Sports Organisations took part in this survey and of these organisations, 52% had responsibility to support their code's delivery and growth in the Waikato District. 80 clubs from different codes completed the club survey – 84% of those clubs were affiliated to their regional sporting body, with 16% reporting unaffiliated status. The codes who responded to the survey included: Netball, Rugby Union, Rugby League, Squash, Waka Ama, Horse Riding and Cricket. Most clubs surveyed were Incorporated Societies (68%) but some (21%) reported being simply an informal group.

## Community Survey

A total of 410 responses were recorded, with 47% of respondents completing the survey on behalf of themselves as individuals and 53% completing as or on behalf of their family unit. Survey responses canvassed all age groups (under 5 through to 65+ years) with those in the 25-44- and 45-64-year-old age demographics most represented. Respondents also represented a range of ethnic groups, with those of New Zealand European (60%), other European (9%), Maaori (15%), Cook Island Maaori (2%) and Indian (2%) taking part. Interestingly 4% of respondents indicated they felt a sense of belonging to a further range of ethnicities, including Hawaiian, South African, Turkish and Greek.

## Limitations

As with any data collection methods, there are limitations to the accuracy and reliability of the data received. The Plan has been prepared based on available data at the time of writing and it is likely that some data omissions do exist. In order to alleviate these limitations, we have been careful to ensure a breadth of data sources have fed into this Plan, and that data sources have been triangulated so as to increase reliability. Despite limitations, the Plan represents the most comprehensive data source currently available but does not replace the need for additional assessment (e.g., feasibility studies) and focused planning in an ongoing manner to support and connect with communities. As sporting codes and Sport NZ update existing national and regional facility plans and participation trends and community demographics continue to change, it is envisaged that this plan will require updating, with formal review every 3 years in alignment with Council's LTP.

## Strategic Priorities and Recommendations

### Play

*Intrinsically motivated, freely chosen activities with no predetermined outcome. Play is spontaneous, fun, accessible, challenging, social, repeatable, and occurring anywhere at any time. Play for tamariki is personally directed with limited or no adult involvement, but can also be undertaken together by whaanau.*

Play is a popular form of physical activity for people and communities in Waikato. It appears in the top 5 activities for both young people and adults, meaning there is evidence of regular engagement in play across the lifespan for residents of the district (Active NZ, 2021).

31% of young people in the Waikato district surveyed as part of the Active NZ survey reported they had engaged in games (e.g., four square, tag, bull rush, while 52% had played on playgrounds (e.g. jungle gyms) in the 7-day period prior to the survey. Adults surveyed also reported engagement in play – 13% had, in the 7-day period prior to surveying, played games often with their kids. For young people in particular, 'playing or hanging out with family or friends' (70%) or 'playing on my own' (61%) are some of the most popular ways that they are active (Active NZ, 2021).

In Waikato, local parks and reserves, aquatic facilities, playgrounds and obstacle courses are important spaces that provide for play. Community survey results reveal that 40% of respondents are using existing playgrounds/obstacle courses, yet only 11% are very or extremely satisfied with these. Majority suggested that they are not fit for purpose (e.g. family friendly including opportunities for adults to play with their children, or accessible – able to be played on/in/at by people of different abilities). Additionally, safety and security are also mentioned as barriers to satisfaction.

*"Every other playground around town is tagged with graffiti and damaged because of out of control children/teens." (Ngaaruawaahia resident).*

While young people are often most active at school and while engaging in playful activities, schools remain underutilised community play assets.

50% of Active NZ (2021) respondents indicated that young people are active at a school and 27% of families reported via the Community Survey using schools to engage in physical activity (play or otherwise). This presents an opportunity to develop a broader offer of both facilities and programmes that utilise the convenience of location and reducing the need to duplicate facilities (Active NZ, 2021). Schools are ripe for play (and often containing fantastic play infrastructure and resources), Waikato schools are not currently being used to their full 'play potential and this under-utilisation of school play facilities -both formally and informally - represents a missed opportunity to identify, widen and strengthen the Waikato community play network.

Given the appetite for play in the district, it is important that spaces, places and opportunities for play are provided, and this includes less structured play (e.g., play that is not defined by the use of playground equipment per se). These spaces need to be easily and readily accessible for people to accommodate the spontaneous nature of play. Attention needs to be turned to modernising, innovating and increasing access and inclusivity when it comes to providing for play, this includes ensuring play spaces cater for multiple users:

*"[I] like to go to [the] playground on my way to get groceries etc, [I] have to travel quite a way for a large playground"(Eureka resident)*

*"They are plain wood, brown and boring, there is no colour or life to the parks, needs more seating and inviting vibes"(Pokeno resident)*

Of course, as time and cost continue to be barriers to participation in physical activity for both adults and young people in the Waikato community, play represents a significant opportunity to engage residents in regular physical activity that meets their needs.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Promote the benefits of play to and for the community using targeted campaigns – normalise this in the effort of creating a playful district that contributes to community vibrancy
- Undertake a play space/facility stocktake to ensure existing network of play facilities meet the needs of users (e.g., age-appropriate, variety, safety) along with the inclusion of provision of family-friendly assets and infrastructure in and around play spaces – shade/shelter, fencing and amenities such as toilets and seating, and access to water.
- Capitalise on the network of Waikato District parks and their proximity to residents to create community play spaces, including schools, that are close to home, safe, inclusive and easy to access for all ages and abilities
- Explore different ways to provide for community play that are based on sensory exploration, water play and built infrastructure – look at simple ways to provide 'pop up' and changeable play spaces in communities to keep interest and excitement high
- Work with schools to open and promote access to community use of play spaces to broaden the Waikato District's play network – this should include a focus on partnerships and shared use arrangements to ensure financial resources can be leveraged and maximised
- When planning new, built community play spaces, look at ways of incorporating space and provision for adults to play alongside their children. Seek community feedback on play spaces to ensure appeal and useability
- Consider Play Trailers or other mobile forms of play opportunities, that may help to reach rural communities, or collaborate with schools and the Ministry of Education to partner/co-create opportunities and secure community access to play.

#### **Active Recreation**

*Active Recreation includes all other forms of activity, other than sport, that require some level of physical exertion as a core element. Active Recreation is undertaken by people for enjoyment in their*

*own free time with a reasonable expectation that participation will increase physical fitness and may include indoor or outdoor activities.*

Active recreation is currently the most popular way that people are being physically active in the Waikato district. According to the recent Active NZ survey, running/jogging, walking, cycling, swimming, gardening and working out using equipment sit in the top 5 activities for adults and/or young people in the community (Active NZ, 2021). These insights mirror regional trends that indicate walking tracks, cycling and mountain biking tracks are the most used and considered the most helpful infrastructure to enable movement among local communities (Active NZ, 2021).

Not surprisingly, a range of spaces support the physical activity levels of people and communities in the Waikato District. Recent figures suggest that further to the 67% of young people being active at home, 57% of young people are active at outdoor locations (e.g. the beach, lake, bush, footpath), 52% are physically using outdoor facilities (e.g., playground, park, field, astroturf or outdoor pool) and 10% use indoor facilities (e.g. gym, community hall, church, marae or indoor pool) (Active NZ, 2021). Similarly, Waikato adults are active in a range of spaces and places with 40% at a private property, home, garden or pool, 40% physically active using roads and footpaths, 28% using walkways, 16% accessing public parks, fields, playgrounds, skateparks or BMX tracks, and 14% in or beside rivers, lakes and streams (Active NZ, 2021). Community survey results also indicate that walkways/footpaths, beaches, rivers or lakes, parks and reserves, aquatic facilities and cycling tracks are some of the most used locations in the Waikato District for being active, among both individuals and families. 17% of Community Survey respondents were using cycle tracks as individuals to support their physical activity, while 30% of respondents indicated that they use these facilities with their families.

While there is, indeed, high appetite for active recreation participation across the district, satisfaction with current provision has been identified as low across some key enablers. Among respondents of the Community Survey, 38% were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with walkways/footpaths (versus 16% very or extremely satisfied), 37% indicated there were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the current provision of playground and obstacle facilities (versus 11% very or extremely satisfied), 35% were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with outdoor sport and recreation facilities (versus 9% very or extremely satisfied), and 31% indicated they were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with indoor sport and recreation facilities (versus 9% very or extremely satisfied).

For many respondents', issues exist pertaining to the quality of provision, which can be related to the perceived need for upgrades and maintenance and/or the provision of infrastructure that increases usability (e.g., toilets, seating, parking, shade).

*More added into the bigger park at Hakanoa - maybe picnic tables/ areas to eat as a family/ more shaded areas - possibly water play/ sand pit area like Hamilton Lake or Ngaaruwaahia (Waikato Resident Huntly East)*

*Having a destination style playground that has toilet facilities, shade and is accessible for those with mobility issues. (Waikato Resident – Huntly)*

*Playgrounds need more shade as they are just too hot to use in the summer. There should be more water fountains too. (Waikato Resident – Pokeno)*

What is also clear from the data is the need to support and provide safe active transport routes and connectivity between assets for active recreation (and/or sport). Active NZ (2021) reveals that 18% of Waikato's young people use active transport to travel to and from school. The Community Survey also indicates that 46% of respondents used active transport to access locations to be physically active. The most common modes of active transport were walking/running (30%), cycling (13%), Horses (4%)

and skateboarding/scootering (3%). Community Survey respondents indicating a need for increased connectivity between existing walking/cycle networks within the district (from town to town) and between districts (e.g., Franklin):

*"[There are] so few [paths] that actually link up into a nice walking experience that is safe around the town." (Tuakau resident)*

*"I'd love more walking options esp. 10km loops with footpaths and fewer scary dogs." (Te Kauwhata resident)*

Of note, among Community Survey responses was also a need to consider provision for horse riding. At present, it seems that most who want to actively recreate by riding their horse are traveling outside of the district to do so because there are currently limited tracks that they are either permitted to ride on or that are safe to do so.

*"For the horse-riding community there aren't many public parks to ride. Wainui Reserve Farm Park horse riding is permitted but trails and maps aren't clear of where permitted trails are. It would be great if horses were permitted to be ridden in more parks and area in the district." (Raglan resident)*

*"Bridlepaths where riders can feel safe to go - need parking space to prepare horses." (Matangi resident)*

*"I would like to see the WDC be more engaging with the equestrian community to investigate shared trail options instead of purely catering to walkers and cyclists. Keeping grass verges alongside roads for horses to safely be ridden without fear of traffic. Allowing horse riders access to parks and bush trails." (Raglan resident)*

Given the significant participation by Waikato people and communities in active recreation, it is important to consider how to further support popular activities such as walking, running/jogging, recreational swimming and cycling. Like play spaces, spaces for active recreation enable physical activity opportunities for those with financial access barriers and time restraints that may preclude participation in more organised forms of activity, such as sport.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Consider options to support safe walking, cycling, skateboarding and scootering routes near primary, intermediate and secondary schools to support sustained and increased active transport among young people.
- Consider ways to better connect parks and reserves, shared paths and cycleways to extend the active recreation network and enable active transitions between spaces for walkers, runners/joggers, cyclists and those using skateboards and scooters.
- Continue to support connections between the Waikato District communities and the natural environment – lakes, rivers, bush – for active recreation, including the provision of cycling, walking/running and hiking trails and safe access to natural bodies of water.
- Undertake an active recreation space/facility stocktake to ensure existing network of active recreation facilities meet the needs of users (e.g., provision of seating, shade, amenities).
- Consider provision for the horse-riding community

#### **Sport**

*Sport has institutionalised rules, competition and conditions of play (e.g., time, space/boundaries, equipment). It has a formalised structure and a recognised representative body at a local club, regional, and/or national level. Participation in sport is typically defined by competition between people or teams to determine an outcome/winner.*

While sport is not participated in as frequently as play and active recreation by the young people and adults of Waikato, it continues to be an important mode of physical activity that offers numerous benefits for participants – including social interaction and connection.

The sports most played by Waikato's youth include<sup>2</sup>:

1. Football/soccer (15%)
2. Dance/Dancing (11%)
3. Basketball or mini-ball (10%)
4. Athletics (9%)
5. Rugby or Ripa Rugby (8%)
6. Kapa Haka (7%)
7. Netball (6%)
8. Gymnastics (6%)
9. Hockey/Floorball (6%)
10. Touch (6%)

Secondary school-aged young people in the Waikato District are participating in sport in lesser numbers than the regional average – 57% of male students and 49% of female students within the region are meeting the New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council's requirements<sup>3</sup> for sport involvement.

Sport also does not feature in the top 5 activities for adults, however, the most played sports by adults in the Waikato district are<sup>4</sup>:

1. Swimming (10%)
2. Golf (5%)
3. Horse Riding and Equestrian (4%)
4. Boxing (3%)
5. Tennis (2%)
6. Surfing and Body boarding (2%)
7. Touch Rugby (2%)
8. Netball (2%)
9. Football/soccer (2%)
10. Canoeing or Kayaking (1%)

Outdoor sport and recreation facilities were being used by 16% of individual Community Survey respondents (and 24% of families) while indoor sport and recreation facilities were being used by 16% of individuals and 25% of families. Artificial turf was being used by only 5% of individual Community Survey respondents.

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<sup>2</sup> Data sourced from the Active New Zealand survey, 2021

<sup>3</sup> The New Zealand Secondary School Sports Council's requirements for sport....

<sup>4</sup> Data sourced from the Active New Zealand survey, 2021

## **Sports Clubs, Groups and the Waikato Sporting Landscape**

80 clubs participated in the Waikato District club survey with results showing both successes and challenges for clubs in growing membership and recruiting and retaining volunteers. 28% reported an increase in membership since 2017, while 30% indicated their membership numbers were decreasing or had decreased. 68% of clubs suggested that they have had challenges with retaining or recruiting new volunteers to support their club's operations, but despite these, 57% of clubs had managed to either increase or maintain the volunteer base in their club. 43% of clubs, however, reported a decrease in volunteer numbers.

Like participants in sport, volunteers who support the running of sport are struggling with being 'time poor' and the need to juggle family commitments. Only 19% of clubs who responded to the survey indicated that they are paying or have employees working for their club in different roles, which indicates the reliance on volunteers, among most clubs, to support the running of sport in the Waikato District. Of those clubs who responded to the survey, Board Members (39%), coaches (27%), administrators (12%), officials (7%) and groundskeepers (6%) were popular roles within clubs and could be both paid and unpaid positions.

Survey responses indicate that clubs generally understand the importance of relationships with schools to support their operations and memberships. 64% of clubs surveyed indicated that they are engaged with local schools and the benefits of this engagement includes support for recruitment, coaching, facility/location use, event support. There is evidence among clubs, of many actively looking for ways to connect to grow their membership and/or volunteer bases.

Among the top barriers for clubs is funding to balance operating costs and to ensure the burden of cost is removed from participants. Almost half of all clubs surveyed (37) indicated that they need support for their finances (including sponsorship) in order to continue to be sustainable, but also to keep costs down for participants.). Of those respondents who lease/hire facilities, 8% had received increases to hire and lease fees in the last 5 years.

Travel continues to have an impact on the cost of providing for sport and it continues to be reflected in the top barriers for both clubs and participants (particularly young people who suggest their family cannot afford their participation). 76% of club respondents indicated that interclub/city competition was part of their sporting offerings and while most indicated that travel was regional, there are still those clubs who either choose to or require their participants to travel nationally.

The maintenance and upgrade of assets (facilities and equipment) among clubs is one of the key challenges the local sector is facing, which comes down to both cost and expertise. Although 84% of clubs who own their own assets believe they are able to financially maintain these, this sentiment is based on the ability to also maintain current club membership numbers. 53% of clubs surveyed believed they have quality issues with 26% having already scheduled in repairs and maintenance to their assets in response. 71% of club respondents believe that their current facilities meet their current needs, but this drops to 54% when thinking about future needs. 30% of clubs suggested their organisation has capital investment projects either planned or underway, including new infrastructure (28%), upgrading infrastructure (24%) attention to functionality (12%), utilisation (otherwise known as optimisation) (12%), improving the quality of experience for participants (12%), improvements to access, safety and support (4%), along with 4% of clubs considering their governance setup.

Recruiting participants and volunteers, financial security and collaboration are among the most salient themes identified by respondents when asked to think about the future – all of which can be connected. Interestingly, 54% of respondents already share their facilities with other codes or organisations, while 11% of respondents are not open to collaborating more than they do currently. There is certainly appetite among clubs in the district to work together, including via co-location, and this is an important way to ensure that the maintenance and upgrade of facilities can occur in a



sustainable way that supports the quality experiences of participants (Waikato District Club Survey, 2022).

### Recommendations:

- Consider options to influence and support shared services and co-location among clubs. With rising costs, scarcity of funding and appetite to work together, support for 'hubbing' is needed in the district to future-proof sport. Particular focus should be placed on:
  - Dr John Lightbody Reserve
  - Raahui Pookeka Lake Hakanoa Domain User Groups
  - Raahui Pookeka West Sport Complex
  - Matangi
  - Raglan Naturally
  - Pokeno – Munro Block User Groups
  - Te Kowhai – New Sport Platform
  - Future Ohinewai Development
  - Naike Community Wellbeing Hub
  - Te Akau-Waingaro
- Look for ways to lower the 'cost' of participation in sport both financially and from a time commitment perspective – investigate innovative solutions to minimise sunk dollars to reduce fees, alternative competition structures to attract volunteers and increase connection to participants. For example, pop-up, localised and less formal opportunities for engagement that require lower time commitments. This is particularly important for encouraging participation among high-deprivation communities and low socioeconomic groups
- Support increased engagement between sports clubs/organisations and the community – increase connections between clubs and schools, support clubs to communicate well with audiences and to connect with volunteer workforces
- Support future planning for sport provision via the use of insights – particularly, with a focus on multi-use facilities planning and governance/leadership

### Spaces and Places

As has been demonstrated via the data, Waikato residents are engaging in physical activity in a range of ways and in a range of spaces and places (e.g., from natural environments such as lakes, bush and rivers to parks and reserves and community buildings). What has come through strongly is the emphasis Waikato residents place on feeling connected to space and place and whether or not it meets their basic needs (e.g., amenities, clean, welcoming, safe and inclusive).

The Community Survey highlighted the importance of the natural environment and being outdoors to Waikato residents with the top 3 locations for activity being walkways/footpaths, near beaches, rivers or lakes, and in parks and reserves. Yet, despite these spaces being high priority places for physical activity, satisfaction was often low with 38% of people dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the provided walkways/footpaths, 35% dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with parks and reserves in the community and 28% dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with the local rivers. Barriers to enjoyment included pollution, safety, access and the provision of quality infrastructure.

*"Some of the park and reserve walkways need better upkeep the ground is uneven and or the concrete tiles are lifting." (Whatawhata resident).*

*"Would love to see more walkways around the lake and through the wetlands; would be amazing to link these through farmland." (Waerenga resident)*

*"Down the river walk by centennial park on the Waipa walkway track there are a lot of the plants that give you bad breathing for asthma people. Woolly nightshade." (Ngaaruawaahia resident)*

Access to natural spaces to be active is important to the people of the district. Therefore, maintaining physical activity levels of the community for health and wellbeing means ensuring continued safe and quality access to natural spaces for active recreation.

Aquatic facilities are utilised by 15% of Community Survey respondents as individuals and 31% of those respondents additionally indicated they use them as or with their family. Satisfaction among aquatic facilities users in the district, is however, low as indicated by the Community Survey responses whereby 26% of those who took the survey indicated they are dissatisfied or extremely satisfied with the facilities (versus only 12% who are very or extremely satisfied). Many of the issues appear to be related to a lack of indoor aquatic space and/or year-round use:

*"Raglan is in dire need of an indoor multi-use recreation and aquatic facility that the community can access 7 days a week." (Raglan resident)*

*"Raahui Pookeka swimming pools are awesome. Ngaaruawaahia swimming pools not so much but only because it's so cold!" (Ngaaruawaahia resident)*

*"Raglan is by the sea and children need to learn to swim but there aren't facilities for it. Also for rehab purposes a pool would be great within the community." (Raglan resident)*

*"There are no heated pools in Raglan. We have to drive to Hamilton for kids swimming lessons in winter! It should be easier for our kids to learn to swim, especially in Raglan." (Raglan resident)*

*"None in Pōkeno and Tuakau. However, the warm swimming pools in Pukekohe is really nice and affordable." (Pokeno resident)*

Equally, spaces for the community to engage in water play and that accommodate small children was emphasised as missing from current provision:

*"Swimming pool okay but not exciting like Waterworld." (Raahui Pookeka resident)*

*"I would love for the pool to be heated! Our babies have their swim classes over summer but they are early morning so can get cold. Would love if this changes and then could be used year-round too." (Te Kauwhata resident)*

In and around being active, Waikato residents want space to connect with others – to socialise, hang out and sit together – and they want to feel welcome, safe and included. Places for sitting, socialising, hanging out and being together as a family were highlighted as gaps in local parks and reserves networks by some respondents as was the provision of shade/shelter, drinking water and seating:

*"A nice place to go for a walk and a picnic, that is safe and within a 30 min drive would be nice. Doesn't have to be huge. Just place to connect with nature. A place to take your kid and catch a fish. What would also be nice if there was a bit more adventure type activities for kids." (Te Kauwhata resident)*

*"I would like that these are designed for the whole family in mind. Different ages and abilities." (Whatawhata resident)*

*"Playgrounds need more shade as they are just too hot to use in the summer. There should be more water fountains too." (Pokeno resident)*

These insights mirror regional data, whereby family/adult/youth/child-friendly spaces and places (e.g., spaces that are inclusive of people regardless of age) are thought to be ways that spaces and places for physical activity could be improved (Regional Insights – Community Survey, 2022).

## **Recommendations**

- Explore options to enhance existing physical activity spaces and places to include amenities that encourage social connection and provide for family-friendly opportunities – e.g., seating, shade/shelter, clean, quality amenity blocks and spaces where families can be active together
- Consider ways to ensure safe access to natural spaces and places for physical activity (e.g., rivers, bush, footpaths) to support residents’ desire to be active in nature/outdoors
- Consider ways to improve satisfaction levels of those using aquatic facilities in the district, with a focus on the type of aquatic provision as well as year-round options
- Identify ways in which principles of accessibility and inclusion can be applied to new and existing spaces and places, improving access for all people (regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, culture etc) to engage meaningfully in physical activity both in terms of information and infrastructure

## **Summary**

## Action Plan

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
Play	<b>Neighbourhood Play System</b>	Identify and address opportunities and barriers for tamariki to play in their school and community through Neighbourhood Play System approach.	SW C	Medium
Play	<b>Play Streets</b>	Identify community neighbourhoods where Play Street initiatives may increase or enhance safe play alongside positive social engagement.	C SW	Community driven
Play	<b>Play on the Way</b>	Consider incorporating play elements and opportunities through school grounds, footpaths, streets, alleys, green spaces, waterways, industrial zones, marae, churches and shops—to promote play every day.	C SW	High
Play	<b>Play Trailer</b>	Investigate the need for community play trailer within the district. Partnership approaches should be considered between councils and organisations to fund, manage and maintain, specifically considering rural communities and kaahui ako (school communities of learning).	C SW	Community driven
Play	<b>Playground Renewals</b>	Where playgrounds are highlighted to be renewed, consideration for co-design of engaging age-appropriate play opportunities, family-friendly social spaces, and meeting standards for universal design should be included.  Considerations are put forward to the Asset Management Plans for Open Spaces.	C	High
Play	<b>Play Trail</b>	Consider blue, green and grey space sites suitable for connected and engaging play opportunities, such as play trails, and as part of town concept planning  Example of proposed inclusion to the Ngaaruawaahia, Hopu Hopu, Taupiri Structure Plan.	C SW	Medium
Play	<b>Nature Play</b>	Explore locations for natural play opportunities outside of built playgrounds. (e.g., Wetlands, water, planted areas, orchards).	C SW	Medium
Play	<b>Cultural Play</b>	Work with communities to identify suitable sites to co-design traditional cultural play opportunities (e.g., mara hupara playgrounds and features)	C SW	Medium
Active Recreation	<b>Cycling</b>	Continue supporting those providing for cycling provision with focus on connectedness between existing urban environment and specific cycling locations (e.g. Raglan Town2Surf, Te Awa Cycleway extension, Pukekohe)	C	Medium

<sup>5</sup> SW = Sport Waikato

C = Waikato District Council

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
Active Recreation	School Travel Plans	Continue to support active transport opportunities to and from school through school partnerships, design, infrastructure and footpaths, cycle paths maintenance.	C	On-going
Active Recreation	Connectivity	Continue to develop a connected, accessible and maintained network of footpaths, tracks, trails and bridle paths for everyday micro-mobility and equine journeys, and recreation opportunities within grey, blue and green open spaces. Consider last mile trips within communities, as well as intra and inter district links and loops.  Item is addressed in the Connectivity Strategy (Review 2024)	C	High
Active Recreation	Dog Friendly Areas	Consider availability and access to on and off leash areas for dogs where people can safely recreate. (e.g. Pokeno, Te Kowhai, Pukemoremore)  Considerations to occur through eventual review of the Dog Bylaw, Reserve Management Plans and omnibus Open Spaces Strategy review.	C	Low
Active Recreation	Natural Bodies of Water	Investigate recommendations that come out of Waikato Regional Natural Bodies of Water strategy, that will include both on and off water investment recommendations and consider key user groups (e.g., Rowing, waka ama) and specific places (e.g., Lake Puketirini, Waikato Awa).	C SW	Medium
Active Recreation	Equestrian Activities	Continue to engage equestrian groups and riders within relevant policies and strategies to provide safe and appropriate access to the bridle path network.  Support for the creation of a Regional Equestrian Strategy. Consideration of bridle trails in the Connectivity Strategy review (Draft 2024).	C SW	High
Active Recreation	Seniors Activities	Investigate the current provision of appropriate and accessible physical activities for senior adults, with a focus on traditional sport offer (e.g., bowls, croquet) alongside emerging sport (e.g., pickleball) and as a way to optimise existing facilities (e.g., community halls), and open space locations (e.g., fitness parks and trails).	SW C	
Sport	Hubbing	Continue to support sport and community hubbing projects encouraging clubs and community groups to combine resources, share and optimise facilities, share costs and services, and develop new ideas. Particular focus should be applied to the following:  – Dr John Lightbody Reserve	SW C	

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Raahui Pookeka Lake Hakanoa Domain User Groups</li> <li>– Raahui Pookeka West Sport Complex</li> <li>– Matangi</li> <li>– Raglan Naturally</li> <li>– Pokeno – Munro Block User Groups</li> <li>– Te Kowhai – New Sport Platform</li> <li>– Future Ohinewai Development</li> <li>– Naike Community Wellbeing Hub</li> <li>– Te Akau-Waingaro</li> </ul>		
Sport	Squash	<p>Work with the Clubs to investigate opportunities to raise the quality of squash court provision in Raahui Pookeka and Ngaaruawaahia and consider whether optimisation may be an appropriate strategy, taking into account accessibility of provision. This exploration may be completed in associated with the Hamilton City study of court provision – Medium Priority</p> <p>Continue to support clubs with existing plans to upgrade facilities, or those with low facility quality or membership ratios to improve the quality of provision as a mechanism to grow participation (e.g., Raahui Pookeka Huntly, Ngaaruawaahia, Te Akau-Waingaro)</p>	SW C	
Sport	Softball	Support the continued development of Softball in the Waikato district at existing locations (e.g., Ngaaruawaahia, Tuakau) and inactive sites (e.g., Raahui Pookeka) and possible new locations (e.g., Pokeno, Rangiriri)	SW C	Community driven
Sport	Rugby League	Support the development of Rugby League in the Waikato District with facility developments (e.g., Davies Park, Taniwharau), along with governance, coaching, funding, and targeted participation assistance in partnership with Waikato and NZ Rugby League.	SW C	Community driven
Sport	Low-cost and Localised options	Explore in partnership with communities, schools, clubs, RSOs, organisations and funding partners the co-design of localised zero/low-cost/koha provision of play, sport and active recreation offering with an increased focus on space utilisation/optimisation and community engagement and opportunities outside of traditional competition structures (e.g., localised competitions, whaanau days, cross-code festival days). Consider the staging and support required to plan, deliver and exit. (e.g., Raahui Pookeka, Active Me Kia Tu fund, Tuu Manawa)	SW C	High

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
Sport	Resources and Signposting	Continue to identify and signpost clubs and organisations to find the support, programmes and resources they require from Regional Sporting Organisations, National Sporting Organisations, Sport Waikato, Sport NZ, Council or another external provider. (e.g., Waikato Institute Leadership in Sport, Community Waikato, Recreation Aotearoa).	SW C	
Sport	Insights and Evaluation	Continue to utilise insights and evaluation to support accurate and evidence-based identification of trends and opportunities.  Gather data on user numbers and visitor survey insights.	SW	High
Sport	Emerging Sports	Consider provision for emerging sports such as lacrosse, ki o rahi, and disc sports. Identify opportunities to incorporate provision into existing and/or planned facilities (e.g., Munro road Sports Park, Te Kowhai, Tuakau)	SW C	Community Led
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Indoor/Outdoor Court Provision	Recommendation that council explore indoor and outdoor court provision priority in line with projected growth. Consideration to be given to Hamilton City's indoor sub-regional indoor court project and recommendations from the national indoor and outdoor strategy (due for release in late 2023). Possible exploration in partnership with Hamilton City Council and other stakeholders.  Also COLA Systems and Court Covers  Review through the Community Facilities Strategy (Draft 2024) and impending omnibus Open Spaces Strategy review	C SW	Medium
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Floodlighting	Floodlighting should be considered as part of any sport field upgrades – especially alongside sand-based fields. Council might like to consider working with partner funders to provide a comprehensive, maintained and accessible floodlight network.	C SW	Medium
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Aquatic Spaces	Explore the current network, capacity, unmet needs and future supply for uncovered, covered, aquatic facilities in built (e.g., pools, splash pads) locations. Review district wide aquatic investment programme in accordance with Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan and National Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2023 recommendations.	C SW	High
Physical Activity in	Playing Fields	Rerun the field supply and demand modelling undertaken in 2020 to take account of updated field supply, sports membership data and population projections.	C	High

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
Spaces and Places		<p>Develop or upgrade sports fields to increase capacity in line with the recommendations of the Central Waikato Sub-Region Winter Sports Field Study (Global Leisure Group September 2020), and Waikato Artificial Turf Study (Visitor Solutions 2023).</p> <p>Encourage collaboration across users to support shared field usage maintaining a regional network approach in line with Waikato Regional Sport Transition Plan.</p> <p>Recommendations are that the Council focus heavily on improving the quality of the existing sports field network through drainage and irrigation projects across a range of field soil and sand types.</p>		
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Green Gym, Nature and Restoration	Consideration could also be given to synergistic opportunities between active recreation, and conservation (e.g., Wetland development and restoration through initiatives like Good Gym and Green Gym).	SW C	Low
Physical Activity in Space and Place	Diversity, Inclusion & Access	<p>Any new or existing facility development ensures principles of accessibility and inclusion (for example, race, gender, age, ability). Encourage local clubs to provide programmes that ensure principles of accessibility and inclusion are considered (for example, race, gender, age, ability).</p> <p>Consideration of these principles should be applied at every Capital project for Open Spaces and Facilities. Where necessary an internal guidance document will be created.</p>	C	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Amenities	<p>Careful consideration for investment into amenities (i.e., change facilities, drinking, shade, seating, rubbish bins) at recreation reserves across the district. From the community survey, this is highlighted as being a high priority. Consider alongside master planning of sports fields, and concept designs (i.e., Munro Block, Te Kowhai).</p> <p>A review of amenities to occur along side Reserve Management Plan reviews</p>	C	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Tracks and Trails	Work with Herenga a Nuku Aotearoa to develop a network map that provides a hierarchy of provision, reflecting access, proximity and challenge of each track and trail (through associated technology provider e.g., Plan My Walk, Pocket Maps).	C SW	High



Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility <sup>5</sup>	Priority
		<p>Develop a connected boundaryless cycling and waling network that links to other play, active recreation and sport sites, leveraging central government support through Regional Land Transport Plan and associated Waka Kotahi Cycling Plan. Continue investment in development of cycling and walking tracks and trails where need is identified while focussing on optimising and maintaining existing assets.</p> <p>Continue to invest into trails of regional significance with a focus on improving customer experience and maintaining/elevating status to 'Great Walks/Rides' (e.g. Waikato River Trail, Te Awa Cycle Way, Te Araroa).</p> <p>Focus on flexible, accessible and inclusive provision for all, including low participation groups and aging population taking into account Accessible Outdoors Guidelines developed by Recreation Aotearoa and Mountain Biking Trail Guidelines 2023.</p> <p>Consideration to be included in the Connectivity Strategy Review (Draft 2024)</p>		
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Gymnastics	<p>Work proactively with key stakeholders such as Council, Gymsports Clubs and the MOE/Schools to explore long term use/lease agreements and facility partnership approaches to secure quality Gymsports access to facilities.</p> <p>Prior to any major renewals or upgrades, undertake a needs and options analysis. If a need is identified, undertake a feasibility and business case analysis prior to developing any new facilities/refurbishments.</p> <p>Consideration included in the Community Facilities Strategy (Draft 2024)</p>	C SW	Community led
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Business Cases	<p>Feasibility and business cases progressed for all subregional facility development recommendations relevant to Waikato District as outlined in the Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan.</p>	C SW	On-going

Holiday Skatepark Delivery – Waikato/Hamilton/Waipā

Changing Room Upgrades

Funding for Needs and Feasibility

**Kia Tu Sport NZ**

**Portable Pump Track**