



PLAY, ACTIVE RECREATION AND SPORT PLAN

2024-2034

NGĀ HUA CONTENTS

1. Rāpopotonga Matua Executive Summary	3
2. Kupu Whakataki Overview & Purpose	4
2.1 Overview and Purpose	4
2.2 Alignment to Strategic Focuses	5
3. Horopaki Rautaki Strategic Context	7
3.1 A Growing, Aging Population with Communities in High Deprivation	7
3.2 The Value of Sport and Physical Activity	8
3.3 Changing Play, Active Recreation and Sport Preferences, Trends and Barriers	8
3.4 Maintaining Assets, Facility Sustainability and Service Levels	9
3.5 Improving Collaborative Approaches and Working with Neighbouring Local Authorities	9
3.6 Covid-19	10
3.7 Climate Change	10
3.8 Alignment to Other Regional and Local Strategies and Plans	11
4. Tikanga Methodology	12
4.1 Information Gathering Process	12
4.2 An Overview of Respondents	12
4.3 Limitations	13
5. Whakatinana Rautaki Strategic Priorities and Recommendations	14
5.1 Play	14
5.2 Active Recreation	15
5.3 Sport	17
5.4 Sports Clubs, Groups and the Waitomo Sporting Landscape	17
5.5 Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	19
6. Rautaki Whāinga Action Plan	21

RĀPOPOTONGA MATUA

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sport, active recreation, physical activity, and play have a crucial role in building communities that are healthy, connected, and vibrant. It provides people with opportunities to improve their physical health while also creating a sense of community and connection that helps to improve mental, social, and emotional health.

60% of young people (5-17 years)
51% of adults (18+ years)
do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing¹

HOWEVER

69% of young people (5-17 years)
77% of adults (18+ years)
suggest they would like to do more physical activity than they currently do¹

The Waitomo 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.

These include:

- Funding
- Climate change
- Facility sustainability, optimisation, and maintenance
- Population trends
- Participation trends
- Building collaborative partnerships
- Working alongside neighbouring local authorities

Alongside an aging population there is an appetite for provision of spaces and places that allows for families to be active together. Of particular significance to the district are beach front reserves, natural open spaces that provide amenities that enhance the

use of play and active recreation spaces including shading, picnic tables and easy access.

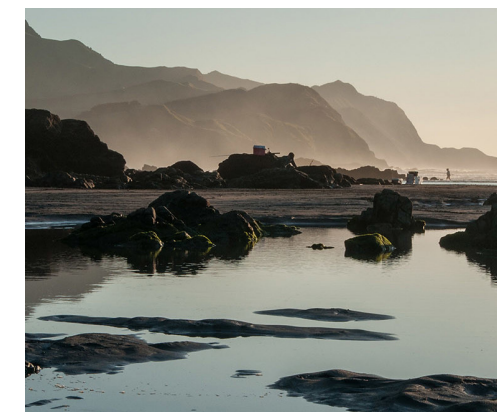
Although there is an increasing shift towards active recreation, the importance of providing well maintained, fit for purpose facilities that meet the needs of the community.

With a network approach to optimisation of all spaces and places including schools and private facilities and innovative ways to fund projects, the district is in good stead to remain well serviced. Local clubs and organisations are also feeling economic pressures with the majority citing funding and maintenance on buildings as concerns for their organisations.

With an appetite among clubs and organisations to collaborate and share facilities, conversations around the benefits of sharing human, administrative and physical resources through proven successful models with local clubs and organisations such as Hubbing should be explored.

With a large rural population and pockets of deprivation, alongside Covid-19 and the ongoing economic pressures following the effects of the pandemic the pressures on families to be able to provide opportunities to be physically active outside the normal traditional based sports.

This creates an opportunity for collaborative, innovate ways for play, active recreation and sport provision that contributes to wellbeing outcomes and supporting the strategic outcomes for both the Waitomo District and Sport Waikato.



KUPU WHAKATAKI

2. OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

2.1 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.

84% of adults (18+ years)
89% of young people (5-17 years)
feel that being physically active is important¹

52% of young people (5-17 years)
48% of adults (18+ years)
do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing¹

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 health².

Despite understanding the benefits of being active, barriers to participation do exist for people and communities, which reflect rapid changes within our society meaning people are increasingly time-poor, 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 active via play, active recreation and sport for life.

For Council, the Plan provides direction on what should be done and crucially, what should not be done, 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.

Waitomo 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 Waitomo District.

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance and direction to organisations who support and provide for play, active recreation and sport in the Waitomo 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 Waitomo.

2.2 Alignment to Strategic Focuses

This plan aligns to a number of strategic focuses and initiatives.

Waitomo District Council:

The focus for the vision is an intent to make sure that the district is an attractive place that people would want to visit, work, and live in. All services and activities that are delivered by council should align with this vision.

The Waitomo District's economic base is largely premised on agriculture and tourism. Sheep and beef farming is the largest agricultural industry, although in the last 10 years dairy farming has been a growing industry within the district. Waitomo's tourism industry has also continued being developed over the last 20 years. Most tourists are from overseas rather than domestic and often do not stay in the area, instead choosing to visit as a day excursion.

Community Wellbeing

Whilst much of Council's focus and investment will remain on managing and delivering core infrastructure services effectively and efficiently, increased emphasis will be placed on the wellbeing outcomes resulting from the services, as well as other services previously less prioritised

where they contribute highly to social, environmental, cultural, and/or economic wellbeing of our community.

The strategy continues to align with the outcomes and priorities in the recent Waitomo District Council Long Term Plan (2024 – 2034) and Vibrant Waitomo Strategy (2023).



The Vibrant Waitomo Strategy 2023 (Vibrant Waitomo) is a collective Strategy that provides leadership and direction for a thriving future for the Waitomo District.

Vision: A vibrant Waitomo – where our communities are thriving

Mission: A regional coalition to drive action towards a vibrant future – utilising our networks to bring the right people to do the right work to increase positive outcomes for the community

A district that is shaped together



Council has adopted a new vision statement and updated community outcomes and priorities for the new LTP:

Vision Statement

Te hanga tahi o tatou Takiwa Shaping our District together

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES



A prosperous district

We enable a thriving and sustainable economy to create greater benefits for everyone.



A district that cares for its environment

We ensure the wise use and management of all land and resources now and for future generations.



A district for all people

Our district is a great place to live because it is accessible, safe, affordable, and inclusive. We promote health, wellbeing, and participation.



A district that values culture

We value the whakapapa of our district, and we promote cultural, creative, and recreational activities where traditions, heritage, and arts are celebrated.

Key priorities

Strengthening Relationships

We will continue to shape our relationships with all our community, iwi, and mana whenua groups to build partnerships that will benefit the district.

Preparing for the future

We will ensure we are ready for the future by adapting to changes at a global, national, and local level. Demonstrating great leadership to support all the services we deliver.

Effective management of resources

We manage all of our resources effectively delivering value to our community, we keep sustainability and affordability at the forefront of what we do.

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 three strategic pillars:

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.



HOROPAKI RAUTAKI

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Waitomo 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.

3.1 A Growing, Aging Population with Communities in High Deprivation

9,303
PEOPLE
MADE UP OF
3,411
HOUSEHOLDS



Waitomo is expecting slow growth across its towns (in the district) with more people/family exiting the town and more demand in Piopio.

There is a change in different types of housing by 2048, as the district expects more over the age of 65 years old.

There is still a predicted demand for the “rural” living lifestyle in the future so a “protected” zone is set in the Town Concept plans for the townships of Te Kuiti and Mokau.

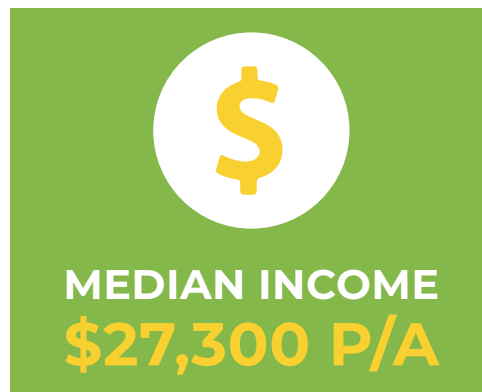
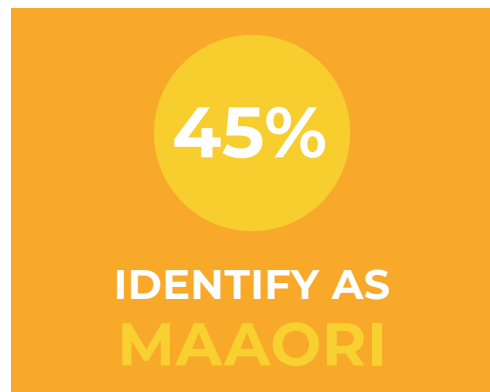
NIDEA shows a slow drop off until reaching 2038 before we see population increase again and it reflects the district plans of the aging population.

A growing and aging population, with a vast number of residents living in deprivation and/or rurally 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.

3.2 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 Zealand³.



National average 17%; Waikato regional average 24%

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

- 92%** believe being active keeps them **physically fit and healthy**, and helps **relieve stress**
- 88%** believe that sport and other physical activities provide them with **opportunities to achieve** and **help build confidence**
- 84%** 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**

52% of young people (5-17 years)

53% of adults (18+ years)

do enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing¹

HOWEVER

70% of young people (5-17 years)

73% of adults (18+ years)

suggest they would like to do more physical activity than they currently do¹

3.3 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.

Preferred Activities for YOUNG PEOPLE

-  **Running/Jogging**
-  **Games** (e.g. four square, tag, bullrush, dodgeball)
-  **Playing on playgrounds**
-  **Cycling**
-  **Playing** (e.g. running around, climbing trees and make-believe)

Preferred Activities for ADULTS

-  **Walking**
-  **Gardening**
-  **Individual Workouts** (with equipment)
-  **Running/Jogging**
-  **Playing Games** (eg. with kids)

ACTIVE RECREATION and PLAY are the preferred modes of physical activity for Waitomo residents

49% of young people in the Waitomo District are using active transport to travel to and from school¹

Sport does not rank in the top eight activities for young people, nor the top five activities for adults. In Waitomo miniball/ basketball and rugby are the only two sports to rank in the top 10 activities for young people, only basketball and golf feature in the top five 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, which likely demonstrates that while not necessarily involved in organised forms of sport, Waitomo young people are increasingly engaged



in recreational activities that involve a trainer or instructor. Given the physical activity preferences of Waitomo residents, it is not surprising that most people are active at home, school, out in nature, and/ or using public facilities¹.

Yet, while at a glance, Waitomo young people and adults are doing enough physical activity to positively impact their wellbeing, and indeed 78% 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 be¹.

The social benefits and opportunities associated with physical activity participation are important to Waitomo residents with many adults and young people choosing to be active with family and/or friends. 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.

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.



3.4 Maintaining Assets, Facility Sustainability and Service Levels

In many communities in the Waitomo 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.

3.5 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.

Indeed, as the Waikato regional population remains increasingly mobile, community members' participation does and can cross district and regional boundaries more frequently.

The Waitomo District neighbours the Otorohanga and South Waikato districts of the Waikato region and borders King Country/Ruapehu and Taranaki regions.

WAIKATO REGION

70% travel **outside of their district** to be physically active with migration noted across **multiple districts** within and outside of the region.²

WAITOMO DISTRICT

71% travel **outside of their district** to be physically active.

In fact, the Community Survey highlighted the level of migration of people and communities of the district, with 22% respondents traveling to the Otorohanga district, 33% travelling to the Waipa district, 22% traveling to the Hamilton district.

In light of such migration collaborating with other district 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 also be considered an option between local authorities,

communities and community groups, and schools/education.

3.6 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 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.

3.7 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 cars (emissions) when planning spaces and places for sport and recreation.

Provision of active transport opportunities and shared pathways will become increasingly important with the move

toward more sustainable facility design as well as environmental policies and practices also more evident in best practice planning.

Climate Change

The impact of climate change will require the need to focus on:



Facility location



Social conscious



Sustainability facility design - lighting, energy use



Active transport

Covid-19



Disruption to delivery



Fiscal strain on the sector



Financial demands on participants

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, including:



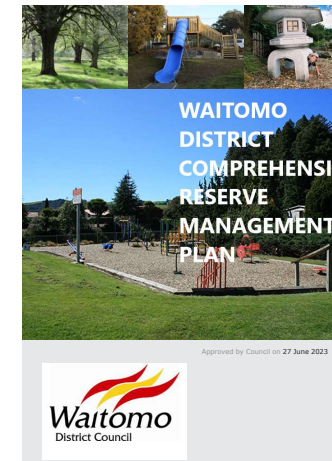
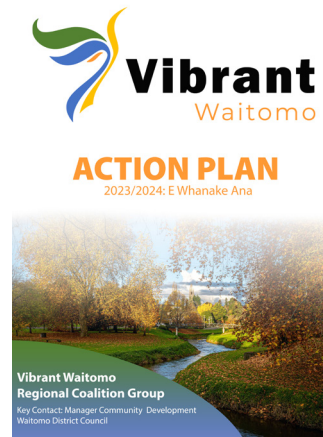
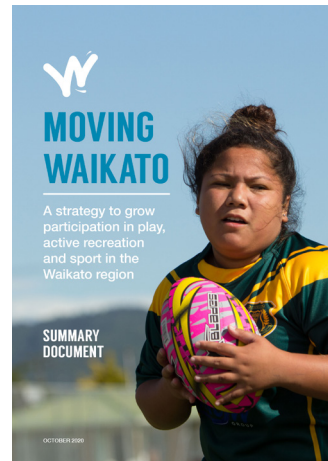
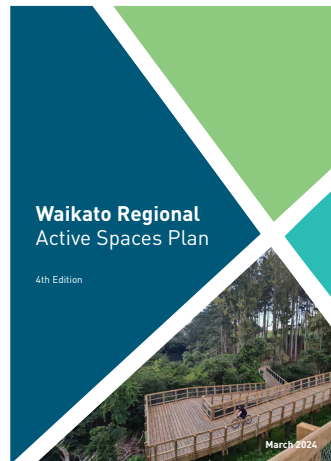
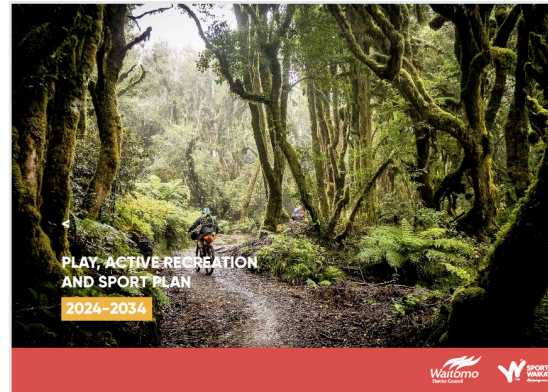
Cost to clubs and the end user



The importance of free and easily accessible spaces and places

3.8 Alignment to Other Regional and Local Strategies and Plans

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



Moving Waikato and the Waikato Regional Aquatics Facilities Plan also informed the creation of this Plan.

TIKANGA

4. METHODOLOGY

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.

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

4.1 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.

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.

Following analysis of Active NZ data, the 2018 census information and the capture of information from survey sources, a draft

4.2 An Overview of Respondents

Regional Sports Organisation & Local Club Surveys

These surveys sought to highlight the key priorities of both regional and local sporting organisations with respect to:

- Facility development
- Maintenance
- Challenges
- Opportunities
- Membership trends
- Volunteer trends
- Service provision and sustainability

Community Survey

This survey canvassed a greater breadth of topics with the main aim:

- How residents are physically active
- Opportunities for increased engagement
- How spaces and places are accessed and enjoyed
- Participation barriers

52

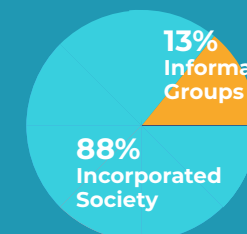
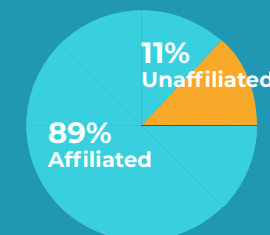
responses from Regional and National Sports Organisations

52%

had responsibility to support their code's delivery and growth in the Waitomo District

22

clubs took part from sports such as: rugby, bowls, badminton, croquet, polo, hockey, tennis, squash, gymnastics, football, swimming, equestrian, athletics and basketball.



Community Survey

50 responses

58% completed the survey on behalf of themselves as individuals

42% completed as or on behalf of their family unit

All age groups represented but

5-11 & 25-44 years

age demographics the most represented

A range of ethnic groups:

64% New Zealand European

36% Maaori

plan was formed collaboratively between Waitomo 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.

4.3 Limitations

As with any and all 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.

Given a low survey response rate it is likely that some data emissions 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 three years in alignment with Council's LTP.

In 2021, **986 young people** and **5339 adults** from the Waikato region shared their experiences of play, active recreation, and sport outside of our Plan-specific data gathering process¹.



WHAKATINANA RAUTAKI

5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Play

Play is defined as intrinsically motivated, freely chosen activities with no predetermined outcome.

It 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 Waitomo. 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 district¹.

In Waitomo local parks and reserves, natural bodies of water, walkways and footpaths are important spaces that provide for play.

Community survey results reveal that 32% of respondents are using existing playgrounds/obstacle courses, with only 7% very or extremely satisfied with these with suggestions made that they are not fit for purpose (e.g., family friendly

24% of young people played games (eg. four square, tag, bull rush, dodgeball)

31% participated in play (eg. running around, climbing trees, make believe)

18% of adults engaged play played games (eg. with their kids) in the 7-day period prior to the survey

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 active¹

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 mentioned as barriers to satisfaction.

While young people are often most active at school and while engaging in playful activities, schools remain underutilised community assets. Only 26% of Community Survey respondents

indicated that they are active at a school and only 18% of families reported using schools to engage in physical (play or otherwise).

Schools are ripe for play (and often containing fantastic play infrastructure and resources), but Waitomo schools are not currently being used to their full 'play' potential and this under-utilisation of school play facilities represents a missed opportunity to both widen and strengthen the Waitomo 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 and perhaps less planned 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:

“It would be great to have playgrounds that are well thought out for all ages, with shade for summer, seating for people supervising”
(Waitomo resident)

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



Play 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., provision of seating, shade, amenities)
-  Capitalise on the network of **Waitomo 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** – 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 **access to community use of play spaces** to broaden the Waitomo 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 the inclusion 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**

5.2 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 Waitomo district. According to the recent Active NZ survey, running/jogging, walking and cycling sit in the top 5 activities for adults and/or young people in the community¹.

These insights mirror regional trends that indicate walking tracks, cycling and mountain biking tracks are the most used and considered the most helpful

YOUNG PEOPLE¹

57% are active at outdoor locations
(eg. beach, lake, bush, footpaths)

10% use indoor facilities
(eg. gym, community hall, church, marae or indoor pool)

60% are physically active using outdoor facilities (eg. playground, park, field, astroturf or outdoor pools)

infrastructure to enable movement among local communities¹.

Not surprisingly, therefore, a range of spaces support the physical activity

ADULTS¹

27% use roads and footpaths

36% at a private property, home, garden or pool

13% using walkways

20% accessing public parks, fields, playgrounds, skateparks or BMX tracks

12% using gyms or fitness centres¹

MOST USED LOCATIONS



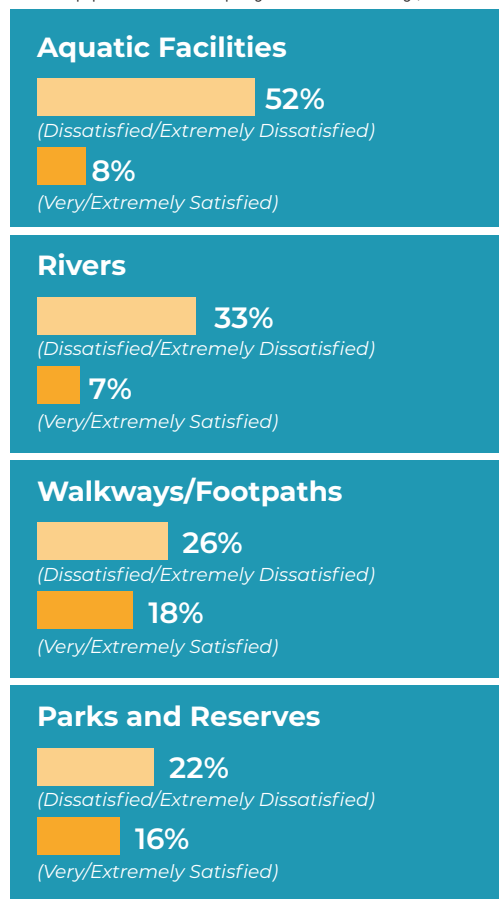
19% use cycle trails as individuals

25% use these facilities with their families

levels of people and communities in the Waitomo District.

Community survey results also indicate that walkways/footpaths, beaches, rivers or lakes, parks and reserves, sports fields and cycling tracks are some of the most used locations in the Waitomo district for being active, among both individuals and families.

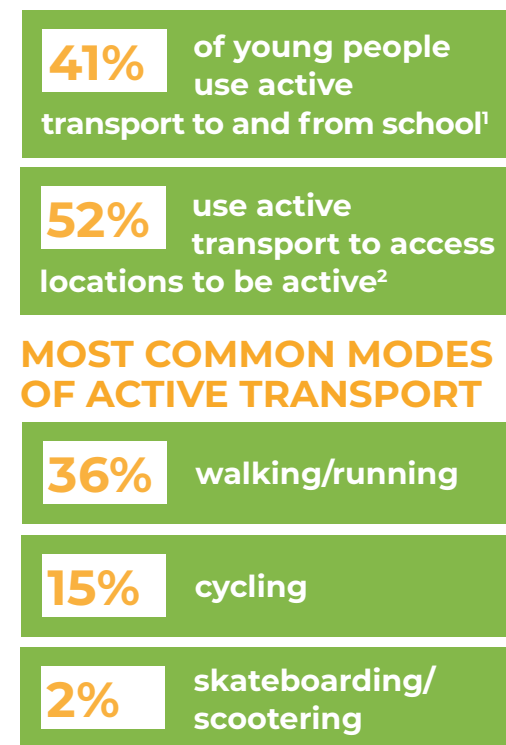
22% of Community Survey respondents were using cycle tracks as individuals to support their physical activity, while



12% 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.

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).

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).

Connectivity was highlighted as both a barrier and opportunity to support active recreation in the district, with many Community Survey respondents indicating a need for increased connectivity between existing walking/cycle networks within the district and between districts (e.g., Otorohanga).

“I’d like to see a cycle pathway to link up existing pathways so that we can complete a circuit of the town safely (without travelling on busy roads). There is already parts of access paths, and some safe paths within new subdivisions, but would be good to have better connectivity with each other”
(Waitomo 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 travelling outside of the district to do so because there are currently no tracks that they are either permitted to ride on or that are safe to do so.

Given the significant participation by Waitomo people and communities in active recreation, it is important to

Active Recreation Recommendations:

- Consider options to support **safe walking, cycling, skateboarding, and scootering routes** near Waitomo 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 Waitomo community 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
- Consider, where possible, **providing free or low-cost options** for active recreation and community infrastructure for high deprivation communities
- 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**

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.

5.3 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 Waitomo, it continues to be an important mode of physical activity that offers a number of benefits for participants – including social interaction and connection.

5.4 Sports Clubs, Groups and the Waitomo Sporting Landscape

Like participants in sport, volunteers who support the running of sport are struggling with being ‘time poor’ and the need to juggle family commitments.

Survey responses indicate that clubs generally understand the importance of relationships with schools to support their operations and memberships.

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, with many clubs feeling that more is required to successfully run their operations and grow their code, but also to ensure the burden of cost is removed from participants.

Almost half of all clubs surveyed indicated that they need support for their finances (including via sponsorship) in order to continue to be sustainable, but also to keep costs down for participants. Of those respondents who lease/hire facilities, 17% 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 therefore, 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).

88% 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 and to other parts of the North Island to participate.

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.

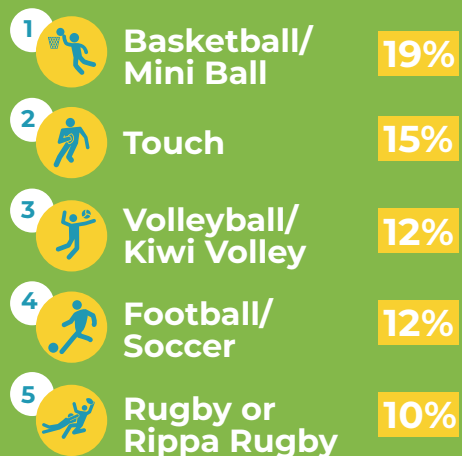
Outdoor sport and recreation facilities used by

14% of individuals
20% of families

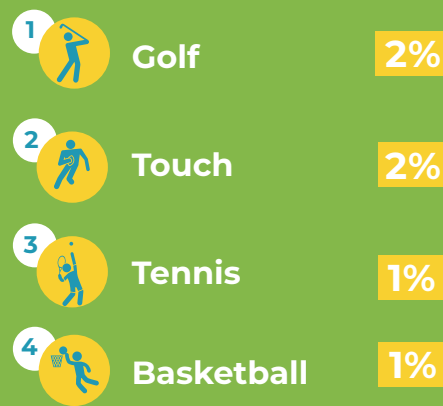
Indoor sport and recreation facilities used by

16% of individuals
18% of families

The sports most played by Waitomo's youth include¹:



The sports most played by Waitomo's adults include¹:



9 responses from clubs

11% had an **increase** in membership since 2017

33% had a **decrease** in membership

50% had **challenges** retaining or recruiting volunteers

but despite this

75% had managed to increase or retain their volunteer base

however

25% reported a decrease in volunteer numbers

TOP BARRIERS FOR CLUBS:

-  **Funding**
-  **Finances**
-  **Lease/hire costs**
-  **Travel costs**
-  **Maintenance and upgrade of assets**

Although 67% 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.

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.

67% of clubs indicated that they are engaged with local schools and the benefit of this engagement includes support for recruitment, coaching, sport development programmes, facility/location use and event support. 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.

22% of clubs have **paid employees**

This indicates the reliance on volunteers, among most clubs, to support the running of sport.

Popular roles (unpaid and paid) within clubs

- 76%** Board members
- 79%** Coaches
- 23%** Officials
- 8%** Administrators
- 5%** Groundskeepers

67% of clubs believe their current facilities meet their current needs

56% of clubs don't believe their facilities meet their future needs

11% of clubs said their organisation has capital investment projects planned or underway

Sport 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 in Waitomo. This could also make way for new/emerging sports to exist alongside more traditional codes
-  Look for ways to **lower the 'cost' of participation** 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 (**e.g., 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

56% of clubs already share their facilities with other clubs or organisations

56% of clubs are open to collaborating

44% of clubs willing to consider it

Grounds upgrades, 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 which can be connected.

Emerging, new and less traditional sports are often having difficulty finding facilities to use. Volleyball (beach and indoor) and Disc Golf, both reported a shortage of appropriate grounds to operate on.

5.5 Physical Activity in Spaces and Places

Spaces and Places refers to the locality, or preferred locality, where community physical activity occurs, whether this is play, active recreation or sport, and regardless of whether this occurs across built infrastructure or across informal natural settings¹.

As has been demonstrated via the data, Waitomo 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 the lake, bush and rivers to parks and reserves and community buildings).

What has come through strongly is the emphasis Waitomo residents place on feeling connected to space and place and whether or not it meets their basic needs regarding infrastructure (e.g., amenities) and 'feel' (e.g., welcoming, inclusive).

“More footpaths need to be designated as shared paths for cyclists and pedestrians. Maybe wider too and perhaps provide connectivity around town.” (Waitomo resident)

“Walking paths are dirty, often weedy and some don't really exist! Much of the town footpaths are overgrown

due to some residents not trimming their bit OR its outside council land.” (Waitomo resident)

Access to natural spaces to be active is important to the people of the Waitomo 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. Equally, spaces for the community to engage in water play and that accommodate small children was emphasised as missing from current provision.

“Some updates with water features or something to make the pools feel more exciting and inviting would be great” (Waitomo resident)

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

“The Waitomo Pools complex appears to not be inviting for teenagers, they are not allowed to do manu's. It would be lovely to develop the

natural swimming hole along the river that these teenagers now seem to use just along from the pool complex” (Waitomo resident)

In and around being active, Waitomo 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 were highlighted as gaps in local parks and reserves networks by some respondents as was the provision of shade/shelter and seating.

“We need more opportunities at the domain or Centennial Park for young and old to come together e.g., pump track, modern playground for all ages including water play and skate/bike course. Shaded picnic areas as well as shaded places for watching kids playing.” (Waitomo 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 improved¹.

- 20%** dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with provided walkways/footpaths
- 50%** dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with parks and reserves
- 50%** dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with local rivers

TOP 4 ACTIVE LOCATIONS



Beaches, rivers and lakes



Playground/obstacle course



Walkways/footpaths



Parks and reserves

BARRIERS TO ENJOYMENT



Pollution



Access



Provision of quality infrastructure



Safety



Spaces & Places 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 provision of 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

RAUTAKI WHĀINGA

6. ACTION PLAN

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility	Priority
Play	Neighbourhood Play System	Identify and address opportunities and barriers for tamariki to play in their school and community through Neighbourhood Play System approach.	SW/WDC/School	Low
Play	Play Streets	Identify community neighbourhoods where Play Street initiatives may increase or enhance safe play alongside positive social engagement.	SW/WDC/Community	Medium
Play	Play on the Way	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. Consider space sites suitable for connecting play opportunities (play trails) around towns.	SW/WDC/Community	Medium
Play	Play Trailer	Investigate the need for a community play trailer within the district. Partnership approaches should be considered between councils and organisations to fund, manage and maintain the trailer, specifically considering rural communities and kaahui ako.	SW/WDC	Low
Play	Playground Renewals	Where playgrounds are highlighted to be renewed, consideration for co-design of engaging, age-appropriate play opportunities, family-friendly social spaces, accessibility, and meeting standards for universal design should be included.	WDC	High
Play	Play Trail	Consider blue, green and grey space sites suitable for connected and engaging play opportunities, such as play trails.	SW/WDC	Low
Play	Nature Play	Explore locations for natural play opportunities outside of built playgrounds (e.g., wetlands, waterways, beaches, forests, orchards).	WDC	Medium
Play	Cultural Play	Work with communities to identify suitable sites to co-design traditional cultural play opportunities.	WDC	Medium
Active Recreation	Cycling	Continue supporting those providing for cycling provision with focus on connectedness between existing urban environment and specific cycling locations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 'Cycleways' community consultation · Otorohanga - Waitomo Cycleway 	WDC	Medium/Low
Active Recreation	School Travel Routes	Continue to support active transport opportunities to and from school through school partnerships, design, infrastructure and shared pathways.	WDC/SW/School	High
Active Recreation	Connectivity	Continue to develop a connected, accessible and maintained network of footpaths, cycleways, tracks, trails and bridle paths for everyday micro-mobility and recreation opportunities across districts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Explore a district wide cycle trail network to Create an interconnected walking and cycling network for Waitomo 	WDC	High
Active Recreation	Activity Gap	Identify, promote and support initiatives that provide localised and less formal opportunities to be active while reducing or removing barriers such as time and cost.	SW/WDC	High
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., Awakino & Mokau rivers).	SW/WDC	Medium

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility	Priority
Active Recreation	Seniors Activities	Investigate the current provision of appropriate and accessible physical activities for senior adults, with a focus on traditional (e.g., bowls, croquet) alongside emerging (e.g., pickleball) and as a way to optimise existing facilities (e.g., community halls, courts), and open space locations (e.g., fitness parks and trails).	SW/WDC	High
Active Recreation	Equestrian Activities	Continue to engage equestrian groups and riders within relevant policies and strategies to provide safe and appropriate access to bridle path opportunities and networks. From the community survey places to ride and participate were highlighted as need within the district. Support the creation of a Regional Equestrian Strategy.	SW	Medium
Sport	Hubbing	Continue to support sport and community hubbing projects encouraging clubs and community groups to combine resources, share and optimise facilities, costs and services. Explore opportunities to work with clubs and community groups to be able to work collaboratively and to develop Sports and Recreation Hubs where appropriate.	SW	High
Sport	Clubs	Work with clubs to investigate opportunities that support the quality of experience and consider whether optimisation may be an appropriate strategy, taking into account accessibility.	SW/DAG	High
Sport	Emerging Sports	Consider provision for emerging sports such as lacrosse and disc sports. Identify opportunities to incorporate provision into existing and/or planned facilities.	SW	High
Sport	Low-cost and localised options	Encourage local clubs to provide participation opportunities outside of traditional competition structures with an increased focus on space utilisation/optimisation and community engagement (e.g., localised competitions, whaanau days, cross-code festival days).	SW	High
Sport	Resources and Signposting	Connect clubs with organisations that produce resources supporting club capability (e.g., WILSS, Community Waikato, Recreation Aotearoa).	SW	High
Sport	Insights and Evaluation	Continue utilise insights and evaluation to support accurate and evidence-based identification of trends and opportunities.	SW	Medium
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. Review district wide court investment programme in accordance with Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan and (due to be released) National Indoor Sport & Active Rec Facilities Strategy 2023 recommendations.	WDC	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Floodlighting	Floodlighting should be considered as part of any sport field upgrades – especially alongside sand-based fields. Investigate co-funding options to provide a comprehensive, maintained and accessible floodlight network.	SW/WDC/ Clubs/MoE/ Communities	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Playing Fields	Provide a comprehensive, maintained, and accessible playing field network. Support user groups to prioritise the sustainability of fields with a focus on optimising use.	WDC	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	School Access Partnerships	Explore school-council partnerships where existing and future MoE infrastructure can support local communities (e.g., indoor halls, sports fields, pools, playgrounds).	WDC/SW/MoE	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion	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 are considered (for example, race, gender, age, ability). Adopt an Accessibility and inclusion Plan or Strategy that allows for targeted interventions and processes that support greater inclusion.	WDC/SW	High

Strategic Priority	Focus	Action	Responsibility	Priority
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Aquatic Spaces	Review district wide aquatic provision and investment programme in accordance with Waikato Regional Aquatic Facilities Plan (2017), Waikato Regional Active Spaces Plan and (due to be released) National Aquatic Strategy 2023 recommendation. Focus needs to be on consideration of co-investment in a sub-regional facility servicing both Otorohanga and Waitomo.	WDC	Low
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Natural Environment	Continue to develop a connected and accessible network of natural spaces and places that support communities desire to be active in the natural environment.	WDC	High
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Artificial Turf – Hockey	Advocate for the development of multi-use facilities and/or school facility partnerships which configure existing synthetic surfaces so that they can be utilised for hockey and where feasible complimentary codes/users. Explore opportunities for indoor hockey in partnership with other providers, facility owners (including schools) to grow participation.	WDC	Low
Physical Activity in Spaces and Places	Amenities	Carefully consider investment into amenities (i.e., change facilities, drinking, shade, seating) at recreation reserves across the district. From the community survey, this is highlighted as being a priority. Consider alongside master planning of sports fields, and concept designs (i.e., Centennial Park Revitalisation project, and the Maniaiti/ Bennydale Rugby Ground upgrade).	WDC	High