

Neighbourhood Play System

East Gore School

GORE, SOUTHLAND
FEBRUARY 2022

Active
Southland
TE TĀKARO ORA Ō MURIHIKU

 **SPORT**
NEW ZEALAND
IHI AOTEAROA

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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Executive summary

Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa and Active Southland are committed to increasing opportunities for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to access quality play opportunities and experiences.

With the support of Sport NZ and Arup, Active Southland applied the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint to the neighbourhood of East Gore, Gore. This enabled Active Southland to undertake a comprehensive play assessment and evaluate opportunities for improving play in East Gore School and in the surrounding community.

The aim of the study was to understand how various urban systems impact children's play experience in the selected community, according to the dimensions of the framework, to support the development of recommendations towards ensuring a play-friendly environment. The project was approached through an understanding of the community through the eyes of tamariki. This process provided an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand the wants and needs of a community from a play perspective.

The lives of tamariki living in East Gore are impacted by poor quality parks and green spaces, unsafe roads and streets restricting mobility and creating poor quality urban realm. Insights from the East Gore community suggested that residents sometimes feel neglected and were excited by the prospect of being included as just one of four pilot projects across New Zealand. Their pride and sense of belonging in the community is strong but is not visibly reflected in the physical neighbourhood.

East Gore is undergoing a period of growth, driven in part by young families taking advantage of lower house prices, and other demographic change across the community. 18 percent of the neighbourhood identify as Māori, while 44 percent of pupils at East Gore School are Māori or Pasifika. The facilitation of play spaces in East Gore struggles to meet the growing needs and cultural and physical needs of tamariki. Access to natural environments including the Matura and Waikaka Rivers and Hamilton Park is poor, reducing play opportunities available for tamariki.

The economic deprivation of East Gore means that wider livelihood considerations can place pressure on whānau and inhibit access to play opportunities. The neighbourhood high deprivation index demonstrated by overcrowding of households, poor quality housing and low incomes, are key challenges that can exacerbate the challenge of establishing a culture of independent play within the community.

At a Council level, funding pressures can result in the suboptimal implementation and maintenance of play spaces. The service levels of play in the area are predominantly defined by road safety risks, with abandoned parks and playgrounds, or restricted access to play spaces, creating an uninviting and off-putting atmosphere for tamariki. High traffic volumes and speeds in the neighbourhoods create an environment where many whānau are not comfortable allowing or empowering tamariki to travel independently to play spaces.



Figure 1: EGS tamariki present at mini launch.



Figure 2: Whānau attending mini launch.



Figure 3: East Gore tamariki sharing pictures of their observations from the site visit.

Ongoing concerns about safety is a key challenge as it influences whānau decision-making and hampers the ability of tamariki to access play independently. Tamariki who are not able to access play independently and participate in informal play opportunities are less likely to gain the cognitive and skill-building benefits associated with play.

While conditions for play are not optimal throughout East Gore there are opportunities to improve this, building on existing initiatives, and to deliver wider social benefits. East Gore School is developing into a community play destination as a result of the principal's desire to provide more accessible opportunities for tamariki in the school grounds. Engagement with partner schools, community groups and key stakeholders has painted a richer picture of the East Gore community and helped shaped an understanding of the challenges and opportunities for play in the area.

The kaupapa for this project is aligned with both Active Southland and the Gore District Council (GDC) priorities and provided a platform for both organisations to work together in support of the East Gore community. The enthusiasm and drive of local play champion and East Gore principal Wendy Kitto was a key to successful engagement with the community. The ongoing engagement of community stakeholders including the NZ Police and Hokonui Runanga will add further value.

Recommendations identified for the future include to:

- champion play
- work and leverage off partnerships with enablers
- improve the quality of current conditions and work towards new amenities
- activate opportunities.

The community-led nature of this project has already provided a strong level of local engagement and rich insights to inform future investment and implementation. Key stakeholders including GDC have a high level of awareness of the project and the role they can play in future, providing confidence that this initiative has laid a foundation for positive outcomes for the East Gore community.

Child-friendly solutions can be transformative. They generate many benefits for cities and communities, bringing new ways of placemaking in their contexts.

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint

Kaupapa/Purpose

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint has been developed to reflect the understanding that play is not confined to defined areas, and encompasses a wide community system including driveways, streets, parks and alleys. It is not intended to be a step-by-step guide, rather it explains the many steps that need to take place to support the governance, funding, technical design and monitoring of child-friendly urban environments.

The Blueprint will operate in tandem with activation plans, opportunities and a Kaupapa Māori Play Model to ensure a holistic approach is taken that reflects and responds to Aotearoa New Zealand's unique cultural, social and environmental context.

The Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint has been developed to explore a more sustainable approach to developing and managing a local play system.

This is characterised by three concepts:

1. The process is iterative and will continue to be updated as we learn.
2. The process is based on an approach of collaboration and co-design.
3. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of goals and impacts is critical.

Improving the quality of and access to play on a local scale, facilitated through the development of an integrated play strategy will encourage all tamariki to engage further in play activities and being physically active.

How does it help when it comes to large scale implementation of play in urban environments?

Little guidance has been developed on planning, designing and upgrading neighbourhoods to deliver outcomes that encourage tamariki to move freely and play without restrictions in the urban environment.

This approach is intended to support enablers of play, guiding short- and long-term approaches through initiatives, influences and impacts:

- **Initiatives** are short-term activation and investment to drive action. Lower cost and often temporary, these may include Play Streets or the activation of school and community play spaces.
- **Influences** are how we shape systems, communities, times and places for play. This occurs with consideration of Council policy, perceptions and the ongoing impacts/context of spaces.
- **Impacts** involve long-term change and leadership, advocating for community play systems. This recognises the value that play has in the lives of tamariki and whānau, shaping how we consider and design urban environments going forward.



Figure 4: East Gore tamariki writing and drawing ideas to improve play in their neighbourhood.

The significance of play

What is play?

Play is spontaneous, tamariki-led and directed, freely chosen with no pre-determined outcome, fun, accessible, challenging, social and repeatable. It is usually highly active with elements of challenge and risk that test boundaries in an imaginative way.

Play allows tamariki the space to practice, learn and develop the skills they need to be active for life including fundamental movement skills, self-directed creativity and innovation, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence, leadership and informed risk-taking.

Play is under threat

The playful upbringing of previous generations is no longer as accessible to tamariki due to changing social, environmental, technological and economic pressures. Young people need the time, space and permission to play but with increasingly structured lives and reduced free time, the loss of traditional play spaces such as streets and driveways, increased fears around safety and risk and a loss of societal connections means play deprivation is becoming an increasing national and international concern.

The right to play

Children have the right to play and this right is encapsulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 31: "That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts".



Figure 5: Tamariki modelling their ideas for better play.



Figure 6: Consultation with tamariki about play.

Introduction

Purpose

Cities have a crucial role to play in shaping urban environments that meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi. Tamariki have the same needs from their urban environments as everyone else: Safe and clean streets, access to green space, clean air, things to do, the ability to get around, the freedom to see friends, and somewhere to call home. Each city needs to shape a context-specific approach, building on their unique cultural, political, socio-economic and environmental conditions and drivers, to realise the benefits of play through child-friendly urban planning.

This document sets out the current play context at a city, neighbourhood and school level for East Gore School situated in East Gore, Gore. Understanding the social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions that shape play for tamariki in this community is a crucial component in supporting play opportunities across the neighbourhood. Play has many benefits for tamariki, their whānau and the wider community.

For many, access to playful spaces is not equitable and can be determined by income and post code.

Improving equitable and easy access to safe playful spaces will improve the health and wellbeing of tamariki and aligns with GDC and Active Southland strategies around living in a creative place, having a choice of quality places to go, valuing and respecting our environment and living in a compassionate, caring community.

Conditions in East Gore, as in every community, have developed over time through planning and design decision-making, relationships, resources and established practices. The community is growing and changing, with planned and proposed residential growth allocated within and adjacent to the neighbourhood.

This growth may increase demand for access to play space, including schools and parks, and drives a need for safe and accessible opportunities for play on the way.

Figure 7: East Gore School viewed from across the main road.



East Gore School context plan



Figure 8: East Gore School context plan.

Approach

The profile of play conditions in East Gore draws upon desk-based historical, socio-economic, material and cultural research performed in advance of site visits, as well as in-depth field research conducted between July 26th and November 24th 2021.

Different qualitative methods were adopted to understand the context and to document findings as thoroughly as possible. Material collected included demographic and policy conditions influencing how local children play. It also investigated how local stakeholders perceive such conditions, contribute to shaping them, and act within them. The following methods were used for the field research.

Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders in East Gore include:

- East Gore School
- GDC
- Hokonui Runanga
- Ministry of Education advisors
- Community Networking Trust
- Church representatives
- NZ Police

As conversations with stakeholders began, a meeting with the Hokonui Runanga revealed that they thought the project would bring some much needed attention to East Gore and were happy to be on the journey.

That afternoon however, New Zealand entered Level 4 lockdown. Meetings with GDC and the local Police had to be rescheduled and become virtual. Although it wasn't the personalised approach wanted, the meeting included four GDC representatives including the Mayor - who was thrilled with the proposal and very forth-coming with offering assistance and resources. The local Police were also happy to help and provided information about safety and has continued to show full support for the Neighbourhood Play System.

The Council has supported the Neighbourhood Play System by providing GIS mapping for the desktop analysis and all partners have been kept up-to-date with regular emails and media coverage. Stakeholder attendance and engagement at the mini launch was really positive and bodes well for the future relationship.

Desktop review

Desktop analysis encountered delays due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19 lockdowns, so instead of in-person collaboration, documents were sent to the Eastern Active Coordinator, East Gore School Principal, Public Health community workers and the GDC Parks Manager. Statistics New Zealand 2018 Census data provided sufficient information for understanding the population demographics of the suburb of East Gore, as well as the nature of housing, level of education and access to transport modes, internet and phone.

Mapping the East Gore area was performed by Active Southland with data provided through partnership with GDC. Mapping identified key considerations for the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint, including the walkable catchment of East Gore Primary School, waterways, roadways, alleyways, greenspace, existing play spaces and public amenities.

“ The playground equipment...is underutilised because it is not well maintained and doesn't have any challenge or invite imagination. ”

“ We want more biking and walking trails (off sealed roads/by the river). ”



Figure 9: East Gore School.

Site walks

Site walks to the East Gore neighbourhood were a fundamental step in understanding the context. Five members of Active Southland and an East Gore School staff member supervised a focus group of local East Gore School tamariki who walked the neighbourhood analysing spaces within proximity for hotspots where they played and hung out. Common locations of interest included green spaces around the school, the Matura River and Hamilton Park.

On 24 November during the mini launch, attendees were invited on a site walk to Oxford Park, the closest park to East Gore School. This provided an opportunity for those attending to witness the parks themselves and feedback was gathered on whether they would take their tamariki to play, and on what was needed to encourage them to bring their whānau there.

These site visits were crucial in shaping early considerations towards the project and understanding spaces that need improvement. This also provided an opportunity for stakeholders, community members, tamariki, whānau and Active Southland staff to collectively oversee the current situation of East Gore.

“ Update the play equipment not just on the main street but also in East Gore. ”

“ I don't stop the kids playing but the parks don't really hold their attention for long. ”

Feedback from community in engagement session



Figure 10: Tamariki utilising play equipment.



Figure 11: Photovoice focus group and Active Southland staff.

Community and school involvement

Consultation with the community was completed through a survey. The survey questions were based off time, place and permission for play currently in East Gore for their tamariki and the survey touched on these factors but in their own childhood. They were also asked to express their ‘grand ideas’ for play in East Gore. These findings and suggestions were presented at our community mini launch and many can be seen in ‘What we heard’ on page 14. This survey was distributed by Antenna (GDC app), East Gore School Facebook page, and via mail drop to the houses of East Gore. On reflection, we have missed two populations – the elderly and rangatahi voice, which will be captured with the help of the steering group in 2022.

Consultation was carried out with tamariki from East Gore school over a period of three days. Forty senior tamariki were involved in the consultations between 28–30 September, supported by three East Gore Staff and four Active Southland staff. Sport NZ Regional Play System Consultant Mark Curr was present on 30 September.

Three exercises were facilitated:

- Play on the way – tamariki drew their journey to school and identified key areas of play.
- Crafting the play environment – tamariki were supplied with craft materials and created their favourite play experience or something cool they'd like to see in East Gore.
- Scoping the environment – tamariki were shown images of nine areas in East Gore and identified opportunities and challenges. This included safety concerns, how they could improve the place and how they get there.



Figure 12: Whānau , community and stakeholders at mini launch.

The school support staff, senior teachers and Principal Wendy Kitto have been integral to the easy running of the Neighbourhood Play System in their school. The two senior teachers were very accommodating, providing their afternoon sessions for us to work with the tamariki for most of the week.

Following these exercises, tamariki were introduced to PhotoVoice, a method of consultation that allows the voice of an unheard community to be heard by those who can influence change. The tamariki were given iPads and free rein to walk around East Gore and take photos of anything they thought fit within the three themes:

- Empty green spaces we can improve
- Existing spaces we can improve
- Dangers or safety concerns.

The photos were narrowed down to five and the tamariki wrote captions explaining what they saw and what they would do to improve this area. The picture with the strongest message was chosen and the tamariki presented this at the proposed community mini launch.

A full community launch was planned at the school to outline the project, build understanding of play and recruit champions, but due to COVID-19 we were unable to complete this. However, on 24 November we were able to hold a scaled-down community mini launch with key community partners and stakeholders at the school, led by Principal Wendy Kitto, with our support – where the tamariki spoke to their respective photo boards.

Also attending the meeting was the whānau of the tamariki focus group directly involved with the Photovoice project attended, four local GDC staff members: Roading Engineer, Parks and Recreation Manager, Communities Empowerment Coordinator (disabilities, newcomers, youth) and Active Aging Coordinator, local Runanga, Ministry of Education advisors, Community Networking Trust, church representatives and the Police. Five East Gore School staff were present and helped with the set up. They were integral to supporting the Principal and Active Southland staff, especially ushering the whānau in and keeping an eye on the tamariki as we adhered to the COVID-19 guidelines.

Engagement has not been as personal as we intended due to COVID-19 restrictions, but the responses have been positive. Workshops are planned for 2022 but dependent on how we navigate the ever-changing environment and restrictions on gatherings.

Current conditions

Gore and the East Gore neighbourhood face a number of challenges that effect the ability for tamariki to play safely and independently. However, there are opportunities to support access to play opportunities in the neighbourhood for all ages and abilities. At a city scale the approach to play in Gore is overseen by GDC and Active Southland.

While GDC does not have a dedicated play strategy to play in the city, the Council's Long Term Plan sets out an aspiration where participation is encouraged, and all residents are able to be active in the city's public spaces, parks and playgrounds.

Demographics

The population of Gore predominately identifies as European with 13 percent of the Gore District of Māori decent. This is a key factor in establishing culture and mana in and around schools and communities.

East Gore has one of the highest levels of deprivation in New Zealand with children under 15 years being the second highest population group in the area. Encouraging play and lifelong activity is a key tool in providing the future generation of East Gore with the proper amenities and services that improve play spaces in their lives.

There is a relatively even gender split across male and female in Gore, however Gore has a far greater proportion of young people compared to other population groups.

The majority of Gore residents drive a private vehicle to work or education with a low utilisation of other transport modes such as walking, cycling or public transport. A larger proportion of Gore residents have no formal qualification with study participation lower than the New Zealand average for full-time and part-time study. However, more than half of the population encounters full-time employment which is largely due to two freezing works and two milk factories in Gore, despite a larger proportion having no access to the internet and telephones.

Gore is undergoing a period of change, with population growth and investment in housing and infrastructure changing how and where people live in the city. At the same time, many of the Southland regions single-use spaces and places that cater for traditional sports are experiencing declining rates of use. In Gore, and across the region, there is increasing demand for a diverse network of flexible spaces and places that facilitate healthy and active lifestyles all year round. The quality of and access to these places and spaces is integral to the quality of life of Southlanders.

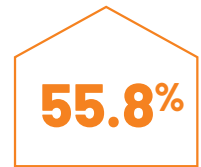
Southland



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-15 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

East Gore



of residents are Māori



of residents are 0-15 years



of residents own or partly own their own home

East Gore School



of tamariki are Māori



100

tamariki

Decile

3

Spatial development

East Gore is a quiet neighbourhood of 1,400 residents, surrounded by nature and farmland, boasting wide streets and pockets of green spaces. Unfortunately, these are old, poorly maintained, unsafe and do not support independent mobility. This is the first neighbourhood that you experience as you travel south into Gore. In East Gore, there is poor signage, with no Te Ao Māori visible, despite the areas rich cultural heritage and Māori population.

Housing is mainly single storey, brick 1960s era with more modern housing as you move further out. In the past, East Gore has been recognised as a 'place not to reside' due to no amenities, low-cost housing and perceived safety concerns with residents. More recently, as the housing market has evolved, there has been an influx of young first-home buyers into the area. On 13 December 2021, GDC released the first 15 sections of Gore's newest subdivision – Matai Ridges – with another 20 sections to come on sale in the near future. This is the biggest subdivision sale in Gore since the 1980s, and will increase housing supply in East Gore significantly.

The majority of tamariki travel to East Gore School as passengers in motor vehicles, and are dropped off at the main entrance on Wentworth Street, which borders the school. As the street connects State Highway 1 to the north it carries high volumes of traffic throughout the day. Roads within the neighbourhood are wide, encouraging motorists to drive faster. During a site visit it was noted that crossing State Highway 1 is challenging, due to the high vehicle flow and speed of traffic. In East Gore, there is no public transport for residents to connect over to the main township.

There is a lack of infrastructure including street trees, lights, cycling facilities (such as separated cycle lanes) and crossings. Two zebra crossings enable students to cross Wentworth Street and Oxford Street, directly outside the main entrance to East Gore School.

Variations in footpath width through the neighbourhood (for example four students-wide to two students-wide in places) forces students to walk on the road if they want to walk side-by-side. With the grid lay out of the streets, it is easy to move around, with many unwelcoming and poorly maintained alleyways. Children will often be seen walking/cycling and scootering on these footpaths.

The school grounds have been identified as the preferred place for children and the wider community to gather and play. During site walks it was noted that both the pump track and play equipment are well used by students and the wider community outside of school hours. Fundraising has started to provide the junior school with a playground. There is a large open field and court space with opportunities for improvement.

The whole school is fully fenced and always open to the community.



Figure 13: Outdated equipment at three East Gore parks.

Relevant plans and policies

Vision 2030 The Rotorua Way

Gore Parks and Recreation Strategy

The Gore Parks and Recreation Strategy establishes a number of objectives around community access to open space and recreational opportunities, including 'a network of parks that provide easy access to play, recreation and walking/cycle linkages'.

Ready for Tomorrow – Gore District Spatial Plan

The spatial plan, Ready for Tomorrow, provides a framework for future development and growth of the district. It defines the place the Gore District could become and gives meaning to the vision for the district, defined through the 'Ready for Growth' project, to "embrace the concept of Rural City Living, to make it the best place in New Zealand to work, visit, and do business". It seeks to provide sufficient land for what may occur and to maximise the choice of locations for investment by business, developers, residents and the wider community.

Ready to Grow – Gore District 10 Year Plan (2021- 2031)

The 2021-2031 10 Year Plan delivers a district-wide average rate increase of 6.42 percent for the 2021/022 financial year. The document outlines key issues from the 10 Year Plan, as well as making the key choices and implications clear to the public. The rationale for this was that by focusing people's attention on the key issues a community faces, and a council's plans to address the issues, the consultation document encourages the right debate with an informed community.

GDC Annual Plan (2020/2021): The purpose of this statement is to disclose the Council's planned financial performance in relation to various benchmarks to enable the assessment of whether the council is prudently managing its revenues, expenses, assets, liabilities, and general financial dealings.

Gore District Welcome Plan (2021-2026)

The aim of this Welcome Plan is to create a realistic and achievable path forward to assist all newcomers to become part of the Gore community. It provides actions for the Gore community to embrace, and be proactive in inviting, those new to the Gore district as well as actions for the newcomers to integrate into the Gore community. This plan serves as a benchmark to assess integration of newcomers to Gore in the future.



Figure 14: Tamariki utilising equipment at East Gore School.

Southland Regional Spaces and Places Te Rautaki o Murihiku

The strategy provides a framework to enable local and regional government, the education sector, funders, national, regional sports organisations and clubs to develop an informed strategic approach in the development of new or upgraded streets and places and management of existing assets.

Our Towns... Our Streets: A Streetscape Strategy for the Gore District

The Streetscape Strategy sets out a framework for the way in which streets and towns are used in the future by identifying deficiencies in the overall structure of roads, assess arising issues, provide direction in response and guide the form of new development that takes place. In achieving this, the GDC seeks to provide and maintain an efficient and appropriate road network while encouraging pleasant cyclable, walkable and playful town centres and neighbourhoods.

Parks, Recreation and Facility Strategy 2013

This Strategy will provide a framework for the preparation of reserve management plans, guidelines for each park category, analyse current and future demand for parks and assess existing land resources.

Gore District Plan

The Gore District Plan is to promote the sustainable management of the district's natural and physical resources.

Charter of Understanding Between Gore District Council and Hokonui Rūnanga 2021

The Charter of Understanding is to facilitate a relationship of mutual benefit between Hokonui and GDC. The purpose of this Charter is to provide a framework so that all parties work together and collaborate in relation to activities and opportunities and respect and acknowledge one another's roles and responsibilities and mana in their respective takiwā. It encourages all parties to collaborate to influence third parties and uphold each other's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi.

What we heard

Throughout our engagement with the community and tamariki we heard a diverse range of concerns and opportunities for play. We consulted with our tamariki and community with a variety of different methods to understand the lived experience of East Gore, the real needs and the suggestions for creating an environment that promotes play for all ages and abilities, throughout the neighbourhood.

Generic suggestions are included on the following pages.

“ More stuff to jump on. ”

“ Trampoline built into the ground. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Figure 15: Consultation with tamariki.



Safety

Tamariki and the community shared their experiences on safety in the neighbourhood.



Figure 16: Wire fence between local park and State Highway 1.



Figure 17: Tamariki insights on Hamilton St road safety between two parks.

“ Alleyways could be improved by removing the glass and bottles and add a concrete path so that wheelchairs would be able to get through. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

“ Safer options to get across the roads, especially over Hamilton Street near the parks. ”

“ I think the 100km sign should be moved back further. ”

“ Cars are travelling too fast, which makes it hard to cross the road. ”

“ Can’t see cars coming, the hill hides the road on Woolwich Street. ”

“has a lot of glass and needs a rubbish bin, but I still go under the bridge as it is safer than crossing the road. ”

“ Improve by tar sealing the road. ”

“ Existing small fences are unsafe for small children especially fences adjacent to main roads. ”

“ Make a crossing across the railway esplanade. ”

Amenities

Tamariki shared their views on amenities within the neighbourhood.



Figure 18: Public toilets and rubbish bin in East Gore.



Figure 19: Tamariki insights for improving green spaces.



Figure 20: Excessive green open space in East Gore that has potential for improved play spaces.

“ The toilet is the first thing people see when stopping and visiting Gore, it is yuck and ugly. ”

“ It will be cool to have BBQ areas and picnic tables at the parks so we can gather with our whānau and friends. ”

“ My whānau would enjoy this place if they added more stuff. Which could be a bathroom, a drinking fountain and more comfortable seats. ”

“ If I am playing I have to go all the way home if I am thirsty or need the toilet. ”

“ The toilet at Hamilton Park is the only public toilet on this side of the bridge. ”

“ Need more rubbish bins. ”

“ Hamilton Park needs more inviting signs to the park. ”

“ Water fountains are great when they are provided. ”

“ This could be improved with colour and locked doors. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Quality of equipment

Tamariki shared their views on the quality of equipment in the neighbourhood.



Figure 21: Areas requiring beautification.



Figure 24: Tamariki enjoying playing in trees at East Gore School.



Figure 22: Play equipment that tamariki have identified as needing improvement.



Figure 23: Ladder access to one of the trees in the neighbourhood that tamariki play on.

“ The equipment is broken and rusty. ”

“ Heaps of wasted space. ”

“ It’s so boring for older kids. ”

“ Could be improved with forts, things to ride, obstacle course with a zip line. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

Accessibility

Tamariki shared their experiences of moving around the neighbourhood and the things that sometimes make this difficult.



Figure 25: Unsafe roads with insufficient signage in East Gore.



Figure 26: Unwelcoming and poorly lit alleyway in East Gore.



Figure 27: Unwelcoming and poorly lit alleyway in East Gore.

“ We should put a better path here so the old people can get to the river.... ”

“ Would be better if there was a swing I could use....with a better path for wheelchair access. ”

“ The current track needs to be less bumpy for people walking or biking, especially if you have a push chair. ”

“ Play areas need to be safe for young and old. ”

“ Add wheelchair access for everyone with a concrete path to the play area. ”

“ When it rains its really wet and I get stuck. ”

“ Need more accessible play equipment e.g. wheelchair swings. ”

“ Fix potholes on BMX track. ”

“ Potholes by the river are frustrating. ”

Feedback from tamariki in engagement session

What does success look like?

Access and movement

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities and their whānau can feel safe and are able to freely access play opportunities in their communities.

What success looks like:

East Gore School	Tamariki attending East Gore School are able to journey safely and independently to and from school. Pedestrian crossings on Wentworth Street provide access to the school during and after hours.
East Gore	Footpaths through the neighbourhood are wide and well maintained to allow for active transport around the school. Street streets, lighting and cycling facilities create a connected network of safe streets throughout East Gore. Traffic calming devices including chicanes and speed restrictions encourage motorists to drive slowly on residential streets. Alleyways provide safe and direct connections, encouraging tamariki to explore the neighbourhood and play on the way opportunities throughout the neighbourhood.
Gore	The city's footpath network is safe and accessible through signage and active transport links, connecting tamariki with play opportunities across the region. Signage reflects the culture and diversity of the city, and tamariki and their whānau are empowered to connect to the broader play network through high quality active transport links.

Built and natural environment

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which local built and natural environments facilitate a variety of play opportunities suitable for tamariki of all ages and abilities and their whānau.

What success looks like:

East Gore School	The built and natural environment at East Gore School is inviting and well maintained for all tamariki. The play space is accessible and features a diverse range of play equipment suitable for all ages and abilities. The field, pump tracks and court are available for adventure play and are age appropriate.
East Gore	Tamariki living in East Gore have access to a diverse range of formal and informal play opportunities across the neighbourhood. Play spaces in the neighbourhoods five parks have diverse high quality and well maintained play equipment. Public spaces are adorned with tamariki artwork, reflecting the neighbourhoods' culture and heritage.
Gore	There is a diverse range of play spaces and play on the way infrastructure across Gore, creating a network of play opportunities connected by safe and accessible active transport routes. Art and stories depicted throughout the city reflect the local natural and cultural heritage.

Awareness and agency

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which play is actively supported and encouraged (through time and permission) by tamariki and their whānau as well as community members, and city authorities.

What success looks like:

East Gore School	Tamariki of all ages are engaged with, encouraging play in the school grounds and when they leave. Play opportunities, including Play Streets and community events, are supported by the school.
East Gore	Community groups champion play in East Gore, developing a play-supportive culture and encouraging the community to access and support local play. This is supported by community partners and leaders including Hokonui Runanga, Community Networking Trust and church representatives.
Gore	GDC is actively championing play throughout the city, working with the community to create play solutions and investing in accessible play infrastructure. A Play Strategy prioritises play and ensures it is embedded in an integrated across other GDC plans and strategies.

Enjoyment

This aspect of the Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint refers to the degree to which tamariki of all ages and abilities with their whānau, continually enjoy their play experiences.

What success looks like:

East Gore School	The East Gore School playground is accessible with play opportunities provided for tamariki of all ages and abilities. Broken equipment is repaired and upgraded quickly. Tamariki are encouraged to explore a diverse range of play activities within the school grounds.
East Gore	The East Gore neighbourhood is a welcoming and inviting place for all tamariki and their whānau, who feel safe exploring the areas around their homes, schools and play spaces.
Gore	Play spaces across Gore reflect the unique cultures and needs of the community, with the stories and mahi toi of the region woven into the urban fabric. Tamariki have access to accessible and safe playgrounds where ever they live.

Opportunities for East Gore

There are a number of opportunities and challenges shaping access to play opportunities for tamariki and whānau living in East Gore. Capitalising on these opportunities and addressing the challenges will require strong governance and local community play champions.

In consultation with Principal Wendy Kitto, the consultation phase was used to identify those that want to be involved and those that have the ability to influence and make things happen. Some key partners were approached individually, like the Council, Police and Runanga and after the mini launch, three attendees approached the Principal offering their support and discounted building supplies.

The establishment of a local steering group in early 2022 will help us navigate the following recommendations for East Gore. These range from simple, quick fixes to new and exciting features.

Championing play

The creation of a Local Steering Group to champion play in 2022 will align with the Commitment of Partnership agreement and provide an opportunity for rangatahi and older community members to voice their opinions. Enabling a 'Let's Talk Play' hui for Council, stakeholders and community early in 2022 will better inform play and clearly communicate the social and developmental benefits of play with all. Working alongside Council, Eastern Active Coordinator and other Southland Territorial Authorities will help to develop and implement a Regional Play Strategy. This provides the opportunity to celebrate play and launch this ongoing initiative with the Southland community, whānau and enablers in 2022.

Furthermore, connectivity and accessibility throughout the neighbourhood could be enhanced through the application of wayfinding techniques directed at tamariki, particularly between the established play spaces in the local parks. The walkable journey itself offers opportunity to play, through interactions with the built and natural environment. Developing this, through the use of engaging wayfinding and interactive design that reflects Te Ao Māori narratives for the area could encourage tamariki and whānau to roam independently through the neighbourhood as they access static play spaces. This also promotes play conversations within the community. This would need to include consideration of safety issues in the neighbourhood, such as the need for a crossing between Oxford Street Park and Hamilton Street Recreation Reserve, to ensure whānau are confident in supporting independent mobility of their tamariki.



Figure 28: Supporting whānau and community members.

Work and leverage off partnerships with enablers

Enabling play opportunities in Gore can be supported by leveraging off partnerships with enablers such as Waka Kotahi, GDC, connecting with the local Hokonui Runanga and establishing new partner opportunities with Tū Manawa Active Aotearoa, Mataura Licensing Trust and Community Trust Southland that will help utilise relevant funding streams to support projected work. Building on and enhancing these connections and relationships will determine the success and exposure of play opportunities in the neighbourhood.

Working alongside these partnerships will help update plans and frameworks to better implement play in statutory documents. Addressing areas of concern in the Network Operating Framework, One Network Framework, GDC Welcome Plan Draft and 10 Year Plan will guide opportunities in play for tamariki and whānau living in East Gore.

Addressing safety and accessibility for independent movement in East Gore include ensuring locations cater to the tamariki. Speed reductions on busy arterial roads, crossings on Hamilton Street and traffic calming mechanisms will improve journey experience for all. This is also through creating playful areas that promote active transport such as walking and cycling.

Paramount to the success of the Neighbourhood Play System is including residents and community groups in the design and decision-making process. Although play is not explicitly mentioned in the GDC 10 Year Plan, making sure the outcomes align with play opportunities will enable residents to live in a creative place with choice of quality places to go and things to do as well as valuing and respecting the environment.

As East Gore is the first part of Gore you are introduced to, there is great opportunity to enable a more welcoming neighbourhood that builds on the universal social language and increase community exposure. Implementing a wholesome and exciting first impression of the area can be supported by Council plans and strategies.

It is fundamentally important to encourage Te Ao Māori perspective and approach throughout the neighbourhood. Establishing a strong relationship with Council and other key enablers, particularly with the recent Charter of Understanding, will promote cultural diversity and appropriation through artwork, colourful streets and bridge the cultural gap in East Gore.

Improve the quality of current conditions and work towards new amenities

Improved wayfinding for tamariki to connect and orientate themselves in the neighbourhood and identify known areas for play. Incorporating art and murals along alleyways to and from school, implementing signage and concrete paint so that tamariki can easily access public green spaces and play areas will help improve current conditions in East Gore.

Improving playground equipment, beautifying the environment, installing multi-generational play spaces and using existing green spaces will provide tamariki opportunities to thrive in their communities and inhabit a better sense of belonging. Improving play space amenities such as park benches, picnic spaces, tables, BBQ areas, better utilised drinking fountains, rubbish bins and public toilets play a fundamental role in facilitating comfort and experience in these areas.

Activate new opportunities

Many of the opportunities established require little or no resources to activate while others require long-term solutions and resources. The big-ticket items include play policies and procedures with GDC and the other Territorial Authorities in Southland, sheltered play areas, fitness tracks/ obstacle courses, basketball courts and hoops and more from the consultations.



Figure 29: Facing low staff numbers due to covid, East Gore senior classes embark on an inquiry about East Gore green spaces.



Figure 30: EGS tamariki during site walks to local parks.



Figure 31: The Maitai river in East Gore.

What this means

Implementation

This desktop analysis pulls together the framing and engaging stage of the co-design process and Let's Talk Play section of the Blueprint.

The next steps in testing the East Gore Neighbourhood Play System Blueprint involves continuing to consult with our tamariki on making sure connectivity and accessibility throughout the neighbourhood are integral. This could be done through enhanced wayfinding techniques directed at tamariki, particularly between the established play spaces in local parks. Establishing improved amenities will also reflect Te Ao Māori narratives for the area and encourage tamariki to roam independently through the neighbourhood.

Championing play is key to welcoming and increasing awareness of the possibilities of play in East Gore, providing ideas outside the current scope of governing agencies, whānau and tamariki. With the expansion of play diversity from just playgrounds, it allows whānau and tamariki the ability to create time to choose how and where they want to play with each other and their neighbours. This also enables regional leadership to include play for all ages and abilities into their decision making and policies.

Many of our opportunities can be executed by our partners on projects they already have in the pipeline. Our role will be to provide a play lens during the decision making and planning. Conversations around safety and crossings have already started, however our influence will be on meaningful placement to benefit the whānau and tamariki on East Gore.

Next steps

Now

- Play on the way.
- Community launch at school to activate play
- Steering group
- Lets talk play
- Welcoming signage
- Active Transport supported by school, ie: walking bus.

New

- Cycle bridge build
- Crossings over busy roads (Railway Esplanade, Hamilton)
- Reduce traffic speed (reducing speed limit, narrowing roads)
- Themed intergenerational play spaces
- Connecting play spaces
- Obstacle course/fitness track
- Places of gathering
- Sheltered play spaces
- Sealed walking and biking tracks off the road.

Next

- Reimagining green spaces for play and whānau gatherings (toilets, seating, picnic tables, drinking fountains, bike stand, BBQ areas, benches, rubbish bins. More engaging and inviting, space awareness)
- Play from a disability perspective
- Play from a wheels perspective (prams, wheelchairs, scooters, mobility scooters)
- Play for young and old (8-80 city)
- Work with council on play policies and procedures.

Timeline

This timeline takes into consideration immediately actionable steps, seasonal busyness, and prior planning and guidance from steering group.

Date	Funding available and immediately actionable by AS and EGS	Requiring external funding and steering group guidance
Jan 2022	Steering group invitation/formation.	
Feb 2022	Lets Talk Play hui: GDC and community, Play on the way Hui, Play Activation	General clean up, alleyway clean up and paint, bins, benches, picnic tables, fruit trees, gardens/ flowers, welcome signs, selecting various play themes.
March 2022	Community launch, Active Transport, Increasing knowledge of various play themes, funding applications.	
April 2022	Policies: 8-80 city, Play policies and procedures with Council, Plan for summer activations.	Rugby posts (school), basketball hoops (school).
May-Sept 2022		
Oct 2022		Wheels access, toilets, sealed tracks, trampoline, introduce various play themes, fitness track, places to gather, BBQ areas, fencing around current green spaces.
Nov-Dec 2022		
Date estimation unknown	Cycle bridge, crossings, speed reduction.	



Figure 32: Gore and the Hokonui hills.



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