



South Taranaki District Council

# DRAFT Open Space Strategy

Prepared by the Community Partnerships Unit  
September 2014

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank all the participants in the nine Community Focus Groups who assisted with the research for this strategy. Your local knowledge about the history of our communities and the changes that are happening today was a vital part of understanding our changing needs and interpreting statistics.

Also thank you to the Community Board members and Councillors who shared their local knowledge, checking property details, providing names for focus groups, and picking up on gaps in our research.

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# OPEN SPACE AND ACTIVE RECREATION STRATEGY

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## FOREWORD

The South Taranaki District offers a diverse environment, from Mount Taranaki to the Tasman Sea. Inherent in this diversity is a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities and different kinds of open space that contribute to the unique character and identity of the District. Adventure areas, places for quiet reflection, sports grounds, public gathering spaces, informal recreation areas and places set aside for the protection of flora, fauna and cultural heritage are all found in South Taranaki.

The challenge for our Council is to develop a strategy which takes into account the diversity and individual needs and strengths of our communities. The number of small communities spread over a wide geographical area mean accessibility and affordability are major challenges; how to provide the best possible range of active recreational options in the most cost effective way.

### The Purpose of the Open Space and Active Recreation Strategy

This Strategy will guide the way current and future open spaces in South Taranaki are provided, developed, managed and funded. It also acknowledges the benefits derived from regular sport and active living participation – the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

#### The Strategy has been undertaken in four parts:

- **Our Open Spaces Today:** A review of the types, quantity and location of our open spaces today, and how they are used.
- **Our Future:** Considering the diversity and aspirations of our communities and how our needs and use of open space may change in the future. Identifying gaps in the provision and protection of open space required to meet the long term needs of the District.
- **Open Space Principles:** The development of a set of principles to guide how our spaces are maintained, developed, protected and funded. These principles will assist with decision making as the Council balances its responsibility to deliver services in the most cost effective way with consideration of the needs of people and our responsibility to care for the environment – the underlying reasons for the provision of open space.
- **Action Plans:** This section includes action plans to address gaps where a proactive approach is appropriate to achieve our long term needs and aspirations.

## BACKGROUND

### What is Open Space and Why is it Important?

Open spaces are areas of land to which the public has a relatively free right of access. They can serve a variety of purposes from recreation, amenity and preservation to providing and being part of views, protecting significant landscapes, sites and community identities, and providing a focal point for a local area. The different types of open space and the combination of these spaces make up the open space network.

The Council is not the sole provider of open space in the District, but it plays by far the main role. Sports fields, passive parks, playgrounds and beautification areas are not provided by other sectors solely for public enjoyment. Golf courses, schools, and sometimes public buildings such as cafes provide attractive open space that may not be fully accessible to the public, but do enhance the visual environment. In these cases, open space is a by-product of the land's main purpose.

The focus of this strategy is on Council-owned or managed land and facilities; however it is recognised that private land also makes a significant contribution to our open space resources and networks.

Active recreation facilities, for the purposes of this strategy, are the specially-constructed and maintained sports fields and outdoor courts that are, or can be, used for organised sports fixtures.

### Open Space Vision

**We have accessible Open Spaces that are enjoyed by our people, support the health and wellbeing of our communities and enhance our environment**

### Community Wellbeing

**Open spaces make an important contribution to the wellbeing of our District.**

#### **Economic Wellbeing**

Our open spaces contribute to recreation and tourism by providing venues for events and destinations for visitors. They add to the visual appeal and value of town centres and suburban communities, and help to attract business and investment. They enhance the lives of residents and assist in retaining our population and attracting people to our District.

#### **Cultural Wellbeing**

Our open spaces help to define the individual character of communities. Many of our heritage sites and cultural facilities are located on, or enhanced by open spaces. Many of these sites mark the presence of tangata whenua (people of the land) and hold kōrero (traditional narratives) which contribute to the rich history of the District. They enhance the cultural wellbeing of the District and provide educational opportunities for the entire community.

## Environmental Wellbeing

Our open spaces contribute to the protection and enhancement of our landscape and provide visual contrast to the built environment. They provide habitats for indigenous flora and fauna and help to mitigate the impacts of development and climate change.

## Social Wellbeing

Our open spaces support the health and wellbeing of communities by providing areas for physical recreation and relaxation, meeting places and spaces for social activities and events. This in turn helps to develop civic pride and reduce negative behaviour through access to sports and play areas and community gardens and plantings.

## Tangata Whenua Relationship with Open Space

South Taranaki District is home to four prominent Iwi: Taranaki, whose boundaries stretch around Cape Egmont into the New Plymouth District and circle the mountain to the west and north. Nga Ruahine, around the south and east of the mountain and including the coastal plain between Opunake and Hawera. Ngati Ruanui extends from Stratford south to the coast and east to the Patea River; Ngaa Rauru from the Whenuakura River east into the Whanganui District and the land between the Whenuakura and Patea Rivers is territory shared between these two Iwi. **These descriptive boundaries are indicative only and are more accurately represented in the map below.**

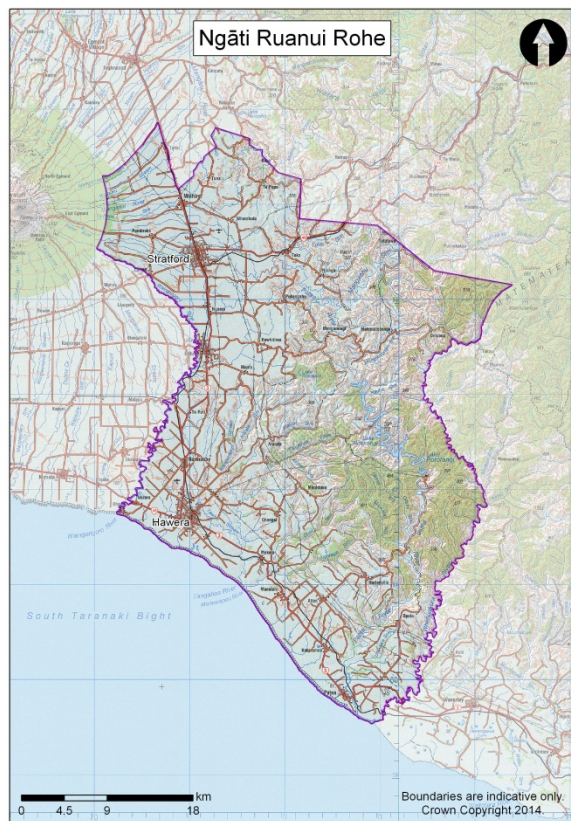
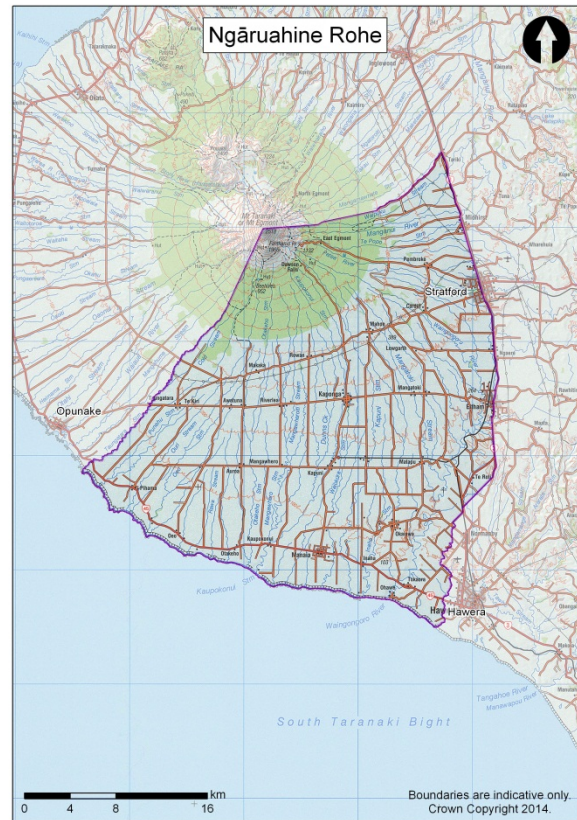
The tangata whenua of South Taranaki have strong spiritual bonds to the land, which provides an important part of the identity of each Iwi. The land and water are considered taonga (treasures) and the four Iwi are kaitiaki (guardians) of that taonga. This responsibility provides a source of tribal unity between the four Iwi. They work together to protect that taonga, ensuring that tikanga (customary rights, values and practices) are considered in decision making.

The role of Iwi is intrinsic in planning for our open spaces and that role is acknowledged throughout this Strategy, recognising their special interests and the need to be included in planning and decision making processes which may impact on sites and landscapes of cultural significance.

The Council recognises the benefits of protecting important cultural sites and landscapes and must be responsive to the possible threats of public access and certain activities to wāhi tapu and culturally sensitive sites.



Iwi Areas of Interest Maps – provided by the Office of Treaty Settlements August 2014





## Council's Role in Open Space

The South Taranaki District Council regards the provision of open space as an integral part of its responsibilities. Its roles in respect of open space include:

<b>Owner</b>	<p>The provision, development and maintenance of open space are core parts of the Council's business.</p> <p>Council acquires land for reserves through subdivision and development processes. The Council can purchase or lease land for specific open space purposes and may also lease land <u>to</u> user groups for sporting or recreational purposes.</p> <p>The Council also holds land for use for other purposes such as water and wastewater treatment, but which could be used for open space purposes.</p>
<b>Partner</b>	<p>The Council can, and does, engage in partnerships with other agencies and groups to provide or enhance open space or to make the optimum use of space. An example of an existing partnership is the Rotokare Scenic Reserve. Council's contributions to partnerships can include land, funding, expertise, administration and governance.</p>
<b>Manager</b>	<p>A significant amount of the open space under the Council's control is owned by the Crown. These areas are reserves for a variety of purposes that are either vested in the Council or it has been appointed to control and manage them under the Reserves Act 1977. Whether open space is owned or administered by the Council, it has a duty to manage these spaces responsibly by planning for the future and maintaining the land and facilities to an appropriate standard. The Council also regulates and supports activities occurring in open space areas.</p>
<b>Protector</b>	<p>Legislation, particularly the Reserves Act 1977, the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act 1991, constrains and prescribes the Council's actions with regard to open space. It also provides mechanisms for protecting the community from the loss of open space without proper consultation processes, and from inappropriate development of open space.</p>
<b>Advocate</b>	<p>The Council can advocate the importance of open space to the community through strategic documents, plans and publications, and it can advocate to regional and central government agencies on behalf of the community through submissions and negotiations.</p>
<b>Researcher and Planner</b>	<p>On-going research and planning ensures that the open space network meets community needs now and for future generations, and ensures that the Council's plans are responsive to people's changing needs and preferences. Planning also involves monitoring demographic and social changes and urban growth, and assessing this information to amend strategies and plans if necessary.</p>

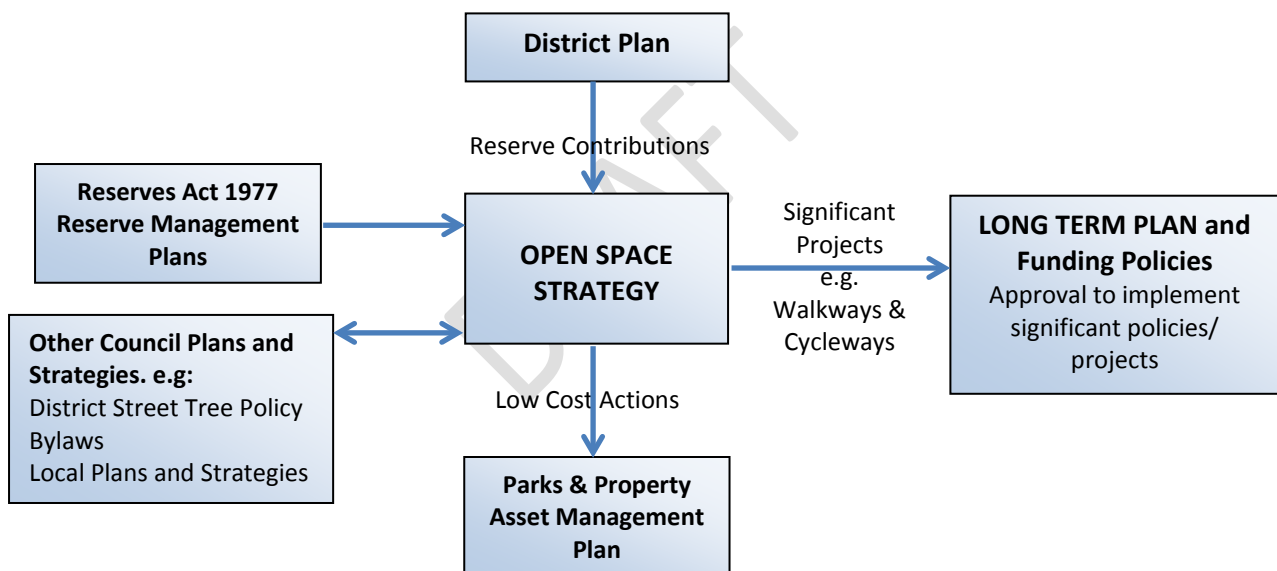
## Links to Other Documents and Plans

The preparation of this strategy is one example of how the Council plans open space, along with asset management plans and reserve management plans. Each has a different focus – reserve management plans deal mostly with reserve land and provide strategies for continued compliance with the Reserves Act, while asset management plans detail how built assets will be managed throughout their useful lives and beyond. Both specify how open space will be managed and developed.

This strategy is intended to sit above those documents as a ‘broad brush’ overview that will guide more detailed plans and special projects such as the Walkways and Cycleways Strategy. The Principles and Action Plans included in this document will be reflected in the Asset Management Plan and service levels.

Combined, they ensure that open space is appropriately provided, funded, distributed, developed and managed.

**The Open Space Strategy also influences and has links to other Council and external documents.**



## COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

### The District Plan

The District Plan manages land use activities on the basis of their effects on the environment including open space and the permitted uses for it. The District Plan could be used to identify and protect future open space and can provide for the taking of reserve contributions or esplanade strips as a part of the approval process for new developments.

The Operative South Taranaki District Plan is being reviewed in 2014/15, and some actions proposed in the Open Space Strategy, such as the identification of available open space could impact on the District Plan.

### **Asset Management Plans**

Asset Management Plans describe the current condition of the asset, the desired levels of service and a lifecycle management plan to maintain those levels of service. Council has prepared asset management plans for all of its major assets including parks and open spaces. How the Council assesses changes to demand, levels of service and how the maintenance, renewal and replacement of assets are undertaken is described in the Parks and Property Asset Management Plan.

The Open Space Strategy is a guiding document that helps to ensure that the planned use and levels of service detailed in Asset Management Plans are consistent with community aspirations for that specific type of public space.

### **Long Term Plan/Annual Plan**

The Local Government Act 2002 requires the Council to produce a Long Term Plan and an Annual Plan in consultation with residents. The Long Term Plan identifies the community's vision for the future and the planned work of the Council for the following ten years. The Annual Plan covers all of the work Council is planning to undertake in the coming year together with approved budgets.

### **Other Council Documents**

- Hawera Town Centre Strategy
- Walkways and Cycleways Strategy – under development
- Reserve Management Plans
- Infrastructure Strategy – to be developed.
- 2009 Active Recreation Strategy – this strategy was reviewed as a part of the Open Space Strategy development and will be superseded by this document.
- 2013 Playground Review
- Bylaws – Dog Control Bylaw
  - Public Places Bylaws (covers freedom camping)
- District Street Tree Policy
- Local Plans and Strategies, e.g. Opunake Northern Headland Development Plan

## **EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS**

### **The Reserves Act 1977**

The main emphasis of the Reserves Act 1977 is to protect reserve land and ensure it is available for public use and enjoyment. The Act provides procedures for preparing management plans, revoking reserve status, exchanging reserve land for other land and dealing with applications for easements, leases, licences and concessions. It sets out the Council's obligations as an administering body, and the right of the public to be consulted and have their comments heard.

Section 41 of the Reserves Act 1977 requires councils to prepare Reserve Management Plans for reserves under their control, management or administration.

Reserve management plans provide for the planned use, maintenance, protection and preservation of reserves at a higher level than asset management plans. The Open Space Strategy influences reserve management plans by summarising community expectations or needs for open space which, in turn, can determine the planned use, levels of service and protection of existing reserves or future reserve acquisitions and disposals.

## Other External Documents

- Local Government Act 2002
- Resource Management Act 1991
- South Taranaki Iwi Environmental Plans and Strategies
- New Zealand Recreation Association – Parks Categories and Levels of Service
- CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
- Taranaki Regional Council Regional Coastal Plan (1997) – *under review*
- Department of Conservation Track Standards
- New Zealand Outdoor Access Code
- Other Regional and National walking and cycling policies and guidelines



## OUR OPEN SPACES TODAY

The New Zealand Recreation Association (NZRA) developed a framework for the planning and management of parks in June 2011. The framework divides public open spaces into eight categories and presents a guide for the provision and levels of service for each category. This document has been used as a guide in the presentation and analysis of South Taranaki's open spaces.

The NZRA Framework divides public open spaces into the following categories.

Park Category	Description/Primary Purpose
<b>Sport &amp; Recreation</b>	Sport and recreation activity, recreation facilities and buildings, often multiple use
<b>Neighbourhood Parks</b>	Local, informal recreation, play and amenity space
<b>Public Gardens</b>	Horticultural collections for relaxation/contemplation, education and/or amenity
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	Protection of cultural and historical environments including structures, to provide for commemoration, mourning and experience of our history. <i>See full description pg 17</i>
<b>Civic Space</b>	Social and community open space and events
<b>Natural Parks</b>	Experience and/or protection of the natural environment: native bush, coastal, forestry, farm parks, wetlands and water bodies
<b>Outdoor Adventure</b>	Recreation activities and built facilities, requiring a large scale non-urban environment.
<b>Recreation and Ecological Linkages</b>	Open space, linkages and corridors, water margins

Most of South Taranaki's Council-owned open spaces fit into one of the above categories, and some fit into more than one. Some areas do not fit into the above categories and are not currently used as open space, although potentially they could be. There are also properties which are unlikely to fulfil any useful purpose and could be considered for disposal. An 'Other' category is used in this plan to include all of these areas.

The NZRA framework includes a catchment hierarchy that indicates significance and community of interest, as shown below.

Catchment Level	Name	Description
<b>1</b>	<b>Local</b>	Serves immediate local area. Generally accessed by walking.
<b>2</b>	<b>Community/Suburban</b>	Serves local community or town. Access by walking, bike or car.
<b>3</b>	<b>City/District Wide</b>	Serves the whole city or district. Access by driving or public transport.
<b>4</b>	<b>Region</b>	Serves the entire region comprising several cities or districts. Access by driving or public transport.

The catchment hierarchy is a tool which can help to guide the levels of service for individual spaces. For example, spaces that serve the needs of the District or Region are more likely to have higher levels of use or require facilities such as toilets, shelters, visitor information or interpretational signage.

Examples of the various categories and catchments in South Taranaki include:

Category	Catchment Level	Park/Open Space Area
Sport and Recreation	Region	Hicks Park, Hawera
Neighbourhood Park / Public Gardens / Cultural Heritage	District	King Edward Park
Neighbourhood Parks	Local	Manchester Street Playground, Patea
Natural Parks	Region	Rotokare Scenic Reserve
Cultural Heritage	Community	Manaia Roundabout Gardens
Cultural Heritage	Region	Te Ngutu-o-te-Manu
Civic Space	Community/Suburban	Hawera Town Square
Civic Space	District	Memorial Gardens, Patea
Recreation & Ecological Linkages	Region	Lake Rotorangi Esplanade Reserves
Recreation & Ecological Linkages	Local	Scott Street Walkway, Hawera

## WHERE IS OUR OPEN SPACE?

The District's provision of open space is summarised below, based on the NZRA categories and descriptions.

### Sport and Recreation

#### **NZRA Description**

*A Sport and Recreation Park is designed and used for sports and recreation and is often multi-use, providing for a range of community activities and facilities. It is likely to have well maintained sports turf for a mixture of winter and/or summer sport. The sports turf areas are maintained to an appropriate standard for the sports code use. It may accommodate hard court and built recreation facilities. Toilets, changing facilities and car parking are likely to be available and some may have resident club facilities.*

*Some parks may have recreation facilities such as playgrounds and other facilities serving other neighbourhood and community functions. Some parks may be entirely leased for sport or recreation activity. The determining factor is the provision of bookable sports play facilities which are the primary purpose of the park.*

The majority of our spaces for outdoor sporting activities were set aside by the various borough and county councils prior to amalgamation into the South Taranaki District in 1989. These areas were developed to meet the needs of the strong rural communities of the time, and with expectations of future growth. The total area of open space currently maintained for sports and recreational use in each ward is listed in the table below.

SPORT & RECREATION	EGMONT PLAINS WARD	ELTHAM WARD	HAWERA/TANGAHOE WARD	PATEA WARD
Area (Ha)	18.08	10.94	20.77	3.61

Of the four wards, Hawera / Tangahoe has the largest area in use for turf and outdoor court sports, which is to be expected with the largest concentration of population. These are in two locations, at Hicks Park adjacent to the TSB Hub and Turuturu Road where additional fields are required to

accommodate high use for winter turf sports. The area in use in Egmont Plains is only slightly smaller, with fields and courts located in smaller rural communities as well as the urban centres of Opunake and Manaia. These additional fields and courts, while owned by the Council, are maintained by the user groups.

In the Patea Ward the total area in use is much smaller; however there are no concerns about the amount of space available. Both Patea and Waverley communities have additional fields that have been retired through lack of demand but could be reinstated should demand increase. Both communities are working toward concentrating sporting and recreational activities on single locations and benefiting from the increased use and sharing of facilities.

In the Eltham Ward the total area available is larger than in Patea. However the grounds are divided over four locations, limiting opportunities for multiple use. This challenge is compounded by drainage issues which restrict the frequency of use of some fields. There have been no tennis courts in Eltham since the late 1990s when the local tennis club that owned the courts wound up.

Town/Area	Sports Field (ha)	Tennis Courts (No.)	Netball Courts (No.)
Warea	0	2	0
Rahotu	4.5554	0	0
Opunake	3.5363	2	0
Pihama	1.3421	4	0
Manaia	6.3738	8	0
Kaponga	4.2692	4	0
Eltham	5.6479	0	0
Te Ngutu-o-te Manu	0	2	0
Hawera	16.6875	9	6
Normanby	2.076	0	0
Patea	1.8974	3	0
Waverley	1.4312	3	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47.6642</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>9</b>

Rationalisation within sporting codes and emergence of new activities has resulted in a wide range of catchment areas, as participants choose to travel to neighbouring communities and even districts which offer the types of activities they are interested in, or at times that suit their lifestyle. The construction of indoor facilities in Hawera and Opunake has added to that mix, providing a new range of evening and midweek options. To some extent this can result in better use of space and quality as different communities become the 'centres' for different sports, for example, rugby at Rahotu and tennis at Manaia. In some cases this is a practical solution where the cost of facilities requires a central location, such as hockey in neighbouring Stratford. In others it is based on strong leadership and community support, which means there are risks as key people move on and groups become less sustainable.

## Neighbourhood Parks and Public Gardens

### **NZRA Description – Neighbourhood Parks**

*A developed urban park designed for use by the local residential community, generally smaller in size, ranging from 1,000m<sup>2</sup> up to 2 hectares. The average useful size is considered to be from 3,000 to 5,000m<sup>2</sup>.*

*Neighbourhood Parks should be easily accessible, ideally from more than one road frontage. They should be well maintained, free draining with flat or gently undulating grassed areas; be safe; and provide an attractive welcoming ambience to the immediate local community. They may provide open grass areas suitable for small scale ball play, children’s play equipment, youth recreation facilities e.g. basketball half courts, seating, amenity lighting, paths and attractive amenity planting.*

### **NZRA Description – Public Gardens**

*Public Gardens include parks that are of significance to the city/district with an emphasis on horticultural displays.*

*The primary focus for Public Gardens is to create a place of beauty and tranquillity through high quality horticultural design and maintenance and other features as appropriate to the park’s character. They often may contain heritage values. They will include but are not limited to Botanic gardens. They will generally exhibit one or more of the following attributes:*

- *Peace and tranquillity*
- *Horticultural excellence and diversity*
- *Tourist destination*
- *Particular unique features or character*
- *Historic, artistic or cultural values*
- *Horticultural and/or environmental education*

For the purposes of this strategy Neighbourhood Parks and Public Gardens have been combined in a single category. In South Taranaki only King Edward Park would currently meet the definition of a public garden, but this is also a valuable neighbourhood park, is home to important heritage objects and fills a function as a civic space in providing a venue for regular community events. As a result of this combination of values King Edward Park is acknowledged by the Council as the District’s Premier Park.

The table below provides a summary of the number and total area of land in use for neighbourhood parks and public gardens.

<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Opunake</b>	<b>Manaia</b>	<b>Kaponga</b>	<b>Eltham</b>	<b>Normanby</b>	<b>Hawera</b>	<b>Patea</b>	<b>Waverley</b>
Number	2	2	2	2	2	11	2	2
Area (Ha)	0.9131	0.2893	0.196	0.9277	0.4553	7.7568	0.2645	0.9084

As with Sport and Recreation areas, the majority of the District’s Parks and Gardens were set aside by previous borough and county councils and reflect the needs and interests of those communities. The NZRA Framework provides guidelines for levels of service and facilities that may be included in these locations. These levels are a guide, and suggest a range of services and facilities which *could be* included in each park. In reality only a small number of our parks and gardens would offer the higher level of services and facilities suggested; however in most cases they are appropriate for the needs of the communities in which they are located.



For example, the NZRA Framework suggests that neighbourhood parks should be a minimum of 3,000m<sup>2</sup> with a preferred size of 5000m<sup>2</sup>. In the case of South Taranaki, only the following five parks would meet that size criteria. These are Bridger Park in Eltham (7,100m<sup>2</sup>), King Edward Park (25,000m<sup>2</sup> – 2.5ha), Tower Grounds (6,103m<sup>2</sup>), Naumai Park (25,400m<sup>2</sup> – 2.54ha) and Beech Place (6,601m<sup>2</sup>), all located in Hawera.

Three of the four Hawera parks are centrally located, well utilised and fit for purpose; however the Beech Place park is a large grass area with no improvements and of minimal value to the community in its current form.

In addition to the five parks of recommended size, 19 smaller neighbourhood parks throughout the District are enjoyed by local communities and are of an appropriate size for their needs. There are an additional 11 children's playgrounds which have been located on areas primarily used for other purposes. For example the sports fields at Victoria Park in Kaponga, Aotea Park in Waverley and the reserve at Kaupokonui Beach all have playgrounds. The Council has also jointly funded playgrounds in partnership with schools in two communities where these locations are the most appropriate for local needs.

## Natural Areas

### **NZRA Description**

*The primary purpose of Natural Parks is to provide opportunities for people to experience nature. The definition is widely defined to include: native bush areas, wetlands, coastal and lake margins, forestry, farm parks, esplanade and restoration areas or other natural landscapes.*

South Taranaki has a diverse landscape, ranging from the slopes of Mount Taranaki to the eastern hill country and bordered by 140 kilometres of coastline. The variety and size of Council-owned natural open spaces in each of our four wards reflects this diversity, the extent to which the land has been developed, and the ecological value of the remaining natural areas.

For example, the inland Eltham ward is home to the 230 hectare Lake Rotokare Scenic Reserve with its lake, wetlands, and native forest protected by a pest excluder fence and providing a unique habitat for indigenous species. There are three smaller bush reserves – Campbells Bush on Sangster Road, Rukumoana Reserve and Glen Nui Reserve at Lake Rotorangi – and a small urban reserve cared for by Forest and Bird on Clifford Road.

Egmont Plains has over 70km of coastline and all of the Council-owned natural areas are coastal. These include beachfronts and esplanade strips from Paora Road in the north to Kaupokonui Beach in the South. Of particular significance is the 16 hectare Tai Road reserve at Oaonui which is a nesting site for the New Zealand Dotterel and the Black-backed Gull.

In the Patea/Waverley ward, the publicly accessible natural open spaces are also all located along the coast with reserves at Mana Bay, Beach Road and Rakaupiko Bay around Patea, and Waverley and Waiinu Beaches. This includes part of the Nukumaru Domain where the coastal dunes are important habitats for native birds and migrant species, and a number of threatened species of coastal fauna.

The Hawera/Tangahoe Ward has a shorter, 20km of coastline with access limited by rugged cliffs and a landscape dominated by farmland – dairying closer to the coast and sheep and beef in the steeper

backcountry. The only accessible natural area owned by the Council in the Hawera / Tangahoe ward is the 4.7 hectare Waihi Beach Reserve.

	EGMONT PLAINS WARD	ELTHAM WARD	HAWERA/TANGAHOE WARD	PATEA WARD
Number	11	5	1	7
Natural Areas (ha)	45.08	241.7088	4.7525	125.6561

In addition to the Council-owned reserves there are a number of significant natural areas, mainly wetlands, protected by local landowners; however these are not generally accessible to the public. There are some exceptions, a significant example being Nowells Lakes to the south of Hawera, where a partnership between local industry and community volunteers is helping to re-establish natural flora and fauna. The walkway around this developing area is helping to fill a need for access to the natural environment for Hawera residents and visitors, and is a great example of what can be achieved through partnerships.

## Cultural Heritage

### NZRA Description

The primary purpose of Cultural Heritage areas is to protect our history. They will generally exhibit one or more of the following values and attributes:

- Historic and cultural heritage sites and features e.g. pa sites.
- Historic buildings or structures
- Monuments
- Cemeteries, including both open and closed cemeteries

There are 15 Council-owned open spaces with a primary purpose of cultural heritage, 13 of which are cemeteries. The exceptions are the Manaia Band Rotunda and the Garden of Tutunui in Patea. Other cultural and heritage sites and objects located on Council-owned open spaces are primarily used for other purposes. Some are structures whose value is clearly evident, for example the monuments in King Edward Park, Hawera and the Canoe of Turi in the Memorial Gardens, Patea. Others, and in particular, sites of significance to tangata whenua, are not always marked and provide opportunities for restoration and enhancement to protect and promote awareness of our history.

In 2014 an additional 2 sites; Te Ngutu-o-te Manu, which, while providing an open space suitable for recreation, is primarily valued as an historic site, and a dye reserve on upper Arawhata Road which protects a source of dye for traditional Maori crafts, were offered back to Ngaruahine and Taranaki Iwi as part of the Treaty Settlement process.



## Outdoor Adventure

### **NZRA Description**

*Outdoor Adventure Parks enable visitors to experience a variety of recreation activities in a wide range of open space environments.*

*Outdoor Adventure Parks will generally be large sites, usually located on the outskirts of urban areas. The character and management of the parks varies widely, from exotic forestry, farm parks, native bush, coastal and river areas. The recreation activities include those that require space and separation from urban locations or require particular natural features. Examples include mountain biking, equestrian, rock climbing, wind sports, motorised recreation, camping, walking/tramping, picnicking, hunting, canoeing /kayaking etc.*

There are no Council owned Outdoor Adventure Parks provided by the South Taranaki District Council. We do however, have access to extensive areas of native bush, rivers and coastline which provide opportunities for tramping, hunting, canoeing/kayaking, climbing, surfing, wind sport and off road motor sport events. These include Egmont National Park in the north, Lake Rotorangi, the Matemateonga Range and the Waitotara Forest to the east. The Tarere and Rimunui forests border the lower reaches of the Patea River below the dam, and inland from Waverley are the Moumahaki lakes and hill country extending through to the Waitotara River.

## Civic Spaces

### **NZRA Description**

*Open spaces provided within central business districts or other retail/business areas, designed to provide a space for casual gatherings, meetings, relaxation, lunchtime etc. They may also provide for large public gatherings, events and entertainment. Civic spaces also provide landscape, amenity enhancement and visual open space relief.*

Provision of spaces in town centres where land is at a premium is challenging and, during the urban upgrade programmes which began around 1999, a number of communities took that opportunity to make strategic purchases or negotiate land swaps to enhance their town centres. Through these urban upgrade processes, most communities also created opportunities for social interaction and visual relief by incorporating areas of seating and planting within the streetscape. These informal areas complement larger spaces and, in some smaller towns, are sufficient to meet the community's needs for civic space.

	<b>EGMONT PLAINS WARD</b>	<b>ELTHAM WARD</b>	<b>HAWERA/TANGAHOE WARD</b>	<b>PATEA WARD</b>
Number	1	1	2	2
Civic Spaces (ha)	0.0111	0.0569	0.1396	0.3278

There are only six civic spaces located throughout the District and these are generally appropriate in size and location for the needs of their communities. Only one, the Memorial Gardens in Patea, is of a size suitable for large public gatherings and is home to Pae Pae, the annual Waitangi Day celebration. In Eltham, Stark Park, located adjacent to Bridger Park, is an excellent example of linking a civic space and a neighbourhood park to provide an attractive multi-use area for recreation and community events.

In Hawera, the town square provides a venue for entertainment, small events and a weekly market; however space is limited and this restricts opportunities to add value to the business, social and cultural environment.

## Recreation and Ecological Linkages

**NZRA Description**  
*Recreation and Ecological Linkages cover a wide range of purposes, from developed areas with mown grass and trees through to undeveloped green areas. They provide an important role in meeting sustainability objectives through protection and enhancement of biodiversity, ecological linkages through the urban environment, urban form and landscape values and opportunities for walking and cycle linkages.*

*They may provide walkway / transport linkages between neighbourhoods or to link parks together. They may be based on geographic features within the urban environment, where buildings are not possible e.g. streams, gullies, drainage areas or steep hillsides.*

*Generally ecological linkages will have a low level of development, except where usage and demand warrants it. This may include tracks, park furniture and signage.*

In South Taranaki there is a total of 341 hectares of land providing recreational or ecological linkages, the majority of which are undeveloped esplanade reserves and riverbank, lakeside or coastal strips whose primary value is the preservation of biodiversity and providing access to recreational areas.

	EGMONT PLAINS WARD	ELTHAM WARD	HAWERA/TANGAHOE WARD	PATEA WARD
Number	25	15	16	12
Hectares	34.2263	103.6180	152.9252	50.80217

A small number of these areas have been developed by local communities as walkways, including the Opunake Lake and Coastal Walkways, the Patea River Walkway, the Scott Street Walkway in Hawera and the Soldiers Park Walkway in Eltham.

In some communities the opportunity to create networks and links between town centres and special areas was considered during their urban upgrade processes. Examples are Opunake and Patea where pathway development and greening of routes was used to encourage walking to local beaches.

With an increasing demand for walkways and cycleways throughout the District it is likely that some of these areas will be considered for development in the future.

South Taranaki has a strong surfing, boating and fishing culture, and public concerns around access to beaches, surf breaks and other areas for water related recreation have been an on-going issue. The Council’s existing policy is to maintain or improve access and continue to build a network of esplanade strips. This is achieved through a requirement to provide access routes or esplanade strips as a part of any land subdivision.

## Other

This category includes other Council-owned open spaces that do not fit within any of the categories described in the New Zealand Recreation Association framework. The 'Other' category has been subdivided into five sub-categories, as follows:

### 1. Properties Used for Recreation/Open Space Purposes but not Freely Accessible or Saleable

These properties are currently used for recreation but most are not freely accessible to the general public. They include bowling club grounds, golf courses and a racecourse. Some are areas of open space that are not owned by the Council, e.g. areas of rail reserve leased by the Council for beautification purposes.

OTHER 1	Egmont Plains	Eltham	Hawera/Tangahoe	Patea
Number	3	3	13	11
Area (ha)	19.66	16.9160	2.8505	80.9445

### 2. Properties with Potential for Recreation/Open Space Use

This category comprises properties that are not currently used for recreation or open space purposes but have some potential for these uses. Some are used for Council purposes, such as water supply or a transfer station, while some are identified for a future use but may have open space potential in the long term.

OTHER 2	Egmont Plains	Eltham	Hawera/Tangahoe	Patea
Number	12	11	7	33
Area (ha)	46.28	99.7581	10.8063	628.9118

### 3. Properties not used for Recreation/Open Space that Provide Some Community Use or Benefit

Like the above category, these properties are not used for recreation/open space purposes, but they provide some form of community benefit, for example, income from grazing used for hall maintenance. They differ in that they have not been identified for reserve swaps on the basis that their community use or benefit warrants their retention.

OTHER 3	Egmont Plains	Eltham	Hawera/Tangahoe	Patea
Number	1	2	1	7
Area (ha)	0.09	5.7076	20.2395	150.2217

### 4. Reserves Not, and Unlikely to be, Used for Recreation - Possible Reserve Swaps

These properties are reserved for some purpose but are never likely to be used for that purpose. For example there are numerous gravel reserves, particularly in the Egmont Plains Ward, and parts, or all, of rural domains that are grazed. This category also includes areas of cemeteries that are unlikely to be required for burials. Some may serve a useful community purpose by providing rental income from grazing that is applied to maintaining the local hall or cemetery, or the recreation areas of a rural domain. In each case there is the possibility of removing the reserve status in exchange for reserving recreation/open space areas that are not currently reserves, to ensure they are protected for the future.

OTHER 4	Egmont Plains	Eltham	Hawera/Tangahoe	Patea
Number	18	5	2	28
Area (ha)	40.65	16.2677	4.8126	40.7209

## 5. Properties not used for Recreation/Open Space with no Obvious Potential for this Use

These properties are not used for recreation or open space, and have no obvious potential for these uses. Some or all of these could be disposed of.

OTHER 5	Egmont Plains	Eltham	Hawera/Tangahoe	Patea
Number	7	4	4	2
Area (ha)	13.02	3.0687	12.1615	10.9032

## Summary

Using the NZRA categories, the District's provision of open space per ward is listed in the following tables:

	EGMONT PLAINS	ELTHAM WARD	HAWERA WARD	PATEA WARD
Category	Area (ha)	Area (ha)	Area (ha)	Area (ha)
King Edward Park	0	0	6.0738	0
Sport & Recreation	18.0823	11.4445	20.6295	3.621
Neighbourhood Parks	1.2024	1.2296	6.1702	1.1744
Cultural Heritage	6.6849	4.28	26.6306	3.87
Civic Space	0.0111	0.0569	0.1396	0.3278
Natural Areas	44.8939	242.0488	4.7525	124.2337
Recreation and Ecological Linkages	34.2263	103.618	153.6152	51.1028
Other (Including Potential Open Space)	115.2616	49.2816	29.8788	847.6572

*NB: The Sport and Recreation areas shown above include courts.*

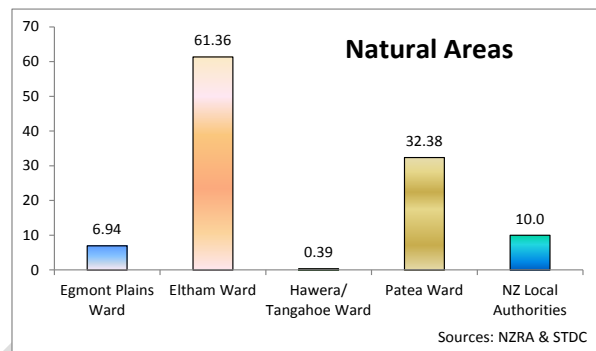
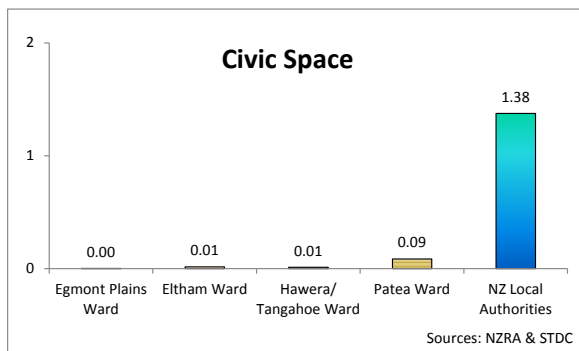
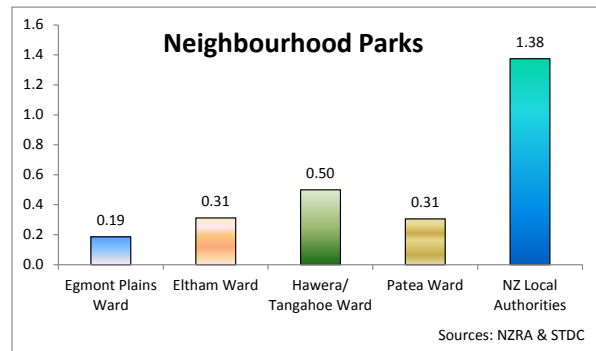
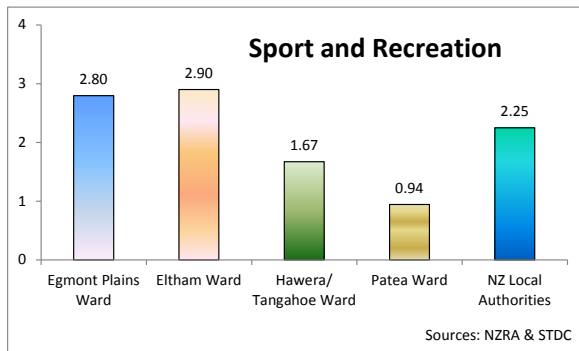
For this exercise, esplanade reserves, recreation reserves and other properties along, or at, the coast were included in the Natural Parks category, while esplanade reserves along streams and rivers were categorised as Recreational and Ecological Linkages.

The distribution of different types of open spaces throughout the District reflects the extent to which areas of natural environment have been preserved, the sporting and recreational needs and strengths of our communities, the varying density of our population and the wide range of catchment areas these spaces serve.

### The Numbers Game

The NZRA framework includes references to Yardstick – a system for benchmarking parks and reserves. It includes a measure for the provision of open spaces per head of population based on New Zealand averages.

The graphs below compare the level of provision of open spaces in each of the South Taranaki Wards with the national averages. The figures relate to hectares per 1000 residents.



There are a number of instances in South Taranaki where the location and size of various open spaces does not align with national averages or 'accepted international standards' but where these spaces fulfil important local needs and are ideally located and sized for their catchment areas. These benchmarks are less useful than the catchment hierarchy described on page 12 of this strategy and are generally more relevant to areas with larger populations and higher population densities.

National averages and standards can be useful reference tools; however basing decisions around the provision of open space on these tools is not a practical approach in South Taranaki. Decisions need to take into account the diversity and individual needs of our communities.



## Other Issues

During research for this section the following areas of open space were identified as having no formal status as reserves. It may be appropriate to take action to protect some or all of these properties in the future.

**Opunake BMX Track**

**Row Reserve, Manaia**

**Smythe Park, Kaponga**

**Thoumine Park, Kaponga**

**Pocket Park, Victoria St, Kaponga**

**Campbells Bush, Sangster Road, Eltham**

**Stark Park, Eltham**

**Clifford Road Reserve, Eltham**

**Willowbrook Reserve, Eltham**

**Bridger Park, Eltham**

**McCallum Park, Hawera**

**Kowhai St Reserve, Hawera**

**Charles Major Playground, Hawera**

**Turuturu Road Sports Ground, Hawera**

**Hicks Park, Hawera including the TSB Hub**

**Goodson Dell, Hawera**

**Clapham Common, Hawera**

**Naumai Park, Hawera**

**Queen Elizabeth Park, Hawera**

**Scott Street Reserve, Hawera**

**Evans Park, Normanby**

**The Garden of Tutunui, Patea**

**Mana Bay and Bourkes Lookout, Patea**



## THE FUTURE

Developing an accurate picture of what our recreational needs will be in the next 20 – 30 years is vitally important to ensure we are able to invest wisely in our open spaces. This section includes profiles of our communities, a snapshot of their individual challenges and aspirations and a summary of trends and issues which may impact on the District’s open space needs over the next 30 years.

**Note:** The rural population figures are for the adjacent surround areas but are not an accurate indication of open space users as catchment areas for active recreational activities vary widely depending on the activity.

### Our Communities – Diversity and Aspirations

<u>HAWERA</u>	Urban Population		Rural Population – Hawera Ward	
	1991	2013	1996	2013
	8,931	8,517	2,964	2,922

Centralisation of services and increasing mobility have increased Hawera’s role as the District’s business and recreational centre. There has been a progressive migration of residents from outlying communities into Hawera, resulting in a gradually increasing population, while most other communities in the District reduce. However, these same factors that bring people into our main centre also tempt others, particularly our young people and higher income earners, away to New Plymouth and other larger centres.

In addition to the dairy sector, our District has a large food processing and engineering base. Attracting suitably skilled staff for these industries is an ongoing challenge. As more and more staff choose the option of living in New Plymouth and commuting to work in South Taranaki, there is a growing awareness of the need for a vibrant urban centre, quality recreational facilities and public spaces to retain our population.

The upgrade of the Hawera urban centre completed in 2000 has stood the test of time and the streetscape itself is reasonably attractive. Within a 2km radius of the town centre we have King Edward Park, the TSB Hub and Naumai Park – a premier park, a top quality multisport facility and an urban natural park, all of which would be valued in a centre twice Hawera’s size. Our challenge is to redefine the town centre boundaries for today’s needs, raise the standard of retail premises and provide better links from the main highway.

Hawera offers excellent facilities for organised outdoor activities. The TSB Hub has helped to focus organised sports in a central location, making better use of existing grounds and offering a range of social sports. Looking ahead, the need for sports fields is unlikely to increase; however, with expansion of some suburbs the provision of neighbourhood parks should be considered. The larger sections in these new suburbs mean green space needs are not so much about space but about providing opportunities for social interaction, building community connectivity by providing places where children, families and older people can socialise.

There is significant interest in the development of walkways and cycle ways around Hawera and providing connections from the town centre to outlying destinations – Nowells Lakes, Waihi Beach, Tawhiti Museum, Turuturu Mokai, and Normanby township. The lack of these types of independent recreational options has been raised frequently as a reason for choosing to live in North Taranaki and commute to the south for work. Addressing that gap and the rejuvenation of the Central Business District are priorities for the community and employers trying to attract skilled staff.

## **NORMANBY**

<b>Urban Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>
894	891

Normanby is a town of 891 people located on the main highway only 5km from Hawera. This is both a benefit and a challenge to the community. Residents are more easily able to access the retail centre, services and recreational facilities in the District's urban centre. It also means that, although the community is a 'town' in its own right with a population larger than Kaponga and similar to Manaia and Waverley, it struggles to retain its own identity.

Unlike most rural towns in the District, Normanby's population has increased slightly and, with the growth of industry in the area, this gradual trend is likely to continue. It is also likely that the 'urbanisation' of the rural area between Hawera and Normanby will continue to draw these communities together and in the long term Normanby will be seen more as a suburb of the main centre. There is little that can be done to avoid that change; however it does provide opportunities. The development of a walkway and cycleway between the two centres is one, reducing the distance travelled by following a more direct off-road route and keeping users away from traffic and safer.

The construction of a new Community Centre following the loss of the hall to fire in August 2008 has provided the community with a modern facility on which to focus recreational and social activities. It is likely that this building and the surrounding domain will provide sufficient space to support Normanby's recreational needs for the foreseeable future. To help retain that sense of community, it will however be important to mitigate any risk of Normanby being perceived as an industrial rather than residential centre. The preservation of rural views, street planting, beautification of commercial frontages and screening of industrial sites are measures that should be considered.

## **OHAWE BEACH**

<b>Urban Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>
258	183

In 2013 the coastal community of Ohawe was home to 183 permanent residents living on the hillside overlooking Ohawe Beach and the mouth of the Waingongoro River. While residents must travel to nearby centres for employment, education and organised sporting activities, Ohawe retains a strong sense of community. Local recreational activities are generally informal, based around the beach, and there is no need for additional parks or sports fields. The community-owned hall on Ohawe Terrace provides a venue for local functions. Children in the community have traditionally used the roadside berms as informal recreation spaces. Because of their high visibility, the community would like to see this continue, although there are increasing concerns around safety as traffic increases.

Ohawe offers the most accessible beach for Hawera residents and, despite coastal erosion which has reduced access over the past 40 years, the beach is attracting an increasing number of holiday visitors and day trippers. The community welcomes these visitors but would like to see them better catered for, through improved beach and river access and better public toilets. The Council-owned Recreation Reserve to the south and east of Karora Street is prone to erosion and unsuitable for future development. The Te Rangatapu Reserve, owned and administered by the Te Rangatapu Trust, is more stable and provides the best vehicle and foot access to the river.

The community would like to develop formal walkway access to the Soldiers Cemetery and possibly along the Waingongoro River. This could include interpretive signage recording the significant history of the area.

## **ELTHAM AND KAPONGA**

Eltham and Kaponga are our two most inland communities. With the Rotokare Reserve and scenic hill country to the east and Mt Taranaki and the National Park to the northwest, the Eltham Ward provides a different variety of outdoor opportunities from our coastal belt.

### **ELTHAM**

<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
2,262	1,941	1,128	999

Eltham is a community of contrasts, located in an attractive rural landscape but home to three large manufacturing plants within the town boundary. Eltham is, on one hand, strategically located on a main highway, well positioned to take advantage of through traffic and capitalise on its heritage buildings and growing reputation as a retail destination. On the other, it is disadvantaged by being centrally located and easily accessible, particularly from Stratford and Hawera. A large percentage of the workforce has chosen to remain living in larger centres offering a wider range of services and leisure activities. The result has been a gradual decline in population despite significant growth in employment opportunities.

A drop in the number and range of sporting and recreational opportunities is common to all of our smaller communities, and in Eltham that trend is again compounded by its proximity to Stratford and Hawera, both of which have quality multi-sport facilities. The added challenge of growing and retaining club leaders in a shift-work environment means that even a significant change in commuting patterns would be unlikely to reverse the trend to more centralised sporting activities.

Despite these challenges Eltham offers a range of independent recreational activities and a great place to raise families for those who appreciate the outdoor playground on its doorstep. The Eltham community is very aware of the strong connection between open spaces and their economy and, in particular, the potential of the Rotokare Scenic Reserve as a national and international visitor attraction. They also recognise the value that urban open spaces have in attracting through traffic on the main highway to stop and, with its strong food processing industries, the potential of winning over some of the commuters.

### **KAPONGA**

<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
384	306	1,098	981

Kaponga is a very different community from 50 years ago when it had a thriving retail centre servicing the town and surrounding rural area. Today the only retailers are the Four Square, dairy and a farm supplies business. The emptiness of the main street is emphasised by the wide thoroughfare. Despite the losses, surrounding rural families continue to see Kaponga as the centre of their community, with the schools, swimming pool, hall, sporting activities, community events and the local hotel all bringing people into town. The closure of rural schools in the surrounding areas has only increased the focus of the rural community on Kaponga.

In 2001 the Kaponga community developed a plan to provide links between the urban area, which was quite stark, and the natural beauty of the town's surroundings. Good progress has been made toward achieving that with the development of pocket parks and landscaping, and the community would like to continue this work. While the population of Kaponga is unlikely to grow, it will continue to serve as a social centre for the rural community. Development of open spaces for passive recreation will benefit these local users and support the efforts of Kaponga's entrepreneurs to attract visitors.

## **OPUNAKE**

<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
1,647	1,335	3,312	2,856

The Opunake community, located on the District's western coast, is 'just far enough away' to have retained service and recreation facilities that other communities of a similar size have lost. Despite an increasingly mobile lifestyle the community recognises that a lot of families cannot afford to travel for regular recreational activities, and these are well catered for through the concentration of sporting facilities at the Opunake Recreation Ground and the retention of sports fields in the outlying communities of Rahotu and Pihama.

Informal recreation is focussed on the coastal belt, from the Opunake Lake and walkway around the southern headland to Opunake Beach and the northern headland to Middleton Bay. The community-led development of walkways, natural areas and informal recreation such as the BMX track have linked these key sites, and this network of open spaces offers outdoor opportunities for all ages.

The Opunake and Coastal area is home to eight significant natural areas, three important coastal herb fields and, to the north of the town, four coastal reserves currently administered by the Department of Conservation. The community has a strong appreciation for the unique rugged nature of the coastline, and this is reflected in its insistence on a carefully planned and sustainable approach to development.

Like our other coastal communities of Waverley and Ohawe, the influx of summer visitors adds to the economy and vibrancy of the community. It also means that Opunake's open spaces must cater for the needs of those visitors, and in particular, surfers, if the community is to build on that point of difference.

## **MANAIA**

<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
1,101	960	1,233	1,038

Stretching from just south of Eltham Road to the sea and bounded by Inaha Road to the east and Oeo Road to the west, the Waimate Plains' gentle slopes are relatively flat compared to other parts of the District. This land has been prized for dairying since the 1880s and the dairy industry has shaped the environment. Few undeveloped natural areas remain, although riparian planting programmes are helping to rebuild the natural flora and fauna.

The coastline is home to some of the most significant botanical sites in the District but, due to a combination of grazing and erosion, these sites are also among those most at risk. The high mudstone cliffs make access to much of this coastline difficult, the exception being Kaupokonui Beach 7km from Manaia. While many other communities benefit economically and socially from visitors to their local beaches, the benefit to Manaia is limited.

The community has been involved in urban beautification projects, the development of the Manaia Domain walkway and youth recreation areas. Manaia was one of the first communities in the District to begin developing a multi-sport recreational facility, at the sports grounds in Hassard Street in the 1960s. Despite this foresight people are travelling to other centres for many organised activities such as swimming, athletics and netball, reflecting the decline of the retail centre and the need for residents to travel further afield for shopping and services.

## **PATEA and WAVERLEY**

<b>PATEA</b>	<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
	<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
	1,488	1,101	1,149	1,065

The urban population of Patea has halved since its peak in 1960. On the positive side the drop of 42 from 2006 to 2013 was the lowest for 20 years, indicating Patea's population may have reached a sustainable level. Residents must generally travel to other centres for employment, shopping and services and, like other rural communities, for most organised sports. This is a challenge which limits Patea's ability to attract new residents, but conversely has created an affordable lifestyle option for others.

The Patea River forms the town's eastern boundary and holds a significant place in the heart of the community. The river is used extensively for swimming, fishing, whitebaiting and jet boating. Mana Bay at the river mouth is a popular surfing beach and the area is a favoured destination for boaties from around the region for recreational fishing. Lake Rotorangi, formed by the Patea Dam, 32km inland on Ball Road, is another popular recreation area for boaties, campers and day trippers.

The community has led an urban upgrade project that included development of open spaces and facilities at Mana Bay and improved foot access from the town centre to the beach. They are continuing this work with further enhancements and planting along the Patea River Walkway from the boat ramp to York Street. The community also feels strongly about retaining the town's few remaining heritage buildings and reducing the visual impact of the green waste dump site near the beach lookout.

<b>WAVERLEY</b>	<b>Urban Population</b>		<b>Rural Population</b>	
	<b>1991</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2013</b>
	1,008	798	948	810

Our District's southernmost urban centre is located on the main highway, around 6km inland from the coast. The town's recreational facilities serve a large rural community, including the township of Waitotara. The holiday homes and campsites at Waverley and Waiinu beaches and informal camping at Aotea Park attract holiday visitors who contribute to the local economy and social culture. In recent years a number of creative enterprises have established in the town centre, taking advantage of the through traffic and adding interest to the town.

The Waverley community has led the centralisation of sports and recreational facilities at Dallison Park, creating a safe and sustainable recreation centre, and this facility and surrounding green space will serve the needs of the community for the foreseeable future.

The coastal area is of significant importance to local people, for both its recreational and environmental value, and this is reflected in the community's concern for the preservation of the natural environment and heritage sites. Shoreline cliffs and erosion mean the retention of access to the coast is also a concern for the community, particularly following the loss of road access to Waipipi Beach, which is one of the most accessible beaches for those with mobility issues.

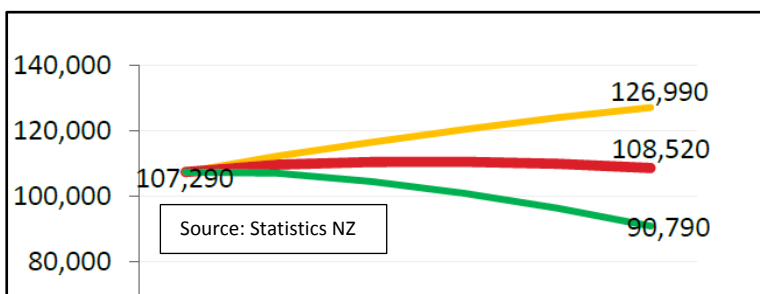
Another area of special value to the community is Herengawe Lake (locally known as Lupton's Lake) located half way between Waverley town and Waverley Beach. The lake is a valued recreational site for waterskiing, jetskiing, kayaking and water safety lessons, with access provided by the surrounding land owners for many years.

## Our Changing Needs

### Demographic Changes

Our District's population has declined slowly but steadily from a peak of 36,250 in 1960 to a low of 26,484 in 2006 and increased slightly to 26,577 in 2013. The decline over the past 20 years was attributed to outward migration; however the National Institute of Demographic Research predicts that this will be compounded over the next 20 years by reduced birth rates as a result of our ageing population.

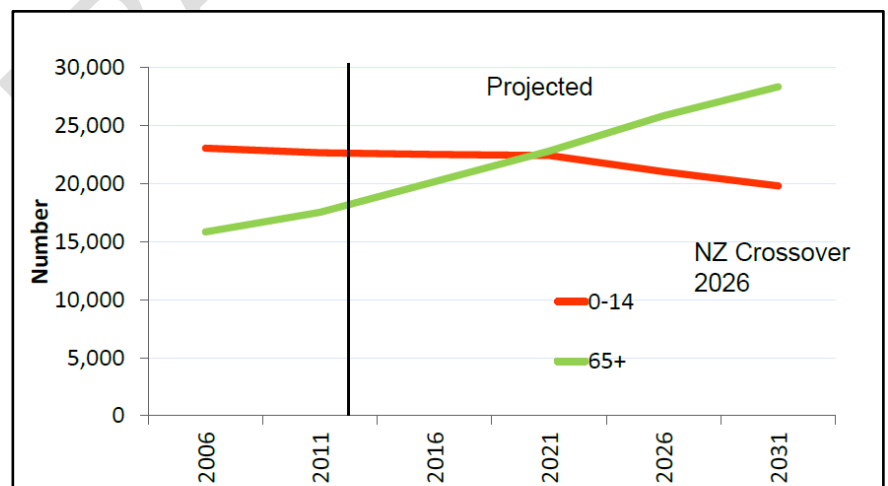
The small increase of 93 to 26,577 people in the 2013 Census has been encouraging. However, even if the historic trend is reversed, a significant increase in population over the next 30 years is unlikely.



Population predictions for Taranaki in 2031 from Statistics NZ have a wide range, varying from a drop of 15% to an increase of 18%. If these regional percentages are applied to South Taranaki this could mean a drop of 3,987 to an increase of up to 4,784.

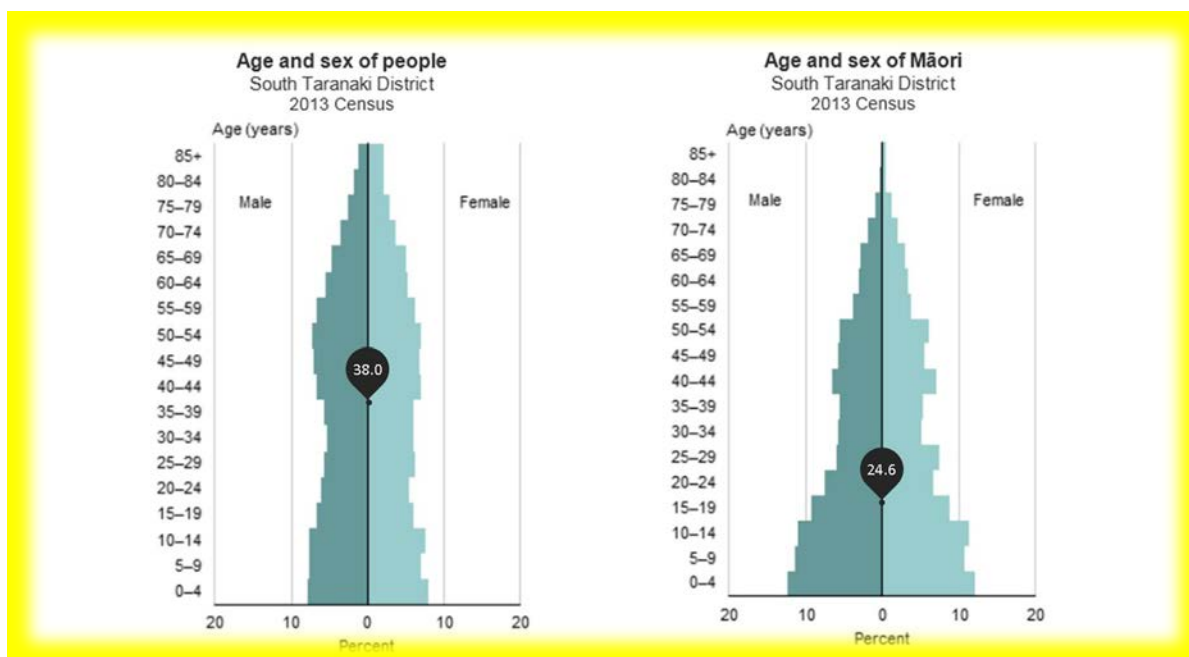
We also need to be mindful that any population increase is more likely to be in the larger centres, while smaller communities either remain stable or continue to decline.

By 2021 over 50% of the regions are predicted to be home to more older people than children, including Taranaki. This is a national trend and the whole of New Zealand should reach that point in 2026.



Our population is ageing; however that change is more apparent in the urban areas as older people from rural areas move into town when they retire. Meanwhile the percentage of children in rural Taranaki still remains relatively high.

There are also notable differences between the ages of Māori compared to the general population. The percentage of Maori over 45 years of age is significantly lower, reflecting a lower life expectancy. There is also a significantly higher percentage of Maori under 20 years and, with Māori birth rates remaining higher than the overall population, the outdoor recreational needs and interests of young Māori will be an important consideration in the future.



Source: Statistics NZ

## Social Trends and Issues

There is a growing awareness of the importance of exercise and healthy eating, supported by health and fitness professionals through public education programmes and green prescriptions. The impacts of this trend are now being seen in lifestyle changes, participation in physical recreational activities and the uses of our open space.

Growing our own food is being promoted for financial as well as health reasons; however not everyone has the skills or space to garden, and this is reflected in an increasing number of requests to utilise Council-owned open spaces for community gardens and to include fruit trees on walkways and in street plantings. As community-based social services and schools become more proactively involved in these projects, this trend is likely to continue. There is also the potential for older people to benefit from the social aspects of these communal projects.

### Families and Children

Rural school closures during the past 10 years had a significant impact on their immediate communities. In many areas the Ministry of Education's expectation that these students would relocate to urban schools was not realised. Parents' preference for rural schools, and how this impacts on participation and support for recreational facilities in urban areas, needs to be considered.

Schools in some communities are reporting high percentages of transient families enrolling for short periods. This has an impact on communities, as these families are less likely to engage in community activities and the communities, in turn, lose resilience and are less able to support new families as they move in. This same self-perpetuating trend affects sporting and other recreational groups such as Scouts and Guides. Once that cycle of growing leaders within a group is broken it is hard to bring it back. This breakdown has been behind many of the recent losses and amalgamations of clubs, and is likely to continue.

Parents with young families are now much more likely to accompany their children to parks and playgrounds, and the safety of outdoor recreation areas is an increasingly important factor in where families choose to go.

### **Youth**

In smaller communities there is little for pre-driving teens to do if they are not involved in organised sport or youth groups, except to hang out at the town pool in summer.

It is important to consider the needs of our young people who are no longer comfortable 'hanging out' in younger children's play areas but, through lack of transport or money, are unable to access beaches, movies, cafes etc. The lack of informal outdoor gathering places for young people has been raised by a number of communities. The cost is not high, with shelter and seating all that is really required; however it can be a challenge to find appropriate central locations where visibility and an adult presence maintain a sense of safety and discourage negative behaviour.

## **Economic Trends and Issues**

People are no longer tied to their job location and Taranaki has a very mobile working population. They can choose to work in South Taranaki but live in larger centres, where they have access to a wider variety of recreational activities. In 2006, approximately 1,260 people from outside South Taranaki were commuting into the district for employment. Many of our larger employers have identified limited social and recreational options and the lack of vibrancy of our urban centres as a challenge when they are trying to attract skilled staff to work here.

There are also large numbers of people who travel to other centres within the District and Region for work. This level of mobility, combined with the high percentage of our workforce engaged in shift work, has an impact on participation in local recreation activities, possibly more than population decline. It affects participation in adult sports grades, the level of adult support available to run junior grades and the growth of participation in recreational activities outside of traditional days and times.

There is a growing awareness of the contribution that well planned open spaces can make to our economy. Our urban open spaces play an important role in the visual attractiveness of our towns, adding to the appeal of our communities as places to live. Open spaces also play a part in attracting "through traffic" to stop, and this is especially important to the seven communities whose urban centres are located on main traffic routes. In Hawera the need to revitalise the town centre has been raised by industry leaders, businesses and the community. Planning is now in progress and a review of the town's civic spaces will be an important part of that project.

In the coastal communities of Opunake, Ohawe and Waverley, open spaces are also used by holiday visitors and day trippers and these people need to be catered for. There are also growing numbers of visitors to other centres whose needs should be considered, in particular, campervans in Kaponga, our closest town to the mountain, and day trippers to Eltham. The Rotokare Scenic Reserve has potential as a national and international visitor attraction.



## Trends in Our Urban Environment

Changes in our urban environment have an impact on open space needs. In central Hawera, redevelopment in residential areas is creating a denser housing environment with smaller sections and less privately-owned green space. The long term effects are likely to be higher levels of use of public parks and spaces. The need for smaller neighbourhood pocket parks that provide opportunities for social interaction and are accessible to older people who are less mobile should be considered. Similar spaces may be needed in new subdivisions on urban fringes. While sections in these areas are larger, the ability for children and families to meet and socialise is an important part of building a sense of community in new neighbourhoods. Historically, community halls, suburban shopping centres or even the local dairy would have provided these opportunities for contact, but these are no longer a part of neighbourhood life in new areas.

The distances from schools, shopping and services mean residents in new subdivisions on the fringes of Hawera are more likely to drive for normal daily activities, with potential impacts on both health and the environment. Including these subdivisions in walking networks will help to mitigate those impacts.

## Trends in Our Rural Environment

There are 11 rural domains (recreation reserves) in the District which are owned by the Crown but vested in the Council to manage. These were set aside for recreation purposes early last Century. Several are no longer, or have never been, used for recreation and are grazed, while parts of others provide an important recreational service for their local rural communities. Although grazing may provide rental income to maintain the domains and/or local halls, the grazed areas provide no recreational purpose. These areas could, however, constitute a resource for land swaps, to acquire land in parts of the District where there may be a need for additional recreational land. The domains belong to the Crown and would return to Crown control if they were no longer reserves, but the Department of Conservation may approve revocation of the reserve status of domains if other land was designated as reserve in exchange.

We also have over 1,000km of unformed legal roads located throughout the District. Some of these could potentially be used to extend our open space network, through development as walkways or cycleways or providing routes to open spaces where access is currently limited.

## Environmental Risks

Taranaki has an active, high-energy coastline, with a high rate of natural erosion that often causes concern to coastal landowners. Much of the Taranaki coastline is eroding, with long-term average rates between 0.05m and 1.89m per year. Coastal protection measures, such as sea walls, are not supported by the Department of Conservation or the Taranaki Regional Council because they affect the natural character of the coast.

It is now generally accepted that erosion-prone areas need to be avoided as sites for development. There is also a need to consider the potential combined effects of erosion and rising sea levels on our coastal open spaces. It may be prudent to consider a managed programme to offset the impacts on any coastal public open space as a result of erosion or climate change.

There is an increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change and the need to protect our environment. There is also a growing interest from schools, other education providers and communities in environmental projects.

## Accessibility

Access to the coast has been an on-going concern in some areas, particularly to surf breaks in the north of the District, and there are emerging concerns about other beaches where erosion is making access more difficult for older or disabled people and for parents with young children. Concerns have also been raised about other locations of recreational value to communities, where access is currently informal and at the discretion of private owners. The Council has a policy of maintaining or improving access through a requirement to provide access routes or esplanade strips as a part of any land subdivision. While this practice is continuing to build access networks it may be appropriate to take a more proactive approach to preserve or provide access to areas of special value to communities.

## Trends in Active Recreation

Most parts of the District have experienced a loss of, or reduction in, the range of organised team sporting activities available, although the codes lost vary between communities. In junior sports, community feedback indicates this is often the result of a drop in adult volunteers and coaches rather than lack of interest from children, though the wider range of more sedentary recreational choices is also a factor. Senior grades in many sports are also struggling and in this case the impacts of shift work, longer working hours and busier lifestyles are often identified as the main issues. Codes that require higher cost facilities such as netball and hockey have centralised in larger towns. Despite our ageing population, participation in traditional activities for older people such as bowls and croquet are also declining in most areas. Again, community feedback indicates the loss of club leadership and capacity and an increase in recreational and social options as a factor. It also reflects the higher levels of fitness, with older people continuing to engage in more active recreation for longer.

Rationalisation within sporting codes and emergence of new activities has resulted in a wide range of catchment areas, as participants choose to travel to neighbouring communities and even districts that offer the types of activities they are interested in, or at times that suit their lifestyle. To some extent this can result in better use of space and quality as different communities become the 'centres' for different sports, for example, rugby at Rahotu, tennis at Manaia and hockey in neighbouring Stratford. In some cases this is a practical solution where the cost of facilities requires a central location. In others it is based on strong leadership and community support, which means there are risks as key people move on and groups become less sustainable.

The construction of indoor facilities in Hawera and Opunake has added to that mix, providing a new range of evening and midweek options to add to traditional activities such as touch and business house tennis. There are a growing number of combat sports and private gyms that are accessible for longer hours. The diversity of needs is also growing. While traditional sports and moderate exercise remain popular, older people are seeking gentler, low impact activities and at the other extreme, there is increasing interest among younger and fitter people in more extreme sports such as mountain biking, hang gliding and surfing.

What is clear from feedback from communities throughout the District is the growing demand for independent recreational activities, particularly walking and cycling. Some communities are being proactive, taking ownership and committing their own time and resources to developing walkways in their communities, generally utilising existing Council-owned open space, but in some cases extending to other public or privately owned land. The coastal walkway concept supported by the Council in 2007 has a high level of public support but will require the commitment of local communities and mana whenua to progress individual stages

### **National Sporting Trends**

We also need to consider the changing expectations of sporting codes and how this may impact on the fields, surfaces and facilities we provide. For example the use of artificial surfaces for tennis, hockey and athletics has increased over the past 30 years and this trend is likely to continue. As new surfaces are developed it is possible the use of artificial surfaces will extend to other codes such as netball, and may even become a requirement for games at some levels. There is also a trend toward moving court games indoors, which could impact on space needs. While these changes are unlikely to increase the amount of space required they could have a considerable impact on the cost of service provision.

## **Active Recreation Needs in the Future**

### **Assumptions**

- Population will remain relatively stable.
- The drift of population from rural to urban centres will continue.
- Our population will age and remain active for longer. The changing recreational interests and needs of our older people will affect how our open spaces are used.
- The percentage of younger people in our District is predicted to decline.
- The focus on healthy living and expectations around spaces for exercise and growing fresh produce will continue.
- Awareness of the need to protect our environment will increase.
- Awareness of the need to protect Māori cultural and heritage values will increase.
- Lifestyle changes and mobility will continue to impact on sports codes and community-run active recreation activities, and needs will change more frequently.

## Conclusions

### Sports and Recreation

Declining rural population and the difficulty in attracting volunteers to support organised sports mean it will be increasingly important to build on the strengths of individual communities, but plan to be able to respond to changing needs as community capacity changes.

It is unlikely that the need for fields for turf sports will increase, even if there were a significant increase in population. Many of our existing sports fields are under-utilised and there is enough capacity to cater for the revival of existing sports or developing interest in new activities. It will however be prudent to encourage any new activities to share grounds and facilities with existing users where activities are complementary. Optimising the use of locations will also minimise maintenance costs and mitigate the risk of vandalism.

### Independent Recreational Needs

Changes in open space needs are more likely to arise as the result of changing age groups and lifestyles than population changes. Active recreation is no longer centred around the traditional Saturday sports day. There is an increasing demand for daytime and midweek activities, and independent recreational opportunities such as walking and cycling.

Our growing older population with more leisure time and higher levels of fitness than previous generations will increase demand for daytime activities, particularly low impact independent exercise. Increases in sedentary work, shift work and flexible working hours are all factors influencing how we engage in exercise.

We can also expect to see an increase in older people using neighbourhood parks for social areas and gentler activities such as Tai Chi. Today, neighbourhood parks in South Taranaki generally cater to the needs of younger children. In future we can expect the range of users to grow and appropriate surfaces, planting, seating and possibly adult exercise equipment should be considered.

The percentage of younger people in our District is predicted to decline; however our young people are our future. While they may leave the District for education or employment, we want them to return to raise their own families, and making their time here as enjoyable as possible is an important part of our strategy to bring them home.

Areas for informal activities are important for the young people who are not involved in organised sport, particularly those from transient families who are less likely to engage. These may include skateparks, casual court sports such as basketball and handball, and safe places to gather and socialise.

### Social and Environmental Conclusions

Life expectancy is increasing and we are becoming more aware of the need to keep fit and healthy and enjoy our retirement and independence for longer. We are also seeing a revival of interest in growing our own food, again driven by an awareness of healthy living, but also financial benefits as the costs of fresh fruit and vegetables increase. For those families who do not have the space or resources to grow food, the community garden can fill an important gap.

Healthy eating and environmental education are becoming increasingly important in our schools. Spaces for gardens and environmental projects are increasingly sought after, creating possibilities for partnerships that will benefit students, communities and the environment.

## **Our Economy**

Provision of recreational opportunities and spaces for social and cultural activities is an important factor in retaining and attracting skilled staff to our industries and maintaining vibrant town centres. There is a need to consider the provision of more appropriate civic spaces in the Hawera Town Centre.

The development of walkways and cycleways has the potential to bring economic benefits, both by helping to retain residents seeking a greater variety of independent recreation opportunities, and by adding to the 'visitor experience'. South Taranaki has a wealth of scenic and natural attractions including the Rotokare Scenic Reserve, Lake Rotorangi, and a number of popular coastal fishing spots, all of which provide free activities for visitors. There is, however, little in the way of tourism product – operator-based activities that generate direct income. It is unlikely that walkways or cycleways will become visitor attractions in themselves unless they are part of a well-coordinated and promoted package. Any planning should be for 'community first' with the visitor factor the potential *icing on the cake*.

## **Summary**

**With the exception of walkways and cycle ways, our existing open spaces are likely to be sufficient to meet our needs for the next 20 to 30 years, in terms of quantity. Patterns of use are however, likely to change and these need to be considered to make the best use of the space we have.**

**The following gaps have been identified in the provision and protection of open space required to meet the long term needs of the District.**

- **The need to develop networks that provide opportunities for walking and cycling throughout the District.**
- **The need for informal recreational spaces for youth and older people**
- **Planning to meet the changing needs of Sports and Recreational Groups**
- **The need for more user friendly Civic Spaces in the District's urban centre**
- **Meeting the increasing demand for spaces for planting and environmental projects**
- **The protection of important Council owned open spaces, and of access to spaces of special value to communities.**

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# OPEN SPACE PRINCIPLES



# OPEN SPACE PRINCIPLES

The challenge for our Council is to develop a strategy that takes into account the diversity and individual needs and strengths of our communities. The number of small communities spread over a wide geographical area means accessibility and affordability are major challenges – how to provide the best possible range of active recreational options in the most cost effective way.

The following principles have been developed to guide how the Council manages its open spaces to ensure that the community's needs, concerns and aspirations are considered and the Open Space Vision is achieved.

## **Open Space Vision:**

**We have accessible Open Spaces that are enjoyed by our people, support the health and wellbeing of our communities and enhance our environment**

## **Principles**

- 1. Promoting Health and Wellbeing**
- 2. Protecting Landscapes, Landforms and Local Character**
- 3. Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values**
- 4. Protecting Indigenous Biodiversity**
- 5. Protecting Open Space**
- 6. Strengthening Network Connectivity**
- 7. Quality and Accessibility of Open Space**
- 8. Working in Partnership**

These principles should also be considered in conjunction with other plans, guidelines and national standards and the capacity of the Council, to ensure that balanced decisions can be made.



## 1. Promoting Health and Wellbeing

The Council acknowledges and values the contribution that well planned and accessible open spaces make to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

**Objective: To provide accessible open spaces in each community that support and encourage recreational activity and community interaction.**

The Council will provide spaces that:

- Are suitable for a range of organised and informal sporting and recreational activities.
- Are attractive, safe and accessible for a variety of fitness levels, in particular children, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Encourage community interaction

**Objective: To encourage active and healthy lifestyles.**

The Council will:

- Work in partnership with the community and health promotion agencies to support initiatives that encourage active and healthy lifestyles.

## 2. Protecting Landscapes, Landforms and Local Character

The unique natural landscape of South Taranaki is highly valued by our communities. Areas of particular importance are:

- Our rugged coastal landscapes
- The lahars that circle the lower slopes of Mt Taranaki and extend down to the coastal ring plain in the northern parts of the District.
- The few remaining areas of natural forest and coastal wetlands.

Some communities have expressed a desire to develop better links between their urban areas and the natural beauty of the surrounding rural landscape through planting, including the use of endemic species.

**Objective: To encourage and support the protection of our unique landscapes and landforms, and the local character of our communities.**

The Council will:

- Ensure that the scale and location of new structures adjacent to areas of public or private open space do not detract from the landscape or local character.
- Consider the local character and landscape of the surrounding area when developing Council-owned open spaces.
- Be proactive in engaging with tangata whenua in planning where landscapes, landforms or natural areas or habitats may be affected.
- Educate rural landowners on the importance of protecting local landscapes, landforms and character.
- Develop a guide for planting trees for beautification and enhancement of landscapes and local character, to support landowners and developers.

### 3. Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values

South Taranaki has a rich cultural history and contains a significant number of historic sites, buildings or objects of cultural or heritage value. These play an important role in defining who we are, creating a sense of place and identity for our communities, and our open spaces provide a means of protecting some of those sites.

**Objective: To preserve and promote the diversity and heritage of our District through the inclusion of cultural and heritage sites in our open space network.**

The Council will:

- Continue to work in partnership with Iwi and local communities to identify, protect, restore and promote places of cultural and heritage value on Council land.
- Educate, encourage and support other landowners to protect cultural and heritage sites on their own properties.
- Work with local communities and Iwi to promote and, where appropriate, record and communicate the stories relating to these sites.
- Collaborate with Iwi on the use of Te Reo on signage and publications relating to heritage sites of significance to Iwi.

### 4. Protecting Indigenous Biodiversity

The Council is required to protect indigenous biodiversity under the Resource Management Act and has a responsibility to identify and protect areas of its own land which provide, or have the potential to provide, habitats for indigenous flora and fauna.

The Council's role in protecting landscapes and improving access and network connectivity also contributes to our biodiversity. This may be through supporting the development of corridors connecting areas of natural forest to the coast, dune and wetland restoration projects or the protection of significant ecosystems.

**Objective: To increase the level of indigenous biodiversity within our District.**

The Council will

- Protect and, where appropriate, work with partners to restore natural habitats on Council-owned natural parks and reserves.
- Support community initiatives to protect and restore natural habitats and ecosystems.
- Educate, encourage and support other landowners to protect and restore natural habitats on their own properties.
- Be proactive in engaging with Iwi in planning for restoration of natural habitats.

## 5. Protecting Open Space

Our existing open spaces were set aside for a variety of reasons and, where these spaces have special purposes and values to the environment or the community, it is important that those purposes and values are preserved.

**Objective: To preserve and protect our open spaces and ensure that any use of our open spaces does not detract from the purposes for which they have been set aside.**

The Council will:

- Ensure that open spaces are protected through appropriate designations within the Reserves Act 1977 and through District Plan controls.
- Ensure that facilities and buildings located on Council-owned open spaces are fit for purpose and complementary to the intended purpose of that land.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, open spaces are protected from encroachment or the impacts of the development of neighbouring properties.
- Develop and maintain a tree policy to ensure that trees contributing to the historical and environmental value of our open spaces are protected, maintained and replaced for future generations.

## 6. Strengthening Network Connectivity

Open space networks serve a range of purposes:

- To connect natural environments, providing corridors that help our natural biodiversity to expand.
- In urban areas networks provide a visual contrast to the built environment, link urban areas to their rural surroundings and provide safe green routes to increase walking and cycling options and access for other activities such as fishing.
- Networks can provide alternative links between communities and destinations

In South Taranaki the demand for more options for walking and cycling has been raised in most communities, and those communities have demonstrated their support by investing time and resources to develop local walkways. The coastal walkway concept adopted by the Council in 2007 has a high level of public support and the Council is now seeking the commitment of local communities and mana whenua to progress individual stages.

**Objective: To develop open space networks that add value to existing open spaces and increase recreational options for users.**

The Council will:

- Work with communities to prepare a cohesive plan for walkway and cycleway development to ensure the wide variety of needs are met and local character and existing open spaces, attractions and networks are considered and incorporated.
- Work with other public and private landowners to extend existing open space networks or develop new networks.

## 7. Quality and Accessibility of Open Space

A challenge for our Council is to meet the expectations of all users when our communities are spread over a wide geographical area. It is essential that we have a good understanding of the individual character and strengths of each of our communities and that funds and resources are committed wisely to best meet the needs of each community.

Barriers to access may include distance, local transport issues, physical terrain, private ownership of access routes and even busy roads, particularly for children.

**Objective: To provide open spaces that are fit for the intended purpose and meet the expectations of users in the most cost effective way.**

The Council will:

- Keep up to date with national and international standards and best practice for the management of open spaces, and include those standards as a benchmark for planning and the review of service levels, with consideration for local expectations and resourcing.
- Consider the needs, aspirations and strengths of communities *and neighbouring communities* in future planning.
- Consider the additional needs and impacts on open spaces in communities with high numbers of destination or seasonal visitors.
- Ensure that any new open spaces and assets are of appropriate quality and fit for purpose.

**Objective: To protect and improve accessibility to the special open spaces that are valued by our communities.**

The Council will:

- Work with other landowners to protect or secure access to recreational areas of value to the community.
- Collaborate with mana whenua to ensure they are included in discussions where changes to access may impact on places of importance to them or protection of wahi tapu.
- Continue to improve access to the coast, rivers and streams through easements or, where appropriate, land acquisition.

**Objective: To manage the use and allocation of sports fields and active recreation spaces in a manner which makes the best use of available space and reduces barriers to new groups and activities.**

The Council will:

- Encourage the sharing of space by complementary groups and activities.
- Facilitate partnerships between complementary codes and activities to share facilities.
- Consider partnerships for cost sharing where codes desire a higher level of service than that provided to other similar codes.

## 8. Working in Partnership

The Council recognises the valuable contribution the community makes to caring for and enhancing our open spaces. This is particularly important to help overcome the challenge of meeting the needs of a diverse population distributed over the District's wide geographical area. Without the support of volunteers, community groups, schools and local businesses, the vision and goals of the Open Space Strategy could not be achieved.

The Council also acknowledges that much of the District's open space is under the control of other agencies or owners such as the Department of Conservation, Iwi, private owners, and trusts.

In particular the Council recognises the role of the four Iwi – Taranaki, Nga Ruahine, Ngati Ruanui and Nga Rauru, who hold mana whenua over the land.

**Objective: To engage in partnerships that will support the protection, enhancement and expansion of the District's open space network.**

The Council will:

- Actively seek external investment from public and private funders and volunteers to support initiatives that contribute to achieving the Vision and Objectives of the Open Space Strategy.
- Be proactive in seeking solutions to enable users and stakeholders to make practical contributions to the development and maintenance of our open spaces.
- Work with Tangata Whenua, Government Agencies, Trusts, sporting and user groups, communities and landowners to protect and enhance the District's open space network and improve active recreation options and facilities.
- Work together with stakeholders including Tangata Whenua, communities and user groups when planning the development of Council-owned open spaces.
- Enter into partnerships with landowners to facilitate access to special areas.



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# ACTION PLANS



## ACTION PLANS

Some gaps have been identified in the types of open space required to meet the long term needs of the District. Most notable is the need to develop networks that provide opportunities for walking and cycling throughout the District. Other gaps include:

- The need for informal recreational spaces for youth and a developing need for space for older people
- Planning to meet the changing needs of sports and recreational groups
- The need for more user friendly civic spaces in the District's urban centre
- Meeting the increasing demand for spaces for planting and environmental projects
- The protection of important Council owned open spaces, and of access to spaces of special value to communities.

This section includes 5 Action Plans to address gaps where a proactive approach is appropriate:

1. Independent Recreational Needs including Walkways and Cycleways
2. Sports and Recreation
3. Civic Spaces
4. Social and Environmental Projects
5. Protection of Open Space

Addressing these gaps will be challenging for the Council. Public interest in new activities and spaces does not necessarily translate to use, and initially we may find ourselves trialling different options in different areas. There are also risks around the capacity of sporting groups and the community's long term capacity and commitment to initiatives undertaken on Council owned open space. The action plans reflect those risks and in some cases propose a gradual approach to change to minimise those risks.





## Independent Recreational Needs

Increases in sedentary work, shift work and flexible working hours are factors influencing how we engage in exercise. The result has been an increasing demand for daytime and midweek activities and independent recreational opportunities such as walking and cycling. Our growing older population with more leisure time and higher levels of fitness than previous generations will further increase demand for daytime activities, particularly low-impact independent exercise.

Today, neighbourhood parks in South Taranaki generally cater to the needs of younger children. In future we can expect the range of users to grow as these areas provide social spaces in areas of higher density housing or places for gentle exercise for older people. The redevelopment of these spaces to meet future needs should be considered. These spaces also have the potential to become valuable links in our open space network.

### Neighbourhood Parks

For neighbourhood parks, where we are largely working within existing spaces, planning and change should be made on a community by community basis, and considering service provision as a whole rather than specific components. For example, historically the Council has reviewed aspects of services such as playgrounds in relative isolation. The 'community approach' proposes consideration of the full range of options: playgrounds, adult exercise equipment, youth spaces, seating, planting, paths and surfaces and linkages to walkways and other spaces and expansion or rationalisation. This approach will enable better consideration of the diversity and individual needs of communities.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Provide Neighbourhood Parks that meet the individual needs of communities</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve communities in planning for development of neighbourhood parks.</li> <li>2. Consider needs of all ages and fitness levels and complementary activities to maximise the use of space.</li> <li>3. Encourage partnerships by involving communities in addressing challenges such as funding and safety.</li> <li>4. Consider provision of new open spaces to meet recreation and social needs of new subdivisions on or outside town boundaries and more centrally located areas of higher density housing.</li> <li>5. Review the user needs and levels of service of neighbourhood parks as a whole in each community, on an as needed basis, triggered by any significant scheduled upgrade or new development proposal.</li> </ol>	<p>Parks and Property and Community Development Unit.</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan</li> <li>• Asset Management Plans</li> <li>• Long Term and Annual Plan</li> <li>• 2013 Playground Review</li> <li>• CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Protecting Local Character</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>• Strengthening Network Connectivity</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility of Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>

## Walkways and Cycleways

The development of walkways and cycle ways is clearly a priority in all areas of the District; however meeting the diverse expectations of a wide range of potential users will be challenging. For some, accessibility for the disabled is a priority and, for others, off-road experiences requiring a much higher level of fitness. Careful consultation and planning will be required to ensure issues around accessibility and sustainability are addressed. The incorporation of existing walkways, parks and recreation areas and attractions will be an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of any new development.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Walkways and Cycleways Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Develop a plan for a network of walkways and cycleways which:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are attractive to a wide range of users</li> <li>• Improve walking and cycling access for employment and other regular travel needs</li> <li>• Expand existing open space networks</li> <li>• Have a community-first approach</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage local stakeholders in planning and development</li> <li>2. Engage with tangata whenua to identify any areas of mutual interest and how they would like to have input into the Strategy.</li> <li>3. Consider multiple access points and links to other recreational facilities and attractions to maximise use.eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special natural areas</li> <li>• Cultural or Heritage sites and trails</li> <li>• Other local destinations and activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Consider network links to new subdivisions on or outside town boundaries to encourage walking and cycling as alternative transport options.</li> <li>5. Investigate options for multi-use, e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating exercise equipment</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Identify sections of walkway/cycleway networks suitable for development projects / partnerships, e.g: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-establishment of indigenous biodiversity</li> <li>• Planting of fruit and nut crops</li> <li>• Seating and viewing platforms</li> </ul> </li> <li>7. Build long term partnerships to ensure sustainability of new pathways, including stakeholder and user group participation in development and maintenance work.</li> <li>8. Consider how new walking and cycle trails can add to the 'visitor experience' through links and partnerships with existing visitor attractions.</li> <li>9. Identify, and negotiate access to, key land parcels that will enable extension or connection of pathways and improve network connectivity including access along key waterways.</li> </ol>	<p>Walkways and Cycleways Project Team</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered: District Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Management Plans.</li> <li>• Long Term and Annual Plan.</li> <li>• Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki 2007.</li> <li>• National Walking and Cycling Strategy 2005.</li> <li>• National Walkways Policy 1995.</li> <li>• Pedestrian Network Planning and Facilities Design Guide 2005.</li> <li>• Cycle Network and Route Planning Guide 2004.</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Protecting Local Character</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>• Protecting Indigenous Biodiversity</li> <li>• Strengthening Network Connectivity</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility of Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>

### Informal Recreation Areas for Youth

Areas for informal activities are important for young people, especially those who are not involved in organised sport. These may include skateparks, casual court sports such as basketball and handball, and safe places to gather and socialise.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Provide informal recreation areas for youth.</b></p>	<p>Engage with youth to consider their needs.</p> <p>Wherever possible include spaces for youth within existing neighbourhood parks, especially in town centres.</p> <p>Consider strategic purchases where needs cannot be met through existing open spaces.</p>	<p>Community Development Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan</li> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> <li>• CPTED – Crime prevention through Environmental Design</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility of Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>



## Sports and Recreation

The provision of space and facilities for Sports and Recreation is particularly challenging. As with other types of open space, the Council must consider issues around equity, accessibility, local needs and character, but also fluctuations in participation in sports and the capacity of user groups, bearing in mind that most sporting clubs are run by volunteers. The Council has a responsibility to ratepayers to manage fields and facilities in the most cost-effective way. It is not appropriate to provide or maintain space for more codes than the community has the capacity to support; however we do have a responsibility to ensure sufficient space is available to meet future needs if that capacity should increase.

Rationalisation of sports can result in buildings and facilities that are surplus to requirements, and there is a risk that these buildings will fall into disrepair, impacting on the safety and amenity value of our open spaces. It is appropriate that the Council insists on the inclusion of mechanisms to reduce this risk before allowing any new development on Council owned open spaces.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Provide appropriate and accessible spaces to meet the current and future outdoor sports and recreational needs of communities and the District.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manage sports fields and courts to achieve the maximum use and community benefit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers to groups providing new active recreational opportunities.</li> <li>• Encourage sharing of spaces with <i>complementary</i> activities that can utilise different areas of the same space at the same time, or the same space during different times or seasons.</li> <li>• Hold regular meetings with user groups to monitor changing needs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Negotiate the allocation of sports grounds and spaces with fairness and consideration for the individual needs of users including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The space requirements of user groups</li> <li>• Type and frequency of use</li> <li>• Number of users</li> <li>• Catchment areas for users</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Be proactive in seeking solutions to enable users and stakeholders to make practical contributions to the development and maintenance of sports fields and facilities.</li> <li>4. Consider partnerships for cost sharing where codes desire a higher level of service than that provided to other <i>similar</i> codes.</li> </ol>	<p>Community Services Group</p> <p>Property and Facilities Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility</li> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> </ul>

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Support the development of multipurpose facilities that minimise the impacts of development on open spaces and reduce the risk of oversupply and vacant buildings.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support sporting and recreation clubs and groups to develop multipurpose facilities or negotiate shared use of facilities.</li> <li>2. Enter into partnerships with sporting and recreation groups to develop multi-use facilities where there are long term economic benefits to the Council.</li> <li>3. Where approval is granted to construct facilities on Council owned land, to ensure that the community’s interests are protected and the long term impacts on open spaces are minimised. This may include conditions to remove the facility or agreement that ownership of the facility can be transferred to the Council or another group if the existing use becomes unsustainable.</li> <li>5. Design Council-owned facilities to enable and encourage multi-use.</li> </ol>	<p>Community Services Group</p> <p>Property and Facilities Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan.</li> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> <li>• CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility</li> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> </ul>



## Civic Spaces

The special character of individual communities can be reflected in all types of open space but is possibly most noticeable in the design of our civic spaces. These play an important part in meeting the daily needs of shoppers and workers in town centres – spaces to relax, meet, have lunch. They provide venues for social and cultural activities and have an important role in creating a town centre which is attractive to locals and visitors, especially in town centres on main highway locations.

Provision of spaces in town centres where land is at a premium is challenging and the future needs of communities should be an important consideration in any urban development planning process.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Provide well-used functional Civic Spaces that are appropriate for the needs of communities and add value to urban centres.</b></p>	<p>1. When developing Civic Spaces consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The special character of the local environment (heritage, coastal etc)</li> <li>Opportunities for enhancing business / retail focus and character, e.g; spaces for markets, street entertainment, appeal to through traffic, visual connections to attractions.</li> </ul> <p>2. Review the need for civic space as a part of all future Town Centre Development Plans.</p>	<p>Upgrade Project Leader</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District Plan</li> <li>Long Term Plan</li> <li>Hawera Town Centre Strategy</li> <li>Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <p>The following Principles should be considered in planning and decision making for Civic Spaces:</p>
<p><b>Provide a well-used and functional civic space in the Hawera Town Centre</b></p>	<p>Review the need for Civic Spaces as a part of the Hawera Town Centre Strategy Planning Process with consideration to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing links between the urban centre and outlying open spaces of District and Regional value including King Edward Park, the TSB Hub and Hicks Park, Naumai Park.</li> <li>Providing a sheltered outdoor environment for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding outdoor markets</li> <li>Cultural events and entertainment</li> <li>Social interaction</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Hawera Town Centre Strategy Project Leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>Protecting Local Character</li> <li>Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>Strengthening Network Connectivity</li> <li>Quality and Accessibility</li> <li>Working in Partnership</li> </ul>

## Social and Environmental Projects

Spaces for gardens and environmental projects are increasingly sought after, and meeting these needs is both a challenge and an opportunity. The potential for partnerships that will benefit students, communities and the environment are immense. There are also risks that must be considered. For example, in the case of community gardens, the requirement for fencing or shelter, or the use of equipment and sprays may restrict public use. It is generally more appropriate to locate these types of activities in less public areas. The Council must also consider the potential impacts when the community is no longer willing or able to support projects. In these cases there is often an expectation that the Council will be responsible for on-going maintenance or reinstatement.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>Spaces are available to support community environmental and social projects.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify areas in reserves, pathways and open spaces where community gardens, environmental projects and plantings are appropriate.</li> <li>2. Consider community proposals to share space for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community gardens and edible planting projects</li> <li>• Environmental and education projects</li> <li>• Planting for traditional medicine and crafts</li> </ul> <p><i>Where the groups are able to demonstrate the capacity to sustain the project for a reasonable period.</i></p> </li> <li>3. Plant fruit and nut trees and edible plants in appropriate reserves and walkways.</li> <li>4. Develop a list of indigenous tree and plant species suitable for planting along walkways and natural areas.</li> </ol>	<p>Property and Facilities Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan.</li> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> <li>• Iwi Environmental Plans and Strategies</li> <li>• District Street Tree Policy</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>• Protecting Indigenous Biodiversity</li> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>

## Protection of our Open Spaces

Access to the coast has been an on-going concern in some areas, particularly to surf breaks in the north of the District. Concerns are now emerging about other beaches, where erosion is making access more difficult for older or disabled people, and for parents with young children. Concerns have also been raised about other locations of recreational value to communities, where access is informal and at the discretion of private owners. The Council currently has a policy of maintaining or improving access through a requirement to provide access routes or esplanade strips as a part of any land subdivision. While this practice is continuing to build access networks it may be appropriate to take a more proactive approach to preserve access to areas of special value to communities. The community has also raised concerns about damage through human intervention to significant natural landforms such as the lahars flowing down from Mount Taranaki in the Egmont Plains Ward.

There is a need to consider the potential combined effects of erosion and rising sea levels on our coastal open space. It would be prudent to develop a managed programme to offset the impacts of the loss of any coastal public-owned open space as a result of erosion and / or climate change.

What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages																								
<p><b>The Council will ensure that the areas of Council-owned open space that are of special value to our communities are appropriately protected for future generations.</b></p>	<p>Initiate processes to protect the following Council owned Open Spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through application to gazette them as reserves; or</li> <li>• Through application to swap/exchange for existing reserves with no obvious recreation or open space purpose.</li> </ul> <table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Opunake BMX Track</td> <td>Row Reserve, Manaia</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Campbells Bush, Sangster Road</td> <td>Smythe Reserve, Kaponga</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pocket Park, Kaponga</td> <td>Thoumine Park, Kaponga</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bridger Park, Eltham</td> <td>Stark Park, Eltham</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clifford Road Reserve, Eltham</td> <td>Willowbrook Reserve, Eltham</td> </tr> <tr> <td>McCallum Park, Hawera</td> <td>Kowhai Street Reserve, Hawera</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Turuturu Road Sports Ground, Hawera</td> <td>Charles Major Playground, Hawera</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TSB Hub/Hicks Park, Hawera</td> <td>Clapham Common, Hawera</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Goodson Dell, Hawera</td> <td>Queen Elizabeth Park, Hawera</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Naumai Park, Hawera</td> <td>Evans Park, Normanby</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Scott Street Reserve, Hawera</td> <td>Evans Park, Normanby</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Garden of Tutunui, Patea</td> <td>Mana Bay &amp; Bourkes Lookout, Patea</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Opunake BMX Track	Row Reserve, Manaia	Campbells Bush, Sangster Road	Smythe Reserve, Kaponga	Pocket Park, Kaponga	Thoumine Park, Kaponga	Bridger Park, Eltham	Stark Park, Eltham	Clifford Road Reserve, Eltham	Willowbrook Reserve, Eltham	McCallum Park, Hawera	Kowhai Street Reserve, Hawera	Turuturu Road Sports Ground, Hawera	Charles Major Playground, Hawera	TSB Hub/Hicks Park, Hawera	Clapham Common, Hawera	Goodson Dell, Hawera	Queen Elizabeth Park, Hawera	Naumai Park, Hawera	Evans Park, Normanby	Scott Street Reserve, Hawera	Evans Park, Normanby	Garden of Tutunui, Patea	Mana Bay & Bourkes Lookout, Patea	<p>Property and Facilities Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan.</li> <li>• Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> <li>• Reserves Act 1977</li> <li>• Local Plans and Strategies</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting Landscapes, Landforms and Local Character</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility of Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>
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What we will do	How	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>The Council will endeavour to protect access to the special places that our communities enjoy.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify areas of special value to communities where access is at risk.</li> <li>2. Identify key land parcels that will improve accessibility to special places.</li> <li>3. Identify key sections of access corridors and walkways that are not owned by Council.</li> <li>4. Pursue opportunities to preserve or improve access through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Purchases</li> <li>• Land Swaps</li> <li>• Creation of esplanade strips</li> <li>• Legal agreements</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Community Partnerships and Legal Units</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan.</li> <li>• Parks and Property Asset Management Plan</li> <li>• Long Term Plan</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting Landscapes, Landforms and local Character</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> </ul>
What we will do	How we will do it	Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> <li>• Quality and Accessibility of Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Council will plan to offset the impacts of the loss of any coastal public owned open space as a result of erosion or climate change.</b></p>	<p>Identify any areas, particularly coastal spaces, where reserves or access routes may be at risk as a result of climate change.</p> <p>Where appropriate, develop action plans to offset any impact of loss.</p>	<p>Engineering Group</p> <p>Environmental Planning Unit</p>	
What we will do	How we will do it	Who	Strategy Linkages
<p><b>The Council will endeavour to protect special landscapes and landforms of value to the community.</b></p>	<p>The Council will identify landscapes and landforms of significant natural value and character and consider options for protection. This may include both regulatory and non-regulatory options.</p>	<p>Environmental Planning Unit</p>	<p>The following plans, standards and guidelines to be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District Plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Principles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protecting Landscapes, Landforms and local Character</li> <li>• Protecting Cultural and Heritage Values</li> <li>• Protecting Open Space</li> <li>• Working in Partnership</li> </ul>

## LAND ACQUISITION and DISPOSAL

The majority of our spaces for outdoor sporting activities were set aside by the various borough and county councils prior to amalgamation into the South Taranaki District in 1989. These areas were developed to meet the needs of the strong rural communities of the time, and with expectations of future growth.

In the past, the acquisition of open space has been a somewhat ad-hoc process, generally in response to opportunities as they have arisen. Acquisition has included contributions from developers and bequests; in some cases, land that was unsuitable for residential development.

The Open Space Strategy enables the Council to identify where new open space areas are needed, and make strategic acquisitions accordingly. The development of this strategy has also identified a number of properties which serve no useful purpose as open space and may be considered for disposal. A number of these properties are gazetted as reserves and it may be possible to exchange them to protect other open spaces of high community value and strategic importance.

Some of these properties may also be sold or exchanged to fund the purchase of strategic acquisitions.

There are three options to fund the acquisition of new open spaces:

1. Through cash or reserve contributions by developers. The Council will consider a reserve contribution credit for public access through private land.
2. Through rates-funded strategic land purchases
3. Through the sale or exchange of existing open spaces and reserves that have no strategic value.

The Council may also enter into other types of agreement where ownership is not possible or appropriate. These may include:

- Beautification leases
- Esplanade Strips
- Conservation Covenants
- Access Agreements / Easements
- Licences to Occupy

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACQUISITION**

The Council will consider the purchase or acquisition of land to improve or expand the open spaces we provide for the following purposes:

### **For Sports and Recreation**

Current levels of space available for sports and recreation are likely to meet the long term needs of the District; however purchases could be considered:

- Where there is a proven need for additional recreational space.
- To extend existing spaces to allow the consolidation of activities or significantly improve the accessibility or quality of the space.
- To relocate activities to a new site where there are significant long term benefits, such as the potential for multi-use and rationalisation of other spaces.
- To meet the independent recreational needs of new subdivisions.

### **To improve our open space network including walkways and cycleways**

The Council may negotiate access or consider acquisition where it will:

- Add value to /enhance our open space or improve network connectivity.
- Improve connectivity between open spaces and between communities.
- Preserve or improve access to open spaces of value to communities.
- Provide greater recreational opportunities.

### **Beautification and Protection**

The Council will consider the purchase or acquisition of land for the following purposes:

#### **To protect indigenous biodiversity**

- Threatened natural habits, where the Council has the capacity to provide an appropriate level of care and protection.

#### **To protect cultural and heritage values**

- Additional sites of cultural and heritage value where appropriate.

#### **To support the preservation of our natural landscape or character**

- To mitigate the impacts of new or existing developments or structures on the natural landscape, landforms or local character.
- To support the preservation of our natural landscape or character.

### **In all cases**

A cost / benefit analysis including purchase, development and long term maintenance costs should be completed.

Opportunities to offset the purchase of property by the disposal or change of use of existing sites should be considered.

**Risks:** There are risks associated with strategic purchases for long term benefits. These risks should be considered along with the potential for future sale (and cost recovery) and the likelihood of another opportunity to purchase.