

Active Community Plan

Palmerston North

SMALL CITY BENEFITS, BIG CITY AMBITION

2018/21

Te Kaunihera o Papaioea
Palmerston North City Council





To fulfil the vision of small city benefits, big city ambition the Council has adopted five goals. The Creative and Liveable Strategy was developed to achieve **Goal 2: A creative and exciting city** and this plan shows how the Council will contribute to achieving this goal.

Walking is the most popular recreation activity in and around Palmerston North, followed by swimming, equipment-based exercise, cycling, and running. The most common reasons adults in the Manawatū region give for taking part in sport and recreation are enjoyment, and fitness and health.

Participation in organised sport is declining, and predicted to decline further. About three-quarters of engagement in sport and recreation is unstructured and informal, and involves casual recreation rather than a competitive sporting environment. Each of the traditional team sports, netball, football and rugby, is played by only about 5-6% of adults.

In contrast, more than 90% of young people (aged 5–17 years) in the wider region spend at least three hours a week in organised or informal sport and recreation activity. About one-half of all children and young people of this age belong to a sports club (outside of school), and slightly more than half belong to a school sports team.

Palmerston North has many recreational facilities able to be used by active people. These include more than 170 reserves and sports fields, ranging from small urban 'pocket parks' to large outdoor recreation areas such as Arapuke (Kahuterawa) Forest Park and the reserves next to the Manawatū River. The city's key sports and events hub, the Central Energy Trust Arena, has a variety of indoor and outdoor venues and plays a key regional events role, as well as providing entertainment and recreation opportunities for residents. Council owns the Lido and Freyberg aquatic complexes, which meet competitive, learn-to-swim, and leisure needs. Other public and private providers like schools, Massey University and golf clubs also play a part in providing recreational opportunities and environments.

People are generally healthier and happier in places where physical activity is prioritised by decision-makers. Being active contributes to good physical health, and provides spiritual and mental health benefits. The city has well-performing representative teams and individuals, but Council is also proud of its role in contributing to an active lifestyle for all members of the community. Palmerston North has a capable and innovative sports and recreation sector that

works hard to make a difference in people's lives. Council's partner, Sport Manawatū, has a critical role in sport and recreation leadership, with its vision "Everyone Active Every Day".

Lifting participation rates in active recreation is an ongoing challenge for the sport and recreation sector, and for the allied health and education sectors. Traditionally, schools, clubs and regional sports associations have relied on Council to provide the infrastructure for competitions, events and training. Council now needs to move from being a provider and investor in infrastructure, to working with key partners to ensure decision-making about programmes and services is well-informed. The Manawatū-Whanganui regional sports facilities plan will help ensure that the city responds to identified needs in the most effective ways.

Council's goal is to develop city-wide reserves that offer unique opportunities to explore, learn, and actively experience the environment. It also wants to ensure the whole community can easily access green spaces and have the opportunity to play.

Palmerston North is already well served by parks and green spaces, ranging from small urban 'pocket parks' to wilderness areas, offering opportunities to play and explore. More than 80% of the city's homes are within 500 metres of a park. The Victoria Esplanade, a city-wide reserve with a unique native bush remnant and extensive network of tracks, is also home to the award-winning Esplanade Scenic Railway and adventure playground. The development of the

Central Energy Trust Wildbase Recovery Centre and the new Junior Road Safety Park add to its attraction.

Council will work with playground users and other community partners to make sure the city has places for everyone. Some of the city's almost 60 playgrounds are popular and used extensively, while others may no longer cater adequately to the needs of their growing community. Council aims to provide a wider variety of play environments and involve communities in decisions about their playgrounds. It will also explore forming partnerships to deliver a higher quality and range of play experiences.







The purpose of the Active Community Plan is to create a city that has great places for all people, particularly families, and have the most active community in New Zealand (Priorities 1 and 5, Creative and Liveable Strategy). The Council will:

- **Provide excellent sports and recreation options, as well as events, to ensure the city is healthy and active.**
- **Provide experiences found in other cities but without the associated hassle and cost.**
- **Promote the city's strength in sport development, capability and participation.**

Council's partner, Sport Manawatū has a critical role in sport and recreation leadership with its vision "Everyone Active Every Day".

Its aim is to increase participation and active recreation through working with clubs, schools, and regional sports associations.

Given this plan's priority to have the most active community, the delivery of this plan will require even greater collaboration with Sport Manawatū.



Where we are now

- The Council has a long-established role as the city's main sports and active recreation facility provider and asset manager with 'hands-on' service delivery achieved through contracts and formal funding agreements.
- Despite its excellent range of, and investment in, recreation facilities, the city has similar levels of participation in sport and active recreation as the rest of the country – this may be having health consequences and impacting on well-being.
- Council lacks detailed information on where in the City people are most active and inactive so this makes it hard to target interventions.
- Council has placed multiple responsibilities on Sport Manawatū, some of which are not just focused on active communities.
- Palmerston North reflects the nation-wide trend of people moving away from participation in traditional sports to informal or casual participation.
- There is pressure on Council to consider making future investment in aquatic and specialist sports facilities in order to attract top level competition and events as well as to support growth in some active recreational activities.
- Palmerston North has a wide range of generally well-performing sport and recreation clubs and groups, however there are concerns about dwindling membership and participation rates, club capability and financial sustainability.
- There are 'peak time' pressures and need for higher levels of customer comfort in some of the city's indoor facilities and swimming pools leading to user/customer dissatisfaction.
- Council has yet to fully incorporate the needs of growth sports (basketball, futsal, cycling, football, hockey, and touch) into planning processes.
- Council currently supports bowling clubs by leasing reserve land, but memberships are declining to a level where decisions need to be made about accommodating the sport's future.
- Central Energy Trust Arena is the city's main multi-purpose hub for sport and recreation and serves as the region's premier sporting and events hub.
- The Council's agreed direction for Central Energy Trust Arena is described in the Master Plan.
- There is demand for all-weather artificial turf surfaces for training and competition.
- There is little co-ordinated development of activity 'hubs' around schools and parks so benefits of co-location of facilities available to the wider community may not be realised.
- There is an opportunity for decision-making about Council facilities to take into account the wider 'city picture'.
- Some secondary schools also have ambition to improve and add to sports facilities for students and the community and are looking to the Council to support their plans.
- Massey University has a vision to be 'New Zealand's defining sports university' with planned development of a sports hub to include artificial surfaces for both hockey and football, alongside existing facilities.
- Council supports community-led initiatives such as Palmy Rocks, Passport to Play, and Dirty 30, which are successful in promoting activity and opportunities in parks and reserves.
- There is a growing popularity in 'mass participation' events that encourage social connections such as Manawatū Striders Super 7 events, "I tried the Tri" series, Whānau and Weetbix Triathlons.

- Access to neighbourhood reserves and playgrounds is uneven in some parts of the city and this potentially impacts on some residents' ability to access local (and no-cost) opportunities within a walkable distance.
- The city has many unique and special places to be active in but the community's awareness of them is difficult to ascertain.
- City forecasts suggests that Palmerston North needs another 'City Reserve' to accommodate population growth, and there is uncertainty about what is the next City Reserve.
- City play opportunities aren't meeting community needs.
- Some parts of the city walkway network are incomplete (such as the 'city loop' track and the Palmerston North to Ashhurst shared pathway), causing frustration for users.
- The Council's dog control areas provide a range of opportunities for dogs and their owners to exercise.
- There are opportunities to promote active recreation in other Council projects (e.g. transportation).
- The Hokowhitu Lagoon is potentially under-utilised for water-based recreation activities.
- The Manawatū River has some 'safe swim spots' but there is a perception that the river is unsafe or the water quality cannot support water-based recreation.



Where we want to be

- Palmerston North is a model active community.
- Sport Manawatū is better supported by the Council to improve activity levels through the targeted delivery of a variety of programmes, activities, and initiatives, some of which may focus on particular areas of the city.
- The city's active 'destinations' or 'activity hubs' offer multiple experiences/opportunities in one location with the aim of prolonging visits that encourage activity .
- Sports House at Central Energy Trust Arena is seen as the 'shop front' for the community to better access sport and active recreation in the city.
- City facilities and public spaces will encourage formal and informal physical activity, catering for a wide range of ages, abilities and interests.
- Council provides more leadership in addressing activity levels by leading by example.
- The city's sport and recreation sector is strong, and leads the way in terms of innovative approaches to reversing declining participation rates and improving club sustainability.
- Sport and active recreation providers work collegially to enhance opportunities for the communities to engage and remain being physically active.
- Council and its partners encourage and support community champions who lead initiatives that focus on being physically active.
- Council only delivers activity-focussed programmes and initiatives where community leaders/champions are unable to or where broad community benefits are expected.
- Council decisions about investment in sport facilities are informed by a wider regional perspective as well as by local community needs.
- The Manawatū River Park is a City Reserve.
- A 'bigger picture' approach is taken in planning for sport and active recreation options that recognises the value of both formal/organised sport as well as informal, casual recreation options.
- Council investment in city playscapes matches the community need for this critical contributor to young people's physical and social development and family-focussed fun.
- The city centre has opportunities for people to be active and play.
- There is increased and more visible use of all of city spaces and places.
- Massey University's Sporting Hub for high performance and students is supported by the Council through formal agreements and includes facilitating community access to enable increased activity levels.
- Agreed plans are in place to deliver quality public spaces through the strategic implementation of the Victoria Esplanade and Te Āpiti Master Plans, Ahimate and Memorial Park development plans, and the Manawatū River Framework.
- Priority is given to completing shared pathway, walkway or cycleway linkages and connections.
- Walkways, shared paths, cycleways and green corridors link to the wider transportation (roads, footpaths) network.
- Streetscapes and park environments are safe, attractive and encourage activity; there are safe places to be active in at night and in winter.
- Neighbourhood park development is carried out in partnership with the local community.
- There is a co-ordinated programme of active events that are low, or no cost, and accessible across the city.



- Palmerston North has fit-for-purpose facilities that meet demonstrated community's sport and recreation needs and retains its ability to host major sporting events.
- Everyone can access opportunities in order to be more active.
- Water recreation activities are enjoyed in safe areas of the Manawatū River and at the Hokowhitu Lagoon.
- All recreation areas are clearly signed and promoted.
- The city is 'dog-friendly' and offers a range of areas to provide for the exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.



How we're going to get there

Day to day / ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Provide and maintain city reserves, neighbourhood reserves, playgrounds, sportsfields, Arena Manawatū, aquatic facilities, walkways, shared paths, sport and recreation facilities.
- Contract Sport Manawatū to deliver sport and recreation services to meet a number of community outcomes sought by Council.
- Align Council's support to Sport Manawatū to the Council's strategic outcomes through contract negotiations and a letter of expectations.
- Facilitate discussions with sports codes or clubs where emergent issues involving Council's recreation network need resolution.
- Through contract and facility management, and discussions with facility managers, optimise the use of Council aquatic facilities and the Central Energy Trust Arena.
- Work with and formalise Council's role in supporting sport and recreation activities at Massey University.
- Support the development of shade/shelter structures and the ongoing operation of the Manawatū Community Athletics Track.
- Ensure current accessibility standards are included in all recreation capital development projects.
- Ensure that, while people are being active at Council facilities, they are protected from the sun through the provision of shade.
- Extend the walking and cycling network, including completing and upgrading parts of the existing network.
- Ensure that sport and active recreation projects benefit from a multidisciplinary / integrated approach.
- Prepare and review an Asset Management Plan for Recreation and Community Facilities and implement programmes (LGA).
- Carry out recreation and reserves planning functions under the Reserves Act 1977 and LGA including the preparation of Reserve Management and Development Plans and Master Plans.
- Carry out research or analysis on active recreation trends and industry developments.
- Implement projects from approved Master Plans, Reserve Management Plans and Development Plans.
- Put in place performance measures to ensure Council and its partners are accountable for achieving agreed outcomes.
- Plan for and provide sport and recreation facilities in urban growth areas.
- Provide signage and wayfinding to direct people to places and spaces to recreate in.
- Contribute to community-led initiatives through operational grants or by assisting project proponents to obtain external funding.

New ongoing actions to achieve the purpose

- Through Sport Manawatū, oversee recommendations from the Regional Sports Facility Plan.
- Identify and support sport and active recreation providers, including community groups, wanting to align their plans to the Council's outcomes and those of its partners.
- Carry out an 'Active Recreation Needs Assessment' to research unstructured and informal recreation activities.
- Develop a parks and reserves categorisation approach that signals clear purposes and the level of expected development.
- Establish an Active Community Forum with key partners and stakeholders to discuss and promote best practice approaches.
- Provide an Active Community Fund to promote accessibility to sport and recreation opportunities for people on low incomes.

- Investigate opportunities for partnerships between Council and education providers
- Provide outdoor gym equipment in parks and facilities to provide informal opportunities that increase activity.
- Facilitate sports code-led developments where there is a demonstrated community benefit.
- Promote free active opportunities through the Council's website.
- Work with event organizers and community leaders to deliver a range of active programmes and events in different parts of the city.
- Increase investment in sportsfield drainage to enable better use and availability (e.g. Ongley and Colquhoun Parks)
- Implement new projects from approved Master Plans, Reserve Management Plans and Development Plans and Asset Management Plans.
- Implement the Central Energy Trust Arena Master Plan.

Specific programmes to achieve the purpose (with timeframe)

- Support the Sports House development within the Central Energy Trust Arena (by end of 2020/21).
 - In the event of bowling clubs not requiring leases over Council land, assess need for other uses and convert the land to meet another sport or recreation need (by end 2022/2023).
 - Design a number of walking experiences/trails that focus on showcasing art (sculptures, murals), heritage and other city icons (beginning 2018/2019).
 - Designate walkway/shared path connections in the District Plan (by end of 2021/2022).
 - Review the Kahuterawa (Arapuke) Outdoor Recreation Plan (by end of 2019/2020).
 - Develop a 'Play Policy' that outlines Council's commitment to provide for a range of play opportunities for different age groups (by end of 2018/2019).
 - Give priority to Arena Master Plan programmes relating to multi-code artificial surfaces that enable greater community use and participation (by end of 2018/2019).
 - Construct a centrally located lit 3-4 km walking circuit to enable safe, night time walking and exercise during evenings and winter (e.g. between the River bridges once the He Ara Kotahi bridge built) (by end of 2022/2023).
 - Develop a Spatial Plan for the whole city that depicts all activity hubs, proposed projects from Master and Development Plans and connections through walkways, pathways and cycleways (by end of 2018/2019).
 - Implement three 'Play in the City' key area interventions in the City Centre Framework (by end of 2021/2022).
 - Develop Flexible Future Facility guidelines on ways Council's sport and recreation facilities can be flexible, easily adapted/repurposed to meet future needs and trends (by end of 2019/2020).
 - Facilitate the provision of an aquatic facility in Ashhurst by operating and upgrading the Ashhurst Community Pool (operating beginning 2018/2019 and upgrading by end of 2021/2022).
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Actions contributing to Council's strategic themes

a) Smart city practices

- Design a measurement tool to track uses of city parks and playgrounds.
- Use digital tools to promote active opportunities.
- Design and promote an online community activity challenge.
- Investigate innovative solutions for more efficient heating in facilities.
- Design an online booking system for real-time access to 'pay to play' opportunities in Council facilities.

b) Sustainable practices

- Prioritise environmentally friendly infrastructure development in sports and recreation facilities.
- Investigate the impact of climate change on the city parks and recreation network.

c) Iwi partnerships

- Engage on major sport and recreation developments.
- Express iwi and Māori cultural heritage values in city parks by making stories and traditions more visible through place names, Toi Māori – artistic expression, bilingual signage, and ancestral stories and interpretation.
- Establish a framework for mana whenua to partner and participate in policy, planning, design, development and management of parks and open spaces based on recognition and respect, which may include co-governance of particular parks and open spaces.
- Work with mana whenua to identify, protect, preserve, and manage wāhi tapu and other places of significance within the public open space network.
- Acknowledge the contribution of Rangitāne o Manawatū, for example through the programmes facilitated by Best Care Whakapai Hauora Charitable Trust centred on kaupapa Māori physical activity programmes from rangatahi to kaumātua, such as, kapa haka, ki-o-rahi, and ngā taonga tākaro.
- Promote and encourage Māori participation in physical activity in city parks, reserves, and cultural facilities.

d) Strategic Partnerships

- Foster a strong working relationship with Sport Manawatū and Sport New Zealand.
- Work cooperatively with adjoining councils to ensure the region's sport and active recreation needs are met.
- Work collaboratively with other partners, stakeholders, community champions, and private facility providers or businesses, including:
 - Department of Conservation
 - MidCentral District Health Board
 - Massey University
 - Cancer Society
 - Ministry of Education and Boards of Trustees



Measures of success



- Increase in use of parks, sportsfields and playgrounds
- Increase in satisfaction of Council's sport and recreation facilities
- Increase in use of Central Energy Trust Arena for community sport and active recreation
- Increase in use of aquatic facilities
- Greater completion of walkways/pathways/cycleways
- Increase in participation rates for all adults in sport and recreation

Related policies



- Asset Management Plan – Recreation and Community Facilities (2017)
- Reserve Management and Development Plans and Master Plans (Reserves Act 1977) – Te Āpiti/Manawatu Gorge, Victoria Esplanade, Memorial Park, Ahimate Park, Manawatū River framework, Kahuterawa (Arapuke) Outdoor Recreation Plan
- City Centre Framework
- Dog Control Policy and Bylaw
- District Plan
- Central Energy Trust Arena Master Plan
- Regional Sports Facility Plan
- Community Funding Policy
- Play Policy (to be developed)
- “Flexible Future Facilities” guideline (to be developed)
- Naming Rights for Council-Owned Recreational Facilities Policy
- Reserve and Walkway Naming Policy
- Smokefree Outdoor Areas Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Parks UAV Drone Policy
- Use of Public Tennis Courts resolution 26 September 1994

Long-term Plan levels of service

Council provides a wide range of accessible and well maintained sports facilities to increase levels of participation in sport and active recreation. Council funds and works in partnership with external recreation organisations to help increase levels of participation in sport and active recreation.

Long-term Plan KPIs

A 30 year Asset Management Plan is in place and major AMP projects approved in the 10 year plan are achieved [specific projects will be listed in the Plan].

Sportsfields are available for weekend organized use.

Funding is distributed and the key objectives achieved with the funding will be described.

Swimming pool annual usage:

- Lido – more than 330,000 people
- Freyberg – more than 110,000 people .



Actions considered but not included in this plan

- Promote and update Council's online presence to direct people to places and experiences/challenges where they can be active.
- Develop a marketing plan/visitor strategy for the City Reserves.
- Through Sport Manawatū, deliver a city-wide education campaign to encourage a more active community, research activity needs, and run targeted interventions for the city's diverse population.
- Investigate the viability of Council-supported holiday or after school care programmes that are 'activity' focused.
- Design and promote an online community activity challenge.
- Provide movable equipment (e.g. football goals during summer) in parks and facilities to provide informal opportunities that increase activity.
- Include an 'active' component in Council festivals and events, activations, public space projects and key cultural facilities (such as the Library and Te Manawa) where possible.
- Carry out an online survey to better measure the city's activity and usage levels, and which also identifies barriers to participation and signals priority areas for investment.
- Carry out needs assessment/feasibility studies on swimming pool provision and bowls.
- Provide a contestable School/Council Partnership Fund to facilitate projects that benefit community use.
- Trial free entry or half price entry to Council's pools for pre-schoolers and adult "off-peak use" discounts to encourage more use.
- Raise comfort levels in Council indoor facilities such as stadia (where practical and economic) and raising swimming pool temperatures through innovative approaches to heating.
- Further contribution to the operation of Manawatū Community Athletics Track and Sport and Rugby Institute.
- Support the Bike Manawatū off-road cycling track.
- Development of new citywide playgrounds for young people, beyond those currently planned.
- Neighbourhood Reserves – Awapuni – Panako Place Accessway to Awapuni Park.





Photographer: Kevin Bills



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