

# **Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy for Tararua District**

**Prepared for  
Tararua District Council**

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 **SPACES & PLACES CONSULTANTS**  
*Innovate, Initiate, Activate*

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**Author:** David Allan

**Quality Assurance:** Richard Hutchinson

Contact:  
Global Leisure Group Limited  
PO Box 2147  
Stoke  
Nelson

[Davea@glg.nz](mailto:Davea@glg.nz)



# 1 What is Play, Active Recreation and Sport?

Play, active recreation, and sport are three interconnected concepts that encompass various forms of physical activities and engagement. While they share similarities and some overlapping occurs, each term carries distinct characteristics and objectives.

Play refers to spontaneous, self-motivated activities that are primarily driven by enjoyment, curiosity, and imagination. It is a fundamental aspect of human nature and is often observed in children who engage in unstructured and creative activities, but play occurs at any life stage. Play allows individuals to explore their physical capabilities, develop social skills, and enhance cognitive abilities. It is characterized by its flexible nature, absence of rigid rules, and emphasis on personal expression.

Active recreation involves purposeful physical activities undertaken during leisure time. Unlike play, active recreation often involves organized or structured activities, although it still emphasizes enjoyment and personal fulfillment. It includes individual and group activity (usually with friends and whanau) and can include engaging in team sports informally.

Sport, on the other hand, is a more formalized and competitive form of physical activity. It typically involves organised games or contests governed by specific rules and regulations. Sports can be individual, or team based. Sport focuses on skill development, strategic thinking, teamwork, and fair competition. It often includes formal training, coaching, and participation in organised leagues or competitions.

# 2 Why is Play, Active Recreation and Sport important?

Play, active recreation, and sport contribute to physical fitness, personal development, social interaction, and overall Hauora/ well-being. They offer individuals opportunities to explore their physical potential, enhance their skills, develop meaningful social connections, and experience the joy of movement and competition. Whether engaging in unstructured play, participating in recreational activities, or competing in organised sports, these activities contribute to a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

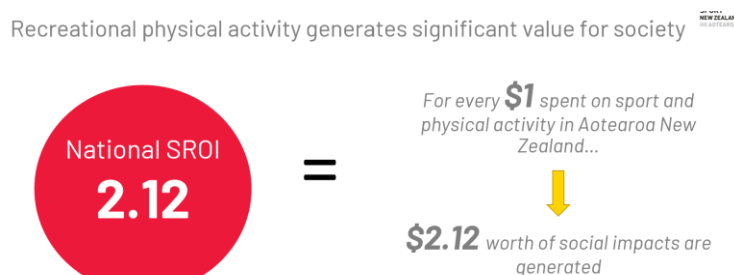
## Social Return on Investment

The Central Government adoption of a Hauora/ wellbeing approach has very significant implications for the play, active recreation and sport sector. Sport NZ estimates for every \$1 spent on sport and physical activity \$2.12 of social return on investment is generated.

Play, active recreation and sport makes a significant contribution to Hauora/ wellbeing for our people, particularly for Māori through strengthening intergenerational relationships and reinforcing cultural values, beliefs, social norms and knowledge.

Investment in play, active recreation and sport programmes, and suitable spaces and places, in the right locations will enable improved physical activity levels and improve the quality of the participant experience. This will deliver benefits to local communities of: <sup>1</sup>:

- Increased social connectedness
- Improved health and social wellbeing
- Increased cultural identity/ ūkaipōtanga
- Improved environmental quality
- Improved access to participation opportunities



<sup>1</sup> Sport New Zealand Outcomes Framework

### 3 What do we know about Play, Active Recreation and Sport in the Tararua District?

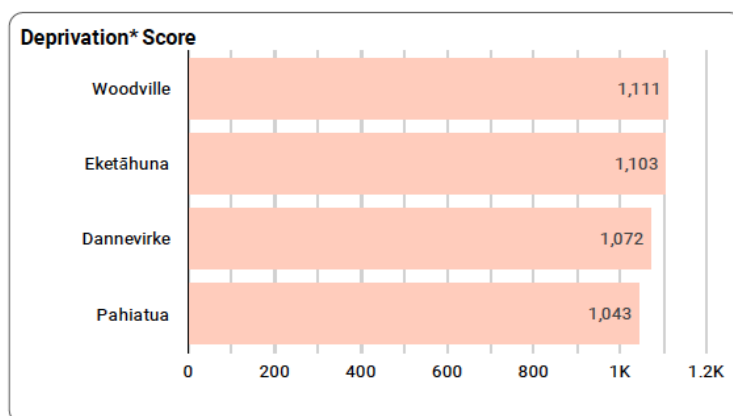
#### 3.1 Population

- After over 50 years of population decline Tararua is growing again. The district population is projected to increase from 19,050 in 2022 to 20,357 in 2034 residents or an increase of 5.7% (TDC 2024-34 LTP Population Model).
- The number of residents aged 65+ increased by 34% from 2006 to 2018 and is projected to increase by a further 50% by 2031 to 27% of the population. This is an expected increase of 1,231 people aged 65+ by 2031.
- In the 2018 Census 84.5% of the resident population identified as European and 24.6% as Māori.
- Historically, the heaviest users of sport and active recreation spaces and facilities network are the school age residents. The network has been designed to primarily meet their needs. However, the current and projected growth in the 65+ age-group with their significantly greater discretionary time is placing pressure on the network to meet their needs and provide for their preferred activities. This pressure will grow on our current network with much of it built before 1996 and any new facilities will be used well beyond 2048.

Analysis of District population used the Community Analysis Tool provided by data science company (ActiveX change). This interactive tool provides insights via a sophisticated segmentation approach to analysis of the resident population based on consumption patterns and demographic statistics. It includes analysis of market, supply and needs for six key catchments based on drive time from the geographic centre of each town.

Key findings are:

- 56% of the district population live within 5-minutes (10,800 residents) of the centre of our 4 main towns
- These 10,800 largely urban residents have higher levels of deprivation with an average index score of 1,064 than the more rurally based 20-minute drive-time population at 1,024
- The four catchments have varying scores in terms of levels of deprivation (see chart) with Woodville and Eketāhuna slightly more deprived than Dannevirke and Pahiatua



More information on the full analysis can be found in the companion Information Report.

\*the HIGHER the score, the more deprived an area is.  
Baseline score is 1000.  
If the score is greater than 1000, it is more deprived.  
If the score is less than 1000, it is less deprived.

#### 3.2 Future State

There are play and active recreation activities that are currently more popular and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future in Tararua based on their attributes, regional participation data and sector trends plus a significant proportion of spaces and places are provided by Council. These include:

- Walking
- Cycling
- Scooter/ skateboard/ trick biking
- Unstructured play (often at playgrounds)
- Water play and swimming
- Fitness and exercise

There are also sports that are currently more popular and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future in Tararua, particularly for our tamariki and rangatahi. Priority is based on their attributes, regional participation data and sector trends plus those that are historically reliant on Council for all or a significant proportion of provision of activity spaces and places for the sport. These include:

- Basketball
- Netball
- Hockey
- Rugby
- Football
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Touch

In addition, there are activities likely to become popular again or are emerging as likely to be popular activities in Tararua based on their inclusive attributes and sector trends (if structure/ organisation and delivery was put in place). Many are whanau friendly (and enable most multiple generations to play together) and relatively easy skill requirements to get started. These include:

- Streetball/ 3on3 basketball has high uptake by tamariki and rangatahi where supply is in place (can use any available court or paved area that has a backboard and hoop)
- Pickleball (modified game often using a badminton court) that is gaining strong uptake nationally from participants new to racket sports and participants needing a less physically demanding game with significant uptake by retiree age group
- Floorball (modified version of hockey and ice hockey using a lightweight plastic ball and sticks) that is popular as an indoor version of hockey
- Emerging modified versions of other sports for participants needing a less physically demanding game, such as walking netball, with significant uptake by retiree age group
- Touch (formerly a significant sport activity in the district) now revived and growing in Dannevirke thanks to the two iwi personnel leading this mahi
- Badminton and table tennis (nationally there has been a resurgence in interest and participation in both)

There are other sport activities that are currently active and likely remain so for the foreseeable future in Tararua based on their attributes, regional participation data and sector trends. These sports have specialised activity spaces and are historically self-reliant in provision of their land and facilities. These include:

- Target shooting
- Bowls
- Golf

## 4 Why do we need a strategy?

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The Strategy purpose is to provide guidance to Tararua District Council on the future direction of play, active recreation and sport in the district over the next 10-30 years and to meet the changing demands and needs that are already impacting current provision.

The focus of the Strategy is on **enhancing and increasing participation** in play, active recreation and sport to improve the Hauora/ wellbeing of people living in Tararua district.

### 4.1 Drivers of change

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There are some key factors driving the need for a change in approach in Tararua district.

**Getting more participation and wellbeing (social value) out of what we already have is critical.**

The increase in cost of building new spaces and places over the past 5-10 years, along with the environmental impact of construction, means we need to use better what we already have. This involves a combination of supporting people (volunteers and participants), the clubs, schools and other providers, and more use of the spaces and places we have (often our parks and facilities) in the district.

**Fostering social connectedness** through playing together via play, active recreation and sport activities is increasing in importance in maintaining healthy communities and residents, especially in our virtual/ digital screen focused age.

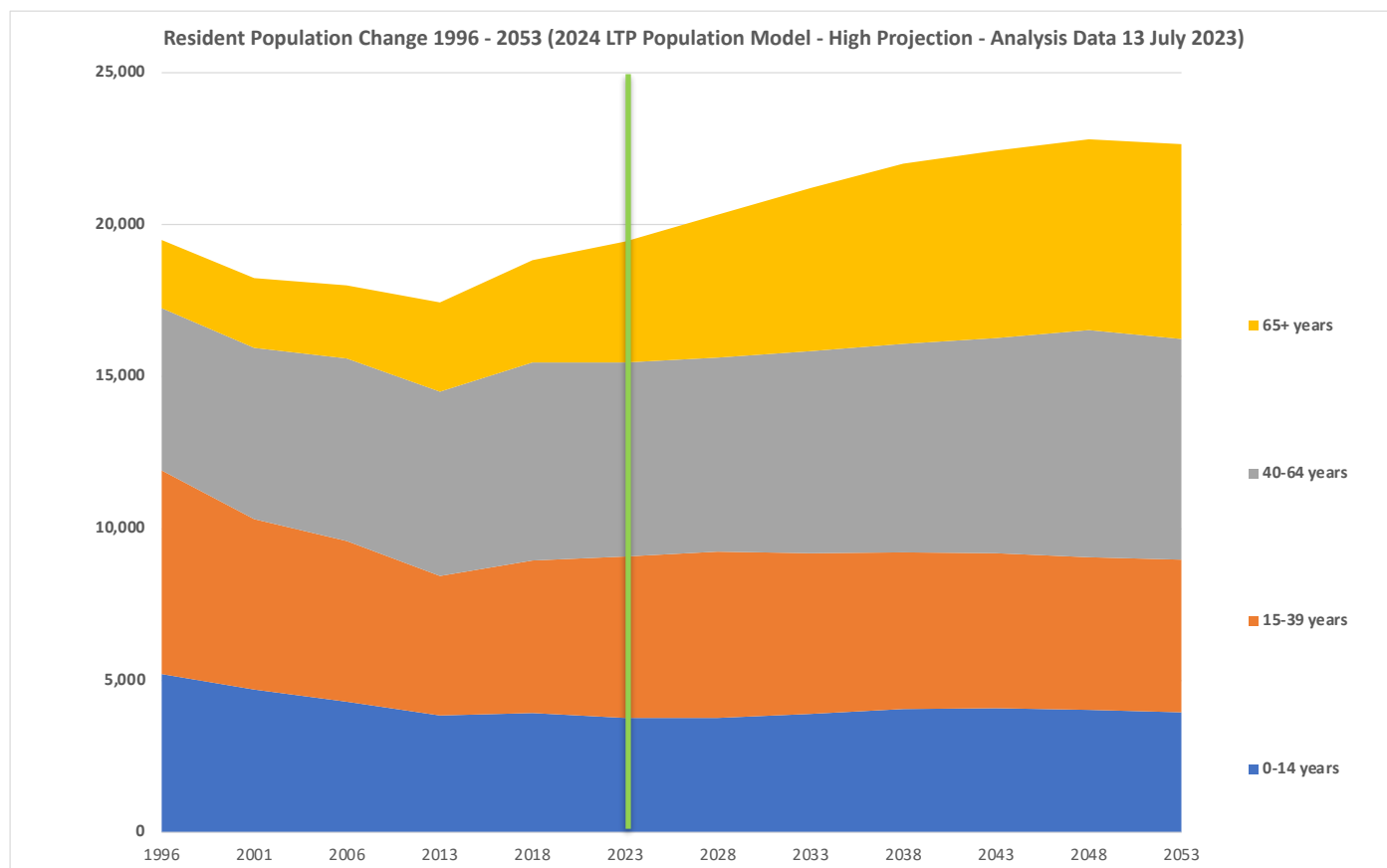
**Environmental sustainability and reducing our carbon footprint** are rapidly becoming an overarching focus. Minimising carbon use and its adverse environmental impacts means a change in our thinking about:

- How we organise our active recreation and sport activities by doing more closer to our homes with less travel and cost making it more accessible and affordable for our whanau.
- Our spaces and places and asking is it viable to extend the life and upgrade an existing space or place to meet the need. If not, is it viable to convert an existing building. If neither is viable, then build new and drive for the lowest practical impact on the environment (for its whole operating life).

**The resident population has and is continuing to change**

Looking back to 1996 helps to understand how different our resident population is now (the green line) and what it is projected to be in 2048. Overall, the total population is looking stable with slow growth. However, we will have many older residents going forward. Young residents who are traditionally the heaviest users of programmes, and spaces and places will decline slightly and is significantly lower than in 1996.

**Figure 1: Resident population – change in age composition 1996-2053**



### Younger Māori population

Nearly one in four residents (24.6%) identify themselves as Māori in 2018 and this was 50% more than the national average of 16.5%. Many more Māori are in the younger age groups than Pākehā and other ethnicities. These tamariki and rangatahi will make up a larger proportion of the heaviest users of our play, active recreation and sport activities, spaces and places in the next 10-30 years.

### The way we play and/or are physically active is changing.

- The focus on wellness through physical activity has been growing in New Zealand.
- Large and continuing growth in more casual active recreation participation (e.g. mountain biking) and decline in formal competition club sport participation.
- The growth in the 65+ years age group with greater free time for active recreation and sport than other age-groups and is generating significant demand on a spaces and places network. The current network is primarily focused on provision for activities undertaken by tamariki and rangatahi. We need to re-shape provision to meet the needs of these older residents as well as tamariki and rangatahi.

## 4.2 Supply

Spaces and places have been developed over past decades and as we have seen from the population profile above the age structure of users and demands are changing. The gap and over-supply analysis of physical spaces and places is detailed in the companion Information Report and the assessment is based on accessibility and suitability of facilities to meet identified needs.

Key findings related to supply are:

## Schools are a major supplier

- 12 out of 15 schools that responded make their spaces and places available for community use outside of school hours
- However, a long-term community-school access agreement (a legally binding contract or lease agreement) between Council and the school/ Ministry of Education (MOE), must be in place prior to inclusion of a school facility in the actual supply analysis of 'public' facilities for 'community provision'. This means the facility is available for the community to book and use during peak demand times for use by clubs, programmes and casual active recreation i.e. after-school, at weekends and during holiday periods.

## Swimming Pools

The national aquatic facility provision benchmark is under review and will be available in late 2023. This will assist Council with its consideration of provision levels and what is appropriate in terms of scale for Tararua district<sup>2</sup>. Swimming pools are a critical provision and are 'trusted' safe spaces due to the supervision provided by lifeguards and other staff for tamariki and rangatahi. They are a critical provision for older residents for exercise, relaxation and maintaining mobility. The network features:

- Wai Splash in Dannevirke is an ageing facility with major renewals needed, particularly the ancillary spaces retained from the earlier outdoor pool. This presents an opportunity to improve the configuration of the facility and how it relates to the Domain as a whole.
- Council has confirmed a conditional contribution of \$600,000 capital towards the new indoor aquatic centre in Pahiatua as well as agreement in principle of Council owning and operating the facility.
- Woodville appears to have potential duplication with two pools – an indoor heated pool at school and public outdoor seasonal pool at Recreation Ground. However, the school pool is by arrangement and controlled by the school so at this stage cannot be counted as public provision.
- Eketāhuna has two seasonal outdoor pools - a community and a school pool, the school pool provides learn to swim.

There is potential for rationalisation of swimming pools, but this will need deeper investigation.

## Outdoor Artificial Surfaces (Courts & Turf)

The mix of activities using outdoor courts is widening. Accessible community courts now have active recreation activities including scooter and skate activity. Many are modified versions of traditional sports such as Basketball (mostly various versions of streetball or 3on3), Tennis (Pickleball) and Football operating in an informal mode such pick-up games.

### Artificial Turf

Hockey has good levels of provision by national standards with a full-size turf in Pahiatua and part-size turfs in Dannevirke and Eketāhuna. There is a gap in local provision of a part-size turf in Woodville. Hockey in Dannevirke is split between two part-size turf areas overlaid on court areas at Anderson Street and at Dannevirke High School (junior hockey). This is not ideal but provides affordable access to adequate surfaces for training and small sided games. The relatively short life of artificial turf means the renewal cycle is shorter creating significant provision costs.

## Soil Sports Fields

The most significant pressure on fields is in winter. This is a technical area requiring a detailed supply and demand analysis to be more definitive regarding provision levels. The following assessment is based on feedback from stakeholders.

- Dannevirke is reliant on privately owned sports fields (A&P and Rugby Sub-Union) to supplement public fields
- Consolidation of Junior Rugby is placing pressure on fields at Bush Multi-sport Park in Pahiatua.
- Growth of Football is placing pressure on fields at Woodville, particularly availability of full-size fields

## Indoor Court Sport

The national indoor court provision benchmark is under review and will be available in July 2023. This will assist Council with its consideration of provision levels and what is appropriate for Tararua district<sup>3</sup>. Pahiatua has an outstanding and unusually large facility (Bush Multi-sport) for its catchment population. However, this hub facility is well used and supported by the community and funders. Dannevirke has a single under-sized court, and the recent feasibility study indicates the need for a co-located 2-court provision based on the increasing popularity of basketball plus other sports and active recreation demand. Woodville Sports Stadium has light use now and could be considered as a venue for programmed active recreation such as basketball, badminton, pickleball and streetball.

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<sup>2</sup> National Aquatic Facilities Strategy 2013 is under review with an updated provision benchmark due in July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> National Indoor Sport Facilities Strategy 2013 is under review with an updated provision benchmark due in July 2023.

## Playgrounds

Playgrounds are a critical provision for informal self-directed play by whanau groups with pre-school or tamariki (5-11 years<sup>4</sup>). They are used to a lesser extent by rangatahi, due to limited age-appropriate provision for 12+ years<sup>5</sup>. However, groups of tamariki and rangatahi often gather at playgrounds to play and socialise. Tararua has a network of 13 public playgrounds and 11 at schools in the district that are open for community use.

A Council review of the physical state of playgrounds was completed in July 2022 and high-risk hazards are currently being remedied. Medium risk hazards are also being dealt with using funds already allocated in the 2023/24 financial year of the LTP. The 2021-2031 LTP also includes planned capital expenditure on playgrounds under Parks & Recreation of \$588,000 over 10 years including district wide expenditures.

## Wheel Parks

Wheel parks are now a critical provision for informal self-directed active recreation and are heavily used by tamariki, rangatahi and sometimes by adult residents to develop and practice their skills and have fun. Groups will often gather at these facilities to play and socialise, particularly those sites with appropriate support facilities and services. Stakeholder feedback indicates some issues in the network:

- Pahiatua has a modern fit for purpose and extensive Wheels Park co-located in the cluster of facilities anchored by Bush Multisport
- Dannevirke facility is under-sized and in sub-optimal location in the commercial area
- Council has approved in principle the use of Council owned land for the development of a skate park facility in Woodville. However, further information is necessary before a decision can be made on the development.

## 5 What does this strategy include?

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The Strategy has been informed by stakeholder consultation and desktop research and analysis.

The Strategy outlines:

- A vision for sustainable play, active recreation and sport in Tararua district
- The values and principles for our play, active recreation and sport community
- What is foreseeable based on trends
- How the Council will enable, facilitate and support partnership within the community
- Principles to assist Council to decision-making regarding investment the development and delivery of improved play, active recreation and sport opportunities in the district

A companion Information Report contains all the information supplied to the Project Steering Group during research and development phases of the Strategy. It provides information on the play, active recreation and sport spaces and places that we manage and the work we undertake. It includes district level analysis as well as analysis of supply and needs for four key catchments geographically centred on the towns of Dannevirke, Pahiatua, Woodville and Eketāhuna. It also lists opportunities and project options identified from the consultation and desktop research for potential implementation.

## 6 How has this strategy been prepared and who was involved?

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The Strategy was prepared by interviewing key stakeholders, surveying schools and active recreation groups, clubs and organisations, reviewing other plans and strategies for alignment and running workshops with the community.

The Strategy has been developed through a partnership of key organisations including: Tararua District Council, Ngāti Kahungunu ki Tāmaki nui-a-Rua (Ngāti Kahungunu), Rangitāne o Tamaki nui a Rua (Rangitāne) and Sport Manawātū. All were represented on the Project Steering Group that provided invaluable guidance and local perspective.

The research findings and snapshot of current provision of spaces, places and activity are detailed in the companion Information Report. The development of the Strategy was disrupted by Covid, particularly the community engagement

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<sup>4</sup> Sport NZ operating definition for tamariki is 5-11 years of age

<sup>5</sup> Sport NZ operating definition for rangatahi is 12-18 years of age



with stakeholders including clubs, schools and trusts which mostly shifted to on-line questionnaires, interviews and meetings.

## 7 What are the Priority Needs?

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The feedback during the community workshops, survey of clubs and stakeholder interviews were consistent on the greatest challenges faced by organised sport and active recreation. These can be summarised as:

### **People first, spaces and places second**

Organised sport and active recreation in Tararua district rely heavily on a declining and ageing volunteer resource to govern, manage, organise and lead activities. The increasing diversity of activities is spreading these volunteers more thinly. Many of these volunteers have been undertaking their roles for longer than they anticipated, and many see little option but to continue as there are fewer people offering to volunteer, particularly for roles with heavier time commitments.

Like most rural districts, residents commonly travel big distances to access many of their sport, and some active recreation and play opportunities. A common theme was the need to travel extensively to be able to compete at sport at a higher level. It was notable that some junior age groups were travelling to the Manawātū because of the competition structure requiring this. The 'suction' factor of talented young athletes being drawn away to larger centres, especially Palmerston North to further their sporting careers. Tararua district is not seen as able to compete with these larger population centres in most sports codes with their larger player base, better support services and often better and more specialised spaces and places.

Another common theme was the desire to be able to **participate closer to home**, especially at the junior age levels as the cost and logistics for families were a significant and increasing barrier to participation in sport. In addition, there was a call for more programme activity closer to home such as the indoor hockey programme operating at Bush Multi-sport Hub.

There was recognition that Tararua district cannot be all things, to all people, that the Council needs to be selective as to which traditional activities and assets it continues to support and which emerging activities showing growth that it looks to support to further grow participation.

Common key needs identified during the research and stakeholder engagement were:

### **People**

- Better retention and recruitment of volunteers was the most common theme in feedback across the district
- Support for recruitment and retention of volunteers through mentoring, training and covering expenses was the key expressed need to enable participation to grow within organised competitive sport and active recreation programmes
- Make better use of volunteers we have by clearing them of administration tasks so they can focus on delivering the activity
- Lighten the compliance load on the volunteer through 'backroom' support by people with the expertise to support and navigate these requirements
- More provision of junior sport and active recreation programme activity nearer to home, so it is more accessible and affordable for families i.e. at venues in Dannevirke, Pahiatua and to a lesser extent in Woodville and Eketāhuna
- Better continuity in delivery of sport from season to season, there are interruptions when a key organiser is unable to be replaced, there is a need for intervention to bridge the gap.<sup>6</sup>
- Provide more multi-code/ activity taster (have-a-go) type fun focused events in local towns

### **Spaces and Places**

- Utilise the spaces and places we have first, 'sweat the asset' approach
- More provision for informal/ casual activities with skate/ scooter spaces a recurring theme (with the exception of Pahiatua with its large skate park)
- More investment in spaces and places popular with active retirees to respond to projected growth in this age group

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<sup>6</sup> Generally, the small population base (and number of participants) means that it is not seen as viable to pay a part-time organiser as the cost of participation would be unaffordable for many families. Pay to play modules were seen as viable to pay an organiser for social sports with larger numbers such as touch and summer football located at larger venues in Dannevirke and Pahiatua, where the cost is spread across a larger number of people.

- Investment by Council and other funders in selected strategic facilities as lack of investment is now evident in condition of many current spaces and places, many were seen as not fit for purpose to meet current expectations
- Develop an investment framework to assist with prioritisation of play, active recreation and sport projects. The principles and criteria would be used by Council to assess the relative merit or value of projects for financial support at key points in the investment planning cycle starting with the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.

## 8 What is our vision?

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The District Strategy vision is:

**Tararua – Thriving Together Ka huri tahi ngatahi Tararua.**

We thrive together. Vibrant, connected communities where our land and waters are nurtured, and our people flourish.

*Mā te whenua, mā te waioara tātou e ora ai hei hapori ngangahau hei hapori honohono hoki.*

Play, active recreation and sport positively impact on all six *Desired Outcomes* and all four *Focus Areas of the District Strategy*.

**Our vision for play, active recreation and sport is simple - to get Every Body Active in Tararua district**

Our intent is for every resident to have access to quality play, active recreation, and sporting opportunities and experiences to improve community wellbeing. We envision a district where individuals of all ages and abilities can come together to play and engage in physical activity to enjoy the numerous health benefits that come with it.

Our intent is to provide space, facilities, programmes and services that reflect and meet the changing needs and interests of our community and foster a lifelong love of play, active recreation, and sport. Ensuring the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of programmes, spaces and places will create a legacy of healthy and active living for generations to come through collaboration and innovation.

## 9 What are our values and principles?

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The communities and people of Tararua will use its tikanga (way of doing things) to deliver the changes outlined within the Strategy guided by the following values and principles.

**Te Tiriti o Waitangi: We acknowledge the mana of the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and in doing so acknowledge Māori as tangata whenua.**

**Values:**

- We value the right of all residents from the youngest to oldest in our communities to have playful experiences and recognise the importance of play in our Hauora/ well-being.
- We value working together to create more than the sum of the parts.
- We value our strengths as a rural district and use them to meet our challenges.

**Principles**

The principles to guide us are:

1. **Increase participation:** We aim to increase participation in play, active recreation and sports activities among all members of the community, regardless of age, ability, or background.
2. **Inclusion and Mana enhancing:** Ensure that all members of the community have access to spaces, places and programmes, regardless of their age, gender, ability, or socio-economic background.
3. **Collaboration:** Foster collaboration and partnerships between community organisations, local government, and other stakeholders to ensure effective and sustainable delivery of facilities and programmes.
4. **Accessibility/ Equity:** Ensure that spaces, places and programmes are distributed fairly across the district to ensure that all communities have access to opportunities for play, active recreation, and sport participation.

5. **Sustainability:** Ensure that facilities and programmes are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable, taking into account the long-term impact of their implementation.

## 10 How will we achieve it?

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The Strategy is focused on the priority need for accessible, affordable and sustainable play, active recreation and sport activities, spaces and places that foster increased participation. The recommended strategic approach has several key themes outlined below.

### 10.1 Reshaping Council Investment

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A key challenge for Council is considering how best to invest in the provision of play, active recreation and sport for the best Hauora/ well-being outcomes for its residents. The traditional emphasis on provision of spaces and places and leaving most activation to the volunteer-based clubs is reducing in viability of delivering improved well-being through participation in physical activity.

As identified in the needs analysis, the greatest challenges faced by organised sport and active recreation can be summarised as **people first, spaces and places second**. There needs to be a shift to greater investment in supporting activation and the people who make it happen.

This adjustment in the balance may mean rationalisation in investment levels into the current spaces and places network, requiring rationalisation of over-supplied provision (duplicated or redundant). This transition over time will need Council to be selective regarding solutions for upgrade, repurpose, replace, or where oversupply is evident, rationalisation of infrastructure in the district.

Tararua district has a strong tradition of community-led and delivered provision of play, active recreation and sport driven by volunteer effort. Community feedback indicates volunteer driven provision of club-based activity is increasingly under threat and a gap between demand for activity and delivery capacity is growing.

Working assumptions:

1. That the Community Development service approach of Council (as described in the companion Information Report) is endorsed for play, active recreation and sport projects
2. That Rangitāne and Ngāti Kahungunu are willing to partner in the activation programme delivery (see people-based projects as listed in the companion Information Report)
3. Sport Manawatū and Council will reshape/ refine their partnership (and contract), so the role of the Tararua Recreation Advisor aligns with the delivery of the people-based projects as listed in the companion Information Report
4. The concept of 'keystone hubs' is endorsed with the existing Bush Multi-sport in Pahiatua with an enlarged activation role and a new hub in Dannevirke with a similar wider role.

In terms of activation the key ingredients are people to organise and deliver the activity (the 'Igniters') plus any equipment costs and space or facility hire charges. Opportunities for co-funding for the people first (and activation) approach include:

- Any financial contribution from Council would be funded through operational expenditure budgets including discounting or removing Council charges.
- Many other funding organisations provide grant support to capital projects, and some provide grants for activation type projects, most are one-off seed funding grants, some are multi-year.
- Some Central Government funding is available through on-going contracts for service for targeted population groups

### 10.2 Reshaping Delivery - Two Keystone Hubs

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Two keystone hubs are envisaged in the district, the existing Bush Multi-sport in Pahiatua with an enlarged role and a new hub in Dannevirke. They will serve the southern and northern parts of the district respectively.

These community-led hubs are to drive growth in active participation within their catchments and strengthen support for volunteers. It is envisaged that they will generate participation at several spaces and places, and most likely at multiple sites. They will harness the past Council and community investment in these spaces and places and look to activate

them more. This will often be in partnership with their aligned clubs and groups plus Council, Sport Manawatu, Rangitāne and Ngāti Kahungunu. The purpose and goals of keystone hubs are outlined in more detail in the Information Report.

### **10.3 Accessible and Inclusive Provision – Hub and Spokes Approach**

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A key strategy is providing a minimum level of service for active recreation and play accessible in each community of interest/ locality with a minimum or base level of provision that is of the right size and is whānau friendly (multi-generational) and inclusive. Many communities have at least some of these elements either at a TDC reserve or at a school. Generally, the strategy is to optimise current sites. This could be a TDC reserve or at an 'open school' welcoming community use (with enduring access agreement for public use).

The two 'keystone hubs' in Dannevirke and Pahiatua would continue to develop with more substantial provision. A network of these 'spokes' is envisaged in the district. There is potential for the keystone hubs to provide outreach programmes and community events at some of the spokes.

This provision in settlements or towns enables easy access by active transport (walk, bike, scooter). They provide a local, affordable and inclusive active recreation and play opportunity for a large proportion of the resident population in the district. Please see the companion Information report for further detail on what could be included depending on the size of the catchment population.

### **10.4 Rationalisation of Some Spaces and Places**

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A key theme identified was the need to rationalise surplus spaces or places in the current network. They may have become surplus due to development of a new community or school-based space or facility causing redundancy of the existing space or facility. They may also become surplus as demand has diminished over time since they were established.

The opportunity cost can be significant in continuing to operate and maintain surplus facilities when those funds could be applied to meeting gaps in the overall spaces and places network or in improving other existing 'in demand' spaces and places. This means either re-purposing these facilities, if viable, or remove or demolish the old facility and possibly dispose of land if not practical to use for another play, active recreation and sport or wider Council purpose. If a partial replacement is needed, then co-locate with another play, active recreation and sport space and/or facility.

### **10.5 Walking and Cycling**

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Walking and cycling are the active recreation activities with by far the largest participation in New Zealand. Currently this relies on the urban road and pathway network to provide most of the opportunities, especially for walking on winter evenings.

The Tararua District Visitor and Walk-Cycle Strategy and Action Plan was completed in 2019 and had an economic development focus. The Te Āpiti / Manawatu Gorge area was seen as the biggest opportunity for Tararua is to optimise the attractiveness of current and new bike experiences. Also, of special interest was to develop the walk / ride from Pahiatua to Mangatainoka and to make far more of the Lindauer heritage trail experience at Woodville.

It appears the Strategy from a physical provision perspective has not been implemented as the actions did not identify specific capital projects. There is a need for an implementation plan to provide a roadmap of capital projects to further develop walking and cycling tracks and trails, and programmes that will increase recreational use.

## **11 Council Investment Framework**

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The below investment principles and criteria are intended to be used by Council to assess the relative merit or value of projects for financial support at key points in the investment planning cycle starting with the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan. A weighting as to relative importance of each principle has also been assessed and allocated.

The intention is once there is further information available (in some cases via a feasibility study/business case) for each proposed project, it will be assessed and given a value score against each principle based on the statements and criteria below each principle. The weighting will then be applied, and this acts as a multiplier for each value score. The total of

these weighted scores will then provide a guide for Council as to the relative merit of the projects being considered at that time.

## 11.1 Gateway Criteria

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Gateway criteria are for projects seeking financial support of over \$20,000 from Council or are seeking endorsement from Council to assist with funding application to third parties. These criteria are usually a pass-fail judgement by relevant Council management. They do not necessarily terminate the proposal but will require improvement and subsequent reconsideration. The criteria are:

- The proposed project must be supported by reliable and verifiable research and consultation for it to be accepted for assessment using this method. Note: this would usually be through an independent feasibility study for projects seeking over \$250,000 from Council.
- The proposed project is supported by evidence of alignment with relevant Council strategies and plans plus sector best practice.

Purpose of the project can include:

- Provide interim support to revitalise strategic active participation opportunities/programmes with evident growth potential.
- Expand successful active participation opportunities/programmes to meet evident growth in demand.
- Develop additional active participation opportunities/programmes to meet evident unmet demand.
- Support the review of a specific type of facility/space in the network, and where needed, implement rationalisation of specific facilities/spaces within a network.
- Renew an existing fit-for-purpose facility to retain the capacity within the catchment.
- Upgrade or redevelop an existing facility to improve its capability and/or capacity to be fit-for-purpose.
- Replace existing capacity within the network with a fit-for-purpose facility (assuming the existing facility is repurposed, divested or demolished)
- Develop additional facilities to meet emerging demand unable to be met by existing capacity in the network.

Some project may include a mix of the above purposes.

## 11.2 Investment Principles

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### **Demonstrated community need** (30% weighting)

The degree to which any existing or proposed facility matches the projected needs of the community within its catchment area. This includes consideration of the degree to which demand exceeds supply (once all existing facilities are being run at an optimal operational level) and the facility or proposed facility is capable of meeting identified gap.

### **Maximum efficiency** (20% weighting)

The degree to which a facility or proposed facility complements the existing or proposed facility network, including avoiding any duplication of facility functions. Facilities should be designed to enable multiple uses wherever possible to ensure facilities are used to their maximum in a safe and secure way. Facilities should be designed to be able to adapt to future needs and changes in community preferences.

### **Financial affordability** (20% weighting)

The degree to which the community can afford the facility is crucial. The design and construction of any facility needs to consider the full life cycle costs including maintenance and operation and eventual replacement. The cost of facility use needs to be affordable for users in the facility catchment.

### **Strategic Fit** (10% weighting)

The degree to which the facility aligns with wider strategic documents and plans, Council goals and the overall community facility network. Alignment with urban planning, infrastructure development, tourism/economic development, and transport networks should also be considered.

### **Accessibility for all** (10% weighting)

It is important that community facilities are accessible. That is, they are equitably located within the region; they are physically accessible for people of all abilities; people are aware of their availability for the public to use; and they reflect the social, demographic and cultural needs of the community in their facility catchment.

#### **Partnerships and collaboration (5% weighting)**

Working together with partners and facilitating community-led opportunities and outcomes to develop and operate community facilities are important. Partnerships allow pooling of resources such as people and funding, and community-driven initiatives is a key tool for ensuring an efficient network.

#### **Wider Benefits (5% weighting)**

The degree to which the proposed investment has the potential to stimulate broader goals for social, cultural and economic development.

#### **Value scoring (extent achieved)**

- 1 or 5% = very low
- 2 or 10% = low
- 3 or 15% = neutral or indiscernible
- 4 or 20% = high
- 5 or >25% = very high

## **11.3 Investment Process**

Council needs to ensure investment decisions are made that result in the most effective outcome for the community. The reason for this is that there is limited funding available as well as multiple and competing community demands. The steps in the Investment Process provide a clear path to ensure the decision to invest in a facility has been well justified by confirming the facility's priority, scale, feasibility and financial sustainability.

### **Step 1: Community needs assessment**

1. An evidence-based document on needs required by the community now and into the future, and the gaps in facility/activity provision to achieve this.
2. Must be robust and defensible and with an appropriate level of evidence consistent with the potential scale of the investment.

Note: Often prepared independently from Council with input from relevant specialists.

### **Step 2: Project plan and scope**

3. Details the scope of the project, building on the community needs assessment.
4. Includes looking at how the need could be met through the following categories:
  - Reform – change in governance, management, culture or regulations.
  - Better use – changes in demand management, pricing, hours of access
  - Improve existing – minor capital works, multiple or shared use facility.
  - New development – construct new assets.
5. Identifies the project delivery including stages, indicative costs, resourcing and timeframes.
6. Identifies project structure including partners and partner's expectations.
7. Completes a preliminary assessment of project concept against investment principles.

### **Step 3: Feasibility study**

8. Determines the viability of the project to achieve the intended aims and the various options in light of contextual factors: social, cultural, environmental, economic, legal, technological.
9. Needs to include:
  - Project rationale and outcomes
  - Assessment of a range of alternatives and options in light of contextual factors
  - Assessment of a range of alternatives against investment principles
  - Activity planning (demonstrating future use)
  - Proposed governance and management models (post-construction).
10. Identifies a preferred option.

### **Stage 4: Detailed Business Case**

11. Determines the financial sustainability of the preferred option in detail.
12. Needs to include:
  - Detailed assessment of costs (including capital, maintenance and operations)
  - Detailed assessment of potential revenue sources to cover build, maintenance and operational costs
  - Strategy for raising funds for capital cost (where significant).

## Stage 5: Funding

13. Prepares concept designs to support funding applications.
14. Formalises any partnerships and identifies ongoing governance arrangements.
15. Secures project capital from sources such as agencies, philanthropic sector and commercial interests.

*Note: The bigger the investment to be made, the more intense the feasibility study and/or business case and the need for professional input from specialists. Feasibility studies and/or business cases for larger projects may need an independent review. Proponent groups will need to be supported to navigate through each stage of the investment stop/go process.*

## 11.4 Divestment Process

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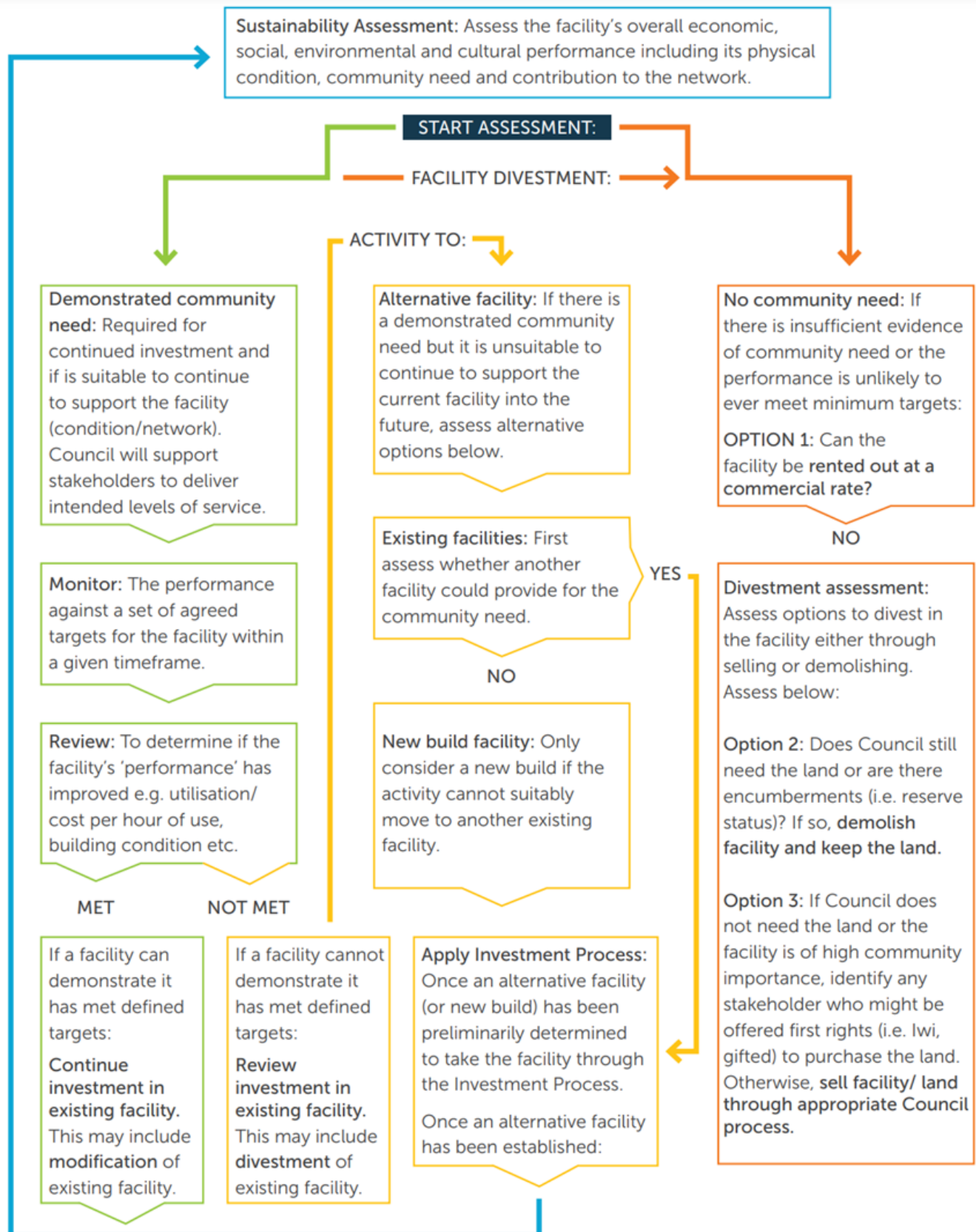
Community facilities that have identified issues are no longer sustainable, or that cost more than they benefit the community should be considered under the Divestment Process. Decision for divesting in community facilities need a transparent and robust process to remain fair and just to the community. At time, facilities also need an opportunity to meet their full potential if issues over the facility's overall sustainability is questioned. The divestment process provides a transparent and robust approach to assess whether a facility should be divested. Three options are available for the facility once it no longer has a demonstrated community need.

**Option 1:** Rent out the facility at a commercial rate.

**Option 2:** Demolish the facility and keep the land.

**Option 3:** Sell facility/land through appropriate Council process.

Figure 2: Divestment Process Chart





## 12 Appendices

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### 12.1 Glossary of Terms

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**Spaces and places** is an all-inclusive term used in this report, it includes all settings used for play, active recreation and sport but with a focus on those provided by Council or stakeholders on Council land or school land including built improvements such as sports fields, recreational parks, playgrounds, buildings and other specialised facilities, installations or structures (e.g. shooting ranges, skate parks, courts, hockey turfs)

**Well-being** encompasses the physical, mental and emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of health. This concept is recognised by the World Health Organisation.

**Hauora** is a Māori philosophy of health unique to New Zealand. It comprises taha tinana (physical wellbeing), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), taha whanau (social wellbeing), and taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing).

### 12.2 Monitoring and Review

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Monitoring and review will be on an annual and three-year cycle coinciding with Council's Annual Plan and Long-Term Plan. This review cycle reflects the need to maintain alignment with the external funding programmes and related projects both locally and regionally.

## 12.3 District Strategy for Tararua

Figure 3: Vision and Outcomes for Tararua in District Strategy

