

Pārekareka

Play, Active Recreation and Sport Strategy (PARSS)

Elected Council Members Workshop, 7 September 2026



Purpose

To provide Elected Member's with information on:

- Priority focus investment areas
- Appropriate levels of investment to test with stakeholders
- Future Long Term Plan options
- Areas that should not proceed further.



Why Play, Active Recreation and Sport Matters

Play, active recreation and sport connect people, place and opportunity

PILLAR 1

Community Wellbeing

- Physical health
- Mental wellbeing
- Social connection

PILLAR 2

Economic Impact

- Events
- Tourism
- Attraction + retention

PILLAR 3

Community Equity

- Participation
- Accessibility
- Affordability

PILLAR 4

Environmental Outcomes

- Open spaces
- Ecological restoration
- Stewardship

Together, the four pillars strengthen participation, community outcomes, our local economy and care for Rotorua's natural assets

Strategy Re-Cap

- Strategy was adopted November 2024
- 78 recommendations identified
- What has happened since adoption
 - 13 advisory group workshops have been held
 - Prioritisation framework developed
 - Strategy recommendations assessed
 - With some work already completed or well underway
 - Operationalising some of the non-capital recommendations are progressing
- Last Elected Member's update, April 2026
 - Further assessment and analysis of priority investment areas
 - Indicative costing of key investment opportunities
- Outcome
 - Six priority investment areas have emerged.



Priority Investment Areas

Areas Requiring Direction

1. Indoor Sports
2. Outdoor Sports
3. Active Recreation
4. Play
5. Accessibility & Inclusion
6. Ecological Enhancement



Why Investment is Needed

Three pressures are compounding across the recreation network



Growth

Growing and increasingly
diverse population



Demand

Increasing expectations and
changing participation trends



Assets

Ageing facilities and
infrastructure

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Quality parks, facilities and
networks are essential to
sustaining participation and
future growth

THE RISK

Without investment, service
levels will decline over time

SOCIAL RETURN

Play, active recreation and sport
are more than activities – they are
investment in Rotorua's prosperity
– nationally for every \$1 spent,
there is a social return of \$2.12

1. Indoor Court Provision & Options



Indoor Court Demand is Strong

Current Network

- Rotorua has 11 indoor court facilities
- Only 6 full-size court equivalents are available for community use at peak times
- Community access relies heavily on school facilities

Participation

- Indoor courts are typically accessed by the following codes: Basketball, Volleyball, Badminton, Futsal, Pickleball, Roller Sports and Table Tennis
- Basketball alone has ~200 teams regularly playing with ~24 teams on the waiting list
- Volleyball and futsal competitions are at capacity with waiting lists



Indoor court demand is constrained by availability, not participation interest

Current and Future Court Shortfall

Current Position

- Rotorua has approximately 1 accessible court per 12,500 residents
- Sport NZ benchmark is 1 accessible court per 7,800 residents
- Current shortfall of 4 indoor courts today, increasing to 5 courts by 2038
- Teams and participants are being turned away

Evidence of Unmet Demand

- Existing facilities stretched with smaller courts, shorter games and extended playing hours
- Basketball participation been constrained for more than two decades
- Volleyball and futsal waiting lists
- Limited ability to expand programmes and enabling emerging sports to grow
- Current provision is limiting participation, training, representative pathways and event opportunities

Participation demand is strong, but access to court space is not meeting current demand and is limiting growth

Indoor Sport Facility Options

OPTION 1

Covered Outdoor Courts

Open, semi enclosed, or enclosed (but not fully weather proof).

Intended to supplement indoor courts, not replace them



OPTION 2

Partnership

Access agreement with a school or private facility to existing or expanded indoor court facilities



Indoor Sport Facility Options

OPTION 3

Non-Traditional Indoor Courts

Several products and producers



OPTION 4

Traditional Indoor Courts

New or converted existing building



Comparing the Trade Offs of Different Facility Types

Facility Type	Level of Service / Experience	Likely Utilisation	Cost to Construct	Whole of Life and Costs to Operate	Likely Cost of Participation	Council Control	Overall Benefit
1. Covered Outdoor Courts	Lowest Quality	Moderate due to narrow demographic use	Lowest	Lowest	Lowest	Full	Affordability
2. Non-Traditional Indoor Courts	High but not as high as Traditional	High but not as high as Traditional	Higher	Close to Highest	Close to Highest	Full	Balances affordability with improved user experience
3. Traditional Indoor Courts	Highest Quality	High	Highest	Highest	Highest	Full	Focused on user experience, tournament hosting and long-term quality
4. Partner and build new or extend existing indoor courts	Facility dependent but likely good quality although generally just 1-2 courts	Low to moderate due to limited access	Facility and agreement dependent but likely moderate	Facility and agreement dependent but likely moderate	Facility and contract dependent but likely moderate	Likely minimal and not long term	Reduced capital cost

Indoor Courts Investment Options

Investment Option	Approach	Implications
Status Quo	Continue with existing provision	Court shortage remains and demand continues to exceed supply
Low	Covered outdoor courts and/or limited partnerships	Improves capacity but does not adequately address the indoor court shortfall
Moderate	Non-traditional indoor court solution	Addresses a significant portion of current and future demand
Higher	Traditional indoor court facility	Provides the ideal level of service and greatest capacity outcome

Indoor court facilities are an intergenerational investment that will deliver health, wellbeing, participation and community connection benefits for Rotorua residents for decades to come

2. Sports Field Network Optimisation



Challenge Is Capacity, Not Field Numbers

Current Network

- 52 sports fields across 21 locations, 48 fields council-owned
- Demand is concentrated on a small number of sites – 32 fields used all year round, 10 not regularly used
- Once Titoki 1 and 2 fields completed, we will have enough field space
- Rotorua should have sufficient fields for the next 10-years based on SportNZ guidance.

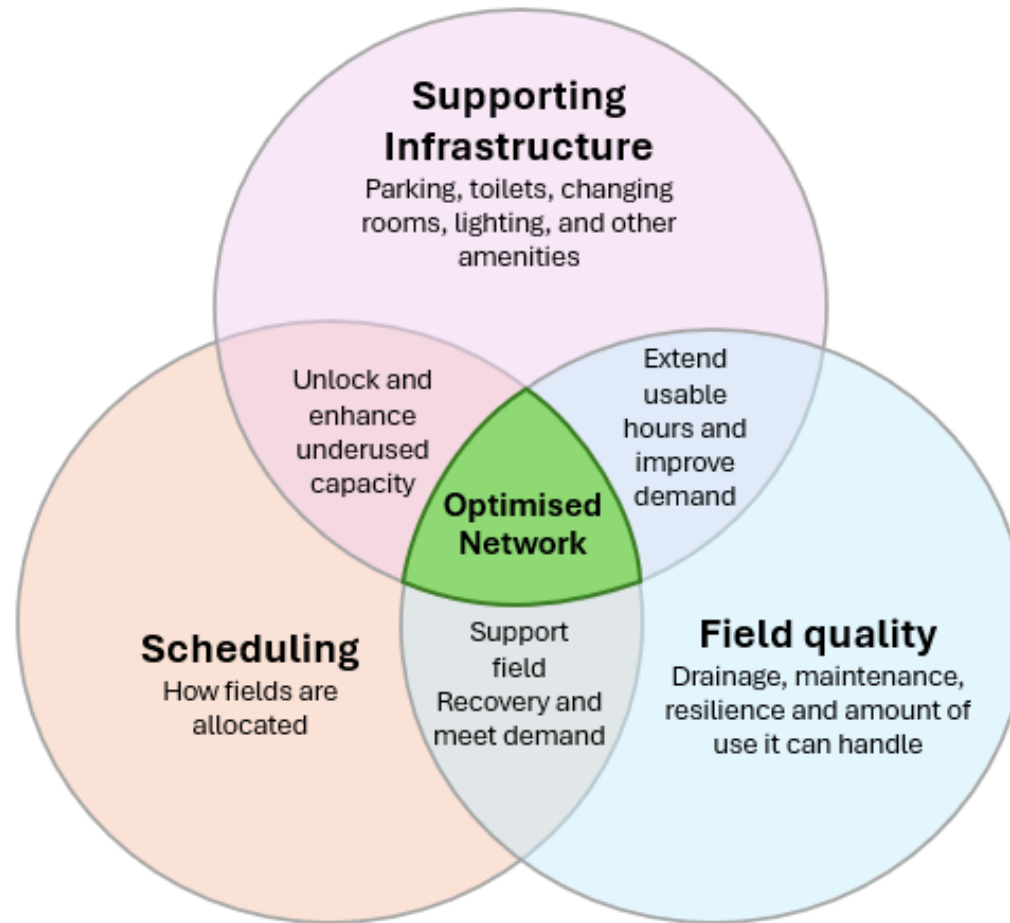
Participation

- Winter codes in order of registered teams include Football, Rugby and Rugby League
- Summer codes in order of participation include Touch, Cricket and Softball.

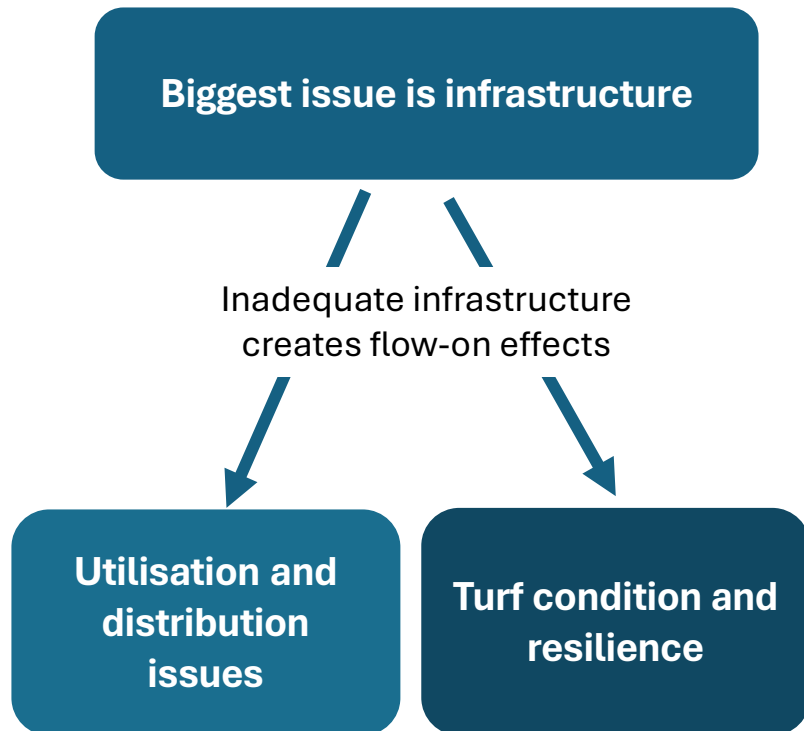


Based on the hours booked, ~50% of fields carry around 90% of regular use

Optimising Existing Field Capacity



What is Needed



- Supporting infrastructure: lighting, toilets, changing rooms and carparking limit how well the network performs
- Utilisation and distribution: better-equipped locations attract concentrated use while other locations remain under used
- Turf condition and resilience: concentrated demand increases wear and reduces surface recovery

Investment can unlock capacity when these constraints are solved together

Potential Options of Where to Invest

Condition, Performance and What Would Shift It



Further consultation with key stakeholders is required to test, confirm, and narrow down best areas for investment.

Key: ■ Adequate ■ Some capability, gaps remain ■ Poor or missing

Location and Precinct (No of fields)	Current use and status	Training lights	Toilets and changing	Parking	Field surface	Limiting constraint and the investment that would shift it
Titoki / Westbrook / Ray Boord (11 fields)	Highly utilised precinct	Partial (2 fields)	Poor in quality and nature for size of precinct	Adequate with construction of new Titoki Carpark	Generally acceptable	Constraint: 10 community fields served by 2 old toilet blocks; the one changing facility is used for storage and new Titoki fields exclude new toilets/changing facilities. Shift: new changing / toilet facility will sustain one of the city's biggest precincts and spreads wear.
Puarenga Park (9 fields)	Highly utilised precinct	None (2 not working)	Poor in quality and nature for size of precinct	Limited formalised and under pressure in peak times	Under pressure and quality can vary	Constraint: 1 toilet / changing block serves 7 of 9 fields; fields 8-9 relied on Whakarewarewa clubrooms, parking is under pressure at peak times. Shift: refurbish / expand facility (or new) plus parking.
Neil Hunt Park (5 fields)	All year	Two fields lit	Three lots of toilets, 1 controlled by council	Parking adequate	Significant subsidence due to decomposing organic matter from old sawmill waste	Constraint: affected area not suitable to play sports on Shift: Remedial work would require geotechnical investigation to determine solution and investment required.
Medical Officers Reserve (2 fields)	Under-utilised central location	None (1 not working)	Not in use	Adequate for number of fields although shared with Marae	Second field could be improved with removal of tress	Constraint: changing rooms extensively vandalised, toilets usable but poor; field quality limits added use. Shift: renew toilets / changing plus ground improvements at field 2 plus new training lights.
Linton Park (2 fields)	Under-utilised in growth area	None	Average	Adequate for number of fields	Second fields requires drainage	Constraint: toilets require upgrade or replacement; clubrooms for sale and not in good condition. Shift: renew toilets / changing plus ground improvements at field 2 plus new training lights.

Comparing the Trade Offs of Different Approaches

Investment Options	Approach	More Capacity Unlocked	Network Coverage	Cost to Construct	Whole of Life and Costs to Operate	User Experience	Speed to Deliver
Status Quo	Avoids cost, but uneven use and surface wear continues	None	None	None	Unchanged	Declining as pressure grows	Not Applicable
Low	Add training lights only on two fields	Moderate - mid-week hours only	Narrow, two fields but unlocks them	Lowest	Low - energy and lamp renewal	Improved but lowest	Fastest
Moderate	Install training lights on two fields and upgrade existing toilet and changing	Good across several sites	Broader a spread across the network	Moderate	Moderate - added cleaning and servicing where toilets not in use renewed	Improved but basic	Moderate
Higher	Enhance one or two major precincts with training lights and a new changing and toilet facility at each location	Highest, at the busiest precincts	Concentrated on one or two precincts but high use ones with mutlple fields	Highest	Highest - full building renewals	Highest	Slowest

Sports Fields Investment Options

Investment Option	Approach	Implications
Status Quo	Continue with existing provision	Demand stays concentrated on a few well-serviced fields, wear continues and under-used fields remain under-used
Low	Training lights only, on two additional fields	Extends usable hours and eases pressure but leaves toilet, changing and parking gaps unaddressed
Moderate	Training lights plus upgrade existing toilet and changing	Addresses two related constraints and unlocks capacity at under-used sites across the network
Higher	Precinct enhancement - lights plus a new changing facility at one or two major precincts	Delivers the greatest capacity and level of service uplift at Rotorua's busiest precincts

3. Active Recreation



Active Recreation: Participation & Value

Current Position

- Active Recreation is a core part of Rotorua's identity and visitor economy
- Rotorua is recognised nationally and internationally for outdoor recreation opportunities including mountain biking, lakes, walking trails and water-based activities
- Active recreation is one of Rotorua's defining strengths, delivering significant community, health, tourism and economic benefits

Participation

- 77% of Rotorua residents were active in the previous week, demonstrating the importance of recreation facilities, open spaces and access opportunities to community wellbeing
- Rotorua's highest participation activities are recreation-based: Walking, Running, Cycling, Water recreation and Forest recreation

Rotorua is an active recreation destination | people participate heavily | therefore investment matters

Active Recreation: Investment Focus Areas

The PARSS work identified continued demand for improved recreation experiences, destination enhancement, better connectivity and access to open spaces and recreation opportunities

Focus areas:

- Forest destinations
- Water access & supporting infrastructure
- Recreation destinations
- Aquatic experiences



Active Recreation Enhancements

OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE NETWORK • LAND • WATER • PLAY

Forest Destination

Grow recreation and visitor experiences while protecting ecological values and delivering improvements with partners

- 1. TRACKS** Increase renewal funding to address harvest-related trail rebuilds, asset renewal pressures and growing network demands
- 2. ACCESS** Extend formal parking on Titokorangi Drive to meet demand and improve arrival at a key destination
- 3. CAPACITY** Expand the Redwoods ablutions to better serve current and future visitor requirements

4. Waterway access & supporting structures

Improve access, washdown facilities and supporting amenities at preferred sites (locations to be confirmed)

5. Aquatic experiences

With CLM, explore high-appeal additions such as hydrosides that strengthen the visitor offer with ideally a positive return on investment

6. Shared water sports hub

Support, in principle, the long-term development of a shared water sports hub for clubs and community users at the Rotorua Lakefront

Active Recreation Enhancements

TWO LAKEFRONT DESTINATIONS • SAFER ACCESS • STRONGER EXPERIENCES

DESTINATION 1

7. Lake Tikitapu

Evolve a key lakefront venue into a sustainable hub for recreation, events and community use

MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY

Provide funding support to upgrade the Rotorua Wake & Ski Club site to better support water-based recreation, events and wider community use

DESTINATION ENHANCEMENT

As the opportunity arises, work with key stakeholders to increase the service offering to enhance the destination's attraction e.g. F&B offering.

DESTINATION 2

8. Waikawau Reserve

Separate boating traffic from family recreation – then renew the reserve around people

SAFE ARRIVAL

Establish a new access road to move boating traffic away from the playground and wider recreation area

FAMILY AMENITIES

Accelerate renewal of playgrounds, toilets and supporting amenities; add a swimming pontoon and improve accessibility

Active Recreation Investment Options

Each option builds on the previous level; pace and investment increase from top to bottom

Investment Options	Approach	Forest Destination	Waterway Access	Recreation Destinations
Status Quo	Maintain current provision	Level of service for high visitor destination remain below expectations	Current provision	Popular locations with sub-standard amenities
Low	Incremental improvement	Track maintenance improves	Target one area	Minor amenity upgrades
Moderate	Improved visitor experience	+ Improve Titokorangi Dr parking +	Target two areas	+ Lake Tikitapu building upgrade support provided +
High	Destination-led approach	Expand Redwood ablutions	Target three areas	Waikawau enhancement

4. Play



The Importance of Play

- Improves community wellbeing
- Strengthens social connection
- Is one of the most accessible and affordable forms of recreation
- Quality play spaces create safer, more vibrant communities
- Investment in play supports equity and inclusion



Investing in Play supports healthy child development, lifelong participation in physical activity, and stronger community wellbeing

Play Network Renewal & Enhancement

Current Position

- 79 playgrounds across Rotorua, average age 17.5 years
- 50% require partial or full renewal within 5 years
- Geothermal conditions accelerate asset deterioration
- Play provision gap identified in Rotorua West

Note: Playgrounds are included in the Level of Service review

Current Challenge

- Community expectations are increasing for accessible and inclusive play
- Intergenerational play helps increase tamariki participation and activity
- Calisthenics parks are becoming an increasingly popular recreation option
- Socially connected play spaces help build stronger communities
- Current funding renews only three playgrounds per year
- Existing funding is insufficient to maintain the network



Play Investment Options

Investment Options	Approach	Implications
Status Quo	Continue renewing around three playgrounds a year within existing funding	Renewals fall further behind the half of the network needing work within five years; ageing assets and the Rotorua West gap remain
Low	Lift the renewal rate and continue to prioritise the poorest condition playgrounds	Slows the decline across the network, but accessible and inclusive play is delivered at only a few sites
Moderate	Increase renewal rate more and add provision where gaps exist	Priority renewals improve and new provision begin to address Rotorua West gap
Higher	Renew the network at a steady pace and apply universal design to new and renewed play spaces	A step change in play provision - an accessible, inclusive network that meets rising community expectations

5. Accessibility & inclusion



Accessibility & Inclusion Importance

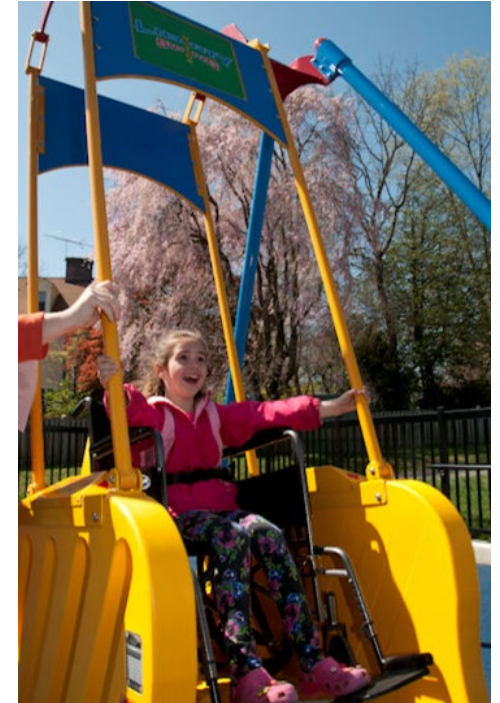
- Accessible spaces ensure every resident can participate
- Inclusive design delivers greater value for ratepayer investment
- Removing barriers to participation improves health and wellbeing outcomes
- Accessible and inclusive facilities strengthen social connection
- Planning for accessibility now reduces future costs
- Equitable access reflects Council's commitment to fairness

Current Position

- Growing and aging population
- Identified accessibility barriers
- Increasing community expectations

Opportunities

- Better access
- Greater participation
- Improved equity



Accessibility & Inclusion Key Stakeholder Priorities

Rotorua Access Group top six priorities in order of indicative investment value:

Priorities

1. Lake access – a paved footpath and access mat at Boyes Beach so people with wheels can get out closer to the water or to picnic with their families
2. Lake Okareka walkway – consider alternative accessway to existing wetland track
3. Liberty swing preferably located at the Lakefront
4. Sports fields – better inclusion of pathways at around sports fields so that people with mobility aids can access and watch local sports matches at some key locations
5. Lakefront high needs ablution unit alongside liberty swing provision
6. Okawa Bay – upgrade toilet block and parking to enable more less able bodied people access to water activities



Accessibility & Inclusion Investment Options

Investment Options	Approach	Implications
Status Quo	Address accessibility through existing renewals and maintenance programmes only	Improvements occur as assets are renewed. Many identified barriers will remain for longer
Low	Progress four of the lower cost items on Rotorua Access Group priority list	Starts to address accessibility opportunities at three sites across Rotorua
Moderate	Progress five of the projects identified by the Rotorua Access Group in order of indicate cost	Enhances accessibility experience at four sites across the district
Higher	Progress all six of the priority projects identified by the Rotorua Access Group	Creates a step change in accessibility and inclusion outcomes across Rotorua's recreation network

6. Ecological Enhancement



Why Ecological Enhancement Matters

Ecological enhancement improves the quality, resilience and value of recreation spaces:

Why it matters

- Healthier places – protect Te Taiao, waterways and biodiversity, and create accessible places for people
- Greater resilience – strengthen ecological corridors and prepare public spaces for future pressures
- Local ownership – embed mātauranga Māori and enable kaitiakitanga and community stewardship



Protecting the places that make Rotorua distinctive

Ecological Enhancement

Current Position

- Aging urban tree population – an ageing tree asset base needs proactive rather than reactive planning; problematic trees are a risk to people and property
- Pest plant issues – we work in partnership with others to tackle this but resources are limited
- Ecological restoration opportunities – a juvenile planting programme is intended but not happening due to limited budget and resources
- Strong community support – volunteer care groups address certain areas and community planting days are generally well supported



Opportunities

- Better recreation experiences
- Greater resilience
- Improved environmental outcomes

This investment area achieves both environmental and recreation outcomes

Ecological Enhancement Opportunities

URBAN TREES • PEST PLANTS • RESTORATION PLANTING

Urban Tree Management

We have an ageing tree asset base and need to plan effectively versus reactively to manage future risk, renewal and resilience

Pest Plant Control

Expand pest plant eradication and ecosystem restoration programmes in partnership with other agencies

Restoration Planting

Restoration initiatives help protect waterways, ecological corridors, and Rotorua's unique natural character



Ecological Enhancement Investment Options

Each option builds on the previous level; pace and investment increase from top to bottom

Investment options	Approach	Urban tree management	Pest plant control	Restoration planting
Status Quo	Reactive	Safety + priority problem trees	Meet compliance requirements +	Continue landcare partnerships +
Low	Steady improvement over time	Safety + moderate problem trees +	Priority control +	Address priority sites over ~20 years
Moderate	Improved resilience	Planned succession programme +	Active control programme +	Address priority sites over ~15 years
Higher	Long-term enhancement	New planting	Targeted eradication	Address priority sites over ~10 years

Funding, Options and Decisions



External Funding Considerations

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Sport NZ • Lottery Grants • Trusts and Foundations • Central Government • User contributions • Partnerships • Sponsorship • Commercial opportunities

Considerations

- Council funding would be complemented, where possible, through external grants, partnership funding and third-party contributions to maximise community outcomes and value for ratepayers
- In addition, user-pays elements are appropriate for several aspects of the investments / projects and potentially public/private partnerships
- The funding environment is very constrained currently. Council is in a position to act as anchor funder which significantly increases funding opportunities
- The economic environment, political landscape, changes to funding criteria, and timing all play a significant factor in attracting third party funding support

Level of third party funding – highly dependent on its nature and total cost

- For community projects under \$1million it could be reasonably expected that third party funding of potentially up to 50% of the project could be obtained
- For projects over \$1million the level of funding would be more capped based on what organisations can give and timing.

Indicative Investment Options Matrix

Investment Theme	Status Quo	Low	Moderate	Ideal
Indoor Courts	Demand continues to far exceed supply	Covered outdoor courts or limited partnership to indoor courts Capex \$4m-\$6m ^	Non-traditional indoor courts Capex \$16m-\$22.7m ^ Opex \$280k-\$400k pa	Traditional indoor court facility Capex \$20m-\$35m ^ Opex \$320k-\$440k
Sports Fields	Continue with existing provision	Training lights only 2 fields Capex \$500k-\$600k ^	Lights & basic ablutions x2 \$650k-\$1m ^	Precinct enhancement 1 precinct = \$1.2m-\$2.1m ^ 2 precincts = \$1.9m-\$3.6m ^
Active Recreation	Maintain current provision	Tracks, Waterway access, upgrade to reserve ablution & playground Renewals \$75k pa Capex \$705k Opex \$100k pa	Tracks, Waterway access, Reserve amenities upgrade, support Wake & Ski Club building upgrade Renewals \$100k pa Capex \$850k * Opex \$150k pa	Tracks, Waterway access, Wake & Ski Club upgrade, Waikawau reserve upgrade Renewals \$150k pa Capex \$2.5m * Opex \$200k pa
Play	Continue to fall behind in renewal requirements	Maintain current Play renewals Renewals \$150k pa	Enhance current Play renewals Renewals \$250k pa	Step change in play provision Renewals \$350k pa
Accessibility & Inclusion	Identified barriers remain longer	Four low cost projects Capex \$145k *	Broader accessibility priorities Capex \$395k *	Step change in accessible city Capex \$685k *
Ecological Enhancement	Primarily reactive	Steady improvement Opex \$200k pa	Improves resilience Opex \$360k pa	Long-term enhancement Opex \$490k pa
Total	Existing budget	Renewals \$225k pa Capex \$5.3m – \$7.4m Opex \$300k pa	Renewals \$350k pa Capex \$17.9m - \$24.9m Opex \$790k - \$910k pa	Renewals \$500k pa Capex \$24.4m-\$41.8m Opex \$1m - \$1.1m pa

^ Indicates costs before external funding and/or partnership contributions are applied. * Amount shown is the balance after accounting for external funding and/or partnership contributions.

Budget Consideration – Unfunded Depreciation

As part of the 2026/27 Annual Plan, Council resolved to unfund \$1.6 million of depreciation in the Parks & Reserves activity on the basis that savings would be identified through the PARRS strategy to identify assets that would be decommissioned, reducing the need for renewal budgets.

Council must now give direction as to how the PARRS strategy is to give effect to the Annual Plan decision.

Options

1. Direct staff to identify \$1.6 million of Parks & Reserves assets to decommission, matching the savings banked in the 2026/27 Annual Plan and reducing the renewal budget.
2. Give direction not to decommission assets in Parks & Reserves and continue unfunding depreciation (with an impact on Council's debt).
3. Give direction not to decommission assets in Parks & Reserves and reverse the unfunding of depreciation (with an impact on Council's 2027/28 rates increase).



Direction Sought

STAFF SEEK DIRECTION ON

1

Which priority investment themes should proceed to stakeholder testing

2

Which investment levels should be further explored

3

Which options should not proceed

4

Which options should be prepared for Long Term Plan consideration

PLANNED NEXT STEPS

Elected Member
Direction

Stakeholder
Testing

Refinement

Long Term Plan
Preparation



Pārekareka

It's about everyday wellbeing