

4. Neighbourhood parks and reserves objectives and policies for management

The General Policies for Council Administered Reserves (2006), and other council policies referenced therein, apply to all of the reserves in this management plan. These policies should be considered, where relevant, as part of any decision made about a neighbourhood reserve.

The following goals, objectives and policies apply to all neighbourhood parks and reserves.

4.1 Quality neighbourhood parks and reserves

4.1.2 Objectives

Objective 1

To manage, maintain and enhance flora and fauna in neighbourhood parks and reserves to add to the amenity value of, and to protect areas of natural significance within neighbourhood parks and reserves.

A number of neighbourhood parks and reserves contain significant ecological and cultural areas including wetlands and native bush remnant. Together with other vegetated open space, neighbourhood reserves act as ecological corridors for wildlife as well as adding natural character and amenity value to urban neighbourhoods. In addition some landscapes within neighbourhood parks and reserves hold cultural and heritage values.

The Council acknowledges the importance of both natural and planted areas and aims to create and maintain an appropriate balance of facilities, vegetation and open areas needed for the functioning of neighbourhood parks and reserves; while protecting areas of significant ecological and cultural value.

4.1.3.1 Policies

- a) ***Landscape development*** – neighbourhood parks and reserves will be developed to create a balance between facilities, natural areas, amenity planting and open space turfed areas.
- b) ***Landscape maintenance*** – maintenance of the natural areas, amenity plantings and turfed areas will be carried out in accordance with industry best practice and council policy including the District Tree Policy 2004.
- c) ***Ecological environments*** – areas within neighbourhood parks and reserves which have significant ecological value, such as bush remnants and wetland, will be conserved (managed to ensure the area is protected and maintained).

- d) ***Cultural heritage values*** – identified areas of cultural heritage value on neighbourhood parks and reserves will be protected, preserved or maintained as appropriate.

Objective 2

To provide facilities and amenities that enhance and encourage a range of recreation and leisure opportunities appropriate to the individual neighbourhood parks and reserves.

Facilities such as playground equipment, skate parks and basket ball half courts located within neighbourhood parks and reserves have become the key attraction for many users. The addition or removal of these facilities within neighbourhood parks and reserves is considered a strategic decision which is to be considered in the Council Playground Strategy (currently under development).

Neighbourhood parks and reserves are used for a number of other recreation and leisure pursuits including kicking a ball, walking, relaxing and family picnics. Facilities and other amenities, which are important to users include park benches and picnic tables.

The decision to place amenities within neighbourhood parks and reserves is carried out in accordance with the proposed policies outlined below as well as the levels of service in chapter five.

4.1.3.2 Policies

- a) ***Playground equipment (including skate parks)*** – the addition or removal of play equipment will be carried out in accordance with the council's Playground Strategy (currently under development), which aims to distribute playgrounds of varying levels of complexity and to meet the needs of a variety of age ranges at appropriate locations throughout the district.
- b) ***Public toilets*** – the addition or removal of public toilets will be carried out in accordance with the council's Toilet Strategy. This strategy currently does not propose any additional toilets on neighbourhood parks or reserves.
- c) ***Park furniture, hard surfaces and barriers*** – all park furniture, hard surfaces and barriers shall be designed, constructed and coloured in accordance with the parks hard asset standard manual (Parkscape Standards Manual 2006)
- d) ***Boundary fencing*** – the Council will work with its neighbours to maintain suitable boundary fencing. The contribution made to new boundary fences is set out in the parks Boundary Fencing Policy (P00-022).

4.2 Accessible neighbourhood parks and reserves

4.2.1 Objectives

Objective 1

To ensure neighbourhood parks and reserves are identifiable and accessible to local residents and visitors

It is recognised that neighbourhood parks and reserves need to be identifiable and accessible to users. A number of aspects can affect accessibility of a reserve including design, permanent or exclusive use, commercial activities, encroachments, grazing and temporary access by construction vehicles. Community feedback has told the Council that no permanent commercial activities should be allowed on neighbourhood parks and reserves.

The policies below outline how the Council will aim to ensure neighbourhood parks and reserves are identifiable and accessible through appropriate signage and good design, and how other issues that can affect accessibility will be addressed.

4.2.2 Policies

- a) ***General access*** – access to neighbourhood parks and reserves will be free of charge.
- b) ***Access points*** – where feasible access points to neighbourhood parks and reserves and associated facilities will be designed to meet national standards and design criteria for people with disabilities.
- c) ***Signage*** – all new signs on neighbourhood parks and reserves will be erected in accordance with the New Plymouth District Council Sign Manual.
- d) ***Events***– anyone wishing to use a neighbourhood park or reserve for an event must apply to the council. All applications will be assessed and managed in accordance with policies set out in the council's General Policies for Council Administered Reserves and the parks bookings system.
- e) ***Commercial activities*** – permanent or long-term commercial development will not be permitted on neighbourhood parks and reserves. Temporary commercial activities on will be assessed on a case by case basis in accordance with the council's General Policies for Council Administered Reserves and will generally only be approved when associated with a community event.

- f) ***Exclusive use*** – permanent exclusive use of a neighbourhood parks or reserve is not considered appropriate.
- g) ***Network and utility infrastructure*** – in accordance with the Reserves Act 1977 the provision of existing, additional and new network and utility infrastructure will be allowed to be installed and maintained in neighbourhood parks and reserves where it does impact the use of the reserve in the long term.
- h) ***Temporary access*** – access will be granted on a temporary basis to allow the installation of network infrastructure or access a part of a property which is otherwise inaccessible. Applications must be made to the Council in writing and give particular consideration to the timing of the access and actions to mitigate the impact on users. Conditions of the access will be set in accordance with policies set out in the council's General Policies for Council Administered Reserves.
- i) ***Encroachments*** – encroachments by adjacent landowners can restrict the public use and access to part or all of a reserve and in most cases is an unlawful use of reserve land. As required, encroachments will be addressed in accordance with the council's encroachment policy (currently under development).
- j) ***Grazing*** – grazing will be used as a management tool for parts or all of neighbourhood parks and reserves that remain undeveloped. As a condition of any grazing lease the public maintain the right to access and pass through a grazing area.

4.3 - Safe neighbourhood parks and reserves

4.3.1 Objectives

Objective 1

To manage neighbourhood parks and reserves so as they are safe for use

Managing neighbourhood parks and reserves so they are safe means taking reasonable and practical steps to prevent, reduce or contain the environmental factors which affects people's use of neighbourhood parks and reserves. It includes preventive measure to reduce accidents. Safe means different things to different people and it is acknowledge that at any one time there may be factors out of the council's control which may contribute to the level of safety within a reserve e.g. unsupervised.

A number of aspects relating to safety on reserves are covered in the council's bylaws including the lighting fires in a public place, use of firearms, animals and disposal of household refuse.

4.3.2 Policies

Neighbourhood parks and reserves will be managed for day use only and lighting will not be generally provided unless supported by other strategy.

- a) ***Safe design*** – where feasible the development of neighbourhood parks and reserves will incorporate safe urban design principles including those outlined in the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Guidelines (CPTED).
- b) ***Standard of facilities*** – a regular inspection programme will be performed so that facilities on parks and reserves meet standards of safety, health and condition in accordance with levels of service in the Parks Assets Management Plan.
- c) ***Animals*** – the control of animals on neighbourhood parks and reserves will be managed in accordance with the Council bylaws. The dog control part of these bylaw permits dogs on parks and reserves except in areas set aside by the New Plymouth District Council as a children’s play area for recreation of children, which includes play equipment for this purpose, where dogs are prohibited. This however does not apply to any dog on a leash being led directly through a playground.

4.4 - Neighbourhood parks and reserves managed through partnerships

4.4.1 Objectives

Objective 1

To ensure the community has a sense of ownership over, and is actively involved in the management and development of neighbourhood parks and reserves through community consultation and partnerships.

It is important that the New Plymouth District’s network of neighbourhood parks and reserves is one that the community have sense of ownership over. Local communities are recognised as users and in many cases also neighbours to the parks and reserves in their area and have valuable local knowledge.

Often the local community is very willing to be involved in management of neighbourhood reserves including decision-making, vandalism reporting and partnership developments.

There are a number of community groups that have played a part in shaping neighbourhood parks and reserves. A recent example is the Bell Block Residents Society, who funded the development of a new playground on the Gardenia Ave Reserve.

The Council aims to facilitate and encourage community partnership and ensure stakeholders including users, neighbours and tangata whenua continue to be informed.

4.4.2 Policies

- a) ***Community Consultation*** – any development or proposed change in management of a park or reserve will involve consultation with the affected community as appropriate or as required by legislation.
- b) ***Consultation with mana whenua*** – consultation will be undertaken with the mana whenua of a park or reserve when any change in management or major development is proposed.
- c) ***Reserve neighbours*** – all development on neighbourhood parks and reserves will be done in consultation with the immediate neighbours in order to mitigate any adverse effects.
- d) ***Community Partnerships*** – the Council supports and promotes community initiatives with resident and community service groups to be involved in the management and development of neighbourhood parks and reserves. The roles and responsibilities of these groups (in relation to the neighbourhood reserves) will be defined on a case by case basis with council officers.