Workshop at Te Wao: How do we play?

26 MARCH 2024

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN PROCESS
FOR WALTER MILDENHALL PARK

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Thank you to everyone who gave their time and insight to the Walter Mildenhall Park project.

On Tuesday 26th of March, Third Studio, and two members of the Hutt City Council Urban Design team went to Te Wao at Treadwell Hall to engage with rangatahi about thier 'backyard', Walter Mildenhall Park.

Approximately 20 tamariki and rangatahi took part including members of various Naenae communities:

- Tamariki wāhine (girls)
- Tamariki tāne (boys)
- Rangatahi wāhine (young women)
- Rangatahi tāne (young men)
- Some identified as Māori and Somali

The kaupapa of the workshop was:

1. How do you like to play / be outside? How come?

What do you currently enjoy doing? What would you like to do outdoors that you currently don't do or can't do?

2. How would you like people close to you to use this outdoor space? How come?

Think about your friends and whānau. How would you like to hang out / play with older or younger people that are close to you?

The engagement process

For 90 minutes in the afternoon, four facilitators talked to rangatahi (>12 years) and tamariki (≤12 years) that came in and out of the Te Wao free, after-school space.

While there was a more structured plan, it quickly evolved due to the in-and-out nature of the space. Images of design ideas, 3D maps, drawings tools and kai prompted kōrero and expression of 'play' for themselves and the people they love.

Insights & Conclusions

SEEING 'ME' IN THE PARK

Rangatahi are starting to see that their feedback is being woven into the park design. It will be really important to continue pointing out where their feedback has had impact.

SUSSING OUT & LOOPING BACK

Many young people had gems of insight that they shared towards the end of the session. It suggests that it took some time to digest the questions and build rapport with the facilitators and that multiple chances to feed back are really valuable.

How do you like to play / be outside? How come?

Summary of Key Themes

GROUP PLAY & MULTI USE

Playing with friends and whānau was a priority but took different forms and indicated elements should have multiple uses. For example, a spider swing could be used for a thrilling group swing, and seating with friends.

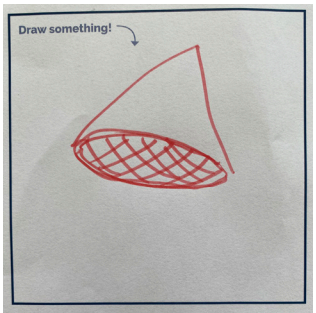
Many wanted to play with their group whilst having separation from other groups.

How important is traditional play like slides and swings? Why?

More people on it
Make a bigger one for more people
- want to do stuff w friends

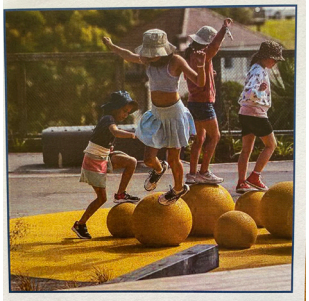
How important is group seating and play? Why?

like to lie down with friends as my legs get tired more relaxing



What else is important to include in this park? Why?

Basket swings - adrenaline!
I like this chemical



How important are soft / safe / colorful surface areas? Why?

Its important to think of the little kids, its not just for us, its for everyone.

CHALLENGE & RISK

Skating, biking, flying, spinning were key words when people talked about play elements that they loved at other parks. When asked why, male and female tamariki (intermediate age) and male rangatahi talked about speed and height providing an exciting challenge.

Rangatahi wāhine tended to talk about activities that used lower levels of energy and risk.

IMAGINATIVE VS PRESCRIPTIVE

There was an interesting dynamic of people talking about elements that are play prescriptive (eg. slides) whilst playing with and talking about non-demarcated elements (eg. climbing the basketball hoop and parkour).

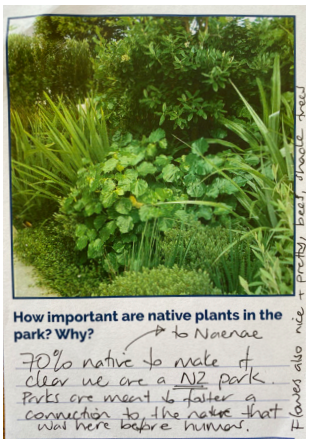
Young people (particularly older rangatahi) considered if they were 'allowed' to play, or 'should' play with elements that are traditionally 'for kids'.

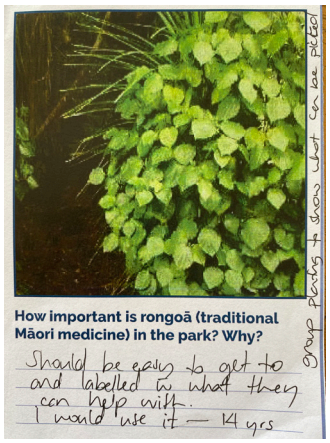
Elements that invite imaginative play may provide play opportunities of various levels to a wider range of people.

> "I [want to] know what I can do there and I won't get in trouble for being too noisy"

VIBRANCY VIA COLOUR & PLANTS

Native plants (to Naenae) were considered by a few rangatahi to be a priority because they would connect people to New Zealand's nature. This should be alongside flowers (which could be exotic plants) to attract bees and be 'pretty'.





Colour was desired by all demographics for a variety of reasons, and in a variety of applications:

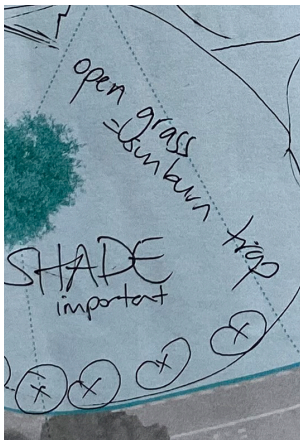
- Colourful plants can be calming
- Colour can also be energising and indicate play elements
- Colour can hold meaning for people.

"Blue! Blue is the colour of my country's flag"

SHADE & SHELTER

More trees was a priority because people desired more shelter for play and rest. This applied to shelter from the heat, rain and wind which would allow more play across the seasons. The oak tree next to the basketball court is particularly well-used.

Te Wao staff observed that people visiting and children who go to Te Wao sit under the trees by the basketball court rather than under the existing bbq shelter. It is much more comfortable, and more separated from the road/sheltered. The existing pergola/cover/seating set up there has been referred to as 'trash' and not in good repair, but also functionally it doesn't work with how the seating is positioned underneath for shade.



VIBRANCY VIA EXPLICIT EXPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY

Rangatahi wāhine were particularly excited by the idea of seeing their own work, or works from people they know, explicitly in the park. For example, having poems from Naenae rangatahi turned into sculpture/art and becoming part of the park.

Suggested Design Translations

Based on this workshop. To be viewed alongside translations from other community engagement.

1. ORGANIC & VIBRANT

Choose plants, materials and textures that provide colour and vibrancy as 'organically Naenae' as possible. For example:

- Native plants with colourful flowers.
- Colourful signs and surfacing to indicate playable elements.
- Contributions from Naenae residents. For example written works from rangatahi incorporated into pathways as artwork.

2. TREES & SHELTER

Focus on existing trees and additional planting for shade and shelter. For example:

- If using built shelters, ensure there is still planting on the edges, or within the shelter, to enable peoples' connection to papatūānuku.

3. VARYING HEIGHTS & SPEEDS

Have park elements that provide varying levels of challenge and risk via height and/or speed.

4. MULTI USE ELEMENTS

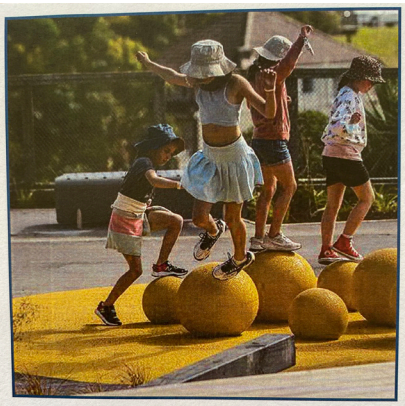
Select/design elements that can be used and in multiple ways and by multiple people simultaneously.

5. ENCOURAGING PLAY FOR ALL AGES & ABILITIES

Design to invite imaginative play so people feel encouraged to try without fear of failure.

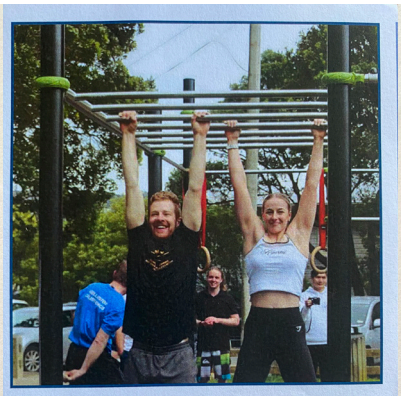
Based on the workshop kōrero, design translations that meet themes 3-5 include:

- Low-to-ground objects that people can hop between, or sit on.
- Abstract objects that can be used for seating and/or for climbing on.
- A spider swing that can be used for a thrilling group swing, or seating with friends.
- Multi-level climbable objects that less capable tamariki can climb the first stages, and more advanced tamariki can jump, or swing off the higher stages.



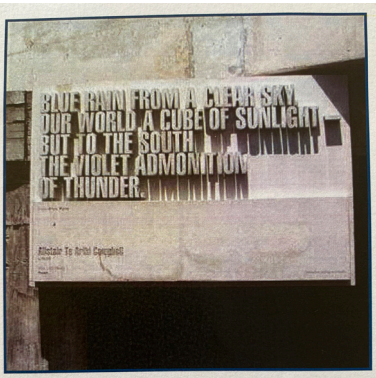
How important are soft / safe / colorful surface areas? Why?

Soft surfaces are fun for stand on and good for climbing.



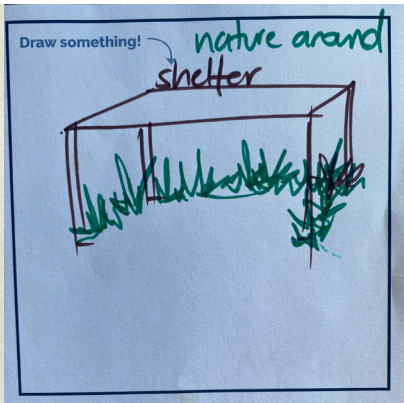
~~How important are calisthenics / street~~ workout areas? Why?

Climbing but more a frame — 3m high for challenge



How important are educational / history / cultural narrative information boards? Why?

They add to the culture vibe of Wellington, Naenae could have a competition in colleges & their poem gets published.



What else is important to include in this park? Why?

Shelter from sun/cold but not concrete, I want it to still ~~feel~~ have plants arand because I'm in nature

For the feedback in raw form please
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THIRD STUDIO
creating opportunities in design processes

local
local landscape architecture collective limited.

HUTT CITY
TE AWA KAIRANGI