

Active Response VII

Neighbourhood Niche

Recreate locally – find your niche, take your bubble-buddies or go alone, use what's to hand, experience the immediate.

This has been the message to our communities during Levels 4 and now during Level 3 of the Lockdown.

While this period has posed big challenges, there have been upsides. The opportunity to re-define how we recreate is one – using our streets, local parks, trails, cycleways and paths, rivers, streams and waterways. As recreation advocates, we can promote and celebrate the power of 'knowing' your home area.

Support our communities to ask:

- What can we do on the street?
- What is right here under our noses?
- Where is the nearest green space?
- What can we, see, feel, hear, smell and notice?
- Who's out there at the same time?
- And what do we love about 'local'?

Use our streets

...the things that most drove people to love where they live were not the local economy or even their personal civic engagement in the place... but the "softer sides" of place...such as aesthetics, social offerings and openness. [Dr K Loflin, Place Match]

Our streets are more than just places for traffic. They are potentially spaces that [communities can use](#) to engage socially, play and recreate, and it is clear that, under Level 4, the streets became [people friendly](#).



Figure 11 Image: Hocken Collections, University of Otago

People and activity-friendly streets impact on:

- [life expectancy](#) of those who live there
- air quality
- people's [activity levels](#) – and therefore their health and wellbeing
- children's play – and [play is central](#) to their development
- the ability to build '[place attachment](#)'

Donald Appleyard's [pivotal research](#) found that social interactions on three streets varied enormously depending on the amount of traffic on that street. Watch a clip [here](#).

Lucy Saunders developed a set of Indicators for a [Healthy Streets](#), and found that:

- people on the street are from all walks of life
- people choose to walk, cycle and use public transport.

To view the transformation of Francis Rd, London, watch [here](#).

Dr Simon Kingham undertook **research** on a suburban street that was closed for repairs following the 2011 earthquakes. Road closure created:

- significant change as people felt it was safer for children to play out
- opportunities for residents to play games with younger people, (such as)... cricket and basketball
- more residents walking and cycling
- residents got to know their neighbours better.

More than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents in the research supported a permanent closure of the street to through traffic.

“This raises the potential for road closures to be seen as an opportunity for local councils to promote things such as community events and street parties, as ways to overtly enhance community” [researchers]

To view Simon’s presentation *The Future of Travel* at the 2019 Conference, click [here](#).

Celebrate Nature

The National Parks City Movement is a reflection that nature is a basic human right. It also serves as a vehicle to ask what is it that we need from our landscape, what does a city need from nature to sustain itself? It is a platform for leaders to share a vision for a good future. It’s a reminder that people don’t follow ideas, they follow feelings. When it ‘feels good’ to people, people will do it again. [Geoff Canham and Gareth Moore-Jones, NPC Network]

‘What we need from nature’ has never been more evident than over the last month. People of all ages and life stages have taken to their gardens [if they have one] and the green spaces within walking distance of home. Why? Not just to keep fit, but because it ‘feels good’ to be in natural environments. Parks and open spaces are essential resources for health and [mental wellbeing](#). If we’d forgotten this, we have been sharply reminded of their value.

The movement promotes cities where:

- people and nature are better connected
- rich with wildlife, every child and young person benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors
- we all enjoy high-quality green spaces, where the air is clean to breathe
- it’s a pleasure to swim in the local rivers, sea or other waterways.



Figure 2 Educationcentral.co.nz

Play Locally

Hutt City’s [Play in the Hutt](#) programme, a collaboration between Hutt City, Sport NZ and Healthy Families, was based on research with local families, and included in [Tākaro – To Play](#).

Success factors included:

- Working in collaboration for collective impact
- The importance of leadership
- Understanding your community
- Telling your story

Outcomes included the establishment of a play team to ensure that play was part of the conversation and integrated into Council departments’ objectives. Insights, knowledge and data have already had an influence over Council policy and playing a role in how the Council approaches the design, build and use of local physical and social environments to ensure healthy, safe play environments for tamariki. [from [Sport NZ Case Study](#) Play in the Hutt]

Purpose	In practice
Play	Play in the Hutt – Hutt City
Exercise	Local cycleway use by families
Explore	Nature scavenger hunt
Adapted sport	Street cricket
Absorb	Nature as sensory experience
Reflect and restore	Walk by water
Challenge	Local walkways and trails

References/Resources

- Appleyard, Donald (2016) 2nd Ed. *Liveable Streets*, Routledge
[Creating Liveable Streets](#)
[Healthy Placemaking report](#)
[Healthy Streets Tools and Policy](#)
 Kingham S, Curl A and Banwell K, 2019, Streets for transport and health: The opportunity of a temporary road closure for neighbourhood connection, activity and wellbeing. *Journal of Transport and Health*, accepted.
[Leaning towards the future of placemaking](#)
 Loflin, K. (2015) *Place Match: The City Doctors Guide to finding where you belong*, Story Farm
 National Parks City [Foundation](#)
[Sport NZ Case Studies](#)
[Street Games movement](#)
 World Urban Parks [Nature Never Closes](#)