

# A play date with

# Riverton-Aparima



The Riverton-Aparima community has embraced the chance to help plan the future of one of our District's most iconic reserves.

The Taramea Bay Adventure Playground is being redeveloped after existing equipment had to be removed last year when safety concerns were identified.

Alongside staff from SDC's community facilities team, the Oraka Aparima Community Board developed a plan to engage with the public and help determine the area's future.

**"We recognise the importance of this site – it's an iconic one in our District which has been enjoyed by generations of Southlanders over the years."** - SDC community facilities contract manager Angie Hopkinson.

"Now we have a fantastic opportunity to revamp it for the enjoyment of the Oraka Aparima community and the wider Southland District. We want to make sure we get it right so we're listening to the ideas which have come in."

Local youngsters were asked how they like to play and what they would like to see and do at the site by submitting pictures, drawings, lists, dreams and stories.

"We asked for whatever their imagination came up with. The concept of play is different in today's modern world – it's not just about the traditional slide and swings. Everything from touch and sound to equipment which allows kids to move, explore, spy, dig, build, climb – the scope of possibilities is endless."

Board member Sharon Ayto was happy with the response.

"There needs to be ownership of the project by the community as it's a focal point in the Riverton Aparima town and area, visited and driven past by many locals and visitors from near and far," she says.

"This is a huge investment by the board and Council and we aim to be utilising the human factors, like Council staff and contractors, and the financial factors to the best of our ability."

Community engagement was of the upmost importance as it impacts all – as a child, a parent, a grandparent or anyone who uses the area.

"We need to make sure we are on the right track for the redevelopment in regard to the scale of expectations, the experiences people wish to have, the safety aspects – a whole range of factors," Sharon says. "We hope feedback is representative of the community."

"We also want to know the worries and concerns so we can look into these further to ensure we minimise them and reassure the community with the subsequent design."

The land is historically significant for Māori.

"We are working alongside the runanga to capture the essence of the site and how we can recognise its importance to Māori in the past, the present and the future," Sharon says.

"For European settlers it also marked the entrance to the safe haven of the harbour."

Responses had been received across a wide range of demographics.

"There have been lots of great ideas, some written, some drawn, or both. Kids have been encouraged by their parents to share their thoughts so they will be super keen to see the site developed and be able to talk of their involvement," Sharon says.

Safety of the site was a key focus with regards to the roadside location, the corner, vehicle speed and the car parking layout.

"The hill itself is seen as both an asset and a hindrance. Slides and a flying fox feature in several responses, along with the point the hill isn't part of the natural landscape of the area."

"There has clearly been a lot of thought put into the feedback and the board would like to acknowledge the work of Council staff in setting up the 'station' at the site and online to enable the community to provide us with their ideas."

Joining forces with the team from Sport Southland's Healthy Families, an activation day was held on-site on March 15 with fun, games and a sausage sizzle.

"It gave families a chance to have some fun and show us how they like to play and use this awesome space," Angie says.

Feedback from the community engagement and online surveys will now be collated before a site design is developed.

"It's really exciting to embark on this next phase and take another step closer to making this site reflect the community's wishes and then make them a reality," Angie says.

"The proactive approach from Riverton-Aparima is providing a great blueprint for other communities going forward when it comes to their recreational spaces."

Ongoing compliance inspections of the 40 Council-owned playground sites in October last year revealed some pieces of equipment which presented a safety hazard to children. Any equipment which no longer met national guidelines was promptly repaired. However, some equipment required permanent removal.

"We have a legal and moral responsibility to eliminate or minimise the risks to our community," Angie says.

"Communities are invested in playgrounds and open spaces within their towns and there is a strong sentimental attachment associated with these spaces. We respect that and are looking forward to working alongside communities to continue providing these important assets."

