

INTRODUCTION

Vacant spaces appear more frequently in urban cities with constant expansions, new subdivision changes and land use adjustments. Beckenham is no exception as an outer suburb, the four vacant spaces associated along the Heathcote River on a border with Cashmere. These spaces shown in Figure 2 include Hunters Terrace tarmac zone (in red), Council freehold land (in blue), concrete outside crystal shop (in green) and an informal pump track (in yellow). By recognising the potential for these vacant spaces, enhancements can be made to improve the current state of the areas. Communication

processes. By comparing the information provided by the BNA and CCC, the vacant spaces within Beckenham can be enhanced through efficient communication and continuous community support/shared maintenance. It will also allow for a compiled document to be produced that shows the perspectives of involved partners through survey responses, interviews, and communication records.

This report covers appropriate research methods used, identifies limitations, analyses results for each vacant space and, concludes with recommendations based on the correlated information. The attached appendixes expand on further detail from the compiled records and research.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

A plethora of resources were used to give background information on topics deemed relevant to the research question. These included: researching how to engage with communities, legalities of councils in New Zealand and the appropriate methods for transforming vacant urban spaces.

The project involved a significant component of community engagement and a small element of engagement with mana whenua. King & Cruickshank (2012) found that building effective community engagement involved adopting bottom-up approaches, early consultation, and regular communication. The bottom-up approach resulted in an increase in community participation and was a determining factor in the success of a community-based project. A bottom-up approach creates a more engaged community that activity shared ideas and share their expertise where they can. However, legislation in New Zealand pushes for a top-down approach (Austin, 2015). Public participation is lacking because there are fewer elected representatives on councils, and decisions are made by central government. These decisions must then be adjusted for every individual region (Austin, 2015). Particularly in Christchurch post-quake, privatisation has become an issue because individuals or entities buy out public spaces within communities, and the sense of community can be lost (Dombroski, 2019).

It became clear that transforming vacant spaces in public areas fit for social exchange was an essential element of research. Empty spaces are defined as underdeveloped land that occurs in the fringe belts between two suburbs (Phelps and Silva, 2018).



Legalities of vacant spaces

Secondary research, methods of emailing and interviewing were conducted to collect and understand current zoning and regulations that govern the areas of interest. Environment Canterbury and CCC websites gave information into the potential of a landfill under the Southern Library area and any further land titles changes that had occurred.

The Reserves Act of 1977, the Resource Management Act of 1993, and the Local Government Act 2002

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of changes to Beckenham:

Using the snowball and convenience method for sampling, the survey correlated 50 responses across a wide distribution within Beckenham, as seen in Figure 3 below. The wide distribution shown indicates residents throughout the southern suburbs of Christchurch utilise the vacant spaces as part of their day-to-day routines. Thus, any changes to the inherent value of the vacant spaces will have an impact on the broader community surrounding Beckenham.

A common trend shown between the residents nearest location points identified a higher density of interest in closer proximity to the vacant spaces. This could be driven by association to the frequency of usage experienced through either the current state of each space or the proximity to the South Library. Li et al. (2018) found by changing the vacant spaces in urban settings, there is a potential for socio-economic growth. Further suggestions and comments regarding each space is expanded on within Appendix C.

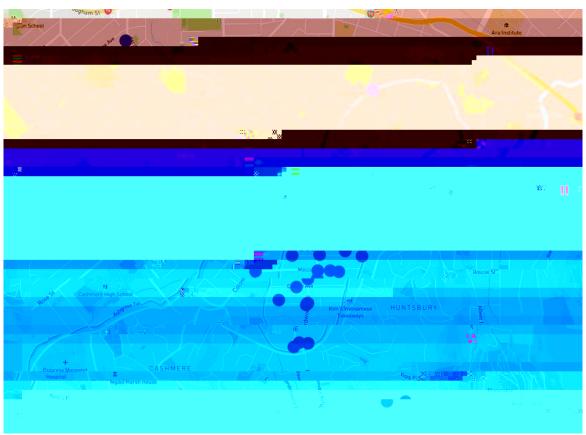


Figure 3: Spatial spread of survey respondents in Beckenham

Council Freehold Land or Civil Defence Training Area:

The current state of the training area prevents public access and usage of the vacant concrete and green space mixed area (shown in

Following on from interviews with BNA board members, the possibility of a physical community noticeboard was suggested. Feedback from the survey showed, 80.9% of residents would interact with the noticeboard either frequently (38.6%; n=17) or infrequently (43.2%; n=19). While a traditional noticeboard could help to facilitate an informal stream of communication between residents (Taylor et al., 2009), this may not be as efficient for reaching a vast majority through the current social media noticeboards (Community Facebook pages run by the BNA).

Pump Track:

Currently used by the Beckenham youth, the pump track provides a safe zone to practise jumps or tricks with a BMX/ Bicycle on softer surfaces (dirt/ exposed topsoil), as seen in Figure 6. Despite a high frequency of use, according to



Figure 6: Makeshift jumps on the pump track in Beckenham

interviewees, 60% (n=30) of residents indicated they were not satisfied with the present state of the pump track. This could be driven by a general lack of communication, between the BNA and CCC, for a formal pump track regarding the standards for appropriate jump ramp heights, space required and, safety gear needed. Each of these factors could be minimalised by potentially extending the pump track into the Civil Defence Training Area or having open community discussions with a CCC representative to create an ideal pump track. By changing the drivers for the lack of satisfaction, could allow for better community engagement with the environment. This was supported by a further 52% (n=26) of residents who would visit the pump track more frequently if it was enhanced.

Kostrzewska (2017) found that while formal recreational spaces provide a more regulated zone for physical activity, these spaces tend to have an issue with privacy as residents can spectate any users. This may deter youth from using the pump track as there is a higher potential for harassment against female-identifying members of the community (Clark, 2015). This could be minimised as a risk factor by introducing safety talks for local schools

injury associated with more complex surfaces in play zones. This risk could be impacted through the current attitude of hardening up associated with playing in New Zealand, Aotearoa. Therefore, this could not be implemented on the grass zone of the Hunters Terrace as potential outdoor use associated with the South Library.

Similarly, a basketball court or a learn to bike area would have the same impact within Hunters Terrace through enhancement of the tarmac for alternative use. A combined 76% of residents would potentially interact with either of these zones. However, a cost-benefit comparison shows that while these spaces provide recreational advantages, the prices associated could be over \$3,000 (shown in Appendix A) and may take a more extended period. This use could be implemented in the future; however, it will require large amounts of planning and focus group discussion, which this research report was unable to provide.

Reflecting on our results from the emails and interviews, it became evident that the policies and procedures within the CCC are far from straightforward. Within the twelve-week period of this research project, we were unable to make any significant headway with legalities. The CCC is a large organisation, and this comes with challenges. There is no one answer for why the processes within the CCC seem so complicated, and one member of the council never holds all the information or power to get things done. The community board member stated that a probable reason for the sites being neglected is that Beckenham is a middle-class neighbourhood and that transforming these spaces is more of an improvement in quality of life, it is not essential. There are other communities in



Christchurch City Council. (2021). Resource Consents.

https://ccc.govt.nz/consents-and-licences/resource-consents

Dimitri, C., Oberholtzer, L., & Nichan, M. (2013). Reducing the Geographic and Financial

Incentives. Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition, 8(4), 429-444.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Case Studies

Learn to Bike:

Christchurch City contains two bike skills tracks. The Westburn Reserve bike park in Westburn and the Knights Stream cycle park located in Halswell, located approximately 10km and 11km from Beckenham respectively. Both tracks allow children to enjoy cycling on a tarmac circuit with road markings and signs designed to replicate what the children



Figure 9: Knight's Stream learn to bike track, Halswell, Christchurch (Backyard Travel Family, n.d.).



Figure 10: Westburn Reserve bike park, Westburn, Christchurch (Cycling in Christchurch, 2012).

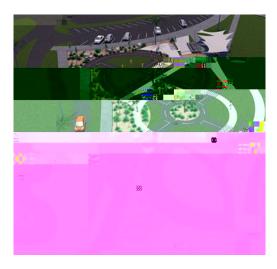


Figure 11: Caroline Bay learn to bike track, Timaru, New Zealand (Littlewood, 2020)

Pump Track:

Two options for Pump track builds and costs are outlined below.

The dirt pump track option has the lowest building costs ranging from NZD\$10,000 - \$30,000, but relatively high annual maintenance costs ranging from NZD \$3000 \$13000. The dirt pump tracks also have a lower average lifespan of 10 years compared to asphalt pump tracks with an average lifespan of 30 years. Asphalt Pump tracks are a greater upfront cost ranging from NZD \$30,000 - \$130,000 but have a longer lifespan and cheaper annual running costs. This option can provide a positive cost-benefit as less maintenance is required (Annette & Grants, 2016).

APPENDIX B: Council Communications



Figure 13: Email Template used to contact Councils across New Zealand/ Aotearoa

Table 2: Summary of Council replies regarding the use within Esplanade Reserves

Council	Response		
Hamilton City Council	Would not allow. The RMA states commercial use only allowed on Recreation or Historic reserves, Esplanade reserves are 'local purpose' thus trade cannot be undertaken.		
Tauranga City Council	Usually permit apart from some tendered licenses on selected reserves.		
Palmerston North City Council	Policy for use of public spaces, if it is more than casual use of space then approval from the council would be needed should be sought.		
Wellington City Council	Esplanade Reserves classified as 'open spaces or conservation area' therefore would need a resource consent approval for any commercial activity.		
Nelson City Council	They allow a coffee cart to operate on their Esplanade Reserves. They also have big parks adjacent to their Esplanade reserves which they have farmers markets on.		

Invercargill City Council Would possibly allow, they classify Esplanade reserves as

Environmental reserves. They assess activity on

Esplanade reserves case by case and whether it complies

with the reserves act.

Dunedin City Council When there is a proposal to use public reserve for

commercial purpose, they adopt a concession licensing

system with a full application that is required.

Tasman District Council Would not allow. The Esplanade reserves in this area reher

Irrelevant to them, they are a very small rural area, but lease Esplanade Reserves for cows to graze on.

Technically a commercial activity.

Mackenzie district Council

Commercial activity on an Esplanade Reserves depends

on a case-by-case assessment.

Selwyn District Council

Their Esplanade Reserves are predominantly in rural areas which would not be suitable for commercial activity. Would have to meet relevant requirements which are regulated through permit system.

Central Hawkes Bay District Council

Do not have any specific policies to do with commercial activity on their Esplanade reserves.

Greater Wellington District Council

Do not own or administer any Esplanade reserves in this area, but commercial use does not seem to fit the purposes listen in the RMA.



Figure 13: Land use zoning within Beckenham (Christchurch District Plan, 2021)

APPENDIX C: Summary of Survey Responses

Table 3: Summary of survey

