

19. CHRISTCHURCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY

Officer responsible Leisure Manager	Author Lesley Symington, Senior Recreation Adviser DDI 941-8879 and Alan Bywater, Policy and Planning Team Leader, DDI 941-6430
---	--

The purpose of this report is to inform the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee about the preparation of a Physical Activity Strategy for the city. The preparation of the strategy has been endorsed by the Community and Leisure Committee, which has appointed Councillor Carole Anderton to be part of the Steering Group established to oversee its development.

BACKGROUND

Increasing physical activity participation has emerged in the last decade as a key national and international goal to ensure health and well-being.

How Active Are We?

According to data covering the period 1997 - 2001, published by SPARC (Sport and Recreation New Zealand) in 2002:

1. Some 70% of New Zealand adults meet the recommended physical activity guidelines (2½ hours of active recreation/sport per week). This compares to 67% in 1997/98.
2. Pacific Island groups and those from 'other' ethnic cultures including Asian groups are less active than Maori and New Zealand European.
3. Adults' weight increased 3.2 kg over the period 1989 - 1997.
4. The level of obesity has increased from 11% to 17%.
5. There has been a 3% decline in physical activity (from 69%) over the period 1997 - 2001 in children/young people 5 - 17 years old.

This decline was particularly prevalent for 5 - 8 and 13 - 15 years olds and for Maori and Pacific Island young people.

6. Some 70% of Canterbury/Westland adults meet the guidelines, compared to 68% of all New Zealanders over the period 1997 - 2001.

BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO INDIVIDUALS AND THE CITY

Health Benefits

There is now strong evidence that people who are active are healthier. Such evidence is documented in reports such as the United States Surgeon General's Report - "Physical Activity and Health" (1996) and the Ministerial Task Force on Sport, Fitness and Leisure report (2001).

These reports concur that people who are more active have reduced risk of health conditions such as:

- Cardiovascular disease.
- Type II diabetes (predicted to rise to 81% by 2011, Ministry of Health, 2001).
- Stroke.
- Some cancers including cancer of the colon and breast.
- Feelings of anxiety, depression and stress (stress has now been included as a factor impacting on workplace wellness under the new Health and Safety in Employment Legislation).

Active lifestyles reduce the risk of high blood pressure, obesity and osteoporosis. The Ministry of Health (2001) has determined that the health burden created by physical inactivity is second only to that created by smoking.

In Christchurch (1997) the main causes of death were cancer, heart disease and stroke.

A 5% increase in physical activity has been estimated to save \$25 million per annum in direct health costs.

Social Benefits

The Ministerial Taskforce (2001) and the Hillary Commission (1998) provided evidence that active recreation and sport enhances social cohesion, provides an enhanced sense of identity and image, enhances national pride and plays a role in the prevention of crime, particularly in youth.

Economic Benefits

In New Zealand the gross output of the sport and recreation sector has been estimated to be \$1.973 billion and provided a \$4.8 million contribution to the economy on a daily basis in 1999 (Ministerial Taskforce, 2001; BERL, 2000). Increased levels of physical activity also have a positive impact on levels of absenteeism from work (thereby contributing to the economy) and the ability of older adults to live independently (contributing to reduced health costs) (Stephenson et al, 2000; WHO; 2001).

Environmental Benefits

Encouraging walking or cycling as a means of transportation and planning the city to accommodate this can lead to reduced traffic congestion and 'calmer' roads, reduced air and noise pollution and decrease demand for car parking.

WHY DEVELOP A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY?

Christchurch City Council is recognised nationally as a leading provider of facilities (pools, leisure centres), parks and programmes which encourage physical activity. For several years there has been a focus on the provision of cycleways and walkways and generally encouraging a shift in the mode of transport away from the dominance of motor vehicles. This in turn has contributed to making Christchurch an 'activity friendly' city. However, it is being increasingly recognised nationally and internationally that other factors such as urban design and air and environmental quality have a major impact on levels of physical activity.

For example, street design which does not cater to the needs of cyclists can lead to decreased levels of cycling as a means of transportation and recreation and smog levels can impact on winter walking outdoors.

A Physical Activity Strategy will pull together all elements of an 'activity friendly' environment, ie:

- Transportation.
- Urban design (including suburb layout and street, walkway, cycleway and park design).
- Leisure facility design.
- Leisure and recreation programmes and activities.
- Environmental health, including air and water quality.

By having a Christchurch Physical Activity Strategy awareness of design and provision for active living will be raised amongst relevant agencies (in particular the Council and Environment Canterbury), staff and elected members and integrated into each agency's policy and planning. By the key stakeholder agencies committing to a Physical Activity Strategy for the city, an integrated approach can be taken to developing Christchurch as an 'activity friendly city'.

Clearly significant work has already been carried out or is underway in a number of these areas. The Physical Activity Strategy will build on the work already carried out and identify areas for further work and potentially bringing together strands of existing work.

LINKS TO COUNCIL POLICY AND STRATEGY

Christchurch City Council has a well-established commitment to enhance health and community well-being through its mission statement and goals, its Social Well Being and Recreation and Sport Policies and Healthy Christchurch initiative. The need to develop an activity friendly city was explicitly recognised in the Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy for the City, which was approved by the Council. This strategy identified the role the physical environment plays in either encouraging physical activity or creating barriers to it.

Increasing physical activity in the city contributes to the triple bottom line through enhancing community cohesion and well being, environmental sustainability, economic development and health.

Both the Council's Cycling Strategy and Pedestrian Strategy note the health and fitness benefits of cycling and walking. Both these documents and the work to implement them are ensuring that the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are considered in many of the Council's infrastructure and transport decisions.

CHRISTCHURCH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY AS PART OF THE LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN

Mary Richardson, Policy Analyst, Policy Unit comments: *"The Physical Activity Strategy will fit well under the Long Term Council Community Plan priorities. The work on the social outcomes for the LTCCP has highlighted the need for a collaborative approach to increasing physical activity in the city. A number of agencies have identified 'increasing physical activity' as a key social priority for the city, for example to reduce epidemics such as diabetes and heart disease and to increase social cohesion".*

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY STEERING GROUP AND PROCESS

A steering group consisting of representatives from the following agencies will be established to oversee the preparation of the strategy:

- Christchurch City Council - staff and elected member representative,
- District Health Board (Community and Public Health),
- Environment Canterbury,
- Pegasus Health,
- Pacific Trust Canterbury,
- Ngai Tahu,
- Healthy Christchurch.

Dr Jenny Ross from Lincoln University (and a SPARC Board member) will provide technical support to the Steering Group.

Costs for preparation of the strategy will be met from existing budgets, including the Policy Unit budget. Other agencies have also expressed a willingness to contribute to the costs.

A draft strategy will be prepared and distributed for feedback to stakeholders prior to submission to the relevant standing committees and the Council for adoption. It is expected that the process will take three - four months.

CONCLUSION

Currently there are no local government models either in New Zealand or overseas for Christchurch to follow in developing such a strategy.

The Council will therefore be able to add to the national/international physical activity knowledge base and provide national leadership to other local authorities by committing to the preparation of a Physical Activity Strategy.

The preparation and implementation of such a strategy, which covers all the settings in which physical activity takes place, will facilitate a collaborative response to a key city priority. It will contribute to making the city 'activity friendly' and will have positive benefits to Christchurch City and to its residents.

Staff

Recommendation: That a member of the Sustainable Transport and Utilities Committee become part of the Physical Activity Strategy Steering Group.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the Committee elect a member accordingly.