

Making facilities hum

Budgets are tight. We need to reduce carbon impact. How can we use existing facilities creatively?

Many spaces and places are under-utilised. Yet, more people are working from home, working shifts, or are underemployed or unemployed. Use innovative programming to optimising use of facility spaces and meet the needs of a diverse community.

Before we focus on building anything new, let's **optimise** what we've got.

"The best building is the one you've got"
Craig Pocock, Beca

Minimise embodied energy

We need to think and act sustainably by reducing excess and effectively utilising our resources. The [Sport New Zealand Environmental Sustainability Guidelines for Spaces and Places](#) recommends carefully considering needs, as opposed to wants. Focus particularly on the needs of potential future users of spaces and places. Use this to guide decision making.

Retrofitting or changing use of existing facilities is the lowest carbon impact your organisation can have. **'Carbon costs increase incrementally if parks or buildings are replaced every 20 years'**. They never pay back their carbon footprint.

Appreciate your assets

Take time to really understand the facility and what it can offer. Consider small changes that can increase utilisation.

- **Increase accessibility** - enable places to feel open and welcoming through programming and staff training.
- **Re-configure spaces** to enable multi-use – through markings, nets, curtains, and flooring.

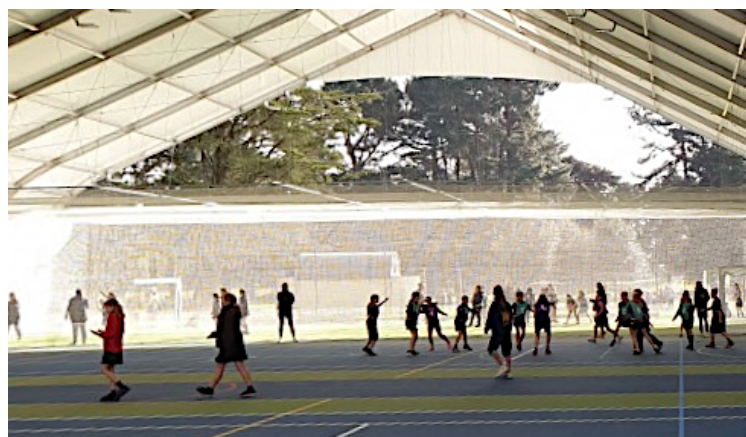


Figure 1 Eastern Canopy, Eastern Community Sport and Recreation

- **Expand equipment** to increase range of activities to be provided (arts, sport, exercise, social, education).
- **Extend facility management** to other spaces in the neighbourhood - community halls, scout dens, church halls, community centres, school halls and gyms.

Understand your communities

What do you know about your community of users, and your facility's context?

Who's in your community during 'low use' times. Identify demographics, familial structure, work situation, leisure needs/motivations. Use this to guide programming.

Identify non-users – cultural groups, people living in residential care or on low incomes. What do you know about these groups? Understand the barriers to participation. Build relationships. Perception is key – people need to think 'it's for people like me'.

Programming

Craig Pocock recommends spending a year on programming to increase utilisation BEFORE considering rebuilds or new builds. Find out what is possible, how people engage and use the space. Social programming is key to maximising the potential of what you already have.

Understanding the community and identifying potential leisure needs is a vital step in creative programme design. Creative programming can optimise facility use, lower costs, and increase the diversity of users.

Refer to previous Insights:

INSIGHTS 12: Equity and Leisure
INSIGHTS 37: Principles of Inclusion
INSIGHTS 40: Spatial Justice

Case Study 1: Avon Hub

Avon Hub, operated as part of Christchurch's [Eastern Community Sport and Recreation \(ECSR\)](#) hums night and day with school programmes, indoor and outdoor sports and recreation activities, and Dallington OSCAR programme operates from upstairs.

Originally part of Shirley Boys High, post-quake it stood unused and fell into disrepair. Banks Avenue School was rebuilding on the site and saw potential for facility re-use. ECSR manages the hub and several other local venues including the innovative canopy in New Brighton, which are available for the 7 local schools and community.

This [Hub Model](#), is a prime example of a community working together and offering a creative solution, minimising impact on the climate through re-purposing of existing buildings.

Case Study 2: Walter Nash Community Hub

Integrating the original Walter Nash Centre, Taita Community Hall, Community Library and Hutt Valley Netball Courts., the [Walter Nash Hub](#) opened in 2018. Home to several sporting codes, it offers five multi-purpose indoor courts, a library, music studio, meeting spaces and a café. Outside there are a further 11 courts and parking for large events.

The Hub is in the centre of a low-decile community, and they're making the most of what is on offer. Last year a record 858,000 people came through the doors, reflecting home communities' appreciation.

Ross Barber, Centre Manager, says that the hub hums with a diverse range of people attending all kinds of programmes and events.



[Huttfest Polynesian Festival](#) attracted 24,000 people over 4 days with 12,500 performers. The local EID celebration for the Muslim community hosts about 1,000 people annually. Movies for seniors and movies for IHC residents add to the mix. And the indoor courts are in constant use. [Kaibosh Food Rescue](#) deliver surplus soup and bread to homeless or financially disadvantaged people twice a week, and whanau can socialise while eating. The foyer hosts university interest nights and art displays. The local intermediate schools hold an art competition twice a year.

The key to its success is good community outreach, a steady building of relationships with people and organisations.

Insights into Action

Principle	Action
Identify non-users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify communities which are not using your facility Find out their interests and aspirations, and availability Identify barriers to facility use
Take a fresh look	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm current spaces and how these might be used Use your facility as a starting point for local activities Thinking about diverse use (eg art in sports spaces)
Creative programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme smaller parts of your facility (badminton courts not basketball courts) Design short term programmes and festivals at low use times Mix up the activity offering: arts in sports spaces, games in meeting spaces, social events in kitchens
Create partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sublet parts of your facility Collaborate with other facility providers in the local area

Further reading

[Sport New Zealand Hub Guide](#)
[Sport New Zealand Environmental Sustainability Guidelines for Spaces and Places](#)
[Sport New Zealand Spaces and Places Framework \(2024\)](#)
 Watch [Craig Pocock speaking at the IFLA World Congress](#)
 Rossman, R J and Duerden, M. D. (2019) Designing Experiences

Figure 2 Hallway table tennis, Walter Nash Hub