Rejuvenating Linwood Park through Placemaking

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Acknowledgements

Contents

1.0 Abstract

The target of this research was to speak with interested community groups around the use and perception of Linwood Park as a public place. Literature has indicated that public place holds importance in terms of social cohesion and community well-being, with good public places engaging with community, increasing a sense of place and ownership. This is particularly important for youth, who also develop a sense of autonomy and identity through interactions in public place. Key elements that contribute to success and conviviality of place are contextually specific which indicates that successful places should be developed by those who have interest in the place through the community; the approach in this way is through placemaking. Through engaging with several groups representing the community, including key informants and young people, data was collected in the form of opinion, and participants were also asked through semi-structured interviews about the ways they used the park. Results from this indicated that many perspectives were shared across all groups of society spoken to. Overwhelmingly, the youth were concerned with poor relationships between age groups, bullying and anti-social behaviour occurring in the park. They were also united in their wants and needs in regard to potential solutions, such as an inclusive, community driven initiative. Further research should aim to expand the points of focus, by considering the views of the wider community.

2.0 Introduction

Public place is the area in which all recreational aspects of everyday life can occur (Oldenburg, 1989). In an increasingly globalised and multicultural world it is imperative that public place is accessible and appealing to all who wish to use it (Project for Public Spaces [PPS], N.D). The various activities that can occur in public place are numerous; however social interaction is an indicator of successful public places. Placemaking, or the process of making places successful, is an important concept to consider in the development and maintenance of communities, whether on a small, neighbourhood scale, or a larger, city based scale. As a concept, placemaking is of great interest to local councils through the engagement of residents in the future of a place, thus generating a greater sense of ownership, and attachment within an area (PPS, 2012). Originating primarily from the work of notable scholars such as Jane Jacobs (1961) and William Whyte (1988), placemaking has become a leading concept in community development and sustainability, as it essentially places community at the forefront of the development of their own places, placing their needs and wants first, and acknowledging individual differences within and between communities.

In post-earthquake Christchurch, there is ample chance to apply placemaking methods. This project worked with different groups in the Linwood community to identify attributes of Linwood Park they consider to be important to any future attempts at placemaking in the area. This research and report aims primarily to provide a methodology and framework for promoting placemaking in the Linwood Park area for the Christchurch City Council (CCC).

2.1 Linwood Context

The Christchurch suburb of Linwood is home to 4,290 people (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). In terms of socio-economics the area is generally not well off, appearing consistently below Christchurch averages, particularly in terms of education level (Figure 1). Further, it can be seen that in terms of income the median earned by those aged fifteen years and above was $25,300, falling below the median income for Christchurch of $29,800, the amount of Linwood residents earning under $20,000 per year is close to 40 percent, compared to 36.3 percent for Christchurch City. Furthermore, unemployment across

Linwood was found to be much higher than the average of 5.1 percent for Christchurch, with Linwood falling at 8.3 percent (ibid).

Highest qualification for people aged 15 years and over
Linwood and Christchurch City
2013 Census
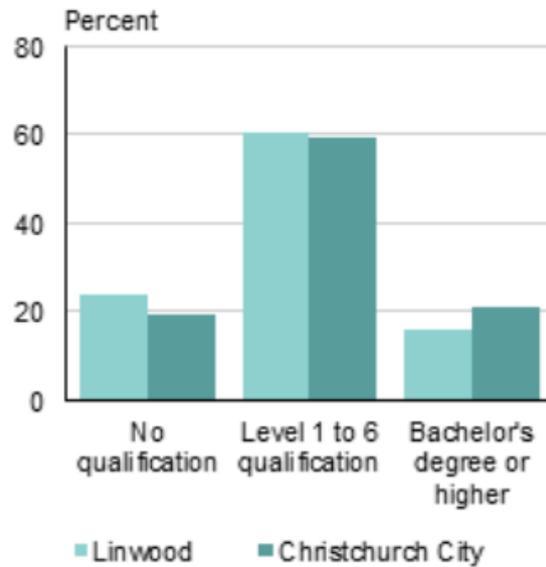
Note: Level 1 to 6 qualification category includes level 1 to 4 certificates, level 5 and 6 diploma and overseas secondary school qualification.
Source: Statistics New Zealand

Figure 1. Educational attainment in Linwood compared with Christchurch average as per 2013, New Zealand Census. Retrieved from: http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=14845&parent_id=14758&tabname=&sc_device=pdf

Linwood and Christchuch Average Unemployment Rate
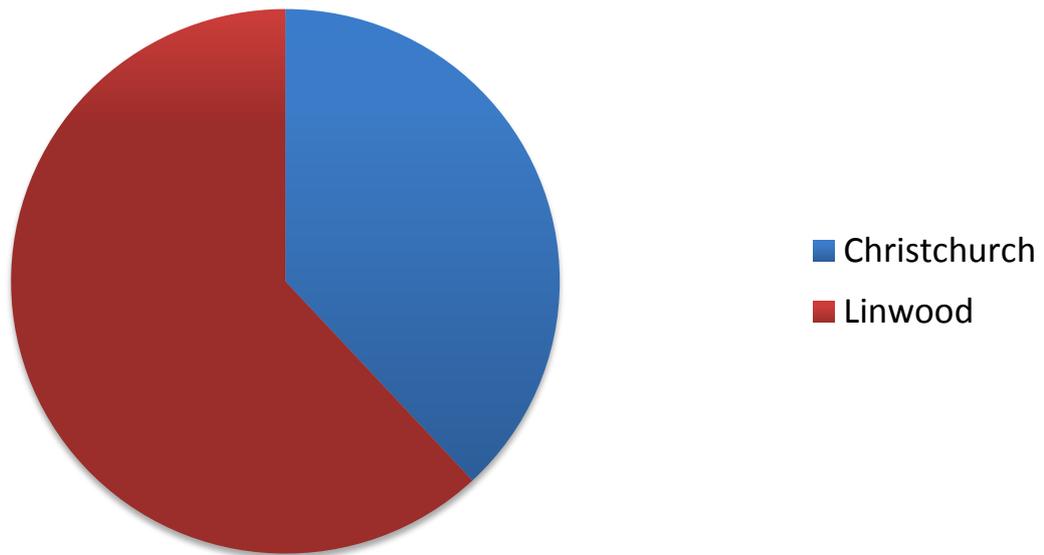
Figure 2 Linwood and Christchurch Unemployment Rate. Statistics retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=14845&parent_id=14758&tabname=&sc_device=pdf

2.2 Linwood Park

In terms of the scope of the project it was important to have a focus point, in an acknowledgment of time constraints, and allow a more focused quality of data gathered. Linwood Park was chosen as this focus point, due to its usage of a public place by various sections of the community and the positive events occurring in the area, such as rugby league and events such as the Linwood Youth Festival Experience (LYFE). It was felt that it was important to focus on the positive and constructive use of the park, as mainstream perception is arguably negative.

After much discussion, the overall aim of this project was decided to be an aim to provide a framework for the revitalization of Linwood Park, through a participatory approach, with regards to enhancing social cohesion, specifically by addressing the needs of the youth. Our objectives to meet this aim were to discover how Linwood Park is used by the youth, and to explore various ways of furthering the promotion of constructive use of Linwood Park. From these objectives we formulated two specific research questions; the first being 'what is the youth perception of park use?' The second research question used involved how youth could be engaged to further promote a more inclusive and attractive use of the park in harmony with others. Framework of the research project was then developed from the aim, objective and questions.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Successful public places are an essential component of the social life of communities, facilitating social interaction and community bonding (Worpole & Knox, 2008). It is in these places that interaction occurs and positive relationships within the community can be formed. PPS (N.D) talks about public places fostering a sense of belonging within the community, this belonging is essential for the wellbeing of residents, providing them ownership and interest in their community. A background of place as a concept, placemaking, and elements within successful public places and particularly successful public parks must be considered in an effort to understand processes occurring and future directions of Linwood Park.

3.2 Place and Placemaking

3.2.1 Place

Place has differing scales, ranging from expanses of countries, cities, parks and rooms (Cresswell, 2009). As a result of this, it can be difficult to ascribe a definition to. However, as a concept central to this current research, and Human Geography it is important there is an understanding of what is meant.

Place as a concept is socially constructed through the usage of elements and how they combine within a space (Cresswell, 2009; Massey, 1991; McEvoy-Levy, 2012; Vazquez, 2012). It is therefore defined, by the worldview of its users and the social interactions that occur in the sphere. Friedmann (2010) defines place as "a small, three-dimensional urban space that is cherished by the people who inhabit it (p154)." Along with the definition above, this emphasises the relationship people have with the place as defining and making the particular place. Importantly, Friedmann then continues on to provide examples of places with 'no soul,' using the term 'non-places.' This understanding is reinforced by Auge (1995) and Kunstler (1993). Spaces such as airports, offices and hotels with little or no character fall into this category, becoming 'non-places' simply due to the fact that people have not ascribed a symbolic value to the area, and without the symbolic value, the place has no meaning (Friedmann, 2010).

If place is understood as being shaped and defined by its users, then it follows that it is adaptable, and constantly changing with changes to society, including population shifts and societal view shifts. Understanding place in this way allows an explanation for individual differences in community understanding of place. Furthermore, this flexible view of space allows for the facilitation of successful elements within the sphere, and provides communities with the opportunity to craft a place with elements they need and want within the public place. Taking into account all of this, the question for this research focuses on how the perception and image of Linwood Park as a place is shaped and used by its multiple stakeholder groups.

3.2.2 Placemaking

Placemaking is the collaborative process between planners, designers and the community, with the end goal of facilitating the creation of a public place that is appealing for all members of the surrounding society. Within this process is the goal of promoting a sense of place and ownership. Sense of place is regarded as a human need, essential for well-being and feelings of safety, security and orientation, and remedy against feelings of alienation and loneliness (DeMiglio & Williams, 2008). The inherent idea at the heart of placemaking is creating places for and with people (PPS, N.D). It is crucial to keep the community engaged and involved in the process, as this provides a sense of ownership and the ability for the community to redevelop the place as their wants and needs change overtime (PPS, 2012).

When in practice, placemaking looks to build or improve public space through the creation of beauty, while connecting neighbourhoods and promoting an authentic sense of place (Disbrow et al, 2013). While this is important for placemaking, Disbrow et al (2013) also make note of the tendency to focus on the physical characteristics of place, while ignoring the process and act of placemaking. The process of placemaking is a key factor which is often left unconsidered, and Disbrow et al (ibid) argue "the most successful placemaking initiatives transcend the 'place' to place additional importance on the 'making' aspect (p3)."

In consideration of this, stakeholders of Linwood should ideally be intricately involved in changes, consulted with in regards to how they currently use the park, and what

they want from it in the foreseeable future. This current research aimed to do this on some level.

3.3 Key Elements of Successful Public Place and Parks

3.3.1 Key Elements of Successful Public Place

When looking at public place it becomes clear that some public places have more success than others. The concept of "conviviality", in urban design can be defined as the quality a space has to be lively and welcoming to all who may wish to use it (Shaftoe, 2008). Several urbanists from varying backgrounds have studied elements of places which contribute to conviviality and success of spaces. Francis Tibbalds (1992) sees convivial spaces as needing to consist of a vibrant, mixed use environment which is used at all times including night and during the weekends. It should be stimulating visually, and attractive to all including tourists and residents.

As each public place sits within its own context, the differences between these places mean that the elements which facilitate and lead to success vary in weightings from place to place. However there are several key themes that remain consistent when analysing the elements identified. These include the access and movement between and within the place (CABE, 2011; Jacobs, 1961; MFE, 2002; PPS, N.D; Shaftoe 2008; Tibbalds 1992), how connected a place is to the street to draw in more users (CABE, 2011; Jacobs, 1961; MFE, 2002; Whyte, 1988), a people centred approach and feel including community collaboration and involvement with the park such as Linwood LYFE festival, (Jacobs, 1961; MFE, 2002; PPS, N.D; Tibbalds, 1992.) the physical aspects within the park such as natural features, water, and exposure to and shelter from weather (PPS, N.D; Shaftoe, 2008; Whyte, 1988), varied and diverse activities (CABE, 2011; Jacobs, 1961; MFE, 2002; PPS, N.D; Shaftoe, 2008; Tibbalds, 1992.) and lastly the perception of safety and actual safety (Jacobs, 1961; PPS, N.D; Shaftoe, 2008; Tibbalds, 1992; Whyte, 1988).

3.3.2 Successful Parks

In "The Death and Live of Great American Cities," Jane Jacobs (1961) states that the best locations for parks are locations in which people already choose to be. Furthermore, she says parks should function in a way that knits a city's function together, rather than as a barrier or interruption of this. In its internal design, a good park allows a plan for community diversity as a space where everyone feels comfortable and a variety of activities can occur,

and should be designed to have intricacy, but hold a clear centre (Jacobs, 1961; Kaplan, Kaplan & Wendt, 1972). Additionally there should be both good exposure to sunlight, and shelter from adverse weather conditions (Jacobs, 1961). For parks that are ill-fitted to their surroundings and unsuccessful, Jacobs provides the answer in provision of demand goods to encourage activity in the park. These can be in the form of major goods such as music and plays or minor goods (ibid). The events that occur in Linwood Park act as demand goods, however talking to users of the park may enlighten the study as to other minor demand goods not immediately evident to outside researchers.

While it is of critical importance to consider the human aspect of interactions with public space in any placemaking attempt, this still requires a physical place for these interactions to take place. Various authors have identified inherent characteristics of a desirable place as; small, utilized, and cherished by the city dwellers (Gehl, 2010; Friedmann 2010). We cannot ignore the physical aspect of the park in terms of design and the infrastructure including pedestrian footpaths, sanitary facilities, benches, sports infrastructure, and children's playground facilities. These characteristics are influenced or depend on the views and perception of intended users. The park is defined by the people it serves but it does not define the people and their behaviour. Cresswell (2004), as cited by Friedmann (2010) agrees with this view of and further points out that urban places are embedded in the built environment but come into being through reiterative social practices.

3.4 Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

Initiatives and studies have indicated that involvement with organised community groups is associated with an increased sense of community, which in turn increases social well-being (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007). It is important to provide youth with opportunities that will increase this sense of belonging, promoting pro-social behaviours in doing so (Albanesi, Cicognani, & Zani, 2007). Social cohesion can be referred to as the extent of connectedness among groups in a society, (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Forrest & Kearns, 2011). Engagement and interaction in community places and activities have been suggested as something which has high influence on facilitating social cohesion (Clark et al, 2007; Forrest & Kearns, 2011).

3.5 Youth and Public Place Usage

Often the design of public places does not cater for youth. For example, it is common for youth to use parks to meet and socialise with groups of their friends, however the perception of youths lingering in large groups in areas such as parks and playgrounds which typically cater to younger children, can be seen as intimidatory (Clark, Holland, Katz & Peace, 2007; Owens, 2002; Carter, Martin & Wood, 2014). This is partially because there is widespread perception that youth in a public place are a problem. The subsequent exclusion of the age group from public place occurs through design (Clark et al, 2007; Owens, 2002) and public policy specifically aimed to restrict teenage usage including curfews, skateboarding bans and loitering ordinances (Owens, 2002). This exclusionary approach is dangerous for any desired community cohesion.

Teenagers have just as much right to use the park in a constructive way as other age groups; in fact it is important for their development. Adolescents need to be able to develop their autonomy and independence in settings outside their homes and without direct supervision of adults (Clark et al, 2007; Owens, 2002; McEvoy-Levy, 2012; Carter et al, 2014). Owens (2002) suggests integrating youth with other age groups that use the public place as a recommendation, through either designing places that appeal to multiple age groups, in effect encouraging teenagers to use public place where others are also present, or locating specific centres such as skateparks into the design of larger parks to facilitate passive interaction between groups.

As youth have been identified as a dominant user group of Linwood Park, it was seen as important to involve them in this research, to gain an understanding of their usage and perception of the park. Initiatives that have engaged youths in re-design of areas which they commonly use such as parks have had success in enlivening the areas and reducing issues such as tagging and vandalism (CABE, 2005). CABE (2005) here, discuss the need for coordinated, and holistic approach to finding solutions to anti-social behaviour, including commitment to the improvement process from the wider community, but specifically amongst young people.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

When giving thought to placemaking in public parks, it is important to consider Cresswell (2004) and Friedmann's (2010) definition of what constitutes good public place, who suggest that place is not only a physical dimension, but also a social, imagined sphere. Subsequently, it is important to ensure that any social values are explicitly involved in any attempt at placemaking. Considering what people want to be involved in, as opposed to the allocation of space is of critical importance when implementing any form of placemaking initiative. As a result, data collection throughout this project have been geared towards understanding what the people of Linwood sees as important in Linwood Park, and understanding any real world issues which may be perceived from within by the Linwood community, as opposed to those perpetuated from the outside by mainstream media. This section will present an overview of the research design, sampling techniques, and data analysis techniques.

The exploration of potential for the revitalisation of Linwood Park was organized around the users and how they utilize the park. The theoretical basis of this project is that the users and the planning authorities affect the utilization of the park in serving its intended purpose. The assumption in this project is that people make good places and their views and perceptions of a 'good urban park' must be considered in the design process. Through communicating and engaging with users of Linwood Park, it is possible to see what the community desires in the creation of 'good public place,' and subsequently make recommendations based on what the community values.

4.2 Research Design

The research revolves around the use of Linwood Park particularly by youth in terms of how they currently use the park. The aim of the study is to promote constructive use of the park by the youth in harmony with other users. In order to completely understand the use of Linwood Park, a qualitative method was used. This method has been preferred as it has an interpretive nature, and aims to discover the meaning that place has on the individual (Mugenda, 2008). Mugenda (2008) further points out that the method is based on the assumption that reality differs between people. This is particularly true in regard to use

of Linwood Park as different individuals have different perceptions and attach different values to the park.

The qualitative method aims to gather in-depth understanding of events, occurrences and behaviours in society and the reasons that govern such behaviours (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). The purpose of the qualitative method for this study was to deliver an extensive interpretation of perceptions, experiences, and activities occurring in Linwood Park. The study will therefore seek to establish an understanding of the underlying occurrences affecting the use of Linwood Park, essentially answering the question of how and why Linwood Park is the way it is. Data collection techniques used in this project included observations, focus group discussions and in-depth, unstructured interviews, allowing for a much more in-depth discussion of key themes between social groups.

4.3 Stratified sampling Method

A sample from groups representing Linwood Community, including interest groups, and school children were selected to ensure that data collected was representative of the potential Linwood community park users. When identifying our key informants, a snowball method was used. Because of the researchers' lack of connection with the Linwood Community, it was important to understand which community groups have the biggest interest in Linwood Park, so as to fully understand the dynamics of human interaction, both with the park and with each other. Using this as a basis during initial meetings with the CCC, it was asked if they could help identify these community groups as a starting point for the research process. From there, it was possible, while consulting with these community groups, to identify other groups which were bought up in discussion which were important to any research being carried out.

Patton and Cochran (2002) state that participants that are likely to give useful data for the research project should be selected. When selecting community groups, it was stressed throughout the research process the importance of considering the interest each informant chosen had specifically in Linwood Park. As a result, informants from the CCC, Linwood hub, Linwood Keas Rugby League Club (RLC) and Linwood youth workers were selected, based on their knowledge and involvement with youth in the park, or Linwood Park in general.

As the project focused primarily on youth because of the importance open public place has for this age group, their views were prioritised. The reason for including older age groups in the study is to obtain their views and observations on how the youth have been using the park, and the wider community's views on them. It is in recognition of the fact that Linwood Park is not used in isolation by any single group but rather collectively by the entire community. A comprehensive holistic study of all the groups is recommended in future when resources allow.

This methodology is hoped to be sufficient to provide recommendations as to what the Linwood community see as important for fostering placemaking through the development of a sense of ownership, pride and belonging with regard to Linwood Park. In reference to Cresswell (2004), Freidmann (2010) and Gehl (2010), this is important in and placemaking due to the previously mentioned social sphere in which placemaking is predominately situated.

4.4 Formal Interviews

Before data collection with the primary target demographic commenced, it was important to understand and conceptualize what was considered by the Linwood community as the primary areas of consideration in Linwood Park. This was achieved through a series of semi structured interviews with key informants mentioned earlier in this methodology. Starting with preliminary meetings with the CCC in Linwood, further key informants were identified, namely social workers in the Linwood area, and Linwood RLC – groups with a significant interest in the use of Linwood Park or youth in Linwood area. These interviews were semi structured in nature, meaning a minimal set of questions were drawn up beforehand, providing a framework to conduct the interview, to gain the information required. The semi structured nature of these however allowed for interviews to change direction, providing a far greater depth and breadth of discussion, and extra considerations which were not originally thought of.

4.5 Children

The Child Friendly City Initiative works with the idea that children as citizens in our society have an integral role to play amongst communities (UNICEF New Zealand, 2008), it was important to take this into consideration for our project, particularly in terms of the importance public place has for children. When speaking to children, it is important to

ensure that every child's view is heard, due to individual child to child differences. In order to do this effectively, this study divided youth into two discrete categories – children and teenagers – and collected data from each. The study used different methods for each group in order to gain as much information as possible in an informal, focus group style environment. These methods will be talked about individually in the following sections.

4.6 Ethics

When speaking to anyone, but particularly children, it is important to keep ethical considerations at the forefront of the planning process. In this case with many of the intended participants being under the age of eighteen this was crucial to the scope of the project. All activities that included the children, and the questions used were pre-approved. Additionally, teachers or social workers were present at all stages when children were involved. Furthermore, our key informants, the children and the youth were not identified by name in any way in this report.

4.7 Linwood Avenue Primary School

An informal focus group was used at Linwood Avenue Primary School, as a method of gaining an understanding into what children believe to be important features of Linwood Park. In addition it was asked what changes they would like to see in the future which may increase the likelihood of them using it. Over the course of an hour, 38 pupils were given a sheet of paper, and asked to do two things. The first task was to draw what they use Linwood Park for, as well as what they do and don't like about the park. This has been shown in previous literature to be a valuable experience, by "enabling children to communicate their ideas and feelings in a symbolic way (Clark & Moss, 2011:8)." While the exercise was invaluable, in some cases drawings were slightly difficult to understand, and as a result the children were also asked to write a few sentences explaining whatever they felt was important in their pictures. This was done solely to improve the transparency of data, and to make it easier to understand.

Following this, the class was gathered into one group, and conversation was initiated to discuss in a more formal setting anything they wanted to talk about. While this conversation started as a discussion about what they had drawn as a way of reinforcing ideas and giving other children a chance to speak up in the event they had forgotten

something, it also allowed them the opportunity to suggest things, whether physical or community based activities, they would like to see in the future in Linwood Park.

4.8 Linwood College

When speaking with pupils at Linwood College, a slightly more formalised focus group setting was used. This turned out to be more of a drop in, drop out session for the 25 total students, where instead of having a set number of participants for the duration of the meeting; people came and went as they felt comfortable. This meeting was once again valuable, as data collected form Linwood Avenue Primary was presented to the students at Linwood College, who subsequently reflected on this, and provided their own insights into what they thought about what Linwood Park was like, and what they would like to see in any future attempts to promote an increased sense of community.

4.9 Data Analysis

The qualitative method aims to gather in-depth understanding of events, occurrences and behaviours in society and the reasons that govern such behaviours (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). The purpose of the qualitative method for this study was to deliver an extensive interpretation of perceptions, experiences, and activities occurring in Linwood Park. The nature of the data collected made it easier to gain appropriate insights into the feelings of the community. This made it easy to analyse in terms of the research question. For primary data analysis, all comments made by groups in interviews and focus groups were collated into tables, which allowed common themes to be identified and explored. As a result of this, it was easy to see linkages between groups, and make recommendations based on whole community answers, rather than trying to find solutions which best served different groups who saw different potentials for the promotion of place in Linwood Park.

5.0 Results

5.1 Issues

The results from talking to our groups were analysed by common issues (Table 1) and common suggestions (Table 2) that consistently occurred. Commonalities between the groups included concern around the provision of services, especially lack of effective lighting in the park at night, and inaccessible toilets. In terms of the physical park environment, participants brought up graffiti, litter, and broken bottles as areas that need to be addressed. The participants were further concerned about behavioural issues, especially concerning inappropriate public behaviour such as drinking and drug use. Overwhelmingly, the children were concerned with bullying occurring in the park, which was mirrored by the youth. Several children also expressed concern about the necessity of having to cross the main road to reach amenities providing toilets, food, water and even the library. Youth also brought up previous fights in the park. Importantly, the relationship between teenagers and younger children was brought up.

Table 1: Issues Raised by Participants by Group			
Issue Raised	Key Informants.	Linwood Avenue Primary School.	Linwood College.
Graffiti	Raised	Raised	Raised
Toilet access	Raised	Raised	Raised
Alcohol or other illegal substances, and suspicious people associated with these activities	Raised	Raised	Raised
Litter, broken bottle and lack of rubbish facilities	Raised	Raised	Raised
Bullying, and poor relationship between children and teenagers		Raised	Raised
Lack of lighting	Raised		Raised
Seat behind skatepark	Raised		
Fights held in the area			Raised

5.2 Suggestions

All emphasised the need for community wide action, rather than isolated efforts, with casual control of children and youth by adult users of the park. Many were keen to have an area which encouraged art in the park, more public events, improved access to toilets and better maintained physical facilities. The informants made several suggestions about physical changes to the park, in particular removing a bench behind the skate-park, which was universally felt to be a centre of anti-social behaviour. Children included increasing the size of the skate park, modifying aspects of the park to involve more sports such as football, a swimming pool and primarily some form of bullying prevention or youth workers presence to increase their feelings of safety and security surrounding park use (Table 4). Particularly for children and youth suggestions stemmed from their poor relationship identified with a desire to attempt to be more inclusive of children through sharing the space, and mentor type programs. Youth especially, had ideas involving creative management of rubbish bins to discourage vandalism, improving the security of the park at night by adding more lights, encouraging ownership through an inclusive community centre that encouraged youth usage They, like the children were eager to see some sort of food vending facilities in place.

Table 2. Common suggestions from participants by group			
Suggestion Provided	Key Informants	Linwood Avenue Primary School	Linwood College
Events at the park	Raised	Raised	Raised
Creative or Arts area in the park		Raised	
Control and supervision of young adults and children (Perhaps youth groups and youth worker presence, or mentor program)	Raised	Raised	Raised
Improved access, and maintenance of toilets		Raised	Raised
Access to food and drink which does not require crossing the road		Raised	Raised
More play equipment, or fields for sport (Swings, and football field)		Raised	
Vandal proof rubbish bins			Raised
Improve security through adding security cameras and lighting	Raised		Raised

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Limitations

6.1.1 Time Management

Throughout the research process, time management was an area of concern. Particularly though the early stages, progress was slow. This left a lot more than would have been desirable to do later on, which arguably impacted the amount of data that was able to be collected. If this project was able to be done again, it would be imperative that time was managed better, allowing for a greater breadth of data collection, with more community involvement, particularly from regular members of the Linwood public.

6.1.2 Mapping Exercise

While the mapping exercise conducted with the children at Linwood Avenue Primary School was one of the most valuable pieces of data collected, on many occasions this was difficult to interpret. Each child was asked to illustrate aspects of the park they liked and did not like, and while on several it was easy to distinguish which was which, in many cases it was not so. However, this was recognised during the exercise and attempts to mitigate this were made by asking them to write a few sentences explaining their drawing. This activity could have been better prepared, perhaps with getting them to do two pictures, one of likes and one of dislikes. Despite this though, when coupled with the discussion afterwards, the data collected from the school was of high value to the researchers.

6.1.3 Community Engagement

Efforts were made to engage the Linwood community, to add another dimension to the data collected. Despite this, the response rate to surveys was not high at all, with two people out of five spoken to willing to answer questions. While this may be a result of the time of day (early Sunday afternoon) surveys were conducted or other reasons, the community response was not high enough to use as a data set in this report. The time management limitation discussed previously also meant that it was not possible to try again at a later date. If this research was to be conducted again, it would be important to further involve the community, and understand their views. There is a potential that these views may also fit in with what was bought up by the groups who are included in this report.

6.2 Physical Environment

Through talking to key informants and the students at the two schools, it became clear that there were three main issues with the physical environment in Linwood Park which may act as a barrier to effective placemaking. As mentioned in the results, lighting, toilet facilities and rubbish were of the greatest concern to the users of Linwood Park. These will be discussed further individually.

6.2.1 Lighting

The lack of lighting in Linwood Park was mentioned on several occasions by all the groups spoken to throughout the research process. This creates a perception that Linwood Park is unsafe at night time, and as a result perpetuates the stereotype that Linwood Park is not a safe place. This is supported by Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). Speaking to the council however, they suggested their reluctance to further light the area, in an attempt to discourage use at night, when it is considered to be most dangerous.

6.2.2 Toilets

The location and accessibility of the toilet facility in Linwood Park was also considered to be a major obstacle to the use of the park, particularly for younger children. Located in the back corner of the park, away from the high foot and vehicle traffic of Aldwins Road, it is considered to be an unsafe place for these facilities. The level of vandalism which occurs has also prompted the Linwood RLC to lock the toilets outside of training and match times, leaving no facilities for the use of the general public to use. This acts as a barrier to any sort of use of the park for any extended period of time, and an important issue to consider when planning any form of place promotion.

6.2.3 Rubbish

Rubbish was also a significant issue in Linwood Park, and this was immediately obvious during visits researchers made to the park. This was reinforced through speaking with all parties during the research process. In the park currently are two rubbish bins, in opposite corners. After speaking to the council, it was learnt that as a result of vandalism of previous rubbish bins, many had been removed because of the cost to repair vandalism. In order to address the rubbish problem, solutions need to be found to prevent vandalism of these. One such solution was raised by the youths at Linwood College, through the

implementation of ideas such as basketball hoops on top, promoting fun ways of disposing of rubbish.

6.3 Social Environment

As people are central to a definition of specific places, the social environment is arguably the most important aspect to consider when implementing a form of place promotion. Through talking to the children at Linwood Avenue Primary School it was clear that bullying and antisocial behaviours were the biggest issue they encountered in their use of the park. When these concerns were raised with the youths at Linwood College, they recognised that they could very well intimidate younger children, and that their age group is often a cause of bullying of these children. As a result of this, it seems an integrated approach to a solution needs to be found.

6.3.1 Bullying

Bullying was arguably the biggest concern the children had with using Linwood Park. When the youths at Linwood College were asked what could be done about this, they thought some form of anti-bullying programme is enforced. It was then asked whose responsibility this should be, and they suggested that it could be theirs. This fits with a bottom up community development definition, whereby members of the community are more likely to take ownership and pride in a proposal, if it is driven by themselves, as opposed to outside influences such as authorities.

6.3.2 Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour was mentioned by many throughout the research process as being a significant issue in the park. Drug use, alcohol, smoking, and lingering suspicious people were raised as being problems inhibiting relaxed and enjoyable use of Linwood Park. In contrast to a bottom up community development method, this is an area which will require the mobilisation of authorities and police to promote change. One bench in particular behind the skatepark was mentioned in particular as being of concern. Identified as being an area popular for drug use and suspicious adults, particularly when children are using the skatepark, many people including council representatives supported the removal of this. The removal of this was also raised as a way of promoting inclusive use of the park, by removing one of the locations where these behaviours take place.

6.4 Community Centre

Through speaking to the children and youth of the Linwood community, it was clear that they wanted a place where they could go in the Linwood park area, where they did not feel at risk from people outside of their social group, but also to be inclusive of the wider community at the same time. It was identified through the results that they wanted somewhere they could be creative, with toilet and sanitation facilities, and engage with other users in activities which may not be available to them in other places. They also mentioned a need for casual supervision, rather than the overt supervision which they experience at school, with people acting as mediators in the event they weren't comfortable with other people, or activities which may take place.

From analysing the results provided by the children, most of them suggested the concept of a youth or community centre, without explicitly suggesting it. Once it was established that a community centre was what was being implicitly suggested, it was raised with the Linwood College youths for discussion, and was universally agreed to be what they wanted. When asked how they would like to see a community facility implemented, it was agreed that it needed to be a facility for youth, with an aim of involving all youth without the fear of being bullied, contrary to what occurs in Linwood Park. Once again, the Linwood College students agreed that the action for an integrated, accepting environment needs to be promoted from within, this fits with the concept of social cohesion through inclusion of wider community members. The idea of an informal big brother, big sister programme was discussed for inclusion within the centre, to foster a sense of trust and integration between the younger children who see these teenagers as a barrier to their enjoyment of Linwood Park.

7.0 Conclusion

It is important to consider the opinions of youth when proposing changes and placemaking in public open space. As predominant users of these areas, it is necessary to conceptualize and understand what they want and need in order to promote inclusive use of public space. Through this research process, youth perception has been at the forefront. It has become clear that youth consider Linwood Park to be a great asset to the community,

but they do have some problems with it, mostly relating to the behaviour of others, condition of the physical environment and facilities available for public use.

From speaking with the students at Linwood College who were from the same age group as those implicated by Linwood Avenue Primary School as being the problem age – and also them agreeing that people their age can accurately be perceived as being a problem demographic – it is clear that they need to be actively involved in change. Through the promotion of ownership over a place in the process of placemaking, a change in attitude from a community with a problem group to an inclusive, integrated community can be achieved.

7.1 Future Research

In additional future research, it would be necessary to involve the wider Linwood community to a higher degree, in order to assess whether they hold the same thoughts and perceptions of the use of Linwood Park, and if the solutions proposed by Linwood youth are shared by the wider community. While this research aimed to collect this, it was not done adequately, and as such remains a key area for future consideration. This research goes a long way to providing an insight into what the community values, and what they believe could enhance Linwood Park as a place from the point of view of the primary users, but unfortunately neglects the views of the wider community who don't hold an explicit interest in Linwood Park, such as that held by the youth or Linwood RLC.

8.0 References

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9.0 Appendix

Link to Male pictures from Linwood Avenue Primary School
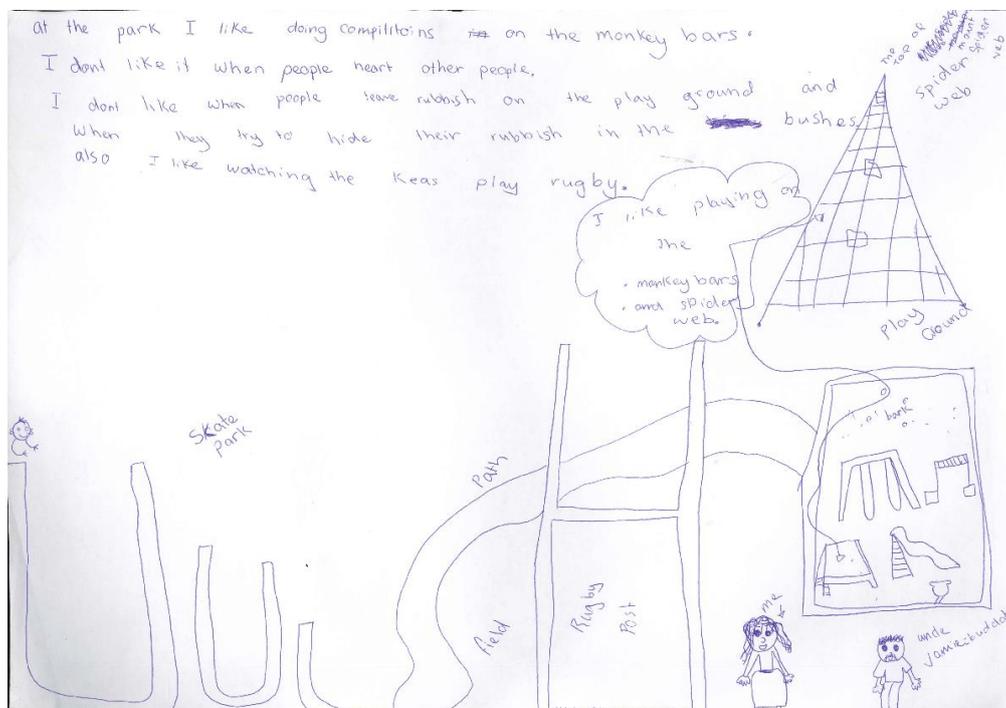
Link to Female pictures from Linwood Avenue Primary School