

The Importance of Play

Alex Bonham – The University of Auckland



Kids Need Play to Learn . . .

‘Play gives the necessary experiences for children to try out and develop their physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills that are fundamental for children to reach their full potential’ - Playgroup Australia CEO Kaye Plowman, 2011



... and build their
social networks ...

- “I love the talking, the exercise ... my favourite things are talking and telling jokes” (child cited in NZ study on Walking School Buses, Kearns, Collins and Beuwelt, 2013)



... with their peers, older
and younger children,
parents and other adults,
knitting the community
together.



What do kids want? The research is consistent . . .

-Safety and freedom of movement, peer gathering places,
varied activity settings, and safe green spaces

- Tim Gill, Child in the City Conference 2018



Four types of play according to Caillois:

Simulation

Competition

Chance

Vertigo

Play activities drive us to become more knowledgeable and flexible...

[Play] is the basis for the 'flexibility of thought' (Bruner, 1972) which underpins the astonishing problem-solving abilities and creativity of humans

—David Whitebread & Marisol Basilio

... and there are inequities of play

- [Play] is the basis for the 'flexibility of thought' (Bruner, 1972) which underpins the astonishing problem-solving abilities and creativity of humans. At the same time, however, **it is clear that there are marked individual differences in playfulness**, among children and adults, and that **environmental and cultural factors may, at least in part, be responsible for these variations** – David Whitebread & Marisol Basilio

Less Play at Home for Kiwi Kids

- Average maternity leave in NZ is 5 months – most parents want to stay home longer – and babies are cared for by nurseries or grandparents. Growing up in NZ study
- 2/3 of two-year-olds are watching 1-3 hours of TV per day and in addition 3/4 of them are playing up to an hour of computer games.

Less play in the neighbourhood

Flatbush: There is no playground, shop, cafe, library or sports amenity in walking distance.
Walkscore: 23



Hobson St: What do kids not like?
Traffic, dirt, noise, people who are angry or distressed.



Three Stage Solution

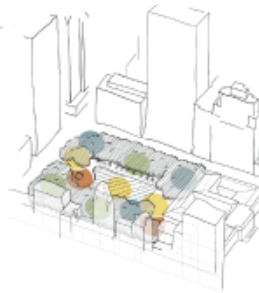
- Plan neighbourhoods so that a number of play spaces are in walking distance.
- Be aware that younger children come with an entourage – and provide for their needs.
- Encourage older children (8 up) to walk to play areas by providing safe routes
- Shift mindsets around children's right to be in the streets

POWER OF 10+

HOW CITIES TRANSFORM THROUGH PLACEMAKING



City/Region
10+ MAJOR DESTINATIONS



Destination
10+ PLACES IN EACH



Place
10+ THINGS TO DO,
LAYERED TO CREATE SYNERGY



Instead of separating, bring generations together
'Distinctly separate street neighbourhoods are nothing to aim for; they are generally characteristic of failure'. Jane Jacobs



DESIGNING A SUSTAINABLE SUBURB: Vauban



... turned into the world's most child-friendly suburb

Public spaces with something for everyone...

1. Playground
2. Water feature (summer)
3. Places to sit
4. Loos (often revolting)
5. The occasional festival
6. Lawn
7. Shade (and closer to the playground)
8. Exercise equipment for adults
9. Cafe looking over the park
10. Barbecue
11. Plant an Orchard
12. Herb/veggie planters
13. Concert programme for Friday evenings in Summer.
14. Picnic tables
15. Flower beds
16. Sun dial
17. Board game tables
18. Patterns in the pavings.
19. Signage to other amenities
20. Notice board for information on what is going on locally.



Images of Domino Park, New York



The Rule of Ten for Myers Park - now

1. Playground
2. Water feature (summer only)
3. Places to sit
4. Loos (often revolting)
5. The occasional festival
6. Lawn
7. Drinking Fountain
8. Shade (but far from playground)



Encourage older children (8 up) to walk to play areas by providing safe routes

Creating play opportunities on useful routes (that kids know)

On the way to school is somewhere for the little ones...

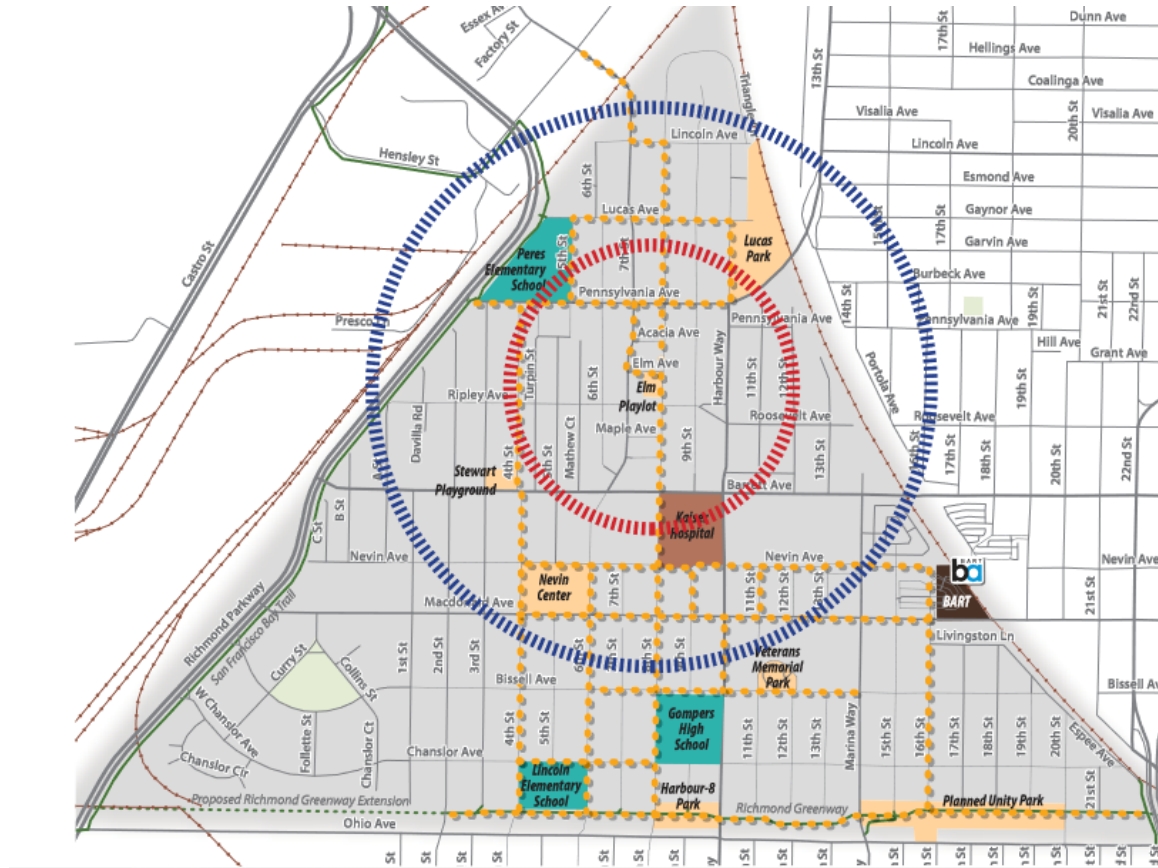


The school playground is a public space that everyone can enjoy.



How to

RETROFITTING A NEW WORLD URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD



The Yellow Brick Road

The Yellow Brick Road is envisioned as a network of safe, green, and clean walking and biking routes linking amenities like schools and playgrounds in Richmond, California's Iron Triangle neighborhood

Community Outreach Programme Harnessed Local Knowledge and Support for the Project.





Yellow Brick Road



Improving Communities. **FEHR**  **PEERS**

A Children's Path in Auckland



Who Will Help if Things Go Wrong?

- Public Figures? –
like park
attendants,
gardeners, police?
- Members of the
Public?



Call to Arms – access to play

- Build infrastructure that makes it safe, easy, interesting and comfortable for kids, and their families to walk to playgrounds
- Children need and want to learn to manage their own risk and social relationships. If they don't get the chance to do that when they are little it may lead to some crazy choices later on.
- Perhaps we need more public figures and an attitude to look out for children that are not our own.

Is it time for a culture shift?

**WE ALL LIKE TO PLAY, SO LET'S
MAKE TIME AND SPACE FOR IT!**