

Bay of Plenty District Health Board is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Bay of Plenty district.

Position Statement – Healthy Built Environments

As a Te Tiriti based organisation, the Bay of Plenty District Health Board supports and advocates for the application of mātāwhana Māori (Māori wisdom) and evidence based healthy built environment principles throughout all stages of urban and rural planning and development. Healthy built environments are places that support equity, and where the wellbeing of people, land, water, air and living species are at the forefront of decisions.

The built environment is made up of the settings where people live, work, learn and play, and supports whakawhanaungatanga (connections) and manaakitanga (mutual respect). In both rural and urban communities, healthy built environments are places that are designed to support Toi Ora (flourishing health and wellbeing for all). Planning decisions such as zoning, transportation systems and community design significantly influence health and wellbeing. The balance of the Te Tiriti partners' unique world views incorporate concepts relating to Ngā Pou Mana o Io, He Pou Oranga Tāngata Whenua¹, Toi Ora, equity, universal design (accessible design for all), and employs mahi tahi (collaboration) and co-design to make decisions.

Application of healthy built environment principles promotes community resilience, good nutrition, physical activity and quality of life. It also considers availability and access to quality and appropriate housing, employment, education, healthy food, health services, ngāhere (forest), rongoā (traditional medicines), greenspaces and other amenities. This contributes to the prevention of unintentional injury and mortality, and chronic conditions such as obesity, cancer and type 2 diabetes². Furthermore, this also supports a positive impact on Papatūānuku (the environment) and the relationship to her and all living things upon her.

The built environment encompasses a community of plants, animals, and humans that inhabit an environment. For tāngata whenua, this community is a series of relationships, of whanaungatanga, in which people are teina (the younger sibling) with a responsibility to protect and maintain the mana (power) of all of our tuakana (elder sibling) in that environment.

Many areas are physically dominated by built structures such as buildings and roads. However, the built environment also contains a rich patchwork of green spaces, including parks, reserves, backyards, street plantings, ecological corridors, streams, and rural land. These greenspaces provide the living heart of a healthy built environment and include culturally significant features such as marae, wāhi tapū (sacred sites), urupa, pā and papa kāinga (communal land), which are essential elements of Toi Ora for Māori communities.

Healthy built environments are more than the individual functional parts, and need to consider the kōtahitanga (unity) of different elements and connections between natural areas. Healthy built environments can either diminish or enhance the mana of all those within them. If planned and developed in a way that preserve the environment, enable healthy behaviours and access to where people live, learn, work and play, the communities and environment thrive and support Toi Ora.

Ko ahau te taiao, ko te taiao, ko ahau (the ecosystem defines our quality of life). A healthy



environment³ is integral to tāngata whenua. It is a tāonga (treasure) under Article II of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and needs to be protected as part of Treaty obligations. Iwi, hapū and whānau provide guidance to act as kaitiaki (guardians) to preserve the mauri (life force) of Papatūānuku. Any degradation of the natural environment, or our relationship with the environment, can weaken this connection and have consequences for Toi Ora.

A well-designed built environment system also supports the achievement of equity. Priority populations who are most affected and vulnerable need to be involved in mahi tahi at all levels of planning. This ensures the development is equity and Tiriti focused, which is conducive of Toi Ora and will minimise unintended consequences. In mahi tahi the voices of children, families, older persons and persons with disabilities should also be included. It is also important to hear from those who speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves; plants, animals and the wider environment.

The Bay of Plenty District Health Board supports and advocates for:

- Application of matauranga Māori (Māori wisdom), He Pou Oranga Tangata Whenua, Ngā Pou Mana o Io, Toi Ora, Whakawhanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, equity and universal design to all stages of planning and development.
- Ensuring genuine collaboration, co-design and mahi tahi is utilised throughout planning and development stages particularly with priority populations and vulnerable communities.
- Consideration of the health of our people, land, water, air and living species at the forefront of planning and development.
- Application of evidenced based healthy built environment principles across all stages of planning and development, including⁴:
 - Biophilic design principles, such as protecting and enhancing natural elements across the landscape, preserving and enhancing environmentally sensitive areas, and maximising opportunities for everyone to access natural environments.
 - Healthy neighbourhood design by creating complete, compact neighbourhoods through mixed land use and efficient planning, and prioritising new developments within or beside existing communities.
 - Active transportation facilities, where street design prioritises active transportation networks which are safe and accessible by all ages and abilities, and provide connected, attractive routes that support multiple modalities.
 - Affordable and quality housing options, with diverse housing forms and tenure types, and located in sites that minimise exposure to environmental hazards.
 - Healthy food systems, by ensuring there is affordable and equitable access to healthy food options, protecting productive land and increasing the capacity of local food systems.

References

1. Bay of Plenty District Health Board. (2019). Te Toi Ahorangi. Retrieved from <https://www.bopdhb.govt.nz/m%C4%81ori-health/te-toi-ahorangi/>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2017). Designing Healthy Living. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/2017-designing-healthy-living/PHAC_CPHO-2017_Report_E.pdf
3. Ministry for the Environment (2015) Māori relationship with the environment. Retrieved from <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/environmental-reporting/environment-aotearoa-2015-our-new-reporting-approach/m%C4%81ori>
4. BC Centre for Disease Control. (2018). Healthy Built Environment Linkages Toolkit: making the links between design, planning and health, Version 2.0. Vancouver, B.C. Provincial Health



Services Authority.

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