

Draft



Evaluation of Waitangi Park - A Qualitative Study

[April 2007]



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Table of Contents

	<u>Page Number</u>
1. APPROACH	4
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
3. EVENT ORGANISERS	7
3.1 Background	7
3.2 General setting	7
3.3 Priorities	7
3.4 Satisfaction with Waitangi Park	10
3.5 Potential competitors	14
4. SKATEBOARDERS AND INLINE SKATERS	15
4.1 Background	15
4.2 Frequency of visits	15
4.3 Reasons for visits	15
4.4 Alternative venues	15
4.5 General satisfaction	16
4.6 Amenities	17
4.7 Safety and cleanliness	17
4.8 Redevelopment	18
4.9 Improvements and lessons for the future	18
5. PARENTS OF TODDLERS	20
5.1 Background	20
5.2 Frequency of visits	20
5.3 Reasons for visits	20
5.4 Alternative venues	21
5.5 General satisfaction	21
5.6 Amenities	22
5.7 Safety and cleanliness	22
5.8 Redevelopment	23
5.9 Improvements and lessons for the future	23

Table of Contents (Cont.)

	<u>Page Number</u>
6. STREETBALL AND CLIMBING WALL USERS	25
6.1 Background	25
6.2 Frequency of visits	25
6.3 Reasons for visits	25
6.4 Alternative venues	25
6.5 General satisfaction	25
6.6 Amenities	26
6.7 Safety and cleanliness	26
6.8 Redevelopment	26
6.9 Improvements and lessons for the future	27
7. PASSERS-BY, USERS OF SEATED AREAS AND USERS OF GRASSED AREAS	28
7.1 Background	28
7.2 Frequency of visits	28
7.3 Reasons for visit	28
7.4 Alternative venues	28
7.5 General satisfaction	29
7.6 Amenities	31
7.7 Safety and cleanliness	31
7.8 Redevelopment	32
7.9 Improvements and lessons for the future	33

1. Approach

UMR Research conducted a qualitative research project to evaluate the performance of Waitangi Park, with the research being divided into two sections. These were:

- 66 intercept qualitative interviews with park users (known as a 'hall test'), covering:
 - Skateboarders/ In-line skaters
 - Parents of toddlers
 - Grassed area users
 - Seated area users
 - Passers-by
 - Streetball players / Rock wall users.

- 5 face-to-face depth interviews with event organisers who had used the park since its re-opening.

It should be noted that this was a qualitative project, where the emphasis was on understanding park users' perceptions of Waitangi Park. Qualitative projects focus on exploring issues in-depth to develop an understanding of perceptions and motivations, while quantitative projects (such as traditional surveys) would aim to measure the numbers who held particular views.

Hall tests similarly need to be treated as different from traditional qualitative research. They involve conducting a larger number of interviews in a shorter period of time (reflecting the fact that the interviews are spontaneously recruited rather than arranged in advance). This means that we are able to cover a wider range of different respondent types, but that the information collected is not of the same depth. They do, however, allow us to talk to respondents when they are actually in the process of doing the activity we are interested in (in this case, visiting Waitangi Park), which gives more 'real world' and timely responses. The fact that respondents for the hall test portion of the research were interviewed at Waitangi Park itself meant that we could not take audio-recordings of the sessions - this in turn means that the verbatim quotes recorded in these sections of the report are less detailed than would be the case for traditional qualitative research.

2. Executive Summary

■ General perceptions of Waitangi Park

- Respondents generally felt that Waitangi Park had met their needs well and thought that it was a substantial improvement on what had been there before. Most believed that it was a significant asset for Wellington.
- Participants were particularly positive about:
 - The open layout of the park
 - The substantial grassed area
 - The fact that it could be used for a variety of different activities
 - The fact that it linked in with the rest of the Waterfront.
- Certain ideas for improvements, however, came through on a regular basis. The most important of these were:
 - More facilities for younger children in the play area, and more fencing between the play area and the roads
 - More separation between the skate area and the rest of the park, particularly in terms of separating experienced and inexperienced skaters
 - More shelter from rain/ shade from the sun/ protection from the wind (may be transitional until the young trees grow taller)
 - Better signposting around the park, both in terms of helping people understand some of the design features (particularly the water features) and in terms of pointing out amenities such as the toilets.
- Event organisers also made a number of specialised suggestions for improvements:
 - Ensuring that the number of water, power and sewerage points is as high as possible to allow users maximum flexibility
 - A firm area close to the grass to allow efficient delivery.
- A few event organisers also felt that Wellington Waterfront could be a bit more accommodating when planning events, although others were fulsome in their praise.

■ Strategic Aims

- The table on the following page summarises what we believe to be the strategic aims of the Waitangi Park redevelopment, and shows the extent to which each of these have been met/ not been met.

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STRATEGIC AIMS	
Strategic Aims	Research Findings
Provide a contemporary urban park that included a built and natural landscape	The park was well liked, providing a pleasant green area that most felt did not have a major alternative in the central city. It supplemented Frank Kitts Park nicely.
Weave the history, culture and ecology of the place and locale into the site	Respondents generally failed to notice the historical and ecological elements. Several described the stream and reed area along the lines of a 'magnet for rubbish'. The main issue here seemed to be understanding - our firm opinion is that the design is actually right, but needs more interpretation.
Link the city and sea by physical, visual and symbolic connections	Respondents generally failed to notice explicit connections such as the waka pathways, and there are again grounds for more interpretation. They did, however, believe that the park made for a pleasant transition between the city and sea.
Cater for the wide and varied recreation needs of current and future users, by providing a range of appropriate uses	<p>The park was seen as very flexible, covering the interests of a range of different groups. Event organisers generally had no complaints about the park or its facilities despite running significantly different types of events. There were a few concerns about noise restrictions, although these were accepted as somewhat inevitable.</p> <p>The playground was, however, seen as limited to older children, and parents of toddlers wanted to see more for young children.</p>
Cater for the short and long term, by ensuring development was flexible and dynamic	This is not within the scope of the research.
Provide an attractive place by developing a climatically amenable, aesthetically stimulating and safe environment	<p>Respondents definitely felt that the area was attractive, interesting to be in, pleasant and as clean as can be expected for an inner city park. Some thought that more could have been done to reduce the impact of the wind.</p> <p>Parents of toddlers had some concerns about safety because of the limited fencing around the children's play area, and one event organiser had similar concerns about unfenced waterways. By and large, however, Waitangi Park was seen as a safe place to walk through, because of suitable lighting and good sight-lines.</p>
Minimise maintenance by using materials and elements responsive to the waterfront environment	We did not pick up major evidence of breakages or deterioration of equipment.
Integrate the site into its broader waterfront context.	Respondents felt that Waitangi Park fitted in well with the rest of the Waterfront, and added aspects that were not available elsewhere (e.g. a flat area for event organisers that was larger than that available at Frank Kitts Park).

3. Event Organisers

3.1 Background

We spoke to a total of 5 people who had organised events at Waitangi Park since its redevelopment. 2 were interviewed by telephone as they were not currently based in Wellington, while the other 3 were interviewed face to face. The interviews typically lasted around 30 minutes, and were held between March 27th and April 2nd 2007.

3.2 General setting

Most respondents were happy enough with their experiences at Waitangi Park, although all identified a few areas where they had encountered problems. Such problems had generally been dealt with reasonably well by Wellington Waterfront, and all reported that they would happily use Waitangi Park again in the future.

3.3 Priorities

The research identified a range of factors that event organisers valued when organising an event. These could be divided into Physical Environment, Amenities and Relationship factors.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	AMENITIES	RELATIONSHIP
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open area• Adaptable space• Protection from wind• Near to central city• Prominent site/ easy for patrons to get to• Ease of access for event organisers• Freedom from noise restrictions• Cleanliness• Safety• Shade/ shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water• Electricity• Toilets/ sewerage access• Lighting• Availability of hire equipment• Solid area to be able to drive delivery vehicles onto/ access paths• Places to put signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willingness to adapt• Clear information (e.g. what's available, what organisers can and can't do)• Willingness to offer alternative means to solve problems• Friendliness• Understanding of event organisers' priorities

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This provides a matrix for understanding event organisers' perceptions of Waitangi Park.

[What is important to you when choosing a venue?] *Cost of hire. Existing infrastructure – same 3 things again. Profile – in other words the amount of foot traffic that goes past. Support for the organisation that owns it. We've had a lot from Wellington Waterfront. In terms of outdoors ideally we need good draining sites and no wind – formidable wind which that site didn't give us, of course, we had a lot of wind. [Are there any wind free places in Wellington?] Not really. You get a little less wind in places like Kilbirnie Park. You get a little less wind around Hāitaitai area but that's about it really.*

[What are you looking for in a venue - generically?] *Spaces that enable you to have varying activities going on at the same time, for instance, for Waitangi Day we had the main stage, which has a lot of performers on it but we like to be able to provide an area for children and also an area that people can still be part of the celebrations but they may not want to be in front of the main stage.*

➤ Physical environment

The first two factors in this category, being 'open area' and 'adaptable area' were clearly related. One of the key benefits of an open area was that it made the space more adaptable. This meant that they had a range of options for setting up their event the way they wanted to, and that the space could accommodate a wide range of different activities. Event organisers recognised that each event had very different requirements in terms of layout and preferred environment (e.g. whether visitors could be expected to be seated or whether they would move around a great deal), and therefore valued a venue that could be used for a wide range of different activities.

Other benefit of open spaces included improved sightlines and larger capacity. Improved sightlines meant that the activity was visible and could be watched from further away, which helped to increase visitor numbers.

Protection from wind is clearly a significant factor in Wellington, particularly on the Waterfront, and matters both because of visitor comfort and general event safety. Event organisers valued venues where marquees and signage were reasonably secure, although they were prepared to make allowances for the Wellington environment in this area. Concern about wind protection could also be alleviated by the venue being adaptable, as event organisers could design the layout of their event to take this into account.

Similarly, noise restrictions were important even to those who did not expect their event to create a great deal of noise. Respondents reported that they had encountered complaints from locals in the past even when they knew that they had been well below agreed maximum decibel levels and worried that these could reflect badly on their events even though they knew they were technically in the right. Flexible venues again helped here, as the layout could be adjusted to minimise disruption to local residents.

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A prominent site near to the central city was important mainly for publicity reasons. Respondents wanted to maximise the amount of foot traffic around their venues as this should help to increase the number of people attending. Central locations were also generally seen as more convenient for all concerned, and a number reported that they had considered and rejected venues that were suitable in every way other than the fact that they were in a low-profile position.

Ease of access was important because it meant that it was easier to set up the event. Respondents wanted a venue where they could get their equipment and delivery vehicles as close as possible in order to minimise the amount of time and effort necessary.

Shade from the sun and shelter from rain were important because event patrons valued them, and event organisers felt that they had a responsibility to provide such facilities. It was also likely that patrons would stay longer if the venue offered shade and shelter.

➤ Amenities

Water was important both for cleaning and for catering facilities. Respondents noted that a wide range of different activities which could form part of their event required water, and it was therefore important that the venue offer as many outlets as possible in a range of locations.

A similar principle applies to electricity, which again had many different uses within each event. The priority was once more having as many outlets as possible and for these to be well spread across the venue to minimise the need for long power cords which could create hazards for pedestrians.

Toilet facilities were an obvious priority, although what was required was dependent on the size of the event. Respondents expressed a preference for plugging portable systems into existing sewerage systems rather than using self contained 'Portaloos'.

Lighting should be seen as of secondary importance because event organisers can organise their own systems provided that there are sufficient outlets for electricity. At the same time, respondents liked the idea of a venue that was generally well lit, as this helped the area feel safer.

Event organisers liked the idea of a venue having certain equipment available for hire or at least having contacts to enable them to hire such equipment easily. They reported that it could be difficult to find suitable equipment (e.g. small portable grandstands) and valued the venue administrator's local knowledge for obtaining this.

Respondents liked the idea of solid areas from which equipment could be delivered, and this should be seen as part of the general preference for 'easy access' venues. One option was a small grassed area cross-hatched with paving to allow vehicles to drive up without damaging the overall aesthetic of the area.

Places to put signage (e.g. to hang banners) were important because they helped event organisers to publicise their events. This applied both before and during the event.

➤ Relationship

A substantial proportion of respondents' comments related to their relationship with Wellington Waterfront. What they were looking for was an organisation that made their own job as easy as possible. This did not necessarily mean that the venue administrator should be actively involved in the planning and organisation of the event (although this was often seen as helpful), but that they should be prepared to accommodate the needs of event organisers as far as possible and to clearly point out as early as possible where these needs could not be met.

Respondents also appreciated that venue administrators would know more about the particular venue than would event organisers, and might therefore be able to suggest options for addressing any potential problems (e.g. wind and access to amenities). This inherently required the venue administrator to have enough of a relationship with the event organisers to be able to understand their priorities.

Event organisers felt that provision of information was an important factor, and generally felt that Wellington Waterfront had done a pretty good job in this area.

The first thing for me, because it was the first time I'd used the park, was what did they expect from me as a user? What were my limitations? What did I need to know that I didn't know – sort of thing. There were the obvious things but I wanted to know where the water was, where the power articulator was, which keys I needed and any noise restrictions because I was aware there were noise things around the park but was there something else I needed to know. With Frank Kitts I was aware of the irrigation and the vendors, people who had licenses to operate within the space, those we could ask to leave, those we couldn't because of their types of licences, things like that.

3.4 Satisfaction with Waitangi Park

➤ Physical environment

Event organisers generally felt that Waitangi Park had been well-suited to the needs of their event. They praised the open layout and size of the grassed area, which they believe allowed them a great deal of flexibility when planning their event.

They also thought that the location of the park was ideal for big events, because it was close to the central city and in a very prominent position. Respondents felt that the park generally linked in well with other parts of the central city (e.g. Courtenay Place and the rest of the waterfront), which meant that it was a very convenient location at which to host an event.

It was location, size and public profile really and the fact it was a new park. The other thing it provided us with was relatively good infrastructure in terms of power supplies, sewerage outlets, water supplies, etc.

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Similarly, the location of the park meant that access for delivery vehicles etc. was reasonably easy. Several thought, however, that access was not quite as easy as it should be. These respondents felt that it should be easier to get up close to the grassed area where most events took place - while they could get reasonably close, they reported that they had encountered obstacles that prevented them getting as close as they would have liked.

Respondents felt that Waitangi Park was as clean and safe as could be expected from a park so close to the central city. The stream areas did create some concerns, however, with individual respondents either arguing that they were a potential trap for rubbish or that they presented a potential drowning hazard for small children and therefore should be better protected or fenced off.

My only concern about the children's area down at Waitangi Park is the water right alongside the kids. Surprised that Council have been able to do that given that you would normally fence watered areas. [Where the children's playground is?] Yes, between the physical park itself and the playground is a running stream.

Wind protection, noise restrictions and shade/ shelter were seen as significant weaknesses of Waitangi Park. Whereas Frank Kitts Park was seen to offer a degree of protection, respondents felt that the wind seemed to funnel through Waitangi Park, meaning that marquees etc. often felt unstable. The additional buildings planned for the area may, of course, solve this problem, but at the moment it was seen as a serious drawback of using the park.

Hiremaster basically came to us and said, 'no, because that is one of the worst wind tunnels in Wellington'. It is really bad. The wind comes straight off the sea and howls down there. So they were very uncomfortable about installing marquees there and basically said at a certain wind level they wouldn't do it or they would have to remove them and things. So we were limited in that.

Every respondent mentioned that they had been conscious of the noise restrictions at Waitangi Park, and that this had had some impact on how they ran their event. The issue was not so much the noise restrictions themselves, which were seen as reasonable and understandable, but the proximity of local residents (specifically those living in Oriental Bay). As noted earlier, most believed that they were at risk of receiving complaints even when they knew they were well below specified noise limits, and that this could negatively impact on their event's reputation. The event layout could be used to minimise the amount of noise heard by local residents, but one reported that they had not been allowed to position their stage in the direction they had wanted to when this would have reduced the amount of noise heard in Oriental Bay. Frank Kitts Park was again seen as preferable in this way because there were fewer residents close by.

There was a wee issue for us in that there was some limitation with the sound on site. The far end got a number of sound complaints, nothing that really went very far but you know there's a certain awareness being that close to the residential areas of Mount Victoria that loud, late night activities are not that suitable. [Is that going to apply pretty much anywhere on the waterfront?] No, not really. You get away with it further down here because you get noise from other things in the city already. Whereas the park is a quiet space. You can hide amongst the noise of the bars here. While the rules are exactly the same, it's much easier in the centre of the city to hide away. The noise we are making is no greater than the noise that already exists whereas when the tent is at the far end the acoustic noise – you could hear all the way up Mt Vic.

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The apartment block actually creates a very good wind break but we were unable to utilise that due to the positioning required for sound. They want the sound fired back into the city to minimise the effect on the Courtenay Place apartments.

Respondents also felt that there was a distinct lack of shade from the sun or shelter from the rain at Waitangi Park. Several argued that there needed to be more large trees - although they were aware that the trees that had been planted would originally grow to a sufficient size, these respondents felt that large trees could have been transplanted to the area. Event organisers generally thought that it would be useful to have more shading like what was near the children's playground, although they recognised that this could have an impact on the 'wide open' feel of the park.

➤ Amenities

Event organisers generally felt that the amenities provided at Waitangi Park were good, although they did identify a number of limitations. These often seemed a little idiosyncratic, as they reflected the particular needs of individual event organisers, although there were some patterns.

[Generally the kind of specific aspects you are talking about just go through the infrastructure, electricity and such?] Adequate to satisfactory. We were able to combine a number of suppliers to get the feed we needed. [But not spectacular?] No. [Where does it fall down?] It fell down in the new area where the carpark is, that's probably next stage anyway so it's probably not fair to pick on that. I think it's got a certain limit to what you can put on the site which is ok for 99% events. In weighing it up they've got the right infrastructure there, it's just it can get stretched when there is something big.

Most felt that there were sufficient ways to access water within the park, although one event organiser reported that the stallholders they had had needed water to run coffee machines etc. While water could be arranged, this required hoses to be run across from taps, which therefore impacted on spaces for pedestrians to walk.

Water was an interesting one. I was informed that there was water outlets at 2 positions – 1 which is what I call the entrance down by the Overseas Terminal at that corner of the park and the other one on the map that Perry showed me was diagonally opposite at the end of the park right down by Te Papa but actually off the park down past the paths, so actually almost in the garden ... so they are very far away and we had some coffee vendors that wanted direct access into water so it limited our ability.

Similarly, the general consensus was that the park offered a good number of power outlets, covering a range of different locations within the park. This gave event organisers greater flexibility in planning their events. One respondent, however, reported that it was not possible to connect to all power outlets at the same time because Wellington Waterfront only had two transformers (if that is the correct term) for the five power outlets.

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Power was good, however, they have 5 in the ground outlets for power at various places around the park which suited us fine but only 2 of the actual boxes that attach in for you to plug into – I can't remember what they call them. There's a box that sits on the top – basically there's a plate in the ground and that's where you can get your power access to and Wellington Waterfront have these boxes that attach into them for you to be able to use them. Well they've got 5 outlets but only 2 boxes. So we wanted to use 4 out of the 5 in various places and they said no, you can only use 2 so we're like okay, so therefore we had to run a lot more cabling which was disappointing given that the plates are there. I think that's presumably because they haven't gotten around to getting some more or budgets or whatever. Ideally we wanted to use all 5 to minimise how many cables we had running around the place.

Respondents were happy enough with the lighting at the park, arguing that the areas that needed to be lit up at night were well covered. Toilets and sewerage outlets at Waitangi Park were likewise seen as pretty good, although some thought that there were not really enough permanent toilet facilities. This did not emerge as a major obstacle to using the park again.

I think good toileting facilities for a crowd of up to 10,000 would be ideal – a crowd to 5,000 let's be realistic. The idea was not to spend a lot of money on toilet infrastructure for big events but use the sewerage points so you can plus the trailers in. [Is that an okay compromise?] Yes that's a good compromise. The most expensive part is the sewerage points – at the end of the day you hire a toilet trailer around \$800 for a day so it's much more economically effective to hire your trailers. Originally they didn't look at putting sewerage in, they were going to use the plastic Portaloos but they just don't really work. They're expensive to service, they smell and they're not the same standard as the flushable units. We just drove in and dropped it into the manhole and off we went. An hour to set up.

As noted, a few respondents felt that access to the grassed area was a little restricted, and several thought that it would be useful if they could drive onto the grassed area itself. They suggested that a mixed paved/ grassed area would be helpful, although they recognised that this could disrupt other users of the grassed areas.

It's a bit hard to access it because of the plantings and concrete blocks at the far end. We literally had to crane the blocks out of the way and drove in. So I guess that's what happens each time you set up. On the other hand you have to protect the turf because the park gets a huge amount of use outside of events. I think some sort of semi-hard surface that gets you onto the field would be useful. A paving grass mix. Currently there is the road down this side but there's no hardware surfaces through the field itself. Maybe some thought could go into that.

I completely understand why they request no vehicles on the grass and I actually am very careful to adhere to that. There are trucks we have exceptions for – the staging truck, the sound truck because of the heaviness for things they are delivering have to be delivered into where it is and because of the positioning it wasn't an issue. They came in at one end. The marquee truck I allowed on and that was basically it. All our stallholders had to park around the edge and the Council put in loading zones opposite Chaffers New World to enable us and we had to monitor that. So our people were allowed to come in and drop off, bring it onto the park and remove their vehicle.

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One respondent raised concerns about a lack of places to position signs promoting their event. This related specifically to places to hang banners, which this person felt were few and far between.

➤ Relationship

Perceptions of their relationships with Wellington Waterfront varied widely. Some were extremely happy with Wellington Waterfront, believing that key personnel had been friendly, understanding and willing to oblige their needs.

[What about information they provide?] Tons. Wind readings website, plans, detailed plans. Most of the things we were after got delivered. They are well resourced. They have a lot of strong data on the site from an engineering point of view.

[What is the relationship with Wellington waterfront and people you book it through?] Great. Perry is fabulous. He's approachable. He's helpful. He provided all the information I needed and if I had a problem he sorted it out. (Wellington, female)

Others reported a somewhat more difficult relationship. These people felt that Wellington Waterfront had not been particularly obliging, to the extent that one of them believed that Wellington Waterfront would have preferred them not to hold the event at Waitangi Park at all. These respondents felt that Wellington Waterfront had not been particularly willing to adapt to their needs, usually because they had turned down a request without offering a viable alternative.

3.5 Potential competitors

Event organisers generally thought that there were only a limited number of potential alternative venues to Waitangi Park in Wellington. The most commonly mentioned alternative was Frank Kitts Park. Like Waitangi Park, Frank Kitts Park was centrally located and was generally felt to have reasonable facilities, but had the advantage of being more sheltered from the wind and less subject to complaints about noise.

Other options only came up occasionally, and were often not seen as especially serious alternatives. These included Karori Park, the Botanic Gardens and the Basin Reserve. All of these were felt to have problems that were more significant than those faced by either Waitangi Park or Frank Kitts Park, and the alternative was often not bringing the event to Wellington rather than choosing another Wellington venue.

4. Skateboarders and Inline Skaters

4.1 Background

13 Skateboarders and Inline Skaters were interviewed as part of the hall test. Most were interviewed next to the skate area, and were spoken to either during or immediately after their time skating. Almost all were male.

4.2 Frequency of visits

Most respondents had visited Waitangi Park on many occasions, with 9 of the 13 saying that they visited once a week or more. The remainder included a skater from Masterton who said that he visited the park every 1 to 2 weeks. The regular visitors included several who claimed to skate at the park nearly every day. The substantial proportion of repeat visitors can in itself be seen as an indication that the skate bowl is performing its intended function.

4.3 Reasons for visits

The only reason most of these respondents ever came to Waitangi Park was to use the skate bowl, and most had little interest in and limited awareness of the park's other features. A few said that they had come to the park before to use the grassed area or to play basketball, while one said that he had visited during the X-Air Festival.

4.4 Alternative venues

There were only a few alternative places mentioned, and most felt that Waitangi Park was a fairly unique facility. This was both because of its location and the quality of its facilities. A skate boarder from Tawa and an inline skater from Newlands mentioned the Newlands and Tawa skate parks as well as the Melling skate park although this was seen as too far to travel. One mentioned mini-ramps at Karori, while the skateboarder from Masterton was not impressed with his local facilities:

The skate park is shit there.

Skateboarders and inline skaters also considered unofficial sites as part of the 'competitive set' for their activities. Areas mentioned included the Oriental Bay, Midland Park and the rest of the waterfront. It was apparent that the facility at Waitangi Park helps to draw skateboarders and inline skaters away from these unofficial areas which, of course, are used by a wide range of other people.

4.5 General satisfaction

All skaters who were interviewed were generally satisfied with the park. Most thought that it was a substantial improvement on what had been there before. Specific positives were its location, size and the fact that it had a playground that was separate from the skate area.

It's much better than before.

Most skate parks are built in cheaper areas, bad out of town areas, rather than in prime locations which makes this one really good.

Reactions to the skate area itself were a bit more mixed, although the general consensus was that it was considerably better than just about anything else that was available in Wellington. Two skateboarders from Napier, for example, said that the concrete was very smooth and was better than the wooden skate park they are used to in Napier, as their wooden skate park has nails sticking out and is higher upkeep than concrete. Others praised the variety of trick orientated objects, such as the step-up, while the bowl itself was singled out for particular praise.

It's really good, there's everything you need, like ramps, ledges and rails.

There's nothing missing. It's a good skate park.

The lines of criticism were not especially consistent, although the most common of these was that the mini ramps were too steep or that the transition to them was too abrupt. Two mentioned the cages around the trees in the skate area, which they felt created a safety hazard.

If you trip around this area you're going to go straight into it.

Others criticised the lack of differentiation between beginner and advanced areas:

- One respondent said that he avoided coming to the park on the weekend because it was too inconvenient and perhaps dangerous to skate when there were a large number of children using the skate bowl
- One of the users of seated areas similarly complained that the skate area was difficult for their children to use because of the amount of experienced skaters
- Both felt that the solution would be to have areas allocated to beginner and advanced skaters.

Other concerns raised by single respondents included:

- Insufficient ramps, rails or 'street content' - in the jargon there were not enough "to grind"
- Not enough shade in the skate area
- Rails that were not the right shape for inline skating (rounded is better)
- Splintering of wood on seats in the skate area (although these were clearly intended for seating rather than skating)
- Lights around the skate area being turned off too early - the respondent who mentioned this said that they went off at 10pm.

The half pipe's a bit lumpy close to the coping.

After 2pm it gets a bit crowded.

4.6 Amenities

As most frequented the park just to skate, only a few were conscious of the other amenities on offer at the park. Respondents were most likely to have used the toilets, although one claimed that he didn't use the restrooms as they didn't like to go to the other area of the park as he believed that it was:

It's for younger kids and parents, not people like us.

One commented that the toilets seemed to be closed at inconsistent times and were often locked when they wanted to use them, while others believed that it would be nice to have a bathroom facility closer to the skate area rather than the one on the other side of the park.

There should be more toilets, or maybe a map. I didn't know where toilets were so I used the toilets at Te Papa.

The only other amenities that were mentioned even occasionally were the children's playground and the café. These were seen as pretty good but of no special interest.

The playground is cool.

4.7 Safety and cleanliness

All skaters thought that Waitangi Park in general was easy and safe to get around in. The location helped in this.

There's a buffer with wide footpath from the road, so it's ok.

It's safe during the day probably.

There were, however, some concerns about the general safety of the skate area, particularly at night or in wet weather. A couple mentioned finding glass in the bowl, which is clearly a significant hazard for skaters. The number of small children using the skate area was again seen as a safety issue.

The concrete is slippery when wet but it's still good though.

There's lots of little kids, especially on the weekends and evenings.

There's no one here at night time except for alcoholics and druggies.

Most liked the walls for aerosol artists, although a few had noticed it spreading to other less appropriate areas.

There should be no graffiti on the bowl. It's just looks and doesn't affect the performance.

4.8 Redevelopment

All bar the respondents from Napier were aware that Waitangi Park had recently been redeveloped and that the skate area was a new feature. All these skaters believed that the park as a whole was a significant improvement on what had been there before. They particularly liked the openness of the area and, despite their safety concerns about children in the skate area, praised the efforts to make the park as a whole family oriented. Some liked the water features, although others failed to understand their point and believed that they were just a “waste of space.”

It's heaps better.

It used to be a big concrete patch, it's much nicer now. Not just skate park all other aspects too.

The skate park is really good. They've, improved the grounds and improved the look and feel of waterfront.

There are lots of parents bringing children to the park to skate and more people can access the waterfront.

Appearance-wise, it's a lot better. I don't hate it but I don't absolutely love it. It definitely has more to do, but they took the mini-ramp away. That was cool - it was smooth, big and had a good transition.

4.9 Improvements and lessons for the future

As noted, skateboarders and inline skaters generally believed that Wellington Waterfront had got a lot more right in the redevelopment of what is now Waitangi Park than it had got wrong, and the skate area in particular was seen as the best (or at least one of the best) in Wellington. Suggestions for improvements predictably centred on the skate area itself, and on additional features that could be offered. These included:

- Fixing the 'vert' or half-pipe
- Having a separate area for younger skaters on weekends
- More ramps and railings
- A quarter-pipe.

Suggestions for the remainder of Waitangi Park included:

- More interactive stuff for kids/ older youths (e.g. a Flying fox)
- Painting the area more to make it livelier
- Closer restrooms
- More water features that children can play in
- Rugby posts in grass area.

Draft

One of the key lessons was that skaters felt that their views had obviously been taken into account when developing the area, and were keen to see this continue in the future. Other priorities for future developments should include clear differentiation between adult and children's facilities, toilets in a 'neutral' location (i.e. between the adult and children's facilities rather than behind the children's play area) and keeping the area as open as possible.

The skate park is just the best thing.

5. Parents of Toddlers

5.1 Background

We interviewed 12 parents of toddlers and small children over the two days we were at Waitangi Park. All were interviewed immediately beside the children's play area while their children were using the play area. Respondents were a mix of males and females.

5.2 Frequency of visits

Most respondents came to Waitangi Park on a fairly regular basis. 7 of the 12 said that they came to the park with their child(ren) at least once every two weeks, while most of the remainder said that they visited at least once a month.

One respondent commented that Waitangi Park was the "main attraction along the waterfront" and that they had never used the area before the redevelopments.

5.3 Reasons for visits

Almost all had come to Waitangi Park specifically so their child(ren) could use the playground. One had instead come to the park mainly as part of a walk along the waterfront with a visitor from out of town and had stopped at the café to have a rest and to allow his child to use the playground, while another said that she had come so her child could use the skate area.

Other reasons given for visiting the park in the past included:

- Walking around the park
- Looking at the wetlands area/ waterfront
- The Sunday markets
- Free concerts
- The 'Earth from the Sky' exhibition
- Kicking the ball around in the grass area
- Picnics
- Using Waitangi Park café.

While most had come to Waitangi Park specifically to use the playground, it is worth noting that they also visited other areas of the Wellington Waterfront as part of their outing. One of Waitangi Park's advantages is therefore that a visit to the park can be combined with a range of other activities.

5.4 Alternative venues

Parents identified a large number of other areas where they might potentially have gone with their children. These were generally other parks, many but not all of which having children's playgrounds. Suggested alternatives included:

- Frank Kitts Park
- Oriental Bay
- Freyberg Pool
- Lyll Bay Waterfront
- Wadestown Park
- Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.

This illustrated that parents were generally looking for a place that offered a mix of activities, rather than simply a playground.

5.5 General satisfaction

Parents of toddlers were generally very positive with their assessment of Waitangi Park in general, arguing that it offered a pleasant environment to bring children to. A number commented on the variety of activities possible at the park, arguing that this was an important feature.

It's nicer than it used to be.

Nicely developed.

Kids like this area.

One respondent praised the open layout, which meant that he could keep an eye on both his kids even though they were using different areas of the park.

The play area itself was less universally positively received. While most thought that it was a reasonable facility, they had two main lines of criticism. The first was the belief that the play equipment was not well suited to young children. Specifically, several respondents argued that the equipment was either too tall or too big for young children, meaning that it was too challenging for them to use.

One example of this was the slide, as children needed to make their way across a rope bridge, with the ropes spread across with spaces rather than the length of the bridge. This meant that it was hard for young children to walk across unsupervised or without help from an adult.

The slide thing is too advanced for my kids.

These respondents argued that Frank Kitts Park was better suited to younger children and toddlers. These views were often expressed in tones of annoyance and disappointment rather than resignation or acceptance that not every playground could cater to all age groups, and so need to be seen as a significant issue.

Draft

One of the drawbacks of larger equipment aimed at slightly older children was considered to be that it attracted teenagers, and participants felt that younger children found this intimidating. Indeed, we observed a number of teenagers wandering through the park and sitting on some of the play equipment.

The second line of criticism of the playground was the lack of secure fencing between the play area and the road. While there is some fencing, parents felt that it would be too easy for young children to walk around the fence and out onto the road. This meant that parents needed to be constantly vigilant about what their children were doing, and a more solid fence would allow them to relax more while their children played. The preference was not for a higher fence that would cut off views across the park, but for a low fence along the road side that children would be less likely to walk around.

Having said that, parents were generally happy enough with the quality and range of play equipment, and liked the fact that there was a café close by where they could sit and watch their children while having a coffee or similar. Respondents liked the pergola near the playground, as this acted as a shaded area for both parents and toddlers.

The participant who had come to the park so their child could use the skate area thought that this had enough activities for children of that age, and did not identify any significant hazards or problems. The fact that the playground and skate area were situated well apart was also seen as positive as it kept these two types of users apart.

5.6 Amenities

Most thought that the café was a useful amenity.

Cafés in parks is a good one to have.

The café is a nice idea.

One respondent complained, however, about the quality of the coffee from the café.

The coffee is dodgy.

Several parents said that the toilets were very good, while another hadn't used the toilets yet said it was "in a good spot though". A reasonable number of the parents interviewed did not know where the toilets were, even though they were just behind the café and close to the play area.

5.7 Safety and cleanliness

All the parents were in agreement that the park and its facilities were generally clean and well kept. One respondent commented that she had noticed cigarette butts and bottles near the children's area and thought that this was a safety issue especially with children around, but accepted that this was to a certain extent inevitable with a park in a central city location.

Draft

It's cleaner than parks in the UK.

One respondent praised the use of gravelled areas, which he thought gave a nice feel to the park.

All parents said that the park was easy to get around, mainly because it had lots of entrances. Notwithstanding their reservations about the lack of fencing around the children's play area and the busy roads surrounding the park, respondents felt that the area was reasonably safe in terms of the potential for criminal activity.

5.8 Redevelopment

All respondents were aware that the park had been redeveloped and believed that it was a huge improvement on what had been there before.

It's improved a trillion percent.

Before it was a bit grungy, it is much better now.

It's so much better, it's a great family feature.

It was a big black hole before and this is a big improvement.

It's fantastic compared to what it was previously. I never used it before other than a shortcut.

Now you walk further around the waterfront.

It linked Oriental Parade with the rest of the city.

Before it was nothing except for the weekend food market. Now it's a rendezvous point and it's packed on weekends.

5.9 Improvements and lessons for the future

When suggesting ideas for improvements and what should be repeated in any future developments, respondents tended to focus on the two perceived weaknesses of the play area, being the lack of equipment for young children and the limited fencing. Other suggestions for hypothetical improvements include:

- Outdoor pool
- Flying fox in the grass area (the respondent who mentioned this thought that it was a large space which was sometimes wasted)
- More activities around using the grass area especially when school holidays on (e.g. free concerts)
- More rubbish bins
- More shade, including on the grassed areas
- More parking.

Draft

Factors that should be replicated in future developments were seen as including:

- The open layout which made it easy to see most of the park and helped it feel spacious
- Variety within the playground
- Walkways throughout the park that were connected with the rest of the waterfront. Most had visited the park as part of a wider visit to the waterfront, and therefore liked the flow between
- Water features. The concerns of the event organiser who worried about the potential for children to fall into the streams were not replicated in parents' comments.

6. Streetball and Climbing Wall Users

6.1 Background

This was the smallest category of respondents, with two streetball players and two climbers interviewed. All were interviewed beside the facility associated with their activity. There were only small numbers of people participating in either of these activities when we were at the park.

6.2 Frequency of visits

Both groups came to Waitangi Park weekly, with the streetball players making a point to come every Saturday to play with others.

6.3 Reasons for visits

In addition to climbing, the climbers said that they had previously used the grassed area for playing cricket and having lunch during their lunch break at work. The streetball players only came to the park to play basketball.

6.4 Alternative venues

The climbers reported that they could instead have gone to 'Fergs' at Queens Wharf. The basketball players were from the Hutt Valley and reported that there were numerous venues where they could play there.

6.5 General satisfaction

Both climbers and streetball players were highly satisfied with Waitangi Park, although they did identify areas where minor improvements could be made. The streetball players for example were happy with surface of the court but felt that the area needed another basketball hoop to accommodate the numbers playing, or perhaps even a full court. It should be noted, however, that as mentioned above, we had difficulty recruiting basketball players because there were not a large number around when we were there.

Draft

The climbers felt that the climbing wall was good and at a level they would expect of a climbing wall available for public use unsupervised. They did, however, note that when the park first opened that the climbing wall was not up to scratch and needed work. They reported that they had called up the Council and Wellington Waterfront to suggest improvements to the holes in the wall, and considered that the wall had been substantially improved as a result.

6.6 Amenities

None of these respondents had used or were even especially aware of the other amenities at the park.

6.7 Safety and cleanliness

Both groups felt that the park was a safe area. The climbers reported that the climbing walls worked well because they were not too high, and were as safe as could be expected for a climbing wall in a public space.

It is safe, no problems

It's safe and wide open.

6.8 Redevelopment

The climbers said the area had improved markedly and reported that they had started to come down during their lunch break, something they would not have done before the redevelopment. The streetball players were also positive in their assessment of the redevelopment, arguing that it meant that more people were now able to enjoy the park.

Improved the area, a lot more people come down now.

A lot nicer, a lot more user friendly.

It's choice as, better than it used to be.

6.9 Improvements and lessons for the future

Suggestions for improvements from this audience were limited as they were basically pretty happy. Both streetballers and climbers believed that their respective facilities were well designed for their particular activity and offered something that was a little bit different from what was available close by (e.g. Fergs Kayaks is a paid facility, and there are no other close by basketball courts). At the same time, unlike the skaters they did not regard Waitangi Park as a particularly unique or special facility, again because similar activities were available elsewhere.

We again heard calls for more shade to be provided and for the playground to be made more suited to younger children (one of the climbers reported that one of his co-workers had complained about this). One basketball player thought that it would be useful to have a BBQ area in the park.

The climbers thought that there would be value in getting 'people from Fergs' to make routes on the climbing wall to make it more challenging, and suggested spray painting the routes around the current climbing holes.

The basketball players would like more hoops, and for the court area to be a little bit bigger. This was mainly because of perceived congestion.

7. Passers-by, Users of Seated Areas and Users of Grassed Areas

7.1 Background

We have combined these three categories together because their priorities are relatively similar. A passer-by was defined as someone who was passing through the park with no intention of sitting in either the seated areas or grassed areas for any length of time. They therefore included people who were out for a walk, joggers and dog walkers amongst others. 12 passers-by were interviewed.

Users of seated areas (8 interviews) were generally seated to have lunch or to use the café, while users of grassed areas were similarly more prevalent during the lunch period (14 interviews).

7.2 Frequency of visits

These users did not come to the park quite as often as the skaters or parents of toddlers, although there were a few who reported that they came to the park most days. Almost all had been to Waitangi Park before, and respondents were most likely to say that they came to the park weekly.

7.3 Reasons for visits

All three types of respondent generally visited Waitangi Park as part of a wider visit to the Waterfront area. Most worked or lived close by which meant that it was a convenient location. The specific reasons for visiting were:

- Walking along the Waterfront (9 respondents)
- Having lunch in the sun (9 respondents)
- Relax in the sun (7 respondents)
- Accompanying skaters (3 respondents)
- Walking to Oriental Bay (2 respondents)
- Walking a dog (1 respondent)
- Accompanying a parent whose toddler was using the play area (1 respondent)
- Cycling along the Waterfront (1 respondent)
- Tourist having lunch on way from hostel to Te Papa (1 respondent).

Most had used the park for another of these activities at some point in the past, although a reasonable proportion reported that they personally did not use any other facilities at the park (specifically referring to the skate area, the basketball court, the climbing wall and the children's playground). Individual respondents also mentioned using the grassed area for football or coming to the park to attend events or exhibitions.

7.4 Alternative venues

Because of the simplicity of the activities they were engaged in, there were a wide variety of alternative venues mentioned. This was not to say that Waitangi Park was not seen as a fairly unique facility, as the alternative venues all had their advantages and drawbacks. Alternatives mentioned included:

Passers-by

- Oriental Bay
- Other parts of the Waterfront
- Mt Victoria.

Users of Seated Areas

- Oriental Parade
- Oriental Bay
- Petone foreshore
- Botanical Gardens
- Frank Kitts Park.

Users of Grassed Areas

- Oriental Bay
- By the wharf/ Te Papa
- Brooklyn/ Karori Sanctuary
- Frank Kitts Park
- Newtown hill.

I could have gone to 'Pigeon Park' on Courtney Place or the end of Courtney Place by the tripod, but both smell like urine.

7.5 General satisfaction

Respondents were generally highly satisfied with Waitangi Park in generally as a facility, and thought that it offered a very pleasant environment in which to do their chosen activity. While they did have a number of suggestions for improvements, these should be seen as suggestions rather than as expressions of serious dissatisfaction. One respondent likened Waitangi Park to Diamond Harbour in Sydney and believed that it was a very good facility for Wellington and wished that there was something similar where she lived (Dunedin).

It's fabulous, fantastic. It beats Auckland, I don't mind rates going to this. The park is well designed and has a bit of everything.

Impressive.

It's important to have this in the central city.

It's nice to see most features finished.

There's plenty to occupy your mind. You can people watch, watch people have fun.

Draft

Several praised the use of waterways in the park landscaping, with one respondent who lived at Chaffers Marina aware that the marsh land had treated the water coming into the marina, meaning that it was now much cleaner than it used to be. At the same time, a few failed to grasp the intention of the waterways, referring to it as an 'ugly swamp'.

It's a waste of space.

The marsh land could be better, it possibly attracts mosquitoes.

The skate area came in for particular praise, as it offered a substantial and reasonably unique facility.

It's the biggest skate park I have been to.

It's a fantastic skate park. There's a huge variety of different manoeuvres they can do. They have put a lot of thought into how skateboarders can use it.

Respondents liked the wide open layout of the park in general and the use of paths throughout. The wide paths and general open layout meant that the park seldom felt cramped or crowded.

I love the different levels and walkways to go through the park.

It's good to have lunch on wide open spaces.

There's a good expansive look to the area.

The open layout of the grassed area came in for specific praise, as this made for a facility that was pleasant to use and that could be used for a wide variety of different purposes. The size of the grassed area meant that many people could use it without getting in each others' way.

I like that it's just a space. Town is for doing stuff and Waitangi Park is for relaxing.

It's a nice grass area. You can see the sky. I went to Hong Kong and you can't see the sky there.

It's good to have lots of grass when you've been sitting in an office all day.

A few did note, however, that the grassed area had some drainage issues, reporting that sometimes could be too wet even a couple days after it rained. At the same time, a few had also noticed worn, dry patches.

Some had grasped the idea that the young trees that had been planted would eventually grow enough to shade the park and generally give it a better feel. As with other types of respondents, however, a good proportion believed that there was not enough shade or shelter in the park. This applied particularly to those who wished to eat their lunch in the park, as they felt that there was nowhere that they could do this on a wet day.

Another respondent commented on the oak trees in the skate areas, arguing that they looked 'unhappy'.

Why plant oak trees when there is a native theme going?

Draft

Two users of the grassed areas were very negative with their comments on the building developments between Chaffers Marina and Waitangi Park.

The new building sucks, knock it down. In winter it creates a large shadow over the park.

One respondent specifically praised the carved gateway, although this was the only respondent who mentioned this feature without being prompted. One respondent who appeared to be of Māori ethnicity specifically stated that he was not aware of any features in the park that were connected with Māori culture or history.

7.6 Amenities

A substantial proportion of these respondents were not aware that there were restrooms at Waitangi Park and only a few of those who were aware had used them before. This is particularly interesting as several of these respondents were interviewed within metres of the restrooms. Those who had used them thought that they were tidy and well cared for, but respondents definitely thought that there needed to be more signage to help people find the restrooms. Similarly, several argued that there should be alternative restrooms closer to the skate area.

Awareness of the café was higher (not surprisingly as a number of respondents were interviewed close by), although again only a few had used it. Some of those who had used it felt that the café should really be bigger and have more variety.

One respondent commented that he would like to see a water fountain in the park. When he was informed that there was a water fountain in the skate area, he reported that he would be unlikely to notice this as he seldom went close to that part of the park.

Rubbish bins were an important issue for those who were eating the lunch in the park or walking their dogs, and respondents generally felt that there should be more bins provided.

7.7 Safety and cleanliness

Most thought that because the park was open, flat and well-lit at night it was generally a pretty safe place. While the lack of trees meant that there was little shade, it also meant that it was easier to see around the park which meant that it felt safer.

You can still walk down at night. It's well lit up and people are here all the time.

Draft

Despite the perceived lack of rubbish bins, most thought that the park was as clean as could be expected given its inner city location. One respondent commented that he kept an eye for glass around the playground as that can be a problem in other playground areas, but that he had not seen any in Waitangi Park. One participant did, however, comment that she had spotted graffiti in the skate area which she did not like and that she had seen rubbish where the beginning of the plant area and wet area met.

There's no dog shit. It's nice and clean.

Several raised safety concerns about the skate area, although it should be noted that these did not come through strongly from skaters themselves. One respondent commented that the edges or corners of the railings should be rounded to protect skaters more, and argued that helmets should be enforced when using the skate area especially with younger children. Another complained that the gravel/ pebbles on the pathways caused problems as they were often swept by the wind on to the skate area and created hazards for skaters. The comments about separating beginner and younger skaters from their more experienced counterparts also came up here.

A few felt that the skate area itself was intimidating sometimes especially when there were a lot of teenagers around. These respondents thought that planting trees to separate the skate area from the rest of the park or having a clearly designated main entrance further away from the skate park would be improvements.

7.8 Redevelopment

As with all other groups, respondents in these three categories were generally aware that the park had recently been redeveloped and thought that it was a substantial improvement. Respondents generally regarded Waitangi Park as a substantial asset for the Wellington Waterfront.

Before was just a waste of space.

Before it was nothing, now there is something for the public to go to.

We now have a place that is central and where there is grass.

It's excellent, wonderful facility for Wellington, both if you live here and if you are visiting.

You can now use it to pass through, especially at night.

They've created a really great facility, possibly spent too much on gardens. I come down to the waterfront more often because of it.

It's a million times better than that shithole. The old Chaffers Park was a wasteland.

It's quite beautiful, before it was an ugly spot and nothing much of a park. I am looking forward to more trees.

120% improvement, a real asset to Wellington and tourists will be impressed. It's inviting.

7.9 Improvements and lessons for the future

While respondents were generally very pleased with the way Waitangi Park has been redeveloped they did, however, have a number of suggestions for improvements. Several of these have also been raised by other types of respondents. Suggestions included:

- More seats with back rests for “people with disabilities, older people, people with arthritis etc”
- Basketball courts further away from the road. One respondent commented on how when the basketball court near the skateboard area was busy players tended to spill to other areas to play usually near the road and once saw the ball bouncing towards the road nearly hitting a passing car
- Fencing around the play area
- Clearer separation between different uses of the park (e.g. between the skate area and the paths)
- More water fountains
- More shade/ shelter
- More rubbish bins

It needs lots more rubbish bins, there should be thousands.

- Various improvements to the skate area

The skate park could have been done better. It's bumpy - it could have been pre-cast. They've tried to make it a little better - they've tried to put more vert on a little part of it, but it hasn't really worked.

- Fencing around the edges of the park to give it a more defined feel.

There could be fences or maybe seating around the other side of the park - there's nothing that makes it feel enclosed. It feels like it just stops in the middle.

The aspects of Waitangi Park that these respondents felt should be replicated elsewhere included:

- The spacious, open feel
- The substantial grassed area
- The number of benches and seats
- The mix of activities within a single space
- The easy connection with the rest of the waterfront.