POSITIVE
& PROUD

Building a Better Future for Merivale

MIHI

Kia hiwa rā, kia hiwa rā!

Mai i te kāinga o Te Kaponga, mai i te wānanga o Tamatea

Ariki nui,

kia rere ngā roimata o te maunga tūhāhā, arā ko Mauao

ki a koutou mā, ka mihi, ka mihi, ka mihi ake rā.

Ko Tutarawānanga he wānanga,

ko Tutarawānanga he kōhanga,

ko Tutarawānanga he kāinga ki ngā hau,

nā reira, piki mai kake mai kia mau ai ki ēnei tāonga.

He tāonga te hinengaro o tēnā, o tēnā,

hei akiaki ki ngā uri nō kōnei,

ko te aranga o te awa Waimapu.

He mihi tēnei kei raro i te mana kōtahi o Ngāti Ruahine

me Ngāi Tamarawaho,

tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Young dancers at the Merivale Idol competition

CONTENTS

THE MERIVALE COMMUNITY

Merivale is a suburb located 5 kilometres from Tauranga's downtown centre. It lies on the edge of the Waimapu Estuary. Merivale reflects a wide range of residents settled since the state housing era, families of different nationalities attracted by relatively low prices of houses and some long-term residents in private homes. Merivale is a decile 10 neighbourhood.

FOREWORD - WORKING TOGETHER

Prior to moving to work in Merivale the majority of my education career was spent in rural areas. It has always been important to me to work where having a sense of community and a feeling of 'belonging' are valued. These are values that I have often found within rural communities but rarely within the urban setting. Merivale is one of those rare urban communities where there is a sense that such values are lived and breathed by community members.

I believe strongly in the ancient African proverb: "It takes a whole village to raise a child." I have always advocated that raising and educating a child is a communal effort including family, extended family and community. I've often, however, believed that this proverb also relates to the communities in which we live and work. It takes all of us to work together to grow our community into a place to be proud of. This research project found that a high percentage of residents (88%) like living in the area. Such an optimistic outlook is heartening. However, while so many of us are proud of Merivale it is extremely important that we work together to overcome issues identified in this research project. By working together we can build a much stronger community and improve outcomes for those within Merivale.

As a school we know we must work with all in our community to achieve the best outcomes for our children. From our perspective the Merivale Community Centre holds a key in organising and enabling all groups to work collectively to achieve the best results for not only our children but also the whole of the community. The resulting vision from this Community Development Project is exciting. While it might be easy to see this vision as belonging to the Merivale Community Centre it is important that all of us within the Merivale community take ownership and work together in engaging in the recommended strategies to achieve this vision. The Centre can't achieve this vision alone, nor can the school, the Kōhanga Reo, the Early Childhood Centre, the Kukapa Trust, nor any other individual on their own. Together, though, we can grow Merivale into a much stronger community and achieve outstanding outcomes for all our residents.

Congratulations to the Merivale Community Centre on this in-depth and forward-reaching Community Development Project. I look forward to working with them and the Merivale community over the next few years to realise 'our' vision.

Jan Tinetti, Principal
Merivale School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Merivale Community Centre – Providing a Focus for Change

This report is a piece of action research. It provides a snapshot of how the residents of Merivale, Tauranga feel about their suburb and reveals what they would like to change about living there.

Merivale faces serious socio-economic challenges. It is among the most deprived 10% of New Zealand communities, with low levels of income, employment and educational attainment. Many of the homes in the suburb are Housing New Zealand properties (three times the national average) and poverty is a major issue. Over the years, various social, education, health and housing initiatives have been rolled out with limited impact.

Despite this, the feedback from the research shows that the area's 850 households are committed to the area and would like to build a far more positive future. Eighty-eight percent of respondents like living there and want to address the community's negative reputation around violence, domestic violence, drug/alcohol abuse and crime/antisocial behaviour issues.

The research shows that feeling safer is an absolute priority for Merivale residents. Providing positive choices and activities for young people and improving the physical environment and run-down shopping area are also high on their agenda.

So what can be done? This research report provides an evidence base and direction for future community action. It also strongly indicates that change has to be something that emanates from within this community, not just happens to it. The findings show that in recent years the Merivale Community Centre has earned the trust of local residents and is well placed to lead these changes. The research underlines that this sense of connection and community engagement will be crucial to the success of any future endeavours.

The good news is that there are plenty of positives to build on. As the photos and case studies throughout this publication illustrate, the Merivale residents themselves are taking positive action to improve their own lives. The Centre has run a wide range of community-building activities over the last year. But more is required.

This report provides a theoretical framework and mandate for change. The challenge now is to turn its recommendations into reality. The research tells us we need to expand the scope of the events, programmes and activities the Centre has underway. We need to

reach more people, especially children and young people. We need to revitalise the physical environment, making the sort of improvements that signal a positive community where everyone feels safe and at home. This means addressing pressure points for those who live here – better supporting parents and whānau, enhancing the quality of parenting, providing better education, training and employment opportunities.

None of this will happen overnight. What is required therefore is a co-ordinated plan of action that is sustainable and achieves progress that is meaningful and tangible to residents. Funding alone is not the answer, although more will be needed to tackle the challenges on the scale required.

The Merivale Community Centre has the potential to be an effective catalyst for change. This report calls for a new model of proactive, 'grass-roots' intervention, co-ordinated by the Centre. It also calls on social agencies and NGOs to listen to the community and work together much more effectively.

Positive & Proud is the first step along that journey.

A new model of 'grass-roots' intervention is making a difference.

METHODOLOGY

The Community Development Project at the Merivale Community Centre is a three-year project funded through the Community Development Scheme, Department of Internal Affairs. The overall aim of the project is to:

- develop a deeper understanding of our community through research and one-to-one connections
- engage with our community, working alongside them to develop internalised strategies that will result in better outcomes for them and their children
- realise the original one-stop-shop vision of Merivale Community Incorporated (Inc.).

It was recognised that the key to improving outcomes for people in Merivale is the community members themselves. Everyone has something unique that they can bring; everyone is a potential leader, volunteer or ally and therefore part of a solution.

Consequently it was decided to use a questionnaire as the means of connecting and engaging with people. The priority was the connection and building of bridges between the Community Centre and the Merivale community as opposed to gathering data through the questionnaire. It was felt that it was important to allow for flexibility for people to tell their story and to talk about what they felt strongly about, to use the questions as a starting point for conversations as well as a means of gathering information. This included giving people the opening to talk about themselves if they wanted to – giving them options to respond on a more general level while keeping open the chance to talk personally if they felt safe to do so.

It was decided that the questionnaire format was not suitable for children and young people, and other ways of connecting with and hearing from these groups were developed as described below.

In delivering the questionnaire the role of the researchers was to:

- **connect**
- **listen**
- **find, nurture and build on the positives**
- **engage people as part of the solution.**

The research was guided by the following Tikanga:

Tuku Aroha – Freely offer ourselves to our community.

Whakamana – Respect for decisions and opinions of participants, affirming the essential worth and identity of others.

Manaaki – Build up the essential worth and identity of others.

Whakapapa – Acknowledgment of whakapapa, establishing binding connections of obligation and joy from one to another.

Whanaungatanga – Development of positive relationships, becoming as a family to one another.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses in three main areas:

1. Living in Merivale; what do people like about it, what are their concerns?
2. What is needed; for others, for the community and themselves?
3. The Community Centre, what people know about the Centre, their experiences of using the services and their ideas about future focus.

During the design phase of the questionnaire researchers were particularly concerned about wording the questions in a way that was accessible for people in the Merivale community. One of the researchers and a Merivale Community Inc. Core Group member, both of whom are Māori and have lived in the Merivale community for many years, were an integral part of getting this right. Making the process accessible to the community was considered to be the over-riding factor in the design and delivery of the questionnaire.

During trials for the format and questions in the questionnaire it quickly became apparent that people tended to focus on the negative aspects of living in Merivale, particularly in terms of how they perceived situations and how they saw other people. To balance this tendency the decision was made to include two questions that tried to elicit a more positive response and get people to talk about some personal aspirational factors (questions 1 and 17). The questionnaires were completed over a six-month period December 2007 to May 2008 by two researchers.

Identity Crisis

In introducing themselves and inviting people to take part in the questionnaire it quickly became apparent to the researchers that there were parts of the community that did not see themselves as living in or having anything to do with 'Merivale.' At times these feelings were strongly expressed and often people in houses next to each other would hold completely opposing views about whether they lived in Merivale, Parkvale, Greerton or Yatton Park. Many people pointed out to researchers that Merivale does not exist on the map. One of the implications of this was that researchers found it best to talk about the 'Community Centre' and the 'Community' when introducing and explaining the purpose of the

questionnaire. People were then more likely to feel it was of relevance to them instead of choosing not to take part if they felt that it was about 'Merivale.'

Coverage

The 2006 Census identifies 801 households in the Merivale community. By knocking on every door in every street in the identified area, the researchers were able to refine this figure. There are 859 houses in the Merivale community. The discrepancy is probably due to some slight boundary differences within the Meshblock dataset as supplied by Statistics New Zealand.

The two researchers completed 316 questionnaires over the information-gathering stage of the project. Researchers were flexible with the amount of time for each questionnaire. People who wanted to complete them as quickly as possible generally did so in around 20–30 minutes, while others were keen to engage in lengthy discussions around the questions and about other issues in the Merivale community. Some of these lasted up to two hours and while this meant that fewer questionnaires could be completed it was felt that the benefits in terms of making personal connections within the community were invaluable.

The 316 completed questionnaires represent 37% of the homes in the Merivale community and were obtained by knocking on at least one occasion at every house in the community (other than those that the researchers felt were unsafe due to the presence of dogs). In all, 5% of houses were identified as being unsafe because of dogs on the property.

There was no response from 43% of homes, a small number of which were physically empty at the time.

At 15% of homes the person that answered did not want to take part in the questionnaire because they were either too busy or just not interested.

The 37% response rate was particularly pleasing, especially given that Merivale has such a high proportion of Māori people. This high response rate can almost certainly be attributed to the fact that one of the researchers was Māori, had lived in the community for many years and was well known to many members of the Merivale community.

Time of Day

Researchers called at different times during the day but found that while more people were home in the early evenings they were generally less likely to take part in the questionnaire. The best times were between 10 o'clock and 12 o'clock in the mornings and 2 o'clock and 5 o'clock in the afternoons.

It was decided to collect information in a way that would enable analysis in three ways:

- Merivale as a whole
- by sector
- by street.

The community was divided into six sectors, three each side of Fraser Street (which is the main thoroughfare through Merivale). There was greater than 33% coverage within each sector. Sectors were identified by researchers and Core Group members as being natural boundaries within the community.

Sector 1: Lloyd, Taratoa, Baycroft

Sector 2: Oxford, Somerset, Surrey, Hampton

Sector 3: Esk, Miranda, Harrier

Sector 4: Yatton, Roys, Hilltop

Sector 5: Mansels, Alverstoke, Henderson

Sector 6: Wembury, Kesteven, Merivale, Landview, Courtney

Children and Young People in Merivale

In addition to the questionnaire other work was done to ensure the views of children and young people were taken into account.

Sixteen young people (aged 15–22) from Merivale attended a 'Reconnect Noho Marae' and, as part of the stay, expressed their views and opinions on living in Merivale. This was done using a mix of large and small group activities to generate issues and concerns held by young people ('Jigsaw,' 'Ideas storm,' 'Diamond ranking' and 'How how how' activities). These were then incorporated into an 'Opinion finder' activity where young people acted as researchers and asked each other for their responses to a variety of statements. The group generated a number of issues, ideas and concerns which have already informed a planning process in terms of events and activities.

Children (aged 5–13) who attend the Merivale Community Centre After-school Programme, as well as a variety of children playing out in the street, gave their ideas and opinions in response to questions about living in Merivale and making things better. At different times children were asked:

- What is the best thing about living in Merivale, what did they like most about living in Merivale?
- What is the worst thing about living in Merivale, what did they not like?
- What would they like more of, what would make things better for them?

Some of the local children help out with the 'speed awareness' campaign trying to get motorists to slow down as they drive through the Merivale community.

CASE STUDY

FRASER STREET - MAKING A DANGEROUS ROAD SAFER

Tania, a local mother, is actively involved with the Merivale community, part of the Core Group at the Community Centre and a member of the Board of Trustees at Merivale School. She is also actively involved in the walking bus initiative and has been part of the crossing patrol at the pedestrian crossing in the mornings as children are on their way to school. Tania has four children ages 6, 8, 10 and 11 who all go to Merivale School.

"In April my youngest was knocked down on the pedestrian crossing – he was crossing with a group of friends and, because he is quite little and at the back of the group, the driver of the car 'didn't see him.' He was hit on his right side and skidded across the road, getting lots of cuts and grazes. He was taken to Accident and Emergency and kept overnight for observation."

Tania is very aware of the dangers of traffic on the pedestrian crossing having worked as part of the crossing patrol and has made a point of teaching her children about the dangers of the road and about how to cross safely. Despite this she says that children do dart out – they don't really understand

crossings despite the work of parents and schools; they don't think like adults and drivers need to realise this.

Tania says that the most dangerous times are actually when traffic volumes are lower as people drive faster through the Merivale community. She has had to put up with a lot of aggression from drivers in her time on the crossing patrol: "People are so impatient and the women drivers are the most aggressive, especially the ones in the 25–40 age group."

She is also concerned that many adults don't use the pedestrian crossing and that this sets a poor example to the children. Older young people often cross through traffic, playing chicken and running close to moving cars – smaller children watch this and think it's cool.

"Despite all the signs there has been a succession of accidents on the pedestrian crossing over recent years and apart from the Community Centre organising campaigns to try and slow cars down as they drive through there has been little or no official action to try and do something about this dangerous stretch of road."

KEY FINDINGS

The Merivale Community Centre

A number of questions in the questionnaire were focused on people's knowledge and experience of the Merivale Community Centre. There was a very high level of awareness about the Merivale Community Centre, much of this coming from the monthly *Merivale Messenger* newsletter which many people see as their way of keeping in touch with what's happening in their community.

About half of the people surveyed were aware of the services provided at the Centre, with around a third having actually used a service at some time. Almost everyone who had used a service felt that it met their needs at the time.

People felt generally that the Centre should play a co-ordination and linking role, acting as a first point of contact for people in the community and facilitating referral to other agencies and service providers.

This is a clear message to support the Centre focusing on more strategic oversight, working in a co-ordinated way with a range of service providers, within the context of engaging and connecting more with the Merivale community. This could be achieved by organising events, activities, programmes and courses as well as creating opportunities and the safe environment that encourages more people to come in to the Centre more often.

There was a number of recommendations as to how the Centre could become more welcoming and accessible to the Merivale community. These included bigger and better signage outside, a more welcoming interior layout with better and more accessible information and more friendly staff.

The questionnaire provides clear indicators for the Community Centre in terms of how to proceed with engaging the Merivale community. Research does not happen in isolation and as the questionnaire has been underway many of the ideas and concerns have formed the basis of new initiatives and activities as discussed later in this report.

Safety and Feeling Safe

Issues around safety and feeling safe were identified as being the dominant theme from this research and while there was a number of questions that encouraged people to reflect on their perceptions of safety and feeling safe around Merivale there is a high degree of confidence that the questionnaire did not prompt such feelings because the first three questions, without mentioning the words safe or safety, elicited many concerns from community members around precisely these issues. Concerns of children were consistent with the concerns of adults with regard

to safety, with the majority of children's reasons for what they disliked most about living in Merivale being related to violence, intimidation and antisocial behaviour.

Feeling safe in this context was identified as being free from:

- physical threat and intimidation (often linked to drug and alcohol use or gang activity), random acts of violence, domestic violence
- for children specifically – bullying, racism (notably against Pākehā children), physical or sexual abuse, use of physical force for discipline and as a parenting tool.

Questions 4–7 asked specifically about people's perception of how safe they felt safe in their own street, how safe they felt generally around Merivale and where they felt most unsafe.

Sector 1: Lloyd, Taratoa, Baycroft is the sector where people felt most unsafe/scared on their own street, while Oxford Street was the single street where people felt most unsafe/scared. These streets are all in the same part of Merivale. In addition sector 1 was also lowest in terms of people feeling they know their neighbours.

People in sectors 3 and 4, which are at the southern end of Merivale adjacent to Yatton Park, felt safest in their own streets but felt least safe generally around Merivale.

The area around the shops was the most frequently mentioned place for people to feel unsafe or scared. This was especially the case at night; 41% of respondents said that they do not and would not go out, other than by car, at night in Merivale. Many people stated that they never use the shops at all – some preferring to travel by car to Greerton rather than walk to their local shop. A number of reasons were given for this:

- the shopping area looks so bad – run-down, covered with tagging and graffiti, frequently vandalised (phone box)
- limited services and products being available
- groups of young people congregating, often drinking (especially at night). People reported experiences with groups blocking the road, throwing bottles at cars. Some people reported going around the long way and advising visitors to do the same rather than drive through the Merivale shops at night. An informal CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design) report in 2008 concluded that youth 'own' the area around the shops and that changing this pattern was the key to turning the situation round
- the liquor store. Many people said that the community would be better off without the liquor store and indeed, it is a focus for the young people

in trying to obtain alcohol either through someone else buying it for them or through asking/ intimidating people to give them money so they can buy it themselves. The liquor store licence is not up for renewal until 2010.

The proximity of the shops to the school along with the fact that the two playgrounds in Merivale are either side of the shops (Surrey Grove and Kesteven Avenue) are particular concerns given the example being set to younger children. Unfortunately many of the younger children look up to, admire and copy the behaviours of the older age group which is a problem when this older group are congregating and openly engaging in anti-social behaviours. A small number of Pākehā families revealed instances of racism and bullying when they had tried to use the playgrounds. This sense of alienation from within their own community exacerbates division and disconnectedness for this group and adds extra challenges to the task of community-building.

The issue of pedestrian safety was addressed by question 7 and the only pedestrian crossing in Merivale was repeatedly identified as the most unsafe place for pedestrians, particularly children. There have been a number of serious accidents on the crossing in recent years. There was a common viewpoint around children not crossing the road safely, not being taught to cross roads safely and crossing away from the actual pedestrian crossing. Many people pointed out that youth and adults set a bad example by crossing Fraser Street away from the pedestrian crossing. Most people felt that people driving through Merivale drive too quickly through the area around the shops but there seemed to be a low level of acceptance that they as car drivers need to modify their own speed and behaviour when driving through the shops.

More Events and Activities – Community-building

Another key theme to emerge from the questionnaire data was people's interest in and support for more events and activities. There was widespread support for this both in terms of what people felt was needed for Merivale and also what they were interested in for themselves. Questions 1, 2, 3, 8, 12, 13 and 17 all generated responses around more events and activities that would build a sense of belonging and community. More events and activities were also seen as being the key to engaging with young people from the community.

Activities and events can also help neighbours get to know each other, which may well contribute to people feeling safer in the streets where they live. Sector analysis of the responses to questions 4 and 9 indicated that this is an issue.

Both children and young people identified that more events and activities in Merivale would be something they want and in which they are interested, as well as a way of addressing some of the problems in the community.

The emergence of this theme from the questionnaire gives clear direction for the Community Centre to prioritise the establishment of new and ongoing events and activities. Events and activities will bring more people into contact with the Community Centre and enable the closer connections and engagement that underlie the sort of personal development and change that is needed.

Support for Parents/Whānau and Parenting Programmes

Questions and discussion around what sorts of things are needed to improve things in Merivale frequently ended up around support for parents and parenting skills. Questions 1, 3, 8 and 12 all elicited responses that indicate poor parenting is at the heart of many of the problems faced by the Merivale community. Interestingly, in question 13, no one identified that support for parents and parenting was something they could benefit from themselves, seeing it as something for other people.

This perhaps touches on the root of the challenges faced by those trying to support parents with their parenting skills, namely that people are not able to (or at least are very resistant to) perceive their own parenting as needing support or improvement. It is easy to understand how people who themselves have had poor parenting default to similar styles and habits when it comes to raising their own children, and all the messages they have absorbed about what constitutes normal healthy family dynamics – love, sorting out disagreements, discipline, etc. become flawed, unhealthy and even toxic for the next generation.

A similar challenge exists with regard to any sort of personal development/spiritual growth in that people need to be able to look unflinchingly at themselves, their past, their present and their goals for the future and such work is often difficult. In the short term it is always easier psychologically not to do this sort of work.

Meeting and overcoming this challenge is perhaps the key component of community development projects that are seeking to facilitate real and sustainable change.

Typical of the environment in need of 'revitalisation.'

"I GREW UP PRETTY MUCH WITH VIOLENCE AS NORMAL"

The words of a long time Merivale resident sum up some of the brutal realities faced by many members of the Merivale community, highlighting how violent and toxic parenting and relationships echo and magnify over generations.

"My Nan had a head injury and used to give my Koro a lot of beatings – but he stayed with her until the end.

"Mum reckoned she didn't care much for Dad – just they got caught together and made to marry. I was one of their seven kids.

"Both Mum and Dad were drinkers and Dad used to smoke a lot of drugs – I used to help him in his 'plantation' – I knew all the ins and outs of marijuana plants at an early age. I remember a cousin giving me marijuana as a Christmas present when I was ten years old.

"Dad always used to tell me how much he loved me – but I used to get a lot of hidings. He used to beat up Mum a lot – I saw him hold a gun to her head once and I saw him stab her with a knife. When they were drinking I always knew it would finish with Mum getting a hiding so I used to run away up the back or stay elsewhere. But of course I still loved my Dad – that's what I thought love was like – and I was attracted to tough macho men – just like him.

"Dad was part of the gang – we grew up in gangs. I was once in a house where a guy was shot in a 'drive-by' – that was just part of the normal.

"I really hated school, was no good at all with book work. I liked sports though – netball, rugby and running – but because we didn't have any money I never got to travel with the teams. Clothes and shoes were always from the second hand shop and we had a wash under the hose pipe or down at the river.

"Getting away from where I grew up was good and Merivale felt just like home – easy to score alcohol and drugs!

"I had my first baby at 17, my boyfriend had done time for violence. I was into drinking and fighting around Merivale but thought that was no good for my baby and so I gave the baby away to my Aunt and Uncle.

"By the time I was 20 I had had three kids and though I had these fellas I was more of a solo mum really – though I still got the beatings because they were all violent. I remember taking beatings for the kids, after they had done something and I would take it rather than let him beat up on them. It all eroded my self-esteem – all those things – 'you're ugly,' 'no one wants you,' 'you need me – I'm the only one that will have you' – got to the point where I was just walking around with my head down.

"Things sort of got worse, I lost it and ended up hanging out more and more with the Mongrel Mob, drinking with them, lost and confused, I guess. The kids saw a lot of what was going on. They got dumped on all sorts of different people and as they got older they started to do the same stuff – out on the streets drinking and fighting – all that sort of stuff."

Coming Together
Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the opening of Tutarawānanga te Kōhanga Reo.

DISCUSSION

Merivale and Proud of It?

A lot of people are very proud and positive about living in Merivale. Eighty-eight percent of people reported that they like living in the area, partly because of its proximity to central Tauranga and to services, but also because of the sense of community and belonging that they experience. However, it is also true that Merivale does have a bad reputation in Tauranga. An indicator of this is the reluctance of real estate agents to refer to houses in the area as being in Merivale, using a range of other names (as mentioned in the Methodology).

At its worst the reputation of Merivale could be summed up as follows:

- brown/Māori
- cyclical poverty/deprivation
- drugs/alcohol
- abuse/poor parenting
- antisocial behaviour/crime/gangs
- hopeless – nothing is really going to change.

The reasons for this reputation are varied. Certainly the local media tend to portray Merivale in a negative light, and past and present problems in the community have also contributed to this image. Yet it also seems that problems are more readily attributed to Merivale than other areas. There is probably a racist element to the reputation; with outspoken and influential individuals and groups in

Tauranga hypothesising that race is the major reason for poverty and problems within the community. While poverty is certainly a major issue, and may be at the heart of stifling life chances and opportunities, leading to many problems in our community, it is not the case that this is solely due to race. Where an education system largely fails to meet the needs of particular groups, and an economic system requires a large pool of unskilled and low-paid workers, unsurprisingly there are high levels of poverty and associated social problems within the Merivale community. In this instance the stereotype becomes self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling.

Merivale has a high proportion of Māori people (39%), compared to just under 15% nationally. People have been attracted to Tauranga mainly through low-skilled employment at the Port of Tauranga and in horticulture. Merivale has been an attractive neighbourhood for these people, as it has remained an area of lower-cost housing with a high proportion of Housing New Zealand properties. The level of Housing New Zealand properties is more than three times the national average, and five times the Tauranga average. Housing New Zealand has previously pursued policies of infill and housing intensification, which have merely compounded social problems, and ensured that the social stratification of Merivale is fundamentally skewed.

Merivale is a notable mātā waka community. We have a significant mix of people from outside Tauranga Moana (most notably Ngāti Porou and Ngā Puhi). Anecdotally there seems to be less identification with an iwi, and a stronger sense of a generic 'Māori' identity. In addition, this identity seems to feed off negative, confrontational and aggressive media views.
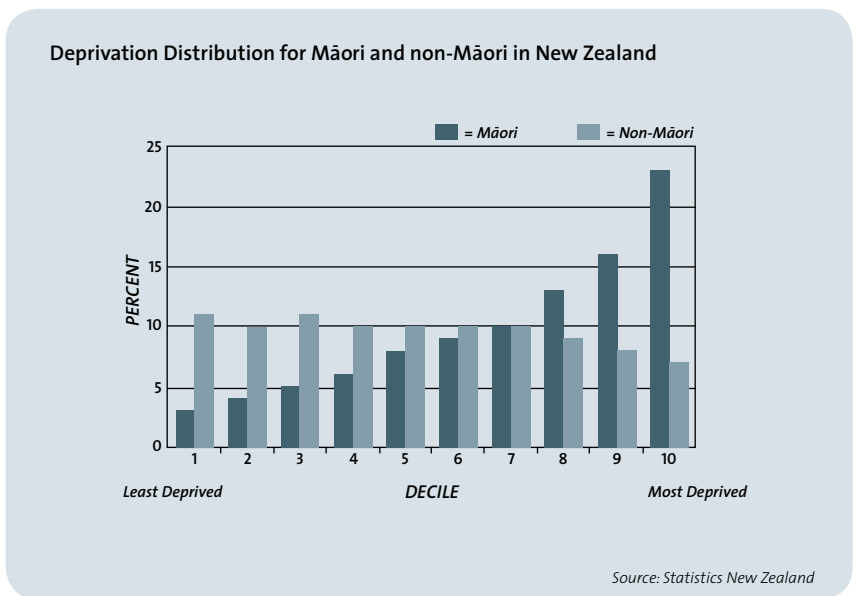
Deprivation

Merivale is a decile 10 neighbourhood as defined by the New Zealand Deprivation Index 2006 (NZDep06).

This is a weighted average of nine key Census indicators of socio-economic status. The components of the index include levels of home ownership, household income, prevalence of income support and unemployment, lack of access to a motor vehicle and telephone, overcrowding, sole-parenting and low educational attainment. The NZDep06 divides New Zealand into equal tenths, whereby a score of 10 indicates a geographic area is in the most deprived 10% of all areas in New Zealand. The scoring system is interpreted in the opposite way to the Ministry of Education's decile rating system.

It should be noted that NZDep06 deprivation scores apply to areas, rather than individual people.

The following graph shows quite clearly the deprivation distribution for Māori and non-Māori across New Zealand based on data from the 2001 Census. Decile 1 is the least deprived areas, with decile 10 the most deprived. The Māori population is highly skewed towards the most deprived deciles.

Top left: One of the Kuia of the Merivale Community – Tepara Douglas – sharing her wisdom and the vision for Merivale.

Bottom left: Playing 'touch' rugby with the local Police.

Right: Juanita and her son Pearce – part of the Centre's 'Mums and Bubs' group.

Deprivation Distribution for Māori and non-Māori in New Zealand

■ = Māori   ■ = Non-Māori

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Problems in Service Delivery

Existing models for service delivery are not effective for the Merivale community. If they were effective then many of the problems in the community would have been resolved over time, and this is clearly not the case. Merivale already has a sense of community. Any new model that seeks to build on this will need to address issues around the following:

1. Lack of real traction for new initiatives and services

Over many years there have been many initiatives and significant amounts of money spent on trying to address issues around poverty, parenting, housing, health, antisocial behaviour, training and employment in communities with demographic profiles like Merivale. Part of why there has not been lasting change has been the lack of traction with the people who would most benefit. It is often the case that people who take up support from initiatives are not the ones at whom they are targeted, leaving those with the most need in the same, if not worse position. Perhaps the findings in question 13 that no-one identified support for parents and parenting skills as something that they were either interested in or could benefit from is a reason for this lack of traction. We believe a lack of insight and self-awareness lies at the heart of problems within the Merivale community. Finding way to gain real traction with those most in need is the main challenge for Community Development initiatives if they are to result in real and sustainable change.

2. Poor inter-agency networking and co-operation

Service providers do not best serve their clients when they are unaware of the range and types of support available. There is a clear ethical obligation to work more effectively together. Yet many issues seem to stand in the way of this occurring. The competitive funding environment for most health and social service providers engenders a lack of co-operation between providers. This funding environment also seems to encourage an output focus that puts relationships with other providers as an additional, rather than core function. Consequently, resourcing and funding for inter-agency networking is often poor. In addition, long histories of often personal animosities between providers affect all staff in organisations, even if they are unaware of the reasons for the breakdown in relationships with other providers.

3. Focus on crisis intervention

Service provision that strategically strives to be pro-active and responsive can, due to day-to-day demands, end up as crisis intervention. Criteria for accessing services may mean that services can only be reached at the time of crisis; case loads may be too high, planning may be poor. A new model for service delivery would need to find practical ways of engaging with people sooner and shifting the point of support and intervention forward. It will need to be more pro-active in addressing the underlying issues for families and the community.

The challenge remains that of gaining more traction with the people that have the greatest need. The same solutions that facilitate insight and self-awareness will also allow people to engage with a process of change. Service providers need to be willing to change the way they work and embark on a process that allows their actual service delivery to become more pro-active and preventative.

So, What's Going On in Merivale?

The following discussion attempts to understand some of the challenges and issues within the Merivale community through the use of a number of different theoretical and philosophical approaches. While use of such theories and approaches can certainly help us to understand things more clearly and challenge us to see the world in new and different ways, we should not be tempted to mistake them for the real world.

Meeting the needs

Often we struggle to engage our community in events and activities, even when they have been generated by an idea in our wider community. This frustrating experience is often regarded as apathy. However, it may be useful to consider a lack of interest and motivation on the part of the community as against psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
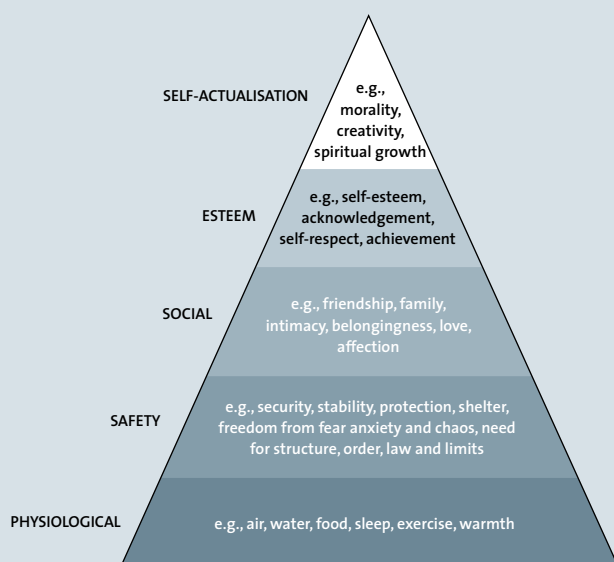
Maslow posits that a community with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage will be less likely than a community where lower-order needs are already satisfied to become involved in community development initiatives. This would suggest that any lack of support or involvement in activities or initiatives may have more to do with community members focusing on meeting lower-order needs than a genuine lack of interest.

Maslow's needs hierarchy

Maslow first introduced his concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" and the subsequent "Motivation and Personality." This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other needs.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is most often displayed as a pyramid, with lowest levels of the pyramid made up of the most basic needs and more complex needs at the top of the pyramid. Needs at the bottom of the pyramid are basic physical requirements including the need for food, water, sleep and warmth. Once these lower-level needs have been met, people can move on to the next level of needs, which are for safety and security.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

SELF-ACTUALISATION — e.g., morality, creativity, spiritual growth

ESTEEM — e.g., self-esteem, acknowledgement, self-respect, achievement

SOCIAL — e.g., friendship, family, intimacy, belongingness, love, affection

SAFETY — e.g., security, stability, protection, shelter, freedom from fear anxiety and chaos, need for structure, order, law and limits

PHYSIOLOGICAL — e.g., air, water, food, sleep, exercise, warmth

As people progress up the pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. Soon, the need for love, friendship and intimacy becomes important. Further up the pyramid, the need for personal esteem and feelings of accomplishment becomes important. Maslow emphasised the importance of self-actualisation, which is a process of growing and developing as a person to achieve individual potential.

Types of needs
Maslow believed that these needs play a major role in motivating behaviour. Physiological, safety, social, and esteem needs are deficiency needs (also known as D-needs), meaning that these needs arise due to deprivation. Satisfying these lower-level needs is important in order to avoid unpleasant feelings or consequences.

Maslow termed the highest level of the pyramid growth needs (also known as being needs or B-needs). Growth needs do not stem from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow as a person.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs provides a framework to understand some of the issues in the Merivale community. For the most part physiological and safety needs are reasonably well satisfied in the first world. The obvious exceptions are people outside the mainstream – the poor and the disadvantaged – and this description certainly applies to many in the Merivale community. If frustration has not led to apathy and weakness, such people still struggle to satisfy the basic physiological and safety needs. They are primarily concerned with survival: obtaining adequate food, clothing and shelter, and seeking justice from the dominant societal groups.

It could easily be argued that people's physiological needs are less likely to be met in a community with our demographic profile. Indeed, the difficulty of trying to meet basic physiological needs is compounded by the current economic climate with rising prices for food and petrol. Similarly, it could also be argued that the volume of research responses highlighting concerns over safety and feeling safe indicates that many people in the Merivale community are spending time and energy trying to meet this lower need, and are not able to progress to having higher needs met.

The implication of Merivale community members spending more time and energy trying to meet lower-order needs is that community development initiatives will often be effective only to the degree that physiological and safety needs are met first. People will not be able to engage fully with work around personal development and spiritual growth (which relates more to esteem needs, social needs and self-actualisation) if they or their children are hungry, homeless, financially insecure, feel unsafe and so on.

Consequently, ensuring that lower-order needs are met is a prerequisite to our strategic goals.

Responding to Poverty

Were Maslow's hierarchy of needs a complete truth, Merivale residents, responding to their relative poverty, would attempt to spend the entirety of their small pool of money on their basic physiological needs. You could expect to see a community bereft of luxuries and dominated by imaginative budgeting.

Yet we know that people in our neighbourhood do not seek to fulfil their needs in a straightforward manner. Often cigarettes, satellite television, appliances, vehicles and legal and illegal entertainment options are given priority in limited budgets over food and housing security. Indeed, people will go far into debt to obtain these consumerables. So while Maslow's hierarchy gives us some insight into drivers in Merivale, it is clearly far from complete.

Celebrating Merivale
Samoan dancing group celebrate an awesome performance at the Merivale Idol Competition.

Perhaps regarding our dominant cultural values and goals as a form of illness that results in people being trapped in unhappy and unfulfilled lives may help explain why Merivale residents can respond to their poverty with consumption, crime and abuse. These phenomena have been described in a legacy of theories from anomie to affluenza.
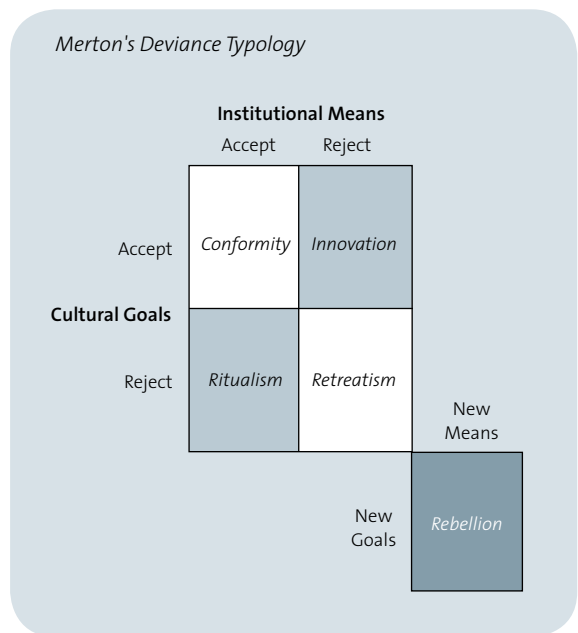
Strain Theory

The 19th century French pioneer sociologist Emile Durkheim borrowed the word 'anomie' from French philosopher Jean-Marie Guyau. Characterised by an absence or diminution of standards or values (referred to as normlessness), and an associated feeling of alienation and purposelessness, Durkheim believed that anomie is common when there is a significant discrepancy between the ideological theories and values commonly professed and what was actually achievable in everyday life.

In Durkheim's view the division of labour that had been prevalent in economic life since the Industrial Revolution led individuals to pursue egoistic ends rather than seeking the good of a larger community.

Robert King Merton also adopted the idea of anomie to develop Strain Theory, defining it as the discrepancy between common social goals and the legitimate means to attain those goals. Merton's theory focuses upon various acts of deviance, which may be understood to lead to criminal behaviour. It differs somewhat from

Durkheim's in that Merton argued that the real problem is not created by a sudden social change, as Durkheim proposed, but rather by a social structure that holds out the same goals to all its members without giving them equal means to achieve them. It is this lack of integration between what the culture calls for and what the structure permits that causes deviant behaviour. Deviance then is a symptom of the social structure.

Simply put, in a market liberal democratic capitalist society like Aotearoa New Zealand, overemphasis on material success and lack of opportunity for such material success leads to crime.

Merton's Deviance Typology

		Institutional Means	
		Accept	Reject
Cultural Goals	Accept	*Conformity*	*Innovation*
	Reject	*Ritualism*	*Retreatism*
	New Goals		*Rebellion*
			New Means

'Strain' is caused by the restricted access to culturally approved goals and means. Merton presents five modes of adapting to strain:[1]

Merton's modes of adaptation

Conformity

Merton recognises conformity as the most common type of the five modes. Individuals accept both the cultural goals as well as the prescribed institutional means for achieving those goals. Conformists will accept, though not always achieve, the cultural goals of a society and the means approved for achieving them.

Innovation

Merton identifies a change in the perspective of those people who have shifted to innovation. They accept cultural goals but have few legitimate means to achieve those goals. Thus they innovate (design) their own means to get ahead. The means to get ahead may be regarded within a society as criminal acts (though not always regarded as such by the individuals or social group themselves).

Ritualism

Another adaptation is for individuals to abandon the cultural goals they once believed to be within their reach and dedicate themselves to their current lifestyle. They play by their own or group's rules and norms, and have a self-perceived safe daily routine. Many members of an urban lower socio-economic population and/or disadvantaged minorities will experience slightly increased, self-perceived success, but this is ultimately short-lived and undervalued within the dominant society.

Retreatism

Identified by Merton as the escapist response, retreatism occurs when people become practical dropouts of society (as seen against cultural goals and norms). They give up all goals and efforts to achieve success because they view it as an impractical, impossible, almost imaginary and irrational possibility. Retreatism is the adaptation of those who give up not only the cultural goals but also the institutional means. Their inability in obtaining success by legitimate means excludes them from society, often resulting in retreat into substance abuse, housing insecurity, health deprivation and criminal activity. They escape into a non-productive, non-striving lifestyle.

Rebellion[2]

Merton suggests that by the time people reach the mode of rebellion, they have completely rejected the story that everybody in society can achieve success and have loomed into a rebellious state. They neither trust the valued cultural goals nor the legitimate institutional

means. Instead, these people create their own goals and their own means, by protest or revolutionary activity. Unlike the other modes of response, rebellion is a group response, seeking to replace the cultural goals and/or the institutional means of an unequal social system.

Strain Theory can give insight and perhaps explanation for some of the problems that manifest in the Merivale community. As a decile 10 neighbourhood, with lower levels of income and educational attainment, there are fewer conformists in Merivale than other, more affluent, communities. Many people lack the means to take part in and attain cultural goals. This dynamic may indeed be exacerbated by the low numbers of conformists. It becomes normal and expected that people will operate from one of the other modes. This is an inversion of what we might see in Tauranga, and can offer an insight to the cyclical and self-perpetuating poverty in Merivale.

We assert that numbers of innovators, ritualists or retreatists are almost certainly higher in Merivale than you would find throughout Tauranga.

Our innovators can be found in the elevated levels of 'alternative' ways of generating money, whether through direct criminal activity, working 'under the table' or benefit fraud. Anecdotes suggest the high numbers of sole parents identified in the 2006 New Zealand Census data reflect the economic advantage to be gained by not declaring a relationship or partner living at the same address. The unintended consequence of this is to marginalise particularly fathers from normal roles in families, further destabilising the family unit.

High numbers of retreatists can be deduced from the elevated levels of drug and alcohol abuse that exist in the Merivale community. This often exacerbates, or is exacerbated by, mental illness, and is again apparent in the higher rate in our community. Perhaps most disturbing is that these abuses and health concerns are regarded as normative in Merivale. One way in which this is manifested in high special education and health needs in our children, with little awareness amongst parents that this is exceptional.

Children of innovators and retreatists are in a particularly vulnerable position. They receive contradictory messages: parents who have given up on the commonly accepted approach to life on the one hand; and a widely extolled, media-reinforced set of expectations about what is normal and acceptable on the other. This dissonance raises the probability that they too will follow in their parents' footsteps while also feeling that they have failed. Education largely fails many of these young people, as it focuses on moving them towards 'conformity,' and further reinforces messages around success being measured

[1] Merton did not mean to insinuate that everyone who was denied access to society's goals became deviant. Rather the response, or modes of adaptation, depend on the individual's attitudes toward cultural goals and the institutional means to attain them.

[2] It would be crass to consider rebellion in this sense to be primarily violent or destructive. Rebellion as a mode is considered, nuanced, creative and relational. This does not exclude revolutionary and transformative action, but proscribes the nature of the action.

solely by job status and income. Indeed, many young people from Merivale have approached education with the attitudes, values and opinion from their parents that it holds no hope for achieving anything useful or worthwhile. Schools themselves seem to conspire in reinforcing what is essentially the same message by failing to see the potential of a pupil from Merivale as any different from the socio-economic class, race or community they come from.

For each of the four modes, the response to inequality is essentially individualist: people blame themselves for their lack of achievement. In doing so, they implicitly help society preserve and maintain itself. Despite our society's manifest social inequalities, people blame their own shortcomings – and fail to call into question the system's inadequacies.

A major inadequacy of the system concerns the overwhelming intensity of the message that more is good, that more material possession and more consumption is at the heart of what it is to be happy. This message is internalised at some level by all individuals and the argument that somehow meaning can be derived from this is one of the great illusions of modern life.

Economic crisis and the American Dream Theory
A way to understand the development of this systemic illusion is to look at both a modified version of Strain Theory known as 'American Dream Theory,' proposed by Messner and Rosenfeld, and the concept of affluenza. These ideas raise important criticisms of the sub-structure and super-structure of our society that are brought more sharply into focus by the emerging reality of the economic crisis, climate change and peak oil.

Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) developed an institutional anomie theory similar to Merton's, sometimes called 'American Dream Theory.' The American Dream is a broad cultural ethos that hypothesises a commitment to the goal of material success, to be pursued by everyone, in a mass society dominated by huge multinational corporations. Their argument is not only that concern for economics has come to dominate our cultural goals (our sub-structure), but that the non-economic institutions in society (our super-structure) have tended to become subservient to the economy. For example, the entire educational system seems to have become driven by the job market (nobody wants to go to college just for the sake of education anymore), politicians get elected on the strength of the economy and, despite lip service to family values, executives are expected to uproot their families in service to corporate life. Goals other than material success (such as parenting, teaching and serving the community) are just not important anymore.

While commitment to the goal of material success is the main causal variable, other variables consist of values and beliefs. Two of the values that make up the American Dream are achievement and individualism. Achievement involves the use of material success to measure one's self-worth. Individualism refers to the notion of intense personal competition to achieve material success. Other beliefs that are related to the American Dream include universalism, the idea that chances for success are open to everyone. This belief creates an intense fear of failure. Another belief is the 'fetishism' of money, which in this instance refers to the notion that there are no rules for when enough is enough when it comes to money.

Affluenza
'Affluenza' partners with American Dream Theory as it postulates a parallel between rampant consumerism and a contagious disease. It suggests there is an epidemic of stress, overwork, waste and indebtedness caused by the pursuit of the American Dream.

Proponents consider the costs of prizing material wealth vastly outweigh the benefits. British psychologist Oliver James asserts that there is a correlation between the increasing nature of affluenza and the resulting increase in material inequality: the more unequal a society, the greater the unhappiness of its citizens.

James also believes that higher rates of mental disorders are the consequence of excessive wealth-seeking in consumer societies. World Health Organization data shows that English-speaking nations have twice as much mental illness as mainland Europe. James explains this discrepancy as the result of 'Selfish Capitalism,' the neo-conservative or market liberal political governance found in English-speaking nations as compared to the less selfish capitalism pursued in mainland Europe.

Our research and experience indicates that the markers of affluenza are apparent in the Merivale community. Indeed this provides a rich vein to understand the individualist responses of Merivale residents as articulated in Strain Theory against the broader societal illness of affluenza. Criminal activity, drug and alcohol abuse, violence and poverty are markers of a systemic failure manifest in individual lives. As such, individuals almost certainly condemn their children to a similar future.

However, there is some encouragement that the illusion is 'seen' by our residents. Questions 1 and 17 tried to elicit positive responses and got people to talk about some personal aspirational factors. Few people identified material possessions or money as being things they associated with a 'perfect world' or 'happiness and well-being.' Of the few that did mention material possession or money this was

usually in the context of having 'enough' as opposed to having a lot. This is encouraging, provided we do not see solutions for Merivale as encouraging conformity. Rather, these responses are a precursor to Merton's mode of rebellion.

Rebellion can become a group response, with building interconnectedness, resilience and resourcefulness in the community, alongside preparing the community to become more independent. Furthermore, we assert that rebellion becomes a more necessary, more normal and more rational response when the issues of the economic crisis, climate change and peak oil are added to the mix. If even the most conservative changes suggested by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change occur, then the cultural goals and institutional means that underpin our affluenza will be unable to evolve quickly enough. It is likely that more and more communities will need to turn to rebellion.

Rebellion as a group response is not automatically healthy or positive. Respondents in the questionnaire discussed the problems associated with gang activity in Merivale. The Mongrel Mob is the largest and most organised, but there are smaller youth gangs that exist on the periphery. The existence of gangs is a rebellion response, which has brought complex challenges to our community.

Rebellion – a Vision for the Future

If we are to pursue the rebellion mode, we must do so in an informed and considered manner. It must be marked by a strategic vision and goals that suggest expected outcomes, and allow us to make an active response to unexpected consequences. As to the nature of that strategy, the lengthy discussion preceding asserts that people are happiest when they are satisfied and self-actualised. Further, the discussion posits a deep need for meaning is a driving motivator within the individual and the community.

Merivale Community Inc. can best support a pursuit of both happiness and self-actualisation when it stimulates conversations about meaning and purpose. Research has strongly linked happiness to meaning. By way of illustration, Michael Steger's work on happiness (2008) found the more virtue-building activities that people engaged in, the happier (more meaningful and satisfied) they said they were on both the day in question and on the following day. Contrary to the prevalent popular cultural support for pleasure-seeking, those who engaged in more hedonic behaviours did not consistently report more well-being.

We see above that people do invest seemingly unwise amounts of resources, energy and time in pursuits that have little to do with survival. Yet research, anecdote and experience also seem to suggest that what marks

out our species is the chase for something more than immediate gratification. We seem endowed with impulses to reach for something beyond the moment – and to keep reaching. Perhaps people evolved to avoid complacency, and as a result we may be wired to respond positively to virtue-building growth.

Unfortunately, our cultural goals have mutated to exclude virtue in favour of the pursuit of profit and power, to the benefit of a very few. Merivale is a community that suffers as a result. However, Merivale residents are not entirely fooled. In this inkling of self-awareness, there is an infinite capacity to rebel against dominant values and norms, and re-establish our own values and norms that value the individual and community. The findings from the research give the community centre a mandate to be involved in community development in Merivale. As such, Merivale Community Inc. can be a focus for this change if we clearly articulate a programme and operations that vision forward and invite involvement.

The Merivale community is distinct within Tauranga. While this is certainly reflected in its demographics, the heart of the distinction, demonstrated in the research, is actually the shared values of the people who live here. Michel Maffesoli noted the importance of distinct values for community-building, coining the term 'urban tribe.' Given our societal fears of the word 'tribe,' we are using our own term, 'intentional urban community.'

Maffesoli identified intentional urban communities as microgroups of people who share common interests in metropolitan areas. These relatively small groups tend to have similar worldviews and behavioral patterns. Importantly, their social interactions are largely informal and emotionally laden, rather than based on an objective logic.

If we wish to build a robust and positive sense of community we need to develop models of service delivery and community development that recognise the existing values of our community.

The shared and distinct values of the Merivale community provide a basis and an opportunity to be an intentional urban community. Our intention must be twofold:

- to identify the positive values that already exist in Merivale, and to strive to build and protect those values together
- to identify and unmask our dysfunctionalities such that they lose their power and attraction in the community.

Our priorities for community development in the next two years must ensure that all of our resources focus on building an intentional urban community.

A BIG LEAP FORWARD

The youth group MVL Localz fund-raised for a number of months for a trip to the snow at Ruapehu. Determined to snowboard and equally determined to get 'air,' this was the first experience of snow for most of the participants. Part of the fund-raising involved a day painting and cleaning the tagging at the local shops. Involving some of the taggers themselves in the clean-up as part of the preparation for the trip has had longer-term benefits in terms of a drastic reduction in tagging and other damage around the shops.

A Fresh Start
Staying at Otukou Marae at the foot of Mount Tongariro, the MVL Localz get ready for their first experience in the snow.
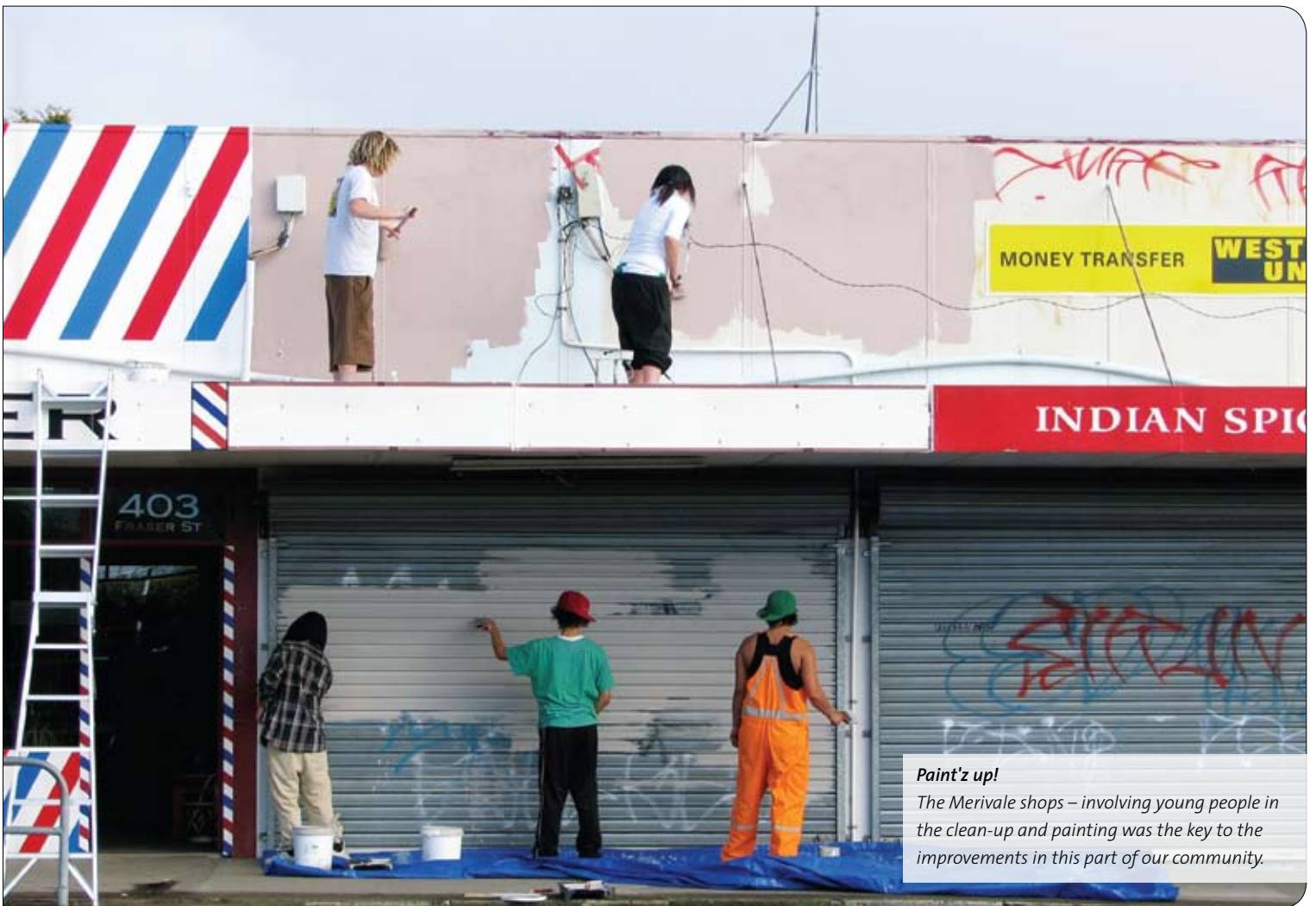
Paint'z up!
The Merivale shops – involving young people in the clean-up and painting was the key to the improvements in this part of our community.

MERIVALE AND PROUD!

The Merivale School netball team show 'positive and proud' for Merivale before heading off for a game. Getting children and young people involved and interested in sports is a great way to bring enthusiasm, focus and application to lives that all too often have very little. Sports can also provide healthy positive alternatives to some of the antisocial activities that can become 'normal' behaviour far too easily.

RECOMMENDATIONS - NEW GOALS, NEW MEANS

OUR NEW VISION:

Building a robust and positive sense of community by developing services and ideas that protect and emphasise existing positive community values.

To achieve this new vision, we recommend the following three strategies:

1. **Connecting Merivale**

   a) Expand the volume of events, programmes, courses and activities, engaging increasing numbers of people from the Merivale community with particular emphasis on children and young people.

   b) Develop an overarching philosophy affirming everyone's right to feel safe all of the time, along with programmes/courses that embed this philosophy within the Merivale community.

   c) Revitalise (tidy, beautify and improve) the area around the shops – making it a place for everyone, not exclusively 'owned' by our young people.

2. **Manaaki Mokopuna**
   Develop a new model for supporting parents and whānau through better inter-agency co-operation and joint working, to enhance the quality of parenting.

3. **Transition Merivale**
   Under the umbrella of Transition Towns, develop a programme of education and action to prepare the community for the challenges and changes associated with climate change and peak oil.

Connecting Merivale

Connection

Expanding the volume of events and activities is the initial priority for the next phase of the community development project. Events, activities, programmes and courses are all ways to interest and engage community members and enable real connections, based on familiarity, trust and mutual respect to develop and bloom. Without these connections there will be no real traction and no lasting change.

As this theme emerged from the research there has been a steady increase in the range and number of events and activities being offered.

Safety

People need to feel safe. Safe that they won't feel blamed, targeted, preached at, 'told' what to do, threatened, made to feel small, bad or wrong. Feeling safe must be at the heart of any initiatives to reach out to more people because people that feel safe will then get involved and engaged in the events, activities, programmes and

courses that the Community Centre will offer.

Through involvement and engagement deeper personal connections can be established and if people continue to feel safe and supported they will engage in the process of personal development, growth and change that lie at the heart of making sustainable change within the Merivale community.

A model that specifically addresses issues around safety and feeling safe is the Protective Behaviours Process, which works specifically in the context of awareness and emotional intelligence. An adapted form could easily be used as a basis for a 'Merivale' model.

Renewal

At present the natural 'heart' of the Merivale community around the shopping centre and Community Centre is a no-go zone for many of the inhabitants of Merivale because of the run-down aspect and the groups of young people.

The appearance of physical settings can be a source of pride or shame for communities. For Merivale, it is a

This model of building community as a means of addressing social and economic deprivation is the way forward.
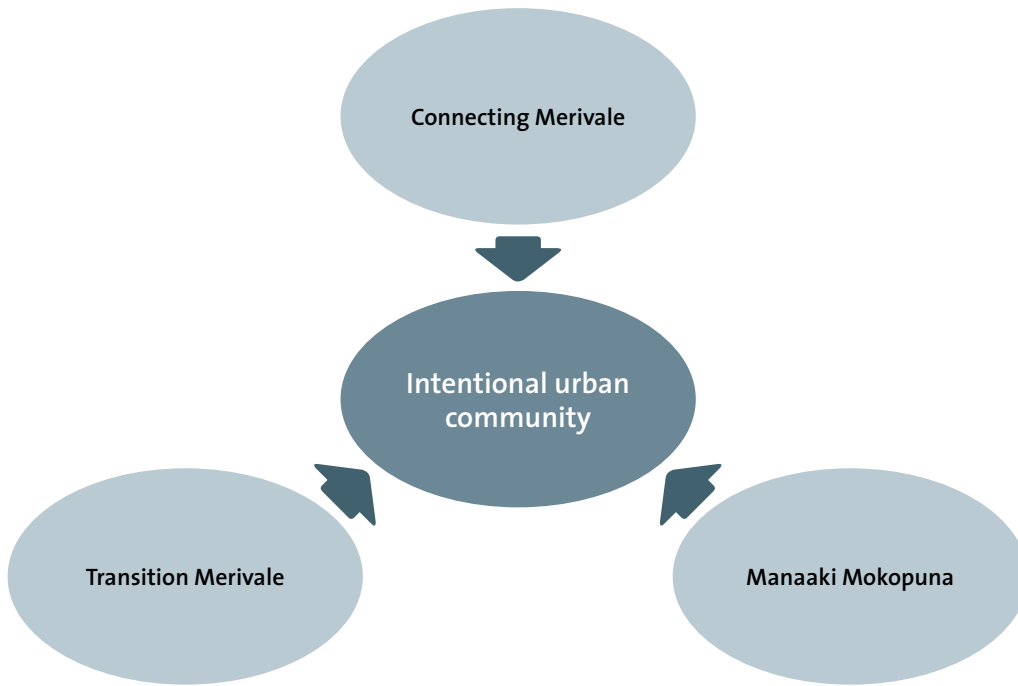
matter of priority that this area is reclaimed and that people can start to feel safe about being around that area and using the services and shops. The aim should be to create a town centre, a healthy heart for our community.

Manaaki Mokopuna

Supporting parents

We need a new model of support for parents in Merivale. This should be an early intervention, grass-roots model, developed by people that work and live in Merivale and building on a sense of community by operating only in Merivale. By doing this, the views, wishes and needs of the community, as expressed in the questionnaire and implied by the demographic profile, can be addressed locally.

Such a model could be a Merivale adaption of the UK's Child Concern Model which addresses the issues around sharing responsibility for providing support much earlier on, before situations escalate. Such a new model will need to address the issues raised in the discussion section on why existing models are not effective for Merivale.

Groups physically based in the Merivale community – Merivale School, Kōhanga Reo, Early Childhood Centre, Kukupa Trust and the Merivale Community Centre – need to model healthy community, providing a leadership role that will require them to work more closely and effectively both internally and together.

This work of facilitating closer ties and better working relationships needs to be a priority for the Community Centre, but also need to go hand in hand with efforts to be as active as possible in engaging people from the community at all levels.

Transition Merivale

Preparing for the future

Two of the toughest challenges facing humankind at the start of the 21st century are climate change and peak oil. The former is well documented and very visible in the media. Peak oil, however, remains under the radar for most people. Yet peak oil, heralding the era of ever-declining fossil fuel availability, may well challenge the economic and social stability that is essential if we are to mitigate the threats posed by climate change.

Peak oil is not about 'running out of oil' – there will always be oil left in the ground because either it's too hard to reach or it takes too much energy to extract. The fact is that regardless of how much money you can make selling oil, once it takes an oil barrel's worth of energy to extract a barrel of oil, the exploration, the drilling and the pumping will grind to a halt.

Peak oil is about the end of cheap and plentiful oil, the recognition that the ever-increasing volumes of oil being pumped into our economies will peak and then inexorably decline. It's about understanding how our agriculture and our industrial way of life are absolutely dependent on this ever-decreasing supply of cheap oil.

Climate change and peak oil will impact sooner on Merivale than on other communities, because more people live closer to the economic bottom line here than elsewhere. This challenge is also an opportunity, as events and activities that prepare people for such changes can be part of the greater emphasis on building connections within the Merivale community. This could potentially be a unifying project within the Merivale community (see 'identity crisis' in the discussion above). Climate change and peak oil create a situation where everyone is in the same boat.

QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS - APPENDIX ONE

Q1 – In a perfect world – what sort of future would you like for you, and for kids growing up in Merivale?

92.7% response rate to this question. (N=293)

- 44% of respondents identified issues around safety as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
  - Noted a higher response rate mentioning safety in sectors 1 and 3 – 49%.
  - Noted a lower response rate mentioning safety in sector 4 and 5 – 27% and 32%.
  - 71% in Oxford Street identified people feeling safe as being an important part of a future 'perfect' world.
- 17% of respondents identified a clean and tidy community as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
  - (5% specifically mentioned tagging.)
  - The area that felt most strongly about this was sector 6 (Wembury, Kesteven, Merivale, Landview, Courtney) – where 25% of respondents identified this as important to them.
  - There was a lower level of concern in sector 3 (Esk, Miranda, Harrier) where 10% of respondents identified this as being important to them.
- 16% of respondents identified children and young people being happy, educated and occupied as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
- 13% identified a closer sense of community, with events, mutual support and togetherness as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
- 6% of respondents identified good parenting and better parental role models as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
- 3% of respondents identified a 'non-racist' environment as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.
- Only 2% of respondents identified material things (money, possessions, etc.) as being an important part of the future in a 'perfect' world.

Q2 – Do you like living in the Merivale community? Why?

100% response rate to this question. (N=316)

- 88% of respondents answered 'Yes' to this question, while a further 7% answered 'Yes and No.'
- Only 5% of people replied that they did not like living in the Merivale community.

For the people that responded 'Yes:'

- 50% of respondents identified the proximity of Merivale to central Tauranga and to shops and services at Greerton as being the reason they liked living in the community.
- 29% of respondents answered that the people, sense of community and friendliness of the community were the reasons they liked living in the Merivale community.
- 10% of respondents answered that they liked living in Merivale because it was 'home,' that they had grown up there.

For the people that responded 'No:'

- 50% said it was because of safety issues for them or their children.
- 10% said it was because of vandalism/tagging.
- 7% said it was because of racism (against Pākehā).

Q3 – What would you say are the main concerns for kids growing up in the Merivale community?

96.5% response rate to this question. (N=305)

- 35% of respondents felt that the biggest concerns were violence, gangs, tagging, vandalism and antisocial behaviour.
- 24% of respondents felt that boredom and lack of programmes, activities and things to do were their greatest concerns.
- 23% of respondents felt that the lack of parenting skills and responsible supervision were their main concerns.
- 21% of respondents felt that drugs and alcohol were their main concerns.

Q4 and 5 – On a scale of 1–5 how safe do you feel on your street/ generally around Merivale?

100% response rate to this question. (N=316)

Note: As it is not possible to feel more than 'safe', scores below 5 represent people's perception of feeling less than safe. A score of 1 would indicate people feeling completely unsafe or scared.

Across the whole of the Merivale community the overall scores were:

- 4.2 for 'your own street'
- 3.2 for 'generally around Merivale'
- People in sectors 3 and 4 felt safest in their own street (scores of 4.4) but felt least safe generally around Merivale (scores of 2.6 and 2.4)
- People in sector 1 felt least safe on their own street (score of 3.9) while people in sector 2 felt the most safe generally around Merivale (score 3.8).

Q6 – Where are the places in Merivale where you feel most unsafe?

- 46% of respondents said that the area around the shops was where they felt most unsafe.
- 41% of respondents said that they do not and would not go out (other than by car) at night in Merivale.

Q7 – For you, or for kids as pedestrians, where do you feel most unsafe?

- 59% of respondents felt that Fraser Street, shops and pedestrian crossing was the most unsafe places for pedestrians in Merivale.

This topic provoked a lot of comment about the responsibility of parents and school for teaching children to cross the road safely, pointing out that most adults do not use the crossing at all and that this sets a bad example to children. Many people said that they always drive very slowly through the area by the shops and a number pointed out that there is often a large green four wheel drive parked in front of the crossing which makes it impossible to see pedestrians at all.

Q8 – Do you have any ideas for how we can make Merivale a safer and better place for children to grow up in?

89.5% response rate to this question. (N=283)

- 35% of respondents felt that stopping children and young people roaming and congregating on the streets, giving them activities and places to go would make Merivale a safe place to grow up in.
- 19% of respondents felt that better security in terms of a higher Police presence (foot patrols and a Police station/office at the shops), Māori wardens and Neighbourhood Watch-type schemes would make Merivale a safer place for children to grow up in.
- 17% of respondents felt that targeting parents with regard to parenting skills, supervision and responsibility would make Merivale a safer place for children to grow up in.
- 6% of respondents specifically suggested that getting rid of the liquor store would be a good thing.

Q9 – Do you know your neighbours and other people that live on your street?

100% response rate to question. (N=316)

- 90% of respondents felt that they did know their neighbours and other people living on their street.
- Sector 1 (85%) and sector 6 (83%) were the lowest figures.

Q10 – How often do you speak with them? Less than/more than twice a week?

100% response rate to question. (N=316)

- 62% of respondents spoke with their neighbours (more than just saying hello) more than twice a week.
- Sector 4 was the area where the most people felt they knew their neighbours (100%) and spoke to them usually more than twice a week (91%).
- In sector 2, 54% of people reported that they spoke to their neighbours more than twice a week.

Q11 – Do you have family living in Merivale?

100% response rate to question. (N=316)

- 37% of respondents had other family who live in the Merivale community.
- 54% of people in sectors 2 and 5 had family living in Merivale as opposed to only 6% and 9% of people in sectors 4 and 5.

Q12 – What sort of support, help, knowledge or skills do you think people need?

75% response rate to this question. (N=238)

- 36% of respondents identified community-building, programmes and activities to engage people.
- 35% identified parenting skills, programmes and support.
- 27% identified living skills – cooking, gardening, budgeting, literacy, numeracy.
- 18% identified work, education and training.
- 8% identified motivation.
- 5% identified support for Tikanga Māori.

Q13 – What sorts of things might you be interested in for yourself?

64% response rate to this question. (N=203)

People were less inclined to answer this question and many replied that they were too busy to be involved in anything else. Researchers were not consistent in pushing people to ask what people liked to do with their spare time and with hindsight this question could have been better worded and perhaps split into two separate questions.

- 43% of respondents were interested in social get-togethers, community-building-type activities which could include games and other specifically focused activities.
- 30% were interested in physical activities ranging from sport, gym to walking groups.
- 12% were interested in cultural activities specifically Kapa Haka.
- 12% were interested in arts/crafts-type activities and programmes.
- 6% were interested in gardening, environmental and conservation-type activities.

Q14 – Do you have any skills or experience that you could use to help out others in the Merivale community?

45% response rate to this question. (N=144)

The low response rate to this question reflects some reticence from people who were concerned they might be 'volunteering' themselves to get involved. Many of those that answered this question indicated that they were happy to be contacted and agreed to their information being recorded separately from the questionnaire responses for this purpose.

- Identified 56 people who felt they had people/communication skills – including specific skills with youth or children.
- Identified 30 people who felt they could help others with basic living skills including cooking, gardening, budgeting, etc.
- Identified 27 people who felt they could help others with practical things like DIY, mechanics, crafts, etc.
- Identified 11 people who felt they could help others with sports coaching and teams management.
- Identified five people who felt they could help others with music.

This question was included as it was felt that this, in combination with question 16, would enable the Community Centre to begin building links with the people in the Merivale community.

Q15 – What is the best way to let you know about what's on?

This question very quickly identified that people like the newsletter as a way of keeping in touch with what is on. Indeed, for many people the reason they knew anything at all about the Community Centre was due to the newsletters being delivered.

Because the support was overwhelmingly in favour of the newsletter the Community Centre revamped the style and commenced monthly newsletters while the questionnaire was still being conducted. No doubt this further reinforced people's positive responses.

There was some surprise that texting was not seen as a way for the Community Centre to let people know what is happening.

Q16 – Who would you say are the key people in the community for you?

74% response rate to this question. (N=232)

- 26% of people felt that their neighbours were the key people in the community.
- 25% of people felt that staff at the Community Centre were the key people in the community for them.
- 17% of people identified family as being the key people in the community.
- 15% of people identified Merivale School and the Kōhanga Reo as being the key people in the community.
- 10% of people identified friends as being the key people in the community for them.
- 9% of people identified shopkeepers – particularly at the garage and the butcher as being key people in the community for them.
- 1% identified the Church as being key people in the community.

Q17 – What is happiness/well-being for your family and you?

97% response rate to this question. (N =306)

- 36% of respondents mentioned family being together, getting on as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 26% of respondents mentioned safety and feeling safe as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 22% of respondents mentioned health as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 15% of respondents mentioned good friends and a strong community as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 13% of respondents mentioned peace and quiet/being left alone as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 7% of respondents mentioned material possessions and money as being an important part of happiness/well-being.
- 4% of respondents mentioned religious/spiritual factors as being an important part of happiness/well-being.

Questions about the Merivale Community Centre:

- 95% of people had heard about the Community Centre before the questionnaire. This was often only because of the newsletter.
- 92% of people knew where the Community Centre was situated.
- 54% of people were aware what services the Centre itself provided.
- 32% of people or their families had used any of the services provided by staff at the Centre.
- 87% of the people that had used the services felt that they had met their needs at the time.
- 76% said that they would like to be able to just drop in to the Centre.
- 78% felt that the Centre was welcoming.

When asked about what would make the Centre more welcoming:

- 62% said that better signage and information, a more welcoming layout and more friendly staff would make the Centre more welcoming.
- 12% said more services would make the Centre more welcoming.
- 5% said a less Māori-focused and oriented Centre would make the Centre more welcoming for them.

When asked whether they would like to see the Community Centre becoming more of a service provider as opposed to continuing to link people to other services:

- 61% said they felt better about the Centre being a link to other services.
- 26% said they felt better about the Centre trying to actually provide the services.
- 13% said the Centre should try to do both.

Mission accomplished
The MLV Localz celebrate the completion of the Paint'z Up project.

THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN MERIVALE

The Merivale Community Centre had a tradition of running activities and services for young people. Previous smaller-scale research projects had both recommended that the Centre run more activities for young people and the current questionnaire identified quite clearly that there is a need for the Community Centre to start doing this again.

Changes to staffing resulted in a position being created to focus solely on the needs of young people in Merivale. One of the first activities organised was a 'Reconnect Noho Marae.'

Sixteen young people from Merivale attended and, as part of the stay, expressed their views and opinions on living in Merivale using a variety of activities.

The most striking finding was that young people generally feel safe around Merivale and do not share the concerns about safety expressed by people through the questionnaire responses.

One hundred percent of the young people strongly agreed that:

• they felt it is safe to hang out at the shops
• they felt safe 'all the time' in Merivale
• there is too much rubbish, litter and broken glass

One hundred percent of the young people agreed or strongly agreed that:

• drugs are a problem in our community
• they feel part of the Merivale community
• tagging is a problem in Merivale.

Over 70% of the young people agreed or strongly agreed that:

• gangs are not a positive influence in Merivale
• they wanted to find out more about Māori culture and Tikanga
• they wanted to find out more about courses and finding work
• drugs are easy to get in Merivale
• boredom is a problem for them and other young people in Merivale.

Sixty-three percent of the young people agreed or strongly agreed that smoking is a problem in our community.

Ninety-three percent of the young people disagreed strongly that getting rid of the liquor store would be a good thing for Merivale. (Forty-three percent agreed that alcohol is a problem in our community.)

Seventy-four percent of the young people disagreed that it would be good to have more Police and security in Merivale.

THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN IN MERIVALE

Children were asked:

1. What is the best thing about living in Merivale for me?
2. What is the worst thing about living in Merivale for me?
3. One thing that could be done to make living in Merivale better for me?

Children at the after-school programme drew pictures of the things they liked about Merivale and of their ideas for making things better.

Responses to the first question: playing games, Nat (after-school programme leader), playing handball, school, playing, the Action Centre, the park at the school, basketball, playing, reading, drawing, the shops, food, friends, the swings, trees, the sun, schools, hopscotch, playing with my cousins.

Responses to the second question: fighting (adults), swearing, tagging, shooting (the threat and fear of shooting being used as deterrent to bad behaviour and a reason not to be allowed out at night), gangs, hoodlums, drinking – wine and alcohol.

Responses to the third question: slow down the traffic, build us a cool tree-house at the back, going swimming, trips (i.e., to the farm and the snow),

Merivale children enjoying the Centre's holiday programme and Christmas party.

stopping the violence, stopping the swearing, more guards for the area, send the teenagers to boot camp, take away the privileges of teenagers that misbehave, festivals, garage sales, organised games.

The theme of safety emerges quite clearly from the responses to the second and third questions, and children do not seem to share the sense of inviolability expressed by the older young people.

MERIVALE COMMUNITY PROFILE – APPENDIX TWO

2006 Census results:

Population of Merivale: 2,397

- 1,155 are male
- 1,242 are female

Age

- The age profile in Merivale is younger than other regions.
- The median age of people in Merivale is 28.0 years – which compares with a median age of 38.0 for Tauranga and 35.0 for Aotearoa as a whole. This figure is down from 32.0 in the 2001 Census.
- 30.5% of the people in Merivale are under 15 – which compares with 20.9% for Tauranga and 21.5% for Aotearoa as a whole. The trend over time is that the median age is falling.
- 10.2% of the people in Merivale are over 65, and while this is not dissimilar to the national average of 12.2% the trend in Merivale since the 1996 Census is that there are fewer people in this age group – while nationally the trend is that there are more people in this age group.

Family Type

- 37% of families in Merivale are single parent with children – which compares with 18% for Tauranga and Aotearoa as a whole. This percentage, which is double the national average, is rising over time while nationally the figure is static.
- Only 26% of family units are couples without children – which compares with 45.8% in Tauranga and 40% for Aotearoa as a whole. This trend is falling over time.

Ethnicity

Merivale has a high proportion of Māori people.

- 39.4% of people in Merivale identified as being Māori – which compares with 16.5% for Tauranga and 14.6% for Aotearoa as a whole.
- Merivale has a lower proportion of people from European, Asian and other ethnic groups but a similar proportion of Pacific Peoples to the rest of the country.

Households and Tenure

There were 801 households identified at the Census.

- 43.4% of households did not own their usual residence – which compares with 31.2% in Tauranga and 31.1% in Aotearoa as a whole.
- Of the families in Merivale who lived in rented property, 38.5% are Housing New Zealand tenants. This 38.5% is more than three times the national average of 12.7% and five times the average for Tauranga, 7.5%.
- The mean number of household members is 3.0 in Merivale – which compare with 2.5 for Tauranga and 2.7 for Aotearoa as a whole.

Qualifications, Income and Work

- People in Merivale have lower qualification and income levels, and are more likely not to be in work.
- 33.9% of over 15s in Merivale have no qualification at all – compared with 23.9% in Tauranga and 22.4% in Aotearoa as a whole.
- Only 3.2% of over 15s had bachelor degree and level 7 qualifications – compared with 7.6% in Tauranga and 10% in Aotearoa as a whole.
- The unemployment rate for over 15s in Merivale over the last three Censuses has consistently been roughly double the national rate.
- 40% of the over 15s in Merivale are not in the labour force – which compares with 30.4% nationally.
- 15% of households have a total household income of less than $20,000 – which compares with 8% in Tauranga and 8.2% in Aotearoa as a whole.
- 32% of households have a total household income of less than $30,000 – which compares with 21.4% in Tauranga and 19.1% in Aotearoa as a whole.

Health

- 33% of over 15s in Merivale are regular smokers – this is an increase of nearly 4% since the 1996 Census. Nationally the rate is 18.9% in 2006, which is down 1.4% since 1996.

Motor Vehicle Ownership

- 9.4% of households do not have access to a motor vehicle – which compares with 6.4% in Tauranga and 7.7% in Aotearoa as a whole.

Telecommunications

- 5.2% of households have no access to telecommunication systems – which compares to 1.6% in Tauranga and 1.9% in Aotearoa as a whole.
- 59.2% of households in Merivale do not have access to the internet at home – which compare with 23.1% in Tauranga and 42% in Aotearoa as a whole.

Youth were often perceived to be the problem or at least part of the problem in Merivale and conversations with some of them about others feeling scared or intimidated revealed some of what they think.

"We've done heaps of good things, man. Lizzie's da bomb! She really helps out."

"The reason people are scared of us is 'cos they don't know us – they should come up and say hello."

"The Centre's been great at making things happen for us."

Please support our work in Merivale.