



Case Study: Community hubs for social services in our district

December 2018

The concept of a community hub for the Wakatipu area has been discussed for several years. This hub would be a shared, collaborative working space for various groups and services to use – similar what is proposed in Wanaka with the Wanaka Community House.

A community hub approach would enable greater collaboration between groups and services and ultimately provide a central heart for the local Wakatipu community. It would also provide a more efficient use of space particularly in the face of increasing rental prices and our growing population.

In order to assess what community groups and services in the Wakatipu area would like from a potential community hub, the Queenstown Interagency Group (a network of community and social service groups and agencies) carried out a survey in late 2017.

Findings from the Queenstown Interagency Group survey

Their survey indicated that while this hub may not need to be in central Queenstown or available 24/7, there were several features that would be important to factor in to plans. These include:

- easy access for people with disabilities and older users
- close to public transport and with a carpark for users who drive
- able to accommodate various needs with different sized rooms available to hire (short and long term)
- being a base for many of the key social service providers
- providing information for available social services
- pleasant surroundings such as a shared garden
- additional areas where the public can visit and use (separately to the groups and services)
- select space available for just community/social services to use
- secure facility
- potentially includes the QLDC library.

Other suggested features include:

- well-resourced information via noticeboards and volunteer greeters
- support for cultural needs of people with English as a Second Language
- child friendly resources such as a crèche, a breastfeeding space, and indoor and outdoor facilities (particularly for children under five years of age)
- affordable rent
- opportunity to “hot desk”
- resources suitable for older users
- computers available for clients and other shared resources (such as a projector and screen, large white board, TV, kitchen)

- opportunity for use by the community in the evenings
- adjacent home that can be used by Happiness House.

The responses also indicated the hub would not duplicate or take away from existing groups and services unable to participate in the setup. Suggestions for groups and services who could be a part of the hub include:

- Jigsaw
- Happiness House
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Families Centre
- Salvation Army
- Mental Health
- Youth groups/trust
- Library
- Budget advice
- Work and Income NZ
- Plunket

“[The hub] needs to be designed around the needs of all different consumers, from new babies to centenarians, all different mobility and accessibility needs and representing different ethnic diversity.”

- Comments gathered from the *Our Community Spaces* research

The current state of play: Happiness House

Happiness House is a Queenstown-based community drop-in centre providing support and advocacy, activity groups, a place to connect, and also access to affordable goods. This centre is frequently used by locals and new residents who need support - each month roughly 900-1000 people come through their doors.

Happiness House is currently housed in a residential property in the heart of Queenstown. The property was recently sold to an overseas buyer. The new owner has allowed Happiness House to continue to lease the space for another two years until 2020. The intention however, is that they will eventually take over their site for other purposes.



In addition to this limited tenure, the central location of Happiness House has become increasingly difficult – particularly relating to parking, the cost of petrol to reach the centre, and also access via public transport.

Because of this, the Trust that runs Happiness House is keen to find a more permanent base out of central Queenstown, in Frankton. They are interested in exploring the concept of a village-type facility where groups have their own separate space but they can also collaborate and share with each other – such as shared spaces and outdoor areas, and opportunities to work together to provide services to the community.

“We are looking for a home-like setting which acts as a space where people can drop in. Wakatipu Youth Trust, Lakes Family Centre, Salvation Army [are] all in similar boat. All of us want some security - not having to worry about moving.”

“It is common knowledge that many community groups are in a similar situation looking for new premises - it is our hope that this scoping exercise brings about fast and positive outcomes for the community. A large piece of land for a community village would be ideal.”

- Comments gathered from the *Our Community Spaces* research

Working towards a community hub: Wanaka Community House¹

The journey towards a Wanaka Community House began in 2004. This was in response to feedback gathered from a QLDC-initiated study of 65 Upper Clutha community groups and organisations. The feedback indicated a need for a community base for these groups and organisations, and ultimately a social wellbeing hub.



The Anglican Parish of St Columba supported the need for a community house, and in 2006 proposed to donate a portion of their land for the development of the Wanaka Community House on their McDougal Street property. Initial fundraising, along with a concept design and feasibility assessment were completed over the next few years. In 2011, Wanaka Community House Charitable Trust (WCHCT) was formed, to provide an independent non-affiliated entity to deliver the project.

The Wanaka Community House has been designed to include nine office spaces, meeting rooms, a hall for up to 140 people, kitchen, storage, waiting area, and a centralised administration area.

A key learning from a community project of this scale has been that it is important to have a project navigator available and resourced to support project management and facilitation. This is an important consideration for other future community hubs in our district.

How the project is tracking

Over 75% of the \$3.6 million budget has been raised with considerable donations from Central Lakes Trust, Otago Community Trust, NZ Lottery Grants Board, Sargood Bequest (\$150,000), and Anglican Parish of St Columba. In 2019, the trust is planning a significant fundraising effort with the goal of raising another \$900,000 ahead of the facility opening in September 2019.² Fundraising activities planned may include a house auction, a corporate event, film evenings, and garden tours.

The Wanaka Community House Charitable Trust is keen to see greater Local Authority investment into the Community House. As part of Queenstown Lakes District Council's 2017-2018 Annual Plan, the Trust received \$25,000 in recognition of the key role they are playing in addressing community infrastructure and space required for a growing Wanaka population.

Who would use the Community House?

Most of the tenants are in place for the proposed opening in late September 2019, with the main ones being Community Networks, Food Bank, Jigsaw and Presbyterian Support. The main hall and community rooms along with the drop-in office will be available for casual users.

"This will be a fantastic asset for the Upper Clutha community. Having multiple social services under one roof has efficiencies in operational resources, and creates a much more productive and collaborative environment for those working and attending the house."

- Bernie Lepper, deputy chair of Central Lakes Trust and chairperson of Alexandra Community House Trust,
WCHCT Media Release, 5 March 2018

Central Lakes Trust provided support to the Alexandra Community House for their project back in 2010 - 2012, and have witnessed what a huge success this has been in increasing accessibility to information and services.

¹ Information for this section of the case study has mainly been sourced from the Wanaka Community House website: <http://wanakacommunityhouse.org.nz>

² Wanaka Community House e-newsletter, 17 December 2018