

Everything you wanted to know about the Newlands Community Centre

When will the community centre be open for business?

We are planning the official opening for early December – either the 8th or the 15th December. At that stage the building may not be completely fitted out and the landscaping may not be complete but we want to get the doors open and at least some activities happening in the centre before Christmas. The centre will be fully operational from early 2009.

What rooms are available at the community centre?

There are six separate spaces in the Centre:

- a drop-in space near the entrance of the centre that we originally called a “cyber library” -basically a place where people can call in, access the internet, read the paper, reserve, pick up and drop off library books, sit in comfortable chairs and chat. We envisage some library programmes being offered, say during the school holidays. Small groups can book the space for low-key activities. This is probably the cosiest space.
- a performance area which has a space for a stage, retractable tiered seating and which is perfect for ‘Sit and Be Fit’, tai chi, yoga and performances of all sorts.
- an area specifically designed for youth but available to all that looks out onto a half-court for activities and potentially social occasions.
- upstairs there are 3 separate rooms (small, medium and large) to cover the needs of a range of groups and activities.

All rooms are carpeted, heated and furnished. There is also a reception area and of course a kitchen and toilets as well as dedicated spaces for the Toy Library and Food Bank. There is disabled access to the first floor via a lift.

What will it cost to use the centre?

For the first six months (till July 2009) current users of the Newlands Community House will have free use of the centre. This enables us to iron out any transitional issues. At that point charges will still enable access for community groups. At other community centres operated by the Council there is a sliding scale for users of the centre. Charges are likely to look like the following table:

Proposed charging (post 1 July 2009)	
Groups under 10 people	\$1 each
Community groups	\$10 per hour
Commercial users	\$35 per hour
Social functions (i.e. private use)	\$35 per hour with a \$300 bond

Emerging organisations or those with a hobby focus or other extenuating circumstances will be able to apply for hardship consideration.

The cost for using the performing space will need to be considered outside of these arrangements because of the potential exclusive use for periods of time.

How will the centre be run?

Unlike most other community centres, the Newlands Community centre will be staffed by Council workers. There is an emerging trend here and in other places like Auckland for community centres to be run by Council directly using paid staff but maintaining a strong and vital link to the local community. The theory is to remove the burden of asset and compliance issues from small community organisations enabling them to concentrate on the developmental and programming activity.

The plan is to appoint a full time Centre Coordinator. They will be supported by other part-time staff and volunteers. The paid staff member will be part of the City Communities team at Wellington City Council.

The Council is keen for community support and advice both formally and informally. Tonight's meeting is to discuss how this could happen.

People have already been thinking about this issue and a new organisation has been established to support the centre. Called the Friends of the Newlands Community Centre it has shown leadership and enthusiasm and has gathered some active people around to start looking at programming etc. Thanks to Jim Candiliotis, Bruce Patterson, Beth Huntington and others for their foresight. Before we start down this path though we thought it would be useful to involve as wide a cross section as possible to work out how people would prefer to be involved.

As the centre is quite large (665 square metres) it will be a challenge to fill the spaces as soon as the building is opened but over time we envisage that there could be a wide range of activities catering to all sectors of the community.

When will the Co-ordinator be appointed?

The position will be advertised in the next couple of weeks and depending on the availability of the person appointed should be able to start mid-October. This means that s/he will be able to take a leading role in setting up the Centre and organising the opening.

Who can use the centre?

Anyone can use the centre, but preference will be given to local groups and individuals. If there is competition for a particular space at a particular time, preference will be given to:

- regular users (i.e. those with a regular booking)
- locally based users
- activities that are for community benefit (as opposed to private benefit).

Are there any restrictions for people using the centre?

The only user restriction imposed by the resource consent relates to the use of DJ or live bands past 10pm at night. This restriction was imposed in deference to the neighbours.

Is alcohol permitted?

Different community centres have different practices around alcohol. At this stage we think we will run a trial for a year where alcohol is permitted for certain events on application. No alcohol will be retained on site once the event is finished. We are working through this issue with our liquor licensing staff and City Safety unit.

What hours will the centre be open?

People will be able to access the Centre between 7am and 11pm. When the Centre is not staffed, security access will be provided to users.

Is the centre the same size as originally envisaged?

The Centre is a state of the art facility that will provide 665m² of space for community use over 2 floors not including the external half court. The original design for phase 1 of the facility allowed for 425m² community space.

How much did the centre cost?

The centre when complete will have cost \$2.75m which includes the cost of the land. Of this amount the Johnsonville Licensing Charitable Trust (JLCT) donated \$500k. \$300k of this was spent on the land and \$200k added to the capital cost of the project.

The Trusts Charitable Foundation (TTCF) donated \$400k for the capital cost of the project and gave us \$60k for the internal fit-out.

What will happen to the Newlands Community House?

The current lease arrangement with the Newlands Community House Inc expires in January 2009 and the building reverts to Council ownership at that point. No decision has been made about the future of the house. The recent consultation on the Northern Reserves Management Plan included the issue of the Batchelor Street reserve and the future of both the open space and the community house. At this stage Council officers will be recommending that the issue of the house should be considered separately as the Reserves Management Plan is not the best place for consideration of a community building such as this.

The Council has received a request for a fresh lease from the Newlands Community House Inc on the basis that the activities of the incorporated society will not have changed. This was received on Thursday 14 August and will be processed in the normal way.

What about Phase 2 i.e. the construction of a recreation centre on the same site?

The original approval for the Newlands Community Centre was an “in-principle” commitment to a two phased development with the second phase being the recreation component. The Council agreed that proposed developments including the Tawa Recreation Centre (within Tawa College), Porirua and the Indoor Sports Centre would need to be factored in before any further commitment would be made. The Council is about to have the Community Facilities Review reported back which will look at an investment plan for facilities over the next 10 years. Any new investment will have to be considered in the light of the overall city needs.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

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