

Process Review: West Ryde Community Centre

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Community and Culture

Case Study: West Ryde Community Centre A Child, Family and Neighbourhood Hub

Introduction

The West Ryde Community Centre is purpose built and designed to be in the middle of places of gathering and celebration in the West Ryde Town Centre.

The West Ryde Community Centre is an integral part of the new West Ryde Urban Village, currently under construction. The Village will consist of new retail, commercial and residential spaces and a large public square, in addition to the existing shopping centre. When traffic calming is completed, the hub will open out onto the square that will be a natural meeting place, and suitable for festivals, events and entertainment.

The Centre is purpose built, has four storeys and includes an underground car park plus storage for tenants of the building, a community hall for public use, service offices, meeting/training rooms, necessary amenities such as kitchens, toilets, and office/retail spaces that are being leased commercially to contribution to the costs of operating the Centre. The facility is accessible by both bus and rail and is DDA compliant.

The multipurpose community facility combines community services, a community hall and public domain with public art reflecting local identity and is the first of its kind in the Ryde Local Government Area. By establishing the Centre in the middle of a town centre, close to public transport, co-locating likeminded services, and establishing a governance model to ensure cohesive service networks, the West Ryde Community Centre has become a *Child, Family and Neighbourhood Hub*.

Council's role is to:

1. Negotiate the Voluntary Planning Agreement based on community and service sector needs
2. Contribute to the design, fit-out and tenant liaison.
3. Provision of subsidised accommodation to the not-for-profit sector within a framework where the balance of tenant affordability and Council's long term financial sustainability are considered.
4. Selection and licensing of tenants with complimentary services
5. Facilitate the development of an operational framework (Memorandum of Understanding) to support the co-location, partnership and collaboration of services within the building.
6. Maintain and support the operation of the building.
7. Promote the Centre to the community.

Services

The Hub encourages partnerships among the co-located services to offer a comprehensive one-stop service for the Ryde LGA community, in particular for children and families. Tenants currently in the Hub include:

- West Ryde Early Childhood Health Centre – parenting and child health service
- Ryde Family Services – practical and emotional support service
- Relationships Australia (NSW) – workshops, information referral and courses
- Good Beginnings Australia – childhood and practical parenting programs
- Korean Lifeline – lifeline service to Korean speakers
- The Benevolent Society – multi-disciplinary early intervention service
- West Ryde Neighbourhood Childcare Centre – 56 place childcare and preschool

- Community Migrant Resource Centre – provides advice for newly arrived migrants

Some tenants, such as Relationships Australia, Good Beginnings Australia, Korean Lifeline and Community Migrant Resource Centre share an office and other facilities e.g. reception space, outdoor space and meeting rooms.

In addition, the Hall provides space for community celebration and a number of regular services, including:

- Various playgroups
- Australian Han-In Saeng Myung Line (Korean Lifeline)
- Chinese and Australia Baptist Church
- Bread of Life Christian Church Northern Sydney
- Ryde Eisteddfod
- Indonesian Welfare Association
- Meadowbank Chinese Neighbourhood Centre
- Durban Dish.

Design

Tenants were involved from start to finish with the design of the building, including during the Voluntary Planning Agreement negotiations, design, fit-out and implementation through a Centre Committee that met monthly and one-on-one meetings with individual tenants. There were a number of positive and negative results from this approach.

Governance – Legal Framework

Not-for-profit services based in the Centre enter into a licence with Council which provides tenure and outlines all parties' responsibilities. Tenants are charged a Licence Fee which fully or partly recovers the direct costs Council incurs in operating, maintaining and renewing the Centre. Generous subsidies are provided to Tenants on these costs based on the organisations' capacity-to-contribute, which recognises the difference between large state-wide organisations and small, local services. This started the development of goodwill between Council and tenants.

Licensees are required to take out their own public liability insurance. The public liability insurance is one of the conditions of the license. All licensees are required to take out glass insurance.

Casual hirers, that use space such as meeting rooms out of hours, are required to show proof of public liability insurance.

Governance – Operational Framework

During the design and building of the Centre, a Tenant Committee was established and chaired by Council which covered design, building, and licensing. As tenants started moving in, this Committee was used to build productive relationships with tenants to facilitate service development and develop an Operational Framework or Memorandum of Understanding.

Tenants developed together and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collectively work towards a shared vision and objectives. The key outcomes of this MoU are:

- Ensures a seamless transition of the co-location of a number of like-minded services by outlining how the tenants will work together within the Centre (practicalities).
- Establishes a governance model to:
 - Align referral pathways to provide holistic service
 - Implement partnership projects developed by the tenants
 - Utilise bilingual workers within the centre where possible.

- Re-enforces the Tenant Committee as a key mechanism to build productive relationships between tenants, and between tenants and Council, ensure communication, information referral, identify service gaps, and establish dispute resolution pathways for tenants to resolve any potential issues themselves.
- Establishes the sharing of meeting rooms when vacant so that other services within the hub can use them, increasing the utilisation of sought after community space.

It the co-location of services help reinforce local identity, find local solutions to local problems and build resilience, vibrancy and diversity in the community. A review on the process in establishing Community Hubs has been published at www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/communityhubs

Costs and Financial Outlook

The construction of the hub (community centre, community hall, village square and public art) was funded at no cost to the community through a voluntary planning agreement negotiated as part of the re-development of West Ryde Urban Village. The total cost was approximately \$18.7 million.

Council's operating costs for the building are \$319,000 p.a. plus \$300,000 for depreciation (total \$619,000). Council's operating costs are higher than anticipated, due to the sudden rises in electricity prices between 2010 and 2013. Council's operating income is \$578,000, including the contributions from community service tenants, venue hire and the commercially licenced retail shops and a commercial floor within the building.

By taking into account income, outgoings depreciation and subsidies offered to the community service tenants, the cost of providing the Centre to the City of Ryde is low (approximately \$41,000), ensuring it will be affordable for ratepayers in the long term.

Critical success factors

The critical success factors were:

- Establish credibility and authenticity with tenants and service sector early, by listening to their needs and walking the talk.
- Provide structured opportunities for engagement in all parts of the process, from design to developing the operational model, based on a deliberative and participatory consultation (through evidence briefings and games). Support decision makers at the Service Manager level to create consistency in tenant decision making, and minute all decisions. Version control of design documents is also critical.
- Demonstrate leadership and establish shared ownership over the governance model to support co-location, partnership and collaboration. Coordinate events to continue the momentum generated from moving-in and working together and support partnership projects.

More information

For more information, please contact Christopher Hellmundt, Coordinator Community Projects (Community Buildings) on 9952 8302 or visit www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/communityhubs