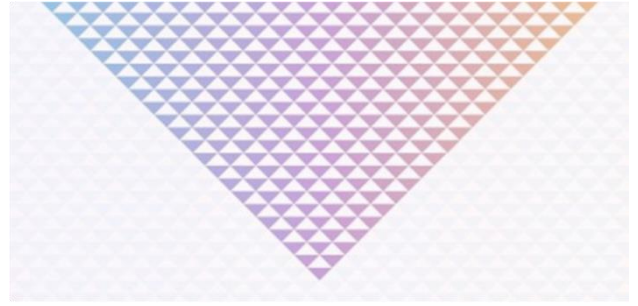




# POWERING UP COMMUNITIES TO DELIVER LOCAL WELLBEING

Community Case Study:  
McLaren Park Henderson South Community Trust



This case study was curated to spark thinking about local structures and approaches that can enable communities to improve their own wellbeing. It's part of a wider Think Piece commissioned by the Western Bay of Plenty District Council.

See [https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic\\_resource/powering-up-communities-to-deliver-local-wellbeing/](https://inspiringcommunities.org.nz/ic_resource/powering-up-communities-to-deliver-local-wellbeing/) for the full report.

**Cover image sources:** Paekākāriki Housing Trust (top left), The Community Led Development Trust (top middle), Te Puna Oranga o Ōtaki (top right), McLaren Park Henderson South Community Trust (right middle), Environment Network Manawatū (bottom right), Focus Paihia (bottom left).



## CASE STUDY: MPHS – SO MUCH MORE THAN A HUB

<b>Name</b>	McLaren Park Henderson South Community Trust (MPHS)
<b>Location</b>	West Auckland
<b>Community context</b>	Youthful, ethnically diverse, lower-socio economic suburban community of 8,000 people living in a mixed residential/industrial area.
<b>Legal Structure</b>	Community Trust (Chair, Treasurer and Trustees with between four and eight trustees in total). Chief Executive employed by and reports directly to the Chair and Board.
<b>Vision</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Purpose</b>	Enable Communities to connect and flourish . PEOPLE-PRIDE-PLACE  “Manaaki whenua, Manaaki tangata, Haere whakamua.” <i>Care for the land, care for the people, go forward.</i>
<b>Values</b>	Compassion, contribution and connection.
<b>Started</b>	2004, with the Hub West community facility opened in 2012
<b>Annual Turn over</b>	\$1.38m (30 June 2022)
<b>Staff (Full time equivalent) and volunteers</b>	18 FTE 679 volunteers contributing 4464 volunteer hours (2022)
<b>Relationship with local government</b>	Long term relationship with Auckland Council and the Massey Henderson Local Board, with multiple grant and service agreements in place, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and programmes contract for Hub West community facility.</li> <li>• Management contract for Tipping Point (resource recovery centre at the Council owned Waitākere Refuse Transfer Station in Henderson) and the new Waiōrea Community Recycling Centre and Education Hub in Western Springs.</li> <li>• Community governance training, mentoring and support contract with Henderson Massey Local Board.</li> <li>• Project Twin Steams: streamside restoration contract.</li> <li>• Shape Up Neighbourhoods contract (place making and street clean up events).</li> <li>• Civil Defence Evacuation Centre in 2023 Auckland Anniversary Floods.</li> </ul>
<b>Interviewed for this case study</b>	Kathryn Lawlor

## JOURNEY TO DATE

MPHS is a responsive, community-led development organisation that over the last 20 years has gone from strength to strength, actively supporting the wellbeing needs of their local community through diverse initiatives, projects and programmes. While the focus of activities is their direct McLaren Park Henderson South community, in more recent times the organisation has expanded its community development and enterprise focus into wider western Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. Starting from humble beginnings with the initial coordinator working from a broom cupboard at Bruce McLaren Intermediate, MPHS has been a proudly community-led initiative. Initially sparked by growing concerns about young people in the area having nothing to do and getting into trouble, local community leaders and the then Waitakere City Council got together to develop a community response – new afterschool and holiday programmes. These first initiatives were hugely successful, which in turn got people asking, “what else could we be doing to support our young people and our wider community?”

Extensive community engagement and door knocking by local volunteers followed, tipping out both local issues and opportunities the community saw for their place. With a range of committed and ambitious community leaders, schools and local Council support in behind, a collaborative approach helped develop community aspirations. With Council having provision in its budget for a much-needed community facility in the area, the MPHS community-Council partnership that followed enabled co-development of not just a new community building but a permanent base for MPHS to both scale its activities and deliver them in a relational way that is reflective of, and responsive to, ever changing community needs.

With the community fund raising \$1 million for a youth studio to complement Council’s \$3m community centre - the Hub West campus, which opened in 2012, is a jointly owned facility that remains community-led and managed.

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*“Hub West has been key in our journey. It’s given us organisation stability and a platform that’s enabled our growth – it’s a home, an income stream, a go-to space for our community and place for connections and relationships.”*

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The MPHS journey over the last two decades has been a mix of planned and responsive action. A core of multiyear partnerships and contracts helped create some anchor activities that have in turn enabled a pipeline of intergenerational connection and local leadership development. Key MPHS anchor activities have included youth programmes (including high tech/creative classes, leadership camp, youth club etc), Project Twin Streams (community-based streamside restoration), HIPPY (a home-based programme to help parents get their 2-5-year-old child ready for success in education), Joy Club (activities for older adults), playgroups and exercise classes for new Mums.

For MPHS Chief Executive Kathryn Lawlor, key enablers of MPHS in its journey so far are:

1. Being place based – it grounds the MPHS vision, mission and purpose.
2. Local ownership and loyalty – built through 20 years of continually engaging, doing, supporting, and having a visible, hub space to operate out of.
3. Strong, consistent governance – underpinned by a mix of long term/newer members with an intentional mix of required skillsets (e.g. HR, Strategy) and community knowledge and relationships within the Board team.
4. Rangatahi focus – which continues to galvanise local energy and support.
5. Trusted to deliver – MPHS has built a quality delivery reputation amongst funders, with belief in the community too that MPHS will do what it says it will, and in an authentic MPHS way.

## **ORGANISATIONAL MODEL**

While the MPHS Community Trust has gone through a couple of iterations of name and objectives over the last 20 years, the organisational model underpinning it has remained largely unchanged. The Chief Executive currently has ten direct reports, with an inhouse financial manager also part of the team.

The last strategic refresh in 2017 confirmed the MPHS People-Pride-Place focus (caring for people and the environment) still made sense at community, MPHS team and board level, with strong support for what was happening in and for the wider Henderson south community.

The MPHS Board meets monthly to consider progress, challenges and new opportunities, with the Board Chair and Chief Executive generally connecting two to four times in between Board hui. Each year an annual report provides a snapshot of the year's achievements, with different MPHS activities, team and board members also profiled to provide a fuller picture of what, how and who is involved in MPHS. The MPHS annual report is shared at a fun community celebration held in November each year at Hub West. This hui brings together MPHS supporters to share kai, celebrate successes and gather ideas for what next. Around 60-80 people generally attend this event – which also usefully doubles as an AGM.

In more recent times, it's become financially clear that MPHS needs to keep growing if it wants to achieve its purpose. This prompted an exploration of income generation opportunities that could leverage existing MPHS capacity and expertise.

Having developed considerable environmental expertise through Project Twin Stream contracts, MPHS took up an opportunity to run the resource recovery centre (Tipping Point) at the Council owned Waitākere Transfer Station. This new seven day a week enterprise has also enabled wider social goals with 50-75% of staff local and/or had previously faced barriers to employment. 25% of annual Tipping Point profits are now being fed back into the MPHS Youth Studio, which has proven to be one of the hardest programmes to find ongoing operational funding to sustain.

Similarly, MPHS community development and capacity building expertise has been leveraged to provide community governance training and mentoring for community groups across West Auckland. A multiyear programme, funded through the Henderson Massey Local Board, has been designed by MPHS to also enable tailored follow-on support for community organisations wanting support to implement governance changes. Some of this support is provided by the MPHS team, other aspects by other external community governance specialists.

Expanding activities beyond MPHS borders has been done with great care. The MPHS team are clear they won't compete with other good local organisations/services. They proactively meet with other organisations to talk about expansion plans and opportunities for possible collaboration ahead of decision making on potential new activities.

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*"We regularly meet with Community Waitakere to share what both our organisations are doing and have planned. We're clear that there can be room for all and that it doesn't have to be competitive if we each work to our strengths."*

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As new opportunities pop up through the year that aren't in the MPHS Annual Plan, there's collective discussion across staff and board teams to get agreement on which way to go. Some key questions that guide discussion and decision making include:

- How does this align with our purpose and values?
- Are we the right people to pick this up? If yes, do we have the right people/capacity?
- Who else might we collaborate on this with?
- Where would this project/service take us to next?
- How would this additional work impact on our existing programmes/delivery capacity?
- Are we prepared to invest in it too? What's our skin in the game?

While new MPHS team member roles generally arise from new contracts/funding, MPHS has also created roles to do better for the community they serve. For example a new kaitakawaenga (cultural support) role came about after intentionally considering the high numbers of Māori and Pasifika people who call McLaren Park Henderson South home and how responsive MPHS was to their cultural needs.

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*"While we knew there was a high percentage of Māori and Pasifika rangatahi in our youth programmes, we wanted to be sure MPHS was doing things in ways that work best for them. We also wanted our staff, many who are Māori and Pasifika and live locally, to also have appropriate cultural support. Just because you're Māori doesn't always mean you have all the tikanga know-how in behind you. Some Māori are on the same learning pathway as Pākehā, so cultural support for them is important too."*

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The kaitakawaenga role also provides strategic support at management and board levels and has been hugely impactful for MPHS. Relationships and connections within and across the Māori community have strengthened and with MPHS cultural competence attested, new doors have opened up, with plans to create a similar role to support Pasifika communities and cultural competency.

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*“I’ve seen that iwi and Te Tiriti relationships and aspirations are enabled when there are practical things that both sides have capacity to do together - doing tangible things builds trust, especially when benefits and connections are two way. For example, MPHS has been taking local rangatahi to Hoani Waititi Marae, enabling them connection to the Marae and Te Ao Māori. We’ve been a bridge, helping broker relationships that might not otherwise have happened.”*

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In terms of iwi relationships, MPHS notes that positive relationships with local iwi Te Kawerau a Maki have strengthened now that the iwi has more staff capacity to engage and work with community partners.

## **KEY RELATIONSHIPS**

For MPHS community and engagement and input to planning happens iteratively through the year through programmes and informal pop ups like sausage sizzles and coffee carts taken to different neighbourhoods. The MPHS team has grown a team culture of learning, with team hui always asking:

- How is the community responding to what we’re doing?
- What are the emerging needs we’re seeing?
- What are the community asking us to do or wanting to do themselves?
- What are people talking about – what’s exciting or concerning them?
- What are we noticing about where people are at now?

Working relationally is important to MPHS, with extra effort in recent years to rebuild and strengthen local connections that had fallen away. Hub West also provides a critical space for relationship building, with Hub West Coordinator Agnes personally taking bookings and returning phone calls.

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*“With an online booking system you miss the chance for relationship and connecting others with MPHS and vice versa. We want to know about the kaupapa people are meeting around, what connection that might have with other things happening in our community and/or what MPHS is working on.”*

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Post Covid, the MPHS team have also noticed a change in what local people need from their Hub too. With more people now sleeping in cars, there’s a need for somewhere to charge a phone, have

some weetbix, a hot drink and a chat.

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*“Running a real community hub requires responding to whoever walks through the door in ways that aren’t a programme. We really want people to come in, for Hub West to be a place to come to get support. That’s not a traditional community centre role. We’ve had to train our team on how to respond, how to manage working with young people who are more anxious and stressed and how to report upward when things are disclosed. We’re seeing more of a cross over between youth, community and social work roles than ever before.”*

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While collaboration is resource intensive, MPHS is at a scale now where they can participate in collective city-wide forums like West Auckland Together, unlike many other smaller local hubs who simply don’t have capacity to participate. There are many benefits from relationships and others knowing a lot about your mahi.

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*“The West Auckland Together process brings together the large anchor organisations across West Auckland to share what we’re doing and to avoid duplication and lane crossing. Having strong relationships meant that during Covid and recent Anniversary weekend floods – we could quickly connect and support each other and our communities with what was needed.”*

*“When MSD threatened to cut our rangatahi holiday programme funding because we weren’t a kaupapa Māori organisation, again everyone rallied in behind us. There were 30 support letters including from Hoani Waititi Marae and other West Auckland organisations backing how well we were delivering for the young people in our holiday programmes who were Māori. We’re proud that many of our programme leaders were previous programme participants.”*

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MPHS’s collaborative approach also extends to supporting other small local groups and initiatives in their rohe. Sometimes the request is to hold funds or provide back office support. At other times, it’s to assist people with ideas to move into a doing it phase. For MPHS the benefits of umbrellaing include new connections, relationships and supporting small scale local action. However, in reality the role generally involves much more than being a bank account and is time consuming.

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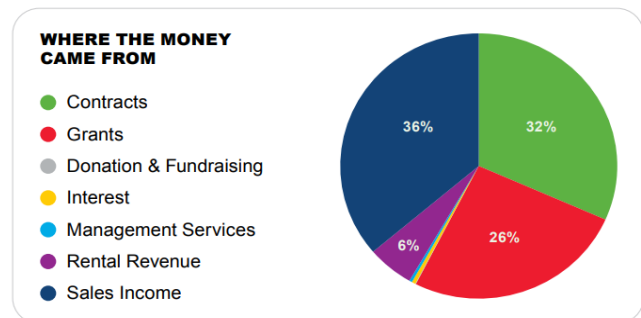
*“What you give you don’t get back in terms of covering costs. The technical bits like a bank account are easy but it’s the strategy and development support that’s much harder. But sometimes it’s important to do for non-financial reasons when it’s your local community.”*

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## FUNDING AND SUPPORT

MPHS continues to be funded through a mix of grants, contracts and enterprise income with the revenue splits for the 2022-year end noted in the adjoining table. With no cost of living increases in recent Council grants or contracts, funding has got tighter. MPHS notes however they are more fortunate than some NGOs in Tāmaki Makaurau who have had funding cuts. Much of this they attribute to a positive working relationship with their local Board and a strong track record of effective community-led delivery and support.



**Source:** MPHS 2021-22 Annual Report

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*“We proactively meet with the Henderson Massey Local Board to share what MPHS is doing and what local members need to know about. Similarly we find out what Local Board members are being contacted about and what they see bubbling – it’s a two-way street.”*

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With increasing pressure to self-generate more funding and diversify income streams, MPHS notes the importance of being clear about just where additional income will be targeted.

In 2015, MPHS established social enterprise the Tipping Point, a community recycling centre. For the 2021-22 year, 334 tonnes of waste (123 elephants!) were diverted from landfill, with the enterprise clearly supporting the organisation’s social and environmental goals.

CE Kathryn Lawlor is quick to point out that while financially beneficial, running large scale social enterprises puts an additional strain on the organisation’s management resource and requires the Board to be comfortable with taking greater financial risk. MPHS is clear on bottom lines however: the new Waiōrea Community Recycling Centre will need to be sustainable to support similar wider community outcomes like what is achieved at Tipping Point.

When it comes to reporting and accountabilities, MPHS acknowledges the importance of stories and gathering participant feedback, with value not just for funders but also for staff so they know how they and their work is valued. The MPHS team would also prefer to do more face to face reporting and/or have funders come and spend time in the hub and see their work in action.

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*“When the Perpetual Guardian funding manager came and based herself at the Hub for 2 days, she learnt more about our approach and impact than any report could have shared.”*

*“At its best, funding and relationships with our funders is about more than money – it’s about them being connectors and brokers to others who need to know about or could add value to our mahi and vice versa.”*

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With most funder-driven templated reporting providing limited value to MPHS, having the time and head space to do more solid thinking on what information MPHS would like to collect and report back on is something that remains on the MPHS wish list. As Kathryn notes “it’s one of those important things we never have time or capacity to properly do.”

## **BARRIERS/ENABLERS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH**

### **ENABLERS:**

- Investment in organisational development and capacity building, alongside programme delivery. It’s important that financial, governance and people systems are all strong too.
- Time/putea for relationships, connecting, collaborating, and gathering insights and intel across everything happening in the community.
- Regular hui and information sharing across key partners so relationships and trust is maintained.
- Having the right skillsets and capacities in place when taking on community engagement and facilitation roles. Working in and with your community to progress challenging local issues and solutions is nuanced work, not a technical exercise.

### **BARRIERS:**

- People – collaboration is good in theory but it’s really people dependent. So much depends on individuals, their mindsets and who’s in what roles.
- Ongoing restructuring/people turn over in Councils. Having to continually restart relationships impacts on momentum and impact.
- Government departments generically cancelling programmes/contracts, even when effective locally-led services are in place e.g. When the Ministry of Education cancelled MPHS’s 10-year HIPPY contract in 2022 they were supporting 50 local families and had a waiting list. MPHS long term success was built from supporting whānau well, and going door to door to engage and enrol vulnerable families because they knew who they were.

**ADVICE FOR COUNCILS AND OTHERS LOOKING TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT DELIVERY OF LOCAL COMMUNITY OUTCOMES:**

*“When you start by bringing local people and those with close community connections to look at what’s at the heart of an issue and what could be done there are more opportunities for integration and multisolving. It’s so frustrating when agencies lead and issues stay in silos.”*

- Local community facilities are a key lever for local development, community connections and wellbeing collaboration. Community-led (as opposed to Council run) hubs are more vibrant, active and cost-effective spaces. When a local community has skin in the game, they care and co-invest and can be responsive to what’s needed, holding community-led values.
- While ownership should be in the community, Council needs to be connected and enabling things too. It’s about collaboration not devolution. There’s a huge opportunity to bring the technical skills/resources of Councils and others together with the community development/relational/social process skills of community anchor organisations. Most complex issues have both technical and community elements so you need to have both working together to make real progress.
- Ensure capacity building support (e.g. professional and organisational development) is included above and beyond service delivery contracts, along with resource to enable ongoing community listening, engagement and relationship mahi.
- In health there are huge opportunities to partner with grass roots organisations and community hubs like MPHS who have local relationships and support bases to build new local wellbeing approaches. With the right support, community hubs could become new wellbeing hubs.
- Ensure local anchor organisations have really solid foundations in place before setting expectations that they grow to take on lots more. Provide HR support when and as they grow and assist them to build their communications and storytelling capacity so that everyone knows what’s happening - locally and externally too.

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