

# Hanson Street Case Study

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# 1 Background

## 1.1 Development summary

This paper summarises the results of resident and stakeholder interviews conducted in relation to 1 Hanson Street. Hanson Street is a medium density development completed in 2008. Further details are summarised below:

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Information</i>
Developer	QM Ltd Development Manager - Mondial
Address of development	Quattro Maison 1 Hanson Street, Mt Cook, Wellington
Management	Behinds the Scenes
Awards	2008 NZIA Wellington Architecture Award Resene Total Colour Award
Location type	Mix of industrial and residential. At one end (Kind St) the area is light industrial; south of the development, the area is residential. Mix of new intensive apartment blocks and old cottages and bungalows. The development is one block back from Adelaide Rd which is a main thoroughfare into Newton.
Demographics of residents	Wide range of residents from students and people in their 20's, through to retirement age. Couples and singles; some families (teenagers and young children). Range of ethnicities (Chinese, Indian, Maori, European). Predominantly professional working people aged 20 to 50.
Tenure mix	2/3 <sup>rd</sup> rental, 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> owner occupied
Number of units	6 story apartment block; 32 single level apartments
Parking ratio	28 car parks for 32 units; no visitor parking. Ratio .875 parks per apartment.
Mix of unit sizes (number of bedrooms and or floor space areas)	Mix of one bedroom and two bedroom apartments; approximately 3 one bedroom and 29 two bedroom. One bedroom – 44 to 58m <sup>2</sup> + decks Two bedroom – 68 to 75m <sup>2</sup> + deck Also storage units provided: 22 storage units.
Price range	Originally marketed at: - One bedroom \$230k - Two bedroom \$385 to \$425k 26 out of 32 sold off plans Prices now estimated to range from \$350 to \$550k Rent for a 2 bedroom \$400 to \$490pw
Site area/density	714m, 100% coverage
Stage of completion	Completed in 2008

## 1.2 Methodology

### 1.2.1 Residents

Ten interviews were conducted face to face with residents in their homes or at their place of work. Respondents were recruited by means of a letter delivered to the 32 apartments with the offer of a \$100 incentive to take part. Individuals then called to make an appointment and the researchers visited the properties.

Interviews typically lasted for one hour and were recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Details of the sample composition are outlined below:

- Seven males and three females;
- Aged in 20s to retired; predominantly under 40;
- Mix of single people living alone, people flatting, couples, and one parent living with university age son;
- Occupation: professional (government and non government), retired, freelance;
- Ethnicity/Nationality: NZ European, Non NZ European, Maori;
- Five owner occupiers and five renters; four of the five interviews with owner occupiers were with Owners Committee;
- One resident had a disability which affected mobility.

Based on our interview questions about who lives at Hanson St, we believe we have a cross section of respondents. However we acknowledge that no interviews with students or Asian residents were obtained.

A number of factors had prompted the owners to buy in the Hanson St development. These included:

- Downsizing to provide cash for other activities;
- Reduce/avoid maintenance and gardening;
- Previous living situation no longer tenable (neighbour difficulties);
- First home purchase.

Those renting were moving for the following reasons:

- Previous living situation no longer tenable (split from partner);
- Temporary rental situation prior to buying or moving elsewhere;
- Lease/contract expiring.

### 1.2.2 Stakeholders

Stakeholders included the project manager of the Development Management Company and Owners Committee.

## 2 Inside Hanson Street

This section summarises the characteristics of the development divided between what works well and the concerns, as expressed by residents in the Hanson St development.

### 2.1 What works well?

This section highlights what works well from the residents' point of view. Bullet point summaries of the comments are provided and illustrated with photographs where possible.

#### 2.1.1 Internal Features

- Modern and new. This has two key positives for people:
  - They are unlikely to face large bills for building maintenance. One resident spoke of having a builder recommend that he not buy an apartment he was considering as it was facing significant maintenance which would cost thousands; this is a considered a risk when buying an old apartment.
  - The positive feelings that go with moving into a new, clean apartment that has not been lived in before (or has had few previous occupiers).



- Warm and dry. This is also a significant reason for buying a modern building. Comparisons are made with old homes where cold, damp and cold conditions are experienced. Residents spoke of the impact on their health and having to throw out clothing and shoes that had gone mouldy during winter.
- No maintenance required. This relates to people wanting to avoid (large) gardens and homes that need to be maintained (e.g. painting). People want to live life and get on with the activities they enjoy, not spend their lives working around the home.
- Reasonable size. While still considered to be quite small, the apartments at Hanson St are bigger than many other apartments; most residents consider the apartments to be big enough for their needs.

*“There is definitely cheaper out there but this is a decent size for a two bedroom ... it’s not big admittedly, but we’ve got a decent size balcony.”*

- Light and sun. All rooms in the building have direct light (including circulation areas). In particular, residents spoke of their enjoyment of the direct sunlight in the mornings and/or in the afternoons (depending on location of the apartment). The light in corner apartments is particularly good.
- Car parks. Most apartments come with one secure car park.



- Storage space. Many apartments were sold with a storage locker. This space is highly valued as without it, people are forced to create storage space in the car park slots and/or on their balcony’s. The fact that the storage lockers offered dry storage set them apart from lockers seen in some other buildings.



- Security. Access to the building is by code which is changed at different times in the year. Residents are asked not to let visitors into the building but to ask them to be buzzed in by those they are visiting. The security offered by apartments is a strong motivator for seeking apartment living for some (e.g. single women, women with a persistent ex-partner). Everyone appreciates the extra sense of security offered by the apartment.
- Balconies. The balconies provide access to outside living and a sense of additional space; residents really enjoy sitting on their balconies in the sunshine with a beer or glass of wine. Apartments offered balconies off the bedrooms as well as the lounge.



- Sound proofing. The sound proofing at Hanson Street is perceived to be very good. Residents report that they cannot hear their neighbours through the walls. The only sounds they can hear are (sometimes) washing machines and bass from loud music.

*"I've been very pleased by the noise level and the consideration of the other tenants here ... sometimes it's so quiet I feel like I'm the only one who lives here."*

*"I never hear anything; it's obviously very sound proof. I was pleasantly surprised about how quiet the whole thing is."*

- Desirability. The building has achieved a level of quality and a price point which contributes to it attracting the 'right' residents. This is an important part of the attractiveness of the building. Prospective buyers and tenants believe that slightly higher price increases the likelihood of attracting professional people who will care for the fixtures and fittings, and show respect for others living in the building.

*"I have been in apartments where it's just like "doof, doof" from next door all the time and it's not like that here ... if you wanna go to sleep you can go to sleep. ... As soon as you're in an apartment that costs a little bit more, you're almost guaranteed that they're either full-time professionals or they're a little bit more clued on and not really going to be partying all night long."*

- Separate laundry. The separate laundry is something that most other apartments do not offer and is valued by respondents. It offers additional storage space, and allows the usage of the washing machine with minimal noise nuisance.



- Location in the building. Generally apartments increase in desirability by level. Ground level apartments offer decreased security and less privacy, while apartments on the top level offering an outlook including greenery and Government House, and a greater sense of privacy.

*"I mean, I don't think I'd pay the same for a lower floor ... we've got a bit of a view. At least you don't feel so claustrophobic up here."*



Some residents prefer lower level apartments that offer visual connection with street (e.g. one level above street level).

- For some renters, (short term or international visitors), being fully furnished is a key requirement.
- Well designed. Good sized passages ways and good proportion of spaces, modern stairway and entrance, and a solid feel to the building (i.e. *"it's not a glass tower"*).
- Décor. Many like the light airy feel of the apartments with the white (off-white) scheme contributing to this.
- Non adjoining bedrooms. This is particularly valued by flatmates, as bedrooms that are separated give a greater sense of personal space. As such, owner occupiers who may wish to rent their apartment in the future considered non adjoining bedrooms an advantage.
- Two bathrooms. Some of the two bedroom apartments offered two bathrooms. This is highly valued, particularly by flatmates.
- Single level living.
- Good sized kitchens in some apartments.

### 2.1.2 External Features

- Scale. The building is perceived as being a 'smallish' block of flats. Its size means it has more chance of establishing a community and feels a little safer as there are fewer people 'coming and going'. Larger blocks are associated with noise, transient tenants and a loss of individuality.
- The building itself is considered to be unique and distinctive due to the colours of the four quadrants. Most describe it as modern, distinctive, colourful, stylish (though some people are less positive).

### 2.1.3 Community Issues

- The efforts of the Owners Committee are recognised by a number of residents.

*"The people that are part of the Body Corp are definitely making an effort. They do make an effort, they do have BBQs, they do send out this newsletter, they have a facebook page ... so they do kind of foster this community feel."*

- The annual BBQ is an initiative aimed at providing an opportunity for people to meet one another.



*“That was our Body Corp initiative ‘cos there are tenants in here that we don’t know. It’s for owners and tenants, and we just thought that it was nice just to get to know your neighbours.”*

- While most appreciate initiatives like the newsletters and notice board, not everyone wants to become involved or socialise with other residents. The Owners Committee is perceived by most as keeping residents informed and providing an organised social event for those residents who want it.

*“We don’t really partake to be honest, we kind of keep ourselves to ourselves. We have our own circle of friends.”*

*“It’s not as though it’s a mandatory thing. If you’re not into that you can sit in your apartment and not go. But it’s ... you know, for the people that are maybe a bit more social you can go down and meet the guys who are part of the Body Corp. I think it’s a good idea.”*

- A close community has developed amongst Owners Committee officers.

*“Do you feel the development has a sort of community feel? Well to be honest, no. It’s quite a nice building and I’m happy with that. I come and go and you quite often don’t see anybody. I’d say nine out of ten times, walking into or out of my apartment I won’t see anyone ... there’s a good community feel amongst the body corp.” (Owners Committee member)*

- Life inside Hanson St is described as quiet, considerate, responsible and friendly.
- There is a network of people who deal with issues quickly when they arise. An example of this was of an instance of internal graffiti. Within a very short time, a notice about the incident went up asking for information and giving details about the teenagers seen in the vicinity of the damage. The parent of one of the teenagers came forward soon after.

## 2.2 What doesn’t work so well?

This section summarises the concerns expressed by some residents.

### 2.2.1 Internal Features

- Privacy and outlook. The privacy offered by the apartments is considered to be good in that residents are not able to overhear conversations in the next apartment or people moving around upstairs. However, in some apartments, especially those lower down, there is a feeling that not only people see into ‘our’ apartment, but we can see into their homes.

*“Looking out on other neighbours ... it’s just intrusive. I’m sure they feel it even more than I do, but I’m not used to having neighbours that close.”*

*“That’s almost like a shop front window there where people across the way can look in, you kind of feel you’re in a fish bowl sometimes if you don’t have the blinds down.”*

- The car park is ‘too tight’. Residents feel that the maximum number of car parks have been squeezed into the car park area; this makes parking cars difficult.

*“The garage downstairs is extremely tight, so we’ve scratched the car a few times.”*

*“I wanted my own car park, but my car doesn’t fit into the car park space.”*

- Flooding in the car park. There have been problems with the drainage in heavy rain resulting in repeated flooding of the garage. Remedial work by the Council in Hanson Lane is underway to address this.

- Other issues mentioned include:
  - Some have found the apartments colder than expected and question the failure to use double glazing to retain heat and reduce noise from outside).
  - There is a low 'sill' between the balconies and the lounge. Wider sliding or concertina doors would have allowed for a further blending of indoor and outdoor.



- Poorly placed lighting e.g. lights above kitchen bench blocked by open cupboards, wardrobes blocked from all light when the wardrobe doors are open.
- 'Wobbly' quality kitchen drawers.
- Minimal 'galley' kitchens in some apartments.
- TV socket next to the kitchen rather than in the lounge.
- The fan in the laundry not strong enough to deal with condensation from the dryer.
- Little storage space (bathrooms, kitchen, lack of cupboards in laundry).
- Some apartments have the entry through the kitchen which is disliked by some.
- Some apartments have the toilet off the lounge.
- Toilet too close to the wall in some ensuites.
- Circulation area have used materials that have not worn well.

### 2.2.2 External Features

- Limited parking. The parking at Hanson St is limited as:
  - Some apartments do not have parking in the car park,
  - Some vehicles are too big to access and park in the car park building,
  - There is no visitor parking provided in the development,
  - Parking on the street is for a maximum of 2 hours during the day (for non residents),
  - Parking on the street at night is perceived as slightly risky.
- The balconies on the ground level apartments are very close to the road and are accessible by those walking down the street. In addition, a bedroom window in one apartment is by the front door to the development.



- Some residents commented that a particular dislike of apartment living is the lack of an outside clothes line. Consequently people use their balconies to dry their washing but are aware of the visual impact of this from the street.

### 2.2.3 Community Issues

- Apart from the car park and circulation areas, there is no communal space in Hanson St. Some residents would prefer some form of communal space. A roof garden was originally planned for the development, but this did not go ahead. This garden would have provided the development for some space for individuals to use and grow vegetables and to compost. It would also have provided space for the BBQs held by the Owners Committee.

*“There’s an apartment just on the next street ... and they’ve got this cool cobblestone area ... and you see people down there reading books in the sun and I think that gives a bit more of a social feel.”*

- Another suggestion for communal space was for some seating in the front lobby to provide somewhere to sit when waiting for taxis and a space for chatting to neighbours should you bump into them. This would also give the lobby a more ‘homely’ feel.
- One resident expressed disappointment with the limited sense of community that has developed at Hanson St. This person feels that many people living there just want to keep themselves to themselves.

*“Here I get the feeling that there’s a real limit to how much people want to get to know one another.”*

## 2.3 Neighbourhood

### 2.3.1 Neighbourhood Benefits

Location was a key reason for the decision to buy or move to the development at Hanson St for most residents. The location offers great connectivity to the city and Courtney Place, and is situated in Mt Cook near Newtown.

Mt Cook is described as a mix of students and established homes. The Hanson St area is dominated by students, while further up Mt Cook are older established residences.

Newtown is described as a diverse, vibrant, multi-cultural, alternative and interesting. Most residents enjoy the Newtown ‘vibe’, however, some residents were more negative about Newtown due to eccentric and anti-social behaviour witnessed there. These residents liked the fact that the apartments are slightly removed from Newtown town centre. Newtown is a 7 to 20 minute walk from the Hanson St development.

*“I really like that it’s alternative; you get some fantastic restaurants, you get some really strange characters, which is brilliant. It’s like nowhere else.”*

*“I like Newtown. There’s some really funky little cafés ... I don’t like some of the crazy people that walk around.”*

Some of the residents of Hanson St previously lived in the area and have a strong connection with Newtown.

*“I’m a Newtowner, so I have a real sense of connection with Newtown. I walk there often; have lots of friends in the neighbourhood and I enjoy being part of the community.”*

The development at Hanson St is built on the intersection of Hanson St and Drummond St. Hanson St itself is a relatively quiet street (in terms of traffic). The area surrounding development is described as a mix of industrial buildings, apartment blocks, and old houses. This mix gives the area an eclectic feel. There is no strong feeling

about the mix of styles on the street, though many appreciate the heritage of the old cottages and homes in the area.



The Council has recently re-developed the road outside the Hanson St development, putting in a more curved structure. This has improved the look and feel of the intersection. They have also incorporated steps from Hanson Street up to Tasman Road providing better connectivity. This will particularly benefit Massey University students. Street lighting has also been improved.



For most residents, the neighbourhood is the community inside the development at Hanson St. For others there was a slight sense of wider community through the Mt Cook Mobilized (Mt Cook Residents Association). Mt Cook Mobilized is perceived as attempting to engender a sense of neighbour though community events and is active in attending to issues facing the wider community (e.g. redevelopment of the steps and street, future supermarket, student behaviour). As such there is the sense that 'someone' is attempting to attend to issues that are important for the well-being of the area.

There is a small area of land adjoining the Hanson St development that is Council owned. The Owners Committee have leased the land (\$1 per year) and maintain it in order to provide a green area for residents and a place to hold a BBQ. The area is exposed to the street so offers no privacy. There is the possibility that the area will be turned into an edible garden (large, hardy plants such as fruit and nut trees) in a joint initiative between Hanson St, Mt Cook Mobilized and Wellington City Council (though budgetary issues may mean this does not go ahead). Recent road works by the Council saw the removal of some plants and the area was in process of being restored by Council at the time of writing.



The following points summarise what residents like and use in the local neighbourhood. Not everyone uses all the facilities but these were all mentioned in the course of the interviews.

- Supermarket shopping in Newtown. Many residents also use Chafer Street New World and other stores.
- Ethnic and European food outlets such as takeaways, cafes and restaurants in Newtown.
- Farmers market held at the Newtown School.
- Newtown Festival Day.
- The Hospital is nearby.
- Government House is visible from the upper levels of Hanson Street.
- Good connectivity to Tasman Street due to recent re-development by Council. This improves access to the University for students living in the area.
- Tennis courts.
- Basin Reserve.
- Ten pin bowls.
- Walking tracks (e.g. through Wellington College up to the lookout).

### 2.3.2 Neighbourhood Disadvantages

Some neighbourhood issues less popular with residents included:

- Some describe the development at Hanson Street as an “island” in a sea of students, due to the proximity of Massey University and student residences in the area.

The students living in the area are friendly and ‘lively’; however, frequent, noisy parties by the students is having a significant, on-going impact on the residents of Hanson Street. Wednesday night through Saturday seem to be ‘party nights’, with one or more flats in the area having a party. This results in loud music and voices, including loud conversations on the street. Often students congregate on the street before heading into town. On their way home they also make a lot of noise. Orientation week is particularly ‘lively’. Most Saturday mornings sees bottles scattered around the street. One resident described a regular Saturday morning bottle run for himself and a neighbour as part of the routine of living in Hanson St. The end of each academic year is accompanied by furniture being dumped on the road (which the Council picks up).

While some residents of Hanson St are relatively philosophical about student behaviour, others are frustrated by frequent broken sleep during the working week. Most residents did not realise the concentration of students in the area prior to moving in.

*“They’re a pain in the arse really. I mean, there’s not a lot you can do really.”*

*“Sometimes I just want to go out there and shout, “Go to bed! Go to bed! Go to bed!”*

- The difference between residents of Hanson St and the students living in the area led one resident to comment on a sense of segregation between the Hanson St development and the surrounding community. This person felt the area need a focal point such as a café (or other amenity) to provide a sense of community.
- Graffiti is regularly sprayed on buildings, including the development at Hanson St. The Owners Committee has a 24 hour removal policy to ensure that the building remains graffiti free.
- Poor lighting along Hanson St (towards King St) and observance of strange, anti-social behaviour in the area means that some residents do not feel safe walking along Hanson St at night. Some male residents commented that they would not let their partners walk alone at night. Another resident did not like the Newtown area (particularly the town centre).

*“You go to catch a bus and there’s someone sniffing glue at the bus stop, or he’s got silver spray paint over his face ... I mean, the best thing about it is it’s got a hospital right close to everyone that lives there.”*

### 3 Connectivity

Location was a key reason for the decision to buy or move to the development at Hanson St for most residents. The location is within walking distance (25 to 30 minutes) of the city where most of the residents work and socialise. The proximity to town makes getting to work quick and easy, and encourages spontaneous social and leisure activities.

*“Basically, I live, work and socialise in town.”*

Adelaide Rd (30 seconds from the Hanson St development) is the main public transport route into the CBD. Buses run frequently along Adelaide Rd.

The route to the CBD is flat rather hilly (which adds considerably to its ‘walkability’) and offers a way for some residents to get to the CBD independent of cars and public transport. Several patterns of access were evident:

- Walking. This is perceived as being ‘good for the planet’ and for one’s health.
- Combination of walking and using the bus. Some prefer walking but use the bus when the weather is poor; others walk one way and use public transport for the other trip.
- Some residents use their cars for getting to work. Reasons for this include: no parking at the apartment, need the car for work or after work, and don’t work in the central city.

Some residents do not have cars as they do not feel they are necessary.

While walking is also a common mode of transport for leisure activities amongst some residents, car use is common for leisure activities amongst most residents.

A number of stores were used for grocery shopping by residents. These included the supermarkets in Newtown and Chafer St, as well as other supermarkets such as Thornton and the Willis St Metro. Different shopping patterns are evident with some people shopping frequently on their way home from work. This allows people to buy only a few items and walk home. Other shopping patterns necessitate the use of their car.

Regular non work destinations included:

- Courtney Place;
- Gym on Lambton Quay;
- Westpac Stadium;
- Cuba Mall;
- Oriental Parade and the waterfront;
- Thorndon;
- Karori;
- Island Bay;
- Hataitai Beach;
- Seatoun;
- Kapiti Coast;
- Lower Hutt;
- Petone;
- Porirua.

While people spend much of their time working and socialising in the central Wellington area, they also have family, sporting and social connections that take them further afield. Cars are the main mode of transport for these trips.

## 4 Tradeoffs made in dwelling selection

Residents made a number of trade-offs when choosing to live at Hanson St. The following summarise trade-offs made by different residents or groups of residents.

Owners:

- Wanted to continue living in the Newtown area, in a small development with a sense of community. Hanson St was a larger complex than originally wanted, but it was in the desired area, was close to budget and reasonably sized. Time constraints meant there was some pressure to find a property.
- Would have preferred a townhouse with garaging under the home, but was not able to find a property with the desired privacy and outlook (did not want to look out at fences or into the lounges of other homes). Wanted modern home, in Newtown, easy maintenance for a good price.
- Would have preferred a slightly bigger apartment closer to town; began looking in the Newtown area when unable to find suitable apartment in preferred areas. Another option considered within budget was bigger, older and further away from town. Hanson St which was modern, sunny and had a nice outlook. The option of being able to rent the apartment out in the future was important.
- Wanted a well constructed home with no maintenance. Rejected an older apartment due to potential maintenance issues. Initially felt the Hanson St apartment was too small but then realised all apartments are this size (or smaller). Hanson St was sunny, modern, new, and warm. Would have liked a storage locker.

Renters:

- Modern, warm, furnished, short-term lease, walking distance to CBD were the key criteria. Would have liked something slightly closer to town and slightly larger, but could not find anything in the preferred area for the budget.
- Wanted somewhere tidy/clean, close to town, with good security and an ensuite for \$300 per week or under (1/2 share). Was looking at established flats so the personality of the flatmate also influenced the decision. Would have preferred a slightly larger place with better car parking.
- Looking for a modern, compact, clean home close to work, family and community activities. The Hanson St apartment was over budget, but it was new and offered car parking and a storage locker.
- Looking for a two bedroom apartment. Was originally looking in the \$300 to \$350 price bracket but decided to upgrade to get something bigger and nicer. Looking in January so competition for properties was high (due to students). Needed something with a car park and close to public transport.
- Wanted something warm and dry, close to town, and in budget. Other places rejected were older, less modern, cold or too expensive. Hanson St was light and airy, and modern. Would have liked something a little bigger (e.g. 2 bedrooms instead of 1, or a larger lounge).



## 5 Post construction governance issues

### *Role in purchase decision making*

An ownership structure in Wellington is Company Shares. Some owner occupiers at Hanson St perceive this as offering apartment living that is predominantly owner occupied.

Some owner occupiers were slightly concerned about buying in an apartment block occupied by too many tenants. All agree there are good and bad tenants; bad tenants are those who don't respect communal property and fail to show respect for their neighbours. This may take the form of damaging communal areas, not respecting rules concerning noise, storing rubbish and other items in communal area. While there is no strong objection to sharing with good tenants, especially those who are longer-term, there are concerns about entering a block which could become predominantly investor owned. As such, some residents spoke of being attracted to the Company Share ownership structure. However, no company share building which compared well with Hanson St was available at the time of purchase.

Other residents preferred the unit title ownership structure as this allows greater flexibility for renting the apartment at some time in the future.

An effective Body Corp that deals with issues quickly and keeps the building tidy and well maintained is perceived as very important. Owner Committee meeting minutes were used to determine whether the committee and property management company are working efficiently to resolve issues, or whether the same issues re-appear meeting after meeting.

### *Management*

Originally the company appointed by the Developer to manage the Hanson St development was Oxygen Strata Ltd. Oxygen was given the contract by the developer along with the 'right of renewal'. However, the Body Corp were not satisfied with the performance of the company and decided to hire a new company. This process was time consuming and stressful given the nature of the contract entered into by the Developer. There was talk of legal action against the Body Corp; nevertheless, a new company was appointed.

The Body Corp has been effective in establishing the smooth running of the Hanson Street development. Initiatives have included:

- A graffiti team that deals with tagging within 24 hours;
- Signage to guide use of the rubbish and recycling areas, closing fire doors etc;
- Rules for Residents;
- Newsletter;
- Noticeboard (latest copy of newsletter, rules for residents, any issues residents should be aware of such as road work etc);
- Facebook page;
- BBQ;
- Good communication with the property manager for speedy resolution of issues.

Effort is made by the Owners Committee to ensure that its newsletters and communications are not just a list of 'dos and don'ts', but that they include other items of interest e.g. after Christchurch earthquake, a Owners Committee member rang the architect and found out about the earthquake strength of the building and included this in the newsletter.

It is noted that the signage in particular made a big difference in dealing with issues.

The effectiveness of the Owners Committee is attributed to an *“enthusiastic team who care about the building.”* Owners Committee members were pleased to see that a number of people wanted to be involved in the committee at an early AGM. This has resulted in a core of people who work well to address issues and get on well together.

Residents (both owners and tenants) not involved in the Owners Committee generally appreciate the communication available through the newsletters and noticeboard, and the effectiveness of the Committee in dealing with issues such as graffiti and keeping the building well maintained. This is thought to contribute to people looking after the building and encouraging a joint sense of responsibility.

*“I think when people don’t have a sense of connection they also have less respect for it, as well, and see it more as a temporary place to live.”*

Despite this, some issues relating to management of Hanson St have arisen:

- One resident felt the Owners Committee could communicate with residents better. For example, by providing better notice of meetings by ensuring all residents are aware of meeting dates and locations well in advance, addressing issues raised via Facebook.
- Some tenants have experienced difficulties when the security codes are changed. While they are aware of the change going ahead, they have not been provided with the new code to gain access to the building. This may be due to communication between landlords and tenants.
- Maintenance of a sensor light in garage.

## 6 Development difficulties and possible solutions

This section considers ways in which the interests of the local community, developers, land owners and new occupants could be reconciled through better communication, design and closer attention to spill-over third party effects.

### *Concept*

The key challenge of this development was in design a good, mid-quality building that would be attractive to the market. It was anticipated that the original concept for the development would have resulted in apartments that would be priced too high for the market. A joint venture was established between the developer (QM Ltd) and a development management company (Mondial).

The development was redesigned to achieve a good, mid-quality building. This process involved looking critically at design and making changes to reduce costs, such as removing the roof garden and internalising balconies (rather than having balconies over-hanging the street).

### *Consents*

As a resource consent had already been granted, the process of redesigning the development and applying for a new consent was a smooth process. This is attributed to the fact that the revised consent did not increase the bulk and form of the building and that the development team were willing to adjust the look of the building to meet Council's requirements.

### *Finance*

A pre-condition for finance was achieving 60% pre-sales. This was considered a challenging target. Market demand at the time for investor properties was strong; thus 81% of apartments pre-sold.

### *Construction*

Much of the financial success of the project for the development team is attributed to careful costing of the project and a collaborative relationship with the builder. This relationship was open and honest where the cost plan and development team's financial objectives were shared with the builder. This resulted in a partnership where the builder understood the goals of the development team and was able to suggest ways of achieving these. There were four or five iterations of the cost plan in the process of appointing sub-contractors in order to ensure that the project performed financially, and the builder was involved in this process.

The project was on time and on budget.

## 7 Lessons from Hanson Street

The following points summarise the main lessons from the case study:

The Hanson St case study demonstrated that the Owners Committee is able to operate beyond the remit of rules and maintenance. The Owners Committee can create an atmosphere where residents feel informed and able to easily contact the Owners Committee should issues arise. Their communications do not just focus on “do’s and don’ts” but provide interesting information relevant to residents. The rules and regulation have been converted to user friendly language and are posted on the noticeboard. Signage around the building put up by the Body Corp provides effective guidance on issues that would otherwise be an on-going communication challenge. Owners Committee members have formed a close community and provide opportunity for other residents to meet one another through an annual social event. All of this creates the feeling that the Body Corp:

- Effectively manages and maintains the building;
- Is very timely in addressing issues;
- Visible;
- Achieves change through working with Council;
- Communicates through a variety of mediums;
- Communicates expectations in easy to understand language, but is not just about “dos and don’ts”;
- Provide opportunity to meet neighbours through an annual BBQ;
- Is inclusive;
- Has good ideas e.g. edible garden, Facebook.

Other lessons from Hanson St are:

- The importance of internal privacy, particularly in living areas. A number of residents in Hanson St felt “on view” to their neighbours and consequently draw the blinds for privacy. Design which takes surrounding properties into account to minimise this will help provide privacy.
- Car parking design that is appropriate for larger cars and caters for visitors and residents without car parks.
- Use of obscured glass on balconies provides somewhere for people to hang their washing without creating visual pollution.
- Initiatives to deal with outside noise nuisance (e.g. double glazing).
- Consider surrounding community; this development may have been better suited to another location with a lower student population.