

Item 3: Review of QLDC Library Strategy 2020-2030: Draft Refresh to 2031

SESSION TYPE: Workshop

PURPOSE/DESIRED OUTCOME:

To seek guidance and feedback from the Community & Environment Committee on the draft refreshed QLDC Library Strategy. The final refresh will be later presented to the Committee for consideration and adoption following incorporation of feedback received.

DATE/START TIME:

Tuesday, 21 July 2026 11:30am

TIME BREAKDOWN:

Presentation: 15 minutes

Debate/Discussion: 15 minutes

PRESENTERS:

Sue Gwilliam - Library Services Manager, QLDC

Sue Sutherland - Director, Sue Sutherland Consulting

Prepared by:



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Title: QLDC Library Services Manager

9 July 2026

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Kenneth Bailey

Title: General Manager, Community Services

13 July 2026

ATTACHMENTS:

A	Draft QLDC Libraries Strategy Refresh PowerPoint Presentation July 2026
B	Draft QLDC Libraries Strategy at a glance refreshed July 2026
C	Draft QLDC Libraries Strategy Refresh report July 2026
D	Draft QLDC Libraries Library Strategy 2020-2031 refreshed July 2026

Libraries Strategy 2020-2031

Review and refresh

Presentation to the Community and Environment Committee 21 July 2026

Review and refresh

Why now?

- > Adopted 2020
- > Achievements since then
- > Changes: societal, local, sector

Consultation

- > Focused consultation for a strategic refresh
- > Focus groups, interviews, staff workshops, national survey highlights



Community feedback

Community

- > Larger and more flexible library spaces
- > Longer opening hours, improved technology
- > Greater support for children and young people
- > Stronger recognition of te Ao Māori
- > Opportunities for communities to come together.
- > Inclusion and support for migrants & diverse communities
- > Partnerships, sustainability and staff support



Interview feedback



Council Staff

- > Position libraries as connected community hubs.
- > Plan proactively for population growth and future infrastructure.
- > Demonstrate community value through evidence and outcomes.
- > Strengthen social inclusion, wellbeing and belonging.
- > Prepare for digital transformation, particularly AI.
- > Operate as an integrated district-wide network supported by partnerships.

Strategic findings



- > Libraries as essential social infrastructure
- > Planning for growth
- > Strengthening communities
- > One district library
- > Skilled staff
- > Demonstrating value

The Strategy

- > Four focus areas remain relevant
- > Revised outcome statements
- > Actions – some brought forward, some new
- > Time frame for further 5 years to 2031
- > With a 20-30 year infrastructure development plan



Why libraries matter



Strategic community assets that:

- > support communities to thrive
- > build social cohesion
- > strengthen civic participation and democracy
- > Safeguard our district stories for future generations

They are

- > inclusive, trusted, safe, welcoming community hubs
- > with spaces, collections, technologies, events and programmes for learning and creativity

Your feedback please

- > Have we identified the right strategic priorities?
- > Does the strategy reflect the future role Council wants libraries to play?
- > Are there opportunities or issues that should be considered before the strategy is finalised?



Next steps



- > Committee feedback
- > Implement any changes to strategy
- > Final strategy to the Committee for adoption on 20 October 2026

Queenstown Lakes District Libraries

Draft

Vision	Enriching minds and communities - Te whakapuāwai kā hinengaro me kā hapori.
Our purpose	Connect people with information, ideas, stories and experiences for learning, literacy, engagement and creativity
Our commitment	We will work in partnership with communities, organisations and business to build a vibrant, responsive and valued service supported by professional, knowledgeable and skilled staff. Our partnership with Kāi Tahu will influence how spaces and services are shaped.
Principles	Freedom of information, Equity of access, Diversity and Inclusivity, Sustainability
Kāi Tahu values	Whanaukataka (family and community focused), Manaakitaka (Hospitality), Kaitiakitaka (stewardship), Tikaka (appropriate action) Haere whakamua (future focused)

QLDC community outcomes	Wellbeing outcomes framework	Library focus areas	Library outcomes
Thriving people	Equity, Mātauraka Kāi Tahu, Resilience, sustainability	Literacy and Language	Expanded horizons through reading and debate
Living Te Ao Māori	Healthy and fulfilled people, a good standard of living	Learning for life	Opportunities for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
Opportunities for all	Connected communities, belonging and identity, participation and governance	Connected vibrant communities	Stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion
Breathtaking creativity		Equity and Access	More people benefit from resilient sustainable library services

Focus areas	Literacy and language	Learning for Life	Connected, vibrant communities	Equity and access
Outcome	1. Expanded horizons through reading and debate	2. Opportunities for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship	3. Stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion	4. More people benefit from resilient, sustainable library services
Why is this important	The ability to read is foundational to success in life, as are information and digital literacies, especially with AI generated information. Te reo Māori, an official language is increasingly important for New Zealanders. Fostering debate and discussion and taking part in civic life encourages understanding and tolerance.	Libraries are informal learning places to grow skills and knowledge, solve problems and experiencing new technologies. The drive to greater sustainability is seeing a resurgence of interest in the sharing economy and craftsmanship. Partnering with individuals and organisations that have expertise can broaden the range of offerings.	Libraries are essential social infrastructure that strengthen social connection, learning, digital inclusion, and innovation. Current libraries are too small which impacts on services. Population growth will exacerbate this. Libraries are part of the ecosystem that collects and records the stories of their local place, keeping it safe and making it easily accessible to current and future generations through digital platforms.	Libraries help break down barriers and deepen understanding of others, creating a more tolerant society. Making sure that no one misses out on accessing services is a priority. The more people who use the facilities and services the greater the return on the investment. Libraries by their nature are sustainable, in that they are the ultimate ‘re-users and sharers’.
What do we want to achieve?	1.1 Children and teens becoming lifelong readers 1.2 Te reo Māori is used more widely and celebrated 1.3 Users are confident in discovering and evaluating digital and AI generated information 1.4 Diverse and inclusive collections that encourage people to read widely	2.1 Provide rich learning experiences and programmes 2.2 Enable greater equity of access to digital and physical technology and tools 2.3 Encourage entrepreneurship and new ideas in partnership	3.1 Library Community Hubs that are multi-functional spaces for communities 3.2 Libraries at the heart of Welcoming Communities 3.3 Celebration of our diverse heritage and unique stories	4.1 Enable greater use of library services by addressing barriers to use 4.2 Improve digital access for those who are time poor or prefer online access 4.3 Put sustainability at the centre of service development
What we will do	- Continue programmes and activities that support reading and discussion, e.g. book clubs, author talks, speakers on topical issues – for all ages - Develop a Zine collection for teens - Strengthen eCollections to support te reo Māori, sustainability, ESOL, Dementia, neurodiversity, World languages, recreational reading - Implement Nga Upoko Takutaku subject headings - Explore national access to eResources to broaden range of collections - Provide one on one support and programmes to improve digital skills and digital literacy in an AI world - Ensure our policies and procedures around freedom to read are strong and staff are supported to uphold them.	- Develop a district wide framework for learning and digital programmes, including programmes in rural libraries - Work with partners and utilise community expertise to deliver a wider range of programmes - Pilot a programme with the business start-up community to test how best to support entrepreneurship - Provide a range of new and emerging technologies as well as craft based kit for in- library use at the larger libraries - Secure a mobile van that can take kit and reading resources to other libraries and community venues - Continue developing the Karawhiua collection (Library of things) - Improve marketing and promotion of services and programmes across all our channels.	- Work with Council to present a comprehensive development plan for library community hub infrastructure - As a new facility is planned, develop the design brief that specifies spatial requirements using the <i>People Places</i> as a guide. - Work with Māori to ensure spaces and services reflect our unique culture and heritage - Establish a digital heritage repository to collect and make accessible the stories and images of the district, in partnership with Māori, local history and museum groups - Digitise important local content and provide avenues for storytelling, oral history and whakapapa - Ensure our library programmes and services provide opportunities for newcomers to connect and make it easy for them to use the library facilities and service. - Celebrate the important festivals and events of our diverse, multicultural community in partnership with others	- Identify groups with special needs and work with them to overcome barriers e.g. those with neurodiverse conditions - Continue to implement the Dementia friendly programme for those with dementia mate wareware - Review the hours of opening to consider opening the three larger libraries on Sunday - Increase hours of operation at Hāwea in line with Arrowtown. - Investigate ways to make library spaces available in the evenings and weekends for community group use - Identify non-user market segments and market how libraries could benefit them, e.g. construction workers - Promote the use of the library app - With Central Otago District Libraries make the case for a mobile van to take resources and service to under-served areas - Refresh the library website and social media channels using a UX (user experience) framework.
Making it happen				
	A great team	Smart, sustainable organisation	Working in partnership	
	- Develop the business case for additional staff - Balance providing customer support with time to plan - Develop the leadership capabilities of team members and provide opportunities for staff development, particularly in learning new skills and gaining professional qualifications - Support staff to become proficient in AI platforms so they can support users	Sustainability means working smarter, looking for efficiencies, reducing duplication of effort and managing resources wisely. - Undertake a strategic review of the operating model - Ensure staff participate in and provide information for the Operating Model Review - Use data and information for smart evidence based decisions and for better outcome reporting - Establish a business development budget line item	- Strengthen our relationship with Kāi Tahu – this will influence all focus areas and strategic goals - Continue partnership with Central Otago and Southern libraries - Work more closely with other council departments on shared outcomes - Deliver more together than we can separately - Develop relationships and networks that provide ideas and complement our expertise - Strengthen our impact and visibility in the community	



A Focus on the future

The review at the halfway point of the strategy confirms that the Libraries Strategy 2020–2030 has provided a sound direction for the development of library services across the district. Significant progress has been made in improving access, expanding services and collections, strengthening community partnerships, and demonstrating the value libraries contribute to community wellbeing.

The environment in which libraries operate has changed. Rapid population growth, increasing diversity, changing patterns of community use, technological advances such as AI, and wider social and economic pressures are reshaping both community expectations and the role of public libraries. This is occurring at a time of proposed, significant change in local government in New Zealand which could potentially change the future structure of the council organisation and governance.

Meeting the needs of a rapidly growing district will require investment not only in buildings, but also in people, partnerships and new ways of working. Positioning the service to respond effectively to future challenges and opportunities requires:

- Long-term planning for library infrastructure
- Continued development of staff capacity and capability
- A review of the operating model
- Greater use of evidence to demonstrate community outcomes

Evidence points to libraries having become essential social infrastructure providing trusted public spaces where people connect, learn, create, access reliable information and participate in community life. They support social cohesion, lifelong learning, digital inclusion and community resilience while contributing directly to Council's vision for thriving people and connected communities.

Inputs into developing the refreshed strategy

- Community engagement through focus groups
- Library staff workshops; interviews with key council staff
- Analysis of societal and library trends likely to impact libraries or provide opportunities for service development
- Understanding of the local context and the drivers for change

Key findings

Community Participants expressed strong support for • larger and more flexible library spaces • longer opening hours, improved technology • greater support for children and young people • stronger recognition of te Ao Māori • opportunities for communities to come together. • Inclusion and support for migrants &diverse communities • Partnerships, sustainability and staff support	Societal trends • Rising living costs, unemployment • Declining social cohesion • Impact of AI (artificial intelligence) on jobs, trusted content • Impact of social media • Challenges to freedom to read and diversity • Sustainability
Staff • Position libraries as connected community hubs. • Plan proactively for population growth and future infrastructure. • Demonstrate community value through evidence and outcomes. • Strengthen social inclusion, wellbeing and belonging. • Prepare for digital transformation, particularly AI. • Operate as an integrated district-wide network supported by partnerships.	Queenstown District and Library context • Population growth and increasing cultural diversity • Need for more community infrastructure, including libraries to meet demand • Potential significant change in local government i which could change the future structure of the council organisation and governance • Average income higher than NZ average but 29% of residents had no disposable income or were unable to cover their expenses and 5% rated their overall quality of life as poor or extremely poor,

Queenstown Lakes Libraries Development Plan

Although the strategy refresh is only covering a further five years, the long-term development plan for library provision takes a 20-30 year view, so that costs, resources and time needed for each development can be spread in a manageable way.

Libraries as community hubs

Over the past two decades libraries have become places with people at the centre. They are strategic assets of local government as trusted institutions of social engagement, civil society and democracy. They have become essential social infrastructure that helps communities thrive.

A modern library has multi-functional spaces for community activity: learning, meeting, events and programmes, study, reading and working away from home. Activity and meeting spaces can be booked for community use.

A library community hub is best located with other facilities that residents use. In New Zealand there are many different examples – libraries in a shopping mall, co-located with swimming pools or other recreational centres, close to health clinics or supermarkets, or part of a museum/art complex.

Public private partnerships are a possibility to help with funding and encouraging developer-led models may be the answer where there is significant new housing developments.

Library hierarchy strategy

Right sizing a library community hub needs to take account of the population to be served, the collection size and the types of community and activity spaces needed. Both the New Zealand Public Library Standards and the People Places methodology have been used to provide for a square meterage per 1000 capita, ranging from 45m2 to 70m2 depending on the hierarchy of libraries.

Tier		
District Library Community Hub	Queenstown, Frankton, Wānaka (Three Parks)	Strategically located libraries with additional services and spaces that service the whole district Ideally within 15 minutes’ drive from most parts of the district. Size: 60-70m2 per 1000 population.
Local Library Community Hub	Arrowtown, Hāwea, Wānaka, Eastern and Southern Corridors	Community library with activity and community space for learning, programmes and meeting, 5-10 minute drive. Size: 50-60m2 per 1000 population
Neighbourhood Library	Glenorchy, Kingston, Makarora	Predominantly space for resources, and smaller space for shared library and community use. A neighbourhood library is more than 30 minutes’ drive to a District Library Community Hub. Size: 45-50m2 per 1000 population

Catchments: population projections and library size

Area	Pop projection				Av day visitors 2057	Total pop served	Approx Size per 1000 pop	Current size
	2027	2037	2047	2057	at 7% ¹		Range 45-70m2	
Frankton	9,048	13,013	16,730	20,135	1,030	21,165	1500m2	658.59m2
Eastern Corridor	9,484	11,584	13,379	15,024	214	5,238	900m2	New
Southern Corridor	6,639	9,857	12,237	14,418	182	14,600	875m2	New
Queenstown	9,028	12,053	14,314	16,384	1,373	17,757	1250m2	506m2
Arrowtown	3,058	3,157	3,267	3,368	119	3,487	200m2	145m2
Glenorchy	570	661	729	791	60	851	50m2	28m2
Kingston	475	855	1,160	1,440	23	1,463	75m2	41m2
Wānaka	4,386	7,330	9631	11,738	401	12,139	580m2	580m2
Wānaka Three Parks ²	11,758	14,613	19,576	22,207	475	22,682	1550m2	New
Hāwea ³	4,255	5,726	7,307	8,757	129	8,886	530m2	169.7m2
Total population	58,701	78,849	97,330	114,262		118,268		

Note 1: Estimated use by visitors based on observation
Note 2: Covers Wānaka Three Parks covers Wānaka North, Northlake, Albert Town, Wānaka West. Cardrona and Luggate
Note 3: Includes Makarora

Queenstown Lakes District
Council

Draft

Libraries Strategy 2020-2030

Review and refresh report

July 2026



Sue Sutherland Consulting

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the staff of Queenstown Lakes District Council for their readiness to supply information.

This work has been completed by Sue Sutherland



Cover images: Queenstown and Wānaka

Inside cover: Frankton

Version	Date	Comments
Version 1:	2 July 2026	Author Sue Sutherland
Version 2	7 July 2026	Following comments from Libraries Manager
Version 3	8 July 2026	Following comments from Strategic Projects Manager, Community Services

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Key Messages

- **The Library Strategy remains fit for purpose.** The vision adopted in 2020 remains relevant. This refresh builds on a strong foundation while responding to significant changes in the district and the wider environment.
- **Libraries are essential social infrastructure.** Libraries are no longer defined primarily by their collections. They are trusted community assets that strengthen social connection, support lifelong learning, improve digital inclusion, foster creativity and contribute directly to community wellbeing and resilience.
- **Libraries are delivering measurable value.** Since 2020 the library service has improved access, expanded collections and programmes, strengthened partnerships, and begun measuring community outcomes to demonstrate the value libraries contribute to the district.
- **Population growth is the defining challenge.** Existing library facilities are increasingly under pressure and will not meet future demand without a planned programme of investment in buildings, staff and services. Long-term planning is needed now to ensure equitable access for future communities.
- **Technology and AI present both opportunities and responsibilities.** Libraries have an important role in helping communities navigate artificial intelligence, misinformation and digital change, while adopting new technologies that improve service delivery and organisational effectiveness.
- **A stronger district-wide approach will maximise community benefit.** As the network grows, there is an opportunity to operate more strategically, making better use of resources, specialist expertise and partnerships while continuing to demonstrate the contribution libraries make to Council's strategic outcomes.

Executive Summary

This report reviews progress on the Queenstown Lakes District Libraries Strategy 2020–2030 and provides the evidence base for refreshing the strategy through to 2031. The review confirms that the overall direction of the existing strategy remains sound. Libraries continue to be highly valued community assets, and the original vision remains relevant. However, the environment in which libraries operate has changed significantly over the past six years, requiring a renewed focus on growth, accessibility, community wellbeing and digital transformation.

The review also confirms a broader shift in the role of public libraries. While books and information remain at their core, libraries have become essential social infrastructure. They are trusted public places where people connect, learn, create, access reliable information and participate in community life. As communities grow and become more diverse, this role becomes increasingly important.

Since 2020 the library service has made substantial progress. Barriers to access have been reduced through the removal of overdue fines and free holds, digital services and collections have expanded, new community programmes have been established, and libraries have strengthened their role as welcoming, inclusive places for learning and connection. The service is also beginning to measure and demonstrate its impact through community outcome surveys and national benchmarking.

At the same time, the district has experienced unprecedented population growth and increasing cultural diversity, alongside wider economic and social challenges. Rising living costs, declining social cohesion, rapid advances in technology, and changing expectations of public spaces are increasing the importance of libraries as trusted places that strengthen community resilience and support equitable access to learning, information and opportunity. This is occurring at a time of proposed, significant change in local government in New Zealand which could potentially change the future structure of the council organisation and governance.

The review identifies several issues that require greater attention over the next five years.

The most significant is planning for growth. Existing library buildings are already under pressure, and future population projections make it clear that current provision will not meet long-term demand. A staged development programme is recommended that establishes a hierarchy of district, local and neighbourhood libraries, identifies future locations, and provides a realistic programme for investment over the next 20 to 30 years. Recognising libraries as essential social infrastructure provides a stronger basis for integrating future library developments into Council's wider planning for community facilities and growth.

The second priority is strengthening the library's organisational capacity. As the district grows, additional staff and new areas of expertise will be required. Equally important is ensuring the service operates as an integrated district-wide

network, making the best use of specialist skills and shared resources while retaining the distinctive character of individual libraries. A strategic review of the operating model is recommended to support this transition.

The third priority is strengthening the contribution libraries make to Council's wider community outcomes. Community engagement consistently identified libraries as safe, welcoming places that support learning, creativity, wellbeing and social connection. Participants expressed strong support for larger and more flexible library spaces, longer opening hours, improved technology, greater support for children and young people, stronger recognition of te ao Māori, and opportunities for communities to come together. These priorities align closely with Council's strategic framework and reinforce the role of libraries as essential social infrastructure that underpins thriving communities.

The review also highlights emerging opportunities. Artificial intelligence is likely to reshape both library operations and community expectations over the coming decade. Libraries have an important role in helping communities develop digital and AI literacy while adopting technologies that improve service delivery. At the same time, stronger collaboration with Council departments, neighbouring libraries and community organisations will enable the service to achieve greater impact and demonstrate its value more effectively.

Overall, the refresh is evolutionary rather than a fundamental change in direction. The original strategy provides a strong foundation. The recommendations in this report build on that foundation by responding to population growth, changing community needs and advances in technology, while strengthening the library's contribution to Council's vision for thriving people, opportunities for all, living te ao Māori and a creative, connected district.

The refreshed strategy provides a clear direction for the next five years while recognising that many of the infrastructure and service changes required will extend well beyond 2031. Together, the proposed actions position libraries as essential social infrastructure that supports resilient communities, strengthens social cohesion and ensures people across the Queenstown Lakes District continue to have equitable access to the spaces, resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Introduction

The Libraries Strategy 2020-2030 was adopted in August 2020 with the expectation that at the halfway point there would be a review of achievements and a refresh of the strategy.

The intent of the refreshed strategy is to confirm that the library is still heading in the right direction, and that any global, national, local and sector changes are reflected in the new actions needed to achieve the strategy over the next five years of its life. This refresh should be read in conjunction with the original strategy document which contains more detailed information about libraries that has not changed with the passing of time.

The review was conducted over a seven week period from 18 May 2026. The process comprised:

- A desktop review of Council strategies and plans to understand the current environment and ensure libraries are still aligned with future vision and goals
- Interviews with key council managers and staff in departments that have strong interfaces with libraries to understand the relationship and gather their insights
- Two workshops with the library lead team to identify achievements and understand the gaps, challenges and emerging priorities (the first workshop was held in May 2025)
- A staff survey to ensure all library staff had an opportunity to contribute their ideas for the future

Because this is a refresh and not a brand new strategy, community input was limited to three focus groups in Frankton, Wānaka and Queenstown and a review of three surveys (1 council and 2 library) that provide insight into how libraries are experienced.

The time frame did not permit direct engagement with iwi. However, they have been informed of the strategy refresh by the Council's Māori Strategy and Partnerships Manager.

The report has been prepared by Sue Sutherland to inform the refresh of the Library Strategy to 2031. The Strategy is a separate document which is to be presented to the Community and Environment Committee of Council for adoption.

Progress since 2020

Achievements

In the six years since 2020 there has been good progress on improving collections and services and increasing use of libraries including:

- Removing access barriers by making holds free and abolishing fines on overdue books
- Enhanced digital services, e.g. social media, website, and the supply of chrome books
- Providing new collections: eResources, Kits, board games, and a greater range of books in other languages
- Establishment of the Karawhiua Collection (Library of things) with items for loan to help users 'learn, create, fix, explore, and thrive'
- Digital learning platforms
- New community engagement roles focused on programming and providing learning opportunities
- Developing productive relationships to deliver the Welcoming Communities programme
- Additional space was acquired in Frankton for the staff work area on collections

Operationally there have been improvements to ways of working, using project teams. Although the pay equity claim for library workers did not proceed, the council has increased wages. There has been a focus on upskilling staff with encouragement to take up library qualifications and to participate at a national level in collaborative developments, e.g. regional representation on the PLNZ (Public Libraries of New Zealand) executive and LIANZA Committee.

Libraries have begun measuring outcomes as an important way of demonstrating the value they contribute to their communities. In 2024, library users and a small number of non-users were surveyed about their experiences, including library use, wellbeing, accessibility, events and programmes, and collections. The results provide both a snapshot in time and a benchmark for future surveys. In 2025, Queenstown Lakes Libraries participated in the national Public Libraries New Zealand (PLNZ) Community Impact Survey for the second consecutive year. This enables comparisons over time as well as benchmarking against other public libraries across New Zealand. Queenstown achieved one of the highest response rates in the country, reflecting the library's proactive approach to understanding the needs and experiences of both users and non-users. Collecting and using this evidence is essential for demonstrating the library's contribution to community outcomes.

Gaps

It is not surprising that some initiatives have not yet been achieved given that the Strategy runs to 2030. Those that are still relevant form part of the refreshed strategy. However, three significant actions are highlighted:

- The development of a long term programme of new library developments
- A mobile library to service communities with limited or no access to library services
- A review of library hours of opening including considering Sunday opening and longer hours at rural/satellite libraries

All three significantly impact on the accessibility of library services in the community. When there is insufficient space for community and individual activity, the distance from a library is too great, or the libraries are not open at times that suit working people to use them, there are barriers to use. However, all three require additional financial investment, and a more planned approach is needed if they are to be achieved in the next five years and beyond. This report has outlined a library infrastructure development plan with proposed types and size of libraries and a suggested phasing plan to assist the planning process.

Staff capacity and capability

Since the strategy was developed the population has grown from 40,760 in 2021 to an estimated 58,701 in 2027. Staff numbers are 29.15FTE which equates to 1.49 per 3000 capita, enabling comparisons with other similar sized districts. Whanganui has 1.59 FTE per 3000 and Central Otago District has 1.67¹. They both have 7 library sites. Capacity at

¹ PLNZ Statistics for 2022-2023

Queenstown Lakes Libraries is stretched and Branch Managers of the three largest libraries must balance direct customer service along with staff management, planning and running the operation.

Population growth will drive a need for additional staff. Whether it is the establishment of a new library or to provide for service development in key areas such as longer hours of opening, Māori services, services for teens, or those with disabilities, new skills and capacity will be needed. Keeping abreast of digital technologies is another area that may need strengthening. By 2037 the population is expected to be 78,849 and if service levels are to be maintained another 10-12 FTE are likely to be needed.

If the library is to be successful in making the case for additional staff, it will need to demonstrate that it is operating in the most efficient and effective way. A strategic review of the operational model is recommended. This would cover:

- Services and levels of service to be delivered across the growing network
- How those services are delivered – identifying what needs to happen at a local level and what is more effectively delivered centrally
- The skills, knowledge, qualifications and/or experience needed for any new or changed roles
- Potentially a new organisational structure

The library service has grown organically, with a high degree of local autonomy. While this has enabled each library to reflect the character of its community, as the service grows there is an opportunity to better balance local decision-making with the benefits of operating as a district-wide network.

Collection development is one example. Collections are selected locally to retain each library's distinctive flavour, but this approach duplicates effort and means the collection is not managed as a single district-wide resource. Staff perceive that community needs differ significantly between locations. While there are some genuine differences, particularly in non-fiction, research suggests that 70–80% of the titles readers want are common across all libraries. Analysing borrowing and use data would help test the extent of local variation and identify where a shared approach would be more effective.

An operational review will need business development funding.

What's changed?

The Library Strategy 2020-2030 identified the following emerging trends which are still relevant in how libraries deliver services to meet community needs:

- Automation, AI, robotics and other technologies that will replace many current jobs,
- Growing divide between rich and poor and the rise of the poor middle class leading to poorer health, mental health, divisiveness and social isolation
- Growing mistrust of media and information platforms and sources
- Manipulation of data and the use of social media to influence readers to a particular point of view
- Exploitation and misuse of personal data, cyber security issues
- Fear of new migrants leading to a rise in nationalism, anti-globalisation, extremism
- Greater awareness of the need for tolerance and understanding and mechanisms to strengthen inclusiveness in society
- Sustainability focus including the impact of climate change, disaster preparedness, emissions reduction, passive and public transport options, electric vehicles
- Conscious consumerism, waste and plastic reduction

The strategy also noted the growing powerhouse of the Māori economy as iwi had settled Treaty claims and invested in improving outcomes for tangata whenua. Local and central governments were seeking new ways to work in partnership to improve outcomes for Māori in education, health, prosperity, well-being

In the period since the library strategy was delivered New Zealand has lived through the covid pandemic and its lockdowns and aftermath, a terror attack, a volcanic eruption and several “once in one hundred years” weather events resulting in loss of life and property. A change of government with different priorities has resulted in the reversal of policies relating to health, climate change, iwi relationships, education and housing. The recent war with Iran and the resulting oil shock is one of several international events that have all had an impact on New Zealand. The economic and social malaise has also led to recent backlashes against immigration and a worsening in Māori Crown relationships with policies that challenge the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

“Life today can be complex and libraries play an important role in helping individuals to feel part of a community. In the next few years, I believe that libraries will play a vital role to promote tolerance, respect and inclusion.”

- Vicky McDonald, CE State Library of Queensland

Cost of living and social cohesion

The cumulative impact of these changes has contributed to an economic downturn in New Zealand, with rising unemployment, increasing living costs, more children experiencing poverty, and business closures.

The Helen Clark Foundation's Social Cohesion Report 2026² found that social cohesion has declined across all dimensions, including confidence that hard work leads to a better life, fairness, and trust in government and the courts. It also found that social cohesion can be strengthened by creating opportunities for people from different backgrounds to connect and fostering a strong sense of belonging, which encourages community participation even during financial hardship. While young New Zealanders report the lowest levels of social cohesion, they remain the most aspirational age group.

Libraries are an important local government partner in strengthening social connectedness by providing welcoming spaces, inclusive programmes that bring diverse communities together, and collections that broaden perspectives and understanding.

Library sector trends

Many of the trends identified in the 2020 research are still relevant and have become even more important over the past five years:

- The importance of community space for connection, learning and enjoyment
- Digital content that is mis- and dis-information making it critical that people have the skills to discern fact from fiction
- Mainstreaming of the ‘maker movement’ providing opportunities to experience and experiment with new technologies
- Strengthening collections and services that support te reo Māori and languages other than English

² Social cohesion in New Zealand 2026. Helen Clarke Foundation. <https://www.helenclark.foundation/research/social-cohesion-in-new-zealand-2026>

- Extending access to the library when it is not staffed, using swipe card technologies
- Collaboration and partnership to achieve greater benefit and collective impact

Collaboration and advocacy

At the recent PLNZ forum (May 2026) there was a strong focus on collaboration: between neighbouring libraries or groups of libraries, with other council departments, and with community and business groups. There was an emphasis on being stronger together, collaboration for scale, doing more with shared resources, and for advocacy.

Libraries are becoming smarter in how they tell the story of the value that libraries deliver to their communities using data, both quantitative and qualitative. Finding and working with partners who understand libraries' value can help in broadening the story of the benefits of libraries to the community.

Freedom to read vs book challenges

Libraries have long defended freedom of information as a cornerstone of a democratic society. Policies and processes are in place to manage complaints about collection items, with decisions based on professional assessment unless material has been banned or restricted by the censor.

In recent years, the United States has seen a significant rise in organised challenges to library and school books, particularly those relating to LGBTQIA+ communities, race, and aspects of US history. These campaigns have often been highly confrontational, with librarians subjected to harassment, accusations, and threats.

New Zealand has also experienced incidents. In a widely publicised event, members of Destiny Church disrupted a children's Pride event at a West Auckland community centre and library³, forcing attendees, including young children, to shelter inside while a teenager sustained a concussion.

Protecting the freedom to read remains a core role of public libraries and an essential element of a healthy democracy. As these challenges become more visible, it is important that libraries are prepared and have Council's support to uphold these principles.

Technology trends - AI

The most significant digital trend since 2020 has been the rapid growth of AI tools and platforms. A *Pulse of the Library 2025* report found that 33% of libraries globally are implementing AI solutions, while a further 35% are actively evaluating their use. The biggest barriers are lack of funding (62%) and staff capability.

For libraries, AI offers opportunities to improve efficiency through automated metadata and cataloguing, predictive collection development, and operational intelligence. Many of these changes will come through vendor developments, but they will require new roles, ways of working, and AI literacy as an essential professional competency.

A recent report from Biblioteca⁴ identifies three emerging roles for AI in libraries:

- libraries as educators, helping patrons engage with AI critically;
- personalization platforms that anticipate patron needs; and
- active partners in the research process.

As Biblioteca notes:

"If there is one emerging role that distinguishes the library from any other access point, it is teaching people how to engage with AI critically. Commercial platforms have an interest in users who trust without questioning. Libraries have a historical mandate to do the opposite."

As Council considers how AI will be incorporated into organisational workflows and services, the library should play an active role in shaping that discussion. Research indicates that libraries have been most successful in adopting AI where they have strong organisational support.

³ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/542159/destiny-church-library-protest-intimidating-and-unacceptable-police>

⁴ AI in libraries: what's changed, what's at stake. Biblioteca, February 19, 2026 <https://www.biblioteca.com/ai-in-libraries/>

Queenstown Lakes District Council

The Queenstown Lakes District is New Zealand's sixth-largest territorial authority, covering 8,719 square kilometres. It is bordered by the districts of Central Otago, Southland, Westland and Waitaki.

The district comprises several distinct communities. Queenstown, Frankton and the wider Wakatipu area are growing rapidly, with Frankton increasingly developing its own identity. Wānaka, Arrowtown and Hāwea each have strong local identities, while Kingston, Glenorchy and Makarora are relatively isolated communities on the district's outer boundaries. All are served by library services. Significant new residential growth is also occurring in Jacks Point, Shotover Country, Lake Hayes Estate, Northlake, Three Parks, Hāwea and Luggate.

Like the rest of New Zealand, the district has experienced significant economic and social pressures. The closure of New Zealand's borders during the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the tourism-dependent local economy. Visitor numbers have since recovered strongly, bringing renewed pressure on housing, transport and other public infrastructure to support both population growth and tourism.

Although median incomes are higher than the national average, many residents continue to experience financial hardship. In 2025, QLDC commissioned its eighth *Quality of Life Survey*. First undertaken in 2018, the survey tracks the impacts of rapid population growth and increasing visitor numbers, while providing baseline measures to inform future planning. The 2019 survey informed the original library strategy. Key findings from the 2025 survey include:

- 29% of residents reported having no disposable income or being unable to cover their expenses, up from 18% in 2019.
- 5% rated their overall quality of life as poor or extremely poor, and 20% rated it as average (up from 4% and 17% respectively in 2019). Despite this, 74% rated their quality of life as good or extremely good.
- Lack of access to parking and transport congestion remain key concerns.

Council vision, strategies and plans

The following recent strategies and plans have been reviewed to understand how libraries fit within the Queenstown Lakes District Council context:

- Strategic framework Tā Mātou Anga Rautaki
- Vision beyond 2050
- Spatial Plan 2021
- The Long Term Plan 2024-2034
- Community facilities strategy 2021-2031
- Infrastructure strategy 2024-2034
- Creativity, culture and heritage strategy, 2024
- Queenstown Lakes District Welcoming Plan 2024-2027
- Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal

“Our plan sets out a vision and framework for how and where our district will grow ... to ensure that future growth happens in the right place and is supported by the right infrastructure, whether that’s pipes in the ground, ways of getting around, access to schools, healthcare or other community facilities.

- Queenstown Spatial Plan

The Council’s vision for 2050 is summed up in its Strategic Framework (attached as appendix 1). Libraries contribute to four of the community outcomes: Thriving people, Living te Ao Māori, Breathtaking creativity and Opportunities for all. The refresh provides an opportunity to more closely tie the outcomes the library wants to achieve to the Council’s vision by using some of the language in the Vision beyond 2050 and the Council’s strategic framework. The Spatial Plan provides comprehensive guidance on the development of the district with five outcomes focused on housing, transport, sustainable tourism, well-designed neighbourhoods and a thriving diverse economy.

Insights

The **Community Facilities Strategy** and **Infrastructure Strategy** together provide the framework for future library infrastructure planning. The Community Facilities Strategy guides decision-making on community facilities, including libraries. Of note is its facility hierarchy—neighbourhood, local, destination and regional—which has been used to help define the hierarchy of libraries (see below)

For the first time, social infrastructure has been incorporated into the Council's Infrastructure Strategy. Its preferred growth scenario promotes well-designed neighbourhoods where social infrastructure is planned and delivered in high-growth areas, while expanding provision in existing settlements. It supports investment in strategically located, integrated community facilities, presenting an opportunity to include larger library developments within these hubs. Although new libraries in Wānaka, Frankton and Queenstown are currently identified in the strategy, they are all listed as long-term projects (beyond 2034).

Libraries have strong alignment with the **Creativity, Culture and Heritage Strategy**. They already support its goals through bicultural and inclusive approaches, providing authentic spaces for connection and safe places for expression, participation and learning. Storytelling and the preservation of documentary heritage are core library functions, while collections, programmes and partnerships celebrate cultural diversity and the heritage of mana whenua. There is further opportunity to embed **te ao Māori** across library services, although progress is constrained by the lack of dedicated Māori staff.

Council participates in the **Welcoming Communities – Te Waharoa ki ngā Hapori** programme, led by the Department of Immigration in partnership with the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and the Human Rights Commission. Rapid population growth has increased the diversity of the district, with more New Zealanders, international students, workers and established migrants choosing to live in Queenstown Lakes. The programme supports inclusive communities that celebrate diversity, promote wellbeing and foster economic growth.

The **Queenstown Lakes District Welcoming Plan 2024–2027**, developed in partnership with the community, outlines eight priority actions and highlights existing initiatives. Libraries contribute through multilingual collections, welcoming community spaces and programmes that support newcomers.

There is strong alignment between the objectives of the Welcoming Communities programme and the role of libraries, positioning libraries as key partners in delivering the plan

Otago Central Lakes regional deal is an economic growth and infrastructure partnership that focuses on shared priorities and long-term goals. The partners are QLDC, Otago Regional Council and the Central Otago District Council. As of early 2026, negotiations with central government are ongoing. Given the latest requirement for Councils to come up with plans for local government amalgamations and the formation of unitary authorities it is possible that the regional deal would be folded into that process.

As it stands this was largely an infrastructure agreement which does not have an impact on libraries other than at one remove (e.g. improved transport between library locations, or cheaper more reliable energy sources). However, a wider reform of local government could have a significant impact on how services are delivered.

Key Challenges

Changes to the local government system

Several major initiatives are currently underway that could significantly change the way the district operates and is governed.

- The establishment of a Water Services Council Controlled Organisation (WSCCO) to deliver water services. QLDC retains sole ownership, but the operations will be governed and operated by an expert Board and a standalone organisation.
- The 'Head start' initiative whereby central government requires local government amalgamation proposals by 9 August 2026. The push is for unitary authorities that will take on the responsibilities for territorial and regional councils.
- The Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Bill currently before parliament which will include rates capping requirements and define 'core' services more tightly.
- The Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal which may impact on priorities for infrastructure development

Against this backdrop, council staff need to provide well thought out and clear advice and options for elected members. The thinking, planning and costing of the above initiatives comes on top of already heavy workloads which can impact what gets done and when. The refreshed library strategy will provide clear direction and outcomes for the next five years to assist with forward planning.

Population growth

The district is experiencing very significant population growth, and this is projected to continue with the resident population reaching over 114,000 by 2057. When the strategy was adopted in 2020 the projected population to 2048 was 74,420. The projected population to 2047 is now 97,330. The rate of growth has accelerated. In addition to this growth in the resident

population, visitor numbers are also projected to increase. The average daily visitor numbers are projected to increase from 26,598 in 2020 to 57,729 in 2057 with a peak day seeing these numbers more than treble.

The diversity of the population is also increasing. Queenstown is the second most culturally diverse territorial authority in New Zealand, with around 40% of residents born overseas. While many of those who are on working visas come from European countries, there is also a strong contingent with Asian backgrounds, and the visitor population brings in many different nationalities from all round the world.

- At the 2023 census 6.4% of the population identified as Māori – up 1.4% since 2018.
- European is the largest ethnic group at 82.8% up from 79% in 2018.
- Asian population is the second largest ethnic group is at 10.5% up 1.5%
- Middle Eastern/Latin American/African accounted for 5.3%, Pacific Peoples 1.5%

(Source: Statistics NZ, Census 2023 – note people may identify with more than one ethnicity making the total more than 100%)

The diversity and growth in population remains the single biggest challenge for developing library services that are accessible and equitable. Space for people-based activities in all libraries is severely limited. Visitors and tourists add to the congestion and can cause tensions between the various users. Given that the Council's 2050 vision is inclusive and welcoming to visitors the lack of space in libraries which results in negative attitudes, is an issue.

A development plan for meeting library infrastructure needs of the district is proposed below.

Community and stakeholder voice

Focus Groups

64 people attended focus groups in Wānaka, Frankton and Queenstown during the week of 15-18 June 2026. The ranged in age from under 18 to older people and from different groups and organisations. The purpose of the focus groups was to identify what the community see as the benefits or value of having libraries in the community, and to seek and explore ideas on what was important for libraries to focus on in the future.

Benefits

The reasons people valued libraries can be summarised as:

- Safe, welcoming community space
- Trusted service, providing face-to face support
- Sustainable - sharing of resources (books, tech, tools etc)
- Community wellbeing - bringing people together
- Learning and creativity opportunities
- Inclusive - a place for all ages, stages, and abilities
- Broadens horizons – through exposure to diverse views and people
- Affordable in a time of rising cost of living

Thirty things

Participants were asked to select their top ten things from a list of thirty ideas for change or improvement. These were collated on to a master sheet for each focus group. Following discussion people were asked to vote for their top five as a priority. The combined results from all three focus groups for the top 10 were:

Activity / Idea	Combined scores
Bookable space for community groups	62
Speakers on current topics	56
Quiet areas for study and reading	51
Extended opening hours	44
Space for exhibitions/displays	40
More programmes for children	38
Support for those with neuro diverse conditions	38
Improved parking: accessible, bike, eBike, parents	37
Support for te reo, te Ao Māori and tikanga	37
Maker labs	37

Other ideas

Participants were also asked for their own ideas, which were many and varied. Of note were the number of people with skills and ideas for clubs and activities which they would be in a good position to lead. These people can be approached to be the catalyst for some of the activities. If possible, libraries can provide the space for the clubs to meet. Their comments suggest the following priorities, roughly in order of how often they were mentioned. See Appendix 2 for a more comprehensive list.

- More and larger library spaces (by far the strongest theme)
- More programmes, events and learning opportunities
- Greater selection of collections, especially digital collections and Library of Things
- Support for children, young people and families
- Improved communication and promotion of services
- Greater inclusion and support for migrants and diverse communities
- Longer opening hours and improved accessibility
- Technology and AI learning
- Partnerships, sustainability and staff support

“Operating within council organisations, libraries are just one of many services councils provide. This makes it essential for libraries to clearly demonstrate not only the services they offer but, more importantly, the real impact those services have on individuals and communities. Evidence-based reporting strengthens the case for ongoing support and strategic development.”

- PLNZ Community Impact Report

Surveys

Queenstown Lakes Libraries participated in the 2025 PLNZ Community Impact report designed to measure the outcomes delivered by public libraries. This enables the libraries to compare themselves with the national results and allows for tracking improvements over time. Queenstown Lakes Libraries results are below.

Percentage of survey participants who agreed that the public library has:



In 2024 the libraries conducted their own survey with very similar results. The QLDC 2026 Community Insights survey noted that 28% had visited a library at least once a month and 57% at least once in 12 months (Indoor sports facilities were 22% and 51% respectively. 5% of people commented on the need for Library upgrades, more libraries and longer opening hours. These qualitative surveys will be important in measuring the outcomes from the refreshed strategy.

Insights from interviews

Fifteen council managers and staff were interviewed. There were many helpful and positive individual comments which were passed to the library team. There are close relationships with:

- Sport and Recreation who have bins for people to return items which they check in for libraries
- Community Partnerships in delivering Welcoming Communities and English as a second language (ESOL) programmes.
- Library maintenance and infrastructure needs are handled by the Property Team
- Back office services from Finance and Information Technology
- Strategic Projects are currently involved in developing the community infrastructure requirements for new developments including libraries.

The manager in council with responsibility for iwi relationships is supportive of library initiatives that focus on bringing te reo and te Ao Māori to the fore. His advice was to embed the Kāi Tahu values framework (see Appendix 3) in the refreshed strategy so they can be referenced when developing new service or initiatives.

In summary the interviews suggest the strategy should be built around six overarching priorities:

- Position libraries as connected community hubs.
- Plan proactively for population growth and future infrastructure.
- Demonstrate community value through evidence and outcomes.
- Strengthen social inclusion, wellbeing and belonging.
- Prepare for digital transformation, particularly AI.
- Operate as an integrated district-wide network supported by partnerships.

A fuller account is attached as Appendix 4

These priorities align well with current local government drivers—focusing on delivering measurable community outcomes, making efficient use of infrastructure, and ensuring libraries remain essential civic assets rather than being perceived simply as places to borrow books.

Queenstown Lakes District Libraries Development Plan

Although the strategy refresh is only covering a further five years, the long-term development plan for library provision takes a 20-30 year view, so that costs, resources and time needed for each development can be spread in a manageable way.

Queenstown Lakes District is the 6th largest district in the country with long distances to travel between the outer boundaries of the district and between the two wards of Whakatipu and Upper Clutha. There are eight libraries in the district: Queenstown, Frankton, Arrowtown, Kingston and Glenorchy in the Wakatipu area and Wānaka, Hāwea and Makarora in the Upper Clutha. The Frankton Library was established in December 2018 to cater for the rapid growth in this part of the district.

“Libraries are an engine room of social mobility...walking into a library is often the first step a person takes out of social exclusion, unemployment and poverty”.

- Darren McGarvey, *Poverty Safari*

“Libraries stand for and exemplify something that needs defending: the public institutions that — even in an age of atomization, polarization and inequality — serve as the bedrock of civil society”

- Eric Klinenberg, *Sociologist*

Libraries as community hubs

Over the past two decades libraries have become places with people at the centre. They have become a third space: safe, nearby, inviting, relevant, free, and available for people to stay as long as they need. Such a space matters when communities experience loneliness, polarisation, and declining institutional trust.

Libraries are no longer simply a community service; they are essential social infrastructure that helps communities thrive. They are strategic assets of local government as trusted institutions of social engagement, civil society and democracy.

A modern library has multi-functional spaces for community activity: learning, meeting, events and programmes, study, working away from home. Spaces can be booked by individuals and groups, or the same spaces may be used for library activities.

A library community hub is best located with other facilities that residents use. In New Zealand there are many different examples – libraries in a shopping mall, co-located with swimming pools or other recreational centres, close to health clinics or supermarkets, or part of a museum/art complex. Public private partnerships are a possibility to help with funding. Encouraging developer-led models may be the answer where there is significant new housing developments.

Given the programme of development over the next 20-30 years, the Council will be looking for creative solutions for meeting the library and community infrastructure needs.

Site analysis

The analysis of potential sites for libraries in Queenstown, Frankton and Wānaka, produced by Athfield Architects, was updated in 2024 to include potential sites to serve the rapidly growing populations in the eastern and southern corridors (Ladies Mile, Shotover Country, Jacks Point). The draft document was updated to help support the development of the 2027-37 Long Term Plan and provide possible sites for future investment. The document supports preferred sites for a District Library Hub in Wānaka at Three Parks, and the Queenstown Events Centre for Frankton. It is also supportive of a centrally located Queenstown Library ideally in the area set aside for Project Manawa.

Library hierarchy strategy

Right sizing a library community hub needs to take account of the population to be served, the collection size and the types of community and activity spaces needed. We have used both the New Zealand Public Library Standards and the People Places⁵ methodology to provide for a square meterage per 1000 capita, ranging from 45m² to 70m² depending on the hierarchy of libraries as described below.

⁵ People Places: a guide for public library buildings in New South Wales. 3rd ed. State Library of New South Wales, 2012

District Library Community Hub	Queenstown, Frankton, Wānaka (Three Parks)	Strategically located libraries with additional services and spaces that service the whole district Ideally within 15 minutes' drive from most parts of the district. Size: 60-70m2 per 1000 population.
Local Library Community Hub	Arrowtown, Hāwea, Wānaka, Eastern and Southern Corridors	Community library with activity and community space for learning, programmes and meeting, 5-10 minute drive. Size: 50-60m2 per 1000 population
Neighbourhood Library	Glenorchy, Kingston, Makarora	Predominantly space for resources, and smaller space for shared library and community use. A neighbourhood library is more than 30 minutes' drive to a District Library Community Hub. Size: 45-50m2 per 1000 population

Population projections for each library catchment to 2057, plus average day visitors are attached as Appendix 5. An assumption has been made that 7% of average day visitors may use a library. Further evidence is required to support this assumption.

Library facilities

Queenstown Library

When the Libraries Strategy was developed in 2020, the Queenstown Library was being considered as part of Project Manawa which aimed to deliver “a range of cultural and community facilities such as a community and arts spaces, a new dedicated library, a performance and visual arts centre, a town square, and commercial buildings, as well as the Council's new administration building”⁶

Whether or not this project proceeds, the need for a new library remains. If the Stage 2 Arterial Transport Project goes ahead, the library will be demolished, and a new site will need to be found.

The Queenstown Library has a 150 year history. It can play a vital and different role in the life of the town and the district. It still needs to be a community library for the residents, but it can also be a place where visitors learn about the stories of the district, a place where people meet, sit, work away from home, or browse in between events or meetings. The library would be the ‘living room’ of the town, used by both locals and visitors.

The place should have an upmarket feel. It could be located with other performing arts activities, Council services or fit in with the retail and business part of the town. It should have a ‘commons’⁷ – a place where people can use their own device, access public wifi, find a comfortable seat and browse a magazine, or new book. Digital displays of the district’s stories, bookable meeting rooms and open space that can host an event or an exhibition is suggested. All of this should be ground floor activity, readily accessible from the street. The library collections, children’s area and activity space for library programmes, technology opportunities and customer support would feed on from the commons, or could be upstairs, or on a mezzanine, providing some separation of the differing needs of users. The projected population growth of the Queenstown catchment over the next 30 years is 16,384. The required space to cater for this population is approximately 1250m2.

Frankton Library

Frankton Library is currently in rented premises, with the lease expiring in December 2027 which could be extended to 2030 with a further right of renewal until December 2033, until a new larger library is built. This library is the ‘workhorse’ for the district serving a fast growing residential and commercial clientele as well as the growing areas of the Eastern and Southern corridors. The population of the three areas will be just over 25,000 by 2027 rising to a projected 49,500 by 2057. There are three options for addressing this growth.

⁶ <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/council-projects/project-manawa/>

⁷ David Bollier Why we must talk about the information commons.

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oitp/publications/infocommons0204/brolier>

- Option 1 - Build a single library in Frankton that will serve the entire catchment of Frankton, Eastern and Southern Corridors. This option would require a building of between 3000-3500m². New libraries would not be built in the Eastern and Southern Corridors.
- Option 2 - Build a library to serve the expected growth in only the Frankton catchment which is projected to be over 21,000 in 2057. The size for the Frankton Library would be 1500-1550m².
- Option 3: Lease a larger building/floor in a suitable location in the Frankton Area

Possible site locations for the Frankton Library were considered in the Athfield report with the preferred site being adjacent to the Queenstown Events Centre.

These options require a detailed business case regarding the costs and benefits. However, given that there are likely to be other community facilities required in the Eastern and Southern Corridors which libraries could be part of, it is likely that Option 2 would be preferred. This is the option used in the Catchment projections in Appendix 5.

The Frankton Library will be a busy suburban style library with activity and community meeting spaces able to be booked by the community for their own activities. It would also have a large maker lab with audio visual and music making facilities that can serve the wider Whakatipu area. It is possible in the future if some of the back office functions get centralised it may have a district library function, as it is a more central location with closer access to Upper Clutha as well as Central Otago (should local government amalgamation of the two districts occur).

Wānaka Library

Wānaka Library is currently located in the heart of the township but with somewhat difficult access and parking. The current population is 16,144 and projected to be 33,945 by 2057. There are two options for addressing the necessary library services for the population:

- Option 1 – build a new larger District Library Hub in the Three Parks area and close the current Wānaka Library. A building of 2400-2500m² is needed to cater for the expected population growth.
- Option 2 – Build a smaller new library in the Three Parks area which would cater for Greater Wānaka (22,207 plus 7% visitors) except for Wānaka Central and Wānaka Lakefront (11,738 plus 7% visitors). The required size of Three Parks library would be 1550m². The existing library of 580m² would be retained to service Wānaka Central and lakefront, and the interior refurbished.

Further work on a detailed business case needs to be completed to understand the benefits and relative costs of the two options.

Whichever is the preferred option the larger library needs to provide similar facilities to the Frankton Library. If the existing library is retained it could be orientated to serving an older clientele with a smaller collection, a seniors' lounge, an area for group activities and a smaller 'commons' for device and wifi users plus two small meeting rooms. The local history society's records could be retained here with greater support for those wanting to research family or local history. The main children's library and teens space would be at Three Parks, but a smaller younger children's area could be retained at the existing Wānaka Library. Space for staff would be minimal as support would be handled at Three Parks with the staff at Wānaka focused on helping customers.

Whakatipu

Arrowtown Library is on reserve land, and an extension is proposed for the next LTP. Currently the population catchment for the library is 3058 projected to grow to 3369 by 2057 plus 7% visitors. The recommended size is for 200m² library requiring a 60m² extension for meeting and activity space.

Kingston Library is currently 41m² and serving a population of 474. By 2057 the population is projected to be 1440. Longer term an extension of 30-35m² will be needed to cater for the growth in residents and visitors. No site location work has been requested should a different location be needed.

Glenorchy Library is the smallest branch at 28m². The population is projected to grow to 791 in 2057 from 475 currently. There is no space for community meeting or library activity. Ideally a 22m² extension would address this deficit.

Upper Clutha

Hāwea Library's population catchment is currently 4255, projected to double to 8757 in the next 30 years. A small extension is proposed for the next LTP which will be adequate in the medium term. Longer term a new local library community hub in a location nearer the commercial and retail and areas away from the lake front should be considered. This location is nearer where the housing developments are happening and where parents and families

are settling. Lake front properties are already selling at very high prices with the potential for these to be holiday homes rather than permanent residents. A library of around 530m² is recommended for a new build/lease. No site location work was requested for the Hāwea Library.

Makarora Library is a partnership with the local primary school. The school provides the building and staff, and the Council provides resources and services for the community. The population in 2023 census was 102 and although there is some new housing development the population is still small. Should the partnership with the school come to an end (the school has indicated it may need to use the space for other purposes) an alternative to a physical library is probably more effective. Possibilities include a mobile library service, postal service for reading materials, book lockers where a collection could be accessed and holds collected. This does not address the social and other benefits of libraries, but it would ensure residents have access to physical library resources. Community consultation should help shape any preferred option of delivery. No site location work was requested for this library.

Potential new libraries

Fast Track development approvals and sustained district growth are likely to influence both the scale and location of future demand for library services. As new communities emerge and existing urban areas intensify, there may be a need to review library provision models, expand existing facilities, introduce new service points, increase digital capability, and integrate libraries within broader community hub developments. The pace and distribution of growth will remain a key consideration in future capital planning, service development and investment prioritisation.

The areas to the northeast and south of Frankton (the Eastern and Southern Corridors) are the fastest growing subdivisions in the Whakatipu. The Eastern Corridor, currently with a population of 9484 is projected to grow to 15,024 by 2057 and the Southern Corridor, currently 6639, is projected to grow to 14,418. In the long term these two areas would benefit from community facilities which include libraries. In the short to medium term, a larger Frankton library as proposed above will be able to accommodate the combined populations. The Athfield report highlighted potential sites for two libraries. Securing land will ensure development is possible in the long term.

Timing of library developments

Planning and delivering new social infrastructure has a long gestation period and has a wide range of variables that impact on delivery, i.e. Three Waters Infrastructure developments/demographics, funding impacts, education facilities etc. At least 5 years is needed for the more significant projects which includes planning, business case development, necessary consultation, funding, design and construction and operational fitout. This is a significant group of developments and at best is likely to take 15-20 years to achieve. Funding the developments needs to fit with other council priorities. An indicative timeline is attached as Appendix 6.

Conclusion

This review confirms that the Libraries Strategy 2020–2030 has provided a sound direction for the development of library services across the district. Significant progress has been made in improving access, expanding services and collections, strengthening community partnerships, and demonstrating the value libraries contribute to community wellbeing.

At the same time, the environment in which libraries operate has changed considerably. Rapid population growth, increasing diversity, changing patterns of community use, technological advances and wider social and economic pressures are reshaping both community expectations and the role of public libraries.

The evidence gathered through this review consistently points to libraries having become essential social infrastructure. They provide trusted public spaces where people connect, learn, create, access reliable information and participate in community life. They support social cohesion, lifelong learning, digital inclusion and community resilience while contributing directly to Council's vision for thriving people and connected communities.

Meeting the needs of a rapidly growing district will require investment not only in buildings, but also in people, partnerships and new ways of working. Long-term planning for library infrastructure, a review of the operating model, continued development of staff capability, and greater use of evidence to demonstrate community outcomes will position the service to respond effectively to future challenges and opportunities.

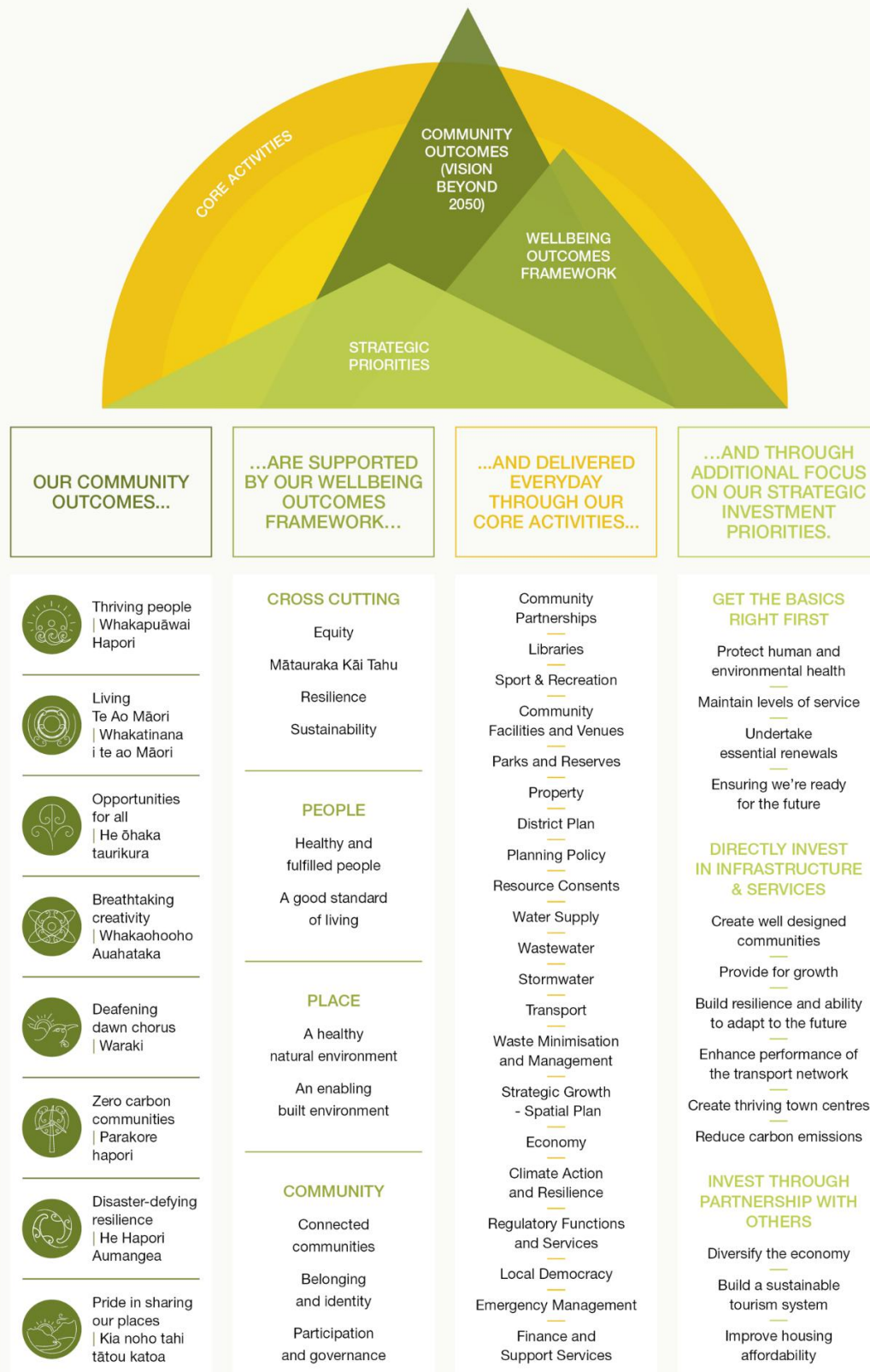
The refreshed Library Strategy builds on the strong foundations established in 2020 while responding to the changing needs of the Queenstown Lakes District. It provides a clear direction for the next five years and establishes the framework for longer-term investment, ensuring libraries continue to be trusted, accessible and valued community assets that help people and communities thrive.

The strategic priorities can be summed up as follows:

Strategic Priority	Why it matters
Libraries as essential social infrastructure	Libraries strengthen wellbeing, resilience, inclusion and belonging. They are at the heart of civil society and our democratic way of life.
Planning for growth	Population growth requires long-term investment in library infrastructure. A hierarchy of libraries is proposed which views the libraries as community hubs.
Strengthening communities	Libraries offer welcoming places, quality collections, technologies and services for learning, connection and participation, providing opportunities for all, and helping people thrive.
One district-wide network	Operating strategically improves sustainability and efficiency while retaining local identity and face to face customer support by staff.
Professional library staff	Skilled, qualified library staff are at the heart of an effective library service. Ensuring sufficient staffing capacity, capability, and expertise enables libraries to build strong, connected, and informed communities and respond to local needs with trusted professional guidance.
Demonstrating value	Evidence and partnerships build the case for continued investment and tell the story of libraries.

Appendices

Appendix 1: QLDC Strategic Framework



Appendix 2: Focus group ideas

Theme	Summary of suggestions
1. Larger, more flexible library spaces	Larger or purpose-built libraries; more seating; dedicated event spaces; meeting rooms; quiet study and remote work areas; cosy reading spaces; outdoor areas; staff work areas; music and art spaces; sensory spaces for neurodivergent children; libraries remaining central to their communities.
2. More programmes, events and lifelong learning	More book clubs, author talks, writers' groups, LitFest, workshops, games clubs, LEGO, STEM/robotics, Rubik's Cube club, homeschool groups, themed quizzes, science activities, sustainability programmes, practical skills, founder/business support, parenting education, AI education, lifelong learning opportunities, afternoon children's activities.
3. Community connection and wellbeing	Libraries as welcoming, social, "no shush" spaces; coffee mornings; cafés/coffee carts; meet-and-greet sessions; connecting generations; reducing isolation; mental wellbeing; outreach; safe and free community spaces; helping people make friends.
4. Support for children, young people and families	Programmes for babies, children, tweens and teens; keeping young people reading; YA promotion; dyslexia-friendly resources; support for struggling readers; family programmes; parent education; homeschool support; equal opportunities for children.
5. Inclusion, diversity and migrant support	Diverse collections and events; multilingual collections; language exchange; ESOL support; bilingual staff; welcoming LGBTQIA+ communities; programmes for newcomers and migrants; culturally diverse events; Māori language and music.
6. Collections and borrowing	More eBooks and audiobooks; faster digital access; science fiction; world language collections; dyslexia-friendly books; podcasts; Library of Things; toy exchange; seed library; instrument and kit lending; single regional catalogue; easier interloans.
7. Technology and digital capability	AI education and everyday AI skills; technology blended with personal service; digital literacy; website improvements; promotion of BorrowBox; app notifications; technology help for seniors.
8. Community partnerships and outreach	Greater collaboration with schools, early childhood centres, aged care, businesses and community organisations; community directories; better promotion through partner networks; community book drop-off points.
9. Communication and marketing	Better promotion of services and events; monthly programme guides; apps and notifications; school newsletters; community noticeboards; clearer information about library services and resources.
10. Opening hours and access	Longer opening hours; Sunday opening; evening hours; increased hours for Hāwea and Kingston; morning opening; improved access to services.
11. Parking and location	More parking, free parking, addressing congestion, and maintaining libraries in central, accessible locations.
12. Staff and customer service	More staff; maintaining friendly, knowledgeable service; better remuneration for librarians; continuing personalised assistance while embracing technology.
13. Sustainability	Book donations; seed libraries; sustainability policies; environmentally focused programmes; sharing and reuse initiatives.

Appendix 3: Kāi Tahu values framework

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION
<i>Whanaukataka</i>	Family and community focused	Ensuring consideration of the social implications of decisions to enable community and whanau connections and growth.
<i>Manaakitaka</i>	Hospitality	Demonstrating behaviour that acknowledges others, through the expression of aroha, hospitality, generosity and mutual respect.
<i>Rakatirataka</i>	Leadership	Ensuring the treaty partnership is recognised to enable mana whenua leadership in decision making processes.
<i>Haere whakamua</i>	Future focused	Adopting a forward looking orientation with future generations in mind.
<i>Tikaka</i>	Appropriate action	Ensuring consideration of the appropriateness of decisions that will have a bearing on social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes.
<i>Kaitiakitaka</i>	Stewardship	Enabling the inherited responsibility of mana whenua to support and protect people, the environment, knowledge, culture, language and resources on behalf of future generations.
<i>Mauri</i>	Life force	Recognising the life force in all lands, waters and the natural environment that stems from time immemorial, requiring a high duty of care for kaitiaki (and others) to maintain an intact and healthy mauri, ensuring that what is gifted from the Atua is not neglected.

Appendix 4: Feedback from Interviews

Strategic issues identified through interviews with Managers and key staff in other Council Departments.

1. Position libraries as community hubs, not just libraries (Highest priority)	This was the strongest and most consistent theme. Rather than planning for traditional library buildings, future facilities should be conceived as multi-purpose community hubs that combine library services with community, cultural and civic functions. Interviewees consistently argued that "library" no longer describes the breadth of what the service provides. Key implications: • Co-locate with other community facilities wherever possible. • Design flexible spaces that can evolve over time. • Build libraries as civic destinations and social infrastructure. • Position libraries as the "virtual town square."
2. Growth requires proactive planning	The district is growing rapidly but community infrastructure consistently lags population growth. Several interviewees stressed that the strategy should identify population triggers, growth areas, future library locations and service standards before land is lost to development. The strategy should become a planning document that Property can use
3. Libraries need a much stronger evidence base	Perhaps the biggest governance message. Council increasingly expects evidence-based investment, measurable community outcomes, return on investment and benchmarking. Interviewees repeatedly noted that libraries do excellent work but struggle to demonstrate impact. The strategy should therefore include: outcome measures, benefit reporting, benchmarking, evaluation framework

4. Libraries are critical social infrastructure	Libraries were repeatedly described as delivering outcomes well beyond books. They contribute to social cohesion and belonging, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, wellbeing and welcoming newcomers, and emergency resilience, as civic spaces during emergencies. The strategy should frame libraries as preventive community infrastructure rather than discretionary services.
5. Prioritise programmes and strengthen partnerships	Several people noted libraries try to "do everything." The recommendation was not to reduce programming but to become more strategic by identifying priority audiences, focusing investment, using partnerships and stopping lower value activities. Key partners include Welcoming Communities, schools, community organisations, social service agencies, multicultural groups, disability organisations and businesses. Libraries should see themselves as co-deliverers of wider Council strategies. A clear programme framework would help.
6. Digital inclusion will evolve into AI inclusion	Technology discussion focused less on equipment and more on capability. Libraries have an emerging role in AI literacy, helping with safe and confident navigation of AI access and digital coaching. Just as libraries bridged the digital divide for internet access, they may become the community's trusted access point for AI. Staff capability will be crucial.
7. Plan for diverse communities	The district is becoming increasingly diverse. Libraries need to remain welcoming and inclusive while tailoring programmes and spaces for changing demographics.
8. Space is becoming the limiting factor	Across almost every discussion there was recognition that existing facilities are under pressure. The issue is not simply larger buildings but more versatile ones. Future libraries require: • flexible programming space • collaborative areas • quiet study • meeting rooms • technology-enabled spaces • adaptable layouts
9. Think district-wide rather than branch-by-branch	Growth and constrained funding mean the library network should increasingly operate as a single district service. This includes coordinated planning, consistent service standards, shared collections, integrated technology, complementary rather than competing facilities.

Appendix 5: Catchments: population projections and library size

Area	Pop projection				Av day visitors 2057	Total pop served	Approx Size per 1000 pop	Current size
	2027	2037	2047	2057	at 7%		Between 45-70m2	
Frankton , Quail Rise, Frankton Arm, Kelvin Heights	9048	13,013	16,730	20,135	1030	21,165	1500	658.59m2
Eastern Corridor : Shotover Country, Lake Hayes Estate, Wakatipu Basin Other, Lake Hayes, Ladies Mile, Gibbston Valley, Outer Wakatipu Other	9484	11,584	13,379	15,024	214	15,238	900	
Southern Corridor : Jacks Point	6639	9857	12,237	14,418	182	14,600	875	
Queenstown Central, Queenstown East, Queenstown Hill, Warren Park, Sunshine Bay / Fernhill, Arthurs Point	9028	12,053	14,314	16,384	1373	17,757	1250	506m2
Arrowtown , Millbrook	3058	3157	3267	3368	119	3487	200	145m2
Glenorchy Township and Glenorchy Other	570	661	729	791	60	851	50	28m2
Kingston	475	855	1160	1440	23	1463	75	41m2
Whakatipu Ward	38,302	51,180	61,816	71,560		74,561		
Wānaka Central, Wānaka Waterfront, Wānaka North, Northlake, Albert Town	4386	7330	9631	11,738	401	12,139	580	580m2
	(7812)	(8698)	(9352)	(9952)	(178)			
Wānaka West, Cardrona Valley, Cardona Other	(3165)	(4928)	(9085)	(10,976)	(280)			
Luggate	(781)	(987)	(1139)	(1279)	(17)			
Wānaka Three Parks library (covering 3 areas above)	11758	14613	19576	22207	475	22,682	1550	
Hāwea) Lake Hāwea, Hāwea Flat, Upper Clutha Valley, Outer Wānaka (Includes Makarora)	4255	5726	7307	8757	129	8886	530	169.7m2 - H 60m2 - M
Upper Clutha Ward	20,399	27,669	36,514	42,702		43,707		
Total population of the district	58,701	78,849	97,330	114,262		118,268		

Appendix 6: Indicative timeline for development

	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/.32	32/33	33/34	34/35	35/36	36/37	37/38	38/39	39/40	40/41	41/44	44/47
	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14	Yrs 15-17	Yrs 18-20
<i>Arrowtown extension</i>	✓	✓														
<i>Hāwea extension</i>	✓	✓														
<i>Frankton</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
<i>Wānaka (Three Parks</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
<i>Queenstown</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
<i>Wānaka (refurbishment of existing)</i>										✓						
<i>Kingston</i>											✓					
<i>Glenorchy</i>											✓					
<i>Hāwea (new Library)</i>												✓	✓	✓		
<i>Eastern Corridor</i>															✓	
<i>Southern Corridor</i>																✓

Note: the cost implications around the timings and total spend are subject to Councils Long Term Plan priorities

Queenstown Lakes
District Council

Draft

Libraries Strategy 2020-
2031

Refreshed July 2026



Sue Sutherland Consulting

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Foreword

Libraries Strategy 2020-2031

Vision and purpose

Queenstown Lakes District Libraries: Enriching minds and communities
Te whakapuāwai I kā hinengaro me kā hapori.

Our purpose is to connect people with information, ideas, stories and experiences for learning, literacy, engagement and creativity.

Our goal is to provide libraries that are inclusive, safe, welcoming community hubs, with spaces, collections, technologies, events and programmes that support communities to thrive, builds social cohesion and strengthens civic participation and democracy.

We are committed to working in partnership with communities, organisations and business to build a vibrant, responsive and valued service supported by professional knowledgeable and skilled staff. Our partnership with Kāi Tahu will influence how spaces and services are shaped.

Principles and values

Important principles lie at the heart of what libraries do:



- Freedom of information – the right of an individual to access knowledge and ideas within the law
- Equity of access – ensuring all have access to learning and knowledge regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status or ability
- Diversity and inclusivity - Collections and services reflect the plurality of the community, actively welcoming all cultures, identities, and perspectives.
- Sustainability - demonstrating leadership in sustainable practices to deliver value

The Kāi Tahu values framework guides how we deliver our principles and services

Value	Description	Application in the library context
Whanaukataka	Family and community focused	Establishing relationships to enable community and whanau connections and growth
Manaakitaka	Hospitality	Our welcome is warm and genuine, demonstrating kindness and generosity of spirit
Kaitiakitaka	Stewardship	Working in partnership with mana whenua to protect Mātauranga Māori for future generations
Tikaka	Appropriate action	Taking te Ao Māori (world view) into account in decision making
Haere whakamua	Future focused	Adopting a forward looking orientation with future generations in mind.

A focus on the future

The review at the halfway point of the strategy confirms that the Libraries Strategy 2020–2030 has provided a sound direction for the development of library services across the district. Significant progress has been made in improving access, expanding services and collections, strengthening community partnerships, and demonstrating the value libraries contribute to community wellbeing.

The environment in which libraries operate has changed. Rapid population growth, increasing diversity, changing patterns of community use, technological advances such as AI, and wider social and economic pressures are reshaping both community expectations and the role of public libraries. This is occurring at a time of proposed, significant change in



local government in New Zealand which could potentially change the future structure of the council organisation and governance.

Meeting the needs of a rapidly growing district will require investment not only in buildings, but also in people, partnerships and new ways of working. Positioning the service to respond effectively to future challenges and opportunities requires:

- Long-term planning for library infrastructure
- Continued development of staff capacity and capability
- A review of the operating model
- Greater use of evidence to demonstrate community outcomes

Evidence points to libraries having become essential social infrastructure providing trusted public spaces where people connect, learn, create, access reliable information and participate in community life. They support social cohesion, lifelong learning, digital inclusion and community resilience while contributing directly to Council's vision for thriving people and connected communities.

The strategic priorities can be summed up as follows:

Strategic Priority	Why it matters
Libraries as essential social infrastructure	Libraries strengthen wellbeing, resilience, inclusion and belonging. They are at the heart of civil society and our democratic way of life.
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Strengthening communities	Libraries offer welcoming places, quality collections, technologies and services for learning, connection and participation, providing opportunities for all, and helping people thrive.
One district-wide network	Operating strategically improves sustainability and efficiency while retaining local identity and face to face customer support by staff.
Professional Library staff	Skilled, qualified library staff are at the heart of an effective library service. Ensuring sufficient staffing capacity, capability, and expertise enables libraries to build strong, connected, and informed communities and respond to local needs with trusted professional guidance.
Demonstrating value	Evidence and partnerships build the case for continued investment and tell the story of libraries.

Alignment with Council Strategic outcomes

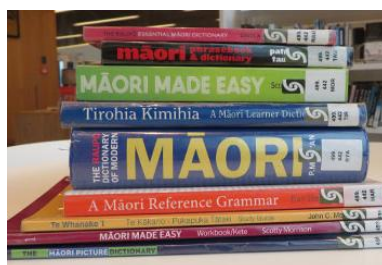
Our libraries strategy framework aligns with four of the Council's Strategic priorities

QLDC community outcomes	Wellbeing outcomes framework	Library focus areas	Library outcomes
Thriving people	Equity, Mātauraka Kāi Tahu, Resilience, sustainability	Literacy and Language	Expanded horizons through reading and debate
Living Te Ao Māori	Healthy and fulfilled people, a good standard of living	Learning for life	Opportunities for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
Opportunities for all	Connected communities, belonging and identity, participation and governance	Connected vibrant communities	Stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion
Breathtaking creativity		Equity and Access	More people benefit from resilient sustainable library services

The following four focus areas provide a framework for delivering on our vision and purpose. They are designed to meet the priority needs identified by the community, take advantage of new opportunities and contribute to the vision and goals of the Queenstown Lakes District Council. A summary of the inputs from stakeholders is in Appendix 2.

Focus areas

Focus Area	Literacy and language
Outcome	Expanded horizons through reading and debate
<i>“Those under 35 are more likely to engage with e-books and audiobooks than any other age. They are significantly more likely to gain recommendations for books on Instagram or BookTok, or to discuss books on social media.”¹</i> <i>“Reading transports us to worlds we would never see, introduces us to people we would never meet, and instils emotions we might never otherwise feel”.²</i> <i>“The ability to conceive, articulate, and evaluate arguments remains ...the lifeblood of democracy and society”.⁴ – University of Washington</i>	The ability to read is foundational to success in life. We know that children who have stories read to them hear up to 1 million³ more words by the time they are five, setting them up for better outcomes in education and life. As with any skill, the more reading is practised the better reader a person becomes. Reading widely broadens understanding and deepens critical thinking. In a world overloaded with information, discerning what is fact from fake and having access to trusted and reliable information is vitally important for decision making. Digital literacy skills help users evaluate and understand the accuracy of the search results that increasingly AI tools provide. Language is crucial to understanding culture. New Zealand is the home of te reo Māori. Providing resources and programmes that actively support the spoken and written word is a priority, as is providing resources in other languages spoken in the home and supporting those for whom English is a second language. Fostering debate and discussion and taking part in civic life encourages understanding and tolerance. Our libraries have a role as the ‘agora’ or place of assembly where ideas can be debated and kōrero happen resulting in new ideas and creating new knowledge. What do we want to achieve? 1.1 Children and teens becoming lifelong readers 1.2 Te reo Māori is used more widely and celebrated 1.3 Users are confident in discovering and evaluating digital and AI generated information 1.4 Diverse and inclusive collections that encourage people to read widely How will this be done? • Continue programmes and activities that support reading and discussion, e.g. book clubs, author talks, speakers on topical issues – for all ages • Develop a Zine collection for teens • Strengthen eCollections to support sustainability, te reo Māori ESOL, Dementia, neurodiversity, World languages, recreational reading • Implement Nga Upoko Takutaku subject headings • Explore national access to eResources to broaden range of collections • Provide one on one support and programmes to improve digital skills and digital literacy in an AI world • Ensure our policies and procedures around freedom to read are strong and staff are supported to uphold them.

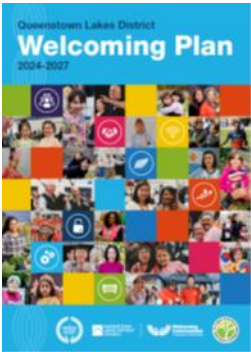


¹ National Reading survey 2025. Read NZ Te Pou Muramura. <https://www.read-nz.org/what-we-do/national-reading-survey>

² <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/541158/scientific-reasons-you-should-read-more>

³ Petsko, Emily. Kids whose parents read to them hear up to 1.4 million more words. <http://mentalfloss.com/article/579224/kids-whose-parents-read-aloud-to-them-understand-a-million-more-words>

⁴ <http://www.com.washington.edu/debate/why-debate/>

Focus Area Outcome	Connected, vibrant communities <i>Stronger sense of belonging and community cohesion</i>
<i>“The future of democratic societies rests not simply on shared values but on shared spaces” – Eric Klinenberg⁶</i> <i>“When libraries are strong, communities thrive. Strong libraries build strong communities.”</i> - American Library Association 	Libraries are essential social infrastructure. They are no longer defined primarily by their collections. They are trusted community assets that strengthen social connection, support lifelong learning, improve digital inclusion, foster creativity and innovation and contribute directly to community wellbeing, resilience and community cohesion. There is a significant shortfall in fit for purpose public library space over the district now and the projected population growth to 2057 will exacerbate this. A comprehensive development plan over a 20-30 year term is needed to aid long term planning and fiscal management. (Attached as Appendix 1). When we feel connected to each other and our culture is acknowledged we are more likely to participate in civic life. Connecting with our history helps us to learn about our place in the world. This connection with where we come from deepens our understanding of the impact of choices on future generations. Libraries are part of the ecosystem that collects and records the stories of their local place, keeping it safe and making it easily accessible to current and future generations through digital platforms. What do we want to achieve? 3.1 Library Community Hubs that are multi-functional spaces for communities 3.2 Libraries at the heart of Welcoming Communities 3.3 Celebration of our diverse heritage and unique stories How will this be done? • Work with Strategic Planning at the Council to present a comprehensive development plan for library community hub infrastructure • As a new facility is planned, develop the design brief that specifies requirements for collections, activity, seating, specialist areas, staff work areas etc using the <i>People Places</i> methodology as a guide⁷ • Work with Māori to ensure spaces and services reflect our unique culture and heritage • Establish a unified digital heritage repository to collect and make accessible the stories and images of the whole district, in partnership with Māori, local history and museum groups • Digitise important local content and provide avenues for storytelling, oral history and whakapapa • Ensure our library programmes and services provide opportunities for newcomers to connect and make it easy for them to use the library facilities and service. • Celebrate the important festivals and events of our diverse, multicultural community in partnership with others



Māori window design, Kaiapo Library



Devonport Library ©Athfield Architects



Te Aka Mauri Children's Health and Library Hub

⁶ Klinenberg, Eric *Palaces for the People: how social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarisation, and the decline of civic life*. New York, Crown, 2018.

⁷ *People Places: a guide for planning public libraries*. NSW State Government. <https://pls.sl.nsw.gov.au/managing-my-library/buildings-and-spaces/people-places>

Making it happen

There are three key elements needed to successfully deliver the strategy:

A great team

Users tell us that the help and expertise of staff is one of the most important aspects in their satisfaction with service. Having people with the right skills, knowledge, capabilities and attitudes is vital to achieving the strategy. As demand grows so will the need to increase the staff team. Capacity is stretched and Branch Managers of the three largest libraries must balance direct customer service along with staff management, planning and running the operation.

Population growth will drive a need for additional staff. Whether it is the establishment of a new library or to provide for service development in key areas such as longer hours of opening, Māori services, services for teens, or those with disabilities, new skills and capacity will be needed. Keeping abreast of digital technologies is another area that may need strengthening.

Staffing levels in 2026 are 29.15FTE. This equates to 1.49FTE per 3000 population. Comparison are possible with similar sized libraries. Whanganui has 1.59 FTE per 3000 and Central Otago District has 1.67FTE. They both have 7 library sites to Queenstown's 8 sites. By 2037 the population is expected to be 78,849 and if service levels are to be maintained at no less a rate, then another 10-12 FTE are likely to be needed.

Actions include:

- Develop the business case for additional staff
- Balance providing customer support with time to plan and focus on district wide responsibilities
- Develop the leadership capabilities of team members and provide opportunities for staff development, particularly in learning new skills and gaining professional qualifications
- Support staff to become proficient in AI platforms so they can support users

Smart, sustainable organisation

Sustainability in all its forms (economic, environmental and social) is a priority for QLDC's Vision 2050. For libraries this means working smarter, looking for efficiencies, reducing duplication of effort, managing resources wisely and using technology to simplify and refine processes. The library service has grown organically, with a high degree of local autonomy. While this has enabled each library to reflect the character of its community, as the service grows there is an opportunity to better balance local decision-making with the benefits of operating as a district-wide network.

is recommended covering:

- Services and levels of service to be delivered across the growing network
- How those services are delivered – identifying what needs to happen at a local level and what is more effective delivered centrally
- The skills, knowledge, qualifications and/or experience needed for any new or changed roles
- Potentially a new organisational structure

The operational review will need business development funding.

Initiatives include:

- Ensure staff participate in and provide information for the Operational Review
- Use data and information for smart evidence based decisions and for better outcome reporting
- Establish a business development budget line item to enable the organisation to buy in specialist expertise to assist with service design and review processes





Working in partnership

The special relationship with Māori as Treaty partner is acknowledged and we will look to strengthen our relationship with Kāi Tahu. This relationship influences all our focus areas and strategic goals.

The partnership with Central Otago District Libraries continues to deliver value, both economically in savings on a shared system and catalogue, and in the sharing of print and eResources. The wider collaboration with the libraries in Otago and Southland (Southlib) brings benefits from knowledge sharing and staff development. Nationally we leverage relationships with other public libraries and with Public Libraries New Zealand (PLNZ the sector body).

Locally, collaboration will depend on the nature of the community organisations and the initiative or programme to be delivered. At a district wide level collaborations and partnerships that are important to our strategy are a priority. This could include organisations involved with learning and literacy, technology partners, business and community associations, historical and arts associations and involving young people in the co-design and delivery of services for them.

We have increasingly strong collaboration and partnerships with other QLDC departments: Sport and recreation, Community Partnerships, Strategy, Property, Finance and IT and systems. Working together on shared council outcomes By working in a partnership approach, we will:

- Strengthen our relationship with Kāi Tahu – this will influence all focus areas and strategic goals
- Continue partnership with Central Otago and Southern libraries
- Work more closely with other council departments on shared outcomes
- Deliver more together than we can separately
- Develop relationships and networks that provide ideas and complement our expertise
- Strengthen our impact and visibility in the community

Appendices

Appendix 1: Queenstown Lakes District Libraries Development Plan

Although the strategy refresh is only covering a further five years, the long-term development plan for library provision takes a 20-30 year view, so that costs, resources and time needed for each development can be spread in a manageable way.

Queenstown Lakes District is the 6th largest district in the country with long distances to travel between the outer boundaries of the district and between the two wards of Whakatipu and Upper Clutha. There are eight libraries in the district: Queenstown, Frankton, Arrowtown, Kingston and Glenorchy in the Wakatipu area and Wānaka, Hāwea and Makarora in the Upper Clutha. The Frankton Library was established in December 2018 to cater for the rapid growth in this part of the district.

Libraries as community hubs

Over the past two decades libraries have become places with people at the centre. They have become a third space: safe, nearby, inviting, relevant, free, and available for people to stay as long as they need. Such a space matters when communities experience loneliness, polarisation, and declining institutional trust.

Libraries are no longer simply a community service; they are essential social infrastructure that helps communities thrive. They are strategic assets of local government as trusted institutions of social engagement, civil society and democracy.

A modern library has multi-functional spaces for community activity: learning, meeting, events and programmes, study, working away from home. Spaces can be booked by individuals and groups, or the same spaces may be used for library activities.

A library community hub is best located with other facilities that residents use. In New Zealand there are many different examples – libraries in a shopping mall, co-located with swimming pools or other recreational centres, close to health clinics or supermarkets, or part of a museum/art complex. Public private partnerships are a possibility to help with funding. Encouraging developer-led models may be the answer where there is significant new housing developments.

Given the programme of development over the next 20-30 years, the Council will be looking for creative solutions for meeting the library and community infrastructure needs.

Site analysis

The analysis of potential sites for libraries in Queenstown, Frankton and Wānaka, produced by Athfield Architects, was updated in 2024 to include potential sites to serve the rapidly growing populations in the eastern and southern corridors (Ladies Mile, Shotover Country, Jacks Point). The draft document was updated to help support the development of the 2027-37 Long Term Plan and provide possible sites for future investment. The document supports preferred sites for a District Library Hub in Wānaka at Three Parks adjacent to the Wānaka Recreation Centre and the Queenstown Events Centre for Frankton. It is also supportive of a centrally located Queenstown Library ideally in the area set aside for Project Manawa.

Library hierarchy strategy

Right sizing a library community hub needs to take account of the population to be served, the collection size and the types of community and activity spaces needed. We have used both the New Zealand Public Library Standards and the People Places⁸ methodology to provide for a square meterage per 1000 capita, ranging from 45m2 to 70m2 depending on the hierarchy of libraries as described below.

Tier	Locations	Criteria
District Library Community Hub	Queenstown, Frankton, Wānaka (Three Parks)	Strategically located libraries with additional services and spaces that service the whole district Ideally within 15 minutes’ drive from most parts of the district. Size: 60-70m2 per 1000 population.

⁸ People Places: a guide for public library buildings in New South Wales. 3rd ed. State Library of New South Wales, 2012

Local Library Community Hub	Arrowtown, Hāwea, Wānaka, Eastern and Southern Corridors	Community library with activity and community space for learning, programmes and meeting, 5-10 minute drive. Size: 50-60m ² per 1000 population
Neighbourhood Library	Glenorchy, Kingston, Makarora	Predominantly space for resources, and smaller space for shared library and community use. A neighbourhood library is more than 30 minutes' drive to a District Library Community Hub. Size: 45-50m ² per 1000 population

Population projections for each library catchment to 2057, plus average day visitors are attached as Appendix 5. An assumption has been made that 7% of average day visitors may use a library. Further evidence is required to support this assumption.

Queenstown Library

When the Libraries Strategy was developed in 2020, the Queenstown Library was being considered as part of Project Manawa which aimed to deliver “a range of cultural and community facilities such as a community and arts spaces, a new dedicated library, a performance and visual arts centre, a town square, and commercial buildings, as well as the Council's new administration building”⁹

Whether or not this project proceeds, the need for a new library remains. If the Stage 2 Arterial Transport Project goes ahead, the library will be demolished, and a new site will need to be found.

The Queenstown Library has a 150 year history. It can play a vital and different role in the life of the town and the district. It still needs to be a community library for the residents, but it can also be a place where visitors learn about the stories of the district, a place where people meet, sit, work away from home, or browse in between events or meetings. The library would be the ‘living room’ of the town, used by both locals and visitors.

The place should have an upmarket feel. It could be located with other performing arts activities, Council services or fit in with the retail and business part of the town. It should have a ‘commons’¹⁰ – a place where people can use their own device, access public wifi, find a comfortable seat and browse a magazine, or new book. Digital displays of the district's stories, bookable meeting rooms and open space that can host an event or an exhibition is suggested. All of this should be ground floor activity, readily accessible from the street. The library collections, children's area and activity space for library programmes, technology opportunities and customer support would feed on from the commons, or could be upstairs, or on a mezzanine, providing some separation of the differing needs of users. The projected population growth of the Queenstown catchment over the next 30 years is 16,384. The required space to cater for this population is approximately 1250m².

Frankton Library

Frankton Library is currently in rented premises, with the lease expiring in December 2027 which could be extended to 2030 with a further right of renewal until December 2033, until a new larger library is built. This library is the ‘workhorse’ for the district serving a fast growing residential and commercial clientele as well as the growing areas of the Eastern and Southern corridors. The population of the three areas will be just over 25,000 by 2027 rising to a projected 49,500 by 2057. There are three options for addressing this growth.

- Option 1 - Build a single library in Frankton that will serve the entire catchment of Frankton, Eastern and Southern Corridors. This option would require a building of between 3000-3500m². New libraries would not be built in the Eastern and Southern Corridors.
- Option 2 - Build a library to serve the expected growth in only the Frankton catchment which is projected to be over 21,000 in 2057. The size for the Frankton Library would be 1500-1550m².
- Option 3: Lease a larger building/floor in a suitable location in the Frankton Area

Possible site locations for the Frankton Library were considered in the Athfield report with the preferred site being adjacent to the Queenstown Events Centre.

⁹ <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/council-projects/project-manawa/>

¹⁰ David Bollier Why we must talk about the information commons.

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/oitp/publications/infocommons0204/bollier>

These options require a detailed business case regarding the costs and benefits. However, given that there are likely to be other community facilities required in the Eastern and Southern Corridors which libraries could be part of, it is likely that Option 2 would be preferred. This is the option used in the Catchment projections below.

The Frankton Library will be a busy suburban style library with activity and community meeting spaces able to be booked by the community for their own activities. It would also have a large maker lab with audio visual and music making facilities that can serve the wider Whakatipu area. It is possible in the future if some of the back office functions get centralised it may have a district library function, as it is a more central location with closer access to Upper Clutha as well as Central Otago (should local government amalgamation of the two districts occur).

Wānaka Library

Wānaka Library is currently located in the heart of the township but with somewhat difficult access and parking. The current population is 16,144 and projected to be 33,945 by 2057. Hāwea is in addition to this and is discussed below. There are two options for addressing the necessary library services for the population:

- Option 1 – build a new larger District Library Hub in the Three Parks area and close the current Wānaka Library. A building of 2400-2500m² is needed to cater for the expected population growth.
- Option 2 – Build a smaller new library in the Three Parks area which would cater for Greater Wānaka (22,207 plus 7% visitors) except for Wānaka Central and Wānaka Lakefront (11,738 plus 7% visitors). The required size of Three Parks library would be 1550m². The existing library of 580m² would be retained to service Wānaka Central and lakefront, and the interior refurbished.

Further work on a detailed business case needs to be completed to understand the benefits and relative costs of the two options.

Whichever is the preferred option the larger library needs to provide similar facilities to the Frankton Library. If the existing library is retained it could be orientated to serving an older clientele with a smaller collection, a seniors' lounge, an area for group activities and a smaller 'commons' for device and wifi users plus two small meeting rooms. The local history society's records could be retained here with greater support for those wanting to research family or local history. The main children's library and teens space would be at Three Parks, but a smaller younger children's area could be retained at the existing Wānaka Library. Space for staff would be minimal as support would be handled at Three Parks with the staff at Wānaka focused on helping customers.

Whakatipu

Arrowtown Library is on reserve land, and an extension is proposed for the next LTP. Currently the population catchment for the library is 3058 projected to grow to 3369 by 2057 plus 7% visitors. The recommended size is for 200m² library requiring a 60m² extension for meeting and activity space.

Kingston Library is currently 41m² and serving a population of 474. By 2057 the population is projected to be 1440. Longer term an extension of 30-35m² will be needed to cater for the growth in residents and visitors. No site location work has been requested should a different location be needed.

Glenorchy Library is the smallest branch at 28m². The population is projected to grow to 791 in 2057 from 475 currently. There is no space for community meeting or library activity. Ideally a 22m² extension would address this deficit.

Upper Clutha

Hāwea Library's population catchment is currently 4255, projected to double to 8757 in the next 30 years. A small extension is proposed for the next LTP which will be adequate in the medium term. Longer term a new local library community hub in a location nearer the commercial and retail and areas away from the lake front should be considered. This location is nearer where the housing developments are happening and where parents and families are settling. Lake front properties are already selling at very high prices with the potential for these to be holiday homes rather than permanent residents. A library of around 530m² is recommended for a new build/lease. No site location work was requested for the Hāwea Library.

Makarora Library is a partnership with the local primary school. The school provides the building and staff, and the Council provides resources and services for the community. The population in 2023 census was 102 and although there is some new housing development the population is still small. Should the partnership with the school come to an end (the school has indicated it may need to use the space for other purposes) an alternative to a physical library is probably more effective. Possibilities include a mobile library service, postal service for reading materials, book lockers where a collection could be accessed and holds collected. This does not address the social and other benefits of

libraries, but it would ensure residents have access to physical library resources. Community consultation should help shape any preferred option of delivery. No site location work was requested for this library.

Potential new libraries

Fast Track development approvals and sustained district growth are likely to influence both the scale and location of future demand for library services. As new communities emerge and existing urban areas intensify, there may be a need to review library provision models, expand existing facilities, introduce new service points, increase digital capability, and integrate libraries within broader community hub developments. The pace and distribution of growth will remain a key consideration in future capital planning, service development and investment prioritisation.

The areas to the northeast and south of Frankton (the Eastern and Southern Corridors) are the fastest growing subdivisions in the Whakatipu. The Eastern Corridor, currently with a population of 9484 is projected to grow to 15,024 by 2057 and the Southern Corridor, currently 6639, is projected to grow to 14,418. In the long term these two areas would benefit from community facilities which include libraries. In the short to medium term, a larger Frankton library as proposed above will be able to accommodate the combined populations. The Athfield report highlighted potential sites for two libraries. Securing land will ensure development is possible in the long term.

Timing of library developments

Planning and delivering new social infrastructure has a long gestation period and has a wide range of variables that impact on delivery, i.e. Three Waters Infrastructure developments/demographics, funding impacts, education facilities etc. At least 5 years is needed for the more significant projects which includes planning, business case development, necessary consultation, funding, design and construction and operational fitout. This is a significant groups of developments and at best is likely to take 15-20 years to achieve. Funding the developments needs to fit with other council priorities. An indicative timeline is attached below

Catchments: population projections and library size

Area	Pop projection				Av day visitors 2057	Total pop served	Approx Size per 1000 pop	Current size
	2027	2037	2047	2057	at 7% ¹		Range 45-70m2	
<i>Frankton</i>	9,048	13,013	16,730	20,135	1,030	21,165	1500m2	658.59m2
<i>Eastern Corridor</i>	9,484	11,584	13,379	15,024	214	5,238	900m2	New
<i>Southern Corridor</i>	6,639	9,857	12,237	14,418	182	14,600	875m2	New
<i>Queenstown</i>	9,028	12,053	14,314	16,384	1,373	17,757	1250m2	506m2
<i>Arrowtown</i>	3,058	3,157	3,267	3,368	119	3,487	200m2	145m2
<i>Glenorchy</i>	570	661	729	791	60	851	50m2	28m2
<i>Kingston</i>	475	855	1,160	1,440	23	1,463	75m2	41m2
<i>Wānaka</i>	4,386	7,330	9631	11,738	401	12,139	580m2	580m2
<i>Wānaka Three Parks²</i>	11,758	14,613	19,576	22,207	475	22,682	1550m2	New
<i>Hāwea³</i>	4,255	5,726	7,307	8,757	129	8,886	530m2	169.7m2
Total population	58,701	78,849	97,330	114,262		118,268		

Note 1: Estimated use by visitors based on observation

Note 2: Covers Wānaka Three Parks covers Wānaka North, Northlake, Albert Town, Wānaka West. Cardrona and Luggate

Note 3: Includes Makarora

Indicative timeline for development

	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31	31/32	32/33	33/34	34/35	35/36	36/37	37/38	38/39	39/40	40/41	41/44	44/47
	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14	Yrs 15-17	Yrs 18-20
<i>Arrowtown extension</i>	✓	✓														
<i>Hāwea extension</i>	✓	✓														
<i>Frankton</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
<i>Wānaka (Three Parks</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
<i>Queenstown</i>								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
<i>Wānaka (refurbishment of existing)</i>										✓						
<i>Kingston</i>											✓					
<i>Glenorchy</i>											✓					
<i>Hāwea (new Library)</i>												✓	✓	✓		
<i>Eastern Corridor</i>															✓	
<i>Southern Corridor</i>																✓

Note: the cost implications around the timings and total spend are subject to Councils Long Term Plan priorities

Appendix 2: Inputs into developing the refreshed strategy

- Community engagement through focus groups
- Library staff workshops; interviews with key council staff
- Analysis of societal and library trends likely to impact libraries or provide opportunities for service development
- Understanding of the local context and the drivers for change

Key findings

Community

Participants expressed strong support for

- larger and more flexible library spaces
- longer opening hours, improved technology
- greater support for children and young people
- stronger recognition of te Ao Māori
- opportunities for communities to come together.
- Inclusion and support for migrants & diverse communities
- Partnerships, sustainability and staff support

Societal trends

- Rising living costs, unemployment
- Declining social cohesion
- Impact of AI (artificial intelligence) on jobs, trusted content
- Impact of social media
- Challenges to freedom to read and diversity
- Sustainability

Staff

- Position libraries as connected community hubs.
- Plan proactively for population growth and future infrastructure.
- Demonstrate community value through evidence and outcomes.
- Strengthen social inclusion, wellbeing and belonging.
- Prepare for digital transformation, particularly AI.
- Operate as an integrated district-wide network supported by partnerships.

Queenstown District and Library context

- Population growth and increasing cultural diversity
- Need for more community infrastructure, including libraries to meet demand
- Potential significant change in local government i which could change the future structure of the council organisation and governance
- Average income higher than NZ average but 29% of residents had no disposable income or were unable to cover their expenses and 5% rated their overall quality of life as poor or extremely poor,