

Best Practice

Duane Lowe Community Centre

CONTACT

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Project Date: **October 1, 2015 – November 1, 2021**

Project video: <https://youtu.be/3JPHZi-0RNq>

THE PRACTICE

What was the issue?

In 2015, the Town of Birch Hills Council and the Multiuse Building Committee explored options to develop a community multiuse building as senior residents had been using a building constructed in 1920 that required significant costly repairs and upgrading. The town was also working to meet additional space needs to provide a broader range of services such as computer stations and an interpretative center. The Birch Hills Lions club was also seeking a permanent home.

What was the project?

The Town of Birch Hills Council & Administration studied the feasibility of using the old Co-op building as a new community hall, library, and Lion's Club meeting room.

THE PROCESS

The Town of Birch Hills Council & Administration studied the feasibility of using the old Co-op building for this project. After months of planning and discussions, a decision was made to submit an offer on the old Co-op building and move forward with the project. A committee was formed and several meetings later, under the leadership of local project manager Duane Lowe, a plan was developed that met the needs of these groups. Duane graciously donated his time to create a floor plan.

Throughout the planning process, the library space and usage were looked at. The Birch Hills Branch of the Wapiti Regional Library has been an integral part of community life and activities since it joined the region in 1958. Over the past 60 years the number of books and members has grown considerably. Due to this growth, the library was also relocated to the Multiuse facility. This allowed for increased space for the library to introduce additional features for users of the library including computer stations and an interpretive center.

Volunteers and community support, from the Lions Club, Peak Electric, Duane Lowe, Town Council and many others, continued to move this project forward. The electrical, heating and plumbing were redone, and the walls and flooring were replaced. The exterior of the building was also updated and modernized.

The Birch Hills Lions Club has made significant contributions to the project. The club contributed over 200 volunteer hours in labor, assisting with the demolition phase of the work.

THE RESULTS

The Duane Lowe Community Centre opened in November 2021 and is already in high demand for events including weddings, recreational activities, board meetings, new library functions and everything in between.

This project has allowed the seniors in the community to once again to come together to visit, play games, participate in recreational activities, support one another, and have a space they can call their own as the pillars of this community. The seniors are more than excited to be using the space.

Every person involved gained a deeper understanding and skills needed for large-scale project development and management. Community members have a sense of pride in this new building, which serves a diverse population who use this space to its full potential. The drastic change in space was a sparking light for creativity and possibilities that were not available before.

LESSONS LEARNED

With a knowledgeable and a skilled team, ideas do really turn into realities. What may seem like a big feat in a small area is possible with the involvement of a community. A community that works together, benefits together.