

### Spanbild case study: Accessible Properties New Zealand Ltd

## NEW SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS ENHANCE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES



**Key deliverable:** Four developments over 18-months – programme value \$5million

**Spanbild Projects involvement:** New-build one, two and three bedroom units specifically designed for rental by people with a diverse range of needs – meeting at least a 4-star Lifemark rating

**Success measures:** Delivered programme of 30 plus tailored homes designed to blend into the community and feature a range of amenities and comfort for tenants

When the country's largest non-government owned social housing provider, Accessible Properties New Zealand Ltd, received a Social Housing Fund grant for the construction of new-build social housing units, they formed a partnership with Spanbild Projects to help provide quality rental homes for people with a wide range of living requirements

Accessible Properties specialises in the disability sector, including the management of the IHC's 1100 properties throughout New Zealand.

Accessible Properties project manager Julia Saunders says the company was established with a focus on providing housing to people with disabilities, and now extends to the wider community to include people who qualify for the Government's Income Related Rent Subsidy programme. "We try and provide housing for whole of life, so that means if a tenant's needs change, they don't have to move."

The IHC New Zealand is Accessible Properties' parent organisation and became a separate entity from its property department in 2010. "We still manage all the housing stock that's owned by the IHC, and we've started developing our own," Julia says. "The projects we've been completing with Spanbild Projects are part of a larger programme established using the government grant to build new stock in areas of high demand here in Christchurch, as well as in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga and Wellington."

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## Case study



*Julia Saunders and Geoff Newman*

### Close partnership

**Accessible Properties approached Spanbild Projects general manager Tim Blake about the development after they had worked with Versatile on projects around the South Island. “We were looking for a long-term partnership with our builders, so that going forward, they understand our specifications and guidelines,” Julia says.**

“With Spanbild Projects, I work closely with everyone in the team – whether that’s with Tim in the initial stages or with the designers and colour consultants on an ongoing basis. I also work directly with their architect to make sure that our Lifemark guidelines are being met – it’s great having everyone under the same roof. There’s a lot of flexibility within their team to make sure things are going to work for us.”

Tim Blake says the company jumped at the opportunity to work alongside Accessible Properties to deliver homes that could really make a difference in the lives of the organisation’s tenants.

“It’s been an incredibly rewarding project, which has given us the opportunity to turn the houses the Spanbild Group is well known for into modern, comfortable versatile homes for a wide range of New Zealanders.”

### Specific requirements

**Spanbild Projects project manager Geoff Newman says the key to the success of the project has been the partnership developed in order to meet Accessible Properties’ particular specifications.**

“For the construction, we’ve drawn on the extensive resources Spanbild Projects can offer – from supply partnerships and materials developed in our own local factory to provide cost benefits, to the design and construction expertise of our team.”

“Although the houses are each constructed to blend into their local neighbourhood, the design is quite detailed. Key features that support a wide range of abilities, such as wide doors and level access for wheelchair accessibility, are all developed during the design stage. We’ve had to be very flexible in our approach, but due to the nature of the partnership, our designer is very proficient with their comprehensive specs.

“Getting the nuts and bolts and all the requirements right from the word go is paramount. It’s definitely necessary to get this part correct before putting a spade in the ground.”

Geoff says while the exteriors of the homes are built using standard materials, internal features, such as the bathroom and the kitchen are configured to provide more access and greater flexibility. “Once again, it’s the design that makes the difference. Everything is very well thought out and planned at the beginning.

“Making sure everything is as comfortable as possible for the tenants is the ultimate goal – and if they did have any problems – no matter how small – we can resolve it for them straight away.”





## UNIQUE ADAPTABILITY

**The houses are specifically designed for people with disabilities and have a range of special features, including wider doors, level access, wet area bathrooms, and handrails.**

The Lifemark rating is the 'whole of life' design that incorporates adaptability and accessibility into the building – evaluated by a range of measures, including details like the height of the power points and door handles.

“Our tenants come from a really wide range of backgrounds,” Julia says. “They include people with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and a whole variety of social housing needs such as mental health, single parents, and the elderly. For this reason, the houses are designed to be as flexible as possible, so that even if the houses are not fully adapted at this point, they can easily be adapted in the future.”

“For example, we have adaptable kitchens – underneath the kitchen sink is a removable unit so that if someone with a wheelchair moves in, we can clip the shelves off and pull the unit out.

“They are also very homely and warm, with double glazing, full insulation and heat pumps. They have also been designed to get as much sun as possible and in some cases the tenants hardly use any heating because they are so warm. We also like the units to have an outdoor area that is as low maintenance as possible.”

## Community benefit

**The project has also been well received by the community, she says. “In all cases, we have bought old derelict and abandoned buildings, knocked them down and built nice new housing in its place.**

“Everyone thinks the units are beautiful – they have been designed really nicely to blend in with the community and it’s been really good for those areas. The neighbouring properties are really happy and in some cases even the police have contacted us to tell us how happy they are – it’s lifted the communities. And you can’t tell that these are social housing units, which is really important.”





### SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

**Julia says Spanbild Projects exceeded all the company's expectations, on top of completing the projects within budget and timeframe. "We had performance targets to meet in regards to our funding, so they were very reliable in that regard. The team is also very flexible and open to our often-changing requirements. Communication was also excellent – they are really good at keeping on top of any issues and keeping us informed at all times."**

Accessible Properties' tenancy managers have close and understanding relationships with their tenants, Julia says. "They spend a lot of quality time with them – that's the background they come from and that's who we want to be. So, the good thing about Spanbild Projects is, we know that if our tenant has an issue or there is a problem with the property, they are really good at working with our tenancy managers to get things rectified – because we are both invested in a relationship that's going forward."

"We feel like everyone works together really well. The Spanbild Projects team are also fantastic with our tenants, which is critical. It's really important that they feel safe with people coming into their homes – the tenants actually enjoy having them there, so it's really good."

Spanbild Projects general manager Tim Blake says the team were pleased to be a part of the development. "This has been an incredibly satisfying project for everyone involved. They've all really invested in the success, not just in terms of delivering a great building project but in making sure Accessible Properties' tenants are totally happy with their new homes," says Tim Blake.

"One of the keys to the success of this project is building strong ongoing relationships through understanding the company's specific needs and requirements. We thoroughly enjoy the ongoing interaction with Accessible Properties and their tenants."

