



Night games at the Reserve

From Vision to Reality: Michaels Ave Community Centre

When the Michaels Ave Community Centre (MACC) officially opened in September 2023, it brought to life years of planning and partnership between Ellerslie’s football and cricket clubs to breathe new life into a previously underutilised community reserve.

Together, the clubs set out to create a modern, inclusive hub for their sports, and to reach out to the wider Ellerslie community. Now, with support

from Auckland Council, Foundation North, Grassroots Trust, NZ Lotteries Commission and NZCT, that vision is playing out in real time

Mark Weipers, MACC’s current Secretary, and a long-time member of Ellerslie Football Club who played a leading role in the project, says the centre has now been up and running for more than two years, offering great facilities for sport and recreation.

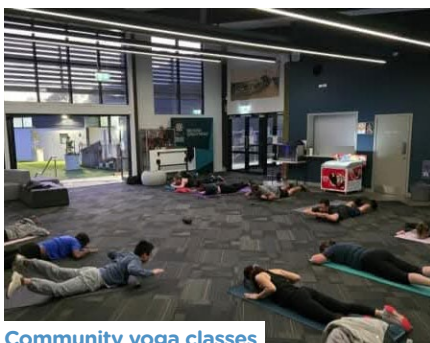
Since opening, the facility has exceeded expectations, with approximately 23,400 visitors per year – 34% higher than the 17,000 anticipated in the original business case. Combined membership across football and cricket has increased by 11% since opening, with Ellerslie Football Club alone now sitting at more than 1,950 members.

Completed in 2023 following a 5-year planning and building process

Auckland Council funding - \$3.425m; total funding - \$7.2m

Developed for the wider community, not just for sporting codes that led the development, with Auckland Council support

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Community yoga classes

A True Community Venue

The scale and diversity of usage by the wider community has been some of the most encouraging outcomes of MACC, says Mark: “What we’re really seeing is the wider community becoming more cohesive around the Centre. It’s becoming more than just a sports hub.”

Weekly community hirers include a Chinese choir, dance and drama groups, and cultural organisations. Public events range from school quiz nights to residents’ association meetings, and corporate and business users have also become regular hirers.

In the year to March 2025, MACC hosted more than 2,000 hours of non-sporting community, public and business events, reinforcing its role as far more than a traditional sporting facility.

For Mark, this reflects the original intention behind MACC. “Football and cricket anchor the evenings and weekends, but between 9am and 4pm we’re hosting everything from university seminars, to workshops, to community groups who just need an accessible space.

“Even during busy sports periods, we’re seeing member neighbours drop in for a drink or families using it as a safe, enjoyable community space. That’s what a true community hub looks like in reality.”

Operational Learning Curve

Mark says operating MACC has been “a learning curve...The first year was essentially a period for working out ‘what works and what doesn’t.’”

One key learning has been catering. While the public spaces are working well, the Centre’s popularity has



Social fun nights at the centre.

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outgrown the original kitchen design, limiting in-house catering capacity on busier days.

Expectations for quality and service have also risen sharply compared with the old facilities, Mark continues. “Our audience has widened, and their expectations around quality of food, cleanliness and service have only increased.

“We’re in a competitive environment [with other hospitality venues], but what we can offer is a strong community feel. We’re getting a lot of positive feedback from families who see it as a safe, welcoming place for people of all ages.”

Case study Michaels Avenue Community Centre

Financially, MACC produced a pre-depreciation surplus in its first full year, helped by community and corporate hire. Mark says that grant funding remains a key part of the operational model though, and achieving long-term financial sustainability beyond grant funding is an important focus.

Surprises and Challenges

While sport and recreation remain a central part of MACC's identity, Mark says the strength of cultural, creative and social use has exceeded expectations.

“What's surprised me most is how quickly bookings have spread beyond sport. School quiz nights

have led to 40th and 50th birthdays, and community groups and families not directly connected to the sports clubs are now regular guests.”

Introducing more family-friendly activities such as kids and relaxation areas, and table tennis tables, has also added to the appeal.

Like any large project, there have also been challenges. The most significant of these relates to field closures caused by bad weather impacting ground conditions. This is an issue that has a direct impact on financial sustainability, and MACC is working with Auckland Council to find alternatives to minimise ground closures.

Mark says the most important lesson learned he can share with any organisation considering a similar development “is that you can't build these things around just one sporting code.

“You have to combine resources, combine finances and design from day one for multi-use. That collective mindset is the only way these projects can get political support and stay viable.”

Looking Ahead

For a project that began as a response to ageing club facilities, MACC has quickly become something far bigger – a place where sport, culture, business, and community life meet on a daily basis.

Mark says MACC's focus for the next few years “is about the Centre truly cementing itself as a place where the whole community can come together.”

“Our catchment is incredibly diverse, and we're already seeing more cultures and groups come through the doors. I want people to think of the Centre first whenever they need a venue – and I want us to be fully sustainable without relying on grant funding. That's the goal.”



Awards for the girls- building on the Women's World Cup event



Participants enjoying the weekly quiz nights

Here to help

For more information on community sport and recreation facility development projects, contact:

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