

Park/Local Board Success Story

Reviving Nicholson Park Tennis Centre

A successful Local Board and Tennis Auckland Partnership

Nicholson Park Tennis Centre is Auckland's first fully public tennis facility which provides access via an online booking system. The close cooperation with Auckland Council and Albert-Eden Local Board has created equitable access to the general public, automated booking and lights meeting the vision of Tennis Auckland, making tennis a part of every Aucklanders' life.

How the project developed

- Three-five years of engagement by Tennis Auckland with Albert-Eden Local Board, introducing and promoting an operational model that was new to tennis in a public park setting in Auckland.
- Growing the confidence of the Local Board and gaining support for the proposed model.
- Via funding partnerships with New Zealand Community Trust and The Trusts Community Foundation, \$100,000 was raised for the replacement of LED floodlights and poles.
- The Trusts Community Foundation provided funding for the Club Spark 'Book a Court' system, which integrated with a magnetic lock gate, keypad entry, and automated floodlights, via an online, real-time booking system.
- Local engagement and promotions.
- Leveraging 'Book a court' promotions by Tennis NZ

Why is an Online booking system a big success?

- Local Board and Tennis Auckland cooperate to improve the existing community tennis facilities, developing affordable tennis programmes and great experiences.
- Online booking allows fair and controlled access to courts.
- The system allows equitable access with a mixed-use model.
- Floodlighting and integrated online booking allow 6,000 additional court hours per year across all 6 courts, 35% more playing time.
- Revenue from court booking will be invested back into the property.
- Nicholson Park joined a network of tennis venues across Auckland with this functionality.



Background

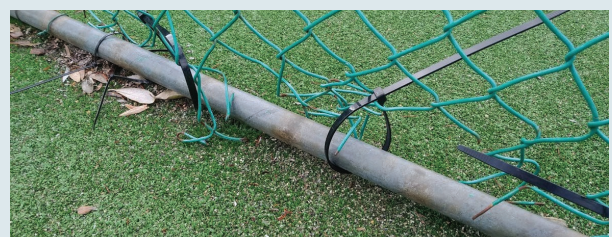
For 50+ years, Tennis Auckland used and maintained the Auckland Council owned tennis courts at Nicholson Park, Mt Eden. Extremely popular with the public, all courts were fully utilised on a "free and first come, first served" basis most days between Sept.-May. To the point where people could be waiting long periods for a court to open up, in order to play. Due to a lack of revenue opportunities, the courts, lights and fencing started to deteriorate significantly.



Deteriorated light poles



Unusable floodlights since 2018



Dilapidated and unsafe fencing

The Outcome

Infrastructure

New floodlight poles were designed, custom made and fitted, along with new LED lighting units. Prior to this new lighting system, tennis play would have to stop about 7pm in the Spring and Autumn and at 5pm in Winter. Now the courts are in action until 10pm every evening.

The Club Spark “Book-a-Court” on-line booking system was set up, allowing specific timed sessions to be booked and integrated into an automated gate access system, and automatically activating the lights at the appropriate time. Extensive fencing repairs were conducted, along with having the court surfaces professionally restored and rejuvenated. The whole project went live in late-November 2023.

Booking System & Usage

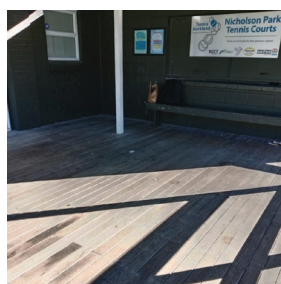
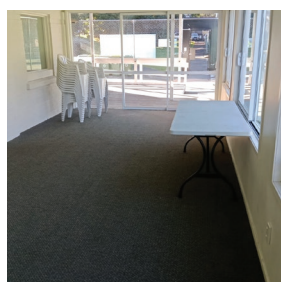
Under agreement with Council, it allows the delivery of a mixed-use model combining ‘Pay to Play’ with ‘Free to Play’. For seven months (December 2023 – June 2024), 5800 number of hours have been booked, of these 26% were public free bookings, whilst 38% were paid public bookings, and the balance block bookings by the likes of the Auckland University Tennis Club, Pascoe Cup Association and local registered coaches. 1097 individual players have set up accounts and booked one of the six courts. An indication of the popularity of the venue is the 78% court utilisation for both the Kings Birthday and Matariki public holidays.



The new automated floodlights integrated with “Book-a-Court”, new light poles, (left) and the resurfaced courts (Right)



The automated gate access through “Book-a-Court” system



The refurbished lounge (Top) and veranda (Bottom)



“We love playing here, it is so easy and convenient for a spontaneous game of tennis, without the commitment of belonging to a club or having to attend set session times.”

“Very easy to book online and see availability of courts, which is great.”

“Courts are great and the system for booking is fantastic. Thank you!”

Lisa Clark, Brooke Bonner,
Frequent customers of NPTC





The Future

- Tennis Auckland plans to replace all the fencing, timing subject to adequate venue revenue and fund raising.
- Tennis Auckland will promote community use of the club house, e.g., small meetings and birthday parties.
- Tennis Auckland will use the venue as ‘a tennis hub’ to encourage people to join the nearby local clubs. This ‘From hub to club’ campaign will provide people with the opportunities to join the local clubs.
- As more young people, diverse ethnic groups and new New Zealanders use Nicholson Park Tennis Centre, Tennis Auckland will provide information on local clubs and the benefits of club membership.

Thanks to our project partners:



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