

2022 Report – Auckland City Mission



HomeGround, the new building of Auckland City Mission – Te Tapui Atawhai, is now open. It's a place of transformation and healing for people in desperate need, while welcoming all Aucklanders through the door.

HomeGround brings together permanent housing, expanded health and social services, state-of-the-art withdrawal service (detox) facilities and a comprehensive programme of activities in a warm and welcoming space. The total project cost for this was \$115.38 million, with IRG funding of \$27 million. HomeGround provides 80 permanent apartment homes for people experiencing homelessness, with a shared rooftop garden and residents' lounge, a community dining room, community spaces, a multidisciplinary health centre, a pharmacy and addiction withdrawal services.

Other spaces will be developed into food and retail outlets for the public. Of the withdrawal service (detox) facilities, Manutaki Robinson notes that both social and medical options are available on two floors. The Mission manages the social option while Waitemata District Health Board's Community Alcohol and Drug Services manages the medical floor. In total there are 25 rooms for patients seeking to overcome addictions. Helen says that the promise of HomeGround is to create a model of integrated care that instils a sense of dignity and pride among everybody stepping inside the building.

Based on successful international models, HomeGround was adapted for Aotearoa's social and cultural needs. Te Aranga and trauma-informed design principles guided the architects and builders, in close consultation with Mission staff.

“The building was designed by Stevens Lawson Architects and built by Built Environs, with care and consideration in every decision for the people who the Mission supports,” says Manutaki Robinson. “It’s also a beautiful addition to our cityscape.”

The structure for HomeGround is what’s referred to as mass timber. Specifically, a cross-laminated-timber (CLT) structural system is being used for the HomeGround development. CLT is known for being light weight, having a significant proportion of prefabrication and being relatively simple to construct. It also has a reduced carbon footprint. It also provides a healthy internal environment and reduces the need for high levels of heating and cooling in comparison with traditional buildings. It stores carbon and outperforms conventionally framed buildings with regard to air tightness, thermal insulation, internal moisture management, acoustic insulation and fire resistance. We understand HomeGround will be the tallest structural timber building in New Zealand.

“This long-held, precious dream is finally a reality,” says Helen Robinson. “For more than a decade the Mission team and our supporters have been meticulously planning and building HomeGround.”

“To know that we’re now open for service is a very special moment for the thousands of people who have helped this building come to life,” she says. “In the days and years that follow, the lives of thousands of people will be enriched and quite literally transformed. People who have had traumatic, challenging and truly difficult lives will have permanent homes, hot meals and access to health facilities and community spaces in a modern, welcoming, light-filled, fit-for-purpose building. That’s incredibly humbling.”

She adds that HomeGround has only been possible because of the generosity of people who believed in the dream and gifted funds, products and time. “This truly is the new home of Tāmaki Makaurau – built for, by and with Aucklanders. I am so deeply grateful to everyone who has been on this journey with the Mission team and am now simply looking forward to seeing lives transformed through people connecting to services within HomeGround.”

The first day of service was Monday 14 February, with residents moving in to apartments from Monday 28 February and the medical withdrawal service (detox) beginning in March. “This means that 80 Aucklanders will be housed, and at least 40 off the street. With an anticipated refresh of 25% a year (based on international examples) this will mean 160 people are supported in the first five years. This will be coupled with 250-300 people per day having a good meal, and up to 3,000 patients being supported per year in the Calder Health Centre. It’s quite simply life changing for thousands of people a year.” Tony McKee, Project Director HomeGround.