

A Strategic Framework for Creating
Liveable New Communities

Final Report

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FINAL REPORT

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1. Introduction

“ ...good planning, effective planning, informed planning creates the palate upon which the community is depicted, portrayed, filled out”

This report sets out a strategic framework for creating liveable new communities in Melbourne’s growth areas and aims to ensure that planning, at the Precinct Structure Planning (PSP) stage, contributes in concrete ways to the future liveability of communities. The intention of the framework is to ensure that all possible steps are taken now to ensure that communities of the future are truly liveable.

The strategic framework was commissioned by the Victorian Growth Areas Authority (GAA), in partnership with key government and other stakeholders, as part of the Creating Liveable New Communities Project (a full list of project partners has been included as Attachment 1). The framework builds on existing commitments whilst looking toward new solutions.

Improving liveability in growth areas is a central concern for governments at the federal, state and local levels, as well as for the private and community sectors. The challenge is how to meet the demands of Greater Melbourne’s growing population at the same time as sustaining liveability. The strategic framework and accompanying practical tools: an extended bibliography; case studies; and a ‘planning for liveability’ checklist, will enable the Growth Areas Authority, project partners, planners, local councils and developers to develop a common approach.

The strategic framework is informed by extensive research: a review of existing key and international literature, more than ten interviews with project partners, and workshops with local councils and developers. Illustrative quotes from these interviews are offered throughout the paper and the research participants are listed in Attachment 2.

The report provides a definition of liveability and outlines the particular characteristics of new communities that give rise to unique challenges in creating liveability in the growth areas. The report then sets out the strategic framework including a set of principles underpinning planning for liveable

new communities, four liveability goals and priority areas for action within each goal.

The goals are:

Liveability Goal 1: High quality job opportunities and a thriving local economy

Liveability Goal 2: Healthy, safe and socially connected communities

Liveability Goal 3: Affordable living

Liveability Goal 4: Sustainable built and natural environments

The strategic framework includes indicators for local government, developers and the GAA to determine the extent to which liveability priorities are being planned for in the Precinct Structure Plan phase. A checklist for assessing Precinct Structure Plans against these indicators has been included as Attachment 3.

An accompanying tool “Promising Practice: A book of good practice case studies” has been included as Attachment 4 and provides innovative ideas for responding to priority areas for action within each goal.

The report concludes with recommendations to the GAA and project partners about next steps needed for the effective implementation of the strategic framework.

The creation of a new community provides a unique opportunity to ‘get it right’ - to build *in* opportunities at the outset that will enhance the future liveability of an area. ‘Getting it right’ requires government agencies, the private sector and the non-government sector to work together. This report marks the beginnings of interagency dialogue about liveable new communities and it is anticipated that the ideas put forward in this report will continue to evolve as the dialogue continues.

Background

Having environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable communities is an important priority for the Victorian State Government. Investing in Victorians, building stronger and more liveable communities and promoting innovative and sustainable growth are high up on the Government’s agenda. These three

commitments bring into focus a diverse range of policy areas including:

- Education
- Health
- Public transport
- Urban development
- Social wellbeing and community safety
- Economic reform, and
- Environmental protection and water.

Each of these has particular significance for growth areas. State Government strategies and activities in these areas have been reviewed in the development of the strategic framework. Indeed, the project has provided an opportunity to bring attention to this full range of policies through the lens of growth areas.

The Victorian State Government's commitment to growth areas is evidenced by the establishment of the Growth Areas Authority in 2006 to guide sustainable development in Melbourne's five outer urban growth areas: Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

The GAA is an independent statutory body that works in partnership with local government, developers and Victorian Government agencies to ensure effective coordination of growth area infrastructure and service provision. The main instrument through which this occurs is the Precinct Structure Plan (PSP). PSPs are a long term strategic planning mechanism and are intended to:

- Set objectives for housing yields, choice and affordability.
- Provide for dwelling densities in line with government strategies and policies for viable public transport, activity centres and services.
- Ensure communities in Melbourne's five growth areas have better access to services, transport, jobs, shops, open space and community facilities.

Give developers, investors and local communities greater certainty and confidence about future development in Melbourne's growth areas.



The GAA communicates the expectations that it has of local governments and developers on what is required in a PSP through a set of draft guidelines. The *Draft Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines* are also used by the GAA and Victorian Government agencies to contribute to and assess the suitability of PSPs.

A review of the *Draft Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines* planned for 2008 provides an opportunity for considering ways to sharpen the focus on planning that ensures the future liveability of communities. The *Creating Liveable New Communities Project* has been undertaken as a prelude to the guidelines review and therefore includes consideration of:

- Key principles that underpin planning for liveable new communities;
- Liveability goals;
- Priorities for action within each goal; and
- Indicators.

It is anticipated that these principles, goals, priorities and indicators will be reflected in the next version of the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines. In particular, the indicators included in the framework will help local governments, developers, State Government authorities and the GAA to measure progress towards the creation of liveable new communities and to assess the contribution of Precinct Structure Plans to the achievement of liveability goals and priorities.

The indicators included in the strategic framework have been chosen using selection criteria developed by the GAA and project partners at a *Creating*

Liveable New Communities Roundtable held in Melbourne in December 2007. The indicators must:

- Be measurable;
- Include both qualitative and quantitative indicators;
- Relate to multi-demographic and all demographics (ages, cultures, and socio/economic backgrounds);
- Be geographically specific - related to scale;
- Be performance based in the planning phase to confirm delivery of a planning element;
- Relate to accessibility (making a link between supply and demand);
- Relate to something that can be responded to (where levers exist); and
- Have short term, immediate relevancy.

Two other sets of indicators are relevant here: the VicUrban 'Sustainable Community Rating' (<http://www.sustainablecommunityrating.com/cs/Satellite?pagename=Sustainability>) and Community Indicators Victoria (www.communityindicators.net.au). The former sets out a useful framework for medium term measurement of progress toward liveability goals and the latter a framework for measuring community wellbeing once the community is established. The collective thinking that has contributed to both these comprehensive frameworks has significantly influenced the indicators chosen for the strategic framework below.

Understanding liveability

In recent months in Victoria liveability has surfaced as a 'new' policy term and its capacity to drive policy innovation and change is currently being explored by the Victorian government. In addition to the development of the strategic framework for planning liveable new communities led by the GAA and partners, new ways of understanding and measuring liveability are also being explored by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission through the "Inquiry into Enhancing Victoria's Liveability".

There is no one definition of liveability in the international literature and the term is often used interchangeably with quality of life, wellbeing, and sustainability. The research about liveability, what it means, what benefits it bestows and for whom, depends on who is asking the questions and why.

For example, much liveability research is driven by an interest in boosting investment and tourism to capital cities. Our challenge is to determine what liveability means for people in Melbourne's growth areas of Melton, Wyndham, Whittlesea, Hume, Casey and Cardinia.

Overall, the evidence reviewed in relation to liveability for new communities reveals a more or less common framework for understanding liveability. Broadly, liveability is described in the literature as being related to the attractiveness and particular amenities a community offers. This means things like fully grown trees, well designed open spaces and walking paths, environmentally sustainable public transport and access to education, recreation and health services. Liveability describes a place where people feel safe, connected to their community, and want to participate in the local economy through investment in business. Also important to liveability is the unique identity of a community defined by cultural development, landmarks, urban design, the developing local economy and the existing natural landscape.

"People aren't just buying a house, they want to buy into a part of a whole community."

There is little Australian research on *new* communities however some international research is available. Two predominant international examples in history include Levittown in the United States and the New Towns of the United Kingdom. These suburban developments have come to be symbols of post war suburbia that provided the option of inexpensive, single-unit housing outside urban neighbourhoods. Although they provided affordable housing in what many residents felt to be a congenial community, critics damned their homogeneity, blandness, and often racial exclusivity. Today, "Levittown" is used as a term of derogation to describe overly-sanitized suburbs consisting largely of tract housing. Although remembered largely for its homogeneity, the houses of Levittown have by now been so thoroughly expanded and modified by their owners that their original architectural form can be quite difficult to see. Critics of these sorts of master planned communities suggest that residents can be socially and physically isolated. These lessons learned are important ones to consider in the development of new communities in Australia.

The little available market research that exists in Australia suggests the predominant reason people choose to live in a new residential development is housing affordability. A second and equally influential driver of location choice is the priority of safe and supportive family living environments where community services and other infrastructure like health, education, culture, and recreation are accessible. Proximity to work place is not an initial priority for people; in some areas 40 per cent of residents travel up to 20km to work daily. However, over time, local employment becomes increasingly important for individuals, as well as for the health and economic vitality of the community as a whole.

“...proximity to workplace is often a trade off for suburban family life style”

This last point highlights the importance of planning for liveability that is ‘future oriented’. That is, planners must understand what is needed for liveability today but at the same time keep an eye on what people might need in 10, 15 and 20 years time. Communities need to evolve with the needs of their residents: as many of the project stakeholders suggested: *“...if you can’t build it in now, don’t build it out for later.”*

Where data exists about how residents understand liveability, there appear to be strong synergies between how both residents and project partners view key components of liveability:

- Local economy and employment;
- Health, safety and socially connection;
- Affordable living; and
- Sustainable built and natural environments.

The broad range of literature reviewed for this paper (see bibliography) provides evidence to support the choice of these four as key contributing factors to liveability in new communities and they form the basis for the liveability goals outlined in the paper.

Why a strategic framework is needed

With broad agreement about liveability for new communities, common goals can be more readily established. The challenge then is not so much about how liveability is defined but how it is planned for, delivered and measured over time. The Growth Areas Authority and project partners

determined that a strategic framework will assist this process.

Liveability needs a whole-of-government and “joined-up” approach

The GAA *Draft Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines* support a whole-of-government approach where government, community and business resources and programs are encouraged to ‘join-up’ to more effectively develop and respond to the needs of newly developing communities.

Collaborative ‘whole-of-community’ partnerships provide useful opportunities for finding new solutions to difficult problems. They work best when collaboration occurs between those with authority and resources to make a difference from the very beginning of the development process. The GAA and project partners have expressed a strong willingness to work together.

Currently multiple government departments (at a national, state, regional, local level) are involved in planning and building new communities and each have their own objectives and responsibilities. Many recognise that no one department can deliver liveable communities alone and that a joined up approach supports more holistic planning. There are currently limited opportunities or forums for joined up approaches to planning liveable new communities. In addition, in many important policy areas such as housing, employment, education and training and the environment, the Federal government has a key role to play in policy design, development and delivery. As such, they are also key players and need to be at the planning table.

The development of the strategic framework for creating liveable new communities has supported the GAA in its leadership role by providing a vehicle for robust discussion with project partners and other stakeholders about priorities. A list of the key stakeholders who participated in the development of the strategic framework has been included as Attachment 4.

Liveability planning for new communities is different

In establishing effective means of collaboration in planning and building new communities, it is important to recognise what distinguishes liveability in greenfield developments. Five key characteristics make planning for the liveability of new communities different:

- The process involves making spaces into places where people can live, work and play into the future. The predominant initial planning mechanisms for new communities are strategic planning and urban design. Precinct Structure Plans are an important vehicle for planning liveable new communities.
- Planning has to take into account the needs of a population that is typically growing rapidly and continues to grow and change over a long period of time. Some new communities abut existing communities and this adds another layer to the complexity to planning for new communities. Standard planning indices based on periodic data collection are often inaccurate in areas where there is rapid growth.
- Many new communities are made up of a higher than average number of families with young children. This means that services for young families are of great importance. However, more recent demographic research is now showing that growth areas are also becoming an increasingly popular relocation site for a diverse group of individuals and non traditional household structures. This means access to services for a wide range of age, social, cultural and economic are required.
- Many people living in new communities are home owners servicing high mortgages who struggle to enjoy affordable living.
- The private sector plays a critical role in planning new communities alongside government. In many growth communities there are limits to interventions by local governments as a result of private titles.

Evidence shows that these differences mean that planning for new communities results in unique challenges. The strategic framework for creating liveable new communities identifies and responds to these challenges.



“We know that the majority of people who live there will come from no more than 5km from there already. So we’re opening up a new (suburb) to them in a way, and it was important for us to do it in a way that was going to enshrine the things they valued, keeping the things that were important to them and catching the new concerns as well”

2. Common Principles

Many of the principles identified as important for the creation of liveable new communities by project partners are aligned with key Victorian policy and strategies such as *Melbourne 2030*, *A Fairer Victoria*, and *Growing Victoria Together*. The liveability goals described in this paper and the discussion of them has been developed through the filter of these principles.

Holistic and integrated planning

Holistic and integrated planning for new communities includes planning for the social, environmental and economic future of an area and for people across the life course. The establishment of the GAA was a step toward a more joined-up approach to holistic planning and project partners are looking to the GAA for leadership in continuing to promote this principle in practical ways.

Choices, flexibility and adaptability

For new communities to be liveable, now and in the future, there must be choices for the people who live there. This means, while new communities may not have all the ideal amenities and services initially, planning for liveable new communities must include consideration of options, flexibility and adaptability for people. The needs of people may change over time, so planning must think about building things in rather than building things out.

Connectivity

The principle of connectivity is multi-faceted. It relates to the way in which the urban form is designed to connect with surrounding neighbouring communities, the broader rural region and metropolitan Melbourne. Communities thrive through enhancing social, economic, cultural and geographical relationships so the principle of connectivity also relates to connections people

have to a sense of place, to economic opportunities, to government structures, to services and to new opportunities.

Diversity

Evidence shows that diversity in communities, including a variety of ages, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, contributes to community strength. Planning a range of housing options in particular will contribute to diversity in a neighbourhood, as will more deliberate efforts to encourage physical interaction between diverse communities.

Equity and fairness

Planning for new communities must provide opportunity *and* at the same time not exacerbate disadvantage. This can be supported by taking a 'people centred' approach. A commitment to equity and fairness will ensure that planning for new communities involves the creation of opportunities *for all* and consequently helping to address issues of disadvantage.

3. Liveability Goals, Priorities and Indicators

Goal 1:

High quality job opportunities and a thriving local economy

High quality employment opportunities and a thriving local economy are crucial foundations for a liveable community. This should include a range of meaningful part and full time job opportunities to meet the needs of residents at different life stages as well as opportunities for home based employment.

For many people, access to and choice of a diverse range of local employment opportunities is critical to minimise time spent travelling from home to work. Minimising the number of people travelling long distances to work also means that residents have more time to enjoy and contribute to their local community as well as reducing overall traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Employment in close proximity, while perhaps not essential initially, becomes a certain priority over time for residents of new communities.

A thriving local economy with a broad mix of industries is therefore an essential basis for local employment as well as ensuring residents have good access to local shops and services.

At the same time, it is also vital that regular and reliable public transport enables residents to travel quickly and affordably when they do need to move beyond the local community for employment, shopping, social or recreational purposes.

Providing a wide range of services, infrastructure and opportunities in a physically attractive environment will, in turn, attract investors in home purchase and industry.

Related Precinct Structure Planning Objectives

Objective 6: To boost employment and commercial activity

Objective 3: To provide sustainable transport networks

Priorities for achieving high quality job opportunities and a thriving local economy

A mix of well linked, mutually supportive industries and businesses

International and Australian evidence about the drivers of local and regional economic development demonstrates the importance of encouraging and promoting industry clusters and business networks which can support and reinforce innovation and commercialisation opportunities. A good mix of local businesses also provides increased opportunities for residents to shop locally.

“For a thriving economy, we are looking at something about the new employment zones for the future and more University Hills (new housing development in Melbourne’s north) and less industrial zones. It’s about how we get a balance of jobs out there.”

Key factors contributing to a positive local business investment environment include:

- Transparent, long term planning and regulation frameworks which maximise certainty and minimise compliance requirements.
- A high level of local business ownership.
- Active local and regional government support to facilitate investment including business start up assistance and incubators, information provision and promotion of products and services provided by local businesses.

Strong links with research and development resources and networks including universities and other learning facilities.

There is also strong evidence that other liveability goals and actions such as well designed urban spaces and a vibrant cultural life are important attractors of local business investment.

High quality education and training opportunities and a well skilled workforce

Access to quality affordable education and training facilities and resources is a key community expectation and is, in itself, an important characteristic of liveable communities. This includes opportunities to secure formal qualifications through schools, TAFE colleges and universities as well as a diverse range of adult and

further education programs for life long learning. Support services such as affordable child care and elder care are also essential to enable all community members to achieve their education and training objectives.

A well educated, well skilled work force is also a core requirement for local business growth. While there are likely to be advantages to business in being able to source appropriately skilled workers from the local community, excellent transport links are also important to enable business to meet skill gaps by recruiting from other localities.



High quality and integrated infrastructure

Integrated infrastructure such as: power and water; telecommunications systems; and roads and transport links support the quality of life in new communities and are major determinants of business investment decisions.

Regular, reliable and affordable transport infrastructure is clearly crucial for business investment, industry development and accessing employment opportunities. In most growth area communities, the key challenge is to expand access to regular and reliable public transport. As discussed in Goal 3, ensuring affordability is also a key challenge.

“The three car family...it’s all just to do with getting to work, dropping the kids off at childcare and doing the shopping at Fountain Gate (large shopping centre in southeast Melbourne)”

High quality communications infrastructure, particularly though access to fast Broadband Internet services is also a prerequisite for modern business operations. Access to fast Broadband Internet also makes it easier for residents to work from home as well as to draw on a wide range of

education and training opportunities. Internet access is in itself fast becoming a fundamental feature of a liveable, well connected community.

Liveability indicators

We will know we are creating liveable communities when a Precinct Structure Plan demonstrates:

A mix of well linked, mutually supportive industries and businesses

- The ratio of industry/ business land and residential land zoning, will meet Victorian standards. (An appropriate benchmark is yet to be developed).
- Local employment opportunities will be connected to where people live through the planning and early provision of cycle, pedestrian and public transport links.
- The plan is underpinned by a rigorous economic impact assessment undertaken with the involvement of all key stakeholders and includes targets for local employment. (An appropriate benchmark for *local* employment is yet to be developed and an appropriate scope and objectives for social economic impact assessments require further development.)

High quality education and training opportunities and a well skilled workforce

- Education and training opportunities are identified in neighbouring communities to identify gaps and plan for future provision.
- Partnerships are established to plan for, and secure, the timely provision of educational facilities and lifelong learning opportunities (including child care, early learning, schools, community and vocational education and locally relevant specialist education).

High quality and integrated infrastructure

- The infrastructure needed for fast broadband internet and up to date telecommunications services for homes, organizations/ schools and businesses has been planned.
- Accessible and well linked roads will be provided and the early delivery of public transport has been planned.
- Good connections will be provided to adjacent communities, services, employment and retail areas for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

Goal 2: Healthy, safe and socially connected communities

Healthy, safe and socially connected communities have strong networks and provide good access to the services and facilities that people need. A combination of physical and social elements combine to create a sense of place and belonging in a community. Physical attributes include design styles, street layout, scale of buildings, landmarks, vistas, meeting places, open space, and greening. Social, psychological and cultural dimensions include whether a place feels inclusive, safe, friendly and vibrant - a place where people want to live and work.

“We can build beautiful communities with all the right sort of roads, buildings, infrastructure. The place from a physical environment point of view is lovely, but if we don’t do that connecting people as they come in...”

Related Precinct Structure Planning Objectives

Objective 2: To develop vibrant, well serviced activity centres

Objective 4: To deliver accessible community facilities and infrastructure.

Priorities for achieving healthy, safe and well connected communities

A well serviced community

Planning for services in a new community has both challenges and opportunities. The challenges include the difficulty and cost of developing physical and social service system infrastructure from the ground up, in addition to the complexity of forecasting and meeting community need over time. The opportunities include the ability to build from first principles an innovative system of service delivery that can learn from experiences elsewhere and can be better integrated across health, education and community services. In other words, a well networked system that is centred on individuals, families and communities, rather than being a reflection of the historical silos of service provision.

Questions on the type of community infrastructure, infrastructure ratios, land use plans, planning principles, the configuration of infrastructure and funding are difficult to answer in the absence of a community ready to be consulted. Whilst there are strong links between the involvement of people in planning and enhanced community wellbeing, there is a distinct lack of community and customer input into planning new communities (and a distinct lack of available community and customer research about what it's like to live in new communities). Furthermore, surrounding neighbours and potential buyers can contribute by saying what they desire for a new community but it remains another challenge altogether to create a community that best reflects the desires of all its inhabitants over time. Drawing directly from the experiences of people living in new neighbourhoods would add a useful dimension to the gathering of preliminary research.

Lifestyles today encompass longer working hours, stressful work habits, less family connectivity and more social isolation leading to an adverse effect on people's health and wellbeing. Access to a variety of services is important, particularly those that may be hard to find like support for domestic violence, addictions and mental health or those which cater to specific demographics: culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), youth, aged, disability, and women's health. These potential health and human service gaps can isolate and further negative impact on the health of individuals. Planning for whole of community and diversity requires access and identification of the services locally or in a neighbouring community.



Early delivery of key services is essential; building timely delivery of more services as the population grows and changes. In the short and long term, local governments and developers need some

certainty of what resources the State Government will commit - set out in a long term whole of government plan that can be monitored over time. Also important is the issue of the relationship of new suburbs with adjoining suburbs, including with the existing infrastructure. In this relationship, it is important to minimise the risk that the focus on the new suburb will reduce focus and thereby disadvantage nearby established suburbs. Within this context, connecting existing services with new communities is as important as attracting new services and specialist services. The interconnections of services will strengthen this infrastructure.

Attractive, well designed and well connected buildings, facilities and open spaces

"We're talking about physical connectivity, but we're also talking about personal connectivity to a sense of place..."

The ability for members of a community to interact with one another and form connections leads to the development of the social networks that underpin a healthy and safe community.

Having access to goods, services, activities and opportunities, shops and other facilities in the local area can encourage the vibrancy of a local community, improving social interaction and physical activity. In addition to the existence of facilities, the ways in which individuals and families move through the community and access the things that they need can contribute significantly to the development of strong communities.

Central to connection and interaction is the physical layout of the streets. A good layout enables more contact and movement choices in a community, and people can get to where they need to go more easily. Combining effective public transport systems with thoughtful pedestrian and cycling access, is one important way in which this can be achieved.

Feeling safe is an important foundation for strong communities. Poor social networks and low levels of attachment to community, in addition to economic deprivation, contribute to the constitution of violence/crime-prone areas. In new communities, building social networks and attachment (the foundations of social capital) can contribute to the development of pro-social behaviour, augmented by

design features such as sightlines, lighting and the generation of activity in public spaces.

“If you live in a community where parents know each other and know kids and they’ve gone to school together, the kids who start to go off the track are less likely to fall off the track if when they walk down the street you make eye contact and say hello... But if they live in a community where there’s no connection at all, it’s far easier to fall through the cracks”

Community pride and belonging

Residents are more likely to feel a sense of pride in a place which is not only attractive to look at and live in but in which there is a real sense of shared community and cultural vitality.

“I’m very interested in the issue of when someone moves there, they don’t know anyone in the area by and large... Someone comes and knocks and gives you the old cup of sugar, it’s that sort of thing. Someone welcoming you to the community”

In order to feel like they belong in a community, individuals and families need to understand and connect with the place and feel satisfaction from being there. Underpinning this is the importance of opportunities for them to engage with decision-making processes and have a role in shaping their own life and the life of their community. While not all citizens will participate in residents associations, the CFA, the footy team or a cultural festival, we are glad to know they are there. Through these processes a “spirit of place” is created, engaging and reflecting the aspirations of the people who live in it.

A sense of belonging is supported by having community meeting spaces and mechanisms for clear and timely information provision. This sense of place can emerge very readily in new communities, particularly for those residents who have deliberately sought a community that has promoted building a sense of place, as most new greenfield developments invariably do.

A healthy social and cultural diversity builds on strong understanding and trust between different groups, and brings many social capital benefits including an increase in sense of identity and cohesion for a community, the development of new

networks, capacity and skill building for community members. In addition to strong internal networks, external networks and connections with the outside world including surrounding communities are important. Confident and connected communities are interested and curious about what others are doing, drawing ideas and inspiration from others. They are willing to welcome and integrate newcomers.

Planning for a whole community with wide demographics means identifying and addressing any inequality and increasing participation through resourcing the most disadvantaged groups. This means actively engaging and supporting those who may have barriers to participation because of social, cultural, or economic difference. Policy and programs that target youth, the aged, people from CALD backgrounds or those with disabilities encourage inclusion.

Liveability indicators

We will know we are creating liveable communities when a Precinct Structure Plan demonstrates that:

A well serviced community

The plan is underpinned by a ‘Community Plan’ that includes:

- Demographic projections and needs analysis.
- Regional and local social impact assessment.
- Consultation with community, service providers, government agencies and the private sector.
- A plan for the timely delivery of accessible, well integrated and flexible community services and social infrastructure including meeting spaces.
- Costs, delivery timeframes, governance and implementation responsibilities.
- Identification of (funding and other) partners.
- (An appropriate scope and objectives for community plans and social impact assessments require further development.)
- The *Infrastructure and Services Plan* is linked to priority social and community needs identified in the Community Plan.

Attractive, well designed and well connected buildings, facilities and open spaces

- Planned activity centres will respond to the diverse needs of new residents and will be well located and integrated into the development in

terms of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

- An interconnected network of pedestrian paths and on and off street bicycle paths will be provided throughout the community providing easy and convenient access to key locations and destinations (especially schools) within the community and adjacent neighbourhoods.



- Active and passive surveillance over the public realm has been taken into account.

Community pride and belonging

- The development of a “local identity” will reflect the physical and cultural values of the existing land and community.
- People in communities surrounding or near the Precinct site have been engaged in the Precinct Structure Plan development process, as well as future residents, where possible.
- The design is road and rail sensitive and transport management systems foster safe vehicle, pedestrian, cycle movement and public transport whilst ensuring that the quality of pedestrian realm is not overly compromised.

Goal 3: Affordable living

Strengthening the economic and social wellbeing of individuals and communities by assisting them to avoid financial stress is a priority in the creation of liveable new communities. Three areas in particular play a key role in creating communities that are affordable as well as being a pleasure to live and work in: housing, transport and the distribution of food, water and other home essentials.

These three priority areas have a critical role to play in creating vibrant local communities. Good outcomes for individuals and communities in important areas such as health, education, employment and social participation correlate closely to access to affordable housing, to affordable transit support and to the local affordability of food and other household essentials.

“And if jobs are close to where you live then its more affordable, so it’s not only designing the house that doesn’t cost you as much to buy or to run ... but your house is close to where you work and you can walk or you could get there without spending too much on transport”

Related Precinct Structure Planning Objectives

Objective 1: To ensure greater housing choice, diversity and affordability

Priorities for achieving affordable living

Affordable housing

“We want affordable living, [to] cater for diversity. Diversity is one element but as well as diversity we want to be able to lower the cost of housing for everybody.”

A well planned housing system is an integral element in the overall mix of local social and economic policies. It is one that is responsive to community growth and change, offering affordable choices through a mix of housing types in a mix of land use settings. It is one that enables connection across all aspects of people’s lives, including work, study, transport, health and community services and recreation and it is one that that promotes interaction between community members. In short, it is a system that harnesses the potential for good housing to build the social and economic capital of a community.

Prioritising the provision of affordable housing, particularly for those people living in low income households, is essential to the development of strong and liveable communities. Housing affordability concerns generate pressures on individuals and families and are likely to induce higher levels of mobility, affecting the maintenance

of social networks and community cohesion. Higher housing costs also increase the risk of homelessness due to inability to sustain a tenancy or service mortgage repayments, reinforcing the importance of an adequate local crisis response.

“In spite of the current housing boom, the extent and effects of housing stress show clearly that existing housing policies are failing low-income families; add transportation limitations and lack of accessible services, and you have extreme disadvantage.”

Current challenges in the provision of affordable housing include the complexity of the housing policy environment with many stakeholders (including Federal, State and Local Government, private and community sector) all with different roles and responsibilities. Identifying and implementing the levers that will improve affordability in new communities remains a key challenge.

The provision of choice in housing types and prices is an important way in which a community can ensure the availability of not only affordable housing but also housing that is diverse and flexible enough to meet the needs of households as they move through life cycle changes. Diversity in housing in a community results in the ability of individuals and families to stay in the same area even if their circumstances change. Flexibility in housing enables people to stay in the same house as it adapts to changing needs, particularly as they age. As a result, they do not need to leave their established social network. Furthermore, a mix of housing types throughout a particular area, such as detached and multi-unit dwellings, boarding houses, temporary and emergency accommodation encourages the emergence of a positive social diversity.

“So gone are the days where people moved from their family home to a nice house in the suburbs, partnered up and formed a five person household. The combinations and permutations are just way huger than that and the transition from one house four people to four houses six people is completely straightforward.”

Access to affordable transport

Transport that connects people with economic and social opportunities in ways that are affordable and

provide choice is one of the key elements of a liveable community. Transport plays an important role in decisions that determine where people live, shop, work, go to school, access health and community service support, make friends and participate in community life. Transport disadvantage, or a lack of access to affordable transport, is linked to increased social isolation and dislocation, as well as a reduced ability to take up opportunities such as education, training and employment.

“People want to be able to drive into Melbourne for work, or sometimes take the train, or a combination of both. They want to have the option. Having an option gives them more convenience and control over their everyday lives.”

Affordable transport means that the costs of transport are not excessive, particularly for low-income households. Transport affordability is affected by the number of vehicles that a household must own, the costs of owning and driving each vehicle, and the quality and costs of alternative modes such as public transport, community transport, cycling, walking and taxi services.



Individual and community factors influence transport affordability. People who must commute long distances to work or school are challenged when limited transportation options are available. People with physical disabilities or other special needs tend to require more expensive transportation services. Lower-income households tend to be particularly impacted by the costs of alternative modes, since they rely on them more than households with higher incomes.

To improve access to affordable transport options for individuals and communities requires the engagement of many stakeholders at all levels of

government, as well as providers in the private and community sectors. Understanding community needs in relation to patterns of mobility and access is the first step. Identifying and implementing the levers that will improve affordability remains a key challenge.

“We need to create a culture of public transport from day one - this means making buses available and attractive before we get the rail.”

Access to affordable food, water and other household essentials

The access of individuals, families and communities to affordable, culturally appropriate and nutritious fresh food on a reliable basis is an essential element of liveability. A culture of food can bring energy and friendliness to urban life through food shops (fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, daily grocery items) and cafes being in close proximity to where people live. However, the price of food is highly significant for people with low incomes. It is one of the key features in determining what they purchase and eat and has a significant impact on their disposable income for other needs. When money is scarce, food choices can be discretionary, unlike other fixed expenses such as rent, mortgage payments and utility bills.

Evidence indicates that food insecurity (the inability to access food) is experienced by people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have low disposable incomes; people who are disadvantaged or have special needs as a result of a disability; people who are disadvantaged by geographic location such as those who live in rural or remote areas or residential areas not serviced by a supermarket or adequate public transport. Food insecurity is also experienced by people on moderate incomes who have higher than average living costs due to living in a high rent area, large mortgage and other loan repayments, or expenses associated with chronic illness or disability.

Factors affecting access to affordable food and other household essentials include the physical infrastructure of the community, particularly the distance that people have to travel to get to shops and the availability of public transport or safe, walkable routes to shops. Local food supply is an essential consideration with important factors including both the location of food outlets (retail and prepared foods) within a community but also the price, quality and variety of the food that is

available in these stores. Additionally, locally produced foods result in reduced transport emissions *and* fresher produce.

“ ...self sufficiency and living, that’s why community gardens are coming into it because they’re about food and that’s about livelihood, its about social participation”

Liveability indicators

We will know we are creating liveable communities when a Precinct Structure Plan demonstrates that:

Affordable housing

- A diversity of lot sizes are planned (prior to land purchase if required) to support housing diversity, a mix of densities with increased density near activity centres.
- The proportion of housing lots planned to be delivered to the market at an affordable purchase price for low income households meets the Victorian growth area standards. (An appropriate benchmark is yet to be developed)
- Affordable housing has been planned in consultation with key stakeholders (including all level of governments) and includes:
- An assessment of projected housing affordability.
- Plans for social housing provision.
- (An appropriate scope and objectives for affordable housing plans require further development)

Access to affordable transport



- The provision of public transport has been planned to maximise efficient delivery, affordability, access and connectedness for people.
- Inter-modal exchanges will provide access to key regional services.
- Regional facilities and services will be accessible by people with no or limited access to a car.

Access to affordable food, water and other household essentials

- People will have the opportunity to shop locally for fresh fruit and vegetables and other household essentials.
- People will have the opportunity to grow, produce and sell local foods.

Goal 4: *Sustainable natural and built environments*

Attractive and sustainable natural and built environments are key features of liveable communities. The quality of the built environment and urban design has a major impact on the attractiveness, connectedness and cultural vitality of communities. The physical environment is something that urban planning can definitively influence.

While the quality and diversity of the natural environment has always been a high community priority, expectations about environmental sustainability are increasing rapidly as awareness grows about the consequences of climate change. This includes the need to deal with the impacts of climate change such as rising temperatures, reduced rainfall and rising energy prices as well as the desire to contribute to the reduction of green house gas emissions. Key natural environment priorities therefore include the sustainability of water use, energy use and waste management.

Related Precinct Structure Planning Objectives

Objective 7: To increase environmental sustainability

Objective 5: To create multi-use, linked open space networks

Priorities for creating sustainable natural and built environments

Healthy Urban Design

Evidence indicates a strong link between the health of a community and the form of the physical environment. The built and natural environment provide the setting and backdrop by which we live our lives, and impact on our senses, emotions, sense of community, physical health and general wellbeing.

“Planning for health outcomes means people have more choices... Health needs to be at the centre of planning. Too frequently poor health is a consequence of poor planning.”

Because urban design focuses on the quality and performance of the public realm, by its very nature it is pluralistic and inclusive. Good urban design enhances both the appeal and functioning of suburbs and has conscious goals to improve community well-being.

There are strong links between the walkability of an area and health outcomes for communities. Active communities require walking paths and pavements connecting residences to local services, businesses and public transport within walkable distance .



Additionally, walking, cycling and public transport access to well connected open spaces is important for active and passive recreation, community events, the enjoyment of nature, biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

Sustainable water use

The immediate impact of drought and the longer term implications of climate change create

significant challenges for all Australian communities in ensuring the affordable and sustainable supply of water for drinking, domestic, garden and industrial purposes. The efficient management of water resources is essential to individual and community well-being, and to the protection of biodiversity and ecological systems. The distribution of scarce water resources between competing demands is also an equity issue. It is vital that the water quality of waterways and catchments within and downstream from new residential communities is appropriately managed and maintained.

Water conservation and recycling therefore need to be core goals and guiding principles of the planning guidelines for new communities. Both business owned and public buildings as well as private houses need to be designed to maximise the potential for harvesting and reusing rainwater and stormwater and for recycling grey water.

Sustainable energy use and waste management

Planning for new communities has historically been heavily focused on physical design of our communities, respect for heritage, and conservation of our natural resources. More recently Australian planners, government and community groups have extended liveability priorities to include the management of the natural environment. This includes the realms of private developers - their planning and actions, public policy- government regulations and activity, and individuals' responsibilities in environmental sustainability.

Developers and builders have a responsibility to ensure the carbon footprint and environmental costs of development (noise pollution, energy, use of non-renewal resources) is offset by sustainable development, housing design and infrastructure.

There is increasing recognition that all Australian communities and households have a responsibility to reduce the use of non-renewable energy and to increase renewable energy use in order to contribute to the reduction of green house gas emissions. At the same time rising energy prices mean that energy costs are become an increasingly important factor in determining the affordability of new housing and new communities. This raises important questions about balancing the costs of up front energy conservation investments and 'whole of life' energy expenses.

“And as new technologies have started to come on board often regulation is often very slow at adapting and being up to speed with things.”

Sustainable waste management and waste recycling are also important contributors to the actions needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Liveability indicators

We will know we are creating liveable communities when a Precinct Structure Plan demonstrates that:

Healthy urban design

- Local destinations (activity centres, schools and community facilities and public transport) will be spread around the community providing several destinations within a 400m distance of every residence.
- A variety of open spaces (parks, gardens, plazas, reserves) each with its own distinctive range of uses, will be evenly spread around the community with all residences within a short walk to at least one natural public open space.

Sustainable water use

Sustainable water use has been planned for including:

- An overall layout that supports on-site water use especially for public purposes,
- Domestic and business water recycling.
- Public open space irrigation to be supplied by alternative water sources.
- On site retardation of storm water and stormwater treatment to achieve pollutant load reductions

Sustainable energy use and waste management

- Building design guidelines will encourage sustainable living.
- The carbon footprint of the development's infrastructure will be minimised and carbon emissions reduction targets have been established.
- Initial and maintenance urban design includes a strategy to maximize tree planting and native vegetation use in open spaces.
- Requirements of builders will include the reuse and recycling of their waste when appropriate.

4. Strategic Framework Implementation

A whole of government and joined up approach

The expressed willingness of project partners to work with the Growth Areas Authority provides opportunities for collaborative implementation of the strategic framework. The GAA will achieve an enhanced whole of government and partnership approach by continued engagement of project partners into the implementation phase. Additional stakeholders may also need to be brought into future processes depending on the priorities being actioned.

Recommendation 1

That the Growth Areas Authority continues to work in partnership with project partners to develop an implementation plan for the strategic framework.

Review of the Draft Precinct Structure Plan Guidelines

The strategic framework has been designed to have immediate application to Precinct Structure Planning. Applying the framework (principles, goals and priorities) when the review of the *Draft Precinct Structure Plan Guidelines* occurs in 2008 will strengthen the potential to achieve liveability goals.

Recommendation 2

That the terms of reference for the review of the *Draft Precinct Structure Plan Guidelines* include the application of the *Creating Liveable New Communities Strategic Framework*.

Indicator development

Planning for liveability outcomes is new and, as a result, measuring liveability outcomes is ground breaking work. Some indicators in the strategic framework refer to benchmarks and standards that have yet to be developed.

Recommendation 3

That the Growth Areas Authority, in consultation with project partners, key industry and academic stakeholders, develop a set of rigorous evidence-based performance standards for relevant indicators.

Sector capacity building

The implementation of good ideas occurs when the people doing the implementing can translate the ideas into practical strategies. For this reason the Creating Liveable New Communities Project has developed two practical tools: *Checklist for Liveability Planning*; and *Promising Practice: A book of good practice*. There may well be other tools that can help, for example, guidelines for preparing a community plan that can be sourced from and/or developed in conjunction with other project partners.

Recommendation 4

That the Growth Areas Authority develop a dissemination strategy for the practical tools inclusive of web based availability, workshops, and profile raising opportunities and continue to work with project partners to consider what other tools may help.

A second way to support good practice is to demonstrate what it is. The Growth Areas Authority and the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) have commissioned a 'Demonstration Project' intended to deliver a residentially focused development project that exceeds current standards and shows excellence in practical urban design and planning for health and well-being outcomes. The demonstration project provides a timely opportunity to implement the strategic framework and to document lessons from the project.

Recommendation 5

That the Growth Areas Authority and the Planning Institute of Australia trial the application of the strategic framework to the 'Demonstration Project' and disseminate lessons for liveability planning at the completion of the project.

Market research

The international review of literature undertaken for this project highlighted the lack of available research into the experiences of people moving into growth areas and new communities. This lack of direct consumer or community voice is antithetical to the whole notion of liveability which relies on knowing what is liveable to *people*.

Recommendation 6

The GAA, in conjunction with project partners, commission a resident survey to ascertain the liveability of new communities in Melbourne's five growth areas and incorporate the lessons from this research into planning for the new communities of the future.

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Attachment 1: Project partners

The following people participated in the Reference Committee for the *Creating Liveable New Communities Project*:

Growth Areas Authority

Peter Seamer, CEO (Chair of the Reference Committee)
Jean Parson, Senior Project Manager, Strategic Directions
Greg Bursill, Director Planning
Mia Davison, Manager Planning

Municipal Association of Victoria

Liz Johnstone, Senior Planning Advisor

National Heart Foundation

Rachel Carlisle

Housing Industry Association

Craig Jennion

VicUrban

Lynn Sweeney
Peter Crowley

Vic Health

Kellie-Ann Jolly
Lee Choon Siau

Planning Institute of Australia

Jason Black
Stuart Worn

Department of Planning and Community Development

Cath Peterson
Nicola Foxworthy

Department of Human Services

Ron Frew
Holly Piontek Walker

Attachment 2: Project participants

The following is the full list of people and organizations that were consulted for the *Creating Liveable New Communities Project*:

Interviews

Peter Seamer, Jean Parson, Greg Bursill, Mia Davison, and Marlene Johnson, Growth Areas Authority

Craig Jennion, Housing Industry Association

Paul Gouting, and Yvonne Robinson, National Heart Foundation

Lynn Sweeney and Peter Crowley, Manager Community Development Projects

Kellie-Ann Jolly and Lee Choon Siau, VicHealth

Stuart Worn and Jason Black, Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)

Cath Peterson, Department for Victorian Communities

Nicola Foxworthy, Department for Planning and Community Development

Sally Semmens, Department of Infrastructure

Kate Austin, Denise Lachlan, Phil Dalling, Jo de Graaff, Ron Frew, Holly Piontek Walker, Daryl Glynn, Department of Human Services

Tabitha Frith, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Melvino Mangolini, Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission Inquiry into Victoria's Liveability

David Turnbull and Chris DeSilva, Whittlesea City Council

Brian Berry John Circosta, Wyndham City Council

Developers Workshop

Kerry O'Neil, VicUrban

Ron Espie and Peter Burke, Australand

Anthony George, AV Jennings

Mark Woodland, Delfin Land Lease

Ken Munro and Paul Moller, Dennis Family

Martin Williams and Kerry O'Neill Vic Urban

Rob Taber, Villa Wood

Clare Malcolm and Nick Dreugus, Stockland Developments.

Local Government Workshop

Liz Johnstone, Municipal Association of Victoria

Lisel Thomas, Municipal Association of Victoria

Denise Shearer, Hume City Council

Phil Walton, Cardinia Shire Council

Sara Miletic and Taren Brockhouse, Casey Shire Council

Neville Smith, Melton Shire Council

Attachment 3: Checklist for liveability planning

Attachment 4: Promising Practice: A book of good practice Case Studies