
Community Hubs Framework

November 2015

Introduction

The City of Greater Dandenong works with its residents to facilitate positive outcomes for the community through the provision of services, funding community programs, facilities, open spaces and development initiatives that allow the community to socialise, recreate, learn and develop.

Community facilities have an important role in achieving these outcomes and providing settings to deliver locally-based services and community development opportunities. Community hubs can provide a valuable link and central location for residents to access local services, activities, support structures, learning options and social opportunities. Hubs can unite service providers in a single facility where residents are welcome in a familiar, friendly and local place. Accordingly, Council plans to develop community hubs in Dandenong, Springvale and Keysborough South.

Council is committed to the development of community hubs in these key localities within Greater Dandenong. This commitment is reflected in various Council policies as well as the Council Plan and is favoured by the State Government as a method for local, integrated service delivery.

This document provides a broad framework for the development of Council community hubs within these localities. It also outlines the principles, characteristics and benefits of community hubs and a community development approach that will support hubs for the benefit of the community. This document recognises that Council will continue to advocate and support community hubs as necessary, be they in schools or community gathering places.

A community hub is a facility offering a range of activities, programs, services and events which address the social, physical and emotional wellbeing of the local community.

Council also recognises that a successful community hub is more than a cluster of services and buildings.

People Focused Approach

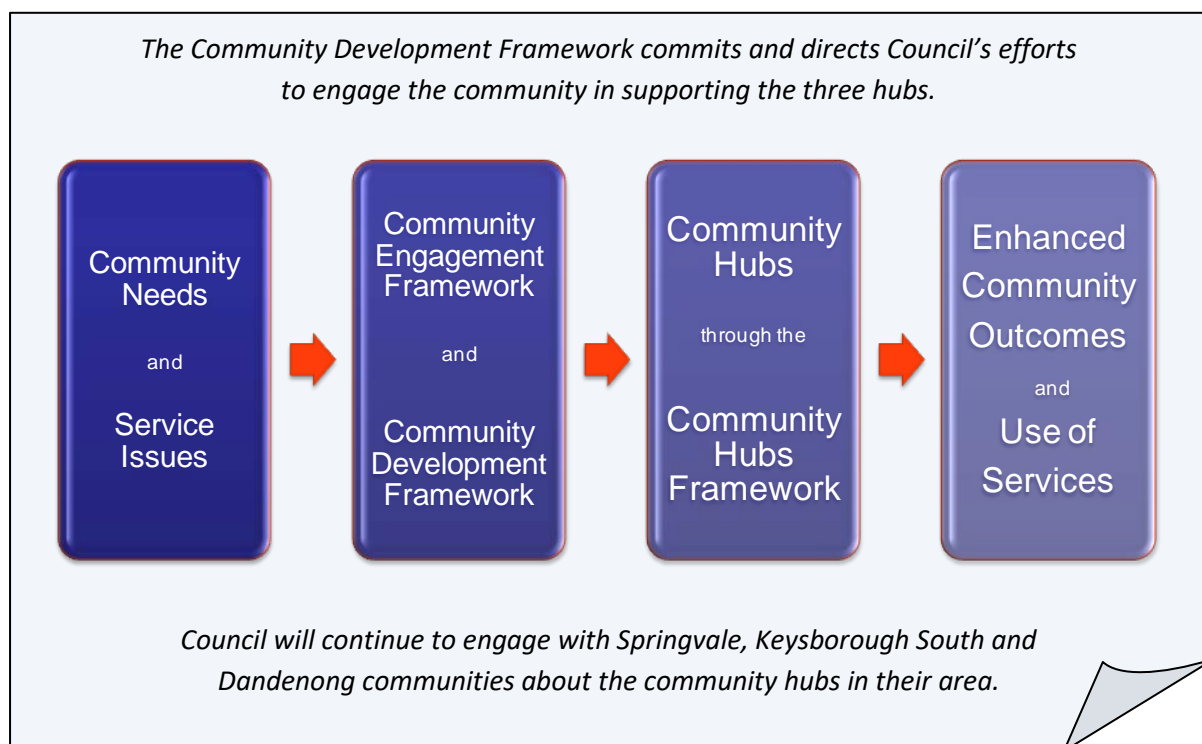
Successful hubs are developed and driven with the community and for the community. Hubs serve the community by building connections between participants through relationships built in welcoming gathering spaces. Community engagement and trust is important in the planning, delivery and ongoing operations of community hubs and ensuring that services are developed in response to community consultation.

Design of hubs must ensure that they are welcoming through both the physical layout and social atmosphere and in particular on first entry into each hub. Staff and volunteers must also be welcoming and caring to people coming to the community hub and a culture of collaboration is necessary in successfully integrating services and providing flexible delivery to appropriately meet the needs of the community.

A community development approach to guide the establishment of community hubs is important, enabling early and ongoing local community engagement in planning and hub design. Early buy-in from local communities creates a sense of ownership and belonging from the beginning with the community being directly involved in providing input, expressing its expectations, aspirations and

ideas. Community development is the key conduit to gain community engagement which then informs successful decision-making.

Once a community hub is realised, a community development approach continues to play a role in providing active connection with community members between hub management and governance as well as between community and Council.



Principles, Characteristics and Benefits

In 2014, Council endorsed a range of principles to underpin its approach to the development of community hubs. These principles are intended to guide the design, development and desired outcomes of community hubs. These principles include:

1. Centrally located – near retail activity precincts.
2. Accessible for users – on or near a main road.
3. Located where people already visit.
4. Able to provide a variety of services to meet the needs of the local community.
5. Integrated in service delivery.
6. Co-located with existing local users such as shops, transport, community facilities, parks and schools.
7. Flexible and adaptable to future changing needs.

There are a number of characteristics that define a community hub.

Hubs combine the benefits of shared use, multi-functional spaces that generate economies of scale, avoidance of the duplication of infrastructure and support for the viable and sustainable delivery of services.

Hubs may also provide members of the community with direct, easy contact with Council, and access to a range of relevant programs and services in their local area. To be successful, it is important that three-way communication is established between Council, residents and service providers to maximise resident interaction and community building.

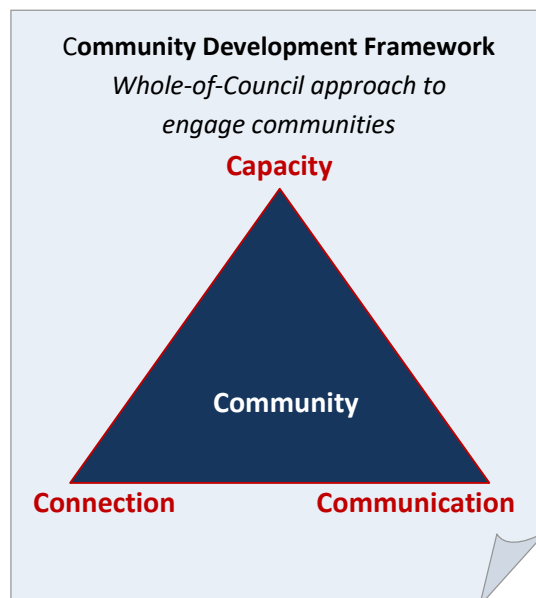
Community hubs have the potential to foster interaction between residents, build community connection and social capital by providing access to a 'one-stop-shop' of services relevant across the community.

Community hubs will be embedded in the Community Development Framework consistent with Council's overarching philosophy. By doing so, centres will provide a vehicle for Council and other community organisations to work with local communities on addressing their core priorities and needs.

The delivery of integrated services within community hubs should assist services shifting from being separate entities under the one roof, to working collaboratively towards community objectives. Council recognises the work of a community development approach in creating the liaisons and synergies necessary to facilitate true integration and collaboration.

The establishment of community hubs, coupled with a best practice community development approach, delivers substantial benefits for Council, service providers and the community.

Community hubs respond to community need, attract people, and provide a friendly and inclusive focal point for the community to access services and supports. These factors make hubs an important community asset and inviting public space encouraging interaction.



Benefits include:

1. Delivering integrated facilities that encourage stronger connection with neighbourhoods and closer familiarity with local services, among residents.
2. Fostering collaboration and cross-promotion between a variety of services and residents.
3. Offering meeting spaces for a range of community organisations and residents, in the convenience of a one-stop-shop.
4. Providing engaging, welcoming spaces that promote contact between residents of different ages and cultural backgrounds. Inclusion of formal spaces with the capacity for community activities as well as spaces for informal gathering should greatly enhance community engagement, belonging and social interaction.

5. Delivering significant savings by sharing buildings, utilities, amenities and management.
6. Enhancing opportunities to secure government funding by promoting a co-located, integrated approach to service delivery.
7. Assisting community members to navigate and access various community services.

Challenges and Considerations

There are financial and practical challenges associated with community hubs that should be considered. These include the cost of land purchase and development, site suitability, availability of staff and other resources, partnering with the community to establish a trusting and positive relationship and ensuring ongoing engagement with local residents.

Consideration must be given to effective governance and management framework for community hubs and the commitment to engaging local communities prior to and during the development of a hub as well as the potential of utilising hubs as beacons of best practice in environmental and energy efficiency.

Just as community engagement is critical early on in the development of a community hub, continued community involvement is just as important in ensuring ongoing community investment and vibrancy in developing social capital and relevant and targeted programming and services.

Community hubs have the potential to bring economic, social and cultural benefits to Greater Dandenong communities. Whilst Council is committed to delivering community hubs in Dandenong, Springvale and Keysborough South, it will continue to support and advocate for other organisations to develop community hubs into the future.

Council will continue to advocate for and seek funding opportunities to support localised hub initiatives within the municipality. This includes advocacy support for existing school based hubs currently operating in the municipality and partner with schools and other services according to the Community Development Framework.

Assistance will be offered to facilitate and/or coordinate efforts to acquire project funding for existing or future localised hubs, emphasising their value in local communities.