

Community Development Framework

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1. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Development Framework is to guide Council's engagement with the community to enable the fair and equitable distribution of resources.

Council is committed to building a stronger, more inclusive community, valuing diversity and enabling residents to help shape the community in which they live.

2. Background

Greater Dandenong is a community of broad cultural diversity and ongoing migrant settlement. As the most culturally diverse community in Australia, two-thirds of its residents were born overseas in over 150 different birthplaces and speak languages other than English. In addition, this community experiences a high rate of migrant settlement, including many refugees and people seeking asylum.

Greater Dandenong also faces the challenges of low-income levels, high unemployment, unfavourable educational outcomes, a substantial level of homelessness, lower levels of mental and physical health than the Victorian average, and elevated crime rates.

Council has a responsibility, and important opportunity, to help residents to understand the structure, roles and responsibilities of government, and extend an opportunity to them to participate in governance processes.

Associated with these conditions is a variety of social and service requirements, such as resettlement, housing, education, and employment. The Community Development Framework outlines an approach that recognises the strengths of this diverse community which may be harnessed to address its challenges.

Local Government Sector Reform

The *Victorian Local Government Act 2020* represents the most significant reform to the local government sector in over 30 years and aims to improve local government democracy, accountability, and service delivery for the community. One of the key changes is the requirement for the use of deliberative engagement practices.

Deliberative engagement is a distinctive approach, involving a representative group of people in decision-making where they are given the time to consider an issue in depth before they reach an informed viewpoint. While the legislation only requires the use of deliberative engagement in Council's strategic planning process, including planning and financial management, the 'Imagine 2030' Community Plan (long-term vision) and the Council Plan, the intent of the new Act is to encourage positive and productive community engagement, by assisting councils to build capacity in deliberative engagement so that this way of working with the community becomes standard practice, rather than an exceptional exercise.

Council recognises that collaborative ways of working with the community and stakeholders offers the most effective means to identify new solutions for some of the most complex problems communities face, improve policy outcomes and build trust between the community, stakeholders and Council. This principle forms a basis for this Framework and is reflected in its principles and approach.

The Local Policy Context

At the local level, the policy context for the Community Development Framework is provided by three plans: Imagine 2030, the Council Plan 2017-21 and the Community Wellbeing Plan 2017-21.

Imagine 2030 outlines the long-term aspirations of members of the Greater Dandenong community, describing the city they want to see in 2030. Underlying the community's top priorities was a desire for a harmonious community, to live in a place one can be proud of, and to enjoy opportunities for educational advancement, employment and raising a family. These priorities form a long-term goal for Council and the community.

The Council Plan 2017-21 sets the shorter-term strategic direction for Council and the achievement of its vision for a safe, vibrant city of opportunity for all. The plan specifies six objectives to realize that vision, relating to infrastructure renewal and development; enhanced public transport links and accessibility; improved educational opportunities; sport and recreation options; long-term employment solutions; business investment; and improved health and wellbeing. The Community Development Framework advances Strategic Objective 2 of the Council Plan, 'A creative city that respects and embraces its diversity'.

The Community Wellbeing Plan 2017-21 demonstrates Council's commitment to work closely with the community, local service providers and other levels of government, to promote health and wellbeing among the residents of this community. It also identifies key priorities and objectives across Council that address the changing health needs of Greater Dandenong residents. The Wellbeing Plan acknowledges that many social, economic, and environmental factors influence the health and wellbeing of the community. Council recognises the importance of tailoring efforts to meet community needs and takes a people-centred and place-based approach to improving health and wellbeing. These approaches are central to the Community Development Framework.

An integrated Policy Framework

The Community Development Framework forms part of a policy framework which is guided by the Diversity, Access and Equity Policy, and includes the Community Engagement Framework and the Community Hubs Framework. These documents support community participation in social, civic, and economic life and help realise Council's vision for a safe, vibrant city of opportunity for all.

On the following page, Table 1 illustrates the policy framework for supporting community engagement and participation in social, civic, and economic life.

Table 1: Policy Framework

| Diversity, Access and Equity Policy | Community Development Framework | Community Engagement Framework | Community Hubs Framework |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirms Council's recognition of, and respect for, the diversity of backgrounds, abilities, values, beliefs and lifestyles of all residents • Guides Council's efforts to address discrimination, promote inclusiveness and partnership, and fosters community participation in social, civic and economic life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides a flexible, approach for working in partnership with stakeholders and the community to identify and respond to the issues that are important to them • Ensuring those impacted by outcomes, particularly the most vulnerable within the community, are represented in community development processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommends the level of community participation based on the type of decision being made and the process • Provides approaches to support inclusive and engaging participation of all residents in decision making, democratic processes, and social and civic life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides Council's role in the planning, design, delivery, support, advocacy, and facilitation of the places and spaces where people gather in the community, physical and virtual, the various functions of these places and spaces, and the relationships and partnerships associated with these spaces |

3. Scope

The Community Development Framework applies to all Councillors, Council staff, contract staff and volunteers. It bears upon all aspects of Council's roles and responsibilities in service planning and delivery; the development of infrastructure, open spaces, and community hubs; engagement and consultation with residents; advocacy; and other Council functions.

4. Policy Statement

Council is committed to working in partnership with the community, with emphasis upon engaging marginalised and vulnerable communities. Its goal is to build a stronger, more inclusive community that values diversity, provides people the opportunity to play a role in shaping the community in which they live.

Community development entails partnership with stakeholders and the community, offering support, encouragement and guidance to help them identify and respond to the issues which are important to them. Central to this process is Council's respect for their knowledge and wisdom, and its conviction that community members are experts in their lives and communities.

The process is flexible and may be tailored to the needs of individual communities.

4.1 Objectives

The objectives for the Community Development Framework are to:

1. Promote a consistent and respectful approach for engaging residents
2. Strengthen their capacity to exert a positive influence upon their community

3. Ensure the voices and views of diverse communities inform Council decisions and activities
4. Encourage the participation of members of the community in social, civic and economic life.

4.2 Principles

The principles for the Community Development Framework below, guide the process Council uses to engage the community in identifying and responding to the issues which are important to them.

| Principle | Practice |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Inclusion and Equity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing genuine and meaningful opportunities for residents to participate in processes whose outcomes affect their advancement and wellbeing • Valuing all people equally, extending particular consideration to marginalised or vulnerable individuals, who often face difficulties in affirming their rights and participating in engagement • Considering the diversity of needs and interests of all people and organisations throughout the process • Enabling members of the community to have a say in their own future, make their own decisions, contribute to solutions to issues that are important to their lives, and foster connections with others. |
| Collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking communities, individuals, groups, agencies and Council • Establishing partnerships to achieve favourable outcomes for residents by encouraging different communities to work together and build lasting, constructive relationships • Fostering and maintaining trust among participants. |
| Empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working and learning together to help increase understanding, awareness, and empathy for each other. |
| Place Based | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on neighbourhoods and places where people meet, to identify opportunities for improvement • Defining and working within specific precincts, locations, and suburbs to co-ordinate planning and activities within those localities. |
| Strength based | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying strengths which exist among the community, encouraging individuals, local organisations and institutions to unite to apply and build upon those attributes. Strengths may include physical spaces, skills, local knowledge, associations and networks, as well as financial resources • Such strengths may be viewed and defined differently by different individuals, and influenced by their experience |

| Principle | Practice |
|--------------------------|---|
| Collective Action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering people and organisations together to enable them to speak with a united, strong and confident voice • A vision for change is developed, including a community understanding of the issue and an approach to tackling it. |
| Building Capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals, families, and communities are encouraged to identify strengths, needs, and supported to develop solutions at a local level • Helping members of the community to cultivate and harness their talents and enjoy a fulfilling life. |
| Responsiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reacting promptly to societal changes and local issues as they emerge • Operating in an honest and forthright way that encourages openness amongst others • Welcoming and responding to feedback from the community • Setting processes in place to monitor progress and outcomes. |

5. Approach

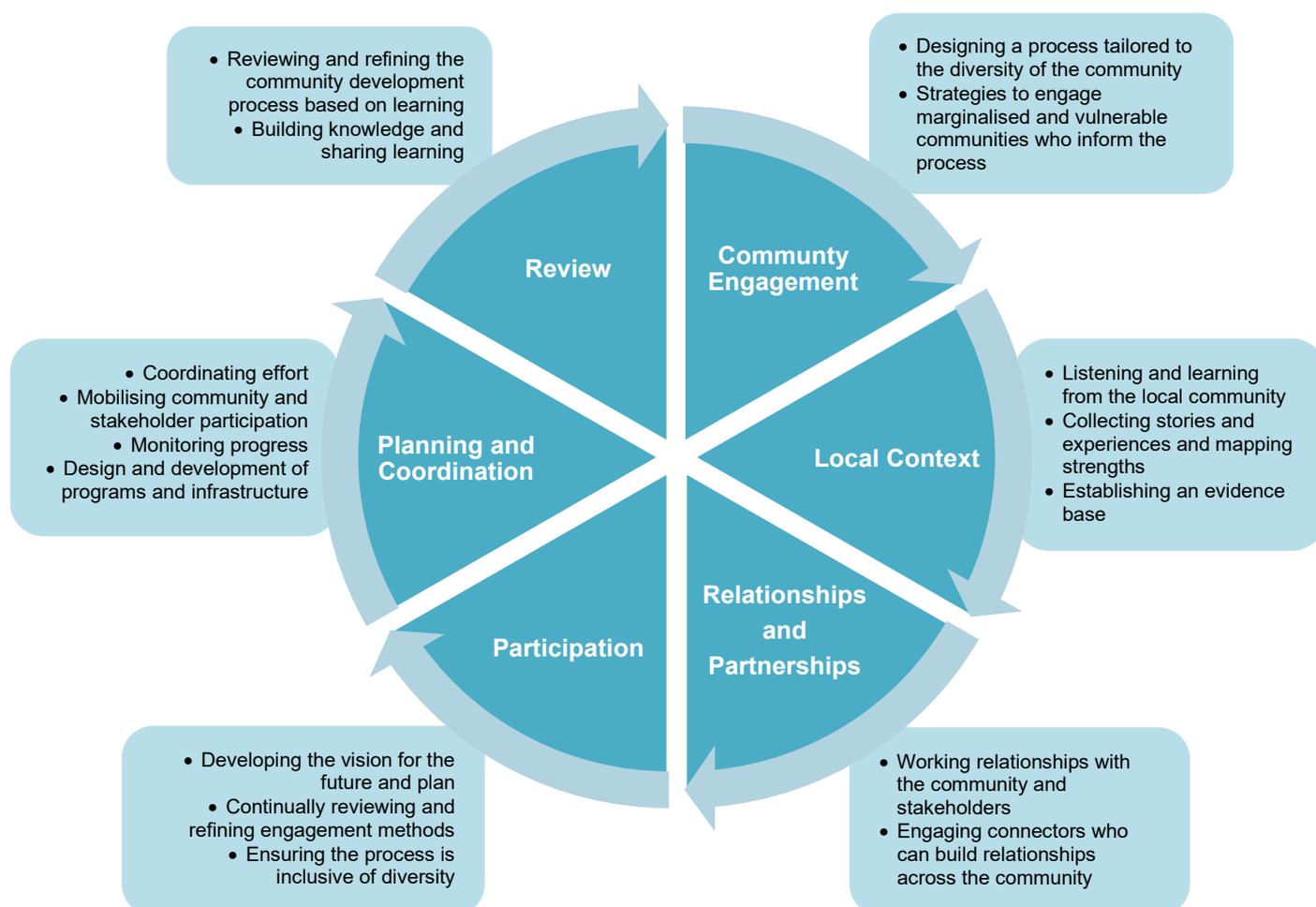
The City of Greater Dandenong's community development approach is flexible and tailored to the needs of individual communities.

It emphasises working in partnership with the community to empower and strengthen communities and encourage cooperative practices inclusive of the diversity of the community.

Central to this process is the belief that community members are experts in their lives and communities, and that the knowledge and wisdom of residents should be valued.

Figure 1 illustrates Council's community development approach. Each stage of the process informs the next in a continuous learning cycle, connected by the active participation of the community in each stage.

Figure 1



Community Engagement

Community engagement is central to the design of a community development process that is tailored to the diversity of the community. Council's Community Engagement Framework provides guidance regarding the level of community participation and engagement that is appropriate to decision-making processes.

The key levels of community participation include:

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|--------------------|--|
| Inform | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to help them understand problems, alternatives and/or solutions |
| Consult | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions |
| Involve | To work with the public throughout the process to ensure that issues and concerns are understood and considered |
| Collaborate | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including consideration of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution |
| Empower | To place final decision making in the hands of the public |

The engagement process adopted for Council's community development processes will aim to involve, collaborate, and empower people. However, the process of engaging with the community is a dynamic one, which means there is likely to be movement back and forth through the different levels of participation as an engagement process is implemented. This is because the community can have different levels of influence at different stages of the process and some groups within the community may be more directly impacted than others.

A wide range of engagement mechanisms will enable the active participation of the community and stakeholders in the process.

Understanding the local context

Developing an understanding of the local context begins by listening to people's views about an issue or situation that is important to them.

Every community is unique. Learning about the diversity of experiences and perspectives provides the foundation for establishing relationships of trust, dialogue, partnership and collaboration between Council and the community.

Engaging with the diversity of the community, local networks and other residents forms the basis for learning about the community and their experience.

A further essential step is to establish an evidence base, including demographic profile and societal trends.

Documenting the strengths of the community generates an appreciation of the broad range of strengths and opportunities that are often hidden in the community, including the physical spaces, skills, local knowledge, local groups and associations and networks and financial resources.

Partnerships and Relationships

Establishing connections will help Council to draw on the strengths and opportunities within the community and working relationships developed with communities to respond to issues.

Partnerships with key community organisations, agencies and other stakeholders also contribute to the success of the process.

Participation

Forming a vision for the future, which describes the community's aspirations, and identifies the activities and initiatives relevant to the local community to realise this vision, is a focus for this stage.

Broader stakeholder analysis helps to identify methods to ensure residents are included in identifying communities' aims, the vision for the future and the plan to get there.

The review and refinement of the tools and methods for engagement will ensure approaches are tailored to support inclusive and engaging participation for all residents in the community development process.

Planning and coordination

Facilitating the planning, coordination, and management of resources to ensure projects and processes achieve their goals is crucial to the process. This includes working in partnership with the community by supporting, encouraging, and guiding their participation in the design and development of programs and infrastructure.

Where possible, opportunities should be sought to support the community to take an active role in coordinating and implementing initiatives, including community-led advocacy to the government, as well as using connections and knowledge among partners to secure additional funding by applying for grants, thereby drawing additional resources into the community.

An important role of the project facilitator is to identify the additional skills and capacities which may help to achieve the plan, while also encouraging the residents to enhance their own capacities and skills.

Review

Monitoring, evaluation, and incorporation of learning processes provides valuable insight into the community development process and its success in achieving its objectives.

Evaluation also provides an opportunity to inform future processes.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of Council for community development processes are outlined in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3: Council's Roles and Responsibilities

| Role | Responsibilities |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Facilitator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling and encouraging the participation of the diverse community in processes • Facilitating processes and supporting, encouraging, and guiding the community to work together • Leading advocacy to other levels of government for change, where appropriate • Ensuing participants are supported to have an active voice and to contribute their perspectives to the process. |
| Visible Presence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a direct and visible access point for members of the community within local neighbourhoods • Serving as a resource and point of assistance for community leaders, residents, and other local stakeholders. |
| Advocate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing and advocating for the community and their aspirations for the future • Seeking funding from Council and other sources. |
| Planning and Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising effort and ensuring the appropriate resources are allocated to priorities. |

7. Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter 2006 – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the *Victorian Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter 2006* have been considered in the preparation of this policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter. In particular this policy is consistent with:

- *Section 14: affirming the right to freedom of religion and belief*
- *Section 17: recognising right of children and families to protection and freedom from discrimination*
- *Section 18: recognising rights to participate in the conduct of public affairs*
- *Section 19: acknowledging the right to freedom to maintain cultural identity and expression, kinship ties and traditional relationship to the land and other resources.*

8. Review

The review period for this framework is four years from the date of endorsement.

9. References and Related Documents

- Adopted at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 12 July 2021
- Supersedes Community Development Framework 2015

The following policies, strategies, procedures, legislation, or guidelines relate to the implementation of this policy.

9.1 Applicable Legislation:

- *Child Safety Act (2015)*
- Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards
- *Equal Opportunity Act (2010)*
- *Public Administration Act (2004)*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008)*
- *The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*
- *Victorian Local Government Act (2020)*

9.2 Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

Plans

- Children's Plan (2015-19)
- Council Plan (2017-21)
- Community Safety Plan (2015-22)
- Community Wellbeing Plan (2017-21)
- Disability Action Plan (2017-23)
- Imagine 2030 Community Plan
- People Seeking Asylum and Refugees Plan (2018-21)
- Reconciliation Action Plan (2020-2023)
- Springvale Community Hub Strategic Plan (2020-2025)

Strategies

- Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy
- Cycling Strategy (2017-22)
- Housing Strategy (2014-2024)
- Local Economic and Employment Development Strategy (2011)
- Library Strategy (2018-23)
- Make Your Move Physical Activity Strategy (2020-2030)
- Neighbourhood Houses Strategic Directions (2016)
- Playground Strategy (2013-23)
- Positive Ageing Strategy (2017-25)
- Walking Strategy (2015-23)
- Youth Strategy (2020-25)

Policies and Frameworks

- Activity Centre's Placemaking Framework
- Community Hubs Framework
- Community Engagement Policy and Framework
- Diversity Policy
- Disability Policy
- Indigenous Policy
- Multipurpose Use of Community Facilities Policy

10. Definitions

| Term | Meaning |
|------------------------------|--|
| Access | Fair and equal opportunity for all residents to use Council services and participate in its programs. |
| Activation | The variety of ways that inspire and involve local people in community hubs. |
| Activities | Developed and performed to meet a community need. Can form part of a service or be delivered as standalone, independent events. |
| Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who live in the City of Greater Dandenong • People and organisations who are ratepayers in the City of Greater Dandenong; and • People and organisations who conduct activities in City of Greater Dandenong • Community of place (based on geographic location) • Community of practice (based on common interests and activities such as cultural, conservation, the environment, bike-riding) • Community of identity (based on an individual shared perspective such as particular age groups or a religious community). |
| Community development | Involves a community working together, with support, encouragement, and guidance, to identify its needs and find solutions. The process is flexible and tailored to the needs of individual communities. |
| Community engagement | Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is essential in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in affecting local government and the community. |
| Community facilities | Community facilities refers to buildings that are owned by Council or where Council is the Committee of Management, that support community services or provide community benefit, and include health, individual, family and community support, education, arts and culture, information, community development, employment and training, and active and passive recreation opportunities. |
| Community hubs | Community hubs reflect the outcomes of the combined elements of place, function, social networks, and relationships, that come together and are brought to life and |

| Term | Meaning |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| | strengthened through the activation of community spaces to form the foundation of strong neighbourhoods. |
| Council | Greater Dandenong City Council. |
| Councillors | Person who has been elected to the office of “Councillor” of Greater Dandenong City Council and surrounding municipalities if appropriate. |
| Council staff | A current member of Greater Dandenong City Council staff with the authority to engage in activities on behalf of Council. |
| Government | State and Federal Government departments, Offices and Agencies, Local Government Sector, Federal, State and Local Members and politicians. |
| Inclusive | To comprise and welcome a broad range of backgrounds and interests, considering issues of language, ethnicity and culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, and disability. |
| Integrated services | Services and organisations working together as one to deliver services and activities that are more comprehensive and cohesive, as well as services being more accessible and responsive to the needs of the community. |
| Methods | Refers to the many types of engagement that can be employed such as online or in person, public meetings and community panels, surveys, ideas boards, public competitions, focus groups, interviews. |
| Not for profit organisations | Types of organisations that do not earn profits for its owners. All the money earned or donated to a not-for-profit organisation is used to continue carrying out its mission. |
| Partner | An individual, organisation or sector that forms a partnership to work with Council. |
| Partnerships | Occur when two or more people or organisations work together to realise or achieve a goal. Partnerships provide opportunities for mutual benefit and results beyond what any single individual, organisation or sector could realise alone. |
| Placemaking | Placemaking is the process of creating places that people inherently understand, participate in, and feel ownership of. |
| Residents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners and renters – residential and business • Residents streets, suburbs, or wards |

| Term | Meaning |
|--------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident and ratepayer representative groups. |
| Services | <p>A group of programs and projects primarily focussed on external recipients, which collectively provide support or guidance to the community to achieve the objectives of Greater Dandenong Council's Vision and Council Plan. A combination of tangible and intangible benefits that can be produced and consumed.</p> |
| Stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections of the community involved in engagement because of impact, interest, or responsibility to deliver on an outcome Can also refer to external organisations, and other levels of government involved in a decision Also includes internal decision makers and implementers of decision outcomes. |
| Volunteer | <p>Formally recognised, unpaid member of the public who assists with the provision of Council services e.g. Visitor Information Centre, Library.</p> |
| Volunteer organisations | <p>An organisation which relies on occasional or regular volunteers for its operations and may or may not have paid staff.</p> |