Creating a Connected Cardinia

Neighbourhood Development Framework
Background Paper
2011 - 2015

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Neighbourhood Development portfolio
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[DATE]

Review date:

The *Neighbourhood Development Background Paper 2011-2015* will be reviewed in 2015.

Contents

Acronyms

CALD   Culturally And Linguistically Diverse

CIV   Community Indicators Victoria

DPCD   Department of Planning and Community Development

ND   Neighbourhood Development

Introduction

Home has a special place in the heart of Australians. We value our homes, our streets, our communities. We all know when a place feels good to be in….

But what are the ingredients that help create this feeling? What makes a strong, resilient community?

Part of the answer lies in the physical form of the place. Part in the facilities and services that are offered. And a third ingredient is the people that live there, the connections and networks they form, and the sense of belonging that together builds a community.

Cardinia Shire is home to brand-new communities within the growth area, as well as to long-standing communities in some of the Shire's rural townships. The development of the growth area from greenfield sites into new suburbs and employment areas presents a special set of challenges that needs a particular approach. Characteristics such as a more uniform age structure, new residents with fewer closer family members, fewer links with existing community groups are just some examples.

Council has an important role to play in ensuring that new and existing residents within Cardinia Shire feel welcome, become part of the community and are able to know about and access a range of services to meet their individual needs.

This Background Paper provides an overview of neighbourhood development theory and practice, an overview of the key factors influencing Cardinia Shire's communities currently and into the future, outlines relevant Council and State Government policy and provides an overview of key stakeholders involved in neighbourhood development.

Program Papers

Neighbourhood Development Background Paper 2011-2015	Provides the background to Neighbourhood Development, outlines Council's role, identifies potential partners and looks at case studies
Neighbourhood Development Policy & Strategy 2011-2015	Sets out the approach to Neighbourhood Development at Cardinia Shire Council and the key outcomes, policies and strategies
Neighbourhood Development Action Plan 2011-2015	Sets out a program of activities and initiatives related to Neighbourhood Development in Cardinia Shire, including an overall program logic map
Yearly Review	Provides a yearly review of Neighbourhood Development and learnings from the following year
4-year Evaluation	Provides a full evaluation of the program and provides recommendations for the next four year program

Neighbourhood Development at Cardinia Shire Council

Neighbourhood development can mean different things to different people in different places.

Social Capital Theory tells us that people who have networks and connections with family and friends, community groups and governance structures are more resilient, contribute more to society, deal better with future challenges and are less likely to be vulnerable to homelessness, social isolation and financial stress. Higher levels of social support are also beneficial to both physical and psychological health, and conversely, there is evidence that social isolation can lead to ill health.[1] There are also strong links between poverty and minority groups, and social exclusion and poor health outcomes.[2]

The role of the Neighbourhood Development portfolio at Cardinia Shire Council is focussed on promoting opportunities for residents and other community members to build social ties, develop linkages with other community members and with community organisations, creating attachment to place and connection with services and governance structures. It is also focussed on promoting community leadership, supporting strong community organisations and fostering respect, which all support the growth of community connectedness.

In doing this, its aim is to contribute to the development of a thriving community and reduce the vulnerability of Cardinia Shire's residents to social isolation, family stress, homelessness and antisocial or risk-taking behaviours.

Neighbourhood development can and does occur organically and without government input. Some people have no problems in meeting their neighbours, getting involved in local groups, or become active in their local community. However, by undertaking specific neighbourhood development activities in the Shire, Council can help to create and promote opportunities for all residents to make connections and become attached to place, and help to ensure that more and more residents are engaged and less likely to fall through the cracks. The neighbourhood development portfolio is not the only player in the game of creating a thriving community, and its programs and initiatives will sit alongside many others Council is currently delivering or will in the future.

How we do things is as important as what we do, and the neighbourhood development portfolio offers significant opportunities to also build community capacity through its programs and initiatives. This may be community capacity in terms of leadership, skills, and involvement in local governance structures. This building of community capacity is not a given, as neighbourhood development programs could be rolled out by Council with little community involvement. However, the more involvement community members have in the design and delivery of programs and initiatives, the more community capacity building will occur and the more appropriate the programs and initiatives will be.

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[1] Stansfeld, S. (2008) *Social support and social cohesion*. In Marmot, M and Wilkinson, R.G .(2008). *Social Determinants of Health (2nd ed),* pp 148-167. Oxford University Press.
[2] Shaw, M., Dorling, D., Davey Smith, G. (2008). *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Minorities*. In Marmot, M and Wilkinson, R.G .(2008). *Social Determinants of Health (2nd ed),* pp 196-223. Oxford University Press.

The special needs of a growth corridor municipality:

Cardinia Shire is a growth corridor municipality, and as a result, has a special set of characteristics that means it needs particular attention. As shown in the Casey-Cardinia Growth Area Framework Plan[3] (Figure 1), there are large areas within the Urban Growth Boundary set aside for residential and employment development. While this is only a small percentage of the total area of Cardinia, it represents a significant amount of land-use planning and infrastructure planning and provision, and of course, a significant population increase. It will give rise to the need for additional community facilities and service, and mean that some parts of the community will need assistance with making connections within their new neighbourhoods.

A report by Stephanie Wyeth and Judith Hunter, of Wyeth Planning Services and 99 Consulting respectively, prepared for the Queensland Department of Communities, begins by citing research suggesting that independent of socio-economic status, large greenfield sites are likely to have high levels of need for social services because of factors such as geographic isolation, lack of infrastructure, relatively weak community capacity, lifecycle homogeneity and housing stress.[4]

The report identifies that community capacity in new communities is often limited due to financial stress, time poor families, lack of established networks, newness of relationships and reliance on developer-led "community".

They suggest that in large greenfield sites, there are several important priorities:

- Early investment in land for – and construction of – a community centre/service hub
- Development of the service system
- Early investment in community development capacity
- Early investment in universal prevention and early intervention services (likely to focus on children and family initially)
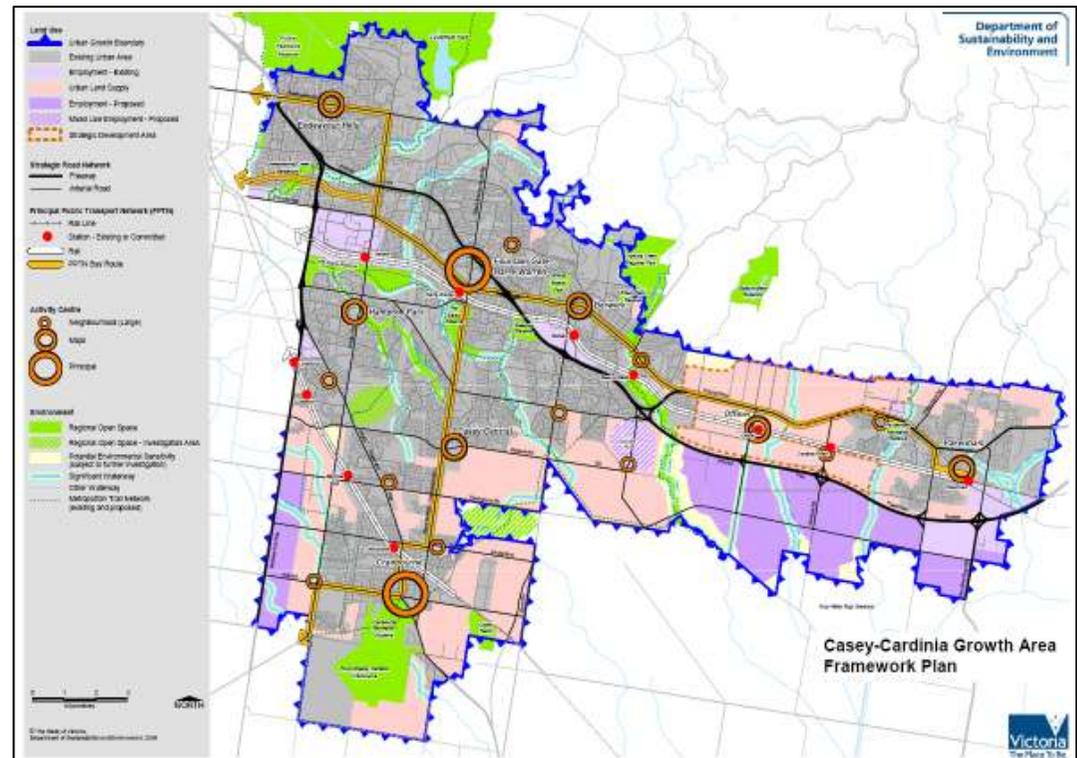- Responses to the risk of homelessness

Figure 1: Casey-Cardinia Growth Area Framework Plan

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[3] Department of Sustainability and Environment (2006), *Casey-Cardinia Growth Area Framework Plan.* Available online: http://www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Assets/Files/Framework_Casey-Cardinia.pdf
[4] Wyeth, S. & Hunter, J. (2009) *Coordinated Human Services Investment in Greenfield Sites: Project Report.*

There are some clear implications here for Council. Of particular relevance for the Neighbourhood Development portfolio is the need for early investment in community development and community capacity building. While some developers already lead community development programs within their new estates, others don't and it's important that across all new communities there is some Council community development presence. Ongoing support for new community groups after developers "pull out" is also essential.

Cardinia's townships and rural areas

Currently, around 45% of Cardinia's population live in one of Cardinia's 27 rural townships or in the rural areas of the Shire. While this percentage will gradually decrease as the population in the Urban Growth Area increases, it demonstrates that a large proportion of residents live outside of areas designated for significant growth. This does not mean that these areas will not experience change, and it is important to recognise that some population growth will occur, alongside population turnover and changing demographics, all of which highlights the need for neighbourhood development initiatives to be rolled out over the whole Shire.

The importance of linking old with new:

The mix of new and existing communities, new and existing residents, different cultures and different backgrounds means that creating linkages between existing and new parts of Cardinia is important. Creating a "whole of municipality" identity as well as the estate or township identity is part of this process.

Links to State and Federal Policy and Strategy	Links to Council Plan	Links to existing Council Policy and Strategy

Recent machinery of government changes means that relevant policies and strategies of the new government are still under development.
 	
Two key policies/strategies of the previous government included:
 	
• Growing Victoria Together
• A Fairer Victoria
 	
Other key documents include:
 	
• Indicators of Community Strength: a framework and evidence (DVC, 2006)
• Indicators of community strength as the local government area level in Victoria 2008 (DPCD, 2010)
• Building Social Inclusion (DPCD, 2008)
	The Cardinia Shire Council Plan 2009-13 states the vision for Cardinia Shire as:
	
	Cardinia Shire will be developed in a planned manner to enable future generations to enjoy and experience the diverse and distinctive characteristics of our Shire
	
	The Neighbourhood Development Framework supports this overall vision for Cardinia Shire and a number of Council Plan policy directions.
	
	In particular, it supports the *Our Community* outcome, being:
	
	We will foster a strong sense of connection between Cardinia Shire's diverse communities
	
	• **Policy Direction 2.3:**
	
	  Foster community leadership
	
	• **Policy Direction 3.1:**
	
	  Promote initiatives that connect and strengthen our communities.
		The Neighbourhood Development Framework recognises, complements and may inform the following Council policies and strategies:
		
		• Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-13
		• Youth Policy and Strategy 2007-2011
		• Positive Aging Strategy 2009-2012
		• Arts and Culture Policy and Action Plan 2009-12
		• Sustainable Environment Strategy 2009-12
		• Lifelong Learning Policy and Action Plan 2011-14
		• Township Strategies (various)
		
		Currently in preparation:
		
		• Housing Policy and Strategy

What does our ideal Cardinia community look like?

There are many permutations of what an 'ideal' community looks like. We brainstormed the characteristics we thought contribute to a thriving community, and which we thought would make up an ideal Cardinia (see Figure 2).

Interestingly, they are similar to the four overarching characteristics of strong communities identified in the Department of Planning and Community Development's 2010 publication *Indicators of community strength at the local government area level in Victoria 2008*. We have used these categories to group our ideas of a thriving community.

Local area amenity

"Pleasantness", proximity to shops/facilities, quality infrastructure (roads, schools, open space, broadband, etc)

Assets

Economic resources, natural resources, human resources (people with skills)

Networks

Community participation, inclusion of all population groups

Strong governance

Strong leadership and decision-making that ensures the equitable use and development of a community's amenity, assets and networks.
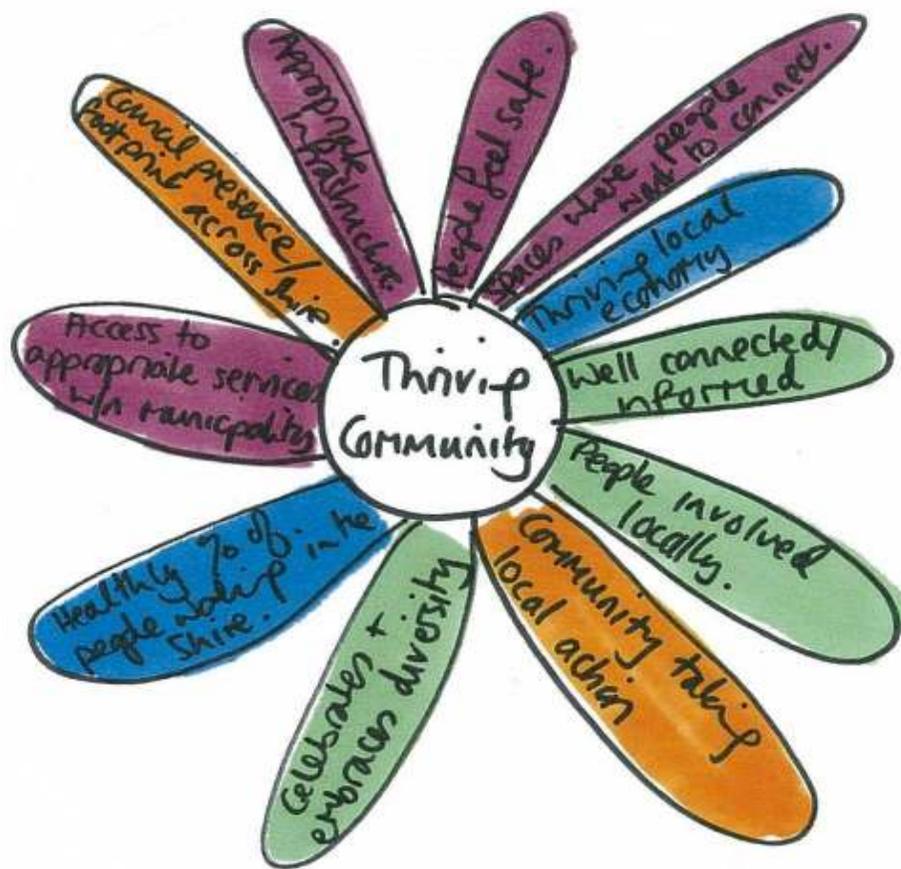
Figure 2: *Our ideas of characteristics that create a thriving community*

Why these characteristics and how does Cardinia currently measure up?

Understanding the characteristics of thriving communities is vital in order to give them importance and value, and assists with future monitoring and evaluation progress. Information about these characteristics in the following table is adapted from the Department of Planning and Community Development's *Indicators of community strength at the local government area level in Victoria 2008* and the earlier Department of Victorian Communities' *Indicators of Community Strength: a framework of evidence*. The tables also provide links to the Council Plan, comments and statistics on the current status (which are generally taken from Community Indicators Victoria[5]), a summary of what Council is doing/going to do, and the implications for the Neighbourhood Development portfolio.

Characteristic	Description	Benefits for community	Link to Council Plan
LOCAL AREA AMENITY • **Access to appropriate services within the municipality** • **Appropriate infrastructure** • **People feel safe**	The "pleasantness" of the area: • Character and appearance • Proximity to shops • Quality infrastructure (roads, schools, open space, leisure and recreation facilities, broadband, services) • Noise levels	Access to services and infrastructure that promote wellbeing and provide life opportunities such as exercise, outdoor play, education, jobs, business opportunities, leading to: • More physically active community • Local employment and education opportunities • Community connections More opportunities for local community interaction, leading to: • Local pride • Sense of belonging • Feelings of safety • Community networks	**Our Community** Policy 1.1 • *Monitor research and demographic trends to assist in planning for residents needs.* Policy 1.4 • *Plan for provision of facilities to service and support our changing communities.* **Our People** Policy 6 • *Increased perception of safety*

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[5] Community Indicators Victoria – *Community Indicators for Cardinia Shire.* Accessed online on 14 April 2011 at: http://www.communityindicators.net.au/

Comments on current status	What is Council doing/ going to do?	Implications for Neighbourhood Development Portfolio
CIV (Community Indicators Victoria) data: • 74.3% of residents felt they had "easy access to recreational and leisure facilities" and 71.1% felt they had access to "good facilities and services such as shops, childcare, schools, libraries" (compared with Victorian averages of mid-80s.) • 25.4% of residents experience transport limitations (compared with the Victorian average of 20.3%). 2006 census results indicate use of alternative transport methods is very low. • People's perceptions of safety when walking alone during the day and night were slightly lower in Cardinia than the Victorian average, while perception of safety while at home alone during the day or night were similar to the Victorian average. • Rates of crimes against the person were higher than the Victorian average (1133 versus 834 incidents per 100,000 population), while crimes against property were lower than the Victorian average (3942 versus 4786 per 100,000 population). Incidents of family violence were also higher than the Victorian average (886 versus 656 per 100,000 population).	**Land use and infrastructure planning:** • Precinct Structure Planning in the growth area • Structure Planning for developed areas (e.g. Pakenham Town Centre) • Township Strategy development in the rural townships • Landscape planning, recreation planning • Housing Strategy **Transport:** • Casey-Cardinia Transport Connections project • Road Safety Strategy (Active Transport) • Walking School Bus program • Active Children's Officer **Safety:** • Council has a number of staff working on safety, including a Community Safety Officer and a Seniors Safety Officer • Caution Program (delivered by Youth Services and Vic Police). • Youth Services programs on bullying and cyber bullying. • Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan – domestic/family violence actions	• The match between community needs and the services and facilities on offer is critical; highlighting the importance of gaining an understanding of community's perceived needs when making decisions on services, facilities, infrastructure etc. • With increasing cultural diversity, consideration will need to be given to places that promote cross-cultural connection, such as a cultural hub, fresh food markets etc. **Opportunities include:** • Assist with increasing awareness of Council services and other non-Council local services. • Advocate for high quality urban design that promotes activity, passive surveillance and feelings of safety. • Consider developing family resilience training that aims to reduce family stress and tension. • Advocate for local entertainment and activity options, especially for younger people. • Ensure Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community needs are taken into account.

Characteristic	Description	Benefits for community	Link to Council Plan
ASSETS • **Healthy percentage of people working in Cardinia** • **Thriving local economy**	• Economic resources • Natural resources • Human resources (people with skills)	• Economic and natural resources can contribute to the local amenity of an area through contributing to the character and appearance of an area, and also to the level of infrastructure provided. • Human resources provide the social capital that enables organisations, networks etc to function.	**Our Community** Policy 2.3 • *Foster community leadership* Policy 3.2 • *Recognise, support and value volunteerism*

Comments on current status	What is Council doing/ going to do?	Implications for Neighbourhood Development Portfolio
• While employment rates are higher in Cardinia (66.6%) than the Victorian average (60.9) (CIV Indicators), local job provision is currently low, with 62.5% of the population out-commuting for work • CIV Indicators report that 20.5% of households spend more than 30% of gross income on housing costs, compared with the Victorian average of 17.7%. • CIV Indicators show that 87.6% of Cardinia residents could raise $2000 in two days in an emergency, slightly higher than the Victorian average. • CIV Indicators show that 7.4% of residents ran out of food in the last 12 months and could not afford to buy more, higher than the Victorian average of 6%.	• Development of Strategic Employment and Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS) • The development of the employment corridor will begin to improve local job numbers, although this will be countered by the increasing population. • Bunyip Food Belt project	• Identifying and capitalising on existing assets (economic, natural and human) is an ideal way to begin working towards the other characteristics of a thriving community, as it entails working from a strengths-based approach with what is existing and how that can contribute to improving other areas. Opportunities include: • Support for any relevant Economic Development initiatives • Identify opportunities to involve business community in ND initiatives • Consideration will need to be given to CALD community and potential difficulty in accessing employment.

Characteristic	Description	Benefits for community	Link to Council Plan
NETWORKS • **Celebrates and embraces diversity** • **Well connected/informed** • **People involved locally**	Social capital theory suggests three network types that can provide resources and benefits to both individuals and communities: • Close personal networks • Associational and community networks • Governance networks (see below)	• Close personal networks can provide practical help, contacts, advice, emotional support, confidence, material goods etc • Broader associational and community networks can generate resources (e.g. sharing information about ideas, jobs, opportunities etc) and positive social behaviours (e.g. tolerance and understanding of difference, collective action in the face of adversity)	**Our Community** Policy 3.1 • *Promote initiatives that connect and strengthen our communities*

Comments on current status	What is Council doing/ going to do?	Implications for Neighbourhood Development Portfolio
• CIV indicators show that 85.4% of Cardinia residents agree or strongly agree that cultural diversity is a good thing for society, compared with a Victorian average of 89.4%. • CIV Indicators show that 92.6% of Cardinia residents can get help from friends, family or neighbours when needed, which is slightly higher than the Victorian average. • The CIV Indicators report a rate of 37.9% of Cardinia residents volunteering, which is just under the Victorian average (40.8%), but significantly higher than the Southern Metro region (28.7%). • CIV Indicators report that 69.6% of Cardinia residents feel part of the community, which is just under the Victorian average. • CIV Indicators report that parental participation in schools is 49%, compared with the Victorian average of 53.2%	**Diversity:** • The Building Harmony project is aimed at promoting cross-cultural understanding in primary school children and their communities • The Positive Aging Strategy is developing a program which will help connect seniors from CALD backgrounds to key services in the Shire. • The updated New Resident Kit will include a multi-lingual section with information on how to contact Council in your own language. • CALD network and CALD mapping report **Connection:** • Council currently communicates to local residents through the CONNECT newsletter, media, direct contact with Councillors. **Involvement:** • The Volunteering Portfolio supports volunteers and the Volunteer Portal can assist people to find ways to volunteer • Training packages for volunteer groups can be delivered by Council, and subsidised training is available for individual volunteers through local providers.	• Part of the benefit in broader associational and community networks is the diversity of these groups, so promoting inclusion and accessibility of groups is important. • Close personal networks that are undermining or violent can result in social isolation, mental health issues and family breakdown, so building positive close social ties is important • The current reliance on volunteers to manage facilities/recreation reserves etc means that continual support and promotion of volunteering is vital. **Opportunities:** • Promote and support opportunities for people to build networks and connections • Promote participation in local community groups and support these groups to be sustainable, accessible and inclusive • Promote and support community leadership • Collaborate with the CALD portfolio as opportunities emerge • Give attention to specific engagement with any hard to reach groups

Characteristic	Description	Benefits for community	Link to Council Plan
STRONG GOVERNANCE • **Council presence/footprint across the Shire** • **Community taking local action**	Strong governance is characterised by broad and inclusive networks of decision makers utilising processes that ensure all the interests within communities have a voice in decision-making and problem solving.	• Community members have the opportunity to identify and assess issues, enter into public policy debates and take action to get things done • This can lead to positive community attitudes because people feel they have a say, and better outcomes because decisions are more likely to match community needs.	**Our Community** Policy 2.1 *Continue to develop community participation in Council policy and strategy development*

Comments on current status	What is Council doing/ going to do?	Implications for Neighbourhood Development Portfolio

• Currently no customer service presence outside of main service centre. However, there are a number of outreach services such as Youth Services, Maternal Child Health etc.
 	
• CIV Indicators report that 43% of Cardinia residents feel they have a say on important issues, compared with 45.8% Victoria wide, and 63.8% of Cardinia residents have participated in citizen engagement activities in last 12 months, compared with 53.8% Victorian wide.
 	
• CIV Indicators report that 22.21% of Cardinia residents are members of a decision making board or committee.
	• Township Committees and Progress Associations provide one link into decision making discussions
	
	• Future adoption of the Community Engagement framework will foster further community input into decision making
	
	• Currently a number of steering groups and reference groups for Council projects include local residents.
	
	• Council outreach services include:
	    ○ Mobile Youth Bus
	    ○ Playgroups in the Park
	    ○ Mobile Library
	    ○ Maternal Child Heath Services
	    ○ Outside School Hours Care
		• Some groups can become disengaged from governance networks, so promoting this participation to diverse groups is important
		
		• Also vital to look at different options for governance structures to offer or access
		
		Opportunities:
		• Advocate and encourage the involvement of community members in decisions affecting the community
		
		• Support for Placed Based Officers to take proactive role in their wards
		
		• Support for preparation of Township Strategies
		
		• Support the community to connect with appropriate networks or stakeholders
		
		• Skilling up local residents in governance
		
		• Assist the community to understand the role Council can or needs to play in action and decision-making and to understanding negotiables/ non-negotiables
		
		• Opportunity to train community members to help with community consultation for Council plans etc.

What is going to influence the gap between our ideal community and reality?

The challenges:

The *Cardinia Shire Council Plan 2009-2013* identifies the following key challenges that will impact on the ability of reality to match the ideal:

- Managing population growth
- Strengthening communities
- Managing the natural and built environment
- Assisting economic growth
- Supporting agriculture
- Partnering with other levels of government
- Developing Council capacity
- Economic uncertainty

Cardinia Shire faces a range of challenges over the next decade as the growth corridor is developed and the Shire adjusts to an increasing and changing population.

Different areas of the Shire will develop at different rates. While the growth area will develop rapidly and see a significant population increase in a short amount of time, the rural townships and localities will have slower growth and less dramatic changes. Precinct Structure Plans will guide the development of new areas within the growth area, while Structure Plans and Township Strategies will guide growth and change in existing areas of the growth area and in the rural townships. Ensuring a sense of connection between new and existing communities will be important, as will ensuring that rural townships continue to be well serviced and that rural areas and area of environmental significance within the Shire are valued and protected.

As our population grows, it will also become more diverse, with an expectation that we will see increasing cultural diversity. There is potential for language and communication barriers, and a lack of cross cultural understanding, so it is important that Council takes a proactive role and ensures it is accessible, inclusive and promotes respect of others.

Our age structure will also change. While the majority of residents will be adults of child-rearing age with dependent children, the Shire will also see a rising number of residents aged 65 years and over, particularly in the rural townships. We also need to be aware of expected increases in the number of people with a disability, and the importance of ensuring that we create accessible and inclusive communities.

Understanding barriers to community participation will be critical for Council, and taking a proactive role in reducing or eliminating these barriers will be an important part of ensuring a thriving community. Factors may include poor work/life balance, having few local connections, language barriers or disability.

The opportunities: Cardinia Shire's existing social asset base

Along with significant challenges, Cardinia Shire also has significant opportunities and human assets that can be built on to help close the gap between our ideal community and reality. Cardinia Shire's existing communities and individuals have a strong history of involvement and engagement in community life.

Our volunteers	• The research report *Volunteering in Cardinia Shire* (October 2007), identified that within Cardinia Shire there are currently over 500 community groups and organisations linked to volunteerism. • Cardinia Shire also has a broad range of community networks and business development groups not reflected in the *Volunteering in Cardinia Shire* report. These groups are made up of community organisations and local businesses who volunteer their time and skills to contribute further to the Cardinia Shire's community spirit. • These figures suggest that many residents within Cardinia Shire are already connected to their local community. This provides a great base from which to work.
Our township committees and other community leadership groups	• Township Committees • Progress Associations • Sporting Clubs and Associations • Community Networks • Business development groups • Friends groups
Our local community services, not-for-profit groups and networks	• Heath and Community Services Network • Cardinia Youth Network • Community Workers in Cardinia Shire Network • CALD network • Community service providers • Children's Services network • Not for profit groups • Kinder groups • Neighbourhood House Cluster Network
Our education programs and organisations	• Local schools provide a great opportunity to reach younger people and make connections • The Youth team at Council, and the CALD portfolio, currently work with school aged people • Kinders and playgroups provide an opportunity to build on existing networks • Streets Ahead project with teachers and parents as champions

Citizen Engagement	• Data on the participation of Victorians in selected forms of Citizen Engagement were collected in the 2007 Community Indicators Victoria Survey. Respondents were asked if they had attended a town meeting or public hearing, met, called or written to a local politician, joined a protest or signed a petition in the previous 12 months. • 63.8% of persons in Cardinia had engaged in at least one of the selected activities in the previous year, compared to 50.5% in the Southern Metro Region and the Victorian State average of 53.8%. This above average result provides a solid base for further improving citizen engagement
Council's existing programs and initiatives	• Health Promotion: Currently a range of programs and initiatives focussed on health and wellbeing that are contributing to neighbourhood development across the Shire • Children's Services programs, including Best Start, Streets Ahead etc. • Community Safety: a range of initiatives aimed at improving safety and perceptions of safety across the Shire • Cultural development activities • Youth Services activities • Existing community strengthening portfolios including Volunteering, Lifelong Learning, Disability, CALD • Council's existing grants programs
Our Shire's natural assets	• Open space • Diversity of landscape (agriculture, hills, lakes, tourist attractions) • Areas with significant environmental assets (e.g. Bunyip State Park, Gilwell Park, Cardinia Reservoir, Bunyip Sanctuary, Lang Lang Heath Lands, Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve, RJ Chambers, Gembrook Park, Cardinia Aqueduct Trail and Emerald Lake Park)

Who will be involved in Neighbourhood Development?

Neighbourhood Development is already being encouraged through many programs in Cardinia Shire. The following diagram provides a snapshot of who is working towards a thriving community and highlights opportunities for future partnerships.

Not for Profit & Community Groups

e.g. Windermere, CCCC, Outlook, Neighbourhood Houses

Networks & Advisory groups

e.g. Health & Wellbeing forum, Community Workers in Cardinia Shire (CWICS) network

Local developers

e.g. Delfin, AV Jennings, VicUrban

Federal and State Government agencies

e.g. Department of Planning and Community Development, Department of Human Services, Department of Health

Education institutions

e.g. Universities, TAFE

Who is working towards a connected and thriving community?

Community Strengthening:
» Neighbourhood Development
» Placed-based officers
» Grants
» Disability portfolio & MetroAccess
» CALD
» Lifelong Learning

Risk, Emergency and Community Safety

Community Services
» Health Promotion
» Youth Services
» Children's Services
» Maternal and Child Health
» Outside School Hours Care

Sustainable Communities
» Economic Development Recreation Arts & Culture

Cardinia Shire

Environment and Engineering

Strategic Planning
» Structure Planning/Precinct Structure Planning/Development Contributions Plans
» Township Strategies
» Urban Design

Communication & Customer Service
» Providing information to the community

What are others doing?

Local Government

A number of local Councils were contacted to investigate and understand existing frameworks for neighbourhood development. The participating Councils were selected due to parallels to Cardinia Shire in experiencing rapid growth in the number of residents moving to each municipality.

Overall approach	Engagement	Implementation	Evaluation
Most Council's interviewed indicated that they implemented neighbourhood development initiatives but without a strategic approach or framework, with the exception of funded projects such as neighbourhood or community renewal.

Although the absence of documented frameworks could give the perception of an unstructured approach, each Council does take a planned approach based on the needs of their communities. A consistent theme appeared that service delivery takes a phased approach, with each phase overlapping and leading into the next. These phases can be structured into engagement, implementation and evaluation. | Each Council indicated a reliance on multiple levels of community engagement. Each Council implements a marketing program through various means such as local media, websites, direct mail and community newsletters. Relevant officers also engage with new estate property developers, neighbourhood houses, local networks, community agencies and local groups. Some of the Councils also engage the community through providing assistance with establishing new community groups and maintaining ongoing relationships.

During this engagement stage some of the Councils also use local events, forums and focus groups to engage with members of the community and promote civic participation. The purpose of this stage is to determine local priorities and issues relating to neighbourhood development. These priorities may also feed into a local action plan or community priority list. | Implementation of neighbourhood development occurs in a range of ways within each local government area and with varying levels of community engagement.

Approaches include:

- Locating officers at neighbourhood houses to engage with residents and deliver local initiatives.

- Delivering a program of activities and events that have been developed through an initial engagement phase.

- Providing a direct liaison officer for community groups and residents to engage with Council, such as a New Estates Officer or a placed based model.

- Delivery of specific funded projects aimed at building community capacity (e.g. Neighbourhood renewal or Community Building initiatives). | One of the key challenges within the evaluation phase is measuring the ongoing effectiveness of neighbourhood development initiatives.

Most council's indicated their evaluations are based around the perception of the event or activity itself or attendance figures rather than a measure of sustained community involvement or enhanced neighbourhood relationships.

One council implements a review of its activities and programs on an annual or biennial basis, with the aim of measuring the ongoing community engagement and effectiveness of activities. This review involves key residents who have been involved or engaged in the process of neighbourhood development initiatives, but does not focus only on an individual resident, rather on a group of residents who have been engaged. |

Local Developers

Interviews with some local property developers were undertaken to determine their approach in implementing neighbourhood development. These developers were selected because they are major residential property developers currently working within Cardinia Shire, although there are a range of other developers in the area. It should be noted that the summary below is likely to be a best practice scenario and is not achieved in many new developments.

Overall approach	Engagement	Implementation	Evaluation
Property developers report a more formalised approach to neighbourhood development closely linked to business and / or marketing plans. The principal motivation for developers to undertake neighbourhood development initiatives is to market a 'community' rather then just houses. To facilitate neighbourhood development some property developers employ community development officers or managers. One key issue for property developers is sustainability, because of the non-permanent nature of their involvement in new communities. Building community capacity during the early years is therefore essential to ensure ongoing commitment to community development initiatives. Some level of Council involvement is also essential to assist with the transition. Some Councils build in the cost of a community development worker into the Development Contributions Plan for a development.	Property developers have a unique opportunity for engaging residents before they purchase a home within a new estate through methods such as: • Presale information evenings. • Marketing material highlighting localised initiatives (i.e. resident newsletters and information kits). • Individual contact with residents. This provides an opportunity for community expectations to be understood even before residents move in. Developers may also engage with existing residents in the process of planning a new estate, with the aim of building cohesion between existing and new residents and ensuring the needs of existing residents are met.	Community development workers undertake a range of neighbourhood development activities with residents after they have moved in, through things such as: • Localised events, initiatives and activities. • Promotion of local businesses, services and groups. • Working in partnership with residents and/or community agencies and clubs to plan for and achieve outcomes. • Provide assistance in establishing resident groups and/or associations that work towards responding to local issues. • Lobbying council and/or other forms of government to provide assistance, services or to influence planning and decision making processes.	The property developers consulted use a range of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of neighbourhood development with new estates. Some of these methods included: • Conducting focus groups. • Meetings with stakeholders. • Debriefing of activities. • Reviewing minutes of working groups or committees. • Feedback forms available at activities or initiatives. • Internal meetings. • Community rating tools through the state government.

Resident-Led and Asset-Based Community Development

Resident-Led and Asset-Based Community Development are considered best practice approaches within the community development sector. A Canadian project *Action for Neighbourhood Change* (Leviten-Reid, 2006) based on Asset-based, Resident-led Neighbourhood Development was reviewed.

Overall approach	Engagement	Implementation	Evaluation
Asset-based, resident-led approaches to community development have been found to achieve greater community participation and sustained outcomes following the implementation of initiatives, projects or activities which incorporate these practices. The Canadian project *Action for Neighbourhood Change* was a project implemented in a range of existing neighbourhoods characterised by a lack of social connection and disadvantage. The approach used emphasizes strongly that resident involvement in identifying, planning and delivering initiatives is fundamental to the success of building cohesive communities. The *Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)* framework is largely based around 'mapping' (Asset Mapping) and 'mobilising'. Asset Mapping focuses on what skills and resources are available within the community, then utilising these existing social capital to 'mobilise' the community to achieve collective goals.	The Canadian project *Action for Neighbourhood Change* engaged residents to initially create a 'community vision' to determine what initiatives will be implemented. Residents were engaged through large scale meetings and a series of smaller scale meetings 'to draw out residents' thinking about the future being sought for their neighbourhood'. This approach employs local residents within the project team to work with the community to assist and support the engagement process and the development of a 'community vision'. Employing local facilitators within the project team adds the key strength of local knowledge and instant networks. The key outcome of the engagement stage within this framework is the establishment of a 'community vision' and strong resident engagement which will be sustained within the neighbourhood.	Following the initial engagement phase, the Canadian project *Action for Neighbourhood Change* employed local facilitators within the project team. The local facilitators and the community worked in partnership with the various levels of government as well as community organisations to implement strategies to achieve the items within the 'neighbourhood vision'. This approach aims to build relationships and train residents to become local champions for neighbourhood development. Implementation within this approach is resident driven and the community or neighbourhood determines what initiatives will be implemented. The ABCD framework implements a program of asset-mapping to identify potential partnerships which focuses on the strengths, skills and assets of the community. The aim is to identify existing resources to mobilise these and promote collaboration to achieve outcomes that meet local priorities and needs.	The Canadian project *Action for Neighbourhood Change* used three broad statements that formed the basis or measures for evaluation. These statements focussed around: • Community engagement or strengthening the community voice. • Whether the project had enhanced the responsiveness of government and other structures. • Building bridges that enables ongoing government/community collaboration. This framework utilises an action research approach which provides empirical evidence through data collection and qualitative methods including individual and group learning and reflections.

Key learning from these examples

- Engaging the community in neighbourhood development promotes active citizenship, community leaders and a better understanding of community needs. Community leaders and local residents understand the challenges faced within their local area and possess invaluable local knowledge of the community assets and skills available. By engaging and supporting residents Council has an opportunity to increase skills and leadership within the community to promote strong, connected communities with sustained community participation and a stronger relationship between Council and its constituents.

- Community involvement will also assist the Council to have a more accurate understanding of the issues and challenges faced by new and existing community members. This information is beneficial to the Council and can assist in planning services, facilities and infrastructure.

- Property developers, and in particular, community development workers within property development companies, provide an invaluable asset and link to new residents.

- Asset mapping helps to identify and utilise existing resources and reduces duplication of resources. This approach also strengthens local networks and partnerships and creates a greater knowledge within the community and networks of what is available to meet local needs.

- Funded projects such as Community and Neighbourhood Renewal and the Community Building Initiative (CBI) provide valuable opportunities to implement pilot neighbourhood development programs. These initiatives build social connectedness and social infrastructure that addresses issues and gaps in the local community. They also provide an opportunity to achieve quick wins where the community can see outcomes and Council's commitment to addressing needs.

- Local community members possess local knowledge and relationships within their community. Ensuring community members have appropriate training will support proactive and fast responses by local networks or networks being formed. This can be facilitated through local networks by providing information on training opportunities that are available to the community or by providing a series of training workshops.

- Local CALD community leaders will be an invaluable resource in connecting with culturally diverse communities.

- Implementing a strong review process ensures:

  » all projects and initiatives genuinely meet the needs of individuals, groups and the broader community
  » neighbourhood development initiative and project goals are met
  » opportunities for resident feedback
  » initiatives evolve and remain relevant
  » enhanced service delivery
  » evidence to success or otherwise of projects, informing future projects and supporting ongoing funding and grant applications

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