



Living locally

How do we design cities to make it better?

We certainly don't imagine you will answer all of these questions but would love your feedback on those that mean something to you.

How local is your life?

Can you get through a day getting everything you need within walking distance? How about a week? Would you like to be able to do this?

Do you know your neighbours? Shopkeepers? Would you like to know them more? Do you talk in the street and spend time with each other?

Our neighbourhood is important, with each of us putting a different value on being near:

1. friends and family
2. work places
3. parks and gardens
4. shops and services
5. school
6. public transport

These benefits all have one thing in common – they help to make life easier and more enjoyable.

Often these neighbourhood facts are considered optional benefits. Is it time they became essential criteria?

And for those of us already well established in neighbourhoods, is it time to improve existing local shops, services and transport so local living is easier?



Your suburb – its heritage and future

Our changing cities can protect our beautiful old buildings and streets, while better reflecting our indigenous communities, geology, hydrology and ecology.

We have the knowledge to turn our cities from being a drain on the environment to being positive by growing our own food, recirculating our nutrients, generating our own energy and water, and recycling all of our goods.

This approach to building and adapting our city will use our heritage to ensure our neighbourhoods have a sense of local character, so that your suburb feels different to other suburbs.

We can both change and preserve at the same time.

Do you know the local history of your neighbourhood? Who used to live here? How the shops have changed? Where the creek flowed? Where the children played?

The value of suburbs

With advancing knowledge, we are now able to better price our environmental services so that their true value is reflected. Trees are a great example. A healthy well-placed tree can be worth tens of thousands of dollars and is well worth the cost and effort to maintain. It is this better pricing on the environment that can increasingly help with urban form decisions.

Does knowing the financial value of environmental services influence your opinion of Council spending in this area?

What are the design solutions?

There are many solutions found in sustainable planning, urban design, transport and landscaping.

A changing city for children

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** to young children's needs can include

- a. Design for children not cars, on chosen streets. Such 'play streets' or 'shared zones' will keep kids more active and social, which benefits all generations.

Play Street
8 am to sunset
except for
access

- b. Create retail areas that support children. Streetscapes for children to walk without being near fast moving cars, cafes with nearby children play areas, goods and services for children.
- c. Provide open space in all suburbs. Have different uses in different parks. Include more natural and discovery landscapes that encourage exploration and creative play.



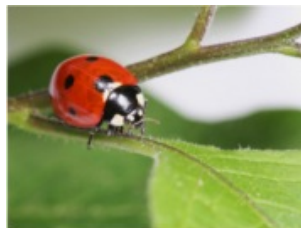
Would you like children to have more freedom in the streets? Do you think these design solutions will help?

A changing city for adults

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** to adult needs can include

- a. less emphasis on car travel to reduce amount of time spent in traffic jams away from family and friends. This means supporting local business, jobs and business incubators
- b. more public transport to reduce the need for and cost of cars for young adults with limited budgets
- c. more car share to reduce car ownership. If your household only needs a second car occasionally then it is much cheaper to take up car share.
- d. more share services such as hardware. The average drill is used for just 13 minutes in its lifetime – it would be better to have a few of them to share in your neighbourhood.

- e. more local groups, especially informal ones. Sharing local knowledge, histories, bird sightings, pollution incidents, potential hazards can all be logged online and discussed informally by local groups. This is known as 'citizen science' and 'local stewardship' and can really help improve local living.



Are you keen to spend more time in your neighbourhood?

Are there places for your children to afford to move into when they are adults? Can they avoid owning costly cars?

Are you a young adult who wants to stay living in the neighbourhood you grew up in?

A changing city for older adults

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** to older adults needs can include

- a. smaller units within established suburbs that allow older adults to keep their neighbourhood connections when they need to downsize to a smaller house. Walking and public transport to visit friends and family is important.
- b. land share that links older adults with untended gardens to nearby apartment dwellers that would welcome the space to grow food and plants.



Do you know how to help older family and friends stay independent? Can these design solutions help?

Changing our city for health and wellbeing

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** for health and wellbeing can include

- good transport options to keep more people independent. This independence helps maintain the physical and mental wellbeing of everyone, particularly people on low incomes and people with special needs.
- reduced vehicle emissions to reduce respiratory and other illnesses. And less car use reduces the risk of obesity.
- ecological design of the city to incorporate nature. This includes streetscapes replicating old creeks, buildings with roof gardens to benefit birds, parks designed for nature, and buildings designed around existing hills and trees. People have an innate need to connect with nature (the biophilia hypothesis)
- landscapes designed to entice more people to walk. This can include shading, better footpaths, better amenity and interesting points for walkers.



Are you able to easily get outside and enjoy nature in your street or suburb?

Changing our city for local business growth

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** for local business growth can include.

- making walking and cycling easier which helps make local shopping more convenient and viable.
- Residents shopping more frequently for everyday needs can reduce waste, and improve customer loyalty.
- businesses clustering to share services can provide great efficiencies and benefits. For example, shared delivery of produce, shared recycling pick up and IT servicing, generating local energy from waste heat, sharing roof water for gardens and tools for maintenance.
- local cooperatives add diversity to retail strips and sharing services reduce resource use.



Would you prefer to shop locally? Are you a local business operator wanting to attract local people?

Are the shops in your cluster meeting basic daily needs so that locals don't have to get in the car and go further afield?

Changing our city to protect limited resources

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** to our limited resources can include

- less car ownership saves on valuable land used for carports, driveways, and roads. Make it easier to walk, cycle, use public transport and car share. Develop smart carparking that is booked electronically at the beginning of trips to save circling and increase efficiency.
- less individual vehicle use will reduce our use of limited world oil supplies
- urban agriculture reclaims local gardens and unused public land to grow food in lieu of the farmland on the city's edge.

How would you like to see land in your suburb used?

Changing our city for biodiversity protection

Adapting our **neighbourhoods and suburbs** to biodiversity protection can include

- streets designed to be pollinator pathways where landscapes support our insects to sustain plant and food crops.
- gardens and naturestrips that connect valuable remnant species in inner areas.
- housing in inner areas with good transport rather than outer growth suburbs where remnant grasslands are so valuable.



Should we return nature to nature-strips?

Why is local living important at all?

Historically, humans have lived locally. This has rapidly changed in recent decades due to changes in technology, transport and attitudes.

Why is local living still important in our global age?

- **community:** knowing your neighbours and being involved in community groups is proven to increase happiness and extend lives.
More time in your local neighbourhood at parks, shops and group events builds community, and is even proven to extend your life.
- **health and wellbeing:** neighbourhoods that support mobility, friendly get-togethers, children's play, sporting activities and local services help to maintain physical and mental health.
Currently 60% of all deaths result from chronic diseases. Good city design that supports 30 minutes of physical activity each day can reduce this dramatically.
- **environmental protection:** local shops, services, activities and food growing help create local jobs, reduce car travel and reduce resource use.
- **wisdom:** understanding your local suburb and community helps retain heritage, connect with nature, and plan the future wisely.
Designing for nature will bring a sense of place to our neighbourhood, as it will look and feel different to other areas. This helps people connect and care more for their local community.
- **resilience:** local services and know how helps us to take on challenges such as floods, drought, climate change and resource limitations.
Over time we have planned cities that do not take into account natural factors that reduce our resilience. This is now changing with the introduction of 'water sensitive urban design' and planning around our climate.
- **city growth:** we need to plan for more homes for our children, our older family members and new migrants. We need to support this growth in a sustainable way.
Cities are one of the few constructions that humans create with a long time frame, yet they have never been designed to accommodate change.

What are City Sustainability Conversation Starters?

City Sustainability is important to all of us. A *City Sustainability Strategy* for Moonee Valley must reflect the priorities and interests of the whole community.

Council is running an engagement program from August 2011 to August 2012 and we want to hear from people and community groups living and working across our City.

Conversation Starters have been developed to provide thoughts and inspiration. They basically get you thinking about your suburbs and how you want to live. Please feel free to expand your ideas and comments beyond the topic of this Conversation Starter. All of your input is valuable and we thank you for your contribution.

Please contact Penny Mueller on 9243 9165 or environment@mvcc.vic.gov.au if you would like to discuss your ideas for City Sustainability further.

Please tell us about yourself...

Answers are optional

Name:

Suburb:

Email address or phone number:

Would you like to be sent further information on this topic? Or do other sustainability topics interest you instead?

Which ones