

KNOX
your city



Community Plan

2021 – 2031

Our Community Vision 2031:

“Knox: where we connect with our people and our environment, ensuring they are safe, supported and have every opportunity to thrive.”

The *Knox Community Plan 2021-2031* represents the voices of our community and stakeholders. It is a guide for this council and future ones, all levels of government, community groups, organisations and businesses, ensuring we work together to make Knox a great place now and in the future.

Acknowledgement of traditional land owners

Knox City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land. The Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community come from a variety of different Nations within Australia and Torres Strait, including the Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation. As such we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Located at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, Council possesses places of historic significance to the Kulin nation. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the traditional knowledge of the First People and the traumatic stories of colonisation.

The journey ahead for Knox involves the land, the traditional custodians, the local Indigenous community, the wider community and the Council itself. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.

DRAFT

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DRAFT

Message from the Mayor

On behalf of Knox City Council, I am pleased to present the *Knox Community Plan 2021-2031*.

This plan outlines our vision for the future of Knox, the areas we will focus on to support this vision and how we as a community will collectively work to make it a reality.

Almost 4,500 people shared their thoughts, hopes and ideas to contribute to this plan. From our newest residents to those who have lived here for many years, your insights helped shape our focus for the next 10 years. Even our youngest community members shared pictures of their wishes for Knox.

We've heard what you've told us. The key directions in this plan highlight the things you said matter most to the way we live, work and play. Together, we look forward to building on these areas to empower our community to thrive.

The plan also informs our Council Plan, which sets out Council's responsibilities to delivering on this promise to our community. In collaboration with business and industry, community organisations, partners at other levels of government and the community as a whole, we'll work to achieve this vision for our city.

Importantly, this plan recognises that we're facing a time of challenge and change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We're engaging with the community to identify the widespread, diverse and continuing impacts and will work in partnership to support and lead initiatives that bring us back together, combat isolation and build resilience. Our community has told us that health and wellbeing are key areas of focus in our recovery and this is echoed in the plan.

We thank everyone who took part in this process and look forward to working together to make Knox a great place now and into the future.

Councillor Lisa Cooper
Knox City Council Mayor, 2020-21

Knox community snapshot

Who we are

Population forecast

166,791 (2021)

Predicted by 2031 to be **178,904**

39 Years

is the median age

30%

of residents were born overseas

25%

speak a language other than English at home

5%

of people require assistance in their day-to-day lives due to disability

How we live

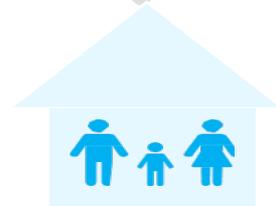


84%

of dwellings are single detached houses

20%

of people live by themselves



50%

of households are families with one or more children

365

people identify as homeless

How we work and learn



More Knox residents work in health care and social assistance than any other industry.



80%

of people travel to work in a private car

22%

of people have a bachelors degree or higher

14,046

businesses in Knox

66,224

jobs in Knox

What is a community plan?

The *Knox Community Plan 2021-2031* is a long-term document developed with and for our community. It includes our Community Vision statement, and describes what we, as a collective, will focus on to achieve that vision.

Knox City Council plays a significant role in making this plan come to life but cannot do it alone. Council will work with key stakeholders including community members and groups, businesses, agencies and other levels of government to ensure we achieve the Community Vision outlined in this plan.

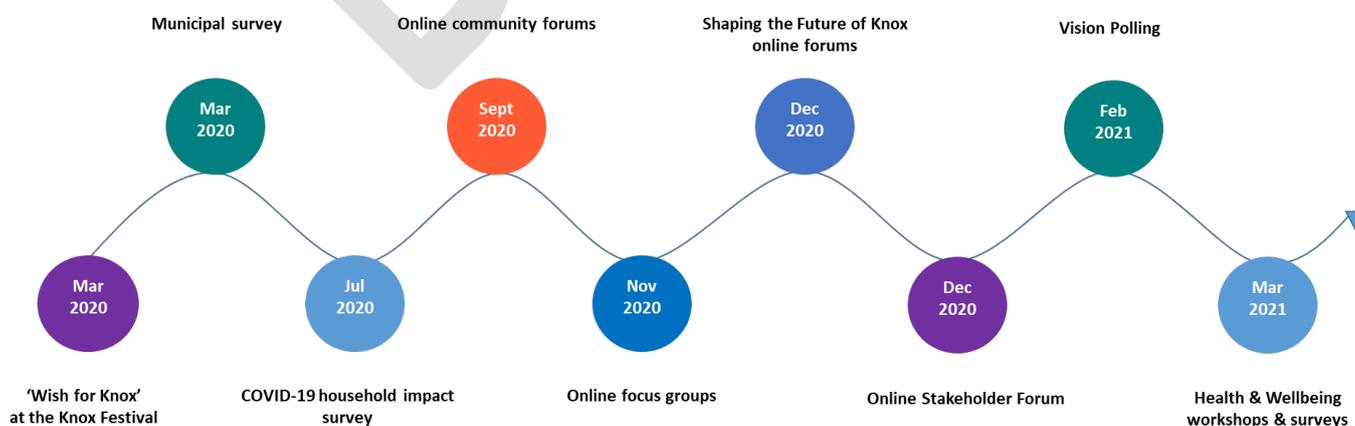
The *Knox Community Plan 2021-2031* is an important document that will guide Council's future planning over the next 10 years. How Council will contribute to the Community Plan and the initiatives it will undertake over the next four years, are outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.



How the plan was developed

In 2020, Knox City Council undertook an extensive research and engagement program to inform the development of the new *Community Plan 2021-2031* and *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

To inform these pieces of work, a range of information has been collected about the municipality via research and community engagement activities.



Almost 4,500 people shared their thoughts on shaping the future of Knox.

The engagement activities were directed at people who live, work, learn and play in Knox to:

- gain an understanding of the community's aspirations for the future of Knox;
- test the data gathered through research;
- gain feedback on the goals in the current plan; and
- identify priority areas for the community and Council.

Knox is home and I have been living here for over 20 years. My kids were raised here and went to kindergarten, primary school and high school all in Knox. For me Knox is a beautiful place to live and it's all about that feeling of home.

A great community is one that supports each other to achieve a common goal and embraces our differences.

My vision for Knox over the next 10 years is that it will continue to grow and evolve. I want to see people doing well and succeeding and I want people to be healthy.

Diana, Smiles for Miles Coordinator at EACH and mum of three

Our Community Vision

Our Community Vision describes our long-term hopes and aspirations for Knox. It helps to plan for the needs of our community now and into the future. It's based on the idea that by creating a picture of the future we all agree to, we can all make a shared commitment to work together to get there.

This is our vision for the future of Knox, as developed with and voted for by the community:

Knox: where we connect with our people and our environment, ensuring they are safe, supported and have every opportunity to thrive.

During 2020, we asked you to come together to talk about what you love about our community, and what you want it to look and feel like in the next 10 years.

At the 2020 Knox Festival we asked you to make a 'wish for Knox'. Your wishes were written on postcards and placed in our 'wishing well'. Children also drew pictures which were displayed at our Festival Community Hub.

We went on to further explore what your aspirations are for the future of Knox through a series of online forums and focus groups.

Many agreed that Knox is already a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. You told us that going forward, we need to strengthen what already exists and work together to improve the things we don't have quite right. By working together towards a common goal, we can ensure we don't lose the things we value the most.

"The people. The place. That feeling of community – all of these things make Knox so great."

Community forum participant
(September 2020)

"A great community is about feeling like we belong not just to other people, but also to the place. Animals, trees, land and the history of the land."

Community forum participant
(September 2020)

"I love the friendliness, particularly in trouble and difficult times"

Community forum participant
(September 2020)

"There is a diversity of interests for people in Knox and lots of different groups that come together... People have a good range of opportunities to participate."

Community forum participant
(September 2020)

Based on what we heard, five vision statements were developed. We put these out to the public for voting, and almost half of those that voted chose this vision statement as the one that best reflected their aspirations for the future.

Our Key Directions

The following pages describe in further detail what we will focus on over the next 10 years to achieve our Community Vision.

Based on research and community engagement, five Key Directions were developed that explain what we, as a community, are striving to achieve. They describe why we should focus on these areas, what we already know about them, what your aspirations are and how we might know when we've achieved success.

The five Key Directions are very closely linked; without one, it may be difficult to achieve the outcomes of the others. An example of this is health and wellbeing. According to our framework, our community's physical and mental health and wellbeing sits under the Connection, resilience and wellbeing Key Direction. However, it is very clear that our health and wellbeing relies on success in all of the other Key Directions.

Our Community Vision cannot be achieved without us all working towards each of the Key Directions. The diagram below shows the Key Directions that will collectively lead us to achieving our vision:



The Key Directions will also be used to guide the work of Council over the next four years. In the *Council Plan 2021-2025*, Council has described its contribution to these Key Directions, and ultimately the Community Vision, in the form of strategies and initiatives.

The *Community Plan 2021-2031* and the *Council Plan 2021-2025* are based on your needs and aspirations, and work together to inform all of our planning and decisions, guiding the future of Knox.

Opportunity and innovation

Knox strives to be a city of opportunity, embracing innovation and change, and providing local learning and employment opportunities for all. It's a place where people and business can thrive.

Why is this important?

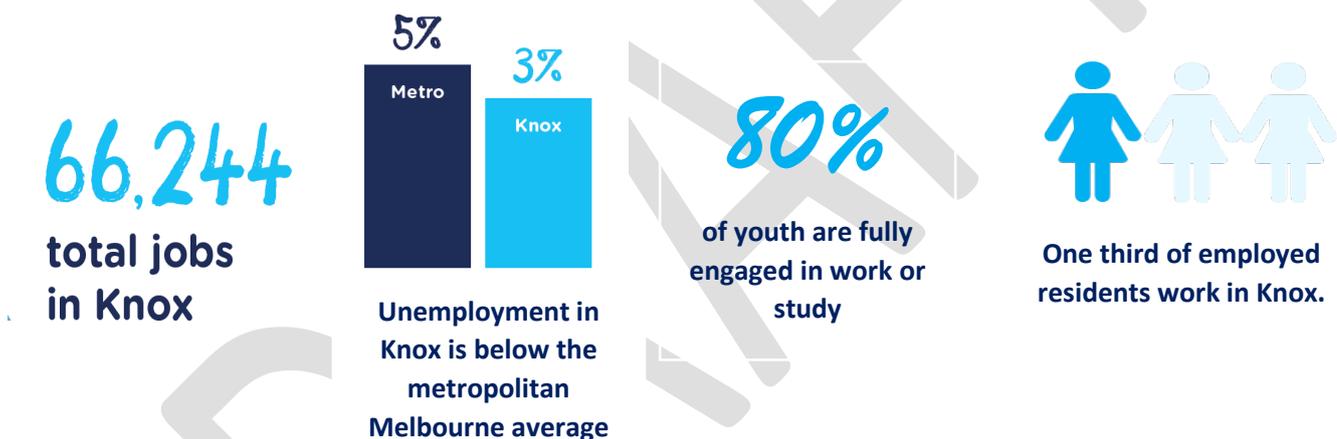
Learning and employment are key to creating opportunity, moving away from disadvantage and are good for our mental health and social connection.

By ensuring all people in our community have access to a variety of learning opportunities, individuals in Knox will benefit from better education, increased skill development, and will enjoy a greater sense of purpose and belonging.

As our skills develop, technology advances and spaces are created for people to come together to share ideas, and opportunities to innovate will increase. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses and organisations were forced to do things differently. Creating opportunities for people to work together and innovate makes a place more attractive for new business and investment to the local area, which in turn makes our local economy stronger.

What we know

You told us that learning and employment are very important, and you want to see a focus on supporting employment programs, creating jobs, and accessible education and training.



Aspirations for the future

You told us that you want Knox to be a strong business hub, making the most of our location and accessible transport and arterial connections. Knox should be a place where business and organisations can establish themselves, with co-working hubs and spaces, and opportunities for networking.

You want our city to be open to new and growth industries and innovative start-ups, which in turn will create opportunities for more local employment for people of all ages and abilities. We need to look for new and smarter ways of working, having reliable internet coverage, and programs and resources available for businesses and organisations.

You have a strong desire to have learning opportunities available to all people in our community. Our learning begins with good early childhood education, schools, TAFEs and universities. Our youth will have greater opportunities for 'real life' learning through connections with business and industry. You also want life-long learning opportunities through a variety of places like libraries, community groups and neighbourhood houses.

"I think in 10 years' time, if we saw a headline where it said something like 90% of people in Knox also work in Knox that would be pretty awesome!"

Employment and Education focus group participant (November 2020)

"I think Knox needs to be quite a strong business hub... with some vibrancy, attracting business and industry to the area."

Employment and Education focus group participant (November 2020)

We can make a difference by:

- encouraging businesses to come, stay and grow
- local businesses employing local people of all abilities
- creating spaces for start-ups to interact and network
- providing and supporting opportunities for education and skills development for all life stages
- embracing technology and supporting innovation.

How we'll know if we've been successful

We'll see:

- more organisations and businesses coming to Knox
- existing business remaining in Knox
- more residents employed in Knox
- more people with disabilities offered gainful employment
- an increase in the skills base of the community.

I like that Knox is very centralised. It's easy to get to, whether from the city or anywhere in Melbourne, by road, tram, buses or even train.

I love that people are able to come together and freely express themselves without any kind of judgement.

Deepak, Financial Advisor

Neighbourhoods, housing and infrastructure

Building on what's great about our city, Knox's housing and infrastructure will meet the changing needs of our community.

Why is this important?

Our neighbourhoods are important to us, creating a sense of belonging. Having appropriate housing and the infrastructure and amenities to support our lifestyles, ensures we feel safe, secure and valued as a member of our community.

Our community is made up of people from different walks of life, at different ages and stages, and with differing needs. Having housing that is appropriate, accessible and affordable means that all members of our community can enjoy a good quality of life.

The surrounding places and spaces in our neighbourhoods need to provide opportunities to access services, connect with others, work and enjoy leisure time. How we get to those places is also important. We need the right transport options, and safe and accessible roads and paths that connect to each other and where we need to go.

What we know

You told us that housing and infrastructure are key components to making Knox a great place to live. You want more affordable housing and adequate infrastructure. You want to see better roads and improved public transport.

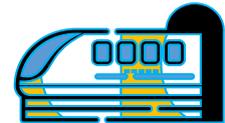
77%

The proportion of the social housing need that can be met with existing local social housing and affordable private rentals

365

people identify as homeless

64%



of households are within 400m of any public transport stop compared to the metropolitan average of 69%

Aspirations for the future

You told us there's more that we can all be doing to protect those most vulnerable, like providing more affordable and social housing, and embracing innovations such as tiny houses and even 3D printed houses.

It's important to you that the housing in Knox is appropriate for different ages, stages and abilities. You also want to see housing developments in Knox that are sustainable and not to the detriment of the environment.

Our neighbourhoods need to be equally accessible. With the desire for us to be less reliant on cars, our footpaths and shared paths need to be adequate to ensure we can safely walk, ride, push prams and use mobility aids or wheelchairs. Our public transport also needs to be reliable and have better connections, with our train stations and bus stops being safe places to wait.

For those times we do need to use our cars, you want to see safe roads and adequate parking, particularly for seniors and those with disabilities.

You told us that you want to see better use of technological advances in electric vehicles and driverless cars, however it's also important that these are not to the detriment of other road or path users.

"... I've got to know my neighbours in this last year more than before. So I'm hoping in the future it will be more like that and maybe more community spaces to bring people together, build that community."

Environment and Housing focus group participant
(November 2020)

"So if you're thinking about people on the street, what you need is shelter – safe shelter – and a group of cluster of tiny houses on a piece of council land, for example, could do that."

Environment and Housing focus group
participant (November 2020)

We can make a difference by:

- supporting those who may be struggling to find affordable and appropriate housing options
- planning for and investing in different housing types to suit all needs
- creating and maintaining the network of paths that connect up and are accessible for all people
- advocating for more social and affordable housing and better public transport options
- making sure our buildings and community spaces are inclusive and accessible.

How we'll know if we've been successful

We'll see:

- a greater mix of housing to meet different needs
- reduced homelessness
- more public art that enhances different places and spaces
- less reliance on cars
- more people walking and riding, using shared paths that are accessible and have good connectivity
- better access to and increased use of public transport.

I've lived in Knox for 55 years and I think we have some of the best facilities, like the athletics track, basketball stadiums, the netball centre and libraries everywhere.

I want to be healthy and as I get older I want to be able to access all the services I need and interact with my community without having to travel too far.

Gary, retired and avid lawn bowls player at both Boronia and Ferntree Gully bowls clubs

Natural environment and sustainability

Knox's natural environment is protected and enhanced to ensure sustainability for future generations.

Why is this important?

Our connection to nature is vital to our health. Not only do we benefit from activity in these spaces, but spending time in places and spaces in nature can also have mental health benefits, like reducing anxiety and depressive symptoms.

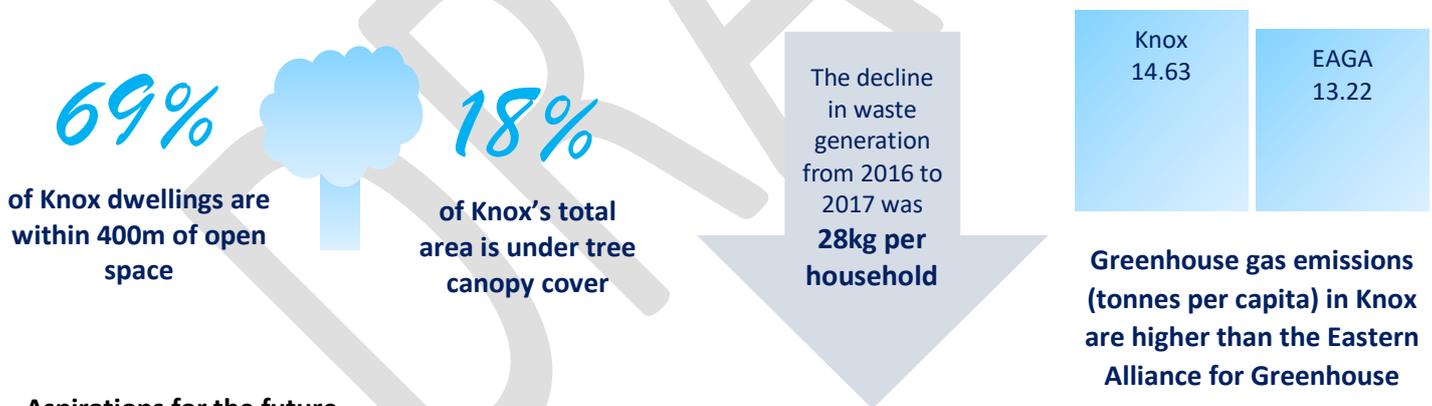
Our trees and shrubs provide shade and protection from heat and wind. They also contribute to our local biodiversity and offer homes for our native birds and wildlife. Having good tree canopy is a key factor in improving the landscape, attractiveness and local sense of place.

In order to protect our environment we need to combat the effects of climate change. Our average annual temperatures are rising as a direct result of climate change. With this comes increased costs of living and rising energy costs.

As our climate changes and temperatures increase, we are increasingly exposed to extreme weather events, fires, and floods. Those most vulnerable in our community – humans, wildlife and plants – are at greater risk during these events.

What we know

You told us that caring for the environment and our bushland and nature reserves are two of the most important aspects of Knox. You want better maintenance of public spaces, streets and roads, and better care for the environment, including addressing climate change.



Aspirations for the future

You told us you value all the bushland areas, nature reserves, parks, reserves and waterways that Knox has to offer. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people found a strong connection with nature. We need to continue to protect and enhance our waterways, bushland, nature reserves and parklands, so they will be there for generations to enjoy. We need to find the balance of being able to enjoy these spaces without damaging the natural habitat of our native bird, wildlife and plant species.

Your hope is that Knox can become a centre of excellence for energy and materials conservation, creating a circular economy. This means moving away from a cycle of 'make, use, dispose' in favour of reusing and recycling as much as possible. By doing this we can conserve the energy needed to produce goods, reduce waste to landfill and significantly reduce our carbon emissions and the impact on our climate.

"I think beauty is really important and having natural spaces, wide open spaces, where you can see the sky and enjoy gardens, parks, waterways. I think those are really important and fundamental to our wellbeing."

Community forum participant
(September 2020)

"I love living here because I feel like there is a lot of greenery. I hope none of it is lost and we can preserve that and build on it."

Environment and Housing focus group
participant (November 2020)

We can make a difference by:

- reducing, reusing and recycling whenever possible
- ensuring local businesses are energy efficient and dispose of waste correctly
- looking after our parks and bushland
- using active transport such as walking and cycling
- planning our city in a way that reduces the negative impacts on the environment and the effects of climate change.

How we'll know if we've been successful

We'll see:

- increased tree canopy cover
- more diversity in flora and fauna
- reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- increased renewable energy use
- a reduction in waste generation
- more homes with access to open space.

My vision for Knox over the next 10 years is that it will continue to develop as a place that is family-friendly, considers the needs of all ages and incorporates work opportunities and a healthy way of living. A place where we foster the things that we know are valuable about life and find new and better ways to do things to keep our community beautiful, spacious, family-orientated, creative and loving.

Fiona, Artist, Art Coach, and mum to two girls

Connection, resilience and wellbeing

Knox is a place to call home. Our community is strong, healthy and we support and respect each other.

Why is this important?

Good health and wellbeing is related to almost everything we do and how we do it. Without it, our quality of life suffers.

Our health and wellbeing links to the natural environment by providing us spaces to enjoy physical activity and the various aspects of nature and biodiversity. The impacts of climate change can, however, have a negative effect on our health through extreme weather, loss of land, threat to food security, and air and water pollution.

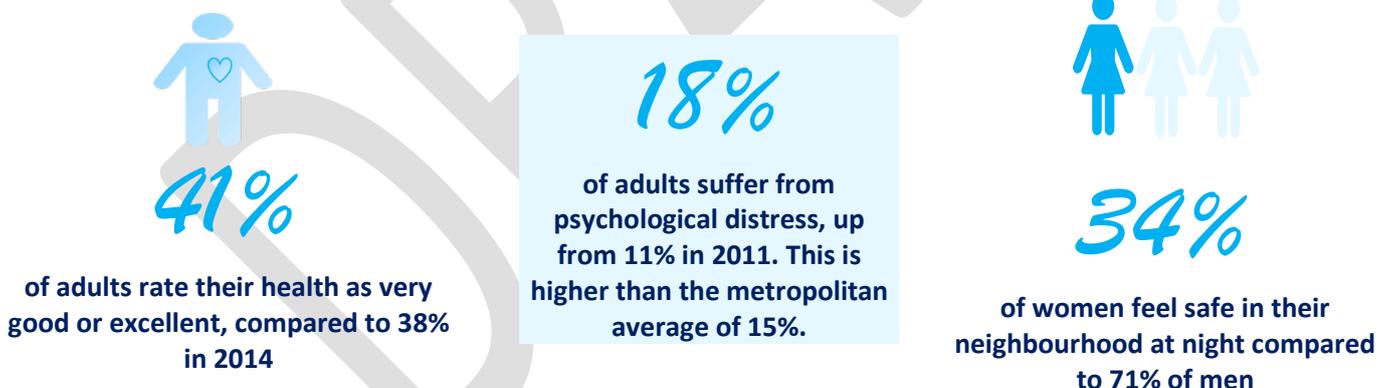
Connection to the place we live in and the people around us also contributes to our health and wellbeing and helps us to feel a sense of purpose and belonging. Having appropriate facilities, services and infrastructure is critical to providing us with opportunities for the best possible health and wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on our health and wellbeing in 2020, and continues to do so. Some of the already prominent issues in our community were exacerbated by the pandemic and the associated restrictions. It is important that we tackle the issues and support those most affected.

What we know

You told us health, wellbeing and safety were the most important aspects of Knox, and you want better support for the vulnerable and improved community safety and security.

You told us that social isolation, anxiety, stress, depression and loneliness were the most prominent mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Aspirations for the future

You told us that all people in Knox should be able to enjoy good health and wellbeing. Your hope is that everyone in our community has access to healthy food, is free from drugs and other harmful substances, enjoys physical activity that suits their age and ability, and has good emotional and social wellbeing.

When discussing what could be done to achieve good health and wellbeing, many of you connected this with other aspects of our lives, for example, having adequate shelter, access to support services for those in need, using visual art and performance to improve mental health and reduce depression, and ensuring people have access to technology so they can connect when not being able to leave home.

Another key aspect of your aspirations for the future is social connection, including spiritual and cultural. In particular, you told us that we should honour and celebrate our First Nations culture. Respect and inclusion are critical to ensuring our community can achieve its vision.

Many of you are concerned about the issue of safety, as it relates to our homes, physical environment, crime, and prejudice or discrimination. Family violence and elder abuse were two significant and concerning issues raised. To ensure we feel safe in Knox, you told us there needs to be a focus on education, promoting respectful relationships in families, between different cultures and in the broader community, and better and more accessible services and infrastructure.

"... we could have pop-up stalls, every weekend... people can just bring in stuff they want to share with the community, and anyone can come without feeling embarrassed. That kind of sharing and caring through some small pop-up stalls, that would be good..."

Health and Wellbeing focus group participant
(November 2020)

"We need balance in our lives. Not just work, work and work... we need more physical exercise, healthy eating habits, and good mental health."

Health and Wellbeing focus group
participant (November 2020)

We can make a difference by:

- making time to look after ourselves, physically and mentally
- maintaining connections with others – social, cultural and spiritual
- volunteering time or joining community groups
- showing respect, embracing differences and supporting others
- ensuring there are good quality support services for those most in need
- providing safe spaces for those most vulnerable.

How we'll know if we've been successful

We'll see:

- reduced alcohol consumption
- reduced tobacco use
- increased access to good quality food and reduced obesity rate
- a more active community
- overall improved mental health and reduced levels of depression and anxiety
- more gender equality and respectful cultural and intergenerational relationships
- increased sense of being valued and sense of empowerment
- people feeling safe and secure in the community.

The people are what makes Knox!

My vision for Knox is that we return to a village concept. To have places where people can meet and be together.

Chris, retired and Board Member of 1812 Theatre Ltd

Civic engagement and integrity

Knox Council is a trusted and respected leader in our community, acting appropriately and ensuring all voices are heard.

Why is this important?

Civic engagement is about making a difference in our community. Having a voice in decision making and all issues affecting our lives is critical to making that difference.

Our local decision-makers need to demonstrate transparency. They need to be open to listening to all views, and make the best decisions for our community, based on our needs.

As the level of government closest to the community, Council needs to fulfil its leadership role by acting appropriately, using its resources effectively and efficiently, and being accountable for all its actions and decisions.

What we know

You told us that opportunities to have a say and social inclusion are key components in making Knox a great place to be. You think we need to work on building community spirit and making sure all voices are heard.

42%

of people in Knox feel valued by society, compared to 50% in 2014

26%

of adults feel there are opportunities to have a real say on matters that are important to them compared to 37% in 2011.

46%

of adults think Council is good or very good at keeping the community informed

Aspirations for the future

You told us you want to have a say in decisions that impact you the most. All voices, not just the loudest ones, need to be heard, listened to and acted on, in an open and respectful way.

You want Council to find interesting and interactive ways for you to be involved in and contribute to decisions and plans for the future. It needs to seek out the voices of those that otherwise may not engage and ensure they have equal opportunity to participate.

Council needs to show that its decision-making processes are transparent and their actions are held to account. You want resources to be used efficiently and effectively, disclosing freely how ratepayer money is being spent in a way that is easy to understand.

You told us you want Council to be easy to deal with and reduce 'red tape'. You want information about Council's services and facilities, all plans and documents to be accessible and the language inclusive.

"We need to identify and train some community leaders who are going to work at building the community in Knox... Council can't do it all. We are all in this together."

Community Engagement and Belonging focus group participant (November 2020)

"Council needs to get out more into the community... not just shopping centres, go to day services and go to the places where the people who don't have a voice are."

Community Engagement and Belonging focus group participant (November 2020)

We can make a difference by:

- participating in consultation and engagement activities
- listening to the community and making decisions based on their needs
- being more open and transparent in decision making, and regularly reporting back on plans and projects.

How we'll know if we've been successful

We'll see:

- more opportunities for the community to have a say
- greater transparency in Council decision-making and actions
- more information about what Council does, the services it provides and where to get help
- an engaged community that feels part of the decision-making process.

I love that in Knox we have the ability to welcome everyone from different areas. They don't look at your background or the way you look as a definition of how they should treat you. They treat everyone equally.

Good communication between people, and between our Council and the people really is the key to a great community.

Susie, full-time university student

Partnerships

We all worked together to develop the Community Plan and now we need collaborative partnerships to ensure its success.

Council will partner and continue to work with a range of stakeholders including community members and groups, service providers, businesses and local, state and federal government organisations.

Our partners will be able to work with us in a number of ways including membership on Council's advisory committees, participating in working groups, and providing feedback and submissions on specific projects through consultation and engagement opportunities. Working together will ensure both Council and our partners have access to the best available information, and can coordinate our efforts to achieve the greatest impact.

Monitoring our progress

There are many ways we can monitor our progress and make sure we are on the right track.

Going forward, we will look at different ways to collaborate and contribute to Knox's success over the next 10 years. We will engage with our partners and stakeholders to build on our strengths, embrace opportunities and find solutions to the challenges facing our community.

Knox City Council collects data from numerous sources, conducts regular surveys and undertakes community engagement activities to keep track of and inform what's happening in our community. You can find this information in our annual reports, and on our website.

We will review the Community Plan every four years as we produce a new Council Plan. These reviews will take Knox's pulse and make sure the Community Plan is still reflective of our community's aspirations. We will check on the availability of new data, touch base with the community, and review the key directions and strategies with agencies and stakeholders to ensure they are still relevant and meeting community needs.

As a Council, we will keep you up to date on the work we are doing to contribute to achieving the Community Vision through regular reporting against our Council Plan, on our website and in our publications.

Keeping in touch

Knox City Council is committed to seeking feedback, making sure you are aware of issues that affect you and providing opportunities to have your say.

Visit our Have Your Say website to see how you can contribute to projects and tell us what you think of our draft plans and strategies - <https://haveyoursay.knox.vic.gov.au>

Sign up to receive *Knox eNews*, our monthly email newsletter which will keep you informed about the latest news, events and activities across the community: <https://www.knox.vic.gov.au/email-newsletter>

You can also contact Council via the following methods:

Phone: 9298 8000

Email: knoxcc@knox.vic.gov.au

Website: www.knox.vic.gov.au

Social media: facebook.com/knoxccouncil or via Twitter @knoxcc

Visit Council in person: Knox Civic Centre
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