

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING POLICY

1.0 Purpose

City of Ballarat (Council) is a provider of community infrastructure including community centres, public halls, sports pavilions, aquatic facilities, libraries, early years facilities, senior citizens centres and playgrounds. It owns and manages community facilities and delivers services to the community through those facilities. Council also supports the provision of community infrastructure by other providers through direct funding and/or advocacy. A holistic and strategic planning approach ensures that Council understands communities' current and future needs for community infrastructure and enables it to meet those needs effectively and efficiently.

This policy outlines Council's commitment to an integrated and strategic planning process for the delivery of Community Infrastructure across the Ballarat municipality. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide the general community, stakeholder organisations and Council employees with an understanding of Council's objectives and approach to providing for community services infrastructure in Ballarat;
- To direct sound decision making about planning, funding, delivering and negotiating for community infrastructure;
- To demonstrate commitment to community and stakeholder engagement when planning for community infrastructure; and
- To assist with a coordinated approach within Council to undertake this work.

The Community Infrastructure Planning Policy provides a set of agreed guiding principles which set out the underlying philosophy that should be followed in the prioritisation, planning, design and provision of community infrastructure to promote more consistent understanding and practice.

2.0 Scope

This policy will apply to Council employees and all persons making decisions regarding community infrastructure planning, funding and delivery.

The Community Infrastructure Planning Policy provides strategic direction to meet local and regional needs and address the key challenges facing the municipality in the planning, delivery and activation of community facilities for a growing population. Council recognises that community infrastructure planning principles and appropriate best practice processes and procedures will enhance achievement of Council objectives such as building social capital, inclusion and community cohesion, achieving innovation, providing best value infrastructure to the community and enhancing environmental sustainability.

The Community Infrastructure Planning Policy focuses on community infrastructure for which Council has primary responsibility. For the purpose of this policy, community infrastructure refers to; Council owned buildings and spaces that are accessed by the community for a wide range of community, cultural, education, recreation and sporting pursuits; both formally and informally. Examples include community centres, public halls, sports pavilions, aquatic facilities, libraries, early years facilities, senior citizens centres and playgrounds.

This policy applies when planning for new or upgraded community facilities or when there is a proposed change of use of existing Council owned facilities as part of the following:

- External capital funding opportunities which are available for community facilities;
- A request from a community organisation for a new/upgraded community facility or changing utilisation of an existing Council community facility;

- The outcomes of a Service Plan, strategic review, issues based or area-based review proposing change or development of Council community facilities;
- To inform the development of internal business cases for renewal and upgrades; and/or
- Process for the allocation, and/or use of Council community facilities.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 Statement

The objective of the Community Infrastructure Planning Policy is to optimise community infrastructure for maximum community benefit through the application of consistent and transparent guiding principles, ensuring that community infrastructure is equitable, efficient, sustainable and meets community needs in the context of population growth and change.

3.2 City of Ballarat Community Infrastructure Guiding Principles

The City of Ballarat Community Infrastructure Guiding Principles provide the overall direction to decision-making for community infrastructure planning.

Principle	Key Considerations
Strategic and integrated planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative and whole of organisation approach is taken to the planning and delivery of community infrastructure and meets the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020. • Decision making is consistent, transparent and evidence based (considering community needs and priorities, usage, fitness for purpose, demographics etc.), directing the City's resources where the benefit is greatest to community health and wellbeing. • Planning considers adequate supply of suitable land in order to preserve opportunities for future generations. • A pipeline of community infrastructure projects should be planned and costed to ensure funding submissions are strategic and based on identified needs. Funding is to be made available for this to occur. Planning and project establishment is to be in accordance with established Council frameworks. • Established hierarchy and provision standards (see 4.3 for definition) guides community infrastructure planning and delivery.
People first approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects focus on connecting people to services, facilities and experiences to enhance their overall health and wellbeing. • There is commitment to stakeholder and community engagement at all stages throughout the planning process which considers the directives of other Council plans, strategies and priorities. • Establishing the purpose and function of a facility is based on the demographic profile, needs and priorities for the facility's catchment area. • Community infrastructure responds to and is integrated with the surrounding area, encouraging social connection, building a sense of place and contributing to developing social capital and capacity building. • Community hubs which encourage social interaction, creativity and economic and environmental vitality are fostered, creating a strong sense of community and local identity. • Implementation of the City of Ballarat Community Engagement Principles (see 4.3 for link, will ensure that community input is valued and respected, with clear information provided about how the contributions will be utilised.

Access, inclusion and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects will be universally accessible, and aim to be equitable, welcoming, socially inclusive and encouraging of active lifestyles, taking into account the diverse needs of our community (including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural, all abilities, child and age friendly, female and gender diverse). • Equitable (see 4.3 for definition) provision and standard of facilities within the municipality and across population catchments will be promoted using established hierarchy and provision standards. • Preferred sites for new community infrastructure will consider liveability and accessibility including 10 Minute City principles (see 4.3 for definition) and be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In a location which is central to the community it serves; ○ Co-located or adjacent to other services and facilities; ○ Accessible by public transport, pedestrian and cycle path networks; ○ In a highly visible civic space, adjacent to public open space; and ○ Have adequate car and bicycle parking onsite or in close proximity. • Community infrastructure will recognise the traditional owners of the land through signage or in other culturally appropriate ways.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability of community facilities is achieved by providing a standard of infrastructure, management and service delivery that focuses on environmental and social outcomes, and balances economic and heritage considerations. • Community infrastructure is designed and constructed/upgraded to comply with ecologically sustainable design principles in support of achieving carbon neutrality within the City of Ballarat whenever possible. • The long-term costs of maintaining and managing infrastructure is taken into account in decision making processes. • Existing community facilities are monitored to improve resource planning and to determine potential useful lifespans. • Community services and facilities are designed and governed using self-sufficient and site-specific management and governance models to meet their full capacity, making best use of existing community facilities where appropriate. • Community facilities not owned by Council, but which are available for community use, are also considered when analysing community needs. • Users of community infrastructure are encouraged to contribute to environmentally friendly energy use and practices.
Innovation and adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design processes aim to achieve innovative and adaptable facilities that can take advantage of new technologies, are ecologically sustainable and respond to changing community priorities in the future. • Council displays leadership in developing and supporting new concepts, innovative practices and successful models of delivery where possible, with robust and ethical governance structures adhered to for project delivery. • Innovative ways to maintain equitable service delivery to settlements that have limited or no capacity for further growth, or that experience population decline will be supported. • Local expertise, creativity and innovation is valued and prioritised through planning and procurement systems.

Multi-purpose, flexible and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community facilities are planned and designed for the broadest possible use by a range of groups, services and activities, and are multi-purpose in nature. • Where possible community facilities are fit for purpose and delivered according to appropriate infrastructure standards and best practice, with internal layouts that can respond to changing community priorities, the accommodation of special interest groups, and opportunities for expansion. • Assets which are no longer able to meet community needs and cannot feasibly be modified to do so should be rationalised to facilitate reinvestment in more appropriate infrastructure. • Buildings enhance public streets, spaces and views and include best practice principles in crime prevention through environmental design including appropriate lighting, visual prominence and location. • Design led spaces promote health and wellbeing of residents.
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3.3 Application of Community Infrastructure Planning Principles

Integrated and effective planning should occur for the development of all community infrastructure projects and attempts must be made to comply with the principles set out in this policy wherever possible. This policy should be applied whenever planning for new or upgraded community facilities or for proposed changes of use of existing Council facilities.

This policy will inform the process of community infrastructure development and an integrated approach to the overall planning, delivery and management of community services, activities and facilities across Council. The policy aligns with sector-wide best practice approaches to community facility planning and ensures that there is consideration of:

- Community demand for services;
- Council's role;
- Models for delivery of services; and,
- Population forecasting;

It also sets a framework for:

- Requests from community organisations for a new community facility or changing utilisation of an existing Council community facility;
- Advocacy to state and federal government for grants and other funding to ensure that adequate community infrastructure is delivered to respond to population growth;
- Forming and strengthening partnerships with community organisations, schools, state government and other local governments to assist in the delivery of shared community infrastructure; and
- Negotiating the best outcomes for the community from developer contributions.

To complement this policy, Council is developing a community infrastructure planning process that is informed by the Community Infrastructure Planning Principles. The planning process will:

- Identify and prioritise infrastructure projects that are justified by evidence and prioritised according to community need.
- Inform business cases for community infrastructure projects.
- Inform service plans and reviews, planning studies, masterplans and other Council business.
- Provide the evidence base for Infrastructure Contributions Plan / Development Contributions Plans, applications for grant funding, and advocacy to external service providers.

3.4 Role of City of Ballarat in Community Infrastructure Development

Planning

- Undertakes policy development, needs analysis and strategic planning for the current and future provision of community infrastructure; and
- Seeks financial and/or in-kind contributions from other levels of government, non-government organisations and the private sector towards community infrastructure provision.

As an owner of community infrastructure, Council:

- Funds, constructs, operates and maintains some community facilities (Council assets); and
- Makes some Council assets available for use by other service providers and the community.

As a provider of community services, Council:

- Delivers community services through its assets;
- Provides funding and/or in-kind support to assist others to deliver community services;
- Partners with and advocates to other levels of government and community service providers to ensure adequate services are available to meet community needs; and
- Considers where, when and how community facilities should be provided to meet current and future needs.

3.5 Continuous improvement

Council will continue to enhance its community infrastructure planning and development knowledge, skills and operational practices with a commitment to a continuous improvement approach. Improved knowledge about the future direction of Council and non-Council services, and an understanding of sector-wide best practice and population forecasting will drive integrated community infrastructure planning and the provision of community facilities.

3.6 Risk Management

The policy supports:

- Prioritisation of programs, projects and investment in public resources which are identified as addressing the greatest need.
- Investment in sustainable community infrastructure development and models.
- Strong links between service planning, evidenced based community needs and investment decisions.
- Transparent and accountable allocation of resources.
- Compliance with relevant legislation including public safety standards.

4.0 Supporting documents and references

4.1 Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2020*

4.2 Associated Documents

- *Active Women's and Girls Strategy 2018*
- *Asset Management Policy 2015*
- *Carbon Neutrality and 100% Renewables Action Plan 2019 – 2025*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *City of Ballarat Council Plan 2017-2021*
- *Community Engagement Framework*

- *Community Engagement Principles*
- *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2022*
- *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021*
- *Master Plans and recreation strategies*
- *Social Policy Framework*
- *Ballarat Prosperity Framework*

4.3 Definitions

Community Infrastructure	Assets (which may or may not include a building), that accommodate community services, including health, individual, family and community support, education, arts and culture, information, community development, employment and training, open space and active and passive recreation opportunities
Equitable	Equitable refers to the character of fairness or equity, or of being reasonable, or just and right.
Equity	A concept based on the human-rights principles of social justice and fairness. It is an approach that addresses the unfair and avoidable differences among social groups with an aim of achieving more equal outcomes This means we try to reduce unfair differences. Equity is needed to ensure everyone has the same chance of equality.
Planning Principles	General statement of intention, which may be applied to particular cases to promote consistency.
City of Ballarat Community Engagement Principles	Are a guiding element of the Community Engagement Framework. Can be found on page 5 of the Framework and accessed at: https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Community%20Engagement%20Framework%20March%202019.pdf
Hierarchy	A hierarchy of provision provides guidance regarding appropriate open space and buildings for distinct catchments, with larger infrastructure serving a larger population and smaller catering for local needs. Ratios are used to evaluate the number or size of buildings and open spaces required across different locations. Benchmarks can either be on a population or distance catchment basis.
Provision standards	<p>Quantity - A strategic assessment to determine if the quantity of provision meets the needs of City of Ballarat residents.</p> <p>Quality (suitability, universal access) - A facility assessment to determine if facilities are suitable for their intended purpose and if not, what improvements are required to make them more suitable for use.</p> <p>Catchment (travel accessibility) - A strategic assessment to determine the maximum reasonable distance that residents should expect to have to undertake to access facilities.</p> <p>Utilisation - A facility specific assessment that measures current use of facilities and determines whether facilities have adequate future capacity to meet community demand.</p>

Asset condition - A facility specific assessment that measures current condition of facilities and the buildings useful life to ensure we are safely and fiscally meeting community demand.

10 Minute City

The 10 Minute City is one of the key concepts in the Ballarat Strategy 2040. The concept of a 10 minute city includes liveable neighbourhoods within a compact city. The 10 minute City in Ballarat reflects community aspirations to maintain existing or improved levels of local access to destinations and services as the city grows over time.

Pipeline of projects

Forward view of infrastructure. A list of identified Infrastructure projects to progress as funding becomes available, based on evidence and needs assessments.

5.0 Policy Owner

Executive Manager Engaged Communities

6.0 Authorisation

Adopted by Ballarat City Council on 16 September 2020. R237/20