



**Moreland** City Council

## **BRUNSWICK MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTRE**

### **SUSTAINABILITY BACKGROUND AND ISSUES PAPER**

May 2007



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## **DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY BACKGROUND AND ISSUES PAPER**

Moreland City Council has a strong commitment to the principles and practices of environmental sustainability. As set out in Moreland's Integrated Environment Plan 2006-2011, Council is committed to creating an environmentally sustainable and liveable city by implementing triple bottom line solutions to improve the local environment and thus contribute to solving environmental issues.

Council is committed to ensuring that the Brunswick Structure Plan is developed and implemented with sustainability firmly in mind. Sustainability is defined as development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Implicit within this definition is the notion of inter-generational equity. Sustainability requires Council to ensure that social, cultural, economic and environmental factors are considered in all decisions that affect the Brunswick Activity Centre.

There is strong history of environmental awareness and activism in Brunswick, and community consultation undertaken to date has indicated that sustainability issues are a key concern and issue for the local community.

The draft Brunswick Structure Plan will strive to:

- be a catalyst for change by providing for sustainable development in the Brunswick MAC
- provide for innovation, design excellence, vibrancy and healthy living, working and recreational environments
- maximise the ongoing environmental, social and economic benefits of all new development.

In the development of the draft Structure Plan social, environmental and economic objectives will be developed to outline in more detail these key drivers of the plan.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

While predominantly a built-up urban area, Brunswick also comprises pockets of natural environment that play a significant role in maintaining human spiritual and physical wellbeing. Green spaces, including the Merri Creek parklands and the Central Brunswick Parklands along with private gardens, landscaped areas and planted streetscapes, serve to break up the hard built form, providing increased permeability and natural filters for Moreland's air, land and waterways. They also provide shade and shelter, habitat, and relief from the hustle and bustle of life in a busy, thriving centre.

In addition, Brunswick gains notable environmental, social and economic benefits as a result of its proximity to the Merri and Moonee Ponds Creeks; these creeks are now recognised as regional habitat corridors and as part of the regional open space network for recreation.

Healthy soil and air are an integral part of a healthy ecosystem. But unfortunately, historic development and land-use practices, in combination with increased traffic congestion have had a serious impact on the quality of our soil and air. Brunswick has a number of identified areas where land is contaminated.

Moreland's green spaces also serve to combat a phenomenon known as the 'urban heat island' (UHI) effect, where urban areas can experience a rise in ambient temperatures and hence a rise in energy usage, due to the increased use of mechanical cooling and air conditioning. The higher temperatures can be attributed mainly to heat-absorbing dark hard surfaces (asphalt paving in roads and car parks, black-topped roofs, etc.) that often dominate the urban landscape. Minimising UHIs can be achieved most effectively by increasing the amount of green space in cities – increasing vegetation – which cools the surrounding air through evapo-transpiration and also helps to mitigate the creation of smog.

Development in Brunswick aims to reduce the UHI effect through several initiatives: by enhancing green, landscaped areas; consolidating open, asphalt parking areas; incorporating water sensitive urban design into car park and road network redevelopment; and encouraging building roof design that minimises heat absorbance and where appropriate, incorporates roof top gardens.

A sustainable future for Brunswick can only be achieved if we begin to use our resources more efficiently and reduce the environmental impact of our land-use and development practices.

The three most critical resource use areas for the City of Moreland and Brunswick are considered to be:

- water
- energy
- materials.

Management of these resource areas is intended to address the critical environmental impact issues of greenhouse gas emissions, the generation of waste, and urban planning and development.

Moreland City Council has long recognised the importance of integrating ecological considerations into all levels of decision making and operations. Since 1996, Council has developed 10 Council and community strategies, focused on specific aspects of environmental sustainability, and has incorporated sustainability principles into each of its four high-level policy documents: the Mayor's Speech, the Council Plan, the Municipal Strategic Statement and the Municipal Public Health Plan. Moreland's Integrated Environment Plan (IEP) was adopted by Council in August 2006 and brings together the range of environmental strategies and projects currently being implemented throughout Council into a framework that assists achieve enhanced environmental outcomes through better planning, informed decision-making and transparent reporting. In April 2007 Council adopted the Climate Action Plan 2007-2012, which has been developed to demonstrate leadership on climate action and achieve major greenhouse emission reductions with a goal of zero net emissions.

Moreland's environmental leadership and commitment to the sustainability agenda can also be recognised in Moreland's Sustainable Tools for Environmental Performance Strategy (STEPS), which has led to the development of two on-line tools for the evaluation of the environmental performance of residential and non-residential development. These tools, Moreland STEPS and the Sustainable Design Scorecard Non-residential, have been trialled by Council on a voluntary basis since May 2005. Work is currently being undertaken in partnership with a number of metropolitan councils to look at implementation of these tools at a state level.

## Broad ESD objectives

The Brunswick Structure Plan will need to explore and maximise opportunities to meet the following ESD objectives.

### *Greenhouse gas emission abatement*

- reduce corporate greenhouse emissions by 40% from 1996 levels by 2010
- reduce community greenhouse emissions by 20% from 1996 levels by 2010
- achieve the long term goal of zero net greenhouse emissions by 2020 for Council and 2030 for the community.

### *Healthy waterways and efficient water use*

- Ensuring all road network redevelopment integrates water sensitive urban design
- Maximising on-site stormwater collection, treatment and re-use for all new development
- Maximising the use of alternate water supplies for non-potable uses (e.g. open space irrigation)
- Appropriate landscaping to minimise water use and increase permeability

### *Energy Efficiency*

- Greenhouse gas reduction and efficient energy use
- Ensuring adequate solar access for new and existing development
- Maximising energy efficient design and the use of renewable energy technologies within new development in the activity centre
- Retro-fit renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency improvements with existing businesses and residents

### *Clean air*

- Promoting and enhancing sustainable transport options to relieve vehicle congestion and associated air pollution
- Increasing streetscape planting, where appropriate
- Fostering co-location/mixed-use development to encourage fewer trips

### *Enhanced biodiversity*

- Improving provision of open space (public and private) and vegetation outcomes
- Planting street trees
- Ensuring appropriate landscaping for all new developments
- Maximising weed management and habitat vegetation

### *Healthy soil*

- Undertaking site remediation where required

*Efficient materials use and waste minimisation*

- Ensuring construction and waste management plans required for all development sites
- Maximising use of environmentally preferable construction materials
- Minimising waste to land fill

## Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is the investment and use of social resources to meet the need of current generations without compromising the capacity of future generations to realise their aspirations. The social sustainability of Brunswick requires foresight in planning to ensure that investment in social infrastructure facilitates just and equitable social outcomes now and into the future. Additionally, the established communities within Brunswick must not be disadvantaged or displaced by the development of the centre.

Social planning objectives have been developed to guide decision making with respect to the planning and provision of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services in Brunswick. These reflect existing state and local policy directions and the findings of the research and consultation process undertaken to develop the social and cultural needs assessment. The objectives have been developed to promote the Centre's role as a focus for civic, community and economic activities and the strengthening of the area's social diversity and creative industries through local partnerships.

Social planning objectives for the Brunswick MAC are set out in the Social and Cultural Needs Assessment Draft Issues Paper, and include a focus on establishing a network of potential neighbourhood precincts within the Activity Centre that provide access to information, services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs and promoting the value of social diversity.

The principles support key state and local policy objectives to improve the integration, flexibility and efficiency of social infrastructure, and imply a partnership approach to future initiatives. The principles therefore have implications for all stages of the planning process, including the nature of future housing, the development of physical spaces, location of future development and the service models that are integrated into the activity centre.

## Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability is a critical component of the wider sustainability agenda, in context with environmental and social development. Achieving economic sustainability requires working for a fair and prosperous local economy that maximises employment opportunities, builds on the strengths of local, traditional industry and develops new economic opportunities. These benefits need to be spread throughout the community. Traditionally, industrial uses provided the main source of employment in the area, the industrial base of Brunswick is under going significant change, and reliance on the textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry has declined significantly. A key priority for the draft Brunswick Structure Plan will be

to pursue economic prosperity by protecting and enhancing employment opportunities in the area within the context of the Moreland Industrial Land Use Strategy (MILUS). This will be achieved through broadening the mix of economic and community benefits in context with achieving environmental quality and social equity.

In addition to incorporating one of the municipality's core industrial areas, the Brunswick Activity Centre includes one of the municipality's major shopping and community centres, catering to both a local catchment for a wide range of local convenience weekly shopping and personal and professional services and a regional catchment for a number of niche markets including the bridal/wedding related retail and services, Mediterranean groceries.

Economic objectives for Brunswick include:

- developing business and employment practices that promote economic, social and environmental sustainability
- to facilitate the opportunity for people to be employed locally to reduce the environmental impacts of car journeys to work
- ensuring that new building design and infrastructure is based on environmentally and economically sound design that is sustainable, healthy and affordable
- broadening the mix of uses appropriate to enhancing the broader lifestyle/cafe culture and destination stores
- encouraging economic activity and business synergies via a range of initiatives as supported by Council's economic development and employment strategy policies
- supporting the viability and growth of existing and new business including:
  - existing and developing niche markets in the area. e.g. wedding related businesses and the arts and entertainment sector
  - retail and retail-related business
  - office and service sector within the centre, particularly in creative business service activities
  - home-based business within and on the periphery of the centre
- continuing to work with a range of partners to further strengthen the Brunswick economy via land use planning strategies, facilitating infrastructure improvements, identifying local economic development priorities, developing sustainable business practices and advocating on behalf of business.

## Opportunities

Structure Planning for Brunswick presents a significant opportunity to encourage environmental best practice and look at practical strategies that move us towards a sustainable society. Opportunities for innovation should be explored e.g. looking at more sustainable energy generation systems, which are socially and economically sustainable and the partnerships that are needed to make this happen.

### Further work

Council should continue to lobby for and work towards appropriate state wide regulatory mechanisms to provide sustainability requirements for buildings.

In the future peak oil issues will become quite a reality. Council is currently preparing a report on all of the products and processes that we have that rely on petrochemicals. The idea is to wean us off oil dependency. Community gardens provide a number of benefits such as reduced transport of foods, 'food miles' health benefits through fresh, local, organic produce, local economic development. Council should continue to look at opportunities to provide for community gardens and develop partnerships to achieve this.