

1.5 NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL – ASHWOOD, ASHBURTON AND CHADSTONE AREAS

(COM39:FH)

Responsible Director: Carolyn McClean

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the progress for the past 12 months of the Ashwood, Ashburton and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal Program.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides Council with an update on the Neighbourhood Renewal Program in the Ashwood, Ashburton and Chadstone (AAC) areas for the 08/09 period.

BACKGROUND

Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) is a Victorian State Government initiative that provides for the capacity of local communities to work in association with the State and local providers in improving local infrastructure, employment, education, safety and health and well-being. In July 2003, the Ashwood, Ashburton and Chadstone areas were formally recognised by DHS Eastern Metropolitan Region as a NR site, funding has now been committed until 2011. The levels of relative disadvantage experienced by local residents when compared to neighbouring suburbs and other parts of the State contributed to the selection of this site.

The six objectives of Neighbourhood Renewal Project are to:

1. Increase people's pride and participation in the community;
2. Lift employment and learning opportunities and expand local economies;
3. Improve personal safety and reduce crime;
4. Enhance housing and the physical environment;
5. Promote health and well-being; and
6. Increase access to services and improve government responsiveness.

In implementing NR in the area, a number of committees/working groups have been established. It is intended that all working groups will have a membership consisting of 50% residents.

A range of City of Monash staff continue to be involved in the Neighbourhood Renewal program including at Board level and in a number of the working groups.

An updated Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plan has been completed. This Action Plan will inform the actions and strategies to be undertaken by the working groups and the NR team in 2009/10.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Since 2004, Council has provided part funding of \$15,000 per annum to the employment of a Community Development Worker to specifically resource Monash residents and activities in the AAC area. This level of support is again recommended for 2009/10. This has been accommodated for in the 2009/10 Budget.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Participation in the Neighbourhood Renewal program is consistent with Council's 2008/09 Business Plan target of *participate in the Neighbourhood Renewal Project for the Ashburton, Ashwood and Chadstone area.*

CONSULTATION

All Neighbourhood Renewal Projects are set a target of 50% resident participation on the Board and all working groups, to ensure that activities and actions are resident driven. This continues to be a challenge for the project to maintain participation from residents at this level. A residents group has been developed to generate interest and ownership of the project.

ANALYSIS

Following an internal review in 2007, the AA&C NR Board decided to restructure its governance and community linkage arrangements of the two local government areas. As a result, two separate committees have been formed that represent residents and key stakeholders from within Monash and Boroondara respectively.

The Ashwood & Chadstone Steering Committee (A&CSC) was established in December 2007 and met throughout 2008. Its membership comprises local residents, local service providers and Local and State Government.

The agreed roles of the A&CSC are to:

- Set the direction for Neighbourhood Renewal
- Be a consultation point for Local and State Government, and key service providers
- Promote effective consultation between these bodies and the community
- Determine the key priorities for the community, decide on actions and oversee their implementation
- Mobilise resources and activities to meet community-identified priorities
- Coordinate investments to deliver maximum impact.

The overall AA&C NR Board now meets twice a year, at the year beginning and end, to coordinate annual action planning between AA&C.

In addition, the Community Development Worker positions are now geographically aligned rather than issue based across the whole AA&C catchments. These positions are now employed directly through MonashLink and Inner East Community Health Service rather than NR.

The major projects undertaken in partnership with NR in 2008/09 include:

Batesford Reserve Youth and Community Hub

Council was successful in its application for \$4 million to the Commonwealth Funding Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects. This funding will contribute towards the construction of this community hub.

On 7 October 2008, Council approved the commencement of a project to explore the potential to develop a youth and community hub within Batesford Reserve, Ashwood to support the needs of the surrounding community.

Council was successful in securing \$30,000 from the Department of Community Planning and Development, to develop the initial design concepts and Cost Plan A for the hub.

Discussions are continuing to take place with the agencies to be located at the proposed hub. Whilst further service model development will be required, the proposed hub is likely to offer:

- Youth Counselling and Support services
- Youth programs and activities
- General Counselling
- Community Health Services
- Computer training and associated Neighbourhood House activities
- Community meeting space
- U3A training and activities
- Public Tenants Association

In addition to the service model development the key stakeholders are meeting regularly to determine the facility coordination and administration requirements.

Batesford Reserve Recreation Precinct Place-making and Walkability Enhancement Plan

Council secured \$25,000 DHS funding to:

- improve safe pedestrian access to and within the south-west corner of the recreation reserve
- initiate a series of pedestrian-friendly destinations which encourage use and enjoyment of the site by people of varied ages and interests
- deliver lasting recreational infrastructure improvements for the local neighbourhood.

The project plan and timeframes are:

- Pedestrian path link to Power Avenue frontage (Apr-May 2009)
- Playground planting works (May-June 2009)
- Boundary revegetation works (May-June 2009)
- Enhancement works (planting and furniture) at Recreation Centre frontage (May-June 2009)

Ashwood Gateway Project

In 2008, funding from the City of Monash and Melbourne Water enabled the creation of the Holmesglen Valley Bio-filter Wetlands, near Power and Warrigal Roads. This seasonal wetland collects and cleans water from surrounding roads before the water enters Gardiners Creek and Port Philip Bay. The project was planted with the help of students from Malvern Valley Primary School and was officially opened on 13 August 2008.

Ashwood Chadstone Family Fun Day

The 2008 Ashwood Chadstone Family Fun Day was held on Sunday 19 October at Batesford Reserve, Chadstone with approximately 5,000 residents attending.

The event was again held during Community Safety Month, and incorporated a community safety area which included emergency services displays, a community safety quiz run by Neighbourhood Renewal and also Neighbourhood Watch. The Ashwood Chadstone Family Fun Day featured main stage entertainment with a variety of community performers, community information stalls, free children's activities and rides, and food vendors (both commercial and community stalls)

Festival For Healthy Living

The Festival for Healthy Living (FHL) is a major 3 years health promotion initiative to improve mental health and well-being in schools and their communities in AA&C using the performing arts supported by health and community service professionals.

Statewide, the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services oversee the FHL. Local projects are initiated by local schools and health and community services in partnership with the RCH, and are managed by a Steering Committee comprising of local stakeholders.

The AAC FHL Steering Committee has representation from the local schools, local and regional health services, Boroondara and MYFS.

DHS has allocated \$120,000 over two years to support this initiative, with other funding contributions from MonashLink Community Health Service and Boroondara and MYFS School Focus Youth Services. The major additional cost of the FHL is funding part-time artists in each school.

In 2008/09, Ashwood School, Ashwood Secondary College, Parkhill Primary School and St Mary Magdalene's Primary School have been involved with a variety of artists and health professionals, leading to a joint performance at Ashwood College in September 2008 by 400 students.

A comprehensive listing of the activities compiled by the Manager of AA&C NR that relate to Monash are outlined in Attachment 1.

Healthy Kids in Monash

Healthy Kids in Monash (HKM) is a local collaborative Health Promoting Schools project, which aims to take preventative action within the City of Monash, to curb the national trend of increasing childhood obesity. The focus is on increasing physical activity and healthy nutrition habits amongst primary school aged children, by incorporating the whole school community.

Activities to address good nutrition have seen the establishment of breakfast programs, healthy changes to canteen menus and food workshops for parents and students, resulting in an increase in fruit and vegetable consumption over two years.

Currently the Healthy Kids in Monash Project is still running with 2 of the 5 schools accredited with 'Kids Go For Your Life'. The Steering Committee (Monashlink, Greater Monash GP Network, City of Monash) is working with the 3 remaining schools to ensure 'Kids Go For Your Life' accreditation with the aim by 30 June 2009.

The future direction of the Steering Committee and Project will be reviewed in July 2009.

Food security and community gardens

Currently Monashlink are leading the Food Security and Community Gardens Project within the communities of Ashburton, Ashwood and Chadstone, to develop a strategic approach to supporting community gardening initiatives and improving community food security, with particular attention to the needs of low-income households.

Council staff have been attending committee meetings, which oversee the project while providing support and resources to the project officer. In addition, information and data on food premises within the catchment area has also been provided. The ongoing level of involvement from Council is yet to be established and will be determined depending on the direction of the project

Ashwood and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal Crime and Safety Working Group

A Council Officer has been working in partnership with the Ashwood and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal Crime and Safety Working Group. This group has been involved in a planning day early in 2009 to determine the group's

goals and strategies and formalising the partnerships between Neighbourhood Renewal, local residents, Victoria Police, local Neighbourhood Houses and Monash Council through a partnership tool and Terms of Reference. Monash Council has been able to provide this group with information about the number of local law violations in this area and have also been involved in advocating for funding to work with the community to clean up graffiti and promote a perception of community cohesion and safety.

CONCLUSION

The AA&C Neighbourhood Renewal Project is set in a complex environment with key agency and resident stakeholders across two municipality boundaries. The result of the restructure has strengthened the focus on the needs of the two municipalities and resulted in increased resident participation. However, strong leadership and further development of robust partnerships with all key stakeholder groups including residents, service providers and Councils still needs to be maintained.

