

GREEN STAR COMMUNITIES A DRAFT NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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This document is in draft form only. The Green Building Council of Australia will seek industry, government and academic feedback prior to releasing the final document. You can provide feedback by participating on the online forum. Visit www.gbca.org.au/green-star for more details.

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The GBCA would like to acknowledge the ongoing strategic support and contribution of its project partner, VicUrban.

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A sustainable communities vision for Australia

A sustainable community embodies the principles of sustainable development, respecting ecological limits and natural resource constraints, encouraging prosperity and happiness and optimising conditions for human development over time.

A sustainable community has aspirations for the future that acknowledge the challenges brought about by change. It is liveable, resilient and adaptable. It strives for a lower carbon and ecological footprint. It has environments designed for all.

A sustainable community evolves through policy and practice that respects and embraces the aspirations of existing and future community stakeholders.

THE GBCA'S NATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ARE:

- Create liveable communities
- Provide opportunities for economic prosperity
- Enhance environmental quality
- Design great places
- Promote good urban governance



Opportunities for sustainable communities

AUSTRALIA'S SUSTAINABLE CITIES AGENDA

Australia's population is expected to rise by 60 per cent by 2050, reaching 35 million people. Most of us – nearly 85 per cent – will choose to live in cities.

This trend in growth will challenge us and be influenced by ecological limits and natural resource constraints, a changing climate, the growing need for employment and access to affordable, liveable and enjoyable places.

We are, however, in the enviable position of being able to shape the evolution of our existing and future communities. This is why the Australian Government is establishing a clear urban cities agenda for the nation, to ensure our cities grow efficiently with respect to major infrastructure networks (such as transport and communication networks), are affordable and liveable, and shape a sustainable legacy for future generations.

GREEN STAR COMMUNITIES

Acknowledging the above challenges, in 2009 the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) consulted with its members and other industry and government stakeholders to identify potential opportunities for supporting this national cities agenda. With its core business being the development and administration of comprehensive and robust rating tools, the GBCA was asked by government and industry to lead the development of a rating tool for sustainable communities.

The development of **Green Star Communities** involves a two-staged process, including:

Stage 1 – development of a **national framework for sustainable communities** that establishes five national best practice principles to guide sustainable communities in Australia; and

Stage 2 – development of the **Green Star Communities rating tool that assesses sustainable communities** against best practice sustainable benchmarks.

ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this framework is to provide a common language for new and existing sustainable communities in Australia. This will be used by the GBCA to inform the development of the **Green Star Communities** rating tool. This framework has been developed by industry and government through a collaborative process facilitated by the GBCA. The intended audience includes industry, government, developers, builders, planning and design professionals.

The framework acknowledges that there are numerous tools and mechanisms being used in Australia and internationally that help guide the evolution of sustainable communities. This framework does not replace them, but rather provides the broader context for their development and application.

The objectives of the framework are to:

- Provide **national consistency and a common language** around the definition of best practice sustainable communities;
- Encourage **innovation and excellence** in our approach to creating communities of the future;
- Promote **integration** across the spectrum of sustainability issues relating to sustainable communities;
- Facilitate **stakeholder engagement** during the evolution of sustainable communities; and
- Provide a basis for ongoing **assessment and evaluation** of sustainable community evolution.

National principles for sustainable communities in Australia

A number of aspects can be influenced to achieve best practice sustainable community outcomes, including:

- **Infrastructure:** the systems and services which supply our energy and water, manage our waste, communications, technology and provide for mobility.
- **Buildings:** the built form that accommodates our activities associated with working, living and playing, both public and private.
- **Open space:** the areas accessible to the public.
- **People:** those who own, rent, occupy, visit, work, reside, recreate or interact in our communities.
- **Ecology:** the biological systems within the natural environment.
- **Economy:** the systems supporting the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services.
- **Governance:** the rules, behaviours and structures that shape and influence communities.

This framework has established five principles to influence the evolution of new and existing sustainable communities in Australia.

THE FIVE GBCA PRINCIPLES ARE:

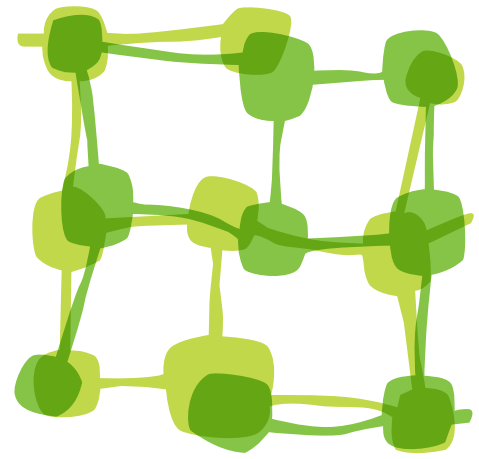
- **Liveability**
- **Economic prosperity**
- **Environmental quality**
- **Place making**
- **Urban governance**



PRINCIPLE 1:

Liveability

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ARE LIVEABLE. THEY ARE DIVERSE, AFFORDABLE, CONNECTED AND HEALTHY; THEY ENHANCE SOCIAL INTERACTION AND OWNERSHIP, ARE SAFE AND CARING AND IMPROVE PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING.



In applying the liveability principle, the following should be considered:

ENGAGEMENT

- Engaging people in the evolution of their communities, from policy to ongoing revitalisation and evaluation
- Facilitating diverse partnerships between government, community and business

AFFORDABLE

- Providing dwellings, buildings and facilities that reflect the needs of the community
- Promoting the local provision of key services such as transport, food, health and conveniences

DIVERSE AND RESPECTFUL

- Providing environments for all ages, cultures and heritage values of the community

HEALTHY AND SAFE

- Enabling and promoting healthy and safe communities through good urban design
- Providing opportunities for and raising awareness of healthy activities within the community

CONNECTED AND COHESIVE

- Providing effective connectivity between transport, communication and social and physical infrastructure
- Facilitating community cohesion by developing a shared vision, embracing diversity and respecting each others' rights and responsibilities

RESILIENT AND ADAPTABLE

- Ability to adapt to changing community and individual needs whether influenced by economy, infrastructure or culture
- Adapting to changing climatic and other environmental and physical conditions so that people's comfort, health, safety and well being are enhanced.



PRINCIPLE 2:

Economic prosperity



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROSPER. THEY ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS DIVERSITY, INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY THAT SUPPORT LOCAL JOBS FOR PEOPLE IN THE REGION.



In applying the economic prosperity principle, the following should be considered:

EMPLOYMENT

- Creating diverse employment opportunities and providing access to education and training
- Encouraging the production and procurement of local goods and services

INVESTMENT

- Providing key economic infrastructure that enables community and business connectivity
- Enabling ongoing sustainable and ethical investment in local business opportunities

INNOVATION

- Encouraging business and community innovation through initiatives that recognise and reward local excellence
- Providing new business opportunities to enhance competitiveness and innovation

EFFICIENCY

- Applying lifecycle impact management approaches to encourage resource efficiency and reduced lifecycle costs
- Investing in efficient and sustainable infrastructure that creates greater urban efficiencies.

PRINCIPLE 3:

Environmental quality



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT THEM. THEY PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND PROMOTE INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND BUILDINGS THAT REDUCE OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT.

In applying the environmental quality principle, the following should be considered:

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

- Protecting, restoring and enhancing healthy ecosystems
- Reducing emissions to land, water and atmosphere
- Conserving and celebrating cultural heritage and archaeological assets across landscapes, places and sites

REDUCING FOOTPRINT

- Promoting environmentally efficient services for water and wastewater treatment and reuse, sustainable energy generation and distribution and waste management and recycling
- Encouraging greater resource efficiency
- Reusing and retrofitting existing sites and buildings
- Providing sustainable transport opportunities and encouraging their use
- Providing communication information systems that enable greater efficiency.



PRINCIPLE 4:

Place making

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ARE GREAT PLACES. THEY ARE ATTRACTIVE, ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE, HAVE THEIR OWN DISTINCT CHARACTER AND IDENTITY AND EVOLVE OVER TIME.

In applying the place making principle, the following should be considered:

CONNECTED

- Understanding the context of site and its relationship with neighbouring communities and the region as a whole
- Encouraging the most efficient use of land and creating coherent structure and connectivity

ADAPTABLE

- Creating opportunities to retrofit and revitalise existing precincts, places and buildings
- Providing for development flexibility and adaptability that supports continuous improvement

ATTRACTIVE

- Supporting a sense of place, community identity and local character
- Encouraging high quality, integrated and safe public domain that meets the needs of the local community
- Providing quality built form and landscape responsive to climate and context

ACCESSIBLE

- Encouraging densities that are more compact and strategically orientated to enhance walkability and public transport use
- Encouraging diversity and mixed use that reflects local values and meets local needs.



PRINCIPLE 5:

Urban governance



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ARE CHARACTERISED BY GOOD GOVERNANCE. THEY PROMOTE STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE A SHARED VISION AND DELIVER COMMUNITY BENEFIT.

In applying the urban governance principle the following should be considered:

TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

- Promoting transparent and accountable decision making by providing access to information, clear timelines, performance measures and responsibilities
- Establishing effective models for governance, decision making, performance evaluation and communication over the life cycle of the community

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Building a shared community vision with stakeholders across community, industry and government and monitor progress towards it by assessing performance, building community capacity and encouraging ownership and leadership in realising that vision

GOOD PLANNING

- Promoting coordinated approaches among stakeholder interests; providing implementation arrangements and supporting mechanisms to enable sequenced and evidence-based planning

SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS

- Promoting low consumptive and efficient behaviour by providing continual improvement mechanisms for monitoring and sharing information.



Applying the principles

It is expected that these principles will be of interest to government, developers, builders, planning and design professionals and communities. The potential application of the principles by these stakeholders is likely to be diverse and some example uses are provided in the table opposite. Regardless of how stakeholders use the principles, the following steps should be followed:

- **Apply all five principles:** A sustainable community applies a broad sustainability lens, making sure environmental, social, economic, design and governance outcomes are achieved. A sustainable community will recognise the benefits of embedding all five principles for all relevant stakeholders. While the issues and strategies underpinning each principle may vary, the overall outcome being sought by each principle should be embodied in each policy, plan or project.
- **Define community boundary:** Each community has a boundary of influence, whether it is geographical, cultural, place-based, environmental and/or economic. Each community should identify its relevant boundary for the purposes of applying the five principles.
- **Adapt for context:** The range of issues that underpin the principles will not apply to all communities, nor will they be relevant to each lifecycle stage. It is necessary that each community define how it responds to each principle by considering the issues provided in this document to create a local set of objectives and strategies. In adapting the issues relevant to each principle, the lists provided should be reviewed for their relevance and supplemented or reduced as appropriate. Issues should be refined in detail to ensure they are relevant to the project, but remain contextually relevant to the overarching principle. Finally, a project may wish to prioritise and/or weight the importance of the issues.
- **Adopt a systems approach:** Apply the principles in a way that helps optimise the synergies and trade-offs. This requires an understanding of the interactions between the liveability and environmental principles, prosperity and place making principles and how the governance principles influence the achievement of them all.
- **Acknowledge and apply existing tools, plans, codes and guidelines:** Identify and understand how other tools, plans, codes and guidelines may assist in successfully applying the framework's principles. Not all tools are the same and often they have very different purposes. Some tools assess performance, some test options and some certify outcomes. Some tools are a vehicle for establishing and demonstrating regulatory compliance while others seek outcomes beyond minimum practice and strive for innovation.
- **Apply in a transparent and accountable way:** Best practice application of these principles is done in an open and accountable way. The review and refinement of the issues underpinning the principles should be undertaken with relevant stakeholders.



PROJECT STAGE	EXAMPLE USER	POTENTIAL APPLICATION	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Policy making	State government department of planning	Principles are used to inform the development of strategic directions and policies within a regional plan.	Regional policies promote best practice sustainable community development.
Regional and town planning	A consultant planner	Principles are used in the drafting of a new planning scheme, informing the scheme's desired planning outcomes for the region/town.	Planning scheme contains localised best practice strategies for a sustainable city.
	Local government planner	Principles used to assess a community development plan at the statutory planning stage to promote adoption of sustainable communities approach.	Future community development applications assessed against best practice standards.
Community planning	Local government planner	Principles are used to identify the potential components of a new neighbourhood plan, or to review an existing one.	Existing neighbourhood plan updated to include a full spectrum of sustainability initiatives.
	Community members and community organisations, NGO's and activists	Principles could assist in community capacity building and community engagement to ensure that local values are reflected in the planning of a community and local people understand the process.	An informed community that builds ownership in the local constraints, opportunities and solutions for its area.
Design	Government or private developer	Principles are used to brief the design team and their scope, ensuring that detailed assessment methodologies and tools align with the principles contained in the framework.	Design options that address best practice elements of a sustainable community.
Finance	Commonwealth Government	Principles are used as part of funding criteria to ensure that projects optimise sustainability outcomes.	Funding is directed to investments that provide an optimal sustainable community legacy.
Tendering	Owner, developer, government	Principles are used in Request for Tenders or Expressions of Interest for specific community developments.	Contractors are engaged and have embedded sustainability as a core outcome of the community development.
Deliver	Construction contractor	Principles are used to inform the company's research program around community infrastructure delivery.	Continual improvement of delivery practices for sustainable community developments.
Evolve and maintain	Neighbourhood community group, Chamber of Commerce and other member groups	Principles are used to prioritise funding applications for community infrastructure improvements and maintaining dialogue with community members, local agencies and local political representatives.	Ongoing community investment is sustained and focussed on the sustainability issues local to the area.
Revitalise and retrofit	Alliance partnership including local government, design consultants and contractors	Principles are used to structure design workshops for the renewal of buildings, open space, playground and/or community hall facilities.	Scoping of an urban retrofit project that ensures holistic sustainable outcomes.
Marketing	Consumer, the public	Principles are used to assist the public understand what broadly constitutes a sustainable community and the standard applied.	An informed consumer who makes the decision to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.



Developing the Green Star Communities rating tool

The GBCA is Australia's only independent and nationally representative member-based organisation for sustainable building. One of its core businesses is the development and maintenance of tools for assessing and independently certifying best practice performance.

Government and industry have asked the GBCA to develop a rating tool that will assess the application of these five principles in community projects. This tool will be called **Green Star Communities** and will be available for government and industry to demonstrate best practice and innovative sustainable community projects.

Before developing the tool, the GBCA will scope the needs of industry and government stakeholders. Existing tools will be reviewed to identify their strengths in achieving the outcomes sought by the principles contained within this framework. The outcomes of this review and stakeholder consultation will inform the development of the rating tool. A technical working group (TWG) of GBCA members will be established to develop **Green Star Communities**. GBCA members specialising in the issues underpinning the principles and their ability to integrate these issues will be selected for the TWG.

Green Star Communities will contain best practice criteria and benchmarks for sustainable communities and provide information on the assessment and certification process. When a pilot (draft) tool has been developed it will be tested on eligible projects. Feedback will be used to refine the tool before it is released for government and industry use. The GBCA will establish the necessary systems and infrastructure to independently assess and certify projects, and to continually review and update the criteria and benchmarks in the tool.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
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