The New Local
Place
Activation
Toolkit

Inspiration and ideas for a post-COVID-19 and climate change era

Village Well

The New Local

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to the world of placemaking, the art of creating places that people love and where nature thrives. The New Local Place Activation Toolkit will guide you to creating a more inclusive, vibrant community and place.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused far-reaching social and economic impacts and immense challenges that have forced us to quickly alter the way we interacted with our cities, streets, neighbourhoods and public spaces. This has fundamentally challenged our sense of place and the foundations of public daily life.

It is anticipated that our cities, towns and neighbourhoods will experience ongoing repercussions of COVID-19, yet the extent of these are hard to envisage and understand today. One thing that is certain, however, is that the pandemic has demonstrated incredible examples of community resilience, our ability to come together and keep each other safe, while also creatively enjoying ourselves in whatever way we can. It has also shifted our way of life to a more local scale, and we believe that this 'New Local' will be critical in refocusing the role and contribution of community, economic development and placemaking in building resilient cities, towns and neighbourhoods in a post-COVID-19 and climate change world.

We understand that the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are still emerging and have not been felt evenly across our communities and regions. Recognising the unique lived experiences, opportunities and challenges of each place will be an important piece of the puzzle when planning for recovery. Furthermore, as we continue to re-emerge and plan for this recovery, it will be important to mobilise available information and expertise, authentically engage with local communities and leverage existing investment strategically to support capacity building and amenity improvements, as well as identify creative ways in which to safely welcome communities to meet, socialise, shop and connect locally.

This is what the purpose of this Toolkit is – a guide beside and inspirational tool to kickstart your creative ideation process around ways to build back better by putting people, place and planet first. Alongside some actions specific to this ongoing recovery, this Toolkit also inspires an ongoing narrative around building stronger and more inclusive, regenerative and resilient places and communities. It draws on global examples but mostly focuses on Australian ones, some of which are specific to our 'place': Melbourne.

We have developed this Toolkit through conversations with our colleagues and industry leaders, clients and communities, our multi-faceted research into effective and best practice responses to COVID-19, as well as tapping into our expertise in place-based development and creative problem solving.

We hope it inspires you, sparks your curiosity and provides you with inspiring examples and practical tools and actions that can contribute to catalysing recovery and renewal in your community.

Don't be afraid to start, take a risk, give it a go and have fun – enjoy!

Value of a Placemaking Approach

Placemaking is the art and science of making authentic, vibrant and resilient places that are valued by their communities and admired by visitors alike. It is a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to planning and developing places that involves understanding the culture, qualities and wisdom of its community and environment, and ensuring collaboration between the 'many hands, hearts and minds' that make a place.

Village Well's multi-faceted placemaking approach brings a tailored and unique lens to holistically exploring places and communities through our 5Ps of Placemaking Framework:

People

Communities, users, customers and audiences – characteristics; traditions and trends; views and values; assets and aspirations

Product

Mix of functions, facilities, services and products – community, commercial, civic, cultural, educational, health, industrial, recreational, retail and social

Program

Activities, events, rituals, interactions and patterns of behaviour, both day and night

Physical Environment

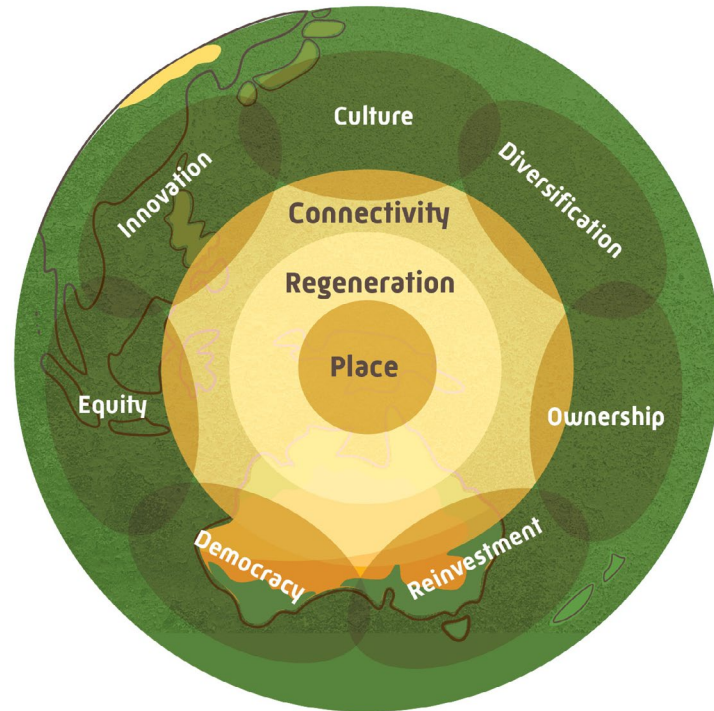Attributes, form, condition and performance of the built environment

Planet

The land, biophilia, biodiversity, microclimate, materials, energy, waste, sustainable practices.

The New Local Principles

The 'New Local' is ten new principles that Gilbert Rochecouste, (Placemaking thought leader, Founder and Managing Director of Village Well) and Michael Shuman (Economist, Attorney Author and Entrepreneur) have together developed. These provide a compelling story for a new economic development and place-led approach to building resilient and regenerative communities, cities, towns and mainstreets in a post-COVID-19 and climate change world.

Placemaking To
BUILD RESILIENCE, REGENERATION & SELF-RELIANCE
in a Post-Covid climate change world

The New
Local

Village
Well

"**Place activation is the process of bringing a place back to life.**"

Walkable

Connected

Accessible

Green

GREAT PLACES

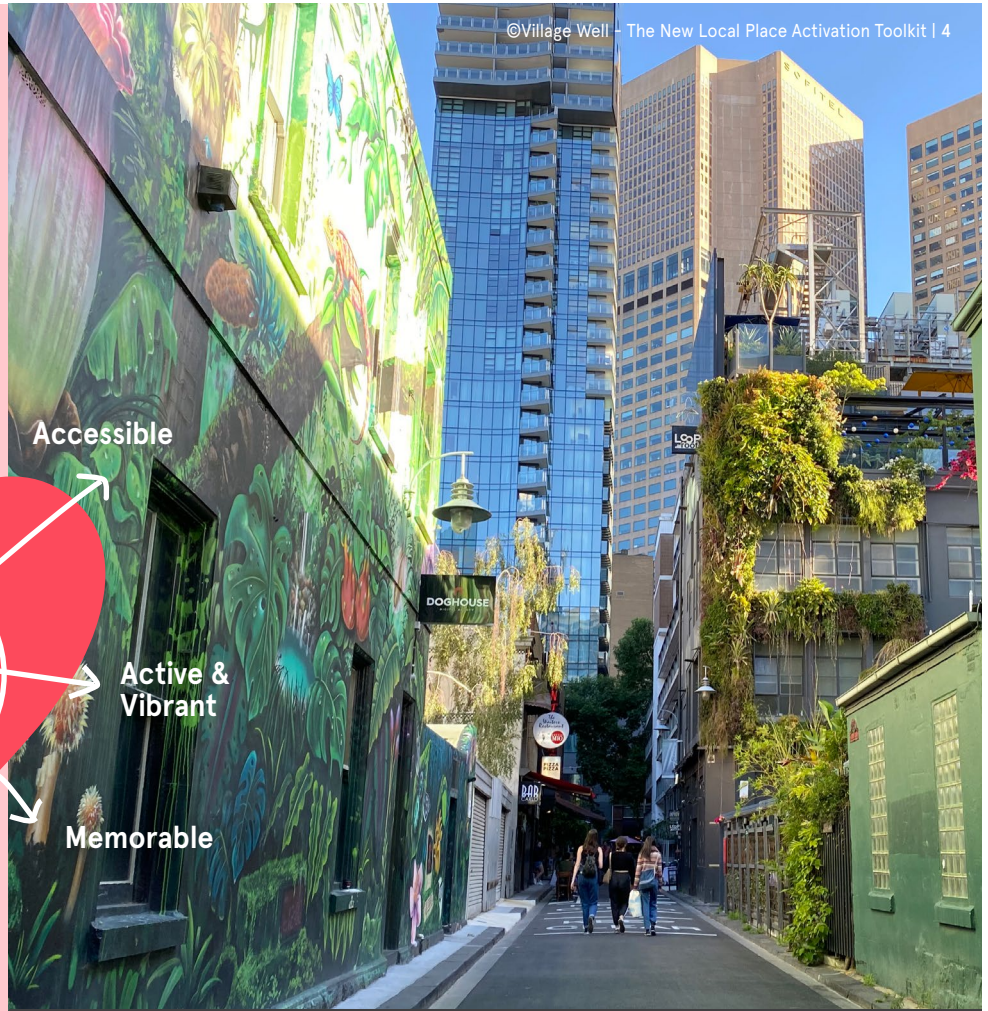Active & Vibrant

Memorable

Authentic

Beautiful

Image 2: Green laneways - Meyers Place, Melbourne

Context

Village Well's 5Ps of Placemaking lens has been used to identify some of the known impacts of COVID-19 and climate change, and inform potential responses and actions in the remainder of this Toolkit.

Village
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People

COVID-19 has had wide-ranging impacts and negative ramifications on the societal well-being of all Australians: job losses; associated loss of income and other economic stressors; social isolation; heightened fears and anxiety around health and safety; and mental health challenges, to list just a few.

However, these repercussions have not been felt evenly across communities and regions. The pandemic has disproportionately burdened marginalised, minority and vulnerable communities, many of whom were facing socioeconomic challenges prior to the pandemic. For those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, low-income households/individuals, women and non-Australian citizens, COVID-19 has unearthed pre-existing inequalities and exacerbated others,[1] in particular:

· More women than men have become unemployed[2] and cases of domestic violence against women have increased significantly during the pandemic[3]

· Young people (aged 18-24) have also faced higher unemployment rates and experienced disruptions to their education, social life, life plans and priorities, impacting their mental health[4]

· Socio-economically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities have recorded higher case numbers, with Census data revealing that many of their residents partake in casual work or precarious employment, do not have access to workplace benefits, experience higher unemployment rates and are less likely to be able to work from home[5]

· More severe mental health impacts on those with pre-existing conditions, gender diverse people, carers and stay-at-home parents.

The pandemic has also, on the other hand, engendered incredible examples of community resilience and togetherness. We have seen a number grassroots initiatives flourish that are driven by local communities, for local communities. For example we have seen the emergence of neighbourhood support groups on different social media platforms, random acts of kindness such as sharing food and provisions and checking in on neighbours, community initiatives such as artworks in windows and seed bars, and more time spent living locally and meeting neighbours.

Product

Stringent lockdown measures, the forced closure of non-essential services and travel restrictions have resulted in a significant reduction in retail, dining, commercial, tourism, cultural, civic and entertainment activity[6]. This has directly translated to decreased patronage and vitality across many CBDs, neighbourhood activity centres, suburbs and regional towns. For smaller retail businesses that rely on in-person interactions and have a limited online presence, the impacts have been particularly devastating.

At the same time, the pandemic has also brought about a surge in living locally, as more people are restricted in their movements and working from home, therefore spending more time in their neighbourhoods. While many CBDs have been hollowed out, some local neighbourhoods, mainstreets and businesses have been reinvigorated, witnessing an uptick in local shopping, eating, socialising and spending.

Image 3: Mainstreet retail and commercial vacancies

Program

Restrictions on indoor and outdoor public gatherings have affected our daily lives and rituals and have prevented us from partaking in activities and events – large and small, organised and spontaneous – which contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of our cities and towns.

The arts and cultural sectors, stalwarts of Melbourne's economy and identity, have been among the hardest hit[7], with live music and performing arts venues and cinemas unable to operate for weeks on end and relying on larger gatherings and discretionary spending to operate successfully.

However, businesses, civic and cultural institutions have been nimble and adapted quickly. We have seen many events and activities move to online platforms or transform to accommodate physical distancing measures,[8] such as amazing performances and exhibitions, movie screenings, classes and webinars, trivia nights, to name a few. These have not only broadened access and interest, but have allowed many to stay connected, learn new things and develop new rituals.

Image 4: Physically distanced performances

Physical Environment

The pandemic quickly altered the way our cities look and feel - from empty public transport, streets and neighbourhoods, drastically less pedestrian traffic and fewer 'eyes on the street', to teams of people sanitising public amenity and signage promoting COVID-19 safe actions. This, in turn, has affected how we react, interact with and feel about our surroundings. This may continue into the future, affecting our mobility decisions and how we undertake our daily activities in urban environments.

The pandemic has also revealed a marked increase in the use and appreciation for public spaces and parks and the range of benefits they provide, as more people are confined to their local neighbourhoods and seeking spaces in which to exercise, enjoy nature and socialise[9]. In some cases, we have even seen citizens appropriate underutilised recreational spaces, such as golf courses.

However, access to public spaces and parks is not equitable: research in Melbourne, where stringent Stage 4 restrictions prevented travel beyond five kilometres from home, revealed that more socioeconomically disadvantaged suburbs had less access to green and public open spaces[10].

As community life gradually returns, it will be important to rethink how we use public spaces and thoughtfully manage these valuable assets, and crucial that there is equitable access to these for all.

Image 5: A delivery cyclist crosses an empty freeway

Planet

Planet

At the start of 2020, we saw signs of an impending climate catastrophe with unprecedented bushfires in Australia. The collision of human and economic growth with nature's boundaries has become more apparent than ever in this pandemic, which has killed close to two and a half million people globally.

Whilst changes in activity levels during the pandemic have seen Australia's carbon dioxide emissions fall, these are predicted to increase again as economic activity recovers,[11] and life gradually returns to a new normal, meaning Australia still remains unlikely to meet its 2030 emission reduction targets in the Paris Agreement.[12]

Despite this, COVID-19 has encouraged the adoption of and accelerated positive environmental behaviours, with a resurgence in more people living and spending locally, flying less and decreasing their ecological footprint overall.

The number of cyclists on the road has also surged in many cities around the world, as people remain hesitant to use public transport. This has resulted in many large cities closing roads, installing pop-up bike lanes and accelerating plans for permanent ones, such as the City of Melbourne who has fast-tracked its commitment to delivering over 40 kilometres of protected bike lanes.

This year has highlighted the pressing need to move towards a future that puts people and planet first. Any intervention aimed at combating the pandemic should therefore seek to dually address climate change - the two most pressing issues of our time.

Image 6: Cycling and private vehicles have become the preferred mode of transport during the pandemic

Outcomes and Actions

(1) **Authentic Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

(2) **Community Connection and Participation**

(3) **Equitable, Healthy and Inclusive Places**

(4) **Creating a Culture of 'YES' in Councils**

(5) **Lively Public Spaces**

(6) **Safe, Active and Connected Transport**

(7) **A Resilient Economy: Living Locally**

(8) **Supporting Creativity, Culture and Innovation**

(9) **Greener and More Climate Resilient Places**

1.

Authentic Community and Stakeholder Engagement

We believe that the wisdom and potential of a place lies in the community, and that planning for the future and co-creating positive change should therefore be led by the community.

Actions

- **Develop and plan a coordinated approach to community and stakeholder engagement**, aiming to engage with a broad range of representative agencies, groups and community members to garner diverse perspectives and understand their aspirations and needs for a place

- **As part of this, undertake stakeholder mapping** to identify and categorise stakeholders that should be engaged with, as well as potential issues. Ensure that engagement seeks to connect with hard-to-reach, marginalised and under-represented groups

- **Respect, acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and connection to Country** through genuine engagement and collaboration with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups

- **Understand who you are engaging with** and curate materials to ensure higher participation, for example, providing information in multiple languages

- **Develop a 'toolbox' of appropriate and accessible methods tailored to each stakeholder group**, for example, online tools, workshops, open space technology, surveys, round tables, kitchen table conversations and citizen juries

- **Engage early on and continually,** monitoring participation levels and actively targeting under-represented groups

- **Demonstrate that you have listened** to stakeholders and the community and show how their views and preferences have been integrated into planning.

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= Quick wins

Authentic Community and Stakeholder Engagement
Case Studies
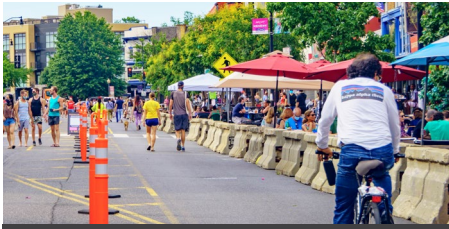
Image 7: Streets closed to vehicles in Washington

Image 8: Community engagement session with Village Well

Image 9: Public participation in decision making

Oakland Slow Streets: Essential Places
– Oakland, California

The Department of Transportation revised its 'Slow Streets: Essential Places' program in Oakland in response to feedback garnered via engagement with residents living in a low socioeconomic neighbourhood during the pandemic. Methods used were diverse and far-reaching and included online and intercept surveys, an online feedback map and multiple weekly meetings with community partners and the emergency operations centre.

The primary concerns raised during engagement related to traffic safety and speeding, particularly in areas where residents were accessing essential services. In response, the Department erected temporary traffic infrastructure to enable safe pedestrian access to these essential services, such as grocery stores and COVID-19 test sites.

Transition Teams: Transition Streets
– Banyule, Victoria

Established in the early 2000s, Transition Teams is a grassroots movement bringing communities together to re-imagine and re-build a better and more sustainable world, as well as work towards a zero carbon future.

The Transition Streets program is part of this movement, and brings together neighbours through frequent face-to-face meetings and workshops with the purpose of following and creating a practical Action Plan to make their street more sustainable. The program promotes resource sharing, building resilience and social capital.
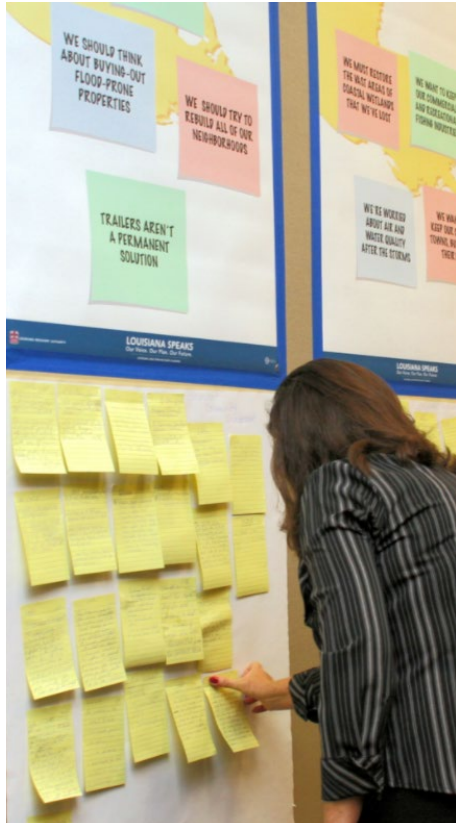
2.

Community Connection and Participation

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen incredible examples of community togetherness and resilience. Communities that come together and connect also contribute to capacity building and harness great ideas and opportunities. They unlock hidden potential, while also building community good will and giving businesses and councils the confidence to innovate.

Actions

- **Bring everyone together** to create a shared vision for their community and place through effective and transformative engagement

- **Establish and participate in community support networks**, such as social media groups (e.g. The Kindness Pandemic), neighbourhood watch, community reward programs and food pantries

- **Participate in 'Social Street' activities**, a grassroots initiative aimed at fostering connections between neighbours via free, and inclusive activities such as: skills sharing, community gardening, shared meals, car-pooling, small outdoor performances and/or food/clothing swaps

- **Initiate an Asset-Based Community-led Development ('ABCD') process**, a community-led approach that identifies and builds on the strengths, resources and assets of a community as building blocks for creating more inclusive, resilient and sustainable communities

- **Establish a 'Block Captain Program'**, whereby on-the-ground volunteers and leaders are a point of contact for their neighbours and work to maintain, improve and promote a sense of safety and welcome to community members

- **Establish or improve the accessibility of open data platforms** to encourage greater transparency, access to public information, engagement, innovation and encourage community-led initiatives

- **Develop an online community placemaking hub** to educate, connect and support placemaking in a local community. It could include resources, processes and tools to implement placemaking locally, a library of successfully implemented activation ideas and an interactive forum where individuals can share stories and case studies and ask for advice.

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Community Connection and Participation
Case Studies

Image 10: Volunteers mending public play equipment

Image 11: Community leaders distribute emergency information

Image 12: Local community package emergency food supplies

Lean in Newy App
- Newcastle, NSW

The Lean in Newy app is a council-owned and operated community rewards app that connects volunteers and disadvantaged or vulnerable members of the community with charities. The app rewards volunteers with vouchers and discounts for local businesses.

Block Captains
- Across the USA

Block Captains are neighbourhood volunteers who act as a point of contact for their neighbourhood 'block', working to make their communities safe and liveable for all on a day-to-day basis.

For example, following extreme heat events in Philadelphia, Block Captains were mobilised as part of a heat wave response strategy where they acted as focal points for the Health Department by identifying high-risk individuals and checking in and monitoring them, as well as providing support to them.

Mallacoota Community-Led Recovery
- Mallacoota, VIC

The regional town of Mallacoota was devastated by the horrible bushfires during the 2019-20 summer. The local community is now leading their own bushfire recovery initiative via an organised community group, rather than relying on the local council to lead this. By doing so, they are able to better negotiate with all levels of government, manage their funds, ensure financial accountability and transparency of all donations and organise insurance.

3.

Equitable, Healthy and Inclusive Places

Social equity means that all citizens are given equal opportunity and access to basic needs locally, such as fresh food, safe and affordable housing, open space other amenities, as well as services such as healthcare, education and transport.

Where communities live can affect social equity, and the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed geographic schisms and systemic inequalities that have burdened, disempowered and reduced social equity for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

As we plan for recovery, it is more important than ever that we take a holistic approach that considers the needs of all citizens and communities to create more locally resilient, equitable and liveable places in future.

Actions

- **Pilot a 20-minute neighbourhood program**
- **Establish a special community grant program** aimed at supporting those most in need and improving issues brought on by the pandemic
- **Support people who are experiencing homelessness**, for example, by providing access to safe and comfortable (heated/air-conditioned) accommodation with showers, toilets and basic amenities and partnering or providing funding to organisations that support people who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness
- **Provide access to wi-fi** in community hubs, libraries and public spaces

- **Test and deliver programs** (in person and online) supporting social inclusion, health and wellbeing and connection, as well as providing support services, skills sharing and upskilling opportunities that respond to the local context of a place and needs of its communities
- **Provide universal access** to newly built or temporary infrastructure in public areas (e.g. ramps and wide footpaths)
- **Provide retreat shelter** for extreme weather events (fire, heat, cold, etc.).

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Equitable, Healthy and Inclusive Places
Case Studies

Image 13: Social service providers

Image 14: Providing information in multiple languages

Image 15: Features of a 20-minute neighbourhood

Woodruff Park, Place-Based Homelessness Outreach Program
- Atlanta, USA

As part of the redevelopment of Woodruff Park, a commercially owned green space, developers employed a trust agent, case manager and a park manager and installed a mobile game cart for social activities to provide local amenity, all to support the growing local homeless population as a result of COVID-19. Instead of covering a wide geographical area, the strategy is place-focused, allowing trusting relationships to form over time.

Social service provision is now integrated into daily park operations, connecting park users experiencing homelessness to services and temporary housing. COVID-19 has made this program even more critical and provides an example of a successful place-based approach to addressing rising homelessness brought on by the pandemic.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse ('CALD') Communities Taskforce
- Across Victoria

Established by the Victorian Government during the pandemic, the taskforce aims to support multicultural and multifaith communities by providing translated health advice, campaigns and videos, other translation and interpreter services, as well as providing grants to organisations that directly support CALD communities. The taskforce also helps those within these communities experiencing social isolation and family violence, as well as youth engagement services.

20-Minute Neighbourhood Pilot Program
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, VIC

The creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods are a key policy direction of Plan Melbourne (2017-2050). The 20-Minute Neighbourhood Pilot Program establishes policies and directions that support the provision of daily needs within a 20-minute walk from home (fresh and healthy food, safe and affordable housing, public transport, safe walkable and cyclable connections, public open space and educational and learning facilities).

The first three pilot programs have been implemented in Sunshine West, Croydon South and Strathmore, all part of Metropolitan Melbourne, and have taken a place-based approach to planning, which considers community partnerships, technical assessments and future opportunities to support daily life within a 20-minute walk from home.

4.

Creating a Culture of 'YES' in Councils

We have witnessed the tremendous speed at which our governments have mobilised people and resources to support their local communities throughout the pandemic.

Local councils will continue to play a vital role in response and recovery initiatives and in facilitating and catalysing renewal by empowering citizens, removing 'red tape', as well as providing financial assistance and guidance for traders, small businesses and local community groups.

Actions

- **Adopt a placemaking approach within and across council**. As part of this, create an internal placemaking and place management team who are responsible for place curation, coordination and communication. This team should also be responsible for assisting with the development of tools to support community involvement in placemaking and place activation, acting as a direct contact and voice for the community and ultimately enhancing the vitality, prosperity and resilience of local places. Ensure collaboration between different council departments

- **Streamline and simplify the approach** to and requirements for obtaining funding, permits and licenses:

  · Provide simple step-by-step guides or practical checklists to apply for funding, COVID-19 recovery grants or outdoor permits/liquor licenses

  · Waive outdoor permit fees

  · Fast-track approvals processes

  Monitor and evaluate this approach and draw learnings to inform potentially permanent changes to this obtaining permits and licenses

- **Support a can-do community, citizen-led placemaking and activation initiatives** by creating a 'Local Place Reference Group' or Town Team, that brings together local residents, businesses, property owners and community organisations and local government to promote, activate and advocate for positive change in their neighbourhood

- **Offer placemaking grants** to test and trial new ideas and activities

- **Provide financial support through neighbourhood matching funds**, whereby council matches community funds for neighbourhood improvement projects

- **Facilitate the use of underutilised spaces** (parking lots, empty shopfronts) outside of hours for community events and programming

- **Monitor and evaluate** outcomes of placemaking initiatives to inform future planning.

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Creating a Culture of 'YES' in Councils
Case Studies

Image 16: Signage prioritising pedestrians

Image 17: Local street festival

Image 18: Whitehorse City Council placemaking sheets

Streets as Shared Spaces
– Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, NSW

Streets as Shared Spaces is a state-wide program providing grants for temporary activation projects across mainstreets in local government areas across NSW.

By fast-tracking approval processes for projects and giving local councils the ability to regulate traffic, their communities have been able to quickly implement initiatives that support the increased use of public space, improve local streets and make it easier and safer for people to access recreation and services.

The program has supported 48 temporary activation projects across the state.

Town Teams
– Across Australia

Town Teams are not-for-profit organisations composed of local businesses, community organisations and residents working collaboratively with local councils to make their neighbourhoods a better place to live, work and play. The Town Team Movement supports new and existing Teams by sharing resources and best practices. It also hosts a network of events.

Throughout the pandemic, different Town Teams have come up with creative initiatives to keep their communities connected, such as the South Freo Porch Fest in Fremantle.

Placemaking and Place Activation
– Whitehorse City Council, VIC

Whitehorse City Council proactively embarked on a whole-of-organisation placemaking culture change process beginning with its internal Urban Realm Vision Project and its involvement in the Neighbourhood Project.

Village Well were engaged to assist with facilitating this placemaking process by facilitating workshops with council staff and developing tools for community involvement in place activation.

The council has since streamlined internal processes, has a Place Coordinator who acts as a direct point of contact for the community and has placemaking sheets for the community to implement their own placemaking initiatives, supported by a Placemaking Booster Fund.

5.

Lively Public Spaces

The pandemic saw a drastic increase in the use of outdoor public and green spaces to socialise, get some fresh air, exercise, play or safely partake in different events and activities.

Moving forward, supporting the greater use of existing public spaces and creating new lively public spaces will be critical to safely welcoming back communities with new opportunities to meet and connect locally.

Actions

Repurpose and retrofit streets and other urban spaces to support new uses and activities by:

· Allocating space for parklets - the repurposing of parking spaces for outdoor dining or free activities and socialising. Prioritising the use of already owned or recycled furniture and other infrastructure to reduce costs, as well as for creative multi-purpose barriers and bollards

· Temporarily closing down streets/ laneways for outdoor dining or Play Streets

· Creating flex zones or re-zoning underutilised space for food and beverage and retail uses

· Allowing neighbouring businesses to use adjacent parks or open spaces for dining, events or markets

• **Trial an alternative digital payment system** for buskers.

Facilitate the use of and activate underutilised spaces outside of hours, such as car parks for pop-up markets and drive-in cinemas and green spaces such as golf courses

• **Support an active and vibrant night economy**, with well-lit streets, longer opening hours for businesses and various evening events and activities such as markets, creative lighting activations and food stalls

• **Curate a program of creative and re-imagined outdoor events and activities** that are aligned with COVID-19 restrictions, such as spontaneous and roving performances, outdoor markets and festivals, open-air and drive-by exhibitions, busking and neighbourhood exploration games (e.g. local business passport stamping, photo scavenger hunt).

People   Product   Program   Physical Environment   Planet

Lively Public Spaces
Case Studies

Image 19: Buskers in Melbourne

Image 20: Street closed to vehicles for outdoor dining

Busking Program
- Melbourne, VIC

As part of its campaign to attract people into the CBD, the City of Melbourne is offering free 6-month permit extensions for all current busking permit holders.

The Tip My Hat competition was also launched during lockdown, encouraging artists and performers with a busking permit to upload their performances and receive donations online. Weekly winners received a cash prize and entry into the Melbourne Music Week busking program.

Prior to the pandemic, a tap-and-go payment system was also trialled, which allowed performers to receive donations in an increasingly cashless society.

Castle Quarter Café:
An Outdoor Eat Street
- Cardiff, Wales

As a way to support local businesses and activate streets during COVID-19, Cardiff's local council created an eat street in the heart of Cardiff, offering patrons a new dining experience with 240 seats in a covered outdoor eating area.

Diners ordered food and drinks which were delivered from the surrounding restaurants via an app. Hand sanitiser was provided, and the area was well-maintained and cleaned regularly.

Pop-Up Park, Outdoor Dining
- Yarraville, VIC

The pop-up park in Yarraville was made permanent in 2014 after the local community protested against its removal. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, the park now includes additional space for restaurants, bars and cafés to use for outdoor dining. Planter boxes and other greenery have been installed to create a more inviting space and a free area has been maintained for picnicking and relaxing.

Northcote Golf Course
- Northcote, VIC

When lockdown restrictions forced golf clubs to close, some communities began using these newly free greenspaces as a result of the limited availability and overcrowding of green spaces in some areas.

The Northcote Public Golf Course was one of these spaces that saw significant community use. The local Northcote community has since started a Facebook group, which now has a few thousand members advocating for part of the Northcote Golf Course to be permanently handed over to or shared with the public, following unprecedented demand for and use of the greenspace during lockdown. The group has drawn interest from local MPs, with further discussions around the future of the golf course are still on the table.

6.

Safe, Active and Connected Transport

The pandemic has seen an unprecedented demand for alternative forms of transport, as people have increasingly valued spending more time in their local neighbourhoods and simultaneously developed a general wariness of spending time commuting on congested public transport.

Whilst maintaining clean and safe trains, trams and buses and readjusting service provision will help rebuild people's trust and public transport habits, supporting and building upon the momentum of new and existing demand for active transport infrastructure, such as additional space for pedestrians and cyclists, will be imperative as cities get moving again.

Actions

- **Launch a campaign to promote active transport,** eScooters and public transport as safe and healthy alternatives to driving
- **Active transport infrastructure**
  · Temporarily re-allocate and re-purpose space to cater for increased demand for cycling and pedestrian paths
  · Use temporary infrastructure to test and build support for more permanent initiatives
  · Fast-track the delivery of permanent active transport infrastructure
  · Improve or increase greenery and shading along pathways to provide amenity and cool the environment
  · Provide additional bicycle parking in highly frequented areas and consider moving existing bicycle parking from footpaths onto the road to create more unobstructed space for pedestrians.

- **Public transport accessibility and safety**
  · Maintain clean and well-lit public transport stops and interchanges
  · Ensure sufficient space for queuing at highly frequented bus/tram stops
  · Advocate for public transport services and schedules to support new staggered working hours
  · Designate dedicated bus services for school students during peak hours.
- **Reduce traffic speed** around highly pedestrianised areas by creating slow or shared streets. Speed limits should be reinforced through design, by incorporating curves in road or narrowing lanes dedicated to car traffic, which also creates more space for other modes of transport
- **Ensure plans for re-purposing carparking spaces and traffic lanes** do not compromise access to loading zones/click and collect zones so that local businesses can continue to offer their services.

People Product Program **Physical Environment** **Planet**

Safe, Active and Connected Transport
Case Studies

Image 21: Temporary cycle lanes

Image 22: Creating safe streets for pedestrians and cyclists

Image 23: Street Labs 'Play Streets' in New York

Temporary Cycleways and Footpath Widening
– Across New Zealand

New Zealand provided councils with grant funding for tactical urbanism projects during the pandemic, such as the widening of sidewalks and creation of temporary bike paths.

Prior to the pandemic, Auckland Transport used tactical urbanism to build a temporary bikeway through the CBD in a relatively short time frame and at little cost. The design was implemented with the majority of public consultation taking place after the cycleway came into operation, allowing people to experience the changes first-hand, which then informed the design of permanent streetscape upgrades. This has proven to be a very successful approach and may be applicable to those erected in response to COVID-19.

'Thanks for 30', Yarra City Council
– Fitzroy and Collingwood, VIC

'Thanks for 30' was a 12-month trial during which a speed limit of 30km/h was enforced in various streets across Fitzroy and Collingwood, with the purpose of making streets safer places to walk, cycle and drive. This was informed by a rigorous community and stakeholder engagement process and evaluation post-implementation, with growing support for the speed limit over the course of the trial. Other positive outcomes from the trial were the reduction in speeding incidents. Yarra City Council has since voted to make the 30km/hr speed limit on these streets permanent.

Exercise Streets
– Croydon, England

Croydon Council's Exercise Streets encompasses a range of new temporary initiatives in response to the pandemic, aiming to reduce road traffic and promote safety and the multi-purpose use of streets.

The first part of the project has involved road closures to promote walkability and cycling and the second part has enabled volunteers from residential streets to apply for a temporary road closure to support and create safer places for exercise and play. Council is considering making the road closures permanent once lockdown ends.

7.

A Resilient Economy: Living Locally

Lockdown restrictions have forced us to live a hyper-local way of life. As people worked from home (and continue to), we familiarised ourselves with our neighbours' faces, (and their dogs too!) that we passed on our daily walks and those of our local traders. We have gotten to know our local places like never before.

Many of the issues our mainstreets and activity centres faced prior to COVID-19 were exacerbated, but the increase in people living locally has also given us a renewed appreciation for the potential of mainstreets and activity centres as focal community gathering places to shop, meet, dine and connect locally. This contributes to keeping money local and supporting thriving local business communities and economies.

Actions

Initiate and participate in various 'Buy Local' initiatives:

- Mainstreet and retail precinct gift cards
- Purchasing local food boxes, with locally made and grown produce and pantry items
- Neighbourhood delivery service for local businesses
- Online local business directory
- A local shopping list, with a checklist of local items to purchase or experiences to partake in
- Local investment portal and procurement policy
- Online click-and-collect marketplace for markets or mainstreets
- 'Adopt a trader' initiative, whereby you pay upfront what you would spend annually at the business at the start of the year, allowing the adopted business to keep their business afloat and cover costs.

• **Engage with, support and inspire local businesses and sole traders via:**

- Free business mentoring and visual merchandising workshops
- Providing grants for facade upgrades and maintenance
- Using vacant shopfronts or spaces as temporary pop-ups and hireable spaces for emerging businesses, creative installations and community meetups
- Developing a support program, with design and planning consultants providing pro bono services (interpretation and support filling out permit applications, site plan development, etc) to support traders in obtaining their permits for outdoor dining and trading
- Creating short-term loading or pick-up zones near businesses with high turnover.

Facilitate and support the creation of local business networks and alliances to share knowledge and experiences and simplify communications between traders and councils.

People   Product   Program   Physical Environment   Planet

A Resilient Economy: Living Locally
Case Studies

Image 24: Enabling use of vacant spaces for temporary use

Renew Newcastle: Vacant Shopfront Activation
- Newcastle, NSW

Between 2008 and 2019, Renew Newcastle collaborated with and supported property owners to 'lend' their properties out in effort to counteract rising mainstreet vacancies. 30-day rolling agreements were created, which allowed owners to keep their properties on the market whilst simultaneously making them accessible to artists and creatives. The initiative catalysed a series of flow-on effects, including a reduction in crime, graffiti and vandalism and increased business and residential interest in the city, and has expanded to other cities in Australia.

Image 25: Temporary repurposing laneway for outdoor dining

Melbourne Outdoor Dining Design Assist Program
- Melbourne, VIC

The Melbourne Outdoor Dining Design Assist Program matches traders with volunteer planning and design consultants to assist with preparing permit applications and site plans for outdoor dining. Volunteers and traders can register their interest on the program website and are supported by a host of resources as well as an on-call team to help streamline the process and to assist with any queries.

BHive Co-operative
- Bendigo, VIC

BHive Co-operative is a locally owned and operated place-based sharing and gifting economy platform that aims to build a sense of belonging and community connections. Users add people to their own personal online 'village' where they can share things such as tools, furniture and skills.

Restaurant Runner
- Adelaide Hills, SA

Restaurant Runner, a new food delivery app in Adelaide, was initially developed by restaurant owners whose businesses did not fall within the Uber Eats catchment area.

Since COVID-19, the app has expanded its operations to also include the Adelaide metro area. Restaurant Runner offers an alternative to the traditional big business delivery model, which charges high commission rates to restaurant owners. Among other things, the app keeps overhead costs low by enabling food and beverage operators to use their own staff as delivery drivers - an option which has also kept staff employed throughout the pandemic.

8.

Supporting Creativity, Culture and Innovation

Creativity and culture are the heart and soul of our cities and towns – they are what make each place unique and contribute to the economic vitality, as well as the everyday and visitor experience of places.

The arts and cultural sector has been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic and must become one of the core focuses of recovery efforts not only for this reason, but also because it will play a key part in bringing our places back to life and allowing new ideas and collaborations to flourish.

Actions

- **Undertake a community and open space mapping exercise** to identify spaces and areas that could be used for cultural events and activities

- **Foster multi-sector partnerships** between government, the private sector and cultural organisations to broker, let and sublet creative spaces at affordable rates and with flexible leases

- **Provide low-cost/free access to underutilised or vacant spaces** for local entrepreneurs and small businesses

- **Activate public spaces with creative and cultural pop-ups or testing sites** for emerging businesses (e.g. Testing Grounds), innovation and skills sharing hubs and co-working spaces

- **Curate and deliver a program** of special cultural and creative free or low-cost events and activities in these spaces as well (e.g. King's Cross X The Great Outdoors)

- **Provide outdoor spaces for local artists** to showcase their work (e.g. outdoor gallery space, space for murals)

- **Establish a local jobs portal**, seeking to connect local employers with local employees

- **Create a program to identify, support and nurture local entrepreneurs** through special grants, training, mentorship and business networks.

People · Product · Program · Physical Environment · Planet

Supporting Creativity, Culture and Innovation
Case Studies

Image 26: Vacant shopfront window murals, Washington

Image 27: Pop-up and impromptu performances

Image 28: Residents enjoy live music from their balconies

City of Melbourne Urban Blooms and Picture Windows
– Melbourne, VIC

The City of Melbourne has launched a number of initiatives to entice greater numbers of people to come back to the city. One of the initiatives, Urban Blooms, involved a floral takeover of the city, with many iconic Melbourne landmarks adorned with locally sourced floral displays.

Picture Windows, another initiative, includes the creative reactivation of vacant shopfronts, with commissioned artists creating vinyl decals of their art and street art on the exterior of vacant shopfronts throughout the city, in collaboration with Renew Australia.

Brisbane Festival Street Serenades
– Brisbane, QLD

The iconic Brisbane Festival was re-imagined during COVID-19 to bring music to the suburbs of Brisbane, with concerts taking place in cul-de-sacs and parks on bespoke stages on wheels. A total of 490 performances took place over the month, with 73 out of 91 events free to the public, and over 700 local artists employed throughout the course of the festival. To avoided encouraging larger gatherings, event organisers announced performances and locations an hour prior to their commencement, rather than releasing the whole lineup and program in advance.

South Freo Porch Fest
– South Fremantle, WA

Upon receiving a community grant from the City of Fremantle, Town Teams South Fremantle hosted a neighbourhood Porch Fest, featuring local musicians performing on neighbourhood porches. The event was free and open to all, with the purpose of connecting neighbours through music.

The performances were highly successful, attracting over one thousand people. Event organisers have received a second round of funding and are planning another Porch Fest for May 2021.

9.

Greener and More Climate Resilient Places

As we emerge from what is hopefully the worst of the pandemic and the catastrophic bushfires, we find ourselves recalibrating and re-evaluating our lifestyles to live well, more simply and change our habits. We know we must work towards refocusing community and economic development and placemaking that not only aims to respond to, but also simultaneously recover from the challenges brought on by the pandemic and climate change.

Actions

Share information and support capacity building to encourage that adoption of environmentally sustainable habits and behaviour changes

Support and embed sustainable practices, such as incentives for using reusable keep cups and containers and water bottle refill stations, with consideration for health and safety guidelines

- **Encourage sustainable waste initiatives,** including organic waste composting and recycling and food rescue programs, as well as banning single use plastic bags and containers
- **Launch a biodiversity initiative,** including revegetating with Indigenous plantings to attract local species
- **Design buildings and spaces for energy efficiency,** for example installing solar panels where possible to harvest solar energy and facilitating the natural ventilation of buildings

- **Investigate the potential of 'living architecture',** such as incorporating green walls and rooftops into new and existing developments
- **Initiate a 'Green Streets' program,** which includes stormwater management and the creation and maintenance of street gardens by volunteers
- **Support and encourage community-led sustainability initiatives and innovations** through grants and funding that respond to local sustainability challenges, such as:
  · Micro-scale electricity generation
  · Permaculture and 'perma-blitzes'
  · Local exchange trading systems
  · Repair cafés
  · Sustainable local businesses.

People   Product   Program   Physical Environment   Planet

Greener and More Climate Resilient Places
Case Studies

Image 29: Residents get involved in greening their streets

Image 30: Students learn about renewable energy

Yarra City Council Climate Emergency Plan
– Melbourne, VIC

Yarra City Council is seeking to 'build back better' from the pandemic by investing in and stimulating sustainable industries and creating new jobs locally as part of the recovery. These aims are articulated in their newly published Climate Emergency Plan, within which council has committed to a number of actions that address climate change, including reaching zero carbon standards, rolling out cycling infrastructure, creating climate adapted green spaces and promoting renewable energy.

This Climate Emergency Plan is only the second of its kind for a council in Australia.

Renewable Newstead
– Newstead, VIC

Renewable Newstead is an initiative by the Newstead 2021 community group, that is working with local government to support and advocate for the development of a vibrant, informed and sustainable community. The community developed a business plan for transitioning to 100% locally generated, secure and low-cost renewable energy that would be accessible to and benefit everyone.

The project was awarded $200,000 by the Victorian Government to develop the masterplan and business model, and in 2020 the Newstead Solar Farm planning application was submitted for approval.

Food Connect
– Brisbane, QLD

Food Connect is a community-owned local food hub that obtains seasonal, ecologically grown fresh food from local farmers. Their vision is to support the regional Brisbane food economy, enhance access to fresh, healthy and sustainably grown food all while ensuring just and equitable outcomes for both farmers and consumers.

South Melbourne Market Sustainability Initiatives
– South Melbourne, VIC

South Melbourne Market is committed to a greener and more sustainable future, striving to achieve this through a number of waste reduction and other environmentally sustainable initiatives.

For example, all green waste is composted on-site and resold as organic fertiliser and glass, oil, coffee cups, polystyrene and plastic milk bottles are all recycled. The Market also has a waste reduction bin system, as well as a sustainable water and power management system.

About Village Well

Founded in 1992, Village Well is one of Australia's leading placemaking consultancies. We work with a range of clients and partners across the urban development sector including public, private and community property investors, developers, owners and operators and with other design professionals and specialists.

Our team has extensive experience in urban planning, design and development, community engagement, place curation and management, retail management and events.

Together with our clients and communities, we generate inspiring narratives and practical action plans to help bring places to life and ensure a positive public benefit and lasting legacy.

Our Services

Place Visioning

Bringing together community aspirations to create a shared vision

Placemaking Strategies

Providing detailed recommendations to realise the vision for a place

Place Activation Plans

Bringing a place and precinct to life through short to long-term activations

Community Engagement and Facilitation

Authentically engaging and inspiring communities

Talks and Masterclasses

Inspiring audiences on the benefits of placemaking and the New Local, building resilient communities, social justice and strengthening local economies.

For more information, please contact info@villagewell.org or (03) 9650 0080

" We act like a business and think like a movement "

" We create the spark that brings a place to life "

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Images

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