

Sydney
t +61 2 9387 2600
PO Box 1488
Level 6, 332-342 Oxford St
Bondi Junction NSW 1355
f +61 2 9387 2557
consulting@elton.com.au
www.elton.com.au
ABN 56 003 853 101

Prepared by Steve Rossiter

Reviewed by



Chris Manning

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project background

Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA) occupies a highly strategic position within the Greater Sydney metropolitan context. The Parramatta city centre is seen as Sydney's 'second CBD' and, as such, has been the focus of considerable planning attention. While the Parramatta city centre remains a major focus, Parramatta City Council also recognises the need to ensure that there are quality place making, community building and service provision initiatives in the many suburban centres that make up the remainder of the Parramatta LGA.

With this more suburban focus in mind, Parramatta City Council is investigating the feasibility of whether community hubs are a viable and sustainable way to organise community facilities and human services in response to changing and complex social needs across the LGA.

Many of Parramatta's community services and facilities have been developed some time ago when community needs were very different from what they are today. Like many other established areas, Parramatta City Council, is now considering new ways to plan services and facilities to better address increasingly diverse and complex community needs.

The issues affecting service delivery include physical barriers to collaboration, lack of integration of services, difficulties with access, fragmentation and unsuitable and outdated facilities. A community hub is one approach that may address some of these issues.

1.2 Purpose of briefing paper

The purpose of this briefing paper is to explore the concept of community hubs and to begin to define what this could mean for Parramatta. This document is intended as a discussion paper and will be used to clarify what is meant by 'community hubs' in the Parramatta context. A strategy paper, to be produced later in this process, will outline how the hub concept might be applied to specific locations across Parramatta.

Although this paper will draw on examples from across Australia and from overseas, it is a clear objective of the feasibility study to ensure that the concept and models of hubs developed respond to the unique characteristics of the Parramatta LGA. To assist with this responsiveness, this briefing paper

complements case study research with a local consultation process to ensure that, from its inception, this project is firmly grounded in Parramatta.

The proposed approach for this project is not to be overly prescriptive in developing a common understanding of what a community hub is. In reflecting the diversity within Parramatta LGA itself, defining the key terms of this project requires a flexibility that enables recognition of the multiple forms that community hubs can take and the diversity of the communities that they may serve.

This briefing paper includes:

- A broad definition of community hubs
- Case studies of community hubs
- Identification of key principles and characteristics derived from case study research and Parramatta based consultation
- An analysis of key opportunities and challenges for developing community hubs in Parramatta
- Some relevant background and contextual information on Parramatta, and
- Identification of the next steps in the process.

Throughout the Parramatta Community Hubs Feasibility Study a range of stakeholders will be consulted in order to clarify what community hubs mean for Parramatta. While a broader, conceptual definition will be developed, it is also important to identify a number of key characteristics or principles that ensure that this hubs concept can be applied flexibly to respond to the diverse needs of Parramatta's communities.

This briefing paper is the first step in identifying and testing some key concepts and principles. It relies on literature review, local consultation and a number of case studies to develop an initial conceptual understanding of community hubs.

2 What is a community hub?

Community hub is a commonly used term in contemporary urban design and community planning. However, as with many commonly used terms, it can mean different things in different contexts and there is no widely accepted definition.

To examine the derivation of the term, 'community' implies something that is publicly owned and designed and used to address the needs of a local population. 'Hub' implies a central position where things come together. The hub of a wheel, for example, is the central point where all the spokes meet.

From this we can assume, in very general terms, that by community hub we are talking about a centrally located, publicly owned place where a variety of activities and services come together for the purpose of addressing the needs of a local population.

Based on feedback during the consultations conducted as part of preparing this briefing paper we propose that a community hub can be defined as:

A conveniently located public place that is recognised and valued in the local community as a gathering place for people and an access point for a wide range of community activities, programs, services and events.

A community hub typically involves the clustering of community facilities that provide space for local organisations and community groups to meet and for a range of activities, programs, services and events which address the social needs of a community. While co-location of facilities and services is widely viewed as an important component of a community hub, the research evidence for this project suggests that to be successful a hub needs to be more than a cluster of services and buildings.

The essence of a community hub is the concentration of activity that occurs and how the mix of those activities, is accessible to, and serves the needs of, a diverse range of community members. Importantly, hubs are places that are integrated, both in terms of the programs, activities and services that occur within them, and in terms of the physical and social relationships with surrounding uses such as local shops, activity centres, public places and transport nodes.

A community hub can be a single multipurpose facility that accommodates a variety of services, programs and activities and is well integrated with other people attracting uses in the local area. A community hub can also be a group of separate buildings that, although physically separate, cluster together to create an activity centre and access point for meeting a diverse range of community needs.

Community hubs are more than the traditional community or neighbourhood centre. The mix of uses within a hub is more extensive and may include facilities such as a library, as well as services like health care and social support, meeting space for community groups, office accommodation for community organisations, space for community functions and events and possibly some form of enterprise, whether that be commercial or social in nature. Community hubs are also places that encourage social gathering and are designed to provide spaces for people to congregate and meet together in both planned and incidental ways.

Accessibility is a strong element of a community hub and the hub's location in relation to activity centres and public transport is another key defining feature. It is also recognised that accessibility has an affordability component and to be truly accessible the activities, programs, services and events conducted from a hub must be affordable to the local community and the key target groups within it.

2.1 The purpose of a community hub

If we accept this definition of a community hub, the next logical step is to clarify its purpose. Two central, and interrelated, questions for this project are:

- What is the purpose of a community hub?, and
- What does Council hope to achieve through the creation of community hubs?

Although a wide variety of community hubs exist, (some of which will be outlined in this paper) an analysis of the purpose of hubs can be distilled to three primary objectives. These objectives are:

- Service coordination and delivery
- Place making, and
- Community building.

These objectives are not mutually exclusive and it can be argued that a true community hub will address all three.

2.1.1 Service coordination and delivery

Community hubs can provide a means of accommodating a number of social and community organisations together in the one physical space, with the goal of enhancing both coordination among services and access to them by the community. The emphasis of service coordination is on encouraging collaboration between different organisations to better serve community needs. An additional motivator is to make more efficient use of resources, by sharing common facilities rather than each organisation having its own separate space. Service coordination often involves bringing community services together in a single location, sometimes as part of some form of multiservice centre.

The advantages of co-locating or clustering services together may include:

- Enhanced convenience for clients who can access multiple services from a single point of access
- Creating synergies between services, leading to greater awareness and utilisation of them
- Encouragement of greater coordination of service delivery as co-location promotes closer ties, more collaborative working relationships and cross-referral of common clients
- The potential for capacity building among services including the benefits of sharing good practices and expanding services' understanding of broader community needs through greater awareness of, and exposure to, a wider range of target groups
- Greater access for services to meeting rooms, training facilities and other resources available on a shared basis
- Improved 'back room' efficiencies for social and community service providers who can pool resources for administrative and maintenance functions.

However impressive the benefits of co-location may sound in theory, practice has demonstrated some potential challenges. These may include:

- Some reluctance among service providers to co-locate with others (including the perception that co-location will diminish individual service identity and/or that it will inhibit use of space – this is a concern raised by some of Parramatta's social and community organisations)
- The cost and time required to make it work, both initially and on an ongoing basis. Agreeing to how co-locating arrangements will work requires a high degree of collaboration and detailed negotiation which can be a drain for some organisations. The

policies and procedures for how different organisations will co-locate and what functions can be shared and what ones remain separate can be a time consuming process

- The need for careful planning as there may be incompatibilities in relation to organisations' client groups, style of operation and facility requirements
- Difficulties with implementation regarding the need for a cooperative approach to facility planning, administration, programming, management, funding and ownership. Examples include how shared spaces such as training rooms and hall space are going to be programmed equitably to ensure availability not only to co-located organisations but also to other groups and organisations not based at the facility. Sharing 'backroom' functions such as administrative support is a potential advantage but how the detail of that sharing is going to be planned and delivered can be complex and a potential source of friction.

Physical co-location can contribute to increased service coordination and creating a community hub. Co-location can enable greater service integration, create efficiencies for organisations through shared use of resources and improve access for clients through a 'one stop shop' approach to service delivery. However, co-location of services, whether in a single building or in adjacent buildings, does not necessarily create a place that is recognised and used as a focal point for the community, nor does it necessarily strengthen community ties in its host community.

2.1.2 Place making

The Project for Public Spaces¹ defines place making as:

Not just the act of building or fixing up a space, but a whole process that fosters the creation of vital public destinations: the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and a commitment to making things better. Simply put, place making capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well being.

Place making uses urban design to enhance the physical quality and appearance of public places in order to reinforce a place's identity and make it a more attractive environment for people to gather and interact with each other.

¹ http://www.pps.org/info/bulletin/what_is_placemaking

Design is a large part of place making but another significant component is planning. Planning can enhance the human experience of a place by ensuring that there is a mix of uses that will meet a variety of needs and will attract a diversity of people at different times of the day. This mix and variety add to safety (perceived and real) as well as vibrancy.

This mix of uses typically involves integrating community facilities such as libraries and community centres with local shops (including cafés and restaurants), public transport and often parks and schools. This element of place making is an extended form of co-location. It involves more than co-location of services in a multipurpose facility but involves greater integration of a variety of people attracting uses. This integration was referred to in consultation for this project as 'cross sectoral linkages' with possible sectors including community, education, health, leisure, recreation, transport and commercial/private partners.

2.1.3 Community building

Community building means enhancing the connections and relationship among people in order to strengthen common values and promote collective goals. These goals may include community cohesion, safer neighbourhoods, support for isolated or disadvantaged people, healthier children and families, more local employment opportunities, greater cultural recognition, more equitable access to housing or more profitable local businesses.

The New South Wales Government communitybuilders web site² cites the USA based National Community Building Network who write that community building is an:

Ongoing process where members of a community share skills, talents, knowledge and experiences that strengthen or develop themselves and the community.

Community building is generally considered to be a continuous process undertaken by residents in partnership with community organisations, non-government and government agencies. It is aimed at capitalising on an area's strengths and/or addressing its challenges. The aim of the process is an enrichment of community life, a strengthening of community assets and the creation or enhancement of local institutions, organisations, relationships and expectations.

Community hubs can contribute to community building by providing:

- A place for community members to meet to undertake community building projects
- A focal point in the community where people with common community interests can gather
- A source of information for people on how to access networks, services and other community building resources, and
- A local source of community building support through the accommodation of community development organisations.

Community hubs are, in essence, multipurpose places where a variety of activities occur, a range of goals are addressed and different objectives can be pursued. The key to the hub concept is integration. This can mean both integration of services, programs and activities within a multipurpose community facility or an integration of a range of activity generating uses including community and cultural facilities, shops, transport, public parks and plazas.

Community hubs are not just about co-locating services. Nor are they just about good design, nor just about building community. Although the purpose of each individual community hub is likely to be different, the key purposes identified here (service coordination and delivery, place making and community building) are generally thought to be foundations of a community hub.

2.2 Community hubs in other areas

Different places throughout Australia have created community hubs based on their own purposes, definitions and models.

The City of Port Phillip³ in Victoria defines a community hub as:

A hive of related activities that are located together or close to each other in order to share resources, audiences and target groups.

Penrith City Council, in its description of the Glenmore Park Child and Family Precinct⁴, defines a community hub as:

A special place with meaning that invites interaction between community members. It is a place where people feel welcome to sit, chat, socialise and relax.

La Trobe City Council, in its planning for the Churchill Intergenerational Community Hub⁵, defines a community hub as:

²

http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/what/cb_defs.html

³ http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/community_hubs.html

⁴ <http://www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/print.asp?id=3738>

A series of conjoined buildings on a new central site where a wide range of community services and activities can be co-located. A place where the community can come together to have many of their needs met. It may include a neighbourhood learning centre, a senior citizens centre, a youth centre, meeting rooms, a childcare centre, a public library and much more.

Brisbane City Council⁶ has developed the following definition of a community hub:

A community hub gathers together in one convenient place, community services which have a synergy or shared purpose to provide an environment where social, educational, recreational and cultural activities can occur.

Different emphases are used in definitions of community hubs to reflect the local priorities of the host community. The City of Port Phillip focuses on the relationship between activities and what that means for access, efficiency and resource sharing. The Penrith example of Glenmore Park focuses more on social interaction and social capital. La Trobe emphasises co-location of community services and the potential of this to meet community needs. Brisbane focuses on convenience, integration and meeting a range of community needs.

These different emphases, and their response to local community priorities, are the essence of understanding community hubs. It is possible to define a community hub at a broad conceptual level, but that definition must be flexible enough to accommodate local community needs and existing assets and be responsive to the issues most important to the host community.

2.3 Planning community hubs

There are numerous community hub models with many based on key or 'anchor' community facilities such as community centres, libraries, children's services, recreation facilities, cultural centres, as well as primary schools. Anchor facilities will typically be ones that generate lots of activity and draw in a wide range of users. As well as the 'anchor', community hubs can also include office accommodation and meeting spaces for community organisations, space for community services like child care or social support, space for community meetings, functions and events as well as a commercial or social

enterprise (such as a café or training organisation). The type of model, and mix of uses, will depend on the needs of the local community and the resources available.

Hubs may involve different levels of integration. Fine et al's (2005)⁷ study found that there are a number of levels at which service coordination can take place ranging from co-location of independent services who collaborate on an occasional basis, to a higher degree of coordination involving joint planning and resourcing, and then on to full integration of services. Physically hubs can be arranged within a single facility or within a cluster of buildings.

Fine's study stresses that the level of integration should match the nature of need in the host community. Fine also stresses that it is critical for participating organisations to articulate their own preferences for working together and to decide on the level of collaboration that works best for them. Given the diversity and range of community organisations that exists, this approach may be applicable to Parramatta. A key element of this approach is continuing to consult and work with relevant stakeholders during all phases of community hub feasibility testing and planning.

One of the lessons from a recent literature review of multi-tenant service centres for the Queensland Government⁸ suggests that creating and sustaining community hub type models is difficult and complex. The review suggests that complexity increases with the number of organisations that are involved. A possible lesson for Parramatta is to commence the hubs process with relatively simple models that do not involve too many organisations and to seek a practical balance between integration and complexity.

When planning community hubs consideration needs to be given to the needs of the wider community. Community facilities are planned in recognition of local, district and regional needs. Facilities planned for a hub need to be considered in the context of wider social infrastructure planning to ensure that local needs are addressed and that services are not unnecessarily replicated.

Regional level facilities include major social infrastructure such as hospitals and TAFE colleges and are based on population catchments often larger than a single local government area. District level

⁷ Fine, M., Pancharatnam, K. and Thomson, C. (2005), *Coordinated and Integrated Human Service Delivery Models*, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW, SPRC Report 01/05

⁸ Lennie, J. (2007), *Challenges and Strategies for the Sustainability and Viability of Non-Profit Multi-Tenant Service Centres: A literature review*, Queensland Department of Communities

⁵

<http://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/Services/CommunityDevelopment/ChurchillHub/>

⁶ Brisbane City Council, Community Hub Libraries Design Brief

facilities meet particular specialist needs and can include larger libraries, larger community centres, aquatic centres and community health facilities and usually serve populations in the range of 20,000 to 40,000 people. Local level facilities meet everyday needs at the neighbourhood level (such as neighbourhood centres and community halls) and usually serve populations in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 people.

While understanding population catchments is necessary, it is equally important to understand the key characteristics of each community. Each community will have its own demographic and socio-economic composition and it is these factors that will determine the nature of community need and the demand for different kinds of community facilities and human services.

In Parramatta, significant regional level facilities are located in the city centre. The suburban activity centres of Parramatta, that are the focus of this project, are most likely to function more as district or local community hubs. Some district level uses may be appropriate in major centres with good public transport access, such as Granville. Typical district and local level facilities that could be incorporated into a community hub include:

- Multipurpose community centre/neighbourhood centre
- Library
- Community hall
- Meeting space
- Child care
- Baby health clinics
- Family support services
- Youth services
- Activities for older people
- Activities for people with disabilities
- Recreation, and
- Office space for local community organisations.

The *City of Melbourne Community Infrastructure Plan 2007-2017*, for example, proposes two levels of hubs, district and neighbourhood. The district hub models are specialist and based around clusters of health and aged care services, social and recreational activity, family and children's services, and lifelong learning activities. The neighbourhood hubs are more generalist and emphasise community

information, social interaction, meeting space, local service provision, child care and community development. Melbourne's hub planning recognises the need for a broad approach to planning that reflects the local, district and regional hierarchy of community facilities.

Many hubs also incorporate, or attempt to cluster with, private commercial uses that may also generate and draw activity to a place. Local neighbourhood shops, public transport nodes, schools, and public outdoor recreation spaces, which are people gathering places, are natural partners in community hubs.

It is through both the range and the clustering of people generating and attracting activities that community hubs become more than just multipurpose community centres and can be catalysts for community activity and social interaction. When located in or with neighbourhood shopping centres community hubs can help to reinforce the role of those centres as public gathering, meeting and information sharing places. A community hub can help to reinforce the role of centres as distinctive places that attract people, provide services, support and information, engender a sense of place and reinforce local identity.

To further promote community benefits, community hubs may also include some form of social enterprise. Parramatta City Council has defined social enterprises as enterprise that:

Pursue community aims through business methods and reinvest all profit/surplus back into the enterprise (ie. not distributed to shareholders, owners or members). Social enterprises focus on applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to social issues, with an emphasis on increasing wellbeing for those who are disadvantaged.

As an example, the library at the Grange Community Hub in Brisbane includes a café that is operated by a not for profit organisation that provides hospitality training and job readiness support to local unemployed young people. Parramatta City Council has recognised the value of social enterprise and this project will explore some of the potential synergies between social enterprise and community hubs.

Although easier to conceptualise as a building or cluster of buildings where services are co-located, it may be the case that in some places a community hub does not involve building physical facilities. While new facilities may be required in some locations, in others an emphasis on service collaboration and integration may help to achieve similar outcomes. This again highlights the importance of thinking broadly about what a community hub is and ensuring that whatever model or approach adopted fits with the local community.

It is important to focus on the needs and desired outcomes of the host community, rather than being constrained by a predetermined notion of what a community hub should be. To be effective a community hub needs to respond to the social, economic, cultural and environmental opportunities and constraints that exist within a particular local community.

Despite the numerous models and diversity of functions, the essence of a community hub is that it supports the development of socially sustainable communities by:

- Engendering a sense of place and reinforcing local identity
- Providing a focus for community building activities
- Bringing together, either in the same building or a cluster of buildings, a range of facilities, spaces, services and activities, and
- Providing space and access to activities, programs and services to help address the social needs of a community.

3 Case Studies

This project has a strong emphasis on defining a community hubs concept that reflects the unique and diverse character of the communities of the Parramatta LGA. However, it is also useful to examine other areas and their community hubs. This section of the briefing paper presents a series of community hub case studies from other areas and attempts to derive some lessons that can help to inform the Parramatta feasibility study.

With one exception, the selection of case studies has focussed on established, rather than new release areas. This is in order to identify case studies that have most relevance to the more established character of the Parramatta LGA. Established areas confront unique issues in relation to redevelopment, land acquisition, service consolidation, and community and stakeholder engagement.

The reporting of case studies is based on a number of research techniques. The methods used to gather information for this section of the paper include:

- A review of academic literature on community facilities planning and community hubs
- An extensive internet search of community hubs with a particular focus on local government hubs
- Interviews with local government representatives who have worked on community hubs projects, and
- Site visits to a number of community hub projects in Brisbane and Sydney including meetings with local government staff who worked on the projects.

3.1 Brisbane City Council

The community hubs concept at Brisbane City Council originally grew out of a need to expand library services across the city. However, part way through the project it was recognised that hubs could take a variety of forms and it was important to consider other models of hubs besides those based on libraries as an anchor.

Brisbane City Council conceives of hubs as places that integrate community facilities and services to maximise viability and to enhance service delivery. Hubs are seen as having the following physical attributes:

- Physically and socially accessible
- Interactive, stimulating, vibrant
- Mix of consistency and variety
- A living part of the community
- Regarded well by the community
- Welcoming and inclusive, and
- A safe place for all.

Brisbane currently has three community hubs, all based around libraries. They are located at Brackenridge, Chermside and Grange.

3.1.1 Brackenridge Community Hub

Brackenridge Community Hub links:

- Brackenridge Library
- Jabiru Community Youth and Children's Services Centre (which offers child care, youth programs, family support, free counselling, drop in centre, youth holiday activities)
- Sandgate and Bracken Ridge Action Group (an independent community based organisation that provides several community support programs, supports local initiatives and brings together local people)
- A community hall, and
- The local ward office.

3.1.2 Chermside Community Hub

The Chermside Community Hub is described as 'a place where you can meet people, learn new skills, relax and enjoy life in your neighbourhood.'⁹ The hub links:

- Chermside Library
- Chermside Aquatic Centre
- A coffee shop, and
- Kedron-Wavell Services Club.

The Chermside Community Hub is a partnership between Brisbane City Council (who own and operate the library), the Kedron Wavell Services Club (which includes entertainment, eating and sporting

⁹ http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/BCC:BASE::pc=PC_937

facilities) and the Splash Aquatic Centre (which includes the pool and other entertainment areas).

Brisbane City Council writes that:

Our libraries have always been important places for the people of Brisbane. Safe and friendly, with lots of great activities and facilities, they're community centres where people of all ages and walks of life can have fun, learn and relax.

And now we've taken the next step by linking the Chermside Library with two other major community facilities – the Kedron-Wavell Services Club and the Chermside Aquatic Centre – to create the Chermside Community Hub.

The result is a place where people can get together and enjoy community life, hold activities, socialise, have fun and get healthy. It's a community space created by the people of Chermside for local people to enjoy.

Key observations from the field visit to the Chermside Community Hub were that although the hub includes a good mix of uses, it does demonstrate the challenges involved in creating a community hub in established areas and attempting to create links between existing facilities. While the mix of uses is good, the relationship between the facilities is not strong and the hub experience is somewhat disjointed. Discussions with Brisbane City Council confirmed these challenges and Council is soon to undertake an urban design project to look at options to improve the integration of uses on the site.

Chermside also highlights the potential of linking with different partners including those outside of what is traditionally considered to be the community sector. The Kedron-Wavell Services Club is a key partner in the Chermside hub and provides a range of community support services and facilities.

3.1.3 Grange Community Hub



The Grange Community Hub links:

- Grange library
- Community Café, and

- Discovery Path.

The Community Café is operated by Work Links, a not for profit organisation that aims to train and develop the job readiness skills of young people and long-term unemployed people. The café's objective is to provide practical and hands on experience for local young people and develop their work readiness skills, particularly for the hospitality industry.

The Discovery Path at the Grange Community Hub provides a fun interactive learning environment for children while parents relax over coffee or visit the Grange Library. The equipment at the Discovery Path focuses on encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle. It's a space where children learn through exploration activities using hearing, smell and touch techniques. The Path is constructed on a flat platform to enable children or people with disabilities to access all the equipment making this path much more accessible and inclusive to the community.

Activities in the Discovery Path include: kaleidoscope cabin, light matrix, factory gate with audio facts, Braille trail, body scale helping you to find out how much you weigh, the water play, information posts with local flora, fauna, plants, and famous people to aspire to be, and global spin with a globe of the world.

Grange Community Hub highlights how a traditional 'stand alone' library can transform and adapt its role by consideration of the role it can play as part of a broader community hub and through the introduction of different people attracting uses such as a universal playground and a café.

Perhaps the biggest learning to be gained from Brisbane City Council's experience with community hubs is that, after considerable initial work, including the establishment of these three community hubs, Council has now decided to step back and undertake a more comprehensive community facilities needs study of the entire LGA.

Council decided that before determining what model community facilities should be delivered in it was important to better understand what the overall needs of the Brisbane community were and what is the likely type and quantum of facilities required to meet the demands of the current and future population.

The broader community facilities needs study will look at social infrastructure needs across the whole LGA and determine what facilities and services are required and where. Planning will consider current population demands and will also take into account projected population growth based on the increased densities required to respond to the SEQ Regional Plan. The next stage of planning will determine what

is the best way for these community facilities to be delivered to meet current and future demand.

It is important to note that Brisbane City Council is not retreating from the hubs model. There is a strong recognition that co-location of community facilities is critical to maximise functionality and resource efficiency. However, it has also been recognised that there is a need for a broader and more strategic assessment of facility needs in order to determine what mix of facilities are most needed in a specific location and what is the best approach to co-location for that particular mix of facilities.

Key features of the Brisbane City Council approach to community hubs include:

- An expansion of the community hubs model from what was originally a primarily library based approach to include a wider range of anchor facilities including sport and recreation
- Adapting existing facilities to become more hub-like by initiatives such as introducing social enterprises and constructing unique play experiences
- The importance of understanding broader community facilities needs and the role that hubs play in addressing those
- Working with a range of partners including services clubs, and
- Highlighting the challenges of creating community hubs in established areas and the need for integrative master plans to ensure strong connections and relationships between different uses in the hub.

3.2 City of Melbourne

The City of Melbourne *Community Infrastructure Plan 2007-2017*¹⁰, considers community infrastructure needs on the basis of the city as whole, four districts and seven designated neighbourhoods. The plan recommends four district level community hubs and seven neighbourhood level hubs.

District hubs serve a larger population than a single neighbourhood, contain functions that are not viable on their own at the local level and support the community and civic functions of activity centres and retail hubs.

The district hubs are proposed to service multiple local neighbourhoods. The four types of district hubs are:

- District Health and Aged Care Hub which provides access to informal open space, community catering facilities, social and health programs, aged services, sessional services space, health and wellbeing services and possibly access to occasional child care. The option of co-location with a community health service is encouraged
- District Social and Recreation Hub which provides access to space for social interaction, indoor/outdoor recreation space, community catering facilities, sessional services, staffed information area, workshop space and possibly child care services
- District Family and Children Services Hub which provides access to child care, community health services, informal open space, community catering facilities, meeting space, social programs, pre-school education and sessional service delivery. Co-location with a local primary school is encouraged, and
- District Lifelong Learning Hub which provides access to library services, informal open space, community office space, civic functions, lifelong learning opportunities, meeting spaces and computer use. Co-location with libraries and other lifelong learning providers is encouraged.

The plan identifies the key locational features of a district hub as:

- Co-located for multi-modal transport, preferably as part of a principle public transport network
- Co-located functions provide the opportunity for cross referral amongst service providers
- Integrated into local retail and employment nodes, and
- Visible street frontage.

The planning process involved undertaking detailed neighbourhood audits to identify the current supply of community infrastructure at the local level. Using a variety of research tools including consultation, surveys, databases, mapping and service standards, the plan then identified opportunities to meet existing gaps and also needs that may emerge over the next ten years.

As a result, the plan recommends that each of the seven neighbourhoods have access to a neighbourhood hub, which the plan (p.3) describes as having the following functions:

¹⁰

http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/opm/bc/CTEE/meetings/CSC_56_20070612.pdf

Access to community information, informal recreation space, community catering facilities, lifelong learning opportunities, early childhood education opportunities, space for local sessional service provision, spaces for meetings, activities and social interaction. The option of co-location with a local primary school should be explored where possible.

The neighbourhood hub model aims to support informal social interaction at the local level, to provide the opportunity for services to be delivered locally if required (family support, maternal and child health, emergency relief) and to support community initiatives such as social support and play groups.

Local open space is considered the core building block of the neighbourhood hub. Open space can be either soft or hard and should provide both gathering space and space for reflection.

The plan identifies the key locational features of a neighbourhood hub as:

- Distribution to support neighbourhood hubs within 400 metres of all residents
- Street frontage for each hub, and
- Within 400 metres of a public transport stop.

In relation to developing hubs the plan does not restrict Council and considers a number of options including new build, leasing, upgrade/redevelopment and refit.

The plan also highlights a number of possible funding mechanisms available to offset Council costs including:

- Negotiated contributions from developers
- State and Commonwealth grant funding
- Community sector capital contribution, and
- Property swap/sale opportunities.

Like Brisbane, the City of Melbourne's community hub planning is based on a thorough community needs assessment process, and the consideration of community needs on a regional, district and local level.

Key features of the City of Melbourne's approach to community hubs include:

- Consideration of community hubs as part of a broader community infrastructure plan
- Planning of hubs on a district and neighbourhood level

- Conducting of detailed community needs analysis and neighbourhood audits, and
- Consideration of a range of funding possibilities.

3.3 City of Port Phillip

The City of Port Phillip, in Melbourne, defines a community hub as 'a hive of related activities that are located together or close to each other in order to share resources, audiences and target groups'.

Port Phillip identifies the following features of a community hub:

- Co-located key services
- Opportunities to meet the people who live near and around you
- Welcoming and useful meeting spaces with at least one large space for neighbourhood/public meetings
- Nearby access to public transport
- Proximity to local shopping and activity centres
- Opportunities to learn new skills or join a class or short course
- Council and community information, and
- Free city on line access.

Port Phillip has adopted a community hubs policy statement that is based on recognition of the potential of community facilities to 'provide opportunities for community participation and to contribute to social cohesion and well-being'. The hubs policy statement also recognises that 'hubs need not to be site specific or located at the one site, but can contribute to an accessible service and activity network linked to other major activity areas within the city'.

The hubs policy statement is guided by the following principles:

- Accessible and equitable service provision for all ages, abilities and social and cultural backgrounds
- Improved opportunities for social cohesion and wellbeing throughout our community hubs
- Maximised community engagement/effectiveness of community facilities

- Maximised functionality of community facilities, and
- Optimised use of existing Council and other community infrastructure.

Port Phillip's community hubs policy framework defines three broad types of community hubs:

- Community gathering places – sites for smaller neighbourhood based meetings that are also venues for recreation, sports, leisure, social and cultural activities and sites for community group office space, e.g. community centres, sporting clubs, galleries, theatres, other club rooms, access to community information, adventure playgrounds, community gardens, etc.
- Council and community service delivery hubs – community locations for provision of Council and other services, e.g. maternal and child health, meals and other social support programs, child care centres, libraries, kindergartens, referral and support services, etc., and
- Civic hubs – sites for the delivery of civic and governance activities, i.e. town halls, information and administration services, large public meeting spaces, etc.

The City of Port Phillip has six community hubs. These are Port Melbourne/Garden City/Beacon Grove, South Melbourne, Middle Park/Albert Park/West St Kilda, St Kilda/Windsor, Elwood/Ripponlea and East St Kilda/Balaclava. As shown by the following summaries some of the hubs are existing, others are being studied and hub feasibility examined, while others are the product of recent redevelopment. Some of the following involve existing collections of community facilities that have the potential to be more like community hubs, but require further study and consideration of their particular circumstances.

3.3.1 Port Melbourne/Garden City/Beacon Grove Community Hub

The Port Melbourne/Garden City/Beacon Grove Community Hub includes:

- Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House
- South Port Information and Support Services
- Homeground – Housing and Support Services
- Daylinks – transport service for community groups and for older or frail residents
- Petlinks – a service to support older and frail people to maintain their pets at home

- Bay St Traders Association, and
- Inner South Community Health and Legal Aid Service.

The hub also contains a multipurpose community space for local groups, clubs and residents to hire. There is also a drop in lounge and a wide range of community information available.

3.3.2 South Melbourne Community Hub

The South Melbourne Community Hub is an initiative of the City of Port Phillip to 'reinvigorate' and 'enhance' the existing South Melbourne Town Hall to become a 'frontline, targeted service delivery and community hub, with a strong cultural focus and identity'. Council also aims to 'create flexible, multipurpose and durable spaces that can assist us to promote community participation and a community presence at the hub'.

3.3.3 Middle Park/Albert Park/West St Kilda Community Hub

The City of Port Phillip has undertaken a feasibility study to examine the potential of redeveloping the Middle Park Community Centre into a key community hub. Currently, the following services operate from the location:

- Middle Park Library Service
- Civic kindergarten
- Middle Park Maternal Child Health Centre, and
- Emerald Hill Toy Library.

There is also community space available for hire including a meeting room and community hall. However, the hall is located on the first floor and is not accessible.

As a result of a consultation and needs analysis process, Council has developed an understanding of service provider and community needs, costs involved in redeveloping the current centre and the potential impacts of major redevelopment on the kindergarten. The City of Port Phillip is now looking at developing an interim strategy for the community centre and will embark on a 'participatory community planning process' to 'find out how to improve further the capacity of the Middle Park Community Centre to operate a key community hub for the local communities'.

3.3.4 St Kilda/Windsor Community Hub

This proposed hub is based around the Betty Day Community Centre in St Kilda. It is currently a vibrant and well used centre with many community groups operating programs and activities. The City

of Port Phillip is undertaking a participatory community planning process to investigate how to improve the capacity of the centre and to examine the potential for it to operate more as a key community hub for the St Kilda and Windsor areas. Council will be conducting a series of community forums to identify community needs and will then develop concept plans and a capital works business case.

3.3.5 Elwood/Ripponlea Community Hub

This community hub is home to the Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre which conducts a range of classes including multicultural arts, self defence for women, English as a Second Language, computer workshops and internet. The centre also operates a toy library and hires out meeting and activity spaces.

3.3.6 East St Kilda/Balaclava Community Hub

The East St Kilda/Balaclava Community Hub is based around the Alma Road Community House. Alma Road has a strong focus on accessibility and its focus is providing a space where people with and without a disability can interact, join activities and share common interests. The community house is described as 'a warm and inviting space where the local community can come together to hire a room to have a meeting or socialise'. There is also large rooms and a patio that can be hired for family celebrations. The recently upgraded playground makes the community house a good venue for family and community events.

Key features of the City of Port Phillip's approach to community hubs include:

- Development of a community hubs policy
- Focus on both existing and new facilities
- Inclusion of a range of facilities and services
- The importance of participatory community planning
- Strong levels of community and stakeholder engagement in planning and feasibility analysis, and
- Emphasis on community information and particularly providing local outlets for Council related information.

3.4 Mount Pleasant Community Centre



The new Mount Pleasant Community Centre in Vancouver, Canada involves the construction of a new, multipurpose community centre to replace an existing (and dated) facility that has served the local community for the last 35 years.

The project responds to Vancouver's CityPlan vision for developing 'neighbourhood centres' that bring together multiple civic services and for a more coordinated approach to service delivery. CityPlan refers to 'accessible community based services' and neighbourhood centres that 'provide a heart for each neighbourhood'. Council also developed a strategic plan for childcare that promoted 'a system of early childhood development services that are integrated with neighbourhood hubs (e.g. neighbourhood houses, schools, community centres, etc.)'.

The need for a new library in the Mount Pleasant area was determined through the development of a strategic plan for libraries. The City of Vancouver wanted to expand the focus beyond just a library and, in cooperation with the Mount Pleasant Community Centre Association and the City Parks Board, commissioned a wider report to determine the need for community facilities. The report identified the need for a multipurpose centre incorporating a library facility and child development centre, as well as a residential component and other uses.

Council allocated \$4.75 million (Canadian) in the 2000-2002 Capital Plan to rebuild the Mount Pleasant Community Centre. In 2001, \$3.45 million (Canadian) was approved for the purchase of a property at 1 Kingsway. The property purchase was made specifically for the relocation and redevelopment of a combined Community Centre and Library with other potential uses such as housing and retail.

The City of Vancouver commissioned a financial feasibility analysis to assess the feasibility of development options for the site including market and non-market housing, retail, a community centre, branch library and child care facility.

In addition, a consultation process was undertaken that included:

- A community survey (with 300 responses obtained over an 18 month period), and
- A series of community workshops.

To supplement this, a child care needs assessment was undertaken which identified a strong need for additional child care places in the area.

The final addition to the brief for the project was housing. The City of Vancouver engaged consultants to review the available options for the additional development potential of the site. The outcome of that study was a recommendation to develop rental housing targeted at the current local rental market. The housing component will be developed and owned by the City of Vancouver and will be held as part of its long term investment portfolio. Social housing was considered but the lack of funding programs meant that this was not a viable option.

A public private partnership for the housing component was considered but it was determined that creating a separate strata title may prove problematic in balancing the residential strata needs with the interests of the library, community centre and child care.

Retail was considered not to be a viable addition to the centre. The Council report¹¹ added that 'the design of the new development can provide for animation and interest along Kingsway in lieu of retail use'.

As a result of the needs analysis and consultation, the 1 Kingsway Community Centre is a 4,640 square metre facility that incorporates:

- A community centre with the latest communications technology and range of leisure activities for all ages (2,900 square metres)
- A library (1,110 square metres), and
- A child development centre catering for 49 0-5 year old children (630 square metres).

In addition there will also be 98 residential units to rent. The rental from the units help to subsidise the provision of the community facilities.

The City of Vancouver has focused on the 'one stop shop' benefits of a community hub and the benefits to users that the integrated delivery of library, child

care and community centre offer. The City also sees the project as a potential catalyst in the revitalisation of the local area.

The initial needs analysis and ongoing consultation process was funded by the City of Vancouver. A range of local and Commonwealth government departments have also contributed funding. Council estimates the cost of the facility (including the housing) to be around \$26.3 million (Canadian), approximately \$30.4 million (Australian).

Key features of the Mount Pleasant Community Centre include:

- Closure of existing facility and the construction of a new facility
- Extensive community consultation
- Comprehensive financial feasibility analysis
- Comprehensive community planning and strategic assessment of facility needs including libraries, and
- Inclusion of residential owned and leased out by Council.

3.5 Pathways Enterprise Centre



The Pathways Enterprise Centre is located at North Lakes in Pine Rivers Shire just north of Brisbane. North Lakes is a master planned community located on the Bruce Highway and will have a mature population of 22,000 residents by 2016. It is projected that the emerging town centre and the mixed use industrial and business area will host 13,000 new job opportunities over the next decade.

The Pathways Enterprise Centre is located on a prominent site in the town centre area. The centre is a collaborative project involving the developer,

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<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/020625/rr2c.htm>

local government, state agencies and the North Lakes community.

An extensive process of community consultation was undertaken to identify local community needs. This process identified key issues related to education, access to information, recreation and leisure and employment opportunities. Based on these key issues the concept of the Pathways Enterprise Centre was formed.

Pathways is a \$13.8 million, multipurpose community facility combining:

- A state of the art library
- Leisure centre
- Education and training centre
- Village green, and
- Meeting and function spaces.

Other facilities include:

- Meeting rooms
- Community garden
- Coffee shop
- Indoor and outdoor recreational spaces
- Youth and children's spaces
- Aquatic centre
- Indoor sports hall
- Enterprise centre, and
- A senior state secondary college (whose students have access to the Pathways library).

The stakeholders and managers of the development include:

- Pine Rivers Shire Council, which initiated the project to create a 'nerve centre for the community'
- The developer (originally Lensworth and now Stockland)
- Education Queensland, which is currently in the process of co-locating a senior state secondary college at the facility
- Sport and Recreation Queensland and the State Library of Queensland which made significant

contributions to the establishment costs of the venture

- Queensland Government, which provided funding for the project, and
- The Northlakes community who will use the facility, and were heavily involved in the consultation phase.

Pathways brings together many different types of stakeholders. While this is, in many ways, the essence of Pathways, experience has shown that there can be clashes arising from different methods of operation and organisational cultures. One of the key lessons from Pathways is that working collaboratively from the project's earliest stages with the full range of participating stakeholders to develop a common vision for the facility is fundamental to overcoming, or preventing, any obstacles that may arise in the future.

Another lesson from Pathways was the importance of solid research in establishing community needs and how important the robustness of this work was in securing funding from other agencies to contribute towards the project.

An additional part of the ongoing success of Pathways is the establishment of a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, an independent governance group comprising representatives from government, business and the community.

3.6 Castle Grand Community Centre and Library

Baulkham Hills Shire Council recognised the need to replace a dated existing community centre in Castle Hill. A nearby site was purchased for a new library and community centre. The initial conception of the facility was as a function centre.

During planning for the new facility, discussions with the Area Health Service took place regarding the need for a better located early childhood centre and health service.

Baulkham Hills Shire Council adopted an entrepreneurial approach to the facility as it was evident in the early stages that Council would not be solely able to fund up front the costs of the facility. Acting as a developer and owner, Council commissioned a private developer to deliver 62 residential units at an agreed rate of return. The profits from the development were then invested in community facilities including:

- A community centre (2,000 square metres) with a 500 seat auditorium, five meeting rooms

- A library (1,900 square metres) incorporating a café (leased to a private operator), Council customer service centre and internet facilities
- An early childhood centre, and
- A local area health service.

Key points about Castle Grand identified in consultation with Council officers included:

- The original proposal included an additional four storeys of residential units. This would have meant the facility was entirely self-funded. However, the additional height was not approved and Council had to locate other finances to assist with the capital funding
- Council acted as developer and went to tender for construction and sales. Taking apartments to the market proved challenging and an alternative arrangement (such as a Public Private Partnership) would likely be considered for future projects
- The café component has been very successful and is seen to add significantly to the use and vibrancy of the facility
- A lease has been negotiated with the Area Health Service where it pays a below market rate for the space, and
- While co-locating libraries and community centres works well in theory, in practice it can prove difficult to realise the potential synergies. The level of interaction between facilities in Castle Grand is not high. Design can help to lay a

foundation but it is not enough to fully realise the potential of co-location.

Three key lessons emerge from this case study. One is associated with the challenges of Council acting as a developer, particularly in a higher density market. Baulkham Hills is in the preliminary stages of planning another community facility nearby. Council would consider a residential/community mix for that project as well but is likely to investigate alternative options for funding. Rather than act as developer other options include Public Private Partnership arrangements or developing a site specific town planning framework and allowing the market to realise the site's potential (and take the associated risks).

The second lesson is about realising the full potential of co-location. Co-location can be significantly enhanced through careful planning and design. However, for synergies to be fully realised it has been Baulkham Hills Shire Council's experience that a more proactive programming and management approach is required. At its Rouse Hill facility Council is employing staff to generate synergies and more actively manage facilities in an attempt to achieve 'more meaningful social, cultural and leisure outcomes'.

Thirdly, although a clear financial model for Castle Grand was developed, the intended community development outcomes were never as clearly articulated. This suggests that a common understanding of the project vision that encompasses clear social, economic and environmental objectives is important.



3.7 Overview of hub case studies

The case studies show a range of community hub types, with some being new, purpose built facilities and others involving retrofitting and enhancing existing facilities. The hub case studies also illustrate the range of possible models for community hubs, with some based around learning with libraries as the anchor facilities and others based around local services and community meeting space. Some of the hubs are in the form of a single multipurpose facility, while others occur in a cluster of buildings.

The purpose of these case studies is not to suggest that Parramatta should 'copy' any of the case study hubs, but rather that there are some valuable lessons from the experience of other places that can be critically assessed and adapted to the Parramatta context. Some of these lessons include:

- Process is important. This includes comprehensive needs analysis and taking a holistic and hierarchical (regional/district/local) view of community facilities needs. This means considering long term and whole of area community needs and working out what role hubs can play in meeting those needs
- Community and stakeholder engagement throughout all stages of the process is a key feature of many of the hub development processes
- An important part of the engagement process involves working with key participating stakeholders to develop a clear vision for the project and a shared understanding of the hub's purpose and function
- While process is critical, there also needs to be a strong focus on the product. Robust feasibility analysis is an important component of many successful hub projects. Rigorous testing of economic and social factors is an essential accompaniment to the community and stakeholder engagement process
- Community hubs projects rely on a range of partners including community organisations, service clubs, other levels of government, developers and businesses
- Although partnerships are critical, the relationships can be complex. Case study (and literature review) evidence suggests that starting off simply and purposefully limiting the complexity of the project and the relationships is advisable
- While good design that helps to integrate uses is essential, sound management and programming practices need to be implemented to ensure the potential synergies between different uses are realised, and
- A range of funding and delivery options are available including:
 - Developer contributions
 - Negotiated planning agreements
 - State and Commonwealth funding
 - Community sector capital contribution
 - A range of asset management strategies including land swaps and sale of property, and
 - Public/private partnerships
 - Less active approaches such as establishing a town planning framework that enables the market to deliver the required outcomes.

4 Community hub key characteristics and criteria

Other than the more general definitions offered earlier in this paper, more precise and prescriptive definitions of what constitutes a community hub are not easy to arrive at, nor necessarily desirable. Just as each community is different, each community hub must also be different, if it is to respond to local needs and values. The previous case studies demonstrate this through their various configurations and also by the emphasis in many of the processes on comprehensive community needs analysis.

Based on local consultation, literature review and case study research, it is possible, however, to identify some key characteristics of community hubs. The following key characteristics help to clarify what a community hub is, without being too prescriptive about its form, content or function. Identifying these characteristics and criteria has been informed through the consultation process for this project including input from residents, community organisations, state human service agencies and a range of Parramatta City Council departments.

4.1 Key characteristics

Successful community hubs are places that:

- Co-locate or cluster a range of community facilities and human services
- Respond to, and are shaped by, the unique circumstances and needs and assets of their community
- Include a variety of uses and services (including community services, health care, leisure and retail) that attract different groups of people at different times of the day and meet a wide range of community needs and support community strengths
- Attract people and are identified as a focal point for the community
- Are readily accessible to ensure all community members can utilise them

- Have a civic quality, sense of stability and level of amenity that marks them as an important place in the community, and
- Include an inviting public domain that encourages people to interact in the public realm.

4.1.1 Co-location of a range key facilities and services

Hubs bring together multiple services and activities in ways that promote:

- Enhanced convenience for clients who can access multiple services from a single location
- Greater coordination of service delivery as co-location promotes closer ties and more collaborative working relationships
- Improved 'back room' efficiencies for community service providers who can pool resources for administrative and maintenance functions and/or share meeting spaces, training rooms, parking or other facilities that would not be available (or affordable) in a separate (stand alone) facility, and
- Greater synergy, visibility, safety, security and the creation of focal points for the community through clustering facilities and services.

Both the advantages and challenges of co-location were explored in the stakeholder consultations. The benefits of co-location for both organisations and communities were largely endorsed, with the proviso that relationships between organisations were well managed.

4.1.2 Respond to, and are shaped by, the unique circumstances and needs of its community

While promoting service collaboration and efficiencies is important, addressing local community needs and supporting and developing community strengths is fundamental and paramount. The requirement for hubs to be responsive to their communities was raised as a critical success factor in the consultation process.

Facilities that are focused predominantly on service integration without sufficient and considerable emphasis on client needs and accessibility are more like multiservice centres (such as Home and Community Care centres) rather than community hubs.

To ensure the focus on local community needs and strengths, comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement and community planning

studies are required. The requirement for hubs to respond to the social needs of the local population and to act as an incubator for community assets also means that hubs need to be evolutionary and adaptable. Hubs will need to change as the community's needs change and its strengths develop. This requirement for adaptability may have implications for leasing and licensing arrangements for community hubs to ensure flexibility and maximise responsiveness.

4.1.3 Include a variety of uses (including retail) that attract different groups of people at different times of the day and meet a wide range of community needs and support community strengths

Ensuring that hubs contain a variety of uses that attract a variety of people was referred to in consultation as 'people have a number of reasons to go there'. Consultation also raised the issues of 'deficit' and 'stigma'. When places are solely focussed on service delivery it can mean they become associated with disadvantage and not with gathering, celebration and community connection. While social justice and serving the needs of disadvantaged communities was also recognised in consultation as extremely important, the requirement for community hubs to serve multiple needs was paramount.

A mix of uses was seen in consultation as important to ensuring that hubs overcome the perception of 'stigma' and that they do serve multiple needs and have a positive influence in communities. Incorporating some form of business enterprise such as a café is one way to encourage diversity of activity. Equally important is planning community hubs in proximity to, and integrated with, local shopping, activity centres, services, employment and transport nodes. Community hubs can be a way to strengthen 'cross sectoral linkages' with shops, schools, TAFE colleges, health care, medical practitioners, etc.

Parramatta City Council recognises the value of social enterprise. Social enterprise is a 'good fit' with community hubs as they have the dual outcomes of meeting social needs of a community and also being key activity generators. In this way there is great potential for social enterprises to add to the vibrancy, dynamism and diversity of a community hub.

4.1.4 Attracts people and is identified as a focal point for the community

The notion of a community hub implies a place that is central, a meeting place and is recognised as a key place in the community. Successful community hubs are highly recognised and valued

by their community. They are places that are safe, welcoming and inclusive.

Community hubs provide places for local people to meet in both formal and informal ways and provide a focus for social cohesion, community celebration and public gathering. This aspect of community hubs was referred to in consultation as 'bumping places' and 'places where people connect'.

4.1.5 Are readily accessible to ensure all community members can utilise it

To service diverse communities, a community hub must be accessible to the widest possible range of community members. Locating community hubs in convenient and central locations that are well served by a range of transport, particularly public transport, is essential and was a key issue identified by all groups in consultation. A community hub, if it is to be a place that attracts activity during various times of day, should also have safe and adequate parking. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) should be used to guide community hub design. Adequate parking provision also helps to reduce impacts on adjacent uses.

A community hub should also be socially accessible in that it welcomes a variety of users and is a place that attracts a wide range of community members.

4.1.6 Has a civic quality, sense of stability and level of amenity that marks it as an important place in the community

Community buildings have traditionally been key landmarks in towns and villages. A community hub should be a place that people feel a strong sense of ownership about and are proud of. Design quality can help to ensure that a community hub is clearly identified as an important asset that is highly valued by the community.

4.1.7 Includes an inviting public domain that encourages people to interact in the public realm

While service delivery and access to facilities are important components of a community hub, it is equally important for hubs to incorporate spaces where people can go to sit, contemplate, meet their neighbours, or just observe the comings and goings of an interesting and vibrant place.

Public spaces also provide venues for community celebrations and events which help to enhance the range of activities that occur in and around a community hub. Providing outdoor space as part

of the hub can be useful for overflow events and cultural activities.

Places where you can spend time, without having to spend money are becoming fewer. The Parramatta LGA is home to numerous diverse groups whose cultural experience is heavily associated with gathering in public spaces and enjoying an active public realm.

4.2 Criteria for site selection

Part of this study involves developing some criteria that will assist in selecting sites that warrant further detailed feasibility analysis regarding their suitability as future community hubs.

The following table has been developed based on literature review, case study analysis and consultation with Council staff, community organisations and residents of Parramatta.

The first column of the table shows the factors identified to make a hub work. The second column shows the criteria that could be used to 'measure' those factors. 'Measure' is used in a broad sense and this decision making tool is likely to be as much a qualitative guide as a quantitative one.

Factor	Criteria
Community need	Current and projected demand for community facilities and services
	Projected population increases according to the Residential Development Strategy
	Key demographic factors including proportions of children, youth, cultural diversity and new communities, unemployed people, etc.
	Availability and use of existing facilities
	Support for community hub from local community
Accessibility	Residential Development Strategy transport accessibility rating
	Public transport services
	Parking (either available or capable of being provided)
Public gathering	Adjacent to public space or potential to incorporate public space in design
Integration	Proximity to local shopping and activity centres
	Potential for integration with adjacent compatible uses
Recognition/ visibility	Visible street frontage
	Recognised and valued by the community
Potential for strong partners	Existing community organisations, resident and neighbourhood groups, state government agencies, service organisations/clubs, local businesses, other councils, religious organisations
	Availability of other sources of funds through project partners
	Levels of social capital and community involvement within the community
Potential for service collaboration/ coordination	Existence of services with willingness to work cooperatively in a potential hub
	History of cooperation and collaboration in the community
	Other plans and projects in the area (including Residential Development Strategy plans, streetscape improvements, neighbourhood renewal)
Availability and opportunity	Council either owner of the site or be aware of a process to secure tenure
	Land acquisition opportunities
	Development potential - zoning
Financial viability	Availability of funds for capital cost of building and/or fit out of the facility

Further consultation with the Project Reference Group and discussion with Council will be used to refine these criteria prior to their incorporation into a decision matrix that will be used as an assessment tool in the upcoming strategy for this project.

5 Opportunities and Challenges

Parramatta presents a number of key opportunities, and challenges, in relation to the development of community hubs.

5.1 Opportunities

Key opportunities in the Parramatta LGA include:

- An apparently high level of commitment both politically and institutionally to community hubs
 - The development of a strategic approach to assets management
 - Good information on assets and community services
 - Good knowledge of, and connections with, the community through Community Place Development Officers, Place Managers and Operational Liaison Officers
 - A number of community organisations who are interested in exploring the community hubs concept
 - The potential for partnerships with key agencies and groups such as GROW (Area Consultative Committee)
 - Projected population growth and the development of a Residential Development Strategy that will help to guide that growth
 - A rail network and a number of activity centres that have developed historically around rail stations
 - An interest in social enterprise and a willingness to explore the potential synergies between social enterprise and community hubs, and
 - A commitment to a twenty year vision for Parramatta which recognises the importance of social wellbeing
- The apparent absence of a long term and strategic plan for community infrastructure across the LGA
 - Ready availability of funds for developing community hubs
 - Difficulties with retrofitting or enhancing existing facilities to become real community hubs
 - Limited communication and networking among some community organisations (as reported by organisations in consultation)
 - A relatively disjointed approach to community services delivery
 - Ageing and relatively poorly maintained community facilities
 - Few facilities that are purpose built
 - Difficulty in matching community need with presence of Council owned land and assets
 - Cross boundary issues and the complexity of planning social infrastructure in areas that share catchments with neighbouring LGAs
 - Some areas with poor public transport service
 - A public transport service that focuses on getting people to and from the city centre with less emphasis on inter- and intra- suburban services
 - Some areas with poor quality urban environments and lack of amenity, and
 - The reluctance of some community organisations to co-locate.

5.2 Challenges

Key challenges in the Parramatta LGA include:

5.3 Community attitudes

During this initial (conceptual) phase of the project two workshops were conducted with community representatives. The workshops focused on the broad hub concept and how community members viewed the idea of a community hub and their thoughts on ensuring that they became places that met community needs. These views have been incorporated throughout this briefing paper.

In addition two workshops were conducted with local community organisations to discuss the key characteristics and purpose of a community hub, what organisations saw as opportunities and challenges and what would be both attractors and detractors to organisations participating in a community hub.

Community organisations' thoughts on characteristics and purpose have been incorporated throughout this briefing paper. The following points were the key things identified as attractors to participating in a community hub for local community organisations:

- Affordability of office space. Although no reference to the affordability of space within any future community hubs was discussed by Council or the consultants during consultation, participating community organisations saw affordability as a key attractor
- Access to more and better facilities, particularly meeting space and training facilities
- More space including the capacity to grow and adapt alongside the communities they service
- Location in a visible, prominent location
- Improved accessibility through proximity to transport, particularly train stations
- Improved access for clients through the greater profile of a community hub
- Improved access for clients through creation of a 'critical mass' of services at a community hub and the potential for development of a 'one stop shop'
- The availability of parking for both staff and clients
- The potential for improving relationships with other community organisations
- The potential for broadening the pool of clients that an organisation serves through 'cross referral' and greater exposure through location in a hub with other services, and
- The potential for a community hub to play a capacity building role in the community sector through co-locating larger organisations with smaller (and possibly less experienced) ones. There was also discussion of community hubs playing an incubation and community development role by providing space for new community groups to develop and grow.

The following issues were identified as potential detractors or 'turn offs' for local community organisations:

- The importance of an appropriate management model and how a model that conflicts with an organisation's values would inhibit or prohibit participation. Organisations commented on the need for management models to be 'negotiated rather than imposed'

- High rents. Affordability was identified as a key factor and a major concern is that, particularly with new facilities, the cost of office space may be beyond what local organisations can afford to pay
- Domination of a community hub by large, well funded community organisations (this concern was related to the previous point about affordability), and
- As previously mentioned co-location was seen by some community organisations as being undesirable as it was perceived as compromising their independence and inhibiting their capacity to grow, be flexible and have access to the physical space that they require. This view, although strongly held, was not necessarily a majority view and many organisations saw considerable benefits in co-locating as part of a community hub as long as the management model was appropriate and developed in collaboration with the participating organisations.

6 Next steps

This briefing paper has been prepared as a discussion paper. It will be taken as a draft to the Project Reference Group and through that group, and with Council officers, it will be revised and then finalised.

The key aspects of this paper – the hubs definition, key characteristics and assessment criteria will then be taken to Parramatta City Council for review by Councillors.

From that point, the steps in the project will include:

- Identification of preliminary areas of interest
- Finalisation of the decision matrix
- Identify potential hub locations through application of the decision matrix
- Place based community and stakeholder engagement on 3 selected potential hub locations
- Development of specific models for each of the 3 potential hub locations
- Testing and refinement of the hub models through internal and external consultation, and
- Preparation and reporting of the community hubs strategy.