



Community Engagement

Report

Developing the new
Community and Council Plans

Acknowledgement of traditional land owners

Knox City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation as Traditional Custodians of the land. The Knox Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community come from a variety of different Nations within Australia and Torres Strait, including the Traditional Custodians and Stolen Generation. As such we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Located at the foot of the Dandenong Ranges, Knox has many places of historic significance to the Kulin nation. Important cultural and historical sites within Knox hold both the traditional knowledge of the First Nations People and the traumatic stories of colonisation.

The journey ahead for Knox involves the land, the traditional custodians, the local Indigenous community, the wider community and the Council itself. Walking together and listening together to create a culturally safe and culturally rich community for all.

In 2021 Knox City Council announced an intention to promote a “whole of business” mindset, moving forward in its acknowledgement and respect of First Nations people, ensuring cross functional collaboration as opportunities present themselves.

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Executive summary

The current Knox Community and Council Plan 2017-2021 expires on 30 June 2021. The new planning cycle will see a new ten-year Community Plan which includes a community vision, and a four-year Council Plan, to guide the future of Knox.

To inform the development of these plans, significant research and engagement activities have taken place throughout 2020. As Council is required to undertake deliberative engagement practices, a variety of activities were conducted, ranging from broad discussions about a vision for Knox, to conversations around the goals in the current plan, determining priorities and considering what role Council and stakeholders can play in responding to these.

Community members and stakeholders were given pre-reading prior to participating in forums and focus groups that outlined background information, data relevant to the topic, and findings from the previous engagement activities. A number of community members participated in multiple engagement activities, allowing for progression through the process from broad to more in-depth discussions on the future of Knox.

Vision for Knox

A strong consensus in the Vision discussion was that people enjoy living in Knox and have done so for many years, or had grown up here and returned after a period of time. The 'green and leafy' environment, a strong sense of community and inclusiveness, and good services and facilities were seen as making Knox an attractive place to live. These are also the elements that people want to see preserved and enhanced for the future.

Issues of concern were in turn identified as priorities for many community members and various stakeholders including:

- Climate change and the increase in extreme weather events.
- Preservation and enhancement of the natural environment.
- Homelessness.
- Concerns about the built environment - overdevelopment and high-rise, high-density buildings as not fitting the character of Knox.
- Safety - both public safety and in the home.
- Ease of getting around Knox - both in terms of public transport, as well as bike paths and footpaths that connect up and are suitable for all abilities.
- Greater support for the local economy and the need for local employment.
- Physical and mental support services for those in need, particularly as a result of the COVID19 pandemic.
- Social isolation.
- Ensuring all voices are heard in decision making.

Executive summary

Current goals

General consensus on the goals in the current plan was that they still resonate for most people. Goals around health and wellbeing, inclusion and belonging, and employment and learning resonated particularly well, which may be as a result of the COVID19 pandemic.

Many people saw the links between the goals. For example:

- “We are happy, healthy and well” is seen as a very broad goal that intersects with all the other goals, eg. housing and a nice environment all contribute to the community being happy, health and well.
- Inclusion and belonging was often seen and acknowledged as a health and wellbeing issue, with strong links to mental health.

While others were uncertain as to why some issues were grouped together under a goal or that a goal was too broad or not explicit enough. For example:

- It was thought that the ‘natural and built environment’ seem disconnected or contradictory, as built environment is commonly understood to be roads, infrastructure etc.
- ‘Safe and secure’ currently appears to be focused on community safety, perhaps there is a need for an explicit statement of support for equality and safety in the home as well.

There were also comments about the way the goals were written:

- Goals should be specific rather than measurable – “some things are hard to measure and too much effort is lost trying to measure progress rather than actually achieving the goal”.
- The goals appear to be phrased in present tense which could be interpreted as we are achieving the goal now.
- The goals seem to be statements not goals with an action/outcome.
- We should be bolder with our vision and goals.

Executive summary

Success and priorities

Many ideas about what success could look like in 10 years were developed by community members and stakeholders.

Some were a reflection of the current goals, while some (like “zero homelessness”) stretched them.

There were many priorities also identified. Some were for Council to consider as part of its program of work, like more lighting on walking and cycling paths. While others were big picture items that require the community as a whole (community members, stakeholders, other levels of government, businesses, etc) to work on together, eg. establish Knox as a strong business hub and leverage its geographic position.

All of the information collected through research and engagement activities is to be considered as part of the planning process for Knox - to make it a great place now and into the future.



Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the findings of the research and community engagement activities undertaken in 2020 to inform the development of Knox’s new Community Plan 2021-2031 and Council Plan 2021-2025.



Background

The new Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) received Royal Assent in the Victorian Parliament on 24 March 2020. The Act sets out new requirements for Councils across several areas. As part of these changes, there is the requirement for Councils to develop a ‘community vision’ for at least 10 years and the need for Councils to develop their plans with the community according to a council’s deliberative engagement practices.

Based on feedback of the current Knox Community and Council Plan 2017-2021, the next planning cycle will see the plan separated into two - a longer term (10 year) Community Plan and a four-year Council Plan.

The new Community Plan will incorporate a community vision and identify the aspirations and priorities of the community. The Council Plan will detail Council’s priorities and how they will contribute to the achievement of our Community Plan, and ultimately the vision. The requirements for a Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan will sit across both the Community and Council Plan. While the plans will be separate, they will be designed in context and look, to fit together.

Introduction

Context

Knox's current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021 is due to expire on 30 June 2021.

Work has begun to develop the new Community Plan 2021-2031 and Council Plan 2021-2025.

To inform these pieces of work, a range of data has been collected about the municipality via research and community engagement activities.

Municipal survey

This survey asked residents and businesses about the importance of, and their satisfaction with, 16 aspects of Knox.

State of Knox Report

This report is a collection of data that identifies trends and changes in Knox over time, across the eight goals areas of the current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021.

COVID-19

Community Impact Survey

This survey sought to discover how local communities are coping during the pandemic, and how this might impact the future of Knox.

Community engagement

A series of forums, focus groups, surveys and other online collaboration tools were used to engage the Knox community and stakeholders.

The engagement activities were directed at people who live, work, learn and play in Knox to:

- Gain an understanding of the community's aspirations for the future of Knox.
- Test the data gathered through research.
- Gain feedback on the goals in the current plan.
- Identify priority areas for the community and Council.

Introduction

Timeframes

Preliminary work started on this project in March 2020. Due to the impact of the COVID19 pandemic, the main engagement activities started in September 2020 and continued through to mid-December 2020.

Further engagement with councillors, staff, key stakeholders and the community continued through the first half of 2021.

Engagement Methodology

Under the new Local Government Act 2020, councils are required to develop their plans using deliberative engagement practices.

According to Knox's draft Community Engagement Policy, deliberative engagement is:

“Engagement where citizens are provided with a high level of inclusion and influence on a decision that affects them. Participants are representative of their community and are given the time to consider options and discuss an issue/s in depth before coming to a considered view.”

Examples of this include panels, polling and workshops, most of which would usually occur face to face. However, during a time of social distancing to protect human health and reduce the spread of COVID-19, face to face engagement has not been possible. The engagement plan for this project was adapted to incorporate online forums and focus groups, using video conferencing and collaboration tools. Pre-reading was given to community members participating in engagement activities, allowing them to consider the research before having in-depth conversations about the issues and opportunities.

OurSay were chosen to facilitate the online community and stakeholder forums and focus groups due to their experiences in hosting interactive and meaningful experiences online. The youth engagement activities were conducted by 'The Workshop' due to their specific experience in engaging young people.

Introduction

Participation

This table shows the schedule of events/activities undertaken during 2020 and the number of participants involved/responses received.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic, more than 2,000 people participated in Knox Council’s engagement activities during 2020.

Event/activity	Timing	No of people /responses
‘Wish for Knox’ (festival and online)	February/March	280 written responses 84 children’s drawings
Municipal Survey	March	1,500
COVID-19 Community Impact Survey	July - August	1,600
Vision for Knox community forum (x3)	September	53
Focus Groups (x5)	November	23
Shaping the future of Knox community forum	December	20
Stakeholder forum	December	10
Youth engagement activities	November - December	95
Engagement with Council’s Advisory Committees	November - December	50
TOTAL		Approx. 3,715*

* This figure is based on engagement undertaken in 2020. Further engagement was undertaken during 2021 which also contributed to the development of the draft plans.

The next section provides a brief description of each activity and the methodology used.

Research and engagement activities

State of Knox Report

The State of Knox Report is a collection of data that identifies trends and changes in Knox over time, across the eight goals areas of the Community and Council Plan 2017-2021.

The full report is substantial given it spans across eight goals, 21 key outcomes, 45 headline indicators and over 100 individual measures used to illustrate life in Knox. This document is an organisational resource that provides evidence to inform Council’s strategic planning and will also assist Council’s advocacy efforts, providing data for submissions and grant applications.

A summary document, titled ‘Knox in 2020’, provides some of the key datasets of the State of Knox report and key findings of the municipal survey, and is more visual and easy to understand. This document has been used for engagement activities, and has been well received. A design version of this document will be published on Council’s website along with the new Plans.

‘Wish for Knox’

The community engagement activities used to inform the development of the new Community and Council Plans began with a simple task. The community were asked to tell us their ‘wish for Knox’.

Approximately 280 ‘wishes’ were made at the Knox Festival (29 February - 1 March 2020), and online through the Knox Council website and Facebook page.

Along with other engagement activities at the Knox Festival Community Engagement Hub, community members were asked to write their wish for Knox on a postcard and put it in a wishing well. Children were also asked draw a picture of what they wish for Knox.



Research and engagement activities

Municipal survey

The municipal survey was conducted in March 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic), asking a representative sample of community members (1,120 residents and 24 representatives of local community groups) and 222 businesses what is important to them and how satisfied they are with aspects of Knox.

Newfocus (who also undertook the 2016 survey on behalf of Council) conducted the survey by phone, online and paper surveys (made available at Council premises and community gatherings).

The 2020 survey was largely a repeat of the 2016 municipal survey to allow for the measurement of change over time. Respondents were asked about the importance of, and their satisfaction with, 16 aspects of Knox. Measurements were obtained on overall satisfaction with the Knox area (to live or run a business), as well as overall satisfaction with Knox City Council.

COVID-19 Community Impact Survey

This survey was conducted late July/early August for the purposes of collecting data on how local Knox communities are coping during the pandemic. It provided insight into localised issues and informed both immediate recovery planning and longer term planning for the future (ie. the Community and Council Plans).

Approximately 1,600 people completed the survey, some through random proportional sampling of the rates database, and others collected through an open access online survey.

Respondents were given the opportunity to express their main concerns about COVID-19 as well as answer a series of questions about how the pandemic has affected their everyday lives, including employment, housing, food, physical and mental health, finances, leisure time and personal safety. They were also given the opportunity to answer what they think the one most important thing the Knox community should focus on for the future.

Vision for Knox community forum

Three online forums were held in early September with approximately 50 people from the Knox community. At the forums, participants were asked to share and discuss their aspirations for the future of Knox and what they thought of the goals in our current Community & Council Plan 2017-2021.

The forum asked participants to consider three main areas of questioning:

- What makes a great community/ what do you love about living in Knox?
- What is your vision for Knox/ what words would you like to see in a vision statement?
- How well do the goals of the current plan resonate for you?

Research and engagement activities

Focus groups

A series of online focus groups were held in early November to take a deep dive into the data collected around the Goals of the current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021.

Five focus groups were held, based on goals of the current plan. Some of the goals were grouped for discussion:

- Environment and housing (Goals 1 and 2)
- Safety and mobility (Goals 3 and 4)
- Employment and education (Goal 5)
- Health and wellbeing (Goal 6)
- Engagement, inclusion and belonging (Goals 7 and 8)

Prior to each session, the focus group participants were given some pre-reading which detailed the research and community engagement done to date. Participants in each focus group discussed the following:

I. Sample vision statements

Sample vision statements, developed from the outcomes of the Vision for Knox Community forums were shared with participants, who were asked to nominate three preferences. Each member of the group was then asked to explain why they had chosen the three statements.

II. Data relating to the goal/s

Members of the focus group were asked to consider and discuss:

- How does this data make you feel?
- How important do you feel this topic is in relation to your own life?
- What have you learned about the topic?
- Are there any particular facts which surprise/don't surprise you?

III. Success and priorities

Participants were then asked to consider what we as a community might do in relation to the goal/s being discussed, and what success could look and feel like.



Research and engagement activities

Shaping the future of Knox community forum

On 1 December another community forum was conducted using the Zoom online video conferencing software. Participants were given some optional pre-reading, which included data collected through the State of Knox Report, municipal survey and ‘wish for Knox’, as well as the findings of the previous focus groups and Vision for Knox community forum.

After a brief re-cap on the process to date, forum participants were presented the findings of the focus group discussions, and given a brief overview of the different roles Council has in supporting the community.

When shown ‘what success could look like’ and the ‘priorities’ of each of the five topics/goal areas, participants were asked to note “what else or what is missing”. They were then asked nominate two roles they felt Council could play to support the goal/s and discuss results.

Stakeholder forum

An online forum was held on 17 December 2020, with invitations being sent to numerous agencies, stakeholders and businesses in Knox. Despite numbers being low, representatives from a good range of organisations attended the session:

- Eastern Domestic Violence Service (EDVOS)
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- EACH
- Bapcare
- Swinburne University of Technology
- Ferntree Gully Arts Society Inc

Participants were provided pre-reading, which provided an overview of the findings of the research and community engagement done to date. The forum was conducted with three main activities:

- Vision for Knox – what words would you like to see in a community vision statement?
- Goals – do the goals in the current plan still resonate?
- Success and priorities - participants were asked to reflect on the findings from the previous focus groups and community forums, and asked to note “what else or what is missing” from the list successes and priorities.

Research and engagement activities

Youth engagement activities

‘The Workshop’, an organisation that develops and delivers “a wide range of programs that promote the social development of young people” sought the views of young people (10 – 25 years) about the eight goals identified in the current Community and Council Plan.

Six focus groups were conducted with 45 young people and the views of a further 50 young people were gathered through phone interviews and surveys.

Conversations with young people were centered on how they see Knox, and what they think of the goals in the current plan, with those involved asked to reflect and respond to the following:

- Describe Knox in one or two words.
- How important are each of the goals?
- What currently works well in Knox around the goals?
- What changes they would like to see?

Engagement with Council’s Advisory Committees

Knox’s Corporate Planning Lead attended the Advisory Committee meetings that were being held in November/December 2020 to discuss the development of the new Community and Council Plans:

- Environment Advisory Committee
- Knox Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Active Ageing Advisory Committee
- Knox Disability Advisory Committee
- Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Arts and Culture Advisory Committee

Participants were sent pre-reading which provided an overview of the findings of the research and engagement conducted to date around a vision for Knox and the current goals. They were asked to consider and share:

- What other words could be used in a vision for Knox?
- Is there anything in the pre-reading that surprises you?
- What do you see the community priorities to be in relation to the area of interest of your particular committee?



Key findings

The following key findings of the community engagement activities conducted during 2020 relating to a vision for Knox and the goals in the current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021. This information will be used to inform the development of the next ten year Community Plan, which will include a Community Vision, and the four year Council Plan.

Key Findings

Vision for Knox

At the Vision for Knox online community forums in September 2020, 188 comments were collected from text chat and break out room notes about what people love about Knox and what makes a great community.

The most common topics were:

- Community - a sense of connection to people and place.
- People - who care about each other and their community.
- Environment - access to open spaces and the natural environment, with Knox often referred to as “green”.
- Facilities - a good range of sporting facilities, transport and healthcare.

“A great community is about feeling like we belong not just to other people but also to the place. Animal, trees, land and the history of the land.”

Overall, it was often a combination of all the factors above which participants described as what they love about living in Knox.

Throughout the online engagement activities, participants were asked what words or sentiments they would like to see in a vision statement. Below are some of the words that were mentioned most often:



Key Findings

Proposed Vision Statements

At the focus group sessions, participants were also given a list of 11 sample vision statements which were based on the words collected through the engagement to date:

- 1 An embracing and diverse community that cares for its people and the environment.

- 2 Knox: A place that you can come home to.

- 3 Hopeful, healthy, community focused Knox.

- 4 Knox is a place of opportunity and potential, where our people are supported and our environment flourishes.

- 5 A safe and supportive community where everyone has a voice.

- 6 Knox is a safe and friendly place that is inclusive of the whole community.

- 7 A vibrant, accessible and inclusive community that nurtures and supports its people, businesses and the environment.

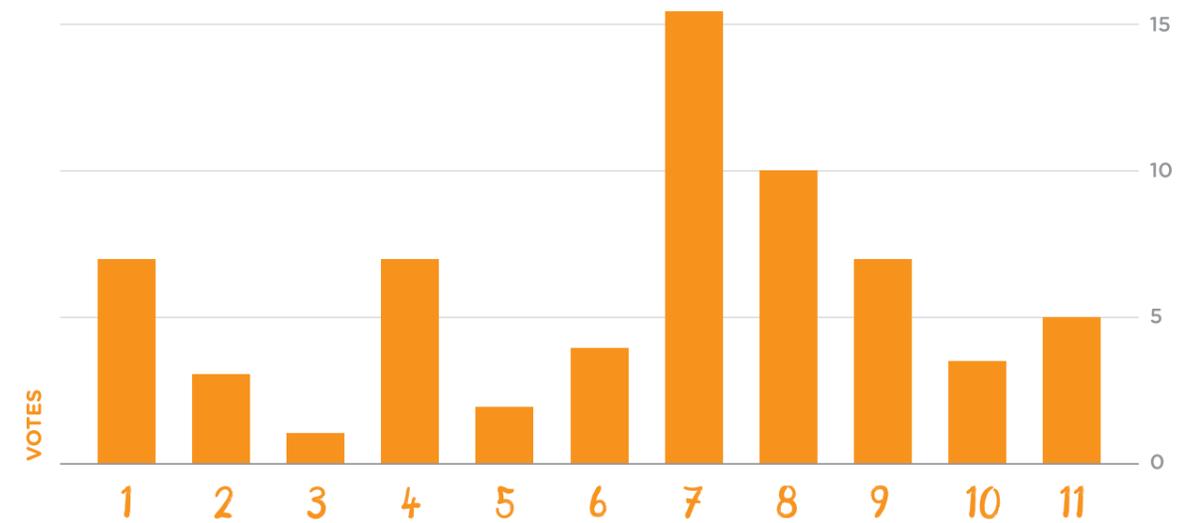
- 8 Knox: where we connect with our people and our environment, ensuring they are safe, supported and have every opportunity to thrive.

- 9 A clean, green, happy and healthy place, now and for future generations.

- 10 Knox: Growing, sustainable, connected communities.

- 11 Knox: A safe, vibrant, healthy and innovative city.

Below is the distribution of which sample statement resonated the most:



Reasons for selecting sample statements 7 and 8 as the ones that resonate the most, included the following:

- “...we need to nurture and care for people at the individual level, whatever the age group, whatever their circumstances”.
- Anywhere than can create opportunities through businesses “will create a lot of energy and make it vibrant and accessible for people in the community”.
- “Vibrant, it just shows how exciting it can be moving around and everything in Knox looks great and it’s growing...”
- “We don’t want to have to travel 20 kilometres to get to a train station or a bus stop...”
- “Thrive also indicates that we’re not just saying stay the same, but actually continue to thrive.”
- “We want to keep connecting with our people, we want to connect with each other, we want to connect with other communities. And we all definitely want to be safe.”

Other ideas for vision statements that came from the Advisory Committees included:

- Knox is the city of ‘Yes’.
- Knox is the city that will try.
- Knox embraces being better.
- Knox a ‘Can Do’ city.
- A city meeting the challenges.

Our current goals

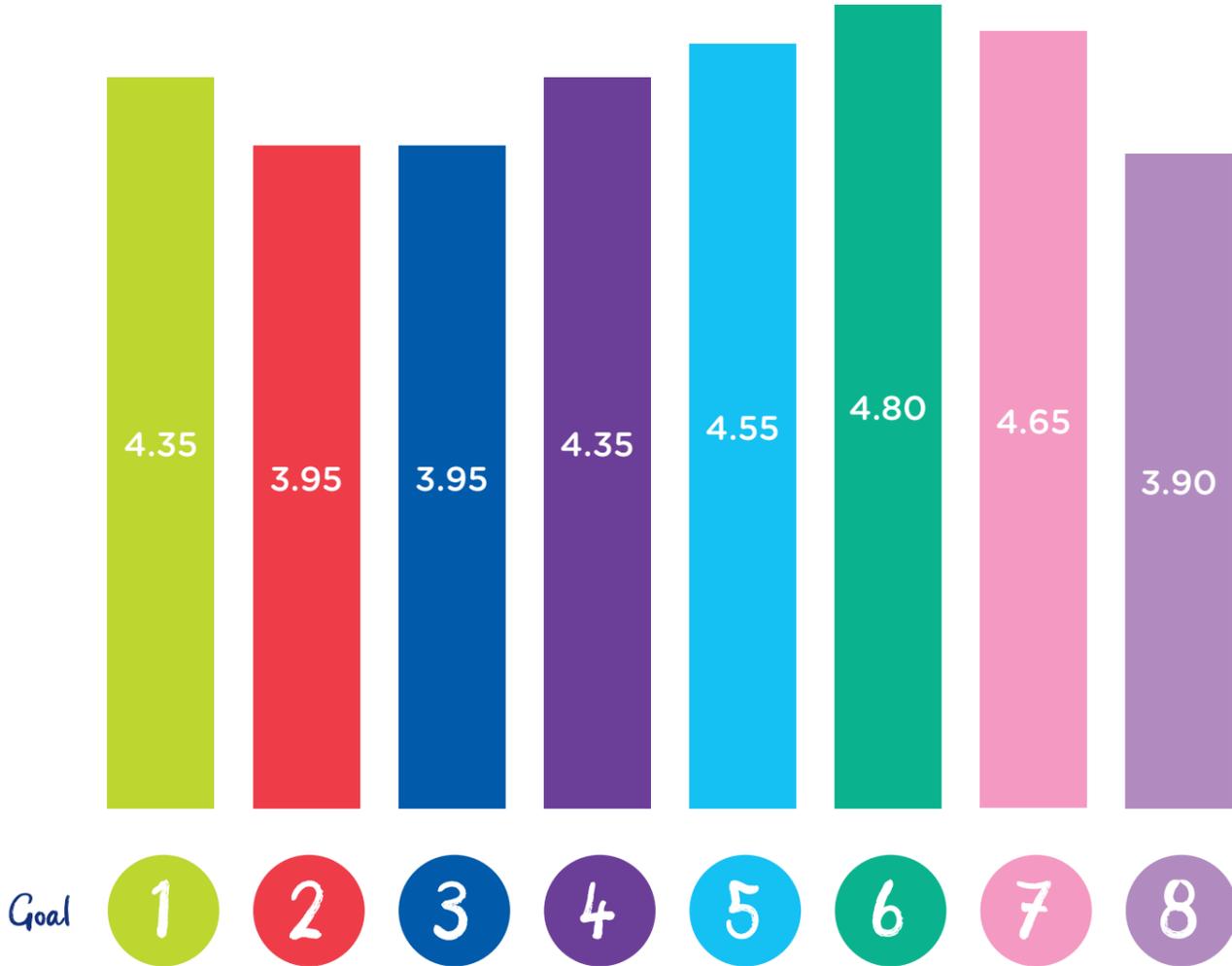
Below are the key findings of the community engagement activities conducted in 2020 relating the goals in the current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021.

Goal
1 We value our natural and built environment
2 We have housing to meet our changing needs
3 We can move around easily
4 We are safe and secure
5 We have a strong regional economy, local employment and learning opportunities
6 We are healthy, happy and well
7 We are inclusive, feel a sense of belonging and value our identity
8 We have confidence in decision making

Throughout the engagement activities, participants were asked whether the goals in the current *Knox Community and Council Plan 2017-2021* still resonated with them.

At the Vision for Knox community forum in September and stakeholder forum in December, participants were asked to rate out of five whether these goals still resonate, where 1 was 'no longer resonates at all' and 5 was 'still completely resonates'. The overwhelming majority of participants indicated that the goals still resonated.

How much does this goal resonate with you?



Our current goals

However, it must be noted there was some confusion around the format of the goals, which may have influenced the results. The way the goals were phrased (in the present tense) confused some, and others felt they needed to be more outcome focused.

“I would like to know what the appetite of council is to make change and be a bit bolder with our vision and goals.”

“Need to consider changes in context brought on by COVID, climate change, acknowledgement of original Aboriginal ownership of the land.”

“Goals should be specific rather than measurable, as some things are hard to measure and too much effort is thus lost trying to measure progress on the goal rather than actually achieving the goal.”

“Explore idea of hierarchy of needs - housing, health, and the need to feel safe and secure.”

Our current goals
Environment

The current goal relating to the environment is:
We value our natural and built environment.



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 4.35.

When young people were asked about this goal, almost 90% indicated this goal was either 'important' or 'very important' to them. Many young people felt a positive aspect of Knox was its greenery, parks and access to nature. However, there was also concern about the environment and a perceived lack of action on climate change.

“Need to distinguish the difference between green open space (such as recreational reserves and parks) and bushland. Both are natural environments and green and leafy but have different benefits and level of priority.”

“We value our natural and built environment” seems disconnected or contradictory as built environment is commonly understood to be roads, infrastructure etc.”

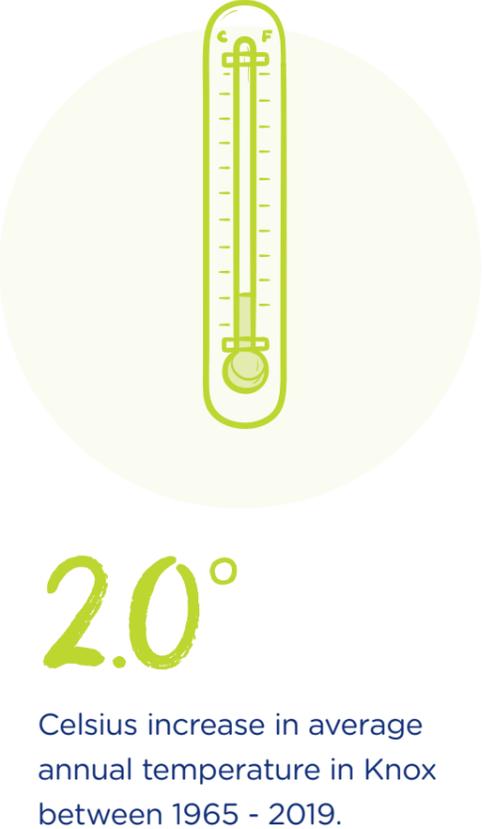
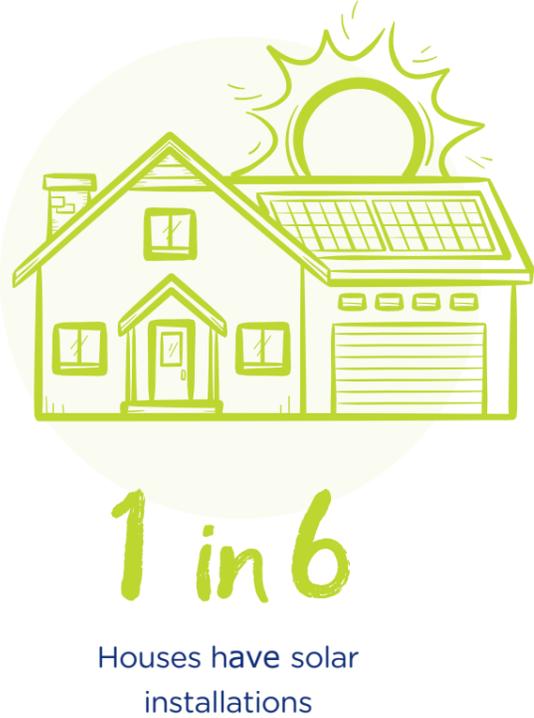
Our current goals

Environment

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to the environment, both positive and negative.



In 2017, the greenhouse gas emissions in Knox were higher than the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) average.



Our current goals Environment



69%

of Knox dwellings are within 400m of open space compared to the metropolitan average of 82%.



18%

of Knox's total area was under tree canopy cover compared to the metropolitan average of 16% and the Eastern Region average of 27%.

Knox's biodiversity programs have re-vegetated



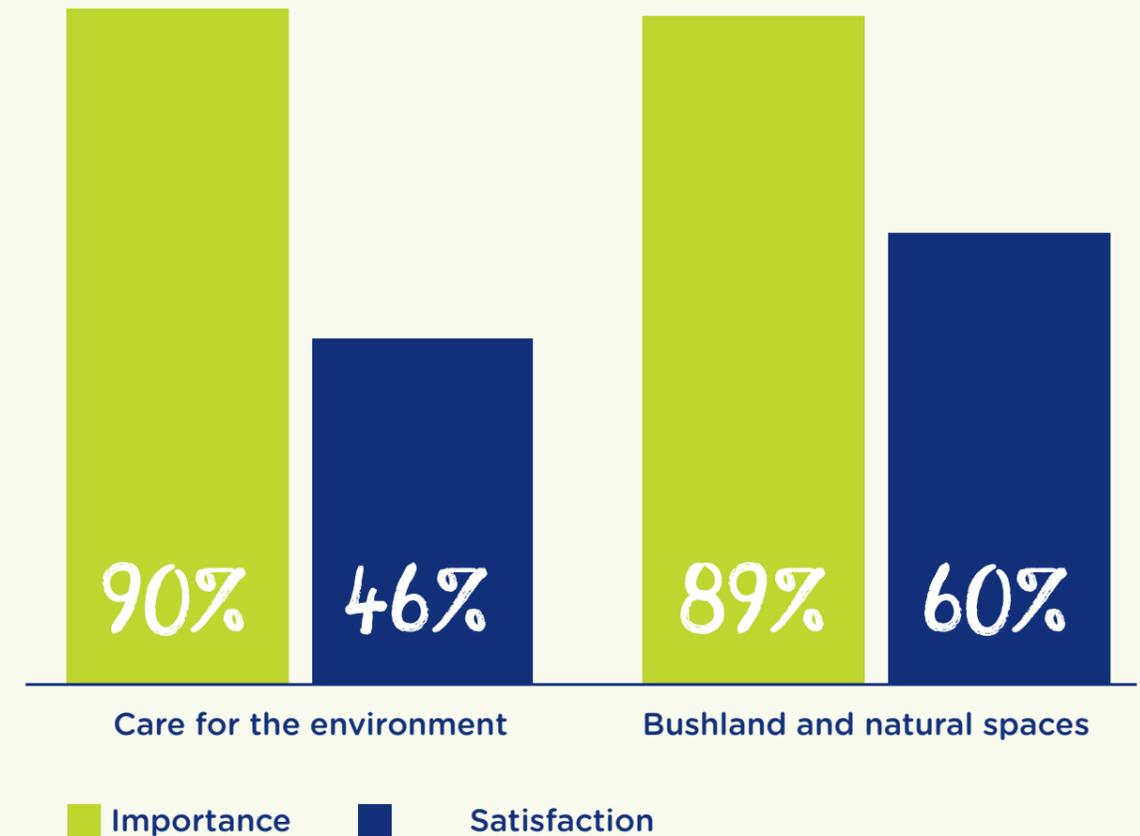
19 hectares

of land in Knox since 2009.



Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, participants identified that bushland and natural spaces, and caring for the environment, are two of the most important aspects of Knox. However, levels of satisfaction with both are quite low.



Our current goals

Environment

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to the environment. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Circular economy - Knox becomes a centre of excellence with energy and materials conservation.
- Increase canopy coverage.
- Walking and cycling tracks are preserved and built upon.
- Closer relationships between environment and sporting clubs.
- Energy from waste disposal management.
- User pays - waste disposal - pay per Kg.
- Vertical farming to provide local produce.
- Housing lots sizes that allow for a tree to be planted next to homes.
- Community micro grid... community level battery storage, p2p electricity.
- Rate payer incentives to reduce carbon foot print at the household level.
- Increase in flora and fauna diversity.
- Public art that enhances different places and spaces.
- Climate change is being addressed.

Our current goals

Environment

Key Priorities

- Encourage individual actions to reduce waste and care for the environment.
- Strengthen and support local environment groups.
- Protect and preserve original bushland and ensure it belongs to the community.
- Encourage local businesses to reduce waste, particularly food waste.
- Pest and feral animal control.
- Promote and support permaculture education.
- Add enhance to protect and preserve to the natural environment.
- Community awareness about the importance of being responsible for reducing litter.
- Increased maintenance of all Council assets (reserves and walking connections, not just sporting fields).
- Manage and protect our waterways - too much rubbish ending up in our waterways.
- Don't construct buildings too high that we lose the beauty of the views and surroundings.
- Preserve our beautiful open spaces & views.
- Maintain level of parklands.
- Action on climate change.
- Address biodiversity and its importance for environmental, social or economic benefits.
- Reduce take away food and online shopping packaging (which has increased during COVID-19).
- Continue to connect with and care for the environment.
- Look after and clean up our bushland areas to help avoid catastrophic bushfires, enabled by reintroducing cultural burning and fire stick programs by traditional owners.
- Do a tree census and put a dollar value on them.
- Have a dedicated litter crew like the public amenity sanitisers that we saw regularly during the pandemic.
- Tighter controls on often smoky and toxic indoor wood fire heaters during the cooler months.
- No more weed spraying around our children's parks and playgrounds, perhaps use steam weeders.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, advocate and provide.



Our current goals

Housing

The current goal relating to housing is:
We have housing to meet our changing needs.

2

When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 3.95.

Approximately half (58%) of the young people that participated in the youth engagement activities felt that housing was important or very important.

A strong theme in young people's response to this goal was the changing nature of housing in Knox, particularly the perceived increase in apartments and townhouses, as opposed to single-level houses with backyards. They recognised that apartment living was a practical response to a growing population but felt that Council should approach this by increasing public greenery for apartments, incorporating rooftop gardens and other community options so residents have access to green spaces.

There was also some concern amongst participants about affordability and their ability to own their own homes.

“Post-COVID demand for homes will be different to pre-COVID, with people... now looking for larger homes with ability to work from home, away from the CBD.”

“Our housing models need to reflect and meet the changing needs of sustainable development models and not just population growth and annual incomes.”

Our current goals

Housing

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to housing, both positive and negative.



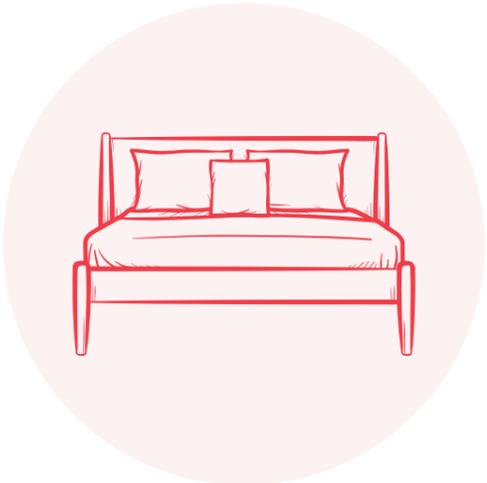
84%

of dwellings are single detached houses compared to 86% in 2006.



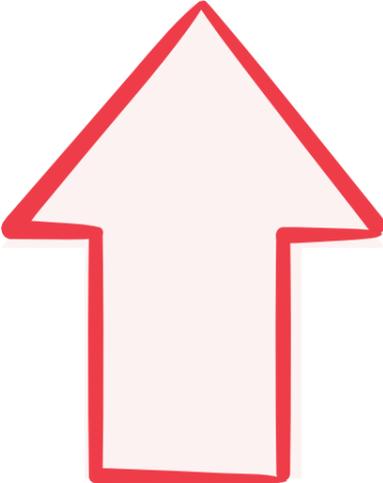
1 in 6

dwellings are an apartment, unit or terrace, compared to 1 in 7 in 2006.



8 in 10

households in Knox have at least one spare bedroom.



59,150

dwellings in Knox, 2,975 more than 2011.

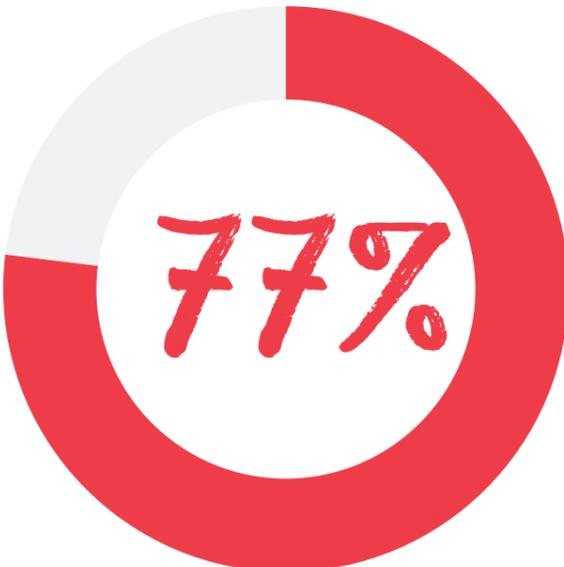


Ten year increase in Knox median household income compared to 41% in greater Melbourne.

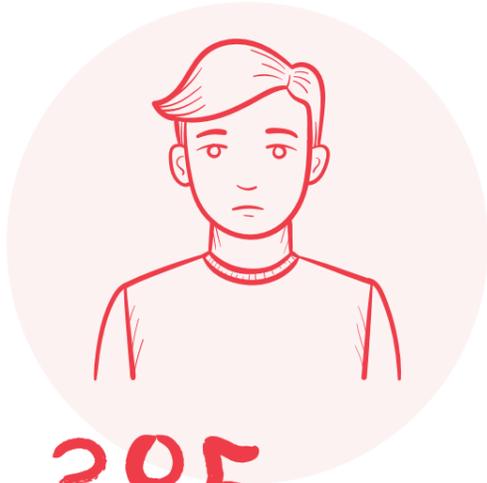


Ten year increase in Knox median house price compared to 86% for greater Melbourne.

Our current goals
Housing

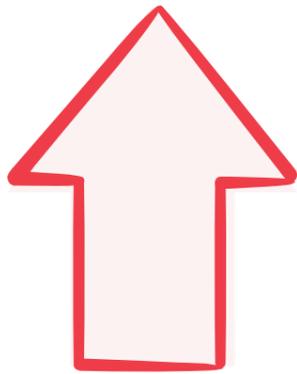


The proportion of the social housing need that can be met with existing local social housing and affordable private rentals.



385

The estimated number of homeless people in Knox.

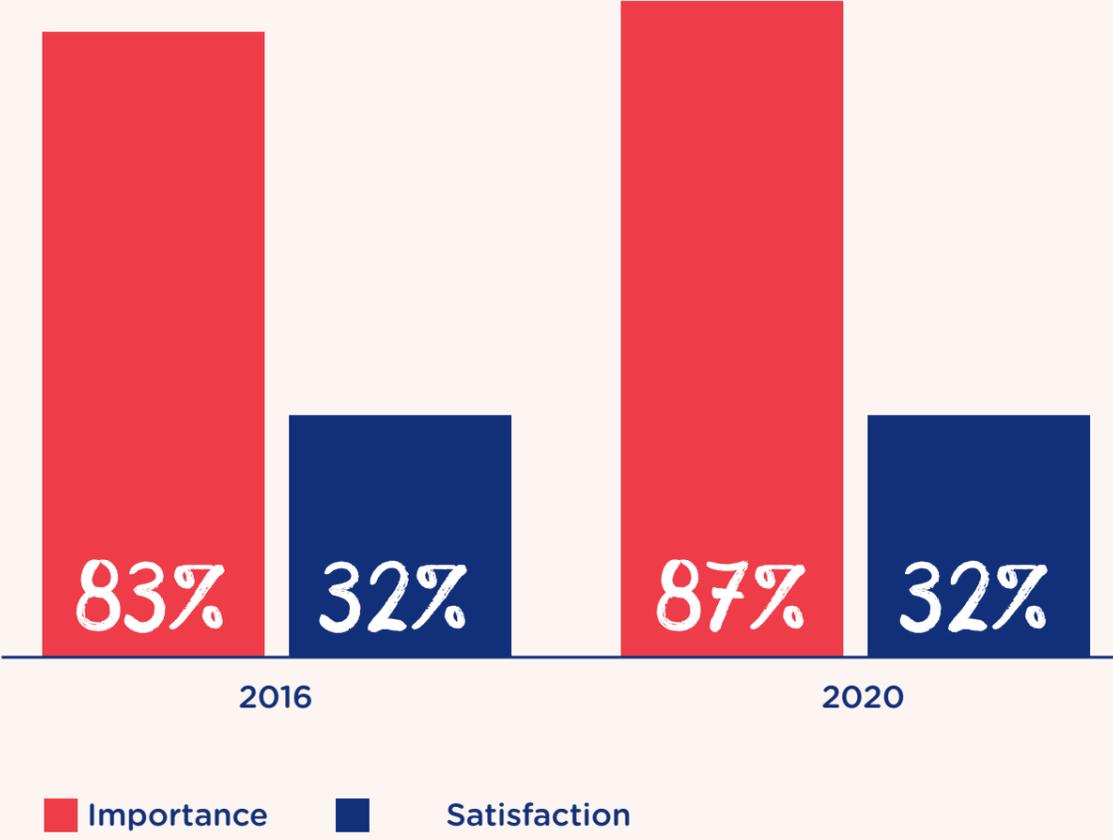


46%

The estimated increase in homelessness in Knox from 2011.

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, participants identified housing as an important issue (slightly more so than in 2016), however the satisfaction levels with the type and affordability of housing in Knox is low.



Our current goals

Housing

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to the housing. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- New housing developments should not be at the detriment of the environment.
- Housing for everyone - no homelessness in Knox.
- Appropriate mix of housing to suit different needs.
- Community has a greater say in planning decisions than developers
- Things in place to protect the few historical buildings that we have in Knox.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Sustainable subdivision.
- Approve architecture that is conducive to the surroundings, not Rubix cubes.
- New urbanism design principals.
- Local government can potentially fund affordable/social housing -including through renting houses.
- Greater density around local villages/shops.
- Solar energy hubs to provide energy to new houses.
- Advocate for a share of the state government social housing developments.

Our current goals

Housing

Key Priorities

- Embrace innovations such as 3D printing and tiny houses.
- Encourage local businesses to use buying power for social impact.
- Consider what type of housing is appropriate for just one or two people, for families, for the elderly, for people with disabilities.
- Funds to help bridge the gap between social housing and private market.
- Take control and less hand off to state government.
- Using more sustainable /recycling building materials.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, educate and advocate.



Our current goals

Transport and mobility

The current goal relating to transport and mobility is:
We can move around easily.



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 3.95.

More than three quarters (85%) of young people indicated this issue was 'important' or 'very important' to them. Unsurprisingly, youth were particularly focused on public transport and walking/bike tracks as these are their primary means of moving around independently. They felt the tracks interconnect well but wanted them maintained better and widened to allow for cyclist and pedestrians to use them together more safely.

Many young people felt buses were clean and safe, however they also felt that taking public transport was time-consuming, frustrating and that some areas in Knox were neglected when it came to accessing public transport.

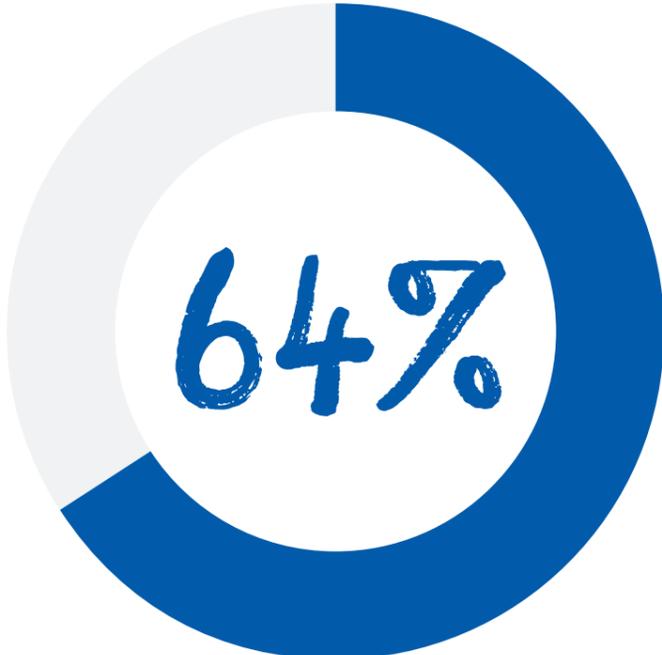
“If there is a rail line that ends at Rowville... then the beautiful large allotments and family homes in Rowville would become a high density living jungle for developers to develop further. Be careful what you wish and advocate for.”

“Our Knox Telebus is excellent, please keep this up.”

Our current goals

Transport and mobility

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time relating to transport, both positive and negative.

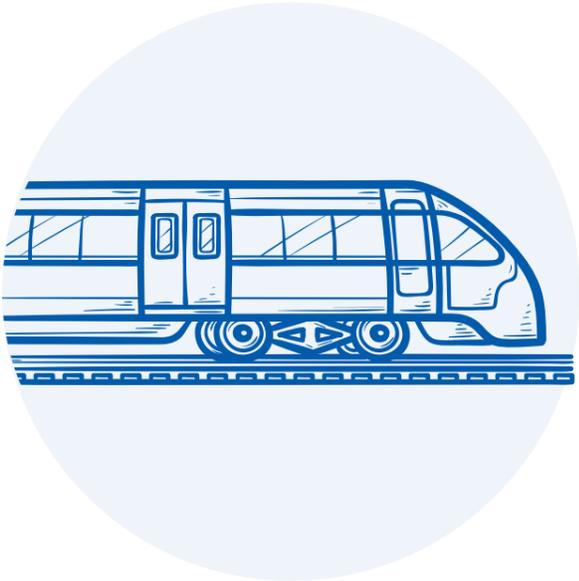


of households are within 400m of any public transport stop compared to the metropolitan average of 69%



81%

of travel on a weekday in Knox is by car, 9% more than the metropolitan average. Car use has reduced by 6 percentage points since 2010.



7%

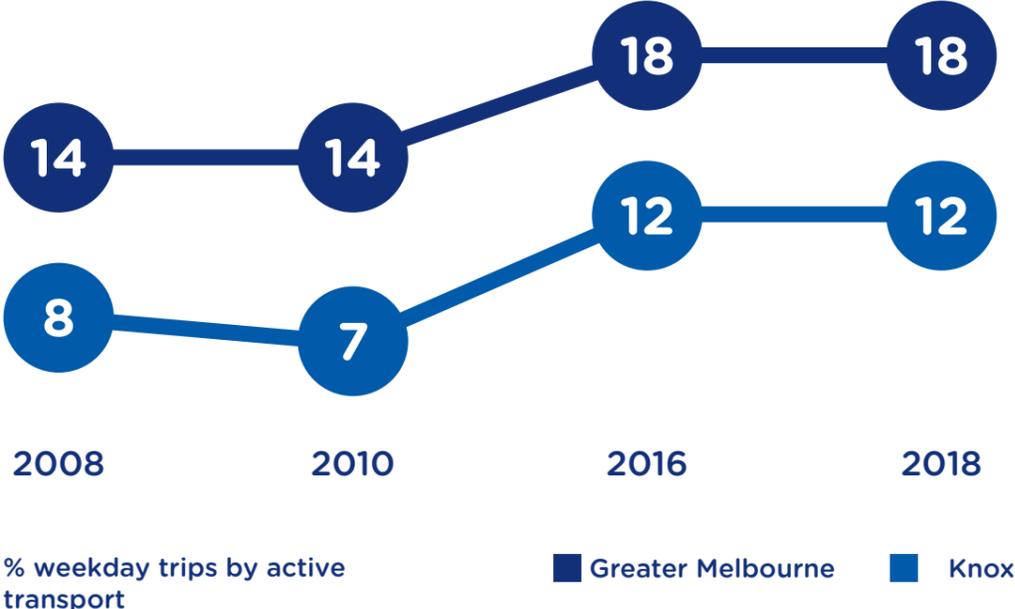
is the average percentage of weekday trips by public transport, up from 5% in 2010.



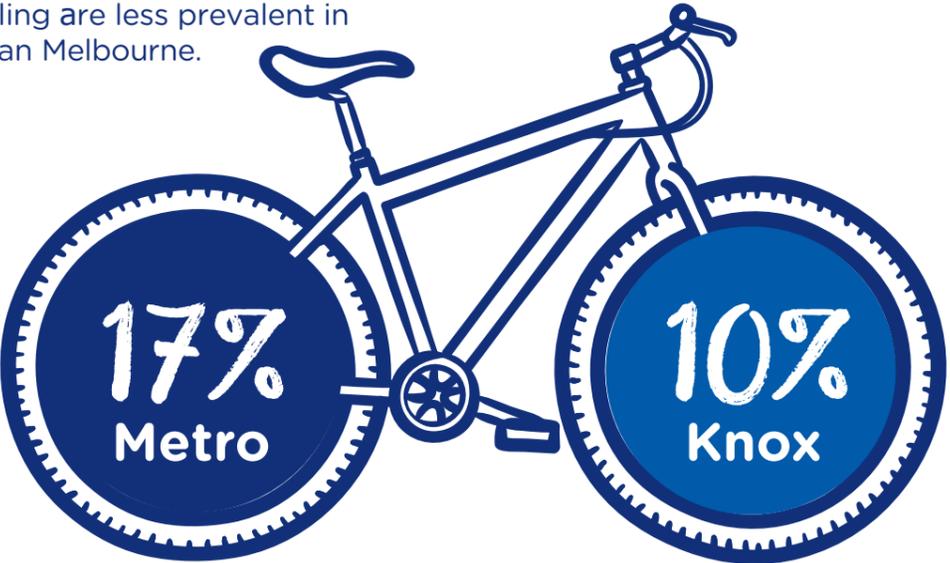
Our current goals

Transport and mobility

Walking and cycling is increasing in Knox but remains lower than greater Melbourne.



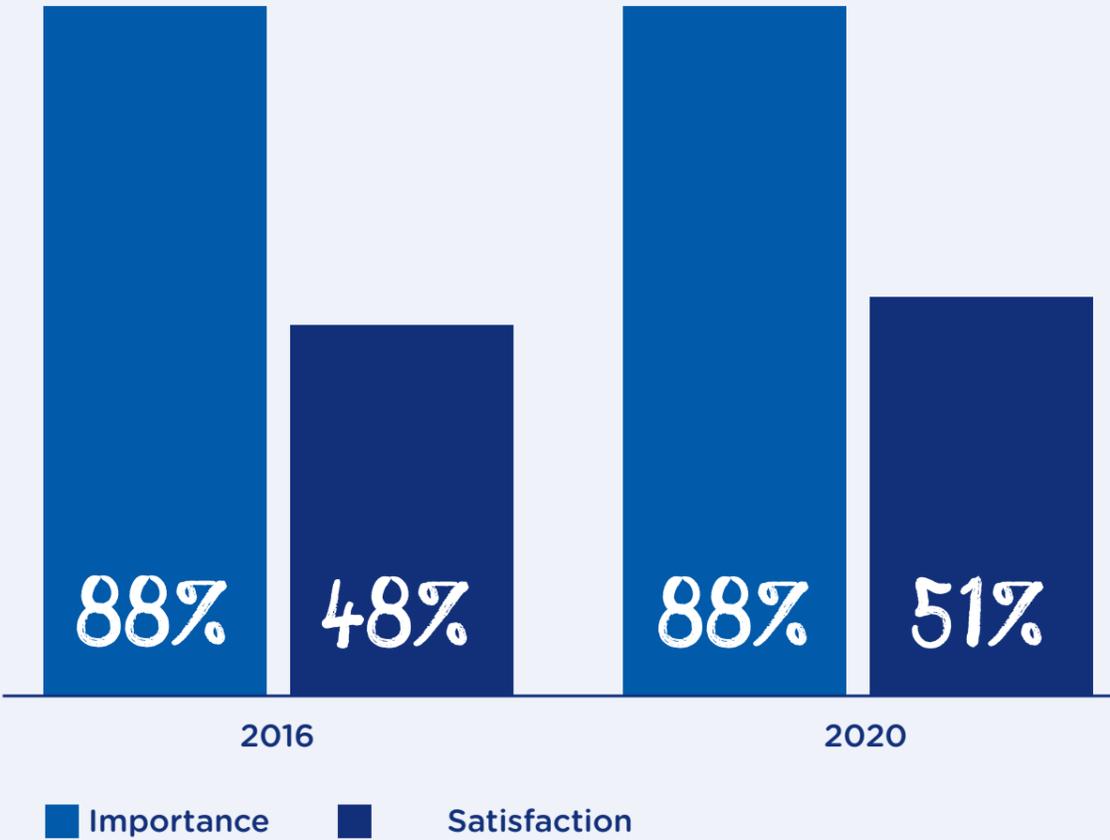
Weekend walking and cycling are less prevalent in Knox than Melbourne.



% weekend trips by active transport

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, most participants believed 'ease of getting around' to be important, however only around half were satisfied with transport and mobility in Knox.



Our current goals

Transport and mobility

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to transport and mobility. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Public transport is equally accessible, no matter where in Knox you live or your level of mobility.
- Access to different transport options to get to key areas e.g. Knox shopping centre.
- Equal focus on safe walkability, wheelchair ability, as well as transport.
- Separation of different forms of transport to reduce points of confluence.
- Driverless taxis/ electric buses/ smart transportation - digital updates when buses are to arrive.
- Mixed transport options. Less reliance on cars and more on walkable suburbs.
- Safe footpaths for people with mobility issues and gradients on footpaths and other areas eg parks and reserves.
- Better connections between buses & trains.

Our current goals

Transport and mobility

Key Priorities

- Rowville rail line and public transportation options for north-south corridor.
- Extend the tram to Knox.
- Addressing the monkey bike issue along walking tracks.
- Footpath and bike track upgrades and maintenance.
- Increasing transport segregation.
- Increased bus shelters.
- Widening of footpaths to accommodate cafe outdoor dining.
- Making shopping centres & streets pram friendly.
- Increase parking spaces at shopping centres and train stations, particularly seniors parking.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to plan, advocate and provide.



Our current goals

Safety

The current goal relating to safety is:
We are safe and secure.



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 4.35.

Safety was one of the top concerns for people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost four in five respondents (79%) of the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey said that the pandemic had impacted on their feelings of safety. There were fears of getting sick, a threat to safety in public or fear of violence or anger in the home.

This goal was considered especially important to young people with 96% indicating this goal was either 'important' or 'very important' to them. The majority of young people had a positive response to their sense of safety and felt secure during the daytime. However, perceptions changed significantly at night when most young people in the focus groups (both male and female) said they would not feel safe using walking tracks or public transport after dark.

Another positive aspect to participants' responses was around a feeling of community safety, the ability to be who they are and express themselves without fear of discrimination.

“There needs to be a focus on family violence (reporting of which increased during COVID19 lockdowns).”

“Safe and secure” currently appears to be focussed externally in the community, perhaps need for explicit statement of support for equality and safety in the home as well.”

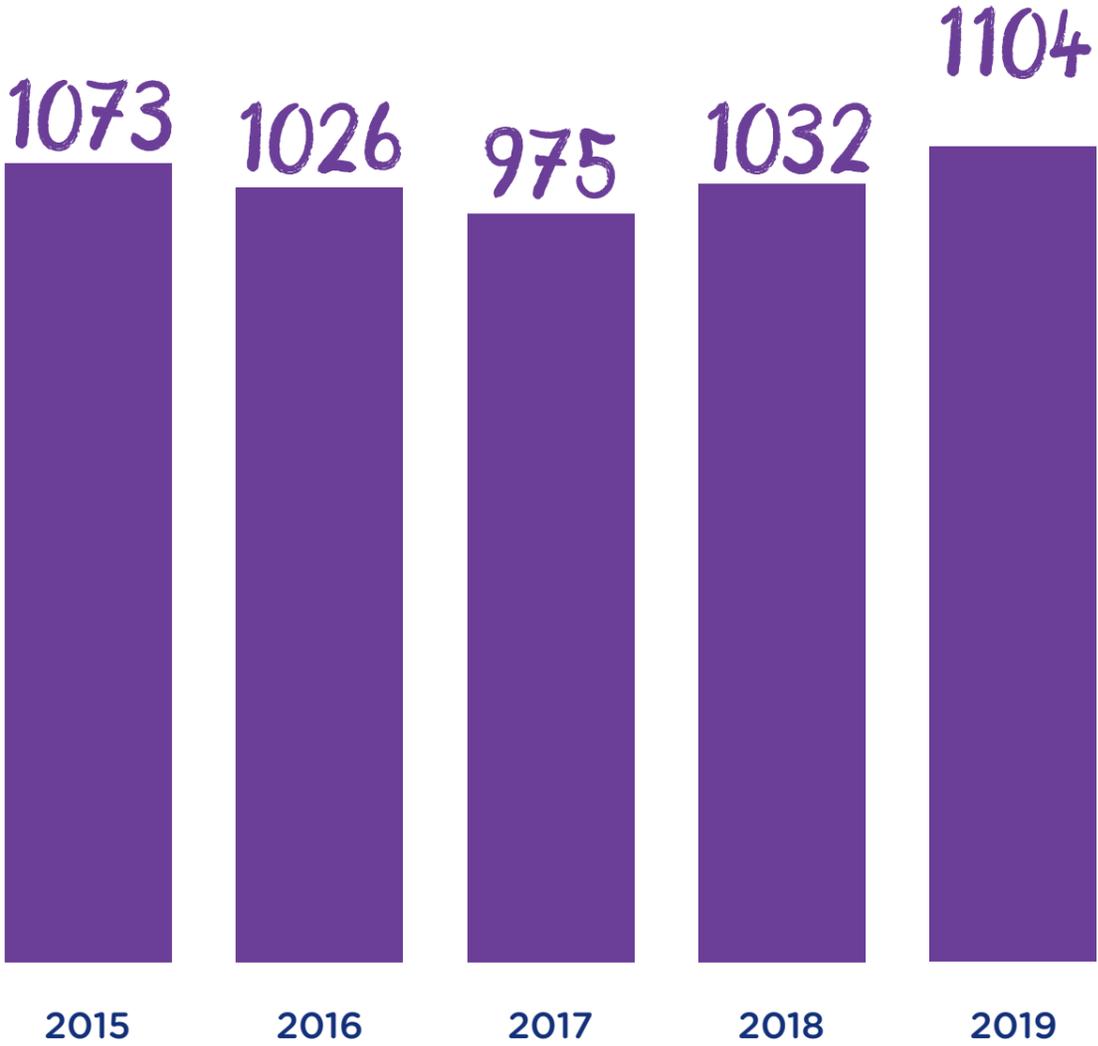
“Engaging with victims and perpetrators - needs to be a positive experience with good results.”

Our current goals

Safety

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to safety, both positive and negative.

The rate of reported family violence incidents in Knox has started an upward trend.



Number of reported family violence incidents per 100,000 population



Of the **8,805** crime incidents in Knox in 2019, **two thirds** were property related.

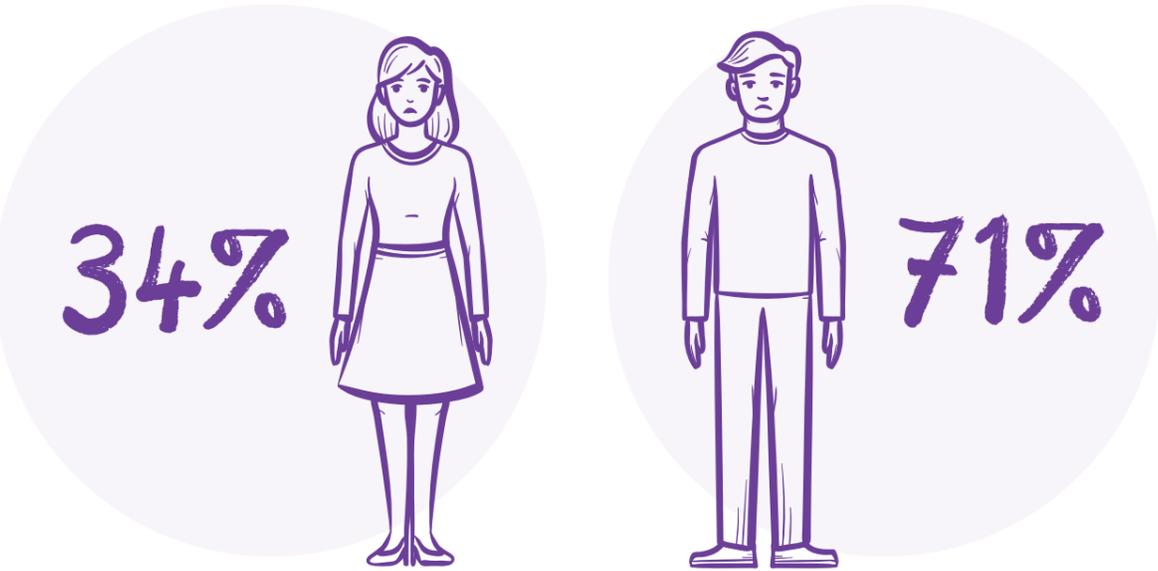
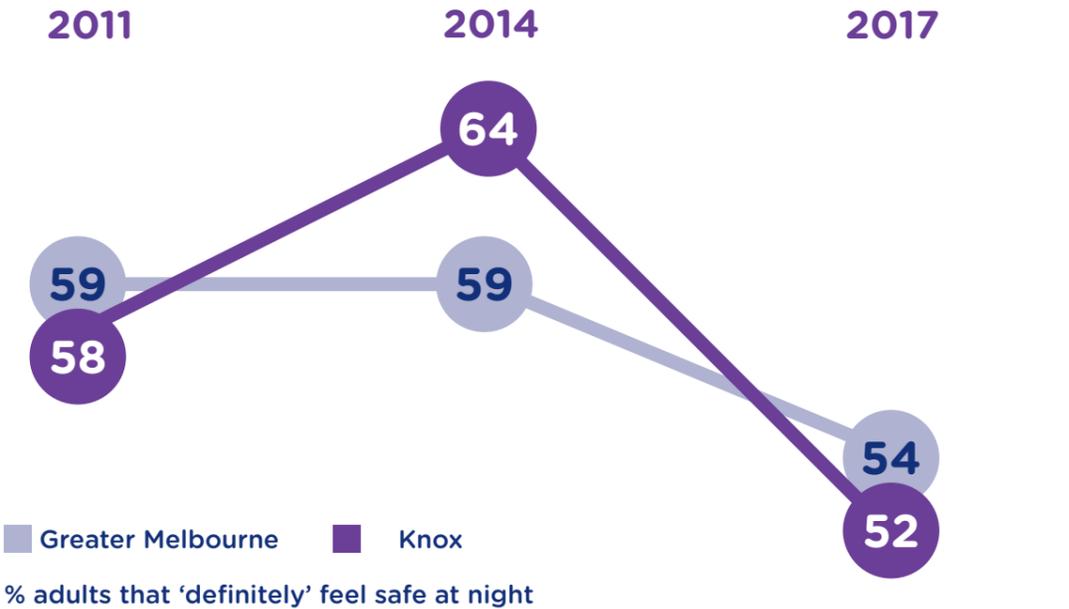


The rate of drug incidents is higher in Knox with 304 incidents per 100,000 population compared to the Melbourne average of 242.

Our current goals

Safety

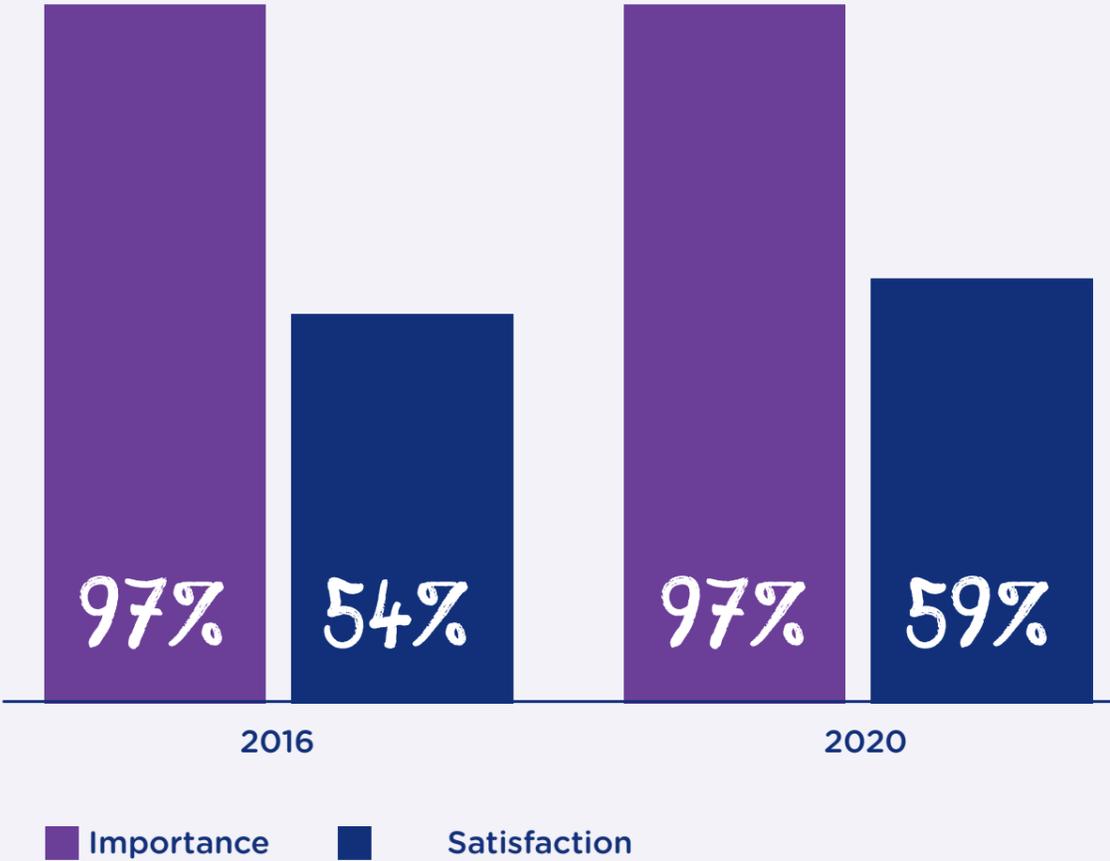
Perceptions of safety are declining.



34% of women feel safe in their neighbourhood at night compared to 71% of men.

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, safety was the most important issue, however, the satisfaction rating was just over half, with a slight increase since 2016.



Our current goals

Safety

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to safety. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Access to appropriate people to call on for help when feeling unsafe.
- Increased perception of safety within Knox.
- Smart lighting - sensor/ CCTV based providing safety.
- Respectful relationships both in the home and in the community (with reference to gender, culture, etc).

Key Priorities

- More lighting on walking/bike tracks.
- More Public Safety Officers (PSOs) on public transport and at train stations.
- Neighbourhood watch or similar community-led system.
- Identifying and fixing possible areas of concern.
- Proactive policing and local 24 hour police stations.
- Clean up and facelift of Boronia train station.
- Promotion of respectful relationships.
- Information/communication delivered in culturally and linguistically appropriate formats and channels.
- Advocating for safety within the home
- COVID19 safety long term.
- Increased focus on ways to mitigate both family and community violence.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to plan and advocate.

Our current goals

Employment and learning

The current goal relating to employment and learning is:

We have a strong regional economy, local employment and learning opportunities.



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 4.55.

Financial vulnerability was a primary impact of COVID-19 on the community, stemming from loss of jobs and reduced work hours. According to the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey, two thirds (65%) of the community had their work impacted in some way by COVID-19.

Just under three quarters (72%) of young people indicated this goal was either 'important' or 'very important' to them. Although a majority of respondents saw this as an important goal, responses were ambivalent with some feeling youth employment opportunities were, 'plentiful and available', whilst others felt there were limited opportunities for young people to enter the workforce locally.

COVID-19 played into this goal, with young people who had lost work or didn't have work, feeling that this made it even more difficult to find a stable job.

Young people were generally positive about education options in Knox and felt there was a good range of schools in the local area, both State and private.

“People with a disability should be given the opportunity to get real work and real pay - Council should promote within the community.”

“We need to continue flexible ways of working and learning.”

Our current goals

Employment and learning

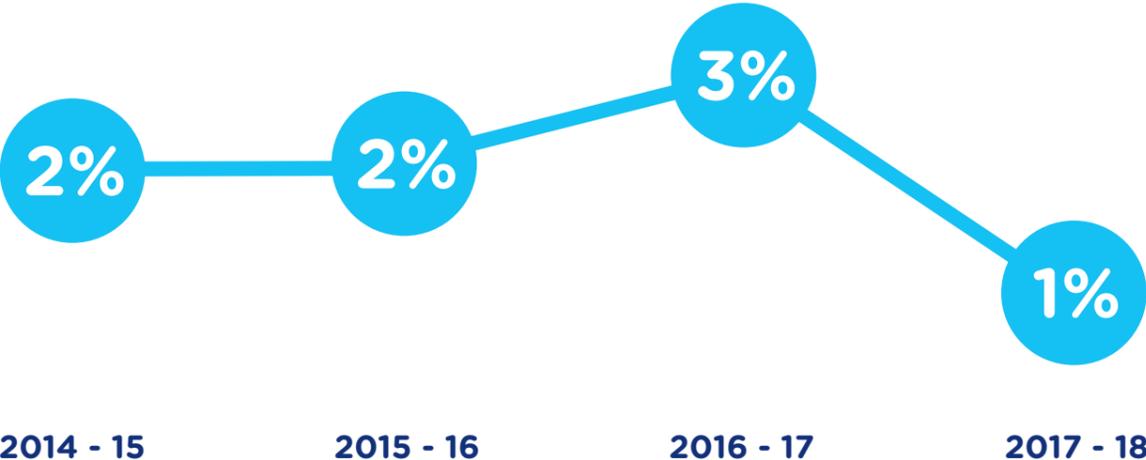
In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to employment and education, both positive and negative.

66,244

Total jobs in Knox

Job growth has declined in Knox

Annual jobs growth rate



Knox has a high rate of youth engagement with 80% of youth fully engaged in work or study. However this decreased by almost 2% from 2011 to 2016.

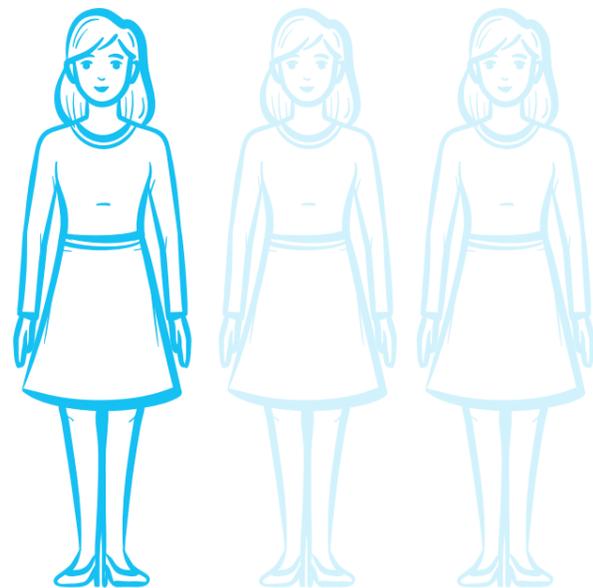


10% of school leavers aged 15 - 24 left school early in 2016 compared to 14% in 2011.

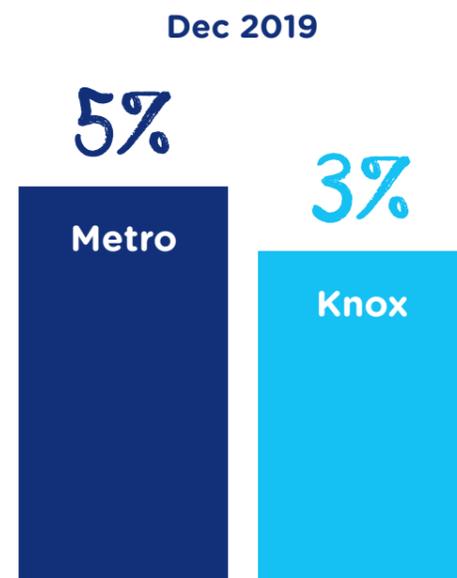
Our current goals

Employment and learning

More Knox residents now work in health care and social assistance, previously more residents had worked in manufacturing.



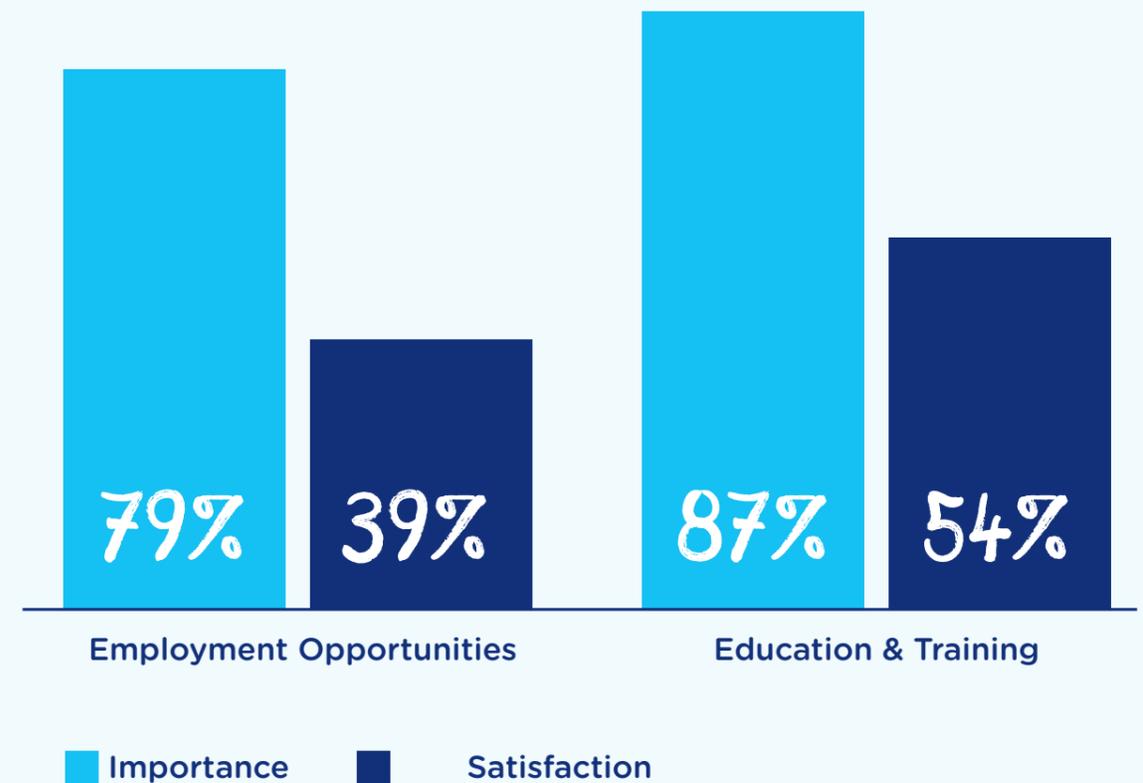
One third of employed people live and work in Knox and more Knox residents now work part time (+2%).



Unemployment in Knox is below the metropolitan Melbourne average.

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, both employment and learning were considered important by approximately three quarters of respondents (79% and 87% respectively), however, satisfaction with these two aspects was quite low - with satisfaction with employment being only 39%.



Our current goals

Employment and learning

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to employment and learning. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Knox is a renewable energy leader with a sustainable economy (link to environment).
- Increased attractiveness of Knox as location for organisations and industries to set up and do business.
- Growth in local employment.
- Increased number of people who live and work in Knox (e.g. 90%).
- Increased number of people with disability who are gainfully employed (e.g. by at least 50%).
- Increased youth engagement and employment.
- Parental education for primary school aged children.
- Innovation hubs and start-ups encouraged.
- Stable, supportive and accessible local employment for aging population.
- STEM education, eg. to improve oral health.
- Quality early childhood education - education starts at the beginning.

Our current goals

Employment and learning

Key Priorities

- Establish renewable energy grid in Knox and lower cost of electricity.
- Establish Knox as a strong business hub and leverage its geographic position.
- Conduct market research to understand and identify possible growth industries and jobs of the future.
- Establish co-working hubs and spaces and networking opportunities.
- Ensure that infrastructure and built environment helps support businesses.
- Ensure that regulatory environment is easy to deal with.
- Ensure that residents have access to reliable internet coverage.
- Train youth to make use of change and opportunities.
- Ensure that businesses are aware of programs and resources that they can utilise.
- Work with high schools and businesses to promote local employment - networking, job opportunities, etc.
- Lobby NBN to upgrade infrastructure to fibre optic.
- Help and advice for young people (20-35 years old) who have innovative business ideas.
- Support and education for people with disability who want to establish own small or micro business.
- Working smarter from home post COVID.
- Businesses to engage with skills development for local employment.
- Incentives for innovative start-ups.
- Research to develop new industry options.
- Families to be included in education.
- Educating smarter online from home.
- More three-level education sites in Knox.
- Talk to students about what is a priority for them/ what they see as opportunity.
- Partner or promote learning opportunities through local community groups.
- Support neighbourhood houses and other community groups that focus on education.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, advocate and provide.



Our current goals

Health and wellbeing

The current goal relating to health and wellbeing is:
We are happy, healthy and well.



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 4.8.

Three quarters (75%) of the respondents to the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey said that the pandemic was having a big or slight impact on their mental health. Restrictions imposed were identified as limiting exercise opportunities for many, and reducing healthy eating.

This goal was seen as 'important' or 'very important' by 85% of young people.

Many young people saw health and happiness as interchangeable and essential. They focused on mental health before physical health and fitness, and felt there were good options for services and facilities across Knox with regard to both.

The role of the environment, access to nature and connection with others were considered essential elements for wellbeing.

“This is a very broad goal that intersects with all the other goals.”

“I think Mental Health services and access should be a key goal as part of the ongoing plan.”

“Too many Knox people are overweight and unhealthy, more education is required.”

Our current goals

Health and wellbeing

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time relating to health and wellbeing, both positive and negative.

50%

of adults undertake adequate physical activity to meet the national guidelines.



16%

of adults are smokers, up from 13% in 2014.



55%

of adults are overweight or obese, up from 49% in 2008 and higher than the metropolitan average of 49%.

56%

of Knox residents do not meet the daily recommendation for fruit & vegetables, up from 49% in 2014 and higher than the metropolitan average of 51%.

41%

of adults rate their health as very good or excellent, compared to 38% in 2014.



Our current goals
Health and wellbeing

60%

of adults are at increased lifetime risk of alcohol related harm, an increase of 3 percentage points from 2014.



84%

of children aged 0 - 6 years are developmentally 'on track' in all domains, 4% higher than the state average.



94%

of children in Knox aged 5 years are fully immunised.



45%

of adults are at increased risk of alcohol related injury on a single occasion.



23%

of young people in Outer Eastern Melbourne have depressive symptoms.



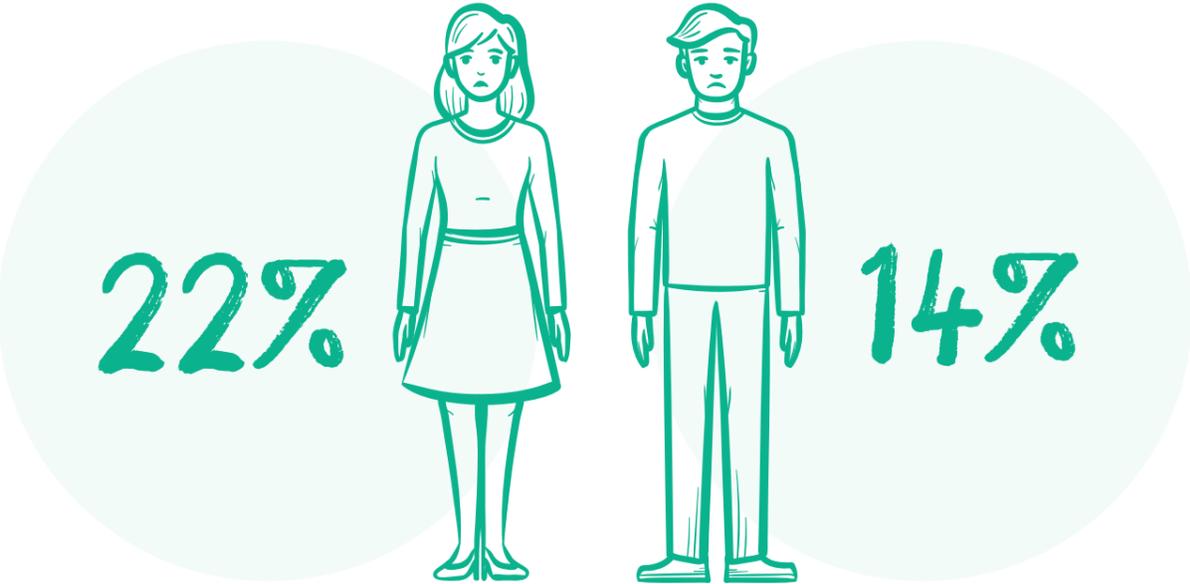
61%

of students rate hope as high.

Our current goals
Health and wellbeing



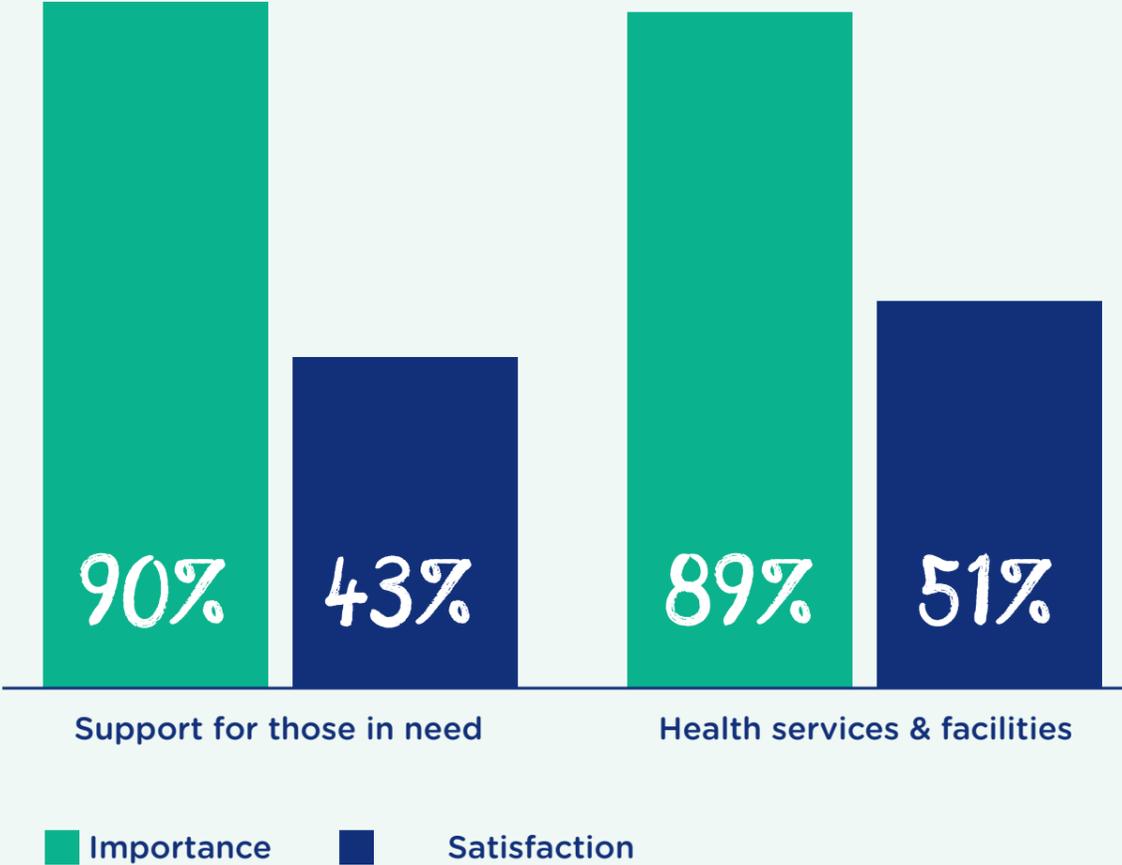
of adults suffer from psychological distress, up from 11% in 2011. This is higher than the metropolitan average of 15%.



The proportion adults with poor mental health was significantly higher in women than men.

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, both 'support for those in need' and 'health services and facilities' were considered important or very important. However, approximately half of those surveyed (43% and 51% respectively) were satisfied with these aspects of Knox.



Our current goals

Health and wellbeing

Success and Priorities

Participants of the community engagement activities were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to health and wellbeing. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Reduced obesity rate (e.g. by 10%).
- Reduced abuse of alcohol rate.
- Maintain level of immunisation and resilience.
- Improved mental health, reduced levels of depression.
- Everyone has a home and is living life to the fullest (link to housing).
- Increased number of people to call on in their local area for support.
- Visual art and performance art to improve mental health and reduce depression.
- Use of technology to improve health and wellbeing.
- Spiritual well-being for those who are unable to access religious services due to transport/mobility issues.
- An active community is a healthy community.
- Housing and wrap around health services together.
- Men's and women's circles.
- Comprehensive drug treatment centre.
- Oral health has been over looked, tooth decay is our most common disease.
- Respectful intergenerational relationships - early years, young children and adults.
- Adapt to climate change impacts on health and wellbeing.
- Reduction of tobacco use in Knox.

Our current goals

Health and wellbeing

Key Priorities

- Ensure continued support and education about healthy lifestyle choices for parents beyond early years into other stages of life.
- Increase awareness of opportunities to get out and about and active in Knox.
- Reduce number of alcohol outlets in Knox.
- Educate community on how to live a more balanced and healthy lifestyle.
- Ensure that environment and infrastructure is age friendly and supports healthy eating and healthy lifestyle.
- Increase community connection, particularly at a neighbourhood level using community champions.
- Directory of community groups to get involved in - no matter their size.
- Drug and alcohol education for youth- harm minimisation focused and getting rid of the binge culture.
- Programs to increase mental resilience. Especially among young people.
- Raise awareness of relationship between physical and mental health to a healthy natural environment.
- Invest in neighbourhood houses to address social isolation.
- Increase arts engagement in supporting mental health promotion and recovery.
- Develop a men's shed in central Knox.
- Dental records on national database.
- Link education programs and facilities to local sporting clubs.
- Invest in cultural centres for the community to engage.
- Partnering with Health Services to promote mental health awareness through Council webinars.
- Education about the harm of gambling.
- Increase access to water fountains to create alternative options to consumption of sugary drinks. Council can promote a network of water fountains in public spaces and sporting facilities.
- Recognition of art and cultural activities as a major contributor to health and wellbeing.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, educate and provide.



Our current goals

Inclusion and belonging

The current goal relating to inclusion and belonging is: ***We are inclusive, feel a sense of belonging and value our identity.***



When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 4.65.

Social isolation was clearly the primary impact of COVID-19 on the community. Almost all respondents (96%) of the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey reported an impact on being able to spend time with friends and family.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of young people indicated this goal was either 'important' or 'very important'. However, this goal also had the largest group who said this was unimportant to them (15%).

Although the majority of participants came from English speaking backgrounds, the inclusion of different cultures was important to them and something they like about the municipality. However, young people wanted more visibility of First Nations people, including education in schools, heritage trails, and events which celebrated Aboriginal culture.

LGBTIQ+ young people had a range of responses about their feelings of inclusion. Some participants' experiences had been incredibly positive, while others were unaware of any groups for LGBTIQ+ youth, or had experienced homophobia/transphobia at school.

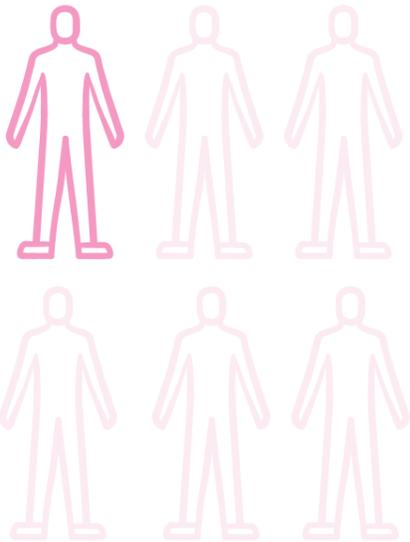
“Everyone should be respected, celebrated, and valued.”

“There is fear of re-connection since COVID19 - this is a barrier for older people in particular.”

“We need to debate the word inclusion more and bring the issues around it to the forefront.”

Our current goals
Inclusion and belonging

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to inclusion and belonging, both positive and negative.



1 in 6

adults in Knox are socially isolated.



1 in 3

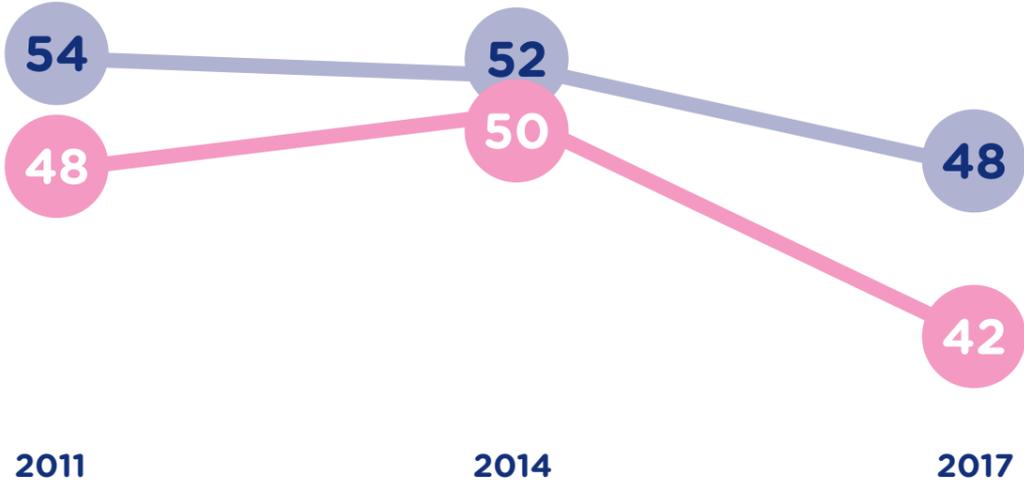
adults in Knox volunteer.

42%

people in Knox feel valued by society, compared to 50% in 2014.

% adults that 'definitely' feel valued by society.

■ Knox ■ Metro



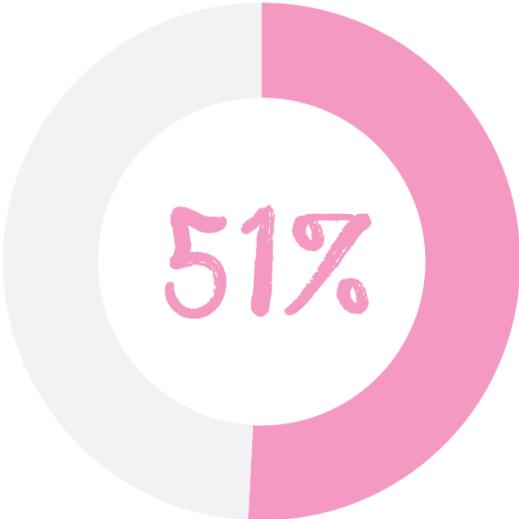
1 in 3

Adults in Knox show low support for gender equity in relationships. This result aligns with the state average of 36%.



Our current goals

Inclusion and belonging

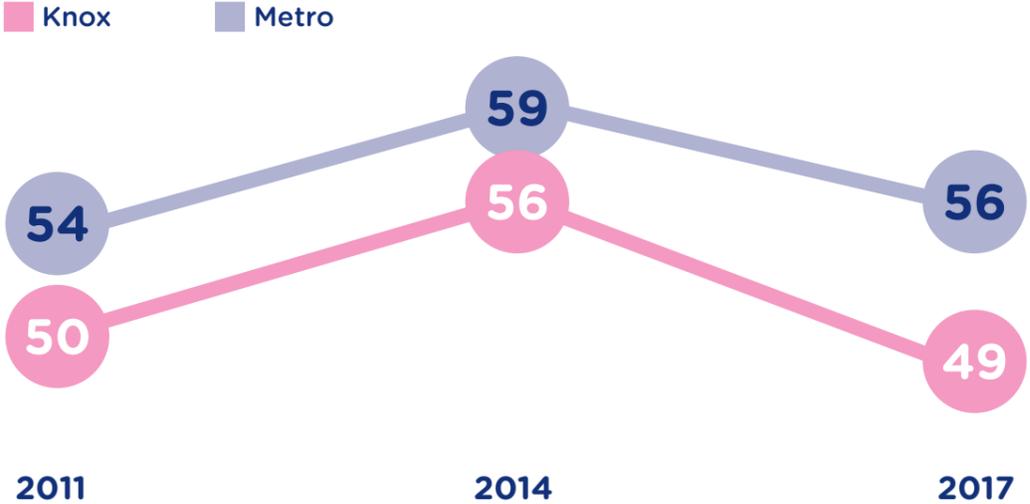


had attended a local community event in the past 6 months.



of adults definitely believe that multiculturalism makes their life better, down from 56% in 2014.

% adults that 'definitely' agree that multiculturalism makes their life better.



Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, 'community spirit' was rated as important or very important by approximately three-quarters of respondents (78%), yet only half were satisfied with this aspect of Knox. The ratings for 'people of world cultures' and 'vibrant arts and cultural opportunities' were closer in importance and satisfaction, with approximately 50% for each.



Our current goals

Inclusion and belonging

Success and Priorities

At the focus groups, the community forum on 1 December, and the stakeholder forum, participants were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to inclusion and belonging. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Increased sense of being valued and sense of empowerment.
- Cultural festivals & use community space to bring the community together like markets, etc.
- Street parties.
- Recognition of First Nations People.
- Aware of barriers which inhibit community inclusion.
- Emotional safety for diverse people - limiting structural barriers and prejudice, and enhance acceptance for individuals.
- Reconnection with land with facilitation from first nations.
- Free Wi-Fi hubs so people can engage online when transport is an issue.
- More communications in community languages, eg. on Council website.
- Gender equality.

Our current goals

Inclusion and belonging

Key Priorities

- Welfare and support services should be non-judgemental.
- Train community leaders to create hyper local support groups.
- Strong link between this and accessibility for those with disability.
- Highlighting and working with the link between this area and mental health.
- Promote partnership between community clubs.
- Invest in neighbourhood houses and the Knox learning alliance.
- Activities/events during and after work hours and weekends.
- Small scale social events to build networks.
- Address ageism in the community.
- Ensure social supports are in place for vulnerable persons within our community.
- Bring equity and inclusion principles to everything we do.
- Build digital literacy and ensure internet access, so that people can connect with others, even if unable to leave the house (by age or ability).

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, fund and provide.



Our current goals

Community engagement and decision making

The current goal relating to engagement and decision making is:

We have confidence in our decision making.

8

When asked how well this goal still resonates, the average rating by community members and stakeholders was 3.9.

Approximately three quarters (77%) of young people indicated this goal was either 'important' or 'very important' to them. Many young people involved in focus groups didn't feel as though they personally had a say in decision making, and the idea of how to participate was therefore difficult to comment on.

Young people felt a disconnect with Council and other community decision makers but were keen to participate and have their voices heard when the opportunity was given to them.

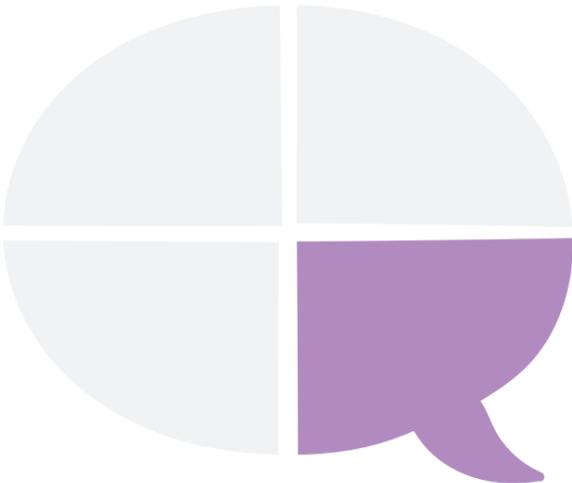
“What does this goal actually mean?”

“Important to have all voices heard in decision making, eg. children, young people, those with a disability, CALD communities, etc.”

Our current goals

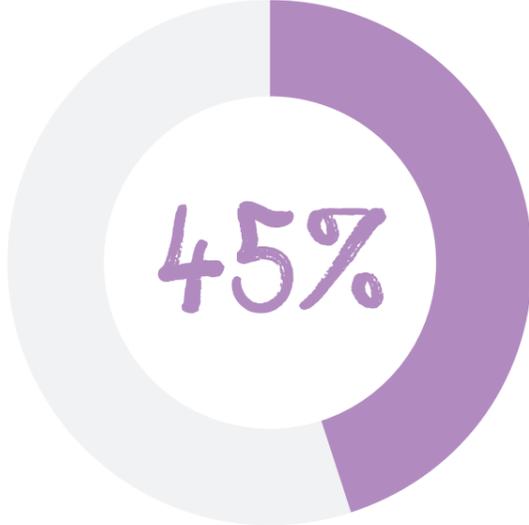
Community engagement and decision making

In 2020, the data collected through the State of Knox Report has identified a number of trends and changes over time related to engagement and decision making, both positive and negative.



A quarter

of adults feel there are opportunities to have a real say on matters that are important to them compared to 37% in 2011.



of adults think Council is good or very good at keeping the community informed.

% adults that definitely agree there are opportunities to engage on issues that are important to them.

2011



2014

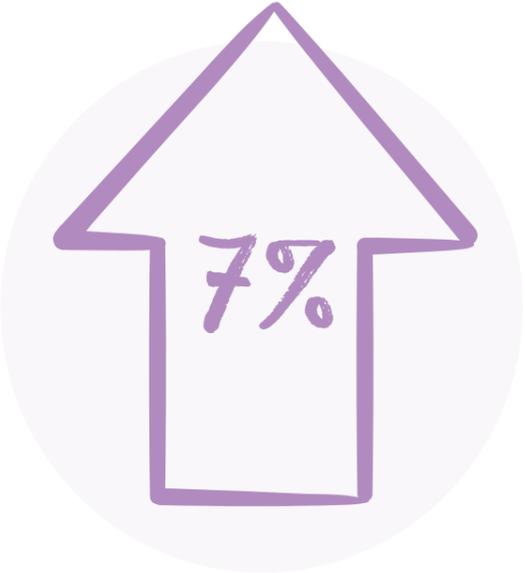


2017

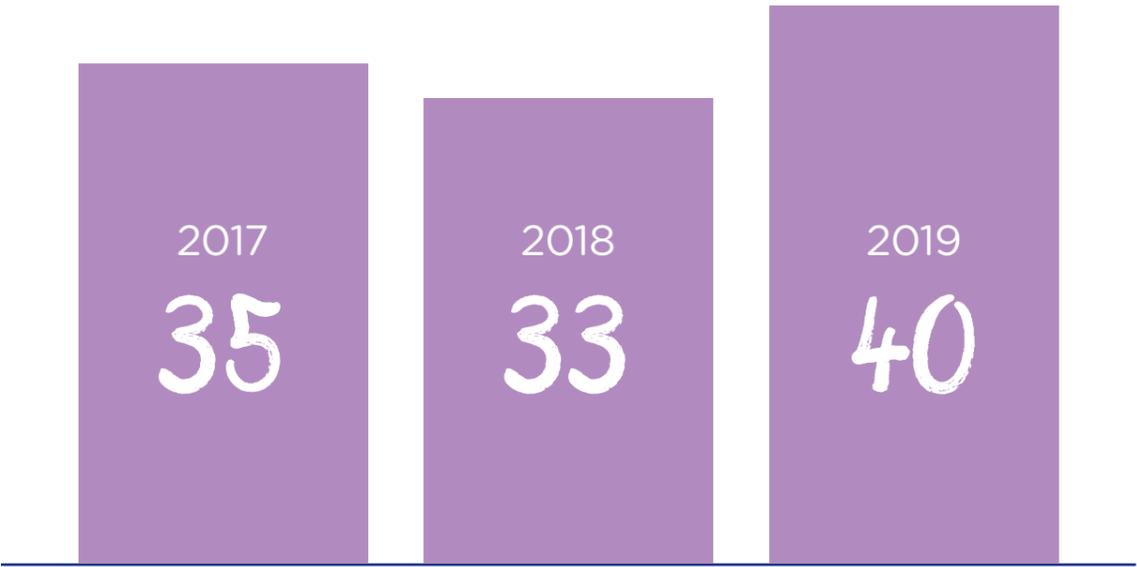


Our current goals

Community engagement and decision making



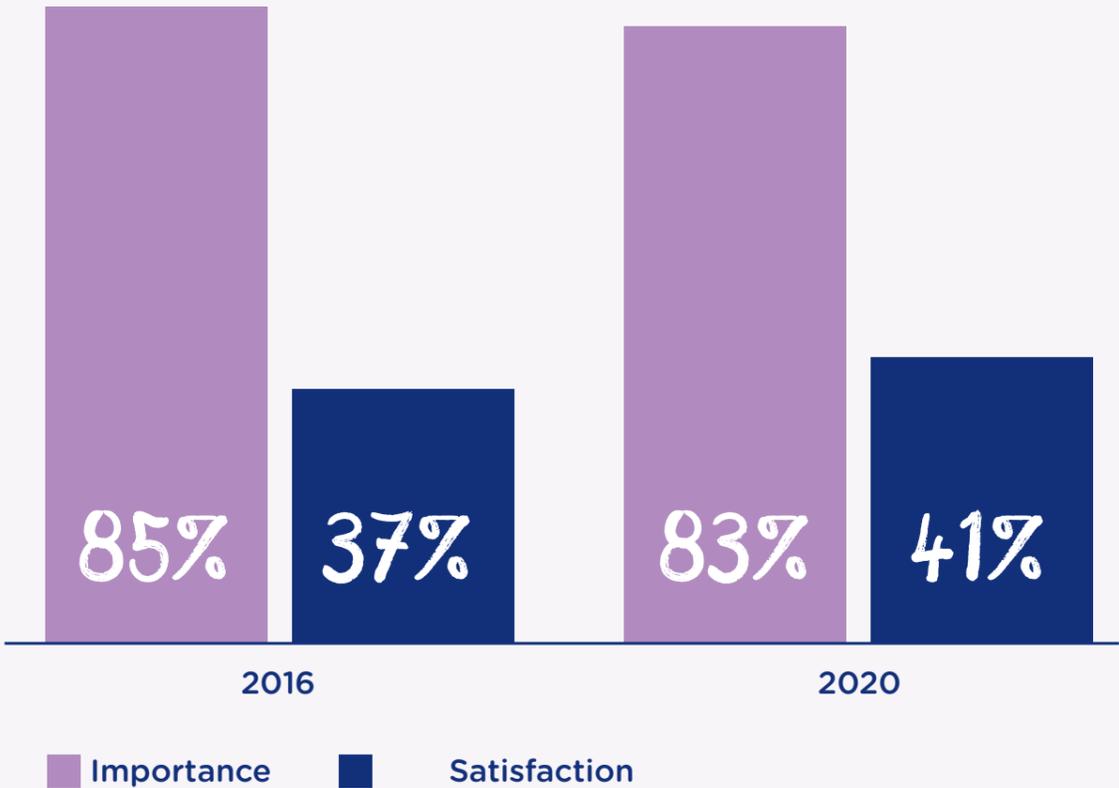
The percentage of adults rating Community engagement as good or better rose by 7 percentage points from 2018 to 2019.



% adults rating Council engagement as 'very good' or 'good'

Municipal Survey

In the municipal survey, respondents considered 'opportunities to have a say' important or very important. Satisfaction with this aspect of Knox has increased slightly since 2016 but is still remains less than 50%.



Our current goals

Community engagement and decision making

Success and Priorities

At the focus groups, the community forum on 1 December, and the stakeholder forum, participants were asked to consider what success could look like in Knox over the next 10 years, in relation to community engagement and decision making. They were also asked to identify what we as a community should prioritise to ensure we get there.

What success could look like:

- Council is talking and getting feedback from everyone, particularly those in circumstances prone to social isolation.
- Representatives and leaders are accessible and approachable.
- Community voice is heard, acknowledged and acted upon.
- One-stop shop service hub for all Council services with online forms.
- Increased accessibility to council data, eg. previous budgets.
- Those impacted the most are engaged with trust and respect.
- Increased oversight of council plan goal tracking.
- Greater council transparency of decisions and actions.

Our current goals

Community engagement and decision making

Key Priorities

- More interesting and interactive social media to engage young people.
- Communications from Council on available services.
- Language used is inclusive rather than exclusive and isolating.
- Reduced reliance on forms, especially for 'at need' community members.
- Getting out into and across the community - going to where the people are - to get feedback (listening posts, community forums).
- Ensure all demographics are represented in responses.
- All councillors to get on "nextdoor" to get local immediate current issues and feedback.
- Better feedback to ratepayers on where money is spent.
- Use of Citizen Juries, selected by lot, for engagement on strategic decision making.

Council's role

At the December community forum, participants determined that Knox Council's role in this goal should be to partner, fund and provide.





Conclusion

Throughout 2020, community members and stakeholders told us what they love about Knox, what their aspirations are, what success could look like and what we should prioritise to get there.

The eight goals of the current Community and Council Plan 2017-2021 still resonate for people. However the wording and how the goals are aligned need to be considered.

Based on the research and recent engagement activities, the Knox community as a whole, needs to focus on the following areas for future:

- Physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Inclusion, belonging and support for others (especially those most in need).
- The natural environment
- Local economy and employment.

Most people felt there was a deep connection between these four areas, which was particularly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. However the link to the other goals was also acknowledged, eg. transport, housing, etc.

Participants of the engagement activities acknowledged all the great attributes the community has already and believe these can be built on to make Knox a great place now and into the future.

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