

Community  
Well-being

## 15



## GOALS

- › 15 (A) All Victorians have income and access to public services to be able to flourish and live with dignity.
- › 15 (B) Lifelong learning opportunities that are culturally appropriate are available for diverse learners of all ages and income levels.
- › 15 (C) High quality, affordable formal education is available and accessible for students of all ages.
- › 15 (D) Victorians know their neighbours, are connected to communities of interest and have diverse opportunities for social interaction.
- › 15 (E) Victorians can support themselves and their neighbours in difficult times.
- › 15 (F) Victoria is a place where people come to live, work and play, regardless of age, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, culture, income, sexual orientation, ability and family status.
- › 15 (G) Victorians are healthy and have a network of health-related amenities, facilities and programs to promote wellness and meet the needs of all levels of mental and physical care.
- › 15 (H) Victoria is a safe city, where everyone feels secure in public, in their homes and workplaces.
- › 15 (I) Victoria continues to advance equity, diversity and inclusion.

## OVERVIEW

A sustainable community provides the physical and social infrastructure necessary for **equity** as well as community and individual well-being. Physical features such as a walkable, wheelable land use pattern, good quality housing, and nearby recreational facilities can have a positive impact on quality of life and community well-being, however, the physical features of a city are just one factor. Community well-being also relies on the city's "soft" infrastructure, such as the network of services, partnerships, resources, groups, and other social relationships that collectively help people achieve their basic needs, support each other and reach their full potential. To create more equitable access to programs and services, cities must also seek to remove systemic barriers, reflect and respond to multiple lived experiences, and ensure inclusion and access for all current and future generations.

While many people in Victoria experience a relatively high level of well-being, buoyed by strong social relationships, feelings of belonging and the ability to meet their basic needs (as reflected in the bi-annual **Happiness Index**), other indicators reflect that marginalized groups have different experiences. The 2021 Community Report on Racism in Greater Victoria indicated that 70% of racialized respondents reported feeling undervalued, isolated, and unsafe in Victoria because of their race. The high cost of living in the city – particularly with respect to housing and childcare – make it challenging for many to make ends meet, with approximately one-quarter of Victorians living below the 2006 **Low Income Cut Off**. Additionally, as of 2016, 21% of Victorians were in **Core Housing Need**, with renter households, seniors, and those with a disability most acutely affected.

Stable housing and appropriate services are needed by a range of people, including those facing mental health challenges, addictions, and homelessness. There were at least 1,523 individuals who experienced homelessness on the night of March 11, 2020. Concerns regarding community and personal safety, comfort, and inclusion are amplified in this context of need. Underlying causes that may lead to crime range widely from systemic, structural and distributional inequalities to lack of support for housing and mental health.

### SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS AND NEEDS

Victoria is also growing more diverse, socio-economically, culturally, and demographically. Over the next 30 years, the proportion of Victorians over the age of 65 is projected to increase dramatically, from 20% in 2016 to 30% in 2041. At the same time, the proportion of children in Victoria is declining and the city continues to see a loss of residents in their family forming years.

Of the 6,161 new residents, who moved to Victoria between July 1, 2018, and July 1, 2019, 2,545 counted as net migrants from foreign countries. Meanwhile, colonialism has had a lasting legacy and continues to create barriers for both local First Nations and urban Indigenous communities, demonstrating the need for a genuine commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

The City continues to acknowledge Victorians' various levels of ability. Approximately 21% of the population (about 19,000 people) have one or more disabilities – accounting for approximately one in five Victorians. An estimated one in ten Victorians over the age of 15 have severe or very severe disabilities. Pain, flexibility, and mobility-related disabilities, along with mental health are the most commonly reported types of disabilities.

There is also growing acknowledgement of the existing diversity and **intersectionality** of Victorians, by age, sex, gender identity or expression, ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, and economic status. The importance of recognizing, celebrating, and planning for diverse needs and greater community inclusion has grown in recent years.

The strength of a community relies on the well-being of each of its members. Collectively, this plan's policies aim to advance a healthy and inclusive community today and in the future using the tools and powers within municipal jurisdiction. It seeks to support a holistic approach to improving social and health conditions as well as the community's economic and environmental assets.

Building community capacity means considering and addressing the needs of diverse residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable or marginalized.

This plan aims to enhance social inclusion for people of all socio-economic levels, cultural backgrounds and abilities; to strengthen the multi-generational features of neighbourhoods; to provide opportunities for civic engagement; and to enhance the sense of belonging, dignity and safety within individual and collective realms. Collective solutions are required to ensure that everyone in Victoria has access to the necessary supports to thrive.

### BROAD OBJECTIVES

The community well-being policies of this plan address six broad objectives:

- 15 (a) That a mix of housing, services, facilities and programs encourage and support a socio-economically and culturally inclusive community.
- 15 (b) That facilities, services, places of employment and housing are accessible and welcoming to users.
- 15 (c) That planning, services and programs are equitably distributed and foster multigenerational, inclusive neighbourhoods.
- 15 (d) That strong partnerships build the capacity of individuals and the community.
- 15 (e) That all community members have the opportunity to participate in civic affairs.
- 15 (f) That all community members have an enhanced sense of personal and public safety, and community support in times of crisis.

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- 15.1 Encourage and support an equitable distribution of community services, social services and facilities across the city, to support all residents.
- 15.2 Establish policies and fee structures to ensure that City programs and facilities are affordable, inclusive, and reflective of the lived experiences of residents of diverse ability, age, citizenship, education, ethnicity, race, gender, income, religion, and sexual orientation [SEE ALSO SECTION 16 – ARTS AND CULTURE].
- 15.3 Support the efforts of senior government, business and community organizations to reduce poverty through:
  - 15.3.1 Advocating to senior levels of government for fair income assistance rates;
  - 15.3.2 Enabling stable housing with support services;
  - 15.3.3 Encouraging jobs that provide a household-sustaining wage for employees [SEE ALSO SECTION 14 – ECONOMY]; and,
  - 15.3.4 Providing education and skills training programs to build individual capacity [SEE ALSO SECTION 13 – HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS].

## ACCESSIBILITY

- 15.4 Establish guidelines and mechanisms to remove and prevent barriers to accessing public spaces, publicly accessible private spaces, mobility systems, and City-owned buildings, facilities, and processes to ensure equitable access to programs, services, information, and civic engagement.
- 15.5 Encourage senior governments, and community and business partners to improve the accessibility of public and private spaces, including places of employment, housing, transportation facilities, websites, public events, and visitor-oriented sites, including through collaboration and demonstrated leadership in City accessibility initiatives [SEE ALSO SECTION 13 – HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS].

## MULTIGENERATIONAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

- 15.6 Consider the needs of children, youth and older adults in planning initiatives, specifically those related to land use, housing, transportation, parks, facilities and community services.
- 15.7 Work collaboratively with senior governments, the health authority, and other public and private sector partners to plan for the housing, health, employment, recreational, educational, cultural and other needs of Victoria's population as it ages.
- 15.8 Encourage the maintenance and development of quality, accessible, affordable daycare, including preschool, out-of-school care and elder daycare spaces, to support families and employers by:
  - 15.8.1 Considering the provision of non-profit daycare space as an amenity in new residential, mixed-use and commercial developments to be secured through agreement; and,
  - 15.8.2 Encouraging new childcare, daycare and elder daycare spaces and programs throughout the city.
  - 15.8.3 Liasing with senior governments to ensure alignment of childcare funding and initiatives related to increasing childcare spaces including, but not limited to universal childcare plans.
  - 15.8.4 Consider the development of more detailed policies and regulatory updates to support childcare opportunities throughout the city.
- 15.9 Seek opportunities to promote social interaction between different generations through the design and programming of inclusive and welcoming public spaces, parks and public facilities.

## SCHOOLS

- 15.10 Seek to sustain a population base sufficient to maintain existing public schools by encouraging diverse housing, amenities and services suitable for families with children in all neighbourhoods through policies, local area plans, and zoning.
- 15.11 Seek to maintain strong partnerships and communication with the school district to ensure there is a shared understanding of strategic priorities and impacts that decisions may have on communities and advocate to keep existing schools open, as key features of complete neighbourhoods.
- 15.12 If the school district deems it necessary to close an existing school, work collaboratively with the school district to retain public school buildings and land in public ownership and available to provide education and a mix of community and recreational services and other uses suitable to the needs of the community they serve.
- 15.13 Encourage the school district to make facilities available for community use outside of school hours [SEE ALSO SECTION 9 – PARKS AND RECREATION].

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 15.14 Incorporate community development objectives into citywide and local area planning processes.
- 15.15 Work closely with community centres, seniors centres, community organizations, the public library, community members and other partners to seek innovative opportunities to sustain, enhance and deliver community-based recreational, educational, cultural and social programs that seek to be accessible to and inclusive of Victoria's diverse population [SEE ALSO SECTION 9 – PARKS AND RECREATION].
- 15.16 Develop and maintain partnerships with senior governments, the health authority, neighbouring municipalities, community organizations, informal groups, the private sector and others to build community capacity, and to provide a range of facilities and community services to serve people throughout their lives, including:
  - 15.16.1 Social services to support attainment of basic needs;
  - 15.16.2 A range of local and regional health and wellness facilities and services;

- 15.16.3 An accessible and inclusive network of regional recreational facilities and services;
- 15.16.4 Regional public library facilities and services;
- 15.16.5 Opportunities and facilities for lifelong learning and skills training;
- 15.16.6 Places of worship and other spaces for contemplation; and,
- 15.16.7 Settlement services and cultural centres.
- 15.17 Encourage collaboration among community service providers and community organizations across the city and at the regional level.
- 15.18 Work with community partners to promote a culture of volunteerism, community service and neighbourliness.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- 15.19 Encourage effective public participation in City processes and service delivery by maintaining and implementing a Civic Engagement Strategy that:
  - 15.19.1 Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision;
  - 15.19.2 Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
  - 15.19.3 Addresses barriers and provides support for those who are affected by a decision to be involved in the decision-making process;
  - 15.19.4 Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way;
  - 15.19.5 Promotes sustainable and transparent decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers;
  - 15.19.6 Provides opportunities for the public's contribution to influence the decision;
  - 15.19.7 Communicates the outcome of public engagement processes [SEE ALSO SECTION 19 – PLAN ADMINISTRATION];

- 15.19.8 Demonstrates inclusivity in City publications, materials, events and public meetings;
- 15.19.9 Facilitates regular activities to improve the City's knowledge and understanding of lived experiences across Victoria; and,
- 15.19.10 Seeks to address imbalances in power in engagement processes, and provides support and capacity building to community organizations and residents who have been excluded from traditional engagement processes.

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 15.20 Collaborate with the Victoria Police Department, the Fire Department, the health authority, community and social service providers, businesses, community groups, and residents with diverse lived experiences to encourage a safe and thriving Victoria, including through:
  - 15.20.1 Working collaboratively to develop a better understanding of what safety means for Victoria's diverse population, including for marginalized communities, people who are racialized, low-income, unhoused or precariously housed as well as people who use drugs.
  - 15.20.2 Working collaboratively with community groups and service providers and other partners to consider, where possible, the design of community facilities, spaces, and the delivery of community services to be inclusive, welcoming, and able to meet the needs of local residents, businesses and the diverse users of public space.
  - 15.20.3 Consider and support opportunities for community-based approaches to safety and crisis response.
- 15.21 Support personal and public safety by considering opportunities for access, comfort, sociability and multiple uses and activities in the review of designs and plans for private developments and public spaces, including potential changes to seasonal comfort based on anticipated impacts of climate change and extreme weather [SEE ALSO SECTION 8 – PLACEMAKING, SECTION 12 - CLIMATE AND ENERGY].
- 15.22 Collaborate with community organizations, neighbours and other stakeholders to address issues related to personal safety and security in parks and outdoor recreation facilities.
- 15.23 Seek to better understand and address systemic inequities that result in substance use and addiction and support public health and community safety by working collaboratively with other governments, agencies, the health authority, Victoria Police Department, business and community organizations to take a coordinated, comprehensive **Five Pillars** approach that:
  - 15.23.1 Prevents problematic substance use;
  - 15.23.2 Reduces harm to individuals and communities from the sale and use of both legal and illegal substances;
  - 15.23.3 Provides a range of support services, specialized care facilities and treatment programs for people who have addictions;
  - 15.23.4 Supports access to safe, affordable and quality housing; and,
  - 15.23.5 Delivers enforcement and response services to support community peace, public order and safety.

