Making Canberra: A human-centered city charter
I/We, the undersigned, recognise the benefits of a human-centred approach to design, creation and production of a liveable and loveable city that enables health and wellbeing for the community. We respect the First Nations communities. This shared urban experience will include:

1. Co-designed services and shared governance.
Engage and empower communities through governance structures which enable community-led decision making and support a culture of participation and advocacy. This includes community-led services delivered collaboratively.

2. Equal opportunities and prosperity.
Ensure that all residents have access to equal opportunities by promoting inclusion, finding creative ways for people to participate and flourish, discouraging cynicism and encouraging optimism, and respecting human rights for all. In order to achieve these goals, overcome dissonance between community and individual wellbeing and commercial aims; remove commercial, social, bureaucratic and cultural barriers to physical and mental health and well-being; and adopt ethical investment policies, always remembering that giving access and opportunity to the neediest improves access and services for everybody.

3. Prioritise protecting the natural world in which we live.
Take immediate and ambitious action to mitigate and adapt to human-generated climate change. As a community, be active, connected and resilient. Create a liveable city that supports sustainability, a circular and shared economy, and biophilic (nature-loving and nourishing) communities. At multiple scales and efforts, take a bioregional approach to prioritise the protection of the planet.

Make communities more resilient and more accepting of diversity, thereby reducing the risks and impacts of disasters and social crises (including food and water security and bushfire) by strengthening emergency alertness, social trust, connection, cohesion, and shared ownership in a digital age.

5. Spaces and places for all.
Commit to a city that leads by example in designing places for health and wellbeing. Urban spaces and places allow residents to thrive physically and spiritually by ensuring that community assets are designed and developed for public use. Encourage widespread use of the spaces through public education and incentives. We emphasise the need for quality human-centred urban planning and design of physical and social infrastructure to ensure safe, accessible and adequate housing, habitat connectivity, playful and green open spaces, built environments and environmentally-friendly mobility systems for all. Community needs must take priority over private interests in achieving this goal.

"The risk of not embracing this charter is larger than the risk of continuing business as usual."
With these shared principles, our community values will be reflected in policy and transformational actions.

“Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love.”

Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion of 1986

We are committed to reducing the physical, social and institutional barriers that limit us from living and embracing these principles of a shared urban experience. We will work with others to help create a culture where people live meaningful lives in a healthy environment.

Signed

Name

Position

Date
Vision

To become a world renowned mid-sized city that is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of the community through transformational actions in human-centred design.

We are aware of and promote the UN New Urban Agenda and the relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing, 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, and 17 - Partnerships for the Goals) and seek to model how they can be implemented in the Canberra context.

Principles and transformative actions

This Charter identifies the needs of the people and provides a common shared framework to help all of us to refocus existing policies, projects, activities and relationships in order to create a culture where people construct meaning in life by enhancing the environment and our shared society through our commitment to this Charter and its strategic principles.

Under each strategic principle, the transformative actions listed provide a practical list of improvements that can be made in most communities. These may need additional activities in response to local need; this is encouraged. The charter will be reviewed in a two year cycle.
We hereby call on policymakers to:

Commit to making the Canberra region a biophilic city, addressing issues of water conservation (keeping in mind the balance of access and equity), energy production and use, resource recovery (as opposed to simply waste management), sustainable transport, and preservation and improvement of nature and gardens in the city.

Develop, pass, implement, enforce, and monitor policies to meet these shared goals; ensure that adequate funding is available. Policies should be drafted and amended in a collaborative process with full community engagement. Policies should include measures to reward property owners for reducing energy use and engaging in resource recovery (reducing solid waste); and revise building and development codes in order to utilise sustainable building practices and materials and to adhere to energy conservation standards.

Revise economic goals in order to emphasise wellbeing of living creatures and the environment, including access to decently paid employment and basic necessities for all residents, over economic growth. This includes a policy to incorporate externalities into the cost of products; creating enforceable business standards for businesses to factor the environment into their models, policies, and actions (e.g. socially responsible targets, triple bottom line justifications, legacy obligations etc.); creating or reinforcing incentives for better business practices; and utilising meaningful penalties for breaches.

Recognise and develop the social commons as a resource for creating a sustainable, resilient, diverse and empathetic city. Develop community ownership and management of public spaces, with a focus on actively involving those with fewer material resources and the young; encourage more innovation from government in partnership with the community; utilise private investment within strict mandates and with firm policy of avoiding outdoor advertising; and improve regulations for developers to ensure our goals.

Ensure that residents and visitors can move safely, conveniently, comfortably and affordably throughout the city with the minimum harm to the environment and with an aim at enhancing community adhesion, with a focus on excellent environments for active mobility and high quality public transport with a focus on access rather than just mobility.
Remarks on actions

The following actions were brainstormed during the forum and will become the “living” part of this charter. Members of the community will be encouraged to submit their ideas and vote on priorities on a dedicated website.

Governance for and with the people

- Design co-governance mechanisms to achieve that which the community needs but cannot do alone.
- Invest in mechanisms that allow for co-governance to increase community capacity to co-govern.
- Create a co-governance monitoring and evaluation performance framework developed through a deliberative process.

Equal opportunities and prosperity

- Identify and address barriers to diverse public input; encourage greater individual involvement/action in policymaking.
- Identify and remove commercial barriers to participation in policymaking.
- Identify policies and legislation which hinder our goals and encourage government/legislators to improve them.
- Commit to deliver universal access to services for all residents.
- Create a dialogue on meaningful definitions of prosperity that encompass aspects of quality of life beyond material wealth.
Prioritise protecting the natural world in which we live

- Develop programs to build a love of nature in the next generation.
- Create a winter strategy to connect non-destructively with nature all year (outdoors).
- Incentivise use of natural energy production methods and reduction of waste/consumption in all sectors including agriculture, industry, transport, and households.
- Design systems to preserve and enhance natural life locally and within the bioregion.
- Implement and increase composting options that are appropriate for apartment living.

Security and peace

- Embed biophilia, empathy, and respect for diversity in the educational curriculum.
- Utilise and incentivise TAFE to build integrated design principles and skills and ‘permaculture’ skills including increasing community capability to satisfy needs for housing, food, and earth care.
- Utilise the existing educational system to incentivise and facilitate reduced consumption.
- Enhance opportunities for community activities and participation in decision making and budgeting.
- Decentralise workplaces and enable remote working and flexible, part-time working options to reduce travel needs and improve ability to balance earning and caring.
- Develop more shared economies (change regulations as necessary, create opportunities and incentives) across housing, transport, food production, jobs, and other areas.
- Support urban food environments (food streets, commons/community gardens).
- Continue to actively address systemic issues of inequality/alienation.
Designing spaces and places for all

- Create city repair projects.
- Open school spaces outside of school hours to the community.
- Address accessibility through low cost/free entry; design for all abilities and for people of different ages; design for different activities and users at all times.
- Encourage nature-based learning and play; avoid undue fear of risk.
- Foster collaborative community learning; move some activities outdoors such as libraries, community development and community education.
- Create policies to prevent further privatisation of spaces.

Additional actions

Please write any further actions in response to your local needs or circumstances in the space below.
SEE-LCO
HOUSING CANBERRA

RECLAIMING THE COMMONS

PUBLIC SPACE ENCLOSURE.

HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY

FIND A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR THE DRAFT CHARTER

NEW URBAN AGENDA
Biophilic Cities for Human Good Health and Wellbeing

SEE-CHANGE
COMMUNITIES CREATING A SUSTAINABLE CANBERRA

Urban Synergies Group

the green institute