

Building Capacity of Urban Communities to Care for Local Biodiversity

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This presentation highlights facets of a municipal conservation program (Knox Gardens for Wildlife), a partnership between a local council (Knox City) and community group (Knox Environment Society) in Melbourne Australia, which engages residents to garden to help conserve the municipality's indigenous flora and fauna. The program began in 2006 and continues to grow, currently numbering over 600 Knox households. Narratives of 16 diverse program members obtained from semi-structured interviews in their gardens, supplemented by responses to a previous Council survey of members, are used to identify the process by which a land stewardship purpose and behaviours can develop, along with attachments to place, nature and community. Results illuminate key program features that involve and sustain residents to manage their land for landscape-focused conservation goals while building connections with council and community. The member interview data, along with information from interviews with several Knox staff and Knox Environment Society leaders and a focus group of program volunteers (32 individuals spoken to in total) is mapped onto a community capacity building framework. The framework is used to assess how the program strengthens natural; social; and human capital, and their deployment, to address challenges of achieving native biodiversity conservation and community wellbeing. I discuss opportunities to build on this exploratory study. I conclude with a brief description of a pilot program (Earth to Humans) informed by this research that is setting up a framework to support urban local government/community group hubs to co-design initiatives that involve residents in caring for local biodiversity, and related performance measures and processes.