



13.1 COMMUNITY GARDENS ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider feedback received through the public consultation period received through Have Your Say on the draft 'Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines'.
- 1.2 To present the Draft Final 'Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines'
- 1.3 Seek Council approve the adoption of the guidelines.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the ordinary Council Meeting on the 6 November 2019, Council received a petition to establish a community garden in Port Melbourne. A motion was passed at this meeting, requesting officers to consider how Council can respond to requests to establish community gardens within a short timeframe.
- 2.2 Neighbouring councils have clear policies and guidelines for the establishment of community gardens as well as separate guidelines for verge plantings. Council presently does not have an adopted policy or guidelines for new community gardens. Council does have established guidelines for nature strips.
- 2.3 On 4 February 2020, Council received a briefing on the draft of the Community Garden Assessment Guidelines and they were refined accordingly to form this document.
- 2.4 These Guidelines will provide a framework for how Council will consider the establishment of new, and management of existing, community gardens within the municipality.
- 2.5 These Guidelines provide a series of principles and responsibilities that align with the intent of Council's draft 'Public Space Strategy'. These principles and responsibilities will guide and direct community when establishing and managing all licenced community gardens within the municipality. It is intended this document will sit as an operational strategy under the pending 'Public Space Strategy' and will operate alongside Council's 'Nature Strip Guidelines'.
- 2.6 The draft Assessment Guidelines were made available for community consultation between the 21 February and the 12 March 2020, via Council's Have Your Say engagement platform. Established garden groups were informed via email and encouraged to provide input. Five submissions were received during this period. Responses indicate a general level of support for community gardens, however several specific issues have been raised that require consideration and response and officers have suggested changes which form part of the Draft Final Guidelines, contained in Attachment 1.
- 2.7 Officers now seek Council's endorsement of these Guidelines.



3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Approves the adoption of the Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines.
- 3.2 Authorises officers to provide direct communication to Licenced Community Garden Groups informing them of the Community Garden Assessment Guidelines and their application.
- 3.3 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the Guidelines to correct any minor drafting errors that do not materially alter the intent of the guidelines.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 Council has well over 30 productive gardens across the municipality including:
 - 4.1.1 Licenced community gardens on council owned or managed land
 - 4.1.2 Gardens on nature strips or verges
 - 4.1.3 Raised planters in public open spaces and parks
 - 4.1.4 Those on private land / land owned or managed by other government authorities.
- 4.2 The Assessment Guidelines outline a process for considering requests for the establishment of 'licensed community gardens on council owned or managed land' only. The process includes two gateways that applicants will be required to proceed through prior to Council considering and determining whether to approve and licence the garden.
- 4.3 Principles within the draft Final Assessment Guidelines provide a framework for how Council will manage and consider future requests for all community gardens. These have been updated to reflect the current objectives of Council's draft 'Public Space Strategy.
- 4.4 Places for People
 - 4.4.1 Community Garden Groups will advance the important role these gardens perform in embedding local community connections.
 - 4.4.2 Garden establishment should consider appropriate application of crime preventative design to create a safe environment for all users.
 - 4.4.3 Community Gardens are effectively governed and self-supporting.
 - 4.4.4 There are clear roles & responsibilities between Council and Community Garden Groups.
 - 4.4.5 Community Garden Groups are responsible for the proactive consideration and management of risk
- 4.5 Public Spaces for a Higher Density City
 - 4.5.1 A network of Community Gardens are equitably distributed across all neighbourhoods within the municipality.



4.5.2 Council should consider the proximity of existing Community Gardens when considering the establishment of any new garden requests.

4.5.3 Sites are deemed suitable for use as a community garden.

4.6 Sharing, Inclusive and Diverse Spaces

4.6.1 Community Garden Groups will promote a broader use and purpose for community garden sites as multi-purpose facilities and gathering places. This includes reporting on activities hosted for the neighbourhood which promote social inclusion.

4.6.2 Community Gardens are welcoming, accessible and inclusive of the broader Port Phillip community rather than providing exclusive access to a specific group.

4.6.3 Council does not have other requirements for that area of land.

4.7 Sustainable Spaces

4.7.1 Gardens will improve sustainability outcomes

4.7.2 Sites will have access to adequate and sustainable water supply and sufficient sunlight

4.7.3 Garden design will describe how design mitigations will be implemented, in response to risks associated with soil contamination

4.8 The Guidelines articulate the responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in community garden projects, including obtaining capital and recurrent funding and resources independent of Council, and the overall management of risks.

4.9 The responsibilities, are premised on active community involvement to ensure the adequate establishment and ongoing management of these valued community assets. They also respond to situations where a change in circumstance or interest may occur and the cessation or relocation of a garden may be necessary (e.g. an alternative use of the proposed space).

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

5.1 The draft Assessment Guidelines placed out for community comment were informed through the extensive consultation conducted through the development of Council's draft 'Public Space Strategy'.

5.2 Consultation on the draft Assessment Guidelines commenced on the 21 February 2020 and extended until the 12 March 2020. Five submissions were received via Council's 'Have Your Say' online engagement website.

5.3 Responses received indicate a general level of support for community gardens, however several specific issues have been raised that require consideration and response.

5.4 Attachment 2 provides an overview of key issues raised in community feedback and provides a recommended officer response and where appropriate suggested changes to form part of the Draft Final Guidelines (Attachment 1). Key issues raised through community feedback include:

5.4.1 *Scope of Guidelines*: Suggestions to extend guidelines to incorporate: Native community plantings and composting.



- 5.4.2 *Definition and Types of Community Gardens*: Indicates the definition of Community Gardens is unclear.
- 5.4.3 *Providing Support to Garden Groups*: Requests that Council should support Community Gardening groups more by reducing red tape, identifying clear resources and providing encouragement from Council.
- 5.4.4 *Garden Locations*: Suggests the guidelines should identify potential locations and notes ambiguity with language around siting of new gardens where existing gardens are proximate.
- 5.4.5 *Consider Local Area Needs and Constraints*. That there is the need to provide a diversity of gardens and the need to consider safety and security in considering whether or not gardens should be gated.
- 5.4.6 *Responsibilities: Insurance*. Requirements for insurance should consider the impact on membership fees which may make gardens less accessible to disadvantaged groups, and the need to define those items that are covered by Council's insurance and those items insured by the Community Garden Groups.
- 5.5 Input has been provided by Council's Open Space and Recreation, Project Services, Organisational Performance, Asset Management, Safety and Amenity, City Development, Strategy and Design, Transport Choices and Environmental Sustainability departments. This has included working sessions to confirm principles, and to map out procedures that are outlined in the assessment.
- 5.6 Community gardens align directly with the 'Council Plan', the 'Health and Well Being Plan' and will sit under the pending 'Public Space Strategy'.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Applications for Licenced Community Gardens on Council Owned or Managed land, must be made by an incorporated community group.
- 6.2 Assessments will consider if groups have demonstrated an awareness of risks associated with a publicly accessible community garden and outlined a risk analysis to manage these. This will include the consideration, and a strategy to manage potential soil contamination as it impacts on edible produce.
- 6.3 Incorporated garden groups are required to manage their own public liability insurance and will be required to provide Council with evidence this has been obtained in a manner that is consistent with other users of Council land and buildings.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 The assessment of applications is dependent on current staffing levels and there are no costs associated with adoption of these Guidelines. The establishing of guidelines will make Council processes much clearer to both staff and members of the community.
- 7.2 Costs associated with the establishment and ongoing maintenance of gardens is the responsibility of garden groups to pursue through grants, sponsorship or other sources. Grants may be issued through Council's grants programs, but only in circumstances where applications can meet the intention and criteria of those funding programs.
- 7.3 In assessing individual applications, in line with Council's Property Policy, Council will consider costs associated in allocating minimum rental rates to support community



garden groups to utilise what may generally be considered underutilised assets. This would be consistent with other users of Council land and buildings.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 Community gardens provide a setting in which residents can contribute to the development of a sustainable urban environment. They are places for learning and sharing knowledge by being physical exemplars of sustainable living practices.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Community gardens can provide much more than just the opportunity to grow food locally. They sustain community spirit and foster community connections in the places that these residents share, care and are collectively responsible for.
- 9.2 Community gardens provide opportunities for residents to actively build community through shared activities. A recognised recreational activity, gardening contributes to the health and wellbeing of the community through a range of social, environmental and educational benefits. A successful community garden can also be an activity that is enjoyed at one time across by different generations making it a truly inclusive activity for all segments of the community.
- 9.3 Principles within the draft guidelines seek to broaden benefits by encouraging incorporated garden groups to more actively engage with the wider Port Phillip community. This will ensure sites are not for the exclusive use of select groups. This may also have benefits in assisting in developing links with other community activities (e.g. Men's Shed) and strengthen ties into the educational programs at local schools.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 Community gardens align directly with the Council Plan, Councils Public Health and Well Being Plan and will sit under the Council's pending 'Public Space Strategy'.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

A communications plan to inform the community and key stakeholders of Council's Guidelines will include promotion through Council's website and direct notification provided to existing Licenced Garden groups.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 The guidelines will be promoted through Council's website.
- 11.2.2 Direct notification will be provided to established Community Garden Groups.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

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ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Attachment 1 Draft Final Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines**
- 2. Attachment 2 Summary of Submissions Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines**