

CITY OF MELBOURNE COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Definition and Scope
4. Role of the City of Melbourne
5. Development Principles
6. Decision Making
7. Role of the Community

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

1. Introduction

Community gardening provides many social, environmental and economic benefits for local people.

The City of Melbourne encourages community gardening as a sustainable living option and as a way for people to get involved with their local community. Community gardens contribute to public health and wellbeing, learning, social connections and can improve local food security.

The City of Melbourne has a community development approach to community gardens to build effective partnerships between garden groups and organisations in their local community to facilitate community ownership and support long-term success of a garden.

2. Purpose

The Community Garden Policy sets out the City of Melbourne's role in managing community gardens on land it owns and/or manages. This includes its aims for the gardens, the resources it will invest in them, its principles for their operation and how it assesses proposals for new community gardens.

This policy responds to two key goals of the City of Melbourne Council Plan 2013–2017:

- A city for people.
- An eco-city.

Urban agriculture within the municipality includes balcony gardening, courtyards, vertical gardens, rooftops, facades and street gardens. While community gardens may also operate on private land, this policy applies to community gardens on land the City of Melbourne owns and/or manages.

A Guide to Community Garden Guidelines in the City of Melbourne is a companion document to this policy and provides more details about planning, operating and managing a community garden.

3. Definition and scope

Community gardens are generally not-for-profit, local spaces that operate on designated land for residents and volunteers to grow fresh food, participate in sustainable urban practices, improve food literacy, learn horticultural skills, build community connections through shared activities, as well as enjoy the good harvest together.

This policy applies only to community gardens that operate on land that the City of Melbourne owns and/or operates. It does not apply to gardens on privately-owned land.

This policy sits beneath the overarching framework of the City of Melbourne's *Food City Policy*, which guides coordinated action and decision-making to improve our food system. You can access the policy at melbourne.vic.gov.au/communityservices

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

Other City of Melbourne policies and materials relating to gardens in streetscapes and gardens in private spaces and dwellings include:

- **Street Gardens Policy**
Access the Street Gardens Policy at melbourne.vic.gov.au/sustainability
- **Growing green guide for Melbourne**
Access the Growing Green Guide at growinggreenguide.org
- ***We Need To Talk About Food* – a Sustainable Food Information Tool**
Access the Sustainable Food Information Tool at melbourne.vic.gov.au/sustainability
- **Sustainable gardening in the City of Melbourne**
Access the Sustainable Gardening materials at melbourne.vic.gov.au/sustainability
- **Food waste**
Access the Food Waste information at melbourne.vic.gov.au/enterprisemelbourne/waste

Community gardening models

A range of community garden management models operate successfully across the municipality, which require varying levels of City of Melbourne resources, support and involvement. Community gardens are generally organised and overseen by local residents. This might be a garden committee or a group of people living near a garden, such as in high-rise apartments.

Some garden committees are incorporated while others manage their garden informally with support from volunteers and in-kind resources support from the City of Melbourne.

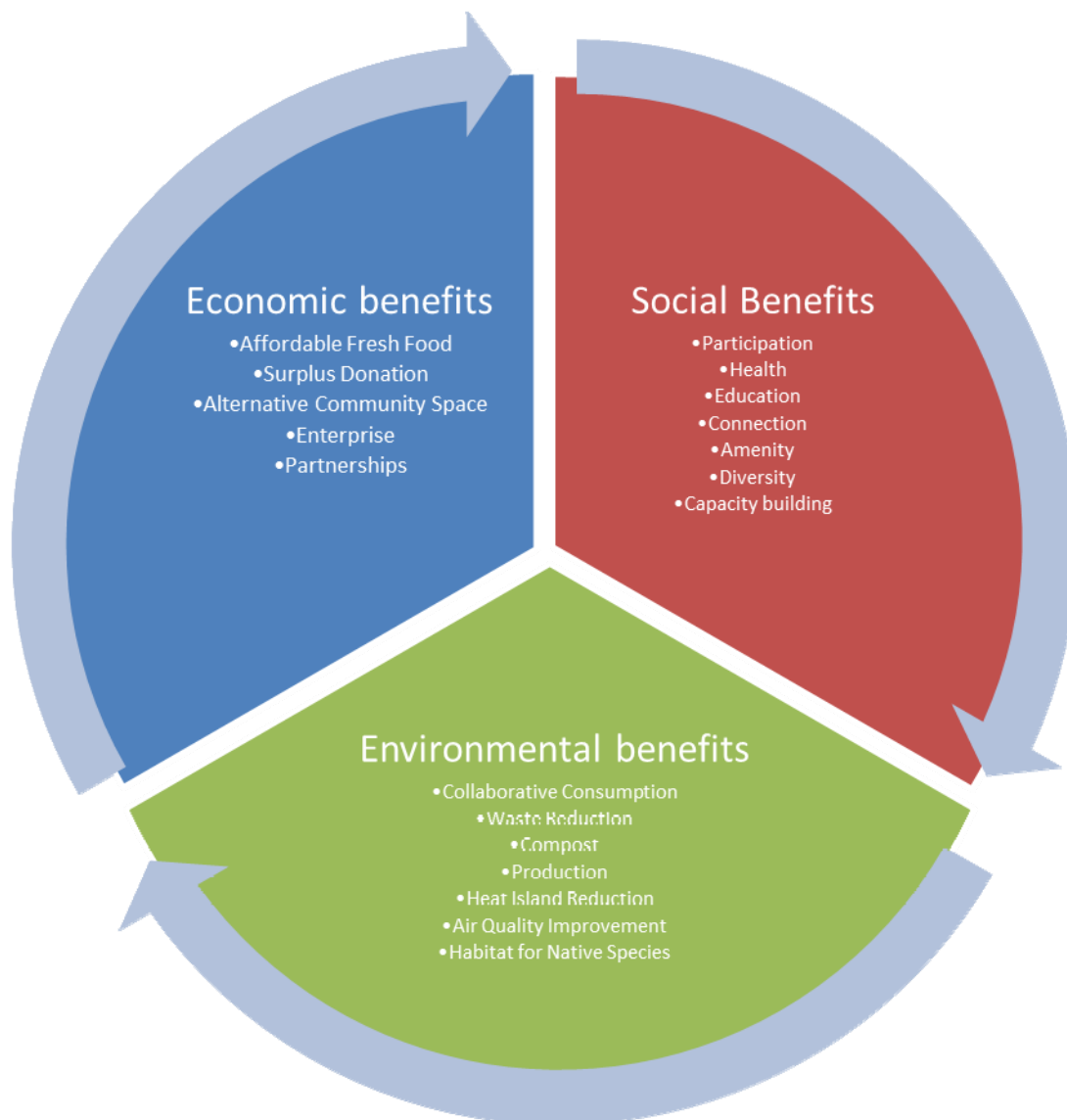
Regardless of the structure of the garden and management arrangements, the City of Melbourne encourages community garden groups to interact and engage with residents and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and knowledge bases, and to seek partnerships with local community organisations. These can include informal networks, child care centres and schools, cafes, businesses and larger enterprises.

Partnerships based on in-kind and financial or pro-bono support may improve the longevity of a garden. The City of Melbourne encourages partnerships at all levels and across all management types to support the development of sustainable community gardens.

4. Role of the City of Melbourne

Community gardening is a valuable recreational activity that contributes to public health and well-being, supports community development, fosters environmental education and increases awareness of sustainability principles (see Figure 1).

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY



The key land management role of the City of Melbourne is as a landlord and strategic planner. The Council's statutory planning role is to ensure that land is designated, developed and managed for appropriate purposes across the municipality.

In relation to community gardens on land that the City of Melbourne owns and/or manages, its primary role is as the 'landlord'. It supports the development and long-term success of community gardens by providing:

- *Information and advice* – Information, connections, knowledge and resources to help the community develop, operate and get involved in community gardens.
- *Education and training* – Support for training to build the skills, knowledge and networks of community garden groups and volunteers.

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

- *Partnership brokerage* – The City of Melbourne helps connect interested community members, groups and businesses with local facilities, new opportunities and relevant networks to support a community garden. In order to support inclusive practice, we will ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are informed of opportunities to get involved in community gardens, such as refugee communities, Aboriginal and Indigenous people. This includes providing gardens that can accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.
- *Funding support* – Community garden groups can apply for funding from the City of Melbourne’s Community Grants program, regardless of whether they are based on public or private land. Funding for community gardens depends on budget constraints and demand. The City of Melbourne shares information on funding and fundraising opportunities. It may also help with:
 - The repair or removal of items in a community garden that pose a significant public health or safety risk. This generally relates to community gardens on land the City of Melbourne owns and/or manages.
 - Public signage and educational materials for a community garden.
- *Infrastructure and planning* – The City of Melbourne may help with identifying potential sites for a community garden through its master planning, interim spaces, or from partnerships with local community organisations or development contributions. It may also support the development, design and lay-out of approved community garden sites.
- *Site management* – The City of Melbourne will make an agreement with the responsible parties so that community gardens on land that the City of Melbourne owns and/or manages operate according to the principles and parameters outlined in this policy and the accompanying *Guide to Community Gardening*. An agreement outlines any terms, specific site requirements and renewal arrangements.

For further details, see *A Guide to Community Gardening in the City of Melbourne*.

5. Development principles

Development principles underpin how the City of Melbourne will work with the community to address expectations of community garden groups. These are:

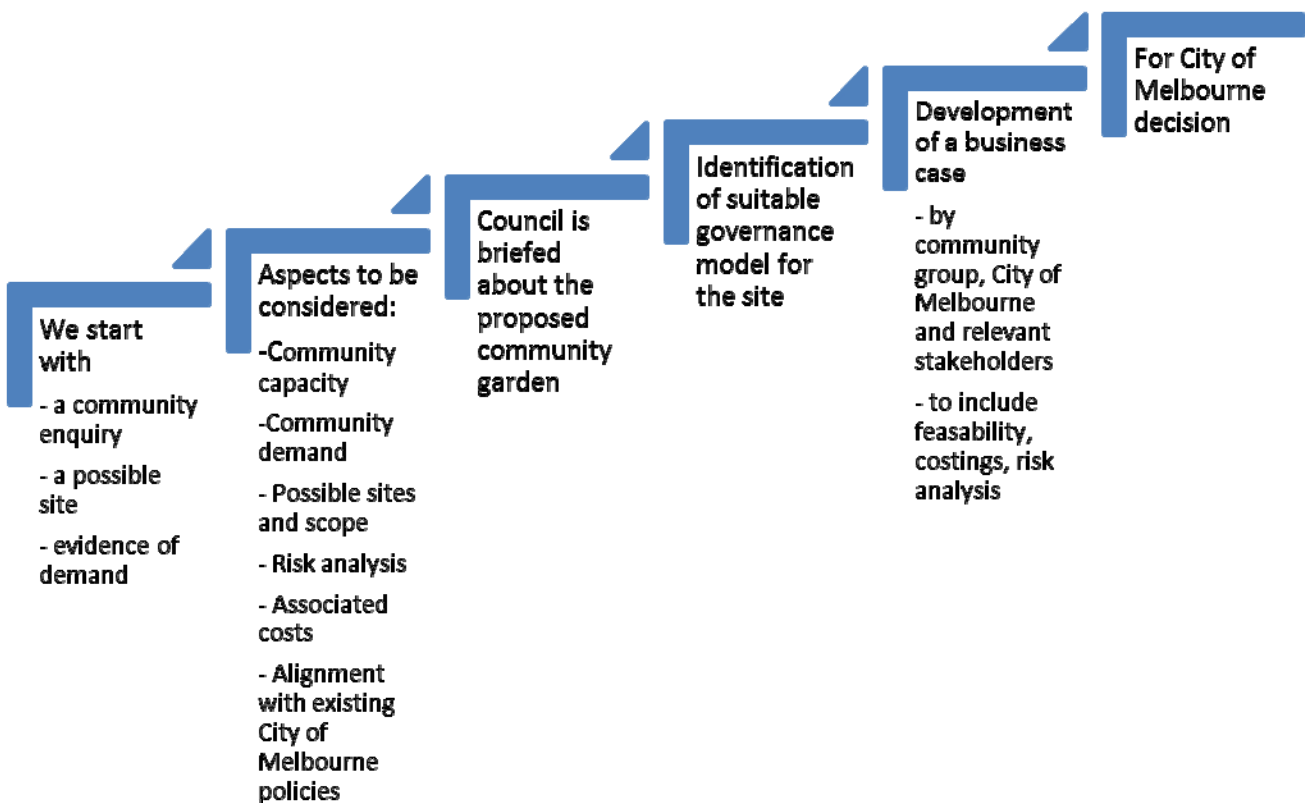
- The social, economic and environmental sustainability of our municipality and neighbourhoods is valued.
- Collaboration and partnerships are promoted so that community gardens operate safely, inclusively, effectively and equitably with processes in place for changing or emerging needs.
- An asset-based approach to community gardening – whereby organisations like the City of Melbourne consults and maximises the skills and knowledge that already exist within a community.

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

- Community gardens and garden groups will take all reasonable steps to consult and engage with relevant stakeholders in the design and management of their garden.
- The City of Melbourne applies an evidence-based approach that promotes knowledge and learning from good practice and acknowledges the needs and aspirations of local residents.
- The City of Melbourne will ensure access and equity to a garden and any associated committee of management or operational group to promote an inclusive community.

6. Decision making

Community gardens support the goals of the City of Melbourne Council Plan 2013–2017 and also its Public Health and Wellbeing Plan objectives by enabling local food production and improving access to affordable and nutritious food. The diagram below outlines the process for making decisions about establishing and managing community gardens within the municipality.



COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

7. Role of the community

Community gardens involve substantial community participation in their planning, management and daily activities. Successful community gardens are generally established by a committed group of local residents and volunteers and are often sponsored by a competent community organisation or local business.

Collaborative projects such as community gardens offer benefits that align with the vision of the City of Melbourne's community plan, *Future Melbourne*, to create a 'bold, inspirational and sustainable city'. This is delivered through best-practice sustainable design, building effective partnerships between community groups, public agencies and corporate or social enterprises and supporting residents to reduce their environmental impacts.

The City of Melbourne has outlined expectations about the role of the community in the operation and management of community gardens in *A Guide to Community Gardening* that accompany this policy. The guidelines outline important aspects of operating a successful community garden including; responsibilities, entitlements, management, partnerships, insurance, risk, incorporation, code of conduct and conflict resolution.