

ITEM 3. CITY FARM PROPOSAL**FILE NO: S076831****SUMMARY**

This report seeks in principle support for the establishment of a City Farm in the City of Sydney.

City Farms are large demonstration sites designed to educate residents, businesses and schools about sustainable living in an interactive setting. They vary considerably but normally include demonstration gardens and orchards, space for community arts and events, educational facilities and displays about sustainable living, communal composting facilities, food outlets selling organic produce such as farmers markets and cafés, and animals such as chickens and ducks.

The City has been approached by the Sydney City Farm (SCF) group to find a suitable site for a City Farm in the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). SCF is a not for profit organisation dedicated to establishing a City Farm in the central Sydney area. Their vision is to create a vibrant centre of learning and community participation where city dwellers are inspired to learn about growing their own food, composting and recycling; and water and energy saving technologies that are suitable for people living in an urban environment.

Developing a City Farm in any open space will require extensive community consultation and resources to investigate appropriate sites, amend or develop open space Plans of Management and, potentially, remediate sites. If the preliminary studies support the establishment of a City Farm, funding will be sought in the 2010/11 budget to resource the implementation of this project.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the principle of establishing a City Farm within the City of Sydney Local Government Area; and
- (B) allocate up to \$50,000 from the General Contingency for resources to investigate models and potential sites for a City Farm within the City of Sydney Local Government Area.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Sydney City Farm and Sustainable Centre Proposal, developed by the Sydney City Farm group

Attachment B: Examples of City Farms in Australia and England

BACKGROUND

1. City Farms are large demonstration sites designed to educate residents, businesses and schools about sustainable living in an interactive setting. They generally include:
 - (a) demonstration gardens, community and market gardens, fruit and nut orchards;
 - (b) space for community arts and events;
 - (c) educational facilities and displays about sustainable living;
 - (d) communal composting and recycling facilities;
 - (e) food outlets selling organic produce such as farmers markets and cafés; and
 - (f) cruelty-free management of animals such as chickens and ducks.
2. Central Sydney is one of the few major cities in Australia to not have a City Farm or large scale demonstration project to showcase sustainability initiatives. Examples of City Farms in Australia include the Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies (CERES) in Melbourne, Collingwood Children's Farm in Melbourne, Northey Street City Farm in Brisbane and City Farm Perth in East Perth.
3. CERES is an example of how City Farms can be a vibrant centre for learning and community participation if managed as a multiple purpose space. It is a 4.5 hectare park in East Brunswick that includes demonstration and community gardens, weekly farmers markets, an education centre, a sustainable house, community nursery, organic café, amphitheatre for events, playgrounds and bicycle paths that link all the different elements of the park together. CERES receives 470,000 visitors a year and runs a number of education programs including tours, excursions and workshops for schools, businesses and residents.
4. CERES is an example of one of the largest City Farms in Australia and has a number of income generating activities through the café, nursery, market and education programs which, in 2008, generated over \$6 million in income. A large percentage of that income is returned to the organisation to help cover the majority of the operational costs of the City Farm. CERES employs 140 staff (42 full time equivalents) and has 500 registered volunteers.
5. Sydney City Farm has an existing membership base of 273 paid members and 1,337 subscribers (i.e. people who are not paid members but subscribe to their website/newsletters). They are keen to work in partnership with the City and other community groups to establish a City Farm. This group has previously been focused on Callan Park at Rozelle as an ideal site, but has not been able to progress a City Farm at this site and is also considering other suitable sites in central Sydney.

6. If a City Farm was to be established within the City of Sydney LGA, communal composting systems would be included in its overall design. Existing City Farms and similar facilities in Brisbane (Northey Street City Farm) and Melbourne (CERES) have communal composting systems as core design elements. Appropriate approvals and, potentially, a licence to establish a large scale composting facility would have to be sought from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.
7. A City Farm would also have the potential to expand the environmental education initiatives of the City and compliment or expand the activities of facilities such as The Watershed in Newtown. A City Farm could also be developed as an environmental education centre with satellite sites supporting community gardens, community nurseries and LandCare sites.

Possible Sites

8. A City Farm could be integrated into an existing large park or public open space and designed to support other uses of the park such as playgrounds and sporting facilities. The following sites could be considered for further investigation:
 - (a) Sydney Park: Sydney Park is near public transport, and has ancillary facilities such as car parks, kiosk, playground and public toilets. The adaptive re-use and restoration of the kilns could also be considered as part of an integrated design for a City Farm in the park. The Plan of Management (PoM) for Sydney Park does not currently allow for a City Farm, so amendments to the Plan would be required in conjunction with community consultation;
 - (b) The Crescent Lands (as part of Glebe foreshore): this area has an existing community nursery that requires renovation, which may also benefit from having a café or kiosk nearby. There is also an existing building that has potential for an adaptive re-use. It is accessible by light rail and has limited parking. A PoM is required for this public open space zoned land and for the buildings owned by the City on Chapman Road.
 - (c) Harold Park: this is not currently owned by Council. Future development of this site may incorporate public open space that could be considered for a City Farm project. A new community garden group in Glebe is interested in developing a community garden at 12 Maxwell Avenue, Glebe, which is located between the Jubilee Park light rail station and the Harold Park site.
9. Other sites not owned by Council will also be investigated such as the Australian Technology Park and nearby Eveleigh Railway Yards. The City will liaise with relevant landowners and other government organisations to discuss other possible sites.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment

10. Creating a City Farm in Sydney will help the City to become an environmental leader and achieve some of its Sustainable Sydney 2030 objectives, such as Action 7.4.5 to: *“investigate creating a centre for Sustainable Sydney in the City to showcase design, culture and the built environment as well as providing exhibition and forum space.”*

11. A City Farm in the centre of Sydney could also contribute to the City's Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision Strategic Directions in the following ways:
 - (a) *A Globally Competitive and Innovative City* – a City Farm could include innovative environmental technologies and attract tourism;
 - (b) *A Leading Environmental Performer* – a City Farm could demonstrate best practice environmental design and the City's commitment to a sustainable environment;
 - (c) *Integrated Transport for a Connected City* and *A City for Pedestrians and Cyclists* – a City Farm could include bike and interactive walking paths in the design and provide space for workshops and educational displays on sustainable transport, bike maintenance and training;
 - (d) *Vibrant Local Communities and Economics* – a City Farm relies upon a high level of community engagement and ownership and could include volunteer programs and joint community management;
 - (e) *A Cultural and Creative City* – a City Farm could provide a focal point for cultural and educational activities and events;
 - (f) *Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design* – a City Farm could showcase sustainable designs that are suitable for an urban environment, such as growing food on balconies, composting and worm farming facilities and the latest energy and water saving technologies; and
 - (g) *Implementation through Effective Partnerships* – a City Farm will involve a range of community partnerships and provide an opportunity for residents to engage in social, cultural and environmental programs.
12. The City Farm concept supports the strategies of the draft Greening Sydney Plan which outlines the City's objectives for the physical greening of the City.

Organisational Impact

13. Developing a City Farm in any open space requires extensive community consultation and resources to investigate appropriate sites, amend or develop open space Plans of Management and, potentially, remediate sites.

Social / Cultural / Community

14. The development of a City Farm could provide a number of social, cultural and community benefits including:
 - (a) providing a vibrant and creative meeting space for recreational and cultural activities, events and education programs; and
 - (b) supporting the objectives of the City's Social Policy 2006 and Social Plan 2006/10 by offering opportunities for community participation, volunteering and the development of social capital and cultural diversity.

Environmental

15. Developing a City Farm would showcase initiatives for sustainable living and provide a number of environmental education opportunities for residents and businesses in the City of Sydney. It could also be designed to provide measurable environmental benefits including:
 - (a) providing community composting facilities that would reduce the City's waste to landfill and CO² emissions;
 - (b) developing community capacity for local food production and support farmers markets, which will reduce the environmental impacts of transporting and distributing fresh food;
 - (c) demonstrating water and energy saving technologies and practices and providing advice and examples of how water saving could be integrated into apartments, terraces and houses in the City;
 - (d) demonstrating the efficient use and re-use of resources, by using recycled materials in the design of the City Farm and providing recycling facilities for participants and visitors. This will also be achieved through interactive displays and workshops on recycling and reusing materials for art projects;
 - (e) raising awareness of urban ecology issues and sustainable gardening practices through interactive displays and workshops on native and habitat gardens, weeds and feral animals, food gardens for small spaces and capturing and treating stormwater; and
 - (f) extending the City's environmental education outreach which would be measured annually by the number of visitors and participants in events and through evaluation of workshops and tours.

Economic

16. A City Farm could be designed to provide employment and generate income to offset administration costs. Further research needs to be undertaken as part of the development of a business plan to enable the project to be self-funding in the long term.
17. Farmers markets and local food initiatives also have an important role in addressing food security by providing safe, affordable and accessible food and providing direct support to Sydney agricultural areas.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. A budget of \$50,000 is required to investigate sites, coordinate community consultation and review the most suitable model of City Farm for the City of Sydney.
19. There was no funding set aside for this project within the 2009/10 budget. Therefore, it is proposed that this \$50,000 be funded from Council's General Contingency.
20. A report on the suitability of sites within the LGA and the most appropriate model for a City Farm will be reported back to Council in 2010. A detailed business plan with capital and ongoing operational costs will be developed as a second stage.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

21. It is anticipated that the program of site analysis, stakeholder consultation and reporting to Council would take approximately 6 months.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

22. Public consultation with key stakeholders and the wider community will take place after an appropriate site has been identified. This may include community meetings and letterbox drops to surrounding residents and businesses around the preferred site.
23. Community consultation will also be undertaken as part of any amendments to existing Plans of Management or the development of a new Plan of Management.

GARRY HARDING

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