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# Community Gardens Policy

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This Policy provides a framework for residents who want to establish a community garden. The City supports and encourages existing community gardens to become self-managed to a high standard.

## Background

Community gardens are unique forms of open spaces which are accessible to everyone, and a place where everyone can participate. They are self-managed by the community primarily for production of food and to contribute to the development of a sustainable urban environment. They provide demonstration sites for learning and sharing knowledge about sustainable living practices amongst gardeners and the local community. They also contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents by connecting people and encouraging inclusion in the local community.

The City of Sydney (the City) recognises community gardening as a valuable recreational activity that also contributes to the health and wellbeing of the wider community and provides a range of environmental, social and educational benefits. There are currently a number of community gardens, which include footpath verge gardens, school kitchen gardens and community composting facilities, across the local government area (LGA).

The documents that contribute to the community garden framework are:

- *Community Garden Guidelines*
- *Preferred materials for use in community gardens*, and
- This policy

## Purpose

The benefits of community gardens are recognised within our community. This policy outlines a framework for community gardeners to grow fresh organic produce to supplement their groceries and to develop friendships, socialise with neighbours and to connect with residents in their local community.

Through environmental leadership the City supports the development of gardens that will be maintained and managed by community gardening groups. We are leading the way with our community garden policy and guidelines by providing residents with guidance and support to develop community gardens within the City, as well as setting a benchmark for other councils and organisations throughout Australia. We encourage production of organic fresh food while providing social and community development opportunities.

Community gardens connect with vibrant local communities and economies to create a space for people to meet and share knowledge, learn new skills and harvest in a harmonious way. These activities encourage interaction between diverse people in passive recreation and gardening pursuits.

This policy supports the vision of the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategy for a Green, Global and Connected City. The policy is in place to provide the community with guidance and criteria about

the key principles and responsibilities in setting up and maintaining community gardens on lands within the City of Sydney.

The community gardens policy:

- Provides clear direction for the establishment of new gardens;
- Outlines the required communication between the City, gardeners and stakeholders;
- Provides a rationale for decision-making that ensures consistency in the management of all community gardens located within the City of Sydney LGA;
- Provides the framework for gardening groups to develop management plans, complete reporting requirements, and to ensure gardens are integrated within the landscape;
- Promotes adherence to sustainable, healthy and safe gardening practices; and
- Encourages gardens that are self-managed, open and welcoming spaces for community participation in gardening.

### Scope

The community gardens policy applies to groups of residents developing a new garden or managing existing community gardens on Council, Crown and private land within the City of Sydney LGA. These gardens are located on open spaces, rooftops and footpath verges.

Footpath gardens installed by individuals on verges in front of their property or business must comply with the [Footpath Gardening Policy](#).

### Objectives

The objectives of the community gardens policy are to:

- Promote the development of community gardens as demonstration sites where people can meet, work together, build stronger community relationships and learn about sustainability;
- Document and standardise processes, procedures and criteria to ensure consistency in the management of all community gardens located within the City of Sydney LGA;
- Help increase the number of community gardens according to the City's capacity, community need and availability of appropriate sites, by developing a clear process and allocating appropriate resources to support new and existing community gardens;
- Clarify the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in community garden projects including the garden volunteers, the City and partnering organisations, with reference to issues such as public liability, maintenance, safety and monitoring;
- Support community gardens to become self-managed and encourage community ownership by requiring community garden groups to develop a management plan for their community garden;
- Recommend the development of new community gardens on land established for community use as part of proposed park upgrades and developments. This will be dependent on the interest of the local community to support the garden operations.
- Ensure that there is potential for a community garden within a kilometre (a 15 minute walk) of the dwellings of most city residents;

- Promote access for the community to fresh, organic and locally produced herbs, vegetables and fruit, from gardens that are well maintained;
- Ensure gardens are well maintained by the garden members to demonstrate a high standard to the community.

## Definitions

The community garden definitions as set out as part of this policy are:

Term	Meaning
Community garden	A unique form of open space which is accessible to everyone, in which everyone can participate. This is self-managed by the community primarily for production of food and to contribute to the development of a sustainable urban environment.
Public open space	Publicly accessible spaces owned or managed by Council and available for multi-purpose recreational use by the community.
Self-managed	A community garden group that can work together and encourage participation without supervision, or with limited assistance from the City.
Demonstration sites	Community garden sites that are well presented, regarded as best practice, accessible for all users and visitors to share ideas, skills and knowledge with the local community.
Landholder or authority	Land owner or consenting authority responsible for management of the lands, e.g. the City of Sydney (operational and community land, roads [including footways] and Crown reserves), government departments, churches or private landowners.
Management plan	Document developed by the community garden group to describe their vision, the details of the garden, their objectives, the activities and responsibilities of the group.
Garden design or garden layout	Landscape design plan showing details of the garden beds, pathways, composting area, tool shed or rain tanks. It may also show the materials used and development stages.
Grants	The City may provide grants for the establishment and operation of community gardens. Grants must comply with the City's Grants and Sponsorship Policy.
Public liability	Community garden groups have a duty of care to the people who visit the garden areas so should have public liability insurance. The City will provide this for Council-owned or -managed sites.
Sustainable gardening	An approach that minimises the impact on the environment by choosing organic, locally grown crops; recycling food waste through composting and worm farming; harvesting rainwater and safely using recycled materials in the construction of the garden.
Composting system	A method for breaking down vegetable scraps, garden waste and other materials into rich organic matter to fertilise gardens. These can be compost bins or worm farms.

Term	Meaning
Community footpath verge group	A group of residents that work together to garden in planter boxes or street verges on the footpath with City approval.

### Policy statement

The City encourages residents to participate in and develop community gardens within the City of Sydney LGA, whether this is on Council land or other property, in line with this policy.

### Principles for a community garden

To receive support from the City of Sydney, community gardens should embrace the following principles:

1. The garden must allow the general community to participate.
2. The group should be covered by the landowner’s public liability insurance, or where not available, comply with and be covered by the City’s community engagement public liability insurance.
3. The group must have local residents who participate in and support the garden.
4. The initiative must be supported by the landowners and the local community.
5. The group must have the skills to organise, manage and maintain a community garden or have a mentor from an existing group to assist them.
6. The group must demonstrate the capacity to fund the garden and provide ongoing maintenance.
7. The group’s activities will include growing plants, seed collecting, harvesting, organic pest management, composting and worm farming.
8. The garden must have an approved management plan and design layout of the garden.
9. The group’s knowledge, skills, experience and produce will be shared amongst gardeners and the local community.
10. The group will be forward thinking with new ideas and problem solving to create productive and well managed community gardens.
11. The project must be a long-term community initiative with community participation a key objective, striving to reach 25 members for establishing a community garden group and 15 members for a footpath verge garden group.

### Site selection criteria

Proposed sites for community gardens should meet the following criteria:

1. **Landowner’s consent** – Approval to use the site is required from the landowner before development of the community garden.
2. **Location** – These sites are usually established on open spaces and parklands or within community centres.
3. **Community capacity** – The site must have the support of the surrounding neighbours and local residents who are willing to participate in the community garden.

4. **Safety** – Sites should be safe with good passive surveillance.
5. **Accessibility** – Sites should be accessible to the community, to people with disabilities and for delivery of materials.
6. **Solar access** – Sites require suitable growing conditions of at least six hours of full sunlight per day.
7. **Size** – Sites should be large enough to accommodate basic garden facilities.
8. **Water** – Sites should have access to water or be located close to harvested water stored in rainwater tanks.
9. **Soil contamination**– Sites should be tested for soil contamination to ensure that they are suitable for growing food crops.
10. **Multiple uses** – Community garden sites should not interfere with other land uses and can be utilised by non-gardeners for passive recreation.
11. **Existing features** – The surrounding buildings and facilities should be considered and may be utilised or retained in the garden, or integrated within the existing space.
12. **Land suitability** – The topography of the land should be reasonably flat.

### The City's role

The City has adopted a community development approach to community gardens by:

- Providing advice, support and assistance when establishing new or managing existing gardens;
- Providing access to and delivery of educational workshops and bus tours;
- Promoting community gardens on the City's web page, media, in publications and at events;
- Encouraging the gardens to be self-managed and have community ownership;
- Developing partnerships with other garden groups and volunteers involved in community greening activities; and
- Encouraging groups to apply for grants and sponsorship to assist with funding their garden.

The City would like to measure the benefits of community gardens to the community by tracking the satisfaction of community gardeners on a regular basis. The community garden groups will be responsible for the safe maintenance, upkeep, and activation of the garden spaces for the enjoyment of the community.

## Approval

Approvals will be granted in accordance with community garden policy and community garden guidelines. New community garden groups must have:

- Approval from the landowner and/or Council;
- Addressed the site selection criteria for a suitable location;
- Developed a management plan approved by the garden group, landowner and the City;
- Developed a design layout of the overall community garden;
- Created community capacity within the group and have support from local residents; and,
- The skills and ability to become self-managed and maintain the garden to a high standard through community participation.

## Removal

The City provides groups with advice and resources to ensure the success of their community gardens. In the event that a community garden, footpath verge garden or community composting site ceases to operate in accordance with this policy, the City reserves the right to remove the community garden to allow other community uses to be undertaken. The City will provide written notice for any community garden removal.

## Establishing a community garden

The City's *Community Garden Guidelines*, *Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens*, and *Community Composting Guidelines* contain all the information required to establish, operate and manage a community garden. These documents are [available for download on the City's website](#).

## References

<b>Laws and standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Companion Animal Act 1998</i></li> <li>• <i>Companion Animal Regulation 1999</i></li> <li>• <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i></li> <li>• <i>Food Act 1999</i></li> <li>• <i>Local Government Act 1993</i></li> <li>• <i>Pesticide Act 1999</i></li> <li>• <i>Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998</i></li> <li>• <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i></li> <li>• <i>Work Health and Safety 2012</i></li> </ul>
<b>Policies and procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable Sydney 2030</li> <li>• Asbestos in the Workplace Policy 2012</li> <li>• Code of Conduct 2013</li> <li>• Community Composting Guidelines 2014</li> <li>• Community Garden Policy 2009</li> <li>• Companion Animal Policy 2011</li> <li>• Disciplinary Policy 2014</li> <li>• EEO and Antidiscrimination Policy 2013</li> <li>• Footpath Gardening Policy 2013</li> <li>• Grants and Sponsorship Policy 2012</li> <li>• Green Roof and Green Walls 2014</li> <li>• Greening Plan 2012</li> <li>• Harassment and Bullying Policy 2012</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing Policy 2014</li> <li>• How to Write a Management Plan – Community Composting 2014</li> <li>• Safety Management System – WHS for Volunteers and Vocational Placements 2010</li> <li>• Tree Management Policy 2013</li> <li>• Volunteer Policy 2012</li> <li>• Waste Policy 2013</li> <li>• Work Health and Safety Policy 2014</li> </ul>

## Approval

Council approved this policy on 29 February 2016.

*P. M. Barone*

## Review

Review period	Next review date	TRIM reference
The Council will review this policy every five years	Feb 2021	2015/091275