

# Community Gardens Guidelines

## Introduction

These Guidelines for community gardens are to be read in conjunction with the Community Gardens Policy. The Guidelines provide a consistent, equitable and transparent approach to the planning and establishment of community gardens and will be reviewed at least every four years or as required.

Council supports the establishment of community gardens on the Northern Beaches and is committed to working in partnership with groups to establish and self-manage community gardens for the benefit of our community.

Council recognises community gardening as a recreational activity that contributes to the health and well-being of our community as well as providing a range of environmental, social and educational benefits.

A community garden is defined as an area of shared land tended to by an organised group where people can come together to meet, learn about and cultivate a garden. The garden may include, for example, fresh fruits and vegetables, ornamentals, natives, native bush foods and / or sensory plants.

## Establishing a Community Garden on Council Land

Establishing a community garden on Council land requires formal Council approval. The process for establishing a community garden is described below and is intended as a guide for Council and the community. The complexity of applications received will determine the steps applicable from the process.

### 1. Responding to an enquiry to establish a Community Garden on Council land

- a) When Council receives an enquiry about establishing a new community garden a Council officer will provide information to enquirer about the process for establishing a community garden on Council land. A meeting will be held to discuss the proposal, vision and proposed site(s). This step may involve multiple discussions and site visits.
- b) A preliminary assessment of the proposal and proposed site(s), as per 2c., will be undertaken and a recommendation made to the Executive Manager Parks and Recreation about whether or not to proceed to an application stage.
- c) Should the Executive Manager Parks and Recreation support proceeding to the application stage the enquirer will be invited to complete and submit a Community Garden Application form. The application form serves to formally advise Council of a request to establish a new community garden on Council land and is to include the; proposed site(s), a concept plan and garden management plan.

Groups (incorporated, not incorporated or auspiced by another group) are eligible to submit a Community Garden Application. An individual is not eligible to submit a Community Garden Application.

Council staff will assist applicants to prepare their submission. Arrangements will also be made to meet with existing community garden groups to discuss how they manage and run their gardens.

## 2. Assessing Community Garden Applications

The next stage involves the following tasks:

- a) The application will be referred to internal Council stakeholders for their advice, including the following business units:
  - Environment and Climate Change.
  - Parks and Recreation.
  - Development Assessment.
  
- b) A Council officer will meet the applicant at the proposed site(s).
  
- c) The proposed site will be assessed against the following criteria:
  - Location and proximity to other community gardens
  - Distribution of community gardens across the Northern Beaches.
  - Access to sunlight and water.
  - Soil suitability (Council would at its cost undertake soil testing if required).
  - Potential environmental impacts.
  - Compatibility with existing use and surrounding land-use.
  - Potential impacts on nearby residents.
  - Availability of parking.
  - Vehicle access.
  - Capacity of the site to accommodate the proposed garden activities and future expansion.
  - Safe public access for visitation and viewing with good passive surveillance.
  - Aesthetics.
  - Estimated cost to establish and operate a community garden on the proposed site.
  - Identified bushland reserves or areas of natural bushland may be excluded.
  
- d) The proposed garden plan will be assessed against the following criteria:
  - Level to which the plan meets a community need and/or aligns with a Council Strategy.
  - Community and or environmental benefits.
  - The proposed structure of the garden group and its governance. Applicants will be encouraged to consider incorporation.
  - Capacity to provide and maintain the required insurance required by Council. For example at the time of writing \$20m public liability insurance is required.
  - The funding or in-kind support the applicant can provide for the planning, establishment and or ongoing operation of the proposed community garden. It is expected that the applicant will have some capacity to 'self-fund' the ongoing operation of the proposed community garden and to contribute to its establishment.
  - The applicant's capacity to operate a community garden.
  - Sustainable practices, conserving resources and protection of the environment.
  - Alignment with the principles of the 'local green grid' and 'green neighbourhoods'.
  - Suitability of the proposed operational days and times.
  - Land use restrictions, controls and planning requirements.
  
- e) If the proposed site is deemed unsuitable the application will be recommended to be rejected. With the approval of the Executive Manager Parks and Recreation the application will not proceed to the next stage.

- f) If the proposed site is deemed suitable, but the garden management plan does not adequately meet the criteria in d) the applicant will be requested to amend their application and resubmit for further assessment. A Council officer will be available to support the applicant.
- g) If the proposed site is deemed suitable and the garden management plan adequately meets the criteria in d) the application will be recommended to progress to the next stage. With the approval of the Executive Manager Parks and Recreation the application will progress to the next stage.
- h) The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the application assessment.

### 3. Community Feedback on the Proposed Community Garden

The next stage involves the following tasks:

- a) A draft community engagement plan will be developed for the public exhibition of the proposed site, concept plan, garden management plan and estimate of costs and funding sources (the community garden proposal). The engagement plan will:
  - Be developed in consultation with the applicant
  - Include that nearby residents are consulted as key stakeholders.
  - Align with Council's community engagement framework.
- b) A report will be prepared for a Council meeting that includes:
  - The outcomes of the assessment of the application.
  - The draft community engagement plan.
  - Recommendation for public exhibition of the proposed community garden.
- c) Should Council not approve public exhibition and rejects the proposed community garden the application will not proceed to the next stage.
- d) Should Council approve public exhibition, the community engagement plan will be implemented and the proposed site, concept plan and garden management plan will be publically exhibited for a minimum of 28 days.
- e) Following the conclusion of the exhibition period a report will be prepared for a Council meeting that includes:
  - An assessment of the community feedback received.
  - Responses to the community feedback including any required amendments to the proposed community garden.
  - An outline of the conditions of an agreement for the proposed community garden (should such an agreement be supported).
  - Recommends approval, amendment or rejection of the proposed community garden.
- f) Should Council not approve the proposed community garden, the application will not progress to the next stage.
- g) Should Council approve the proposed community garden, the application will progress to the next stage.
- h) The applicant and the community (including those who gave feedback and nearby residents) will be notified of the outcome.

#### 4. Entering into an Agreement for a Community Garden on an Approved Site

- a) Council will enter into an agreement with the applicant (which is to be an incorporated group or auspiced by an incorporated group) for the establishment and ongoing management of the garden as approved by Council. Advice will be provided on incorporation and Council will support incorporation establishment fees.

#### 5. Construction of a Community Garden

- a) The construction of the community garden will be undertaken by Council and / or the applicant in stages as funding becomes available (and as per the agreement). Funding may be sought through Council's annual budget process and external grants if required. The applicant will be required to seek and provide a funding contribution to construction and ongoing management.

#### 6. Management of a Community Garden

The responsibilities of Council and the applicant (the garden group) for management of a community garden will be detailed in an agreement between the parties. Key responsibilities for Council and the garden group will generally be as outlined below (or as otherwise agreed).

- a) Council's key responsibilities generally include:
  - Fund and manage asset renewals as per the agreement.
  - Fund and undertake maintenance of garden assets as per the agreement.
  - Undertake an annual asset maintenance inspection.
  - Undertake an annual review of the group's outcomes and adherence with the agreement.
  - Provide advice including about sustainable practices and volunteer management and recruitment.
  - Meeting with the group at least annually to discuss their operations.
  - Promote the community garden, along with other community gardens, on Council's social media platforms.
  - Invite the garden group to participate in Council's annual community garden forum for sharing ideas.
  - Reviewing the agreement every three years.
  - Supporting one annual event to promote the garden and volunteer membership.
- b) Community Garden Group's key responsibilities generally include:
  - The ongoing day to day management and operation of the garden.
  - Seek and provide funding and in-kind contributions to ongoing maintenance and improvements.
  - Be mindful of and pro-active in minimising impacts on nearby residents.
  - Management and recruitment of volunteers.
  - Promotion of the garden.
  - Ensure the garden site remains accessible to the community.
  - Sustainable practises, conserving resources and protection of the environment.
  - Meet the WHS requirements for all activities.
  - Adhere to the agreement.
  - Provide Council with an annual report.
- c) The relevant Council policies, strategies, regulations along with any relevant legislation also apply to the management of a community garden.