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Responsible Officer:	Food Systems Officer
Owner:	Active and Healthy Lifestyles
Responsible Director:	Health and Wellbeing
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
DOCSETID:	4181081

1. PURPOSE

The Community Garden Policy outlines the role of the City in the provision and management of community gardens on Council owned and/or managed land, including its resource commitment and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. It includes the planning guidelines by which the gardens are expected to operate as well as how the City will assess requests for new community gardens. In addition, the Policy clarifies the responsibilities and rights of community gardeners.

Key objectives of this policy are to:

- Facilitate the establishment of community gardens on council owned and/or managed land when it is in accordance with any master plan for the site.
- Provide guidelines and procedures to ensure consistency in the standards and management of all community gardens across Greater Bendigo.
- Provide appropriate opportunities for community gardens, according to the City's capacity, community need and the availability of suitable land.
- Support the capacity of groups managing existing community gardens as assets within the City.
- Clarify the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in community gardens.
- Support community gardens to be self-managed to increase community ownership.
- Promote knowledge and access to fresh, organic and locally produced fruit and vegetables.
- Promote sustainable gardening practices.
- Strengthen community connections and build food literacy of our residents.

2. BACKGROUND

Community gardens are places where people come together to grow produce, to learn horticultural skills, to share seed, produce and knowledge, to relax and reflect, to make friends and connect with a diverse range of local people.

Community gardens are usually not-for-profit and run by volunteers. The majority are a registered incorporated association managed by a committee made up of elected members and operating under a constitution. Many community gardens act under a partnership arrangement with Local Government. There are a number of different models of community garden structure.

The most common forms are:

- Allocation of individual plots or allotments to members with some shared areas e.g. propagation shed.
- Collective management of the entire garden by members.
- Planter boxes on the footpath with collective management from local interest groups e.g. street traders.
- School kitchen gardens can be defined as a community garden when local residents outside the school community can join the garden in partnership with the school.
- Gardens managed by Council, with the plot operator issued with a permit under a fee arrangement.

This Policy pertains specifically to community gardens that exist on Council owned and/or managed land, therefore community gardens that operate on privately owned land or land owned by State Government are outside the scope of the policy.

It should be noted that while the City actively encourages the establishment of community gardens as long-term projects, circumstances may arise where the land concerned may be required for other purposes. If this situation arises, the City has the right to terminate the arrangement, but will work collaboratively with the respective entities to endeavour to find an alternative site to support the ongoing operations of the community garden and their re-establishment.

3. SCOPE

The Community Garden Policy outlines the role of the City in the provision and management of community gardens on Council owned and/or managed land, including its resource commitment and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. It includes the planning guidelines by which the gardens are expected to operate as well as how Council will assess requests for new community gardens. In addition, the Policy clarifies the responsibilities and rights of community gardeners.

Applications for community gardens within a nature strip must comply with The City's (draft) Nature Strip Policy and Guidelines and require a Works Within Road Reserve Permit.

4. DEFINITIONS

Organic – food produced using gardening methods that do not use synthetic herbicides, pesticides, soil additives and/or fertilisers.

5. PRINCIPLES

The City will assist in locating a possible new garden site subject to the following:

- Demonstrated interest and commitment from a community group.
- The existence of suitable available land.
- The support of neighbours living adjacent to and near the proposed site.

- Alignment with existing Management Plans and all other planning, regulatory and legislative requirements.
- Usability of the site.
- Compatibility with surrounding land uses.
- Commitment to using raised wicking beds (or similar) with imported clean soil to mitigate the risk of using contaminated soil. Beds must be created with feet so that the beds can be relocated with a forklift if they fall into disuse and there is a barrier between the bed and the natural soil.
- Sun exposure.
- Accessibility to public transport.
- Accessibility to supporting infrastructure such as water.
- Use alternative water supplies (e.g. harvested rainwater, recycled water, etc) wherever possible provided they are fit-for-the intended purpose.
- That discussions to partner with other local community gardens have occurred.
- Consideration of access to existing public facilities such as toilets and meeting rooms.

In addition, it will be important that existing open space users are not disadvantaged as a result of the establishment of a community garden.

6. POLICY

Council recognises that community gardens provide a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits. Council promotes the development of community gardens by supporting community groups to self-manage garden sites on Council land. Any direct involvement by Council is subject to available resources. This approach leads to increased community ownership and the long-term sustainability of community gardens.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the City is as follows:

- Provision of information, knowledge and resources to assist the community in developing, operating and participating in community gardens.
- Supporting training opportunities to build the capacity of community garden groups and volunteers to facilitate the success and sustainability of community gardens.
- Promoting existing community gardens and activities through Council's website, newsletters and events.
- Advising community garden committees of any changes that the City makes that may impact the operation of the garden.
- Assessing applications, provision of land and compliance to guidelines.
- Determining what use will proceed if there are competing demands for any particular area of land and ensure the uses on any particular site are compatible.
- Provide support with identifying grant opportunities through the City's Community Grants process.
- Planning the location of community gardens.
- Establishing a framework for community gardens in Greater Bendigo.
- Ensure that the site has an Environmental Site Management Plan.

Role of Community Gardeners

Community gardens should be managed by the community; however, this must be undertaken in such a way that the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders are taken into account.

Responsibilities

Community gardeners are responsible for maintaining their garden so that the health and safety of the neighbouring community is not adversely impacted. In particular, gardeners are responsible for ensuring that:

- They do not discriminate against anyone due to differences in disability, race, culture, sexuality, age or gender.
- They develop positive and cooperative relationships with the surrounding neighbourhood, local businesses, other users of the land and other gardeners.
- They regularly communicate with the City, neighbours and partners.
- Decision making is democratic, transparent and inclusive.
- Noise levels do not disturb neighbours.
- There is an efficient use of water, so that any run-off is minimised.
- Any water leaving the garden is not contaminated by sediment, fertiliser, manure or excess organic matter.
- If rainwater tanks are installed, they should be maintained to ensure water quality is high.
- Water expenses incurred for the community garden are paid for by the relevant community garden group.
- Recycled organic systems are maintained so as not to attract vermin or produce unpleasant odours.
- Noxious and environmental weeds are actively controlled in accordance with the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 and organic principles should be applied to the use of herbicides and pesticides.
- The garden is kept tidy so as not to create an unpleasant environment for local residents.
- Visitors are welcomed to the garden, and members of the public can access the community garden during daylight hours.
- The terms set out in any licence/lease and/or permit are adhered to and notifying the City of any changes to the community garden following the submission of the Community Garden Management Plan.
- Raised wicking beds (or similar with an impermeable base) with imported clean soil are used to reduce the risk of planting in potentially contaminated soil.
- That a responsible approach is taken to minimising general waste, encouraging recycling and the use of organics/composting.
- Comply with any relevant requirements under the site's Environmental Site Management Plan.
- The site is restored to its natural state or to the satisfaction of the City, in the event the Community garden group is disbanded.

Rights

Community gardeners have the right to:

- Develop their own internal policies, organisational procedures and Plan of Management providing they liaise with the City.
- Be informed by the City of any decisions or policy changes that may affect the project.
- Be treated with respect by other gardeners, local residents and the City's representatives.
- Negotiate a secure and reasonable agreement with the City.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Readers are encouraged to access relevant documents and/or resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- Appendix A: Community Garden Guidelines
- Management of Contaminated Land Policy
- Nature Strip Policy Guidelines (draft)

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to Active and Healthy Lifestyles

9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
<i>November, 2021</i>	<i>LF</i>	<i>Active and Healthy Communities</i>	<i>Develop</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2026</i>