

SUSTAINABILITY
AND
COMMUNITY
POLICY

COMMUNITY GARDENS

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Definitions

Community garden

A 'community garden' is defined as a parcel of land administered by Council which is utilised by the community (with Council oversight) where the site is used for:

- the production of produce for the personal use of its members through allotments or shared plots, and
- demonstration gardening, or where other environmental activities are undertaken, also encouraging the involvement of schools, youth groups and citizens in gardening activities

Community garden is an inclusive term for different types of enterprise that involve:

- horticulture, mainly of food species, usually vegetables and culinary herbs but, sometimes, fruit and nut trees
- community involvement
- local government support and participation

Community gardens are not-for-profit, and can provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. The focus of activity within a community garden varies with the enterprise; larger projects may combine a number of activities such as gardening and education.

Permaculture

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people — providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way.

Permaculture Design

Permaculture design is a system of assembling conceptual, material and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms.

The philosophy behind permaculture is one of working with, rather than against, nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless action; of looking at systems in all their functions, rather than asking only one yield of them; and allowing systems to demonstrate their own evolutions.

Different types of Community Gardens

There are different forms a community garden can take, they are:

- Community Garden as defined above - a mixture of allotments and some shared areas
- Community Garden on private land with agreed access- a mixture of allotments and some shared areas
- School kitchen garden - a community garden in a school, in which local residents outside of the school community can join and manage the garden in partnership with the school. Gardens may include individual plots for residents and communal garden beds that the school can manage and use for lessons on cooking, nutrition and the environment and provide produce for the school canteen

Council recognises that many schools in our local area have established productive and thriving school kitchen gardens. Many of these are developed like a community garden, in that the whole school community (teachers, parents and students) are involved in its development.

- Church community garden - a community garden within Church grounds, in which local residents and church members can join and manage the garden in partnership with the church. Gardens may include individual plots for residents and communal garden beds that the church can manage and use for lessons on cooking, nutrition and the environment and provide produce for the school canteen

Note: Should you have a connection to a school or church in the area, you may wish to contact them directly to volunteer to help with their garden, or to help set one up. However, the approval of outside involvement is at the discretion of each school and/or church and is neither the role nor responsibility of Council.

Council Support

City of Canada Bay supports community gardens by working with community partners, in assisting to identify and contribute to site development activities. Subject to available resources Council will:

- Promote and raise awareness of community gardening
- Provide information to the public about the operation of community gardens
- Assist interested groups in searching for suitable public land for the development of community gardens
- Assist with site development such as site planning and design, surveying, and site preparation on public land
- Provide in-kind support where feasible (i.e. water options, mulch etc)
- Host workshops on practical skills, and group management (ie. governance); and
- Provide grant funding opportunities and advice
- Promote the community gardens through Council's website, networks, publications and events
- Assist the management committee in obtaining grants
- Provide information and resources on general development frameworks (steps to planning/proposals/development)
- Provide guidance on social elements such as governance , grievance procedures and Council liaison

Resourcing your garden

Once you have a clear vision for your garden and a plan for implementing that vision, you will need to develop a budget and consider where you will obtain the necessary financial resources. In-kind support (such as donations from local businesses and Council), reusing 'waste' resources and applying for grants are some of the ways community garden groups have resourced their projects.

The requirements of each unique garden will vary, but most gardeners will need to consider the following:

- Costs of involving the community (e.g. producing promotional material, mail-outs, local advertising and venues for meetings);
- Public liability insurance;
- Construction materials (e.g. termite-free recycled sleepers or bricks);
- Organic material for no-dig bed construction;
- Tools and equipment (e.g. hand-tools, wheelbarrows, watering cans, hoses and propagation supplies);

Accessing funds

There are many ways community gardeners can access funds for their project, depending upon its scale and focus. Plan your fund-raising efforts carefully, ensuring that the money raised is worth the time and energy expended. Successful ways that community gardeners have raised funds include:

- Events – open days, celebrations, festivals and markets can all attract a donation for entry. You may also attract new members this way
- Annual plot and membership fees – a consistent income stream that is enhanced by incentives such as a library, newsletter or free workshops
- Lease of space – a well developed community garden can be leased to local educators and community groups for courses and workshops
- Visitor donation box – decorate it to attract attention
- Educational tours – community groups, schools, TAFE and university courses may pay to visit a well developed site that demonstrates key sustainability principles
- Courses and workshops – this can be a significant source of income in a well designed and developed garden with appropriate facilities
- Services – some community gardens have developed successful consultancy arms that provides an income stream
- Grant funding – Community gardens provide a diverse range of social and environmental benefits so they are eligible for a wide variety of local, state and federal government grants. Visit www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au and www.ourcommunity.com.au and www.grantslink.gov.au for further information on obtaining grants.

- Sponsorship and Business Support including donations such as garden sheds or materials. Similar support can be gained through sponsorship but a more detailed agreement will be required. Councils sponsorship package can be used as a guide.

Purpose

The City Canada Bay recognises community gardening as a valuable recreational activity that contributes to health and well-being, positive social interaction, community development, environmental education and sustainable principles, protection and use of open space.

Background

Community gardening provides a range of environmental, social and educational benefits. Community gardens can bind a community by giving residents a sense of pride and involvement. Residents from different backgrounds and ages come together in companionship and friendship to share a common interest.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy include:

- To recognise the need and benefits of community gardens.
- To support and encourage the establishment of autonomous community gardens throughout City of Canada Bay, on public open space, where feasible and appropriate.
- To recognise the value of community gardens, as a public amenity.
- To ensure that all community gardens are managed in an efficient manner and maintained to an acceptable standard.
- To ensure all community gardens are chemical free, water efficient and sustainable.
- To support the development of community gardens: where gardeners can acquire, share and increase knowledge and practice of organic gardening with various educational institutes and the local community.
- Offer a suitable site for Council environmental workshops and educational days.
- To standardise processes and procedures for the development of the community gardens.
- To clarify the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in community garden projects with reference to public liability, maintenance, safety and access.
- To develop a community garden network which is open and inclusive to a diverse range of abilities and community members

Link to Futures Plan 20 Operational Plan

This policy is prepared in accordance with the outcomes of the Futures Plan 20 direction:

Outcome:	3.1 I feel a sense of health and wellbeing
Direction:	3.1.1 Provide healthy lifestyle programs and partnerships that promote healthy living and overall health and wellbeing
Delivery Plan Strategy:	Pilot a community garden project and engage local community garden with appropriate sensory components
2010-11 Operating Plan action:	Undertake consultation and investigation to identify existing gardens and potential site options

Establishment of Community Gardens

City of Canada Bay supports the development of community gardens, particularly in high density areas. City of Canada Bay will assist in locating new garden sites on public lands, where available land exists, where neighbours are supportive, and where a community group demonstrates interest and commitment.

For Council to consider supporting the development of any new community garden, applicants will need to address the site selection criteria outlined below. The first step is to establish a community garden group and conduct a site assessment of the potential site. If the site meets the criteria, applicants should then discuss the proposal with Council and go through the potential issues.

Site Selection Criteria - Community Gardens – Public Lands

Location

- Consistency with relevant plans for open space
- Informed and supportive neighbours
- Proximity to high density living areas
- Close proximity to supporting infrastructure and services, such as power and water
- An area of approximately 750m²

Usability of site

- The site should have no major safety or health concerns
- Good passive surveillance
- Sun exposure
- Soil quality and drainage

Accessibility

- Should be accessible for a range of user groups
- Accessibility to public transport (where possible)
- Vehicle access

Multiple Uses

- Community garden should be integrated without adversely conflicting with other land uses
- Community gardens can still be used as information sites for Council and School Workshops

Upon Council review of a proposal and meeting the relevant criteria, a report to Council will be presented recommending that the proposal be exhibited to the public for comment. A follow up report will be submitted to Council for its consideration.

Community Management of Gardens

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

Incorporation of the Garden Group

The Council encourages community garden groups to have a clear and identified management framework. Garden groups can apply to the NSW Office of Fair Trading to become Incorporated Associations. This arrangement affords the group some flexibility in the management of funds and enables them to open a bank account, obtain public liability insurance cover and apply for government grants. Incorporation as an association requires groups to establish a management committee with annually elected office bearers and to commit to regular meetings. This can be beneficial for the Garden as it maintains a structure that can address management issues. Having a committee also helps share the tasks of garden management and avoids excessive responsibility being placed on a few people or the garden management becoming dominated by one person.

Insurance and Risk Management

Community Gardens will be licensed to an incorporated community group with an approved Public Liability Cover of \$20 million that indemnifies Council. Each garden group has a duty of care to the community who access the garden areas. All groups will be required to provide evidence of all members completing an appropriate site induction and relevant work, health and safety training on an ongoing basis. Depending on the nature of the site use agreement with Council, gardeners may be required to follow Council site visitor procedures and/or establish their own process as an incorporated group in relation to work, health and safety.

The community group will be required to manage safe access in and around the site and, if necessary allocation of garden plots. Management of the site will also need to follow Council's direction in the issue of Environmental Sustainable

Development and encourage all members, through its functions and activities, to act more sustainably. The incorporated community group will liaise with Council staff in regard to any new infrastructure or projects planned for the garden. Prior to erection / installation of any infrastructure, written approval from Council or, where required, Development Consent may be required.

User Agreement

Should a licence agreement be desirable, a licence for use agreement must be signed between Council and the organisation or individual plot holders for the purpose of developing and maintaining a community garden. The licence agreement would also contain conditions for the use of the site. At the initial set up of a new garden, a license will be granted for 12 months with an option for a 3 year agreement after this period. All community gardens will operate on a not-for-profit basis. (see conditions of use below)

A licence or other agreement with the group could be revoked or not renewed if:

- the group disbands or ceases to function due to internal conflict.
- the garden is not maintained or becomes unsafe for public access; and,
- appropriate insurance cover is not maintained.

The group will be required to report annually to Council on the function of the garden and how they are meeting Council objectives.

Council retains the capacity to use the garden as a demonstration site for community education activities such as tours and workshops. The Council will work with the garden group to ensure that organised activities do not conflict inappropriately with other garden uses, such as regular working bees.

Council promotion and events

Information regarding community gardens will be advertised through Council's website, libraries and publications.

Conditional Use

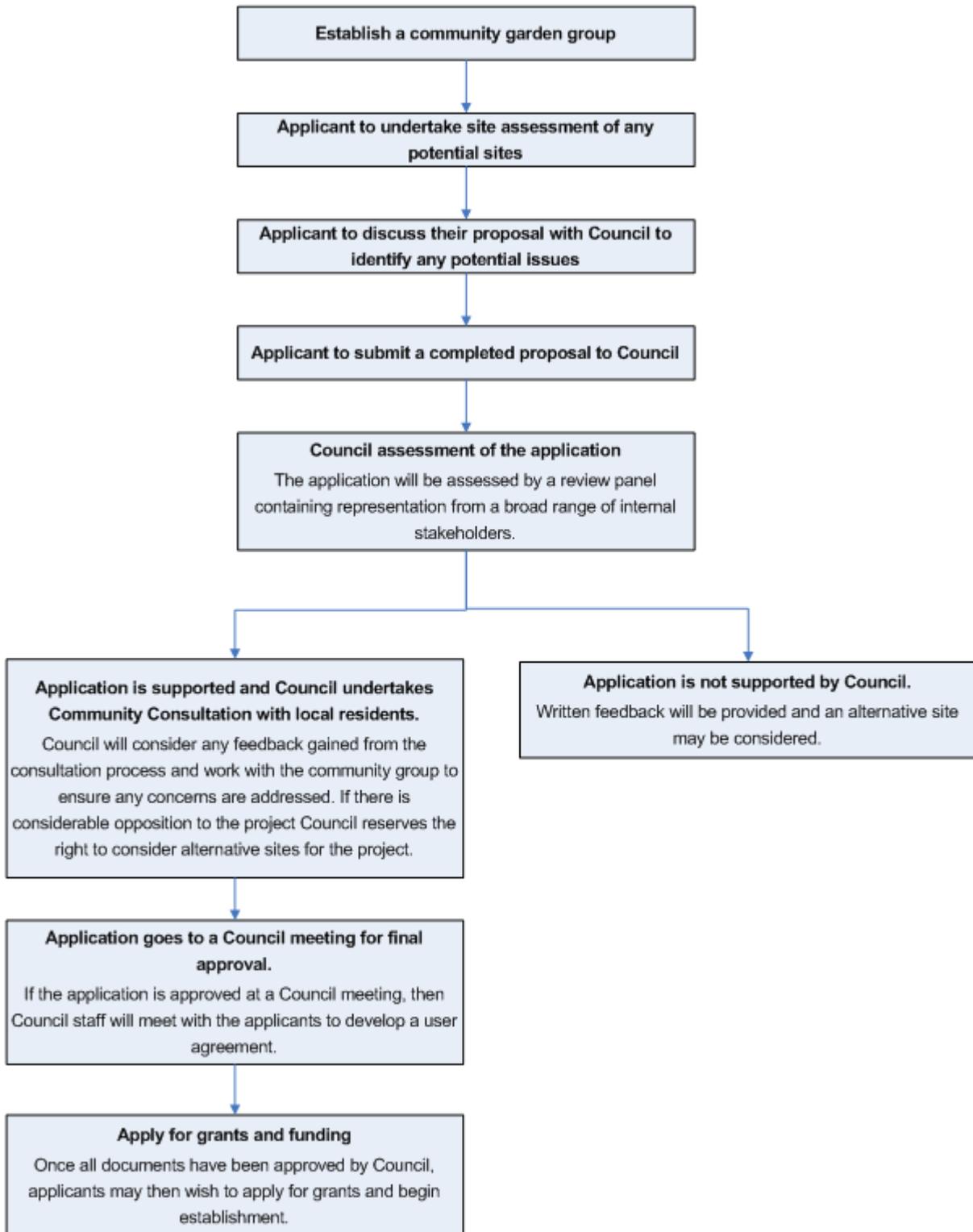
The non-profit organisation agrees to develop, manage and operate the community garden according to a user agreement with their members, which specifies the terms of use, management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures, which include the following:

- Residents of the City of Canada Bay will be given priority for membership, however, applications will be open to all
- The association may set rules with the assistance of the Office of Fair Trading. Rules must not be inconsistent with Council's Community Garden Policy
- A list of by-laws must be developed by the association and must comply with Section 11 of the Associations Incorporation Act 1984 approved by Council (Staff). Members are required to sign a contract indicating their compliance
- Membership and use of the site can be revoked for non-compliance with the organisations by-laws, the applicable user agreement or this policy
- Gardeners need to commit to work within the communal garden and may need to undertake various courses before being allocated an individual allotment.
- Allotment gardens must be maintained to a minimum standard of aesthetics and orderliness. Year-round produce is encouraged.
- Produce is to be organically grown, chemical free, and not to be sold for private commercial profit. Funds from selling produce must be invested in the garden. Excess produce can be donated.
- The organisation is to have its own Public Liability Insurance (becoming a member of a Landcare group can reduce the cost of the PLI).
- Allow monitoring and review as stipulated by the agreement.
- Any requests for poultry/ livestock must be approved by Council and will need to be formally assessed.
- Any approval granted will be subject to a trial period with a review to be undertaken twelve months from commencement.

- In developing the site agreement, Council reserves the right to designate conditions of use including hours of use, permissible activities etc

Procedure for implementation

Once a preferred site has been established, applicants will need to submit a proposal to Council. If the proposal is supported, then Council will organise community consultation with local residents and work with the community garden group to address any concerns.



Want to know more?

For further information on this policy, contact our Environmental Sustainability team and/or Community Development team on 9911 6555 or email communitygarden@canadabay.nsw.gov.au.