COMMUNITY gardens

POLICY DIRECTIONS for Kogarah Municipal Council

September 2008

KOGARAH
- a better lifestyle -

Living Schools

Published: September 2008

© Kogarah Municipal Council, Living Schools, Russ Grayson

Author: Russ Grayson

Consultant: Living Schools (www.livingschools.com.au)

Photography and diagrams:

Russ Grayson (www.pacific-edge.info)
Kogarah Municipal Council's aerial photo of site

Assisted by: Australian City Farms &
Community Gardens Network
(www.communitygarden.org.au)

All rights reserved.

This publication may be reproduced for educational purposes and by community gardening organisations.

No part of this publication may be otherwise reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

Site of the proposed Carss Park Community Garden — the disused Carss Park Bowling Club. August 2008.

Preface

We are pleased to deliver to Kogarah Municipal Council this policy directions document on the development of community gardening in the local government area.

We believe the act of commissioning the document places Council in the forefront of socially progressive local government and positions Council to take a structured approach to future projects of this type.

The document makes proposals for starting the proposed community garden on the site of the disused Carss Park Bowling Club and suggests an approach for Council to assess future requests for assistance in the development of community gardens.

Assistance in starting community gardens is a relatively new demand upon local government in Australia. It may be viewed as one among other demands stemming from public and institutional perceptions around global trends in environmental, food and social issues. As such, it is a demand likely to increase. Adopting a policy or practice in regard to requests for assistance streamlines the process for councils and, potentially, draws upon fewer resources.

We take this opportunity to thank the exemplary cooperation of Kogarah council staff, especially that of Fiona Stock, Manager, Waste Services, and her staff, as well as Council's landscape architect, Anthony Parker. Their cooperation has made the process of developing this policy directions document and the other documentation associated with this project a pleasurable task.

Table of Contents

PREFACE 3

SUMMARY 8

INTRODUCTION 9

Background to the proposal for a community garden 9

Process of engagement 10

Aims and objectives 11

The site for the proposed community garden — potentials and limitations 13

Potentials *13*

Limitations *13*

The policy directions document 15

Sources 15

GARDENING THE COMMUNITY WAY IN AUSTRALIA 17

Community gardening in other states 18

Brisbane *18*

Melbourne *19*

Tasmania *19*

GLOBAL MOTIVATORS 21

Urban agriculture — an imperative 21

Growth indicates popularity 23

Global warming 24

Peak oil 24

Food health fears 25

The global food crisis 26

Acting locally on the big issues 26

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT 27

State government involvement 27

Local government and community garden policy development 28

Enabling food security 29

The value of policy 31

Recommendations *32*

WHAT GOES ON IN COMMUNITY GARDENS 33

Food production 33

Garden productivity *33*

The urgency of food production *34*

Contribution to family diets *34*

Socialisation 35

Arts in the garden 35

Community education and workplace training 35

Precedents in education and training *36*

Biodiversity conservation 37

Agricultural biodiversity *37*

Food and natives together *37*

Celebration 38

Safe places for families 38

Reducing crime and vandalism 39

Research discloses success *39*

Recommendations *40*

COMMUNITY GARDENS — A SOCIAL ROLE 43

People from other cultures 44

Community gardens as Third Places 45

Precedents *46*

Recommendations *47*

THE GOVERNANCE OF COMMUNITY GARDENS 48

State government gardens 48

Council instigated 50

More work, but success can be achieved *51*

Devolving authority builds community capacity *51*

Council volunteer model 52

Council allotments 53

Citizen instigated 53

Summary: models and solutions for councils 54
Recommendation 56

COMMUNITY GARDEN ORGANISATION 57

Types of gardens 57
Allotments 57
Shared gardening 60

Cultivation methods 61

Training of community gardeners 62

Decision-making in community gardens 64
Document decisions 64

Funding community gardens 65
Membership fees 65
Grants 65

Barriers — constraints actual and perceived 65
Actual barriers 66
Barriers perceived 67

Water supply, irrigation and conservation 68
Irrigation 69
Capture and storage 69
Windbreaks 70
Other approaches to water conservation 70
Recommendations 72

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS 73

Precedents 74
Recommendations 74

THE PROPOSED CARSS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN…
…A WAY FORWARD 75

The first challenge — form a core group 75

Gardeners' charter or agreement 76

Council-garden liaison and relationship 77

Early on-site activity stimulated by Council 77
Recommendations 79

THE PROPOSED CARSS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN…
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION 81

Consultation with Council staff 81

Consultation with community 84
Venues *84*
Intent *84*
Process *85*
Outcome *85*
Group assets *87*

Community participation session — *Saturday 9 August* 87
Purpose *87*
Number present *87*
Process *88*
Outcomes *88*
Action planning — priorities *89*
Forming a working group *91*

Community participation session — *Saturday 16 August* 91
Purpose *91*
Number present *91*
Process *91*
Outcomes *91*

FUTURE COMMUNITY GARDENS 94

In-house structure 94
Recommendation *94*

Establish a process 95
Recommendation *95*

ATTACHMENT 1 98

Recommendations to Council 98

ATTACHMENT 2 102

Project summary 102

ATTACHMENT 3 103

FOOTNOTES 107

Summary

The authors of this policy directions document propose that Kogarah Municipal Council assists in the development of the Carss Park community garden so as to help establish, in cooperation with the core community garden team, sound starting conditions for the garden's future.

In doing so, we propose that Council take cognisance of the outcomes of the community consultation and the on-site design workshops so as to influence the newly-formed core group in forming a positive, cooperative and ongoing partnership with Council.

We recognise the existence of the trend towards an increasing number of community gardens in local government areas. To minimise future work for Kogarah Council staff, we recommend that council adopt a policy in support of future assistance to community gardens that are community instigated and demand driven rather than relying on the initiative of Council. We propose a structured approach for Council to assess future applications for assistance with community gardens.

In developing this document and its recommendations, we have included information gleaned during the community consultation process. Also feeding into the document is information coming from the two on-site workshops that aimed to harness the evident community motivation to start a community garden. The outcome of the workshops has been the establishment of a core group of gardeners and the identification of information pertinent to the design of the community garden. This has been passed on to Council.

The authors of this document commend Council on its foresight in assisting citizens undertake and manage an authentic community enterprise.

Introduction

The recommendations that follow are presented to Kogarah Municipal Council for their consideration as a means of achieving two objectives:

- facilitating the proposed community garden on the corner of Carwar Avenue and Parkside Drive, Carss park
- to propose a means of responding positively and objectively to any future requests for assistance with the practice of community gardening.

To date, local government response to requests for assistance with community gardens has been ad hoc. Discussions with both council staff and community gardeners reveals the preference for a structured approach that provides assurance that community-initiated requests will be dealt with objectively, openly and fairly.

With the practice of community gardening — which is primarily about growing food on unused or underused land — growing rapidly, the time for a structured approach has come.

Background to the proposal for a community garden

The Kogarah Council meeting on the 14 October 2002 agreed to investigate a formal garden be located in Carss Park on the bowling club site.

- the proposal was advertised in *Kogarah Life* in November 2002
- a further resolution was adopted at the Council meeting on the 27 August that a report be submitted to the Development and Health Working Party providing recommended options for the charter of the community garden to include a concept and management plan and aims, guidelines, office bearers and co-ordinator, membership, structure and responsibilities, fees and dispute resolution procedures
- Landscape Australia consultants were engaged by Kogarah Council to carry out a plan of management review of the idea in 2007; this reported that "…..residents commented on the loss of an important community meeting place……. with the closure of

the Carss Park Bowling Club"; a community garden is viewed as a way for the community to re-establish a community meeting place; a community garden would reinforce the preferred use of passive recreation

- conclusions from Plan of Management Review of Carss Park Bowling Club and surrounding parkland (Draft December 2007) carried out by Landscape Australia concluded that the implementation of the community garden go ahead.

Process of engagement

The assessment and consultation process for the proposed community garden on the site of the disused Carss Park bowling club:

- enacted requirements notified by Kogarah Municipal Council in its project brief
- undertook community consultation
- engaged the community in participatory processes both in the consultation phase and in the two, on-site planning days
    - current processes of participation that are accepted by facilitation professionals were used
- aimed to establish starting conditions for the proposed community garden that —
    - are manageable by a community team
    - involve Council in the decision making process in partnership with participating community members
    - are sustainable in terms of available resources, skills and motivation.

Aims and objectives

The broad aim of this policy directions document is to propose to Kogarah Municipal Council an approach that would facilitate the development of community gardening in the local government area.

The objectives necessary in achieving this aim include to:

1. Recommend policy directions and a process for developing the proposed community garden that is generic enough to serve as an approach to future community gardens
    a. **Indicator:** policy directions document delivered to Council.
2. Develop gardener's guidelines that outline a management process for the community garden (*Gardeners' Guidelines*)
    a. **Indicator**: document delivered to Kogarah Council.
3. Develop a gardener's charter appropriate to site management and group processes
    a. **Indicator:** charter delivered to Council, accepted by community garden team
4. Bring together a core group of people interested in gardening the site
    a. ***Indicator*:** formation of group following community consultation process and first on-site planning day
5. Provide an initial site analysis and planning event on-site and forward site analysis information to Council's landscape architect for inclusion in the garden design
    a. **Indicator:** events scheduled and implemented
6. At a meeting of Council, recommend that they adopt support for the community garden
    a. **Indicator:** ideas documented and incorporated into plans.

The site of the proposed Carss Park Community Garden. The garden would occupy the bowling green at the top left of the photo. North to top of photo.

The site for the proposed community garden — potentials and limitations

The Carss Park site for the propose community garden is currently zoned 6(a) Open space (Public).

A preliminary inspection of the site by the consultants and a review of the aerial photo, maps and documentation, revealed that the site for the proposed community garden has no limitations that cannot be dealt with through an integrated design approach, and has considerable potentials as a site for a community garden.

Potentials

Among the advantages noted by the consultants during a preliminary survey of the site were the observations that:

- the site receives adequate sunlight appropriate to the successful cultivation of food and other plants year round
- the site appears to be well drained via installed sub-surface drainage dating from the time of its use as a bowling green
    - the consultants visited the site during rain and found only minor pooling
- the soil appears to be of relatively open structure and well drained
- existing infrastructure dating from the use of the site as a bowling green — such as access and fences — appears to be suitable for incorporation in design of the site as a community garden, if its retention is deemed desirable
- the bowling club building is close to the site and thus suitable for use by gardeners, if that is decided upon
- the 2007 Landscape Australia's consultant's report identified the site as suited to use as a community garden.

Limitations

Limitations of the site's potential for use as a community garden are minor:

- the site is unfenced, raising the question of its vulnerability to vandalism should that be a problem in the area
    - a decision on fencing would be left to discussions between the proposed community gardener core group and Council, with the option of leaving the site unfenced for a time to assess the level of vandalism or accidental damage if any, and whether it requires the fencing of the site
- there is no water tank on the site itself and no structures to harvest runoff from, however there is the option of taking water from an existing rainwater tank storing runoff from the building
    - there are three existing taps around the disused bowling green that could serve for garden irrigation
- approximately three-quarters of the site was shaded by 3.30pm in late August (winter)
    - there is sufficient exposure to direct sunlight before this time for plant cultivation
- the site is exposed to winds from the south to the south-west, a vector for strong, cold and potentially damaging winter winds
    - the use of a windbreak to shelter plants and gardeners and the placement of a possible shelter structure on-site may ameliorate the effects of these winds
- there exists acid sulphate soils approximately a meter and a half below the surface
    - the soils are well below the root zone of the crops most likely to be grown
    - the use of raised garden beds would further isolate the cultivation profile from the acid sulphate layer
    - the use of no-dig garden construction would further limit potential for contact with the affected soils
    - the acid sulphate soils are not considered to be a limitation on cultivation.
    - a planned Council assessment of soil conditions, to check for contamination, will disclose any presently unknown limitations on cultivation.

The policy directions document

This document:

- provides background on the history, motivations and influences on community gardening in Australia
- makes recommendations for Council in regard to the proposed Carss Park Community Garden and future community gardens in the local government area.

The background material links motivations for community gardening with global trends. It is already evident that trends such as global warming and climate change, dryer regional climatic conditions and drought presently affecting the South-East of Australia have become the business of both state and local government. Although community gardens are not a panacea for these trends, they are now regarded as a part of the package of solutions.

The document also describes the roles performed by community gardens and the varied approaches to community garden governance and activities. The intention is to provide readers with an appreciation of the scope and potential of community gardens for food production, for building a sense of community and for community education, including that offered by local government.

Recommendations to Kogarah Municipal Council are found at the conclusion to relevant chapters. These are also listed separately in Attachment 1. They are proposed as a starting point for Council deliberation, as Council staff and councilors will have to view them in light of Council's policies and plans.

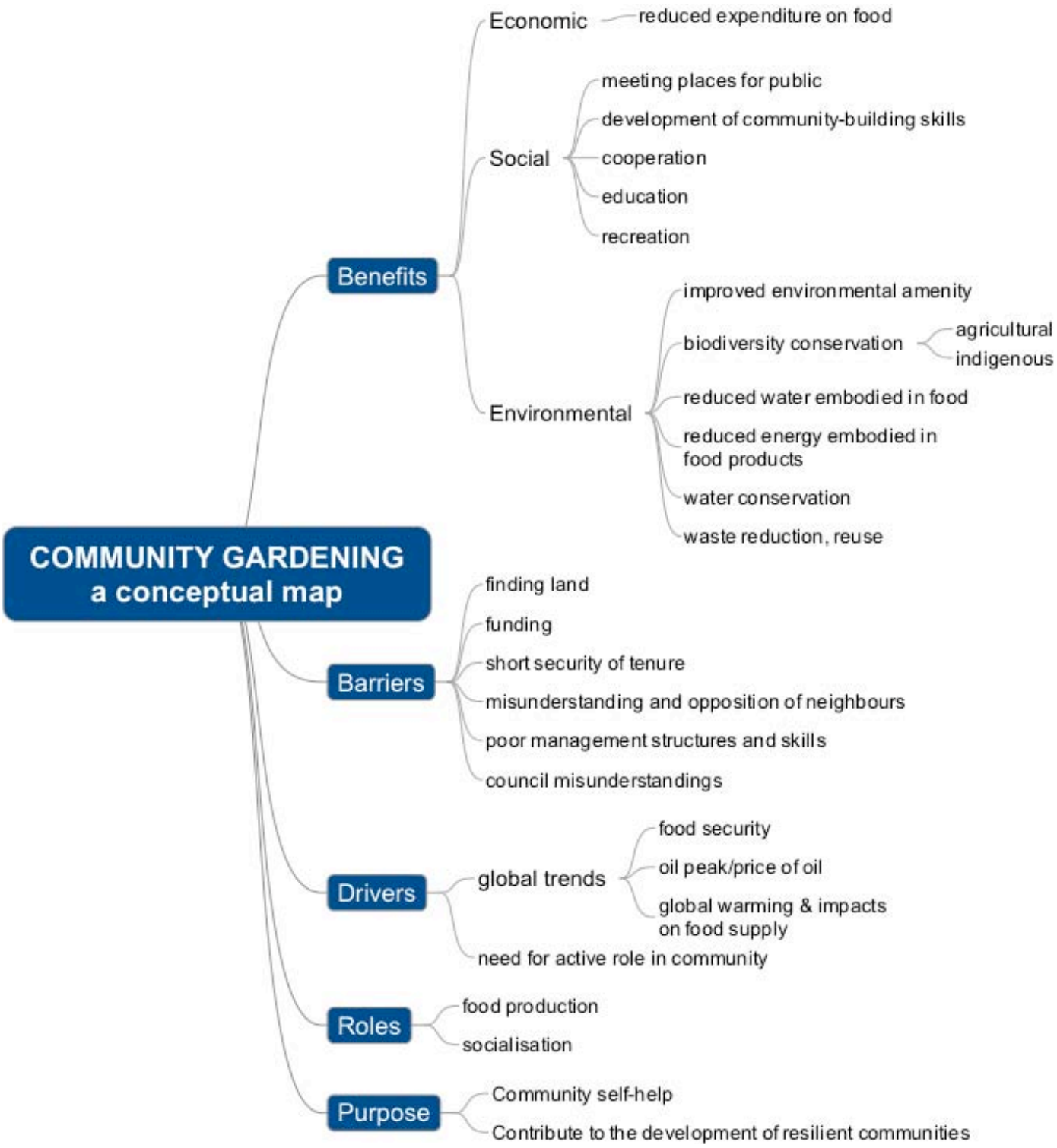
Sources

In producing this document, the authors have drawn on recent research conducted with community gardeners, councils and others with an interest in community garden development in our cities. Some material was developed for policy directions documents for Marrickville Council and the City of Sydney as well as a 'getting started' guide for residents of the City of Sydney.

Other sources of material are interviews and articles produced for a range of publications, including ABC *Gardening Australia*, *Community Harvest*, *Kindred* and online media.

The authors have considerable experience in starting and assisting community gardens and in the training of gardeners and garden problem solving.

Community gardening — a conceptual map



Chapter 1

Gardening the community way in Australia

Community gardening is not new in Australian cities. This chapter focuses on examples of gardens in the states as a means of introducing the practice of community gardening

Main points

- community gardening is a 30 year old practice in Australian cities and suburbs
- council-initiated community gardens are a relatively new development
- community gardens can serve as incubators of social enterprise and develop marketable skills.

Community gardening in Australia can be traced back to 1977, when Nunuwading Community Garden was opened in Melbourne. Sydney was to wait almost a decade before its first community garden was started in Rozelle in 1986. That was Glovers Community Garden. The garden continues to be cultivated, however there is uncertainty over its future in the planned redevelopment of the old Callum Park hospital site.

The years leading into the late 1990s saw the start of a number of community gardens including that in the grounds of Newtown High School — Angel Street Permaculture Garden — and the community garden in the grounds of Waterloo Uniting Church, now the Luncheon Club Community Garden.

From that time, the rate of creation of new community gardens began to accelerate. The 1990s brought the development of the UNSW Community Permaculture Garden, which, over its years of existence (the site was eventually resumed by the university) was used by TAFE horticulture students and the Eastern Suburbs Community College.

The first iteration of the Randwick Community Organic Garden was in 1994. The garden moved when the land it occupied was redeveloped. The Eastern Suburbs Community Garden developed an exemplary team based induction and training process for new gardeners and offered an outreach service to advise new community gardens.

A mother and daughter make a mulched garden bed at Randwick Community Organic Garden

In recent times, both Randwick and Woollahra Councils have assisted community gardens to make a start, as has City of Sydney and Hurstville. Marrickville Council has initiated a process to facilitate community gardens and, in 2007, commissioned the first local government policy directions document on community gardening.

The years since the start of the new century have seen growth in the number of community gardens in Australia. A new influence in community garden development in NSW has been the intervention of local government in initiating community gardens.

Community gardening in other states

Brisbane

Community gardens and city farms in Brisbane are located mainly on land administered by community centres or Brisbane City Council.

The prime example is Northey Street City Farm[i], a large establishment operating since the mid-1990s on city land on the banks of Breakfast Creek in Windsor. The City Farm has developed into a multiple use centre with a very popular Sunday morning organic growers' market, seasonal celebrations and festivals, workshops for the Brisbane community, labour market training programs, a schools' education program and offering accredited training (certificates three and four) in

the permaculture design system as well as the permaculture design course.

The City Farm gave birth to Growing Communities [ii], a consultancy arm providing community and school garden design and management.

Another social enterprise making use of community gardens in Brisbane is Spiral Community Hub[iii], a cooperative of community development workers and an architect that provides services in labour market training in their West End market garden and the Paradise Street Community Garden[iv].

It is in this way that the practice of community gardening can sometimes lead to livelihood opportunities based on the community gardening experience. In this sense, community gardens and city farms can act as community enterprise incubators, enhancing their social value.

Melbourne

In Melbourne, most community gardens are on Department of Human Services public housing estates. Those not on the estates are commonly found on local government land.

Melbourne is another instance where community gardening has links with social enterprise. There, the community association, Cultivating Community[v], is contracted by the Department of Human Services to provide community food system and community garden start-up, design and management services to its estate clients.

As well as supporting a growing number of community gardens, Cultivating Community offers an affordable, schools' garden-to-kitchen program, has started two food cooperatives (shared buying groups) on the estates and is building a second brick oven adjacent to Fitzroy community gardens that will form the sore of a community kitchen. In association with Melbourne University, Cultivating Community offers two courses — Kitchen Gardens in Schools and Community and Therapeutic Horticulture.

Tasmania

Hannah Maloney is a young, up-and-coming social entrepreneur who lives in Hobart. She reports that community gardening and associated projects are going well and receive support from the government-supported Eat Well Tasmania[vi]. Eat Well supports the Tasmanian

Community Gardening Network and is involved with school gardens. What is happening in Hobart indicates the way in which food is becoming the focus of community-based initiatives.

The Tasmanian Growing Communities organisation:

- organised the 2007 statewide conference on community and school garden development; over 100 gardeners, council staff, teachers, community development workers and the general community attended, indicating the growing interest in these initiatives and their potential
- another statewide conference is planned for the end of 2008
- advised a new community garden has opened in Taroona, a Hobart suburb, supplementing the existing garden at Lenah valley
- is planning another community garden in Hobart that will include a grey water system and, potentially, a micro-hydro generator utilising the creek running through the site; extra produce from the garden will be sold through the associated co-op, with the potential for a small community market to open in future.

Community gardens in the other states occupy local government land, for the most part.

Chapter 2

Global motivators

World trends as stimulant to community gardening

This chapter describes the way that people respond locally to global trends by participating in community gardening

Main points

- community gardening gives people a sense of working locally on global issues and of making a contribution.

Community gardening has become a means for people to respond locally to global trends. In participating in this way they feel as though they are making a contribution to solutions, modest though that may be. For local government, this motivation opens the way to their participation in relevant council initiatives such as community education, waste minimization and recycling.

Community gardening, as a practice within the wider ambit of urban agriculture, is increasingly proposed by food experts and a growing number of planners as a positive practice in the present context of high oil prices and global warming and their likely continuation into the future.

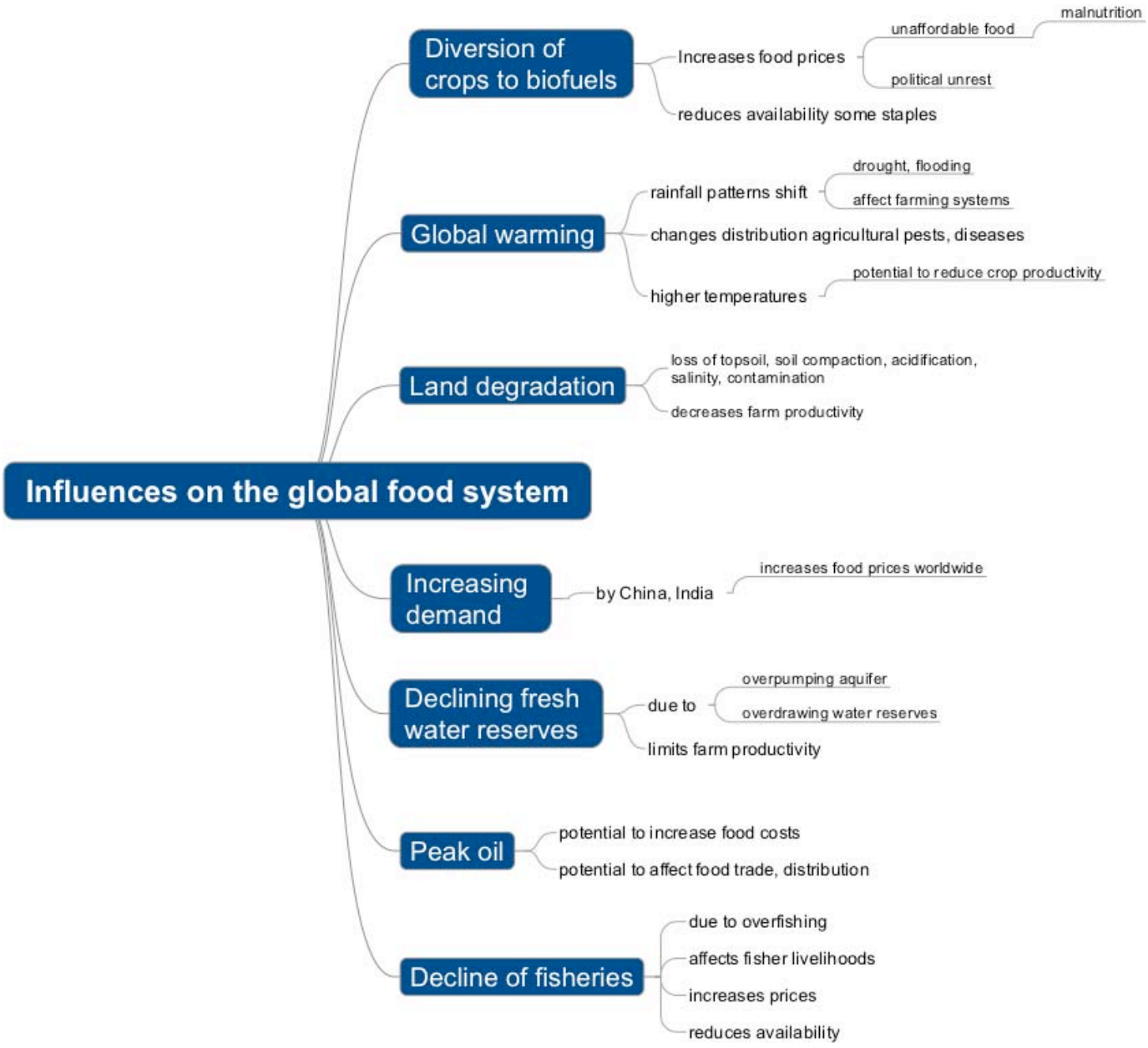
Urban agriculture — an imperative

The practice of growing food on public land feeds people worldwide and, where it is practiced as a type of small-scale market gardening, yields valuable income in developing country cities.

The importance of urban agriculture, of both the small scale commercial model and for the direct consumption of gardeners, was described in the book *Urban Agriculture — Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*[vii]. The book disclosed the fact that urban agriculture is the fastest growing type of agriculture worldwide.

Urban agriculture is practiced not only in developing countries but in the advanced economies as well. Although it existed in the UK before

the First World War, it was that conflict and the Second World War that firmly established the practice in the cities of combatant countries. In the UK and the USA, these wartime gardens were known as Victory Gardens and were popularised as sources of dietary nutrition for civilian populations. The security value of having local sources of nutritious food was a learning of the wartime experience.



Growth indicates popularity

Today, community gardening — the production of food for the immediate consumption of the gardeners and their families — is undergoing a worldwide surge of popularity following a period of decline during the 1960s through to the early 1990s.

To illustrate this, consider the fact that there are estimated to be something like 600 community gardens in New York City. Over 100 of them are owned as land trusts or managed by one of two organisations — the Trust for Public Land[viii] and the New York Restoration Project[ix]. Two New York botanic gardens — the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the New York Botanical Garden — provide services to community gardens in their areas.

In the UK, where local government maintains the tradition of providing land for allotment gardening, there is now a waiting list for allotments. There, the popularity of traditional allotment gardening has increased over the past decade.

According to a BBC News Channel report on allotment gardening:
" …there is a new breed of allotment enthusiast — more likely to be younger, female and bringing along the children to help out… and the demand for these allotments is such that in some inner-city areas there are waiting lists stretching out for years and years ahead. Allotments are even being used to improve health - with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers running 'green gyms' where gardening skills are used as a form of exercise.

"It's becoming much more of a community activity. I see my neighbouring allotment holder bringing his children, so they can watch how to cultivate vegetables and seeing the distinction between growing food and buying it from a supermarket," a gardener was quoted as saying[x].

Concern about global trends motivate many community gardeners and may be the reason for their initial involvement.

Global warming, the peaking of global oil production (known as 'peak oil'), health fears over food and the current global food crisis figure among the concerns of community gardeners and those involved in associated community food initiatives such as food cooperatives and Community Supported Agriculture (a form of subscription farming that links regional farmers with city buyers. Brisbane's Food Connect is the most developed CSA in Australia[xi]).

Global warming

Community gardening is a means of addressing global warming at the local level because it involves the local production of a portion of a family's food.

This reduces the purchase of foods that have been moved interstate or internationally, thus reducing the 'food miles', a measure of the distance food is transported and its consequent emission of greenhouse gases.

Although food miles are becoming a de facto estimate of the environmental impact of the food system, Australia's only research into food miles, *Food Miles in Australia*[xii], says that the measure is only one component in estimating of impact of the food system.

Peak oil

The term 'peak oil' describes the peaking of extraction of the global oil reserves.

A situation of demand for oil outstripping supply is expected to follow peak extraction. In such a situation, prices of any goods and services using oil in their manufacture, processing and distribution will increase to reflect rising demand and reduced supply. This includes food, because the global food system is oil-intensive, using oil for:

- the production of agricultural inputs such as synthetic fertiliser, pesticides and other synthetic chemicals
- farm mechanisation
- food processing
- food distribution via ship, truck and aircraft
- the production and transport of food packaging.

Those that study the phenomenon say that, although the discovery of new oil fields is anticipated, they will at best delay the drawdown of oil reserves rather than eliminate the anticipated shortfall.

There is some disagreement as to the likelihood of peak oil, however the consensus is that it is an authentic phenomena. The credibility of the idea was attested to in the recent CSIRO study of peak oil, *Fuel for thought – The future of transport fuels: challenges and opportunities,* released in July 2008[xiii]. The report investigated the need to reduce the Australian transport sector's greenhouse gas emissions and how to deal with economic risks associated with increasingly costly and scarce oil supplies.

Food has become a focus in the international conversation around peak oil, understandably so as it is a basic human need. In regard to agriculture, the local or regional (the terms can be considered synonymous) production, processing and distribution of foods are promoted as a means of dealing with the anticipated and progressive peak oil-induced food price increases. Community gardening is a means of producing food locally.

Adding further credibility to the idea that peak oil is an authentic trend has been the 2008 Victorian Eco Innovation Lab/ University of Melbourne research, *Sustainable and Secure Food Systems for Victoria*[xiv]. The report purports that food production close to and within our cities forms part of the solution to both peak oil and global warming.

Food health fears

These are plentiful and persistent. They include concerns over the health and environmental effects of:

- genetically engineered foods
- foods contamination by pesticides, herbicides and other biocides
- additives in foods
- the effect of food irradiation.

These are drivers of the rapidly growing demand for organic foods in Australia.

Health concerns are an often-heard reason for participation in community gardening as it gives gardeners have full control over the food they grow. Evidence for the depth and persistence of food health fears comes from Robert Pekin of Brisbane CSA, Food Connect. He says that concerns over children's health accounts for the prevalence of young mothers among Food Connect's membership. This indicates a distrust of the conventional food system and its products, even among the younger demographic.

The global food crisis

The price of oil and the diversion of grains and soya from the global food market into the fuel tanks of the world's vehicle fleet is driving a new fear over the security of our food supply.

The crisis has motivated food riots in over 30 countries, the freezing of food exports and prices and a UN conference on the issue. While food prices are now starting to increase in the developed economies as a result of the crisis, all but the economically marginalised in those societies are probably affluent enough to absorb the increases.

This situation provides a basis for the contention of researchers and academics that food security is increased where periurban agriculture is protected from urban development and where sources of staple foods are derived close to where they are consumed. In this context, community gardens gain added value as local sources of fresh foods.

Acting locally on the big issues

Community gardens provide citizens with a means of acting locally on global issues.

Although the impact of their individual actions is small, the experience of taking local action on global issues is a motivating one and encourages people to assume the role of engaged citizenship. When local government makes constructive links with this motivation, avenues of interaction are opened and council can benefit by recruiting local people to its environmental and community development agendas.

Chapter 3

The role of local government

Local government, especially in NSW, has become involved in community gardening over the past decade and councils are now major stimulants of new community gardens.

Main points

- there exist precedents for local government involvement in the development of community gardens
- Sydney has a record of local government involvement in local food systems
- in recent years, councils have adopted the approach of developing policy on community gardening
- the adoption of a policy enabling community gardening in the Kogarah Council local government area would facilitate the proposed garden at Carss Park.

Local government, especially in NSW but also in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, is now a major influences on the practice of urban food production in community gardens.

They approach this role in different ways.

State government involvement

State government in NSW and Victoria facilitate community gardening on public housing estates.

In NSW, the Department of Housing adopted a policy of support for public housing estate community gardens, with the Royal Botanic Gardens providing advice. In Victoria, the Department of Human Services contacts Cultivating Community, a community association, to provide similar assistance.

In Western Australia, Sue Ellery, Minister for Child Protection, Communities, Women's Interests, Seniors and Volunteering, in June 2008 announced a grant of $154,000 to assist community gardening in the state.

The Minster said: "There are now 15 established community gardens in WA and they are a wonderful opportunity to bring people together in an environment that is fun and relaxed and also, quite literally, productive.

"Managed by the people who live in the community, these gardens not only bear home-grown produce but can also promote cultural understanding, teach new skills and create a better awareness of the environment."

Partners in the project included the WA Community Garden Network (an associate of the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network[xv]), the City of Swan, City of Gosnells and the Town of Cambridge and not-for-profit organisation Learning Centre Link. Together, they will produce a map of community gardens across WA, an information kit and starter pack for community garden projects, document best practice models of community gardens and opportunities for community garden training and develop a community garden website.

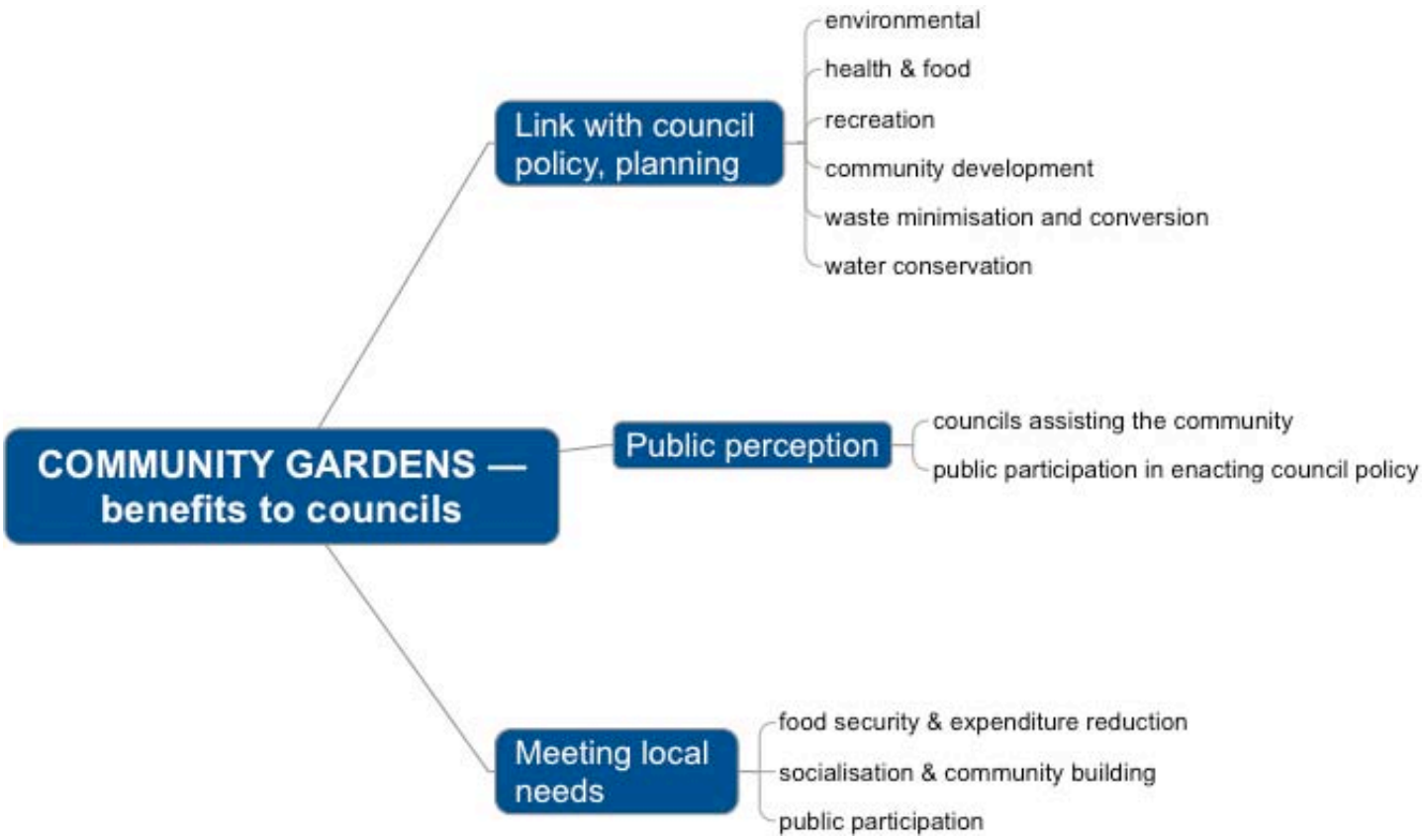
Local government and community garden policy development

Forward thinking councils are developing policy on community gardening. To date, they have taken a positive attitude to garden development.

Policy initiatives in Sydney include:

- development of a local government food security policy that approved Council support for community gardens and other local food initiatives, in 1998 (*What's Eating South Sydney?*; South Sydney Council)
- development of a policy directions document for Marrickville Council in late 2007
- development of a community gardening policy and community gardeners' guide by the City of Sydney in 2008 and Woollahra Council in 2007 developed a community garden policy.

Across the Tasman, New Zealand's Auckland City Council adopted policy on community gardening some years ago.



A thoughtful approach to community gardens by councils can make constructive links with council practice and policy

Enabling food security

There are precedents for local government involvement in food systems in Australia, including in Sydney.

City governments in a number of other countries, including Canada and the USA, have also adopted policy and practice to support food production in community gardens. In a number of cases the gardens form part of a city food security policy.

Food security may be defined as access to a year-round supply of nutritious food sufficient to sustain an active lifestyle.

A definition of food security may include:

- the notion of 'culturally appropriate' foods in the recognition that some cultures prohibit certain foods and require food to be processed in accordance with certain practices

- the practice of growing some of the family food supply in home or community gardens so as to ensure access to fresh and nutritious foods and to reduce family expenditure on foods
- the preservation, through legislation, local government landuse zoning and local environmental planning documents of urban and periurban market gardens, orchards and poultry farms.

Five years ago, the term 'food security' was largely unheard outside of the overseas development assistance milieu. That it is a common term today signifies that the ideas it embodies are now regarded as important and urgent. In part, this stems from the heightened prominence of food issues globally and from the findings of food organisations that there exists 'hidden hunger' in Australia (the term comes from the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance — www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au — and was used first at the launch of the organisation at NSW Parliament House in 2005).

Australian local government involvement in food issues includes:

- the Hawkesbury Food Program, an initiative of Hawkesbury City Council, local health services, the University of Western Sydney, NSW Agriculture and others[xvi]
- City of Port Phillip which, in its *Food Security in the City of Port Phillip* report, *Part V, Municipal Food Security – Executive Summary of dimensions, opportunities and new ideas*, states that it will "encourage sustainable production of local foods (for example fruit trees, vegetables) grown in the setting of natural and public resources — homes, reserves, parks and gardens and public housing estates; investigate potential neighbourhood and household orchards with sharing of crops; encourage local food processing and packaging industries (for example — fruit, vegetables, cereals, meat and meat substitutes, milk and milk products, Halal foods)"
- Penrith City Council's Penrith Food Project (1994)[xvii]
- South Sydney Council's 1998 local government food security policy; the document offered council support to local fresh food initiatives including food co-operatives and community gardens and enabled council to assist the development, in cooperation with the NSW Department of Housing, of a number of community gardens on the Waterloo Estate and assisted other community gardens in the local government area
- the Darebin Good Food Alliance, a leadership and advocacy group for the City of Darebin Health Strategy 2005-2006 in

which Council is taking a leadership role at all stages of the food supply chain
- the City of Yarra – Community Food System Project; a City of Yarra/Cultivating Communities project partnership which plans an urban agriculture and community food security network to inform policy development and which was supported by Council.

Other food security initiatives that may include some local government support include:
- the Food Security Network of the VicHealth initiative, Food for All, that aims to improve access to food for healthy eating by supporting local governments and others working towards improving access to healthy food and food security
- healthy eating agencies in the states set up under the 'Eat Well' initiatives
- Cultivating Community, a Melbourne-based, not-for-profit community enterprise contracted to the Victorian Department of Human Resources to design community gardens and train community gardeners on public housing estates, as well as initiate community food co-operatives and an affordable garden-to-kitchen initiative in schools
- the Frankston Community Kitchen Project developed by Frankston Community Health Service to promote healthy eating and the development of personal skills and local social support networks; there are around 60 community kitchens operating across Victoria and others are to be found elsewhere in Australia[xviii]

The value of policy

In adopting policy on community gardening, councils are enabled to set up community gardens as a local government initiative and — where policy is adopted as a guide to the future development of community gardens in the LGA — become open to approaches for assistance from community groups interested in starting their own community garden.

With a policy available on the council website and perhaps in brochure form, would-be community gardeners would be aware of their management responsibilities, council requirements for applications for community garden assistance and whether or not a formal submission is required and what it should cover. They would be assured that an

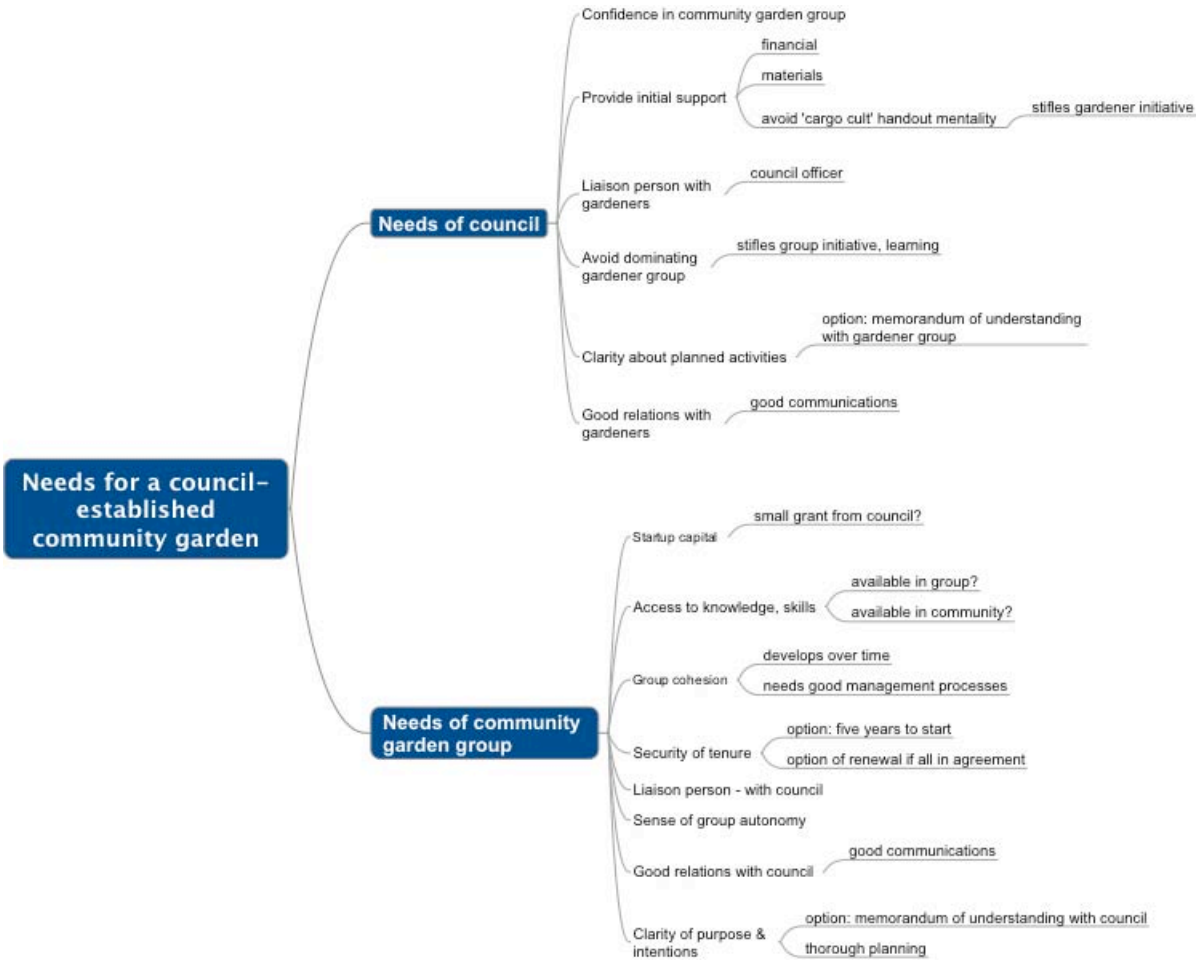
open, transparent process would be followed by council in assessing their application.

Policy adoption is a means for councils to adopt a community-based, demand driven approach to community gardening to supplement the supply driven, council-instigated model. The latter can be successful, however it entails more work for council.

Recommendations

That Kogarah Municipal Council considers taking the proactive approach of:

1. Adopting policy in support of community gardening
2. Developing a structure for seeking and assessing applications for community garden support from the community
3. Considering the future development of a food security policy which would include community food gardening
4. In future, adopting the community based, demand driven approach through which Council responds positively to a request for assistance in starting a community garden.



Chapter 4

What goes on in community gardens

Community gardens cater mainly for food production and socialisation needs. A few have become major sustainability education enterprises.

Main points

- activities in community gardens are variable and reflect the preferences of the gardeners
- successful community gardens often adopt a policy or practice of multiple-use
- compatible multiple-use improves the tenure of community gardens through building a larger user-base.

Community gardens are more than places to grow food. At their best they become places of significance in the urban landscape where individuals, friends and families can gather — special places that combine many different activities.

In this chapter we outline some of the activities to be found in community gardens in Australia. All of the activities will not be found in any one particular garden, however some include a number of them. The activities that occur in a community garden are determined by the interests of the gardeners.

Food production

This is a basic function of all community gardens and is the core around which other activities are woven.

Garden productivity

The amount of food a community garden produces depends on:

- the area available for food production
- the horticultural skills of the gardeners
- the availability of irrigation water, especially in times of drought when water consumption may be restricted

- access to advice on food production and in dealing with the challenges likely to be encountered, such as pest management.

The urgency of food production

Urban food production is a high priority activity in developing countries, as described in the UNDP publication, *Urban agriculture — Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities*.

In Australia, the availability of cheap food has blunted the 'survival' aspect of urban gardening. However, according to those who study peak oil and climate change, however, it could become more important as agriculture becomes less viable and less productive in some regions and as food prices rise, driven by the increasing cost of oil, itself an effect of increasing demand and falling supply.

In this scenario, today's community gardens are seen as training grounds for a cadre of gardeners that would go out to train others to multiply the number of community gardens and to boost urban food production.

Contribution to family diets

It is mainly vegetables and herbs that are grown in community gardens. Some yield fruits; a few produce nuts and eggs.

While it is the productivity of the allotments and common gardens that determine the portion of the domestic diet that is satisfied through community gardening, observation suggests that the production of staple foods is lacking. Given the area needed for the production of grain staples, this is understandable, despite the fact that grains requiring minimum processing, such as corn, are widely grown.

Community gardeners could produce more of their staples by substituting grains with root crops, a practice that has yet to be fully developed.

At present, the main dietary contribution of community gardens is in the form of the vitamin and mineral component of a balanced diet — the varied vegetable and herb crops that are commonly grown. Protein is obtained successfully where community gardeners form a 'chook team' to manage a small flock of chickens, something that is done successfully by only a small number of community gardens.

Socialisation

Interpersonal interaction is a basic activity necessary to the effective functioning of community gardens. The cooperation needed to operate a garden rests on a base of positive, personal relationships between gardeners.

As places of common endeavour, community gardens are ideal for bringing people together around the activities that take place in them. Over time, personal contact leads to friendships, and friendships lead to effective cooperative activities.

As working relationships and friendships grow, and as familiarisation with the garden site leads to increasing knowledge about it, a sense of place can emerge that, given time, can grow into a sense of community through commonality.

Arts in the garden

Community gardens are places given to non-gardening activities such as the performance and learning of arts. Acapella singing, musical performance, readings, poetry, community mosaic production and more are to be found in some community gardens.

Arts activities commonly occur as workshops for the community, events at which people can learn the skills involved. Mosaic art, placed around the garden, is a popular form and one that has proven attractive to children.

In Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, the Arts in the Garden team make use of community gardens for arts performance and learning. Led by Mary O'Connell, the team is at present focused on the Randwick Community Organic Garden. Before its closure, the team turned the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden into a popular community arts venue in the Eastern Suburbs.

Community education and workplace training

Whether for arts skills, compost making, learning to make a no-dig garden and use mulch, or to learn the techniques of low-water use gardening, community gardens are proven venues for community education. Plant propagation and seed saving are other skills that have been passed on at community gardens.

Workshops and courses are one way in which home gardeners can benefit from the presence of a community garden nearby.

Council may consider gaining the agreement of gardeners for the periodic use of the community garden for community education, such as would be carried out by Council's sustainability or environmental education officer or its water and waste educators.

Council may also wish to demonstrate some technologies or devices on the site that are compatible with the site's main use for community gardening. These could include the installation of rainwater tanks, low-water use gardening and the like and would introduce new ideas or technologies to the public. In this way, the community garden serves as a demonstration centre.

Where the interest of gardeners includes the cultivation of unusual plants, knowledgeable gardeners have offered workshops in ethnobotany — the use of plants by different cultures. Where there is a knowledge of cooking, perhaps including the presence of gardeners from other cultures, workshops in preparing and cooking unusual foods could be offered.

Precedents in education and training

Some local governments, such as City of Sydney, make an agreement with gardeners to make use of the community garden for council's waste education. Here, skills in compost and wormfarming are offered in a way that benefits Council, the community and the gardeners.

At Northey Street City Farm, Education Officer Dick Copeman offers a range of community education workshops as well as the nationally accredited permaculture design course at certificates three and four levels.

In some cases, community adult education colleges and TAFE have made use of community gardens. The Eastern Suburbs Community College, for example, made use of the UNSW Community Permaculture Garden, as did TAFE.

Places such as Northey Street City Farm, CERES and Westlafen Community Garden have provided venues for workplace training for long term unemployed people. Spiral Community Hub, a Brisbane cooperative of community workers, uses the Paradise Street Community Garden for workplace training.

Biodiversity conservation

Conserving the biodiversity of our native plants and our agricultural heritage is an interest assumed by many community gardens.

Conserving native biodiversity is considered an appropriate role for community gardens as it is upon natural systems that we depend for their environmental services — clean water, clean air and habitat. Endangered plants can also be cultivated in community gardens as seed sources for the community.

Agricultural biodiversity

The conservation of agricultural biodiversity is regarded as being as critical as the preservation of native plant biodiversity because the wellbeing of humanity depends so heavily upon it. Agricultural biodiversity is endangered all around the world and community gardeners have assumed the role of protecting it through use heirloom and locally specific seed varieties.

Community gardens have the option of joining Australia's Seed Savers Network (www.seedsavers.net) and becoming a Local Seed Centre for this purpose. The Network offers a free manual for training gardeners in this role.

Food and natives together

As community gardens work best when well-designed, the establishment of exotic food species and edible and non-edible native plants takes place where they form a functional relationship within the whole garden design.

An example is the bush food garden at Northey Street City Farm and the native habitat planting in the form of a windbreak to protect edible gardens at Randwick Community Organic Garden. In the latter case the native and indigenous plantings were established by the gardeners with the assistance of Randwick City Council's Bushcare team.

The involvement of the Bushcare team demonstrates that there need be no conflict in integrating native and edible species in the context of effective design, when the principle of functional relationship is employed.

Celebration

Celebration in community gardens can take two forms: the celebration of accomplishments and milestones in the garden's development, and seasonal and other celebrations.

The celebration of significant accomplishments is important to group development and cohesion.

The types of celebrations appropriate in community gardens include:

- harvest festivals — such as the annual Harvest Festival at CERES
- diversity fairs, which celebrate the diversity of particular food crops such as chillies, tomatoes etc; these events are characteristically held at harvest time and can include workshops on preparation and cooking
- cultural celebrations peculiar to the original cultures of the gardeners
- seasonal celebration, such as solstice and equinox festivals that are linked to traditional agricultural cycles.

Safe places for families

Community gardens are safe places for families because they provide a contained space for children in which parents can allow them freedom and at the same time keep watch on them.

Where there is interest, activities for children may be organised in the garden.

Where space and funds permit, and where the facility would be used by local people as well as gardener's children, the installation of a children's playground can add to the multiple use of the site.

Reducing crime and vandalism

It is a truism that vandalism decreases where there are people about.

People in public places provide an unintentional and informal surveillance of the area. This is true of community gardeners, especially when they attend their garden during the week and late into the evening during the daylight saving months.

Vandalism does occur in community gardens but there is evidence that the presence of community gardens can deter crime. This was shown in Sydney's South West where it was reported that the presence of a community garden on a NSW Housing land dislodged crime from the area.

Research discloses success

At the NSW government housing estate at Claymore, near Campbelltown, residents, assisted by Argyle Community Housing, cleaned up their streets, started their own neighbourhood watch and employment service and established extensive community food gardens.

A study by Dr Bruce Judd and Dr Rob Samuels of the AHURI UNSW-UWS Research Centre, conducted over two and a half years on nine public housing estates, found effective a social approach to crime reduction that includes the presence of community gardens.

"In many public housing estates, people's territories are not defined," Dr Judd said. "There is no patch that's yours to look after. You get these no-man's-land spaces that end up being littered with shopping trolleys, rubbish and dead cars. This causes a downward spiral of physical deterioration, low morale and stigmatisation. In areas of high disadvantage, community becomes critical," Dr Judd said. "You need empathetic people on the ground actively tackling the issues."

It was on such "no-man's-land spaces that end up being littered with shopping trolleys, rubbish and dead cars" that a series of large community gardens were established. Suddenly, the no-man's land was occupied, and that changed everything.

Community gardens are a way to reclaim ambiguous public space, confirmed Dr Judd. "Occupy space, secure it, light it well and get people actively using it," is his prescription for reclaiming such spaces.

A similar finding was reported at the Smith Street Community Garden in Cabramatta. The garden occupies a part — public open space— and was vegetated with eucalypt trees and large shrubs that sheltered heroin users from the street and that led to the loss of the children's playground to the drug users.

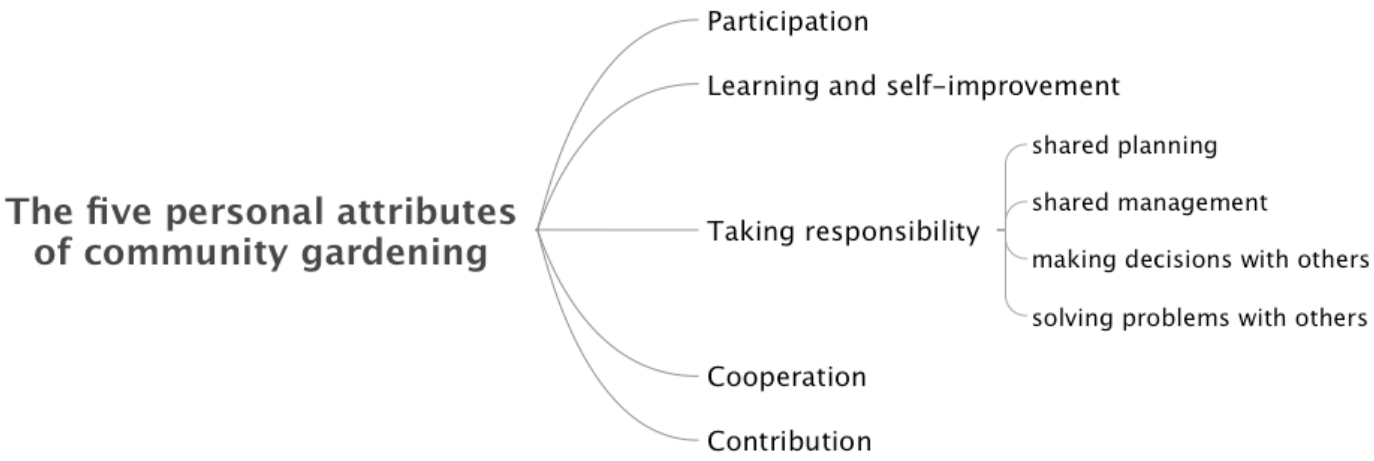
When Liverpool Council gave support to the community garden, it cleared the shrubbery but left the tall eucalypts. Now, the drug users were open to view from the street and from the community garden. The reclamation of the playground by local children and parents was attributed to the presence of community gardeners.

As Dr Judd said about the establishment of community gardens in crime prone areas — "you move in, light the area well and occupy it".

Recommendations

That the proposed Carss Park Community Garden, as well as possible future gardens in the Kogarah LGA:

1. Adopt the principle of muliple-use and facilitate a range of activities, compatible with the community gardens and the passive recreational use of the sites, that are within the capacity of the gardeners to fund, design and introduce.
2. That community gardeners and Kogarah Municipal Council agree that proposed multiple use of community garden sites are in the best interests of the gardeners and compatible with the spirit of Council planning and other policy and practice.



Community gardens — strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Proven model • Access to fresh food • Locational focus for community • Social amenity • Environmental amenity • Opportunities for councils • Educational role • Promote active citizenship	• Disputation could threaten garden • Minimally funded projects • Reliant on local government, other cooperation for start-up and tenure • Possibility that declining interest could lead to abandonment of site • Leaders could leave	• Food production • Develping sense of community, place • Positive relationship with councils • Regreening local environments • Preserving biodiversity of food plants • Habitat creation • Schools involvement • Community education • Demonstration centres	• Loss of land tenure • Loss of participants — threatens garden viability if too many lost • Soil contamination

The needs, functions & yields of community gardens

Needs: inputs to garden. **Functions**: processes on site.

Yields: Products of use by people that are the outcomes of the community gardening process.

NEEDS	FUNCTIONS	YIELDS

• Site with suitable soils & conditions.
• Gardeners — initial core group then the ability to recruit more gardeners.
• Gardener organization.
• Planting materials (seeds, cuttings, tubers).
• Funding.
• Water for irrigation.
• Site infrastructure — water harvesting and storage;
  • durable paths (minimize maintenance);
  • shelter for gardeners from sun and rain;
  • compost production;
  • propagation area;
  • fencing (?).
• Knowledge, skills, access to information.
• Organisational capacity — management.
• Process to plan, maintain garden.
• Training in gardening skills.
• Good relations with landholder.
• Development of garden as neighourhood asset.
• Integrated pest management.
• Clear sense of purpose & direction.
	• Decision making.
	• Cooperation.
	• Gardener participation and cooperation in developing site.
	• Waste recycling and reuse.
	• Design of site.
	• Development of a sense of place.
	• Effective site management.
	• Water harvesting, storage and use on site.
	• Soil maintenance.
	• Site monitoring — soils, safety, productivity, team processes.
	• Learning.
	• Cooperation.
	• Reduced expenditure on food.
		• Fresh, nutritious food.
		• Sense of community through shared responsibility.
		• Improved group and individual skills.
		• Improved food security.
		• Improved neighbourhood environmental and social amenity.

Chapter 5

Community gardens — a social role

As well as food production, community gardens fulfill an important social role for their participants.

Main points

- community gardens reflect their surrounding demographic
- community gardens have traditionally welcomed participation by people of culturally diverse backgrounds
- there is precedent for community gardens serving broader social functions, beyond food production; this can be facilitated by thoughtful design
- councils can assist community gardens by charging only a peppercorn lease fee, if any.

The social role of community gardens is considered by some researchers and community gardeners as being of equal importance to the provision of fresh food.

Observation, experience and research point to a number of social benefits stemming from successful community gardens. These include:

- the educational value of the gardens, both to gardeners and to non-member locals who may visit the garden for workshops and advice
- the breaking down of cultural barriers through the familiarity that comes with proximity and frequency of contact
- the use of community gardens and the safe environment they engender as venues for professional community work
- the use of community gardens for work-related activity by organisations caring for mentally and physically disabled people.

Northey Street City Farm, Beelarong Community Farm and the former UNSW Permaculture Community Garden are just a few of the gardens that have provided venues for mentally disabled people and those of culturally diverse origin. In Sydney, a centre for refugees seeking immigration into Australia is planning to build a small community garden.

People from other cultures

People of non-English speaking backgrounds have a long association with the practice of community gardening in Australia:

- some of those that eagerly took up the allotments at Melbourne's Collingwood Children's Farm were Greeks who immigrated in the 1950s
- most of those who cultivate allotments at Fitzroy Community Garden are Hmong from the highlands of Vietnam and Cambodia
- those at the nearby Collingwood Community Garden are a mix of Vietnamese and Turks
- community gardens elsewhere in Collingwood, on public housing estates, include East Timorese, Vietnamese and Chinese
- gardeners at the Cook and Solander community gardens in Sydney come from many nations and religions, as do those on other public housing estates
- Riverwood community gardeners include many people from Asia as well as other places living in NSW Housing accommodation.

Some gardens, located in suburbs with people from a mix of cultures, write into their gardeners' agreement a prohibition on racial vilification in the garden. In reality, there have been few instances of racial disputation and gardeners of culturally diverse backgrounds appear to get on well. This suggests something more than tolerance; it is acceptance, a more viable basis on which to build

For gardeners of non-Western origin, community gardening brings the opportunity to grow plants peculiar to their dietary culture. This can be seen in Carlton, an inner suburb of Melbourne, where community gardeners from East Timor grow edible plants they know from their homeland and which are otherwise difficult to find, if they can be found at all.

Community gardens as Third Places

The Third Place is an idea developed by professor of sociology at the University of West Florida, Ray Oldenberg[xix].

The term describes places where people gather informally to meet, converse and do those other things common to informal meeting places.

The term is derived from the idea that the 'first place' is that where we spend most of our time — the home. The 'second place' is where we spend the next greatest amount of time, and for most of that's the workplace. The Third Place is the venue where we gather with friends, acquaintances and strangers to meet informally.

Third Places are:

- open to the general public
- cheap or free to visit
- informal
- easy to access on foot or by public transport.

According to Oldenberg, Third Places include cafes, bookstores, bars, hair salons and similar locales. Traditionally, the Third Place role has been fulfilled by the English pub, the Australian bar, the French cafe, the urban coffee house and the city park.

It is in Third Places that interpersonal bonds are formed, ideas discussed and explored, problems solved, time passed in conversation, books and magazines read and discussed and plans made.

At their best, Third Places become the heart of a community, a place where ideas to improve the surrounding environment are thought up.

It takes little stretch of the imagination to recognise community gardens as Third Places as they fulfill all of the above criteria. In the same way that Oldenberg describes other venues as being the heart of communities, so a competently run community garden can fulfill the role of neighbourhood focus. The provision of benches and the welcoming of non-gardeners into community gardens allows visitors to make compatible use of the place for purposes other than gardening.

Precedents

Venues serving effectively as Third Places include:

- Randwick Community Organic Garden, where the construction of a pergola by the gardeners and the installation of a long table and seating has provided a relaxing venue for gardeners and visitors
- Northey Street City Farm, with its seats and tables and outdoor cafe serving shoppers at the weekly organic growers' market and other community events
- Beelarong Community Farm, with its well made shelter with built in greywater treatment, coffee and tea making facilities and seating around the site
- Westlafen Community Garden in Ipswich, which has a community centre, organizes events and was recently by council for its role in the community; the City of Ipswich assists the garden.

In making the presentation to the Westlafen community gardeners, City of Ipswich mayor, Cr Paul Pisasale, said: "Community gardening is a great way to meet people, to share knowledge and experience… they [community gardens] are places for people who want to make things happen in a community. Community gardens are an achievement of the people".

A number of low cost features facilitate community gardens assuming the role of Third Places. These include:

- an openness to visitors entering and lingering on site
- provision of seating around the site
- a pergola or similar shade structure to provide shelter from sun, rain and wind and equipped with a table and seating
- an aesthetically pleasant environment
- an awareness by gardeners of the role of community gardens fulfilling the function of social meeting place — a Third Place.

The idea of community garden as Third Place can grow out of the development of a sense of place within a garden. This might not occur immediately, as energy initially goes into getting garden beds built, plants in the ground and infrastructure established.

Ideally, the time to think about the garden as social focus is during the initial planning phase..

Recommendations

Planning for the proposed Carss Park garden include:

1. In a gardeners' agreement the prohibition, for purposes of gardener harmony and cooperation, of the making of racial, religious or cultural slurs in the community garden.
2. Agreement in community garden documents or by non-written means that people of different cultural backgrounds be permitted to grow customary food crops.
3. Provision for the proposed garden to serve as a Third Place for the local community; that Council and gardeners agree to the construction of a pergola and the installation of a table and seating; and that a garden agreement put on record the provision that the garden be open to visitation by non-gardeners.

Chapter 6

The governance of community gardens

New south Wales has the greatest range in governance models for community gardens. This chapter describes the models, their advantages and disadvantages

Main points

- different models of garden set-up and management have been trialed
- citizen-initiated gardens lead more rapidly to self-management and have less call on council resources
- where councils start community gardens, they have the option of devolving decision making authority to the gardener group as they gain experience and build organisational capacity.

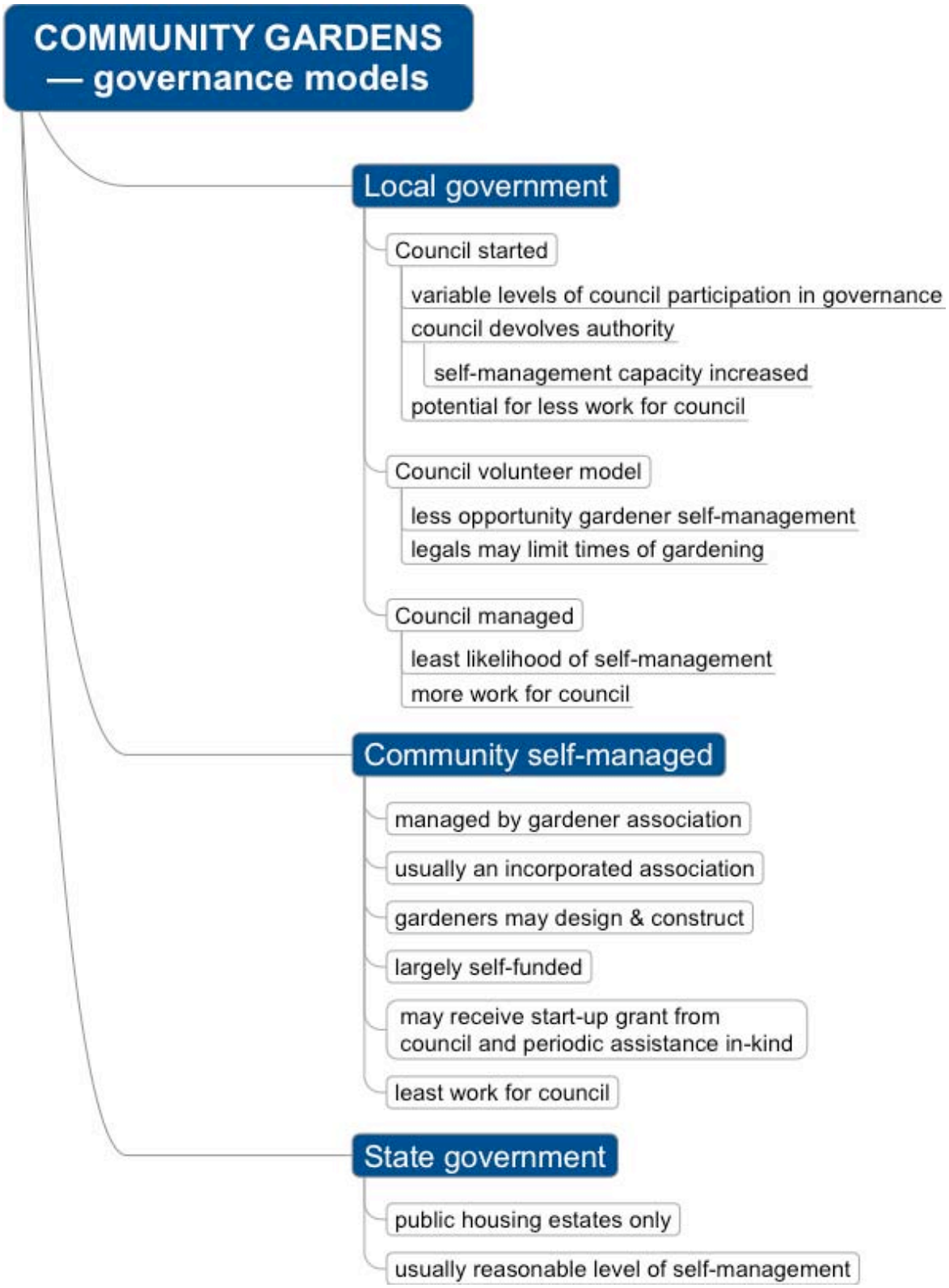
There are a number of models under which Australian community gardens have been developed.

State government gardens

State governments in NSW and Victoria have adopted policy and practice to enable and support community gardening on public housing estates.

In NSW, the Department of Housing started to provide assistance to public housing tenants in community gardening with Cooks Community Garden, on the Waterloo Estate in Sydney, in the mid-1990s. An additional two gardens were subsequently developed on the estate in response to demand. All gardens remain in full use.

The project involved collaboration between the department, South Sydney Council (enabled by its food security policy) and the UNSW Faculty of the Built Environment, which has involvement with estate residents. The Royal Botanic Gardens also provides some assistance to community gardens on public housing estates.


COMMUNITY GARDENS
— governance models
Local government
Council started
variable levels of council participation in governance
council devolves authority
self-management capacity increased
potential for less work for council
Council volunteer model
less opportunity gardener self-management
legals may limit times of gardening
Council managed
least likelihood of self-management
more work for council
Community self-managed
managed by gardener association
usually an incorporated association
gardeners may design & construct
largely self-funded
may receive start-up grant from
council and periodic assistance in-kind
least work for council
State government
public housing estates only
usually reasonable level of self-management

In Melbourne, the Department of Human Services has contracted the community-based not-for-profit, Cultivating Community, to assist community gardening on public housing estates. Cultivating Community also supports food cooperatives on the estates.

The initiative has proven successful, with up to 15 people employed on a full or part time basis. The organisation assists at least 20 community gardens, operates the Edible Classrooms consultancy and, with Melbourne University, offers the Community and Theraputic Horticulture course.

There has been little state government housing authority involvement with community gardens in other states.

In this model of community gardening, decision-making authority largely rests with the gardeners, but organisations like Cultivating Community have authority to intervene to solve problems.

Council instigated

Staff or councilors are the motivators of this approach that could be summarised as a top-down, supply driven approach that stands in contrast to the community-based, demand driven model.

The model can be made to work, however in a number of ways it can be more difficult than using the demand driven model. In this approach, there is council support for a garden and a site may be available but there is initially no community.

Generating interest in the garden becomes an early activity and, unless there is existing interest evident, this is a process that can take time. Where interest is present there is the option of approaching those people with the idea that they form the initial core group of gardeners and assume the role of further popularising the garden and recruit more participants.

There remains the danger that participation in a garden may not eventuate or gain sufficient numbers to make the garden viable. A council may make the assumption that a community garden is a good idea and that, if provided, people will be drawn to participate in it.

Some indication of demand in the community for a garden might suggest that a community garden would be successful, however in its absence council is left with a choice between:

- constructing a garden, or a small module of it, and hiring somebody to stimulate community participation; this was the strategy used at the Chester Hill Community Garden, where it worked
- undertaking a community engagement process to stimulate interest in the garden and proceeding with construction if there is sufficient interest in the idea
- taking the chance that people will be attracted and going ahead and constructing a module of the community garden
- adopting a policy in favour of assistance to community garden development and acting on it when approached by a community association.

A limiting factor on participation — identified as such by people living in adjacent local government areas without community gardens —is that some councils stipulate that gardeners must be resident of the local government area. In contrast, community-instigated gardens often have open membership irrespective of residency.

More work, but success can be achieved

The council-initiated community garden approach incurs more work for council staff. This was revealed in discussions with local government workers.

Councils planning this approach are advised to assess which staff would be involved and the staff time likely to be needed. Experience suggests that sustainability/environmental education, waste management, planning, parks and, perhaps, community development staff could be involved, depending on the scope of the project envisioned.

Devolving authority builds community capacity

There is potential for gardener self-management to develop as people join the garden and become a more cohesive and committed group.

Generally, responsibility for the overall direction of the garden and the activities that take place there lies with council. Where council has an interest in encouraging community capacity building and the development of social capital through responsible decision-making, it might progressively devolve authority for the garden to the gardeners.

Hurstville Community Garden is a successful Sydney example of a council-instigated community garden. The idea of a councilor, council redeveloped a disused bowling green into a community allotment garden. A community of gardeners soon coalesced around the site.

In contrast, the first Sydney example of an agency-instigated community garden, Chester Hill Community Garden, required the work of a specialist permaculture designer/community facilitator to gather a community around the site.

For councils, starting a community garden is an opportunity to demonstrate support for community involvement and participation in decision-making as well as local environmental improvement.

A council initiated community garden can link to council policy and practice embodied in local environment plans, community development and health, sustainability programs and council's community educational services (such as the work of council's environmental or sustainability education officer).

Council volunteer model

This makes use of the structure of the local government Bushcare teams in which community gardeners are regarded as council volunteers working on council projects.

The model covers volunteers for insurance but can leave little room for gardener self-management. This depends on how much say the volunteers are given, something that has the potential to be quite variable.

In the limited number of models of the type in Sydney (two at last count), gardeners sign on and off the site, a requirement to do with insurance, and are required to attend an induction session with council staff.

A limitation with this model is that gardeners may not be able to access the garden without the presence of council staff. Given that most gardeners tend their gardens on weekends and public holidays and in some cases after work, any requirement that council staff be present is likely to stymie the development of the garden.

Willoughby Community Garden, which is a shared garden without personal allotments, is a Sydney example. A small community garden operated on the site of a community centre by Sutherland Shire Council is a further example.

Council allotments

There is only a single council using this model in Sydney, as far as is known.

Council has complete decision-making responsibility with no formal channel for input from gardeners. Thus, the model has little prospect for gardener self-management and the development of skills of social capital and personal development, such as the group skills that come with responsibility for site management.

Waverley Council claim to have taken as inspiration the UK allotment garden model.

On the Sunshine Coast, Vegie Village Community Garden has adopted a similar model but with a different motivation. Like the Waverley garden, allotments are held for only 12 months and renewal depends on whether there is a waiting list. Comments from some community gardeners suggest that this is too short a time for a full cropping cycle and that the uncertainty over the likelihood of allotment renewal is not conducive to the development of social capital.

Vegie Village differs from Waverley in that the intention is for the limited time of access to serve a training function so that gardeners can then return to their home gardeners and manage them successfully, based upon their learning in the community garden.

Citizen instigated

This is probably the most common model of community gardening in Australia. In contrast to the council-instigated model, this one is citizen-instigated and bottom-up.

Its characteristics include:

- an approach from a community group to council for assistance in finding land and starting a community garden
- the availability and enthusiasm of group of people to get the garden going
- greater potential for the development of social capital gained through the cooperation, participation and decision-making responsibilities inherent in effectively managing an area of public open space
- generally, lack of land and financial resources
- less work for council than starting their own community garden.

For the would-be gardeners, the barriers to starting the community garden of this type include:

- gaining council support for the project
- placating neighbour concerns
- finding land that is agreeable to council for their use, that is uncontaminated and suitable for food production
- accessing knowledge and skills where absent
- finding start-up capital for costly items such as fencing, tools and water connection.

For council, opportunities include:

- lower cost and less staff time than starting their own community garden, especially where gardeners design and construct the garden themselves
- being seen to support community enterprise
- being seen to address global and national concerns at the local level through supporting community initiative
- the opportunity for positive interaction with citizens.

Expertise in the skills of designing and managing a community garden are sometimes present among the would-be gardeners. Where they are missing and council offers support to the gardeners, council might offer the services of their landscape designer or other skilled worker as part of their package of assistance.

Summary: models and solutions for councils

THE SITUATION
Council has motivation, funds and land but no community participation in a proposed community garden; in some cases a level of interest may be evident in the community.

THE CHALLENGE
1. Generating interest in the community garden and establishing a gardener core group
2. There may be no discernible demand by community for garden.

ASSUMPTIONS
1. There is a need for a community garden.
2. Establishment of garden infrastructure will generate public interest.
3. Public interest will result in participation in garden.

CONSTRAINTS
1. Lack of gardener participants.
2. Financial — construction and development budget.
3. Staff time to establish garden.

1ST SITUATION:	2ND SITUATION:	3RD SITUATION:
No evidence of interest in community for a community garden	Some evidence for a level of interest in community in a community garden	No evidence of a broad interest in community for community garden or evidence of a low level of interest
Solution: Council hires consultant with expertise in facilitation, garden design and management to generate public interest in garden.	**Solution:** Council designs and constructs community garden (or a core module of it) and recruits interested people to form a core group of gardeners	**Solution:** Council adopts policy to support and resource community gardening when there is demand and when approached for assistance. **Option:** Council identifies potential sites for community gardens.
Pro: • Less staff time consumed • Possession of relevant skills • Possible access to helpful networks	**Pro:** • Less ongoing work for council staff • Less staff time consumed • Reasonable chance that garden will prove viable	**Pro:** • No need for immediate budgetary outlay • No immediate call on staff time other than identifying potential sites • Any approach from community signifies real need for community garden • Council seen to be acting in response to community need
Con: • Cost • Council may disagree with some solutions developed	**Con:** • Less direct control for council • Cost of design and construction • Core group may not prove viable • Core group may fail to recruit more participants	**Con:** • Funds may not be available when needed to support a garden. • Pubic may not know of policy unless council produces information.
Examples: • Chester Hill Community Garden • City of Sydney community gardens.	**Example:** Hurstville Community Garden	**Example:** Marrickville Council

Recommendation

As the proposed community garden at Carss Park is a council-instigated community garden, that:

- Council devolve decision-making and other authority for the garden's management and direction over time to the gardeners as they develop into a cohesive team and develop greater capacity as an organisation
- at the start of the garden and through its initial set-up phase, council adopt an approach of participation with the gardeners in decision-making so as to encourage the development of organisational and people skills as befits a community enterprise
- Council be clear on its motivation for wanting input into the governance of the garden and what type of participation they envisage
- where, and if, council decides to go ahead to develop future community gardens, they hire qualified people with both horticultural and facilitation skills to design and implement a program of community engagement in the garden
- Council assist in the development of the Carss Park Community Garden so as to establish a sound foundation for the garden's future; this might include construction based on the findings of a site analysis activity conducted with the initial group of gardeners.

In general:

- to minimise the work for Council staff, Council adopt a policy in support of future assistance to community gardens that are community instigated and demand driven.

Chapter 7

Community garden organisation

There are almost as many approaches to organising community gardens as there are gardens. This chapter describes common characterstics.

Main points

- democratic and participatory decision-making creates a sense of belonging in community gardens
- most community gardens find a mix of allotments and shared gardens a workable model
- community gardens should harvest and store their own irrigation water where possible
- common objections to the development of community gardens should be dealt with at the planning stage.

Types of gardens

With some exceptions, most community gardens in NSW combine the allotment and shared gardening model. This has proven an effective means of meeting demand for personal growing space and for working collectively on site.

Allotments

Allotments are garden beds made available, sometimes for a fee additional to the annual membership fee, to families, groups of friends or individuals. Allotment holders have sole right to what they grow and responsibility to manage their allotment in accordance with the garden's guidelines.

Allotments gardening calls for commitment, as poorly attended and maintained allotments quickly become overgrown by weeds. Where the gardeners have not determined the period in which an allotment can remain in disuse but remain allocated to a gardener, those on the allotment waiting list are denied the opportunity for their own patch.

This was a problem in the original Randwick Community Organic Garden, but the new garden, started over two years ago with assistance from Randwick Council, has set a fixed period for allotment inactivity, after which the allotment is offered to the next on the waiting list.

Some gardens, such as Randwick, require that gardeners meet certain criteria before they are offered an allotment:

- a period of three months of active garden membership, during which they help to manage the shared garden areas and take a yield from them
- completion of three practical workshops — compost making, plant propagation and permaculture design.

This provides time for new gardeners to know if their interest will continue and whether they are likely to stay around long enough to manage their own allotment.

The size of allotments both within and between community gardens is variable. Some are too small to supplement a family's food purchases in any substantial way, however they remain of value for recreation. Others, such as those at Collingwood Childrens' Farm and CERES, and at Westlafen Community Garden in Ipswich, are of sufficient size to grow the bulk of a family's herb and vegetable requirements, plus derive a share of fruit grown in the orchard area.

According to veteran food gardener and author of *The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Garden*, Clive Blazey[xx], an area of ten square metres can supply the bulk of the vegetable needs of an average family when soils are enriched with compost, high yielding non-hybrid vegetables are planted, when plants are close spaced and organic techniques used.

Blazey's findings were developed through experimentation, however the skill level his model calls for would be unlikely among beginner gardeners although they would be achievable after some substantial experience has been gained. Furthermore, there are not many community garden allotments that would meet his size criteria, thus allotment gardening, and community gardening in general, serves mainly to supplement food purchases.

Gardeners are generally advised to assess what they eat most of and to grow those vegetables and herbs in their allotments. Some experiment with exotic vegetables but the value of doing this should be weighed against the meeting of normal dietary needs where space is at a premium. A community garden's common areas are better placed as

sites for experimentation. Even here, however, there are instances where trees of limited productivity and value, and which consume perhaps too much space, would be better replaced with more productive and commonly eaten species. A case seen in a couple community gardens is that where gardeners have established the ice-cream bean tree (*Inga edulis*), a large, spreading specimen with edible pulp in large pods. In the same space, two citrus might have yielded a more preferred crop and made more productive use of the space.

A small number of gardens feature allotments only, with minimal or no shared gardening space. Examples can be found on public housing estates in Sydney and Melbourne, the Hurstville Community Garden and the Greg Hamish Memorial Garden in Redfern.

Some community gardeners argue that in gardens such as these there is less potential to develop the organisational and interpersonal skills that are possible in gardens with sizable common areas requiring collaborative planning and maintenance. The veracity of this belief has never been tested.

Allotment gardeners

Shared gardening

The shared area of community gardens is maintained by all of the members, including allotment holders.

Shared or common garden areas allow people to participate in community gardening even when they cannot attend regularly. Then, they perform whatever work needs doing at the time and take a share of whatever crops are ready to harvest.

Frequently, fruit trees and shrubs are planted in the shared areas as their presence among the allotments would likely cause shading problems that could inhibit the growth of vegetables.

A community gardener attends a vegetable bed in a shared garden

The shared areas are also suited to the cultivation of longer-term annual crops, biennials or perennials:

- Kooragang City Farm in the Hunter region has grown bulk quantities off some crops, including chili which they processed into chili sauces and products for sale as fundraisers
- Beelarong Community Farm gardeners use their common garden beds to grow raspberry and rosella crops (gardeners make jam from rosella and sell it as a fund-raiser) as well as fruit and other crops such as bulk supplies of spinach and other vegetables that they sell to the local Meals on Wheel service

- Westlafen Community Garden, which has plenty of land, uses the shared growing areas to produce bulk supplies of vegetables, rosellas for jam making for fund raising and grapes in a vineyard
- at Northey Street City Farm, which has no allotments but plenty of space on Brisbane City Council land, a market garden has been established in which government labour market program trainees learn about organic production and grow crops for selling at the weekly Northey Street City Farm organic growers' market.

Few community gardens operate solely as shared gardens. Those in the Sydney region include the Angel Street Permaculture Garden in Newtown (City of Sydney LGA; garden liaison Michael Neville), the Kooragang City Farm and the UNSW Community Permaculture Garden.

Cultivation methods

Organic techniques are most commonly found in community gardens.

The Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network (www,communitygarden.org.au) recommends organic methods because:

- they are knowledge, not chemical intensive, and there is thus greater opportunity for gardener learning
- the potential for chemical misuse to damage gardener health is avoided
- the potential for chemical overuse leading to soil and waterway contamination is avoided.

Organic cultivation is based on the development of a friable, well-structured soil rich in organic matter. The education or gardeners ought to pay particular attention to the development and maintenance of organically-rich, fertile garden soils. This is a matter of prime importance if garden productivity is to be maximised and insect pest and plant diseases minimised.

There is no single approach to organic gardening but it is suggested that an approach that is both simple and effective be employed initially. If there is interest, once gardeners have become competent in the simple methods they can move on to experiment with the more complex.

Training of community gardeners

Training in compost production is of considerable importance to maintaining soil fertility in community gardens. Here, simplicity is a virtue and the model taught in the EarthWorks waste minimisation course has proven successful. There are many other models but none appear to be as simple to teach and as effective in being adopted by gardeners as the EarthWorks model.

Experience indicates that a starter knowledge base be passed on to community gardeners that includes instruction in:

- the earthworks method of hot **compost production**
- the use of **mulch** to provide gardens with organic matter to enrich the soil as it decomposes, to reduce evapotranspiration (moisture loss from leaves and soil) from garden soils and to protect soils from drying by wind and hot sun
- the construction of **no-dig gardens** that layer a weed barrier of overlapped newspaper (thus including waste reuse in education) below a layer of mulch; no-dig gardens interest people, probably due to the use of newspaper; other methods of garden soil preparation — such as double digging and the Biointensive method — get plant nutrients into the soil profile of the root zone faster but require more work, a consideration with aged gardeners
- **minimum water-use** irrigation via the effective use of garden hoses, drip and seep irrigation, watering cans and other water-conserving approaches
- **plant propagation** by seed and cutting and the **planting out** of seeds and seedlings
- the principles and practices of **integrated pest management** so that gardeners have a range of options for the control of insect pests and plant diseases without resorting to synthetic insecticides; some botanical preparations used in organic gardening, such as chilli spray, can cause injury, so instruction in their preparation and use should include a safety component
- **garden safety** — instruction would include the safe use of garden tools; maintenance of infrastructure such as paths and garden beds to minimise the chance of injury; dangers from garden wildlife such as spiders, bees and snakes (if near bushland); protection from the sun and so on.

Organic gardening is a common practice these days and it may be possible to find a community-based volunteer to advise and train

community gardeners if they have no one with the knowledge and skills in the gardening group. A good idea when the group forms is to do a skills audit to identify those who could be useful in the development of the garden and the training of gardeners.

The Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network has assisted community garden groups make a start through a strategic planning workshop consisting of two, two and a half hour sessions over two meetings.

Graduates of the Permaculture Design Course have proven useful as trainers, providing their theoretical learning has been further developed through practice. Accredited Permaculture Training is now taught at the nationally accredited certificate two, three, four and diploma levels. Trainees are required to gain experience and, if available locally, may prove a useful source of gardener training and advice.

Training is a core activity of community gardens

Decision-making in community gardens

Of all the challenges that community gardeners face, it is those to do with people that prove the most troublesome.

At best, decision-making is a fair, participatory and open procedure based on rational discussion process. At worst, it leads to dispute, the loss of gardeners, complaints to council and, in the very worst situation, can threaten the continuity of the garden.

The ideal form of decision-making in community gardens is a type of deliberative democracy. Done properly and with process, it provides sufficient time to thoroughly discuss a topic before making a decision. It is a workable model for community gardens because of the relatively small number of people usually involved.

Community gardens sometimes start with a group of people known to each other and who share a high degree of trust. Decisions might then be informal, perhaps based on a type of consensus. As new people join, however, it sooner or later becomes apparent that a more defined structure is required. This may be more structured but it can still retain informality.

As community gardens grow, the need for a documented procedure for reaching decisions becomes apparent. There are any number of forms that this could take along the continuity between informal and formal, but the opportunity for participation, fairness, openness and due process remain critical.

For really crucial decisions or those that have the potential to be contentious, the services of an outside facilitator may be useful. Ideally, this would be someone without connection to the garden.

Document decisions

It is recommended that gardeners document decisions they make, either as minutes of meetings of in a decisions log. This could be stored where it is available to all members. The decisions could also be summarised and emailed to members or placed on the garden's website.

A documented record can be referred to later, when clarification or reference is needed.

The Eastern Suburbs Community Garden and Randwick Community Organic Garden share a similar approach to decision-making. There are quarterly general meetings and more frequent but brief meetings of

task groups. Their approach is structure without being over-structured and bureaucratic and it is reported to work. It might be taken as a model for the proposed community garden at Carss Park.

Funding community gardens

Initially, community gardens find funding through two main sources: membership fees and grants.

Membership fees

Depending on the number of gardeners, membership fees provide enough income to pay annual public liability insurance and for the minor costs involved in running the garden. Reliance on funding via membership fees is contingent on the absence of a burden of lease fees. This necessitates access to land without a fee or with only a peppercorn lease. Commercial rents are out of the question as they are well beyond the affordability of community gardens.

Funding pubic liability insurance can be a major challenge for some gardens as it can cost many hundreds of dollars, depending on the source. The problem can be alleviated by joining gardening associations or Landcare Australia, which offer members group insurance sometimes for hundreds of dollars below the commercial rate.

Grants

It is common practice for councils to fund the start-up of community gardens through their small grants to community groups program. This, for example, is how the Randwick garden made a start.

By their nature, grants are competitive and an unreliable means of funding community gardens. Characteristically, gardeners apply for grants for water tank and other high capital cost infrastructure.

Barriers — constraints actual and perceived

As previously mentioned, paying for public liability insurance can be a challenge to community gardens.

There is great variance in what community garden groups find to be a barrier. The same thing can be a major concern for one garden but might not figure at all as a challenge to another.

With this proviso in mind, actual barriers can include the following. Possible solutions are also listed.

Actual barriers

- **Challenge**: finding land**.**
    - **Solution**: consultation with and securing the cooperation of local government. Where councils adopt a policy on community gardening they might assess available lands for suitability for community gardening.
- **Challenge**: finding funding.
    - **Solution**: a small grant from council as start-up capital; state and federal government grants, philanthropic grants (rarely accessed); membership fees; small scale sale of produce, plants and preserved food.
- **Challenge**: paying for public liability insurance.
    - **Solution**: membership and access to Landcare Australia or the group insurance of other organisations.
- **Challenge**: soil contamination.
    - **Solution**: this is a low probability but high impact occurrence that can be avoided by the testing of soil for contamination before adopting the land. Council funding for lab testing of soils is advised.
- **Challenge**: disputes between gardeners.
    - **Solution**: adoption of effective dispute resolution procedures; the option in the gardener agreement to expel particularly troublesome members after due process has been followed in providing the opportunity for changing their behaviour.
- **Challenge**: uncooperative councils.
    - **Solution**: a low probability but high impact possibility less common today; negotiation and gaining public support to provide evidence of demand for a community garden may assist in developing a solution.
- **Challenge**: uncooperative neighbours.
    - **Solution**: most of the common fears of residents can be resolved through communication and consultation.

Barriers perceived

- **odour** — malfunctioning composting systems are the most likely source of unpleasant odour; training in effective, aerobic compost making and the option for Council to stipulate the use of only enclosed compost bins may go some way to avoiding this objection
- **attracting rodents** — rodents are a common suburban fauna and are likely to be in the area even if seldom seen; there remains the real possibility that poor site management of a community garden could provide attractive habitat for them; the thoughtful storage of materials and removal of what might attract rodents are preventative measures; where open bays are used for compost making, weekly turning will disrupt their use as rodent nests and produce a faster compost; the use of enclosed compost bins — whether covered and enclosed bays or the commercially available plastic compost bins — is a means of excluding rodents
- **vandalism** — vandalism does occur in community gardens but is usually minor in scale; fencing and the presence of gardeners reduce opportunities for its occurrence
- **noise** — community gardening tends to be a quiet activity, however if there are celebrations and arts events there will obviously be a low level of noise generated; maintaining good relations with neighbours and inviting their involvement in the garden, as well as informing them of upcoming events that could produce noise, is advised
- **parking** — location of the community garden on a public transport route and provision of on-site parking, where possible, are solutions, as is the encouragement of gardener car pooling
- **alienation of public open space**— this is seldom raised as an objection; solutions include Councils' treating community gardeners' access to land in the same way that sporting clubs are granted use rights to land, encouraging visitation of the gardens and enacting the principle of multiple use of the site.

These things have potential to become barriers to community garden development, however perceptions as to what constitutes a barrier can be peculiar to gardeners and local residents.

Sometimes, they have the chance to become actual, such as when the compost system at the UNSW Permaculture Community Garden went anaerobic and odourous. That was easily fixed by moving the compost bins and training the gardeners in proper compost making. Not all barriers may be so easily dealt with, however. Local objections to a community garden in Glebe in the 1990s prevented the garden going ahead.

For people thinking of starting a community garden, it pays to take a proactive approach and address potential barriers, such as objections from local people, in a submission to council for access to community gardening land. For those involved in getting a council-instigated garden on the ground, addressing common objections so as to alleviate public fears is worth doing in any public consultation process.

Water supply, irrigation and conservation

The principle employed in many community gardens is to capture and store water coming onto the site.

The water restrictions introduced to cope with the recent dry condition have had some impact on the productivity of community gardens, however most of those in the Sydney region appear to have maintained a high degree of plant growth.

Community gardeners in Sydney have not sought exemption from water restrictions, however Beelarong Community Farm, in Brisbane, has obtained exemption from council.

Many community gardens installed rainwater tanks before restrictions were introduced. Tanks have been regarded as essential infrastructure in community gardens since their early days. The maintenance of friable soil containing a large amount of organic matter has also helped. The use of compost, made in the community gardens, enriches soils and optimises their water retention capacity.

The adoption of water conservation as a gardening ethic, the hand watering of garden beds and the targeted use of irrigation are practices that have long been a part of the practice of community gardening.

Irrigation

Irrigation in community gardens has traditionally been by hand, using hoses. This encourages a targeted approach to irrigating crops that wastes little water.

The use of the watering can is seen in many community gardens, especially over the period that has followed the introduction of water restrictions. Even though more laborious, irrigation by watering can is a viable practice given the small scale of community gardens and gardener's allotments. The exception might come with aged gardeners for whom carrying a full watering can may be difficult.

The use of hoses and watering cans suggests the advantage of having a number of taps throughout the garden.

Where an irrigation system needs to be installed in a community garden, the use of low-flow drip or seepage systems is recommended. The Aquapore system is one that is relatively inexpensive, low maintenance and durable.

Capture and storage

Many community gardens in Sydney have water tanks. Some have been provided by councils as a form of assistance to the gardens, such as City of Sydney installing the water tank at Woolloomoloo Community Garden. Others the gardeners have raised funds for — the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden, for example. Where councils instigate a community garden it is customary for them to fund and install the tank during the construction of the garden, as Hurstville Council did.

A rainwater tank requires a roof from which to harvest water. Commonly, as in the examples of Randwick and Woolloomoloo community gardens, the tank is placed adjacent to a pergola structure the primary function of which is to provide shelter for the gardeners. In some cases, the roofs of neighbouring buildings are utilised. Eastern Suburbs Community Garden harvested rainwater falling on the roof of the adjacent childcare centre; the Randwick garden plans to take water from the roof of the neighbouring stables and a community garden in Fremantle collects and stores rainwater from the roofs of neighbouring houses.

To maximise the water harvest, Northey Street City Farm gardeners have installed water tanks on all of their roofed structures.

Round tanks made of plastic or galvanised iron are the most common in community gardens. It has been found useful to raise the tank off the ground to a height sufficient to conveniently fill a watering can. The water is then gravity fed, avoiding the need for a pump and the consequent maintenance costs.

Gardeners without the funds or council assistance to install water tanks have improvised. The UNSW Permaculture Community Garden did not have a water tank, so they captured water from their pergola roof and stored it in clean, 200 litre fuel drums fitted with a tap.

Windbreaks

A windbreak of hardy shrubs and trees placed to the side of the garden from which potentially damaging winds (strong/hot/cold) come reduces evapotranspiration from the garden soils and plants in its shelter. Not all community gardens have the space to establish a windbreak.

At Randwick Community Organic Garden, Council's Bushcare team assisted gardeners establish a windbreak as a participatory planting event. Council's Bushcare nursery provided seedlings of native and indigenous species. As well as protecting the garden, the windbreak can later be harvested as a source of seeds.

An important consideration in establishing native plants in community gardens — especially trees and shrubs —is that they be placed in functional relationship to the other plantings and to structures. This is planned during the design stage. Poorly placed plantings of natives (the same could be said for exotic trees and shrubs) can overshadow vegetable beds and deprive them of light. Eucalypts too close to vegetable beds at Smith Street Community Garden infiltrated the allotments with their feeder roots, making cultivation difficult and competing with crops for soil nutrients.

Other approaches to water conservation

- *Swales*

The gardeners at Habitat in Harmony Community Garden capture water falling on their sloping site in swales. Also known as infiltration trenches or contour ditches, swales are excavated along the contour of the land so that runoff is stored rather than being drained away. Detained for a time, runoff infiltrates the soil profile where it becomes available to plant uptake.

Soil excavated from the trench is mounded on the downslope side and may be planted. Species with matting roots help stabilise the mound and reduce erosion. The depth and width of swales is influenced by the degree of slope.

Being a disuse bowling green and thus flat, the Carss Park site in unsuitable to sale construction.

- *Micocatchments*

These take many forms including low, raised barriers of stone placed across a slope, shallow trenches and barriers of vetiver or lemon grass planted across-slope. The principle is to intercept runoff and soil moving down slope so as to conserve it for use in the garden.

Another form of microcatchment takes the form of an excavated pit with the fill mounted around the circumference. This is commonly planted to high water need species such as banana, pawpaw and sweet potato. The microcatchment is placed where runoff will naturally flow into it. Alternatively, shallow drainage channels may be excavated to move runoff into it. Organic waste from the garden may be placed in the pit where it breaks down to become available to plants as nutrient.

Microcatchment consisting of a pit with bananas planted around the edge. Yandina Community Garden

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Council ensure that the existing taps at the proposed Carss Park Community Garden site are in good working order.
2. Council install a rainwater tank/s of appropriate capacity fed from the roof of the proposed pergola shelter in the community garden. Preferably, the tank would be raised sufficiently above ground level to permit the easy filling of watering cans and gravity flow of water rather than require the use of a pump, to minimise maintenance costs.
3. Council consider diverting water from the existing rainwater tank that harvests runoff from the existing building to the community garden.
4. Council encourage the production of compost on site and its use in soil improvement so as to make full use of the moisture retention capacity of organic soils.

Chapter 8

Environmental benefits

Properly designed and managed, community gardens can bring environmental benefit to the areas they are situated in.

Main points

- plan community gardens for mutual benefit
- link with council environmental and health planning
- build best practice environmental practice into the management of community gardens.

Many community gardens combine a number of environmental practices that give them value to local government.

Water conservation, green waste conversion and recycling have already been mentioned. In addition is the practice of actively preserving the biodiversity of both food and native species and the regreening of neighbourhoods. This latter practice enhances the habitat value of community gardens, something that may comply with the aims of local government Bushcare programs.

In addition to this, community gardens that welcome casual, non-member visitors enact the public open space values of gardens by providing opportunity for passive recreation. They then become de-facto parkland, though parkland with a productive difference.

Community gardens and their associated plantings and soil management practices provide many of the same environmental services as do natural ecosystems — provision of clean air and water, water infiltration into the soil and aquifer, prevention of soil erosion and degradation, as well as habitat.

At the same time, the gardens serve human needs for good food, sociability and community development. Gardeners can link with Council health educators as well as environmental educators to get across messages about the nutritional value of local, fresh food and avoiding the long distance transportation of foods — so-called food miles — and their emissions of greenhouse gases. This latter may be of most value where Council employs an officer to act on global warming issues.

The proposed Carss Park Community Garden forms part of a green corridor. The garden would be compatible with this role as native plantings, such as a windbreak, could be included in design and because the site as a whole could have a neighbourhood regreening role that includes habitat.

Precedents

Northey Street City Farm demonstrated the environmental values of community gardening when they undertook revegetation of a neighbouring mangrove ecosystem and by establishing an Australian bush food garden that also serves an educational function. The Farm has successfully revegetated what was once minimally used open parkland, combining the values of education, food production, habitat restoration and neighbourhood regreening.

A similar combination of revegtation of native ecosystems and urban agriculture was carried out at the Kooragang City Farm and wetlands restoration project, near Newcastle. Mangrove and terrestial ecosystems were revegetated and restored, and a successful and productive city farm established.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The design of the proposed community garden at Carss Park include a windbreak of native/indigenous species that could be harvested as a seed bank; exotic species could be included if desired by the gardeners
2. If riparian or other native vegetation is to be established in the sector towards the creek, a corridor of Australian bush food species, shrubs, trees and groundcovers, be planted at the interface of native planting and community garden. The design of the proposed bushfood plantings should be such that, when funding is available, a trail and interpretive signage be installed to facilitate use as an educational resource. Through design, it may be possible to integrate the proposed bushfood panting and the windbreak.

Chapter 9

The proposed Carss Park Community Garden… …a way forward

Like other councils that have been inspired to start community gardens, Kogarah Municipal Council has land and budget but no gardening community. At the start of the project to establish a community garden on the site of the disused Carss Park bowling club, gaining community participation was envisioned to be the biggest challenge to be faced in making the community garden a reality.

The first challenge — form a core group

The critical accomplishment — and the biggest challenge — lay in establishing a core group of gardeners. This was achieved through the community consultation process and the subsequent two on-site planning days, which involved community participation.

The challenge until the gardeners move on-site to start gardening will be in maintaining interest to retain the core group as a cohesive body. This start-up phase is the most challenging to newly-formed groups. It is a time when different attitudes and approaches must be reconciled and a cooperative working relationship with Council established. In doing this, past experience with and consequent attitudes towards Council may play a role. Council staff will need to be skillful in deflecting any negative feelings or beliefs towards Council so that they do not interfere with the community garden formation phase.

Once a core group becomes active in developing the garden, experience suggests that more gardeners will be recruited. This is likely to occur over time, however it will require active stimulation by the gardeners.

Council may be able to assist in this, primarily through publicity for the community garden in Council newsletters, the local media, through placing posters in Council facilities such as libraries and community centres and via the Council website.

Were Council to offer training workshops on-site, this too would assist the consolidation of a core group.

Although the Worldwide Web is the primary and first source of information for most people, those not accustomed to its use, such as segments of the aged population, continue to rely on printed sources for information. It is thus advantageous for Council's communications team to be enlisted in publicizing the community garden, especially through press releases to local media and mentions in Council newsletters.

The consultants organized on-site planning events. It was anticipated that from those attending the public consultation before the events, a group of people interested in community gardening will be identified and from that group a core team of gardeners will emerge. This appears to have been consolidated at the first on-site planning event on 9 August 2008.

What eventually happens on-site will be strongly influenced by this core group. The experience in community garden in general is that the basic dynamic of the garden, the infrastructure and the organisational structure is set by those who form the first team of gardeners.

Gardeners' charter or agreement

Council has listed the need for a gardener's charter or agreement covering on-site participant responsibilities, rights, behavior, dispute resolution and other items.

It is the experience of other community gardens — such as the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden and Randwick Community Organic Garden in Sydney — that a gardeners' agreement is a useful device in dealing with difficulties that may emerge and in clarifying what is expected of participants. The agreement is signed at the time of assuming membership of the garden.

As the core group gains cohesiveness and experience in the garden, they may see the need to amend the gardeners' agreement. This would best be done in cosultation with Council as Council will still, at that time, have some responsibility for the site and because Council is responsible for public open space.

Council-garden liaison and relationship

Gardener-Council communications are facilitated when each organisation has a person whose role is liaison with the other organisation. Liaison people should be contactable by phone and email.

As Council is starting the community garden it will have influence and decision making power at least in the initial period of garden establishment. This provides the opportunity to appoint a staffer, perhaps Council's liaison person, to the governing board of the community garden. This could be negotiated with the community gardeners or later ratified.

Council should be clear on its intentions in participation in the governance of the community garden. Would the Council person's role be active or passive? Would it be advisory only? Would it be simply a liaison position?

If Council decides to later opt out of its closer involvement, it is recommended that the role of liaison be maintained to facilitate effective communications with gardeners.

The type of council intervention would have an effect on the autonomy and self-management capacity that develops among the gardeners. It also has potential to influence the organisational learning of the gardener association and the development of qualities such as decision making, planning and problem solving. Council's role and influence on any community garden management structure is something that needs careful consideration and discussion with gardeners. A precedent may be found in Council's similar roles in other community-based organisations accessing Council facilities.

Early on-site activity stimulated by Council

To stimulate on-site activity and increase the skills of the gardener core group, Council might consider offering relevant workshops on-site. These would best be on topics directly related to the operational need of the gardeners.

While Council could provide practical workshops through their waste education and other educational staff, there is the option of contracting educators for this role. Ideally, educators — whether Council or hired — would formulate a series of workshops that developed an integrated

knowledge base so that skills were prioritised and offered progressively to increase the capability of the gardeners.

It may be that, among the core group of gardeners, there already exist skills that could be passed on through informal workshops. This was the situation with the Randwick Community Organic Garden that devised a set of basic instruction through the use of which gardeners could engage in effective gardening.

A sequential workshop series could take the following form:

- **site analysis** — this would be done as a participatory workshop to gather information about the site for use in the site design; it would give the core group an understanding of the site in regard to how sun and shade patterns, soils, runoff, winds and services influence it
- **compost making** — the simple and proven approach developed for the Earthworks waste minimisation program
- **garden bed construction** — the preparation of ground-level or raised beds and their soils, including the use and values of mulch; planting out of seedlings and seeds
- **plant propagation** — starting plants from seed and cuttings
- **integrated pest management** — identifying and dealing with insect pests and plant diseases.

These would form a starter set of workshops that could later be built upon with more advanced training.

Whether formally or informally, the gardeners will have to ensure this basic training is passed on to people joining the garden over time. It could be that new gardeners be required to complete the training to qualify for an allotment, as is done at the Randwick community garden, or that a team-based approach to the training of gardeners be adopted as was the practice in the Eastern Suburbs Community Garden and as will probably be adopted by the Paddington Community Garden.

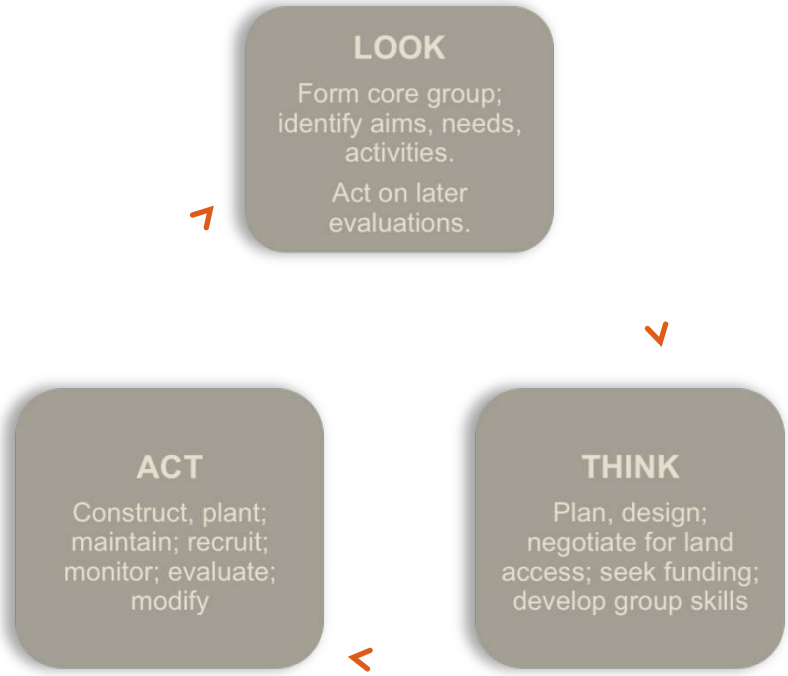
Were Council to offer the workshops to people not members of the community garden, this would stimulate interest in the community garden, enhance its value to other residents of the area and provide training in improved home garden and food production in local backyards.

Recommendations

It is recommended to Council that:

1. A core group of gardeners be established as close as possible in time to the opening of the community garden.
2. A gardeners' agreement be formulated and adopted by the initial group of garden participants.
3. Council negotiate with the community representatives any amendments to the gardeners' agreement that may be proposed in future.
4. Council and the gardeners' group each appoint a liaison person capable of articulating the needs of each body and negotiating with each other on behalf of their organisations.
5. Council consider appointing a staff member, ideally their liaison, to have a seat on the governing body of the community garden, at least for the initial start-up and establishment period. Ratification for this is sought with the gardener association. Council carefully consider the role of this appointee in relation to development of gardener self-management.
6. Council maintain a liaison role if they later decide to end their direct involvement in garden management, as gardener competency and capacity for self-management evolves.
7. Council stimulate early on-site activity and train gardeners through the offering of an integrated set of workshops in basic organic gardening skills.
8. Council make the early on-site workshops available to community gardeners and to others, such as local people who are not community garden members but who may be home gardeners
9. Council communications staff assist in publicity for the garden so as to recruit new members.

Recommended is an approach to community garden development based on the Action Learning methodology



Chapter 10

The proposed Carss Park community garden… *community consultation*

Kogarah Council required consultation with Council staff and citizens in the local government area to be part of the process for starting a community garden on the disused Carss Park bowling club site.

Citizen participation in the proposed community garden was enabled through:

- three community consultation events in different locations within the Kogarah local government area
- two Saturday events on the site of the proposed garden, for the design of a community gardeners' organization and for the design of the site as a community garden.

There was also a consultative session with Kogarah Council staff.

Consultation with Council staff

The consultation took place at Council's administrative centre in Kogarah on 30 July 2008.

Present were 25 Council officers from a variety of departments including waste management, communications, landscape and parks, community services, planning, assets, childcare, sustainability, legal, law enforcement and others. The numbers present were far more than envisaged and provided the opportunity to make Council's and consultant's intentions known to staff. The turnout is a credit to Council.

At the consultation, there was evident interest from community services, planning, landscape, childcare and waste management. A number of these signified the possibility of involvement in the garden.

Russ Grayson, from the Living Schools consultancy, presented a short Powerpoint presentation on community gardens and their benefits.

He explained that community gardens provide a sense of community, an understanding of food, gardening skills, break the barrier of social isolation, provide an opportunity for cultures to interact, social interaction and a sense of place.

The group then participated in a brainstorming session to put ideas together of what individuals wanted in a community garden and the topics to be considered when planning, developing and designing the garden.

The following topics were raised:

- council to maintain involvement.
- inclusion of permaculture design
- what systems are going to be in place as guidelines for the garden? such as the use of organic fertiliser or no fertilisers at all.
- use of companion planting
- operations manual and/or garden charter for garden; set out rule; include aesthetics
- weed management and pest control — will people bring their own solutions or one on site for everyone to use?
- signage in different languages for NESB groups; Greek and Chinese were mentioned as well as English
- funds for plants — will it be self funded or council grants?
- workshops in plant propagation
- environmental and gardening workshops, including companion planting
- fencing around garden or no fencing? this is a safety issue for children and vandalism could occur if there is no fencing
- equity among communities
- risks involved with building on the bowling green; Anthony Parker is arranging for tests to be completed on the grounds
- resources for garden — where are they to come from? possibility of a nursery on site for plant propagation and germination of seeds
- subdivide areas for community groups, rather then individuals, to maximise community involvement
- will the garden be open for residents residing in Kogarah LGA only or other outside interested parties?
- will we have raised garden beds or garden beds at ground level? OH&S issues? some elderly and handicapped residents may

require raised beds to participate; raised bed will require more water
- how often will people come and maintain their plots or areas of the garden?
- shared garden and/or plots or allotments
- part shared plots or allotments
- native seed propagation with bushcare group
- educational bush food trail
- rainwater harvesting; pergola; pathways adequate for wheelchair access
- solar panels
- could become a demonstration environmental garden
- shared garden — who receives produce once grown?
- could have bartering/market days
- if having allotments, what costs are involved and how long are people going to be able to have the plots for?
- how is the interest going to be sustained within the community for future running of the garden?
- childcare centre to have a plot
- transport to the community garden — bus route goes past
- will council provide grants for community to be used for the garden?
- opening hours of garden — security
- organic fertilisers can go straight into waterways
- problems that can occur could include odour, noise, vandalism, parking, rodents, birds, possums
- use the garden for community workshops such as Council's Enviroworks, plant propagation, organic gardening.
- will there be a limit on things that can and can't be planted?
- look at design for type of plants wanted and access for childcare centre.
- site analysis and site design will be drawn up.
- other facilities used on the site to be 'green'; be environmentally conscience in design and purchasing of products and material
- larger water tank may need to be installed to collect run off from childcare centre roof; underground water tank?

Consultation with community

Venues

There were three community consultation sessions held on the evenings of 4,5,6 August 2008.

- 4 August: Carss Park Life Saving Hall, Carss Park;

  attendance — 16
- 5 August: Kogarah Council building, Kogarah;

  attendance — 10
- 6 August: Oatley Senior Citizen's Centre;

  attendance —3.

The larger number attending the 4 August session can be explained by the proximity of the session to the site of the proposed community garden. Most live close by.

The low number at the 6 August session is explicable by the distance of Oatley from the proposed site. It should be noted, however, that those at this session expressed interest in participation in the proposed community garden despite their distance from it, though not as allotment holders.

Intent

The intent of the community consultation process was to:

- familiarise participants with the idea of community gardening and the activities typically found in community gardens
- Council's intent with the Carss Park bowling club site in assisting the start-up of a community garden there, in pursuance of Council's 14 October 2002 resolution to investigate the development of a garden
- collect ideas about what participants would like in regard to a community garden
- encourage attendees to form a core group to start the development of the community garden
- encourage attendees to attend the on-site days on the two Saturdays following the community consultation that took place between 4 and 6 August.

Process

At the community consultation sessions:

- Council's intent in proposing a community garden was explained
- a Powerpoint presentation was made to familiarize participants with the idea of community gardens, the activities that take place within them, the challenges they face and their benefits to the area
- as small groups, participants identified ideas for the proposed community garden.

Information compiled on the worksheets developed at the sessions was later assessed by the consultants and commonalities were identified. These were presented at the on-site Saturday planning events as part of the organizational and site design process.

Outcome

Participants made mindmaps of their ideas for the community garden at the three consultative sessions.

The findings identified as desired components of the community garden the following…

Physical components

- build both raised and ground-level garden beds
- build both allotments and shared garden beds
- build infrastructure: storage shed, water tank, shelter pergola, tool storage shed, tables, sink
- fruit trees
- native plant windbreak
- seed raising area
- water harvesting
- BBQ
- composting.

Social components

- intergenerational — kinder, primary, high school
- garden as a meeting place
- new friends
- code of conduct
- sharing information
- keeping in touch — email group
- name for community garden
- expected contribution
- hours
- noticeboard
- kid's play area/garden
- disabled access
- special groups — eg. nursing homes
- who can join?
- code of conduct.

Educational components

- community education
- school allotment
- youth groups
- permaculture education
- gardening workshops
- community education
- network with other gardens.

Environmental components

- fruit
- vegetables
- herbs
- composting
- bird-attracting shrubs
- border of edible trees — olives, fruit.

Group assets

Skills

During the community participation process, it became apparent that there is a considerable skills base already in existence among participants that may be useful in the development of the community garden.

This included existing experience in vegetable cultivation and knowledge of the permaculture system of integrated design that may prove of value in the design and operation of the proposed garden.

Motivation

Also evident was universal support for the idea of developing a community garden.

The ideas of sharing and cooperation were prominent as was the revelation that a number of participants have been positively influenced by the allotment gardens in the UK.

A number of participants voiced the opinion that the community garden should produce what they termed 'useful' products —ie. food, fruit etc — rather than being a garden managed primarily for visual aesthetics, such as a public park or a garden growing non-edible species.

Community participation session — *Saturday 9 August*

Purpose

To establish organisational structure for group to proceed in establishment of community garden.

The outcomes were to feed into the community garden operations manual.

The idea was that, by the end of the day, the group would have established a vision and objectives for the garden and an action plan to take the garden to the design and construction phase.

Number present

15 plus three children, three Kogarah council staff, two facilitators.

Process

The process utilized participatory processes including:

- group work
- the World Café participatory process
- discussion, analysis and decision making.

Outcomes

Visioning and objectives

The activity was to write a vision and three objectives or the community garden for each group.

For the vision, participants were asked to consider what the garden should have become in eight to ten years and write a few sentences about this.

Objectives were brainstormed onto a mindmap, then ordered (categorised), discussed and agreed to by all.

The facilitators took the vision and objectives to up.

In preparation for writing the objectives, the group participated in the listing of what constituted the components of a 'systems design' for the community garden.

Listed were:

- security (storage)
- maintenance
- funding and resources
- management (regulations, procedures
- OHS
- insurance
- communications (internal, external – promotion, recruitment – and membership)
- water management
- education (including eternal)
- community partnerships.

These were group according to commonality.

Developing an action plan

A template was used to guide the development of a garden action plan in which objectives priorities were recorded.

Action planning — priorities

MAINTENANCE AND WATER		
ACTION	PRIORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
Connect rainwater tank to taps	High	Council
Install irrigation	High	Council
Payment of water costs	High	Council
Source organic matter, weed-free soil	High	Council
Log book for work undertaken	High	Council
Develop guidelines for feeding of plants	High	Gardeners
Develop watering roster	Medium	Gardeners
Obtain mulch	Medium	Council
Ensure only organic pesticide used	Medium	Gardeners
Encourage people to bring scraps to compost	Medium	Gardeners
Set up low maintenance compost	Medium	Council
Install sensor lights	Medium	Council
Set guidelines for neglected/untended allotments	Low	Gardeners
Management and security		
Establish formal association	High	Gardeners
Make decisions on security and fencing	High	Gardeners
Make decision on lighting	High	Gardeners
Discuss policy, conflict resolution, behaviour etc	High	Gardeners
Develop safety induction	High	Gardeners
Conduct risk assessment	High	Gardeners
Decide on allotment fees, if any	High	Gardeners
Develop membership and allotment application forms	High	Gardeners
Develop member and allotment holder contact list	High	Gardeners
Develop rules for allotment holders	High	Gardeners
Appoint liaison person with Council	Medium	Gardeners
Develop members' kit	Medium	Gardeners
Write constitution	Medium	Gardeners
Insurance	Medium	Gardeners
Develop safety policy and fact sheet	Medium	Gardeners

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS		
Formalise links with Council	High	Gardeners
Gain relevant Council approvals	High	Council
Join Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network	High	Gardeners
Visit other community gardens	High	Gardeners/Council
Gain sponsorship	Medium	Gardeners
Develop brochure/letters for funding membership	Medium	Gardeners/Council
Invite visitation by community groups and membership	Medium	Gardeners
Open Gardens Scheme	Medium	Gardeners
Invite educational organisations for assistance & use of garden	Medium	Gardeners
COMMUNICATIONS		
Internal contact	High	Gardeners
Internal notice board	High	Council
Conduct skills audit	High	Gardeners
Tour other community gardens	High	Gardeners/Council
Conduct workshops — organic gardening etc	High	Council
Develop own website	High	Council
Sign for garden	Medium-long	Council
Develop induction process	Medium	Gardeners/Faith/Russ/community gardens network
Develop newsletter	Medium	Unclassified
Communicate with Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network	Unclassified	Gardeners
Compile email/phone numbers	Unclassified	Gardeners
FUNDING AND RESOURCES		
Negotiate with Council about their budget	High	Council
Water tank	Medium	Council
Irrigation	Long term	Gardeners
Organic bedding material	Medium	Council
Compost bins/enclosures	Medium	Council
Plants	Later	Gardeners
Organic matter	Continual	Gardeners
Set membership fees	(Unclassified)	(Unclassified)
Tools	(Unclassified)	Gardeners
Mulcher	Long term	Gardeners

Forming a working group

A working group was formed, consisting of most of those present.

A tentative first meeting date was set for late August.

Community participation session — *Saturday 16 August*

Purpose

To facilitate design ideas for the proposed community garden.

Number present

21 plus Council staff and consultants.

Process

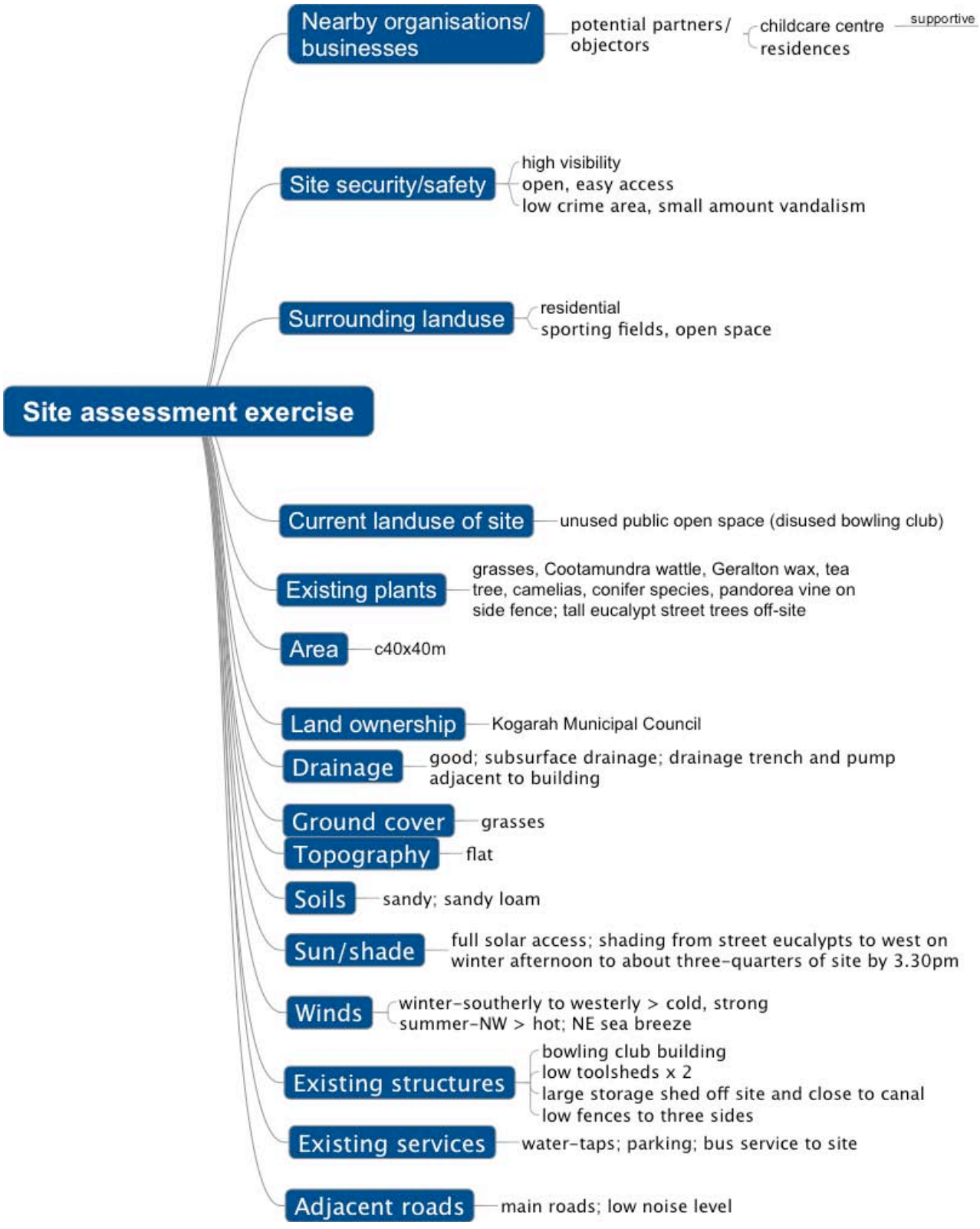
Various participatory processes were used to:

- identify the characteristics of the proposed community garden site
- identify influences on the site coming onto it from outside, such as sun/shade patterns, winds and runoff
- draw up a number of concept plans to pass onto Council's landscape architect to assist in site design.

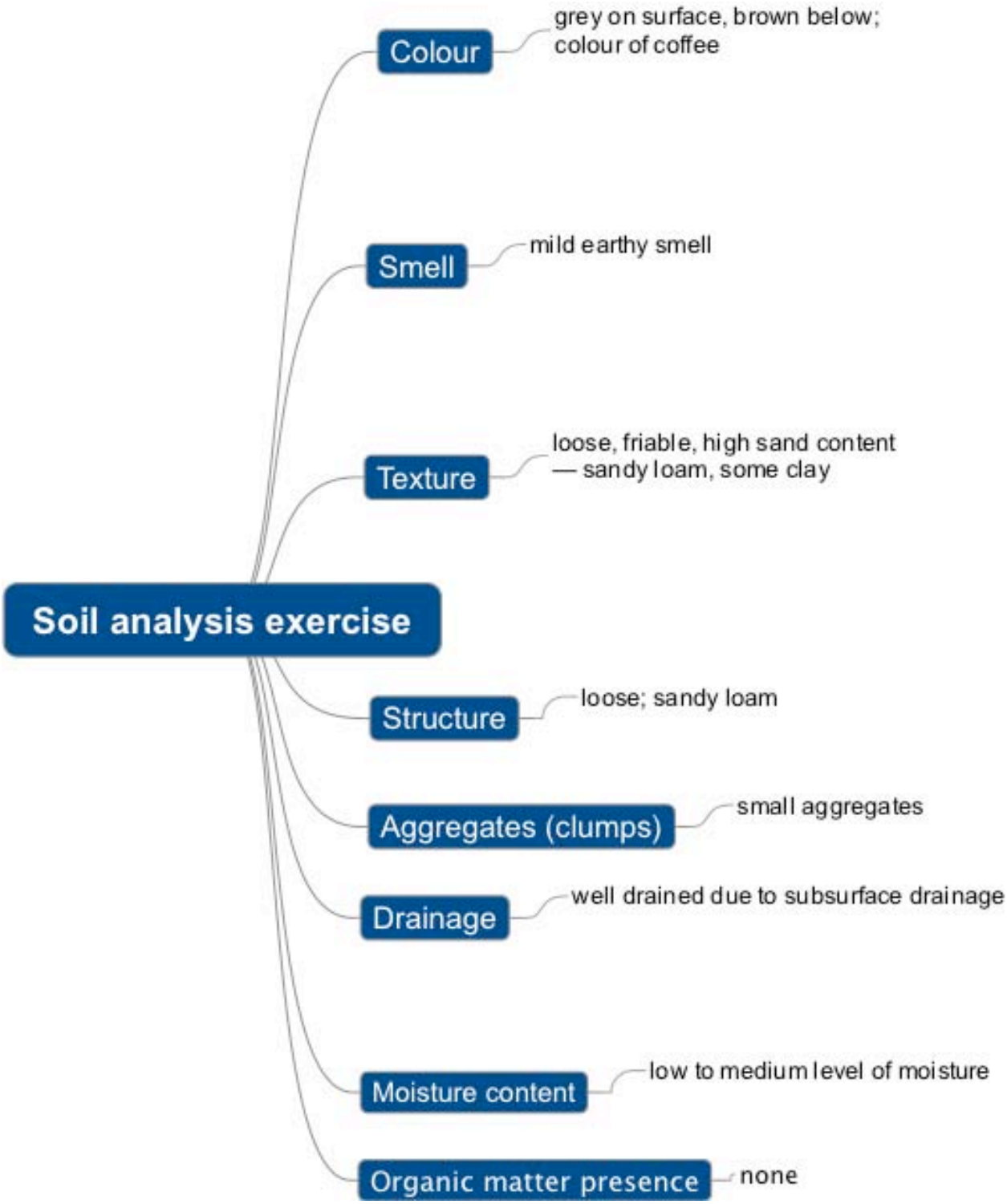
Outcomes

The concept designs were handed on to Kogarah Municipal Council's landscape architect as community input into his design for the garden.

Site assessment



Soil analysis exercise



Chapter 10

Future community gardens

Assuming the demand for community gardening space continues to grow, it is possible that Council will be approached by citizens seeking assistance in starting new gardens elsewhere in the LGA. A structure through which to facilitate this may prove useful.

In-house structure

It is recommended that council identify an in-house team that would meet with people seeking land for community gardening and make decisions on such applications.

A team could consist of officers from Council's parks, community development/community services, environmental/sustainability education sections and waste management.

Community groups approaching Council might have identified a site or a short list of sites preferred for community gardening. However, if resources permit, council might identify such sites itself, taking into account:

- soils
- potential for existing soil contamination
- access by public transport
- parking
- access to water
- proximity to dwellings
- existing use
- …and so on.

Recommendation

Council identify an in-house team to deliberate on applications for land access for community gardening, to meet with interested community organisations and to make decisions on such applications.

Establish a process

A process through which citizens approach council for assistance in finding and starting community gardens and through which their application is considered avoids the existing ad-hoc approach common to date in councils.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council set up a coherent process for receiving and assessing applications for community gardening land and other assistance.

A suggested process

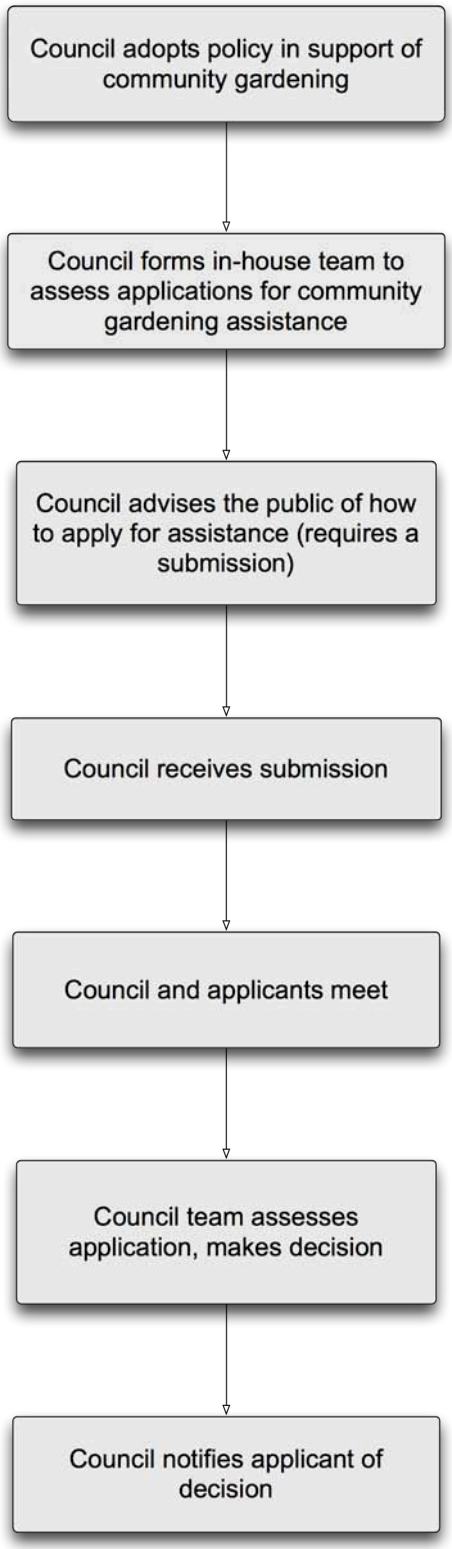
1. Council **adopt a policy on community gardening** in the LGA that is supportive of the practice of community gardening and that sets out a process for assessing applications from the community for such gardening space.
2. Council **notify the public** via a simple brochure and on its website that it will consider applications for community garden assistance and that a process for doing this exists. Council notify the public that **a written submission is required** for this process (see proposed topics to be addressed below) and lists criteria to be addressed in the submission, Applicants add additional material as they see fit.
3. After receiving a submission, the proposed **Council in-house team and applicants meet** so that the applicants can put their case directly to Council officers and so that points can be clarified. The provision for further meetings if needed may be made.
4. The in-house **council team discuss and assess the application** and make a decision. The applicants are notified and the reasoning for Council's decision is explained. In the case of rejection, provision for the consideration of alternatives be made.

As due process, the consideration of applications should be a transparent procedure.

Proposed topics for addressing in an application to Council for assistance in establishing future community gardens

1. NAME OF COMMUNITY GARDEN ASSOCIATION
2. Contact details — liaison person
3. Incorporated association identification/number (if incorporation required by council)
4. Date of incorporation (if incorporation required by council)
5. Whether organisation is not-for-profit
6. Does the association carry public liability insurance and to what value/does the organization intend to obtain public liability insurance? (if incorporation and/or public liability insurance required by council)
7. Name of proposed garden
8. Number of participants at present
9. List characteristic of a preferred site for the community garden on council land, ie.: • size of area needed • access to public transport • access to sunlight, water and wind protection etc.
10. Do you have a preferred location for the community garden?
11. The types of activities planned for the land eg: • organic gardening • community education workshops etc.
12. Planned infrastructure eg: • rainwater tank • shelter structure • storage shed, • paths — paved, mulched, gravel etc • nursery • poultry yard • compost system etc
13. Preparedness to allow the public access to the garden site for compatible purposes other than gardening eg. passive relaxation
14. Description of the proposed management structure for the community garden, such as: • how decisions will be made • the proposed conflict resolution process • how new members will be recruited • how ongoing costs will be funded
15. How gardeners will ensure that there are no problems with: • odour • vandalism • excessive noise • site aesthetics — the appearance of the site • rodents • parking • non-gardener public access.
16. Other topics that applicants see as relevant.

Proposed process for application for assistance



Attachment 1

Recommendations to Council

The following is a list of the recommendations to Kogarah Municipal Council that appear at the end of preceding chapters.

1. Council adopt policy in support of community gardening.
2. Council develop a structure for seeking and assessing applications for community garden support from the community.
3. Council consider the future development of a food security policy which would include community food gardening.

In regard to the proposed Carss Park community garden, as well as possible future gardens in the Kogarah LGA:

1. Council assist in the development of the Carss Park community garden so as to establish sound starting conditions for the garden's future. This should include construction based on the findings of a site analysis activity conducted with the initial group of gardeners.
2. At the start of the garden and through its initial set-up phase, council adopt an approach of advising the gardeners, as requested, in their decision making so as to encourage the development of organisational and people skills as befits a community enterprise.
3. A gardeners' agreement be formulated and adopted by the initial group of garden participants.
4. Council negotiate with the garden representatives any amendments to the gardeners' agreement that may be proposed in future.
5. Council and gardeners adopt the principle of multiple-use and facilitate a range of activities, compatible with community gardening and the passive recreational use of the site.
6. Community gardeners and Kogarah Municipal Council agree that any proposed multiple use of community garden sites are in the best interests of the gardeners and compatible with the spirit of Council planning, policy and practice.
7. A gardeners' agreement include the prohibition, for purposes of gardener harmony and cooperation, of the making of racial, religious or cultural slurs in the community garden.

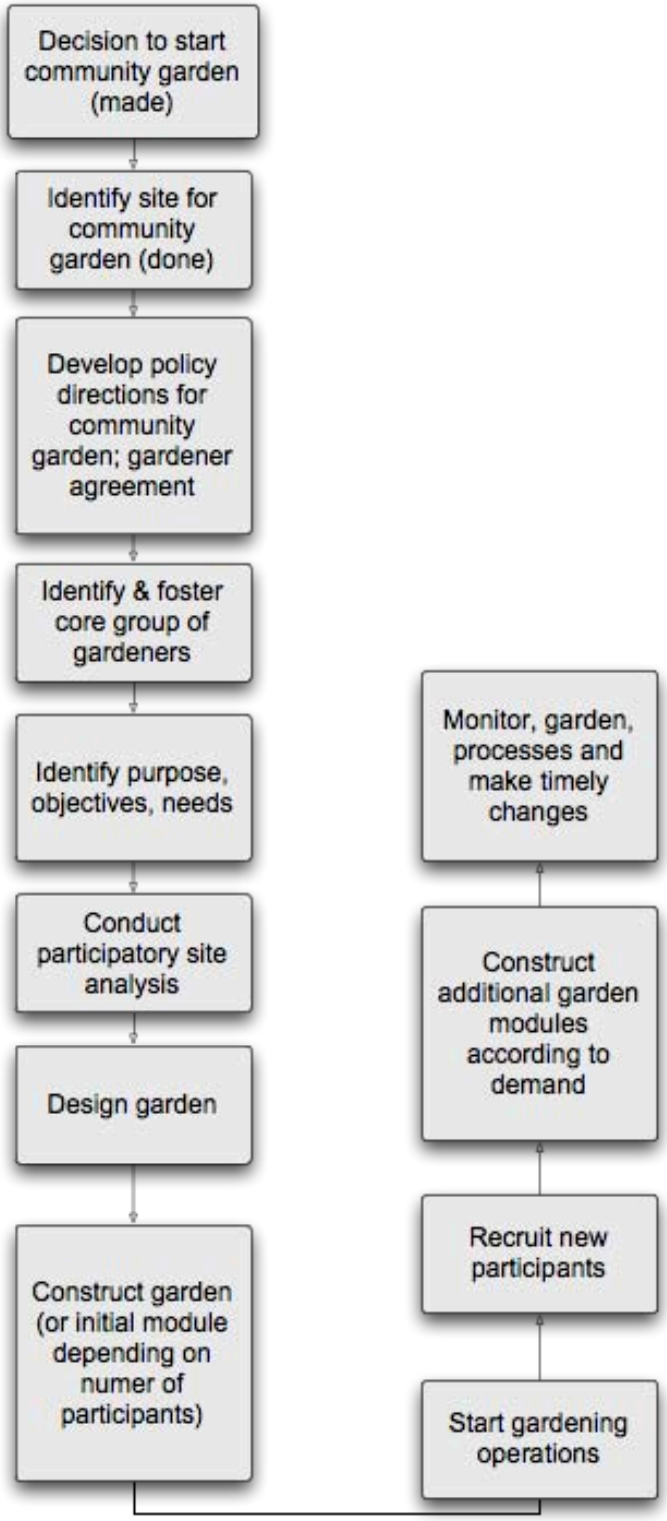
8. Agreement in community garden documents or by non-written means that people of different cultural backgrounds be permitted to grow customary food crops appropriate to the limitations of the site.
9. Provision for the proposed garden to cater for a role as a Third Place for the local community. To facilitate this role, Council and gardeners agree to the construction of a pergola and the installation of a table and seating.
10. Over time, Council devolve decision making and other authority for the garden's management and direction to the gardeners as they develop into a cohesive team and develop greater capacity as an organisation.
11. Council ensure that existing taps at the proposed Carss Park Community Garden are in good working order so as to enable the convenient hand watering of garden beds.
12. Council install a rainwater tank/s with of appropriate capacity and fed from the roof of the proposed pergola structure in the community garden. Preferably, the tank would be raised sufficiently above ground level to permit the easy filling of watering cans and the gravity flow of water rather than use a pump, to minimise maintenance costs.
13. Council consider plumbing the existing rainwater tank adjacent to the existing building (the disused bowling club) and fed from its roof to the community garden and encourage gardeners to make use of that water source in preference to mains water.
14. Council encourage the production of compost on site and its use in soil improvement and to make full use of the moisture retention capacity of organic soils.
15. A core group of gardeners be established as close as possible in time to the opening of the community garden.
16. Council and the gardeners' group each appoint a liaison person capable of articulating the needs of each body and negotiating with each other on behalf of their organisations.
17. Council consider appointing a staff member, ideally their liaison, to have a seat on the governing body of the community garden, at least for the initial start-up and establishment period and that this be ratified by the gardener group. Council carefully consider the role of this appointee in relation to development of gardener self-management.
18. Council maintain a liaison role if they later decide to end their participation in garden management, as gardener competency and capacity for self-management evolves.

19. Council stimulate early on-site activity and train gardeners through the offering of an integrated set of workshops in basic organic gardening skills.
20. Council make the early on-site workshops available to community gardeners and to others, such as non-community garden members, who may be home gardeners.
21. The design of the proposed community garden at Carss Park include a windbreak of native/indigenous species that could be harvested as a seed bank.
22. The design of the proposed community garden include the planting of Australian bush food species — shrubs, trees and groundcovers — at the interface of any future native plantings of the adjacent, disused bowling greens and the community garden. The design should be such that a trail and interpretive signage later be installed to facilitate use as an educational resource. Through design, integrate the proposed bushfood panting and the windbreak.

In general:

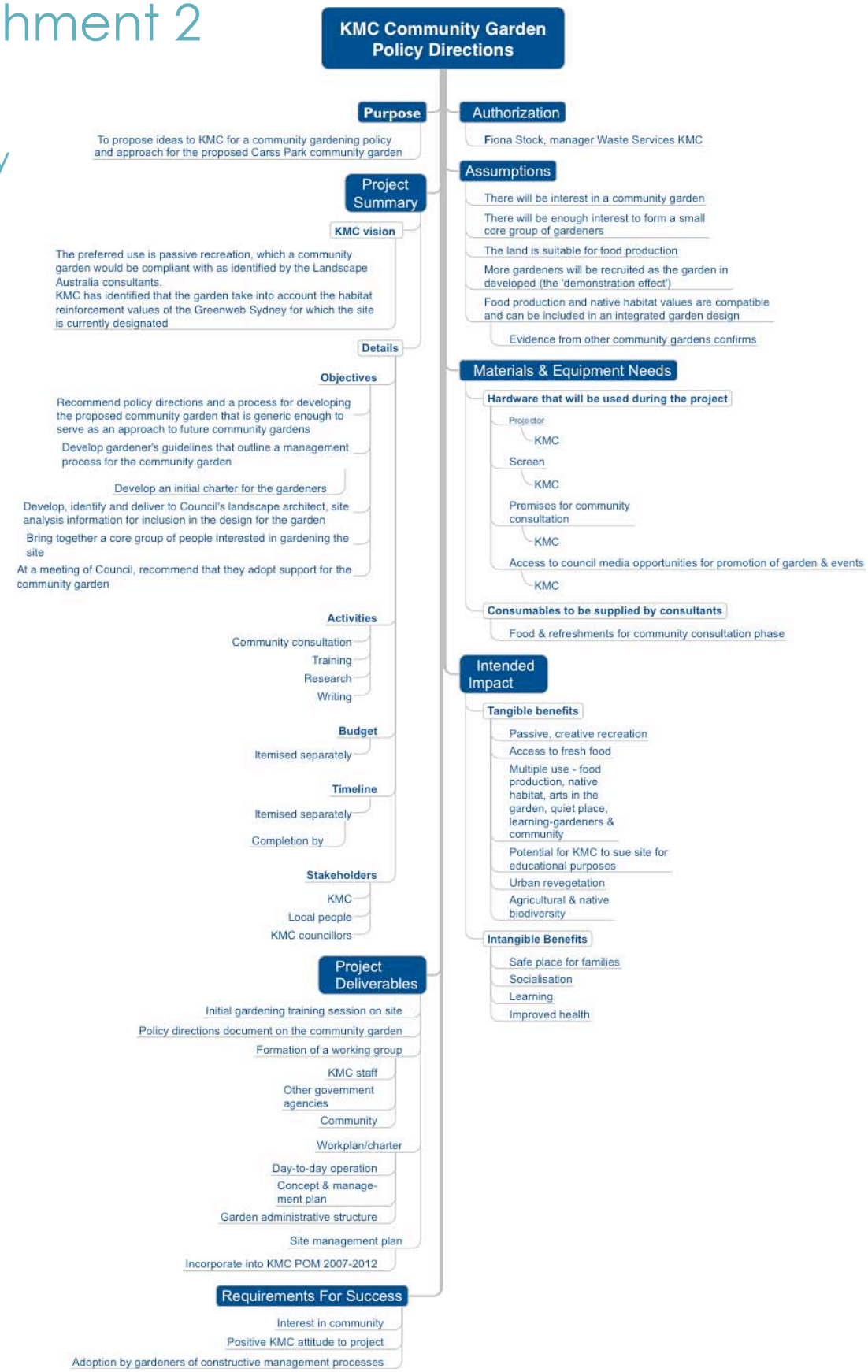
1. To minimise the work for council staff, councils adopt a policy in support of future assistance to community gardens that are community instigated and demand driven.
2. Where, and if, council decides to go ahead to develop future community gardens, they hire qualified people that have a balance of horticultural and facilitation skills to design and implement a program of community engagement in the garden.

Model of community garden startup flow



Attachment 2

Project summary



Attachment 3

Summary of topics listed for addressing in project Expression of Interest — Scope of Research

These have been addressed in detail in the body of the policy directions document.

TOPIC	COMMENT
Community gardening — relation to global trends	Community gardening provides a mean's for citizens to locally address trends such as global warming, peak oil and the current food crisis
Urban agriculture and local food production	Community gardening is a non-commercial subset of urban agriculture practiced for the direct use of gardeners and their families. Benefits include access to fresh, nourishing food as well as variable social benefits to gardeners and non-gardening visitors to community gardens.
Motivators of community gardening	These are variable and include the notion of contribution through addressing global issues; food fears and the desire for safe, nutritious food for children and families; active recreation; meeting local people; urban environmental improvement.
A brief history of community gardening	Australia's first community garden: Nunuwading Community Garden, 1977. Sydney's first community garden: Glovers Garden, Rozelle, 1986. Brisbane's first community garden: Northey Street City Farm, 1994. The period from approximately 1997 saw an upsurge in the development of community gardens Australia-wide, with a quickening over the years since 2000.
The perceived and actual benefits of community gardens (more at: www.communitygarden.org.au/about/benefits.html)	Dietary: access to fresh, nourishing vegetables, herbs and, sometimes, fruit; potential for improved food security. Social: positive relationships with other people living in the vicinity; venues for community work such as with disabled people. Citizenship: development of social capital through cooperation; shared decision making, problem solving and planning. Environmental: Improved local environment through revegetation, occupation and constructive use of

	derelict and neglected land, planting of habitat. Local government: potential for positive interaction with citizens; improved social, environmental and sustainability infrastructure in LGA.
Educational values of community gardens	Formal education: Potential for use in tertiary (eg. TAFE), secondary and primary education (school garden-to-kitchen projects have been underway in Australia for some years and now receive federal and Victorian government financial assistance in some cases; there may be potential to link community gardens with schools in these projects; Northey Street City Farm provides services to schools through curriculum-based learning on site). Informal education: Significant informal learning takes place in community gardens, especially those that offer workshops in sustainable gardening, food preparation and cooking skills. Council-led education: Some councils make agreements with community gardeners to make use of the garden for council environmental/sustainability education.
Reducing crime and vandalism	The presence of people in the gardens suggests that their unintentional surveillance has the potential to reduce vandalism and crime. Evidence for this was uncovered 2007 research by the Dr Bruce Judd and Dr Rob Samuels of the AHURI UNSW-University of Western Sydney, in areas of the metropolitan south west (www.communitygarden.org.au/ experience/experience/crime.html).
Encouraging good council/communit y relations	This is a potential, the realization of which depends upon the attitudes of council and gardeners towards each other and their willingness to collaborate. Council's negotiating access to the garden for workshops brings the potential for closer and positive interaction with citizens.
Breaking down cultural barriers	Gardening with people of other cultures can lead to greater understanding and acceptance. The sharing of culturally-specific food and crops in the garden is a means to these ends.
Approaches to establishing community gardens	The two main models are: top-down, council instigated bottom-up, demand driven. There are also a few council managed gardens.
Types of gardens and legal structures	There are two main models: those with allotments for individuals and families those that have no allotments and in which the tasks and harvests are shared . Most gardens favor a combination of these models.

Cultivation methods	Organic methods of cultivation are most common because organics: encourages greater learning has less potential to damage gardener health through chemical misuse has less potential to contaminate soils and waterways through chemical misuse and overuse.
Effective operational management and maintenance systems	These are garden specific and are quite variable but gardens develop an approach best suited to their circumstances. They may be described in a garden 'operations manual' that could serve as a guide to new gardeners.
Decision making in community gardens	The most successful models are best described as types of deliberative democracy. Participation, due process and fairness are important characteristics.
Funding community gardens	In council-instigated gardens, local government usually funds the construction of the garden, including infrastructure such as pergola (shelter) and water tank. For citizen-initiated community gardens, especially those granted access to council-managed public open space, councils often make a small grant of start-up capital. Councils (and other bodies) usually make no charge for accessing land or charge only a peppercorn lease as community gardening groups are usually not-for-profit and voluntary, and rely on membership fees for their funding.
Actual and perceived constraints	Perceived constraints: local concern, commonly over the potential for noise, odour, rodents, vandalism, parking. Actual constraints: finding land, finding funds for public liability insurance; access to skills.
Public access and equity issues	Most community gardeners welcome non-gardeners on site. This report has proposed that community gardens be considered as multi-purpose centres where those other purposes are compatible with gardening and the garden's recreational values. Other uses might include: arts in the garden; training workshops; sustainability education by council staff, those hired by council for that purpose or by the gardeners; passive visitation by the public. The Randwick Community Organic Garden provided space within the community garden for the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service's wildlife rehabilitation cage.
Water supply, irrigation and conservation	A tap is a basic need in a community garden. Irrigation depends on what is allowable under water restrictions that may be in place. Commonly, irrigation is via hose,

	sometimes via watering can. Drip irrigation is an option where fruit, nut or other trees have been planted. Recommended is a rainwater tank of suitable capacity drawing runoff from the garden's pergola and/or nearby roofs.
Management structures for community gardens	These are variable and may be defined by the requirements of incorporation where the gardeners form an incorporated association. Usually, seasonal meetings plus an annual general meeting are held. Some garden set up teams to manage specific functions in the garden and these may meet informally and more regularly.
The role of local government	This varies from the completely hands-on model of council managed gardens to the hands-off model of gardens that are self-managing. Council may negotiate use of the garden for community education and to demonstrate preferred household initiatives such as low-water use gardening, water tanks etc. Council has an enabling role as manager of public open space and in granting start-up funds.

Footnotes

[i] www.northeystreetcityfarm.org.au
[ii] www.growingcommunities.org.au
[iii] www.spiral.org.au
[iv] www.ourbrisbane.com/lifestyle/gardening/community-gardens-brisbane
[v] www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au
[vi] www.eatwelltas.org.au
[vii] 1996; *Urban agriculture — Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities* UNDP, New York
[viii] www.tpl.org/tier2_rl.cfm?folder_id=630
[ix] www.nyrp.org
[x] www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4776325.stm
[xi] www.foodconnect.com.au
[xii] www.ceres.org.au
[xiii] www.csiro.au/news/FuelForThoughtReport.html
[xiv] www.ecoinnovationlab.com/modules/download_gallery/dl.php?file=29
[xv] www.communitygarden.org.au
[xvi] www.hawkesbury.net.au/community/178.html
[xvii] www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au/print.asp
www.foodsecurity.vlga.org.au?id=921
[xviii] www.dhs.vic.gov.au/humanservicesnews/nov04/kitchen.htm
[xix] 1999, Oldenberg R; *The Great Good Place*; Marlowe & Company, NY. ISBN 1 56924 981 5
[xx] 2006, Blazey C; *The Australian Fruit & Vegetable Garden*; The Diggers' Club, Dramona Victoria. ISBN 1 876473 59 2