

Growing and Sharing Local Food in Boroondara

Discussion Paper – ‘Have Your Say’



Community consultation is open until 30 June 2015

Table of contents

1. In summary	1
2. Why talk about growing and sharing food in Boroondara?.....	3
3. What do we mean by ‘local food’ and ‘food systems’?	4
4. What are the benefits of growing local food?.....	6
5. Growing local food – a diversity of options	7
5.1 What are typical settings for growing food in Boroondara?	8
5.2 How is locally grown food being shared?	11
5.3 Some innovative activities beyond Boroondara.....	12
6. Boroondara’s existing community gardens.....	13
7. Priorities for future community-based food gardening.....	14
8. Proposals for new community-based food gardens on Council-managed land.....	16
8.1 Issues for consideration	16
8.2 The process for progressing proposals for new community gardens on Council land	19
9. Building capacity and support for our local food system	20
10. How to ‘have your say’	21

Prepared by:

Environment and Sustainable Living Department, 28 May 2015

Contact: Andrea Lomdahl andrea.lomdahl@boroondara.vic.gov.au or (03) 9278 4889

Prepared in collaboration with the following Departments:

- Community Planning
- Parks and Gardens
- Economic Development
- Strategic Planning
- Communications and Engagement
- Commercial and Property Services

1. In summary

An increasing number of residents and organisations are becoming interested in activities related to the growing and sharing of local food.

Growing and sharing local food is an important component of a resilient and sustainable local food system and has a wide range of potential benefits for community health and wellbeing, the environment and even the local economy (see Section 4). Evidence suggests that, at its best, community-based food growing can foster the physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing of our community. Because of the many community benefits it can offer, Council is supportive of community-based food gardening within the municipality.

Local food is already being grown in a wide variety of settings: in backyards, in traditional community gardens (with individual plots for fee paying members), in open community gardens and food forests, school and kinder kitchen gardens, and on private and public land. An outline of the typical settings for local food growing is provided in Section 5, and more detail is in the supplementary booklet 'A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives'¹.

Boroondara's existing traditional community gardens on Council owned land are highly valued and generally have 'waitlists'. Beyond managing the related lease or licence agreements, Council is not involved in the day to day operations of these gardens, but encourages principles of equitable access, social inclusion and sustainable practice (see Section 6).

Public open space in Boroondara is limited and highly valued by the whole community. Council asks that interested community members explore other land options for future community gardens (e.g. on private land or other underutilised land) before requesting the use of public open space (see Section 7). Where use of Council land is subsequently proposed, the discussion paper outlines a process that community members would work through in collaboration with Council officers, to ensure all relevant issues are addressed (as part of project planning, design and consultation) before the community gardening project is considered by Council for approval and funding (see Section 8).

Council has been actively fostering the growing and sharing of local food in a number of ways (see Section 9), including:

1. Regular 'how to' workshops as part of the Living for our Future sustainable living program.
2. Collaborating with the community to establish the Ashburton Community Garden (2009), the Winton Road Food Forest - Stage 1 (2012), and the Ashburton Shopping Centre salad planter boxes (2013).
3. Providing access to grant funding (up to \$10,000) for suitable projects through the Community Strengthening Grants Program (Note: four of the eight recipients of a 2014 Sustainable Communities annual grant had establishment of a food garden as a key aspect of their project proposal).
4. Promoting community awareness of local 'food swaps' and other emerging initiatives (e.g. Kew Fruit Squad).

¹ *A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives* is available on Council's website <http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/your-say>

5. Facilitating the provision of community gardens through a number of its neighbourhood houses and community centres.

There may be other innovative or cost effective ways that Council could facilitate or support our emerging local food system. Feedback received from the community or other stakeholders will help shape the relative priority of various options.

A number of prompter questions are posed throughout the paper. Please refer to Section 10 for details on how to get involved in the discussion and 'Have your say'.

2. Why talk about growing and sharing food in Boroondara?

Across Melbourne, there has been a groundswell of interest and activity focused on growing and distributing local food. By *local food*, we primarily mean food grown in our suburbs, as well as food and food products from Melbourne's urban fringe or regional Victoria. Over the last few years an increasing number and diversity of community-based food growing activities have emerged across Boroondara.

Nevertheless, we also know that:

- Just under half of Boroondara residents are not eating the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables, and one in three are overweight or obese.
- While the positive links between social connection and physical and mental health are well established, many residents are at-risk of social exclusion (among them older residents, public housing tenants, residents who were born overseas, people who have a disability or long term health condition, carers and lone parents).
- Almost all of the traditional (individual plot) community gardens in Boroondara have lengthy waiting lists.
- Planning and establishment of new (additional) community gardens on public land is a relatively complex, expensive and lengthy process.

There are a multitude of ways that residents, community groups, local businesses and Council could act to enhance the extent, and benefits, of growing and sharing local food.

Council has prepared this Discussion Paper to:

- 1. Increase community awareness about the diversity of existing opportunities for growing (and sharing) of local food.**
- 2. Clarify the level of community interest and support for various community-based food growing opportunities.**
- 3. Outline the issues that need consideration and the associated process for considering any proposals for new community-based food gardens on Council managed land.**
- 4. Seek feedback about how Council might work with the community to foster continued expansion of local food growing (and sharing) opportunities.**

Preparing this discussion paper for community consultation is an action in Boroondara's *Public Health and Wellbeing Plan - Annual Action Plan 2014*².

Depending on the outcome of community feedback, Council will review its priorities for working with the community to contribute to a thriving and equitable local food culture.

As you read this discussion paper, please think about your interests and priorities. We have included discussion questions to prompt your thinking. At the end of this document, we have outlined a range of opportunities for you to share your views with Council and community members. Be part of the discussion - have your say!

Discussion Questions

Question 1. Do you think it is important for Council to support the expansion of community-based growing (and sharing) of local food in Boroondara? Why or why not?

3. What do we mean by ‘local food’ and ‘food systems’?

Local food

By *local food*, we primarily mean food grown in our suburbs, as well as food and food products from Melbourne’s urban fringe or regional Victoria. Examples include local grown fruit, vegetables and nuts, locally produced honey and eggs, bread, dairy and meat as well as all the preserved goods (jam, pickles, chutney, relish etc.) and the prepared dishes that use these local produced ingredients.

Because locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables are seasonal and can be harvested when ripe, they are often tastier and more nutritious. Having low to zero ‘food miles’³ means such produce is much less reliant on fumigation, refrigeration, packaging and transport inputs compared to much supermarket produce (especially imported fruit and vegetables).

Local food growing can:

- occur at a range of different scales - from the backyard veggie patch to urban market gardens
- take place on private land, public land and in home gardens
- be initiated by individuals, community groups, community organisations, schools/kinders, social enterprises, small businesses and government bodies.

Growing food locally is an important aspect of creating a more resilient and sustainable ‘local food system’.

Food systems: from global to local

A *food system* describes all of the processes, inputs (energy, water, fertilisers) and infrastructure needed to supply food to people. It includes: food growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, cooking and eating, as well as the disposal of waste products along the way.

One of the effects of globalisation has been the development of a **global food system**. Although intensive industrial agriculture has delivered benefits, it is also associated with a number of negative outcomes; from environmental degradation to malnutrition and obesity.

Individuals and communities seeking greater control over food production are supporting the redevelopment of **local food systems**. This creates opportunities for healthier and

³ The distance that food travels from where it is produced to where it is sold or eaten.

more resilient communities, local enterprise and innovation, and more sustainable and ethical agricultural practices.

Figure 1 (below) summarises the basic aspects of our local food system and notes activities already underway.

Fig. 1: Boroondara’s emerging local food system



4. What are the benefits of growing local food?

Increasing the number of people with the skills and opportunity to grow (and share) local food offers many potential health and wellbeing, social, environmental and local economic benefits.

Improves health and wellbeing

- Gardening encourages 'year round' physical activity in the fresh air.
- Growing food provides children and adults with opportunities for connection with the rhythms of nature. Many people find it relaxing and rewarding.
- Access to healthy and nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables.

'Why do we grow food at home?'

'We grow our own food for many reasons... to have access to fresh home-grown produce is the primary reason, especially produce that is not readily available to buy (such as heritage and heirloom varieties of vegetables); to educate our kids on growing, harvesting and cooking fresh food; the feeling of accomplishment of growing something from seed; to prompt us to eat seasonally, and to share the food with family and friends.'

Natasha Kuperman, Founder of My Home Harvest

Fosters social connectedness

- Communal gardening (for example, in a shared community garden plot or food forest) brings individuals together, fosters friendships and helps reduce social isolation.
- Growing food provides opportunities to share excess produce with neighbours, friends, family and others.

Lowers environmental impacts

- Access to local food means less reliance on processed and imported foods (and their associated processing, packaging, transport and refrigeration costs).
- Small scale growers and farmers can use low impact or organic methods — including avoiding synthetic herbicide and pesticide sprays — supporting the health of soils, waterways and local biodiversity.
- Home gardeners can reduce mains water use by using rainwater on gardens.
- Food and garden 'waste' can be recycled to provide rich organic compost.

Creates local economic opportunities

- Farmers markets, food hubs and co-ops support fair livelihoods for family farmers in regional Victoria.
- Local community gardens and community supported agriculture initiatives such as farmer direct boxes provide food that's fresh and affordable.
- Local food initiatives can also provide a focus for training opportunities, social enterprises and small business entrepreneurs.

Opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing

- Engaging in gardening for food develops a range of life-long skills, with opportunities for both formal and informal knowledge sharing.
- Food growing provides opportunities for children and adults to learn about healthy eating, and addresses the modern day disconnect between food and where it comes from.
- Encourages the passing of skills, knowledge and traditions from generation to generation.

What do children learn from school kitchen garden programs?

'The kids learn so much. They learn about life and lifecycles, food cycles and food chains.'

'They learn that life's not perfect. Sometimes things go wrong. Also none of the veggies we grow look anything like what you would buy from supermarkets. Our carrots are all twisted and gnarly!'

'One thing I've noticed is that the garden is good for students' mood and spirit. The garden is a 'no-stress place' so everyone is happy.'

Andrea Clements, garden specialist, Auburn South Primary School Kitchen Garden Program

Discussion Questions

Question 2: What do you think are the key benefits of growing (and sharing) local food?

Question 3: What do you think are the key barriers to productive gardening within Boroondara?

5. Growing local food – a diversity of options

In urban areas, food is being grown (and shared) in many different settings, each with their own particular benefits, constraints and risks.

Being clear on the variety of modes of community-based gardening is helpful when considering:

- Which modes are residents currently engaged in?
- Which modes are residents most interested in undertaking, given the opportunity?
- Which modes warrant the greatest focus for further development and support?

The following section summarises different settings within which Boroondara residents are currently growing food. For more detail about the activities underway across the municipality see the supplementary document 'A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives' (available to download from <http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/your-say>).

5.1 What are typical settings for growing food in Boroondara?

Table 1: Modes of local food growing, key characteristics and some local examples

Modes of local food growing	Key characteristics	Local examples	Notes
Home-based productive gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents growing fruit and/or veggies in their own front or back garden or in pots. Sometimes residents also keep chickens or bees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natasha Kuperman, Camberwell resident and founder of My Home Harvest (myhomeharvest.com.au) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last five years, almost 500 Boroondara residents have attended a free 'how to' workshop as part of Council's Living for our Future program. Raised planter beds are a common option if you are unsure of the soil quality in your garden.
Traditional community gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual plots (raised beds) with fee-paying members Usually on public land that is fenced off with a locked gate (member only access) Managed by an Incorporated Association, under an (exclusive use) Lease Agreement or Licence Agreement with Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riversdale Road Community Garden (Hawthorn) Linda Crescent Community Garden (Hawthorn) Ashburton Community Garden Canterbury Community Garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All have 'wait lists' for individual plots. Ashburton Community Garden has a number of shared plots for local community groups. See Section 6 for further discussion around traditional community gardens.
Community gardens at Neighbourhood Houses or Community Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly individual plots (raised beds) with fee-paying members, plus some shared plots Gardens are within the grounds of the Neighbourhood House / Community Centre (and usually managed by the centre under 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balwyn Community Garden (Balwyn Community Centre) Alamein Community Garden (Alamein Neighbourhood and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balwyn and Canterbury have 'wait lists' for individual plots The Craig Family Centre Kitchen Garden has all shared plots that are used for specific programs run by the centre (that is, no member fees). The Craig also leases ten

Modes of local food growing	Key characteristics	Local examples	Notes
	a broader facility lease agreement)	Learning Centre) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Craig Family Centre Kitchen Garden 	plots at Ashburton Community Garden.
Open communal gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A more recent mode of community garden that is open to the general public (not fenced / locked) May have raised beds, but commonly focuses on long-lived plants rather than annual crops Gardening and harvest is shared by community group members/ volunteers If on public land, open communal food gardens should operate under a (non-exclusive use) Licence Agreement between Council and a legal entity (either an Incorporated Association or auspicing body) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winton Road Food Forest (Ashburton) Ashwood College Permaculture Food Garden (Ashwood) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Winton Road Food Forest was established in 2012 through collaboration between Council and a local resident group that was supported by the Craig Family Centre (as auspice).
Communal 'planter boxes' on public land (such as the pavement of a shopping strip)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planter box design and location must be approved by land manager (e.g. Council) Needs to be maintained by local volunteer(s) or traders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashburton Shopping Centre salad planter boxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, herb and vegetable planter boxes were installed on High Street Ashburton by Council at the instigation of the Ashburton Traders Association.
Communal gardening on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members grow produce on private land with permission of the landowner Can be managed more or less formally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corner Deli garden (Ashburton) The Green at St Columbs (Hawthorn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3000acres is a community organisation helping facilitate community gardens on unused land (e.g. vacant land awaiting

Modes of local food growing	Key characteristics	Local examples	Notes
	depending on garden size, type of landowner (e.g. organisation or individual) and whether the garden is temporary or permanent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3000acres project in Kew 	<p>development).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landshare's online platform can help to match 'growers' and 'landowners'.
School and kinder kitchen gardens and/or chickens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On school / kinder grounds • Generally maintained by children with assistance from teachers and/or parent volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many to mention! • A few kinders have received grant funding to help establish a kitchen garden (See Section 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number of local schools are participating in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, which integrates food education with the curriculum.
Temporary or 'pop-up' communal gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally involves planting into crates or planter boxes that are cheap to set up and easy to relocate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small 'pop-up' garden at Ashburton Pool and Recreation Centre, is maintained by staff and visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires Council permission if sited on public land.

Discussion Questions

Question 4. Are you currently engaged in local food growing? How?

Question 5. If you had the choice, which type(s) / modes of food gardening would you most want to participate in? (e.g. at home, individual plot at community garden, working with others to care for a shared plot or food forest etc.)

Landshare Australia - connecting growers with land owners

Landshare is a social networking service for connecting people wanting to grow fruit and vegetables - but with nowhere to do it - with people who have spare land and are willing to share it. The Landshare concept is especially popular in the UK.

Council has promoted community awareness of Landshare in Boroondara through the Boroondara Bulletin and Leader newspaper. Many homes in the area are located on large blocks and an arrangement to 'landshare' may suit people who are either time poor or limited in mobility and unable to grow food themselves.

Council is keen to encourage landsharing in our community and is exploring a local landsharing register that for example, links older residents who have gardens to share with residents living in flats or apartments. **If you are a local resident and already part of a Landshare arrangement (either as a 'grower' or as 'landholder') we would love to hear from you.**

Please email (localfood@boroondara.vic.gov.au) or call (03) 9278 4011.

5.2 How is locally grown food being shared?

There are several innovative ways that local and regionally grown food is being distributed:

- **Local 'Food Swaps'** - bringing people together to share excess produce that they've grown at home. Local examples include the Hartwell-Burwood Food Swap and the Surrey Hills/Balwyn Food Swap.
- **Kew Fruit Squad** - Kew Fruit Squad is a new community group based at Kew Neighbourhood and Learning Centre. Trained Fruit Squad volunteers harvest excess fruit from local private gardens, provide advice on pruning and maintenance of fruit trees, and distribute produce to local boarding houses and charities that offer food relief. The group is a recipient of a Community Strengthening Grant and is modelled on the Darebin Fruit Squad.
- **Camcare weekly food market** - Camcare supports people in Boroondara through times of adversity and hardship. A weekly market for clients offers food from a range of sources including their large community garden (managed by volunteers, clients and staff) at the rear of Camcare's Camberwell offices, as well as donations from FareShare, Second Bite, and local businesses.
- **Food co-operatives and collectives ('community supported agriculture')** - community groups and organisations source fresh produce boxes and sometimes meat directly from regional farmers. Boxes are delivered and distributed amongst members. Local examples include the Damper Creek Collective in Ashwood as well as food co-ops operating out of a private home in Surrey Hills and from Kew Neighbourhood and Learning Centre.

For more information and other examples refer to the supplementary booklet '[A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives](#)' or visit Council's website.

Boroondara Farmers Market and 'Our Grub Hub'

Boroondara Farmers Market is held on the third and fifth Saturday of each month at Patterson Reserve Hawthorn.

Regional farmers and food producers sell fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, poultry and food products such as relishes and jams, tarts, cakes and wine. Farmers who sell their produce at the market must be accredited – a process to check the authenticity of stall holders. The market is supported by Council, and coordinated by the Rotary Club of Glenferrie. Rotary uses the 'gold coin donation on entry' for community projects.

'Our Grub Hub' is a new 'Buy Local' initiative encouraging local cafés, restaurants and food businesses to source their produce from the Boroondara Farmers Market stall holders. Participating businesses are rewarded with increased promotional and marketing opportunities.

5.3 Some innovative activities beyond Boroondara

Joe's Connected Garden

Four interconnected back gardens in the Adelaide suburb of Elizabeth Grove have created a mega veggie patch and orchard also known as '[Joe's Connected Garden](#)'. The collective gardens feature 400 varieties of fruit trees plus vegetables and herbs. The project began five years ago following a number of conversations 'across the back fence'. The fences are still intact but include gates to all properties. All the neighbours share the workload and invite others to join working bees with a BBQ and sharing of produce.

This private arrangement relies on goodwill and neighbours that share similar values and interests. No Council permit is required, and there may be examples of something similar already happening in Boroondara.

Kilsyth church community garden

This community garden was established with funding from a Knox City Council Community Grant. The project steering committee engaged students and staff from Swinburne TAFE to develop the garden design, install drainage and construct the gardens. The shared garden plots are being used by church members, playgroup families, local primary school classes, residents from a nearby retirement village and patrons from the Zo Church (Burmese). A portion of the produce is being distributed through the church food bank to local residents in need. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/KSBCCCommunityGarden> for further details.

Peppertree Place

Peppertree Place is a Coburg community hub that includes a community garden, nursery, and kitchen where families and communities can come together to learn about growing and preparing fresh food, improving health and enhancing community links. A 'Grow your own healthy lifestyle program' is run from the centre by Kildonan Uniting Care. Other activities include the volunteer-run nursery, a weekly food swap, a café that offers community-prepared goods and an annual garden fiesta.

6. Boroondara's existing community gardens

Boroondara has a number of large traditional community gardens, with a combined total of 200 plots cared for by individuals or small groups. Most gardens have waiting lists. Refer to 'A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives' for a full listing of these gardens.

The traditional community gardens located on public land at Riversdale Road and Linda Crescent have been established for at least 20 years and Hawthorn Community Gardens Inc. manages the day to day operations.

Canterbury Community Gardens was established on the former Canterbury Bowls Club site in 2006, and is managed by Burke and Beyond Inc.

The more recently established Ashburton Community Garden, located in Markham Victory Reserve, was instigated by the Canterbury Rotary Club and designed and constructed by Council in 2009.

Community gardens at some of Boroondara's neighbourhood houses and community centres contribute to the range of programs and activities they offer.

These traditional community gardens are highly valued by the community. Occasionally, Council is contacted by residents who are frustrated at the limited access to community garden plots. Concerns have been expressed about:

- Lengthy waiting periods (sometimes several years) before a plot becomes available.
- Perceived unfairness of the 'automatic right of renewal' for existing plot holders.
- Limited opportunity to access shared plots as an interim (or ongoing) measure.
- Some plots looking as though they are not being used. (Note: most community garden coordinators issue warnings to gardeners who do not maintain their plots and arrange assistance if plot holders are sick or unable to work on their plots for a period).

To foster broad community benefits, community gardens are encouraged to manage themselves to facilitate community access, equity and inclusion and environmental sustainability. Such principles can be integrated into garden operations in a variety of ways:

- **Promoting access and inclusion.** Opportunities could include: gradually increasing the number of plots available for shared use; limiting the number of years individuals can lease an individual allotment; prioritising access for those without backyards; offering lower membership rates to concession card holders.
- **Fostering community engagement.** For example, through holding community garden 'open days' or hosting community workshops to enable others in the community to visit and learn.
- **Environmentally sustainable gardening practices.** Most gardens have membership policies stipulating use of organic or low toxicity methods of pest and weed control; use of recycled water (where possible); on-site composting and/or worm farming; and mulching beds.

Discussion Questions

Question 6. How else might community gardens involve the broader community and share the benefits of community-based food growing?

7. Priorities for future community-based food gardening

Experience within Boroondara and beyond reflects that successful community-based gardening is best driven as a 'grass-roots' initiative, rather than instigated from the 'top down'. Converting an idea for a new community-based food garden into reality takes commitment, and a 'coalition of the willing' ready to work collaboratively over time towards a shared vision. Successful initiatives generally involve 'a lengthy planning stage characterised by a willingness to engage with as many individuals and groups within the community as possible - not just the gardeners'.⁴

Private land options

An often overlooked option for individuals or small groups is the abundance of large private gardens in Boroondara. Residents with the skills to establish and maintain a productive home garden could 'pair up' with nearby homeowners with large gardens and share in the resulting produce.

There is significant potential to establish community-based gardens on other private land, either instigated or supported by the landowner. Interested community groups should explore options such as use of vacant lots (awaiting development), land associated with churches, aged care centres /nursing homes, hospitals and educational institutions etc. Community organisation 3000acres has resources to help facilitate establishment of community gardens on private land.

Co-locating community food gardens with community facilities

When redeveloping or planning new community facilities, Council could liaise with facility tenants interested in opportunities to co-locate community food gardening on the site. Co-locating food gardens with existing or new community facilities offers various benefits including passive surveillance of buildings and gardens, access to public facilities (e.g. toilets), potential compatibility with programs offered by the facilities (e.g. community kitchen, cooking classes etc.) and opportunities to use roofs for rainwater collection and irrigation.

Assuming the site is otherwise suitable (refer to Table 2 for considerations), the types of facilities that may be suitable for co-location of communal food gardens include: neighbourhood houses, community centres, kindergartens, facilities used by University of the Third Age (U3A), child care centres or maternal child and health centres. Operation of the garden would need to be compatible with the use of the facility by existing tenants.

⁴ Sustainable Gardening Australia - Community Gardens Manual: <http://hmstrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Community-Gardens-Manual.pdf>

Community food gardens in public open space

Public open space in Boroondara is limited and highly valued by the whole community.

Provision for new community gardens on Council managed public open space is considered in the Boroondara Open Space Strategy (BOSS)⁵, adopted by Council in December 2013. The BOSS provides the strategic direction for open space planning and management through to 2026.

Less than ten per cent of our municipality is available to the community as open space. As our population grows, public parks and other areas of public open space will become even more precious. These areas are used for unstructured recreation, organised sport, socialising, and to provide environmental services and enhanced biodiversity values.

The BOSS notes that 'community gardens have positive features including growing food sustainably and social connectedness, but do restrict access for other purposes. As they can be run successfully on public land other than open space as well, future proposals for them in open space will be assessed within this context.' The BOSS reflects that use of land associated with community facilities or other underutilised land (e.g. railway land) may be more suitable for any future community gardens.

To reflect this position, interested community groups are requested to first explore other options before proposing use of public open space. Where other options aren't found to be feasible and public open space is then proposed, community groups will be asked to participate in a collaborative process with Council (See Section 8 for a high level diagram of the process) to review and progress their proposal. This process is important because Council needs to address all relevant issues and risks, and ensure there is broad community support, before allocating funding for building new community garden infrastructure.

Discussion Questions

Question 7: Do you think it is reasonable that community groups interested in creating a new community garden should explore other options (e.g. on private land or co-located with community facilities), before proposing use of public open space? Why or why not?

⁵ Boroondara Open Space Strategy http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/your_council/building-planning/strategic-planning/plans/open-space-strategy

8. Proposals for new community-based food gardens on Council-managed land

Over the past few years, Council has received occasional requests for new community gardens on Council land. These requests have been considered on a case-by-case basis. Recent successful projects have included the Ashburton Community Garden, constructed by Council in 2009, and the Winton Road Food Forest, established in 2012. For more details of these and other local activities, see the supplementary booklet 'A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives'.

The time required to progress a community garden project from concept to completion can take several years. The timeframe reflects the many issues that need to be considered (see Table 2), the need for well-planned community engagement, and the need to secure Council approval and funding to build the community garden. Collaboration, flexibility, respect and patience are essential.

Individuals and community groups interested in initiating a community gardening project are encouraged to read the Community Gardens Manual⁶ published by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Sustainable Gardening Australia, as it contains a wealth of guidance and advice.

Community planting on Council land requires pre-approval. Unsolicited food planting is not supported and is in breach of the Amenity Local Law.

8.1 Issues for consideration

The following table summarises the wide range of issues needing consideration, by the proposing community group and Council, when developing and refining a proposal for a new community garden on Council land. If important issues or risks cannot be resolved positively, the proposal may not secure Council support and funding.

Table 2: Issues to be considered when assessing proposals for new community garden on Council land

<i>Appropriate location / site specific issues</i>	
Is the proposed community garden in public open space?	Have alternative locations, including co-location with existing community facilities, been explored? Is the local area rated high or low for provision of public open space? Is the area covered by an existing Master Plan, or is one being developed? Is the land subject to any restrictions or overlays e.g. floodplain?
Impact on existing uses	How would the project impact on existing and future users of the space? Would use of the site still allow adequate public open

⁶ Sustainable Gardening Australia - Community Gardens Manual: <http://hmstrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Community-Gardens-Manual.pdf>

and function	space for use by the broader community into the future? Is the proposed site compatible with adjoining land uses and amenity? Is the site compatible with the environmental and heritage values of adjoining open space?
Size of site	Is the land area large enough to sustain a viable community garden? Depending on the project concept, more or less space may be needed, but many community gardens need space for compost bins/worm farms, path access, a shelter, storage shed and water tank(s)?
Site access	Does the site allow access for construction vehicles? How will people access the site in the future to undertake maintenance and deliver materials (e.g. mulch)?
Site history	Do we know what the site has been used for historically? Potentially harmful chemicals can persist in the soil for many decades and can be taken up by plant roots. Soil testing for contamination will be required.
Orientation / topography	Does the site receive sunlight for most of the day? Is there a risk of overshadowing? Are there established canopy trees in or around the area (as well as risk of overshadowing, tree root zones will need protection)? Is the site flat or gently sloping?
Access to water and power	Is there access to water and power (if required)? Is there potential to access rainwater from nearby buildings?
Public facilities	Are there facilities nearby - public toilets, public transport, shared path?
Visibility of gardens	Is there some passive surveillance of the site? Or is the proposed location hidden from public view? How might this affect perceptions of safety and risk of vandalism/theft?
<i>Community engagement and support</i>	
Community demand	Is there a demonstrated demand for a new community garden in the area? Does the area have a significant number of properties with small yards and/or flats and apartments?
Community support for the garden	Are local residents clearly supportive of the project? Are a wide range of individuals and organisations being consulted and involved? Are particular concerns being raised by individuals or groups being addressed?
Garden access and inclusion	Is the proposal to fence and lock the garden or to keep access open to the broader community? Does the proposal envisage individual plots, shared use plots or a combination? How else is the proposal seeking to maximise community engagement, access and inclusion?

Governance	
Vision and commitment	Does the community group making the proposal have enough members with relevant skills, experience and time to work together? Do they have a shared vision for the project? Is the project seeking to deliver benefits for the broader community?
Legal status and public liability insurance	Is the community group prepared to become an incorporated association and to take out public liability insurance? Or can a suitable auspice be found? In most cases either the community group or auspice would be required to enter into a legal agreement (lease or licence) with Council as the land manager.
Maintenance	Is there a sufficient number of individuals prepared to work together to ensure ongoing care/maintenance of the garden over time? What maintenance support/resources might be required from Council?
Funding/Investment	
Community funding and in-kind contribution	Does the group have access to sources of co-funding or in-kind contributions?
Return on investment	Are the project's short and longer-term community benefits sufficient to justify Council capital expenditure and land allocation?
Timeframe for planning and construction	<p>Formal Council approval and funding of a project would be confirmed through the annual budget cycle. Proposals that have been assessed and progressed successfully through design and community consultation would be subject of a budget bid (prepared around November to December each year for potential funding in the <i>subsequent</i> financial year or thereafter).</p> <p>Considering the likely time lag between proposal development, formal approval and construction, can the community group maintain their commitment over the medium to long term?</p>

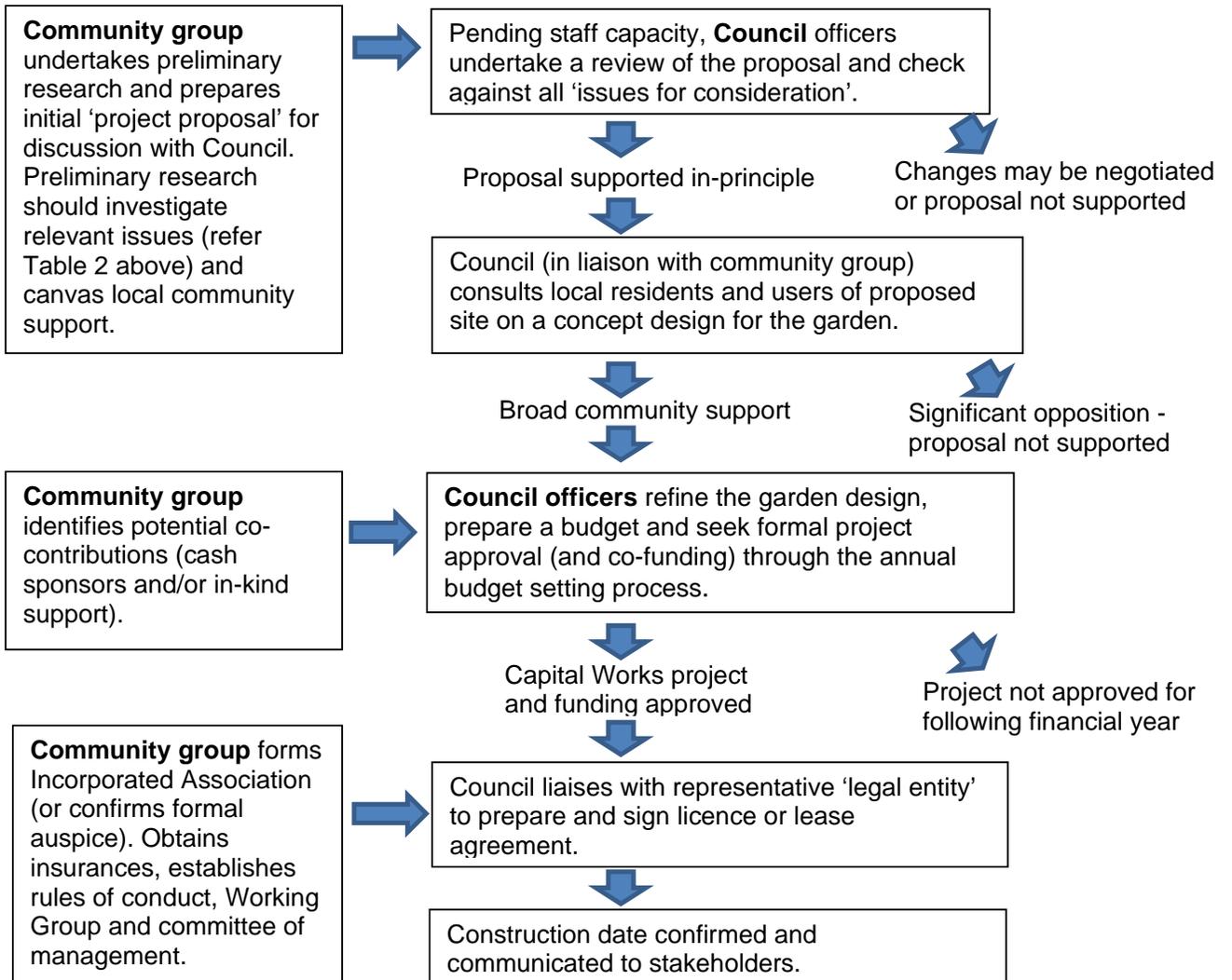
The 'issues for consideration' outlined above are integral to the Council process for considering and supporting (or not supporting) a proposal for a new community garden on public land.

Discussion Questions

Question 8. When thinking about proposals for new community gardens on Council managed land, do you have any feedback on the 'issues for consideration' outlined in Table 2 above? Are there other issues that should also be considered?

8.2 The process for progressing proposals for new community gardens on Council land

Individuals and community groups interested in driving a community garden initiative should make contact with Council to access resources and preliminary advice. An important initial step will be for the group to explore options for temporary or ongoing use of private land. If use of public land is subsequently proposed, the community group will be asked to participate in a collaborative process with Council (see below) to review and progress the proposal.



Discussion Questions

Question 9. Do you have any feedback about the process (outlined above) for progressing proposals for new community gardens on Council-managed land?

9. Building capacity and support for our local food system

There are many food growing and distribution activities underway in Boroondara and the majority are taking place independently of Council or with minimal support. The supplementary booklet 'A Snapshot of Local Food Growing and Sharing Initiatives' captures the diversity of current local food activities and opportunities.

As outlined in Sections 7 and 8, activities that impact on Council-managed land require Council, as well as community, input and support.

Over the last five years, Council has been actively fostering the growing and sharing of local food in several ways, including:

1. Running (very popular) 'how to' workshops (on veggie gardening, backyard chickens, composting / worm farming and beekeeping) as part of the Living for our Future sustainable living program.
2. Collaborating with the community to establish the Ashburton Community Garden (2009), the Winton Road Food Forest - Stage 1 (2012), and the Ashburton Shopping Centre salad planter boxes (2013).
3. Initiating 'Our Grub Hub' to encourage local cafes and food businesses to set up ongoing produce orders from stallholders at the Boroondara Farmers Market.
4. Providing access to grant funding (up to \$10,000) for suitable projects through the Community Strengthening Grants Program (Note: four of the eight recipients of a 2014 Sustainable Communities annual grant had establishment of a food garden as a key aspect of their project proposal).
5. Promoting community awareness of local 'food swaps' and emerging community resources (e.g. landsharing) and initiatives (e.g. Kew Fruit Squad).

There may be other innovative and cost effective ways that Council could facilitate or support our emerging local food system. Feedback received from the community or other stakeholders will help clarify the relative priority of various options.

Discussion Questions

Question 10: Which types of Council support do you think are most valuable?

Question 11: Keeping in mind that Council's budget and staff are limited, what other ways do you suggest that Council could help support the growing and sharing of local food?

Have you considered being a food gardening mentor?

Do you have knowledge or skills relevant to establishing and maintaining a food garden? If so, might you be interested in volunteering to mentor community groups or individuals that are new to growing food? Please contact the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre, phone: 9278 4550 to find out more.

10. How to ‘have your say’

We want to know what you think about growing and sharing local food in Boroondara. Now that you have read through the discussion paper, take the next step in our discussion. You can get involved through a variety of discussion channels. Choose the method(s) that suit you best.

Online

1. **Complete the online survey** via <http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/your-say>

Through this survey, you will have the opportunity to tell us about your interests and priorities for growing and sharing local food in Boroondara.

2. **Participate in discussion on the Boroondara Facebook page**

We will pose questions for you to contemplate. Post your comments and photos and read the views of others in the community.

Visit the ‘Have Your Say’ webpage on the Council website for information and links to the online survey and Facebook page.

In writing

3. Write to Council with your responses to (any or all of) the questions posed throughout this discussion paper. For clarity, please include each question you are answering as part of your submission.

Written submissions can be: emailed to localfood@boroondara.vic.gov.au; mailed to ‘Local food discussion’, 8 Inglesby Road, Camberwell, VIC, 3124 or dropped off at the Camberwell Customer Service Desk.

Face to face

4. We would love to meet you! Drop in on Council officers at the Boroondara Farmers Market from 9am to 11am on Saturday 20 June to have a chat.

Community consultation is open until 30 June 2015, so please ‘have your say’ by then.

For further information, contact Andrea Lomdahl by calling 9278 4011 or by email localfood@boroondara.vic.gov.au