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Executive Summary

THE DAREBIN COUNCIL PLAN RECOGNISES THE POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION TO BRING POSITIVE BENEFITS TO THE SOCIAL, BUILT, NATURAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.


The purpose of the Strategy is to outline how Council can guide and support the food growing and preparation culture which already exists in Darebin to result in a greater capacity across the community to make healthy and sustainable food choices. Darebin faces significant nutrition related health challenges with some segments of the community having difficulty accessing fresh food. Key assets supporting the strategy include Darebin’s rich cultural diversity, a significant number of communal food growing sites and a growing number of food outlets interested in sourcing local, seasonal food. The Strategy describes how Council and the community will work together on local food initiatives which enhance health, wellbeing and community connectedness, improve the environment and regenerate natural resources.
STRATEGY VISION:
LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS WHICH ARE SECURE, HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR.

Local government is well placed to promote, facilitate and advocate for urban food production and can direct action to improving access for disadvantaged groups. Council recognises it is not able to directly address the systemic issues underlying the contribution of conventional food systems to the poor nutrition related health indicators and negative environmental impact of urban areas. An integrated response is called for to deliver better and more resilient food production models. This requires Council to form innovative partnerships with the community, local business, professional stakeholders and all levels of government.

The Strategy has identified four key actions areas from the consultation undertaken as well as from research into urban food production approaches and opportunities in a local government context. These are:

1. HOME FOOD GROWING
Identified as a priority action area, Council will continue the successful promotion of home food growing through education programs. This includes whole-of-community capacity building as well as targeting disadvantaged communities whose need for the social and health benefits provided by home grown food is greatest. Home food growing will be integrated with other community development and planning initiatives to create more liveable, interconnected and safer neighbourhoods.

2. COMMUNITY GARDENS
Council will support productive community gardens which maximise the social and environmental benefits to the community. Council also commits to looking for opportunities to partner with schools and the Aboriginal community to strengthen the communal gardening network. A guideline has been developed in parallel with this Strategy to enable potential communal food growing sites to be assessed comprehensively and equitably.

3. OTHER URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION MODELS
Council commits to supporting a wide range of local food system initiatives which engage a diverse demographic, have a strong educational component and deliver benefits to communities with the greatest need. Council will demonstrate leadership by developing an internal sustainable catering policy. A focus on partnerships which link local food with the sustainable business community and the arts is identified as a way of broadening community participation.

4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PLANNING FOR URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION
The Strategy recognises that planning and infrastructure are critical areas which impact on the priority and support which can be given to urban food production initiatives. Council will advocate to State government for strong policy direction to incorporate urban food production into planning decisions. Relevant food production policy will also be integrated into the Darebin Planning Scheme (MSS) and local planning policies. Projects which demonstrate the integration of food growing, waste and water management into urban renewal projects will be supported to showcase how urban food production can be implemented more broadly across the municipality.

An implementation plan that specifies priority areas and actions, timelines, resources required and responsibilities for delivery will be developed separately to the strategy by the end of 2014. Performance measures and indicators will be developed alongside and be included in the implementation plan.
Urban food production refers to the cultivation, processing and distribution of food in urban areas. The City of Darebin recognises the important role food plays in our lives and its impact on our community and environment. It is central to our health and wellbeing, social connectivity and cultural identity. Although a relatively new area, the Darebin community has demonstrated strong support for urban food production and sustainable food initiatives.

The potential for local food production to bring positive benefits to the social, built, natural and economic environment in the municipality has been recognised in the Council Plan. Council committed to developing an Urban Food Production Strategy in both the 2013 – 2017 Health and Wellbeing Plan and 2012 – 2020 Greenstreets Streetscape Strategy. The Strategy is designed to link closely with and complement the 2010 – 2014 Food Security Policy. Urban food production is one way to help improve access to reliable supplies of healthy food. The Food Security Policy covers Council’s role in addressing the other physical and social barriers to accessing food in Darebin.

Appendix 1 details the specific goals and strategies in the Council plan and the other key Council documents which support urban food production.

The policy implications of local food production are far reaching – many other existing Council policies and plans link with, reference and / or support urban food production as highlighted in Figure 1.

**PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**

The Urban Food Production Strategy recognises that food is central to Darebin’s culture and identity. It outlines how Council can guide and support the passion and skills for food growing and preparation demonstrated by many Darebin residents to increase the capacity of the community as a whole to make healthy and sustainable food choices.

While encouraging and supporting food growing in Darebin is an objective, this Strategy is not intended to determine how Darebin can become self-sufficient in fresh food. Rather it seeks to integrate a wide range of local food initiatives into our urban environment to help increase awareness of the links between food, health and living more sustainably.

The development of the Urban Food Production Strategy provides the opportunity to recognise our community’s desire for a thriving and resilient local food system. The Strategy describes how Council will work together over time with the Darebin community to realise a shared vision for urban food production which enhances health, well-being and community connectedness, and which respects the limits of our natural resources. It identifies what is currently within Council’s capacity and resources to achieve, as well as future aspirations. The Strategy provides a framework to inform Council decision making and prioritisation around the funding and resourcing of urban food production initiatives.
Figure 1 Darebin Council plans, policies and strategies which support urban food production

- **COUNCIL PLAN**
  - “Support food production for improved health, amenity, food security and to reduce environmental impacts.”

- **WASTE STRATEGY**
  - Achieve a sustained downward trend in the kg per person of household waste.

- **OPEN SPACE STRATEGY**
  - Consider innovative solutions to urban food growing which do not compromise the public’s access to open space.

- **GREEN STREETS STREETSCAPE STRATEGY**
  - Recognises urban food production as a key direction. Provide for edible plants in public landscapes.

- **COMMUNITY CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN**
  - Reduce emissions and build resilience by promoting locally produced in season foods over processed, packaged foods sourced from afar. Consider flexibility for localised economy, including food production, when reviewing local planning goals / policies.

- **GREEN FOREST STRATEGY**
  - “Increase tree coverage on public lands to at least 25% over 15 years.”

- **PLANNING**
  - eg. Reservoir Structure Plan
  - Used FSPUD* principles to incorporate space for food growing.

- **HEALTH AND WELL BEING PLAN**
  - “…promote food security, healthy eating and safe food provision…”
  - “facilitate community connections through food growing / preparation and diverse food cultures.”

- **MUNICIPAL STRATEGIC STATEMENT**
  - “Support food production for improved health, amenity, food security and to reduce environmental impacts.”

- **SUSTAINABLE WATER USE STRATEGY**
  - Holistically manage stormwater quality.

*FSPUD refers to Food Sensitive Planning and Urban design – a tool used to help consider opportunities for food growing / provision in planning and urban design processes.
Challenges and Opportunities

**Social Environment**

**CHALLENGES**

160,000
Population predicted to grow from 147,000 to over 160,000 by 2021.

10
Preston and Reservoir scored 10, the highest rating in a heatwave vulnerability study.¹

39th
In 2011 Darebin was ranked 39th out of 80 local government areas across Victoria in the Relative Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), and there is a growing gap in income levels within Darebin.

6.4%
of Darebin’s adult population have type 2 diabetes compared with the state average of 4.8%. The proportion of male and females in Darebin who are overweight is 41% and 24% respectively, compared with the Victorian average of 41% and 17%. Over 49% of people in Darebin did not meet the recommended intake for fruit and vegetables.

5.8%
of households surveyed in 2014 reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity.

**Natural Environment**

**CHALLENGES**

38%
of Darebin residential rubbish is food and green waste (which is similar to the Melbourne average of 40%)

**EXISTING ASSETS**

Community Gardens
15
Darebin has 41 sq metres of open space per person (compared with 34 sq metres in Yarra, 27sq metres in Stonnington and 43 sq metres in Moreland)

46%
of households surveyed in 2014 have a home fruit and / or vegetable garden.

1 in 3 Darebin residents born overseas providing a rich diversity of food cultures as well as a strong connection to food growing. Council’s annual Darebin Backyard Harvest and Homemade Food and Wine Festivals recognise and celebrate the diverse multicultural home food growing and preserving traditions in Darebin.

¹ Preston and Reservoir scored 10, the highest rating in a heatwave vulnerability study.
**Low Access**

Low access to fresh food in Preston West and Reservoir East relative to other Darebin areas due to low car ownership rates, poor public transport connections, and distance to supermarkets / green grocers greater than 750 metres (10 minutes walk).

**Existing Assets**

**60%**

Around 60% of Darebin residential stock consists of separate houses and therefore good scope for back and front yard gardening.

Access to a diverse range of fresh food at the Preston Market; plus local produce at the Preston, Thornbury and Bundoora Park farmers markets.

Significant increase in cycle paths contributing to high quality networks for cycling and walking.

**Built Environment**

**Economic Environment**

**Challenges**

During 2012 – 2013, emergency relief agencies reported an increase in numbers of Darebin residents running out of food and not being able to afford more.

**Existing Assets**

**3,022**

In 2012 Darebin’s 425 Food services / outlets employed 3,022, an increase of 55 services/outlets and 641 employees since 2009.

The partnership between Preston Market and SecondBite results in an average of more than 500kg fresh food donated to Darebin’s Emergency Food Relief network per week.

Reports of cafés in Darebin engaging in local food sharing, helping connect communities around local food.2
LOCAL CONTEXT

As the City of Darebin grows and develops there are both challenges and opportunities for urban food production. Some of the statistics which highlight these are presented on pages 6 and 7.

CHALLENGES INCLUDE POPULATION GROWTH LEADING TO RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION AND INCREASED DENSITY. THIS WILL MEAN LESS BACKYARD SPACE FOR GROWING FOOD IN THE FUTURE.

Darebin residents have relatively high nutrition related risk factors for disease. Urban design and development can address access to healthy affordable food. This includes provision for urban food production which can play an important role reducing the overconsumption of nutrient poor foods and improve diet related health issues.

Under Council guidance (as outlined in this strategy and the Food Security Policy), local food initiatives can be a route to addressing both the socio-economic inequality and food insecurity experienced by some Darebin residents.

Urban food production is an effective platform to drive awareness and behaviour change around reducing and recycling food waste and water. Reducing Darebin’s high levels of food waste to landfill, avoiding storm water damage and enhancing biodiversity are all outcomes which can be delivered through urban food growing. The contribution of fruit and other food trees to urban greening can help reduce the ‘urban heat island effect’ and high vulnerability of some Darebin areas to heatwaves.

Darebin Council has considerable assets to support urban food production. This includes both our culturally diverse food culture with strong connections to food growing and the relatively good supply of land for potential food growing sites, compared with other metropolitan municipalities. This provides the scope to support food production in concert with the other goals for a liveable city such as providing amenity, open space and greening through trees and parks.
BROADER CONTEXT

FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE KEY ISSUES FOR URBAN SUSTAINABILITY.

Melbourne, like other cities in the developed world, relies on a globalised food system which is largely controlled by private corporations and is highly dependent on non-renewable fossil fuels for fertilisers, farm machinery, transportation, refrigeration, storage, processing and packaging⁴.

Food production and consumption has been estimated to account for approximately 28% of Victoria’s ecological footprint, compared to services 22%, residential energy use 16%, goods 14%, and transport 10%⁵. The industrialised food system will be particularly vulnerable to ‘peak oil’ as supply becomes more uncertain and fuel costs rise⁶. We have already seen increased variability in food availability and costs and this is likely to continue. Conventional agriculture is facing increased competition for natural resources such as land and water and has been shown to cause significant damage to the land, soil and ecosystems on which it depends. Farms are getting larger, more intensified and specialised⁹. Higher costs and lower returns are impacting farm viability and contributing to rapidly declining numbers of farms and farmers, with over 70% of those remaining relying on off-farm income to make a living¹⁰.

Australia is fortunate to produce an abundance of good quality food. Australian farmers supply 98% of our fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, milk and eggs, and more than half of our agricultural produce is exported⁷. However producing enough food is only one aspect of a secure and resilient food system. Victorian food systems and security in Victoria face a range of challenges in the coming years. Not only is food production and distribution vulnerable to the increase in frequency and severity of extreme weather events associated with climate change, the conventional food system is itself a major contributor to the greenhouse gas emissions which contribute to a changing climate⁸. We have already seen increased variability in food availability and costs and this is likely to continue. Conventional agriculture is facing increased competition for natural resources such as land and water and has been shown to cause significant damage to the land, soil and ecosystems on which it depends. Farms are getting larger, more intensified and specialised⁹. Higher costs and lower returns are impacting farm viability and contributing to rapidly declining numbers of farms and farmers, with over 70% of those remaining depending on off-farm income to make a living¹⁰.
Another indicator that conventional food systems are failing us is that the food an increasing number of Australians are consuming is contributing to alarmingly high levels of disease\(^1\). In a country as highly urbanised as Australia (where 9 out of 10 people live in cities)\(^2\) many consumers are literally distant from their source of food, as well as in terms of knowledge and personal experience. This lack of food literacy has been linked with a poor diet and high levels of food waste due to a lack of understanding or appreciation of the resources that have gone into producing food\(^3\). The consumer is the end point of a system in which sectors are fragmented and operate sequentially – where agriculture is seen as separate from processing, distribution and consumption.

The fundamental systemic changes required to address these issues are outside the control of local governments. However Council can play a role in advocating to the State and Federal governments for legislative changes in health, planning, business and agriculture to create a fairer and more resilient food system for both Australian farmers and consumers.

There are positive signs Australia’s urban population is becoming increasingly interested in the origin, quality, freshness, nutrition and ethics of their food, as evidenced by the demand for local, seasonal food in homes, schools and food service outlets\(^4\). Supporting the establishment of local food systems is a practical and effective way for local government to help the urban population take more interest in, and have a stake in how cities are to be fed in the future.
How does urban food production fit into local food systems thinking?

Figure 2 Community Based Local Food Systems: Types and Benefits
LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS THINKING HAS EMERGED OUT OF THE LOCAL OR COMMUNITY BASED FOOD MOVEMENT AND IS BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION. IT IS FOCUSED ON INTEGRATING IN A HOLISTIC WAY THE FOOD SYSTEM SECTORS FROM ‘PADDOCK TO PLATE’ SO THAT THE SYNERGIES AND MUTUAL BENEFITS ARE MAXIMISED TO STRENGTHEN THE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE. THE OVERRIDING GOAL IS TO OPTIMISE BOTH PEOPLE AND ECOSYSTEM HEALTH.

This strategy is concerned with how Council can support urban food production as part of the creation of local food systems in Darebin as well as Melbourne more widely. This includes food grown and produced in Darebin and how this links with and impacts on food distribution, processing or preparation and consumption within the municipality.

The inner wheels of Figure 2 show the food system sectors (producing, processing, distribution, retailing, consumption and disposal) and the range of community based local food initiatives which link the sectors in different ways. The outer wheels show the multiple social, economic and environmental benefits that can flow from these activities.

The stronger the links between local food production, distribution and preparation, the greater the potential for a reliable, diverse and affordable source of local food which contributes to better health, well-being and environmental outcomes. For example a household that grows their own fresh food is more likely to understand that cultivation, preparation, consumption and disposal are strongly linked and therefore will likely have a deep appreciation of the seasonality and resources that have gone into the food they’ve grown. Their physical and mental health as well as social connectivity is being enhanced through the growing and sharing of food15.
Vision

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS WHICH ARE SECURE, HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR

Urban food production in Darebin:

- is diverse, innovative, and part of a thriving local food culture where growing and sourcing fresh food locally is the new norm
- celebrates diversity and multicultural food traditions
- facilitates equal access to sufficient safe and nutritious food for all, both now and into the future
- supports high levels of food literacy and healthy, ethical eating practices
- leads to positive environmental outcomes and the regeneration of natural resources
- is linked with local food businesses and enterprises and is part of a diverse local food economy
- is integral to healthy, connected and resilient communities
Assumptions and Guiding Principles

THE FOLLOWING ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION STRATEGY:

- Access to adequate nutritious and safe food is a basic human right.
- The vulnerability of current food systems to resource constraints (including peak oil) and climate change highlight the need for better food production models and a more resilient food supply.
- Local government is well placed to play a key role in promoting, facilitating and advocating for urban food production.
- Recognise and harness the wealth of existing skills and passion in the community to inspire wider participation in urban food production.
- The different demographics across the municipality call for different approaches to implementing urban food production. The range of foods produced and types of systems developed will need to be diverse and appropriate to the social and environmental context in which they operate.
- The goals and vision for urban food production set out in this strategy require an integrated response which calls for innovative partnerships with the community, local business, professional stakeholders and all levels of government.
- An evidence based approach will be used to ensure the strategy is guided by research and supporting information. Monitoring and evaluating the impacts and lessons learned from urban food production programs and initiatives is essential to increasing the knowledge and skills of both Council and the community in this relatively new and dynamic area.
COUNCIL RECOGNISES THAT THERE ARE KEY AREAS WHERE WE CAN MAKE THE BEST CONTRIBUTION TOWARD REALISING THE VISION FOR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS WHICH ARE SECURE, HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR.

However there are also many intersecting factors and issues that impact on the success of local food systems which are outside of Council’s direct responsibility or control. Businesses, the community, non-government organisations, academia and all levels of government must all play a part if we are to realise our vision for urban food production in Darebin.

Darebin Council commits to playing the following roles:

1. BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE COMMUNITY
Provide targeted programs that support the development of skills and inspire people to grow and prepare food locally. This includes whole-of-community capacity building to strengthen the urban food production network overall, as well as targeting disadvantaged communities whose need for the social and health benefits provided by these skills is greatest. Council will harness the existing skills and resources within the community to achieve this.

2. LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY
Demonstrate leadership through Council’s own activities which demonstrate support for local and sustainable food production. Advocate to the State and Federal governments for the appropriate legislative changes to create fairer and more resilient food systems, as well as for the support of urban food production as a legitimate land use in both State and Local Planning Provisions. Establish transparent and streamlined internal processes for evaluating and supporting a range of urban food production initiatives.

3. PLANNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATION
Manage our statutory responsibilities, service delivery, resources and infrastructure to support urban food production in ways which complement and enhance our ability to meet our other obligations (such as waste and water management, urban revegetation, provision of open space, increasing biodiversity, and providing safe and inviting communal spaces).

4. BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS
Partner with key stakeholders including community groups, community gardens, local businesses, sustainable food professionals and other levels of government to support diverse and innovative urban food production initiatives. Maximise opportunities to deliver the Strategy objectives in partnership with programs across Council which have complementary goals.

These roles provide the framework for how Council will support urban food production in four key action areas.
Key Action Areas

The community’s strong interest in sustainable local food systems has been recognised through the allocation of funding to develop and deliver a Sustainable Food Program in Darebin each year since 2009. Program content continues to evolve based on the issues and priorities identified at Sustainable Food Leader Forums held since 2010, as well as from feedback obtained during the program’s events and activities.

Four key action areas have been identified from the work Council has already undertaken as well as from research into urban food production approaches and opportunities in a local government context. These are:

1. Home Food Growing
2. Community Gardens
3. Other Urban Food Production Models
4. Integrated Approach to Planning for Urban Food Production
1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Private food gardens are one of the biggest opportunities for urban food production in Darebin. Darebin’s population is highly diverse, with 1 in 3 residents born overseas.

GARDENING AND FOOD TRADITIONS HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO DAREBIN FROM FIRST AND SECOND GENERATION MIGRANTS. THIS HAS HELPED ESTABLISH A STRONG CULTURE OF GROWING AND PRESERVING FOOD AT HOME.

Council’s annual Darebin Backyard Harvest (See case study page 19) and Homemade Food and Wine festivals successfully promote and celebrate this culture. The benefits of supporting and promoting home food production are:

- There is a high proportion of land suitable for growing food locked up in private residences in Darebin. Sixty per cent of Darebin dwellings are separate houses (although townhouses and apartments will make up a greater percentage in future as housing density increases). Private yards generally have good water and solar access, lower risk of soil contamination versus other urban land, ease of access and few security issues.

- It addresses perceived barriers to home food gardening, such as lack of time, space and knowledge and demonstrates that it can be an easy, convenient and low cost source of fresh food. Even those with limited space and / or renters can grow herbs and a few vegetables on a balcony or vertical garden on a wall.

- The increased fruit and vegetable intake reported by home gardeners as well as the mental and physical health benefits can contribute significantly to the overall health and wellbeing of the Darebin community.

- If awareness of home food growing is enhanced at the neighbourhood level this can help develop a strong sense of collective purpose around food growing so that it becomes the social norm. This in turn can increase the acceptance of and desire for local food systems on a Darebin-wide scale.
The popular annual Darebin Backyard Harvest Festival was established in partnership with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) in 2011. It has grown from 6 open gardens in 2011 to 14 open gardens and 5 workshops in 2013 when over 290 people attended. The festival has been successful in providing opportunities for the community to share food growing knowledge and skills across generations and cultures. Participant feedback indicates the home grown food message is believable and relatable coming from the gardeners themselves in their own backyards. More than 90 per cent of participants at the 2013 festival were from Darebin. The festival can help create a support network at the neighbourhood scale to collaborate and learn about home food growing beyond the festival itself.

“We went to three gardens. They were fabulous, and we have made some new gardening friends to share goods and swap recipes.”

“Open Garden 5... was the epitome of what the festival is all about – a cross-generational, cross-cultural sharing of gardening (and food preparation) skills.”

2013 Darebin Backyard Harvest Festival Participants
1.2 BACKYARD BEE AND CHICKEN/LIVESTOCK KEEPING

THERE IS A GROWING INTEREST IN KEEPING CHICKENS AND BEES IN URBAN BACKYARDS. COUNCIL SUPPORTS KEEPING CHICKENS ALONGSIDE COMPOSTING AND WORM FARMING AS PART OF HOME ORGANIC WASTE RECYCLING SYSTEMS.

Chickens turn the food waste they eat into both nutritious eggs and nitrogen rich manure which can be used as garden fertilizer. If managed well, chickens also control garden insect pests and improve soil health.

Council also recognises the importance of bees to our food systems. Worldwide, bees pollinate over a third of our food supply, and up to 65 per cent of Australia’s agricultural crops. Bee populations are in decline in many parts of the world. While Australia has not yet experienced a serious outbreak of bee pests or disease, the impact on commercial crops which rely on bee pollination could be devastating. Bee keeping in cities is a growing trend which apart from providing local honey can help educate urban populations on the critical links between bees and the life cycle of many of our food crops. Although the bulk of domestic bee keeping is based on the introduced honey bee, it is also possible to keep native bees. Providing a home for native bees in urban areas can help rebuild populations affected by urban development and support plant biodiversity.

It is important that urban chicken and bee keeping in Darebin complies with the relevant State and Local Government regulations (see ‘Regulations on Keeping Animals for Food’).
The numbers and conditions for keeping animals in Darebin are specified in the Domestic Animals Management Strategy 2009. These are enforced through the Local Laws process. Darebin’s Local Laws are based on State and Local Government regulations and are designed to protect and maintain residential amenity, public health and safety. Laws related to keeping animals are also concerned with promoting animal welfare.

Darebin’s Local Laws currently allow for up to 5 chickens (excluding roosters) per household without a permit.

A permit is required to keep bees. In addition, all bee hives must be registered with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) in accordance with the Livestock Disease Control Act. Management and planning requirements for bee keeping based on the Apiaries Code of Practice have been incorporated in the State Section of all planning schemes. If these requirements cannot be met, a town planning permit is also required to keep bees.

A permit is required to keep roosters, cattle, sheep, horses, goats, and pigs.

Permits can be applied for through Council’s Animal Management Unit. Applications may require at least 75% approval from neighbours before being assessed.

What are the regulations on keeping animals for food?
1.3 COUNCIL’S ROLE

COUNCIL’S SUSTAINABLE FOOD, SUSTAINABLE HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AND OTHER PROGRAMS HAVE IMPROVED THE COMMUNITY’S SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN HOME FOOD GROWING.

A range of resource materials have been developed to support this process. We will continue to provide information and free workshops on home food growing topics, including permaculture, vegetable gardening, composting, worm farms, backyard chickens, bee keeping and preserving home-grown food. The 2014 Community Leaders in Sustainability Course delivered by the Sustainable Homes and Communities program has further empowered community members to embark on local food growing projects as leaders.

Council led education and skill building in private food gardening will be framed within the requirements of the local laws and the Darebin Planning Scheme in relation to land-uses. Growing food at private residences for home consumption does not require a planning permit but should comply with the local laws regarding keeping the visual amenity of the neighbourhood. Council can provide advice, guidance and support on the planning permit requirements for other local food growing activities on private land.

Council aims to maximise the potential benefits by integrating home food growing education programs with other community development and planning initiatives designed to create more liveable, interconnected and safer neighbourhoods. This includes programs which help elderly community members start or continue food gardening as well as preserving the knowledge and skills of older food gardeners for future generations. Council will also develop home food growing programs which target renters and those from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly newly arrived migrants and refugees.
Actions

- Continue to develop and implement resources and programs to inspire and support and address perceived barriers to home food gardening across different sectors of the community.

- Continue to review and develop the Backyard Harvest Festival program to empower and inspire home food gardeners across different cultures, generations and demographics. Further develop links with the Homemade Food and Wine Festival to support and celebrate multicultural home food preserving and preparation traditions as part of Darebin’s thriving local food culture.

- Explore partnerships between Council departments and / or with external agencies to deliver home food growing, preserving and preparation initiatives as part of an integrated approach to creating resilient and connected communities.

- Continue to support the community in understanding State and Local government regulations relating to urban food production. Review and identify appropriate updates to the relevant Local Laws to reduce unnecessary impediments to home food gardening as part of the Local Laws 2015 review.
2.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Community gardens are the most common communal food growing initiative in Darebin. Council has supported the establishment of a number of community gardens on Council land. These include the Northcote Library Food Garden, the East Reservoir Community Garden, Bundoora Park Community Garden and SPAN Community Garden in Thornbury.

Community gardens involve the collective gardening of a single piece of land by a community group on a not-for-profit basis producing food primarily for the consumption of the gardeners. Community gardens can be established on privately owned land or on land owned and/or managed by Council.

Council has identified 15 community gardens in Darebin as shown on the map accessed through the link in Appendix 3. These vary in size, access and governance/operating models. The most common types of community gardens include:

- A collection of garden allotments, each tended individually by community members and their families
- The entire garden space cultivated and managed collectively
- A mixture of allotment and collective gardening
- Gardens established to support programs run by community agencies or centres for select groups of disadvantaged community members
- School gardens where the school community partners with local residents to manage the garden
- Gardens designed to be short term or temporary on land designated for other uses in the future

There are many more school kitchen gardens not open to the general community and shared food gardens on public housing estates used specifically by residents of those estates. These generally receive State or Federal government funding and support.

Verge or naturestrip gardens and street trees are covered separately under the 2012–2020 Green Streets Streetscape Strategy. The selection, planting and maintenance of street trees is the responsibility of Council in consultation with the community. As a general rule, fruit or nut trees are not suitable street trees due to the high maintenance requirements and the potential public health and safety risks from fallen fruit and nuts.

There are a number of other existing public food growing sites in addition to the community gardens listed on the map in Appendix 3. For example there is an orchard and a bush foods garden at Coopers Settlement in Bundoora Park. Council has also included edibles in some of its pocket park upgrades which the local community have been encouraged to help harvest and maintain. Wherever feasible, the community will be encouraged to make use of existing urban food growing sites and resources.
At present there is no simple or clearly defined method for assessing whether the level of soil contamination on a potential food growing site poses a risk to human health, or guidelines to manage the issue for different kinds and levels of contamination. Council recognises that engaging soil engineering specialists for advice is beyond most community groups due to the costs involved. This is a potential barrier to increasing community gardens in Darebin. Council is involved in a contaminated soils working group consisting of representatives from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Not-for-profits CERES and Cultivating Community, community garden groups, and other councils.

However a thriving community garden offers many benefits to the community and fulfils a number of Council’s environmental and social objectives. The benefits include: healthy food, exercise, improved mental health, social interaction and connectivity, mentoring and skill building. Community gardens can be a focal point for diverse members of the community to come together and share their food cultivation and preparation skills.

It is Council’s policy that community gardens are managed and implemented by the community. Community garden groups have the most chance for long term success when they form strong partnerships with sponsoring agencies and other organisations and have diversified funding streams.

A note on Soil Contamination

At present there is no simple or clearly defined method for assessing whether the level of soil contamination on a potential food growing site poses a risk to human health, or guidelines to manage the issue for different kinds and levels of contamination. Council recognises that engaging soil engineering specialists for advice is beyond most community groups due to the costs involved. This is a potential barrier to increasing community gardens in Darebin. Council is involved in a contaminated soils working group consisting of representatives from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), Not-for-profits CERES and Cultivating Community, community garden groups, and other councils.

The aim is to develop a Growing Food in Urban Soils guideline which is endorsed by the Victorian Department of Health and the EPA. Council will consider supporting funding applications to the state government or other sources to progress the work, recognising it could take a year or more. To reduce contamination risk, food on Council land is generally grown in raised garden beds filled with clean soil from a trusted source. See the resources section of www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au for tips on food gardening in raised beds.
In the case of community gardens on Council land, there are key conditions which need to be met to ensure the needs of all stakeholders are taken into account. A licence agreement will outline the general terms of use for growing food on Council land. In addition, Council will work with the community garden group to establish the detailed terms of the relationship on a site specific basis. This can be done in one of two ways:

a. either set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between Council and the garden group or

b. the garden group could be auspiced by a community centre or neighbourhood house with whom Council has a formal agreement.

Some of the areas covered by such agreements include:

- Map of the site including major features and infrastructure
- Gardeners’ responsibilities, which include managing the garden to maintain the safety and health of the community and to be inclusive of the community
- Council’s responsibilities, including undertaking general maintenance of garden infrastructure
- Insurance and risk management
- Governance and legal structure, including whether the group is to be incorporated
- Dispute resolution process
- Terms of the agreement
- Other items as mutually agreed

It is Council’s policy to waive rent / fees for community food growing on Council land on the understanding these sites are run by volunteers on a not-for-profit basis for the benefit of the community.

**CASE STUDY**

**Northcote Library Food Garden**

The Northcote Library Food Garden was established next to the Northcote Library in 2011. The site is highly visible and accessible from Separation Street and adjacent to dwellings with small or no private garden space. These features have helped the Northcote Library Food Garden work successfully as a gardening space which is open to everyone and is cultivated communally in raised garden beds. This shared cultivation fosters community connectedness around the production of healthy organic food. The group managing the garden have become an incorporated association and consist of many members who were involved in the planning and design from the garden’s inception in 2011. This has fostered a high degree of ownership and independence. At the same time Council has maintained a close partnership with the group, supporting them to hold workshops, activities and events to support and educate the local community in sustainable food and gardening practices.

The terms of the relationship including the rights and responsibilities of both parties have been documented in a Memorandum of Understanding, which can be viewed at [www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au](http://www.darebinfoodharvestnetwork.org.au) under Resources – Community Gardens.
2.3 COUNCIL’S ROLE

The role that Council will play in supporting an established community garden will vary according to whether it is located on private or public land, how it is funded and its governance structure. Council commits to providing the following general services to all community garden groups:

- Make community gardening guidelines and other supporting documents readily available and provide general advice on community garden management.
- Provide opportunities to network with other community garden groups and sustainable food leaders to share skills and knowledge.
- Promote the community garden and its activities on Council websites and through its sustainability networks.
- Assist garden groups in connecting with agencies, local organisations and businesses to provide opportunities for forming mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Support to establish recycling, worm farms and composting facilities. Worm farm/compost bins will be supplied free of charge to community garden groups who are committed to ongoing organic waste management. In return they are required to hold composting/worm farming workshops for their local community and advertise Council’s worm farm/composting programs.
- Community garden groups are entitled to access the City of Darebin Community Grants program, regardless of whether they are based on public or private land. Funding for community gardens is contingent upon budget constraints and demand. Council will also share information on other funding and fundraising opportunities as they arise.
- Provided community garden groups have demonstrated they are committed to managing their garden, including responsible resource use, Council can provide one-off assistance on an as needs basis with mulch, plants and water during exceptionally dry periods.

Through the 2012 – 2020 Green Streets Streetscape Strategy, Council has already committed to increasing the prevalence of community gardens and creating opportunities for community gardens on public land.

Council worked with Transition Darebin and the Sustainable Food Leaders forum in 2013 to develop a map of potential food production sites in Darebin on Council or other public land and private land. These are shown on the map accessed through the link in Appendix 3.

The mapping exercise identified that there are a range of considerations which impact the suitability of potential food garden sites. Consultation with a broad range of stakeholders is required to ensure all potential issues have been addressed before a community garden or other food growing site can be initiated. Council recognised it was important to develop a consultation and assessment process which deals with any questions or concerns comprehensively and equitably. The Darebin Communal Food Garden (Community Garden) Assessment Guidelines outline the steps involved for both Community members and Council staff to
assess a potential urban food growing site. For the City of Darebin to consider supporting urban food growing (including new community gardens) on Council owned or managed land, applicants will need to address the site selection criteria outlined in these guidelines.

There is potential for the many school kitchen gardens and public housing estate food gardens in Darebin to share knowledge and collaborate with other community gardens and home food gardeners. This would help foster intercultural and cross-generational food growing networks and mentoring opportunities more broadly in the Darebin community.

Council recognises the strong connection the Aboriginal community have with the land. Incorporating indigenous food planting examples and techniques in communal food gardening sites celebrates this connection and knowledge. Additionally it reinforces connection with the ecosystems and seasonal cycles that produce food.

Communal food growing need not be segregated from other types of urban greening. This could be initiated by Council or members of the community. The same general site selection criteria outlined in the Darebin Communal Food Garden Assessment Guidelines would apply, including: avoiding natural conservation areas; not impacting on other land uses and taking into account potential soil contamination issues. Council will also continue to support planting food producing trees on suitable sites where there is strong community support for harvesting and maintenance. An example is the 2014 All Nations Food Forest project in All Nations Park, Northcote.

**Actions**

- Develop site assessment form and community consultation guideline / report template to support communal food garden applications on Council land.
- Develop a licence agreement template for community gardens.
- Promote and make the communal food garden assessment process, forms and licence agreement templates available on-line.
- Look for opportunities to collaborate with schools and public housing tenant groups on urban food production projects, including mentoring programs.
- Consult with the Aboriginal community regarding opportunities and concepts for growing indigenous foods.
3.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Council recognises that Community Gardens are only one of a whole range of possible food production models. Urban food production has the potential to realise multiple social, economic and environmental benefits when collaborative partnerships are formed to link production with local distribution, waste and recycling, and community development initiatives. The piloting of innovative urban food production models which engage a diverse demographic and have a strong educational component can help speed the diffusion of a local food growing culture.

3.2 COUNCIL’S ROLE

Council is open to considering support for a wide range of local food system models where community need and benefit can be demonstrated. Examples of local food initiatives which Council is either already supporting or would consider supporting in the future include:

- **Food Forests:** Darebin Council is establishing the All Nations Food Forest in 2014, a publically accessible food growing space which is also designed to be a place where the community can share food production ideas, learn new skills and trial new species. A food forest site has been included in the Bundoora Park Master Plan. Food Forests can also be a low maintenance, highly productive feature of community gardens.

- **City Farms:** CERES (Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies) in the City of Moreland not only grows and sells significant quantities of food using the latest sustainable urban agriculture techniques, but is a demonstration and education hub for sustainable living.
- **Roof Top Gardens / Farms:** Growing food on roofs is a growing trend in land scarce cities like New York. Roofs can be underutilised spaces with less use conflict issues than land. Roof Top gardens can also contribute to Council’s Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD) Goals by reducing the ‘urban heat island effect’, providing insulation and reducing stormwater runoff damage.

- **Food and Labour Share Programs:** This can range from a simple food swaps involving the sharing of excess home grown and preserved foods through to formal programs which harness local volunteer labour and excess produce (See Fruit Squad case study Page 32).

- **Community Food Enterprises:** These can be not-for-profits or businesses who partner with local community groups to benefit the community through the provision of locally grown / sourced affordable healthy food. An example in Darebin is the SPROUT Community market in Thornbury, which is part of the community garden program of Mind Australia.

Food Hubs, Community Supported Agriculture Programs, Food Cooperatives, Direct Delivery Schemes and Farmers Markets are all examples of community based food distribution which aims to connect consumers more directly with local farmers. ‘Local’ in this case generally refers to farms in areas outside of Darebin (in outer municipalities and regional Victoria). These initiatives are considered important for connecting our local food systems with the greater regional food network. Council will support these activities through promotion on its websites (including the Darebin Food Harvest Network website) and other publications both internally and to the community. Council is a significant procurer of catering from local food businesses, so there is an opportunity to influence those businesses toward sourcing ethically produced, seasonal and local food.

There are opportunities to creatively link local food initiatives with arts and cultural activities in Darebin. Food growing sites which incorporate art features help make them inviting communal spaces. Local food or community gardening groups could host or participate in Darebin arts or music festivals, helping create connections more broadly across communities and between generations through the combined mediums of food and art.
The Fruit Squad is a Darebin based community fruit harvesting project. It was created through a partnership between Transition Darebin and Jika Jika Community Centre that has been strengthened by funding and support from Darebin Council. Trained volunteers harvest surplus fruit from local fruit trees in private yards and public spaces. The fruit is redistributed to agencies like SecondBite who supply it to people in need. In return for surplus fruit, the Fruit Squad offer basic fruit tree maintenance.

The Fruit Squad is an innovative local food distribution model which makes use of an existing source of local, fresh fruit that is going to waste – much of this is found in backyards in orchard stock planted by previous generations. Volunteers not only assist in the practicalities of harvesting and collecting fruit but can also help with social connections and capacity building by enabling skill share between householders and volunteers, and supporting aged or disabled people to maintain their fruit trees. The result is an increased awareness of and value in Darebin’s fruit tree stock, preserving this valuable source of local food for future generations.
Darebin Food Harvest Network

Council created the **Darebin Food Harvest Network website** for community groups and individuals involved in or interested in sustainable food initiatives and food security. Council signs up members who can then post news, resources and events on the site. It is designed to work in conjunction with the biannual Sustainable Food Leaders Forum to enable community members and Council to collaborate strategically and connect to share experiences and ideas on sustainable food and food security initiatives and projects.

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**Actions**

- Provide opportunities for Darebin’s sustainable food network to learn from innovative urban food production projects and leading sustainable food businesses to inspire ideas and collaboration.
- Create an internal forum and process for relevant Council areas to consider and develop innovative urban food production proposals.
- Explore options for recognising and rewarding community food enterprises, for example as an extension of the ‘Greening our Business’ program.
- Identify innovative local food projects to promote as catalysts for the more widespread adoption of urban food production.
- Develop an internal sustainable catering policy which includes encouraging orders from vendors who source ethically produced, seasonal and local food. Share and promote the policy with other organisations.
- Look for opportunities to broaden community participation and connectedness by including local food growing groups and activities in Darebin arts festivals such as the True North Reservoir Arts Festival.
Integrated Approach to Planning for Urban Food Production

4.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT
COUNCIL RECOGNISES THAT PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ARE CRITICAL AREAS WHICH IMPACT ON THE PRIORITY AND SUPPORT WHICH CAN BE GIVEN TO URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION INITIATIVES.

The State Planning Policy Framework seeks to ‘ensure that the objectives of planning in Victoria (as set out in Section 4 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987) are fostered through appropriate land use and development planning policies and practices which integrate relevant environmental, social and economic factors in the interests of net community benefit and sustainable development.’ However neither the Planning and Environment Act nor the State Planning Policy Framework explicitly recognises planning for food. This would allow for far greater consideration to urban food production initiatives as part of weighing up the net community benefit of any development and urban design.

4.2 COUNCIL’S ROLE
Council will advocate for strong policy direction for incorporating urban food production into planning decisions. This includes as part of the 2014 Planning Policy Framework Review.

The Reservoir Structure Plan demonstrates that Council is already committed to including provision for food growing opportunities into its local planning processes. The plan was developed over three years from 2009 – 2012 with considerable input from stakeholders and the community. Reservoir’s strong links to food production and the desire for sustainable local living were key themes that emerged. The vision of a new ‘Food Park’ for the ‘Central Heart’ Precinct which proposes to integrate community gardens along with food trees and herb gardens therefore became an important feature of the Plan and one of a number of food production related actions. This work has been informed by the principles of Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design. The Reservoir Structure Plan illustrates a model which can be applied to other proposed structure plans and urban renewal projects such as the Northland Urban Renewal Precinct and Oakover Village.
Council will also seek opportunities to integrate urban food production with water and waste recycling initiatives. Council is already demonstrating this at the household level by providing resources and education on recycling water and food and garden waste through water tanks, composting and worm farms as part of a sustainable approach to gardening. There are also opportunities to use community food gardens on Council land as demonstration sites for larger scale integration of food growing with rain water harvesting and efficient water use. They could also be a hub for food and organic waste recycling through neighbourhood composting and worm farming schemes.

**Actions**

- Advocate to have urban food production recognised in the State Planning Policy Framework so it can be integrated in the Metropolitan Planning Strategy and VCAT decisions.
- Integrate relevant food production policy into the Darebin Planning Scheme (MSS) and local planning policies by referencing the Food Security Policy and Urban Food Production Strategy.
- Apply principles of Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design to future Structure Plans and urban renewal projects such as the Northland Urban Renewal Precinct.
- Progress the food production elements as part of the implementation of the Reservoir Structure Plan, such as the ‘Food Park’ food growing project.
- Explore opportunities to develop urban food production sites on Council land as demonstration sites for integrated food growing, water and waste management.
- As part of the Food Security Policy review in 2014, ensure the vision, approach and actions of the Food Security Policy and Urban Food Production Strategy are aligned and integrated.
Implementation and Evaluation

This strategy will be implemented through a separate implementation plan which specifies priority areas and actions, timelines, resources required and responsibilities for delivery. Input will be sought from residents and expert stakeholders at Sustainable Food Leaders forums, as well as from Council staff to develop the plan by the end of 2014. An ongoing working group will be formed to guide the implementation plan and ensure the strategy commitments are delivered. Departments across Council will be responsible for implementing particular aspects of the strategy.

The effectiveness of the Urban Food Production Strategy will be evaluated by:

- achieving the actions set out in the implementation plan and,
- demonstrating that these actions have led to the outcomes sought under the Vision for the strategy.

Performance measures / indicators for the strategy will be developed alongside and will be included in the implementation plan.

Glossary

Peak Oil: The International Energy Agency has reported that global (conventional) oil production peaked in 2006 and that the increasing cost (energy and financial) of oil extraction means that we are passing from an era of abundant cheap energy to one of increasingly uncertain supply and rising costs as demand continues to rise. The impact on world economies and markets will be significant.

Food Security: Described as the ability of individuals, households and communities to obtain nutritious, affordable, culturally acceptable and safe foods reliably without the need to resort to emergency relief. It is achieved when there is adequate food available (food supply) and people have the necessary skills and resources to acquire and use that food (food access).

Local Food System: A ‘food system’ consists of the components and processes involved in providing people with food, including growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, storage, distribution, consumption and disposal. A local or community based food system is one in which these processes are integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place or location.

Sustainable Food: Food grown/produced and distributed in a manner that respects the limits of natural resources. It is food which is both better for the environment and better for people. In an urban local government context, sustainable food involves locally grown food and local food systems which are based on principles of environmental stewardship, social justice and community development.

Ecological Footprint: A holistic measure of the total impact of a lifestyle expressed in land area. It includes energy consumption, water use, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and other impacts.

Ecosystem: An ecosystem is a dynamic complex of plant, animal, and microorganism communities and the nonliving environment, interacting as a functional unit. Food is one of the many ‘services’ ecosystems provide.
Food Forest: A small-scale, intensive food production system consisting of fruit and nut trees with a layered understory of perennial grasses, plants and woody shrubs. All plants work together to help stabilise and repair the soil and keep weeds out, reducing the need for maintenance.

City Farms: Large demonstration sites which educate residents, businesses, schools about living sustainably and combatting climate change. They vary in their set-up and operation but usually offer interactive events and courses on organic gardening, urban animal farming, waste reduction and management, and water and energy conservation.

Roof Top Gardens / Farms: Roof top farms involve cultivating food on the roof of a building, and are a specialised form of what is often referred to as a ‘green roof’. Roof top farming can supply the building occupants and local community with fresh produce and promotes small-scale local agriculture as well as a tangible connection to the food source. Roof top farming is most common in urban areas, where ground-level agricultural opportunities are scarce. Roof Top Farms can also absorb solar radiation reducing the ‘urban heat island effect’, insulate and cool the host building (reducing energy use), and manage stormwater by delaying and reducing the hazards of rainfall runoff.

Community Food Enterprise: Organisation that works in partnership with local residents, family farmers / city farms, and community-based businesses to improve the social (health, connectedness) and economic assets of disadvantaged communities.

Community Supported Agriculture: A system where consumers pay in advance for a regular box of vegetables or other farm products from a farmer directly. Consumers share the risks of production with producers for mutually beneficial outcomes - farmers are guaranteed that their crops will be purchased while consumers receive produce often at a discounted price from a trustworthy source.

Food Cooperative: A group of urban consumers who work together to source and bulk buy local produce which is typically organic or otherwise chosen based on environment or social credentials.

Direct Delivery Scheme: An organisation which sources fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables and other groceries, typically organic, from local farmers and artisans and delivers them direct to households or designated suburban pick-up points. The objective is to pay farmers a fair price as well as supply urban consumers with cost effective organic produce.

Farmers Markets: The Victorian Farmers’ Markets Association defines an authentic farmers’ market as a predominantly local fresh food and produce market that operates regularly at a public location. It provides a suitable environment for farmers and food producers to sell their farm origin product and their associated value added primary products directly to customers.

Food and Labour Share Programs: Community led programs based on the mutual exchange of fresh food and labour and which foster the sharing of food and community connections / networks.

Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design: A manual developed by the Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab (VEIL) at Melbourne University and the Australian Heart Foundation which provides principles, tools and case studies to help incorporate local food provision into planning and urban design.

Food Hubs: Australian Food Hubs Network describe food hubs as centres which work directly with farmers to assist in the marketing and distribution of their products, making it easier for local businesses and communities to access fresh local food.
The following Council plans and policies directly support urban food production in Darebin:

- The Urban Food Production Strategy directly supports commitments made in the Council Plan 2013 – 2017:
  Sustainable and Resilient Neighbourhood Goal: the local food production strategy commits to ‘encourage and support local food production to improve health, amenity, food security and reduce environmental impacts’.

- The 2013 – 2017 Health and Well-Being Plan includes the objective:
  ‘promote and embed health and wellbeing principles in all strategic planning and urban design policies’. A priority action to achieve this is to coordinate and advocate for the consideration and inclusion of public open spaces with trees, plantings and provision for food growing as part of new housing developments.

  The plan also aims to promote food security, healthy eating and safe food provision for all Darebin people. This will be achieved by:
  - Continuing to implement and monitor Darebin’s Food Security Policy and develop an Urban Food Production Strategy
  - Leveraging food growing, preparation and diverse food cultures to facilitate community connections and understanding.

- The 2012 – 2020 GreenStreets Streetscape Strategy includes Key Direction 4 – Urban Food Production:
  Where possible, Council will include edible plants in public landscapes, including community gardens and urban orchards.

  Council will provide increased opportunities for urban food production on public land through increased community gardens and other opportunities to grow edible plant materials in the municipality’s parks and residential streets. A strategy guiding the location, type and proliferation of community gardens should guide this initiative.

  Actions:
  - Create and implement an urban food production strategy
  - Increase the prevalence of community gardens in the City of Darebin
  - Create the opportunity for one community garden on public land each year until 2020

- The 2010 – 2014 Food Security Policy:
  Commits council to planning for better access to sustainable local food supplies by ‘encouraging urban food production i.e. incorporating communal food growing areas in new developments, private backyard gardens, and food growing in public spaces including Council owned land, crown land, neighbourhood houses and housing estates.’

  Another Food Security Policy goal is to increase community capacity to practice growing food sustainably and share food growing knowledge across generations and cultures.
APPENDIX 2

The consultation process for the four year Urban Food Production Strategy involved both open consultation as well as targeted consultation forums. This included residents, expert stakeholders and Council staff, recognising the existing wealth of experience in this area within the community. The outcomes of these many sessions were documented, analysed and incorporated into the final strategy.

Targeted Stakeholder Consultation Dec 2013 – July 2014

The Sustainable Food Leaders network consists of community groups and residents interested in and/or involved in sustainable local food systems in Darebin. The themes emerging from Sustainable Food Leaders forums held since 2010 have informed the vision and key action areas in this strategy. In December 2013, forum participants provided input on the Strategy’s scope, objectives and action areas. Feedback on the draft Strategy was obtained through focus group discussions at the June 2014 Sustainable Food Leaders forum.

Internal Consultation April – May 2014

The following internal Council teams and officers provided input to the draft Strategy:

- Coordinator Public Realm
- Manager Assets and Property
- Coordinator Strategic Planning
- Principal Strategic Planner
- Coordinator Statutory Planning
- Senior Planning Investigation Officer
- Coordinator Business Development
- Manager Parks and Vegetation
- Senior Local Laws Investigation Officer
- Team Leader Community Health and Wellbeing
- Community Planner
- Coordinator Coopers Settlement
- Coordinator Environmental Strategy
- Coordinator Water and Waste Strategy
- Coordinator Sustainable Communities
- Strategic Risk and Insurance Advisor
- Aboriginal Affairs Officer
- Coordinator Procurement and Contracting

External Consultation May – July 2014

The following Council advisory committees, reference groups and community groups were consulted to develop the content of the draft Strategy:

- Darebin Environmental Reference Group (DERG)
- Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC)
- Darebin Disability Advisory Committee
- Darebin Active and Healthy Aging Board
- Darebin Women’s Advisory Committee
- Darebin Health Steering Committee
- Darebin Sexuality, Sex and Gender Diversity Advisory Committee
- Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Local Community Groups and Neighbourhood Houses

The draft Strategy was made available on line. The general community and Sustainability News Subscribers were invited to comment over 4 weeks in June/July 2014. In addition a facilitated public consultation session was held on July 2nd, 2014.
The following link is to the Darebin Food Gardens map which shows existing and potential sites identified in consultation with internal Council departments and the community.


FOOTNOTES

1 Loughnan ME, Tapper NJ, Phan T, Lynch K, McInnes JA 2013, A special vulnerability analysis of urban populations during extreme heat events in Australian capital cities, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast.


3 Economic Assessment of the Urban Heat Island Effect, commissioned by the City of Melbourne 2012. Urbanisation has radically transformed environments from native vegetation or farmland to largely built-up areas. The thermal storage capacity and the thermal profile of urban areas are now dramatically different from adjacent non-urban areas. This is known as the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect. Local and international studies have found that the UHI effect can add between 1°C to 6°C to the ambient air temperature.

4 Nordahl D 2009, Public Produce: The New Urban Agriculture. An estimated 10 calories in energy from fossil fuel is required to produce just one calorie of food in the USA. Similar conversion rates apply in other developed countries such as Australia.


6 Victorian Food Supply Scenarios: Impacts on Availability of a Nutritious Diet. K Larsen, Dr G Turner, Prof C Ryan, Prof M Lawrence, 2011

7 Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/food

8 Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab (VEIL) 2008, Sustainable and Secure Food Systems for Victoria: What do we know? What do we need to know? Agriculture has been calculated to account for at least 23% of Australia’s greenhouse emissions, and up to 30% when the higher warming potential of methane is accounted for. The emissions from downstream stages in the food supply chain (processing, distribution, packaging, storage, waste) add significantly to this figure.

9 Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab (VEIL) 2008, Sustainable and Secure Food Systems for Victoria: What do we know? What do we need to know? Conventional agriculture has been linked to soil degradation and loss and reduced soil biodiversity leading to a loss of arable land. Overfishing has led to depletion of stocks and damage to marine ecosystems.


12 The World Bank 2013, Urban Population (% of Total)


16 The Australian Institute 2014, Grow Your Own – The Potential Value and Impacts of Residential and Community Food Gardening. Home food gardeners report consuming a greater variety, volume and frequency of fresh food as well as increased cooking and preserving knowledge. The exercise and stress relief associated with gardening is also a key motivator.

