

Application Guidelines for Community Gardens

The City of South Perth is committed to supporting the establishment of community gardens by community groups on City owned or managed land. The City has adopted Policy P113 and the following procedures for assessing and approving the establishment of community gardens.

What is a community garden?

Under policy P113, a community garden is defined as a garden that:

- Is on City-owned and/or managed land, including, but not limited to, Public Open Space (POS); and
- Is managed by a community group that is a not-for-profit organisation; and
- Involves the participation of the wider community and/or a specific community (e.g. retirement village) in the day to day operation of the garden; and
- Encourages the involvement of local residents and community groups; and
- Has a primary activity of growing fruit, vegetables and herbs, for the personal or shared use of its members.

The City aims to promote and encourage the multiple outcomes of community gardens including recreational activities, community development, education and events, and to recognise the value of community gardens as a public amenity.

Application process

To assess whether community garden projects are suitable to be established on City land, an application process has been adopted.

If you are proposing to start a new community garden it is recommended that you meet with the relevant officer from the Community Culture and Recreation department at an early stage to discuss the project, including a preferred proposed site and at least two alternatives, proposed make up and leadership of the community garden group, and the process to start the garden, including potential funding sources and development application requirements.

Once you have collated all the required information and completed preliminary planning for the garden, the “Application for In-Principle Approval to Establish a Community Garden” form is required to be submitted to the City for approval.

Applications for in-principle approval must demonstrate the following essential criteria, as set out in policy P113 Community Gardens:

- There is an appropriate site for the proposed garden, including:
 - sufficient site size for all aspects of gardening;
 - There is sufficient sun exposure for gardening without removing any existing assets or significant pruning of existing trees;
 - There is an existing water supply on site (or demonstrate how water will be supplied);
 - The topography of the site is suitable with minimal slope (to minimize earthworks);
 - There are options for access and traffic management, including parking for visitors; and
 - Appropriate facilities such as toilets.
- The site is City owned or managed land.
- The community garden would complement the current and future role of public open space in the area.
- The proposed community garden and the objectives of the community garden group will benefit the local area and community.
- Demonstrated community support for a community garden in the local area.
- Evidence of a committed group of local residents to manage the project in the long term (including proposed committee members).
- The group managing the community garden must be a not-for-profit community organisation or be eligible for this status.
- The wider community and/or a specific community (e.g. retirement village) will be involved in the day to day operation of the garden and local residents will be encouraged to get involved.
- Growing fruit, vegetables and herbs will be the primary activity at the community garden.

If approved, a memorandum of understanding will be formulated by the City and approved under the appropriate delegated authority. This document will define the community garden site, set out the terms for the use of land and the construction, care and management of the community garden, the relationship expectations and code of conduct of group members, and the expectations, requirements and responsibilities of both parties (community group and the City of South Perth) in relation to the partnership being established.

If structures are planned a development application may be required. This can be discussed with City planning officers after in-principle approval has been granted to establish the garden.

Before the community garden can be established a management plan must be prepared by the community garden group and approved by the City. The management plan must include:

- the proposed legal and organisational structure of the community garden group (including membership fees if applicable)
- identification of a liaison person for the garden
- hours of operation
- details of public liability insurance and other necessary insurances
- an estimated budget and timelines for establishment and maintenance, including sources of funding
- the process for the community garden members and/or committee to make decisions, solve problems and resolve conflict
- the training and induction process for new gardeners
- what is required from the City of South Perth
- gardening method(s), including mowing and maintenance requirements, weed and pest control, and composting
- methods to address safety, security and vandalism, including fencing
- structures and storage requirements
- aesthetics and tidiness
- signage, including information such as the garden's purpose, contact details and operating hours
- noise and odour control

Once the management plan is approved by the City, on-ground works and applications for grants and funding can commence.

Costs

Community gardens require significant resources and funding for the initial establishment as well as their ongoing operation and management. The amount required varies dramatically according to the size, scale of activities and the skill base and volunteer time of members. Below is a list of typical costs a community garden project may need to address. Some of these costs may not apply to your proposed community garden; however it will be important to establish a list of expected costs and secure funding to meet them.

Primary Set Up Costs

- Site works
- Reticulation / irrigation system / water source
- Soil / soil conditioners
- Waste management systems e.g. composting areas, worm farms
- Seeds, seedlings
- Fruit trees
- Garden tools

Other Potential Set Up Costs

- Fees to become an incorporated entity
- Advertising / promotion
- Logo design
- Website design and hosting
- Energy generation infrastructure e.g. solar panels, windmill
- Rainwater tank
- Shelter / covered areas
- Seating / tables
- Accessible paths
- Garden signage e.g. entry sign, educational signs within garden
- Notice board
- Nursery for plant propagation
- Food preparation area / BBQ / pizza oven
- Sink for washing produce and hand washing
- Play area for children
- Fencing / security
- Garden artwork
- Professional expertise e.g. garden design, community consultation
- Construction labour
- Garden beds, including raised beds for accessibility

Maintenance Costs

- Water use
- Electricity use
- Soil conditioners
- Infrastructure maintenance e.g. paths, reticulation, plots, sheds, water source
- Insurance
- Financial administration
- Communication and promotion e.g. website hosting

A range of sources for funding and resourcing the community garden project should be considered. The following five options may be available to assist with funding.

Local Government - The City may assist by providing advice and assistance to establish community gardens. Please contact the City to discuss what support is available.

Private Partnerships - Local businesses may be interested in partnerships with your community garden. Businesses may be permitted to advertise on the garden website or on a piece of infrastructure at the garden which they supply for free or at a discounted cost (e.g. a water tank, irrigation, solar panels).

Fees and Charges - It is common for community gardens to charge annual membership fees, however these are usually minimal. If the garden is offering activities to the community, for example community education workshops or programs for schools and other groups, the garden may consider charging a small fee to participants. Examples of workshops run by community gardens include worm farming, organic vegetable gardening, permaculture and healthy cooking.

Donations - Donations can be an important income stream for community gardens. 'Our Community' offers a free online donation facility for Australian not-for-profit groups through GiveNow.com.au. Registering for this service would mean the garden could take credit card donations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 'Our Community' does not take a commission or fees for this service. In order for your supporters to be able to claim income tax deductions for donations to the garden, the garden needs to be endorsed as a deductible gift recipient (DGR). The garden management committee would need to apply to the Australian Taxation Office to receive this endorsement.

Grants - There are number of State, Federal, community and philanthropic grants that may be suitable for community gardens. For the latest information on available grants, go to the Department of Local Government Grants Directory at www.grantsdirectory.dlg.wa.gov.au.

In addition to the above methods of providing funds and resources to a community garden project, reducing costs should also be an ongoing goal throughout the project. The following methods are commonly employed by community garden groups to reduce costs and promote sustainable practices:

- Tap into the existing **skills and knowledge of your members and supporters**;
- Access **in-kind support and donated materials**;
- **Choose materials for the construction** of your garden that don't have high ongoing maintenance costs; and
- **Reuse 'waste' resources** in the construction of your garden. Community gardens are great places to demonstrate the reuse of materials considered to be waste. A common example is using decommissioned fridges to make worm farms.

Insurance

A community garden should have the following insurances:

- Workers compensation insurance (may not be required if there are no paid staff);
- Insurance to cover the committee (may not be required, depending on the structure of the community group, under the Volunteers (Protection from Liability) Act 2002);
- Public liability insurance;
- Volunteer insurance; and
- Any other insurance necessary and applicable to the community garden in relation to the activities taking place on the site and related to the function of the community garden.

The City may request copies of Certificates of Currency to ensure that the correct cover is in place at any time.

In addition, it may be sensible to consider having site insurance to cover theft, vandalism, fire, etc. As the garden will be located on City owned or managed land, it may be covered through existing City of South Perth insurance policies. However this option should be discussed with relevant City officers as early as possible in the planning process.

Further information

For more information about the process to set up a community garden in the City of South Perth, please contact the Community, Culture and Recreation Department on 9474 0777.

To see an example of an existing community garden in the City, please visit McDougall Farm Community Garden, which is located behind the old stables in Neil McDougall Park, 20 Clydesdale St, Como or online at www.mcdougallfarmcg.org/.

For general information and ideas about community gardens, please visit the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network at <http://communitygarden.org.au/>.