

ITEM 2. COMMUNITY GARDEN – ST HELENS COMMUNITY CENTRE, GLEBE**FILE NO: S111788****SUMMARY**

This report recommends Council approve a new community garden at St Helen's Community Centre at 184 Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

The St Helen's Community Garden Group, which comprises 25 members, successfully applied for a Matching Grant in July 2012 for \$10,000 to assist in funding the development of a new community garden.

The Group has consulted with City staff and prepared a community garden design and management plan, and is now seeking approval to construct and operate the community garden in accordance with Council's *Community Gardens Policy*.

Community consultation was undertaken for the proposal between 29 July and 9 August 2013. A total of 36 submissions were received, which comprised:

- 30 (82 per cent) in support;
- three (nine per cent) in support, subject to conditions; and
- three (nine per cent) in opposition.

A summary of the submissions and responses is attached to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the development of a new community garden at St Helen's Community Centre, at 184 Glebe Point Road, Glebe; and
- (B) the garden be developed in stages to coincide with available funding, support by community garden members, demonstrated success and demand for further garden space.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Site Map of St Helen's Community Garden

Attachment B: St Helen's Community Garden Management Plan and Design

Attachment C: Summary of Community Comments

BACKGROUND

1. In March 2012, a group of Glebe residents, interested in establishing a community garden, started a garden group with advice and support from City staff.
2. The group selected an open space adjacent to St Helen's Community Centre, 184 Glebe Point Road as a preferred site for the community garden.
3. The proposed community garden site is 620 square metres in size and located between St Helen's Community Centre and Glebe Library (refer Attachment A for site map). The proposal for the community garden will occupy about 50 per cent of the open space available at St Helen's Community Centre and Glebe Library.
4. The St Helen's Community Garden Group has 25 members and, in October 2012, was successful in receiving a grant of \$10,000 under the City's Matching Grants Program to fund the proposed community garden.
5. In May 2013, the City and Group ran a design and planning workshop to formalise a garden design and management plan for the site.
6. The community garden will comprise of raised communal garden beds for growing edible plants and miniature fruit trees, as well as a compost bin, worm farm, native bee hives, small storage shed and small rainwater tank.
7. The design and management plan proposes the garden be developed in five stages (refer Attachment B). Each stage of the garden will be developed as the number of members increases and the previous stage is operating successfully.
8. The Group will manage the garden and encourage local residents to become involved.

Community Gardens Policy

9. The *Community Gardens Policy* was adopted by Council in 2010. The Policy contains site selection criteria, which the Group has assessed and discussed with City staff. The proposed community garden meets the site selection criteria as follows:
 - (a) **Location** – the site is Council-owned and community-classified land available for public access and community use;
 - (b) **Safety** – the site has good passive surveillance from the adjoining community centre, library, local businesses and people walking along Glebe Point Road;
 - (c) **Accessibility** – the site is accessible to a range of users, including people with a disability. There is also access to public toilets, public transport, as well as good street access for deliveries;
 - (d) **Solar access** – the site has a north/north-east aspect, which provides good quality solar access for growing vegetable crops;
 - (e) **Size** – the site, at 620 square metres in area, is a good size with a variety of spaces for growing food. Stage one is 270 square metres in area;

- (f) **Water** – there is an existing water supply and tap, as well as a 5,000 litre tank, which is used for recycling rainwater. It is proposed to install an additional rain water tank in the fifth stage of the garden;
- (g) **Soil contamination** – the City conducted soil testing of the site, which showed the soil did not contain contamination and was suitable for growing food crops. The tests also showed that there was rubble generally located within 200mm of the surface. This issue will be addressed by constructing raised garden beds and importing suitable soil; and
- (h) **Multiple uses** – the site is located next to a community centre, library and small park. The site will not be fenced, and will be accessible to all members of the community to visit or participate.

Community Consultation

10. In August 2013, the City consulted with the local community through the following activities:
 - (a) distribution of a letter and a copy of the proposed design to 3,000 local residents and businesses within a radius of 400 metres from the proposed site. The letter provided web links to consultation material and outlined the ways in which people could have their say;
 - (b) SydneyYourSay web page including news items, consultation material, an online submissions form and an outline of the ways in which people could have their say; and
 - (c) consultation material was displayed at the Glebe Library and Neighbourhood Service Centre (adjacent to the site).
11. The City received 36 submissions from local residents and one submission from the Physical Disability Council of NSW.
12. 30 people gave their support for the proposal, citing reasons such as the convenient location of the site, the likely community and environmental benefits it will deliver, its potential for education and learning, and the constructive use of a space that is presently underutilised.
13. A further three people gave their endorsement pending clarification of issues such as the location of the rainwater tank and tool shed, management of beehives and pests, funding sources, the replacement of a *Murraya* hedge with native plants and the relocation of an existing small tree.
14. Three people opposed the community garden on the grounds it would decrease valuable open space in Glebe, and two of the three people saw it as a selfish use of community space.
15. The Physical Disability Council of NSW supported the proposal and recommended that the pathways in the design be widened to ensure that they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), so that people with a physical disability can participate in gardening on the site.

16. Special care has been taken to ensure the proposed community garden complies with DDA requirements, and to encourage people with a disability to participate in gardening activities. All pathways are wheelchair accessible, with over 50 per cent of the pathways meeting DDA requirements. The garden beds are raised to a height suitable for wheelchair access, and one garden bed has recessed spaces for wheelchairs to approach the garden front-on for easy gardening access. There are wheelchair accessible toilets in the adjoining community centre and library. City staff have discussed these design elements with the Physical Disability Council of NSW, who has indicated they are happy with the proposed design.
17. A summary of the submissions and responses to comments are in Attachment C.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

18. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following SS2030 strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) A Leading Environmental Performer – community gardens help residents to reduce their environmental impacts;
 - (b) A Cultural and Creative City – community gardens provide a focal point for cultural and educational activities and programs;
 - (c) Vibrant Local Communities – each community garden provides a unique focal point for local social and educational activities;
 - (d) Sustainable Development, Renewal and Design – community gardens can showcase sustainable living and be integrated into new development; and
 - (e) Implementation through Effective Partnerships – community gardens involve a range of partnerships and provide an opportunity for residents to engage in social and environmental programs.

Greening Sydney Plan

19. The development of community gardens and the engagement of the community in green volunteering activities are key focus areas of the Greening Sydney Plan adopted by Council in May 2012.

Organisational Impact

20. City staff will provide assistance and guidance to the St Helen's Community Garden Group to construct the garden. The community garden will also receive ongoing support and assistance through the City's Community Gardens Program.

Social / Cultural / Community

21. Community gardens provide a range of healthy recreational activities that promote physical and emotional wellbeing. They encourage social interaction for marginalised communities, as gardens are often used as outdoor community meeting points.

22. A community garden at the St Helen's Community Centre would increase the use and community ownership of public open space in Glebe.
23. The garden design provides for the inclusion of wheelchair access through the garden, as well as wheelchair accessible garden beds, to encourage residents with physical disabilities to participate in gardening activities.

Environmental

24. Community gardens provide a range of environmental benefits, including developing community capacity for local food production and educating the community about reducing the environmental impacts of transporting and distributing fresh food.
25. In October 2012, the City conducted soil testing of the site, which showed the soil did not contain contamination and was suitable for growing food crops. The tests also showed that there was rubble generally located within 200mm of the surface. This issue will be addressed by constructing raised garden beds and importing suitable soil.
26. The Group will access an existing rainwater tank to harvest water from surrounding buildings and provide recycled water to the garden. An additional rainwater tank will be installed in the fifth stage of the garden, with the installation of a solar pump to reduce energy and potable water consumption.

Economic

27. Local food initiatives, like community gardens, can have an important role in providing safe, affordable and accessible food.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

28. The St Helen's Community Garden Group has received \$10,000 from the City's Matching Grants Program, which is subject to Council approving the community garden proposal.
29. The Group has contributed large amounts of time to plan and design the community garden. They will also donate time to build the garden, provide plants, materials and gardening labour as value in-kind to the value of \$10,000.
30. Stage one of the proposed garden is estimated to cost \$40,000, including the Group's \$10,000 value in-kind. The City will be contributing \$30,000 to the project comprised of:
 - (a) \$10,000 from the already approved Matching Grant, which will fund the raised garden beds, gardening materials, tool shed and compost bins; and
 - (b) a further \$20,000 to be funded from the Community Gardens 2013/14 operating budget, for soil and pathways so that they are wheelchair accessible.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

31. Following Council's approval, the City will work with and support the St Helen's Community Garden Group to construct the garden in the five stages outlined in the community garden design and management plan.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

32. Public consultation on the community garden proposal was undertaken from 29 July to 9 August 2013. A letter with the proposed garden design was distributed to residents and businesses within a radius 400 metres from the site.
33. The letter and proposed garden design were placed on the noticeboard at Glebe Library in August 2013.
34. A copy of the proposed garden design and management plan was placed on SydneyYourSay for a period of two weeks in August 2013.

GARRY HARDING

Director City Operations

Raewyn Broadfoot, Community Gardens and Volunteer Coordinator
Joel Johnson, Manager Parks Trees and Aquatic Facilities