

ATTACHMENT D

**REPORT OF STRATEGIC CONSULTATION
FOR DRAFT COMMUNITY GARDEN
POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

Cred

COMMUNITY PLANNING



CITY OF SYDNEY

Report of Strategic Consultation for Draft Community Garden Policy and Guidelines

September 2015





Report Title: Report of Strategic Consultation for Draft Community Garden Policy and Guidelines

Client: City of Sydney

Version: Final Report

Date: 7 September 2015

Author: Sarah Reilly (sarah@cred.com.au)

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Executive Summary

To inform the City of Sydney's (the City) review of the revised *Draft Community Garden Policy and Draft Community Gardens Guidelines* (Draft Policy and Guidelines) and *Draft Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens* (Draft Preferred Materials), the City has consulted broadly with residents, community garden members and other stakeholders.

The consultation outcomes are outlined in this report and will be used to inform the next stage of document review.

types, community gardeners valued social interaction and connection with their neighbours as the most important aspect of participating in community gardening. Two thirds of survey respondents rated the Draft Policy and Guidelines as good to excellent. Overall, survey respondents found the documents clear, concise and educational. Illustrations and photos throughout the documents were described as inspiring and helpful.

However, a proportion of survey respondents, four out of five submissions and at least 77% of focus groups (with existing community garden members) perceived the Draft Policy and Guidelines as too prescriptive, for example overusing the word "should" rather than "could". Focus group participants and two submissions also said that the documents focussed too heavily on the production of crops and how the gardens looked, rather than on the social and community building aspects of participating in community gardens. Across both consultation types, respondents commented that the documents tended towards a "one size fits all" approach rather than acknowledging the diversity of community gardens and their unique values and needs. While all focus groups valued community access and engagement, across all consultation types respondents felt that the documents should give consideration to how to facilitate general community access whilst addressing vandalism, ownership, safety and security issues.

Of survey respondents:

- 74% of respondents had a community garden in their local area
- 47% of garden members rated their Experiences as excellent, 50% as Good or Very Good
- 64% were aware of the existing Community Gardens Policy, and
- 56% were aware of the Draft Policy and Guidelines, with 67% rating them as Good or better.

WHAT WE DID

Community consultation completed included nine focus groups with community garden groups (49 participants), an online survey (64 respondents) and email submissions (five submissions received). An email encouraging participation was sent to 104 gardeners and interested residents and 57 Councils and organisations.

GENERAL FINDINGS

Feedback from the community across all consultation types was supportive of the City's efforts in producing the Draft Policy and Guidelines and appreciative of the City's support for community garden groups. Across all consultation



1. About the Consultation

1.1. CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

The City of Sydney (the City) developed its first Community Gardens Guidelines in 2008 and adopted its first Community Gardens Policy in 2009. The City has a requirement to review its policies every five years and has now prepared a revised *Draft Community Gardens Policy, Draft Community Gardens Guidelines* (Draft Policy and Guidelines) and *Draft Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens* (Draft Preferred Materials). As part of the review the City has consulted broadly with residents, community garden members and other stakeholders. The objectives of the City's consultation was to:

- Inform stakeholders about the Draft Policy and Guidelines
- Seek feedback on the Draft Policy and Guidelines, and
- Prepare a consultation report incorporating feedback to inform the City's review.



1.2. CONSULTATION COMPLETED

Community members were provided with multiple opportunities to provide feedback on the Draft Policy and Guidelines. The City invited participation through the following channels:

- Focus groups with existing community garden groups located in the City of Sydney LGA
- Survey available in hard copy and online at the Sydney Your Say website, and
- Submissions.

The City encouraged participation through an Email inviting participation sent to:

- 54 gardeners from existing Community Gardens, Footpath Verge Gardens and Community Composting in the City
- 50 interested residents participating in Reconciliation Community Garden, and
- 57 councils and organisations across Australia and internationally.

The following groups provided feedback:

- Sixty-four people responded to the survey. Most respondents were a member of a community garden (42%) or were a resident interested in community gardens (33%).
- Nine facilitated focus groups with existing community garden groups (15 groups were invited to participate). Forty-nine community garden group members participated, and
- Five submissions to the City's Community Gardens Coordinator.



2. Consultation findings

This section provides a summary of the key findings across all consultation types. Detailed consultation outcomes for each consultation type are provided as appendices to this report.

2.1. GENERAL FINDINGS

Across all consultation types, community gardeners valued social interaction and connection with their neighbours as the most important aspect of participating in community gardening. Those consulted appreciated the City's support for community gardens and community gardeners across the LGA such as bus tours and provision of resources such as soil, mulch and public liability insurance. Many thought that the Draft Policy and Guidelines were clear, concise and easier to use than the previous document with 67% of survey respondents rating the Draft Policy and Guidelines as Good to Excellent. Generally, respondents found the Draft Policy and Guidelines educational and informative. The Draft Preferred Materials were seen as useful for groups starting a new garden as they were educational and provided practical assistance. They liked that the preferred materials are examples rather than requirements.

There were a number of suggestions for how the Draft Policy and Guidelines could be improved:

- Values - Place at least equal value on the social benefits of community gardening as on food production and the look of the gardens
- Ease of use - Include a snapshot or checklist of key points, and an index to make use of the guidelines easier
- Tone – Less prescriptive phrasing, for example reduced use of the word "should" and replacement with "could", "Some ways you could do this", "How will we do this?"
- Group management - Place more emphasis on the need for good group management and decision making
- Flexibility - Acknowledge and provide flexibility in the requirements for the diversity of community gardens across the LGA, and the communities they are located in
- Clarity - Greater clarity around and faster processing of grant applications, and
- Safety - Acknowledgement the safety issues faced by some groups including needles being left in the garden, theft of crops and vandalism of gardens and consideration of how to facilitate general community access whilst addressing these issues.

2.2. DRAFT COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY

Suggestions

- Gardens not on City land - Clarification whether the Draft Policy applies to community gardens that are not on City land and whether the City has jurisdiction over these gardens, and

- Insurance – Clarify who is responsible for Public Liability Insurance and what it covers
- Community access - Focus group participants from gardens that had a fence felt more secure in facilitating community access, while other groups were prevented from working with local community organisations such as schools due to vandalism and safety issues
- Community access - Two gardens had plans for visible, signposted areas for the community to pick from, which they hoped would allow the broader community access to crops from the garden and prevent theft of individual crops.

Concerns

- Community access - Dominant barriers to allowing 24-hour community access to gardens are security and safety issues; including stealing crops, finding needles, dumping rubbish and defecation in garden beds. Submissions noted that while it is fair to allow general communities to take crops within reason, this can be disheartening to the people who have worked hard to grow them
- Community access - While supporting community participation from broader community members, some groups located in areas experiencing more complex social issues felt that they needed more security for the gardens after hours, as the regular vandalism and destruction of the gardens is disheartening, and
- Insurance - Lack of clarity regarding Draft Policy about Public Liability Insurance, who is responsible and what it covers.

2.3. DRAFT COMMUNITY GARDEN GUIDELINES

Suggestions

- Events - Only require Council approval for community garden events that are over a certain size
- Self-management - A less hierarchical approach to community gardens, focussing on participation and coordination rather than management would assist with achieving the aim of self management
- Flexibility - More flexible guidelines around the design stage of the gardens
- Information - Provide references to further information for example about permaculture or other council policies
- Further information - A section for 'other things you may want to consider' may provide more guidance for unique gardens. For example: 'Is your garden situated next to a school?', and
- Flexibility - A separate document for people wanting to start a garden, and for ongoing management of gardens.

Concerns

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- Events - Respondents viewed it as unrealistic to expect groups to gain approval from the City to hold events which often are held and organised on the spur of the moment
- Landscape Architect - The requirement for community groups to have a landscape architect was seen to be restrictive and unrealistic
- Reporting - Respondents felt it is unrealistic to expect community garden groups to quantify the amount of produce grown, particularly for those groups that experience significant vandalism, where no crops result
- Tone - The tone of the Guidelines is prescriptive and may be interpreted as not allowing for gardeners to self-govern, and
- Size - The Guidelines are large and could be overwhelming for some people.

2.4. MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

Suggestions

- Social design criteria - The Management Plan Template (MPT) should include social design criteria such as decision making and conflict resolution
- Ease of use - Provide example templates, for example from other community gardens
- Ease of use - Step-by-step guides to creating an MPT or an online checklist format

- Essential v. non-essential - Noting which questions in the MPT were essential to answer to apply for a grant, and
- Flexibility - To account for differences of styles two MPTs may be more appropriate, one for a formal model and an informal model.

Concerns

- Flexibility - The one size fits all approach of the Management Plan Template may not support all groups.

2.5. DRAFT PREFERRED MATERIALS FOR USE IN COMMUNITY GARDENS

Suggestions

- Further information - The section that includes materials to be avoided could be expanded, and
- Further information - A "Growing Guide" for the Sydney basin would be a beneficial addition.

Concerns

- Self-sustainability – Suggested materials are expensive and so restrict self-sustainability, and
- Flexibility – The Draft Preferred Materials restrict opportunities to be resourceful in using found objects, and do not consider the context of each garden such as values around up-cycling resources and building community capacity.

3. Conclusion

Overall the consultation process and response to the Draft Community Garden Policy and Guidelines was constructive and positive. A range of suggestions have been put forward by the community across a variety of consultation types. The feedback has presented a span of information (e.g. some requests for more documentation for guidance, others for less prescriptions to allow autonomy), and this detail will inform the next stage of document review to help maximize the experiences and interactions of community gardeners, other residents and various government agencies involved in community gardening pursuits.

Appendix 1 Survey outcomes

This section provides the outcomes of the Draft Community Garden Policy and Guidelines survey which was open between 10 June and 30 July 2015. The survey was available online at sydneyoursay.com.au and provided in hard copy to all focus group participants. Relevant documents were available to download from the Sydney Your Say website.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Sixty-four people responded to the survey. As shown in figure one, most respondents were a member of a community garden (33 people, 42% of respondents) or a resident interested in community gardens (26 people, 33% of respondents).

The top suburbs where respondents lived – who were residents, ratepayers or other – were:

- Glebe (8 people, 13%)
- Woolloomooloo (7 people, 11%)
- Darlinghurst (6 people, 9%), and
- Chippendale (5 people, 8%).

Most survey respondents were aged between 18 and 70 years. There was one respondent aged under 18 years, and four aged over 70 years, with an even distribution of respondents between 18 and 69 years.

The majority of respondents (54 people, 63%) were residents of the City, and around half (26 people, 30%) were ratepayers. 6 people (7%) said were not residents or ratepayers but worked in the City LGA, or were gardening teachers.

There were more female respondents (36 people, 56%) than male (26 people, 41%).

Around a fifth of respondents (14 people, 22%) spoke a language other than English at home. Four people spoke Mandarin, 2 people spoke French, 1 person spoke Thai, and 7 people spoke another language. One respondent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Figure 1
Respondent suburb

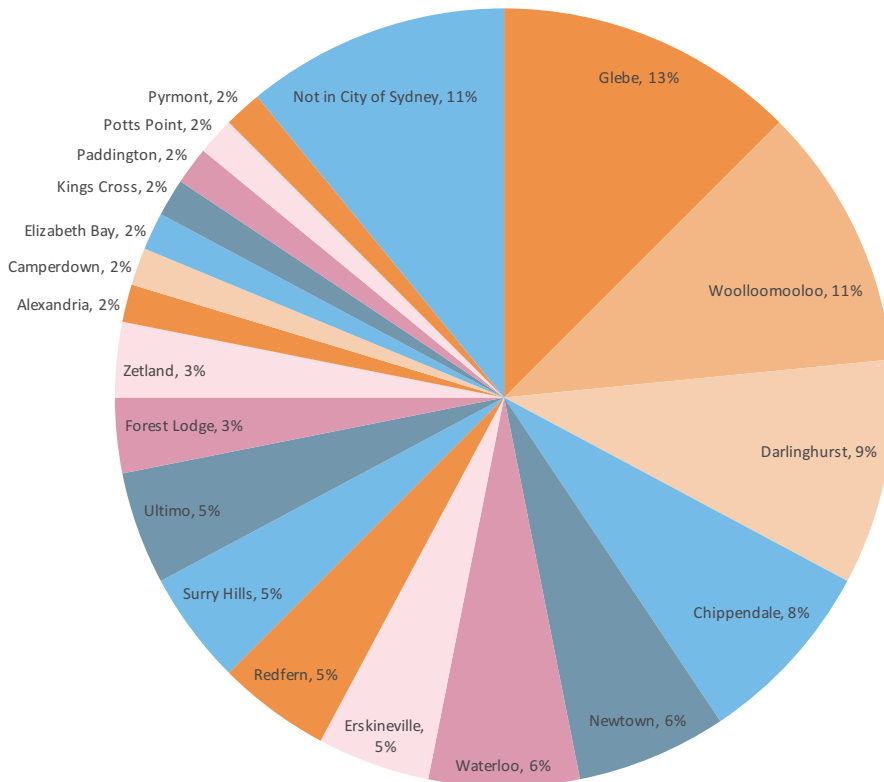
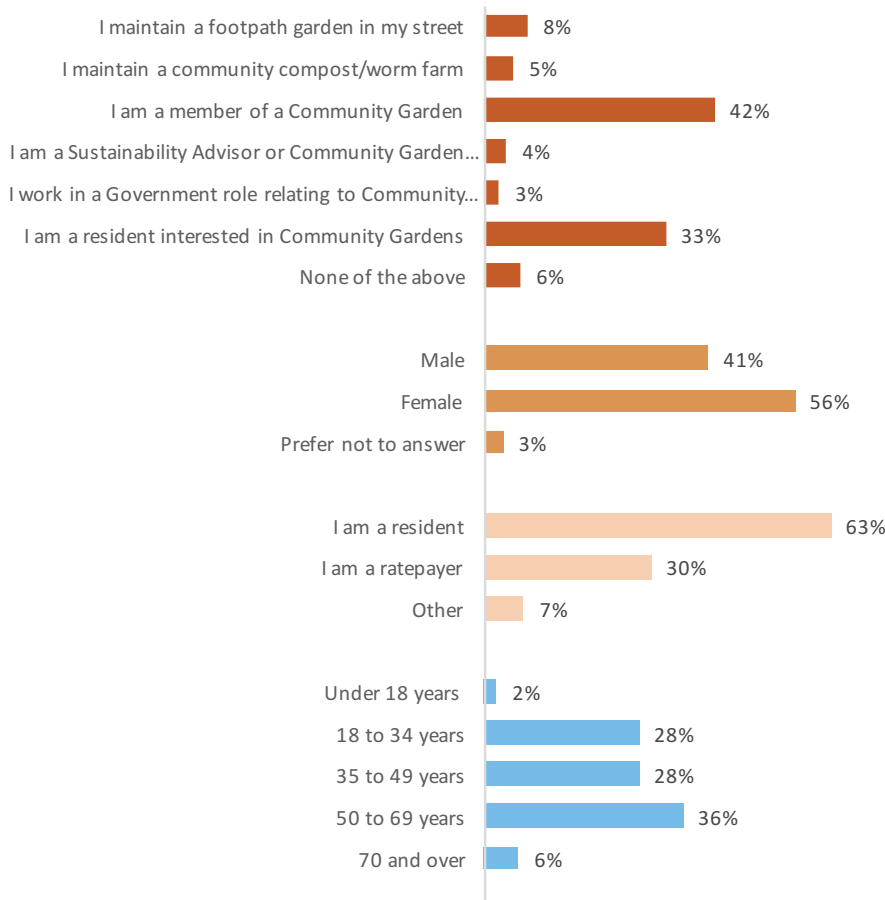


Figure 2
Respondent Demographics



VALUES, ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

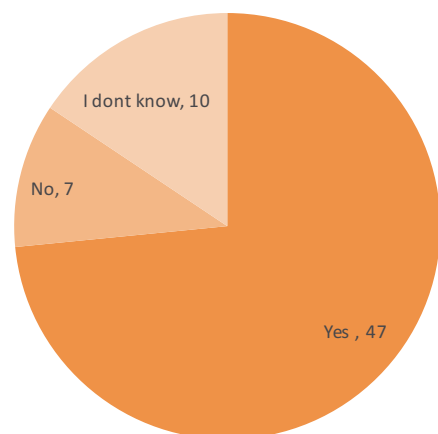
Respondents ranked, in order of importance, the outcomes that may be delivered by community gardens. Table 2 shows the mean ranking for each outcome, where 1 is the most important and 5 is the least important.

Table 2
What do Community Gardens mean to you?

OUTCOME	MEAN RANKING
Health and wellbeing to grow fresh nutritious food	2.33
Meeting new people and connecting with neighbours	2.37
Environmental sustainability e.g. Water tanks, recycled materials	3.02
Encouraging alternative growing practices e.g. organic, biodynamic, permaculture	3.05
Providing a demonstration site to educate residents on how to grow food crops	4.05

The majority of respondents (47 people, 74%) had a community garden in their local neighbourhood (7 people, or 11%, did not).

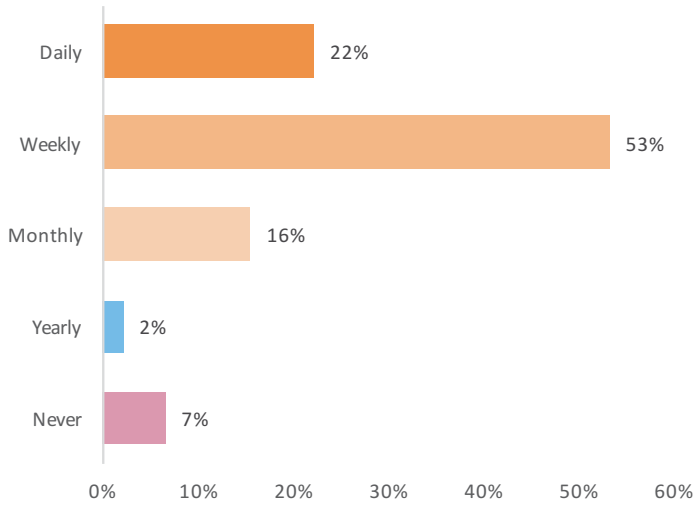
Figure 3
Is there a community garden in your local neighbourhood?



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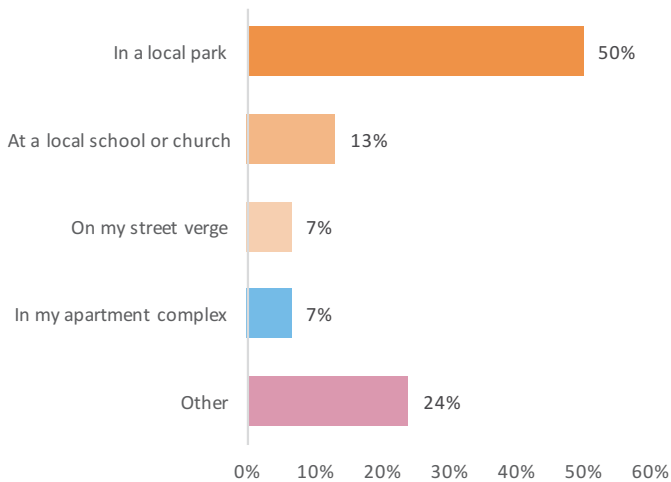
As shown in Figure 4, respondents visited their community garden daily (10 people, 22%) or weekly (24 people, 53%).

Figure 4
How often do you visit this community garden?



Half of respondents' community gardens were located in a local park (23 people, 50%), and a quarter (11 people, 24%) in another location such as "in the grounds of a local community centre building".

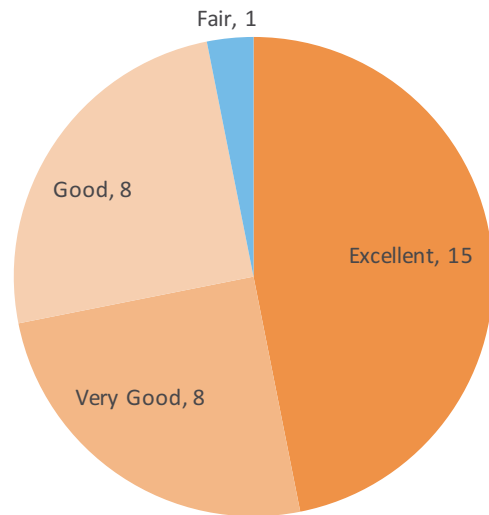
Figure 5
Community garden locations



More than half the respondents (35 people, 55%) were currently members of a community garden (28 people or 44% were not).

Most people who were members of a community garden rated their experience as Excellent (15 people, 47%). Half of the people who were part of a community garden rated their experience as Good or Very Good (16 people, 50%). Only one person rated their experience as fair (3%).

Figure 6
How would you rate your experience with this group?



For the people who were not currently members of a community garden (28 people, 44%), most would like to be (20 people, 77%). For the people who would like to be part of community garden, but were not currently, the main barriers were:

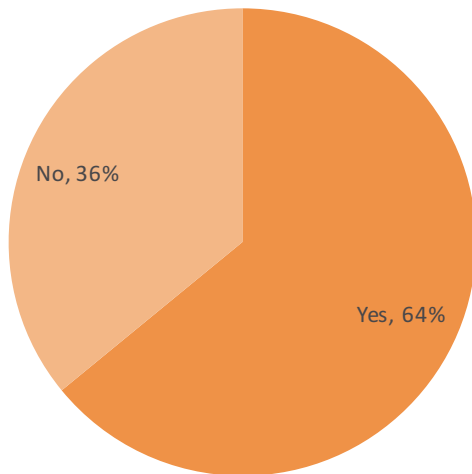
- No community gardens in their area (8 people, 40%)
- Lack of time (5 people, 25%), and
- Don't feel welcome at their local Community Garden (3 people, 15%).

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DRAFT POLICY AND GUIDELINES

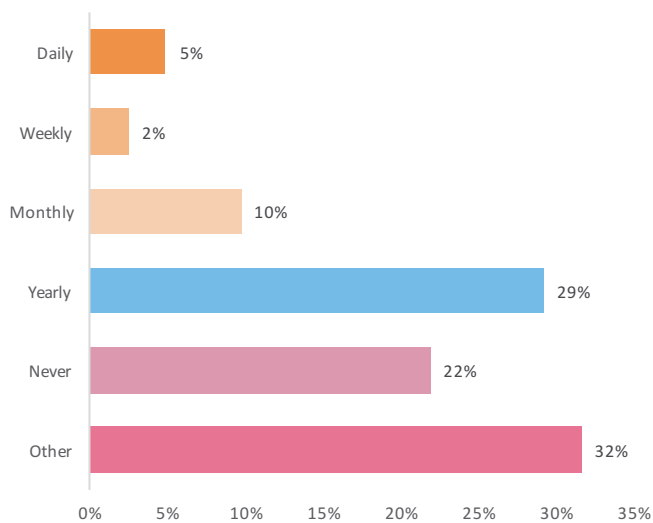
Around two-thirds of respondents (41 people, 64%) were aware of the City's existing Community Garden Policy and Guidelines (23 people, 36%, were not).

Figure 6
Are you aware of the City's existing Community Garden Policy and Guidelines?



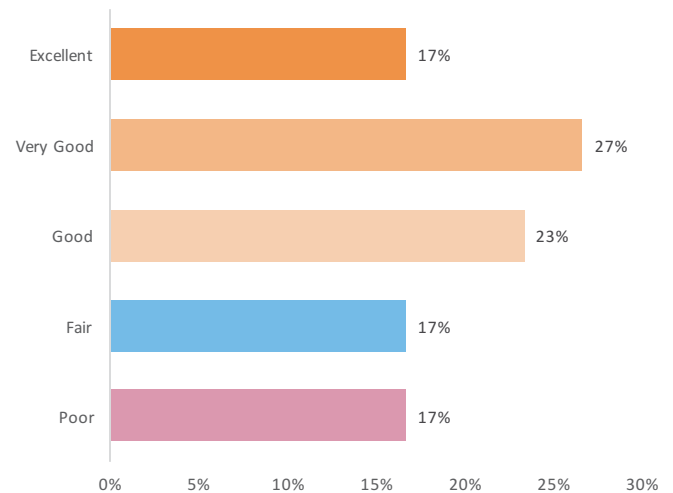
Of the people aware of the City's existing Community Garden Policy and Guidelines, most would refer to it yearly (12 people, 29%) or never (9 people, 22%), or responded "other" (13 people, 32%).

Figure 7
How often would you refer to the City of Sydney Community Gardens Policy?



More than half of respondents (36 people, 56%) were aware of the Draft Policy and Guidelines (28 people were not, 44%). Most people who were aware of the Draft Policy and Guidelines rated it as Very Good (8 people, 27%), and approximately one third of respondents rated it as Fair or Poor (10 people, 34%).

Figure 8
How would you rate the revised Draft Community Garden Policy and Guidelines?



WHAT RESPONDENTS LIKE ABOUT THE DRAFT POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Aspects of the Draft Guidelines and Policy that respondents liked included:

- Clear, concise, easy to use (8 people, 27%)
I like to see much more down to earth and simple form of policy which have people taking responsibility and custodianship to care for the land as the main focus'
- Supportive, educational and informative (8 people, 27%), and
'That the City is actively supporting the community in creating community gardens, reducing red tape and allowing the community to start a garden in a reasonably fast amount of time. The City should facilitate citizens being agents of change'
- Illustrations and photos (5 people, 17%).
'Visual inspiration for those interested in setting up a community garden'

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WHAT RESPONDENT'S THINK COULD BE IMPROVED

Aspects of the Draft Guidelines and Policy that respondents thought could be improved included:

- Too bureaucratic

'You have taken out the basis of the policy being focussed on community development and gone to a management model... We are not employees to be managed. We are a community'

'The policy seems to be leaning towards a more corporatised model of operation which I think is at odds with community development aspects and ethos of a community garden... you need to keep in mind that you are dealing with a bunch of people whose primary interest is gardening'

'Reduce red tape'

'Seems like a lot of stuff to do just to put garden beds on the verge opposite our house'

'Responsibility and custodianship to care for the land' should be the main focus of the policy'

'As a retired person I did not join a community garden to be involved with Management Plans'

'The draft policy requires community gardens to become incorporated. Most people who want to garden are not interested in management or wish to avoid the onerous duties of incorporation'

- Lack of acknowledgement of and support to manage issues, and

'They give Community Gardeners the responsibility to maintain the gardens in good order, but don't acknowledge many of the difficulties of running a community garden that I've experienced e.g. vandalism, theft, and illicit drug use...'

'The existing policy documents don't clearly outline what assistance gardens can expect to receive from Council... particularly in how Council can help gardens experiencing issues like vandalism, theft, antisocial behaviour'

'The biggest issue for community gardens is vandalism and stealing. The draft policy completely ignores this aspect of the community gardening experience... Gardeners are not supported to address these issues which are broader social issues than ordinary gardeners are equipped to deal with'

'Vandalism and theft is not mentioned in the policy - nor any help offered about support we can get to address this'

'[Council is] avoiding responsibility for what happens on public land that is essentially required to be managed by Council'

'The volunteer policy is a bad policy as it creates personal

liability for actions that benefit the community'

'Ought to contain a protocol for dealing with Council regarding maintenance works'

- Assistance in understanding the policy, writing a management plan, and managing the garden.

'Promote Council's Community Garden Coordinator as somebody who can help residents set up a garden'

'Even if I could understand the reason for having one how easy a task writing a management plan for some of the more disadvantaged garden members, those with limited English language literacy skills and/or confidence?'

'Inconsistencies [in the Policy]'

To me the policy is not very clear... it is also not clear if we need to be some sort of incorporated association or not, or if we need to pursue a licence to occupy the land'

Some solutions suggested were:

- Example templates
- A separate document for people wanting to start a garden, and ongoing management of gardens
- Providing references to further information for example about permaculture or other council policies, and
- 'A very clear statement of responsibilities for the garden itself and the council would be useful'.

BEST PRACTICE COMMUNITY GARDENS AND COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICIES

A few people (4 people, 6%) were aware of other community garden policies or guidelines that they thought were best practice. One person provided a reference: "Keeping Chickens: an Australian Guide, by Nicolas Brasch".

More than half of respondents (34 people, 53%) said that there were community gardens that inspired them, such as:

- Whitely Garden
- Paddington Community Garden
- Rose Bay Community Garden
- Addison Road Community Garden
- Randwick Permaculture Interpretive Garden
- Earth Care Community Garden
- Secret Garden at UWS campus
- Sustainable Chippendale street gardens
- Ian Potter Children's Garden in Melbourne
- Rose Street in Newtown
- Charlie's Garden in Darlington
- St Canises rooftop garden
- Comboyne Public School Community Garden
- Gardens in Newcastle and Melbourne, and
- Community gardens in the heart of the city in Barcelona.

Appendix 2 Focus group outcomes

This chapter describes the outcomes of focus groups with nine participating community garden groups located in the City LGA. The focus group discussion explored the following areas:

- What groups valued about being members of a community garden
- The proposed new Management Plan Template
- Opportunities and barriers to community participation
- How the City could assist Community Garden groups moving forward, and
- The Draft Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens (Draft Preferred Materials).

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY GARDEN GROUPS

Nine community garden groups (49 community garden group members) participated in focus groups that ran for between 1 and 1.5 hours. The Waterloo Estate focus group ran for 3 hours.

Table 3 Focus groups conducted

GROUP NAME	MEETING DATE	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Angel Street Permaculture Food Forest	16 July 2015	3
Bourke Street Community Garden	5 July 2015	6
Eden Community Garden	6 July 2015	6
Erskineville Community Garden	5 July 2015	5
James Street Reserve Community Garden	9 July 2015	5
Newtown Community Garden	16 July 2015	8
St Helens Community Garden	2 July 2015	5
Waterloo Estate Community Garden	21 July 2015	8
Woolloomooloo Permaculture Community Garden	22 July 2015	3
	TOTAL	49

GENERAL INSIGHTS

- Nearly all focus group participants were current members of the community garden groups and most had been involved for between 2 and 12 years
- The groups appreciated the support that the City has provided to community garden groups since they began, and
- There was a sense that the City's approach to formalising community gardens through management plans, requirements for grants funding, materials, and landscape architects was disempowering for community group members and detracted from the reasons why most people wanted to participate in a community garden. Participants felt that it is a burden on the group that can take away from the more "organic" nature of being part of a community garden and what is the core value of community gardens – building community and neighbourhood relations.

VALUES

SOCIAL INTERACTION AND CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY

Across all of the groups, members strongly valued the opportunity for social interaction, to meet their neighbours, and connect with their community.

"[The garden is a] great way to meet people in the community, it's a nice way to connect with people"

"A good spot to come for social interaction"

"Something to join as a retiree"

Uniting "different ends of the community"

"[Being part of the garden] is about being in a community and spending time with people outside of work"

Members also valued collaboration with the broader community, through engagement with passers-by, other community gardens, and local groups such as churches and schools.

SUSTAINABILITY

A secondary value was around sustainability, including composting, reducing waste, and the opportunity to grow food to eat.

"I like growing things and I can eat them"

"Not just a hobby – I grow things I actually want to eat"

"I don't have rubbish anymore"

"Doing things organically"

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KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Knowledge sharing and learning through doing were also valued.

"I have two kids that now know a lot of things about native bees and gardens"

"Building skills which can then translate into regular practice"

"If this is a community group then it is a matter of growing your knowledge and skills together"

OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE

Members valued the sense of ownership and pride in their community that being a part of the garden gave them.

"It enriches our life, especially for the elderly. We would like to see the garden more clean, tidy and thriving"

[As a renter, being a part of the Garden] "gives me some ownership in [my suburb]"

PERCEPTIONS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE (MPT)

Most participants in the focus groups had not read the guidelines, or had just skimmed them.

WHAT'S WORKING?

- Some groups appreciated the MPT as a set of guidelines that were "fair and equitable"
- Some members appreciated that the MPT could be written anywhere, even "on a cardboard box"
- Community Garden members commented on having a good working relationship with the City of Sydney, and receiving a lot of support, and
- One group thought that the MPT might help to legitimise their proposals for the garden.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

Less Bureaucracy

At least seven Community Garden groups perceived the MPT as bureaucratic and over-regulated. This was felt to be disempowering, overwhelming and unnecessary, and damaging to the experience of being part of a Community Garden

- Bureaucracy was felt to be "the antithesis of gardening". The MPT was seen as restrictive, particularly as many people work in offices by day and want to participate in a positive social activity in their neighbourhood

"We would prefer to put energy into the garden rather than paperwork"

"It's a garden, you don't need to be a stickler"

"We are here because we care about the community, not to be part of the 2030 strategy"

- There was concern that the City is too focussed on gardens being "pretty" and looking the same, than as a community building activity, and as about sustainable living
- The MPT was seen by at least four groups as "one-size fits all" when each garden felt it had a unique context and focus

"One size fits all is not sensitive to the community groups."

- Five groups had concerns about the MPT being unrealistic, with expensive requirements, excessive time demands, and requiring higher level skills

"Making basic things difficult"

"Why do we report [so often]? It doesn't change much ... Once a year would be more than sufficient"

- Two groups commented that they felt the MPT was irrelevant, and that most people would not read it

"Most of us don't read these things"

"Government likes nice glossy policies because they look good, 90% don't read it, maybe just skim read"

- Members perceived the MPT as disempowering particularly for people with literacy issues and because of extensive restrictions, and

"It scares people, this much information"

"It is currently too daunting"

"Some people can't read these... this is disempowering their involvement in the garden"

"The reality is, you are not allowed to have actual ownership"

- For one group, the formality and complexity of the MPT and the preferred materials seemed unnecessary when there are fundamental issues of safety that they felt were not being adequately addressed by the City.

Many members made specific suggestions for improvement, including:

- More flexible guidelines around the design stage of the gardens
- Less expensive requirements like needing a landscape architect to design the garden
- Step-by-step guides to creating an MPT or an online checklist format
- Less restrictive phrasing e.g. "Some ways you could do this", "How will we do this?"
- To account for differences of styles some members suggested that two MPTs would be more appropriate, one for a formal model and an informal model. This accommodates for differences in the management and the aesthetics between community gardens

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- Members suggest the MPT should be complemented by a map which identifies and informs the public what areas or parks may be suitable for a community garden
- Some members suggested that the City could also provide examples of completed MPTs from other gardens in the LGA. This would alleviate the stress associated with “starting from scratch.” Members of this garden had sent a copy of their MPT to another garden to assist their process
- Audio visual aids online as an easy to follow step-by-step guide
- A section for ‘other things you may want to consider’ may provide more guidance for unique gardens. For example: ‘Is your garden situated next to a school?’
- Members would prefer The City to “facilitate rather than monitor and manage”, and
- Regarding the Guidelines, some members felt that it is unclear up front what the requirements are for the members of the community garden. A ‘snapshot’ of key points was raised as a possible solution to this.

Clarification around Public Liability Insurance

There was a strong desire across four groups for clarity around insurance, including:

- Clarity around exclusions in Public Liability Insurance, particularly with reference to power tools, and
- Clarity around who is responsible for providing insurance.

Requirements for a Landscape Architect

Many members across three groups had concerns around the requirements for a landscape architect. Members felt that this would be prohibitively expensive, and take away from the valued ground-up approach to Community Gardening.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

WHAT'S WORKING?

- All groups valued community engagement, participation, and collaboration.
- Groups with a fence felt more secure, but still valued being open to the community at certain times
- Many groups spoke positively of a “steady stream of visitors”, commenting that “as soon as you start digging people come”
- At least four groups have engaged with local community groups such as schools and churches, and
- One garden was developing some visible, signposted areas for the community to pick from, an idea which came from the Community Garden Guidelines, which they hoped would help to prevent theft of crops.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- The dominant barriers to community participation are: security issues, vandalism, needles and safety, and stealing of crops.

“More people more problems. If we get more people we'll need police. We're scared to open up the garden because other people are watching and are very territoria.”

“I'm all for being open and inclusive but it has to be satisfying for those who are committed to the garden”

- While allowing access to the wider community was seen by most as workable and valuable, many gardeners were disappointed and frustrated when their crops were stolen or garden vandalised.

“[It is] not motivating to come back when everything is gone”

- One garden that has had some community groups involved is finding this harder to do recently due to safety issues, and
- Complexity and overregulation was also seen as a barrier to newcomers. At least two gardens felt that they could do with more resources and support for community engagement.

HOW THE CITY CAN ASSIST WITH THE GARDENS

WHAT'S WORKING?

- Four groups expressed appreciation for the support of the City, particularly regarding bus tours of other gardens, provision of resources such as soil, mulch and public liability insurance.

“Very very grateful to the City, their support means it looks the way it does”

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- Two groups desired prompt feedback, faster processing, clarity around decision making and simpler grant applications
- Four groups desired support in dealing with safety and stealing issues. One group was frustrated that they did not receive support from the City regarding how to address ongoing vandalism, much of which poses significant safety hazards to gardeners and visitors, despite having suggested some solutions

“We have to go through all this red tape although we have all these people smashing bottles and shooting up in our garden bed”

“The issue is not whether there are weeds on the path (which is part of the permaculture), the issue is the syringes!”

“We get told off for things that for us are not the issue”

ATTACHMENT D

- Four groups appreciated and desired more support for interaction with other gardens, such as workshops and bus tours, and events and resources available to garden members, and
- Provision of resources such as soil, lighting, and maintenance such as root barriers were desired. Garden members and coordinators hoped for a simpler, faster process for provision of resources such as soil and mulch, which they felt had become difficult over the past 12 months.

"Not to have to beg for it, send multiple emails... It's a bit demeaning."

PERCEPTIONS OF THE DRAFT PREFERRED MATERIALS FOR USE IN COMMUNITY GARDENS

WHAT'S WORKING?

- Some groups felt that the Draft Preferred Materials would be useful if they were starting a new garden, and were very positive about the practical assistance offered by the Draft Preferred Materials. Members appreciated the benefit of the preferred materials in being examples rather than requirements.



WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

- The preferred materials were seen to be expensive and restrictive to the self-sustainability of the gardens. At least three groups perceived some of the materials to be unrealistic and not compatible with the funding available to the garden, such as raised garden beds
- Members felt that the preferred materials were restrictive to the learning experience of being part of the gardens

"You have to do all of the learning before you've even got them (chickens)"

- The preferred materials were not seen to consider the context of each garden or encapsulate the uniqueness of each community, such as values around up-cycling resources. Members suggest that they would adapt their garden for members and their unique needs when it is required (wheelchair access for example)

"If I was building a garden bed in my own garden I would be using recycled timber... it is so much better using a natural material"

"The reality is, whatever space you've got and whatever materials you have you build something"

"I would hate to see all of the gardens looking the same... materials should reflect the community and the people"

- Some members suggested the section that includes materials to be avoided could be expanded, and
- Another member felt a 'Growing Guide' for the Sydney basin would be a beneficial addition to the Preferred Materials.



Appendix 3 Submissions

This chapter provides a summary of the five submissions received in response to the revised Draft Community Garden Policy and Draft Community Garden Guidelines (Draft Policy and Guidelines) and Draft Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens (Draft Preferred Materials).

SUBMISSION 1 - WOOLLOOMOOLOO COMMUNITY GARDEN MEMBER

The key points from this submission were that:

- Members of this garden feel mentally, physically and financially drained and frustrated as they struggle to grow a good harvest. Some issues causing this are vandalism, garbage, syringes, defecation and urination from children, tourists, local residents, and rough sleepers requiring police intervention
- The Council sign has been placed near to the ground and so is now covered in graffiti, and
- The member would like to see their garden look more like the Bourke St garden, with locked fences, handy toilets, benches/chairs, a sign above eye level and police presence.

SUBMISSION 2 - AUSTRALIAN CITY FARMS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS NETWORK

This submission found no disagreement with the review documents in general. However, the authors made comments on some areas of the Draft Policy and Guidelines that the Network believed would benefit from clarification and extension, with a focus on the egalitarian, participatory ethos of community gardening and reducing bureaucratic barriers. Some specific areas included:

Draft Policy

- Does the City have jurisdiction over what happens on private land on rooftops and non-Council land? Do the Draft Policy and Guidelines only apply to gardens on City land or those seeking support from the City
- Education, workshops, hosting visits and small events should be included in the principles for a community garden
- Clarification is needed to the meaning of "shared amongst gardeners and the local community". It is proposed that reference to local community be deleted
- Many of the requirements are a financial and administrative burden to gardeners that may deter their involvement, and
- Social design should be included in the Management Plan.

Draft Guidelines

- Clarification of land ownership is required

- The submission provides commentary around garden materials, organic gardening, biodiversity and storage
- Page 18 subheading "managing community gardeners" should be changed to Coordinating community gardeners to fit with the participatory nature of community gardening
- More clarity around terms such as computing and communicating is needed
- The document needs a friendlier tone that celebrates community gardening and its community outcomes
- The requirement to submit an event application for small events common in community gardens disregards the spontaneity of most events and the City's desire for self-management. It differs from other local governments which require no permission requirements
- The City should support community garden groups with conflicts if required
- The wording of Garden Inspections comes across as authoritarian and does not support the City's desire for self-management
- Weeds could be regarded as crops – some are edible, some support permaculture principles. Not all gardens should look the same, and
- It is unrealistic to expect community garden groups to quantify the amount of produce grown – particularly for those groups that experience significant vandalism, where no crops result.

Draft Preferred Materials for Use in Community Gardens

The submission provides feedback on inclusions and changes to the Draft Preferred Materials resource including around garden safety, garden bed materials, and composting systems.

ATTACHMENT D

SUBMISSION 3 - ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS SYDNEY

Draft Policy and Guidelines

- Suggestions
 - Page 16 Trigonía sp are stingless native bees

Draft Preferred Materials

- Suggestions
 - Page 13 Reducing the timber going into landfill sites should be seen as an advantage not a disadvantage of using recycled timber for planter boxes
 - Page 30 Add Royal Botanic Gardens Community Greening Website and Newsletter link to the list of useful websites

SUBMISSION 4 - MARRICKVILLE COUNCIL

This submission was received from Marrickville Council staff (Coordinator Recreation Planning, Manager Environmental Services, Coordinator Community Sustainability, Environment Officer Community Sustainability, Team Leader Community Sustainability). The submission supports and seconds the feedback from the Australian City Farms and Community Garden Network (ACFCGN). The authors consider that all three documents are helpful and valuable resources and applaud the City for producing them.

Draft Community Gardens Policy

- Concerns
 - The Policy is focussed on food growing with little emphasis on the social benefits of community gardening (which can be much greater than food production)
 - Too narrow a definition of what a community garden is
 - Questions whether the Council has any right to govern what happens on Crown or private land
 - Verge gardens are considered community gardens in some parts of the policy and not others, and
 - Page 4 The expectation for community gardens to share their harvest with the local community all the time might be too great an expectation. Is it practical to expect that community garden sites should not interfere with other land uses?
- Suggestions
 - Place at least equal value on the social benefits of community gardening as food production
 - The Policy needs to be more about the philosophy (rather than being prescriptive) of what community gardening is, what its function is, why the City supports it, and how the City will support it
 - Page 1 needs a clear definition of what a community garden is. Should define the difference between

community gardens on private land, Council land and other land ownership, and

- Page 2 need to include the general community as a stakeholder

Draft Community Garden Guidelines

- Concerns
 - The tone of the Guidelines is prescriptive and may be interpreted as not allowing for gardeners to self-govern
 - The Guidelines are large and could be overwhelming for some people
 - It is unrealistic to expect groups to gain approval from the City to hold events which often are held at organised on the spur of the moment.
 - Page 24 Random inspections stress that gardens need to be neat and tidy, establishing a garden can be messy, particularly when deliveries are made
 - Page 25 It is unrealistic to expect garden groups to have the skills to keep records
 - Page 33 concern that the Signature Apartment is not really a community garden accessible to the public, and
 - Page 36 Template is useful but maybe overwhelming.
- Suggestions
 - Reduced use of the word "should" and replace with "could" and include an index to make use of the Guidelines easier
 - Place more emphasis on the need for good group management and decision making
 - Ensure that pictures relate to page content and include pictures that show people interacting at the gardens to show the social dimension of community gardening
 - Page 4 make a little less directive and reword sections. Perhaps state that the choice of private allotments, communal plots or a mixture of both should be made to maximise participation.
 - Page 6 make the points into checkboxes, change "a department" to "state or federal government department"; suggest adding "how does the sun change with the seasons"; include worm farming for garden types and allotments as another category
 - Greater use of plain English (eg soil fungi instead of mycelia)
 - Page 8 – use and/or instead of "and" for tap and water harvesting
 - Page 10 move governance skills above the gardening skills
 - Page 11 add establish a committee group
 - Page 15 add some rationale why organic gardening is encouraged
 - Page 16 add agricultural diversity and instead of discouraging keeping exotic bees focus on training

ATTACHMENT D

- Page 18, 22 and 40 add a point about expected conduct of mutual respect rather than being explicit
- Only require Council approval for community garden events that are over a certain size
- Page 22 Suggest changing “managing a community garden” to “coordinating a community garden”
- Page 25 Suggest that gardeners might want to collect stories of their experiences rather than just quantitative data
- Page 36 add that the template is to help gardeners but that all are not expected to answer all questions, and
- Page 36 Add additional comment about how the gardeners interact with each other and the public.

Draft Preferred Materials

The resource is very useful, however it needs more focus on sustainability including reuse (which can be cheaper).

- Suggestion
 - Include reference to the Bower or Reverse Garbage
 - Page 4 pond liner might be a better suggestion than plastic
 - Page 19 change “material that can be composted and when the bin is full and needs to rest”, and
 - Page 20 Disadvantages – add they are difficult to move if full.

SUBMISSION 5 - PUG MEN'S SHED

- Concerns
 - The Management Plan is very comprehensive, however, it is also overwhelming especially for groups with a simple garden.
- Suggestions
 - Note that all groups don't have to answer all questions in the Management Plan with an asterix next to those questions which are essential to answer.