

ITEM 2. BOURKE STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN – EXTENSION**FILE NO: S101147****SUMMARY**

This report recommends Council approve the extension of the Bourke Street Community Garden (the Garden) at 103 - 115 Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo.

The Bourke Street Community Garden Group (the Group) formed four years ago and presently comprises 35 members with strong support from local organisations and businesses. The community garden is self-managed to a high standard and the Group has collaborated with the City to ensure the Garden's Management Plan (refer Attachment C) is relevant, up to date and implemented.

Due to the popularity of the Garden, the Group is seeking Council approval to undertake an extension into the northern side of the open space at 103 - 115 Bourke Street. If approved, the City will assist the Group to construct and operate the community garden extension in accordance with Council's *Community Gardens Policy and Guidelines*.

The proposed extension will cover 410m² of land, increasing the Garden size to 645m². The extended Garden will include new communal raised garden beds for growing edible plants, planter boxes with miniature fruit trees, a new tool shed for storage, composting bays, a coop to house chickens, a native bee hive, and relocated seats and tables.

Community consultation was undertaken for the proposed extension between 20 May and 3 June 2016. A total of 46 submissions were received, all of which were in support.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that Council approve the extension of the Bourke Street Community Garden at 103 - 115 Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Bourke Street Community Garden Extension – Garden Design

Attachment B: Site Location Map

Attachment C: Bourke Street Community Garden Management Plan

Attachment D: Chicken Project Management Plan

Attachment E: Community Consultation Summary of Submissions

BACKGROUND

1. The Bourke Street Community Garden (the Garden) was established in 2011 as part of the major upgrade of Bourke Street Park. An expression of interest was advertised to help form a group interested in gardening and managing the site.
2. The Bourke Street Community Garden Group (the Group) formed in early 2012 and undertook consultation for the design of the garden, which was completed in August 2013.
3. The Garden is currently 235m² in size and is operating at capacity with 35 active members. The existing community garden was built in four stages and includes communal, raised planter boxes with edible plants, herb garden, composting bins and worm farms.
4. The Garden is open to all residents, organisations and businesses. The Group currently has 35 members and is very popular, with recent community consultation identifying potential new members who are interested in joining.
5. The Group has developed strong partnerships with TAFE Outreach and the Ozanam Learning Centre to provide free training and educational workshops for garden members and the broader community.
6. Ozanam Learning Centre ran a free, six week drawing class at the Garden from April to June 2016. These classes were very successful and provide an opportunity to learn new skills and meet others in the local community.
7. The Group has support from local businesses, with cafes providing kitchen scraps and coffee husks for the communal compost. A local restaurant has expressed interest in sponsoring the installation of a native bee hive.
8. Due to the Garden's popularity and community interest in local organic food production, the Group has proposed to expand the Garden to provide additional growing areas, tool storage, a native bee hive and a chicken coop.

Bourke Street Community Garden Extension

9. The Group has developed the design for the extension of the Bourke Street Community Garden (refer Attachment A), which has been informed by the City's *Community Gardens Policy and Guidelines*, input from the Group and community feedback.
10. It is envisaged that the extension will make use of a currently underutilised space in the park and expand opportunities for social interaction, healthy food production, relaxation and education. The scope for the extension includes:
 - (a) new communal, raised garden beds for growing edible plants;
 - (b) planter boxes with miniature fruit trees;
 - (c) a new tool shed for storage;
 - (d) composting bays;
 - (e) a coop to house chickens;

- (f) a native bee hive;
 - (g) relocated seats and tables; and
 - (h) new ground surfacing (mulch and decomposed granite).
11. It is proposed that extension will cover 410m² of land. Completion of this stage will increase the community garden to a total of 645m² (refer to Attachment B for site location).
12. In December 2015, the Group was successful in receiving a grant of \$7,150 under Council's Matching Grant Program to assist in funding the extension.

Community Gardens Policy and Guidelines

13. The *Community Gardens Policy* was adopted by Council in February 2016. The Policy encourages community garden groups to become self-managed and to educate and mentor other new and existing garden groups. The proposed extension has the potential to become a great community asset and meets the requirements for a community garden as defined by the Policy and outlined below:
- (a) **Landowner's consent** – Council approved the Garden in 2011 and through approval of this extension will be providing landowner's consent;
 - (b) **Location** – the existing Bourke Street Community Garden is located within Bourke Street Park. The area proposed for the extension is on land leased by the City for open space, and is owned by Transport for NSW and Roads and Maritime Services;
 - (c) **Community capacity** – the Group has 35 members, and a number of prospective members have expressed interest in joining as a result of the community consultation. Partnerships have been formed with TAFE Outreach, Ozanam Learning Centre and local businesses;
 - (d) **Safety** – the site is secured by a 1.8 metre high fence with the gate opened daily. Residential properties and the eastern distributor are also adjacent. The gardeners utilise the garden on a daily basis, which provides good passive surveillance;
 - (e) **Accessibility** – the site is accessible to a range of users with all abilities and is well supported by existing infrastructure. The park is well connected by pedestrian, bicycle and public transport access, as well as existing street access for deliveries;
 - (f) **Solar access** – the site has a northern aspect that provides good quality solar access for growing vegetable crops. Part of the site is shaded by an overhead railway viaduct and is suitable for the additional storage shed and chickens (refer to Attachment D for the Chicken Project Management Plan);
 - (g) **Size** – the existing site is 235m² and the proposed extension will be 410m². Following the extension the garden will be 645 m² in area, which is suitable to support the needs of the Group;
 - (h) **Water** – the site is currently connected to town water supply, as well as harvested rainwater tanks and taps;

- (i) **Soil contamination** – the edible produce is grown in raised garden beds and planters that are 450mm in height above the ground and filled with clean soil;
- (j) **Multiple uses** – Bourke Street Park has multiple uses including passive and active recreation provided through lawn areas, fitness stations, bench seating and tables, the community garden and public toilets;
- (k) **Existing features** – the site is neighboured by residential properties, local businesses and has a train viaduct that passes overhead. The sandstone herb garden was built from pieces of sandstone from a demolished property from the local area; and
- (l) **Land suitability** – the site is generally flat, making it suitable for extension of the garden. There is a slight slope towards the north-west side of the garden that will assist with drainage.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

14. *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 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 activities and programs.

Greening Sydney Plan

15. 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

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

Social / Cultural / Community

17. Community gardens contribute to the health and wellbeing of local residents and the broader community by connecting people and encouraging inclusion and social interaction in local communities.
18. Community gardening is a valuable recreational activity and provides a range of environmental, social and educational benefits that promote physical and mental wellbeing.
19. The Ozanam Learning Centre is an initiative from St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Support Services and currently operates programs at the garden. The Centre is a community focused early intervention centre, providing educational, living skills and recreational courses for local people experiencing homelessness, or at imminent risk of homelessness, and for those living in the community.
20. The Garden will provide for the inclusion of equal access as well as wheelchair access to at least one garden bed to encourage people of all abilities to participate in the gardening activities. The City will also assist with improving accessible pathways in the Garden.

Environmental

21. Community gardens create opportunities to share knowledge about sustainable living practices and provide a broad range of environmental benefits including:
 - (a) developing community capacity for local food production and educating the community about reducing the environmental impacts of transporting and distributing fresh food;
 - (b) encouraging native bees for pollination of flowers for fruit, vegetable production and bush tucker plants;
 - (c) recycling of food scraps, coffee husks and manure from chickens through composting;
 - (d) chickens eating food scraps, pests and insects and providing manure for the garden, as well as eggs to share with the gardeners. Keeping of Chickens (Poultry) will be in accordance with the Local Government Regulation 2005 – Part 5 standards for keeping birds
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_reg/lgr2005328/sch2.html; and
 - (e) the Garden has access to water from existing rainwater tanks that harvest rainwater from the train viaduct to provide recycled water.

Economic

22. Local food initiatives like community gardens can have an important role in providing safe, affordable and accessible food to all residents and businesses who wish to be involved.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

23. The Bourke Street Community Garden Group has received a grant \$7,150 from Council's Matching Grant Program.

24. In their grant application, the Group outlined a range of works that contribute in-kind to the matching grant. This includes preparation of the garden design layout, a Chicken Project Management Plan and Gardeners Agreement. They will also donate time to build the garden extension. This labour is valued at \$13,000 as an in-kind contribution.
25. The proposed Garden extension is estimated to cost \$20,150, made up of the matching grant funding of \$7,150 and the Group's \$13,000 value-in-kind. The matching grant will contribute to the cost of raised garden beds, gardening materials, tool shed, compost bays, chicken coop and chickens.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

26. The Group will commence construction of the Garden extension after receiving Council approval, and expect to complete the work by the end of 2016.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

27. Between 20 May and 3 June 2016, the City consulted with the local community about the Garden extension through the following activities:
 - (a) distribution of a letter, with a copy of the garden design layout, to 3,000 local residents and businesses. The letter provided web links to consultation material and outlined methods to provide feedback;
 - (b) SydneyYourSay webpage announcing the consultation, displaying the Group's proposed plans (Management Plan, Garden Design Layout and Chicken Project Management Plan). An online submission form and City staff emails were provided for people to have their say; and
 - (c) copies of the notification letter and garden design layout were displayed on the front fence of the community garden.
28. The City received 46 submissions from local residents, organisations and businesses (refer to Attachment E for a summary of the submissions).
29. All 46 respondents showed support for the Garden extension. Reasons for support included interest in participating, ability to show children where food comes from, environmental benefits and the introduction of chickens.

GEORGE ANGELIS

Acting Director City Operations

Joel Johnson, Manager Parks Trees and Aquatic Facilities

Jacqui Brooks – Program Manager, Parks Services

Raewyn Broadfoot, Community Gardens and Volunteer Coordinator