

Community Garden - Kings Cross Community Garden, Elizabeth Bay

File No: S124720

Summary

This report recommends Council approve a new community garden at Lawrence Hargraves Reserve, 9A Elizabeth Bay Road, Elizabeth Bay.

The Kings Cross Community Garden Group have consulted with City staff to identify an appropriate site and to prepare a community garden design and management plan. The group is now seeking Council's approval to construct and operate the community garden at Lawrence Hargraves Reserve in accordance with the City's Community Gardens Policy and Guidelines. It is proposed to construct the community in two stages subject to funding availability and demand for gardening space.

The Kings Cross Community Garden Group comprises 138 members. The group has applied for a City Matching Grant for \$10,000 to assist funding the development of a new community garden.

Community consultation was undertaken for the proposal between 27 November and 15 December 2017. A total of 88 submissions were received which included:

- 76 submissions in support (86 per cent);
- 6 submissions in support with conditions (7 per cent); and
- 6 submissions in opposition (7 per cent).

A summary of the submissions and responses can be found in Attachment D.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) approve the design of a new community garden (stages 1 and 2) at Lawrence Hargraves Reserve, at 9A Elizabeth Bay Road, Elizabeth Bay and proceed with delivery of Stage 1; and
- (B) note that the future stage 2 is to be delivered to coincide with funding availability, support by community garden members, demonstrated success and demand for further garden space. Stage 2 will require further community consultation and the development of a management plan for the livestock. Significant changes to the design may require further approval by Council.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Location Map of Kings Cross Community Garden
- Attachment B.** Kings Cross Community Garden Management Plan
- Attachment C.** Garden Design Layout
- Attachment D.** Community Consultation Summary of Submissions
- Attachment E.** Budget Implications (Confidential)

Background

1. In November 2015, a group of 13 local Kings Cross residents interested in establishing a community garden started the Kings Cross Community Garden group (the group) with advice and support from City staff.
2. Following review of four possible locations in Kings Cross and Rushcutters Bay with City Staff, the group selected an open space within Lawrence Hargraves Reserve, Elizabeth Bay, as the preferred site for the community garden. This was the most suitable site due to the good solar access, the availability of water, the level ground and the reserve size which can comfortably accommodate existing passive recreation activities and the new community garden.
3. The proposed community garden site is 250 square metres in size (190 square metres in stage 1 and 60 square metres in stage 2) and located on the eastern side of the reserve (refer Attachment A). The proposed the community garden will occupy about 6 per cent of the open space available at Lawrence Hargraves Reserve.
4. The group has 138 members interested in participating and supportive of the garden.
5. The group has proposed charging an annual membership fee of \$20 and will waive the fees to members in cases of financial hardship. The membership funds will help sustain ongoing operations including the purchase of seed, plants and mulch.
6. The group has applied for a \$10,000 grant under the City's Matching Grants Program to assist in funding the development of the community garden.
7. In May 2016, a qualified Landscape Architect and a member of the Kings Cross Community Group organised a design planning workshop to develop the group's garden design and management plan for the garden (Attachments B and C).
8. Stage 1 of the community garden will comprise raised garden beds for growing vegetables and herbs, a tool shed for storing tools and hoses, green waste recycling with composting and worm farms, and seating for gatherings, and will be surrounded by a low fence.
9. The future Stage 2 will comprise additional garden beds, native bees and - subject to further assessment - a chicken coup. Stage 2 is to be delivered to coincide with funding availability, support by community garden members, demonstrated success and demand for further garden space. Stage 2 will require further community consultation and development of a management plan for the livestock. Significant changes to the design may require further approval by Council.
10. The group will manage the garden with support from City staff and encourage local residents to become involved.

Lawrence Hargraves Reserve

11. Lawrence Hargraves Reserve is classed as a Council-owned pocket park and classified as community land available for public access and community use. It is located on the roof of a Council-owned carpark.

12. The Kings Cross Memorial committee received a donation of a Hoop Pine tree by the City of Sydney. This memorial tree is planted in the south-eastern corner of Lawrence Hargraves Reserve, adjacent to the proposed garden. An annual memorial event is held in the reserve each year to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in drug related deaths in the community. The design does not impact on this memorial planting.
13. The reserve is an off-leash park and used for passive recreation. The garden is proposed to be fenced to prevent access by dogs.
14. The area is known for homeless, rough sleepers and antisocial behaviour and the park has two sharps containers. The garden will introduce a positive activation of the space and increase visual surveillance. The challenging environment will continue to be managed and monitored by the City's Safe City unit and local Police. The group have already been working with the local community to build rapport and have developed a management plan to guide the group with safety requirements dealing with sharps and vandalism in the garden.
15. The park is due for a capital works renewal upgrade in 2020/21 which will include, among other items, an accessible pathway from Elizabeth Bay Road.

Community Garden Policy and Guidelines

16. The Community Gardens Policy and Guidelines was adopted by Council in February 2016. The Policy contains site selection criteria which the Kings Cross Community Garden Group have assessed and discussed with City staff. The proposed community garden meets the site selection criteria as follows:
 - (a) location – the site is a Council-owned park on community land and is located on the rooftop of a Council-owned carpark. The City is investigating loading and waterproofing issues which may influence the final detailed design;
 - (b) safety – the site has passive surveillance from the neighbouring apartments, local businesses, nearby police station and people using the reserve on a daily basis;
 - (c) accessibility – the community garden stage one has been designed as an accessible area. It is proposed an accessible path will be constructed to the garden as part of a capital works renewal upgrade to the reserve;
 - (d) solar access – the site has a north-westerly aspect which provides good quality solar access for growing vegetable and fruit crops;
 - (e) size – the site is 250 square metres in area and offers a variety of spaces for growing produce crops. Stage one is 190 square metres in size which is comparable with existing gardens at St Helens Community Garden in Glebe, and the Charlie's Community Garden, Darlington;
 - (f) water – there is existing water supply and taps located in stage one and stage two areas;

- (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 without detrimentally impacting human or plant health. The garden design will include raised garden beds and imported soil suitable for vegetable growing;
- (h) air contamination - the City conducted air quality testing from the car park roof air vents near the proposed community garden stage one area. Air quality testing showed compliance with the relevant environmental air quality impact assessment criteria for the health of the gardeners and growing food crops;
- (i) multiple uses – Lawrence Hargraves Reserve has multiple uses including passive and active recreation provided through the open turf areas, off leash area, bench seating and the proposed community garden;
- (j) existing features - the site is neighboured by residential properties, local businesses and a nearby police station. The community garden will not negatively impact on the existing park features such as the groves of trees, park memorial sites or car park air vents. Existing park features will be retained and protected; and,
- (k) land suitability - the stage one site is generally flat and well-suited for a community garden. The stage two site is raised 800mm in height and will require additional safety fencing and access requirements at the back of the reserve.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

17. 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) Resilient and Inclusive 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,
 - (e) Implementation through Effective Governance and 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

18. 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

19. City staff will work in partnership with the Kings Cross Community Garden Group to deliver construction of the garden. The community garden will also receive ongoing support and assistance through the City's Community Gardens Program.

Risks

20. The Kings Cross Community Garden Group have developed a management plan to reduce the likelihood of, and effectively manage risks, to ensure the safety of the gardeners within the community garden. City staff will induct the group to the site and provide ongoing support to encourage the group to become self-managed to a high standard.
21. In January 2018, 214 needle sharps were collected from the two sharps bins in the park with four discarded sharps collected from the park. The group proposes to manage this risk by removing the sharps themselves or contacting the needle hotline to remove the sharps, which is stated in their Management plan.

Social / Cultural / Community

22. 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 an outdoor community hub.
23. A community garden at Kings Cross would increase the use and community ownership of public open space in the Elizabeth Bay area.
24. The garden design provides for accessible spaces through the garden, as well as accessible garden beds, to encourage residents with physical disabilities to participate in gardening activities.

Environmental

25. Community gardens provide a range of environmental benefits, including developing community capacity to grow organic food and educating the community about recycling gardening waste.

Economic

26. Local food initiatives like community gardens can have an important role in providing safe, affordable and accessible food to the local community.

Budget Implications

27. There are sufficient funds allocated for these works within the draft 2018/19 operational budgets, Landscape Projects and Community Gardens (refer confidential Attachment E).

Critical Dates / Time Frames

28. Following Council's approval, the City will work with and support the Kings Cross Community Garden Group to construct the garden in the two stages outlined in the community garden design and management plan.

Actions	Timeframes
Council approval - approval of location, design and management plan	May 2018
Construction documentation and procurement of contractors - stage one	May - June 2018
Construction - stage one	July - August 2018
Site inductions and commence gardening operations	September 2018

29. The future stage 2 is to be delivered to coincide with funding availability, support by community garden members, demonstrated success and demand for further garden space. Further consultation for stage 2 is required.

Options

30. If the City does not fund the additional construction works, the project could be delivered in smaller stages as funding becomes available through the group. This approach is not desirable as it would delay project delivery and result in a higher project cost. This would likely negatively impact on project momentum and membership.

Public Consultation

Community Consultation

31. In December 2017, the City consulted with the local community through the following activities:
- (a) distribution of a notification letter with a copy of the proposed design to 2,150 local residents and businesses within a 500 metre radius of Lawrence Hargraves Reserve. The letter provided an overview of the garden proposal and outlined the ways in which people could have their say;
 - (b) SydneyYourSay web page including overview of the garden proposal, a copy of the garden management plan and garden design, an online submissions form and an outline of the ways in which people could have their say; and,
 - (c) notification letter and garden design displayed at the proposed location on site at Lawrence Hargraves Reserve.

32. The City received 88 submissions from local residents, businesses and organisations. One submission in support was received from the Wayside Chapel, which has developed its own rooftop community garden. The Kings Cross Memorial committee welcomes and supports the development of a community garden in Lawrence Hargraves Reserve. A summary of submissions can be found in Attachment D.
33. Seventy-six submissions gave their support for the proposal citing reasons such as the shared use of the space which allows space for dog walkers and other park users, the environmental benefits it will deliver, its potential for education and learning, and the constructive use of a space for the whole community.
34. Six submissions gave their endorsement pending clarification of issues such as potential conflicts with existing memorials in the park and the City providing an accessible pathway through the park.
35. Six submissions opposed the community garden citing an increase in noise due to construction and gardening activities, concerns about the noise and smell of potential chickens, decreased property value, and increased antisocial activity and petty crime.
36. In response to feedback, the City recommends deleting a garden bed in stage 2 as it would restrict the annual memorial gathering to honour the memory of those who lost their lives in drug related deaths.
37. Further consultation will be undertaken for stage 2 once the group is ready to proceed with the additional works. A management plan to keep chickens and native bees will need to be developed and consulted further if they are proposed as part of stage 2.

DAVID RIODAN - DIRECTOR CITY OPERATIONS

Joel Johnson, Manager City Greening and Leisure

Raewyn Broadfoot, Community Gardens and Volunteer Coordinator