

	<h2>Community Garden Policy</h2>
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Responsible officer	Manager, Community Planning
Policy owner	Social Planning and Wellbeing Coordinator

1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to guide Council's decision making in relation to the establishment of community gardens on Council owned or managed land within the City of Melton. The policy has been developed in the context of Council's commitment to protect, improve, and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.

The policy provides direction on the process and accountabilities for managing requests for community gardens made by incorporated community organisations, and what level of support Council may provide. This policy encourages the establishment of community gardens by eligible community groups.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- requests received by Council in relation to the establishment of community gardens by community groups, on Council owned or managed land
- the handling of requests, including the request process and the specific departmental roles throughout the process.

The following is outside of the scope of this policy:

- requests received by Council in relation to the establishment of community-led gardens on private land within the City of Melton
- requests received by Council in relation to the establishment of gardens by individuals on Council owned, managed or private land
- other forms of landscapes such as botanical gardens, market or commercial-use gardens, edible landscapes, or nature strip improvements
- the ongoing stages of community garden establishment, use of produce from community gardens once established, and their ongoing management.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Community gardens	Community gardens are places of either temporary, semi-permanent or permanent agreements where people come together to grow, harvest, and propagate edible and non-edible plants in a supportive

Word/Term	Definition
	<p>community context. When carefully designed and managed they can provide a wide range of environmental, social, and economic benefits.</p> <p>There are several different community garden structures, with the most common types being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those with individual plots allocated to individuals • those where the entire garden is run collectively as a shared enterprise • those that integrate both individual plots and shared gardens.
Council managed land	<p>Council managed land is not owned by Council however Council has landowner's permission to utilise the area, examples include linear reserves and powerline easements. Council managed land may require additional approvals (in comparison to Council owned land) from the governing body of that land.</p>
Community organisation	<p>A community organisation is a not-for-profit, registered, and legal entity that is accessible and accountable to members of the community. It may have an elected committee of management or executive group that act on behalf of and for the benefit of the club, organisation and/or the broader community.</p>
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles	<p>CPTED principles aim to influence and inform decisions about designing and managing environments, to prevent the incidence of crime and enable communities to be safer, more secure, and therefore more sustainable.</p>
Edible landscapes	<p>Edible landscapes are Council planned and delivered projects that are temporary, semi-permanent or permanent spaces. These landscapes are for the benefit of the community and may include things such as fruit trees on nature strips and edible gardens at Council venues that are maintained by Council.</p>

4. Policy

Community gardens are places where people come together to grow harvest and propagate food and other plants, to learn new skills, meet other people, form meaningful connections with one another and be part of their local community. Council acknowledges that community gardens are a valuable addition to the municipal landscape and offer many benefits including:

- contributing to positive public health and wellbeing outcomes through increased social connection, healthy food production and availability
- supporting community development and capacity building through skill development and sharing
- developing community pride and enhancing sense of place
- fostering environmental education and increasing awareness of sustainability principles.

The objectives of this policy are to ensure that:

- approved requests for community gardens comply with the requirements of the [Melton Planning Scheme](#)
- requests for community gardens are consistent with Council's strategic objectives, strategic planning and land use planning documents and resourcing availability
- approved requests are supported by community led models for the ongoing establishment and management of community gardens
- a consistent approach is taken in Council's decision-making process when assessing community garden requests.

In order to fulfil these objectives, Council will consider requests from community groups against the eligibility and suitability criteria outlined in section 6 of this policy.

5. Request process

The Community Garden Guidelines provide an in-depth explanation of the request process for establishing a community-led community garden, for interested community groups. The following is a linear overview of the request process relating to the roles of various departments across Council:

5.1 A request is made to Council

Applicant makes a request to Council and are directed to the Community Planning Department. Community Planning outlines the request process and required eligibility. If the request is made by an individual or unregistered/non-incorporated group they are referred to a Council Officer who can provide direction on how to become an established entity, to enable them to become eligible as per section 6.1 of this policy.

5.2 A pre-request meeting is held

Should the applicant identify they believe themselves to be eligible and want to progress with the request a pre-request meeting is held. Council Officers in attendance will include Council's City Strategy and Design Department and other relevant departments, as organised by the Community Planning Department.

5.3 Request is lodged

The Applicant completes the request form (template provided in the community gardens guidelines) and lodges it by email to the Community Planning Department.

5.4 Initial eligibility and capacity assessment

The Community Planning provide an initial assessment of the request. If the organisation applying is eligible and criteria for governance are satisfactory, Community Planning then sends to the City Design and Strategy Department.

5.5 Suitability assessment

The City Design and Strategy Department are responsible for assessing site suitability and the size and design suitability in consultation with other relevant departments, including co-located Council facilities and services. An outcome regarding suitability and next steps must be communicated to the Applicant within 60 business days of the request submission, and the completed assessment form is provided to Community Planning for record keeping.

5.6 Proceed with relevant permits

Where required, the Applicant obtain any relevant permits to progress the request, the Planning Department supports the lodgement of requests where required. The group may be eligible for a Council grant which could cover the costs of the permit process.

5.7 Development of lease arrangement

If a Permit is granted, the matter is referred to the Legal Department who organise a 12-month lease agreement between Council and the Applicant.

5.8 Community Garden can now be established

Once the lease agreement is arranged, the Applicant may establish a Community Garden on the approved site, within the confines of the approved design and scope. The Applicant may also now be eligible to apply through Councils Grants Program for funds to support the community garden itself.

6. Request assessment

The Community Planning Department and the City Design and Strategy Department will have a tiered approach to assessing requests. At the initial stage, the Community Planning Department will be responsible for determining if the community organisation is eligible and demonstrates sufficient capacity to satisfy the criteria outlined in section 6.1. Should the request satisfy these criteria, the request will then proceed to the City Design and Strategy Department, who will assess the suitability of the nominated site/s and the scope and design of the proposed community garden as per section 6.2, and determine its final outcome.

In order for Council to review a formal request for a community garden, community groups must complete the request form found in the Community Garden Guidelines.

6.1 Initial assessment criteria

Eligibility

- is incorporated or has the support of an auspice body
- public liability and site insurance as deemed appropriate.

Sound planning and risk management

- evidence of engagement with relevant community members and site users (e.g. surveys of neighbouring residents and local facility users) as informed by advice from Council
- demonstration of appropriate community support for the establishment of a community garden
- the community group is able to demonstrate in its request that it:
 - is a highly organised, motivated, and adequately skilled group of residents with demonstrable skill, commitment, and time to participate in and govern the community garden in the short and long term
 - has established funds and ongoing income streams (or the ability to establish these within six months of lodging the request)
 - has demonstrated commitment to community inclusion and accessibility
 - has provided evidence of a plan for intended ongoing governance and management of the garden, inclusive of the expected garden life cycle.
- the request includes a clear and realistic financial plan (inclusive of establishment and ongoing costs).

6.2 Suitability

Assessment of site, scope and design suitability for community gardens will be made by the City Design and Strategy Department in consultation with relevant stakeholders, in line in consultation with relevant departments and informed by the Melton Planning Scheme.

The nominated site needs to:

- be consistent with land use planning strategic documents and relevant planning provisions including master plans and the [Melton Planning Scheme](#)
- be consistent with existing (and future) Council policies and procedures (e.g. Landscape Guidelines), master plans, urban design principles and CPTED principles
- be confirmed to be on relevant land (that is Council owned or managed)
- have suitable land tenure and a long-term lease/licence agreement can be identified or established
- have access to mains water
- have soil quality conducive to community gardening/ability for raised garden beds
- be likely to contribute positively to local amenity including enhancing natural surveillance and activation of public space
- be in close proximity to suitable existing community infrastructure
- offer a suitable sun: shade ratio.
- be in close proximity to an accessible toilet
- appropriate nearby parking provisions and/or public transport access (including pedestrian and cycling access)
- have a reasonable scope and design suitable to the proposed area, and conducive to a sustainable community garden.

7. Provision of Council support

In the first instance, the support offered by Council is guidance to the community group for the following components of the process.

- understanding the request process
- identifying suitable site/s, and appropriate scope and design
- lodging the request.

Other existing forms of support offered by Council may also be appropriate for the community organisation to access.

- support with establishment/capacity building for community groups
- financial support for the establishment and maintenance of the community gardens via the existing [Community Grants program](#) (note community groups should have obtained approval for their request prior to applying for these grants)
- financial support for the establishment and maintenance of the community garden via the [Council budget submission process](#).

8. Long term considerations

The terms of a lease arrangement for a community garden will reinforce that if a community garden initiative is not successful, or not maintained to an appropriate standard, costs for the removal of the garden and infrastructure needs must be covered by the community organisation.

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1	Manager Community Planning Oversee implementation of the policy including community engagement, coordination of request process and review and collaboration with Council departments
9.2	Manager Planning Oversee the Planning Department's support to applicants to lodge permits where required.
9.3	Manager City Design and Strategy The City Design and Strategy department is responsible for providing an assessment of the site suitability of the proposed community garden and engaging relevant Officers in this process from across Council as appropriate (e.g. Recreation, Community Activation and Learning, Planning, Operations, Engineering).
9.4	Manager Recreation and Youth Oversee the contribution by the Recreation and Youth department who are responsible for supporting City Design and Strategy to assess site suitability relating to provision of land, if adjacent to sports and recreation sites.
9.5	Managers, Coordinators, Team Leaders and Supervisors Ensure all employees are made aware of the policy.

10. References and links to legislation and other documents

Name	Location
Melton Planning Scheme	Ordinance (planning.vic.gov.au)
The Good Practice Guide for Community Gardens	www.cultivatingcommunity.org.au
The Community Grants Program	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Grants-Awards-and-Training/Community-Grants
The Council budget submission process	https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Council/Have-your-say/Do-you-have-a-great-project-idea?BestBetMatch=budget%20submission d13b95b2-5146-4b00-9e3e-a80c73739a64 4f05f368-ecaa-4a93-b749-7ad6c4867c1f en-AU