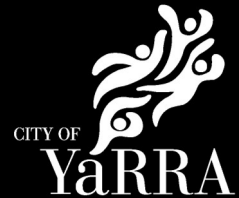


# STREET GARDEN GUIDELINES

## Community Engagement Report



This report details the specifics of the Street Garden Guidelines community engagement and evaluates the participation. The consultation opened on Monday 20 November and was live until Monday 18 December 2023.

### Why we ran this consultation?

Yarra City Council is developing Street Garden Guidelines to provide guidance on how the community can plan, plant and maintain gardens within Yarra's streetscapes.

The Guidelines are intended to inform and educate the community about the various considerations for gardening in streetscapes across the municipality. The Guidelines will include safety, accessibility and tree protection requirements; and will recommend preferred species selections to increase biodiversity. The proposed Guidelines need to be finalised and then taken to Council to be endorsed. This project was initiated via a Councillor motion.

### Objectives of this engagement

1. To inform community about the Street Garden Guidelines.
2. To seek community feedback on whether there is any information missing in the draft Street Garden Guidelines and whether there are other considerations that should be included in the draft Guidelines when planning community street gardens.

### Level of Community influence

#### Negotiables

The community can influence:

1. Detailed information required to guide community members to install a street garden.
2. Other considerations that we have missed in the Street Garden Guidelines.

#### Non-negotiables

The community cannot influence:

1. Tree protection measures.
2. Plant heights / Plant offsets.
3. Introducing structures, raised edges and other materials listed in the Guidelines.
4. Amendment of the 'Do Not Plant' list.
5. Removal of gardens that present a safety or accessibility risk or when works are required by Council or service authorities.

### What did we ask?

#### Participants were asked:

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the draft Street Garden Guidelines. Rate from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.
  - The draft Guidelines clearly explain the steps required to begin planning a street garden,
  - The draft Guidelines clearly explain what cannot be included in your street garden,
  - The draft Guidelines clearly explain your role as a community member and the role of Council in the upkeep of street gardens,
  - The draft Guidelines clearly explain why some plants are prohibited, and

- The draft Guidelines clearly explain how to prevent street gardens from becoming hazardous and causing accessibility issues.
2. Is there any information that is missing to guide you on installing a street garden?
  3. Are there any other considerations that should be included in these draft Guidelines for planting community street gardens?

**Methods :**

- Online survey on Your Say Yarra webpage

**Who did we hear from?**

Demographic data was collected via the 63 online copies of the survey.

- Most people who completed this survey (93.65%) live in Yarra. 49.21% indicated that they own a property or mortgage in Yarra and 28.57% work in Yarra.
- More women (63.49%) than men (14.29%) completed this survey, with the remaining people self-described or preferring not to answer this question.
- The most common age range for people who completed this survey was 50-59 (30.16%) followed by 35-49 (19.05%).
- Participants from most suburbs were represented. Most of the people who completed this survey (19.05%) live in Fitzroy North, closely followed by Fitzroy (15.87%), Clifton Hill and Richmond (14.29%).
- We had a good proportion of underrepresented community members taking part, with three out of four of our key target groups completing the survey:
  - Person who speaks a language other than English – 7.94%
  - Person with a disability – 6.35%
  - Member of the LGBTIQ+ community – 11.11%

What's your connection to Yarra?	Numbers	Percentage
I live in Yarra	59	93.65%
I work in Yarra	18	28.57%
I visit Yarra	3	4.76%
I study in Yarra	2	3.17%
I own a property or mortgage in Yarra	31	49.21%
I rent in Yarra	2	3.17%
I own a business in Yarra	7	11.11%

What gender do you identify as?	Numbers	Percentage
Man	9	14.29%
Woman	40	63.49%
Self-described	1	1.59%
I prefer not to say	13	20.63%

What is your age range?	Numbers	Percentage
Under 11	0	0%
12 to 17	0	0%
18 to 24	1	1.59%
25 to 34	6	9.52%
35 to 49	12	19.05%
50 to 59	19	30.16%
60 to 69	11	17.46%
70 to 84	11	17.46%
85 and older	0	0%
I prefer not to say	3	4.76%
What suburb do you live in	Numbers	Percentage
Abbotsford	4	6.35%
Alphington	4	6.35%
Burnley	0	0%
Carlton North	7	11.11%
Clifton Hill	9	14.29%
Collingwood	5	7.94%
Cremorne	0	0%
Fairfield	0	0%
Fitzroy	10	15.87%
Fitzroy North	12	19.05%
Princes Hill	1	1.59%
Richmond	9	14.29%

I live outside of Yarra	2	3.17%
<b>Select all that apply. I am.....</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	5	7.94%
A person living with a disability.	4	6.35%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	7	11.11%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	0	0%
None of the above.	35	55.56%
I prefer not to say.	13	20.63%

## Engagement Reach

Engagement and Communications Activity
Your Say Yarra page containing key information about the project including FAQs and online survey.
Social media posts
Council's email newsletters, included in: Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra EDM and Libraries EDM.
News item (corporate website).
Postcards at key Council venues including Libraries and Customer Service Centres.
Digital Screens within our customer service centres.

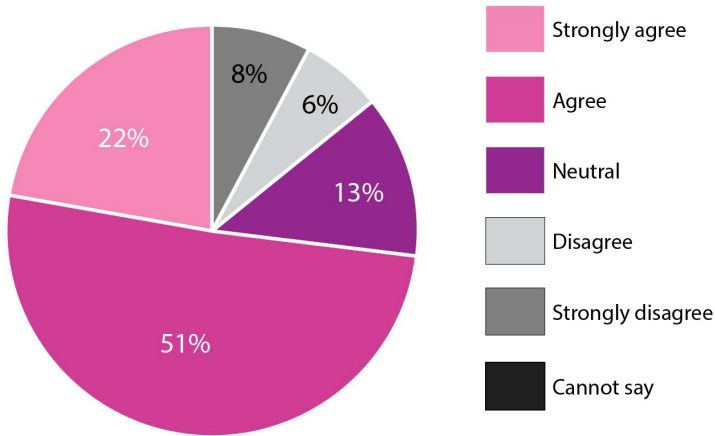
## What did we hear?

The online survey contained a mix of agreement matrix, single response and open ended questions.

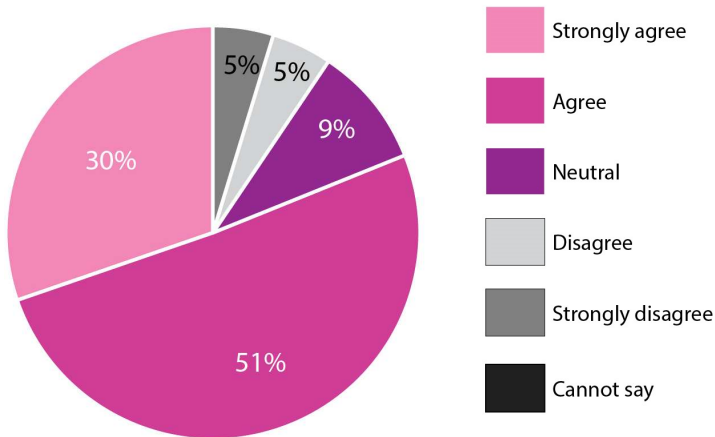
The first question asked the community to rate their level of agreement with 5 statements about the draft Guidelines on a scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The results are listed below:

**Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the draft Street Garden Guidelines. Rate from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.**

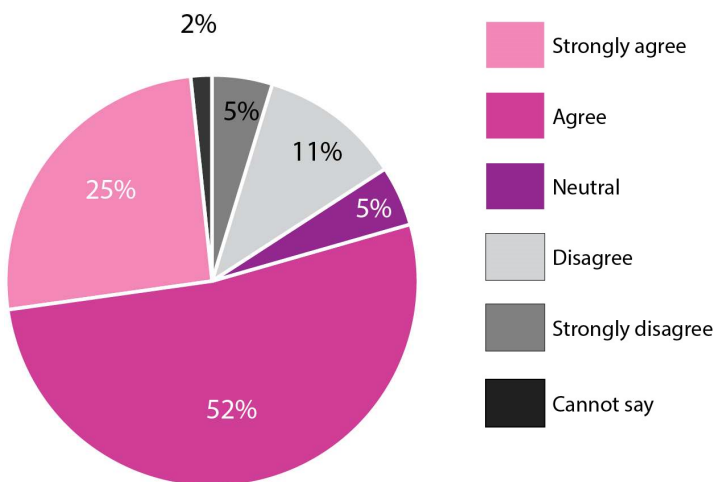
**The draft Guidelines clearly explain the steps required to begin planning a street garden.**



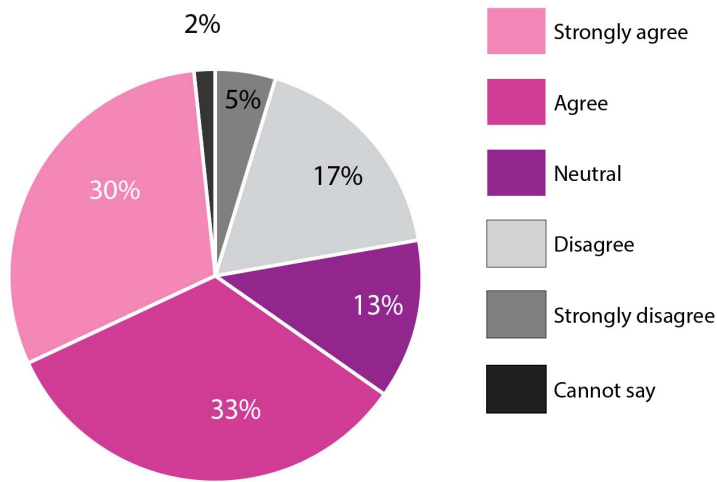
**The draft Guidelines clearly explain what cannot be included in your street garden.**



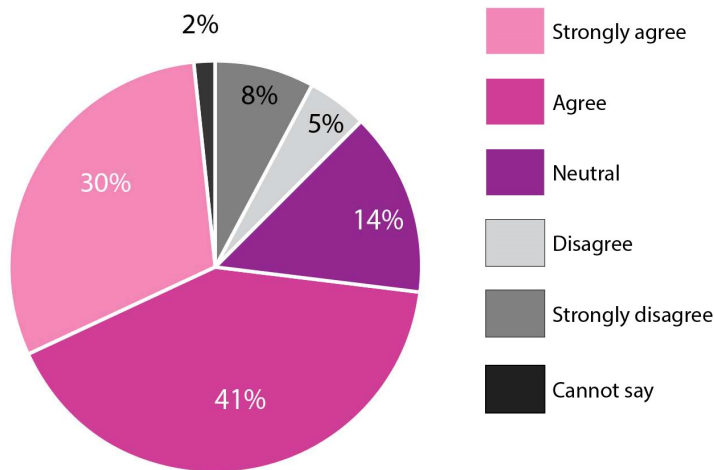
**The draft Guidelines clearly explain your role as a community member and the role of Council in the upkeep of street gardens.**



**The draft Guidelines clearly explain why some plants are prohibited.**

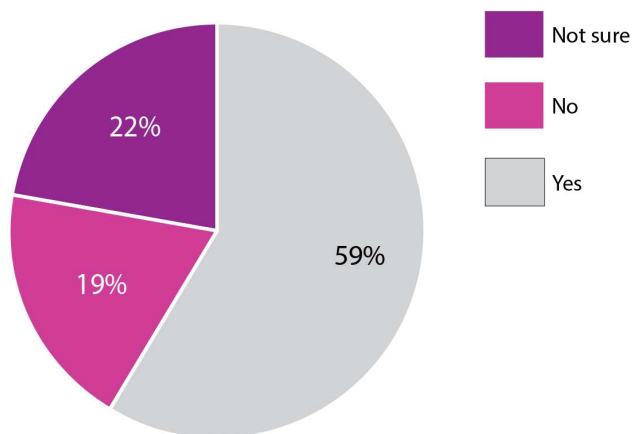


**The draft Guidelines clearly explain how to prevent street gardens from becoming hazardous and causing accessibility issues.**



The next question asked if there was any missing information.

**Is there any information that is missing to guide you on installing a garden?**



The final two questions were open ended.

**Please outline the information you think is missing (if they answered yes to the previous question).**

**Are there any other considerations that should be included in these draft Guidelines for planting community street gardens?**

The text from these responses was analysed and broken down into the key themes below. Text responses have been combined due to recurring cross over between the two questions.

Feedback Theme 1 – Need for Guidelines	
What did we hear	Our response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question of why the Guidelines were necessary was raised by some, querying the need for more regulation which was felt to discourage community input and enthusiasm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons behind the draft Guidelines have been stated on the Your Say Yarra webpage.</li> <li>‘We’re supportive of these community street gardens, however there are several issues that need to be considered when planting a street garden to ensure that our streetscapes remain safe, accessible and that plantings do not damage other assets including our street trees’.</li> <li>Council is not intending to discourage future community input and enthusiasm or diminish the value of these beautiful, biodiverse street gardens.</li> </ul>
Feedback Theme 2 – Document structure	
What did we hear	Our response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Guidelines are over complicated/too detailed and lacking positivity, making them difficult to understand and discouraging.</li> <li>A step-by-step process to seek support for a street garden has not been clearly outlined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council officers will take on board feedback in relation to the document structure, we will simplify content where possible whilst making sure that the guideline objectives are preserved.</li> <li>An ‘Online Yarra Street Garden Questionnaire’ will be available further to the Guidelines being finalised, which will guide residents through the process step-by-step.</li> </ul>
Feedback Theme 3 – Existing street gardens	
What did we hear	Our response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns were shared in relation to existing street garden removal and the importance of Council notifying/holding a discussion with residents prior to this action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft Guidelines included a section on legacy gardens. It was stated, ‘there are many existing valued, biodiverse and beautiful street gardens in Yarra. There is no expectation that these gardens be removed, even if they do not fully comply with the guidelines’.</li> </ul>

- Council may need to modify or remove an existing garden if a specific concern is raised regarding safety, accessibility, or tree health. Council reserves the right to do so without consultation or compensation.

#### Feedback Theme 4 - Maintenance

##### What did we hear

- A request for further detail covering the maintenance expectations of residents, including but not limited to litter and dog poo controls.

##### Our response

- The draft Guidelines make note of maintenance expectations.
- The 'Online Yarra Street Garden Questionnaire' adds to this further. It is expected that the garden is kept tidy, litter and dog poo should be collected and binned as required.

#### Feedback Theme 5 – Neighbourhood consent and ownership

##### What did we hear

- A request for further clarification/details on consent requirements from neighbours.
  - Will Council officers offer support with neighbourhood mediation if required and or manage an up-to-date register/contact list?
- Place additional emphasis on community ownership; still public space, not privately owned

##### Our response

- The 'Online Yarra Street Garden Questionnaire' will inform residents of these requirements.
- If consent is required from a neighbour and/or any other affected property owner or tenant and is not granted, you are not able to proceed with your street garden.
- Council will have a log of all submitted questionnaires containing contact details. These details will be recorded for the purposes of the submission only.
- A street garden is considered to be available and accessible to the local neighbourhood.

#### Feedback Theme 6 – Council support

##### What did we hear

- How will Council further support this initiative? Will Council provide any of the following; gardening advice/materials/tools, vehicular protection of garden area/safeguards for pedestrians, signage, financial reimbursement and or improve existing conditions for plants?

##### Our response

- Street gardens are a community lead initiative and Council provides limited support.
- As outlined in the draft Guidelines there are certain expectations for residents to work within existing site conditions.



- Council’s recycling drop-off centre, located in Clifton Hill, provides a stockpile of mulch for residents to utilise.

### Feedback Theme 7 – Additional resources

#### What did we hear

- A request to include interactive links to relevant resources such as; ‘Recommended’ and ‘Do not plant’ species lists, local environmental weeds list, Gardens for Wildlife, Indigenous nurseries (Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-Operative VINC and Nangak Tamboree Wildlife Sanctuary Indigenous Nursery), and tool borrowing libraries (Brunswick Tool Library).
- Provide graphic plans/photographic examples of planting options and ‘Recommended’ species selections that meet guideline standards.

#### Our response

- As part of the community engagement, Council provided a link to Yarra’s ‘Recommended’ and ‘Do Not Plant’ Street Garden Species Lists on the Your Say Yarra web page alongside the draft Guidelines. These links will also be made available on Council’s website alongside the final Guidelines.
- Council is also happy to provide the following interactive links as a part of the final Guidelines;
  - Yarra’s Gardens for Wildlife booklet
  - Removing Weeds in Yarra and Planting Indigenous Alternatives document
  - Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-Operative; [VINC](#)
  - Brunswick Tool Library; [Brunswick Tool Library](#).
- Council encourages residents to get creative with planting design within the restrictions of the Guidelines.

### Feedback Theme 8 – Street garden locations

#### What did we hear

- Clarification on acceptable street garden locations; for example – can residents’ plant in Council gardens lacking vegetation, parks, laneways, roadside tree squares and median strips.
- Are there alternative options for people who live in streets that cannot support street gardens due to physical constraints. Can a resident ‘adopt’ a street garden in a neighbouring street or suburb?

#### Our response

- New street garden locations will only be approved if located within an existing lawn nature strip or existing tree square located within the footpath or road. All other locations fall outside of the project scope and are not supported by Council.
- Negotiations between residents can take place in relation to organising a street garden outside another resident’s property or in a neighbouring street.
- Council advises the consent from the property owner and or tenant of the affected property, prior to filling out the 'Online Yarra Street Garden Questionnaire' or going ahead with any site works.

### Feedback Theme 9 - Biodiversity

#### What did we hear

#### Our response

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differing opinions on plant species suitability. Responses ranged from Indigenous only, to a mix of native and non-native species.</li> <li>• Some additional plant species were suggested for adding to the 'Do not plant' species list.</li> <li>• To further support biodiversity measures it was suggested that an allowance for the placement of natural features such as rocks, logs and water within the street garden area should be permitted.</li> <li>• Place further emphasis on the differences between Street Garden and Urban Agricultural initiatives.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council encourages Indigenous and Native plant species within the draft Guidelines to help enhance biodiversity in Yarra. However non-native/non-invasive species can also be selected for planting.</li> <li>• Additional weed species suggested for inclusion in the 'Do Not Plant' Street Garden Species List will be considered for inclusion in the updated document.</li> <li>• The Guidelines state the following; 'do not introduce raised structures such as raised edges, planters, pots, rocks or star pickets as these can become trip hazards or impact accessibility for prams, wheelchairs and people who might need assistance with mobility'. This requirement has been included for safety and accessibility reasons.</li> <li>• As part of the engagement, Council provided a link to Yarra's Urban Agricultural Guidelines document on the Your Say Yarra web page for residents interested in planting edible plants. Council does not permit the planting of edible plant species within street gardens.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

There were also other comments/questions in the open-ended questions that were not limited to the project scope of works. These included:

- Council garden beds are not being maintained to a satisfactory level. It was felt unfair as to why there could be one policy/set of rules for residents and seemingly an alternative policy/set of rules for Council.
  - This feedback has been heard and will be passed onto Yarra's Open Space Services team to consider in conjunction with the landscape maintenance contractor.
- Why non-native/non-Indigenous plant species selections were being installed throughout Yarra's existing and new garden bed areas.
  - This feedback has been heard and will be passed onto Yarra's Open Space Services, Biodiversity and Horticultural teams.
- Will Council support requests for new nature strips/permeable garden areas and or consult prior to footpath re-sheeting works to allow for community requests for additional softscape permeable areas?
  - This feedback has been heard and will be passed onto Yarra's Open Space Services and Civil Engineering teams to consider.
- One response received was location specific which will be followed up with an individual email.

## Evaluating the engagement

Objective	Evaluation
To inform community about the Street Garden Guidelines	<p>We received 63 responses to the online survey on Your Say Yarra.</p> <p>This is a great outcome, given that the subject matter is quite niche and will only be of interest to a minority of Yarra residents.</p> <p>We used a wide variety of communications methods to reach the Yarra community and inform them about the Guidelines and how to participate in this consultation.</p>
To seek community feedback on whether there is any information missing in the draft Street Garden Guidelines and whether there are other considerations that should be included in the draft Guidelines when planning community street gardens	<p>Most responses provided detailed and in-depth suggestions on how the guidelines could be improved.</p> <p>Survey respondents were highly engaged and informed members of the community who have a genuine interest in street gardens.</p>