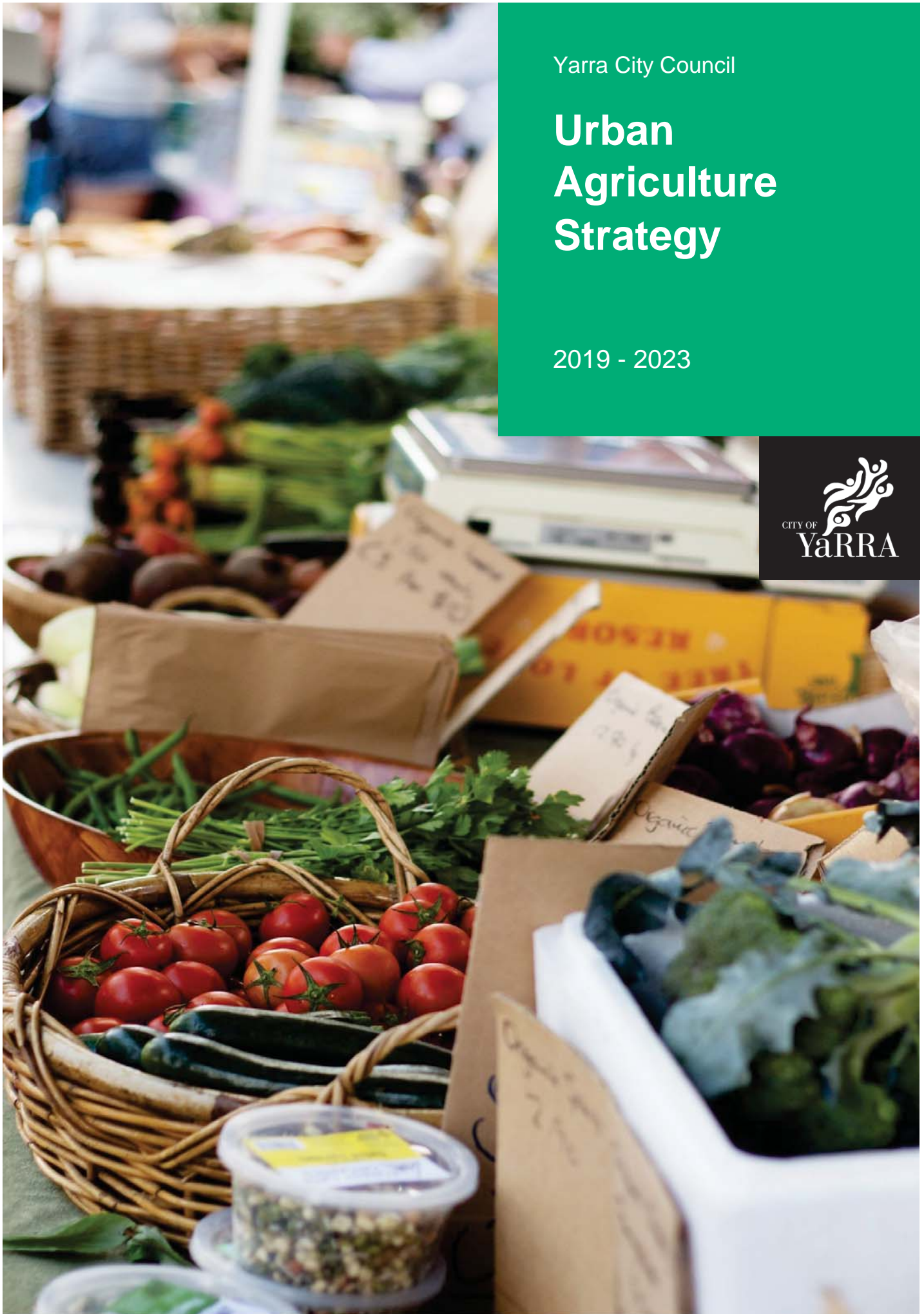


Yarra City Council

Urban Agriculture Strategy

2019 - 2023



Contents

Message from the Mayor	3
Introduction.....	4
Where are we now	4
What do we want to do	7
Where we want to be	9
Evaluation.....	10
Urban Agriculture Action Plan 2018-2022.....	11
Objective 1.....	11
Objective 2.....	14
Objective 3.....	16
Objective 4.....	18

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Message from the Mayor

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[PLACEHOLDER]

Introduction

What is urban agriculture?

Urban agriculture is the process of growing, producing and recycling food scraps in the urban environment. This might include backyard vegetable gardens, laneway gardens, planter boxes or larger scale urban community food growing. It can also include local processing and preserving of food and the composting of food scraps.

Why is it important?

Urban agriculture is important because it helps promote local food systems and build community resilience. Local food systems improve the management of the food cycle from planting and growing through processing, distribution, access, consumption and resource recovery.

Whether it be growing a few herbs on a balcony, developing a market garden or contributing to a thriving community growing space, urban agriculture is becoming increasingly popular.

What does it mean in Yarra?

Sustainable food systems and urban agriculture are key to maintaining and improving sustainability. The work of the previous four years has proven that genuine food production, food waste recycling and local food systems are possible and desirable in Yarra.

The population density of Yarra makes broad acre farming impractical but does provide other opportunities such as growing food in public places, growing on private land, local food swaps, food waste collections, and municipal composting. These can all help to build the profile of urban food growing; reduce food waste and increase community skills and experience. Small actions, undertaken by a large population, can have cumulative benefits such as growing herbs rather than buying them wrapped in plastic.

The City of Yarra is, and will continue to, experience high levels of population growth and higher proportion of residents living in apartments. More than ever our community is at risk of being disconnected from the social reality and ecology of our food system, therefore the role of urban agriculture and its ability to reconnect people with food sources will be increasingly significant.

Where are we now

What does Urban Agriculture in Yarra look like now?

[INSERT INFOGRAPHIC]

Where does urban agriculture fit within Council's work?

Every four years all councils are required to produce a Council Plan and Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan. In 2017 Yarra City Council combined these plans and outlined seven key objectives. Three of these key objectives relate directly to urban agriculture.

- Maintain and enhance Yarra's open space network to meet the diverse range of community uses. Promote a community that is inclusive, resilient, connected and enjoys strong mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Provide health promoting environments that encourage healthy eating and active living
- Provide opportunities for people to be involved in and connect with their community

Urban agriculture has a cross organisation focus and therefore has close relationships with a broad range of other council policies and strategies. The most closely related strategies and policies are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key Council Policies Plan and Strategies related to Urban Agriculture

Related strategy/policy	Relationship	Connection to Yarra Urban Agriculture Strategy (YUAS)
Council Plan	Overarching	Community resilience, community health and wellbeing, social cohesion, open space networks
Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan	Overarching	Food systems, access to healthy food, food security, community resilience
Yarra Environment Strategy (YES)	Overarching	Urban greening, climate adaptation, climate mitigation, biodiversity
Yarra Open Space Strategy	Peer	Land use, open space planning and design, open space management.
Yarra Waste Minimisation and Resource Recovery Strategy 2018-2022	Peer	Resource management, nutrient cycles, food systems
Municipal Strategic Statement	Peer	Land use, built environment, urban regeneration, place making, infrastructure planning
Urban Design Strategy	Peer	Urban design, landscape design, urban regeneration, place making

What does Yarra do to support urban agriculture?

Yarra is an Australian leader in urban agriculture. The previous urban agriculture strategy 2014-2018 provided a framework to recognise and build on work that was already occurring in the community. This work has included:

- A dedicated urban agriculture facilitator who provides advice to residents on how to start and maintain community growing space/gardens.
- Establishing the Community Growing Spaces program to help residents set up public planter boxes, laneway and nature strip gardens. As part of the program, Council provides step-by-step advice, planter boxes, land and public liability insurance.
- Establishing the Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee, which provides support to the community and advice to Council about local urban agriculture issues.
- Running a variety of workshops throughout the year to provide residents with skills such as small space gardening, organic gardening, beekeeping, composting and keeping chickens.
- Supporting schools, neighbourhood houses and non-profit community organisations to start or manage communal food gardens with grants, resources and community connections.
- Providing worm farms and compost bins for purchase.

What do we want to do

The previous strategy was developed at a time when urban agriculture was a new concept to many and as a result had a strong focus on building the profile of urban agriculture and removing barriers. This strategy builds on the work of the previous strategy by moving towards a food systems approach.

What is a food system?

A food system is how our food is grown, processed, distributed consumed and recycled. In practice, this means where we get our food from, how we use it and what we do with any waste. A sustainable local food system helps reduce waste and the environmental impacts of consuming food. Urban agriculture is one element in a sustainable local food system. It has the potential to reduce the impacts of distribution, increase access to local food, help people avoid wasting food and encourage them to recycle their food leftovers.

[INSERT INFOGRAPHIC]

Yarra's role in the a sustainable local food system

Yarra's key roles in the local food system are:

1. To assist our community in growing food through facilitating access to public and private spaces.
2. To reduce the loss of nutrients from the food system by exploring and facilitating local and municipal composting solutions.
3. To work with local, municipal and regional networks to promote and develop sustainable food systems.
4. To provide education and information about reducing food wastage through programs such as Food Know How.

What are the limitations of this strategy?

This strategy is designed to be focused and realistic with clear aims and objectives. Urban agriculture is still a relatively new area for councils and it is necessary to establish where energy and resources are best focused.

This strategy has a strong focus on building the knowledge base, networks and processes required to develop genuinely sustainable local food systems in Yarra and its municipal neighbours.

This strategy is a stepping stone, it aims to further build the foundations of urban agriculture and food systems in Yarra while maintaining flexibility to be responsive to opportunities that may arise.

The benefits and challenges for urban agriculture

The proposed urban agriculture activities will have a number of community benefits that will steadily accumulate over the period of this strategy. The following is a brief description of those benefits which the local community of Yarra consider critical, as well as a number of the challenges which will impact how the strategy is developed and implemented.

The benefits

- **Education and community building**
Urban agriculture helps the community build connections through growing and sharing food. It helps people understand and appreciate the importance of local grown, nutritious healthy food and build a culture of appreciating food.
- **Improving food security and equality**
Urban agriculture increases access to local, affordable food and increases community access to food through growing and sharing food.
- **Increasing environmental sustainability**
Urban agriculture helps reduce food miles by promoting the local growing and production of food. It also helps develop sustainable local food systems by capturing nutrients that might otherwise be lost to landfill, usually via composting processes. Food growing in public places promotes green neighbourhoods and increases the safety on the streets through passive surveillance.
- **Building the local economy**
Local food production can support the local food economy and link producers, providers and consumers and build employment opportunities.

The challenges

- **Space for growing**
Yarra is an inner urban area with a high percentage of medium (48.1%) and high density (37.1%) housing. As a result many residents have limited or no outdoor space for growing or composting food.
- **Housing tenure**
The Yarra community has a high percentage of renters (50.3% of the total population) who are likely to have less control over how they can use gardens and space around their homes.

The previous Urban Agriculture Strategy 2014 – 2018 developed a range of initiatives such as planter boxes, vertical gardens and the use of other land to help ameliorate these challenges and to demonstrate that it is possible to grow food in the urban environment. These activities have helped build the profile and legitimacy of urban agriculture.

Where we want to be

Vision

Yarra contributes to a sustainable city where our community grows, produces and shares food as part of a healthy and resilient food system.

Objectives

The following objectives have been developed to support the vision and direction

- 1. Facilitate access to space for people to grow food**
We will:
 - Provide access to growing space for residents through the Community Growing Spaces Program.
 - Facilitate landshare within our community for the purpose of food growing.
 - Work with developers to facilitate the provision of land for growing food in new developments.
 - Support community groups in negotiations with landowners to facilitate long and short-term urban agriculture opportunities.
- 2. Increase food skills and knowledge through education and training**
We will:
 - Develop an annual program of events and activities to promote Urban Agriculture.
 - Undertake a comprehensive program of community, business and stakeholder engagement to understand community expectations of Urban Agriculture.
 - Promote Urban Agriculture in publications and on the Council website.
 - Partner with educational institutions to promote Urban Agriculture.
- 3. Build partnerships with other organisations and groups**
We will:
 - Work with community organisations to optimise funding opportunities to deliver Urban Agriculture.
 - Work with other local governments to support and promote Urban Agriculture.
 - Facilitate opportunities for organisations working in Urban Agriculture to work together.
- 4. Advocate – within and beyond council to work towards a sustainable local food systems approach**
We will:
 - Gather available evidence to better understand Urban Agriculture and how it fits into the broader food system.
 - Develop methods to embed Urban Agriculture into projects and developments within council and the City of Yarra.

- Create and protect opportunities for sustainable local food systems in Yarra.
- Build and promote an understanding of food systems and their application in local government.

Evaluation

Many of the strategic objectives and actions outlined in this Strategy will be measurable and form the groundwork from which the community can grow, produce and share its own food. The delivery of the Action Plan will be evaluated on an annual basis.

It is important to understand that much of the social value and other benefits of urban agriculture work are intangible or are difficult to measure. We therefore know that the sum of the work of this strategy will be greater than that which we can practically measure.

What will success look like?

It will be possible to understand some of the success of this strategy by reflecting on the stories our community and visitors share. These are the questions we will ask to understand what success will look like:

[INSERT INFOGRAPHIC]

Urban Agriculture Action Plan 2018-2022

Objective 1

Facilitate access to space for people to grow food

We will:

- Provide access to growing space for residents through the Community Growing Spaces Program.
- Facilitate landshare within our community for the purpose of food growing.
- Work with developers to facilitate the provision of land for growing food in new developments.
- Support community groups in negotiations with landowners to facilitate long and short-term Urban Agriculture opportunities.

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
1.1.1 Continue to deliver and manage the Community Growing Spaces program	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	City Works Business Support Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Program available to residents	Number of residents participating in the program	Within existing resources
1.1.2 Provide support to existing Community Gardens and Community Growing Spaces (in line with agreements)	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Streetscapes and Natural Values Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Support as outlined in agreement	Satisfaction with support	Within existing resources

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
1.1.3 Develop Urban Agriculture Agreements for historic community growing spaces lacking agreements	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Streetscapes and Natural Values Team	Year 1,2	Urban Agricultural Agreements completed	Completion of Urban Agriculture Agreements	Within existing resources
1.2.1 Review and update Council's Urban Agriculture guidelines	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Communications Team	Year 2,3,4	Community Gardens guidelines to be redrafted and adopted by Council	Adoption of new guidelines	To be determined
1.2.2 Provide support to new projects proposed under the community gardens guidelines	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Streetscapes and Natural Values Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Provide support as required.	Number of new projects supported	Additional 0.2EFT
1.2.3 Streamline the application process for the Community Growing Spaces program	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Business support Team	Year 1,2	Improved application pathways to Community Growing Spaces program	New online application pathway developed	Additional 0.1EFT
1.3 Facilitate relationship between community groups and landowners, supporting long and short-term	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Property Services Team	Year 2,3,4	Provide support as required	Support provided as required	To be determined

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
Urban Agriculture opportunities						
1.4 Work with planners to include Urban Agriculture in planning referral process	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Strategic and Statutory Planning	Year 1,2,3,4	Provide support as required	Number of planning applications commented on	Within existing resources
1.5 Investigate feasibility of land-share programs	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	N/A	Year 3,4	Referral process established	Completion of report	To be determined
1.6.1 Explore potential sites in open space, owned or managed by Yarra for food growing	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Open Space Design Team	Year 2,3	Identify potential sites for a trial	Pilots established and evaluated	To be determined
1.6.2 Undertake analysis of all laneways and categorise potential for growing space	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	GIS Officer	Year 3	Provide report on options to partner with groups delivering a land share program	GIS available and incorporated into guidelines	To be determined
1.7 Undertake a feasibility study of potential to host a land availability inventory for City of Yarra	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	GIS Officer	Year 3,4	Feasibility study	Study completed	To be determined

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
1.8 Provide information on determining soil contamination	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Building Asset Management	Year 2	Soil contamination testing information provided, as needed	Information publicly available including recommendations	To be determined

Objective 2

Increase food skills and knowledge through engagement, education and training

We will:

- Develop an annual program of events and activities to promote Urban Agriculture.
- Undertake a comprehensive program of community, business and stakeholder engagement to understand community expectations of Urban Agriculture.
- Promote Urban Agriculture in publications and on the Council website.
- Partner with educational institutions to promote Urban Agriculture.

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
2.1 Develop an annual communications plan to increase the visibility of Urban Agriculture work in Yarra e.g. food swaps, farmers markets, community composting	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Communications Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Support as outlined in agreement	Satisfaction with support	Within existing resources

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
2.2 Develop an annual program of workshops catering to a range of ages, demographics and groups within the community	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Sustainability Engagement Officer	Year 1,2,3,4	Annual program developed and delivered	Attendance at workshops Diversity of people attending workshops	Within existing resources
2.3.1 Investigate the feasibility of developing a partnership with post-secondary education institutions	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Waste Minimisation Officer and Communications Team	Year 2,3	Feasibility report	Report completed	To be determined
2.3.2 Promote available school gardening education material to local schools.	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Communications Team	Year 3	Review available material and effectiveness Analyse any gaps in available material Produce material to fill gaps	Analysis completed	To be determined
2.4 Review the links between Food Know How and Urban Agriculture	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	N/A	Year 2	Report on potential links and opportunities	Report and business case completed	To be determined
2.5 Produce a Yarra Urban Agriculture walking trail and make	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Sustainability Engagement Officer	Year 3	Walking map indicating Urban	Number of hits on website	To be determined

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measureable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
available on the website				Agriculture sites.		
2.6 Investigate the potential to provide seed starter packs for residents to encourage people to grow food locally	Sustainability Engagement Officer	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Year 2,3	Report and business case	Report completed	To be determined

Objective 3

Build partnerships with other organisations

We will:

- Work with community organisations to optimise funding opportunities to deliver Urban Agriculture.
- Work with other local governments to support and promote Urban Agriculture.
- Facilitate opportunities for organisations working in Urban Agriculture to work together.

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measureable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
3.1 Partner with public land owners to develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for sites within Yarra to be	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Governance Team	Year 3	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with at least public land owner	One formal agreement developed	To be determined

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measureable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
used for Urban Agriculture						
3.2 Assist community and other organisations to access potential funding opportunities for urban agriculture in Yarra	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Community Grants Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Urban Agriculture grants applied for	Annual number of Urban Agriculture related grant applications assisted	Within existing resources
3.4.1 Develop partnerships with Collingwood Children's Farm and other leading community organisations to work towards delivering the objectives of this strategy	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Economic Development Team	Year 2,3	Identifying opportunities Develop an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as required	Opportunities considered	To be determined
3.4.2 Support community organisations to enable greater Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community involvement in	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Community Planner Aboriginal Partnerships	Year 2,3	Provide language support as requested	Joint projects delivered	To be determined

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measureable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
Urban Agriculture programs						
3.4.3 Work with Indigenous groups to identify opportunities for indigenous urban agriculture projects	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Community Planner Aboriginal Partnerships	Year 2,3	Local Indigenous Groups engaged	Number of opportunities identified	To be determined
3.5 Support other organisations to expand fruit squad	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Community Partnerships Team	Year 1,2		Partnership opportunities identified	Within existing resources

Objective 4

Advocate within and beyond council to work towards a food systems approach

We will:

- Gather available evidence to better understand Urban Agriculture and how it fits into the broader food system.
- Develop methods to embed Urban Agriculture into projects and developments within council and the City of Yarra.
- Create and protect opportunities for food growing and recycling in Yarra.
- Build and promote an understanding of food systems and their application in local government.

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
4.1 Identify opportunities to promote Urban Agriculture through events, policy reviews and other opportunities as identified	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Waste Minimisation Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Identified opportunities, Events supported, policy submissions	As opportunities arise	Within existing resources
4.2 Evaluation of Urban Agriculture programs delivered to date	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	GIS officer Communications Team	Year 3,4	Survey of current Urban Agriculture programs Analysis of survey results	Survey completed Analysis completed and reported	To be determined
4.3 Develop and promote a best practice guide to integrate Urban Agriculture opportunities into new development to be considered as part of the planning permit process	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Strategic and Statutory Planning teams	Year 1,2	New guidelines developed	Guidelines implemented through planning referrals	Within existing resources
4.4 Input into Council's public realm improvement	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	City Strategy Teams, Transport Teams, Capital Development Team	Year 1,2,3,4	Urban Agriculture identified as potential option for projects	Participation in cross - departmental place making processes	Within existing resources

Actions	Responsibility Lead	Responsibility Support	Timeline	Measurable Outcomes	Evaluation	Resources
projects programs and strategies						
4.5.1 Build an evidence base to guide action and decision-making including conducting research, collecting and interpreting data about Urban Agriculture opportunities and participation levels in the City of Yarra	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	N/A	Year 3,4	Report	Report completed	To be determined
4.5.2 Evaluate the effectiveness of planter boxes to deliver urban agriculture objectives	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	N/A	Year 2	Report on the effectiveness of planter boxes to deliver Urban Agriculture outcomes	Report completed	To be determined
4.6 Investigate current right to solar access protections for gardeners	Urban Agriculture Facilitator	Statutory Planning Team	Year 2,3	Report outlining current status of right to solar access	Report completed	To be determined

