



Urban Agriculture in Yarra

GROWING AND SHARING FOOD WHERE YOU LIVE

YARRA CITY COUNCIL

**URBAN AGRICULTURE STRATEGY
2014 - 2018**

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Introduction

It is important to acknowledge that this is the first Urban Agriculture Strategy for the City of Yarra and in fact one of the first in Australia.

THE PURPOSE OF URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban Agriculture means many things to many people and describes a myriad of activities connected with the growing, processing and distribution of food in our urban environment. More importantly it provides our communities with an exciting opportunity to grow food where we live, share in its preparation and distribute this food amongst our family, friends and communities, ensuring good fresh food is available to all equally.

There are many benefits associated with urban agriculture including fresher tastier food; improved health and well-being; stronger, more cohesive communities that are safe and enjoyable to live in; and more sustainable communities through the better utilisation of 'waste' resources and lower environmental costs.

Whether it be growing a few herbs on a balcony, developing a market garden or working in a thriving community growing space, urban agriculture is becoming increasingly popular both internationally and within the City of Yarra.

WHY THIS STRATEGY IS IMPORTANT FOR YARRA

The Yarra community has a long history of growing its own food. This interest has steadily grown over the past 30 years, from the initial establishment of the Collingwood Children's Farm in 1979, developed as an opportunity for the city's children to experience a farm and country existence, to the creation of public community gardens in Collingwood, North Fitzroy and Richmond as well as gardens dedicated to the City's housing estates in Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy, now managed by Cultivating Community.

Many of our schools consider the growing and sharing of fresh healthy food a vital addition to their curriculum, with Collingwood College being the first school to participate in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program in 2001.

Regular fruit and vegetable exchanges and farmers' markets have sprung up throughout Yarra. Our streets and nature strips reflect urban agriculture through the myriad of planter boxes, nature strip plantings and other informal gardens all reflecting the community's strong desire to grow and share food close to home.

In 2011 an Urban Agriculture facilitator was employed to work with the community, providing advice on the implementation of urban agriculture in the public environment, facilitating partnerships and coordinating training and education in urban agriculture. This position, the first such position in Australia, provides a vital link between the community of Yarra, the Yarra Council, private landholders and government departments.

In 2012 the Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee (YUAAC) was established to support the community in the development of urban agriculture and work with Council to facilitate its growth. Their first role was to assist in the development of Urban Agriculture Guidelines which outlined the procedures involved in the placement of urban agriculture in our streets and reserves. The guidelines initially focused on the installation of planter boxes and nature strip plantings. Their primary role was to ensure the process was rigorous, fair and transparent, as well as raising awareness for the growing and sharing of food in the city.

The following is a selection of quotations by the community reflecting their support and desire for the development of urban agriculture in Yarra.

- “There are a lot of people in Melbourne and they are less and less connected with the regional communities and food growing.
- Melbourne Farmers Markets “We build community, we promote health” Growing Spaces
- “Healthy eating is more than nutrition: it's also about the cultural and social significance of growing, cooking and sharing food. “ Vic Health

When asked “What does Urban Agriculture mean to you” the community responded by saying:

- “In Vietnam many people grow food in planter boxes” Community member
- “Reminding us where food comes from” Community member
- “Good things for everyone on lots of levels” Community member
- “Better tasting food” Community member

(Refer Appendix 1 for a full list of Urban Agriculture activities in Yarra)

THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

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 the how the strategy is developed.

THE BENEFITS

Benefits	
Education / community strengthening	*the communities of Yarra value the sharing of skills, stories, food and knowledge
	*urban agriculture builds social connectedness
	*urban agriculture builds an understanding of food, where it comes from, its seasonality and the food cycle
Food security / food equality	*increasing the communities awareness of healthy and nutritious food options
	*access to local, affordable food for all
	*provides equitable access to healthy nutritious food options
Economic	*opportunity for all to grow their own food
	*better access to food for those on limited incomes
	*create opportunities to engage with local food producers
Safe neighbourhoods	*potential for local employment through social enterprise
	*more people using public spaces - more eyes on the street
	*stronger more connected communities
Food culture	*contributes to a strong culture of food, good growing and food sharing
	*support and grow a thriving local food economy
Environment	*limiting food miles, chemicals, packaging, transportation, storage and disposal
	*utilising 'waste' resources to grow food, completing the food cycle
	*introduction of green space to our streets, assisting in the reduction of "heat island" effect
Recreation / Health	*equitable access to healthy food
	*alternative opportunities for the usage of public space
	*the physical and psychological health benefits of working a garden and developing community

THE CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES			
ECONOMIC	BUILT	NATURAL	SOCIAL
Many Yarra residents rent rather than own (48.7%)	Limited access to Public Open Space	Growing concern over where our food comes from and how healthy it is	The City of Yarra has the highest concentration of social housing of any municipality in Victoria (14.7%)
10% of Yarra's population experience food insecurity (6% is State average)	Only 4 public community gardens exist in Yarra with waiting list of up to 2 years	Australians discard up to 20% of the food they purchase (1 out of every 5 bags of groceries)	At risk populations in Yarra: People living with long term disability, indigenous Australians, people from diverse cultural backgrounds, women
Only 38.6% Victorian children meet the minimum daily recommended intake of fruit and vegetable	Building typology largely medium to high density with limited access to public or private open space	40% of the average household waste is food waste.	The biggest wasters of food are young consumers (18 - 24 year olds), households with incomes of more than \$100,000.00 per year
Health and Well Being means access to material basics of food, water, shelter, money and work		Soil contamination and access to water are major issues in the development of community growing spaces	15.3% of Yarra's demographic is made up of young, single, professional, high to middle income residents Yarra's most important risk factors for health are an unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco and alcohol
ASSETS			
ECONOMIC	BUILT	NATURAL	SOCIAL
Yarra has a strong connection to food growing, selling and sharing	Considerable land opportunity for community growing spaces	Yarra schools consider the growing and consuming of fresh food important to their curriculum	Yarra has a strong multicultural mix
Food is a major draw card for the City of Yarra	Strong partnerships in place already	The "Food Know How" program has diverted 7000k of food waste from Yarra's landfills between 2012 - 14	Yarra has a strong and growing interest in fresh healthy food
		Yarra has 235 HA of open space (approx 34 sq m per person)	

COUNCIL'S ROLE IN URBAN AGRICULTURE

This Strategy provides a framework for urban agriculture in the City of Yarra. The Strategy will be used by both the community and Council to support and shape the growth of urban agriculture in Yarra into the future.

More specifically, the strategy will embed urban agriculture in Council policy and programs; facilitating and supporting the Community in the development of urban agriculture in their city and leading the discussion at Council, Community and State level.

Council's role in this Strategy will be to:

- strengthen and facilitate education and training in the area of urban agriculture;
- support community leaders in developing urban agriculture in their local communities;
- cultivate relationships and partnerships between council, community and external agencies and groups in support of urban agriculture;
- facilitate opportunities for the inclusion of urban agriculture into the community; and
- lead discussions in support of Urban Agriculture within Council, the Yarra community and beyond.

Where we are now

POLICY CONTEXT – YARRA

The community has made clear its desire to recognise urban agriculture as an important consideration in council business. This need is emphasized through the recognition of urban agriculture in a number of strategic Council documents both directly and indirectly.

More recently Yarra demonstrated its commitment to leadership in sustainability by becoming the fourth local government in the world to receive certification from “One Planet Living”. To receive this certification Council’s environmental programs must be independently audited against ten principles that allow communities to live and work within their fair share of the earth’s resources. While many of these principles indirectly relate to Urban Agriculture the principle regarding the use of “Local and Sustainable Food” provides a direct link. You can read the ten principles and find out more about One Planet Living at

www.oneplanetliving.net/what-is-one-planetliving/the-ten-principles.

For a full outline of those strategies which relate and support Urban Agriculture refer to Appendix 1, page 25.

POLICY CONTEXT – AUSTRALIA

Over the last decade Urban Agriculture has grown both internationally and nationally building on our historic love and need to grow our own food and feed our communities. While many programs have grown from grass roots community projects, a number of guidelines and strategic reports now support these efforts. For a summary of both National and State Policy documents refer to Appendix 1, page 24.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The desire for the development and acceptance of urban agriculture has grown exponentially through Australia and internationally. Through strong community leadership a myriad of programs and projects have been developed to feed and share food with our people. A sample of these programs both Australian and International has been depicted in Appendix 1, page 29. This is by no means a full representation, merely a taste.

PARTNERSHIPS

Yarra City Council has through the years worked in alliance with a number of dynamic private and public organizations in the development of urban agriculture programs. These partnerships typically provide more bountiful

opportunities and stronger outcomes for the community. This strategy will foster and develop these existing relationships while encouraging new collaborations in pursuit of more vibrant outcomes.

What will success look like?

Many of the strategic objectives and actions outlined in this Strategy will be measurable and form the groundwork from which the community can grow and develop as a sustainable city, growing, producing and sharing its own food.

We will however best understand success by the stories our community members and our visitors tell. Do our residents have equitable access to fresh healthy food, grown in a sustainable manner? Will our children have a strong understanding of where their food comes from and an appreciation for what makes a healthy diet? Will our community be working together alongside our regional farmers growing, sharing and cultivating food? Will the rich culture of Yarra be reflected in the food we grow, share and buy every day?

These are the questions we will ask to know what success looks like.

Where we want to be

Through the development of this strategy many stories and conversations have occurred with community members, Council officers, groups and organizations, in particular that of the Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee. These conversations have resulted in the development of a vision which will drive the growth of urban agriculture into the future.

This vision is outlined below.



VISION

THE CITY OF YARRA IS A SUSTAINABLE CITY WHERE A ROBUST AND RICH MULTI-CULTURAL COMMUNITY GROWS, PRODUCES AND SHARES ITS FOOD.

How we will get there

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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

1. CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE LAND

COUNCIL WILL LINK PEOPLE AND LAND, CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GROWING, SHARING AND CONSUMING OF FOOD IN THE CITY OF YARRA.

2. CULTIVATE A CULTURE

COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE AND FOSTER ITS RICH CULTURE OF FOOD, FOOD GROWING AND FOOD SHARING AS A WAY OF NUTURING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.

3. BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

COUNCIL WILL FOSTER MORE ROBUST COMMUNITIES, BUILDING STRONG NETWORKS AND SUPPORTING ITS LEADERS THROUGH URBAN AGRICULTURE.

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE GROWING AND SHARING OF FOOD, SKILLS AND STORIES IS INTEGRAL TO EMBEDDING URBAN AGRICULTURE IN YARRA. COUNCIL WILL FOSTER THE BUILDING AND IMPARTING OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH TRAINING, SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CONNECTIONS.

5. IMPROVE POLICY

COUNCIL POLICY WILL SUPPORT URBAN AGRICULTURE AND PROMOTE THE GROWING OF FOOD SUSTAINABLY IN THE CITY OF YARRA.

Legend

An assessment based priority matrix was developed to assess the actions using the objectives of the strategy:

1. Build and strengthen community (0 – no, 1 – Yes)
2. Engage with multiple community members / groups (0 – no, 1 – Yes)
3. Increase opportunity for food growing in Yarra (0 – no, 1 – Yes)
4. Increase knowledge of food growing / food cycle (0 – no, 1 – Yes)
5. Support existing Yarra Strategies (0 – no, 1 – Yes)
6. Build on existing programs (0 – no, 1 – Yes)

If the action scored:

Low – 1, 2

Medium – 3, 4

High – 5, 6

High actions will take priority and be delivered first

ACTIONS

1. CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE LAND

COUNCIL WILL LINK PEOPLE AND LAND, CREATING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GROWING, SHARING AND CONSUMING OF FOOD IN THE CITY OF YARRA.

Strategic Objective	Action No	Deliverable	EFT	Priority	Year		
					1	2	3 to 4
CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE LAND	ACTION LINK GARDENERS TO LAND AND SPACE						
	1.1.1	Partner with existing networks and local food initiatives to build an online inventory of potential growing opportunities connecting those offering and those seeking gardening space (e.g. backyard sharing opportunities).	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	
	1.1.2	Facilitate gardeners in negotiations with landowners, State agencies and Council, supporting short and long term gardening opportunities (e.g. pop up gardens).	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	ACTION GROW PARTNERSHIPS						
	1.2.1	Investigate public / private partnerships to assist with practical help, funding, training and support for Urban Agriculture activities.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	1.2.2	Build collaboration across Council Units to facilitate the development and growth of Urban Agriculture on Council owned land and private or State owned land.	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓

2. CULTIVATE A CULTURE

COUNCIL WILL PROMOTE AND FOSTER ITS RICH CULTURE OF FOOD, FOOD GROWING AND FOOD SHARING AS A WAY OF GROWING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.

Strategic Objective	Action No	Deliverable	EFT	Priority	Year		
					1	2	3 to 4
CULTIVATE A CULTURE	ACTION CELEBRATION AND PROMOTION						
	2.1.1	Using current networks and agencies, promote existing Urban Agriculture projects / guidelines, celebrating their unique appeal and benefit for the community at large.	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	2.1.2	Promote and support the use of locally grown food to local businesses in Yarra, utilising established networks and programs such as "Food Know How", Lunch box sessions, Melbourne Farmers Market, etc.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	2.1.3	Working with existing programs and agencies such as the Food and Wine festival, Rotary, Sustainable House Day, promote the benefits of Urban Agriculture through the development of a program of vegetable tours.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	2.1.4	Promote Urban Agriculture and community gardening as healthy and social activities.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	2.1.5	Assess, evaluate and report on the progress of Urban Agriculture activities in Yarra.	.8EFT	HIGH		✓	✓
	ACTION CREATING AN EDIBLE CITY						
	2.2.1	Increase the number of Urban food growing locations in Yarra, including urban orchards, planter boxes and community gardens.	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	2.2.2	Investigate and trial options for the development of an engaging, accessible web site for Urban Agriculture information, facts, calendar.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓

3. BUILD CONNECTIONS

COUNCIL WILL CULTIVATE MORE ROBUST COMMUNITIES, BUILDING STRONG CONNECTIONS AND SUPPORTING ITS LEADERS THROUGH URBAN AGRICULTURE.

Strategic Objective	Action No	Deliverable	EFT	Priority	Year		
					1	2	3 to 4
BUILD CONNECTIONS	ACTION	LEADING THE COMMUNITY IN ITS DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN AGRICULTURE					
	3.1.1	Support existing local community networks in the development of urban agriculture, through the sharing of skills and knowledge and through creating opportunities for connections.	.8EFT	MEDIUM	✓	✓	✓
	3.1.2	Assist the community in the identification of external funding sources and financial support.	.8EFT	HIGH		✓	✓
	ACTION	CONNECTING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS					
	3.2.1	Work with existing local food initiatives, networks and agencies in the building of an online inventory of growers, producers and eaters in Yarra.	.8EFT	MEDIUM			✓
	3.2.2	Build community connections and awareness of the nutritional and health benefits of good quality food and gardening through the development of a program of skill sharing, gardening, stories and food.	.8EFT	HIGH		✓	✓
	3.2.3	Sponsorship and promotion of Urban Agriculture events within the Yarra community and externally	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	3.2.4	Work with local business and industry networks to establish their requirements with regard to local food opportunities, requirements and production.	.8EFT	MEDIUM			✓
	ACTION	CROSSING BOUNDARIES					
	3.3.1	Identify opportunities for sharing, collaborating and delivery of joint objectives through Urban Agriculture. Projects across the Yarra City Council, community groups, local food initiatives and state organisations. (eg working with 3000 acres in delivery of food growing spaces).	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓

4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

THE GROWING AND SHARING OF FOOD, SKILLS AND STORIES IS INTEGRAL TO EMBEDDING URBAN AGRICULTURE IN YARRA. COUNCIL WILL FOSTER THE BUILDING AND IMPARTING OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH TRAINING, SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CONNECTIONS.

Strategic Objective	Action No	Deliverable	EFT	Priority	Year		
					1	2	3 to 4
EDUCATION AND TRAINING	ACTION STRENGTHEN EDUCATION AND TRAINING						
	4.1.1	Coordinate and compile information regarding urban food production. Information including but not limited to soil testing, food waste disposal, biosecurity pests and diseases protocols, cultivation, composting. Investigate options for delivering this information accessible to the community.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	4.1.2	Develop and implement a program of workshops on the growing of food in urban settings, food cycle awareness and good nutrition, focusing on hard to reach communities.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	ACTION BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY						
	4.2.1	Support existing local food initiatives in the development of new approaches for celebration, skill development and sharing of food.	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	4.2.2	Encourage and support the community through education in the maintenance and care of edible food (including vegetables, fruit, bees, chickens, etc.).	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	4.2.3	Establish a library of hand tools, resources and guidelines for gardeners use in the production of edible food (including vegetables, fruit, bees, chickens, etc.).	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓

5. IMPROVE POLICY

COUNCIL POLICY WILL SUPPORT URBAN AGRICULTURE AND PROMOTE THE GROWING OF FOOD SUSTAINABLY IN THE CITY OF YARRA.

Strategic Objective	Action No	Deliverable	EFT	Priority	Year		
					1	2	3 to 4
IMPROVE POLICY	ACTION REMOVE BARRIERS AND DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE POLICIES TO ENABLE THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN AGRICULTURE						
	5.1.1	Review policies and local laws to enable, encourage and facilitate the development of Urban Agriculture in under utilised land the City of Yarra (including but not limited to , traffic treatments, land owned by State Divisions and Private Owners).	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	5.1.2	Review, evaluate and update existing Urban Agriculture guidelines including planter box guidelines, nature strip guidelines and community garden guidelines.	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	5.1.3	Develop guidelines which facilitate the use of land in under utilised spaces for the purpose of growing food (including but not limited to traffic treatments, etc).	.8EFT	MEDIUM		✓	✓
	5.1.4	Support the development and implementation of key policy and strategic documents (ie Food Policy and Urban Forest Strategy) as outlined in the YES Strategy.	.8EFT	HIGH	✓	✓	✓
	ACTION RECOGNIZE URBAN AGRICULTURE AS A LEGITIMATE LAND USE						
	5.2.1	Investigate opportunities / mechanisms to encourage developers to incorporate urban agriculture within their developments.	.8EFT	MEDIUM			✓

Appendix 1

URBAN AGRICULTURE IN YARRA

Prior to European settlement the land, now known as the City of Yarra, was inhabited by the Aboriginal people. The people did not live in permanent settlements but camped for periods of time defined mainly by the availability and seasonality of food, water and shelter. They had a deep understanding for the land, how to manage it and how to sustain their people from it. *(From <http://aboriginalhistoryofyarra.com.au>)*

With the arrival of the European community, Melbourne developed into a major industrial and commercial centre, taking advantage of the river system and easy access to the sea. In its early history Melbourne fed its community largely through imported food. Agriculture tending to be more specialized, usually of high value.

The City of Yarra, one of Melbourne's first suburbs, serviced this growing city, providing a centre for industry and housing. The agricultural growing areas of Coburg, Keilor and Moonee Ponds provided the community with fresh locally grown food giving Melbourne the reputation as a centre for market gardens and fresh produce. With food grown in suburban backyards alongside a rich culture of market gardens the community's connection to its food was strong.

As the population grew, land along Melbourne's fringe was developed into housing for the growing population, pushing the farms further out into the regional areas. Transportation of food from greater distances became the norm. The scale of residential dwellings decreased with the population growth resulting in limited space for private food growing. People became increasingly detached from the process of growing food and had lower appreciation for the land, where their food comes from and its seasonality. A reliance on large-scale farming, transportation, packaging and distribution to larger supermarkets evolved, these supermarkets offering a great variety of foods from across Australia and internationally throughout the year without acknowledgment of seasonality or local availability.

Post war immigration brought new arrivals to the City of Yarra. People from southern Europe and South East Asia arrived with rich new cultures, introducing new traditions and new foods to the city dwellers. A culture of food developed in the city and continues to develop today with each new influx of residents. Yarra has now become known for its unique and individual sense of food. *(from <http://www.emelbourne.net.au>)*

Urban agriculture in Yarra continues to grow with the development of community gardens at Rushall Station, Mater St. and the Collingwood Children's Farm, as well as those dedicated to the communities of Yarra's

housing estates. Fruit and vegetable exchanges and farmers markets are conducted regularly, with fresh local produce available for purchase or swapping. Planter boxes have been established along the city streets growing fruit and vegetables, and guerrilla gardens continue to pop up.

This consistent groundswell of food growing in Yarra resulted in the establishment of the role of Urban Agriculture facilitator in 2011 and the development of a community advisory board in 2012. The main purpose of this group was to assist in the development of Urban Agriculture Guidelines reflecting the Council's growing need to provide parameters around the implementation of gardening within the streetscape and to make it more accessible to the community. The group continues to meet regularly assisting in the development of this strategy in addition to promoting the development of urban agriculture in Yarra.

The community has made clear their desire to re kindle their relationship with the land, growing their own food, preparing and sharing this food with their friends, family and community and sharing the stories of food and its significance in their lives.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Yarra is today a vibrant inner-city municipality in close proximity to the Melbourne Central Business District. Bordered by the Yarra River along its eastern and southern boundaries, Melbourne's sport and entertainment precinct, Burnley gardens and park district, world heritage-listed buildings, parks and gardens and Princes Park to the north, the City of Yarra is rich in history, culture and activity.

The city covers an area of 1,953Ha (19.5 sq k) which equates to approximately 35.3 persons per square hectare. Our new development sites are typically medium to high density with limited opportunity for open space and our existing dwellings small with minimal backyards. Additionally the City houses the highest concentration of social housing as a percentage of the total housing stock (14.7%), with many of these residents older and or from a CALD background.

Yarra is currently experiencing population growth over that of the Victorian average, with over 1,000 additional people moving into the community every year. The population in 2012 was over 80,000 and this number is expected to grow to 100,000 over the next 15 years (Council Plan 2013–17) creating further pressure on Yarra's facilities, resources and environment. The community includes a growing influx of younger people with higher income and capital in addition to a large number of low-income, disadvantaged residents, creating a unique demographic.

Yarra is a socially and economically diverse community with significant pockets of disadvantage when compared to the rest of Victoria. 10% of Yarra's residents surveyed for the Community Indicators Victoria Survey ran out of food, and could not afford more in the 12 months prior to the survey,

compared to 6% in Melbourne City Council area (Yarra Health Status Report 2010, p21) Many of Yarra's population live at the very lowest end of the socio-economic scale and many at the highest, creating a community of extremes.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The City of Yarra is emerging as a leader in the global movement for sustainable food and urban agriculture. A wealth of innovative projects of all scales and sizes attest to Yarra's diverse food culture.

The following "snapshots" represent some of the wide array of activities already taking place in the City of Yarra, activities which through the support of this strategy and a community of leaders in the area will grow and develop into the future.

Planter Boxes / Nature Strips / Productive Trees / Guerilla gardens

The first city planter box was located on an inner urban residential street in 2012. Since this first tenuous step over 50 planter boxes have been placed in the neighborhoods of Yarra in addition to the authorization of a number of guerrilla gardens planted by private individuals prior to the implementation of the Urban Agriculture Guidelines.

A number of nature strip plantings, both formal and informal have been implemented within the City limits providing the community with an opportunity to grow their own healthy food as well as the providing the opportunity to come together in an informal setting.

The Urban Agriculture Agreement can be found at:

<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/DownloadDocument.ashx?DocumentID=6977>

Community Gardens

There are currently three public community gardens located in North Fitzroy, Collingwood and the Collingwood Children's Farm and one under construction at Burnley. Planning for further gardens is now underway. There is typically a waiting period of up to 2 years for access to these gardens, however there is often a general community plot within the garden allowing new community members to participate.

The development of site assessment criteria and a matrix for the selection of suitable sites has been developed to assist in the implementation of further community gardens.

Cultivating Community is funded by the Department of Human Services to manage six community gardens for those tenants located in the public housing estates within the City of Yarra. These gardens are well supported by the tenants providing a rich opportunity for developing community, growing food and sharing stories.

Urban Agriculture guidelines / facilitation

To assist in the ongoing sustainability of urban agriculture in the City of Yarra the development and subsequent endorsement of Urban Agriculture guidelines (June 2011) was undertaken to facilitate the implementation of ongoing urban agriculture in the city.

In September of 2011 a part time Urban Agriculture facilitator was appointed. This role was to provide advice to the community, facilitate partnerships and coordinate training and education. The role has proven important in the development and cultivation of urban agriculture projects, and partnerships both internally across Council and within the community and external agencies. The facilitator provides a link for the community and external agencies to Council programs and methodologies.

Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee (YUAAC)

In April of 2012 the Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee, a committee of representative community members, area experts, Council officers, and Councilors was initiated. The aim of the group was to help resolve the conflict between Council's regulatory approach to guerrilla gardening constructively, assist in the development of the Urban Agriculture Guidelines and facilitate the implementation of urban agriculture in the community. The draft guidelines underwent a community consultation process and attracted considerable community response both in favour of and in opposition to the proposal. Guidelines for the implementation of planter boxes and nature strip gardens were formally adopted in June 2011.

The committee continues to meet regularly providing strong direction and commitment towards the development of urban agriculture in Yarra, in particular the vision and direction of this strategy.

Academic and Cross Council Research and Collaboration

Since the creation of the Urban Agriculture position considerable work has been undertaken in raising awareness of Urban Agriculture both within Council and in the community. A brief outline of this work is highlighted below:

- Education sessions have been developed to up skill the community in all facets of Urban Agriculture;
- Cross Council discussions have commenced within internal Council divisions to embed Urban Agriculture into the community;
- Partnerships established with major Victorian universities in the discussion and development of urban agriculture in our cities, universities including University of Melbourne, RMIT, Monash University, La Trobe University and, Griffith University;

- Collaboration with other local Government Authorities in the development and growth of urban agriculture;
- Support and involvement of community groups and non-profits, including: Cultivating Community, Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, Transition Yarra;
- Participation in the 2nd Australian National Sustainable Food Summit and presentation at the 2012 Health Cities Conference in Geelong.

WHERE THIS CAME FROM

POLICY CONTEXT – AUSTRALIA

Healthy Places and Spaces

Healthy Spaces and Places is a collaboration between the Australian Local Government Association, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the Planning Institute of Australia. It was originally funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The report highlights the need to reduce health costs through preventive measures and promotes the benefits of physical and mental health through active, healthy living. <http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/>

Urban food security, urban resilience and climate change

(Burton, P, Lyons, K, Richards, C, Amati, M, Rose, N, Des Fours, L, Pires, V & Barclay, R 2013, National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast)

This report provides up-to-date information on the extent of current urban agriculture practices in Australia. It is a critical review of good practice urban agriculture and provides an analysis of the opportunities and barriers for extending and expanding upon these practices. Data was collected through the analysis of two Australian cities and had three main aims:

1. to increase our knowledge of the current extent of urban agriculture in Australian cities;
2. to review its capacity to play a more prominent role in enhancing urban food security and urban resilience and;
3. to assess the impacts of climate change on the capacity of urban agriculture to enhance food security and urban resilience.

<http://www.nccarf.edu.au/publications/urban-food-security-resilience-climate-change>

POLICY CONTEXT – STATE

Planning for food: Towards a prosperous, resilient and healthy food system through Victoria's Metropolitan Planning Strategy

(National Heart Foundation, Food Alliance and Vic Health, Oct 2012)

“Planning for food: Towards a prosperous, resilient and healthy food system through Victoria's Metropolitan Planning Strategy” is a background briefing paper developed by the Heart Foundation in partnership with the Food Alliance and Vic Health. It aims to generate discussion and inform stakeholders about opportunities to include food systems in the Victorian Metropolitan Planning Strategy. Recommendations are given with direct links to relevant Principles from the Victorian Metropolitan Planning Strategy Discussion Paper.

<http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/driving-change/current-campaigns/local-campaigns/Pages/food-sensitive-planning.aspx>

Food-sensitive planning and urban design (FSPUD)

(National Heart Foundation – Victoria) June 2011

FSPUD is a conceptual framework for achieving a sustainable and healthy food system, providing ideas and issues for consideration by all parties involved in the development and planning of our cities and towns.

“Food-sensitive planning and urban design does not simply assert that we have a problem in our cities, but sets out to identify new ways of tackling issues, providing a suite of ideas and innovations that cities should now embrace. It tackles a topic that has little precedent as an agenda for the planning of cities in Australia. It also sets out a host of reasons why we should add food to the core elements of the planning and design of our urban areas..” (FSPUD 2011, p.1)

Food for All

Information Sheet Series: Ten ways local government can act on food security (Vic Health) 2005–2010

Vic Health's “Food for All” program was developed to help the community regularly access and consume a variety of nutritious foods, particularly fruit and vegetables. The program ran for a period of five years from 2005 – 10, in partnership with local government and concentrated on priority populations.

Food for All encouraged local government authorities to implement the integrated planning of key factors influencing access to food. These factors include: transportation, housing, economic development and land use.

While the City of Yarra was not a participant in the program, the program did provide valuable information used in the preparation of this strategy.

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/foodforall>

Growing Green Guide

A guide to green roofs, walls and facades in Melbourne and Victoria, Australia

(State of Victoria through the Dept. of Environment and Primary Industries)
Feb 2014

The Growing Green Guide was developed with advice from industry experts and academia and supported by four Inner Melbourne local Government Authorities, including the City of Yarra. The guide is written for professionals involved in the design, construction and maintenance of green roofs, walls and / or facades.

The guide highlights urban food production, promoting the opportunity for food growing on a local scale, for community gardens, school gardens and social enterprise.

<http://www.growinggreenguide.org/>

Food Alliance

The Food Alliance is a group of community members and organisations dedicated to food security advocacy and research. The group, founded in 2009, works within Deakin University primarily as a 'food think tank', conducting research into strategic issues such as planning and food access, and making submissions on food-related government policy development processes. The project works through the leadership and support of the Victorian Foundation for Health Promotion (Vic Health).

Their vision is: *"To make our food system better – better for our health, better for the planet and fairer for farmers".*

<http://www.foodalliance.org.au/>

POLICY CONTEXT – YARRA

Council Plan

The Council Plan 2013-17 is a strategic document that puts forward a medium to long term vision for how Council will respond to the opportunities and challenges facing Yarra over the next four years.

It provides guidance on how Council will work to improve the amenity of residents, manage the challenges presented by population growth, provide support to vulnerable community members, protect and enhance Yarra's heritage and culture and continue to reduce the city's environmental footprint.

While the Council Plan refers to Urban Agriculture directly in the strategic objective “Ensuring a sustainable Yarra”, encouraging a focus on Urban Agriculture over the next 4 years, this plan touches all five strategic Council objectives:

1. celebrating Yarra’s uniqueness
2. supporting Yarra’s community
3. making Yarra more liveable
4. ensuring a sustainable Yarra
5. leading Local Government.

The plan states:

“Community gardens have long been an important part of neighbourhoods, particularly in the inner city, offering people a place to meet, to socialise and to share a knowledge and interest in gardening. Guidelines for supporting urban agriculture have been developed, which simplify the process for community groups to identify new community garden sites. Urban agriculture offers a means to reducing the amount of food required to be produced outside of Yarra and transported here. Whilst in some parts of the City residents have backyards or community gardens and can grow their own fruit and vegetables, an increasing number of residents live in apartments with no, or limited, garden space.

Creating new garden plots or planter boxes can provide people with this opportunity to reduce their environmental impact by growing some of their own food.” (Council Plan 2013 – 17, p. 25)

Yarra Environment Strategy (YES) 2013 – 2017

The Yarra Environment Strategy (YES) outlines a four year vision in which “Yarra is a resilient and sustainable city where current and future populations enjoy a high quality of life within our fair share of the earth’s resources, whilst ensuring we co-exist harmoniously with the natural environment.” (YES 2013–17, p. 9)

The YES includes the following references to Urban Agriculture:

Action 1.2.2 - Strengthen Urban Agriculture program

Yarra is a national leader in supporting local food growing activities through our Urban Agriculture program. However, a holistic Urban Agriculture Strategy and Implementation Plan is required to tie the many elements together and ensure a clear and unified set of actions and direction that meet the needs of all sectors of the community.

Year 1:

- continue and strengthen existing Urban Agriculture program,
- develop Urban Agriculture Strategy and Implementation Plan

Year 2-4

- implement Urban Agriculture Strategy and Implementation Plan
- develop Urban Agriculture Toolkit for how to set up local urban agriculture projects

(For a full listing of the actions outlined above refer to the YES 2013-17, p. 16)

Yarra Health and Wellbeing Plan (2013 – 2017)

The Yarra Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017 (Health Plan) is a strategic document which sets the health priorities for the municipality and informs Council actions to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

The guiding principles of this report direct efforts towards:

- strengthening community inclusion, participation and connection;
- acting early to reduce health and well-being; and
- promoting mental health and wellbeing by creating opportunities for people to be involved in and connect with their community.

Yarra Health Status Report (April 2010)

A Health Status Report was undertaken for the City of Yarra in 2010 as part of the planning process for the development of Yarra City Council's Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP) 2009-2013. This document is now known as the Health Plan 2009-2013.

Key findings from this document note:

"Yarra has a pattern of death and disease in which avoidable conditions such as heart and lung disease, diabetes and suicide dominate, and in which people's health is profoundly affected by social inequality. This pattern highlights the following health priorities for Yarra:

- the prevention of leading causes of chronic disease, through healthy eating and physical activity;
- the high health impact of alcohol, smoking and use of other drugs;
- a range of mental health problems; and
- health inequalities in key risk groups, especially Indigenous Australians, in Yarra.

(Yarra's Health Status Report, 2010 P.3)

Yarra Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy (2014 - 2018)

The 2014-2018 Yarra Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy (YWRRS) is a strategic document which will help us to redefine how we use our resources in a way that profoundly changes the City of Yarra's approach to resources and the production of waste.

The new YWRRS builds on previous work in the area of waste recovery with the aim to redefine our current understanding of 'Waste'. This will be achieved not only by recycling and diverting materials from landfills, but also advocating for better product design and stewardship, which will help us to rethink consumption behavior and prevent waste from being produced in the first place.

With particular relevance to the Urban Agriculture Strategy is the "Food Know How" program which was developed in partnership with Cultivating Community (www.foodknowhow.org) as a pilot project to emphasise the importance of closing the loop on food waste.

In addition to those strategies with a direct reference or link to Urban Agriculture there are a number of strategies in which this strategy could add value to through collaboration and development.

INDUSTRY CONTEXT–STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Other Local Government areas

Communities across Metropolitan Melbourne have made it clear that Urban Agriculture, or growing food where you live, is important to their well-being. This has resulted in the development of a myriad of programs and initiatives run through the local government authorities.

For examples of the programs initiated through other Councils refer to Emerging Ideas– Case Studies.

Local Government Urban Agriculture Network (LGUAN)

In November of 2012 The Food Alliance formed a group of local government professionals dedicated to growing and supporting knowledge and understanding in the field of urban agriculture, its best practice, how it has developed in other local government agencies and how to support one another in the developing Victorian context.

The goal of the group is to:

"...bring together local government professionals for the purpose of sharing, discussing and creating common best practice in the field of Urban Agriculture, policy and protocol that is achievable, strategic and appropriate."

EMERGING IDEAS: CASE STUDIES

The following brief case studies provide a taste of successful Urban Agriculture initiatives from around Melbourne and the world. The case studies show how Urban Agriculture can be community or government led and how it has the potential to provide food for urban dwellers but also to improve amenity and safety as well as build community connections.

Edible Bus Stops – London UK

Edible Bus Stops is a community led project. The aim is to transform unused land around bus stops into productive growing land. People catching public transport or walking past are encouraged to pick food to eat or take home to cook.

The aim is not only to provide food but also to improve the amenity of the area and in doing so make the place safer and more pleasant. The project brings the community together in working bees also improves connections and leads to community strengthening.

There is an umbrella organisation which helps to share skills and resources and an installations arm which creates pop up installations for corporate events and public festivals.

A number of DVD's and other resources are available on the Edible Bus Stop website

www.theediblebusstop.org

Urban Orchard – integrated into a new development Melbourne Australia

In one new housing development in Melbourne's south fruiting trees have been planted as street trees. The urban orchard is integrated within a pedestrian and bicycle friendly shared zone, this includes a watering system.

The street and public open space orchard is managed and maintained by the homeowners association, which is funded through a quarterly levy on each homeowner's rates notice.

Homeowners automatically become a member of the homeowners association when they purchase a housing lot – active participation is not compulsory but is encouraged.

More details can be found in the Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design (FSPUD) case studies at <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/driving-change/current-campaigns/local-campaigns/Pages/food-sensitive-planning.aspx>

Urban Agriculture as Public Policy – Havana – Cuba

In Havana the Provisional Planning Directorate have identified areas of unused land and set guidelines for the establishment of urban agriculture.

This includes the right to use vacant land for cultivation, providing the land is not damaged. In addition research is being undertaken into intensive methods of farming in small spaces. Produce can be sold at farmers markets and stalls.

140,000 jobs have been created in urban agriculture and it is producing 50% of the fresh fruit and vegetables for Havana.

In the year 2000 small patio's produced 326.9 million eggs and 7.7 tons of poultry meat.

All this food is produced from small family based plots to larger state run enterprises with professional employees.

This example indicates that urban agriculture can be a genuine food production method when given the support and resources.

More details can be found in the Food Sensitive Planning and Urban Design (FSPUD) case studies at <http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/driving-change/current-campaigns/local-campaigns/Pages/food-sensitive-planning.aspx>

Darebin Fruit Squad – Darebin - Australia

The Darebin fruit squad is a team of volunteers who harvest excess fruit from peoples' fruit trees as well as provide advice on tree maintenance. The harvest is shared between the tree owners and a variety of charities. Anyone in Darebin or surrounding suburbs can call in the fruit squad when they have a tree that needs harvesting. This avoids fruit being wasted and also assists homeowners who may have otherwise ended up with a mess of fallen fruit causing a nuisance and possibly encouraging disease.

The fruit squad also provides advice and expertise on pruning trees and dealing with basic tree problems and disease. The outcome is an urban orchard in people's back yards that are healthy and productive. In addition the fresh fruit is used and enjoyed by a range of people. The fruit squad also provides people an opportunity to meet neighbors and build their networks.

For more information, contact liz@jikajika.org.au or 9482 5100.

3000 Acres – Melbourne - Australia

3000 Acres is a project that aims to connect people who want to grow food to land that is not currently being used. 3000 acres recognises that many people living in cities want to grow food but lack the space required. Conversely there are vast amounts of underutilised land within the urban setting that is simply lying dormant.

3000 Acres is a grassroots organisation that uses a team of planners, designers and gardeners to assist individuals and groups to contact landowners and negotiate usage of land. In addition 3000 Acres can put people in touch with other gardeners to build groups who can work together. From a landowners' perspective it provides an opportunity to get unused land cleaned up and maintained.

3000 Acres has a website which has a range of resources including a map of available land the 3000 acres has identified.

More information from www.3000acres.org

Melbourne Farmers Markets (MFM)

Melbourne Farmers' Markets (MFM) is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to Victorian food and producers, regional food cultures, seasonal produce, biodiversity, sustainable farming practices and the strengthening of relationships between the consumer and the producer. The farmers' markets run through MFM are dedicated to Victorian food and producers, regional food cultures, seasonal produce, biodiversity, sustainable farming practices.

More information from: <http://www.mfm.com.au/about-us#sthash.yaOWKhZb.dpuf>

Fitzroy Community Food Centre, Cultivating Community – Melbourne - Australia

The Fitzroy Community Food Centre (FCFC) is a facilitated space managed by Cultivating Community incorporating a kitchen and a garden. It is being developed as a dynamic hub of community food activity, engaging and partnering with community groups and organisations that will run a multitude of food-related programs, events and activities in the Centre. The Centre's activities are based around, micro enterprise, food security, food waste and food system advocacy and community building, for both public housing tenants as well as the wider community. This innovative concept will create the first Centre of its kind in Australia.

USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is an inclusive term that describes a myriad of activities connected with the growing, processing and distribution of food and food-related products in and around cities. Although vegetables and fruit are generally the most common foods which come to mind, the term also includes animal husbandry, such as urban hens for eggs, beekeeping for honey and aquaculture for fish. (City of Toronto Grow To policy p5)

Healthy and Sustainable food

Vic Health recognises three broad determinants of healthy eating:

- secure and sufficient supply of healthy foods
 - access to healthy foods
 - a culture that supports healthy food consumption.
- (Vic Health)

Food security

Healthy eating was identified as one of the strategic priorities of the Yarra Health Plan 2009-2013. Healthy eating, in the context of public health, is considered to be the consumption of a diet that provides sufficient energy and nutrition for desired daily activities and good health, but not so much as to result in overweight or obesity. In terms of food insecurity, 10% of the population of Yarra reported food insecurity. This indicator measured the percentage of people who ran out of food in the past twelve month period and did not have the financial resources to buy more. Self-reported food insecurity was higher for residents of Yarra than for Victoria overall (6.0%).

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization and stability.” Source: Food and Agriculture Organization, World Summit on Food Security 2009

The Food System

The American Planning Association defines food systems as “the chain of activities beginning with the production of food and moving on to include the processing, distributing, wholesaling, retailing and consumption of food and eventually the disposal of waste” (FSPUD, March 2011)

Nutritious Diet

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (AGTHE) defines a nutritious diet as one that meets the key nutrition reference standards. The aim of the AGTHE is to “Encourage the consumption of a variety of foods from each of the five food groups every day in proportions that are consistent with the Dietary \Guidelines for Australians” (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging 1998).

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