

Report by Melanie Medrano, Landscape Architect & Sue Stevens, Community Gardens Project Officer

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That Council endorse the Laker Reserve Community Garden concept design and the implementation of works.**
- 2. That a further report be provided to Council advising the ongoing site management process post construction.**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update to Council on the development of Laker Reserve Community Garden and to seek Councils approval to proceed with the implementation of the concept design.

REPORT

Council previously resolved that the draft Community Gardens Policy be endorsed.

Since this time, Council has been actively involved in generating interest in the community for the development of a community garden at Laker Reserve, Strathfield. In September 2012, Council appointed a Community Gardens Project Officer and community engagement for the garden began in February 2013 with a letter sent to 1,500 local residents inviting them to register their interest in participating in the Laker Reserve Community Garden. A 'pop-up' tea stall was also held at Laker Reserve in February 2013 where 84 locals expressed interest in the garden and 22 registered to be contacted about future updates. 3,000 flyers were also distributed inviting people to register their interest in the garden.

Community consultation continued in March 2013, with an information night held on 5 March (attended by 18 people) and a 'Have A Say' night on 19 March (attended by 14 people) at the Central Library. Registered community members were also able to 'Have A Say' via an online survey held in late March. This allowed the community to choose what they would like in the proposed garden. The results of the survey formed the basis for two concept plans.

A Concept Plan Discussion Night was held on 14 May and voting for a preferred design was conducted through an online voting process. 29 people participated in the concept design voting which closed on Thursday 23 May 2013. 16 voted for an informal design, 10 for a formal garden and 3 voters had no preference. The informal concept design was the preferred concept and it is proposed that Council proceed with this design.

Council's Direct Section 94 Plan identifies the proposed works for the Laker Reserve Community Garden.

Council has now completed Stage 1 of the works (community consultation and development), and is now ready to commence Stage 2 – Construction and implementation. Following this, members who have expressed interest in the garden will be invited to participate in the

construction of portions of the garden as well as commencing the plot allocation process. Construction works will commence in the coming months.

The Community Gardens Project Officer is currently preparing guidelines for the future management of the site which will be completed prior to the community garden being operational. These guidelines will indicate how the garden will be self-managed by the community.

It is intended that once Laker Reserve Community Garden is operational it will be managed by a management committee made up of the gardeners themselves. Various community garden governance models have been researched, and the preferred model chosen is a transition model where responsibility for the overall direction of the garden and the activities that take place there lies with Council in the early stages of the garden, evolving over time to a gardener-managed garden. Council will encourage community capacity building and the development of social capital through responsible decision-making by progressively devolving authority for the garden to the gardeners. Advantages of this model include empowering community and building community skills at a pace that is commensurate with the enthusiasm, skills and energy of the participants. An example of a garden that has successfully been established in this manner is the Hurstville Community Garden.

The garden design chosen by the community has plans for 17 large or 34 small garden plots, which will be licensed to individual or small groups of gardeners (e.g. families) for their exclusive use. Other garden beds within the community garden will be shared by all members of the community garden. A licence period of twelve months maximum is recommended for the exclusive use plots, with an option to extend for a further 12 months if the plot is well-maintained. If garden plots are over-subscribed, some system of credit that offers gardeners the right to 'earn' a licence to an individual plot from participation in the shared areas of the garden may need to be instigated. The management committee, once established, will make decisions on the process of plot allocation and other garden management procedures, subject to Council approval.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Feedback from the Community Development Advisory Committee was supportive of the proposed community garden and the informal garden concept design.

REFERRAL FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT

No referral was required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding has been provided in the current budget for this purpose as set out below:

Budget Item	Approved Budget	Expenditure to Date
Section 94 Laker Reserve Community Garden Development	\$248,236.82	\$122,209.47

ATTACHMENTS

1. Community Garden preferred concept design

Report approved by:

Jocelyn Palmer	Rob Bourke
Manager Community Lands and Services	Director Operations