



# YARRA CITY COUNCIL. URBAN AGRICULTURE STRATEGY 2014–2018

SUMMARY



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the Traditional Owners of this country, pays tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Yarra and gives respect to Elders past and present.

## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
The purpose of urban agriculture	2
Where are we now	3
The benefits and challenges	6
Council's role in urban agriculture	8
<b>WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>WHERE WE WANT TO BE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>11</b>



**COMMUNITY  
PLANTING DAY IN  
RICHMOND 2014.**





## 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 myriad 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 wellbeing; 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.



**YARRA 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 CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUND.**



**WHERE ARE WE 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.

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 neighbourhoods of Yarra in addition to the authorisation of a number of guerrilla gardens planted by private individuals prior to the implementation of the Yarra’s urban agriculture guidelines.

A number of nature strip plantings, both formal and informal, have been implemented within the city 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.

**Community Gardens**

There are currently three public community gardens located in North Fitzroy, Collingwood and at the Collingwood Children’s Farm with another one under construction at Burnley. Planning for further gardens is now underway. There is typically a waiting period of up to two 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.

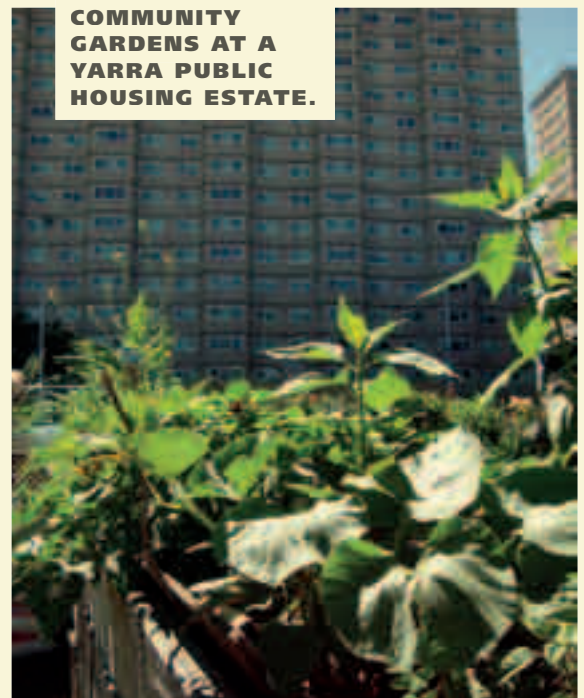
Cultivating Community, a not-for-profit community gardening group, is funded by the Department of Human Services to manage six community gardens for tenants located in public housing estates within the City of Yarra. These gardens are well supported by the tenants providing a rich opportunity for developing community, growing food and sharing stories.

**Collingwood Children’s Farm**

Established in 1979, developed as an opportunity for city children to experience a farm and country existence.



**A CELEBRATION OF FOOD ON YARRA’S SCHOOLS.**



**COMMUNITY GARDENS AT A YARRA PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE.**



### School Gardens

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 Garden program in 2001.

### Fruit and Vegetable Exchanges and Farmer's Markets

Regular fruit and vegetable exchanges and farmers' markets have sprung up throughout Yarra.

### 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 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 2012, the Yarra Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee, a committee comprising community members, area experts, Council officers, and councillors was formed. The aim of the committee 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 for and against 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.

**10% OF YARRA 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.**



**FARMER'S MARKET**



**YARRA'S FIRST PLANTER BOX, 2012.**





## 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 the benefits which the Yarra community consider critical, as well as a number of the challenges which will impact how the strategy is developed.

### 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
- increasing the community's awareness of healthy and nutritious food options

#### 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 in a garden and developing community

#### ECONOMIC

- better access to food for those on limited incomes
- create opportunities to engage with local food producers
- potential for local employment through social enterprise

#### SAFE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- more people using public spaces – more eyes on the street
- stronger, more connected communities

#### FOOD SECURITY / FOOD EQUALITY

- access to local, affordable food for all
- equitable access to healthy nutritious food options
- opportunity for all to grow their own food

#### FOOD CULTURE

- contributes to a strong culture of food, good growing and food sharing
- support and grow a thriving local food economy

**YARRA IS A SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY WITH SIGNIFICANT POCKETS OF DISADVANTAGE WHEN COMPARED TO THE REST OF VICTORIA.**

**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 lists 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 7000kg 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. 34m <sup>2</sup> per person)	

## COUNCIL'S ROLE IN URBAN AGRICULTURE

This strategy provides a framework for urban agriculture in the City of Yarra. It 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.



## WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

THE CITY  
COVERS AN  
AREA OF  
1,953HA  
(19.5 KM<sup>2</sup>) WHICH  
EQUATES TO  
APPROXIMATELY  
35.3 PERSONS  
PER SQUARE  
HECTARE.



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.

Through the development of this strategy many stories and conversations have occurred with community members, Council officers, groups and organisations, 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.

## WHERE WE WANT TO BE



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.



# 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.

Action	No	Deliverables
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) <b>YEAR 2</b>
	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) <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
Grow Partnerships	1.2.1	Investigate public / private partnerships to assist with practical help, funding, training and support for Urban Agriculture activities. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	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. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>



## 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.

Action	No	Deliverables
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. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	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. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	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. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	2.1.4	Promote Urban Agriculture and community gardening as healthy and social activities. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	2.1.5	Assess, evaluate and report on the progress of Urban Agriculture activities in Yarra. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
Creating an Edible City	2.2.1	Increase the number of Urban food growing opportunities in Yarra, including urban orchards, planter boxes and community gardens. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	2.2.2	Investigate and trial options for the development of an engaging, accessible web site for Urban Agriculture information, facts, calendar. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>



**THE POPULATION IN 2012 WAS OVER 80,000 AND THIS NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO GROW TO 100,000 OVER THE NEXT 15 YEARS.**



### 3. BUILD CONNECTIONS

Council will cultivate more robust communities, building strong connections and support its leaders through urban agriculture.

Action	No	Deliverables
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. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	3.1.2	Assist the community in the identification of external funding sources and financial support. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
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. <b>YEAR 4</b>
	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. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	3.2.3	Sponsorship and promotion of urban agriculture events both within the Yarra community and externally. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	3.2.4	Work with local business and industry networks to establish their requirements with regard to local food opportunities, requirements and production. <b>YEAR 4</b>
Crossing Boundaries	3.3.1	Identify and develop 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 organizations. (ex working with 3000 acres in delivery of food growing spaces). <b>YEAR 1-4</b>







## 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.

**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.**

Action	No	Deliverables
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 making this information accessible to the community. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	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. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
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. <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	4.2.2	Encourage and support the community through education in the maintenance and care of edible food (including vegetables, fruit, bees, chickens, etc.). <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	4.2.3	Establish a library of hand tools, for gardeners use in the production of edible food (including vegetables, fruit, bees, chickens, etc.). <b>YEAR 2-4</b>



**5. IMPROVE POLICY**

Council policy will support urban agriculture and promote the growing of food sustainably in the City of Yarra.

Action	No	Deliverables
Remove Barriers and Develop Supportive Policies and Practices 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 in the City of Yarra (including but not limited to traffic treatments, land owned by state divisions and private owners). <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	5.1.2	Review, evaluate and update existing Urban Agriculture guidelines including planter box guidelines, nature strip guidelines and community garden guidelines. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
	5.1.3	Develop guidelines which facilitate the use of land in underutilised spaces for the purpose of growing food (including but not limited to traffic treatments, etc). <b>YEAR 2-4</b>
	5.1.4	Support the development and implementation of key policy and strategic documents (i.e. Food Policy and Urban Forest Strategy) as outlined in the YES Strategy. <b>YEAR 1-4</b>
Recognise Urban Agriculture as a Legitimate Land Use	5.2.1	Investigate opportunities / mechanism to encourage developers to incorporate Urban Agriculture within their developments. <b>YEAR 4</b>





FOR INFORMATION IN YOUR LANGUAGE ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT OR ABOUT COUNCIL, PLEASE CALL 9280 1940 AND QUOTE THE **REF** NUMBER BELOW.

**ARABIC**

للمعلومات باللغة العربية، حول هذا المستند أو عن المجلس البلدي، نرجو الإتصال هاتفيا على الرقم 9280 1930 وأذكر رقم المرجع **REF** المذكور أدناه.

**SIMPLIFIED CHINESE**

欲知有关本文件或议会的普通话版本信息，请致电9280 1937并报上下列REF号码。

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE**

欲知有關本文件或議會的粵語版本資訊，請致電9280 1932並報上下列REF號碼。

**GREEK**

ΓΙΑ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΣΧΕΤΙΚΕΣ ΜΕ ΑΥΤΟ ΤΟ ΈΓΓΡΑΦΟ Ή ΤΗ ΔΗΜΑΡΧΙΑ, ΠΑΡΑΚΑΛΟΥΜΕ ΚΑΛΕΣΤΕ ΤΟ 9280 1934 ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΦΕΡΕΤΕ ΤΟΝ ΑΡΙΘΜΟ **REF** ΠΑΡΑΚΑΤΩ.

**ITALIAN**

PER AVERE INFORMAZIONI IN ITALIANO SU QUESTO DOCUMENTO O SUL COMUNE, SI PREGA CHIAMARE IL NUMERO 9280 1931 E CITARE IL NUMERO DI RIFERIMENTO (**REF** NUMBER) SOTTOINDICATO.

**SPANISH**

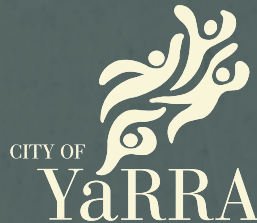
PARA INFORMACIÓN EN CASTELLANO SOBRE ESTE DOCUMENTO O SOBRE EL AYUNTAMIENTO, LLAME AL 9280 1935 Y CITE EL NÚMERO DE **REF** DE MÁS ADELANTE.

**VIETNAMESE**

ĐỂ BIẾT THÔNG TIN BẰNG TIẾNG VIỆT VỀ TÀI LIỆU NÀY HAY VỀ HỘI ĐỒNG, XIN HÃY GỌI SỐ 9280 1939 VÀ NÊU SỐ **REF** DƯỚI ĐÂY.

**REF 15023**

[YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU](http://YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU)



## YARRA CITY COUNCIL.

PHONE: 9205 5555  
FAX: 8417 6666

RICHMOND TOWN HALL  
333 BRIDGE ROAD, RICHMOND

COLLINGWOOD TOWN HALL  
140 HODDLE STREET, ABBOTSFORD

CONNIE BENN CENTRE  
160 BRUNSWICK STREET, FITZROY

WEBSITE: [WWW.YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU](http://WWW.YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU)  
EMAIL: [INFO@YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU](mailto:INFO@YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU)  
POST: PO BOX 168 RICHMOND VIC 3121