



3. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND SUBMISSIONS

5. COUNCILLOR QUESTION TIME

6. SEALING SCHEDULE

Nil

7. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

Item 7.1 Petition – Neighbourhood Community Laneway Garden, Park Street, South Melbourne.

A Petition containing 12 signatures was received from local residents.

The Petition states the following:-

We wish to apply for a Neighbourhood Community Laneway Garden at the rear of our properties in Park and Montague Streets South Melbourne.

In consultation with the Head Gardener at St Vincent Garden, Les Williams, who is one of the members of our group, we have determined that the proposed site is one that is suitable for a community garden.

Over the past 12 months during the period of the Covid-19 lockdown our neighbourhood relationships have strengthened and this was supported by a renewed interest in gardening among many of us.

However, the properties in our neighbourhood have limited space to be able to grow much produce. This led to the idea of using the space in our laneway to create an area where we can all grow food, care for a garden and help to sustain the healthy relationships in our community.

The laneway has no car access to the properties that directly back onto it, it has ample sunlight for most of the day, is wide enough to allow easy access for residents and those tending to the garden to move around and has access to tank water from some of the properties that back onto it.

We believe that the project will serve to -

- foster a sense of community among members of our local neighbourhood across generations and cultures*
- be a safe space for a community garden as there is no car access to this part of the laneway*
- help to reduce food and green waste going to landfill by providing sustainable opportunities for composting and use of green waste*

- *improve our local area by providing edible plants for everyone to share*
- *allow skills to be shared between experienced gardeners and those who are new to gardening and growing food*
- *provide the opportunity for younger members of our community to understand the process of producing food*
- *provide flowering plants to help sustain and build the local bee population*

OFFICER COMMENT

There are many benefits to community gardening, it is a great way improve greening outcomes, grow local vegetables and to get to know neighbours.

During Stage 3 and 4 COVID-19 restrictions under the direction of the Victorian Chief Health Officer regulations, we saw an increase in residents requesting community gardens as local public space became more in demand.

While Council recognises the value that Community Gardens provide, it also needs to ensure that gardens located in public space managed by Council are safe, risks are mitigated and that there is equitable community access.

Council endorsed the *Community Garden Assessment Guidelines* on 20 May 2020. These establish how a Community Garden can be established in the City.

The proposal as outlined in the petition would likely not meet these assessment guidelines for several reasons.

1. The application is for garden on a Roadway and not on Council Land (which is the case for other community gardens). These guidelines do not cover gardens within laneways.

This petition relates to lane R2597, which is 3.2m wide by 5.8m long.



Image 1: Lane R2597



Image 2: Front of Park Street Houses



Road Act

Laneways are considered roads and therefore fall under the regulations of the Road Act. One of the requirements of the Act is that obstructions cannot be placed on roads, in this instance a community garden would be considered an obstruction. Therefore, the only way to permit this would be to close or discontinue the road (laneway). This would require formal Council approval and can take up to 3 months.

Then a licence or permit would need to be issued to occupy the public space.

2. Council's Community Gardens Assessment Guidelines require each Community Garden to be managed by either an incorporated group, auspiced by a community group or attached to a leased community facility and hold indemnity insurance. This is not the case with this group.

Other Options

The residents could achieve similar gardens on the nature strips out the front of their properties under Council's Nature Strip Guidelines. These are designed to encourage planting of garden beds by residents. If the residents wish to include raised garden beds or planters, they would need to seek advice of Council officers to ensure that these raised beds don't create any hazards.

Residents could also become members at one of councils licenced community garden, join a community group that plants in garden plots Council has provided in parks or establish a garden on private land or land owned and managed by other authorities, such as schools, churches, or private vacant land.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the petition
2. Thanks the community for their petition and acknowledge the health and community benefits and social connectiveness delivered by community gardens.
3. Advises the petitioners that they can commence an application for a Community Garden under the Community Garden Assessment Guidelines
4. Notes that Officers' advice is that the current proposal would likely not comply with these guidelines, as the proposed garden is on land falls under the regulation of the Road Act and is not made by an incorporated association or auspiced by a community group
5. Advises the residents that they could undertake these gardens on the nature strips outside their properties under Council's Nature Strip Guidelines. Officers can provide advice on this.

TRIM FILE NO: F21/7

ATTACHMENTS Nil