

CITY OF PARRAMATTA

Community Gardens Network

Community gardens help build healthier, stronger, and better connected communities

Community gardens offer our community the opportunity to plant, grow and harvest produce in a shared setting. When community gardens are led by the community, they provide inclusive, common ground areas with opportunities for residents to be active and connect with each other over shared interests.

Community gardens also help our community to interact with nature, to reduce their household waste, and to learn and practice skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Defining our community garden network:

A community garden is space that is accessible to the community and has been allocated to grow food and other plants.

There are different models of community gardens. The most common forms are:

- Community gardens with a mixture of allotments for each member and some shared areas
- Community gardens where the entire garden is managed collectively



COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK

Current situation

What is provided now?



3

Council-owned land

4

Non-Council owned land

KEY: ● Council-owned land ● Non-Council owned land

City of Parramatta Council (Council) currently plays a small role in provision of community gardens.

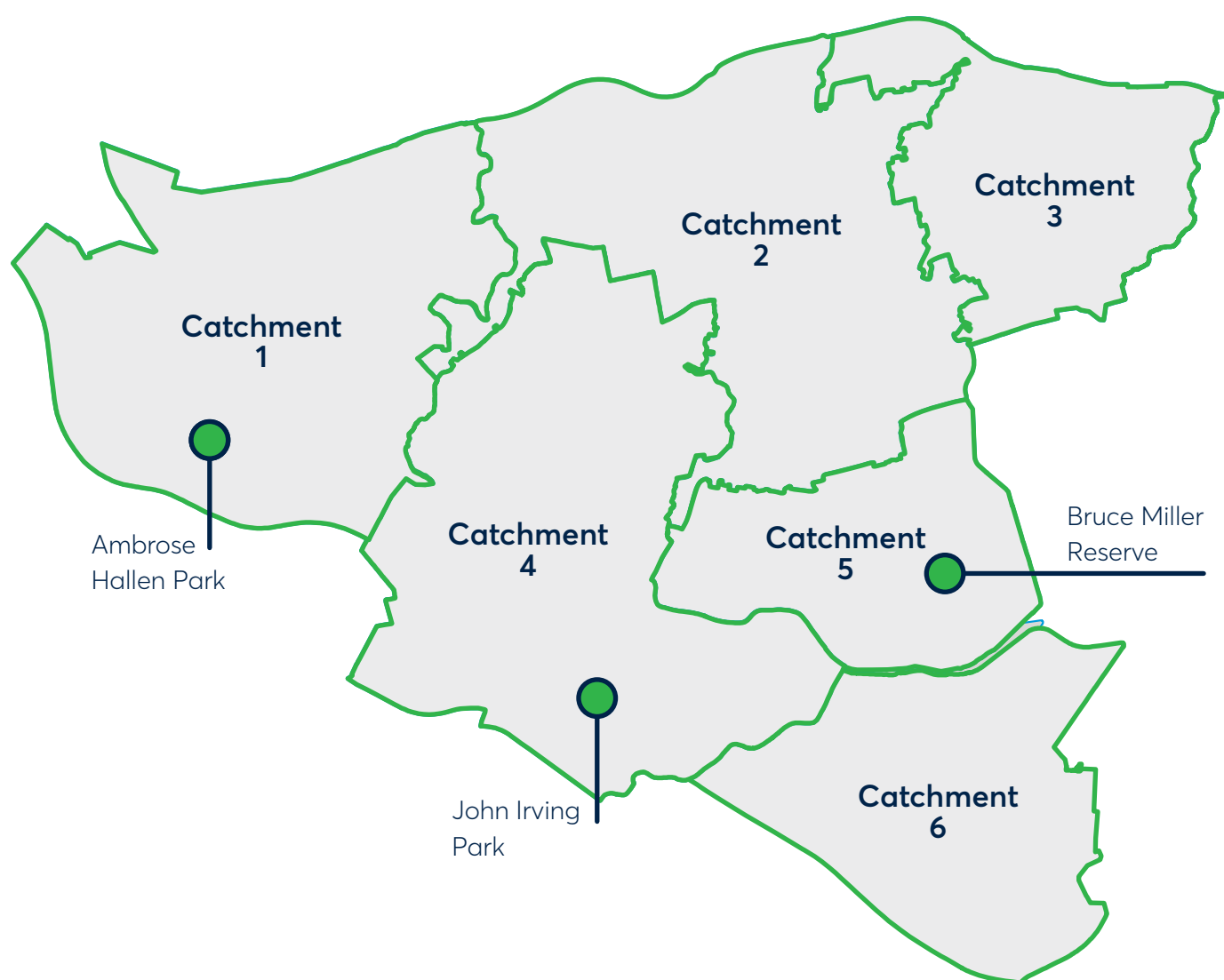
In our Local Government Area (LGA), Council enables and facilitates community gardens on Council-owned land that are managed and led by the local community.

There are three community gardens that are situated on Council land.

There are at least four community gardens on non-Council land that are available for the community.

In addition, there are public schools within City of Parramatta LGA that have school kitchen gardens, used to support learning outcomes and as an additional learning space for students. These are not widely accessible for the broader community.

2019 City of Parramatta community gardens network



Community gardens on Council land

CATCHMENT 1				
Facility name	Land ownership	Establishment and operations	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambrose Hallen Park 18A Derbyshire Ave, Toongabbie	Council-owned land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community led 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to primary school Accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and by public transport Universal accessibility Co-located with a play space Adequate parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of visual prominence Low passive surveillance Low number of dedicated gardeners Limited signage No toilet onsite No access to drinking water

CATCHMENT 4				
Facility name	Land ownership	Establishment and operations	Strengths	Weaknesses
John Irving Park 6 Jordan Street, Rosehill	Council-owned land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership between CoP and Harris Park Community Centre The garden management committee is incorporated through Harris Park Community Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated with services of Harris Park Community Centre Gardens well maintained Established in an area of forecast growth Onsite accessible toilet Universal access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate parking Lack of activation Not highly accessed by members of the broader community Lack of visual prominence Lack of signage and lighting Low level of joint programming with Council

CATCHMENT 5				
Facility name	Land ownership	Establishment and operations	Strengths	Weaknesses
Bruce Miller Reserve 6A Trumper St, Ermington	Council-owned land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed by the community in partnership with Council following the Imagine Ermington Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-located with open space and a play space Accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and by public transport Adequate parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topography of the park limits accessibility

Community gardens on non-Council land

CATCHMENT 1

Facility name	Land ownership
Northmead Public School Bush Tucker Garden <i>(designed in collaboration with the community with expectations of active community involvement)</i> Moxhams Road, Northmead	NSW Department of Education

CATCHMENT 2

Facility name	Land ownership
Teloepa Community Garden 12 Shortland Street, Teloepa	Located on NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) land and supported by LAHC and Dundas Area Neighbourhood Centre.
Teloepa Public School Chestnut Avenue, Teloepa	Located on NSW Department of Education land. Run by Department of Education's 'Schools as Community Centres' project at Teloepa Public School.

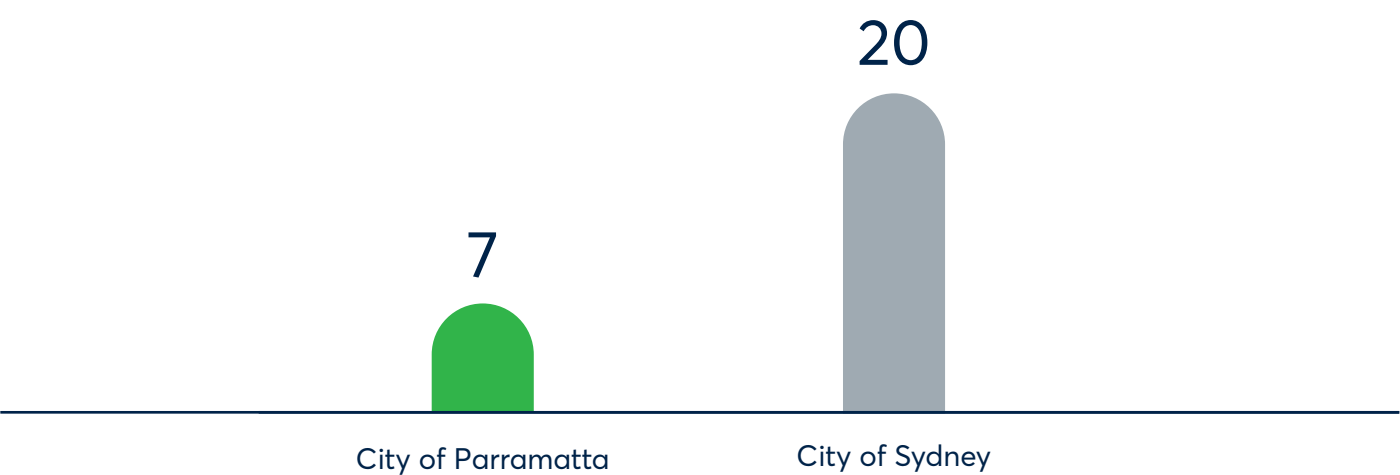
CATCHMENT 5

Facility name	Land ownership
Riverside Church Community Garden 10 Lawson St, Ermington	Owned and run by Riverside Church.

Rates of provision

Current provision of community gardens available to the general public in City of Parramatta is limited.

Provision of community gardens in City of Parramatta and City of Sydney 2019



City of Sydney Council supports the establishment of community gardens. Currently there are 20 community gardens run by volunteers in the local area (as identified on City of Sydney’s website).

Community gardens facility benchmarks

There is no universally agreed benchmark to guide the calculation of ideal community garden provision in LGAs to meet population estimates.

For more information on the application of benchmarks and their strengths, weaknesses and considerations, refer to the 'Table of benchmarks' pages 60-61.

Community gardens can be initiated in several ways



By the community: Interested people form a community group, find an available piece of land, conduct site assessments and discuss with Council and others the process of establishing and managing a community garden.



By a not-for-profit organisation: Development, support and hosting of a community garden project by a local community centre or community service provider in the interests of social cohesion, healthy active living and support activities. These community gardens can be located on Council, State Government, non-government organisation (NGO) or private land.



By Housing NSW: Development and management of a community garden by Housing NSW as part of their 'Community Greening' program, which provides a framework for providing land for this use.



By a school: Development and management of a community garden by a local school, located on Department of Education land.



By a developer: Sometimes developers of new residential communities will provide space for community gardens onsite which new residents may choose to activate.

What does it take to maintain a good quality community garden?

Quality community gardens support residents to be active community members, to learn healthy living habits, to be exposed to educational opportunities about natural resources in an urban environment and to connect with others in a personally rewarding experience.

Community gardens also play a significant role in promoting community connectedness and cohesion, particularly for residents living in medium to high density housing.

When a community garden is poorly maintained, the space can become derelict and can cause contention amongst members of the community garden group and the broader community. Sometimes objections can be raised due to issues that may arise from unmaintained spaces, including odours, attractiveness to vandals and undesirable behavior, poor aesthetics and vermin.

What does maintaining a good quality community garden involve?



Past experiences indicate there may be value in exploring options for community gardens to be more flexible in use, moveable or temporary in nature.

How do we maintain our community gardens now?

The community or specific organisations who establish community gardens are responsible for the safe maintenance, upkeep, and activation of community garden spaces in City of Parramatta.

The time and cost for community garden maintenance can be significant, and in an era where people are increasingly time poor, the ability to find community members with time and the relevant expertise to take on the necessary garden maintenance can be difficult. Where appropriate, Council encourages groups to apply for grants and sponsorship to assist with funding their garden and its upkeep.

Council also provides advice, support and assistance for new and established community gardens. Despite the best efforts of our local community, sometimes the overall condition of individual community gardens can decline over time as a result of reducing investment of time by the community.

Opportunities to improve community gardens establishment and operations

Throughout 2011, the then Parramatta City Council, together with the then University of Western Sydney, undertook extensive community engagement across the former LGA. As part of this process, Council heard that there were several perceived problems with community gardens, and these included:

- Transparency about how individuals can become involved with community gardens
- A need for a clear set of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
- Greater partnerships with local businesses and organisations for support
- Mitigation measures to manage any conflict arising between community garden members
- Greater clarity about the rules for shared and individual plot usage in community gardens
- More education opportunities for each garden that link with the desired learning goals of community garden members at each site
- Networking between community garden sites.

How well positioned is our current community garden network?

The strengths of our community garden network include:

- Each community garden is unique and has its own character and opportunities which result from the site history, context and relationships with the local community and other agencies.
- For some members of our community, Council's community garden network plays a significant role in supporting health, wellbeing and community connections.
- Some community gardens are managed in partnership with others and integrated with other community infrastructure.
- Some community gardens have an active membership base, are well managed and are of good quality.

Despite some strengths, our community garden network has weaknesses:

- From time to time, issues can arise amongst community garden members due to different views on management, use and access.
- Some community gardens are left to decline as a result of reduced investment of time by the community. Often there is no set time frame associated with new garden establishment and no clear processes for closing a garden if this is required. This can lead to issues for local neighbours nearby to a declining site.
- Current community garden provision does not reflect or support a networked approach to service delivery. The facilities and services provided at gardens are not complementary or integrated.
- Kitchen gardens within schools are not always set up as community gardens due to perceived problems with access and security.
- Some community garden sites are limited in their use to raised garden beds, due to past industrial uses and contamination.
- All current community gardens are fixed, permanent and made up of hard infrastructure, with very little flexibility.

Northmead Primary School



Bush Tucker Garden

In 2016, the P&C of Northmead Primary School were successful in receiving a \$40,000 grant from City of Parramatta's Stronger Communities Fund, to create a 'Bush Tucker' Community Garden.

Completed in 2018, this community garden has created a sustainable Bush Tucker Outdoor Learning facility which includes:

- **A Yarning Circle:** where Aboriginal people can come together with students, educators and parents to share song lines, stories, language and develop a greater understanding of the culture of the traditional land owners, and all Aboriginal communities and clans.
- Storytelling poles.

- **Indigenous plants:** all plants are labelled with their name and children are able to use the produce.
- A dynamic learning environment, connected to Aboriginal culture.

The Bush Tucker garden was created with local Aboriginal groups and input from the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Committee, with the aim to create an integrated learning space for all students who attend Northmead Public School and those children and young people who have access to the school grounds from the wider community.

To ensure the sustainability of the Bush Tucker Garden, the P&C Committee engaged the services of Burbangana Group – an Aboriginal majority owned company with a vision of working together for community wellbeing. "Burbangana" is a word from the Sydney Language, also known as Dharug and Iyora, which means "Take hold of my hand and help me up".

**information sourced from Northmead Primary School*



Facts at a glance

In City of Parramatta in 2019, we have:



3

Community gardens
on Council-owned land



4

Community gardens
on non-Council land



3+

School kitchen
gardens including one
bush tucker kitchen
garden

Liang

Connecting with her community through gardening

Liang moved to the Parramatta area in 2003 from China. She had never gardened before but was looking for a new hobby to fill her time. She began experimenting with different types of herbs, fruits and vegetables at home on her veranda. After gaining some confidence, she decided to join her local garden group. This gave her the opportunity to meet more people in her local area and practice her English.

Liang has planted many different types of Chinese plants in her plot including taro, white radish, snake beans and Chinese greens. She often shares her leftovers with other gardeners and curious passers-by that stop for a chat. She also discusses different ways of preparing the fruit and vegetables and suggests recipes that they can be used in.

Each month, the garden group hosts an international food day, where gardeners use produce from their garden and prepare dishes from their home country. These are then shared with other members of the gardening group and the broader community.

Overall Liang feels very relaxed when she is working in the garden and enjoys the chance to speak to people, practice her English and teach them about her culture.

**CASE
STUDY**



Emerging trends

What
does future
best practice
look like?

In City of Parramatta, the experience of living in increasingly urban environments is changing the way we consider and view the role of community gardens.

The importance of eating healthy food and having access to green space is also increasing. Schools, developers and community service providers, together with those that plan for and govern the growth and development of our cities and neighbourhoods, are more focused on enabling access to spaces to grow healthy food, be outdoors and to form strong community connections.

Council considers the following trends as critical to the future of our community garden network:

Community gardens as gathering places.

A 'third place' is an informal community gathering place that is inclusive, local and helps to bring people together through promoting community cohesion and social inclusion. Community gardens of the future will need to be of sufficient size and amenity to accommodate this function.

Collaborative learning.

Community gardens are embracing an educational approach that has a greater focus on group and collaborative learning, shifting to more active and interactive learning environments. This learning opportunity is particularly focused around gardening, the environment, health, nutrition and sustainability.

Community engagement.

Community gardens can provide a forum for conversations that add to the understanding of the community, assists community members to make informed decisions and connect people with the information and resources necessary for strengthening citizenship and providing access points to government.

Programs and partnerships.

Community gardens are increasing the range of activities offered. They are focusing on creating vibrant and stimulating environments for a wide array of community garden uses as well as working in partnerships to deliver outcomes. Partnerships could include shared projects or initiatives with local schools and Men's Sheds. Partnerships assist with funding streams and support sustainability.

Smart technology.

Increasing information technology has meant that community gardens will need to consider how they can utilise this resource. Additional facilities for technology may include the provision of WiFi access areas and the use of apps to identify plants.



Location.

Alternatives to open space sites, for example rooftops and street verges, are increasingly being considered for community gardens. New community gardens should be located to ensure a balance between accessibility and privacy. The potential for flexible, moveable and temporary community gardens is also being explored as a way of better meeting the needs and expectations of the community.

Community gardens as a network.

Community gardeners are looking to develop links across community garden sites. This will increase knowledge surrounding the interests and service provision at each site as well as increase support. By viewing community gardens as a network, this enables sites to share resources and work together to achieve common goals.

Management and support.

There is growing awareness and appreciation that community garden groups must have appropriate management structures to ensure effective management and care of the sites.

Length of operation.

The success of community gardens is variable, where some succeed long term and others chose to close. Community garden groups must be flexible and maintain a short, medium and long term view of their project. Any approach to operations will need to reflect the capacity of participants to be involved with the community garden over time. Being proactive in planning for a closure (if necessary) is increasingly recognised as critical from the outset.

Supporting new community members.

As the population grows and increasingly welcomes people from different backgrounds and cultures, many of these new residents will be living in high density dwellings and some will be vulnerable. Community gardens have an important role to play in this context, being places where new residents can develop a sense of community, connect with one another and grow the produce that they might otherwise be unable to access locally.

Bruce Miller Reserve Community Garden, Ermington

Initiated and developed together with the community

In 2016, Council launched 'Imagine Ermington', a new initiative to shape the future of this community by offering locals a chance to engage with Council and their neighbours to turn their ideas into reality.

A community engagement website was established which allowed locals to search a map of Ermington, choose a location and submit an idea for improving the public domain in their area. Users could also browse, comment on, or support other people's ideas.

Over 150 submissions were received. In late 2016, City of Parramatta Council announced that the winning idea in the 'Imagine Ermington' initiative would be a new community garden.

Council held an inception meeting with interested local residents to discuss the type of garden and proposed location within Ermington. Bruce Miller Reserve was selected as the preferred location.

Taking inspiration from community feedback, Council's landscape designers designed the garden, which was built in 2017.

CASE
STUDY

Image credit: ParraParents





COMMUNITY GARDENS NETWORK

Future needs

What are the gaps and challenges we face?

City of Parramatta's current provision of community gardens available to the general public is limited.

City of Parramatta's future population is estimated to grow to 488,000 people by 2041. Given the exponential population growth and an increasing proportion of our community living in higher density apartments, community gardens have the potential to be important spaces for our community to access for recreation, health opportunities and social interaction.

There is no universally agreed benchmarks to guide the calculation of ideal community garden provision into the future. Community gardens work best when driven by the community themselves, or an organisation on their behalf.



What our community has told us...

The first version of this Strategy was publicly exhibited between August and October 2017, and the updated draft Strategy was publicly exhibited between September and November 2019.

These engagement opportunities allowed Council to better understand the needs and expectations of our community. This information has been useful for strengthening this document. Through the consultation process, and others, we heard that:

Our community values:

- The individual character of each community garden site
- The social interaction experienced at community gardens
- The role that community gardens play as community learning spaces

Our community would like to see:

- Increased transparency about how individuals can become involved with community gardens
- Greater clarity about what is offered by each community garden
- Partnerships with key stakeholders to promote the increased provision of sustainable community gardens

"Community gardens, supported by Council, would be of significant benefit in areas of medium to high density..."

- Resident, public submission

"...Council should promote the development of community gardens as demonstration sites where people can meet, work together, build stronger community relationships and learn about sustainability."

- Western Sydney Local Health District Submission

Wynnum Manly Community Garden Group, Brisbane QLD

Fostering connections with the broader community

The Wynnum Manly Community Garden Group (WMC GG) have a membership base of over 200 people who come together to grow and share organic food.

Opened in 2011, the garden was funded by donations from a local Councillor, Brisbane City Council's Cultivating Community Gardens Program and the Lord Mayor's Sustainability Grant.

Operating on 720m² of land, the WMC GG hosts many public events in conjunction with Brisbane City Council GOLD and GOLD n KIDS programs. The community gardens also hosts a playgroup every Tuesday.

Members of the garden consist of local residents seeking to learn to grow organic food and be part of the local community.

The WMC GG is part of the broader local community:

- Waste products for the compost system are provided by a local café and local neighbours.
- Local schools, neighbourhood centres and the local library promote the community garden events.
- Connections have been established with social housing advocates, the local school for students with disabilities, local disability organisations and the local mental health service provider.

- Registered with Centrelink, supporting members on Newstart and those with community service obligations.

**Information sourced from Brisbane City Council's 'Community Garden Guide' and Wynnum Manly Community Gardens Group*

CASE STUDY

Image credit: When in Wynnum



The strategic challenges we face together

As City of Parramatta continues to undergo transformational change, our community garden network will enable healthy active living for our residents and foster broader community wellbeing, through access to informal recreation opportunities, healthy food and social connection.

We will need to plan and use our resources to find solutions to the following critical strategic challenges:

Q. How can we maximise the capacity and functions of existing community gardens to meet the needs of our growing and changing communities?

Q. What partnerships and collaborations will assist communities, especially those living in high density neighbourhoods, who want to expand the network of community gardens and other alternative spaces across our LGA to grow food and other plants?

Q. What operational and management strategies will be most successful for delivering and maintaining community gardens that are sustainable and activated? What is the best way to manage community garden sites when they are no longer viable?

Q. What funding strategies will be most successful for delivering best practice, sustainable community gardens?

Q. What opportunities exist to make community gardens more flexible in use, temporary and relocateable?

Q. How could community gardens nurture the growth of new innovations such as urban farms or farmer's markets?

Q. How can accessibility of community gardens be maximised and awareness of their welcoming presence be increased?

COMMUNITY GARDENS NETWORK

Future directions



Strategic directions

To meet the needs of City of Parramatta's growing and increasingly diverse community, Council will seek to facilitate community garden space where communities express the desire for them and are committed to their development, delivery and ongoing operations.

This will enable residents' access to facilities and programs to support healthy active living and more broadly build community wellbeing.

City of Parramatta Council will focus on the following strategic directions:

- **For all community gardens:**

Support residents and organisations of City of Parramatta to develop and effectively manage community gardens, through provision of advice, education and training, promotion and investigation of sites, funding, partnership and management options.

- **For community gardens on Council-owned land:**

Support residents and organisations of City of Parramatta to develop and effectively manage community gardens on Council-owned land through:

- Provision of general advice, education, training and promotion.
- Site options analysis.
- Funding and partnership options analysis.
- Potential funding, planning, delivery, materials and maintenance support, subsequent to detailed planning.

- **Encourage community garden provision in high growth high density** areas, through partnerships and planning with the community, community services, developers and government.

Key recommendations

CATCHMENT 1

Suburb	Name	Recommendation
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Toongabbie

Ambrose Hallen Park

Continue to support

Westmead

Milson Park

Seek to investigate potential site opportunities

CATCHMENT 4

Suburb	Name	Recommendation
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Rosehill

John Irving Park

Continue to support

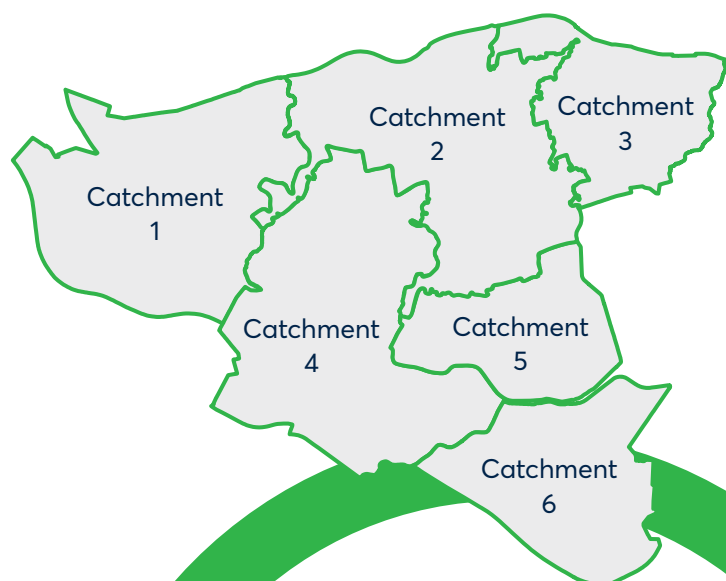
CATCHMENT 5

Suburb	Name	Recommendation
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Ermington

Bruce Miller Reserve

Continue to support



Criteria to guide decision making for new community garden opportunities

The following criteria complement and are to be used in conjunction with City of Parramatta's stated principles for community infrastructure planning found on pages 63-65. Council will use them to guide decision making and discussion with stakeholders and partners about new community garden opportunities.

Will the future community garden:	Contribute to meeting the directions for the neighbourhood as a priority, and complement the existing community garden network?
Will the community garden site:	Be located within close proximity to regular public transport services?
	Be located to ensure a balance between accessibility and privacy?
	Be physically accessible and employ universal design principles?
	Be designed to maximise flexibility in use and be capable of accommodating a diversity of uses?
	Include or be positioned close to accessible toilets?
	Be located within close proximity to medium-high density residential communities?

Operations/ sustainability:

Ideally, secure the support of other partnering organisations such as local businesses and not-for-profit organisations?

Have clear funding sources and not be dependant on unreliable sources of funding such as grants or sponsorship from partnering organisations?

Have a Plan of Management and a management structure with appointed members?

For more information:

This Community Infrastructure Strategy draws on the knowledge and experience of many staff from across Council who have a passion for enabling socially sustainable communities. Together with feedback from our community, and our key stakeholders, this document has been a shared effort.

For further information on City of Parramatta's community garden network, or Council's key strategic directions, the following resources are available:

- "Sharing the Opportunities of Growth for All – Socially Sustainable Parramatta Framework": <https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/sites/council/files/2018-09/socially-sustainable-parramatta-framework.pdf>
- City of Parramatta Council's website: www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au
- City of Parramatta Customer Contact Centre: 9806 5050
- For access to demographic data: <http://profile.id.com.au/parramatta>