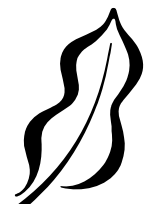


THE CITY *of*
Unley 

Food Security Strategy

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1. Introduction

In 2010, Council launched its *Environment Sustainability Plan* that addressed the impact of Climate Change on the City, together with strategies for water, waste and sustainable landscapes. One of the objectives of the Plan was to “*promote and support local food production*”.

This *Food Security Strategy* aims to support the City of Unley community to become more self-sufficient in food. The Strategy has been collaboratively developed by the City of Unley’s Community Sustainability Advisory Group (CSAG), comprising Elected Members, community representatives and Council staff.

2. Context

World Food Crisis

The capacity to provide enough food is at a tipping point. In 1950 the world population was 2.5 billion people, by the start of 2012, there will be more than 7 billion people on the planet, and more than 9 billion by 2050. The apparent productivity gains of the *green revolution* of the 1970s, involving high-yield plants and intensive use of fertilisers and pesticides, have now been overtaken by population growth. Productive farmland has been reduced in size and the supply of fresh water is diminishing. Poverty is now on the increase and it is projected that in the future many people will not have enough to eat (Ref 1, Ref 2).

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This is exacerbated by:

- the early impacts of climate change now being felt. Less rain means less water for growing food, a major constraint to addressing the food crisis. Shorter winters mean that the growing patterns of many plant species are disrupted. Less arable land is caused by increasing desertification of land and overuse of existing land. The number of incidents of extreme weather events appears to be increasing: Australia, for example, has experienced extreme drought, storms and floods in the past three years;
- the negative impacts of some of the *green revolution* techniques e.g. soil degradation, reduced water quality in streams, and a decline in the number of bees – essential for pollination;
- our food system being heavily dependent on fuels and fertilisers derived from fuel - which in turn contributes to climate change;
- the increase in demand for meat, much lower-yielding than cereal crops, as formerly poor countries develop a large middle-class who can afford meat;
- the development of biofuels, turning land that could be used for food into cropping for transport fuel.

Australia is impacted by these changes too.

Global To Local

Ecological Footprint Calculators (Ref 7) provide an estimate of the ‘footprint’ that each of us has of the earth’s resources: if everyone on earth consumed resources at the rate that we do, there would need to be two to three earths to meet our needs! For example, the resources consumed in the production, transportation and sale of food, plus the eventual disposal of waste from the food cycle is invariably the largest component of our personal ecological footprint – typically, 25 to 35%.

A priority for personal action is to reduce the level of resources required for our own food. The most effective way is to grow more (and waste less) of our own food and to consider eating less meat, both as individuals and in collaboration with the community in which we live.

Historically, food has been grown in the City of Unley since European settlement (Ref 8). Agriculture and horticulture flourished, with vegetable gardens, vineyards and crops in abundance. Today, many households in the City have fruit and nut trees and a vegetable garden; however, there has been a gradual reduction of local food cultivation over the past 20 years.

Currently, there are many existing and proposed examples of food security initiatives in the City of Unley.

- the Sunday Farmers market at the Wayville Showgrounds
- the Clarence Park Food Co-operative and the Good Food co-operative run at the Clarence Park Community Centre on Saturdays and some weekdays
- the Urban Orchard fruit and vegetable swap market at the Clarence Park Community Centre, monthly
- school food gardens at Black Forest Primary and Parkside Primary Schools
- community food gardens at Fern Avenue and the Goody Patch – a shared school/community garden at Goodwood
- several pocket parks are proposed for planting fruit and/or nut trees are being development, such as Morrie Harrell Park
- one street is proposed as under consideration as the pilot for replacement of dying ornamental street trees by fruit trees
- community harvest, where Council volunteers collect surplus home-grown food for re-use
- informal arrangements for sharing seeds and seedlings such as at the Sturt Bowling Club.

Local to Global

Other inspiring food security initiatives across the world include:

- the Food Forest – a world-leading permaculture farm and education facility near Gawler (Ref 9);
- the Magic Harvest – inspired by Lolo Houbein’s book *One Magic Square*, Magic Harvest supports families in disadvantaged neighborhoods in the City of Onkaparinga to grow food in their backyards. The scheme provides soil, seedlings and training and support (Ref 10);
- shared backyards: where those who no longer have the ability or time to use their backyard to grow food are linked to those who don’t have the space but do have the enthusiasm to do so. Sustainable Communities SA coordinates a number of shared backyards in Adelaide (Ref 11);

- gardening in public places: residents of Chippendale in Sydney have removed concrete and planted out food plants in nature strips and verges (with Council support);
- Totness and ‘Incredible Edible’ Todmorden in the United Kingdom have food plants growing everywhere from railway stations to car parks (Ref 12);
- A variant on this is the notion of community orchards where pocket parks and footpaths are planted with fruit and nut trees rather than ornamental trees;
- Permablitz networks, where volunteers are recruited, trained then ‘blitz’ a conventional backyard, turning it into a productive site based on permaculture design principles (Ref 13);
- a Demonstration Garden: the City of Vancouver runs the City Farmer Compost Demonstration Garden that demonstrates sustainable gardening techniques to its residents (Ref 14);
- an holistic approach is taken by the CERES Community Environment Park at Brunswick in Melbourne which provides models and advice on water sustainability, food production and distribution, and community building. It has extensive partnerships with the City of Moreland, federal and overseas agencies and trusts (Ref 15);
- Capital Bee – a London-based initiative which encourages community-based beekeeping (Ref 16).

3. Australia and Food Security

In Australia, food security has been a focus for the Government for many years: as part of our aid program, as a major topic for Research and Development for Australia’s farmers, and as part of an increasing current concern about foreign ownership of Australia’s arable land, water supplies and food (Ref 3, Ref 4).

In December 2010, the Prime Minister’s *Science, Engineering and Innovation Council’s Expert Working Group on Food Security* released its report entitled *Australia and Food Security in a Changing World*. Key, relevant points raised in the report include:

- “Australia is currently a net exporter of food, with considerable expertise in food production under resource constraints and in the face of climate variability”;
- challenges for the future in Australia are “land degradation, population growth, long-term climate change, competition for arable land, scarcity of water, and nutrient and energy availability”;
- “food security does not just mean having enough food in a typical year. It means having reliable and sustainable access to acceptable, nutritious and affordable food at all times”;
- “Australians expect this security and about 40 million non-Australians internationally rely on our country to secure their food as well” (Ref 5, Ref 6).

This food security report made many recommendations to secure Australia’s food security, including substantial new investment in Research and Development and a national approach to food including the creation of the *Australian Food Security Agency*. More specifically, the report recommended:

- “better engaging the community and partner organizations to elevate the status of food in Australia”;
- “Projects to support community driven developments in food production, such as school and community gardens”;
- “Community projects to encourage local groups to develop infrastructure that drives the supply of healthy food”.

These community-focussed actions are relevant for the City of Unley community.

4. Defining Unley’s Food Security Strategy:

The fundamental approach for the City of Unley’s Food Security Strategy is to grow more food locally:

Strategy 1: Grow More Food in Public Spaces, including:

- investigate more Community Gardens within the City
- identify public spaces in the City of Unley where food can be grown by the community
- encourage all schools in the City to have a school food garden
- trialling fruit and nut trees in streets and parks

Strategy 2: Grow More Food in Backyards, including:

- run public seminars to educate/train backyard growers in areas such as effective pruning, composting, using raised garden beds and permaculture;
- link community members needing space to grow food with those who have unused backyards;
- advertise local businesses which support local growing of food;
- support disadvantaged households to grow their own food.

Strategy 3: Support Local Food Distribution and Re-use including:

- support existing local food markets and facilitate the development of additional markets, to encourage the valued use of surplus food;
- support the operations of agencies which practice recycling of unused food;
- encourage arrangements for sharing of surplus food, seeds and seedlings;
- encourage priority to be given to the purchase of locally-grown food.

This *Food Security Strategy* will support the local community to:

- become more self-reliant in food and improve their food security
- obtain more healthy food at a reasonable cost
- reduce their ecological footprint
- build links with others in the community interested in growing food and strengthen the sense of community in the City.

An Action Plan has been developed and will be facilitated and monitored by the City of Unley’s Environment Officer in collaboration with CSAG.

5. References

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- (10) The Magic Harvest: <http://www.foe.org.au/resources/chain-reaction/editions/chain-reaction-109/the-magic-harvest-program>
- (11) Sustainable Communities SA:
<http://sustainablecommunitiesa.wordpress.com/projects/backyard-community-group-gardening/>
- (12) Saving our trees: <https://savingourtrees.wordpress.com/tag/michael-mobbs/>
- (13) Permablitz: <http://www.permablitz.net/what-is-a-permablitz>
- (14) Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden:
http://newcity.ca/Pages/compost_demo_garden.html
- (15) Ceres Community Environment Park: <http://www.ceres.org.au/>
- (16) Capital Bee: <http://www.capitalbee.co.uk/>

6. City of Unley Food Security Strategy Action Plan

Strategy	Action	2011/12	2012/13
Grow more food in public places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate more Community Gardens within the City 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select suitable site (feasibility study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission the garden
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify public spaces in the City of Unley where food can be grown by the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select some pilot sites Obtain some small grant funds. Advertise seeking Expressions of Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission several sites with the community Conduct a more complete audit of potential public places suitable for growing food
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all schools in Unley to have school food gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact all schools in Unley and meet with them as a group to seek opportunities Explore the possibility of start-up kits of seeds and soil in boxes to help get schools started 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the schools in commissioning several additional school food gardens
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and address existing legislative and planning barriers to local food production and seek partnerships to overcome them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek partnership with NRM Board to promote local food growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address barriers to local food growing
Grow More Food in Backyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run public seminars to educate/ train backyard growers in areas such as effective pruning, composting and permaculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a training session on pruning Support a training session on permaculture and non-toxic approaches to controlling pests. Support a training session on composting and fertilising and use of raised garden beds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider additional training sessions based on feedback from the first year Develop a Fact Sheet on growing food locally
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link community members needing space to grow food with those who have unused backyards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise the opportunity through <i>Unley Life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat, depending on feedback and interest
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise local businesses who support local food growing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise opportunities through <i>Unley Life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat based on interest and feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support disadvantaged community members to grow their own food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess requirements for this need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small funding program as per City of Onkaparinga pilot for supply of soil, seeds tools etc.

Support Local Food Distribution and Re-use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support existing local food markets and facilitate the development of additional markets to encourage the valued use of surplus food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise through Council publications and <i>Unley Life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support as required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the operation of agencies for recycling of unused Food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to ensure that surplus food, not required at official meetings, is considered for donation. • Support agencies as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support as required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage arrangements for sharing of surplus food, seeds, seedlings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support as required e.g. advertise opportunities through <i>Unley Life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support as required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage priority to be given for the purchase of locally-grown food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to prioritise sourcing of local food for meetings and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to encourage businesses to prioritise sourcing of locally-grown food