

# Draft Urban Food Strategy

2023-2027

## Acknowledgements

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Banyule City Council proudly acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Our community is made up of diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages and genders. We are committed to access, equity, participation and rights for everyone: principles which empower, foster harmony and increase the wellbeing of an inclusive community.

Banyule City Council extends a heartfelt thanks to the individuals, businesses and organisations who dedicated their time and contributed their input to this consultation report via focus groups, surveys, pop-up sessions, kitchen table talks and two community workshops. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of many Banyule Council staff who engaged directly with the consultation process and shared their expertise. We extend our deepest appreciation to members of the Urban Food Strategy Working Group who generously supported the consultation process with their time, ideas and networks.

Banyule City Council is made stronger by the collective expertise, ideas, enthusiasm and passion of the many people, organisations and businesses committed to an inclusive, healthy, sustainable, and delicious food future for the whole community.

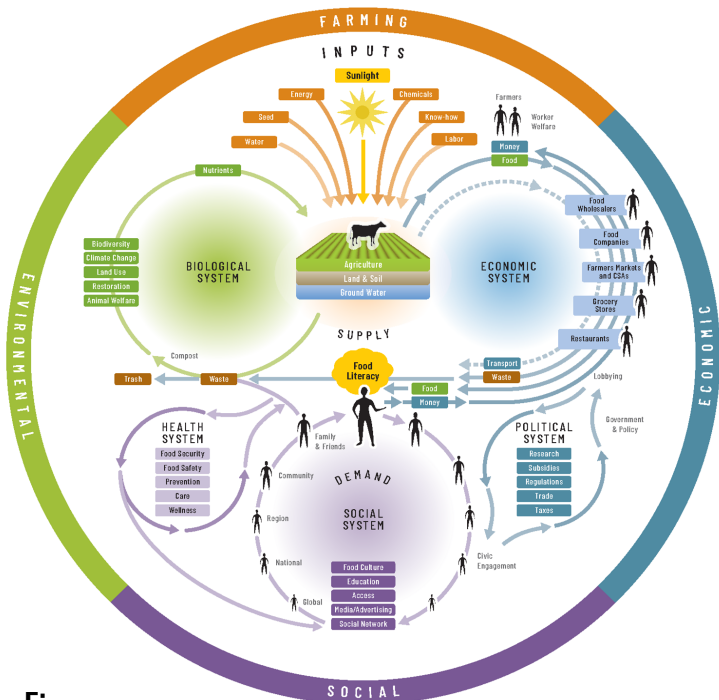
# Table of Contents

<b>Draft Urban Food Strategy</b> .....	<b>1</b>
2023-2027.....	1
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>About this Strategy</b> .....	<b>3</b>
What is an urban food system? .....	3
The big picture .....	4
Banyule's urban food system .....	5
Strengths and opportunities .....	5
Vulnerabilities and areas for strategic action.....	9
Why create an urban food strategy?.....	12
The strategic context.....	13
Guiding principles.....	16
How the Urban Food Strategy was developed.....	16
<b>The community's vision for the Banyule urban food system</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Priority themes and objectives for the Urban Food Strategy</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Theme 1: An inclusive, connected food community.....	21
Theme 2: A thriving local food economy .....	23
Theme 3: Planning for healthy and sustainable food systems.....	24
Theme 4: Abundant edible landscapes .....	26
Theme 5: Good food system governance.....	28
<b>Monitoring our progress</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendixes</b> .....	<b>32</b>

# About this Strategy

## What is an urban food system?

The ‘food system’ is everything that happens from farm to fork: the network of people, processes and interactions involved in the growing, processing, distribution, sale and disposal of food on-farm, in retailing and at home. The urban environment has a significant effect on how people access food and what form this food takes (e.g. fresh, processed, packaged, etc) and therefore affects human and environmental health in many ways.



Figure

As illustrated in the [Nourish](#) food system diagram (Figure 1), the food system is better understood not as a linear “supply chain” between farm to plate but rather as a web of life that connects everything from soil microbes, plants and animals to energy consumption, retail environments, everyday food practices and food cultures of nourishment and celebration.

The ‘urban food system’ describes the systems, processes and networks that influence how food moves and is accessed at a local level and is also connected to Melbourne’s foodbowl and broader agricultural regions that nourish our municipality. The urban food system encompasses a wide spectrum of products, people, resources and networks including the cafes, restaurants, supermarkets, greengrocers, food manufacturers and other retailers whose offerings include local and non-local as well as imported products.

There is no one definition of local food. For the purpose of this Urban Food Strategy, *local food* is defined as food grown and processed in and around the greater Melbourne metropolitan area. The local or community food system also comprises and is shaped by the many community food organisations, networks and leaders that advocate for and participate in how people interact with, access and consume food. It includes community food assets — productive spaces like backyards, community gardens and urban farms — as

well as community kitchens, seed libraries and farmers markets. For the purposes of this Strategy, 'community food system' refers specifically to Banyule and its surrounding areas.

## The big picture

Melbourne is a sprawling city and has lost much of its most productive peri-urban farmland. On the current trajectory of population growth combined with loss of farmland, Melbourne's productive capacity will reduce by over 50% in the next 25 years in the absence of clear planning controls and prioritisation of vital farmland areas over new suburban developments.<sup>1</sup> Melbourne's foodbowl regions have come under increasing development pressures as the city's population has expanded rapidly in recent decades.<sup>2</sup>

Losing fertile farmland with good access to water and transport hubs close to Melbourne is worsened by the anticipated impacts of climate change and extreme weather events such as flooding and prolonged droughts and heatwaves. Recent estimates based on observed and modelled climate change impacts suggest that the yields of some staple grain crops could decline by as much as 24% as soon as 2030.<sup>3</sup> The combination of urban sprawl in the midst of accelerating climate change threatens future food security for Banyule residents as well as the broader Melburnian community. Further, a growing body of research demonstrates that a broader population shift to 'sustainable diets' as recommended in the Australian Dietary Guidelines – that is, diets with increased consumption of 'whole plant foods, vegetables, fruits, legumes and fewer animal foods' – would bring benefits both for human health and reduced environmental impact, including greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>4</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic also revealed the vulnerability of mainstream supply chains. Shorter supply chains, enabled by urban agriculture and localised food systems, have

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<sup>1</sup> J Sheridan, R Carey, and S Candy, *Melbourne's foodprint: what does it take to feed a city?*, 2016, Victorian Eco Innovation Lab, available at <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2016-06/apo-nid182986.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See also various Foodprint Melbourne reports available at <https://science.unimelb.edu.au/foodprint-melbourne>.

<sup>3</sup> J Jägermeyr, C Müller, AC Ruane, et al., 2021, Climate impacts on global agriculture emerge earlier in new generation of climate and crop models. *Nature Food* (2): 873–885. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00400-y>

<sup>4</sup> CW Binns, MK Lee, B Maycock, LE Torheim, K Nanishi, DTT Duong. Climate change, food supply, and dietary guidelines, 2021, *Annual review of public health*, 42: 233-255, 241; S Jarmul, AD Dangour, R Green, Z Liew, A Haines, and PF Scheelbeek, Climate change mitigation through dietary change: a systematic review of empirical and modelling studies on the environmental footprints and health effects of 'sustainable diets', 2020, *Environmental research letters*, 15: 123014.

proved more resilient and adaptable to transport challenges, labour shortages and other disruptions (Smith and Lawrence, 2018; Carey et al., 2021). Urbanisation, changing patterns of food consumption and climate change impacts all present significant challenges for our collective future. In this context, it makes sense to support and invest in shorter, more resilient food systems within Banyule.

## Banyule's urban food system

Banyule is a diverse community, with varying levels of secure and affordable access to fresh, healthy food. The pandemic highlighted existing social inequalities, increasing reliance on emergency food relief, particularly amongst vulnerable population cohorts. In 2022, cost of living pressures deepened vulnerability to food insecurity, including working families struggling to make ends meet. Within the Banyule community, there is a strong desire to work together in creating an urban food system that supports local growers, addresses the challenges of climate change and creates a more equitable, connected community.

### Strengths and opportunities



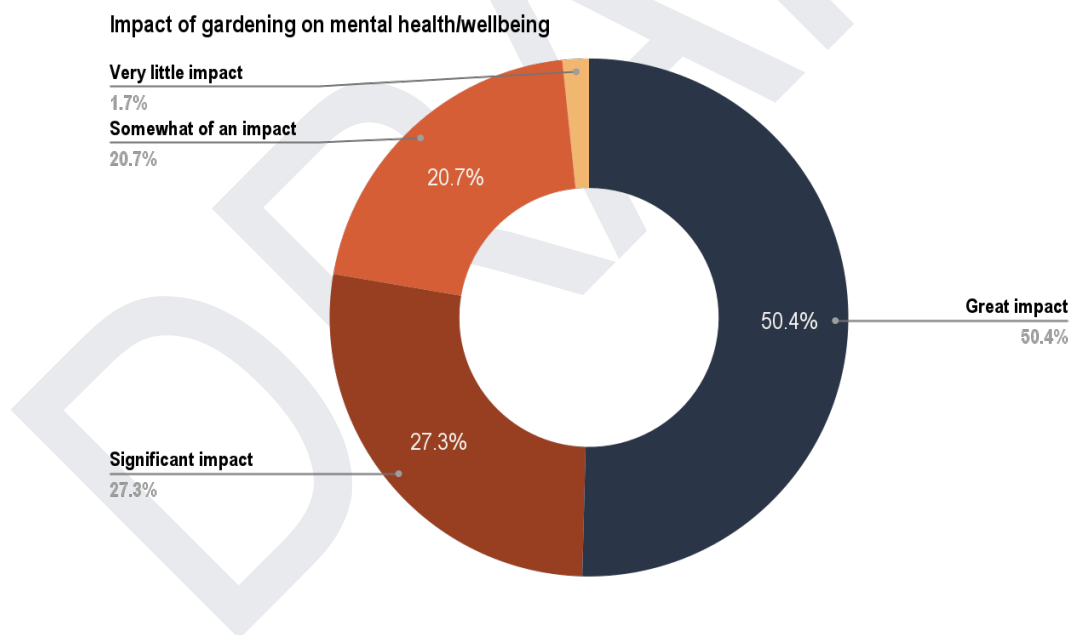
The strength of Banyule's urban food system is its people: a network of knowledgeable and passionate food leaders, educators and volunteers who are keen to connect, open to collaboration and committed to their communities. Banyule's community food sector, including Local Food Connect, Sustainable Macleod and the Teachers Environment Network, has a strong commitment to improving access to healthy, affordable and local food.

Banyule enjoys abundant open spaces and bushland and benefits from a diverse range of community food assets including urban farms such as Farm Raiser, community meal programs, seed libraries, community gardens, social enterprise cafes, urban food producers, local food manufacturers and artisans. Neighbourhood houses are important community food assets where community gardens, seed libraries and food swaps as well as food relief provision are often co-located. Together these provide a strong foundation

for collaboration, for building a shared sense of ownership over the food system and for sharing knowledge and resources.

**75%** Grow food at home  
**19%** Participate in a community garden  
**75%** Consider food central to how they make friends or connect with community.  
\*Community survey

Banyule is also a community of passionate and knowledgeable gardeners who want to strengthen networks with others through gardening and cooking. Expanding edible gardening across the municipality is a powerful tool for enhancing the health and wellbeing of our community by encouraging the consumption of fresh produce, physical activity and social connection.



Source: Sustain's Pandemic Gardening Survey 2020

Major economic development initiatives such as the [La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster](#) (NEIC) and La Trobe's University [City of the Future](#) focus present significant opportunities to develop and strengthen the local food economy within Banyule. Council's existing strategies and policies are well positioned to support an integrated

approach to the implementation of the Urban Food Strategy. These include the new Economic Development Strategy, the Inclusive Local Jobs Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2025), the Open Space Plan and the Community Climate Action Plan.

### Case study – Farm Raiser

Farm Raiser is a registered charity running an urban farm in Bellfield, Melbourne. Established by three young farmers, they sell produce to the local community grown on land provided by Waratah Special Development School, connecting farming activities with educational opportunities for students. The purchase of critical infrastructure such as irrigation and polytunnels to establish the farm was made possible via seed funding from Banyule City Council and other smaller grants.

Farm Raiser grows fresh, quality vegetables for the local community while having a practical impact on the environment through regenerative agriculture practices that increase biodiversity and honour natural water and carbon cycles. Farm Raiser's farmers are motivated by the need to make good quality food more accessible and to make farming a more inclusive career path to people of all abilities.

Farm Raiser produce is sold via a farm gate on-site, local grocers and a veggie box program. Produce sales are used to cover operational costs, with the long-term aim of financial self-sufficiency. Any profits made will be directed toward food education programs in partnership with Waratah Special Developmental School and other schools.

From Patrick Turnbull (co-founder of Farm Raiser):

“We love growing good quality local food, and we work really hard to do so for reasons greater than ‘really yummy carrots’. The very big purpose of our very little farm is to positively influence and improve the health of both humans and the environment through a more fair and just food system. The farm offers a sliding scale of payment for our veggie boxes, from free community boxes to upfront payment for the season. Our community boxes are paid for by others in the community, when possible, who can afford a little extra.”





Photo credit: Farm Raiser



## Vulnerabilities and areas for strategic action

Despite its strengths, Banyule's food system also faces emerging vulnerabilities, both internal and external. Stagnant or declining household income and rising inflation is further entrenching and expanding poverty. A much broader range of household and income levels are now experiencing food insecurity, including working families, university students and people living on government benefits.

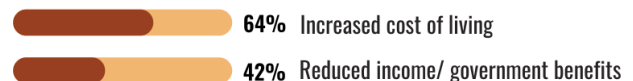
These complex economic and policy dynamics at a national level have a direct impact on the wellbeing of Banyule residents. The last three years have seen sharp rises in food insecurity, placing further pressure on emergency food relief providers working hard to support vulnerable members of the community. BANSIC (Heidelberg West) reported a 215% increase in client demand for emergency and food relief services over a three-year period since December 2019, as well as a significant increase more recently in clients requesting housing assistance and related difficulties. Diamond Valley Community Support (Greensborough) has reported a 22% increase in demand for food relief in the last year. A concerning one in five community survey respondents reported some level of food insecurity in the last year.

Most community food relief organisations depend heavily on volunteers, creating additional vulnerability for the sector. A strong volunteer workforce requires effective recruitment, management, training and coordination. This is particularly challenging with limited resources. Local community groups stressed during the consultation process that burnout among volunteers due to insufficient funding and pressure on volunteers to manage and lead programs creates a risk for the community organisations and associations.

**I have skipped or made my meals smaller to save money in the last 12 months**



**Most common drivers of food insecurity**

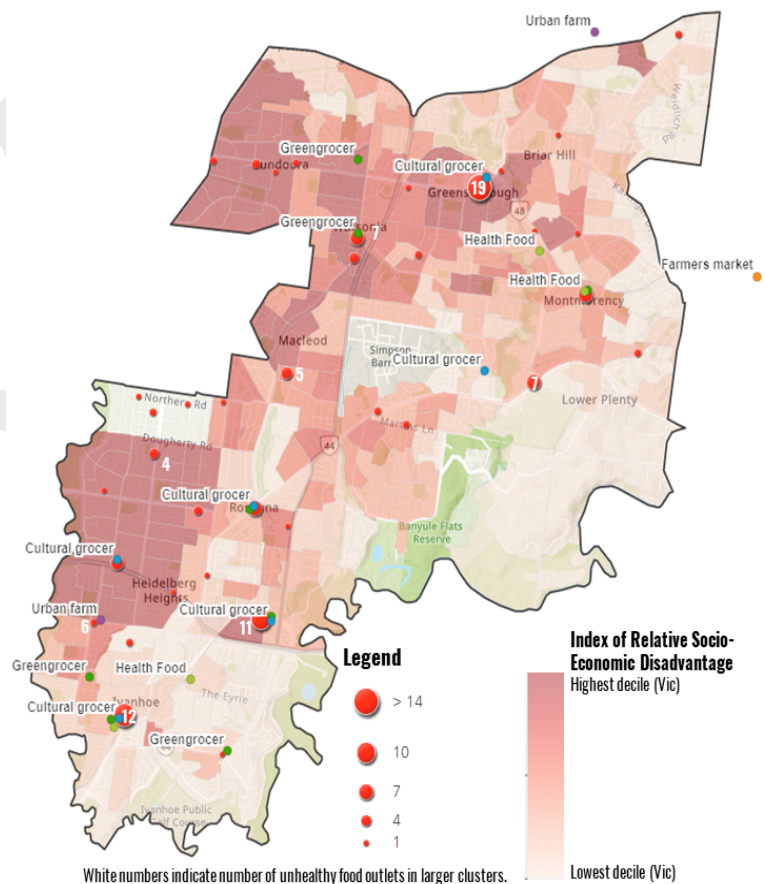


Food insecurity is tied to many factors beyond Council's control. However, the urgency of the issue highlights the need for strong food system leadership at a local level, including robust advocacy to state and federal government on issues impacting vulnerable members of the community. Further research is also required to better understand, monitor and

respond to food insecurity within the municipality. The Urban Food Strategy is an opportunity to support improved coordination of food relief services and access to information about where to receive support as well as ensuring that community members are not falling through the cracks of existing food relief and social support services.

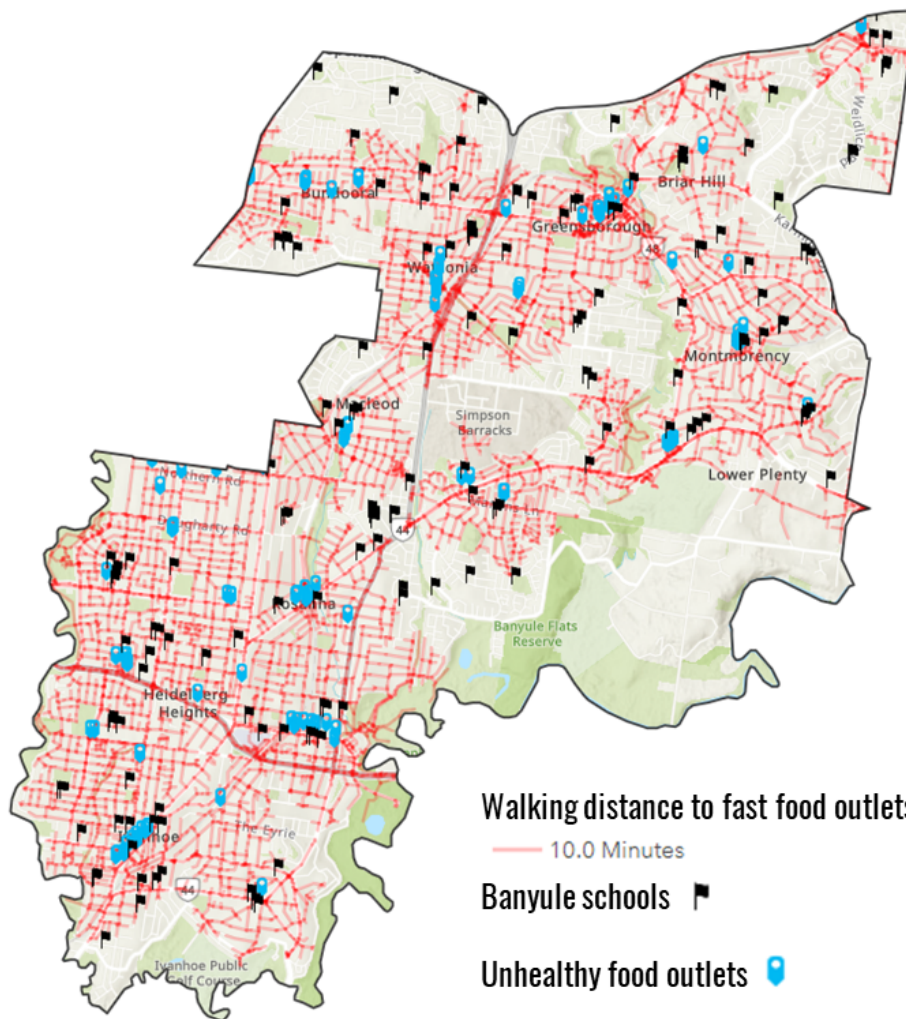
A further challenge is a limited diversity and proximity of healthy and culturally relevant food businesses within walking distance within some of Banyule's neighbourhoods and precincts. The food retail environment in Banyule does not reflect the cultural diversity of residents, with a quarter born overseas and 20% of households speaking a language other than English at home. Affordable culturally appropriate food is not readily available in Banyule, with only six cultural grocers identified across the municipality.

Major supermarket retailers are assumed to be an appropriate “anchor” retailer in precinct planning and assumed to provide good access to healthy food by policy makers. However, the food offerings they provide can present challenges for health, sustainability and cultural diversity. A food environment dominated by major supermarkets and other franchised food outlets contributes to economic homogeneity, undermines human and ecological health, and diminishes neighbourhood character and its sense of community. Unhealthy food outlets are not only more numerous than healthy food outlets in Banyule, but more easily accessible on foot.



Suburbs with the highest disadvantage or in growth areas often have the lowest access to fresh food and a greater proportion of unhealthy outlets (Needham et al., 2022). In Banyule, the numbers of unhealthy food outlets are generally highest in localities with the

highest disadvantage (indicated by darkest red areas on the corresponding map). The exception is Ivanhoe which also has significant numbers of unhealthy food outlets, though this locality also has better access to healthy food outlets.



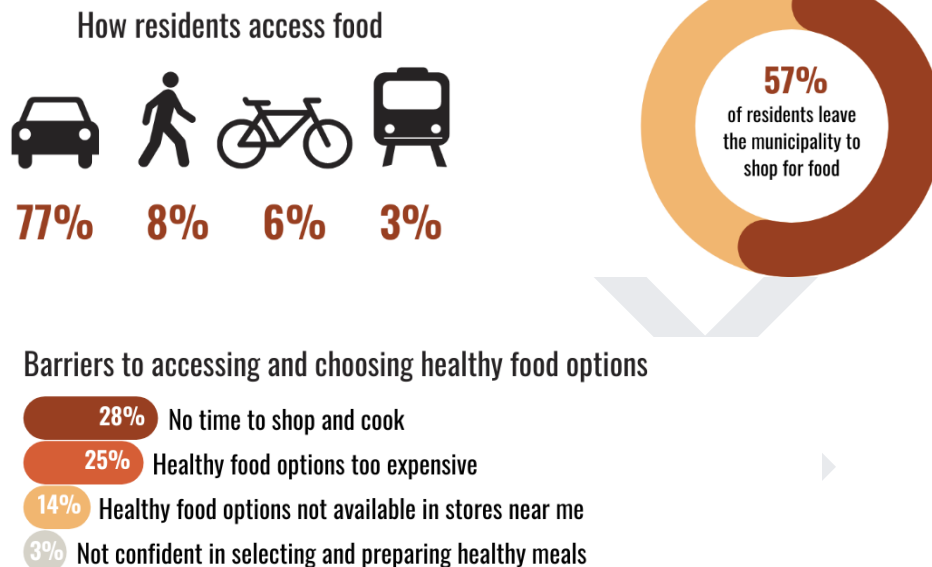
Of particular concern is the proximity of schools to unhealthy food outlets across Banyule, with almost every educational institution (childcare, primary and secondary) within 10-minute walking distance of unhealthy food. Food environments at a neighbourhood level normalise the foods and food practices children and

young people are exposed to everyday. Easy access to unhealthy food also makes it more difficult to make healthier food choices.

Most Banyule residents drive to purchase food, while only 8% walk and 6% ride a bike. Many also regularly leave the municipality to purchase fresher, healthier, higher quality and/or cheaper food. The limited retail outlets for everyday food access at the neighbourhood level exacerbates the main barriers to accessing and choosing healthy food options for Banyule residents: time, cost, access and affordability.



More local greengrocers, butchers, bulk food stores and community or farmers markets would improve access to fresh food, reduce food packaging, support more walkable communities, foster social connection at a neighbourhood level and strengthen the local food economy.



\*Healthy food includes greengrocers, cultural grocers and supermarkets. Unhealthy food includes fast food chains, takeaway outlets, convenience stores and confectionery shops.

## Why create an urban food strategy?

Food systems intersect across multiple areas of local government work and community activity: economy, environment, climate change, health and wellbeing, open space, social enterprise and neighbourhood character, amongst others. The urban food system is shaped by diverse social, environmental and economic forces at various levels, including:

- geopolitical and other disruptions at the global level;
- dominant players influencing the food economy and shaping the interactions between urban and regional environments and communities;
- socio-economic inequality relating to employment, housing affordability, benefit levels and other forms of structural disadvantage;
- climate change and environmental conditions;
- the planning and design of urban environments, precincts and neighbourhoods;

- the social and cultural factors that influence food provisioning, access, preparation and consumption of food; and
- the local, state and federal policy contexts.

Together these factors determine the quality of food available within Banyule's urban food system and whether that food is culturally appropriate, nutritious, affordable and accessible by all.

There is currently no state or federal policy framework aimed at creating healthy and sustainable food systems or for tackling the complex issues our communities and environment face. However, local government has an important role to play in creating a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system through its responsibilities and functions within planning, community and economic development, governance, regulation, sustainability and health and wellbeing.

Good food systems planning and governance requires a whole-of-system, whole-of-organisation and whole-of-community approach. Banyule's first Urban Food Strategy is an opportunity to respond to community expectations and to provide strategic guidance for implementing targeted initiatives and programs that can create a healthy, sustainable, equitable and resilient food system for all. Through the adoption of this Urban Food Strategy, Banyule City Council joins other local governments in providing strong food systems leadership and governance for our residents, businesses and visitors as well as contributing to a more sustainable and resilient food system for Victoria.

## **The strategic context**

The Urban Food Strategy sits within a broader strategic context relating to the economy, health and wellbeing, environment and planning at the local, state, federal and global level, reflecting the systemic and cross-cutting nature of food systems and the importance of an integrated approach to the implementation of food system strategies.

The Urban Food Strategy is strongly aligned with the six priority themes of the *Banyule Community Vision 2041*, along with Council's existing policies, strategies and action plans. In particular, the objectives and actions presented in this strategy have been developed with the priorities outlined in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan within the Council Plan 2021-2025.

The Urban Food Strategy also reflects Banyule City Council's commitment to the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 1 - No poverty

Goal 2 - Zero hunger

Goal 3 - Good health and wellbeing

Goal 10 - Reduced inequalities

Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities

Goal 12 - Responsible consumption and production

Goal 17 - Partnerships for the goals

[note to Banyule comms/design team: insert relevant SDG goal icons above (downloadable [here](#))

# Strategic policy contexts

## State

- Plan Melbourne 2017-2050
- Planning and Environment Act
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- 20-Minute Neighbourhoods: Creating a more liveable Melbourne
- Urban Design Guidelines for Victoria
- Land Use Framework Plans
- Open Space Strategy for Metropolitan Melbourne 2021
- Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021
- Climate Change Act 2017
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Strategic Plan 2022-23
- Social Procurement Framework
- Precinct Structure Plan Guidelines 2.0
- Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023
- Recycling Victoria: A new economy 2020
- Food Relief Taskforce 2021
- VicHealth Local Government Partnership 2021
- Consensus Statement: Towards a healthy, regenerative and equitable food system for Victoria 2022

## Local

- Banyule Community Vision 2041
- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Community Climate Action Plan 2020
- Towards Zero Waste Management Plan 2019-2023
- Partnership Framework / Neighbourhood House Strategy 2022 (draft)
- Public Open Space Plan 2016-2031
- Banyule Social Infrastructure Framework 2022-2023
- Social Enterprise Action Plan 2020-2025
- Inclusive Local Jobs Strategy 2020-2025
- Neighbourhood Character Strategy (draft)
- Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028 (draft)
- Urban Forest Strategy 2022-2032 (draft)
- Community Infrastructure Plan (draft)

## International

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
- C40 Good Food Cities Declaration
- UN Single-use plastics: a roadmap for sustainability

## National

- National Waste Policy and Action Plan (2019)
- Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013, 2019)
- Climate Change – Powering Australia



## Guiding principles

The guiding principles for the development and delivery of this strategy are:

- Partnerships and collaboration
- Participatory governance
- Inclusion and equity
- Respecting and celebrating diversity
- Facilitating and empowering community-led initiatives
- Cohesive policy integration and alignment
- A strong advocacy agenda

## How the Urban Food Strategy was developed

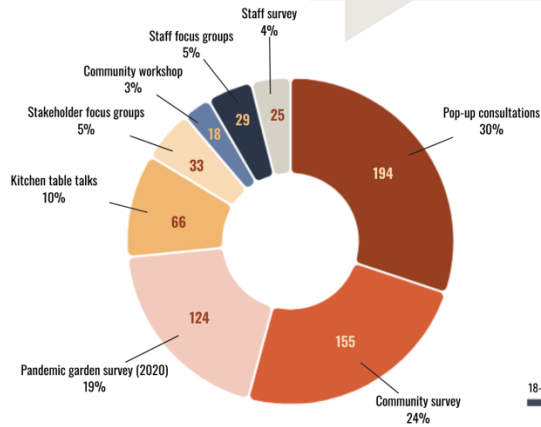
In August 2022, Banyule City Council engaged Sustain: the Australian Food Network to facilitate the development of our first Urban Food Strategy. This process was supported by an Urban Food Strategy Working Group with representatives of diverse sectors and organisations from across Banyule with an interest in the social, economic and environmental impacts of food production, distribution and consumption.

The Strategy draws on evidence from a range of sources, including published literature, economic and health and wellbeing data analysis, food system mapping, policy analysis and consultation with Banyule residents, business owners and visitors completed between September and January 2023. Over 600 community members, key stakeholders and Council staff participated in consultation and engagement activities including workshops, focus groups and interviews, staff and community surveys, pop-up consultations and kitchen table talks.

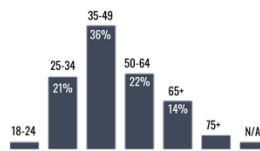
## Consultation overview

**644**  
people engaged

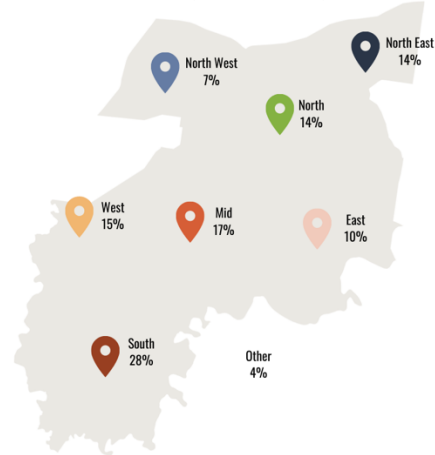
Between September 2022 and February 2023, an extensive consultation process took place in Banyule through community pop-ups, kitchen table talks, online surveys, workshops and focus groups. A diverse range of stakeholders, residents and Council staff were engaged in order to develop a preliminary community vision for Banyule's urban food system.



Age (community survey)

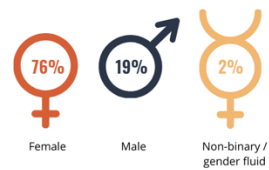


Precincts distribution (community survey)



Gender (community survey)

\* 2% preferred not to declare



SUSTAIN  
the Australian food network

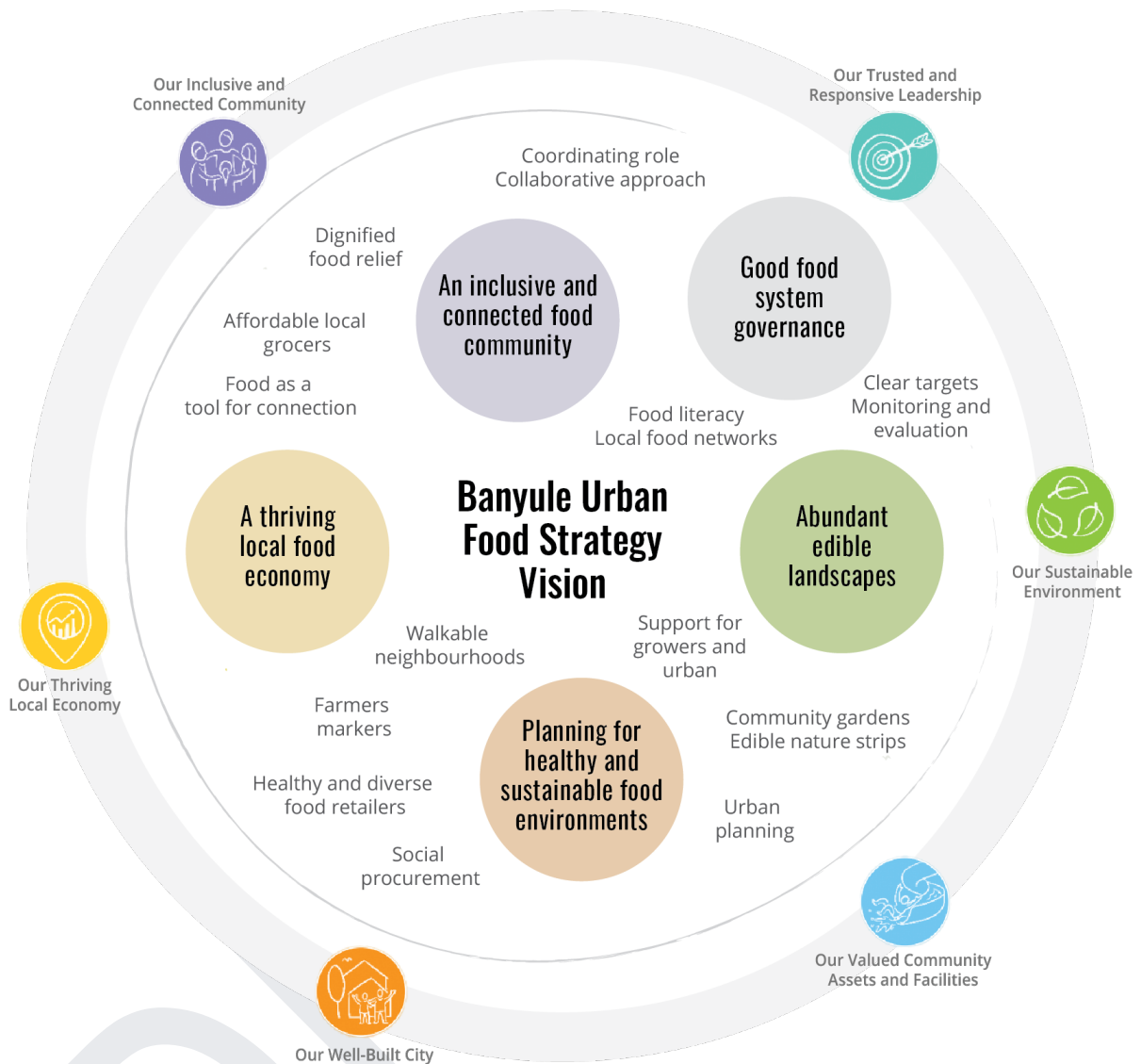
Banyule  
City Council

## **The community's vision for the Banyule urban food system**

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The Banyule Urban Food Strategy describes the community's aspirations for the future of Banyule's food system and expresses a vision reflecting what is important to the community and unique to Banyule.

Banyule's urban food system provides equitable access to good food for all residents. We feel connected to its abundant edible landscapes and our thriving local food economy. Food connects us to each other and celebrates our diversity. Inclusiveness, collaboration and participatory decision-making guides our collective path to a thriving and sustainable food future.



Alignments between key themes for the urban food strategy and key council policies and strategic priorities are summarised in the table below. The Banyule Community Vision 2041 and Council Plan 2021-2025 cuts across all themes.

Urban Food Strategy - key themes	Opportunities for strategic and policy alignment
<p>Theme 1</p> <p>An inclusive and connected community</p>	<p>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025</p> <p>Partnership Framework / Neighbourhood House Strategy 2022</p> <p>Arts and Culture Strategic Plan</p> <p>Older Adults Strategic Plan</p> <p>Community Engagement Policy</p> <p>Neighbourhood Character Strategy (draft)</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Plan 2023-2033 (draft)</p>
<p>Theme 2</p> <p>A thriving local food economy</p>	<p>Community Climate Action Plan 2020</p> <p>Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028</p> <p>Social Enterprise Action Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>Banyule Inclusive Local Jobs Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>Neighbourhood Character Strategy (draft)</p>
<p>Theme 3</p> <p>Planning for healthy and sustainable food environments</p>	<p>Banyule Planning Scheme</p> <p>Walking Strategy 2018-2028</p> <p>Zero Waste Management Plan 2019-2023 (due for review)</p> <p>Community Climate Action Plan 2020</p> <p>Banyule Inclusive Local Jobs Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>Banyule Social Infrastructure Framework 2022-2023 (due for review)</p> <p>Urban Forest Strategy (draft)</p> <p>Neighbourhood Character Strategy (draft)</p>
<p>Theme 4</p> <p>Abundant edible landscapes</p>	<p>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025</p> <p>Partnership Framework / Neighbourhood House Strategy 2022</p> <p>Public Open Space Plan 2016-2031</p> <p>Banyule Social Infrastructure Framework 2022-2023</p> <p>Biodiversity Plan 2019-2022</p> <p>Community Climate Action Plan 2020</p> <p>Neighbourhood Character Strategy (draft)</p> <p>Urban Forest Strategy (draft)</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Plan 2023-2033 (draft)</p>

## Priority themes and objectives for the Urban Food Strategy

A strong and supported Banyule urban food system offers many benefits that can improve public dietary and mental health, reduce environmental impact and address climate change, support Banyule's local economy and build community connection and resilience. By investing in its urban food system, Banyule City Council can work with local businesses, organisations and community members to create a healthier, more sustainable future for themselves and for future generations. Through the extensive process of community consultation and engagement that led to the Strategy's creation, five key themes and eighteen objectives were developed.

### Theme 1: An inclusive, connected food community

All Banyule residents have equitable access to good food. Community food relief initiatives, where required, put people's dignity first. Food is the connective tissue of Banyule's diverse communities, bringing people together to celebrate and share their food cultures, knowledge and skills.

#### The evidence for action

Access to good food is a basic human necessity and a fundamental human right.<sup>5</sup> It is also a tool for connection, celebration and inclusion of diverse cultural identities. Many Banyule residents value food as central to their social lives and connection to community. They wish to see food recognised and valued for its unique role in community building.

Residents are concerned with the current level of food insecurity in Banyule and expect that effective action will be taken to address this. Food insecurity increased sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic and even more so with the cost of living crisis that commenced in 2022. Even prior to recent years food insecurity was rising and many prevailing responses to this growing social problem in Victoria cause stigma and shame for recipients.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> G Kent, *Freedom from want: The human right to adequate food*, 2005, Georgetown University Press.

<sup>6</sup> R Lindberg, H McKenzie, B Haines and FH McKay, An investigation of structural violence in the lived experience of food insecurity, 2022 *Critical public health*: 1-12.

## What we heard from the community

<i>"We need to slow down and create the environment that supports people – yes, physically and nutritionally, but also psychologically back to being in our community. "</i> – Montmorency resident (kitchen table talk)	<i>"We can't keep up with the food demand"</i> – participant from Watsonia Neighbourhood House (kitchen table talk)	<i>"We've lost our older people guiding our younger people. (...) There is a role for older people to be with younger people and food is a key part of that."</i> – Montmorency resident (kitchen table talk)
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## The benefits

**Dignified food security:** A strong urban food system can improve food security by reducing dependence on distant food sources vulnerable to disruption. By growing and distributing more food locally, Banyule's diverse communities can ensure that they have a reliable source of food even in times of crisis, whilst enhancing dignified access to good food for those who need it most.

**Social and mental health benefits:** Tackling food insecurity in ways that uphold dignity and respect for the individual will strengthen mental health and wellbeing amongst vulnerable community members in Banyule.

**Community celebration and connection:** A strong urban food system can bring communities together by creating a sense of shared purpose and increasing social cohesion. Food festivals and celebrations will strengthen knowledge of and appreciation for the diverse cultures that comprise the Banyule community.

## Key Objectives

Objective 1: Strengthen dignified access to good food across the community

Objective 2: Celebrate and connect the community through food

Objective 3: Strengthen connections and participation across the community food sector

Objective 4: Prioritise First Nations foodways and connection to Country

## Mini case study in a box:

Local Food Connect, a not for profit community group, has helped Banyule growers and eaters connect for over 10 years. A weekly newsletter shares local food-related events and workshops and their website includes a local food directory and trove of gardening and cooking resources.

## Theme 2: A thriving local food economy

Local neighbourhoods have a lively, village feel, and local food businesses reflect the cultural diversity of their communities. Banyule residents find it easy and convenient to buy good food locally. Greengrocers, butchers, bakers and other food businesses provide job opportunities and cater to people living, visiting or working in the municipality.

### The evidence for action

Strong community demand to purchase local food and shop locally is a clear opportunity, which can have positive economic multiplier effects especially in terms of employment creation.<sup>7</sup>

Residents' top priority in the community survey was more opportunities to buy local food within Banyule. Community food initiatives including food swaps and pop-up markets (50%) and opportunities to grow food and sustainable agriculture in and around Banyule (36%) were also high priorities.

The Urban Food Strategy can support industry sub-sectors such as food retailing and food/beverages services by leveraging stronger connections to other growth sectors including the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster<sup>8</sup>, the La Trobe University City of the Future<sup>9</sup> and master planning processes for the Heidelberg West Business Park.<sup>10</sup> Alignment with the Social Enterprise Action Plan and the Inclusive Local Jobs Strategy represent clear synergies. A diversity of food retailing offering access to fresh produce and other day-to-day food items can encourage employees within these economic clusters to shop locally, supporting local food businesses and local jobs.

### What we heard from the community

<i>"I participate in the veg boxes by Farm Raiser, and the fact that they deliver is central to my ability to access/participate. I don't have a car, so I always find it hard to get to local farms and/or pick up veg boxes on a regular basis [...] So the fact that they deliver and select all the veg is important. I also</i>	<i>"An affordable bulk store would be great, but it takes funding to get off the ground. Attempts to get buying groups started have stalled because it's just too much work to do</i>	<i>"As an organisation, the City of Banyule is right to do this. There are big opportunities in Open Space, and with the new Economy Development Strategy [and the La Trobe NEIC], the timing is</i>
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<sup>7</sup> Z Benedek, I Fertő, and V Szente, The multiplier effects of food relocalization: A systematic review, 2020, *Sustainability*, 12(9): 3524.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://vpa.vic.gov.au/project/la-trobe-employment-cluster/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/future-city>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://hwbp.com.au/about-hwbp/>.



<i>like that it's transparently local. It's clear where things are coming from. It's also comparably priced to supermarkets. Finally, I like that it's run by young people."</i> – Bellfield resident (community survey)	<i>voluntarily, there's no space to store foods and it takes funds to buy heaps up front."</i> – Heidelberg West (kitchen table talk)	<i>perfect."</i> – Council manager (focus group)
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## The benefits

**Enhanced local economic activity:** By supporting local producers and businesses, a strong urban food system for Banyule can help stimulate the local economy, create jobs and improve livelihoods.

**Education and training:** Increased economic activity in Banyule's urban food system will provide opportunities for education and engagement with students and young people on urban food growing and value-adding. In alignment with training providers, such training can create pathways to future employment and local business development.

## Key Objectives

Objective 5: Support greater access to Victorian food and shorter supply chains

Objective 6: Support and diversify Banyule's local food economy

Objective 7: Encourage a vibrant, skilled and sustainable food sector

## Theme 3: Planning for healthy and sustainable food systems

The food system is understood as vital urban infrastructure, and access to good food contributes to a sense of place, creates a sense of belonging and underpins neighbourhood and precinct planning. Healthy and sustainable food environments are not left to chance but rather integrated into the local planning scheme.

## The evidence for action

Residents indicated dissatisfaction with currently available options for healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food in many areas of Banyule City Council. This especially applies to a perceived lack of greengrocers and cultural food outlets (such as Asian and Indian grocers). A lack of food retail diversity has implications for health and wellbeing and food security, especially for lower income neighbourhoods. A comparison of fresh produce prices in farmers markets, supermarkets and greengrocers across Victoria found greengrocers were "significantly cheaper" than supermarkets but offered "the same

availability of fresh fruit and vegetables as supermarkets and more availability than farmers' markets".<sup>11</sup> They also offer vastly fewer ultra-processed and unhealthy food options compared to supermarkets.

Greengrocers and other smaller food retailers also build community and neighbourhood character through the personal relationships that these family businesses develop over time with customers. This importance of small shops in building community relationships was noted by the Barrbunin Beek community. A diversified local retail environment is also more likely to encourage walking and the use of public transport, rather than private cars, contributing to climate change and physical activity goals.

### What we heard from the community

<i>"I would like to see more healthy and sustainable hospitality venues in Banyule. If we are not cooking at home, we are very limited in healthy eating options and often have to compromise on our healthy eating preferences."</i> – Lower Plenty resident (community survey)	<i>"Residents need to hold councils accountable to create more fairness and to implement sustainability policies encompassing food security, environmental protection...safe and secure public transport, bike tracks and pedestrian walkways... After all, the physical and psychosocial health of the community is at the core of thriving communities and must be in the local and national interest."</i> – Heidelberg resident (pandemic gardening survey)	<i>"Regarding the planning department, we need stronger policies or by-laws that support small-scale food production."</i> – Food business owner (focus group)
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### The benefits

**Fresher and healthier food options:** Urban food systems typically focus on fresh, seasonal produce, which we know is more nutrient-dense than packaged and processed foods that have been shipped long distances and held in storage. Better diets will contribute to healthier and happier residents in Banyule.

**Environmental enhancement:** Urban food production typically relies on sustainable farming practices, thereby enhancing the environment through greening urban spaces, reducing the use of chemicals, enhancing biodiversity and conserving natural resources.

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<sup>11</sup> S Abley *et al.*, Do Farmers' Markets Offer Consumers an Available and Affordable Supply of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Compared to Other Retail Outlets in Australia?, 2020, *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 15(6): 827–834, 832.

**A zero-waste urban food system:** Residents welcome FOGO and appreciate being able to keep food waste out of landfill. They expressed a strong desire to expand the scheme to apartments, businesses and in public places. Community composting systems, like those operating in the cities of Melbourne and Merri-Bek as well as Cardinia Shire offer examples of how to build on community enthusiasm for applying circular economy principles to food waste management to support nutrient cycling within the Banyule community.

### **Key Objectives**

Objective 8: Co-design neighbourhood food retailing environments with the local community

Objective 9: Integrate food into planning to support residents access to fresh produce and affordable food locally

Objective 10: Create healthy food environments in Council-owned facilities and other institutions and workplaces

Objective 11: Reduce the ecological impact of the local food system

### **Theme 4: Abundant edible landscapes**

Food is grown in backyards, community gardens and other spaces across the municipality. Urban farmers are supported to grow food and feed their community. Community members can access information and a wide array of educational and skills building activities about growing food, and there is a strong network of food gardeners.

### **The evidence for action**

Edible gardening and related forms of urban agriculture enhance mental health and wellbeing, as demonstrated by the findings from the Pandemic Gardening survey and much other research.<sup>12</sup> In this way they constitute a 'nature-based solution' that provides a meaningful and significant response to the many socio-ecological challenges that Banyule faces.<sup>13</sup> A recurring theme across the consultation process concerned the desire for more spaces for edible gardening and ensuring residents in all dwelling types have equal opportunity to grow food.

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<sup>12</sup> KJ Donati and NJ Rose, "Every seed I plant is a wish for tomorrow" *Findings and Action Agenda from the 2020 National Pandemic Gardening Survey*, 2020, Sustain: the Australian Food Network, available at <https://sustain.org.au/projects/pandemic-gardening-survey-report/>

<sup>13</sup> J Kingsley *et al.*, Urban agriculture as a nature-based solution to address socio-ecological challenges in Australian cities, 2021, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 60: 127059.

Over a third of community survey respondents do not currently have a garden but would like access to growing space and to learn more about growing food. Facilitating these activities will support key health and community development priorities for Banyule residents as well as the achievement of the Community Vision. The My Smart Garden program (currently supported by eight Melbourne councils) could be a welcome additional source of workshops for many Banyule home gardeners.

Edible spaces intersect with sustainability outcomes for new builds and local biodiversity. Encouraging the planting of edible native plants on bushland reserves can contribute to local biodiversity while also providing opportunities to integrate Indigenous foodways and culture into the local community.

### What we heard from the community

<i>"Banyule is ripe for home gardens, since we have lots of single houses with big backyards." – Council manager (focus group)</i>	<i>"Public spaces... I would like to see the Council supporting nature strip gardening (edible and indigenous planting) and producing some guidelines on this." – Heidelberg West resident (community survey)</i>	<i>"When I walk past these little patches, like parks with one swing that no-one ever uses... I look at them and think: this could be an orchard, this could be a herb garden, this could be an interactive children's play space with food in it, that the local community supports and uses and benefits from. It just seems so obvious, that there's all this gorgeous land that isn't utilised. And it's ours -- not council's -- we, the community, contribute to that land through our rates." – Montmorency resident (kitchen table talk)</i>
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### The benefits

Improved dietary, physical health and mental health: Edible gardening improves the diets of the gardeners and contributes to improved health and wellbeing from a nutritional

perspective.<sup>14</sup> School gardening has a positive impact on health outcomes for children.<sup>15</sup> As part of 'green exercise' edible gardening improves mental health and wellbeing.<sup>16</sup>

**Climate change action:** Growing food locally reduces emissions and environmental impacts associated with industrial agriculture, packaging and shipping food long distances.

**Reduced waste:** A household that grows food is more likely to understand that the production, preparation, consumption and disposal of food are strongly linked.<sup>17</sup> They are thus more likely to compost and play their part in tackling food waste, which in turn will support community climate action in Banyule.

### Key Objectives

Objective 12: Expand access to edible food spaces

Objective 13: Empower the community to grow, cook, preserve and share food and food knowledge

Objective 14: Support local and regional food production

## Theme 5: Good food system governance

The governance of Banyule's food system is consultative, collaborative and participatory. Strong leadership support and decision-making processes for the Urban Food Strategy within Council are strengthened by a diverse and lively network of residents, local business owners, urban farmers, community gardeners, community organisations and volunteers. A 'good food lens' is applied to the development of new or review of existing relevant policies, strategies and plans to ensure strategic alignment and policy integration across Council.

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<sup>14</sup> M Howarth et al., What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: a scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription, 2020, BMJ open, 10(7): e036923.

<sup>15</sup> A Rochira et al., School gardening activities aimed at obesity prevention improve body mass index and waist circumference parameters in school-aged children: a systematic review and meta-analysis, 2020, Childhood Obesity, 16(3), 154-173.

<sup>16</sup> M Rogerson et al., Regular doses of nature: The efficacy of green exercise interventions for mental wellbeing, 2020, International journal of environmental research and public health, 17(5): 1526; R Thompson, Gardening for health: a regular dose of gardening, 2018, Clinical medicine, 18(3): 201.

<sup>17</sup> M Mitchell, N Goldsworthy, A Roth, C Gonzalez-Avram, Unique In-school Garden and Nutrition Intervention Improves Vegetable Preference and Food Literacy in Two Independently Conducted Evaluations (P16-040-19), *Current Developments in Nutrition*, 3(1), 2019, nzz050.P16-040-19, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdn/nzz050.P16-040-19>.

## The evidence for action

Good governance is a core enabler of an effective Urban Food Strategy. Good governance enables the systems, resources and people required to support the Strategy's implementation. This includes managing and responding to community expectations, values and needs; providing a coordination function; collaborating with the community; and ensuring policy coherence and alignment across Council strategies, policies and plans to avoid the siloed thinking that hampers effective implementation.<sup>18</sup>

Strong leadership support is an essential element of good food system governance to ensure effective policy development and coherent implementation (Coulson and Sonnino, 2019).<sup>19</sup> Senior leadership buy-in is also critical in terms of mobilising resources (financial and human) within the organisation to enable effective implementation as well as create and maintain collaborative partnership approaches to food governance, both internally and externally.<sup>20</sup>

## What we heard from the community

<i>"Council has a role to play in addressing food systems, but it requires a collaborative partnership approach with community, industry and government." – Council employee (staff survey)</i>	<i>"Council could take a role in helping to facilitate the conversation and dialogue in the community around food insecurity." – Emergency food relief provider (focus group)</i>	<i>"There needs to be oversight over the strategy and sub-working groups to drive implementation of actual policies." – Council employee (focus group)</i>
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<sup>18</sup> R Sonnino, The cultural dynamics of urban food governance, 2019, *City, Culture and Society*, 16: 12-17.

<sup>19</sup> H Coulson, and R Sonnino, Re-scaling the politics of food: Place-based urban food governance in the UK, 2019, *Geoforum*, 98: 170-179.

<sup>20</sup> C Slade, C Baldwin, Critiquing Food Security Inter-governmental Partnership Approaches in Victoria, Australia, 2017, *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 76(2): 204-220.

## The benefits

***Strengthening local organisations and networks:*** Raising visibility and facilitating coordination of diverse community food initiatives, projects and actors in Banyule will create opportunities and incentives for coordination across shared agendas.

***Building community engagement and support for the Urban Food Strategy:*** Promoting the Urban Food Strategy within Council and across the community will build public support and community awareness of its benefits and provide opportunities for strengthening community partnerships. Regular communication about Council's implementation actions will encourage accountability and build trust.

***Establishing a whole-of-organisation and systems approach:*** Strong strategic alignment with other Council priorities, policies and action plans will ensure that the multifaceted benefits of the Strategy's actions complement the Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. A cross-departmental working group will ensure a cohesive approach to the Strategy's implementation, to embed food systems thinking across the organisation and to avoid departmental silos that impede effective implementation.

## Key Objectives

Objective 15: Demonstrate strong leadership support and engagement

Objective 16: Engage in collaborative governance and coordination with community members

Objective 17: Enable policy integration and cohesion through a whole of council approach

Objective 18: Ensure effective resourcing and investment

## Monitoring our progress

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Banyule's Urban Food Strategy Action Plan identifies key actions for the next four years across five strategic areas. The detailed action plan includes 'indicators', 'targets' and 'data sources'. Progress against the action plan will be reviewed and reported on annually by Council and disseminated to Councillors and with the Urban Food Strategy Reference Group. This annual review and reporting process will involve organisations and groups that are leading actions reporting to the Urban Food System Strategy Reference Group (coordinated by the Banyule Council) on their respective actions. These annual 'check ins' will further embed collaboration and the alignment of work across these networks of key stakeholders.

At the end of the four years Banyule will conduct a strategic evaluation of the strategy, its outcomes and impacts. This evaluation will include the design of a comprehensive Evaluation Framework drawing on the action plan detailed in this strategy, review of data collected by Council over the four years, consultation with stakeholders and the presentation of evaluation findings via a written report.



# Appendixes

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## Appendix 1 – Glossary

### **Community garden**

Public or private land gardened for food growing by a group, most or all of whom are volunteers and local residents. Typically gardeners have their own plots (allotments), although there are a number of community gardens where some or most of the garden may be worked collectively.

### **Food system**

Everything from farming, food processing, transportation and the selling of food, through to how we buy, enjoy and dispose of food. We all have an influence on the food system through what we choose to eat and where we obtain food. The food system also influences the way that we eat through the types of food that are available to us, its cost and the way it is marketed.

### **Local food system**

A food system that provides for most or all of its components (production, processing, distribution, access, consumption and waste recovery) to occur in the same region or local area. For the purposes of this Strategy, 'local' food includes food produced within 100 kms of the boundaries of Melbourne.

### **Food system governance**

Governance describes “the broad range of policies, laws, regulations, and de facto practices that shape and influence the nature and orientation of our food systems. [It] involves both explicit rules and implicit practices, customs, and assumptions related to who and what is considered part of a food system, who should be included in governance decisions, and in what ways”.<sup>21</sup>

### **Good food**

Although food preferences may be individual and cultural, good food can be seen as the outcome of a food system that enhances human and ecological health, builds community connectedness, meets cultural needs, contributes to nutritional and dietary diversity, strengthens connections between the local and regional economy and supports economic participation through living wages and fair working conditions. This definition has been developed through the principles of good food in Scotland's Good Food Nation Act (2022).

### **Healthy food**

Refers to a wide variety of food in accordance with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, balanced against the body's requirements for growth, metabolism and physical activity across the life stages, and consumed regularly and consistently without periods of over consumption or severe restriction.

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<sup>21</sup> CZ Levkoe et al., Civil society engagement in food systems governance in Canada: Experiences, gaps, and possibilities, 2023, Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development, 12(2): 267–286.

### **Food insecurity**

Food insecurity is deemed to exist whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain. Food insecurity with hunger is where a person experiences a period where they go without food. In contrast, food insecurity without hunger is where a person is at risk of food insecurity with hunger and may employ tactics such as relying on low-cost unhealthy foods to avoid going without food.<sup>22</sup>

### **Food literacy**

Describes the idea of proficiency in food related skills and knowledge (Truman et. al, 2017).

### **Food security**

‘...exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ (World Food Summit, 1996). There are six dimensions of food security: agency, stability (short term), sustainability (long term), access, availability and utilisation (High Level Panel of Experts, Food Security and Nutrition: Building a Global Narrative Towards 2030).

### **Local food**

Local food includes food grown or processed within and around Banyule City Council, including in backyards, community gardens and urban farms. However it also includes Victorian produce and food products that are marketed, distributed and sold in farmers markets, local retailers or other social or economic systems that exist outside the mainstream supermarket sector.

### **Urban Agriculture**

Describes the growing of food in urban areas such as fruits, vegetables, herbs and Indigenous plants. This can be at the small scale, household level or involve neighbourhoods, communities, businesses and entire towns or cities.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Victorian Agency for Health Information 2017, [Challenges to healthy eating – food insecurity in Victoria: findings from the 2014 Victorian Population Health Survey](#), State of Victoria, Melbourne.

<sup>23</sup> LJ Mougeot, Urban agriculture: definition, presence, potentials and risks, 2000, *Growing cities, growing food: Urban agriculture on the policy agenda*, 1, 42.

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