

Food City Policy Summary

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Welcome to the City of Melbourne.

Wominjeka / Womindjeka means ‘welcome’ in the Woi-wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people and Boon Wurrung language of the Bunurong people of the Eastern Kulin.

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection the Wurundjeri, Bunurong, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Wadawurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin have to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Victorians.

Today we are proud to say that Melbourne is a significant gathering place for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# Policy Statement

The City of Melbourne is, and always has been, Country. Aboriginal custodianship of the land, sky and waterways of the region dates back tens of thousands of years and Indigenous foodways are acknowledged, celebrated and embedded in the very fabric of urban life through the city's stories, culture, economy and ecosystems.

Visitors and residents alike flock to Australia's Food City to enjoy the vibrant culinary diversity of the 140 cultures that call Melbourne home. Melbournians benefit from the abundant food bowl that surrounds the urban landscape. The systems of food production and distribution that feed Melburnians and visitors alike every day connect city to country, farmers with eaters. Food builds connection and community.

Everything that happens from paddock to plate and soil to stomach is intrinsically connected to the health and wellbeing of people, the integrity of ecosystems and the stability of the climate. The food system, in turn, is impacted by climate change as well as economic and non-economic shocks and stressors, notably the Covid-19 pandemic. The interdependence of the food system with these broader processes and challenges greatly affects individual and community food security, now and into the future.

# Policy Aim

The aim of ​​Food City is to improve community health and wellbeing by supporting and promoting a food system that is secure, healthy, fair, sustainable, thriving and socially inclusive.

The policy provides an overarching vision and framework for the City of Melbourne that guides coordinated action and decision-making to strengthen our food system and provide the foundation to meet the challenges of the coming years.

# Guiding aspirations

In our role as a leading local government, the City of Melbourne will utilise the following guiding aspirations in its commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of our community. Our aim ​is to promote and support a food system that:

* Acknowledges and respects First Nations custodianship and culture,
* Celebrates the diverse food cultures of Melbourne’s multicultural community,
* Provides dignified, fair and secure access to nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods for all Melbourne’s residents, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged,
* Underpins good physical, dietary and mental health and wellbeing for all Melbourne’s diverse communities,
* Supports sustainable, regenerative forms of food production both within the City of Melbourne and around greater metropolitan Melbourne,
* Supports local food businesses and social enterprises through procurement standards and a strong commitment to shorter and values-based supply chains,
* Serves as the basis for a thriving and just local food economy and hospitality sector,
* Designs for resilience and sustainability by embedding food into neighborhood and precinct planning,
* Encourages collaboration with, and inclusive participation of, the citizens and stakeholders of Melbourne’s diverse communities, and
* ​Provides a model for a world-class food city with strong ethical foundations.

# Community outcomes

Achieving our aspirations for the City of Melbourne’s food system will contribute to the following outcomes for our community:

* Food security for all people across our municipality,
* Food environments that provide opportunities to access healthy, local and sustainably produced food,
* A circular economy that minimises food waste, circulates nutrients and regenerates the urban landscape,
* A thriving community food enterprise sector that supports access to local food and participation in a good food economy,
* A food economy that values and celebrates sustainable and regenerative food producers and processors in Melbourne’s foodbowl,
* Vibrant communities that celebrate their food cultures through gatherings, events and festivals, and
* Abundant urban landscapes with diverse opportunities to grow food.

# Introduction

#### Melbourne is known as Australia’s ‘Food City’, renowned for the quality and diversity of its food, its iconic Queen Victoria Market, and its lively restaurant and cafe culture. Our temperate climate allows a wide variety of delicious produce to be grown close to Melbourne all year round.

#### Melbourne’s food system has a large economic footprint. Our thriving hospitality sector made a significant contribution to the $104 billion Gross Local Product generated by the municipality in 2019 and supported over 31,000 jobs in 2021. By sourcing produce and products made in Victoria, the food and beverage sector in Melbourne creates a large flow-on economic benefit for the state as a whole.

#### Covid-19 dealt a significant blow to Melbourne, resulting in economic disruptions and business closures. By mid-2020, foot traffic in Melbourne had declined by 90% compared to the previous year. The good news is that Melbourne’s recovery has already begun, with 2022 seeing a record $2.5 billion in new development investments and a record number of new hospitality businesses opening. Food businesses, and Melburnians’ love of and appreciation for good food, will play a major role as Melbourne recovers from the shocks of Covid-19.

#### Covid-19 revealed deep vulnerabilities and inequities within the city, as demand for emergency food relief soared in the wake of business closures and job losses. The City of Melbourne’s Social Indicators Survey found that over 30 per cent of our community experienced food insecurity in 2022 and only 4 per cent of adults in the community consumed sufficient fruit and vegetables. Responding to the sharp increase in food insecurity during Covid-19, the City of Melbourne developed and adopted the Community Food Relief Plan 2021-2025, committing the City to the goal of increased food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable

#### Beyond the disruptions caused by Covid-19, the signs that our food system is facing serious challenges have been building for some time, with record-breaking fires and floods causing significant fluctuations in the price on food. Further, the remaining productive farmland in the regions surrounding Melbourne are under constant pressure from suburban growth with research indicating that this farmland will satisfy less than 20% of the city’s food requirements by 2045 when Melbourne reaches 7 million people.

# City of Melbourne’s role

##### The food system is complex, and no single organisation can achieve systemic change alone. The City of Melbourne Food Policy recognises that we need to work together to address the challenges facing our food system and to ensure we have sufficient access to good food for all, now and into the future.

##### The City of Melbourne has a clear and vital role to play in strengthening the city’s food system through two complementary approaches:

##### 1. The City of Melbourne’s own actions, initiatives, advocacy and leadership in the food system.

##### 2. Enabling, supporting and building the capacity of communities, businesses and organisations to strengthen the local and regional food systems that sustain us.

##### City of Melbourne’s commitment to participatory democratic approaches to decision-making will enable it to ensure marginalised and disenfranchised communities benefit from the implementation of Food City. The knowledge and insights of the local community, businesses and food system actors and experts will be critical to finding creative solutions to the food systems challenges we are collectively facing.

# Themes and Priorities

## Theme 1: City as Country

##### Melbourne has always been a food city, and the city is, and always has been Country. The sovereign lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung Peoples of the Eastern Kulin have been imbued with spiritual and cultural importance. Weaving Aboriginal food heritage, ecologies, culture and entrepreneurship into the urban fabric of the City of Melbourne provides a foundation for Aboriginal people to express their pride and share their culture with the broader community. It is an opportunity for Aboriginal people to practice their connection to Country and share their traditional knowledge so that current and future generations can flourish.

Our priorities:

* Facilitate ongoing engagement and consultation with local Traditional Owner groups and the broader Aboriginal community to embed Aboriginal food culture within the City of Melbourne’s cultural events and landscapes.
* Protect, promote and celebrate places and stories of Aboriginal food culture and practice in ways that educate the broader community.

## Theme 2: Good food systems governance

##### Strong food systems leadership, collaborative governance and strong partnerships contribute to working towards a shared agenda and demonstrating accountability in the implementation of Food City. As a leading capital city council, our work is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Partnerships for Healthy Cities and the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. This policy alignment strengthens the aspirations in our Council Plan 2021-2025.

##### Our priorities:

* Play a strong coordinating role to support diverse community food initiatives and actions.
* Encourage broad community and business participation in decisions and activities that shape Melbourne’s food system, including from community members with lived experience of food insecurity.

## Theme 3: Food justice: good food for all

Access to nutritious, fair, safe and culturally appropriate food for all people is a human right and the cornerstone of a just food system. Growing numbers of community members in our city struggle to consistently get the food they need on a daily basis to support their health and wellbeing. Food insecurity is caused by poverty and exacerbated by other intersectional factors, including family violence, being a single parent household, age, disability and chronic illness. Food security, and the vision of a just food system, can be strengthened when communities are empowered by supportive local and state government programs to shape their local and regional food system.

*Our priorities:*

* Advocate to state and federal government for the appropriate measures to address the root causes of food insecurity and food poverty including continuing our advocacy agenda to raise welfare benefit levels as a key measure to tackle food insecurity.
* Establish programs and pilot initiatives such after school healthy and culturally appropriate cooking programs for children from low-income families and provision of food vouchers redeemable at the Queen Victoria Market.

City of Melbourne’s commitment to participatory democratic approaches to decision-making will enable it to ensure marginalised and disenfranchised communities benefit from the implementation of Food City. The knowledge and insights of the local community, businesses and food system actors and experts will be critical to finding creative solutions to the food systems challenges we are collectively facing.

## Theme 4: Healthy food environments

Food environments (which include the built, retail and digital environments) shape people’s food choices, purchasing decisions and accordingly their diet and health. We acknowledge our ability and responsibility as a leading local government to work with our community and partners to shape these food environments to increase the availability and accessibility of good food within the city, and promote its consumption. This includes increasing the amount of healthy food and drink options available in City of Melbourne owned and managed facilities, catering and events.

Our priorities:

* Improve and promote the availability and accessibility of good food options across the municipality, including the provision of healthy food and drink options in our council owned facilities.
* Build shared understanding amongst community members and our partners of the need and expectation for healthier food environments.

## Theme 5: A sustainable and resilient food system

The City of Melbourne is intimately connected to the highly productive farmland regions surrounding Melbourne. By supporting sustainable food production and consumption within the City of Melbourne and these nearby regions, which together form Melbourne’s foodbowl, we can reduce the negative environmental impacts of Melbourne’s food system, support our local and regional farmers and food businesses, and contribute to a more resilient food future.

*Our priorities:*

* Work with our partners, community and businesses to promote our foodbowl regions through branding and marketing campaigns.
* Create a circular economy to reduce food waste. For example through more neighbourhood compost hubs and programs for hospitality businesses to donate leftover food to food relief organisations.

## Theme 6: An edible city

The City of Melbourne recognises the importance of edible gardening and urban agriculture in enhancing the health and wellbeing of local communities. Rooftop farms, edible backyards and balconies, street and community gardens, and neighbourhood farms nourish residents, provide spaces for cultural and intergenerational connection and contribute to cultural and culinary diversity. They cool the city, capture storm water runoff, provide biodiverse habitat and encourage composting and seed saving practices. Urban agriculture provides places for Aboriginal communities to connect to Country in the city and celebrate stories of belonging, both old and new.

*Our priorities:*

* Support and expand opportunities to grow food in the City of Melbourne at different scales, such as balconies, rooftops and community gardens.
* Acknowledge the importance of edible gardening as an expression of cultural identity and food culture.

## Theme 7: A thriving local food economy

Our thriving food and hospitality sector provides a rich range of employment opportunities, strengthening our local economy. Increasing and promoting the opportunities to buy fresh, seasonal foods from Victorian producers supports our regional economy and enhances the quality and character of the food and hospitality sector within Melbourne. The City of Melbourne’s procurement standards, catering contracts and food sold in facilities are levers for supporting our local food economy. We also acknowledge the important contribution greengrocers, fresh food markets and social food enterprises make to the health and wellbeing of residents and to the cultural diversity of local communities.

*Our priorities*:

* Promote a vibrant and diverse food and hospitality sector that extends Melbourne’s reputation as a world class ‘city of food’.
* Support and promote the local food social enterprise sector as a key part of a values-based food economy.

## Theme 8: A city that celebrates food

The experience of sharing meals and eating together is an important part of life, community and family rituals and connects us with others. The City of Melbourne promotes our love of food through its markets, restaurants, lively cafe culture and festivals large and small. The everyday shared celebrations of food are also central to how our culturally diverse communities can express their cultural identity.

*Our priorities:*

* Promote the diversity and quality of the City of Melbourne’s gastronomic cultures and businesses
* Celebrate stories of food that reconnect us to its source and the natural world.
* Provide facilities that encourage sharing of food, such as community kitchens, cooking facilities and tables in communal and open spaces.

# Implementation and evaluation

In developing an action and implementation plan, a robust evaluation framework with targets, timelines, measures and indicators will be developed through a collaborative, inclusive and participatory process.

Research through collaborative relationships with expert partners deepens understanding of critical food system issues and barriers to change and provides an evidence base to guide action and decision-making.

In addition, City of Melbourne is committed to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals as an approach to reduce poverty and hunger, promote sustainable development and ensure the peace and prosperity of all people.