

FOOD CITY

2024–34

City of Melbourne Food Policy

Melbourne is a world class and inclusive food city with strong ethical foundations that protects the land which nurtures us and where all people have access to good food.



Acknowledgement of Country

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 they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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

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DATA Page and infographics

Current population of Melbourne: 159,810 (2022)

By 2041 the number of people living in the City of Melbourne is expected to double and reach over 308,000.

32 percent reported food insecurity

22 percent reported worried they would run out of food

19 percent reported skipping meals

13 percent reported running out of food

8 percent reported accessing food relief organisations

7.7 percent reported consumption of fruit and vegetables meets daily requirements

93 percent believe the relationship with Aboriginal people is important

95 percent support diversity

73 percent reported score for overall wellbeing

The proportion of people producing, preserving and consuming their own food increased by 3 percent from 58 percent to 61.9 percent between 2018 and 2021.

Melbourne's food bowl contributes \$2.45 billion per annum to the city's regional economy (Deloitte Report, Melbourne University)

Melbourne food bowl contributes to 21,001 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs (Deloitte Report, Melbourne University)

Visitor attraction to restaurants, bars and cafés worth \$104 billion dollars (2019)

Food sector supports over 31,000 jobs

Income inequality worsened between 2015 and 2018 and remains worse than the metropolitan Melbourne and Australian averages.

The unemployment rate for residents remained relatively low through 2020 at 3.9 percent in comparison to 4.9 percent in 2015, however increased to 5.4 percent in 2021

Vision: our food city for the future

Melbourne is a world class and inclusive food city with strong ethical foundations that protects the land which nurtures us and where all people have access to good food.

The City of Melbourne is a significant gathering place for sourcing, sharing and celebrating food. Our resilient food system sustains the health and wellbeing of our communities and ecosystems. We are proud that Melbourne is a city where everyone enjoys equal access to nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food.

Melbourne is a place where Aboriginal people continue to gather and proudly practise their connection to Country, right here in the city. Visitors and residents have a deep appreciation for the richness of Aboriginal culture that is woven through the fabric of the city's landscapes and ecologies.

People from around the world are drawn to the rich tapestry of Melbourne's food culture. Local markets, restaurants and festivals celebrate the culinary diversity of the many cultures around the world that call Melbourne home.

Cooks and chefs around Melbourne enjoy the quality and abundance of the local produce available to them. Each day, through the simple act of eating, we celebrate the farmers around our city and across Victoria who care for the land that nourishes us. A vibrant array of independent food businesses and community enterprises offer affordable, healthy and delicious food options for everyone. They contribute to our sense of place and belonging.

Melbourne's neighbourhoods are vibrant, diverse and inclusive. Our communities come together in communal spaces for growing food and for sharing their food traditions and knowledge. These are places for our children to cultivate their love of food and to learn the skills they need to grow up healthy and strong.

Food connects us all and Melbourne is a place where we support each other.

(Image of Queen Victoria Market)

QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET

The Queen Victoria Market (QVM) is one of Australia's most iconic fresh produce markets and is synonymous with food and the city of Melbourne.

QVM officially opened in 1878 and has been serving the people of Melbourne for more than 140 years. The market represents the important role fresh produce markets have in the development and growth of cities and its communities.

The Market has and will continue to provide business opportunities for newly arrived immigrants, introducing new produce varieties and cultural diverse foods.

The market offers an exciting trader community, seasonal events calendar for example its summer and winter night markets and is highly regarded for its culture of social vibrancy and its commitment to sustainability.

To find out more about QVM's traders visit: <https://qvm.com.au/shop-by-trader/page/3/>

Policy statement

Food City 2024–34 has been developed to ensure the City of Melbourne works with all tiers of government, food relief organisations and the food industry to secure an economically viable, healthy, sustainable, socially inclusive, equitable and resilient local food system for all people; supporting their access to good food, enhancing their physical and mental health; their social wellbeing and quality of life.

Australia's food system is made up of a complex web of relationships from paddock to plate.

Everything that happens from paddock to plate affects the health and wellbeing of people and the planet. Our food system is also vulnerable to impacts of climate change, economic factors and disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These forces produce inequity in our food system, which impacts the accessibility and affordability of fresh and healthy food for many and creates barriers to health and wellbeing. The City of Melbourne knows that a secure, healthy, sustainable, socially inclusive, fair and resilient food system does not happen by chance. It is something we must create together for our collective benefit – now and into the future.

Our commitment to the health and wellbeing of all in our municipality is embedded in *Council Plan 2021–25 (incorporating Melbourne's Health and Wellbeing Plan)* and underpins our goal of ensuring good food for all in our community. The City of Melbourne recognises that all everyone has the right to eat well, including having access to fresh produce; and to live free of hunger. *Food City 2024–34* reflects our commitment to actively work towards the fundamental and universal human right to safe, nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food for all people. We will engage with all levels of government and stakeholders across the food system to secure these basic rights as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹, which Australia ratified in 1975.

Leaving no one behind is a central theme of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), the global framework for achieving social inclusion, equity, economic growth and environmental sustainability. The City of Melbourne has embraced and committed to the UN SDG's to make sure Melbourne is a good place to live, work and visit for everyone.

¹ UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966, United Nations. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights> [accessed 27 April 2023]

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Working in partnership towards a secure, healthy, sustainable, socially inclusive, equitable and resilient food system.












The City of Melbourne is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG's) as our framework for action towards sustainable development of our city. These goals are a plan to build a greener, fairer, better world by 2030.

We were the first Australian city to commit to a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) of our progress towards the STG's. This includes an inherent and ongoing commitment to our partnerships to address the challenges faced in protecting our food system and supporting community who are worried about missing out on meals, skipping meals or not having enough money to purchase food. We are firmly focused on the overarching principle of the UN SDG's that *no one is left behind*.

Food City 2024–34 is aligned with the Goals by articulating the importance of connected local, state, national and international governments and engaged citizens to work together to address and develop solutions to multiple complex issues. Social policy relating to poverty, income, social inequities and affordable housing can contribute more broadly to improving people's health and wellbeing and reduce food insecurity.

These are important factors that are recognised through *Food City 2024–34* and other aligned City of Melbourne key strategies or policies including our *Affordable Housing Strategy 2020–30*, *Waste Reduction Strategy 2030*, *Economic Development Strategy 2031* and *Inclusive Melbourne Strategy 2022–32*. Our organisation has been mobilised to work together to better understand and reflect on our progress and help guide meet our local targets.

The most applicable goals to *Food City 2024–34* are:

										
End poverty in all its forms everywhere	End hunger, achieve food security, improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at ages	Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation	Reduce inequality within and among countries	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	Ensure sustainable consumption and production	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial, ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Introduction

As Australia's food capital, Melbourne is renowned for the quality and diversity of its food and its iconic hospitality sector and institutions including the Queen Victoria Market (QVM). 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. A lively restaurant, bar and cafe culture attracts millions of visitors, contributing \$104 billion to Gross Local Product in 2019 and supporting over 31,000 jobs in 2021. By sourcing produce and products grown and made in Victoria, the food and beverage sector in Melbourne creates significant economic benefits for the entire state.

The pandemic dealt a significant blow to Melbourne's residents, workers and businesses. Melbourne's recovery is underway, with a record number of new hospitality businesses opening in 2022. Residents' passion for gardening remains strong, with almost one in three residents growing and eating some of their own food.² However, the pandemic also deepened economic vulnerability and inequity. Demand for food relief has soared. Over 30% of our community continues to experience food insecurity in 2023.³ Many households are struggling with sharp increases in the cost of living, including food. In addition, corporate interests have impacted food costs and make it difficult for independent food businesses to compete and influence community food choices and produce or product prices.

The City of Melbourne's *Community Food Relief Plan 2021–25*, which is aligned to *Food City 2024–34*, aims to increase food security for everyone, especially the most vulnerable. We are working with food relief providers to support access to:

- Freshly cooked meals through our library services.
- Information about where our community can access food when they need it through our *Community Food Guide*.
- Access to community grants encouraging ideas and innovation in food growing for example, Melbourne Skyfarm.

Anyone in the community can become vulnerable due to any number of complex life, environmental or social conditions. Our focus on the right to food, tackling inequality and strengthening our food system and communities are more important than ever. Other challenges facing our food system have been gathering pace. Record-breaking fires and floods have contributed to the significant fluctuations in the price of food in recent years, revealing the vulnerability of our food system to climate change.

We are fortunate that the highly productive farmland surrounding Melbourne supplies us with an abundance of healthy food, including much of our fruit, vegetables and eggs and can produce enough to meet 41% of Melbourne's food needs.⁴ However, Melbourne's food bowl is under intense pressure due to population growth, urban expansion, climate change and the high costs of farming close to the city.⁵ With estimates that Greater Melbourne's population will reach seven million by 2050, we must protect this precious food resource for Melbourne's future food security. A clear, long-term policy framework at all levels of government is needed to support these vital regions that are so important to the resilience of our food system and our community's access to affordable good food.

² City of Melbourne, [Social Indicator Survey](#) 2023.

³ City of Melbourne, [Social Indicator Survey](#) 2023.

⁴ Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and Carey, R. (2015) *Melbourne's foodbowl: Now and at seven million*. Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, The University of Melbourne.

⁵ Carey, R., Murphy, M., Alexandra, L., Sheridan, J., Larsen, K. and McGill, E. (2022) *Building the resilience of Melbourne's food system – a roadmap*. University of Melbourne, Australia. <https://doi.org/10.46580/124371>

Purpose

Food City 2024–34 will improve community health and wellbeing by strengthening and promoting a food system that is secure, healthy, sustainable, socially inclusive, fair and resilient.

To achieve this aim we will advocate for and support a food system that:

- Reflects our commitment to a human rights approach in reinforcing the need for affordable and dignified access to good food for all in our municipality; including amplifying the voices of food insecure or disadvantaged Melbournians.
- Improves access to healthier and good quality food, including fresh produce and drink options in the places where people live, learn, work and play, including City of Melbourne facilities and events.
- Celebrates and supports the diverse food cultures of Melbourne's multicultural community; and acknowledges and respects First Nations custodianship and culture.
- Encourages sustainable, regenerative food production and waste minimisation by strengthening the City of Melbourne's connection with its surrounding food bowl.
- Supports local food businesses and social enterprises through procurement standards.
- Commits to shorter, sustainable and values based supply chains that recognise the relationship between farmers/local food product developers in the local food chain to consumers.
- Serves as the basis for a thriving and fair food economy and hospitality sector.
- Embeds food security into neighbourhood design and precinct planning.

In 2012, the City of Melbourne was the first Australian council to develop a food policy and, three years later in 2015, was again an Australian-first in becoming a signatory to the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact*.⁶ *Food City 2024–34* presents new opportunities for the City of Melbourne to continue its global partnership and leadership in the development and promotion of healthy and sustainable food and farming systems. This policy will also support us in advocating to the state and federal governments for policies that tackle poverty and improve access to affordable housing.

⁶ The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact is an international agreement among cities from all over the world, committed "to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse, that provide healthy and affordable food to all people in a human rights-based framework, that minimize waste and conserve biodiversity while adapting to and mitigating impacts of climate change". Its main aim is to support cities wishing to develop more sustainable urban food systems by fostering city to city cooperation and best practices exchange. See <https://www.milanurbanfoodpolicy pact.org/>.

Guiding Principles

Principles	Key messages
Right to food and dignified access	<p>The right to adequate food is human right as enshrined in the <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)</i>. Article 25 states, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family, including food, clothing , housing and medical care and necessary social services; and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.</p> <p>In addition, Article 11 of the <i>International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)</i>, which Australia ratified in 1975, is binding on all Australian Governments. It recognises the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.</p> <p>To this end, we will apply criteria to deliver programs that are respectful, discreet, accessible and socially acceptable. Importantly, we seek to reduce stigma and increase agency in accessing good food and fresh produce; and other resources that support an adequate standard of living.</p>
Health and wellbeing	<p>Health and wellbeing for all people is underpinned by good dietary intake sustaining our physiological and mental health. <i>Food City 2024–34</i> reinforces the importance of sustained overall health and wellbeing through good nutrition by promoting the increase of consumption of fruit and vegetables and reducing the consumption of products like sugary drinks through our recreation centres and child care centres. We will also strengthen food programs and events that integrate social opportunities to enhance overall mental health and social wellbeing.</p>
City as Country	<p>We have a responsibility to protect the land for future generations, which in turn ensures the health and wellbeing of our community. Opportunities for connecting to Country are central to Aboriginal self-determination, community health and cultural belonging. This holistic understanding of health is a strength of Aboriginal culture that can enrich the City of Melbourne's municipal public health and wellbeing planning. The expertise of First Nations peoples in resilience and caring for Country and community can guide us in working towards a sustainable and fair food system that enables current and future generations to flourish.</p>
Enabling food environments	<p>Supporting our community's capability to access healthier food options. Determinants impacting healthier food access include the provision of affordable and culturally appropriate food outlets nearby to where community live, including the ability to walk or catch public transport to local shops, green grocers or farmers markets. Food literacy programs are also crucial to improve community capability, for example learning how to prepare low cost meals with fresh produce that are nutritious. This includes working with local businesses to improve good food or fresh and seasonal produce options available to community.</p>
Inclusive food cultures	<p>Inclusion through food provides opportunities to connect, unite and propel communities to share their experiences on wider issues including the right to food and protection of farm land. Melbourne is a melting pot of food cultures. People bring their capability to grow their own food, to share what they produce and for some, explore business investment to bring their food products to market. City of Melbourne aims to strengthen its already enviable quality of fresh produce, culinary variety and inclusive food cultures in our neighbourhoods; and through our business enterprise programs.</p>

Sustainable sourcing, innovation and solutions	Ensure the stability of food supply chains and locally grown seasonal produce. Redirecting edible surplus/retail food waste to organisations that can distribute it to communities in need (rather than food going to waste). We will collaborate with stakeholders to support the resilience of food distribution systems and improve food waste processes in our municipality. This includes industry connection to new ideas and markets.
Resilient food systems, food economy and communities	<p>City of Melbourne will advocate and work with all tiers of government to ensure long term viability, sustainability, economic prosperity and resilience of our food system in Victoria and nationally.</p> <p>Having a local agriculture/farming focus and protecting Victoria's food bowl, our food system can adapt and be resistant to shocks and stressors.</p>

(Image: Melbourne's food system or what is a food system?)

City of Melbourne's role

Food City 2024–34 prioritises the needs of people with lived experience of food insecurity, homelessness and other forms of disadvantage. Inclusive decision making will ensure the knowledge and insights of the local community, businesses and food system experts inform the development of creative solutions to address the social, economic and ecological challenges we collectively face.

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

- The City of Melbourne's own actions, initiatives, advocacy and leadership in the food system.
- Enabling, supporting and building the capacity of communities, businesses and organisations to strengthen the local and regional food systems that sustain us.

The objectives for *Food City 2024–34* are:

- To coordinate and support sustainable and diverse community food initiatives and actions that support our community's health and wellbeing.
- To advocate for collective action towards a healthy, sustainable or regenerative; and equitable food system for Melbourne and Victoria.
- To encourage and support innovation in food systems thinking at all levels at the City of Melbourne and within Melbourne City Council.

To achieve these objectives, we will continue to capture community ideas and encourage our community to take positive actions; including leading by example locally, nationally and globally.

Advocacy

Partnerships and collaboration will be critical to addressing complex challenges, such as climate justice, and strengthening our collective voice in areas where policy change at state and federal level is most needed. Increasing social and economic equity includes our support and advocacy for national and state policies to alleviate poverty, ensure sustainable food supply and access to good food, especially for those most vulnerable.

Leadership, partnerships and collaboration

Strong leadership, collaborative governance and effective partnerships contribute to a secure, healthy, sustainable, social inclusive, fair and resilient food system. As a capital city council, our work is aligned to the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, *Partnerships for Healthy Cities*, *C40 Cities* and the *Milan Urban Food Policy Pact*.

Strong alignment of Council policies, strategies, plans and priorities with *Food City 2024–34* will strengthen the *Council Plan 2021–25* and the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021–25*.

Regulation and infrastructure management

The City of Melbourne's statutory responsibilities in food safety and substantial base of community assets have a valuable role to play in the local food system. This includes creating opportunities for Council owned facilities to support the community in sharing and accessing good food. We can also embed healthy food environments across council facilities and events to increase access to healthier food and drink options in our community.

Community development and education

Food City 2024–34 will help drive engagement and building food systems literacy within our organisation and externally. The City of Melbourne's grants programs can support the diverse community food organisations and social enterprises that are working hard to create a secure, healthy, sustainable, socially inclusive, fair and resilient food system.

(Image: The Community Grocer)

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Priorities

Following extensive community and stakeholder consultation, the City of Melbourne identified six priority areas for *Food City 2024–34*.

1. 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 fair and socially just society. Growing numbers of people in our city struggle to get the food they need on a daily basis to support their overall health and wellbeing. It is important we raise their awareness of social support services, including food relief organisations. This includes working with food relief organisations to understand models of support and ensure that services are delivered with dignity and respect for those who access them.

Food insecurity is caused by poverty and exacerbated by other factors for example inflation, the rapidly increasing cost of food. Impacts of climate, family violence, parenting pressures and employment barriers such as age, disability and chronic illness. These challenges also influence people's capability to participate in and connect to the broader community.

Council Plan 2021–25 seeks to ensure everyone in our community has access to food. Our *Community Food Relief Plan 2021–25* was our first step in realising this goal and by working in partnership with stakeholders we have begun the journey to taking collective action against food insecurity and hunger in our community.

Commitments	Our role
Investigating the delivery of food programs and events that are integrated with social connection and cohesion opportunities, enhancing access to good food, reducing community isolation and food insecurity in our city; and improving our community's overall mental health and wellbeing.	Deliver Partner Advocate
Ongoing advocacy in climate justice to tackle food insecurity and strengthen a healthy, sustainable, regenerative and equitable food system for Melbourne and Victoria.	Advocate
Working with food relief services, community organisations and other stakeholders to deliver healthy and dignified models of food relief, integrate food affordability into housing and homelessness initiatives; and ensure our work and services address the diverse needs of community to reduce inequity in our city.	Partner
Ongoing advocacy to the Federal and Victorian Governments to take action to reduce poverty in Australia.	Advocate

Outcomes:

- Dignified and affordable food access for all people across our municipality.
- Reduced food insecurity in our city.
- Community are aware of the social support services including food relief providers in their neighbourhood or where they can access affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food options.
- Reduced inequity in our city.

Alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals



2. Healthy food environments

Food environments shape people's food choices, purchasing decisions and accordingly their diet and health. These include built food environments, such as shopping centres, markets and high streets as well as farms and community gardens. They include food retailers where people obtain food products including fresh produce on a daily basis. They also include digital food environments, such as the online world of advertising, marketing and media, that seek to influence our food choices.

Our food environments are saturated with marketing of unhealthy food to children and designed to shape people's food purchasing decisions, with long-term implications for diet and health.⁷ We have a responsibility to work with our community and business partners to shape good food environments and increase availability, accessibility and affordability of fresh food and or good food options within the city. This includes enabling environments for breastfeeding in Council owned and managed facilities.

Commitments	Our role
Building shared understanding amongst stakeholders, community members and business community of the need and expectation for healthier food environments.	Partner
Working with City of Melbourne programs and contractors to incorporate healthy food and drink options into existing facilities, catering and procurement contracts.	Deliver
Align principles of the <i>Food Policy 2024-34</i> into neighbourhood infrastructure and precinct planning.	Deliver
Supporting Council owned childcare facilities to exceed the National Quality Standard for the provision of healthy food and drinks for children; including promoting and supporting breastfeeding.	Deliver
Working with hospitality and other food service providers to ensure compliance with food regulation and food safety standards.	Partner Deliver

Outcomes:

- Food environments provide diverse opportunities for affordable access to healthy, local and sustainably produced fresh food.
- Melbourne Town Hall catering contract provides variety in their menu options that are affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate.
- Melbourne's childcare facilities are recognised for offering healthy food and drink options for children.
- Our community embraces healthy eating and nutritious food including fresh and seasonally available produce.
- Strong relationships between Melbourne's hospitality and food service providers and Melbourne's Health Services ensuring compliance with food regulation and food safety standards.

Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals:



⁷ Baker, P., Lawrence M. and Machado, P. (2020). [The rise of ultra-processed foods and why they're really bad for our health](#). *The Conversation*, September 13 2020.

3. Celebrating diverse food cultures

Melbourne is world renowned for the quality and diversity of its produce; including its use to elevate our sense of place and diverse food cultures. Food is embedded in the city's hospitality, culture and events for example Moomba, New Year's Eve Celebrations and the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival.

It's no coincidence that Melbourne's food offer brings people together from all over the world and helps us learn about good food from all cultures. The simple pleasures of discussing ingredients, sharing meals and eating together are a foundation of community life and social connection. Melbourne loves to celebrate food through its markets, restaurants, festivals and through everyday gatherings that take place across our culturally diverse community and neighbourhoods.

It is this unique culinary diversity that makes Melbourne an eclectic and great food city.

Commitments	Our role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrating and maintaining the diversity and quality of the City of Melbourne's gastronomic cultures and businesses that bring people together, strengthen social connection, belonging and build connected communities. 	Partner Deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating the celebration and promotion of City of Melbourne's diverse food initiatives locally, throughout the state of Victoria, nationally and internationally. 	Deliver Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrating stories of food that reconnect us to its place of origin and producers. 	Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting, promoting and celebrating places and stories of Aboriginal foods and culture in ways that educate the broader community and retain Aboriginal custodianship. 	Partner Advocate

Outcomes:

- Vibrant communities that celebrate their food cultures through storytelling, events, festivals, workshops and other promotion or learning opportunities.
- The vision and aims of *Food City 2024 - 2034* are embedded in Melbourne's Premier Events, e.g. Moomba, Melbourne Fashion Week, Christmas Festival, New Year's Eve, Firelight Festival, etc.
- Social cohesion in our community is enhanced through our connection to land and appreciation of our community's diverse food cultures.

Alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals:



4. A sustainable and resilient food system

Sustainable and resilient agriculture enhances the health and wellbeing of urban communities and economies.

The City of Melbourne is closely connected to the highly productive farmland surrounding Melbourne. Supporting more localised, diversified food supply chains and circular economies is important to building resilience against shocks and stresses as well as community food security. Protecting our food bowl can reduce the environmental impacts of Melbourne's food system, support our local and regional farmers and food businesses and contribute to a healthier and more resilient food system and future.

Partnering with other local councils is an imperative to achieve sustainable or regenerative agriculture for a climate resilient and food secure future. We continue to advocate for and support a robust circular food economy that minimises single use plastic, food packaging; and reduces and rescues organic food waste.

We will expand sustainability initiatives that are already making a difference, for example our neighbourhood compost hubs for our hospitality businesses; as well as working with business to donate leftover produce and other food products that can be shared with food relief providers. This includes supporting, promoting and expanding climate justice food initiatives led by local community and neighbourhood groups.

Commitments	Our role
Strengthening a circular economy that avoids generating food waste and transforms composted organic waste into fertile soil for the urban landscape.	Partner
Partnering with stakeholders to build understanding and advocate for the protection of Melbourne's food bowl.	Advocate
Promoting sustainable or regenerative agriculture within and beyond the municipality.	Advocate
Strengthen the provision of nutritious and culturally appropriate food to the community during times of emergency.	Advocate

Outcomes:

- Our food system demonstrates resilience to shocks and stresses to ensure nutritious, fair, safe and culturally appropriate food during times of crisis and emergency.
- Climate justice food security initiatives led by local community and neighbourhood groups are supported and promoted.
- Enduring mechanisms are established by the Victorian Government ensuring the protection of vital farmland that makes up our food bowl.
- A circular economy that avoids generating food waste, and transforms composted organic waste into soil fertility for the urban landscape.
- Reduced food insecurity in our city.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals:



5. A thriving local food economy

Our thriving food and hospitality sector contributes to Melbourne's economic, social and cultural vitality. This includes Melbourne's identity as a global food city and Australia's gourmet capital.

A local food economy (from farm to plate) that supports fair and living wages enables fuller economic participation of residents, workers; and local farmers in our food bowl. Our greengrocers, fresh food markets and social food enterprises also make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of residents and to the cultural diversity of our local economy. In addition, food sold and served on City of Melbourne premises are levers for supporting local food businesses and the food producers in our region.

We will continue to support a vibrant independent food sector that reflects Melbourne's cultural diversity and the needs and values of the local community. This includes ongoing promotion of community food enterprises and other food businesses that contribute to a local economy that puts people first. We will continue to engage Aboriginal food businesses, artists and organisations in catering and food contracts and in Melbourne's cultural events and festivals. This includes creating opportunities for First Nations staff and communities to partner on projects including consulting and deepening understanding of Aboriginal food cultures, histories, knowledge and sovereignty.

Strengthening food governance and stability locally and nationally are critical to ensure our food system is able to sustain innovation, productivity and resilience in the face of shocks or stressors such as climate change.

Commitments	Our role
Promoting a lively diverse food and hospitality sector that extends Melbourne's 'world class' reputation as a 'good food' destination; and includes celebrating food retailers and hospitality representatives who are leading the way in achieving the objectives of <i>Food City 2024–34</i> .	Deliver Partner
Promoting emerging food economies and smaller scale producers in accessing city markets, i.e. Queen Victoria Market, local businesses, and council contracts.	Deliver Partner
Advocacy to all tiers of government for a food system that embraces sustainable new technologies.	Advocate
Increasing economic and cultural participation whereby Aboriginal people, food businesses and communities benefit from the burgeoning interest in Aboriginal food and culture.	Deliver Partner Advocate
Work with chefs and restaurant owners who source produce locally showcasing leading practice in connecting venue patrons with producers of food.	Partner

Outcomes:

- A thriving hospitality and community food sector that supports access to local food, development of food enterprises by our diverse community; and participation in a fair and good food economy.
- Increase in support for community food programs that prioritise educational and employment pathways for marginalised or low-income residents.
- Melbourne is recognised as the food capital of Australia and celebrated globally as a leader in hospitality and diverse restaurant culture.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals:



6. An Edible City

Edible gardening and urban agriculture are important for the health and food security of local communities. Rooftop farms, backyards and balconies with growing produce or herbs, street and community gardens and urban farms can nourish residents, provide spaces for intergenerational and cross-cultural connection and enhance the cultural, culinary and nutritional diversity of our diets.

A city in which food is visibly abundant and woven into the urban fabric creates neighbourhoods that are vibrant, healthy and provide delicious fresh and seasonally available produce. We acknowledge the importance of edible gardening as an expression of cultural identity and food culture including food sharing and food growing practices. These spaces also cool the city, capture storm water runoff, provide habitat and encourage composting and seed saving practices.

In addition, through our grants programs and our *Melbourne Urban Forest Fund* the City of Melbourne invests in local food production and urban agriculture innovation.

Commitments	Our role
Promoting community food literacy through support for gardening, cooking, composting and food swapping activities and knowledge sharing.	Deliver Partner
Supporting innovation for communities to grow fresh food in the municipality	Partner
Embedding urban agriculture into the review and revision of the Urban Forest Precinct Plans including the use of native plant/bush tucker species in parks.	Deliver
Supporting new developments to integrate edible gardening spaces, especially in social and public housing.	Partner, Advocate

Outcomes

- Urban landscapes with multi-dimensional opportunities for the local community to grow and share fresh food in their neighbourhood.
- Melbourne is a recognised as a leader in engaging entrepreneurial ideas in urban agriculture tech innovation.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals:



Implementation and evaluation

The City of Melbourne commits to working with community members and our partners to fulfil our commitments and develop a process of implementation and evaluation of *Food City 2024–34*.

We also have a shared responsibility with inner city councils and the Victorian and Federal Governments to protect of local farm land that feeds our community and supports the resilience of our food system.

We will ensure the evaluation of *Food City 2024–34* and related council priorities such as affordable housing, climate resilience, urban greening or health and wellbeing are co-designed with meaningful input by Traditional Owners.

In addition, research through collaborative relationships with universities and other expert partners will deepen our collective understanding of critical food system issues and barriers to change and provide an evidence base to guide future action and decision-making.

The City of Melbourne will remain informed of national and international best practice and stay connected with our global experts, including Partnerships for Healthy Cities, C40 Cities, Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and keep monitoring how we are tracking against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

(Image: food growing)

Stakeholder acknowledgements

Food City 2024–34 is founded on a strong evidence base and extensive consultation with the community and other food system experts nationally and internationally. We gratefully acknowledge the following organisations for their generosity and collaborative spirit in informing the development of *Food City 2024–34*:

Agriculture Victoria
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Australian National University
Cirque du Soil
City of Maribyrnong
City of Merri-bek
City of Stonnington
City of Sydney
Community Grocer
Council to Homeless Persons
Deakin University
Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
FareShare
Foodbank Victoria
Kantar Public
Fruit2Work
GenWest
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
McLeod Family Foundation
Melbourne Farmers Markets
Melbourne Sky Farm
Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
Monash University
Open Food Network
OzHarvest
Partnerships for Healthy Cities
Regen Melbourne
Salvation Army (Lighthouse Cafe)
SecondBite
St Vincent De Paul (Vinnies Soup Vans)
STREAT
Sustain, The Australian Food Network
Swinburne University
University of Melbourne
VicHealth
Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
Victorian Council of Social Service
Victorian Department of Health
Women's Health Victoria
Wurundjeri and Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage and Aboriginal Corporation

It is the City of Melbourne's privilege to collaborate with its passionate, engaged communities in working towards a food system that is fit for the challenges of this decade and beyond.

We also acknowledge the many City of Melbourne staff working in the food system space whose knowledge and connections to our community strengthened the development of the food policy.

Glossary

Circular economy: A circular economy reduces the environmental impacts of production and consumption by avoiding or repurposing waste through good design. A circular food economy decreases food waste, redistributes surplus edible food and transforms unavoidable food waste into a resource for enriching the soil.

Community food enterprises: Community food enterprises are locally owned or managed businesses that produce social and/or environmental benefits for their community. They can include food hubs, low-cost grocers, community kitchens, food cooperatives and farmers markets. They have the added benefit of supporting the local food economy and building food system resilience.⁸

Community garden: Community gardens are public or private land used to grow food, usually managed by volunteers and cared for by local residents. They can involve individual or community plots or a combination of both.

Climate justice: Climate justice recognises that climate change threatens basic human rights, including the right to food, and takes into account historical responsibilities and socio-economic disparities in the causes and experiences of climate change. It calls for policy responses that prioritise the participation and needs of those most impacted by climate change.

Food bowl: A food bowl is a highly productive agricultural area. Melbourne has an inner and outer food bowl that represents two per cent of agricultural land in Victoria but produces a significant proportion of its food due to intensive production, quality soils and ideal growing conditions. Melbourne's inner food bowl includes peri-urban areas such as Werribee South, Casey and Cardinia, Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula. The outer food bowl includes other farming areas approximately 150 kms from Melbourne.

Food environments: Food environments are the physical, economic, and social contexts in which individuals interact with food. These influence the type and quality of different foods and diets as well as the distribution of food outlets and the presence of healthy and affordable options. Food environments are shaped by many factors including government policy and regulation, marketing and advertising strategies, food packaging and urban planning.

Food insecurity: Food insecurity occurs when the ability to access nutritious, safe or culturally appropriate food is limited or uncertain due to lack of money or other circumstances. Severe food insecurity involves hunger when a person goes without food. It can also involve experiencing anxiety about not having enough money to buy more food when it runs out and reducing or skipping meals or eating less nutritious food to make ends meet.⁹

Food Justice: Food Justice is a holistic and structural view of the food system that sees healthy food as a human right and addresses structural barriers to that right.¹⁰

Food literacy: Food literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to make informed food decisions. This includes interpreting food labels, understanding dietary health, cooking and meal planning,

⁸ Hill, S. (2019) Community food enterprises: Their role in food system change, opportunities, challenges, and support needs. Open Food Network Australia. doi 10.6084/m9.figshare.10258577

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ <https://foodprint.org/issues/food-justice/>

and having awareness of the social, cultural, and environmental aspects of the food system. Food literacy can be developed in many different contexts, including family, educational and cultural environments.

Food relief: Food relief programs are often run by charitable organisations with support from volunteers and donations from food banks and food businesses. They typically offer food vouchers or free or low cost meals and food parcels. Food relief initiatives are designed to support people in times of crisis. However, due to cost of living pressures, many people rely on food relief services on a regular basis.

Food security: Food security exists when everyone has the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active, healthy lifestyle.¹¹ It encompasses the availability, accessibility, affordability, and utilisation of food as well as the stability and sustainability of the food supply chain. Achieving food security requires addressing issues of poverty, inequality, and ensuring sustainable food production and distribution systems.

Food system: A food system involves everything from growing, processing, transporting, distributing and selling food through to how and where we buy, enjoy and dispose of food. The food system also encompasses the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence food production and consumption, such as policies, regulations, cultural practices, and sustainability concerns.

Food systems literacy: Food systems literacy refers to the knowledge and understanding of how food systems operate, an awareness of their social, economic, and environmental impacts and interactions and the ability to analyse, communicate and navigate the complexities and challenges within these systems. Food systems literacy also enables individuals and institutions to take informed action in promoting sustainable and equitable food systems and to collaborate with others in creating change.¹²

Good food: Although food preferences may be individual and cultural, good food can be regarded as food that enhances human and ecological health, builds community connection, meets cultural needs, contributes to nutritional and dietary diversity, upholds ethical production standards and supports economic participation through living wages and fair working conditions. This definition has been developed through the principles of good food set out in Scotland's [Good Food Nation Act \(2022\)](#).

Healthy food: Healthy food refers to a wide variety of foods that nourish the mind and body due to their nutritional qualities. This can include a balance of different foods, such as those recommended in dietary guidelines, which support the body's requirements for growth and sustenance across different stages of life and different levels of physical activity.

Local food: Local food is food grown, processed and consumed within a short distance of where it is grown or processed. Local food advocates highlight the benefits of supporting local farmers, reducing carbon emissions and building community connection. "Local" may have different meanings depending on context. For the purposes of this policy, "local food" includes food grown and/or processed in and around Melbourne and across Victoria as well as the businesses that support and distribute this food.

Sustainable food system: Sustainable food systems are characterised by practices that prioritise environmental care, social justice and economic viability throughout the food supply chain. They aim to provide

¹¹ High Level Panel of Experts (2020). Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome.

¹² Pope, H., De Frece, A., Wells, R., Borrelli, R., Ajates, R., Arnall A., Blake, L.J., Dadios, N., Hasnain, S., Ingram, J., and Reed, K. (2021). Developing a functional food systems literacy for interdisciplinary dynamic learning networks. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 5, 747627.

secure, equitable access to healthy, nutritious food for all people. They should sustain fair livelihoods for those working within the food system and reflect the voices and priorities of the community, particularly the most vulnerable or marginalised. They also involve sustainable or regenerative forms of food production and seek to ensure long-term food security and wellbeing for present and future generations, with the ability to sustain shocks and crises.¹³

Urban agriculture: Urban agriculture describes the growing of food in and around cities. This can involve individuals at the household level or neighbourhoods, communities, businesses and entire towns or cities.

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¹³ High Level Panel of Experts (2020). *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome.

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