Resolution of Council

26 October 2026

Item 13.16

Laneway Gardening Workshop Report Back

Moved by Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Ellsmore -

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note:

(i) on 10 October 2026, over 40 City of Sydney residents attended a laneway gardening workshop hosted by Councillors Matthew Thompson and Sylvie Ellsmore at the Darlington Activity Centre

(ii) the City's draft Community Greening Framework is on exhibition from 22 September 2026 to 3 November 2026. Residents are invited to provide their feedback by completing an online survey, emailing sydneyyoursay@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au, or attending one of two community workshops

(iii) the creators of the Hayden Lane garden in Darlinghurst, Sebastian Vasquez and Mike Heenan, presented and shared their experiences of how they transformed their laneway into a green oasis, buzzing with life

(iv) representatives from local community gardening groups attended, including the Abercrombees, Charlies Garden and Friends of Chippendale

(v) residents in attendance expressed interest in starting laneway gardens in Chippendale, Darlington, Forest Lodge, and Erskineville and appreciate the City's work and the proposed policy currently on exhibition

(vi) residents also want to see the policy strengthened further, including through:

(a) more flexibility in relation to laneways that do not have 3.2 metre clearance, as the current clearance requirement will mean many inner-city laneways cannot be greened

(b) a clearer and easier pathway for residents to follow should they wish to reclaim their laneway as green space by closing it to traffic, like that of Hayden Lane

(c) the ability to create gardens and plant closer to street trees through the removal of the proposed 1 to 2 metre exclusion zone, as such a zone would prohibit verge gardening on many inner-city streets

(d) a clearer and easier pathway for residents to follow should they wish to set up water and composting systems, that take into account risk mitigation and buy-in from neighbours

(vii) residents also noted that they require more support and/or guidance in how to manage:

(a) the initial upfront costs of acquiring resources, tools, soil, plants and/or materials for a new verge or laneway garden and whether the City could play a stronger role in funding some of this or facilitating connections to encourage more sharing of resources across the community

(b) training and upskilling aspiring gardeners on how to adhere to the policy and create and grow a thriving laneway or verge garden, and whether the City might be in a position to run training and education events in collaboration with community

(c) disagreements that arise between neighbours on who has ownership of verge or laneway gardens, with many raising they are unsure who to speak to at the City when issues are unable to be worked out through conversation

(d) issues with neighbours leaving bins on footpaths, blocking traffic and damaging existing verge gardens, and what role the City can play in supporting behaviour change

(e) ensuring that any laneway or verge garden that is set up is compliant with the proposed policy and is covered by the City's public liability insurance

(viii) the City already donates suitable plants used in our Mobile Planter Displays and limited gardening supplies to schools, daycares and the community

(B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to investigate ways the City can further encourage laneway gardening, including:

(i) hosting and promoting workshops, with guest speakers who have experience in community gardening across the local government area

(ii) scoping/investigating supporting residents in obtaining plants and soil to create laneway gardens for Council's consideration as part of the preparation of the 2027/28 Operational Plan, with funds redirected from the Mobile Planter Display Program

(iii) considering the aforementioned residents' feedback when finalising the Community Greening Framework.

The varied motion was carried on the following show of hands –

Ayes (5) Councillors Arkins, Ellsmore, Maxwell, Thompson and Weldon

Noes (4) The Chair (the Lord Mayor), Councillors Kok, Miller and Worling.

Varied motion carried.

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