

**Summary of the Open Space session at
Transition Darebin's Food For Thought forum
Saturday 23rd October 2010**

Notes from table discussing 'Growing food in public spaces':

Contact Kelly Heffer <kellyheffer@yahoo.com.au>

People are motivated by seeing stuff happen on the ground.

o Got TD Urban Orchard Working Group, now just need to get out and do stuff!

Identify suitable sites

o Rail, water and electricity easements

o Learn from Angus investigating VicTrack land for use

o Possibly link with Thornbury Primary School

o Other sites that are not public but may be available..Land at retirement villages, hostels for disadvantaged, church grounds.

o Don't forget small pockets of land eg. Plant herbs on kerbside, planter boxes that are empty and other small places.

Instead of only Train Station Beautification, want Verge Beautification with edible trees, plants along sides of railway line.

Consider public space for animal rearing

o Cows / goats, milkshare?

o Learn from Collingwood Children's farm

o Multiple benefits including controlling weeds

Need 'stewards' of these public plantings.

o Roster for watering, maintenance etc....?

o Engage local residents and businesses

'Living gardeners', like the living books idea in local library. People who have a lot of knowledge in a particular area can be 'loaned out' to learn from.

Intergenerational transfer of knowledge

o Ageing demographic of Darebin, potential for fruit and veg growing knowledge to be lost.

o Connect with Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, senior citizens and other networks.

o Garden share scheme like in the UK. Match older people with garden space with younger people in units.

o Garden tours

o Learning other skills - preserving etc

Document useful trees in Darebin in public spaces.

o City of Yarra have a register

o Can register on web to add to this - FeralFruit Melbourne.

Community harvest events

o Used to be an Olive Festival around Northcote, bring back the Olive festival!

o Thornbury picnic with local produce

Consider risk of chemicals used for weed spraying

Require soil testing...?

Share larger garden tools in community

o mulcher, water cart etc

Common land in Reservoir

- o Triangular parcel of land that may be common land, not owned by surrounding houses. Near corners of Allenby, Gellibrand and High Sts.
- o Kate P to investigate if this is public land.

Notes from the Produce Exchange Working Group:

Contact Chris Erlandsen <chrisherlandsen@gmail.com>

- must be grown in Preston
- mainly for seasonal produce and annual harvest time
- have signs on letter - box saying what you you sell/grow
- produce could be swapped for service or skill - negotiable
- contact/ ask -Yarra Nieghbourhood Orchard how they went about starting up
- ask John re Heritage Fruit Tree
- talk to some local ethnic groups re community food
- do a flashmob performance for publicity
- develop a plot in a disadvantaged area
- next step
- form a working group - Angus, Bernadette, Kirsten, Dani, Steve and Chris
- **meeting at Dani's, 3 Davies St. West Preston, Wed 3rd Nov, 6.30**

Notes from the table discussing the Web-based solution to encourage communication & information sharing between the different groups active in the north.

Contact Paul Waite <paulswaite@gmail.com>

Possible functions to be included

Discussion board

Wiki/ knowledge base - whe

Links - to local groups, grant makers, SGA, etc

Calendar/Event organiser - to minimise duplication/overlap of events on the same dates.

Google Calendar?

5. List of local experts - so much knowledge in migrant communities, etc - open gardens in the north; digital storytelling to document migrant knowledge and make available on the website.

6. Maps showing local community assets/activities

Key Principles

1. Independent - not a council initiative (otherwise it will get bogged down in bureaucracy); possibly independent of all local groups.
2. Used to facilitate discussion and knowledge sharing. However, important that such a site not be used as a substitute for face-to-face contact. The site could play an important role in promoting increased face-to-face contact between people (e.g. by advertising group meetings to a broader audience; engaging people in dialogue between meetings.)
3. Broaden geographic scope to include all groups in Melbourne's north (rather than just having a Darebin focus.)

Key Issues

1. Purpose & Principles of Operation - need to be clearly defined.
2. Governance arrangements

- a. Consider establishing a core management group consisting of representatives from each group which joins the initiative.
- b. Development & maintenance of the site?
- c. Costs?
- 3. Encouraging use of such a forum by locals - is there a demand for something such as this? If so - how to get the message out (e.g Sustainability News published by Darebin Council)? If not - no point in proceeding any further.
- 4. Are there existing websites which could fulfil our requirements (no need to reinvent the wheel)? Need to do some research to see what is out there, e.g:
 - a. Wiser Earth (social network for sustainability) - <http://www.wiserearth.org/user>
 - b. My Connected Community (Vic Gov't initiative) - <http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/>

The East Preston Sustainability Street group has a discussion board which has a few active users. It can be found at <http://hosting.workingsoftware.com.au/~peade/sustreet/>

Preliminary List of Organisations to Approach:

Sharehood
 East Preston Sustainability St
 Northern Permaculture
 Transition Darebin
 Sustainable Gardening Australia (Fairfield Pod)
 Cultivating Communities
 Permablitz
 Sprout & other community gardens
 Loophole Community Centre
 Neighbourhood Houses
 CERES
 Moreland Energy Foundation
 Darebin Climate Action Network
 Moreland Climate Action Network
 Bundoora Park

Next Steps

1. Paul Waite to contact 10 local groups to assess their interest in establishing a webspace to promote contact/info sharing between groups.
2. Paul Waite to contact Michelle from Darebin Council to find out about the Council's plans in this area.
3. Paul Waite to investigate existing website (e.g Wiser Earth) to see if they could potentially meet the requirements identified by the group)