



Merri-bek
City Council

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Food System Strategy Engagement and Next Steps

29 February 2024

Strategic Context

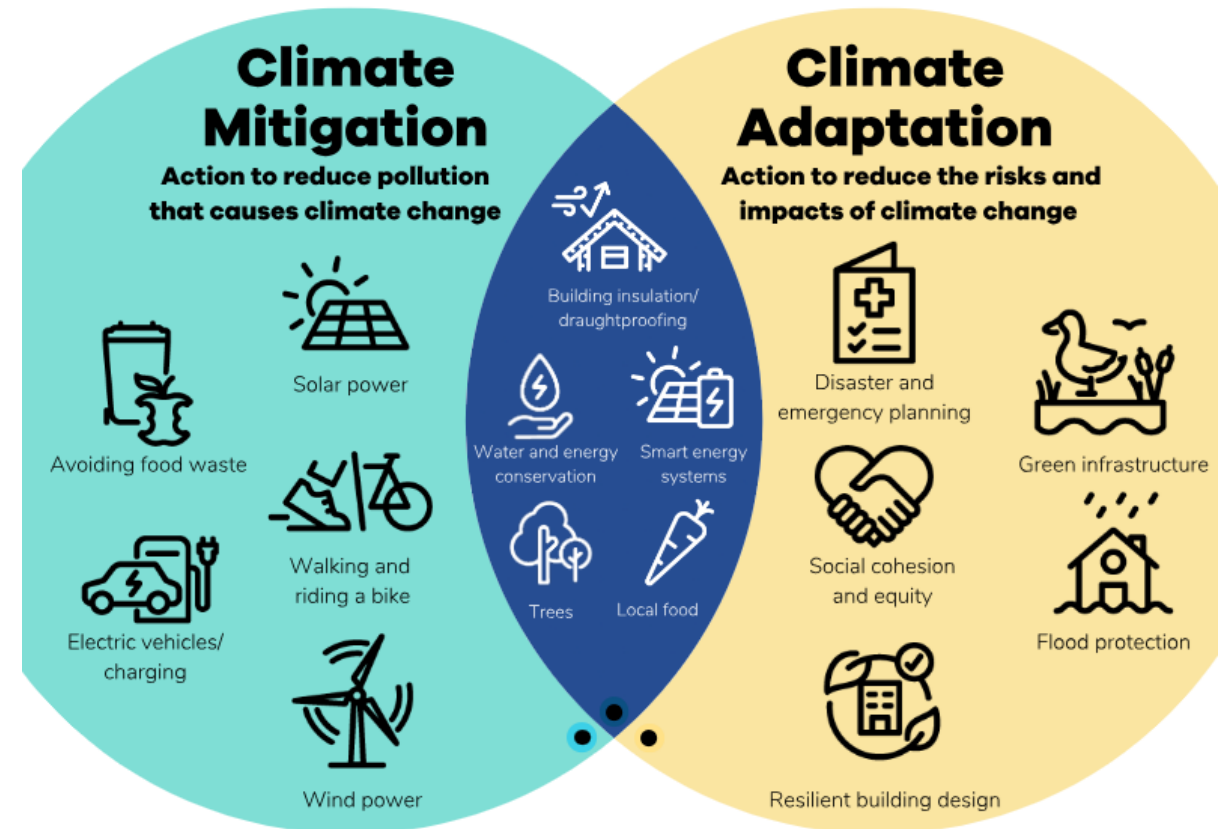


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Council resolved to review its Food Systems Strategy in line with the new VicHealth Strategy 2023-33

Food System actions embedded in core Council objectives:

- Community vision / Council Action Plan
- Climate risk strategy and action plan
- Human Rights Policy 2016 - 2026
- Draft Open space strategy



Recognition



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- Council and the local community have been leaders in this growing / evolving policy area since they worked together to develop the first Food System Strategy in 2017
- Recognition of our leadership: Project partner in [Foodprint Melbourne research](#)



fvas.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/foodprint-melbourne



Food System Strategy 2020-24 - Community impacts



- **Food Leadership Action Group (FLAG)** of community food leaders established 2022 to lead development of a **Community Food Hub in the north** of Merri-bek
- **My Smart Garden** education and capacity building program, winner 2023 Tidy City & Sustainability Education and Premier's Sustainability award,



Food System Strategy 2020-24 - Community impacts



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- More than 300 Merri-bek households have collected 9 tonne of olives during the **annual [Olives to Oil Festival](#)**, 6 tonne in 2023 alone. Winner Merri-bek Community event of the year
- Delivered 3 local food networking and gardening events
- Council community grants invested in local community food groups and projects and provided letters of support for external grants

Council's role – stakeholder interviews



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- **Map / track and share the outcomes and benefits** of Merri-bek's community food organisations, projects and initiatives
- **Facilitate connection** between local food community groups and projects, **build relationships** and partnerships to enhance outcomes and benefits
- Community grant funding and other project / seed funding is important / valued but lack of ongoing / operational funding a major issue
- **Capacity builder-** provide the community with knowledge, skills and tools to understand, measure and lead the actions



Food System Strategy actions still to be achieved



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- Create **Indigenous foods** learning space
- Support and development of **strategic food growing sites** (Open Space masterplans, Neighbourhood House programs)
- Review Community Garden guidelines
- Consolidate food system network communication channels and establish resource hub
- Support for local food social enterprises in Council's procurement practices



Emerging needs and opportunities



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- Council support for **food justice** - building **community resilience** to food related impacts of climate change
- Upskill community organisations to **measure their impact** and contribution to the goals of the Food System Strategy.
- Identify more **reliable and ongoing funding streams** and support to access infrastructure
- Resourcing the **community-led approach** so that the drive and passion of community leaders is harnessed without leading to burn-out

What do we want to know?



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Groups and organisations:

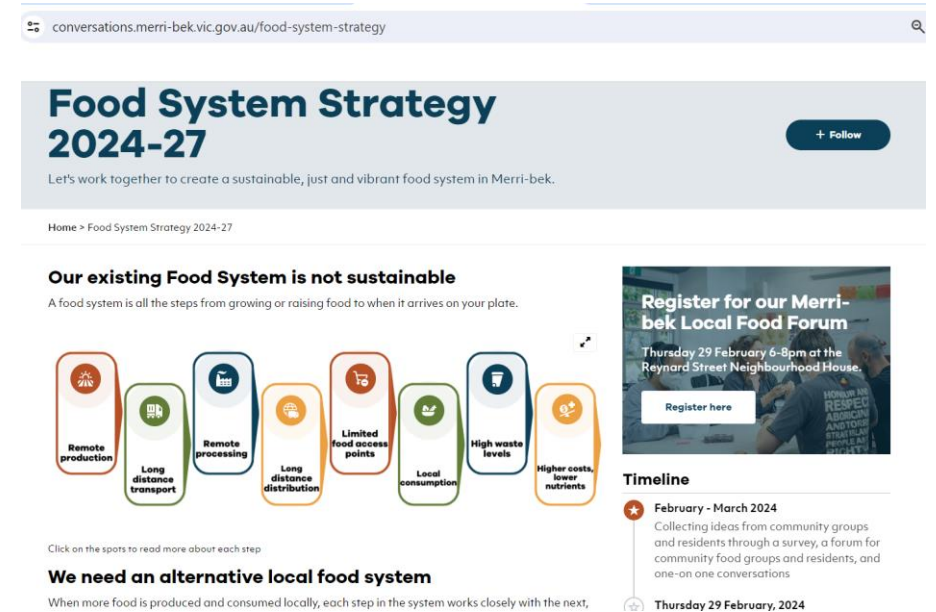
- How are you currently involved in the food system in Merri-bek?
- What have been the benefits of the projects / initiatives you have been involved in?
- What do we need to be doing over the next 3-4 years?
- What are the biggest barriers to achieving these goals
- What is the best way to identify and engage with individuals / cohorts who are food insecure?

How you can contribute



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- Conversations Merri-bek:
 - Survey for individuals and households
 - Survey for community groups and service providers
- One-on one interviews with Community groups during March
- Request for help to engage directly at the grassroots level with residents who are disadvantaged and have a lived experience of the impact of food insecurity



What do we want to know?



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Individuals and Households:

- How are you currently experiencing the food environment in Merri-bek?
- What are the barriers to accessing nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food.
- Which local food programs or services have you used or would like to use?

Next steps

Timing	Step
February – April 2024	Food System Strategy 2020-24 review and community engagement Development of Food System Strategy 2024 - 2027
June 2024	Engagement outcomes reported to Council meeting. Draft Food System Strategy to Council
October 2024	Council elections
Early 2025	Final Strategy adoption