

Report to the Future Melbourne Committee**Agenda item 6.6****Funding for Community Grocer****16 August 2022****Presenter:** Linda Weatherson, General Manager Community and City Services**Purpose and background**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Future Melbourne Committee's endorsement to provide up to \$45,000, in two tranches, to the Community Grocer (CG) to re-establish its weekly market in Carlton. This is in response to a 2022–23 budget submission. The matter has been called in by a Councillor.
2. The CG is a not for profit social enterprise that runs affordable fresh fruit and vegetable markets in communities identified as at risk of food insecurity. Up until recently markets operated in Carlton, Fitzroy, Pakenham and Heidelberg West.

Key issues

3. The CG had been operating a weekly market on the Carlton Public Housing Estate since 2014. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the Carlton market had been running at a financial loss over the previous two years and closed operations on 10 June 2022.
4. During the COVID-19 restrictions period the market had two temporary closures and four location changes. This placed significant hardship on the CG to promote revenue raising activities, limiting their ability to host regular markets, run complementary stalls and implement community activation events. This contributed to a 50 percent decrease in customers.
5. The CG made a submission to Council's 2022–23 budget for \$45,000 to re-establish the weekly market. The submission aligned strongly with the objectives of Melbourne's food relief plan, *Community Food Relief 2021-2025: Planning for a food secure city*; which encourages access to nutritious, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food within our municipality by our vulnerable community groups. This includes the plan's key action: *to improve access to nutritious food in areas of need by investigating different community food enterprise models*.
6. The submission also aligned with the draft Carlton neighbourhood priorities that reflect the diversity of community voices heard from in the first stage of Carlton neighbourhood planning, including:
 - 6.1. better support for public housing residents, such as more frequent and affordable programs and services
 - 6.2. better support for young people, international students and social housing residents, such as initiatives that offer affordable products and services
 - 6.3. strengthening community connections and social cohesion by developing programs and initiatives that encourage inclusion and accessibility while providing opportunities for communities to gather and connect.
7. A review of Melbourne's Knowledge Bank between March and June 2022 in the Carlton neighbourhood captures commentary from residents who express a need for increased access to fresh produce and supermarkets that are located in their area and offer affordable food. Suggestions include a need for more markets like QVM and grocery stores that offer food deliveries. The sentiments outline food relief and food systems should be a focus in the short to longer term.
8. After further communication between management and CG after the submission being heard at Future Melbourne Committee on 23 June, management recommends providing the requested funding. It is intended and has been agreed by CG to make the payment in two tranches with Key Performance Indicators being achieved by December before the second half of the \$45,000 is paid.
9. The funding will be used to relaunch the market and activations, with the long term outcome to boost customer numbers and revenue to make the market more sustainable.

Recommendation from management

10. That the Future Melbourne Committee:

10.1. Approve the provision of up to \$45,000 (in two tranches) to the Community Grocer, to re-establish a community market in Carlton to increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables to people who are currently experiencing food insecurity.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 3 of 3)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. Up to \$45,000 can be found in the Community and City Services 2022–23 operating budget to provide one year funding to the CG.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a material or general conflict of interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. The CG's markets provide access to nutritious food to people experiencing food insecurity. They also promote community connection through participation in the market and associated activities on market days.

Stakeholder consultation

5. Council's Neighbourhood Partner for Carlton has consulted with community members, particularly residents of the Homes Victoria housing estate in Lygon Street who indicated strong support and need for the weekly market provided by the Community Grocer.
6. Discussions have also been had with the CEO of the CG regarding:
 - 6.1. their intention for the re-establishment of the Carlton market and how they would expend the Council funds
 - 6.2. how it is anticipated making the market financially sustainable post the 2022–23 financial year understanding this was a one off funding from Council
 - 6.3. Key Performance Indicators that are expected to be met for the second tranche of funding to be paid in December 2022.

Relation to Council policy

7. The CG's submission aligned strongly with the objectives of Melbourne's food relief plan, *Community Food Relief 2021-2025: Planning for a food secure city*; which encourages access to nutritious, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food within our municipality by our vulnerable community groups. This includes the plan's key action: *to improve access to nutritious food in areas of need by investigating different community food enterprise models.*

Environmental sustainability

8. Council officers will work with CG staff and volunteers to ensure the impact on consumption of resources and the generation of waste on market days is kept to a minimum and that waste is disposed of appropriately.