

Urban Farm - Samford

MBRC Briefing Note content

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Background

Subsequent to a presentation by Peter Kearney, Karen Warbrooke and Peter Booth to MBRC officers in August 2013 on the Samford Futures initiatives, Mark Forbes of MBRC asked Peter Kearney of the Urban Farm Group to provide an overview of Urban Farm - Samford initiative. This information was to assist Mark Forbes in the preparation of a briefing note to Councillors regarding usage of Samford Parklands land and infrastructure for the Urban Farm – Samford initiative.

Overview

The Urban Farm – Samford (UFS) initiative evolved from the Samford Futures process over 2 years of community consultation and engagement. The UFS initiative reflects a strong desire from the community for a more sustainable food system in Samford Valley with easy access to locally grown food with organic methods, in addition to a desire to maximise land use in Samford Valley.

With people now demanding high quality fresh produce sourced locally and more concern regarding food security, Urban Farming is a developing industry around the world. The Urban Farm – Samford initiative allows the MBRC to be a leader in the world in this area. This particular initiative is unique because of the larger scale production and commercial viability of the project.

The opportunity for MBRC to support this initiative is in providing access to some of Samford Parklands land and infrastructure for the UFS to begin this community owned initiative. In essence, the Parklands will become a catalyst for change with wide ranging benefits to the local community and knowledge on sustainable urban farming that can spread around the MBRC, the rest of Australia and the world.

Activities of Urban Farm - Samford

- Stimulate a vibrant location in Samford Valley of learning, sustainable organic food growing, community connection and large numbers of food entrepreneurs
- Organic farming of vegetables, herbs and fruits, in addition to bees, chickens and smaller animals. Fish may also be cultivated in aquaponic systems. Processing of food grown on site and other local farms
- Organic food growing education – covering short and longer workshops and courses in all aspects of urban agriculture
- Educating and supporting a network of urban farmer entrepreneurs that use other land (mostly leased private land) in Samford to make a living from productively growing food
- Urban agriculture research and advocacy



Benefits to community

- Significant volume of seasonal locally grown food that is reasonably priced. Produce sold through local retailers, directly from the Urban Farm shop and from the urban farmers.
- Employment and business
- Education of adults and strong community engagement of schools in the district
- Community development and well being around food
- Maximising land use for community benefit
- Environmental improvement with organic growing methods

Governance structure of Urban Farm - Samford

The venture will be in a not-for-profit status entity, established as a company limited by guarantee. It will be run as a business that aims for financial sustainability with any surplus going back into supporting the growth of urban agriculture. The organisation will have paid staff, a board and members who are likely to be key local stakeholders. UFS has engaged the services of Heather Watson of McCullough Robertson to assist with legal and governance structures.

Business model

The venture will generate income from:

- farming on the Parklands land, sale of fresh vegetables, herb and fruit tree seedlings and processed food sales
- a margin from assisting with the sale of produce from other urban farmers in Samford Valley,
- educational workshops and courses in addition to subscription for an online learning platform developed out of farming activity and educational system, and farm tours,
- renting of community plots (adjoined to farm plots), and
- grants with a focus on urban agriculture research.

Funding

The venture will need start up funding to get the farming activities underway and pay staff to develop the farm and educational activities. The venture will be developed in stages to reduce up front cost and risk and to prove the operating model, thus working towards financial sustainability from operations. Start up funding is expected to be sourced from grants, crowd funding, loans and donations. It is anticipated that with strong local community engagement and volunteer labour, materials and local sponsorship will play an important role in developing the farm and reducing start up costs. As the farm plots produce consistent cropping, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) subscriptions may be available enabling members to even out cash flows for the urban farmers.

Farming methods

The bulk of the farming activity will be in-ground farming using organic methods. It is aimed that organic certification of the farming space is achieved in 5 years. The farming area will use well established design techniques to optimise rainwater penetration and in-ground water storage. Food forests and edible grasses such as sugar cane will be used to prevent nutrient and sediment flow into the waterways and maintain the fertility of the land. Other organic food production will be:

- Aquaponics in one of the green houses
- Cultivation of summer greens and salads in the greenhouse
- Mushroom growing in one of the cold rooms
- Honey production
- Chickens and eggs

Staging

- Council agreement for land access – October- November 2013
- Forming and funding of venture entity - October- December 2013
- Stage 1 farm plots underway – December 2013 -January 2014 – proving the farming model
- Building access – January 2014 (see Infrastructure requirements below)
- Educational services commence – March 2014
- Stage 2 Farm plots underway - December 2014 -January 2015
- Deepening of education options and urban agriculture research
- Stage 3 Farm plots underway - December 2015 -January 2016
- Deepening of education options and urban agriculture research

With the farming model, stage 1–2 will include a farm manager on staff and this person will also become part of the educational team. At stages 2-3, it is likely that the some of the farm plots will be sub leased to farm entrepreneurs who will use the farming model proven in stages 1-2.

Land/infrastructure requirements at the Parklands

The preferred land is located on the south side of the buildings precinct and is bordered by Samsonvale road, the gully (250m down from buildings precinct fence) and the archery road. This has a total area of approximately 40,000m². The land, water and infrastructure are sought on a lease or license basis. The staging below shows the farm will be developed in a 3 stage process over the first three years.

- Stage 1 – December 2013 to November 2014
 - Farm plot (market garden) area 12,000m² – see diagram with Stage 1 marked, includes community plots.
 - Water supply via MBRC water licenses – water tanks will also be installed to collect water from buildings and store water for drier season use.
 - Shared building for office (see no 1 on diagram)
 - Cold room (see number 8 on map), farm shop space (see number 9 on map)
 - Green house – north side of entrance road
 - Land for fruit tree planting at entry (marked as 11 on the map)
- Stage 2 - December 2014 to November 2015

- Farm plot area (market garden) – 12,000m² - see diagram with Stage 2 marked,
- Further water storage required – either a dam in the gully or additional water tanks
- Additional green house
- Improvement of cold room for usage
- Stage 3 - December 2014 to November 2015
 - Farm plot area (market garden) – 16,000m² - see diagram with Stage 3 marked
 - Land for fruit tree planting along the Archery access road (marked as 12 on the map)

Other land in the Parklands to the north of the buildings precinct could be considered after stage 3. Given that cattle are grazing on the land, it would be ideal that cattle management become part of the education program and a partnership be developed with the current lessee of the land to work jointly on this opportunity.

In summary, the requirements of the Urban Farm – Samford from MBRC over the 3 year staging described above are:

- Land access as specified above
- Buildings access as specified above
- Water license for irrigation
- Assistance would also be welcome with:
 - Use of on-site machinery for slashing and earth moving
 - Any required development approvals
 - Access to any relevant grants

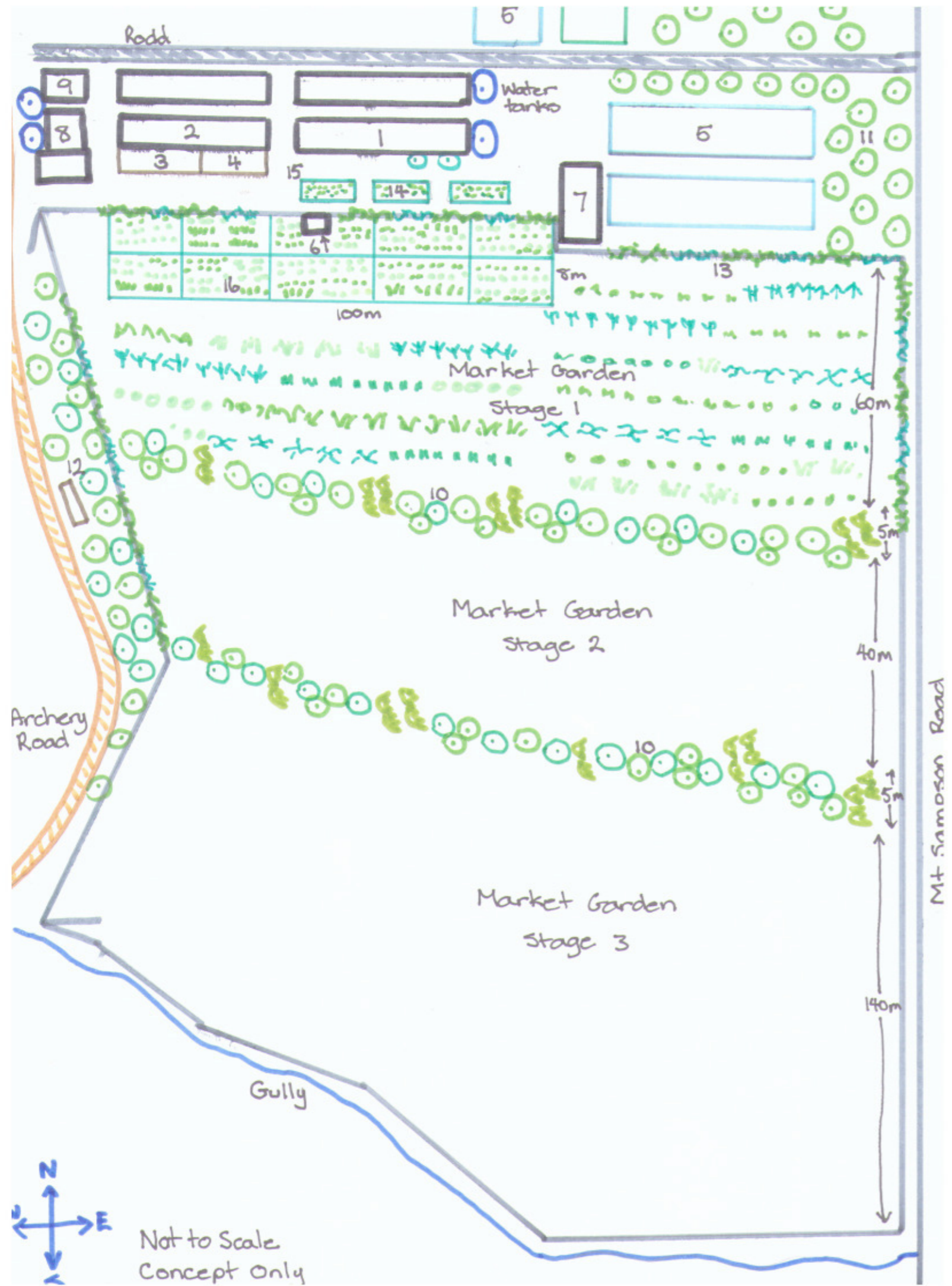
Major achievements/activity

- Formed working group of local experienced people in agriculture, education, research and business.
- Created strong connections to national organisations in organic agriculture, sustainability, organic food retailing, education in organic farming and agriculture research
- Detailed planning of the business activity of the Urban Farm - Samford with presentation documents developed for the Samford Futures presentation in March 2013 and presentations to MBRC. Business plan developed.

Potential economic benefits

A core aspect of the farming method to be used will be to work with urban farm plots of approximately 6,000m² which have the capacity, using the planned intensive organic growing methods and direct sales, to grow enough seasonal vegetables for up to 30-40 families and generate \$60-\$80,000 gross income with a reasonable net income for the farmer. It is expected this level of production per plot will take up to 3 years to achieve.

Given the projected food production per plot above, it would be possible, using both private and public land, to have 100 farm plots across Samford Valley with a total land area of 60 hectares to produce enough seasonal vegetables for 3500 families (all of Samford Valley population) in addition to grossing \$5-10 million in farm income. Statistics from other parts of Australia and the world indicate that by localising the food system, such income has a 5 times multiplier as it creates service industries supporting the agriculture. This could eventually become the largest economic activity in the Samford region.



Number key to Figure 1:

- 1 Office building
- 2 Training building
- 3 Outside teaching area
- 4 Potting area
- 5 Nursery/Glasshouse
- 6 Tool shed
- 7 Equipment shed
- 8 Cold room
- 9 Shop
- 10 Food forest – Swale
- 11 Orchard
- 12 Food Forest
- 13 Vines on existing fencing
- 14 Raised garden plots
- 15 Area around buildings designed for demonstration and teaching
- 16 Community garden plots – 80m² each



Figure 1:
 Concept Design of Urban Farm – Samford on the Samford Commons Land



Creative Samford -Commons building proposal for Samford Community Arts Centre

Buildings Proposed: 11 and/ or 12, this includes indoor and outdoor spaces including front, back and in between building spaces. We would imagine more space needs as the group grows. (We already have over 200 artists on our register so ideally two spaces would be required in years to come)

We have a large established group of community based artists ready to support this endeavour. We are in the process of researching long established community arts centres all around Australia in terms of best practice, mentoring and sharing of development resources.

Proposed staged usage includes:

- A permanent home and workshop centre. Space to hold regular arts meetings, socialise and share ideas. A space for networking and community building and co-working spaces. A place to collaborate with already established arts groups in the valley, representing all creative genres including performance arts.
- A working arts co-operative with shared studio space.
- A place to make /display public art in all of its configurations.
- A dedicated gallery/display space, eventually. Perhaps in a mixed purpose space combined with selling of produce from the gardens etc. (Building 9?)
- Shared storage space for arts equipment of community value eg: Plinths/display screens , mannequins.

Immediate needs:

Access needed to toilet, water, building/s with ventilation and natural light.

After- hours access and basic security lighting once space is occupied.

Once established:

- Covered outside space.
- Potential access to digital technologies.

Time Frame:

As soon as possible .

Lease and Legals:

We would require a long term lease: We are in the process of incorporating our group Creative Samford

We are looking at viable community based ways to fund the following:

- Ongoing maintenance or rates (water, electricity etc).
- Ongoing lease / rent payments.
- Insurance.

Need for legal / building / architecture professional advice. (Arthouse Building Company prepared to give pro bono building and design advice and to provide advice on using recycled building materials where possible and sustainable options for decoration and fit-out.) Advice on refurbishing buildings to meet Health & Safety codes / laws- we also have a member of our group who is a work place health and safety auditor who is willing to advise on the site building. We have a large core group of people willing to donate time and energy and materials and expertise for refurbishment.

Wendy Bailye and Sue Ford .



BUSINESS INCUBATION

SUSTAINABILITY

3

Sustainability Hub and Resource Centre

The Sustainability Hub and Resource Centre elements of the Commons will provide a connecting point and educational resource centre for sustainability-oriented activities in the Samford Valley and in the Moreton Bay Region, linking to other regional sites in Caboolture and Murrumba Downs.

The Hub will generate strong links between the emerging Samford School of Sustainability, universities, TAFE institutions, government agencies and community networks.

Universities have expressed interest in having a presence either through funded research, study space or digital presence. One University is being approached re having a boutique face-to-face presence as an educational Eco Centre.

The United Nations Global Compact Cities Programme has identified the Samford Commons project as the subject for a case study to inform sustainability-oriented community engagement practices globally. A sustainable income stream is expected to come from:

- Fees from schools for visits to the Resource Centre
- Lease of space to universities and government agencies;
- Lease of space to sustainability businesses;
- Income from the Samford School of Sustainability as a community owned social enterprise and from lease of space; and,
- Solar power generation to SC, into the grid or to contracted purchaser.

Proposed staged usage

Stage 1 will include:

- collaborative use of building space to be used also by the Urban Farming project as a training space.
- Establishing a Hub project office in Building 9 in co-operation with other sub-projects at the Commons
- Development of detailed arrangements with tertiary education organisations and community agencies

Stage 2 will include:

- the establishment of the Samford School of Sustainability
- establishment of leased spaces for use by sustainability businesses and other agencies
- Establishment of a community owned solar farm

Immediate needs and time frame

- Shared use of buildings 9 and 12 (Year 1)
- Procurement of resources to fit out spaces (Years 1 and 2)
- Finalise a strategic business plan for the delivery of the Sustainability Hub and Resource Centre (Year 1)

Legal framework

The Hub will operate as an incorporated not-for-profit entity owned by the community. It will operate under the general legal umbrella of the Samford Commons.

Co-working business collective

The upsurge in home based businesses and 'work from home' practices in large organisations represents an opportunity for working space and high tech digital resources to be established at Samford Commons.

Samford has the highest proportion of home based businesses of any Queensland postcode. This provides a strong base for the successful establishment of a Co-working business collective.

A small number of businesses have been contacted re their likely take up of such co-working services, including: hot desk, shared open office space, conferencing spaces, workshop rooms, client conversation spaces, large screen conferencing.

An organiser of Samford Commons has participated in expert workshops conducted recently on the establishment of co-working spaces. He has also established early links with the MBRC co-working space at Redcliffe.

The co-working space will provide the opportunity for regional networking with Council activities in the digital space.

A sustainable income stream is expected to come from:

- Lease of shared/individual office space;
- Lease of conferencing /workshop spaces;
- Fee for service organisational support; and,
- Access to high tech digital resources.

Proposed staged useage

Stage 1 will include the development of a business plan (Year 1)

Stage 2 will include the fitting out of the space and development of detailed operational plans (Years 1 and 2)

Stage 3 will see the launch of the co-working centre (Year 3)
Immediate needs and timeframe

Finalisation of a detailed business plan

Legal framework

The co-working business collective will be conducted under the legal framework of the Samford Commons entity.