

## **Soil Testing in Sherwin Park Community Garden, North Parramatta**

### **Why has City of Parramatta undertaken soil testing?**

Following the proposal to construct a community garden in Sherwin Park, Council as part of its due diligence, commissioned consultants to undertake investigations. Reports identified contaminated soil on the site.

As a result, Council engaged specialist consultants to undertake a Detailed Site Investigation across the proposed community garden site to determine the nature and extent of contamination.

The final report confirmed the presence of soil contamination and identified high concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs a cancer-causing chemical) and lead in the surface soil across the area proposed as the community garden site. This contamination exceeds health investigation levels for growing fruit and vegetables.

### **What are the contaminants of concern?**

#### **(PAH) polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon**

PAHs are compounds formed when organic materials do not completely combust when burned. They are suspected carcinogens (cancer-causing agents). PAHs are typically found in tar roofing, asphalt driveways and ash from wood-burning stoves and fireplaces.

#### **Lead**

Lead is a bluish-white metal that has many industrial uses. The source of the lead in the soil at the site of the community garden is unknown. However, sources may include past land-use activity, and residual lead from vehicle exhaust emissions (prior to the use of un-leaded fuel).

### **What are the risks from contamination?**

The risk from PAHs occurs when there is skin contact with contaminated soil, the compounds are breathed-in or ingested (usually by eating food grown in contaminated soil).

As there are currently no gardening activities in the area affected by PAHs, the risk to your health from soil exposure is low.

#### **Contact us:**

council@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au | 02 9806 5050  
@cityofparramatta | PO Box 32, Parramatta, NSW 2124  
ABN 49 907 174 773 | [cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au](http://cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au)

There is a potential risk to your health if you consume food crops planted directly into the lead-contaminated soil located in community garden. Garden produce which has accumulated lead in its tissue or has soil particles adhering to it can be a hazard if eaten.

There is no evidence that the food crops grown in the raised garden beds are unsafe for human consumption.

### **Why does contamination exist at the community garden?**

Soil contaminants are common across parts of Parramatta due to former land-fill practices and historic vehicle exhaust emissions (from lead-based fuel).

The contamination in the community garden is thought to have originated from historic land-use and vehicle exhaust emissions. Likewise, the source of the PAHs in Sherwin Park may have originated from the burning of materials on site, illegal dumping and contaminated fill material imported into the site.

### **What does this mean for the community garden?**

As the test results show higher than acceptable levels of contaminants in the soil within the proposed community garden, remediation of the affected soil is required.

The investigation report has recommended the preparation of a Remediation Action Plan (RAP) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to treat and manage the site to make it suitable for use as a community garden.

### **What are the next steps?**

Council's specialist consultants have recommended remediation of the contaminated soils and implementation of a site management plan which is designed for the safe ongoing-use of the site as a community garden and allowing for possible future works.

Council is in the process of engaging a contaminated land consultant to prepare the RAP and EMP. Council has requested all remediation options be considered.

Once these reports are completed, the next steps will involve the implementation of the remediation works in the new financial year (July 2022).

We will work with the community and community garden members to design a safe and attractive layout for the new garden.

### **Can I access and use the area proposed as a community garden?**

No, not at present.

The contamination report identified high concentrations of PAHs and lead in the surface soil across the area proposed for the community garden at levels which are unsafe for growing fruit and vegetables.

### **Who can I contact for more information?**

Further information will be available on the City of Parramatta website shortly.

You can also contact Council's **Sherwin Park project team** (Erin Hrouda, Open Space Officer or Andrew Scholz, Contaminated Land Project Officer) in the Open Space and Natural Resources Unit.

Call City of Parramatta on **1300 617 058** or email [openspace@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au](mailto:openspace@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au)