

STAGE TWO CONSULTATION REPORT

DARWIN INNER SUBURBS AREA PLANS

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1.0 SUMMARY

On Wednesday 11 November, Northern Territory Planning Commission Chairman Gary Nairn launched Stage Two of the Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plan project.

Stage Two was an opportunity to seek further feedback and comment on a draft Area Plan for the Inner Suburbs.

Stage One of the project involved more than four months of community and industry consultation and preliminary work by the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment to prepare a draft Area Plan for Stage Two consultation.

This report provides a summary of the activities undertaken and the feedback received during Stage Two. For a detailed review of Stage One of the project, please refer to the Stage One Consultation Report.

The launch in November was the first opportunity for residents, property owners, developers, industry bodies and the broader community to view the draft Area Plan and associated documents.

The documentation to support the draft Plan are:

Darwin Inner Suburbs Draft Area Plan, detailing the planning principles used for future land use and development, including precinct maps.

Darwin Inner Suburbs Draft Needs Assessment, detailing the key issues for consideration, informed by the community feedback and background investigations undertaken during Stage One.

Draft Discussion Paper – Review of the NT Planning Scheme Performance Criteria proposing new criteria for development and design standards in the Territory.

To ensure a comprehensive consultation process, to involve both those who had provided feedback in Stage One, and to reach as many residents, owners and interested parties as possible, a number of activities were undertaken:

- A letter from the NTPC Chair to approx. 10 000 residents and property owners in the study area, to advise the commencement of Stage Two, and the availability of the draft Area Plan and associated documents for comment
- Public Notice in local daily newspaper
- News media coverage
- 7 information stalls at targeted locations in and around the study area

- Briefings with industry stakeholders, community members, Government agencies and media, including invitations to all who made formal submissions during Stage One

Throughout the Stage Two consultation process, the Planning Commission spoke directly to over 200 residents, property owners and members of the community, 34 industry, Government and Community stakeholders and received 47 submissions.

In total, consultation throughout Stages One and Two resulted in over 800 direct discussions, 75 Industry, Government and Community stakeholders and 110 formal submissions. In contrast to Stage One, which sought general feedback and initial thoughts on how the Inner Suburbs might accommodate growth into the future, Stage Two provided an opportunity for more specific feedback, related to the changes proposed in the draft Area Plan. In this way, feedback received in Stage Two tended to reflect the residential location of submitters, or specific locations identified for renewal. Submissions from peak industry bodies however, provided feedback on a range of matters within the study area.

In general, submissions and feedback identified the following:

- Strong support for a revitalisation of the Stuart Highway, including mixed use, green space and a re-imagining of the Highway as the entrance to Darwin’s CBD.
- Many differing opinions regarding development in The Gardens, ranging from no development, to the highest level of mixed use residential.
- Strong community objections to the redevelopment of Richardson Park, and any changes to the existing Community Purpose and Public Open Space in Ludmilla.
- Understanding around the need for increased density, but differing perspectives on how this might be achieved, and the level of density suitable for the Inner Suburbs.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Study Area

Darwin's inner suburbs are strategically located on the edge of Darwin CBD, covering the Darwin Peninsula and stretching north to the natural boundaries of Ludmilla Creek and the Darwin International Airport/RAAF Base.

The inner suburbs include Stuart Park, The Gardens, Parap, Woolner, Fannie Bay, Bayview, The Narrows and parts of Ludmilla. The industrial suburb of Winnellie provides the eastern boundary of the scope area. However, Winnellie is not within the study area for this project.

Population growth projections outline that over the next 40 to 50 years, the Darwin Region is expected to almost double in population with an increase of approximately 120,000 residents.

Darwin's inner suburbs are likely to be one of the largest growth areas, with an expected demand for 4,500 extra dwellings likely over this time. (*Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015*).

2.2 The Study Context

The Northern Territory Planning Commission is an independent and advisory statutory authority that prepares strategic land use plans to manage growth in anticipation rather than in response.

The Planning Commission proactively sets the strategic framework for better integrated land use, transport and infrastructure planning, delivering more sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the community, with sensitivity to environmental and heritage values.

In April 2015, the Minister for Lands and Planning tasked the Planning Commission with the preparation of Area Plans for key localities throughout Darwin and the Rural Area.

Stage Two of the Inner Suburbs Planning project builds on the work undertaken in Stage One, and incorporates a number of supporting plans and policies including:

The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan

Northern Territory Compact Urban Growth Policy

Darwin City Centre Master Plan

The preparation of an Area Plan for Darwin's Mid Suburbs is being undertaken by the Planning Commission concurrent to the Inner Suburbs project.

2.3 The Stage Two Planning Environment

As with Stage One, a number of announcements and decisions occurred during the consultation process, which affected the nature of the submissions.

The proposed re-development of Richardson Park in Ludmilla was not raised as an issue in Stage One of the consultation. However, it emerged as a highly contentious issue just prior to the commencement of Stage Two. As a result, much of the feedback in Stage Two related specifically to this re-development. The Richardson Park project has since been abandoned by Government.

A Notice of Intent submitted to the NT EPA in May 2015 regarding a proposed development in the suburb of Bayview created some confusion as some Bayview residents associated these NOI documents with the draft Area Plan. The Draft Area Plan does not propose any changes to existing Future Development zoning in Bayview.

Where possible, any inaccuracies were corrected with a personal response from the Planning Commission.

3.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Report is a summary of the second stage of a three-stage consultation process. The Planning Commission has undertaken a three stage process to recognise that exhibiting Area Plans in their draft form prior to seeking input from the public led to an (incorrect) assumption that the Area Plan was already complete and that the opportunity for any real public input was moot.

To reinforce to the community the value of their contributions, a three Stage engagement approach has now been adopted by the Planning Commission.

Stage One of the engagement process commences via an early input consultation phase, gathering and sharing information prior to the display of the draft area plans.

Stage Two sees the development of the plans by the Department, and circulation/display for a short public exhibition period for further comment and feedback.

Stage Three will commence the statutory exhibition period for inclusion in the Planning Scheme.

This approach gives three distinct opportunities for public participation, and allows the Planning Commission to gather valuable input and stakeholder information and distribute key information relevant to the major issues and regarding the planning process generally.

3.1 Consultation Outcomes – Stage Two

Media briefing and announcement: A media briefing was held at Energy House on 11 November to provide an overview and detail the Stage Two planning documents, and to promote coverage and encourage feedback. Stage Two received coverage on ABC Radio, NT News, and on ABC TV News and Channel Nine news.

Mail Out “Invitation to participate”: A four page mail out was sent to approx. 10 000 residents and property owners in the study area, with an invitation from the Planning Commission Chairman to view the planning documents and participate in Stage Two via submission or by visiting one of the pop up stalls.

Consultation Materials: Stage Two materials were more comprehensive than Stage One, as the draft Area Plan was now available for public comment.

The documentation to support the draft Plan consists of:

Darwin Inner Suburbs Draft Area Plan, detailing the planning principles used for future land use and development, including precinct maps.

Darwin Inner Suburbs Draft Needs Assessment, detailing the key issues for consideration, informed by the community feedback and background investigations undertaken during Stage One.

Draft Discussion Paper – Review of the NT Planning Scheme Performance Criteria proposing new criteria for development and design standards in the Territory.

Copies of all engagement materials were available to view at the information stalls and downloadable from the Planning Commission’s website.

Pop up Stalls: ‘Pop up’ information stalls were held at convenient locations throughout the study area, including Saturday markets at Parap, outside local shops in Stuart Park, Fannie Bay, Winnellie and in the Darwin CBD. Dates for these stalls were advertised on the Planning Commission’s website.

Targeted briefings: Targeted briefings from the Planning Commission chair were given to Government agencies and Industry and Community stakeholders, well attended with over 27 representatives

Advertising: Advertising in the NT News Planning Notices section (Friday)

Community and Stakeholder Consultation – Stage Two: To effectively ‘close the loop’ and provide as many residents, property owners and community groups with access to the Stage Two documents, the Planning Commission re-visited those locations from Stage One. This proved effective as the locations became identifiable with the project.

DATE & LOCATION :	STAKEHOLDERS	# CONSULTED
Friday 2 October, Arnhemica House, Parap	Government and Agency Stakeholders	9
Thursday 12 November, Fannie Bay	Local Residents and Property Owners	48
Saturday 14 November, Parap	Local Residents and Property	39

Market	Owners	
Tuesday 17 November, Winellie Shops	Local Residents and Property Owners	8
Wednesday 18 November, CBD Mall	Local Residents and Property Owners	23
Thursday 19 November, Stuart Park shops	Local Residents and Property Owners	18
Saturday 21 November, Parap Market	Local Residents and Property Owners	64
Tuesday 24 November, Fannie Bay Shops	Local Residents and Property Owners	8
Tuesday 11 November, Energy House	Industry and Community	17
Tuesday 11 November July, Energy House	Industry and Community Stakeholders	10
		TOTAL: 244

Key Agency, Industry and Community Stakeholders

- Briefings were conducted with 6 NTG agencies which included representatives from:
 - Department of Infrastructure
 - Department of Chief Minister
 - Power and Water Corporation
 - Department of Transport
 - Department of Housing
 - Department of Business

- Two briefings for Industry and community representatives was also held, which included 27 representatives from:
 - Urban Development Institute Australia
 - Defence Housing Australia
 - Australian Institute of Architects, NT Chapter
 - Private planning consultants
 - Private engineering firms
 - Community members and Inner Suburbs residents

In total, consultation throughout Stage One and Two resulted in over 800 direct discussions, 75 Industry, Government and Community stakeholders and 110 formal submissions.

4.0 SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

A total of 47 submissions were received in response to the draft Area Plan for the Inner Suburbs.

Many of the submissions provided responses to specific proposed changes, relating to a particular site, lot or suburb. These submissions have been summarised on a suburb by suburb basis. Other submissions, from Industry and Community groups, address wider-ranging issues across a number of sites/suburbs, and these submissions are summarised in section 4.2.

4.1 SUBURB BY SUBURB

4.1.1 – The Gardens

In the main, formal submissions relating to The Gardens focussed on increasing development in the suburb, however some feedback received during Stage Two also expressed opposition to increased density in The Gardens.

Two sites in Melville Street were requested to be considered for zone MR (currently MD) to act as a transition between the proposed higher residential development in Blake Street, and existing MD dwellings. The submission cited The Gardens as suitable for higher density development due to its high level residential amenity and proximity to services.

An alternative submission from long term residents of Melville Street reject the premise that this suburb is suitable for higher densities, citing existing traffic issues, the proposed implementation of a new road link to Gardens Road, and proximity to the George Brown Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre, with pre-existing noise issues.

“There is no current demand for high rise unit development and plenty of other spaces available for it when the demand does return”

Residents of The Gardens

Two sites on Blake Street (Lot 6907 and Lot 6908) were requested to be re-considered from proposed zone MR in the draft Area Plan to a high density zoning, to compliment the HR residential zones in neighbouring Geranium Street, Gardens Hill Crescent and Blake Street.

The submission also notes that the proposed development is to include residential, commercial, retail, restaurants, cafes, playgrounds and BBQ areas, and notes that these uses are not permitted under zone MR or zone HR, and subsequently requests a designation that allows for high density mixed use development.

A second, supporting submission to the above also contends that no existing zone adequately reflects the nature of the proposed development, and as such, requests that a Specific Use (SU) zone be applied to the sites.

4.1.2 – Stuart Park

There is generally an understanding and appreciation of the need to revitalise the Stuart Highway.

A number of submissions focus on the Stuart Highway as both the entry point to Darwin’s CBD, and as the ‘spine’ of Stuart Park and the Inner Suburbs.

A submission from commercial property owners on the Stuart Highway (Lots 1726, 1727 and 1728) acknowledges the mixed use opportunities presented in the draft Area Plan, and proposes incentives such as increased building height (up to nine storeys) for property owners to amalgamate to facilitate revitalization along the highway.

There was general agreement that areas of Stuart Park could be revitalized, to provide an attractive gateway to the city.

“Would like to see the demise of the car yards along the Stuart Highway”

Stuart Park Resident

There is concern around anti-social behaviour in Stuart Park and the limitation this might place on revitalisation and protection of existing green space.

A Duke Street resident noted that while additional green spaces in Stuart Park sound nice, their current uses are “havens for anti-social behaviour”. However, it was also noted that increasing activity and density along and around the Stuart Highway may be instrumental in reducing anti-social behaviour.

A local Stuart Park business owner requested the rezoning of the St Vincent de Paul facility along the Stuart Highway, to improve amenity and safety around the Stuart Highway / Westralia Street crossing, and to improve commercial and social opportunities. Another respondent called for additional pedestrian crossings along the Stuart Highway.

Proposed changes to increased density along the Stuart Highway side of Voyager Street in Stuart Park were questioned due to existing parking, stormwater, and drainage and infrastructure concerns in the Duke Street/Margaret /King Street areas.

One submission supports proposed changes to increase density along Charles Street in Stuart Park, however submits that the transition area be extended to include further properties along the Street. Note that 9, 11 and 13 Charles Street are subject to a rezoning application that will facilitate the development of four storey apartment buildings.

A number of submissions from residents in the Stuart Park Primary School vicinity expressed concerns around the extension of local roads from Parap into Stuart Park and from Tiger Brennan Drive into Stuart Park, citing local traffic and parking issues, loss of amenity, and potential decrease in property value.

Stuart Park residents not wishing to see increased density in the inner suburbs suggest alternatives such as the redevelopment of existing public housing in the CBD or investing funds in better transport between the CBD and Palmerston.

There was general support for the proposed expansion of Stuart Park Primary School to include active and passive recreation areas; however City of Darwin note the proposed site (between Tiger Brennan Drive and Stuart Park Primary) is constrained by storm surge and steep gradient. However City of Darwin does support the inclusion of pathways and landscaping to increase usability of the site (Lot 5942).

4.1.3 – Parap

While there was general support for revitalisation, and a general understanding that increased density in the inner suburbs will occur, many residents in Parap held concerns about the specific location of proposed changes.

The Uniting Church of Australia’s submission objects to proposed changes to its land fronting the Stuart Highway in Parap due to noise factors and proximity to the highway. The proposed change would see the sites used for residential rather than existing service commercial uses.

Parap residents in both the Stokes / Wilkinson and Weddell / Hingston Street areas would prefer to see no change to existing SD zones.

While acknowledging the need for revitalisation along the Stuart Highway in Parap, residents in Wilkinson Street and Jones Place have concerns regarding increased density in a primarily SD area, particularly around traffic and parking, and the provision of future recreation areas in Parap to support a growing population.

Specific objections to the proposed change from two Specific Use Zones to MR and SC to MR in the Parap area along the Stuart Highway (at Wilkinson/Jones Pl and the Ross Smith corner of the Stuart Highway), propose instead the retention of these spaces as green space, rather than higher density residential.

“Much of the area highlighted in the draft Area Plan namely the Stuart Highway end of Parap Road and the area from the old government printing office are currently parklands of some sort. There is very little parkland or green zones into the city area. Allowing expansion of these areas as natural green zones would revitalise the city more than more and more high-rise being built.”

Parap resident

The draft Area Plan proposes a change from SD to MD along Weddell Street in Parap. One submission rejects this proposed change in favour of a higher density such as MR given the proximity of Weddell Street to Parap Road and the facilities and services of the Parap Activity Centre, as well as proposed changes to MD / MR for other similarly located sites in Parap.

Another property owner also on Weddell Street rejects the MD proposed change in favour of retaining SD with potential to sub divide existing lots for dual occupancy.

“Surely this would be a less disruptive, staged approach to densification than MD. Smaller SD lots in the inner suburbs would retain the garden, neighbourhood image of these suburbs and the sense of community, plus cater for self-funded retirees as well as young families”

Parap Resident

A business owner in Parap expressed support for two-way traffic on Nylander Street, as well as the provision of green open space on Salonika Street.

The redevelopment of the current MVR site was seen as “inevitable”.

Some Parap residents also expressed concern regarding the re-development of Richardson Park and proposed changes to zoning in adjacent land.

4.1.4 – Bayview

While the draft Area Plan did not propose any changes for the suburb of Bayview, there was some confusion / misinterpretation around the existing Future Development (FD) zoning in Bayview.

The zone FD has existed in Bayview since the suburb’s initial development, with an expectation that further development would occur at some point in the future.

In May 2015, a developer submitted a Notice of Intent to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority for a proposal to develop ‘Stage Two’ of Bayview. The Notice of Intent included proposed rezoning, and design details. In August 2015, the NT EPA determined an Environmental Impact Statement would be required.

Some residents have confused the Planning Commission’s draft Area Plan with the documents submitted in the developers Notice of Intent.

Notwithstanding the current zoning, some Bayview residents are concerned about future development in the area, particularly as it may impact on views, mangroves and surrounding wildlife.

Recommendations for improvements to the Bayview area include a designation of Conservation for the mangroves south of Bayview Boulevard; a mangrove boardwalk be established in the area; and a platform suitable for fishing be constructed in the Bayview lock area.

4.1.5 – Woolner

There were no formal submissions received from residents in Woolner.

However, a number of submissions (including those from Industry and government stakeholders) acknowledged and supported the proposed changes for Bishop Street in Woolner, *“provided existing uses may continue are not forced to rezone”* (City of Darwin)

City of Darwin also supports the potential for mixed used development along Parap Road, which is *“strongly supported as a linking element to between Parap Village and a new activity centre and transport interchange in Woolner.”*

4.1.6 – Ludmilla

Overwhelmingly, submissions from residents in and around Ludmilla addressed Government’s proposed redevelopment of Richardson Park, and the subsequent changes proposed in the draft Area Plan to Lot 5406 (“Antenna site”) and Lot 3725 (“Bush block”).

Many submissions cited the considerable work undertaken by the community to enhance and protect the Bush block and considered any potential rezoning of this site a significant loss to amenity for the suburb.

The “Antenna site” is currently privately owned Community Purpose (CP) land, housing a broadcast antenna and the draft Area Plan proposes rezoning to Organised Recreation (OR) to support Ludmilla and surrounding suburbs.

Similarly, the potential rezoning of the “Bush block” from Public Open Space to OR was not supported by any submissions.

4.1.7 – The Narrows

Submissions from residents in The Narrows were scant, and in general, not specifically related to the suburb.

One respondent at the Winnellie shops was *“pleased to see no change in The Narrows”* and another respondent indicated they were keen to *“get rid of the flats”*.

4.1.8 – Fannie Bay

The majority of submissions relating to Fannie Bay focused on potential density changes to Ross Smith Avenue and Dick Ward Drive in Fannie Bay.

While one submission objected to the potential increase in density due to increased traffic and parking, the majority of submissions relating to this change supported increased density.

Specific submissions sought a higher zoning for neighbouring properties at the Fannie Bay end of Ross Smith Avenue, to match the proposed changes to 2 – 10 Dick Ward Drive, and more flexibility regarding the consolidation of properties on Dick Ward Drive, to expedite future development.

Parking continues to be a key issue in Fannie Bay, both residential street parking and the availability of parking at Fannie Bay shops.

4.2 – INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SUBMISSIONS

The following is a summary of submissions made by Industry and Community Groups, including:

- Department of Defence
- City of Darwin
- Department of Transport
- Architects Institute of Australia, NT Chapter
- Housing Industry Australia, NT
- Ludmilla Creek Landcare Group
- Department of Business

4.2.1 Department of Defence

Future development should be strategically located to protect the RAAF base

- Building height controls;
- Aircraft Noise;
- Extraneous lighting;
- Bird and Flying Fox Strike – concerns that densification could enable land uses that have the potential to attract wildlife around the RAAF base which could result in increased bird strike; and
- Stormwater management – Darwin Flood Mitigation project to construct an augmented drain and retention ponds to reduce flooding on Bagot Road.

The Department of Defence supports urban growth and development in Darwin, and requests Defence continues to contribute to the early stages of future planning, and that future development be compatible and strategically cognizant of the RAAF base.

4.2.2 City of Darwin (CoD)

- Supports the Compact Urban Growth policy and the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan.
- Expressed some concern around any potential residential development on Blake Street, due to the close proximity of the Botanic Gardens Amphitheatre.
- CoD has no current Council-endorsed plans for enhanced community facilities at the Parap Pool, beyond the current upgrades to the existing pool facilities.
- Land adjacent to Stuart Park Primary School is constrained for development of sporting ovals.
- Concerns regarding the funding, coordination and delivery of infrastructure and service upgrades.
- CoD supports consolidation and rationalisation of underutilised and strategic lots where possible.
- Strong support for mixed use development along Parap Road, particularly to link up to Woolner.
- Support for service commercial in Woolner, providing existing uses can transition over time.
- Concerns re: placement of multi-storey car park in Parap Primary School vicinity.

4.2.3 Department of Transport (DoT)

- DoT would like more detail included in the draft Area Plan around the timing of the Stuart Highway realignment (ie 2030) as other recommendations in the draft plan are contingent on the bypass.
- Planning principles should clearly outline no development is to occur within the Stuart Highway corridor.
- Discussion paper – suggested addition of specifications for bicycle parking, particularly in activity centres.

4.2.4 Housing Industry Australia (HIA)

- Area allocated as medium density residential is too small.
- HIA see this as a lost opportunity, suggesting that more diversity in housing stock is required, which is facilitated by rezoning.
- HIA would like to see smaller minimum size allotments than currently allowed in Inner Suburbs SD zones and a removal of the need for Ministerial consent to construct more than one dwelling on a residential lot.

- HIA see Government as the major contributor for Social Infrastructure improvements, and as such should not rely on developers to fund these improvements.

4.2.5 Architects Institute of Australia, NT Chapter

- Focus development primarily on the Stuart Highway as a whole, and less on activity centres.
- More density could be supported.
- Continuation of small lot/ multiple dwelling along Ross Smith Ave.
- AIA NT supports the development of a masterplan for larger scale developments, such as the proposed development at Blake Street.

4.2.6 Department of Business (DoB)

- DoB recognises the considerable opportunities for future commercial, residential and infrastructure development in the inner suburbs.
- DoB supports the Draft Plan as a means of providing confidence and certainty for developers and the community, and as a mechanism to promote more business opportunity within the designated Activity Centres.
- DoB supports the review of Performance Criteria / Design standards.
- DoB is particularly focused on reducing the burden of inefficient regulatory regimes that impede growth, investment and development.

4.2.7 Ludmilla Creek Landcare Group

- Protection of open spaces and conservation areas of Ludmilla.
- Establishment of walking trails.
- *“Plan for more Open Space, not less – with increased densities, more open space and quality recreational open space is required. Any rezoning should not reduce the future capabilities to meet open space and recreational needs... Ludmilla Creek provides the ideal basis for this.”*

NOTE: This submission also applies to Mid-Suburbs Area Plans

5.0 CONCLUSION

While there were slightly fewer submissions and engagement numbers in Stage Two of the Inner Suburbs Area Planning project, compared to Stage One, every effort was made to reach all residents and participants. Compared to previous Area Plans (prior to the Planning Commission’s involvement), the level of engagement for Inner suburbs Area Plans is outstanding.

Stage Two provided an opportunity for residents, property owners, developers and the community to provide comment and feedback on proposed changes outlined in the draft Area Plan. As such, many submissions provided comment related to specific sites, lots and localities.

Generally, however, there is support for revitalisation in the Inner Suburbs, particularly along the Stuart Highway, and an understanding that some level of density will occur in these highly-prized suburbs. Dual occupancy, smaller SD lots and mixed use residential are just some of the options put forward by property owners, developers and residents. There is a strong wish to maintain green open space commensurate with increased density.

The majority of respondents in the Inner Suburbs Area Planning project appreciate the high level of engagement and the opportunity to participate in the planning process.