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INTRODUCTION

This document sets out Objectives and Built Form Guidelines for the Alice Springs Town Centre. The Objectives and Guidelines are principal-based as well as place-based in that they respond to specific conditions found in the Alice Springs Town Centre.

The Guidelines are not prescriptive and provide opportunities for developers, architects and designers to innovate. However they do require recognition that buildings should contribute positively to streetscapes in the Alice Springs town centre. The contribution of individual buildings to defining a comprehensive “Public Realm” is critical to improving streetscapes and the overall townscape in Alice Springs. The role of individual buildings is to combine with other buildings to create great streets, as they do in all good towns.

The Guidelines are a reflection of the relative importance of buildings in the Alice Springs Town Centre and represent a change of emphasis from land use zones to the form and quality of buildings to ensure that they work harmoniously together to improve the quality of the Town Centre and encourage increased walking to and within the Town Centre.

Pedestrian amenity is a key objective of the Guidelines. This is in line with the Northern Territory Planning Scheme, where the Central Business Zone (Zone CB) states, “Building form and design is expected to be sensitive to the needs of pedestrian movement and facilitate the creation of safe and active street frontages and public places and a vibrant commercial precinct”. A recent urban design audit of Alice Springs indicates that these objectives are not being met through zoning controls alone. Zoning controls are activity based and not place-based or focussed on built form outcomes and character, hence the need for Built Form Guidelines to guide development.

The Guidelines describe how the physical elements of town (buildings, streets, river, parks and open space, natural landscape and land form) will work together to create a harmonious whole. While the Guidelines are generally based on performance and offer guidance, some
specific requirements are identified. The Guidelines relate to built form and do not rely on abstractions such as site coverage or floor space ratios (FSR). They do however give guidance to allowable height and setbacks. Other controls (such as parking ratios) are contained within the Northern Territory Planning Scheme.

**The Objectives of the Built Form Guidelines**

During 2009 an urban design audit of the Alice Springs Town Centre was undertaken. The audit revealed that quality in the Public Realm was being eroded by poor development outcomes and an increasing number of surface car parking areas adjacent to or in the Public Realm. These issues are addressed by these Built Form Guidelines so that over time better urban design is achieved in Alice Springs Town Centre.

A key objective is to enhance a “sense of place” in the Alice Springs town centre. Evidence shows that strong, vibrant town centres with a strong “sense of place” are the focus of community and economic life. This requires design guidance which is focused on the quality of the Public Realm and the quality of buildings as the means by which to achieve and enhance a strong “sense of place”.

A key objective is the need to elevate the **quality** of the experience for all users of the Town Centre and in particular the pedestrian. The quality of the pedestrian experience will increase social activity and lead to an improvement in the overall economic performance of the Town Centre. Changes in economic, social and environmental performance are complemented by improved cultural performance as a consequence of reinforcing the authenticity of the town centre. This is the basis of “**sustainable development**”.

A further objective is to reinforce Alice Springs as a tourist destination of choice, known for high amenity and attraction. The application of the Guidelines will require a long term view from the Community, Local Government and the Northern Territory Government as the application of the Guidelines over an extended period of time will be the most effective way to deal with change in the town centre. Alice Springs will continue to evolve and change and the Built Form Guidelines make no statement about fashion or style. The creation of robust and adaptable buildings has proven to be the best way for towns to cater for the dynamics of economic and social change.

Through these Guidelines the value of public infrastructure is to be recognised, valued and respected by public and private investment. Development has an obligation to maintain and increase the values created in the Public Realm. From a planning perspective this means that planning authorities will evaluate each development proposal on the basis of its contribution to the inherent quality and amenity in the Public Realm, which is a significant public asset. Buildings therefore need to contribute positively to streets and other public spaces. This is the opposite of blank walls and loading zones of stores and shopping malls facing onto streets. This comes at a major cost to the Public Realm and to adjacent sites. A key objective is to ensure that blank walls onto the Public Realm no longer occur. Increased quality in the Public Realm ultimately translates to a more sustainable and safer town centre where people are attracted to visit, work, play and live.
Where Do The Guidelines Apply?

Figure 2 – Area Where the Guidelines Apply

How are the Built Form Guidelines Structured?

These Built Form Guidelines form the basis for the minimum standard of urban design within the Alice Springs town centre and are grouped into Elements of the overall development. These Elements are:

- Town centre (development capacity, links, height, setbacks, views)
- Streets (street types within the town centre)
- Buildings (Contributing to a quality Public Realm)
- Shopfronts (how buildings deliver shops and the presentation of shops to streets)
- Landscape (Role of landscape in town, and around town)
- Fences
- Signs
- Materials (Promoting local identity)
- Parking (Maintaining capacity, but reducing visibility of parking)
- Safety (Crime Prevention through Environment Design)
- Privacy and Noise
- Environmentally Sustainable Design (Water conservation, energy efficiency, use of sustainable materials, low carbon footprint)

Each of these Elements is described in terms of:

- **Objectives** Setting the overarching design and development goals.
- **Requirements** Those aspects which must be addressed to meet the Objectives. Alternative means of meeting the Objectives may be submitted and judged on their merits.
- **Guidance** Suggested ways in which the Objectives could be achieved.
1. Alice Springs town centre

These guidelines refer to the overall structure of the Alice Springs town centre.

Objectives

O1 To improve the quality of the built environment and public realm in the town centre.
O2 To increase safety and a sense of safety in Alice Springs.
O3 To maintain key vistas to the MacDonnell Ranges, Anzac Hill, Billygoat Hill Annie Meyer Hill and the Todd River.
O4 To identify and achieve key future links.
O6 To promote the use of solar energy.
O7 To integrate art into the design of public spaces and buildings.

Requirements

R1 Heights of buildings in the Alice Springs town centre are limited to a maximum height of 3 storeys. This may be increased to 5 or 8 storeys in some locations on condition that the requirements of these Guidelines are met. Refer to Figure 3 for height limits.
R2 To maintain key vistas to the MacDonell Ranges, Anzac Hill, Billygoat Hill, Annie Meyer Hill and the Todd River, heights are limited in areas specified in Figure 3 below.
R3 All buildings are to have a zero setback from the front boundary, with the exception of residential only buildings located along Railway Parade which may be set back a maximum of 6.0m.
R4 Building setbacks from the street are to be in accordance with Figure 4 below.
R5 Where basement parking is provided and basements are naturally ventilated, basements may protrude an average of 1.0m above the natural ground level without being counted as a storey.

Guidance

G1 Key Future Links should be strengthened and maintained for public use. These are shown on Figure 5 below, and are in addition to streets and links in private development.
G2 Buildings should be designed to ensure that neighbouring buildings are able to receive sufficient sunshine for potential solar hot water or solar energy production.
G3 Artists should be considered for inclusion in the design process of streets and buildings.
G4 Stopping places should be designed in public spaces in the town centre and along the Todd River. These places should incorporate a range of public amenities including, amongst others, public seating, protective canopies, trees, drinking fountains and bins.
Figure 3 – Maximum Permissible Building Heights expressed as Storeys

Figure 4 – Maximum Building Setbacks
Figure 5 – Future Public Links
2. Streets

Streets are the most important public spaces in the Alice Springs town centre. They perform a wide range of functions including the movement of pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, tourists and potential public transport users. Beyond this, streets are key social and economic spaces where social and economic interaction, exchange and transaction occur on a daily basis. Streets and the buildings along streets carry strong cultural messages and values and their quality determines the quality of the townscape.

Objectives

O1 To support pedestrians by providing sufficient shade and weather protection in streets.
O2 To ensure that pedestrians have safe and regular crossing opportunities in the Alice Springs town centre.
O3 To ensure that pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, public transport users and motorists needs are met and balanced in the design and function of streets.
O4 To create streets which function primarily as “places” and “social spaces” and not just as conduits of traffic.
O5 To provide opportunities in streets for stopping, sitting and social gathering.
O6 To give character and differentiate streets in the Alice Springs town centre.

Requirements

R1 Footpaths must be provided on both sides of every street.
R2 Pram ramps and tactile bumps must be introduced to aid the visually impaired.
R3 On-street parking is encouraged and must be maximised in all streets to provide a physical barrier between moving traffic and pedestrian paths.
Guidance

G1 Where possible new medians should be introduced and have trees incorporated into their design to provide shade to cool the Alice Springs environment.

G2 Provide public seating in well protected and shaded places in streets.

G3 Where practical, plant street trees in Todd Mall and Todd Street to increase the tree canopy and provide additional shade for pedestrians.

G4 Signalised or signed pedestrian crossings should be introduced at key locations as indicated in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 – Key Pedestrian crossings

G5 Introduce particular species of trees on specific streets to give individual character to those streets.

G6 Introduce tree planting which links to the natural environment and character of the Todd River along Parsons Street between Todd Mall and the Todd River.
3. Buildings

Objectives

O1 For buildings to achieve a high level of activation of the Public Realm.
O2 For buildings to provide weather protection for pedestrians at the street edge.

Requirements

R1 Buildings must be oriented to the street and be entered from the street. This is important to promote passive surveillance and support a sense of community safety in public spaces.
R2 All shops must be entered from the street. Large format retail outlets such as supermarkets may be an exception to this requirement however; links to the street must be maintained even when a “sleeve” of shops surrounds this building typology. (See a possible solution in Figure 7 below).

![Figure 7 – Large format retail “sleeved” by other buildings](image)

R3 No blanks wall facing the Public Realm may be longer than 20% of the width of a site frontage, and may not exceed 3m in length.
R4 Darkened glazing or highly reflective (mirror effect) glazing may not be used in the Alice Springs town centre. Where shading is required, the use of canopies, verandahs or vegetation is to be considered.
Individual buildings must contribute to a general continuity of the street edge and support a sense of enclosure to the street edge.

The ground level of buildings must provide an “active frontage” to the street to take advantage of pedestrian movement and interaction. Ground floors of buildings should be “retail capable” or “commercial capable” by having at least 4.0m floor slab to floor slab heights and have plumbing and toilets located to the rear of the building to facilitate change over time.

Buildings must provide weather protection for pedestrians in the form of a canopy or verandah over the footpath.

The design of the roof of buildings must receive special attention. Roofs in Alice Springs are highly visible from surrounding hills. Consider roof gardens, roof terraces, and the like to soften the appearance of roofs, provide improved insulation to buildings, and visual relief to the overall townscape and roofscape.

Where residences have ground level verandahs or patios these should be accessed directly from a living space within the building.

Building proportions must generally be more vertical than horizontal to support the townscape of Alice Springs.

All facilities/access for disabled persons shall be provided in accordance with the NT Local Government Act of 2008, as amended, Australian Standard 1428.1-1988 or the Building Code of Australia.

Consider providing seating as part of the design of the base of the building.

Buildings on corners should respond to the corners architecturally and also give attention to the role openings and awnings play in reinforcing the intersection as a social space area. i.e. allow people to gather and communicate in comfort, and potentially provide building entrances at corners.

To promote continuity and compatibility between buildings, buildings should respond to design features of surrounding buildings. This will promote a sense of continuity and enhance a sense of place in the Alice Springs town centre.

Buildings should be designed to be adaptable to a range of uses over time. Dimensions should be suitable for a range of uses.

Consider including artists in the design of buildings.

Design buildings which promote healthy living and flexibility of use by reducing the reliance on mechanical air conditioning. Design windows which are able to be opened by building occupants.
4. Shopfronts

When human activities are invisible the diversity of character of the town centre is lost. If the town centre is to be vibrant and active its buildings and shopfronts must be oriented positively to the outside, and to the street.

Objectives

O1 To maintain visual connection between inside and outside of shops.
O2 To ensure that the structure of buildings is visually “brought to the ground”.
O3 To avoid a shopping mall approach and aesthetic to shopfront design.
O4 To achieve a balance between display, access and architectural expression at ground floor.

Requirements

R2 No blackened or mirror glass may be installed, only clear glass.
R3 Glass display windows must not be used for painted on or poster applied advertising. Display windows should maintain a high level of visibility between inside and outside.
R4 At ground level no more than 70% of the building frontage is to be glazing. (A fully glazed frontage is a shopping mall aesthetic and inappropriate for a town centre). The structure and materials of the building should be “brought to the ground” visually, so that the building appears not to “float” on glass.

Figure 8 – Shopfront Design to be avoided – more than 70% glass covered in advertising

Figure 9 – Shopfront design which expresses building architecture
5. Landscape

Objectives

O1 To provide comfort and visual amenity for pedestrians.
O4 To connect the natural environment of the Todd Rover environment to Parsons Street, Todd Mall and the town centre.
O5 To provide landscaping which supports the *urban* character of the Alice Springs town centre.

Requirements

**Streets**

R1 Street trees to be planted in all Town Centre streets at approximately 9.0m to 12.0m centres to provide a shade canopy for pedestrians.

R2 Street trees should be selected to be “fit for purpose”. The following are performance criteria for street trees:
- Street trees should be deciduous to provide deep shade in summer and allow sunlight to penetrate in winter.
- Deciduous trees should preferably have an early drop of leaves to facilitate solar access to buildings and streets in autumn. This is important to reduce power required for heating.
- Trees to be non-fruiting, but may produce flowers.
- For public safety reasons species to be non-allergic, and not in the habit of dropping boughs, or producing fruit.
- Trees to be “architectural” and regular in their form.
- Street trees to produce deep shade in summer.
- Trees to have clear trunks to 2.0m at maturity to maintain visibility at pedestrian level.
- Trees to have a non-invasive root system.
- Trees to have an urban scale, growing up to four storeys in height where appropriate.

R3 No plants or shrubs may be planted which at maturity block the field of vision between 700mm and 2000mm above ground level in Alice Springs streets.

Guidance

**Intra-Block Parking areas**

G1 Trees in intra-block parking areas are encouraged so that shade is provided in summer and sunlight penetrates in winter.

G2 Ground cover planting is encouraged to soften the appearance of parking areas. This should not however be higher than 700mm above ground level.

G3 Planting should not obstruct pedestrian movement paths in intra-block parking areas, but should provide shade for pedestrian comfort.

**Plazas or Squares**

G4 Squares or plazas to be landscaped and paved with high quality natural materials and be designed to facilitate a wide range of uses over time.
The planting of trees in squares is to provide shade and break up the large scale of spaces.

Seating in and around squares is to be provided.

Parks

Landscaping in parks should not block views of paths and open spaces from streets and surrounding houses.

Landscaping should approximate natural conditions in parks and in the Todd River environment.

Essential paths in parks should be well lit with lighting that is consistent along the path, and at a higher level shining down, not at eye level to avoid "blinding" pedestrians.

Lighting should illuminate each side of pathways to provide a greater sense of safety for users at night.

Street Furniture

Seating to be provided in streets, squares and parks and along the Todd River banks.

Seating and lighting to be provided in streets near bus stops.

Waste bins to be located in areas where anticipated pedestrian volumes are high, near shops, and near public transport stops.

Drinking fountains to be provided in or adjacent to squares.

Street lighting should generally be in accordance with Australian Standard 1158.1.

Public lighting should be provided in streets, footpaths through parks, near public telephones and public transport stops, squares, intra-block parking areas and any public spaces likely to be well used at night to assist in providing safe passage for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Lighting in intra-block parking areas should illuminate car bays and pedestrian paths to and from cars. Lighting levels should be consistent avoiding pools of darkness.
6. Fences

Objectives

O1 To improve the visual appearance of Alice Springs by reducing the amount of fencing and improving the quality of fencing in the town centre.
O2 To improve safety by improved streetscapes and increased surveillance from buildings in order to avoid the need for fencing.
O3 To reduce the perception of a lack of safety by the reduction of fencing adjacent to the Public Realm.

Requirements

R1 The use of corrugated metal fencing is not permitted within the Alice Springs town centre.

Guidance

G1 The use of standard pool fencing should be avoided in the Alice Springs town centre.
G2 The use of low level (up to a maximum 1m high) stone walls using local stone is encouraged to enhance local identity in Alice Springs.

7. Signs

Signs on buildings fall into two categories – building identification signs and advertising signs. Both types need to be regulated to visually integrate with the Alice Springs townscape and reduce the amount of visual clutter. Signs should be well designed and contribute to the quality and character of streetscapes.

Objectives

O1 To regulate the location, size and style of building identification and advertising signs.
O2 To provide signage which will:
  • Integrate with the architectural character of the subject building and adjacent buildings.
  • Harmonise with other features, particularly size and placement of other signs in the immediate vicinity.
  • Maintain the safety of pedestrians and traffic.
  • Enhance the attractiveness and character of the urban environment.
O3 To ensure a street number for each building is clearly visible from the street.
Requirements

R1 Signs should generally be sized and contained within the shopfront and building ‘frame’ (main structuring elements) and be designed to fit within the architectural style of the building.

R2 Street number should be positioned on the street façade of buildings or fences in locations which are highly visible from the street.

R3 Special promotional advertisements and A-Frames on footpaths are not permitted.

R4 Under and Above-awning signs (illuminated and non-illuminated) shall have:
   o Maximum dimensions of 1800mm X 500mm;
   o Be erected horizontally and at right angles to the building façade;
   o Have a minimum clearance of 2,650mm above the footpath

R5 Top hamper signs:
   • May project up to 200mm from the building façade;
   • Shall not exceed 600mm in height
   • Shall be restricted to one sign per premises.

R6 Fascia Signs:
   • Shall be part of the verandah or awning;
   • Shall not project above or below the verandah fascia;

R7 Building Identification Signs:
   • Only one building identification sign may be displayed per building elevation.
   • Sign is to be positioned at the focal point of the building façade.
   • Building identification signs may not include general advertising of products, goods and services.

R8 Flush Wall Signs
Where opportunities exist for flush wall signs on blank side or rear walls, the following shall apply:
   • Signs must not comprise more than 20% of the wall area on the given frontage of the building.
   • One sign is permitted per wall per side
   • Services and goods advertised are to be sold within the premises on which the sign is located.

R9 Freestanding advertisements:
   • Only one sign freestanding advertisement per property
   • The above ground elevation is 3 metres or less

R10 Window Signs:
   • Not comprise more than 20% of the window area on the given frontage of the building.

R11 The following types of signs are not supported:
   • Flashing or moving signs.
   • A-boards (except in association with alfresco dining areas on footpaths for the purpose of displaying menus).
   • Display of banners, canvas or fabric signs (except in association with one-off festivals and the like).
   • Freestanding signs (such as pylon signs) with an above ground elevation greater than 3 metres.
   • Bunting and/or flag type signage typically used in car yards.
8. Materials

Local identity can be significantly enhanced by the use of local sourced natural materials. The local geology in and around Alice Springs provides very good materials for conveying local identity.

Objectives

O1 To enhance the local identity of Alice Springs through the use of locally sourced building materials.
O2 To improve the cultural values of the built environment through the use of local stone.

Figure 10 – Local materials used effectively in Alice Springs buildings

Requirements

R1 Building designers shall explore the use of local natural materials to improve local identity and enhance the cultural significance of architecture.

Guidance

G1 Similarity of materials and colours of materials give the built environment strong visual unity. Where practical local natural materials used in adjacent buildings should be incorporated into the design of new buildings.
G2 The use of local sandstone, rammed earth using local material, corrugated metal, timber (termite resistant), steel and glass is encouraged.
9. Parking

Objectives

O1 To reduce the visual impact of parking on the Public Realm.
O2 To prohibit large car parks in front of buildings in the Town Centre and to accommodate larger public parking areas intra-block or above or below ground floor level.
O3 To provide vehicular and pedestrian access to intra-block parking, which does not unreasonably compromise development continuity and active frontages to streets.
O4 To ensure that street trees and other landscaping enhances the environment and comfort of on-street and public intra-block parking areas.
O5 To promote private under-ground or basement parking below buildings where feasible.

Requirements

R1 Locate parking to the rear of buildings, in basements or above ground level and not between buildings and the street.
R2 Where parking is located above ground level parking areas should be screened or have active frontages sleeved to maintain an active frontage to the street.
R3 Ensure that access requirements for emergency services are satisfied.
R4 Design driveway crossings in accordance with Alice Springs Town Council’s standard vehicle entrance designs.
R5 The maximum grade for vehicle access ways is 25%. To avoid vehicles scraping or bottoming, the maximum allowable change of grade is 12% over 1.5m.
R6 Vehicular ramps less than 20m long must have a maximum grade of 1 in 5 (20%).
R7 Vehicular ramp widths are to be in accordance with AS 2890.1.
R8 Security roller screens or shutters to be provided at the entrance to all basement parking areas.
R9 All facilities/access for disabled persons shall be provided in accordance with the Northern Territory Local Government Act of 2008, as amended, Australian Standard 1428.1-1988 or the Building Code of Australia.

Guidance

G1. Provide vehicle access points to parking areas from secondary streets rather than the primary street where practical.
G2. Locate driveways to take into account any services within the road reserve.
10. Safety

Objectives

O1. To maximise informal or passive surveillance of streets and public spaces.
O2. To maximise residential amenity through the provision of privacy within the subject site and from neighbouring properties.
O3. To integrate layout and occupation patterns of new development with streets.

Requirements

R1. Provide windows overlooking streets and other public spaces.
R2. Pedestrian entrances to buildings to be directly from the street.
R3. Locate apartment living and dining areas towards streets and public spaces.
R4. Avoid recesses to ground level street frontages that could allow concealment.
R5. Locate active ground floor uses along the street perimeter of new development to increase the safety, use and interest of the street.
R6. Provide sufficient lighting of public spaces to ensure safety and a sense of safety in public spaces.

11. Privacy and Noise

Objective

O1. To ensure that the placement and design of buildings provides reasonable levels of visual and acoustic privacy for residents in the town centre.

Requirements

R1. That residential developments are located and oriented to limit adverse amenity impacts from existing building and activities, such as noise from loading bays, cooking exhausts, service plants, waste collection and bin storage.
R2. Maximise privacy of internal living areas of opposing dwellings through:
   - Site and building layout;
   - Utilising screening devices such as louvres, fins, balustrades, planter boxes and landscaping.

Guidance

G1. Locating rooms/areas that are least sensitive to noise, closest to noise sources so they form an internal buffer to those rooms/areas that are most sensitive to noise.
G2. Utilise techniques and materials to minimise the effect of noise, such as acoustic glazing and insulation.
G3. Separate private outdoor spaces by using design devices such as recessed balconies and vertical fins between balconies.
12. Environmentally Sustainable Design

The design of buildings is to incorporate energy conservation measures through appropriate orientation, technology, detailing and material specification.

Objectives

O1 To encourage the reduction of non-renewable resources through site orientation and building design.

O2 To enhance Alice Springs’ performance as a “Solar City”

Requirements

R1 A site analysis of new development is undertaken to ensure optimal site orientation for solar access and to ensure that the solar access for adjoining properties is not adversely impacted.

Guidance

G1 The use of solar heating for heating water and solar power for most energy requirements is recommended.

G2 Buildings should be designed to ensure that neighbouring buildings are able to receive sufficient sunshine for potential solar hot water or solar energy production.
Definitions

Active Frontage
Refers to street frontages where there is an active engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floors of buildings. This quality is assisted where the front facade of buildings, including the main entrance, face and open towards the street. Making building edges "active" to the street adds interest life and vitality to the Public Realm. This means:

- Frequent doors and windows with few blank walls;
- Narrow frontage buildings giving vertical rhythm to the street scene;
- Articulation of facades with projections such as bays and porches providing a welcoming feeling, and on occasion;
- Lively internal uses visible from the outside, or spilling onto the street.

Natural Surveillance
"Eyes on the street" provided by local people as they go about their daily activities – this can deter anti-social behaviour and increase the perception of safety. Buildings design can give a strong impression that surveillance of the streets is occurring, even if no people are present.

Robust Buildings
Buildings which are designed to be able to change use over time are referred to as "robust". These buildings are wide enough to allow natural light to penetrate most of the interior and are accessible and flexible to allow a range of uses.