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The Northern Territory Planning Commission’s (NTPC) primary role is to prepare integrated strategic land use plans to manage growth. The NTPC has identified the need to update and implement a Central Alice Springs Area Plan into the Northern Territory Planning Scheme to provide for growth of Alice Springs.

This paper has been produced to assist your involvement in the preparation of an Area Plan for the Central Alice Springs Area Plan (Map 1).

Alice Springs is the largest urban centre outside of Darwin and Palmerston. It is a place rich in natural and cultural heritage, operating as a major economic hub servicing the southern region of the Northern Territory as well as remote areas of South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

Long term land use planning considers how and where development should occur to maximise investment in infrastructure, use land efficiently, and create enjoyable spaces for people.

What is an Area Plan?

Area Plans are land use and development policies within the NT Planning Scheme. They establish a long term vision and usually contain maps, planning principles and objectives to give the community, industry, and decision-makers understanding and confidence about future land uses.

Area Plans build on the overarching direction provided by the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan (ASRLUP) and are informed by population and infrastructure studies. Community input is essential to developing an Area Plan.

Area planning also provides an opportunity for authorities like Power and Water Corporation and local councils to plan for future infrastructure and services such as power, water and sewerage.

Area Plans DO NOT automatically rezone land. Any applications for rezoning must be made through the Minister responsible for administering the Planning Act.

Understanding the project

Amendments to the NT Planning Scheme to include the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan, design guidelines, and to allow eight storey buildings in the CBD have prompted a review of the 20 year old Area Plans to ensure the Central Alice Springs Area Plans align with the updated strategic direction and communicate a clear vision for development in the central area.

The Central Alice Springs Area Plan is important as it will provide an understanding of the necessary social and physical infrastructure upgrades, and land use changes that will occur to support a growing centre. These Area Plans will also give confidence to government, industry and the community about the future land use.

This plan will provide a clear and effective land use and development framework that:

- reinforces Alice Springs CBD as a vibrant commercial, cultural, administrative, tourist and civic hub for the region;
- encourages integration of the CBD and surrounding areas; and
- maintains the character of established localities while enhancing connectivity, and respecting environmental, heritage, and recreation values.

This project is an opportunity to build on the existing Central Alice Springs Area Plan, and bring together previous studies, projects and consultation, such as the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan, which have focused on shaping a vibrant city centre.

The NT Government has committed to Alice Springs with projects including the revitalisation of the CBD, a National Indigenous Art Gallery and a Cultural Centre. These projects are considered as part of the Social Infrastructure considerations at page 16.
What this discussion paper does

The discussion paper outlines how you can be involved, what we understand from previous studies and projects, and what needs to be considered in the preparation of an Area Plan.

Section one introduces the project, summarises the consultation process, places the Area Plan within the hierarchy of plans and background information relevant to guiding future use and development (page 6).

Section two of this discussion paper details planning themes that influence land use and development across the whole study area. These themes should be thought about in relation to how they contribute to an integrated, functional and liveable city centre and surrounds.

How you can be involved

We are currently in Stage 1 of the area planning process outlined in our three stage area planning process as shown below.

Stage 1 is an opportunity to provide upfront input to a Draft Area Plan, by attending information sessions, talking with planners, completing a survey, or making a submission to the Northern Territory Planning Commission. Check the Planning Commission website for details www.planningcommission.nt.gov.au.

Look out for the 'Tell Us' boxes throughout this discussion paper, as these questions might help you prepare a submission, respond to the survey, or talk with our team. Your thoughts, comments, and questions will help us to prepare the draft Area Plan for further consultation in Stage 2.

TELL US...

- How you use and move around the city and surrounds?
- The things you value in the area?
- How you would like to see the area develop over time?

Stage 1
Information gathering and analysis. Includes community engagement and the assessment of study area character and infrastructure networks to identify options for accommodating growth.

Stage 2
Prepare a draft Area Plan in response to initial community feedback and other assessments in Stage 1. Public engagement on the draft Area Plan.

Stage 3
Finalisation of the Area Plan by the NT Planning Commission and formal exhibition of the Area Plan to amend the NT Planning Scheme to include the Area Plan by the Minister.
The NT Planning Scheme applies to the whole of the NT and includes:
- Statements about land use policy;
- Development controls that allow, prohibit or put conditions on a use or development of land;
- Instructions, guidelines and assessment criteria to help the consent authority to assess and decide on development applications; and
- Maps, plans, designs and diagrams.

The Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan (ASRLUP) is the regional planning policy that sets the future direction, and establishes an overarching framework, for development across the Alice Springs region.

ASRLUP identifies the Alice Springs CBD as the dominant centre in the region and provides for detailed Area Plans to guide infill development.

Area Plans contain planning principles and objectives along with maps that illustrate opportunities for future development. The Central Alice Springs Area Plan will sit at this level of the hierarchy and build on the broad direction provided by regional planning policy.

Guideline documents and background material, such as the Design Guidance for Development in Zone CB (Central Business) in Alice Springs, provide further guidance in land use planning matters.
THE CURRENT AREA PLANS

The current Central Alice Springs Area Plans are five plans that identify future land use and considerations in transitioning to those uses. They consider the precincts of: Central Commercial Area; Todd Street Tourism Area; Anzac Hill/Todd River Area; Southern Area; and Western Area. The current Area Plans can be found at Part 8 of the NT Planning Scheme or at www.planningcommission.nt.gov.au.
PLANNING DOCUMENTS

A number of current documents provide a basis of information to begin the preparation of a draft Area Plan. While we have no intention of changing these studies, or the outcomes they lead to, we believe the studies and community feedback are still valuable pieces of information to consider.

Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan 2016
The Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan 2016 (ASRLUP) provides the long-term strategic framework to anticipate and manage future growth and development for a population of 32 000 and 40 000 people. It investigates the local environment, demographics and economics to set direction for industrial, residential and commercial land uses, the rural areas, conservation areas, community facilities and services, infrastructure, transport and natural resources across the whole of the Alice Springs Municipality.

The ASRLUP is a policy document in the NT Planning Scheme.

Key themes emerged around: building height; maintaining views to the ranges; quality building design within the CBD; protection of historic and heritage items; energy efficiency of buildings; and continued engagement with all stakeholders.

Implication for the Area Plan
The Area Plan will build from the direction provided by the ASRLUP to reinforce the primacy of the CBD, embracing the unique natural and cultural environment, and utilising the background information to inform the future land use needs within the study area.

Design Guidance for Development in Zone CB 2016
The Design Guidance for Development in Zone CB (Central Business) is a guideline document in the NT Planning Scheme for developers, architects and designers responding to the Alice Springs environment. The Design Guidance relates to building design, street views protection from weather and the users experiences.

The Design Guidance is a guideline document in the NT Planning Scheme to inform initiatives and assess design merit.

Key themes emerged around: protection of views; building heights; street character; providing residential; protection of heritage; buildings bulk and scale; sustainability and quality design.

Implication for the Area Plan
The Design Guidance identified many areas of planning controls required, notably around the protection of cultural significance, heritage, protection of views and retention of unique character.

The Design Guidance and community feedback will help guide the Area Plan to plan for the unique natural environment and climatic conditions of Alice Springs and community values.

These documents are available at www.planningcommission.nt.gov.au
Alice Springs Central Activity District 2010

The Alice Springs Central Activity District studies are a cohesive set of investigations assessing the role of various elements in delivering population growth, attractive architecture and functional public design. The Alice Springs Central Activity District studies do not form part of the NT Planning Scheme. The studies included:

- Urban Design Audit – looking at improvements to the public realm;
- Parking evaluation – considers the efficiency of on and off street car parking;
- Residential Capacity Report – modelling how dwellings could be established in the CBD; and
- Built Form Guidelines Study – creates principles and objectives to guide development.

Urban Design Audit

The audit identifies physical and planning control measures to improve the social, economic, cultural and environmental performance of the public space in the CBD, through measures like planting of street trees to reduce temperature; extending weather protection; and formalising east-west pedestrian links.

Parking Evaluation

CBD parking spaces comprised 73% off-street surface parking, 18% in parking structures and 9% on-street. A significant improvement to pedestrian amenity and efficiency of land used for car parking can be achieved by parking within structures to increase vehicle traffic movement around the CBD and creating pedestrian anchor points by guiding pedestrian movement; preventing the demolition of buildings until the issuing permits for a replacement building, and; ensuring only the required quantity of parking is provided in new facilities.

Residential Capacity Report

The residential capacity report identified that having people live in the CBD improves safety and security, added to the viability of business, increased attendance at local events, higher walking culture, higher activity drawing tourists and creating a multiplier effect.

Modelling suggested that up to 1300 dwellings could be added, housing about 2500 people.

Built Form Guidelines Study

The Built Form Guidelines Study established principles and objectives to guide the development of buildings, landscaping, fencing, signage, etc. It focuses on establishing quality buildings that encourage walking, citing that an improvement in pedestrian experiences results in increase economic performance and greater social activity. Key recommendations include: maintaining vistas; buildings contributing to a high quality public realm; maintaining a visual connection between inside and outside of shops; and landscaping that supports pedestrian comfort and activity.

Implication for the Area Plan

The Alice Springs Central Activity District studies provided insights of the user experience from various perspectives. It reinforced the benefits of residential development in the CBD, protection of heritage, and promoting pedestrian access through the CBD.
GROWTH CONSIDERATIONS

The current population of Alice Springs is approximately 27 000 (ABS). The Central Alice Springs Area Plan will seek to provide for the needs of the regional population at 32 000 in the near term, and 40 000 in the far term. This ensures that when these thresholds are reached, the necessary facilities and services are in place.

Most of the activity within the central area currently occurs within working hours, with limited activity at night or on the weekends. Observations show that only 50% of developable land in the CBD has a building on it, indicating there is space to grow. It was also noted that most buildings are more than 30 years old but most are still utilised.

Population and housing

At the 2016 Census, there were around 250 dwellings in the central area. Growing the residential population is critical to improving economic and social activity, vibrancy and surveillance.

It is estimated that 150 additional dwellings will be required in the near term, with a further 350 dwellings in the far term.

Office and retail space

The CBD has about 105 000m² of office space, with population growth and economic activity the likely drivers for new space.

There is currently 2.6m² of office space per person, which is considered very generous and unlikely to be sustained. Future provision is expected at approximately 1m² per person, or 12 000m² in the far term.

There is currently an oversupply of retail space that is likely to be sufficient in the near term, and as the population grows an additional 10 000m² will be required in the far term.

Industrial and bulky goods

Warehousing, industrial and logistic land uses are mostly within the western area, providing a central location to distribute goods and convenient access to the Stuart Highway. Bulky goods showrooms are forecast to continue to be in demand, with 6900m² floor space required in the far term.

The industrial and bulky goods contained in the western section of the study area is discussed further on page 18.

TOWN PLANNING ZONES

Land use zones in the Planning Scheme control the use and development of land. Most of the Alice Springs centre is within Zone CB (Central Business) which allows a wide range of land uses and activities typical of a city centre.

Zoning of land surrounding the city centre allows for a range of tourism, recreation, retail, residential, entertainment, and industrial uses (Map 2).

TELL US...

• What would encourage you to live in the CBD?
MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT

Integrating land use and transport planning creates efficient movement networks and contributes to walkable neighbourhoods, accessible public transport and increased economic and social activity.

Current situation

The central area has a variety of active, public and private transport networks that provide local and regional links as shown on Map 3. Pedestrian and cycling activity is focused around the Todd Mall with various links through to the Todd River and Hartley Street. All five public transport routes pass through Hartley Street.

There have been recent improvements to the pedestrian network with the addition of a wombat crossing on Gregory Terrace, pedestrian islands along Bath Street, Gregory Terrace and Stott Terrace, new roundabouts at the intersections of Gregory Terrace/Bath Street and Hartley Street/Gregory Terrace.

Planning considerations

Pedestrian activity is greatest around the Todd Mall, Yeperenye Shopping Centre and Alice Plaza. Enhancing the ability to move efficiently and safely between these sites and beyond will encourage people to spend more time in the CBD, supporting a stronger retail industry and increased passive surveillance.

Access by larger delivery vehicles to shopping centres and businesses need to be balanced with improving pedestrian links and creating safe traffic environment.

As the CBD grows, the need for a multi-level parking facility should be considered. Suitable locations must have direct and convenient access to surrounding arterial roads to efficiently move cars in and out of the CBD.

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Essential services like power, water, sewer, stormwater and communication networks need to be planned to match likely development locations, land uses and future populations.

Current situation

Existing essential service components are shown on Map 3, including pump stations and bores. Drinking water is sourced from Amadeus Basin south of the Gap, while Irrigation water for the likes of Traeger Park and ANZAC Oval is sourced from bores in the Todd River. Investigation of power, water and sewer networks may be carried out to test capacity and identify necessary upgrades to support growth.

Modern cities integrate technology to improve liveability, prosperity and productivity. Long term infrastructure planning needs to consider how we can integrate this into the local networks. The Federal Government’s Smart Cities Plan encourages public-private partnerships for smart infrastructure projects.

Planning considerations

The high evaporation rates in arid environments and finite water availability of the Amadeus Basin are key considerations for the efficient use and retention of water. Future development should consider water use to prolong water security and future infrastructure costs.

Infrastructure plays a fundamental role in how the city operates and functions. Understanding the current capacity and planning for future demand will identify where upgrades are necessary, including any additional land needs.

TELL US...

• What are the most important pedestrian connections?
• What would encourage you to cycle to and from the CBD?
• How could we improve the use of and connections to public open space areas such as ANZAC Hill, the Todd River, Todd Mall, Billy Goat Hill, Stuart Memorial Park?
CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Current situation
Places of cultural and historical significance are important to help create a sense of belonging. They connect people on a social level, with history and with landscapes. Sites of cultural and heritage value in the study area range from Aboriginal sacred sites, to European settlement and natural features.

Aboriginal sacred sites
Alice Springs is acknowledged for the spiritual connection between the unique environment and the Aboriginal people. There are sacred sites and areas throughout the study area, with the most prominent being Billy Goat Hill, ANZAC Hill and the Todd River. These sites, and many others, represent significant and formally protected Aboriginal cultural history.

Heritage
The NT Heritage Register identifies 19 declared heritage sites and the Heritage Precinct. Notable heritage sites include the Old Hartley Street School, Courthouse, The Residency, Town Gaol, Totem Theatre Complex and Former Telegraph Repeater Station.

The Heritage Precinct is a unique example of the planned development of the town as an administration centre in the late 1930s. It contains buildings for health, law and order, remote area services and dwellings that demonstrate an architectural solution to the arid climate. The precinct has links to the pioneering settlers and spiritual associations through the Aboriginal sacred site, Billygoat Hill.

Adaptive reuse of heritage sites means that important places continue to be used and actively maintained while respecting the significant associations, meanings and activities. Today, parts of the Old Hartley Street School functions as offices and a museum, while a heritage listed dwelling has been repurposed as a restaurant.

Scenic views and vistas
There are a number of iconic views and vistas in and adjacent to the study area. The study area enjoys views of the MacDonnell Ranges as it provides a dramatic backdrop, as well as the Todd River and surrounding hills. Map 4 shows the view lines from within the CBD, and the views points from surrounding hills.

Planning considerations
The growth of Alice Springs and proximity of the Heritage Precinct to the CBD places pressures from increasing interest for commercial uses. The Heritage Precinct Conservation Management Plan seeks to preserve and protect the Heritage Precinct and seeks adaptive reuse of buildings to provide for CBD integration, notwithstanding the social responsibility to respect the significant associations, meaning and activities that define the character of the sites and greater precinct.

Identification and protection of places with cultural and historic significance will enable sites to be respected, valued and integrated with future development.

The continued protection of sacred sites, cultural history and heritage is important to prevent the encroachment of development into these identified areas.

The study area includes native and protected vegetation, scenic views and vistas that have cultural value and make a significant contribution to the economy and liveability of the study area.

TELL US...
- Where do you meet people in the CBD?
- Should places of cultural significance become stronger features of our CBD?
- How can heritage places be better featured in our town?
SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Current situation
Social infrastructure includes community facilities, public open space and organised recreation spaces such as community health facilities, education facilities, community centres, public libraries and sporting facilities. Notable facilities are identified on Map 5.

Health
The Alice Springs Hospital services the whole of the Central Australian Region, including for accident and emergency, intensive care, maternity, occupational therapy, outpatient clinics, palliative care, radiology, renal, medical imaging and other services. Surrounding services include accommodation for hospital staff, physiotherapy and sports injury clinic, and recently a proposal for the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress on Todd Street.

National Indigenous Art Gallery, and Cultural Centre
A National Indigenous Art Gallery, and a cultural centre are two projects identified for Alice Springs with a site yet to be chosen.

Lifelong learning centre
The Public Library is reaching its capacity with more than 500 people coming through the door daily, and a near full agenda of events. A Lifelong Learning Centre is an evolution of a library that provides more than just a repository of books, including meeting and event spaces, as well as technological innovation that fosters business opportunities and arts development.

Planning considerations
Population growth will drive the need for increased community services and facilities, including a greater health capacity within the hospital site, additional General Practitioners, dentists and medical services.

There is opportunity for the colocation of medical services and facilities in a medical precinct. A dedicated precinct will provide benefit to the number and variety of services offered, and also to the business that serve the medical industry.

Far term social infrastructure requirements include additional childcare places, libraries, community centres and various recreation facilities. Demand for recreation facilities is anticipated to increase, which may be accommodated by improved management, or upgrade to allow usage over a greater time span.

A National Indigenous Art Gallery, and a cultural centre will potentially be key attractors bringing people to the central area, adding to the liveliness of the CBD and linking to Aboriginal culture.

A Lifelong Learning Centre site could be at the current Library site, but in matching with its evolving function, could integrate with cafes, mixed use developments, and public spaces.

ENVIRONMENT

The study area includes native and protected vegetation, scenic views and vistas that have cultural value and make a significant contribution to the economy and liveability of the study area.

Current situation
Alice Springs is situated along the banks of the Todd River on a flood plain. In June 2017 the Flood Mitigation Advisory Committee report was released and provides recommendations for managing the flood risk in the Alice Springs region.

A computed 1% AEP (1 in 100 Year) flood extent was completed which identified the study areas flooding implications should another major flood event occur. Map 5 the flood extent and flood way during a 1% AEP event.

Planning considerations
The risk of flooding needs to be balanced against future development, the amenity provided by vegetation in the Todd River and the established economic and social centre of the CBD.

Maintaining remanent native and protected vegetation will be an important consideration in promoting the health of our natural systems.

TELL US...
- What community or recreation facilities would encourage you to spend more time in the CBD and surrounds?
- Which natural features of the CBD and surrounds do you value and why?
BULKY GOODS AND INDUSTRY

Current situation

West of the Stuart Highway is the industrial and railway area, comprising a variety of uses including bulky goods showrooms, warehousing, storage and manufacturing.

The high level of visibility coupled with access to and from the Stuart Highway has facilitated car yards, showrooms and other stores establishing in the western precinct.

The current Area Plan identifies the western area as the long term option to expand the CBD. Recent amendments to the building height in Zone CB (Central Business) has increased the vertical capacity to provide retail, office and residential floor space for a regional population of 40 000 people within the existing CBD, questioning the need to expand the CBD.

Planning considerations

The Stuart Highway restricts pedestrian movement between the CBD and the western area. Future planning will consider how to advance both sides of the highway with distinctive and non-competing uses. The CBD has the greatest capacity to deliver pedestrian friendly areas with shops, offices and retail, while the larger lots and busy roads of the western area are an advantage for bulky goods and industrial uses, including warehousing and distribution.

Warehousing and logistics provides services relied upon by most other industries to move and store goods and materials, ranging from food and retail products, to heavy machinery and construction materials. Warehousing and logistics is most efficient when central to the population for efficient distribution; in proximity to arterial roads or rail for convenient access; and on large sites for heavy vehicles to manoeuvre.

Growth in industries such as mining will drive the need for industrial land with access to both arterial roads and rail. In this context, consideration will be given to protecting the role of the light industrial area as a local employment hub.

TELL US...

• What future land uses should occur in the western area that complement the CBD?
• Should the western area’s role for bulky goods and industry be protected?
The Central Alice Springs Area Plan seeks to understand what future land use might look like, and ensure the infrastructure and services can support those future uses.

Looking at photography from 1983, it becomes apparent how much has changed in the last 34 years.

**What has changed?**
- ANZAC Oval Stadium
- Alice Plaza
- Whittaker St Subdivision
- Diplomat Motel
- Yeperenye Centre
- Stuart Highway Extension
- Supreme Court Building
- K-Mart Centre
- Centrepoint Building
- Hospital Additions

**What might Alice Springs look like in the next 34 years?**