

DESIGNING BETTER

Stage 2 Consultation Report

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Introduction

Designing Better is a territory wide project that seeks to encourage and promote well designed commercial, apartment and mixed use buildings in the Northern Territory.

The key aims of Designing Better are to:

- respond to context and celebrate local and regional differences;
- respond to climate and contribute to the Territory's built form character;
- embrace innovation through flexible, best practice design solutions; and
- make great places that provide meaningful, vibrant and liveable spaces for people.

Consultation on Stage One of Designing Better occurred between late 2019 and early 2020, over three stages. A Discussion Paper identifying issues and potential improvements to current design provisions was key to consultation and allowed the Planning Commission to engage with stakeholders on the ideas and concepts suggested by Designing Better.

Stage Two consultation of Designing Better was undertaken between 10 March 2021 and 16 April 2021.

Using the feedback received from community and industry during Stage One, the Northern Territory Planning Commission prepared a suite of draft development requirements and guidance notes specifically relating to apartment and mixed use buildings in:

- Zone MR (Medium Density Residential);
- Zone HR (High Density Residential);
- Zone CB (Central Business); and
- Zone C (Commercial).

The purpose of this report is to summarise feedback received during Stage Two of consultation.

Consultation Objectives

The purpose of Stage Two consultation was to gauge industry and community feedback on a series of proposed development requirements that focus on design of mixed use and high- density residential developments within commercial and residential areas.

Stakeholders that were targeted during this stage of consultation included:

- industry groups and professional bodies:
 - Australian Institute of Architects Northern Territory;
 - Planning Institute of Australia NT Division;
 - Urban Development Institute of Australia (NT);
 - Property Council of Australia;
 - National Trust of the Northern Territory;
 - Professional planners;
 - Builders;
 - Developers; and
 - Certifiers.
- Northern Territory Government Agencies, Members of the Legislative Assembly and Local Government; and
- members of the general public.

Figure 1 - Stages of Designing Better



Consultation Materials

The Stage Two consultation paper presented:

- background to the project, including the key aims of Designing Better;
- proposed Development Requirements to be included within the NT Planning Scheme 2020;
- Guidance Notes to assist with the understanding of key ideas; and
- information on how readers could get involved during consultation.

Proposed Development Requirements

The main part of the document focused on development requirements that could be considered for inclusion into the NT Planning Scheme 2020 (the Scheme).

The proposed development requirements were presented using the existing requirements in the Scheme, highlighting where proposed amendments were to be included/removed. Notes at the top of each requirement provided an explanation of the key changes to each clause and the intent behind the changes.

Guidance Notes

Guidance Notes provided additional information to help explain particular topics relating to the draft development requirements.

The Guidance Notes were presented to clearly identify:

- the relevant clauses relating to the concept;
- the intent of provisions;
- how to interpret the Scheme provisions; and
- offered some non-statutory design suggestions for developers to consider when incorporating the requirements into design.



Landscaping In Zone CB

Landscaping refers to the use of trees, shrubs and plants to enhance the appearance of a building and to make an area more attractive.

On-site landscaping can benefit both the public realm, and users of the buildings, by providing opportunities for shading and creating spaces for people to engage with nature. Sympathetic landscaping can also visually soften the appearance of the building to the streetscape and reduce the impacts of urban heat.

Scheme Requirements

Clause 5.2.6 of the Scheme provides minimum requirements for planting associated with the use and development of land in Zone CB.

Development must provide landscaping, inclusive of any paved areas, equivalent to 10% of the site area.

Landscaping areas can be achieved at ground level or on structures and a variety of approaches are encouraged.

Landscaping on structures can be integrated into elevated outdoor spaces on rooftops and podiums or as vertical gardens on building facades.

Amongst other requirements, the Scheme also requires that the quality and extent of any landscaping must be maintained for the life of the development.

Objectives of Landscaping in Zone CB

The objectives of the Zone CB landscaping provisions are to:

- ensure that planting associated with a development enhances the streetscape and overall amenity of the locality; and
- provide opportunities for climate-responsive design that mitigates heat capture and improves the thermal performance of buildings.

Interpreting the Requirement

The minimum requirement of 10% of the site area is required regardless of whether landscaping is undertaken vertically or horizontally (i.e. the minimum requirement is 10% of the site area, not 10% of the elevation). The 10% figure refers to the net total of all landscaping on the site and can be distributed throughout numerous landscaping components.

Note: An application should include a plan clearly identifying any areas that contribute to planting.

Note: Developments proposing green walls or other vertical landscaping should provide renderings to illustrate how the development will look with and without plantings.

Fig 1: Illustrates a range of locations where landscaping can be undertaken for a development in Zone CB.

Fig 1: Illustrates a range of locations where landscaping can be undertaken for a development in Zone CB.

Figure 2: Consultation paper and example pages.

Consultation Activities

Members of the community, industry associations, representative bodies, and Government agencies were engaged during consultation.

Consultation was broken into two aspects; public and industry engagement.

Community Consultation

To encourage community awareness and ensure the community had the opportunity to provide comment during Stage Two consultation, the following engagement tools were used.

'Have Your Say' online engagement

The Planning Commission used the Northern Territory Government platform 'Have Your Say' to engage with the broader community, by encouraging education and feedback about the project.

This platform included:

- consultation material;
- details relating to the open sessions;
- how to get in touch with the project team; and
- methods to submit a submission.

Through this tool, the Stage Two consultation document was downloaded by 199 members of the community.

Mail Outs

Approximately 1200 land owners in Zones MR (Medium Density Residential), HR (High Density Residential), CB (Central Business) and C (Commercial) within the Northern Territory were sent correspondence to inform them of the Designing Better project, direct them to the Have Your Say website, and invite comment.

Social Media – Facebook

The Planning Commission used the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics' Facebook page as the social media platform for advertising Open Sessions ahead of each event. The campaign reached over 4000 people across the Territory.

Designing Better

The Designing Better Project is a suite of suggestions by the Northern Territory Planning Commission that specifically relates to apartment and mixed-use buildings.

The project applies to:

- Zone MR (Medium Density Residential);
- Zone HR (High Density Residential);
- Zone CB (Central Business); and
- Zone C (Commercial).

Designing Better is Territory-wide in scope and seeks to encourage and enable residential apartment and mixed-use buildings in the Northern Territory to:

- respond to context and celebrate local and regional differences;
- respond to climate and contribute to the Territory's built form character;
- embrace innovation through flexible, best practice design solutions; and
- make great places that provide meaningful, vibrant and usable spaces for people.

This project draws upon feedback received from the community and industry through other projects and targets a number of key design elements for improvement. The Designing Better project will ultimately inform revised development requirements in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme and be complemented by the locality-specific guidance of Area Plans.

NEWSFEED MEET WITH THE TEAM

Stage 2 Consultation

We want your feedback on proposed development Planning Scheme 2020.

- Open sessions will be held across the Territory but about what this project means for you.
- Tennant Creek: Monday 15 March, Government
- Alice Springs: Wednesday 17 March, DoubleTree
- Darwin: Wednesday 24, Friday 26 March, Energy
- Katherine: Tuesday 30 March, Public Library & 3

Download the [proposal document](#) and submit your feedback on the proposed design requirements.



Figure 3 – Have your Say content; Figure 4 – Facebook post; and Figure 5 –Facebook event promoting Alice Springs 'Open Session'.

Media Coverage – Print Media

To promote 'Open Sessions' and encourage feedback from industry and the general community, print advertising was placed in the NT News, Centralian Advocate, Katherine Times and Tennant and Districts Times.

Additional print advertising was also placed in the NT News and Centralian Advocate nearing the closing of consultation.

Open Sessions

To provide the public an opportunity to drop in and speak directly with the project team, ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed changes, the project team held Open Sessions across the Territory. These sessions were held in:

- Alice Springs – Wednesday 17 March.
- Darwin – Wednesday 24 to Friday 26 March, Monday 12 April and Friday 16 April.
- Katherine – Wednesday 30 March.
- Tennant Creek – Monday 15 March.



Figure 4: Newspaper Advert.

Industry Consultation

Seeking feedback from industry (builders, planners, designers and developers), professional groups and Government was pivotal in gauging how the requirements would be incorporated into real-world development, and help refine the proposed draft requirements. The following engagement activities were used.



Figure 5: Briefing session with AIA - attendance in person and via online

Written (email) invitation

Over 200 industry planners, architects, designers, developers, builders, certifiers and Government agencies were targeted by email during consultation.

Email correspondence provided details of the project and encouraged the reader to attend a briefing or to write a submission.

Additionally, Members of the Legislative Assembly, industry groups and Local Government were encouraged to share the Designing Better project and stakeholder engagement opportunities within their networks.



Figure 6: Image from Stage 1 snapshot booklet.

Briefings and Meetings

As the proposed planning amendments were technical in nature, industry associations and representative bodies had the opportunity to be briefed and provide feedback on the project. During the consultation period, more than 40 representatives attended one of the eight briefing sessions, or one-on-one meetings held, including:

- Australian Institute of Architects NT (AIANT);
- Urban Development Institute NT (UDIA);
- Planning Institute of Australia NT (PIA);
- Property Council of the Northern Territory;
- National Trust of the Northern Territory;
- Palmerston City Council;
- City of Darwin;
- Building Advisory Committee; and
- number of local professional planners, builders, designers and developers across the Territory.

Briefings were intended to ensure participants had an understanding of the aims of the project so that they could provide verbal feedback and/or written submissions.

Briefing sessions were aimed at providing a platform to stimulate conversation and encourage discussion around the concept ideas. In noting that not all attendees provided further written submission, these briefing sessions provided a valuable tool in seeking verbal feedback and gauging industry views on the proposed amendments.

The vast majority of participants viewed the proposed amendments as “going in the right direction” and used the consultation process as an opportunity to make suggestions for further improvement.

Stakeholder feedback

Overall the feedback received during Stage Two consultation was positive and provided the Planning Commission with the confidence that the proposed changes are in line with best practice.

More than 60 people across industry provided their views and input either by attending briefing sessions, one-on-one meetings, or via written submission

Feedback and submissions during Stage Two have been grouped into key themes and summarised below.

Key Themes to Proposed Development Requirements

Residential Plot Ratio in Zones MR, HR and C

Residential plot ratios were proposed to replace fixed dwelling densities for dwellings- multiple development in Zones MR, HR and C. The purpose of this proposed amendment was to provide greater flexibility for proponents undertaking this type of development and to encourage innovation in design.

In general, stakeholder feedback was supportive of the new approach. Industry provided comment that introducing a maximum residential floor area would allow developers to be more innovative and take advantage of site attributes and opportunities, which would result in improved design outcomes. Industry also noted this approach was consistent with other jurisdictions.

Additional comments supported the provision as it would incentivise the uptake of ground level dwellings.

While the proposed requirements were viewed as an overall improvement, there was some concern that the perceived flexibility in density controls may be restricted by existing car parking rates and that a review of car parking rates may be needed in the future.

There were some other concerns that the introduction of a residential plot ratio meant that theoretically there would be no minimum apartment size and that this could result in very small apartments.

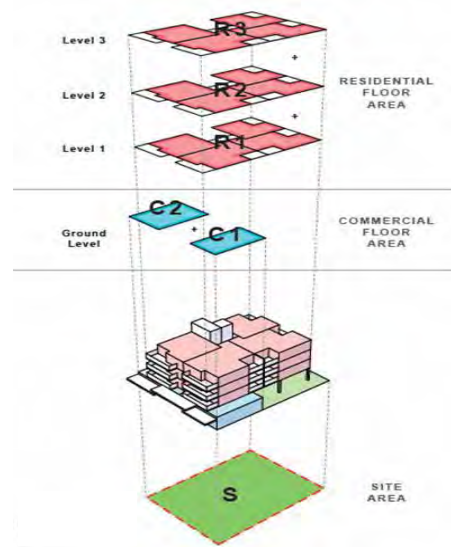


Figure 7: Illustrates how a residential floor area and commercial floor area interrelate in a typical mixed use development.

Setbacks in Zones MR, HR and C

Revised setbacks for Zones MR, HR and C were proposed during Stage Two that focused on front, secondary and side/rear setbacks on lower levels (from 1-4 storeys), as well as upper level setbacks (above the fourth storey).

As part of this proposed amendment, requirement 3(b) of the existing Clause 5.4.3.1 (Additional Setback Requirements for Residential Buildings longer than 18 metres and for Residential Buildings over 4 storeys in Height) was also removed, meaning the traditional 'wedding cake' upper level setbacks would not apply to developments over 4 storeys.

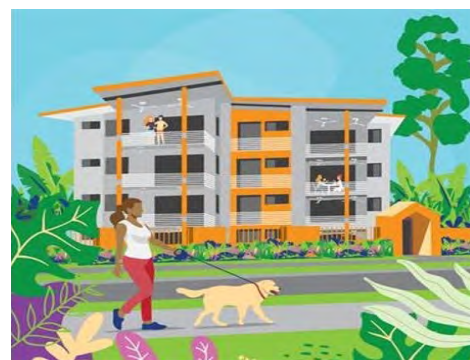


Figure 8: Image - Fronting the street.

The intent of these changes were to encourage development to interact positively with the street and to better facilitate breeze penetration through sites.

Feedback received through consultation supported the removal of the 'wedding cake' setback requirements and expressed that the

existing provisions placed overly onerous conditions for taller developments. The consensus was the proposed provisions provided a simplified approach to setbacks that would provide better built form outcomes.

There was also agreement that setting side and rear setbacks to a firm 3m and decreasing primary and secondary setbacks would promote breeze penetration through the site. Developments would also interact positively with the public domain.

During briefing sessions, some concern was raised that the existing setback of the roofline would limit the effectiveness of the proposed balcony setbacks provisions as there would not be sufficient shading to cover upper level balconies. Suggestion was made to allow the roof line of buildings in Zones MR and HR to extend out to the property boundary where it faces a street, or further if the local council permitted. The perceived benefits mentioned included increased passive cooling of the building and increased shading over the pedestrian realm.

Whilst the proposed setbacks were seen as a general improvement on existing controls, it was noted from professional bodies that flexibility should be retained in the Scheme to allow the consent authority to vary requirements where lots are constrained by shape or configuration.

Residential Height Limitations in Zone C

To incentivise the uptake of mixed-use developments, a height increase from 3 storeys to 4 was proposed in Zone C.



Figure9: Image - Height limitation in Zone C.

Stakeholders were supportive of the proposed height increase, and most recognised that the approach of aligning the height limit in Zone C with the height limit in Zone MR was appropriate. There were a few comments that expressed that the height limit could be increased even further (for instance 6 storeys).

For most, it was considered that the increase in height would encourage mixed use development as it would become more financially viable.

Private Open Space for Dwellings - multiple

A new clause was proposed to specifically address private open space requirements in the context of dwelling-multiple development. While much of the existing provisions remained the same, a key proposed change was to reduce the minimum spatial dimensions of private open space for ground level apartments.

New requirements were also introduced that focused on the screening of lower level balconies and providing convenient access between communal and private open space.

The proposed spatial requirements that aligned ground level private open space with private open space above ground (i.e. balconies) were generally supported and seen as positive and practical approach to incentivise the uptake of ground level apartments.

There was some comment that the 12m² minimum spatial requirement for private open space above ground level was too onerous and suggestions were made that minimum dimensions should be scaled to the number of bedrooms in the dwelling (for example. 1 bedroom – 8m², 2 bedroom – 10m² etc.), recognising that this is the approach in some other states in Australia. However, there was also feedback that supported the firm 12m² dimension as it facilitates outdoor living and enhances the territory lifestyle.

Some professional bodies noted that air conditioning plants are often placed in private open spaces which can detract from the usability of the space. It was suggested that consideration be given to the placement of air conditioner plants in respect to private open space, especially in terms of the effects of noise and hot air coming from the units.

Articulation of residential buildings

A new clause was introduced to the development requirements which addressed the articulation of buildings that are longer than 15m. The intent of this clause was to encourage buildings to respond to effects of massing by creating more steps and corners within the building line.

This clause was intended to effectively replace the existing requirement 3(a) in Clause 5.4.3.1 (Additional Setback Requirements for Residential Buildings longer than 18 metres and for Residential Buildings over 4 storeys in Height).

There was wide support that this new provision as an improvement on the existing requirement. It was noted that the requirement was much simpler but still contributes to reducing the perceived massing of the built form.

NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services made comment that any articulation of a building should consider what ability the step or recess creates for persons to climb the exterior of the building and gain access to adjoining buildings or roof.

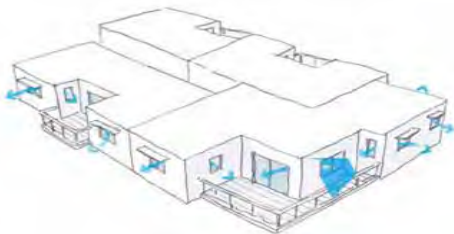


Figure 10: Illustrates how articulated buildings can provide for cross-ventilation opportunities by creating spaces where rooms can have multiple aspects.

Building Design for Dwellings-multiple

There was no wholesale change to the existing building design requirements for dwelling-multiple. Existing scheme provisions that covered building design for dwellings-group, dwelling-multiple, rooming accommodation and residential care facility (all in the same clause) were reviewed and some minor amendments were made to clarify the intent in the context of dwellings-multiple development.

New requirements were introduced to the clause that covered screening of undercroft car parking, providing legible and safe entry points to buildings on site and screening of bin storage areas, as well as air conditioning units.

Feedback received during consultation generally centred on the screening of car parking requirement. Most agreed that screening of car parking would be positive and improve the visual amenity of the streetscape, but expressed that some minor changes may be needed to clarify the intent.

During briefing sessions there was also some feedback that suggested landscaping should be considered as an alternative option instead of hard surface screening.

Comment was also received behind the intent of screening air conditioner units, in particular, who's view the air conditioner units have to be screened to.

Active Street Frontage

Active street provisions were introduced for Zones HR, C and CB. The NT Planning Scheme has existing active street frontage provisions that cover Zones CB in Darwin and Alice Springs only, but all other areas of Zone CB, Zone HR and Zone C are presently not covered.

The proposed requirements mean that commercial developments are to provide an active street frontage for 60 percent of the street frontage.

Feedback supported the promotion of street level activation and the entailed passive surveillance opportunities created within commercial and mixed use areas.

Consistent comments were made during briefing sessions of the difficulties faced when meeting existing requirements. Many respondents noted that servicing requirements made it unachievable in certain circumstances. Stakeholders emphasised the need for service authorities to also review their requirements, in an effort to encourage better design outcomes.

With consideration of building security, NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services made the comment that alternative materials should be considered that offered protective qualities, in place of glass windows.

Although most commenters agreed the new provisions were a positive step in enhancing the connection between commercial development and the public realm, there were questions surrounding the need for active street frontages in Zone HR as the building will be set back 6m from the street.

Design of commercial development

No major changes were proposed to the existing commercial design clause, although two new requirements were introduced. The first focused on all commercial buildings providing awnings so pedestrians could have protection from the sun and rain; the other required commercial buildings to provide landscaping where the building is set back further than 1.5m from the boundary.

There was mixed response in relation to the requirement for awnings. Overall, there was support for the provision in Zone C, however there was some contention over awnings in Zone CB. Some respondents argued that only certain streets with high levels of activation should be required to have awnings, instead of using a blanket approach across the whole zone, while others welcomed the additional shading in the pedestrian realm and supported the existing provisions in Zone CB.

There was mixed opinion on the additional landscaping requirement. Some welcomed the potential for additional landscaping within commercial areas, whereas others sought clarification as to how the requirement would work in conjunction with the proposed awning requirement. Some submitters also expressed that the additional landscaping may create spaces for unwanted loitering.

As a general comment, professional groups raised the question of what zones were directly affected by the proposed requirements as the Commercial Design clause covers more zones than just Zones C and CB.



Figure 11: Buildings providing high level of activation.

Setbacks for Commercial Development adjacent to residential zones

A new provision was proposed within clause 5.2.7 (Setbacks for Development Adjacent to Land in Zones LR, LMR, MR or HR) to require commercial development adjacent (across the road) from residential development to be setback by a proportion of the length of the boundary that has an interface with residential development.

The intent of this provision was to provide a transition in setbacks between larger commercial sites and residential development.

During consultation, many questioned the relevance and need for commercial development to provide a setback when adjacent to a residential zone, and sought clarification where the requirement would apply within the Territory. It was also noted that the setback provision may create unwanted places for loitering and there could be unintended consequences for the community in regards to safety as a result of the requirement.

Whilst the intent of the provision was widely understood and accepted, many stakeholders questioned the need as there is already a 5m setback requirement for all commercial development that abuts residential uses.



Figure 12: Buildings providing high level of activation.

Fencing in Zones MR and HR

A new clause was proposed to address fencing of dwellings-multiple in Zones MR and HR, where currently there is no fencing provisions. The introduction of this clause means that any fencing along the front setback is to have a degree of visual permeability, especially in

places where sightlines are needed for pedestrians.

The intent is to limit the appearance of blank walls that do not interact with the street, provide variation within the streetscape, and encourage passive surveillance opportunities.

There was limited comment in respect to the requirements within this clause, but the overall intent of the provisions were well supported. There was agreement that the provision provides an aesthetically better outcome than a solid wall, and allowing for improved sightlines to shared paths and intersections is a positive improvement for pedestrians.

There was some suggestion that the provision be developed further to encourage articulation of front fences that would allow for planting along footpaths.



Figure 13: introducing regular breaks or changes in fencing materials heightens pedestrian experience.

Landscaping

There were two components to landscaping proposed within the draft requirements. The first was a new requirement in Zone CB for 10 percent of the site to be landscaped; the second related to Zones MR and HR only and addressed landscaping within side and rear setbacks.

The intent of landscaping requirements in Zone CB were to encourage more planting within CBD areas, which would contribute to public amenity and assist with heat mitigation. In general, the requirement was seen as a positive response to greening and was widely supported by designers, local councils and planning professionals. Some stakeholders provided objection to the provision and questioned if the requirement of 10 percent was too onerous for small scale developments.

It was noted by industry that a detailed landscaping guide to encourage better planting choices for the climate, location and desired outcomes would be beneficial. A suggestion was also made of a possible payment in lieu type option for sites that were not able to meet the 10 percent requirement, with funds to be used towards public landscaping spaces.

Comment was also received that developments should be discouraged to include the planting in backs of lots where benefits to the public realm would not be achieved.

Very little feedback was received in respect to the landscaping within side and rear setbacks in Zones MR and HR provision, however general comments were made that the landscaping should not detract from the ability to provide private open space within those areas.



Figure 14: Landscaping of streetscape.

General Comments

Throughout consultation a lot of feedback focused on the purpose and administration statements within the proposed provisions.

Certain comments suggested that further work was needed within specific clauses. Others provided feedback that suggested a performance based planning approach through these provisions would support intended outcomes through the planning process.

There was also general support for the introduction of the guidance notes, which many respondents affirmed would help interpret key provisions. Some clarity was sought on how they would be included within the Planning Scheme.

Out of Scope Feedback

During Stage Two consultation, a number of comments were received that were considered to be outside the scope of the Designing Better project, these included:

- Reviewing vehicle parking requirements in Zone CB, in particular the number of car parking spaces with consideration to the increased usage of electronic scooters.
- Height limitations in industrial zones.
- Extending private open space requirements to hotels.
- Rubbish collection alternatives.
- Community entitlement and the provisions of Zones CP (Community Purposes) and CN (Conservation).

Local Government

The following Local Government Authorities provided comments with respect to the Designing Better project:

- City of Darwin; and
- City of Palmerston.

Their submissions are summarised below.



City of Darwin welcomed the Planning Commission's Designing Better Project and broader Northern Territory Planning Scheme reforms. Noting that the proposed recommendations generally will have positive impacts for streetscape amenity, the built form and energy efficiency of buildings.

The City of Darwin provided the following comments for consideration:

- Greening and beautifying our streets and parks is important to the Darwin community. Council has responded by investing \$1.6 million to transform key suburban streetscapes from grey to green in 2020/2021. The 2019 CSIRO report 'Developing a Darwin Heat Mitigation Strategy' stresses the important contribution of elements associated with the built environment, such as green walls, and roof gardens; and green spaces.

Council generally supports the proposal to increase the area and quality of landscaping, provided that vertical and green wall landscaping on upper levels, over or adjoining the road reserve is subject to a detailed maintenance agreement.

- Designing Better Stage Two Consultation document does not address the application of plot ratios to Zone MD (Multiple Dwelling Residential) as suggested in Council's submission during Stage One.
- The increased residential height from three to four storeys in Zone C is consistent with Council's response to the Designing Better Discussion Paper.
- Side and rear setbacks have been increased to facilitate better breeze penetration through and around the site in Zones MR and HR. Landscaping provisions have also been introduced to side and rear setbacks to provide more meaningful landscaped areason higher density sites. These changes are consistent with Council's response to the Designing Better Discussion Paper.
- The introduction of the new Building Articulation clause is consistent with Council's response to the Designing Better Discussion Paper. Emphasis is placed on providing more cross-ventilation opportunities by encouraging steps in the building line.
- The introduction of a maximum allocation of visually impermeable materials seeks to create variation in the streetscape and provide opportunities for passive surveillance. The introduction of this new clause is consistent with Council's response to the Designing Better Discussion Paper and general advocacy for improved sightlines to shared paths and intersections.
- Street frontage of residential development addresses the ground level interface between residential development and the street in Zone CB. Requirements of this new clause promote increased visual amenity and passive surveillance and are generally supported.
- Any measure to improve ground level activation and awnings are supported. It is further noted that the proposals of the Designing Better Discussion Paper are broadly consistent with Councils Policy No.037 Awnings, Balconies and Verandahs

on Council Property which provides that awnings and verandahs shall be encouraged with new developments and the refurbishment of existing premises for a broad range of commercial and residential uses.

The requirement for buildings setback in excess of 1.5 metres to be landscaped is generally supported by Council, but appears to conflict with the requirement to provide an awning as detailed above. It is suggested that this clause may need further refinement or clarification.

- Providing active street frontages equating to 60 percent of the frontage, unless there is an alternative standard specified in an area plan or elsewhere in the Scheme, will promote mixed use developments, ground floor activity in medium and high-density areas and passive surveillance opportunities. For these reasons, it is supported.



City of Palmerston

City of Palmerston supports the intent of new and amended requirements that enable greater ability to address provisions of the planning scheme, whilst ensuring clear minimum standards. This is noted in the creation of performance-style criteria in parts, based on industry consultation and best practice. Continued refinement of the *purpose* and *administration* sections of development requirements will support intended outcomes through the planning process.

The recently adopted Central Palmerston Area Plan, outlines the intent to prioritise investment in establishing a high amenity city centre. There are a number of key sites within this area, and immediately adjoining that present significant development opportunities. The focus of the Designing Better project is welcomed in facilitating desired outcomes for these sites, ensuring application of design requirements align with policy intent. Additionally, there are opportunities for mixed use development in the surrounding areas and the need to ensure quality development outcomes for neighbourhood commercial centres.

Council notes that the requirement for awnings to street frontages support the creation of more comfortable environments for pedestrians accessing these commercial and mixed-use sites, and linkages to other areas. Council supports climatically responsive design requirements, facilitating pedestrian movement and greater interface with the public domain. This provision would remain subject of technical requirements of City of Palmerston and maintenance agreements.

Northern Territory Government Agencies

The following Northern Territory Government Agencies provided comments with respect to the Designing Better project:

- Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security; and
- NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Their submissions are summarised below.

Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security

Climate Change Response: Towards 2050 adopts four broad objectives to guide future strategies and Government investment and effort. The objectives are:

- achieve net zero emissions by 2050
- build a resilient Territory
- unlock opportunities to realise a low carbon future, and
- inform and involve.

A Three Year Action Plan was released with the Response to guide NT Government activity in establishing the foundation work required to deliver an enduring and effective climate change response. The 'Designing Better' project is recognised as an important initiative that will play a part in contributing to the Territory's ability to build a future that is responsive to the impacts of a changing climate. In line with the priorities of the Action Plan to address climate change, the Designing Better approach will support *Territorians to respond and adapt to the impacts of climate change*. In particular, the following components of Designing Better are noted as contributing to this outcome:



- Clause 5.2.6 (Landscaping) proposes to introduce a 10 percent landscaping requirement in Zone CB (Central Business). Currently there are no landscaping requirements within this zone. The requirement intends to encourage developments to provide cooling and greening through landscaping design.
- The proposed amendments to Clause 5.4.3 (Building Setbacks of Residential Buildings and Ancillary Structures) seek to enhance breeze penetration through individual sites by increasing setbacks between buildings. The clause also requires landscaping to be located within the setback area which is intended to provide shade for residents and encourage passive cooling. Clause 5.5.3 (Design of Commercial and Other Non-Residential Development) includes a new provision that requires commercial buildings to provide landscaping where they are setback from the boundary line. The intent of this provision is to limit open expanses of concrete within commercial design, therefore reducing the heat sink effect. Clause 5.5.3 also specifies that all commercial buildings are also to contain an awning covering the pedestrian realm providing a more comfortable pedestrian experience.

These aspects will all contribute to the liveability of the Territory as it faces the impacts and challenges of climate change.

In addition, the Department suggests further consideration should be given to climate change in the building design clauses and perhaps enforce climatically responsive design. As our climate changes, it is prudent that our built environment and the quality of life it facilitates, is resilient and assists to mitigate the impacts of these changes. Reference to 'climatically responsive design' in these clauses could assist to improve their robustness in achieving effective and long lasting development outcomes over the coming decades in line with Government's commitment to reducing the impacts of climate change.

NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES)

From a policing perspective, social amenity is an essential part of safe and resilient communities, and crime prevention is at the forefront of the NTPFES's strategic, operational and tactical considerations.

Incorporating principles of crime prevention through environmental design into planning, both commercial and private lands and buildings, has the potential to 'problem solve' some crime and social amenity matters before they become an issue. Ideally, the NTPFES would like to incorporate crime prevention principles into the design of future constructions and developments.

NTPFES provided the following comments on specific provisions:

- *Landscaping* - Any plants or foliage should have consideration to not be congested where they create reduced visibility or places of concealment for persons involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. Trees should be considered to only have foliage above the eyeline. This creates open visible spaces that are optimum for CCTV cameras and lighting to deter crime and anti-social behaviour; and Planter boxes and alike should be considered to be utilised as hostile vehicle mitigation barriers to protect areas of mass gathering or strong pedestrian traffic.
- *Building Articulation* - Any steps or recesses on buildings should be considered in respect to what ability the step or recess creates for persons to climb the exterior of the building and gain access to adjoining buildings or the roof. A number of current buildings within the Alice Springs CBD have design flaws that allow easy external access to persons to be able to climb the exterior of the building and access areas that should not be accessible or provide access to adjoining buildings.
- *Design of Commercial and Other Non-residential Development* - Pedestrian links should have consideration for unsociable hours or when these links aren't expected to be utilised by pedestrians.

NTPFES also questioned whether there is an ability to secure or prevent access to these links/pathways in night time hours or when the buildings are not in use to prevent creating easy access to those looking to engage in crime.

A number of links in the Alice Springs CBD already create thoroughfares that enable offenders as well as providing areas of concealment for offenders to unlawfully enter buildings. If buildings are intended to be used during night time hours, close proximity to parking or public transport should be considered to ensure patrons can safely get to and from the premises.

- *Active Street Frontage of Commercial and Mixed Use Buildings in Zones CB, C and HR* - Alternative options to extensive glass frontage or protective options for glass windows should be considered that still provide passive surveillance but also building security particularly in the times when the building is not occupied.
- *Building Design Requirements within Zone CB in Alice Springs* - Ground level car parking areas that are designed so that they are not visible from the street or public spaces may create an area of safety risk for patrons utilising the car park. Removing visibility creates a haven for opportunistic criminals to be able to target victims moving to and from vehicles in relative safety from getting caught.

Summary

Stage Two consultation has allowed the Northern Territory Planning Commission to consult with stakeholders to help refine the proposed draft requirements and guidance notes. It was clear to the Planning Commission that overall, stakeholders are in support of the proposed amendments.

Next Steps

This report covers Stage Two consultation.

The next step is for the Planning Commission to assess the responses and refine the proposed amendments.

It is intended that proposed development requirements will then be presented to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to consider introducing amendments to the Northern Territory Planning Scheme 2020.

For more information

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NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
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