Designing Better

Ideas for Improving Mixed Use and Residential Apartment Developments

NORTHERN TERRITORY PLANNING COMMISSION

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Introduction 1.0

1.1 About This Project

Designing Better is an Northern Territory Planning Commission (NTPC) initiative that seeks to enable and promote quality built form outcomes for apartment and mixed use developments across the Territory.

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 project involves a review of existing standards and also champions best-practice, innovative approaches that make positive contributions to our built environments, the lives of future residents and the broader community.

This project is a key step in a broader suite of planning policy reforms that the Northern Territory Government (NTG) and Northern Territory Planning Commission the NTPC have embarked upon.

Planning Reform is a parallel project led by the NT Government that seeks to provide a clearer, more transparent and accountable planning system through a set of reforms to the *Planning Act 1999*, the NT Planning Scheme (Planning Scheme) and associated administrative processes. This will strengthen the influence of planning and land use policy through the rollout of Area Plans, which are providing greater clarity of land use objectives, design guides and opportunities at a local scale.

The **Designing Better** project will ultimately inform revised development requirements in the Planning Scheme. The improved development requirements will function within the new system and complement locally-specific work from Area Plans.

Combined, **Planning Reform** and **Designing Better** will see the biggest set of reforms in the Territory's planning system since the introduction of the Planning Scheme in 2007.

The improvements recommended through the **Designing Better** project will assist professionals, industry and the public alike in contributing to the Territory's built environment, creating higher standards of design that contribute to the attractiveness, liveability and vitality of development areas while protecting amenity and improving safety.

The intent of this document is not to prescribe how to ultimately design a building, but rather to set the stage for good things to happen through acceptable minimum standards and clear objectives.

1.2 Using This Document

This document is a working draft and your feedback on the recommendations is welcomed and encouraged. The document has been structured specifically to be as user-friendly and informative as possible.

Section 2 - Better Buildings by Design sets out a clear contextual background for the project as well as its key themes and overarching objectives.

- Detailed consideration of specific design elements identified for review under this project along with associated recommendations.

Section 3 - Design Elements sets out a detailed review of specific design elements identified for review under this project along with associated recommendations and is structured to include the following:

- An explanatory introduction of the particular element being considered.
- **Objectives** -Identifies the broad intent behind proposed recommendations. There are often more than one objective per topic.
- **Existing Provisions / Issues** - Outlines the current situation and relevant impacts of existing controls on delivered outcomes.
- **How This Could Be Improved** - Nominates and sets out proposed recommended changes to existing controls and practices.

Section 4 - Recommendations Summary compiles these recommendations as they apply to each zone along with a broader review of the current situation and is set out in a similar way to Section 3.

The outcomes from this project are likely to inform future changes to the Planning Scheme.

1.0 Introduction

1.3 How You Can Be Involved

We are currently in Stage 1 of the planning process outlined below. Stage 1 gives you an opportunity to be involved and have your say through:

- talking to planners
- attending information sessions
- making a submission to the NTPC - refer to the Planning Commission website for details at www.planningcommission.nt.gov.au

We are seeking input from the general community as well as industry professionals and are interested in hearing your views on the topics covered in this document.

Whether you live in an apartment or not, we are interested to hear your views on what can and should be the minimum acceptable standards for the Northern Territory and what we should promote and encourage in order to get the best quality outcomes for residents, neighbours, businesses and the community at large.

Feedback received by the Planning Commission about the topics discussed in this information paper will inform the the next stage, which may lead to a possible Planning Scheme Amendment.

The Planning Commission will then recommend that the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics consider including that amendment in the Planning Scheme.

If the Minister decides to consider the Planning Commission's recommendation, the proposed Planning Scheme Amendment will be placed on public exhibition and there will be a further opportunity to provide feedback to the Minister on special changes at that stage.

2.1 Improving Our Built Environments

Our built environments and the spaces within them are where the majority of us live, work, and play. They are usually the locations of significant life milestones and treasured memories. They offer us protection from the elements and influence the way we relate with others. Built environments are framed and shaped by a range of buildings from different eras working together, with the most successful being those that respond to the landscape, context and climate in a variety of ways.

The range of landform and climatic zones across the NT present different challenges and require varied approaches to building design which in turn influences the broader design of our built environments and creates areas of distinct character. For instance:

- Intense periods of high rainfall and cyclonic winds present significant water management and structural challenges to buildings in the Top End, while the consistent warm temperatures and often intense sunlight encourage year round shade.
- In the Top End, built form traditionally considered capturing the prevailing breezes, allowing for air flow and protection from the sun. Although these techniques are still used in some cases, many of today's examples of the Top End's residential built form, significantly rely on refrigerated air conditioning. Changes to the building code, requiring more robust buildings post Cyclone Tracy (1974) have also had considerable influence on the appearance of built form today.
- Buildings in Central Australia require a different balance of shade, insulation and solar access to manage the larger temperature variation.
- In Alice Springs, the backdrop of the MacDonnell Ranges has added further localised design considerations, which seek to retain views to the ranges through maintaining sight lines and requiring lower building heights.

Designing Better acknowledges the influence that individual new buildings have on the broader urban environment and seeks to enable positive incremental change by identifying ways in which new buildings can better respond to their specific contextual challenges and how they can embrace the opportunities that their specific context affords.

2.0 Better Buildings By Design

2.2 Project Origins and Local Context

Designing Better originates from a combination of issues identified in the initial development of Area Plans. This brought to light inconsistencies between the statutory requirements and Area Plans, preventing mixed use development above three stories in Zone C as encouraged through Area Plans in specific cases.

Feedback received from the consultation periods across a range of projects such as Planning Reform and the drafting of Area Plans undertaken by the Planning Commission later expanded the project scope to investigate improvements to the quality of built form outcomes.

The feedback highlighted multiple perspectives about how the current set of planning controls have influenced the outcomes of built form at the neighbourhood scale, particularly within Alice Springs and Darwin's inner and middle suburbs. Key issues identified are as follows.

From the community, we have heard that new buildings are:

- creating poor outcomes for neighbours
- creating poor outcomes for the street with the car parking and service infrastructure often dominating ground level street interface
- disruptive to the established character of an area
- not delivering on-site landscaping.

From an industry perspective, we have heard that current planning controls:

- are confusing to navigate
- are stifling to design innovation
- have significant and sometimes prohibitive cost implications
- result in poor streetscapes with buildings that don't consider their context or relate to one another
- do not facilitate housing diversity
- do not provide adequate separation between uses
- promote minimum standards rather than aspirational values that allow for flexibility and interpretation.

In attempting to find a balance between community and industry needs, the Planning Commission is tasked with finding common links that consider both perspectives.

2.3 National Context

At present, there is a clear trend of improving design standards both internationally and across the country, as cities are competing to attract business, investment and new residents. Projects such as Design WA, Design Guidelines for Regional NSW and Design Guidelines (SA) are examples of projects currently up for public comment. These attempt to improve building design outcomes through a combination of updated controls and best practice design guidelines.

Industry research (as conducted by Design Council (UK) and Ministry of Environment (NZ)) tells us that quality design instruments implemented into planning systems have an impact on crime prevention, increase the liveability of homes, have a positive effect on health and the environment, improve education levels and increase business productivity.

As a guide, the **Designing Better** project has been modelled on the nationally recognised 'Creating Places for People – An Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities' for its methodology to formulate principles, objectives and procedural conduct.

This nationally adopted protocol aims to assist government in creating productive, sustainable and liveable places for people through leadership and the integration of design excellence. It identifies individual elements of urban design that refer to buildings and their role in the built environment.

2.0 Better Buildings By Design

2.4 Key Aims for Designing Better

Through considering community feedback, industry perspectives, specific Northern Territory challenges as well as national and global trends, the NTPC believes the following four aims are essential to the success of this project.

"Planning controls should encourage and enable residential apartment and mixed use buildings in the Northern Territory to:

1

Respond to context...

...and celebrate local and regional differences."

Buildings should generally address the street and contribute positively to the vitality of their area. Furthermore they should enable opportunities for social interactions and facilitate engagement between residents and their surroundings.

This project seeks to enable and encourage buildings that respond sensitively to their context by taking cues from their surroundings and its existing characteristics. The range of landscape and built elements that are deployed and combined in a building composition can help anchor a building in its location and help to engender a strong sense of place. To that end, it is important to consider how we can celebrate and enable particular local and regional differences.

How buildings relate with each other is a key component in establishing the character of a streetscape as well as preserving the amenity and outlook of current and future residents. When done well, new and older buildings can sit comfortably together and help create a better level of clarity, certainty of outcome and comfort for all.

2

Respond to climate...

...and contribute to the Territory's built form character."

The varied and often extreme climate of the Territory poses many challenges to building construction. Responding to these unique climatic circumstances in the pursuit of human comfort and a desire for energy efficient buildings has a strong influence on the micro climates of our built environment and can collectively help to create a distinctive built form character.

This project seeks to enable and encourage buildings that go beyond the minimum standard, positively influence their surroundings and express their climate responsive approaches boldy and for all to see.

In addition to providing access to light and views where applicable buildings should provide opportunities for outdoor living, engaging with nature and the ability to choose passive heating and cooling methods (such as cross-ventilating breezes and solar access).

The principles of designing for human comfort should be applied to the design of the building as a whole and also its on-site surrounds. This approach extends beyond the internal design of each apartment and should also include circulation and common areas, as well as the arrival experience for pedestrians and vehicles.

3

Embrace Innovation...

...through flexible, best practice design solutions."

Good planning provisions should provide firm and clear minimum standards that protect key amenity elements and also set the stage for potential innovative approaches to building design and construction.

Design innovation is often generated from a specific site or climatically-responsive approach and can be nurtured by a developer with a bolder vision of what the market might want.

Design innovations should be encouraged and enabled when these innovations align with stated objectives and do not compromise minimum amenity standards.

Many common approaches to human comfort in Australia have been developed for the more populous southern parts of the country and may not necessarily be appropriate for the particular climates of the Northern Territory. An openness to innovative approaches is needed to help ensure that human comfort is successfully incorporated in locally relevant ways into new apartment and mixed use buildings.

4

Make Great Places...

...that provide meaningful, vibrant and liveable spaces for people."

In addition to their basic function as shelter, buildings physically frame and influence the spaces where people live their lives. Apartment forms can also help share the benefits of a particular location that might otherwise only be enjoyed by a select few.

Apartments in mixed use developments can introduce a whole new tone to an otherwise homogenous commercial-retail area. Increased local densities may create opportunities for new services and amenities for the broader community, such as improved public transport options, new business offerings and more local customers to support existing businesses. Increased populations will also result in more eyes on the street which has safety and surveillance benefits.

This project seeks to promote apartment forms as a key component in continuing to deliver and evolve meaningful, vibrant and liveable places for people across the Territory.

The collective objectives and recommendations of this project all seek to achieve these four overarching aims.

3.0 Design Elements

3.1 Key Controls and Design Elements

While building design incorporates a broad range of considerations and details, this section of the document focusses on design elements that can be influenced by quantifiable controls and requirements. These include:

- **Regional Context**
- **Local Context and Streetscape Character**
- **Front Setbacks**
- **Side and Rear Setbacks**
- **Podium Management**
- **Fencing and Front Boundary Treatments**
- **Ground Level Commercial Frontage**
- **Landscaping Requirements**
- **Communal Open Space Areas**
- **Plot Ratio**
- **Building Height**
- **Building Articulation**
- **Balconies and Outdoor Living**
- **Building Composition**
- **Landscaping for Ground Level Carparking**

These design elements are considered separately in subsequent pages and then are summarised more generally as they relate to the relevant zone in Section 4.

3.2 Regional Context

The Northern Territory is vast and covers a variety of climatic types. Geographic and climatic differences have implications for how buildings are put together. When these regional differences are identified and embraced, they can continue or help establish a building character for the region and contribute to a region's sense of identity.

While there are a broad range of transitional conditions, generally speaking:

- Southern regions of the Territory have a far broader temperature range and buildings can benefit greatly from solar access through the winter months.
- Northern coastal regions have a narrower temperature range and a wet-dry tropical climate with extended periods of high rainfall and lengthy drought conditions. Solar protection is preferable in these regions and buildings need to account for cyclonic conditions.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure that regional differences are accounted and allowed for within the Planning Scheme
- Enable and encourage climate-responsive design that is appropriate to different climatic regions
- Promote regional building character as an important contributing aspect of a region's sense of identity.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Alice Springs has its own specific height and setback provisions within the Planning Scheme.
- General Planning Scheme provisions apply to zones outside of Darwin's CBD, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek or other regional towns.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Allowances for regional differentiation for key built form elements could be enabled and encouraged through Area Plans and region-specific policies.
- Many elements of regional character relate to more aesthetic aspects of building design such as colours, materials roof forms and that these aspects can be encouraged in supporting documents to the Planning Scheme, rather than sit in the Planning Scheme itself. (Note: This sort of design guide is outside of the scope of the current project.)

3.0 Design Elements

3.3 Local Context and Streetscape Character

New apartment and mixed use buildings can play a significant role in helping to establish, continue or change the character of an area while also supporting broader planning initiatives and public domain investments. To do this successfully, new developments should consider their existing and proposed surrounding land uses and how new buildings might respond.

Not all streets are created equal and each has a particular character born of the interplay between built form type and scale, setbacks, landscaping types, parking arrangements, verge width and so on. Good buildings should respond to and enhance the established or emerging streetscape character.

Not all developments can or will generate special contextual responses. However, including the suggestions below is intended to help encourage developers and designers to take cues from their surroundings which may lead to innovative outcomes that may incorporate alternative approaches to the standard provisions.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage buildings to consider and respond to their existing and potential future context.
- Improve the quality and level of detail of supporting information accompanying development applications.
- Encourage buildings to respond to and enhance their street context and character.
- Encourage design innovation.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Section 46 of the (*Planning Act 1999)* sets out what information must be submitted to support a Development Application. This information is to be in the form of a report, statement, assessment or description, which generally implies the information is presented in the written form.
- In some cases, Area Plans attempt to identify and respond to local area issues. However, their benefit and influence is hampered by their current status as documents of due regard that do not prevail over the Planning Scheme.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- A requirement for a site context analysis would help demonstrate that the applicant/architect has fully interrogated and responded to the local site context as an early step in the designs development process. Analysis should identify key aspects of the streetscape including existing street trees and neighbouring built form.
- Require a brief architectural statement of response to existing and potential future local context and streetscape character.
- A 3D model of a proposed development over a certain height could help the consent authority and community easily understand how a proposed development would sit in its context. (Note: Clause 6.2.2 (3) of the Planning Scheme already requires a 3D model to be submitted as part of any development application over three storeys in Alice Springs.)

Although changes to the *Planning Act 1999* aren't part of the scope of this project, it is considered that there is scope in the following clauses of section 46 of the Actto require the following information:

- A site context analysis could be sought under provision (e) as follows:
  - » "a description of the physical characteristics of the land and a detailed assessment demonstrating the land's suitability for the purposes of the proposed development and the effect of development on that land and other land".
- A 3D Model could be sought under provision (h) as follows:
  - » "an assessment of the potential impact on the existing and future amenity of the area in which the land is situated".

3.4 Front Setbacks

Front setbacks play a crucial part in setting the tone of how a building relates to the street.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage buildings to orient dwellings and major openings towards the street.
- Encourage front setbacks that contain complementary tree plantings and landscaping that contribute positively to the public domain.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Front setbacks in Zone MR and HR are 7.5m.
- There is no stated front setback for Zone C.
- Front setbacks in MR and HR zones can be dominated by parking, which in turn reduces landscape planting opportunities, street appeal and pedestrian arrival experience.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- A general minor reduction of front setback from 7.5m to 6m to Zones MR and HR would provide a small increase in developable area to compensate for changes to side setbacks.
- Retaining nil setbacks permitted in Zone C to facilitate and encourage building interaction with the public domain and also encourage mixed use buildings in Zone C.
- Permit balcony encroachments into the front setback area to encourage apartments to orient towards the street.
- General resident parking not be permitted within front setback area.
- Only visitor parking should be permitted in the front setback of residential buildings and be located outside controlled gates, where possible and provided by a development.
- Enable strategic variations to front setback requirements, if and as supported by a clear and logical Street Context Analysis.
- Resident parking could be encouraged to be located or screened so as not to be visible from the public domain.

Front setbacks filled with carparking do little to contribute positively to the street.

Landscaped front setbacks can contribute positively to the street, whether the area is privately or communally owned.

3.5 Side and Rear Setbacks

Side and rear setbacks are an important consideration in both preserving the amenity of existing and future residents as well as creating visual and landscape breaks between buildings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage meaningful landscape plantings and treatments to side and rear setback areas.
- Preserve minimum amenity outlook of existing and future residents.

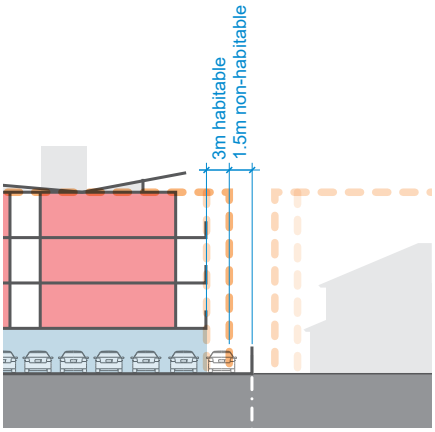
EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS/ISSUES:

- Side and rear setbacks vary between habitable and non-habitable rooms, with non-habitable rooms inherently incentivised through reduced setbacks.
- Clause 8.3 requires a 5m setback, for a non-residential use (e.g. commercial) on any boundary that abuts land in Zones SD, MD, MR and HR.
- Zone CB permits nil side and rear setbacks up to 25m. Above 25m the upper level side and rear setbacks are 6m.

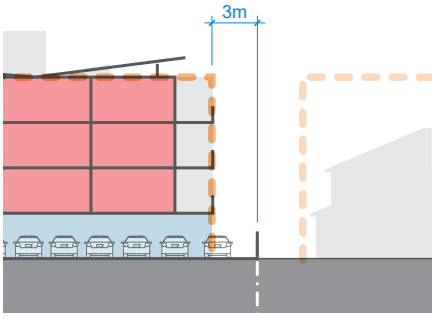
HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Simplify setback requirements by not distinguishing between habitable and non-habitable rooms.
- Retain Clause 8.3 requirement for a 5m setback, but clarify that it applies for exclusively non-residential use (e.g. commercial) buildings on any boundary that abuts land in Zones SD, MD, MR and HR. (i.e. standard setbacks apply for the residential components of mixed use developments in Zone C).
- No proposed changes to Zone CB setbacks are suggested at this time.
- Encourage landscape breaks between buildings through more specific landscaping controls (refer to section 4.0 Landscaping Requirements).
- Buildings in Zone C that have two street frontages, where one is an active commercial streetscape and the other is residential streetscape, should give special consideration to how the street interface transitions sensitively to adjacent residential uses. Suggest that the residential setback be applied to a significant portion of the secondary frontage of sites over 1,000m². Suggest that this portion be whichever is the greater of either a minimum 10m or 25 per cent of frontage.

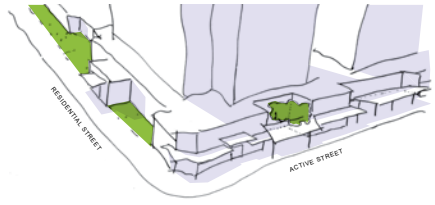
Landscape breaks between buildings can be achieved in narrow spaces with careful species selection.



Existing typical side and rear setback condition.



Proposed typical side and rear setback condition.



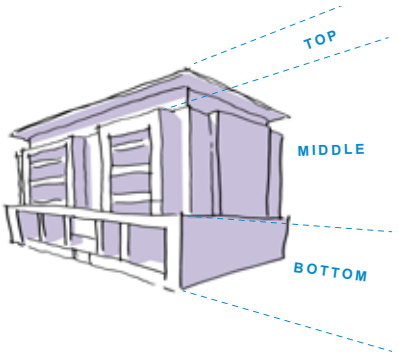
Buildings with two street frontages should help transition from active commercial to residential streetscape characters.

3.6 Upper Level Setbacks

Upper level setbacks can be a useful device for reducing the perceived visual bulk of a building and can help set the stage for good building composition to occur.

A common approach to achieve harmonious building composition is by thinking of the building in three broad elements - bottom, middle and top. This approach can be applied equally well to buildings of a range of scales and uses. While, of course, variations to this principle can work - it is a good guiding principle that upper level setback controls can help to reinforce.

Multiple upper level setbacks or angled height planes can be appropriate in specific special locations and circumstances such as where solar access is important or building scale needs to be especially controlled. However, these tapered approaches pose construction efficiency challenges for buildings and can significantly impact the development potential of smaller sites.



Diagrammatic application of the 'bottom, middle, top' building composition principle.

OBJECTIVES:

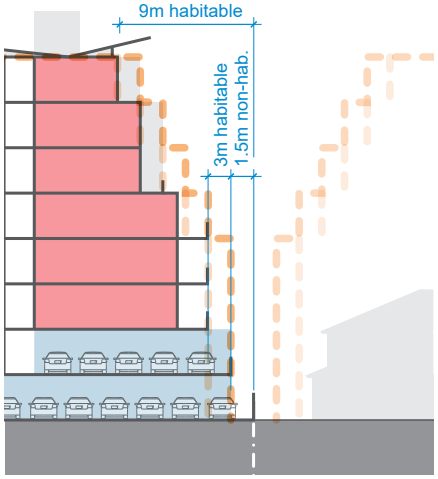
- Help provide appropriate building separation for taller buildings.
- Help reduce perceived bulk of taller buildings.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

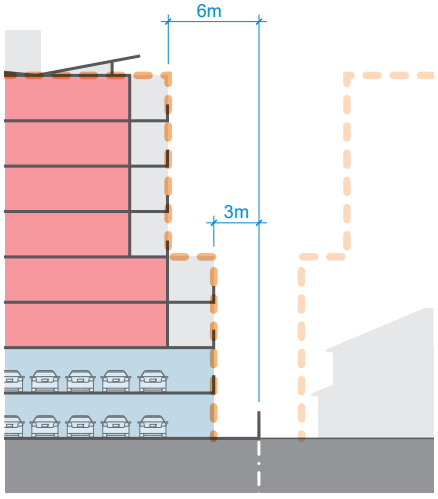
- Zone HR has 'wedding cake' or 'ziggurat' style upper level setbacks that step in an additional 1.5m per storey as height increases (to a maximum of 10.5m). This creates construction challenges for developers and on some sites can lead to upper levels that are undevelopable.
- Zone CB permits nil side and rear setbacks up to 25m. Above 25m the upper level side and rear setbacks are 6m.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Recommend a single additional 3m upper level setback above four storeys for zones other than CB where more than four storeys is permitted. This additional 3m would then provide a 6m side and rear setback (and therefore 12m separation between buildings), which is in line with established setbacks and building separation distances in Zone CB in Darwin City.
- Suggest that unique upper level setback controls for special locations and circumstances can be prepared and managed through Area Plans.



Existing staggered upper level rear setback scenario for Zone HR.



Proposed simplified upper level setback scenario for Zone HR.

3.7 Podium Management

Podium levels can be a useful massing device in urban locations. The more generous development envelopes of podium levels helps to facilitate bulkier elements such as above ground parking and retail commercial uses, while enabling more slender forms above.

Podiums can also work well together to create a consistent 'street wall' to give a consistency of scale to the street, even though the overall height of different buildings may vary.

OBJECTIVES:

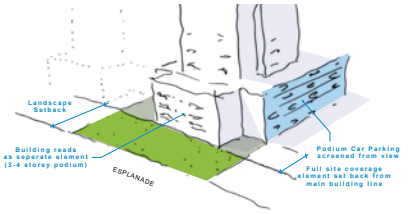
- Facilitate coordinated special podium heights to assist with the creation and reinforcement of character precincts.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

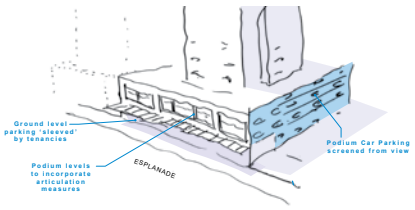
- The maximum permitted podium height of 25m within the CB Zone of Darwin is quite generous (approx. seven to 8 storeys) and permits nil setbacks to all sides.
- Podium levels are frequently used to accommodate on-site parking and in some cases this presents poorly to the street.
- Zone C and Zone CB in Palmerston and Katherine do not have any podium controls.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

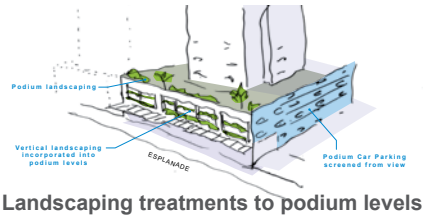
- Recommend incorporation of lower 'human scale' podium heights (two to four storeys) for key streetscapes and precincts within focus areas identified by Area Plans.
- Recommend that local variations to podium height be managed through Area Plans; this may include Zone C.
- Encourage buildings to conceal parking behind apartments or tenancies.
- Encourage podium parking levels to incorporate articulation measures (recesses and projections) to avoid the perception of blank, sheer walls.
- Encourage vertical landscaping to be incorporated into podium levels as a climate-responsive alternative approach to screening carparking from view.
- In some circumstances, it may be acceptable to screen podium level parking with architectural treatments.
- Encourage use of varied materials, textures and colours to break up large wall areas.



Buildings are encouraged to conceal podium parking behind apartments or tenancies.

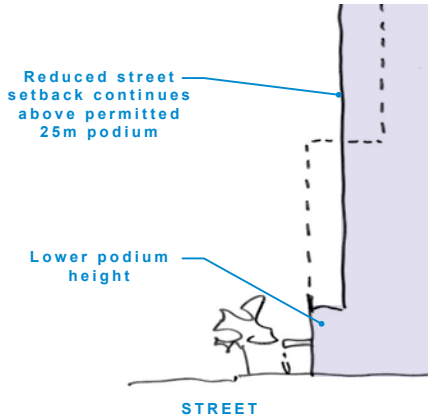


Podium levels are encouraged to incorporate articulation measures.



Landscaping treatments to podium levels are encouraged.

Example of podium parking presenting to the street.



Street setback reductions can provide development incentive for reduced podium potential.

3.8 Fencing and Front Boundary Treatments

Fencing and front boundary treatments play an important role in the presentation of a building and the pedestrian experience. Tall, blank walls or fences contribute poorly to the pedestrian experience and can lead to uninviting streetscapes.

OBJECTIVES:

- Help create a safe and inviting streetscape experience for pedestrians.
- Enhance the visual presentation of buildings.
- Balance safety and security for residents with passive surveillance of the public domain.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Clause 7.4 of the Planning Scheme refers to a minimum solid screen fence requirement for multiple dwelling sites with an interface to Zone SD
- The Community Safety Design Guide, an official referenced document to the Scheme, states in Section 2.0 that front fences should be either - visually permeable (not solid) or less than 1.2m high for effective street surveillance.
- The Design Guidance to Active Frontages and Provide for Services is another official document that focuses on the location of service infrastructure such as hydrants, meters, electrical sub-stations egresses, bus stops and waste collection.
- Fire boosters, bin stores and other required components can create challenges to ground level composition. Guidance on this aspect of a building exists for Zones CB in Darwin only.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Suggest fencing along primary streets be visually transparent above a height of 1.2m or include indentations or other features, such as different materials, colours and landscape planting opportunities.
- Suggest improved general guidance in the Planning Scheme and possible incentives for improved integration for all commercial areas of services and bin stores into fencing and facade design.
- Pedestrian entries should be clear and direct (i.e. not require pedestrians to pass through parking areas).
- Some locations are more sensitive to well governed fencing than others. Special fencing / interface controls could also be prepared and managed through Area Plans where particular local context warrants this approach.

Slightly elevated ground level courtyards are encouraged.

Fencing which incorporates soft landscaping elements are encouraged.

Street frontages must accommodate a number of functional components.

Pedestrian entries should be clear and direct.

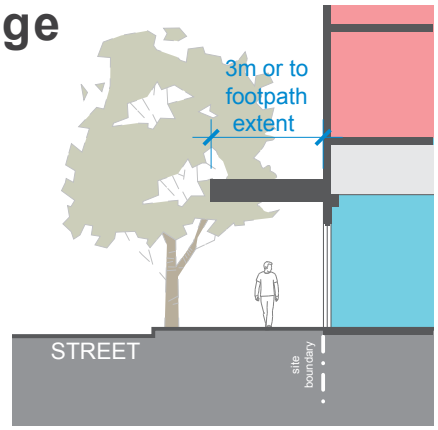
3.0 Design Elements

3.9 Ground Level Commercial Frontage

How commercial buildings relate to the street plays an important role in both facilitating trade and ensuring passers-by feel safe and welcome.

This interface is of particular importance in mixed use environments where there is generally a higher level of pedestrian interaction throughout the week, both within and outside business hours.

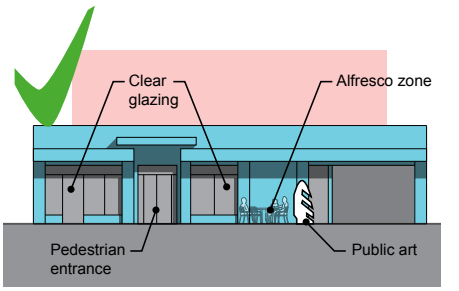
In car-oriented commercial precincts, the appearance of these environments requires a different approach given their visual dominance on the landscape. Their impact on the precinct can be softened using an integrated approach to landscaping that considers shading for pedestrians and vehicles and facilitates safe pedestrian movement and personal security.



Awnings

OBJECTIVES:

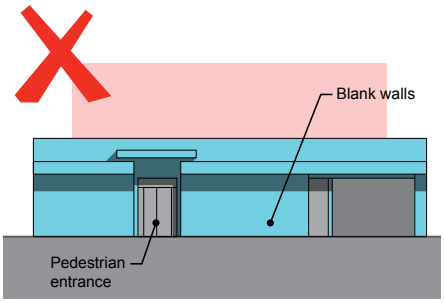
- Ensure that commercial buildings contribute positively to the street and encourage safe, vibrant and active streetscapes.
- Encourage buildings and landscaping to contribute to the shade and shelter for pedestrians.
- Avoid unnecessarily burdensome requirements for buildings in homogenous commercial precincts.
- Facilitate the retention and celebration of local retail character.



Ground floor activation opportunities

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Clause 7.9.2 applies to mixed use apartments in Zone C. Residential buildings require the provision of ground floor commercial occupancies.
- Clause 8.2 promotes site-responsive designs for mixed use developments in Zone CB, C and HR among others.
- Clause 8.2.3 requires a development subject to Clause 8.2 demonstrate consideration to the Community Safety Design Guide.
- The Community Safety Design Guide refers to ensuring ground level commercial buildings are designed to maximise opportunity to activate frontages and allow clear observation of the streets, plazas and malls.



Poor ground floor activation

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Additional controls and guidance on activation of ground level frontages could be included for Zone C and Zone CB.
- Mixed use developments could be required to demonstrate that 70 per cent of the length of a building fronting a primary street and 40 per cent of the length of a building fronting a secondary street atr to be activated through a combination of: clear glass windows; doors to tenancies; al fresco dining areas or courtyards that can be used by tenants and their guests; open space, plazas or public art elements; any other features such as awnings and shade devices that make a positive contribution to the public domain.
- Recommend that Area Plans can incorporate additional commercial frontage guidance for strategic locations where specific outcomes might be required (e.g. historic, fine-grained shopping streets).
- The requirements of service and local authorities will need to be considered in designing the street interface, while also achieving the activation measures mentioned above.
- Suggest awnings be provided to a minimum width of 3m or to footpath extent (subject to local authority requirements).

3.10 Landscaping Requirements

While the range of Northern Territory climates has unique challenges for meaningful landscaping, all parts of the Territory can reap the social and climatic benefits of genuine attempts to integrate on-site landscaping into, on and around a building.

At their best, orientation, shading and on-site landscaping can help cool a building and its environment, create inviting spaces for residents to engage with nature and help visually soften the appearance of a building.

However, on-site landscaping requirements can be tricky to manage through planning controls. Numeric controls for un-built landscape areas can go some way to setting the stage for good landscaping to occur, but requirements for type and scale of vegetation are hard to define and loopholes can often be found.

Areas to accommodate large trees with established root systems are encouraged.

Simple turfed areas framed by carparks do little for residents and their environs, where smaller, more densely planted areas can achieve far more.

OBJECTIVES:

- Help ensure landscape areas are inviting and meaningful to residents.
- Ensure landscape areas can support established trees and shrubs.
- Deploy landscaping that works with and visually softens the building and is visible from the public domain.
- Promote waterwise planting regimes and the complementary shading effects of established plantings.
- Encourage landscaping designs that provide shaded and sheltered areas for residents.
- Promote landscape designs and species selections that enable solar access in winter for cooler parts of the Territory.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- There is a requirement for 30 per cent of the site to be dedicated to landscaping (Planning Scheme Part 4 Clause 7.7).

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Retain existing percentage requirement for landscaping.
- 2m minimum dimension to deep soil planting areas within side and rear setback areas.
- Sites with nil setbacks permitted at ground level (i.e. Zone C and CB) should provide deep soil planting areas on top of podium level, but that the minimum dimension for these be reduced to 1m.Plantings in the public realm may also be approriate in some circumstances subject to Council approval.
- Developments proposing green walls or other vertical landscaping in lieu of deep soil planting areas should be required to demonstrate how the landscaping elements will be maintained and also show renderings of how the building will look without plantings.

3.11 Communal Open Space Areas

Communal open space areas are places that should enhance the on-site amenity of residents. They can include landscaped areas, pools, entertaining areas, gyms and other shared facilities.

These spaces and facilities vary significantly between buildings and can be a point of difference in a competitive market place. However, the provision of these spaces can also become a cost impediment for marginal markets and buildings targeted at a more affordable product, in terms of both upfront cost and ongoing maintenance.

The most successful and best-loved private landscape areas are connected to and looked onto by residents.

Communal landscaped courtyards between buildings are encouraged.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure that communal open space areas are inviting and usable spaces.
- Ensure there is flexibility in requirements to reflect case-specific situations.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- 15 per cent of site area is required as Communal Open Space (Planning Scheme Part 4 Clause 7.6.3).

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Additional requirement for 6m minimum dimension to communal open space could facilitate the provision of meaningful and useful space.
- Enabling communal open space area requirement to also count as landscaped area contribution, while maintaining the 15per cent requirement, could help alleviate the cost burden of communal open spaces.
- Encourage and promote communal open space areas located on podium levels with direct access from apartments.
- Turfed areas that connect only to open undercroft parking provide little amenity to residents, neighbours and passersby. These should be avoided.
- Recommend guidance to encourage a direct relationship of connection and outlook from apartments to communal open space.

3.12 Plot Ratio / Density Controls

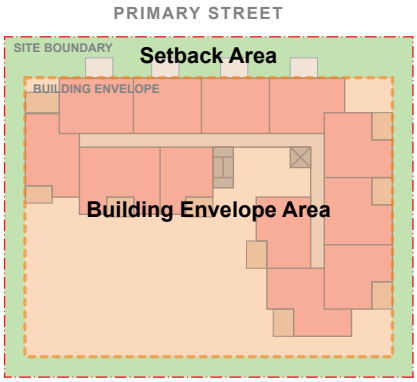
Plot ratio is a mathematical relationship between the internal floorspace provided by buildings and the size of the lot. Plot ratio essentially limits development by providing an internal floorspace allowance for the site, but this does not specifically prescribe a maximum number of dwellings.

Plot ratio controls are used to help establish the allowable volume of development within the 'container' of the site's building envelope. The building envelope itself is defined by the site's size, setbacks and permitted height. The final building design can deploy its permitted plot ratio area within the building envelope in any number of ways.

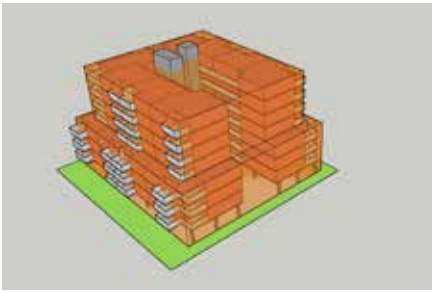
Plot ratio controls can also be useful in helping to encourage more articulated and less bulky buildings.

It is important to remember that in addition to plot ratio and building envelope controls, the number of dwellings that a site can comfortably accommodate varies in relation to a number of factors including:

- the overall size of the lot;
- the regularity of lot geometry and key lot dimensions;
- on-site parking requirements;
- built form arrangement minimums for floorplan composition, daylight access, fire safety controls and privacy separation between apartments on the same site.



The building envelope area is shaped by the site setbacks.



The building envelope is a 3D volume (defined by setbacks and permitted height) within which development must sit. In this example the building envelope volume is shown as translucent orange, with balconies permitted to encroach outside of the envelope along the street frontage.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- The achievable site yield for zones other than Zone CB is governed by Planning Scheme Part 4 Clause 7.1.1 Residential Density Limitations whereby a site's achievable density is determined by dividing the site area by an estimated average allowance for different dwelling sizes in relation to the height of the building. These controls:
  - » discourage design innovation by prescribing a maximum number of dwellings for each site that does not account for variations to apartment sizes between building projects or to meet market demand.
  - » do not account for the design limitations of site geometry and size (e.g. a triangular lot can generally achieve fewer dwellings than a regular lot of the same area).
  - » discourage (or effectively penalise) the provision of underground car parking.
- There are no prescribed dwelling caps for mixed use buildings in Darwin Zone CB (where volumetric controls apply).
- Plot ratio is already defined in the Planning Scheme and does not include:
  - » verandahs, balconies, which encourages their generous provision.
  - » car parking areas or car parking access areas, which encourages or enables above ground parking.
- Zone C has a plot ratio control that applies to the commercial component only of a mixed use building.

3.0 Design Elements

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Introduction of plot ratio controls to govern the provision of residential dwellings in Zones C, MR and HR. This can help encourage innovative design solutions and allow developers to better respond to market demand through tailored apartment mix and sizes.
- Retain plot ratio controls for commercial component of buildings in Zone C.
- No changes to existing Darwin Zone CB volumetric controls.
- Incentivise and encourage ground level apartments and basement parking by excluding ground level apartments from plot ratio calculations. This would also not penalise or hinder those developers who choose to develop in the common format with ground level occupied by surface parking.
- Exclusion of balcony areas from plot ratio calculations to be retained, so as to continue to encourage their generous provision.
- Plot ratio may be amended in special specific strategic circumstances through Area Plans, but that this should be carefully considered (e.g. permitting additional height, but keeping plot ratio the same may be preferable to encourage more slender or tapered buildings).
- Recommend base residential plot ratio for Zone MR and Zone C be 1.3:1 (Refer Worked Example section).
- Recommend base residential plot ratio for Zone HR be 2.3:1 (Refer Worked Example on page 28).

3.12.1 Plot Ratio Explanatory Section

ESTABLISHING BASE PLOT RATIOS FOR THE NT

The base residential plot ratio for each zone in the Northern Territory has been established by using the **NSW Apartment Design Guide** rule-of-thumb as a starting point. This guide has been tested against typical lot sizes and adjusted for the NT context.

The NSW rule-of-thumb is intended as a guide for local government planners and a starting point from which to test and determine final plot ratios to be applied for each site or group of sites. The final plot ratio adopted can be influenced by a range of local contextual factors.

It is important to note that elsewhere in Australia, its typical for the primary development controls (including plot ratio and height) that relate to a site to be governed by specific maps (usually in the local government scheme) or performance based codes. In the Northern Territory however, the underlying zoning of the land currently governs primary building controls (unless otherwise varied through an Area Plan).

The NSW rule-of-thumb recommends taking 70 per cent of the building envelope area, multiplied by the number of storeys and divided by the site area. Since we are intending to exclude ground level elements from plot ratio, the number of storeys is reduced by one, in this Northern Territory context.

The NT version of the plot ratio rule-of-thumb starting point would therefore be:

- Building Envelope Area (Site Area - Setback Area) x (Permitted Storeys - 1) x 70 per cent

When this rule-of-thumb formula is applied generically, larger sites have increasingly (and predictably) higher **theoretical floorspace areas** and ratios than smaller sites (since the impact of the setback area reduction as a proportion of the site becomes less).

In practice however, as site area increases, the burden of on-site separation between apartments and other floorplan composition challenges also increases. Therefore the ability to achieve the theoretical plot ratio through floorplan design and building composition actually reduces as sites get larger. (Note: commercial buildings are far less impacted by these challenges.)

Given the above, a single plot ratio figure can apply for all sites within a zone. The accompanying tables (1 and 2) set out some working calculations to help illustrate the relationships between theoretical plot ratio and achievable plot ratio for each zone and how the final proposed plot ratios have been derived. The tables consider three representative lot sizes and sets out three testing scenarios for comparison:

- **Indicative Concept Site Test** - This uses indicative building arrangements for each representative site to demonstrate the inherent requirements for voids and on-site building separation increasing as buildings get larger.
- **Theoretical NT Rule-of-Thumb Test** - This calculates what an indicative plot ratio might be using the equation discussed above. This has been cross-checked with the figures from the Indicative Concept Site Test to generate a provisional Proposed Plot Ratio.
- **Proposed Plot Ratio** - This sets out what the floorspace allocation would be for these representative sites using the proposed plot ratios.

The proposed plot ratios have been nominated so as to not adversely impact the development potential of the compact lots, while encouraging additional articulation and bulk reduction for all lots.

BASE PLOT RATIOS IN PRACTICE

Under the plot ratio approach, a proponent for the development would take their site area and multiply it by the plot ratio for their appropriate zone (or Area Plan). This would give them their floorspace allocation.

Proponents will need to submit a floorspace summary with their development applications that clearly demonstrate compliance with their floorspace allocation.

3.0 Design Elements

TABLE 1: Schedule of Plot Ratio Site Testing for Zone MR and Zone C

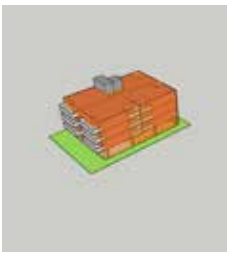
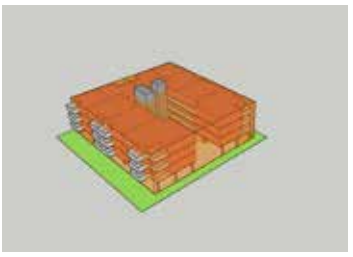
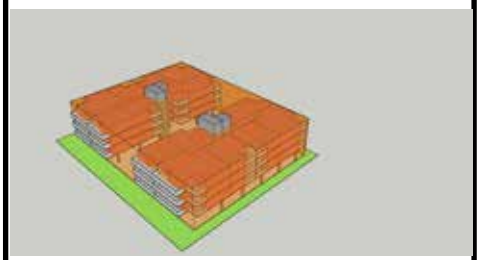
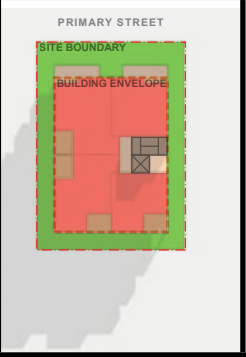
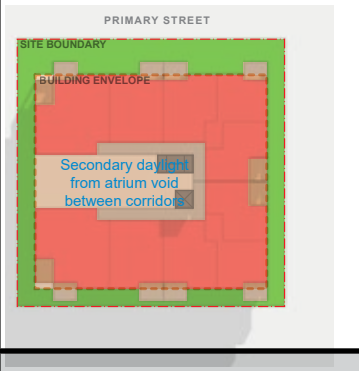
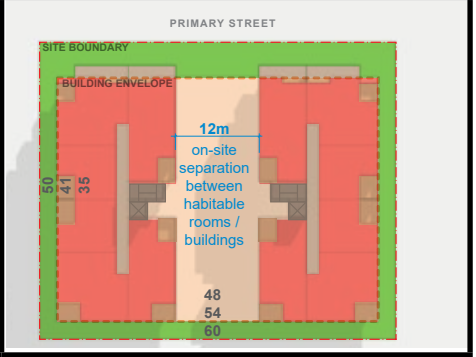
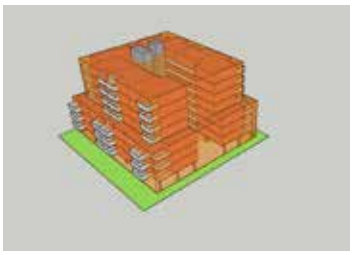
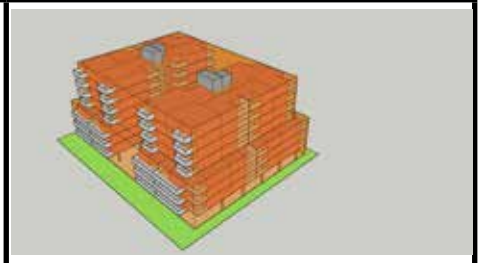
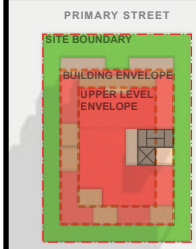
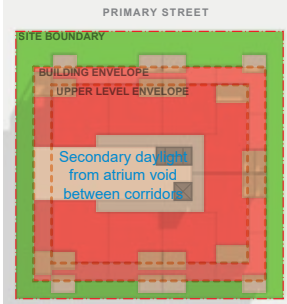
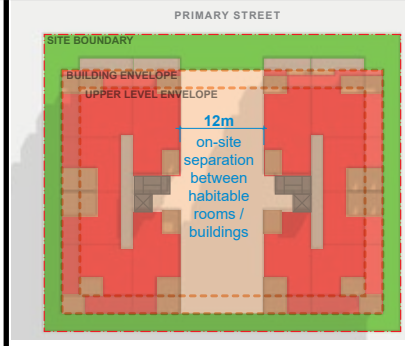
	Compact Site	Medium Site	Larger Site
			
			
Indicative Lot Size	**875m²**	**2 025m²**	**3 000m²**
INDICATIVE CONCEPT SITE TEST			
Indicative Floorspace per level (L1-L3)	390m²	988m²	1 260m²
Total Indicative Floorspace	1 170m²	2 964m²	3 780m²
Indicative Plot Ratio	**1.34:1**	**1.46:1**	**1.26:1**
THEORETICAL NT RULE-OF-THUMB TEST			
Building Envelope Area (L1-L3)	494m²	1,326m²	2,214m²
Theoretical Plot Ratio Area	1 037m²	2 785m²	4 649m²
Theoretical Plot Ratio	**1.19:1**	**1.38:1**	**1.55:1**
PROPOSED PLOT RATIO FOR ZONE MR AND ZONE C			
Proposed Plot Ratio	**1.3:1**	**1.3:1**	**1.3:1**
Floorspace Allocation	1 137m²	2 632m²	3 900m²

TABLE 2: Schedule of Plot Ratio Site Testing for Zone HR

	Compact Site	Medium Site	Larger Site
			
			
Indicative Lot Size	**875m²**	**2 025m²**	**3 000m²**
INDICATIVE CONCEPT SITE TEST			
Indicative Floorspace per level (L1-L3)	390m²	988m²	1 260m²
Indicative Floorspace per level (L4-L7)	214m²	598m²	858m²
Total Indicative Floorspace	2 026m²	5 356m²	7 212m²
Indicative Plot Ratio	**2.32:1**	**2.64:1**	**2.40:1**
THEORETICAL NT RULE-OF-THUMB TEST			
Building Envelope Area (L1-L3)	494m²	1,326m²	2,214m²
Building Envelope Area (L4-L7)	260m²	924m²	1 680m²
Theoretical Plot Ratio Area	1 765m²	5 372m²	9 353m²
Theoretical Plot Ratio	**2.02:1**	**2.65:1**	**3.12:1**
PROPOSED PLOT RATIO FOR ZONE HR			
Proposed Plot Ratio	**2.3:1**	**2.3:1**	**2.3:1**
Floorspace Allocation	2 013m²	4 658m²	6 900m²

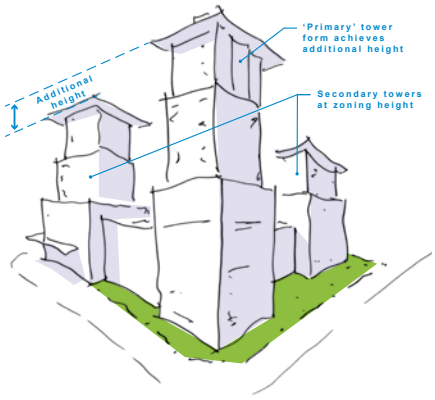
3.0 Design Elements

3.13 Building Height

The development potential of a site is strongly influenced by its permitted overall height. However, this development potential is also influenced by lot size, lot geometry, site topography, market conditions, proximity to heritage buildings or/ places and views.

This means there may be times when a site might not be able to develop to its full height or yield potential that its underlying zoning allows for. This is often the case for smaller infill lots, where site amalgamation may be required to make development to the zoned height feasible.

There may also be valid reasons why additional height might be possible and even desirable. Where additional height is on offer, it may not be taken up on all sites which can be beneficial in terms of creating a more naturally varied feel within a precinct.



Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate height variation between buildings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure a consistent, predictable and fair approach to development height is applied.
- Enable variation to typical building height in special strategic locations.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- The height of buildings is generally governed by its underlying zoning, which can pose difficulties in responding to a local area's particular appetite for development height. Elsewhere in Australia, height is governed separately to land use.
- The height of buildings other than single dwellings is generally governed in terms of storeys, rather than metres above ground. This is considered a good thing in terms of simplicity, but could pose challenges in mixed use environments where a fully commercial use is proposed.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Permit an additional storey for mixed use buildings in Zone C to align with Zone MR (four storeys).
- Enable variation (both increase and decrease) to permitted building height through Area Plans without changing the underlying zoning. It is suggested that this variation be subject to performance criteria and recommended plot ratio restrictions.
- Larger sites containing multiple buildings are encouraged to incorporate height variation between buildings, particularly when this variation assists in the built form response to the development's local context. This could be achieved through Area Plans by permitting additional height to apply to a limited number of primary building forms or a particular part of the site.

3.14 Building Articulation

Building articulation is often advocated as a desirable characteristic without much explanation of why is it seen as desirable.

While external features such as blades, balconies, screens and other features can contribute to the articulation of a building true building articulation is when a building's perimeter walls are regularly recessed back or projected forward.

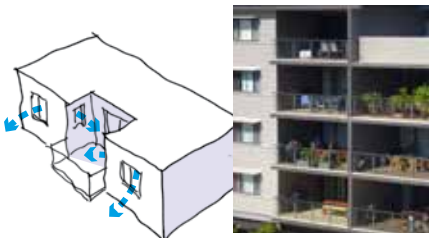
This true articulation creates additional corners to the building. When the recession distances are significant (i.e. greater than 1m) this can be particularly useful in wet-dry tropical design because it enables a higher proportion of rooms to have the potential for windows on at least two different orientations, thereby enabling cross-ventilation.

This principle applies both at the individual apartment and building scale.

The intent behind 'building articulation' controls can have direct lifestyle impacts if applied appropriately.

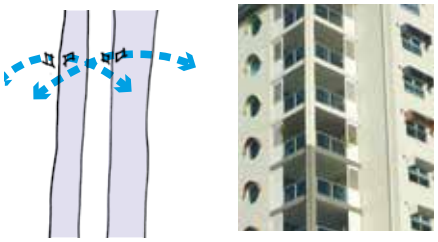
Articulated corners and sides of buildings also enable amenity views to be maximised across multiple apartments.

No articulation to typical apartment with external balcony only capturing breeze.



Articulated typical apartment with part-recessed balcony enables two rooms to capture breeze.

No articulation to building corner enables one room / apartment to capture breeze per corner



Articulated corner to building enables more than one room / apartment to capture breeze per corner.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage well-articulated buildings that are visually appealing.
- Avoid flat, monolithic building forms.
- Encourage buildings that enable multiple cross-ventilation opportunities.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Clause 7.3.1 increases the setback by 0.5m for every 3m over 18m in length. This encourages buildings to be separated in order to retain a larger building envelope and discourages visual bulk and building massing.
- Clause 7.8 states building should minimise expanses of walls, allow for breeze penetration and circulation and conceal various types of building infrastructure.
- Building articulation can be a difficult concept to define and enforce.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- A significant (1m or greater) facade articulation in a building wall could be required at least every 15m of facade length. This could be achieved through recessed balconies or any other form of wall adjustment.
- Development may be required to provide a specific building articulation or setbacks to facilitate the retention of key view corridors, breezeways, landscape elements or other considerations. If required, this can be clearly set out and explained in the relevant Area Plan. Additional policy or design guidance could be drafted to provide further information on how to achieve articulated buildings.

3.15 Balconies and Outdoor Living

Balcony and balustrade design can have a big impact on the liveability of apartments and the appearance of the building as a whole.

The existing control which requires a minimum balcony depth / width dimension of 2.8m is generous and goes a long way to enabling and encouraging outdoor living in apartment forms.

However, the level and permeability of screening of balconies from both sunlight and view from the public domain and other apartments goes a long way to influencing the usability of these balconies.

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide outdoor living opportunities for apartment residents.
- Encourage balconies to be incorporated into the overall composition and articulation of a building.

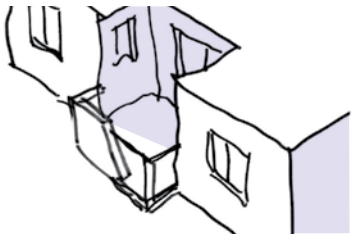
EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- There is a minimum balcony dimension of 2.8m x 4m for balconies. This is a good numeric control for enabling balconies that are appropriately scaled to be useful for outdoor dining and relaxing.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Exclude balconies from plot area calculations to encourage their generous provision.
- Permit primary balconies to extend into the front setback area by 3m to encourage buildings to orient towards the street.
- Primary balconies should have generous proportions and be located off main living areas.
- Allow and encourage minor balconies (such as those located off bedrooms) with narrower or irregular dimensions to complement the primary balcony area.
- Encourage more solid and mixed permeability balustrade types to lower levels of buildings where unwelcome views from the public domain are more prevalent.
- Encourage ground level courtyards to be elevated 0.6m where appropriate to improve their sense of privacy and avoid direct overlooking of private space from the street.
- Encourage adjustable screens and louvres to balconies to provide adaptable shade and to assist in articulating the building facade.
- Facade treatments should be integrated with the building design and not rely on paint or applied finishes that may deteriorate over time, particularly given local climatic factors.
- Encourage buildings to articulate their perimeter walls meaningfully to maximise cross-ventilation and view-sharing benefits.

Balustrade permeability changes with increased heights and separation from street.



Mixed permeability balustrades provide a balance of views out, while restricting views in.

Fully-glazed balustrades enable maximum views both out and in, which can reduce the perceived usability of the balcony.

Moveable screens and louvres are encouraged, where possible.

3.16 Landscaping for Ground Level Car Parking

Ground level surface car parking will remain a feature in developments where underground, undercroft and podium level parking are not achievable, in particular for suburban sites with a commercial component. These areas should nonetheless provide for safe pedestrian movement and be shaded and landscaped to help reduce the visual impact and surface heat gain from hardscaped surfaces. Surface parking areas typically prioritise vehicle functionality over people movement and street vitality.

The Heat Mitigation Program, which was undertaken in a joint partnership between the NTG and the University of NSW, concluded that open parking lots contributed to increasing the ambient temperature to the immediate urban area. In some cases this exceeded 60°C; however, this could be reduced with a range of mitigation measures such as increased greenery and shading.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reduce the visual impact of ground level parking lots on street
- Reduce surface heat from exposed parking areas
- Encourage landscaping, sleeving and safe pedestrian movement

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- The Planning Scheme contains some controls relating to visual screening of parking, including:
  - 6.2.3 (5) Building Design Requirements within Zone CB in Alice Springs - Ground level car parking areas are to be designed so that they are not visible from the street or public spaces.
  - 6.3.3 (5) Urban Design Requirements in Central Darwin - All car parking areas are to be screened so that they are not visible from the street or public spaces.
  - 6.5.3 Parking Layout - be not less than 3m from a road, and the area between the car parking area and the road is to be landscaped with species designed to lessen the visual impact of the car parking area;
- The Planning Scheme contains some controls that relate to landscaping, including:
  - 6.12 (a) Landscaping - planting is focused on the area within the street frontage setbacks and communal open space areas and uncovered car parking areas;
  - 8.2 (m) Commercial and Other Development in Zones HR, CV, CB, C, SC, TC, OR, CP, FD and T - provide landscaping to reduce the visual impact and provide shade and screening of open expanses of pavement and car parking;
- There are some controls in the Planning Scheme relating to safety, including:
  - 8.2 (m) Commercial and Other Development in Zones HR, CV, CB, C, SC, TC, OR, CP, FD and T - provide safe and convenient movement of vehicles and pedestrians to and from the site;
- The measures listed above do not relate to the level of shade or pedestrian amenity provided.
- Plans submitted in development applications are often varied after approval.

HOW THIS COULD BE IMPROVED:

- Require a minimum amount of landscaping ($5m^2$) for every 10 car spaces.
- Encourage shading through canopy coverage or artificial means.
- Encourage and incentivise basement and podium options for car parking.
- Encourage buildings to screen ground level parking areas through landscaping.
- Encourage ground level parking areas to be located to the side and rear of developments.

4.0 Recommendations Summary

4.1 Buildings in Zone MR

Zone MR buildings are of particular importance, since they are the most broadly applied zoning for apartment forms. This broad reach has significant ramifications across the Territory, in both greenfield and infill locations and in suburban and regional contexts.

OBJECTIVES:

- Simplify and improve controls for Zone MR buildings.
- Improve and protect amenity for residents, neighbours and the surrounding streetscape.

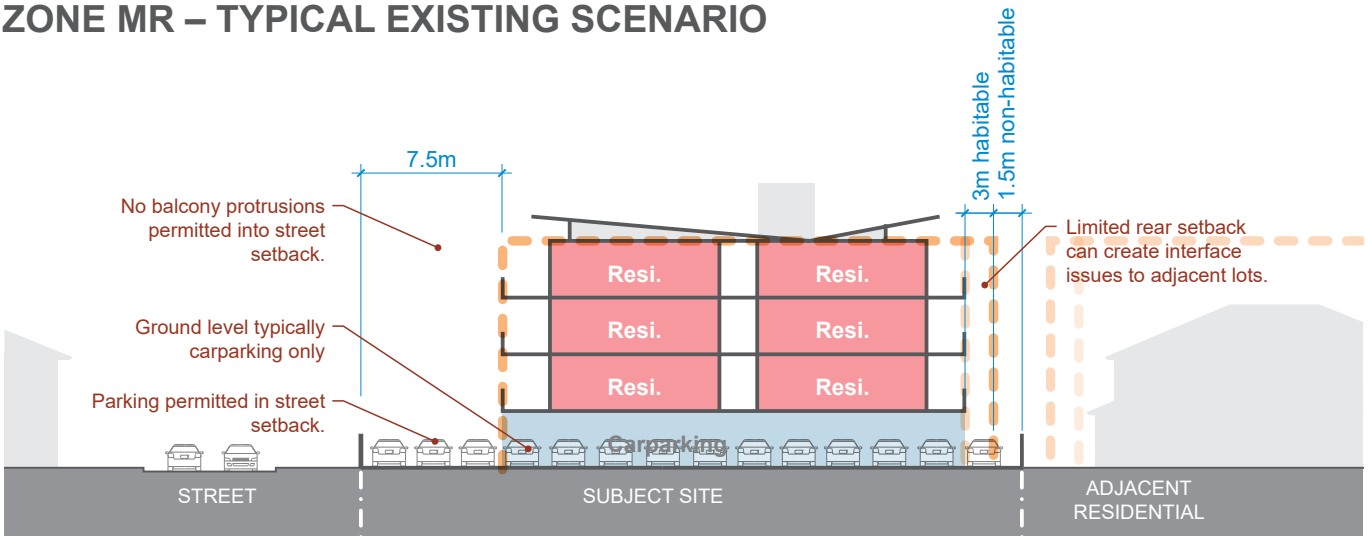
EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Large street setbacks push building mass back to centre / rear of site which puts pressure on side and rear boundary interfaces.
- Differential side and rear setbacks for habitable and non-habitable rooms can lead to poor interface outcomes.
- Rear and side setbacks do not allow for minimum acceptable building separations (6m up to four storeys and 12m above four storeys - as established through this body of work) if neighbours redevelop.
- Full ground level parking is common and creates poor street interface.

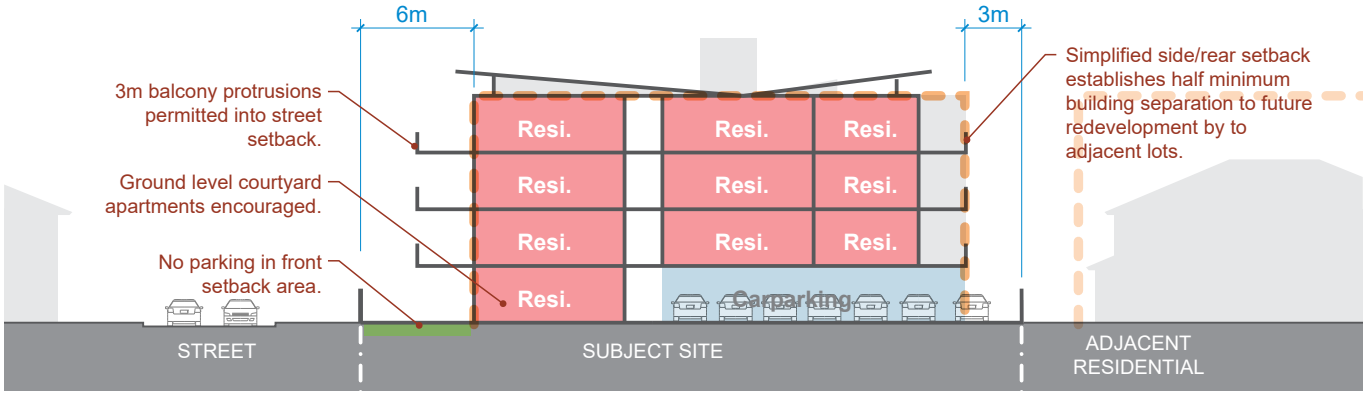
SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ZONE MR:

- Building mass brought forward to the street through reduced front setbacks and apartment orientation to street is incentivised through permitted balcony encroachments in to the front setback area.
- Remove 1.5m side and rear setback for non-habitable rooms to provide improved interface to neighbours and equable future building separation. Retain existing 3m side and rear setback for both habitable and non-habitable rooms.
- Retain existing 2.5m setback to secondary street.
- Resident parking provision prohibited in front setback area to enhance street presentation.
- Ground level apartments incentivised through exclusion from plot ratio calculations, which can help the building contribute more positively to the street.
- Landscaping provisions enhanced to provide minimum deep soil planting dimensions.

ZONE MR – TYPICAL EXISTING SCENARIO



ZONE MR – POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIO



4.0 Recommendations Summary

4.2 Buildings in Zone HR

Zone HR buildings are less frequently deployed in the Territory than Zone MR. While their geographic distribution might be relatively limited, their scale makes them an important typology to manage carefully. With increased height comes increased potential for relationship impacts to lower scale neighbours, but also additional benefits to the vibrancy of an area and increased financial risk for developers.

Zone HR also allows for some select commercial uses to be incorporated into buildings.

OBJECTIVES:

- Encourage Zone HR buildings to develop in a timely manner.
- Improve and protect amenity for residents, neighbours and the surrounding streetscape.

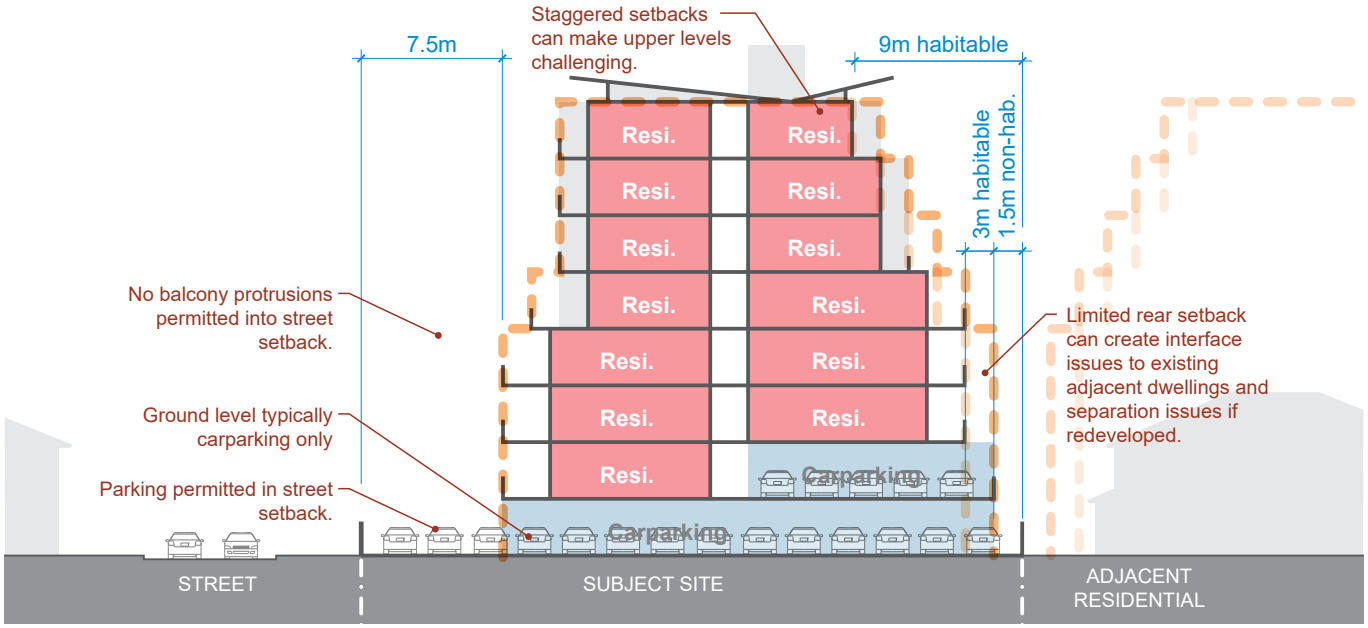
EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- Large street setbacks push building mass back to centre / rear of site which puts pressure on side and rear boundary interfaces.
- Tiered rear and side setbacks create significant challenges to efficient delivery of upper levels.
- Rear and side setbacks do not allow for minimum acceptable building separations (6m up to four storeys and 12m above four storeys - as established through this body of work) if neighbours redevelop.

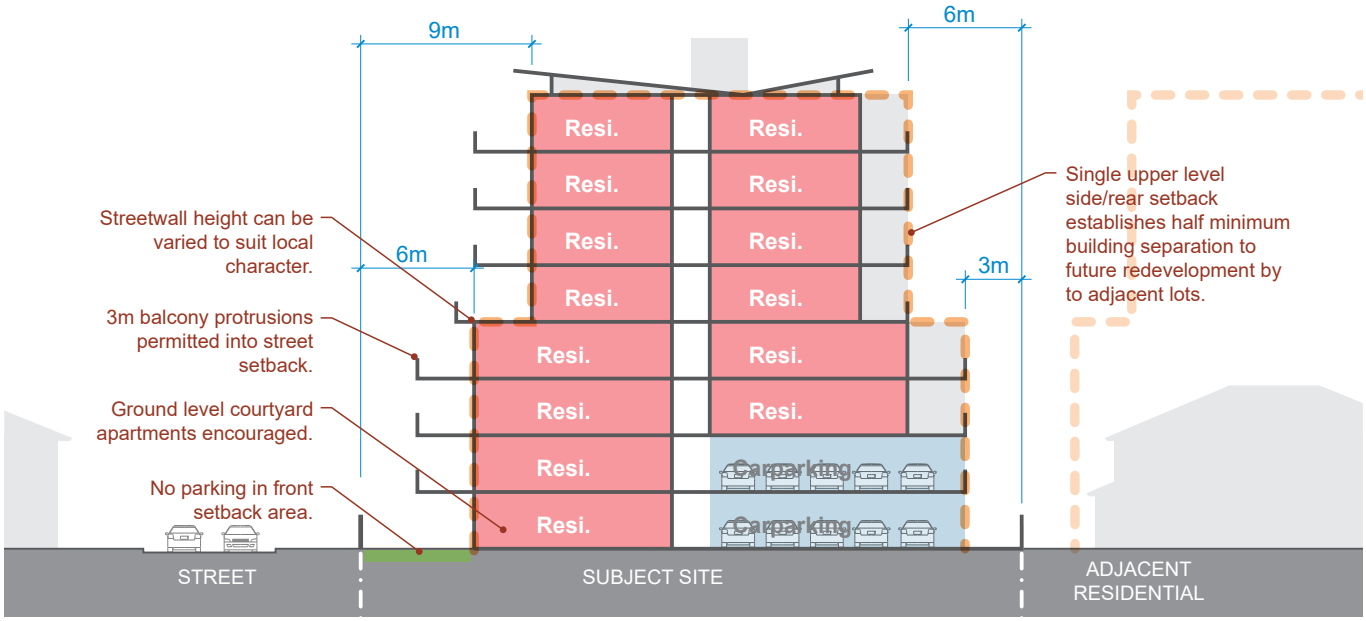
SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ZONE HR:

- Building mass brought forward to the street through reduced front setbacks and apartment orientation to street is incentivised through permitted balcony encroachments in to the front setback area.
- Remove 1.5m side and rear setback for non-habitable rooms to provide improved interface to neighbours and equable future building separation. Retain existing 3m side and rear setback for both habitable and non-habitable rooms.
- Retain existing 2.5m setback to secondary street.
- Single upper level setback easier to manage in construction terms and can lend a consistent street wall to the streetscape. Note that street wall height can be tailored to local /or regional character.
- Resident parking provision prohibited in front setback area to enhance street presentation.
- Ground level apartments incentivised through exclusion from plot ratio calculations, which can help the building contribute more positively to the street.
- Landscaping provisions enhanced to provide minimum deep soil planting dimensions.

ZONE HR – TYPICAL EXISTING SCENARIO



ZONE HR – POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIO



4.0 Recommendations Summary

4.3 Mixed Use Buildings in Zone C

Buildings in commercial zones come in a wide range of types and formats depending on the type and scale of business operating there. In most cases, the provision of plentiful, accessible customer parking is important to both the success of the businesses and the effective management of interactions with surrounding land uses.

A common scenario, particularly in a suburban context, is the provision of customer car parking in front of the building. While this approach assists the functionality of the businesses, it generally lends a poor amenity outlook for potential residential uses within the building.

OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate and encourage the provision of residential uses within commercial zones in mixed use buildings.
- Encourage buildings to front the street where possible and appropriate.
- Improve and protect amenity for residents, neighbours and the surrounding streetscape.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

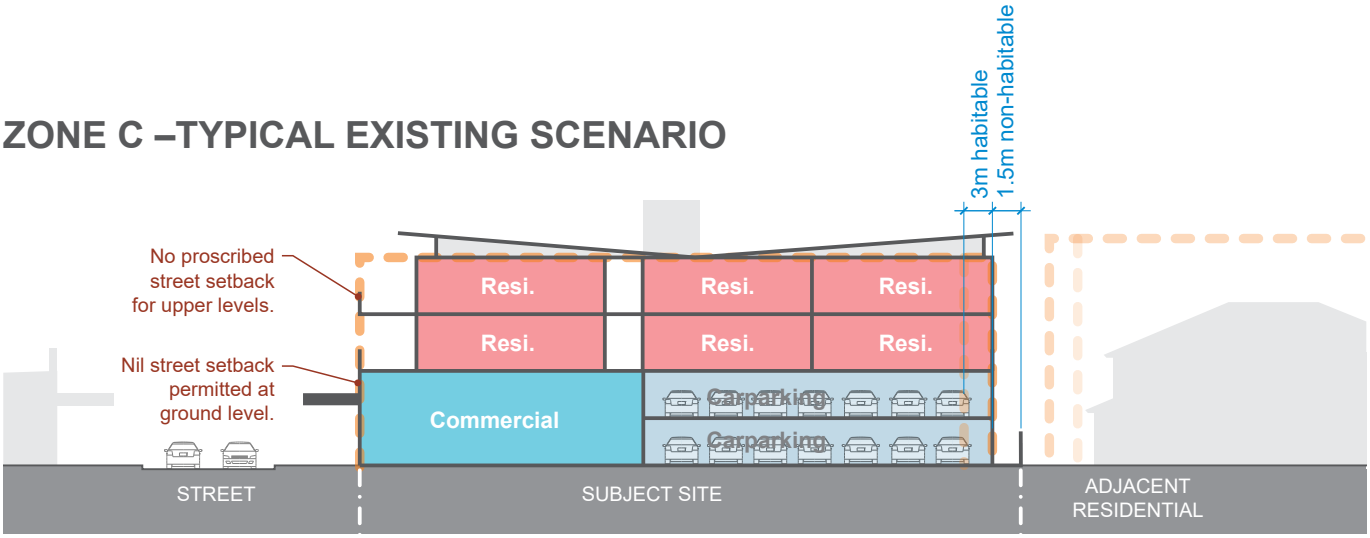
- The maximum height of buildings in Zone C is three storeys.
- There is no stated street setback for commercial zones, due to the range of building types. It is assumed that nil is permitted.
- A plot ratio of 1:1 applies to Zone C, but does not apply to residential buildings other than a hostel.
- There is no density or plot ratio control for the residential component of commercial buildings within Zone C.
- Differential rear and side setbacks for habitable and non-habitable rooms can lead to poor interface outcomes.
- Setback to Zone SD interface is to be a minimum of 5m.
- Rear and side setbacks do not allow for minimum acceptable building separations (6m up to four storeys and 12m above four storeys - as established through this body of work) if neighbours redevelop.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ZONE C:

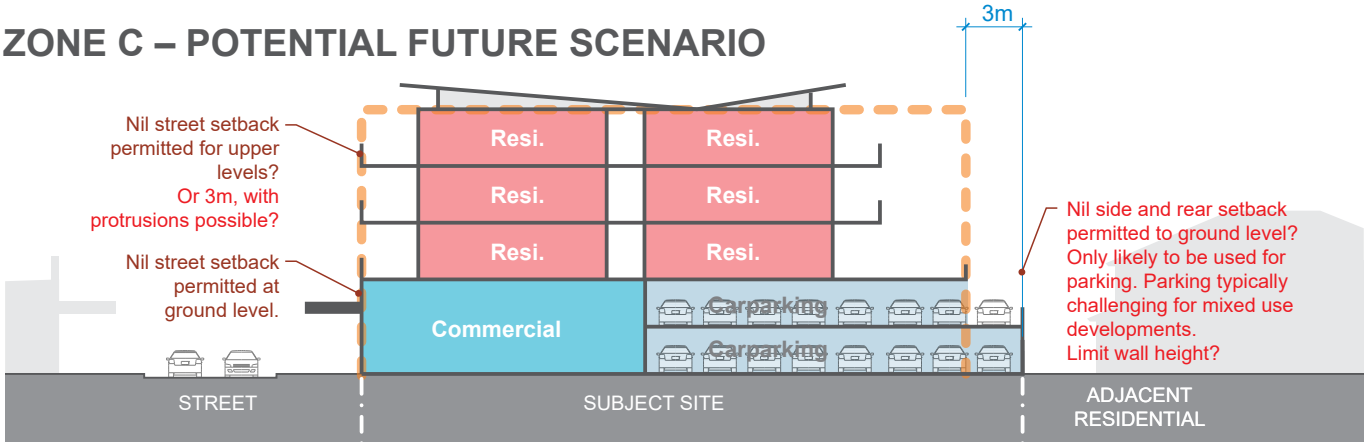
- Additional permitted level for consistency with Zone MR.
- Formalise upper level nil street setback.
- Remove 1.5m side and rear setback for non-habitable rooms to provide improved interface to neighbours and equable future building separation. Retain existing 3m side and rear setback for both habitable and non-habitable rooms.
- Nil side and rear setback permitted at ground level to facilitate on-site parking.
- Improve guidance for commercial frontages and entrances.
- Improve the visual amenity and reduce the environmental impacts of ground floor car parking areas.

Recommendations Summary 4.0

ZONE C –TYPICAL EXISTING SCENARIO



ZONE C – POTENTIAL FUTURE SCENARIO



4.0 Recommendations Summary

4.4 Mixed Use Buildings in Zone CB

Zone CB planning controls need to accommodate a broad range of building types and uses including fully commercial buildings as well as mixed use buildings incorporating residential apartments and often a broad range of other uses such as hotels.

Zone CB areas typically comprise larger consolidated areas of the same zoning across multiple street blocks, as opposed to higher density residential zonings which tend to relate to more site-specific attributes. These consolidated Zone CB areas are generally intended to encourage or reinforce a particular vision for that CBD. It is challenging then to simplify the Zone CB across the board, as evidenced by the distinctly different visions for Darwin (encouraging of height) and Alice Springs (more restrained in terms of height and particularly focused on views).

It is worth noting that the existing controls within the Darwin CB zone for 12m on-site building separations and 6m upper level setbacks have been used as a reference point for promoting 12m as the generally acceptable building separation (and therefore 6m upper level setback) now applied in Zone HR.

OBJECTIVES:

- Support and facilitate the established visions for individual CBD areas.
- Improve and protect amenity for residents, neighbours and the surrounding streetscape.

EXISTING SCHEME PROVISIONS / ISSUES:

- There are no plot ratio or height restrictions in Darwin's CB Zone, although there are practical limitations due to flight paths.
- There are podium and tower volumetric controls in place for Darwin CBD.
- Zone CB in Alice Springs permits an eight storey maximum height to a maximum overall height of 34m, with sites needing to be larger than 2 000m² and provide accompanying, explanatory 3D imagery in order to develop over three storeys. Buildings are also not to obstruct identified significant viewlines.
- There are no controls in Zone CB areas of Palmerston and Katherine relating to building height and urban design.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ZONE CB:

- Recommended that podium heights can be varied in specific strategic locations through Area Plans.
- Recommend a review of each CBD's controls be undertaken via the Area Plan process.

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Zone MR – Zone Medium Density Residential is applied to areas suitable for medium rise residential development. Zone MR has a permissible density of 117 dwellings per ha and height controls can vary between four to six storeys (Area Plan dependent).

Zone HR – Zone High Density Residential is applied to areas suitable for high rise residential developments and has a permissible density of 142 dwellings per ha. Height controls vary however the default limit is eight storeys.

Zone C – Zone Commercial can be used for commercial or mixed use (residential and commercial) activities and has a permissible density of 75 dwellings per ha. Height controls vary; however, the default limit is three storeys.

Zone CB – Zone Central Business is not restricted by density controls or prescribed height limits and provides for a diversity of activities including administrative, judicial, professional, office, entertainment, cultural, residential and retail and other business activities.

Planning Act 1999 **–** Legislative instrument that provides the framework for planning throughout the Northern Territory.

Planning Scheme – Northern Territory Planning Scheme, administrative instrument of the *Planning Act 1999*.

NTPC – Northern Territory Planning Commission, an independent statutory authority that consults with the community to develop strategic plans and policies for inclusion in the Planning Scheme and advises on significant development proposals.

Apartment – The Planning Scheme defines Multiple Dwelling as a building or group of buildings on a site that individually or collectively contain more than one dwelling (including serviced apartments) but does not include an independent unit.

Mixed use development – Building consisting of residential and commercial uses.

Plot ratio (or floorspace) **–** A mathematical relationship between a developments floorspace and the site area (Plot Ratio Area /or Site Area).

Al Fresco Area – An open outdoor area, which forms part of a building generally used for outdoor dining.

Building Envelope Area – The area allocated for the placement of buildings, which is calculated by subtracting the area within the setbacks from the lot area.

Building envelope – The 3D volume defined by setbacks and permitted height in which a building must fit within.

Boundary setbacks – The minimum distance from any surveyed boundary to which a structure may be built.

Planning Scheme Amendment – A process involving the application of amending controls within the Planning Scheme.

Stage – Stages break up the overall project into specific tasks in a sequence, generally from the projects commencement to completion.

Built environment – Human made surroundings which provide a setting for human activity ranging from buildings to parks.

Character – A term used to define a particular theme or style in an urban and/or rural context.

Streetscape – The visual elements of a street, including the road, adjoining buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, trees and open spaces, etc, that combine to form the streets character.

Activity centre – Nominated community hubs where people shop, work, meet, relax and often live. They range in size depending on their location and function, from local neighbourhood shopping strips to centres that include universities and major regional shopping malls.

Planning Reform – Current project by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) designed to improve the planning system through changes to the Planning Scheme and *Planning Act 1999*.

Building mass – Architectural term that refers to a structure in three dimensions. Massing influences the solid form of an enclosed space and defines the exterior shape of the building.

Primary and secondary frontage – A nominated street setback that is determined by the road hierarchy classification system administered by DIPL. This determines front, side and rear setbacks within the Planning Scheme.