



ALICE SPRINGS **Central Activity District**

Residential Capacity Study

January 2010

This Document has been prepared for

**The Northern Territory Government
Department of Planning and Infrastructure**

Level 1 Cavenagh House
Cavenagh Street
DARWIN
NT 0801

This Document has been prepared by

Design Urban Pty Ltd

77 Wattle Road
Hawthorne
MELBOURNE
Vic 3122



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	4
Study Limits and Objectives	4
Study Area	5
Basic Assumptions	6
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND CONTEXT	6
Study Methodology	8
Urban Design Considerations	10
DEVELOPER AND INVESTOR CONSIDERATIONS	11
Car Parking	11
Market Dynamics	11
POTENTIAL SITES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT	13
CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY	26
Residential Capacity	26
Additional Parking	26
Implications for the Alice Springs CAD	26
DEFINITIONS	27

INTRODUCTION

The renaissance of many town and city centres has been catalysed by the development of new residences in those areas. For example, the revitalisation of the Melbourne CAD was catalysed through the *Postcode 3000* Program which encouraged and gave guidance to the development of new dwellings in town.

The benefits of people living in town are numerous, and include;

- improved safety and security as a result of more people in town, especially at night.
- The economic performance of shops and businesses in town is improved as a result of increased patronage.
- More restaurants and cafes are rendered viable as a result of more patronage.
- More cultural events are better supported by local people. Overall, the town performs better environmentally as fewer people have to use cars to get to events and activities.
- Walking becomes an attractive alternative to the car.
- The town centre becomes a hive of activity drawing tourists who want to share in the “buzz” of an active and vibrant town centre. This causes a multiplier effect as the town becomes even more “buzzier”.
- The town centre becomes more than just a business district, but the Central Activities District.
- This becomes the focus of community life for not only those living in town centre but for the broader community.

This study has been commissioned to examine the potential for living in the Alice Springs CAD as a step to consolidating the renaissance of this important town centre.

Study Limits and Objectives

Following the Urban Design Audit of the Alice Springs Central Activity District (CAD) during 2009 (*City of Melbourne, Design Urban, February 2009*), the Northern Territory Government commissioned this study to determine the potential for residential development in the CAD. This follows a number of landowner enquiries regarding mixing of land use to include residential land use and the possible relaxation of the current 3 storey height limit over the CAD.

Clearly, all sites in the Alice Springs CAD have the potential to be redeveloped. This study is however limited to those sites which are less encumbered and are either vacant, underutilised or have buildings which are deemed to be at the end of their economic life. There will no doubt be other sites which could be redeveloped however the study has intentionally been limited to those sites which in the view of the authors have greatest potential for redevelopment. They are also sites which have the greatest potential to achieve “good” urban form in the CAD. “Good” urban form is that which contributes in a positive way to activating the public realm, and which contributes to making Alice Springs a safer and more vibrant place just from

people going about their daily activities in town. Buildings contribute to safety and vibrancy by fronting streets and having many doors and windows which face the street. The public realm is that public area which includes streets, parks, public reserves and public squares.

The objectives of this study are:

- To test the potential for new residential development in the CAD on sites which are currently vacant or have the potential for early redevelopment.
- To ascertain how many residential units could be accommodated within the CAD on vacant and redevelopment sites.
- To determine where parking could be provided to support additional residences, shops and offices.
- To evaluate potential development on sites with potential to achieve “good urban form”.

Study Area

This residential capacity study has been confined to the area bounded by Stuart Highway to the West, Stott Terrace to the South, Leichardt Terrace to the East, and Wills Terrace to the North of the Alice Springs CAD. The study area is shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1 – Residential Capacity Study Area

Basic Assumptions

This study is undertaken under certain key assumptions. These include:

- Future parking in the CAD will be in parking structures and not provided as surface parking. (*As recommended in the 2009 Urban Design Audit and 2009 Parking Evaluation*)
- It is assumed that buildings comply with the Draft Built Form Guidelines for Alice Springs CAD (October 2009), despite the fact that this document has not been adopted or approved and therefore has no status other than as a set of draft proposals.
- Height limits will be relaxed as long as applicants comply with the requirements set out in the October 2009 Draft Built Form Guidelines for Alice Springs CAD.
- These Guidelines refer to building height and state, "*Heights of buildings in the Alice Springs CAD are limited to a maximum height of 3 storeys. This may be increased to 5 storeys if the requirements of these Guidelines and the following conditions are met.*"
 - *Buildings need to avoid heritage buildings and heritage areas*
 - *If buildings are built to 5 storeys, an equivalent of 20% of the area built above the 3rd storey must be built as affordable housing on the developed site, or an equivalent financial contribution must be made so that this may be built on other sites within the CAD area."*
- It is assumed that buildings are built to a maximum height of 5 storeys, except where stipulated in the Built Form Guidelines.
- Residences have been assumed to be varied in their accommodation to cater for a diversity of households. For the purposes of this study, size and percentage share of additional capacity have been calculated as follows:

• Single bedroom apartments (Average 50m ²)	30% of capacity
• Two bedroom apartments (Average 80m ²)	(50% of capacity)
• Three bedroom apartments (Average 120m ²)	(20% of capacity)

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND CONTEXT

Alice Springs town centre has traditionally been a place for living as well as working, shopping and recreation. In recent times however many homes have been demolished to make way for parking lots. This has incrementally reduced the quality of the urban environment to the point where Alice Springs has a disproportionate amount of surface car parking exposed to the street. This results in a poor public realm or public environment.

The implications of a poor quality public environment can be serious. As Alice Springs is heavily dependent on tourism for much of its economic performance, there

is will be considerable negative economic impact if tourists no longer find the town attractive enough to visit.

The introduction of new housing to the town centre has the potential to repair some of the damage done to the public environment, as well as increase the number of people in town. This in turn will improve safety and security and increase the economic viability of many shops, restaurants and local businesses.

The housing supply strategy for Alice Springs CAD should be as broad-based as possible and should not cater for a narrow market, such as is currently provided. Housing and accommodation tends to be targeted to the tourist market, and not to local residents. Housing could be provided in and around the Town Centre to meet the needs of more diverse social groups including families and skilled workers. The latter would include small business operators, managers and professionals. Such workers can drive local economic development and help diversify the local consumption economy. Council and the Northern Territory Government will need to develop housing diversity targets to ensure delivery of diversity.

In addition to encouraging a wider range of housing products, Council and the NT Government should adopt an “*Affordable Housing Policy*” for the Alice Springs CAD. As suggested in the Built Form Guidelines, this could be linked to relaxing height limits.

For vacant sites and for redevelopment sites a set of design guidelines should be adopted to ensure that each development contributes to the making of a high quality public realm. In new developments authorities should establish planning agreements with developers to achieve a proportion of affordable housing in their proposals. Consideration should be given to inclusionary zoning and authorities should facilitate partnerships between not-for profit housing providers and landowners/developers.

As Alice Springs has set itself the target to become a “Solar City”, the incorporation of environmentally benign measures should be incorporated in all developments. Rainwater collection and re-use, grey water re-use, sewer mining, good solar orientation, passive shading and cooling devices, solar water heating and solar power should all be considered in all new developments to ensure minimal impact on non-renewable resources and the environment.

The marketing and promotion of housing development opportunities and the delivery of new housing in the CAD addresses many of the key strategic considerations facing authorities.

Study Methodology

A survey of each site within the CAD was held during September 2009. This was to evaluate sites for the potential to develop, and record existing land uses, parking numbers and floor areas and storeys of existing buildings. In addition, sites were examined for the potential to add additional floors to buildings in order to increase overall numbers of residents in town.

A computer 3D model was created of the existing CAD and all of its buildings. This is accurate and measurable. Sketch designs for each potential development site were prepared and the results transferred to the computer model. Areas and numbers of possible units were then taken off the model permitting calculation of car parking requirements for these new developments. These have been calculated according to the car parking ratios contained in the current Northern Territory Planning Scheme.

The ratio for parking in “*multiple dwellings*” is 2 spaces per dwelling. Where retail at ground floor has been included in proposals, parking has been calculated at a ratio of 6 spaces per 100m² of retail area. Where offices are proposed the parking is calculated at 2.5 parking spaces per 100m².

Sites for parking structures have been identified in this study. This follows advice in the 2009 Urban Design Audit which showed that the continued practice of clearing buildings for surface car parking areas has a negative impact on the quality of the urban environment, impacting the social and economic performance of the town.

The following figures are captured from the 3D computer model and demonstrate various aspects of development in Alice Springs, and indicate possible development. From this residential capacity in the Alice Springs CAD has been calculated.



Figure 2 – 3D Model of Existing Development

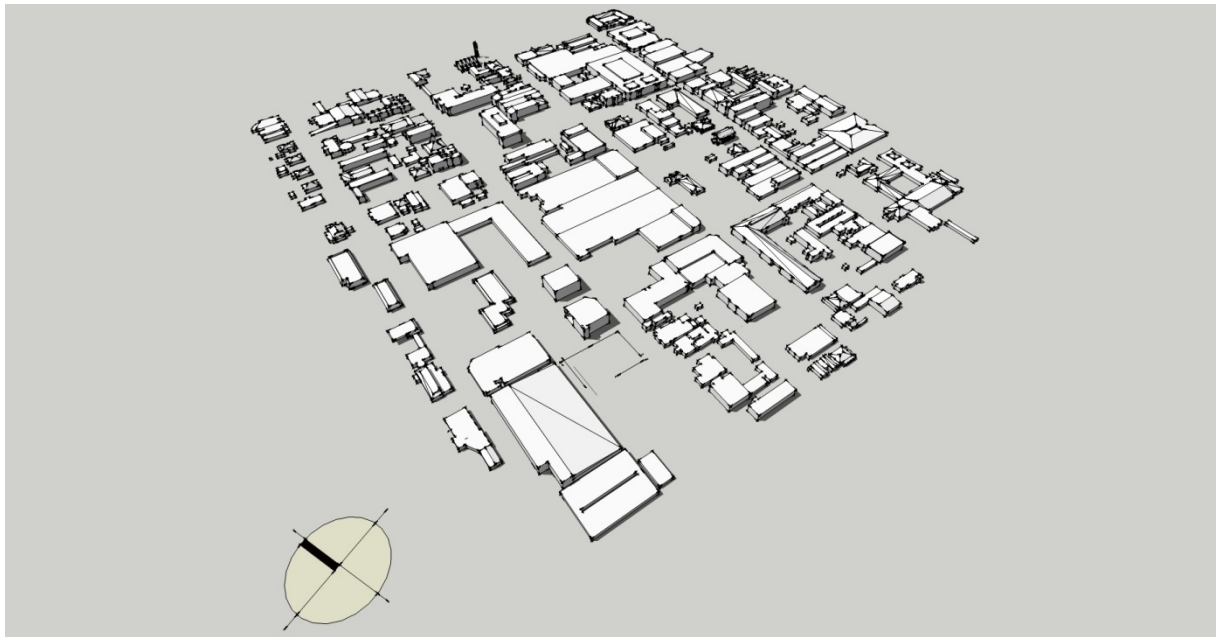


Figure 3 – The Scattered Nature of Development

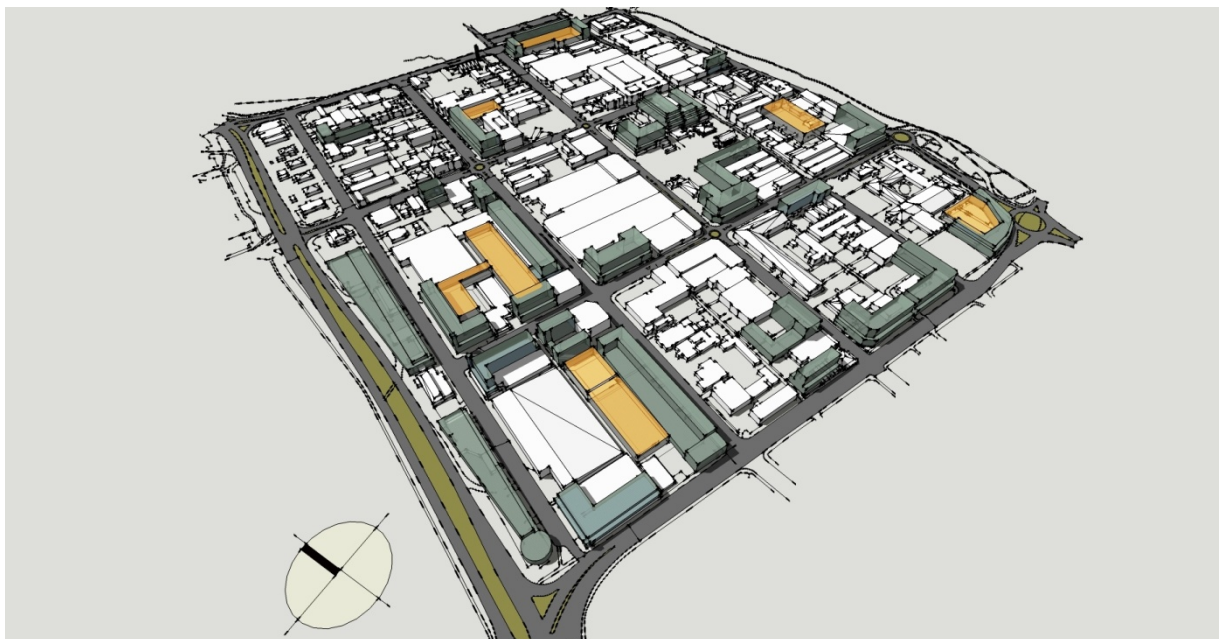


Figure 4 – Potential Capacity for New Development
 (Potential New Mixed Use buildings are shown in Green, while possible future
 Parking Structures are coloured Yellow)

Urban Design Considerations

A “figure-ground” map of Alice Springs shows that many streets are poorly defined as a result of buildings either being demolished or set back too far. To achieve a coherent public realm it is important to provide good spatial containment to these public places.

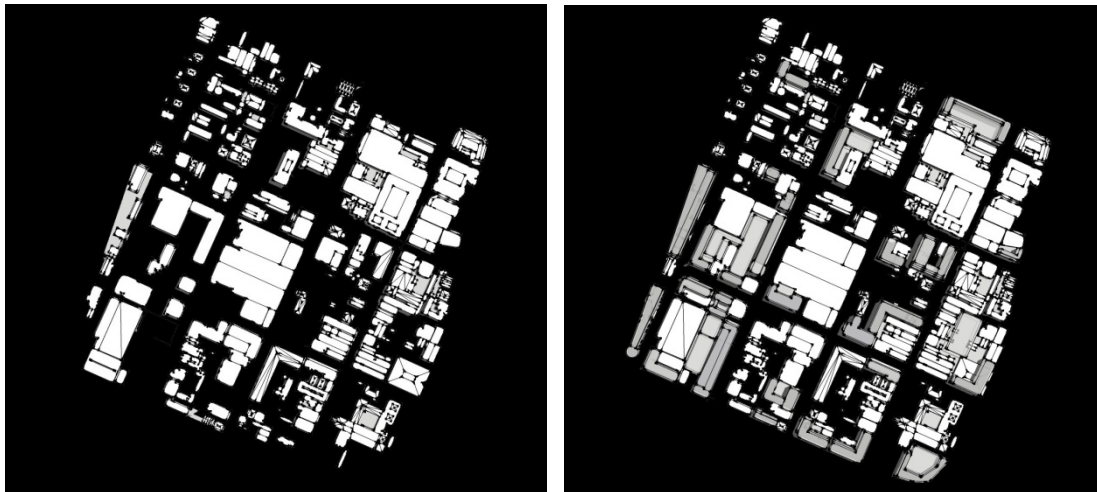


Figure 5 – Figure Ground Map of Alice Springs CAD – Now and the Future

The introduction of new housing and mixed use buildings to the CAD represents an opportunity to improve urban design outcomes. Figure 5 shows the existing built form and compares this to the potential situation if new housing and mixed use is developed in a way which supports the creation of a spatially contained and clearly defined public realm.

Draft Built Form Guidelines indicate maximum heights for development in the Alice Springs CAD. In places the maximum height of 5 storeys has been reduced to maintain key views and vistas, particularly of Anzac Hill, Billgoat Hill, Annie Meyer Hill and the MacDonald and Chewings Ranges. Figure 7 below indicates maximum heights.



Figure 6 - View down Gregory Terrace to the Chewings Ranges

(Source: Mike Gillam, 2009)



Figure 7 - Proposed Maximum Height Limits

(Source: Draft Built Form Guidelines, 2009)

DEVELOPER AND INVESTOR CONSIDERATIONS

Car Parking

On the question of development feasibility, a related issue is that of “*parking ratios*”. It is often suggested that by restricting the provision of parking, private car travel will be reduced. This obvious benefit needs to be balanced with maintaining the attraction of the CAD for potential buyers who own cars. Moreover, restricting the market for apartments to a smaller pool of potential buyers reduces potential sales prices and development feasibility. A balance needs to be achieved between providing opportunities to store vehicles whilst also acknowledging that people who live in town will require cars less as a result of proximity to so many more services and facilities. It would be reasonable to consider reducing the parking ratio for CAD dwellings from 2 per dwelling to 1. It is further recommended that visitor parking be provided in streets and in public parking structures and not be calculated for each development proposal.

Marketing Dynamics

The dynamics of developing higher density housing in town centres are known. Potential purchasers of apartments fall into three broad categories:

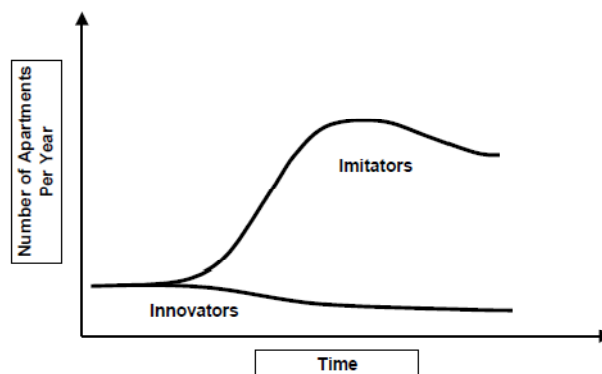
First, there is the “*innovators*” group. This group comprises the portion of the population that will consider living in an apartment, even where no examples are provided in their area. Innovators can envisage the benefits (from their view) of a smaller, low maintenance dwelling with excellent access to services.

Second, there is the “*imitators*” group (or followers). This group will consider living in an apartment, but only after they have seen the finished housing products and observed people living in them who clearly enjoy the benefits of this lifestyle. People in this group will initially report no interest in an apartment, but may change their minds once the option is real (assuming the examples on show are high quality and have the capacity to change perceptions and preferences). This group can grow a market by a factor of 3.5.

Third, there is the “*not interested*” group. This group comprises people that will not live in an apartment in any situation. This is usually the majority of the population in the overall urban area.

The task of the developer, therefore, is to tap into the innovator market and open up the follower (or imitator) market in suburban areas. An indicative illustration of how innovators and imitators are likely to respond to a new product is provided in the figure below. This suggests that innovators will take to a new product in the initial stages and after time imitators will move in and become the bulk of the market. At some point in time the numbers will plateau and fall to a sustainable long-term level.

This pattern of uptake of a new housing product is evident in growth of inner Melbourne apartments. A similar trend was reported by BIS Shrapnel (2001) in their study and publication: “*Inner Melbourne Apartments 2001-2005*”.



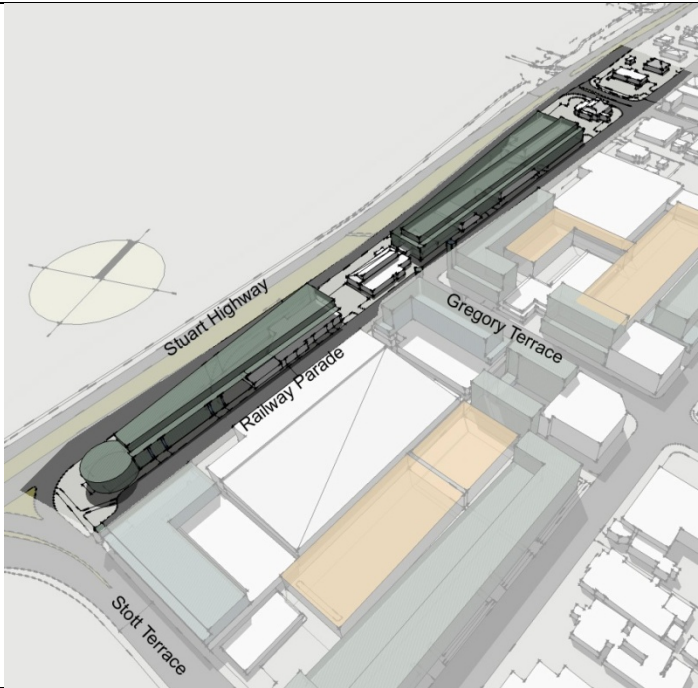
BIS Shrapnel. (2001), *Inner Melbourne Apartments 2001-2005*.

Figure 8 – Sales Trends

The key message here is that initial apartment developments must be of a high quality and have the capacity to change perceptions and preferences in the minds of imitators. If low quality developments are delivered in the initial stages, then imitators are likely to reject the concept meaning potential market growth is not realised. It may be the role of Council and the NT Government to promote this high standard and advocate for excellence through guidance, publications and discussions with potential developers and landowners. Without this the potential market will not be realised and an opportunity will be missed. Such a strategy was followed by the City of Melbourne in their Postcode 3000 Strategy, which promoted good design and useful tips and hints for creating good urban design and urban living outcomes.

POTENTIAL SITES FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The following sheets set out a series of development opportunities in the Alice Springs CAD. These sites have been identified as they are either vacant, have a low level of development at the end of its economic life, have land uses which would could relocate to more appropriate sites around the CAD or have large surface car parking areas which could be redeveloped.

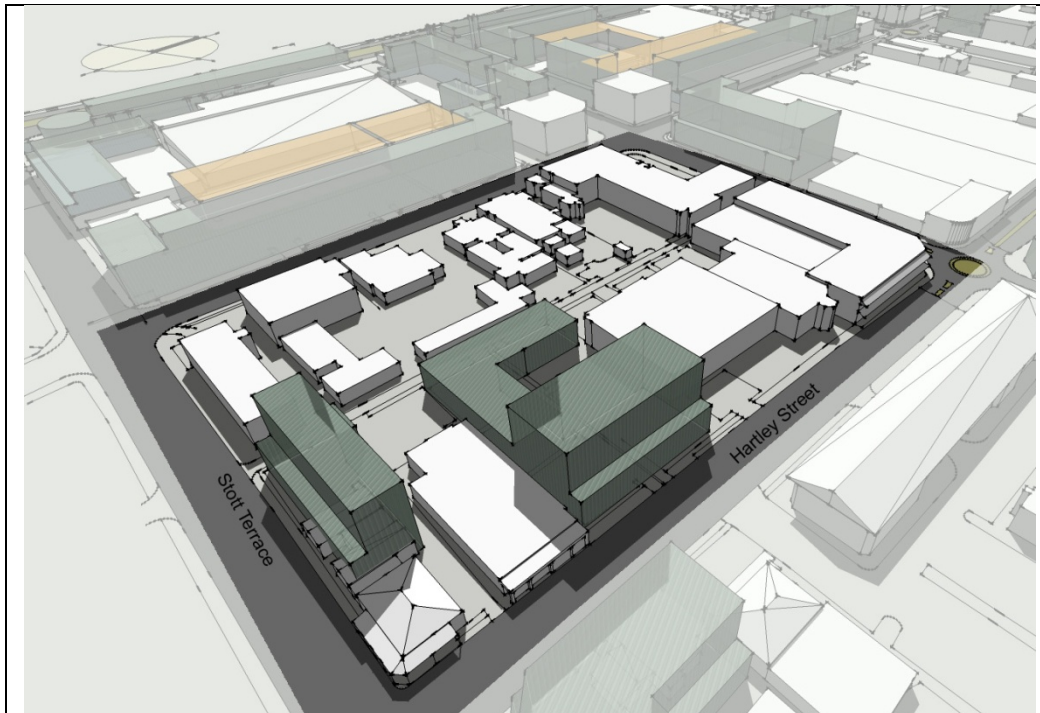
	
A - Redevelopment of Sites along Railway Parade A number of sites located on Railway Parade have either vacant buildings or have a low level of development. These sites could be redeveloped with ground floor shops and showrooms fronting railway parade with 2 levels of apartments above	
Storeys	3 Maximum allowed
No of Dwellings	Total 124 Dwellings 53 x 1 Bed 56 x 2 Bed 15 x 3 Bed
Retail, Showroom Area	970m ²
Parking Required	182 Spaces
Parking location	Ground Floor – Sleeved by retail or showrooms facing Railway Parade



B - Redevelopment of vacant sites, car park and underutilised sites adjacent to existing K-Mart

This location has a number of development opportunities which would support K-Mart and consolidate the block as a vibrant mixed use precinct

Storeys	5 and 3
No of Dwellings	Total 177 Dwellings 76 x 1 Bed 80 x 2 Bed 21 x 3 Bed
Retail, Showroom, Office space	2,400m ²
Parking Required	321 Spaces
Parking Location	The proposed 5 level parking structure would accommodate 321 new parking spaces in addition to the existing 196 spaces currently provided as surface parking, a total of 517 spaces.



C – Redevelopment of existing Hertz Car Hire Site and Vacant site on Hartley Street

If Hertz were to relocate the site could be redeveloped with housing fronting Stott Terrace and the existing corner building converted to a restaurant. Rear lane access gives good opportunities for this and the adjacent vacant site to the north on Hartley Street. The Hartley Street building has ground floor retail and dwellings above.

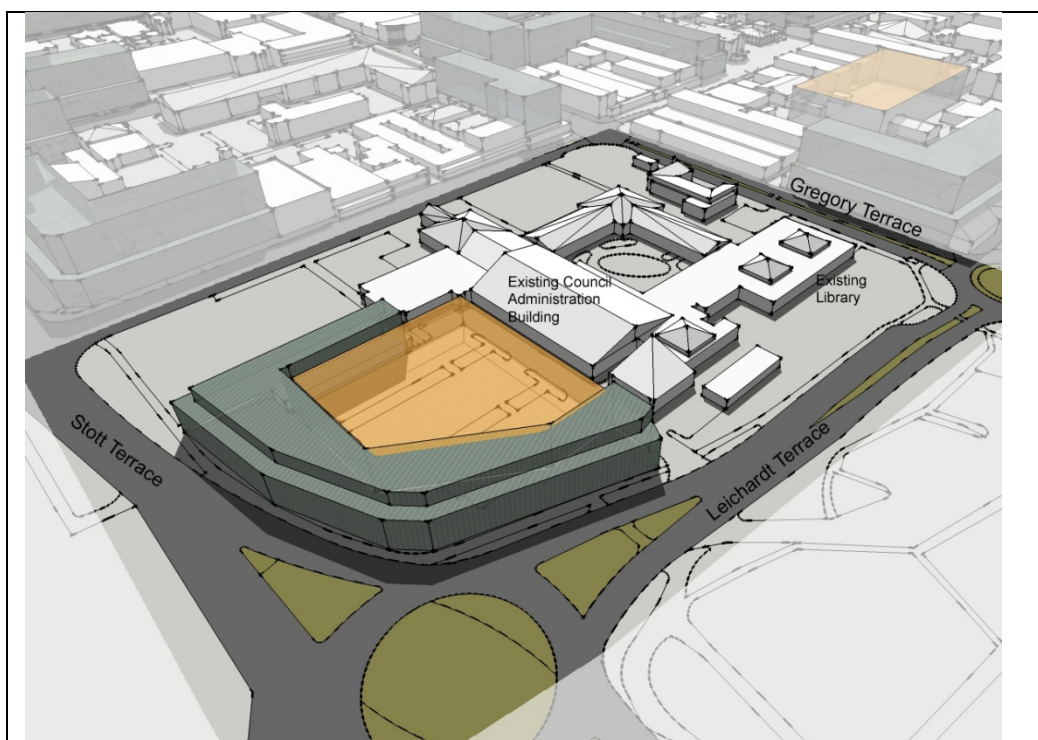
Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 66 Dwellings 29 x 1 Bed 30 x 2 Bed 8 x 3 Bed
Retail Area	560 m ²
Parking Required	100 Spaces
Parking Location	Parking would be on-site within the developments with access from rear lanes



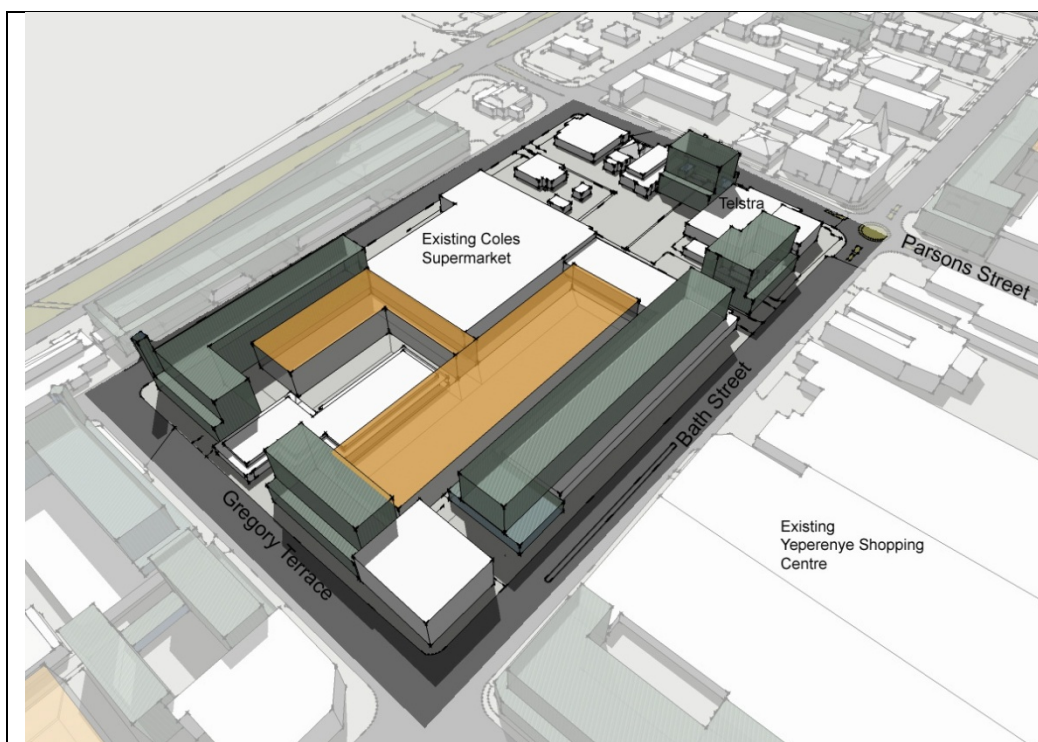
D – Redevelopment of KFC Site and Thrifty Car Hire Site.

This proposal shows Thrifty car hire relocated and the KFC site redeveloped with the KFC outlet incorporated as a shop below a mixed use development. Development above the single level shops and galleries on Gregory Terrace could yield more residences.

Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 154 Dwellings 66 x 1 Bed 69 x 2 Bed 18 x 3 Bed
Retail Area	720m ²
Parking Required	197 Spaces
Parking Location	Parking would be on-site within the developments with access from rear lanes.



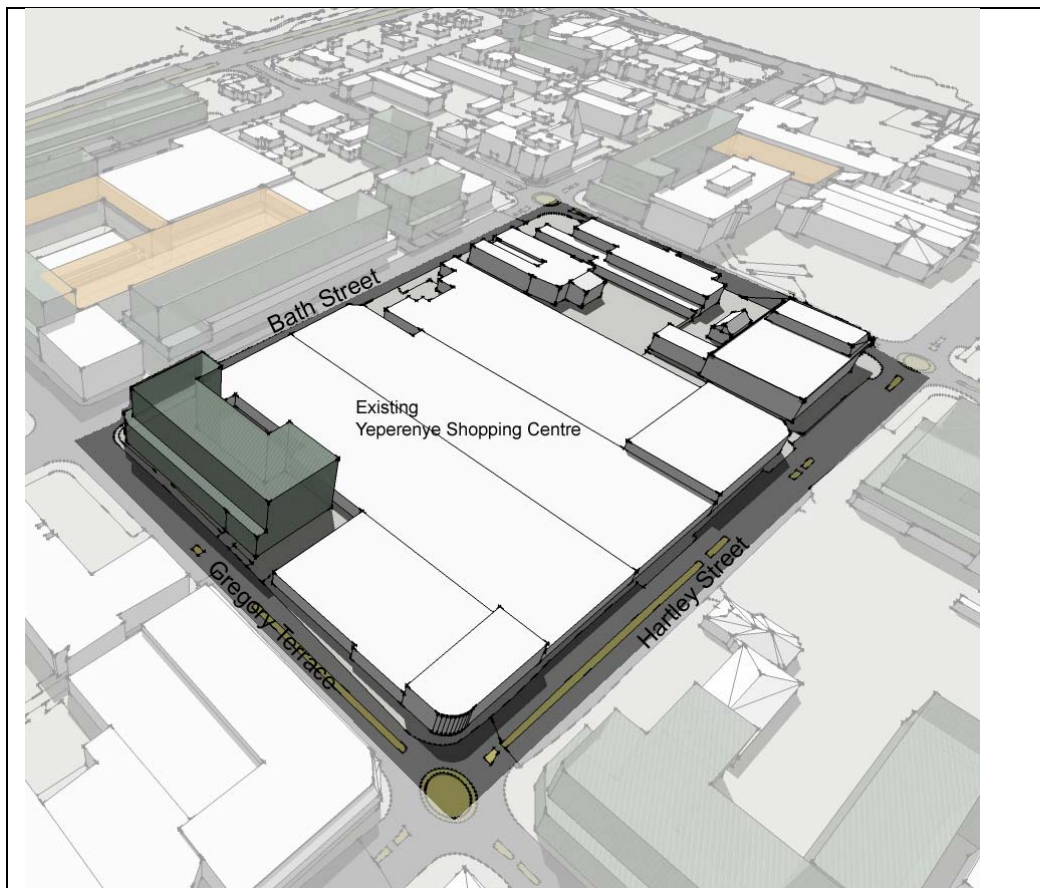
E – Redevelopment of Council Car Parking Area	
Storeys	3 Maximum
No of Dwellings	Total 20 Dwellings 9 x 1 Bed 9 x 2 Bed 2 x 2 Bed
Office Area	1,200m ²
Parking Required	50 Spaces
Parking Location	A new 3 level parking structure would accommodate 80 new parking spaces in addition to the existing 80 spaces currently provided as surface parking, a total of 160 spaces.



F – Redevelopment of Surface Parking Areas around Existing Coles and Telstra Buildings

Parking for the sites adjacent to the Telstra complex is provided on site. New residential development adjacent to the existing Coles supermarket and shopping centre is designed to sleeve a proposed new parking structure. All existing shops are retained in this proposal

Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 203 Dwellings 88 x 1 Bed 92 x 2 Bed 25 x 3 Bed
Retail Area	500m ²
Parking Required	233 spaces
Parking Location	A new 4 level parking structure as shown would accommodate 250 new parking spaces and the existing 283 spaces currently provided as surface parking, a total of 533 spaces.



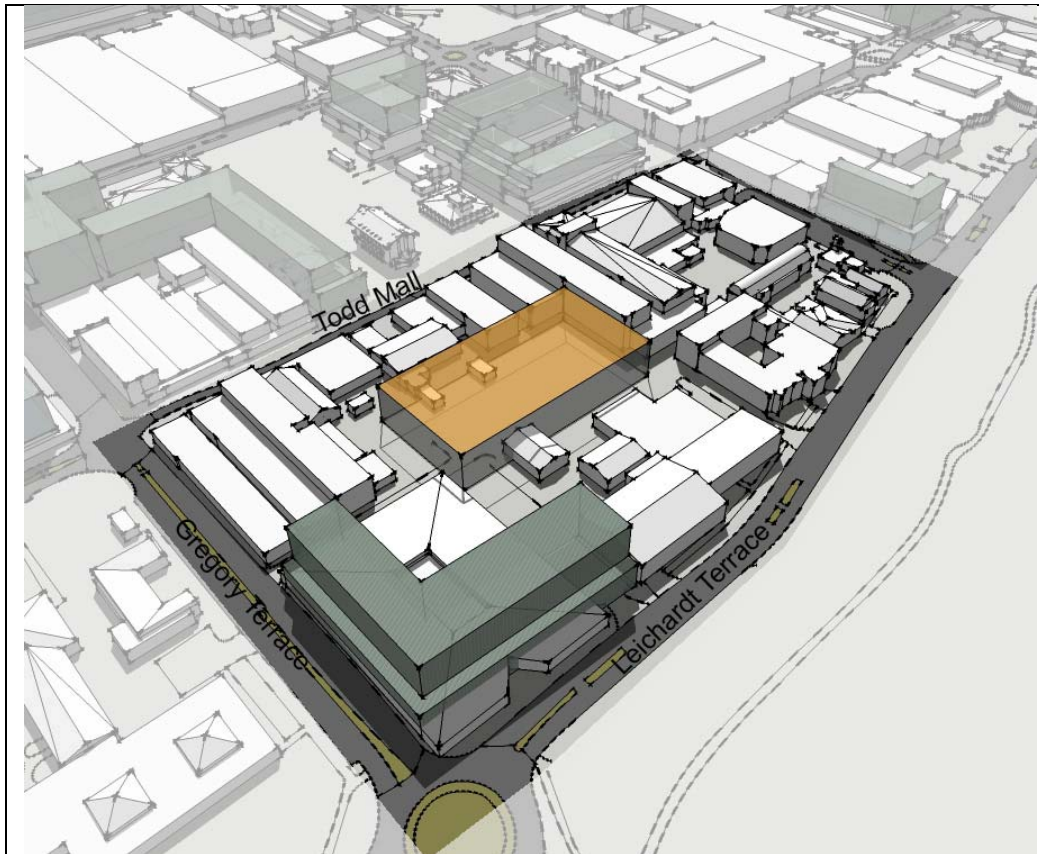
G – Development of vacant site to the south of the Yeperenye Shopping Centre

A proposal to develop housing above retail and parking at ground floor, and office and parking at first floor level

Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 37 Dwellings 16 x 1 Bed 17 x 2 Bed 4 x 3 Bed
Retail Area	500m ²
First Floor Office Area	500m ²
Parking Required	79 Spaces
Parking Location	Ground and First Floor – Sleeved by retail, office or showrooms facing Gregory Terrace



H – Alice Springs Park Redevelopment Proposal to develop a public parking area, a new urban park, new residences and retail at ground floor level surrounding the new park	
Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 267 Dwellings 115 x 1 Bed 120 x 2 Bed 32 x 3 Bed
Retail Area	2,000 m ²
Parking Required	540 spaces (387 new, 153 existing)
Parking Location	Parking will generally be below ground in a new basement structure. Some parking at ground level sleeved by shops which face Parsons Street.



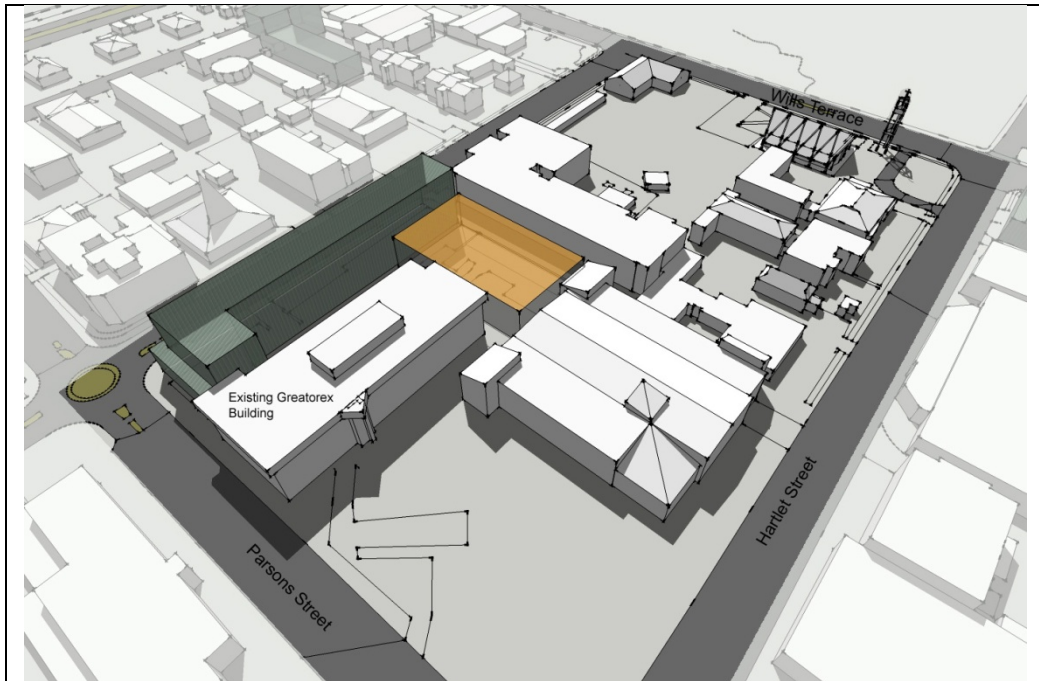
I – Government Building Redevelopment and Parking Structures

To remove parking from the Todd River environment, alternative parking is proposed in conjunction with the redevelopment of a government building. Government offices are replaced in the new development along with 2,000m² additional office space.

Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 54 Dwellings 23 x 1 Bed 24 x 2 Bed 6 x 3 Bed
Office Area	4,200m ²
Parking Required	159 spaces
Parking Location	Parking will be in a new 5 level parking structure with 480 spaces to enable parking areas in the Todd River precinct to be reclaimed as parkland. (All parking in the Todd River can be replaced)



J – Vacant Site on Railway Parade This proposal is entirely residential as it is in an essentially residential precinct in the CAD.	
Storeys	5 and 3
No of Dwellings	Total 44 Dwellings 19 x 1 Bed 19 x 2 Bed 5 x 3 Bed
Parking Required	44 spaces
Parking Location	Parking will be on site behind the new development.



**K – Redevelopment of Greaterex Building
Parking Lot**

Currently the car park to the west of the Greaterex Building is visually intrusive. A new office and residential development to sleeve a new parking structure will result in improved urban design outcomes

Storeys

5

No of Dwellings

Total 42 Dwellings

18 x 1 Bed

19 x 2 Bed

5 x 3 Bed

Office Area (2 levels)

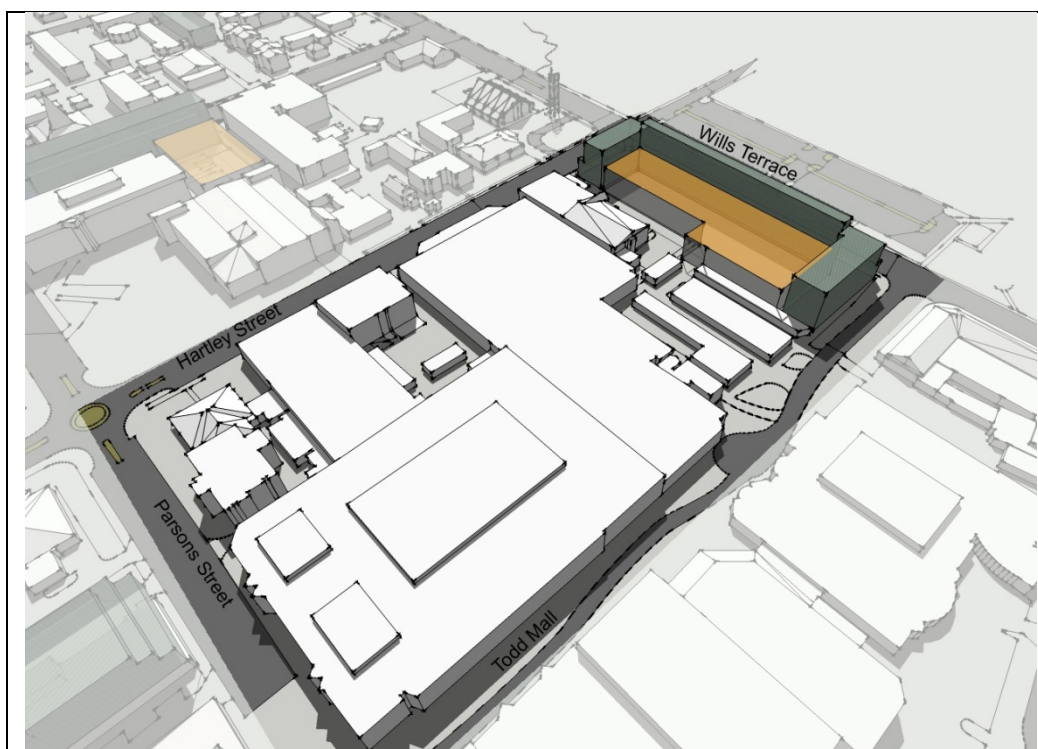
2,000 m²

Parking Required

92 spaces

Parking Location

Parking will be in a new 5 level parking structure (182 spaces) which will also replace the existing 89 surface parking spaces.



<p>L – Redevelopment of Target Parking Lot and Former Service Station Site on Wills Terrace</p> <p>This proposal is for a parking structure sleeved by new residential development which faces north to Wills Terrace</p>	
<p>Storeys</p>	<p>4 and 5</p>
<p>No of Dwellings</p>	<p>Total 69 Dwellings 30 x 1 Bed 31 x 2 Bed 8 x 3 Bed</p>
<p>Parking Required</p>	<p>69 spaces</p>
<p>Parking Location</p>	<p>Parking will be in a new 4 level parking structure which will replace existing surface parking (40 spaces) and provide additional parking capacity. Total parking in this structure will be 292 spaces</p>



M – Redevelopment of the ANZ Parking Lot Parking will restrict development potential on this site, however if parking is provided off site (say at proposal L) the development would result in a better public realm adjacent to the Todd River environment.	
Storeys	5
No of Dwellings	Total 19 Dwellings 8 x 1 Bed 9 x 2 Bed 2 x 3 Bed
Parking Required	19 spaces
Parking Location	Limited parking will be on site behind the new development.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Alice Springs CAD Capacity for Additional Dwellings, Offices and Retail

From this study of potential sites in the Alice Springs CAD the potential yield of residences, office and retail space and parking has been estimated. These are as follows:

Additional Gross Ground Floor Retail Area	8,030 m ²
Additional Gross Office Development Area	7,900 m ²
Additional Gross Area for Residences	91,500 m ²
Additional Residential Dwellings	1,273 Dwellings

Residences have been assumed to be varied in their accommodation to cater for a diversity of households. For the purposes of this study, size and share of capacity have been calculated as follows:

Single bedroom apartments	(30% of additional capacity)	Average 50m ²
Two bedroom apartments	(50% of additional capacity)	Average 80m ²
Three bedroom apartments	(20% of additional capacity)	Average 120m ²

Retail and offices have been proposed in conjunction with residential development to ensure that there is ground floor continuity between retail precincts and, that offices are provided in predominantly office precincts. These also ensure that there is activation of ground floors which contributes to the quality of the public realm.

Additional Parking Required

To accommodate this new development, parking has been calculated at the following ratios;

Retail	6 spaces per 100m ²
Office	2.5 spaces per 100m ²
Residential	1 space per dwelling

The development sites shown have the potential to deliver 2,154 new parking spaces while replacing 1,185 existing parking spaces. The total parking spaces provided in these proposals is therefore 3,316.

Currently there are 4,066 parking spaces in the Alice Springs CAD. These developments will bring the total to 6,220 spaces.

Implications for Alice Springs CAD

An additional 1,273 dwellings in the Alice Springs CAD will bring an additional estimated residential population of approximately 2,500 people. This will have a significant impact on the social, economic and environmental performance of the town

centre. Increased local patronage of shops, restaurants and businesses is likely to improve general economic performance, while cultural life will be strongly supported by this local resident population. In addition, a greater diversity of housing options will result. This will include more affordable housing and executive housing.

In addition these proposals would result in the following potential outcomes;

- The removal of parking from the Todd River to facilitate the restoration of this important natural and cultural landmark
- An additional 8,000 m² of retail space
- An additional 7,900 m² of new office space
- A new significant public park in the heart of Alice Springs. This will become the venue for a wide range of social and cultural activities, events and ceremonies in future.
- Significant improvements to the Alice Springs streetscapes.
- Improved safety and perception of safety through increased “natural surveillance”.
- Improved retail presentation.
- A more attractive town will be developed to encourage increased tourism.
- Additional parking capacity bringing to total parking spaces to 6,220 spaces.
- Protection of key vistas to surrounding hills, mountain ranges and river precincts

DEFINITIONS

<i>Public Realm</i>	Is that part of the town centre which is clearly for public use. This includes streets, parks, squares and other public spaces.
<i>Active Frontage</i>	Refers to street frontages where there is an active engagement between those in the street and those on the ground floors of buildings. This quality is assisted where the front facade of buildings, including the main entrance, face and open towards the street.
<i>Natural Surveillance</i>	“Eyes on the street” provided by local people as they go about their daily activities – this can deter anti-social behaviour and make places “feel” safer.
<i>Residential Capacity</i>	For the purposes of this study this is the theoretical potential for new residential development in the Alice Springs CAD
<i>Alice Springs CAD</i>	The Central Activity District of Alice Springs

January 2010