

## ***CONSULTATION REPORT***

### ***DARWIN INNER SUBURBS AREA PLANS – STAGE ONE***

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

On 25 June 2015, Northern Territory Planning Commission (NTPC) Chairman Gary Nairn AO, announced the commencement of Stage One of a three-stage Area Plan process for Darwin’s Inner Suburbs, to determine how best to accommodate expected growth into the future.

Unlike previous community consultation undertaken for the preparation of Area Plans, the three-stage process enabled the NTPC to commence discussions with the community in an ‘early input’ stage, prior to the development of a draft plan or map. The inclusion of this additional step meant that feedback and comments could be sought from the community and industry groups to inform the preparation of the draft plans.

This report provides a summary of the activities undertaken and the feedback received during Stage One.

This comprehensive consultation process rolled out approximately over eight weeks and included:

- An invitation from the NTPC Chair to approx. 10 000 residents and property owners in the study area;
- Public Notice and general advertising in print media;
- News media coverage;
- 13 ‘pop up’ stalls at targeted locations in and around the study area; and
- Two briefings with Industry bodies, Community groups and Government agencies.

The key question asked throughout Stage One was *“How will Darwin’s Inner Suburbs accommodate expected growth over the next 10, 20, 30 or 40 years”*.

Throughout the consultation process, the Planning Commission spoke directly to more than 600 residents and property owners, 41 Industry, Government and Community stakeholders and received 63 submissions.

While many varied ideas and contributions were heard, a number of key themes emerged throughout the consultation process including:

- General support for increased density and revitalization in areas surrounding activity centres, along transport corridors or where a level of density already exists;
- Maintaining and developing a modern tropical character through improved planning and design, including the better utilization of existing green space;
- Making better provision for parking, transport and infrastructure requirements prior to development approval and support for an integrated approach to planning; and
- A halt on spot rezoning approvals during the area planning consultation process.

These themes will assist Planners in developing the draft Inner Suburbs Area Plans.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### The Study Area

Darwin's inner suburbs are strategically located on the edge of Darwin CBD, covering the Darwin Peninsula and stretching north to the natural boundaries of Ludmilla Creek and the Darwin International Airport/RAAF Base.

The inner suburbs include Stuart Park, The Gardens, Parap, Woolner, Fannie Bay, Bayview, The Narrows and parts of Ludmilla Creek. The Industrial suburb of Winnellie provides the eastern boundary of the scope area. However, Winnellie is not within the study area for this project.

The suburbs of Stuart Park, Fannie Bay, Parap and the Gardens are often described as the "old Darwin" suburbs or "Garden suburbs", in contrast to suburbs such as Bayview and the new residential parts of Woolner.

*"Darwin's inner suburbs are also our iconic first suburbs, full of early history and multiple generations. The sense of community that exists in these SD areas, support shared in times of crisis, volunteer base, sporting and cultural ties is not to be underestimated."*

*Parap Resident*

Population growth projections outline that over the next 40 to 50 years, the Darwin Region is expected to almost double in population with an increase of approximately 120,000 residents.

Darwin's inner suburbs are likely to be one of the largest growth areas, with an expected demand for 4,500 extra dwellings likely over this time (*Draft Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2014*).

### The Study Context

The Northern Territory Planning Commission is an independent and advisory statutory authority that prepares strategic land use plans to manage growth in anticipation rather than in response.

The Planning Commission proactively sets the strategic framework for better integrated land use, transport and infrastructure planning, delivering more sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the community, with sensitivity to environmental and heritage values.

In April 2015, the Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment tasked the Planning Commission with the preparation of Area Plans for key localities throughout Darwin and the Rural Area.

A number of supporting plans and policies will guide and influence the preparation of the Inner Suburbs Area Plans.

**The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan** is a high level policy aimed to result in better integrated land use, transport, and infrastructure planning at a regional level. The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan was approved by the Minister for Lands and Planning in July 2015 and now forms part of the NT Planning Scheme. It should be noted however, that this type of higher level Land Use Plan does not provide the finer grain detail required to effectively plan for the districts and suburbs of the Darwin Region. This is the role of the Area Plans.

**Northern Territory Compact Urban Growth Policy** came into effect on 19 June 2015. The aim of the Policy is to create urban hubs that improve lifestyle, health, the economy, the environment and the community as a whole. Where appropriate, higher density residential buildings are encouraged alongside other commercial and community uses, creating localities where people can work, live and play. The Policy outlines how to achieve the above through a range of objectives and performance indicators.

**Darwin City Centre Master Plan** is a joint project of the City of Darwin, Northern Territory Government and Australian Government. The Master Plan provides a blueprint to guide the growth of the Darwin City Centre over the next 20 years, with a focus on liveability, connections into the CBD, and potential areas for new development and guidance for the private sector on how to get the best returns on investment in the CBD.

The Master Plan's area of influence includes Stuart Park and The Gardens.

The preparation of Area Plans for Darwin's Mid Suburbs and the preparation of the Litchfield Sub Regional Plan with accompanying Area Plans are also being undertaken by the Planning Commission.

### **The Planning Environment**

The Inner Suburbs project was the third Area Planning project undertaken by the Planning Commission (the Draft Holtze Area Plan and Planning Principals was prepared by the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, and then exhibited and edited following consultation by the Planning Commission, undertaken in June and July 2015. The Planning Commission also previously completed an Area Plan for Berrimah North). Prior to this, the preparation of Area Plans had been undertaken by Lands Planning, within the Department of Lands and Planning.

The Planning Commission's involvement with the preparation of Area Plans represented an opportunity for the area planning process to be undertaken in a different way.

Throughout the consultation process, planning issues were a hot topic in local media, with debate and discussion around the Lowther Road development application in the Rural Area, Holtze area planning, CBD building heights and general development in the rural area.

A number of planning decisions and approvals made prior to, and during the consultation process for the Inner Suburbs Area Planning project provide further context.

The Compact Urban Growth Policy was approved by the Minister in the days prior to the commencement of the project and the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan was also approved during the consultation.

The Blake Street, Gardens rezoning application was approved during the early stages of the consultation, while a rezoning application for Quarry Street in Stuart Park was also considered and refused.

### **3.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS**

This Report is a summary of the first stage (“Stage One”) of consultation for Darwin’s Inner Suburbs.

This is the first stage of the three-stage consultation process, and the first of its kind undertaken by the Planning Commission.

The three stage Consultation process was undertaken to establish a new methodology for Area Planning, which involves an ‘early input’ stage prior to the public release of draft plans. It was recognized that exhibiting Area Plans in their draft form prior to seeking input from the public led to an (incorrect) assumption that the Area Plan was already complete and that the opportunity for any real public input was moot.

To avoid this assumption, and to reinforce to the community the value of their contributions, a three Stage engagement approach was recommended and accepted by the Planning Commission.

**Stage One** of the engagement process will commence via an early input consultation phase, gathering and sharing information prior to the display of the draft area plans.

**Stage Two** will then see the development of the plans by the Department, and circulation/display for a short public exhibition period for further comment and feedback.

**Stage Three** will commence the statutory exhibition period for inclusion in the Planning Scheme.

This approach gives three distinct opportunities for public participation, and allows the Planning Commission to gather valuable input and stakeholder information and distribute key information regarding the planning process.

#### **Consultation Objectives – Stage One**

- To create an engagement framework that is meaningful and accessible for key stakeholders to get involved in and contribute to the development of Area Plans;

- To articulate key messages, common language and high level context for spokespersons, publications, social media and direct engagement;
- To ensure stakeholders are provided with information, timeframes and feedback regarding their input into the area planning process;
- To illustrate good compact urban growth planning for a vibrant, sustainable Darwin;
- To create a public understanding of, and interest in, the planning process in the NT; and
- To start an on-going discussion for the future vision for Darwin’s inner urban suburbs.

### **Consultation Approach – Stage One**

**Media Announcement:** A media event was held at Parap Village (as the centre of the study area), attended by all local media, receiving coverage on ABC Radio, NT News, and on ABC TV News and Channel Nine news.

**Mail Out “Invitation to participate”:** A4 mail outs were sent to approx. 10 000 residents and property owners in the study area, with an invitation from the Planning Commission Chairman to have input into the study via submission or by visiting one of the pop up stalls.

**Consultation Materials:** Copies of all engagement materials – including an Inner Suburbs planning booklet containing maps and important information about the Inner Suburbs – were made available at the stalls and on the Planning Commission’s website. The materials included a range of questions for consideration to help guide discussion.

Visitors to the stalls could also make ‘on-the-spot’ submissions.

**Pop up Stalls:** ‘Pop up’ information stalls were held at convenient locations (Saturday markets, outside local shops in Parap, Stuart Park, Fannie Bay, Winellie, Darwin CBD and the Darwin Show). Dates for these stalls were advertised on the Planning Commissions website, on the consultation materials and in newspaper advertising.

**Targeted briefings:** Targeted briefings from the Planning Commission Chair were given to Government agencies and Industry and Community stakeholders, well attended with over 40 representatives.

**Advertising:** Advertising in the NT News Planning Notices section (Friday) and general news section (Saturday).

### **Community and Stakeholder Consultation – Stage One**

It was very clear throughout the consultation process there is strong interest within the community about planning and a genuine desire to discuss concerns and areas of interest.

For many people, the pop up stalls appear to be their first one on one engagement with planning agencies generally and with the Commission specifically.

Planning issues were a hot topic throughout the consultation period, in the media regularly, and at times, a political issue. This brought some attention to the consultation process, however for the most part; participants were genuinely interested in their ‘patch’ and the future growth of their city.

DATE & LOCATION	STAKEHOLDERS	APPROX. # CONSULTED
Sat. 27 June, Parap Markets	Local Residents and Property Owners	110
Wed. 1 July, Stuart Park	Local Residents and Property Owners	19
Sat. 4 July, Parap Markets	Local Residents and Property Owners	60
Wed. 8 July, Fannie Bay	Local Residents and Property Owners	55
Sat. 11 July, Parap Markets	Local Residents and Property Owners	99
Wed. 15 July, Stuart Park	Local Residents and Property Owners	8
Sat. 18 July, Parap Market	Local Residents and Property Owners	65
Tues 21 July, Energy House	Government and Agency Stakeholders	18
Tues 21 July, Energy House	Industry and Community Stakeholders	23
Wed. 22 July, Fannie Bay	Local Residents and Property Owners	30
Thurs, 23 July, Darwin Show	Greater Darwin Community	17
Fri, 24 July, Darwin Show	Greater Darwin Community	57
Sat 25 July, Darwin Show	Greater Darwin Community	41
Fri 14 August, Smith St Mall	Greater Darwin Community and CBD residents	24
Wed 19 August, Winellie Shops	Local Residents and Property Owners	15
		<b>TOTAL: 641</b>

### Key Agency, Industry and Community Stakeholders

- Briefings were conducted with 18 NTG agencies which included representatives from:
  - Department of Infrastructure

- Department of Chief Minister
  - Power and Water Corporation
  - Department of Transport
  - Department of Housing
  - Department of Arts and Museums
  - Department of Business
  - Leader of the Opposition
  - Opposition Planning Spokesperson
- A briefing for Industry and community groups was also held, which included 23 representatives from:
    - Danila Dilba Health Services
    - Urban Development Institute Australia
    - Real Estate Institute NT
    - Northern Planning Consultants
    - One Planning Consult
    - Flanagan Consulting Group
    - Property Council of Australia, NT
    - Housing Industry Association
    - Australian Institute of Architects, NT Chapter
    - PLAN (Planning Action Network Inc)
    - Top End Disposal

#### 4.0 SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

A total of 63 submissions were received from stakeholders, including residents and property owners, industry and community groups.

In addition to these formal submissions, comments and feedback provided at the pop up stalls was also noted and where given, contact details noted. Questions relating to specific properties were followed up by the Department.

Feedback has been grouped into the following areas:

**Key Consultation Themes** – the main issues raised throughout the consultation process

**Land Use Themes** – responses and submissions addressing the key Land Use Themes identified in the consultation materials

**Peak Body Feedback** – a summary of responses and recommendations received by peak industry bodies throughout the consultation

Many of the issues raised throughout the consultation are not strictly ‘planning’ matters, or the remit of the Planning Commission. For example, provision of public toilets, building design and appearance, undergrounding of power lines. However it is essential these concerns are captured within this document and fed back to relevant bodies.

#### **4.1 KEY CONSULTATION THEMES**

##### **4.1.1 TROPICAL CHARACTER**

Overwhelmingly, respondents wish to maintain and accentuate Darwin as a tropical city, incorporating tropical design, streetscapes and green open spaces. This was not necessarily at the expense of compact urban growth, rather that growth or densification occur in areas where density already exists, and that urban design guidelines are in place to ensure new developments are reflective of a tropical city.

Elements or values identified throughout the consultation which respondents felt typically reflect a tropical city include:

- Larger lot sizes
- Green open space
- Tree-d streetscapes in residential areas
- Renovated tropical high rise homes, with louvres to allow flow through

*“How do we build and maintain a tropical image? Through architecture that allows flow and overhangs, open space, shaded streetscapes and shaded corridors connecting our historical sites and parks to our beautiful natural heritage.”*

*Parap Resident*

Respondents felt a key component of “tropical character” is open green space – “a green belt” used as recreation, community and open space. Many expressed fears that Darwin is ‘losing’ its green space, while others responded that existing green spaces are not being utilised to their full potential.

A recurring recommendation is that new buildings and developments provide a proportionate green space either for residential or community use.

##### **4.1.2 COMPACT URBAN GROWTH**

Generally, there was a high degree of understanding about the concept of compact urban growth and support for growth to happen in a planned way, in keeping with the concepts outlined in the Northern Territory’s Compact Urban Growth policy.

A common response was that ‘higher density is acceptable in some areas, but with a mix of single dwelling homes throughout existing SD areas.’ Compact Urban Growth was variously described as in-fill, densification, revitalization, urban renewal and higher density living.

Amongst those who nominated specific areas or areas for redevelopment, revitalization or as candidates for compact urban growth, there was general agreement on location. Some of the areas identified as suitable for redevelopment or revitalisation included:

- Illife Street / Ben Hammond
- One Mile Dam / Daly Street bridge
- Goyder Road / MVR
- Along transport corridors, particularly revitalization of entry points into the CBD along the Stuart Highway, and Westralia Street in Stuart Park
- In and around existing Activity Centres
- The Stuart Highway end of Parap Road
- The old Netball courts (precinct) on Ross Smith Avenue
- Richardson Park as residential redevelopment
- Higher density development along the Stuart Highway from the old Government Printing Office to Parap Road
- A number of parkland/open spaces, particularly smaller, single allotments are “underutilised”, and used largely by itinerants. Reincorporating these allotments could be both an improved safety and renewal opportunity
- Underutilised areas in Woolner, Bishop Street, the area between Woolner and Winnellie, the town end of Winellie; along the Stuart Highway, Bagot Road, the RAAF base, parts of Ludmilla bound by Bagot Road and Dick Ward Drive.
- Stuart Park Activity Centre could be expanded, due to its placement on the Stuart Highway

*“If higher density housing is inevitable, it should be planned for and encouraged, so that developments can take place in a logical and desirable way...”*

*Stuart Park Resident*

*“A lack of re-zoning initiative is holding back the redevelopment and revitalization of the area.”*

*Stuart Park Resident*

*“Higher density redevelopment of Eastern Stuart Park would have additional flow on effects. For instance, with a higher residential population, the shabby shopping centre in Westralia Street adjacent to the Stuart Highway might be upgraded and re-developed as a result of improved business returns and improved capacity for investment”*

*Stuart Park Resident*

*“Development is necessary and a good thing. It creates jobs and prosperity. Inner urban “infill” or “consolidation” is also a good thing if managed properly. It can create vibrant, compact, cosmopolitan cities where people want to live. However, not every development is good, just as not every resident objection is valid.”*

*Inner Suburbs Resident*

*“There are areas within Fannie bay where there is a choice of either living in a low or high density zone. It is essential that both this choice and separation of zones is maintained”*

*Inner suburbs Resident*

Respondents have given a fairly clear view as to where redevelopment could or should occur. However, the majority of responses were clear that while development could occur at these sites, the character of areas that are dominated by detached single dwellings was left alone (ie. Fannie Bay South, Ludmilla and the eastern section of Stuart Park).

There were, however, some suggestions that the inner suburbs are ‘full’ and that growth should be accommodated elsewhere, such as Darwin CBD, Berrimah Farm and Weddell.

*“Does urban infill need to take place? The Weddell Plan should go ahead – why spoil Darwin and its green spaces? Why urban infill if Berrimah Farm is to be developed?”*

*Inner Suburbs Resident*

#### **4.1.3 PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN**

As previously noted, the consultation process appeared to be the first opportunity for many in the study area to engage directly with Planning on a one-on-one basis. As a result, many comments related to planning and development processes and decisions.

From both individuals and industry groups, there is wide support for improved and explicit design controls, urban design guidelines and character statements to be included in the Planning Scheme to provide guidance for new developments that include aesthetic, environmental, tropical living, innovation and parking/traffic considerations.

*“Character Statements will give developers, the community and regulators more certainty that new development resulting in increased densities will respect the established and identified future character of the surrounding locality.”*

*Industry Stakeholder*

Due to the political and planning environment at the time of consultation, quite a number of comments were received regarding spot rezoning and Exceptional Development applications. A majority of these comments asked for spot rezoning to cease during the consultation period, until the Area Plans were drafted, exhibited and incorporated into the Planning Scheme.

*“Please don’t consider any re-zoning applications within Darwin and Inner suburbs until the Plan is developed. This would ensure well planned, consistent development that reflects good planning principles and the wishes of the residents.”*

*Park Resident*

Other planning, development and design issues noted throughout the consultation are:

- A two year time-limit on development, once approval has been received (no land-banking);
- Interest in the progress of the Weddell plan, with some opposition to the plan in light of alternative redevelopment opportunities;
- Government should compulsorily acquire Chinatown in the city;
- More information about developer contributions for infrastructure;
- All new developments should include additional greenspace and adequate parking;
- Developments like the Waterfront are great for families and tourists;
- Design controls must be part of approvals for high rise and new developments;
- Architecture and lot size is part of the ‘tropical lifestyle’ and image we need to maintain;
- Requirement that developments are required to provide public open space upon approval of development;
- Innovative design can help to maintain tropical character of homes and suburbs;
- Dramatic difference in the interface between some zones (ie SD to MD to MR to HR) does not encourage quality design outcomes;
- To consider developing a planning policy that covers development design objectives and built form controls to encourage design innovation; and
- Staging of building heights to provide ‘viewing corridors’.

*“The Inner City looks like the Gold Coast”*

*Parap resident*

*“The DCA deals only with approving developments... there is need for a separate agency to deal with the public, as against the commercial aspects of planning and development.”*

*Community stakeholder*

*“Consider the development of planning policy that covers development design objectives build form controls in greater detail.”*

*Industry Stakeholder*

*“Can we demand that developers start being sustainable in the materials and design? We are so outdated with our housing requirements.”*

*Inner Suburbs Resident*

*“Greatly increased aesthetic and sensible environmental control is on new builds.”*

*Stuart Park resident*

## **4.2. LAND USE THEMES**

A number of key land use themes were outlined in the consultation materials. These themes cover the main criteria used to draft the Area Plans.

The consultation materials included questions relevant to each of these themes, to guide (in a non-leading way) discussion and thinking around area planning. These questions are replicated below, and a summary of feedback relating to these topics.

### **4.2.1 RESIDENTIAL**

- *How and where would you accommodate the anticipated population growth within the inner suburbs?*
- *How do we achieve a series of more compact neighbourhoods whilst maintaining the tropical character of the inner suburbs?*
- *Where should growth be encouraged? What neighbourhoods and precincts have the most potential for change, and what neighbourhoods and precincts shouldn't change?*
- *What does your suburb need more or less of? How should buildings, streets and shopping centres look in the inner suburbs?*

### **Tropical Character**

As previously noted, overwhelmingly, submissions and comments agreed that maintaining a “tropical character” in residential suburbs was essential.

Views on how this might be achieved differed greatly, with comments ranging from the idea that big lots in the inner suburbs are an essential part of the tropical character of Darwin to strong support (generally by owners of large lots) for dual occupancy and subdivisions.

*“The idea of a tropical character for the city is an outdated notion that features extravagantly large allotments and swaying palm trees. While such a concept is paradise for the individual the cost to society of such extravagance is prohibitive. A tropical atmosphere can be achieved by other means”.*

*Fannie Bay Resident*

In the main, most agreed that this was important to retain, but differed in their solutions to achieve it.

### **Lot Size / Dual Occupancy**

For many, the key component to a ‘tropical character’ is larger lot size, but submissions and comments were mixed in regard to the suitability of dual occupancy or subdividing larger lots in the inner suburbs.

A fair percentage of those in favour of rezoning or subdividing were owners of large lots looking to sell, as well as those who simply felt that while large lots were a “nice idea”, tropical character could be maintained via a 500 or 600 sq block.

*“True residential streets should only be allowed subdivision into two blocks and not multi-dwelling units. It is inevitable that large blocks be subdivided.”*

*Owner/Resident of large block in  
Stuart Park*

*“We have no objection to having predominantly two storey (MD zonings) in all of the suburbs mentioned, with some MR zonings also scattered around these areas, as long as all the existing ‘green belts’ in and around these areas are retained.”*

*Inner Suburbs Resident*

*“Densification is happening at a community level with granny flat construction and subdivision of blocks in the area (that still retain SD status) in the past 10 years. These new developments retain the flavor of our locality.*

*Fannie Bay resident*

It was felt that allowing subdivisions of larger blocks could alleviate the housing pressure, without needing to build higher rise units, and that it could allow older residents an alternative option to enable them to remain in the inner suburbs.

### **Compact Urban Growth**

While there is support for the principles of compact urban growth, and for the inclusion of a policy to guide decision making around densification, there is some reservation regarding its application to protect primarily SD areas.

*“Principles in the Darwin Compact Urban Growth Policy give some guidance to selecting areas where densification is appropriate; however it does not go far enough to protect precincts where our resident community’s investment in gentrification is underpinned by the SD zone – precincts that would otherwise meet the requirements for densification.”*

There is also encouragement to apply the Compact Urban Growth principles as adopted into the Planning Scheme, to allow revitalisation and densification in key areas supported by transport corridors and centres of employment and activity.

*“The proposed area plan for the Darwin Inner Suburbs should reflect the suitability of properties along the Stuart highway corridor for high density residential development...(which) comply in every respect with the principles discussed in the Northern Territory Government’s Strategic Planning policies. ”*

*Owner of properties along the  
Stuart Highway*

#### **4.2.2 ACTIVITY CENTRES AND SERVICE CORRIDORS**

- *What kind of development would you like to see within Activity Centres?*
- *The Stuart Highway is one of the main entrances to Darwin city - how should the entry from Parap to the City look?*
- *Should more land in the inner suburbs be made available for other commercial activities, such as shops, showrooms, warehouses etc.?*

#### **Shopping / Commercial Precincts**

There was general acceptance of the Activity Centres as designated in the consultation materials.

Defence Housing Australia recommend Parap Village and adjoining nodes be designated as the major centre of the inner suburbs. Stuart Park was also seen as a key Activity Centre, due to its placement on the Stuart Highway

Comments were split as to the need for a supermarket in the inner suburbs. Some felt it would destroy the neighbourhood feel (particularly at Fannie Bay), others felt Ludmilla or Woolner would be a perfect location for an additional supermarket or grocery shop.

*“Always have mixed shops in any development, they provide opportunity for micro/small businesses and keep local communication points alive. We want to encourage walking to the shops, not driving to the supermarket”.*

*Inner Suburbs Resident*

#### **Gateway to the CBD**

It was generally thought that rezoning / densification along existing service corridors and main roads makes sense, lending further support to the compact urban growth model.

The creation of an ‘entry’ or gateway into the CBD, through rezoning of existing service commercial, revitalisation and changes to the alignment of the Stuart Highway was a common theme, and included suggestions such as:

- Revitalised Stuart Highway with a ‘High Street’ feel;
- Terraced housing the entrance to the city;
- Rezoning the Stuart Highway to improve and commercial appeal; and
- Maintaining the Auto strip along the Stuart Highway *“to support the day to day business, residential and lifestyle needs of the study area”*.

*“The approach to the city is disgusting”*

*Stuart Park Resident*

*“The potential for significant revitalisation of land fronting the Stuart Highway, between the Daly Street Bridge and the Westralia Street intersection... with a greater emphasis on commercial (rather than service commercial), community and mixed use development, whilst ensuring the appropriate provision of services and infrastructure, would significantly improve the use of this land and the entrance to the CBD.”*

*Industry Stakeholder Submission*

### **Industrial Areas**

Beyond the identification of industrial/light industrial areas for revitalization, comment around Industrial uses was limited.

A recommendation was made by Defence Housing Australia to maintain the Business to Business area of Woolner to support the day to day, business, residential and lifestyle needs of the study area.

*“Shabby” Stuart Park shops and associated space could do with revitalization.”*

*Stuart Park Resident*

### **4.2.3 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

- *Is there enough open space provided in the Inner Suburbs?*
- *Should new public open space be made available in sizeable developments?*
- *What types of community facilities do you think need to be considered for the area into the future?*

There is a general feeling in the community that Darwin is ‘losing’ its green space and that this should be protected to maintain a ‘tropical character’.

Additionally, observations were made that some current spaces are not being well-utilised as community spaces.

As noted elsewhere, there is strong support for new developments to include corresponding space for social infrastructure, either for use by residents, or by the broader community – a “green space to match growth” approach.

Some suggestions for additional or improved community facilities for the Inner Suburbs includes social infrastructure such as skate parks or facilities for families in the inner suburbs, a revitalized recreation space at the old Netball courts on Ross Smith Avenue.

*“What community infrastructure will require an increase in capacity to support the additional population? As a general comment, we believe that community purpose, recreation and open space land needs to be held onto. We can’t get it back! If it is ever sold, it needs to be a fully transparent process.”*

*Parap Resident*

*“The organised recreation area on Ross Smith Avenue, consisting the old netball courts is another facility that should be redeveloped. Many of the future needs of the population may be met by making better use of (recreational) facilities and spaces that are already available in the inner suburbs”.*

*Resident Fannie Bay*

#### **4.2.4 MOVEMENT AND TRANSPORT**

- What potential implications could future population growth within Darwin’s inner suburbs have on the *local transport network*?
- *What opportunities exist to improve the local transport network, including road networks, and pedestrian and cycling links within the scope area?*
- *What other kinds of public transport might be useful in a city like Darwin?*

The impact of higher density development on parking, transport and movement, particularly in narrow, predominantly residential streets was an issue for a majority of respondents.

It was felt this could be alleviated by better design and approval processes, ensuring there is adequate parking allowance for new developments to keep additional cars off the street.

*“All new apartment developments should be required to have at least three off street parking spaces for each unit. In older suburbs such as Fannie Bay where the streets are narrow and winding (part of its charm) the on-street parking is becoming a real problem and danger.”*

*Fannie Bay Resident*

Parking around Activity Centres was also identified as an issue. It was noted that as the Activity Centres develop and become successful, increased traffic and increased employment was causing additional parking needs. However, there was universal resistance to paid parking at these Activity Centres.

General approval for the continued maintenance and development of the shared path network with requests and suggestions to make these paths shaded or tree-d where possible, and to extend the path to create a whole network including Bayview, Tipperary and into the CBD, and the Waterfront.

Additional suggestions include: drinking fountains, improved visitor signage, safer crossings around major intersections, lock up bike stops near Activity Centres, and potentially a short term bike hire and return system similar to cities in Europe.

It was felt investment into the shared path network would alleviate the pressures on the road network and traffic

*“The shared path network is a great asset that needs investment to defer road and parking upgrades and keep suburbs connected to the CBD. Improvements that increase usage should be a transport priority.”*

*Parap Resident*

There is some support for a light rail network from Howard Springs to the City in the future, with some urging to plan for this now, for the Territory’s future needs – *“With modern technology this can only be done if (a) light rail corridor is kept open.”*

#### **4.2.5 ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

Beyond some comment around infrastructure planning and investment, comment on Essential Services was limited.

A Stuart Park resident noted that increased density was already putting pressure on existing services and that consideration must be given to infrastructure capacity before developments are approved.

A respondent whose rezoning application was recently approved is unable to proceed until electricity and water upgrades are progressed in Stuart Park.

Verbal feedback throughout the consultation underscored the need for an integrated approach to planning, incorporating a range of agencies to ensure growth in the inner suburbs is supported by infrastructure, transport, public housing and environmental planning.

#### **4.2.6 ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**

As previously identified, many residents felt the maintenance of existing green belts was essential for tropical character, and the better utilization of existing green space was of benefit to the whole community.

A number of submissions refer to the protection of existing mangroves and the role the mangroves play in biodiversity and in supporting traditional skills.

*“Densification should be balanced by environmental and heritage networks, walking and bike tracks as an offset for higher density development and for the health of the community.”*

*Parap Resident*

*“Natural values enhance our lives and marine biodiversity. Protect all natural areas. Don’t bulldoze habitat, densification is alright in areas that are already built on.”*

*Millner Resident*

#### **4.3 PEAK BODY FEEDBACK**

The Commission received a number of comprehensive submissions from a number of key Northern Territory industry bodies and Government agencies, including:

- Defence Housing Australia (DHA)
- City of Darwin (CoD)
- Housing Industry Australia (HIA)
- NT Department of Housing (DoHsg)
- Urban Design Institute Australia (UDIA NT)
- NT Department of Transport (DoT)
- Planning Institute Australia (PIA)
- Australian Institute of Architects NT Chapter (AIA NT)

The following summary outlines the key input from these stakeholders, grouped by consultation and land use themes.

##### **4.3.1 TROPICAL CHARACTER**

The importance of maintaining tropical character is reflected in almost all industry submissions. As noted elsewhere, UDIA recommends the development of Design Guidelines and Character Statements to achieve compact neighbourhoods whilst maintaining tropical character.

### 4.3.2 COMPACT URBAN GROWTH

AIA NT considers that urban consolidation *provides economic and efficiency benefits, social justice and sustainability.*

The Urban Design Institute of Australia (UDIA) (NT Chapter) strongly opposes *the ecologically and economically unsustainable Weddell at this time, in favour of Berrimah Farm and Holtze sites for residential new development.*

UDIA take the view that it is *unacceptable to socially force new residents to live in an area where there are limited services, employment and public transport.*

The Department of Housing considers urban renewal a strategic opportunity for the Territory, and supports compact urban growth to *“reduce impact on environment and rejuvenate neighbourhoods.”*

DoHsg, as a key stakeholder for urban renewal decisions, would like to see social / affordable housing components included in any crown land release for development.

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) supports an increase in residential densities along public transport corridors, particularly mixed use developments, to create a business and residential district incorporating in the Parap Village/Salonika Street /Westralia St /Woolner Rd.

DHA also nominate a number of potential redevelopment sites:

- Adjacent the Museum and Art Gallery
- DHA Goyder Road
- MVR Goyder Road
- Power and Water Corp Depot
- Zoned Land at Woolner Road and Tiger Brennan Drive

UDIA nominate the below sites for higher density / renewal

- Old Tank farm as an opportunity for renewal/ green space
- NT Fleet / bus depot / PWC potential for redevelopment
- Goyder Road and neighbouring SD areas linking to the MVR site.
- Parts of The Gardens could be suitable for densification, including potential commercial/office space and access roads, commencing with the already MR zoned Gardens Hill Crescent
- UDIA also supports higher density and higher-rise developments abutting the Stuart Highway to support public transport.
- UDIA notes that while there is scope for infil in Parap, particularly around Parap Square, the existing single dwelling amenity of the area should be protected, similarly in Fannie Bay SD areas.

- UDIA supports higher density along Ross Smith Avenue, particularly around the service station area in Fannie Bay

#### 4.3.3 PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT/DESIGN

Beyond the articulation of design or character guidelines for the Inner Suburbs, the AIA believes an overarching narrative – a vision, relating to Darwin’s unique story as Australia’s northernmost capital – could be included as part of the Area Planning materials and consultation.

*“We hope that the ‘frontier’ nature of Darwin’s more recent history can evolve into something more complex, layered and sophisticated, and propose that strategic planning exercises such as this are an opportunity to articulate, and lead, such a vision.”*

UDIA also recommends consideration is given to Darwin’s role as the capital of Northern Australia, and the future economic, tourism and development opportunities this may have for iconic sites in the inner suburbs, including the Botanic Gardens and the Old Hospital Site.

Along with the UDIA, the AIA would expand the Area Planning process to include well-considered urban design and streetscape principals, and incorporate a professional design review as part of the Development Approval process.

The Planning Institute of Australia (NT) also considers design matters an essential part of an Area Planning process, with a focus on:

- *Improving outcomes regarding the quality of higher density living, in terms of design, acoustic privacy, quality of outdoor shared space, storage availability, the quality of surrounds, streetscapes and connectivity.*
- *“Cool Cities” and “Cool Character” for better design outcomes for activity centres, residential densification, shaded streetscapes, and community infrastructure.*

In terms of planning process and development approvals, HIA advocates a *smooth and efficient planning process be implemented to facilitate infill development.*

*“Strategic redevelopment sites provide a real opportunity to start a new community and the planning process needs to be efficient for these areas and delays in the process minimised”*

Similarly, the Department of Housing promotes a strategic and integrated approach to planning decisions around renewal sites, including representation at the detailed planning stages.

Specifically, DoH would see a *“streamlined process for a Department of Housing-proposed low impact density increase by converting Single Dwelling to duplex and triplexes”* in the Inner Suburbs.

#### 4.3.4 RESIDENTIAL

Peak bodies, including DHA, AIA and UDIA recommend increasing the diversity of housing product, beyond the Troppo House vs High rise dichotomy.

*“Increase diversity of dwelling type in the Inner Suburbs - secondary dwellings, dual, tri and multiple, duplex and dual occupancy, small lot subdivisions” - DHA*

AIA recommends the Commission undertake a conceptual exercise to illustrate the range of alternative housing design available:

*“High quality, mid rise high density housing” needs to be promoted as an alternative between single troppo and high rise residential towers” AIA*

#### **4.3.5 ACTIVITY CENTRES**

Defence Housing Australia nominates Parap Village as the ‘major centre’ in the inner suburbs, and provides a recommendation for the *“melding of Parap Village, Salonika Street, Westralia Street, and the zoned land at Woolner Road to form a central mixed use business and residential district.”*

DHA also recommend maintaining the existing Business to Business services in Woolner, and the existing Auto strip along the Stuart Highway.

UDIA recommends the large Illife Street sites as potential for a large supermarket, as well as additional green space through development. Alternative sites for a hub or supermarket include The Narrows and Woolner.

UDIA recommends an upgrade for the Fannie Bay shops with potential for a two-storey development, particularly with the redevelopment of Sports House.

#### **4.3.6 INDUSTRIAL**

As mentioned previously, DHA recommend maintaining the Business to Business areas of Woolner, and Auto Exposure strip on the Stuart Highway along the entrance to the CBD.

#### **4.3.7 SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The City of Darwin supports the allocation of space for meeting and activity spaces to bring the community together.

However, City of Darwin also notes that rezoning of CP land must be thoroughly investigated first, and if rezoned, supporting infrastructure must be considered, and the question of who funds and coordinates any upgrades or new facilities require as a result of development must be answered prior to development approval.

See also, UDIA nominated sites for development to include community green space

#### **4.3.8 TRANSPORT / MOVEMENT**

The City of Darwin (CoD) note that higher density requires improved public transport and that Area Plans must include provisions for light rail, rapid transport systems.

The Department of Transport (DoT) also notes that improved Public Transport routes and a Rapid Transport Corridor will need to be incorporated into the draft Area Plans, along with other limitations/considerations emerging from a range of Transport studies including:

- Roads and Bridges Strategy
- Public Transport Study
- Darwin Regional Transport Plan
- Multi-modal Darwin Regional Transport model

The CoD note that transport capability and access to local roads and the highway must be considered prior to any upzoning (as well as stormwater infrastructure and capability).

UDIA recommends that a *decision is made and planning commenced for the realignment of the Stuart Highway as this will have considerable impact on the future development of these Suburbs.*

DHA supports a Rapid Transit route along the Stuart Highway, and a Public Transport interchange between Goyder road and Parap Road intersection, supporting their recommendation for Parap as the major centre for the Inner Suburbs.

CoD, DoT, UDIA and DHA note the importance of upgraded and shaded bike and pedestrian pathways, to support compact urban growth. A bike path from Bayview to the City is specifically identified.

#### **4.3.9 ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

CoD note that stormwater infrastructure and capability (as well as transport capability and access to local roads and the highway) must be considered prior to any upzoning.

#### **4.3.10 ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE**

CoD note that green space in the inner suburbs is “a higher proportion than required by the Planning Act” and that while it is unlikely to increase substantially in the future, large redevelopment sites should still include publically accessible open space or make a contribution or improvement to existing local open space.

AIA notes that any increase in physical density (especially height) should be matched by appropriate landscaping and ground level considerations, including parking, commenting that green open space is about quality, not quantity and well-tended and planted smaller spaces may be more useful than larger under-utilised tracts.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Despite a reasonably volatile environment in which to commence an area planning process, particularly for some of Darwin's most iconic suburbs, the submissions and feedback received, engagement undertaken and opportunity to commence a conversation about planning have resulted in a successful Stage One process.

Feedback received during the process, particularly at the 'pop up stalls' was generally positive, with genuine interest in planning and Darwin's future. It was also a positive opportunity for the Planners and the Planning Commission, to speak with residents and property owners in a relaxed, informal environment.

The addition of Stage One – the early input stage – meant that the Planning Commission wasn't 'selling anything'. By not going out with a draft plan, it was genuinely understood that Stage One was simply gathering information. In this way, feedback and submissions were wide ranging, with recommendations, comments, suggestions and ideas far beyond the remit of the Commission, but wholeheartedly expressed. This type of one-on-one engagement, where we 'ask' not 'tell' seems appreciated by the community.

The Key Consultation Themes emerged quite quickly and were maintained throughout the almost eight weeks of consultation:

- Almost universal support for maintaining the tropical character of the Inner Suburbs, particularly via well-utilised green space
- An understanding of the concept of Compact Urban Growth
- General agreement on those areas within the Inner Suburbs where revitalization might take place
- Strong interest in improved design controls to enhance the aesthetic of the Inner Suburbs
- Strong feedback that traffic, parking and general movement in some Inner Suburban streets has become problematic following developments
- Support to stop spot rezonings during the consultation process

While a wide range of solutions and recommendations were heard, what is most heartening is the appetite for and interest in planning, and the future growth and development of Darwin's Inner Suburbs. Interestingly, feedback received from Industry and Government stakeholders is not dissimilar to feedback from the community.

Stage Two will commence following the preparation of the Area Plans, and will include further consultation and public exhibition.