



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Planning Reform



7. Good Design

To assist with COVID-19 recovery initiatives, the State Government is undertaking legislative, regulation and policy reform to create a more flexible, responsive and contemporary planning system. This is a short-term initiative aimed at stimulating the economy by delivering high quality and sustainable development, creating new employment and business opportunities, in addition to ensuring people have their say early about future development in their communities.

Well-designed buildings and public spaces are essential to creating communities that Western Australians want to live, work and recreate in. They also help to create places that people want to visit and be part of. By establishing mechanisms and processes for design review and developing new policies, we are putting good design at the centre of all planning and development.

Key Reforms

- So far, the State Government has established a State Design Review Panel and encouraged the expansion of local design review panels. In addition, we successfully launched the first stage of Design WA policies for apartments.
- The State Government continues to expand the Design WA suite of policies and guidance materials to support a high quality of design in all development across Western Australia. Policy reforms to be delivered over the next six-twelve months will support the implementation of legislative and regulatory changes and help to create a modern planning system. These policies include:
 - Finalise design benchmarks and policy for medium density – which includes multi-unit, two and three storey complexes.
 - Finalise new benchmarks and policy to guide precinct design.
 - Review the single house development requirements of the R-Codes (Volume 1)¹.
 - Bring forward reviews of State planning policies for activity centres and liveable neighbourhoods.
 - Continue the review of existing State planning policies, particularly those relating hazard management such as bushfires and coastal erosion.
- The Design WA Precinct Design policy and guidelines will elevate design review and ensure a high-level of community participation early in the process. It will specifically apply to the planning and development of complex areas which may include a mix of commercial, retail, residential and tourism uses, higher levels of density, an activity centre designation or character and/or heritage value.
- With more than 800,000 new homes forecast to be required over the next 20-30 years, a new Medium Density policy will guide how the State will accommodate a growing population through a diversity of well-designed housing options within our existing suburban centres.
- The review of R-Codes Volume 1 will make the codes easier to understand by simplifying the language and reflecting more contemporary planning and building requirements for residential homes, making the policy simpler and easier to understand and interpret.

¹ R-Codes are a set of density and design standards that apply to all residential development in Western Australia. R-Codes use a numbering system to give a general idea of what can be built, and where, and how many dwellings can be developed per hectare to ensure development is consistent in an area.



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- The review of State Planning Policy 4.2 – Activity Centres will provide clear guidance to deliver contemporary outcomes when planning major centres with a mix of uses including retail, commercial and mixed-use developments.
- A revised Liveable Neighbourhoods policy will ensure our suburbs are designed to create sustainable, connected, self-sufficient and healthy communities.
- Temporary enhanced approval powers for the Western Australian Planning Commission will enable more strategic assessment of significant developments that deliver broad economic, social and environmental benefits for the State. In determining the applications, the Commission will consider a broader range of matters including non-planning related matters in the public interest. Design review may also be considered to ensure design is tested upfront and reflects the significance of the development and location.
- The Commission and the Office of Government Architect will continue to promote discussion and build awareness of the importance of good design in buildings and urban environments across the State. The Government Architect will also sit on the Special Matters DAP to ensure good design for development proposals considered by the panel.
- Public consultation is considered a key part of the assessment of significant development proposals and to ensuring a high quality built outcome.

Implementation

- The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage will complete an initial review of the residential design codes (R Codes Volume 1) for consideration by the Commission, and to seek approval to commence public and stakeholder consultation by late 2020.
- Shortly after, the Department will seek public comment on the draft policies for medium density, activity centres and liveable neighbourhoods.
- With consultation on the draft Precinct Design policy completed last year, the final policy is expected to be adopted and released by late 2020, alongside the final Activity Centres policy.

Desired Outcomes

- Good design more than appearance, taste and style - it improves the urban environment, benefits local communities and leaves a positive legacy for future generations. It has to be at the centre of planning and development in Western Australia.
- The reform of our planning system will help prepare the State for strong economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and support the delivery of high quality development outcomes into the future.
- Design policy and guidance, and design review processes are essential to create great places across the State, building the communities Western Australians want to live and work in.
- Elevating the importance of design in the early stages of the planning process will ensure the best possible planning and design outcomes, bring the community along in the planning journey.
- The temporary change in approval authority to the Western Australian Planning Commission, and establishment of a Special Matters Development Assessment Panel, will enable the State Government



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to prioritise projects that have investment certainty, are well designed and are ready for construction to commence. It will also ensure all economic, social and environmental benefits for the State are considered as part of the assessment process.

- The role of design review processes will be more clearly defined and more widely promoted to achieve quality outcomes in the development of our towns and cities.
- The review of the R-Codes and other policies will establish more consistent consultation requirements for residential projects and reduce red tape for industry through more clear and simple guidance.