

Activity Centres

What is an Activity Centre?

It defines places which vary in scale, composition and character but in essence are commercial focal points which include a combination of activities such as offices, retail, higher-density housing, entertainment, civic/community, education and medical services.

What are the main purposes of the Activity Centres Policy?

Its role is to provide broad policy guidance for local government, state agencies and the development industry and includes:

- Preferred locations for retail and commercial land use;
- Development, transport and urban design considerations for new activity centres and the redevelopment and renewal of existing centres; and
- Facilitating planning of commercial and community land use in activity centres and its associated transport and other urban infrastructure.

What are the main objectives of this policy?

It is designed to provide equitable community access to goods and services with major centres being a major focus for the city's future commercial and employment growth and its public transport system. It is also committed to promoting economic and social vitality by concentrating higher density housing and employment sectors in compact centres. There will be increased consideration for sustainable transport modes and promoting street-oriented development and attractive public spaces.

What aspects of planning does the policy cover?

The policy's contents are organised under six general subject areas:

- Activity Centre Hierarchy – differentiates activity centres and their fundamental planning principles in terms of:
 - Their economic role and service function as part of the city's overall network;
 - Typical government services, offices and public transport infrastructure;
 - Indicative retail catchment which is broadly in line with its hierarchy classification
 - Housing density and land use diversity targets
- Activity – covers the preferred scale and mix of land use and promotes higher-density housing, offices and employment-generating land uses in centres.
- Movement – prioritises public transport and other sustainable transport modes, transit-oriented development principles and recommends maximum rather than minimum parking standards.
- Urban form – compact, pedestrian-scaled centres with quality urban design and feature well-connected streets, active building frontages and public spaces.
- Resource conservation – water conservation and sustainable building principles.

- Out of centre development – location criteria to constrain trip-attracting land uses from locating outside activity centres when they should be clustered within them.

What are the main differences between the new Activity Centres Policy and the previous Metropolitan Centres Policy?

A more prominent role is given in the new Activity Centres Policy to public transport accessibility and urban design guidelines in order to promote a better quality built environment. It also places a greater emphasis on co-locating other land uses with retail so that centres incorporate a broader range of compatible urban activities.

What is the “mix of land uses” guideline or Diversity performance target?

The Diversity performance target is part of the Activity Centre Policy and is recommended minimum percentage of non-retail floorspace that should be incorporated in structure plans for larger centres to encourage more non-retail jobs and services. This planning guideline promotes the development of offices, community and other non-retail uses as the shopping floorspace of Activity Centres increases.

How many Strategic Metropolitan Centres are there going to be?

There will be 10 Strategic Metropolitan Centres: Yanchep, Joondalup, Stirling, Morley, Midland, Fremantle, Cannington, Armadale, Rockingham and Mandurah.

How many other major centres will there be?

The policy identifies 19 secondary centres which include places such as Subiaco and Booragoon as well as five major Specialised centres - major University and hospital precincts and Perth and Jandakot airports.

What characterises a secondary centre?

Secondary centres share similar characteristics with Strategic Metropolitan Centres and include major suburban regional shopping centres and traditional town centres such as Subiaco and Claremont.

Does the policy identify all current and planned future activity centres?

No. The Commission will in future approve additional centres (district level and above) that are not currently identified in this policy. This will occur as part of future structure planning for new urban areas, subject to the policy criteria.

The policy is a regional level policy and therefore does not identify the hundreds of smaller neighbourhood and local activity centres either existing or planned. The policy highlights the need to maintain a good distribution of neighbourhood and local centres in local planning for communities, consistent with the Liveable Neighbourhoods policy.

What is the role of local government in implementing the policy?

The policy will be implemented through on-going planning processes such as local planning strategies and schemes, Activity Centre Structure plans and general development assessment.

How does the policy encourage high density housing in these areas?

The policy includes housing density targets in Activity Centre precincts to be incorporated into local planning schemes and Activity Centre Structure plans.

What opportunities will the policy present for retail, commercial and apartment developers in Perth?

The Activity Centres Policy represents a more flexible regulatory approach that will encourage more investment in the commercial, higher density housing and retail sectors. .

What is an Activity Centre Structure Plan?

Structure Plans are a well-established feature of WA's planning system and can cover a relatively small or a very extensive area such as a district or a sub-region. Structure plans set out planning and development parameters that are specific to a particular location such as an Activity Centre that supplements the more general zoning and development controls of local planning schemes.

The Policy recommends that developments occur in an integrated manner and that local governments, landowners and developers collaborate to prepare structure plans for larger activity centres.

How is the Model Centre framework intended to be used?

The Model Centre Framework is essentially a "how to" guide for the preparation of activity centre structure plans. It helps explain how the Policy principles should be applied through detailed planning and includes information requirements and planning considerations to be addressed.

What types of development in Activity Centres require the Western Australian Planning Commission approval?

The Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) is responsible for developments that may have significant regional implications.

The policy intends that local government and the proposed development assessment panels will be responsible for most forms of developments within Activity Centres.

The WAPC will also be responsible for development proposals in the specialised centres such as major university and hospital precincts.