



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**

DISCUSSION PAPER

Infill development and subdivision in Zone LR (Low Density Residential)



Introduction

The NT Government is committed to allowing more flexibility in how regulations are applied to stimulate development across the Northern Territory. Through the recent work of the Approvals Fast Track Taskforce (the Taskforce), the Government is aware of the need to remove barriers to investment and overly burdensome regulations. As part of its recommendations, the Taskforce identified the need to review existing restrictions on what can and cannot be developed on land identified for low density residential development, known in the Territory as 'Zone LR (Low Density Residential)'. You may know this zone as the old 'SD' (Single Dwelling) or 'R1' (Residential 1- Low Density) Zone.

What role will the NT Planning Commission play?

As part of the Government's review into restrictions on lots in low density areas, the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment has asked for the Northern Territory Planning Commission (the Commission) to look at ways to enable infill development in Zone LR in the Territory. 'Infill development' means adding new dwellings within existing areas rather than on undeveloped (greenfield) land and is discussed in more detail later in this paper.

The Commission is an independent statutory authority whose job is to undertake widespread reviews of the NT Planning Scheme, set the strategic framework for land use, consult with the community on strategic plans and provide advice to the Minister on strategic planning matters.

The Minister has asked the Commission to examine potential options to allow infill development including changes to the number of houses you can build on a block, reducing the minimum lot size and changes to other subdivision design controls in Zone LR. This discussion paper has been prepared to help start a conversation and invite feedback to inform possible future changes to planning controls.

The Commission welcomes your feedback about how our low density residential neighbourhoods could develop into the future to best provide for the needs of people in the Territory.

The Minister has asked the NT Planning Commission to examine potential options to enable infill development in Zone LR, including

1. Changes to what you can build on a block (such as more than one house per block)
2. Removing barriers to subdivision by reducing the minimum lot size

Have your say

- Online: [Have Your Say Northern Territory](#)
- Email: ntpc@nt.gov.au
- Post: NT Planning Commission, GPO Box 1680, DARWIN NT 0801
- Hand delivered: Level 1, Energy House, 18-20 Cavenagh Street, DARWIN NT 0800

What is infill development?

'Infill development' is common in urban areas, it refers to the development of new dwellings within existing areas rather than on undeveloped (greenfield) land. It typically involves using vacant or underutilised lots, redeveloping larger residential blocks, or converting older properties into multiple smaller dwellings. Infill development aims to make more efficient use of existing infrastructure, support housing diversity, and strengthen neighbourhood vitality.

Infill development can take many forms and can cater to a variety of household sizes and needs, ranging from free-standing homes on smaller lots, attached homes, duplexes, granny flats, row and terrace housing and low to medium rise housing.

Why is infill development being considered in the Territory?

Currently, across Australia it is recognised that providing for infill development will assist in increasing housing choice and diversity in existing residential areas.

Most other jurisdictions have existing policies that allow for infill development or have taken recent steps to improve on options available to provide for more diverse housing choice, more compact and vibrant neighbourhoods. In the ACT, changes are proposed to the planning system to enable more housing options (including townhouses, terraces and duplexes) to be developed in existing lower density zones. In NSW, dual occupancy is now allowed in all lower density areas in both metro and regional areas. These efforts align with the national housing reform agenda which aims to improve housing supply and provide more diversity in housing choice.

Providing a broader mix of dwelling types to cater to changing demographics, including smaller households, ageing residents, and diverse family structures will help address the housing needs of the Territory. Infill development could provide opportunities for more housing in existing areas that are well connected to services to balance new housing that is already being delivered through greenfield development and increase housing choice.

There is an awareness that current restrictions on lots in Zone LR in the Territory may be contributing to the lack of opportunities for infill development in existing suburbs. This means there are few opportunities for lower-rise housing, such as duplexes (attached or detached homes on the same lot) and individual homes on smaller freehold lots.



The NT Planning Scheme, which is the 'rule book' for using and developing land in the Territory, only allows for infill development in Zone LR in existing suburbs in the form of a 'dwelling-independent', often referred to as a granny flat. The current minimum lot size for subdivision in Zone LR in existing suburbs is 800m² which is relatively large compared to many other jurisdictions, where low density residential lots are often between 300–600m². For example, Brisbane allows for a minimum lot size of 450m² for standard lots in lower density areas, with even smaller lots of 300m² allowed in specific circumstances. This presents opportunities to introduce smaller, diverse housing choice, or appropriately designed subdivisions, while still maintaining the low density character of the area.

What benefits could infill development provide?

Supporting new housing in existing urban areas through infill development can provide many benefits including:

- **Boosting supply** and offering **more housing choice and diversity** in existing suburbs
- **Maximising the use of existing infrastructure** such as electricity, water and roads avoiding the need for costly new infrastructure
- Encouraging investment and upgrades to housing stock to **stimulate the economy**
- Replenishing and upgrading housing to **revitalise existing neighbourhoods**, improve streetscapes and community amenities
- Providing homeowners the opportunity to **build a new home** on their lot or **sell part of their land** for future development
- Enabling people to **downsize** to a smaller more manageable home while staying within the community they love
- Providing opportunities for **multigenerational living**
- Providing a **new entry point** to the housing market for first home buyers
- Supporting more **sustainable patterns of growth** by minimising land consumption and promoting compact urban form

Tell Us

- How do you feel about the possibility of infill development in the Territory?

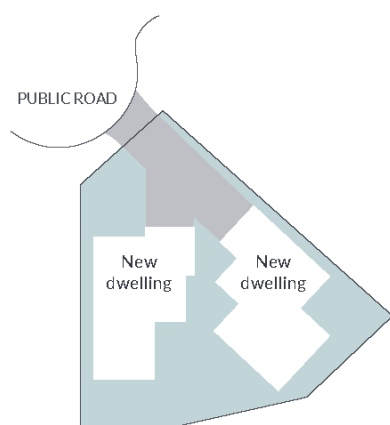


What could infill development look like in the Territory?

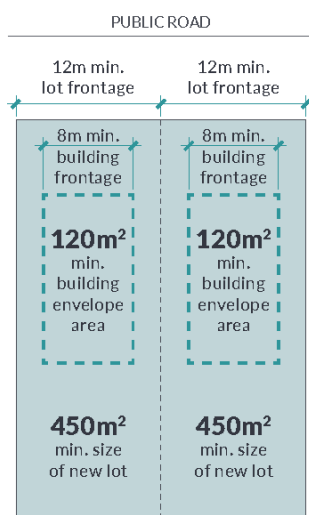
Recognising the current restrictions on lots in Zone LR, the Minister has asked the Commission to examine changes to planning controls to enable infill development in the Territory. Specifically, the Minister has asked the Commission to consider changes to planning controls to enable more types of development and a potential reduction in the minimum lot size for subdivision in Zone LR where it is supported by adequate infrastructure. Some ideas for changes to planning controls could include:

- Allowing dwelling-group and dwelling multiple (more than one house per block)
- A new dwelling density of 1 house per 450m²
- A new approach to ensuring lots have a big enough buildable area, for example a minimum building envelope area of 120m²
- New minimum lot size of 450m²
- New minimum lot frontage of 12 metres
- Subdivision where a continuous street frontage of 6.5m is required to provide space for on-street parking
- Allowing battleaxe lots

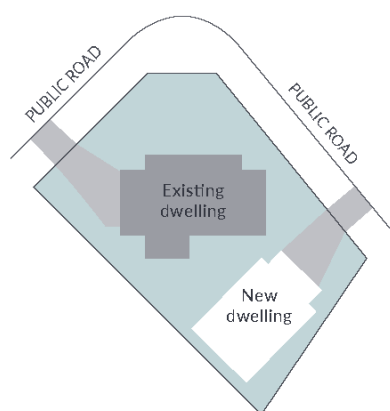
Development could look like:



Demolition of an existing home to build two dwellings on the same lot



Subdivision of one lot into two



Addition of a dwelling to the side or rear of an existing home

Based on these ideas, infill development could take many forms. The image shows what development could look like if some of these changes were introduced.

The Commission welcomes your feedback on these ideas and other suggestions to allow for infill development and subdivision in Zone LR.

Tell Us

- What types of homes do you think are suited to Zone LR?

How can amenity be protected?

It is important that infill development respects valued features of the neighbourhood and landscape character of the area and does not have unreasonable negative impacts on neighbouring properties.

Infill development can be managed through planning controls that ensure new dwellings fit well within established neighbourhoods. This could be achieved through:

- **Minimum Building Setbacks:** maintain privacy, reduce overlooking, and allow for breeze penetration
- **Height controls:** prevent overshadowing and ensure buildings remain compatible with surrounding homes
- **On-site car parking:** minimise on-street parking and traffic impacts
- **Private open space:** ensure each dwelling has usable outdoor areas
- **Minimum lot size and building envelope area:** ensure that new infill development can be designed and constructed efficiently, while protecting the amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood
- **Site Coverage:** ensure that buildings do not dominate the lot or impact the amenity of neighbouring properties by managing total building footprint and floor area

Current Dwelling-Single Development Requirements (NT Planning Scheme)

- *Building Height:* Maximum 2 storeys (8.5 metres)
- *Front Setback:* 4.5 to 6 metres
- *Side & Rear Setbacks:* 1 to 1.5 metres
- *Car Parking:* Minimum 2 on-site spaces
- *Private Open Space:* Minimum 45m²

A variation to the development requirements needs approval from the Development Consent Authority.

Requirements in the NT Planning Scheme help to control the look, feel, character and design outcomes of development in Zone LR. Any future changes to allow infill development would also need to comply with the relevant development requirements including provisions for on-site car parking, private open space, and a built form that protects the amenity of adjoining properties.

Tell Us

- How could we make infill development work in the NT?
- Do you think there are other policies or design standards that could make infill development a good option in your local area?

Where could it occur?

Zone LR is primarily intended for low-rise urban residential development, where it supports the development of well-serviced suburban neighbourhoods with a strong emphasis on residential amenity, privacy, and landscaped open space.

Infill development in Zone LR could occur across the urban centres in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs. In rural areas, smaller fragmented pockets of Zone LR occur around Howard Springs, Coolalinga and Batchelor.

Hurdles to the delivery of infill development include the capacity and costs of infrastructure upgrades as well as ensuring areas with significant constraints, such as flood affected land, or areas with environmental risks are not further burdened. For these reasons, unconstrained land with existing infrastructure capacity provides suitable conditions for infill development.

We know there are about 8,000 lots in Zone LR across the Territory that are larger than 900m² and not affected by flooding or storm surge. Most of these lots are in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, with fewer than 1,000 spread across Katherine, Tennant Creek, Batchelor and Litchfield.

While not all of these lots would be suitable for infill development, through this Discussion Paper the Commission is seeking community views on whether some could be developed or subdivided if landowners choose to do so.

To find out whether your property is in Zone LR, you can search your address at [NT Land Information Search](#).

What happens next?

This discussion paper is part of the first step in understanding how infill development and subdivision might work in the Territory. The feedback people provide will inform further investigations and potential future changes to planning controls.

After the public consultation period finishes, the Commission will review all feedback received on infill development and subdivision in Zone LR. The Commission's role is not to introduce new planning controls, rather to report back to the Minister about what the community said during consultation.

Based on feedback, the Commission will outline possible changes to planning controls that the Minister could consider as part of any next steps.

Any changes to the NT Planning Scheme will be communicated to the public as part of future stages.

Have your say on infill development in the Territory

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If you have any questions, please contact the Commission at:

- Phone: 08 8924 7540
- Email: ntpc@nt.gov.au