



Medium density

Many voices contribute to a happy medium

A new Medium Density Residential Housing Code is being introduced to deliver better housing choice across Perth to reflect our changing lifestyles and housing needs, and create more vibrant communities.

State Planning Policy 7.3 Residential Design Codes Volume 1 (Medium Density) has been informed, developed and refined over almost three years of research, analysis, drafting, consultation and testing.

We thank everyone from local government, peak bodies, industry and the community who have provided considered and valuable input.

The result is a Code that prioritises housing choice to suit a variety of lifestyles with sustainable options to accommodate population growth, with quality design that delivers, among other benefits:

- more trees and gardens
- better solar access and ventilation
- flexible, functional living spaces
- safe attractive streetscapes
- more space for people and less cars.



Range of voices

In the pursuit of a 'happy medium' the State Government invited constructive feedback on the policy and its implementation from a broad range of stakeholders including:

- the community – buyers, investors, residents who live in or close to medium density housing
- local and State Government agencies – decision makers (regulators)
- industry – developers, architects, designers, builders, planners.

Medium Density Advisory Group

A Medium Density Advisory Group (MDAG) was formed to help define and scope the Code, and provide ongoing expertise throughout. It consisted of representatives from a range of peak bodies and other stakeholders including:

- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Architects Institute of Australia (AIA)
- Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA)
- Local Government Planners Association (LGPA)
- Housing Institute Australia (HIA)
- Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)
- Master Builders Association
- Property Council Australia (PCA)
- Community representatives.

In 2022, MDAG members were given an advance copy of the Code and asked to comment on fundamental issues, and provide examples or evidence to illustrate their discussion points.





Informed voices

The invitation to examine and comment on the Draft Medium Density Code was issued publicly in late 2020 and more than 550 people were engaged in information sessions and workshops in metropolitan and regional WA to help stakeholders prepare informed submissions.

The workshops were designed and tailored for specific stakeholder groups with a mix of opportunities to provide feedback including plenary sessions, small groups, and through an interactive online tool.

Public advertising

It's clear that striking a happy medium on our medium density housing policy matters to Western Australians. The public advertising process attracted a total of 225 submissions with more than 4,000 individual comments on different aspects of the policy. More than half the submissions (53%) came from members of the community.

Sustainability, impact on existing housing, cost and feasibility, effects on greenfield development and the transition period were among the key themes.

Diving deeper

As the policy was further developed and refined, engagement included forums where previous information and workshop session participants took a 'deeper dive' into the key issues raised through the consultation period – and proposed responses to them.

There was robust and invaluable debate, discussion and input from local government authorities, State agencies and the development and planning industry on significant issues - about how the new Code would be integrated into local planning frameworks and how the transitional arrangements might work smoothly for industry and homebuyers.

Rigorous testing

The new Medium Density Housing Code has been rigorously tested by designers, land developers, builders, architects and local government planners.

In five phases of testing from 2020 to 2022, 100 designs covering a range of building types (terraces, apartments, triplexes) to suit common lot types were produced. Thirty eight of them were costed and valued by volume builders, quantity surveyors and valuation consultants.

The key findings validated important aspects of the Code and also highlighted some industry concerns including garage width restrictions, reducing homes to three-bedrooms on smaller lots, feasibility and affordability.

