Improving residential standards in Tasmania

Tasmanian Government

Development standards

Why they're important

Delivering diverse, well-designed and well located housing is an aspiration for all Tasmania's cities and towns. Bringing our development standards up to date is essential to guide future housing development.

Many of Tasmania's existing residential areas are characterised by single dwelling development. While some areas are intended to retain their existing character, others are changing urban environments, where increased density will be necessary, particularly in areas close to activity centres and key transport corridors.

The standards discussed in this factsheet focus on enabling built form outcomes that have a positive relationship to the surrounding built and natural landscape, while providing the flexibility needed to deliver the right housing in the right location.

Current challenges

Tasmania's planning system ranks highly in Australia for measures of efficiency and consistency. Despite these positives, many important residential standards seen in other states and territories are not currently covered by the planning system in Tasmania.

Current challenges include a lack of guidance in delivering 'density done well' and how to best provide for quality landscaping and shared spaces in housing developments.

Future improvements

The Final Recommendations Report details a range of potential improvements to the existing development standards. This factsheet focuses on three initiatives:

- **Residential diversity and density**
  To enable increased diversity and density in the right locations
- **Building height and setbacks**
  To improve the design response to location and housing type
- **Landscaping and common space**
  To improve liveability, climate resilience, and design quality.

For more detail on the potential improvements to development standards, see page 28 of the Final Recommendations Report.

Residential density

As our cities and neighbourhoods grow and change, it is important that we make more efficient use of land for housing, preserve the environment, landscapes and agricultural land, and that we optimise infrastructure use. To achieve this, increased density in urban areas will be necessary.

Tasmania's current residential density standards manage the maximum number of dwellings allowed on a site with limited consideration to built form outcomes or whether the density is appropriate for the site, its context and characteristics. At the same time, housing densities in Tasmania are also well below targets set through the strategic land use planning framework and are not encouraging housing diversity. Together this means that Tasmania is not achieving the housing we need in the right locations.

Plot ratio is a tool that manages the scale and coverage of built form and is proposed as an alternative to the current density controls.

Plot ratio

Plot ratio is the ratio of floor area to site area, calculated by dividing gross floor area by site area.

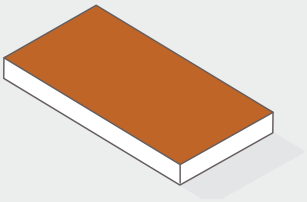
When combined with other built form controls the shape and siting of buildings can be varied to help deliver a broader range of housing types and densities to ensure that the overall bulk and scale is appropriate to the site and its surrounds. The diagram below shows how other built form controls affect the resulting development.

A plot ratio of 1.0 means that the floor area of the building is equal to the site area, whereas a plot ratio of 0.5 means that the floor area is equal to 50% of the site area. In the urban residential zones, a plot ratio ranging between 0.3 to 1.0 is considered appropriate for single dwellings. This echoes provisions in similar locations in other Australian jurisdictions.

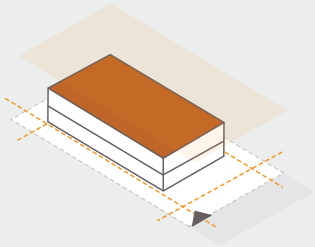
Potential plot ratio parameters (permitted pathway)

	Inner Residential	General Residential	Low Density Residential
OBJECTIVE	To ensure that the overall bulk and scale of development is appropriate for the existing and planned character of the area.		
PLOT RATIO	1.0	0.6	0.4
DWELLING DIVERSITY BONUS^	+0.2 for social housing, townhouses, and apartments	+0.1 for social housing +0.2 for (a) social housing, townhouses, and apartments, and (b) less than 400m of a business zone or high frequency transit corridor	+0.1 for social housing less than 400m of a business zone or high frequency transit corridor
LIVEABLE HOUSING BONUS^	+0.1 for developments with more than 50% of dwellings achieving Livable Housing Guideline's gold or platinum level universal design features.		

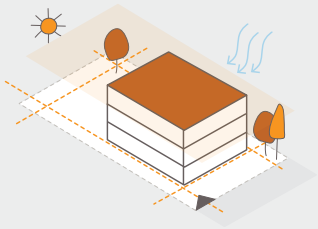
^ Only 1 bonus available per development



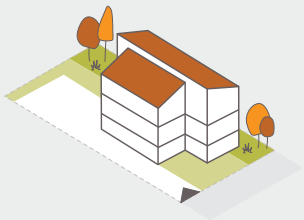
Plot ratio 1.0
full site coverage



Plot ratio 1.0
setbacks and height applied



Plot ratio 1.0
considering the environment (solar access, vegetation and wind)



Plot ratio 1.0
landscaping, deep soil, access and parking applied

Building height and setbacks

Currently building height and boundary setbacks are managed by a building envelope clause. This means there is no opportunity to meet the Acceptable Solution for building height if permitted setbacks are not achieved; the reverse is also true.

By separating height and setback standards, the assessment process is simplified. Greater flexibility will lead to more appropriate designs. While building height often dominates development discussions, it is not always the most significant factor impacting our neighbourhoods. Taller buildings that are well designed with sensitive siting, setbacks, solar access, landscaping and materials can deliver much better outcomes for residents and neighbours than ill-considered, lower scale buildings which do not respond to their surroundings.

The current building height controls do not allow for modern needs, particularly in higher density developments such as apartments, where more ceiling height improves access to natural light and sense of space.

For side and rear setbacks, the current controls are more appropriate for lower intensity development like single and grouped dwellings. To enable greater housing diversity with appropriate building separation, side and rear setbacks should be relative to the type of housing proposed.

Potential height parameters (permitted pathway)

	Inner Residential Zone	General Residential Zone
OBJECTIVE	To ensure that the height of development is compatible with the streetscape and does not cause an unreasonable loss of amenity for adjoining properties.	
MAXIMUM HEIGHT^	• 9.5 m for single dwellings, grouped dwellings and non-dwellings • 11 m for townhouses and apartments	• 8.5 m for all buildings

^Note: maximum height unchanged from existing SPP requirements for the General Residential Zone and for single and grouped dwellings in the Inner Residential Zone.

Potential setback parameters (permitted pathway)

	Inner Residential Zone	General Residential Zone
OBJECTIVE	To ensure that the siting of development is compatible with the streetscape and does not cause an unreasonable loss of amenity for adjoining properties.	
FRONT^	• 3 m (primary) • 2 m (secondary), or equal to adjoining building	• 4.5 m (primary) • 3 m (secondary) or equal to adjoining building
SIDE	• 0 m for buildings up to 3.5 m in height, and for shared walls of townhouses^^ • 1.5 m (up to 7 m in building height) • 3 m (>7 m in building height)	
REAR	• 0 m (up to 3.5 m in height) • 3 m (>3.5 m in height)	

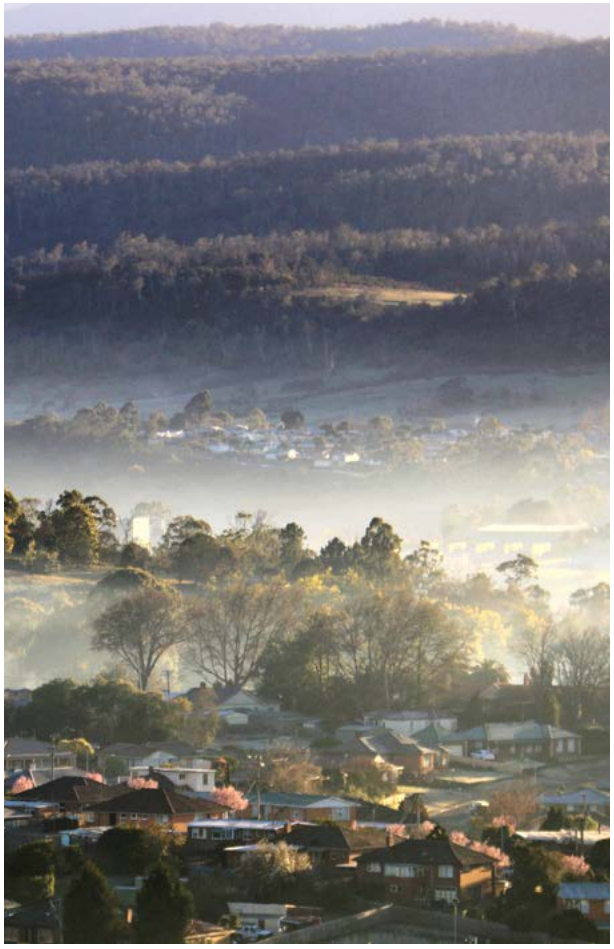
^Note: front setback and garage setback unchanged from existing SPP requirements in the Inner Residential Zone and General Residential Zone. ^^If not more than 2/3 length of shared wall boundary.

Landscaping and open space

Landscaping, including private and common open space, is an important factor in housing development and how they are enjoyed by residents. As dwelling density increases, and as we experience a changing climate, the availability of meaningful landscaped areas through a mix of common and private open space becomes more important.

There are currently no landscaping requirements in Tasmania's residential standards and no clear consideration for common open space needs. Therefore, a new standard is required to cover the elements that contribute to improved liveability, climate resilience and design quality of future housing.

This includes controls for landscaping and deep soil area, tree retention and the provision of both private and common open space areas.



Potential landscaping and open space parameters (permitted pathway)

PRIVATE OPEN SPACE (PRINCIPAL AREA)

- **Single dwelling:** 40 m^2 (4 m min dimension)
- **Grouped dwelling/ Townhouse:** 24 m^2 (3 m min dimension)

Apartment:

- 8 m^2 for studio and 1 bed (2 m min dimension)
- 10 m^2 for 2 beds (2.5 m min dimension)
- 12 m^2 for 3+ beds (3 m min dimension)

COMMON OPEN SPACE

Grouped dwelling, townhouse, apartment: 5 m^2 per dwelling when providing more than 10 dwellings/independent living units up to a total of 300 m^2 common open space

LANDSCAPING AREA

- 25% of site area in GRZ and LDRZ
- 20% of site area in IRZ

DEEP SOIL AREA^

All housing types: 10% of site area or 7% of site area if retaining an existing large or medium tree (3 m x 3 m min dimension and 90% permeable to water)

TREE PROVISION^

- **Single dwelling (lot >750 m^2):** 1 large tree or 1 existing tree retained
- **Single dwelling (lot <750 m^2), grouped dwelling/townhouse:** 1 medium tree or 2 small trees per dwelling (minus any existing trees retained
- **Apartment:** 1 large tree, 2 medium trees, or 3 small trees per site + 1 small tree for every 10 dwellings (minus any existing trees retained)

^ For tree provision, deep soil areas equate to a minimum of 9 m^2 for a small tree (3-8 m height), 36 m^2 for a medium tree (8-12 m height) and 64 m^2 for a large tree (over 12 m height).

Note: Landscaping, deep soil and open space areas can be overlapping. For example, a common open space area can also be a deep soil area and contribute towards the overall site landscaping area.