

16. The Neighbourhood Zones

The state government's introduction of the biggest changes to planning zones in 30 years aimed to enable Councils to identify the areas that are appropriate for more intensive development and those that are not.

The new system has three residential zones: General Residential Zone (GRZ), Neighbourhood Residential Zone (NRZ) and Residential Growth Zone (RGZ).

unChain had significant concerns that the proposed zones were too restrictive in Port Phillip. In particular we feared that there would be an adverse impact on housing affordability, housing choice and good housing design because of the extensive use of the restrictive Neighbourhood Residential Zone.

In Port Phillip the Council used a 'two-stage' process. It sought to balance the need to protect neighbourhood character and heritage with the need to provide affordable housing and housing choice.

Stage 1 had significant changes to the original proposal that took into account unChain's concerns. In particular there were more generous density limits in the Neighbourhood Residential Zones (NRZ), special provision for social housing and a reduction to 2,500 sq m. for large sites to be zoned RGZ.

Stage 2 included additional sites and precincts for inclusion in the General Residential Zone (GRZ) and Residential Growth Zone (RGZ). It also included special provision for housing for the aged.

The other inner-city Councils have taken widely different approaches. Many commentators have expressed concerns that the widespread use of the NRZ, which prohibits medium density development will 'lock down' suburbs preventing extensive suburban redevelopment. *Plan Melbourne*, under this scenario would provide only two housing choices – small high-rise apartments in the inner city (especially Fishermans Bend) and detached housing on the urban fringe – both unsatisfactory to the large cohort of young adults seeking medium-density housing.

In July 2013 the opposition Planning Minister said he was not supportive of the new zones and would reintroduce Melbourne 2030 if elected. This will allow "unlocking the capacity in established suburbs" resulting in more multi-storey and apartment development in residential streets and high-rise along transport corridors and main roads.

unChain wants to know whether the parties and the candidates believe that the new zones are satisfactory, both on a metropolitan-wide view and in Port Phillip in particular.