REVITALISING RETAIL IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN CODE
INTRODUCTION

Shopping centres and main streets are the heart of our vibrant and connected communities and support South Australia’s growth and development. For many years, planning policy has supported a centres hierarchy approach, from regional and district level shopping and services through to neighbourhood and local centres providing for smaller scale conveniences.

This has served our state well and seen communities well supported by retail and other services. However, the nature of retailing, and in particular how we shop and receive services, is changing. We have also seen new types of shopping and service industries enter the South Australian market, the revitalisation of main streets and high streets within our communities, greater opportunities for mixed use development as industries evolve and co-locate, as well as the continuing need to accommodate large format outlets such as homemaker centres and new distribution models.

This brochure provides an overview of the proposed policy in the draft Phase Three (Urban Areas) Planning and Design Code (the Code) related to retail development and shops. Through the policy, the Code intends to ensure the provision of retail services in South Australia in a manner which encourages vibrant activity centres, supports employment opportunities, promotes sustainable transport use and builds healthy communities.

RETAIL POLICY BENEFITS

- Encouraging shops in ‘activity centre’ and ‘main street’ zones, but allowing small shops in other areas, facilitates people having convenient access to retail services while preserving the vibrancy of existing centres
- Reducing red tape by allowing new businesses including shops, offices and consulting rooms to move into existing commercial premises within centres without lengthy planning approvals
- Promoting above-ground-level apartments in activity centres, where residents benefit from convenient access to shops, services and transport
- Promoting ‘main street’ areas with a focus on good design, interesting shopfronts, sheltered pedestrian footpaths and areas for visitors to meet, relax and entertain
- Enabling shopping centres to expand by allowing shops opposite/adjoining existing centres and improving the range of shopping options in convenient locations
- Removing barriers to innovation and efficiency by allowing businesses to install things like solar panels without planning approval
- Enabling bulky goods outlets (such as home furniture stores) to operate in industrial type areas which are suited to large-size warehouse-style buildings.
Key Policy Feedback Received – an Overview

In the early stages of developing the Code, retail was the subject of a high level of feedback in response to the Productive Economy Discussion Paper released by the Commission in November 2018. Most feedback advocated for the transition, update and consolidation of the existing contemporary retailing and activity centre zone policies to the Code where possible, while others advocated for more flexibility for out-of-centre retailing such as homemaker centres.

From the formal consultation period on the Phase Three (Urban Areas) Code from 1 October 2019 to 28 February 2020, the key feedback focussed on four main themes:

1. The Activity Centre hierarchy
2. Out of centre retail activity
3. Building height
4. Dwellings in centres
THE ACTIVITY CENTRE HIERARCHY

CURRENT SITUATION

Activity Centres have been one of the pillars of South Australia’s growth and development, having contributed to the form and pattern of development and enabling more equitable and convenient access to shopping, administrative, cultural, entertainment and other facilities in a single trip.

PROPOSED CHANGE

Larger scale Neighbourhood, District and Regional centre zones from development plans will be consolidated into two new zones in the Code – Urban Activity Centre / Suburban Activity Centre. Those centres which have a main street layout/focus will transition to the Suburban Main Street Zone. These higher order centres are often vibrant centres of commercial, retail, entertainment, health and civic services. They provide a focus around which dense housing can form, assist in focusing infrastructure investment and provide greater agglomeration-driven productivity.

A Township Activity Centre will apply in regional areas and a Township Main Street will apply where a main street character is sought.

Feedback identified that Local Centre Zones in current development plans serve a different role. They are generally smaller in scale and intensity, supporting local services and walkable neighbourhoods. In response to this feedback, a new Local Activity Centre Zone is proposed to better reflect the scale and activity expected in small local centres, including maximum building heights that are consistent with current development plan policy.

Feedback also identified that a range of other current zones support establishment of large scale retail development, particularly in locations experiencing investment and growth. This includes:

- Emerging centres created within large scale broad hectare residential developments
- Innovation and employment precincts such as Tonsley where new jobs and housing support new retail opportunities
- Bulky goods development, small scale convenience shops, and shops associated with manufacturing are expected in Employment Zones to service local population and support value add opportunities for business.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- The proposed introduction of the Suburban Activity Centre Zone is not suitable as a replacement for some local centres. A new zone is required for these locations.
- There are a range of locations where large scale retail is expected outside of activity centres that are not reflected in the draft Code.

PROPOSED CHANGE

- Introduce new Local Activity Centre Zone and spatially apply it to existing local centre zone locations.
- Introduce new subzones in ‘employment’ and ‘innovation’ zones to acknowledge areas where development plan policy currently anticipates larger shops, promoting business clusters.
ACTIVITY CENTRE HIERARCHY IN THE PHASE THREE CODE

URBAN ACTIVITY CENTRE

SUBURBAN ACTIVITY CENTRE

TOWNSHIP ACTIVITY CENTRE

SUBURBAN MAIN STREET

TOWNSHIP MAIN STREET

LOCAL ACTIVITY CENTRE

Building Scale / Size of Catchment / Variety of Land Uses

Low

Medium / High

Centres

Main Streets

Image credit: Morphett Street Bridge by Andre Castelluccii
OUT OF CENTRE RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

CURRENT SITUATION

Often, older established suburbs tend to be characterised by a greater number of smaller centres aiding an outcome of walkable communities and perhaps reflective of their establishment in a less car dependent era. New suburbs, particularly those at the fringes of the metro region, often exhibit fewer but larger centres which can provide less opportunities for walking to shops and services.

In most cases current development plan policy envisages some level of non-residential development to be established outside of centres. Typically, this is aimed at serving the local community and where it doesn’t detrimentally impact nearby residents. An analysis of current zoning identified that current residential zones generally expect retail development between 50 – 250m² to serve the needs of the local community.

Maximum floor areas for shops outside activity centres have been reviewed to facilitate small-scale shops in locations with poor access to activity centres and limit non-residential activity to home-based businesses in neighbourhoods that are within walking distance of an existing centre.

PROPOSED CHANGE

The Code provides some scope for limited contiguous expansion of an existing centre through allowances in adjacent zones as well as limited opportunity in neighbourhood type zones more generally, subject to performance assessment of impacts depending on the location.

The Code adopts a position that involves retail development over a specified floor area being classified as 'restricted' (typically 1000m², other than in centre-type zones or targeted infill locations such as urban corridor zones) and therefore subject to a more comprehensive assessment process by the State Planning Commission, along with third party appeal rights. It is important to note that the restricted development threshold is not a policy, and therefore should have no bearing on the suitability of shops in a particular zone (e.g. the zone’s policies guiding the scale of shops would be the only parameter considered in a performance assessment of shop floor area).

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

• Concern about the scale and intensity of retail development allowed out of centre, particularly in relation to zones primarily for residential purposes.

• In relation non-centre commercial/employment zones, the concern is based around impact on retail centre vibrancy and function, while in residential locations, the concern is in relation to impact on residential amenity.

PROPOSED CHANGE

• Alterations are proposed in most neighbourhood zones to limit the scale of retail development depending on the distance from an activity centre as follows:
  • Up to 100m² floor area where more than 500m from an activity centre
  • Up to 200m² floor area where adjoining an activity centre
  • Up to 200m² where fronting a State Maintained Road (unless within 500m of an activity centre)
  • All other cases: Up to 50m² home businesses

• In other non-centre zones (e.g. employment, innovation, rural zones), the Code anticipates some small-scale retail development as a secondary land use, or complementing other primary envisaged land uses, provided impacts can be addressed.

• Note: Under the PDI Act a home activity of 30m² or less does not require approval, subject to conditions.
### How does the Code deal with shops in/out of Activity Centres?

The suitability of shops in a zone is dictated by the land uses envisaged in PO/DTS/DPF 1.1, and by any further policy on the scale of shops.

Shops will be restricted development where assessment at the State level is required to consider strategic implications and impacts. The restricted trigger has no relevance in performance assessment on merit, and restricted development is not necessarily inappropriate in the zone.

Notification should occur where a shop is not an envisaged land use in the zone, exceeds the anticipated floor area/height in the zone, or where it is likely to adversely impact adjacent land.

### Activity centres/main streets
- Urban Activity Centre Zone
- Suburban Activity Centre Zone
- Suburban Main Street Zone
- Urban Corridor (Main Street) Zone
- Local Activity Centre Zone
- Activity Centre Subzone

- Shops are envisaged as a primary land use.
- No restriction on shop floor area in zone policy.
- Shops are not subject to notification unless exceeding height/setback criteria.
- Shops are not restricted development.

### Mixed use zones
- Urban Neighbourhood Zone
- Suburban Neighbourhood Zone
- Strategic Innovation Zone
- Suburban Business Zone
- Urban Corridor Zones (Boulevard, Living) Zone
- Community Facilities Business Neighbourhood Zone

- Limited shops are envisaged as a secondary land use.
- Restriction in shop floor area in zone policy (can be varied by subzones).
- Shops are only subject to notification unless exceeding height/setback criteria.
- Large shops may be restricted development, except in suitable subzones.

### Employment zones
- Urban Corridor (Business) Zone
- Employment Zone
- Strategic Employment Zone
- Tourism Development Zone

- Small shops are envisaged, or larger shops that are ancillary to envisaged uses.
- Restriction in shop floor area in zone policy (can be varied by subzones).
- Shops are not subject to notification unless exceeding height/setback criteria, or where adjacent to a dwelling in a neighbourhood-type zone.
- Large shops are restricted development, except in suitable subzones.

### Rural productive zones
- Adelaide Country Zone
- Rural Zone
- Rural Horticulture Zone

- Small shops are envisaged for value-adding.
- Restriction in shop floor area in zone policy.
- Shops are only subject to notification where floor area, setback or height criteria are not met.
- Large shops are restricted development.

### Residential zones
- Urban Renewal Neighbourhood Zone
- General Neighbourhood Zone
- Established Neighbourhood Zone
- Waterfront Neighbourhood Zone
- Housing Diversity Neighbourhood Zone
- Suburban Neighbourhood Zone
- Hills Neighbourhood Zone

- Home businesses are envisaged, as well as small shops in certain areas to promote walkable neighbourhoods.
- Restriction in shop floor area in zone policy depending on proximity from activity centres and location on State Maintained Roads.
- Shops are only subject to notification where floor area criteria is exceeded.
- Large shops are restricted development.

### Other areas
- Deferred Urban Zone
- Conservation Zone

- Shops are generally not envisaged.
- Zone policy does not envisage shops.
- Shops are subject to notification.
- Shops are not listed as restricted development (given shops are clearly not envisaged in the zone, a comprehensive impact assessment isn’t warranted.)
BUILDING HEIGHT

CURRENT SITUATION

Building design and appearance is primarily guided by policy in the Design in Urban Areas General Development Policies. Built form parameters (e.g. building height) are contained in zones.

Feedback suggested introducing maximum building heights into centre zones to reflect current development plan policy.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- Concern about insufficient guidance on maximum building heights
- The interface height provision did not reflect the current development plan policy in specific locations

PROPOSED CHANGE

- Introduce a Technical and Numeric Variation to allow for a maximum building height to be specified in relevant centres and main streets, consistent with current development plans
- This change was adopted through the Phase Two (Rural Areas) Code Amendment
- Introduce a Technical and Numeric Variation to allow for current development plan policy on building envelopes to transition into the Code.
CURRENT SITUATION

Centre zones in development plans typically envisage housing in conjunction with non-residential development. This generally requires housing to be located above non-residential uses (similar to conventional apartment buildings) or behind non-residential uses in order to encourage active business premises along main roads and key pedestrian thoroughfares.

PROPOSED CHANGE

This approach has been largely retained in the Code, but in response to consultation feedback, additional flexibility is proposed in smaller activity centres to deal with declining patronage and changing consumer behaviour towards local convenience shopping. In such cases, existing buildings may warrant changes in land use to a residential use.

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

• Requests to allow ‘standalone’ residential development in small underperforming centres.

PROPOSED CHANGE

• In the new Local Activity Centre Zone, standalone residential development is contemplated in underperforming centres.

• The continuance of policy that only anticipates housing in conjunction with non-residential development has been retained for other centres and main streets.
How to get help?

To find out more visit www.plan.sa.gov.au, email PlanSA@sa.gov.au or call the PlanSA Service Desk on 1800 752 664.

There are a significant number of resources - fact sheets, guides and videos available at www.plan.sa.gov.au to help you better understand the new planning system.