

Reviewing planning rules to guide future Festival Plaza development

About the proposed changes

The South Australian Government is reviewing the planning rules for Festival Plaza to ensure this prime location in Adelaide's city centre provides the greatest benefits for the state and our community.

The [draft Festival Plaza Code Amendment](#) focusses on providing clear [building height](#) and [design guidance](#) to ensure the remaining development site is maximised to make Festival Plaza a world-class hub for the arts, culture, tourism and entertainment.

The review also aims to ensure that planning rules for this important area are consistent with the [South Australian Government's vision](#) for the broader Riverbank Precinct.

Recent upgrades and development have renewed Festival Plaza as a cultural and entertainment hub in the centre of Adelaide.

A 38-storey mixed-use tower alongside the One Festival Tower has been proposed to complete renewal of the precinct.

The draft code amendment does not consider specific proposed developments but would provide building height and design guidance for any future development in Festival Plaza.

Therefore, changes to the planning rules through this code amendment would guide whether the proposed 38-storey building is the highest and best use of the precinct's remaining development site, considering its relationship with national and state heritage listed Parliament House and opportunities to create public space.

These draft planning rules came into effect on an interim basis at the same time as being released for consultation to ensure that any undesirable development applications are not submitted for this important precinct while these rules are reviewed.

Feedback was invited on the draft code amendment from 12 September to 24 October 2024.

What we heard

A total of 87 submissions were received during the consultation period from industry, advocacy groups, government agencies and the community.

Key issues raised during consultation largely related to building height guidance and the impacts of a potential tower building at the site indicated in the concept plan, including concern about:

- the acceptable height for a tower building in Festival Plaza, suggesting 40 levels is too high
- building on the Adelaide parklands, particularly a building that is not for entertainment, arts and culture, health or public use
- impacts on the heritage values of the national and state listed Parliament House and nearby heritage buildings, such as Festival Theatre and the Torrens Parade Ground, including overshadowing buildings along North Terrace
- obstructing views of linear park, the northern façade of Parliament House, the Railway Station, Festival Theatre and the River Torrens
- building on Festival Plaza, suggesting the site identified in the concept plan should remain undeveloped to create green space or a space for community purposes such as recreation, festivals or concerts
- loss of the geometry of the square mile of Adelaide's CBD as per Colonel Light's vision.

The key areas of support raised during consultation included:

- the building height and design guidance provides an opportunity to build a high-quality, iconic building that makes a bold statement, strengthens the CBD skyline and improves business growth
- Adelaide needs more taller buildings to use space more efficiently
- a building of about 40 levels in Festival Plaza could provide opportunities to benefit the community such as a public viewing deck or museum
- a building of 38-40 levels is needed to minimise the bulk of a lower height building
- acknowledgement of the amount of work and due diligence undertaken to ensure the best outcomes for Adelaide through the proposed code amendment.

One submission also highlighted a preference for a taller building on the site identified in the concept plan, preferring a high-quality design, 50-storey building on the site.

Feedback demonstrated that the majority of responses do not support the code amendment, particularly the building height guidance and location identified in the concept plan as suitable for a building of up to 40 building levels, next to the heritage listed Parliament House.

While feedback was mixed on the design guidance and amending wording to avoid misinterpretation that could allow buildings over 20 levels to be built next to the River Torrens, these amendments were generally supported.

Engagement activities

Information was provided and feedback gathered from the community and stakeholders via:

- online information sessions on 26 September and 15 October, open to everyone and attended by 13 people
- YourSAy consultation website and survey, with 46 survey responses submitted mostly by community members
- PlanSA website and online submission form/email address, with 40 responses submitted mostly by community, industry, state agencies and advocacy groups.

These engagement activities were proactively promoted through social media, Planning Ahead and YourSAy e-newsletters, Eventbrite website and emails. Letters were sent directly to state and Federal MPs, industry bodies, local government, state agencies, heritage representative bodies, community advocacy groups, Traditional Owners, businesses and affected landowners, providing information, inviting feedback and encouraging stakeholders to share information across their networks. The consultation was also promoted on ABC Radio Adelaide.

Next steps

All feedback is now being collated and considered in greater detail in updating the draft Festival Plaza Code Amendment, including the concept plan for the site.

An engagement report is being prepared, which includes a summary of written submissions and feedback received, how these were considered and proposed updates to the draft code amendment that was released for consultation. Once completed this report will be provided to the Minister for Planning to enable a final decision on the code amendment.

The engagement report, including all submissions, along with the outcome of the code amendment and any further updates, will be published on the YourSAy and PlanSA websites.

More information

Contact: PlanSA
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Visit YourSAy: yoursay.sa.gov.au/festival-plaza
Visit PlanSA: plan.sa.gov.au/en/ca/festival-plaza