



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND URBAN RENEWAL

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Submission Cover Sheet

Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 363 – Curtin group centre and adjacent residential areas

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Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal
Legislative Assembly for the ACT

By E-mail: LACommitteePUR@parliament.act.gov.au

Inquiry into Draft Variation 363 – Curtin Group Centre and adjacent residential areas: zone changes and amendments to the Curtin precinct map and code.

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Draft Variation to the Territory Plan number 363.

Canberra Town Planning has been working with the proponents of the redevelopment of 44 Curtin Place for the last few of years and we are happy to see progress being made on the site.

This submission seeks to contribute to the successful implantation of DV363 based upon our experience working in the group centre.

The success of the Centre will to be reliant on it being an attractive place to live, visit, work and do business.

Revitalisation of centres such as Curtin will be essential to the achievement of the broader planning strategy for Canberra. If we are to achieve a more compact and efficient city, we must look to our existing commercial centres as places of activity and urban development.

The role of the precinct code is to facilitate this reinvestment in the centre in a manner that is amenable and appropriate. Most importantly, it needs to cater for the future, not the past.

Having studied the demographics of the suburb of Curtin, the data suggest to us that Curtin is a suburb that is likely to change significantly over the next 10 to 20 years. 38% of the residents are over 50 years old, compared to the average across the Territory of 29%. There are only 276 one or two bedroom dwellings in Curtin, but there are 453 single person households. This suggests that there must be approximately 175 individuals in the suburb occupying dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms. This in turn suggest that there is a mismatch between the demographics of the suburb and the housing choices available and that it would be reasonable to expect that opportunities to 'right size' within the suburb should be widely supported.

The changes that are needed can only be achieved if Curtin is an attractive place for private investment. This means, when buildings are approaching the end of their useful life, there is an economic opportunity to redevelop them and there is a good level of certainty provided around the planning timeframes and the desired outcome.

We support the desired character statement because it includes acknowledgement of the need for:

- Services and facilities for diverse user groups
- Housing options, and
- Business opportunities

In terms of detailed comments on the precinct code, we provided comments on the draft variation and these comments have been considered by the Planning Authority. With reference to our earlier comments, we would like to reiterate the following principles:

- A precinct code that is too complex, or imposes restrictions that are too onerous on development, will not make Curtin an attractive place to do business.
- Rule 3 seems to be at odds with the intention to move towards more sustainable and active transport. Should the car parking not be required in the future, the only way to do anything else with this land would be to first complete a Territory Plan variation. It cannot even be converted to parkland. Given that the current variation has taken several years to complete, this seems to be unnecessarily inflexible.
- Rule 7 is too onerous. Some parts of Area 'a' could be taller than 5 metres with no potential to overshadow the courtyard.
- There are several rules and criteria that seem to be seeking to protect the solar access to the courtyard. It would be better if a single metric could be identified that would achieve this outcome and not be so complex.

The Governance of the territory plan establishes a hierarchy of codes that states: "Where inconsistencies exist between provisions of applicable Codes, the Act specifies that the Precinct Codes take precedence over Development Codes that in turn take precedence over General Codes."

The Commercial Zones code identifies a maximum plot ratio within group centres of 100%, with criteria-based assessment being available (R46/C46). In the absence of any controls relating to plot ratio in the precinct code, it is likely that this control will need to be addressed by any future development proposal.

Where the precinct code is providing for opportunities for 6 storey development, this would result in plot ratios much higher than 100% and could result in considerable planning risk to the proponent. This is especially relevant given that the plot ratio of the proposed redevelopment of 44 Curtin Place was one of the reasons given for refusing the original 2016 development application. To reduce risk to future development proposals that are consistent with the intentions of the master plan and precinct code, the precinct code should include a control relating to plot ratios that are consistent with the height controls and intended development outcomes.

Overall, we are supportive of the implementation of the variation.

It has taken since 2015 to prepare the Curtin Master Plan and translate it into a new precinct code. The future of the Curtin Group Centre needs to be a partnership between the community and local businesses, that is facilitated by the Territory. This needs to be done in a timely manner to allow reasonable business decisions to be made.

Should you wish to discuss this submission further, I can be contacted at:

[Redacted contact information]

Yours Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

Kip Tanner
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