



ACT
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Residential zones in the ACT

Variation 306

Residential zones in the ACT are areas where the main use of land is for housing. Some small scale community and commercial facilities (such as childcare centres, medical practices and community halls) are permitted to meet the needs of local residents. Industrial and commercial developments are prohibited in these zones to protect their residential character.

Residential zones provide a framework to meet housing demand and for changes in demand to be managed. The planning controls in these zones aim to manage redevelopment in established areas, create the character of new areas, and promote a more sustainable urban form.

Canberra's population is growing and the community's needs are changing. It is ageing and household sizes are declining. There is demand for a wide choice of affordable and sustainable housing, including single dwellings, secondary residences, dual and multi unit developments.

The following zoning summaries describe the current planning rules.

RZ1 – Suburban Zone

RZ1 covers over 80% of all residential land in the ACT. It is characterised by low rise and predominantly low density housing, the majority of which are single residences.

The planning controls for RZ1 aim to guide low rise and low density residential development in Canberra:

- Multi unit housing (including apartments) is permitted as part of the initial planning of RZ1 areas, however there are strict limits on multi unit housing redevelopment of land that was originally single dwelling housing.
- Dual occupancies are permitted on blocks over 800m², however they are not permitted to be subdivided or unit titled (and therefore cannot be sold separately).
- Except for supportive housing consolidation of single dwelling blocks is not permitted in order to protect the pattern of blocks in the area.
- On single dwelling blocks, basement carparking or an attics is not permitted if the building has two storeys above or below. However they are permitted on multi-unit blocks.
- In new RZ1 areas, the zone will provide a range of low rise housing which responds to climate change and population increase, and will provide opportunities to work from home and small scale opportunities for local employment.
- In new RZ1 areas, multi-unit housing will be restricted to two storeys and a 65% plot ratio.



RZ1 in Crace, compact blocks



RZ2 – Suburban Core Zone

RZ2 is located around local, group and town centres. It is characterised by a wide range of housing types that are still low rise and low density.

RZ2 provides opportunities for housing close to shopping centres and public transport corridors to use of existing public transport, shops and services.

RZ2 can respond to changing population and household sizes by providing a wide range of housing choices.

The planning controls for RZ2 allow multi unit redevelopment within existing suburbs, whilst protecting the suburban character of the surrounding RZ1 zone:

- Buildings in RZ2 can be up to two storeys high and can also include attics and/or basement car parking. This, along with a maximum height of 8.5m (the same as RZ1) helps maintain the low rise character of the zone.
- A plot ratio of 50% for multi unit development in RZ2 (the same as for a single residence) ensures that density remains low.
- Multi unit dwellings must have their own ground floor garden or outdoor entertaining area that adjoins the unit.
- Apartments are prohibited.

Variation 306 contains additional provisions applicable to multi-unit developments in RZ2. These aim to control the extent and scale of redevelopment in the zone to retain a consistent suburban character:

- The maximum number of dwellings permitted is based on the size of the block to prevent over-development.
- Blocks can only be consolidated if they have a continuous street frontage.
- There can be a maximum four dwellings per building and there must be physical separation between buildings.



RZ2 in Downer, multi-unit housing

- There can be a maximum of four car parking spaces located together (except where located in a basement) and there must be physical separation between groups of parking spaces.

RZ3 – Urban Residential Zone

RZ3 is relatively low rise but is slightly higher density than RZ2. It is generally located in the vicinity of commercial centres and employment locations (e.g. Canberra City, Northbourne Ave and Gungahlin) and acts as a transition zone between the low density suburban RZ1 zone and the medium density RZ4 areas.

Planning controls for RZ3 aim to create a wide range of housing in suitable urban areas which have good access to facilities and employment:

- Buildings have a maximum height of 9.5m and are generally two storeys.
- Apartments are permitted.
- The plot ratio is 65% which allows for medium scale multi unit development.



RZ3 in Bruce, multi-unit housing



RZ4 in Braddon

RZ4 – Medium Density Residential Zone

RZ4 is characterised by medium rise and medium density. It is generally located close to town centres and along major transportation corridors to take full advantage of the public transport system. It may also sometimes occupy large 'island' sites that are suitable for this type of housing.

The RZ4 zone aims to encourage housing diversity, contain urban expansion and accommodate population growth along major transport corridors:

- It provides opportunities for increased dwelling densities.
- It helps reduce population losses in established areas.
- Buildings have a maximum height of 12.5m, are generally three storeys and have a maximum plot ratio of 80%.
- Apartments are permitted.

RZ5 – High Density Residential Zone

RZ5 aims to increase the population in existing areas in a sustainable way. It permits high rise and high density development, predominantly consisting of apartments.

RZ5 intends to promote sustainable and environmentally sensitive development that is less dependent on car travel, and minimises infrastructure and service costs. It encourages housing in locations that have convenient access to employment, and accommodates population growth and changing household sizes:

- Buildings have a maximum height of 21.5m and are generally up to six storeys.

- If located near to low rise residential areas, community facilities or parks and recreation areas, a maximum of three storeys is required to limit the impact of high rise buildings in terms of bulk and scale as well as overshadowing.

Some RZ5 areas are subject to precinct code provisions that may specify lesser or greater heights or other provisions that are deemed to be appropriate.



This building in Kingston is what an RZ5 development might look like



Table 1: Rules for residential zones in the ACT

Aspects of development	RZ1 Suburban	RZ2 Suburban Core	RZ3 Urban Low Rise Residential	RZ4 Urban Medium Rise Residential	RZ5 Urban High Rise Residential
Plot ratio for single dwellings on large blocks	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Plot ratio for dual occ/ multi unit (single dwelling block)	formula up to 35%	35% or 50% (depending on location of second house)	65%	80%	n/a
Plot ratio for dual occ/ multi unit (other than single dwelling block)	65%	65%	65%	80%	n/a
Number of storeys	2 storey (1 storey rear dwelling)	2 storey	2 storey	3 storey	6 storeys plus area specific provisions
Maximum height	8.5m	9.5m	9.5m	12.5	21.5m
Attics and basements	permitted but not in addition to 2 storeys	permitted	permitted	permitted	permitted
Dual occupancy	800m ² min block area	700m ² min block area	permitted	permitted	permitted
Multi-unit (more than 2)	on non-standard blocks only	Block density control with 1050m ² min block area required	permitted	permitted	permitted
Apartments	not permitted (unless previously identified as a multi unit block)	not permitted (unless previously identified as a multi unit block)	permitted	permitted	permitted
Unit titling and subdivision	not permitted for single dwelling blocks except where dwelling pre-existed Variarion 200	permitted	permitted	permitted	permitted
Consolidation	not permitted for single dwelling blocks except for supportive housing	permitted	permitted	permitted	permitted

For more information

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