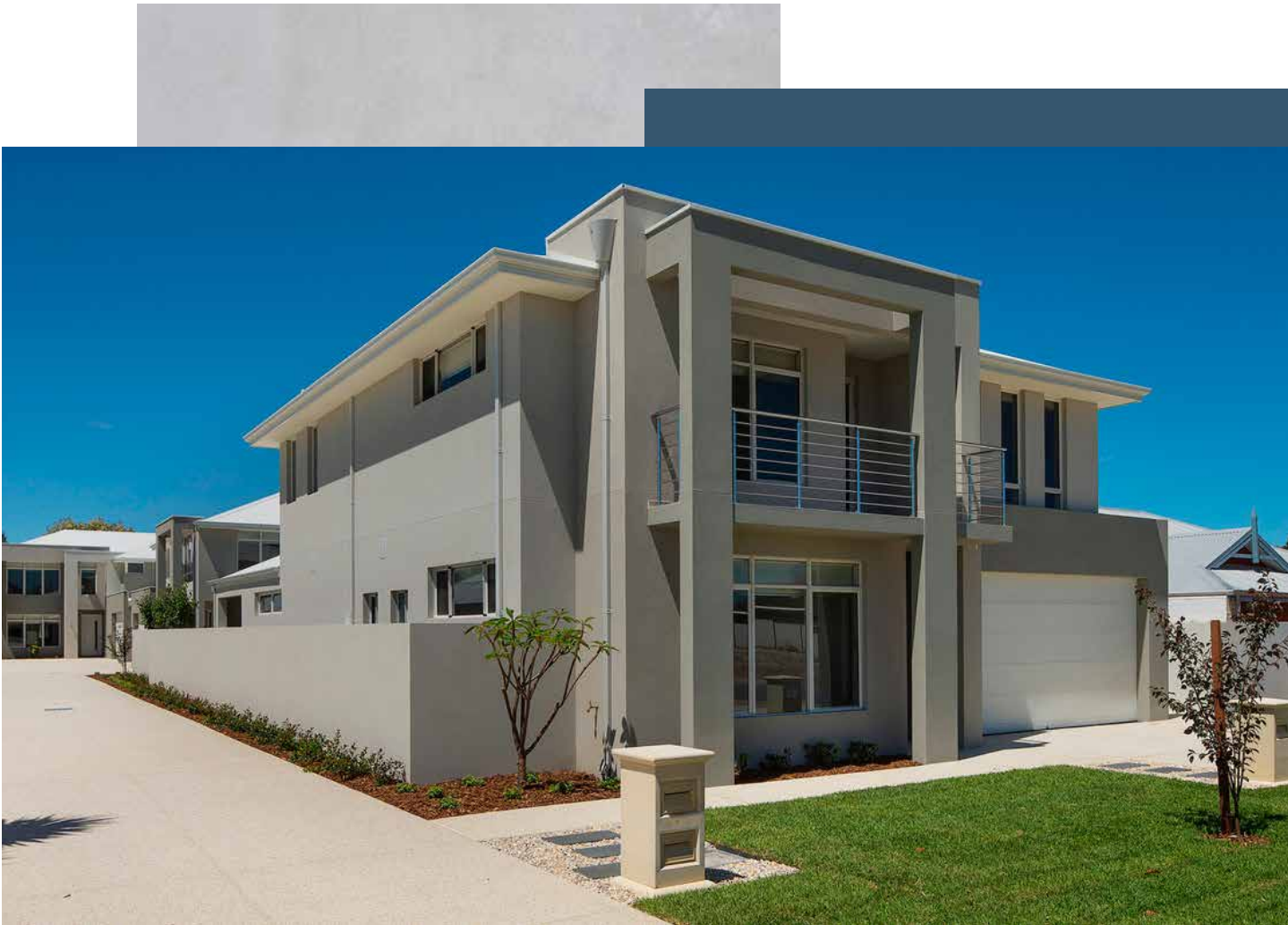


# Understanding *n-codes*

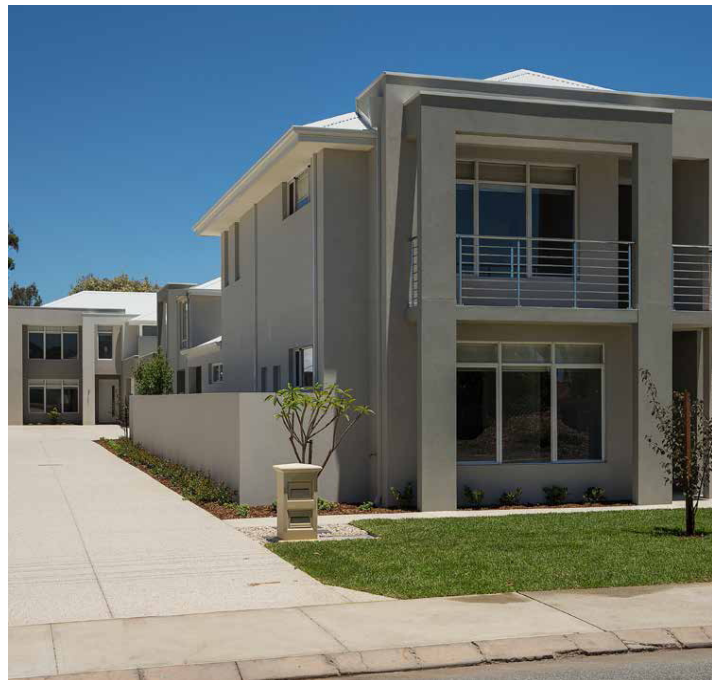


# Understanding R Code zoning

If you've ever looked into the process of land development, you may have come across the term R-Codes or heard someone refer to a block of land as being 'zoned' R20, R30 or R40, or maybe even R60.

The relevant R-Code zoning is one of the things developers look at first because it dictates how many properties they can get on a particular block of land. As a guide, the higher the R-Code number, the higher the housing density permitted.

Understanding how the R-Code zoning works helps developers determine whether their project will be feasible or not. As a rule of thumb, the more properties you can get on a block, the better the return on your investment is likely to be.



Given that the State Government's new Design WA policies are encouraging well-designed higher density housing to improve the way Perth is growing, R-Code zoning remains a hot topic with new and seasoned developers alike.

## Doing the sums

R-Code zoning calculations are based on **Table 1**, contained in State Planning Policy 7.3 Residential Design Codes Volume 1\*, a weighty planning document that controls the design of most residential development throughout Western Australia.

While the numbers and columns can seem tricky to the untrained eye, Table 1 is important because it lists all the R-Code zones and the minimum areas required per dwelling. It also outlines minimum requirements for outdoor living, street frontage and setbacks.

**TABLE 1**

| R Code | Site Area per Dwelling |              |  |                      | Open Space          |                             | Minimum Setbacks |                  |
|--------|------------------------|--------------|--|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|        | Average (m2)           | Minimum (m2) | Minimum - Rear Battleaxe inc.access leg (m2) | Minimum Frontage (m) | Minimum (% of site) | Minimum Outdoor Living (m2) | Primary Street   | Secondary Street |
| R20    | 450                    | 350          | 450  | 10                   | 50%                 | 30                          | 6                | 1.5              |
| R25    | 350                    | 300          | 425  | 8                    | 50%                 | 30                          | 6                | 1.5              |
| R30    | 300                    | 260          | 410  | -                    | 45%                 | 24                          | 4                | 1.5              |
| R35    | 260                    | 220          | 395  | -                    | 45%                 | 24                          | 4                | 1.5              |
| R40    | 220                    | 180          | 380  | -                    | 45%                 | 20                          | 4                | 1                |
| R50    | 180                    | 160          | 380  | -                    | 40%                 | 16                          | 2                | 1                |
| R60    | 150                    | 120          | 380  | -                    | 40%                 | 16                          | 2                | 1                |

### IF THE BLOCK IS ZONED R40...

The average minimum site area per dwelling according to **Table 1** is 220sqm. To work out the number of dwellings permitted, you divide 728sqm by 220sqm. This gives you 3.31, which equates to three dwellings, otherwise known as a triplex development.

### IF THE BLOCK IS ZONED R30...

The average minimum site area per dwelling according to **Table 1** is 300sqm. The calculation in this instance would be 728sqm divided by 300sqm, which gives you 2.42. This equates to two dwellings, otherwise known as a duplex development.

### IF THE BLOCK IS ZONED R20...

Using Table 1, the calculation would be  $728 \div 450 = 1.62$

This would mean only a single dwelling would be permitted on the site.

You can call the local council to find out the zoning for a particular block of land. Our experts are also happy to do the research for you and can carry out a free feasibility assessment to give you extra information to base your decisions on.

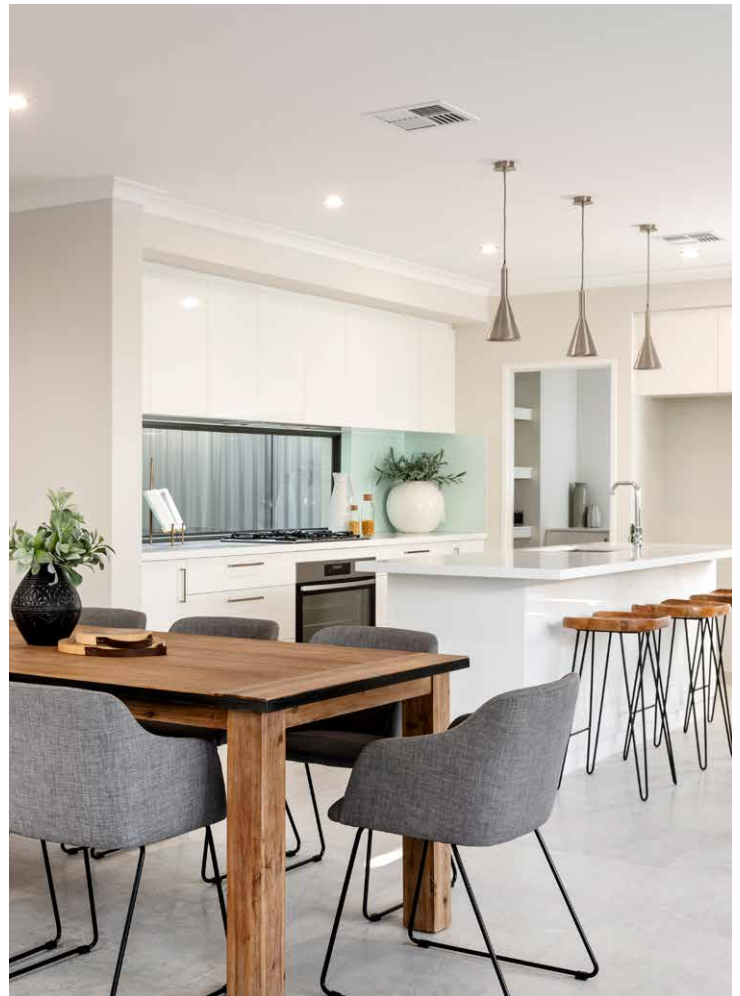
A word of warning! Some blocks can have a split zoning and each council has different rules that apply if this is the case. It's always a good idea to speak to the experts before making any decisions.

\*Formerly State Planning Policy 3.1 Residential Design Codes

## Why R-Codes are changing

The State Government has realised that urban sprawl cannot continue and is requiring local councils to increase the density of housing closer to the city and in developed areas. This effectively means filling in the 'gaps' and inserting more homes into established suburbs, including areas around shopping centres, established transport hubs and commercial hubs in particular.

Many homeowners have started thinking about developing their block after receiving news from their local council that the area has been re-zoned to encourage people to subdivide their blocks and build more homes. The good news is that re-zoning opens up a whole range of possibilities. Building an extra home on your block, for example, means you could stay in an area you love, but have a second property to rent out or sell, giving you an income stream or the potential to put a nice sum of cash in the bank. Another option would be to look in a re-zoned area for a big block with an old property that you can bowl over, enabling you to build two, three, four or more new houses, villas or townhouses.



## Additional considerations

While the R-Code zoning and the lot size dictate how many dwellings are permitted on a parcel of land, there are many other factors that need to be addressed as part of a development application. They include:

- Minimum site areas for exclusive use
- Setbacks
- Averaging and heights
- Overlooking neighbour's amenity
- Streetscape
- Open space
- Garage design
- Car parking
- Vehicular access
- Pedestrian access
- Passive solar design
- Overshadowing
- Special purpose dwellings
- Other utilities and facilities
- Local Government

The R-Codes also provide scope for local councils to replace some criteria in line with specific local housing objectives. These amendments come in the form of local planning policies or structure plans, which supplement or enhance the R-Codes to cater for the local context.

For instance, in some councils, if you have a corner lot in an area zoned R20 and you choose to demolish the existing house you can maximise your site and build to R30 zoning requirements. Other things to watch out for include policies regarding façade treatment and material selections to special precinct areas. Some councils also have categories for laneways and sometimes a rear unit is required to face the laneway to alleviate parking issues.

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## R Codes in action:

### CASE STUDY R20 in Como

**The opportunity:** The clients were living in an older home, which they had purchased in 2002, and decided to relocate to the Perth Hills. The home sat on a 1012sqm block that was ripe for development. The block's R20 zoning meant there was an opportunity to knock down the old house and replace it with two new homes. Although the clients were keen to unlock the potential of their property this was their first development and they were understandably unsure of the process.



**The project:** The clients worked with Developments by Dale Alcock, confident the experienced team would not only deliver a quality build to an agreed budget and timeframe, but also look after the project from start to finish. This included carrying out a feasibility study and weighing up the options, pricing the project, arranging for the old house to be demolished, looking after the subdivision process, and designing and constructing two new homes to maximise the block.

**The result:** Two contemporary double-storey homes, each with its own street frontage to not only make best use of the site, but also ensure maximum appeal for potential purchasers or tenants. The 'turn key' project was handled by an experienced team who looked after the day-to-day management of the subdivision process, planning application and building permits, as well as design, construction and finishing. One of the homes is a 'hold' to rent out and the other a 'sell'.





## CASE STUDY

### R40 in East Vic Park

**The opportunity:** The client purchased an old house on a 710sqm block zoned R40 in East Vic Park. Developments by Dale Alcock had already conducted a feasibility study to confirm that a triplex development was possible on the site, which is close to public transport into the CBD, within walking distance of major shopping centres and close to Curtin University.

**The project:** Not only was the client overseas a lot of the time, but also this was their first development so they wanted a full turn-key project, from the feasibility study through to design, planning approvals, demolition, sub-division and construction.

**The result:** Three double-storey townhouses proved to be the optimum solution for the site. A 'turnkey' package for each of the homes gave the client confidence that everything was included in the contract price, right down to the carpets, window treatments and internal painting. All three townhouses were offered for sale, with each one priced at more than \$750,000.



## CASE STUDY

### R40 in Jindalee

**The opportunity:** A vacant 1532sqm block zoned R40 by the beach in Jindalee proved to be the perfect site for the clients' first development.

**The project:** The clients spend much of the year abroad, so needed a team that could handle their build and make decisions on their behalf, while keeping them fully briefed at every stage, from concept and design, right through to construction and finishing.

**The result:** Three contemporary 'upside-down' townhouses, each with three bedrooms and three bathrooms. Putting together a 'turnkey' package for each of the three double-storey homes meant all aspects of the build, including finishes such as floor coverings and window treatments, were covered in the contract price.

## Making it happen

There is a lot to know and consider when developing property. Not only do the R-Codes need to be addressed when designing a development, but also any Town Planning Scheme or Planning Policy. Other factors that come into play include the objectives of your development – whether to keep, sell or rent – and your target market, budget, design brief and timeframe. The proper evaluation of all of these factors will lead to good design and a feasible project.

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## A quick word about Design WA

In May 2019 the State Government launched Design WA Stage One, a new set of policies that respond to the challenges of contemporary urban growth, with a focus on higher density living. Stage One focused on improved design outcomes for apartments.

Stage Two was released in August 2019 for public consultation for 60 days. Precinct Design guides the preparation and assessment of planning proposals for areas that require a high level of planning, such as higher levels of density and infill, mixed use components and activity centre designation.

## The latest on apartments

As part of Design WA Stage One, Part 6 of the R-Codes has been replaced with Volume 2 – Apartments, also known as the Apartment Design Policy.

Focusing on improved design outcomes for apartments, the new policy covers considerations such as context and character, landscape quality, built form and scale, build quality, amenity and community.

The requirements set out in the new policy apply to residential apartments (multiple dwellings) in areas coded R40 and above, within mixed-use development and activity centres.

**Developers with plans approved before the change came into effect will be subject to the new policies (where applicable) if they don't action their plans within the designated timeframe or they let their plans lapse.**

Developments by Dale Alcock can advise whether any changes will be required to existing plans in line with the new policies.





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