



Promoting Affordable Housing

Submission

**City of Fremantle
Planning Scheme Amendment No. 49
City Centre Strategic Sites
REF: 218/055 – Planning Policy and Projects Team
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Shelter WA

Shelter WA is an independent community based organisation committed to the principle of accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing for every person. Shelter WA focuses on people who have low incomes or who are otherwise disadvantaged in the housing market. This includes people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness.

Our role is to give an informed voice on housing policy issues based on sound research, close collaboration and consultation with housing consumers and community based organisations working with housing and related issues. We promote housing options for people on low incomes, including social housing (public housing and community housing), affordable housing provided through the private sector and affordable home ownership.

Introduction

Shelter WA recognises that planning plays a central role in the supply and availability of affordable housing. Clear planning mechanisms are needed to ensure that increased supply is affordable for low and moderate income households. Without specific provisions for additional dwellings to target these households, we run the risk of increasing density without increasing the social and economic mix needed for the health and vitality of our communities.

Long term residents, families and generations who remain stable in a location over a long period of time have many benefits for communities and local regions. Diverse dwelling types and sufficient affordable housing options across all tenures (i.e. home-ownership, private rentals, social housing, crisis and supported accommodation) are required to accommodate people at different points in their lives or 'housing careers'.

As the population of Perth increases, affordable housing will be needed for a range of household types and sizes. Key workers, including nurses, police officers and teachers, as well as tradespeople, shop assistants and hairdressers need affordable housing close to where they work. Households with complex housing needs such as a child with a disability or responsibility for in-home care provision to frail older relatives also require some place to live that is safe, well-located, in close proximity to health services and affordable. Similarly, ageing parents caring for an adult child with disabilities, a parent with children seeking to rebuild their lives after a relationship break-down or following domestic violence all need safe and secure accommodation. These families are unlikely to be able to find appropriate and affordable accommodation near essential services or adequate public transport in the current private rental market.

Local governments can use specific planning mechanisms to facilitate the development of affordable housing within their jurisdictions.

In this submission Shelter WA will refer to proposed initiatives as outlined in the City of Fremantle Strategic Plan 2010-15 and the Planning Scheme Amendment No.49.

Shelter WA welcomes the opportunity to comment on Fremantle City Central Urban Renewal Planning Scheme Amendment No. 49 in relation to the City of Fremantle's Strategic Plan 2010–2015.

Shelter WA supports the City's Strategic imperative for Urban Renewal & Integration and its aim to develop an "affordable and diverse housing policy" over the next three years. The strategy's aim for "more affordable and diverse (mixed use) housing for a changing and growing population" is commended for increasing housing diversity, removing barriers to the provision of affordable housing, and increasing density close to public transportation and other amenities.

Absence of Inclusionary Zoning in LPS 4 Amendment No 49

The Fremantle City Central Urban Renewal Planning Scheme Amendment No.49 requires further proactive measures to facilitate and encourage the provision of affordable housing, particularly in the Fremantle City Central Urban selected sites.

Given the decreasing inner city population (830 residents) and the City's goal to increase to 3,300 residents – "*residential density in the city centre is about half what it is in Fremantle suburbs*" Shelter WA urges the Council to increase residential allocation of affordable housing to 15% and consider include inclusionary zoning? (LPS4 Scheme Amendment Report p.3)

"The amendment proposes that 10 per cent of the total residential net lettable area be provided as 'low income housing' as one of the performance criteria for additional discretionary building height." LPS4 Scheme Amendment Report p.11

The WA Department of Housing's *Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020: Opening Doors to Affordable Housing* recommends "*Placing a minimum 15% affordable housing quota on all government land and housing developments* to be targeted to low-to-moderate income households. (p10. AHS)

Whilst Shelter WA understands the "*Council's target to achieve Primary Centre status under the WAPC's Directions 2031 strategy*" by aiming to achieve "*an additional 70,00sqm of office net lettable area within the city*" we urge Council to also articulate what percentage of the total dwellings will actually be set aside for affordable housing options.

Discretionary additional height (p.12) Clause 12.12 – Schedule 12 Local Planning Areas (Development Requirements)

Local Planning Scheme No. 4 Amendment No. 49 is to be acknowledged for the initiative of the City in expanding residential and density zoning within this site. The City of Fremantle Strategic Plan 2010-15, and Policy SG47 – diverse and Affordable Housing Policy, state the City's intentions of responding to housing affordability issues within the City, and increasing the amount of affordable and diverse housing options. However, the only reference to affordable housing allocation within the proposed Amendment No. 49 occurs in Clause 12.12 Schedule 12, which relates to discretionary additional height conditional approvals. We would urge Council to consider increasing the allotment of low income housing from 10% to 15% and adopt the recommendations as outlined in the Department of Housing's fact sheet for local government (<http://www.housing.wa.gov.au/aboutus/aboutthedevelopment/StrategicDirection/Pages/default.aspx>).

It would also be useful to define what is meant by “low income housing”, and whether it is intended for purchase or rental. Furthermore, it would be helpful to outline how it will be maintained as low income housing in perpetuity, and how it will be managed in order that it is of benefit to low-moderate income individuals or families.

In addition to providing incentives to developers to build more affordable housing, as proposed in Amendment No. 49, there are several mechanisms that Local Government Authorities can adopt to ensure the affordable housing needs of its populations will be met. For instance, inclusionary zoning, whereby a portion of new units (15%) in a specified area or in developments with a specified number of units must be reserved as affordable housing. This can be done in a number of ways, for instance in partnership with community housing providers and/or in partnership with the Department of Housing through cost price sale to those government or non-government growth providers.

CITY OF FREMANTLE STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2015 - Development of a City of Fremantle Affordable Housing Policy

Shelter WA supports the development of an Affordable and Diverse Housing Policy as outlined in the City of Fremantle Strategic Plan 2010-2015 page 8.

Shelter WA has extensive experience in research and policy, and valuable resources which can support Council in the process of developing its Affordable Housing Strategy. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate and provide feedback during the consultation process.

We would suggest it may be advantageous to expedite the development of the City of Fremantle’s Affordable and Diverse Housing Policy, given State land use and planning amendments currently under way in response to the WA Government State Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020.

CONCLUSION

Shelter WA commends the City of Fremantle for its vision in expanding its use of residential zoning in the proposed Amendment No. 49. As outlined in the submission above, however, Shelter WA would suggest a further extension of the planned amendments to increase the site’s allocation for affordable and low income housing.

The City’s intention to develop a local Affordable and Diverse Housing Strategy is also to be commended. Shelter WA supports the City’s efforts and encourages them. The development of an Affordable Housing Strategy will provide the direction required to ensure affordable housing is a key feature in the future planning of the City of Fremantle. It also provides a clear message to developers and the public that affordable housing is a necessary component to the health and vitality of the future of the City of Fremantle.

Our communities are stronger when everyone is able to access housing which is safe, secure, and affordable.