



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Planning Reform



Residential Design Codes Volume 1 (R-Codes) Review

Western Australians planning to build a new home could benefit from streamlined decision-making under proposed changes to Volume 1 of the State's Residential Design Codes (R-Codes).

An interim review of the R-Codes state planning policy is part of the McGowan Government's planning reforms to support Western Australia's economic recovery. Proposed changes to the policy aim to simplify and streamline the approvals process for many new home builds and renovations, making it easier for homebuyers, local governments and developers.

The review aims to simplify the R-Codes so that they are easier to interpret, as well as streamline the approvals process for single houses, grouped dwellings, multiple dwellings (coded less than R40), and smaller structures such as patios, carports, decks and sheds.

Background

- The R-Codes Volume 1 are design standards that apply to all single house, grouped dwelling and multiple dwelling (coded less than R40) developments in Western Australia. They specify what can be built and where it can be built, to ensure residential development is responsive to a range of considerations, including streetscape, neighbourhood amenity and liveability.
- Local governments use the R-Codes in conjunction with their local planning frameworks to guide development within their boundaries.
- Applications for single houses, ancillary buildings and some home improvements must be considered by the relevant local government to ensure they comply with the R-Codes. If they comply, there is no need for development approval – these proposals are regarded as 'deemed-to-comply'.
- A key objective of the review is to make it easier for local governments to deem more applications compliant, allowing applicants to proceed straight to building permit.

Key Changes

- Proposed changes to the R-Codes will allow a wider range of smaller residential projects such as patios, decks and extensions to be exempt from requiring development approval.
- To achieve this, changes are proposed to the requirements for open space, building setbacks, wall heights and visual privacy setbacks.
- Simplified language is used to improve both the understanding and usability of the document.
- Changes are also proposed to improve the design and liveability of residential developments, including increasing the size of outdoor living areas, provide for a tree to be planted for each dwelling and that carport and ancillary dwelling designs complement the main dwelling.

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	DESIGN ELEMENT	PROPOSED CHANGES
Common triggers for development approvals	Single house approval	No development approval required for compliant single houses on lots less than 260m ² .
	Boundary walls	Remove average wall height calculations to simplify assessment.
	Primary street setbacks	Simplify assessment for carports, verandahs, patios, porches and similar structures.
	Privacy	Apply reduced privacy setbacks to lots coded R30 and above, instead of R50 and above.
	Building heights	Increase height limits for two-storey dwellings by 1m to allow for improved design
	Open space	Allow additional site cover of 5 per cent
	Front fences	Allow visual permeable front fencing with 1.8m piers as deemed-to-comply
Simplified for streamlined assessment	Lot boundary setbacks	Simplified assessment method
	Site works and retaining	Simplified assessment method
Development opportunity	Ancillary dwellings	Reduce minimum site area to 350m ² for ancillary dwellings on single house lots
	Patios, small outbuildings (shed), boundary fences	Address common triggers for development approvals in line with community expectations
	Swimming pools and pergolas	Clarify that no development approval is required
Design and liveability improvements	Outdoor living area	Increase outdoor living area requirements, including minimum dimensions and area
	Landscaping	Require one tree per dwelling and landscaping within the front setback for single houses, as well as grouped and multiples
	Ancillary dwellings and carports	Introduce simple design standards to improve design outcomes

Desired Outcomes

- The proposed changes will reduce a range of common triggers for single house development applications, simplify provisions for streamlined assessments, while requiring design improvements for more efficient building design and better outdoor spaces. This will reduce the application costs for homeowners and help alleviate the administrative and regulatory burden on local governments.

Implementation

- Public comment on the proposed changes is open until 5pm on 10 September 2020. Submissions can be made online at <https://consultation.dplh.wa.gov.au/>.
- All submissions will be considered and used to inform the final policy, which is expected to be in effect by the end of 2020. More information is available at <https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/rcodes>.