Ipswich City Council
PLANNING SCHEME FACT SHEET NO. 8

Key Matters Affecting Residential Lot Sizes

1. Introduction

This Fact Sheet is one of a series that deals with planning scheme related information. This Fact Sheet discusses the key matters relating to residential lot sizes.

2. Historic Background

The first legislation regulating lot sizes in Queensland was the *Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act 1885.* The Act included a minimum lot size of 16 perches (405m^2).

During the early 20th Century residential lot sizes ranging from a quarter acre (1012m^2) to 32 perches (809m^2) were common. In the latter part of the 20th Century residential lot sizes tended to reduce to around 600 to 700m^2. In the 21st Century strong demand has emerged for smaller residential lots from 300-500m^2 and also terrace (attached) house lots from 100-200m^2. The increased demand for small lots is being driven through increased land prices and housing affordability issues as well as different lifestyle choices and household make up whereby households without children are seeking low maintenance house lots without significant on site recreation space.

Many factors over time have influenced residential lot sizes and land configurations, including changing lifestyle choices and expectations, living standards and affordability, socio-economic and demographic profiles, planning policies and infrastructure investment.

There is currently no minimum residential lot size specified under the State planning legislation in Queensland.

Councils are able to determine lot sizes but they must also comply with relevant State Planning Policies and the SEQ Regional Plan. These overarching State Policies are binding on all Councils in SEQ.

3. Key Matters Affecting Residential Lot Sizes

(a) South East Queensland Regional Plan

The Queensland Government's South East Queensland Regional Plan (SEQ RP) predicts that the region's population will increase from 2.8 million in 2006 to 4.4 million by 2031, a population increase of 1.6 million people over 25 years, requiring an additional 754,000 dwellings.

To address this population growth, the South East Queensland Regional Plan projects a population for Ipswich of 435,000 people (in 118,000 additional dwellings) by 2031, being the highest predicted percentage change in the region. The population of the Ipswich Local Government Area at 30 June 2015 was around 190,000 people.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan defines an 'Urban Footprint' - a boundary to manage urban growth and provide for the region's urban development needs. Land within the 'Urban Footprint' is planned to accommodate urban development needs to 2031 based on population, housing and employment projections, and includes existing urban and new greenfield areas to accommodate future urban development.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan also requires Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) - higher density residential development in and around centres and public transport nodes and corridors to increase land use intensity and provide more convenient access to services and transport.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan is currently under review. The new time horizon of 2041 is likely to mean that the planned capacity of the Region will grow to over 5 million people with a greater focus on higher density, transit oriented development.

All of the Local Governments in South East Queensland from the Gold Coast north to the Sunshine Coast and west to Toowoomba are required under the State Planning Legislation (currently the Sustainable Planning Act) to comply with the requirements (including the growth targets and densities) of the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

(b) Lifestyle, Affordability and Liveability

There have been significant changes in household composition since the 'baby boom' era post the Second World War.

The 2011 census data found that only 50% of households in Ipswich have children, with 26% of households comprising couples without children and 20% of households comprising single or lone persons. 78% of Ipswich households have two or fewer motor vehicles.

The census also identified that Ipswich currently has a high proportion (91%) of detached housing stock (compared to 76% for Australia). There is a significant mismatch between housing type and household occupancies, with a shortfall in the variety of alternative housing options and associated lot sizes (such as semi-detached, townhouse, flat, unit or apartment). The provision of housing and associated lot sizes in Ipswich needs to respond to a diversity of community housing needs (including smaller households), lifestyles, demographics and budgets.

Lifestyle choices also influence residential lot sizes. Increasingly the trend is for an internal house rather than outdoor living focus, the desire for larger dwellings (as big as one can afford) in preference to land area, the focus on access to public facilities and amenities for recreation and entertainment and a preference for low maintenance and freehold title avoiding the expense and administration issues associated with community title living options.

Smaller residential lots provide affordable entry level housing for new home owners, as well as offering intergenerational housing options for people downsizing or desiring lower maintenance lifestyle choices. Intergenerational housing provides opportunities for people to remain in their community through the various stages of their lifecycle, and is important to ensure sustainable and vibrant communities are maintained.

The provision of well-located, smaller residential lots achieves population densities that allow more people to live in closer proximity to services and facilities, supports more cost effective public transport provision, encourages greater physical activity and supports reductions in private vehicle dependency.

More compact urban development also limits urban sprawl, protecting a greater area for non-urban purposes including rural production, environmental conservation and community recreation uses.

Larger lot sizes provide opportunities for families to grow and recreate on site, as well as to have hobbies involving gardens, sheds, boats and caravans.

(c) Ipswich Planning Scheme

The Ipswich Planning Scheme provides for the delivery of new residential development in both greenfield areas (new growth areas) and opportunities for urban consolidation and infill development in established areas. **As outlined under 3(a) above, the Ipswich Planning scheme is required by State Government legislation to comply with the requirements (including the growth targets and densities) of the South East Queensland Regional Plan.**

The lot sizes achievable on an individual site will depend on a number of factors including the physical characteristics and location of the land (including constraints such as mining, difficult topography and flooding/drainage), the zoning of the land and other relevant provisions of the planning scheme.

- Locational Criteria

The proximity of access to day-to-day facilities and services is an important consideration for density and lot size/type. Generally, higher residential densities (including smaller lots) are encouraged within walking distance to existing and planned future:

- public parks and recreation opportunities;
- centres (for employment and shopping);
- community and educational facilities (such as schools); and
- public transport nodes (such as bus stops and railway stations).

Increased density enables a greater number of residents to easily access services and facilities, improves efficiency in delivering services owing to shorter distances, contributes to improvements in public transport services and patronage levels and maximises the return on investment in infrastructure.

- Development Constraints

Part 11 – Overlays of the Planning Scheme outlines key matters that may constrain future urban development (such as mining, difficult topography and flooding/drainage). These matters may also influence residential lot size and land configuration. Generally, development should be sited and designed to avoid, minimise or withstand the incidence of a development constraint, with the intent to minimise the number of people exposed to the development constraint. For example, there should be no new residential lots created on land below the adopted flood regulation line and new residential lots on slopes greater than 15% should generally be 800m^2 or greater in area.

- Infrastructure

Residential development requires the provision of supporting infrastructure. This infrastructure includes water, sewer (except for very large lots), roads, public transport, community facilities, parks, telecommunications and electricity.

Increased residential densities maximise access to and use of the capacity of infrastructure, helping to reduce the overall costs associated with delivering housing and maintaining the infrastructure. Larger lots generally require a greater extent of infrastructure to serve a lower population. Higher densities (at 20+ dwellings per hectare) also support the provision of public transport.

- Zoning

The Planning Scheme provides for the delivery of a mix of lot sizes and housing types to meet a range of housing and lifestyle needs of the community and includes controls to facilitate the delivery of good design outcomes. The zoning of land is determined and responds to the physical characteristics, location criteria and infrastructure required.

The Planning Scheme categorises all land within the Ipswich local government area into zones that provide the preferred uses and development outcomes for specific areas of the City including the preferred residential densities and associated lot sizes. Proposals for reconfiguration (subdivision) of land are considered based on the zone in which the land is located and any development constraint overlays. This guides considerations regarding the appropriate area of the proposed lots. The existing land use pattern and lot sizes in the local area is also considered where these have been identified as matters of significance.

The planning scheme provisions do not apply a 'one size fits all' approach. For example, in the Large Lot Residential Zone the density is 1.5 to 2.5 dwellings per hectare (ha) (4,000m^2 to 6,000m^2 lots) as these are mostly unsewered lots, whilst in the Residential Low Density Zone – generally 10 to 15 dwellings per ha (average 600m^2 lots), in the Residential Medium Density Zone - 3 storey (RM1 - 75 dwellings per ha); 1 to 2 storey (RM2 - 50 dwellings per ha) and Residential High Density (100+ dwellings per ha). Additionally, the size of lots may vary within a zone, with a range of lot sizes supported.

- Reconfiguring a Lot Code

The Reconfiguring a Lot Code (Part 12, Division 5), of the Planning Scheme also provides for a range of residential lot sizes that can be provided in the Urban Footprint and includes provisions relating to lot dimensions, road widths, pathways, etc.