

SYDNEY'S GROWTH CENTRES

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the North West and South West Growth Centres?

The Growth Centres are two regions of mostly undeveloped land in Sydney's north west and south west, totalling some 27,000 hectares.

Planning for the Growth Centres started in 2003. Together, the North West and South West Growth Centres will be home to 500,000 people over the next 25+ years.

The Growth Centres will contain new infrastructure worth \$7.5 billion and provide land for more than 180,000 homes, 2,500 hectares of employment space and extensive areas for recreation and conservation.

2. Where is the North West Growth Centre?

The North West Growth Centre is a 10,000 hectare region including parts of The Hills, Blacktown and Hawkesbury local government areas.

It comprises 16 Precincts with capacity for 70,000 new dwellings and 200,000 residents. It includes three dedicated employment Precincts.

The North West Growth Centre will be designed around the existing major centre of Rouse Hill.

3. Where is the South West Growth Centre?

The South West Growth Centre is a 17,000 hectare region covering parts of the Liverpool, Camden and Campbelltown local government areas.

It comprises 18 Precincts with capacity for 110,000 new dwellings and 300,000 residents. It currently includes two dedicated employment Precincts and will feature Leppington as its major centre.

Fully developed, the South West Growth Centre will have a population equal to that of Canberra over the next 30 years.

4. Why has the NSW Government created the Growth Centres?

The Growth Centres are helping to sustainably and sensibly manage the growth and change expected in the Sydney region over the next 25 to 30 years.

If growth was left to sprawl at the rate it has over the past 25 years, Sydney would need 850 square kilometres of land to meet its projected housing needs by 2035.

Instead, the same population growth can be accommodated in just 350 square kilometres, largely through better forward planning and the creation of the Growth Centres (which themselves cover 270 square kilometres).

The Growth Centres represent the biggest land release ever undertaken in the state's history. For this reason, the NSW Government has adopted a new approach to urban development that links planning with infrastructure delivery.

All 34 Precincts will be developed over time in response to population growth and market demand.

5. Who owns the land in the Growth Centres?

The land within the Growth Centres is owned by thousands of different individuals, partnerships, families (or family trusts) and companies. Some government agencies also own small holdings.

Individual landholdings can range from several hundred square metres to several hundred hectares. Some Precincts have scores of individual landowners, while others may be almost entirely owned by one company or entity.

Regardless of the size of their landholding, all owners are kept up to date during the planning process and are able to provide feedback on proposed plans for their area.

6. What is Growth Centres land being used for now?

Much of the land in the Growth Centres is currently open space and sustains a variety of land-uses.

This can include agistment (grazing) and small scale agriculture, as well as some commercial, industrial and residential use.

7. How were the Precinct borders chosen?

The Precinct borders were identified on the basis of existing boundaries such as creeks and roads, property perimeters, current land-use activities and other factors.

Precinct boundaries are re-assessed in the early stages of the planning process.

8. How are the Growth Centres developed into new communities?

Broad objectives for the Growth Centres are set out in Structure Plans, which identify the general pattern and direction of development over the next 30 years.

More detailed, localised objectives are formulated during a process called Precinct Planning, in which the Department of Planning & Infrastructure brings together other government agencies and local councils to examine each Precinct more closely.

Precinct Planning analyses a Precinct's existing infrastructure, topography, biodiversity, Aboriginal and European heritage, water management, economics and employment, community facilities and key transport routes.

A coordinated approach at the outset ensures faster and more efficient delivery of essential infrastructure for water, sewerage, power, roads, transport, schools and other services to each Precinct.

After detailed analysis, a layout plan is drafted to indicate the likely location of housing, town centres, schools, parks, industrial sites, transport routes, conservation and drainage areas and other services.

A package of draft Precinct Planning documents – including the layout plan - is then placed on public exhibition and submissions are sought.

A submissions report is then prepared for the Minister for Planning & infrastructure who decides whether to approve, amend or not approve the Precinct Plans.

If Ministerial approval is granted, a Precinct is then rezoned to allow urban development to proceed.

9. How long does it take to rezone a Precinct?

This streamlined approach has, in general, slashed the time needed to make land serviced and ready for development to two years (from 7-10 years previously).

However, this timeframe is a guide only; precincts vary in size, the number and type of landowners and the time needed to resolve issues of genuine concern raised during community consultation.

10. How is planning for the Growth Centres governed?

The Growth Centres are planned according to the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Region Growth Centres) 2006* (the "Growth Centres SEPP"), a legal document that establishes the planning rules and objectives for the Growth Centres.

Councils must apply the Growth Centres SEPP when making decisions about land within the Growth Centres.

The Growth Centres SEPP provides the basis for Precinct Planning. It establishes planning requirements for land which is flood-prone, near major creeks or which is otherwise significant due to high quality vegetation and other environmental qualities.

Rezoning occurs after Ministerial approval is granted and an Amendment to the Growth Centres SEPP is published in the NSW Government Gazette.

11. What is the difference between land being ‘released’ and ‘rezoned’?

A Precinct is *released* by the Minister to allow the Department to undertake studies and consultations to prepare it for future urban development.

If, after relevant planning and consultation, Ministerial approval is granted, a Precinct is *rezoned* to allow urban development to occur.

Landowners and/or developers can then lodge development applications with the relevant local council.

12. Who decides which Precincts get released first?

The NSW Government manages land release sequencing in the Growth Centres by considering factors such as proximity to existing and planned infrastructure, as this is more cost effective and easier to develop.

For example, the North West Growth Centre already has substantial water-related infrastructure, in particular the existing waste water treatment plants at Riverstone and Rouse Hill. There is also an existing rail service and the planned North West Rail Link.

13. Can landowners request their land be rezoned sooner than the Government’s timetable?

Landowners may seek to bring forward consideration of their land for rezoning, provided there is no cost to taxpayers.

The NSW Government has introduced a Precinct Acceleration Protocol (PAP) which allows Precinct releases within the Growth Centres to be considered sooner than scheduled by the Government.

The Department has released *Guidelines for Applicants* to assist proponents wishing to apply for precinct acceleration.

A *Probity Plan for Precinct Acceleration Protocol (Stage 1)* outlines the processes under which submissions will be considered.

14. How have the Growth Centres improved the planning and approval process?

The NSW Government has streamlined (and continues to refine) the approval process in the Growth Centres so that homes can be built sooner.

Legislative requirements in relation to biodiversity, water management and heritage matters are dealt with at a Precinct-wide level.

In 2007, the environmental assessment process in the Growth Centres was simplified by the introduction of biodiversity certification -- a process that identified and protected areas of significant environmental value before any development commenced.

This removed the need for costly, site by site assessment of each development – at a state level.

The Department is now working with the Federal Government to satisfy its requirements in this area and remove the need for site by site environmental assessments under Commonwealth law.

Developers will then have a single, agreed environmental assessment process that will help accelerate the delivery of new housing while ensuring large areas of conservation areas are protected in perpetuity.

15. If land is rezoned for a new purpose, does the landowner have to change or cease their current activities?

No. A landowner may choose to carry on with any legal activity that was already being undertaken prior to rezoning, for as long as he or she wishes.

16. How will the Government ensure the Growth Centres are attractive places to live?

The planning principle behind the Growth Centres is to minimise travel times and reduce congestion by providing schools, services, business, work and leisure opportunities close to where people will live.

The Growth Centres will be planned around Major Centres -- Rouse Hill in the North West and Leppington in the South West -- which will be significant providers of jobs, services and leisure activities.

The Growth Centres will also feature extensive conservation and recreational areas.

Upgraded roads and public transport connections will provide easy access to existing strategic centres such as Norwest and Blacktown in Sydney's north west or Liverpool and Campbelltown in the south west.

17. Who will pay for the new infrastructure required in each Precinct?

The NSW Government will pay for all social infrastructure such as schools and police stations as well as some regional infrastructure such as major roads.

Developers and/or landowners will help fund the remainder of the regional infrastructure through a Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) – a State levy based on the area of land they develop.

Alternatively, they may opt to directly fund regional infrastructure works related to their development instead of paying the SIC, under a Voluntary Planning Agreement.

Local infrastructure – such as parks, playing fields and drainage facilities – will be partially funded by developers and/or landowners through contributions set down in council plans (as authorised under Section 94 of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act).

18. Who will assess individual development applications?

As is the case across NSW, applications for future development within the Growth Centres will usually be considered by the relevant local council.

In certain instances, a Joint Regional Planning Panel may assume the role of council as the consent authority.

19. What consultation processes are available for the public?

Landowners, residents and other stakeholders are regularly updated during the Precinct Planning process through a website, newsletter mail-outs, and local newspaper advertisements.

The Department also provides a 1300-Community Information Line where people can speak directly to Planning staff.

After Precinct Plans are drafted, the community is able to view the proposed zonings and comment during the exhibition period.

The Department considers all submissions and makes necessary improvements to the Precinct Plans before rezoning.

20. How can I find out more?

Call the Community Information Line on 1300 730 550 or visit www.growthcentres.nsw.gov.au