WAPC Western Australian Planning Commission

PUBLIC REALM CONTRIBUTIONS

Discussion Paper for Consultation

Precincts WA | Station Precincts Improvement Scheme No. 1

Purpose of consultation

To seek stakeholder views on the principles and objectives that should guide a consistent, simplified contribution framework for station precincts.

A key objective is to replace separate requirements for public open space, public art and community benefits with a single coordinated public realm contribution.

This paper does not propose contribution rates.

Consultation draft

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Document status

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Program:	**Precincts WA**
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Scope:	**Public realm contribution principles and objectives**

Executive summary

The Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) is considering a consistent and simplified policy framework for public realm contributions within Precincts WA station precincts. Growth in housing, employment and mixed-use activity creates both opportunities and additional demand for high-quality streets, public spaces, urban greening and safe, convenient access to stations.

The proposed position is that development which materially increases demand for the public realm should make a fair and proportionate contribution to planned precinct improvements. The framework should simplify development obligations by consolidating separate requirements for public open space, public art and community benefits into one coordinated contribution, with safeguards against duplication. Contributions should be clearly connected to growth, applied transparently, coordinated with local government investment and used for improvements that benefit the precinct in which they arise.

This consultation paper focuses on the policy rationale, objectives, principles, scope, governance and delivery approach. It intentionally does not identify contribution rates. Detailed settings, including calculation methods, thresholds, exemptions, credits and payment arrangements, would be developed after consultation and supported by further analysis.

WAPC preliminary position

Position statement

A consistent public realm contribution framework should support the coordinated delivery of high-quality public places in station precincts, while simplifying development obligations through a single coordinated approach to public open space, public art and community benefits. The framework should remain fair, proportionate, transparent, predictable and responsive to local precinct needs.

1. Context

Precincts WA is intended to support well-planned growth around public transport. As station precincts accommodate more residents, workers and visitors, the quality and capacity of the public realm becomes increasingly important to accessibility, liveability, economic activity, amenity and place quality.

Public realm improvements may need to be planned and delivered across multiple sites, landowners and delivery agencies. A precinct-wide framework can help coordinate investment, provide a clearer relationship between development growth and the public improvements needed to support that growth, and remove the need to administer separate contribution requirements for public open space, public art and community benefits.

The WAPC is therefore seeking views on the principles that should guide a future policy under Station Precincts Improvement Scheme No. 1.

2. Purpose of this discussion paper

This paper:

- sets out the WAPC's preliminary position on public realm contributions in station precincts;
- identifies the proposed policy objectives and guiding principles;
- outlines the intended scope and types of public realm outcomes that may be supported;
- describes a high-level approach to precinct planning, works in kind, administration and reporting; and
- invites feedback before detailed policy settings are prepared.

This paper does not establish a contribution liability and does not specify contribution rates. Any future requirements would need to be expressed through the relevant statutory and policy framework.

3. Proposed policy objectives

3.1 Simplify and consolidate contribution requirements

Replace separate requirements for public open space, public art and community benefits with one coordinated public realm contribution framework, reducing complexity and avoiding overlapping or duplicative obligations.

3.2 Support transit-oriented growth

Enable housing, employment and mixed-use activity around public transport to be supported by a functional, attractive and inclusive public realm.

3.3 Coordinate public realm investment

Provide a framework for aligning development-related contributions with precinct planning and local government capital works programs.

3.4 Deliver clear precinct benefits

Direct funding and works towards streets, public spaces, urban greening and access improvements that respond to growth and benefit the relevant station precinct.

3.5 Promote fairness and proportionality

Ensure any contribution requirement reflects the additional demand generated by development and avoids unreasonable or duplicative obligations.

3.7 Provide certainty and transparency

Establish clear policy settings, decision-making processes, eligible purposes, accounting arrangements and reporting expectations.

4. Proposed guiding principles

4.1 Clear relationship to growth

A contribution should only be considered where development generates additional demand for public realm infrastructure or improvements. Existing lawful development and infrastructure obligations should be recognised to avoid double counting.

4.2 Fairness and proportionality

The framework should distribute obligations fairly between development types and should be proportionate to the scale and nature of additional demand.

4.3 Precinct benefit

Contributions should be used within, or for the direct benefit of, the station precinct in which they are generated.

4.4 Strategic alignment

Eligible projects should be identified through an approved Public Realm Improvement Program and aligned, where practicable, with precinct plans, local government strategies, capital works programs and other public investment.

4.5 Transparency and predictability

The future policy should clearly identify when requirements apply, how obligations are determined, what may be funded, how funds are held and how delivery is reported.

4.6 Simplified and consolidated requirements

The framework should replace separate public open space, public art and community benefits contribution requirements with a single, clearly defined public realm contribution.

4.7 Flexibility in delivery

Works in kind may be appropriate where they are planned, publicly beneficial, properly valued, deliverable and consistent with precinct priorities.

4.8 Good governance

Contributions should be separately accounted for by precinct, used only for authorised purposes and subject to regular public reporting and WAPC oversight.

4.9 Delivery focus

Improvement programs should prioritise realistic projects, identify responsibilities and dependencies, and support timely expenditure on outcomes visible to the community.

4.10 Review and adaptability

The framework should be reviewed periodically and adjusted in response to evidence about development feasibility, housing delivery, infrastructure demand, project delivery and stakeholder experience.

5. Proposed scope

The WAPC's preliminary view is that the framework should be capable of applying to development that materially increases residential, accommodation, employment, commercial or visitor activity within a station precinct. The detailed policy should define eligible development, thresholds, exemptions and credits in a way that is simple to administer and proportionate to likely public realm demand.

The detailed framework should replace separate precinct requirements for public open space, public art and community benefits, while distinguishing the consolidated public realm contribution from unrelated State infrastructure charges, headworks charges, local government rates, application fees and service charges.

Matters proposed for later detailed policy development

- development classes and thresholds;
- the methodology for determining obligations, without presuming a particular rate structure;
- treatment of existing lawful development and changes of use;
- exemptions, waivers and credits;
- works-in-kind valuation and agreements;
- timing and conditions of payment; and
- transitional and review arrangements.

6. Public realm outcomes

Subject to an approved Public Realm Improvement Program, the framework should support improvements such as:

Outcome area	Examples
Streets and movement	Footpaths, shared paths, crossing facilities, lighting, traffic calming, kerb improvements and wayfinding.
Urban greening and cooling	Street trees, landscaping, irrigation, water-sensitive urban design, shade and cooling initiatives.
Public spaces	Town squares, plazas, gathering spaces, public access ways, seating, shade structures and small urban parks.
Station access	Walking and cycling links, bicycle parking and publicly accessible end-of-trip facilities.
Public amenity	Street furniture, shelters, drinking fountains and public art integrated with eligible public realm projects.
Active interfaces	Footpath widening, kerbside activation, pedestrian lighting, seating and wayfinding that support mixed-use and commercial streets.

The framework should not be used as a general revenue source or as a substitute for unrelated infrastructure, ordinary asset maintenance or operational expenditure. Detailed policy should clearly define included and excluded expenditure.

7. Public Realm Improvement Programs

A Public Realm Improvement Program should be the key link between contributions and delivery. The WAPC or a participating local government could prepare a program for approval by the WAPC.

A program should identify:

- the station precinct and strategic context;
- priority projects and expected public outcomes;
- the relationship between projects and anticipated precinct growth;
- indicative scope, cost, staging and delivery timing;
- delivery responsibilities, dependencies and approvals;
- other committed or potential funding sources; and
- arrangements for review and reporting.

Only projects that are consistent with an approved program, or otherwise specifically approved by the WAPC, should be funded through the framework.

8. Works in kind

Works in kind may provide an efficient way to deliver priority public realm outcomes as part of development. The detailed policy should allow works in kind where the WAPC is satisfied that the works:

- are identified in an approved program or otherwise approved by the WAPC;
- provide a clear and enduring public benefit;
- are located within, or directly benefit, the relevant station precinct;
- are appropriately scoped, costed and independently valued;
- can be delivered to an agreed standard and timeframe;
- address ownership, access, handover and maintenance responsibilities; and
- do not duplicate works already required as a normal element of development approval.

The relevant local government should be consulted where proposed works affect land or assets it owns, manages or maintains.

9. Governance, administration and reporting

The framework should provide confidence that contributions are managed transparently and used for their intended purpose. Detailed arrangements should:

- identify the body responsible for receiving, holding and administering funds;
- separately account for funds and earnings by station precinct;
- record amounts received, committed and expended;
- limit expenditure to authorised precinct projects;
- document works in kind and any associated credits;
- report regularly on project progress, completed works and available balances; and
- provide for WAPC monitoring, review and corrective action where required.

Where a development or project spans more than one local government area, allocation should have regard to the distribution of impacts, benefits and delivery responsibilities.

10. Next steps

You can provide feedback through the Precincts WA survey on Have Your Say. You are welcome to answer all questions or just those relating to this discussion paper.

Consultation feedback will inform refinement of the WAPC position and the preparation of detailed policy settings.