



**August  
2022**



## Proposed Plan Change 78 Information Sheet #4

# Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS)

**In August and September 2022, Auckland Council is inviting submissions on changes to the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) – our city’s planning rulebook – to allow for greater building heights and densities in urban Auckland. This is known as Proposed Plan Change 78 - Intensification.**

**This includes a requirement to incorporate the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) into relevant urban residential zones.**

**This information sheet explains the council’s approach to incorporating the MDRS and proposed changes to ensure good design outcomes.**

**Submissions are now invited on the proposed plan change. The period for submissions closes on 29 September 2022.**

### **The government’s approach to more housing**

The government’s National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD) came into force in August 2020 and was updated in May 2022. The NPS-UD directs Auckland Council to enable more building height and housing density within and around Auckland’s city centre, metropolitan centres and rapid transit stops such as train and busway stations. The NPS-UD also requires more building height and housing density within and around neighbourhood, local and town centres.

In December 2021, the government also made amendments to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). The RMA now requires the councils of New Zealand’s largest and rapidly growing cities – Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington and Christchurch – to incorporate new Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) in relevant residential zones.

Through the use of MDRS the government requires the council to enable medium-density housing across most of Auckland’s residential suburbs. Three dwellings of up to three storeys, including terrace housing and low-rise apartments, are to be permitted on most residential properties unless a ‘qualifying matter’ applies (see information sheets #7 and #8). Four or more dwellings are to be enabled through a non-notified resource consent.

To deliver the NPS-UD and the MDRS, the council is required to publicly notify changes to the AUP by 20 August 2022.

## What are the Medium Density Residential Standards?

MDRS are a government requirement and include objectives, policies, and the new standards (rules) that replace existing rules in the AUP. The key standards are summarised in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Medium Density Residential Standards	
Number of residential units per site	3 houses per site are permitted (more than 3 houses require resource consent)
Building height	Maximum building height of up to 12 metres (3 storeys)
Height in relation to boundary	Buildings must not project beyond a 60° recession plane measured from a point 4 metres vertically above ground level along all boundaries. <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>
Minimum setbacks	Front yard: 1.5m Side and rear yard: 1m
Building coverage	Maximum building coverage of 50% of the net site area.
Outlook space	Minimum outlook spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4m x 4m from principal living area</li> <li>• 1m x 1m from all other habitable rooms</li> </ul>
Outdoor living space	Ground floor units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum outdoor living space of 20m<sup>2</sup>, containing an area of at least 3m x 3m.</li> <li>• Ground floor, balcony, patio or roof terrace</li> <li>• Can be grouped together as a communal space</li> </ul>

	Above ground units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum outdoor living space of 8m<sup>2</sup> (minimum 1.8m dimension)</li> <li>• Balcony, patio or roof terrace</li> <li>• Can be grouped together as an accessible communal space, which may be at ground floor</li> </ul>
Windows to the street	Minimum 20% glazing on street-facing frontage
Landscaped area	Minimum landscaped area of 20%
Other	There are other government standards, for example relating to subdivision

## Additional standards

In order to achieve good design outcomes, the council is proposing additional standards to the MDRS (some are already existing in the AUP). Development that complies with the MDRS and the additional standards will not need a resource consent. The additional standards generally relate to the following:

- Maximum impervious area (to manage stormwater runoff and support ecology)
- Daylight (to ensure adequate daylight for living areas and bedrooms)
- Minimum dwelling size (to ensure developments meet the day to day needs of residents)
- Front, side and rear fences and walls (to allow for privacy while enabling eyes on streets and reduce large blank faces for neighbours and the street)
- Deep soil and canopy trees
- Safety and privacy buffer to private pedestrian and vehicle accesses
- Residential waste management

The standards relating to maximum impervious area, daylight, minimum dwelling size and front, side and rear fences and walls already exist in the AUP. The maximum impervious area requirement differs between the Residential – Low Density Residential, Residential – Mixed Housing Urban (MHU) and Residential – Terraced Housing and Apartment Buildings (THAB) Zones.

See information sheets #3 and #5 for the THAB and MHU zones to read more on the standards relating to deep soil and canopy trees, safety and privacy buffer to private pedestrian and vehicle accesses and residential waste management.

## Notification for some non-compliance

The council is required to process applications for up to three dwellings without public notification even if the development does not comply with one or more of the density standards shown in **Table 1** (above). This does not apply to the additional standards proposed by the council.

## Where will the MDRS apply?

The MDRS will apply to the MHU and THAB zones. Parts of the MDRS are proposed to apply in the Low Density Residential zone.

Some residential land is exempt from MDRS:

- small settlements of less than 5000 people
- islands, like Waiheke
- Large Lot Residential zone areas, and Rural and Coastal Settlement zone areas.

## When do the new standards apply?

The rules that include the government's MDRS have immediate legal effect from 18<sup>th</sup> August 2022 when the proposed plan change is notified, where:

- land is within an urban area and is a relevant residential zone in the AUP - MHU or THAB zones
- land is not within an area where qualifying matters apply, and
- land is to be used for up to three houses.

Nothing applying to business land will have immediate legal effect from public notification of the council's proposed plan change, such as within city centre, metropolitan centre, or other centres.

Aucklanders can make submissions on the plan change but because the government's standards are mandatory there are some parts of the plan change the council cannot change.

## What changes can the council make to MDRS?

It is mandatory for the council to include MDRS in the AUP. In its proposed plan change, the council may only propose changing the MDRS to:

- enable more development than MDRS, such as by allowing more height
- reduce the height and density of buildings on identified sites or areas if a qualifying matter applies
- change, or include new standards that support the inclusion MDRS and allowing increased heights and densities, and
- change, or include new standards that are consequential to the impact of including MDRS and allowing increased heights and densities.

## What might MDRS development look like?

The following images provide examples of the types and densities of development that could be enabled under the MDRS and including the additional standards proposed by the council.

**Image 1** (below) shows three scenarios for a maximum development possible on a typical site. The scenarios show garaging, communal parking and no parking options. Key elements include:

- 3 terrace houses on one site
- 3-storey height
- Complies with height in relation to boundary standards
- Complies with outdoor living and landscaping areas standards
- Complies with maximum building coverage and maximum impervious area
- Complies with front, side and rear yards standards
- Complies with minimum dwelling size and daylight standards
- Complies with deep soil area and tree canopy standard
- Complies with safety and privacy buffer from private vehicle and pedestrian accessways standard
- Complies with residential waste management standard

**Image 1:** Potential development complying with the MDRS and proposed additional standards.



**Key:**

- Outlook Space (Primary 4x4m)
- Private Outdoor Living Space - POLs (20m<sup>2</sup>)
- Landscape Area (20%)
- Safety/Privacy Buffer (1m)
- Deep Soil + Canopy Tree Area (10%)
- Waste Storage (1.4m<sup>2</sup> p/unit or Communal)

## Qualifying matters

The government has provided for building heights and housing density to be reduced from what would normally apply, where there is a qualifying matter. Qualifying matters can result in rules that do things such as limit building heights and densities or require a resource consent to build within an area or demolish or remove buildings or vegetation.

For more information on qualifying matters, refer to information sheets #7 and #8.

## Further information

- To learn more about how Auckland Council is planning for growth and development, visit [ourauckland.nz/growingtogether](https://ourauckland.nz/growingtogether)
- For detailed information about the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD) visit the [Ministry for the Environment website](#).
- For more information on the RMA and the amendments made to it in 2021 including the MDRS requirements [visit the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development website](#).

### **Please note:**

**This information sheet is a summary document to assist with understanding Proposed Plan Change 78 - Intensification, the Council's intensification planning instrument, which gives effect to Policies 3 and 4 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 and incorporates the medium density residential standards into relevant residential zones as required by the Resource Management Act 1991.**

The proposed plan change to the Auckland Unitary Plan was publicly notified by Auckland Council on 18 August 2022.

All information provided in this information sheet should be considered as being illustrative and indicative only. Users should take specific advice from qualified professional people before undertaking any action as a result of information obtained from this information sheet. The user waives and releases Auckland Council from any claims arising from use of the information provided in this information sheet.