



Inner City Living: an exciting opportunity for Launceston

The context

Like many towns and cities, the space (particularly above shops) in Launceston's CBD is under-utilised.

To combat this, a long-term initiative to attract people back to live in the city must be considered.

The likely effects of this return include:

- a safer city (due to increased passive surveillance)
- a more vibrant city
- an improved local economy
- a more condensed city
- minimising suburban sprawl

Public policy and sensibility already suggests progress toward these goals is underway.

At the same time, a new generation of young people and 'empty nesters' are discovering both the convenience of living in the city and the dynamic lifestyle that it may afford them.

As the University of Tasmania plans to move its campus to Inveresk and student numbers grow, the demand for accommodation from its non-local students in Launceston is increasing. Students are always seeking affordable accommodation convenient to public transport and active social centres.

The opportunity

The City of Launceston wants to support people aiming to make a value-adding investment in their inner city property, including conversion of disused upper level space in existing buildings, or development of leftover CBD urban infill.

Benefits to the building or land owner may include:

- consistent income from currently unprofitable upper level real-estate
- improved security for your investment
- increase in property values

Why convert?

There is increasing demand for inner city living. There are both lifestyle and financial advantages for a diverse range of people making the move back to the city, and therefore money to be made in providing the accommodation they require.

Another reason to convert is that the maintenance of entire buildings is a consistent problem for owners.

Problems with leaking roofs, water tanks or pipes, pest infestations and break-ins can easily go unnoticed when upper floors are left unoccupied.

When left unchecked, these common problems may spread and cause major (expensive) damage to entire buildings.

When monitored by residents, these issues may be addressed before major damage occurs, potentially saving the owner from large repair bills.

Planning approvals

The *Greater Launceston Plan* and the City Heart Project encourage inner city living under the *Launceston Interim Planning Scheme 2015*.

Zoning & permitted land use

In line with these amendments, single and multiple dwellings above ground floor level are allowable in the CBD, Mixed Use and Business Zones.

Visitor accommodation or short term rentals are also encouraged to relocate in these zones above ground floor.

Parking requirements:

Normal parking requirements are waived in central areas of the city through the car parking exemption area in the planning scheme.

Heritage listed buildings:

Physical changes proposed to buildings listed with the Heritage Council of Tasmania or locally by the council will be considered for their heritage impacts.

Please note: internal alterations for changes of use are often accepted as part of a building's natural life and carried out in a sensitive way. Such changes can increase functionality and add value to the property.

Building approvals

Any building project usually requires:

- certification by a licensed building surveyor
- application to Council's permit authority for the issue of a building permit
- a plumbing permit, if necessary

The development must comply with:

- Building Act
- Building Regulations
- National Construction Code
- Disability Standards

There are also a number of Fire Safety, General and Access requirements which must be complied with.

Council encourages you to work closely with a reputable building surveyor to find solutions to meet the mentioned requirements. Our own surveyors and planners are available to offer advice, also.

Fire safety requirement principles

- 1 ensure the stability of the building and to allow safe escape of occupants in the event of a fire
- 2 contain a fire and minimise the spread of fire and smoke to other parts of the building and to adjoining buildings. Fire doors and windows and smoke doors etc also assist to safeguard occupants
- 3 provide illuminated exit signs, emergency lighting and audible alarms if necessary so occupants can escape more safely and quickly
- 4 warn of fire as efficiently and as quickly as is practically possible so occupants can help put out a fire, and the fire brigade can attend to control the fire.

General requirements

In the case of a single dwelling above a commercial ground floor the following are basic requirements:

- provision of direct escape from the residential areas to a place of safety, eg dwellings usually require their own escape stair independent of ground floor spaces and other users

- floors and separating walls should be able to contain and resist a fire for a specified period of time. Non-combustible or fire rated exit doors or windows may be required in some circumstances
- a smoke detection and alarm system of good quality must be hardwired in
- hardwired illuminated exit signs and emergency lighting
- fire services such as portable fire extinguishers. Fire hydrants, fire hose reels and automatic sprinkler systems may be required in larger buildings.

In the case of multiple dwellings, fire safety requirements are more stringent and would most often require consultation with both Council and the Tasmanian Fire Service.

In some cases where shared kitchens and food preparation areas are involved, refer to the Council's Environmental Health officers.

Access requirements

In the case of larger properties and multiple dwellings, safe access and egress must be provided for people with disabilities in accordance with Disability Standards. This includes people who use wheelchairs and people who are restricted in some way such as the elderly, pregnant women and the visually and hearing impaired. Each property and type of users could be different and will have its own solution, so please call the City of Launceston building surveyors for more information or for clarification of any of the above.

Advice

Planning & Building

In order to facilitate refurbishment and urban infill for residential accommodation in the CBD and surrounds, the City of Launceston can offer further advice on the various requirements that apply to such developments. Please see below contact details to get in touch.

Contacts

Building Approvals

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Heritage and Planning matters

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The Tasmanian Heritage Council also offers advice and services through its web site: www.tasheritage.tas.gov.au