



Investing in the City

How under-used properties
in central Launceston can be
developed for residential uses



Launceston
City Deal



City of
LAUNCESTON



Launceston City Deal


The Launceston City Deal, signed in April 2017 included commitments that would improve residential housing and tourist accommodation options in central Launceston and enhanced commercial activity in the CBD, and increase the diversity of housing options.

The City of Launceston's strategic plan, the Greater Launceston Plan encourages living in the city centre.

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A photograph of a busy street in Launceston at night. The street is filled with people walking, and the buildings are illuminated with warm lights. On the right, there's a building with a sign that says 'WALKERS F'. Below it, there's a sign for 'OPTICAL'. Further down, there's a sign for 'FLORIST'. On the left, there's a sign for 'WURSTHAUS & OLIVERS'. The street is paved with cobblestones, and there are some trees and bushes. The overall atmosphere is lively and urban.

The centre of Launceston has a large area of unused and under-used floor space, as well as some small sites that remain undeveloped.

Urban 'shop-top' living is becoming increasingly achievable, viable and desirable.

Does this represent an investment opportunity for you?

A rejuvenated city centre

Like many Australian towns and cities, Launceston has unused spaces in its centre, particularly the spaces above the shops, and these provide great opportunities for city revitalisation.

We aim to bring residents into the city, in order for Launceston to become:

- a more vibrant city with an improved economy
- a more condensed city with minimised suburban sprawl
- an even safer city, because there will be, simply, 'more people about'.

Progress toward these goals is strong, in terms of both public policy and community values – and now we need people with vision to turn it into a reality.

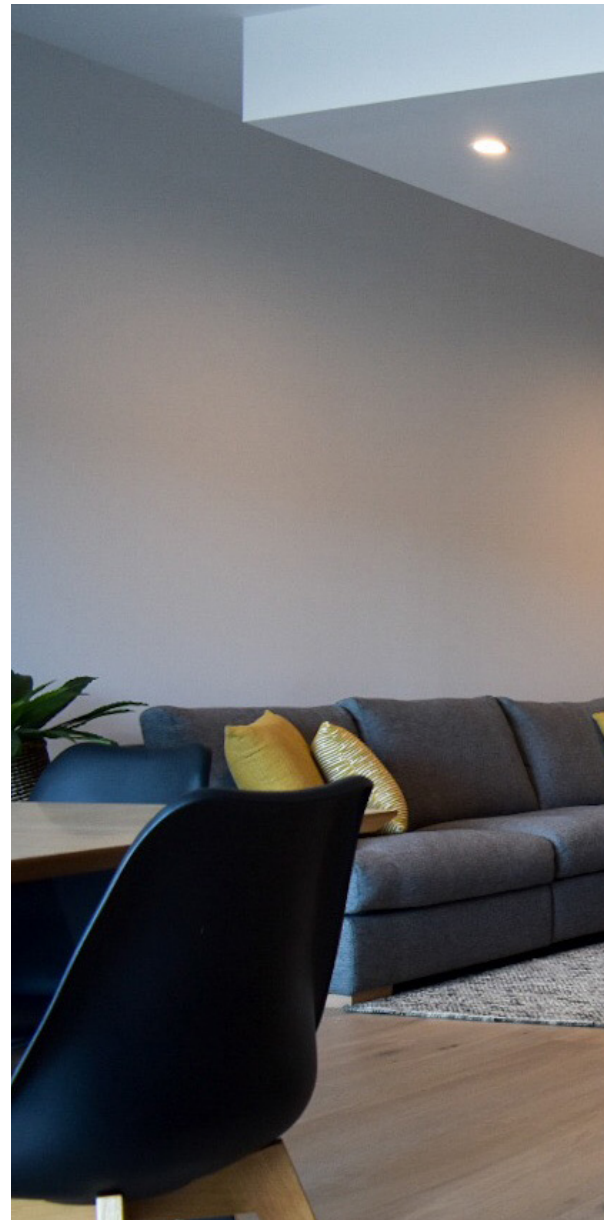
The opportunity is an initiative of the City of Launceston. It is, in short, an offer of support for investment in residential accommodation on upper floors in the CBD – combining worthwhile investment with far-reaching benefits to the Launceston community.

The opportunity for owners and developers

The response may be either the conversion of unused (or under-used) upper level space in existing city centre buildings or the development of the remaining small pockets of vacant land for residential and/or commercial uses.

Benefits to the building or land owner may include:

- income from currently unprofitable upper-level real estate
- improved security for investments
- an increase in property values.



1. Existing building stock

Maintenance of city buildings is a persistent issue for property owners. Damage caused by water (leaking roofs, tanks or pipes), pest infestations or criminal activity can easily go undetected when buildings are unoccupied outside business hours. Major (and expensive) damage to entire buildings can result.

When buildings are occupied by residents, such events are less likely to occur, and less likely to lead to major damage if they do occur.



2. Residential demand

There are both lifestyle and financial advantages for people making the move into the city, and an investment opportunity in providing that accommodation.

Household sizes are decreasing and the inner city appeals to a diverse range of people. Students, singles and 'empty nesters' are discovering both the convenience of living in the city and the dynamic lifestyle that it affords – so there are a variety of markets to consider targeting.

University students seek affordable accommodation close to public transport and active social centres. In Launceston, demand for accommodation among both local and international students appears strong. It is likely that the growth of the University of Tasmania campus at Inveresk will increase demand for housing in the inner suburbs and city centre.

3. Council support

The City of Launceston's strategic plan, the Greater Launceston Plan, encourages living in the city centre. Planning Scheme provisions have been designed to allow residential development to occur on upper levels.

Planning approval for a change of use is nonetheless normally required. This is sought through a Development Application process.

We recommend you talk to a Planner at the Council early in the planning process. They can provide guidance in regard to the relevant planning provisions before you engage consultants, and assist you with making an application when required.

ZONING AND PERMITTED LAND USE

Single and multiple dwellings above ground floor level are classified as 'Permitted with a Permit' in the zones that cover most of the central city area – the Central Business and Urban Mixed Use zones.

PARKING REQUIREMENTS

On-site parking requirements are waived in the centre of the city. This is an area defined in the Planning Scheme as the Central Business Parking Exemption Area.

HERITAGE PROPERTIES

Changes to heritage listed properties will normally require specific approval. The Council's Heritage Planner can assist you with this process.

The development process



Step 1 — Establishing feasibility

The objectives of this stage are to:

- Identify sites available for purchase (unless already owned)
- Ensure the project is financially viable.

Property titles

A review of property titles is advisable at the earliest opportunity. Title documents include:

- plans and text
- schedules of easements
- any other requirements imposed by the title, including Section 71 Agreements.

Defining the scope and financial feasibility

Some useful questions to ask at this stage may be:

- What planning and building controls will apply?
- What is the available floor area?
- How many dwellings can be supported?
- What is the potential financial return?
- How will any businesses below be affected?
- How will emergency exits be provided?
- How will access for people with disabilities be provided?
- Can all other planning and building requirements be met?

Examining market demand

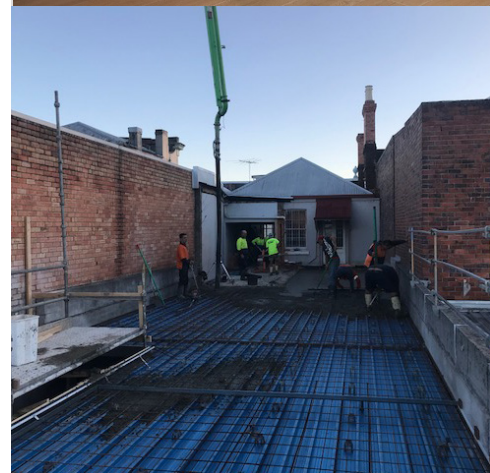
At this stage it is crucial to consider the market demand in the locality, particularly in light of any restrictions highlighted by site and neighbourhood investigations.¹ This information should assist you to gauge whether the development will sell or lease well.

Planning and building regulation advice

To determine what can be potentially built on a site, owners/developers should refer to the relevant planning and building regulations. The Launceston Planning Scheme can be accessed through www.iplan.tas.gov.au. A planning consultant or building designer may be able to assist in the interpretation of the provisions and standards. You can also contact the Council's City Development department for information on general planning and building requirements and those that would apply to a specific site.

The requirements of the Tasmanian state building regulations and the National Construction Code are best investigated with the assistance of a building surveyor, architect or building designer. However the following links may assist with information on current legislation:

www.legislation.tas.gov.au
cbos.tas.gov.au
www.abcb.gov.au



¹ The City of Launceston cannot provide advice on the financial viability of any project.

CASE STUDY

102-104 Charles Street

Each building has a unique history. Prior to the conversion the upper levels were vacant. Millers lady's fashions previously occupied the ground floor, which has since relocated to the mall. The upstairs space has been converted into two separate apartments.

CHALLENGES

There were a number of challenges that involved craning and concrete pumping into the site and the storage of materials. Construction access was limited due to neighbours and public considerations.

SOLUTIONS

To overcome these challenges the hours of operation were altered, beginning earlier before the streets became busy. Off-site storage, with the delivery of goods to coincide with the day they were required, alleviated storage pressures. Developing good relations with the neighbours and incorporating good use of signage of the footpaths went a long way to addressing construction access challenges.



Seeking professional advice

There are a range of experts available to support you through this stage, and help you to ensure the project's viability.

A development manager could coordinate the entire process and would engage other professionals with specific areas of expertise, such as:

- Town Planners
- Architects
- Engineers
- Solicitors
- Building surveyors
- Financial advisors
- Real estate agents.

These professionals may provide you with assessments regarding potential sites, the scope of the project and the likely marketability and profitability of the completed development. These assessments should include consideration of planning and building regulations.

Heritage considerations

Properties may be listed at both the local level (in the heritage schedule of the Planning Scheme), and at state level (as items on the Tasmanian Heritage Register).

Most changes to the exterior of listed buildings will require a Planning Permit. Applications relating to state listed properties will be referred to the Tasmanian Heritage Council for assessment as part of the Development Application process.

Interior alterations to state listed properties may also require the approval of the Tasmanian Heritage Council via a discretionary Development Application process (exemptions can apply).

Sensitively designed functional changes to the interiors and backs of buildings are often accepted as part of a building's natural life, and will usually be supported.

Advice on heritage listed buildings can be provided by the City of Launceston's Heritage Planner. To ensure the best outcome, you would involve your architect or designer, and meet the Planner before you submit your planning application.

If included on the Tasmanian Heritage Register free advice is also provided by Heritage Tasmania in regard to suitable development and the potential for exemptions in certain circumstances.

Neighbourhood analysis

You should also conduct a detailed analysis of the neighbourhood. This should consider the history and character of the area, and also identify any potential objections from neighbouring properties.

Building requirements

Almost all development involving changes to building fabric (inside or out) and/or change of use will require advice and sign-off by a Building Surveyor, and more significant works will also require a Building Application to be submitted to Council for approval.

It will be prudent to engage a Building Surveyor at the earliest stage to ensure that the requirements of the National Construction Code can be met in the space proposed.

Fire safety

Single dwellings above commercial ground floors have the following basic requirements for containing and warning of fire and ensuring safe escape:

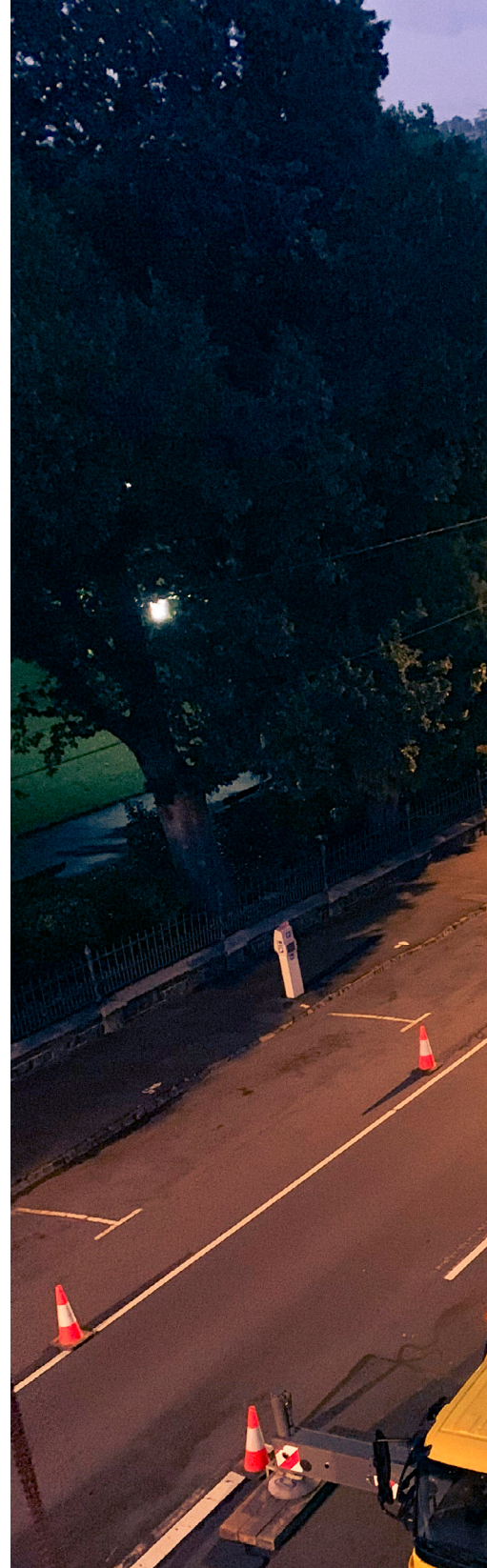
- direct escape to a place of safety
– upper-floor dwellings must have independent escape stairs
- floors and separating walls capable of containing and resisting a fire for a specified period of time
- wired-in smoke detection and alarm systems of good quality.

Fire safety requirements are more stringent for multiple dwellings, and proponents normally need to consult with a Building Surveyor, a Fire Safety Engineer and the Tasmania Fire Service.

Accessibility

In the case of larger properties and multiple dwellings (over 200m²), safe access and egress must be specifically provided for people with disability. The 'Building Regulations 2016 s.82 and the Tasmanian appendix of the NCC 'Tas D3.4(d)' details the possible concessions to these access requirements.

Note: Each property is different and will have its own solution. A Building Surveyor can provide information and clarification of any of the above.





CASE STUDY

58A Elizabeth Street

Conveniently located overlooking Prince's Square, 58A Elizabeth Street is a boutique inner city conversion. Originally the site was utilised as a storage facility for real-estate signs on the upper level with a car park on the ground level. This has now been converted into a modern residential apartment with an enviable city location.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges of this project involved the lack of site access and ensuring that the materials and emergency exits met building requirements.

SOLUTIONS

There were a number of solutions developed to overcome these challenges. The use of cranes and scheduling deliveries for early mornings helped overcome site access challenges. To meet fire rating compliance a new lighter fire-rated Bondor product was used for the walls. These were built as panels and could be stood up in one piece. In addition a fire rated emergency tunnel was created from the back unit to the front façade to ensure the emergency exit requirements were met.



Step 2 — Developing the concept

Sketch design

The concept stage involves developing sketches that illustrate the development. These should include:

- setbacks from boundaries
- pedestrian and vehicle access ways
- parking and manoeuvring space (if parking is to be provided)
- private open space for residents.

You should examine surrounding developments and uses, and gather documentation.

This exercise will prove useful for:

1. Consultation with planners and other consultants to guide advice
 - a. Confirm applicable zone, codes and building considerations

2. Preparation of planning and other consultant reports

- a. Planning reports: noise emission, contamination reports, heritage impact assessment.
- b. Specialist reports: fire assessment, accessibility.



Step 3 — Applying for a Planning Permit (Development Application)

The objective of this stage is to gain a Planning Permit if required.

1. Application lodgement

- a. Lodge application either in person or online, including at a minimum:
 - i. Development Application Form
 - ii. Full copy of title including schedule of easements for all affected properties
 - iii. Drawings and plans fully describing the location and proposal
 - iv. Planning report or cover letter addressing the relevant provisions of the Planning Scheme
 - v. Any applicable supporting documents.
- b. Pay the Planning Application Fee.
- c. Acknowledgement: Council will send receipt of payment, and the allocated Planner will be in contact with you (normally within two business days).

For more information and guidance, including the Development Application Checklist, please visit <https://www.launceston.tas.gov.au/Business-and-Development/Planning/Applying-for-a-Development-Application>

2. Planner pre-assessment

- a. Check to ensure that the application is complete and valid.
- b. Internal referrals: Environmental Health (noise), Infrastructure service (parking, signs overhanging roadways, storm water), Natural Environment (vegetation issues).
- c. External referrals: Tasmanian Heritage Council, TasWater, TasGas.

3. Request for further information (if needed)

- a. If necessary, the Planner will be in contact with you describing any further information required.
- b. Once information is found to be satisfactory the application can progress.

4. Application advertising – for discretionary applications only

5. Consideration of any representations – for discretionary applications

- a. If submissions from the public are received during the advertising period, they will be considered by the Planner and discussed accordingly.

6. Planner report and recommendation

- a. Draft assessment: the assigned Planner will discuss any significant conditions related to the application.
- b. The Planner will present recommendations to the Delegated Officer.

7. Decision

- a. The application can be approved by the Manager of City Development (under delegation of Council); or, if three or more representations are received, or if refusal is recommended, the decision will be made by the Councillors at a Council meeting.
- b. The applicant may attend Council meetings to speak about their application.
- c. Notification of decision, including any conditions of approval.

8. Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can appeal to the Tasmanian Planning Commission:

- a. An appeal must be lodged within two weeks of Council's decision
- b. If there are no representations the applicant may complete and return a 'Waiver of Right to Appeal' form to Council, to allow building approvals to be issued prior to the end of the appeal period.



For answers to common questions please visit <https://www.launceston.tas.gov.au/Business-and-Development/Planning/FAQs>

More information can be found at the Tasmanian Planning Commission website <https://www.planning.tas.gov.au>.



CASE STUDY

25 York Street

Sitting just on the fringe of the Central Activity District, the building currently houses office floor space on the lower levels. Prior to works commencing, it was a disused residential building that was unoccupied for many years. With the addition of another storey, the site has been developed into 18 apartments providing inner city living.

CHALLENGES

There were issues with craning materials into place, concreting and the storage of equipment. Construction access needed to be considered in relation to the existing retail business and residences, as well as public access to the main street.

SOLUTIONS

Changes to the hours of operation to allow for early starts assisted in reducing traffic impact. Materials were stored off-site, with arrangements for them to be delivered on the day of use. There was also extensive use of on-site and on-street signage.



Step 4 — Applying for approval to build

The objective of this stage is gain **Building and Plumbing Permits**.

Once you have received the Planning Permit, you can proceed with gaining building and plumbing approvals.

This process can begin simultaneously with **Step 3 — Applying for a Planning Permit**, as the more developed the project concept is the more likely it will be to meet the Planning requirements.

It should be noted that while not always required for a Development Application, it is crucial that you engage licensed practitioners, such as an architect or other accredited building designer (and engineers if applicable), to complete the working drawings for Building approval.

During this stage you will need to:

1. Submit an Application for Certificate of Likely Compliance Building Work to the Building Surveyor
2. Submit Application for Certificate of Likely Compliance Plumbing Work to the City of Launceston
3. Apply for building and plumbing permits (need to cover protection work requirements)
4. Receive Building and Plumbing Permits
5. Submit Start Work Notice/s.



Step 5 — Completing the development

The objective of this stage is to **undertake the building construction or conversion and obtain Occupancy and Completion Certificates**.

The timeline of your project will be agreed between yourself and your project manager.

1. Comply with Planning Permit – ensure works are consistent with drawings and any conditions supplied on the permit, such as:
 - a. Noise limitations
 - b. Hours of operation
 - c. Rubbish and site maintenance
 - d. Any other specific permit conditions.

2. Comply with Building Permit conditions
3. If changes to the design or construction are needed through the building approval or construction process, consult with the Building Surveyor and Planning Department to seek approval for amendments to Planning and Building Permits.

Upon completion you will need:

1. Occupancy and Completion Certificates
 - a. Gained through the Building Surveyor once works are at an appropriate stage
 - b. Building Surveyor to submit to Council

2. Strata Plan Application for multiple dwellings/commercial lots
 - a. A Land Surveyor will prepare and lodge the application to Council, with associated fees
 - b. A building report from a Building Surveyor will be required for existing buildings that don't have recent building/plumbing completions
 - c. The applicant lodges the Strata Plan with the Land Titles Office for registration.



Information and advice

In order to facilitate refurbishment and urban infill for residential accommodation in the CBD, the City of Launceston can offer further advice on the various requirements that apply.

Planning advice

If you would like to speak with a Planner, you can:

- Email planning.queries@launceston.tas.gov.au.
- Call our Planning Hotline on (03) 6323 3220 between 10am and 4pm, and speak with the Duty Planner
- Drop in to our Customer Service Centre between 10am and 1pm, and speak with the Duty Planner
- Make an appointment with a Planner (appointments are available on the hour at 1pm, 2pm, 3pm or 4pm) by calling (03) 6323 3220, or booking online at calendly.com/col-planning-queries.

Heritage advice

If you would like to find out if your property is heritage listed, or for information about development of locally listed properties, you can contact the City of Launceston's Heritage Planner.

Email fiona.ranson@launceston.tas.gov.au
Call (03) 6323 3370

For further information and advice about state listed properties contact Heritage Tasmania.

Email enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
Call 1300 850 332

www.tasheritage.tas.gov.au

Building Permits

For information about the building and plumbing permit process please contact the City of Launceston's Building Permit Authority.

Email permit.authority@launceston.tas.gov.au
Call (03) 6323 3220

Building Surveying

To find a registered building surveyor, visit <https://occupationallicensing.justice.tas.gov.au/search> and click on Building Services Provider.

References

The following documents are available at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/city-deals/launceston/>

Launceston City Deal (see Housing, pages 26- 27)

Launceston City Deal Annual Progress Report 2018 (see Housing, pages 32-34)

Launceston City Deal Annual Progress Report 2019 (see Housing, pages 37-39)

