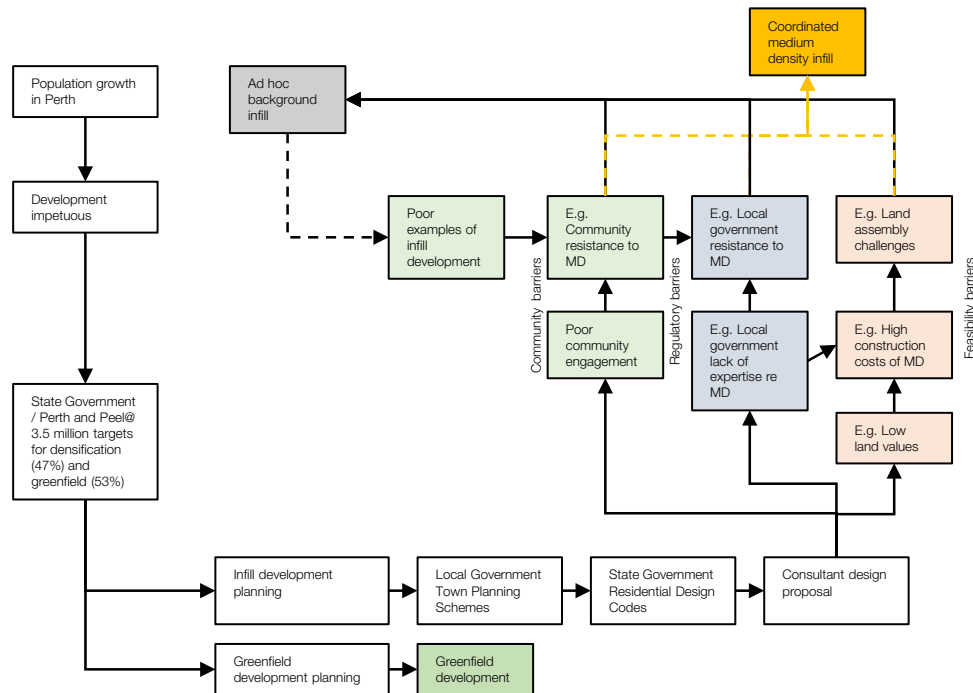


AUDRC Research Note

Finding the missing middle



How can we overcome the barriers to medium-density infill?

Background

- Due to polarisation between high-density apartments and low-density infill that obviates risk, commentators recognise that Perth has a 'missing middle.' The 'middle' refers to coordinated medium-density infill development.

- Nonetheless, a substantial volume of low-density urban infill development is happening through the subdivision of suburban lots in Perth's inner and middle suburbs. This development is referred to as 'background' infill. It differs from the multi-unit medium-density development because it involves the subdivision of land rather than the subdivision of airspace and is typically low-density.

- This project sought to understand the barriers to coordinated medium-density infill development in Perth and how these barriers could be mitigated. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives involved in planning, designing, approving, and delivering medium-density infill. This process identified community, regulatory environment, or development feasibility-related barriers.

Key findings

- The interviewees identified that the main barriers to medium-density infill in Perth are - poor examples of low-density infill, fragmented and prescriptive medium-density policy, Local government resistance and high construction costs.

- They identified that the main strategies to mitigate these barriers are mandating/

incentivising lot amalgamation for medium-density, mandating minimum densities for medium-density, and utilising performance controls for medium-density.

- Planners should critically assess State Government planning to limit the number of sites zoned for infill development and set minimum lot sizes and residential densities for infill development. These shifts will avert the 'business as usual' background infill, which negatively influences urban liveability and amenity.

- Without such restrictions, it will be exceedingly difficult for developers to corral the required impetus behind medium-density infill development. Such policy shifts will be hard to implement, which is why they have been avoided till now.

Links to related publications

- Bolleter, J., Myers, Z., & Hooper, P. (2020). Delivering medium-density infill development through promoting the benefits and limiting background infill. *Journal of Urban Design*, 1-26. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2020.1851594>

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