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Higher-density living will have many benefits for Perth

When the State Government launched Directions 2031 — its planning framework for Perth — back in 2009 it outlined a vision of a more compact city that could be achieved with a target of 47 per cent of new dwellings coming from infill development.

That may be an ambitious target, but the Government has clearly recognised the many advantages a more compact city brings.

For starters, public transport is far more efficient and effective with higher urban densities and that's a major consideration with the approach of peak oil prices and the rising cost of energy.

There are other pay-offs when we reduce car use, including less pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Other services, too, are easier to provide when they're closer to people's homes.

Perhaps the biggest benefit comes in the form of a better lifestyle.

When cities have well-designed, higher-density housing catering for a variety of household needs, ready access to quality open space and good local amenities, people "vote with their removal vans" and flock to them.

That's not to say that larger suburban blocks are obsolete.

The aim is to provide a wide variety of homes to suit people's needs now and into the future.

Achieving that urban infill target for Perth is going to be quite a challenge.

Successfully delivering the energy, water, waste water and transport infrastructure to support it is going to need a big financial commitment from the Government if the total cost isn't to ultimately fall on the homebuyer, making higher-density dwellings unaffordable.

There's more than one way of increasing urban density.

Perhaps the most visible example we're going to see in the coming years is the Perth City Link Project.

This vibrant mix of homes, retailing and commercial activity is going to transform the central city for the better, but it's only one of many infill projects.

Higher urban densities are coming to the suburbs, too.

These can be in the form of transit-oriented developments like Cockburn Central and the City West Precinct in Armadale, where apartments are nestled around train stations and in easy walking distance to shops, offices and entertainment.

In Fremantle, the city council has recently decided to replace its uninspiring 1960s and 70s buildings with new multi-storey developments.

They will bring much-needed business, life and vibrancy back to the city — that's one of the big benefits of increasing urban density.



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Blocks get snapped up in new release

LAND

■ Maureen Eppen

Ongoing demand for land has prompted the release of 20 new lots in the Lilly Fields precinct at Bletchley Park in Southern River.

Developer Wallis Property has sold more than 50 lots so far this year — mostly to young families — and interest in the new release is expected to be keen.

The Stage 4 lots range from 375-720sqm, with frontages from 12.5m to 20m. The prices start from \$233,000 and average \$305,000.

Buyers have already responded positively to the latest release, snapping up 13 of the 20 lots when they were released last weekend.

Wallis Property managing director Jason Wallis said this showed that, despite economic uncertainty and low-level consumer sentiment, there were still some astute second and third-homebuyers keen to buy land in the \$300,000-plus sector.

Mr Wallis said land prices for the new lots had been held at about the same level as those for lots released in March. He expected the August 2 Reserve Bank decision to leave interest rates unchanged to spark increased interest in the release.

"While the recent Westpac-Melbourne Institute Consumer House Price Expectations Index fell sharply from April to July, most consumers still expect prices to remain steady or rise over the next year," Mr Wallis said.

The Westpac-Melbourne Institute figures revealed 42 per cent of consumers expected house prices to rise over the next year, 32 per cent expected them to remain steady and 26 per cent expected declines.

"Of the States, WA had the most optimistic approach, with only 13 per cent expecting a fall in prices."

While other States would suffer from weak growth in consumer spending and ongoing weakness in residential and non-residential building, the off-setting forces of the mining sector would ensure WA would remain strong.

"Astute buyers can sense the current market softness will not last much longer and now is the time to act to secure a good deal."

Construction of the new Bletchley Park lots would be complete in September, with titles due in October.

"A number of lots will have direct frontage to high-quality public open space or Bush Forever and the remainder will be an easy walk from these locations," Mr Wallis said.

"There is a good mix of product available, with traditional Bletchley Park lots complemented by easy-care cottage lots."

Lilly Fields is one of six residential precincts to be developed at the master-planned community and the new Stage 4 lots are in a part of the estate adjoining 30ha of permanent bush, lakes and walk trails.

Work has started on additional walkways near this precinct, with



An example of the quality of house being built in Bletchley Park estate.

interpretative signs to help residents and students identify species of flora and fauna.

Mr Wallis said that the proximity of several schools — including Bletchley Park Primary School, Carey Baptist College, Thornlie Christian College and Southern River College — was a key attraction to buyers.

"The distinctive

characteristics of the land at Bletchley Park, its closeness to schools, shopping centres, established offices and business parks, and the attraction of the adjoining environmentally sensitive bushland and wetland precincts have generated keen interest," he said.

More than one-third of the 1600 lots planned for Bletchley Park had been developed to date and more than 1700 people — mostly second and third-homebuyers — had moved into the estate.

Mr Wallis said recently

appointed senior development manager Stuart Reside would ensure Bletchley Park continued to evolve into a sustainable community enhancing the quality of life of its residents.

■ The Bletchley Park land sales office, in Castlewood Parkway, is open weekends, Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-5pm. More information about Stage 4 lots at Lilly Fields is available at bletchleypark.com.au or from estate manager Adrian Rodway, on 9490 9188 or 0403 497 300.

'A number of lots will have direct frontage to high-quality public open space.'



A popular ornamental park in the heart of the Bletchley Park estate in Southern River.