

Design Guidelines Scorecard

Precincts & Communities

Nature-based development excellence for better urban environments

Project Address: _____

Developer: _____

Town Planner: _____

Urban Designer: _____

Landscape Architect: _____

Civil Engineer: _____

Ecologist: _____

Site Area: _____



The Nature Based Cities Design Guidelines Scorecard is for developers who care about sustainable design and want to focus on nature-based solutions.

The scorecard comprises a set of achievable nature-based design goals, which can be adopted as a design brief to guide urban designers, landscape architects and engineers. The scorecard sets the two following levels of achievement: 'Commended' or 'Exemplary'.

Once the masterplan is complete and submitted for approval, the scorecard is formalised based on proposed outcomes. Submitting it with supporting documents secures the Nature Based Cities rating.



Commended 60%

To achieve Commended status, projects must achieve a minimum score of 60–80% of available points.



Exemplary 80%

Exemplary projects are the highest rated NBC projects, designed in accordance with the Nature Based Cities Guidelines with a scoring of 80% or more of available points.



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Mandatory Criteria

Protection of threatened species and habitats

The site does not include threatened ecological communities or threatened species.

All onsite threatened ecological communities and habitats for threatened species are protected.

Explanatory Notes

The project needs to satisfy one of the above to receive accreditation. No points are awarded in this category.

Threatened ecological communities include Ecological Vegetation Communities (EVCs) deemed to be at risk of extinction under the EPBC Act.

Threatened species are species assessed as being at risk of extinction under the EPBC Act or relevant state legislation. The likelihood of threatened species is typically established through a Flora and Fauna Assessment for greenfield sites and a desktop assessment for brownfield sites.

Additional information required

Does the site include threatened ecological communities? *

Has a Flora and Fauna Assessment or desktop ecological analysis been undertaken? *

Does the site include threatened species? *

Will habitat for threatened species be protected? *

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

1. Existing Site Features

Preserve unique, natural site features.

N/A The site is a brownfield or contaminated site that has been highly modified due to previous urban/industrial land uses.

1 Point

The master plan retains and protects site features including topography, hydrology, geology, soil and landscape character, demonstrated by a comprehensive written Earthworks Strategy.

2 Points

The above, plus the master plan proposes enhancing and celebrating existing site features including creation of vistas, nature trails, lookouts/viewing platforms, rehabilitation of existing waterways, re-use of site rock, bridges/boardwalks, innovative building typologies on sloping sites etc.

Explanatory Notes

The Earthworks Strategy is to be developed in consultation with the civil engineer, landscape architect & soil scientist. The strategy should address retaining site hydrology, minimising earthworks and ground disturbance, maximising retention of existing vegetation, erosion management, soil management plan addressing conservation of topsoil, minimising soil disturbance, testing, stockpiling and re-use of salvaged topsoil.

For 2 points, the applicant is to provide details of precinct design features that achieve the objective of enhancing or celebrating existing site features and landscape character.

Provisional Score

Additional information required

Has an Earthworks Strategy been prepared?*

Provide a description of how the existing site features have been enhanced and celebrated.*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

2. Ecology

Deliver developments that protect and enhance local ecology.

1 Point

- An ecologist is engaged to prepare a comprehensive ecological assessment to understand the ecological baseline and prepare recommendations for protection and enhancement of biodiversity values. The master plan protects all areas of high biodiversity value and demonstrates how core recommendations are implemented (e.g. in landscape strategy plans). The implementation of core protection and management measures is demonstrated in a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) which details long term ecological management and monitoring.

2 Points

- The above plus, a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) is produced demonstrating measures for protection and management, but also enhancement of existing ecological values as well as new created habitats. The BEMP outlines measures to specifically improve habitat provision and connectivity for target species known to occur nearby or within the site.

Explanatory Notes

The ecologist should be engaged early, ideally before a development plan is devised so they can influence avoidance and protection of ecological values. High value ecological areas are defined as EPBC and/or State listed threatened ecological communities, and habitat important to EPBC and/or State listed threatened species.

Aligns with Green Star Communities Credit 40: Impacts to Nature, Credit 43: Design for Wildlife and Credit 44: Nature Connectivity
Aligns with BESS Subdivisions Ecology 2.1 – Enhanced ecological value – Biodiversity Management Plan

Provisional Score



Additional information required

- Has an Ecological Assessment been prepared?*
- Has the master plan implemented the core recommendations by the ecologist and protected areas of high biodiversity values?*
- Has a Biodiversity Management Plan been prepared?*
- Has a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) been prepared? *

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

3. Biodiversity

Deliver measurable biodiversity improvement.

1 Point

The master plan demonstrates a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain over the site.

2 Points

The master plan demonstrates a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain over the site.

Explanatory Notes

Biodiversity net gain is to be assessed by a qualified ecologist. The ecologist must outline their methodology for calculating biodiversity net gain, it’s relevance to the Australian context and clearly demonstrate how net gain is achieved. In absence of a specific biodiversity net gain calculator tool, ecologists should use existing State biodiversity assessment frameworks as a basis.

The process to demonstrate net gain should follow these basic steps:

1.

Map the baseline habitat types across the site.
2.

Assign each habitat a condition score based on ecological quality.
3.

Calculate baseline habitat units (Area × Condition).
4.

Repeat the calculation for habitat units of the proposed design.
5.

Demonstrate that the post–development habitat value exceeds the baseline value.

Aligns with Green Star Communities Credit 42: Biodiversity Enhancement.
Aligns with BESS Subdivisions Ecology 2.1 – Enhanced ecological value – Biodiversity Management Plan

Provisional Score

Additional information required

What is the predicted biodiversity net gain (or loss) for the project?*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

4. Existing Trees

Preserve mature trees & habitat trees which take decades to replace.

N/A there are no existing high or moderate value trees on site.

1 Point

Retain at least 60% of high and moderate value trees (assessed by arborist), including at least 80% of high value trees.

2 Points

Retain at least 80% of all high and moderate value trees including all high value trees.

Explanatory Notes

Tree value is to be assessed by a Consultant Arborist prior to commencement of the development. An ecologist should also identify trees that have high habitat value.

Retention of trees is preferred, but if a tree can't be retained in its location, it is acceptable to transplant the tree if it remains on the development site. Relocation of trees must be carried out by a suitably qualified tree transplanter under the supervision of an arborist.

If a tree is considered a high value habitat tree, but has low arboricultural retention value, the goal is to balance safety with ecological preservation. A determination should be made on whether the tree is truly a safety risk. If it is, an arborist should be employed to seek alternatives to total removal e.g., crown reduction / modification, bracing or exclusion zones.

Aligns with intent of Green Star Communities Credit 40 Impacts to Nature.
Aligns with BESS Subdivisions Ecology 1.1 – Tree Retention

Provisional Score

Additional information required

Percentage of high and moderate value trees retained?*

Percentage of high value trees retained?*

Percentage of moderate value trees retained?*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

5. Access to Public Green Space

Provide opportunities for residents to engage with nature through well planned, accessible open space.

1 Point

- All residences are within 400 metres of a public green space. Public green space is at least 10% of development area.

2 Points

- All residences are within 300 metres of a public green space. Public green space is at least 15% of development area.

Explanatory Notes

Public green space includes parks and gardens that are a minimum 500sqm, contain tree and understorey planting, are accessible to the public and suitable for passive and/or active recreation.

Encumbered open space such as wetlands, and linear parks (green links) can also be included.

Distance is ‘as the crow flies’.

*Aligns with Green Star Communities Credit 26: Density and Amenity.
1 point aligns with BESS Subdivisions SLL 2.1c – Compact & walkable neighbourhoods – Proximity to services & amenities (Parks & Open Space)*

Provisional Score



Additional information required

Percentage of public green space of development area.*

Maximum distance to public green space.*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

6. Walkability

Optimise health and wellbeing by providing an accessible network of walking paths.

1 Point

- The master plan includes a continuous network of walking paths including pedestrian through links at cul-de-sacs.

2 Points

- The above, plus all residences are within 600m of green links that connect to recreational areas, public transport, activity hubs and schools. Defined paths are well shaded with minimum 30% canopy cover.

Explanatory Notes

Walkability enables residents to engage with nature on a regular basis and enjoy the associated health benefits.

Green links are defined as linear open spaces with defined pedestrian paths, trees and planting. Footpaths on conventional streets are not included unless the streetscape has been widened to accommodate shared paths and additional planting, and vehicle crossovers have been minimised via rear loading or multi residential typology.

Distance is ‘as the crow flies’.

Aligns with Green Star Communities Credit 30: Active Transport.

Aligns with BESS Subdivisions:

SLL 2.2 – Compact & walkable neighbourhoods – Culs-de-sacs

SPR 2.1a – Rest nodes and recreational facilities – Bench seating

SPR 2.1c – Rest nodes and recreational facilities – Public water fountains (intent aligned – BESS extends the criteria to other recreational areas beyond the green links.)

Climate Resilience 2.1 – Urban Heat – Shading of pathways (intent aligned)

Provisional Score



Additional information required

Does the master plan include a continuous network of walking paths?*

Maximum distance to green links.*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

7. Canopy Cover

Deliver climate resilience, shade and habitat through the urban forest.

1 Point

Provide a minimum of 30% tree canopy coverage to public spaces.

2 Points

Provide a minimum of 40% tree canopy coverage to public spaces including a minimum 45% canopy coverage to parks and reserves and 35% to streets.

Explanatory Notes

Canopy cover is the total land area that will be covered by tree canopy calculated using the expected mature spread of the proposed trees at 20 years maturity.

Public spaces include parks, reserves and streets, but excludes conservations zones, special habitat zones, easements that restrict tree planting and water bodies.

Adequate soil volumes and nature strip widths to support proposed trees must be demonstrated to gain these points.

2 points aligns with the intent of Green Star Communities Credit 16: Heat Resilience and Credit 26: Density and Amenity.

Aligns with BESS Subdivisions
Ecology 3.1a – Tree canopy – Public open space
Ecology 3.1b – Tree canopy – Streetscapes / Road reserves

Provisional Score

Additional information required

Percentage of canopy cover to public spaces *

Percentage of canopy cover to parks and reserves *

Percentage of canopy cover to streets *

Has adequate soil volume been provided?*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

8. Planted Area

Provide habitat complexity and ecological function.

1 Point



Provide a minimum of 25% planted area to public open spaces (excluding traditional streets).

2 Points



Provide a minimum of 30% planted area to public open spaces and 10% planted area to nature strips and medians in traditional streets.

Explanatory Notes

Planted area includes garden beds of shrubs and groundcovers. It does not include lawns of exotic grass species.

Planted area must include a mix of understorey (up to 500mm) and midstorey (500mm to 2m height) species to create habitat complexity.

Existing retained vegetation can be included in calculations.

Provisional Score



Additional information required

Percentage of planted area to public open spaces (excluding streets)*

Percentage of planted area to nature strips and medians in streets*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

9. Plant Palette

Promote locally appropriate and resilient plant communities.

1 Point



Proposed plant palettes include at least 60% indigenous plants.

2 Points



Proposed plant palettes include at least 80% indigenous plants with a diverse palette achieving structural diversity and the 10/20/30 benchmark.

Explanatory Notes

Indigenous means native to the site’s bioregion as defined by the state government authority responsible for environment. Your ecologist may recommend additional species native to the region to suit the specific requirements and objectives of your development.

The planting palette should be designed in line with the principles set out in the Design Guidelines i.e. with a complexity of structure, variety of habitat niches, flowering throughout the year, and creation of habitats to support local wildlife, with input from the ecologist.

10/20/30 benchmark means no more than 10% of any species, 20% of any one genus and 30% of any single family.

Percentages are calculated on total number of plants and not total number of species. However, if detailed planting plans and quantities have not been completed, the plant palette must demonstrate the ability to achieve the targeted species diversity, and the Developer must commit to doing so for each stage of the development.

*Aligns with Green Star Buildings v1.1 Credit 39 Biodiversity Enhancement
1 point aligns with BESS Subdivisions Ecology 4.1a – Planting palette – Native and indigenous plantings*

Provisional Score



Additional information required

What percentage of the plants are indigenous?*

Will the 10/20/30 benchmark be achieved?*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

10. Private Gardens

Extend nature based design principles to private land.

*Applicants are only required to fill in either Part A or Part B depending of the type of development.
Part A is for low density developments consisting of detached housing or terrace-style housing with private gardens on individual lots. Part B is for developments with apartments or townhouses with communal gardens.*

PART A: For low density precincts:

1 Point

- Private garden design guidelines are enforced which include, as a minimum, the requirement for 1 canopy tree per lot and a minimum 20% planted area.

2 Points

- Private garden design guidelines are enforced which include the requirement for a minimum of 1 canopy tree per lot, a predominantly (over 50%) native planting palette, excludes environmental weeds, and a minimum 30% planted area.

Explanatory Notes

For low density precincts, Private Gardens are defined as all external areas within the title boundary excluding the building footprint. A canopy tree is defined as a tree with a mature height over 5 metres. Native planting means native to Australia. Indigenous planting is preferred but a native palette can give residents greater choice. Productive trees and gardens are excluded from the requirement for native planting. Planted area includes mulched in-ground planting beds.

*2 points aligns with BESS Subdivisions
Ecology 4.1d – Planting palette – Removal of environmental weeds
Ecology 4.1e – Planting palette – Environmental weeds
note: bess requirement applies to whole subdivision, not just private gardens.*

Provisional Score

Additional information required

Have private garden design guidelines been prepared?*

Do the guidelines require 1 canopy tree and minimum 20% planted area?*

Do the guidelines require 50% native plants, exclusion of environmental weeds and minimum 30% planted area?*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

PART B: For medium or high-density lots (apartments and townhouses) designed as part of the New Community master plan:

1 Point

A minimum 15% of the lot area is planted area.

2 Points

A minimum 20% of the lot area is planted area and vertical greening is incorporated to at least 3% of façades.

Explanatory Notes

For medium or high-density precincts, the minimum planting areas are to be achieved over the entire area within the title boundary. This may require roof gardens and/or upper level raised planters.

Planted area includes mulched and irrigated in-ground planting beds, on-structure planters with a minimum 300mm soil depth and internal planting to lobbies or communal spaces.

Vertical greening includes climbing plants, well maintained green walls and shrubs in balcony planters that are visible from street level. All planting must be irrigated.

**When apartment and townhouse sites are developed separately on super lots, they should seek Nature Based Cities Accreditation via the Scorecard for Multi-residential Developments.*

Provisional Score

Additional information required

Percentage of planted area*

Percentage of facade greening*

Additional Notes

*Mandatory information

Thank you for completing the Scorecard.

Your provisional score is:

Out of a possible 20 points you must score 12–15 points to be accredited as a Commended Nature Based Cities project, and 16 points or more to be accredited as an Exemplary Nature Based Cities project.

Please note: If NA is recorded for 1. Existing Site Features or 4. Existing Trees, the total available points are reduced. In those cases, the score is calculated as a percentage of available points with 60% required for Commended and 80% for Exemplary.



Commended
60%

To achieve Commended status, projects must achieve a minimum score of 60–80% of available points.



Exemplary
80%

Exemplary projects are the highest rated NBC projects, designed in accordance with the Nature Based Cities Guidelines with a scoring of 80% or more of available points.

Please get in touch with us via email
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