

Lessons from Mr Fluffy and other upzoning initiatives

Marea Fatseas 8 August 2023

Lessons from Mr Fluffy program

The majority of Mr Fluffy blocks in the **RZ1 zone** in the inner south were used to build large single dwellings, instead of dual occupancies, resulting in **minimal increase in supply of dwellings**.

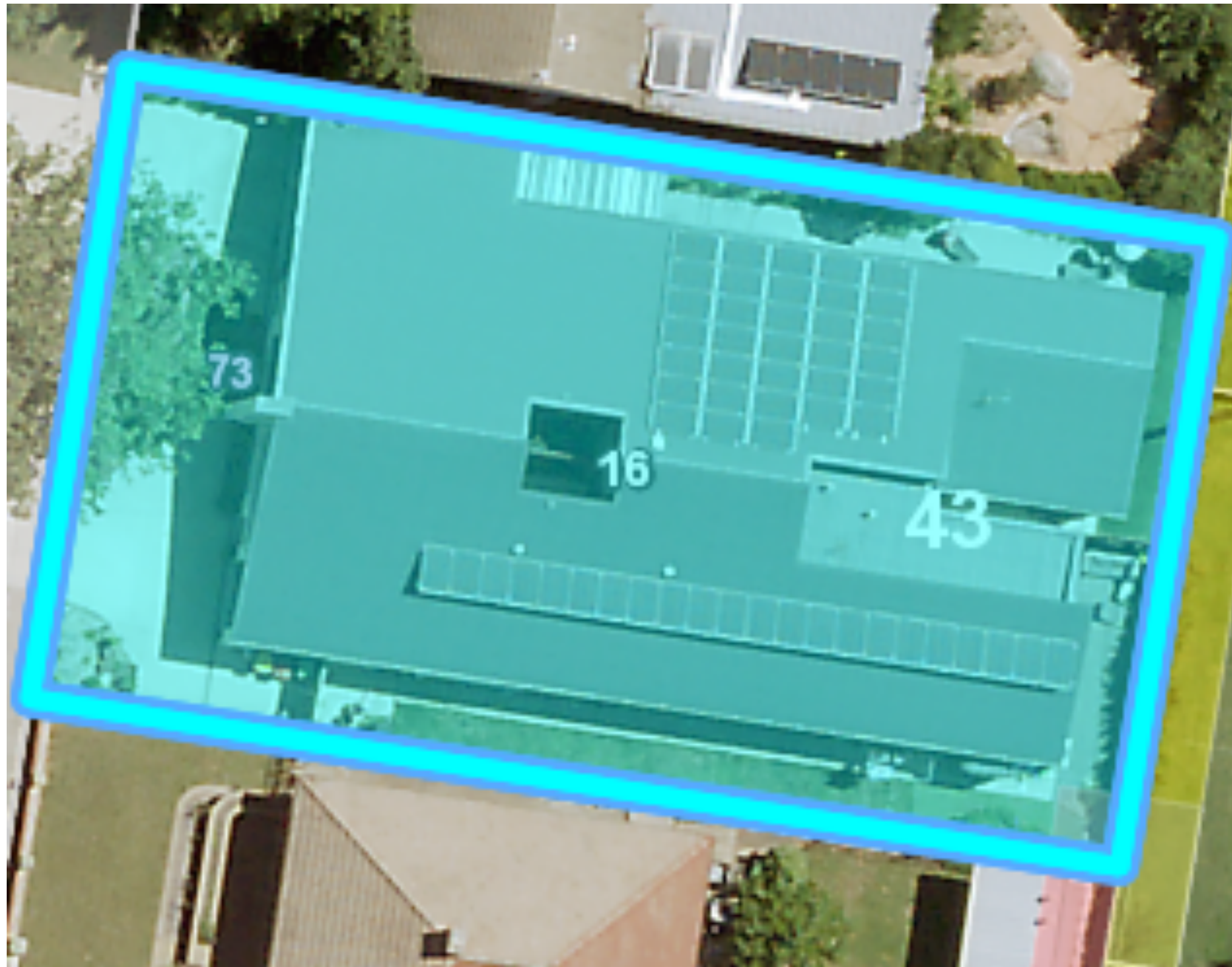
- Yarralumla: out of 15 blocks, only 2 have resulted, so far, in dual occupancies (compared to 380 dwellings to be supplied through the Brickworks redevelopment)
- Deakin: out of 12 sites, only 3 have resulted, so far, in dual occupancies
- Griffith: out of 10 sites, only 3 have resulted in dual occupancies
- Narrabundah: out of 12 RZ1 sites, about 4 resulted in dual occupancies

Only in the **RZ2 zone** in Narrabundah, were the majority developed into **multiple** dwellings

Proportion of Green Space on Mr Fluffy blocks

- Out of a sample of 32 new single dwellings on Mr Fluffy blocks in RZ1, **nearly half seemed to have 30% or less permeable area.**
- Out of a sample of 11 Mr Fluffy sites that were turned into dual occupancies in RZ1, **most seemed to have about 30% or less permeable area.**
- In **multi-unit developments** on Mr Fluffy blocks in RZ2 in Narrabundah, **most provided less than 30% permeable area.**
- **Lesson: there are problems with inadequate permeable area on both single dwelling and dual occupancy/multi-unit development sites. Need clear rules in the new Territory Plan and better enforcement of the permeability requirement.**

**Examples: Dual occupancies and single dwellings: low ratio of permeable area
(The dual occupancies on the left seem to exceed by far the allowed 50% plot ratio. Who was ensuring compliance?)**



Lessons from Brisbane

<https://theconversation.com/why-city-policy-to-protect-the-brisbane-backyard-is-failing-150173>



New house construction on subdivided lots on Taylor Street, Woolloongabba. Google Earth

“In the past decade, the seven inner-city suburbs we studied lost over 21,000 square metres of open space, usually backyards, to be replaced with more houses.”

“It’s [inherently difficult](#) to co-ordinate redevelopment across multiple properties for high-quality, precinct-level infill. On the other hand, individual owners can reap financial benefit from lot-scale redevelopment, without the costs associated with larger developments.

As a result, backyard subdivision is pursued as a simple form of infill. Despite the city council’s policy to “[protect the Brisbane backyard](#)” and the state government’s goal of more [diverse and affordable homes](#), more single-family homes are being crammed into less and less space.”

Lessons from upzoning in Auckland

- Auckland is becoming more compact
- Increase in number of dwellings, their diversity, and their sustainability
- Rental affordability is improving (rents increased 11% since 2018 against inflation rate rate of 16%), **BUT**
- Housing affordability is worsening: median house prices are over 11 times median household income
- Housing stress is worsening - 94% increase in people on Public Housing Register in June 2022 compared to March 2019
- Growing number think their area has become a worse place to live

(Auckland Plan 2050 - Three Yearly Progress Report 2023, page 18)

“There are important pressures to balance in tackling Auckland’s housing affordability challenge, including ensuring that intensification is done well to maintain and improve Auckland’s liveability. Some Aucklanders’ perceptions of and satisfaction with their local environment is showing signs of declining, with more housing development/high density housing as one of the top three reasons. At the same time, Auckland has been losing a growing number of residents to elsewhere in New Zealand. Taken together with Auckland’s poor housing affordability this suggests that Auckland could be doing better in terms of offering its residents the best quality of life. It is important that these issues are considered as part of the solutions to the housing affordability challenge.”

(Auckland Plan 2050-Three Yearly Progress Report, p.20)

Key Lessons

A significant loss of tree canopy and green space is occurring on redeveloped sites, whether they are single dwellings or multi-unit developments.

The new dwellings are not necessarily more affordable to buy.

There is a need for clear rules in the new draft Territory Plan (not just guidance) and appropriate enforcement, especially in relation to:

- Amount of permeable area on residential blocks, informed by the science about liveability and climate change adaptation (eg heat island effect, flooding)
- Solar access
- Protection of private open space from overshadowing by neighbouring properties