Canberra is a planned city and its growth and development have exemplified contemporary planning principals.

Alastair Swayn, Australian Capital Territory Government Architect

Urban design in the nation’s capital

Canberra, Australia’s planned capital, is a laboratory of 20th and 21st century planning and urban design. Selected by surveyor Charles Scrivener and designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin, Canberra is nestled within a landscape setting.

It is the nation’s eighth largest major city, and the largest inland city. Since the original city beautiful design, Canberra’s planning and design has been progressively updated – building on past plans with whatever the current practice was at the time.

Canberrans rate their city highly for liveability, in particular its economic opportunities and attractive look and design.

In late 2011 the ACT Government released the draft ACT Planning Strategy for public comment. The draft Strategy was developed following extensive community and stakeholder engagement.

When finalised, the ACT Planning Strategy will guide Canberra’s development for the next 30 years and beyond, and is focussed on making Canberra a compact, efficient city by building on its key strengths – its metropolitan structure, its position in the region and place as the ‘bush capital’.

In 2010-11 nearly two flats and apartments were built for every free standing house. This represents a remarkable outcome for a generally low density city developed in the era of the car.
Examples of urban design charters, guides and handbooks in Australian Capital Territory

National
- COAG Objectives and Criteria for Capital Cities
- CREATING PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Territory
- State Policies and plans
- ACT Housing Strategy

Town/District
- Local Area Plan
- Greenfield structure plan

Neighbourhood
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Town Centre masterplan

Street
- Street-scale plan

Site
- Site Plan

ACT Active Living Forum – Our Health, Our City
Canberra Central Design Manual
Energy ratings