

# Property Activation Levy

ACTIVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION INFORMATION



# Property Activation Levy

## ACTIVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION INFORMATION

From 1 July 2019, the Property Activation Levy will apply to properties in the Darwin Central Business District (CBD).

The purpose of the levy is to encourage owners of vacant land or unoccupied commercial buildings to activate or beautify their properties and improve the CBD.

**The levy is part of Government's plan to revitalise Darwin CBD** which also includes the Cavanagh Street cooling project, underground carpark (to remove four hot carparks and create more parkland), Austin Lane upgrades, new Health House, street art program and laneway events. The \$200 million 'Darwin City Deal' and \$10 million 'Switching on Darwin' project (including 138 CCTV cameras and better lighting) will also activate the CBD.

This guideline will assist property owners to understand how properties may be activated or beautified by setting out the principles, common issues and design considerations.

Any property meeting the **minimum** number of suggested options in this document will **not** incur the levy. If any revenue is raised, it will be used on Darwin CBD revitalisation projects.

The information provided in this document is for

guidance only and any specific activation works should take into account the circumstances relevant to the site.

All activation works must be undertaken **in conjunction with general maintenance** to ensure the property is presented to a reasonable standard.

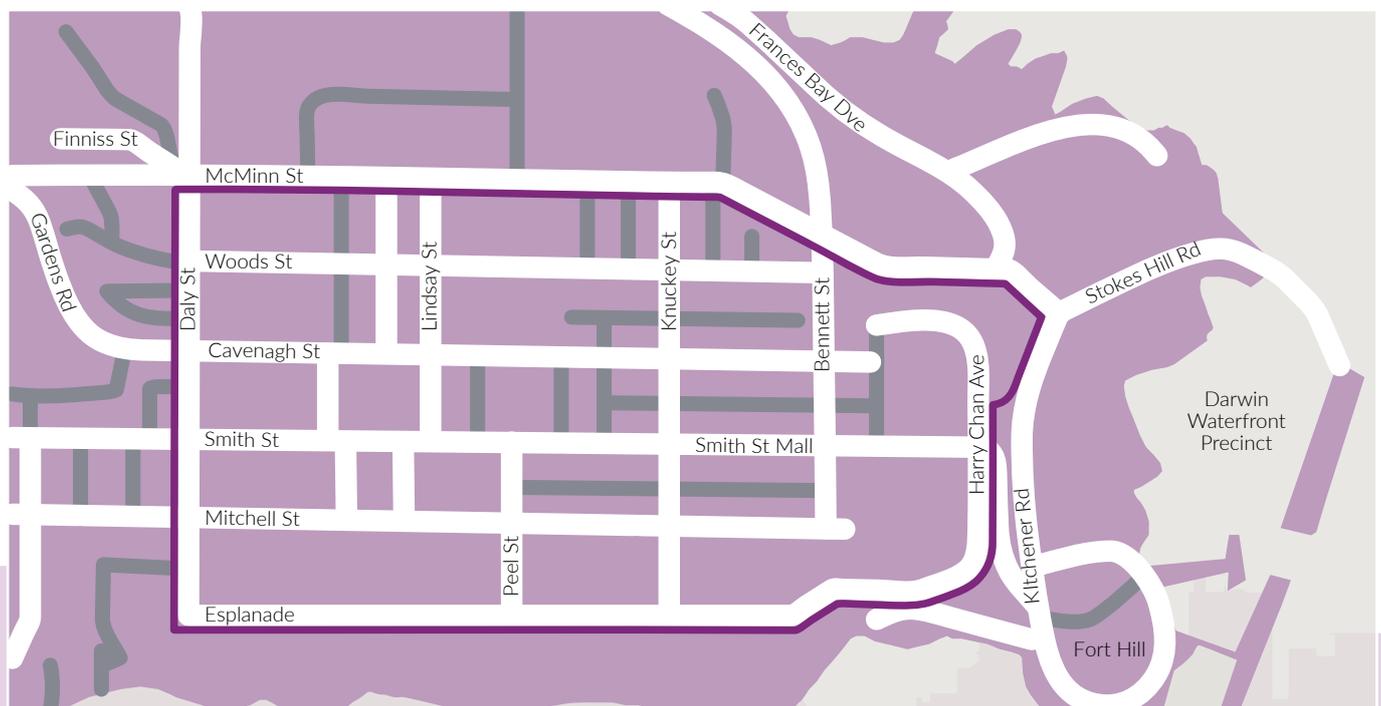
All work must comply with existing planning laws and regulations set out by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, City of Darwin, NT WorkSafe or other relevant body.

Owners are encouraged to contact the Territory Revenue Office (details at the end of this document) if they have any queries regarding the levy.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE LEVY:

- Improve the look and feel of Darwin CBD for residents, workers and visitors/tourists.
- Improve the CBD's liveability, attractiveness, safety and cultural activity.
- Support business operators by activating the CBD.
- Improve pedestrian accessibility and experience.
- Promote the CBD as the premier location in Darwin to live, play and work.

### LEVY AREA (all areas on, or inside, the dark purple line):



## KEY DATES FOR PROPERTY OWNERS



## OWNERS' OBLIGATIONS

From 1 July 2019, owners of vacant land and non-residential property in the levy area will be required to:

- Register as a user on the online levy portal – all property owners will be provided with a direct link to the portal once it becomes available in June 2019.
- Make an initial declaration of current use by 31 July 2019.
- Register any change in use of the property during the year that may impact its levy status (for example, vacant to activated).
- Lodge a return and pay the levy (only if not occupied or activated during the year) by 31 July 2020 and each year thereafter.
- Lodge a return (and pay the levy if applicable) for the period up to the date of settlement if a property is sold part way through the year.

## GRACE PERIOD FOR ACTIVATION

Owners of vacant land or commercial property will have a reasonable grace period to activate their property without incurring the levy. A property owner who activates their property by 1 October 2019 will not be liable for the levy in relation to the period from 1 July 2019 until that activation occurs.

## ACTIVATION INDICATORS

### VACANT LAND

Vacant land will mean any site in Darwin CBD without a commercial or residential/mixed used building.

Owners of vacant land will be able to prevent the levy being applied by developing their property or through activation or beautification works which improve the amenity of the CBD without requiring development.

Owners of vacant land have options in the short to medium term to prevent the levy being applied .

The following examples set out scenarios and options for owners of vacant land to activate their properties.

These examples are given as a guide only and owners should consider what options are most appropriate for their land.

If the minimum number of suggested options are undertaken to improve the vacant land, owners will prevent the levy being applied.

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## ACTIVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION INFORMATION

### EXAMPLES

#### SCENARIO 1: VACANT LAND

#### ACTIVATION (MUST DO **AT LEAST ONE** OF THE BELOW + ONGOING MAINTENANCE)

##### Desirable activation responses

- Graphic or architectural fence that includes a combination of seating, landscaping, lighting or mural. This does not include fencing such as chain link or plain solid panelling.
- Remove weeds and debris and rehabilitate as green space with landscaping and reticulation.
- Improve public access to, and usage of, land (for example, shade structure, benches, tables, children's play equipment or sporting equipment, such as a basketball ring).
- Enable part of lot to be used as outdoor dining or trading area by a neighbouring business.
- Make the area more visually interesting and exciting by incorporating public art, including sculpture, murals and street art.

##### Design suggestions

- Incorporate some permeability to allow airflow and enable public surveillance.
- Adhere to 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' principles.
- Facilitate options to mitigate site heat through environmental design.
- Consider impact on neighbours and any existing use of surrounding sites.
- Remove obsolete concrete slabs and exposed footings.
- Comply with all relevant planning laws and regulations.



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## SCENARIO 2: IDLE CONSTRUCTION SITE ACTIVATION (MUST DO **AT LEAST ONE** OF THE BELOW + ONGOING MAINTENANCE)

### Desirable activation responses

- The levy rules apply to excavated sites.
- Excavated sites may be activated in the same manner as set out in Scenario 1, but must also comply with the planning, health and safety laws relating to construction sites.
- Sites with both a current development permit **AND** displaying tangible construction progress will not be subject to the levy.

### Design suggestions

- Suggestions made for vacant land (Scenario 1) apply.
- Excavated sites must also comply with all relevant planning and health and safety rules, including that the perimeter of site must be defined, secured and treated appropriately.
- Activation options for excavated sites should take into account the nature of the site.

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## SCENARIO 3: VACANT LAND USED COMMERCIALY - CARPARK SITE

### Desirable activation responses

- Vacant land may be used commercially without the construction of buildings, such as ground level carparks.
- Any site with an existing use recognised for planning purposes will not be subject to the levy.
- For land without an existing use, commencing a new commercial use will cause the land to be activated and not subject to the levy.

### Design suggestions

- Any change in the use of a vacant site must adhere to all applicable planning and building rules. All other design suggestions made for vacant land also apply. This includes complying with all applicable planning and building rules.
- Owners must ensure any ground level use has adequate landscaping, maintenance, site security and heat mitigation.



# Property Activation Levy

## ACTIVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION INFORMATION

### UNOCCUPIED COMMERCIAL PREMISES

The levy will apply to unoccupied commercial premises meaning any non residential building (or, in the case of strata-titled buildings, strata lot) **at ground level** that is not being actively used. This includes all areas open to the public, such as laneways, arcades and thoroughfares.

Consistent with the objective of the levy, assessment of unoccupied premises will focus on the appearance of premises from the street.

Whether a building is occupied or unoccupied will be determined based on lettable areas **at ground level**, with a building being considered unoccupied if more than 50 per cent of the ground level is unoccupied and inactive.

For strata-titled buildings, occupancy will be determined separately for each strata-titled commercial lot **at ground level**.

A commercial property may be vacant for up to four months per year between tenants without being subject to the levy.

Unoccupied commercial premises may be occupied through attracting tenants by offering competitive leasing arrangements. As with vacant land, unoccupied commercial buildings can also be activated to prevent the levy being applied. The examples below outline options that may be available to owners of unoccupied commercial premises to activate their properties without requiring tenancies.

### EXAMPLES

#### SCENARIO 1: UNOCCUPIED COMMERCIAL PREMISES

#### ACTIVATION (MUST DO **AT LEAST ONE** OF THE BELOW + ONGOING MAINTENANCE)

##### Desirable activation responses

- Inset graphics, art displays or other visual installations on ground level external windows and walls.
- Repaint or retile and improve ground level frontage and associated awnings over the footpath.
- Include rotating shop displays (for example, Christmas, Darwin Festival, Darwin Cup Carnival) or community spaces, such as for group activities, classes or study areas.
- Where setback from the road reserve exists, undertake landscaping according to 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design' principles.

##### Design suggestions

- Curated spaces should demonstrate potential uses of the site and promote interesting shop fronts.
- Lively internal uses, visible from the outside, should encourage adaptation of vacant retail tenancies to commercial uses.
- Window treatments of commercial tenancies should be managed to ensure high levels of visual permeability.
- Avoid blank flat panels that can invite graffiti/ tagging and vandalism. Consider appropriateness of murals or other artwork.
- Provide appropriate lighting and permeability.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Call Territory Revenue Office, Department of Treasury and Finance

Phone: 1300 305 353

Email: [ntrevenue@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntrevenue@nt.gov.au)

The City of Darwin and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics publish information that may assist on topics such as:

- verge maintenance guidelines
- landscaping guidelines
- vehicle parking
- outdoor dining
- street food
- active frontages.

City of Darwin

<https://www.darwin.nt.gov.au/>

Northern Territory Planning Scheme

<https://nt.gov.au/property/building-and-development/nt-planning-scheme/northern-territory-planning-scheme>

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<https://cbd.nt.gov.au>

