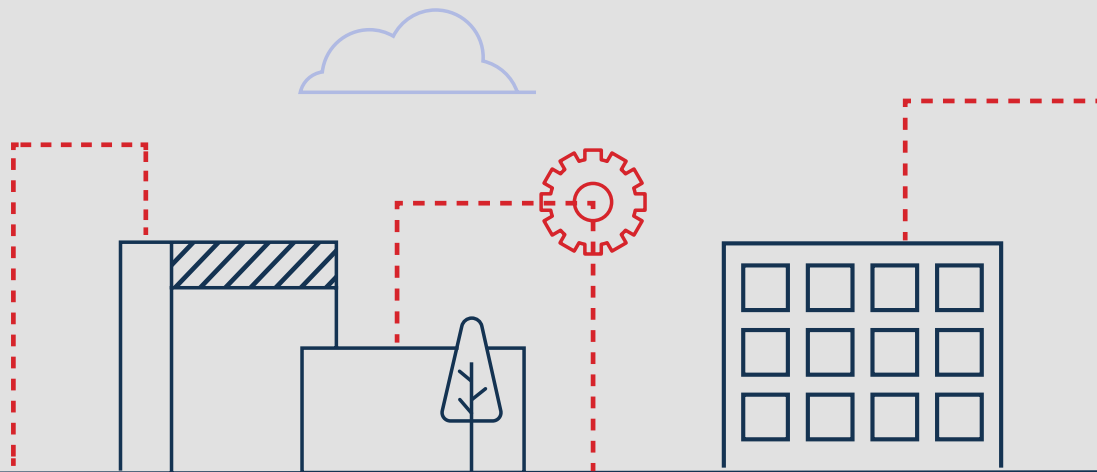


7 Critical things you MUST DO when planning



Ready to design, build or develop?

Here are my insider tips to help you get it right from the start – and avoid costly mistakes.

But first... why **me**?

Hi, I'm Melanie, one of Melbourne's most trusted town planning experts.

With deep knowledge of local governments across greater Melbourne, I've been advising and supporting small businesses as they grow and relocate – for more than 20 years.

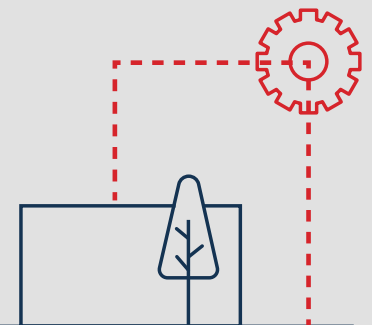
And over that time, I've seen people make the same town planning mistakes, again and again.

That's why I founded Change of Plan.

My team and I are here to help you remove the stress, avoidable delays and costly mistakes from the planning process.

We steer you through it all from the start – and submit water-tight permit applications to help you achieve your goals.

So, now that you know who I am, let me help you get off on the right foot with your next planning project.



1

Brush up on your town planning lingo (at least a little)

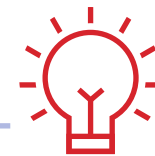


GRZ, the Act, Existing Use Rights. These are just some of the technical terms town planners love to use.

I'm not saying you have to become a whiz in all things town planning overnight. But getting your head around some of the common terms will help you understand your basic rights and responsibilities.

Because as they say, knowledge is power.

What's more, council planners often discuss the merits of an application in their language, so you need to be able to translate it to some degree. Otherwise, you could be presented with unworkable conditions, unnecessary delays – or even a perplexing refusal.



TOP TIP

This [glossary](#) of common town planning terms is a good place to start.



2

Make council your new BFF



Every council in Victoria has **different planning schemes**.

So, even if you've developed many sites before, you must never assume that the restrictions in one area will be the same as another.

That's why I recommend speaking to your council as early as possible in the planning process. You'll be able to get their initial views

on your proposal – and find out what planning controls and policies apply to your site.

The last thing you want is to invest time and money into a design that won't be approved.



TOP TIP

Make sure that your design team is aware of and follows the planning controls related to your site before you spend a cent!



3

The covenant conundrum: check the restrictions on your land title

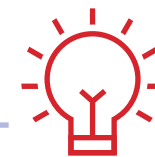


It sounds straightforward – and perhaps even obvious. But many people neglect to check the covenants on their land title before submitting their applications.

In some cases, covenants are so restrictive, they're debilitating.

For example, a covenant may stipulate that your building must be constructed with brick, which could dramatically increase the cost of your development. But then again, be sure to check the specific restriction as it may allow for both double brick and brick veneers, which could help keep your budget in check.

So, check out those restrictions closely. And if you don't quite understand a covenant, ask a town planner.



TOP TIP

A copy of your land title will be included in your Section 32.

Misplaced it? You can purchase another from [Landata](#).



4

Take a quick trip through history



Just like checking restrictions, you should also investigate a site's planning history before leasing or buying. This will ensure you make the right planning requests – and don't breach council laws unknowingly.

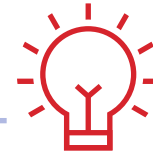
Here's an example.

Let's say you have found the 'perfect' site to open a new café. But after looking into the site's planning history, you discover that the council has

rejected past applications for outdoor seating and imposes strict limitations on patron numbers and noise control.

(Not so hot information unless you're planning to open Melbourne's most exclusive café – seating only five diners at a time.)

However, armed with this information, you will be much better placed to make the right planning decisions and requests.



TOP TIP

For a small fee, your council can send you all past planning applications, permits and plans. Generally, permit conditions don't expire if the 'use' of the building is unchanged.



5

Don't believe what they tell you – size *does* matter



I see it all too often: people providing building plans that are simply not big enough.

This is an absolute no-no. Unlike your high school graphic design teacher, your council planner won't be so lenient about drawings that require some generous squinting to even read.

And for a council to approve your plan without delay, it needs to be to an appropriate scale – with accurate proportions.



TOP TIP

Depending on the type of planning proposal, you may need to engage a professional to draw up your plans. However, for *some* applications (such as signage) you might be able to use existing plans.



6

It's the good advice that you just didn't take: avoid incomplete-application irony

'If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?'

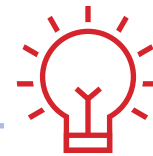
This famous quote rings true in the world of town planning.

Too many people submit incomplete applications to councils – largely because they are time poor. But in a sort of irony that Alanis Morissette would sing about, if you fall into this trap, it will only cost you more time down the track.

Individual councils require slightly different application

components, but in general, simply filling out the application form is not enough. You should also include plans as well as a well-written submission that outlines what you want to do, why you want to do it, and how it adheres to town planning controls.

Otherwise, your application will simply be rejected and returned. And that means you're back to the drawing board. Not a great way to start the application process!



TOP TIP

Ask your council for a checklist of what they require in your application.

Then, triple-check that you've included every item.



7

Get organised (or get sidelined)



Did you know that your application will lapse if you don't provide what the council has asked for in the timeframe they've specified?

That's why good organisation is the backbone of successful town planning.

With multiple cogs typically moving at once, it's crucial that everyone involved in your project is on the same page – and aware of who needs to do what, by when.

Otherwise, you could lose a lot of valuable time and money, simply because you weren't on top of things.



TOP TIP

Consider using a project management tool – or at least, maintain a shared spreadsheet with key dates and tasks – so that nothing gets forgotten.



8

BONUS: Make that bounce-back *quick*



Sometimes, decisions don't go your way. It can be frustrating and disheartening.

But if this happens to you, it's important to bounce back quickly, as you only have **60 days to appeal to VCAT**.

Importantly though, your appeal will only be successful if your plans don't go against the rules and laws of the local council.

So, if you're unsure why your application was refused, it's wise to consult a town planner *immediately*.



TOP TIP

Want to better understand why your plan was refused? Ask your council to send you a Delegates Report which contains more details on their decision.



Want
stress-free
planning –
and an
increased
chance of
success?

With deep knowledge of council regulations for all suburbs across greater Melbourne, my team and I take the guesswork out of your planning process.

We'll help you get it right from the start – so that you can get your project underway sooner.



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