Current population and household size projections indicate that another 50,000 new dwellings will be needed across the region by 2031 to address housing needs. Continuing to provide a high proportion of dwellings in low-density developments on the urban fringe will not match the changing structure of households or meet the needs of a growing population. Providing a compact urban form with mixed use and a high quality living environment can help create more active, stronger communities.

The draft FNQ regional plan
The draft FNQ regional plan proposed higher residential dwelling densities in various localities to promote a more compact urban form and provide a wider mix of housing choice to meet the changing needs of the population.

Issues raised
A number of submissions expressed concern about the proposed increased housing densities, particularly for the smaller regional activity centres such as Herberton and Mission Beach.

Addressing the issues
The final FNQ regional plan has been substantially amended to clarify the intent regarding housing densities. It is proposed that increased dwelling densities would be achieved over time through development of greenfield sites and infill and redevelopment of existing areas. The following densities apply:
- 15–20 dwellings per hectare in the Mount Peter master planned area
- 15 dwellings per hectare for Cairns
- 12 dwellings per hectare for Atherton, Mareeba and Innisfail.
Where transit oriented communities are proposed, higher densities equivalent to 40–100 dwellings per hectare should be considered.

Density targets are expected to be achieved through a mix of low and medium density housing, with higher densities confined to the central business district or specified nodes.

For example, it is not intended that the density target would be achieved by uniform development with a 400 m² lot size.

Discussions are underway with local councils to determine appropriate implementation and monitoring mechanisms to achieve the proposed density targets over the life of the FNQ regional plan.