

# Housing industry wants zoning overhaul as developments slow

By MATTHEW RAGGATT

New data shows the number of development applications lodged in key residential zones plummeted last year, prompting architects and developers to call for major changes to ACT planning laws

The head of the Housing Industry Association in the ACT said the lack of medium-density housing would hit baby boomers hardest, as they would struggle to downsize in, or near, their suburb.

Government figures showed 46 development applications were lodged in the RZ2 zone in the year to June, a drop of 63 per cent from the 126 the previous year. In the RZ3 zone, which allows three- or four-storey developments, there were just 10 DAs, down from 40.

HIA ACT/Southern NSW president

David Fogg said he believed a glut of one-bedroom apartments was largely to blame for the RZ3 decline, but it was planning restrictions – in practical effect since July 2010 – which made more RZ2 developments unfeasible.

“There’s still a desire and want for those sort of RZ2 developments, they just don’t stack up under the current situation,” Mr Fogg said.

Architect and HIA vice-president Glen Dowse said the results for suburbs would be dire if affordable downsized accommodation was not available for retiring baby boomers.

“If we fail on those, they stay in the existing homes, and our suburbs eventually die; we’ve got no kids to go into the schools,” Mr Dowse said.

Mr Dowse said key changes should involve the cutting of the lease variation charges to levels

similar to those in Queanbeyan, a removal of the dwelling replacement policy that requires part of a redevelopment to be based on the number of rooms in the demolished home, and the removal of the four-unit or townhouse maximum restriction for an RZ2 block.

The government agreed in principle last year to a Legislative Assembly committee recommendation to “reconsider RZ2 changes to make them more consistent with the goals of affordable housing and urban infill”.

Planning Minister Mick Gentleman said the Environment and Planning Directorate had begun discussions with representatives of the development industry to better understand factors that discouraged urban intensification in residential zones.

“Redevelopment in [RZ2 and RZ3] helps to provide a greater diversity in the types of dwellings within each district in Canberra, and therefore a decline in development within these zones is of some concern,” Mr Gentleman said.

The minister said the directorate’s scoping review into housing choices was expected to be completed in the second half of 2015.

DA numbers were stronger in the three months to October 1, with 32 RZ2 and nine RZ3 applications lodged, but Mr Fogg said he doubted the growth would be year-long. “I think it’d be lucky if [RZ2 lodgings] got to 50 this financial year.”

The immediate past president of the Australian Institute of Architects, ACT, Tony Trobe, said the city had stagnated as a result of inadequate development.

## Campbell residence sets \$2.3m record price

By MEREDITH CLISBY

A modern executive residence in Campbell’s heights has broken the sales record for the suburb at auction.

The home at 14 Garsia Street sold under the hammer for \$2.33 million on Saturday morning.

It beat the previous record for the inner north suburb by \$40,000.

Number 12 Cobby Street sold for \$2.29 million in 2010.

The palatial property on Garsia Street was designed by Terry Ring of Architects Ring and Associates to take full advantage of the views of the city, lake and mountains.

Features of the five-bedroom home included a covered alfresco terrace with panoramic views over Lake Burley Griffin and an infinity-edge swimming pool.

The home incorporated range of natural materials such as timber and stone.

Independent Property Group Woden agent Jonathan Charles said the home had been a joy to sell, rather than a job, and he



The Campbell residence boasts an in-ground pool.

was pleased it had broken the previous sales record for the suburb.

“There’s a lot of money in Campbell now, it’s probably the best northern suburb in Canberra.”

Mr Charles said 211 groups had inspected the house during the marketing campaign and there were seven registered bidders at the auction.

The opening bid on the property was \$1.5 million and another four registered bidders participated in the auction.

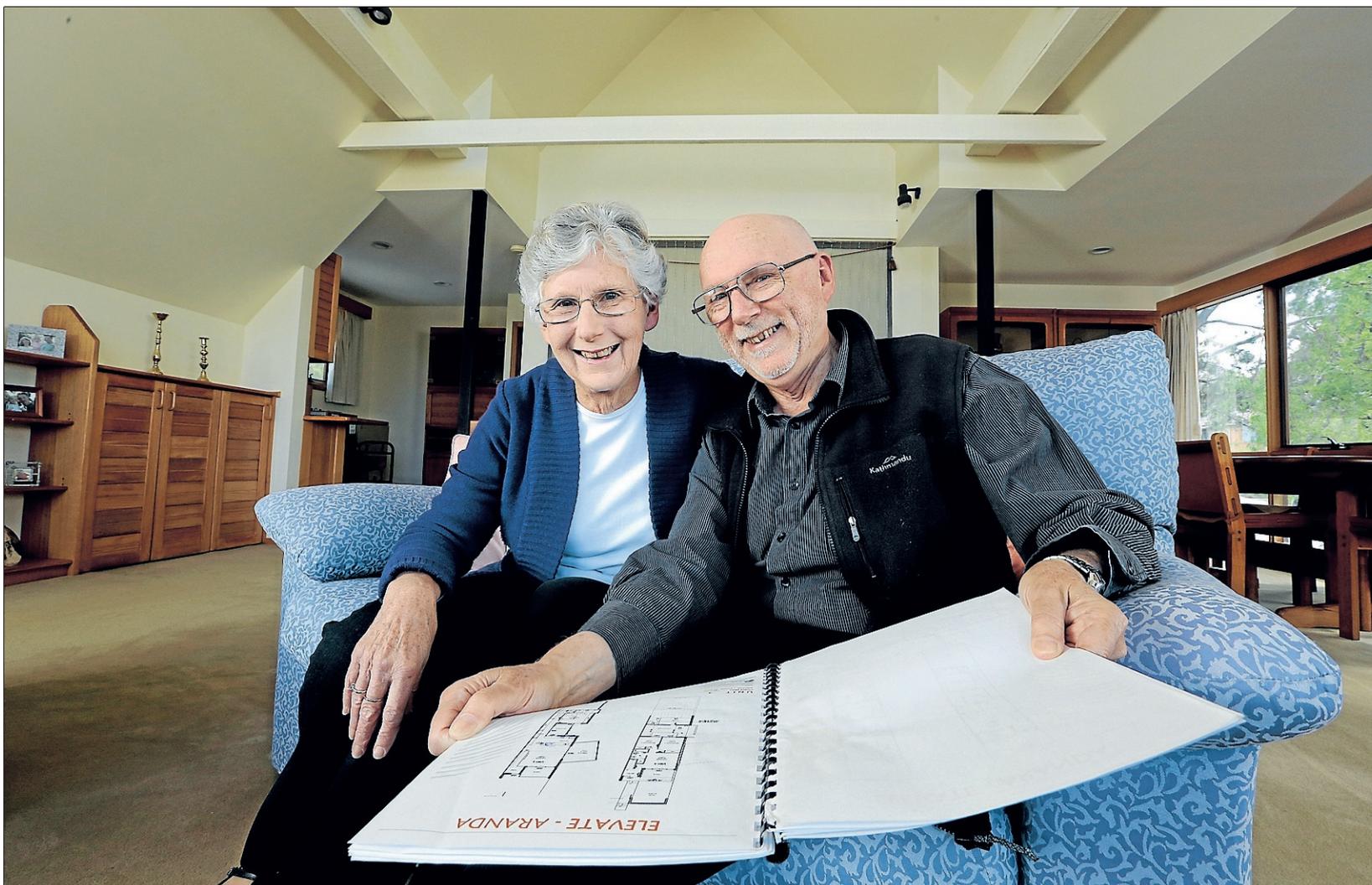
Mr Charles said the sellers wished to remain private but said they were pleasantly surprised by the record price and would be sad to let the home go.

Real Estate Institute of the ACT president Michael Kumm said he was not surprised suburb records were being broken as the market was performing well.

“I think it goes to show the strength of the Canberra market; when the market’s strong you expect to get records,” he said.

Mr Kumm said he expected house price increases in the territory as buyers competed for properties under the auction process but not until after Christmas.

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Barbara Court and Lance Court look at plans for a smaller townhouse they bought 350 metres away from their Aranda home as they downsize.

Photo: JEFFREY CHAN

## Boomers back call for more age-appropriate apartments

By MATTHEW RAGGATT

Barbara and Lance Court have managed to do what many people their age dream of – downsize in the suburb they have lived in for more than a decade.

Mrs Court, 68, a retired public servant, said there were not enough quality, roomy apartments available. The three-bedroom property they purchased in Aranda ticks all their boxes.

“We were looking for a high-class development, something with an outdoor terrace entertaining area and walking distance to shops and amenities,” she said.

“What they’ve been building as

three-bedroom apartments is more for young folk . . . and in Jamison they’re not building bigger apartments.”

After 11 years in their current home, the couple will move from their spacious block to one of the 10 three-bedroom apartments – yet to be built – in the elevated complex.

While each apartment is two storeys, the couple can live on one storey if they wish.

It’s a feature commonly requested of developers, but Council of the Ageing ACT executive director Paul Flint said there was a great need for more appropriate housing for baby boomers.

“Given the combined demographics of the suburbs – the age of the suburbs and age of the residents – we find the suburbs that were built in the ’60s and ’70s have very little housing that is age-appropriate,” he said.

He called for more single-storey apartments, limited in practice by the dwelling replacement rule and the economic incentive to go higher, and said double-storey apartments built should maximise opportunities for retirees by providing ground-floor accommodation for one family and a top storey for another.

Belconnen Community Council president Robyn Coghlan said while she often received complaints about

neighbours who built an extra dwelling next door, more moderate redevelopments tended to be better accepted.

“The redevelopment of the old Jamison Inn site dropped from a six-storey development to three storeys . . . the current proposal is generally viewed much more happily for the community because it has been designed for the market,” she said.

The Courts, who hosted regular dance groups at their home, said they wanted to move while they were healthy.

“The only thing we will miss is not having the back deck to dance on,” Barbara said.