



5.0 Housing Innovation and Affordability

5.1 Introduction

Providing affordable and high quality homes for local residents in sustainable locations is a key principle of the UDF. The UDF seeks to promote innovative forms of housing, particularly in terms of homes that are socially and environmentally sustainable.

Cohousing

Cohousing models are becoming more common place in Australia and are already common place in parts of Europe and elsewhere globally. Cohousing is an community of dwellings, which is centred on a shared space. Each home has traditional amenities, such as its own kitchen, but often shares other amenities, such as laundry facilities. The intention of cohousing is to provide more affordable homes and create intentional communities.

Cohousing allows for privacy in each individual home, but also provides for a greater level of social interaction than is usually present in traditional housing developments. Residents can choose the amount they live communally, but most communities have regular meals together and share duties in terms of maintenance and food growing.

Cohousing schemes will also have a Common House, which is central to the development both physically and socially. Communal activities will take place there and it will include cooking and dining facilities for the whole community.

Banyule already has the most well-known cohousing community in Victoria, called Murundaka, a Wurundjeri word meaning ‘a place to stay; to live’. Murundaka is a community of 20 households with a shared garden and communal areas for meals and socialising. They are also transitioning away from reliability on fossil fuels.

Promotion

To recognise the more sustainable nature of cohousing, it is proposed to make those types of housing exempt from development contributions (see Section 10).

Many cohousing developments find it difficult to compete for sites against traditional developers. Traditional development models can expect to generate greater densities, and therefore greater value than cohousing can, and this allows them to outbid cohousing groups. Exemption from development contributions will help to ‘level the playing field’, allowing innovative, socially responsible developers to be more competitive when purchasing land for redevelopment.

Cohousing can also be encouraged by the planning system through on-site car parking reductions or waivers, reduced permit application fees and/or expedited planning permit processes.

Cohousing is not defined by the planning scheme and due to the variety in approach of cohousing developers, it is difficult to identify definitive elements which ensure only genuinely socially responsible groups can gain exemption from development contributions and it does not create a ‘loophole’ for other developers to exploit.

Banyule City Council has prepared a definition of Co-housing Development which should include all the following:

- At least six separate dwelling units and households;
- Independent self-contained living quarters with small kitchen or kitchenette, small living area, bathroom and storage;
- Fully operational communal kitchen and storage space to cater for all residents;
- Communal living area to seat all residents for social activities and dining;
- Communal waste collection and recycling facilities to service all residents;
- Communal outdoor space and separate undercover outdoor space that can be accessed by all on-site residents
- Communal toilet and bathroom facilities attached to shared spaces for all residents and visitors;
- End of trip, lockable bicycle storage and maintenance space for all residents;
- Shared car-parking space that is used and accessed by on-site residents;
- Evidence of all doorway widths and fixtures that enable wheel-chair access to all dwellings and shared spaces.

Banyule City Council has prepared guidance around what co-housing Development should include:

- A binding Maintenance Agreement between residents for their effective maintenance and use of all shared spaces;
- A binding Green Travel Plan between residents to encourage shared-car use, bike use and public transport use;
- Maintenance Agreement & Green Travel Plan attached to title and periodically reviewed by a legally constituted entity;
- Proposed Cohousing schemes will be assessed by Council against the definition outlined above to ensure they adequately address:
- Environmental sustainability – elements such as green infrastructure, on-site power generation, reduced private car ownership and use, community food growth, and passive environmental design;
- Social sustainability – elements such as shared community space, shared laundry facilities, well considered internal circulation, and optimisation of development size to improve community cohesion; and
- Financial sustainability – elements such as capped developer profits, pared down internal fit out, and affordable housing for residents.

Based on community consultation the following were suggested to be included;

- Providing opportunities for site amalgamation to effectively support 15-35 dwellings per community (international benchmarks).
- Car-parking allowance is developed in collaboration with traffic consultants and residents to provide the minimum requirements;
- Industry partnerships that demonstrate active measures to include public, private and/or social housing into a cohousing community mix; and
- The legal entity, whether it be an Owners corporation, Company, or a Cooperative, that is established for ongoing management control, policies and fee settings, shall include owners and residents in determination of its operations.

Other innovative housing which delivers architectural design excellence and sustainability measures, such as those listed below may be granted a partial or full exemption from development contributions at the discretion of Council.

- Renewable energy systems, including small-scale local community energy infrastructure such as photovoltaics and batteries
- Large scale water storage, treatment and solar heating systems for communal use
- Passive design to eliminate the need for mechanical heating and cooling
- Elimination of onsite fossil fuel use (including avoiding fossil gas)
- Green infrastructure, such as green roofs, walls, and façades, communal food growing space, shared laundry facilities
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Recycled, reclaimed, and sustainable building materials such as timber construction
- Sustainable travel planning and facilities to reduce private vehicle use and parking

Cohousing groups are encouraged to engage with Council early in the planning phase of developments.