

5.6.3 New Housing that Respects Neighbourhood Character

There is a need to ensure that residential growth is allowed for in appropriate locations, in a way that is complementary to neighbourhood character.

As Yarra Ranges' neighbourhoods are predominantly made up of low scale buildings and tree canopy, new development can have significant impacts on streetscapes and the sense of neighbourhood character for the community. While a degree of change will be necessary to accommodate growth, the amount of change will vary by area.

New development will need to respond to the preferred neighbourhood character objectives and guidelines, which will be guided by the Yarra Ranges Neighbourhood Character Study, 2021. This Study provides a basis for planning scheme provisions to guide how the scale and form of new development can address the preferred vision for how particular neighbourhoods will change over time.

5.6.4 Increased Housing Affordability

There is a need for more affordable housing types in Yarra Ranges to accommodate people experiencing mortgage and rental stress, vulnerable groups, and the homeless population.

The issue of housing affordability is partly tied to the cost of living, which can be improved by locating new housing in or near activity centres to reduce household expenditure on transport and utility costs. It is also related to housing diversity, with smaller housing forms such as townhouses and apartments offering a range of price-points to complement larger dwellings that dominate the Yarra Ranges housing stock. The environmental sustainability of new housing stock is another contributing factor, which can further reduce living and utility expenses.

However, the housing affordability response also needs to progress beyond these issues to consider ways to achieve a larger provision of social housing in Yarra Ranges.

5.6.5 Housing with Better Environmental Performance

Yarra Ranges housing stock was primarily constructed in previous decades, and many dwellings lack sustainable approaches to energy management, waste and water management, and other issues now commonly considered in contemporary housing design.

The Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme has recently been amended to include new requirements for improved approaches to environmental sustainability in building design. These requirements apply to residential development of over 3 dwellings, and some non-residential development.

The renewed and revised focus on activity centres taken by the Housing Strategy, including development in commercial areas for future medium and high-density housing, provides an opportunity to realise improved environmental performance in a larger proportion of Yarra Ranges' dwellings in the future.

6.0 Housing Vision

Vision

“Yarra Ranges will have a variety of housing options that are adaptable for the changing needs of its residents and provide effectively for its population.

Residential streets will retain their spacious, leafy character, with substantial landscaping in new developments.

New housing will be environmentally sustainable and responsive to its surrounding context, with higher density housing located near townships and urban centres in a way that facilitates community participation and active living.

There will be higher rates of affordable housing to support Yarra Ranges' most vulnerable residents, reinforcing Yarra Ranges' sense of community spirit and identity.”

Objectives

The vision was formed from community feedback on the Housing Strategy Discussion Paper, 2022, and is consistent with existing State and Local policy direction for the future of housing in Yarra Ranges. It is written to incorporate the following objectives:

- ✓ To achieve more diverse and adaptable housing that will adequately address the needs of current and future residents, including an ability for older people to age in place in their communities, particularly in areas with good walking proximity to town centres.
- ✓ To achieve future development outcomes that respond to valued neighbourhood character attributes of Yarra Ranges' neighbourhoods, as well as landscape characteristics.
- ✓ To ensure that higher density housing is directed appropriately to targeted locations, where it enhances the sense of place and cultural identity and supports strong local communities and neighbourhood participation.
- ✓ To ensure new housing is designed and constructed with greater attention to environmental sustainability.
- ✓ To achieve social and affordable housing that will address the needs of elderly people, groups on low incomes, and disabled people.