



City of Hobart
Town Hall
Macquarie Street
Hobart TAS 7000

31 March 2026

By email to:

Re: Hobart Housing Action Plan

Dear Hobart City Council,

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Hobart Housing Action Plan.

The Institute acknowledges the City of Hobart's long-standing leadership in affordable housing, including its ongoing work with community organisations, homelessness services, and government partners to address housing need in a coordinated and collaborative way. We also acknowledge the value of the widely supported Hobart Housing Forum (December 2024), which demonstrated a strong, collaborative commitment across sectors to addressing housing supply challenges.

The draft Action Plan is a positive and proactive step. The Institute supports its focus on increasing supply, enabling infill development, and strengthening partnerships. To ensure its effectiveness, the Institute's position and recommendations are outlined below.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Institute Position

The Institute supports the draft Hobart Housing Action Plan and recognises that increasing housing supply in well-located areas is essential. To be effective, the Plan must ensure that new housing is affordable, well-designed, climate-responsive, and accessible to those most in need.

The Institute considers that the Plan will be strengthened by:

- Moving from broad intent to measurable outcomes, particularly for affordable housing
- Recognising design as a key lever to improve cost efficiency, liveability, and long-term performance
- Embedding clear delivery mechanisms that address feasibility and implementation barriers

Without these refinements, there is a risk that increased housing supply will not translate into improved affordability or long-term community outcomes.

1.2 Key Recommendations

- 1. Ensure design governance for significant housing projects**
Ensure consultation with the City of Hobart Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) process or alike for council-led, partnered or demonstration projects.
- 2. Embed higher performance standards in council-enabled housing**
Require strong energy performance, climate responsiveness, and indoor environmental quality to reduce long-term living and health costs for residents.
- 3. Secure measurable affordable housing outcomes**
Ensure council-led partnerships, land use decisions and exemplar projects deliver a defined and reportable proportion of affordable housing, particularly for low-income households and those at risk of homelessness.
- 4. Enable 'missing middle' housing through viable delivery mechanisms**
Support terraces, townhouses and low-mid-rise apartments through consistent planning controls, streamlined approvals, and practical enablers such as strata titling and small-scale infill pathways. This should include opportunities to leverage laneways and sub-street networks to enable fine-grain infill development.
- 5. Expand adaptive reuse as a housing delivery pathway**
Remove barriers and introduce incentives to enable conversion of underutilised buildings, including upper-level commercial space.
- 6. Address feasibility barriers through targeted incentives and infrastructure strategies**
Improve viability through mechanisms such as design excellence incentives, coordinated infrastructure and alternative delivery approaches.

2. ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

The Australian Institute of Architects represents architects across practice, government, education, and industry. It advocates for well-designed, sustainable, and inclusive built environments.

Architects contribute expertise in balancing design quality, cost, sustainability, and long-term performance in housing delivery.

2.1 Alignment with Institute National Advocacy Priorities

This submission aligns with the Institute's national priorities, including:

- Embedding architectural leadership in housing delivery
- Advancing built environment decarbonisation
- Supporting integrated urban policy frameworks

3. COMMENTS ON KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Incentives and deterrents

The Institute supports the use of incentives to improve housing outcomes and coordination of this could be worked through within the UDAP process.

This could be strengthened through:

- Design excellence incentives (e.g. additional height or floor space linked to quality outcomes), including competitive design processes for key sites

- A balanced approach to built form incentives, ensuring any additional height or yield is paired with appropriate controls for building footprint, setbacks, solar access and amenity to maintain urban quality and long-term liveability

These approaches can improve both viability and design quality, while setting clear benchmarks for future development.

3.2 Efficient regulatory processes

The Institute supports efforts to streamline approvals and provide clear pathways to feasibility. Equally important is:

- Clarity and consistency in planning controls, particularly for strata and multi-dwelling housing
- Regulatory settings that actively enable medium-density housing delivery
- Early and consistent design input, including expanding the role of the Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) to include medium-density housing proposals above a defined scale, and pre-application engagement to improve design quality and streamline assessment
- The City of Hobart Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) plays an important role in supporting design quality outcomes; however, its impact could be significantly strengthened through earlier and more formal integration into the planning process. This could include mandatory referral of key projects, particularly in sensitive or high-impact areas, and clearer requirements for decision-makers to demonstrate how UDAP advice has been considered in final determinations. Strengthening the weight and timing of UDAP input—without altering its independent advisory role—would help ensure that design quality is embedded from the outset and carried through to delivery, ultimately supporting better built environment outcomes for the community

3.3 Strategic land use planning

The focus on infill and increased density in well-located areas is strongly supported. The emphasis on grouped housing, terraces, townhouses and low-mid-rise apartments is particularly important in delivering housing diversity.

To support this planning frameworks should provide clear pathways for missing middle housing and infrastructure planning must align with increased density. This includes strengthening access to active and public transport and adopting a coordinated, performance-based approach to parking.

The Institute supports reduced residential parking requirements where proposals demonstrate walkability and access to public transport. In addition, Council could consider the role of strategically located, centralised multi-storey parking in identified growth areas.

Shared parking infrastructure can reduce the need for costly basement construction, improving project feasibility, supporting increased housing supply, and enabling more active and safer street frontages by minimising crossovers and vehicle access points.

More broadly, there is an opportunity for Council to take a proactive role in coordinating enabling infrastructure, including advocacy to key service providers, to reduce development risk and support timely housing delivery.

3.4 Underutilised land

The Institute supports a stronger focus on unlocking underutilised sites.

Key opportunities include:

- Adaptive reuse, particularly vacant upper floors in commercial areas
- Activation of small or constrained sites, including those accessed via laneways and secondary networks
- Identification and promotion of Council-owned sites suitable for residential or mixed-use development, to provide clarity to the market and support coordinated delivery opportunities

Hobart's laneway network presents an opportunity to support small-scale infill, improve access and increase urban activation.

These approaches offer low-cost, high-impact housing supply opportunities.

3.5 Exemplar projects

The Institute strongly supports the use of exemplar projects.

These can:

- Set benchmarks for high-quality, affordable, and sustainable housing
- Demonstrate innovative typologies and delivery models
- Build community confidence in increased density

They also provide an opportunity to explore innovative construction approaches and material strategies that respond to Tasmania's context, including improving efficiency, reducing costs, and supporting local supply chains.

The Institute would be pleased to assist with showcasing of existing exemplar projects as outlined in section 5.3.

As Council takes on a greater role as landowner or development partner, it is important to prioritise deliverability. While mixed-use and community outcomes are valuable, overly complex or aspirational project requirements may undermine feasibility and delay housing delivery. A balanced approach that prioritises housing yield—particularly affordable and medium-density outcomes—will be critical.

3.6 Working with the community

The Institute supports Council's continued collaboration with community organisations, housing providers, and people with lived experience.

The Institute also notes the importance of addressing the specific housing needs of Aboriginal communities. This requires culturally appropriate approaches developed in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to embed cultural safety, connection to Country and long-term wellbeing.

More broadly, housing delivery should respond to place-based and environmental systems, recognising Country as an integrated framework of land, water, ecology, skies and culture. This

includes consideration of impacts such as light pollution and the quality of the night-time environment with dark sky appropriate lighting solutions.

The Institute looks forward to continuing its partnership with the City of Hobart through Open House Hobart, and other educational opportunities, to inform the community about the benefits of well-designed, affordable housing.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Ensure design governance for significant housing projects**
Ensure consultation with the Urban Design Advisory Panel process or alike for council-led, partnered or demonstration projects.
- 2. Embed higher performance standards in council-enabled housing**
Require strong energy performance, climate responsiveness, and indoor environmental quality to reduce long-term living and health costs.
- 3. Secure measurable affordable housing outcomes**
Ensure council-led partnerships, land use decisions and exemplar projects deliver a defined and reportable proportion of affordable housing, particularly for low-income households and those at risk of homelessness.
- 4. Enable 'missing middle' housing through viable delivery mechanisms**
Support terraces, townhouses and low-mid-rise apartments through consistent planning controls, streamlined approvals, and practical enablers such as strata titling and small-scale infill pathways. This should include opportunities to leverage laneways and sub-street networks to enable fine-grain infill development.
- 5. Expand adaptive reuse as a housing delivery pathway**
Remove barriers and introduce incentives to enable conversion of underutilised buildings, including upper-level commercial space.
- 6. Address feasibility barriers through targeted incentives and infrastructure strategies**
Improve viability through mechanisms such as design excellence incentives, coordinated infrastructure and alternative delivery approaches.

7. CONCLUSION

The Institute commends the City of Hobart for its leadership in this space and dedicating attention and resources to this issue.

With targeted refinements, the Plan can deliver not only more housing, but better housing that is affordable, well-designed, healthy, sustainable, and responsive to Hobart's context.

The Institute looks forward to continued collaboration to enable high-quality housing outcomes. The Institute can provide relevant case studies from other jurisdictions, including examples of design excellence processes, adaptive reuse, and infrastructure-led approaches that improve feasibility and housing delivery, and which support Council to play an active role in setting a strong benchmark for market-led development in Hobart.

For further information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,



Daniel Lane
President, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects



Jennifer Nichols
Executive Lead, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with over 14,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design. To learn more about the Institute, log on to www.architecture.com.au.