

Frequently Asked Questions

The Victorian Government is creating a legacy of exemplary apartments, making better homes available to more Victorians

What is the Future Homes project?

Future Homes comprises a series of three-storey exemplar apartment building designs that can be easily adapted across a range of sites. The exemplar designs are accompanied by a streamlined planning process which, if adapted correctly, could halve current planning timeframes.

Why is it needed?

Victorian's need access to great quality residential apartment buildings developed in well-connected locations across the State. By incentivising the development of Future Homes across the state, Government is increasing the opportunity and access to high-amenity-living that all Victorians deserve.

The program has previously been trialled and limited to General Residential Zoned land in the City of Maribyrnong. By expanding the project more broadly, Government is responding to the great interest expressed by many stakeholders since the successful launch earlier this year.

What are the Future Homes Exemplar Designs?

Future Homes Exemplar Designs are 3 storey apartment designs that can be easily adapted to different sites, conditions, and client briefs. There are 4 sets of designs for purchase, each with their own unique style, design, and layout. Each design set provides 3 variations to suit different site orientations and requirements.

The Future Homes designs have been created for a typical two lot consolidation (approximately 1200sqm), the designs are adaptable, but if your total site area is below 900sqm it is unlikely that it will be able to accommodate a Future Homes design.

Where can a Future Homes be built?

To be eligible for Future Homes, a site must be in the General Residential Zone and:

- within 800 metres of a train station, or
- within 800m of an activity centre in Metropolitan Melbourne; or
- within 800m of an identified regional activity centre

Development that requires a planning permit under a Heritage Overlay or a Neighbourhood Character Overlay are ineligible.

Development sites that would require a permit under Environmental Significance Overlay, Significant Landscape Overlay, or Design and Development Overlay are eligible for Future Homes. However, designs will need to respond to the requirements of the overlay and will come under further scrutiny during assessment.

The 800m catchment area is aligned with existing Plan Melbourne strategies about 'living locally' - giving people the ability to meet most of their daily needs within a short return walk from home, essentially increasing housing choice and diversity in well serviced neighbourhoods.

If you are unsure, you may check your site's eligibility on DTP's interactive maps at:
<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/futurehomes/>

Alternatively, send the Future Homes project team an email at:
futurehomes@delwp.vic.gov.au.

How did you create these designs?

The designs were created through an open competition process by a jury with expertise in architecture, landscape, planning and building. The designs were refined in collaboration with the OVGA, DTP and a range of specialist consultants.

Each design was further assessed by the Victorian Design Review Panel – a panel which typically provides independent, expert advice on significant building projects in Victoria. This is a level of review rarely applied to residential proposals of this scale.

What makes Future Homes different to other apartments?

Future Homes are designed to be an exemplary product. They are low-scale apartment buildings, that do not exceed height limits specified under the General Residential Zone and designed to be highly adaptable into any suburban context. They are designed to be better apartments for occupants, better for those living next door and better for the environment.

The layout and design go above and beyond what's currently provided in typical apartment developments delivered by the market. They include:

- **Natural ventilation:** with 100 percent of dwellings having effective natural ventilation
- **Bicycle parking:** at least 1 space per apartment for residents and additional spaces for visitors
- **Environmentally Sustainable Design:**
 - achieves a 7.5 star NatHERS average rating across all apartments, with no individual apartment less than 6.5 stars
 - achieves an excellence or equivalent score as outlined in the Building Future Homes Adaptation Guide
 - achieves a 100 percent STORM rating
- **Accessibility:** a minimum of 50 percent of apartments are Future Homes Accessible (equivalent to 'Gold Performance Level' under the *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines*).
- **Generous circulation:** wider corridors and entries.

Do the Designs meet planning requirements?

All Future Homes proposals must meet 13 mandatory design and planning controls on top of compliance with specific Future Homes requirements. While most requirements are equivalent to BADA, in some instances, the Future Homes requirements exceed current and incoming planning and building rules.

Can I alter the Designs?

Yes, you can. Future Homes Designs are based on a set of principles and replicable design elements. As 'site-less' plans the Designs can be adapted to a range of site conditions and residential markets. The *Building Future Homes – Adaptation guide* provides guidance on how to adapt a design to suit various sites.

However, a Future Homes proposal cannot vary or depart from the 13 mandatory design and planning requirements, plus building height and garden area requirements prescribed under the General Residential Zone.

Do I have to purchase the Designs to see if they work on my site?

No, free Design Intent Plans are available to download. This allows for initial viability and due diligence assessments. The Design Intent Plans are free concept plans that give a sense of the look and feel of the apartments. The plans will help you in choosing the right Future Homes Design for your site.

The Design Intent Plans can be downloaded from here: <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/future-homes/future-homes-designs>

What do I get once I purchase the Designs?

The Designs are site-less, scalable, replicable designs for three-storey apartment buildings. Once purchased you will get:

- A set of highly resolved architectural designs, including floor plans, elevations, sections, façade details
- Typical apartment plans, including floor areas, storage, accessibility response and breeze paths
- Three different development layout options for 13-17 apartments, including at-grade and basement car parking options and different site orientations
- Example site plan showing the landscape concept integration
- Access to the new streamlined planning process.

Please be aware, to access the streamlined planning process, a planning application will have to be lodged within 12 months of purchasing the Designs, unless an extension is sought from DTP.

The full package list can be seen here <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/future-homes/future-homes-designs>

How viable are the designs?

The design teams and technical consultants paid particular attention to the balance of initial construction costs with whole-of-life considerations of maintenance, running costs and occupant well-being.

The designs have been tested and performance requirements and construction realities have been embedded into the final outcomes, including the following:

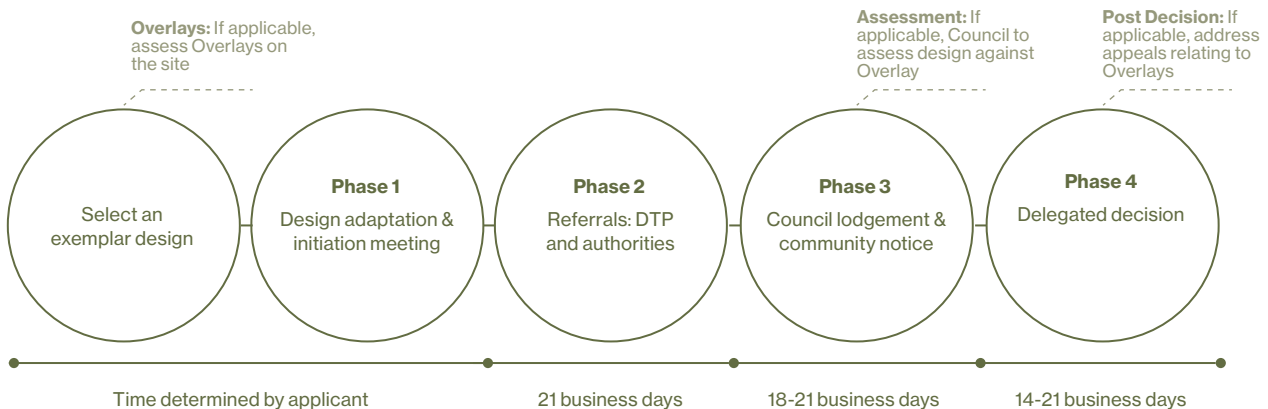
- Reduction of car parking spaces to balance dwelling yield and support garden planting opportunity
- Designs developed with input and feasibility testing from apartment developers and expert quantity surveyors
- Inherent flexibility of structural solutions and construction approaches, so long as clearly defined design intent and building performance targets are met
- A focus on simple building forms with rational structural alignment and simple spans
- Use of repeated building elements and layouts
- Flexibility in options for external cladding materials, with interior finishes and fitouts open to being tailored to the individual brief and specific market for the development
- Future proofing buildings for ageing in place, increased universal design, and improved energy and thermal performance

Construction cost guidance is available for each design and more information can be found in Appendix 7 of this document here: https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0031/668047/BFHAG_V3-Part-3.pdf

What is the new streamlined planning process?

If adapted correctly, planning approval may be less than half the usual timeframe. While the planning process may be shorter, the plans will pass through rigorous design checks by DTP, OVGA and council to ensure the design integrity of each adaptation proposal is upheld.

- Determine site suitability: before purchasing the Designs, you will need to determine if your site is eligible.
- **Phase 1: Project initiation:** Once a design has been selected and purchased, you must attend a 'design direction review meeting' with DTP including OVGA (council will also be invited) to receive initial guidance on the direction of your adaptation.
- **Phase 2: Referrals (approximately 21 days):** DTP will assess the completeness of the referral and the adaptation, then seek initial input from OVGA and council. Consolidated comments will be provided. A number of meetings with DTP and OVGA (council will also be invited) will be offered to clarify and resolve any design issues. Referrals to other statutory authorities may also be required and should be undertaken prior to DTP. More information can be found in the [Future Homes Referral Requirements](#).
- **Phase 3: Application lodgement (anticipated between 18-21 days):** Submit a full package of the adapted design including referral authority comments to council. Council will undertake usual planning application checks and formal notification to neighbours.
- **Phase 4: Decision (anticipated between 14-21 days):** Council officers will undertake an assessment against the Future Homes provision at 53.24, any applicable overlays and consider any submissions received. A permit may then be issued under delegation.



Timeframes provided are indicative. Sites affected by Overlays may increase timing.

How does Future Homes interact with Overlays?

Future Homes is now eligible on sites that are covered by overlays (excluding Heritage Overlay and Neighbourhood Character Overlay). This means that if your site is covered by an overlay, the Future Homes team will work with you upfront to ensure your application responds to and meets the requirements of that overlay. If a site eligible for Future Homes is covered by an overlay that restricts a crucial element of the Future Homes design, we will advise you upfront that a Future Homes design will not be possible on that site.

If your Future Homes site is affected by an overlay, you will need to be aware of the following:

- **Project initiation:** The Future Homes team will work with you to ensure the design is adapted to meet the requirements of the applicable overlay. Council's input will also be requested.
- **Referrals:** The process doesn't differ, DTP will consider how the adaptation responds to the relevant overlay.
- **Application Lodgement:** Council will be assessing your application against the Future Homes provision and any applicable overlays. This means that Council will follow their normal planning process when assessing the application against the requirements of the overlay. So, third party appeal rights are applicable.
- **Decision:** Council will undertake a formal assessment against the Future Homes provision and any applicable overlays. The decision based on the overlay component may be delegated, but councillors will have the ability to call up the decision. Third party appeal rights will apply to a decision made against any applicable overlays.

A Future Homes site that is affected by an overlay could increase the indicative timeframes, however the Future Homes approval process has been front loaded, to ensure any issues are worked through early and to create more certainty in the planning process.

Why are there no third-party appeal rights?

A faster planning process does not mean a poorer outcome or that the community doesn't have a say. The views of the community are important and will continued to be considered as part of the usual planning notification process through council.

However, unlike a regular planning application, there will be no third-party appeal rights. To ensure applicants build high quality Future Homes there

needs to be a balance to offset the cost of delivering high quality homes, with a faster planning outcome. There will be multiple checks throughout the referral process, with both DTP and the OVGGA involved before council considers the application to ensure the quality commitment is upheld. Future Homes is committed to delivering better homes for occupants, better developments for those living next door and better buildings for the environment.

If your site is affected by an overlay, third party appeal rights are possible in relation to the overlay. A decision by council can be appealed by an objector to the Victoria Civil and Administrative Tribunal in relation to the applicable overlay.

How much are the designs?

The Future Homes Designs can currently be purchased for \$15,000 excluding GST. They can only be purchased if they will be used for a planning permit application for a site within a council and meets the eligibility criteria. By purchasing the designs, you will gain access to the streamlined planning process including direct guidance from DTP and OVGGA.

To incentivise early adopters of the project, the Victorian Government is heavily subsidising the cost of the plans and as such, the designs will currently cost 1% of the usual price.

To access the streamlined planning process, a planning application will have to be lodged within 12 months of purchasing the designs, unless an extension is sought from DTP.

What other fees are there?

Like any other planning permit application, an application fee will be payable to council at the time of lodgement. Please contact the relevant council to determine the application fee.

A Metropolitan Planning Levy also applies to applications for a planning permit to develop land in metropolitan Melbourne where the estimated cost of the development is more than \$1 million. For more details see: <https://www.sro.vic.gov.au/metropolitan-planning-levy>

Like any other planning permit application, consultant costs associated with adapting the designs as well as any supporting technical reports will also be incurred.

What are the 13 mandatory standards?

Future Homes proposals are assessed against 13 mandatory standards that go beyond typical planning, building and apartment proposals including:

- **Gardens:** Generous landscaped areas and canopy trees and room for deep soil planting
- **Communal open space:** Generous, accessible and a nice space for residents to foster a sense of community
- **Solar access to communal open space:** communal open space that is not significantly overshadowed and receives sunlight
- **Sustainable:** Homes that lead the State and go above and beyond what is currently industry best practice for environmentally sustainable design*
- **Adaptable:** Homes that are adaptable over-time, to change with a household's needs*
- **Accessible:** Homes that are accessible, with wider entries, corridors, doors and functional bathrooms that allow space to move*
- **Functional rooms:** Rooms that are generous and efficient in size with layouts that work
- **Room depths:** Well-proportioned rooms that have good access to daylight
- **Light filled bedrooms:** Bedrooms that all have good access to daylight
- **Ventilated:** Homes that are well ventilated and have through breezes*
- **Storage:** Adequate and convenient storage provided for all homes
- **Car parking:** At least 1 space per dwelling
- **Bicycle parking:** At least 1 space per dwelling, plus additional spaces for visitors *

* Indicates above current standards.

In addition to these mandatory requirements, DTP will also undertake a thorough assessment of all proposals against all of the requirements under Part 1 of the *Building Future Homes - Adaptation Guide*.

Why mandatory standards?

When designing a three-storey apartment building, consideration must be given to a range of standards and requirements in the Victoria Planning Provisions and in particular, Clause 55.07 – Apartment Developments. Many of these standards are discretionary, and an application may seek to vary these. To ensure Future Homes are exemplary, 13 of these requirements have been made mandatory and cannot be varied, and in some cases, go beyond what is required under planning and building requirements.

Will neighbours be notified about a Future Homes application?

Yes, just like any other planning application for apartments, adjoining neighbours will receive notification from council about a proposed Future Homes application that may be next door to you.

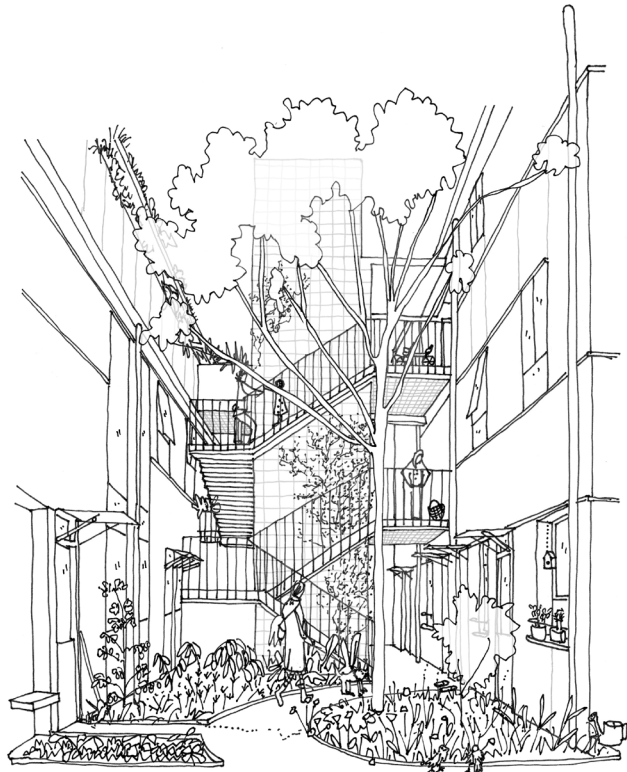
As per usual planning processes, you may choose to write in support of, provide suggestions on

refinements or object to the proposal.

What if changes are required once a planning permit is issued?

Once a planning permit is issued there may be some amendments required. The following may apply:

- **Condition one plans:** may be required for council to endorse the plans
- **Secondary consent:** to modify minor details on the plans, council will determine the application
- **Amendment to the permit:** as a determining referral authority DTP will be required to review the request. This will be done upfront, prior to lodgement of the amendment with council.



What is the *Building Future Homes: Adaptation Guide*?

The *Adaptation Guide* will assist with the process of adapting a design to suit a relevant site, context or brief.

The *Adaptation Guide* contains three parts:

- **Part 1** – mandatory controls and general requirements taken from the VPP and in some instances, expanded upon
- **Part 2** – specific instructions on how to adapt each of the designs. This section was prepared in conjunction with the project architects
- **Part 3** – technical requirements and specifications for all adaptations

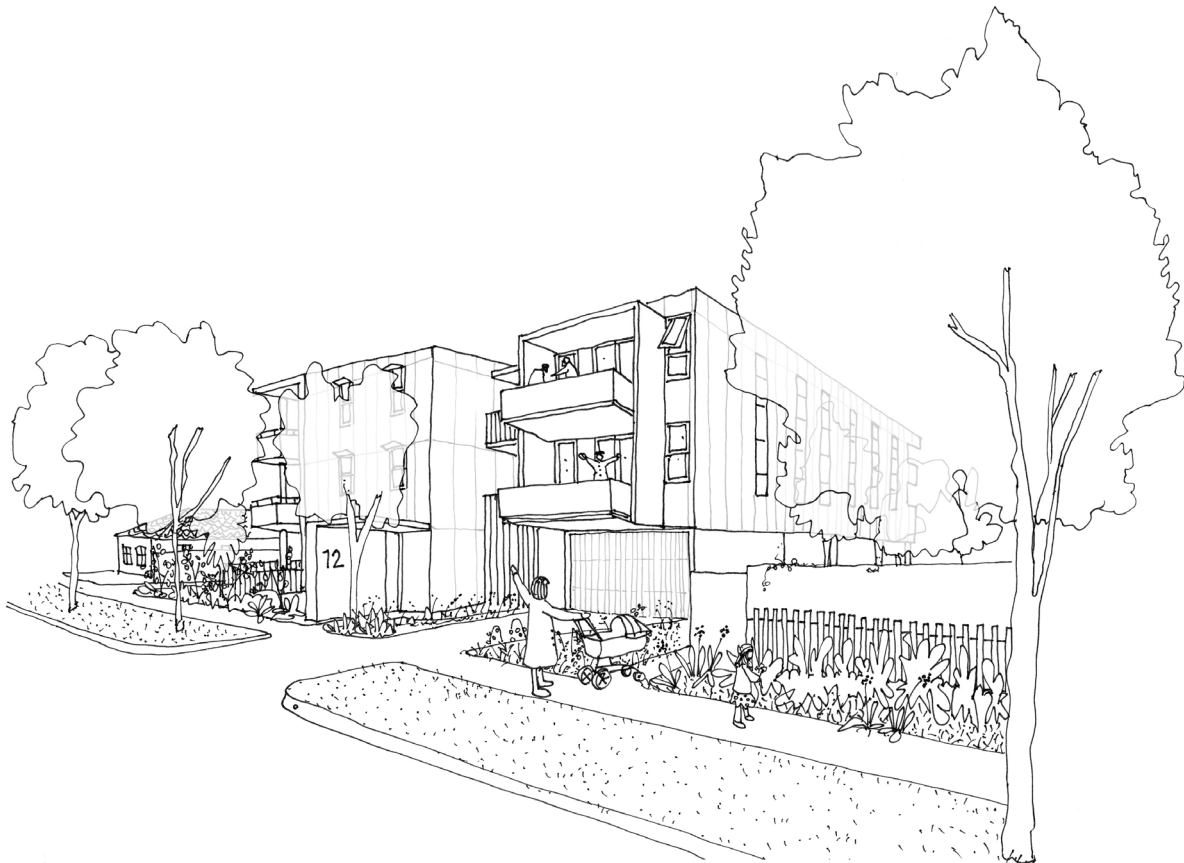
The *Adaptation Guide* will be used by:

- Your designer and consultant team to adapt your purchased Future Homes design to suit your site and requirements
- DTP, OVGA and council to provide advice to you and to assess a proposal once submitted
- Anyone who would like to gain a better understand of the Designs, process, and purpose.

What is gentle density?

Gentle density is modest infill development making the most of existing urban land. It promotes lot consolidation and more efficient use of land in areas well connected to public transport and other services.

Gentle density is something that can already occur in the General Residential Zone, however, Future Homes will be providing highly resolved, considered and high-quality architecturally designed responses to our urban areas where modest increases in density are encouraged.



Abbreviations

- **Adaptation Guide** – *Building Future Homes: Adaptation Guide*
- **BADS** – Better Apartment Design Standards
- **DTP** – Department of Transport and Planning
- **NatHERS** – Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme
- **OVGA** – Office of the Victorian Government Architect
- **STORM** – Stormwater Treatment Objective – Relative Measure
- **The Act** – *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- **The Designs** – Future Homes Exemplar Designs
- **VCAT** – Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
- **VPP** – the Victoria Planning Provisions

Accessibility

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2023

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Printed by the Department of Transport and Planning, Melbourne
ISBN 978-1-76105-942-1 (Print)
ISBN 978-1-76105-943-8 (pdf/online/MS word)

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