



A Guide To Medium Density Housing

Introduction

Waitakere City's population is estimated to grow from 170,700 in 2000 to 247,400 in 2021. Auckland's Regional Growth Strategy expects Waitakere City's population to double by 2050. Therefore more housing for the City's growing population is essential. Managing the type and location of this housing is a major responsibility for Waitakere City Council.

The Operative District Plan sets out directions and opportunities to help guide the location of future housing and acknowledge the changing composition of our community. Current trends indicate fewer people living in stand alone houses, with more older people and smaller families as a proportion of the population. It is clear that changing work patterns, family structures and lifestyles are resulting in demands for new ways of living. Instead of the "quarter acre property", many people are now seeking smaller sections and low maintenance homes close to shops, transport, entertainment and leisure facilities.

The Council is also actively committed to concentrating new housing in existing urban centres. This means stopping the City from sprawling into rural and bush areas, because of the adverse effects this generates for those environments and local communities. The Council has therefore adopted a development strategy that aims to limit settlement outside the existing urban area. One option provided by the Council to meet these changing needs and to protect the natural environment is to allow for what is known as "medium density housing".

What Is Medium Density Housing?

Medium density housing is defined as buildings for residential purposes up to 11 metres or three stories in height. The common form is terrace housing, which is usually two storeys high. Medium density provisions apply to comprehensive developments located on Living Environment sites of no less than 2000 square metres (half an acre), and within walking distance of town centres and transport nodes (such as railway stations).

There is no upper limit to the size of sites where medium density housing can be built. There is also no set minimum size for each house within a medium density housing development. (However, note the Operative District Plan also makes provision for the Council to consider Medium Density Housing on sites less than 2000 square metres if you have affected parties' consent, or through a publicly notified process). Medium Density Housing may be located further away from town centres and transport nodes, and will be assessed as a discretionary activity.

Other examples of medium density housing include apartment or townhouse style homes generally up to three storeys. The key concern for the Council is that these developments fit into the character of their surroundings whether it is the local neighbourhood, existing town centres such as Henderson, Glen Eden, New Lynn, Swanson and Ranui, or sites near main roads, railway stations and public transport routes.

Medium Density Housing may appeal to older adults, single people or couples who want to:

- Live in a small home on a low-maintenance property;
- Live in safe surroundings near to neighbours;
- Live where open space and surveillance of access and road ways is a key part of the design; and/or
- Be close to work, shops, community centres, public transport facilities, cafes and cinemas. Prime locations also create opportunities for people to walk and cycle rather than drive long distances.

Medium Density Housing Resource Consents

A resource consent application has to be made to the Council for all medium density housing developments. These are processed in two separate categories, depending on where the development is located. The Council may approve or decline an application for a limited discretionary or discretionary activity.

While the Operative District Plan is partially operative, the Transitional Plan provisions may change the activity category.

1. Limited Discretionary Activities

Medium density housing in the areas listed below will usually be processed as limited discretionary activities. This allows the application to proceed on a non-notified basis and without neighbours consents and for Council to place conditions on consent as specified in the District Plan. These areas are:

- On a site over 2000 square metres identified as Living Environment on Council Maps within 700 metres of the centre of Glen Eden and Westgate Community Environments;
- On a site identified as Living Environment on Council Maps within one kilometre of the centre of Henderson and New Lynn Community Environments;
- On a site identified as Living Environment on Council Maps within 500 metres of a train station;
- Within the Harbour View Living Environment on the Te Atatu Peninsula;
- On property that fronts onto strategic or arterial roads in the City, (such as Great North, Lincoln, Te Atatu (south of the motorway) Swanson, Godley or Hobsonville Roads).

2. Discretionary Activities

All other applications for medium density housing that fall outside the above criteria will usually be processed as a discretionary activity. This is a more stringent type of resource consent that may be publicly notified and allows the Council to specify any conditions it considers appropriate).

The Council encourages people to discuss their medium density housing proposal with Council's Resource Planners at pre application meetings. These discussions will clarify the information Council needs to process the resource consent application, and provide advice on how to integrate the development with the existing neighbourhood. There is a cost associated with these meetings. However, savings are made as a result of having such meetings, especially as reworking plans at later stages can cause both time delays and increase costs.

Key city centres - New Lynn, Glen Eden and Henderson -each have a concept plan. These have been developed with the local community, and reflect the District Plan provisions. The Council has project managers who oversee the implementation of these plans, and they join with the Resource Planners and other Council representatives to discuss preliminary medium density housing proposals.

Design Requirements

As Medium Density Housing developments allow more people to live close together, good design is extremely important. To ensure consistently good design, the Council has compiled a comprehensive list of design criteria by which all medium density housing development is evaluated. These criteria include:

- That the development fits in with the existing features of the neighbourhood, such as the character of the street and nearby buildings, the existing landscape and fencing;
- That the overall design takes into account existing trees, views to and from the site, surveillance of the access and road ways from a living area, the position of roads and footpaths, the location of local parks and shops, prevailing winds, earthworks and retaining walls, slope of the site and position of site boundaries
- That the location and height of the buildings allow reasonable daylight and sunlight into dwelling units, and that the buildings will not significantly affect neighbours privacy or sunlight;
- That buildings, car parking and driveways are designed to reduce unwanted noise;
- That each dwelling unit has private outdoor space which has an appropriate area and levels of outlook and sunlight;
- That any communal open space is accessible and well maintained;
- That each dwelling has a separate identity and that doors are secure and easily accessible for people with disabilities;
- That facilities like letterboxes and rubbish collection areas are designed and located to be convenient for residents and complement the overall design of the development; and
- That landscape treatment ensures a quality living environment and helps to integrate it into the surrounding neighbourhood.

This brochure is only a guide to Medium Density Housing. Further information can be found in the Policy, Living Environment Rules, Medium Density Housing Criteria (includes illustrations), and Map Sections of the Operative District Plan. A brochure on applying for a resource consent for medium density housing is also available.

The Council has also produced "The Developers' Design Guide for Residential Subdivision and Medium Density Housing", which further outlines design options. If you have any queries, or require further information please ask the Civic Centre Counter Staff or telephone the Council Call Centre on (09) 839 0400.