



**Wellbeing  
Waikato**  
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.  
Knowledge.  
Storytelling.

2026

# Pattern Housing Book

Summary



## Purpose Statement:

This mahi, led by the Waikato Wellbeing Project, aims to create more affordable housing in the Waikato.

## Prepared for:



## Prepared by:



# Identifying the Market Gap

## Building Consents: Cost, Time and Risk

Obtaining a building consent for a home in New Zealand takes time for design, consent preparation, and approval. Legislatively, the consent assessment process with a Building Control Authority is 20 working days, however, the whole building consent process generally takes several months including preparation, assessment, and responding to requests for information (RFIs). In the last 12 months ending June 2025, Building Control Authority (BCA) data from MBIE shows that across New Zealand:

- 143,022 building consent applications were processed nationally.
- The median processing time for all residential consents was 13 working days, excluding any RFI hold period.
- The greater the building complexity category for residential applications, the longer the processing times.
- Despite having a MultiProof process for repeatable designs, only 101 MultiProof consents (including commercial, education and other consent categories) were processed in that 12-month period.

The building consent process itself adds time, cost, and risk to the home builder.

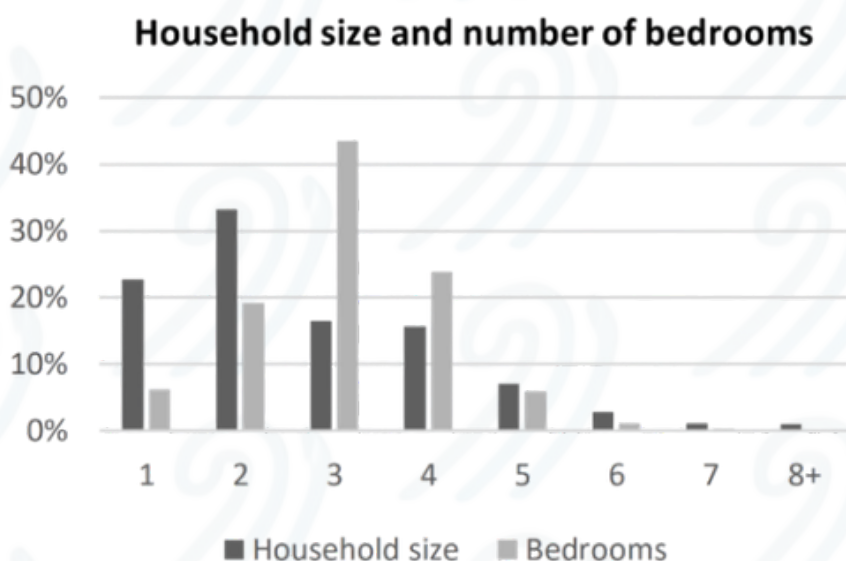
## Size of Dwellings

The median size of new dwellings consented in New Zealand peaked around 2010 at 200m<sup>2</sup>. More recent data indicates that the median new dwelling consented across New Zealand is closer to 150m<sup>2</sup>.

The size of a dwelling is one, but a significant, contributing factor to the end price of housing. Typically, the smaller the home, the lower the cost.

## Housing Choice

There is a misalignment between household size in New Zealand, and the number of bedrooms in the housing stock. The image below from MBIE illustrates this misalignment. Demographic projections are that we will have greater demand for single and two-bedroom homes. Yet the private sector market is predominantly delivering 3+ bedroom homes.



## **Minor Dwelling (Granny Flat) Exemption in 2026**

The Building and Construction (Small Stand-alone Dwellings) Amendment Act 2025 has passed, meaning that from early 2026, a building consent exemption will be in place for small standalone minor dwellings up to 70m<sup>2</sup> in size. The focus is on reducing the regulatory burden of small minor dwellings and increase housing supply and housing options across New Zealand.

There are a range of conditions to meet the exemption requirements, which protect risk and maintain simplicity such as all dwellings must be single level, standalone, new, and be built by licensed professionals.

## **Planning Rules: MDRS and Intensification Rules**

The NPS-UD 2020 and Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021 brought about increased flexibility in planning rules, for the development of housing on residential zoned land. The central government led planning reform also brought about greater consistency of planning rules. In particular, the Tier 1 Councils of Hamilton City Council (PC12), Waikato District Council (Variation 3) and Waipā District Council (PC26) have all implemented residential intensification plan changes that generally allow:

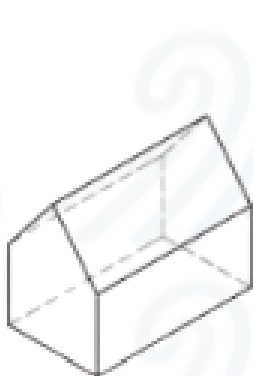
- Three dwellings per site, up to three storeys
- 11m maximum height
- Increased density provisions supporting more efficient use of land
- Height in relation to boundary rules are now 4m and 60 degrees
- Setbacks generally reduced to 1m rear yard, 1m side yard, and 1.5m front yard
- 50% building site coverage

Coupled with other changes to planning rules such as the removal of on-site car parking minimums, has the potential to bring about the most significant change in market response to the types of residential housing development in generations.

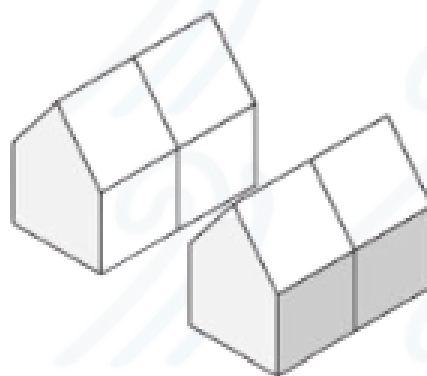
## The Market Gap

The convergence of housing affordability challenges, demographic changes, significant planning reform, and consistency alignment of rules across multiple high growth Councils, and building consent exemptions for minor dwellings leaves a clear market gap for the following:

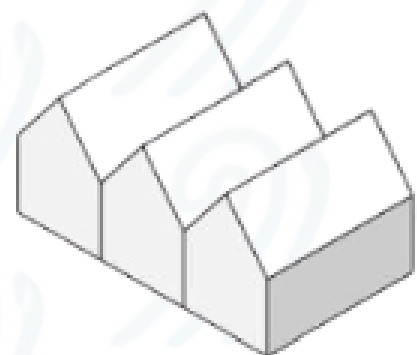
1. A process for residential dwelling building consents that is Pre-approved / MultiProof / Exempt / Streamlined
2. Designs that comply with the MDRS intensification rules, for widest applicability to sites and market take up
3. A suite of design options that are available to anyone (free or for a small charge) to reduce design costs, reduce consenting costs, reduce risk and improve speed to market
4. Designs that cover:
  - a. Small standalone homes (under 100m<sup>2</sup>)
  - b. Duplex or attached homes (under 100m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling)
  - c. Triplex (3 homes) designs (under 100m<sup>2</sup> per dwelling)
5. Once proven for lower risk dwelling types, could be expanded into a wider breadth of typologies



**INDIVIDUAL HOUSE**



**ATTACHED HOUSES**



**ROW HOUSES**

The successful roll out of this concept has occurred in New South Wales, Australia. The core objective of the NSW Housing Pattern Book is to promote greater housing diversity and choice across the state. While a second tranche of designs have been released covering medium to high density homes, the NSW Housing Pattern Book initially focussed on low rise, including the following typologies.

# Regulatory Options

There are a range of regulatory options including:

1. Pattern Book designs be exempted from requiring building consent under Schedule 1 of the Building Act 2004.
2. Pattern Book designs be approved under the national MultiProof design process.
3. Pattern Book designs be fast tracked by all local authorities. This may be, for instance, through agreement across Waikato local authorities that the Pattern Book designs meet the requirements for a Discretionary Exemption.



**Semis 01**  
Anthony Gill Architects

🏠 2 📄 3-4 📏 450 m<sup>2</sup>  
→



**Semis 02**  
Sibling Architecture

🏠 2 📄 2-4 📏 450 m<sup>2</sup>  
→



**Row Homes 01**  
SAHA

🏠 4 📄 2-3 📏 500 m<sup>2</sup>  
→



**Manor Homes 01**  
Studio Johnston

🏠 4 📄 1-3 📏 625 m<sup>2</sup>  
→

Examples of some Pattern Housing designs in New South Wales

# Central Government Direction

Engagement with HUD has revealed that the Housing Minister is interested in pre-approved pattern housing. If it were to be implemented, the timing will follow the **RMA** reform, which will introduce standardised rules and zoning across the country. The intention is that pattern housing designs will be developed once these changes are in place.

HUD is currently at the early stages of understanding how pattern housing could work, and initial estimates from HUD suggest implementation may not be possible until 2029 and potentially later. This presents an opportunity for Waikato to move ahead, lead the way, and influence the quality and outcomes of the approach. Waikato also has the potential to lead a regional model tailored specifically to the needs and character of its communities, demonstrating what successful implementation could look like in practice.

## A Waikato Led Pattern Book

The Waikato needs more affordable homes and a wider range of housing types. There is an opportunity for the region to foreshadow upcoming government changes and lead the way showing how collaborative, well-considered design can support more affordable and resilient housing outcomes. And do it in a way that is distinctly Waikato and owned by the region.

By working together across councils, iwi, architects, and industry, the region can set the direction rather than react to it, demonstrating what practical, efficient, and genuinely affordable housing delivery can look like in practice.

The Waikato Pattern Housing Book could include:

- A library of pre-approved housing plans for standalone homes, townhouses, duplexes, walk-ups, and terrace homes
- Designs that reflect local character, climate, and lifestyle
- A clear documentation approach that helps streamline consenting
- Options that support sustainability and long-term affordability
- Designs sized for real household incomes in the Waikato
- A digital library that can be used by Councils, developers, CHPs, and community groups.

The Waikato Pattern Housing Book has the potential to create homes that work for people and communities and make it easier, faster and less costly for everyone involved to deliver them.

# Design Once. Build Many.

Right now, delivering smaller, more affordable homes is harder than it needs to be. Every development often starts from scratch, new designs, new drawings, new engineering, and a fresh round of consenting and interpretation. This adds cost, time and uncertainty. It means that many homeowners or smaller developers give up because it is too complex and technical.

The Waikato Pattern Housing Book tackles this by creating simple and repeatable plan sets that can be implemented on a wide range of sites. It provides confidence for councils, predictability for developers and builders, and better options for households.

This work responds to challenges raised across the region:

- **Cost barriers:** Smaller homes still require the same design and consenting effort as larger ones. Pattern plans reduce duplication.
- **Inconsistent processes:** Different interpretations across Councils slow down delivery. A shared resource promotes clearer, more consistent pathways.
- **Demand for smaller homes:** Many households are open to living smaller, but the market simply doesn't provide enough choice.
- **Public confidence in quality:** Seeing high-quality example designs helps shift perceptions and normalises well-designed, compact homes.
- **Shared benefits:** Councils, developers, iwi, group builders, and CHPs all benefit from reduced cost, reduced risk, and faster delivery.
- **The Book creates a practical shift:** It helps the region deliver smaller, more affordable homes without sacrificing quality or character.



# Design Partners & Delivery Leaders

The book relies on collaboration. No single organisation can deliver this alone.

## Programme Lead

- Coordination and project leadership.

## Design and Iwi Partners

- Architectural teams and engineering and compliance specialists.
- Sustainability experts.
- Cultural design partners and guidance on cultural identity and place-based design.

## Council and Regulatory Partners

- Waikato Councils supporting design review, risk assessment, and consenting alignment. This includes Council planners, building officials, and urban designers.

## Development Sector Partners

- Developers, CHPs, builders, and financiers provide practical insight into cost, constructability, demand, and feasibility.

## Governance

- Programme Steering Group (Project Lead, Councils, Funder).
- Technical review panel to ensure designs are sound, buildable, and affordable.



### Energy efficient

Patterns are light-filled, cross-ventilated and all-electric to reduce energy bills and improve thermal comfort.



### Flexible layouts

Patterns are customisable to suit many lifestyles and can be adapted to sites and climates across NSW.



### Affordable construction

Patterns are compact and cost-effective, using standard construction systems that are familiar to builders.



### Faster to deliver

Patterns are suitable for preparing a fast-tracked planning application to help realise a project quickly.



### For everyone in any place

Patterns provide diverse housing for more households and fit comfortably into the neighbourhood.



### Easy to live in

Patterns are well-designed with practical layouts that connect to the outdoors and are comfortable and healthy to live in.

Benefits of Pattern Housing designs presented in New South Wales

# The Path to Adoption

## (Starter Project Plan)

### 1. Co-Design a Waikato Approach

- Test concept with local authorities across the Waikato
- Secure funding for the development of a Waikato residential Pattern Book
- Review the NSW Pattern Book and other examples to inform structure, quality expectations, and how best to bring the Waikato version to life
- Form a governance structure – including funders, regulatory bodies (likely local government).
- Workshop with local Architects and Architectural Designers on interest to participate, covering intellectual property, funding, timeline, resources.

### 2. Start with the regulatory response

- Workshop with local authorities across the Waikato to set the expectations and conditions by which they will either accept no consent requirements or fast-tracked consenting for Pattern Book housing
- Agree aligned regulatory approach
- Agree alignment of expectations and support before forging ahead with the balance of actions.

### 3. Choose the right housing types

- Select typologies that reflect the region's needs and incomes, including smaller standalone homes, duplexes, terrace homes, and townhouses
- Ensure the typologies respond to the core project origins and are able to deliver more efficient, compact housing, faster

### 4. Set the design principles

- Agree what good looks like in terms of liveability, sunlight, privacy, sustainability, cultural narrative, and affordability.

## **5. Create and robustly test designs**

- All house designs will be developed with advice from a team of technical experts. Commission design teams to prepare and test plans. This will cover:
  - Design look and feel
  - Building performance and specification
  - District plan and planning alignment
  - Engineering and feasibility checks
  - Council development standards
  - Structural design
  - Fire design
  - Building services provisions
  - Parking and traffic
  - Waste
  - Risk assessment
  - Cost.

## **6. Work with councils to streamline approvals**

- Co-design a consistent consenting approach so that pattern plans can genuinely reduce time, cost, and uncertainty.

## **7. Test with industry and market**

- Engage developers, builders, CHPs, and community groups early to ensure designs are practical and cost effective
- Test buildability
- Test with target market purchaser segments.

## **8. Build the digital library**

- Create an accessible repository where Councils, developers, CHPs, and the community can easily navigate the Book.

## **9. Launch and embed across the region**

- Provide training, roadshows, and support to help councils and industry adopt and use the Book effectively.



**Wellbeing  
Waikato**  
TOIORA O WAIKATO

Research.  
Knowledge.  
Storytelling.