

UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Factors that increase the risk of community resistance to your project

Research in Australia and overseas has shown that there are common characteristics of communities more likely to 'resist' affordable housing proposals.

Proponents should identify the local community's 'resistance risk profile' as a key step in strategic site selection, and to better understand the local area prior to engaging with neighbours and the community about a proposal.

Areas with a higher than average 'resistance risk profile' tend to be:

- **older,**
- **wealthier,**
- inhabited largely by **owner occupiers,**
- predominantly **low density housing environment,**
- more **socially homogenous,**
- have a **changing housing mix** moving from predominately low rise detached dwellings to more multi-storey townhouses, flats and units; and
- especially in areas that are **experiencing rapidly increasing land and property values.**

Unfortunately, community resistance to affordable housing projects is often caught up in general community resistance to **increasing density.**

A local area's 'resistance risk profile' should not necessarily rule out certain areas for affordable housing proposals, but it should be considered alongside other attributes about a site in order for a proponent to determine whether the location is desirable for the type of project they want to create. It also makes good design that seeks, as far as possible, to integrate with the existing urban fabric important.

Main reasons for resistance to affordable housing developments

For this project CHIA Vic reviewed 31 Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) cases from 2007 to 2020 for rooming house and affordable housing proposals. Most of these cases included submissions in opposition to the proposal.

The 31 VCAT cases reviewed included proposals for:

- Rooming houses (8 cases, 26%)
- Proposals entirely comprised of affordable housing (Community Housing or Public Housing developments) (6 cases, 19%)
- Proposals that include some affordable housing or contributed to increasing housing diversity in an area (23 cases, 74%):
 - private developments with an expressed affordable housing component (11 cases, 35%);

- student accommodation with an affordable housing component (1 case, 3%);
- caravan park (1 case, 3%); or
- private development that contributes to affordable housing by increasing housing diversity without an expressed component of affordable housing dwellings (4 cases, 13%).

In terms of outcomes, of these 31 VCAT cases:

- 87% (27 cases) were **approved**
 - All rooming house, Community Housing and Public Housing applications were **approved**
 - All but one proposal with an expressed affordable housing component were **approved**, but most found that Council had no power to impose 10-15% affordable housing inclusion, including post-2018 amendments ('voluntary')
- 13% (4 cases) were **not permitted**

Of the 31 VCAT cases reviewed, grounds for initial refusal by Councils related to:

- 71% Planning standards/compliance (e.g. land use suitability, bulk & scale, setbacks)
- 65% Amenity (e.g. overlooking, privacy, solar access, internal amenity for future residents)
- 48% Parking and traffic (e.g. suitable provision, impact on neighbourhood parking)
- 45% Neighbourhood character
- 23% Social impacts (e.g. anti-social behaviour of future residents, integration of affordable housing, section 173)



To learn more about character, refer to our fact sheet [About 'Character'](#)

How to reduce the risk of opposition to an affordable housing development

Whilst some factors which increase the risk of opposition to an affordable housing development are beyond your control (for example demographics of the local community), there are some things you can do to reduce the risk.

Making sure you address substantive issues related to physical and amenity and character will make it more difficult for people opposed to the development to gain traction on more subjective grounds, for example 'who' will live in the new development and 'what' their behaviours will be like.

It is also important to **anticipate and proactively engage existing residents, particularly those immediately surrounding the proposed development, and attempt to mitigate potential concerns around design, amenity and character to the greatest extent possible.**



To learn more about how to reduce the risk of opposition to your affordable housing development, refer to our factsheet [Key Factors in Building Support](#).