

# **Christchurch City Council – Housing Policy**

## **Vision**

The Policy's vision is that all people in Christchurch have access to housing that is secure, safe, affordable, warm and dry.

We want a city where anyone who wants to be housed can be. As a basic human right, we recognise that good, adequate housing is the building block of individual wellbeing and strong communities, ensuring that all our citizens can be all that they wish to be.

The Housing Policy will guide the Council's decisions and support collaborative action across the continuum of social, affordable and market housing to achieve the Policy's vision.

## **Context**

Adequate housing, i.e. housing that is affordable, secure, well located, habitable and accessible, underpins good health, economic, environmental and social outcomes. Housing is a vital part of our community infrastructure. This means that each of the public, private and community sectors has a valid, active and valuable part to play in a range of roles, working together to address the housing challenges facing Christchurch.

The Canterbury earthquakes have had a large impact on the demographic changes such as an ageing population, socio-economic challenges and tenure shifts to housing that Christchurch was already experiencing. For example, the shortfall of both affordable rental and affordable owner-occupied housing has been brought sharply into focus since the earthquakes. There will need to be a range of short and long term demand and supply responses that arise in these changing circumstances.

Housing access and housing inequality are big challenges for Christchurch as they lead to social and economic inequality, with long term impacts on families and children in particular. Groups expected to continue to be most under housing affordability pressure include retired, one person, and single parent households. Once adequately housed, further effort may be needed to ensure households can maintain their long term security as their circumstances change over time.

## **Housing Continuum**

A housing continuum (see Figure One) can be used to identify where there are housing challenges and barriers. This should then lead on to what options, resources and agencies are needed to address them that gets the best social and economic results.

Part of this process will be looking at what Council's role is in relation to other organisations or sectors. As a result there should be a number of different actions developed and roles carried out. These range from direct provision and support in emergency and social housing areas, working with others to develop affordable housing, through to ensuring the efficient

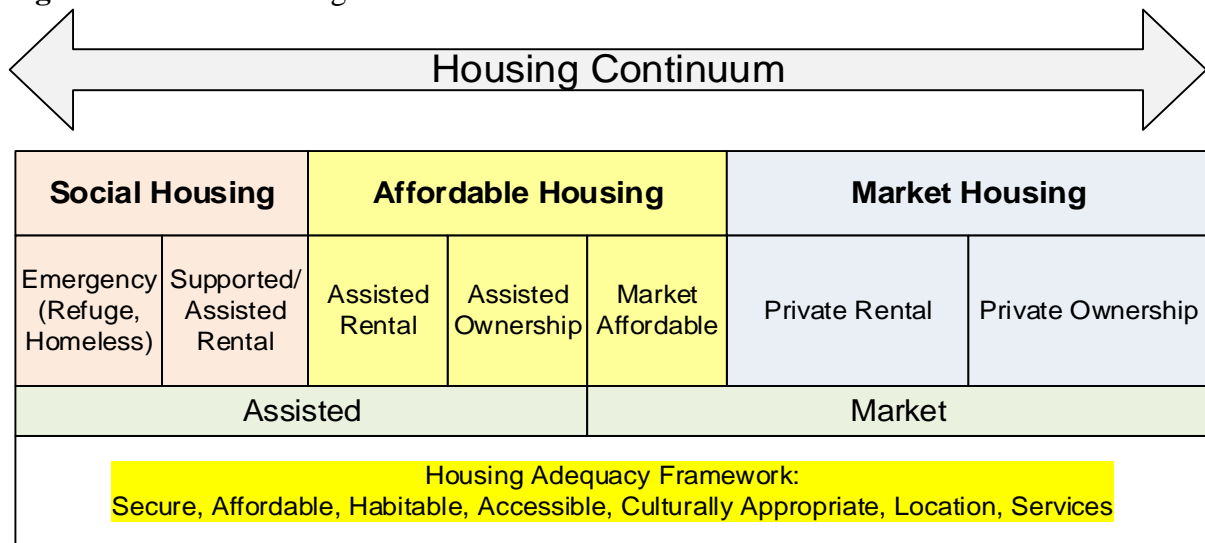
encouraging and enabling of market housing supply, whilst achieving a mix of housing tenures, sizes and typologies.

Pressure points on parts of the housing continuum can result from insecure and unaffordable housing along with other drivers such as less stable employment and income patterns. Stakeholder collaboration and agreement on housing actions should lead to a more joined up approach to the planning, funding and delivery of a more sustainable mix of housing.

Affordable, quality housing is widely recognised as a critical area to address. Within the housing continuum it can be noted that affordable rental housing is often a vital step for those readying themselves for purchasing a house, as well as a necessary space on the continuum for those unable or unwilling to do so. However, along with difficulties accessing affordable rental housing Christchurch’s home ownership rates have fallen, with younger families experiencing the largest declines in home ownership rates. These trends have long term implications for the health, security and well-being of the City if households continue to struggle to obtain and remain in affordable housing, thereby providing one area of focus.

The availability of all forms of housing is crucial for people to have both housing options and pathways available to them along the housing continuum throughout their lives. Engaging and working with the community, providers and developers, a sound policy framework, leadership commitment, and a critical awareness of its actions will be needed by the Council to achieve its housing goals.

**Figure One:** The Housing Continuum



## Scope

Social housing, including emergency housing such as for the homeless and others in such need, can be defined as not-for-profit housing programmes that are supported and/or delivered by central or local government, or community housing providers, to help low income households and a range of other disadvantaged groups to access appropriate, secure and affordable housing. This can be of a supported nature such as addressing emergency housing issues, or of a more general assisted nature where low incomes in relation to housing costs may be the main issue.

Affordable housing can be defined in terms of low to middle income households (i.e. those households earning up to 120% of median household income) spending no more than 30% of their gross income on rent or mortgage costs. For those on middle incomes, this can be further defined in tenure terms of a median household income being sufficient to affordably purchase a lower quartile priced house (which stood at \$383,000 in mid-2016, meaning that it is borderline affordable to purchase on such an income of about \$70,000 within a low interest environment, assuming that standard deposit and bank lending criteria can be met).

Market housing is private housing bought, sold or rented under prevailing open market conditions, largely without any direct assistance. In any given area there may be a mixture of housing types, as well as housing tenure groups within them across a range of household incomes. In mid-2016, the median house price was \$460,000, with the median rent for a three bedroom home being \$420 per week.

Wider affordability and community considerations are the housing-related energy and transport costs, access to services and amenities, and the quality and performance of both new and existing houses. This means that localised collaborative planning and provision approaches taking into account a range of drivers are needed when developing a set of options to address affordable housing issues in a socially sustainable way.

## Principles

1. **A human right** - to adequate housing that is secure, affordable, habitable, accessible, well located, and culturally appropriate.
2. **Security of tenure** - is a foundation to building strong communities.
3. **Collaboration** - among all sectors of society is required to address long term social and economic housing challenges facing Christchurch.
4. **Quality of life** - housing outcomes are linked to social, cultural, economic, environmental, and health outcomes.
5. **Quality of housing** - well-designed, maintained and located housing is critical to supporting the social, economic and environmental recovery and resiliency of Christchurch.

## Goals

1. **Demand Analysis** - Take a long term, systematic demand driven housing needs analysis to identifying housing trends so as to develop plans and targets for social, affordable and market housing provision.
2. **Building Knowledge** - Improve, develop and share research, information and intelligence on housing issues to support the capacity and capability of those involved in innovative housing actions.

3. **Mixed Housing** - Promote and support mixed housing developments that utilise land and amenity value to include a range of housing types and tenures.
4. **Inclusive Housing** - Support quality housing developments that create inclusive communities and overcome exclusionary housing practices.
5. **A Range of Responses** - Develop a range of integrated regulatory and non-regulatory measures which reduce housing barriers and incentivise good quality social and affordable housing.
6. **Acute Needs** - Work with other agencies in the effective provision of housing and associated support services to address acute housing need and to eliminate homelessness.
7. **Retaining Affordable Housing** - Develop a range of creative, collaborative and innovative ways to ensure the co-ordinated long term promotion, provision and retention of both social and affordable housing.
8. **Housing Quality** - Improve the standards, regulations and monitoring on housing design and quality to achieve healthier housing for households irrespective of their income.

## **Planning and Legislative Linkages**

This Policy is strongly linked to the following:

Council Direction	Ageing Together Policy Community Outcomes on housing Resilience Strategy Social Housing Strategy Strengthening Communities Strategy Sustainability Policy Replacement District Plan
Strategic Direction	Christchurch Transport Strategic Plan Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy Land Use Recovery Plan Central Christchurch Recovery Plan
Legislative Direction	Canterbury Regional Policy Statement Local Government Act National Policy Statement on Urban Development Resource Management Act Regenerate Christchurch Act

## **Giving Effect to the Policy**

For this Policy to be given effect a number of actions will need to be identified and included in the Council's activity planning for it to achieve its goals (see Schedule One for an indicative list of key policy action areas). Areas of ongoing focus are likely to include homelessness, emergency housing, social housing supply, and both affordable rental and ownership housing.

Actioning the Policy will include the creative use of local government powers, mechanisms and resources to more effectively support, finance and provide housing for identified need. Utilising public land for a range of housing will likely be a key focus, which also helps to keep people in their communities.

Working with others across the public, private and community sectors and engaging with the community will be required to achieve common goals and related actions, along with developing a robust and shared evidence base. This includes both supporting and guidance to the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy given its strategic importance in the Greater Christchurch context. A collaborative approach will be needed to identify the right mix of actions to achieve the Policy's goals.

Housing provision and delivery models that include the means and mechanisms for households to move with relative ease within in a well-functioning housing continuum will need to be realised. This will need to feature applying local and overseas affordable housing models and practices, especially those that can give a range of long term housing outcomes along with an enduring community building emphasis. The Council will need to maintain its commitment to quality mixed housing developments.

The extent to which the Policy is implemented will depend on decisions made in the Council's Long Term Plan and Annual Plan processes, as balanced against other Council projects and services.

## **Review**

This Policy arises from long term housing issues as well as the housing related challenges in the recovery from the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury Earthquakes. It will be reviewed on a six yearly basis as the City evolves through and beyond the recovery period.

## **Definitions**

### **Housing Adequacy Framework**

**Adequacy** - Housing that takes account of security of tenure, affordability, habitability, availability and location of services, accessibility, and cultural considerations.

**Accessibility** - Housing that takes account the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

**Availability of services** – housing that provides access to essential services essential for health and security

**Habitability** - housing that has adequate space, protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health.

**Location** – housing that provides for physical safety, is away from locations that threaten the health of its occupants, and allows access to services

**Security of Tenure** - freedom from, and protection against, forced evictions, harassment and other threats.

### **Housing Continuum**

**Social Housing** - Not-for-profit housing programmes that are supported and/or delivered by central or local government, or community housing providers, to help low income households and other disadvantaged groups to access appropriate, secure and affordable housing (on the Housing Continuum, includes Emergency Housing and Supported Rental).

**Affordable Housing** - low to middle income households (i.e. those households earning up to 120% of median household income) spending no more than 30% of their gross income on rent or mortgage costs (on the Housing Continuum, includes Assisted Rental, Assisted Affordable Ownership, and some Market Affordable).

**Market Housing** - private housing bought and sold under prevailing open market conditions (on the Housing Continuum, includes some Market Affordable, Private Rental and Private Ownership).

### **Accommodation Type**

#### **Emergency Housing**

Temporary accommodation for individuals and families who have an urgent need for accommodation because they have nowhere else to stay, or are unable to remain in their usual place of residence (common forms include emergency shelter, night shelter, and transitional housing).

#### **Supported Rental**

Subsidized rental accommodation, combined with wrap-around supportive services appropriate to the household needs. Rents usually partially funded by the Income Related Rent Subsidy (common forms include rental housing and community group housing).

**Assisted Rental**

Subsidized rental accommodation only. Rents usually partially funded by the Income Related Rent Subsidy or the Accommodation Supplement, or from a capital subsidy that allows the setting of rents at below market rates.

**Assisted Ownership**

Household income-related pathways to home ownership including rent-to-buy, affordable equity, and shared equity programmes. Models can include below market price point mechanisms to ensure longer term 'Retained Affordable Housing'.

**Market Affordable**

Full ownership for housing usually at below the median house price, typically for smaller units or houses within a development (also known as 'Relative Affordable Housing'.)

**Private Rental**

Households in private rental accommodation which is not directly subsidised (although some households may receive the Accommodation Supplement).

**Private Ownership**

Housing that is privately owned without any form of direct external assistance (although a small number of households may receive the Accommodation Supplement).

## Schedule One: Proposed List of Priority Policy Action Areas

Action Area	Type	Priority
<p><b>Goals: Demand Analysis, Building Knowledge</b></p> <p><u>Commitments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be proactive on provider, developer, and local and central government co-ordination, information sharing, and alignment on housing issues.</li> </ul> <p><u>Deliverables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out a demand driven housing needs analysis to inform common understandings and clarity on actions across a range of submarkets.</li> <li>Collaboratively develop and monitor a set of clear and achievable targets and actions that address identified housing issues and opportunities.</li> </ul>	Existing	Medium
<p><b>Goals: Mixed Housing, Inclusive Housing</b></p> <p><u>Commitments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support developments that provide a responsive and adaptive housing stock to meet changing needs.</li> <li>Encourage and support a range of ownership models for modest income households, such as assisted home ownership.</li> <li>Keep identifying and taking opportunities from the redevelopment or reutilisation of public land to deliver a range of housing.</li> <li>Encourage the temporary use of vacant sites for housing</li> </ul> <p><u>Deliverables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify ways to minimise restrictive covenants and other affordable housing barriers.</li> <li>Evaluate mixed housing exemplar and other residential developments to assess housing outcomes.</li> </ul>	Existing New Existing New	Medium Medium High Low
<p><b>Goals: A Range of Responses, Acute Needs</b></p> <p><u>Commitments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the capacity and capability of community housing providers to more easily undertake housing developments or initiatives, especially for vulnerable groups such as the homeless.</li> <li>Support land amalgamations, mixed use proposals, re-zonings and up-zonings that include or require affordable housing.</li> <li>Work with developers and providers to overcome barriers in applying planning and financial regulations and policies to affordable housing provision.</li> </ul> <p><u>Deliverables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate measures such as inclusionary zoning as a means to support social and affordable housing outcomes.</li> <li>Develop consenting, rating and development contributions assistance policies to support social and affordable housing.</li> <li>Constructively work with young people and youth organisations to find solutions to youth housing issues and opportunities</li> </ul>	Existing New Existing New New New	Medium Medium Medium High High Medium
<p><b>Goals: Retaining Affordable Housing, Housing Quality</b></p> <p><u>Commitments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support housing models that retain affordable housing, e.g. land trusts, leasing, shared equity.</li> <li>Education and advocacy on a range of housing issues across the Housing Continuum, including promoting a range of types and tenures.</li> </ul>	New Existing	High High



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the use of standards and performance based ‘whole of house’ approaches to improve and maintain rental stock quality, e.g. rental 'WOF'.</li> </ul>	Existing	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and monitor universal design and sustainability principles such as ‘Lifemark’ and ‘Homestar’.</li> </ul>	Existing	Medium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging the adaptation and upgrading of dwellings to meet the needs of more diverse household types.</li> </ul>	Existing	Low
<u>Deliverables</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and support public, private and philanthropic investment in affordable housing, e.g. investigate the feasibility of housing bond guarantees.</li> </ul>	New	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop measures that assist people to maintain their household security and remain in their communities, e.g. postponing rates.</li> </ul>	New	Medium