



Responsible Development and Housing

Housing Shortages

The shortage of available and affordable housing in the City of Busselton is well documented. Rental properties are also at a premium in the City of Busselton, with a high number of second homes and holiday homes which are not available for people to live in. This is impacting the region's ability to attract workers, especially those in lower paid tourism, hospitality, agricultural and viticultural businesses.

There are a number of economic and social factors that have contributed to this issue, most of which are out of the City's control, however, the City has identified a number of levers which may alleviate some of the pressure.

Funding for headworks to enable development

The City recognises that one of the major barriers to development is the cost of headworks. In the past, developers could access funding to contribute to infill sewer installation costs, but this funding is no longer available, and the cost is to be borne by the developer. This in turn impacts on the cost to the person buying the lot to build on it. The current building and construction costs are at records levels, so this only compounds the issue and means housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable. The City would like to see State funding made available again to remove this barrier.

Homelessness and displacement

The City recognises that homelessness can occur for many reasons, both social and economic, and works to support those in need in a number of ways. The City has recently experienced an increase in people displaced from the housing market and camping in public spaces, and while the number is difficult to quantify, there does appear to be an increasing trend.

Homelessness is a State Government responsibility to manage, so most of the solutions to homelessness are not within the City's control. However, the City is willing to partner with other Government agencies to enable development of social and affordable housing to relieve some of the pressure in the market.



Lazy Land Opportunities

The City, through a program funded by the South West Development Commission, identified a number of "lazy land" opportunities for possible development of social and/or worker accommodation. The majority of land is owned by the State. A list of vacant and/or under developed Department of Housing sites in Geographe was provided to the Regional Capitals Alliance Housing Solutions Action Group and the State Government showing high level analysis of the capacity of the Housing Authority Assets in the Geographe area.



In parallel, the City has been working with South West Development Commission to explore land opportunities.

One example is 116 Hadfield Avenue is owned by the Department of Education and was originally planned to be a primary school site, but there is no longer a requirement for a school in this location. The City's first preference would be to see the land sold for a mix of social and affordable housing development. In order to control and influence the development to achieve these priority outcomes the City would be interested in obtaining the land freehold, but this would be subject to the valuation, development of a business case for a joint venture and a decision of the Council.

Making land parcels available is one way in which the State Government could make a significant contribution to the current housing pressures in the South West, either by developing the land itself for this purpose or supporting the City with a nominal land value consideration to achieve the same outcome.

Council Plan 2024-2034 Actions

- Finalise and seek Ministerial approval for Local Planning Scheme No.22, with consideration for an appropriate mix of development and housing densities. Scheme 22 is a statutory document that outlines how land may be used and developed within the City of Busselton.
- Review the Local Planning Strategy; an integrated strategy that considers key planning elements, including housing diversity and density, transport, economic development and the natural environment, to guide the region's growth, development and overall character and liveability over the next 10-15 years.
- Advocate for the State Government to provide sewerage and power in key locations to support population growth and economic development.

Other City Commitments to Housing Solutions

The current housing shortage is a complex issue, that requires a long-term, multi-agency solution. While this may not fall under the direct remit of the City, we are committed to continuing to identify and advocate for strategies to address this issue in the district. Some of the support the City already provides is as follows:

- Provision of community housing for eligible seniors through a joint venture with the Department of Communities – the City has three unit complexes comprising of 42 units in total, some of which are provided as part of a joint venture with the State Government. Eligibility for this type of housing is based on age, income, assets and resident status.
- Actively working with the Department of Communities, Department of Housing, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the South West Development Commission and private developers to identify and advocate for opportunities for the development of worker, social and transitional housing.
- Partnering with the WA Regional Capitals Alliance to further investigate the impact of these evolving issues within the regions and to lobby for appropriate investment to assist with solutions to housing shortages.
- Relaxation of caravan park regulations to increase the length of time people can stay.
- Offering a compassionate approach when discovering people living in cars and supporting people experiencing homelessness to access support services when they interact with the City (for example, through Ranger services, the library or youth services). The City has taken the approach of educating and supporting those who need assistance.