



11 September 2024

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To whom it may concern,

### **Submission - Council Plan 2025-29**

I am writing regarding the City of Greater Geelong's (the City) new Council Plan to guide the municipality through the next four years. We understand that a key priority for the City is ensuring that the new Council Plan focuses on financial sustainability and the delivery of critical services.

UDIA Victoria thanks the City for providing the opportunity to put forward the following considerations ahead of the plan's formal release.

### **About UDIA Victoria**

The Urban Development Institute of Australia, Victoria (UDIA Victoria) is the peak-body representing Victoria's urban development industry. We are a not-for-profit advocacy, research and educational organisation supported by a membership of land-use and urban development organisations.

Our members include organisations from across the private sector and Victoria's public service. We are committed to working with both industry and Government to deliver housing, infrastructure, and liveable communities for all Victorians.

UDIA Victoria represents a broad range of industry organisations across Victoria's regions. We are proud to be able to play a role in the continued growth of our State's regional centres.

UDIA Victoria's regional chapters, including the Geelong Chapter (Barwon Region), are represented by committees made up of industry participants from the respective regions – ensuring local knowledge, expertise and insight informs everything we do.

UDIA Victoria recognises the important role the regions have and will play in providing high-quality and affordable housing for hundreds-of-thousands of Victorians. We champion progressive urban planning policy that facilitates the sustainable growth of our major regional cities while respecting the unique characteristics that make them such attractive places to live, work and play.

### **Background**

As you know, Geelong is Australia's fastest-growing region, with the City experiencing the fastest increase in population of any major Australian city in the past decade. To support the region's rapid growth and ensure it remains an attractive place to live, work and invest, it is critical that housing supply matches the region's growing demand.

The 2021 Census indicated that Greater Geelong has enjoyed a 52 per cent increase in greenfield housing supply since 2016. This is the single-largest increase of any category of dwelling type, in any city, throughout Australia. In contrast, housing supply grew by just 10 per cent in Geelong's established areas over the same period.

The trend of relying on greenfield development—and its largely single-dwelling typology—is concerning in the context of Geelong's existing housing mix. In total, 87 per cent of Greater Geelong's 115,750 dwellings are detached homes. Only 13 per cent of dwellings are semi-detached and units (11 per cent) or apartments (2 per cent).

Compared to the 2016 Census, there is an increased proportion of households that are comprised of couples with no children, with a lower proportion of households reported as families with children in 2021. Geelong is also experiencing an influx of retirees (65 years old and over) settling in the municipality in recent years.

This highlights that the demographics of Geelong are changing with its rapid growth. Accommodating those changes with a greater diversity of dwelling choices must be factored into strategic plans for the region.

Council adopted the Greater Geelong Settlement Strategy in 2020, which emphasises the need to increase urban density. The Settlement Strategy identifies the ongoing imbalance in Geelong's growth and seeks to deliver a minimum '50:50' split of infill and greenfield development by 2036.

It is our understanding that only 20 per cent of Geelong's growth is being delivered in its established areas.

This aspiration reflects that a balanced approach to growth is required and that development in greenfield and infill settings are complementary to ensure a vibrant, yet affordable city.

Increased urban density has significant benefits. The potential development yield of any individual site has a direct relationship to its 'building performance'.

In this context, we define improved 'building performance' as the capacity for larger buildings to provide:

- increased potential for architectural excellence;
- better environmental performance through design and construction;
- improved public realm and amenity outcomes; and
- increased capacity to accommodate social, affordable and inclusive housing.

Development of this type is best placed in locations well-served by public transport.

## Victoria Housing Crisis

Victoria is experiencing a deepening housing crisis, with affordability at its lowest ebb in the last 30 years.

Low supply of market-rate and supported affordable housing is especially problematic in Victoria's regional cities and towns. There is an urgent need for new and emerging planning frameworks to support the delivery of housing in established regional areas, and locations that enjoy good access to services and infrastructure. Moreover, there is a need to supercharge development around transit-oriented locations.

The State Government recently released draft housing targets for all Victorian municipalities, with Geelong expected to accommodate 139,800 additional homes by 2051 – the largest planned increase of any regional city/township.

## Recommendations

UDIA Victoria encourages the City to consider the following recommendations:

- 1.** We support the City's commitment to financial sustainability and the provision of critical services. However, we caution the City against overextending itself by taking on services or initiatives that fall outside its primary remit. A successful implementation strategy hinges on timely execution and delivery to prevent resource strain across multiple projects.
- 2.** Our members inform us of the ongoing challenges in the approval and delivery of projects due to fundamentally conflicting objectives between the City's various internal departments. For example, there are conflicting drivers between the Place Making's department's desire to support the City's clever and creative vision through design excellence, and the City Infrastructure department's desire to minimise ongoing maintenance costs which comes at the expense of design excellence. Clarification concerning the City's priorities must be communicated via the Council Plan with clear objectives and guidance.
- 3.** The City's settlement strategy seeks to deliver 50 per cent of housing growth within its established areas and 50 per cent in its growth areas. We support these targets. However, we note that this will take time, given the current composition is closer to 20:80.

Increased infill development should not come at the expense of stable greenfield housing supply, which should not be artificially constrained. Greenfield development will continue to play a vital role in the housing mix for the region. Furthermore, greenfield development presently offers better affordability and choice for homebuyers.

Substantial investment in enabling infrastructure will be required to deliver upon these targets. The Council Plan should clearly articulate a pathway in which the City will advocate for State and Federal governments to fund and deliver the necessary infrastructure. In addition, substantial changes to planning policies needs to occur in order to enable the delivery of 50 per cent of housing growth within Geelong's established areas. The Council Plan must articulate when and how these policy changes will be implemented.

## Further Engagement

UDIA Victoria in partnership with its Geelong Committee recently released a strategy for the Barwon region. [I have attached this document alongside this submission.](#)

We are grateful for the opportunity to engage with the City on the new Council Plan and await its final release.

If you would like to discuss any of these matters further, please don't hesitate to contact UDIA

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Yours sincerely,

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