



# DESIGN FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

A proven approach to addressing challenges homelessness creates for individuals, families and communities...and for service systems experiencing high utilisation of acute, institutional and tertiary settings.  
Supportive Housing required a place based approach.

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# Design Guide for Supportive Housing



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Wintringham Housing.

Angus Martin House, Frankston.

**Quality Supportive Housing projects are as diverse as the communities in which they are located, but they share important consideration and features for their success.**

Supportive Housing can be a crucial pillar in our housing system offering stability, dignity, and compassionate care to vulnerable individuals and families confronting homelessness. Some people are on very low incomes facing homelessness, are experiencing co-occurring mental health illness, disabilities, substance use health issues and aging-related issues. Many women are experiencing homelessness due to domestic and family violence and need long term Supportive Housing to recover and stabilise with their children.

In response to the rising demand for effective care, inclusive supportive and affordable housing, Government, urban planners, and architects can rise to the challenge of designs that not only cater to the specific needs of vulnerable residents but also can foster a strong sense of community and overall well-being.



# Planning + Design

## Shared considerations

### Tenant-Centred Considerations

Supportive housing considers support is delivered for people with a range of needs and can be culturally adapted within the diversity of population groups.

Who is the building or project being designed for?

Where is the proposed location and how does it support tenants?

What specific needs need to be considered? (e.g. Mobility, access to specialised services, disabilities, mental health, alcohol and other drugs use disorders, primary health).

What specific design is appropriate to meet these needs?

Mix: Does the project have:

- A social mix of tenants.
- Mix of low, medium, and high needs within targeted population.
- What components gender/age?
- Which is the eligibility criteria?
- Can the general community access resources available in the building?

### Operational Considerations

Supportive Housing ownership and operational models are varied (see Table 1). Based on the target tenancy population and the housing type, planning should consider the specific owner, the operational needs, and the required level of coordination with support services.

Who will own the asset?

Who will provide ongoing property and tenancy management?

Who is the best partnership to develop, maintain, and evaluate the support services.

### Financial Considerations

Based on the target population and the operational model, the financial requirement for operations and services can be estimated.

Who pays capital costs?

What is the ratio of tenancy management needed for each tenant?

Can the rental income cover management costs?

Which ownership models are Community Rent Scheme (CRS) eligible?

Where are the financial gaps?

What funding can be targeted to make the development viable?

Who will fund support services?

**Table 1.**  
Ownership and Management Options.

Ownership	Assets Management	Property Management	Tenancy Management	Support Services
Government	✓	✓	✓	Partnership
Community Housing	✓	✓	✓	Partnership
Government ownership	✓			Partnership
Community Housing		✓	✓	
Philanthropic dependent on contribution	TBD	TBD	TBD	Partnership

# Supportive Housing Types

Supportive Housing is evidence- and place-based and designed at various scales and to accommodate varying planning constraints. We describe four typologies of Supportive Housing.



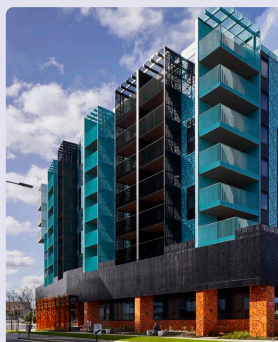
## **Type 1. Single Site, high-density**

High-density housing that integrates a support service ‘hub’ with a full array of services tailored to the needs of the tenants and the local community.



## **Type 2. Single Site, low-medium density**

Low to medium density housing integrating a support service ‘spoke’ with a select array of services tailored to the needs of the tenants and the local community.



## **Type 3. Integrated Models**

### **Within existing social and affordable housing**

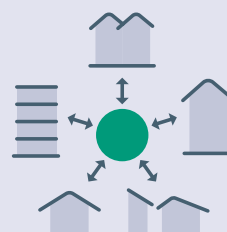
Supportive Housing units are set aside within an existing affordable housing development, to create opportunity for mixed tenancy and maximise new resources for property preservation. A number of units are targeted to an at-risk population group, and funding for support for these tenants is made available.



## **Type 4. Scattered Site**

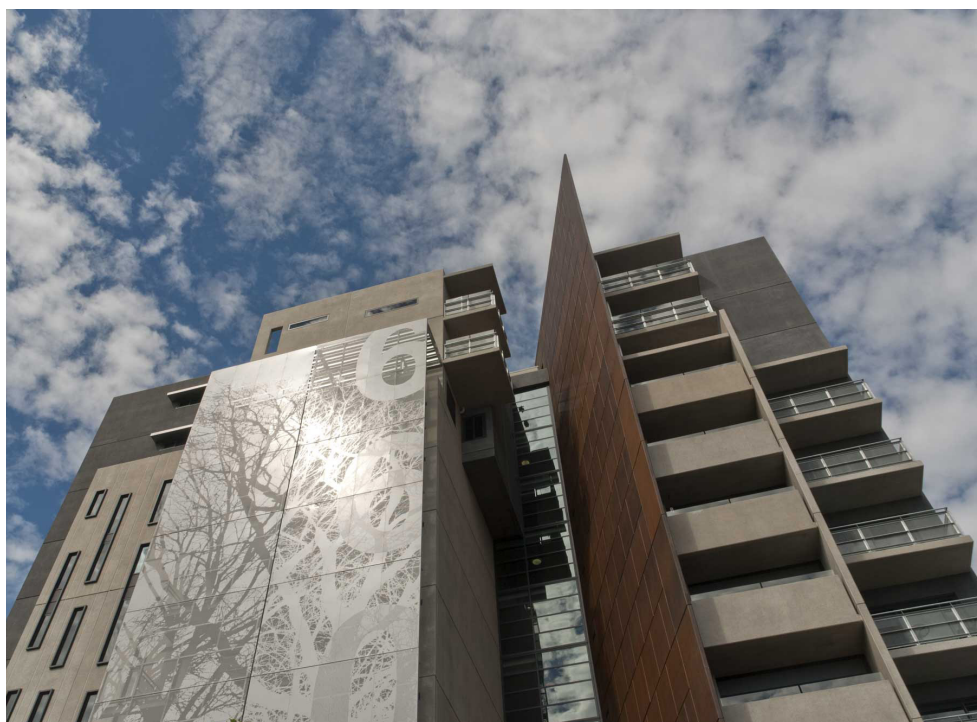
### **Public or private homes**

Individual affordable public housing, or private housing with a rental subsidy, provided throughout the region – each within the catchment of a relevant service hub and/or spoke.



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# Single Site, High-Density



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Elizabeth Street Common  
Ground, Melbourne

**High density housing that integrates facilities for community use and on-site services tailored to the needs of the tenants and local community. Housing is built as a community asset as well as a home for tenants.**

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## Community connection

Shared communal spaces (shared kitchen, living, gardens, and play areas) offer a place to connect and interact. This community space is for residents of the building and is private from the public.

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## Support services on-hand

An integrated service hub provides a variety of spaces for supportive services, offered to tenants and visiting community members. It includes offices for service staff, offices for property management staff, and meeting spaces to allow for service coordination, co-location, and easy collaboration and visiting services.

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## Support and Security at one entry point

The ground floor has a 24-hour concierge team offering security and support workers at hand. This level of security gives peace of mind to residents who may be fleeing violence.

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## Stable housing

A mix of apartments – studio, 1, 2, 3 bedrooms, with potential for 4 bedrooms for larger families. Some of the apartments house people who need economic support only (low acuity) and others house people with higher needs requiring integrated support services. The balance of this mix is carefully managed at each location.

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## Commercial spaces – optional

Commercial spaces can offer the benefits of a mixed-use building. They would be determined in line with local planning and neighbourhood opportunities. During planning, social enterprises could be considered to engage tenants with community, training, and employment opportunities. Commercial or office spaces need to be planned for early and need to consider financial benefit to NGO providing community services.

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# Single Site, High-Density

Core elements needed to deliver this type of project

Design Requirements	
Typology	High-density housing with integrated service spaces.
No of dwellings	100-150
Storeys	5-15 storeys.
Dwelling Size	1,2, 3 bedrooms with capacity to link units for larger families.
Car parking	On-site parking for staff and visitors. No car parks for residents, as dwellings are located near public transport and street parking.
Community Connection	
Communal spaces	Communal kitchen and lounge, shared children's play areas, multi-purpose spaces and gardens.
Commercial spaces	Ground floor curated tenancies ideal for a cafe or allied health support services.
Embedded Support	
Service delivery	Integrated, on-site support.
Services offered	Tailored services to meet needs to tenants and target groups.
Support spaces	24hr concierge (security) team, offices, meeting areas, medical suites, consulting rooms, crisis support, staff room, lockers, staff amenities.
Security	Designed to ensure the building is safe and secure.

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# Single Site, Low–Medium Density

Core elements needed to deliver this type of project

Design Requirements	
Typology	Low-density housing with integrated service ‘spoke’. Housing could take various forms including duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, row housing, courtyard apartments, low-apartments, and/or shared accommodation models.
No of dwellings	Varies according to zoning – May not be individual units.
Storeys	Typically, 5 or under, often 3 or under.
Dwelling Size	Mix of individual units and shared access, or shared accommodation with own toilets.
Car parking	Secured on-site and visually, plus visitors parking.
Community Connection	
Communal spaces	Create shared amenities for the local community (e.g., a common room, kitchen, garden, lounge, or play space).
Commercial spaces	Not generally included.
Embedded Support	
Service delivery	Services designed to meet the needs of tenants.
Services offered	Tailored support for the population group (e.g., National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS], in-home aged care, etc.)
Support spaces	24hr concierge (security) team and reception, consult room, training room, and amenities.
Security	Designed to ensure the building is safe and secure.

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# Integrated Models

## Support within existing social and affordable Housing

This model of housing can be created when a social or affordable housing development is planned or is existing. A quota of units can be targeted to supportive housing populations.

Design Requirements	
Typology	High- or low- mixed housing with support services integrated.
No of dwellings	Public or community housing providers, based on evidence and place-based need.
Storeys	Planning constrained.
Dwelling Size	1,2, 3 bedrooms with capacity to link units for larger families.
Car parking	On-site parking for staff and visitors. No car parks for residents, as dwellings are located near public transport and street parking.
Community Connection	
Communal spaces	Create shared amenities for the local community (e.g., a common room, kitchen, garden, lounge, or play space).
Commercial spaces	N/A
Embedded Support	
Service delivery	Mobile supports are connected to the person, not to the tenancy.
Services offered	Tailored to the need, but will likely include health and wellbeing, parenting, counselling, and trauma care. Where appropriate, education and training opportunities may be provided.
Support spaces	Designed to ensure the dwelling is safe and secure.
Security	Designed to ensure the building is safe and secure.



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# Scattered Site

## Core elements needed to deliver this type of project

Design Requirements	
Typology	No limit, scattered single publicly owned homes
No of dwellings	Typically, 1 - 2 storeys.
Storeys	Typically, 2 - 5 bedrooms, ideally caters to larger family sizes.
Dwelling Size	Secured on-site and visually.
Car parking	Secured on-site and visually.
Community Connection	
Communal spaces	Located near community.
Commercial spaces	Located near shops and employment opportunities.
Embedded Support	
Service delivery	Local and mobile support; mobile services attend tenants' homes, and tenants travel to service 'hubs' and 'spokes'.
Services offered	Services vary and can be dynamically adjusted to suit tenants needs.
Support spaces	Mobile support vehicles from service 'hub' or collaborating community services.
Security	Designed to ensure the building is safe and secure.

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