



COMMITTEE FOR
PERTH

Working Group Submission

Densification

**Density With Identity: Let's Shape a
Better Future Together**

December 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

Committee For Perth acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

Foreword

Following the publication of the Perth 2050 report, which identified three key themes, Committee for Perth invited all members to nominate for our proposed working groups: Decarbonisation, Densification and Economic Diversification. We sought individuals passionate about exploring ideas and opportunities that could deliver 'quick wins' as well as longer-term strategies to address these challenges. While we recognise that a single working group cannot solve every issue, bringing together passionate experts creates the potential for fresh, practical suggestions for Government and the community to consider. Each group was tasked with developing practical initiatives to help guide Perth's long-term future.

I am so incredibly proud of Francien Boom and Kelly Campbell who led the three groups independently organising the selection of the Chair and Deputy Chair roles of each group and the meeting rhythm and cadence, all the while having the end of the year vision to present the three white papers to Government, Opposition, members and the community with recommendations and proposed solutions to assist future proofing Perth.

Thank you to Ben Haddock (ARUP), Chair of Densification, and Deputy Chair Dan Pearce (Hatch); Julie McKay-Warner (Keystart), Chair Decarbonisation, and Deputy Chair Steve Mills (CME WA); and Lance Glare (KPMG), Chair of Economic Diversification. Your hard work and dedication in maximising the value and impact of this collective effort has been profound. This is especially impressive when you consider that every member and leader holds demanding, high-profile full-time roles. Thank you for volunteering to lead the groups, your commitment has ensured the white papers will deliver real value for Perth's future.

I reflect on the incredible value these working groups have delivered. It is like having three consulting teams applying their significant expertise to our three key levers for transforming Perth's future.

Here's what the numbers show:

Diversification



Guest speakers

- John Langoulant, ACIL Allen
- Sian McGill, DEED

Decarbonisation



Guest speaker

- Prof. Peta Ashworth, Director of Curtin Institute of Energy Transition (CIET)

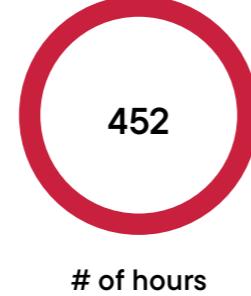
Densification



Guest speaker

- Malcolm Smith, Arup

Collectively



Collectively, that's 452 hours of work outside regular day jobs, all dedicated to shaping recommendations that will help Perth achieve its best possible future in 2050 and beyond. This effort focuses on practical, forward-looking solutions for environmental sustainability, urban growth, and economic resilience.

A massive shoutout to our three volunteer working groups, who have generously donated their time and expertise to tackle Perth's biggest challenges. In total, this represents months of expert thinking, freely given—equivalent to three months of full-time professional work, valued at up to almost \$100,000 in consultancy terms.

This extraordinary gift of time and knowledge demonstrates the power of member-led ambitious thinking in crafting a sustainable and resilient future for Perth.

We know there were moments of frustration and fatigue, but together you delivered. On behalf of the Committee for Perth board and members, I applaud and celebrate what you have achieved.

Paula Rogers
CEO
Committee for Perth



Paula Rogers, Kelly Campbell, Lance Glare, Julie McKay-Warner, Ben Haddock, Francien Boom.

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1.0 Executive Summary

Perth is at a turning point as it prepares for a population of 3.5 million by 2050. Continuing low-density suburban growth will lead to rising infrastructure costs, loss of green spaces, increased emissions, and weakened social cohesion. To avoid these outcomes, Perth must embrace managed urban densification that balances growth with liveability. This is the essence of Density with Identity.

Looking toward 2050, Perth's aspiration is to be a more compact, connected, and resilient city, with diverse housing options located near transport, employment, and amenity, and with green spaces protected and enhanced.

“ Perth's density challenge is not just about bricks and mortar – it's about imagination.

Achieving this outcome will depend on coordinated leadership across all levels of government, effective partnerships with the development sector, and sustained education and engagement with the community to build confidence in higher-density living.

To progress Density with Identity from 2025 onwards, this paper identifies three critical areas of focus:



Commercial Viability: addressing the economic barriers that limit the delivery of infill and apartment development, including construction costs, labour constraints, approval complexity, and investor risk, to enable the market to deliver housing at scale and in the right locations.



Benefits of Higher Density and Apartment Living: clearly articulating and demonstrating the social, environmental, and health benefits of well-designed higher-density housing, including improved access to services, reduced emissions, stronger community interaction, and better housing choice across life stages.



Education and Engagement: building community understanding and support for density through ongoing, place-based engagement, education initiatives, and the visibility of successful local and international examples.



2.0 Context

2.1 What is the problem?

If Perth continues its pattern of low-density suburban growth, the City will face significant economic, environmental, and social challenges by 2050. Economically, the expanding urban footprint will drive up the cost of infrastructure, constrain access to employment, and increase household expenses due to car dependency. Environmentally, unchecked expansion will lead to the loss of productive agricultural land, destruction of native vegetation, and higher greenhouse gas emissions. Socially, our community will experience reduced access to essential services, and increased social

isolation, particularly for those without ready access to private vehicles.

Without a shift toward more sustainable, higher-density development, Perth risks cementing its status as the world's longest city. Failure to act will make it harder to accommodate population growth within the existing urban footprint, missing the opportunity to create more vibrant, walkable, and socially connected neighbourhoods that support a projected population of 3.5 million by 2050.

2.2 What is density?

The future of density in Perth is centred on creating a more compact, connected, and sustainable city to accommodate rapid population growth and address housing affordability. Major reforms are underway to fast-track higher-density housing, particularly around key train station precincts, with the WA Planning Commission taking a central role in setting new zoning and height controls within 800 metres of selected stations.

This shift aims to move Perth away from the prevailing pattern of detached housing, to encouraging more diverse, building and living formats. The vision is to balance growth with liveability, ensuring that new developments are well-designed, integrated with infrastructure, and are responsive to the needs of a growing and diverse population.



2.3 What are the barriers to implementation?

2.3.1 Challenges

Urban densification in Perth faces a range of significant challenges. The price point of constructing and purchasing higher-density housing may be less competitive compared to suburban homes, making it harder to achieve affordability targets and market appeal. Approval risk and timeframes are also concerns, as higher-density projects usually involve more complex processes, resulting in delays and increased uncertainty that can discourage investment.

Access to labour presents another major hurdle; the construction industry's capacity to provide the skilled workforce required for dense urban projects is stretched, especially during periods of rapid

2.3.2 Impacts

These challenges have significant social, economic, and environmental impacts. Infrastructure strain affects mobility and service reliability, while loss of green spaces diminishes quality of life and urban biodiversity. Environmental impacts include urban heat islands and poor air quality, which compromise sustainability goals and public health.

2.3.3 Urgency

Addressing density is urgent as Perth's population continues to grow and high-rise developments stall. Without timely action, the city risks worsening congestion, affordability crises, and environmental degradation. Strategic interventions, cultural

growth, which can further delay delivery and drive-up costs.

Finally, the location of land suitable for densification—particularly sites near public transport or established amenities—is limited, making it challenging to deliver well-situated, high-density housing that supports access to services, reduces congestion, and preserves green spaces. Collectively, these challenges compound existing issues such as housing affordability, infrastructure strain, reduced access to nature, and the risk of weakened social cohesion, underscoring the need for strategic planning and a plan for Perth.

Limited housing choice prevents people ageing in place or encourages the underuse of housing stock as family compositions change when children leave home. These outcomes weaken social cohesion and can lead to community fragmentation.

change and urban transformation are essential to ensure liveability and resilience. Failure to act now will compromise Perth's identity and aspirations for 2050.

2.4 Density with Identity

These challenges are not unique to Perth but require tailored solutions to fit our City's unique identity and aspirations. The challenges manifest acutely in specific precincts but affect the broader urban environment, impacting social cohesion, commercial viability, and engagement across the community.

This document examines the critical urban transformation challenges facing Perth as it seeks to accommodate significant population growth through greater urban intensification and the creation of vibrant, socially connected communities rather than continuing the prevailing pattern of suburban development. We call this 'Density with Identity'.

3.0 The Future of Perth

By 2050, Perth aims to be a more sustainable, diverse, and well-connected city, growing to 3.5 million people by focusing on managed densification, improved transport options, the protection of green spaces, and a shift to renewable energy.

Achieving this vision depends on coordinated planning, targeted investment, and strong community engagement to balance higher density living with the preservation of Perth's valued natural environment, lifestyle, and affordability.

To understand the impact and scope of density-related challenges in Perth, it is essential to consider the perspectives of diverse

stakeholders and to understand their priorities and the trade-offs they are willing to make.

The personas below represent key groups affected by or involved in density with identity, affected by issues such as urban sprawl, car dependence, housing affordability, access to amenity and services, climate resilience and a growing, culturally diverse and ageing population.



Inner-city Resident: A young professional, couple or small family living in a high-density apartment, seeking convenience, short commutes, access to shops, green space and community connection while worrying about overcrowding, limited private space, rising strata fees and declining public amenity.



Local Business Owner: The proprietor of a café, takeaway or boutique reliant on foot traffic and visibility, concerned about parking, changing catchment demographics, rental pressures, competition from online retail and how new developments alter streetscape and trading hours.



Urban Planner: A municipal planner or transport officer balancing growth, sustainability and liveability; responsible for integrating infill, public transport, community facilities and green infrastructure while navigating complex regulations, limited budgets and competing stakeholder views.



Community Advocate: An engaged resident or neighbourhood group campaigning for affordable housing, parkland, inclusive design and meaningful consultation to protect liveability and social cohesion as density increases.



Developer: A private developer seeking viable projects and clear policy settings; requires predictable zoning and design standards, while facing community scrutiny over scale, environmental impact and the provision of affordable and adaptable housing.



Elderly Homeowner: An older person who wishes to age in place in their suburb, preferring accessible, single-level homes and local services; worried about being displaced by redevelopment, losing local social networks and insufficient nearby health and care services.



New Migrant Family: Recent arrivals who may have migrated with expectations of a house and garden, often valuing space for extended family and cultural practices; they face choices between large suburban lots and the trade-offs of higher-density living close to jobs and services, as well as barriers to affordable home ownership.



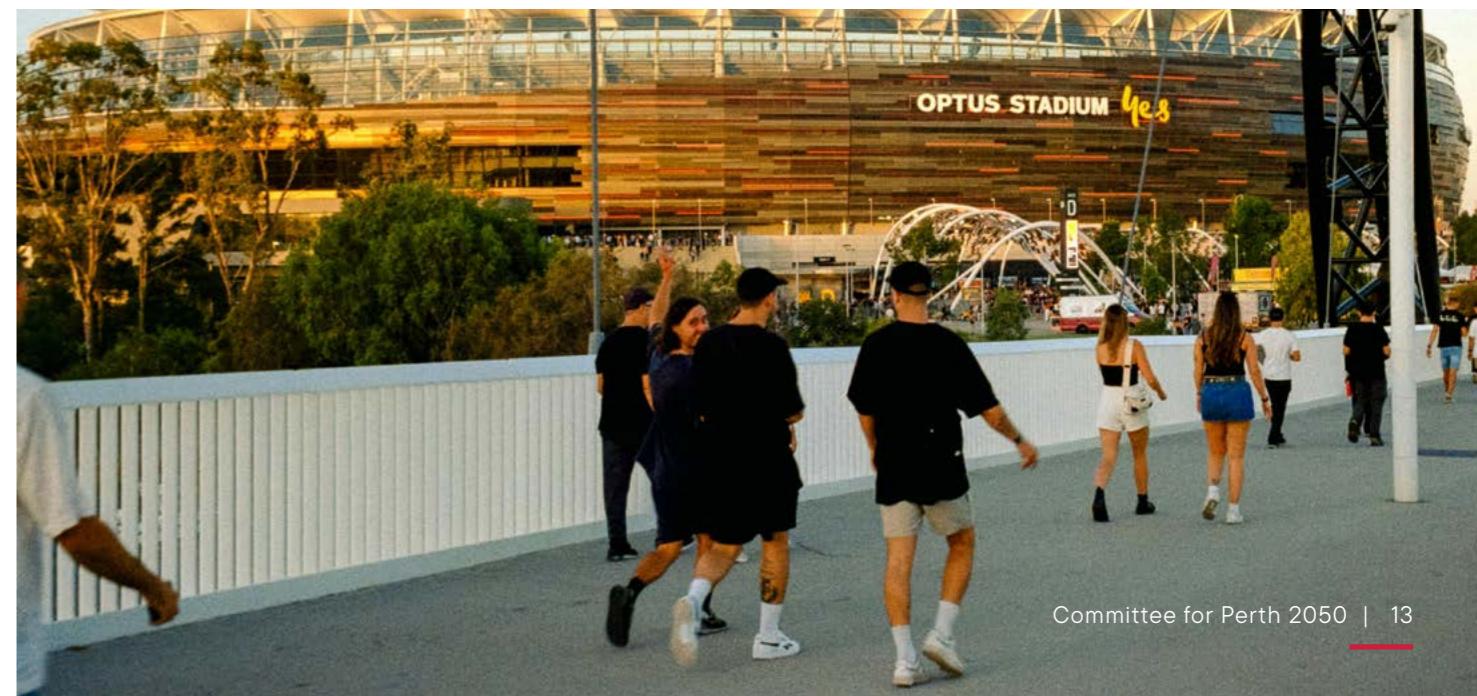
Student or Young Renter: Tertiary students and early-career renters seeking affordable, well-connected, short-term accommodation near universities, training and employment; they prioritise active and public transport, nightlife and flexible tenure but are vulnerable to rental insecurity and poor-quality micro-housing.



Suburban Commuter: A household in Perth's outer suburbs reliant on private cars and arterial roads; concerned about long commutes, limited public transport, local amenity and how strategic densification or new transport investments will affect travel times and neighbourhood character.



Baby-Boomer Homeowner: A long-term, often 'baby-boomer' family, strongly attached to their standalone home and garden; prioritises privacy, neighbourhood character and property values, resistant to redevelopment or higher-density infill, sceptical of new housing types and developer promises, and fearful of being pressured to sell or forced out - values tradition, quiet streets and keeping their suburb 'as it has always been'.



4.0 Areas of Focus



4.1 Commercial Viability

Successfully managing density in Perth should unlock significant commercial opportunities, enabling more efficient use of land and infrastructure while supporting a diverse, productive urban economy. However, the City faces major challenges to realising this upside including rapidly rising construction costs, access

to skilled labour, approval complexities, and limited investor confidence. These constraints make infill and apartment development commercially marginal. Without a refreshed approach the market cannot deliver the scale and diversity of housing needed for Perth's future.

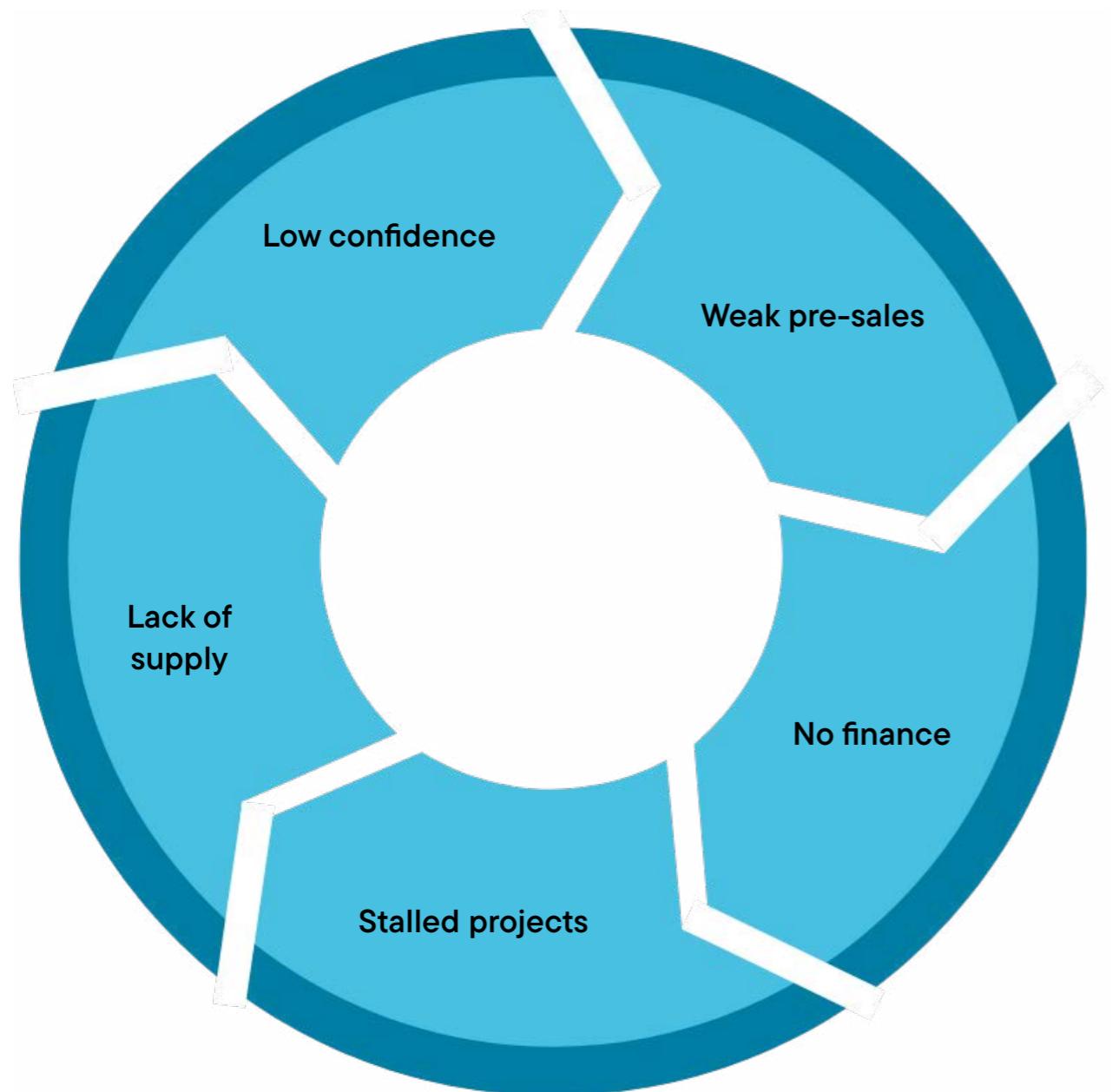


Figure 1: Commercial viability vicious cycle



4.2 Benefits of Higher Density and Apartment Living

Apartment living in high-density areas offers real advantages for Perth's growing population. Well-planned developments can enhance infrastructure efficiency, increase access to green spaces, and deliver a more comprehensive mix of homes for everyone from families to downsizers.

Higher density living fosters vibrant communities, supports sustainability by reducing carbon footprints, and enables residents to enjoy convenient access to amenities, public transport, and a rich urban lifestyle—if guided by thoughtful design and planning.

“ If well-planned and carefully implemented, new residential areas with higher density, particularly medium-density housing, can encourage healthier behaviours that reduce risk of cardiovascular disease and other chronic diseases

Heart Foundation and Healthy Active by Design

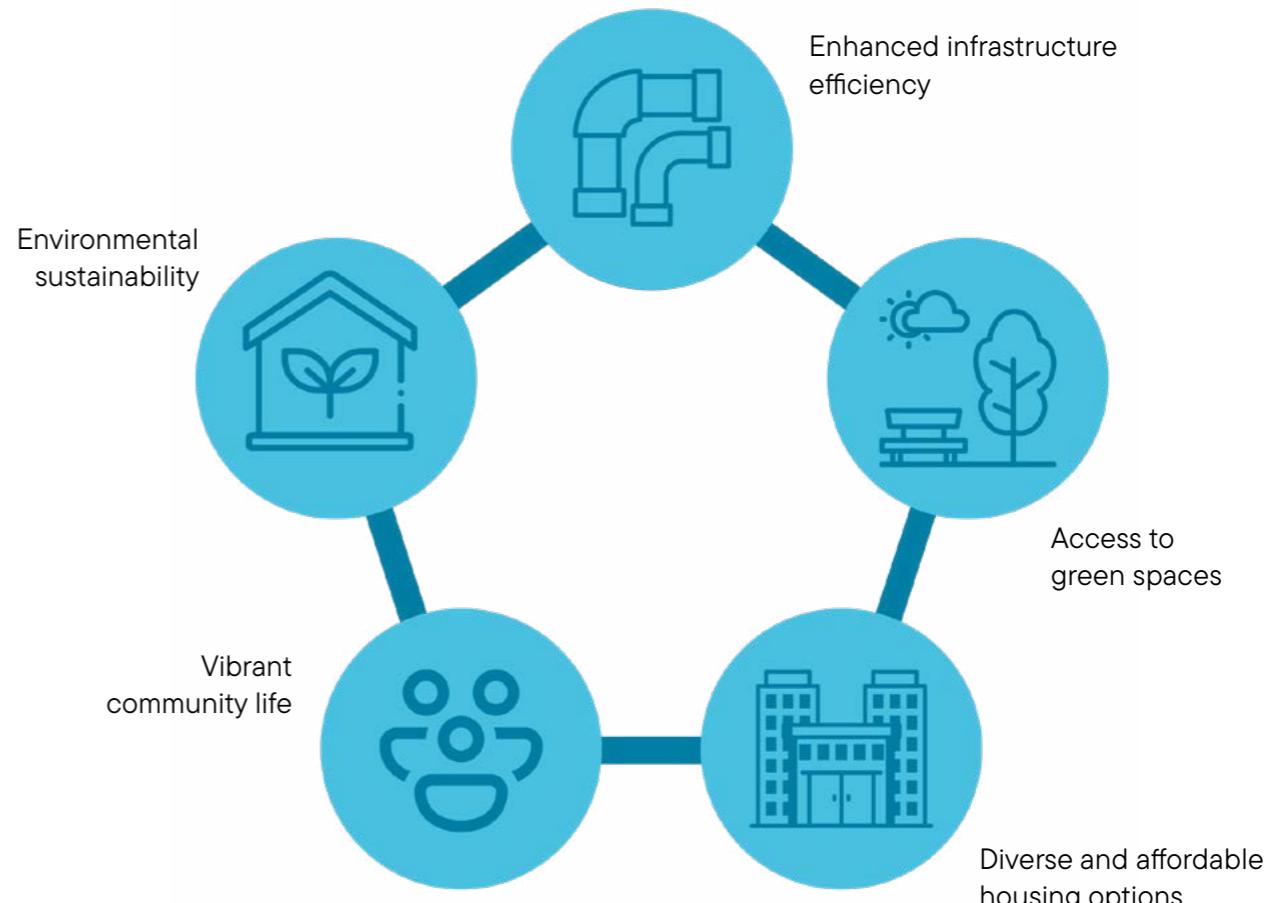


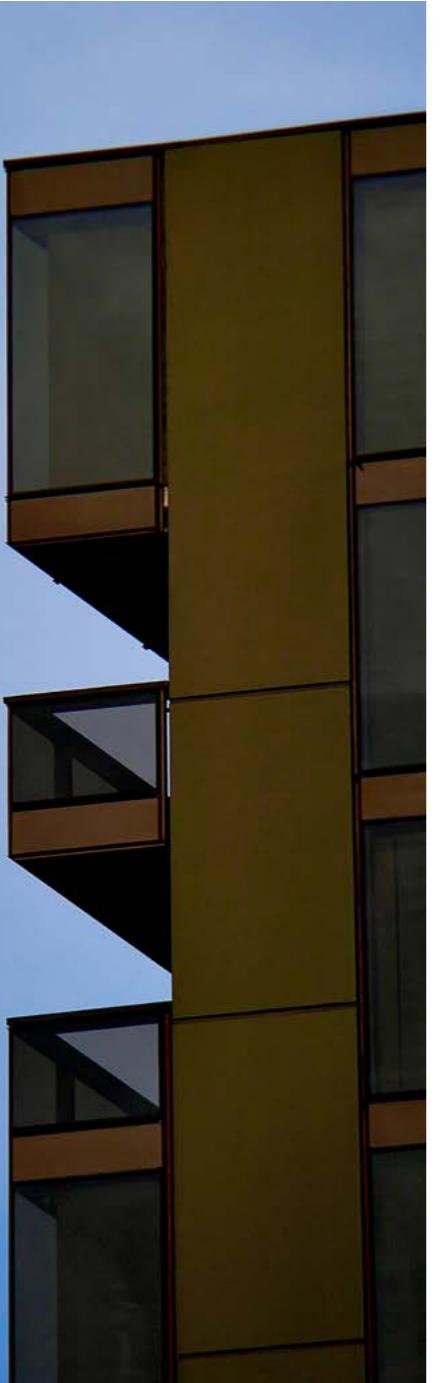
Figure 2: Benefits of higher density

4.0 Areas of Focus



4.3 Education & Engagement

Achieving density with identity relies on broad community understanding and participation. Education and engagement must dispel myths and showcase the benefits of well-designed density, using schools, media, and public events to build awareness and acceptance.



Ongoing dialogue, tailored campaigns, and hands-on experiences—such as pop-up parks or open-home tours—help people see urban living as a positive lifestyle choice, while empowering residents and stakeholders to contribute to shaping Perth's future neighbourhoods.



Community awareness

Educational campaigns can inform the public of the benefits and goals of denser urban development



Participatory planning

Consulting residents early in the planning process fosters collaboration and buy-in.



Ongoing dialogue

Maintaining open channels of communication can help address concerns and build trust.



Championing success stories

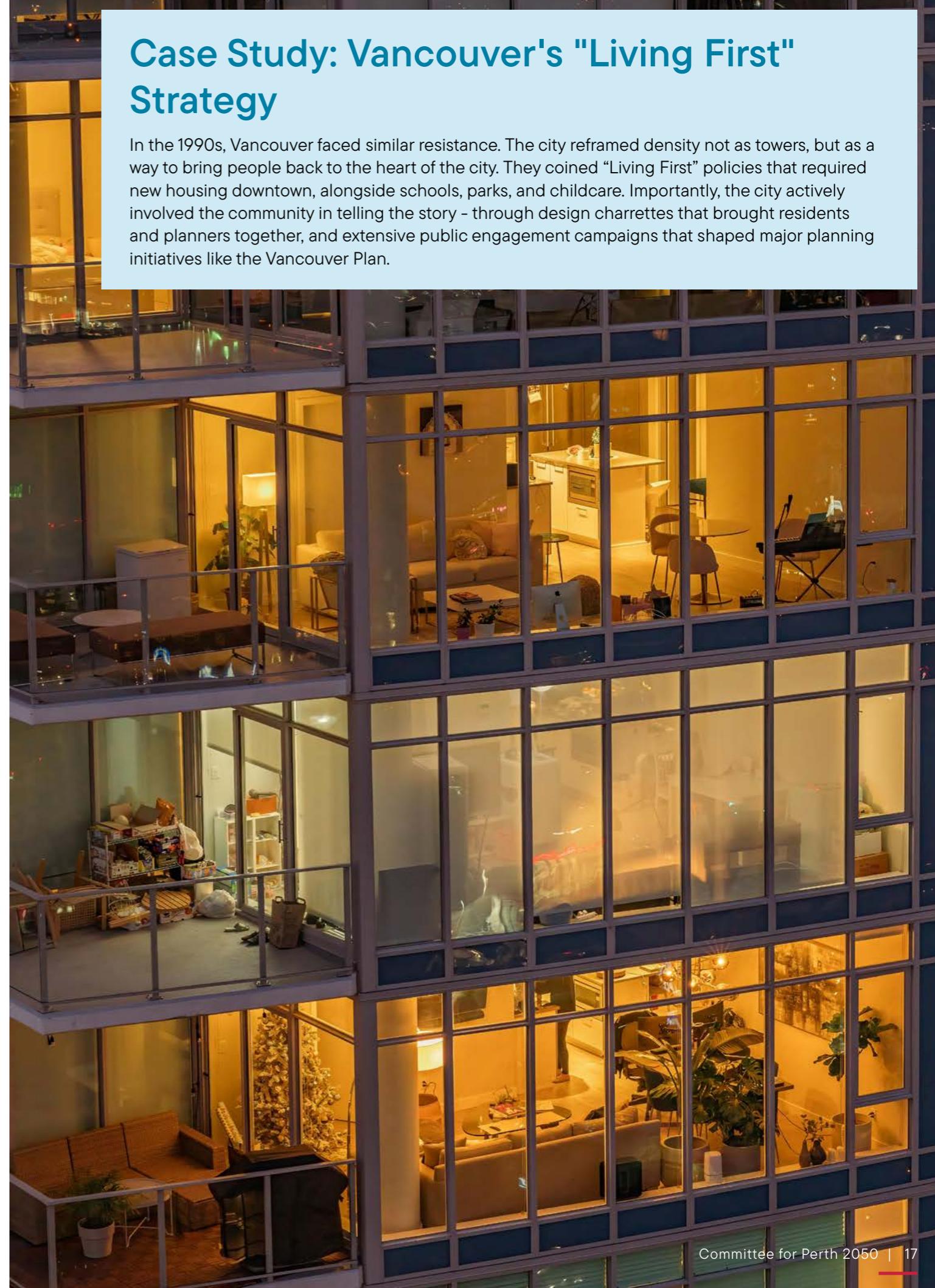
Highlighting successful densification projects can inspire and motivate further initiatives.



Capacity building

Training for professionals and community leaders support effective density management.

Figure 3: Education and engagement focus areas



Case Study: Vancouver's "Living First" Strategy

In the 1990s, Vancouver faced similar resistance. The city reframed density not as towers, but as a way to bring people back to the heart of the city. They coined "Living First" policies that required new housing downtown, alongside schools, parks, and childcare. Importantly, the city actively involved the community in telling the story – through design charrettes that brought residents and planners together, and extensive public engagement campaigns that shaped major planning initiatives like the Vancouver Plan.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Reframing the Challenge

Perth's density challenge is not just about bricks and mortar – it's about imagination.

For decades, the default picture of "a good life" in WA has been the detached single dwelling with a backyard. That image is deeply ingrained, reinforced by marketing, policy settings, and the TV shows and movies we grew up with.

The result: density is often seen as a downgrade, rather than an upgrade. The task is not to lecture people out of that dream. It's to offer a new narrative about how living in a more urban, rather than a suburban, environment can improve their lives – more time with family because the commute is shorter, more local cafés and culture on their doorstep, more choices in housing that suit different stages of life.

This is captured in the emerging concept of the "soft city" which has been developed as a framework for creating density that people feel good about.

“ This approach balances the efficiency benefits of density with human needs for comfort, connection, and access to nature. At its core, the soft city embraces several key principles: human-scale buildings and streets, mixed-use development, accessible public spaces, the integration of natural elements, and design that facilitates social interaction.

My Radiant City

This is not a communications campaign in the narrow sense. It's a cultural project. And like all cultural shifts, it will require the right mix of storytellers, champions, and platforms.

Case Study: The Auckland Plan

Auckland took a proactive approach to address housing pressures and urban growth. Through the Auckland Plan, the city set out a vision for inclusive, connected communities and identified six priority areas to ensure Auckland remains a place where people want to live, work, and visit.

One of these priorities, Homes and Places, is particularly relevant. Its goal is that "Aucklanders live in secure, healthy, and affordable homes, and have access to a range of inclusive public places."

The plan focuses on:

- Accelerating quality development at scale to improve housing choices
- Increasing security of tenure and expanding tenure models, especially for those most in need
- Improving the built quality of existing dwellings, particularly rental housing
- Investing in and supporting Māori to achieve their housing aspirations
- Creating urban places designed for the future



5.0 Recommendations

5.2 How to create Density with Identity

Deliver a Plan for Perth – in the next 12 months

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for Perth that sets clear, measurable targets for urban density while preserving local identity, supported by robust governance structures such as a dedicated capital city planning authority.
- This approach ensures the cohesive and considered delivery of strategic objectives—including open space provision, infrastructure upgrades, height and population targets—which cannot be effectively achieved through ad-hoc, site-by-site decisions.
- The plan should also enable development contribution schemes to fund essential infrastructure and community amenities.
- The plan should establish clear metrics for density initiatives, regularly assess progress with community feedback, and adjust strategies to ensure continuous improvement, inclusivity, and resilience for all of the community.
- Active stakeholder engagement, alignment with community views, and practical steps for sustainable growth and vibrant neighbourhoods must remain central to the plan's execution.

Education for Urban Density and Liveability – continuous effective campaigns

- Launch a comprehensive education initiative to build public understanding and support for increased urban density and liveability.
- This should include community campaigns, school curriculum integration, and participatory engagement that addresses misconceptions, highlights the benefits of diverse housing and green spaces, and involves stakeholders in shaping their neighbourhoods.
- By empowering the community with knowledge and a voice in the process, the program will foster social cohesion and ensure that growth aligns with community values.

- Recognise and promote projects that successfully balance density, liveability, sustainability, and inclusivity—using them as models for future growth, and addressing barriers like infrastructure, affordability, and green space loss through targeted, collaborative interventions.
- Establish a Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) group, gather community members who support smart urban density and positive local change. Organise meetings, use social media, and partner with councils and developers to advocate for well-designed projects. By championing new housing and public spaces, the group can help build community support for a vibrant, evolving Perth.

Commercial Adaptation & Inclusivity:

Government and Private Sector Partnership

- Establish collaborative frameworks between government and the private sector to drive commercial innovation, inclusivity, and resilience in high-density areas.
- Incentivise or underwrite projects that deliver affordable and diverse housing, adaptable retail models, and enhanced public amenities—particularly those supporting culturally diverse and ageing populations.
- This includes streamlined approvals, grants for innovative developments, and investment in infrastructure and green spaces. By jointly addressing barriers and championing exemplary projects, these partnerships will ensure economic vitality and equitable outcomes across Perth's evolving urban landscape.

5.3 Who should lead?

To create this cultural shift and increase density successfully, we need to develop a story and a vision for Perth's evolution that gets the attention of and support from residents, workers, investors and the public sector.

The story is written across government, industry and the community.

State Government:

- Develop and promote a unified vision for Perth's sustainable urban future through enabling a Plan for Perth and fund it.
- Integrate urban sustainability concepts into school curriculums to educate younger generations about the benefits of compact, liveable cities.
- Launch state-wide awareness campaigns to highlight the advantages of smart urban living and encourage positive perceptions.
- Continue to reframe state planning and legislation to adapt to the plan.

Local Government:

- Adapt the broader urban narrative to local contexts by engaging community through place-based activities.
- Showcase real-life examples of urban living to bridge the gap between conceptual planning and everyday experience, building trust and enthusiasm among the community.

Federal Government:

- Align Perth's density and growth initiatives with national objectives, including the National Urban Policy and Net Zero 2050 commitments.
- Support local efforts by framing increased density as a critical component of national goals and providing policy guidance and funding to facilitate these outcomes.

Development Sector:

- Deliver high-quality, diverse, and affordable housing projects that set benchmarks for smart urban density.
- Collaborate with government on public engagement campaigns and open completed developments for community tours to demonstrate the benefits of well-designed urban spaces.
- Support advocacy groups to build public understanding and acceptance of denser living models.
- Establish collaborative frameworks between government and the private sector to de-risk density projects, drive commercial innovation, inclusivity, and resilience in high-density areas.

Committee for Perth and the Media:

- Lead educational efforts by producing and sharing positive stories about vibrant neighbourhoods, successful community initiatives, and the advantages of compact city living.
- Use multiple media channels to correct misconceptions about density, inspire community support, and foster a culture that values sustainable, inclusive, and connected urban environments.

6.0 Appendix

Recognition of current reports/plans/policies

- WA Housing Strategy 2020–2030
- Medium Density Housing Code
- Perth and Peel @ 3.5 Million
- METRONET East Redevelopment Program
- Housing Affordability Measures (Build-to-Rent incentives, social housing investment)
- State Planning Policies (SPP 7.0 Design WA, SPP 3.7 Bushfire, SPP 4.2 Activity Centres)
- Sustainable Health Review (SHR) – WA Health
- State Public Health Plan
- Age-friendly Communities Framework
- WA Disability Strategy
- Sport and Recreation Strategic Directions

Additional Sources and References:

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- Western Australian Local Government Association. (2021). Infrastructure Cost Analysis for Perth Metropolitan Development. Policy Research Paper.
- <https://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/habd-news/the-need-for-higher-density-neighbourhoods-to-support-heart-health-sept-2025>
- <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/en/plans-policies-bylaws-reports-projects/our-plans-strategies/auckland-plan/homes-places.html>
- <https://myradiantcity.com/blog/density-and-diversity-creating-inclusive-urban-neighborhoods/>

7.0 Working Group Members

As an apolitical, future-focused and independent organisation, Committee for Perth draws upon the expertise of its diverse membership, representing over 40 different industry sectors across the Perth region. The goal is to bring together our member's collective expertise to foster thought leadership and produce a white paper lead to real, practical and achievable impact.



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