

Mayoral Minute No. 8.1
File No:

Supporting Housing above Council Owned Carparks
I2020/180

I move that Council:

1. **Support, in principle, facilitating the establishment of diverse and affordable housing on Council owned carparks, without decreasing the current number of available car parking spaces and having regard to the need to avoid negative impact on recent investment in emissions reduction capability.**
2. **Extend an invitation to housing providers to a preliminary session to ascertain requirements, possibilities and challenges for establishing housing above Council carparks, and that:**
 - a) **This session is to be a ‘without prejudice’ discussion prior to any activation of a more formal EOI process;**
 - b) **Council provides for internet based attendance.**
3. **Prior to this meeting, create a list of possible sites for discussion and consideration.**

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Background Notes:

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Councils have an often volatile relationship with ‘development’-especially Byron. Mostly, Councils process what is brought to us within guidelines and rules largely created by the State Government. Sometimes we fight against poor development proposals. And sometimes, we can help enable great development proposals.

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This Mayoral Minute seeks support for Council to explore how we can enable developments that are greatly needed by our some within our community and which have the potential to be designed and created with innovation, sustainability and beauty.

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As we all know all too well, affordable housing, or housing that is appropriate for the housing needs of very low, low and moderate-income households is in dire short supply in Byron Shire.

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Byron Council has a long held, and long term commitment to strengthening and supporting our diverse community with appropriate housing and by demonstrating strong leadership.

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Though we know that all levels of government must be active and involved in contributing to increasing the supply of Affordable Housing, and that local government is the least empowered level of government to do so; we should continue to try and do what we can, where we can and how we can.

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Currently, Council is actively exploring ways of working effectively with the State Government to increase the supply of Affordable Housing within the shire via innovative and flexible planning provisions. We also continue to support an inter- governmental approach to address the housing challenges facing many residents of Byron, the Northern Rivers and Australia more generally.

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As well as focusing on advocacy and partnership, Council is exploring how its own assets can be used for Affordable Housing and thus far, this has been through looking at its vacant or unused land.

Now, we should join other councils both nationally and internationally who are looking to add value to their 'lazy land', or 'lazy airspace'.

5 According to the University of Melbourne, (School of Design, Faculty of Architecture)
6 *Project 3000: Producing Social and Affordable Housing on Government Land 2018*, Lazy
7 Government Land is defined as "any government site currently occupied by a land use that could
8 be mixed with affordable and social housing but is currently not and where existing buildings are
9 currently under four storeys." This could include, libraries, community and neighbourhood centres,
10 ground level car parking, shopping and offices, some healthcare facilities, social services and
11 childcare facilities.

12 Adding an affordable housing project above a ground level car park could have three main
13 benefits: it can minimise the impact of spatial dislocation of low income households by providing
14 housing within town centres, it can reduce the cost of creating housing, and it can make better use
15 of existing assets.

Starting with Why

16 So, why do it?
17 Using our land to facilitate the creation of housing provides a high level of influence and control,
18 providing some great possible outcomes:

19 1. It can ensure Council chaperones environmentally sustainable design (ESD) principles into
20 designs to reduce energy use for future residents of the building. This would provide an
21 environmental benefit as well; reducing the utility bills for the low income household and establish
22 leadership in promoting sustainable design.
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24 2. It can help improve the wellbeing of people in a low income household by providing
25 opportunities for people to live within their existing community even when they can no longer afford
26 the private rental market or if they need to downsize from a family home.
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28 3. It can facilitate cultural diversity, and support for housing for our local indigenous mobs.

29 4. It can enable low income workers to live close to where they work. This reduces the time and
30 cost of travel to work and means they have more funds available for economic participation in the
31 local community.
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33 5. Simply put, it can make it financially stack up. Affordable and social housing developers face
34 significantly higher land costs today than in the last three decades. Land typically constitutes
35 between 10% and 30% of development costs (Urbis 2011). By providing land for a nominal fee,
36 affordable housing provision is more possible. The value and therefore cost of land within the
37 Byron Shire makes it difficult for non-profits to develop social housing. Council leasing its land to
38 non-profits for a nominal fee would eliminate this cost for housing providers.
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40 Ownership Considerations

41 Though many twists along the road need to be travelled before final decisions are reached, and
42 without any desire to pre-determine outcomes, it would seem reasonable to assume that the
43 statutory regime may consist of a long-term lease. The term of such lease is limited to 50 years
44 under the Local Government Act. The rental amount can be set by Council and hopefully, that it
45 would be a nominal, or peppercorn amount to ensure the financial viability and to navigate around
46 the high land cost barriers currently faced by low cost housing providers.
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48 The benefit of the lease option is that the land remains in public ownership and Council would
49 retain significant control over the site. Council could establish requirements for the use and
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development of the land and enforce these through the lease conditions. A lease would provide Council with the highest level of control over the site with the benefits for our community as shared earlier. A lease is aligned with Council's preferred position of ensuring public land remains within public ownership.

5 A potential shortfall of establishing a leasing regime is that a lease provides less certain tenure and it may prove difficult for a housing association to secure finance or funding.

Expression of Interest Process

10 Again, much road will be travelled prior to decisions being finalised, however, I would encourage that within the Expression of Interest (EOI) process to identify a suitable tenant for the site, the tenant would ideally be a registered housing association or a charitable organisation capable of delivering affordable housing on the site.

Relationship with other Council Plans and Strategies

15 Providing, or at least supporting, the provision of diverse housing within the Shire is an outcome that is consistently espoused across numerous Council Plans and Strategies. This is the case within our overarching, umbrella strategic planning program- *Our Byron Our Future: Community Strategic Plan 2028* (CSP) and its accompanying Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2019-2020. Within the CSP it states, "The community told us quite clearly, to "Providing strategies to ensure living in Byron Shire is affordable for locals and future generations, and to ensure young people don't have to move from the area due to lack of employment or housing options." Pertinent sections within the identified Community Objectives include:

- 25
- INFRASTRUCTURE: We have infrastructure, transport and services which meet our expectations
 - COMMUNITY: We cultivate and celebrate our diverse cultures, lifestyle and sense of community, specifically, 'support and encourage our vibrant culture and creativity' and 'support access to a
 - 30 wide range of services and activities that contribute to the wellbeing of all members of the Byron Shire community.'
 - GROWTH: We manage growth and change responsibly, specifically, 'support housing diversity in appropriate locations across the Shire' and 'establish planning mechanisms to support housing that meets the needs of our community.'
 - 35 • GOVERNANCE: We have community led decision making which is open and inclusive

Council has also outlined its commitment to supporting diverse and accessible housing, seen through the following Housing Affordability Initiatives:

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- North Coast Community Housing Project, Station Street Mullumbimby
 - Lot 22 Stuart Street, Mullumbimby
 - Expressions of Interest for Affordable Housing
 - Residential Strategy housing affordability measures
 - Our Housing Challenge: Local Communities: Local Solutions: Byron Perspective - 10 May 2019
 - Housing Charrette, November 2018
 - 45 • Byron Housing Roundtable, 5 July 2018
 - Housing Summit, 10 February 2017

50 Lastly, Council's Homelessness Policy contains the recognition that all people have a right to housing that meets their individual needs

Possible Sites

5 Currently council holds quite a few parcels of land utilised for car parking. Some of these include the Council Administration building carpark, the Cavanbah Centre, North and South Lawson St Byron Bay, and Station St Bangalow. Of course if a pilot project proves successful, it could inspire State government owned land to follow suit.

Possible Housing Types

10 The exact types of Affordable Housing (e.g. social housing, shared equity housing) that could be provided through the development will naturally be explored through the EOI process, or outlined by Council within the EOI process. The mixture of Affordable Housing types that can be provided is influenced by financial viability, available funding sources, different housing needs within our community and wider planning models to ensure diversity and a healthy interaction with the wider township. All things considered, Affordable Housing developments would most likely comprise a range of housing across the Affordable Housing continuum, and be available to people with a range of incomes (between the very low to medium income brackets).

Examples from Elsewhere

20 *Australia*

25 *Transforming Housing* is currently working with the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation and the City of Darebin on an Affordable Housing Challenge: transforming the air rights above a council parking lot into at least 60 social housing homes, as well as additional affordable rental homes.

Seen here, the City of Port Phillip has also recently completed an affordable housing development above one of its own carparks.



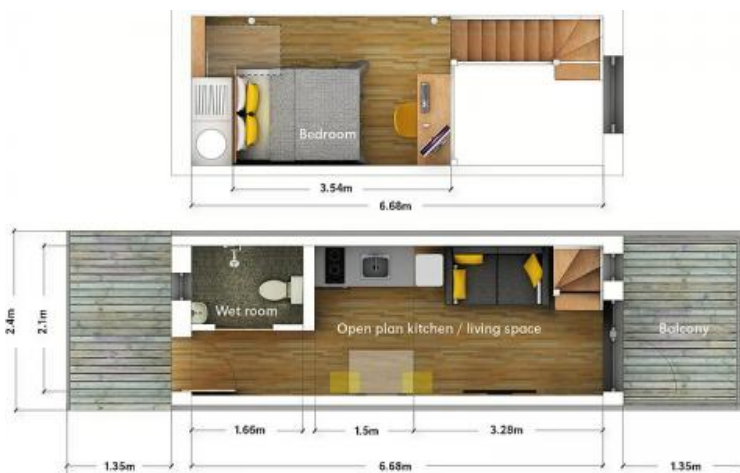
30 *The UK*

35 **Overseas, this seems a more matured** development process. The London firm Zedpods (zedpods.com) are an exciting case in point. Erected on piles above car parks, they preserve both the original parking space whilst offering cheap and quick-to-build housing above. The dead air space above a parking bay becomes a home for someone to live in. Dwellings come with an open-plan kitchen and living room (with an adjoining bathroom and balcony) takes up the space directly above the car parking space, whilst a mezzanine floor above provides a reasonable double bedroom.



They can be built in a single terrace above one line of parking spaces, or in two facing lines with a communal space in the middle if the car park is bigger.

- 5 There are double pods, too – with space for two bedrooms, a larger open-plan dining-living area, and a separate kitchen.



And for the more ambitious-minded car-park owner, the homes can be stacked in two stories, though the construction of these involves resurfacing the car park



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Germany



These wooden structures are an excellent building material which is ideally suited to its pre-fabrication and aesthetic radiance to build quickly houses, also just because of the massive immigration. This project proposes in its feasibility study to create in Koblenz on the area of the university a prototype as a superstructure of the parking lot in front of the university.



Here prefabricated modular components should be used for affordable housing. Due to the high prefabrication wooden structures allow a fast, efficient and economical construction process. In addition to shortening the construction period the modular design allows a big flexibility.



Finally, the planning for this multi-storey residential building is transferable to other plots. The supporting structure allows adaptable floor plans in all three residential floors, which can be divided individually via light partitions. The supporting structure consists of composite floors made of wood and concrete.

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The three upper floors have common areas. Access is via a staircase. If required a lift can be installed. A solar system on top of the roof for heating support is planned. The building is designed for refugees and foreign students, suggesting to build 4 houses in the first phase.

Source by HennerHerrmanns.

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Signed: Cr Simon Richardson