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# Where to next for multi-generational housing?

There are many ways to overcome the barriers to multi-generational housing, including more creative tenure models and design choices.

A BRANZ project has delved into barriers to delivering multi-generational housing in Aotearoa New Zealand. The research defined multi-generational housing broadly, encompassing various household structures such as where multiple generations of related adults live together as well as multi-family households from the same generation.

While focused on barriers, the research also explored specific cultural requirements, design requirements and innovative development models.

## Tenure models driving design outcomes

Tenure differences significantly impact design requirements. Tenures include multi-generational public rental housing, developer-led market multi-generational housing (including build to rent), resident-led private market new builds and resident-led private market renovations. Mixed-tenure options also exist.

Those involved in developing multi-generational housing expressed concerns about future saleability and what to do if family circumstances and configurations change. Developers talked of innovative housing types such as duplexes with interconnecting doors or two-over-one units, which offer flexibility and the



*Penina Trusts multi-generational housing development in Papakura, Auckland.*

potential for multi-generational living while protecting future saleability or tenancy of individual units.

Build to rent can take a longer-term

view, developing a range of flexible alternative models and diverse typologies that can be reconfigured as whānau and community needs change.

### Exterior form and site design considerations

Site size and configuration are crucial for multi-generational living, with many developers saying that, in attempting to deliver multi-generational housing, development economics inevitably intersect and at times conflict with design requirements. This can manifest in different ways, depending on density.

Lower-density developments necessarily require a larger footprint, which can present challenges to accessibility and require flatter contiguous pieces of land. For denser developments, the need to increase yield may impact apartment and unit sizes, with the narrower and smaller units considered financially viable failing to meet the needs of whānau living in multi-generational configurations. Balancing universal design requirements and multi-generational living design requirements with density and site constraints requires creative design solutions.

### Shared amenity and communal spaces

For lower-density developments (for example, 1–2-storey semi-detached dwellings occupied by a whānau or extended family made up of smaller household clusters), the thoughtful configuration of dwellings in relation to one another

is necessary to foster both privacy and a sense of community and togetherness.

Well-designed outdoor areas enhance quality of life and encourage inter-generational connections and are vital for family interaction and play, especially for children. Higher-density developments provide opportunities for amenity space shared at various levels – within multi-generational households, by clusters of dwellings, for the wider development/community and at a neighbourhood or public level such as public parks and reserves.

### Interior design considerations

Internal layouts that maximise space and functionality, especially in kitchens and living areas, are essential for multi-generational households. These may include flexible layouts with larger and multiple living spaces, larger and multiple kitchens, larger bedrooms, wider hallways, toilets separate to showers and the selection of hard-wearing and low-maintenance materials.

The need for multiple kitchen spaces presents a challenge to current resource and building consenting requirements and in the calculation of development contributions.

Incorporating universal design features on the ground floor, including a bedroom

and accessible entry, bathroom and kitchen, caters to diverse and changing household needs.

Depending on the tenure arrangement, designing dwellings with the ability to make changes to the layout over time through minor alterations may also be desirable.

### Specific cultural needs

Specific cultural needs such as those related to tangihanga (funeral rites) in Māori and Pacific cultures should be considered in design and layout. For example, separate spaces for food preparation and consumption from areas for tangihanga may be important for Māori families, while separate toilets from living areas may be important for some Pacific cultures.

Cultural requirements may vary between Māori and various Pacific cultures. However, consistent between these cultural groups is the cultural obligation and desire to accommodate whānau/extended family and the fluctuating occupant numbers that may arise from this arrangement. Flexibility to accommodate whānau dynamics is key.

**NOTE** The wider research team contributing to the research included Dr Kate Bryson, Jacqueline Paul, Dr Charmaine 'Ilaia Talei and Greer O'Donnell. ♦