

Moving to medium-density

As housing pressure mounts, new BRANZ research explores how New Zealand can better adapt to medium-density living.

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POPULATION GROWTH, demographic changes, lifestyle trends and a need for more affordable housing are all driving demand for a greater number of homes in New Zealand.

Housing demand to be met by MDH

Meeting this demand is a complex issue, but part of the problem can be addressed through widespread adoption of medium-density housing (MDH). In order to be successful, however, MDH requires public education and acceptance, updated planning and urban intensification rules, streamlined consenting processes and a building industry proficient in higher-density design and construction techniques.

To help ensure these requirements can be met, BRANZ has a research programme to identify the barriers and technical challenges to MDH and provide practical solutions to overcome these problems.

With its second year almost complete, the programme has published several MDH



Apartments at the Viaduct, Auckland.

reports, including investigations into residents' attitudes, supply and demand, consenting, maintenance and bodies corporate, and acoustic performance. From early in the work, it became apparent that terminology was perhaps MDH's most confusing problem.

Common language

Unfortunately, there are several, often contradictory definitions of MDH in

common use in New Zealand and overseas. Many of these definitions include arbitrary limits for site size, building height, number of units per site or dwellings per hectare. Some definitions mention the type of dwelling, while others focus on the density of dwellings over a specific site size or land allocation.

To provide the industry with a simple description that enables everyone working