

Knox Housing Monitoring Program

Annual Report for 2025

April 2026

Knox City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the City of Knox, the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation.

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Executive Summary

This section summarises the key findings from the 2025 Housing Monitoring Program Report, highlighting major trends in housing supply, delivery, location, diversity, and affordability in Knox. Drawing on planning approvals and building permits, it provides an evidence-based assessment of how housing outcomes are tracking against the six objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*. Notably, 2025 represents the first full year following the implementation of significant Victorian planning system reforms, and the findings provide an early indication of how these changes may be influencing development patterns and housing outcomes in Knox.

Highlight of Key Findings

Housing Supply and Delivery

- **Increase in net new dwellings, but driven by atypical approvals:** In 2025, planning permits yielded 591 net new dwellings, representing a 77% increase from 2024 (333). While this indicates a recovery following the decline between 2021 and 2024, planning permit approvals remain below levels observed between 2014 and 2020. Notably, 2025 recorded the lowest number of permits approved since at least 2014, with a single permit accounting for 55% of total approved dwellings, suggesting the increase may be episodic rather than systemic.
- **Decline in building approvals signals weaker delivery pipeline:** A total of 670 building permits were issued in 2025, a 23% decline from 2024 (869) and below the 9-year average of 785. As building permits provide greater certainty of construction activity, this decline indicates potential constraints in short- to medium-term housing delivery.

Strategic Alignment and Growth Patterns

- **Improved alignment with Housing Strategy Areas, but spatial outcomes remain uneven:** In 2025, 77% of new dwellings were consistent with their designated Housing Strategy Area (HSA), a 9-percentage point increase from 2024 and above the 10-year average of 74%. The Housing Strategy 2015 includes areas without preferred housing character type. 56% of total approved dwellings were located outside HSAs i.e. in areas without a preferred housing character type—the highest proportion in at least five years—indicating that headline alignment improvements do not fully reflect spatial outcomes.
- **Stability and reduction in dwelling density across housing strategy areas:** Dwelling density remained stable or decreased across all housing strategy areas, with no change (0%) in Bush Suburban areas, a marginal increase (4%) in Knox Neighbourhood areas, a 26% decrease in Local Living areas, and an 11% decrease in Activity Areas. Apart from Knox Neighbourhood areas, this pattern of stability and reduction has resulted in increased lot sizes per dwelling across Bush Suburban, Local Living and Activity Areas, supporting enhanced canopy retention, backyard space, and neighbourhood character.

Housing Diversity and Typology

- **Decline in small dwellings approvals and misalignment with household structure trends:** Only 12% of approved dwellings in 2025 were small dwellings (two bedrooms or fewer), representing the lowest level in the past decade, declining from 21% in 2024 and remaining below the 10-year average of 27%. This trend is inconsistent with demographic patterns, where lone-person and couple-only households accounted for 46% in 2021 and are projected to reach 50% by 2031, indicating continued growth in smaller household structures.
- **Continuing imbalance between dwelling size and household composition:** In 2025, 88% of net new dwellings approved were large dwellings (≥3 bedrooms). Over the past decade, the average has been 73% large dwellings,

while 82% of existing dwellings already fall into this category. This demonstrates a clear and continuing imbalance between housing supply and household size trends.

- **Marked decline in apartment approvals limits diversity:** Only nine apartment developments were approved in 2025 (within one planning application), a sharp decline from 39 in 2024 and 59 in 2023. This reduction contributes to the decline in small dwellings and limits the delivery of higher-density, diverse, and more affordable housing options, potentially constraining vibrancy, accessibility of local areas and local activation.

Affordability and Social Housing

- **Improvement in social housing, but substantial shortfall remains:** Social housing increased by 115 dwellings (7.7%) in 2025, reaching 1,606 dwellings—the largest annual increase since at least 2017. The overall shortfall in social and affordable housing decreased from 902 dwellings in 2024 to 747 in 2025, with total provision at 1,687 dwellings against an estimated need of 2,434 dwellings. This progress has also narrowed the shortfall relative to the estimated minimum social housing supply from 298 dwellings in 2024 to 120 in 2025. Despite these gains, a significant supply gap persists.
- **Rental affordability deteriorating faster than purchase affordability:** In 2025, affordability declined in both rental and property markets for very low and low-income households, reversing gains seen in 2024. Between 2020 and 2025, rental affordability declined by around 20 percentage points, including a 14-percentage-point drop between 2023 and 2025. Over the same period, purchase affordability declined by 11 percentage points. These trends indicate that rental affordability is deteriorating more rapidly, intensifying pressure on lower-income households.

Specialised Housing and Location Outcomes

- **Aged care provision remains near minimum benchmark:** In 2025, Knox marginally exceeded the national benchmark of 78 residential aged care places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over, improving from 2024 when the municipality recorded the minimum benchmark level. Despite this improvement, provision remains close to the minimum, indicating limited capacity to meet future demand.
- **Shift toward car-dependent locations:** A total of 70% of net new dwellings in 2025 were located in “Car Dependent” areas, a substantial increase from 28% in both 2024 and 2023, and 24% in 2022. This shift raises concerns as it may reinforce car reliance, reduce access to services and employment, and increase social isolation, living costs, and barriers to ageing in place—especially as the population ages and more households consist of single residents—undermining the strategic objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*.

Environmental Sustainability Design (ESD) and System Performance

- **Strong past ESD performance, but no current data:** Due to the conclusion of the ESD Planning Advice Service contract in 2025, no updated 2024–2025 ESD data against approved planning permits has been collected. However, it is noted that past performance was strong, with 100% compliance against targets for potable water and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction in 2021–2022, 2022–2023, and 2023–2024. Given the historical data, it is expected that planning permits approved in 2025 will continue to meet these requirements.
- **Low VCAT appeals indicate efficiency gains, but alignment challenges remain:** Only seven VCAT appeals were lodged in 2025, the lowest level in at least 12 years and well below the long-term average of 21. However, consistent overturning of Council refusals highlights the need to recalibrate decision-making, strengthen early collaboration, and apply place-based policy frameworks more consistently.

Key Implications for Housing Delivery in Knox

- **Housing supply remains volatile:** The increase in dwelling yield appears episodic and is driven by a single high-yield permit, while declining building permits signal a weaker forward pipeline.
- **Strategic geographic alignment is weakening in spatial terms:** High levels of development outside HSAs reduce policy coherence and limit the effectiveness of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.
- **Dwelling densities are increasing:** Rising densities in established areas risk undermining environmental values and neighbourhood character.
- **Housing diversity remains out of balance with demand:** The dominance of large dwellings due to preference to build large dwellings instead of apartments and smaller dwellings limits housing choice.
- **Affordability pressures are intensifying:** Persistent social housing shortfalls and declining rental affordability are increasing stress on lower-income households.
- **Accessibility outcomes are deteriorating** Growth in car-dependent areas reduces residents' sustainable access to services, employment, and public transport.
- **Aged care housing capacity is constrained:** Residential aged care provision remains insufficient to meet the future demands of an ageing population.
- **Planning system efficiency is improving, but decision-making alignment requires strengthening:** Reduced VCAT appeals indicate procedural efficiency and an appeals system shift, while continued overturns highlight the need for strong and consistent place-based policy and earlier engagement with applicants.

Key Findings by Housing Strategy Objectives

Objective 1: A diversity of housing is provided in appropriate locations

In 2025, planning permits yielded 591 net new dwellings, representing an 77% increase from 2024 (333). While this reflects a rebound following the decline between 2021 and 2024, overall approvals remain below levels observed between 2014 and 2020. Notably, 2025 recorded the lowest number of permits approved since at least 2014, with a single permit (Jenkins Orchard development yielding 362 dwellings) accounting for 55% of total dwellings, indicating that the increase may be episodic rather than systemic.

Building permits declined to 670, a 23% decrease from 2024 (869) and below the 9-year average of 785, signalling potential constraints in the short- to medium-term housing delivery pipeline. Alignment with Housing Strategy Areas improved, with 77% of new dwellings consistent within their designated areas—up 9 percentage points from 2024 and above the 10-year average of 74%. However, 56% of total dwellings were approved outside Housing Strategy Areas, the highest proportion in at least five years, highlighting reduced coherence with policy frameworks and the need for clearer guidance on exceptional approvals.

Dwelling density decreased across two housing strategy areas, with a 26% reduction in Local Living areas and an 11% reduction in Activity Areas. Bush Suburban areas recorded no change, while Knox Neighbourhood areas experienced only a marginal increase of 4%. This pattern of stability and reduction has resulted in increased lot sizes per dwelling across Bush Suburban, Local Living and Activity Areas, supporting enhanced canopy retention, backyard space, and neighbourhood character, and reinforcing environmental and neighbourhood character objectives.

Objective 2: Residential development responds to community needs, and allows people to age-in-place

Housing outcomes in 2025 continue to reflect an imbalance between supply and community needs. Small dwellings (1–2 bedrooms) accounted for only 12% of approvals, the lowest level in the past decade, down from 21% in 2024 and below the 10-year average of 27%. This does not align with demographic trends, where lone-person and couple-only households are projected to comprise 50% of all households by 2031.

In contrast, large dwellings (≥3 bedrooms) represented 88% of approvals, exceeding the 10-year average of 73% and reinforcing an already dominant housing stock where 82.1% of dwellings are large. Apartment approvals declined sharply to just nine dwellings, down from 39 in 2024 and 59 in 2023, limiting the provision of higher-density, diverse, and more affordable housing options. Social housing provision increased by 115 dwellings (7.7%) to reach 1,606 dwellings, reducing the shortfall from 902 dwellings in 2024 to 747 in 2025; however, total provision remains below estimated need (1,687 dwellings compared to 2,434 required). This progress has also narrowed the shortfall relative to the estimated minimum social and affordable housing supply from 298 dwellings in 2024 to 120 in 2025.

Affordability declined in both rental and purchase markets for very low and low-income households, with rental affordability decreasing by approximately 20 percentage points between 2020 and 2025, including a 14-percentage-point decline between 2023 and 2025, while purchase affordability declined by 11 percentage points. Residential aged care provision marginally exceeded the national benchmark of 78 places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over (by 1 place), improving from 2024; however, capacity remains close to the minimum benchmark and insufficient to meet future demand.

Objective 3: Energy, water, and waste efficient design are increased in residential dwellings

Due to the conclusion of the ESD Planning Advice Service contract in 2025, no updated composite data on Environmental Sustainability Design (ESD) measures is available for 2024–2025. Historical performance indicates strong outcomes, with 100% compliance achieved for potable water consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets in 2021–2022, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024. Given the historical data, it is expected that planning permits approved in 2025 will continue to meet these requirements.

In practice, approved developments achieved a 38% average reduction in potable water consumption and a 61% average reduction in GHG emissions in 2023–2024. While these results demonstrate strong recent performance, current ESD outcomes cannot be assessed for 2024–2025.

Objective 4: Housing design in Knox better responds to neighbourhood identity and creates a stronger sense of place

In 2025, 70% of net new dwellings were located in “Car Dependent” areas, a substantial increase from 28% in both 2024 and 2023, and 24% in 2022. In contrast, only 12% of dwellings were located in “Very Walkable” areas and 18% in “Somewhat Walkable” areas. Notably, the concentration of development in car-dependent locations largely occurs within suburbs classified as “Somewhat Walkable”, rather than in the least accessible areas such as Lysterfield, Upper Ferntree Gully, The Basin, and Rowville. This spatial pattern is likely to reinforce car reliance, as access to services and employment is further away. This also undermines the strategic objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*.

Objective 5: Protect and enhance the landscape and environmental values of natural areas of significance

Bush Suburban areas remain relatively protected, with only 30 new dwellings approved in this area compared to 262 across other key Housing Strategy Areas. Density within Bush Suburban areas remained 22 dwellings per hectare between 2024 and 2025, representing no change. This means the environmental values are maintained. More broadly, according to the Lorimer Report (2010 & 2025), a decline of approximately 6% in native tree cover across Knox highlights a gap between policy intent and environmental outcomes. While Council initiatives, including the planting of 15,200 indigenous plants in 2024–25, contribute positively, they have not fully offset vegetation loss, indicating that existing policy and implementation mechanisms may require strengthening to protect biodiversity.

Objective 6: Development responds to neighbourhoods in an integrated and balanced manner

Only seven VCAT appeals were lodged in 2025, the lowest level in at least 12 years and well below the long-term average of 21 cases. However, the consistent overturning of Council refusals highlights the need to recalibrate local decision-making, strengthen early collaboration with applicants, and apply place-based policy frameworks more consistently. Strengthening these areas will be critical to ensuring that streamlined processes deliver context-responsive outcomes aligned with the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

Table 1. Summary of Progress Towards Housing Strategy Objectives in 2025

Council Initiative is on Track/Achieved*		Further Improvement Required*	Results do not Indicate a Definite Direction	
Objective	Indicative Result of Council's Housing Related Action	Target	Achievement Rating	
1	101 approved planning permits could yield 591 net new dwellings in 2025.	N/A		
	77% of dwellings approved aligned with their Housing Strategy Area.	50%		
	Density trends: Low in Bush Suburban & Knox Neighbourhoods; high in Local Living & Activity Areas.	N/A		
2	Dwelling diversity: 12% small dwellings; 88% large dwellings.	45% small dwellings		
	9 apartments approved in 2025; No residential aged care approved in 2025	N/A		
	Residential aged care provision: 79 places per 1,000 people aged 70+.	78 places / 1,000		
	Social housing increased by 115 dwellings; only 22% of rentals and 13% of properties for sale are affordable to very low and low-income households.	- 120 units social & affordable housing; - 747 dwellings to meet demand		
3	No updated composite ESD data available for 2025.	100% compliance potable water & GHG targets		
4	12% of net new dwellings located in "Very Walkable" areas.	≥50%		
5	Development largely directed away from Bush Suburban areas (20 net new dwellings, 3% of total).	N/A		
6	VCAT decided 7 residential planning applications in 2025.	N/A		

*Results influenced by property market conditions, planning reform impacts, and other considerations.

Action Areas (Council-led Initiatives in Response to State Planning Reforms)

- **Strengthen strategic alignment with State planning reforms:** Refine local planning direction to align with updated Victorian Government housing reforms, including *Plan for Victoria* and activity centre–focused intensification, while clarifying preferred dwelling typologies within Strategic Investigation Sites and areas outside the Knox Housing Strategy Areas.
- **Increase housing diversity in line with State targets:** Facilitate greater delivery of small dwellings and diverse typologies to respond to evolving household structures and support State objectives for increased housing supply, including social and affordable housing outcomes.
- **Manage density and environmental impacts under intensified development settings:** Continue to monitor trends arising from State-led reforms and strengthen local planning controls to protect neighbourhood character, tree canopy, and environmental values, particularly in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas.
- **Prioritise accessible and well-serviced locations:** Reinforce policy settings to direct housing growth toward activity centres, transport corridors, and areas with established infrastructure, consistent with Victorian Government directions for sustainable urban consolidation.

- **Embed evidence into strategic planning under a reformed policy framework:** Utilise Housing Monitoring Program findings to inform the review and implementation of key Council strategies, ensuring alignment with evolving State policy, including housing, social and affordable housing, and integrated land use planning frameworks.

Advocacy Opportunities (Council as Advocate)

- **Infrastructure and services provision:** Advocate for increased State investment in public transport, health, education, and local services to support housing growth in Knox, particularly in car-dependent areas, in line with Victorian Government reforms linking infrastructure provision to accelerated housing supply and activity centre intensification.
- **Social and affordable housing delivery:** Continue coordinated advocacy to accelerate Victorian Government investment and delivery of social and affordable housing, aligning with State housing targets and addressing the persistent shortfall across Knox.
- **Residential aged care provision:** Advocate for expanded State-supported residential aged care provision to respond to Knox's ageing population, consistent with integrated housing and health planning priorities under current State reforms.
- **Diverse housing supply:** Encourage industry delivery of apartments and smaller dwellings in appropriate locations—particularly activity centres and Strategic Investigation Sites—to align with State objectives for increased housing diversity, affordability, and consolidation in well-served areas.

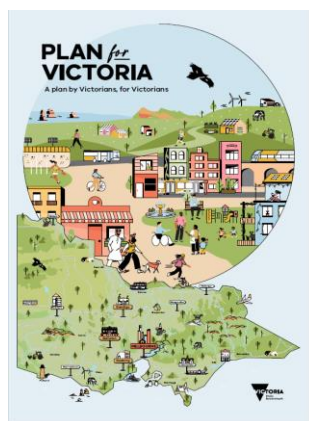
About this Report

This is the 18th annual Knox Housing Monitoring Program Report, providing an evaluation of performance and progress against the six objectives of the [Knox Housing Strategy 2015](#) for the 2025 calendar year. Drawing on planning permit and building approval data, the report offers an evidence-based assessment of housing supply, diversity, location, affordability, and development outcomes across Knox.

Importantly, this is the first Housing Monitoring Program Report prepared following the broad implementation of planning reforms by the Victorian State Government in 2025. These reforms have introduced significant changes to the planning system across metropolitan Melbourne and the State, including expanded provisions to facilitate housing supply, streamlined assessment pathways, increased emphasis on activity centres and well-served locations, and reforms to planning controls influencing density, built form, and development feasibility. Changes to approval processes and the role of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) have also sought to improve efficiency and reduce delays in decision-making.

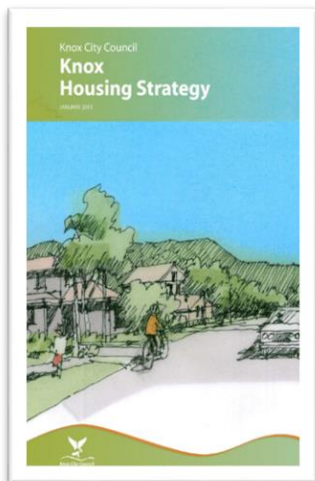
In this context, the 2025 report provides an important baseline for assessing the early impacts of these reforms within Knox. In particular, it enables analysis of whether there is emerging evidence of change in key indicators such as the number of permits approved, dwelling yields, dwelling densities, spatial distribution of development, and VCAT activity. As such, this report not only tracks progress against established strategic objectives but also offers critical insights into how recent planning reforms are shaping housing outcomes at the municipal level.

Policy Context



Plan for Victoria is the Victorian Government's long-term plan to provide more homes, more jobs, and to build great communities across Victoria. The plan's five pillars for action will reshape Melbourne and Regional Victoria. It aims to create a socially inclusive, economically prosperous and environmentally resilient Victoria, connected to global opportunities for all Victorians. Pillars 1 and 3 of the Plan are particularly relevant for housing in Knox, as they focus on delivering more diverse housing choices that are affordable and located in vibrant, resilient and inclusive suburbs, towns and neighbourhoods. The Plan highlights the need for **2.24 million additional homes** in Victoria over the next 30 years and sets out housing targets for each local government area.

The Knox Housing Strategy 2015 is directly consistent with Pillar 1 and 3 of [Plan for Victoria](#) in terms of the proposal to provide a diversity of housing in the appropriate locations. The overall vision of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* is expected to be achieved through six interrelated objectives, including an approach to residential development that accommodates population growth and the community's changing housing needs. The adoption of this balanced approach recognises that some parts of Knox will need to accommodate change, while in other areas change should be gradual and limited in order to protect and enhance Knox's green and leafy character and areas of significance.



Objective 1: A diversity of housing is provided in appropriate locations.

Objective 2: Residential development better responds to the community's current and future needs and allows people to age-in-place.

Objective 3: Energy, water, and waste efficient design is increased in dwellings.

Objective 4: Housing design better responds to neighbourhood identity and creates a stronger sense of place.

Objective 5: Protect and enhance the landscape and environmental values of natural areas of significance.

Objective 6: Development responds to neighbourhoods in an integrated and balanced manner.

The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* divides Knox into four Housing Strategy areas – Bush Suburban, Knox Neighbourhood, Local Living, and Activity Areas (see Map 1) – and provides clear guidance on the types of dwellings that are preferred and permissible in each area.

Each area has different levels of anticipated change and different types of preferred dwellings:

- **Bush Suburban** and **Knox Neighbourhood** areas are expected to undergo less change, preserving areas of environmental significance (including native vegetation and wildlife habitat), landscape value and neighbourhood character.
- **Local Living** and **Activity Areas** are expected to see more change, accommodating medium and higher-density development to provide additional housing capacity and choice to serve the municipality's changing housing needs.

Key strategic documents of Knox City Council, such as the Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan, and Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan, both underscore the continuing importance of housing as a critical area of focus for Council. A key Theme of the [*Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 – 2029*](#) is "*Planning our Future City*". This key theme expressly focuses attention on improving access to a diverse range of housing options through effective planning, advocacy, and identifying opportunities for social and affordable housing supply, as well as ensuring better access to public transport, amongst other important outcomes. The immediate past *Council Plan 2021–2025* commits Council to several actions to achieve positive housing outcomes for the community, including commencing a review of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* (currently underway), and Council's adoption of the [*Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2027*](#) to increase the supply of social and affordable housing, as a key and concrete step towards addressing homelessness in Knox.

Total versus Net Dwelling Changes

Approved planning permits for subdivisions and additional dwellings (excluding planning permits for one new dwelling) are used in this report as an indicator of the dwellings likely to be constructed, and their location¹.

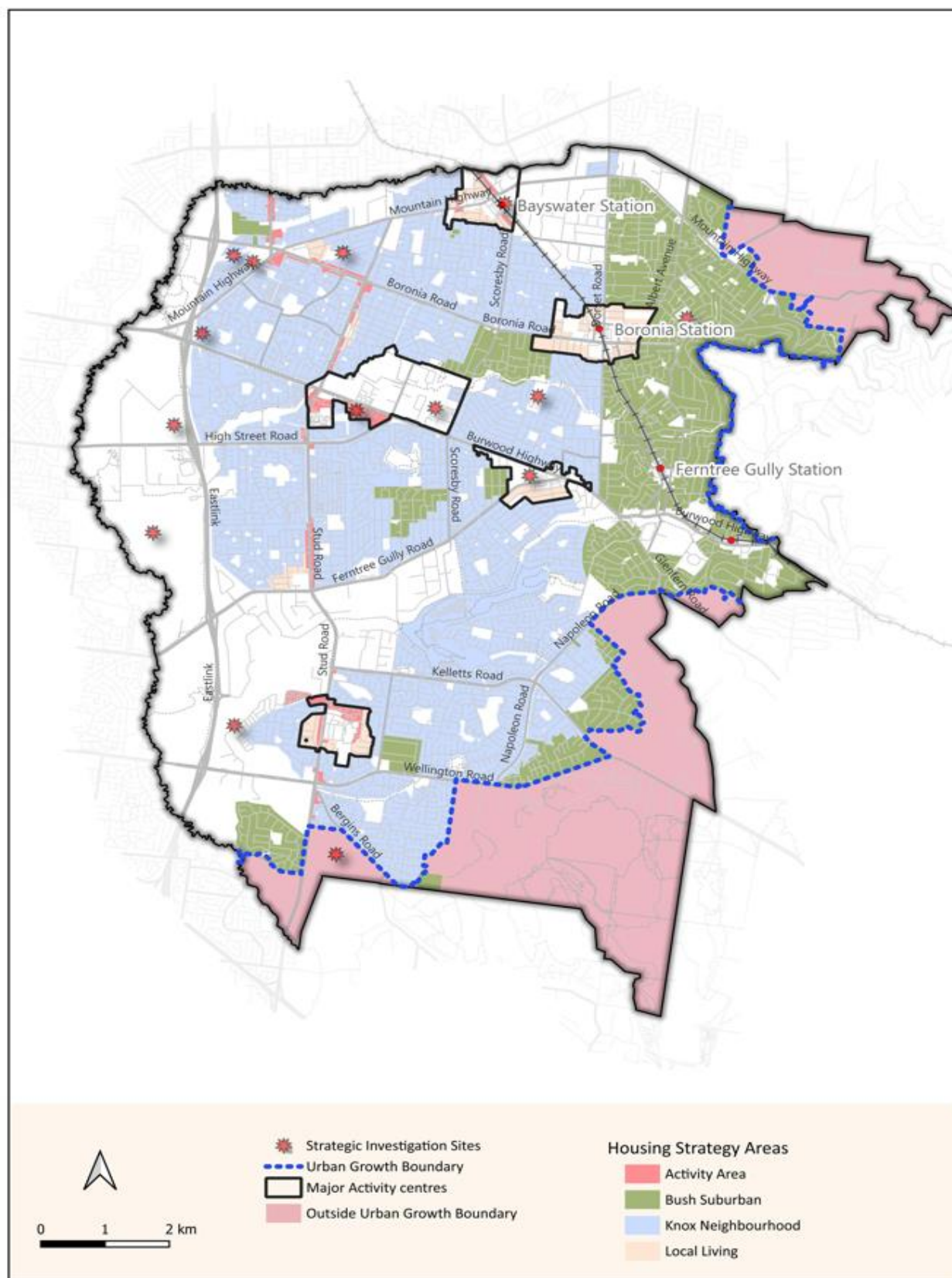
Two approaches are applied to counting the number of dwellings approved in planning permits:

- **Total new dwellings** represent all new dwellings enabled through approved planning permits. This measure does not account for demolitions and provides the most comprehensive information on the size and type of dwellings being approved. Total new dwellings are used to assess how permit approvals align with the objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.
- **Net new dwellings** represent the increase in dwellings enabled through approved planning permits above the existing dwelling stock in Knox. This measure subtracts demolitions from total new dwellings and therefore reflects growth in Knox's housing supply.

For example, an approved planning permit to replace a detached house with five new townhouses would be recorded as five total new townhouses and a net increase of four dwellings.

¹ Approved planning permits are indicative of what may be built, but not all planning permits are enacted. Planning permits usually expire after two years (if not commenced), although extensions can be granted for an additional two years.

Map 1. Residential Areas as defined in the Knox Housing Strategy 2015



Highlights of Residential Planning Permits Approved in 2025

101	planning permits resulting in at least one additional dwelling were approved in 2025. This is the lowest number of planning permits approved since 2014 (12 years).
591	net new dwellings are possible from the planning permits approved in 2025; this is significantly higher than the 2024 figure by 258 dwellings – and the highest since 2021.
75	proposed demolitions possible from approved permits in 2025. The lowest since 2022.
0	beds in residential aged care facilities approved in planning permits in 2025. In 2024 a 96-bed residential aged care facility was approved. In 2022 and 2023, no residential aged care facility was also approved in planning permits.
82%	of net new dwellings possible from approved planning permits were in Wantirna South (388), Wantirna (48) and Bayswater (46). No single dwelling approved in Upper Ferntree Gully and Lysterfield in 2025.
9	apartments were approved in planning permits in 2025. This is significantly lower than the 39 and 59 apartments approved in planning permits in 2024 and 2023 respectively. In 2022, no apartments were approved in planning permits. Only four apartments were approved in 2021.

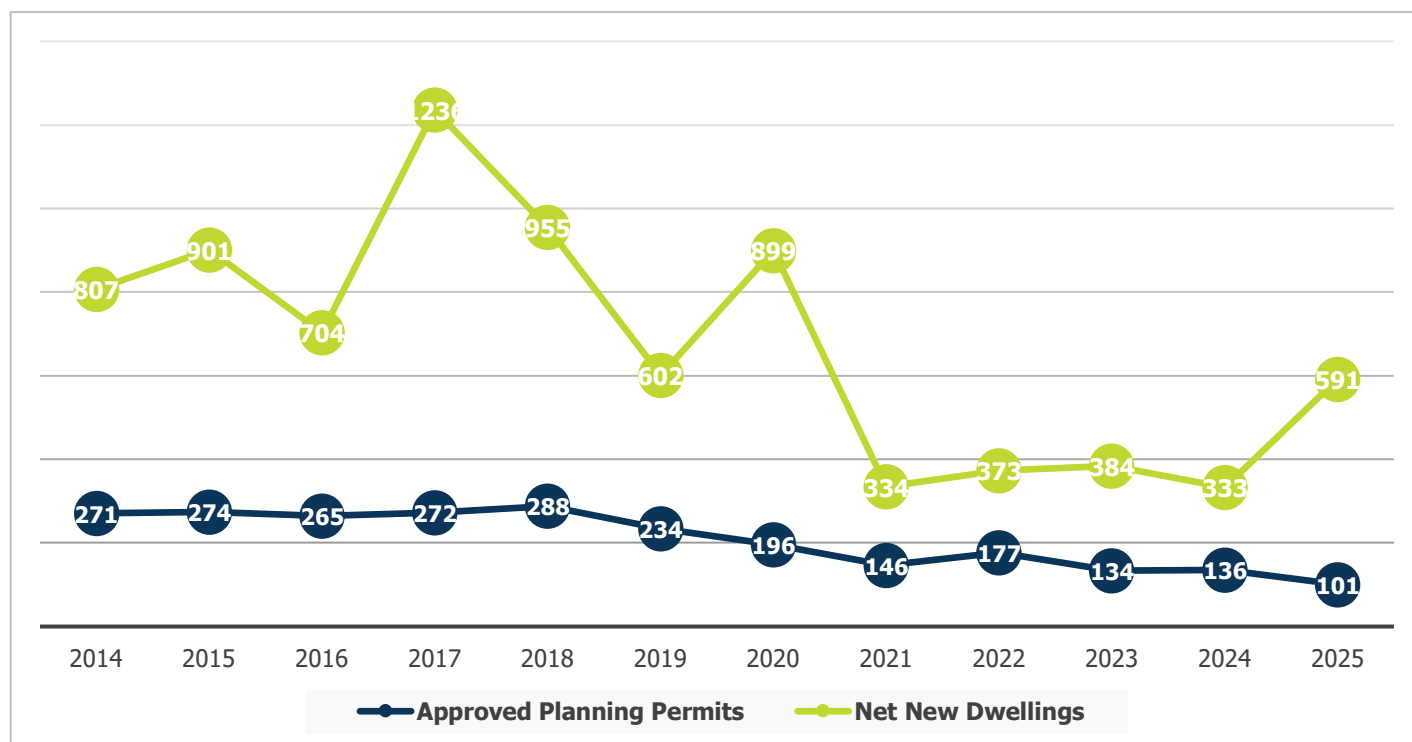
From Figure 1, the potential net growth in dwellings from planning permits approved² in 2025 represents the highest annual number for the period following 2020. Notably, this figure is 258 dwellings higher than the net new dwellings recorded in 2024.

While the number of new dwellings in 2025, as well as over the past four years, remains lower than the approvals observed between 2014 and 2020, the data indicates a rebound in net new dwelling growth in Knox following the significant decline between 2021 and 2024. Indeed, the 2025 net new dwellings are only 11 dwellings fewer than the total approved in 2019.

² This includes planning permits approved by Council at the direction of VCAT.

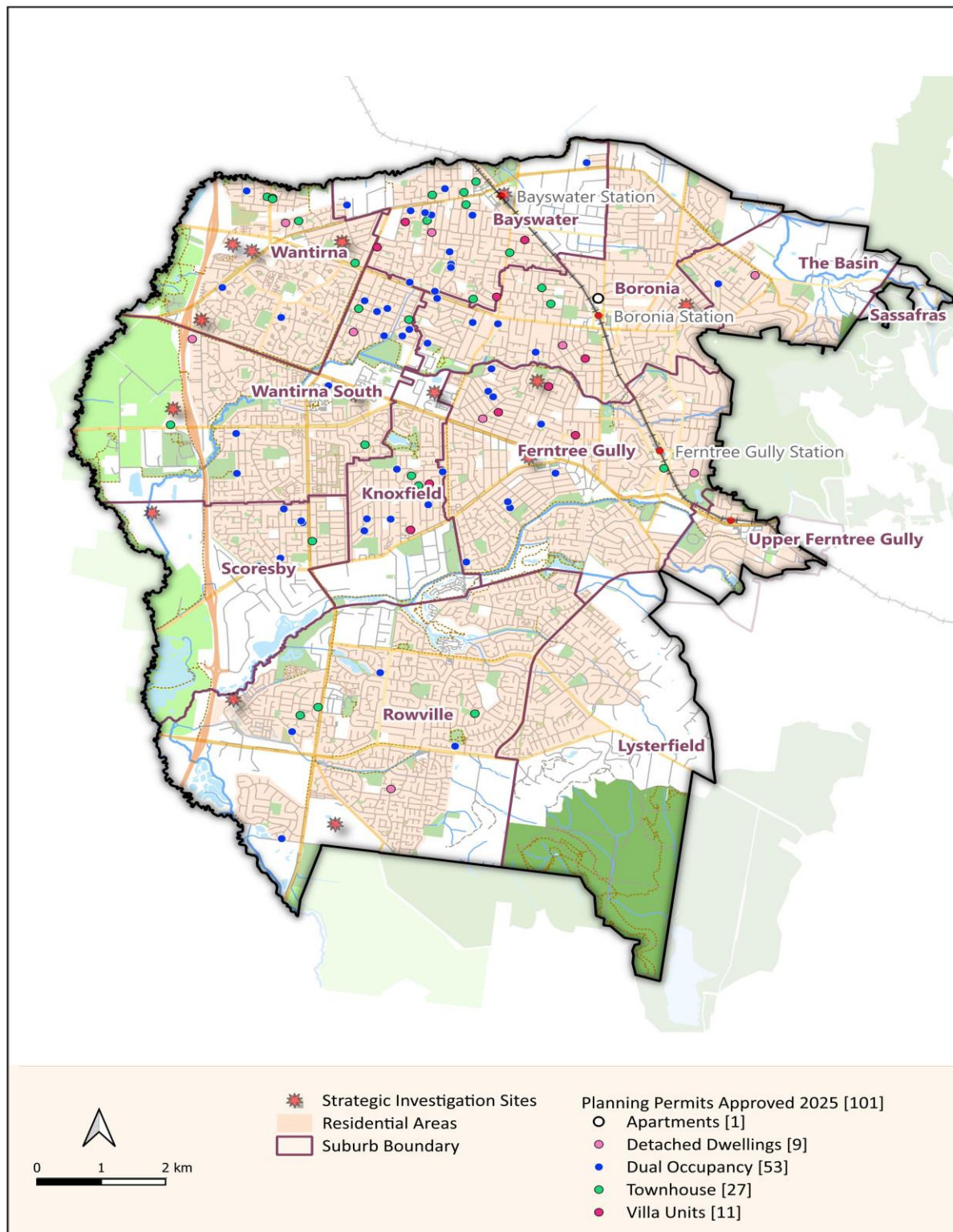
Figure 1. Approved Residential Planning Permits and Net New Dwellings, 2014–2025

The number of **approved permits** in 2025 was the lowest since 2014, while **potential net new dwellings** reached the highest level since 2020.



Map 2. Residential Planning Permits Approved in 2025

These permits will result in at least one additional dwelling if implemented.



Objective 1: A diversity of housing is provided in appropriate locations

Strategic Rationale

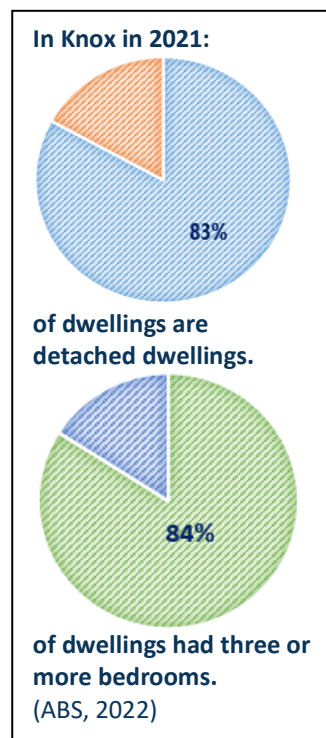
A greater diversity of accessible housing is required to respond to the current household structure and dwelling composition in Knox. Within Knox, 83% of dwellings are detached dwellings, with 84% comprising three bedrooms or more (ABS, 2022). This existing housing stock does not fully reflect the evolving demographic profile of the municipality. Notably, 45.7% of households in Knox are couple-only or lone person households (ABS, 2022), indicating a growing need for smaller and more diverse dwelling types. The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, *Council Plan 2021–2025*, and the current Council and Health and Wellbeing Plan collectively address this imbalance by encouraging the development of a broader range of dwelling types and sizes to meet the changing needs of the Knox municipality. While demand for larger detached houses is expected to continue, increasing the supply of diverse housing options is critical to ensuring that Council caters to present and future residents across all life stages, household sizes and socio-economic groups. Greater housing diversity also contributes to a more multi-faceted and vibrant community. Providing smaller and more varied dwelling types may enhance Knox’s ability to attract young workers, students and other cohorts who typically prefer more compact and accessible housing.

At the same time, Council seeks to protect and enhance the “green and leafy” character valued by the community. Achieving this balance requires directing increased housing densities to Activity Areas and Local Living areas, particularly those close to public transport, shops and services, while discouraging intensive development within Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas to preserve neighbourhood character and areas of environmental significance. In this regard, housing development must align with the planned character of different neighbourhoods. Whilst housing diversity is critically important, the provision of diverse dwelling types should not unduly compromise the established character of Knox’s neighbourhoods and suburbs.

An additional strategic consideration is the spatial distribution of new housing relative to public transport infrastructure. Knox Municipality is largely car dependent; therefore, locating new dwellings closer to train stations, bus stops and key services is essential to achieving improved accessibility outcomes and supporting more sustainable patterns of development.

Performance Indicators

Of the residential planning permits approved in 2025, townhouses constituted 76% of total new dwellings approved (see Figure 2). This represents a substantial increase compared to 35% in 2024, 42% in 2023 and 55% in 2022. With the exception of 2020, townhouses have been the predominant housing typology in Knox since 2015.



A total of 27 townhouse development applications were approved in 2025. Of these, 14 permits were for developments comprising four dwellings or fewer, while 13 permits were for developments of five dwellings or more. Notably, one application accounted for 364 townhouses.

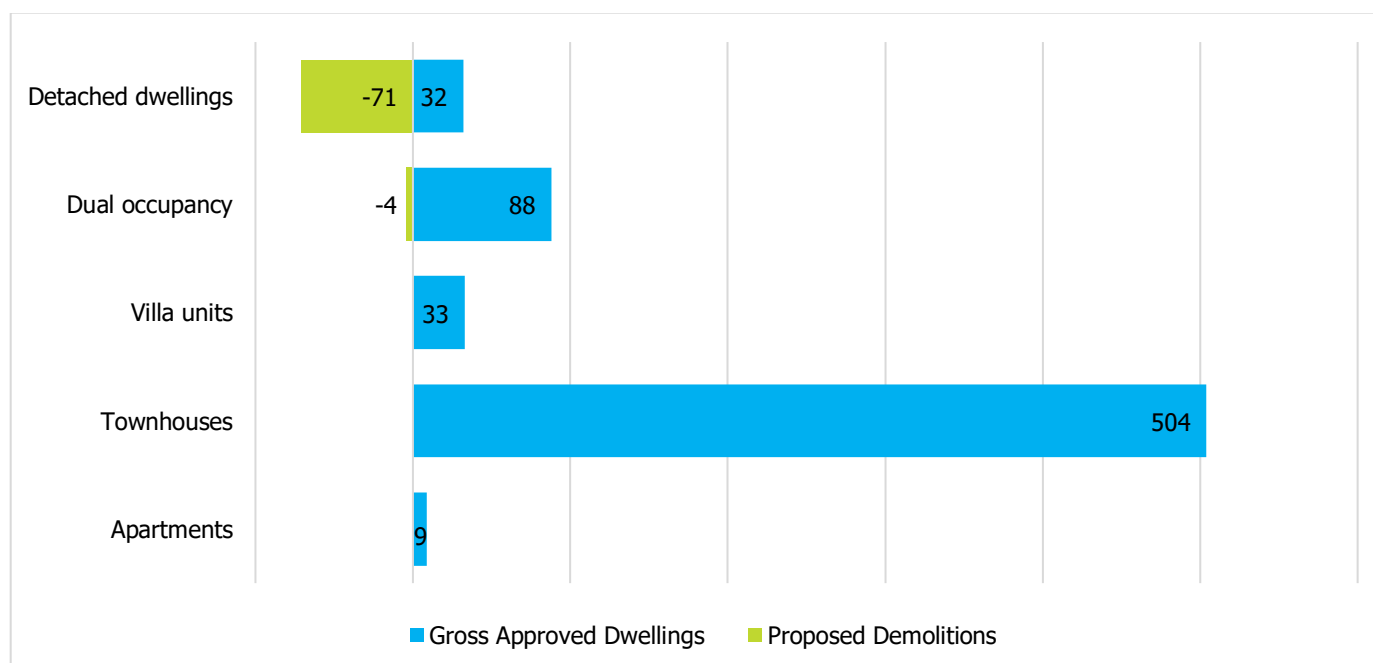
The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* identifies preferred dwelling typologies across the municipality's residential areas. The spatial distribution of approved planning permits provides an indication of the extent to which development outcomes align with these preferred housing types. Table 2 presents the number of dwellings approved in 2025 by Housing Strategy Area, within the four designated Housing Strategy Areas, plus areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary and Commercial Areas, alongside the preferred dwelling typology for each.

The data indicates that some villa units and townhouses were approved within Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas (on lots under 1,000m²), and apartments were approved within Local Living areas. In addition, 374 townhouses were approved outside the designated Housing Strategy Areas³. While these approvals do not fully align with the preferred dwelling typologies for those locations, site-specific characteristics and development design responses may still support the intended neighbourhood and landscape character outcomes.

Figure 3 presents the percentage of total new dwellings that fell within the preferred dwelling type in each Housing Strategy Area. Figure 4 illustrates the total number of new dwellings approved per hectare across the four Housing Strategy Areas. A long-term trend analysis of net growth in dwellings by typology over the past 11 years is provided in Attachment 2.

Figure 2. Approved Total New Dwellings and Demolitions by Housing Type in 2025

Townhouses remained the predominant dwelling type in approved permits, comprising 76% of total new dwellings. Nearly all demolitions recorded in these permits involved detached dwellings, with only 4 demolitions outside this category.



³ The proposal comprises two applications: one for the development of 367 dwellings at a strategic investigation site (Jenkins Orchard), and another for the development of 10 dwellings on a residential land within the Ferntree Gully Neighbourhood Activity Centre boundary.

Table 2. New Dwelling Numbers by Typology Across Knox Housing Strategy Areas

Area Type		Net new dwellings	Total new dwellings	Detached dwellings	Dual Occupancy	Villa units	Townhouses	Apartments /Mixed used
Outside Housing Strategy Areas	All lots - includes rural and other zones	372	374	0	0	0	374	0
Bush Suburban	All lots - min. subdivision	20	30	5	10	4	11	0
Knox Neighbourhood	Lots under 1000m ²	111	166	27	72	29	38	0
	Lots over 1000m ²	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Local Living	All lots - additional controls	35	40	0	3	0	28	9
Activity Areas	All lots - additional controls from local plans may apply	52	55	0	2	0	53	0
Commercial Areas	All lots - additional controls from local plans may apply	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

 PREFERRED HOUSING TYPE
 PERMISSIBLE BUT NOT PREFERRED
 NON-PREFERRED HOUSING TYPE

Figure 3. Proportion of Preferred Dwelling Types Approved Across Housing Strategy Areas (2016–2025)

Since 2018, nearly all new dwellings approved in **Activity Areas** have aligned with the preferred dwelling types specified for their respective Housing Strategy Areas.

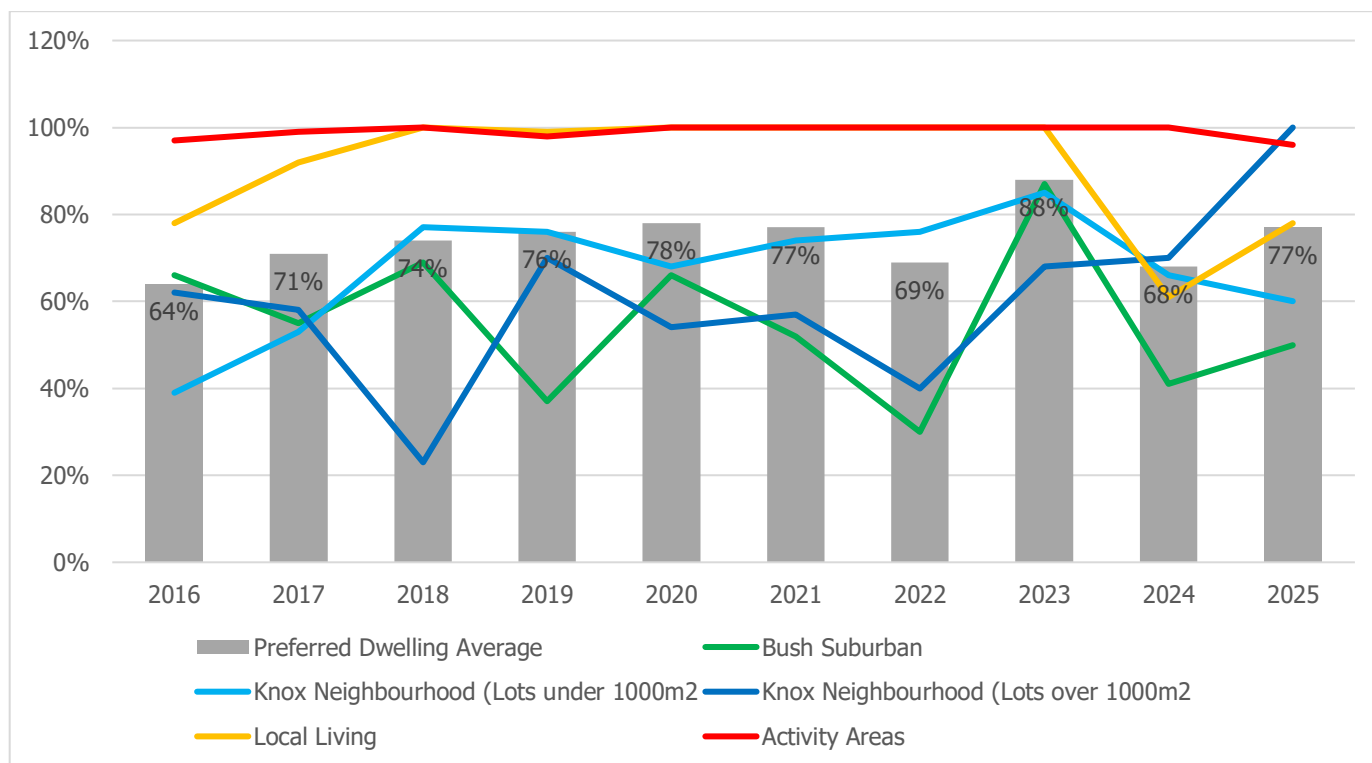
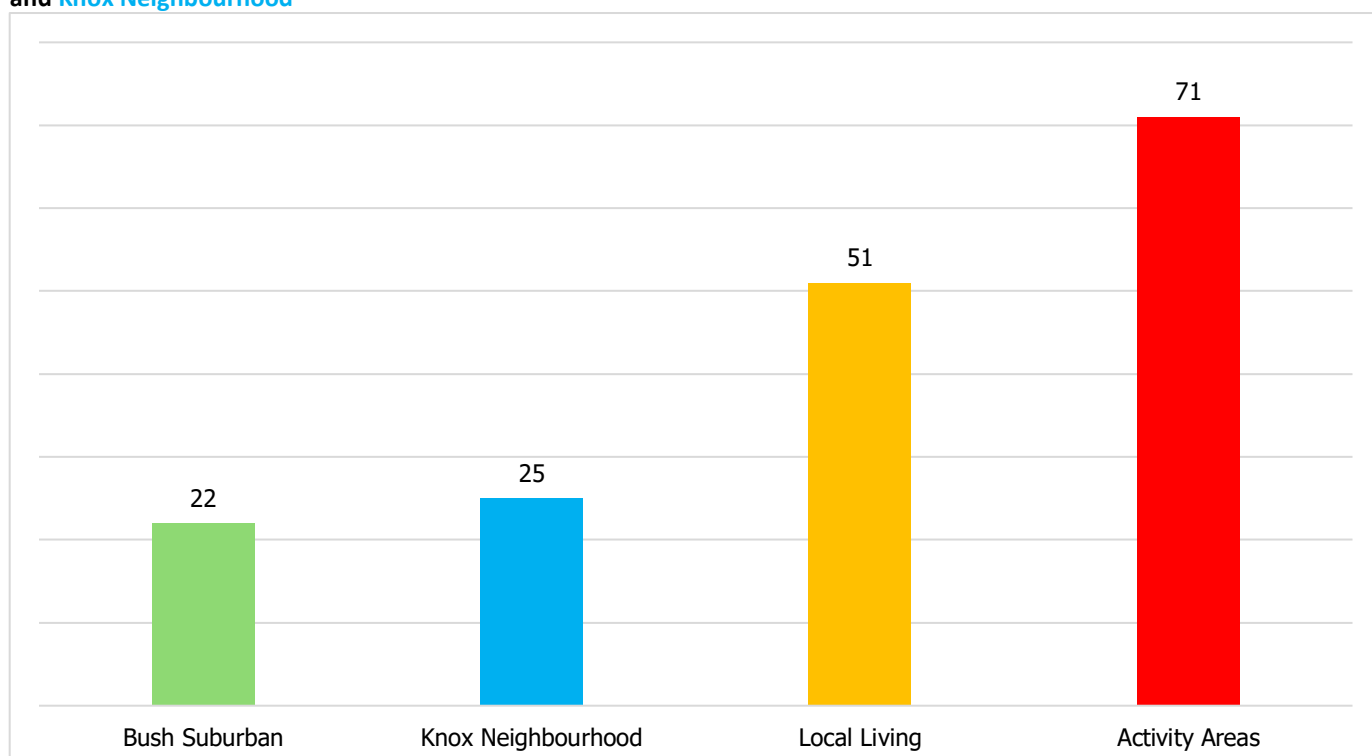


Figure 4. Dwelling Density (Units per Hectare) by Housing Strategy Area in 2025

In 2025, approved dwelling densities were notably higher in **Local Living** and **Activity Areas** compared to the **Bush Suburban area** and **Knox Neighbourhood**



Performance Analysis

Based on the analysis of the planning permits approved in 2025, the usual trend of a net loss of detached dwellings continued. This trend has persisted since 2015⁴, apart from 2020 when there was a net increase in detached dwellings (see Attachment 2 for a time series graph). It is pertinent to note that planning permits approved in 2025 recorded the second lowest net loss in detached dwellings since 2015. Some demolitions of detached dwellings between 2015 and 2018 may also include dual occupancy dwellings due to differences in accounting methods. The lowest net loss of 23 detached dwellings was recorded in 2015, while the highest net loss of 173 detached dwellings was recorded in 2018. On average, 46 detached dwellings have been proposed to be demolished in Knox annually to make way for new developments between 2015 and 2025. On the other hand, 4 dual occupancy dwellings have been proposed to be demolished on average between 2019 and 2025. On the other hand, an average of 4 dual occupancy dwellings have been proposed to be demolished annually between 2019 and 2025.

Since 2015, townhouses have been the most prevalent dwelling typology approved in planning permits. The only discontinuation in this trend occurred in 2020, when the approved subdivision of the former Kingston Links Golf Club site resulted in approximately 500 new detached dwellings, which placed detached dwellings ahead of townhouses for that year⁵. To be specific, 76% of the total new dwellings approved in planning permits in 2025 were townhouses. This represents a substantial increase compared to 35% in 2024, 42% in 2023 and 55% in 2022. If these sites are developed and this trend continues, the 15.8% (ABS, 2022) share of medium density dwellings will increase in Knox.

Only nine apartments were approved in planning permits in 2025. This constitutes a significant decline from the 39 apartments approved in 2024 and 59 approved in 2023. However, this decline is still an improvement compared to 2022, when no single apartment was approved. High density development such as apartments contribute to vibrant local areas and create genuine housing choice including affordability (Department of Transport and Planning, 2025). Hence, the low approval of apartments in planning permits is likely to affect the delivery of more diverse and affordable homes in Knox.

Unfortunately, no residential aged care facility was approved in 2025. While this represents a major departure from the 96-bed residential aged care facility approved in planning permits in 2024, it is in line with the trend in previous years, as no residential aged care facility was approved in planning permits in 2023 and 2022. It is worth noting that in the not-too-distant past, residential aged care approvals in Knox included 230 rooms, 226 rooms and 214 rooms in planning permits approved in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Over the past decade, 2025 (along with 2021) recorded the third highest average score of 77% for dwellings approved in the preferred dwelling typology in the four⁶ main Knox Housing Strategy Areas. This marked a 9-percentage point improvement over the score in 2024. Over the last decade, the highest average score was achieved in 2023, with 88% of approved dwellings aligning with the preferred typology. The lowest average score of 64% was recorded in 2016. There was an incremental improvement in the alignment of approved dwellings with the preferred Housing Strategy Areas from 2016 to 2020. However, this trend reversed between 2021 and 2024, except for 2023. It is positive that this rebound in dwellings approved in their preferred housing strategy areas has occurred.

⁴ However, it is important to note that between 2015 to 2018 all proposed demolitions in planning permits were assumed to be detached dwellings. This is not entirely the case. For instance, between 2022 and 2025, on average 93.7% of dwellings proposed to be demolished were detached dwellings. This means, on average 6.3% of proposed demolitions in planning permits were dual occupancy within the same timeframe.

⁵ The 500 detached dwellings approved at Kingston Link were not counted among the 899 approved dwellings in 2020.

⁶ Although we have four housing strategy areas, Knox Neighbourhood area is sub-divided into Small (Lots under 1,000m² and Large Lots over 1,000m²). Different dwellings are therefore preferred in the two.

The preferred dwellings approved in Bush Suburban areas, Knox Neighbourhood areas (Lots over 1000m²) and Local Living areas improved compared to the scores in 2024. Knox Neighbourhood areas (Lots over 1000m²) recorded the most significant improvement (30%) over its 2024 outcome. However, only one dwelling was approved across the entire area in 2025 (and it was located in the preferred area), resulting in a score of 100%. Local Living also recorded a 17-percentage point improvement, thus bouncing back from its lowest performance in 2024. Unfortunately, preferred dwellings approved in Activity Areas and Knox Neighbourhoods (Lots under 1,000) recorded marginal declines in 2025. Activity Areas missed their usual score of 100% of preferred dwellings approved by just 3 percentage points—the fourth time this has occurred over the last decade.

A significant 56% of total dwellings approved in 2025 were located outside the Housing Strategy Area (HSA), representing a substantial increase from 6% in 2024 and 17% in 2023. To contextualise, 54% of dwellings approved outside the HSA were situated within one of Knox's Strategic Investigation Sites (i.e. Jenkins Orchard), while the remaining 2% were located on residential land within the Ferntree Gully Neighbourhood Activity Centre boundary. However, the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* does not provide explicit guidance on preferred dwelling typologies for either the Strategic Investigation Sites or areas outside the four primary HSAs of Knox. A future Council initiative should clearly define the preferred dwelling typologies for these sites, and the ongoing review of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* provides an opportunity to address this lacuna, contingent on the Strategic Investigation Sites being available for development.

Consistent with previous trends, planning permits approved in 2025 are expected to yield comparatively fewer dwellings per hectare in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas, and significantly higher dwellings per hectare in Local Living and Activity Areas (see Figure 4 for further detail). This outcome aligns with the strategic direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, facilitating higher density development within Local Living and Activity Areas, while maintaining lower density outcomes in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas. This pattern supports the protection of neighbourhood and landscape character within these areas.

To contextualise these findings, the average dwelling in a Bush Suburban area is situated on a larger parcel of land (~461m²), compared to approximately ~141m² in Activity Areas (see Figure 19, Attachment 2). This provides greater capacity for the retention and establishment of canopy trees in Bush Suburban areas relative to Activity and Local Living areas. It also supports the protection of areas of biological significance, consistent with the intent of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*. In this regard, the observed outcomes are positive.

Lot sizes per dwelling increased by between 2% and 34% across three of the four Housing Strategy Areas between 2024 and 2025, with only a marginal reduction of 5% recorded in Knox Neighbourhoods. In absolute terms, lot sizes increased by 10m² in Bush Suburban areas, 50m² in Local Living areas, and 4m² in Activity Areas. These changes are consistent with established trends.

The marginal increase in lot sizes per dwelling in Bush Suburban areas may further enhance opportunities for canopy tree retention and the protection of environmentally significant areas. If sustained, this trend will continue to support the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* objectives relating to canopy cover and biodiversity protection.

These changes in lot size are reflected in corresponding shifts in dwelling density. Between 2024 and 2025, dwelling units per hectare decreased by 26% in Local Living areas and 11% in Activity Areas, while Knox Neighbourhoods recorded an increase of only 4%. No change was observed in Bush Suburban areas over the same period. For context, between 2023 and 2024, dwelling density declined by 5% in Knox Neighbourhoods and 17% in Local Living areas, while Activity Areas recorded a modest increase of 6%. The only significant increase during that period occurred in Bush Suburban areas, where dwelling units per hectare rose by 38%.

These incremental fluctuations in dwelling density are expected and broadly consistent with recent trends. Of greater concern, however, is the spatial distribution of development. In 2025, approximately 70% of proposed dwellings are located in car-dependent areas, while only 12% are situated in highly walkable areas of Knox. This raises strategic concerns regarding accessibility, sustainability, and alignment with broader planning objectives.

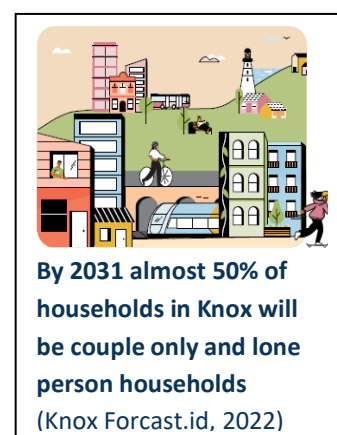
Objective 2: Residential development better responds to the community's needs, and allows people to age-in-place

Strategic Rationale

Residential development needs to provide greater housing choice and more opportunities for Knox residents to live in an affordable home that suits their needs at different stages of life. In particular, Knox requires a greater supply of small houses (one to two bedrooms), both now and in the future, to accommodate the growing number of smaller households. This is increasingly important as almost 50% of households in Knox are projected to be couple only and lone person households by 2031 ([Forecast.id](#), 2022). This projection indicates that couple-only and lone person households will surpass households with children.

In response to this shift, the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* seeks to better align the mix of available dwellings with the current and future housing needs of the community by encouraging the development of more small dwellings. These dwellings can meet the needs of smaller households while also improving housing affordability. Affordability is particularly important as larger detached dwellings are becoming increasingly out of reach for a growing proportion of new homebuyers. Smaller dwellings are generally less expensive to purchase and maintain, providing greater flexibility and choice for young people seeking to enter the housing market, elderly residents planning to downsize, and others looking to reduce their housing expenditure or overall cost of living.

Ensuring a greater supply of smaller dwellings is also important to enable Knox residents to remain part of their community as they age (aging-in-place), rather than being compelled to relocate outside the municipality to find suitable and affordable accommodation. Increasing the supply of smaller houses in Knox would therefore help meet the housing needs of many residents. The provision of smaller dwellings and residential aged care homes directly contributes to expanding housing options for homebuyers seeking smaller homes and for elderly residents seeking to downsize. A more diverse housing stock is therefore essential to support demographic change, improve affordability, and enable residents to age-in-place within their local communities (Department of Transport and Planning, 2025).



Performance Indicators

Knox Housing Capacity

Understanding Knox's capacity to accommodate additional dwellings is critical for managing residential development across the municipality. The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* estimated that, theoretically, Knox had the capacity to accommodate 36,362 additional dwellings (in addition to the existing dwellings in Knox as of 2015). If each lot were developed to its full capacity within the constraints and parameters of the Knox Planning Scheme at that time, this would result in a total of approximately 92,500 dwellings across the municipality (see Figure 5).

Based on the Victorian Government's *Victoria in Future (VIF)* population and household projections⁷ ([Department of Transport and Planning, 2023](#)), the forecast housing growth in Knox can be accommodated within the capacity identified in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* until 2036, and potentially beyond (see Figure 5). These capacity estimates are based on broad assumptions within the policy framework of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, the [Knox Residential Design Guidelines 2015](#), the Knox Planning Scheme, and other relevant Council strategies and plans. Consequently, estimates may change if the policies or planning controls underpinning them are significantly revised.

Recent planning reforms introduced by the Victorian Government, including Planning Scheme Amendment VC257 and the Townhouse and Low-Rise Code, are expected to influence residential development outcomes in Knox. These reforms facilitate increased housing density around activity centres and transport corridors, and streamline approval processes for medium-density housing, which may alter how the municipality's theoretical housing capacity is realised (Department of Transport and Planning, 2025).

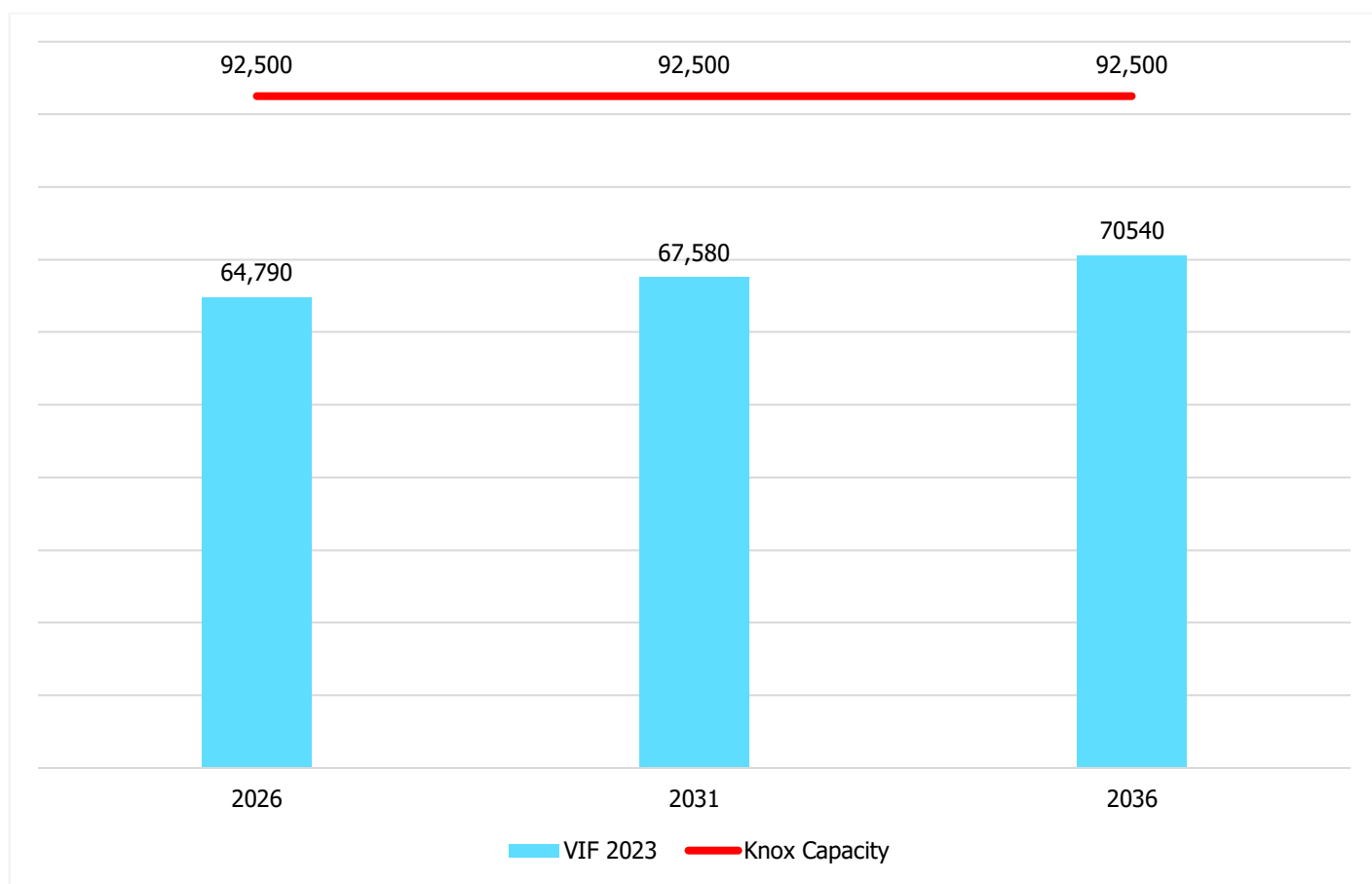
A housing capacity assessment⁸ undertaken on behalf of Council in 2025 indicates that Knox has a net capacity of 34,238 additional dwellings to 2036 and 28,277 additional dwellings to 2051. However, the Victorian Government, through [Plan for Victoria](#), has set a housing target of 43,000 additional dwellings for Knox by 2051 (Department of Transport and Planning, 2025, p. 31). Therefore, the State housing target and recent planning reforms suggest that additional housing capacity may need to be realised through increased redevelopment and higher dwelling densities in appropriate locations across the municipality. Ongoing monitoring will therefore be essential to understand how these policy changes influence residential development patterns and the long-term housing capacity of Knox.

⁷ VIF dwelling projections are applied here as they are calculated using a top-down approach. In contrast to the forecasting method employed by id Consulting Pty Ltd (abbreviated as .id in some sections of this report) on behalf of Council, in which only local factors are taken into account, the VIF projections include assumptions about state level growth and allocate this to local government areas.

⁸ The Housing Capacity Assessment was done to inform the ongoing Review of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

Figure 5. Forecast Dwelling Capacity in Knox

The latest **VIF forecast** for dwelling capacity aligns with the **estimates** in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and is achievable within existing planning provisions.



Since the above projections are based on theoretical assumptions, it is important to test them against actual outcomes. In this regard, projected dwelling growth should be assessed against recent housing development data. One effective method for doing so is to analyse building permit data in Knox, which reflects the number of dwellings for which construction has been formally authorised. Building permits confirm that development plans and specifications have been submitted to comply with building regulations and authorise construction to commence on site. Consequently, building permits provide a more reliable indicator of actual dwelling growth than planning permits, which represent potential development over the next two to four years if approved plans are fully enacted.

Analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that building permits were granted for 7,069 dwellings in Knox between 2017 and 2025—a nine-year period (ABS, 2025). This equates to an average of 785 dwellings approved per year. However, this figure overestimates net dwelling growth, as ABS building permit data does not account for demolitions⁹. To estimate the net increase in dwellings, it is necessary to consider the number of dwellings removed to make way for new development. In this report, the correlation between new dwellings and demolitions recorded in planning permits has been applied as a proxy.

⁹ But from the planning permit we know that some existing dwellings are demolished for the construction of new ones.

The analysis indicates that, on average, one dwelling was demolished for every six dwellings approved in planning permits between 2017 and 2025. Applying this ratio to building permit data produces an estimated net average of 652 new dwellings constructed per year in Knox during this period. This figure sits between the Victoria in Future projection of 821 dwellings annually and the forecast of 636 dwellings per year, calculated by id Consulting Pty Ltd¹⁰ on behalf of Council (see Figure 6¹¹). The close alignment with these independent projections suggests that the methodology applied in this report provides a reliable¹² estimate of actual dwelling growth.

Overall, the analysis indicates that net dwelling growth in Knox between 2017 and 2025 has been broadly consistent with forecast projections, falling between the Victorian Government's Victoria in Future estimates and the Council's independent capacity assessment. This alignment suggests that, while actual development is influenced by demolitions and site-specific factors, the methodology applied provides a reliable estimate of housing delivery. Ongoing monitoring of building approvals, demolitions, and planning permit activity will be essential to ensure that Knox continues to meet projected housing demand and aligns with strategic objectives outlined in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*.

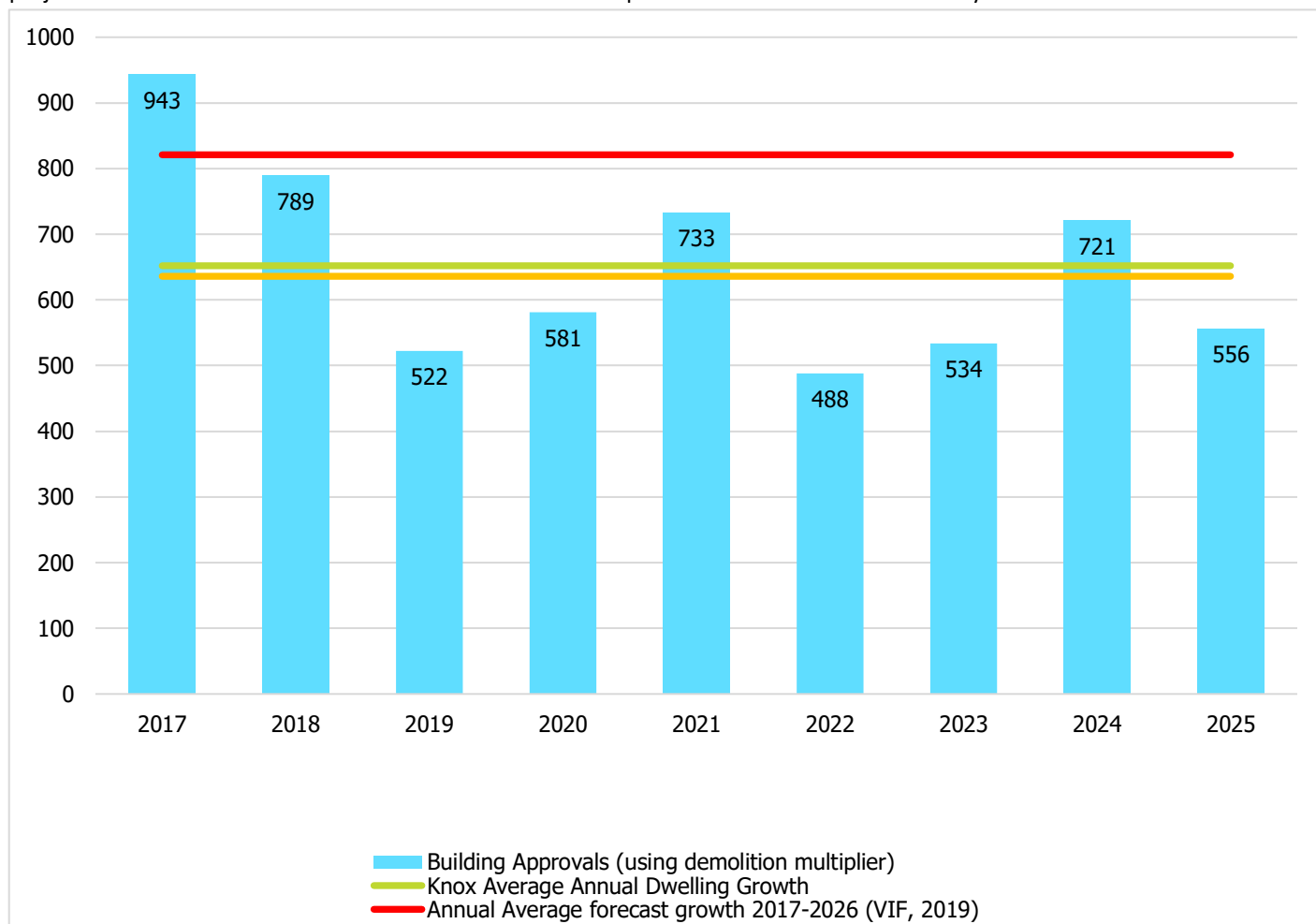
¹⁰ id Consulting Pty Ltd is abbreviated as .id in some sections of this report.

¹¹ The significant alignment between building permit data and the dwelling forecasts prepared by the Victorian Government is anticipated because building approvals are taken into consideration in computing these forecasts.

¹² At least using the planning permits to demolition ratio and transferring that to building permits.

Figure 6. Annual Average Building Permits Growth compared to Projected Dwelling Growth in Knox

The **number of new dwellings** in Knox, derived from building permits (adjusted for demolitions), broadly aligns with growth projections from both the Victorian Government and an independent forecast commissioned by Council.



Dwelling Size (Number of Bedrooms)

The size (number of bedrooms) of proposed dwellings is the next issue of focus. To contextualise this analysis, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data (published in 2022) shows that lone-person and couple-only households account for 45.7% of all households in Knox. The same data indicates that, as of 2021, 82.1% of existing dwellings in Knox contain three or more bedrooms (referred to as large dwellings in this report). Similarly, over the past nine years (2016–2024), an average of 73% of dwellings approved through planning permits were also large dwellings with three or more bedrooms.

In 2025, only 12% of dwellings approved through planning permits were small dwellings, with the remaining 88% classified as large dwellings. This represents the lowest proportion of small dwellings approved in Knox over the past decade. By comparison, the second-lowest proportion occurred in 2020 (13%), while the highest occurred in 2017 (47%) (see Figure 8). The 2025 approval rate represents a decline of 6 percentage points from 2024 and a more substantial decline of 17 percentage points from 2023 in the proportion of small dwellings approved. This trend is concerning. While small households (lone-person and couple-only households) account for nearly half of all households in Knox, the existing housing stock is dominated by large dwellings, with 82.1% containing three or more bedrooms. In addition, large dwellings have consistently comprised the majority of new approvals over the past decade (73% on average).

Overall, these patterns indicate a mismatch between household structure and dwelling size in Knox. Increasing the supply of smaller dwellings will be important to better align the housing stock with the needs of lone-person and couple-only households.

Figure 7. Net Dwelling Growth by Bedroom Count

Planning permits approved in 2025 would result in **12%** of net new dwellings being small dwellings (two bedrooms or fewer).

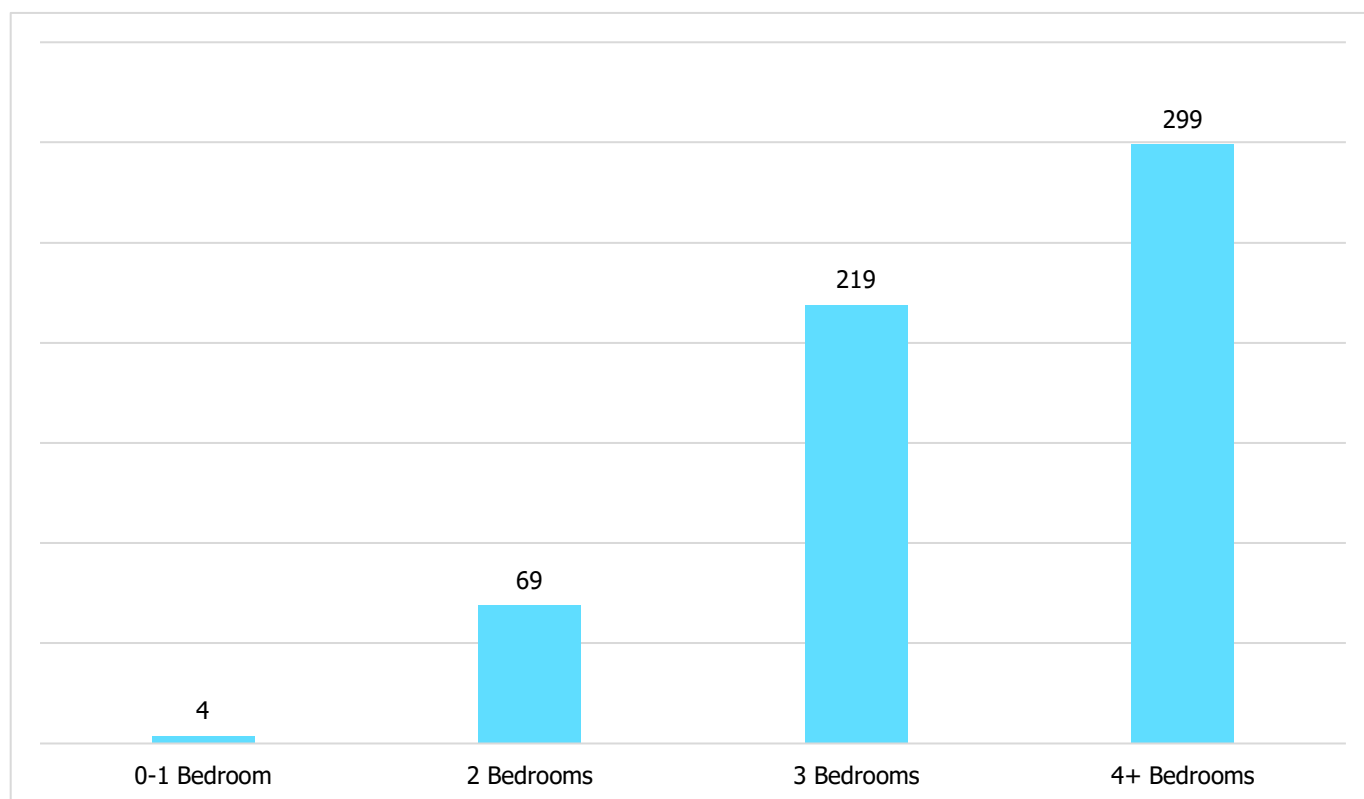
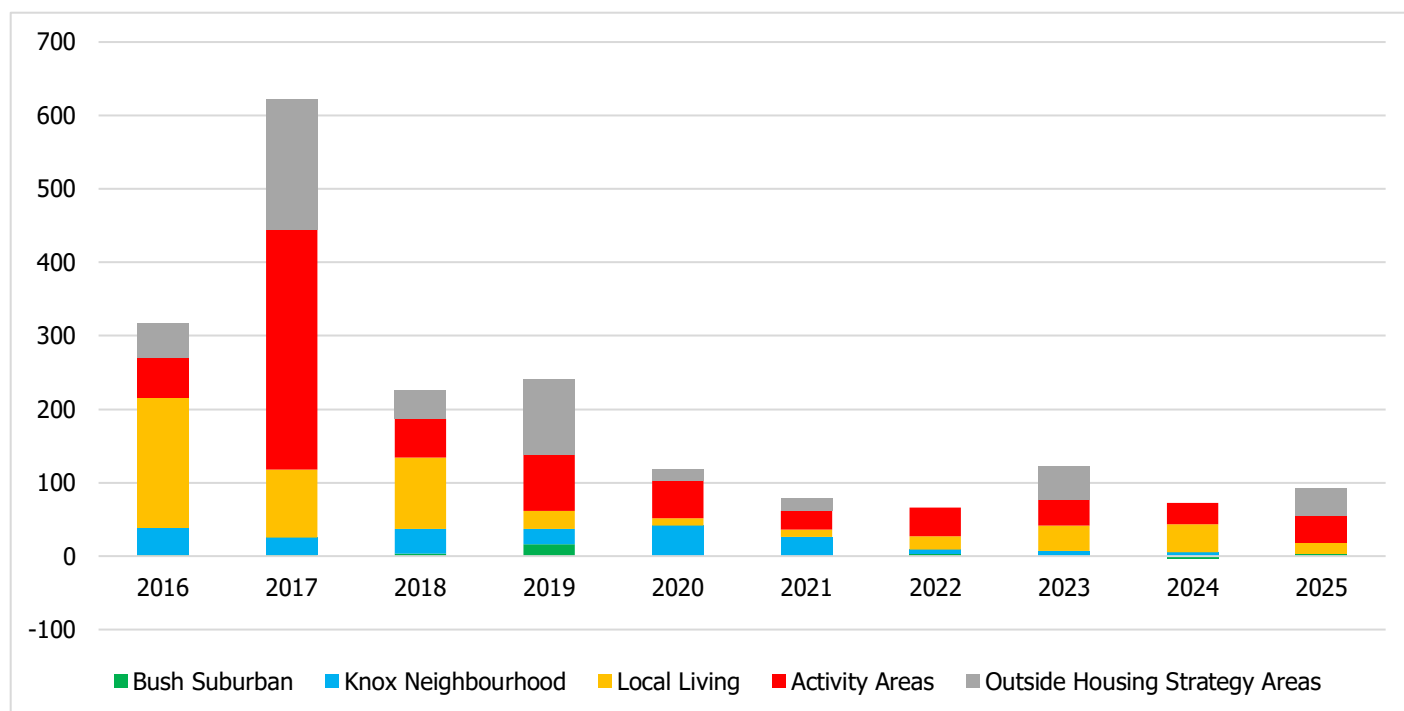


Figure 8. Net Growth in Small Dwellings (≤2 Bedrooms)

In 2025, approved planning permits delivered a below-average number of net new small dwellings over the past ten years.



Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF)

Ensuring access to dignified accommodation for older people is an increasingly important policy consideration in modern society ([Home Care Assistance, 2023](#)). Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) play a critical role in supporting older residents who require ongoing care and accommodation. As the population of Knox City Council continues to age, the availability of RACF places will become progressively more important to meet the needs of senior residents.

Updated data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare confirms that, as of June 2024, Knox had 1,696 operational residential aged care places, typically comprising a single room with an ensuite (AIHW, 2025). Population estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that, as of 30 June 2024, 21,371 residents in Knox were aged 70 years and over¹³ ([ABS, 2024](#)). This equates to a provision ratio of 79 RACF places per 1,000 residents aged 70 years and over in Knox (see Figure 9). The 2025 provision ratio is the second lowest recorded since 2015. As shown in Figure 9, it represents a marginal improvement over the 2024 ratio of 78 places per 1,000 residents aged 70 years and over, which was the lowest level recorded in the past eleven years. The slight improvement in 2025 is attributable to the addition of a new residential aged care facility in Lysterfield—Arcare Lysterfield—which provides 75 additional RACF places.

The Australian Government’s target provision ratio for operational residential aged care places is 78 places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over (ACFA, 2021)¹⁴. Knox is therefore marginally above the national target provision ratio in

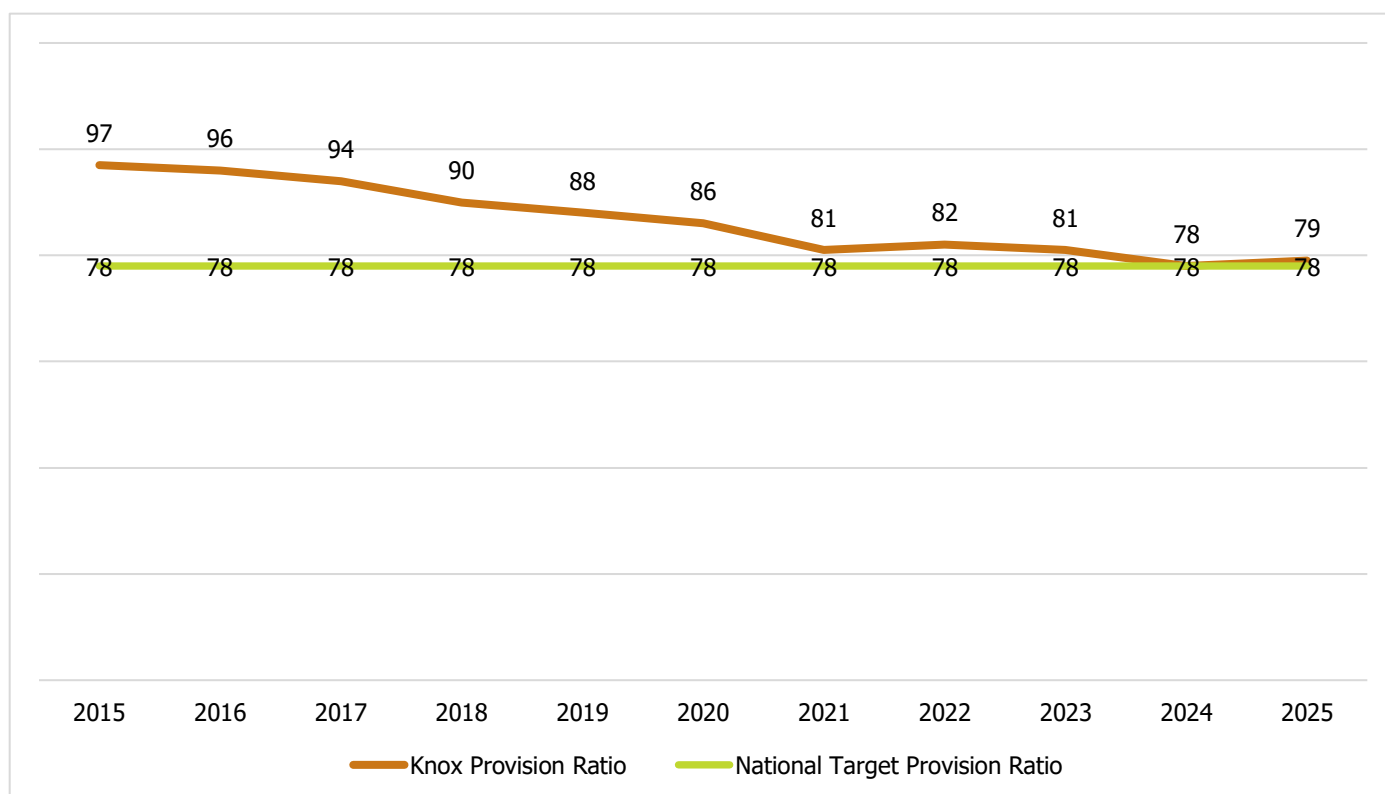
¹³ 2024 population estimate used as 2025 ABS update is pending.

¹⁴ The national target for home care is 45 per 1,000 residents 70 years and over. However, the home care target ratio has already been exceeded, reaching 53.6 mainstream home care packages available for every 1,000 people aged 70 and over as of 30 June 2020 (ACFA, 2021). The residential aged care places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over was reduced from 86 places per 1,000 residents aged 70 and over to the current 78 places per 1,000 people 70 years and over. This report has cited the most current [ACFA report](#).

2025 (see Figure 9). However, this represents a departure from the period 2015–2020, during which Knox consistently exceeded the target by a more substantial margin. Since 2021, the municipality has remained only narrowly above the minimum provision benchmark. Without additional investment in RACF capacity over the coming years, Knox may fall below the target provision ratio. With the exception of 2022 and 2025, the provision ratio has generally trended downward since 2015. This trend reflects the fact that while the population aged 70 years and over has continued to increase annually, the supply of residential aged care places in Knox has not expanded at a comparable rate.

Figure 9. Residential Aged Care Provision in Knox, 2025

In 2025, Knox slightly exceeded the **minimum benchmark**, providing **79 residential aged care places** per 1,000 residents aged 70 years and over.



Social and Affordable Housing

This section assesses the current supply of social and affordable housing in Knox City Council and compares it with the municipality’s projected minimum housing need. The *Plan for Victoria* seeks to ensure that all Victorians have access to affordable housing. Without social housing, very low-income households in Knox City Council would be unable to access secure and affordable housing. Social housing therefore plays a critical role in supporting households with limited financial capacity. As of 30 June 2025, Knox had 1,606 social housing dwellings, according to data from Homes Victoria. This represents an increase of 115 dwellings (7.7%) between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025. Notably, this is the first increase of more than 100 dwellings in a single financial year since at least 2019¹⁵.

¹⁵ Housing Monitoring Program reports before 2019 discussed social housing without specifying existing stock or annual additions in Knox.

By comparison, growth in the social housing stock over recent years has been modest. Between June 2020 and June 2023, the stock increased by an average of 13 dwellings per financial year. More specifically, the number of social housing dwellings increased by 19 dwellings between July 2022 and 30 June 2023, and by four dwellings between July 2021 and 30 June 2022. The stock also declined by 31 dwellings between 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2024. According to Homes Victoria, this decline was attributable to business-as-usual (BAU) maintenance and upgrade works, which temporarily removed some dwellings from the available housing stock until works were completed.

Drawing on accessible data on social housing and affordable housing lettings from the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (via Homes Victoria), and comparing these figures with the minimum supply benchmarks established in the Knox [Minimum Supply of Social Housing Analysis](#) (2022) and the [Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027](#), a gap remains between current supply and estimated need. In 2025, the gap between the actual availability of social and affordable dwellings in Knox and the estimated need was 747 dwellings¹⁶, an improvement from 902 dwellings in 2024.

Based on the minimum supply analysis, Knox was projected to require 1,807 social and affordable dwellings by 2025. However, the current combined availability of social housing and affordable private rental lettings is 1,687 dwellings, resulting in a shortfall of 120 dwellings relative to the projected minimum supply. This reduction in the supply gap is largely attributable to an increase of 115 social housing dwellings in 2025, together with a marginal improvement in rental availability for low-income households receiving Centrelink incomes in Knox¹⁷ (from 2.7% in 2024 to 2.8% in 2025, for the 12 months to June 2025). This analysis draws on Homes Victoria data on affordable dwellings by Local Government Area (2025).

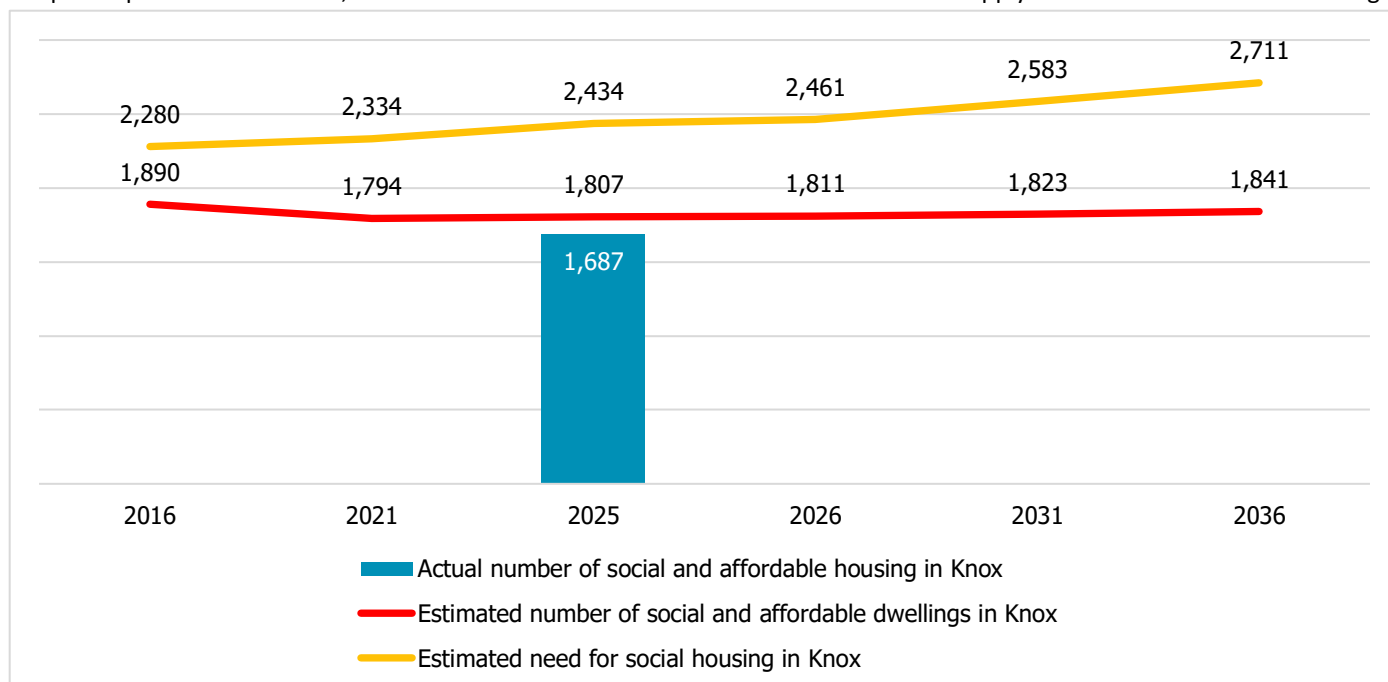
Despite these improvements, Knox remains below the projected minimum supply of social and affordable housing. As shown in Figure 10, the projected minimum supply for 2025 is 1,807 dwellings, compared with the current supply of 1,687 dwellings, leaving a shortfall of 120 dwellings. Overall, while supply has improved, Knox remains below the projected minimum supply of social and affordable housing, with a shortfall of 120 dwellings in 2025.

¹⁶ This estimate is calculated based on the social and affordable housing supply/available in Knox as of 2024, and the estimated social and affordable housing need projected in the two Council documents cited in this report.

¹⁷ The *Homes Victoria Rental Report 2025* notes that “Low-income households are defined as those receiving Centrelink incomes.” Therefore, this marginal improvement is limited to a relatively small subset of renters (Centrelink income recipients). In contrast, Figure 12—drawing on .id data—shows that rental availability and affordability in the private rental market for the broader cohort of very low and low-income households have worsened by 7 percentage points in 2025.

Figure 10. Social and Affordable Housing Supply and Need Gap in Knox, 2025

Despite improvements in 2025, Knox continued to fall short of the estimated minimum supply of social and affordable housing.



Affordable Housing Rentals and Sales in the Private Market in Knox

This indicator assesses the affordability of housing sales and rentals in the private market in Knox for very low- and low-income households. Housing affordability in the private market is primarily determined by house prices and rental costs. Within the 12 months to June 2025, the median house price in Knox was \$982,500 and the median unit price was \$680,000, according to the [Knox Housing Monitor 2025](#). This represents a marginal decline from June 2024, with house prices decreasing by \$2,500, and unit prices decreasing by \$7,500. Of the 833 dwellings sold in Knox during this period, only 112 dwellings (13.4%) were considered affordable to households in the very low and low-income brackets¹⁸. Rental affordability remains limited. Over the same period, the median weekly rent was \$625 for houses and \$550 for units, representing increases of \$45 and \$40 respectively compared with June 2024. Of the 3,223 rental properties available in Knox during the 12 months to June 2025, only 714 properties (22.1%) were affordable to very low and low-income households (see Figure 11).

Recent trends show modest fluctuations in sales affordability but a continued deterioration in rental affordability. Compared with 2023, the proportion of affordable dwellings sold declined by 3 percentage points, before improving by 3 percentage points between 2023 and 2024. In contrast, the proportion of affordable rental properties declined by

¹⁸ This Report follows the Department of Infrastructure and Knox City Council in defining Affordable Housing as a “Well-located housing, appropriate to the needs of a given household, where the cost (whether mortgage repayment or rent) is no more than 30% of that household’s income. Exceeding the mark places one under ‘housing stress,’ particularly in the lower 40% of the income distribution scale” (Department of Infrastructure, 2002, p.182; Knox City Council, 2015, p.6). The *Homes Victoria Rental Report 2025* notes that “Low-income households are defined as those receiving Centrelink incomes.” Beyond this, other data—excluding .id data on housing affordability in the private market—align with the household income band classifications defined under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 for 2025 (effective 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026), as used in the 2025 Housing Monitoring Program Report. For affordable rental and sales data in the private market, we rely on .id data and calculations, which use a different set of household income band classifications. For further details on both approaches, see Table 4 in Attachment 3.

7 percentage points between 2024 and 2025, following a similar decline between 2023 and 2024. Over the longer term, rental affordability has deteriorated more rapidly. Between 2020 and 2025, the proportion of rental properties considered affordable in Knox declined by approximately 20 percentage points, including a 14-percentage-point decline between 2023 and 2025. By comparison, the proportion of affordable dwellings for sale declined by 11 percentage points over the same five-year period. These trends indicate that rental affordability in Knox is worsening faster than purchase affordability, particularly for very-low and low-income households. A longer-term trend analysis is provided in Figure 12. Overall, housing affordability in Knox remains limited, particularly in the private rental market.

Figure 11. Affordable Rentals and Sales in Knox, 2025

In the year to June 2025, only 13 sales (0.4%) and 12 rentals (1.4%) were affordable for **very low-income households**.

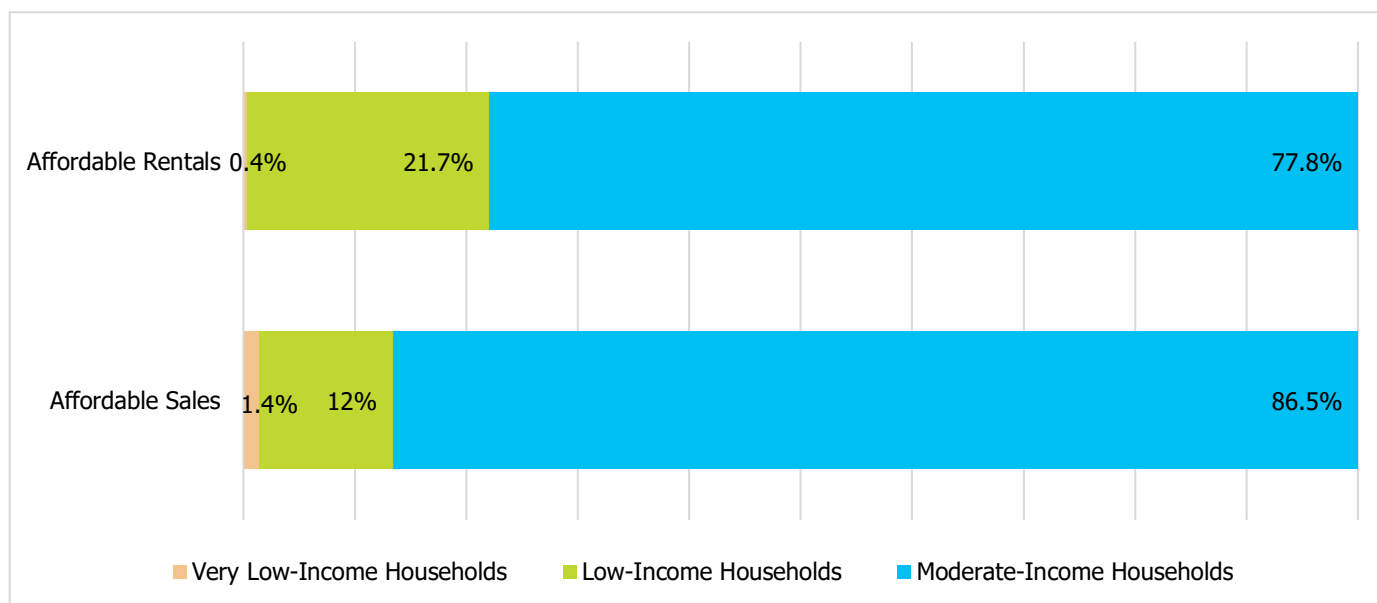
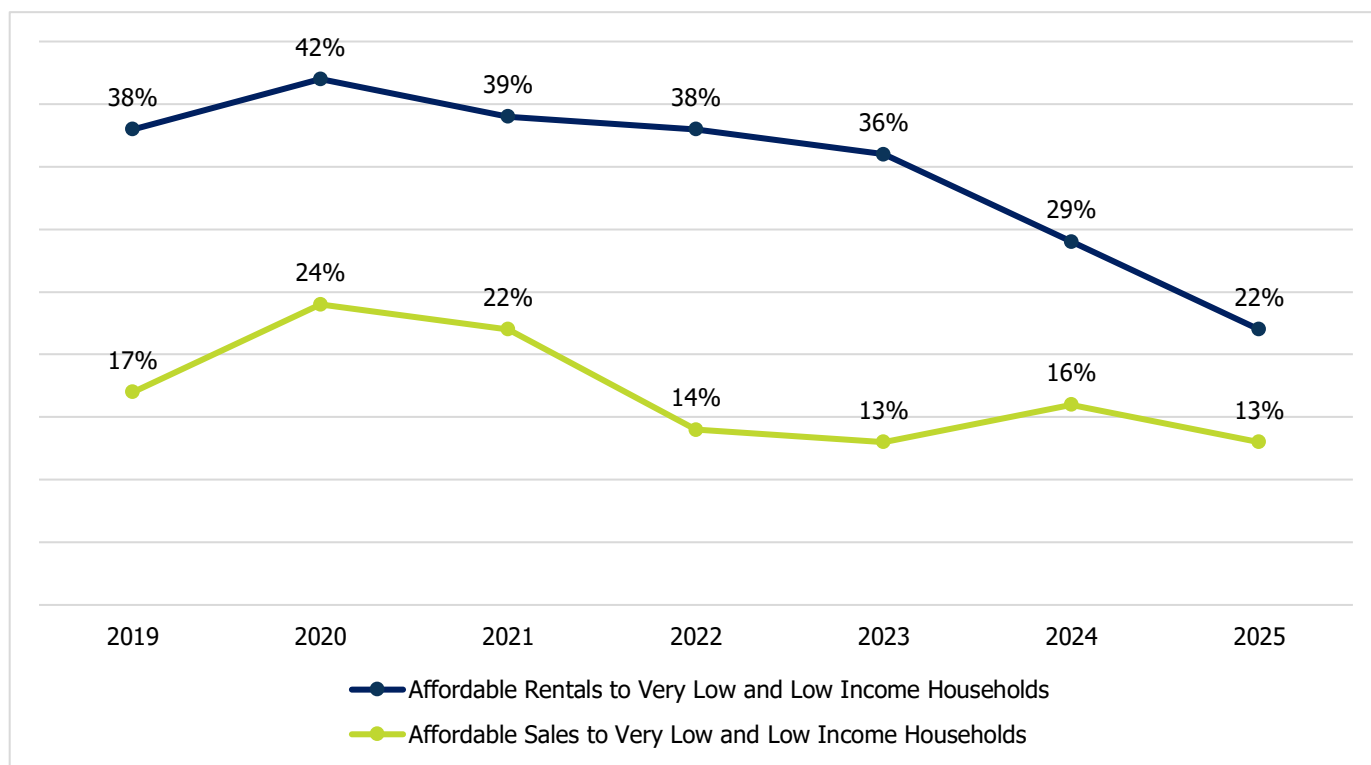


Figure 12. Trends in Affordable Rentals and Sales in Knox, 2019–2025

Since peaking in 2020 during COVID, access to affordable rental housing for very-low and low-income households has steadily declined in Knox.



Performance Analysis

In the context of the housing targets allocated to local governments under *Plan for Victoria* —which identifies capacity for an additional 43,000 dwellings in the Knox Local Area by 2051—current projections indicate that the municipality retains substantial remaining development capacity. Population and dwelling forecasts in *Victoria in Future 2023* suggest that projected dwelling growth between 2026 and 2036 can be accommodated within the dwelling capacity identified in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*. Population estimates for 2036 differ slightly between the Victorian Government and *id. Consulting Pty Ltd* by 2,131 residents, reflecting methodological differences in forecasting. Even under the higher Victorian Government projection of 177,300 residents by 2036, Knox could accommodate this growth if development progresses toward the estimated capacity of 92,500 dwellings. With forecasts of 69,237 dwellings (VIF) and 70,552 dwellings (*id Consulting*) by 2036, Knox would still retain over 22,000 dwellings of additional theoretical capacity relative to the capacity benchmark in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

A decline in residential building approvals has been observed in 2025; 670 buildings were approved as compared to 869 in 2024 – in term of percentages, this is a 23% decline. In fact, the 2025 approvals is below the 9-year average (785). Over the 9-year period, the highest number of buildings (1,136) were approved in 2017, and the lowest number was 588 in 2022. The strong bounce back in building approvals in 2024 has not been sustained. In the recent past, the media (that used ABS data) reported that Victoria had the lowest building approvals compared to the previous 10 years. In 2024, while other states recorded higher building approvals, Victoria’s figure declined by 0.5% compared to 2023. This was foreshadowed by the Victorian Building Authority – VBA (2022) as it noted that building approvals increased during the 2021-2022 financial year for other building activity, but residential building approvals reduced as compared

to the 2020-2021 financial year across Victoria. A consistent or sustained growth in building approvals in Knox may contribute to easing the current housing crisis as well as the affordability crisis.

Approvals of small dwellings (two bedrooms or fewer) in planning permits in Knox fell to their second-lowest level in the past decade in 2025, with only 12% of approved dwellings classified as small. This represents a decline from 21% in 2024 and marks two consecutive years of reduction. Over the past decade, small dwellings have comprised an average of 27% of dwellings approved in planning permits in Knox, indicating that recent approvals remain below the long-term trend. The highest proportion occurred in 2017, while the second-lowest was recorded in 2020 (13%). These trends contrast with projected demographic change. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, lone-person and couple-only households accounted for 45.7% of Knox households in 2021 and are projected to approach 50% by 2031 (ABS, 2022), suggesting growing demand for smaller dwellings.

Recent approval patterns also indicate that the supply of small dwellings is closely associated with apartment development. In years with higher apartment approvals, the proportion of small dwellings tends to increase. For example, 59 apartments were approved in 2023, when small dwellings comprised 32% of total approvals, compared with 39 apartments in 2024, when the proportion of small dwellings declined to 21%. This suggests that increasing and sustaining apartment approvals could help reduce the emerging gap between housing supply and the needs of smaller households over the medium to long term. Without this shift, demand for smaller and generally more affordable dwellings in Knox may remain unmet, and the objective of *Plan for Victoria* to support greater housing diversity may be more difficult to achieve.

In 2025, 75% of net growth in small dwellings occurred across Activity Areas and locations outside the Housing Strategy areas, differing from the longer-term trend in which about 85% of such growth has typically been concentrated within Activity Areas and Local Living areas. These areas generally offer stronger access to services, shops and public transport, making them more suitable for smaller households such as older residents and lone-person households. While the continued concentration of small dwellings in Activity Areas and Local Living areas supports the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, the unusually high proportion of small dwellings developed outside Housing Strategy Areas (Figure 8) raises planning concerns due to more limited access to services, transport and infrastructure. Ensuring future dwelling approvals align with the Strategy will help maintain an appropriate distribution of small dwellings that supports housing diversity and access to essential services.

In 2025, Knox marginally exceeded the national benchmark of 78 residential aged care places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over, representing a modest improvement from 2024 when the municipality recorded the minimum benchmark level. The 2024 figure was the lowest provision ratio recorded in Knox since 2015. While the 2025 result indicates some improvement, the municipality remains close to the minimum benchmark and therefore has limited capacity to accommodate future increases. As shown in Figure 9, the overall trend since 2015 indicates a gradual decline toward the national minimum provision level. The slight improvement in 2025 reflects the completion of a new residential aged care facility with 75 places in Lysterfield. However, a sustained increase in residential aged care capacity will be required in the medium term to maintain provision levels comfortably above the benchmark. This is particularly important given the steady growth of older residents in Knox. According to the ABS, the proportion of residents aged 70 years and over increased from 10.2% in 2016 to 12.4% in 2021, indicating that demand for residential aged care is likely to continue rising.

In contrast to 2024, when a 96-bed residential aged care facility was approved through a planning permit (via VCAT), no residential aged care facilities were approved in Knox in 2025. This continues a recent trend, with no approvals also

recorded in 2022 and 2023, raising concerns about the future supply pipeline and Council's capacity to remain above the Australian Government's minimum provision benchmark for residential aged care places. To reduce the risk of future shortfalls, Council may need to work more proactively with private aged care developers to facilitate suitable proposals and address planning issues identified in previous applications, particularly landscape and environmental concerns raised in 2022 proposals. This approach would be consistent with the partnership model outlined in the *Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027*, which emphasises collaboration with the private sector to support the delivery of housing and related accommodation types.

Social housing in Knox increased by 115 dwellings (7.7%) in 2025, bringing the total to 1,606 dwellings. This represents the largest annual increase recorded since at least 2017 and follows a decline of 31 dwellings in 2024 due to routine maintenance. Combined with a marginal improvement in affordable rental lettings¹⁹ for people receiving Centrelink payments (from 2.7% in 2024 to 2.8% in 2025), this growth has modestly narrowed the gap between the estimated minimum supply of social and affordable housing and current provision. The shortfall reduced from 298 dwellings in 2024 to 120 dwellings in 2025. Overall, Knox had 1,687 social and affordable housing dwellings in 2025 against an estimated need of 2,434 dwellings, leaving a gap of 747 dwellings—down from 902 in 2024 (See Figure 10). While this represents a positive improvement, a substantial supply gap remains. Continued growth in social and affordable housing will be necessary to keep pace with demand. In this context, Council may need to complement existing initiatives with strengthened advocacy and partnership approaches to support increased delivery over the medium to long term.

Housing affordability in the private market remains a significant challenge for very low-income households in Knox. In 2025, only 13 rental properties (0.4%) and 12 properties for sale (1.4%) were affordable to households in the very low-income bracket²⁰ ([Knox Housing Monitor](#); see Table 4, Attachment 3). Low-income households²¹ had somewhat greater access to rental options (21.7%), but home ownership opportunities remained limited. In the 12 months to June 2025, only around 100 of the 833 properties listed for sale (12%) were affordable to this group ([Knox Housing Monitor](#); see Figure 11).

The limited availability of affordable rentals has pushed many low-income households to seek social housing. Hence, the demand for social housing remains substantial. As at 30 June 2025, the Homes Victoria, [Victorian Housing Register, 2025](#) recorded 3,332 Priority Access and Register of Interest applicants seeking social housing in Knox. Although this represents a decline of 229 applicants from 2024—and the third consecutive annual decrease—the waiting list remains high, reflecting persistent affordability pressures in the local housing market, and broadly across Australia (Pawson, 2022).

The proportion of homes affordable to very-low and low-income households in Knox's private market declined in 2025 for both property sales and rentals, reversing the modest improvement in sales affordability recorded in 2024. Over the longer term, rental affordability has deteriorated more sharply. Between 2020 and 2025, the share of rental properties considered affordable declined by around 20 percentage points, including a 14-percentage-point drop

¹⁹ This is based on Home Victoria data and only covers dwellings available to Centrelink recipients, not the broader private rental market. Accordingly, it does not conflict with other findings noting a 7-percentage-point decline in private rental availability compared to 2024.

²⁰ Based on .id income classifications in 2025, very low-income households are defined as those with annual incomes of up to \$27,094 for a lone person, \$64,087 for a couple, and \$88,792 for a couple family with children.

²¹ Based on .id classifications in 2025, low-income households are defined as those with annual incomes of up to \$43,350 for a lone person, \$102,538 for a couple, and \$142,067 for a couple family with children.

between 2023 and 2025. By comparison, the proportion of affordable dwellings for sale fell by 11 percentage points over the same period. These trends indicate that rental affordability is worsening more rapidly than purchase affordability, particularly for very-low and low-income households (see Figure 12). The scale and pace of this decline highlight the need to accelerate implementation of the actions and initiatives outlined in the *Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027* to help address growing housing affordability pressures in Knox.

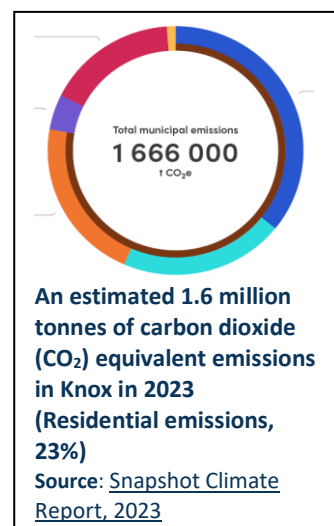
Overall, the analysis indicates that while Knox retains significant theoretical dwelling capacity, the key challenge is less of capacity but the type, location and affordability of housing being delivered. Addressing this will require stronger policy and implementation measures to support diverse and affordable housing supply. Council may need to prioritise higher-density development, particularly apartments and smaller dwellings in Activity Areas and Local Living areas, streamline planning processes for strategically aligned proposals, and strengthen partnerships with community housing providers, aged care operators and private developers. Consistent with the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and the *Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027*, Council could also expand negotiations with developers of larger residential projects to encourage voluntary contributions to social and affordable housing, including the proposed 5% contribution target. Such measures, alongside continued advocacy to the Victorian Government for investment in social housing, will be critical to improving affordability outcomes and supporting the objectives of *Plan for Victoria*.

Objective 3: Energy, water, and waste efficient design are increased in dwellings

Strategic Rationale

The residential housing sector plays a significant role in greenhouse gas emissions and resource consumption, highlighting the importance of improving the environmental performance of housing. [The Knox Climate Response Plan 2021–2031](#) identifies that around 37% of emissions in Knox originate from residential and commercial stationary energy use, largely driven by electricity consumption. At the global scale, the World Bank (2025) estimates that buildings account for approximately 34% of carbon dioxide emissions, noting that stronger building energy standards are among the most effective policy tools for reducing emissions in the construction sector. These trends underscore the need for more sustainable housing that reduces environmental impacts while supporting lower household energy costs and improved living conditions.

Promoting environmentally sustainable design (ESD) in residential development can significantly improve energy and water efficiency and support waste-efficient building practices. Integrating these principles into new housing will contribute to more resilient, resource-efficient dwellings while reducing the environmental footprint of urban growth. Consistent with this approach, the *Knox Climate Response Plan 2021–2031* sets out a range of strategies to support more environmentally responsive and climate-sensitive housing across Knox.



Performance Indicators

Improving the environmental performance of new housing is critical to reducing emissions, managing resource consumption and supporting climate-resilient communities in Knox. Suitably designed and resource-efficient buildings can lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduce household energy and water costs, and contribute to more sustainable urban development. Through the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, Council encourages residential development to incorporate environmentally sustainable design (ESD) measures, including energy-efficient building design and water-sensitive urban design principles.

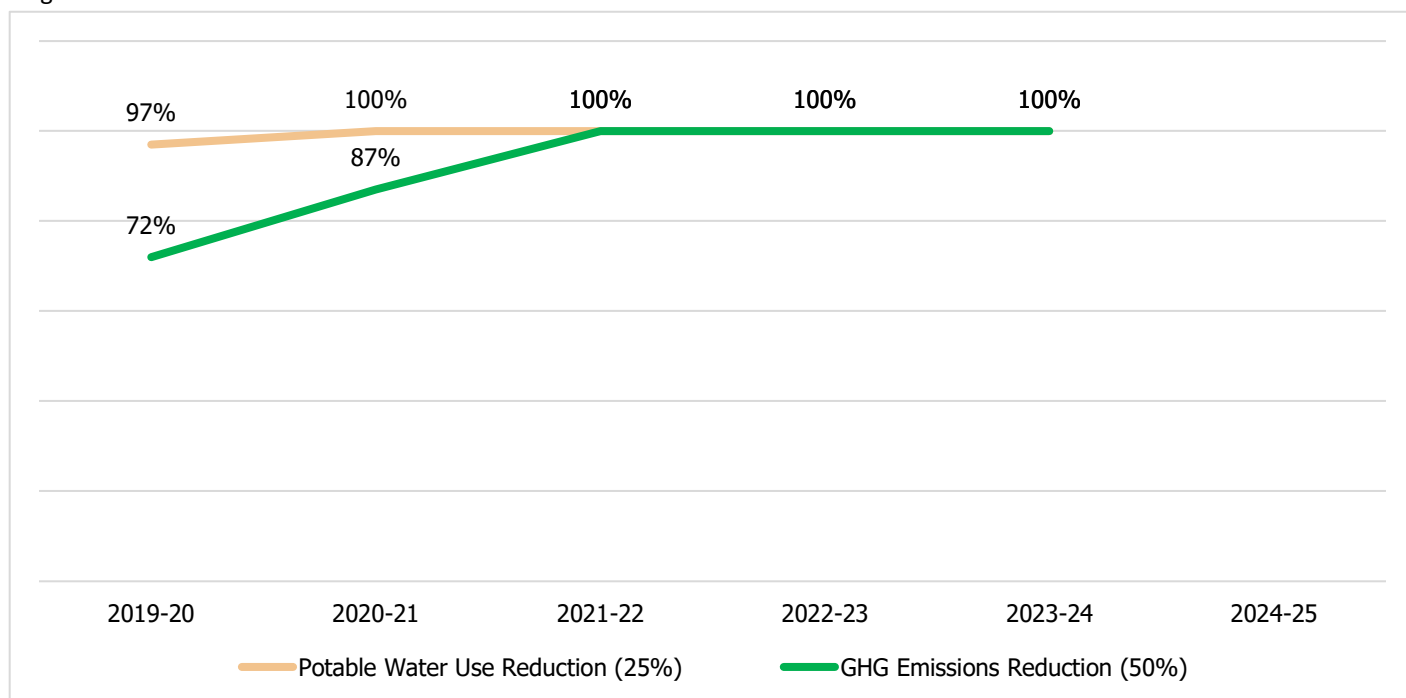
To support this objective, Council requires developments involving two or more dwellings to submit a Sustainable Design Assessment (SDA) as part of the planning permit process. The SDA provides an evidence-based evaluation of a proposal’s environmental performance, particularly in relation to potable water consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Progress toward this objective is monitored through performance indicators assessing reductions in potable water use and GHG emissions in new developments. These indicators have previously been assessed using the *Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard* (BESS).

Based on available BESS data for the 2023–2024 financial year, all assessed developments achieved the best-practice target of a 25% reduction in potable water consumption. The applicable developments also met the best-practice target

of a 50% reduction in GHG emissions²² (see Figure 13). However, due to the discontinuation of Council’s BESS subscription, comparable performance data for the 2024–2025 financial year is currently unavailable.

Figure 13. Applicable New Buildings Meeting Sustainability Targets 2019-2024

Proportion of new buildings approved through planning permits that comply with Environmental Sustainability Design (ESD) targets.



Performance Analysis

This section assesses the performance of new residential developments in Knox against key Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) indicators, including potable water consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. The analysis draws on the most recent available data from the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS), noting that updated data for the 2024–2025 financial year is currently unavailable.

It should be noted that Council revised its approach to Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) permit conditions in 2019–2020 to strengthen the implementation of endorsed sustainability measures during the construction phase of approved developments. As a result of this methodological change, ESD performance data reported for 2019–2020 are not directly comparable with results from subsequent financial years presented in Figure 13. Data from the 2020–2021 to 2023–2024 financial years are however consistent, and therefore suitable for performance comparison.

Within this comparable period, the results indicate strong performance against key sustainability indicators. In 2023–2024, all planning permits for developments involving two or more dwellings achieved or exceeded the best-practice target of a 25% reduction in potable water consumption. In the same year, 84% of applicable developments²³ met or

²² It is worthy to note that application for elevated ESD requirements has been submitted to the Minister for Planning. When the new ESD requirements are approved they will be tracked and reported in future Housing Monitoring Program Annual reports.

²³ Applicable new dwellings mean additional new dwellings of two or more.

exceeded the best-practice target of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. More broadly, the potable water reduction target was achieved across all assessed developments between 2020–2021 and 2023–2024. The GHG emissions reduction target has also been consistently met over the past three financial years (2021–2022 to 2023–2024), although full compliance was not achieved in the earlier reporting years of 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 (see Figure 13).

Additional insights from the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) data for the 2023–2024 financial year indicate that, in practice, approved developments achieved an average reduction of 38% in potable water consumption. This represents a marginal decline from the 39% reduction recorded in 2022–2023 and from 41.3% in 2021–2022. Over the same period, the average reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions was 51%, reflecting a notable decrease from the 61% reduction achieved in 2022–2023 (and 60.4% in 2021–2022). While these outcomes continue to exceed the best-practice benchmarks, the downward trend suggests some moderation in sustainability performance relative to previous years.

BESS data also shows that approximately 2.1 million litres of rainwater tank storage capacity was committed to, in Knox during 2023–2024, compared with over 3 million litres in 2022–2023. Similarly, commitments to install solar photovoltaic (PV) systems totalling around 740 kW (0.74 MW) was down, compared to 830 kW in the previous year. These reductions likely reflect the lower number of net new dwellings approved in 2024, which declined by 51 dwellings (13%) compared with 2023. Nevertheless, the continued installation of rainwater tanks and solar PV systems remains an important mechanism for reducing potable water demand and lowering GHG emissions associated with residential electricity consumption.

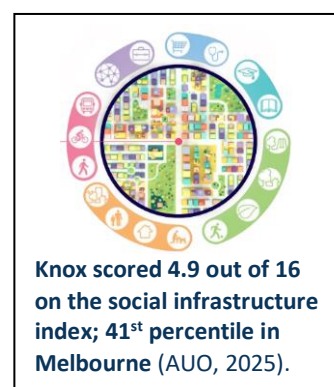
Longitudinal analysis of these indicators provides an important basis for assessing Knox’s progress against key Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) benchmarks. However, it is important to recognise that the definition of “best practice” is not static and may evolve as regulatory standards and policy expectations change. For example, on 21 July 2022 Knox joined 23 other Victorian councils in lodging a planning scheme amendment with the Victorian Government seeking to strengthen sustainability requirements for new developments and support a transition toward net zero carbon buildings. At the time of reporting, this application remains under consideration by the Minister for Planning. Should the proposed amendment be approved, the associated ESD performance benchmarks are likely to become more stringent. While this would improve the environmental performance of future developments, it may also affect the comparability of ESD performance data over time, as historical benchmarks would differ from the revised standards. Consequently, caution may be required when interpreting long-term trends in ESD outcomes, as changes in policy settings may influence the measurement of performance across reporting periods.

Overall, available evidence indicates that Knox has maintained strong performance against key Environmentally Sustainable Design benchmarks in recent years. However, the discontinuation of Council’s subscription to the Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) significantly limits ongoing monitoring. Without updated BESS data, Council’s ability to systematically track potable water reduction, greenhouse gas emissions performance, and other sustainability outcomes in new residential developments is constrained. This weakens the evidence base needed to evaluate progress, refine policy settings and support informed planning decisions. Given the growing importance of building-sector emissions reduction and climate-responsive housing, Council may need to consider restoring access to robust ESD monitoring tools or establishing an alternative data collection framework. Strengthening the monitoring system would support consistent tracking of sustainability outcomes, enable higher ESD standards, and help ensure Knox continues to progress toward more energy-efficient, water-sensitive and low-carbon residential development.

Objective 4: Housing design is improved to better respond to neighbourhood identity and create a stronger sense of place

Strategic Rationale

Well-designed neighbourhoods that integrate tree canopy, open space, and active transport infrastructure contribute to healthier, more sustainable communities ([Department of Transport and Planning 2023](#)). The *Trees for Cooler and Greener Streetscapes: Guidelines for Streetscape Planning and Design* emphasises the role of green infrastructure in enhancing urban liveability and environmental performance. Historically, Knox has been characterised by green and leafy neighbourhoods, quiet streets, and a semi-rural character. Predominantly low-scale, low-density development has shaped this distinct sense of place while contributing to car dependency and limited proximity to services in some areas.



Redevelopment and rising land values have introduced new housing forms, altering neighbourhood character. In response, the *Plan for Victoria* directs growth to well-serviced locations. The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* aims to balance development and neighbourhood character by identifying areas suited for new housing with access to public transport, shops, schools, and infrastructure, acknowledging that accommodating current and future residents requires trade-offs across the municipality.

Performance Indicators

This section assesses how new residential developments enhance local accessibility using the Walkscore Index. By evaluating scores at both individual address and suburb levels, Council can measure contributions to walkability, sustainable transport, and the creation of connected, liveable, and well-serviced neighbourhoods in Knox.

Increasing housing within the walkable catchments of activity centres, train stations, and priority precincts can enhance opportunities for walking, cycling, and micro-mobility modes such as scootering. A key performance indicator used to monitor this outcome is the [Walkscore Index](#), which quantifies the walkability of a location. Developed by Steiniger et al. (2019), Walkscore evaluates the proximity of local shops, services, schools, employment, and entertainment to generate a score ranging from 1 to 100. Scores below 50 indicate “Car Dependent” areas, 51–70 are classified as “Somewhat Walkable,” 71–90 as “Very Walkable,” and above 90 are considered a “Walker’s Paradise.” By tracking changes in Walkscore across Knox, Council can assess how new housing developments are improving accessibility, supporting sustainable transport choices, and fostering neighbourhoods that are better connected to essential services and community infrastructure.

The Walkscore platform allows assessment at both individual address and broader suburb or neighbourhood levels (Steiniger et al., 2019). Accordingly, the Housing Monitoring Program evaluates Walkscores for each approved planning permit and compares these scores to the average for the respective suburb. This enables a nuanced understanding of

how new residential developments contribute to local accessibility. Developments in higher Walkscore areas are particularly valuable, as residents benefit from convenient access to essential amenities, services, and socio-economic infrastructure, enhancing liveability and supporting Council’s objectives for sustainable, connected, and well-served neighbourhoods.

The Walkscore Index provides a robust measure of how new housing in Knox enhances accessibility and supports sustainable, connected neighbourhoods. By assessing individual permits and suburb averages, the Housing Monitoring Program evaluates proximity to shops, services, schools, employment, and transport, highlighting car-dependent versus highly walkable areas. This indicator underpins the Performance Analysis, tracking how developments promote active and micro-mobility transport, strengthen local infrastructure, improve access to essential amenities, and enhance liveability, ensuring new housing aligns with Council’s objectives for sustainable, well-served, and connected communities.

Figure 14. Majority of New Dwelling Approvals Concentrated in Car Dependent Areas in 2025

Dwellings approved in car-dependent areas rose by 42 percentage points compared to both 2024 and 2023.

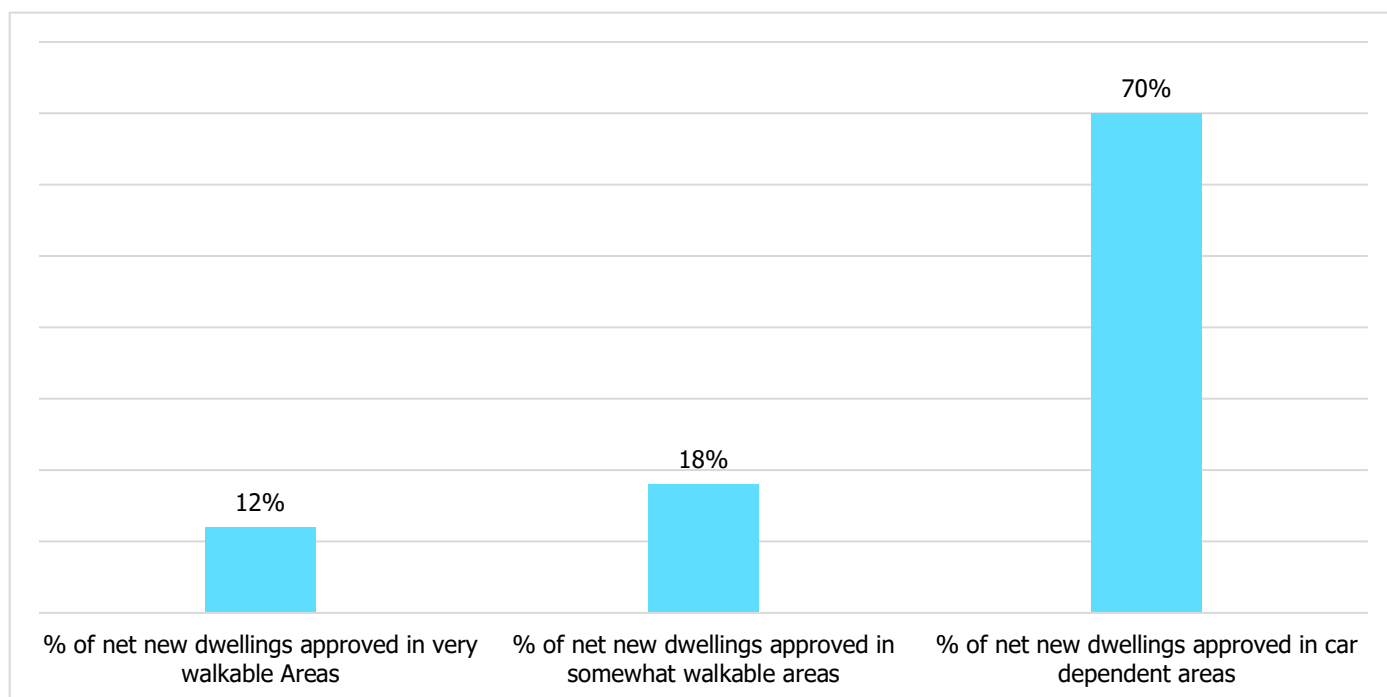
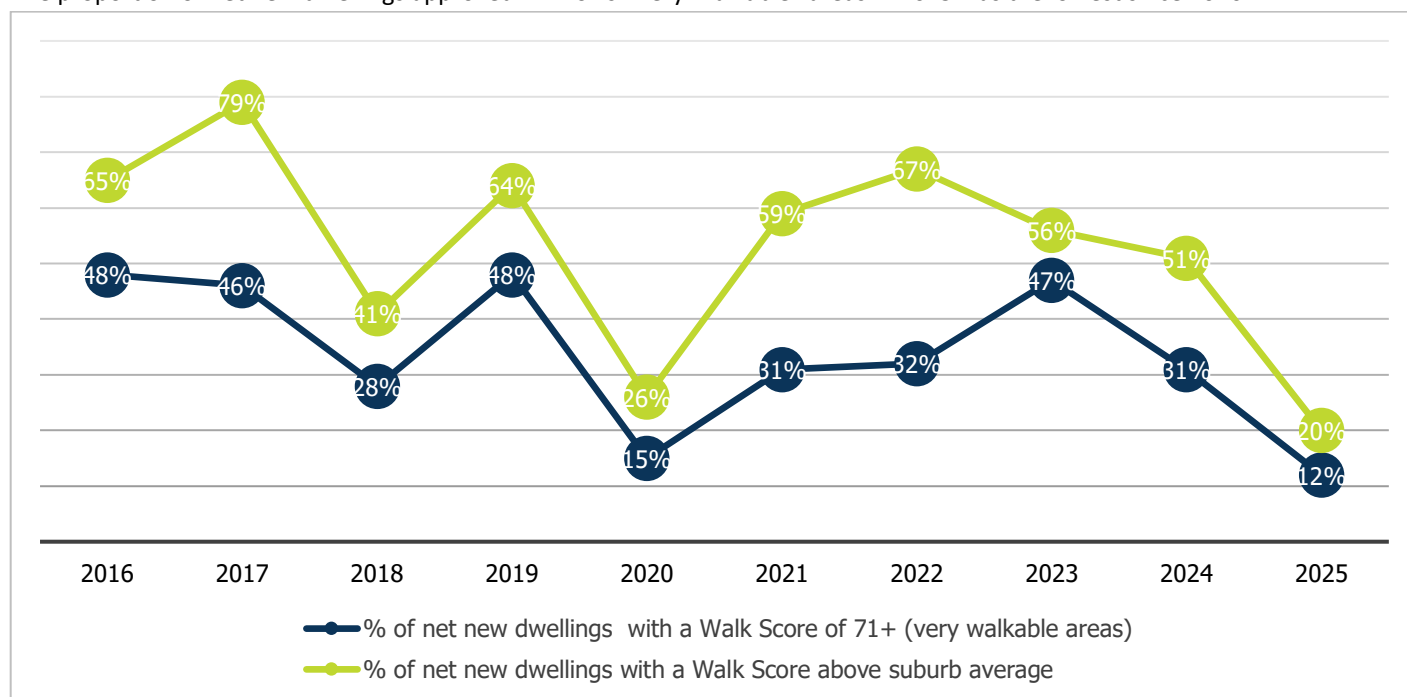


Figure 15. Trend of New Dwelling Approvals in Very Walkable Areas and Areas Above Suburb Average Walkscore, 2016–2025

The proportion of net new dwellings approved in Knox’s “Very Walkable” areas in 2025 was the lowest since 2016.



Protecting Trees and Backyards in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood Areas

This subsection underscores a vital performance indicator within the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*’s neighbourhood identity objective: the preservation of tree canopy and backyard space in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas. Data from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA, 2022) records approximately 250,000 trees on residential land within these zones, providing a critical benchmark for ongoing and future canopy monitoring. The comparatively low dwelling density approvals per hectare (Figure 4) reflect Council’s deliberate approach to limiting tree loss and maintaining Knox’s green, leafy character, thereby safeguarding ecological health and reinforcing neighbourhood identity.

Between 2024 and 2025, dwelling density remained stable in Bush Suburban areas and increased by only 4% in Knox Neighbourhood areas. This trend ensures that space for canopy retention and backyard areas continues to be adequately protected. If this trajectory persists, the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*’s explicit objectives to protect tree canopy and backyard space will remain aligned with anticipated outcomes. Consequently, the municipality’s green identity and ecological sustainability are expected to be sustained over time.

Performance Analysis

This section analyses recent planning permit approvals to assess how new housing development aligns with walkability, access to services, and neighbourhood character objectives outlined in the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

Net new dwellings approved in “Very Walkable” areas of Knox declined sharply by 19 percentage points between 2024 and 2025. As shown in Figure 14, only 12% of net new dwellings approved in 2025 had Walkscores of 71 or above, indicating locations with strong access to shops, services, employment and public transport. This represents a second consecutive annual decline, from 31% in 2024 and 47% in 2023. The 2025 outcome is also the lowest level recorded

over the past decade (2016–2025) and sits well below the 10-year average of 34% (Figure 15). Similarly, the proportion of dwellings approved in locations with Walkscores above the suburb average declined steeply from 51% in 2024 to 20% in 2025—a 31-percentage-point drop. Together, these indicators suggest that relatively fewer planning permits were approved in areas close to activity centres, services and transport corridors in 2025.

Correspondingly, a significant 70% of net new dwellings approved in 2025 were located in “Car Dependent” areas, where access to services, public transport and socio-economic infrastructure is typically more limited. Only 18% of dwellings were approved in “Somewhat Walkable” areas, representing a substantial decline from 41% in 2024 and 25% in 2023. In comparison, the share of dwellings in car-dependent areas was considerably lower in previous years—28% in both 2024 and 2023, and 24% in 2022. The concentration of new housing approvals in car-dependent locations therefore raises planning concerns, as it may reinforce car reliance and reduce residents’ access to essential services, employment and sustainable transport options. Over time, this pattern risks undermining the strategic objectives of both the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*, which seek to direct new housing toward locations with stronger access to activity centres, public transport and community infrastructure.

The decline in dwellings approved in very walkable and somewhat walkable areas in 2025 does not appear to be primarily driven by the low number of apartment approvals (only nine in 2025). While apartment developments typically increase the proportion of dwellings with Walkscores above their suburb average—because they contain many units and are often located near activity centres—recent trends suggest this relationship is not absolute. For instance, 2022 recorded one of the highest walkability outcomes despite no apartment approvals, outperforming both 2023 and 2024 when 59 and 39 apartments were approved respectively. This indicates that other dwelling types can also contribute strongly to walkability when located close to services, public transport and community infrastructure.

Although suburbs such as The Basin, Lysterfield, Rowville and Upper Ferntree Gully are generally classified as “Car Dependent” by Walkscore, they were not the primary contributors to the high share of dwellings approved in car-dependent locations in 2025. In fact, no new dwellings were approved in Lysterfield or Upper Ferntree Gully, and only 28 net new dwellings were approved in Rowville and The Basin combined—representing just 5% of total approvals. This indicates that the concentration of dwellings in car-dependent areas is largely occurring within suburbs that are overall classified as “Somewhat Walkable.” In other words, many developments are being approved in the less accessible parts of these suburbs rather than in locations closer to activity centres, public transport and services. This finding highlights an important planning consideration: the precise location of development sites within suburbs is more critical than the suburb classification itself. For Council and planners assessing planning permits, greater emphasis may therefore be needed on directing new housing to the most accessible and well-serviced parts of each suburb to better align with strategic objectives for walkable, connected neighbourhoods.

Minimising the loss of trees and backyard space in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas continues to highlight the importance of protecting tree canopy and private open space—an objective central to the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*. While historically low dwelling densities have supported canopy retention, the stable dwelling density in Bush Suburban areas and the modest 4% increase in Knox Neighbourhood areas suggest that pressures on lot sizes and open space remain limited and manageable. If this trajectory continues, it is unlikely to significantly erode tree canopy and backyard areas. Rather, it reinforces the effectiveness of current planning settings, indicating that planning decisions relating to site density, lot configuration and tree retention are appropriately managing development outcomes to maintain Knox’s green and leafy neighbourhood character.

Overall, the results highlight a growing misalignment between recent dwelling approvals and the strategic direction of both the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*. The concentration of new housing in car-dependent locations—often within the less accessible parts of otherwise “somewhat walkable” suburbs—risks reinforcing car reliance and limiting residents’ access to services, employment, public transport and community infrastructure. Addressing this challenge will require a stronger spatial focus in planning permit decisions, prioritising housing development in well-serviced locations such as activity centres, transport corridors and established service nodes. At the same time, careful management of site density and lot configuration will be necessary to protect tree canopy and backyard space in Bush Suburban and Knox Neighbourhood areas. Strengthening these planning responses will be critical to delivering more accessible, liveable and environmentally sustainable neighbourhoods across Knox.

Objective 5: Protect and enhance the landscape and environmental value of natural areas of significance

Strategic Rationale

Protecting the environmental and landscape values of Knox is essential to maintaining the municipality's distinctive leafy character and ecological health. Located at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, Knox contains significant natural assets including bushland areas, creeks, wetlands and habitats that support native biodiversity and contribute to the wellbeing and amenity of residents. As population growth places increasing pressure on residential land, careful planning is required to ensure that housing growth occurs in appropriate locations while safeguarding these valued environmental qualities.

Consistent with the direction of *Plan for Victoria* to accommodate more homes in well-connected and serviced locations while protecting environmental values, the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* seeks to guide housing growth away from environmentally sensitive Bush Suburban areas and toward locations better suited to change. This includes maintaining the very low scale of change within the Dandenong Foothills landscape, recognising and protecting all sites of biological significance in Bush Suburban areas, and encouraging the retention and planting of native and indigenous vegetation to strengthen habitat connectivity. Together, these measures support the delivery of additional housing in appropriate locations while preserving Knox's valued landscape setting and ecological assets.



28 dwellings were approved per hectare in Bush Suburban Areas in 2025.



Knox has 118 Sites of Biological Significance; native vegetation covers less than 5% of Knox (Lorimer, 2010).

Performance Indicators

This section assesses performance against the key indicators used to monitor the protection of Knox's environmentally significant landscape and bushland settings. The analysis focuses on whether new residential development is being directed away from Bush Suburban areas, whether the anticipated very low scale of change within the Dandenong Foothills is being maintained, and whether all identified sites of biological significance remain located within Bush Suburban areas. It also considers the extent to which new development supports the planting and retention of native and indigenous vegetation, reinforcing the municipality's valued green and leafy character and supporting local biodiversity.

The Knox [*Biodiversity Resilience Strategy 2024 – 2034*](#) establishes a long-term framework for protecting and strengthening biodiversity across the municipality, with the aim of fostering a nature-positive future in which the community can coexist with and support local ecosystems. The strategy identifies 118 sites of biological significance across Knox that protect areas of remnant and indigenous vegetation and form a critical foundation for local biodiversity. Despite Knox's valued natural setting at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, native vegetation currently covers less than 5% of the municipality ([Lorimer, 2010](#)). Of particular concern is that more than a quarter of Knox's native plant species are considered at risk of local extinction within the coming decades without effective intervention.

In response, Council has established a strong policy framework²⁴, supported by planning controls relating to vegetation protection and residential design, to safeguard the municipality's significant environmental and landscape values. The adoption of the *Biodiversity Resilience Strategy* in 2024 further strengthens this approach by setting clear goals and actions to guide biodiversity outcomes over the next decade. The strategy focuses on three core areas—tree canopy and vegetation cover, habitat connectivity, and climate change resilience—and outlines a series of strategic actions aimed at protecting sites of biological significance, strengthening habitat networks, and enhancing the long-term resilience of Knox's natural environment.

Bush Suburban areas within Knox contain highly valued environmental and landscape assets, supporting flora and fauna of significance at both a municipal and metropolitan scale. Consistent with the direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*, housing outcomes in 2025 indicate that development has largely been directed away from these sensitive areas, with only 30²⁵ new dwellings approved compared to 262²⁶ dwellings across the other three housing strategy areas combined.

The stability in approved dwelling density within Bush Suburban areas is evident, with 22 dwellings per hectare recorded in both 2024 and 2025—representing no change (see Figure 4). This remains the lowest density outcome across all Housing Strategy areas, compared to 25 dwellings per hectare in Knox Neighbourhood areas, 51 in Local Living areas, and 71 in Activity Areas. The modest 4% increase observed in Knox Neighbourhood areas signals only a minor uplift in development intensity within locations intended to accommodate limited change. Overall, the strategic objective to direct development away from Bush Suburban areas is being achieved in terms of dwelling numbers. This trend indicates that development levels will continue to reinforce the intended very low scale of change while supporting the protection of environmental values in these areas

The Dandenong Foothills, forming part of Knox's Bush Suburban areas, have long been recognised for their significant landscape and environmental value and have been subject to specific planning controls since 2006. These controls have been effective in preserving the area's distinctive character. Consistent with the direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* to maintain a very low scale of change (see Map 1), development outcomes in the Bush Suburban areas—including the Dandenong Foothills—continue to reflect the lowest dwelling densities across all housing strategy areas, reinforcing their limited capacity for change.

Native vegetation plays a vital role in supporting plant and animal habitats, improving land productivity, and contributing to human wellbeing. The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* promotes the planting of native and indigenous vegetation to strengthen biodiversity, protect habitat, and enhance liveability. However, retaining and establishing vegetation—particularly large canopy trees—remains challenging in multi-dwelling developments, where site constraints often necessitate vegetation removal. Reduced private open space further limits opportunities for tree planting and can affect long-term tree health.

²⁴ The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* notes that the *Knox Residential Design Guidelines 2015 (updated 2019)* aim to enhance the 'green and leafy' image of Knox.

²⁵ Net new dwellings of 20 as 10 dwellings will be demolished for the 30 to be built. And a net 199 dwellings in the remaining Housing Strategy Areas.

²⁶ This excludes the 374 dwellings approved outside the Housing Strategy Areas.

There is ongoing concern that, beyond the established urban areas, Knox's native tree cover has declined by an estimated 6 per cent (approximately 112 hectares) since the late 1980s (DELWP, 2019a). Council acknowledges these challenges in balancing development with environmental outcomes. The *Biodiversity Resilience Strategy 2024–2034* responds to these issues by identifying key priorities to protect and enhance biodiversity and habitat. In the 2023–2024 financial year, Council's Biodiversity Team contributed to this effort through the planting of 24,864 indigenous plants, including 1,104 trees. In 2024–2025, a total of 15,200 indigenous plants were planted, representing a 39% decline compared to the previous financial year.

A further direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* is that all sites of biological significance should be located within Bush Suburban areas to ensure their ongoing protection. The updated Graeme Lorimer Report (2025) identified 118 such sites across Knox. By visual observation of the location of these sites, approximately half of these sites are situated within Bush Suburban areas. As more precise spatial data becomes available, future Housing Monitoring Program reports will provide a more definitive assessment of the proportion of the identified sites that are aligned with this strategic direction.

Performance Analysis

This section analyses housing development outcomes in Knox against key environmental and planning objectives, with a focus on biodiversity, vegetation cover, and the protection of Bush Suburban areas.

The observed decline of approximately 6 per cent in native tree cover across Knox, as identified in DELWP (2019), highlights a gap between policy intent and on-ground outcomes. While the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* supports the planting of native and indigenous vegetation, current measures have not been sufficient to halt or reverse vegetation loss. This suggests that existing policy settings and implementation mechanisms may require strengthening to more effectively deliver biodiversity outcomes.

In response, the *Knox Biodiversity Resilience Strategy 2024–2034* introduces more targeted and practical actions aimed at addressing ongoing vegetation decline, including a stronger focus on canopy cover, habitat connectivity, and climate resilience. From a policy perspective, this may necessitate the introduction of more robust planning controls and permit conditions to ensure vegetation retention and meaningful replanting outcomes in new developments. While Council's planting efforts—24,864 indigenous plants in 2023–2024 and 15,200 in 2024–2025—make a positive contribution, they are unlikely to offset historical losses without complementary regulatory and strategic measures to secure long-term gains.

As previously noted, Bush Suburban areas—including the Dandenong Foothills—continue to record the lowest dwelling densities in 2025, consistent with outcomes reported in previous Housing Monitoring Program reports. This reflects the policy direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* to direct development away from these areas in order to maintain a very low scale of change and preserve their distinctive bushland character. From a policy perspective, these outcomes indicate that the strategic intent is largely being achieved in terms of limiting overall development intensity.

A direction of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* is that all sites of biological significance should be located within Bush Suburban areas to support their long-term protection. The Graeme Lorimer Report (2010) identified 118 such sites across Knox; however, current evidence does not confirm that all of these sites are appropriately located within Bush Suburban areas. From a policy perspective, this introduces a degree of uncertainty in assessing the effectiveness of the Strategy's spatial framework for biodiversity protection. As approximately half of these sites appear to fall outside Bush

Suburban areas, they may be subject to greater development pressure and less stringent planning controls, potentially undermining their ecological value.

While Knox has made progress in directing development away from Bush Suburban areas and maintaining low densities in the Dandenong Foothills, policy gaps remain. Native tree cover continues to decline, and approximately half of the Sites of Biological Significance are located outside Bush Suburban areas, leaving some sites exposed to development pressures. Strengthening protection will require more robust planning controls, permit conditions, and verification of significant sites, alongside targeted planting of native and indigenous vegetation in new developments. Integrating the *Biodiversity Resilience Strategy 2024–2034* into housing approvals is essential to safeguard Knox’s bushland character, biodiversity, and ecological values while accommodating growth.

Objective 6: Development responds to neighbourhoods in an integrated and balanced manner

Strategic Rationale

Integrated planning is essential for shaping liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods that respond to the complexity of Victoria’s urban environments. *Plan for Victoria* provides the statewide vision for creating “inclusive, liveable, sustainable, prosperous and enriching” communities and emphasises planning that reflects local identity, supports housing needs, and strengthens neighbourhood character. This aligns closely with Knox’s own priorities, given the municipality’s established suburbs, valued landscapes and environmental assets.

In Knox, integrated planning ensures development aligns with infrastructure capacity, neighbourhood character, community wellbeing, and environmental protection. The *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* continues to guide place-based planning that tailors development expectations to the distinct conditions of individual neighbourhoods, including Activity Centres, Neighbourhood Centres, and environmentally sensitive areas. The Knox Planning Scheme provides the statutory basis for implementing these strategies and ensuring consistent, transparent decision-making by Council, planning officers and Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Alignment between local policy, the Planning Scheme and VCAT decisions is essential to achieving fair, predictable and balanced development outcomes. Maintaining this consistency supports Knox in managing growth responsibly while protecting the municipality’s unique character and liveability.



VCAT decided 7 residential planning applications for Knox in 2025, down from 15 in 2024; 12 in 2023; 14 in both 2021 and 2022; 26 in 2020; 32 in 2019; and 43 in 2018.

Performance Indicators

Alignment of VCAT and Council Decisions

This section evaluates the consistency of Council planning decisions with the Knox Planning Scheme by analysing outcomes at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), with a focus on appeal trends and decision alignment.

As outlined earlier, consistency between Council planning decisions and those of Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) is a key indicator of alignment with the Knox Planning Scheme. While Council determines planning permit applications, these decisions may be appealed to VCAT by applicants or objectors, with VCAT making the final determination based primarily on the planning scheme and relevant supporting material. The number of appeals and the proportion of decisions overturned provide an important measure of how consistently Council decisions reflect the intent of the planning framework. This section therefore examines trends in the alignment between Council and VCAT decision-making.

In 2025, a total of seven residential planning decisions in Knox were appealed to VCAT, representing the lowest number of appeals in over a decade. Of these, VCAT upheld one Council approval and overturned six Council refusals (See Figure

16). Consistent with trends observed since 2018 (excluding 2021 and 2023), VCAT has continued to overturn the majority of Council refusals. Notably, no Council refusal decisions were upheld in 2025—the lowest outcome since 2014. In contrast, VCAT upheld 100 per cent of Council approval decisions (albeit from a single case), continuing a generally consistent pattern over time (See Figure 17). These outcomes suggest a divergence in decision-making, particularly in relation to refusals, and may indicate a need to review Council’s assessment approach to ensure stronger alignment with the Knox Planning Scheme.

Overall, the 2025 VCAT outcomes indicate a high level of alignment with Council decisions on approvals but a continued divergence in relation to refusals. While the low number of appeals may suggest improved system efficiency, the consistent overturning of refusals highlights a potential gap between Council decision-making and the interpretation of the Knox Planning Scheme by Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This underscores the need for ongoing review of assessment practices, clearer policy guidance, and strengthened decision-making frameworks to ensure greater consistency and reduce the risk of unsuccessful appeals.

Figure 16. VCAT Decision on Residential Planning Applications in 2025

In 2025, VCAT overturned all of **Council’s refusal decisions**.

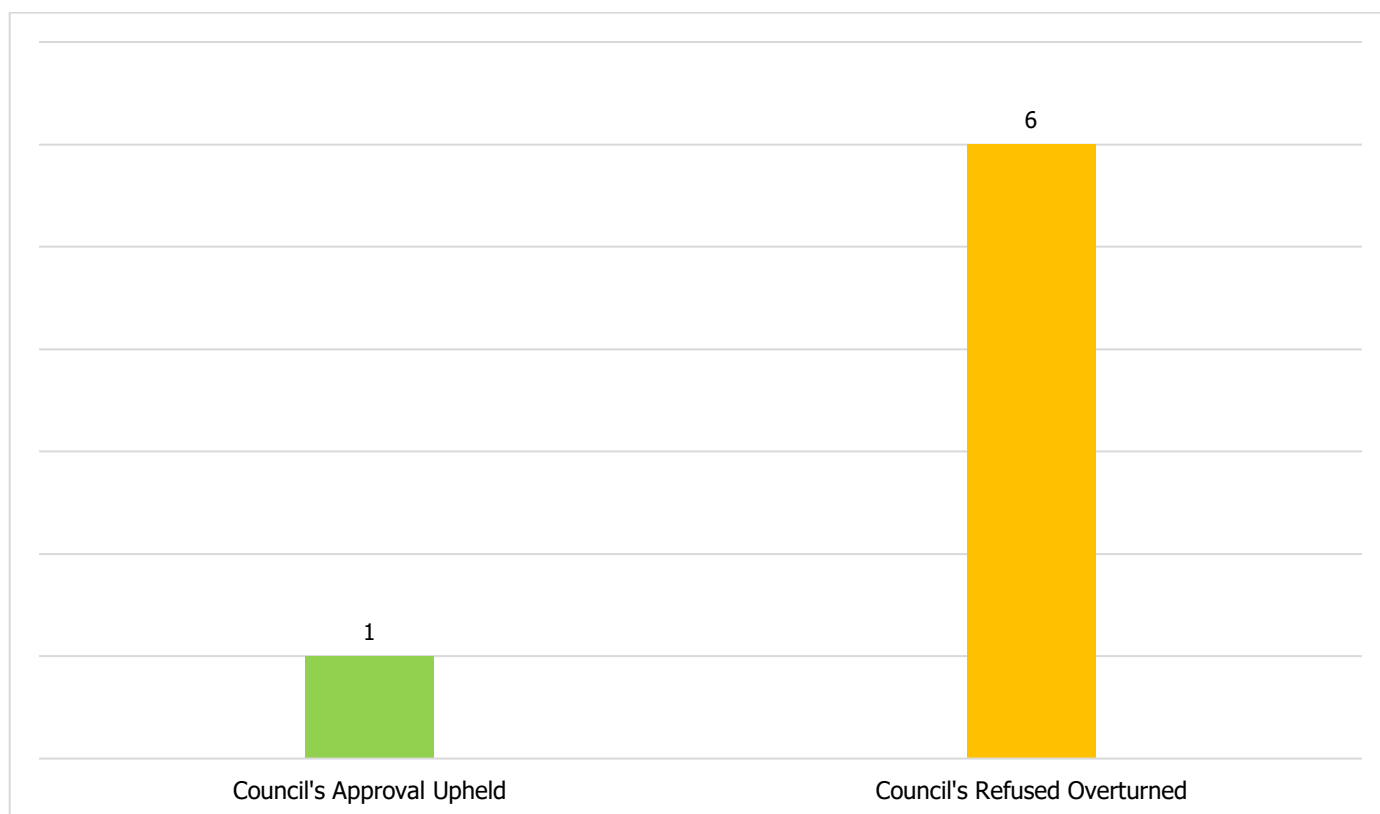
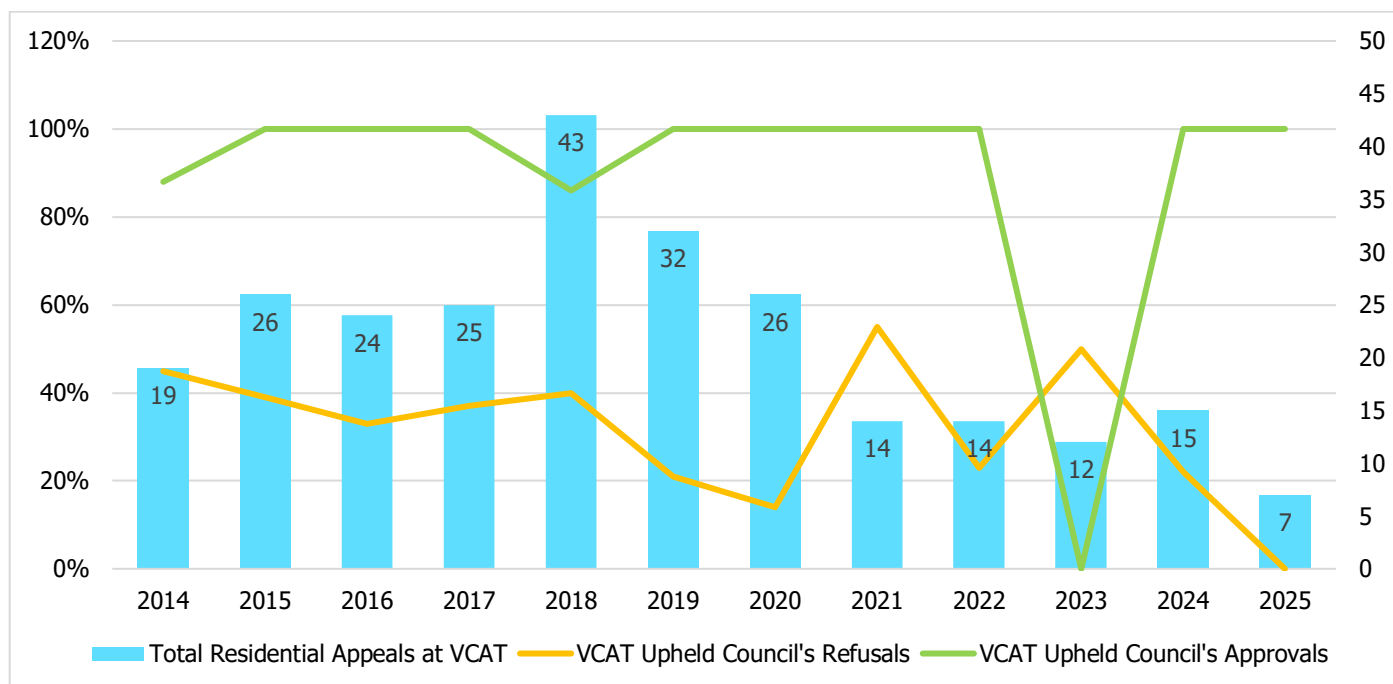


Figure 17. Trend of VCAT Decisions on Residential Planning Applications, 2014–2025

In 2025, VCAT upheld none of **Council's refusal decisions**, while **all approvals** were upheld



Place-based Planning

Place-based planning is a key mechanism for aligning development outcomes with the specific characteristics, needs, and opportunities of different parts of the municipality (Lata & Reddel, 2022). Rather than applying a uniform approach, it enables targeted responses to complex, localised issues through coordinated land use planning, infrastructure delivery, and service provision. In Knox, this approach is implemented through structure plans and local strategies prepared with community and stakeholder input, which guide planning controls and investment in key locations such as activity centres.

From a performance perspective, place-based planning strengthens the policy framework by providing clearer, location-specific direction for decision-making, thereby improving consistency and reducing uncertainty in planning outcomes. It also supports more efficient infrastructure delivery and enhances community alignment with planning objectives. However, its effectiveness is dependent on the ongoing currency, implementation, and integration of these plans within statutory decision-making processes. Knox currently supports this approach through six key place-based plans and strategies:

- **Knox Central Structure Plan (2017):** Focuses on transforming Knox Central into a vibrant mixed-use hub with higher-density housing, employment, and improved transport connections, anchored by a strong civic and community core.
- **Bayswater Activity Centre Structure Plan (2005):** Guides the transition of Bayswater into a mixed-use activity centre, balancing industrial functions with residential and commercial development while improving amenity and connectivity.
- **Boronia Renewal Strategy (2019):** Aims to revitalise Boronia by encouraging medium-density housing, enhancing the town centre, and improving safety, accessibility, and public realm quality.
- **Upper Ferntree Gully Strategic Plan (2017):** Seeks to strengthen the township's local character by supporting modest growth, enhancing the village feel, and improving connections to the Dandenong Ranges.

- **Rowville Plan (2015):** Focuses on managing growth in Rowville through improved activity centres, better transport infrastructure, and enhanced local employment opportunities.
- **Ferntree Gully Village Structure Plan (2014):** Supports the development of a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly village with a mix of housing and local services, while maintaining its historic character and sense of place.

Collectively, these plans translate broader housing and planning policy into locally responsive outcomes across Knox. Through its place-based planning initiatives, Council has established six activity centres that provide residents with convenient access to retail, community, government, entertainment, cultural, and transport services, while supporting local employment and economic development. These centres also support higher-density housing in appropriate locations and align with broader strategic directions, including the *Plan for Victoria* target of delivering 800,000 new homes across the state, with a strong focus on 60 activity centres in Greater Melbourne over the coming decade.

The 2025 indicators show Council decisions align well with VCAT approvals, though the frequent overturning of refusals highlights the need for clearer guidance and stronger assessment practices. Knox's place-based planning continues to deliver locally tailored outcomes, supporting higher-density housing, services, and economic activity within six activity centres. Together, these findings emphasize the importance of ongoing monitoring, policy refinement, and integration of strategic frameworks to ensure development aligns with the Knox Planning Scheme while protecting community, environmental, and economic values.

Performance Analysis

This section evaluates residential planning decision-making in Knox in 2025, with a focus on how outcomes align with neighbourhood context and policy objectives under Objective 6. It examines trends in appeals to VCAT, the interplay between Council refusals and approvals, and the role of place-based plans in guiding development. The analysis highlights policy implications for balancing efficient housing delivery with responsive, context-specific decision-making.

Only seven appeals were lodged with VCAT from Knox in 2025—the lowest level recorded in at least 12 years and approximately one-third of the long-term average of 21 cases. This continues a downward trend from 15 cases in 2024, 12 in 2023 and 14 in 2022. Of the seven cases, six arose from Council refusals—all of which were subsequently overturned at VCAT and approved, including two with variations. The remaining case involved a Council-issued notice of decision to grant a permit that was challenged by objectors, with VCAT ultimately affirming Council's decision subject to minor changes. From a policy perspective, the consistent overturning of Council refusals signals a potential misalignment between local decision-making and Tribunal interpretation of planning policy, particularly in balancing development outcomes with neighbourhood character under Objective 6.

The sharp decline in appeal volumes also reflects broader State planning reforms that have narrowed third-party appeal rights at Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to those directly affected by a proposal. While this has materially reduced the number of objections progressing to review—thereby improving certainty and timeliness for housing delivery—it also has implications for the role of community scrutiny in the planning process. In this context, the reduced VCAT caseload should not be interpreted solely as improved policy performance, but rather as a structural shift in the appeals system. Ongoing monitoring is therefore required to ensure that streamlined processes continue to deliver development outcomes that are integrated, balanced, and responsive to neighbourhood character, rather than simply less contested.

VCAT's consistent overturning of Council refusals—contrasted with its near-universal affirmation of Council approvals—highlights a structural imbalance in decision outcomes at VCAT. This enduring pattern, evident since 2015 (with only minor exceptions), suggests that while Council's approvals are broadly aligned with Tribunal expectations, its refusals are more frequently found to be overly restrictive or insufficiently responsive to policy flexibility. From a policy perspective, this raises a critical implication: the high rate of overturned refusals may indicate an overly rigid application of planning controls, potentially undermining Objective 6 by limiting well-designed developments that could achieve a balanced neighbourhood outcome. A recalibration of refusal grounds—towards a more context-responsive and performance-based assessment—may be required to better align Council decision-making with Tribunal interpretation and reduce avoidable appeals.

In cases where Council refusals are later approved with variations by VCAT—a recurring trend—there is a clear opportunity to resolve key design and compliance issues earlier in the process. From a policy and practice perspective, this suggests a need for more proactive, collaborative pre-decision engagement between planning officers and applicants to negotiate design refinements upfront. Strengthening this iterative review approach could reduce avoidable refusals, better align outcomes with likely Tribunal positions, and deliver more efficient, policy-consistent housing approvals.

The seven place-based plans across Knox strengthen residential planning decision-making by embedding clear, locality-specific guidance into permit assessments, improving consistency, reducing uncertainty, and better aligning development outcomes with neighbourhood context. However, their policy value depends on being current, well-implemented, and meaningfully integrated into statutory decisions. When effectively applied, they directly support the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* objective of ensuring development responds to neighbourhoods in an integrated and balanced manner.

Collectively, the findings point to a system that is becoming more efficient but not necessarily more aligned: while reduced appeals to VCAT reflect procedural reforms, the consistent overturning of Council refusals signals a need to recalibrate local decision-making. Strengthening early collaboration with applicants and more consistently applying place-based policy frameworks can better align Council assessments with Tribunal expectations, reduce avoidable refusals, and ensure that streamlined processes deliver genuinely integrated, context-responsive housing outcomes in line with the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

Key Findings

This section summarises the key findings from the 2025 *Housing Monitoring Program Report*, highlighting major trends in housing supply, delivery, location, diversity, and affordability in Knox. Drawing on planning approvals and building permits, it provides an evidence-based assessment of how housing outcomes are tracking against the six objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.

Highlight of Key Findings

Housing Supply and Delivery

- **Increase in net new dwellings, but driven by atypical approvals:** In 2025, planning permits yielded 591 net new dwellings, representing an 77% increase from 2024 (333). While this indicates a recovery following the decline between 2021 and 2024, planning permit approvals remain below levels observed between 2014 and 2020. Notably, 2025 recorded the lowest number of permits approved since at least 2014, with a single permit accounting for 55% of total approved dwellings, suggesting the increase may be episodic rather than systemic.
- **Decline in building approvals signals weaker delivery pipeline:** A total of 670 building permits were issued in 2025, a 23% decline from 2024 (869) and below the 9-year average of 785. As building permits provide greater certainty of construction activity, this decline indicates potential constraints in short- to medium-term housing delivery.

Strategic Alignment and Growth Patterns

- **Improved alignment with Housing Strategy Areas, but spatial outcomes remain uneven:** In 2025, 77% of new dwellings were consistent with their designated Housing Strategy Area (HSA), a 9-percentage point increase from 2024 and above the 10-year average of 74%. The Housing Strategy 2015 includes areas without preferred housing character type. 56% of total approved dwellings were located outside HSAs i.e. in areas without a preferred housing character type —the highest proportion in at least five years—indicating that headline alignment improvements do not fully reflect spatial outcomes.
- **Stability and reduction in dwelling density across housing strategy areas:** Dwelling density remained stable or decreased across all housing strategy areas, with no change (0%) in Bush Suburban areas, a marginal 4% increase in Knox Neighbourhood areas, a 26% decrease in Local Living areas, and an 11% decrease in Activity Areas. Apart from Knox Neighbourhood areas, this pattern of stability and reduction has resulted in increased lot sizes per dwelling across Bush Suburban, Local Living and Activity Areas, supporting enhanced canopy retention, backyard space, and neighbourhood character.

Housing Diversity and Typology

- **Decline in small dwellings approvals and misalignment with household structure trends:** Only 12% of approved dwellings in 2025 were small dwellings (two bedrooms or fewer), representing the lowest level in the past decade, declining from 21% in 2024 and remaining below the 10-year average of 27%. This trend is inconsistent with demographic patterns, where lone-person and couple-only households accounted for 46% in 2021 and are projected to reach 50% by 2031, indicating continued growth in smaller household structures.
- **Continuing imbalance between dwelling size and household composition:** In 2025, 88% of net new dwellings approved were large dwellings (≥3 bedrooms). Over the past decade, the average has been 73% large dwellings,

while 82% of existing dwellings already fall into this category. This demonstrates a clear and continuing imbalance between housing supply and household size trends.

- **Marked decline in apartment approvals limits diversity:** Only nine apartment developments were approved in 2025 (within one planning application), a sharp decline from 39 in 2024 and 59 in 2023. This reduction contributes to the decline in small dwellings and limits the delivery of higher-density, diverse, and more affordable housing options, potentially constraining vibrancy, accessibility of local areas and local activation.

Affordability and Social Housing

- **Improvement in social housing, but substantial shortfall remains:** Social housing increased by 115 dwellings (7.7%) in 2025, reaching 1,606 dwellings—the largest annual increase since at least 2017. The overall shortfall in social and affordable housing decreased from 902 dwellings in 2024 to 747 in 2025, with total provision at 1,687 dwellings against an estimated need of 2,434 dwellings. This progress has also narrowed the shortfall relative to the estimated minimum social housing supply from 298 dwellings in 2024 to 120 in 2025. Despite these gains, a significant supply gap persists.
- **Rental affordability deteriorating faster than purchase affordability:** In 2025, affordability declined in both rental and property markets for very low and low-income households, reversing gains seen in 2024. Between 2020 and 2025, rental affordability declined by around 20 percentage points, including a 14-percentage-point drop between 2023 and 2025. Over the same period, purchase affordability declined by 11 percentage points. These trends indicate that rental affordability is deteriorating more rapidly, intensifying pressure on lower-income households.

Specialised Housing and Location Outcomes

- **Aged care provision remains near minimum benchmark:** In 2025, Knox marginally exceeded the national benchmark of 78 residential aged care places per 1,000 people aged 70 years and over (by 1 place), improving from 2024 when the municipality recorded the minimum benchmark level. Despite this improvement, provision remains close to the minimum, indicating limited capacity to meet future demand.
- **Shift toward car-dependent locations:** A total of 70% of net new dwellings in 2025 were located in “Car Dependent” areas, a substantial increase from 28% in both 2024 and 2023, and 24% in 2022. This shift raises concerns as it may reinforce car reliance, reduce access to services and employment, and increase social isolation, living costs, and barriers to ageing in place—especially as the population ages and more households consist of single residents—undermining the strategic objectives of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*.

Environmental Sustainability Design (ESD) and System Performance

- **Strong past ESD performance, but no current data:** Due to the conclusion of the ESD Planning Advice Service contract in 2025, no updated 2024–2025 ESD data against approved planning permits has been collected. However it is noted that past performance was strong, with 100% compliance against targets for potable water greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction in 2021–2022, 2022–2023, and 2023–2024. Given the historical data, it is expected that planning permits approved in 2025 will continue to meet these requirements.
- **Low VCAT appeals indicate efficiency gains, but alignment challenges remain:** Only seven VCAT appeals were lodged in 2025, the lowest level in at least 12 years and well below the long-term average of 21. However, consistent overturning of Council refusals highlights the need to recalibrate decision-making, strengthen early collaboration, and apply place-based policy frameworks more consistently.

Key Implications for Housing Delivery in Knox

This section outlines the key implications of the 2025 findings for housing delivery in Knox, with a focus on supply, strategic alignment, diversity, affordability, and spatial outcomes.

- **Housing supply remains volatile:** The increase in dwelling yield appears episodic and is driven by a single high-yield permit, while declining building permits signal a weaker forward pipeline.
- **Strategic geographic alignment is weakening in spatial terms:** High levels of development outside HSAs reduce policy coherence and limit the effectiveness of the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015*.
- **Dwelling densities are increasing:** Rising densities in established areas risk undermining environmental values and neighbourhood character.
- **Housing diversity remains out of balance with demand:** The dominance of large dwellings due to preference to build large dwellings instead of apartments and smaller dwellings limits housing choice.
- **Affordability pressures are intensifying:** Persistent social housing shortfalls and declining rental affordability are increasing stress on lower-income households.
- **Accessibility outcomes are deteriorating:** Growth in car-dependent areas reduces residents' sustainable access to services, employment, and public transport.
- **Aged care housing capacity is constrained:** Residential aged care provision remains insufficient to meet the future demands of an ageing population.
- **Planning system efficiency is improving, but decision-making alignment requires strengthening:** Reduced VCAT appeals indicate procedural efficiency and an appeals system shift, while continued overturns highlight the need for strong and consistent place-based policy and earlier engagement with applicants.

Action Areas and Advocacy Opportunities

Based on the key findings of the 2025 Knox Housing Monitoring Program Report, Council is well positioned to take targeted action and advocate for policy and planning reform to support housing diversity, affordability, and access to community infrastructure. These responses build on Council's four interconnected roles—as planner, provider, partner, and advocate—enabling Knox to respond proactively to emerging housing trends and challenges.

Action Areas (Council-led Initiatives)

These actions represent areas where Council can directly influence housing outcomes through planning, policy, and program delivery functions.

- **Housing Diversity:** Only 12% of approved dwellings in 2025 were small (1–2 bedrooms), the lowest proportion in the past decade. With lone-person and couple-only households projected to account for 50% of all households by 2031, there is a clear mismatch between housing supply and future demand. In the context of Victorian Government housing reforms promoting housing diversity and increased supply, Council should proactively engage with developers to increase the delivery of smaller dwellings—particularly within Strategic Investigation Sites—to better align housing outcomes with evolving household needs.
- **Approvals Outside Housing Strategy Areas:** In 2025, 56% of approved dwellings were located outside the four designated Housing Strategy Areas. Consistent with emerging State planning directions emphasising clearer alignment between strategic planning and development outcomes, Council should refine planning direction to ensure development outside Housing Strategy Areas supports broader housing objectives and the intended role and function of Strategic Investigation Sites, with clearer guidance on preferred housing outcomes.
- **Dwelling Density:** Dwelling density trends in 2025 remained stable or declined across most policy areas, with no change in Bush Suburban areas, a 4% increase in Knox Neighbourhoods, a 26% decrease in Local Living areas, and an 11% decrease in Activity Areas. While State reforms encourage increased housing supply through intensification in appropriate locations, the limited change in lower-density areas indicates that existing planning settings continue to manage growth effectively. Ongoing monitoring is required to ensure that any future uplift aligns with State objectives while maintaining neighbourhood character and environmental values.
- **Approvals in Car-Dependent Areas:** A total of 70% of approved dwellings were located in car-dependent areas, limiting access to public transport, services, and employment. In line with Victorian Government reforms prioritising housing growth in well-serviced locations, Council should strengthen planning policy and decision-making to direct development toward activity centres, transport corridors, and areas with access to public transport and community infrastructure, consistent with the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and *Plan for Victoria*.
- **Informing Council Strategies:** The 2025 Housing Monitoring Report should directly inform the ongoing review of key strategic documents, including the *Knox Housing Strategy 2015* and the next iteration of the Knox Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027. Embedding this evidence base within a reformed State planning framework will support responsive, data-driven policy and planning outcomes aligned with evolving Victorian Government housing priorities.

Advocacy Opportunities (Council as Advocate)

These priorities identify areas where Council can advocate to the Victorian Government, industry, and other stakeholders to address gaps beyond its direct control, particularly in the context of State-led housing reforms focused on increased supply, infrastructure coordination, and activity centre intensification.

- **Services in Car-Dependent Areas:** Given that 70% of approved dwellings are in car-dependent areas, Council should advocate for targeted State investment in public transport, local activity centres, health services, and education infrastructure. This aligns with Victorian Government reforms emphasising the integration of land use and infrastructure planning to support sustainable housing growth and improved accessibility outcomes in Knox.
- **Residential Aged Care:** Despite modest increases, aged care provision remains near the minimum benchmark. Council should advocate for increased investment from public, private, and not-for-profit providers, supported by State policy settings, to expand residential aged care capacity in line with the needs of Knox's ageing population and broader health and housing integration objectives.
- **Social Housing:** Social housing stock increased by 115 dwellings in 2025; however, a shortfall of 120 dwellings remains, with total demand projected at 747 dwellings. Council should continue coordinated advocacy to Homes Victoria and the Victorian Government to accelerate the delivery of social and affordable housing, consistent with State housing targets and funding programs aimed at addressing housing need.
- **Apartments and Small Dwellings:** Only nine apartments were approved in 2025, contributing to the low proportion of small dwellings. Council should advocate to industry and the Victorian Government for increased delivery of higher-density housing—particularly apartments and small dwellings—in Activity Areas and Local Living areas, aligning with State reforms promoting consolidation, housing diversity, and efficient use of well-served locations.

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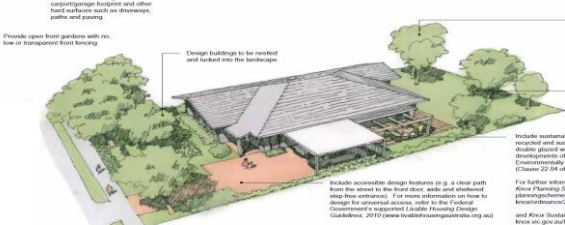
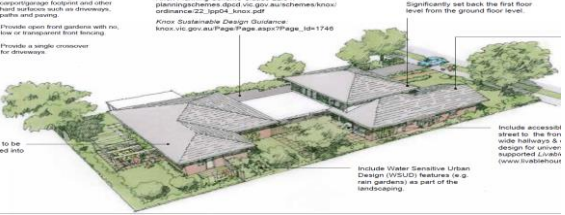
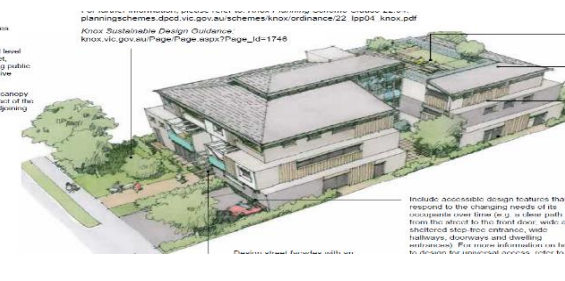
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Attachment 1: Definition of Housing Types

Table 3. Housing types as defined in the Knox Housing Strategy

Housing Type Definition	Indicative Lot Layout: Perspective View
Detached dwelling: one dwelling on a lot.	 Minimise the shading and courtyard/porch footprint and other hard surfaces such as driveways, paths and paving. Provide open front gardens with no, low or transparent front fencing. Design buildings to be nestled and tucked into the landscape. Include sustainable material and use double glazed windows (Chapter 22.04.04). Include accessible design features (e.g. a clear path from the street to the front door, wide and sheltered step-free entrances). For more information on how to design for universal access, refer to the following documents: supported Living Housing Design Guidelines, 2010 (www.healthhousingguidelines.org.au) and Knox Sustainability Planning Scheme (www.knox.vic.gov.au).
Dual occupancy: two dwellings on a lot (can include retention of an existing dwelling).	 Appearance from the street Minimise the dwelling and courtyard/porch footprint and other hard surfaces such as driveways, paths and paving. Provide open front gardens with no, low or transparent front fencing. Provide a single crossover for driveways. For further information, please refer to: Knox Planning Scheme Chapter 22.04, planning schemes.dpd.vic.gov.au/schemes/knox/ordinance22.04p04_knox.pdf Knox Sustainable Design Guidance: knox.vic.gov.au/Page.aspx?Page_id=1748 Significantly set back the first floor level from the ground floor level. Include sustainable material and use double glazed windows (Chapter 22.04.04). Include Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) features (e.g. rain gardens) as part of the landscaping.
Villa units: three or more dwellings on a lot with no shared walls.	 Security: Garages are over garages to retain character. Minimise the dwelling and courtyard/porch footprint and other hard surfaces such as driveways, paths and paving. Use for landscaping areas to soften the front of the street. Include accessible design features (e.g. a clear path from the street to the front door, wide and sheltered step-free entrances, wide hallways & doorways). For more information on how to design for universal access, refer to the Federal Government's supported Living Housing Design Guidelines, 2010 (www.healthhousingguidelines.org.au). Significantly set back first and second levels from the ground floor level. Include sustainable material and use double glazed windows (Chapter 22.04.04). Ensure the rear dwelling is single storey. For further info: planning schemes and Knox Sustainability Planning Scheme (www.knox.vic.gov.au).
Townhouses: three or more dwellings on a lot sharing a wall or roof.	 Minimise the dwelling and courtyard/porch footprint and other hard surfaces such as driveways, paths and paving. Use for landscaping areas to soften the front of the street. Include accessible design features (e.g. a clear path from the street to the front door, wide and sheltered step-free entrances, wide hallways & doorways). For more information on how to design for universal access, refer to the Federal Government's supported Living Housing Design Guidelines, 2010 (www.healthhousingguidelines.org.au). Provide a mix of dwelling sizes (number of bedrooms). Include sustainable material and use double glazed windows (Chapter 22.04.04). For further info: planning schemes and Knox Sustainability Planning Scheme (www.knox.vic.gov.au).
Apartments: development of three or more stories in a single mass or multi-unit dwelling, usually with a common entrance.	 Minimise the dwelling and courtyard/porch footprint and other hard surfaces such as driveways, paths and paving. Use for landscaping areas to soften the front of the street. Include accessible design features (e.g. a clear path from the street to the front door, wide and sheltered step-free entrances, wide hallways & doorways). For more information on how to design for universal access, refer to the Federal Government's supported Living Housing Design Guidelines, 2010 (www.healthhousingguidelines.org.au). Provide a mix of dwelling sizes (number of bedrooms). Include sustainable material and use double glazed windows (Chapter 22.04.04). For further info: planning schemes and Knox Sustainability Planning Scheme (www.knox.vic.gov.au).

For further details, see the [Knox Residential Design Guidelines 2015 – revised 2019](#) (p.24-28).

Attachment 2: Additional Graphs

Figure 18. Net Growth in Dwellings by Typology

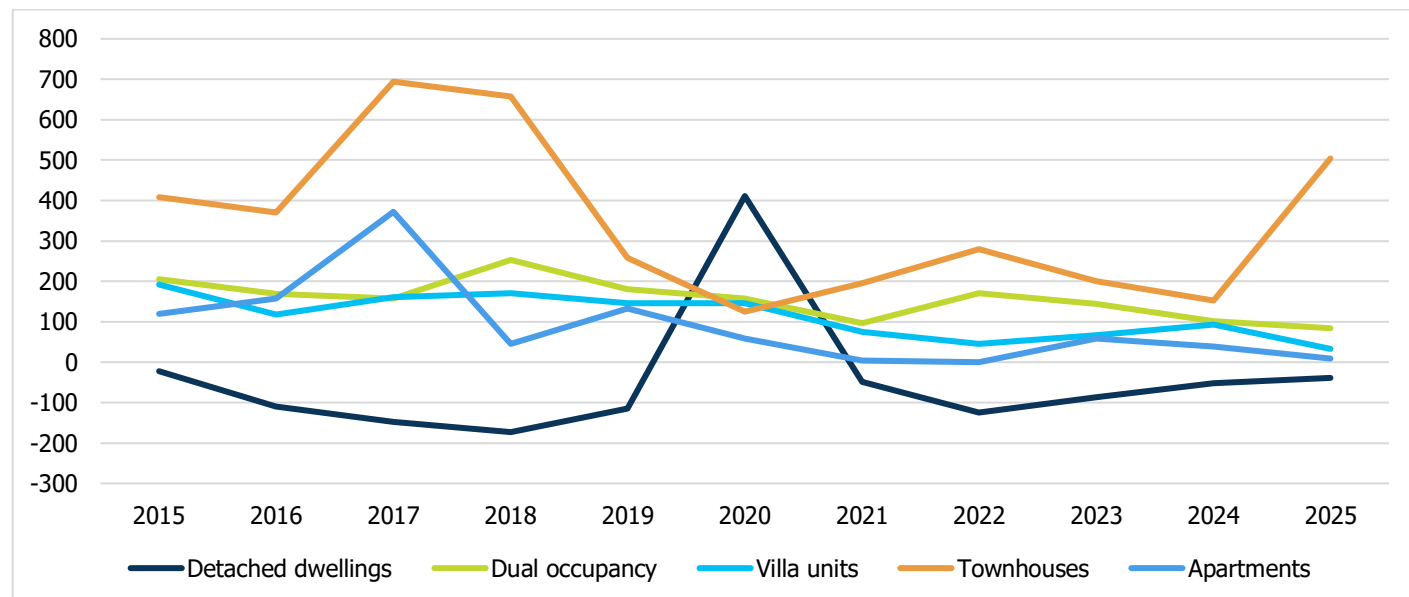
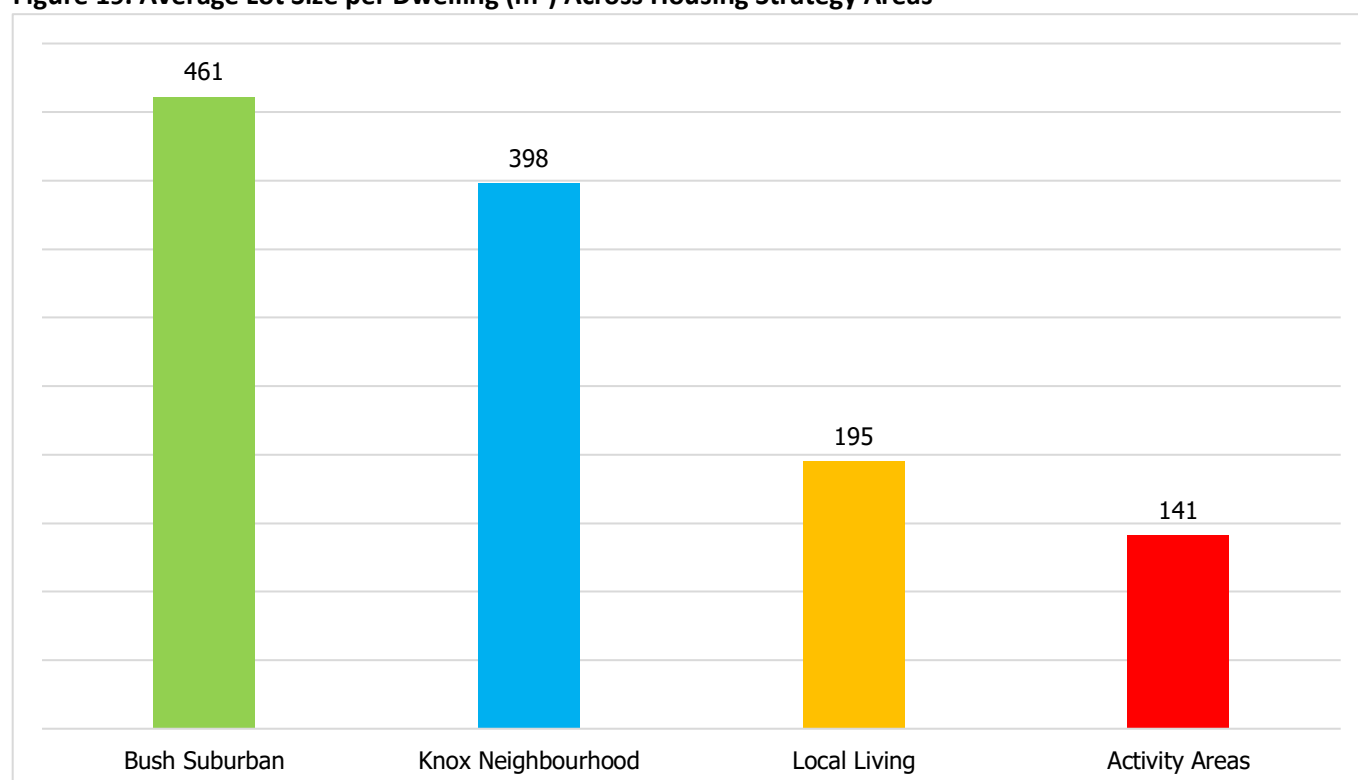


Figure 19. Average Lot Size per Dwelling (m²) Across Housing Strategy Areas



Attachment 3: Household Income Ranges

Table 4. Household Annual Income Ranges for 2025

Informed Decisions (.id), Housing Monitor: Income Ranges for Greater Melbourne 2025			
	Very Low	Low	Moderate
Lone person	Up to \$27,094	Up to \$43,350	Up to \$65,027
One parent family	Up to \$44,480	Up to \$71,168	Up to \$106,752
Couple	Up to \$64,087	Up to \$102,538	Up to \$153,808
Couple family with children	Up to \$88,792	Up to \$142,067	Up to \$213,101
Group household	Up to \$64,656	Up to \$103,451	Up to \$155,176
Total	Up to \$58,572	Up to \$93,714	Up to \$140,573

Planning and Environment Act 1987: Specification of Income Ranges for Greater Melbourne (1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026)			
	Very Low Income Range (Annual)	Low Income Range (Annual)	Moderate Income Range (Annual)
Single adult	Up to \$30,870	\$30,871 to \$49,380	\$49,381 to \$ 74,080
Couple, no dependent	Up to \$46,290	\$46,291 to \$74,080	\$74,081 to \$111,110
Family (with one or two parents) and dependent children	Up to \$64,810	\$64,811 to \$103,710	\$103,711 to \$155,550