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ACT Government

Testing housing choices policy through Demonstration Housing projects

The ACT Government is delivering Demonstration Housing to showcase innovative housing design and delivery, particularly in relation to: design quality; carbon neutral buildings; medium density infill; innovative planning and engagement approaches; innovative housing products and typologies; close partnerships with industry bodies; and options for public and affordable housing.

The Demonstration Housing project is running in parallel with the ACT's Housing Choices policy review, with input from a Collaboration Hub (a randomly selected, but demographically representative, group of 35 citizens).

Demonstration Housing is working to deliver types of housing that are not common in Canberra due to various planning restrictions. It is about encouraging better housing choices in the right locations. It is also seeking to test different project governance, financing and delivery methods. The projects will provide examples of potential planning policy changes, while at the same time, testing their viability.

A two-stage Expression of Interest process was developed in consultation with community and industry representatives. Proposals were received from a range of groups, including community groups, developers, architects, and property owners – and included co-housing, a manor house, micro apartments and townhouses designed for ageing-in-place.

The Collaboration Hub informed the assessment criteria for the projects – ensuring projects would deliver the types of innovation that are important to the community, and that they could be used to test and inform the Housing Choices policy review. The issues that were of particular importance to the Collaboration Hub included: improving building quality; preserving Canberra's garden city character; retaining vegetation to mitigate heat island effect; and encouraging universal design.

Once completed, people will be able to visit the projects on an Open House Day. If the projects are successful, planning policies may be changed to permit more housing choices in the right locations.