

# Townsville

## Affordable Housing Action Plan

### 2022 - 2023







## Foreword from the Mayor

Townsville is a city of innovation with an enviable tropical lifestyle, however the cost of living in the North is presenting as a barrier to retaining our residents and attracting the key workers that are needed to support economic growth. This Action Plan focusses on partnerships that will provide solutions that start to ease the affordable housing crisis and continue the critical advocacy needed to address the insurance inequality of the North.

Cr Jenny Hill  
Mayor of Townsville

## Foreword from the CEO

Growing Townsville through a strong economy and creation of new jobs must be balanced with secure housing options for our current and future residents. Delivering innovative solutions through partnerships that produce high density affordable housing is a key step towards stabilising our housing market and supports Townsville on its journey to being a resilient and sustainable city of tomorrow.

Dr Prins Ralston  
Chief Executive Officer

### OUR VISION

A globally connected community  
driven by lifestyle and nature

### OUR PURPOSE

Grow Townsville

### OUR MISSION

Add 6,400 new jobs by 2026





# Affordable Housing Action Plan

## **Townsville and the broader region, like the rest of Australia, is in the grip of an affordable housing crisis.**

With a continued and sustained decrease in rental vacancy rates across regional Queensland, and expectation of continued migration into Townsville it is critical to provide some rapid solutions to ease the housing gap.

The rental vacancy rate has remained below 1.0% since the September 2020 quarter. REIQ has reported that for the June 2022 quarter, Townsville's rental vacancy rate was 0.5%. This is the lowest vacancy rate experienced for the last decade.

To meet the demonstrated and forecast needs, Townsville City Council is supporting progression of affordable housing options that seek to improve access to housing, retain and attract key workers as well as activate the city.

Affordable Housing improves social and economic resilience of a community. In a financial climate that is seeing significant cost increases across all levels of government continue to deliver innovative and sustainable housing outcomes.

Affordable housing aims to support provision of housing to those on low-to-moderate incomes. Council will focus on models that provide affordable ownership and rental housing products that can be developed and managed through registered community housing providers.

## **Townsville Snapshot**

- Townsville has a record low vacancy rate of 0.5% (REIQ Residential Vacancy Report June Quarter 2022).
- Over 10% of the housing market (7,717 households) are in housing stress, with over 5,000 of these being in the rental market (Economy id, id.com.au, September 2022).
- While Townsville is experiencing economic growth, lack of housing may deter from investment in the region. Rapid solutions for housing to support retaining and growing jobs in Townsville is paramount.

This action plan focusses on four key areas:

1. Provision of Council owned land to facilitate development of affordable housing.
2. Partnerships with government and private industry to deliver affordable housing.
3. Investigate conversion of vacant office buildings into residential.
4. Facilitating development



# Action Area 1

**Provision of Townsville City Council land to support development of affordable housing.**

## **Stage 1 – North Rail Yards**

The North Rail Yards will be an active and exciting precinct that provides contemporary use of the rail heritage buildings, retaining their key architectural form and historical elements while respectfully integrating the intent of the Priority Development Area. North Rail Yards will be the southern gateway into Townsville City and support high-density residential housing with commercial and cultural activities that educate and celebrate our city's heritage and future.

Offering of land parcels within the North Rail Yards site as Council's contribution to development partnerships that will deliver affordable housing outcomes.

## **Stage 2 – Growth Areas**

Review of areas across the city in conjunction with the community to identify further Council owned land parcels that may facilitate medium to high density affordable housing.

# Action Area 2

**Partnerships with government and private industry to deliver affordable housing. Identify partnership opportunities for affordable ownership and rental housing products by:**

- Reviewing funding, financing and delivery models for delivery of high-density affordable housing.
- Accessing Queensland and Federal Government initiatives and support programs to accelerate affordable housing.
- Determining and activating mechanisms to support delivery and funding opportunities.





## Action Area 3

3

### Investigate conversion of vacant office buildings into residential.

Townsville has a number of Government, and privately owned office buildings across the CBD which have been vacant or underutilised for a significant period. These buildings have the potential to be repurposed and rapidly converted into residential apartments. The repurposed buildings would also contribute to city activation with lower levels able to be converted into commercial, retail, social enterprise, and hospitality spaces. This will not only start to address the Townsville housing crisis but also support the economic uplift and revitalisation of the CBD.

In a joint project between the Property Council of Australia and Council, an assessment will be undertaken to determine the feasibility of repurposing small, medium and large style vacant or underutilised buildings within Townsville's CBD into mixed-use commercial and residential accommodation.

## Action Area 4

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### Facilitating Development

Development Incentives – Council has established development incentives for new and repurposed development within the city, city fringe and designated medium density residential zones. The fee waivers include aspects such as infrastructure charges, operational works, compliance assessments and water meter and service connections.

Streamlining Development Assessment processes – Council is currently mapping the customer journey in order to streamline processes to make outcomes more certain and reduce timeframes. This will make the pathway for development clearer.

Insurance – Advocating in conjunction with Peak Representative Bodies to reduce insurance in the North to support medium and high density residential development and living through:

- Finalisation of the North Queensland Reinsurance Pool and Resilience Program
- Implementation of the North Queensland Strata Title Resilience Pilot Program






To follow the Action Plan progress visit [townsville.qld.gov.au](https://townsville.qld.gov.au)







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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Townsville City Council acknowledges the Wulgurukaba of Gurambilbarra and Yunbenun, Bindal, Gugu Badhun and Nywaigi as the Traditional Owners of this land. We pay our respects to their cultures, their ancestors and their Elders – past and present – and all future generations.