

Neighbourhood character

The Neighbourhood Character Strategy depicts the preferred future physical and environmental state of each neighbourhood character area. Banyule's *Neighbourhood Character Strategy (2012)* has been reviewed in tandem with this Housing Strategy. The aim of this process is to ensure there is balance between housing growth and diversity, while respecting a neighbourhood's identity.

The existing *Neighbourhood Character Strategy (2012)* has been largely successful in maintaining valued neighbourhood character or direction on preferred future neighbourhood character. The review refreshed the existing strategy, making sure it is still relevant and able to assist with matters that proceed to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and better reinforce local identity.

Across all of Banyule, communities value the leafy, green and native vegetation in their neighbourhoods. As outlined in the *Urban Forest Strategy (2023)*, Banyule is aiming for 30% canopy cover in all suburbs. The Neighbourhood Character Strategy review can assist in identifying areas which need more canopy cover to reach 30% coverage, through identifying additional tree planting as part of the preferred future neighbourhood character.

There is, however, a risk of neighbourhood character being used as a form of density control, by defaulting to single dwelling outcomes, when no provisions are made for how housing diversity can be done well in a neighbourhood character area. A balance is required between achieving appropriate housing outcomes from a neighbourhood character perspective and encouraging housing types that meet future community needs. Where there is a change to housing typologies, it is important that additional guidance is given on how the preferred future neighbourhood character can be achieved.

VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING

While acknowledging that Banyule must provide more housing, this must be carefully balanced with protection and enhancement of significant vegetation and biodiversity. Banyule enjoys leafy and native vegetation, especially trees which provide good canopy cover.

A key threat to Banyule's neighbourhood character is the loss of its established vegetation. This often occurs when existing houses are demolished and replaced with larger development such as a larger house or multi dwelling development, which leave minimal area for the retention or planting of canopy trees.

Banyule's *Urban Forest Strategy (2023)* aims to achieve a minimum canopy cover of 30% by 2050 for all suburbs and no net loss in suburbs already exceeding that level. Achieving this target will require action in both the public realm and private property.

The need to accommodate a greater density of housing in Banyule's residential areas, whilst also contributing to the urban canopy may result in changes to the form and scale of development in these areas. Residential development can be designed in a way to better accommodate vegetation and achieve better landscaping outcomes. For instance, a taller building which occupies a smaller area of the site may take precedence over other forms of development as this type of development will provide better permeable area for the planting and ongoing growth of canopy trees and understorey vegetation.

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

Where there is a significant neighbourhood character area, and that neighbourhood character is at risk from higher density development, a lower scale of housing will be maintained in this Housing Strategy as areas for minimal housing change. The draft Neighbourhood Character Strategy has identified an area in East Ivanhoe which abuts the Yarra River which should be maintained at a lower density housing.