

A house or a high rise, or take a hike!

From today, our housing choices will be limited in Brisbane. Today is the start of Exclusionary Zoning in Brisbane. What does that mean? It means that from today, the majority of Brisbane neighbourhoods will be reserved for only single houses (and the odd aged care home). Over two thirds of our residential areas will now be reserved for big houses with only one household in each. What's left of our residential land mostly facilitates mid to high rise apartment living.

Joining the officially banned list in the majority of Brisbane today are new townhouses (which is simply 3 or more attached or separate dwellings which share some space for gardens and parking). Townhouses are now in the company of the already banned forms of 'missing middle housing' including low-rise apartments, duplexes, rentable granny flats or fonzie flats and tiny houses (unless they're on wheels), from your typical neighbourhood. And in much of our next tier of residential zoning (the low medium density residential zone, known as LMR), 3 storey walk-up apartments and single unit dwellings (which were essentially smaller houses on freehold lots less than 400m²) have already been phased out in the 2014 Brisbane City Plan.

From today, you will only be able to build a house in the majority of our residential neighbourhoods, and only if you are one of the lucky ones who can afford it. This will simply fuel our urban sprawl and reduce affordability, choice and sustainability.

This is at a time when many cities in the USA are scrambling to be the most fair, equitable and sustainable cities, which much talk about the relationship between housing policy and climate policy. I had the opportunity to meet with local representatives from 'Portland, Neighbours Welcome' and 'Portland for Everyone' late last year, to discuss local housing issues and the YIMBY (Yes in My Back Yard) movement. Housing supply and affordability are big issues in Portland, as they are in many US cities, with racial segregation having historically influenced housing policy and more recently concern is being raised about economic segregation. In response, Oregon has become the first State in the USA to ban areas for only single family dwellings, introducing new planning rules allowing rentable ADUs (accessory dwelling units) of around 90m² in all residential areas, and quadplexes or even six-plexes on corner lots. In 2019, Minneapolis also celebrated the banning of single family zoning, moving to allow multiple homes on single-family lots to provide opportunities for more housing in already developed areas. Late last year California also passed new laws, marking the end of single family zoning in California, allowing as many as three homes on each lot in most single family neighbourhoods.

Like in many of the larger cities in the USA, we believe this townhouse ban in the Brisbane (or what has become a ban on all forms of 'missing middle' housing in the majority of Brisbane neighbourhoods) must and will eventually be turned around. Here are 10 quick reasons why we believe townhouses and other forms of 'gentle density' such as duplexes and ADUs are important:

- * **Choice** - for those who don't choose a house or high rise
- * **Entry into the market** - at a lower cost on average compared to a house of similar age in the same neighbourhood



sustainability

innovation

community dividend

design excellence

- * **Downsizing** - in the suburb you call home & have made social connections, or in recognition of changing household structure
- * **Lower maintenance living** - attractive for the time poor, those who no longer want the constant upkeep of a big backyard
- * **Affordability** - for first home owners, lower income earners & key workers who want to live close to work or family and reduce long commutes
- * **Small backyard** - plus shared green spaces & other common facilities, great for building connections with neighbours and for people with pets
- * **Play space** - internal low-speed private roads are safer for children to play
- * **Low density housing form** - complementing their surroundings in built form and scale while offering another option than a house
- * **Compact urban infill** - making better use of existing infrastructure, housing a growing population without putting further pressure to continue our urban sprawl legacy
- * **Suitably located in low density areas** - reserving more central & accessible areas for higher density living

Unfortunately turning this ban around and reintroducing ‘missing middle’ housing forms to Brisbane neighbourhoods will take time and is not likely to occur before its impacts will be felt by many, most likely young people looking for their first home to start a family, downsizers wanting to stay close to the area they’ve called home, and those with lower economic means. Instead, these people will likely be increasingly pushed out of Brisbane, into adjacent neighbourhoods in Moreton Bay, Ipswich City and Logan City, on the edges of Brisbane, to find these types of housing choice, increasing commute times and cars on our roads. Or they will be forced into a high rise units because the choices will be just that - a house or a high rise, or take a hike!

At YIMBYQld, we support housing for all. We want housing policy to be fair, affordable and sustainable, delivering community benefit. We support a mix of housing types, sizes, tenures and prices in all residential suburbs across our city, and increased densities around good public transport, schools and other existing infrastructure. Well located, serviced and walkable locations deserve appropriate density. More specifically, YIMBYQld calls for housing policy that allows new low-density townhouses, duplexes and ADUs in all low density residential neighbourhoods of Brisbane (as a land use, subject to appropriate design controls), allowing higher density apartment living to concentrate around centres and good public transport. We call for a ban on the ban on new townhouses in low density and emerging community areas.