



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Environment
and Planning

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into DPA-04 – Missing Middle Housing Reform

Submission number: 008

Submitter: Planning Institute Australia (PIA)

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Standing Committee on Environment and Planning
LACommitteeEnvironment@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee,

RE: Inquiry into DPA-04 – Missing Middle Housing Reforms

I am writing on behalf of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) in regard to the Draft Major Plan Amendment to the Territory Plan 04 (DPA-04). PIA is the professional body representing urban and regional planners, with over 5,000 members across Australia.

PIA welcomes the Committee's ongoing work to progress the Missing Middle Housing Reforms and recognises the importance of this Draft Amendment as a significant step in shaping Canberra's future housing. PIA supports the intent of the Draft Amendment to permit a wider range of housing choices on existing residential land across the ACT.

We appreciate the constructive engagement throughout the development of this reform, including the opportunity to contribute through our [Submission on Missing Middle Planning Reforms](#) made in July 2025. This response highlights the key matters we previously raised without restating the full submission.

PIA also [acknowledges](#) and appreciates the adoption of several PIA recommendations, particularly those relating to assessment requirements, and thanks the ACT Government and the Committee for their continued engagement with PIA.

Summary

- **PIA supports the intent of the Missing Middle Housing Reforms and their role in enabling more diverse housing across Canberra.**
- **Stronger place based and spatial planning will help direct growth to the most suitable locations and align it with infrastructure delivery.**
- **Clear and well-structured Policy and Assessment Outcomes are essential for a transparent, efficient and user-friendly planning system.**
- **Landscape scale design guidance will help manage cumulative impacts and enhance Canberra's valued character.**
- **Ongoing updates to District Strategies will ensure growth is coordinated, supported and sustainable over time.**

Introduction

PIA strongly supports urban consolidation and recognises the potential of the Draft Amendment to enable a wider range of housing options throughout existing well-located suburbs. We also recognise the opportunity to build trust in planning by improving the efficiency and transparency of development standards and assessment processes.

PIA sees opportunities to further develop and refine the Government's approach to infill development. In particular, place-based planning remains crucial to achieve the best cumulative outcome. Place-based strategic planning would identify the most suitable locations for targeted infrastructure and public realm investment, increased density, support homes in areas well connected to jobs and services, and help shape new development in tune with Canberra's distinctive landscape character.

Spatial planning leads housing delivery

PIA recognises the strong demand for new housing across Canberra, and the need to accommodate a variety of household structures and preferences. Amendments to the Territory Plan are essential to utilise existing urban land effectively and make housing choices available over the long-term. These changes are best supported by spatial planning which evaluates physical, social and market realities to select the best places to concentrate uplift. Infrastructure delivery based on clear spatial policy would provide a strong signal to encourage housing delivery, and ensure that new homes are built where growth can be sustained.

PIA notes that the ACT District Strategies, which were recently introduced to link strategic planning and development controls, say that more detailed planning would be undertaken for the change areas they identify. This would allow new housing to be calibrated with current and planned infrastructure capacity.

The [DPA-04 Supporting Report](#) also recognises the need to manage infrastructure demand resulting from the Missing Middle Planning Reforms by "*appropriate planning and investment in infrastructure throughout the Territory*".

PIA recommends that District Strategies be updated regularly to account for evolving scenarios and to support ongoing infill delivery. Additional localised planning aligned with updated strategies would help clarify growth potential and infrastructure needs in existing suburbs.

Policy and Assessment Outcomes

A key issue raised by the Draft Amendment is the weight given to Policy Outcomes during development assessment. There is a challenge to ensure Policy Outcomes remain relevant and applicable to missing middle housing typologies and updated assessment requirements.

To provide a legible and user-friendly system for applicants, Policy and Assessment Outcomes should be clearly structured and weighted. Maintaining this hierarchy improves the transparency of planning controls and builds confidence in the planning framework for all its users.

Policy and Assessment Outcomes for RZ1 land should be subject to a timely review process requiring new policies and strategies to be fully integrated. Assessment requirements should straightforwardly reflect the overall Policy Outcomes sought, offering applicants which comply passage through the system with as little friction as possible. This ensures that policy aims are carried through reliably into everyday assessment – moving from 'aspiration' to 'shaping outcomes'.

Landscape-scale design guidance

PIA welcomes the new Missing Middle Design Guide as an important tool for improving design quality at the site scale. We encourage complementary work to consider cumulative impacts at the neighbourhood and landscape scale, which is especially relevant in Canberra, a city defined by its landscape setting and urban structure. Understanding how missing middle development affects the character of streets and suburbs would strengthen

the effectiveness of design guidance and help maintain the qualities identified in Priority 8 of the [Statement of Planning Priorities 2025-2028](#): *Protect the environment and enhance the city's landscape*. This broader design guidance could draw on the expertise of the new position of ACT Chief Landscape Architect and inform the future landscape plan for the ACT.

Coordinated urban design outcomes will also require public realm and infrastructure upgrades, which should be identified and sequenced through future updates to District Strategies.

Conclusion

PIA appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important reform and remains committed to working with the ACT Government and the Committee to support well planned infill housing across Canberra. To help refine and strengthen the Draft Amendment, PIA recommends:

- Regular updates to District Strategies to guide growth, infrastructure sequencing and local planning for identified change areas
- A clearer and more structured hierarchy of Policy and Assessment Outcomes to ensure transparency and consistency in development assessment
- Expanded design guidance that considers cumulative, landscape-scale outcomes, supported by coordinated public realm and infrastructure investment.

With these elements in place, the Missing Middle Housing Reforms can significantly enhance housing diversity and support Canberra's long-term liveability. PIA looks forward to continued collaboration as this work progresses.

Yours sincerely,

Natalia Anderson RPIA
PIA ACT President