GUIDANCE NOTE

Small Lot Housing Code

Victorian Planning Authority

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VICTORIA State Government

Contents

Introduction

What is the Code?

The Small Lot Housing Code (SLHC) was created in 2011 to cut 'red-tape' by removing planning permit process for lots less than 300 square metres. Streamlining processes facilitates greater diversity and density of housing product, alleviates planning pressures on local councils.

The SLHC prescribes design and siting standards for dwellings on less than 300 square metres, that must be met to avoid the planning permit process. This allows for faster approvals and lower costs for small lot housing.

Further, the SLHC provides an opportunity for housing diversity in Greenfields suburbs.

Much like the state-wide residential development code 'ResCode', the SLHC **provides design and siting standards** including requirements for setbacks, building height, provision of car spaces, private open space, overlooking, overshadowing, building articulation and fences. These Standards supersede many of the regulations at Part 5 of the *Building Regulations 2018*.

The SLHC also includes Standards that are not prescribed in the *Building Regulations 2018* and they are required to be met for the dwelling to comply with the Code, including things like storage requirements and tree planting areas, which are commonly lost on smaller parcels.

The SLHC is suitable for use by building surveyors, council planners, developers, consultants and designers. It has varied applicability at PSP scale, subdivision permit scale and for buildings and works permits.

The SLHC is not mandatory, a developer or house builder can opt to use the existing planning permit process.

Where does it apply?

The **SLHC applies in identified growth areas where the Urban Growth Zone applies. The Code has also been introduced to limited areas of strategic infill sites** via a Special Purpose Zone such as in the Burwood Highway and Scoresby Road Knoxfield Comprehensive Development Plan. Numerous regional Councils have also introduced the SLHC into their planning schemes via the Urban Growth Zone.

The SLHC is an incorporated document in a planning scheme and is introduced via planning scheme amendments by the relevant Planning Authority at the time of rezoning.

Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) accompany the introduction of the Urban Growth Zone provisions and identify preferred locations for residential development, including areas where higher density is required. SLHC product is commonly used to achieve density targets identified in the PSP, but should be used in concert with a mixture of home types including detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings and apartments. It is included as a housing principle target and is embedded into PSPs.

By streamlining and aligning the process for dwellings on lots less than 300 square metres to the process for other single dwellings, the SLHC seeks to improve housing diversity and achieve density targets across precincts. This is particularly important to streamline housing and assist with supply. Subsequently, this contributes to the downward pressure on housing affordability.

Disclaimer

These VPA SLHC guidelines have been prepared to assist with one interpretation of how the application of SLHC development can optimise outcomes. However, the subdivision permit permit stage represents the responsible authority's and applicant's opportunity to nominate SLHC types having regard to these guidelines.

How does the Small Lot Housing Code work?

The SLHC requires a permit applicant at the subdivision stage to nominate a lot as a SLHC Type (as described below). The building surveyor is responsible for assessing any dwelling design against the code Standards to determine if it is compliant. If the dwelling is deemed to be compliant, then a planning permit will not be triggered, and the application will go directly through the Building Permit process. If a lot is not compliant with the code, then a planning permit will be required through the standard permit process.

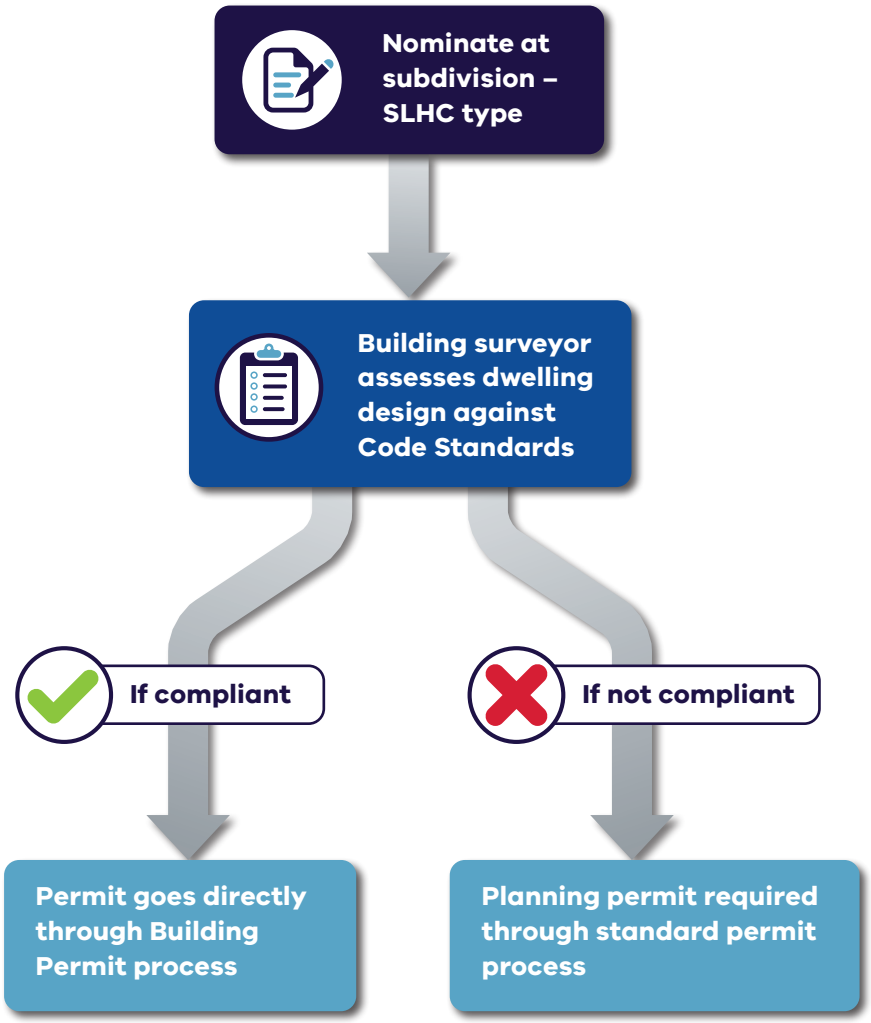
The code has three typologies known as:

- Type **A**
- Type **B**
- Type **C**

Type **A** and **B** were first introduced in 2011 and broadly have remained unchanged, and Type **C** was introduced in 2024.

Type **C** was introduced to provide more design opportunities based on industry feedback. It will encourage housing diversity and density within a masterplan.

Masterplanning is a necessary and important component of planning for new suburbs. Masterplans should utilise SLHC products to ensure that there is enough housing diversity and density in appropriate locations across a new suburb. PSPs will identify areas (town centres, near existing or future transport nodes, adjacent to high amenity areas like local parks etc) where higher density is required, and although there are not specific locations for the different SLHC typologies, the VPA provides guidance in this document. These are discussed in more detail on Page 6.



Why is guiding material required?

This guidance material can help achieve the density targets specified in a PSP, for new communities. The density targets for are crucial in guiding sustainable urban development and ensuring efficient use of land. By setting specific density goals, PSPs can promote more compact, walkable neighbourhoods that reduce the need for extensive transportation infrastructure and minimize environmental impacts.

Given the prescriptive nature of the code, industry has provided the VPA with extensive feedback relating to where typologies should be located in a masterplan. There has also been a large amount of feedback received from local government on the need for greater diversity of housing product.

The guidance document does not consider all possible outcomes and is not to be used as a strict guide, as alternative outcomes can achieve the desired outcomes. The guidance material is prepared to assist in the design of new neighborhoods and decision makers (responsible authorities) in approvals of subdivision masterplans when the identification and use of the code is nominated.

The desired outcomes relate to:

1. Diversity of housing types in new neighborhoods
2. Improved streetscape outcomes
3. Integrated built form and street design
4. Appropriate transition from different urban outcomes (open space, activity centres)
5. Activated street frontages, particularly in areas of high amenity

Understanding the typologies

To determine whether there are preferred locations for the different typologies, the common characteristics of the Types must be understood. The VPA recognises that there are no strict definitions for what a Type A, B or C dwelling is, but they are generally formed by the following characteristics.

TYPE	TYPE A	TYPE B	TYPE C
			
BUILDING HEIGHT AND FRONT SETBACK	Allows for a dwelling of up to **11m and 3 storeys, with a with a moderate front setback** (commonly 3-4 metres).	Up to **11m and 3 storeys, with reduced setbacks** (commonly 1.5-3 metres).	Are designed to facilitate dwellings of **up to 4 storeys and 13.5m of height.** They are characterised by moderate front and rear setbacks to soften the urban environment.
LOT SIZE	**Between 200 and 300 square metres** that may also fit a conventional housing product.	**Between 110-200 square metres**.	Can be accommodated in **smaller lots (approximately 95sqm)** while allowing areas for deep soil planting through the provided setbacks.
PRODUCT TYPE	**Detached housing products**, and has increasingly been delivered as **townhouse or semi-detached products**, of generally one or two storeys in height.	**Two-storey townhouse**, **simultaneously designed and built**, allowing for maximum wall on boundary provisions.	Standards afford greatest flexibility to products that are **simultaneously approved**. Generally, these will facilitate the delivery of **three-four storeys townhouses.**
LOCATION	• Located **intermittently within a block**. • Co-located between Type B and Type C products to provide built form and setback variance.	• Located **near town centres** to allow for a transition between commercial to residential land uses. • Suited to '**block bookends' or adjacent to contiguous areas of amenity** such as waterways.	• Best used as a **transition to taller built** form in higher density precincts (town centres) or **adjacent to areas of amenity** where taller built form can be absorbed. • Can also be situated **adjacent to streets with active frontages**, including pedestrian only or cycle streets, further supported by rear loaded products.

Location within a masterplan

As identified above, each typology can be used in any part of a subdivision masterplan, however each typology has characteristics that lend themselves to being **more optimal in different areas of the master plan**. This ensures that there is enough housing diversity and density across the plan. It also means that the dwellings are located in appropriate proximity to open space, schools and community facilities, jobs, public transport and cycling networks, or other forms of amenities.

To assist with identifying the preferred locations, the VPA has prepared a matrix for preferred locational characteristics or design conditions for each Type.

- Proximity to amenity
- Location within block
- Complementary street

Type A lots are typically detached or semi-detached single storey products with room for a small tree planting in the front yard. They may be located throughout an estate, but concentrated Type A product should be located within close proximity to areas of public open space.

Ideally, they should be located adjacent to active transport routes and high traffic roads since they are intended to be located further away from town centres. They may be located in mid-block or on corner lots.

Type B is typically town house product that can provide for a transition from town centres to surrounding residential areas. It does not explicitly provide for private realm planting and therefore is best located in areas of higher open space amenity such as parks or waterways.

They should be rear loaded when fronting key active transport routes but may be front or rear loaded.

Type C is intended to be the densest product and is best located within vicinity of town centres. Therefore, they are located on key bus and bicycle transport connections.

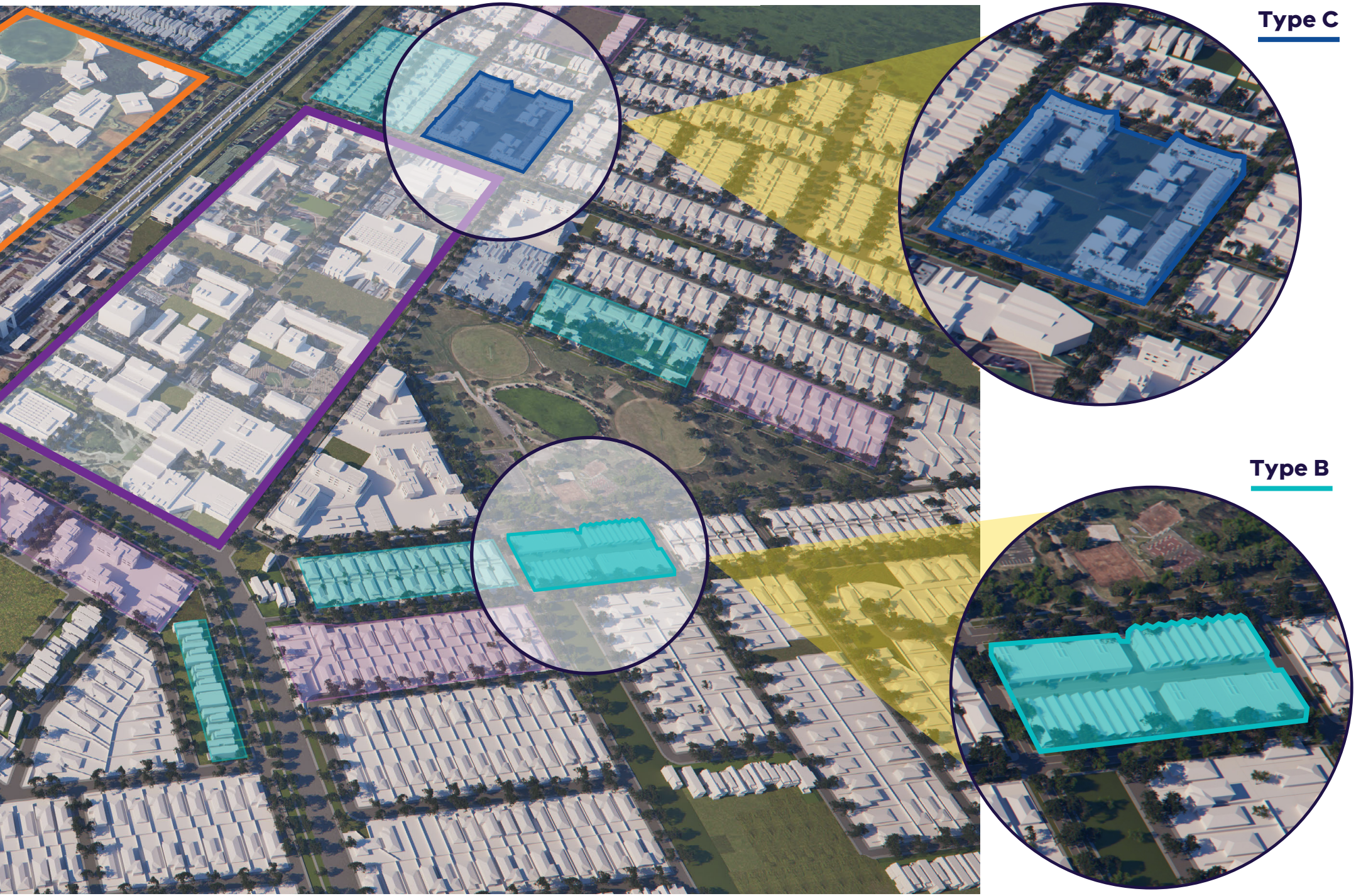
They provide for private realm planting, so should be used in place of Type A and B where there opportunity for street tree planting is limited. They may be located mid-block, or book ends.

Considerations when nominating small lot types

- Efficiencies of building and selling housing models that are designed simultaneously on adjoining lots.
- Encourage a variety of design and built form outcomes that provide some variance across different plans within a masterplan. For example, a street containing Type A, B and C dwellings will be more visually varied than a street with standard dwellings.
- Better to locate and co-locate dwellings with areas of amenity, such as open space, along transport routes or in proximity to activity centres. For example, dwellings with balconies or terraces should have 50-100m proximity to open space.
- Housing types should complement streetscape types to create more diversity in streetscape outcomes and support larger canopy trees.
- Certain housing types should be located on wider verge streets due to narrower lot size and increased site coverage. These wider verge streets will be able to accommodate rear-loaded dwellings to support pedestrian friendly streets, active transport routes and high-traffic roads. For example, multiple rear-loaded Type B dwellings can allow for a continuous off-road cycle lane without interruptions by crossovers.

Type A


Type A
Type B
Type C
Activity Centre
Education
Community facilities
Artist's impression


Type C
Type B

Type A

FRONT SETBACK

4m	1.5m	3m
from declared roads	when facing an open space	for all other cases

SIDE & REAR SETBACK

BUILDING HEIGHT

3.6m	3.6 > 6.9m	> 6.9m
1m	1m plus 0.3m for every metre over 3.6m	2m plus 1m for every metre over 6.9m

Description

Type A allows for dwelling of up to **11m and 3 storeys with a moderate front setback**. These types have larger areas of private open space due to greater setbacks.

This type has been commonly nominated on **lots between 200 and 300 sqm**, as single or double-storey dwellings.

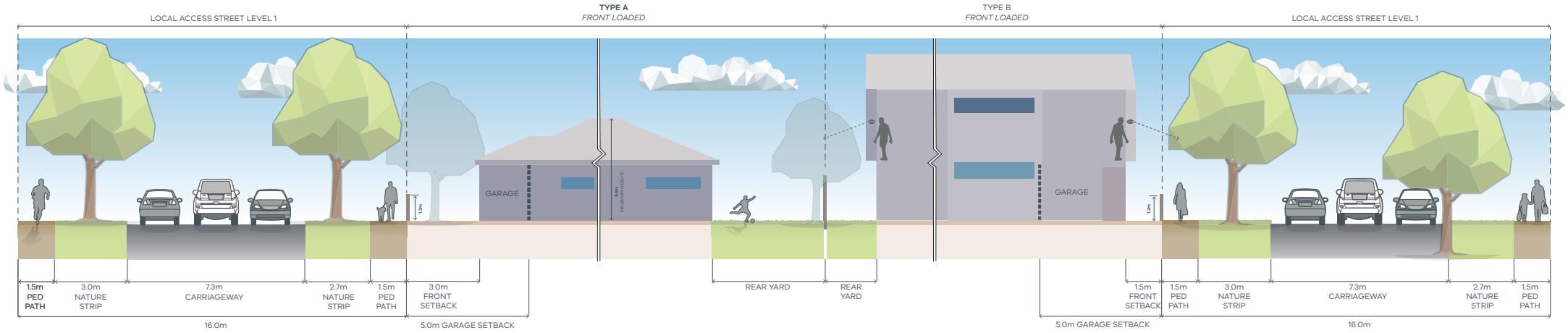
Preferred location

1. Locate on the fringes of public open space's catchment area (400m), as standards allow for larger private open spaces at ground level.
2. Locate on corner allotments to provide a 'soft edge' to the street.
3. Co-locate as a transition between Type B/C and standard dwellings on lots greater than 300 sqm.

Type A

BUILDING HEIGHT	SITE COVERAGE	PERMEABILITY	CAR PARKING
11m and **3** storeys	**90%** max	**10%** min	**1** space

Cross section A1



Typology consideration

Where there is sufficient amenity in the public realm and minimal or no setback is provided, the front façade should allow for **passive surveillance and visual connection** to the streetscape, while ensuring **privacy** of habitable rooms.

Where possible, **landscaping of driveways and articulation of the facade** is encouraged for garage entrances not to dominate the streetscape.

Increased depth of rear and side yards is encouraged to **maximise daylight regardless of orientation**.

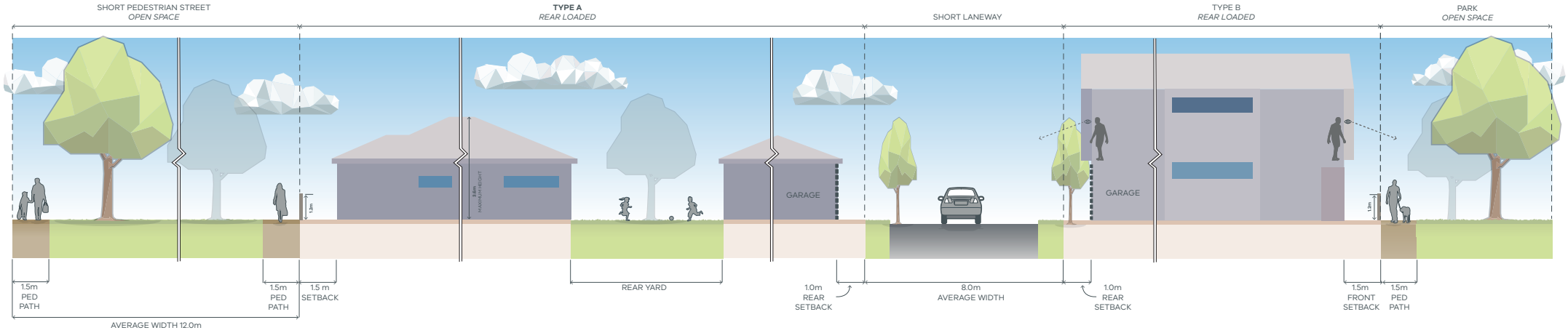
Streetscape requirements

Minimum distances between deep soil obstructions (crossovers) and **consolidated crossovers** are encouraged to allow for **meaningful street tree planting and better pedestrian experience**.

When located on corner lots, **landscaping and activation** towards both sides is encouraged to provide a soft-edge to the street.

Front setbacks greater than 2.5m should include a small tree, further contributing to the street landscaping, particularly if Type A is located on a streetscape side that only offer very small and small street tree planting.

Cross section A2



Typology consideration

Rear door entries should be considered to provide passive surveillance and activation to rear lanes.

East and West **preferred orientation** to maximise daylight to courtyard and rear yards.

Streetscape requirements

Consideration of having **additional depth at the rear of the dwelling for landscaping**.

Provide access to mostly **uninterrupted meandering paths/shared paths at the front**, where rear vehicle access is provided at the rear.

Laneways and pedestrian-only streetscapes should adopt **maximum street lengths** with appropriate street breaks to support improved pedestrian experience and safety.

Type B

FRONT SETBACK

4m	1m	1.5m
from declared roads	from side street on a corner	for all other cases

SIDE & REAR SETBACK

BUILDING HEIGHT

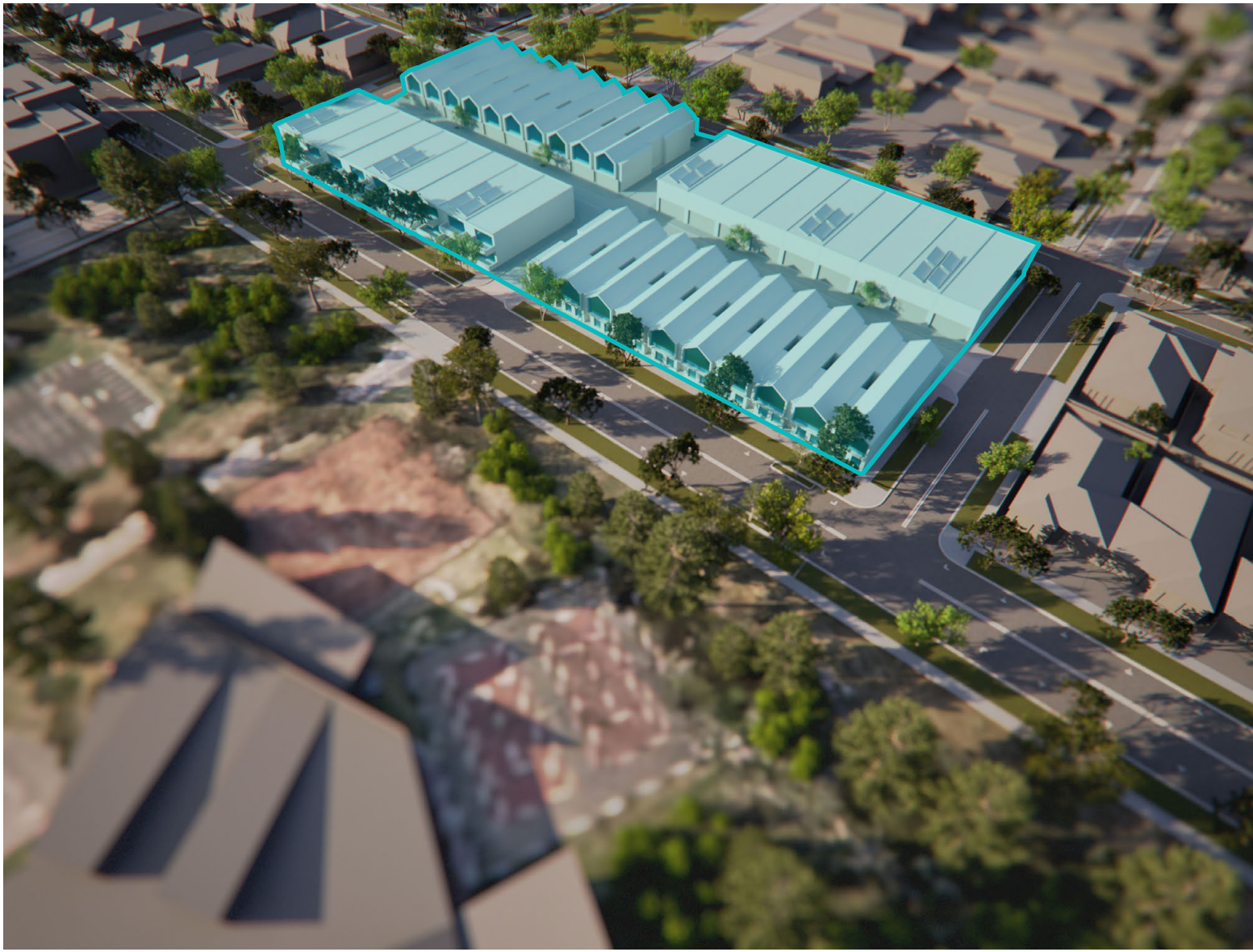
3.6m	3.6 > 6.9m	> 6.9m
1m	1m plus 0.3m for every metre over 3.6m	2m plus 1m for every metre over 6.9m

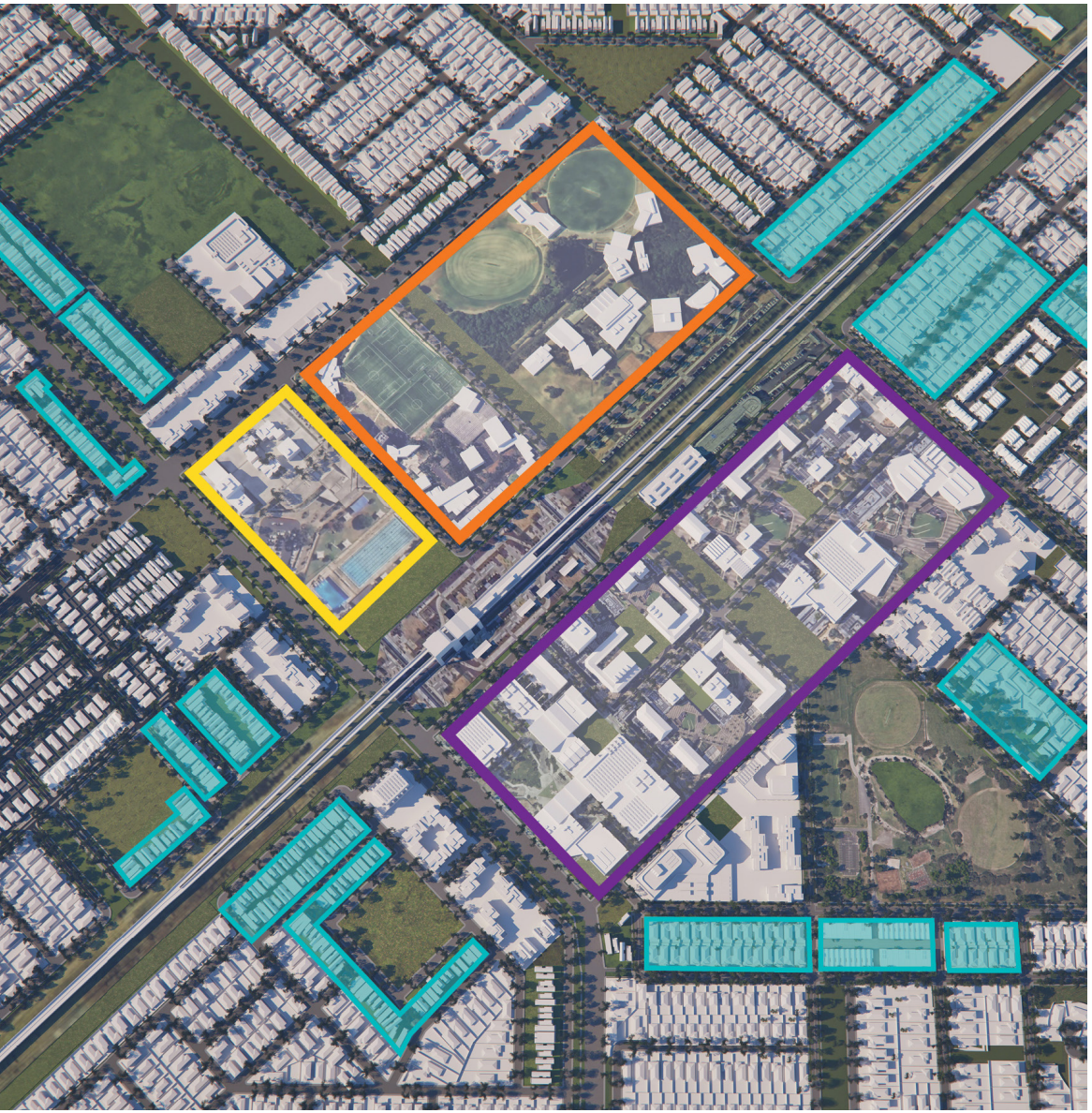
Description

Type B allows for dwellings of up to **11m and 3 storeys with a reduced front setback**. It better supports **private open space above ground level** as reduced setbacks and no maximum site coverage or minimum permeability area apply. This type has been commonly nominated on **lots between 150 and 200 sqm**, as simultaneously designed double-storey townhouses.

Preferred location

1. Locate in close proximity to parks or other open spaces (max. 100m) to supplement the limitations of private open spaces above ground level.
2. Co-locate mid-block as a transition between type A and C, in medium or high-density precincts.
3. Locate along roads with a generous treed environment to supplement limitations of the reduced setbacks and private open spaces above ground level.

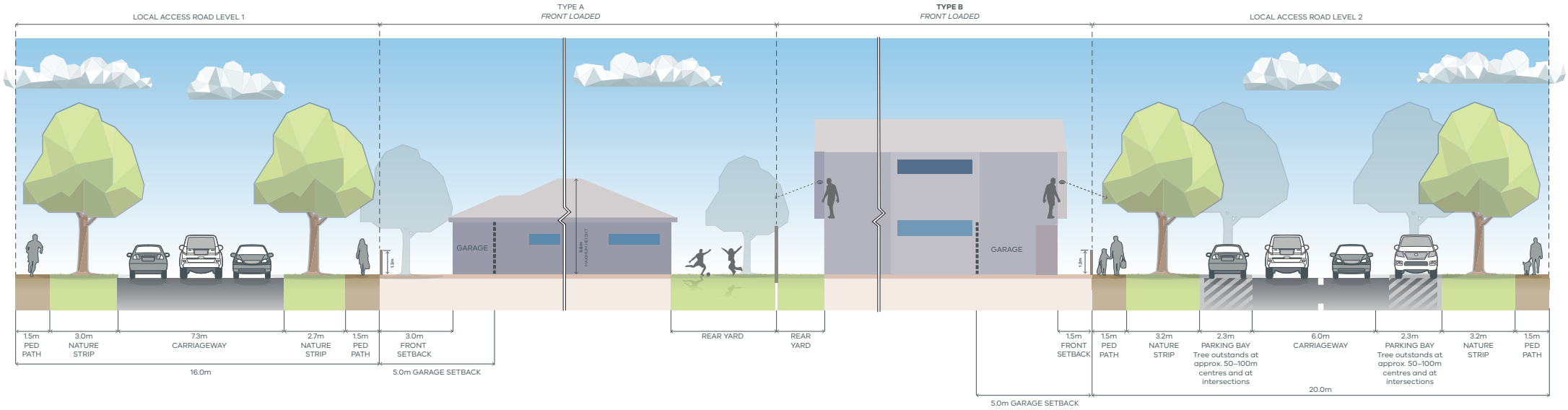




Type B

BUILDING HEIGHT	SITE COVERAGE	PERMEABILITY	CAR PARKING
11m and **3** storeys	**No max**	**No min**	**1** space

Cross section B1



Typology consideration

Simultaneous design and construction of this type can support maximum wall on boundary provisions.

Private open space in the form of balconies should be placed at the front of the property, allowing for **passive surveillance and visual connection** with a more active streetscape

These types should have **rear access** to **maximise public realm planting** and to **protect cycling streets**.

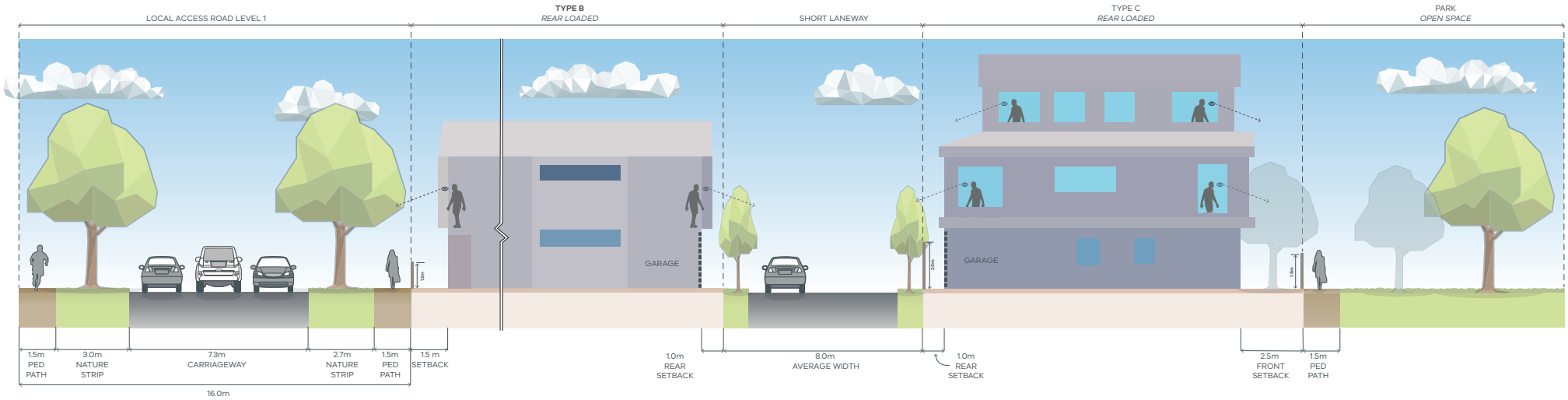
Streetscape requirements

When private open space is only provided above ground level, **streetscapes that support a generous treed environment** or interface with an open space are encouraged.

Where abutting a property with a rear or side private open space, **overshadowing** requirements should be considered

Minimum distances between deep soil obstructions (crossovers) and **consolidated crossovers** are needed to allow for **meaningful street tree planting and better pedestrian experience**. A minimum lot width of 7 metres can be accommodated.

Cross section B2



Typology consideration

Second storey windows and rear door entries should be considered to provide passive surveillance and activation to rear lanes.

Private open space provided above ground level should be placed at the **front of the property**, allowing for passive surveillance and visual connection to the streetscape.

Where there is sufficient amenity in the public realm and minimal or no setback is provided, the front façade should allow for **passive surveillance and visual connection** to the streetscape, while ensuring **privacy** of habitable rooms.

Streetscape requirements

Provide access to mostly **uninterrupted meandering paths/shared paths at the front**, where rear vehicle access is provided.

Type C

FRONT SETBACK

2.5m
from street alignment

BUILDING HEIGHT

< 6.9m
1.5m
from a side street

> 6.9m
0.5m
additional, for every metre of height above 6.9m

SIDE & REAR SETBACK

BUILDING HEIGHT

	<6.9m	>6.9m
REAR	**4m**	**0.5m** additional for every metre over 6.9m
SIDE	**1m**	

Description

Type C allows for dwellings of up to **13.5m and 4 storeys with a moderate front setback (2.5m)**. It better supports **co-location with buildings of greater height and private open space above ground level** as no maximum site coverage or minimum permeability area apply. This type has been commonly nominated on **smaller lots (approx. 75sqm)** as three to four storey townhouses.

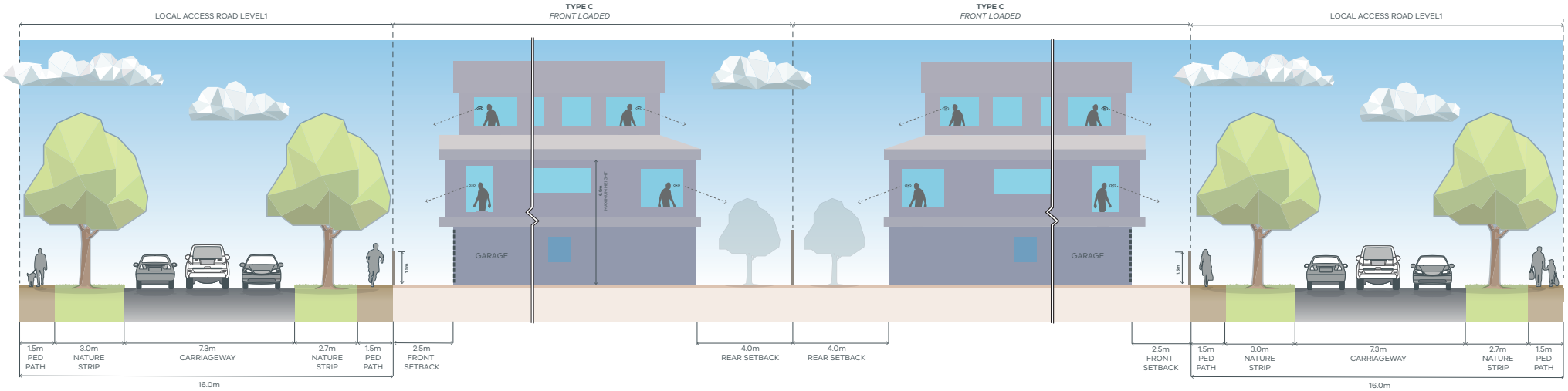
Preferred location

1. Co-locate adjacent to higher density buildings (above 4 levels) providing a transition to Type A and B from higher density precincts.
2. Locate in close proximity to parks or other open spaces (100m) to supplement the limitations of private open spaces above ground level.
3. Locate in close proximity to town centres to allow a transition from commercial to residential uses.

Type C

BUILDING HEIGHT	SITE COVERAGE	PERMEABILITY	CAR PARKING
13.5m and **4** storeys	**No max**	**50%** of the ground floor p.o.s.	**1** space

Cross section C1



Typology consideration

Second storey windows and rear door entries and balconies should be provided to allow for passive surveillance and activation to rear lanes.

Private open space provided above ground level should be placed at the **front of the property,** allowing for passive surveillance and visual connection to the streetscape

Where abutting a property of equal or lower height, **overshadowing and overlooking requirements** should be considered.

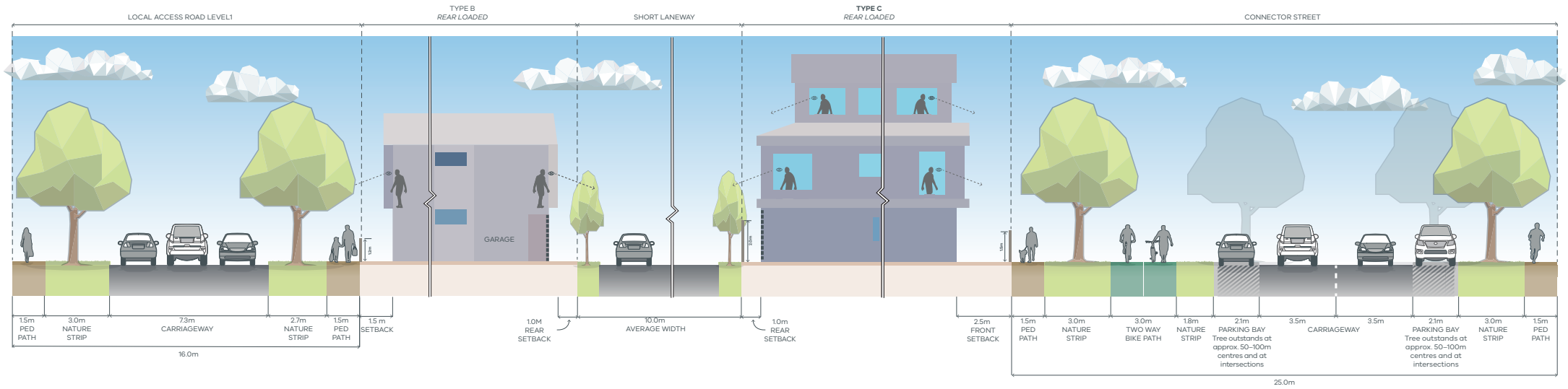
Streetscape requirements

Provide access to mostly **uninterrupted meandering paths/shared paths** at dwelling frontage, where rear vehicle access is provided.

Front setbacks greater than 2.5m should include a small to medium tree, further contributing to the street landscaping

The **front garden** should provide **tree planting and landscaping to increase amenity**.

Cross section C2



Typology consideration

Townhouses typically are two-three storey and provide diversity of housing products within a subdivision masterplan.

Townhouses, with **taller built form** allow for a **transition from residential to commercial uses in town centres**, where building heights are expected to be higher.

Dwellings should provide **articulation to the street** to allow for a diversity of housing product and to limit visual massing of dwellings.

Deep soil planting in the front garden can allow for larger trees to grow to support canopy growth to **reduce urban heat island effect.**

Streetscape requirements

A rear loaded dwelling should be located in **close proximity to public open space**. This allows for passive surveillance of the open space via balconies and windows.

Rear loaded product allows for **uninterrupted active transport routes** to and from key nodes such as activity centres, schools or other community facilities.

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