



REMARKS

By:

The Hon. Zane J Desilva, JP MP

Deputy Premier and Minister of Housing and Municipalities

Affordable Housing Strategy Consultation

4th May 2026

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us.

Today, we take an important step in addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing our communities:

Too many individuals and families are struggling to find homes that are affordable, safe, and suitable for their needs. But this is more than a housing issue; it is an economic issue, a social issue, and ultimately, a matter of fairness.

Several factors are driving this challenge..... Based on the best available data and projections from the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities, by 2035, one in three residents is expected to be aged 65 or older.

At the same time....., household sizes are shrinking, which means that even with a stable population, we need more homes, particularly smaller, more accessible homes that better reflect how people are living today.

We are also seeing empty rental units, abandoned properties, and the growth of vacation rentals, all of which reduce long-term housing supply. Rising construction costs, alongside the wider cost of living, continue to place significant pressure on households across every income level.

The reality is clear: there is an urgent need for housing that is affordable to build, affordable to rent, and affordable to buy.

This Affordable Housing Strategy recognises that not all housing needs are the same. It distinguishes between affordable housing for lower-income households, attainable housing for middle-income earners, and market and high-end housing. Our focus is clear—public investment must be directed where the need is greatest: affordable, attainable homes for Bermudians who are being left behind by the current market, both rentals and sales.

While housing pressures affect many people, this Strategy is specifically designed to support those facing the greatest challenges. This includes individuals and families on housing waiting lists, seniors on fixed incomes, essential workers, single-parent households, and young people trying to build independent lives. These are Bermudians that the market is not adequately serving, and where the market falls short, the Government must step in.

This is a 10-year Strategy, covering 2025 to 2035, with a clear vision to ensure that every resident of Bermuda has access to safe, affordable, sustainable housing and a place they can call home. Although we are now in 2026, the Strategy begins in 2025 to reflect the significant work already undertaken during that year. In 2025, feasibility assessments were made, 30 suitable housing development sites were identified, and construction methodologies were evaluated, laying the critical groundwork for Phase One delivery.

There are five key goals that guide this Strategy.

First, to expand and diversify the housing supply. We aim to deliver between 950 and 1,350 affordable and attainable housing units over the next decade. This will be achieved through government-led construction, the rehabilitation of derelict properties, and by bringing underutilised homes back into the long-term rental market.

Second, to improve affordability and access. This includes financial tools, rental support, and new pathways to ownership, as well as the use of modern construction methods, such as precast concrete, modular and prefabricated housing, to reduce costs and speed up delivery.

Third, to modernise regulations, so housing can be delivered faster while maintaining fairness in tenancy and development processes.

Fourth, to strengthen governance through the creation of a new Housing Authority and a dedicated Department of Housing, ensuring stronger coordination and accountability.

And fifth, to promote sustainability and resilience, ensuring that new and rehabilitated homes are energy efficient, climate resilient, and built for the future.

Delivery will be implemented in three phases, each designed to respond to Bermuda's changing housing needs in a practical and responsible way. Housing demand will not remain static over the next ten years, and neither should our approach. At the end of each phase, we will carry out a full review to reassess housing demand. In this way, the Strategy will be a 'living document', adaptable to changing conditions, emerging trends, and community needs.

Phase One is about responding to urgent housing needs. It focuses on Bermudians facing the greatest housing pressures right now: families on the Bermuda Housing Corporation waiting list, seniors on fixed incomes, single-parent households, young people working toward independent living, and individuals experiencing housing insecurity.

This phase will focus on government-led housing delivery across BHC, BLMC, and Government-owned sites. We will use modular, precast concrete, hybrid, and mid-rise construction methods because they allow us to build faster, more efficiently, and at a lower cost, while maintaining the durability and resilience required for Bermuda's climate.

Phase One will also introduce stronger measures to return empty and underutilised homes to the long-term rental market, helping to unlock existing housing stock while reducing pressure on new supply.

The goal of Phase One is to deliver approximately 310 affordable housing units, including emergency and supported housing, through a combination of new construction and the activation of existing underutilised homes. This is the first step in reducing the current backlog of around 400 households that require immediate housing support, including those on the BHC waiting list and those needing transitional or homelessness-related accommodation. That being said,

I would like to encourage residents in the East and West Ends of the island to register with the Bermuda Housing Corporation (BHC) soonest.

Phase Two focuses on redevelopment and community regeneration. At this stage, the strategy aims to increase housing supply while improving existing communities. Medium-scale modular and hybrid developments will be introduced, alongside the redevelopment of older Bermuda Housing Corporation estates and institutional properties. This phase is designed not only to provide more homes but also to improve the quality of neighbourhoods and living conditions for residents. The estimated delivery for Phase Two is 300 units.

Phase Three focuses on large-scale sites and system consolidation. This is the long-term stage of the strategy, where attention shifts to sustainable community development. Multi-phase community housing projects will be developed across the parishes to ensure wider access to affordable housing across Bermuda. This phase strengthens the overall housing system and ensures long-term stability and support for future generations. The estimated delivery for Phase Three about almost 400 units. It is important to note that Phase One is already underway.

In 2025, feasibility assessments were completed, 30 suitable housing development sites were identified, and construction methodologies were carefully reviewed.

Following that work, precast concrete construction has been identified as the most suitable solution for Phase One, offering advantages in cost, speed, durability, and resilience, while being well-suited to Bermuda's environment. It also has a proven local track record, having been successfully used at the Victoria Place housing project.

The initial stage of Phase One is expected to deliver over 200 affordable homes across five sites, including housing for families and seniors:

- Victoria Place, Sandys – 36 affordable units
- Albert Row, Sandys – 24 affordable units
- Tommy Fox Road, St. David's – 24 affordable units
- Dr. Cann Park II, Southampton – 110 seniors' units
- Channel House, St. David's – refitted to provide 30 to 50 rooms for senior residents

This represents significant progress in increasing supply where it is needed most.

The estimated budget for this phase is approximately \$114.75 million, with financing secured through local banks and supported by a government guarantee. Local contractors and service providers will play a major role in site preparation, civil works, infrastructure installation, and interior fit-out, ensuring strong participation from Bermuda's local construction industry.

We will also maintain ongoing communication with residents, community groups, and other stakeholders throughout the process. Ground-breaking is anticipated in August 2026, subject to approvals and site preparation, with delivery expected approximately 18 months later.

Throughout this process, we have worked to ensure that the public has every opportunity to be heard. Today, we are launching the Consultative Draft Affordable Housing Strategy for public feedback.

This must be a collaborative process. The document is available on the Government of Bermuda Citizens Forum at forum.gov.bm and we will continue engaging directly with stakeholders, community groups, and residents to ensure a wide range of voices are heard.

Feedback can also be sent directly to the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities at housing@gov.bm.

Your input is critical in making sure this Strategy reflects the real needs of our communities and leads to meaningful, lasting change. We encourage everyone to take the time to read the draft Strategy and share your views to help shape the final version.

I also want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the technical officers and staff who have worked tirelessly to help develop this Strategy in such a relatively short period of time.

Although the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities was only established in February 2025, significant progress has been made in just over a year. Following several months of assessments, the development of this Strategy has taken approximately eight months, including the initial drafting, technical reviews, and consultation across multiple Ministries and stakeholders. This work has also been carried out in tandem with the development and securing of financing for Phase One projects, ensuring that planning and delivery could move forward together.

I would like to give special recognition to Permanent Secretary Jeane Nikolai, former Permanent Secretary Drew Pettit, Mr. Hugo Pereira, Special Advisor, Mr. Paul Martin, General Manager of the Bermuda Housing Corporation, Andrew Dias, Chief Executive Officer of Bermuda Land Management Corporation, Mr. Mark Melo, Chief Financial Officer of the Bermuda Housing Corporation, Keino Furbert-Jacobs, Project Manager at the Bermuda Housing Corporation, Mrs. Lakila Bell, Project Coordinator, Mrs. Julie Marshall, Senior Planner, Mrs. Jane Brett, Policy Analyst, and Mr. Michael Brangman, Communications Officer, whose expertise, commitment, and hard work have been instrumental in shaping this Strategy. And finally, my Executive Assistant Ms. Tracey Wilkinson

Their dedication has helped ensure that this is not simply a policy document, but a practical and deliverable roadmap for addressing Bermuda's housing challenges.

Housing is the foundation of strong communities. Communities lose vitality when young people are forced to leave, and social inequities deepen when decent housing becomes a privilege rather than a foundation for opportunity. When people have stable homes, they can build better lives, contribute to the economy, and feel a true sense of belonging.

We know this challenge will not be solved overnight. But today is about commitment.....,commitment to practical action,..... to accountability, and to real progress.

We are committed to making this vision a reality.

Thank you.