

March 2026

Information sheet: Reducing build costs through standardised design plans

In line with the Kāinga Ora reset, we continue to look at how we can build new warm, dry and quality homes in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

We have developed a suite of pre-designed house designs called standardised house designs (also known as optimised plans) for new single-level and double-storey homes in a range of sizes. New designs for three-level terraces and three-level and five-level-plus apartment buildings are also under development.

These standardised designs mean we can deliver new homes for those in need quickly and cost-effectively. Not only are we saving on design time, but construction is standardised, repeatable and therefore faster too.

What changes have you made to your house designs?

Some of the changes include:

- Simplifying the homes' internal layout, reducing construction complexity.
- Fewer cladding types on exterior walls.
- Standardised sizing for walls, floor, cladding and windows to match available material dimensions.

Where are the homes using these new designs located?

We are building homes using these standardised designs across the country. The first homes to be built using these plans were completed in Rotorua in May 2025.

How long is it taking to build these new homes?

In Rotorua, homes built using these standardised designs have taken on average 28 days in design, to 110 days in construction. In some cases, it has taken only 69 days to deliver these new homes.

How has Kāinga Ora developed these standardised house designs?

The new designs were developed in conjunction with our build partners and design consultants.

What feedback has been received about these new homes?

We have received positive feedback so far from both build partners and people moving into the homes. Our build partners have said that these new house designs are much easier and faster to build. Some of the comments from tenants include:

“Very satisfied, everything with the way it is laid out is perfect.”

“Everybody has their own space, kids have their own rooms to go and play. When I'm cooking no one comes into the kitchen. Everyone has space.”

How much does one of these new houses cost to build compared with previous plans?

Our new standardised plans are helping us to decrease our construction costs. The move to new standardised house plans and other transformation work mean we are on track to meet and exceed

our \$2,980 per square metre target by the end of the 2026 financial year. The average build cost in FY24 was \$3,473.

Are you planning further changes to your designs?

We are continually looking at how we can reduce cost and improve efficiency without affecting the quality and longevity of our homes. We continue to refine and improve upon our plans as we gather further feedback and information.

Are these the type of homes we can expect to see delivered from Kāinga Ora throughout the country?

In the short term, we are continuing to deliver homes contracted prior to these new designs. However, in future, most of our new homes will be contracted to our new designs.