

# Housing

## What is urban resilience?

Urban resilience refers to the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems within a city to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kind of chronic stresses and acute shocks they may experience.<sup>1</sup>



## Chronic Stresses

Stresses weaken the fabric of a city on a daily or cyclical basis.

Examples include:



Ineffective public transport system



Climate change

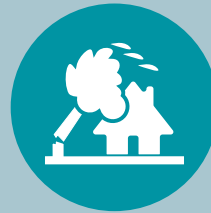


High unemployment

## Acute Shocks

Shocks are sudden, sharp events that threaten a city.

Examples include:



Natural disasters



Disease pandemics



Extremist acts

## Urban resilience and the housing sector

In Australia, our population is rapidly growing and urbanising – in 2014, 89% of Australians lived in urban areas. Today, cities are engine rooms for knowledge-sharing, creativity and employment, and in many cases, the seat of regional politics and decision-making. Most of Australia's fastest growing sectors are based in our cities, attracting new visitors driving even further urban population growth.

Increasing urban populations bring many challenges for housing. Affordability is a major issue – in 2011, the shortage of dwellings for low to medium income households was estimated at 211,000 nationally. With competing demands for space, a related challenge is providing housing close to fulfilling employment, essential services, recreational opportunities and sustainable modes of transport. Climate change is expected to exacerbate existing environmental challenges – quality housing stock will be crucial in a future of more frequent and intense extreme events, such as heatwaves and floods, especially among the most vulnerable members of society.

The principles of urban resilience offer organisations a new lens through which to view their operations. In the housing sector, it can help organisations consider not only how their places and services can support residents in emergency situations, but also how they can contribute to a higher quality of life by enhancing economic, environmental and social outcomes. It is a model for good times, as well as bad.

Throughout the development cycle – from design and planning to construction and facilities management – the housing sector has a significant role to play in the future of our cities. This fact sheet has been designed to help organisations in this sector begin the journey.

*See overleaf for information on the attributes of resilient systems, along with a series of self-assessment questions for organisations.*

## How can your organisation contribute to a more resilient society?

Resilient systems share certain attributes.

To help you embed resilience principles into your organisation's decision-making, consider these questions in relation to each attribute of a resilient system.



**Flexible**

**Alternative strategies can easily be adopted to deliver critical services, depending on the circumstances.**

Who are the different users of our housing and services, and how do they use them?

How can residents of a development survive and function when unable to access or rely on city services for an extended period?

What alternative service systems or back-up systems can be built in to support residents in emergency situations?



**Reflective**

**Past experiences inform future decisions and actions.**

How does our organisation measure its performance in delivering housing and related services?

How have previous shocks or stresses affected the housing and related services our organisation provides?

How can we learn from these events, and change the way we deliver housing services accordingly?



**Robust**

**Systems are well-conceived, constructed and managed. Any failure is predictable, safe, and proportionate.**

How does the housing we design, construct, operate and/or maintain rely on external inputs? (e.g. electricity, water, personnel)

Is our housing designed, constructed and managed in a way that ensures residents are safe in any event?

How can the housing we design, construct and manage take into account current climate change projections?

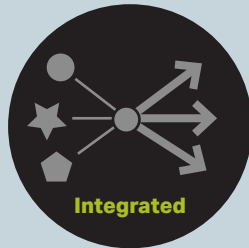


**Inclusive**

**Broad and meaningful engagement – aiming to create a sense of shared ownership among stakeholders.**

How can housing design cater to a broad and changing market, and provide for diversity of development types?

How can we ensure that all residents are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes that affect them?



**Integrated**

**Connections between systems and institutions are harnessed to generate multiple benefits.**

How can we collaborate with other organisations to enhance outcomes for residents and make safe and affordable housing available to more people?

Does our organisation have an internal culture of integration and collaboration?

How do development and decision-making processes support community connectedness and cohesion (e.g. relationships between neighbours and local service providers)?



**Resourceful**

**Seeking better ways to use existing resources, both in good times and bad.**

Does our organisation manage or operate accommodation with latent capacity that could be used by those in need in the event of a crisis?

How can we facilitate neighbours and communities to share resources in times of shock and stress?

Does our organisation's culture and investment support continual improvement (i.e. improving in good times, not just in response to a crisis)?



**Redundant**

**Spare capacity exists to allow continued functioning even when disrupted.**

Are our developments designed and constructed with spare capacity that allows continued functioning of critical services even when disrupted?

How are we planning and delivering housing to account for future demographic change (e.g. population growth, ageing population)?

The attributes on this page are adapted from the qualities of resilient systems, available through [www.cityresilienceindex.org](http://www.cityresilienceindex.org).

If you're interested in reading more about how cities around the world are building their resilience, see [www.100resilientcities.org](http://www.100resilientcities.org).

