

Media Release

7 August 2025

Ivanhoe development a win for retirees and affordable housing

VMCH is delighted to announce that a ministerial planning permit has been granted for its newest premium retirement living precinct, St. Francis on the Park, in Ivanhoe East.

This exciting milestone follows more than two years of dedicated planning and community engagement by the for-purpose organisation, and meets growing demand for local retirees wanting to age in place.

Designed by Jackson Clements Burrows Architects, the development includes 58 premium apartments and world class amenities, with sweeping views and direct access to Ivanhoe Park. The landscape design, led by specialists Oculus, reflects a commitment to preserving and enhancing the natural environment, integrating the project with its beautiful surroundings.

The population of residents aged 65+ living in Ivanhoe and surrounds is expected to grow from 29,000 to 34,035 by 2032. The State Government's [Ageing Well in Victoria Action Plan 2022-2026](#) notes older people want to age in place within their local neighbourhood and community.

A ministerial planning permit is granted directly by the Minister for Planning; typically for projects that are considered important to the state, such as housing and aged care.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart said proceeds from the sale of residences at St. Francis on the Park will directly support VMCH's mission-driven initiatives, including affordable homes.

"This site (on Lower Heidelberg Rd) was formerly home to outdated affordable housing which no longer served its residents. In 2023, we were proud to build a new, purpose-built affordable homes development in nearby Ford St Ivanhoe, called Trinity Lane. The award-winning development provides 39 modern and accessible apartments for older people on low incomes and people with disability," Ms Smart said.

"Now, two years later, we are pleased to finally begin work on St. Francis on the Park. This project not only meets a clear need for local high-quality retirement living, but also strengthens our ability to deliver vital services to those who need them most. Importantly, retirement developments like St. Francis also help free up stock for young families struggling to enter the housing market. This decision is a win for the community, for our future residents, and for our mission."

Demolition of the existing buildings is scheduled to commence shortly, with the display suite opening in 2026. This project will create up to 300 jobs during the construction process and a further 25 permanent jobs when operational, delivering an approximate \$260,000,000 in economic value to Victoria.

"We look forward to continuing to engage with neighbours, local businesses, and community groups throughout the development process," Sonya said. "I'd like to thank Planning Minister the Hon. Sonya Kilkenny for her support of our vision to provide more homes for older Australians who want to age locally, surrounded by their loved ones and established communities. We also extend our gratitude to State Member for Ivanhoe, Anthony Carbines, for his support."

"Finally, I'd like to thank our development team for their tenacity, diligence and dedication shown throughout this long process. Their efforts will have a lasting impact on the lives of many for years to come."

St. Francis on the Park joins VMCH's other premium retirement communities in nearby Camberwell and Hawthorn, and its \$250m flagship project nearing completion in Kew, St. Clare.

Media enquiries

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

