

A Short Guide to Co-located Housing



An example of how a 675 m² corner site might be configured into three co-located dwellings. An existing cottage is retained and renovated (left), while a second dwelling is created as an addition (centre). A third dwelling is created as a small-footprint detached backyard home (right). All three share a garden with room for trees.

Demographic and suburban change

It is widely understood that there are many housing pressures across Australia, and Adelaide is not immune. Beyond the problems of housing affordability, we face challenges relating to our changing household structures. On average, there are fewer people living in each home, more people living alone, and a higher proportion of older people who, thankfully, are able to remain in their own homes.

However, as we have changed over the years, our suburban homes have not. They have generally either remained the same size or have become bigger.

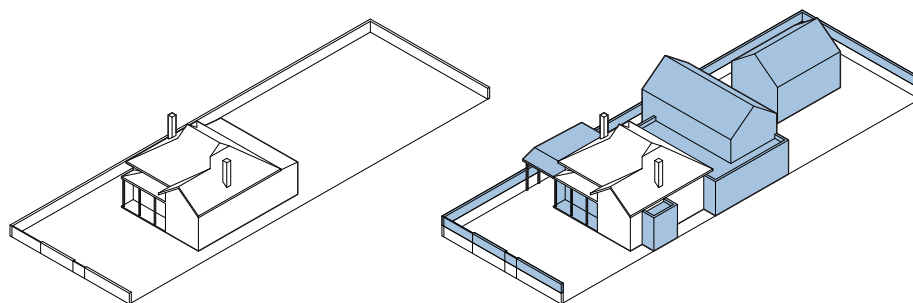
Simply put, we need to create more homes in our established suburbs and do so in a way that also increases the variety of our housing types. This means creating housing of different sizes and price points for both purchase and rent.

But none of this means that our older suburbs haven't changed at all. Over the years they have adapted from small homes with productive gardens and many occupants, to nuclear family homes with large backyards, to knock-down-rebuild large homes and duplexes.

Through these processes we have seen many older houses demolished and their gardens removed to make way for replacement houses, resulting in changes to neighbourhood character and a loss of suburban tree canopy. And of course, older houses continue to be adapted through internal alterations and external additions.

These changes have occurred for many years and will continue, as we adapt houses to create extra bathrooms, garages and carports, home offices, and open plan kitchen, dining and living areas.

Commonly accepted changes to older single-family homes in established suburbs.



Co-located housing: an additional housing form for changing times

There is no suggestion that such building activity is wrong or should be stopped or even slowed.

But as well as using alterations and additions to make single houses bigger, what if we could allow property owners to make similar changes to create additional small-footprint housing that is co-located together on the allotment?

In other words, what if we could build a similar amount of material, but configure it slightly differently to make more housing?

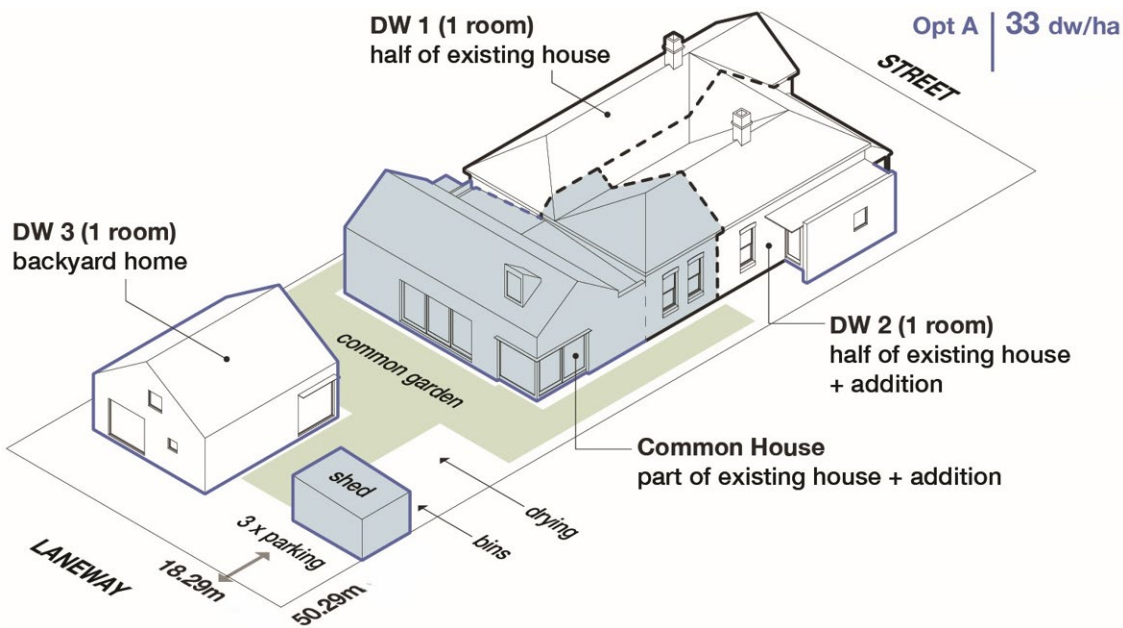
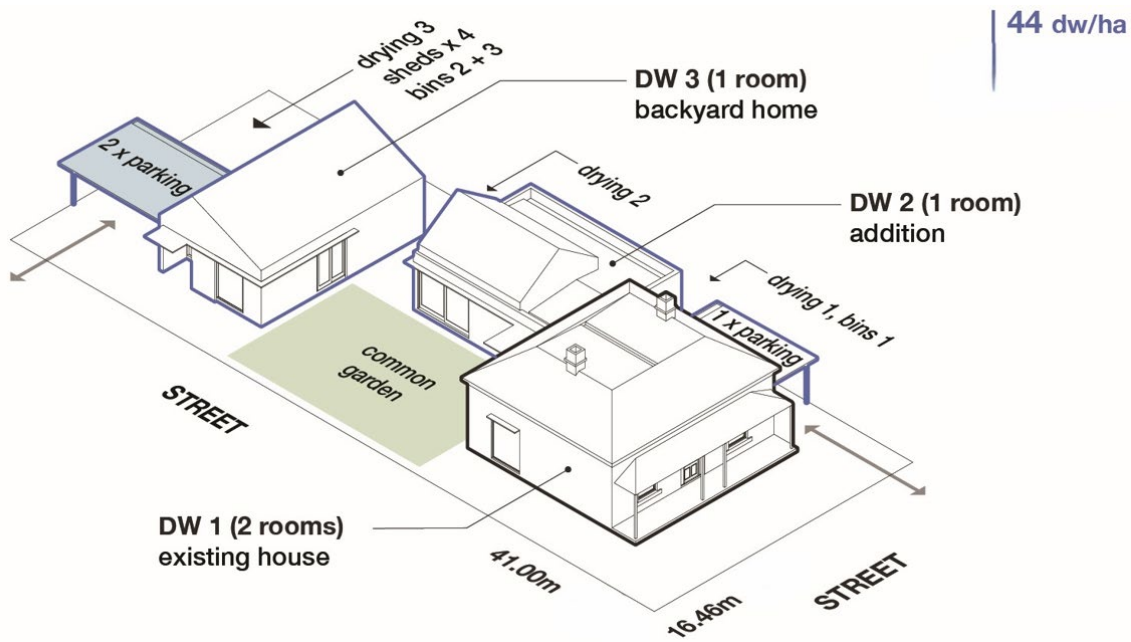
And what if we could do that while also retaining existing mature trees, or by arranging the housing around gardens big enough to support medium and large trees?

This is the Co-located Housing model, designed in Adelaide for Adelaide: low-rise, small-footprint housing that looks and feels much like a single-family home but operates legally and financially like a small group of units.

By definition, 'co-located housing' means a group of two or more self-contained dwellings contained on land within the Co-located Housing Overlay that meet the following criteria:

- they each occupy an allotment created under the *Community Titles Act 1996*;
- they comprise at least one or more established dwellings facing a primary street that may be sensitively altered and / or extended as part of the co-located housing development to accommodate additional dwellings; and

- they incorporate communal open space that is accessible to all dwellings; and
- they may also comprise other common areas and / or facilities for shared use by all occupants, including:
 - a common building that includes facilities such as a shared kitchen, dining and / or living facilities
 - shared laundry facilities
 - shared carparking.



Examples of two different approaches to co-located housing

In a co-located housing development, the site and garden will always be shared, but if desired by the residents, they may choose to also share other elements such as a common laundry, shared carparking, or even a common house that includes a shared kitchen and/or dining facilities and/or living facilities, and/or a guest bedroom.

In all co-located housing schemes, however, each dwelling is always independent – both functionally and financially.

What co-located housing is not, is a fencing off into smaller compartments. It is therefore neither a 'group dwelling' (such as a block of units that is stacked side-by-side with no relation to each other), or a 'residential flat building' (for example, an apartment building). Each co-located housing application will be performance assessed on its merits.

Importantly, being low-rise and made up of alterations and additions to an existing home, co-located housing will look and feel very similar to existing single-family homes, despite being a new form of housing.

It will sit comfortably amongst other homes in our older suburbs while providing smaller housing choices where they otherwise might not exist.

It will suit people looking for multi-generational living, people looking for housing in a garden setting that sits somewhere between a house and a unit, and those seeking a more socially-connected way of living with family, friends or like-minded others.

Further information

The State Planning Commission is seeking feedback on draft changes to the planning rules that would enable co-located housing to be built in well-established neighbourhoods across six council areas in Greater Adelaide.

You can get more information about co-located housing and the Future Living Code amendment, including an extended version of this guide, at: yoursay.sa.gov.au/future-living.

If you would like to understand more about the model and see more examples, you can download a free PDF of the book *Bluefield Housing as Alternative Infill for the Suburbs*, by Damian Madigan from the University of South Australia. Simply search online for "bluefield housing book". Images used here are taken from the book and used with permission.