

Bluefield Housing: Alternative Infill for the Suburbs

'Bluefield Housing' is both a land definition and an infill housing model, each created by Damian Madigan as an extension to the widely-understood definitions of Greenfield, Brownfield and Greyfield Housing. As a land definition, 'Bluefield' refers to low-rise suburban neighbourhoods that are excluded from strategic densification policies and targets, or where increased housing numbers can only be achieved through minor infill via subordinate housing add-ons such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs). As a housing model, the Bluefield approach sees new housing co-located on a site where the existing housing stock and landscape are retained and adapted into a unified infill housing development as an alternative to Knock-Down-Rebuild (KDR) development.

At its heart, Bluefield Housing is about increasing housing diversity and choice while retaining and enhancing neighbourhood character: infill that is low scale, low intensity but high impact.

From the forthcoming book *Bluefield Housing as Alternative Infill for the Suburbs* (Routledge, 2023):

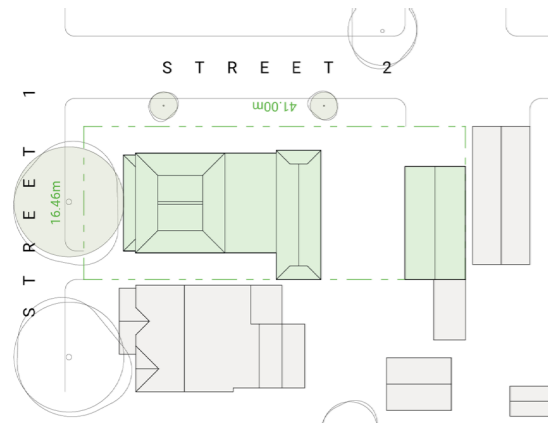
Using a design-led approach, the bluefield co-location method looks to the existing context of streetscape, landscape, house sizes, building forms, and site coverages to determine the capacity for a lot to support additional houses, even if the prevailing minimum lot size of the zone dictates otherwise. In short, for a lot that cannot be legally subdivided due to its size or zoning rules, the bluefield model allows the chance for it to be considered for additional housing through carefully designed co-location with the existing house on the property. This requires that the proponent demonstrates liveability, amenity, and neighbourhood fit. A bluefield redevelopment can be achieved by successfully retaining the existing house, re-configuring it to provide small footprint living, and co-locating one or more new dwellings in any combination of:

- a division of the existing house into separate dwellings under the one roof
- an extension to the existing dwelling, or
- as a detached backyard home.

Smaller lots might only accommodate one of the three strategies, while larger lots will be able to use all three in combination. The appropriate neighbourhood fit is determined by the prevailing scale and site coverage patterns, and by the ability for the designer to demonstrate internal and external amenity coupled with functionality. A single shared yard space, designed and integrated with the housing, binds the individual dwellings into a coherent whole.

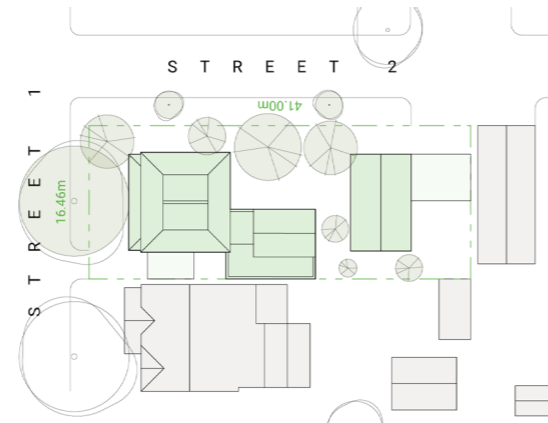
Whilst sharing the yard space is necessary for all bluefield developments, sharing facilities such as laundries or additional living spaces is at the discretion of residents and resolved at the point of approvals and permits being issued.

Because bluefield housing is about tweaking the existing alterations and additions development models of the single-family home, it has the potential to introduce smaller and more affordable housing options in the absence of a speculative market housing developer. Homeowners can develop the model with a 'light touch' level of assistance from domestic construction companies, while larger developments could be undertaken by community housing providers, housing associations, or small scale ethical or socially responsible developers. The model offers the potential to sit in a suburban development 'sweet spot' between two- to four-bedroom profit-driven market housing at one end of the spectrum, and private ADU development undertaken by homeowners at the other, enabling small-scale residential builders to undertake the work within their existing skillsets and capacity.



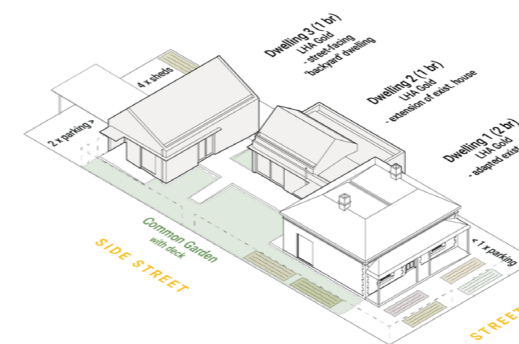
Existing BAU Conditions

1 house, 15 dwellings per ha, 34% site coverage



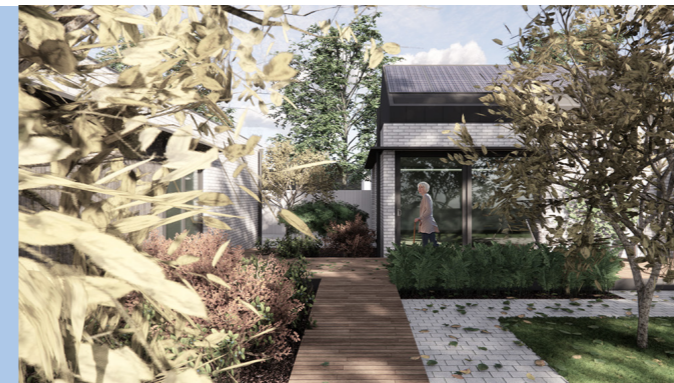
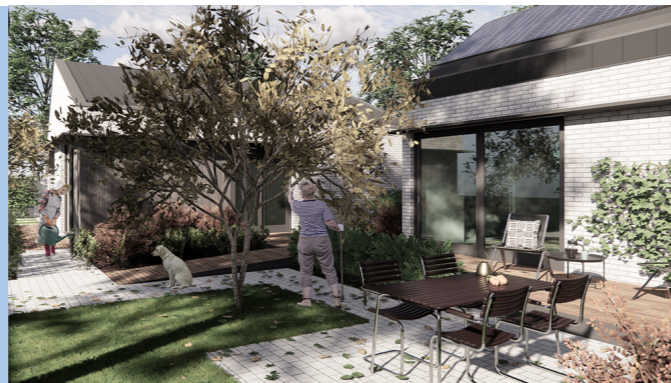
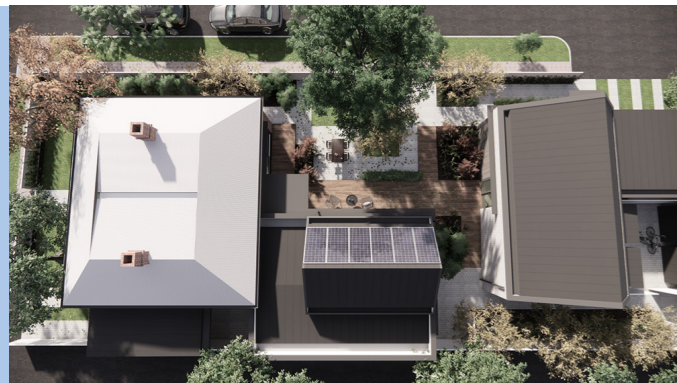
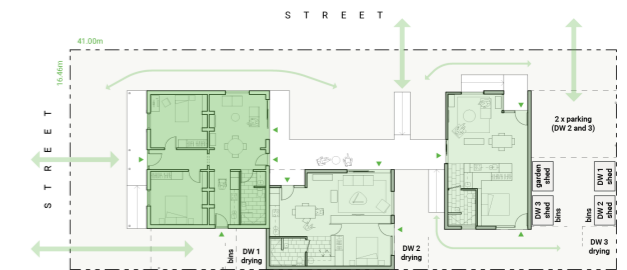
Bluefield Housing Development

3 houses, 45 dwellings per ha, 35% site coverage



The bluefield housing model is based on seven design principles:

1. Facilitate sharing in degrees determined by the residents.
2. Ignore lot size and instead co-locate to avoid land division.
3. Retain and adapt the lot's original housing.
4. Leverage the prevailing pattern of alterations and additions.
5. Create housing in a flat hierarchy as a middle ground between the single-family home and the ADU.
6. Arrange housing around shared landscape in a unified design.
7. Design for social, financial, and environmental sustainability.



Research Team

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The Future

Damian is currently working with the South Australian State Government and five local councils to author zoning policy that will see the Bluefield Housing co-location model become a form of permitted infill development under the state's new Planning and Design Code.

A future industry partnership is required with the financial sector to explore funding options that can support homeowners wanting to take up the model.

Partners

Planning and Land Use Services,
Attorney General's Department
State Planning Commission

City of Unley, City of Burnside, Town of Walkerville,
City of Prospect, City of Campbelltown