

Planning *for*  
Brisbane's future

**Design-led City**

# Traditional Housing: Alterations and Extensions Design Guide



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land and their unique relationship with their ancestral country. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of Brisbane, and recognise their strength and wisdom.

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### Disclaimer

1. This guideline is not a statutory document. It has been prepared to help improve the quality and design of alterations and extensions to traditional housing in Brisbane.
2. The images, graphics and other illustrations are for consideration only and are not intended to represent a specific design.
3. The specific circumstances of your home and lot should be considered including, but not limited to, orientation, slope, existing trees, the position of existing street trees and services and planning provisions regarding building height, site cover and setbacks.
4. If you submit a development application, copying or recreating any design from the examples or illustrations in this guide does not guarantee approval of the application. Each proposal should be developed considering the specific elements and features of your traditional house along with its street and neighbourhood context. Each application is assessed on an individual basis considering statutory planning provisions.

*(Cover image)*

*Architect: Vokes and Peters.*

*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



# Creating a design-led city

Brisbane City Council is committed to making the Brisbane of tomorrow even better than the Brisbane of today. One way Council is achieving this is by implementing *Brisbane's Future Blueprint* – eight principles and 40 actions to guide our city's next exciting chapter.

The *Traditional Housing: Alterations and Extensions Design Guide* is one way Council is protecting Brisbane's unique character as well as ensuring best practice design that complements the character of the city.

In late 2018, Council held a character design forum and community consultation to begin creating this guide. The community told us what they valued and this feedback was the basis for the following design principles that shaped this guide. Visit [brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://brisbane.qld.gov.au) and search 'Character Design Forum' to view the principles.

The guide will encourage home owners and design professionals to sympathetically alter or extend traditional character homes to meet the owner's needs and contribute to neighbourhood and streetscape character.

The design guide supports the implementation of *Design-led City – A design strategy for Brisbane*, which establishes Council's plan to ensure quality design that reflects Brisbane's character and identity is delivered across all elements of the built environment.



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# Introduction

**This guide provides a collection of design principles to make altering or extending your Brisbane traditional character home simple and effective.**

Traditional houses, such as the iconic Queenslander, contribute to the character and identity of our city and reflect Brisbane's architectural and social history. This contribution and link to the city's past is highly valued by residents.

As the city grows and adapts to meet our changing social, environmental and technological needs, we need to balance meeting these new requirements while respecting the character of our traditional houses, streets and neighbourhoods.

This guide is one part of Brisbane City Council's strategy to support the retention and sympathetic adaptation of the city's traditional homes into the future for generations to come.

## What is traditional housing?

Traditional houses in Brisbane are generally houses constructed in 1946 or earlier.

These houses are commonly referred to as 'Queenslanders' or 'timber and tin' houses. Other styles of housing, such as art deco, Spanish mission, Californian bungalow or Georgian, may also exhibit traditional character. This guide can help you identify what style your home is and its traditional character elements and features. Many homes do not fit neatly into one period or style but share some common characteristics that collectively contribute to Brisbane's distinctive character and identity.

**Traditional character is different to heritage value or cultural significance.**

Buildings that have been identified as having cultural significance considering aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations may be identified on the Heritage overlay. Properties and places on the Heritage overlay or Pre-1911 Building overlay are afforded a higher level of protection under the *Brisbane City Plan 2014* (City Plan).

Refer to the City Plan interactive mapping tool to determine whether your home is identified as having traditional character, heritage value, or is a pre-1911 house.

## Traditional housing design outcomes

The design outcomes and principles outlined in this guide were developed by considering what elements are contained in traditional houses and how traditional houses contribute to the character of Brisbane's neighbourhoods.

This guide will help you create a comfortable living environment which considers Brisbane's subtropical climate, and a home that will meet your current and future needs.

Traditional houses often share some common characteristics:

- a core internal living area with attached or integrated verandahs
- roof forms of medium pitched pyramids, hips or gables
- elevated from the ground on stumps
- predominantly made of timber
- enclosed areas underneath that are set back from the front building line and generally maintain the street appearance.

This document explores these and a range of other elements and detailing that contribute to traditional building character and traditional character streetscapes.

## The purpose of this document

This document provides guidance to homeowners and design professionals about how traditional houses can be sympathetically altered or extended to meet current needs and lifestyle demands, while positively contributing to neighbourhood and streetscape character.

It is a resource to improve the planning and design of alterations or extensions to traditional homes in Brisbane.

The context, siting and design of each traditional house is different. The design for your alteration or extension needs to suit your house, as well as considering your specific needs and preferences. This guide provides a range of ideas to help home owners and design professionals achieve positive design, streetscape and neighbourhood outcomes.

# About this guide

## How to use this guide

To help you plan an alteration or extension to a traditional character home, the following resources are included in this guide.

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Know your home</b>                 | A summary of the typical house style periods found in Brisbane and traditional building character elements and details.   |
| <b>Design outcomes and principles</b> | <p>Four design outcomes aimed at retaining and respecting traditional house values are explained and supported with principles and case studies.</p> <p>The design principles provide direction and advice on specific ways in which your home and alterations or extensions can achieve the design outcomes and positively contribute to your neighbourhood, street and your own living environment.</p> |
| <b>Examples</b>                       | Project examples illustrate design outcomes and principles, and how these can be achieved.  |
| <b>Summary</b>                        | The list of design outcomes and principles at the end of this guide will help you understand and check whether your alteration or extension will retain key traditional elements and details, and contribute to the traditional character of your street and neighbourhood.   |
| <b>Other resources</b>                | Other resources that may help you develop plans for your alteration or extension are listed at the back of this guide.  |

# About this guide

## Application

This document provides guidance only and does not have any statutory or regulatory effect.

This guide is supplementary and does not form part of the assessment benchmarks where a planning application is required for the proposed alteration or extension of a dwelling house that is included in the City Plan Traditional building character overlay.

To determine whether building and planning approval is required for your project, please refer to Council's website for further guidance, contact Council on 07 3403 8888 to speak to a Council town planner, or consult with your design, planning or building professional. Building approval is separate from planning approval.

The demolition of traditional character buildings or parts of a dwelling house included in the Traditional building character overlay may require development approval. This guide does not provide direction or guidance on whether demolition may be considered appropriate or approved by Council.

This guide is not intended for application to places identified on the Heritage overlay or Pre-1911 Building overlay in City Plan, or to the development of new dwelling houses on sites in the Traditional building character overlay.

## Where do I start?

- Research the history of your home and develop an understanding of its style and traditional building elements and features. Refer to the **Know your home** section of this guide for assistance.
- Think about the character of your street and neighbourhood, how your traditional home contributes to this character, and ways to retain or improve this contribution. Refer to the **Contribute to the traditional character of the street** section for guidance on how to better understand the character of your street and neighbourhood.
- Consider the positioning of other houses on lots immediately adjoining your lot and what measures you might need to consider to ensure that both you and your neighbour have a high degree of privacy and amenity. Refer to the **Be a good neighbour** sections for guidance.
- Develop an outline or brief for your project by thinking about not only your current needs, but what your future needs might be for space, access and flexibility. Refer to the **Future-proof your home** section of this guide for some simple tips.
- Find out whether you need approval to alter or extend your existing house by talking with Council or a design, planning or building professional about your plans.
- Before commencing any work make sure appropriately qualified building professionals and tradespeople check your electrical switchboard and wiring, any materials that could contain asbestos, and the structural integrity of the original building and any additions.

(Below) Streetscape of traditional housing.



# Know your home

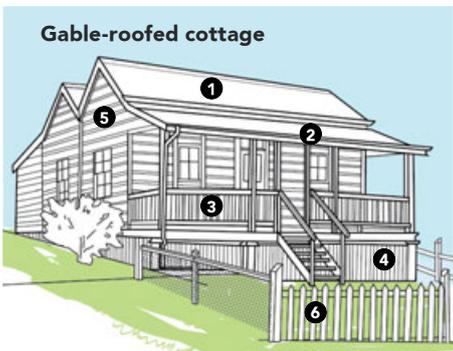
## Introduction to traditional housing styles

This section of the guide will help you identify the style period, and key traditional character elements and features of your home. Information on some of the most popular or common styles for each period and typical house are presented along with information on typical traditional character details and features.

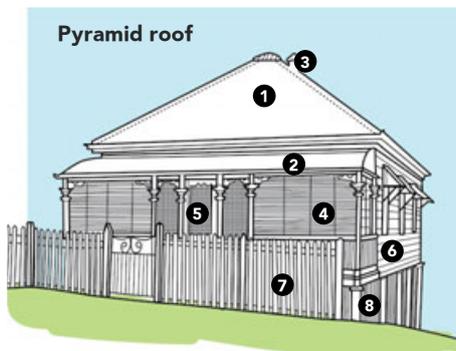
Some houses might not fit neatly into one style and might be a hybrid of different styles or details that exhibit traditional character.

Most traditional houses, while reflecting a range of styles, share some common characteristics - being predominantly made of timber, elevated from the ground on stumps, comprising of a core internal area with verandahs to the front and side, and steeply pitched roof forms made of metal.

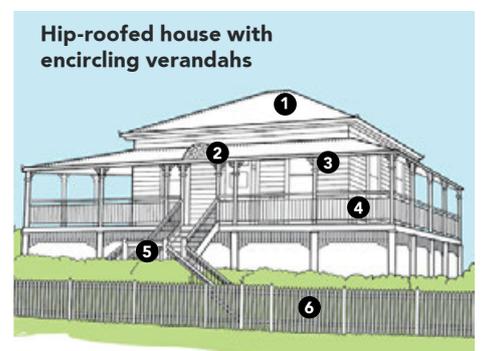
## Colonial period (1870s-1890s)



- 1 Side to side gable roof
- 2 Separate verandah roof
- 3 Simple timber dowel balustrade
- 4 Lowset on stumps
- 5 Chamfer board cladding
- 6 Simple picket fence

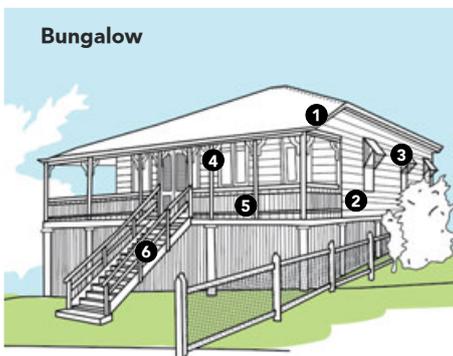


- 1 Pyramid roof
- 2 Separate verandah roof
- 3 Decorated gal. ridge ventilators
- 4 Roll-down blinds
- 5 Lattice front doors
- 6 Chamfer board cladding
- 7 Simple picket fence
- 8 Lowset on stumps

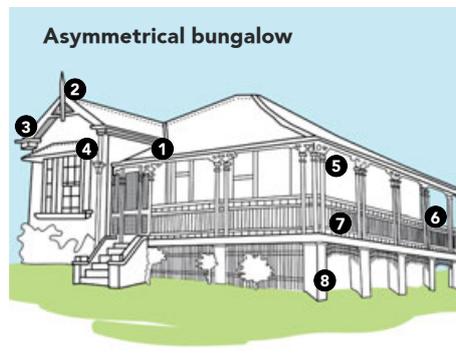


- 1 Main hip roof with separate roof over verandah
- 2 Fretwork pediment over entry
- 3 Verandah post capital decoration and brackets
- 4 Dowel balustrades
- 5 Symmetrical stairs
- 6 Simple picket fence

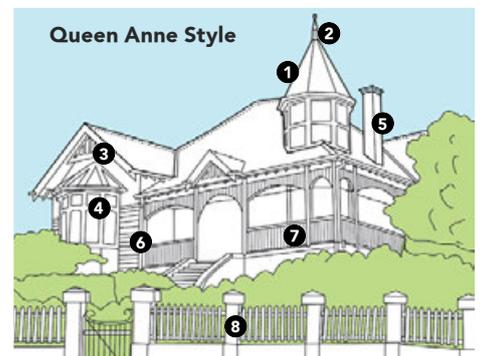
## Federation period (1890s-1910s)



- 1 Continuous verandah and main roof
- 2 Chamfer board wall cladding
- 3 Timber supported window hoods
- 4 Simple, geometric verandah brackets
- 5 Dowel balustrades
- 6 Straight-run stair with handrails



- 1 Asymmetrical front with continuous verandah and main roof
- 2 Gable finial
- 3 Fretwork gable decoration
- 4 Generous hood over window
- 5 Glazed brickwork, quoining on corners
- 6 Paired posts, tapering corner chamfers
- 7 Dowel balustrade
- 8 Brick piers



- 1 Steep pitched roofs
- 2 Finials on roofs
- 3 Decorated gables, open battens
- 4 Bay windows
- 5 Simple, capped chimney stack
- 6 Chamfer board wall cladding
- 7 Dowel verandah balustrading
- 8 Brick fence piers

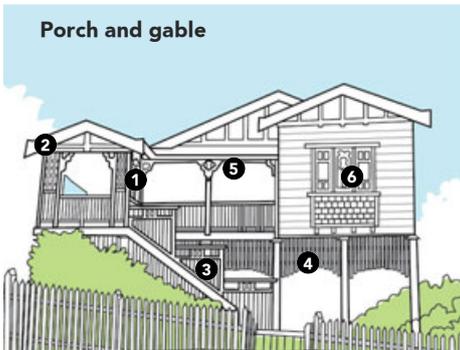
# Know your home

To learn more about your home visit [brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://brisbane.qld.gov.au) and search 'Research the history of your house'.

Other styles include masonry with brick detailing and tile roofs. Different characters and styles developed and changed over time, which is evident in the arrangement of elements and detailing of features. The styles represented here are the dominant traditional housing styles in Brisbane, however, this is not an exhaustive list and other variations do exist.

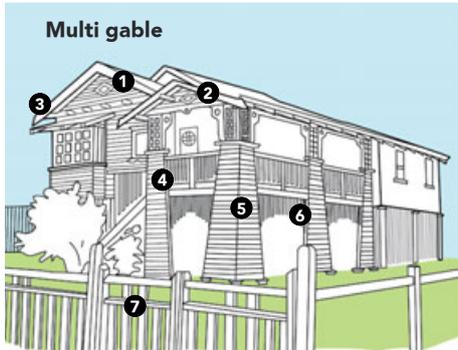
## Interwar period (1920s-1940s)

**Porch and gable**



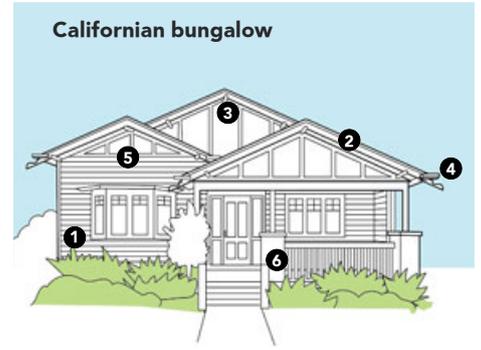
- 1 Asymmetrical entrance porch
- 2 Medium pitch roof, wide eaves, shaped ends to barge boards, batted gable end walls
- 3 Stepped stair balustrade
- 4 Shaped sub-floor batten screens
- 5 Art nouveau influenced verandah post brackets
- 6 Leadlight casement bay with flat roof over, shingle decoration below sill level

**Multi gable**



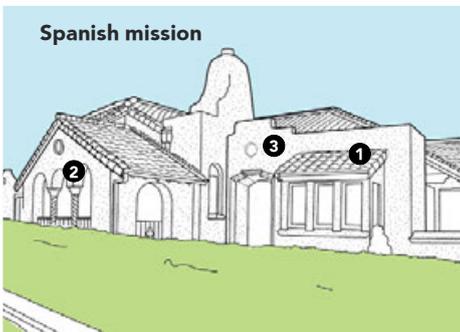
- 1 Medium roof pitch, wide eaves
- 2 Decorated gables
- 3 Decorative cut barge board ends and rafter ends exposed
- 4 Asymmetrical front
- 5 Paired posts on piers, (in this case piers are weatherboards and house is highset)
- 6 Shaped sub-floor batten screens
- 7 Double top rail batted timber fence

**Californian bungalow**



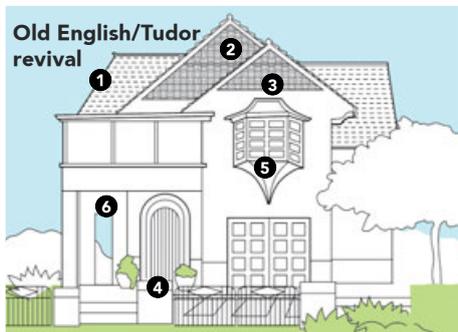
- 1 Lowset southern-style bungalow in timber and fibro
- 2 Corrugated iron roof - low pitch with wide eaves
- 3 Decorative gable beams
- 4 Decoratively shaped barge board ends
- 5 Batted gable end wall
- 6 Batted balustrade, heavy section handrail

**Spanish mission**



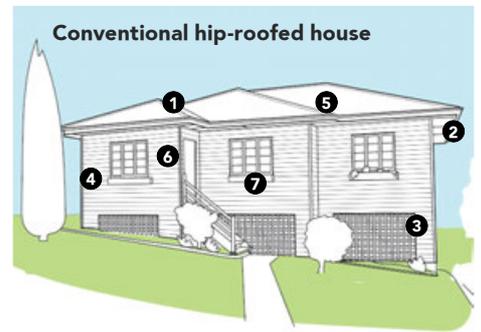
- 1 Half-round terracotta tiled roof
- 2 Arched openings with 'Barley-sugar' columns
- 3 Stucco wall finish

**Old English/Tudor revival**



- 1 Tiled roof
- 2 Gables
- 3 Half-timbering in upper walls or gables
- 4 Use of red or clinker brick
- 5 Oriel window
- 6 Asymmetrical form

**Conventional hip-roofed house**



- 1 Hip-roof core, with projecting hips, unadorned
- 2 Wide eaves, making sunhoods unnecessary
- 3 Stumps and sub-floor hidden by weatherboarding
- 4 Fibro wall cladding
- 5 Roof either metal, asbestos tiles or asbestos fibro-cement sheeting
- 6 Front room is a living room, rather than a master bedroom
- 7 Window boxes

# Know your home

## Introduction to traditional elements and details

This section of the guide identifies some of the feature elements and details of traditional character houses.

The summary of each element includes a brief explanation of the purpose and value of these. This can assist in making decisions about restoration or replication for your project.

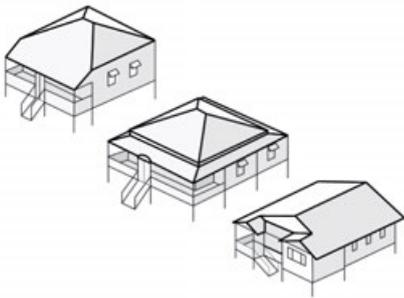
It is important to recognise that many small parts contribute to the overall quality of traditional character housing.

Each of the key elements and feature details differ through the periods and styles. This is not an exhaustive list and further information on Brisbane house styles can be found in a range of publications and on Council's website.

When restoring, reinstating or adapting elements or features of the original traditional house, try to match them to the period or style of the building particularly at the front of the house or where visible from the street.

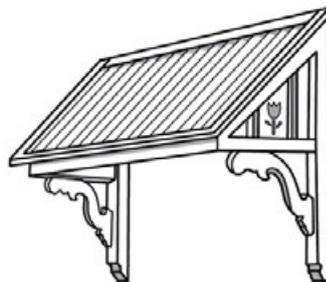
## Shelter from the elements

**Your roof, including its eaves, are your house's 'hat'. Traditional elements such as broad eaves, overhangs and window hoods help to keep internal spaces cool and protect openings from weather.**



### Roof form

The roof can be the most prominent part of a house and is usually a distinctive element in identifying the style and period of your home. Traditional character housing usually has a more steeply pitched roof than contemporary housing. Eaves and roof overhangs provide protection to the house from the weather.



### Window hoods

Window hoods offer protection from sunlight, glare and rain. The design and shape of traditional sunhoods varies from bullnose (curved), convex to skillion style depending on the era of a home. Sunhoods were made in metal only or with timber framing and metal sheeting.



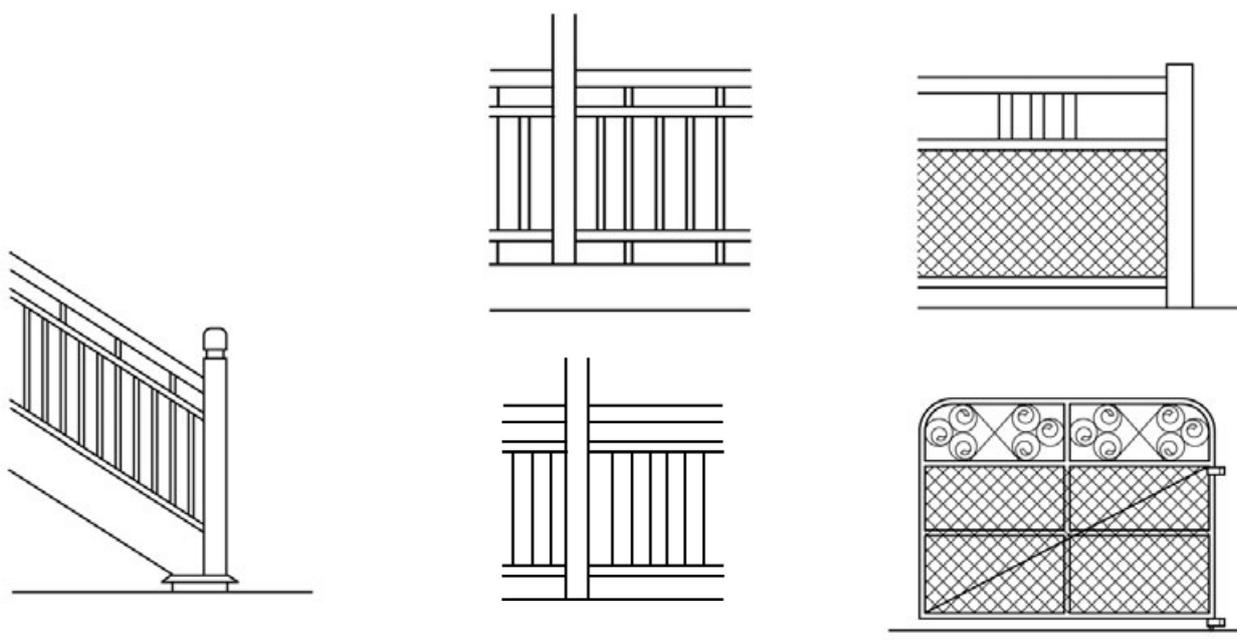
### Verandah

The verandah has multiple roles. It provides a sheltered outdoor living space that can store muddy shoes, wet umbrellas and bikes. They protect windows and doors from weather, and allow them to be left open to cool the house. Verandahs also have a civic role in providing an occupiable space facing the street to improve surveillance and as a welcoming entry to visitors. They can be secured by decorative gates and screens.

# Know your home

## A welcoming entry

Traditional houses present a more ornate and friendly face to the street. A range of elements at the front of your house can be combined and used to create an attractive welcoming entry for you and your visitors. These elements can also positively contribute to the character of your street.



### Front stairs

Traditional high-set houses often had two sets of steps. One to the front verandah or a porch that may have been more ornate, and another at the rear. Front steps provide for functional access from the street but can also add interest to, and balance the appearance of, a house from the street.

### Balustrades

Balustrades for a verandah or stairs were typically open with dowels or slats, or sometimes decorative cast iron and a hand or top rail. Board or solid balustrades are typical on some styles and may be appropriate where privacy is of concern.

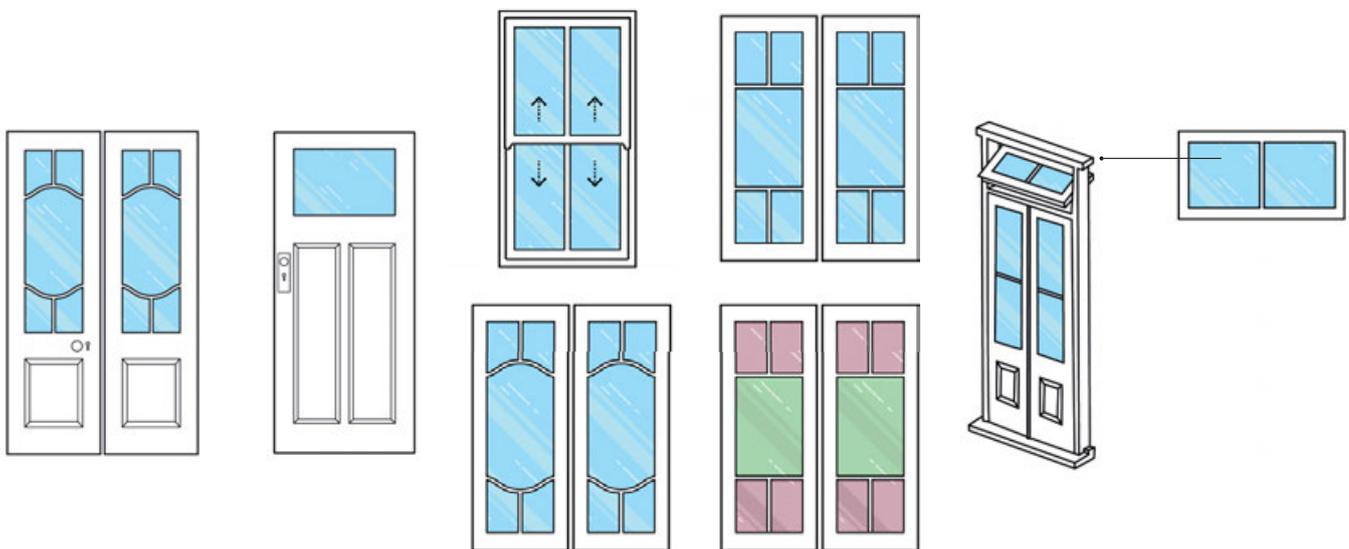
### Gates and fences

Gates and fences do more than just mark your property boundary. While they help to define the street edge and private garden spaces, front fences can add to the visual appeal of a house and in the past were usually more ornate than other boundary fencing. Traditional front fences are typically 1.2 metres high, transparent and are commonly made of timber palings or a combination of timber posts, rails and wire netting.

# Know your home

## Connecting indoors and outdoors

Windows and doors let light and air into internal spaces and enable views in and out to be framed and controlled. In many traditional house styles, windows were centred on the external wall of the room. Bay windows and corner windows were innovations in the 1920s and 1930s. The size and position of the opening and style of door or window can affect internal comfort and privacy.



### Doors

The front door was usually the most ornate door in the house. Early doors on modest homes typically did not include any glass. After World War I, fashions changed and doors with three panels and a pane of glass to let light into hallways became common. French doors were common for rooms opening onto verandahs and the design of these doors sometimes matched the design of windows.

### Windows

There are many types of windows. Sash windows that move up and down were more prevalent before the 1920s. Casement windows range from simple five pane hopscotch patterns to elaborate patterns with coloured or textured glass insets depending on the grandeur of the residence.

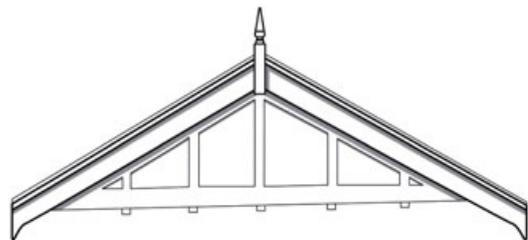
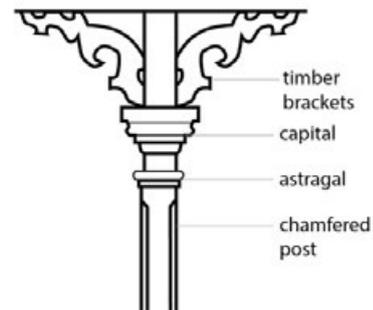
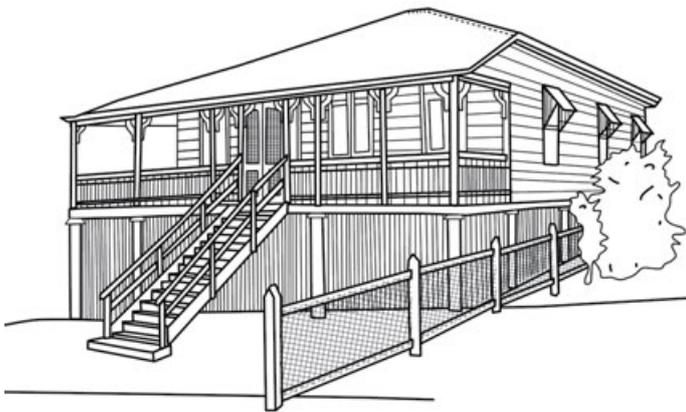
### Openings above doors

A small push out or pull in window above the front door or other doors to the verandah provided for air circulation while maintaining privacy and security in traditional houses. Pull-in, above-door hopper windows enable screening to be fixed to the outside.

# Know your home

## Getting the details right

Retaining or matching traditional details and materials on your house can positively contribute to the character of your house and the street.



### Materials

Traditional houses were predominantly constructed of timber as this was readily available and a cheap building material. Roofs were typically corrugated iron. As traditional houses are altered and extended, owners may wish to repair or replicate existing elements or details and use the same materials.

Distinctly different or similarly proportioned elements in lower maintenance materials may be appropriate in new parts of the house where extensions are distinguishable. Where small-scale alterations or extensions are integrated into the original building, details and material should be matched where possible.

Note: If your house was built before 1990 it may contain asbestos. Before carrying out any renovations, maintenance or repairs, take proper precautions and seek advice before starting work. For further information and practical advice for homeowners and renovators, refer to [asbestos.qld.gov.au](http://asbestos.qld.gov.au)

### Decoration

Decorative details on traditional houses changed with styles over time and may also reflect the owner's individual choices or affluence at the time of building. These details add to the appearance of the house from the street and commonly include:

- roof ornamentation with finials, fretwork or gable end panelling
- verandah entrance posts and brackets
- feature balustrades
- short hanging battens below the verandah
- hallway or lobby windows with textured and/or coloured glass panels or leadlighting.

# Design outcomes and principles

Four overarching design outcomes have been identified that will help retain and reflect the essence of Brisbane's traditional housing into the future and where alteration or extension of a home is undertaken.

Within each design outcome are several design principles. Each outcome and principle is explored further throughout the remainder of this guide, using diagrams and photographs to illustrate key ideas.

The sections have been ordered to first consider the public areas of your home - your street and frontage. Secondly, the principles focus on your house and considerations for extensions. The third section looks at how you interact with your neighbours, and the final section helps you plan for the future.



## Respect the local context and streetscape

- Contribute to the traditional character of the street
- Integrate front gardens
- Embrace the front verandah
- Celebrate the front steps
- Use complementary fencing
- Accommodate the car



## Respect the original building

- Retain, reveal or reinstate original details
- Extensions are sympathetic to the original house
  - » Siting your extension
  - » Size and scale
  - » Roof design
  - » Style and materials



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## Be a good neighbour

- Share access to daylight
- Create privacy for you and your neighbour
- Balance built form and landscape



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## Future-proof your home

- Design for our subtropical climate
- Recognise the value of trees and landscape
- Be adaptable for all stages of life
- Accommodate new technology



## Respect the local context and streetscape





## **Brisbane streets often have a unique character that reflects the period in which they were built.**

In areas of traditional housing, this character is most often exemplified as a series of detached houses set back a similar distance from the street with front verandahs, low front fencing and generous front gardens presenting a welcoming appearance to the street. Shade trees such as jacarandas or poincianas often line the street and front yards of our oldest neighbourhoods.

The traditional character of these streets can be disrupted by unsympathetic development, the demolition of key traditional housing elements or details, or the loss of mature trees. By applying the following design principles when thinking about and designing your alteration or extension, you can positively contribute to the character of your street and neighbourhood.

A key first step is to look closely at the character of your neighbourhood and how your home fits in and contributes to this character. This means identifying what is typical in terms of the front setback to houses, roof forms or pitches, front fences and street trees.

*(Left)*  
*Architect: Arkhefield.*  
*Photographer: Angus Martin Photography.*



# Contribute to the traditional character of the street

**How your home addresses and interfaces with the street can affect the character and feel of your street and neighbourhood. Alterations and extensions to your home, particularly elements at the front of your property, can impact on the quality and character of the street.**

When altering or extending your traditional home, along with considering your own space needs, consider your street appearance and connection to the street. What important elements can you retain, reveal or reinstate that positively contribute to the traditional character of your home and the street?

There are a number of ways to approach the alteration or extension of your house to achieve spaces that contribute to the traditional character of the street. These include:

- retaining your traditional house in its current position on the site
- building underneath behind the main building line so that existing features such as verandahs remain prominent
- extending to the rear where new additions are not visible from the street
- extending to the side behind the main building line
- a combination of options.

Other ways to contribute positively to street character include maintaining a front setback that is similar to other houses in the street and not raising your house more than is required for the types of spaces proposed underneath. For example, car parking, storage areas, laundries or movie rooms do not need the same height clearance as main living rooms or bedrooms.

## How to better understand the character of your street and neighbourhood

The character of your neighbourhood is influenced by a range of factors including the period and style of houses, the balance between buildings, open space and landscaping and specific details such as the type of street trees. The **Know your home** section can help you identify the period, style, common elements and details that contribute to the character of houses in your neighbourhood.

In some neighbourhoods, traditional houses are located on small lots and consequently are more closely spaced. These houses may still have generous backyards where the house is located to the front of the lot and is compact.

In neighbourhoods with larger lots, traditional houses may sit more separately on their lot and be more widely spaced.

The size of your extension and total building area compared to open space or landscaping, can positively or negatively impact on the amount of space that you have for outdoor activities, large trees or future needs as well as the character of the neighbourhood.

Note: Front setbacks are regulated under *Brisbane City Plan 2014* or *Queensland Development Code* depending on the size of your lot. The overall maximum height of houses is regulated under City Plan.

## Examples



This porch and gable house gives no hint from the street that it has been extended. Decorative elements to the front of the house have been retained along with a low permeable fence, front stair and verandah, and mature street trees, which all help to retain the traditional character of the street.

(Left)  
Architect: Vokes and Peters.  
Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.

When altering or extending your traditional home, along with considering your own space needs, consider your street appearance and connection to the street.



This house is an example of a narrow lot traditional home that has been renovated. The lower level, though built in, is recessed back from the verandah, to create depth and shadowing to the lower level, and uses permeable timber screens that allow air and some visibility through. The original front stairs have been removed to allow for car accommodation to fit, however the rhythm of the verandah posts and balustrade remains.

*(Left)*  
*Architect: Cavill Architects.*  
*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



# Integrate front gardens

**Front gardens in Brisbane's traditional streets vary significantly and range from a lawn with simple concrete path to planting that frames the house or entry from the street. Importantly, front yards provide a transition from the street into your home and an extra outdoor space.**



Front gardens help to green, soften and cool our streets and neighbourhoods. Your front setback may need to accommodate a range of functional needs such as entry pathways, driveways, and access to a letterbox or meters. Minimising hard surfaces that meet functional requirements will help provide space for landscaping. Mature trees or shrubs can provide benefits such as:

- shading to your house
- privacy
- filter pollutants in the air
- a nice outlook.

The style of your front garden can be designed to suit the period of your home or provide a contemporary garden. The most important thing is that space for mature vegetation is set aside as this provides the greatest potential benefit to you, and the character of your street.

The selection of plants for your front garden should also consider what direction your home is facing. For example, if your home faces a busy road or west, then more dense evergreen shrubs may help to provide a natural noise barrier or screening from the sun. If facing north, then plants that are deciduous in winter might be a good choice to let sun into your yard and home. There are many water-wise native plants that can be used to create shade, colour and scent. You could also consider incorporating productive plants such as fruit trees or herbs within the front garden.

Note: Brisbane City Council provides lists of trees that are suitable for planting near power lines.

## Examples



The bungalow house on the far left benefits from both street trees and the frangipani planted within the front yard. Shrubs are located both inside and outside the fence, creating layering of vegetation and built elements. The driveway is limited to tyre strips, to allow more permeable surfaces.

The home immediately left maintains a proportionally larger area of lawn and garden compared to the impervious hard finishes such as the driveway.

*(Far left)  
Architect: Vokes and Peters.  
Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



# Embrace the front verandah

**Front verandahs play many roles and bring numerous benefits to the occupants of a traditional house. They provide a welcoming and transitional space into your home from the street. They also provide positive benefits to street character and users of the street.**

The role of a front verandah in traditional housing includes:

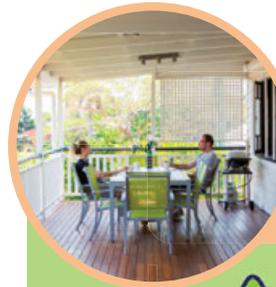
- creating a flexible indoor-outdoor room for socialising, relaxing and watching the activity of the street
- enhancing the appearance of your home to the street by providing visual interest and depth to the front
- providing layered security by incorporating lockable gates or screens and lattice
- providing shelter to openings so that windows may be left open for cooling breezes
- creating deep shade to the front of your house
- providing a place to leave muddy shoes, wet umbrellas, bicycles, scooters and other small items.

Some traditional houses from the late 1930s have no front verandah or entry porch. A sympathetic verandah addition could be beneficial in some instances where front setback and character requirements can be addressed. If you are building a new verandah, make sure it is wide enough to comfortably accommodate some furniture.

If your home has a front verandah already, as part of your alteration or extension ask your builder or engineer to check that it is still structurally sound and that bolts or other fixings do not need to be replaced. Restoration and good maintenance will extend its longevity.

This photo of a verandah shows how the verandah provides a liveable space overlooking the street. It is wide enough to accommodate furniture, and shades the core walls and windows of the house. Security is achieved with decorative gates at the top of the stair.

*(Right)*  
Architect: Vokes and Peters.  
Photographer: Jon Linkins.



Lattice screens were often used on verandahs to add additional security and shading, while still allowing cool breezes.



Furnish your verandah to provide an area to relax outdoors in shade.





# Celebrate the front steps

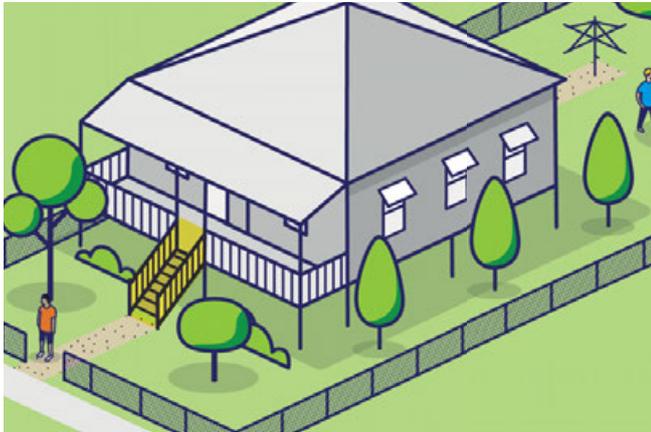


Diagram of house not raised with a short flight of steps



Diagram of house now raised, with extended front steps and additional landing.

**Front steps help to signify where the main entry to your home is. They form part of the entrance experience into a traditional house and contribute to the wider streetscape.**

Traditional houses in Brisbane had front steps as they were typically raised on stumps. Houses were raised for a number of reasons relating to our climate and environment, for example:

- as a preventative measure against termites
- to allow cooling breezes and air circulation under the house
- for flood protection.

Staircases are therefore a classic feature of traditional houses in Brisbane, and form part of the entrance experience of a house.

When raising a traditional house lengthening flights of stairs may create challenges. Longer flights of steps might not meet current building standards, suit the proportion or character of the house, fit comfortably with the available space or make it difficult to accommodate multiple cars under the house. There are ways to ensure that front steps still remain a feature such as adding an additional landing. The solution for each site depends on a range of factors including slope, the position of original steps, centred or to the side, and the location of car accommodation and driveways.

Secondary entries at ground level may also be an important consideration to enable easy access later in life or for household members with limited mobility.

## Examples



The front stairs can help to signify and formalise the entry to your home. They often contain crafted or decorative elements, and the style and configuration of your stairs and balustrades may give hints of the period and style of your home. The configuration of stairs can also be driven by practical matters such as the available space in front of the house, the height of your house, and the slope of your land.



## Use complementary fencing

**Traditional fencing was generally low enough to see over but not easily climbed over. Complementary front fencing can add to the visual appeal of your home and character of the street.**

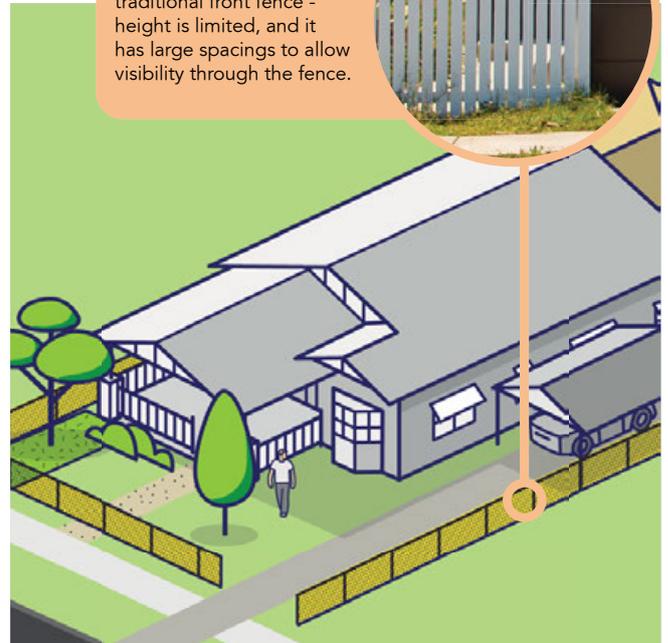
Front fences help define your private space, keep small children or animals away from the road and frame entries to the house. Traditional houses often had layered security – the front yard visible and observable from the street, a gate locking-off access to the verandah and sometimes including screens or lattice; the front door and windows themselves providing security. Traditional fences should be retained where possible.

Design considerations for new front fences to traditional homes include:

- maintaining a low height, that is no higher than 1.2 metres
- using materials that complement the house
- providing some openness that allows view through a fence to support informal surveillance of the street
- considering the above items where a fence is higher than 1.2 metres but also provides variation in alignment with planting in front of the fence, a higher degree of openness or variation in materials.

If you need to replace your front fence, refer to the **Know your home** section of this guide for more information on fencing styles that might complement the period of your home.

A modern take on a traditional front fence - height is limited, and it has large spacings to allow visibility through the fence.



Note: In some neighbourhoods, fences are regulated under the City Plan. Check your obligations before installing a new fence. Also check the position of service lines into and out of your property before commencing work.



An example of a front fence that is low and does not block views to the house. The batted style of the fence allows gaps for openness and relates to the traditional style of the house and street. Privacy is achieved by layering the fence, vegetation and the verandah screening elements. The openness of the batten spacings allows views through to the hedge and garden beyond.

(Left)  
Architect: Kieron Gait.  
Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.



## Accommodate the car

**Traditional houses in Brisbane were generally built before car ownership became more common. Later, cars were often kept underneath a home or in a separate carport or shed.**

Carports and garages can have a significant impact on the streetscape and the appearance of your home depending on their size, location and design.

Appropriately accommodating cars on small or sloping lots can be one of the most challenging aspects of an alteration or extension to a traditional house. Accommodating more than one car on a small lot without compromising the traditional character of the house or street is also challenging and may not be suitable in all circumstances.



### Car under

One of the best locations for your car, to preserve the traditional character of your home, is under the house and set back from the front of the home. This preserves the traditional character of your home and your front garden, more directly connects your car space and house, and provides greater security for your car.



### A carport

Where it is not possible to fit a car along the side or underneath your house (a typical challenge on small lots), providing an open carport in front of the house may be the best option. The carport should be predominantly open-sided to not obstruct views and connections to the house. Where security is required (including any doors), consider open slats, rather than solid materials to allow airflow and visibility.

## Examples



Accommodating a car or even two under the house can be difficult within the width of a traditional home. Consider whether a tandem arrangement (cars nose to tail) will work better for your house than side-by-side spaces, which often impact entry stairs or verandah posts. Side-by-side spaces could have single garage doors to help with retaining verandah posts. Also consider whether any additional cars can remain in the driveway.

The photo on the left has a single car under the house with a carport over the driveway. The carport provides a roof over, while maintaining openness and views to the house.

Ways to accommodate your car and positively contribute to street character and the appearance of your home include:

- ensuring car accommodation does not dominate or detract from the original house and remains a secondary element of the house
- locating car accommodation under the house and recessed behind the main building line, or along the side so that views to and from the house are not obstructed

- where located close to or in front of your house, providing an open carport only that is not fully enclosed and uses a complementary design or similar materials to that used elsewhere on your home
- not using a solid door to the front of your garage or carport as you can achieve security with a slatted door or gate
- using a single or tandem parking arrangement on lots less than 12 metres wide
- using a single width driveway and kerb crossover to provide more space for a front garden.



### Side

If you have space along the side of your house, this can sometimes be a good option for car accommodation. Ensure the accommodation is set back from the main building line, so views of the original house are not obstructed. Including open sides or slats to these car structures is also a good idea for air and light, but less important the further back from the street they sit.



### Side with extension

If you are planning an extension to the side of your house, you may be able to design car accommodation underneath the extension on ground level. Ensure the extension is set back from the main building line, so views of your house are not obstructed and the new extension does not dominate the original house.



Far left: An open carport in front of the house. In lieu of a door on a carport, this house incorporates vehicle gates within the front traditional picket fenceline, giving the appearance of a continuous low fence across the frontage.

(Far left) Architect: Owen Architecture.

Left: A double carport that maintains the visibility of the house from the street with open sides, in a more contemporary form and material palette.

(Left)

Architect: Owen Architecture.

Photographer: Jon Linkins.



## Respect the original building





**Brisbane’s traditional houses are highly valued by their occupants and the community more broadly. They are distinctive and reflective of Brisbane’s subtropical climate, building materials that were locally available at the time of building and the skill of local builders and craftsmen.**

Council understands that adaptive reuse of traditional houses means that the use of existing internal spaces may change and new spaces may be required to meet the needs of current occupants now and into the future.

Traditional houses do not need to be retained in a time capsule but the fundamental functional and character elements of these buildings that make them work in our subtropical climate should be retained, respected, embraced and re-interpreted to meet current building standards, life cycle needs and lifestyle changes. Through respectful alteration and extension their contribution to the character of the city and its many great neighbourhoods and streets will be valued and retained.

By applying the following three key design principles, you will be able to alter and extend your traditional house while respecting the original building and the contribution it makes to street and neighbourhood character.

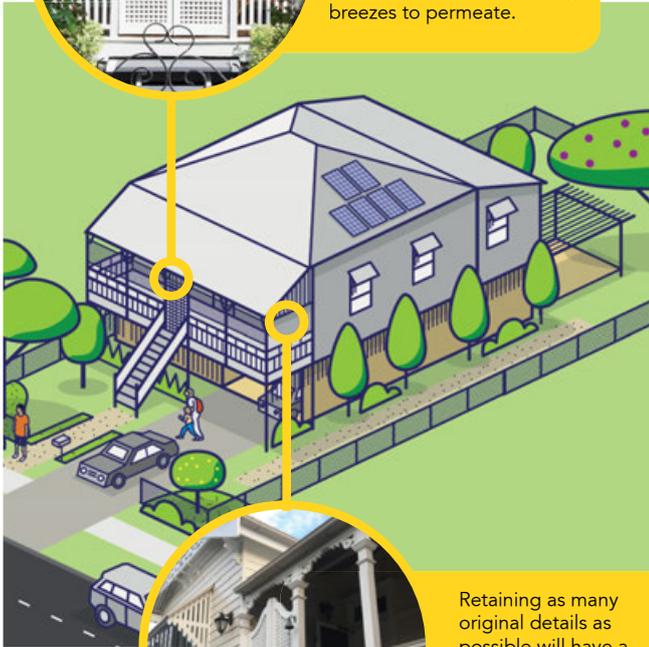
*(Left)*  
*Architect: Vokes and Peters.*  
*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



# Retain, reveal or reinstate original details



Verandah gates mark the formal entrance to the house as well as securing the verandah, while allowing breezes to permeate.



Retaining as many original details as possible will have a cumulative benefit and add charm to your street frontage.

**Traditional houses exhibit many common elements and details that together contribute to the overall liveability and character of your home. Over time, traditional building details may have been covered up or removed from your house.**

Use the **Know your home** section at the start of this document to identify any existing traditional elements and details that may be appropriate to restore, reinstate, enhance or use to inspire modern interpretations.

The best way to respect your traditional home is to retain the original house in its basic form with as many of its original details as possible. The more traditional features you can retain in the original part of the house, the more you will add to the street appeal and authenticity of your home.

Ideally, damaged or decayed timber, windows or doors should be replaced with like for like. If restoration of a traditional detail is not possible, then carefully consider whether replacement or replication with a new detail is best. For structural elements that are not visible, more robust materials with a long lifespan and no-to-minimal maintenance requirements are expected.

## Examples



Far left: Many of the elements which typify Spanish mission style have been retained in this renovated Brisbane home. The Barley-sugar columns are a main feature in the outdoor dining room, as well as the terracotta tiled roof and archways.

*(Far left)*  
Architect: Twohill and James.  
Photographer: Cathy Schusler.

Left: Original details vary greatly across traditional character homes, dependant on the style and age of your home. **The Know your home** section earlier in this document will assist you in identifying the likely period and style of your home, and which elements were typical of that style. Shown here is an example of a decorative finial and fretwork to the roof gable that has been retained. These were common in the Federation period (1890s-1910s), particularly in asymmetrical bungalows.



# Extensions are sympathetic to the original house

**The traditional house should still be the most visible and dominant form in the streetscape and new extensions should not dominate the original building. This does not mean that new additions should imitate the original house.**

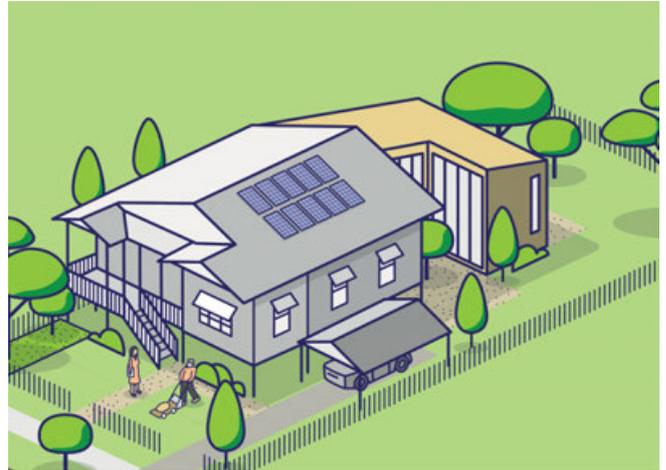
There are a number of ways to ensure that your alteration or extension is sympathetic to the original house. This includes where you locate the extension relative to the original house, the size of the extension, the roof form, style of new additions and materials that you use.

## Siting your extension

A key way to ensure that new extensions are sympathetic to the original traditional house is to locate the extension to the rear or side behind the main building line of the original house where space permits. These new spaces are often best used for casual living connected to outdoor living areas in the backyard.

When an alteration or extension involves raising and building-in under an existing traditional house, ways to respect the original house include:

- not raising the house so much that the new lower level is out of proportion with the upper level or the new part dominates the house when viewed from the street
- setting the extension back in line with the core internal area of the upper level so that the front verandah or porch is still a prominent feature - using colour, materials, valances and screening to create shadow and differentiate the under storey.



Locating an extension to the rear.



Locating an extension to the side and rear, setting new building work back from the front wall of the original house.

Right: The photo shows the original gable-roofed cottage in the foreground and the new extension in the background. Although the roof form of the extension is flatter, it relates to the original house by using the same colour scheme, the paint colour changes at the same level, and the extension is of a scale that disappears, and does not dominate the original house.

(Right) Architect: Bureau Proberts.

Far right: the extension contrasts and is highly distinctive from the original house, while maintaining a similar roof pitch and the distinctive terracotta tiles of the Spanish Mission style.

(Far right)

Architect: Twohill and James.

Photographer: Natalie McComas.





# Extensions are sympathetic to the original house

## Size and scale

A sympathetic alteration or extension to a traditional house is of a similar scale, and proportional to, the original house. This includes both the core of the house and its roof.

Rear extensions should not tower over the house at the front, so careful design is required where lots are sloping and higher at the rear. The siting and design of extensions to houses located on corner lots also requires greater consideration as a rear extension will be more visible.

Side extensions should include breaks in the building form and respect and reflect the scale of the original house.

## Roof design

The roof is a key part of the streetscape appearance and character of a traditional house. Traditional houses have a variety of roof shapes and forms depending on their period, style and size. Typically, the pitch of the main roof over the core of the house is consistent. During some periods, verandahs or later additions had flatter roofs.

Where alterations or extensions are proposed, the form of the roof, extent of connection and pitch should be carefully considered to ensure that a harmonious outcome is achieved when viewed from the street, other vantage points and front and backyard outdoor spaces. New roofs that are just off the same pitch of the existing roof can be jarring. Using the same roof pitch of the original house or introducing a distinctly different roof form or pitch at the rear of the house can be effective in providing a sympathetic extension.

Other ways to make sure that your alterations or extensions are sympathetic to the original house are to use similar materials or details.

## Style and materials

There is a generally accepted approach with heritage buildings that new additions should not mimic the original and be clearly distinct, unless of restoring an original element. This is to preserve the authenticity of the original structure, and keep it distinguishable from new additions.

The choice of materials, colour and details for extensions to traditional character houses should be informed by the original house (e.g. reflect the original style, elements or history) but you don't need to use exactly the same materials, colour or details.

Where the alteration is minor, or the size of extension modest, it may be better to integrate the new section of your home into the old more seamlessly. Ways to tie-in smaller extensions include extending or replicating roof forms and using the same materials and details.

Distinguishable extensions to the side or rear of a house can still be tied into the original house by including elements from the original design or style in a new way. Examples of this may include continuing the same door and window heights, or replicating a screen with a different material or colour.

Use materials or details similar to the original house to ensure a sympathetic alteration or extension.

## Examples

A new rear extension to this traditional house can be seen in the foreground of the photo, with the roof of the original house just visible behind. This represents a good example of how a new extension to the rear of your home can pay homage to the roof pitch, form, colour and materials of the original house, while still being distinguishable as new.

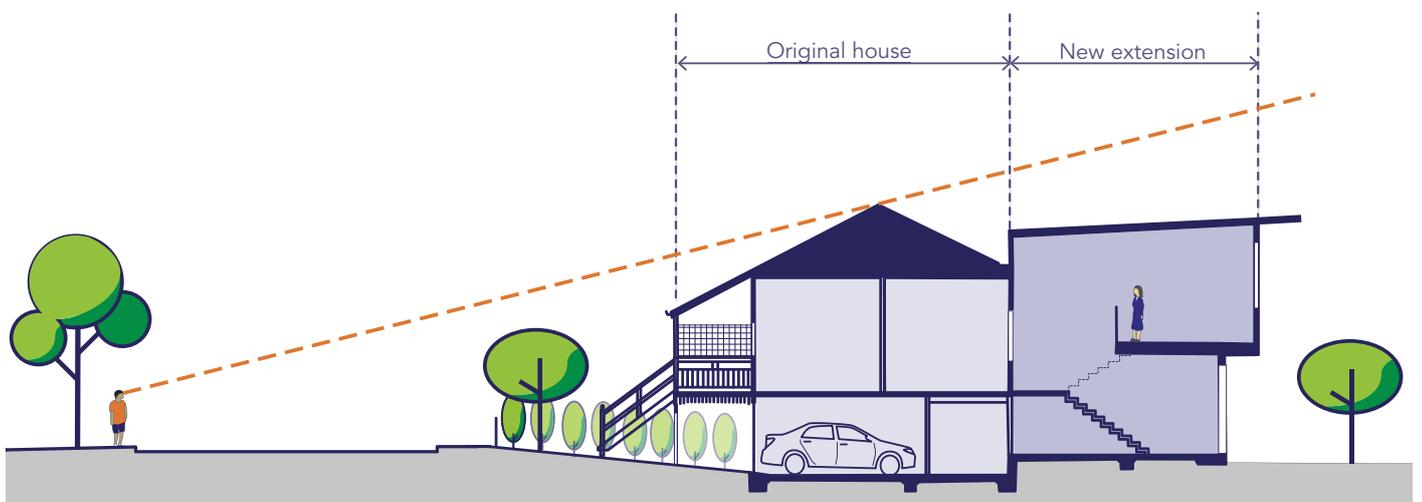
(Right)

Architect: Vokes and Peters.

Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.



Avoid extensions which dominate or tower over the original house.



Avoid extensions which dominate or tower over the original house. A good test is to look at the proposed extension in section (as above), and consider how much will be visible from the street. Minimising the amount visible or the dominance of a new extension will help to conserve the character of the original house.



The new extension is sympathetic to the original house by incorporating a transition zone between new and old and by using similar materials. Being on a corner block, it is especially important the new and old have some synergies.

*(Left and far left)*

*Architect: Vokes and Peters.*

*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



## Be a good neighbour





## Getting along with your neighbour makes your community a happier and safer place to live.

When you are designing alterations or extensions to your traditional home think about how your changes may impact not only on your living spaces and enjoyment, but also the impact that it may have on your neighbours.

It is always a good idea to talk to your neighbour while you are developing your plans. While people may not agree or be happy with what you want to do they will most likely appreciate your honesty and effort.

The most important design principles that will help you be a good neighbour when designing your renovation relate to sharing access to daylight, maintaining privacy for you and your neighbour and managing stormwater. These are important outcomes for both you and your neighbours.

(Left)  
Architect: Twohill and James.  
Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.



## Share access to daylight

**Natural light is important for our health and well-being. Using daylight to naturally light internal spaces or provide warmth during winter means less energy is required to light or heat your home. Being a good neighbour means carefully designing your extension and minimising off-site impacts so that your neighbours also have access to daylight.**

While the position of your traditional house is relatively fixed, you can design your alteration or extension to make the most of daylight for you and your neighbour by considering:

- the position, height and size of your home and neighbouring homes or buildings and how these already shade your yard or internal spaces
- the position of new extensions relative to side and rear setbacks
- the height of new extensions considering the distance to side or rear setbacks.

The setback distances in planning and building codes are minimums only. You might want to consider larger setbacks in some areas to create a north facing courtyard or backyard outdoor space for your own use. A roof form that slopes down at the edges to side or rear boundaries may cast less shadow depending on your orientation.

Be mindful of the scale and bulk of any new extensions. Be respectful of the shadow your home may cast on a neighbour's property and minimise overshadowing where possible. A single-storey extension will cast a far smaller shadow than two storeys.

In traditional homes, natural light is easy to control in bedrooms as there is usually one primary window centrally located. Living spaces usually had more windows or were located adjacent to front or side verandahs with french doors that could be opened to let in light and air when needed. Kitchens and utility areas were located at the rear of the dwelling with easy access to the garden. These simple organising strategies remain valid and relevant to modern living.

To improve your comfort and energy efficiency consider the solar orientation of your house and any new extensions.

Both daylight and allowing the sun to heat your home naturally during winter make a home more comfortable and efficient. To improve your comfort and energy efficiency, consider the solar orientation your house and any new extensions. In Brisbane, living spaces facing north are ideal. South-west and western facing living areas will require screening from late afternoon sun.

## Examples



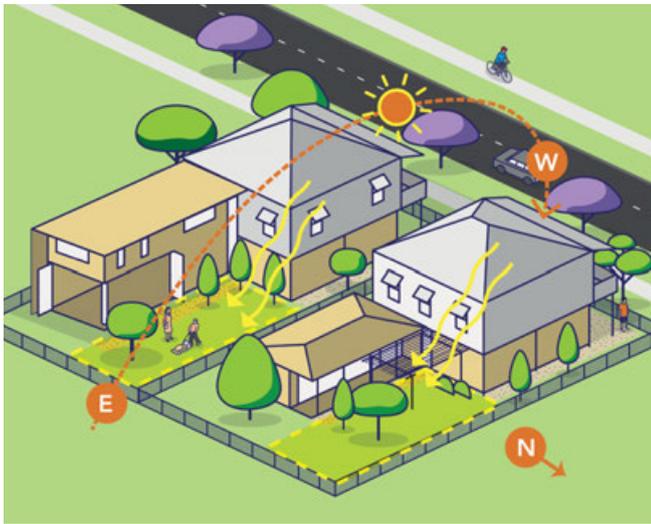
When planning an extension, identifying north on your property is an important step. You can also observe the shadows cast by your house and your neighbours that occur throughout the day. In order to maximise the amount of daylight in new extensions, consider orientating the main living spaces (that is, where you plan to spend the most time) to have glazing, or open outdoors to the north. Other factors such as where the views are, where you get breezes, or the location of a neighbour might also influence the way you lay out your extension, however, including some glazing to the north is valuable.

Any glazing on a west-facing wall will require screening to protect from late afternoon sun, or you can minimise any openings. Offsetting outdoor living spaces from your neighbour will help both of you enjoy the best of our subtropical climate.

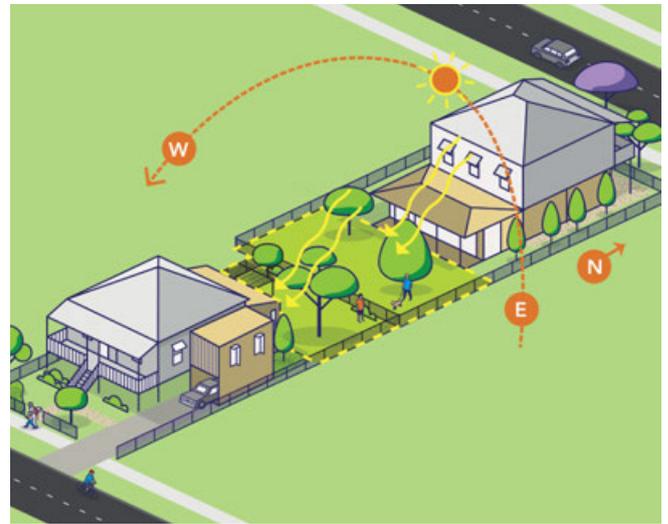
*(Left)*

*Architect: Twohill and James.*

*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



In the diagram above, the house on the right has located its new extension to open up to the north, and in response to the neighbour's outdoor space. The extension faces away from neighbour's yard, creating a more private back garden.



In this diagram, the house to the right has chosen an extension across the back of their house. By maintaining a large rear setback, the amount of overshadowing to their neighbour is minimal. If they had built to their minimum rear setback, the structure would cast a shadow into their neighbours property.

Doubling up backyards like this also effectively doubles your setback from your windows to your neighbour, affording both of you more privacy, and a larger collective green space to look out onto.



Maintaining a generous rear setback will allow you a backyard with access to sunlight, as well as providing greater separation and privacy to your rear neighbour. Always check where north is for your property, and the height and overshadowing of your house and your neighbours' houses.



# Create privacy for you and your neighbour

**Having a feeling of privacy and security when in your own home is a fundamental need no matter what the age or style of your home. Traditional character houses achieve this but also enable people to interact with neighbours by providing a range of private, semi-private and more public spaces along with layered security.**

There are a number of ways that you can ensure privacy for you and your neighbour while ensuring access to natural light, breezes and the ability to take advantage of existing or new views.

Incorporating lots of glazing into your house and new extension is great for getting natural light into your home. When positioning windows, doors and outdoor spaces consider ways to ensure privacy such as:

- offsetting windows, doors or outdoor spaces from those of your neighbour so they are not directly opposite
- providing a greater setback or stepping in the building to create opportunities for windows that do not face boundaries or other houses

- using high-level windows in bathrooms or other spaces where a high degree of privacy is required and where located to the side or rear of the house
- using frosted, obscured, texture or opaque glass or skylights
- providing screening offset from the outside of the window or opening
- providing adjustable or operable exterior blinds or louvres on semi-private spaces
- jointly providing a boundary fence that establishes the degree of privacy and security that you mutually want at the ground level.

Landscaping can help with screening where only a moderate amount of privacy is desired but you should not rely on this alone to do the job where the spaces are internal and require a high degree of privacy (e.g. bathrooms).

Screening trees or shrubs can be used to filter views into and out of your yard but the species should be selected carefully to ensure they do not become a nuisance in terms of roots or dead branches. Being a good neighbour also means balancing your need for privacy with your neighbours' need for daylight and amenity.

There are a number of ways that you can ensure privacy for you and your neighbour while maintaining access to natural light, breezes and views.

## Examples



Solid sections of balustrade are an effective way of creating privacy to rear balconies, where people are typically seated. Aligning new sills to existing windows can help a renovation fit in with the existing house.

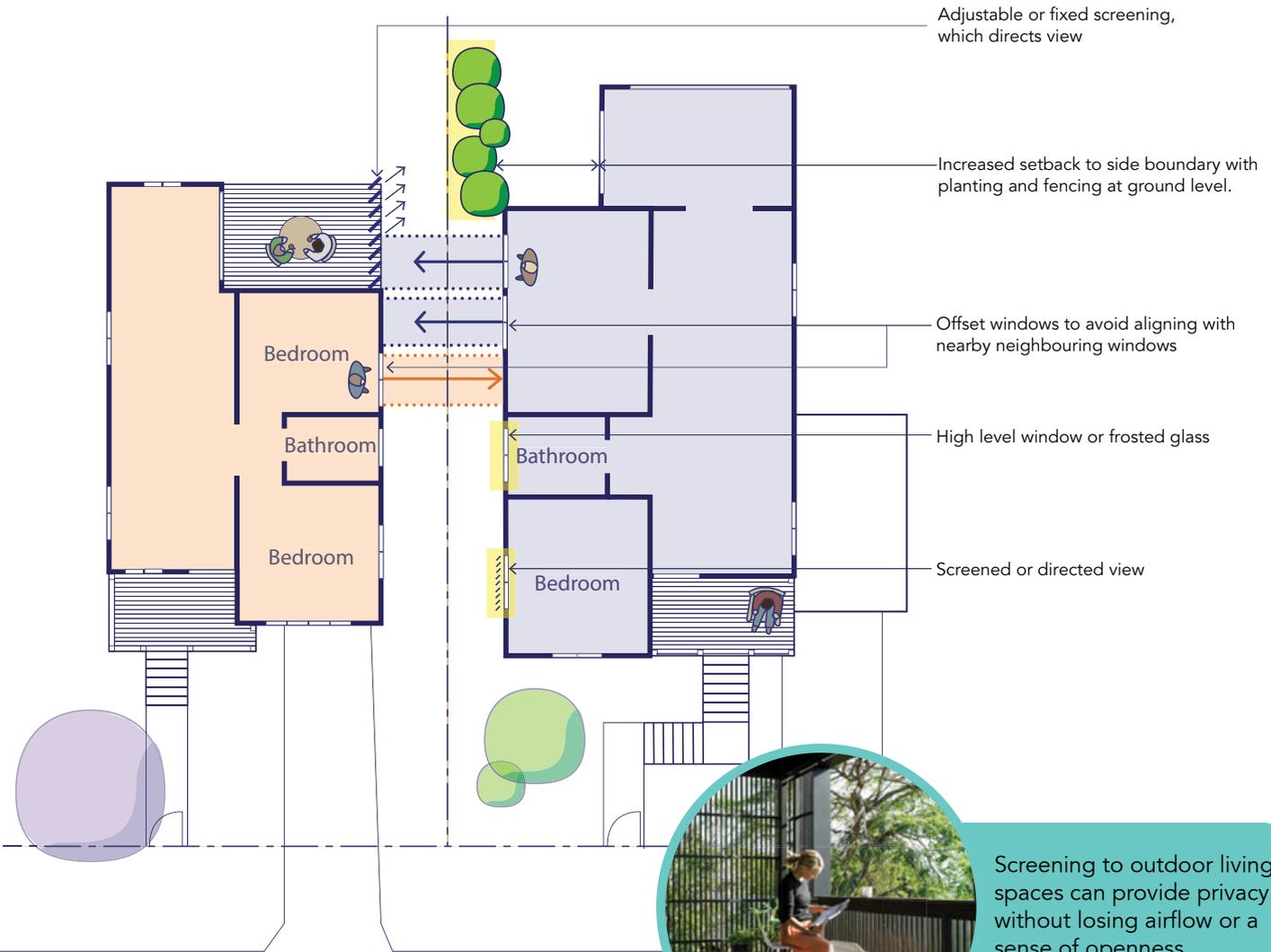
(Left)

Architect: KO & Co Architecture.

Photographer: Kate Mathieson.

## House A

## House B



Screening to outdoor living spaces can provide privacy without losing airflow or a sense of openness.



A combination of screens and solid elements can provide privacy for outdoor living areas. Consider sill heights and locations of windows, to look out over rooftops or treetops which brings natural light and outlook without compromising privacy.

(Left)  
 Architect: Bligh Graham Architects.  
 Photographer: Scott Burrows.



## Balance built form and landscape

**Leaving space to play, relax and retreat outdoors in your yard is important. The location and size of outdoor spaces may also create breathing space between you and your neighbours.**

Providing a generous setback to your rear boundary allows for large trees, outdoor living spaces and play. How far your home is set back from side and rear boundaries also impacts on your privacy. You can make a dramatic improvement to the quality and feel of your home by:

- maintaining a generous private backyard space
- providing sufficient space for a significant tree to establish
- ensuring that you are comfortable with the amount of backyard you have and separation from your neighbours
- checking where north is, and whether the location of any extensions will cast a shadow on your or your neighbours outdoor living spaces, and at what time of day
- ensuring your side setbacks are generous enough to allow planting and any access you require (car or person) along the side boundaries.

It is important to strike a balance between permeable and impervious surfaces, that is between grass and garden areas and concrete or paved areas, as this has significant impacts on the following:

- stormwater quantity and quality from your lot
- the amount of heat and glare potentially created and radiating into your home.

Having a higher proportion of more permeable finishes can assist with the volume of stormwater run-off on your property. Aim to incorporate more permeable areas such as gardens, grass pavers or stepping stones or include a rain garden next to large impervious areas. A rain garden is a depressed area in the landscape that collects run off from driveways or paving and filters it through planting.

It is your responsibility to ensure that stormwater from your roof and land is managed appropriately and does not discharge onto a neighbouring property. This means connecting to a lawful point of discharge for roof water and managing stormwater from your yard. You may want to capture and store rainwater for use in your garden.

Seek advice from a building professional, plumber or hydraulic consultant if you are unsure of your obligations regarding water discharge from your property.

Note: Maximum site cover and minimum setbacks are set out in the City Plan or *Queensland Development Code* depending on the size of your lot or extent of your alteration or extension. Check with Council if you are unsure.

## Examples



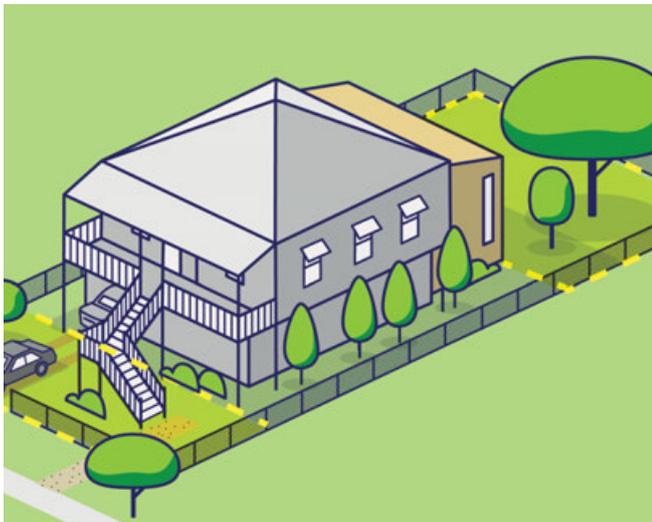
Far left: Retaining a significant rear setback allows space for play, daylight, significant planting, a pool, vegetable patches and much more. It also increases privacy for you and your rear neighbour.

Left: The side of your house can also be a zone to maintain wider setbacks if possible, particularly on wider lots. This project achieves landscaping and permeable surfaces alongside the extension.

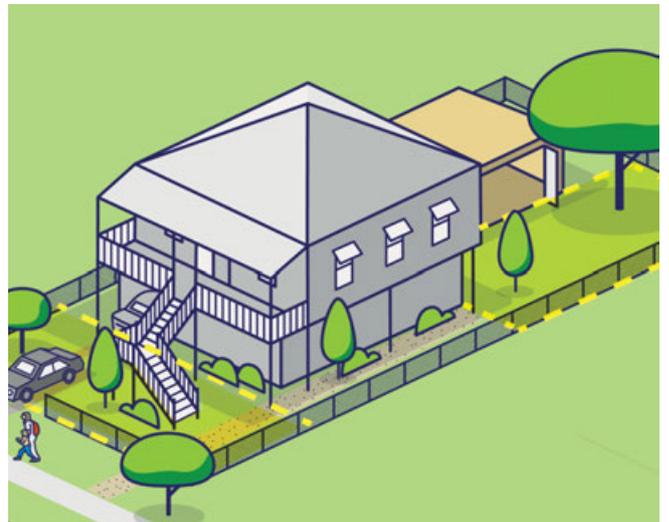
(Left)

Architect: Bligh Graham Architects.

Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.



Raising and building in underneath your house, or building a narrow extension across the back, allows you to retain a large backyard for significant trees, relaxing and increased privacy and separation from your neighbours. You should have at least two significant zones for gardens - the zone within your front setback, and the backyard you choose to retain, so maximise the backyard wherever possible.



You can also choose to locate a rear extension to one side of your property (adhering to the side/rear setback rules for your lot). In this instance, maintain a generous side setback to the alternate side, to still give yourself room for significant trees and backyard. Sometimes this arrangement of a pavilion to one side at the rear of your house can help achieve good solar orientation if you don't have a north facing backyard.



An example of an extension that is restrained in size and site cover, but still provides an airy, sheltered and connected place for living in our subtropical climate. The remainder of the yard is permeable lawn and gardens, with room for significant trees to shade the house.

*(Left)*  
 Architect: Placemate Architects.  
 Photographer: Carole Margand.



## Future-proof your home





## **Making your home fit your needs now and into the future, or be flexible enough to be adapted when necessary, makes sense.**

Future-proofing your home means designing alterations and extensions that:

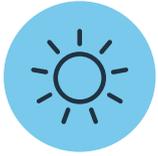
- consider and respond to Brisbane's subtropical climate
- minimise energy and water use by maximising opportunities for natural lighting and cooling
- recognise the value of trees and landscape
- easily accommodate new technology
- will support your needs during all stages of life.

Having a home that is designed to be energy and water efficient is important and will save you money. Smart homes use technology to manage energy use and regulate access and security.

Flexible or multi-purpose rooms that can be used for different purposes over time, gives your home and renovation longevity. For example, a rumpus room might be a home gym, office or secondary living room for a guest, older children or multi-generational household.

If you plan to live in your house as you age, think about the width of corridors, doorways and the design of bathrooms. Spending time thinking about how your needs might change and ways to future-proof your home will save you time and money later.

*(Left)*  
*Architect: SP Studio.*  
*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



# Design for our subtropical climate

**Traditional character houses have many elements that are a direct response to typical conditions that may be experienced in our subtropical location. For example, indoor-outdoor spaces such as covered verandahs, decks and patios provide respite from hot summers and thunderstorms, and potentially provide a warm space during our mild winters.**

How can your home, especially new extensions, be designed appropriately for Brisbane's humid summers and mild winters?

Following are some basic design principles that will vastly improve the comfort and liveability of your house in Brisbane's subtropical climate.

## Orientation

In Brisbane, the sun's path across the sky tracks across the north. Where possible, orientate your living spaces and the rooms you spend the most time in during the day to the north.

## Shading

Western or eastern facing windows should have vertical screening.

Northern frontages should have large roof overhangs, horizontal shading or hoods to protect from summer sun but allow winter sun in.

## Cross ventilation

Consider the types of windows in your house to maximise the amount of airflow. A window which only opens slightly does not provide much airflow.

Louvres are a good choice for achieving ventilation. Placement of windows on opposite walls to louvres encourages cross ventilation through your home. Protecting windows with hoods, verandahs and appropriate security screening may also allow you to leave them open all day or night to cool your home naturally.

## Colour choice

Choosing light external colours for your home will allow your house to reflect more heat and keep the interior cooler. This is most important on the roof of your home, and less so on walls that are shaded by screens or hoods, or are recessed, as is typical when building-in lower storeys under traditional homes.

## Ceiling fans

Ceiling fans are a great way to get air moving within your home and on verandahs. They also use a lot less energy to run than air conditioning.

## Value to you

Considering these sorts of passive design principles in your home can help your home to function at its best, and long term, can reduce your energy consumption. There will always be some days of extreme temperature and weather in a year, but these principles will, on the whole, make your home more comfortable in Brisbane's subtropical climate.

## Examples



Retaining several existing significant trees allows the backyard of this house to be dappled in shade.

*(Left)*  
*Architect: SP Studio.*  
*Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.*



## Recognise the value of trees and landscape

### Traditional streets and homes that have large mature trees and well-established gardens are highly valued.

Retain and work around mature trees where possible and give them sufficient breathing space. Trees take a long time to grow and are a long-term investment but they have countless benefits to the environment in which you live.

Large trees and other planting:

- provide shade and reduce heat
- filter dust
- absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and other potentially harmful gasses from the air while releasing oxygen
- provide a pleasant outlook for you and your neighbours and soften the appearance of buildings
- are beneficial for local fauna as a food source or habitat.

You can seek advice on suitable, low-maintenance, waterwise plants from a landscape architect, landscaper or local nursery. In Brisbane, subtropical plants and Australian native species are often better suited to our climate. They may have the following advantages:

- often hardy, as they are suited to either a subtropical or a drier Australian climate, including drought tolerant varieties which are lower maintenance
- some varieties attract bees, birds and other native fauna.

You may also consider edible or productive gardens, including:

- planting fruit, vegetables, herbs or other edible plants
- composting and worm farms to break down food scraps and naturally enrich your soil
- companion planting which is a practice of deliberate placement of different plant species together for mutual benefit, including natural pest deterrence.

Other options may include green roofs or walls as part of your new extension.

Did you know that Brisbane ratepayers can obtain two free native plants from Council for their garden each



The sloping ground has been terraced to accommodate garden beds full of vegetables, herbs and flowers that are within easy reach of the kitchen.

(Left)

Architect: SP Studio.

Photographer: Christopher Frederick Jones.



## Be adaptable for all stages of life

**Our population is living longer and there are a higher number of older people and people with a disability or mobility issues in our community. Our traditional houses don't necessarily meet the needs of our diverse community, particularly where houses have two storeys. Well-planned alterations or extensions can address many of these accessibility issues and make traditional homes suitable for everyone.**

There are design features that can make your home easier to manoeuvre prams within and watch children, as well as features to accommodate people with disabilities or temporary injury. Including these features will make your home more adaptable and suitable for a broader range of people and their changing needs over time.

Consider how your home might need to adapt for different phases of life:

- working from home
- living on your own or sharing with other non-related people
- living as a couple or with other adults
- families with young children, or with teenagers

- family members who sustain a temporary injury
- family members with permanent disability
- empty nesters
- adult children or guests coming to stay for extended periods
- accommodating older parents
- ageing in place.

Having a self-contained second living area or a sleeping space accessible from street level provides you with flexibility for a family member with decreased mobility and different support needs.

*The Australian Standard for Adaptable housing (AS4299-1995)* provides guidance for designing houses to accommodate varying degrees of physical ability over time and is available from [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au) along with a range of other useful resources.

The *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines* set out some practical principles to ensure your home is easier to access, navigate and live in, and more cost-effective to adapt when circumstances change. It includes such strategies as flush thresholds for accessibility, wider circulation space, and reinforcement in bathroom walls to add grab rails at a later time.

### Examples

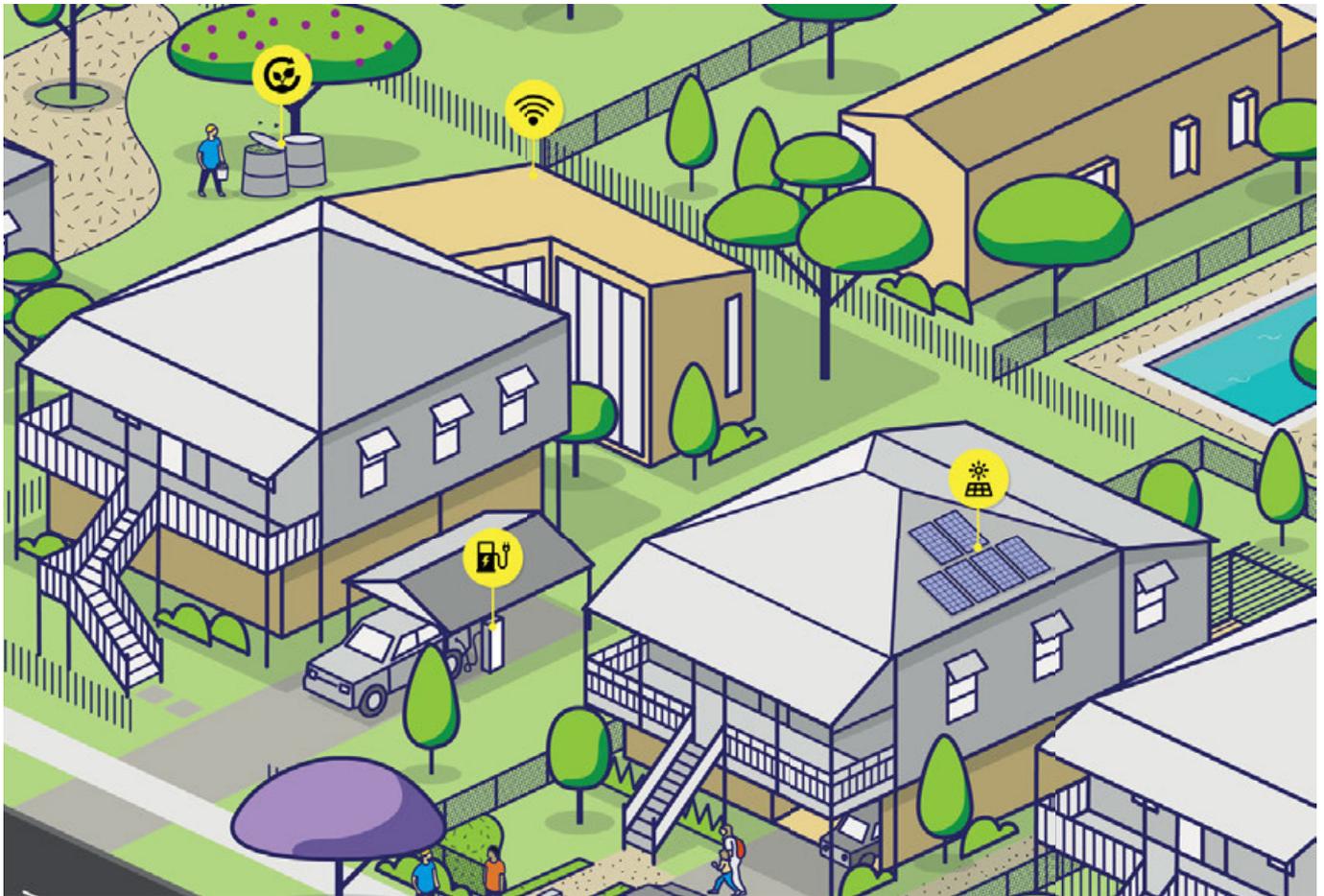


Left: Adaptability in a two storey house for ageing home occupants. The stairwell was designed with a square central light-well, at a specific size to allow for a domestic lift to be installed in future. This is just one example of how you can design flexibility and adaptability into your home.

(Left)  
Architect: Arkhefield.  
Photographer: Scott Burrows.



## Accommodate new technology



**Brisbane's traditional houses are more than 70 years old. There have been many improvements and advances in building and technology since this time.**

Some traditional homes have been renovated many times, while others have not. An important first step before you start your renovation is to have a qualified electrician check the condition of your wiring, fittings and that your electricity switchboard meets current standards. This makes things safer for you and people who may work on your alterations or extension.

As a next step, research new technologies that you may wish to incorporate in your home to understand the spatial, power or servicing requirements these technologies may need.

### **Insulation**

Where possible, ensure your home has adequate insulation in the walls, ceiling and roof. It is a simple way to improve the acoustic and thermal comfort of your home and reduce energy consumption.

Consult with your builder or design professional to understand what changes you may need to incorporate in your alteration or extension to meet current building standards as set out in the *Queensland Development Code* or *National Construction Code*.

### **Renewable energy**

Consider incorporating renewable energy production into your home - the most commonly available is solar power systems. Ensure solar panel arrays fit within your roof area and do not protrude beyond, especially when facing the street.

### **Smart home systems**

There have been great advancements in automated or remotely controlled technology for the home that improve energy and water efficiency or manage access and security. These systems can be built-in or allowed for in future to make your home more efficient, liveable and easier to manage.



# Summary

As you develop plans for your alteration or extension use this summary to track the design principles that you have considered and actioned.

These should be addressed taking into consideration the character of your home, street and neighbourhood, and your functional needs now and into the future.



## Respect the local context and streetscape

- Contribute to the traditional character of the street
- Integrate front gardens
- Embrace the front verandah
- Celebrate the front steps
- Use complementary fencing
- Accommodate the car



## Respect the original building

- Retain, reveal or reinstate original details
- Extensions are sympathetic to the original house
  - » Siting your extension
  - » Size and scale
  - » Roof design
  - » Style and materials



## Be a good neighbour

- Share access to daylight
- Create privacy for you and your neighbour
- Balance built form and landscape



## Future-proof your home

- Design for our subtropical climate
- Recognise the value of trees and landscape
- Be adaptable for all stages of life
- Accommodate new technology

## Further Information

There are many good design resources but two that will be particularly helpful to design for climate and future proof your home are the *Your Home* guide and the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines*.

### Your Home

The *Your Home* website includes information on how to start your alteration or extension, passive design, materials, energy and water efficiency along with case studies and a range of typical house designs. Go to [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au) for more information.

### Livable Housing Design Guidelines

The *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* can help your home better meet the changing needs of occupants over their lifetimes. The guide provides practical tips that can be considered and implemented as part of an alteration or extension. This guide is available to download from [livablehousingaustralia.org.au](http://livablehousingaustralia.org.au)

### Researching your home's history

If you would like to research the history of your traditional house or look for typical plans, visit [brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://brisbane.qld.gov.au) and search 'Research the history of your house'.



## More information

For more information please contact Council.



Visit [brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://brisbane.qld.gov.au) and search 'Traditional Housing: Alterations and Extensions Design Guide'.



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