

Streets and communities

Streetscape is the term given to the collective appearance of all buildings, footpaths and gardens along a street. The streetscape is the visual identity of a neighbourhood and plays an important role in facilitating interaction between residents and creating a community.

Well designed streetscapes encourage connection, understanding and community spirit among residents.

Houses can be diverse in age, shape or style yet combine to create a community identity. At the same time, a development that is not sympathetic to the existing streetscape can significantly detract from the character of the neighbourhood.

Newington Village



Newington Village

COMMUNITY, STREETScape & PLANNING

When designing a new home or addition there are a number of ways to contribute to an improved community identity.

Understand the character of your local area, and design your home or addition sympathetically. Your home should look like it belongs in the neighbourhood. Use characteristic attributes (for example building height, street setback, form and materials) to compose your innovative design solutions.

Face houses towards streets, parks and open spaces to allow improved surveillance and access. This encourages better use of public space, promoting safety and community spirit. The orientation of the house should still account for solar access considerations and compromises may be necessary, particularly on west facing blocks.

Limit the width of driveways and share them where possible. This allows more of the street frontage to be landscaped and provides a better environment for pedestrians.

Present the house rather than the garage to the street. Generally, set garages and carports beyond the house frontage to minimise their visual impact. Where possible, use secondary streets or rear lanes for car access. This allows more landscaping at the street frontage and establishes a direct visual connection between the house and the street for security.

Plant trees to enhance the quality of the street. Good tree cover increases property values and provides improved shade, habitat, windbreaks, air quality and appearance.

Avoid high walls and hedges on the front boundary as they isolate the home from the neighbourhood. They create a perception of isolation and impede observation of the street.

Accommodate your neighbour's field of view. Utilise appropriate building setbacks and building height to retain your neighbour's view while maximising your own.

What to look for in a street

Streets should be part of our living space and a common area for the community, equal to the park and the footpath. The road itself is more than a racetrack. A good street is one in which you can chat with your neighbour without having to shout over traffic noise, or worry about your safety and that of small children.

The following features make streets more 'livable' – safer, cleaner and more attractive.

- > Unique houses that still fit together in a consistent pattern so that no single house is dominant.



Environment Projects

- > Consistent alignment of house frontages.
- > Regularly spaced tree planting on both sides of the street to give it identity.



Photo: Michael Steyn

- > Private garden landscapes that complement the street planting.
- > Streets that give pedestrians and cyclists priority and are designed to discourage speeding.



- > Streets in which the width of the carriageway relates to traffic volume and is not wider than necessary.
- > Garages that don't dominate the street frontage.
- > Driveway crossovers of minimum width.
- > Fences and walls of an alignment, height and style consistent with others in the street.
- > Pavements that are porous or modular where possible to encourage stormwater infiltration.
- > Clear sight lines between house entrances and the street, providing visual surveillance of the street to maximise neighbourhood safety.
- > Underground services, as this removes unsightly power lines and does not impede street tree growth.

STREETSCAPE'S VALUE

Attractive and functional streetscapes increase residents' quality of life and their property values.

The streetscape should encourage community interaction and exchange. People who feel isolated from society are more likely to behave in a manner detrimental to the needs of the community.

An effective streetscape should therefore convey a sense of openness and sharing while offering a degree of privacy.

Elements like trees and footpaths encourage pedestrian activity, which reinforces social interaction and provides casual surveillance of the street.

A streetscape that looks inviting is more likely to encourage people to live there, increasing demand and property prices.

Good streetscape design

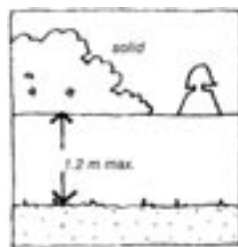
Creating a sympathetic building design and additions to fit in with the streetscape does not mean that neighbouring house designs must be imitated. It implies being conscious of the area's natural environment, heritage significance, density, style and social & cultural mix.

Good house design allows individuality without detracting from the character of the street or the amenity of neighbours.

Visit your local council for guidelines specific to your area. Council planners understand the features that give a precinct its individual character and are trained to help you find solutions that meet your needs without destroying that character.

Solutions include:

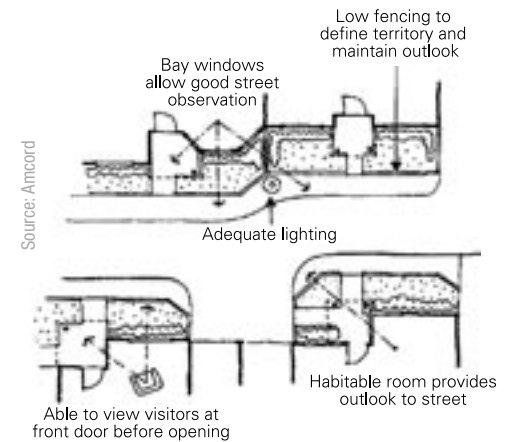
- > Complementary materials and colours.
- > Roof pitch to maintain consistency with the neighbouring houses.
- > Bulk, form and height sympathetic to the character of the street
- > Passive visual surveillance to discourage crime. Provide outlook over the street and public space from at least one room other than a bathroom or bedroom.



Source: Amcord

- > Consistent street fencing, which does not isolate the house from the street. New fences and walls should balance privacy requirements with the need for a visual connection with the street.

- > Low walls to integrate mail boxes and shield bins and recycling facilities from the street.
- > Landscaping to enhance the quality of the



Source: Amcord

streetscape. Plants can be used to screen or direct views, provide shade, clean the air and give visual identity to a street.

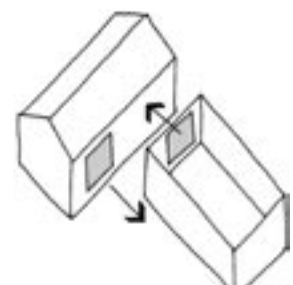
- > Garden planting which considers the rhythm and proportion of existing street planting (intervals between trees, height and spread). Plant fewer big trees rather than many small trees.



- > Planting species that won't damage footpaths, structures or drainage or invade adjacent bushland.
- > Planting native species which require less water and provide a habitat for native animals. Many local councils provide lists of local indigenous plant species.

Be a good neighbour

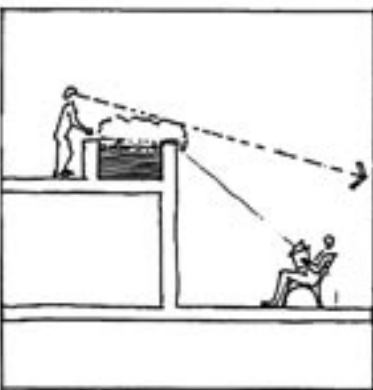
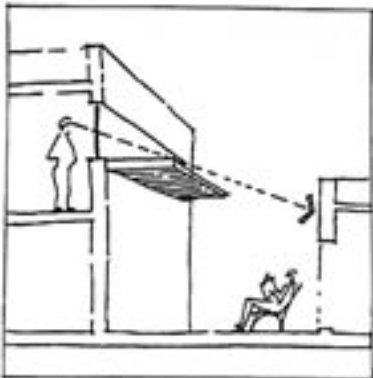
Offset windows to ensure maximum privacy.



Consider the use of landscape and other devices to selectively screen views.

Protect acoustic privacy by careful siting and internal planning. Locate bedrooms and private open space away from noise sources such as service equipment, busy roads, driveways or active recreational areas.

Avoid directly overlooking your neighbour's main living areas or garden space by careful location and design of windows and balconies.



Source: Amcord

Avoid building in a way that significantly overshadows the main living areas or garden space of neighbours.

Avoid locating noisy areas (such as pools, driveways, and service equipment) near the bedrooms or living areas of neighbours. Driveways and parking areas should be at least 3m from bedroom windows.

Protect as much as possible any significant views enjoyed by neighbouring properties.

ADDITIONAL KEY REFERENCES

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