

# YOUR

# GUIDE TO



# BUYING

# LAND



# FROM



**ACT**  
Government

**Suburban Land**  
Agency

A handbook for single residential land sales

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**ACT**  
Government

**Suburban Land**  
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A handbook for single residential land sales



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## Section 1

# About the Suburban Land Agency

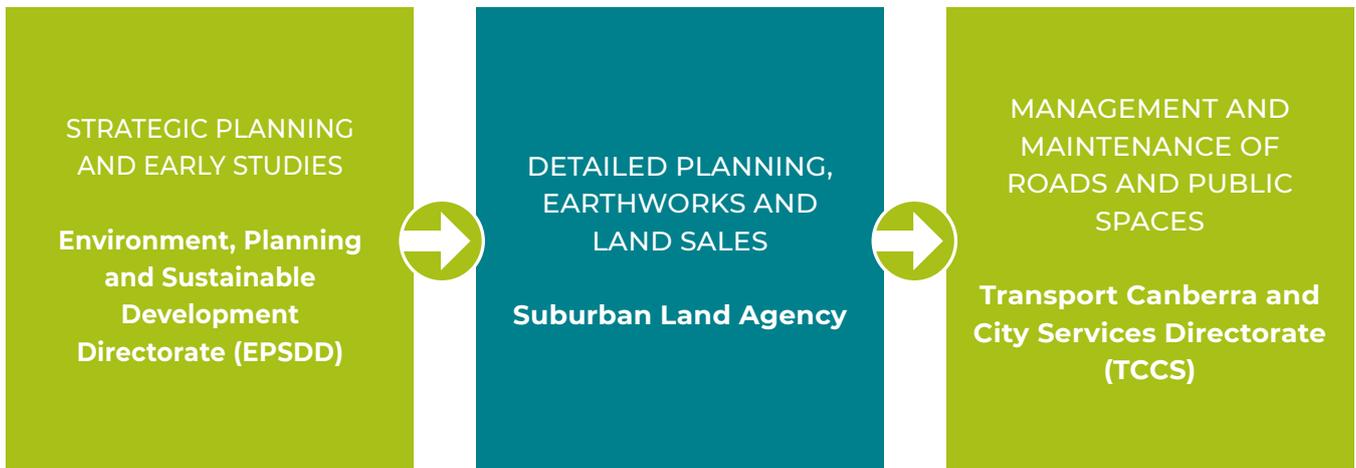


**At the Suburban Land Agency, we create great places  
where communities thrive.**

**As a statutory authority, the Suburban Land Agency develops  
and releases land on behalf of the ACT Government. This  
includes land for residential, industrial, commercial and  
community purposes.**

**Through smart, sustainable development, we deliver  
social, economic and environmental benefits for Canberrans.**

## Here's how we work with other ACT Government directorates to deliver our development projects.



Access Canberra can put you in touch with the right part of the ACT Government.  
Visit [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](https://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

Our goal is to create liveable spaces where people feel connected to their suburb and their community.

- 1 We run a community development program called 'Mingle' in many of our estates. Mingle helps build vibrant communities through fun-filled activities such as family events and workshops.
- 2 We support initiatives that promote affordable living. Our estates offer a range of block sizes and dwelling types to support the inclusion of all members of our community.
- 3 We also care about our environment. We design and construct our estates in an environmentally sustainable manner and work to protect and enhance our region's natural biodiversity.



Buying land from the Suburban Land Agency is your pathway to living in a brand-new home in one of Canberra's premium locations.

This guide will help you understand how to buy land from us. It also includes lots of information to help you through the process of designing and building your dream home and garden.

We look forward to welcoming you to a Suburban Land Agency community.

## Section 2

# How to use this guide



The Suburban Land Agency sells land on behalf of the ACT Government. If you want to buy land to design and build your own house, this guide will help you understand the process. It will:

1

help you **choose** which block of land you would like to buy

2

help you **understand** more about your block of land

3

provide you with **advice** about designing and building your home and garden

4

help you know how to ask the **right questions!**

This guide is designed to help you throughout your home building journey. There's no need to read it from start to finish. Simply consult the different sections as necessary.

## Call in the professionals

It's a good idea to get independent legal, planning and financial advice before you buy a block of land. Buying land involves a legal contract. It's also a big financial decision. Independent advice will help you understand your contract and your obligations. It will also help you make the best decision for your personal situation.

We also recommend you engage the services of design, building and landscaping professionals. They will help make sure you follow all the relevant rules and regulations. You'll also find useful tips about designing and building your home and garden at [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au).

## Laws and legislation

This guide refers to laws, codes and regulations which govern planning, land development, sales and construction in the ACT. You'll find these on the ACT Legislation Register at [legislation.act.gov.au](http://legislation.act.gov.au). Whilst this guide is designed to help you with your purchase, it does not replace any laws, codes or regulations, or the terms and conditions of your contract.

## Industry or technical words

The meaning of industry-specific and technical words or terms can be found in *Section 11: Glossary*.

## Further information

Details of useful resources and contacts can be found in *Section 12: Resources and guides* and *Section 13: Useful contacts*.



## Section 3

# How to buy land from the Suburban Land Agency

### Learn About Buying



Learn about the legal, planning and financial implications of buying. This includes talking to your bank.

Talk to our sales team about your options.

1

### Choose Your Block



Look at different Suburban Land Agency communities and different blocks for sale.

Use this guide and other information to help you understand what you are choosing.

Get professional design, planning, building and landscape advice about what you could build and the type of block you need.

2

### Buy Your Block (Exchange)



Agree to buy a block, either over the counter, by ballot or at auction.

Read and sign your contract for sale.

Pay the deposit (usually 5 or 10% of the block price).

3



Want to buy land in the ACT? There are several ways to do this. You can:

- ▶ buy a finished house and land package from a private owner or builder;
- ▶ buy a planned house and land package from a builder;
- ▶ buy land from a developer to design and build your house; or
- ▶ buy land from the ACT Government to design and build your own house.

If you want to buy land from the Suburban Land Agency, this guide will help you understand the process.

**Whilst each block we sell is unique, buying land generally involves the following five steps.**



4

## Settle Your Block (Settlement)

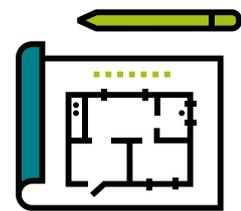


The Suburban Land Agency will contact you when your block is ready.

Pay the remaining 90 or 95% of the sales price.

Pay your stamp duty (visit [revenue.act.gov.au](http://revenue.act.gov.au) for details).

## Get Started



### Congratulations!

You're on your way to building your dream home.

Use the information in this guide to help you design and build.

Join our 'Mingle' program and enjoy events and activities in your new neighbourhood.

5





## Section 4



# Do your research



**Before you agree to buy a block of land, you should find out as much as possible about it. This includes the conditions associated with the block and any rules you must follow.**

## Suburban Land Agency resources

The following documents can help with your research. They are especially important for potential buyers to review. You'll find these for each Suburban Land Agency community on our website at [suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au).

### Development Specific Requirements

This outlines the requirements that apply to a particular community.

### Estate Plan

This is a plan of a whole Suburban Land Agency community. It shows the location of different blocks of land in relation to major roads, open spaces and future shops and schools.

### Block Fill Plan

This plan shows the amount of 'cut' and 'fill' (measured in metres) for different blocks of land. This is important for understanding what is in the ground on your block (for details see 'Geotechnical information' on page 9).

### Block Details Plan

This plan shows levels, slope, easements and other information related to specific blocks of land. Each block has a 'block number' and a 'section number', which allows it to be uniquely identified compared to all the other blocks in the suburb. Your block number is not the same as your street number.

### Block Details Table

This table summarises the information shown on the Block Details Plan so you can compare blocks of land.

## Get to know your block



No two blocks of land are the same. Before you buy, you must have a good understanding of its features, both above and below the ground. This will help you create a home that makes the most of the block's size, location and attributes.

### What's nearby?

New communities often include open spaces, shops or schools, parks, playgrounds, pathways and public transport stops. Look at the Estate Plan so you can understand what is included in your new community and how close your preferred block is to these features.

### ***The Single Dwelling Housing Development Code***

*The most important document is the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code which is part of the Territory Plan. This is the key statutory planning document in the ACT.*

*Your design, building and landscaping professionals will be familiar with the requirements under the plan, but you can also find it at [legislation.act.gov.au](http://legislation.act.gov.au).*

## Geotechnical information

The types of soils on your block will affect how you build your home. This is sometimes known as the geotechnical information. It's important to understand this information before you start construction.

When new suburbs are developed, there will be earthworks to create the roads, footpaths and blocks. In some sections, land may be 'cut' away to create a more level area. In others, soil may be added to create a more level area. When extra soil is added it is known as 'fill'. When earthworks like this take place, the fill is controlled to make sure it is of good quality. All the works are carefully managed to ensure no contaminated materials are used.

A high-level geotechnical report and site classification certificate will be available for your block once the earthworks are complete. This will include:

- ▶ a description of the site;
- ▶ the status of any fill (including controlled fill added by the Suburban Land Agency);
- ▶ a summary of the soil layers;
- ▶ groundwater observations; and
- ▶ site classifications.

A Block Fill Plan is also prepared for each Suburban Land Agency community. You can find this on our website at [suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au). You should review this plan to check the status of fill on your

block before you start construction.

As there may be historic fill on your block (for instance, fill added before we began our suburb development), it's wise to seek independent professional advice — from your builder or an engineer — before starting construction.

## Orientation

Orientation refers to the direction (north, south, east or west) your block faces compared to your street. This is also known as the 'bearing of address street boundary'.

You can work out the orientation of your block by looking at the Estate Plan and the Block Details Plan for your community.

## Sloping land

Is your block flat or does it have a slope? This will affect how you design and build your home.

The contour lines on the Block Details Plan show the slope across the area. If you need help understanding contour lines, talk to a professional such as your builder, building designer, architect or engineer.

For more information about building on sloping land see *Section 6: Designing your home*.

## Block Size

Is your block considered compact, mid-sized or large?

### Compact

a block of land with an area of 250m<sup>2</sup> or less

### Mid-sized

a block of land with an area more than 250m<sup>2</sup> but less than or equal to 500m<sup>2</sup>

### Large

a block of land with an area more than 500m<sup>2</sup>

And if it's over 500m<sup>2</sup> but less than 550m<sup>2</sup> and identified in a precinct code, it is subject to Rule 21 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development

Code in the Territory Plan. These blocks are indicated in the Block Details Table for your community.



## Setbacks

A setback is the required distance between your block boundary and the outside face of your home. It also applies to other structures on your block such as balconies, decks, verandas and walls. Setbacks determine how far back your home needs to be from the street and from your neighbours.

## Battle-axe blocks

A battle-axe block is a block of land not located directly on a street. It has a long driveway and is behind other blocks that face the street. Blocks listed as 'battle-axe blocks' are included in the Block Details Table for your community.

## Corner blocks

This is a block of land that fronts onto two different streets. Corner blocks are subject to different rules and requirements, especially in relation to the front yard. You'll find blocks listed as 'corner blocks' in the Block Details Table for your community.

For more information about building on corner blocks see *Section 6: Designing your home*.

## Surveillance Blocks

Some blocks of land are near rear laneways or pathways. To help promote safe communities, some blocks are identified as 'surveillance blocks'. These blocks should include a liveable room above the garage, with windows overlooking the rear line. Blocks listed as 'surveillance blocks' are included in the Block Details Table for your community. You can find out more about 'surveillance blocks' in Rule 19 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.

## Limited Development Potential Blocks

As you browse the Block Details Table for your community, you may notice some blocks described as 'limited development potential'. This isn't as alarming as it sounds. In fact, these blocks DO present potential. The potential to design a unique home that makes the most of the block's size, slope and orientation. As always, seek professional advice to ensure your home meets the conditions in the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.



### Did you know?

Did you know some blocks are identified as 'surveillance blocks'? They are often near laneways or pathways and play a key role in helping promote safe communities.

## Other block requirements

There are also other requirements which apply to certain blocks of land. These are included in the Block Details Plan and Block Details Table for your Suburban Land Agency community, so be sure to look out for the conditions below.

### Bushfire

Some blocks of land, such as those next to a nature reserve or open space, may be classified as being in a Bushfire Prone Area. If a bushfire were to start in these areas, these blocks are more likely to be affected. This information can be found at [actmapi.act.gov.au](http://actmapi.act.gov.au). If your block is located in a Bushfire Prone Area, your home and garden will need to meet certain standards. This is to reduce the risk of your property being damaged.

You can find out more about building in a Bushfire Prone Area in the ACT by contacting Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

### Noise

Some blocks are in areas where there will be noise from nearby roads or venues. This means your building should be designed to reduce the noise impact. This is under Rule 42 of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan.

### Light

Some blocks have certain conditions about the type of lighting they use. For example, you may need to ensure your lights do not point up into the sky or into nearby nature reserves.

### Active Travel Streets

Some blocks of land are next to Active Travel Streets. These streets have slower speeds to make them safer for walking and cycling. The street entry and signs will inform vehicles of the slower speeds.

### Fencing facing public areas

If your block is next to a major road or an open space such as a park, your boundary fence may need to meet certain requirements, and you'll need to cover the cost.

For more details on fencing see *Section 8: Tips for your garden and landscape*.

Remember, the Block Details Plan and Block Details Table for your community will identify the blocks where special conditions apply. You'll find these on our website at [suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au).

#### **Off-the plan vs land-ready**

*'Off-the-plan' means there is an approved plan for the estate, but the roads and services are still under construction. You won't be able to visit your block until construction is complete. This also means there will be a longer time between exchange and settlement.*

*If you buy land that is 'land-ready', it means construction of the new development is complete and approved. There will be a shorter time between exchange and settlement, because your block is ready for you to start building your house.*



Section 5



# Be set up for services



**From water to telecommunications, here's how to ensure your new home has all the services you and your family need.**



## Easements, access and existing services

Essential services such as water, energy, stormwater and sewers are installed in our new communities so you can connect these to your home.

When there are services on or near your block, there may be easements or special requirements identified. You may not be allowed to build on these parts of your block. This is to protect the services from damage and give utility providers access for maintenance and repairs.

You'll find easements and other special requirements on the Deposited Plan and Block Details Plan. It's important you know the location of easements before you start work on your block. If you interfere with services without permission, you may have to pay repair costs.

You can find out about the location of services by contacting 'Dial Before You Dig' at [1100.com.au](http://1100.com.au) or phone 1100.

You should also be careful not to damage any existing services near your block. This includes footpaths, kerbs, gutters, streetlights, traffic lights, signs, trees, grass or other plants, mini-pillars, substations, covers for service access and markers for valves and hydrants.

See some damage? Contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

## Water, sewer and stormwater services

When you buy your block, you'll need to arrange connections for your water supply, sewer and stormwater. These are sometimes called hydraulic services.

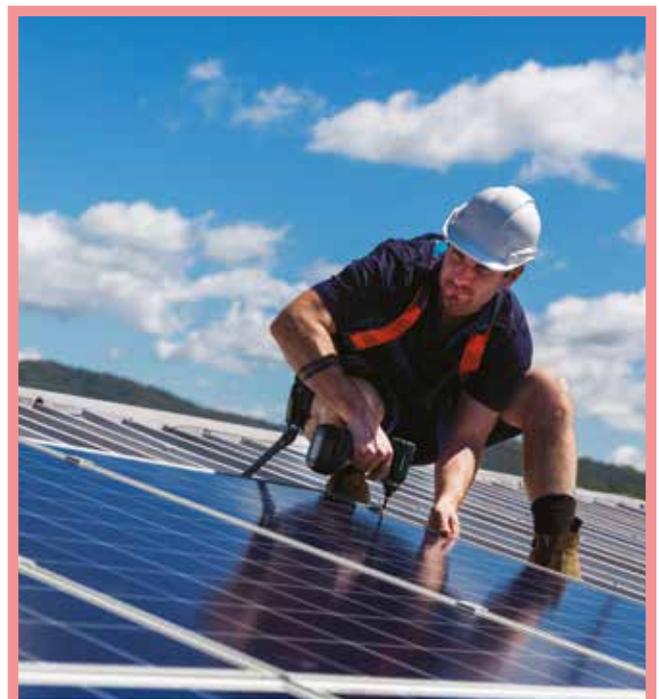
For details contact Icon Water at [iconwater.com.au](http://iconwater.com.au) or phone 02 6248 3111. You can also contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

## Energy services

When you buy your block, you'll need to connect your energy services such as electricity. This is important even if you install solar panels and battery storage.

For more information about energy connections, contact Evoenergy at [evoenergy.com.au](http://evoenergy.com.au) or phone 13 23 86. You can also contact an authorised energy retailer. A list of authorised retailers is available from the Australian Energy Regulator at [aer.gov.au](http://aer.gov.au).

There may be electricity distribution equipment, such as a mini-pillar, substation or light pole, on your nature strip. Be careful not to damage these during any construction or landscaping.



## Phone and internet services

You will need to include wiring for phone, TV and internet services when you design and build your home. This includes establishing a connection between your home and the closest telecommunications pit. These pits are located at regular points along the side of the road.

By buying in a Suburban Land Agency estate, you'll enjoy access to all the latest technology and infrastructure. You simply need to arrange the connections once your home is ready.

Learn more about getting connected and choosing a provider by contacting NBN Co at [nbnco.com.au](http://nbnco.com.au) or phone 1800 687 626.

## Your street address and postal services

Your street address, including your street number and street name, will be allocated to your block. You can find out your street address at [actmapi.act.gov.au](http://actmapi.act.gov.au).



It is important you use the correct street number and display it clearly. Police, fire and ambulance services will use this to find your house if there is an emergency.

When you buy your block and build your home, you will also need to provide a letterbox. The letterbox should have clear numbering and be facing a public road that can be accessed by postal services.

### Online maps

Occasionally it can take time before the streets in our new communities can be found on online platforms such as Google Maps. The ACT Government makes the data available via [actmapi.act.gov.au](http://actmapi.act.gov.au) as early as possible.





## Section 6



# Designing your home



**Designing your home is about more than how it looks. You need to think about how comfortable it will be, how it will affect your neighbours and its impact on the environment. You also need to consider how your family will live, grow and change over the years.**

If designed and built well, your new home could last for a very long time.

Its design and construction can also impact how much it costs to run your house. This includes the costs of energy and maintenance. Taking the time to get the design right may save you money in the long term.

We recommend you seek professional advice before starting any construction or landscaping. Design and construction professionals such as architects, builders and some trades need to be licensed to work in the ACT. You can search for licensed professionals on the Access Canberra website at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.



Find tips for designing and building your home at [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au).

## Design ideas for different block types

Different block types may need different designs.

When your land is ready, your builder (or you can hire your own building surveyor) will get a survey to understand the size and slope of your block. This will help determine the best location for the footprint of the house, the size, views, access to sunlight and the best spots for your outdoor areas.

### Orientation and siting

When designing your home, you should consider how your house will relate to your neighbours and the street. Take into account your own privacy, and the privacy of your neighbours.

You should also think about solar access, which is the amount of sunlight your home will get. Your living areas should receive enough sunlight to make them comfortable. You also need to make sure you don't create shadows for your neighbours.

The rules in the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan will help guide your home design.

## Building on sloping land

Building on a sloping block is a chance to design a home with great views and a unique, original floor plan. Sloping blocks often need a split-level design to ensure a cost-effective solution that goes with the natural slope of the land.

While some earthworks will be needed, you can reduce the visual, structural and drainage impact by designing the home to work with your block.

There are three types of sloping blocks:

- ▶ Up sloping blocks: these blocks slope up from the street to the rear boundary.
- ▶ Down sloping blocks: these blocks slope down from the street to the rear boundary.
- ▶ Side sloping blocks: these blocks slope from side to side rather than front to rear.

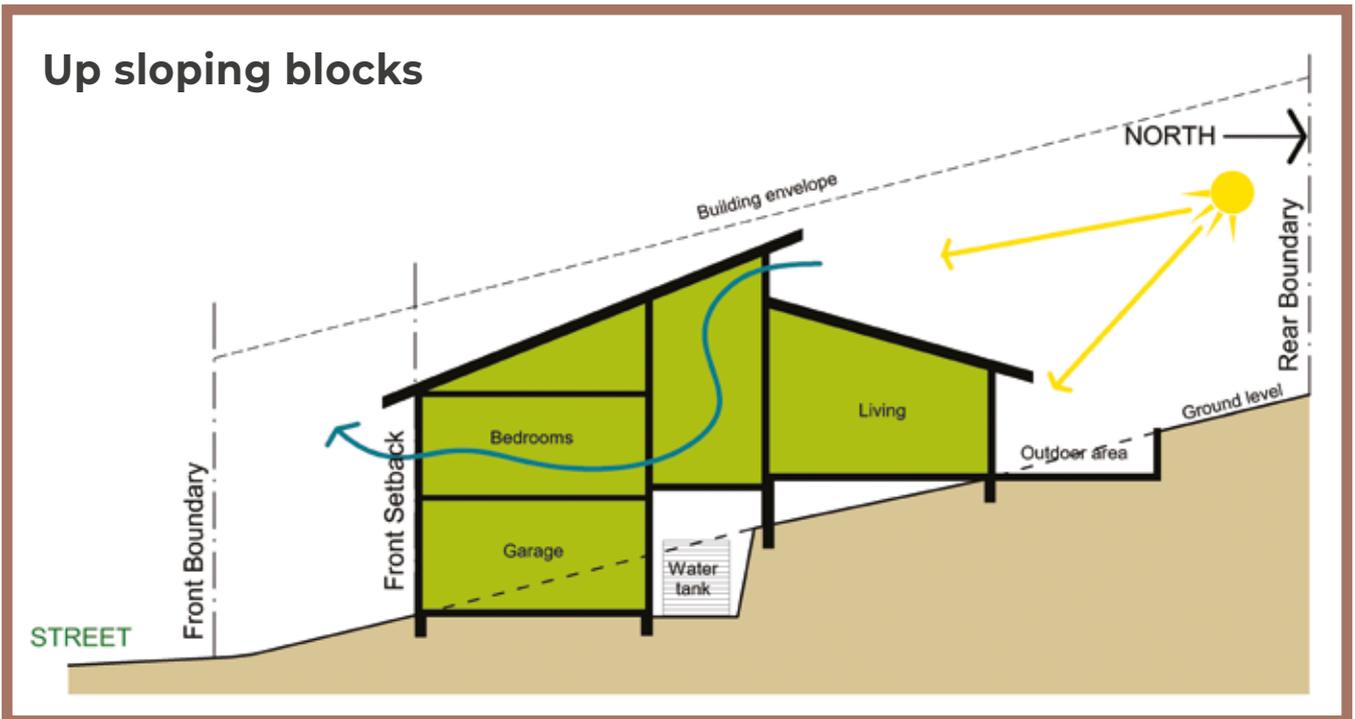
It is important to select a building designer, architect or builder who has worked with sloping land and can work within your budget. Remember; a large amount of earthworks will be expensive and may not be good for the environment.

Building on a sloping block requires important decisions about:

- ▶ building design and extra building works;
- ▶ cut and fill, retaining walls, as well as driveway design and drainage; and
- ▶ construction logistics such as scaffolding and timing.

### Considerations for up sloping blocks

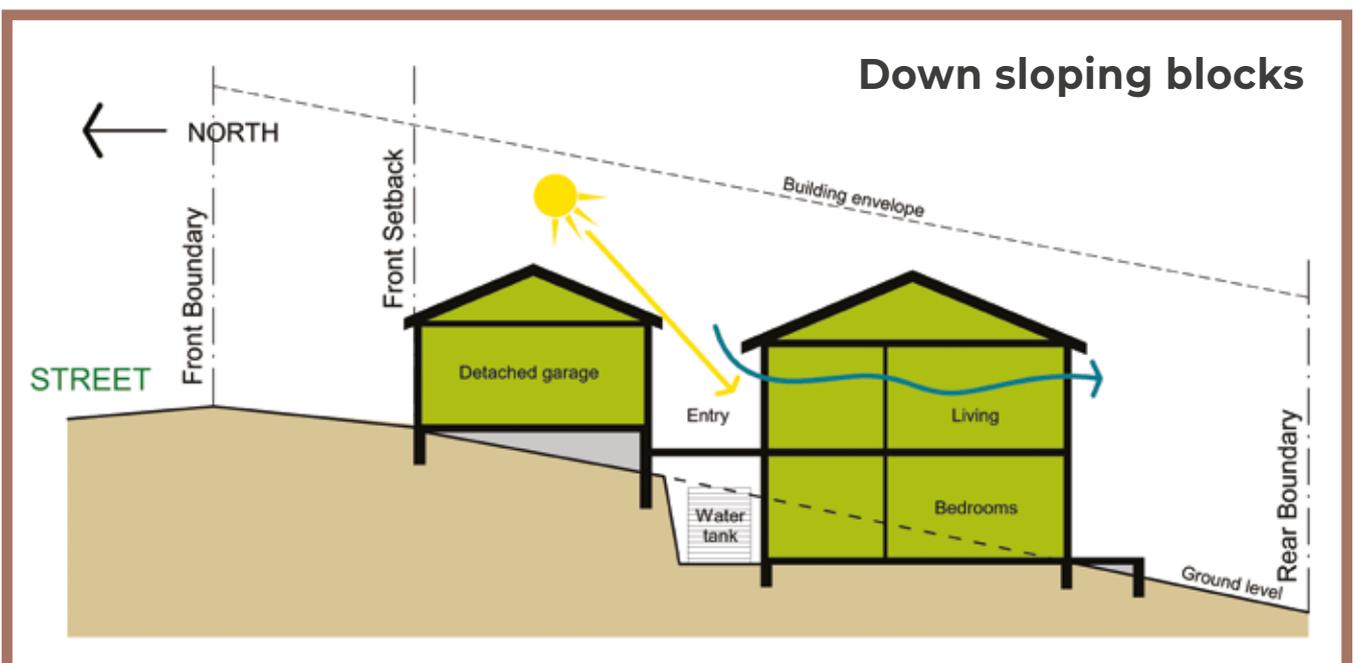
- ▶ Avoid cutting and filling your site from end-to-end to form a large flat platform (a practice known as benching). This will result in a high or multiple retaining walls right at your front boundary.
- ▶ Carport or garage doors and the driveway will visually dominate the front of your home. To reduce the impact, consider a projecting roofline or balcony above the carport or garage.
- ▶ These blocks generally need more cut to ensure the carport or garage is at the correct level. Make sure the carport or garage has appropriate drainage at the rear.



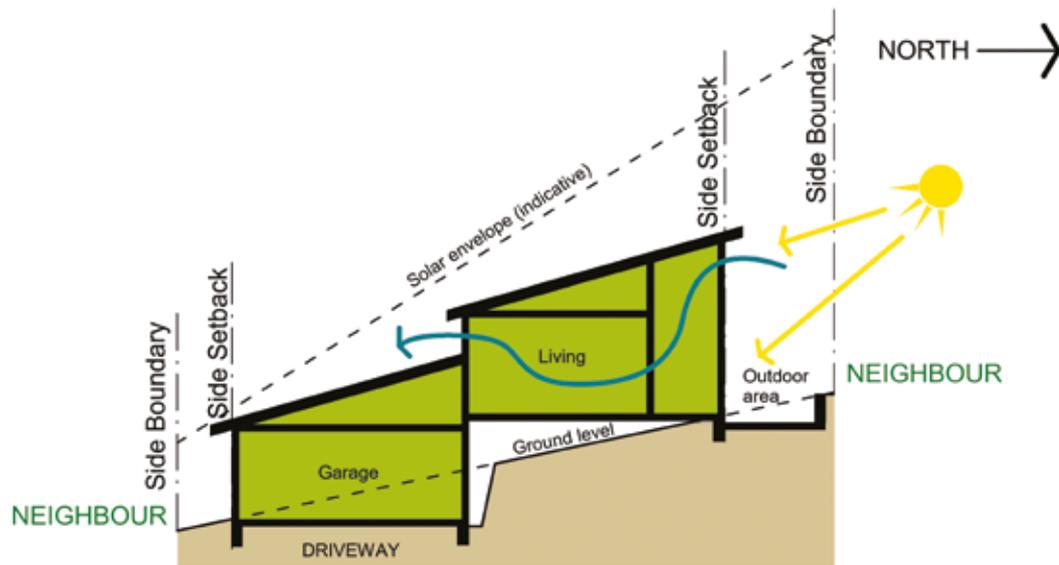
- ▶ Try to include level changes within the building rather than by changing your site.
- ▶ Consider using a suspended platform floor system instead of fill to split the house into different levels. You can use the empty space to install rainwater tanks.
- ▶ Consider using clerestory (highlight) windows to naturally light rooms and improve cross flow ventilation.
- ▶ Aim for a level transition from elevated living areas to the backyard.

### Considerations for down sloping blocks

- ▶ Consider using a suspended platform floor system instead of fill to split the house into different levels. You can use the empty space to install rainwater tanks.
- ▶ Driveway gradients and drainage need careful design.
- ▶ Consider using a detached carport or garage to allow for more sunlight for your house.



## Side sloping blocks



- ▶ Try to include level changes within the building rather than by changing your site.
- ▶ Consider using clerestory (highlight) windows to naturally light rooms and improve cross flow ventilation.
- ▶ Avoid 'going up an extra storey' at the rear. It will significantly increase the building height and impact your privacy (and that of your neighbours)
- ▶ Aim for a level transition off the street into the elevated living areas.

### Side sloping blocks

- ▶ Where possible split the house so the carport or garage is at a lower level. The location of the driveway crossing will be a determining factor.
- ▶ Design the entry for easy access from the street.
- ▶ Consider using clerestory (highlight) windows to naturally light rooms and improve cross flow ventilation.
- ▶ Try to include level changes within the building.

## Building on corner blocks

Corner blocks offer several benefits. Your house will be in a prominent location. You'll have fewer neighbours. Your backyard will also be easier to access.

But there are requirements to be aware of.

When building on a corner block, you need to understand the rules of the Single Dwelling Housing Development Code in the Territory Plan. Look out for the rules about 'secondary street frontage'. You might also want to use a designer, architect and/or builder who has experience with corner blocks. They will be able to help you design your home to make the most of the site. This is especially important if your corner block is also on a slope.

### Building with two street frontages

A corner block has two street frontages. The Suburban Land Agency will build a driveway crossing on one of the streets. This is where you should build your garage or carport, and it's where you should put your letterbox. This street will become your postal address.

If you want to move the driveway crossing, you'll need to get planning approval. You will also have to pay for any costs, such as moving underground electrical services.

Your home will be seen from two different streets, so think about how your home will look from both sides. You should also consider the shape of your roof and whether systems such as solar panels and water tanks can be seen from the street.

In the design stage, you should take into account your views to the outside, how much sunlight your home will get, and where your outdoor areas will be. You may even be able to have two separate outdoor areas as part of your design.

Your front garden will also be larger than most other blocks, so consider its appearance and how much work it will be to maintain.

It may help to have your architect or designer create a 3D image of your future home, like this one below. This can show you what your house will look like once it is built, and provides a clearer picture than a 2D image such as elevations.

### Setbacks and fencing

Corner blocks often have a large amount of land on the secondary street frontage. This is usually the side of your block which is longest, but make sure you check the Block Details Plan for your Suburban Land Agency community.

Setbacks refer to the distance between your home and the boundary. You may be able to build a courtyard wall closer to the street. This is a great chance to build a private open space, particularly if your secondary street frontage faces north and enjoys lovely sunlight.

## Other design features

The design of your home can affect your comfort levels, its energy efficiency, and how easily you'll be able to adapt in the future. As well as size, layout, the number of bedrooms and living areas, you should also think about the following design features.

### The front of your house

When you are designing the front of your house, think about how it will look from the street. After all, this is the first part of your home any visitors see, so it's important to make a good first impression.

You should also think about how visitors (and your family) will be able to get into your house. Make sure there is a clear pathway for people to follow. Consider accessibility when you are designing your home, so visitors with a pram or wheelchair can still get inside your house.

Make sure you include a letterbox that can be accessed by postal services, and that your street number is easy to read.





## Your driveway

Your driveway design can affect how easy it is to use your garage or carport.

The Suburban Land Agency will construct the first part of your driveway, from the street over the verge. You cannot change this part of the driveway. You will need to build the rest of your driveway so it connects to your carport or garage.

The slope of your driveway will depend on the floor level of your carport or garage. On a sloping block, you should aim for a height difference of approximately one metre from the verge crossing to the floor level of the carport or garage.

If you have a steeper slope, you will need a transition zone at the top and bottom so your vehicle can be easily used on the driveway. You will need to get this designed by a qualified builder, architect or engineer who understands the relevant Australian Standards.

If your house is lower than the street, and your driveway slopes downwards, you should include:

- ▶ drainage to ensure your carport or garage does not flood when it is raining; and
- ▶ enough space at the top of your carport or garage door for your vehicle to enter at an angle.

You should also think about:

- ▶ avoiding very smooth surfaces so your driveway is not slippery;
- ▶ choosing lighter coloured materials which will not absorb as much heat during summer;
- ▶ making sure your driveway allows you to move your bins to and from the street for collection;
- ▶ ensuring your driveway location does not stop you from accessing the side of your house; and
- ▶ using alternative materials such as permeable paving.

To find out more about driveway requirements contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.



## Drainage

When you are designing and building your home and garden, you need to consider how water flows across the surface of your block. You must have enough drainage to prevent any flooding on rainy days.

You should also make sure you don't force the flow of stormwater onto any neighbouring blocks, laneways or open spaces. This could also cause flooding.

If unsure, seek professional building or landscaping advice.

inclusions such as your laundry and where you will dry your clothes.

Save on energy bills by including a clothesline. Your clothesline should be easily accessible from your laundry, be at the rear or side of your home and be in a spot with plenty of sunlight.

You also need enough space for your bins; your green bin, your recycling bin and your general rubbish bin. Consider how you will get to the bins from inside your home, and how easily you can wheel them to the street for collection.

Storage is another important part of your house. Think about storage in your bedrooms, kitchen, laundry and living areas. You should also think about bike storage. If you keep your bikes in a spot that's easy to access, you're more likely to use them!

## Future proofing your home

A well-designed and well-built home could last for a long time. But a lot can change over the years.

Ask about liveable or adaptable design when you are planning your house. This includes wider corridors and step free pathways to make it easier to manoeuvre prams or wheelchairs. It may also



## Practical inclusions: laundry, bins and bikes

They may not be the most exciting parts of your new home, but you also need to consider practical

include stronger walls in areas like your bathroom, so grab rails can be installed down the track. You should also consider the wiring and cabling in your home and how well it will serve you in years to come.

For example, you may want your future home to be a 'smart house'. This is where you control your lighting and other features through voice activation. As this requires extra wiring, it may be more affordable to do this at the beginning rather than adding it in at a later time.

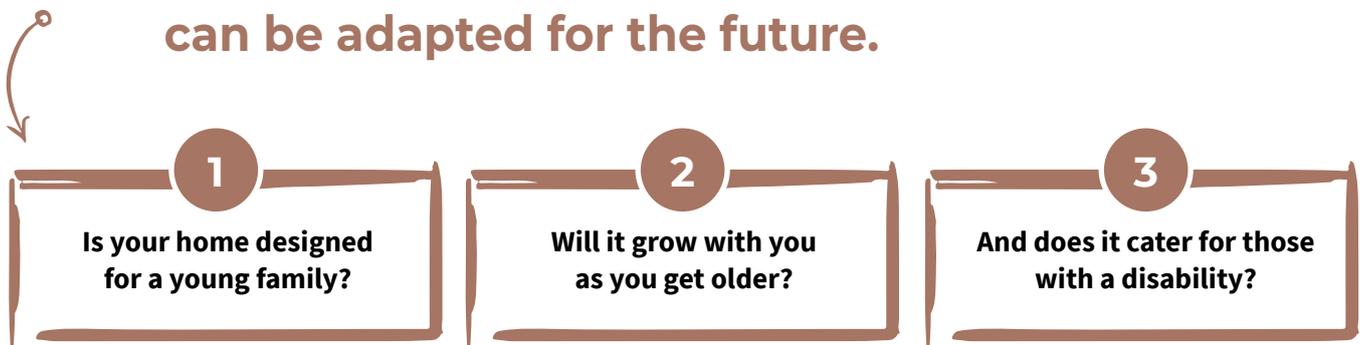
Including the wiring in your carport or garage for electric vehicle charging will prepare your home for a future where electric vehicles are more common.

If you have solar panels installed, you should also consider setting it up for a battery storage system. A battery allows you to store the energy you generated during the day and then use it at night.



For more details on development applications and building approvals visit [act.gov.au/build-buy-renovate](http://act.gov.au/build-buy-renovate)

## Your home should be designed so it can be adapted for the future.



“ A well-designed and well-built home could last for a long time. **But a lot can change over the years.**”



## Section 7



# Be climate wise



**Canberra is famous for its four seasons. We have cold winters (often with overnight frosty conditions) and hot, dry summers. We also have low humidity with big shifts between day and night temperatures.**

Designing and building a home for our unique climate is good for your wallet. It's also better for the environment. By designing your home to let in the sun during winter — and keep your house shaded in summer — you'll increase your comfort levels too.

In the ACT, all new homes must meet a minimum 6 Star Energy Efficiency Rating (EER). The EER is based on how much heating and cooling you'll need for a comfortable home all year round. So be sure to consider both heating and cooling as you design your home, and strive to get an even higher EER.

You should also select energy efficient lighting, appliances and heating and cooling systems. For example, consider ceiling fans over an air conditioning system which uses a lot more energy.

Our climate is Zone 7: a cool temperate region. For more information about designing homes for climate Zone 7 areas visit [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au).



Visit Actsmart at [actsmart.act.gov.au](http://actsmart.act.gov.au) for advice on how to save energy and water, reduce waste and cut greenhouse gas emissions. They also hold free workshops on a range of energy efficiency topics.

## Insulation, draughts and ventilation

Controlling how air flows in and out of your home is crucial for keeping it warm in winter and cool in summer. This means ensuring you don't have gaps around your floors, ceilings, doors and windows that let draughts of air in or out. By keeping your house well-sealed, you are in control of the air flow.

A good first step is to install insulation in your walls and ceilings. Insulation reduces heat flow and is essential for keeping your home warm in

winter and cool in summer. Quality insulation for slab edges, suspended floors, walls and ceilings could halve your heating and cooling costs. It will also reduce your greenhouse gas emissions.

A good way to check if your home is well-sealed is to get an air leakage test by an energy efficiency professional. Air leakage testing involves using a fan to remove air from the building to lower the pressure and then measuring the resulting air flow rate.

You can also ask for a thermal imaging test, which uses a thermal camera to identify any air leakages in your home. Remember, by doing these tests at the right stage of your build, issues may be easier (and cheaper) to fix. You'll also save on your energy bills. Search online for services in your area.

If your home is well-sealed, you may also consider installing ventilation systems to help remove moisture.

When air can't escape, neither can moisture in the air, like the steam produced from a hot shower or cooking. This can create condensation on the inside of windows and walls, which can lead to problems such as mould or damp inside your house. For more details visit [yourhome.gov.au](http://yourhome.gov.au).

## Doors, windows and glazing

When designing your home, you should position windows and doors to allow for cross-ventilation. This means a natural breeze can flow between your open windows and doors. Be sure to consider flyscreens and screen doors too. They help increase security and prevent insects from entering your home.

Windows and glass doors let in plenty of natural light. Unfortunately, they can also let in unwanted hot air in summer and let out warmth in winter. The type of frames and glazing chosen for your doors and windows can have a huge impact on your comfort levels.



### Did you know?

Did you know all new homes in the ACT must meet a minimum 6 Star Energy Efficiency Rating (EER)? For further information on the EER system visit [nathers.gov.au](http://nathers.gov.au).

Go to **yourhome.gov.au** for more information about selecting doors, windows and glazing. You can then work with your builder to choose the best options for your home, which may include double glazing.

## Roof and walls

When designing your home, it's important to consider the colour of your external materials, in particular the roof. It can make a huge difference to your energy use and comfort levels.

Darker colours absorb more heat which will affect the rest of the house. Consider using lighter coloured materials, which will help keep your walls, roof space and home cooler on a hot day.

Consider using materials rated as light (less than 0.475) or medium (between 0.475 and 0.7). This is a rating known as solar absorptance. When choosing lighter coloured materials, you should also ask about products that reduce glare for your neighbours.

The design of your roof is also important for the installation of solar panels. Try to keep the roof design simple, so there is plenty of space for panels. The direction and angle of your roof should also be designed with solar panel installation in mind.

Your roof drainage system also needs to be considered, and your roof should provide adequate shading for your windows in summer.

## Being water wise

When designing your home, make sure you have enough space to include a rainwater tank. In new suburbs in the ACT, rainwater tanks are required in new homes.

You should also install water efficient fixtures, fittings and appliances. This includes low-water showerheads and water efficient washing machines and dishwashers.



You should connect your rainwater tank to your laundry, toilet and outdoor taps. Learn more about rainwater tanks with Access Canberra at **accesscanberra.act.gov.au** or phone 13 22 81.

## Using renewable energy sources

Fossil fuels such as gas are having an impact on our changing climate. You can reduce the use of energy from these sources by turning to renewable sources such as solar energy. The ACT is on track for all its electricity supply to come from renewable energy sources by 2020.

### Solid Fuel Heating Systems (Wood Fires)

These are traditional heaters that use wood as a fuel source (such as fireplaces). Blocks of land have restrictions about installing or using solid fuel heating systems. This is because wood smoke has pollutants which can be harmful to the environment and your health.

Design your home so it is heated as much as possible by the sun. Consider more efficient and environmentally friendly options for heating, such as hydronic heating, and make your home as thermally efficient as possible by addressing draughts and insulation. For more details visit **yourhome.gov.au**

### Generating electricity with solar panels

Generate your own electricity by harnessing the power of the sun. A solar photovoltaic (PV) system consists of flat panels that capture sunlight and convert the energy into electricity.

A solar PV system is not the same as a solar hot water heater. A solar hot water system converts sunlight into heat for water heating. A solar PV system generates electricity for use throughout your home. It can be used either straight away or be put back into the network. It can also be stored in batteries for later use.

How big should your system be? It depends on how much energy you use. It's also influenced by your budget, the roof area and the amount of suitable unshaded space. It's common to install a smaller solar PV system that meets only part of the total electricity demand of your home.



Before installing a solar PV system, you'll need to ensure the panels will be in a sunny area. They should also slope at an appropriate angle and face the right direction. Solar panels work best if installed facing north at 30 degrees from horizontal. If you install the panels with the wrong slope or direction it will reduce the amount of power generated.

There are also new technologies to make the panels less obtrusive. Talk to your solar panel provider about the options available.



Visit the Clean Energy Council website [solaraccreditation.com.au](https://www.solaraccreditation.com.au) to find an accredited installer for solar PV systems and battery storage. They'll help find the most appropriate system for your needs.

## Battery storage

It is becoming more common to install batteries that store the electricity generated by a solar PV system. These batteries store excess solar production (captured during the day) for use at night or when the electricity tariff rates are higher.

If you're installing a solar PV system, you may wish to provide the space and wiring for a future battery storage system.

Rebates and subsidies to improve energy efficiency are offered to eligible households as part of ACT

Government supported programs. For details visit [actsmart.act.gov.au](https://actsmart.act.gov.au)

## Energy demand management system

You can also install an energy demand management system in your home. This system will help you keep track of your energy usage. Many systems can also connect to your solar panels or battery storage systems.

It's easy to put one in during construction. The system can be installed by a licensed electrician at the same time as your home's electrical system.

## Preparing for electric vehicles

While our communities support walking, cycling and public transport, electric vehicles are becoming more common.

To future-proof your home, you may want to include an option for electric vehicle charging. This is easy to do during construction. Simply have the right wiring installed by a licensed electrician at the same time as you install the rest of your home's electrical system.

You can search for licensed electricians on the Access Canberra website at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](https://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.



Section 8



# Tips for your garden and landscape



When designing your garden and outdoor spaces, it's a good idea to seek professional landscaping advice. They'll help you create a space that will thrive in the Canberra climate and is enjoyable to be in too.

Here are some extra things to know and do before you get started on your landscaping.

## Free plants

If you've bought a new residential block in the ACT, you're entitled to an allocation of plants from the Yarralumla Nursery. The ACT Government runs the Free Plant Issue Scheme to help you beautify your new home and suburb. For more information contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

## Cat containment



Most new suburbs in the ACT are cat containment areas. This means you must keep any pet cats contained within your block of land. Cat containment areas help protect our native wildlife from being injured or killed by cats. Cat containment also helps keep your treasured pets happy, healthy and safe.

There are several ways cats can be contained to your block and still be able to explore. This includes installing a purpose-built enclosure which allows them to explore without the risk of roaming.

The cat containment symbol is used in cat containment areas to remind you about these requirements. You can find out more about cat containment on the Transport Canberra and City Services website at [tccs.act.gov.au](http://tccs.act.gov.au).

## Turf supply

If you are using grass or turf in your garden, ask the supplier to certify it does not contain fireweed seeds. Fireweed is a highly-invasive and highly-spreadable weed that can have a devastating impact on surrounding pastures and make grazing animals very sick.

## Fencing

When you are building your fence there are several things to consider, such as the height of your fence and the materials you use. For more information contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

Materials like brush or timber may catch alight easily and should not be used for fencing in Bushfire Prone Areas. You should also give thought to how your fencing materials will last over time or if they will need regular maintenance.

The colour of your fence is also important. Dark colours are more likely to absorb heat in the summer, so consider using lighter colours.

If your block has a common boundary, you'll need to discuss your fence with your neighbours. This includes the material, colour and how you will pay for the fence. If you share a fence with several neighbours, you'll need to talk to everybody involved.

If your fence crosses an area utility providers may need to access (for example, to check your meter or trim some trees), you should check with them about any other conditions that might apply.

Some blocks have extra fencing requirements, particularly if they are near major roads or public open spaces. These blocks are identified in the Block Details Plan and Block Details Table for your community.



### Did you know?

Did you know that as a new residential land owner, you're entitled to a portion of plants to help establish your garden?

“ **Plants with flowers provide an important source of food for bees and birds.** ”

## Waterwise gardening

Like other parts of Australia, Canberra experiences periods of high rainfall and storms, mixed with periods of drought or low rainfall.

Try to choose drought-tolerant plants that can cope when it's dry. At the same time, your landscape needs to cope with lots of water during storms. You can do this by using a mix of surfaces such as grass, plants and permeable pavers (which let the water soak through).

Remember, grass may not cope well during a drought, so choose climate-wise plants instead. And don't forget the mulch; it helps your plants thrive in dry weather. Just be sure it doesn't wash into the stormwater drains when it rains.

## Promoting biodiversity

When choosing plants for your garden, select a variety of plant species. By using a mix of native Australian species and introduced species you'll support biodiversity. This helps create much-needed habitat for our native wildlife. Make sure to choose plants suitable for the Canberra climate.

You should also consider choosing plants which support bees and birdlife. Plants with flowers provide an important source of food for bees and birds.

## Shade in a changing climate

The Canberra climate is changing, and our city is expected to get warmer. By including shade in your garden it will keep cool and be more pleasant to be in, even when it's hot outside.

Try to use natural shading where possible. This includes growing climbing plants on your fences or pergolas, and planting trees which will create shade once they grow.

You should also include deciduous trees which lose their leaves each winter. They provide shade in summer and sunlight in the colder months, making them perfect for a Canberra garden.

## Bushfire awareness

When designing your garden and selecting plants, you should consider the possibility of a bushfire.

There are some plants which resist the effects of fire and can even slow it down. These are good options to choose if you live in a Bushfire Prone Area or if your block is near an open space. Talk to your local nursery or landscaping professional for plant recommendations.

You should also take care of your garden to make sure you don't gather large amounts of material, such as leaves or rubbish. These could catch alight during a bushfire and easily spread to your house.

## Edible gardens

Enjoy easy access to delicious fruit and vegetables with a productive garden. Not only is it a source of inexpensive fresh food, it's a healthy activity the whole family can enjoy.

When planting your garden, think about including a space for edible plants. It doesn't have to be a large area, but it will need enough sunlight. It will also need shade in the hottest part of the day in summer. You will need to use good quality soil to provide nutrients for your growing plants. They will also



need watering. Try to reduce the amount of water you use with efficient irrigation systems or water from your rainwater tank.

## Your nature strip and street trees

Your nature strip (the area of public land between the property boundary and the street) will form an important part of the character of your new community.

Even though nature strips are not part of your block, well-kept nature strips can enhance property values and deliver environmental benefits.

When planning your garden, think about how you will maintain your nature strip. Try not to park on your nature strip, as it may damage the area and stop it from absorbing water.

Trees in the nature strip create shade during summer, helping to keep our city cool. They also support wildlife such as birds and make our streets more appealing and walkable. Take care not to damage the trees near your home, and be sure to water them in very hot weather.

Find out more about what is allowed on your nature strip, and how you can get approval to carry out works, through Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

“ Even though nature strips are not part of your block, well-kept nature strips can enhance property values and deliver environmental benefits.”



## Section 9



# During construction



**The designs are complete, the plans are approved. It's time to start building! When building your home, there are things you and your builder need to know and do to avoid damaging the environment or any other property.**

## Protecting trees, nature strips and other public land

During construction, you must be careful not to damage existing features around your house. This includes trees along streets and in other open spaces, your nature strip and any footpaths or roads. You need to make sure you protect these during any building or landscaping work. This could include putting up temporary fencing around your nature strip.

## Protecting our waterways

When dirt and other sediment is washed into our waterways it can block our drains, affect water quality and damage habitat.

To protect our waterways, you need to ensure soil and other waste does not leave your block and enter the stormwater system. This needs to be considered before and during any building work.

This could include measures such as sediment fences or catch drains. These are temporary barriers that trap waste and debris to ensure they don't wash into nearby gutters and drains.

You could also include temporary downpipe connections once your roof is on your home. This will prevent water from washing across your site and causing erosion.

## Air and noise pollution

While building your home, you should be careful to not create too much dust or noise at times when it might disturb your neighbours. If there is going to be work happening on a windy day, think about using water to keep the dust from blowing around.

You can find information on noise thresholds in residential areas on the Access Canberra website at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au).

## Construction waste and recycling

Building a home is likely to result in some waste and recycling, such as extra materials or packaging. It is important to keep these materials contained while they are on your block. This is so they don't blow away or enter our waterways.

If possible, try to reduce the amount of waste you generate. You should also check to see if any of it can be reused or recycled.

If you see any illegal dumping, please report it to Access Canberra on 13 22 81.



For more details on construction rules and requirements visit Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.





## Section 10



# Living in your new home



**With construction complete, it's time to move into your new home. Congratulations! Whilst the hard work is done, there are still a few more things to consider at this final stage.**

## Connect your services

Contact your energy, water and telecommunications service providers and let them know you're ready to be switched on.

## Change your details

Once you have moved in, make sure you update your contact details with your family, friends and relevant organisations.

## Organise insurance

Don't forget to organise home and contents insurance for your new home, whether you are living in it or you are renting it to somebody else. Insurance will be important if your home is damaged or if anything is stolen.

## Waste and recycling collection

There will be regular collections of waste and recycling bins in your area. To order your bins and for further details contact Access Canberra at [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](http://accesscanberra.act.gov.au) or phone 13 22 81.

## Plan for an emergency

You should make sure you are prepared for an emergency or an unexpected event such as a bushfire or storm. This includes preparing a plan and an emergency kit. For more information visit the Emergency Services Agency at [esa.act.gov.au](http://esa.act.gov.au).

## Get to know your neighbours

Connecting with your neighbours can help promote a sense of belonging, safety and support. It can also help you and your family feel safer and more settled in your new home and suburb.

You can also get involved in your community. The Suburban Land Agency's community development program 'Mingle' works to build vibrant communities through a range of events and activities. It's a great way to meet your new neighbours and have fun while you're at it.

For details visit [suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au).



**The Suburban Land Agency's community development program 'Mingle' works to build vibrant communities through a range of events and activities."**

## Section 11

## Glossary



**Auction** A public sale in which goods or property are sold to the highest bidder at or above the agreed price.

**Ballot** A method of land sales where interested buyers provide their details and receive a unique ballot number. The numbers are then individually drawn out via an electronic ballot draw system. Buyers are invited to purchase land in the order the numbers were drawn.

**Block** A parcel of land, whether or not the subject of a lease, within an estate. Each block of land has a unique identifying number, within a Section of a suburb. This number is not the same as the street number. You can check block numbers at [actmapi.act.gov.au](http://actmapi.act.gov.au). In some parts of Australia, blocks are also referred to as 'lots'.

**Building approval** Building approval is required for most developments to ensure the building complies with building laws, including the Building Code of Australia. Building approval is usually obtained after development approval has been granted. Building approval must be obtained before construction begins.

**Buyer** This means the buyer specified in the First Grant Contract or potential buyers of Blocks.

**Code** This means a code in the Territory Plan.

**Cut and Fill** The amount of topsoil and other soil material that is cut out of the land or is added to fill it in (e.g. to create even ground for building on).

**Deposit** A sum of money paid as an assurance the buyer is serious about the purchase.

**Development application** A formal request for consent to carry out development. This type of Development Approval is the most common way to getting development consent.

**Estate** An Estate is a new community for which the Suburban Land Agency has prepared an Estate

Development Plan. A list of Suburban Land Agency communities is available on the Suburban Land Agency website at [suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au)

**Estate Development Plan** This plan sets out how a proposed estate will be developed. The Suburban Land Agency will prepare Estate Development Plans for planning approval.

**Exchange** This is where the Buyer agrees to buy the block, signs the contract and pays the deposit.

**First Grant Contract** The contract between the Territory and the first buyer to be granted a lease for the land. This is a legal document. There are sample contracts available from the Suburban Land Agency.

**Land-ready** Land on a development that is complete and approved.

**Lease** A lease is defined in the Planning and Development Act 2007 (ACT).

**Off-the-plan** Land in an estate where the roads and services are still under construction.

**Permeable paving** A form of paving that allows stormwater to filter into the soil and groundwater, improving water quality and slowing down the rate of stormwater runoff.

**Section** A parcel of land that includes several blocks. Each section within a suburb has a unique identifying number.

**Settlement** The date on which the title documents and funds will be swapped between Buyer and seller. This process will transfer the property to the new owner.

**Solar absorptance** The effectiveness of a material in absorbing radiant energy from the sun (and the opposite of solar reflectance). Light coloured (low solar absorptance) material keeps cooler than darker colour (high solar absorptance) materials.

## Section 12

# Resources & Guides



### Block Fill Plan

This plan shows the amount of cut and fill (measured in metres) for different blocks of land. This is important for understanding what is in the ground on your block. The Block Fill Plan is available from the Suburban Land Agency.

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### Block Details Plan

This plan shows contours, easements and other information related to specific blocks of land. Each block has a 'block number' and a 'section number', which allows it to be uniquely identified compared to all the other blocks in the suburb. Your block number is not the same as your street number. The Block Details Plan is available from the Suburban Land Agency.

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### Block Details Table

This table summarises the information shown on the Block Details Plan so you can compare blocks of land. The Block Details Table is available from the Suburban Land Agency.

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### Deposited Plan

The Deposited Plan means the plan relating to the land and registered under Section 7 of the Districts Act 2002 (ACT). This defines the legal boundaries of land and often records subdivisions and easements. You can find your deposited plan by contacting Access Canberra.

### Development Specific Requirements

This outlines the requirements that apply to a particular Suburban Land Agency community. This may include particular restrictions relating to certain blocks. The Development Specific Requirements may form part of your contract for purchasing land and are available from the Suburban Land Agency.

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### Estate Plan

This is the community plan. It shows the location of different blocks of land in relation to major roads, open spaces and other types of development such as shops and schools. The Estate Plan is available from the Suburban Land Agency.

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### Site Classification Report

Also referred to as a soil test report or geotech report, this is a report prepared by a qualified geotechnical engineer on the soil conditions of your site, assessed in accordance with the Australian Standard. A high-level site classification report will be available from the Suburban Land Agency once earthworks are complete.

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### Territory Plan

The Territory Plan is the ACT's key statutory planning document. It was established under the Planning and Development Act 2007 (ACT). The Territory Plan is available at [legislation.act.gov.au](https://legislation.act.gov.au).

## Section 13

# Useful contacts



### ACCESS CANBERRA

An integrated service provider connecting the community with the ACT Government.

 [accesscanberra.act.gov.au](https://accesscanberra.act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

### ACTMAPI

The ACT Government's interactive mapping service, providing a convenient and fast way to analyse ACT spatial data.

 [actmapi.act.gov.au](https://actmapi.act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

### BUILD, BUY OR RENOVATE

A new ACT Government website bringing together information for community and industry when building, buying or renovating a property.

 [act.gov.au/buildbuyrenovate](https://act.gov.au/buildbuyrenovate)  
 13 22 81

### ACT REVENUE OFFICE

The ACT Government organisation responsible for the administration of ACT tax laws.

 [revenue.act.gov.au](https://revenue.act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

### AUSTRALIAN ENERGY REGULATOR

Regulates wholesale and retail energy markets, as well as energy networks, under national energy legislation and rules.

 [aer.gov.au](https://aer.gov.au)  
 1300 585 165

### CLEAN ENERGY COUNCIL

The peak body for the clean energy industry in Australia, representing businesses operating in or supporting the development of renewable energy and energy storage.

 [cleanenergycouncil.gov.au](https://cleanenergycouncil.gov.au)  
 03 9929 4100

### DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG

A national not-for-profit group that aims to protect and prevent damage and disruption to Australia's infrastructure networks.

 [1100.com.au](https://1100.com.au)  
 1100

### ACT EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY

The ACT Government organisation charged with providing emergency management services to the Canberra community.

 [esa.act.gov.au](https://esa.act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

## EPSDD

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, part of the ACT Government, incorporating the Suburban Land Agency.

 [act.gov.au](https://act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

## EVOENERGY

The managing and energy distribution provider of electricity and gas networks in the ACT. Evoenergy looks after the electricity poles and wires and gas infrastructure.

 [evoenergy.com.au](https://evoenergy.com.au)  
 13 23 86

## ICON WATER

The ACT's supplier of essential water and sewerage services.

 [iconwater.com.au](https://iconwater.com.au)  
 6248 3111

## HIA

The Housing Industry Association, the official body of Australia's home building industry.

 [hia.com.au](https://hia.com.au)  
 6245 1300

## MBA

The Master Builders Association, the nation's peak building and construction industry association.

 [mba.org.au](https://mba.org.au)  
 6175 5900

## NBN CO

The Australian government-owned corporation tasked with building and operating Australia's National Broadband Network.

 [nbnco.com.au](https://nbnco.com.au)  
 1800 687 626

## TCCS

Transport Canberra and City Services, part of the ACT Government, and responsible for managing roads, footpaths, streetlights, cycle paths, active travel and public transport.

 [tccs.act.gov.au](https://tccs.act.gov.au)  
 13 22 81

## YOUR HOME

An online guide to building, buying or renovating a home, including tips on creating a comfortable home with low impact on the environment.

 [yourhome.gov.au](https://yourhome.gov.au)





**Need more help?  
Get in touch**



**1800 777 952**



[suburbanland.act.gov.au](http://suburbanland.act.gov.au)



**ACT**  
Government

**Suburban Land**  
Agency