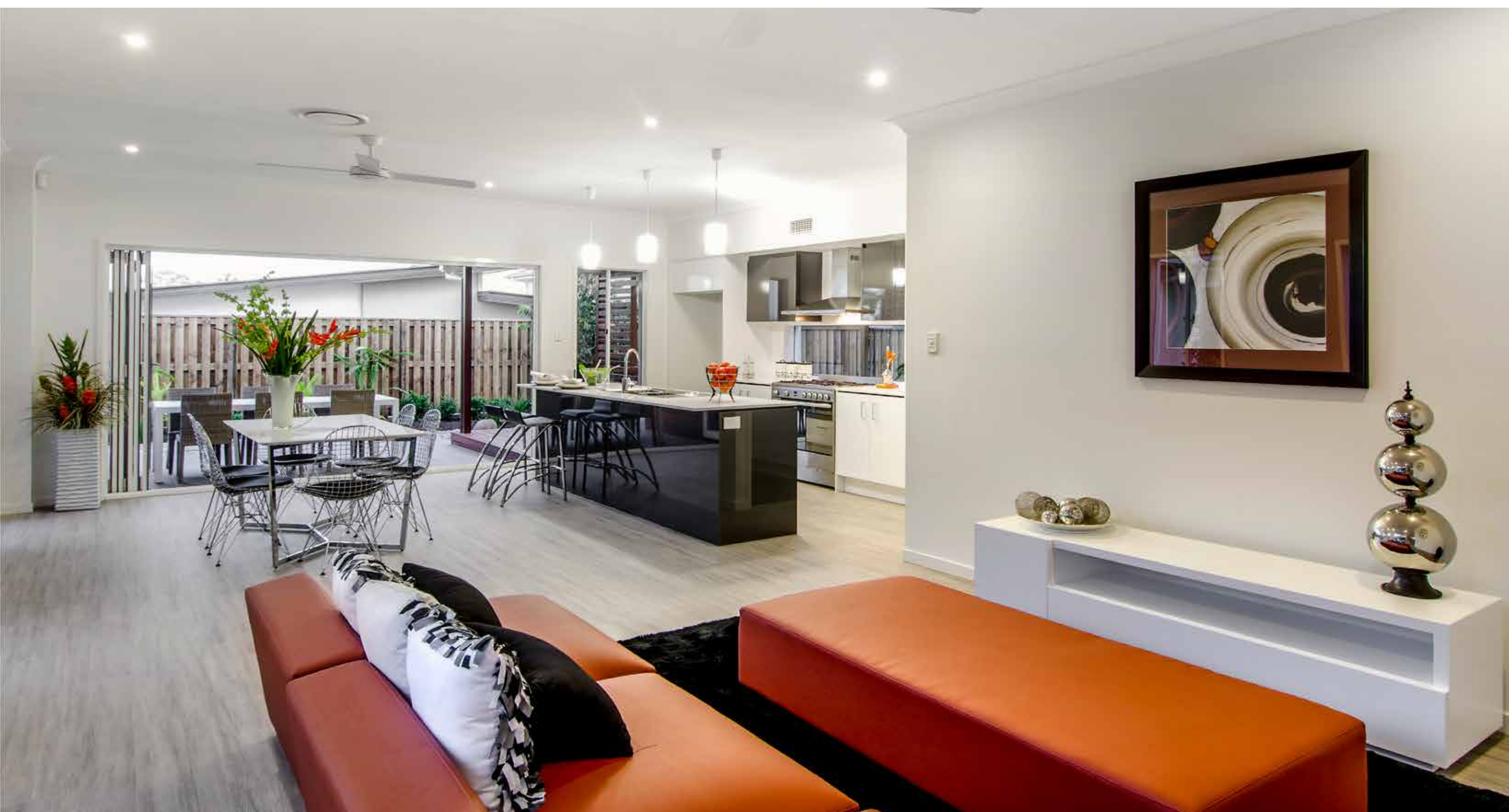




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SMALL LOT HOME GUIDE

HOW TO LIVE BIG WHILE BUILDING SMALL



What is a narrow or small lot home?

A small lot is classified as a block of land with an area less than 450m² or 600m² (excluding the driveway) if it's a battle-axe or rear block. Alternatively it can be a lot with a 10m or less frontage.

Most subdivisions result in two or more small lots. This can also be referred to as splitter blocks.

How does having a small lot affect my choice of plan?

Small lot homes are required to comply with the [Dwelling House \(Small lot\) code](#).

This code dictates that your home must fit within a building envelope. This envelope can change based on different variables of your block and the existing houses around it.

For example, your home is required to have a setback (how far back on the block it sits from the boundary) of 6m or more, or the same as the least setback house (up to 3m) of an adjoining dwelling.

This means that if your neighbour has a setback of 4m, you can as well.

You can also have a setback of 3m where there are no adjoining dwelling houses.

Why should you build a small lot home?

There are three key factors that will influence every house that you could buy or build, but are especially true when building a small lot home.

Location, price and lifestyle.

Small lot homes are incredibly effective at maximizing on these three variables.

Location

You'll find the vast majority of small lots are located in either inner-city and well established suburbs close to central hubs, or brand new suburbs with lots to offer. These are highly sought-after locations with lots of infrastructure readily available in the area such as restaurants, cafes, schools, shopping centres and park land.

Price

A small lot home will offer a lot of home for a cheaper price as they work on maximizing the space in commonly used areas such as the living areas, while reducing space in areas such as hallways. This leads to a smaller yet incredibly efficient design. Generally, building a small lot home is cheaper than buying an older home and renovating it to suit your needs.

Lifestyle

Due to their prime location and being close to infrastructure, you're close to everything you need and have more time for some of the finer things in life. Whether that's ducking out to a cafe for a quick brunch with your friends or being able to walk the kids to school in the morning with a stop at the park on the way, your location directly affects your lifestyle.

So what is a small lot home and how do you get one?

The general building envelope for small lots consists of:

- 6m front setback
- 6m to rear boundary
- 0.5m from boundary to garage wall
- 9.5m max building height with 7.5m max eave height
- 25m maximum length.

The code also dictates the percentage of land the house can occupy with a 400m² or more block allowing 50% maximum coverage whereas a 200m² block can have up to 80% coverage.

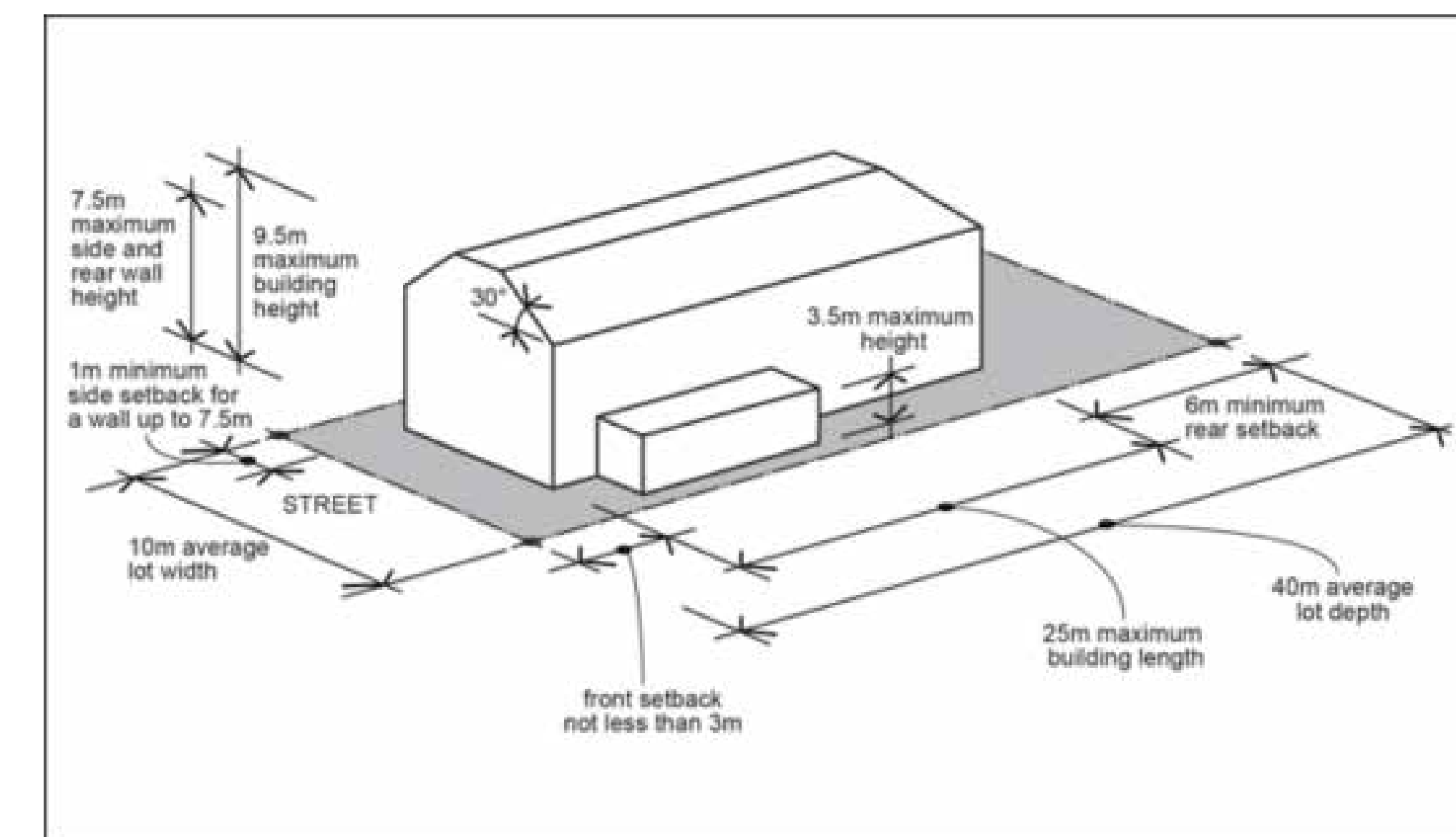


Figure a—Building envelope for a typical 405m² (16 perch) lot with one street frontage in the Low density residential zone

Above: Image taken from Dwelling House (Small Lot) code.

Further requirements include things such as some windows and balconies requiring barrier or privacy screens, car parking requirements and driveway access.

If this is confusing you, don't worry too much. We can help by walking you through what can and cannot work on your block of land to meet council requirements, however it helps when searching for your block if you keep this criteria in mind.

Are there any additional costs?

So now we're getting into the nitty gritty technical information, that generally means additional time or costs.

These are some potential costs you should be aware of that may occur when building your small lot home.



Site works

Due to the smaller nature of blocks, it means less room for gentle sloping earthworks. This leads to requiring retaining walls, which can result in additional costs depending on how much retaining is required.

Depending on your particular site, utilities such as stormwater and sewerage could be in an awkward position that may result in special piercing for your slab or these utilities needing to be moved.

As part of the initial site and contours assessment, we can inform you about any additional costs that may be required due to this.

During construction

Smaller lots also mean there can be site access issues for various trades and delivery of materials during construction, which can result in additional costs.

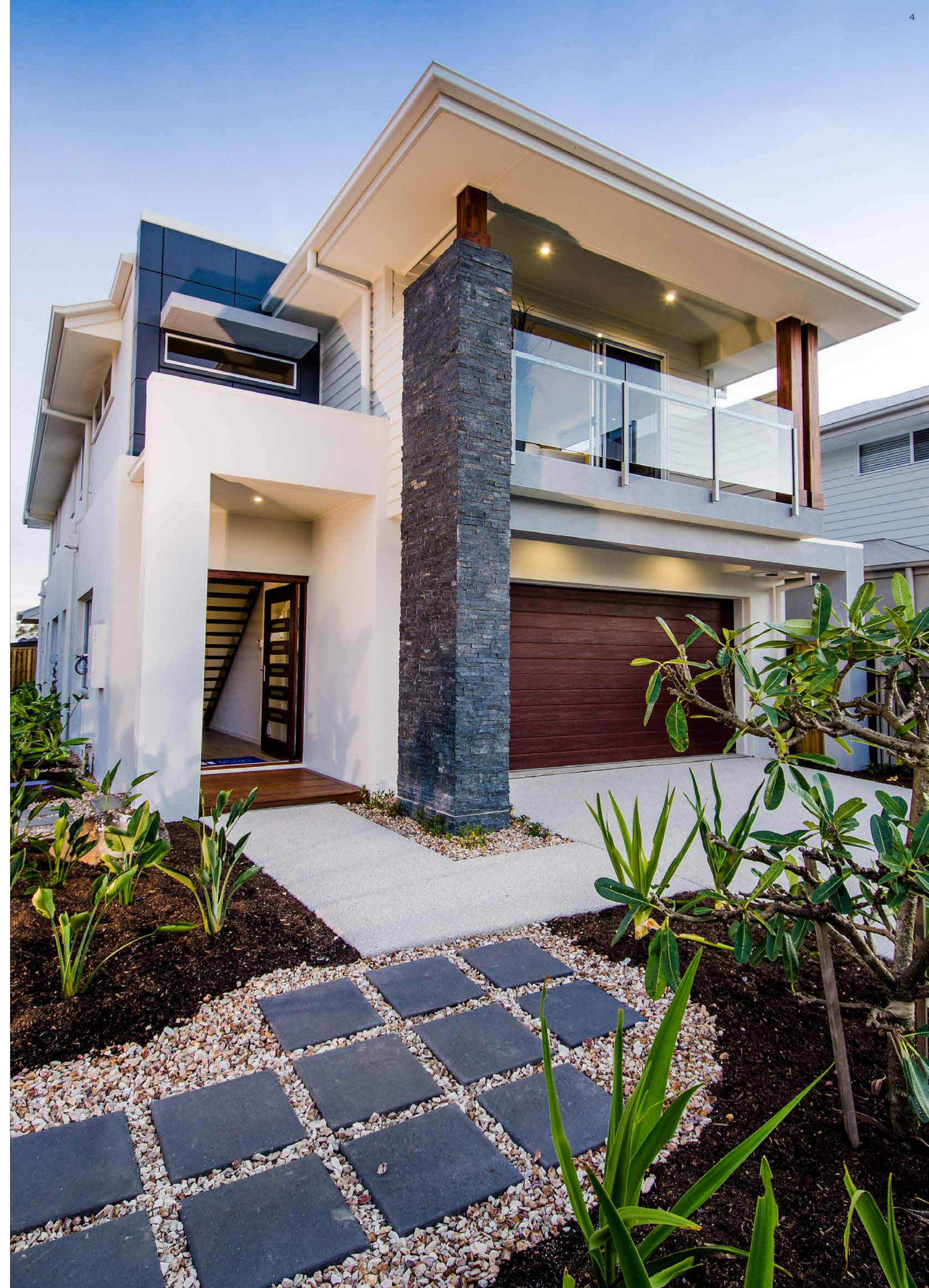
An example includes:

- Materials cannot be delivered to the rear of the block. Tradespeople are then required to transport the materials from the front of the block to the rear. This takes time and labour for the tradespeople so they charge accordingly.

If the site is too narrow for typical scaffolding methods to be



Location of the site may also affect cost. If your block is on a busy or narrow road, hiring traffic controllers may be required as deliveries are made to your site.



Tips and Tricks!

When designing your new home, it's important to maximize the positives while reducing any negatives, especially with small lot homes. There's a few tips and tricks that can help you achieve this.

Let there be light!

It may seem obvious, but a bright house is a nice house! Especially in a small or narrow home where a lack of light can quickly lead to a home feeling dull and smaller than it actually is. Making sure you have plenty of natural light available to your home is vital to make it feel warm, welcoming and wholesome.

One obvious method to accomplish this is to have lots of windows, especially on the north side of your home but there's some more obscure areas where windows can be helpful. If your kitchen is against an external wall, you can even have your kitchen splashback be a window which floods the bench and room with natural light. Large windows near your stairs provide light to both the ground and top floor. A few less obvious methods are skylights and mirrors to scatter natural light throughout your home.



Skylights no longer have to be large rectangle, window-like openings in your roof. A lot of common skylights are no bigger than a smoke alarm and effectively light up a room with natural sunlight. The benefits of a skylight is that you'll always have light during the day and they can be placed in internal areas of your home, whereas with windows it highly depends on the direction they're facing, time of day and are required to be on an external wall. They're also great at providing light while maintaining privacy making them ideal in toilets or bathrooms.



Decorative mirrors are an excellent way to make your small lot home feel larger and take advantage of the light streaming inside. A mirror reflects both the light and the reflection of the space, making the room both brighter and feel larger. Great spaces for mirrors are bathrooms for the additional light, living spaces for the illusion of extra space and hallways to improve the flow of the house.





Feel the flow!

A good 'flow' is one of the cornerstones of every great floor plan design. The way each room transitions into another influences both lifestyle and how a space feels. Good flow of a space can be described as feeling natural to go from one area to another without any annoyance or conscious thought involved, with each room transitioning into another seamlessly.

A sure-fire way to achieve this is with open plan living and multi-purpose spaces; both important tools when planning your small lot home.

It's common these days to have a kitchen that flows into a dining and living area, but you can expand that by having the living area flow into the alfresco using sliding or french style doors. This creates an additional living space in the house and makes the existing space feel larger and more open

Another method to increase the flow in tighter areas is to install a cavity sliding door in place of a hinged door. While they're a bit more expensive, the extra room gained by not having a door opening intruding into a space can be vital in areas such as the walk in pantry, laundry or powder room.



Efficiency

Similarly, and sharing traits with 'house flow', is 'house efficiency'. An efficient floor plan is one that uses the space in the most practical and useful way possible. This means cutting down on a lot of 'wasted' or 'dead' space in the house. An example of this is the space at the end of the hallway which doesn't really have a purpose except as a transition zone between the hallway and a living area.

An efficient plan would utilise this space for storage, a study nook or shelving.

A good small lot plan will be highly efficient, allowing for the one space to be used in a range of different ways and cramming utility out of every square meter of the design.

Some ideas but are not limited to:

- Placing a study nook in the lounge room, under stairs or near the upstairs landing.
- Having the fridge in the walk in pantry.
- Additional storage in the garage
- Storage under the stairs.



Storage

The reason many of these tips include additional storage is that in a small lot home having areas to store your items becomes a lot more critical as you look at how best to utilise space. Storage that is both accessible and out of the way is critical for both efficiency and the flow of the house. Extra storage can come in many forms, from a hinged bench seat, additional cabinets in your walk in pantry, shelving near your stairs and more.

Utilising under bench seat storage on your alfresco can be a great way to store garden tools while also providing a great seating area if you don't have space for a shed!



Landscaping

Along a similar vein, if you're running out of space for a garden bed, you can always go vertical. Vertical gardens are becoming increasingly popular, not just for smaller areas but as a point of interest on an otherwise bleak wall, or as a privacy screen. All of these make it perfect for a small lot garden as it provides extra privacy and a point of interest without taking up space!

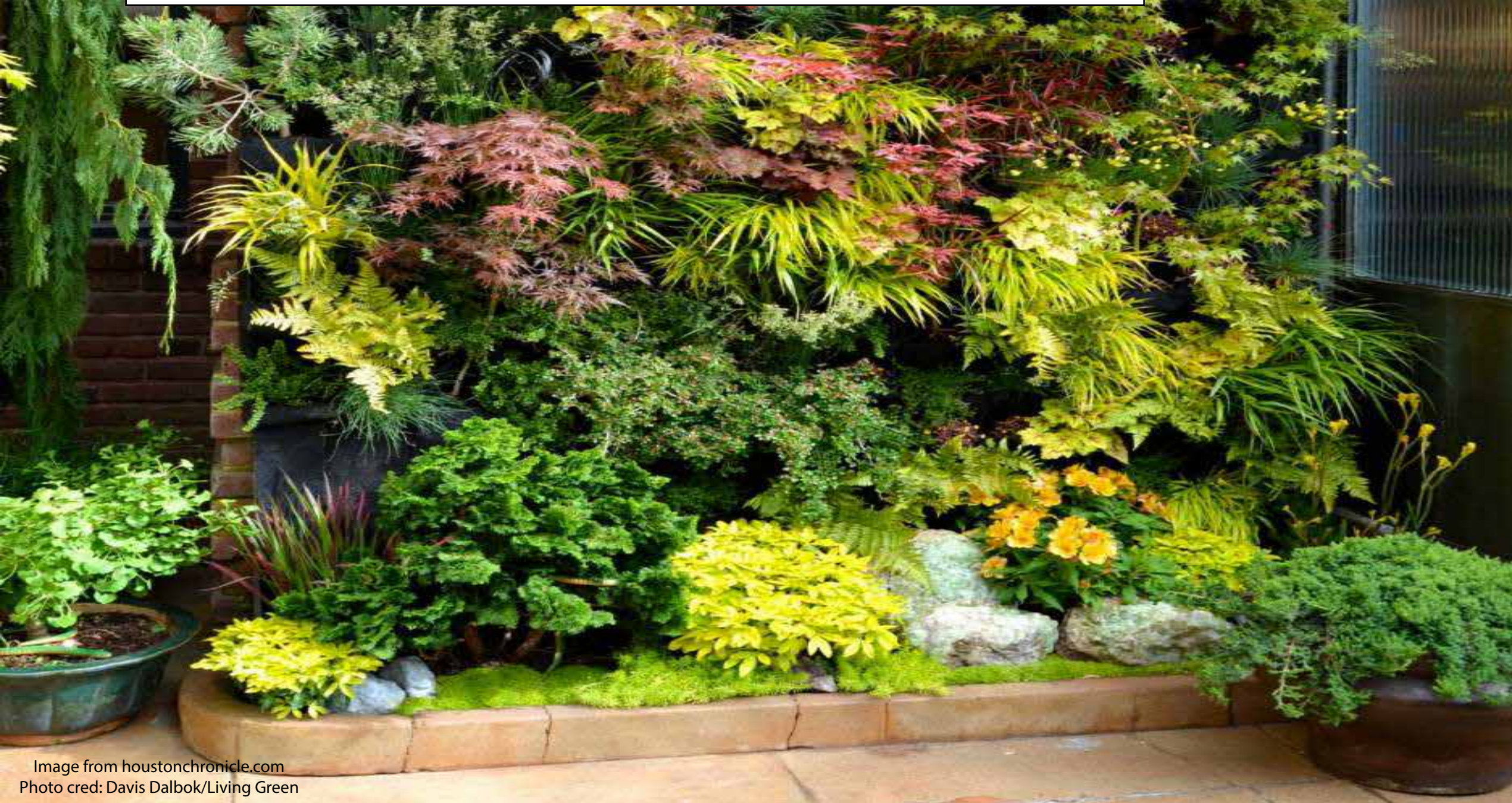


Image from houstonchronicle.com
Photo cred: Davis Dalbok/Living Green

Take the next step!

You don't have to know everything about building a small lot home, a professional and experienced builder can help you traverse the building process to maximize your homes potential.

Indigo has been designing and building for small lot homes since 2006 and have successfully built hundreds of small lot homes for happy clients. If you have questions or would like to know more, you can contact Indigo Homes via our website, on Facebook or by calling our office.

Paint

Finally, a simple yet incredibly effective method for making your space feel larger is your selected materials and colours. Lighter coloured paint on your walls will make a room lighter and more open. Dark tones have a habit of feeling more dense which can make a room feel cozier but also closed off and smaller. This can be desired in areas such as the media room but for general living areas it's usually avoided.



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