Say “YES IN MY BACK YARD!”

A cooperative model of sustainable, suburban densification in Southern Queensland for local residents, by local residents that reinvents the quintessential Australian back yard.

Say YES IN MY BACK YARD - Don’t be just another NIMBY!

The back yard is one of Australian suburbia’s iconic spaces. We see it also as the opportunity to develop new models of densification that turn the private yard into community spaces through cooperative subdivision. The YIMBY model is a hybrid of the classic battle-axe block and the granny flat, offering a flexible model for local residents to collaborate with their neighbours and create new houses straddling back and side property boundaries through a range of shared subdivision scenarios.

Traditionally private back and side yards are refocused in the YIMBY neighbourhood becoming the communal green space shared between homes while the front yard becomes the private domain, turning the every day life of the house back towards the public realm.

In designing the YIMBY neighbourhood, we ask the question what the back yard could be if it was shared by multiple new and existing houses. In mitigating the effects of densification, the back yard could become a socially rich communal space for the a group of neighbours and provide novel ways of supporting suburban lifestyles.
A YIMBY neighbourhood develops over time - it’s a strategic and cumulative approach to suburb making as opposed to one from the top down. It’s an opt-in or opt-out approach that encourages local residents to benefit from collaboration while meeting broader density and sustainability objectives.

The first stage of the redensification would be led by individual early adopters who would primarily apply the subdivision principles to their own land. The result would be a ‘courtyard’ like repurposing of the back yard into a shared in-between space - where the back yard becomes a front-yard. This initial form would be well suited to intergenerational housing, or downsized living and may be permissible as ‘dual-occupancy’ development without the need to subdivide land titles formally.

In the case that a larger dwelling were sought, neighbours across rear or side boundaries could cooperate to share development costs, minimise subdivision of individual parcels and share the profits of selling a free-titled dwelling. Accessed like a battle-axe block, this arrangement produces a communal back yard space, linking the two existing yards via an expanded side passage creating a C-shaped interconnected yard. It is envisioned that this new space be used by the three dwellings and that the existing front yards to the streets would become more clearly a private green space for the existing house.

If a number of neighbours came together, the YIMBY development strategy could also produce expanded, internal park-like green spaces in the centre of a block, surrounding one or more houses ‘in-the-round’. Once again, the capacity of the back yard to become a community green space is clear, providing substantial shared and private amenity to a group of houses while providing additional density.

As the model advances and collaboration amongst neighbours becomes more frequent, the densification of neighbourhoods would create micro-communities within the blocks. In this instance, the backyard becomes an interconnected shared green space between a substantially densified neighbourhood without compromising the security and privacy of the residents. With ample passive surveillance and still maintaining private open space to the street-scape, the YIMBY neighbourhood is both street active and yard active bringing both residential and social density into the suburbs.
The YIMBY Model-3 (South QLD)

This example is of a 3 bedroom courtyard variant of the YIMBY home, for a young family. The design is based around a central courtyard providing substantial natural light and the opportunity for ventilation through the house. With a regular module, the design is also suggestive of kit-homes and, in keeping with the concept of mum’s and dad’s investing in their own suburb, could be repurposed as such a product to encourage the uptake of this development model. The simple planning and modular nature of the rooms is also easily adaptable into 2 or 1 bedroom models for intergenerational living or small scale affordable rental income housing.
After years of sequential individual and cooperative development the YIMBY neighbourhood offers a model of suburban densification that values the inherent positives of a suburban lifestyle with added density and community oriented spaces.