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A Home For All Seasons

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We all hope there is a reward for the effort made during our working lives. Ideally we can live in the house we have always desired and have the time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labour in comfortable surroundings.

The owners of this property have had the good fortune to be able to turn this dream into reality. They acquired a very large site in a rural subdivision sometime ago and recently decided to build a new house with all the advantages of contemporary living. This house replaces their original, conventional home, built decades earlier, when first starting a family and a business.

The site is unique, being a corner lot of 2800 m2 with a gradual fall towards the street, and wide exposure to the surrounding streets, making privacy an important consideration for any design. There are no significant views, with outlook limited to the surrounding houses. Therefore attractive vistas needed to be created within the site. The owners approached Mark Lawler Architects to provide a design for the house, which addressed these issues.

The design also needed to provide extensive accommodation including provision for the couple's Winnebago motor home.

"From the outset it was important that this project not over-capitalise on the total property investment," said Mark Lawler. "While the house needed to be in keeping with the lot size, there was a need to be mindful of the economic factors with an upper limit on the future resale value for any property in this location."

The house needed to be a welcoming venue with room for the owner's children and several grandchildren when the family came together for special occasions and holiday periods.

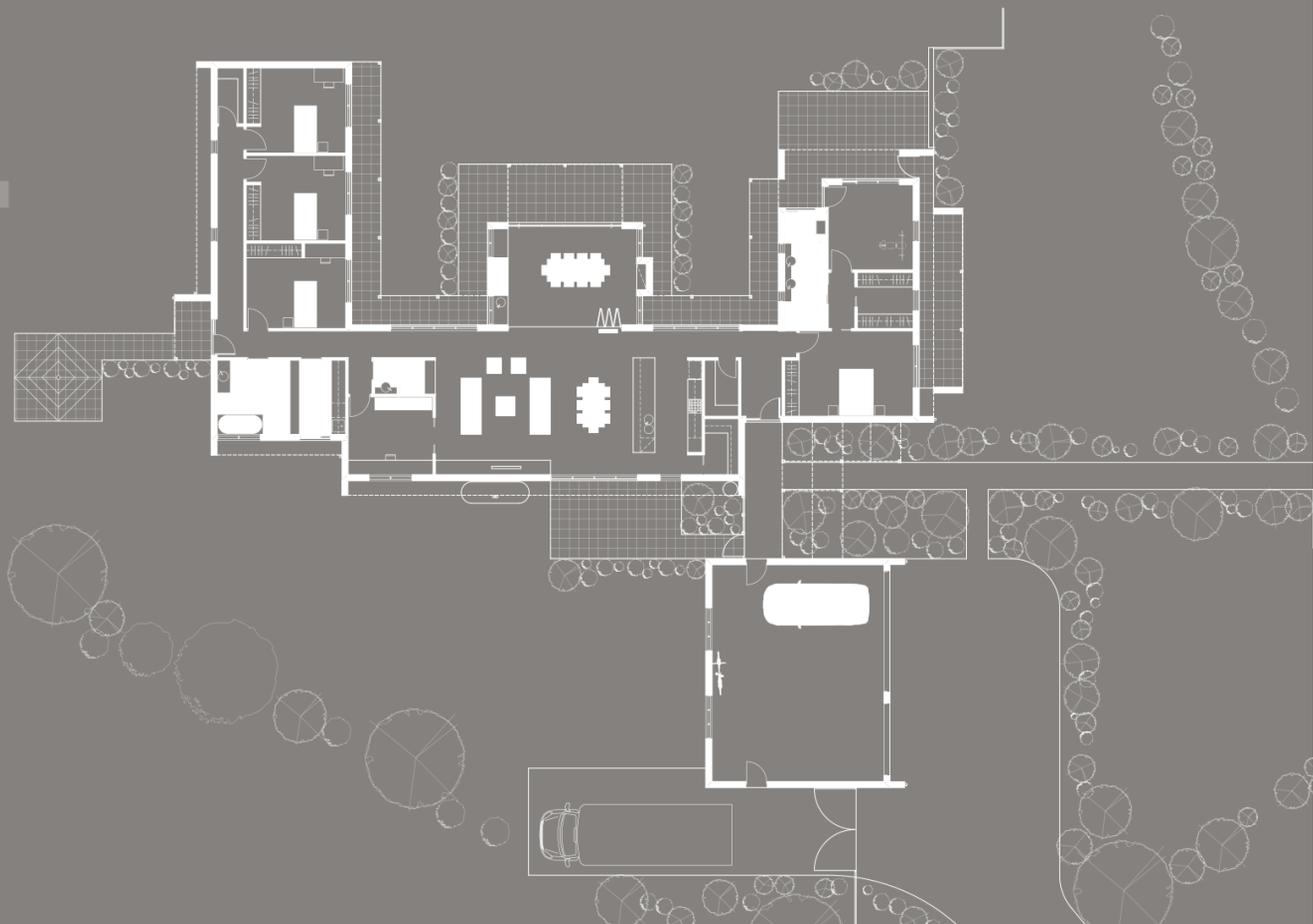
Because of the generous site size, the house was divided into four wings, with each wing serving a different function. Each wing extends out to divide the site into distinct, external areas which can be used for different purposes.

One wing of the house incorporates a three-car garage (or two cars and golf buggy!) as well as off street parking for the Winnebago. ▶



The second wing includes the master bedroom suite which includes a bedroom, dressing room, en suite and gymnasium or craft room.

floorplan



The second wing includes the master bedroom suite which includes a bedroom, dressing room, en suite and gymnasium or craft room.

The main wing of the house includes the kitchen with walk-in pantry, dining room, living room, study and powder room. Attached to this central wing is an indoor-outdoor living space. The fourth wing of the house is a bedroom wing; with three bedrooms, bathroom and laundry. By separating the various accommodation needs into distinct wings, the privacy of various family members is maintained and multiple activities can occur simultaneously.

Designed as a courtyard house, three wings enclose a central courtyard which faces north to gain the most favourable sunny aspect and to create a private outdoor space located away from the street. The wings of the house also serve as wind barriers to the unfavourable southerly and westerly winds.

It is intended that over time the central courtyard can be further developed with landscaping to enhance outdoor activities and the outlook – provision has also been made for a swimming pool within this space if required.

By using a courtyard plan layout with the accommodation divided into separate wings, each space of the house gains an outlook, good natural light and ventilation and easy access to the exterior.

The house has been placed on the site so that the external spaces can be used for different functions with varying landscape treatments to suit. ▶



The central courtyard on the north side of the house takes advantage of the north winter sun aspect. A private terrace and utility area on the southern side of the house can be used as a shaded area on summer afternoons.

The area on the western side of the house is separate from the other spaces and is a larger space suitable for more active games when the grandchildren visit. The areas on the eastern side of the house, which front the street corner have a large setback to allow for lawns and gardens as well as the driveway.

"In contrast to the traditional suburban arrangement with a front and rear yard, this property has multiple external spaces formed into defined courtyards which can be used at different times of the day and during different seasons for various uses", Mark Lawler said. ▶

By using a courtyard plan layout with the accommodation divided into separate wings, each space of the house gains an outlook, good natural light and ventilation and easy access to the exterior.





“While the planting is now still relatively young, over time it will increase in size adding to the presentation.”

Mark Lawler Architects have given each wing its own distinct roof form so that the house presents as a series of pavilions or individual buildings grouped together.

This arrangement harks back to many traditional rural homesteads where the main house is surrounded by a series of ancillary buildings that form interesting grouping, each building distinguished by its individual roof.

Each wing is further articulated by the use of verandas and pergolas, which serve to provide sun protection and also to link the various wings with a common building element. While the garage is separate from the house it has been linked with a covered way to enable all weather access. This link also serves as the entry porch to the front door.

Various colours with subtle changes in tone have been used to distinguish the various building elements. The walls, roof, screens, pergolas, windows and doors have all been finished with different colours to add to the visual interest.

The house was built to a high standard by Valley Homes with all the inclusions expected in a house of this quality. The roof and walls have been fully insulated to provide high thermal efficiency and the walls are clad with Hebel panels to provide greater insulation.

This is particularly important in this inland location where the extremes of heat and cold are more keenly felt.

Large windows and sliding glass doors have been provided to ensure ample daylight and to promote good cross-ventilation. The individual wings of the house ensure that all spaces receive good exposure to the sunlight and breezes. Ducted air-conditioning, an integrated TV and sound system, and a ducted vacuum system have been installed.

Underfloor heating is provided in the outdoor living area and en suite bathroom. The house also includes additional rainwater tanks to ensure there is sufficient water available to irrigate the large landscaped areas of this site.

To ensure the development met with the owner's budget requirements, the site was excavated for an economical ground level slab and the house was then built with timber framed walls and timber roof trusses.

Valley Homes maintained good relationships with the owners and architect throughout the process. “Some details and selections were adjusted in consultation with Valley Homes to suit their preferred methods and to assist in achieving cost reductions,” reflected Mark Lawler. Valley Homes also assisted with the co ordination of the site excavation and site drainage, and worked with the owner's landscape contractor.

The objective at the outset of this project was to provide the owners with a luxurious and distinctive residence that would meet their lifestyle requirements and also to make maximum use of the potential of this unusually large site.

“All of this was achieved within sensible economic constraints to ensure that this investment did not result in an over-capitalising in the local real estate market,” said Mark. “The objectives have been achieved by the development of a single level courtyard house, constructed economically using conventional residential construction, but to a custom architectural design. “In contrast to the owner's former home, this house is light, open and spacious with strong connections to the surrounding gardens from all spaces.”

The owners are thoroughly enjoying starting a new phase in their lives in an exciting new setting, and the high level of amenity this house offers. 🏡

Architect: Mark Lawler & Associates
Builder: Valley Homes
Tiles: Jacoba Tiles
Kitchens: Valley Kitchens

