



## **Adelaide: The Garden City on Steroids**

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Adelaide is the original garden city. Uniquely in the world its metropolitan area extends around the original settlement at a uniform low density and it retains its central parkland belt. Whilst Colonel Light's original design for the square mile of Adelaide was an inspiration for Howard's garden city, over 150 years later the wider city is a massively inflated version of the original garden city concept, measuring 90 kilometers from north to south and home to 1.3 million people. It has long since outgrown the walkable, population constrained model of its founding fathers. For a century Adelaide has represented the egalitarian Australian dream of a single family home on a quarter acre block for all, irrespective of income or class. But rising house prices and the imperatives of urban sustainability now demand that the city consolidates its density, restricts further outward sprawl and shifts towards linear, public transit oriented development. A new metropolitan planning strategy presages significant changes to the urban form. However, there is significant resistance to urban consolidation particularly in the historic eastern suburbs. Many Adelaide residents perceive a threat to the garden city form and lifestyle in the new planning strategy. The paper addresses the implications of the planned changes and questions whether quality of life in Adelaide will be improved as a result of the new strategy. In the context of its gradual development as a spatially extensive, low density garden city the 2009 Planning Strategy for Greater Adelaide is assessed. The strengths and weaknesses of the twentieth century development of Adelaide are examined against the ideas set out in the new strategy. Key questions addressed include whether it is time for a twenty first century revamp of its founding principles and whether Adelaide can and should attempt to retain its garden city heritage. Crucially, is it physically possible to redraw the map and reinvent the garden city as the sustainable city? The paper concludes that Howard's social city concept remains a valid model for a revised metropolitan planning strategy.

**KEY WORDS:** Adelaide, low density, garden city, social city, planning strategy.