Merri-bek City Council

Good Design Advice Sheets

Designing Better Medium Density Housing in Merri-bek

BETTER QUALITY DEVELOPMENTS

GOOD DESIGN ADVICE SHEETS - JANUARY 2026

GOOD DESIGN ADVICE SHEETS

Merri-bek City Council
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REVISIONS

REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE
-	Final draft	05/2025
A	To align with Townhouse Exemplar Designs work	01/2026

INTRODUCTION

Purpose
Merri-bek's Council Plan 2021- 2025 encourages better quality medium density developments. This document gives clear guidance and certainty on Council's expectations of good design for low-rise residential development within Merri-bek.

How to use this document?
The Good Design Advice Sheets (GDAS) provides guidance and serves as a reference for discussions between designers, applicants and Council planners.

The document contains six sections, each with a series of chapters and dot points outlining preferred outcomes (Design Reponse) and Things to Avoid. Sections are set out within a linear hierarchy with early sections tackling higher level issues and solutions, while latter sections deal with more detailed and often more easily reconcilable topics.

The document need not be read cover-to-cover however for quick results to queries we encourage the use of dynamic search functions using key words and use of hyperlinks for related chapters and external links. Return to the section pages (4) by clicking on the footer text on each page.

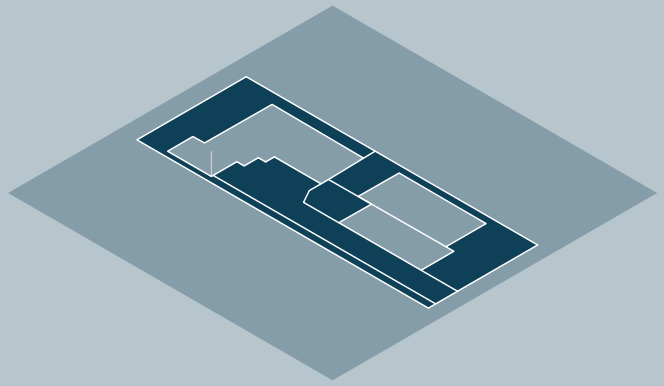
Why is good design important?
Good design enhances quality of life by promoting comfort, functionality, and sustainability. It fosters physical and mental well-being, supports efficient use of space, and reduces environmental impact. Thoughtful design accommodates diverse needs, encourages community connections, and ensures long-term value, creating spaces that are safe, adaptable, and inspiring to live in.

What does good design look like?
The GDAS provides snippets of design solutions that can be adapted to specific ideas or a vision.

To understand what a well resolved design might look like, refer to Merri-bek's suite of Exemplar Designs on typical lot sizes found within Merri-bek including:

- Exemplar Designs for two dwelling on a lot which showcase practical design solutions for dual-occupancy proposals; and
- Townhouse Exemplar Designs document which demonstrates best practice, Townhouse & Low-Rise Code compliant designs.

1. Site Layout



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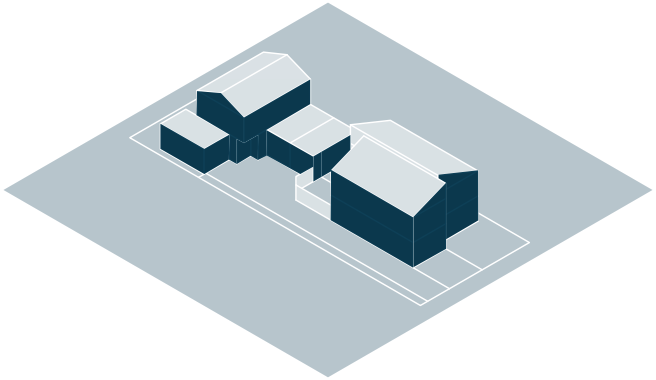

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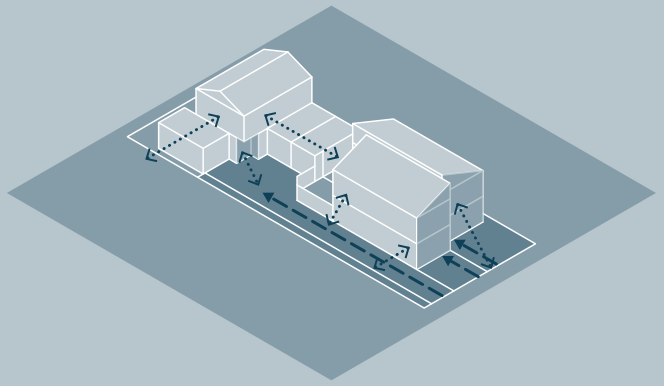

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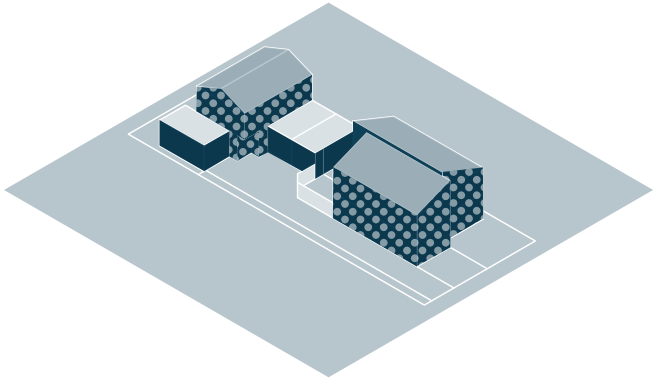

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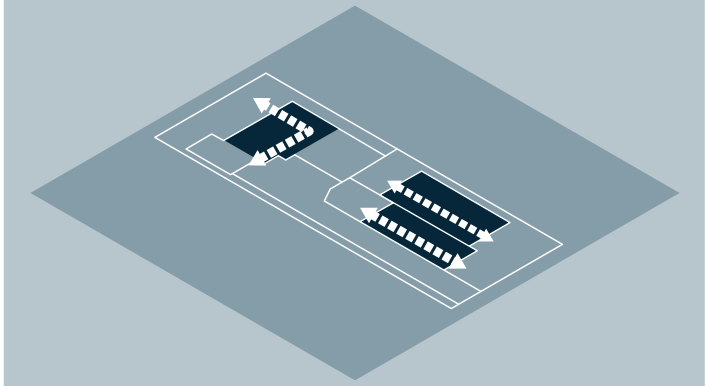

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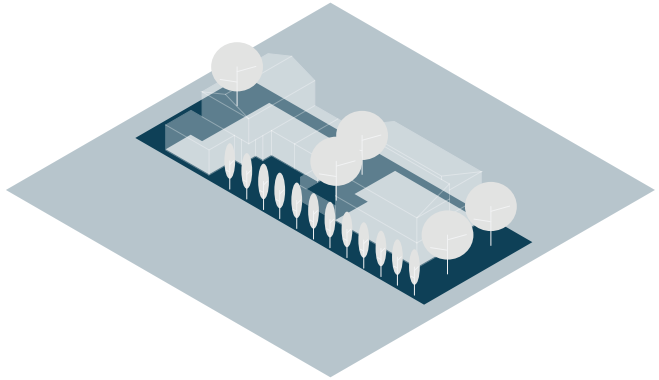

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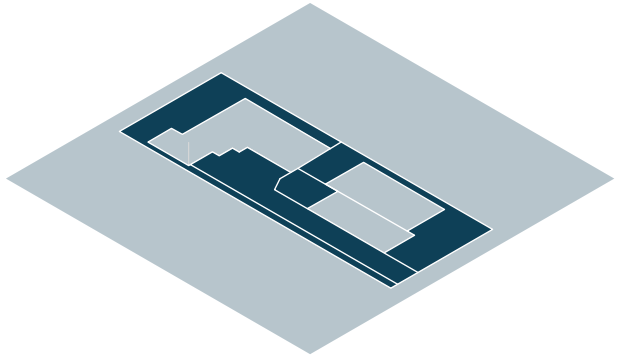
1. Site Layout

1.1 Siting and setback

1.2 Orientation

1.3 Slope managment

1.4 Usable open space



What does the Site Layout include?

The site layout is the arrangement of key elements of a proposal within a site. The site layout must respond to spatial considerations such as building envelope, setbacks, open spaces, parking and access, orientation and separation between forms.

Why is Site Layout important?

A good site layout responds to the existing and emerging context and identity of the street, allows for efficient dwelling planning and easy access, mitigates negative amenity impacts on neighbouring sites and provides good amenity for the dwellings.

The Site Layout should

- Respond to the neighbourhood context
- Respond to topography
- Provide usable open space
- Provide opportunities for social interaction
- Consider the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties
- Provide meaningful space for landscaping
- Provide opportunities for activation of the street or adjoining open space

Planning Scheme References

55.02 Neighbourhood Character

- 55.02-1 – Street setback
- 55.02-3 – Side and rear setbacks
- 55.04-4 - Walls on boundaries
- 55.02-5 - Site coverage
- 55.02-7 - Tree canopy

55.03 – Liveability

- 55.03-3 – Street integration

Supplementary References

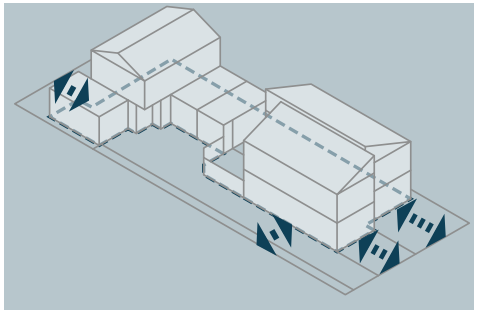
Canopy Tree Planting in Residential Areas

PPN84 - Applying the minimum garden area requirement

Thornbury Townhouses by Fowler and Ward - 2019 (photo: Tom Ross)

1. Site Layout

1.1 Siting and setbacks



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Siting and typology -** The site dimensions, proportions and context will determine the approporate siting and arrangement of built forms. Consider side-by-side, front-to-back or a combination of both for larger sites.
- **Front setback -** Ensure space within the front setback allows for canopy tree planting, pedestrian access and permeable surfaces to support sustainable drainage and landscaping.
- **Frontage -** Ensure frontage reflects the spatial qualities of existing and emerging development in the street. Where adjacent properties require solar access and outlook the frontage may need to be offset from one of the side boundaries. (REFER ALSO SECTION 2.1)
- **Effective site planning** - Prioritise generous courtyard spaces along side boundaries instead of narrow side yards. This will enhance privacy, reduce dependence on outlook to neighbouring properties, and improve internal amenity.
- **Open space provision -** Locate secluded open space within the side or rear setbacks. Ensure open space accommodates minimum canopy tree requirements and where appropriate, screen planting. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.4)

✓ *Dwellings with permeable surfaces within front setbacks.*

✓ *Side setback responding to street context (photo: Tom Ross).*

✓ *Usable courtyard spaces along side boundaries (photo: Christopher Frederick Jones).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

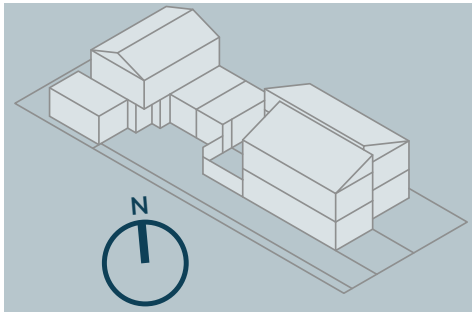
- Building typologies that don't 'fit' within the their site or context.
- Front setbacks that cannot accommodate canopy trees as per the tree guidelines.

- Excessive hard-paving within the front setback.
- Boundary to boundary development where this is not consistant with the surrounding context.

- Private open spaces located within the front setback.
- Long narrow side yards that which cannot accommodate appropriate planting.

1. Site Layout

1.2 Orientation



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Public realm interface -** Ensure dwellings are oriented to maximise frontage to the street / public realm. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Solar orientation -** The site layout should orientate living spaces and secluded private open spaces toward north. Where a northern orientation cannot be achieved aspects to the east, west or a combination of these should be considered. Prioritising the solar orientation of open space must not be at the expense of street activation. (REFER ALSO SECTION 2.5)
- **Corner lots -** On corner lots, dwellings must front both streets and minimise driveway crossovers on the primary (usually shorter) street frontage.

✓ *A dwelling which maximises frontage interface and activation to the street (photo: Tatjana Plitt).*

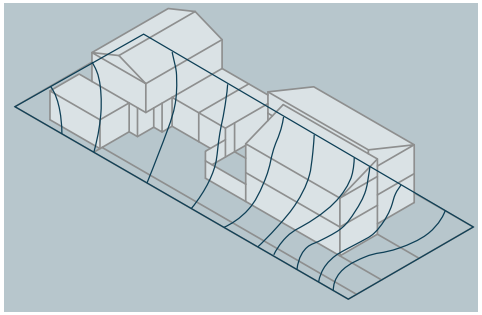
THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Dwellings which turn their back on the public open space.

- Site layouts which rely on open spaces within the front setback, resulting in inactive interfaces.

1. Site Layout

1.3 Slope management



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Respond to topography -** Ensure the site layout responds appropriately to the existing topography of the site and adjoining properties and public realm. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Accessible open space -** Provide private open spaces accessible at the same level as internal living areas to enhance usability and connectivity.
- **Parking underneath -** Consider providing basement or sub-basement parking to sloping sites to reduce need for costly excavation and levelling. Minimise the prominence of basements from the street.
- **High retaining walls -** Ensure level changes do not result in unnecessarily high retaining walls which increase the visual bulk of the building. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Split-level design** - If required consider split-level dwelling layouts to reduce the need for cut and fill and retaining walls.
- **Universal Accessibility -** Consider universal accessibility to dwellings to allow occupants with limited mobility, prams or visitors with special needs to access the property. Accessible dwellings also allow occupants to age in place.

✓ *Retaining walls with opportunities for an elevated private open space.*

✓ *Where steps are provided also consider ramped access alternatives (photo: Peter Clarke).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Private open spaces with limited accessibilty and poor connections with living space.

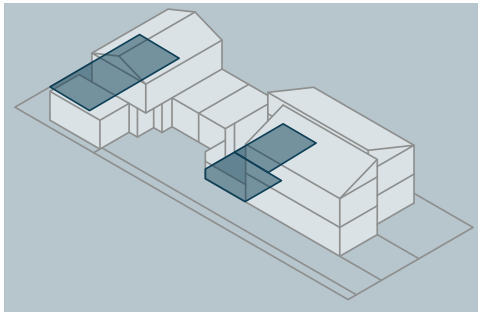
- Excessively high and blank retaining wall and subfloor walls fronting the street, open space or communal areas.
- Excessive cut and fill earth works.

- Steep ramps and stairs which dominate the front setback environment.

- Basement or sub-floor dominating the facade.

1. Site Layout

1.4 Usable open space



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Well proportioned open space -** Ensure private open spaces are well proportioned to accommodate a range of outdoor activities/ uses. The provision of usable secondary courtyards instead of long narrow side yards/ pathways are especially useful at the midpoint of long built forms.
- **Connection to living rooms -** Consider the location of open space in relation to indoor living areas. Connection between the two spaces increases the total usable living area as well as improving potential for daylight, outlook and ventilation.
- **Connection to car storage areas -** Consider locating garages adjacent to open spaces, allowing usable space to be expanded for entertainment or play when needed.
- **Service locations -** Ensure quality of open space is not compromised by required services such as clotheslines, rainwater storage tanks, sheds, bins, hot water units, heat pumps etc. (REFER ALSO SECTION 4.5)

✓ *Effective site planning can improve access to daylight, views and sense of space (photo: Tom Ross).*

✓ *A generous outdoor living space with direct connection to the living room (photo: Tom Ross).*

✓ *A garage space opening up to the rear yard provides additional undercover space (photo: Tess Kelly)*

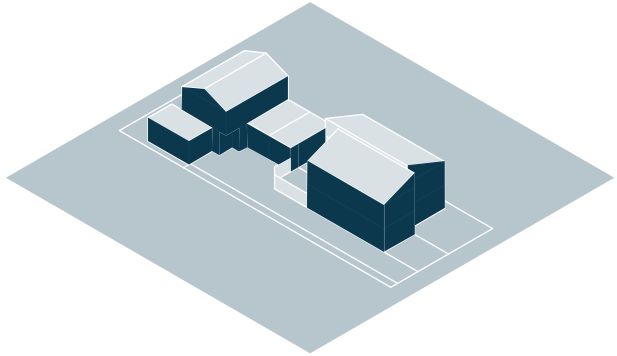
THINGS TO AVOID ✗

- Narrow side yards create awkward, unusable outdoor space.
- Secluded private open space which is disconnected from the primary internal living space.
- Site services which diminish the quality of private open space.

The Green House by Wardle Design - 2022

2. Built Form & Massing

2.1 Context response
2.2 Height and massing
2.3 Overall proportions
2.4 Facade design
2.5 Passive design



What does Built Form & Massing include?

Built form and massing concerns the overall shape, scale and architectural expression of the building.

Why is Built Form & Massing important?

A development which responds to the profile, scale, rhythm and architectural expression of the surrounding building forms and neighbourhood will sit comfortably within the existing urban context, while taking advantage of orientation/aspect to optimise passive design outcomes.

Built Form & Massing should:

- Respond to the surrounding context (scale and form)
- Express a simple architectural concept or language which does not require complicated detailing.

Planning Scheme References

55.02 Neighbourhood Character

- 55.02-2 – Building height
- 55.02-5 – Integration with the street

55.03 Liveability

- 55.03-6 – Solar access to open space
- 55.03-9 – Daylight to new windows
- 55.03-10 – Natural ventilation

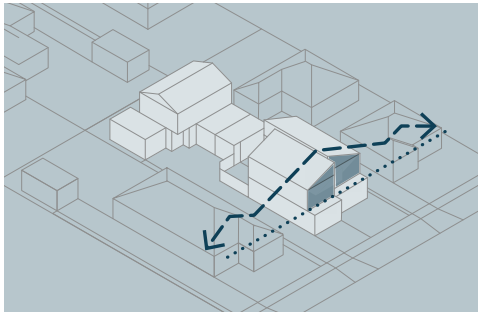
55.04 External Amenity

- 55.04-3 - Overshadowing secluded open space

LLLBion by Tecture - 2019 (photo: Shannon McGrath)

2. Built Form & Massing

2.1 Context response



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Streetscape rhythm -** Ensure the building form reflects the established rhythm and pattern of development within the streetscape. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.1)
- **Roof profile -** In areas with a strong neighbourhood identity roof shapes should respond to the prevailing or emerging profiles.
- **Long frontage** - Minimise the impact of developments with long street frontages by varying architectural forms and/or providing occasional vertical breaks or recesses.
- **Upper level setback** - When a proposed facade is too prominent, a meaningful upper level setback should be considered. Consider form and material junctions, proportions and softening of the facade (through greening). Also, consider whether a balcony to the street can be incorporated.

✓ *Roof pitch responding to prevailing forms within the streetscape.*

✓ *Long frontage of townhouses with alternate facade treatments and deep recesses.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

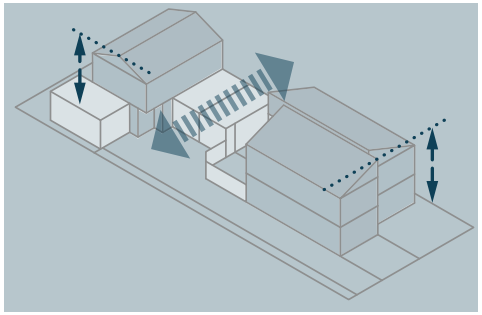
- Long building facades where the existing urban pattern is a finer grain.

- Monotonous, long facades without any variety, visual interest or physical breaks.

- Tokenistic upper level setback with fussy details.

2. Built Form & Massing

2.2 Height and massing



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Streetscape context -** Appropriate transitions to adjacent lower-scale developments must be considered. Upper levels might need to be set back, or changes in roof form may be appropriate.
- **Upper floor separation -** Provide breaks between dwellings along long upper-level built forms to reduce their dominance. Where a break is not possible, provide a recess in the form to reduce visual bulk.
- **Meaningful massing articulation** - Where courtyard setbacks or recesses are provided, they should be vertically aligned to provide other benefits such as planting, improved solar access at ground level, and visual relief, improved outlook and structural continuity to upper levels. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)

✓ *Stepped side profile responding to existing single storey context.*

✓ *A break in form to the side interface offers visual relief to neighbouring dwellings.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

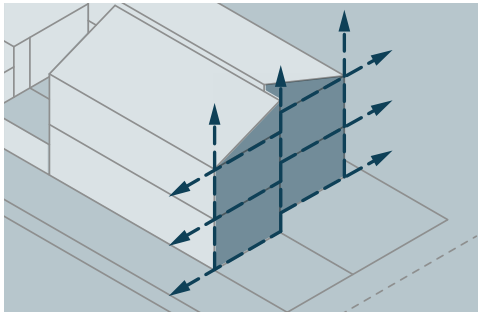
- Excessive height resulting in addtional overshadowing to open spaces.

- Sudden variations in height and massing.
- Long, continuous facades.

- Multiple attached dwellings without a break or recess.

2. Built Form & Massing

2.3 Overall proportions



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Visual bulk -** To avoid excessive visual bulk, define each element of the form, and consider the scale of the building in relation to context. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Urban grain -** Ensure the form and proportion of the building responds to the existing scale, proportions and rythym the streetscape. Where a fine grain is prevelant, consider vertical recesses, staggered front setbacks and/or material variations to differentiate dwellings.
- **Window proportions** - Windows should be designed to be residential in scale, proportion and style.
- **Roof proportions -** Roof forms should be proportionate to the overall massing. Facade forms should be reflected in the roof form (i.e a gable facade form should correspond with a gable roof form behind).
- **Heirachy of forms** - Facades elements should consist of primary and secondary forms to avoid complicated design compositions.

✓ Staggered front setbacks and subtle material variations help to differentiate dwellings.

✓ Building rhythm and window openings that respond to the residential context.

✓ *Vertical recesses respond to the pattern of existing lot subdivision.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

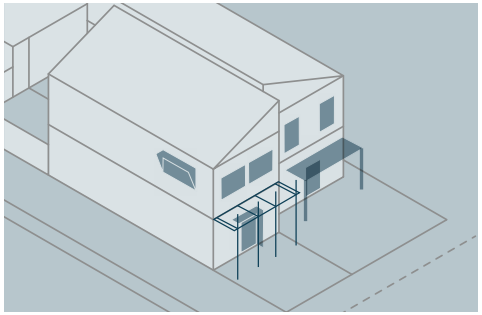
- Long horizontal elements which increase visual bulk.
- Large expanses of blank wall.

- The use of too many materials, which becomes visually distracting.

- Porches which are not integrated with the overall design or form.
- Very steep or very shallow roof pitch
- Complicated hip roofs with multiple ridges increasing the visual bulk and complexity of the facade.

2. Built Form & Massing

2.4 Facade design



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Recessed articulation -** Recessive windows within simple forms result in facades with depth, shadow and interest.
- **Projecting articulation -** Awnings, shade structures and window hoods provide interest and shading benefits without adding unnecessarily bulky features. On the ground level, structures such as arbors or pergolas provide an inviting building entry, encourage social interaction with neighbours and reduce the prominence sheer walls. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.2)
- **Stepped setbacks -** Differentiated setbacks can be used to distinguish dwellings and reduce percieved bulk.
- **Quality materials and cohesive design -** Materials and architectural language should respond to surrouding streetscape and be applied beyond the street facade with treatment continued throughout the development. (REFER ALSO SECTION 4.4)

✓ *Offset or 'stepped' facades provide distinction between the dwellings (photo: Peter Clarke).*

✓ *Arbours provide visual relief to sheer wall facades (photo: Shannon McGrath).*

✓ *Facade with simple expression and a combination of recessive and extruded articulation.*

✓ *Window awnings and hoods add depth and interest to the facade (photo: Rory Gardiner).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✗

- Unsheltered entries where people cannot pause or linger.

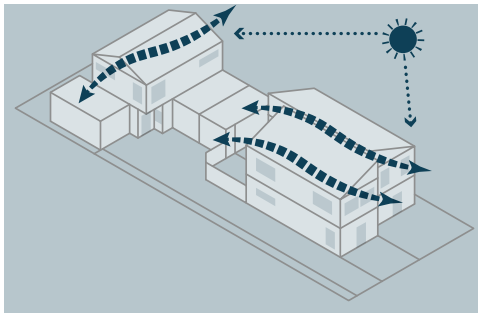
- Large windows with bulky facade elements create heavy and complicated compositions.

- Flat facades where windows and different materials are on the same plane.

- Complicated roof forms resulting in excessive, visible downpipes.
- Quality material finishes only applied to the front facade.
- Dominant projecting party walls extruding well above the roof line or beyond the facade.

2. Built Form & Massing

2.5 Passive design



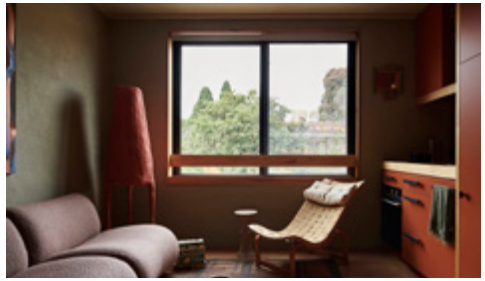
DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Solar access -** Orientate living areas and habitable room windows so that they benefit from northern solar aspect. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.2)
- **Solar shading -** Incorporate fixed shading devices such as hoods or shrouds to north facing windows and adjustable shading to west and east to reduce impact of hot summer sun while allowing winter sunlight to enter.
- **Natural ventilation -** Provide openings that allow for natural ventilation to pass through the building to improve comfort levels inside and reduce reliance on mechanical ventilation.
- **Windows and Outlook -** Ensure windows are appropriately sized and located to allow for solar access, clear views to outside, and designed so that occupants can control ventilation and privacy. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.1)
- **Ceiling Height -** Ensure a minimum ceiling height of 2.7m is provided to allow enough natural daylight to enter the building and enough height for the installation of a ceiling fan, improving air quality in the summer.
- **Eave size-** Design roof eaves to allow for increased solar access during cooler months and decreased solar access during warmer months to reduce the reliance on mechanical heating and cooling.
- **Planting -** Specify vegetation and trees (deciduous where appropriate) in courtyards to provide seasonal shading / cooling to buildings and hard paved surfaces. (REFER ALSO SECTION 6)
- **Screening and solar / daylight access** - When providing screening ensure slats / louvres are angled to optimise daylight and passive solar gain during cooler months. (REFER ALSO SECTION 4.2)

✓ *Adjustable external venetian blinds for east or west facing windows (horiso.com.au)*

✓ *Deep eaves can provide shade in summer and allow solar access during cooler months (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *North facing solar shading 'hoods' can reduce the impact of the summer sun while allowing winter sunlight to enter (photo: Rory Gardiner).*



✓ *Well located windows reduce the need for artificial lighting (photo: Eve Wilson).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Walls and large windows exposed to harsh northern and western sun.
- Planting that limits sun access within the dwelling year-round.

- Too many fixed windows or high level windows

- Dark or tinted windows.
- Overlooking screening conflicting with functionality of adjustable shading devices.

16 Arthur Street, Preston by Wardle Design - 2021

3. Interface & Access

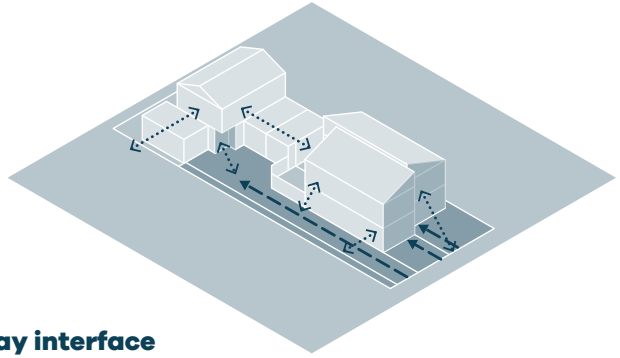
3.1 Activation and passive surveillance

3.2 Sense of entry

3.3 Access

3.4 Waste access and storage

3.5 Open space and waterway interface



What does Interface & Access include?

Areas of the building which interact directly with the street, or with neighbouring sites. These includes common areas, front yards, windows, front doors and accessways (pathways or driveways).

Why are Interface & Access important?

Prioritising safety, accessibility and convenience within common areas of a development can create spaces which are welcoming, functional and accommodating for everyone. High quality materials and interfaces improve not only the design outcomes for a dwelling, but also for the street.

Interface & Access should:

- Prioritise people over vehicles
- Integrate vehicle accessways and pedestrian paths
- Be well landscaped
- Contribute positively to the streetscape

Planning Scheme References

55.02 Neighbourhood Character

- 55.02-6 – Access

55.03 Liveability

- 55.03-2 – Parking location
- 55.03-3 – Integration with the street
- 55.03-4 – Entry
- 55.03-11 – Storage

55.04 External Amenity

- 55.04-4 – Overlooking
- 55.04-5 – Internal views

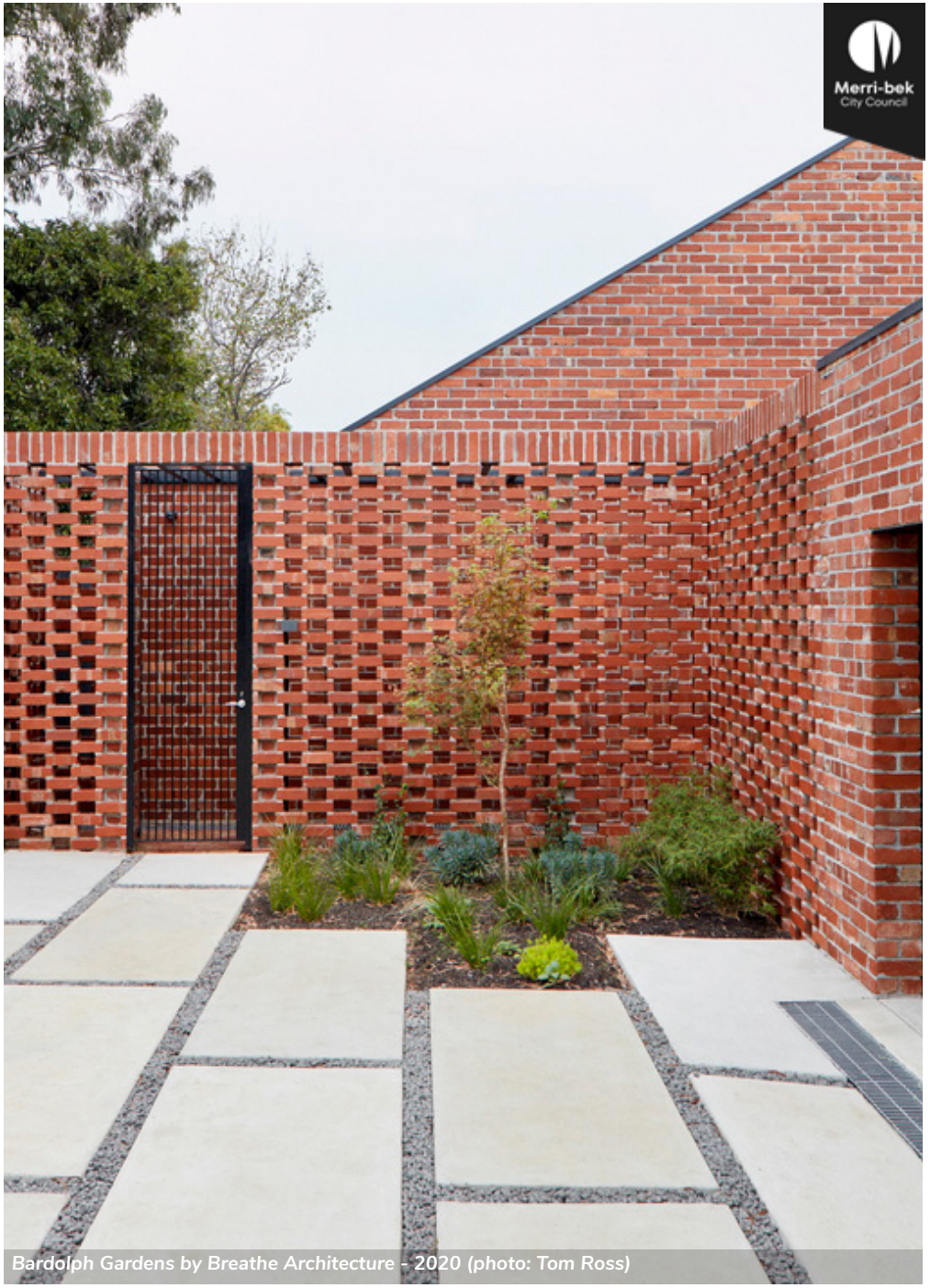
55.05 Sustainability

- 55.05-5 – Waste and recycling

Supplementary References

Merri-bek Sunlight to Parks

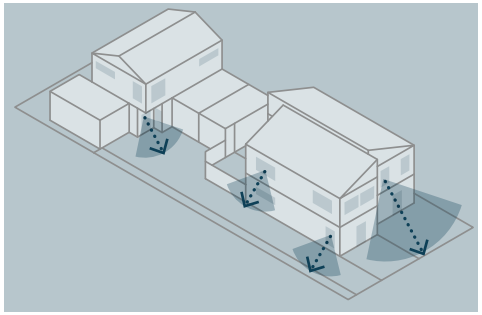
Melbourne Water - Standards and Specifications



Bardolph Gardens by Breathe Architecture - 2020 (photo: Tom Ross)

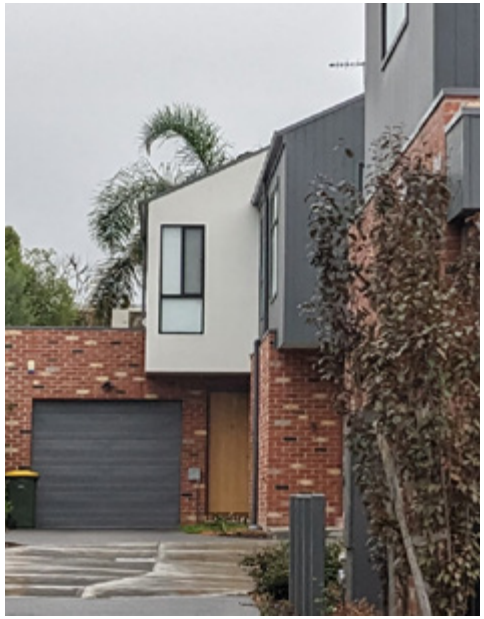
3. Interface & Access

3.1 Activation & Passive Surveillance

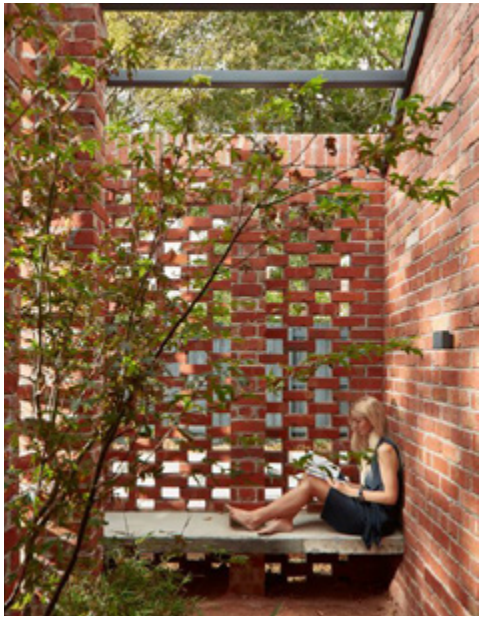


DESIGN RESPONSE

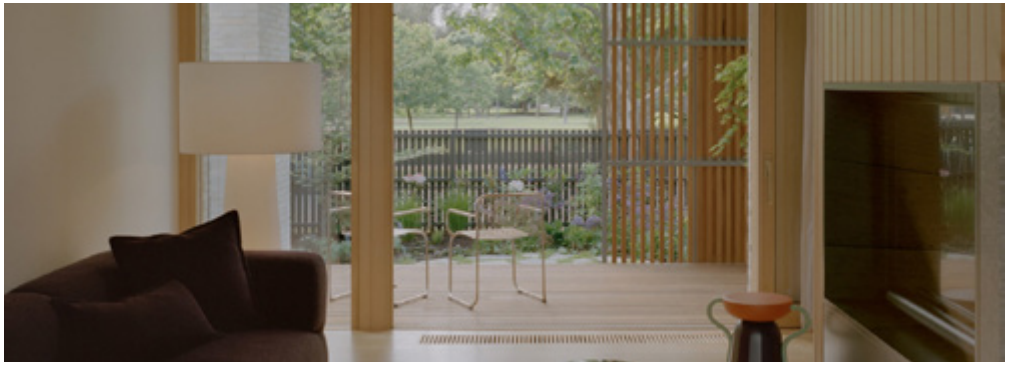
- **Passive surveillance -** Ensure the number of windows and habitable rooms fronting the street are maximised to activate the public realm. (REFER ALSO SECTION 2.5)
- **Public open space activation -** Dwellings located adjacent to a public open space should provide passive surveillance and activation. Windows oriented to the open space along with low or semi-transparent fences along the boundary will increase public safety and provide occupants with a stronger connection to nature. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Common driveway activation -** Ensure that dwellings adjacent accessways or common areas have habitable room windows facing these spaces.
- **Observation screens -** Provide hit-and-miss brick or a similar permeable barriers at ground level to balance passive surveillance and activation between the private realm and common areas.
- **Provide outlook -** Provide an outlook from living spaces and bedrooms on upper levels. Ensure windows do not unreasonably overlook private open spaces.



✓ Windows overlooking the common driveway.



✓ Observation screens providing surveillance to common areas (photo: Tom Ross).



✓ Living space activating the public realm (photo: Tasha Tylee).

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

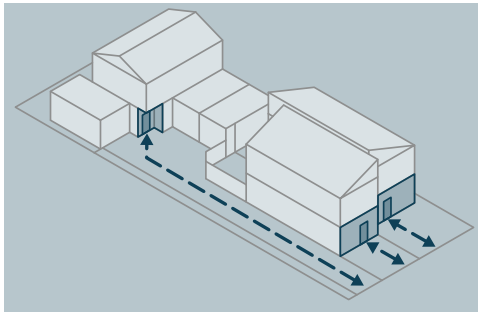
- Long extents of high fencing interfacing with common driveways or public open space.

- Facade with poor activation / outlook to the street.

- First floor windows that do not provide outlook

3. Interface & Access

3.2 Sense of entry



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Shelter over entry -** Ensure each dwelling entry incorporates a canopy, porch or recessed entry to provide a transitional space a sense of address and weather protection.
- **Entry scale -** Where the dwelling entry is at the base of a sheer 2-storey facade, including a porch/verandah can provide a clear and welcoming transition space at an entrance.
- **Entry environment -** Consider alternative uses of front porches beyond access requirements. Spaces adjacent to entries may be used for pot plants, bike parking, sitting etc.
- **Proportion of entry elements -** The size of canopies and posts should be in proportion with one another and with the overall structure, forming an integrated part of the facade composition. (REFER ALSO SECTION 2.4)
- **Planting and services conflict -** Ensure landscaping and services adjacent to dwelling entry does not impede access or hinder sight lines to the front door. (REFER ALSO SECTION 4.5)

✓ *Porch area adequately sized, integrated into facade and finished in quality materials (photo: Randers Tegl).*

✓ *Structure above the entry provides weather protection and defines a porch space below. Lighting and planting enhance the entry space (photo: Shannon McGrath).*

✓ *Sheltered entry with arbor creating an inviting transition from public to private space, with opportunity for vertical planting (photo: Alice Hutchison).*

✓ *Using subtle colour variations to differentiate dwellings and create a sense of address*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

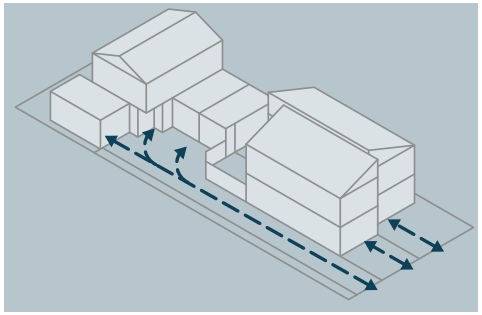
- Bulky, face mounted awnings

- Misproportioned columns.

- Entries hidden behind services.

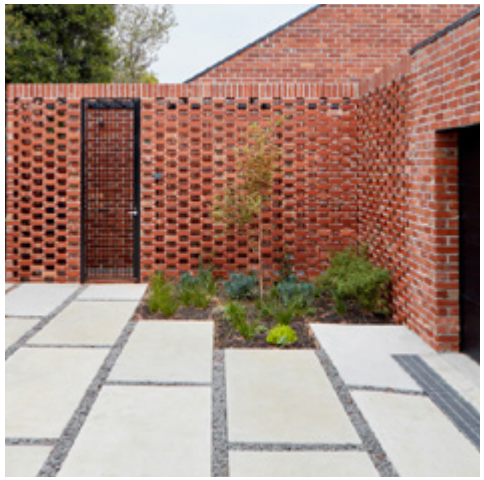
3. Interface & Access

3.3 Access



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Shared access -** Combine vehicle and pedestrian access areas. Use high-quality, fine grain finishes along driveway areas to create a sense of pedestrian priority.
- **Activate communal areas -** Ensure all accessways are activated with entry doors, windows and permeable fences to provide passive surveillance to communal areas.
- **Lighting -** Provide wayfinding lighting, including garden lights and shared light from windows, along the full length of the accessway.
- **Sense of address -** Ensure each dwelling has a sense of address and that visitors are able navigate easily and safely from the street to the front door. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.2)
- **Recessed garages -** Street facing garages should be visually recessive; either setback beyond the facade, placed behind a pergola or integrated within a canopy structure. Where a garage is located at the end of a common driveway and is visible from the street, it should be single width to minimise its presence.
- **Parking adjacent to windows -** Ensure parked cars do not impact outlook or daylight access to habitable rooms.
- **Short driveways** - To avoid cars overhanging driveways into footpath space, driveways between 3.5-5.4m are not allowed.



✓ High quality driveway with a sense of pedestrian priority (photo: Tom Ross).

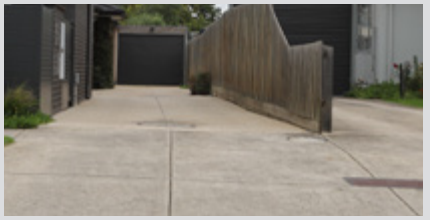
✓ Garage doors are deeply inset within the canopy structure (photo: Tom Ross).

✓ *Activation to common driveway* (photo: Tom Ross).

✓ *Ambient lighting creates pleasant and safe environment (photo: Shannon McGrath).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Poor quality/harsh lighting or flood lighting.
- Lighting above 1.2m from ground level



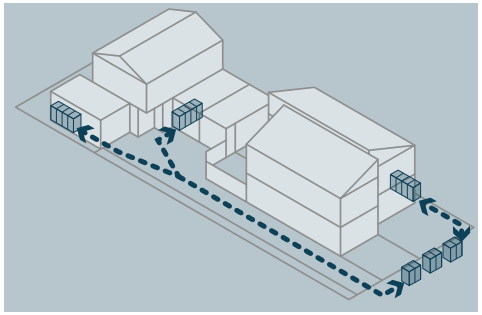
- Concrete or asphalt driveways with no planting and no clear pedestrian path

- Driveways without windows to habitable rooms for passive surveillance.

- Narrow, cluttered walkways with limited landscaping and poor sense of address.
- Long blank walls along common driveway.
- Garages which appear dominant from the street.
- Pedestrian access impeded by parked cars.

3. Interface & Access

3.4 Waste access and storage



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Bin storage locations -** Locate bin storage behind the building line, integrated with the building envelope, or along the side fence.Use a landscape buffer and/or low screens to reduce the visibility of the bins from the street and dwelling, especially when located within the front setback.
- **Bin storage sizes -** Bin enclosures must accomodate Merri-bek City Council's bin sizes. See Merri-bek Standard service bin sizes (link),
- **Bin access -** Ensure adequate space is provided to move bins through garages or side paths for street collection.
- **Bin collection -** For larger developments ensure bin collection areas are adequate in size and do not impede pedestrian movement or obstruct vehicle visibility (REFER ALSO CLAUSE 55.05-5 Waste and recycling).

✓ Bin storage located within a recess beyond the dwelling frontage.

✓ Front fence providing screening to bins where there is no side access.

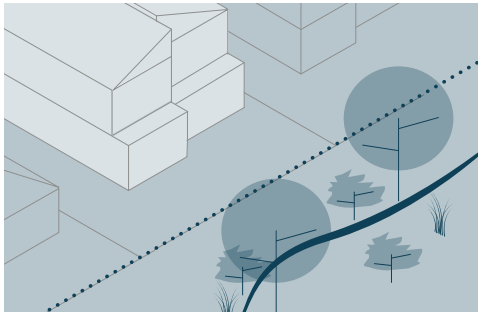
THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- No provision for private or communal bin storage.

- Bins visible from the street and bin enclosure not large enough.

3. Interface & Access

3.5 Open space and waterway interface



DESIGN RESPONSE

NB. In this section open space and waterways are referred to collectively as 'public land'.

- **Massing -** Ensure the building form considers overshadowing impacts and respects the scale and openness of adjoining public land. Breaks in massing allow for views through to open space and vegetation to flow into adjacent private land, expanding natural habitat corridors. (REFER ALSO SECTION 2.1)
- **Steep topography -** Ensure steep sites adjacent to public land manage flood risk and site stability. Where retaining is required, tiered landscaping with native species will help to soften the visual impact of structural elements. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.3)
- **Access -** Where the title allows it provide direct access to public land to promote passive surveillance and activation. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.3)
- **Passive surveillance -** Ensure a visual connection between dwellings and public land is provided with windows overlooking the space and semi-transparent fencing to allow for passive surveillance. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.1)

- **Materials -** Use durable materials with natural tones and textures that are sympathetic to natural surroundings.
- **Landscaping -** Ensure landscape and planting responds to native species within adjacent public land. Use endemic or indigenous species.
- **Canopy trees** - Plant canopy trees adjacent to public land to benefit from nearby deep soil and to share the benefits with park users.

✓ Steep terrain with tiered planting can be used to soften visual impact of retaining walls.

✓ Natural timber cladding can complement the natural surroundings. (photo: Peter Clarke).

✓ Development with direct access to open space provides activation through passive surveillance.

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Blank walls or rear fences abutting parks.

- Sheer retaining wall and solid fence above with no landscape to soften interface.

- Planting which does not contribute to significant greening of adjacent open space.
- Development crowding the park edge.
- Poorly lit or concealed access points.
- Monoculture of exotic plant species or screen planting which recudes passive surveillance.

Stewart Street Residences by Ample Architecture - 2021

4. Design Details & Materials

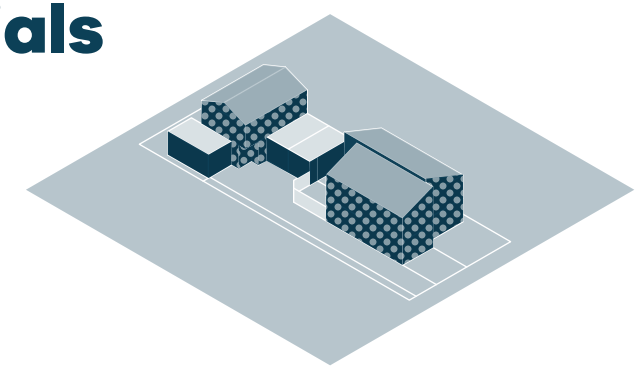
4.1 Balconies

4.2 Privacy and screening

4.3 Shading and weather protection

4.4 Materials

4.5 Services



What does Design Details & Materials include?

The type and composition of externally visible elements.

Why are Design Details & Materials important?

Design details and materials have a siginifcant impact on the amenity, durability, functionality, aesthetic value of a building.

Design Details & Materials should:

- Consider efficiency and simplicity to reduce complexity in construction.
- Ensure services, shade and screening are integrated into the overall design
- Consider how design details such as screens impact internal amenity

Planning Scheme References

55.03 Liveability

- 55.03-3 – Integration with the street
- 55.03-4 – Entry

55.04 External Amenity

- 55.04-4 – Overlooking
- 55.04-5 – Internal views

Supplementary References

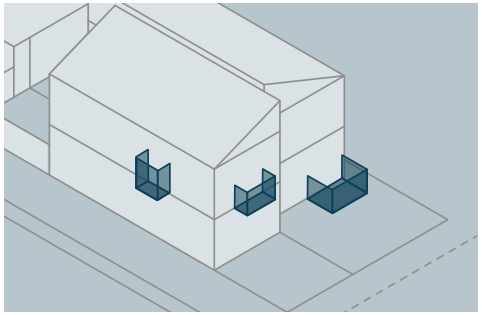
Merri-bek ESD Guideance Plans

Sustainability Victoria - Energy Smart Housing Manual

96 Pearson Street, Brunswick West

4. Design Details & Materials

4.1 Balconies



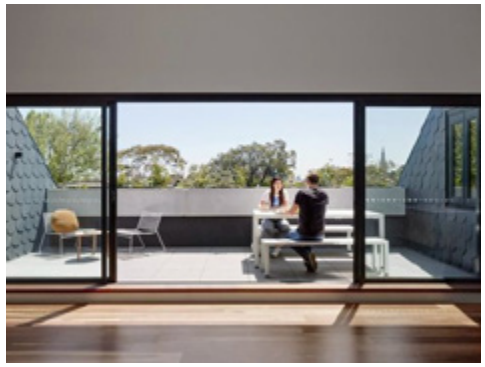
DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Balcony size -** Design balconies which are large enough to be used as outdoor living spaces. Balcony size should be proportionate to the dwelling size (refer to Clause 55 Private Open Space Standard B3-5 for guidance).
- **Outdoor dining -** Where the balcony is adjacent to the living space provide a usable space that allows the convenient arrangement of table and chairs for outdoor dining.
- **Balcony outlook -** Balconies should have at least one outlook that is not screened.
- **Balustrades -** Balustrade design and detailing should tie in with the overall material palette. The lower portion should be solid, or battens should be used to allow for adequate privacy from below (refer to Clause 55 Overlooking Standard B4-4 for guidance).
- **Ground floor terraces -** Where private outdoor spaces are located at ground ground level (and facing the street or accessway) consider increasing their floor level (relative to the footpath) to improve privacy.
- **Covered balconies -** Where balconies are provided as the principle private open space ensure they are covered for weather protection to improve functionality.

- **Noise and visual impacts -** Mechanical equipment should be located away from habitable windows and doors. Where A/C units are proposed on balconies, they should be concealed and positioned to ensure they do not impact on the functionality of the space.

✓ *Metal pickets or palisade fence provides low-level privacy for occupants.*

✓ *Covered balconies allow year round use.*



✓ *Outlook from balconies provide views not possible at ground level (photo: Tess Kelly).*

✓ *A deep balcony can be used as a second living space. A solid balustrade provides privacy from below (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

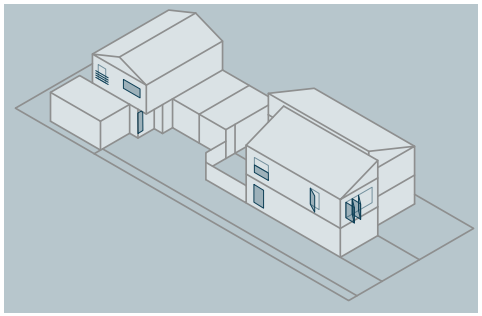
THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Minimum balcony sizes for dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms.
- Narrow balconies with high screening and no outlook.

- Locating air conditioning units and other equipment within usable balcony space.
- Fully glazed balustrades (including tinted) with poor quality framing elements.

4. Design Details & Materials

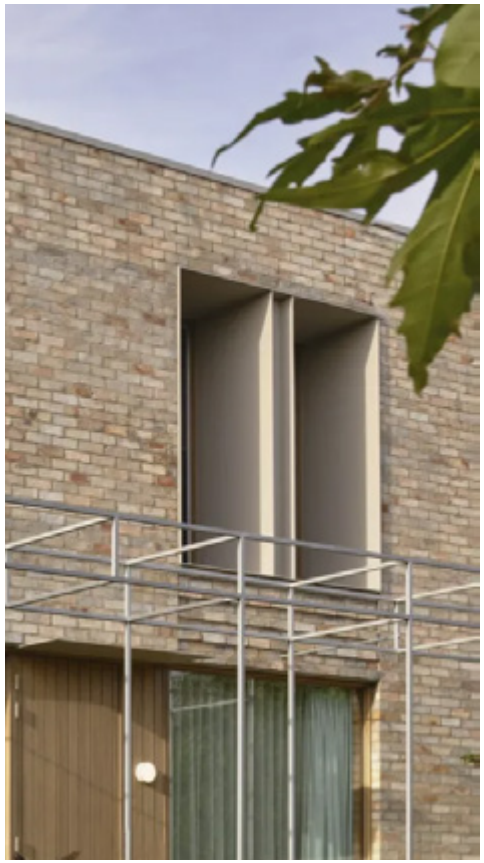
4.2 Privacy and screening



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Privacy screens and opaque windows-** Habitable windows with screening are not recommended. Clear, openable windows improve the internal amenity of spaces by providing daylight, outlook and ventilation. Alternative solutions for overlooking protection are listed below (SEE ALSO SECTION 3.1).
- **Elevated views -** Using a deep planter box, 'shelf' or angled screen can restrict views in one direction, while still providing a sense of openness and outlook for occupants.
- **Staggered views -** Where windows from separate dwellings face each other, consider staggering them to avoid the need for screening.
- **Fins, hoods, shrouds and deeply inset windows -** These components can narrow the view lines from a window without the need for screens or opaque windows. They can also assist with sun shading.
- **Offset screens -** If screening is required, it should be offset from the facade to create space for planting and/or a balcony.
- **Roller shutters -** Roller shutters should only be used where security or noise are key issues.

- **Integrated element -** Privacy devices should always be designed as an integrated part of the facade.
- **Adjustable views -** Provided they still comply with overlooking standards, using adjustable screens allows flexible use by the occupant for privacy and weather protection when most needed.



✓ *Deep inset windows narrow the field of view reducing the chance of broad views to internal spaces (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *First floor windows with a mid-height sill to allow privacy to the interior and surveillance to the street (photo: Shannon McGrath).*

✓ *Screens which are offset from the facade can provide mini-balconies and provide a better outlook from within (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *Screens offset from the facade can provide mini-balconies (photo: Tess Kelly).*

4. Design Details & Materials

4.2 Privacy and screening - continued

✓ *Metal window shrouds reduce oblique views into neighbouring open space (photo: Ari Hatzis).*

✓ *Adjustable screening allowing privacy and shading to internal spaces.*

✓ *Integrate screening to the design of the facade (photo: Dave Kulesza).*

✓ *Barrier screens limit downward views into neighbouring yards and living spaces.*

✓ *Angled, batten screening integrated into the architecture and only restricting views in one direction.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Oversized window hoods which may bend or warp over time.

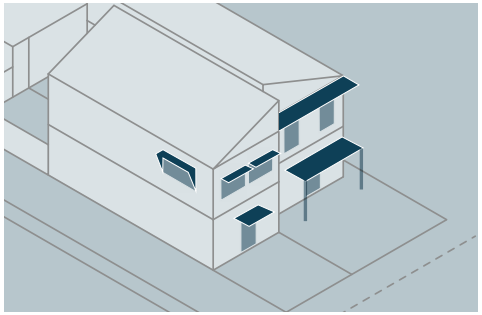
- Excessive use of high, fixed screens and obscure glazing.

- Excessive use of highlight windows facing the street.
- Fixed high screening around balconies (when they are the primary secluded private open space)
- Screened or opaque windows in habitable rooms.

- High screening to the street.

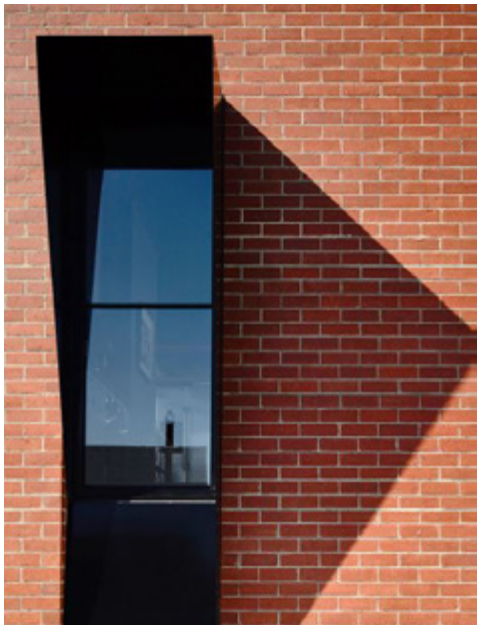
4. Design Details & Materials

4.3 Shading and weather protection



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Entry protection -** An awning, verandah, porch or canopy structure should be provided at dwelling entries for weather protection.
- **Window hoods** - Design window hoods to provide shading in the summer, and allow sunlight in the winter.
- **Shade awning -** Use high quality fabric awnings to provide adjustable shading.
- **Window and door protection -** When windows or doors are not inset, ensure a canopy is provided to reduce chance of water ingress or damage.
- **Roof eaves -** Roof eaves should be integrated as part of the overall building composition and provide shade to windows or glazed doors. The eave size and profile should reflect the design and structure of the roof.



✓ *Window hood with side fins can provide protection from hot summer sun (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *Awnings above entries provide weather protection to occupants and visitors (photo: Tess Kelly).*

✓ *Fabric awnings can be adjustable providing much needed shade during summer.*

✓ *Deeply recessed windows reduce the chance of water / rain ingress.*

✓ *Eaves should be well proportioned and integrated in to the facade composition (photo: Mancini Made).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Entry doors with no weather protection.

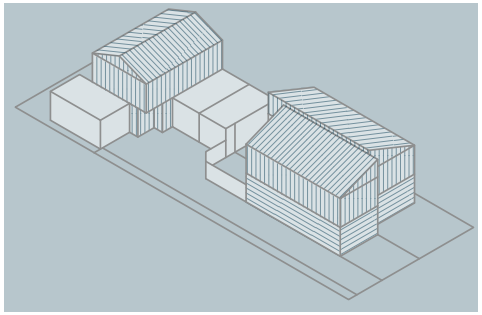
- Windows which are flush with facade.
- Face mounted, bulky, eaves or canopies which are not integrated with the facade.

- Eaves which are not considered as part of the overall form composition.

- Shading devices which detract from the appearance of facades and reduce street activation.

4. Design Details & Materials

4.4 Materials



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Simple palette** - Use a simple palette of high quality, textured materials.
- **Durablility -** Ensure materials are durable, age well, are not easily water-stained and can be easily maintained.
- **Whole building approach -** All buildings should consist of high quality materials and surface finishes. Particular attention should be paid to the detailing and quality of the street facade and side return walls, which can be viewed from the public realm.
- **Complementary palette -** Materials used on the ground and first floors should be complementary. Solid, textured and durable materials must be used at ground floor where they are most visible, and subject to more wear.
- **Material junctions** - A change in profile, a step or a recess should be used where two different facade materials meet.
- **Light colours -** Avoid using dark coloured cladding and roofing which can absorb heat and increase the need for mechanical cooling (see ESD Planning Pre-application and Pre-FI checklist).
- **Material scale -** Use materials which reflect a residential character. Large format, commercial materials should be avoided.

Light coloured cladding which absorbs less heat. Single colour palette with different textures on ground and first floor (photo: Tom Ross).

Painted brick provides a solid base material with a textured finish.

High quality, textured materials (photo: Tom Ross).

4. Design Details & Materials

4.4 Materials - continued

✓ *Timber cladding on first floor contrasts with with painted brick base (photo: Ari Hatzis).*

✓ *High quality timber cladding with protective coating will age well as it weathers (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *Recycled brick with subtle details can result in a well resolved facade composition (photo: Tess Kelly).*

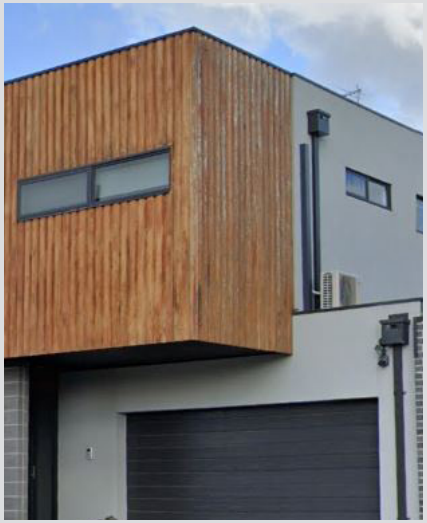
✓ *Variation in use of a single material such as brick provides interest at street level.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Use of low quality materials such as rendered panels, which are not durable and age poorly

- Material transitions which only add complexity and do not aid in building articulation

- Sporadic use of materials

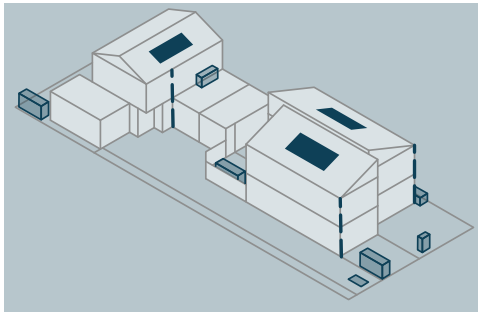


- Quality materials limited to the front facade.

- Large format panels more suited to commercial or industrial buildings.

4. Design Details & Materials

4.5 Services



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Solar (PV) panels location** - Ensure solar panels are not highly visible from the street or nearby public spaces. On small sites, solar panels can still be visible from the public realm. Design the roof pitch to accommodate proposed or future solar panels.
- **Services integration -** Integrate services into the fence or mailbox design or locate them beyond the front wall of the building. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.4)
- **Mulitple mailboxes -** Where mutiple mailboxes are required combine them along the street boundary within a low height structure. The mailboxes should be easily accessible.
- **Dwellings fronting the street -** Dwellings with direct street entry should have individual mailboxes and services.
- **Air conditioning equiment -** Air conditioning units should be hidden from street and from public spaces.
- **Downpipe location -** Avoid placing downpipes on the front facade. Where downpipes are visible they should be integrated with the design and discrete.

- **Rainwater tanks -** Rainwater tanks should not be seen from the street and should not impact the functionality of private open spaces.
- **Visibility splays -** Services should not not restrict visibility between pedetrians and cars exiting the driveway (see Clause 52.06-9 Design Standards 1 Accessways).
- **Integration with landscape -** Ensure landscaping around mailboxes and services does not interfere with their function or accessibility. (REFER ALSO SECTION 3.2)

✓ *Recessed downpipes as part of a well considered facade composition (photo: Tess Kelly).*

✓ *Downpipes and AC condenser setback from the frontage, along the side facade.*

✓ *Mailboxes and utilities integrated into fence design (photo: Alice Hutchison).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Air conditioning units which are visible from the street

- Prominent downpipes and rainwater heads visible from the street

- Poorly integrated mailbox and services boxes.

- Prominent screened services facing the street.

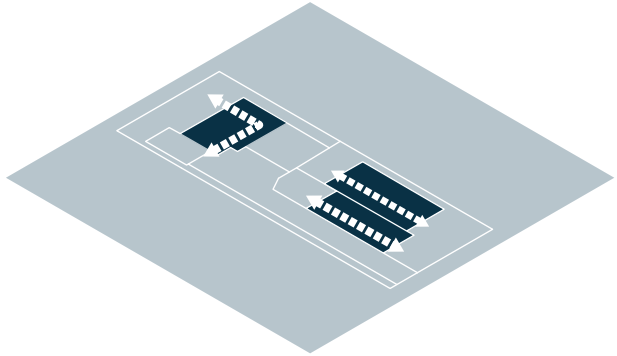
Salisbury Blackburn by NFT Architects - 2019 (photo: David Kulesza)

5. Internal Layout

5.1 Internal planning

5.2 Circulation spaces

5.3 Designing for livability



What does Internal Layout include?

Any area within the external walls of the dwelling.

Why is Internal Layout important?

A functional and efficent internal layout has a significant impact on the usability, amenity and flexibility of the dwelling.

Internal Layout should:

- Provide sufficient space within rooms and provide sufficient circulation spaces between rooms
- Provide flexibility to change the use of a room in the future
- Incorporate Livable housing design features
- Provide sufficient internal storage space to meet the needs of future occupants
- Take advantage of daylight, outlook and ventilation opportunities

Planning Scheme References

55.03 Livability

- 55.03-4 – Entry
- 55.03-7 – Functional layout
- 55.03-8 – Room depth
- 55.03-11 – Storage
- 55.03-12 – Accessibility for apartment developments

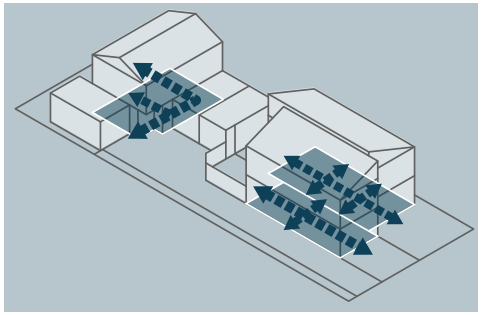
Supplementary References

Livable Housing Design Standard 2022

South Crescent by Neometro - 2022 (photo: Derek Swalwell)

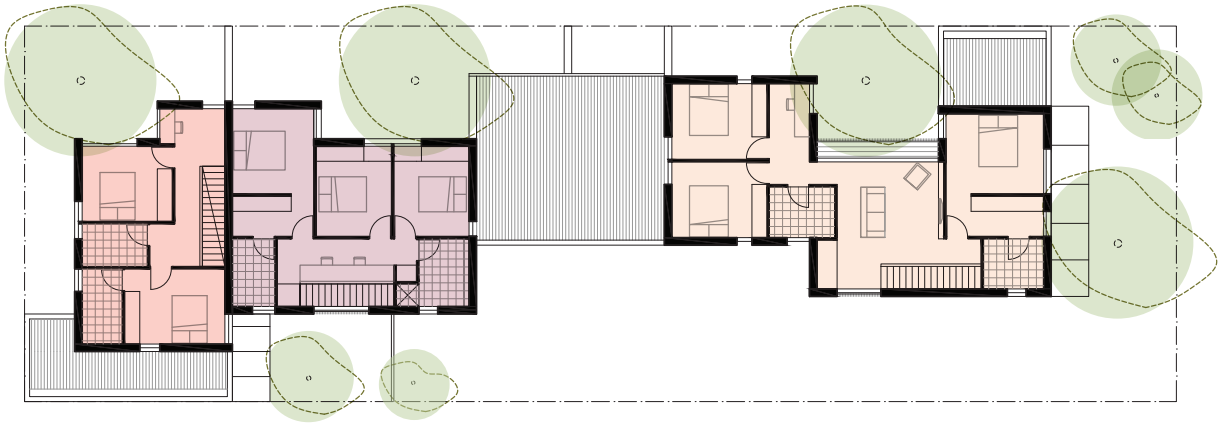
5. Internal Layout

5.1 Internal planning

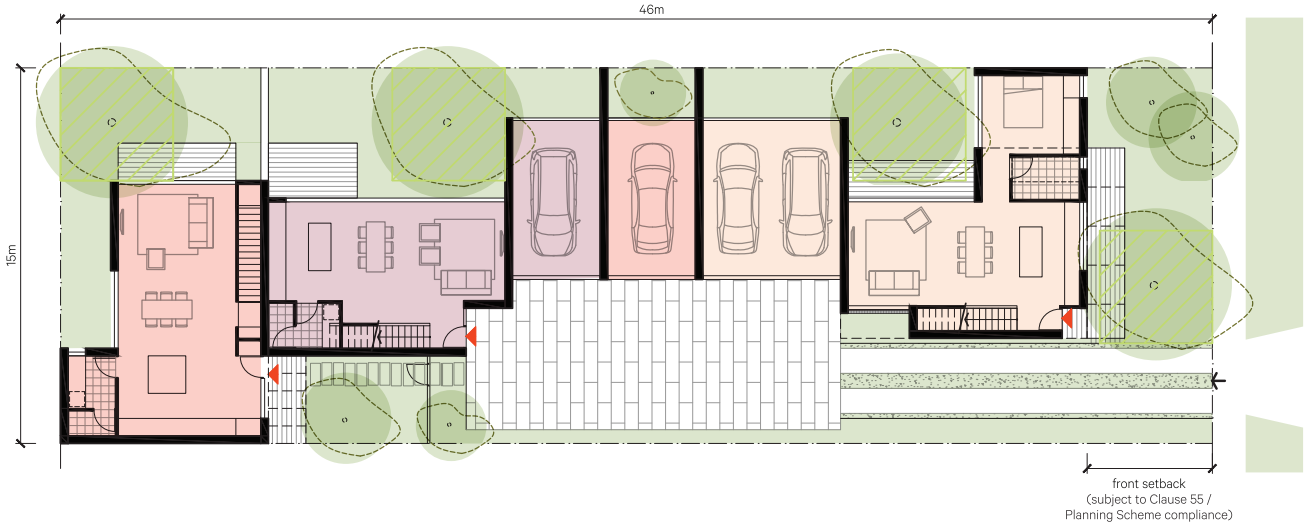


DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Window and door placement -** The furniture layout and use of an interior space must be considered when locating windows and doors to ensure a functional and usable space.
- **Size of rooms-** When preparing floor plans ensure furniture and fixtures are included and shown to scale. The size of living rooms should be proportionate to the number of bedrooms or occupants in the dwelling.
- **Laundry access -** Provide direct or easy access from the laundry to the external clothesline.
- **Garage access** - Where garages are located adjacent to private open space provide a window or glazed door for visual connection between spaces and flexible use.
- **Entry transition -** Where front doors open onto living spaces provide a transition space; a hall, recess or niche
- **Bedroom transition** - Bedrooms should be separated from living spaces by a hall or recess.
- **Uninteruped flow -** Rooms and furniture should be arrange to ensure a logical and uninterrupted flow through the internal spaces.
- **Connection to outdoor spaces** - SEE SECTION 1.4



first

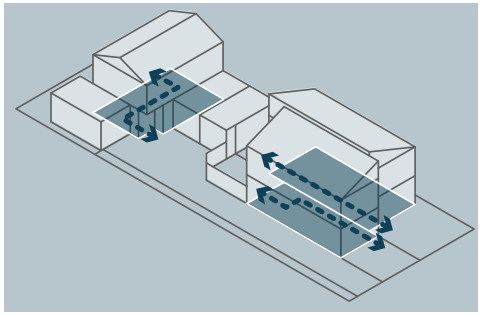


ground

Furniture and fixtures layout example (Exemplar Designs - Merri-bek City Council and Kennedy Nolan).

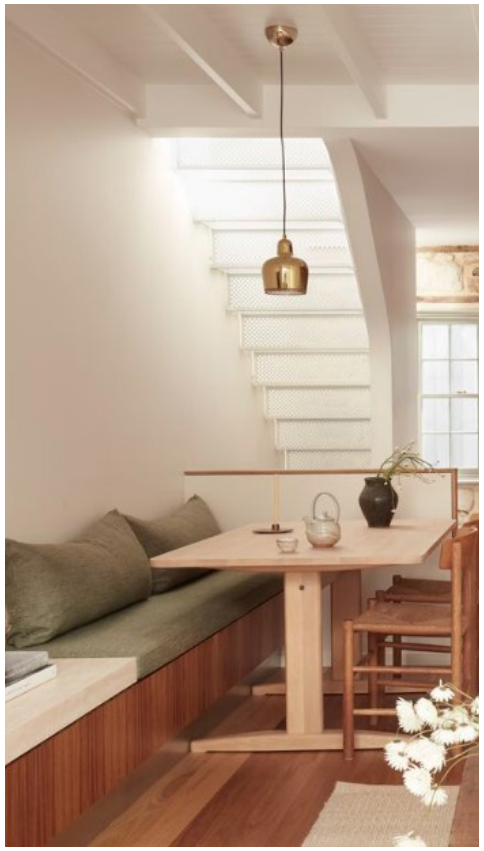
5. Internal Layout

5.2 Circulation spaces

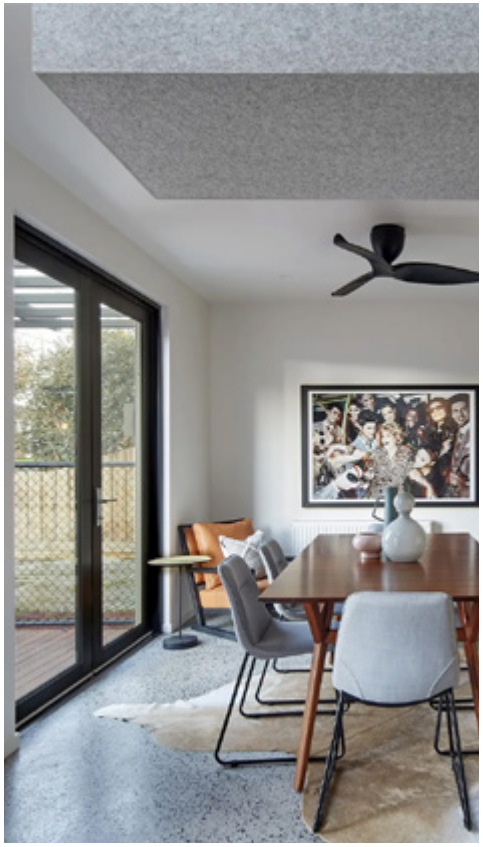


DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Restricted spaces -** Consider location of doors to ensure they do not negatively impact circulation or open into hallways. Consider using sliding door for restricted spaces.
- **Multi-functional spaces -** Create multi-functional rooms instead of small, separated rooms. For instance, provide a european laundry under a stair or within a larger bathroom.
- **Access to daylight -** Circulation spaces should enjoy a good level of daylight, outlook and ventilation. Hallways and transitional spaces should also have a visual connection to the outside.
- **Staircase configuration -** Provide straight staircases (with limited winding) which are open at one side to allow daylight to filter into circulation spaces and to ease movement of furniture between floor levels.



✓ *Efficient use of under-stair space (photo: Prue Ruscoe).*

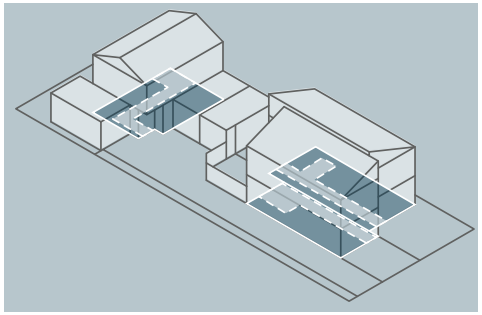


✓ *An open, light-filled interior (photo: Alice Hutchison).*

✓ *A space saving european laundry (photo: Nat Spada).*

5. Internal Layout

5.3 Design for livability



DESIGN RESPONSE

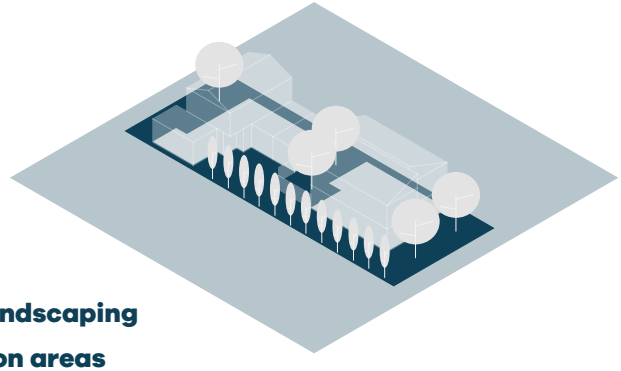
New dwellings are encouraged to achieve Silver Level of performance under the Livable Housing Australia, Livable Housing Design Guidelines, including:

- Providing an accessible path from the street and car park areas to a level entry.
- Providing minimum clear opening width of 850mm for doors and 1000mm for hallways at ground (or entry) level.
- Whenever practical and reasonable, providing a living area, kitchen and bedroom at entry level.
- Hobless showers designed to enable future installation of grab rails.
- Refer to Livable Housing Design Standard (2022) for more details.

✓ *Clear space around kitchen (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

Liverpool House by Kennedy Nolan (photo: Derek Swalwell)

6. Open Space & Communal Areas



6.1 Trees

6.2 Garden planting

6.3 Courtyards

6.4 Furniture and hard landscaping

6.5 Vertical and elevated landscaping

6.6 Accessways and common areas

6.7 Fences

6.8 Storm water and passive irrigation

What do Open Space and Communal Areas include?

Areas on the site but outside of the dwelling footprint, including vertical or elevated landscaping.

Why are Open Space and Communal Areas important?

Open space improves amenity for residents, reduces the heat island effect, reduces stormwater run-off and increases habitat and biodiversity.

Open Space should:

- Provide good levels of amenity for residents to rest, play and interact
- Assist with shading and cooling of the urban environment
- Reduce water run-off from the site by retaining it within the soil

Planning Scheme References

55.02 Neighbourhood Character

- 55.02-7 – Tree canopy
- 55.02-8 – Front fences

55.03 Livebaility

- 55.03-3 – Street integration
- 55.03-4 – Entry

55.05 Sustainability

- 55.05-1 – Permeability and stormwater management

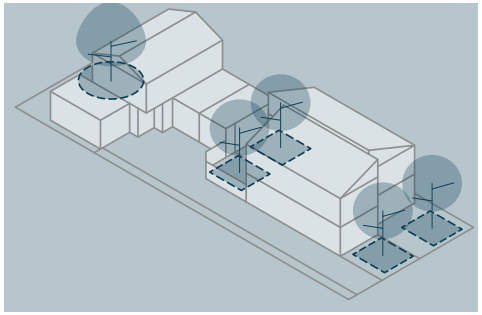
Supplementary References

Merri-bek Tree Finder

Clyde Street Mews by Six Degrees - 2018 (photo: Alice Hutchison)

6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.1 Trees



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Retain trees -** The retention of existing mature trees on site is encouraged. The driveway crossover location should be considered so that existing street trees do not have to be removed.
- **Soil volume -** Ensure sufficient soil volume is provided for the full size of a tree at maturity.* (SEE ALSO SECTION 3.5)
- **Tree planting conflict -** To avoid conflict with adjacent infrastructure, take into consideration the mature size of a tree and its potential impact on underground services, overhead powerlines, car parks, driveways, and footpaths.
- **Break-up spaces -** To avoid wide expanses of multiple driveways plant appropriate trees in the spaces between to soften the hardscape.
- **Tree selection** - Consider impacts on open space (shade), interior space (privacy, daylight/ solar access) and neighbours (maintainance, leaf litter, overshadowing etc) and the benefits/ drawbacks of evergreen or deciduous trees when selecting a tree. For more information follow link to the Merri-bek Tree Finder.

**To confirm required soil volumes you may need to consult a horticultural specialist.*

✓ *Tree planted between two (impermeable) driveways to soften the hardscape (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *Plant trees in corners not affected by vehicle movements (photo: Dion Robeson).*

✓ *Deciduous trees offer shade in the summer and passive solar gain in the winter (photo: Shannon McGrath).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

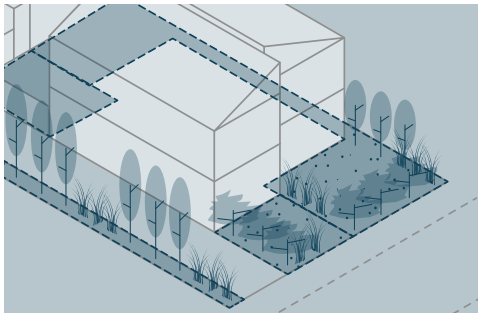
- Removal of mature and/or high quality vegetation.
- Loss of established vegetation with the adjacent verge/public realm.

- A reliance on dwarf species or small mature trees.
- Planting trees without adequate soil volume.
- Trees unsuitably sized and/or located, resulting in property damage or loss of amenity.

- Multiple driveways without planting between.

6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.2 Garden planting



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Quality topsoil -** Retaining the existing topsoil in the garden can help new plants to establish more effectively. Where topsoil can't be retained, use a good quality replacement and ensure sufficient soil volume is provided for the full size of a plants at maturity.
- **Drough tolerant and low maintenance -** Use low maintenance and drought tolerant tree and plant species that are climate resiliant
- **Biodiversity -** Plant species which will improve biodiversity with the site.
- **Avoid excessive repetition -** Where there are long strips of garden bed alternate different plant species
- **Layered planting -** Instead of relying on a water dependent lawn within a front setback consider planting low-mid height tussock grasses, shrubs and climbing plants for a 'layered garden'.
- **Weed suppression -** Use low shrubs and native ground cover plants to suppress weed species and to create habitat for biodiversity.
- **Sloping gardens -** Where gardens include steep topography use deep rooted plants to stabilise the soil and avoid run-off. (SEE ALSO SECTION 3.5)

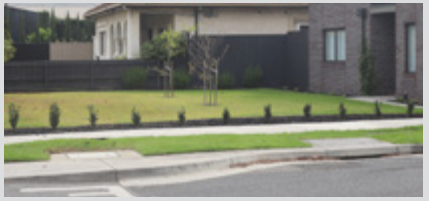
✓ *Layered planting (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

✓ *Sloping garden*

✓ *Drought tolerant plants (photo: Sam Noonan).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Sparse planting requiring high maintenance.



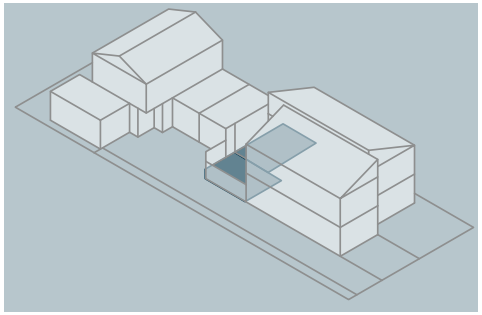
- Monotonous planting combined with large lawn areas

- Predominantly exotic plant species which do not provide habitat / food for native animal species and require a lot of water to survive

- Garden beds which are too small or narrow

6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.3 Courtyards



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Multi-functional open space -** Using a combination of permeable surfaces such as decking, permeable paving and resilient ground cover planting, a courtyard can accomodate canopy trees, greenery, outdoor dining and play space.
- **Utilities location -** Place utilities such as water storage tanks, hot water units, and HVAC systems in consolidated and concealed locations to reduce the functional and visual impact on the open space.
- **Rainwater tank location -** Rainwater tanks should be placed in discrete locations. They can be placed underneath the decking, along fence lines, or underground.
- **Storage location -** Storage should be located below eaves or within a garage to maximise landscaping areas which are open to sky.
- **Washing line location -** Washing lines should be retractable and be located to reduce impact on functionality or visual appearance of outdoor spaces.
- **Utilised undercover areas** - Consider locating garages adjacent to open spaces, allowing usable space to be expanded for entertainment or play when needed.

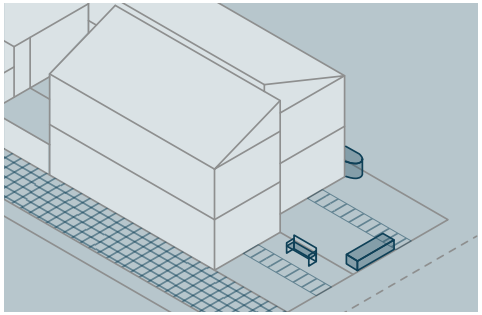
✓ *Space for trees with permeable surfaces and outdoor dining (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Locating storage sheds and services in locations which compromise the functionality and visual appearance of private open space.
- Long stretches of narrow spaces with limited functional use.
- Private open spaces which receive limited sunlight

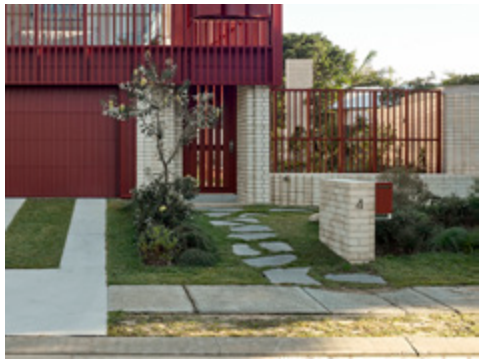
6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.4 Furniture and paved areas



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Pathway provision -** Pedestrian paths within the front setback should incorporate permeable surfaces such as granitic sand, pavers, stepping stones or permeable paving to decrease water run off and improve conditions for nearby trees.
- **Rain garden/watertank provision -** Rain gardens and/or watertanks should be carefully located integrated into the garden or open space. They should not be located within the front setback. See Melbourne Water for instructions and Merri-bek tech notes.
- **Retaining elements -** Retaining walls and other garden elements should be integrated with the fence and dwelling design.
- **Furniture placement -** Consider how people will use outdoor spaces. In rear yards, design/ place furniture in locations protected from sun, wind and rain. In front yards consider how fences or walls can also function as seating. (REFER ALSO SECTION 1.4)



✓ *Stepping stones access to the front door (photo: Christopher Frederick Jones)*

✓ *Seating element integrated into mailbox and services structure (photo: Rory Gardiner).*

✓ *Walls, fences or planters at sitting height (photo: Derek Swalwell).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Large, concrete pathways.
- Watertanks visible from the street.

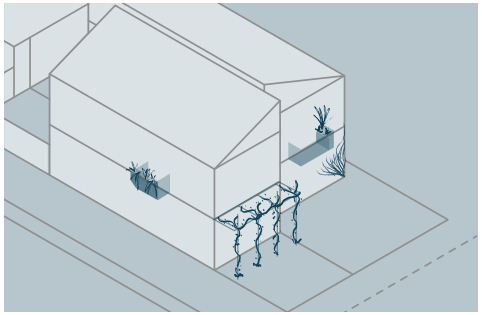
- Retaining wall materials that don't fit with the overall material palette.

- No pedestrian path to the front door.

- Front path indistinguishable from the driveway.

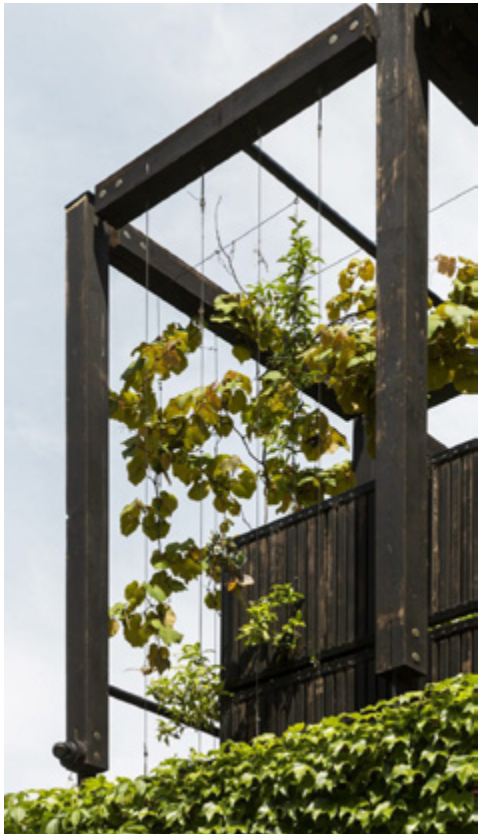
6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.5 Vertical and elevated landscaping



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Balcony planting -** Integrated planter boxes located on balconies or as window boxes should be easily accessible from inside or balcony to allow for watering and maintenance.
- **Irrigation and drainage -** Where planters cannot be easily accessed, irrigation systems must be provided. Ensure planters have a drainage outlet and consider a reticulated water system to improve efficiency.
- **Climbing plants -** Ensure an appropriate structure is provided for climbing plants and the species isn't likely to cause damage to the proposed or neighbouring dwellings.
- **Soil volume -** Ensure sufficient soil volume is provided to enable plants to reach their optimal size.



Climbing plants on a dedicated climbing structure (photo: Tim Allen).

Balcony plants with access via first floor window.

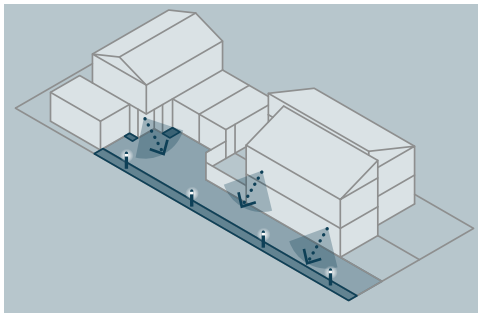
Climbing plants can be accessed from within the property for routine pruning (photo: Tess Kelly).

THINGS TO AVOID

- Selecting plants which will not survive in an elevated position where they may be subject to high sun and/or wind exposure.
- Plants that can cause significant damage to proposed or neighbouring structures.
- Planters which cannot be accessed for watering or routine maintainance
- Planters that do not drain and cause damage to infrastructure or buildings.
- Exposed irrigation lines.
- Insufficient soil volume resulting in small or stunted plant gowth

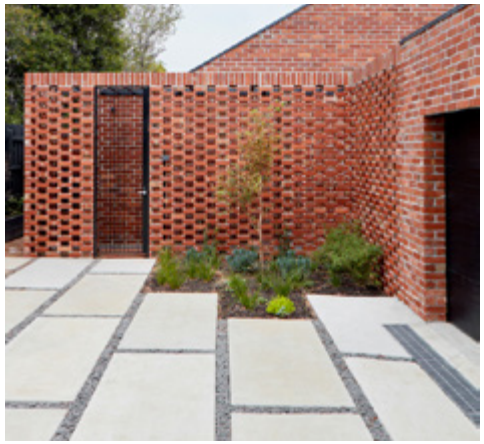
6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.6 Accessways and common areas



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Shared zone -** Accessways should accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and those with limited mobility. Provide a clear and safe path from the street to the front door of dwellings.
- **Hardscape treatment** - Break up expanses of concrete by alternating finishes across broad areas, by using paving, expressing joints and/or using textured concrete.
- **Driveway environment -** Driveways for front-to-back developments should allow room for landscaping, and generous and welcoming dwelling entrances which are visible from the street.
- **Passive surviellance -** Provide windows from living areas and entry halls, and clear windows at upper levels to provide passive surveillance and light to accessways and common areas. (SEE ALSO SECTION 3.1)
- **Lighting -** Provide layered garden and path lighting within common areas to make them safe, accessible and attractive.
- **Landscaping** - Provide resilient landscaping within the front setback, along the fence line and at dwelling entries.



✓ *Driveway environment allows for passive surveillance, landscaping and tree planting (photo: Tom Ross).*

✓ *Passive surveillence to common driveway from upper levels (photo: Peter Clarke).*

✓ *Well lit and attractive pedestrian access and common areas (photo: Tess Kelly).*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

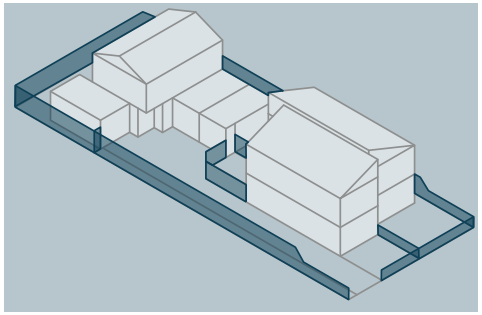
- Flood-lighting

- Large concrete driveway areas that do not incorporate landscaping.

- Common driveway areas that are dominated by garage doors and do not provide passive surveillance.

6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.7 Fences



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Fence design -** Front fences and fences separating common areas should be integrated with the overal design of the dwellings. They should share design and/or material characteristics.
- **Front fence height -** Low front fences are preferred; they are more welcoming and provide passive surveillance, while still delineating private and public property.
- **High front fences -** If a high fence (over 1.5m) is required* some transperancy should still be provided. This can be achieved using timber slats or pickets, palisade or perforated metal, 'hit and miss' brickwork or gaps in-between solid walls.
- **Combine with landscaping** - A hedge or screen planting can be used in addition to a low fence. Setting a high fence back from the boundary to allow for planting between the footpath and the fence can also improve this interface. High fences between properties could be be semi-transparent to allow light through and plants to climb

**Up to 2m high fence allowed when fronting a transport zone (Clause 55.02-8).*

- **Side and rear treatment** - Allow enough space along side and rear boundaries for screen planting and/or climbing plants.
- **Integrated seating** - Consider providing seating as part of the fence structure to encourage use of front setback spaces and interactions with neighbours and passers by.

✓ *Quality fence material and finish integrated with the facade.*

✓ *Where a high fence is allowed provide some transparency for passive surveillance (photo: Shannon McGrath)*

✓ *Low metal palisade fence allowing vegetation to grow through.*

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Solid, high fences to street without any transparent elements or textured treatment

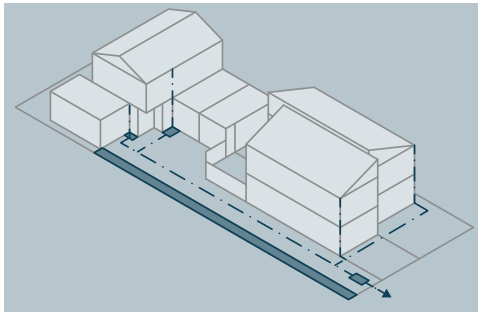
- No fence (unless a landscaped alternative has been proposed or it is a response to the existing street character)

- Fence materials/finishes which have no connection to the dwelling materials.

- Poor quality fences that hide dwellings beyond.

6. Open Space & Communal Areas

6.8 Stormwater and passive irrigation



DESIGN RESPONSE

- **Passive irrigation -** Utilise storm water run-off from the driveway and roofs for passive irrigation and reuse in bathrooms / laundries.
- **Permeable paving -** Incorporate porous paving to break up large, hard surfaces such as driveways to reduce impact on stormwater infrastructure.

✓ Driveway with permeable paving surface.

✓ Rain garden to harvest stormwater from roof.

✓ Driveway with permeable paving surface (photo: Tom Ross).

THINGS TO AVOID ✕

- Diverting storm water that could be used for passive irrigation

- Large, non-porous hard paved areas without landscaping.
- Areas of gravel that may wash onto the public realm during rain events.

Ballarat House by Kennedy Nolan (photo: Derek Swalwell)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessible

Dwellings and associated outdoor space that can be accessed by people of all abilities.

Activation

The conditions of a site (dwelling and/or yard) which create a vibrant and lively interface through human presence, diverse uses, and interactive design, to promote social interaction and safety.

Amenity

The quality of a development that contributes to the comfort, convenience and/or enjoyment of a place.

Architectural Expression

The unique style and character of a building, conveyed through design elements, materials, and the overall aesthetic, reflecting its purpose and context.

Architectural Form

The physical shape and structure of a building, including its massing, geometry, and spatial configuration, defining how it interacts with its surroundings.

Articulation

The detailing and variation of a building's surfaces, materials, and elements to reduce visual bulk and enhance visual interest.

Biodiversity

The variety of plant and animal life as supported by green infrastructure, habitat creation and sustainable landscape design.

Building Envelope

A form defined by a building in its entirety. A building envelope must be considered in relation to urban context, visual bulk and shadowing impacts.

Building Rhythm

The regular repetition of elements such as windows, columns, or balconies along a facade, creating visual harmony and reinforcing streetscape patterns.

Canopy Trees

Large trees with broad, spreading crowns that provide shade, reduce heat and contribute to urban identity and biodiversity.

Deciduous

A type of tree or shrub that sheds its leaves every autumn and regrows them in spring. This cycle of shedding and regrowth can provide shade in warmer months while allowing sun and warmth to penetrate in the cooler months.

Design Composition

The arrangement and organization of visual elements, such as lines, shapes, colors, and textures, to create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing design.

Desire Line

A path created by foot traffic that highlights the most direct or preferred route between destinations.

Evergreen

A type of tree or plant that retains its leaves throughout the year, providing consistent greenery and shade regardless of the season.

Grain (urban + fine)

The pattern and scale of urban development within an urban context. Fine grain refers to small, frequent, and varied elements, encouraging visual interest and diversity.

Habitable Rooms

Rooms designed for human occupancy such as living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. Service rooms such as bathrooms or laundries and circulation areas are not considered habitable.

HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning)

Mechanical building systems that regulate indoor temperature, airflow, and air quality to ensure comfort and health.

Liveability

The overall quality of life of dwelling occupants, shaped by accessibility, connection to green space, safety, usability and practicality of dwelling layout.

Overlooking

Direct views into private spaces such as yards, balconies, doors and windows which can affect privacy and amenity.

Passive Surveillance

Design that allows people to observe spaces from buildings or yards, enhancing safety by increasing monitoring of the public realm.

Proportion / Well Proportioned

The harmonious relationship between elements of a building or space, contributing to visual balance and aesthetic appeal.

Permeable Surface

A surface that allows water to pass through, reducing stormwater runoff and supporting sustainable drainage.

Public Realm

Spaces accessible to the public, including streets, parks, waterway corridors, plazas and other communal areas.

Solar Orientation

The alignment of buildings and spaces to optimise sunlight exposure for energy efficiency, comfort and environmental performance.

Transitions

The spatial or visual shifts between different uses, forms, or environments that guide movement and support coherence in urban settings.

Tree Protection Zone (TPZ)

A designated area around a tree that must be kept clear of construction activity to protect its roots and health.

Visual Bulk

The perceived mass and scale of a building, which can affect its dominance in a streetscape or impact on adjacent properties.

Visual Relief

Design strategies that break up large or monotonous forms through articulation, landscaping, or variation, enhancing visual compositions.

For more information visit
merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Merri-bek
City Council