

Trends and strategies in the design of medium density housing

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for

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Strategic Planning and Policy Division
Department of Human Services
South Australian State Government

Definition

For the purposes of this study

“Medium Density Housing” (“MDH”)

Includes:

- ‘Town house’ row houses
- Low rise apartments
- Mixed use, with housing over commercial uses

in the context of the city and inner suburbs of Adelaide
the numerical figure of density assumed is between
around 60-150m² land area/dwelling unit

Affordable medium density housing

- Not a separate design category
- May be some different design priorities

Trends in medium density housing

- Attractions of city and inner suburban living
- Smaller site areas
- Smaller household sizes
- Flexibility of plan and form (for couples, couples with small children or shared occupancy)
- Preference for low maintenance and security

Internal spaces

- One large space: Living/eating/cooking/working
- View is desirable but not critical
- 'Heat and eat' kitchen
- Two good bedrooms preferred
- Two good bathrooms preferred
- Flexible 'other' space
- Two or 1-plus covered car spaces preferred

External Spaces

- Minimal private open space, more of an open room than a garden. It should be small but useable, such as a deep balcony or room-sized courtyard
- Low maintenance private open space - lawn mowing is unfashionable
- Minimal use of outside communal space, and no expectation of maintenance of communal outside space

Fittings and Finishes

- High standard of finishes
- High standard of fittings
- Modern, not neo-traditional, appearance - the 'sophisticated urbanite' image
- 'Historic' or imported styles are not preferred for MDH, in contrast to the dominance of such styles in 'popular' single dwelling housing

Security and privacy

- Occupant control of access
- Unambiguous degrees of territoriality
- Aural and visual privacy between dwellings

Adaptability and visitability

- Design for visitability by people with physical disabilities
- Design for adaptability for occupation by people with physical disabilities

Environment

- Design for comfort
- Design for low energy use
- Design for acceptable impact on neighbours
- Design for sustainability

Costs

- Land costs and infrastructure costs
- Process costs
- Construction costs

A strong market driven housing industry
drives land and construction costs

Land Costs

Land costs respond to the provisions of the Development Plan through:

- permitted uses
- plot ratio
- open space ratio

Land costs increase to take account of density bonuses

Process Costs

- Design fees
- Holding costs during approvals process
- 'Risk costs' due to uncertainty in the market or uncertainty in approvals

Construction Costs

- Construction pricing responds to demand relative to capacity within the industry
- For MDH, building techniques are typically more sophisticated and larger building firms are involved than for low density housing
- 'Non-standard' design may be perceived by builders to warrant higher costs
- New construction techniques are changing relative costs

DWELLING TYPE	Approximate building cost/M ² in early 2002	Building cost relative to low density housing
LOW DENSITY Detached framed houses	\$700	100%
LOW/MEDIUM DENSITY Terrace or town houses Apartments up to three stories with one or two bedroom units, no lift, excluding balconies	\$950 \$1000	135% 140%
MEDIUM/HIGH DENSITY Multi storey apartments with one or two bedroom units and lift, excluding balconies	\$1250	180%

Community and Neighbour Attitudes

Concerns:

Very high: Parking/traffic

High: Streetscape, privacy

Medium: Noise, property values, views, physical impact

Low: Type or residents and maintenance

(Study of MDH in some Melbourne suburbs)

Community and Neighbour Attitudes

Most acceptable:

Small in scale

Contextual in design

Improves the environment in some way

Area of few existing residents

Making MDH Affordable : Incentives and subsidies

- Facilitating purchase through Government subsidy or shared equity schemes
- Government subsidy of tenant rent
- Government subsidy of public sector rental dwellings
- Government subsidy of community housing groups
- Affordable housing in return for planning bonuses
- Affordable housing development levy
- Long term leasing or control of private sector financed housing
- Government ownership of land
- Composite schemes

Examples of MDH developments

Characteristics of developments that are likely to be successful are:

- Good design
- Small scale projects.
- Mix of income groups.
- Subsidised dwellings indistinguishable from the private sector. This protect the value of the project. Moreover, *Residents in subsidised housing do not want their houses to stand out.*

B2 Queen Street and Colby Place Housing (completed 2002)

T Tectvs Architects for sale in the private sector

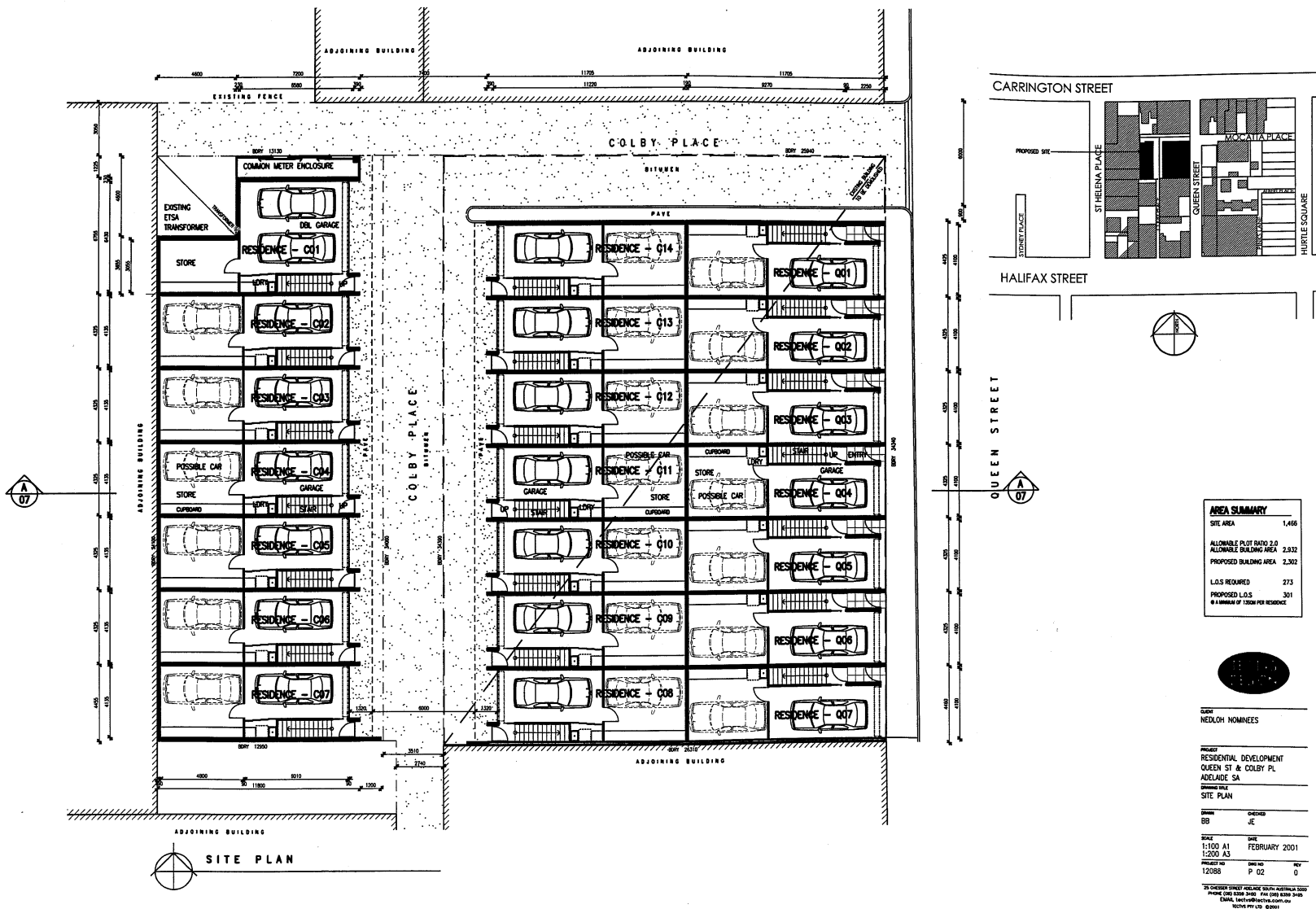
D Dense development

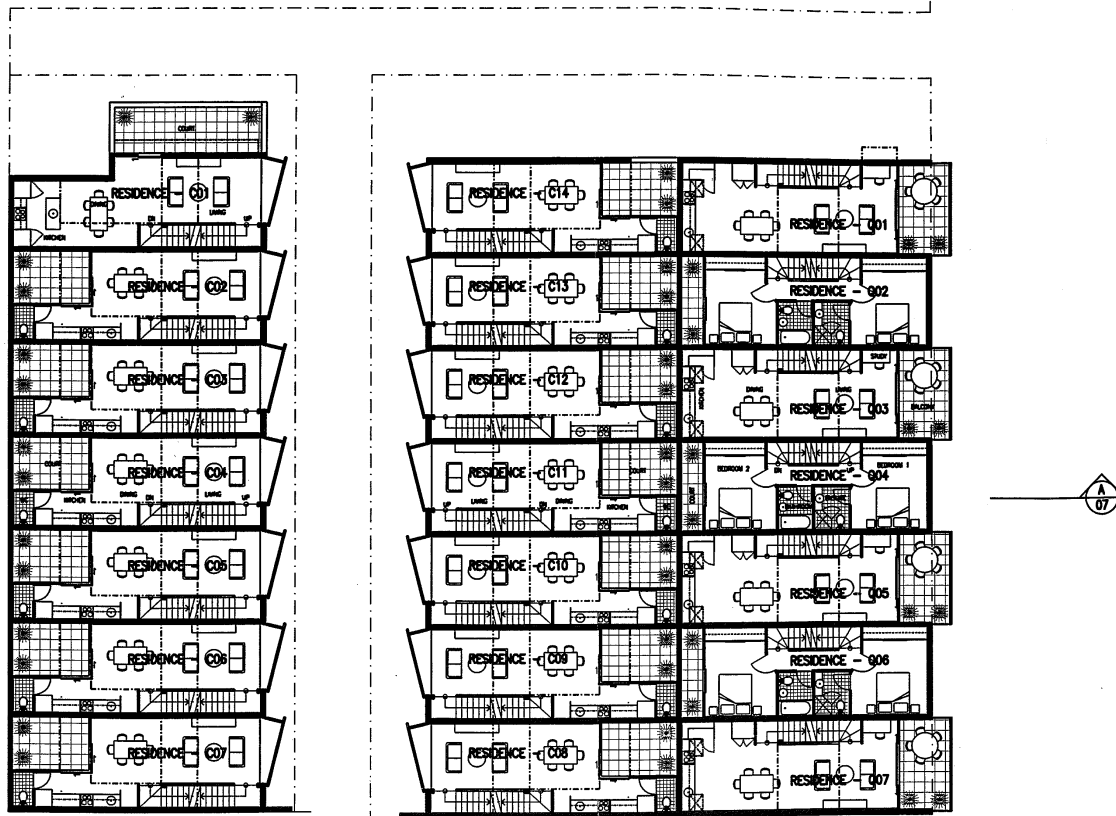
“End on’ parking spaces for each dwelling

E Economical, straightforward, repetitive plan form 2

C Careful treatment of overlooking and privacy issues







FIRST FLOOR SITE PLAN



CLUB
NEOLH NOMINEES

PROJECT
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
QUEEN ST & COLBY PL
ADELAIDE SA

DRAWING TITLE
FIRST FLOOR SITE PLAN

DRAWN	CHECKED
BB	JE

SCALE	DATE
1:100 A1	FEBRUARY 2001
1:200 A3	

PROJECT NO	DWG NO	REV
12088	P 03	0

31 CHESTER STREET ADELAIDE SOUTH AUSTRALIA 5000
PHONE 080 808 3366 FAX 080 838 3485
EMAIL info@tectvs.com.au
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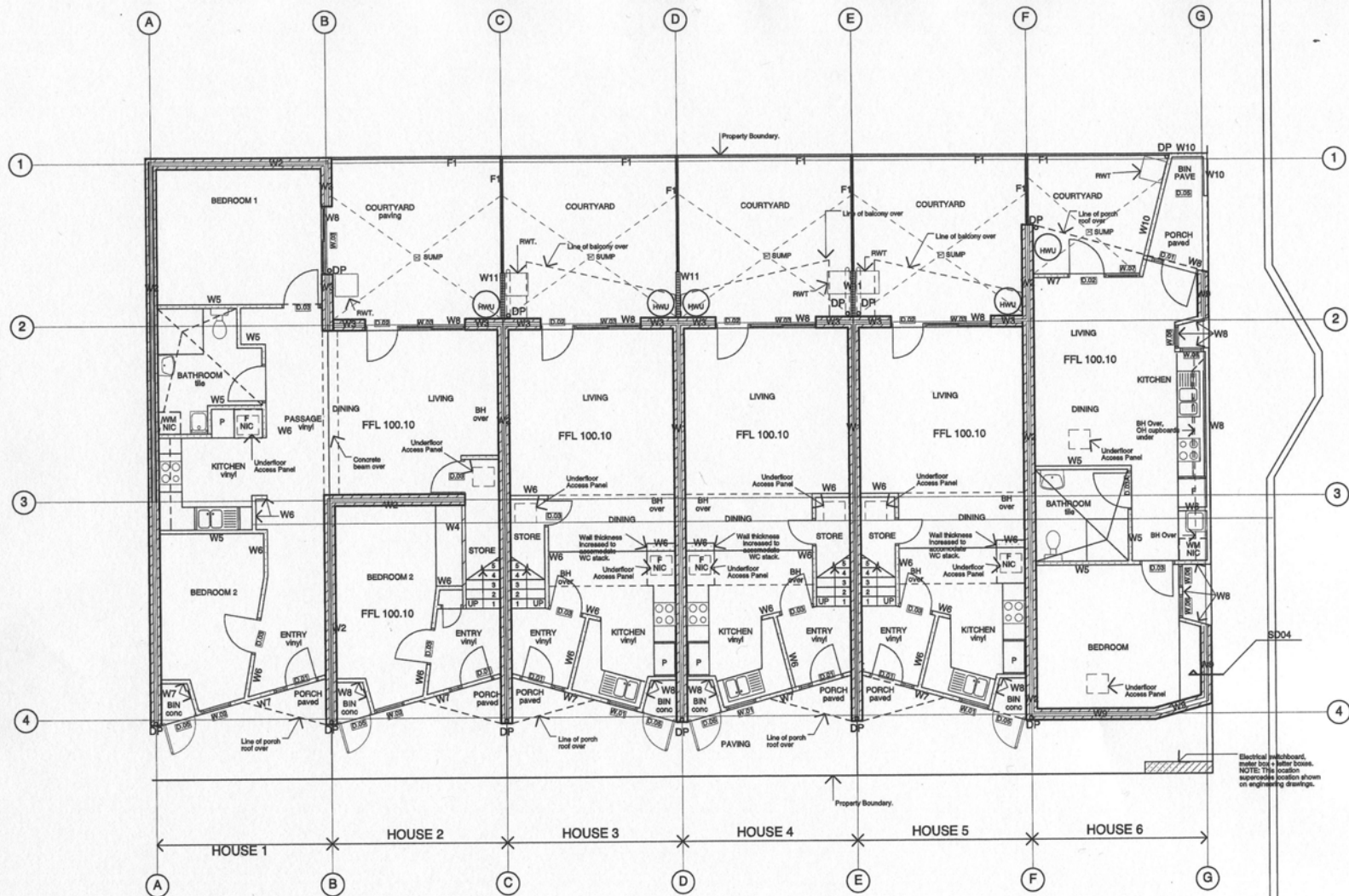
B1 Hallett Street Houses (completed 2002)

Phillips/Pilkington Architects for
the South Australian Housing
Trust

- Dense development
- No car parking
- Adaptable housing on ground floor
- Environmental responses (north facing, shade, solar hot water, rainwater tanks)
- Diversity in housing mix
- Funding by State Government.

Images made available by Philips/Pilkington Architects





Hallett Street Units for SAHT
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

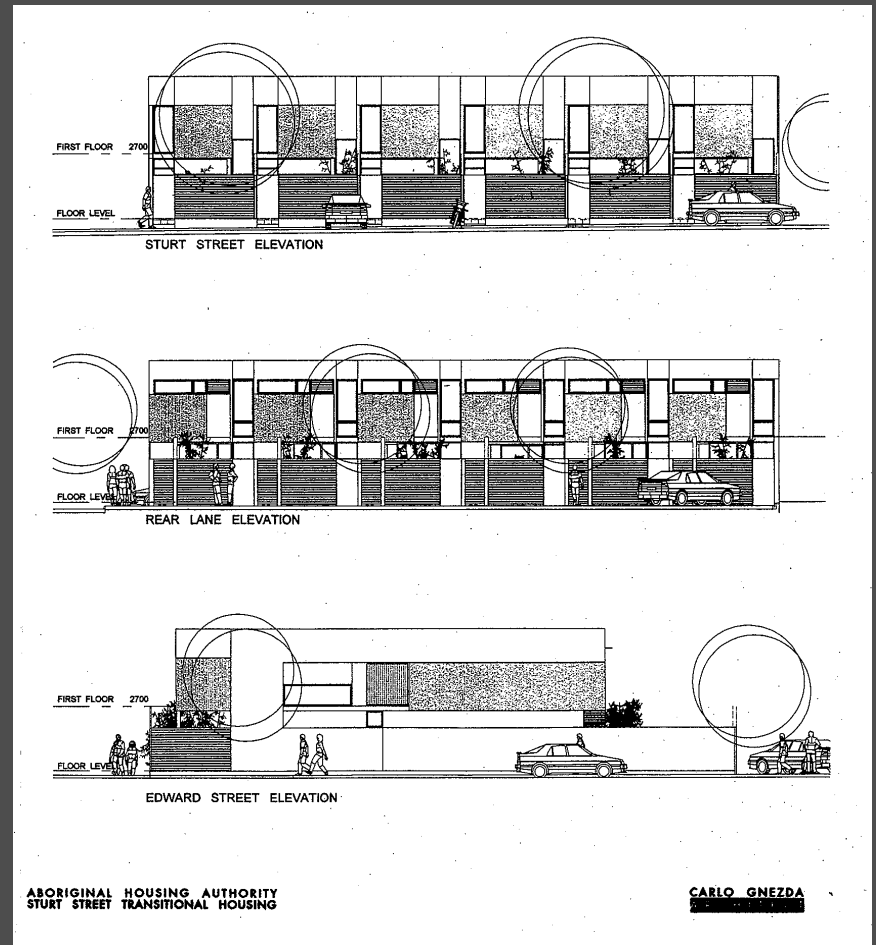
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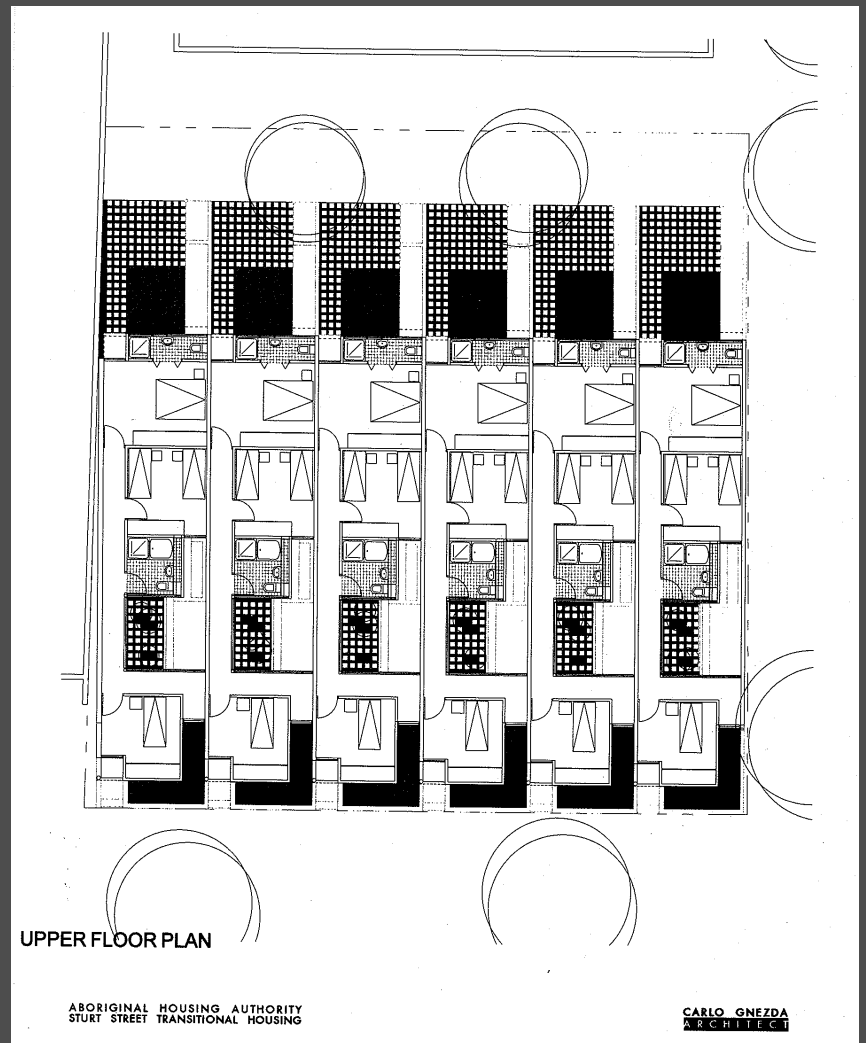
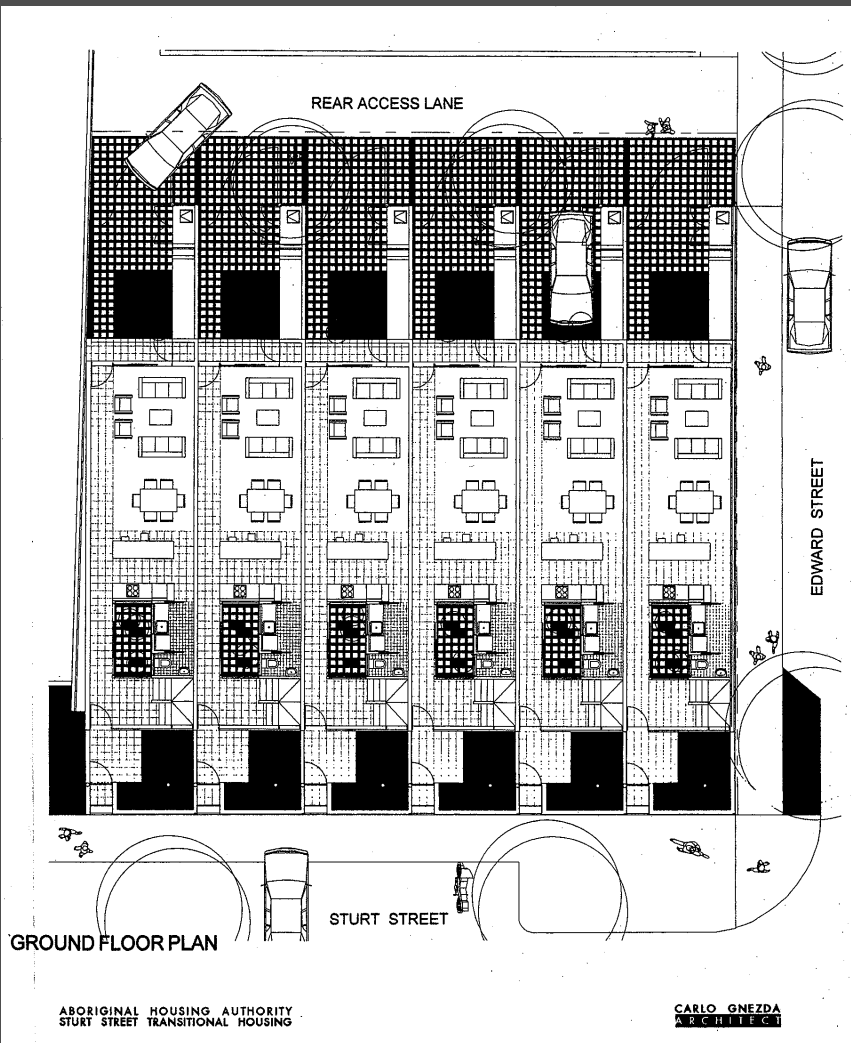
B4 Sturt Street Housing 254-260 Sturt Street Adelaide (designed 2002)

Carlo Gnezda Architect for
the Aboriginal Housing
Authority

Single storey courtyard row
housing
Planning for Indigenous
communities
Funding by State Government



Drawings made available by AHA



Drawings made available by AHA

B8 Wattle Apartments Pyrmont, Sydney (completed 2002)

Woods Bagot Architects for City
West Housing

8 floors of apartments with lift providing
disabled access

Noise reduction measures to cope with
main road location

Environmental measures – cross
ventilation, passive solar design.

Open walkway access allows single-
storey dual aspect apartments

Shared rooftop area

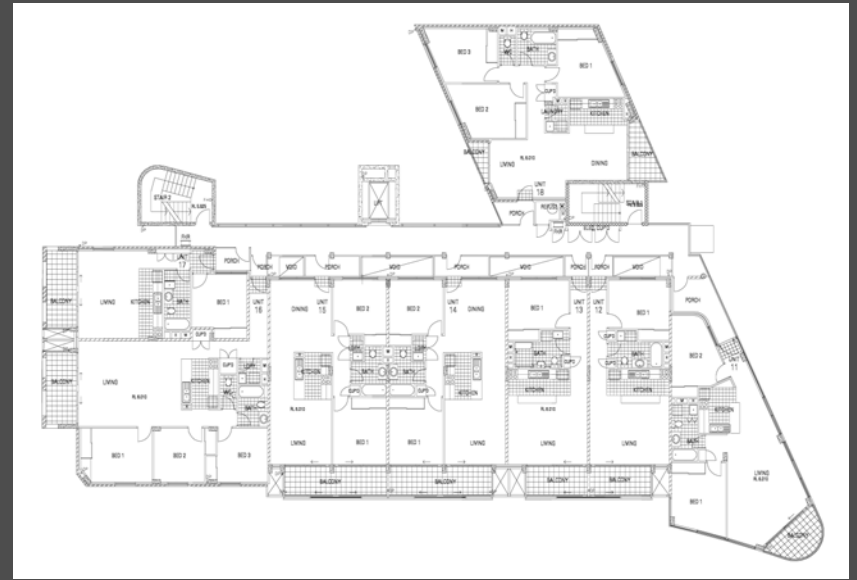
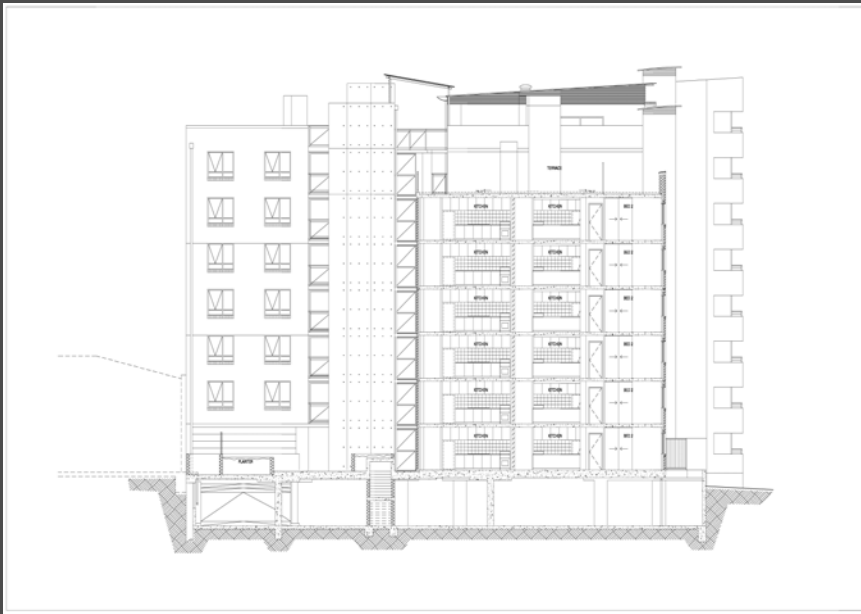
Part funding by proceeds from
developer levy



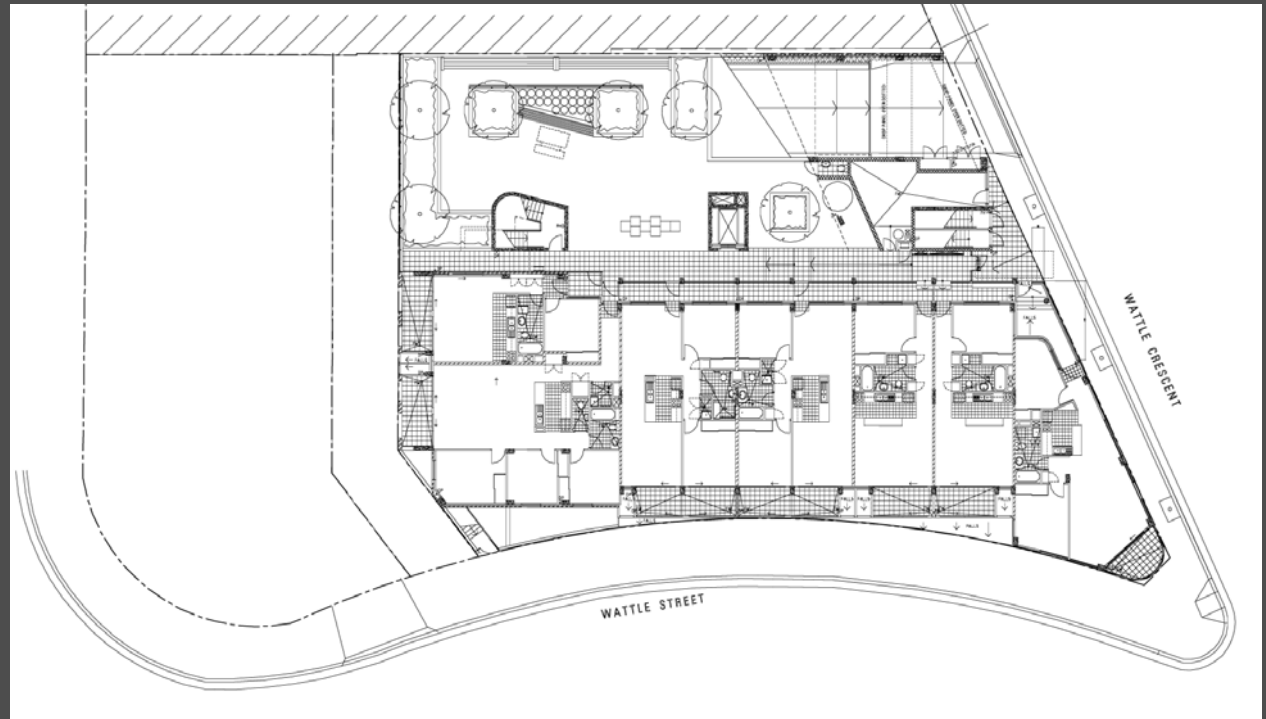
Images made available by Woods Bagot Architects



Images made available by Woods Bagot Architects



Drawings made available by
Woods Bagot Architects



Design – Expectations of occupants

- close to facilities and services
- secure and private
- comfortable with enough space
- low running costs
- For affordable housing, appearance that is not distinguishable from other housing.

Design – Expectations of neighbours

- Low or positive impact on neighbouring residents and property
- Low or positive impact on traffic and parking
- Contextual design

Design – Expectations of providers/owners

- low cost
- low maintenance
- adaptable (to allow a wide range of future occupiers)
- sustained asset value.

Design – Expectations of society

- environmentally sustainable (energy efficient, minimal negative effects on local and global environments, quality urban design)
- socially sustainable (a mix of income groups living in the City and inner suburbs. Diversity of population groups is a social objective)
- economically sustainable (strategies that are viable in the long term)

Affordable MDH

- No magic bullet
- 'Affordable MDH' is simply well designed MDH which is somehow made 'affordable' to the target group
- Best leverage to achieve affordable MDH where government owns the land at the time of development design and approval

