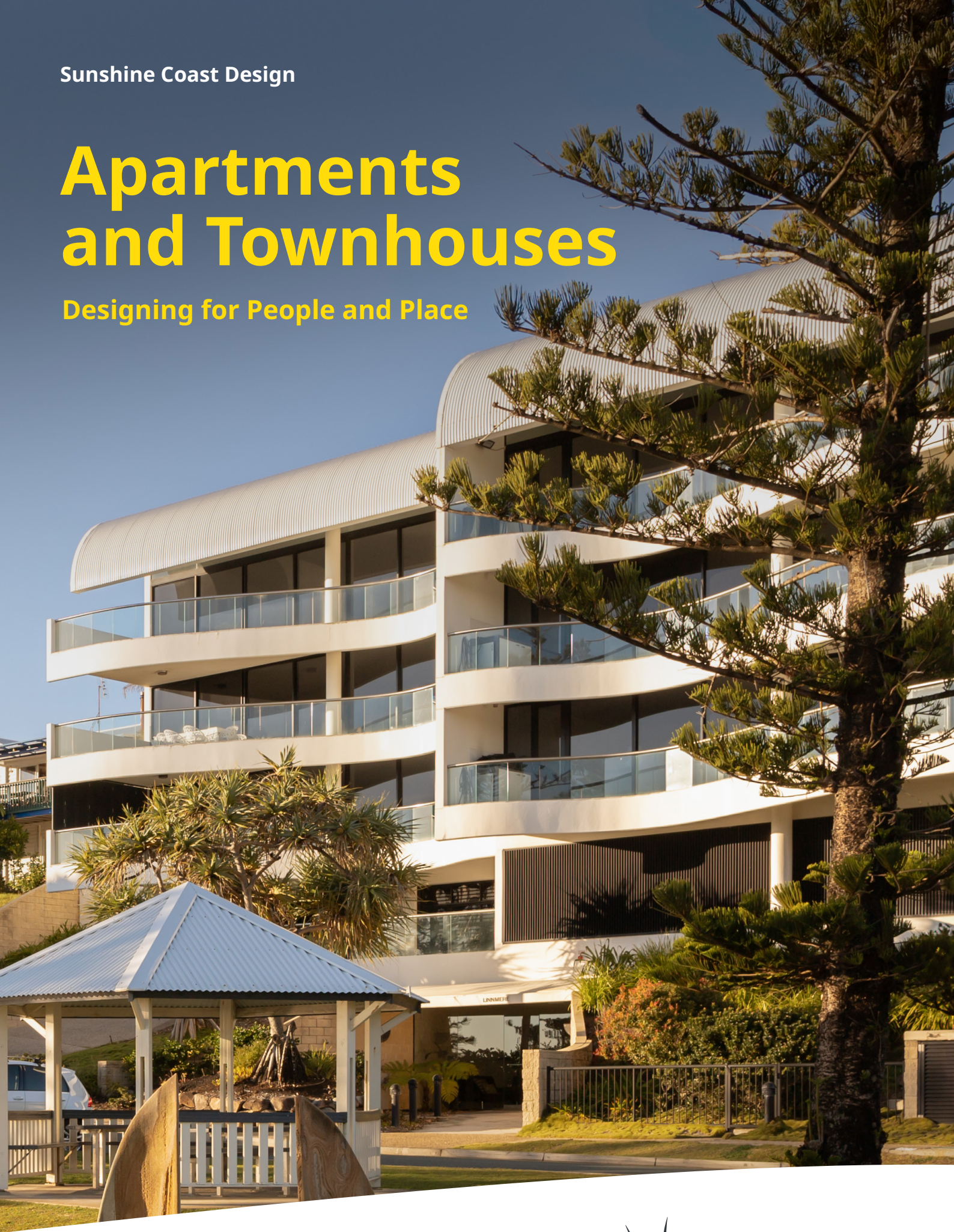
Sunshine Coast Design

Apartments and Townhouses

Designing for People and Place



Sunshine Coast COUNCIL

Acknowledgement of Country

Sunshine Coast Council respectfully acknowledges the Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land. We acknowledge the strength, endurance, wisdom and insight of the world's oldest living cultures, and pay our respects to elders, past and present.

This guide upholds the idea that if we care for Country, then the Country will care for us. ***Caring for Country*** provides a context for this design guide. It provides a foundation for designing more sustainable and respectful housing now and into the future.

Introduction

The Sunshine Coast has a vision to be Australia's most sustainable region - a special place where residents and visitors value the natural environment, green spaces and local character, alongside quality urban design. The Sunshine Coast's status as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve demonstrates globally that we are a community wanting to live in harmony with our environment while encouraging responsible design and development.

With the population expected to grow from 370,000 to more than 500,000 by 2041, it is crucial that new housing is comfortable, functional and aesthetically appealing while respecting the local character, culture, and context, including our streets and neighbourhoods.

The Sunshine Coast community is made up of over 40 distinct villages, each with their own character, stories, and culture – we must design places that honour these differences. If we do not prioritise place-based design, we risk losing the local identity of our beautiful region and a possible increase in unsuitable developments, especially as climate extremes increase.

Future housing - including apartments and townhouses - should support indoor-outdoor living, facilitate our enviable lifestyle, be adaptable to the changing climate and not contribute heat to the urban environment. By designing sustainably, and with liveability in mind, our medium-density homes can be comfortable, affordable and accessible, while in harmony with the natural landscape.

Great design doesn't happen by accident, it requires a thoughtful, collaborative process to achieve quality outcomes for residents, neighbourhoods, and the environment. By following the tips in this booklet, we can collectively ensure the Sunshine Coast remains a desirable place to live, work, and play - now and into the future.

Front Cover
Architect: Harry Seidler & Associates
Public Artwork: Sails by Angel Buj-Casanoves
Photo: Shane Hastings

Purpose

This guide provides design tips and inspiration to encourage the design of apartment and townhouse developments that are most suitable for the Sunshine Coast climate, context, and character. All new Sunshine Coast homes and neighbourhoods should focus on what is best for people and place.

Context for this guide

This design guide helps demonstrate Sunshine Coast Council's commitment to supporting and encouraging design quality in our built environment.

This design guide is intended for low to medium rise townhouse and apartment living. However, the advice in this guide may also apply to other types of development.

It is not a statutory document. It does not reference the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme or relevant Codes. Nor does it reference the National Construction Code, NatHERS or any other requirements to achieve Building Certification. Planning advice may be sought from Council on the statutory planning requirements that apply to development, in particular the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme.

The guide does not consider individual site and developer circumstances, costs, and financial considerations. Instead, it is intended to inspire, encourage, and support great Sunshine Coast design.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone interested in the design and development of medium density residential dwellings with a focus on apartments and townhouses.

Developers, designers, architects, planners, landscape architects, local government officers and investors will find this guide useful.

This guide can also help buyers, renters, and real estate agents to understand what makes a great apartment or townhouse for the Sunshine Coast.

How to use this guide

Design should be considered in the earliest stages of a project.

Use this guide to:

- Help design apartments and townhouses for the Sunshine Coast context and the current and future climate.
- Contribute to a more liveable and sustainable neighbourhood.
- Design places where people love to live, where they feel comfortable, safe, connected, and proud.
- Help prepare a project vision or design brief.
- Discuss project ideas and aspirations between clients, designers, and experts.

Most of the photos in this guide are from the Sunshine Coast, while others are primarily from South East Queensland. The photos reflect design ideas from a range of housing types to inspire creative thinking.

Not every design element in every photo is compliant with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme. The ticks highlight the design element to focus on in that image. A tick does not imply endorsement of that development.

Rewards of a well-designed apartment or townhouse

- Comfortable without relying on air-conditioning and heating.
- Resilient and responsive to the changing climate.
- Enables an indoor/outdoor lifestyle.
- Creates a cooler neighbourhood and pleasant shared spaces.
- Low energy living, therefore lower electricity costs.
- Suits the local character and context.
- Improve the health and well-being of the residents.
- The home will likely retain or increase in value.
- Residents will feel proud, safe, and connected to their community.

Engage professionals

Designing a townhouse or apartment building involves many complex decisions. You are strongly advised to engage a qualified design team. Seek professional advice from suitably qualified specialists such as an architect, landscape architect, building designer, planner, builder, engineer, energy assessor and others.

If you want to engage an architect, this link will be useful: www.architecture.com.au/explore/working-with-an-architect

The Sunshine Coast climate

The Sunshine Coast climate is an important part of the region's allure and reputation. It influences our lifestyle, defines our culture, and makes our region one of the most liveable in the world. The subtropical climate includes hot and humid tropical summers and cool temperate winters, the sun is intense throughout the year. Cool nights and warm days are common between autumn and spring.

Different micro-climates exist across the diverse geography of the mountainous hinterland, the foothills, the coastal plain and the coastal strip.

Buildings should respond to the local climate, allowing occupants to tailor access to sunlight for warmth and breezes for cooling, enabling indoor-outdoor living and providing protection from the sun and rain. Buildings that include operable elements can adapt to provide comfort without relying on artificial cooling, heating or lighting and are more resilient in the changing climate.

Well designed buildings improve how we live, how we feel and how we enjoy the climate.

	Humid tropical months October – April	Mild temperate months May – September
Air temp	19 - 29°C average Max 41°C Warm nights	9-21°C average Min 1.4°C Cold nights June to August
Sunshine	Intense sunshine Sept to March Sun higher in the sky and rising south of east, setting south of west	Sun lower in the sky and rising north of east, setting north of west
Skies	Frequent cloud cover Jan - Feb	Generally clear skies
Humidity	Higher: 60 - 75%	Lower: 45 - 70%
Rainfall	Rain from south-east Highest rainfall Dec - June	Rain from south-west Lowest rainfall July – Nov
Wind	Prevailing breezes from south-east Occasional tropical cyclones typically from north-east	South-easterly breezes, often with a cold west / south-westerly afternoon wind. Storms typically from north-east

Sunshine Coast Design Principles

The Sunshine Coast Design book was published in 2020 and sets out an important design vision and ethos for the Sunshine Coast. It is intended to encourage and inspire design that is best suited to the region and to protect and enhance all that is loved about the Sunshine Coast.

Following extensive consultation, it was determined that there are four key characteristics that the community values most about the Sunshine Coast. These characteristics are at the heart of what makes the Sunshine Coast so loved:

- We love our **climate**
- We live within and cherish our **landscape**
- We treasure our **oceans, beaches, and waterways**
- We are a **community** of communities

You can read the Sunshine Coast Design book online (free) or purchase a hard copy via www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/sunshinecoastdesign.

This design guide builds upon the 10 Design Principles covered in the Sunshine Coast Design book. While the 10 Design Principles will help you design any built environment on the Sunshine Coast, this design guide provides specific guidance for apartment and townhouse developments.

This document complements the State Government QDesign document. The purpose of QDesign is to guide the delivery of high-quality places, which deliver great streets, enjoyable parks and spaces and memorable buildings across Queensland.

The Sunshine Coast Design 10 Principles:

1. Work with the local climate
2. Create places that respect and incorporate landscape
3. Bring our cultures, arts and heritage to life
4. Capture and frame views and create vistas
5. Strengthen and extend a network of green corridors
6. Be inspired by the natural and built environment
7. Create shaded streets that put people first
8. Create welcoming places that can be enjoyed by everyone
9. Design places to be resilient and ready for change
10. Create and add value

Contents

The following six sections include design tips and inspiration to encourage the design of apartment and townhouse developments that are best for people and place, including the street and neighbourhood.

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1. Site

It is important to fully understand your project site and its context at the very beginning of the design process. This ensures an outcome that respects the local context, climate and character while contributing to the neighbourhood and achieving the best outcome for the residents and community.

1.1 Understand your site

Understand your site to determine the unique attributes, opportunities, and constraints. This allows the design team to maximise the site features or anticipate potential problems.

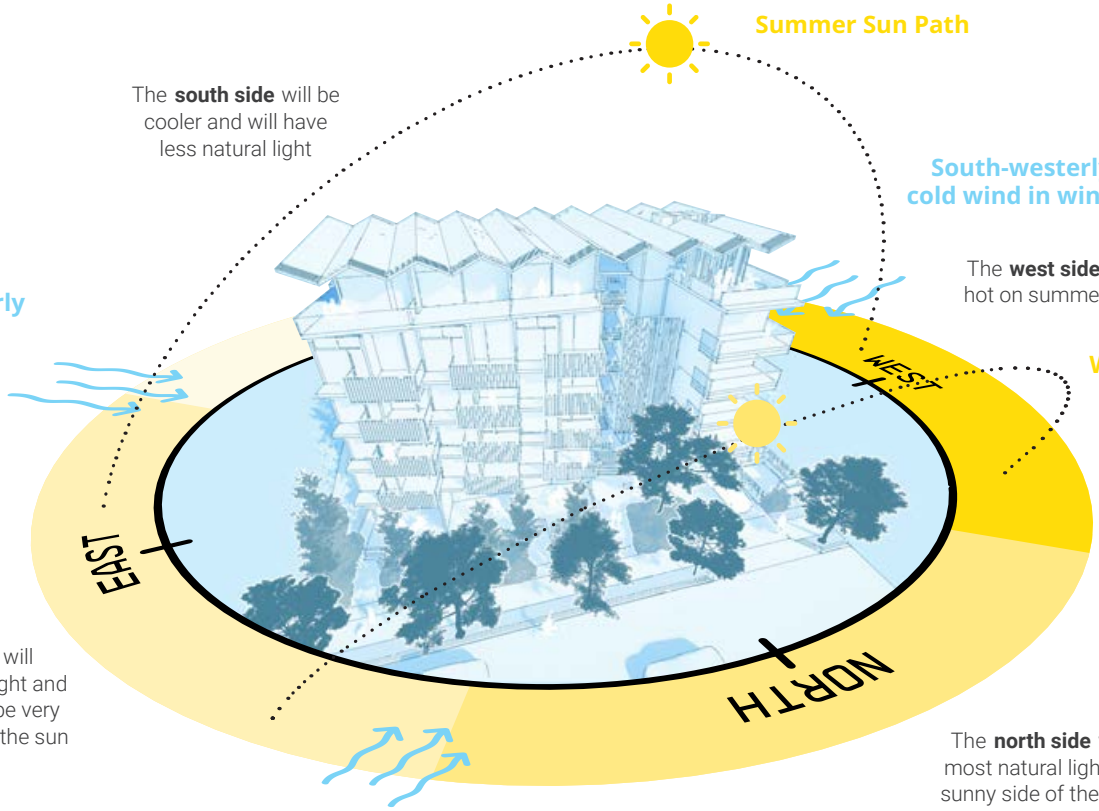
Consider the following:

- Sun path, breezes and prevailing winds
- Current and future climatic conditions, including awareness of flood, fire, heat, wind, sea level rise and storm surge hazards
- Social, cultural and historical context and character
- Existing native vegetation and established trees on and around the site
- Local flora and fauna in and around the site
- Topography, overland flow, local creeks, waterways
- Soil conditions & existing services
- Surrounding green corridors & natural areas
- Views into, out of and through the site
- Key local landmarks, gateways & natural features
- Surrounding land uses, neighbours and existing buildings
- Traffic conditions, vehicular needs, car parking
- All other relevant attributes of the site and the neighbourhood


Orientate your building to capture the sunlight and breezes. Generous, north facing balconies will be well used.

1.2 Understand the sun and breezes for your site

The shape and orientation of the block will be a major factor in the siting and orientation of your building. The best orientation will maximise daylight, sun and breezes which will affect the temperature and comfort level for residents.

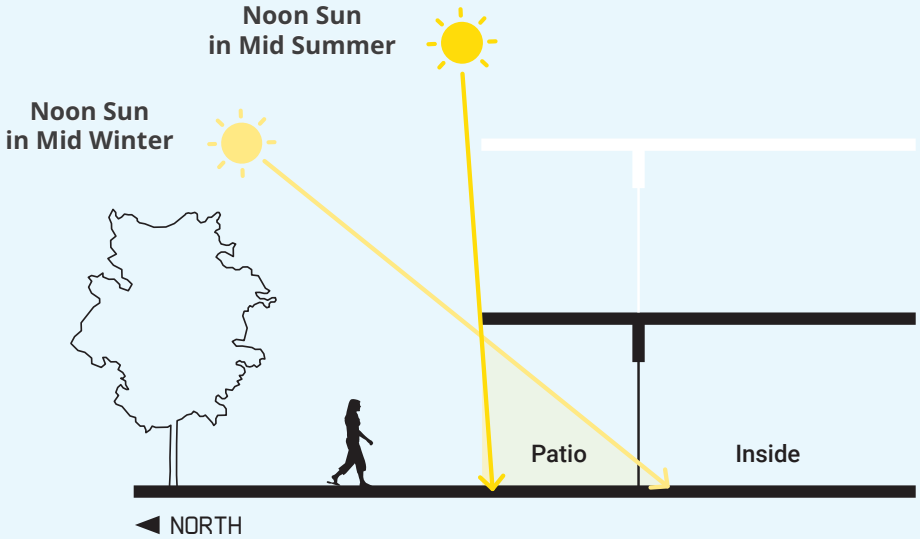


September to March

The sun is higher in the sky. Sunlight coming into this house is mostly blocked by the awning / verandah.

March to September

The sun is lower in the sky. Sunlight reaches under the verandah and into the house.



The amount of warmth and light coming into a townhouse or unit will depend on the angle of the sun, the size and position of the windows, glass doors, awnings, eaves and trees and the depth of the balcony above.

Note:
A sun study can show the optimal orientation to capture sunlight.

1.3 Design for context, character and place

In the process of understanding your site, you will reveal the attributes and context including the vegetation type, cultural values, local stories, terrain, heritage values, the existing surroundings, neighbouring buildings and any local features or patterns.

The character and identity of the Sunshine Coast should be evident in our buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods. Design in a way that respects and enhances local character, context, climate and identity – this is also referred to as place-based design.

Climate is a foundational driver of the character of Sunshine Coast buildings. Other prevailing characteristics include:

- Lightweight materials
- Light touch
- Climate control
- Outdoor living
- Simple and modest
- Landscape setting

Tips to design for place, context and character

- Design to respect Cultural Heritage
- Research the local character to better understand the local area and heritage including stories, landmarks, historical events and existing or local buildings.
- Think beyond the site – consider the scale of surrounding buildings.
- Retain or replace existing vegetation, especially mature trees.
- Be inspired by the form of existing local buildings, materials, craftmanship, details and features.
- Research existing local housing typologies, identifiable vernacular and understand the look and feel of the village or community.
- Be inspired by the local environment when choosing materials, colours, finishes.

Outcomes to avoid

- ⊗ Avoid buildings that disrespect the local character, especially in precincts that have a strong local character such as in the heritage and rail towns and the coastal villages.
- ⊗ Avoid generic or imported building styles – instead design for place and the local climate.
- ⊗ Avoid replication of heritage buildings creating a false impression of age or style. Do not copy the style of the past with unauthentic heritage detailing.

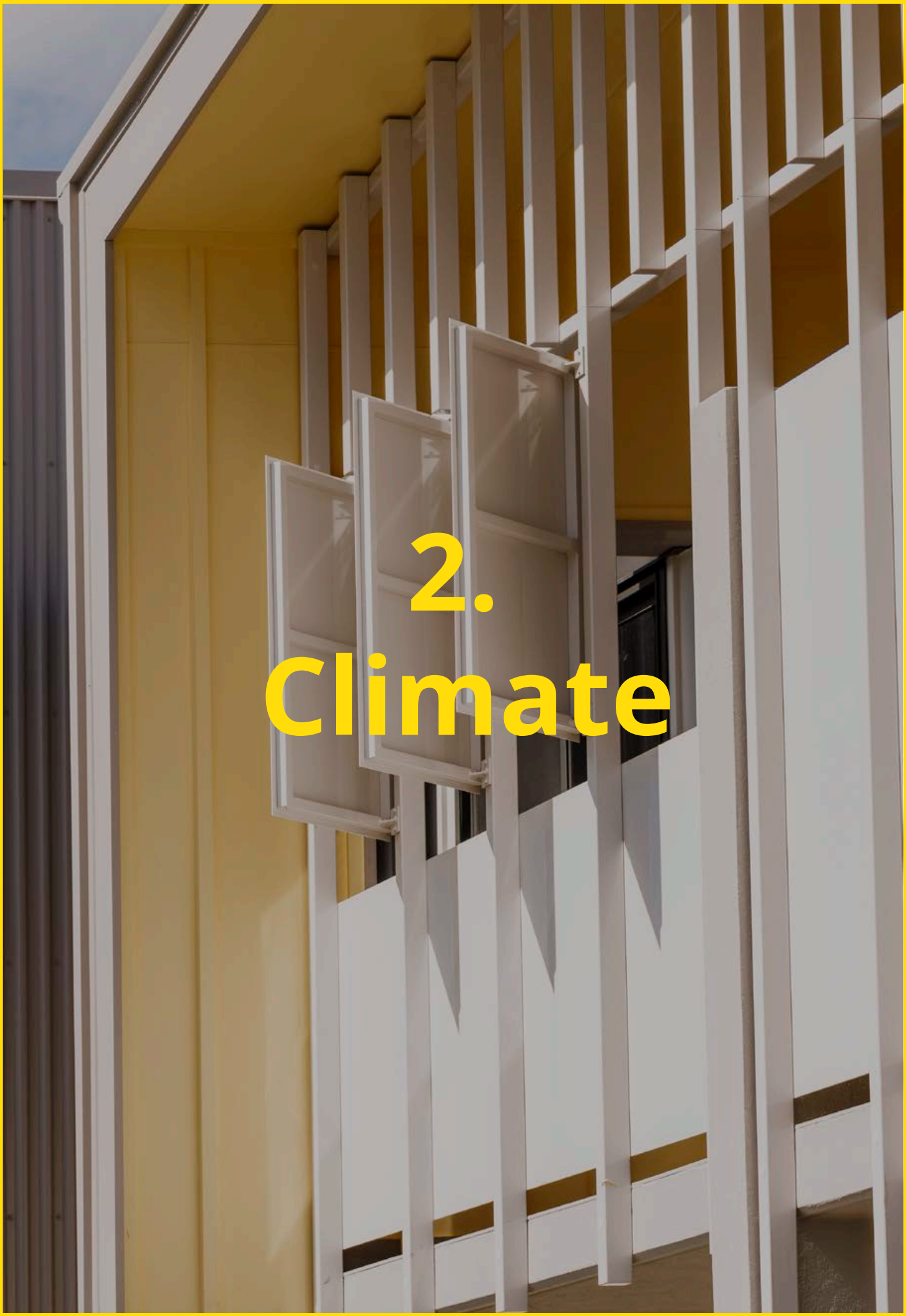
Site layout

Designing the site layout for an apartment or townhouse development is a complex process.

A holistic design approach considers the building and landscape in the context of the whole site and the adjoining neighbourhood. Every project team should consider the many competing design opportunities and site constraints, as well as the regulatory requirements for both Planning and Construction..

Consider the best location for all desired features and mandatory requirements to ensure the building is integrated with the landscape and enhances the streetscape and neighbourhood.

Competing considerations can include building mass and footprint, yield, carparks, engineering requirements, frontage treatment, vehicular and pedestrian access, landscape (existing and new), unit entries, views, visitor entry, private open space, communal areas, and storage to name a few.



2. Climate

The Sunshine Coast is famous for its sub-tropical climate, allowing an enjoyable indoor-outdoor lifestyle all year round.

Clear blue skies, clean air, and comfortable temperatures most of the year allow an enviable indoor-outdoor lifestyle. Sunshine Coast homes should take advantage of the climate, let breezes in and allow daylight to illuminate and sunlight to warm the home in winter. Shade, greenery, and enjoyable external spaces are equally important.

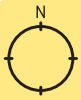
To maximise the Sunshine Coast climate design for generous balconies, courtyards, light wells, operable windows, and outdoor living spaces. You may consider adding a pool or rooftop garden to take advantage of the climate.

2.1 Orientate buildings to maximise daylight and sunlight

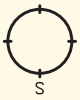
The orientation of the building on the block and the internal layout of each apartment or townhouse will determine the amount of daylight, sun and breeze each room receives at different times of the year. This affects the temperature of each home and how comfortable the residents will feel.

The position and path of the sun changes with the seasons and throughout the day, and will impact each home differently. Ideally, orientate the building so living spaces and outdoor areas take advantage of the climate, sun, and breezes.

Consider the best position for each room, to maximise light and breezes in the most lived in parts of the home.



North: Living spaces, balconies, merged indoor/outdoor space (position the living spaces to flow onto the balcony or courtyard), private open space, communal open space, outdoor entertaining area or pool



South: Bedrooms, bathrooms, office, studio, laundry

East: Kitchen, next best location for merged indoor/outdoor living, studio, office, bedrooms, courtyard, balcony, communal open space

West: Less used rooms, laundry, bathroom, garage, driveway, sunset deck

Daylight and Sunlight

For the purpose of this document, **daylight** includes both direct and indirect sunlight and is the volume of natural light that enters a building to illuminate internal spaces.

Sunlight refers to direct sunshine and is much brighter than ambient daylight.

Design for the changing climate

The climate is changing, and we are experiencing more extreme heat, intense storms, flood, drought, and bushfire. The buildings we create today, will still be in use many decades from now so it's vital we design for current and future climatic conditions. We want our homes and outdoor spaces to be both responsive to the current climate and resilient into the future.

Resilient buildings are robust, flexible, and able to withstand extreme weather that may lead to electricity blackouts or water shortages.

Here are some of the Sunshine Coast climate hazards and ways to mitigate impacts.

Climate hazards	Design suggestions
Hotter summers, and more frequent heatwaves	Maximise cooling, to ensure comfort, safety, and affordability.
Less frequent, but more intense rainfall, severe storms and cyclones	Use resilient building materials, have generous eaves and overhangs, manage overland water flow
Increased drought	Consider rainwater tanks, greywater systems and water-sensitive vegetation
Rising sea levels and more frequent storm surge	Minimise the impact of rising sea levels and increased storm surge
Reduced air quality	This hazard can worsen asthma, hay fever and other health conditions. Good building design and air filtration can reduce risks.

2.2 Create and merge indoor-outdoor living

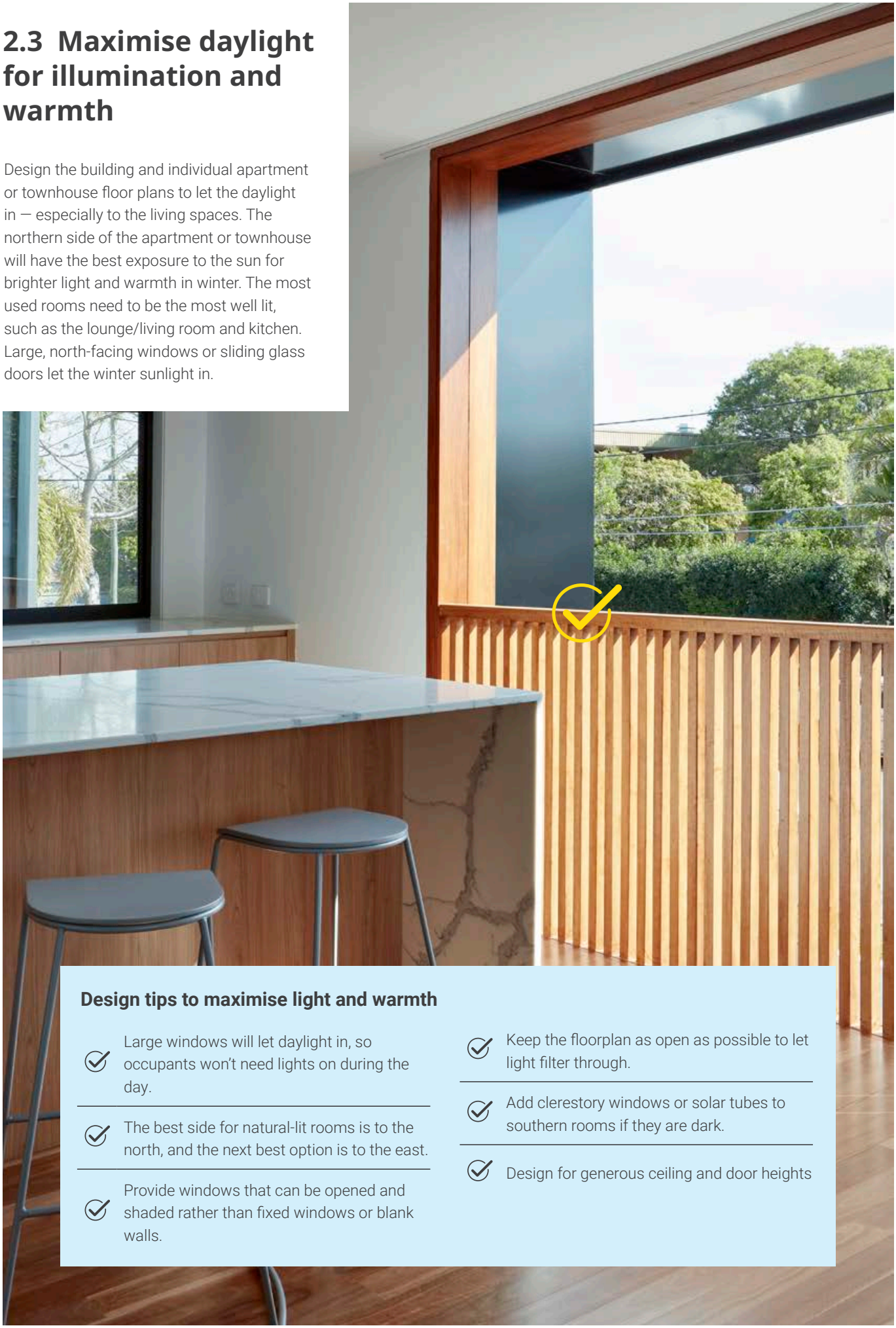
Aim to create a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor living spaces to give residents easy access to the fabulous Sunshine Coast climate. Indoor-outdoor living is an important part of the Sunshine Coast lifestyle and can be encouraged in apartments and townhouses via well-positioned balconies, courtyards and gardens.

Design tips to merge indoor-outdoor living

- Merge indoor and outdoor spaces to create a continuous transition between the two.
- Add bi-folds, French doors or stackable doors that can fully retract to help connect indoor/outdoor spaces.
- Provide generous balconies or courtyards to maxmise the climate.
- Don't enclose the balcony – instead create a useable outdoor space that is easily accessible from inside.
- Provide shade and weather protection to outdoor entertaining spaces with a roof or awning.
- Provide adequate storage elsewhere in the building or home to maintain the useability of a balcony or courtyard.

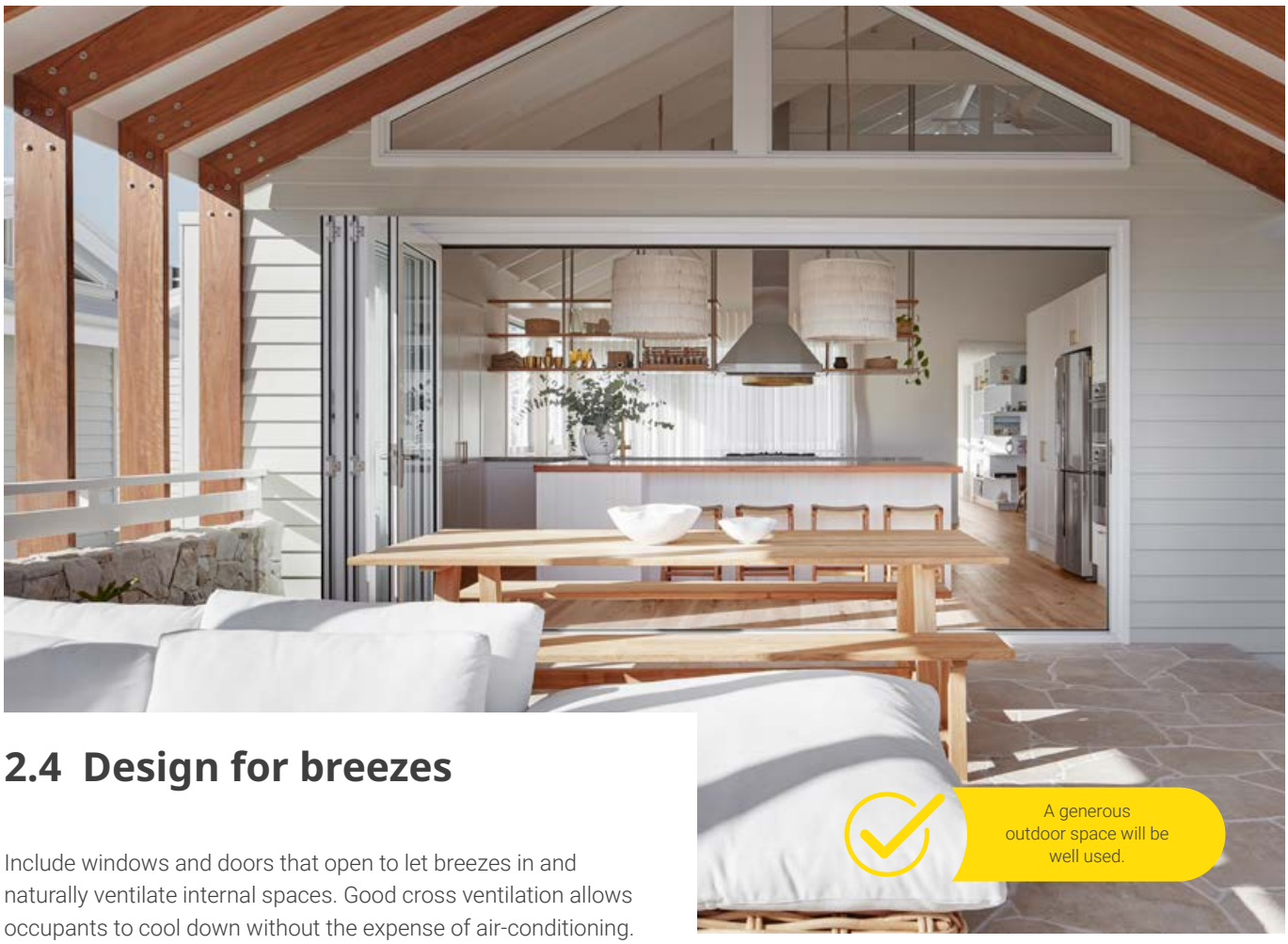
2.3 Maximise daylight for illumination and warmth

Design the building and individual apartment or townhouse floor plans to let the daylight in — especially to the living spaces. The northern side of the apartment or townhouse will have the best exposure to the sun for brighter light and warmth in winter. The most used rooms need to be the most well lit, such as the lounge/living room and kitchen. Large, north-facing windows or sliding glass doors let the winter sunlight in.



Design tips to maximise light and warmth

- Large windows will let daylight in, so occupants won't need lights on during the day.
- The best side for natural-lit rooms is to the north, and the next best option is to the east.
- Provide windows that can be opened and shaded rather than fixed windows or blank walls.
- Keep the floorplan as open as possible to let light filter through.
- Add clerestory windows or solar tubes to southern rooms if they are dark.
- Design for generous ceiling and door heights



2.4 Design for breezes

Include windows and doors that open to let breezes in and naturally ventilate internal spaces. Good cross ventilation allows occupants to cool down without the expense of air-conditioning.

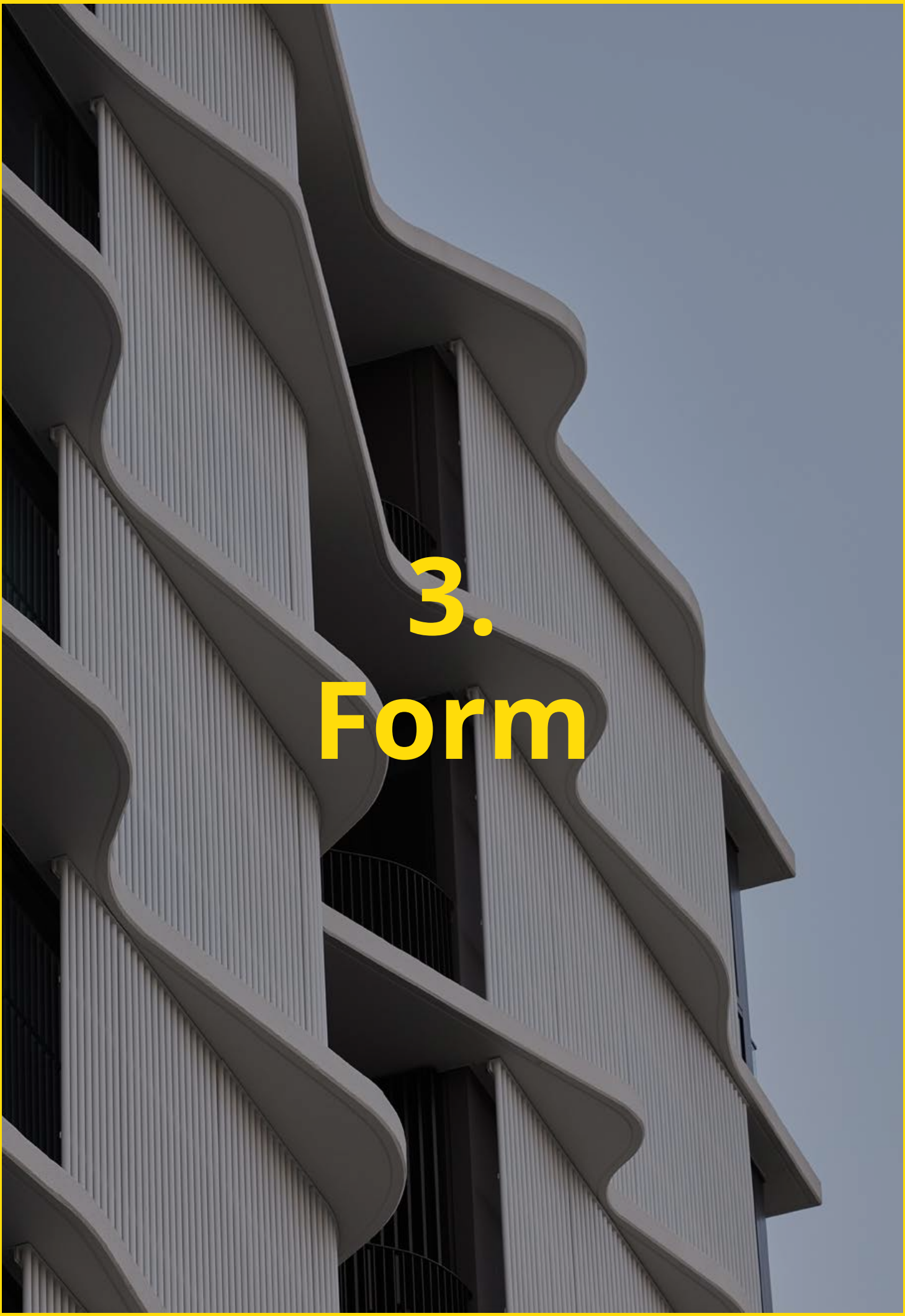
Air should circulate throughout apartments and townhouses. A combination of openings along with unobstructed internal spaces allow for airflow.

Design tips to let breezes in

- Two open sides to an apartment allow for a better flow of breezes to cool internal spaces in summer.
- Position windows and doors opposite each other to maximise airflow and cross-ventilation.
- An open floor plan is ideal to allow breezes to move through the unit or townhouse.
- Specify operable windows not just fixed glass.
- Consider louvres and awning windows to add variation as well as facilitate cooling.
- Use large retractable doors on the north to allow a flow of cooling breeze.
- Add ceiling fans to circulate the air and whirly birds to let heat and moisture out of the roof.
- Permeable balustrades let breezes and light onto balconies.
- Open building cores provide ventilation and spaces for residents to interact.
- Deep roof eaves, and overhangs above windows and openings provide adequate weather protection.

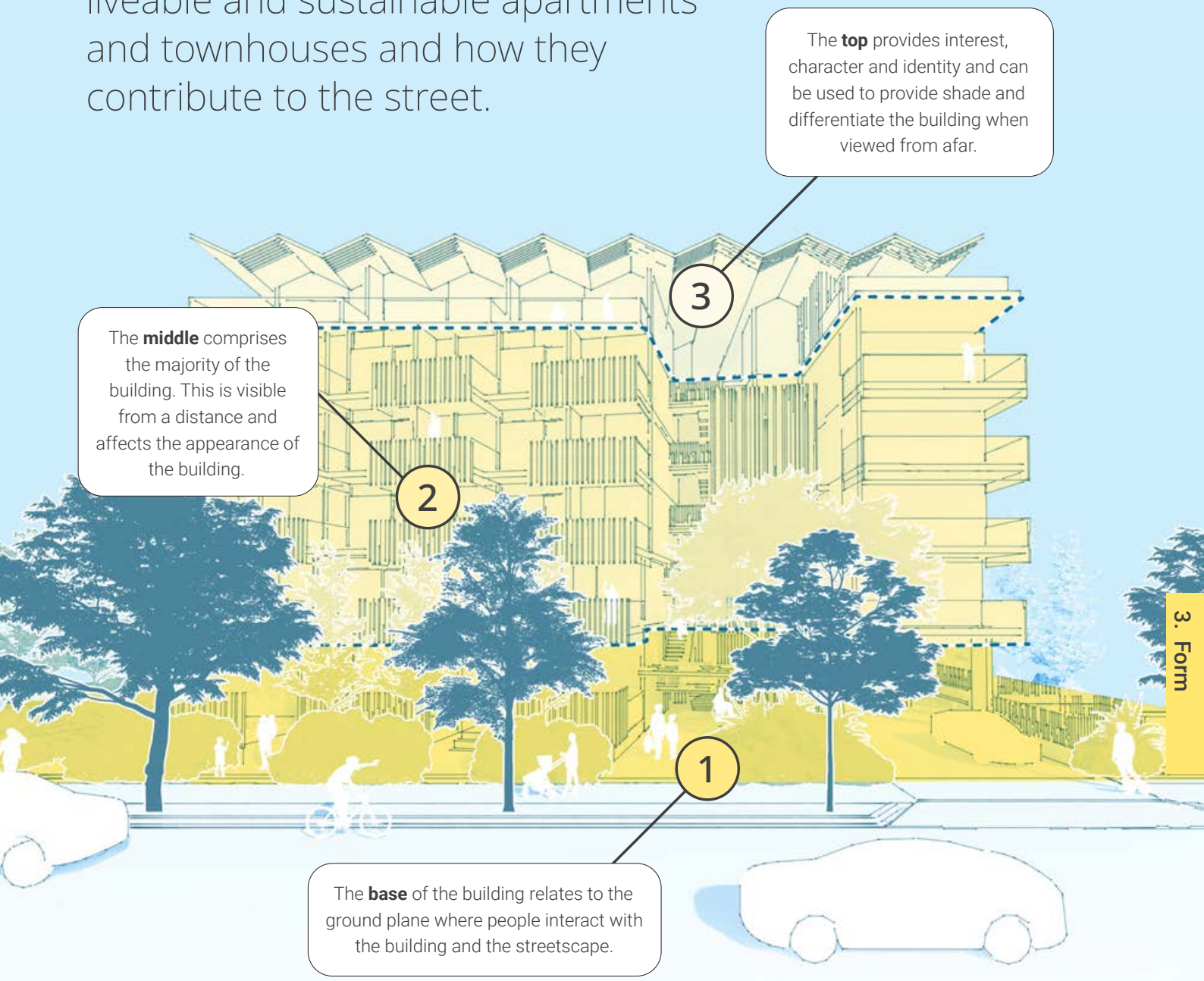
Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid solid balustrades that block the breeze, such as block work or glass.
- Avoid deep, bulky buildings that don't allow cross ventilation.
- Avoid balconies that are enclosed by side walls and rely only on one opening for light and breezes.



3.
Form

Getting the building base, middle and top right will lay the foundation for liveable and sustainable apartments and townhouses and how they contribute to the street.



Buildings should contribute to the urban character of the local area, add visual interest to the street, enable differentiation between buildings and avoid a stark or austere appearance. A key consideration is how the building looks in the street, which is heavily influenced by the size, form, and mass of the building. The ideal building will not dominate the site or locality and will demonstrate a balance between the built form and the surrounding open space, both within the site and beyond.

Traditionally, Sunshine Coast design has responded to the subtropical climate by incorporating:

- large roof overhangs or verandahs for shade and rain protection,
- facades that open to allow an indoor-outdoor lifestyle,
- a variety of wall and roof treatments that create visual interest and reduce building mass, and
- a character that reflects an informal, relaxed lifestyle.

3.1 Design to reduce bulk and scale

The location, context and dimensions of a site will significantly influence the shape and form of the building. The ideal building form will not overwhelm the site or the street and will maximise space for communal areas and for landscape to be a key component of the development.

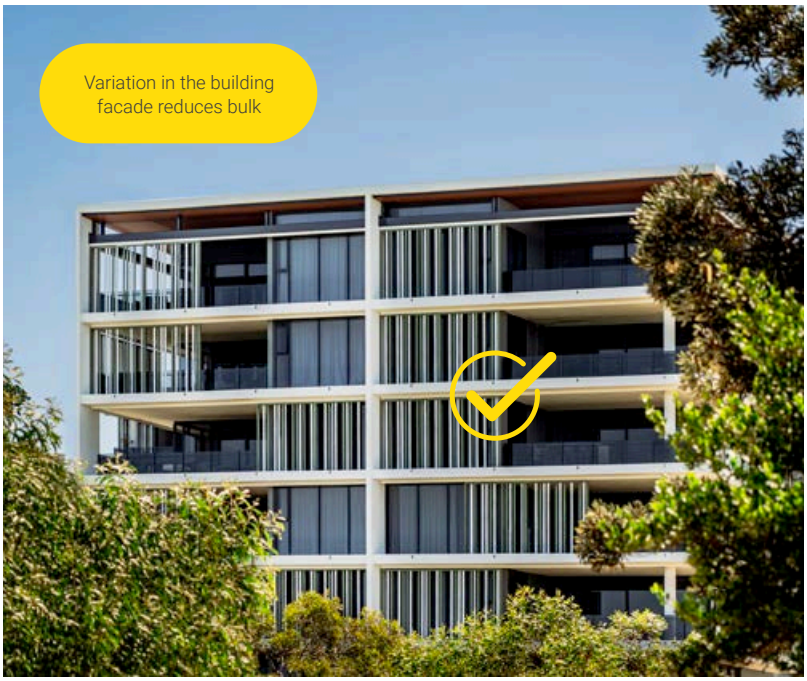
Building mass refers to the three-dimensional form of a building including the scale, height, proportions, and the arrangement of structural form.

Reducing the building footprint and the mass of the building, will improve the experience of the building for both the occupants and those looking into the site.

A development with appropriate building scale and mass will likely be open, inviting and light filled.

Design tips to reduce bulk and scale

- Reduce the building mass so the development does not dominate the site, the street or overwhelm neighbours.
- A narrow building footprint promotes ventilation and access to light.
- Aim for a breathable and thermally comfortable building.
- Reduce building mass to enable space for deep planting, large trees and communal open spaces.
- Variations in the footprint provide opportunities for views, access to light and breezes, and create a more visually interesting building.
- Soften the bulk of the building with landscape and leave enough space for large trees both within boundary setbacks and within developments.
- Where a new development is adjacent to an existing lower density or lower scale development, minimise the impact on neighbours.
- Provide open balconies on corners of buildings in place of solid walls to open the building edges, to allow more light and ventilation, and reduce the appearance of building bulk and mass.



3.2 Design appropriate setbacks

Every building development has a responsibility to its neighbours and the street to create an environment that connects to nature and adds to the overall look and feel of the street and neighbourhood.

Appropriate setbacks and the provision of space between buildings achieves the following:

- space for landscape and large trees,
- sight lines through and across the site,
- long distance views between buildings, and views of the sky,
- daylight can enter buildings, rooms, balconies and courtyards,
- breezes and air flow between buildings,
- room for private and communal open space,
- reduce overshadowing, and improve acoustic and visual privacy
- maintain and enhance the leafy character of the Sunshine Coast.

Design tips for appropriate setbacks

- Design generous setbacks to allow for landscaping, deep planting and large trees.
- Provide space between buildings to create visual definition and a sense of separation.
- Design setbacks to help internal rooms capture breezes and access natural light.
- Setbacks help with access to views from within the building as well as views through the site.
- Setbacks provide space between buildings, to reduce impacts on each-other.

3.3 Building articulation, rooflines and façades

A development that has visual variation and appeal will contribute to the street and avoid a row of developments that look the same. Layering the facade and creating aesthetic appeal helps the development to conjure pride and set an example for future developments in the street. Well-articulated buildings break up the mass of the building so they don't overwhelm the site or the street and allow breezes and light to penetrate the structure.

Articulation provides visual interest and can be achieved though variation of form and roof lines, detailing and materiality, the provision of layering and transparency, as well as a variety of openings and projections.

Balconies not only help with passive surveillance but also create the opportunity to add variation to the facade.

Design tips for building articulation, rooflines and facades

- Add visual interest and articulate the building facade to make the building more appealing and contribute to the streetscape.
- Break up large bland or monotone areas using a variety of materials and finishes; windows and openings, protrusions and cutouts; shade devices, awnings, balconies, battens, screens and vertical landscapes.
- Balconies overlooking the street promote passive surveillance and provide visual interest to the building, and connectivity to the public realm.
- Include eaves and projections to create deep shadow lines
- Provide shade and weather protection using elements integrated into the building structure.
- Design rooflines to add visual interest and a varied skyline silhouette, and to avoid a sea of flat roofs.
- Rooflines can be designed to fit in with or respond to the local context (eg: light weight splayed roof projections in a coastal setting, or more traditional roof forms in hinterland settings)


There are many ways to add visual interest to the skyline.

3.4 Building materials and finishes

The Sunshine Coast has a proud architectural heritage of using locally sourced, lightweight, inexpensive materials in innovative ways.

Specify the most suitable and efficient building materials and finishes for the climate and to mitigate heat. This will help with longevity and can decrease the ambient and internal temperature of a home.

Aim for minimal maintenance whilst adding a variety of textures and finishes to break up the mass and provide visual interest. Materials should reflect the local context and reference Sunshine Coast natural colours and elements.

Design tips for building materials and finishes

- Consider ongoing maintenance, longevity and life cycle costs when choosing materials. For example, overhangs help reduce weathering of wall surfaces.
- Specify materials that do not absorb or store heat for walls exposed to direct sun.
- Specify lighter colours for roofs, walls and ground surfaces. Light colours emit and absorb less heat than dark colours.
- Use appropriate materials, textures and colours to help the building relate to the local context and add variation to the building.
- Insulation is essential for Sunshine Coast homes. Well-insulated roof, walls and floor can significantly cut heating and cooling costs.
- Provide external shading and weather protection to windows and doors.
- Consider using natural building materials or colours in the built form and landscape to complement the natural landscape and soften the development.
- Vary the building facade using glazing, openings, recesses and permeable or transparent options such as battens or screens.
- Use glass to let in natural light, this is great for wellbeing and means the residents won't need their lights on during the day.

Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid black and other dark colours on external walls and the roof as darker colours will absorb the sunlight and will heat up internal spaces.
- Avoid large areas with no variation in materials or with no windows or openings.

4. Landscape

Living amongst the natural environment and greenery is part of what we love about the Sunshine Coast.

The people of the Sunshine Coast love living in the landscape. They deeply value the presence of green and the abundance of nature. The Sunshine Coast is one of Australia's most biodiverse regions and it is important that we preserve our natural environment, protect habitat trees, create green corridors, enhance our leafy streets and connect to our various landscapes.

4.1 Understand the local growing conditions

The Sunshine Coast's natural habitats vary from coastal dune environments to eucalypt forests, wetlands, heathland, wallum and rainforests. These habitats are an important part of our local natural character and provide clues as to which species perform well in your area.

Ideally use plants that draw on and reflect the endemic species. This is beneficial for the health of the garden but also provides native animal habitat, enables pollination, and adds beauty and movement to external spaces.

The community native nurseries of the Sunshine Coast are a great resource for learning about your local environment and learning what species work well in your area. There is a list of the local native nurseries on the Council website.

4.2 Maximise greenery

One of the most valuable and important components of any Sunshine Coast development is the presence of greenery – trees and gardens. The soft landscape makes a site more comfortable and more visually appealing. The interface with the street should be generously landscaped..

Well-designed Sunshine Coast urban environments are dominated by gardens that create shade, help keep our streets and homes cool, soften hard spaces and provide important habitats and micro-climates.

Our wildlife don't remain in reserves and protected areas, they use our urban landscapes and gardens too.

Design tips to maximise greenery, landscape, and trees

- The presence of greenery (living landscape) is an important asset to your project.
- Prioritise gardens and trees, to soften the built form and help cool your site and the street.
- Allow enough space in garden beds for layering and variety.
- Retain existing trees to provide instant shade, greenery, softening and habitat. If trees must be removed, replace them.
- Deep planting areas should be sufficient in size to ensure viable living landscape and shade street with a focus on street frontages and side boundaries.
- Where space is limited between neighbouring blocks or between townhouse courtyards, consider planting taller screening shrubs or climbers along the fence line.
- Consolidate landscape areas to create space for greenery especially along the front, side and rear boundaries and for carpark and services screening and communal and private open space.
- Provide generous subtropical deep planted landscapes that contribute to urban amenity and settles buildings into the landscape.
- Strategically place trees to hide and soften the impact of blank walls.
- Create privacy by carefully placing landscape and greenery and choose appropriate species.
- Choose vegetation that thrives locally and can adapt to harsh environments, including on rooftops and walls.
- Use native vegetation to reduce the need for watering and create habitat for local wildlife and insects.
- Use drought-tolerant species and where possible irrigate with water collected or recycled on site.

Consider the different layers of plants in the landscape

Design tips to cool the area using landscape

- Minimise Heat Island Effect by reducing unshaded hardstand beside dwellings to avoid unwanted heat radiating off the paving or concrete into a home.
- Plant shade trees on the west and southwest of the building or townhouse to block the hot afternoon sun.
- Native ground covers are more effective than paving or grass to cool the air and conserve water.
- Create gardens to improve the microclimate and cool hot areas.
- Harvest stormwater and encourage infiltration within your garden through the use of dry creek beds and soakage pits.

  Rainwater tanks could be placed in an allowable location.

Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid breaking garden beds and landscape areas into small green areas that don't allow for deep planting.
- Avoid hot bland walls and expanses of concrete or paving.
- Avoid solid fences and other structures that minimise space for living landscapes and the opportunity for depth and layering of greenery in frontages

Note:

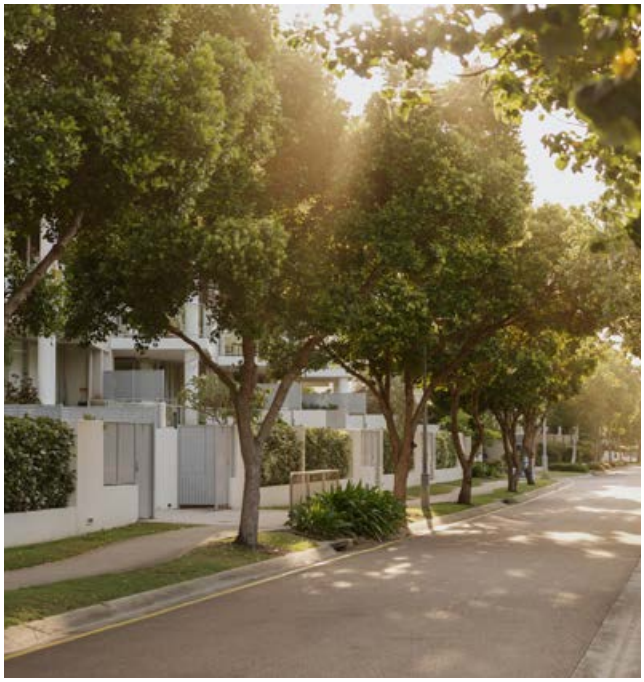
Heat Island Effect occurs when urban areas are warmer than the surrounding natural environment. This is caused by vegetation being replaced with buildings, driveways and hardstand, and other heat-absorbing infrastructure. The hard surfaces absorb the sun's heat making it harder for urban areas to cool down at night.

Also note, the temperature under a tree can be 6 degrees cooler than an unshaded area.

4.3 Design leafy, shaded, safe streets

Think beyond your site. The best apartment buildings or townhouses will contribute to great, comfortable streets and will help create welcoming, attractive and safe neighbourhoods. We want all new developments to contribute to green, walkable streets by providing a shady, inviting, and attractive interface with the street and the public domain.

It is important that buildings maintain a relationship to the street to enable casual surveillance from windows and balconies. This creates a strong sense of safety and community.



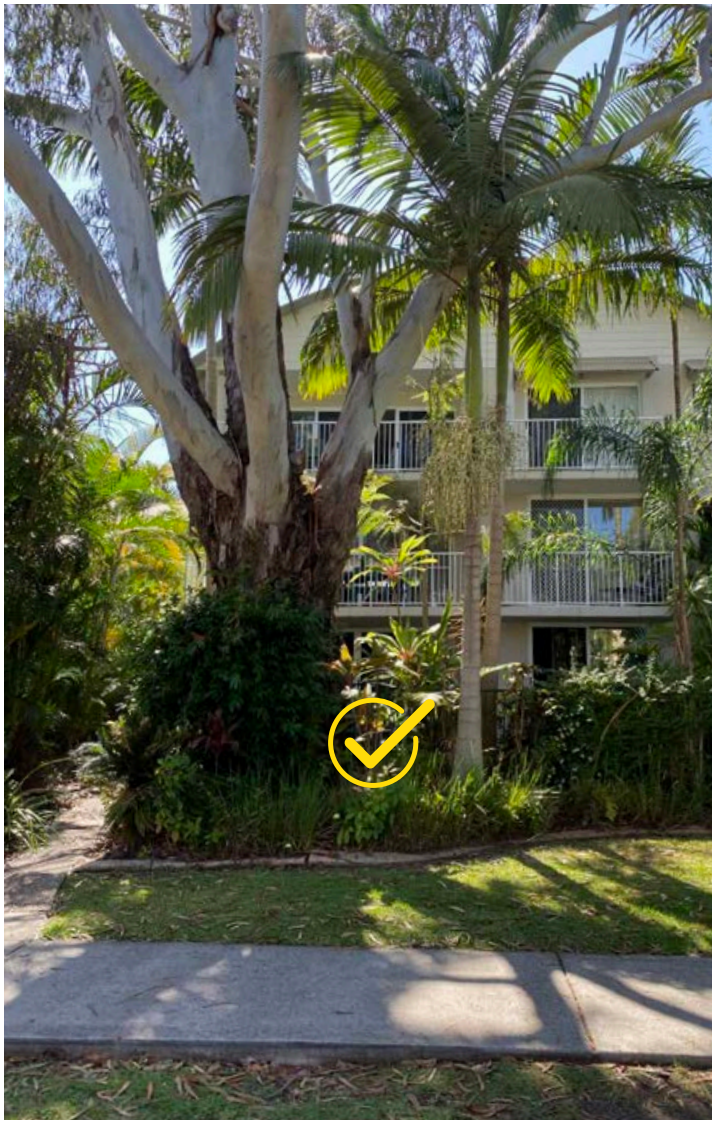
Design tips to enhance the street

- Design to contribute shade and greenery to the street while ensuring a safe and welcoming streetscape.
- Create an elegant, welcoming, and easily identifiable entry to the site and apartment building and make visitor and other pedestrian entry points clear.
- Front fences (if required) should be set back from the boundary and positioned behind landscape. Fences should be low or permeable to allow breezes and glimpses through to gardens and the building.
- Taller buildings should have greater setbacks, to allow space for softening of the building and for canopy trees to be accommodated at the front of buildings.
- Space between buildings allows for greenery that contributes to the street and reduces ambient temperatures (Heat Island Effect).
- Screen and soften the built form and preserve open space and vistas between towers wherever possible.

Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid large, dominating blank front walls that create a bland, hot street.
- Avoid tall solid fences at the front that block views to gardens, units and townhouses.
- Avoid treeless frontages.

Create an elegant, welcoming and easily identifiable entry to the site and apartment building



4.4 Integrate frontage structures in the landscape

A development that has an attractive frontage adds to the appeal of the street, makes the area more walkable and comfortable, and fosters residents and community pride. Ideally, the frontage (that is, the area forward of the building) will be predominantly vegetation and trees rather than built structures or hard surfaces.

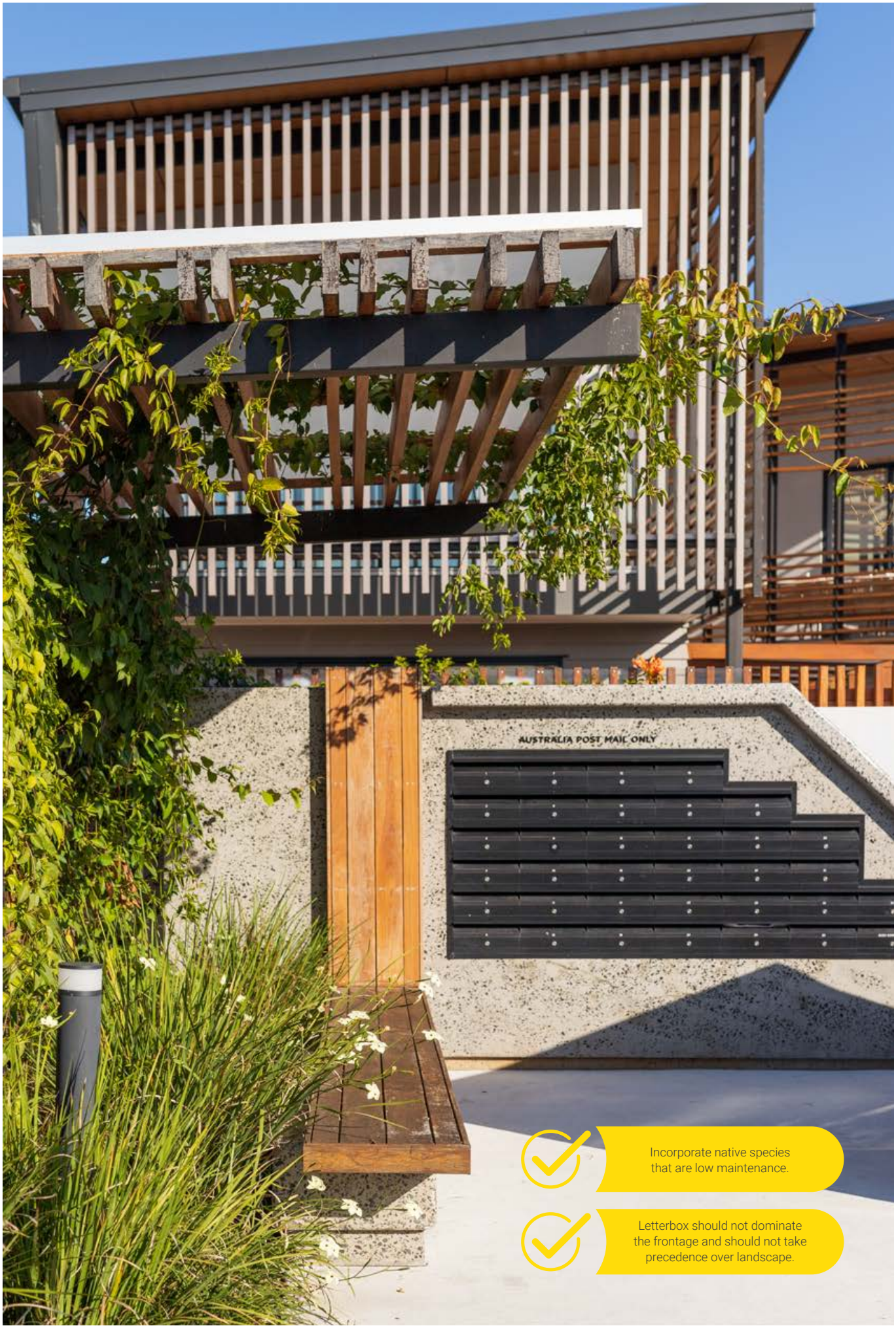
A well-designed landscape will help reduce radiant and ambient heat in the area and soften the building. Fences and walls, along with letterboxes, services and other structures, should not dominate the street and should be located behind generous amounts of greenery and shade trees.

Design tips to create attractive street frontages

- Provide landscape and shade trees along the front boundary to improve street amenity.
- Add shade trees to achieve pleasant walkability and comfort.
- Set back fences and structures from the street frontage, behind generous landscape.
- Aim for visual connection to the building and front door.
- Services and essential infrastructure should not dominate the front boundary and should be integrated into the landscape.
- Give preference to transparent, lightweight and permeable wall structures that allow views and breezes. Consider acoustic requirements in your decision.
- Letterbox structures should not dominate the frontage and should not take precedence over landscape.
- Plan ahead to accommodate necessary fire, electrical, waste and other services.

Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid hard, hot, bland street frontages with little or no greenery.
- Avoid high, solid walls or fences that enclose spaces, preventing breezes and views.
- There should be no blank walls on the street frontage that can lead to hot and uninviting footpaths.
- Avoid unnecessary structures that dominate the frontage.



Incorporate native species that are low maintenance.

Letterbox should not dominate the frontage and should not take precedence over landscape.

5. Liveability

The Sunshine Coast is renowned for its climate, natural landscapes and enviable lifestyle.

We not only have a very comfortable sub-tropical climate, we also have easy access to beaches, waterways, the hinterland and stunning natural environments. Designing homes that promote and enable a great lifestyle is imperative to the future of the region. Think about ways that make living easier for all ages and types of households, including single parents with children and elderly living with their younger families. Many people are downsizing while looking for comparable amenity in a townhouse or apartment. Those moving to medium density living do not want to miss out on the quality of life they had in their suburban home.

5.1 Design for an indoor-outdoor lifestyle

The fabulous Sunshine Coast climate allows residents and visitors to enjoy an indoor-outdoor lifestyle all year round. Design apartments and townhouses with an outdoor living and dining area that connects with the indoor lounge room. Outdoor living might also be provided via a courtyard, garden or balcony.

To help merge the indoor-outdoor living spaces, add generous doors and windows to connect the two spaces. This will enable residents and guests to relax, work or eat outside during the day and night, depending on the time of year. It is also important to have generous internal living spaces that have good views and connection to an outdoor landscape, private open space or the street.

Design tip for an indoor-outdoor lifestyle

- Balconies and courtyards should be large enough to fit outdoor seating and dining as well as landscape and greenery to encourage residents to spend time outside. Don't compromise on the courtyards and balconies – these are one of the biggest assets of a townhouse or apartment.
- Add bi-folds, sliding doors or stackable doors that can fully retract to help merge indoor-outdoor spaces.
- Add a roof or adjustable shade for wind, shade and rain protection to protect the courtyard or outdoor space.

Balconies

Balconies play an important role in the liveability of an apartment. They add visual expression to a building as well as providing private outdoor space for residents. A well-designed balcony should be deep enough to create a genuinely useable outdoor space. A covered balcony can be used all year round and will provide protection from the elements. The balcony will merge with the indoor living space, but the balcony should not be closed in. Balconies give residents access to natural light, outdoor living, fresh air, views and space to create a garden.

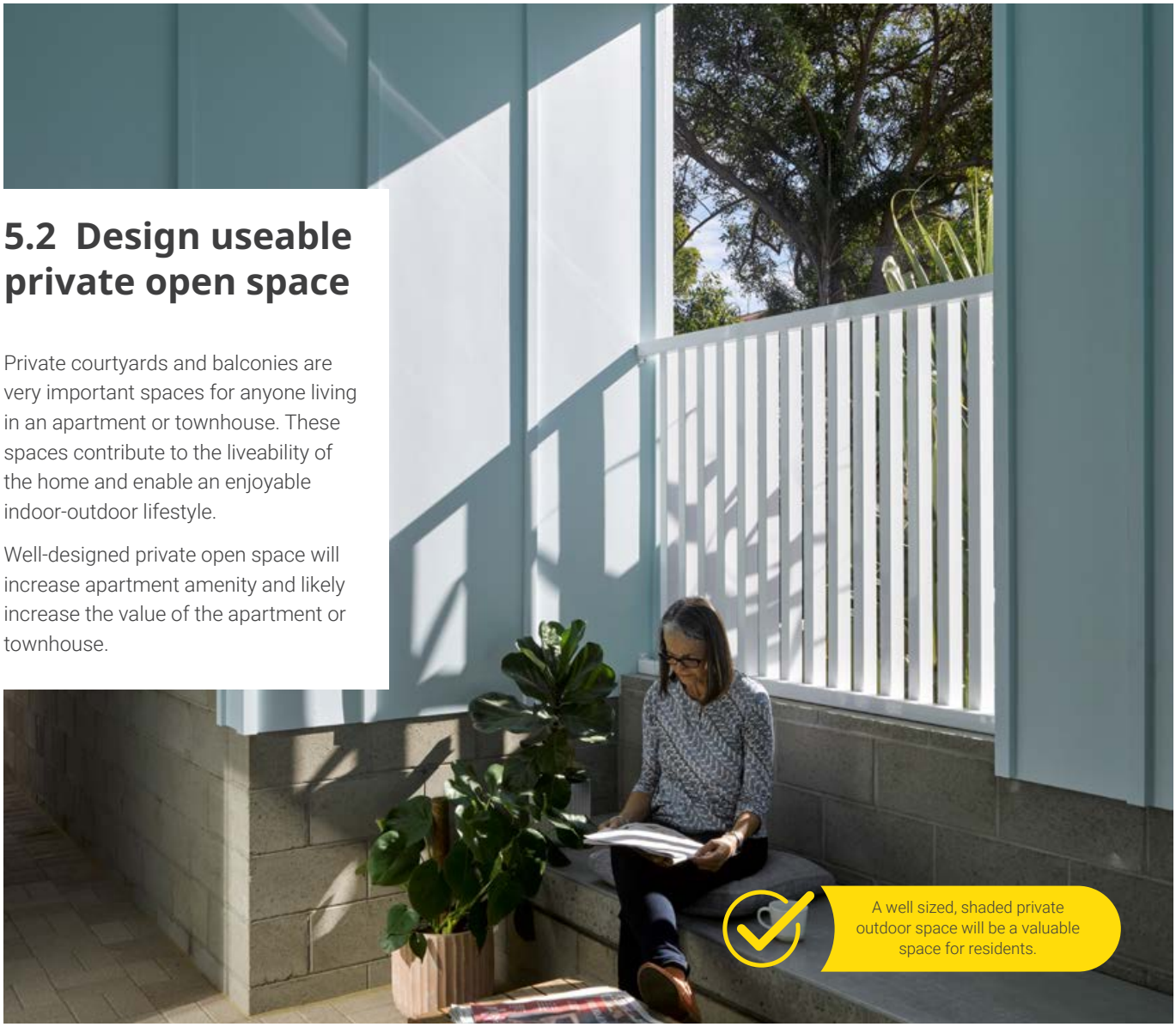
Courtyards

Courtyards are an important feature of a townhouse layout or the ground floor unit of an apartment building. A well-designed courtyard will be generous in size and shape to allow a useable, private outdoor living space. A partly covered courtyard makes the space useable all year round. The external courtyard will merge with an indoor living space. Courtyards give ground floor residents access to natural light, outdoor living, fresh air, views and space to create a garden.

5.2 Design useable private open space

Private courtyards and balconies are very important spaces for anyone living in an apartment or townhouse. These spaces contribute to the liveability of the home and enable an enjoyable indoor-outdoor lifestyle.

Well-designed private open space will increase apartment amenity and likely increase the value of the apartment or townhouse.



A well sized, shaded private outdoor space will be a valuable space for residents.

Design tips to create useable private open space

- Design courtyards and balconies to maximise access to natural light.
- Consider the size and amenity of the private open space including room for outdoor seating and dining, shade and an attractive outlook to make the space more appealing.
- Hide the clothesline or drying space and other services.
- Design balconies that capture views and overlook the street for casual surveillance.
- Consider if the private open space is alongside an adjacent landscape to maximise greenery.
- Maximise privacy.

Outcomes to avoid

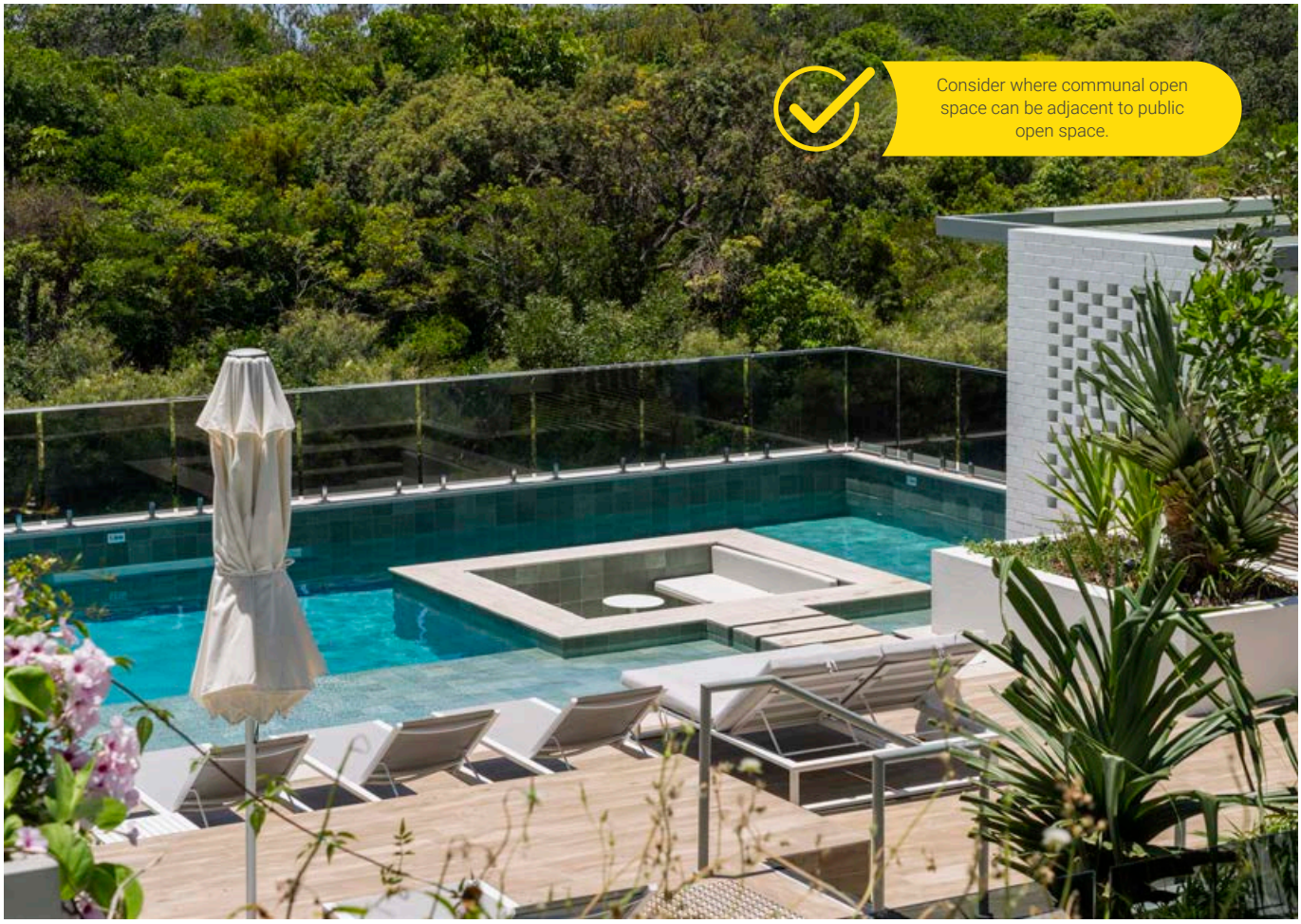
- Avoid noisy air-conditioning units dominating private open space.
- Avoid external private open space where there is insufficient room for landscaping/greenery or places to sit.
- Poorly designed private open space will feel small and unwelcoming. Avoid designing a space where residents are staring at a blank wall and won't have enough access to natural light.

5.3 Design useable and welcoming communal open space

Create useable and welcoming communal open space for residents to enjoy time outside and interact with neighbours, which helps create a sense of community. Interaction amongst residents and visitors most commonly happens in the street, in the entry areas or around the lifts, in the garden, by the pool or at the communal BBQ area or vegetable garden. Providing these amenities facilitates interaction between residents.

Design tips to create useable and welcoming communal areas

- The communal space should be easily accessed and attractive, amongst gardens or on the roof. Avoid locating communal open space in uninviting left-over spaces.
- A well designed communal open space will encourage interaction and a sense of community.
- Provide a variety of facilities including shaded seating to encourage people to gather and chat.
- Consider the opportunity to create additional smaller, intimate spaces for people to gather in small groups or spend time alone.
- Provide large open communal space with a BBQ, seating and tables to accommodate a family gathering or party.
- Rooftop gardens are ideal in the Southeast Queensland climate. Consider how they can be incorporated to create quality social spaces for residents.
- Get creative, think about what else could be useful for residents such as a pool, vegetable garden, shade structure or shelter, or an area of lawn.
- Consider where communal open space can be adjacent to public open space.
- Provide shade and greenery, softening of hardstand and ideally a large canopy tree beside communal open space.
- Landscaping provision are separate to communal open space provision.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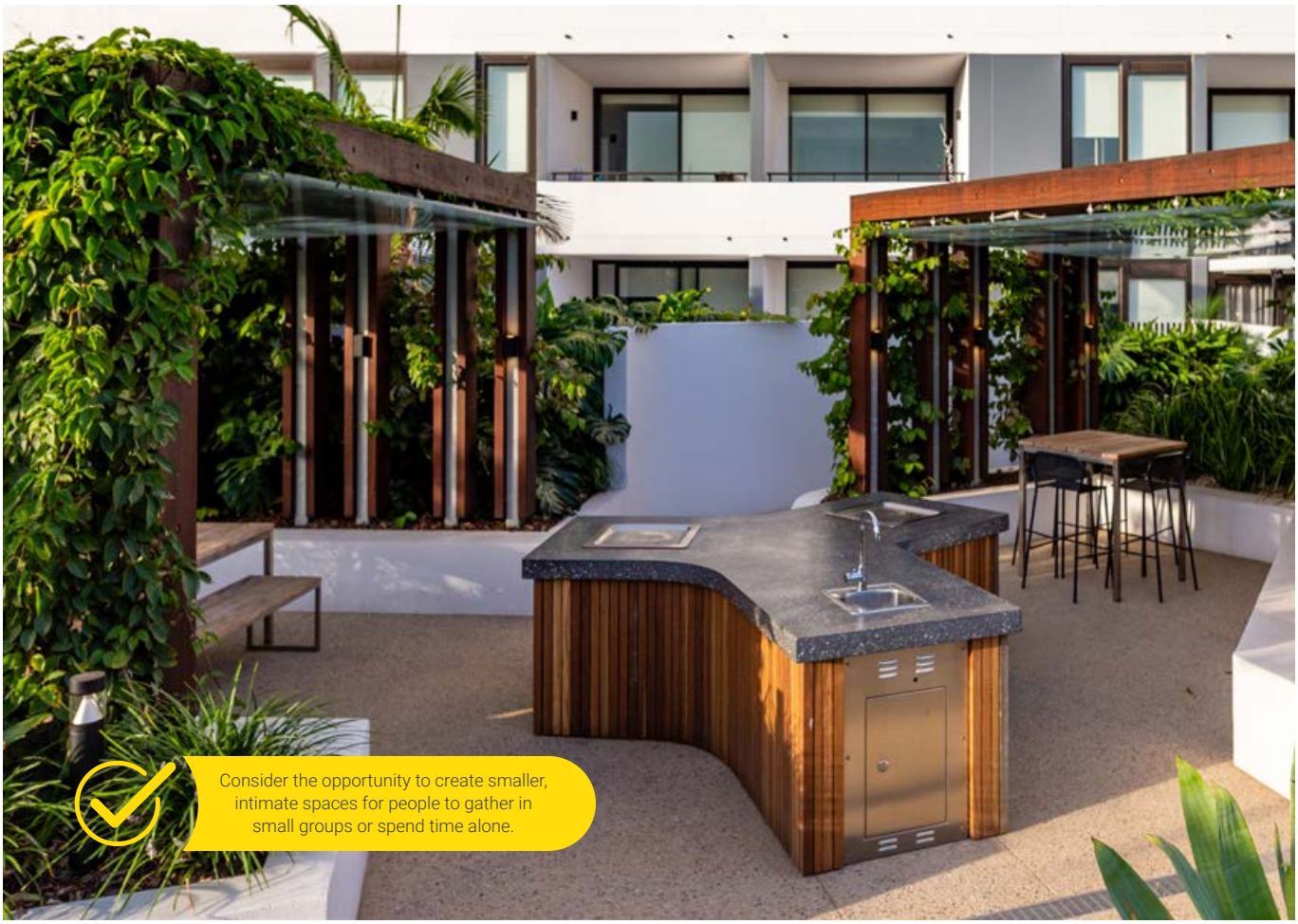
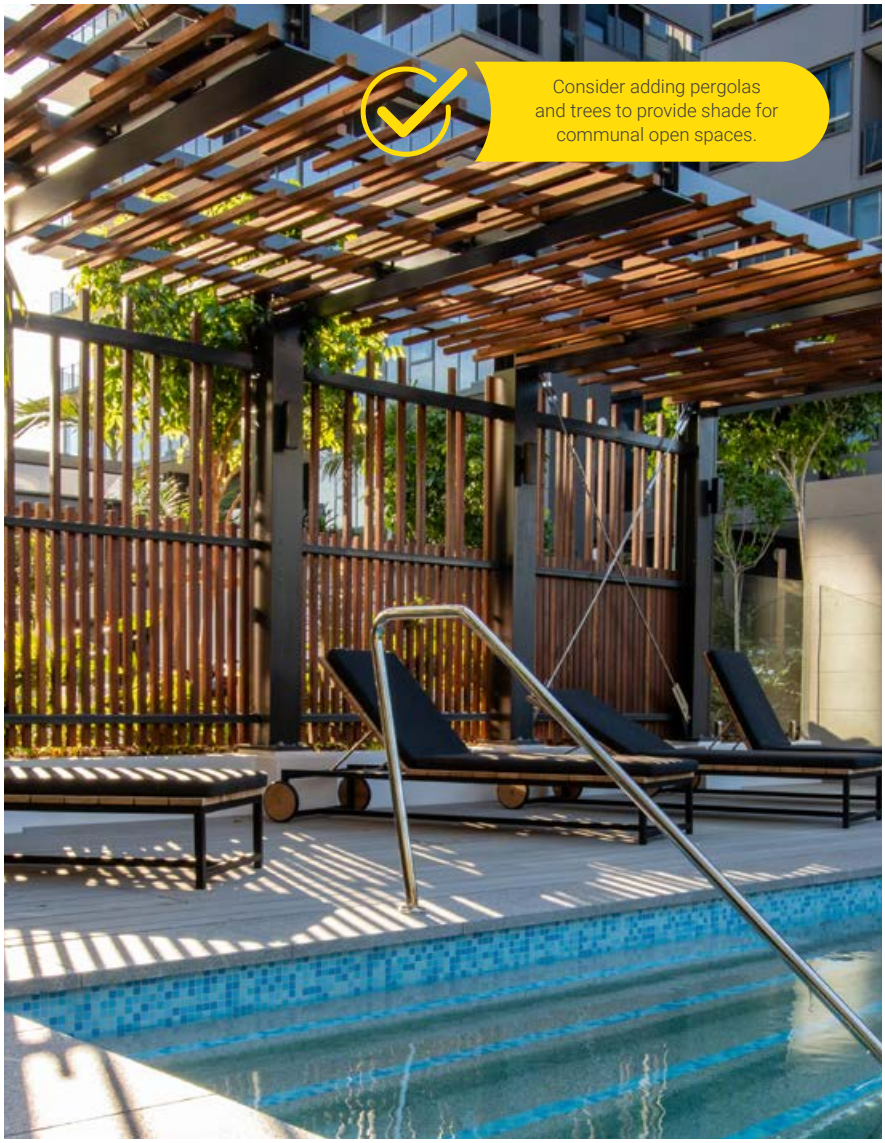

Consider the opportunity to create smaller, intimate spaces for people to gather in small groups or spend time alone.


A well-designed communal space with diverse seating, gathering, and play options strengthens community and encourages resident interaction.
Encourage outdoor activities by providing shaded private and public open spaces.
Remember to cater for families and children.

5.4 Create shade

Shade is an important part of a well-designed Sunshine Coast home, including apartments and townhouses. A pergola, eaves, roof overhang or a verandah are examples of ways to shade external walls, windows and outdoor living spaces, to help cool spaces.

External screens and shade devices help reduce heat load by preventing the direct sunlight touching the building. They also soften sunlight, and protect against rain and wind. Screens and shade devices contribute visual interest and add building variation. They add texture and control the temperature. Anything that helps cool internal spaces will help reduce energy costs.

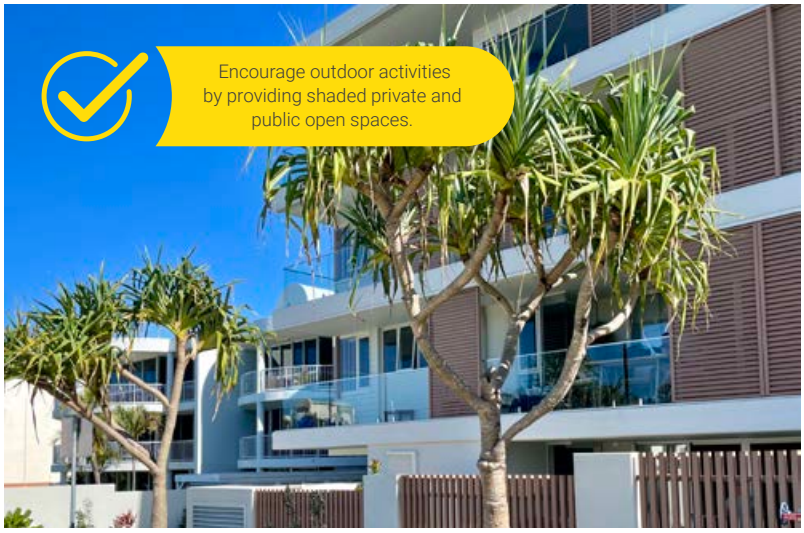


Design tips to create shade

- Prioritise shade on the north and west sides of the building.
- Use deep eaves and balconies to allow winter sun and provide shade during summer.
- Add external shade using trees, gardens, awnings, eaves, adjustable screens or pergolas particularly to the west side, to block the sun during the hotter months.
- External, operable blinds can be installed to help residents manage heat, rain and light as well as noise.
- External screens and shade devices will reduce heat load, soften bright light, and protect against rain and wind and can also assist with privacy.
- If the windows don't have suitable eaves, add an awning above the window to increase weather protection.
- Consider external trellises, pergolas and placement of trees to add shade to communal areas and walkways.
- Specify building elements that enable shade, screening, generous overhangs, and fenestration hoods so openings can be maintained as much as possible during periods of rain and strong winds.

5.5 Design for privacy and to reduce the impact of noise

It is important to consider ways to create privacy and reduce noise travelling between apartments and townhouses and to neighbouring properties.



Design tips to create privacy and reduce noise

- Design for privacy in a way that does not rely on screens. Consider where overlooking occurs and avoid windows looking into each other.
- The need for privacy should not result in enclosed spaces, or prevent opportunity for adequate daylight and views.
- Consider using landscape to create visual privacy.
- Design for good acoustic outcomes to protect residents from outside noise.
- Ensure that acoustic screening is attractive and integrated into the design

5.6 Pedestrian circulation

Consider how residents and visitors will move around and through the site to encourage interaction and ensure people are safe and comfortable. It may be appropriate to provide weather protection or shade for some walkways or provide seating near doorways for the elderly.

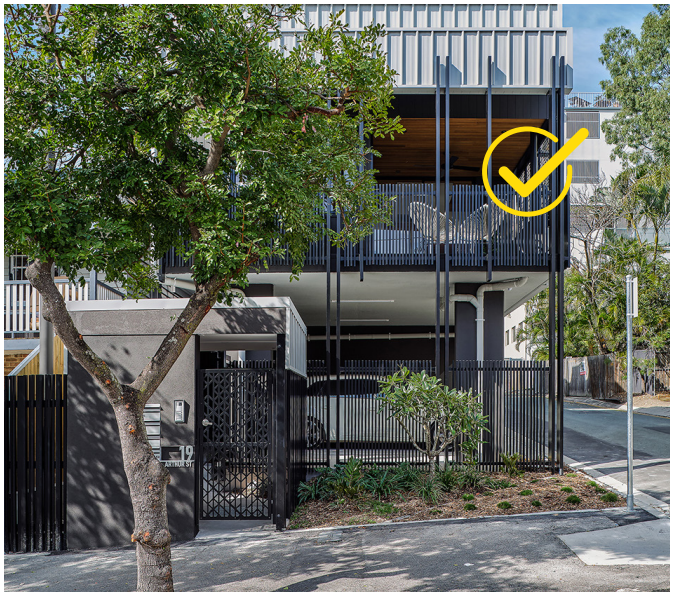
Design tips for pedestrian circulation

- Consider desire lines for people to move through common areas and between different spaces, e.g. from the carpark to their home.
- Design to allow ease of movement of people from carparking to their homes, entrances, letterboxes and the street. All pathways should be safe, comfortable, landscaped and accessible for all.
- Create obvious, safe and welcoming lobbies, entry areas and front doors.
- Lobbies and corridors should be comfortable and attractive.
- Make stairs safe, attractive and viable to encourage use.
- Open air corridors in a sub-tropical climate allow breezes to penetrate the building and improve thermal comfort.
- Wayfinding should be clear and easy to navigate into and around the site.

5.7 Design to maximise views

Design to allow views of the surrounding neighbourhood, the landscape, and local landmarks. Views create a sense of connection to the outside and enable casual surveillance between homes and the street.

The positioning of windows, balconies and communal spaces should be directed towards attractive views. Beautiful views should be available to as many people as possible, including residents, neighbours and the public.



Design tips to maximise views

- Start by undertaking a view analysis.
- Orientate the building to maximise views but also be mindful of the passage of the sun and the most suitable orientation for different rooms.
- Consider building articulation and setbacks to maximise views from and through sites.
- Be mindful of not looking into surrounding neighbours or blocking their views.
- Design to keep views of key landmarks and long-distance views for the enjoyment of residents, as well as the public and the community.
- Ensure that your building does not block or minimise important views that area available to the public realm.
- Design setbacks and the shape of the building to allow views to the sky and access to sunlight.

5.8 Design for accessibility and inclusion

Remember that everyone has different abilities and needs. Design buildings and homes to be accessible for everybody and where everyone feels welcome, safe, included and comfortable.

Consider the opportunity for an extra tenancy for each apartment or townhouse to increase demographic flexibility. Also allow for a variety of unit sizes to cater for differing household sizes and needs, as well as affordability.

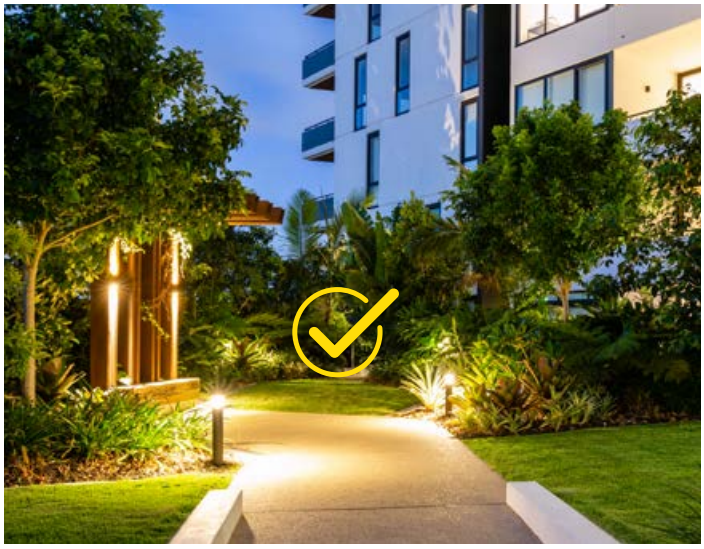
Design tips for accessibility and inclusion

- Design for physical mobility challenges and provide features such as ramps, lifts, widened doorways and accessible restrooms. Provide adequate space for everyone to move freely, especially wheelchairs and prams.
- Incorporate clear signage, colour contrast and intuitive layouts to help individuals with cognitive or visual impairments to navigate through spaces independently.
- Consider colour, material and lighting choices for individuals with sensory disabilities: soft natural colours without bold patterns and simple, non-reflective materials feel more calming.
- Provide inclusive social spaces that encourage interaction, collaboration and engagement among all people. Additional quiet spaces are recommended.

5.9 Provide lighting and safety for everyone

It is important that residents and visitors in apartments or townhouses feel safe and welcome. Lighting adds visual interest and appeal to the building and the neighbourhood. Also, lighting is important around the building to ensure people feel safe at night.

Keep in mind that some areas benefit from darkness. Light spill needs to be carefully managed to reduce impact on local wildlife.



Design tips for lighting

- Choose lighting to add visual interest, mood and ambience and contribute to the identity of the building.
- Specify lighting that doesn't disturb wildlife – especially our nesting turtles. Follow the National Light Pollution Guideline for Wildlife. Use amber light with little or no blue wavelengths.
- Consider lighting on timers and motion sensors to reduce light spill later in the night.

Design tips for safety and crime prevention

- Illuminate pedestrian walkways, building entries and carparking areas to make them welcoming and safe.
- Design for casual surveillance over the street and the site when positioning balconies and living spaces.
- Design for appropriate sightlines and opportunities to avoid the creation of dark, hidden areas.
- Limit public access to the side and basement of buildings.
- Make entry areas obvious and unobstructed to allow people to come and go safely.

Outcomes to avoid

- Avoid enclosed spaces or laneways.
- Avoid designing the entry to a building through a carpark.
- Avoid lighting in areas not intended to be used after dark.
- Avoid unshielded lighting at eye level.
- Avoid tall fences that prevent surveillance.
- Avoid blue rich white lighting which disrupt human circadian rhythm and native wildlife.

6. Integration

6.1 Design useable, integrated carparking and vehicle circulation

The design of parking areas and vehicle access can have a significant impact on the streetscape, site layout, building design and pedestrian access of a development. It is also important that driveways are useable and practical, and that regulatory requirements are met in relation to vehicle access and carparking.

Large areas of concrete or pavement will create a very hot microclimate around a building or along the street. Reduce expansive driveways and car parking on the frontage. An attractive streetscape with shade trees and gardens will create a very comfortable and pleasant pedestrian experience.

Carparking, carports and garages should not dominate the site and instead should sit within the landscape to help cool our suburbs and soften the built form.

Design tips for integrated carparking and vehicle circulation.

- Position carparking away from the frontage or the street.
- Minimise hard stand and maximise landscape – to make the site attractive, cooler and welcoming.
- Internal roads, driveways and carparks should ideally be lined with shade trees and landscape to reduce heat and soften the hardscape.
- Limit the number of carparking spaces at ground level to enable more space for greenery.
- Consider a permeable ground treatment to reduce the mass of concrete or paving.
- Co-locate bike and bin storage areas with carparking and soften with landscape.
- Provide delineated and safe pedestrian pathways between the building and carparking.
- Design for other modes of transport (e.g. bikes, scooters, tinnies, kayaks) and provide suitable storage and EV infrastructure.

Design tips for townhouse carparking

- The design focus should be on residential and street amenity where carparking and vehicular access do not dominate.
- Locate carparks, carports and garages out of view.
- Where rear lane circulation is appropriate it should be landscaped and hardstand minimised.
- Carparks can be recessed from other parts of the building including the levels above.

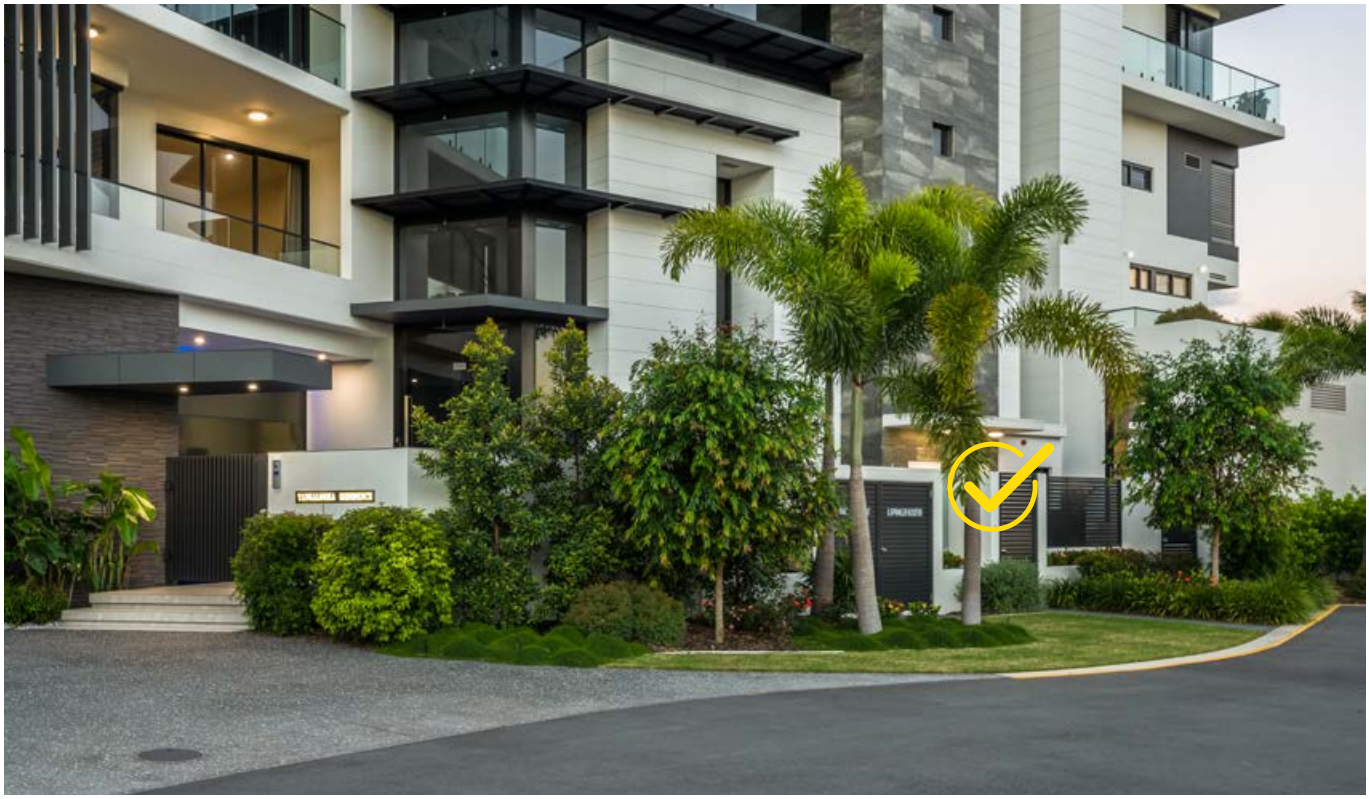
Design tips for apartment carparking

- Optimally, basement parking should be fully submerged below the natural ground level.
- Basement carparking should not be built to boundary and instead should allow for deep planting and other landscape.
- Avoid whole of site basement excavation to allow existing trees to be retained.
- Use site topography to minimise excavations and provide ventilation opportunities.
- Open, undercover carparks can be naturally ventilated and should be screened using landscape.
- Ensure suitable lighting is provided to basement carparks.
- Basement carparks are great locations for bike, scooter and surfboard storage.

Carparking tucked away from the street and surrounded by landscaping, will contribute to the street appeal.

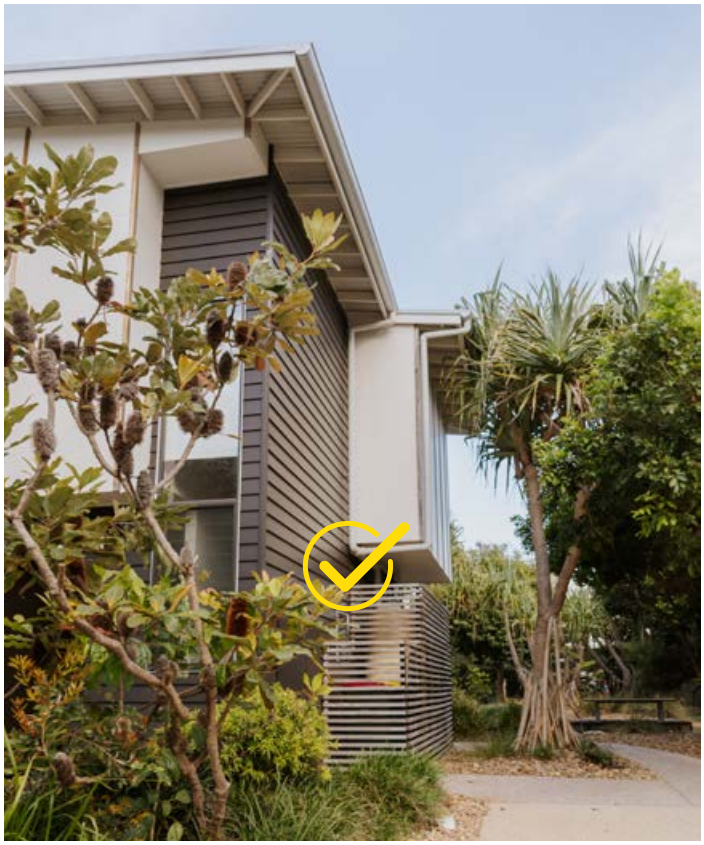
Outcomes to avoid

- Don't dominate the site with carparking and large vehicle circulation areas.
- Avoid large, hot areas of hardstand, concrete and paving that isn't softened with trees and landscape.
- Avoid townhouses that are dominated by poor entry areas, bin storage and garage doors.
- Do not locate visitor carparks at the front of the site where landscape should be.



6.2 Design to screen building services

Building services such as bins, fire boosters and pad-mounted transformers are unavoidable for many developments. These services should be located and integrated with abundant landscape, so the services do not dominate the frontage. Hiding building services is an opportunity to be creative with screening to add visual interest and create a more attractive street.



Design services to minimise visual impact

- Design to integrate, soften or screen services such as pad mounts, fire boosters and bin storage areas using landscape or a suitably designed screen.
- Locate services on the side boundaries where appropriate.
- Locate bin storage that is easy for residents to access but is not exposed to the street or residents above.

6.3 Design to reduce energy usage

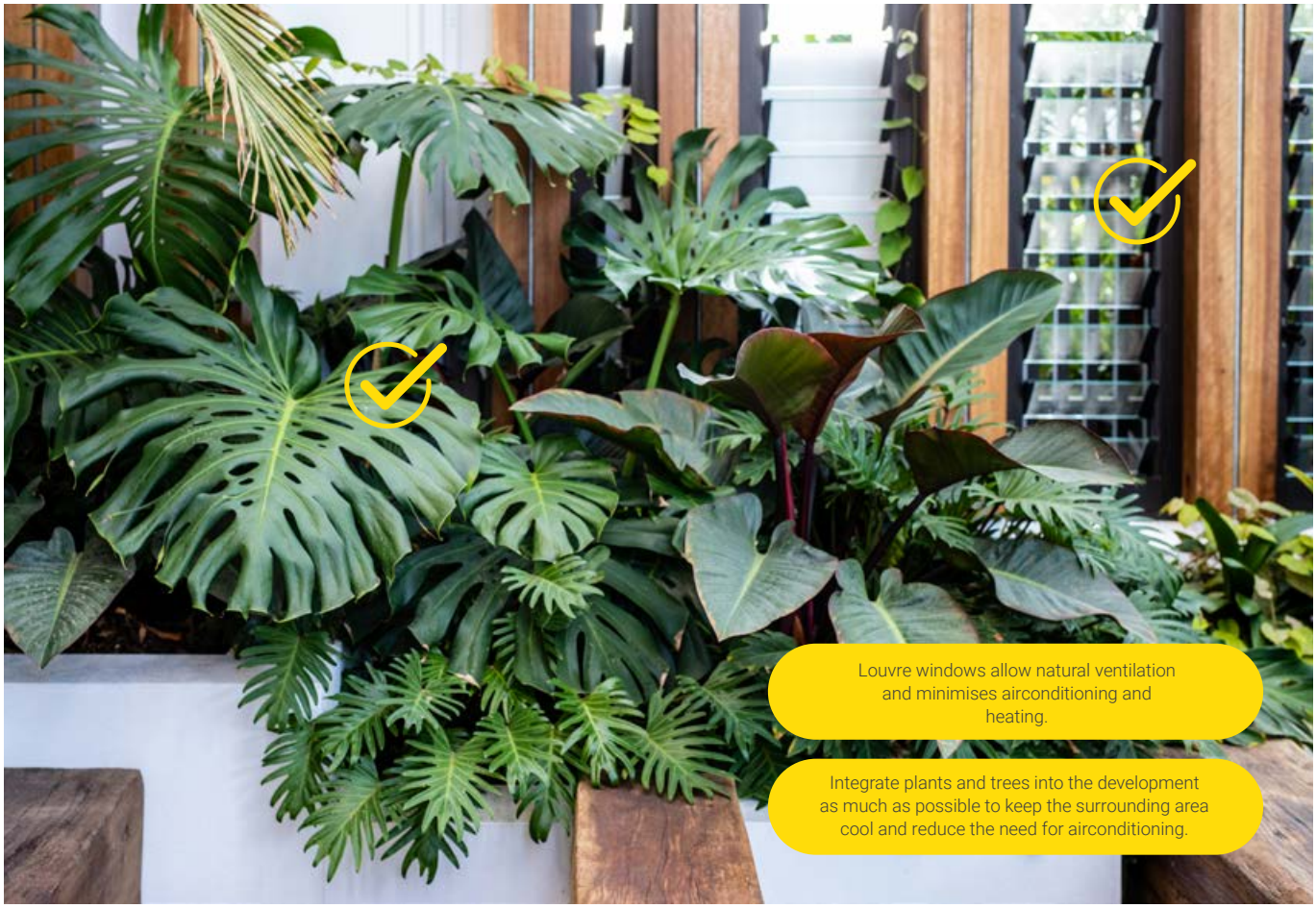
Design developments with sustainability in mind. Use materials and technology that minimise energy use and can be adaptable into the future.

Consider the best building materials to suit the climate. External walls and roof that are exposed to direct sun will ideally be materials and colours that do not absorb and store heat. Choose materials to minimise the need for air-conditioning in summer and heating in winter.

Insulated ceilings, walls and floor are essential for Sunshine Coast homes. Adding shade to windows and doors will further increase energy savings.

Design tips for energy reduction

- Design to reduce the energy consumption and the carbon footprint of the home
- Consider timber or cement sheeting (or other lightweight materials) on the hotter west and north-facing exteriors.
- A light-coloured roof will reflect the heat whereas, a dark roof will heat up the home.
- Add solar panels and/or other renewable and low-carbon energy sources to supply energy.
- Insulation in the roof, walls and floors will keep the heat out in summer and warmth in during the winter.
- Orientate the building to maximise natural light and ventilation and minimise the need for artificial light, air-conditioning, or heating.
- Include as many operable windows as possible to allow cooling breezes to remove any heat that accumulates.
- Integrate plants and trees to cool the surrounding area.
- Where possible specify locally sourced materials, this will reduce carbon emissions from transporting goods around.
- Reuse and recycle building materials where possible.
- Renovate and adapt existing buildings rather than rebuild.
- Include integrated recycling and composting facilities that are convenient for residents.
- Consider dark sky and wildlife sensitive lighting in communal areas. Put lighting on a timer or motion sensor for energy efficiency and to minimise light pollution.
- Add water tanks to collect onsite water to irrigate communal gardens.
- Ensure high-efficiency lighting throughout the building.
- Consider electric heat pump hot water systems or solar hot water systems.
- Consider longevity and resilience in material selection.



Louvre windows allow natural ventilation and minimises airconditioning and heating.

Integrate plants and trees into the development as much as possible to keep the surrounding area cool and reduce the need for airconditioning.

6.4 Design to manage stormwater

It is important to consider the management of stormwater within and beyond a site.

Design tips to manage stormwater

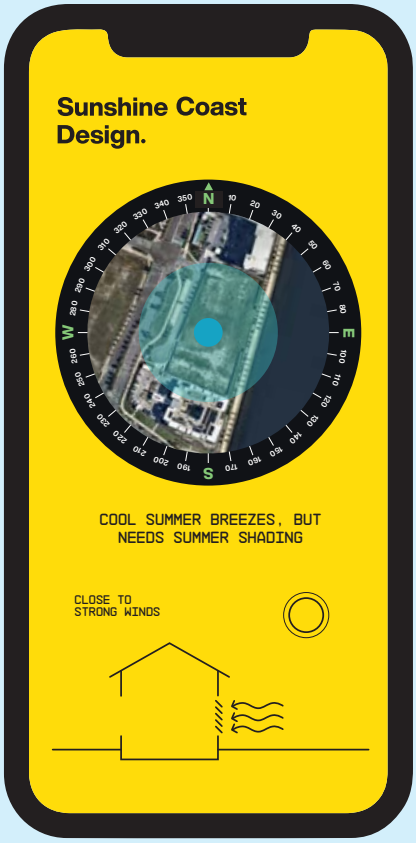
- Maximise gardens and minimise impervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants and improve urban cooling
- Consider rainwater as a resource. It can be used for irrigation, pool top up and other non-potable uses
- Drain hard surfaces towards garden beds where possible
- Ensure that overland flow and drainage from surrounding lots does not impact buildings. Implement design responses in accordance with Council's requirements.
- Drain roofwater and stormwater from the site to an appropriate point of discharge in accordance with Council's requirements.
- Make sure all surfaces, courtyards and balconies can drain in a way that will not damage buildings and infrastructure, even if drainage is blocked.
- Ensure all infrastructure, electrical outlets, floor and surface levels are set at appropriate levels.
- Locate basement entrances at high points within the site.
- Seek the advice of Council or the services of suitably qualified professionals, particularly if located in areas affected by flooding or overland flow.

In conclusion – achieving the ultimate design outcome

A holistic design approach will lead to the design of a comfortable and enjoyable homes, while helping to protect and enhance all that we love and value about the Sunshine Coast.

A well-designed development will respond to the local climate, respect context and place and positively contribute to the street, the public realm, the neighbourhood and the community.

The design process is a complex journey that can be both inspiring and rewarding. The goal is to create an apartment building or townhouse complex that is appropriate for its context, loved by its residents, admired by the broader community, and maybe even win some design awards.



Smartphone compass

Use this QR code to access a handy compass to show you how to best orientate your development and take advantage of the sub-tropical climate to help keep all the apartments and townhouses cool in summer and warm in winter.

The smartphone compass is inspired by the ***Department of Environment and Science's orientate your home compass*** (1999).

Access your smartphone compass here

Want to know more about Sunshine Coast design?

The Sunshine Coast Design book is full of ideas for designing in ways that will protect and enhance all that we love about the Sunshine Coast.

Read the book for free on-line, or buy a hard copy of the Sunshine Coast Design book via www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/sunshinecoastdesign

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This guide suggests practical ways of designing an apartment building or townhouse complex. It is not intended to replace professional architecture, urban design, building design landscape design, or other expertise to achieve best performance for every building and the best outcome for the neighbourhood.

This guide does not make any claims about achieving the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) star rating by following the suggestions in this booklet.

It does not provide advice on the National Construction Code or other requirements to achieve Building Certification.

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The specific circumstances of the development or project, lot and personal needs should be considered.

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Please contact us if you wish to recommend an edit or change to this document or request a workshop or design guidance for your project.

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For more information

Refer to the Council website for a list of valuable documents to support you when designing apartments and townhouses.

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