

# Design Statement

## ARO

### APARTMENT and TOWNHOUSE DEVELOPMENT

### 182-208 VICTORIA STREET and 263-269 WILLIS STREET, WELLINGTON

### SR 445605

## Introduction

This Design Statement outlines the project in general and discusses some aspects in detail. It should be read in conjunction with the Central Area Urban Design Guide Assessment that accompanies this application.

## Central Area Urban Design Guide Intention

The Central Area Urban Design Guide (CAUDG) identifies that building design is a catalyst for generating a quality public environment. The stated intention of the design guide is “*to achieve high quality buildings, places and spaces in the Central Area of the City*” to be achieved by ensuring buildings, places and spaces:

- Are coherently designed
- Make a considered response to context
- Address heritage values
- Establish positive visual effects
- Provide good quality living and working environments
- Integrate environmental sustainability principles, and
- Provide conditions of safety and accessibility

## Design Guide Provisions

New buildings within the Central Area require resource consent under the operative Wellington City District Plan provisions in respect of “*design, external appearance and siting*”. As the application site is not located within an identified character area, the design proposal requires assessment against the provisions of the operative Central Area Design Guide.

District Plan Change 48 (DPC 48) has created an additional assessment matter for Central Area building developments, this being “*placement of building mass*”. It also introduced a new Central Area Urban Design Guide (CAUDG) replacing the operative design guide and its associated character area design guides.

Advice received from Council is that the Central Area Urban Design Guide incorporated within DPC 48 is to be used as the main guiding document for assessing design aspects of Central Area resource consent applications. This document contains Council's current policy direction for the Central Area while also incorporating the relevant assessment matters of the operative design guides.

The CAUDG is divided into sections, with each one providing design objectives and related generic guidelines. The design guide acknowledges that good design is site and program specific meaning that only relevant identified objectives and guidelines need be considered in any particular proposal. It further suggests that due to the unique conditions of each location, some objectives will be more important than others. Priority should be given to satisfying those guidelines that are critical to the overall intentions of the guide.

## **Te Aro Context**

The Central Area contains five distinct areas; Pipitea, Capital Precinct, Downtown, Te Aro and the Waterfront. The site is located in the Te Aro area which is at the south of the Central Area.

Some key characteristics of the area noted in the CAUDG are,

- its made up of larger and less intensively developed blocks, which are in some cases further subdivided by ad-hoc lanes and cul-de-sacs,
- buildings largely conform to block perimeters and to the edges of lanes and cul-de-sacs,
- there have been substantial changes in land use and in particular the strong presence of inner city living replacing industry,
- the transport corridor,
- less street life, except for Courtenay Place and Cuba Street, in part due to the 'Low City' building height, traditional land uses, a smaller daytime population, and the 'coarse grained' nature of the area.

## **Neighbourhood / Site Observation / Urban Considerations**

Some observations of the immediate neighbourhood are,

- The building stock is extremely eclectic – with considerable variety of building use, age and height,
- Building heights vary with buildings across the road generally 2 or 3 levels except on Willis St where they are 5-7 levels,
- The site is at the boundary of District Plan height limits with 10.2m to the SW and 14m to the S, 27m to the N, E and W,

- The bulk of floor area in adjacent buildings is used for residential activities – mostly student accommodation, transitory rental (motel) and residential. Residential activities exist in the ground floor of some,
- Various commercial activities make up the balance of uses in neighbouring sites,
- There is limited retail close by – two art galleries, Warehouse Stationery, Viti barbers,
- A small number of small food outlets and cafes are located further south on Willis St – Moulin bakery, il Piccolo pizza, Mughlai MerCury,
- Proximity to Cuba Street influences the number and type of retail that is viable in the area,
- Pedestrian foot traffic is observed to be greater along the south side of Vivian and Willis Streets – people walking to and from Cuba Street and the CBD from residential areas to the south and west. Few pedestrian numbers are observed on Victoria Street especially on the west side,
- Vivian Street is currently SH1 and has a very high traffic count,
- Victoria Street is a Principal Road leading to Brooklyn, Aro valley etc and has a high traffic count.

## **The Development Site and Project Outline**

The site is a substantial size with dimensions of approximately 76m north to south and 59m east to west, and an area of 4,138m<sup>2</sup>. It is currently occupied more or less by weekday car parking and weekend activities – including an open-air produce market and motorcycle riding skills training. A single level building currently used for auto repairs is close to the Vivian Willis corner.

The project involves construction of 109 residential dwellings in both apartment and townhouse typologies. This will result in a density of about 260 dwellings per hectare, or 335 dwellings/hectare including dual-key studio apartments. Assuming three residents per townhouse, 1.5 residents per apartment, and one resident per studio-apartment we can anticipate a population of about 280.

The apartment units are located in a 4-5 level structure comprising three buildings connected by vertical and horizontal circulation. This fronts onto both Victoria and Willis streets and is adjacent to the north edge of the site. To the south of the apartment buildings is a laneway.

This major laneway bisects the site in the east west direction. It is for pedestrians and vehicles and connects Willis and Victoria Streets. Being in this location it is close to the north edge of the site and approximately a third of the distance between Vivian and Ghuznee Streets. This more or less replicates an informal connection that currently exists through the existing carpark. There are currently no other public laneways in this entire block.

Townhouses are located on the balance of the site to the south side of the laneway. The townhouse units are located in three 3-4 level structures aligned with Willis and Victoria streets and two internal pedestrian laneways. These two pedestrian only laneways run in the north south direction connecting the major laneway with Vivian Street. Mid way along these laneways is a connecting passage.

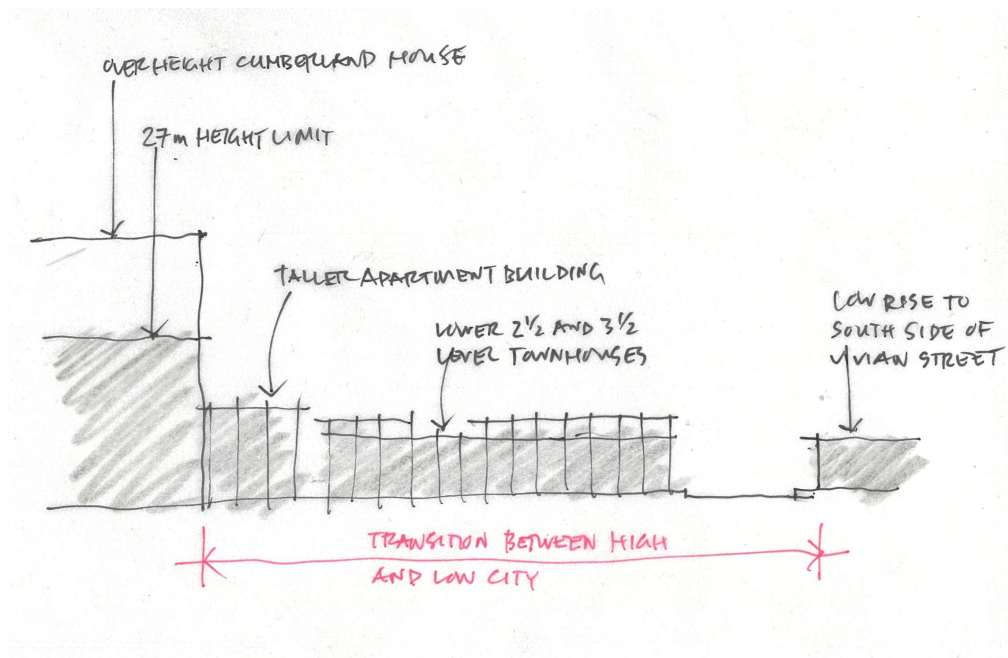
The built forms closely follow the perimeter of the site, with only minor interruptions due to the geometry of the boundary.

Five commercial tenancies are provided on the ground floor of three of the townhouses and below the apartments at strategic locations at high pedestrian nodes and positions where people are likely to pause – street corners and laneway entrances.

## Urban Response

The configuration of the built form closely responds to the neighbourhood urban pattern.

There is scale gradation from south to north. The taller apartment buildings act as a transition from the lower scaled townhouses and the even taller neighbours to the north. Height variation also occurs throughout the development to avoid uniformity and inappropriate scale. Important corners such as Vivian / Willis are identified by taller units.



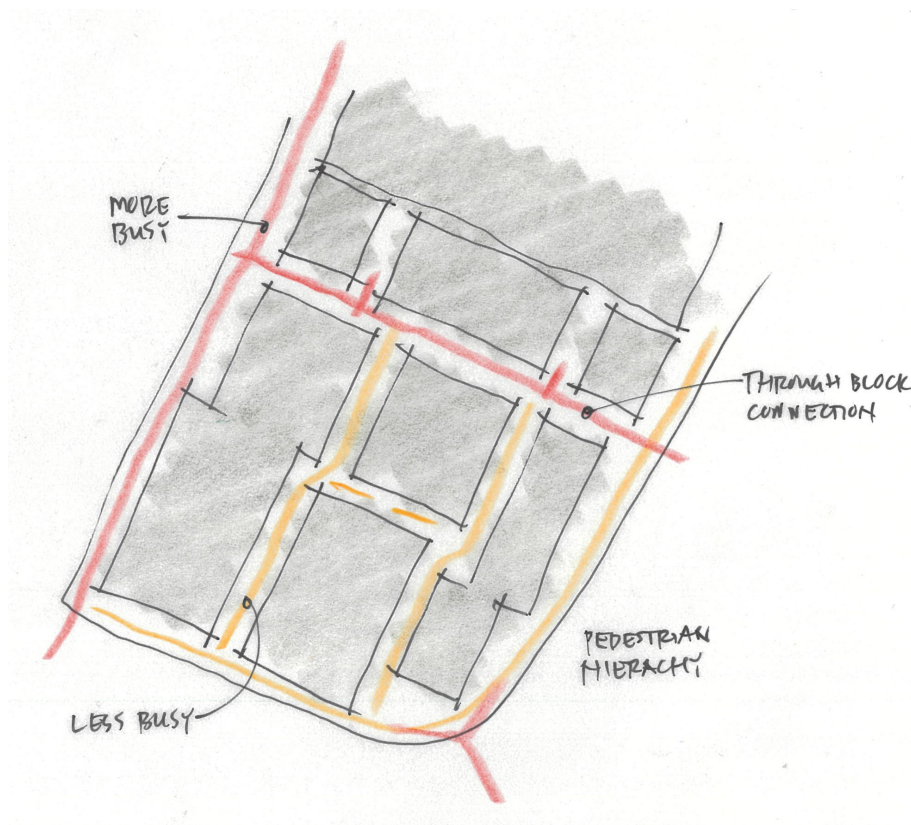
Residences on Vivian Street face east west to reduce impact from traffic noise – entrances and windows generally face the laneways, with only a few windows facing the street.

Service vehicle access from Victoria / Willis Streets rather than Vivian St to avoid conflict with traffic on Vivian St. Generous provision of space for cycle / scooter parking with direct and convenient access from the shared laneway.

Commercial space in selected locations where foot traffic is highest, visibility is greatest and where pedestrians are likely pause.

Where residential space is on the lowest floors it is elevated above footpath level to improve comfort and provide a balance between privacy and connectivity. All ground floor levels are elevated above the footpath or laneways by 150 to 900mm (one to six steps).

Laneways provide and allow pedestrian pathways through the site for convenience of both residents and general public and help foster public life. Intimate pedestrian only laneways with activity pockets / seating areas to encourage people to pause, linger and occupy these spaces. Stepped level change at the entrances to pedestrian laneways to discourage scooters and skateboards.



Medium rise walk-up 3 and 4 storey building typologies provide a scale relationship to lower 2 storey neighbours and higher Willis St neighbours. Stepped building platforms follow the topography from a high point at Willis / Vivian corner to low point adjacent to Apex on Victoria St.

The apartment block divided into three smaller buildings with shared entrances and stairs leading from the major through-site laneway. These entranceways ensure pedestrian activity within the site whilst maintaining convenience of approach from both east and west. Further this position ensures occupants of both apartments and townhouses come into contact and helps foster community integration.

The separation of the apartment block into three separate buildings alters the scale so that it is more intimate and more in keeping with the overall development. This establishes a finer grain to the building that transitions from the smaller townhouse forms and the larger bulk of the neighbours. Formally the articulation of the apartment component establishes a transition to the townhouse typology which provides additional identity of individual residences. Figurative flowing gable roofs on the apartment buildings have been added to establish a linking element that helps to distinguish them from the townhouses.

Townhouse typology establishes small blocks of common coloured houses in groups of one to five based on shifts in height and plan in response to site level changes and boundaries. Townhouses all have primary façade to the east or west and a secondary façade in the other direction. This improves sun and daylight access, and cross ventilation. Rooftop terraces are provided on 35 of the 61 townhouses. These provide a number of benefits to the occupants and to the urban realm.

## **Accommodation**

The project involves construction 109 residential dwellings in both apartment and townhouse typologies.

The apartment units are located in a 4-5 level structure comprising three buildings connected by vertical and horizontal circulation. This fronts onto both Victoria and Willis Streets and is adjacent to the north edge of the site.

Townhouses are located on the balance of the site and front onto Victoria, Vivian and Willis Streets. The townhouse units are located in three 3-4 level structures aligned with Willis and Victoria streets and two internal pedestrian laneways.

61 townhouses will be provided. There are five different designs, as follows,

- Live Work LW3.5 with ground floor commercial space, two bedrooms and a roof terrace, on three and a half levels,

- Dual Key DK3.5 with ground floor studio apartment, two bedrooms and a roof terrace, on three and a half levels,
- Dual Key DK3.0 with ground floor studio apartment, two bedrooms, on three levels,
- Live L3.0 with three bedrooms, on three levels,
- Live L2.5 with two bedrooms, and a roof top terrace, on two and a half levels,

The numbers and location of the LW3.5, DK3.5 and L2.5 are fixed. However, purchasers will have the option of selecting either a DK3.0 or L3.0 in the 26 locations determined. The façade of these are more or less identical so there will be no obvious difference externally.

The Live Work LW3.5 commercial space is a small tenancy that can be used by the occupant as a commercial space (shop house) or leased to another business. They might be used for retail or office (1-3 persons).

The Dual Key DK3.0 and DK3.5 have a studio apartment with its own entrance and a connecting door to the stairway of the dwelling. This will allow these spaces to be occupied by either a member of the family or a short-term tenant / overnight stays. They could also be used as an office or commercial space in the same way as the space on the ground floor of the LW3.5 townhouses.

48 apartments are provided. They are all single bedroom. All bedrooms face away from the street. Whilst they face the walkway, they are separated by a void to increase privacy.

## **Bulk and Form**

The development responds to the adjacent built form of the neighbourhood which has low height and smaller footprint buildings to the south, east and south west as well as to the taller built forms of the neighbours on Willis Street to the north and north west.

There is scale gradation from south to north. The apartment building is taller and acts as a transition from the lower scaled townhouses to the very tall building to the north.

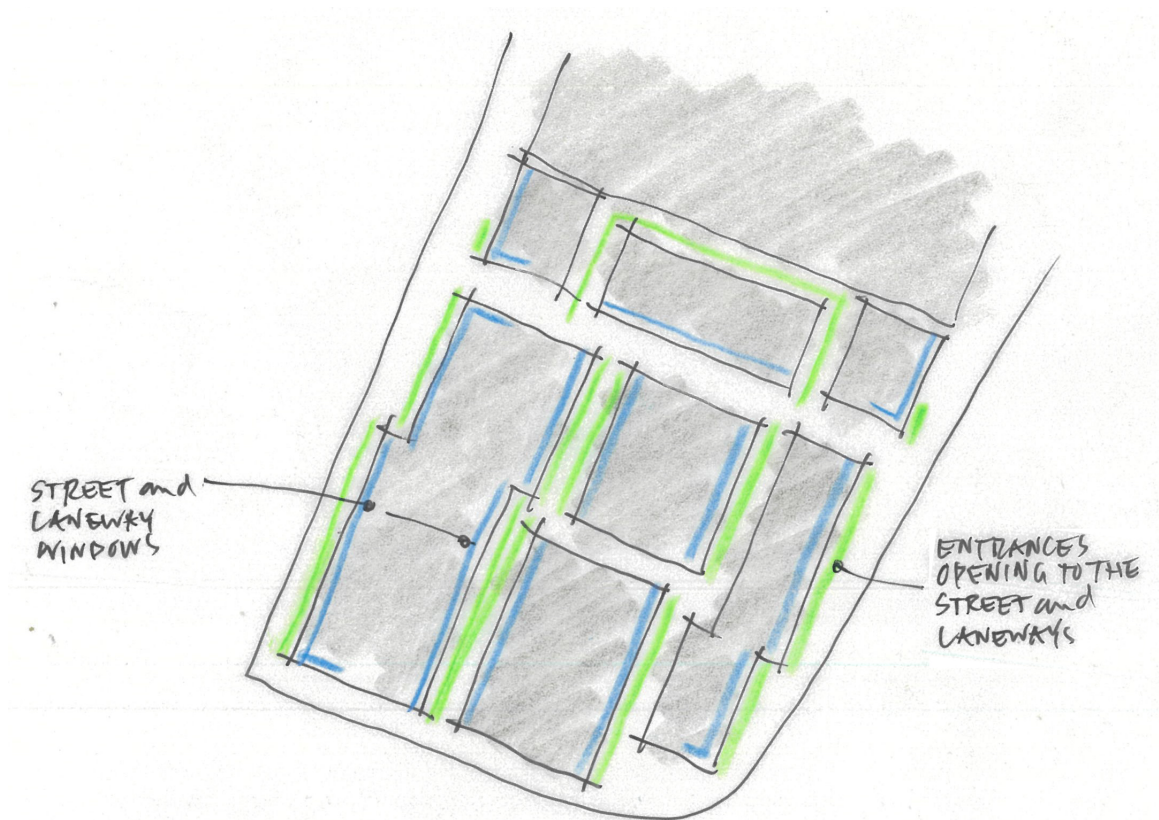
The subdivision of the site into multiple buildings and the articulation of these in elevation and plan breaks down the large block into smaller components consistent with the variety of width and height of neighbouring buildings. This subdivision reduces the single large block into five smaller blocks. It also introduces a new urban typology and environment by the introduction of laneways.

Built form closely follows the perimeter of the site. This creates a consistent streetscape that reinforces and defines the street edge.



## Street Frontages and Façade Treatment

Building frontages are provided continuously along Willis and Victoria Streets and laneways. All townhouse entranceways are configured with porches and elevation so they can function as a stoop by occupants. This will encourage informal communication and incidental engagement with neighbours and passers-by. Some townhouses have rooftop terraces / gardens. These are private spaces where residents can sit outside to overlook the street.



Articulation of the façade gives priority to providing clear identity to each dwelling. Each townhouse has a combined letterbox / rubbish / courier cupboard. This articulation establishes a finer grain consistent with the nature of residential inhabitation.

The rooftop silhouette of the townhouses is strongly defined by the stepping crenulated profile resulting from the three or four level heights and by the incorporation of rooftop terraces and gardens. These are positioned to face the street so they have visibility.

Given its status as SH1, and its position to the south of the site, we have elected not to orient townhouses towards Vivian St. On this frontage, dwellings have windows which will provide passive surveillance. The composition of this facade has been carefully

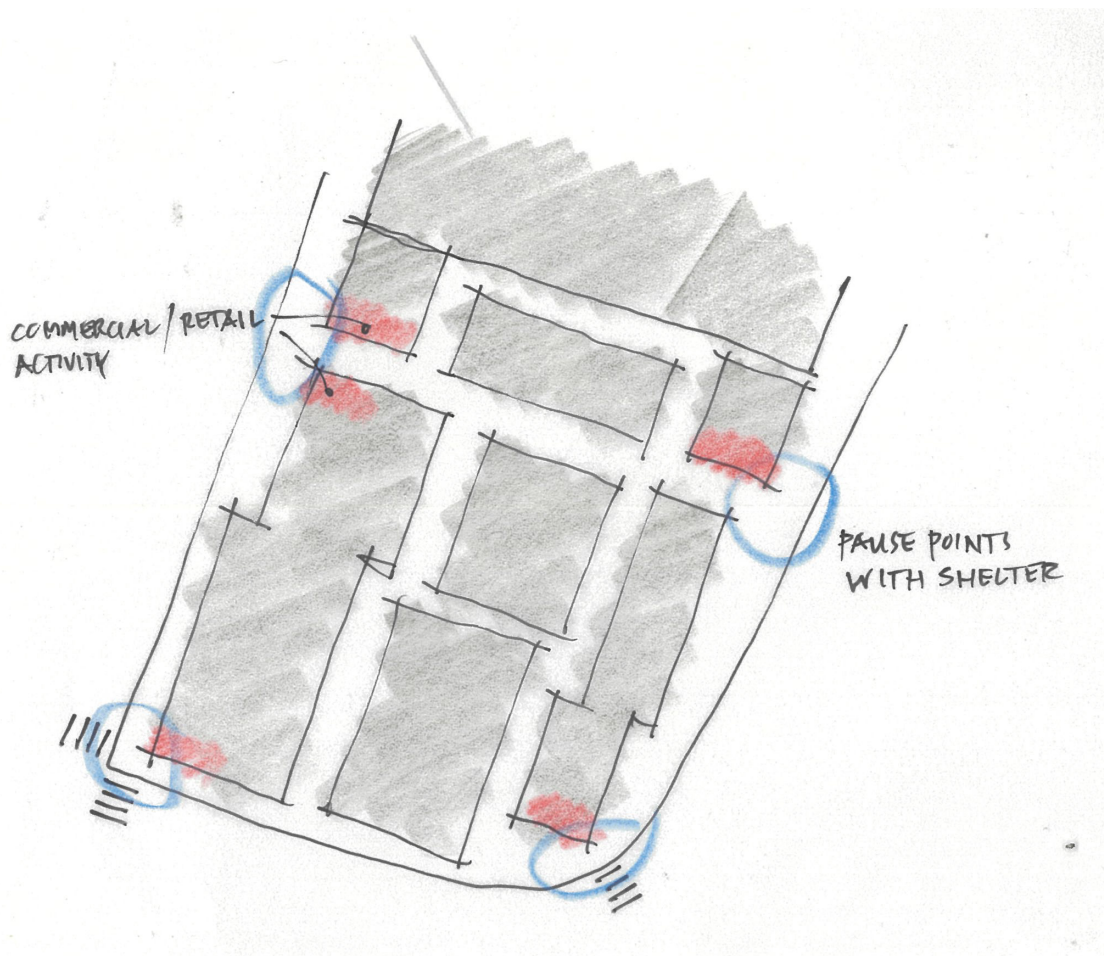


considered to provide an aesthetically pleasing frontage. Pedestrian laneways also connect to Vivian Street and help contribute to activity on this frontage.

## Canopies

Canopies and shelter is provided at pause points at laneway entrances and street corners. These canopies also identify the retail and commercial tenancies. These provide both amenity and signal this activity.

A continuous canopy on the Willis Street frontage, as required in the District Plan, is not provided. Instead, as indicated above, shelter is provided at points where pedestrians are likely to wait, including most importantly at the Willis Vivian traffic lights.



There are several reasons for this non-compliance. Firstly, there is no continuity of shelter north and south of the site. The immediate neighbour Cumberland House only has shelter for approximately 15% of its frontage. This small canopy at its entrance provides negligible cover for pedestrians. The immediate neighbor to the south, Speedy Signs, has a canopy however it is used as a carport so pedestrians are unable to use it.

We contend that pedestrians walking this part of Willis Street in wet weather will have been prepared and dressed accordingly. Secondly, the slope of the site and the step in the site boundary mid-way along the frontage conspire to making the geometry and functionality of a canopy challenging and overly complex with multiple steps and gaps at junctions. Thirdly, the affect of a canopy is to prevent visual connection between upper level rooms and the footpath, thereby preventing surveillance and reducing signs of life.

Shelter is nevertheless provided at the entrance to all townhouses. They have elevated recessed porches that provide shelter, signal entrances and provide an inhabitable stoop space where residents can sit outside.

The apartment building has shelter at the two entrance gates and a glazed roof over the access walkways and stairs.

### **Private Outdoor Space, Landscaping and Open Space**

We have elected to make all laneways publicly accessible rather than gated. This will benefit both residents of this site as well as neighbours and passers-by. These laneways are open ended and there are no cul-de-sacs. At key nodes in the laneways places to pause and sit are provided. Planting, trees, lighting and visual connectivity will ensure these spaces are comfortable, safe and desirable spaces to occupy.

The laneways will be constantly activated as they give access to front doors, and are overlooked by occupants living spaces. All townhouse entranceways are configured with porches and elevation so they can function as a stoop by occupants. This will encourage informal communication and incidental engagement with neighbours and passers-by.

Some townhouses have rooftop terraces / gardens. These are private spaces where residents can sit outside to overlook the street or in private should they wish.

The site also benefits from proximity to the large sunny public open space on the east side of Victoria Street. This will provide additional recreational amenity to occupants.

Semi-private open space is provided within the apartment building. Gates at the two entries restrict access to occupants. Within the circulation network each apartment has a small outdoor space immediately outside their entrance that can be furnished and occupied. These spaces are covered by a glass roof and have open sides for ventilation. They will encourage occupation and help foster public life and community. Street facing apartments have small balconies. These will provide amenity to occupants and sunny places to occupy depending on the orientation.

Laneway trees will provide some visual separation between opposing dwellings.

## **Servicing, Vehicle Access and Cycle Parking**

Servicing is provided along the shared laneway. This will allow refuse and recycling trucks, delivery, removal and maintenance vehicles to undertake their activities without adversely impacting on the footpath.

A shared refuse, recycling store located under the apartment building with convenient access for residents and servicing. The space has capacity for sufficient bins for three collections per week – 2 @ 240L organic, 4 @ 1,100L recycling, 3 @ 1,100L refuse. Additionally, all townhouses have a rubbish store cupboard outside their front door. This will allow temporary holding prior to removal to the shared store, or managed collection by a contractor.

No on site carparking provided. Purchasers will be able to lease carparking in an adjacent building should they wish or utilise Mevo or other carshare services. Shared covered bicycle / scooter parking is provided under the apartment building with convenient at grade access for all residents. Public cycle stands are provided in key locations for visitors.

Vehicular access is restricted for servicing only. The through site shared laneway allows 8m long MRV trucks (rubbish, furniture, deliveries, typical fire appliance etc) to access the site as required without reversing.

## **Materials**

The structure is precast concrete walls and floors with lightweight roofs. The external concrete surface will be off-board concrete with mineral paint (Boncote or Resene Aquashield) in four colours – natural, off-white, brick-red and charcoal. Metal roof colours to match.

A deliberately restricted palette of materials allows variation of form, detail and colour to provide continuity whilst avoiding monotony and creating interest at macro and micro levels of the design. Articulation ensures that individual townhouses are able to be distinguished and identified. A consistent language of materials and forms results in an integrated urban development that achieves the above principles and generates an urban form that integrates with the surrounding context.

Feature panels of ceramic tiles separate the townhouses at the ends of the rows. Tiles porch paving will also identify and distinguish the different townhouses.

Window reveals and parapet cappings will be painted steel plate. Balustrades and screens will be anodized aluminium and painted steel plate. These materials will be robust, durable and have permanence.