



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

What to look for when choosing a well-designed house or apartment



DESIGN
WA

For a
Better Built
Environment



Well-designed homes make life easier

Houses and apartments come in many different sizes and configurations. When they are well-designed, they improve your quality of life and help you save on maintenance and operating costs. They let more light in, are energy efficient, have outdoor spaces, gardens and other amenities, and are constructed to last.

The benefits go beyond each building – these homes create better streets, neighbourhoods and make for a more liveable city.

Use these easy to follow 10 principles of good design when buying or renting your next house or apartment.

Context and Character

Well-designed homes fit into the local neighbourhood

How a house or apartment building sits within its surroundings is an essential element of good design. Whether it blends in - or has its own distinctive character - it should still relate well to the other buildings around it.

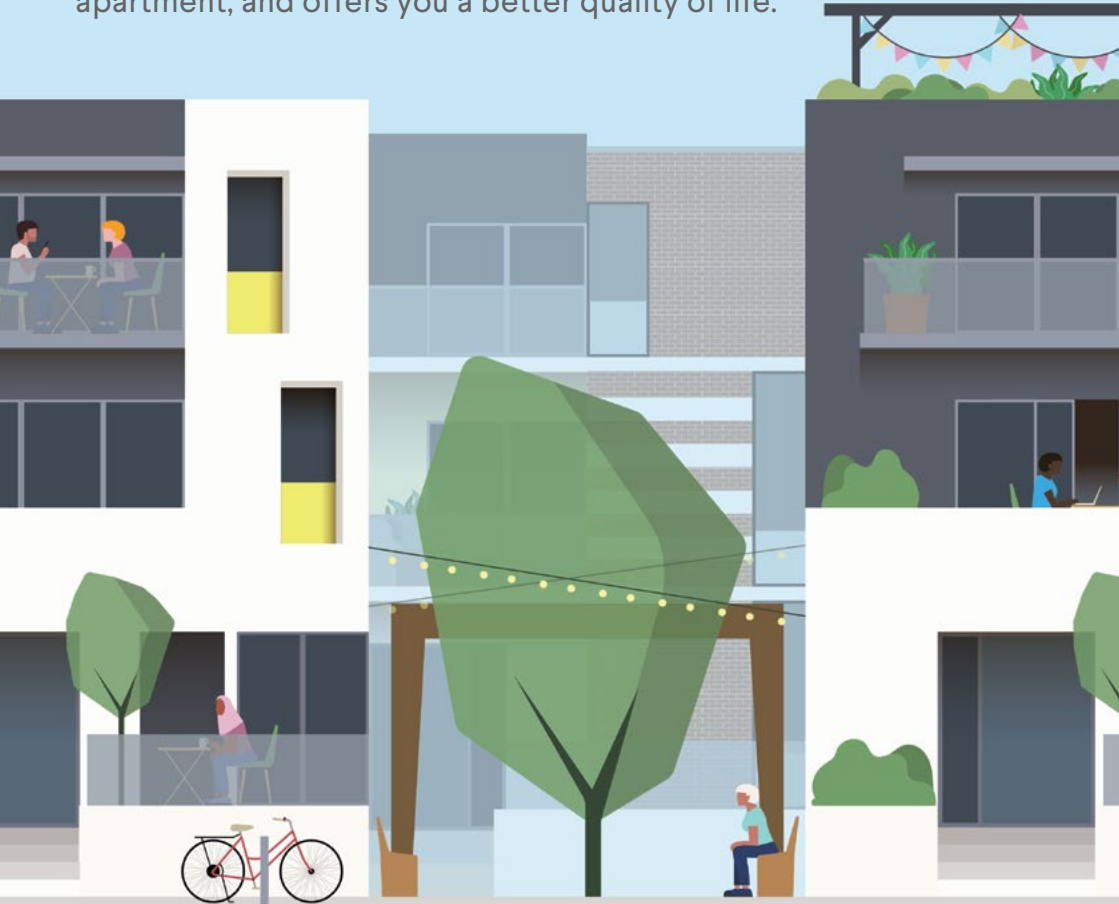


- How does the building sit within the existing streetscape?
- What is the character and feel of the place? Does it reflect what you like about the neighbourhood? i.e. “very Freo” “so North Perth.”
- How does its use of materials, shapes and colours relate to the buildings around it?

Landscape Quality

Well-designed homes incorporate quality landscaping

Good landscaping adds to the look, feel and function of a house or apartment, and offers you a better quality of life.



- What natural landscaping is there?
Are there good sized trees and gardens?
- Are the landscaped areas well maintained and in good condition?
- For apartments, are shared gardening facilities provided?

Built Form and Scale

A house or apartment should be sized to suit its location

Houses and apartments should fit naturally into the local landscape in terms of their size and scale, both in the present and into the future.



- How does the building's size sit within the overall streetscape?
- Are larger buildings, such as apartments, attractive and welcoming at ground level?
- How does the scale of the building fit with potential future development plans for the area?

Functionality and Build Quality

Well-designed homes should have a functional layout and use quality materials that will last

The overall layout of a house or apartment should suit your lifestyle and have good quality internal finishes that are easy to maintain and adaptable to your changing needs over time.

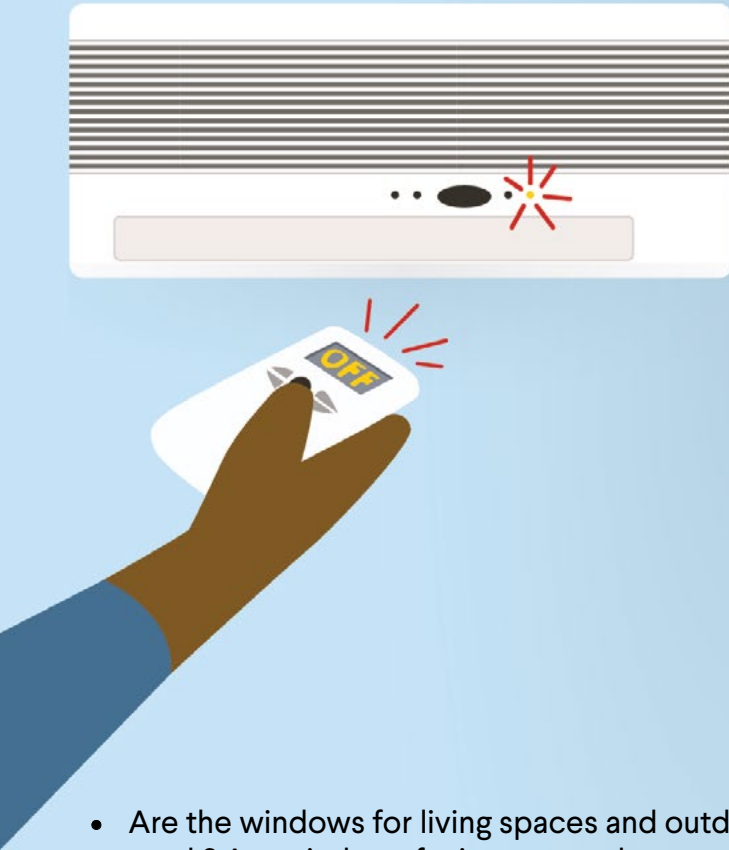


- Do the room layouts provide spaces that are easy to furnish?
- Is adequate storage provided for bulkier items?
- Are the internal and external finishes of good quality and easy to maintain?

Sustainability

Well-designed homes minimise energy use and support the environment

Good design incorporates energy efficiency into the layout. The positioning of windows and outdoor spaces, insulation, waste management, and building materials also contribute to a home's overall sustainability.



- Are the windows for living spaces and outdoor spaces facing north? Are windows facing east and west provided with shading?
- Are opening windows located on opposite sides of the house or apartment to allow for good cross-ventilation?
- Does the apartment achieve a minimum 6 out-of-10 star NatHERS sustainability rating?

Amenity

Well-designed homes are comfortable and welcoming places

Comfortable houses and apartments are well-lit, with plenty of natural sunlight and sufficient privacy. They also provide places where you can experience a sense of peace and quiet.



- How quiet and peaceful are the rooms and outdoor spaces? Are sleeping areas away from louder living spaces?
- What is the level of natural light in each of the living spaces and bedrooms?
- What provisions are there for privacy? I.e. screens, blinds, hedges and protection from noise.

Legibility

Well-designed homes are easy to navigate - even for first-time visitors

For larger buildings, like apartments, car parking facilities and front entrances should be accessible and easy to find.



- How straightforward is it to make your way to the front door?
- For apartments, how accessible is the car park and entrance from the street?
- Is it easy to tell the difference between outdoor areas for private, communal and public access?

Safety

Well-designed homes feel safe, day and night

Houses and apartments should be secure and designed so neighbours can look out for each other.



- Do balconies and windows open onto the street and communal areas to encourage neighbours to look out for each other?
- How visible, well-lit and secure (particularly at night) are the building entrances and car park areas?
- For urban areas, is the street lively, with a mix of uses?
Do people frequently come and go?

Community

Well-designed homes respond to community needs

A home should allow for social interaction with people in your street or apartment building. It's also important that there are community spaces nearby to suit your needs now and into the future.

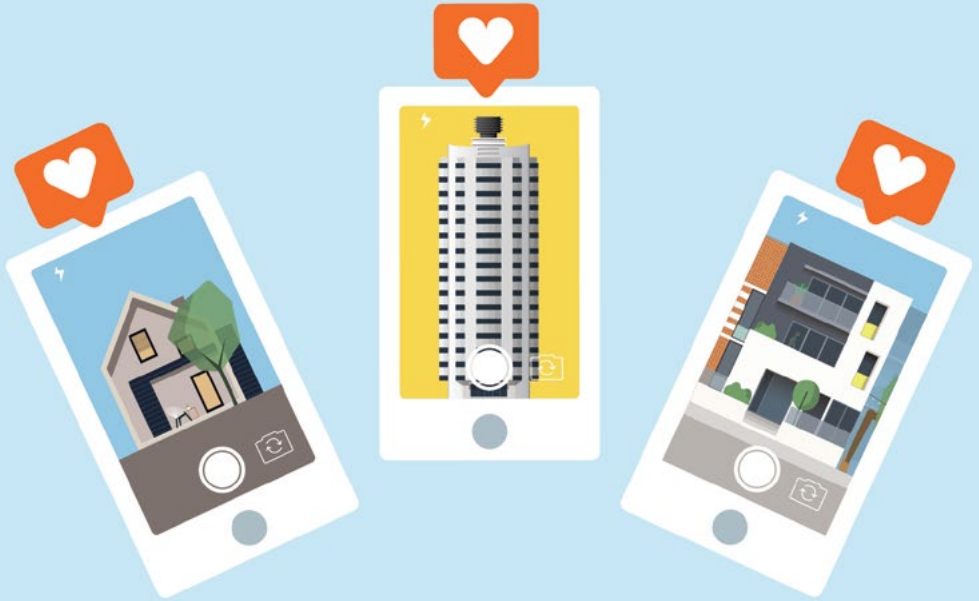


- Are there any community spaces within a short walk, such as parks for recreation, plazas to meet friends, and local shops?
- Are there a variety of housing types for different needs, demographics and budgets within the neighbourhood?
- For apartments, does the building encourage you to keep physically and socially active? e.g. are there easy to find stairways, bike facilities and good communal facilities?

Aesthetics

Well-designed homes are aesthetically pleasing and inviting

A home is where you live, play and go about your life - so it's important that it looks good and ages well. This includes all the finer details that can often get overlooked.



- Is the building visually engaging?
Would you feel proud to live there?
- Does the design possess elegance, character and beauty?
- Has the design been followed through to the finer finishes of the building?

Rate the places on your short-list

Context and Character

- How does the building sit within the existing streetscape?
- What is the character and feel of the place? Does it reflect what you like about the neighbourhood? i.e. “very Freo” “so North Perth.”
- How does its use of materials, shapes and colours relate to the buildings around it?



Landscape Quality

- What natural landscaping is there? Are there good sized trees and gardens?
- Are the landscaped areas well maintained and in good condition?
- For apartments, are shared gardening facilities provided?

Built Form and Scale

- How does the building’s size sit within the overall streetscape?
- Are larger buildings, such as apartments, attractive and welcoming at ground level?
- How does the scale of the building fit with potential future development plans for the area?

Functionality and Build Quality

- Do the room layouts provide spaces that are easy to furnish?
- Are the internal finishes of good quality and easy to maintain?
- Is adequate storage provided for bulkier items?

Sustainability

- Are the windows for living spaces and outdoor spaces facing north? Are windows facing east and west provided with shading?
- Are opening windows located on opposite sides of the house or apartment to allow for good cross-ventilation?
- Does the apartment achieve a minimum 6 out-of-10 star NatHERS sustainability rating?

Amenity

- How quiet and peaceful are the rooms and outdoor spaces? Are sleeping areas away from louder living spaces?
 - What is the level of natural light in each of the living spaces and bedrooms?
 - What provisions are there for privacy? I.e. screens, blinds, hedges and protection from noise.
-
-

Legibility

- How straightforward is it to make your way to the front door?
 - For apartments, how accessible is the car park and entrance from the street?
 - Is it easy to tell the difference between outdoor areas for private, communal and public access?
-
-

Safety

- Do balconies and windows open onto the street and communal areas to encourage neighbours to look out for each other?
 - How visible, well-lit and secure (particularly at night) are the building entrances and car park areas?
 - For urban areas, is the street lively, with a mix of uses?
Do people frequently come and go?
-
-

Community

- Are there any community spaces within a short walk, such as parks for recreation, plazas to meet friends, and local shops?
 - Are there a variety of housing types for different needs, demographics and budgets within the neighbourhood?
 - For apartments, does the building encourage you to keep physically and socially active? e.g. are there easy to find stairways, bike facilities and good communal facilities?
-
-

Aesthetics

- Is the building visually engaging? Would you feel proud to live there?
 - Has the design been followed through to the finer finishes of the building?
 - Does the design possess elegance, character and beauty?
-
-

For further information

The State Government is developing policies to improve the way houses and apartments are built. By providing clear and proven guidance for planners, designers, developers and residents, these future well-designed buildings will contribute to the well-being of both the community and the environment.

You can read our policies at www.planning.wa.gov.au/designwa

You can also find more information about house and apartment design at www.yourhome.gov.au

Acknowledgements

A collaboration with Open House Perth.

Illustrations by Kelwin Wong, Architect and graphic designer.



Department of **Planning, Lands and Heritage**

Department of **Finance**

Office of the Government Architect