

Gated Residential Developments

Design Guidelines

Development typology

Please note:

These guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive. Instead, the principles contained in this document are meant to guide property owners, City officials, designers, developers, architects, planners and community members in managing and improving the principles expressed in the Urban Design Policy. The intended purpose is to collectively create sustainable, safe, contextually appropriate environments for the betterment of the City and its users.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and quality of the information in this document, as well as the alignment with other City policies and guidelines available at the time of production. The City cannot be held responsible, and will not be liable, for any errors or omissions contained herein.

In no event will the City be liable for any loss or damage that may arise from the use of these guidelines.

Many of the images used in this document are taken from real world examples, adapted to show the principles of the guidelines presented.

The guidelines form part of the approved Designing Quality Places; Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town. These guidelines look to provide supporting transparent decision making and provide guidance in achieving principles of good urban design.

The intention is that the Guidelines are flexible so that they can be updated and reviewed periodically, based on on-going feedback and evidence based responses. Any updates will be consulted with, and endorsed by, the Executive Director.

Endorsed by:

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Executive Director
Spatial Planning & Environment

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Director
Spatial Planning & Environment

Rev. no	Date	Description
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For the purpose of this guideline, and as defined by the Gated Developments Policy, gated residential developments are characterised as **developments that are bound by physical barriers, such as walls and fences, that separate them from the surrounding context**. General **access** to these developments is typically **monitored, controlled, restricted, or prevented** in any way, often by means of booms or gates. Other criteria by which gated residential developments are defined or distinguished are subject to **limited access points** that **lead into an internal network of streets** and a group of separate and/or linked dwelling units, which may be subdivided but are **planned, designed and built as a harmonious architectural entity**.

Gated residential developments have become increasingly prevalent in the housing market, often driven by concerns about security and the desire for controlled environments. However, it is essential to recognize that these developments, if poorly designed, can fragment the existing urban fabric, reduce connectivity, and limit access to shared public spaces. This guideline seeks to promote sound urban design principles that ensure such developments are well-integrated into their surroundings, respecting the immediate context rather than isolating from it. The planning and design process must aim to contribute positively to the public realm, foster inclusivity and enhance overall quality of life, rather than reinforcing exclusivity or social separation.

What and where?

Gated residential developments need to:

- respect the existing spatial structure by ensuring connectivity through physical and/or visual integration with the surrounding context
- be easily accessible and prioritise pedestrian movement
- demonstrate appropriate site design in response to the scale and integration with the surrounding built and natural context so as to compliment and not detract from it
- provide adequate open space that is intentionally designed
- ensure appropriate interfaces by contributing positively to the public realm (both internally and externally)

What kind of developments are we trying to create?

Gated residential development guidelines are applicable, but not limited to the following:

- A development bound by a physical barrier, such as fences or walls
- A development to which access is monitored, controlled or restricted by a boom or gate
- A development with an internal network of streets that provides pedestrian and vehicular access to individual, privately owned residential units
- A development planned and designed as a harmonious architectural entity

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Key definitions

These definitions are shorthand and should be read in conjunction with the Urban Design Policy (2024).

Active interface: A building edge that engages with the public realm through features like windows, doors, or retail activity to promote interaction and safety.

Active mobility: Movement by non-motorised means such as walking or cycling.

Articulation (of façade): Variation in a building's surface (e.g., recesses, projections) to create visual interest and avoid monotony.

Boundary wall treatment: The design and material approach to walls enclosing a development, often incorporating permeability and landscaping.

Built form: The shape and massing of development. Built form relates to qualities such as density or quantum of development (often referred to as massing), coverage (how much of the site is built up), building height, and the distance from property lines.

Canyon effect: A visual and spatial condition where tall, continuous buildings or walls create a narrow, enclosed street, often considered undesirable.

Connector street: A road that links neighbourhoods or districts and supports moderate vehicle flow and accessibility.

Cul-de-sac: A dead-end street with only one inlet/outlet, often discouraged in urban design for limiting connectivity.

Desire Lines: Informal paths created by pedestrian movement, indicating preferred routes.

Green infrastructure network (GIN): A network of natural and semi-natural systems (e.g., parks, wetlands) that provide ecological and recreational benefits.

Mobility route: A road classified by its capacity and function, typically ranging from high-capacity arterials (Class 1) to local streets (Class 5).

Open space: Open space refers to hard space, including squares, plazas, road reserves, and soft green spaces, such as parks or conservation areas, areas used for active and passive recreation, and livelihood opportunities such as allotment areas, community gardens, small-scale farming and food-growing.

Overlooking features: Architectural elements like windows or balconies that face public spaces, enhancing safety through passive surveillance.

Passive surveillance: Natural observation of public areas by residents or users, improving safety and security.

Permeable boundary: A fence or wall that allows visual or physical connection between spaces, enhancing openness and safety.

Permeable surface: Ground materials that allow water to infiltrate, reducing runoff and supporting sustainable drainage.

Phased growth: Development that occurs in planned stages over time.

Public realm: This term means the collection of physical and non-physical elements that are accessible or have an impact on the general public. Some aspects of the public realm are privately owned and managed. The public realm includes among others all forms of media, open spaces and streets.

Service road: A smaller road parallel to a main road, providing access to properties and reducing traffic congestion.

Site configuration: The arrangement of buildings, streets, and open spaces within a development site.

Spatial integration: Spatial structure and hierarchy refer to the organisation of space to create legible places and neighbourhoods.

Street hierarchy: A classification system for roads based on their function and traffic volume.

Streetscape: The visual and functional character of a street, shaped by buildings, landscaping, and public amenities.

SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems): Design strategies that manage stormwater sustainably, often using natural processes.

Topography/landform: The natural shape and elevation of the land.

Typology matrix: A system for categorising different development types to guide appropriate design responses.

Urban fabric: The physical layout and structure of a city, including buildings, streets, and open spaces.

Urban grain: The pattern and scale of streets and plots in an area, reflecting its development history and character.

Visual permeability: The ability to see through or into a space, enhancing openness, safety, and connectivity.

Woonerf: A shared street design that prioritises pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles, often used in residential areas

Active interface: A building edge, facade or frontage that has habitable spaces that connect well with the public realm. It includes a mix of uses and spaces facing the public realm, with doors, windows, balconies and clear shopfronts. These interfaces are intentionally designed to encourage public accessibility as well as physical and visual interaction with the public realm.

Positive interface: A building edge or facade that includes windows, balconies and overlooking features that encourage interaction, safety and passive surveillance.

Pedestrian-friendly interface: A building edge, facade or frontage that prioritizes the needs and safety of people walking. These interfaces should create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Landscaping and overlooking features can be used to create these interfaces.

Introduction

Guidelines are intended to provide the 'how' to the Urban Design Policy, which emphasises the 'what' and the 'why'. In general terms, guidelines are required for where there may be ambiguity, or where there are multiple interpretations of a policy, strategy or by law.

Purpose of the guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines are developed as a suite of documents. These documents serve as part of the approved Designing Quality Places: Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town (2024). The intention is that the guidelines are flexible so that they can be updated and reviewed periodically. The executive director will be consulted on any updates to these documents, and will be responsible for implementing the contents of the guidelines as a decision-support tool. The executive director will report periodically on the implementation of the policy and guidelines to the relevant political oversight bodies, and will provide an overview of the current decision-support tools, as required.

The guidelines are intended to:

- serve as a facilitative document that assists in understanding the 'how' of the Urban Design Policy.
- supplement and streamline commenting.
- function as educational material that contextualises and explains how each development decision impacts the City and its users as a whole.
- encourage creative and innovative solutions to design challenges by 'demystifying' how good urban design principles can be achieved.
- promote early engagement with the City's Urban Planning and Design Department and the Urban Design Branch.
- be a clear, easy-to-read and user-friendly document.

It should be emphasised that the guidelines illustrated and explored in this document show a potential design solution. The principle of the guideline can be explored, changed and altered by anyone to achieve the same result in a different way.

The value of high-quality urban design

The international community recognises the importance of high-quality urban design in boosting the economic vitality of towns and cities. Effective urban design policies have been pivotal in transforming cities, driving economic development, and fostering social rejuvenation. High-quality urban design enhances the sense of place, pride and security within a community. It makes settlements more efficient by building on existing strengths and complementing the variety of resources available, leading to better resource use and greater economic vitality.

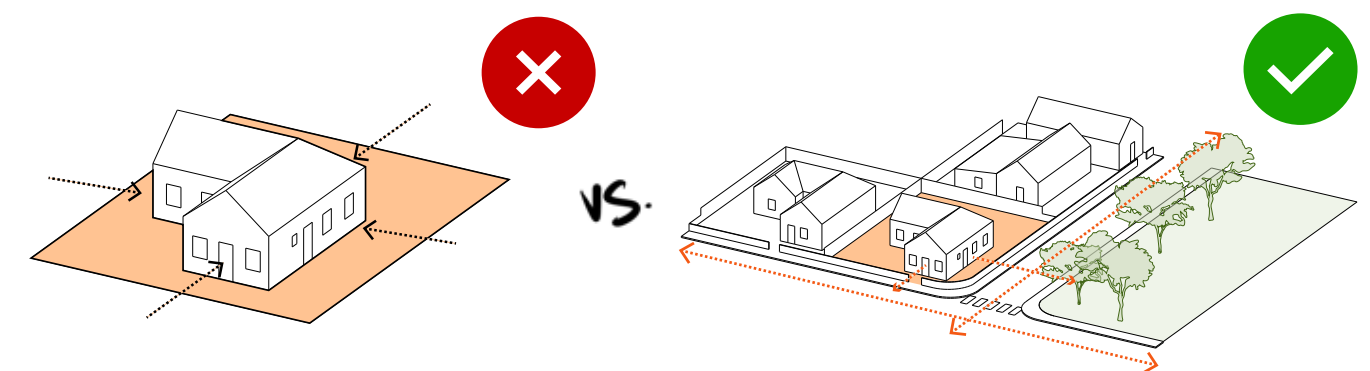
Attractive, well-designed spaces draw investments and stimulate economic growth. Conversely, poorly designed public spaces can negatively impact the environment, economy, and community. They can degrade natural resources, limit employment opportunities, and impose social costs. Residents in poorly designed areas often lack pride in their surroundings, perceive them as unsafe, and experience ongoing degradation and marginalisation.

Well-designed urban projects promote mixed-use activities, enhancing a city's adaptability and resilience in changing economic climates. Quality, safe and secure public spaces encourage exercise, walking and cycling, increasing street activity. This makes urban areas hubs of economic interaction the foster enterprise, innovation and tourism.

Building design vs urban design

Urban design is about creating better places for people by shaping buildings, spaces and infrastructure to improve the function, feel and form of towns and cities. It focuses on ensuring that the connections and relationships between buildings and spaces, public and private areas, and natural and built environments work well and efficiently as urban areas grow and develop. Urban design takes into account aesthetics, social, environmental and economic impacts, as well as the identity, character and heritage that define towns and cities.

Urban design can be applied at various scales, from large towns and cities to individual streets and buildings, and their surrounding landscapes or urban spaces. On a larger scale, it looks at how different parts of a city are connected and integrated, and where synergies between different activities can be created. On a smaller scale, urban design ensures that elements, such as street furniture and other features, are placed to support diverse uses and people, contributing to their continued use, comfort and safety, and the overall appearance of the community.



How the guidelines are structured

The guidelines are intended to be facilitative documents that assist in the processes of development and design. As such, the overall collection of guidelines should speak to a multitude of development **typologies** that are common within the city. A **matrix of typologies** has been developed, which looks to **identify, categorise and group** types of developments so that guidelines specific to those typologies can be produced. This matrix will be an evolving list that can and should respond to the ongoing trends and evolution of development across the city.

Matrix of Typologies:

Residential developments toolkit

Mixed-use, multi-storey developments
Multi-storey residential developments
Single residential
Gated residential developments
Residential infill developments
New development areas (NDAs)
Small-scale rental units (SSRUs)

Economic developments toolkit

Retail Developments
Infill high-rise developments
Neighbourhood mixed-use commercial precinct
Trading

Business park/ Industrial Precincts toolkit

Industrial precincts
Business precincts

Public space handbook

Green open space
Dignified spaces
Public parks
Urban public squares

Community facilities handbook

Community facilities
Clinics
Schools and ECDs

Institutional facilities handbook

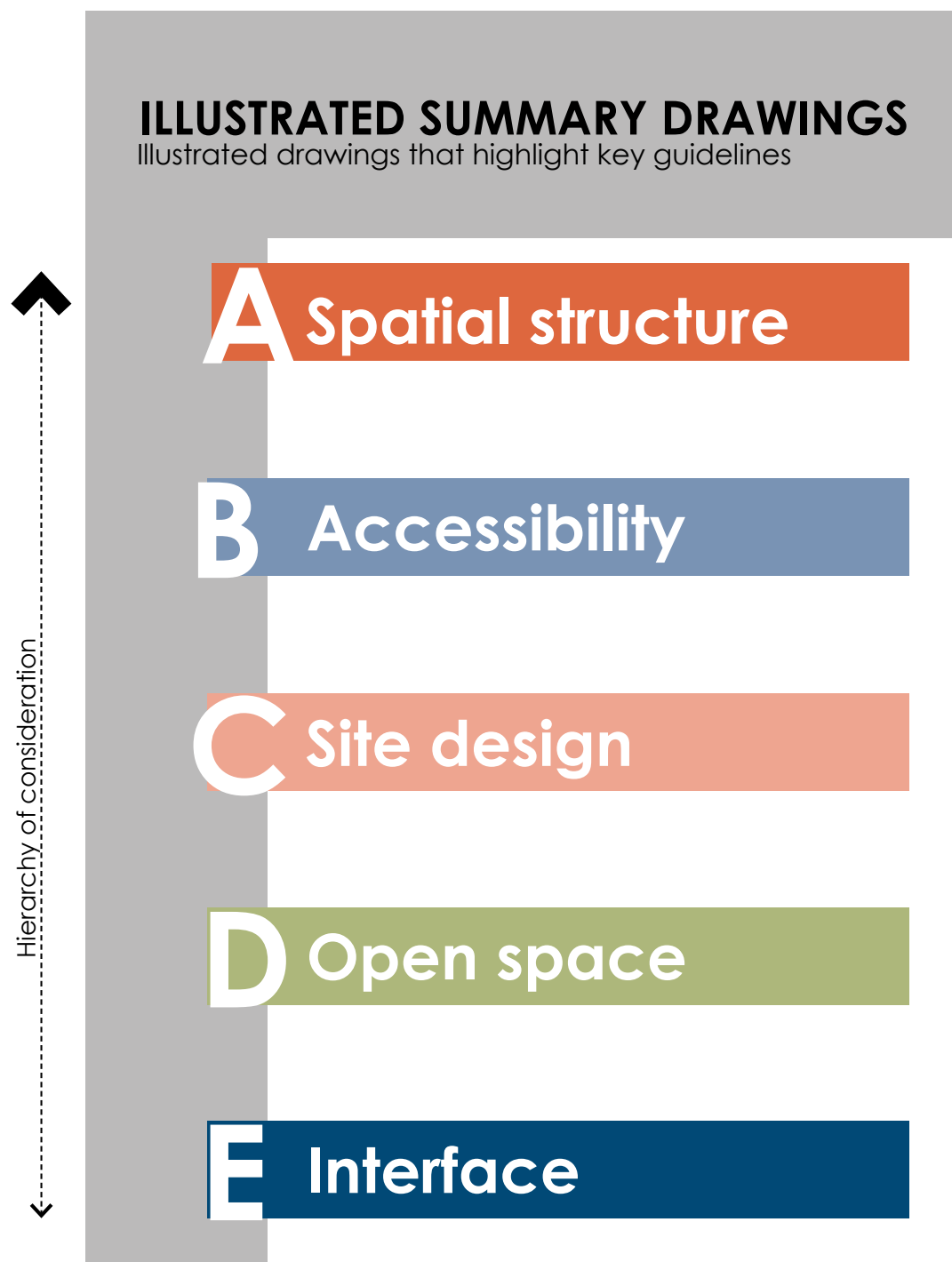
Transversal handbook:
Human settlements
Complete streets

Why the guidelines are structured in this way

All Urban Design Guideline documents are structured under **five main themes**, namely structure, accessibility, site design, open space and interface.

Urban designers use these themes as guiding principles when assessing development proposals.

For ease of reference, the guideline themes are provided in a hierarchical sequence; from large-scale site considerations to small-scale built form details. However, it is important to emphasise that all of the themes relate to each other and should be considered in an iterative manner in the planning and design process for a new development project. For example, decisions on the type and choice of boundary wall treatment, which are discussed in the 'interface theme', relate to the site's location, which is discussed in the 'structure theme'. When applying and using the guideline document, users will need to consider all of the themes and consider how they relate to each other in the final formulation of a design proposal.



How to read this guideline document

The guidelines are constructed using a few elements. This is done to create a document that can be easily understood and clearly expresses not only a specific guideline, but the thinking behind that guideline.



Theme

Each guideline document is made up of **5 five themes**.

This descriptor note aims to express the specific theme and how it relates to the identified typology. It looks to explain why that theme is important to the development typology, and what the general principles are and how they are explored and expanded upon in the proceeding guidelines.

Approach A1:

{Text for illustration purposes}
Lo blaccuptas quamusae nem dent is am hilloribus et eria
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Refer to the Urban
Design Policy (2024)
{Urban Design Policy
statement number}

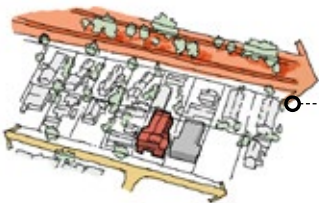
Approach

The approach aims to describe the intended outcome for a specific set of guidelines. This section helps to understand the reasoning behind the specifics of a guideline, and relate it back to methods of achieving good design.

A reference to specific policy statements, held in the Designing Quality Places: Urban Design Policy for the City of Cape Town (2024), helps to place these guidelines and their relationship to the Urban Design Policy (2024).

Prospecting and speculating

A.1.1 {Text for illustration purposes}
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Guideline & Sketch

Specific guideline points are provided to explore potential design solutions that achieve the policy's principles and objectives.

In many instances, an illustrative example is provided that captures the guideline in a diagrammatic form.



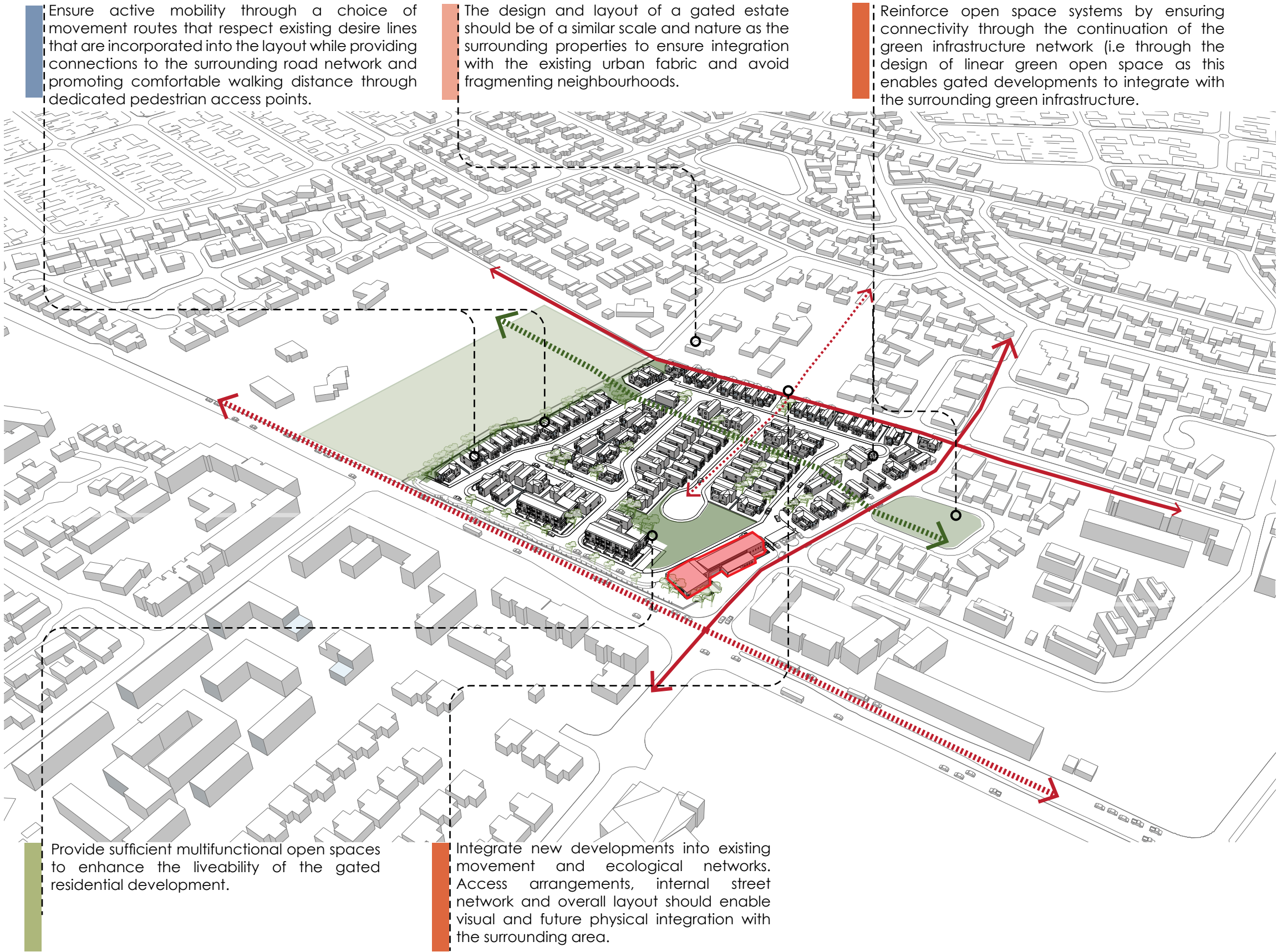
Image & Annotations

Annotated images are used to visually clarify what a potential guideline(s) is. Annotations highlight key features or design elements that help readers grasp what a 'real-world' example of a guideline would look like.

Gated residential developments

Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a gated residential development.



What and where?

Gated residential developments can be generally characterised by:

- Physical barriers, such as walls and fences, which separate the development from the surrounding context
- Typically embedded within an existing suburban context
- Limited access points
- Access that is typically monitored, controlled, restricted or prevented
- Within the second and third row of a high street/corridor
- Designed and built as a harmonious architectural entity

Gated residential developments are:

- generally embedded within a residential context
- typically located along a connector street (class 4 and 5)

What kind of developments are we trying to create?

Gated residential developments that:

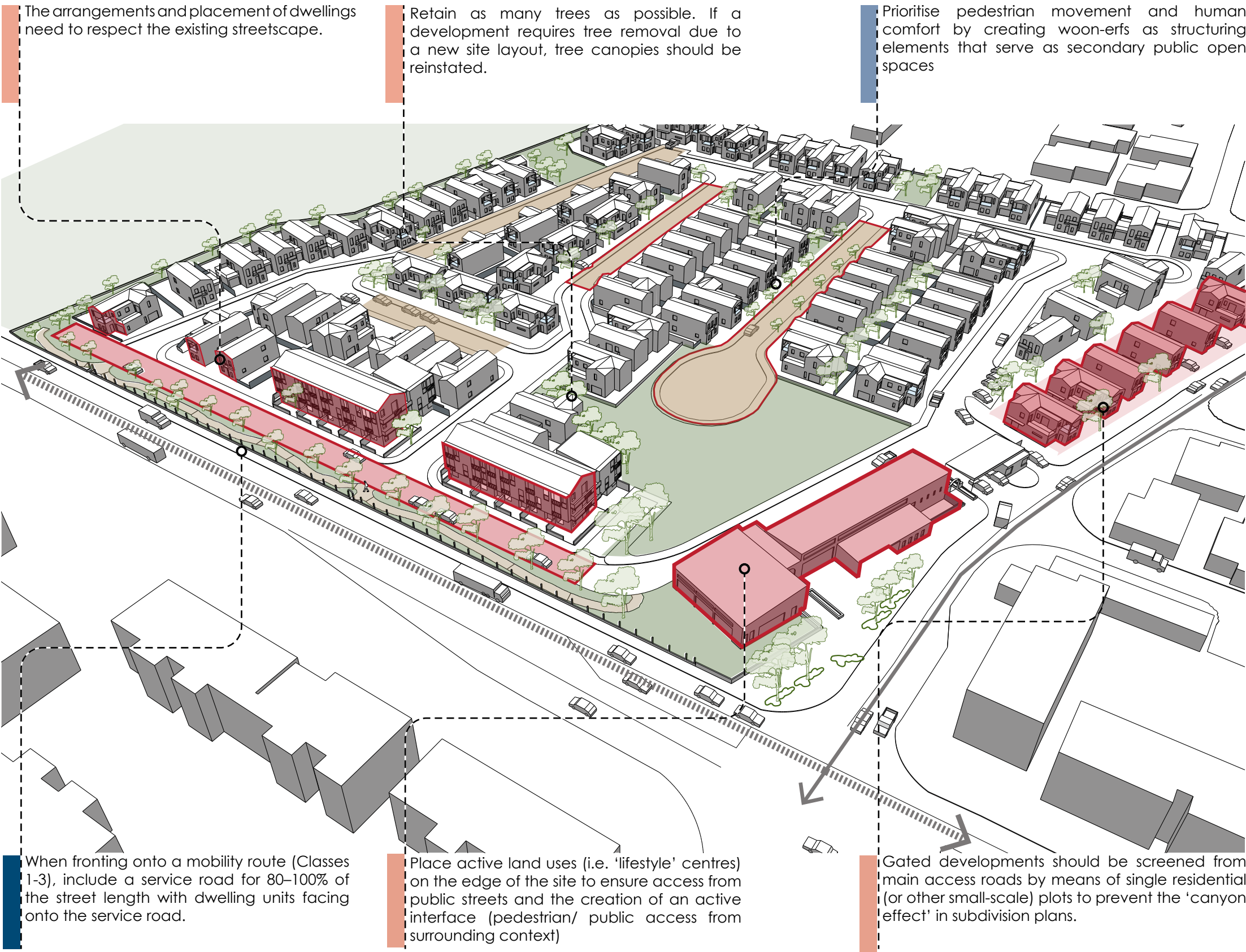
- respect the existing spatial **structure** by ensuring connectivity through physical and/or visual integration with the surrounding context
- are easily **accessible** and prioritise pedestrian movement
- demonstrate appropriate **site design** in response to the scale and integration with the surrounding built and natural context so as to compliment and not detract from it.
- provide adequate **open space** that is intentionally designed
- ensure appropriate **interfaces** by contributing positively to the public realm (both internally and externally)

Development context

Gated residential developments

Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a gated residential development.



Site configuration

How the site should be designed

Gated residential developments should be designed with careful consideration of urban design principles (the whole above the parts) to ensure they are sustainable and integrated into the broader urban fabric-despite their enclosed nature.

Key urban design principles that should guide their planning, at the level of site configuration, may include (but are not limited to):

Connectivity and permeability, where the design allows for both pedestrian and vehicular accessibility that promotes integration with the surroundings;

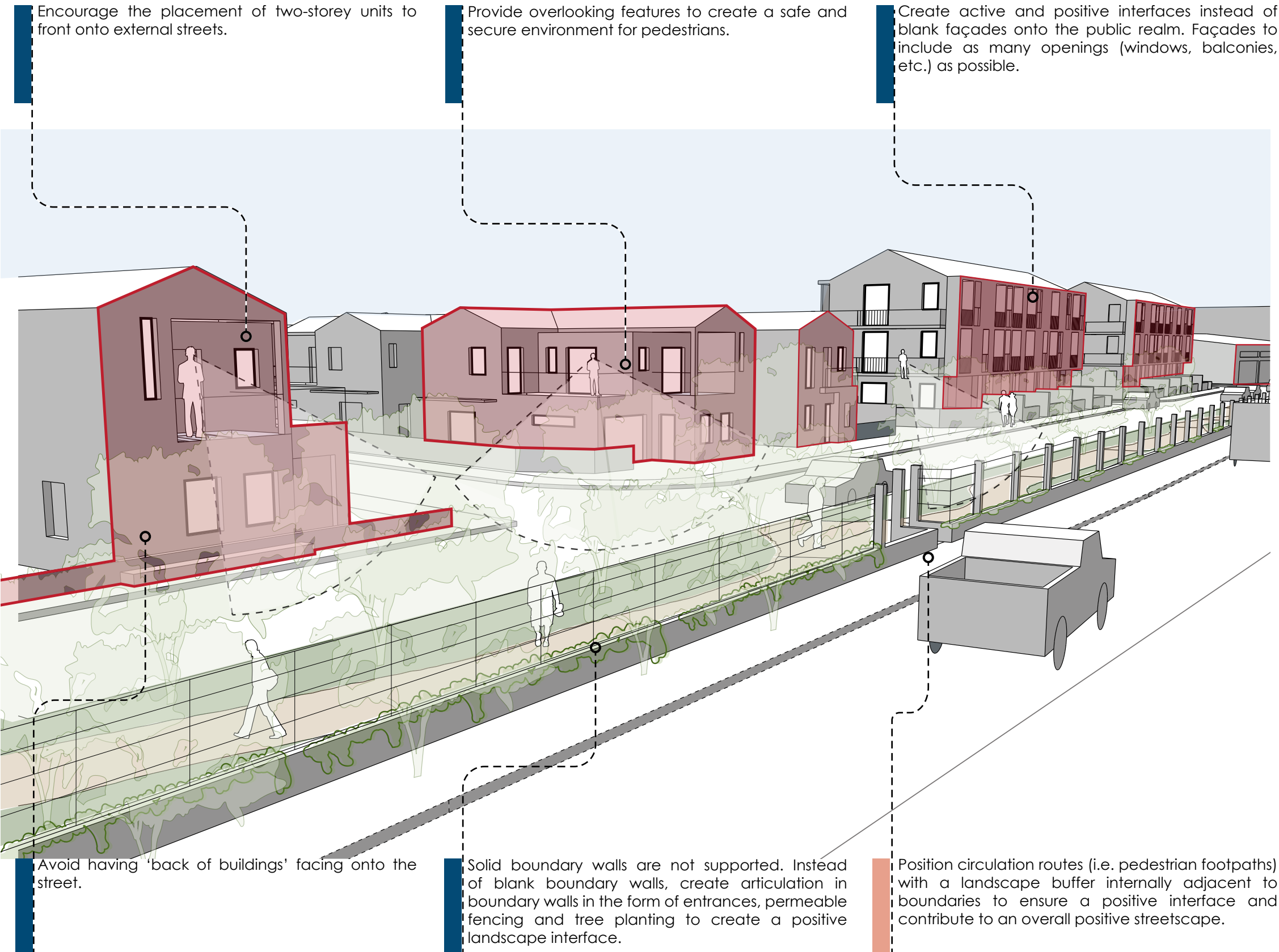
Consideration for mixed-use and social diversity through the provision of either small-scale retail or community-related facilities that foster vibrancy and diverse housing typologies to accommodate different income levels and family sizes that promote inclusivity;

Designing with and for green infrastructure by incorporating parks, green corridors and tree-lined streets to improve biodiversity and microclimate.

Gated residential developments

Core guidelines: Illustrated summary

The images and accompanying annotations below outline key design guidelines that should be carefully considered when planning and designing a gated residential development.



How development should address the public realm

Gated residential developments often prioritise privacy, exclusivity and security, but they should also consider their impact on the public realm to ensure good urban design.

The key principles that such developments should follow in order to integrate positively with the surrounding urban fabric relate to how the development interfaces with the public realm.

It is important to promote walkability and provide a comfortable pedestrian experience by designing street-facing edges with active uses rather than blank walls or fences. Passive surveillance should be encouraged by orienting homes with overlooking features (windows and balconies, etc.) facing primary public streets.

Make use of landscaping and semi-permeable boundaries (e.g. hedges, low walls, permeable fences) instead of high, solid walls to maintain visual engagement with the public realm. By incorporating green infrastructure (street trees, SUDS), the public realm's environmental quality will be improved. Provide sufficient lighting and wayfinding to enhance safety for both residents and passers-by.

Gated residential developments should balance security and exclusivity with urban connectivity and public benefit. The incorporation of permeable edges, active frontages, and community amenities can contribute positively to the public realm rather than creating isolated, exclusionary spaces.

Streetscape

A

Spatial structure

Where a residential development is located within the broader context of a neighbourhood and city, structure is important when gauging its size, scale and response to its surroundings. What type of residential units can and should be designed and developed to best respond to its context and what form that development takes, are all based on aspects of structure and good urban design principles.

Approach A1: Scale and connectivity of proposed development

Gated residential developments should be designed so as to ensure an appropriate scale in relation to their surrounding context and is that they are able to achieve integration and connectivity.

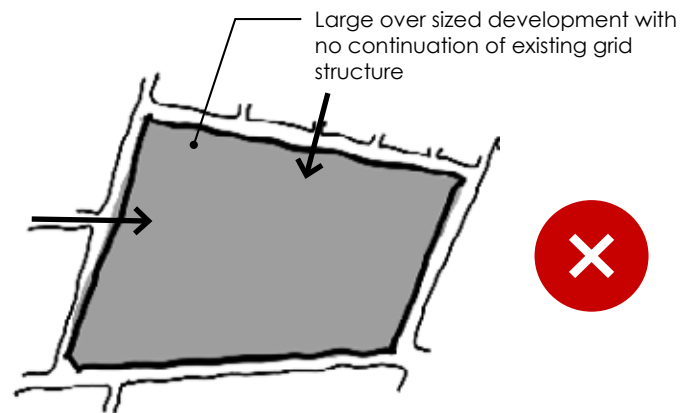
This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS 1.2; PS 1.3; PS 1.4;
PS 1.7; PS 1.10; PS 2.5;
PS 2.9; PS 4.2; P2 4.4;
PS 5.7

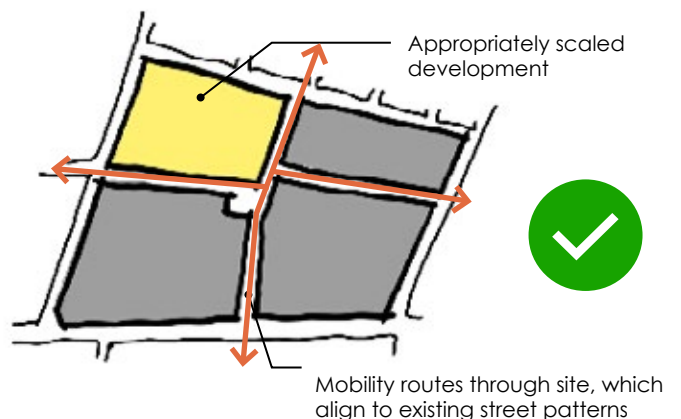
Location and scale

A1.1 Gated residential developments should not be located where it would disrupt the continuity of important movement routes.



A1.2

A1.2 Large-scale gated developments should be subdivided into smaller parcels to prevent the formation of mini suburbs and to avoid compromising an area's structural network.



A1.4 A1.5

A1.4 Gated residential developments or the individual parcels within an estate should be integrated into the existing urban fabric to prevent the fragmentation of neighbourhoods and to support spatial integration efforts. This can be achieved through scaling the development in an appropriate way to its surroundings as well as aligning internal streets with the surrounding network.



Source: City Maps Viewer, 2025



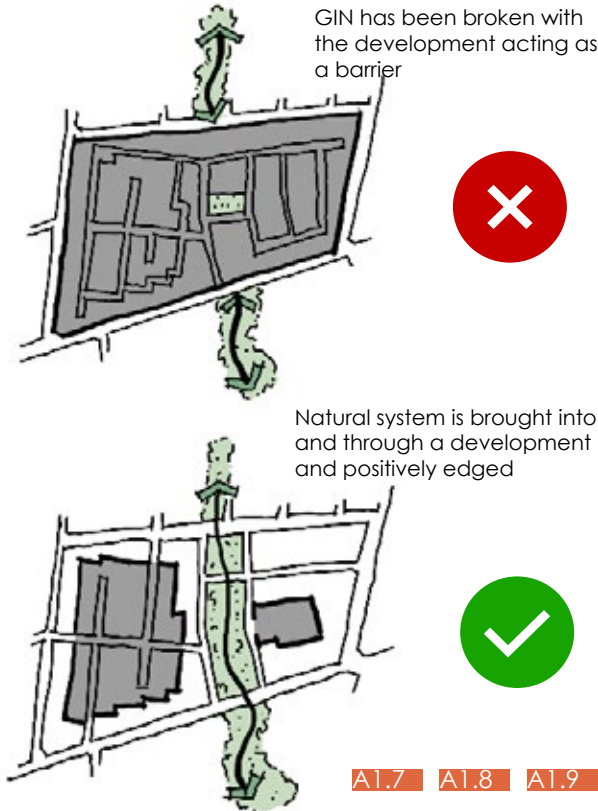
Source: City Maps Viewer, 2025

Connectivity to surrounding urban fabric and green infrastructure network (GIN)

A1.6 Plan for open spaces from the outset of the design process, ensuring they structure the spatial layout of the gated residential development and connect to the wider green infrastructure network.

A1.7 Reinforce the green infrastructure network through the continuation of green open spaces into the gated residential development. Design internal green open spaces to integrate with the surrounding green infrastructure network.

A1.8 Access arrangements, internal street network and overall layout should enable visual and future physical integration with the surrounding area.



Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS1.6; PS1.7; PS2.9; PS3.2; PS3.3; PS3.7; PS3.4

Approach A2: Infrastructure

Planned infrastructure should minimise disruption to the public environment and positively contribute to the quality and character of the public realm.

This can be achieved in the following ways:

Layout

A2.1 Design the street layout to positively respond to the existing topography.

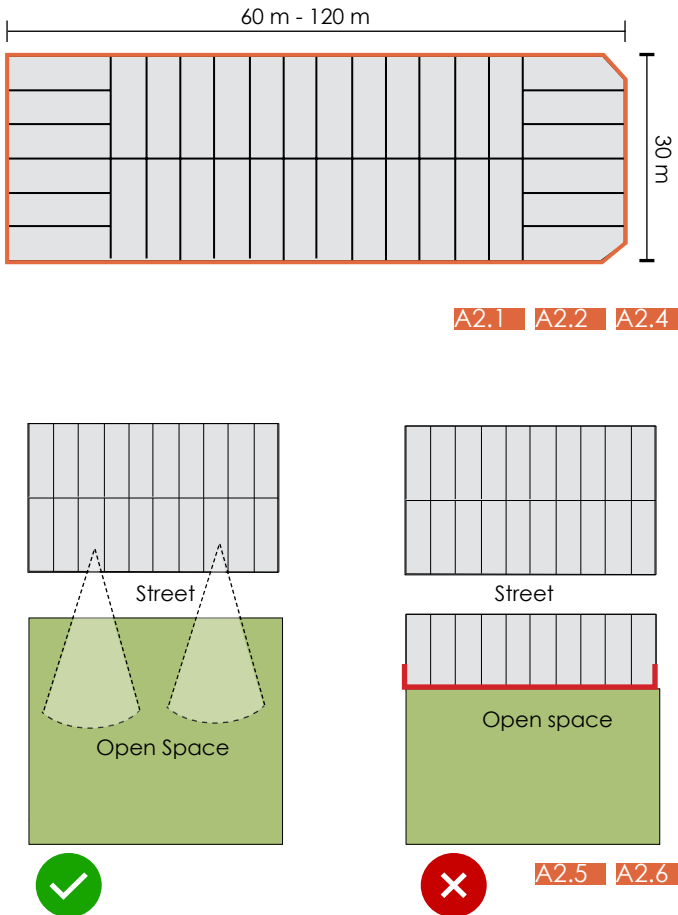
A2.2 Design urban blocks that are between 60m - 120m in length and at a minimum of 30m in depth. These balance the need of infrastructure capacity and pedestrian permeability.

A2.3 Ensure that the perimeters of lengthy blocks are active, making the additional travel more interesting and safer.

A2.4 The shape and proportions of the individual plots should be simple to accommodate different dwelling typologies.

A2.5 Avoid placing single-sided blocks onto streets and open spaces. Where unavoidable, plots in these blocks should be a minimum of 30m deep.

A2.6 When placing urban and service infrastructure, cognisance should be taken of pedestrian routes, universal access, sight lines, open spaces and aesthetic considerations.



City Maps Viewer, 2025



City Maps Viewer, 2025

B Accessibility

Mobility routes and the way users of a gated residential development access their homes play an important role in shaping and using the development. Active mobility, public transport and private vehicle movement are all critical aspects that must work together to create a well-functioning development without compromising a user's ability to move into, through and toward facilities.

Approach B1: Create legible street networks and promote and prioritise pedestrian access routes and comfort

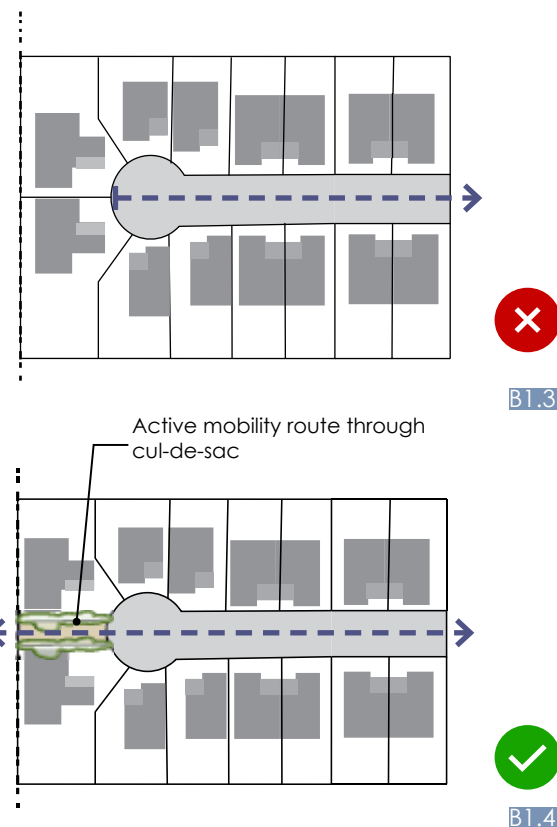
The internal movement routes and connections to the surrounding street network should be legible and designed to prioritise pedestrian movement and safe and comfortable access. This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS3.1; PS3.2; PS3.7; PS4.1 - 4.7; PS7.6

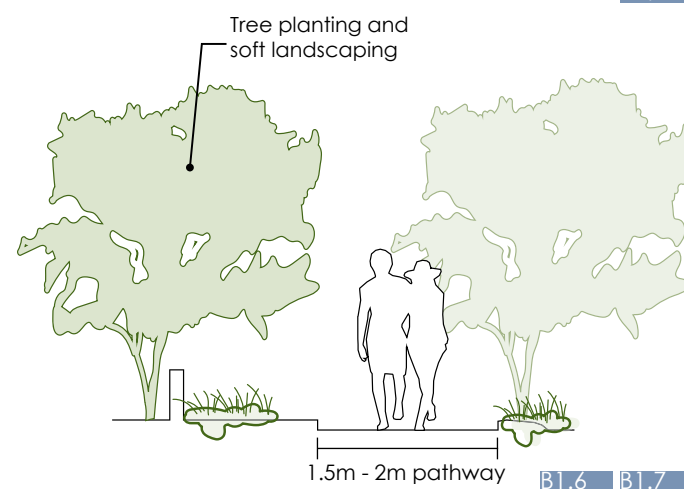
Legible movement networks

- B1.1** Provide connections to surrounding roads and networks.
- B1.2** Design primary, secondary and tertiary routes through the differentiation in road widths, surface materials and way-finding signage within the development (i.e. vehicular routes, pedestrian routes).
- B1.3** Avoid cul-de-sacs as these street designs are not resilient and do not allow for the development to be re-integrated into the surrounding context.
- B1.4** Where unavoidable, provide pedestrian and active mobility routes through cul-de-sacs.
- B1.5** In order to distinguish vehicle zones from pedestrian or shared areas, use contrasting surface materials or textures to enhance spatial legibility.



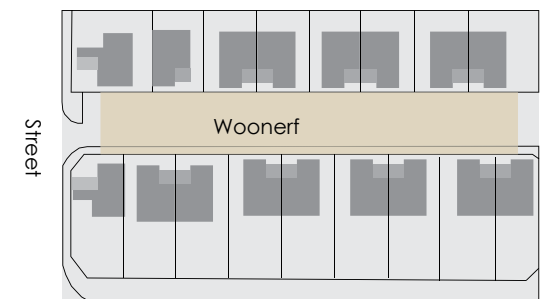
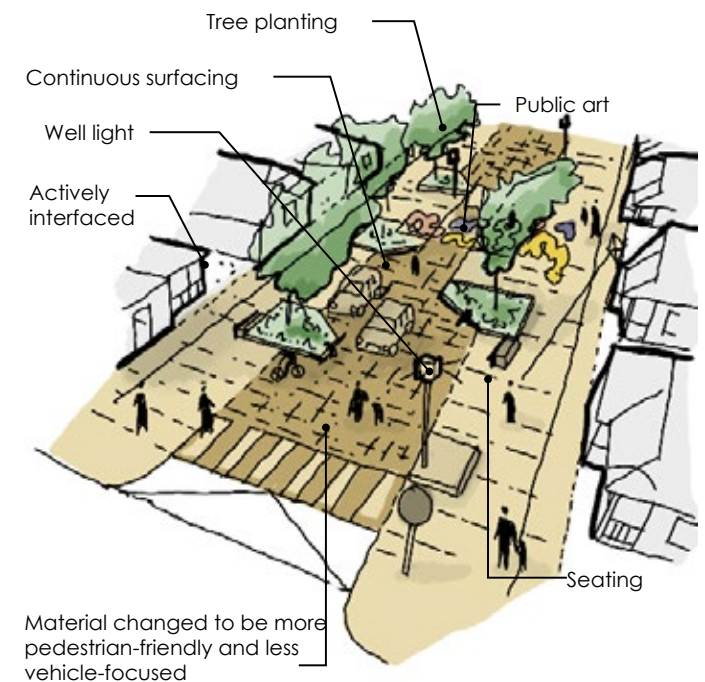
Active mobility

- B1.6** Provide dedicated pedestrian access points to ensure comfortable walking distances between entrances and open spaces and into surrounding neighbourhoods and streets.
- B1.7** Provide a 1.5m - 2m pedestrians pathway complemented by comfortable edge conditions - such as landscaping, tree planting, lighting, way-finding, universal access and low walls, or seating to support walkability and pedestrian safety.



Woonerfs and complete streets

- B1.10** Consider creating woonerfs as a structuring element to prioritise pedestrians within the development.
- B1.11** Design the street for social interaction and to ensure human comfort by providing appropriate building heights, positive interfaces and street widths to create a comfortable enclosed environment.
- B1.12** Woon-erfs should be seen as secondary public open spaces, in conjunction with the primary functional open spaces (which would feature, for example, playgrounds and outdoor seating), and should therefore be aligned/connected wherever possible.
- B1.13** Design woonerfs to include features such as table tops, landscaping, lighting, and different surface materials for speed management and pedestrian safety and comfort.



Evergreen Lifestyle Estate, Val de Vie Evergreen

Approach B2: Access and parking

Vehicular access and parking should be discreet and its visual impact on the public environment should be minimised. This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS3.1; PS3.2; PS3.7;
PS4.1- 4.7; PS7.6

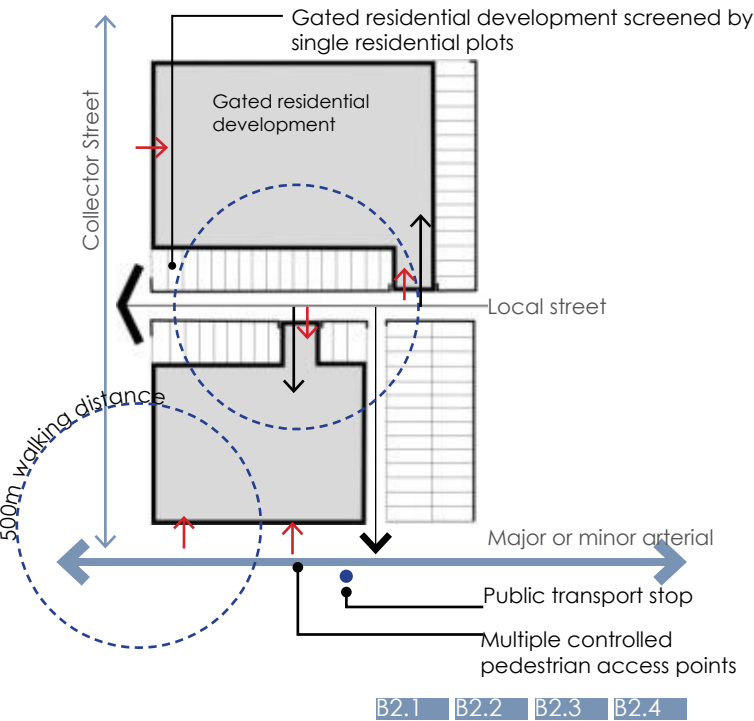
Access

B2.1 If only one vehicular access point can be provided, it is encouraged that multiple controlled pedestrian access points are planned throughout the development.

B2.2 Gated residential developments should be screened from main access roads by means of single residential (or other small scale) plots to prevent the 'canyon effect' in subdivision plans and create a positive interface.

B2.3 When located adjacent to a collector or local street, single residential units should be accessed from these roads, with the gated development behind. This enables integration with the surrounding area.

B2.4 Where a development is planned adjacent to an existing public transport stop, ensure that pedestrian access is provided within a comfortable walking distance. This may require additional lighting and sidewalk improvements outside of the development.

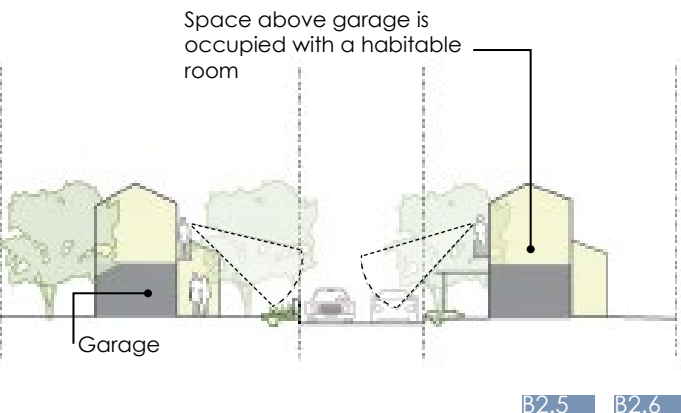


Parking

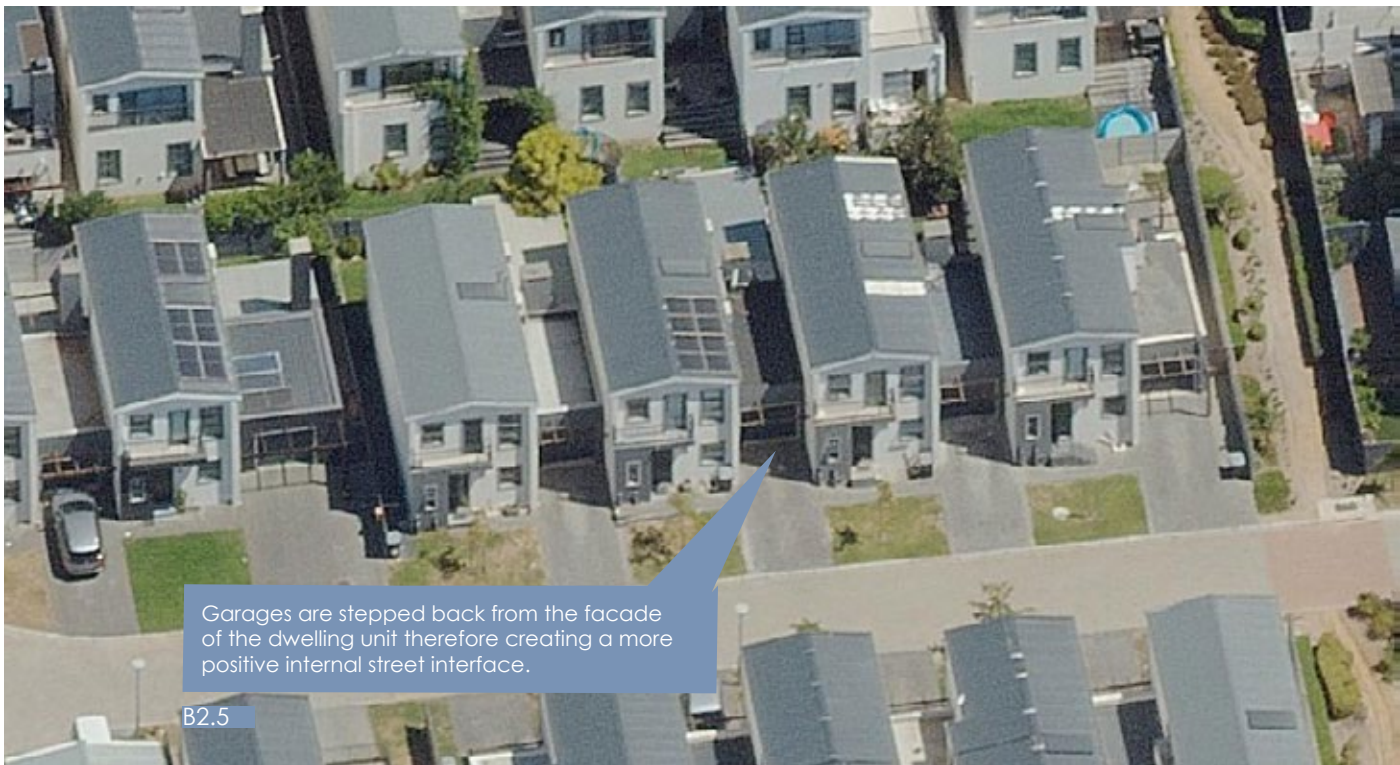
B2.5 Position car parking facilities (private garages, carports and shade cloth structures) to provide convenient access but not in a manner that comprises a positive streetscape. The garage interface needs to be recessed from the dwelling façade, or the floor above the garage needs to be occupied by a habitable space or patio.

B2.6 Use landscaping, pergolas or façade treatments to soften the visual impact of car parking structures. An overall positive and active interface of the dwelling unit and the quality of the internal streetscape should remain the priority.

B2.7 Large parking areas should be discouraged. Parking areas should be broken up into smaller pockets and distributed evenly throughout the development.



Tanglewood Estate, Langeberg Heights



Tanglewood Estate, Langeberg Heights

Site design

The design of a residential gated development needs to consider its existing site and surrounding context, and take into account what is best for its current and future residents, based on what the identified site has to offer. Responding to what a site and its surrounding character is, allows for a development to unlock the greatest potential from that site and enhance the experiences of its users for the better.

Approach C1: Designing for neighbourhood character:

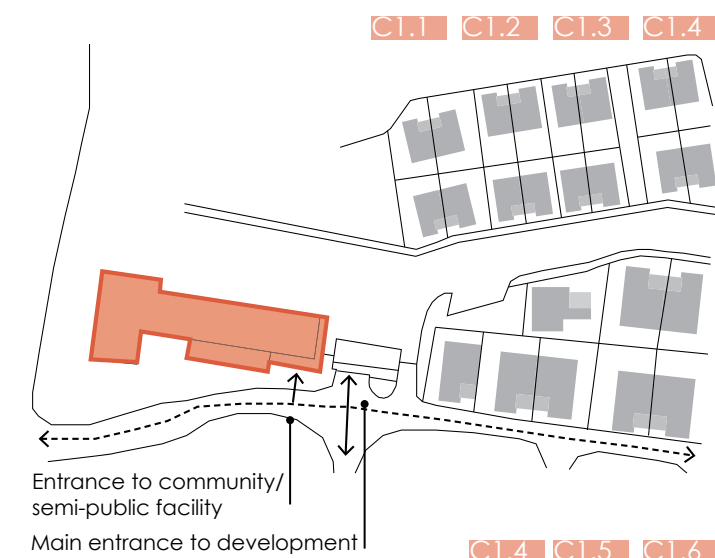
Gated residential developments need to respond to the character and identity of an area by considering the fabric, grain and streetscape of the existing surrounding context. This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS6.2; PS9.1 – 9.6

Response to context

- C1.1** The design and layout (blocks and erven) of a gated estate should be of a similar scale and nature as the surrounding properties to ensure integration with the existing urban fabric and avoid fragmenting neighbourhoods.
- C1.2** Retain as many trees as possible. If a development requires tree removal due to a new site layout, tree canopies should be reinstated.
- C1.3** Position dwellings in response to existing streetscape, taking into account the orientation, interface, scale, urban grain as well architectural articulation of the surrounding context.
- C1.4** Place active land uses (i.e. community or semi-public facilities) on the edge of the site to ensure access from public streets and the creation of an active interface (pedestrian/public access from surrounding context).
- C1.5** Locate the main entrance to the residential gated development next to the active land use to concentrate activity and safety measures.
- C1.6** Position entrances in relation to surrounding context and mobility networks.



Le Ruh Security Estate, Durbanville



Tanglewood Estate, Langeberg Heights

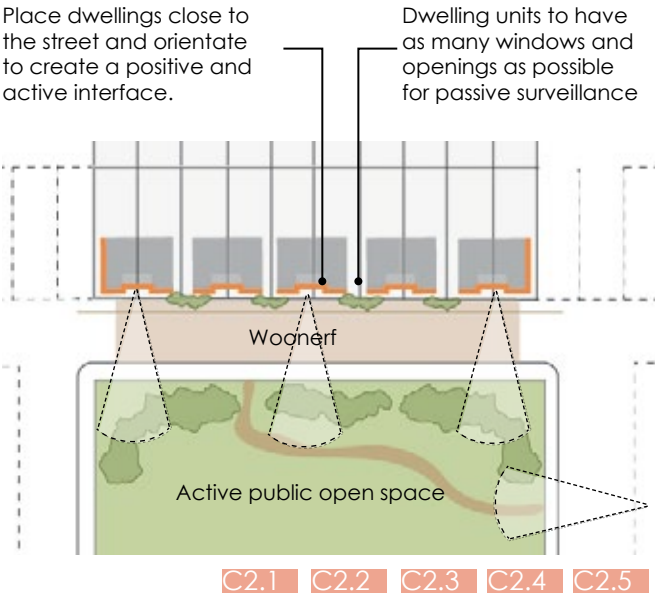
Approach C2: Orientation of buildings in relation to the public realm

Dwelling units need to be placed and orientated appropriately to enhance the liveability of its occupants
This can be achieved in the following ways:

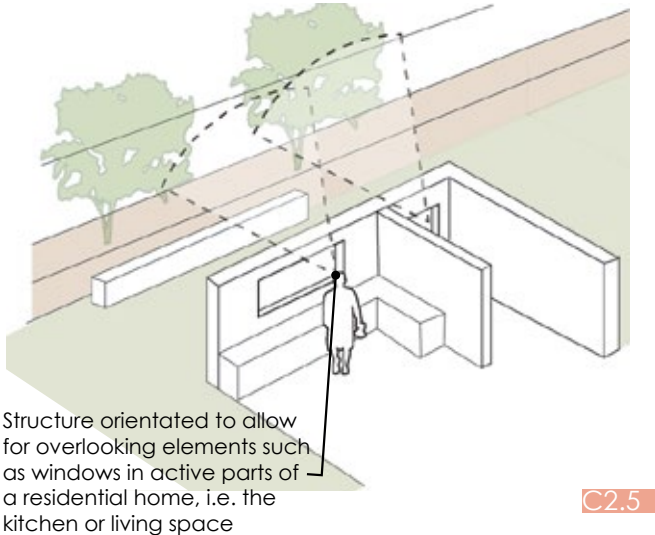
Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)
PS3.1; PS 3.2; PS6.2;
PS6.6; PS9.1 – 9.6

Placement and orientation of buildings

- C2.1 Orientate buildings and open spaces appropriately in relation to each other to ensure the design and articulation of positive spaces.
- C2.2 Place buildings as close to the street as possible to ensure that a positive streetscape is created.
- C2.3 All aspects of the development (erven, buildings, streets, parks and landscaping) need to be orientated and placed appropriately for sustainable and environmentally sensitive design, taking the micro-climate (natural light, wind, etc.) into consideration.

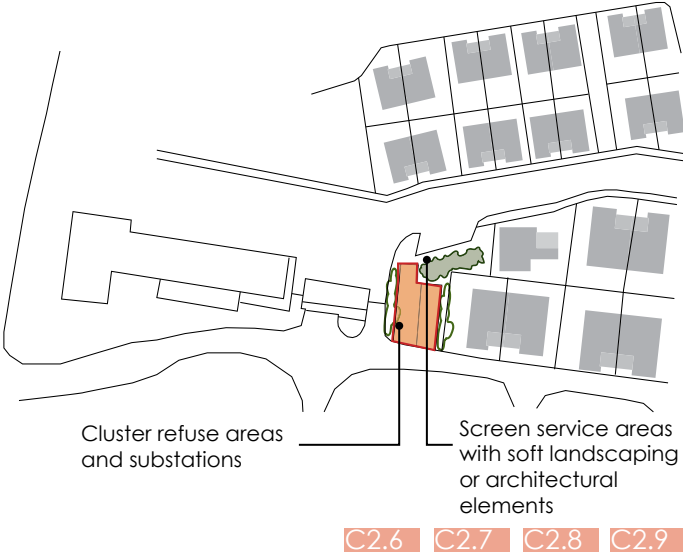


- C2.4 Orientate buildings and structures to respond appropriately to the public realm as opposed to turning its 'back onto the street'. This will create positive and active interfaces and enhance security through the provision of overlooking features. .
- C2.5 Special attention needs to be given to corner plots to ensure there is a diversity in built form and all visible frontages need to include positive interfaces with the public realm (refer to Section E: Interface).



Service areas

- C2.6 Service and utility elements such as refuse areas and substations are to be clustered together and located in such a way to not negatively impact on active and prominent interfaces.
- C2.7 Avoid locating utility elements on street corners or on public open spaces where they can compromise the functionality of the space.
- C2.8 Place elements of utility infrastructure out of the way from main Active mobility routes.
- C2.9 Where necessary, provide adequate screening (architectural or landscaping) to service areas to mitigate negative visual impacts.



City Maps Viewer, 2025

Open Space

Internal and external open spaces are a vital component to create a liveable environment for a gated residential development and the city as a whole. A holistic design approach to how these spaces are considered, placed, scaled and designed should respond to specifics of the site and the intended design principles of the gated residential development being catered for.

Approach D1: Provide sufficient open space

The provision of multifunctional open space is vital for the liveability of these gated residential developments. This can be achieved in the following ways:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

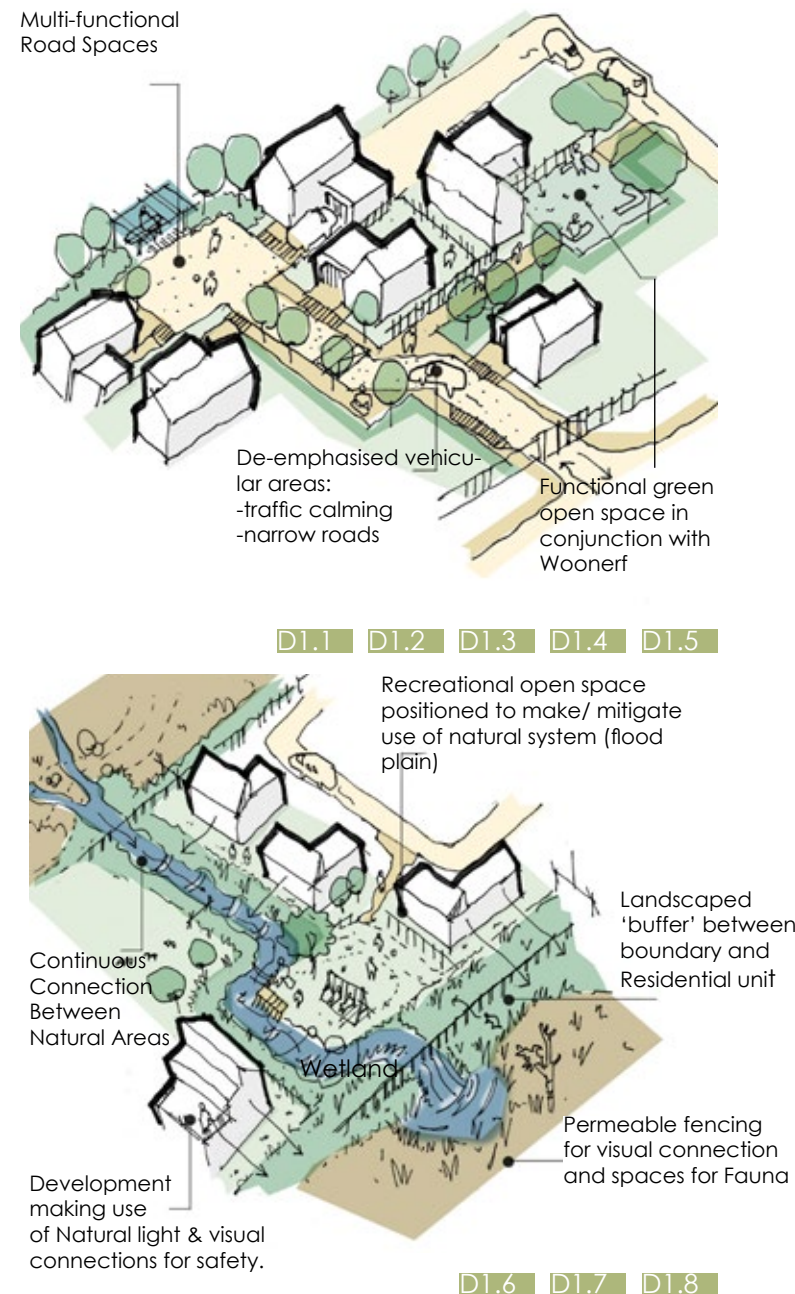
PS1.7 - 1.8; PS1.10;
PS2.1 - 2.9; PS3.1; PS3.2;
PS3.4 - 3.8; PS4.2;
PS8.1 - 8.8

Active open space

- D1.1** Gated residential developments should incorporate functional public outdoor spaces that support recreation and social interaction. These spaces should be centrally located within the site layout to ensure they are easily accessible and within comfortable walking distance for the majority of residents.
- D1.2** Provide a range of passive and active recreational facilities to serve various age groups, abilities and preferences.
- D1.3** Design woonerfs as a secondary public open space connecting the above mentioned spaces.
- D1.4** Design open spaces in conjunction with the internal layout of dwelling units to avoid impeding on residents' privacy. Where needed, plant wide vegetation buffers between active and noisy open spaces and dwelling units to provide privacy for residents.
- D1.5** Provide adequate soft landscaping and tree planting within open spaces.

Green open space

- D1.6** Natural systems can be enhanced within the development by creating public spaces around these elements, such as footpaths and cycling routes.
- D1.7** Utilise natural systems and the buffers that they require as the basis for amenities for users.
- D1.8** Where there is an existing green open space next to the site, provide a positive interface through soft landscaping and overlooking features (windows, balconies, etc.)



Brittany Estate, Brackenfell



Junix Estate, Burgundy Estate

Approach D2: Using landscape design to enhance developments

The integration of landscaping interventions significantly enhances the quality of gated residential developments, creating a more inviting and cohesive environment. This can be achieved in the following ways:

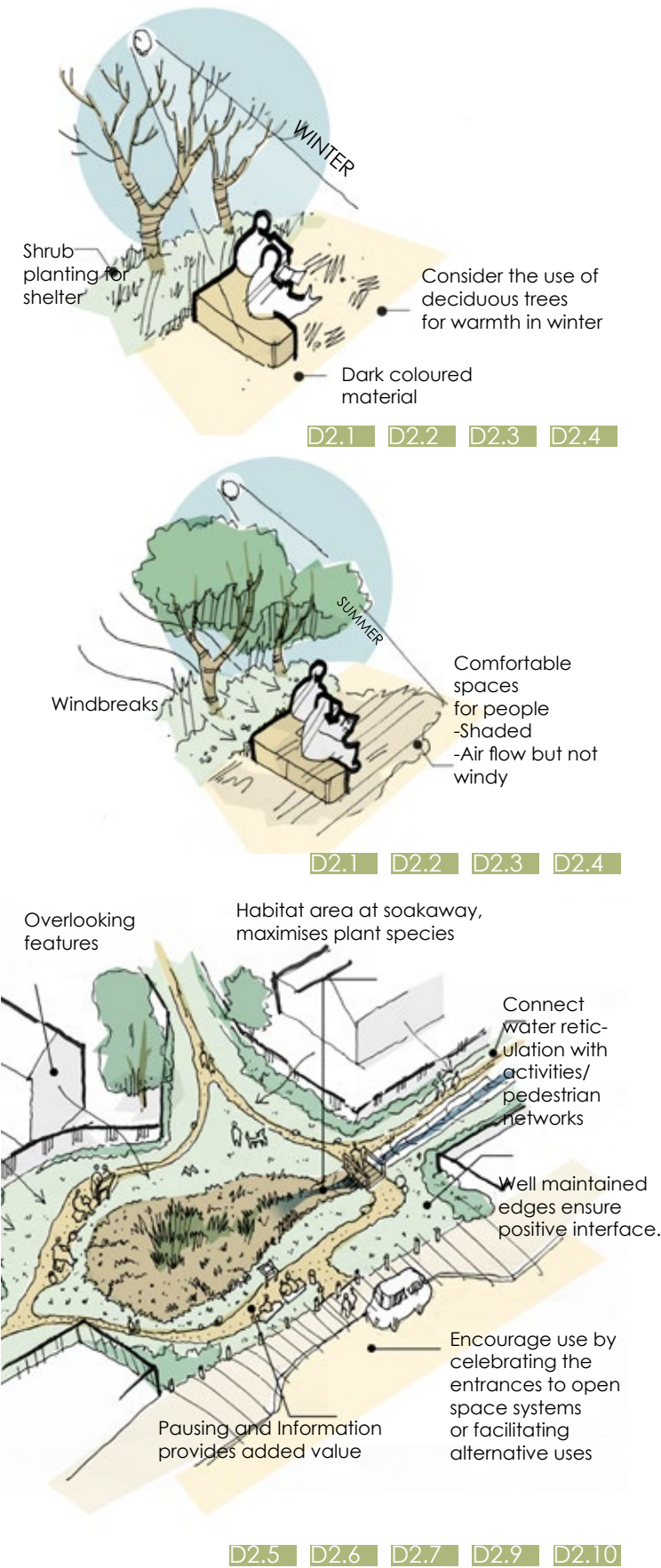
Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)
PS1.7 - 1.8; PS1.10; PS2.1 - 2.9; PS3.1; PS3.2; PS3.4 - 3.8; PS4.2; PS 8.1 - 8.8

Designing for the natural elements

- D2.1 Provide tree planting and/or shrubs as windbreaks to mitigate against natural elements in order to create comfortable open spaces.
- D2.2 Position communal open spaces to face north and use tree planting or the use of shading canopies to maximise human comfort.
- D2.3 Where retaining walls are required, implement stepped terraces with plant beds to promote the infiltration of water run off as opposed to surface run-off.
- D2.4 Incorporate soft landscaping and tree planting within the entire gated residential development.

Stormwater run off

- D2.5 Incorporate the principles of sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) within the design of the development.
- D2.6 Maximise permeable surfacing within the development to allow for on-site groundwater recharge.
- D2.7 Design swales to provide water drainage and additional landscaping next to roads and pedestrian footpaths.
- D2.8 Design detention ponds to be green open spaces that can provide space for games, kick-about sports, dog walking or other passive recreation when not inundated with water.
- D2.9 Design retention ponds as visual amenities, which should not create safety concerns for children and animals. These ponds should not be located near roads or bicycle footpaths without barriers.
- D2.10 Provide a balance between well maintained storm water reticulation spaces and biodiversity.



Birchwood Estate, Brackenfell



Sandown Estate

Interface

The relationships between residential homes, internal and external public realm, and the surrounding context must be carefully designed in accordance with good urban design interface principles. A poorly conceived interface can compromise safety and negatively affect both the residential gated development and its surrounding context. A well-designed and thoughtfully considered interface enhances the quality, safety and connectivity of the development and contributes positively to the surrounding context.

Approach E1: Interfaces onto the (external) public realm

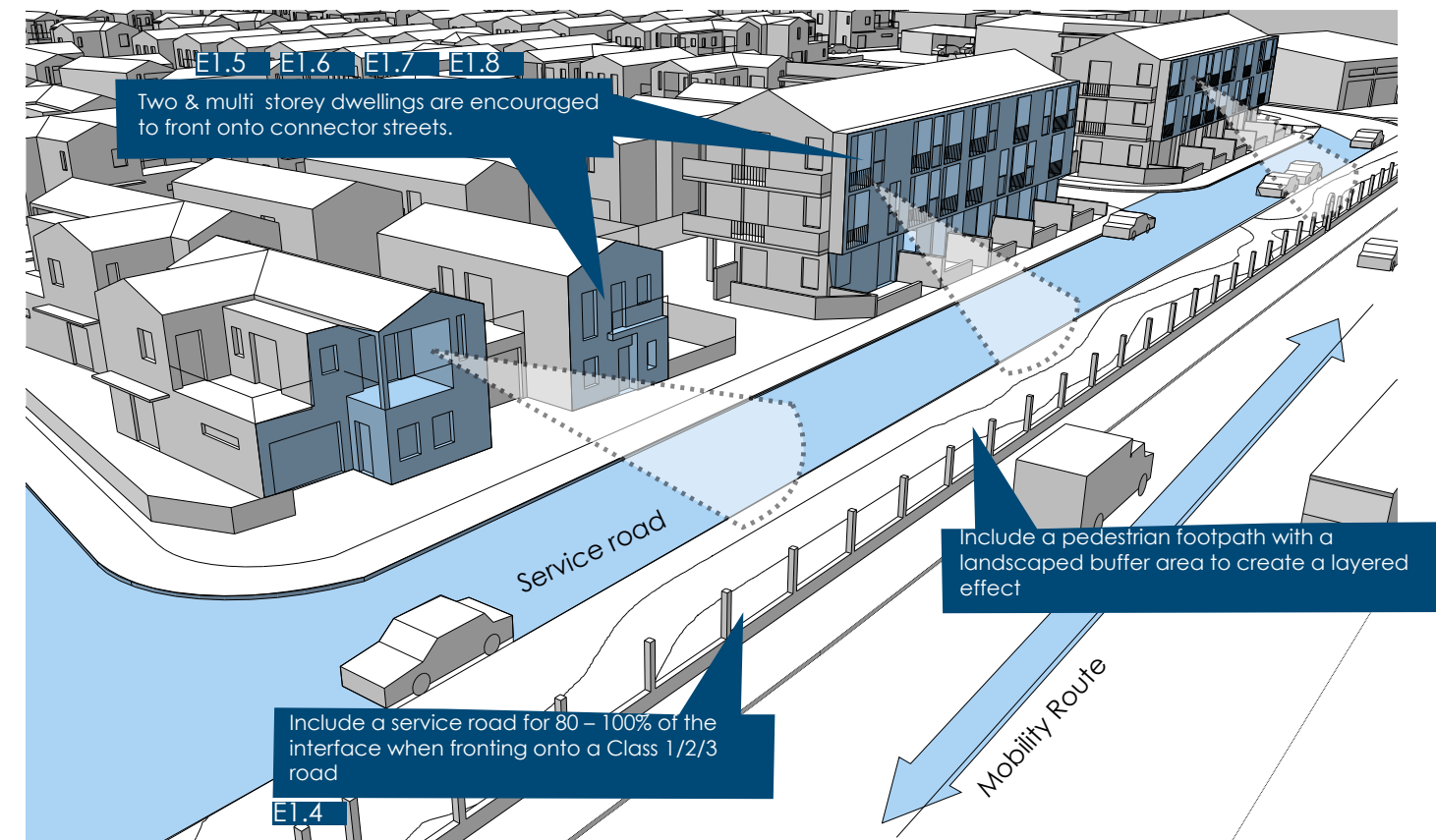
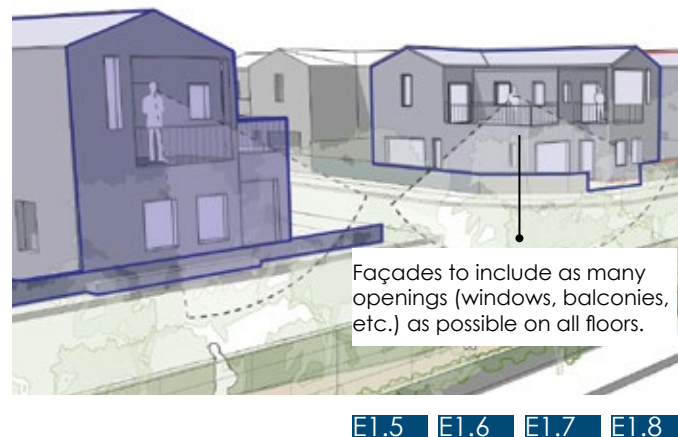
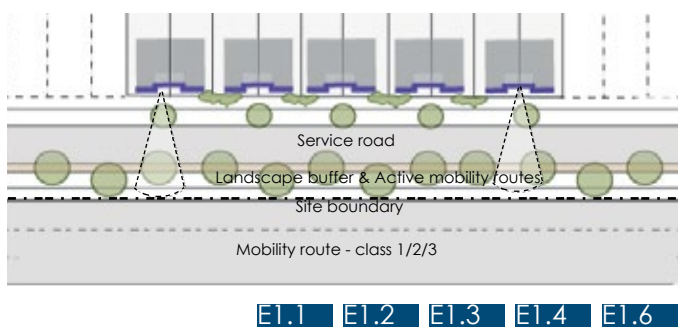
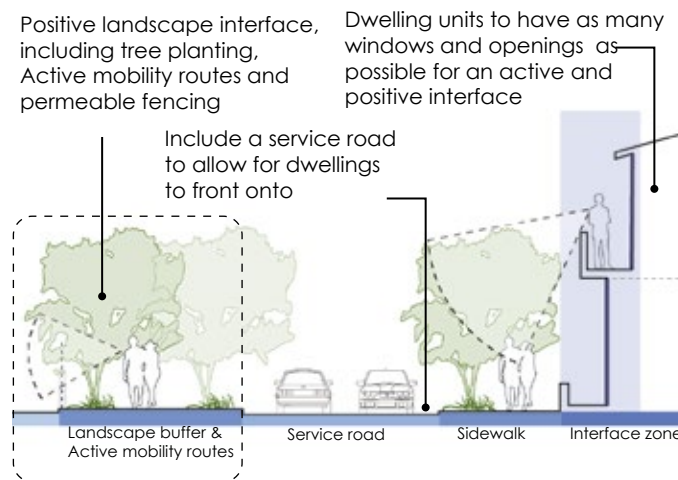
Gated residential developments need to positively respond to the public realm through various design measures.
This can be achieved in the following way:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS6.1-6.8; PS9.1, PS9.3; PS9.6

Creating external interfaces

- E1.1** Create active and positive interfaces instead of blank façades onto the public realm. Façades to include as many openings (windows, balconies, etc.) as possible on ground, first storey and the storeys above.
- E1.2** When fronting onto a mobility route (Class 1 - 3), include a service road for 80 - 100% of the street length with dwelling units facing onto the service road.
- E1.3** Create an external positive landscape interface by placing Active mobility circulation routes (i.e. pedestrian footpaths), permeable boundary walls/fencing and landscaping (low planting and tree planting) both internally and externally.
- E1.4** When located adjacent to a class 4 and class 5 road, design units that can be accessed straight from these roads. Ensure that these dwelling units have active and positive interfaces onto the street.
- E1.5** Respond to the surrounding context appropriately by considering the position of entrances, balconies and windows to contribute to a positive streetscape.
- E1.6** Avoid having 'back of buildings' facing onto the street. Where unavoidable, ensure that those façades have as many opening and overlooking features as possible.
- E1.7** Place units with two or more storeys onto external streets in order to positively define the broader public realm.
- E1.8** Provide as many openings such as doors, windows on shopfronts on the ground floor of the community or semi-public facility.



Brittany Estate, Brackenfell

Boundary wall treatments

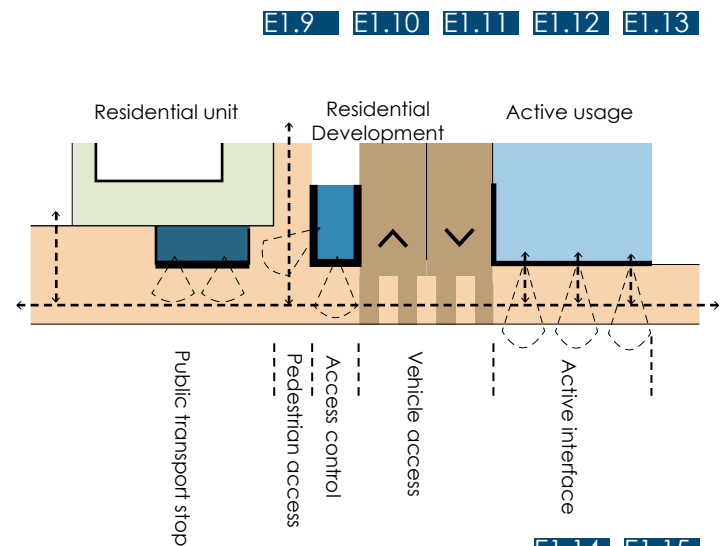
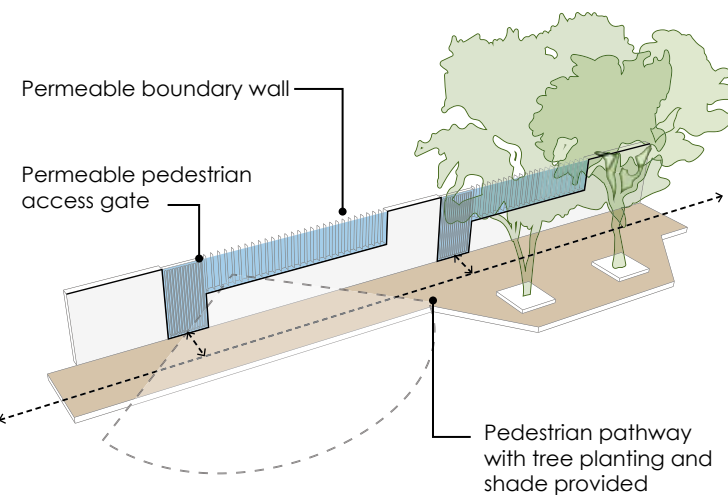
E1.9 Avoid solid boundary walls. Instead, create articulation in boundary walls in the form of entrances, permeable fencing and landscaping.

E1.10 The inclusion of permeable elements in boundary walls is encouraged. These should be placed according to the social spaces within the layout of the dwelling unit.

E1.11 Wherever possible, create no or low boundary (0 - 450 - 1000mm) walls to enable a woonerf scenario.

E1.12 Provide permeable boundary walls onto open spaces.

E1.13 Introduce landscaping as a screening mechanism to mitigate any safety or privacy concerns. Refer to Section D: Open space.



Location of entrances

E1.14 Provide safe and dedicated pedestrian access from the external public realm.

E1.15 Cluster different modes of circulation and access points together, still making sure there is a clear distinction between them.

Approach E2: Interfaces onto the (internal) public realm

Gated residential developments need to positively respond to the public realm through various design measures.
This can be achieved in the following way:

Refer to the Urban Design Policy (2024)

PS6.1-6.8; PS9.1, PS9.3; PS9.6

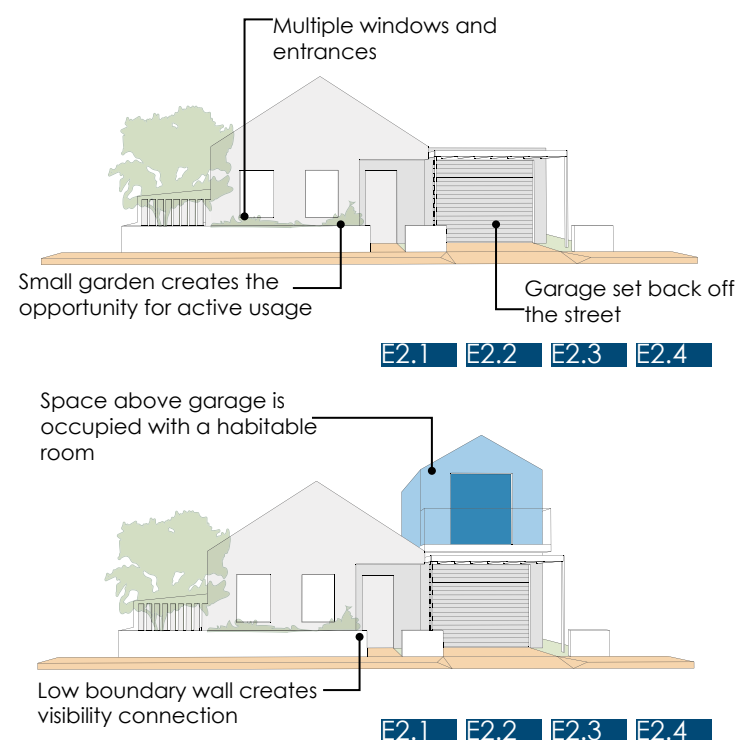
Internal interfaces

E2.1 The façades of internal dwelling interfaces need to include as many openings (windows, balconies, etc.) as possible.

E2.2 Avoid placing garages and car-related functions adjacent to each other facing onto the semi-public street. This can result in a negative interface and a garage dominant streetscape.

E2.3 Incorporate front gardens and landscaping in the front of individual erven to contribute to a pedestrian-friendly, positive internal streetscape.

E2.4 Façades of dwelling units that front onto open spaces need to have as many overlooking features as possible (e.g. windows, doors and balconies) from habitable rooms.



Source: City Maps Viewer, 2025 - Constantia, Cape Town



Source: City Maps Viewer, 2025 - Burgundy Estate, Cape Town

Acknowledgements:

This document was produced by the City of Cape Town's Urban Design Branch in collaboration with a multi disciplinary group of individuals representing internal and external groups.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all internal departments and external professionals whose collaboration and expertise were instrumental in the development and drafting of this Urban Design Guideline document. Their collective input has helped shape a comprehensive and forward-thinking framework that reflects a shared vision for sustainable and inclusive urban environments.

These guideline documents look to provide a tool for users to use when designing and developing within the City. As such, the intention will be to periodically update and revise these documents based on the changing realities within the urban realm.

If you would like to provide any feedback or comments on the urban design guidelines and Policy, please make contact with our team via the email below:

urban.design@capetown.gov.za