CASE STUDY

BAY STREET SHOPS AND APARTMENTS, BYRON BAY

Expanding the options for retail and housing in a coastal town

Better value:
Well-designed mixed-use buildings can increase activity and offer new opportunities for regional town centres. Image: Troppo Architects.

QUICK FACTS

PROJECT TYPE:
Two-storey mixed-use new development: residential and retail

LOCATION:
Corner Bay and Fletcher streets, Byron Bay, a beachside town of 9000 people on the NSW far north coast

REGION:
North Coast people

ABORIGINAL CUSTODIANS OF THIS COUNTRY[1]:
Bundjalung

CLIENT:
Private developer
Byron Bay Group

PROJECT SCALE:
Medium: two-storey; four retail tenancies and two 2-bedroom dwellings
SITE AREA 504 m^2
FLOOR SPACE RATIO 1.43:1

PROJECT COST:
$2.5 million

YEAR: Completed 2006

PROJECT TEAM:
ARCHITECTURE
Troppo Architects
PLANNING
Planners North
ENGINEERING
Phil Wallace
ECOLOGY
Peter Parker

PROCUREMENT PROCESS:
Traditional procurement with documentation, tender, and lump-sum contract

AWARDS:
2008 Northern Rivers Urban Design Awards: Grand Winner and Award for Excellence

A development in Byron Bay town centre has set a new standard for the design of regional mixed-use buildings, and provided environmentally friendly and low-maintenance shop-top housing as an alternative to the free-standing housing model.

Better for community:
The retail frontage is designed to encourage people to stop and chat, or sit and enjoy the street activity. Image: Michael Zanardo.

Taking advantage of a prime beachfront location, four ground-level retail tenancies open up to the street, while upstairs two private apartments overlook the beach.

The building responds to the mild temperate climate of Byron Bay with architecture that can both shelter occupants from the extremities of weather as well as offer them the opportunity of free-flowing indoor–outdoor living as the seasons change.

Revitalising a prominent location in the town centre

The retail zone on the ground floor brings interest and social activity to the streetfront and creates an inviting and attractive public space for businesses, residents, and visitors.

The retail spaces have been designed to maximise display space and exposure. The shopfronts have large timber-framed sliding glass doors that open up to the street. Shared back-of-house facilities include bathrooms and storage and allow the tenancies to be flexible, so they can adapt to new uses as required.

The deep verandah above the shops provides shade and shelter at the street level, creating an attractive place for café seating. Along the footpath edge a long, low concrete seat, integrated into the building fabric, invites people to spend time and socialise on the street.

Increasing options for diverse and healthy living

Two spacious, low-maintenance, private, and comfortable apartments on the first floor provide a housing choice which is unusual in regional centres.

Each two-bedroom apartment has a large cross-through living space with high ceilings that follow the roof form. Living areas open on to deep north-facing verandahs overlooking the street with panoramic views of the beach.

Entry to the apartments is from the quieter side of the corner. Each has a private courtyard, open to the sky, that provides the outlook for a bedroom, the dining space, external bath house, and laundry.

The basement has underground parking, with all levels accessible by stairs and a lift. The developers were permitted to reduce the standard parking provision and provide bicycle parking instead, encouraging people to walk or cycle to the shops and the beach.

Using a sculptural roof form

The generous, undulating roof is the building's most distinctive visual element, clearly visible from the street below and from further afield.

The shape of the roof follows the floor plans of the apartments beneath, with large curving gables over the two central indoor–outdoor living areas. The curve of the roof extends past the gables and tilts upwards on both sides, giving the impression of opening up to the sky. At night the lofty volumes created by the roof are accentuated by uplighting.

Through this clever articulation, the large roof creates a feeling of open generosity and shelter, rather than bulk. This prominent aspect of the building's appearance creates a strong identity, and has become a local landmark. However, its role is more than aesthetic.

Responding to climate impacts

Many aspects of the building are designed in response to Byron Bay's climate, providing comfort for the occupants throughout the seasons, and improving environmental performance.

The roof is an expression of how the building form is integral to its environmental performance.

Deep shade is the most obvious example of this, with large overhanging eaves keeping the sun out of the apartments in the hottest months, and protecting shopfronts and pedestrian spaces at street level. Rainwater collection is visible too – three oversized box gutters with rainwater heads are expressed at the eaves line, with downpipes integrated into the facade.

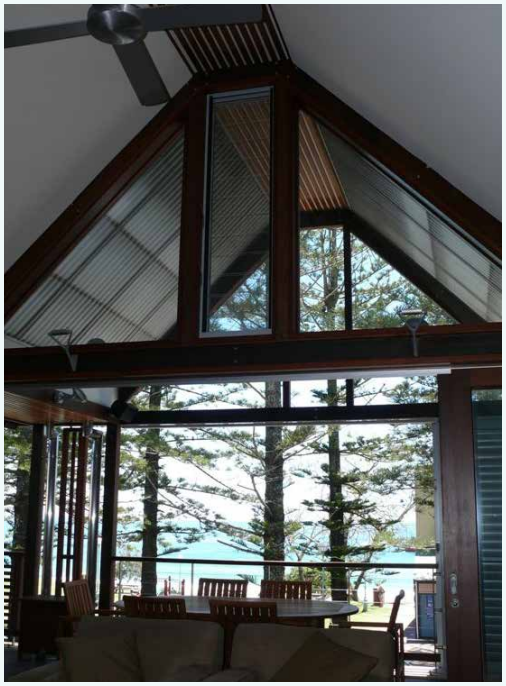
Large windows maximise natural light, while high ceilings and cross-ventilation encourage air flow, assisted by ceiling fans when necessary. The occupants can control light and ventilation using the building's adjustable "skin" of sliding screens and stackable louvre shutters.

As well as providing year-round comfort, these simple sustainability measures minimise the environmental impact of the development and reduce the occupants' ongoing energy costs.

Better working:
The distinctive roof form is integral to how the building functions in response to its location and the climate. Image: Michael Zanardo.

Better for people:
Walls can be opened or closed, depending on whether the breeze is welcome. Image: Michael Zanardo.

Better performance:
In summer, high ceilings and cross-flow ventilation take advantage of the sea breeze to cool the interior spaces. Image: Michael Zanardo.



Selecting materials for durability and minimal maintenance

The ground floor finishes are hard-wearing, with durable concrete-block walls and steel columns.

Above the strong horizontal line of the first-floor concrete slab, the construction changes to a mix of warmer, lighter materials for the residential areas. Timber decking is made of recycled grey ironbark that requires no finishing.

On the facade, exposed timber posts and beams, timber windows, fibre-cement wall cladding, translucent polycarbonate roof sheeting, and reflective corrugated zincalume require minimal maintenance. Louvre screens and timber batten balustrades provide shadow and texture, while people, bicycles, signage, and goods add colour to the neutral palette.

Design objectives for NSW

Seven objectives define the key considerations in the design of the built environment.

Better fit
contextual, local and of its place

Better performance
sustainable, adaptable and durable

Better for community
inclusive, connected and diverse

Better for people
safe, comfortable and liveable

Better working
functional, efficient and fit for purpose

Better value
creating and adding value

Better look and feel
engaging, inviting and attractive

Find out more
ga.nsw.gov.au

Good process: select designers with the right skills and experience

This landmark retail and residential development skillfully and generously accommodates different uses, while being a prime example of the everyday advantages of designing for the climate and location.

Engage an architectural consultancy that has the experience to understand the unique conditions of the place, in particular responding to local climate conditions. In a prime location such as this, a focus on design quality will add long-term value for the owners and occupiers, and the area as a whole. Design quality extends beyond site and project boundaries. It needs to be established from the outset and carried through to completion.

Better working:
The building materials are fit for purpose: durable and requiring minimal maintenance. Image: Michael Zanardo.

Key considerations – balancing urban growth

Regional towns can benefit by offering a choice of housing types that can suit a range of different needs and living configurations – and by locating new housing closer to an active centre with existing infrastructure rather than on the isolated edges of town, and rather than allowing urban areas to encroach into rural or natural landscapes. Many people of all ages prefer to live closer to shops and services and enjoy being able to walk or cycle around town, rather than having to drive.

The Bay Street building has attracted business, improved the amenity of the public streetscape, provided private housing – all through good design. This precedent has been recognised in local planning policies, aiming to encourage other new developments to follow in similar footsteps.

MORE INFORMATION

GANSW policies:
Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW
GANSW guides:
Integrating Urban Design
Urban Design for Regional NSW
Implementing Good Design: Implementing Better Placed design process into projects
Evaluating Good Design: Implementing Better Placed design objectives into projects
Design Excellence Competition Guidelines
GANSW advisory notes:
How to develop a design brief
How to select design consultants
When to get design advice
Good design and design excellence

1. Horton D (creator) & AIATSIS (1996), AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia, Aboriginal Studies Press, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz.

This case study has been developed in conjunction with the Urban Design for Regional NSW guide.