

Many issues affect the function and appeal of multi-unit housing developments. Unit design and floor plans affect individual resident satisfaction. The relationship of units to one another influences the design, function, and appeal of the entire building. How buildings relate to their surroundings is a key concern to neighbors and the community.

Common Concerns

Design Solutions and Suggestions

Mix of unit types

- A variety of unit types will best respond to a diversity of household types. A mix of unit types can be placed within an individual building, development, block, or neighborhood.

Unit entrances

- A limited number of unit entrances off of a single building entrance helps residents get to know and watch out for one another. In high-rise buildings, floor plans arranged with units clustered together, or a limited number of units per floor, create a similar effect.

Building circulation

- Buildings with hallways organized along central corridors are clear and easy to navigate, with simple, logical plans and signage.
- Communal rooms and shared spaces placed near the central corridors will be accessible to the greatest number of residents.

Response to the environment

- West- and east-facing windows that are shaded in the summer and exposed in the winter help keep down cooling and heating costs.
- Units with windows on more than one side provide cross-ventilation that can limit the need for air conditioning and reduce cooling costs.

Storage

- Storage lockers and individual garages provide spaces for residents to keep objects such as bikes, boxes, and other items that do not fit easily in their units, and help keep corridors and outdoor spaces free of clutter.

Accessibility

- Universal Design incorporated at the time of construction allows all people—regardless of their age or ability—to live in buildings without specialized design or modification.

References

Marcus, Clare Cooper, and Wendy Sarkissian. 1986. *Housing as if People Mattered: Site Guidelines for Medium-Density Family Housing*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Center for Universal Design www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

Local Design Solutions: Building and Unit Layout



River Station (Minneapolis)

Balconies provide private open space

Spacing between the buildings ensures a certain level of privacy, as does the placement of windows

Courtyards between the buildings provide shared open space



East Village (Minneapolis)

This mix of side attached rowhouses with apartments above provides a variety of unit access and street relationships

A small number of units share each entry

** Not all of the developments included are located on corridors; they were chosen as local examples that illustrate solutions and suggestions for building and unit layout.*