

# Architect and Builder

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THE  
ONE



# THE ONE

**THE ONE**  
Stellenbosch

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**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
Dave Southwood;  
Courtesy of the Developer

The One was conceptualised not only to provide student accommodation but also to act as an urban intervention that would catalyse urban renewal in the area

The One was developed to address a critical shortage of student accommodation in Stellenbosch. The brief envisioned a safe, supportive, and engaging environment in which students would have everything they need to thrive. The developers had in mind a premium all-inclusive student village rather than a conventional residence. They wished to create a modern, relaxed living environment with design at its core, including private and shared residential facilities. They also proposed state-of-the-art amenities and facilities, including a study centre, cinema, e-gaming, games room, gym, laundry, pause areas, and communal fully equipped kitchens. They emphasised a need for collective spaces and shared environments, including safe and secure outdoor recreational areas. The scheme also required a commercial component on ground level that would provide and promote an interactive interface with the street. It was of fundamental importance to the developers that the design should enhance and uplift the urban fabric of the surrounding area so that the surrounding suburb would be pedestrian friendly and connected with the university campus, which is within walking distance.

## Design Concept

Architecturally, The One seeks to establish a striking urban presence while remaining sensitive to the historical context and Stellenbosch's distinctive local vernacular, thus acknowledging the area's role in South Africa's cultural history.







As a place-maker, its design, while unabashedly modern, draws inspiration from the surrounding rural architecture and its mountainous setting. The building occupies an entire city block, so its design references the historic village's original rectangular grid layout and 'werf' character. Parking is concealed beneath the building to maintain an active, pedestrian-friendly street interface.

The built structure wraps around the perimeter of the block, surrounding two large landscaped internal courtyards.

Each internal courtyard has been designed with a distinct purpose. An 'active' courtyard functions as the main outdoor entertainment hub, centred on a swimming pool and elevated deck that serve as key focal points. Surrounding this space are communal amenities, including a boma-style fire







pit, braai areas, and leisure zones positioned to encourage interaction and connection.

In contrast, a 'passive' courtyard offers a tranquil, Zen-inspired setting for quiet and reflective activities. It features a dedicated study area equipped with charging points and Wi-Fi, along with intimate gathering spaces and an outdoor chessboard. This courtyard supports focused study, solitude, and smaller group interaction.

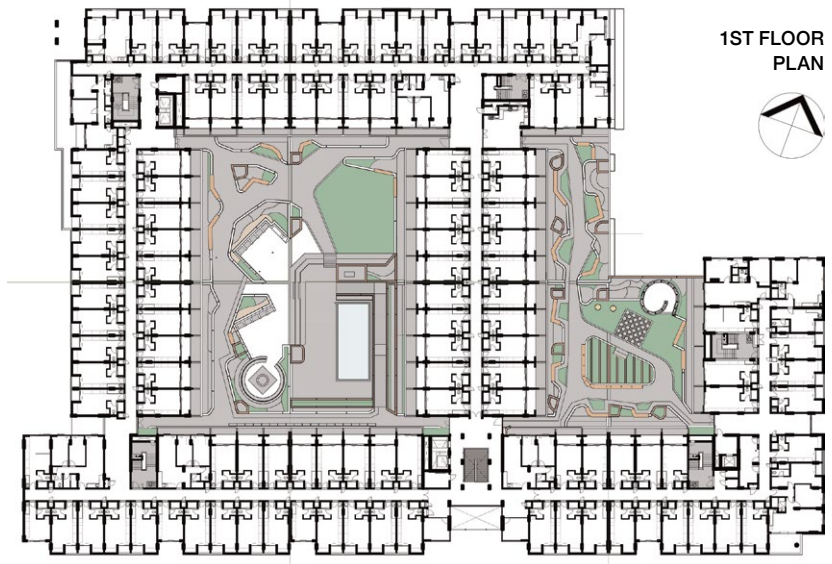
Planters have been carefully positioned to prevent access to private courtyards while also defining zones and offering informal seating.

#### Façade Design

Its massing, materiality, and detailing reference the region's rural architecture; simple rectilinear forms with thick walls that echo historic barn structures and wine cellars.

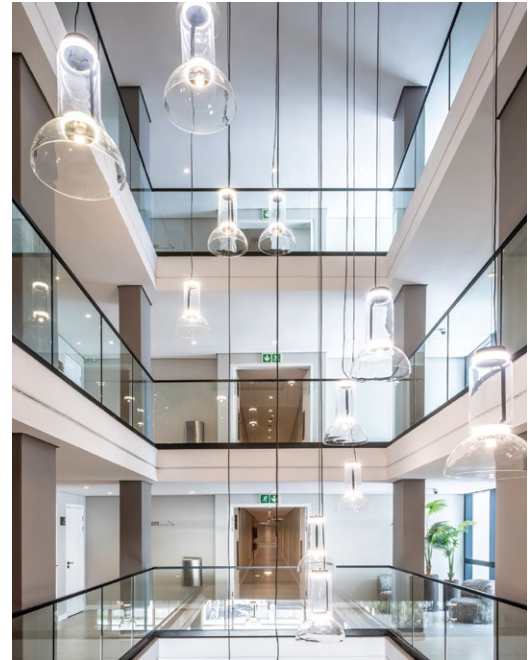
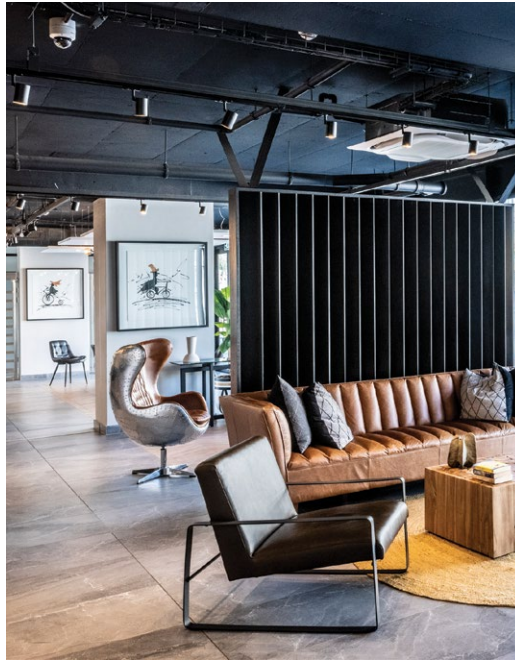


TYPICAL SECTION



1ST FLOOR  
PLAN





The elevation is divided into three sections, each expressed with a distinct rhythm to introduce hierarchy. Two contrasting planes separate the body from the recessed base and cap of the building. The body of the building is projected forward, making it the most visible element. The base and head of the structure feature full-height glazing and cladding, set back from the main façade. This recessed plane enhances the visual lightness of the building, allowing the larger mass to blend more harmoniously with its surroundings.

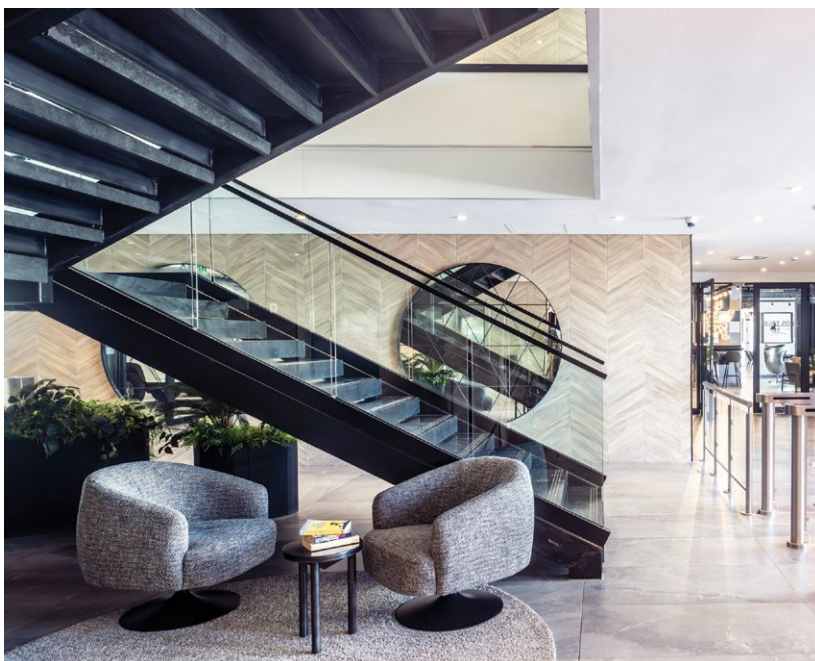
Additionally, the building's bulk is broken not only at the base and top head but also at regular intervals along its length by Juliette balconies

recessed in cladded vertical bands. These design interventions are critical to the horizontal scale of the long façades. A mix of pitched and flat roofs creates a varied roofscape reminiscent of the Cape agricultural 'opstal'.

This reinterpretation of traditional forms through modern expression contributes to a built environment that resonates with the local identity while elevating expectations for student accommodation.

#### Public Spaces

The One was conceptualised not only to provide student accommodation but also to act as an urban intervention that would catalyse urban







renewal in the area. It involved a public component and pedestrian-friendly street interface, as well as upgrading the streets connecting to the Stellenbosch CBD and university.

To prioritise the pedestrianised character of the surrounding streets, parking has been concealed from street view beneath the development. In typical Stellenbosch style, a street café and retail activate the sidewalks.

The development contributed over R35 million in privately raised funding for infrastructure upgrades and precinct security, adding value to the broader community, making it a more accessible and desirable place for students and residents alike. The One's location and design

foster a strong sense of community, providing students with a supportive environment that integrates well with the broader town.

The ripple effect of The One's success has catalysed interest in the precinct, with several adjacent properties now earmarked for future student housing developments. Other local infrastructure upgrades include precinct-wide pedestrianisation initiatives, which further reduce car dependence and contribute to long-term environmental and social sustainability.

### Interiors

The One comprises 508 units spread across five floors, including studios, one and two bedroom







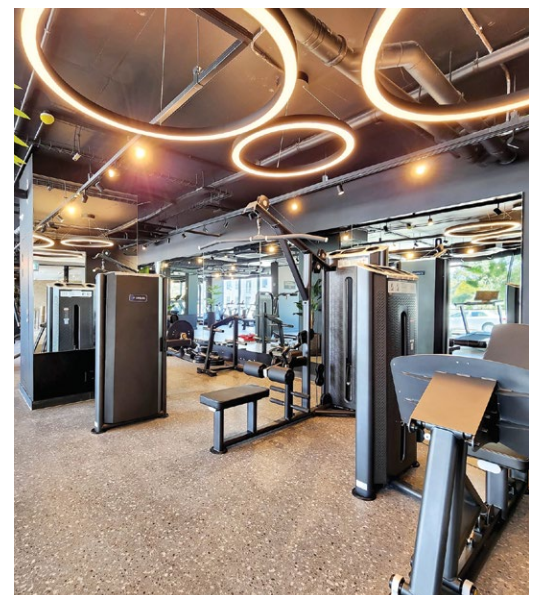
typologies. Each unit is designed with functionality and comfort in mind, featuring high-end fixtures and finishes such as engineered stone countertops in kitchen and bathrooms, built-in cupboards, desks, and shelves. Performance

glass windows and fibre optic internet are also some of the design features that will feature in the units.

Extensive care was taken in the construction of the common areas and amenities, with an emphasis on ease of maintenance while maintaining a high standard of visual and practical quality.

#### Sustainable Elements

Environmental sustainability is embedded in both the location strategy and the architectural design of The One. The building is strategically located just 750m from the university, promot-







ing walkability and encouraging the use of bicycles and public transport.

To enhance sustainability, solar panels are installed on the roof, supplementing water heating and reducing the building's overall energy consumption. Performance glazing, abundant natural light, and ventilation strategies support resident wellbeing.

Sustainability and functionality have been carefully integrated throughout the landscaping design too. Water-wise design principles, the planting palette comprises predominantly indigenous, hardy species based on sun and shade tolerance, especially

in areas between buildings where light conditions vary. Effective drainage systems manage rooftop runoff, a critical consideration given the Western Cape's susceptibility to flooding. The swimming pool's orientation maximises sun exposure to enhance comfort and usability.

### Conclusion

The One has spurred local urban renewal, infrastructure upgrades and enhanced safety, creating a connected, vibrant community. The One sets a new benchmark for modern, sustainable student living in Stellenbosch.





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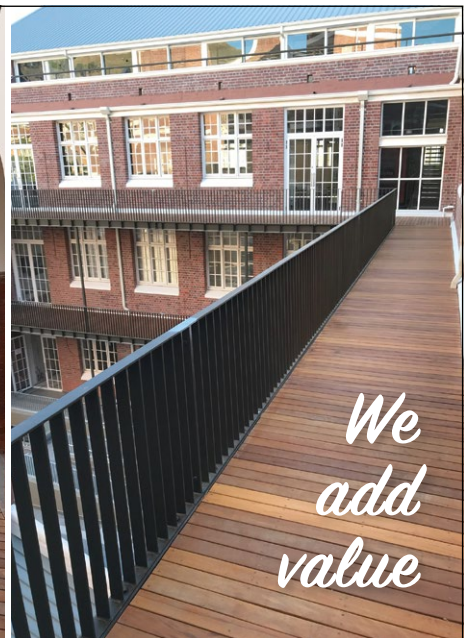
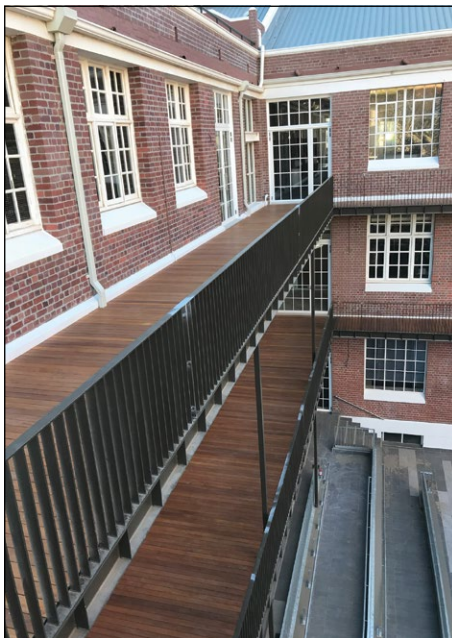
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