



**JOHN LOW**  
**ARCHITECT PTY. LTD.**

**Full Architectural Services Guide**



Decide | **Design** | Develop



## **Full Architectural Services**

**John Low Architect Pty. Ltd.** is pleased to offer our premium **Architectural service**, for property owners desiring a unique building design to be taken from conception through to physical completion. A full architectural service engagement is a trusting relationship between the architect and the client. Our process is collaborative, bringing your design to fruition as a team.

We specialise in **Residential buildings** - from **full rebuilds** to **humble renovations**. We believe that our engagement as your primary consultants throughout the project places us in the best position to deliver your project and manage associated risks.

We understand that the building procurement process is complex, involving many stages. Therefore we have developed a phase-by-phase guide, outlining the different phases for you to follow.



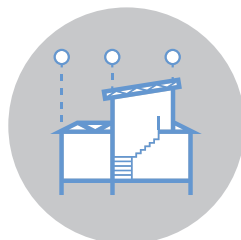
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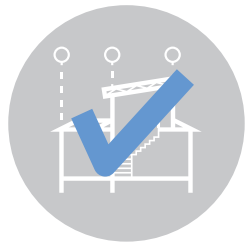
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## **PHASE 0: PRE-DESIGN**

Even before design begins, essential information for the project needs to be gathered. We collect data for use in concept design, such as site, any existing structure(s), codes, covenants, asset plans, access, budget, and overlays.

### **CLIENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

This phase begins by us sending you a detailed list of questions to help us find out more about you, your needs for the project, and inspirations of an architectural idea to build the project on. Our process clarifies the design intent from the outset.

Some consultants we involve in this phase:

#### ***Cost consultant***

→ provides estimates and advice regarding the cost of construction works. The benefit of sound and early cost advice to any client is financial predictability.

#### ***Land surveyor***

→ measures and captures your site into digital information. They are responsible for the accuracy of coordinates for title boundaries, corners, existing conditions, vegetation, ground levels, and adjoining properties.

#### ***Geo-technical Engineer***

→ goes to the site and profiles the soil, producing a soil report along with recommendations for the foundations required for the construction of the building.

This phase is usually completed once the program and budget have been developed and agreed upon.



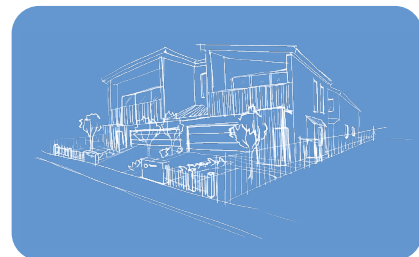
## **PHASE 1: CONCEPT DESIGN**

This is where the rough shape of the building and the ideas are formed. Depending on the scope, we generate a series of design options for a collaborative discussion with you. These schematic ideas are meant to be conceptually evocative to incite new ideas and feedback with your input.

We use this process to help you establish an accurate project budget attached to a defined scope. We discuss the designs with the goal of narrowing the field to one preferred design concept into something we can move forward with.

At the end of this phase we will usually have the following:

- Existing Conditions
- Schematic Site Plan
- Substantiated program fulfilling your brief
- Schematic Floor Plans
- Sketch Elevations
- Sketch Roof Plan



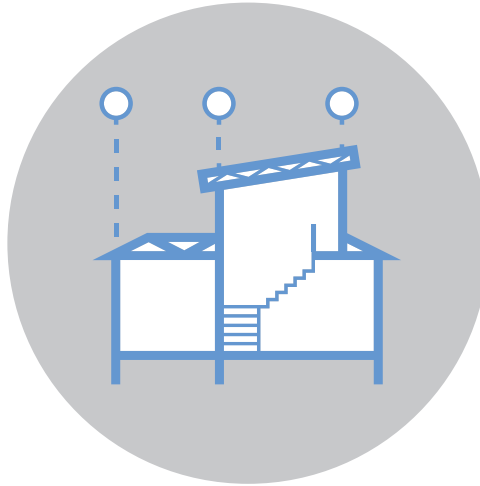
This phase is usually completed upon agreement of a design.

It may be noteworthy that we do not endorse the direct design plagiarism from other firms. Each of our **Full Architectural Service** proposals are the result of carefully crafted artistic endeavours, responding to the unique opportunities of the site.

Our full services protects the copyright of the design and the uniqueness of the project. However we do have options available for extending this copyright if necessary.

*\*If you are a developer and have the opportunity to develop multiple similar plots of land, our **Design and Ready** line would be able to help you save costs in time and money.*





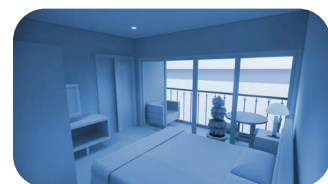
## ***PHASE 2: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT***

During this phase, we develop the approved concept design and provide documentation to explain the more technical aspects of the building. There will also be a schedule of proposed materials and finishes. We will then be able to coordinate the work of specialist consultants; organise and attend preliminary meetings with relevant authorities. Finally, we will review the developed design against the budget and coordinate preparation of an updated estimate of the cost of the works.

We will usually meet to discuss the evolution of the design several times, each time refining the level of detail. We find this produces the most cohesive design overall.

This phase often includes more robust documentation, providing other consultants the information they need. This also includes the procuring of the relevant drawings for town planning and building permit:

- Site Plan
- Existing Conditions
- Floor Plans
- Area Calculations
- Exterior Elevations (North, South, East and West facing)
- Sections
- Shadow diagrams
- Overlooking diagrams



Some consultants we involve at this stage:

**Town Planner**

→ assists in preparation for the following step of planning permit, making sure the proposal is in accordance with the municipality's schemes.

**Structural Engineers**

→ designs the skeletal structure of the building, ensuring that our homes perform to our joint high level of expectation. They engineer the roof, frame, footings and connections, providing computations and certificates for the associated engineering.

**Energy Rater**

→ computes the thermal performance of interior rooms, then specifies insulation materials and window glazing values for the building to perform in compliance with energy efficiency requirements.

**Civil Engineers**

→ calculates and manages the rainfall on the building and site by systems of gutters, downpipes, and in-ground plumbing, directing to water tanks, retention systems or to the legal point of discharge.

**Landscape Designers**

→ designs the outdoor green spaces, populating the gardens with vegetation in accordance to the municipality's standards. Arborists may also advise on existing vegetation.

**Other consultants such as traffic, fireproofing, lighting or mechanical professionals can be brought in as necessary.**

## CODES AND STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

It is critical to understand the restrictions governing the subject property or structure before beginning schematic design. Our routine reviews help inform practical options in the design. We will review the zoning, by-laws, and covenants which impact the property, review environmental issues, flood zones, and assess the overall permitting process. We often conduct preliminary enquiries to Council, Water authorities, Vic Roads, and engineering review as required.

## SCHEDULE

It is important to develop a basic schedule to make sure we are meeting everyone's expectations. The project schedule will be impacted by the following:

- Owner's Schedule
- Architect's Schedule
- Consultants' Schedules
- Permitting Schedule



Whilst the schedule is bound to change, we utilise it to identify any constraints early on.

Although we mark this phase as complete when you have agreed to the design and documentation for approval and application, the work and refinement often continues in the next few phases.



## ***PHASE 3: TOWN PLANNING APPLICATION***

Enquiries will be made during the Pre-Design phase as to whether or not we require town planning permits to proceed with the design. Most common instances where planning permits are necessary will include densifying a single plot of land into multiple dwellings.

At this phase we will have a developed design that is ready to submit to the city council. We will compile the appropriate drawings and information necessary for the application and also assist you with lodging the application itself.

We will prepare documents needed for the application to comply with local authority requirements including:

- Neighborhood analysis of its character and its surrounding area.
- Carefully considered Design Responses to the objectives and standards of Clause 54 or 55 of the relevant council's Planning Scheme.
- Architectural plans and elevations showing internal programs and window placements.
- Street front elevations of the surrounding properties depicting how the design nests within the neighborhood.
- Shadow diagrams and calculations of the proposed design to ensure that the adjoining properties are minimally affected.

At the stage of town planning, the program should be formalised without requiring major changes. Each council in Victoria is unique and we will tailor our approach for the planning process. Complex sites may require an earlier start on the permitting process; however, this will be determined in the Pre-Design phase.

Note: town planning permits stipulate a latest date which the project is required to **commence**, and a latest date which the project is required to be **completed**. Breaching these dates may require a full re-application.

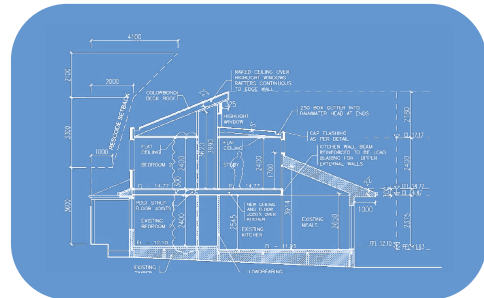




## **PHASE 4: CONTRACT DOCUMENTATION**

This phase consolidates all of the information about the house into a detailed set of drawings and specifications that will be used by the contractor for pricing and construction. Think of it as an instruction manual. For a typical project, we will generate the following drawings:

- Site Plan
- Floor Plan(s)
- Foundation Plan
- Exterior Elevations
- Building Sections/Wall Sections
- Door + Window Details
- Interior Elevations
- Details (interior/exterior)
- Electrical / Lighting plans
- Building Specifications
- Schedules (Door/Window/Hardware/Plumbing/Lighting/Finish/Appliance)



It will also involve the finalisation of the consultant documentation: construction management plan, structural engineering, civil engineering, energy rating, landscape design, traffic management, fire separation, and other relevant documents.

The contract documentation phase will require less input from you as most of the decisions will have already been made. If there are outstanding finish selections or cabinetry design decisions we will meet to confirm those.

This phase is completed when we have the documentation in place and are ready to engage the contractor. By this point you need to be ready to meet the financial obligations of the construction process.



## **PHASE 5: CONTRACTOR SELECTION**

There are typically two means of selecting a contractor – by competitive tendering bid or by negotiated contract. In this document we will describe the former.

### **TENDERING BID CONTRACT:**

A tender is essentially a quote, though more detailed and tied to both our documentation and the eventual building contract. We agree one or more contractors to competitively price the construction, resulting in a fixed bid price and time. The bidders should be of equal quality because high-end custom builders and project builders will naturally arrive at different numbers, making the process less useful.

Bidding requires a tight set of drawings to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. By reducing the undefined variables, the materials are known quantities (windows, doors, finishes) and the only real differences between bids should be the individual builder's varying overhead and profit percentages.

The bidders will submit their prices to you and together we will evaluate the bids and award the contract to the bidder of your choice.

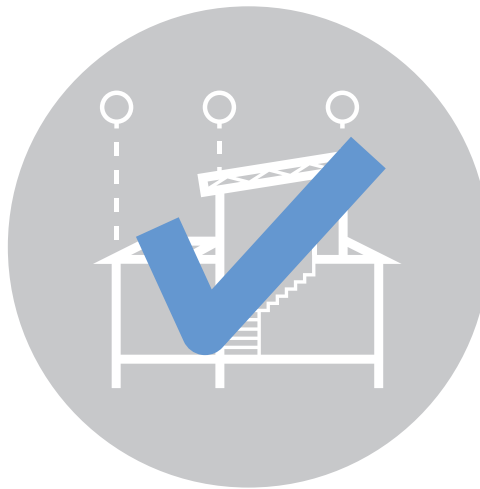
### **PROS:**

- Validates the cost of construction among a pool of builders.
- Builders have to keep their price competitive, or they lose the job.
- Tendering allows for multiple sources of input in the form of addendas.

### **CONS:**

- Low bidders may sometimes feel pressure to compromise quality.
- Up front drawing/design fees are higher to ensure drawings are complete.
- Some local contractors won't participate in the bid process at all.
- More time to conduct the bid process and award the contract.
- Tendering quality is subject to the quality of the lowest bidder.

Having a quality builder on board will help to price your project fairly and make the construction process much less stressful – even enjoyable.



## **PHASE 6: BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATION**

This phase revolves around collating documentation for the building permit. It typically takes place after the town planning permit where the relevant authority has given approval to the design. This is because the design in the building permit drawings have to correspond with the approved town planning permit submission.

The architectural drawings for the building permit are very different in scope from town planning permit drawings. At this stage they need to form a cohesive document for the building to be certified and to be built.

A building permit application involves appointing the local authority or a relevant building surveyor for the remainder of the project. They require all relevant documents: architectural drawings, specifications, consultant documents, approved town planning permits, and details of the nominated contractor. The nominated contractor will also need to provide evidence they are adequately insured to procure the works.

Our roles during this phase include:

- Assist the client in the coordination of consultants as required.
- Coordinating consultant documentation and packaging for the permit.
- Answering RFI and amendments to satisfy the building surveyor.

Please note that when approved, these documents represent a “ticket to build” rather than being definitive or a building contract agreement.

We emphasise the fact that despite the differences between town planning and building permit drawings, the reflected design should be the same. Any changes may result in the rejection of the permit. We therefore advise against unnecessary alterations at this phase.

It is unfortunate that some developments tarnish the industry's reputation by providing "artist impression" drawings to home buyers who end up with different outcomes. We circumvent this by presenting the drawings throughout the process that ultimately end up on the approved permit, so you can be assured of the final delivery.



## **PHASE 7: CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION**

After the contract is awarded and construction begins, we act as the contract administrator to the construction contract. Our role as the superintendent entity in the contract is to remain independent and fair. Contractors prefer communicating through us, and we help discuss and review your decisions before relaying to the contractor.

Some examples of our responsibilities as contract administration are:

- Contractual responsibility dissemination to each party.
- Agency between owner and contractor, via meetings and presentations.
- Preparation of brief and appointments in Performance Building Solutions.
- Coordination of Consultant's work.

Your involvement during the construction process not only develops an appreciation for all of the hard work we put into designing your vision, but we also find that it tends to hold the contractor to a higher standard of quality.

### **SITE MEETINGS**

While the contractor is in possession of the site, safety and accountability are their responsibility. They are in the position to manage on-site risk, and therefore have the authority to right or refuse personnel entering the site. This is why many project homes limit visitation to homeowners, oftentimes only at completion. Under a fair contract, our role permits us to visit the site as an authorised person, keeping the contractor accountable.

### **PROGRESS CLAIMS**

It is best practice to ensure that any payments are subject to an architect's assessment of the works. A quality contractor will have no reason to not agree to this if they are building to an acceptable quality standard. The contractor then sends their progress claim amount as appropriate with a tax invoice matching our certificate. In this way you can be assured that any payment you make has been assessed by us.

## REQUESTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION (RFI'S)

Invariably, there may be issues that remain unforeseen in the contract document phase, such as underground rocks, or internal conditions to existing buildings. Some of these require time sensitive inputs from us or consultants before proceeding. Our involvement in the Construction Administration phase allows us to facilitate prompt responses and update the contract documents.

## VARIATIONS TO TIME & COSTS

Variations are changes to the original scope of works as agreed. Thankfully good building contracts inherently include mechanisms so that changes can be made fairly through an administrator. As the nominated contract administrator we review adjustments to the Practical Completion dates and contract price against the situation, and the contractor's performance. Hence accountability remains paramount.

## PRACTICAL COMPLETION (P.C.) CERTIFICATE

In the final stages of construction, we conduct inspections, generate a defects list and consolidation of several certificates. This includes:

### CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE (Town Planning)

→ The local authority representative checks that the finished building is in accordance with the approved town planning documentation.

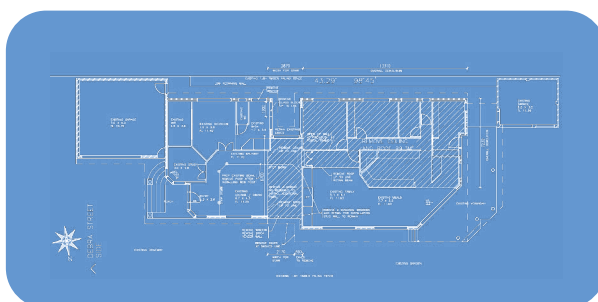
### CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY (Building Permit)

→ Building Surveyor checks that the finished building is in accordance with the endorsed documentation.

P.C. Certificate is given when those certificates are received, and we are satisfied.

## SECURITY

Your contract may include measures to implement security - a contractual mechanism to keep the contractor accountable for an agreed post occupancy period (defects liability period). This is often as a cash retention or bank guarantee, and can only be enacted under specific circumstances if the contractor defaults. If the contractor fulfills their obligations, you are required to pay the security.



## FINAL COMPLETION (F.C.) CERTIFICATE

Towards the end of the agreed period (usually 1 year - full cycle of seasons), we conduct a final inspection, where the contractor is obliged to rectify any outstanding defects. Once rectified to our satisfaction, we award the final certificate and instruct for the remaining security to be paid out. This releases the contractor and our obligations, concluding the project.



## ***OUR FEES AND PROJECT BUDGET***

The cost of construction is a useful guideline in projecting how much design time may be needed to consider the project and produce the drawings. **Note that this is the actual cost of construction, not the total project budget - these two are very different numbers.** Remember that the project budget includes consultant fees and permits.

### ***How do you charge your Architectural fees?***

There are three traditional ways Architectural Full Services are modelled:

**Percentage fee** → Traditional architecture practice. More recent economic constraints have made it less favourable due to clients not liking it relating to the budget because if it becomes more expensive, then they go out of budget. It discourages exploring options.

**Lump sum fee** → Preferred method for banks. However it bears a lot of risk on the designer, and if it is under quoted, can strain the end result. It could be a discouragement to the working relationship if time is not managed well.

**Hourly rate** → Is relative to how much time is spent on the project. The client is liable to only pay for time that has been required to deliver the project. It encourages the client, and it encourages the designer for the time spent. It requires a trust in time management, but for entrusting your budget to the architect, this would be a basic necessity.

Every project is different. As part of our enquiry, we build a brief summary, and package to you a tailored quotation. Kindly note our fees do not include other consultant fees (ie. engineering, landscaping), nor permit fees.



## ***What is and isn't included in your fees?***

For engagement of Full services, our Client Architect Agreement details out what is typically involved in our scope of work as your primary consultant.

Our fees do not include sub-consultant fees, as we recommend you engaging them as secondary consultants. We forward their invoices to you for payment, but we maintain coordination. Otherwise if we were to pay their fees for you, we will need to charge a margin on top for risk (and nobody wants to pay more than they need to).

We also do not include payments for permits and associated fees. Finally, we do not include the build and materials fee, as that will be negotiated through the contract with the builder. For a full list of exclusions, please see our Client Architect Agreement.

## ***How to Control Costs***

We recognize that designing a house can be an expensive endeavor and we are happy to work with you to manage these costs. A couple of things to prioritize when thinking about how to effectively control design fees:

- 1→ Exploring more options, while a really enjoyable exercise for me, can get expensive quickly.
- 2→ Be up front with your goals, likes and dislikes. Architects thrive on critical dialogue so don't be afraid to be direct and candid. Without an honest open dialogue, the process can take longer to arrive to something you are happy with.
- 3→ Match the size of your desired house with your budget. This keeps all parties working toward a singular goal. It's much easier to work early on a defined realistic house size that meets your budget than to try and remove money from an oversized house during the pricing phase. We advocate designing smaller, more energy efficient + affordable floor plans as a starting point.

Pre-Design services are particularly variable in nature, which makes it hard to list a percentage of fee to allocate to them. This variability is because each project begins with a different set of pre-conditions. Some arrive knowing exactly what spaces they want, how big the home should be, along with a clearly defined budget. Others are just beginning to take the necessary steps.

The nature of the decision-making process, owner's directives, and the level of design input requested, all affect the overall fees. Therefore, fees can only be an estimation at the start of a project based upon the potential size, complexity and intended work.

*\*If you are a developer and have the opportunity to develop multiple similar plots of land, our **Design and Ready** line would be able to help you save costs in time and money.*



## **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? (TYPICAL SINGLE DWELLING)**

### **DESIGN & DOCUMENTATION**

The time it takes to complete the design portion of the work can vary from as little as a few months to up to a year (or more). It depends on the complexity of the scope of work, how quickly you are able to make decisions, how quickly we can come to a design solution that meets your needs, and any special permits or regulatory hurdles we face.

### **PERMITS & APPROVALS**

Planning permits give permission to develop or use land for building. These permits can take 3-6 months to get approval or even up to 9 months in some rare cases. Each council is different and not all projects require a town planning permit.

Building permits are documents certifying that your design complies with the relevant building regulations. These may not take as long to receive approval as planning permits, but they do require documentation to be completed as part of their application. All new building projects will require a building permit.

As your primary consultant, we will assist you with getting these arranged and submitted for approval. However, the timelines for approvals are often out of our hands.

### **CONSTRUCTION**

Again, this depends on project size and complexity as well as the Contractor's schedule and workload.

### **TOTAL**

You can expect to take between 12 and 16 months for the average custom-built project from start to finish.

*\*Refer to our **Designed and Ready** line if you are a developer looking for economically benefited timelines.*



## FAQ

### ***Do you stay involved during the construction process?***

Within our Full Services provision we assist the construction process as the contract administrator. Depending on the project, we tender out to reliable registered builders and make recommendations.

### ***Who will be designing my project? Who will be my everyday contact?***

As your local architecture firm, our cosy team headed by John will collaborate with you, developing a personal yet professional relationship. All aspects within our service delivery will be supervised by a registered professional Architect.

### ***Can you see any challenges with my project?***

Every project is unique and will have its own challenges. As we are a team with a diverse range of experiences across design, documentation, structural engineering, and building inspections, don't hesitate to ask us the hard questions. Contact us to have a chat!

### ***Are your services only for residential projects?***

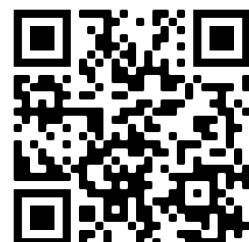
Whilst we specialise in residential design, we do take on a variety of projects. Send us your project and we will see if we are able to help out.

### ***Do you have any samples of your work?***

Our tailored quotation package include samples of similar work we have undertaken in the past, so that you can be assured of our experience in delivering your project.

### ***OTHER QUESTIONS?***

If there's something you are still wondering about, you can always reach me using the contact information on the QR code or on the back cover of this booklet.







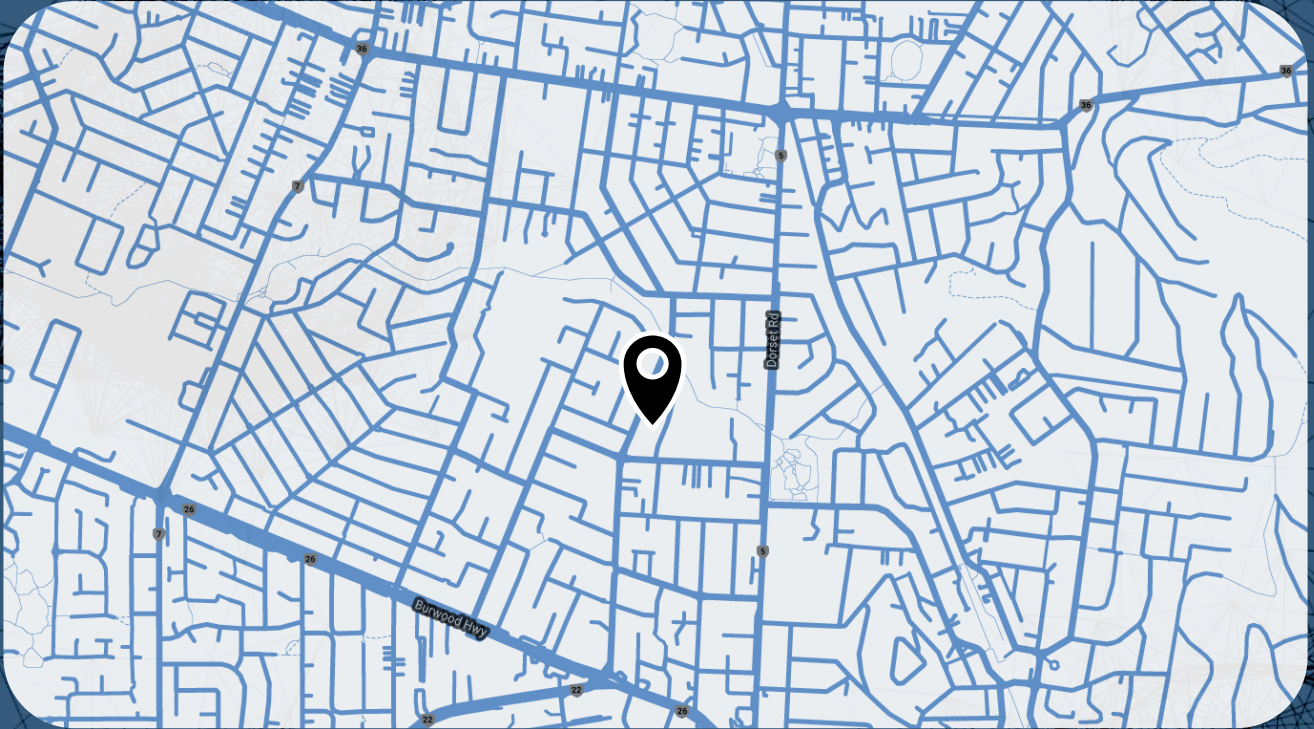


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