



Unlocking Innovative Housing Solutions
for Vulnerable Populations

Autistic Haus: Unlocking Innovative Housing Solutions for Vulnerable Populations

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Autistic Haus: Innovative Housing Solutions

1. Executive Summary: Redefining Accessible Living for Autistic Australians

Autistic Haus is an innovative, autistic-led housing initiative based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, dedicated to providing accessible, affordable, and community-centric accommodation for autistic individuals. Our model demonstrates the use of *Autistic Inclusive Design* in leveraging the strengths of community and individuals, to utilise the efficiency of proximity in function and services. This approach directly addresses critical gaps in current disability support, particularly within the Australian context of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the disproportional impact of the ongoing housing crisis on vulnerable populations.

By strategically integrating housing with a unique support framework, Autistic Haus offers a pathway to significantly improved outcomes, enhancing life expectancy, functional capacity, and overall well-being for autistic people, especially those currently underserved by existing systems. Our Autistic Inclusive Design principles prioritise reducing processing load, which is crucial for autistic individuals who generate a minimum of 42% more information from stimuli at all times compared to non-autistic people.

2. The Unmet Need: Why a New Model is Essential

Despite the pivotal role of Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in providing individualised support plans, significant challenges persist for autistic individuals. Many with low support needs, or those facing poverty and other intersectional barriers, struggle to access adequate NDIS funding. This often leaves autistic people unable to bridge infrastructural barriers through informal supports and social networking, leading to atrocious outcomes, including a significantly reduced life expectancy (estimated 16 to 30 years less than non-autistic populations).

A critical aspect compounding these challenges is the high prevalence of co-occurring disabilities in autistic individuals. Nearly every autistic person has at least one secondary condition or disability. However, NDIS and other support systems frequently make it very difficult to have them accommodated which is not only discompassionate and unrealistic but leads directly to poorer outcomes, for obvious reasons. This pervasive issue means that even with NDIS funding, the needs of autistic individuals with complex presentations are often unmet.

Furthermore, traditional housing environments often fail to accommodate the unique sensory and processing needs of autistic people. Public spaces, like grocery stores, are often deliberately overwhelming through hostile design practices like “The Gruen Transfer”, which maximises navigational fatigue to induce unplanned purchases. Additionally, typical rental accommodation is frequently inappropriate due to poor proxemics, over-bright colour schemes, and poor functional spaces, further reducing the functional capacity of autistic people. Autistic Haus is specifically designed to mitigate these challenges, providing an environment that reduces cognitive load and fosters optimal function.

3. Our Innovative Support and Financial Model

Autistic Haus introduces a groundbreaking approach to support delivery and funding, designed to be both highly effective and financially sustainable. Our buildings are designed to be funded through government grants and fundraising initiatives. The NDIS at large, says that foundational supports should be met through state funded infrastructure, Autistic Haus is an realisation of those promises delivered in and by the autistic community. This also means that the basic supports packages can be funded by the residents' combined accommodation rates, which is a notable asset for government cost-savings and support access simultaneously.

3.1 Integrated Basic Supports Package:

At the core of our model is a comprehensive "Basic Supports Package". This package covers essential, day-to-day services that are critical for well-being but often inefficiently funded or unavailable through traditional channels:

- **Food preparation:** Fresh and healthy meal components are available, a chopped fruit and vegetable salad bar, and communal kitchen facilities accessible for use by residents and support persons. Residents can also opt to pay for the cost of food, enabling access to fully prepared, affordable meals.
- **Housekeeping:** One-on-one assistance is provided for cleaning residences once a week. This has the potential for flexible, multi-specialised roles (e.g., a support person who can also provide pain management like massage therapy, understanding its impact on a resident's capacity for self-care and increasingly discarded through existing channels).
- **Transport support:** This includes group organised outings, and transporting residents to appointments. This facilitates community participation.
- **Tool and equipment libraries:** Offering a variety of items from kitchen equipment (e.g., stand mixers, muffin trays) to consoles and exercise equipment.
- **Advocacy:** Assistance in navigating support access or liaising with employers for work-from-home accommodations, etc.
- **Volunteer-led social engagement and discussions.** Specialised informal discussion groups to enhance theoretical understanding of interactive complexities.
- **Peer Mentoring.** Autistic people benefit specifically from mentoring and leadership from people with their own neurotype who have overcome relatable obstacles and impediments.

This list is non-exhaustive as Autistic Haus is continually adapting to feedback and demand.

3.2 Unique Funding Mechanism: Basic Supports from Rent:

Unlike conventional models, the costs for this Basic Supports Package are directly integrated into residents' accommodation rates (rent) for basic supports and facilities. This creates a single, streamlined payment for residents covering both their housing and these fundamental services. This bundling is key to:

- **Affordability:** Achieving economies of scale by delivering supports to a group, making the "Basic Supports Package" more cost-effective than individualised provision.

- **Efficiency:** Streamlining financial processes for residents and eliminating the need for complex, individual NDIS claims for these foundational, shared services.

3.3 Optimising NDIS Plans:

Our model strategically leverages existing NDIS plans for residents with medium to high support needs.

- Residents continue to utilise their NDIS funding for higher-level, individualised supports that extend beyond our basic package (e.g., intensive 1:1 personal care, complex behavioural support, specialised therapies).
- By covering essential foundational supports through the rent, Autistic Haus effectively reduces the demand on individual NDIS plans for these components. This means NDIS funds are preserved and optimally allocated to the unique, higher-tier needs of each participant, resulting in substantial savings for both residents and the government funding their support plans.
- This also ensures that specialists and support workers save time and money on travel, making face-to-face supports more accessible for the entire community *which has become particularly relevant for providing sustainable necessary supports to the autistic and disabled community.*

3.4 The "Anchor Resident" Model:

To ensure the financial stability and continuity of the Basic Supports Package, Autistic Haus intentionally accommodates a blend of residents with varying support needs. We embrace inclusion by not separating autistic people by their support needs, allowing us to supplement everyone's resources through a mix of high and low support residents. This is a revolutionary and much belated new approach. Individuals with higher-value NDIS plans effectively serve as "anchor residents." Their contributions to the pooled group rate provide a robust financial base for staff salaries and service delivery, mitigating the impact of occasional resident vacancies. Lower support needs residents then add supplemental and dynamic initiatives and resources. This flexible approach allows the model to balance the community's needs with available resources.

3.5 Addressing NDIS Gaps with Compassion and Advocacy:

For autistic individuals whose NDIS plans are insufficient for essential higher-level supports, Autistic Haus is committed to ensuring no one falls through the cracks. Where NDIS funding is demonstrably inadequate, our charity intends to temporarily bridge these gaps using dedicated charitable funds. Crucially, we will document these costs and use them as evidence to formally report and advocate to NDIS for more appropriate and comprehensive plans on their behalf. This combines immediate support with systemic advocacy for long-term change.

4. Community Structure and Phased Development

Autistic Haus is envisioned as a cohesive community, designed to accommodate groups of up to 22 residents per operational unit. The model has the flexibility to start with fewer and grow upwards.

- **Phased Development:** The facility is designed to be developed in strategic phases over a 3 to 5-year period. This approach allows for optimal development and seamless resident progression.
 - Initial phases will provide short-term accommodation (contracts up to 12 months) and respite, beginning with 12 small homes and a communal hub. This immediately addresses the housing crisis for a vulnerable group.

- Subsequent phases will introduce medium-term (3-year contracts) and long-term (5-year contracts) accommodation options as we build further homes up to 22 per site. This allows residents to transition to longer-term contracts within Autistic Haus as their needs evolve, ensuring continuation of support and stability.
- **Communal Hubs:** There will be a main communal facilities building, which features a small reception area and core communal functions, including a large kitchen with varied bench heights for access, a café/dining area, and shared lounge. Additionally, the hubs will offer a therapies and wellness space, specifically designed to support pain management and therapeutic interventions for residents. A central laundry facility and tool/equipment library will also be included.

5. Architectural Design Principles and Accessibility

The physical environment of Autistic Haus is meticulously designed to support autistic well-being and reduce processing overload.

- **Addressing Zoning & Legislative Considerations:** The inclusion of substantial communal facilities buildings is a strategic design choice that addresses common zoning requirements which often have stipulations against solely developing properties with only small, individual homes. By providing these larger, central structures, Autistic Haus aligns with broader planning expectations for multi-functional developments, proactively reducing potential "red tape" and facilitating smoother planning approvals.
- **Individual Dwellings:** The individual *small* homes are a more practical space than and not to be confused with a *tiny* home, designed for long term outcomes for adults. As pictured in the attached plans, the centre of the space comprises an open plan of bed, lounge, personal therapy space, and small galley kitchen. At either end of the dwelling are a spacious bathroom (designed for ease of navigation for all disabilities, e.g., space next to toilet and bath for wheelchair, roll-in shower with bench) and a storage room/walk-in wardrobe. Each individual small home will also feature a modest private garden, providing residents with a personal outdoor space.
- These small homes strike a careful balance of accessible spaciousness and humility. While they may appear generously sized, this spaciousness is not a luxury but a *fundamental necessity* for autistic and disabled people who require specific environmental conditions to manage sensory input and process additional information (compared to non-autistic people) effectively.
- **Autistic Accessibility:** All buildings on site are built to universal accessibility standards, featuring spacious amenities, large doorways and corridors, Braille signage, and audio guides. Crucially, they also include initiatives in autistic accessibility, such as colours that avoid excessive glare, good proxemics, subdued or natural lighting, and flow spaces. Fundamental components within the homes are modular and utilise current technologies, ensuring safety and catering to support needs. Given the relatively small and modular nature of the individual homes, we also have the flexibility to explore innovative construction methods such as 3D printed construction. This approach can potentially bypass current obstructions within the traditional construction industry, offering greater efficiency and creative composition. This is also not particularly loud compared to mainstream construction, contributing to a more sensory-friendly build process. Medium and long-term homes can be customised between residents to meet sensory needs through complementary colour usage, and individual risks are easily adapted (for example, modern electric stovetops are easily removed

and replaced with ordinary bench space, bathtubs can be removed or replaced easily due to wide doorways and open plans). A small portion of short-term facilities permanently do not have these amenities for those with higher safety concerns.

- **Community Layout & Access:** The property is designed to be largely carless, promoting better health and wellness practices through accessible pathways. A small fleet of mobility scooters will be available for residents to navigate these paths. A carpark will be situated at the entrance for essential vehicle access. The wide and smooth pathways ensure that emergency medical attendance or similar services will not be disadvantaged compared to attending an apartment complex. The community will feature only small, wheelchair-suitable paths for internal movement, promoting a quiet, pedestrian-focused environment with no direct drive-up access to residences. This design enhances privacy and reduces traffic noise, contributing to the desired "green feel" and birdsong atmosphere.
- **Variety in Accommodation:** Fifty percent of the homes are connected as double accommodation, designed to suit a variety of situational and supportive needs, such as two adult autistic people supporting each other, or an autistic parent caring for their adult autistic child. In the future, Autistic Haus aims to partner with government and national organisations to forge a pathway to permanent accommodation and home ownership for optimal stability and capacity building.

6. Expected Outcomes and Impact

Autistic Haus aims most urgently to increase the life expectancy of our residents and influence national practice. While "extending life expectancy" is a long-term outcome, we anticipate measurable positive outcomes in the short term, including feedback from residents and their supports, and especially financial savings for residents and government without compromising care for vulnerable people.

- **Increased Life Expectancy and Wellbeing:** Autistic people face immense and often invisible barriers, including significantly reduced life expectancy (estimated 16 to 30 years less than non-autistic populations) and frequent co-occurring conditions. Recent studies connect the physical and cognitive onslaught endured by autistic people to chronic pain and dysautonomic conditions, indicating a degenerative impact from exposure to lack of supports and inappropriate environments. By addressing systemic and environmental deficits, we expect to mitigate this onslaught, reducing pain and preventing or benefiting acquired or progressing co-occurring disabilities, such as Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and dysautonomia.
- **Enhanced Functional Capacity & Opportunities:** Considering the inherent processing load and the compounding effect of co-occurring disabilities, it is not reasonable to expect autistic individuals to thrive in employment or other societal roles before these fundamental systemic and environmental deficits are addressed. Autistic Haus prioritises the reduction of processing loads. As a result of addressing the infrastructural barriers, we expect the statistics around employment and social outcomes for our residents to improve. Residents will gain the opportunity to function at their optimal capacity, leading to an enhanced immediate quality of life.

- **Authenticity and Reduced Masking:** Another key outcome will be the freedom to not hide autistic traits. The more people feel comfortable speaking in monotone, being accommodated for eating difficulties, feel accepted using assistive communication devices, or expressing any variety of harmlessly distinctive presentations, the lower the risk of long-term physical and mental illness, and the more opportunity to redirect harmful responses to stress. Studies link “masking” behaviours with a steep increase in suicidality, so by simply providing a space by and for autistic people, we will reduce these adverse outcomes.
- **Community Building & Peer Support:** We also foresee positive outcomes in community building, as demonstrated by practices like peer mentoring. Autistic people rarely see autistic people thriving, so exposure to others thriving in a supported, autonomous lifestyle within Autistic Haus has the profound ability to uplift residents’ mindsets and attitudes.
- **Financial Savings:** The model will deliver financial savings for both residents and government support plans without compromising care for vulnerable people.

7. Values, Principles, and Best Practices

Autistic Haus embodies the international autistic and disabled community’s long-standing principle of “nothing about us without us”. Our organisation is founded by a board where the majority (4 out of 5) identify as neurodivergent or autistic, and includes carers and people with higher support needs.

- **Strengths-Based and Intersectional:** Good practice in autism spaces includes a “strengths-based approach”. Our Executive Founder has a special interest in autism and autism research, cultivating relationships in prolific autism spaces and liaising with contemporary and renowned researchers and leaders in the field. Contemporary autism research is intrinsically applicable on an intersectional paradigm. We recognise that people of colour and women are significantly less likely to be correctly identified as autistic, which interplays with systemically reduced access to supports and safety, impacting how autistic traits are presented. Consideration is also given to co-occurring disabilities like connective tissue disorders or Intellectual Disabilities.
- **Informed by Lived Experience & Research:** We are fundamentally grounded in up-to-the-minute verified findings and make a point of keeping up with the most current research. Our insights are deeply rooted in lived experience as autistic people and carers, combined with a commitment to integrating up-to-the-minute verified findings from contemporary autism research. Ultimately, the only real way to understand autistic people is to listen to autistic people – not just those who are easy to listen to or communicate with.
- **Holistic and Culturally Appropriate:** It is essential that Autistic Haus provides culturally appropriate accommodation for every autistic person who comes to us. In implementing our practices of community consultation, we prioritise heeding traditional elder knowledge and local area community feedback.
- **Cooperation and Innovation:** We value cooperation and solidarity in disability spaces and the opportunity to contribute. Autistic Haus is grateful to all the other fantastic people and organisations breaking ground in accessible housing. We believe genuinely that there is no competition in this space, only inspiration, as each effort makes progress more possible for the next. We are inspired by initiatives such as: Project Independence - home ownership for Australians living with Intellectual Disabilities, “Night Sky”- a custom private accessible home in New South Wales, Bobby’s Tiny House

World on Tiktok, and G A Architects- located in the UK they have collaboratively pioneered practices of Autistic Inclusive Design, which we will be implementing throughout Autistic Haus.

We also value climate resilience in the face of increasingly intense and unpredictable events, requiring a forward-thinking and innovative approach to evidence-based problem solving.

8. Key Elements for Enhanced Quality of Life

Autistic Haus was in part initiated on an observation by our founder during respite: “Luxury is just accessibility for people who don’t need it”. Simply having a functionally accessible bathroom was so immediately impactful on their capacity, that they questioned why such facilities are more commonly accessed by the wealthy than the people who would so meaningfully benefit from them. This same founder also has an enduring special interest in autism and autism research, especially the effects of environment and how autistic people process environments. This summarises an ethos at the heart of Autistic Haus.

We are called “Autistic Haus” for very deliberate reasons: when we refer to “autism” (e.g., “autism community”, “autism research”), we encompass not only autistic people, but everyone interacting with them, from parents and carers, to specialists, therapists and support workers. The “autism” space is often built and determined by non-autistic people. However, when we use the term “autistic”, (e.g., “autistic led research”, “autistic community”), we mean that it is centred on and meaningfully developed by autistic people. By calling ourselves “Autistic Haus”, we make a deliberate and profound assertion that this is a place for autistic people, which is incredibly rare. We believe that truly functional accessibility is profoundly impactful on an individual's capacity and overall quality of life. By designing a space for autistic people, developed by autistic people, we offer an environment that is incredibly rare and provides the freedom to not work unproductively against autistic traits, fostering profound upliftment and reducing the risk of long-term illness. The spaciousness of our small homes, for instance, is not a superfluous comfort but a vital element of accessible design, enabling autistic and disabled individuals to manage extraordinary informational input and navigate their environment effectively – a necessity often overlooked in standard housing.

9. Note for International Readers

A significant element of our model’s success, particularly in the Australian context, is our emphasis on leveraging the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This individualized funding system, while not universal, provides a strong foundation for participant-led support. However, our model is fundamentally designed to be adaptable and could be highly effective in other countries, such as Canada, depending on the structure of their disability support systems. The critical factor that allows Autistic Haus to meet the diverse needs of all autistic individuals, including those with lower support needs or those who have historically faced exclusion from traditional support systems, is the principle that government needs must fund the building and land. This crucial investment ensures that residents can afford their own basic supports through accommodation rates, making the model genuinely accessible and sustainable for all.

10. Key Partnerships

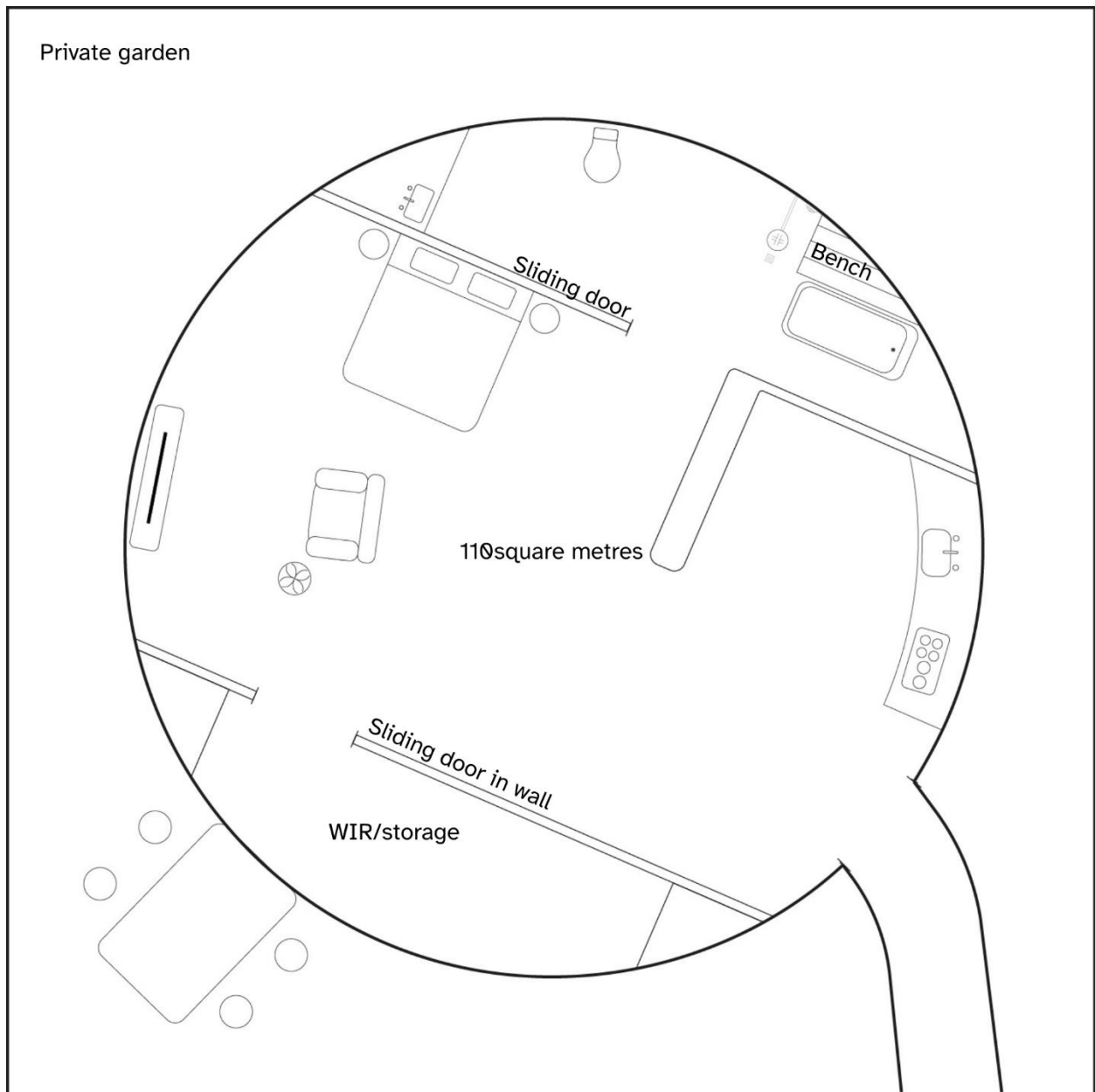
A key relationship in the success of Autistic Haus is our deep base in the community. We speak from our lived experience as autistic people and carers, NDIS recipients, and disabled people with complex presentations. Our insights come from overcoming profound barriers, and existing in these spaces has given us the practice of listening meaningfully to the nuances and expressions of these diverse experiences. We are privileged to be in rooms where our demographic speaks freely and safely with us.

Our established relationships with highly expert professionals are also vital for implementing and interpreting current and new evidence. Specialists in fields such as autism, psychology, movement and connective tissue disorders, and researchers offer valuable insights and support.

11. Pictures of the Site

Pictures showing the interior design of our individual homes, and a projected design of the first development comprising 22 homes. Note that the model requires a minimum of 12 homes. We have demonstrated in the following images some variety of the possible number and arrangement of the housing sites. Due to the arrangement of small individual footprints of buildings, we can utilise a wide variety of potential development sites. Sites can be operable before all buildings are completed due to staged development and smaller size of buildings. It is advantageous to begin on land with an established property. It can be noted that we are able to accept some donations of land flexibly on a case-by-case basis to adaptively service a larger potential demographic. Our model is highly adaptable.

Picture 1 Interior of 110 square metre individual small home and garden space.

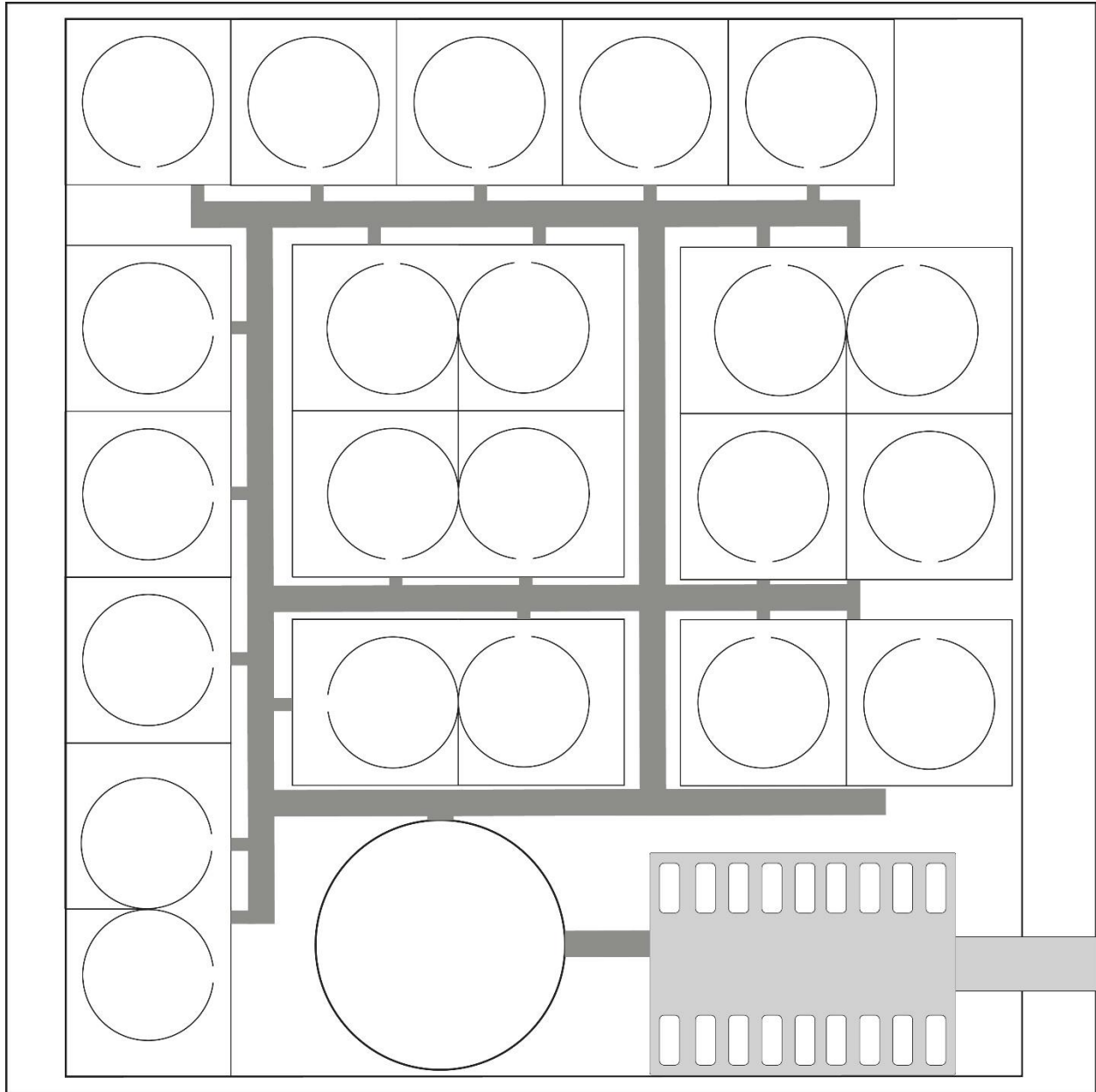


Picture 2: 22 Homes, 2.4 Acres, 400sqm communal building

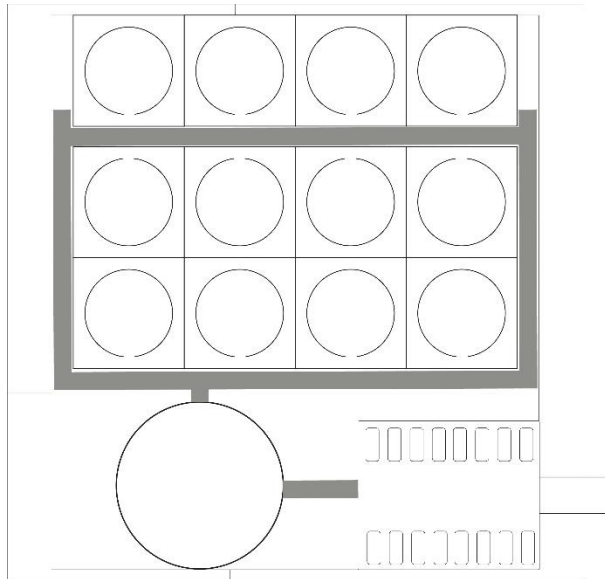


Picture 3

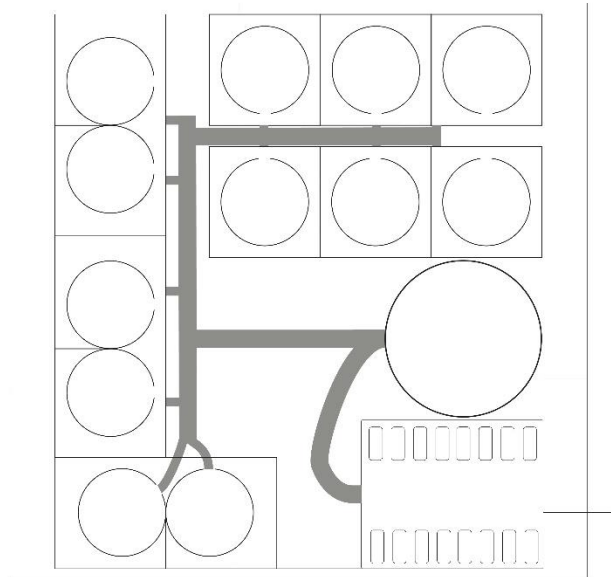
22 Homes, 2.4 Acres, 400sqm communal building



Picture 4



1.5 acre - 12 Dwellings - Main structure is 400sqm



1.5 acre - 12 Dwellings - Main structure is 350sqm

12. Primary Contacts

Founder: Erica Greaves (*preferred name Absentia Nova*)
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