

01 Box Modern

Design Handbook 2025

With Rebeka Morgan,
BuildHer Collective



Meet your guide

Rebeka Morgan

As part of our Design Handbook series for 2025, we have collaborated with leading building expert Rebeka Morgan from BuildHer Collective. She is known for her beautiful, functional and cost-effective builds and passion for Box Modern design.



From Rebeka:

‘What I love about Box Modern homes is how the bold architectural forms are balanced with warmth and livability. It really is about designing homes that are as inspiring as they are practical.’

Cover

The Box Modern style 'Jessie Street' home, designed by Obi Office for BuildHer Collective, uses Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding with Hardie™ Axent™ trim to reimagine classic board and batten application in a modern context.

This handbook will show you how to achieve the Box Modern exterior and interior look and propel your journey forward to creating a Box Modern home. From the signature box shapes, to the flat rooflines, to flexible floorplans and refined interior details, this guide is designed to help you create the ultimate Box Modern home.



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Lifestyle themes

The Modern Homes Forecast 2025 identifies four lifestyle themes changing the way we design and build our homes today. Global and local changes are reshaping how we live, and here we show how Box Modern homes are evolving to reflect these shifts.

01 Building Efficiencies

The Box Modern home leverages a streamlined design code, including flat rooflines and a modular grid pattern, which provides simple, cost-effective construction processes while maintaining a custom, luxury feel.



‘The Jessie Street project demonstrates that building efficiencies are about more than saving costs—they’re about creating homes that are: adaptable to evolving family needs, sustainable in their materials and energy use, streamlined in their construction methods without losing quality or style, and low maintenance for long-term savings.’

—Rebeka Morgan, BuildHer Collective

02 Wellbeing

Box Modern architecture masterfully embraces natural light by designing spaces that capitalise on aspect and orientation. This approach floods the home with beautiful, natural light, enhancing the living experience while creating a seamless connection between the indoors and the surrounding environment.

‘Tranquil garden spaces are designed to be seen from all aspects of the home through large windows’ says Rebeka.

03 Flexibility

We need to design for now and for how we want to live but also understand that we cannot predict what the future will bring, so flexibility is a must. The Jessie Street, Box Modern design can be built to change and evolve around the new living norms. A family home that is generational will have many different uses and stages throughout the time, from bustling with little kids, to a teenagers retreat, functional with downsizers and then possibly back to split generational living.



04 Resilience

Building efficiencies in Box Modern design are about more than saving costs—they’re about creating homes that are adaptable to evolving family needs, sustainable in their materials and energy, streamlined in their construction methods without losing quality or style and low maintenance for long-term savings.

- 1 BuildHer Collective's 'Jessie Street' home, designed by Obi Office, uses a mix of Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and vertical Hardie™ Axent™ Trim to accentuate the building's height at the rear.
- 2 Axon™ Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim line the interior courtyard of the Box Modern Ferndale house by Webster Architecture & Interiors, with large windows that let ample natural light into the living area. Photo by Elisa Watson. Build by Mazzei.
- 3 The horizontal lines of Stria™ Cladding Smooth can help to accentuate the cubic forms of Box Modern architecture.



Symmetrical, simple & versatile

Box Modern design plays with the infinite possibilities of modular design, using bold and sharp geometric shapes to create a striking yet simple facade.

Theme insight

Building Efficiencies

Box Modern style continues to grow in popularity due of potential for flexibility and cost effective structural profile in both new builds and renovations.

‘We put it onto a slimline truss system which was still super efficient to build, but gave us a cavity that we could run heating, cooling, ducting. By going through each aspect like that, you can work with the structure and kind of line up the walls, which is a great thing to do.’ says Rebeka.

In Box Modern design, the simple box shape takes on new meaning. Australian design has given the box character through mixing materials, playing with colour and height. It has maintained its popularity due to its versatility. Low boxes stay cool and are more cost-effective, while stacked boxes create modular flexibility for multi-generational living.

Box Modern design features bold, sharp geometric shapes to form a visually striking facade. These designs include the stacked box style, the cube, and the box with angles. The stacked box gives the appearance of multiple shapes stacked on top of one another. The cube emphasises clean, straight lines and is the ultimate form of minimalist modernism. Lastly, the box with angles uses angled windows and sloped roofs to define a visual spectacle. The board and batten technique has emerged as a sophisticated cladding method that transforms the traditional box design. By using strategically placed boards with minimal jointing and carefully applied battens, designers can create a seamless, clean appearance that enhances the Box Modern aesthetic, proving that efficiency and style can coexist in contemporary home design.

The Box Modern style delivers on the need for convenience and privacy.

This easily identifiable look is characterised by its sparsity and lack of ornamentation, creating a blank canvas to suit individual preferences. This privacy-driven approach transforms traditional home design by reimagining spatial connections. Designers are strategically repositioning key living spaces to create more intimate environments, moving master suites from front-facing positions to more secluded rear locations with enhanced views of private outdoor spaces. The result is a home that offers a retreat from the external world, providing a sense of sanctuary while maintaining clean, minimalist lines.

- 1 A facade of Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim are complemented by vertical batten screening for privacy.
- 2 The multi-use ancillary dwelling complements the main house, as seen in this example using Axon™ Cladding painted in the same colour as the main dwelling.

'Jessie Street' home, designed by Obi Office for BuildHer Collective.



Theme insight

Flexibility

The modular design allows homeowners to adjust spaces like bedrooms, living areas or fitness zones to suit evolving needs.

‘Jessie Street needs to function for people that have young kids. That includes transitions to backyards, kitchens overlooking spaces, appropriate storage and workflows through the house. If I'm bringing home the shopping, how do I get into the house, put the shopping away, how do I manage people coming into my home from the front door If I've got spaces that are messy. I want them to be zoned in a hidden place because I don't want people to see my mess.’ says Rebeka.

Theme insight

Wellbeing

An ancillary dwelling can be interchangeable to meet differing lifestyles and life stages. 'It had to have that external area for a teenager to be or an art studio or for my son to play drums,' says Rebeka. These multi-purpose spaces provide dedicated zones that can transform from a wellness studio to a self-contained guest area, enabling families to customise their living environment to suit their specific needs.



Design features

‘A home should be a series of systems that work for the family. The Box Modern style is really versatile to suit any family as that changes form.’

—Rebeka Morgan, BuildHer Collective

1 Flat roofline

A hidden, flat roof line is created using parapet walls, sharp angles and well-defined edges. The capping or guttering can either match the cladding or be used to create an outline to accentuate the box shape. The Jessie Street gutters are overhanging gutters rather than box gutters which can be a huge hidden cost to build.

2 Defined exterior

Vertical or horizontal cladding or expressed panels create sharp lines to define the box shapes. Touches of other materials like timber or concrete add a unique flair.

3 Box shapes

The cubic form of the home with boxed-in eaves combines with oversized windows with steel frames to facilitate a uniform box effect.

4 Achromatic colours

An achromatic palette amplifies facade articulation through use of black, white, grey and dark grey colours. Jessie Street took it all the way down to the ground to have one material that seamlessly going over the whole building.

5 Interiors

Interiors feature hotel-like elegance with open-frame furniture, an abundance of luxurious materials such as stone countertops, and a refined achromatic colour palette. Rebeka warns of things like spending on hallways that achieves little. If you can condense spaces to have no wasted circulation, you can have another bedroom or a butler's pantry—rooms that sell houses.

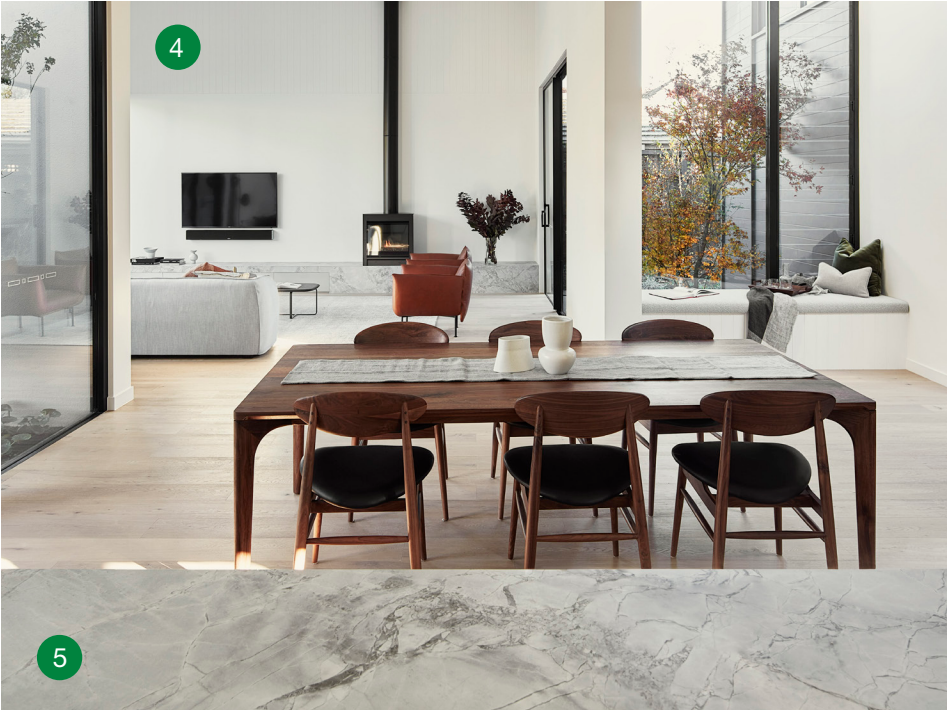


Theme insight Resilience

Upgrading to premium windows and insulation can not only improve energy efficiency in a Box Modern home but also increase the home's appeal and comfort.

‘We focused on materials that are designed to last, and that would stand up to harsh Australian conditions. Hardie™ fibre cement products are fire resistant, rot resistant and resistant to damage from moisture and termites. It's also low maintenance, easy to clean and holds on to paint really well, making it a smart choice for lowering maintenance costs over decades.’ says Rebeka.

- 1 Detail of Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim on the second storey balcony of the Box Modern house designed by Obi Office for BuildHer Collective.
- 2 The Box Modern Ferndale house by Webster Architecture & Interiors uses horizontal and vertical lines created by Axon™ Cladding and Hardie Axent™ Trim, contrasting elegantly with a timber garage entry. Photo by Elisa Watson. Build by Mazzei.
- 3 The Ferndale house interior exemplifies Box Modern style with open plan living, a minimal colour palette and elevated material selections. Photo by Elisa Watson. Build by Mazzei.



Theme insight Flexibility

Box Modern design favours living zones that flow seamlessly, reducing unnecessary barriers and optimising the available square meterage for functionality.

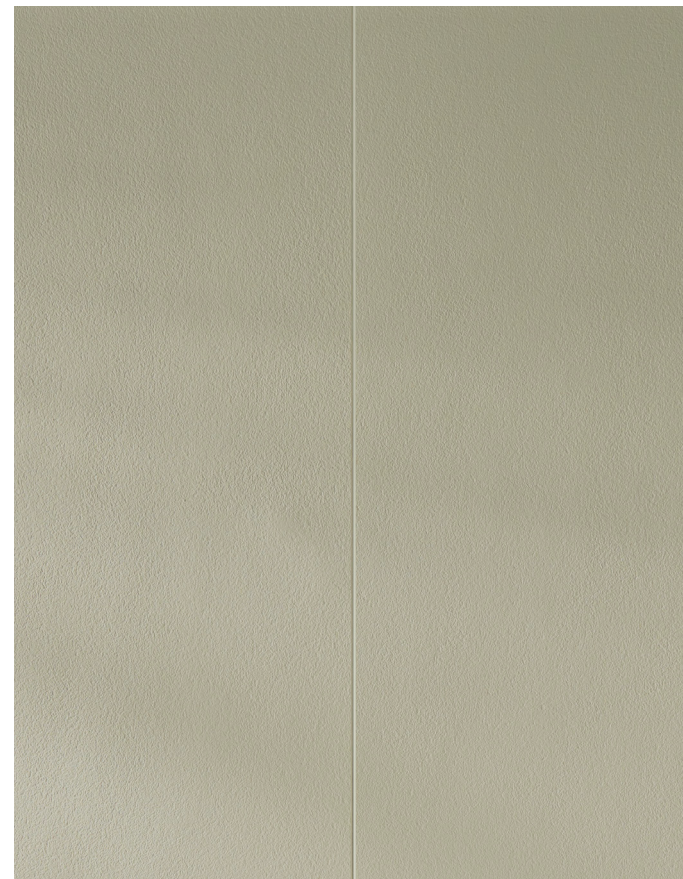
‘It's important that the transition of flow has key moments in it. I think this is picked up really well in the bulking of the house. So if you've got spaces that are able to come out to the boundary and you've got an interesting corridor which has a window that looks through to a view, then you can come down into different spaces that contract and then open up.’ says Rebeka.

Cladding solutions

Hardie™ exterior cladding is perfectly suited to building Box Modern homes, offering sleek, durable finishes that enhance the clean lines and bold geometry central to this architectural style. Its range of textures and colors allows for dynamic facades, while its durability and fire resistance ensure the home remains low-maintenance and resilient in diverse urban, coastal and rural environments.

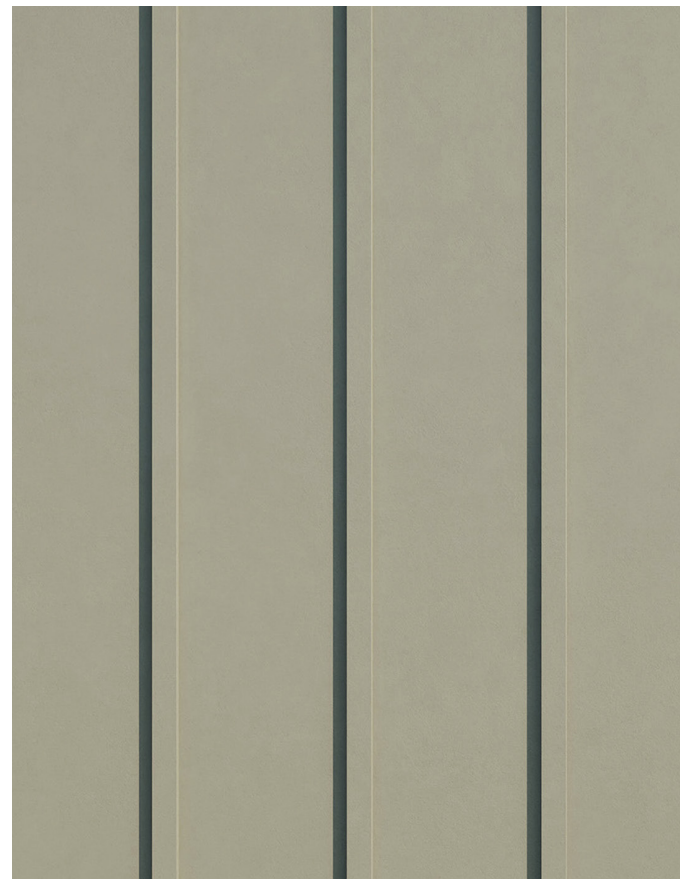
Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding

It offers a refined finish that complements the minimalist aesthetic of Box Modern architecture. The sand-like texture adds a subtle elegance without overwhelming the design.



Hardie™ Axent™ Trim

A durable batten for creating a modern board and batten look. Available in 89mm, 70mm or 45mm widths and 19mm or 38mm thickness options, the depth helps to create the impression of solidness and crisp clean edges.



Theme insight

Building Efficiencies

Choosing the right cladding, like the Jessie Street board and batten look, not only elevates the Box Modern design but also streamlines the construction process, offering precision, durability and improved project efficiency.

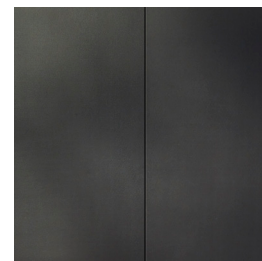
‘One of our key approaches was to avoid mixing materials to reduce wastage. With the external cladding, we chose a lightweight material that allowed for a more efficient structural system. It's a system that's quicker to install, easy for the team to understand, and doesn't require complex on-site detailing. This approach means we can create a seamless look from ground to roofline, using a single material that gives a higher-end architectural finish.’ says Rebeka.



‘The reason I like the Box Modern style is that it’s really efficient to build. It is a builder’s dream. It’s a square box on top of a square box with all the walls lining up.’

—Rebeka Morgan, BuildHer Collective

Complementary Products



Matrix™ Cladding



Stria™ Cladding
Fine Texture

Materials & textures

When choosing materials and textures for a Box Modern home, decisions should focus on simplicity, functionality and authenticity, ensuring they align with the clean, minimalist aesthetic of Box Modern style.

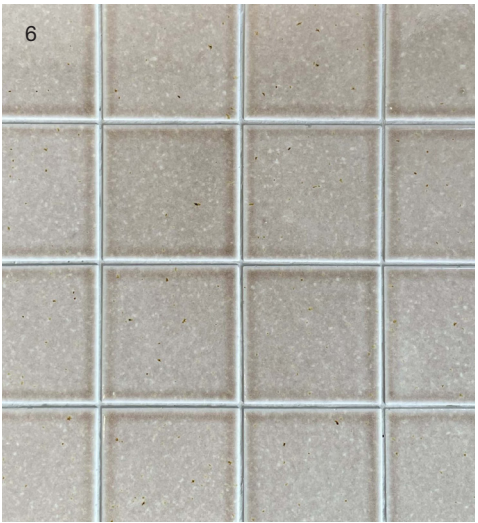


- 1 A new take on the previously cooler Box Modern palette includes soft greens, timbers and textures found in nature.
- 2 Wool carpets in muted tones add sophistication and luxe comfort.
- 3 Use understated European oak from sustainable forests for warmth.
- 4 Artisan natural textured curtains and soft furnishings contrast and balance hard surfaces.
- 5 The organic texture and unique veining of natural stone adds depth and character.
- 6 Opt for glazed ceramic Japanese tiles for bathrooms, kitchens and splashbacks.



Theme insight Wellbeing

Textures such as smooth wood, polished stone and matte finishes minimise visual clutter, promoting mental clarity and relaxation. Additionally, the durability and ease of maintenance of these materials contribute to a stress-free living experience in the Box Modern home, while their ability to regulate temperature and acoustics enhances comfort and overall wellness.



Colour palette

Sophisticated shades of black, white and grey define the bold, contemporary, and largely achromatic color palette, offering a timeless and versatile foundation for any Box Modern design.



Theme insight Flexibility

Lightweight cladding offers adaptability through paintwork, allowing homeowners to transform their exterior as colour trends evolve. Unlike masonry products, fibre cement cladding enables easy repainting, giving the home a fresh look without significant expense or structural changes. Box Modern homes can remain contemporary and personalised through simple colour updates.

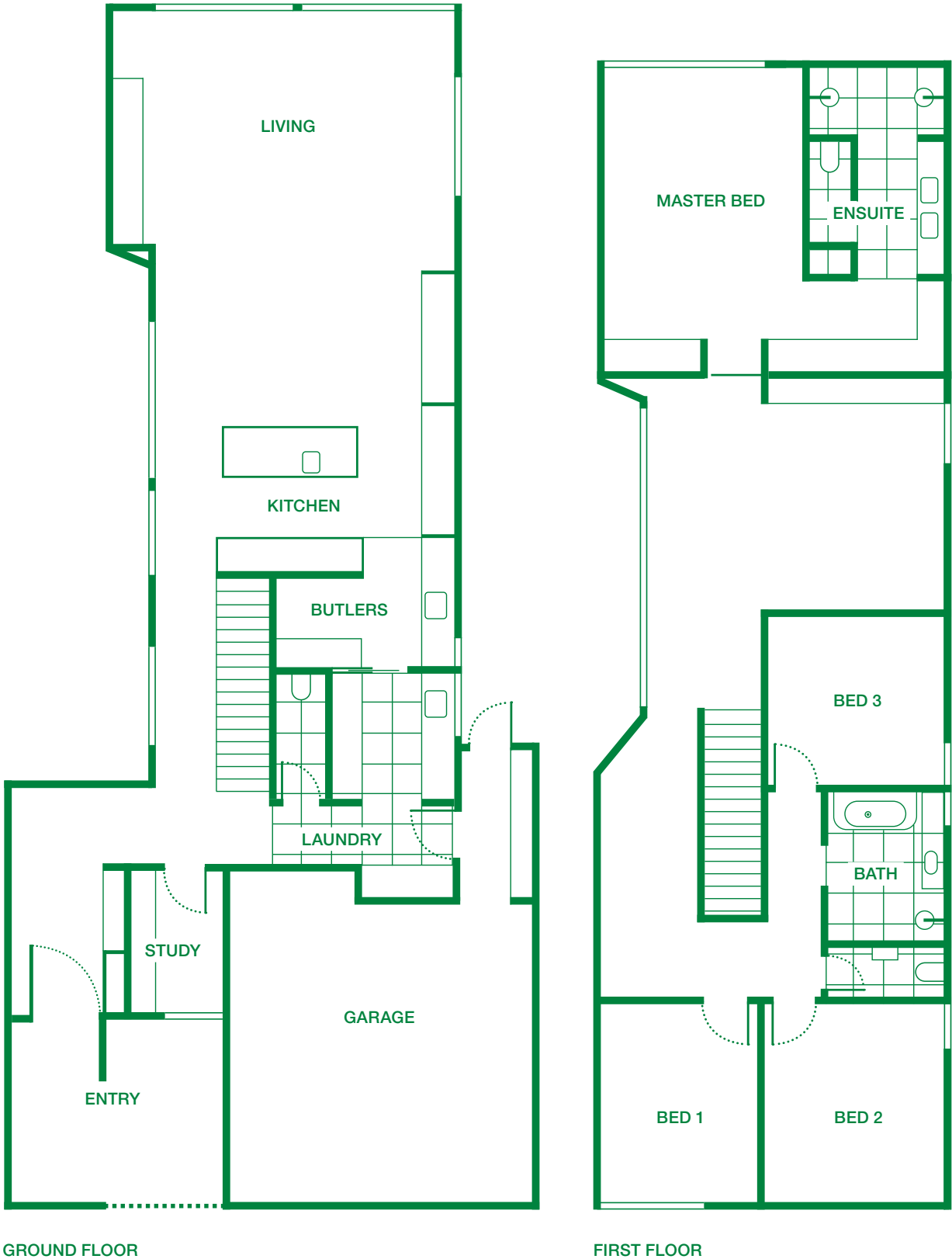
	Scheme One	Scheme Two
Roof	COLORBOND® Dune®	COLORBOND® Cove®
Main Walls	Dulux® Manifest	Dulux® Natural White
Details	Dulux® White Duck Quarter	Dulux® Sandy Day



Floorplan

Designed as a spacious, intergenerational family home, this project balances budget-conscious efficiency with warmth and longevity. Built at \$3K per m², the design prioritises zoning, creating a seamless flow between public and private spaces to suit a growing family. A highly efficient structure—aligned walls, lightweight cladding, and a waffle slab—allowed for investment in high-quality finishes. The result is a beautifully considered four-bedroom home with a swimming pool, offering both connection and retreat. Total build: \$1.2M.

Designed by Obi Architects, project by BuildHer Collective.



Rebeka's top tips

1 Minimise material mixing for cost efficiency

Using singular materials throughout your design reduces material wastage, simplifies installation, and lowers costs. Lightweight, uniform cladding systems like the board and batten look created using Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim, allow for faster installation, reducing labour expenses and project timelines. Avoiding complex patterns, custom orders, and excessive cutting prevents unnecessary costs in both materials and workmanship.

2 Optimise floor plans to reduce build costs

Eliminating unnecessary circulation space, such as oversized hallways and inefficient room layouts, reduces square metre costs. Thoughtful planning ensures rooms are dimensioned to fit standard furniture sizes, eliminating wasted space. The savings from minimising excess space can be redirected toward high-value areas like additional storage or functional enhancements without increasing the overall budget.

3 Focus on high-impact areas to maximise value

Prioritise spending in areas where quality is most visible and impactful, such as kitchens and master suites, while simplifying finishes in secondary spaces. By directing the budget to areas that homebuyers value most, such as functional storage, modern kitchens, and durable flooring, you ensure that cost savings do not compromise perceived quality.

4 Design for build efficiency and future savings

Incorporating a streamlined structural approach—such as using standardised materials, avoiding excessive design complexity, and leveraging efficient roof and slab systems—reduces both upfront construction costs and long-term maintenance expenses. Box Modern designs, for instance, reduce construction inefficiencies by minimising structural complexity, eliminating unnecessary customisations, and optimising heating and cooling efficiency.

5 Integrate professional insights for smarter cost decisions

Engaging builders, real estate professionals, and architects early in the design phase allows for cost-saving opportunities to be identified before construction begins. Real estate market insights ensure that design choices align with buyer preferences, maximising resale value while staying within budget. A cohesive design strategy prevents costly mid-project adjustments and ensures that every decision contributes to efficiency and financial prudence.



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