

A REFINED APPROACH TO THE URBAN HIGH-RISE

DEVELOPER : AUTA GROUP
MAIN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY : SYNERGY CONSTRUCT
ARCHITECT : Cheeseman Architects
CONCEPTUAL & INTERIOR DESIGN LEAD : Nic Design Studio
CONSTRUCTION VALUE : \$130 million



Victoria Tower is a technically complex high-rise delivered within Adelaide's constrained CBD environment. Through early contractor involvement, the project's structure, façade and services were refined to improve constructability and viability, while staged approvals and early procurement enabled the tower to be completed three months ahead of schedule without compromising architectural intent.

The Victoria Tower is a striking addition to Adelaide's CBD skyline, not only for its architectural presence but for the complexity and ingenuity behind its delivery.

For Synergy Construct, the project represented an opportunity to demonstrate the value of early contractor involvement, technical rigour and collaborative delivery in a challenging high-rise environment.

Synergy was initially engaged through a competitive tender process based on 30% design-developed documentation, competing against Tier 1 contractors from both local and interstate markets. Following a successful bid, Synergy was awarded an Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) role, enabling the team to work closely with the client and consultants to refine the design and develop a financially viable design-and-construct solution.

A key focus was rationalising the structure, façade, services and fitout trade packages to align with the project budget. This included removing two transfer structures and reducing slab thicknesses. "These refinements allowed the introduction of an extra apartment floor, which increased overall project revenue and helped make the development financially viable," explains Project Manager Josh Brooksby. "It was a win for both constructability and commercial outcomes."

To accelerate delivery, Synergy adopted a staged approvals strategy, dividing building rules consent submissions into substructure, structure and façade, services and fitout

packages. This allowed progressive design certification and early commencement on site, while Synergy's in-house design capability supported early procurement of façades and other long-lead items, protecting the construction program from supply delays.

The Adelaide CBD site presented a particularly complex build environment, with neighbouring heritage structures and severe logistical constraints. Demolition works were carefully managed where non-heritage buildings interfaced with heritage façades, requiring progressive hand demolition, temporary strengthening and extensive steel shoring supported by piles and footings.

"The bracing could only be removed once our permanent structure was in place," Josh said. "There were many interfaces, legal agreements and lengthy stakeholder engagements required with adjoining property owners and heritage authorities."

Logistics were equally challenging. The tight site was bounded by a four-lane arterial road, a narrow laneway servicing two live car parks totalling 350 spaces, and neighbouring commercial and heritage buildings. Synergy negotiated access through adjoining land to maintain traffic flow, installed a large overhead gantry to protect the public and vehicles, and co-ordinated crane operations around an active pub and heavy pedestrian traffic accessing the Adelaide Central Markets.

Architectural quality was maintained through a rigorous prototyping and verification process. Feature brickwork was selected to

closely match Adelaide Red bricks used in early 20th-century buildings, reinforcing the project's contextual relationship with its surroundings. A distinctive perforated 'Dragon Scale' aluminium façade was developed through Australian shop drawings and overseas fabrication, with Synergy's façade team inspecting every stage of manufacture prior to shipment. Curtain wall and window wall systems followed a similar process, with full-scale prototypes approved before mass production.

Collaboration underpinned the project's success. Consultants were novated to Synergy post-tender, with a clear design program established and progressive design submissions issued at 75, 90 and 100% completion stages. A prototype apartment was delivered early to establish a minimum quality benchmark, while progressive PRC-handover inspections streamlined final settlement.

Delivered three months ahead of schedule, Victoria Tower is a testament to Synergy Construct's capability in high-rise delivery. "We've earned the trust of the client which has opened the door to future opportunities. But above all, the project's success reflects the depth of the team and the impressive growth of our emerging engineers—people whose talent and dedication continue to shape the high standards we set."

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Below Nic Design Studio led Victoria Tower's integrated architecture and interiors, maintaining design intent and quality throughout delivery

INTEGRATING DESIGN VISION ACROSS ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS



Delivering design-led outcomes in dense urban environments requires more than a strong concept, it demands sustained architectural leadership through every stage of delivery.

Victoria Tower is a complex mixed-use development within Adelaide's tightly constrained CBD. The project required careful integration of residential, commercial and retail functions, alongside a contextual response to heritage surroundings and evolving urban conditions.

Nic Design Studio (NDS) was engaged to lead the project from concept through to completion, providing an integrated architectural and interior design approach that prioritised continuity, buildability and long-term residential quality.

NDS's scope extended across master planning, planning approval co-ordination, building design, external and internal concept design, interior documentation and material selection. Importantly, the studio remained actively involved through to the defects stage, ensuring that the original design intent was carried through to the built outcome.

"As design lead for Victoria Tower Adelaide, we were responsible for shaping the key design drivers and overall vision for the project," says Nic Wong, Managing Director of NDS and Principal Architect for the project. "Remaining involved through to completion allowed us to safeguard the integrity of the design as it transitioned from drawings to reality."

The project's constrained CBD site demanded a sophisticated response to a complex mixed-use brief, integrating residential apartments alongside office and retail functions within a compact building envelope. Privacy, safety and operational clarity were critical considerations.

"Clear separation between residents and commercial occupants was essential," Nic explained. "Entries, circulation and vertical movement needed to function independently, while still forming a cohesive whole. At the same time, façades, car parking, communal facilities and commercial areas all had to coexist within a single building volume."

Externally, the architectural expression responds directly to its context near Victoria Square. The building's lower levels adopt a solid, brick-based language that references Adelaide's historic urban fabric, while the upper tower presents a lighter, contemporary form articulated through large-scale glazing to maximise daylight and natural ventilation.

"The name 'Victoria' is more than a label—it's a cultural reference embedded in the city's identity," Wong says. "That informed our approach, particularly the 'V' motif expressed through balcony geometry and the gold-toned, scale-like façade elements, which symbolise continuity and timelessness."

Delivering these distinctive elements required extensive co-ordination and technical resolution, particularly where bespoke detailing and innovative materials were involved. Collaboration with the wider

project team, including Synergy Construct, consultants and the client, AUTA Group, was central to maintaining design fidelity throughout construction.

"Rather than defaulting to compromise, the emphasis was always on testing and refining solutions together," Nic said. "It was a patient, iterative process underpinned by continuous dialogue and shared commitment to the original vision."

Interior design formed a parallel and equally important layer of the project, led by Cherie Yuan, Associate Director of NDS and Lead Interior Designer for Victoria Tower. The interiors were conceived not as an afterthought, but as an extension of the building's architectural narrative. "One of the aspects we're most proud of is the way a unified design language runs across both architecture and interiors," Cherie said. "Form, spatial planning and interior expression were developed in parallel, allowing consistency while still supporting variation across different apartment types."

Material selection was carefully calibrated in response to natural light, outlook and level within the building. Upper levels, benefitting from expansive glazing and panoramic views, adopt darker stone and slab finishes to create a grounded, refined atmosphere, while lower levels use lighter palettes to enhance brightness and openness.

"This variation supports different residential experiences without diluting the overall identity of the building," Cherie explained. "

It allows the interiors to respond to context while remaining firmly connected to the architectural framework."

The collaborative approach extended into construction, with prototypes, samples and progressive approvals used to align expectations across all stakeholders. Bespoke joinery and detailed finishes were researched, tested and refined, often referencing international precedents to ensure both buildability and design integrity.

Completed Victoria Tower now stands as a cohesive architectural and interior composition. One that balances innovation with context, and detail with performance. For Nic Design Studio, the project exemplifies the value of sustained design leadership, collaboration and an integrated approach to architecture and interiors in delivering high-quality urban outcomes.

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VICTORIA
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