

Attachment A3

**Draft Inventory Sheet – 40-44 Victoria
Street, Potts Point - Gemini**

Name		Gemini	
Address	40–44 Victoria Street, Potts Point	Lot number	Lot 1 DP 205052, Lot 1 DP 916138, Portion 45 DP 2436, Portion 40 DP 2436, Lots 1–58 SP 11452
Architect	Harry Seidler & Associates	Construction date	1961 (north tower) 1969 (south tower)
Builder	P Cussel (1961)		
Listings	<p>Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012: Within the Potts Point Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) (C51), identified as detracting on the Sydney Development Control Plan (DCP) building contributions map.</p> <p>Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture (AIA Register).</p>		

Historical overview

The Cadigal people of the Eora nation have lived in the Sydney area for thousands of years and have shaped its landscape and nurtured its plants and animals. Before the arrival of the European settlers the Potts Point area was known as Kurrajeen (or Curageen) and Yarrandabbi. Governor Lachlan Macquarie set aside land near Elizabeth Bay, Potts Point and Woolloomooloo as a 'model fishing village' for Aboriginal people in 1820. At this settlement, known as Elizabeth Town, several huts were built, a patch of land was cleared for a garden, and boats were provided for use by the Aboriginal people who lived there. John Palmer's estate at nearby Woolloomooloo Bay was also an important gathering place for local Aboriginal people and was the location of a corroboree in 1831 attended by Bungaree's son, Young Bungaree.¹

In 1828 Darling ordered the subdivision of Woolloomooloo Hill into suitable 'town allotments' for large residences and extensive gardens. He then issued 'deeds of grant' to select members of colonial society (in particular, his senior civil servants). The first seven grants were issued in 1828, with the other allotments formally granted in 1831.

The private residences built on the grants were required to meet Darling's so-called 'villa conditions', which were possibly determined and overseen by his wife, who had architectural skills. The conditions ensured that only one residence was built on each grant to an approved standard and design, that each residence was set within a generous amount of landscaped land that, in most cases, faced the town. By the mid-1830s the parade of 'white' villas down the spine of Woolloomooloo Hill presented a picturesque sight and was visible from the harbour and town of Sydney.² The name of the suburb Potts Point honours a self-made man, Joseph Hyde Potts, who was employed with the Bank of New South Wales when it initially opened for business in 1817.

The subject site was formerly occupied by two houses, Leura and Euroa at 42 and 44 Victoria Street; 40 was an unnamed two-storey house. The houses were erected on part of the 1831 land grant to Henry Grattan Douglass, later partly subdivided as Challis Estate.

In May 1961 Harry Seidler submitted a development application (DA) on behalf of his clients Sidney Gale and Horwitz Corporation Pty Ltd to erect an eight-storey building at 40 Victoria Street for bachelor home units to rent (28 bedsitting room flats) with off-street parking for 14 cars. The building, comprising concrete floors, tilt up concrete walls and precast panels, was estimated to cost £50,000.

Horwitz Corporation, a subsidiary of publishing house Horwitz Company, owned and developed several properties in the area. In 1954 Harry Seidler designed their headquarters 'Horwitz

¹ City of Sydney 2013, 'Aboriginal People and Place'.

² State Library 2002.

Historical overview

House' on Sussex Street in Sydney. Horwitz Corporation was also responsible for developing Ercildoune in Elizabeth Bay, also designed by Seidler and completed in 1966.

Horwitz was the publisher of *Houses, Interiors, Projects*, the first book about Harry Seidler's work, published in 1954, as well as *Architecture for the new world; the work of Harry Seidler*, published in 1973. Seidler had designed the interiors and deck layout for the Horwitz family yacht.

In July 1954 Council approved the DA for 40 Victoria Street. Entry was from Victoria Street and egress to Grantham Lane with the proposed building to be set back no less than 24 feet from Victoria Street. The construction of 40 Victoria Street was completed in accordance with the approval and conditions in December 1962.

Shortly after Horwitz Corporation purchased the adjacent site, 42/44 Victoria Street. Harry Seidler & Associates submitted a DA to erect a similar 8 story residential building that was to connect to the existing building by means of a bridge at roof level. The Council approved the DA in February 1964; however, no work commenced and the DA approval lapsed in April 1965.

Harry Seidler & Associates, on behalf of Horwitz Corporation Pty Ltd, lodged a new DA in January 1969, this time for a larger building with 28 one-bedroom units. The Council approved the DA in April 1969. The new building was completed in 1970.

Although similar in height and design, and linked by a roof bridge, the southern building was larger in footprint. Each maintained their own separate lobby space and laundry area at ground level. The two buildings were initially named Victoria Towers in Council documentation, but at a later unknown date changed to Gemini.

Horwitz Corporation notified the Council in October 1970 that Florida Skyline Motel Holiday Apartments had acquired Victoria Towers (Gemini) as holiday apartments. In February the following year the Council reported on complaints it had received that the 'use of the premises has been altered without the consent of Council to that of a motel type occupation and that inspection reveals that the premises are still being used as individual residential flat units with cooking facilities within each unit but short-term lettings are accepted, service in the form of cleaning and bedmaking is provided but no meals are provided to occupants' (City Building Surveyor's Report, TC 1001/69, DA 56/59, 25 February 1971).

Gemini features in the 1971 publication *Living and Partly Living: Housing in Australia*, by Ian McKay, as an example of compact inner city living. McKay commissioned David Moore to photograph an apartment with its young female owner using the spaces, in contrast to conventional architectural photography devoid of people.

Architects Anthony Gill and Sarah McSpadden renovated a 38 square metre (sqm) apartment in Gemini (southern block) that in 2012 won numerous design awards including Residential Design (National), Winner – Australian Interior Design Awards.

Harry Seidler & Associates

Harry Seidler (1923–2006) was born in Vienna to Jewish parents. Following the Nazi occupation of Austria in 1938, Seidler relocated to England where he attended Cambridge Polytechnic, before being deported to Canada in 1940. He was awarded a Bachelor of Architecture in Canada in 1944. He won a scholarship to study at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, where Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer were teachers. He then studied at Black Mountain College, under Josef Albers, before working with Breuer in New York City (1946–1948) and briefly with Oscar Niemeyer in Rio de Janeiro, on his way to Sydney in 1948.

Arriving in Sydney, his first commission was to design a house for his parents (Rose Seidler House, 1948–1950). Seidler gained Australian citizenship and in 1958 married Penelope Evatt, who was to be a significant partner in his career. By the 1960s Seidler's practice began to receive significant commissions including Blues Point Tower (completed 1962) and Australia Square (1960–1967). The latter, designed with engineer Pier Luigi Nervi, became a 'type-model' for Seidler's urban tower designs throughout his career. From the 1970s Harry Seidler & Associates was commissioned for significant large-scale commissions across Australia and overseas. These included the Australian Embassy, Paris (1973); MLC Building, Sydney (1978); Riverside Centre, Brisbane (1984); Shell Headquarters, Melbourne (1988); and QV1, Perth (1992).

Throughout his career, Seidler wrote about architecture and taught at various universities around the world, as well as advocating planning reform in Australia. He was awarded numerous

Historical overview

honours throughout his career including being made an Honorary Fellow of both the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA awarded him the Royal Gold Medal in 1996); and a Life Fellow (1970) of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (receiving 50 awards including five Sulman Medals, four Wilkinson Awards and the Gold Medal [1976]). He was also awarded an Order of the British Empire (1972). His impact and the work of his firm were a major cultural influence, applying uncompromising Bauhaus-inspired modernist architecture and principles in Australia.

Description

An external-only site visit from the public domain was undertaken by GML in September 2024. The physical assessment is based on publicly available documentation of the site.

Setting and context

Gemini is a pair of buildings linked by a pedestrian bridge at roof level. It is located to the eastern side of Victoria Street, near its intersection with McDonald Lane. The portion of Victoria Street to the west of Gemini is partly pedestrianised. The land drops sharply to the west of Victoria Street and Woolloomooloo Bay giving Gemini wide views to the west and north.

The building is located within the Potts Point HCA. The HCA within the immediate vicinity of the site is characterised by small scale nineteenth-century housing, terrace houses and multi-storey postwar and contemporary apartments.

Physical description

Gemini consists of two blocks of eight-storey flat buildings containing 28 studios (northern block), 40 Victoria Street, and 28 one-bedroom units (southern block), 42–44 Victoria Street. The 28sqm and 38sqm apartments are intended, as Harry Seidler said, to be for 'people of average means'. The lot shape is irregular and the buildings follow the historical arrangement of housing on the block, which is at an angle to Victoria Street. The buildings have a simple cuboidal form and their elevations are symmetrical. The structure of reinforced concrete is exposed and the simple palette of materials consists of reinforced concrete frame, accentuated with down-turned slabs, and blond face brickwork infill walls, anodised aluminium window units and blue roller blinds fitted into deep window reveals. The blond brick carries up to form a parapet and balustrade for the roof deck.

40 Victoria Street

The building has identical façade arrangements along the shorter north and south elevations and the longer east and west elevations. The north and south elevations are divided into three vertical rows with full height aluminium framed windows to the end rows set deeply into blade walls, and high aluminium framed awning windows with fixed glass panels along the central row to the bathrooms. The full height windows consist of two large sliding panels to the top, a wide transom and fixed panels below. The windows to the side elevations are aluminium framed awning windows with fixed glass panels.

The ground floor is semi-open with an exposed grid of columns. The lobby is located on the southern side of the building and is accessed through glass doors and finished in polished stone to the floor and walls. A laundry and storage room is located behind. There is a plant room to the roof constructed of a concrete frame and blond face brickwork infill walls.

In plan the building has a simple rectangular shape. The studio apartments are mirrored around a central axis and on both sides containing the lift and stairwell core. The units are rectangular in plan and oriented to the full height glazing at the east or west. The kitchen is semi open to the living zone and the bathroom is located on the eastern or western external wall. All rooms are naturally lit and ventilated.

42–44 Victoria Street

The southern part of the pair is a larger building with a wider footprint. It has a similar regular repeated façade arrangement but to the east and west is divided into four vertical rows with two rows of full height aluminium framed windows to the centre and high aluminium framed sliding windows to the end rows. The full height windows are set back with the same detail as 40

Description

Victoria Street and fitted with blue aluminium roller shutters for shading. The north and south elevation have two vertical rows of high aluminium framed ribbon windows with both awning and sliding windows. The ground floor is semi-open with an exposed grid of columns. There is a metal canopy along the entrance lobby to the eastern elevation.

The roof was planned with a roof garden, toilet, and steps to a raised swimming pool and reinforced concrete bridge link to the northern building. It also contains a plant room with a concrete frame and blond face brickwork infill walls. The roof area has a balustrade/pool fence with glass panels as a later addition.

In plan the building has a simple rectangular shape. Unlike the northern building the circulation core runs through the short side of the plan. Kitchens are at the external corners of the plan beside the living zone with a bathroom dividing the space into an informal bed-alcove. The ground floor has an entrance lobby, the laundry and a drying area.

Landscaping

The site has low lying planting and young trees at its entrance along Victoria Street and along McDonald Lane. There is a rooftop garden with artificial turf and a swimming pool.

Modifications/integrity

- No major DAs on file from 2004 onwards.

Condition

The condition is unknown due to limited access.

Comparative analysis

Gemini can be seen as a representative example of the 1960s works of Harry Seidler & Associates when the firm was prolific in the design and development of residential flat buildings. Comparable examples include the Avalon Apartments, Avalon (1959), Stephen Towers, Paddington (1963), Village Towers, Ocean Avenue, Double Bay (1964) and Blues Point Tower, McMahons Point (1962), which all have corner apartment arrangements to each floor, providing excellent light and ventilation as well as views.

This contrasts with contemporary projects such as Ithaca Gardens (1960), Diamond Bay (1965), Aquarius (1965) and Ercildoune (1966) with linear planning. From 1964 onwards, Harry Seidler & Associates' housing schemes tended to rely on linear arrangements with complex split-level planning, and later still with curved, radial planning with baroque influences.

The first stage of the Gemini complex, completed in 1961, is closely related to Blues Point Tower completed just a year later. At 24 storeys high, Blues Point Tower was at the time of completion Australia's tallest residential building.³ It shares elements with Gemini including ribbon windows for secondary rooms and larger windows to living rooms and demonstrates the same highly ordered elevational composition. However, the alternating recessed balcony elements and the window arrangements of Blues Point Tower create a more varied and expressive façade than found at Gemini.

Gemini can be seen as representative of Harry Seidler & Associates' early 1960s multi-residential projects. While each responded to its site and context, as a group they can be seen as evolving structural and planning prototypes. Seidler noted in relation to this group of apartments 'the aim of their design is the development of prototypes incorporating a system, both of planning and construction'. (*Living and Partly Living*, 1971).

Gemini, with 28sqm or 38sqm studio and one bedroom apartments, is an important example of this group of projects completed in the 1960s, a time when economically planned flats on smaller sites were a particular focus.

Gemini shares the following characteristics with these projects: each is built of poured-in-place concrete and brick infill walls. They all explore systematised construction with repeated layouts and segregated vertical access cores. They all express their structure, and their façades express

³ Blues Point Tower, At Home in North Sydney, <https://www.athomeinnorthsydney.com.au/blues-point-tower.html>.

Comparative analysis

their internal uses and the importance of rooms through window size. Typically, full height glass walls alternate with ribbon windows created by down-turned concrete slabs.

Fixed awnings and sun shading are all carefully arranged to create a characteristic 'tensional' façade pattern. Living units are reduced to their minimum to allow flexibility of use.

Gemini has representative significance as an important example of Seidler's 1960s multi-unit apartment projects, which as a group have an exceptional level of significance for their ability to demonstrate the architect's evolving planning and construction prototypes. Seidler's architecture of this period was extremely influential, widely published and highly awarded, and can be seen to have made a major contribution to the development of modern architecture in Australia and is highly regarded internationally.

Gemini has particular significance as an example of two tower designs completed eight years apart. It is able to demonstrate an evolution in Seidler's designs and the adaptability of his building units, working as modules on the one site, linked by a sky bridge.

Gemini was widely published by Seidler himself and in the architectural media.



Figure 1 Blues Point Tower (likely to be of state heritage significance), of 24 levels and 144 apartments, is of a much larger scale than Gemini; however, its varied façade arrangement shows similar design characteristics. (Source: Wikimedia)



Figure 2 International Lodge (formerly Ling Apartments), Elizabeth Bay. A similar tower block with four one-bedroom apartments per floor completed in 1970 demonstrates Seidler's evolving planning prototypes. (Source: GML)

Assessment of significance

Criterion A (Historic significance)

Gemini has historic significance as an innovative example of high-rise housing developed in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area during the 1950s and 1960s. Its construction as compact studios, and later use as a motel, is able to demonstrate an important phase in the historical and social development of the area.

Assessment of significance

	<p>Gemini has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion B (Historical association)	<p>Gemini is associated with architect Harry Seidler, one of the most significant modernist architects in Australia, who has made an important contribution to the development of Australia's built environment. As a noteworthy apartment project of the 1960s Gemini has strong associations with the architect.</p> <p>Gemini has some significance for its association with developers Horwitz Corporation as an example of their apartment developments within the local area and as an example of their collaborations with Harry Seidler.</p> <p>Gemini has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion C (Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement)	<p>Gemini shows innovations in planning and construction that make it a noteworthy example of a late 1950s–1960s modernist apartment building.</p> <p>Gemini displays typical elements of the work of architect Harry Seidler during the 1960s. It shares aesthetic characteristics with some of Seidler's most notable projects including Blues Point Tower and Village Towers (Arlington), which demonstrate distinctive aesthetic attributes in form and composition. Gemini also has unique aspects in its design and construction that demonstrate creative and technical excellence, innovation and achievement.</p> <p>In its construction, planning and detailing it demonstrates Harry Seidler's progressive development of design prototypes applied across multiple projects. Its expression of structure, regular façade arrangement, use of raw materials and spare planning with a concern for natural light, sun shading, and ventilation are all typical of Seidler's highly acclaimed architecture. Gemini has been widely published and is a noteworthy example of the work of an important designer.</p> <p>The original design and structure are largely intact, with minimal alterations visible to the exterior of the buildings.</p> <p>Gemini has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion D (Social, cultural and spiritual significance)	<p>Gemini is listed on the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) Register of Significant Architecture, indicating that it has importance to architects and the design community more generally.</p> <p>Gemini has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion E (Research potential)	<p>Gemini is an early example and significant example of compact, innovative apartment design and construction in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area. As a project that developed and</p>

Assessment of significance

expanded over an eight-year period it is able to demonstrate important elements in architectural innovation. Gemini is an important example of Seidler's early apartment design and can contribute to knowledge about the evolution of housing in Australia and the work of Harry Seidler.

Gemini **has** cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.

Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.

Criterion F (Rare)

Although one of a small number of early and innovative modernist apartment projects completed in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area by Harry Seidler & Associates, Gemini is not considered a rare example of their work.

Gemini does not have cultural significance at a local or state level under this criterion.

Criterion G (Representative)

Gemini is considered to have representative significance as one of a group of 1960s apartment projects designed by Harry Seidler & Associates in the local area and more widely, which as a group are highly significant. Other examples in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area include Ithaca Gardens, Aquarius, Ercildoune and International Lodge. These projects were widely published and featured in the multiple surveys of Harry Seidler's career. As Seidler himself noted, each project applied a series of evolving structural and planning prototypes. Each was built of the same materials, and with evolving structural systems, repeated layouts for construction efficiencies, repeated window units and sun shading elements to create characteristic 'tensional' façade patterns. Gemini is noteworthy amongst this group as a pair of towers linked by a sky bridge, constructed eight years apart.

Gemini displays key characteristics of this significant group of apartment projects and is an important representative example of Harry Seidler's long-term engagement with construction and planning efficiency and innovation.

Gemini is representative of wider trends in housing, the redevelopment of inner-city suburbs with higher density apartments, and the growing demand for compact well-located housing.

Gemini **has** cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.

Gemini does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.

Statement of significance

Gemini has historic significance as an innovative example of medium-rise housing developed in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area during the 1950s and 1960s and is able to demonstrate wider historical trends of importance to the local area. Constructed over an eight-year period the two-building complex has strong historic associations with architect Harry Seidler, one of the most significant modernist architects in Australia.

Gemini has aesthetic significance, demonstrating a high degree of creative and technical achievement. It contains many innovations in planning and construction that make it a noteworthy example of a late 1950s–1960s modernist apartment building. It shares aesthetic elements with some of Seidler's most notable projects including Ithaca Gardens, Blues Point Tower, Village Towers (Arlington), Ercildoune and Aquarius, which are distinctive in form and

Statement of significance

composition. Widely published Gemini is a noteworthy example of the work of an important designer.

Gemini is likely to have importance to architects and the design community more generally, as an early example of innovative apartment design and construction in Australia.

Gemini has the ability to contribute to knowledge about the evolution of the work of Harry Seidler and the development of modernist apartment design in Australia more generally.

Gemini has representative significance as one of a group of 1960s apartment projects designed by Harry Seidler & Associates, which as a group are highly significant. Other examples in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area include Ithaca Gardens, Aquarius, Ercildoune and International Lodge. Gemini displays key characteristics of this significant group of apartment projects and is an important representative example of Harry Seidler's long-term engagement with construction and planning efficiency and innovation.

Recommendations

Gemini meets the threshold for local heritage significance under historic, historical association, aesthetic, social, research potential and representative criteria and is recommended for heritage listing on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan.

The building should be retained and conserved. A heritage impact statement should outline any original features and their proposed management prior to any major works being undertaken.

A comprehensive conservation management plan for the site could be prepared to guide future uses and development and ensure its heritage values are conserved.

Information sources

Type	Author	Title	Year	Repository
Site inspection	GML		2024	GML
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Building Application File No. 203 Year 1964	1964	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Planning and Building Department	Development Application Year 1961 No. 381	1961	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Development Application File No. 1112 Year 1963	1963	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Development Application File No. 56 Year 1969	1969	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City of Sydney Council	Town Clerk's Department 1969 No. 1001	1969	City of Sydney Archives
Published	Ian McKay	<i>Living and Partly Living: Housing in Australia</i>	1971	

Information sources				
Published	Peter Blake	<i>Architecture for the new world. The work of Harry Seidler</i>	1973	
Published	Frampton and Drew	<i>Harry Seidler: Four Decades of Architecture</i>	1992	
Published	Intro Chris Able	<i>Harry Seidler: Houses and Interiors 1</i>	2003	

Image caption	Site plan, typical floor plan and east elevation for 40 Victoria Road, Potts Point (northern block).				
Image year	1961	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

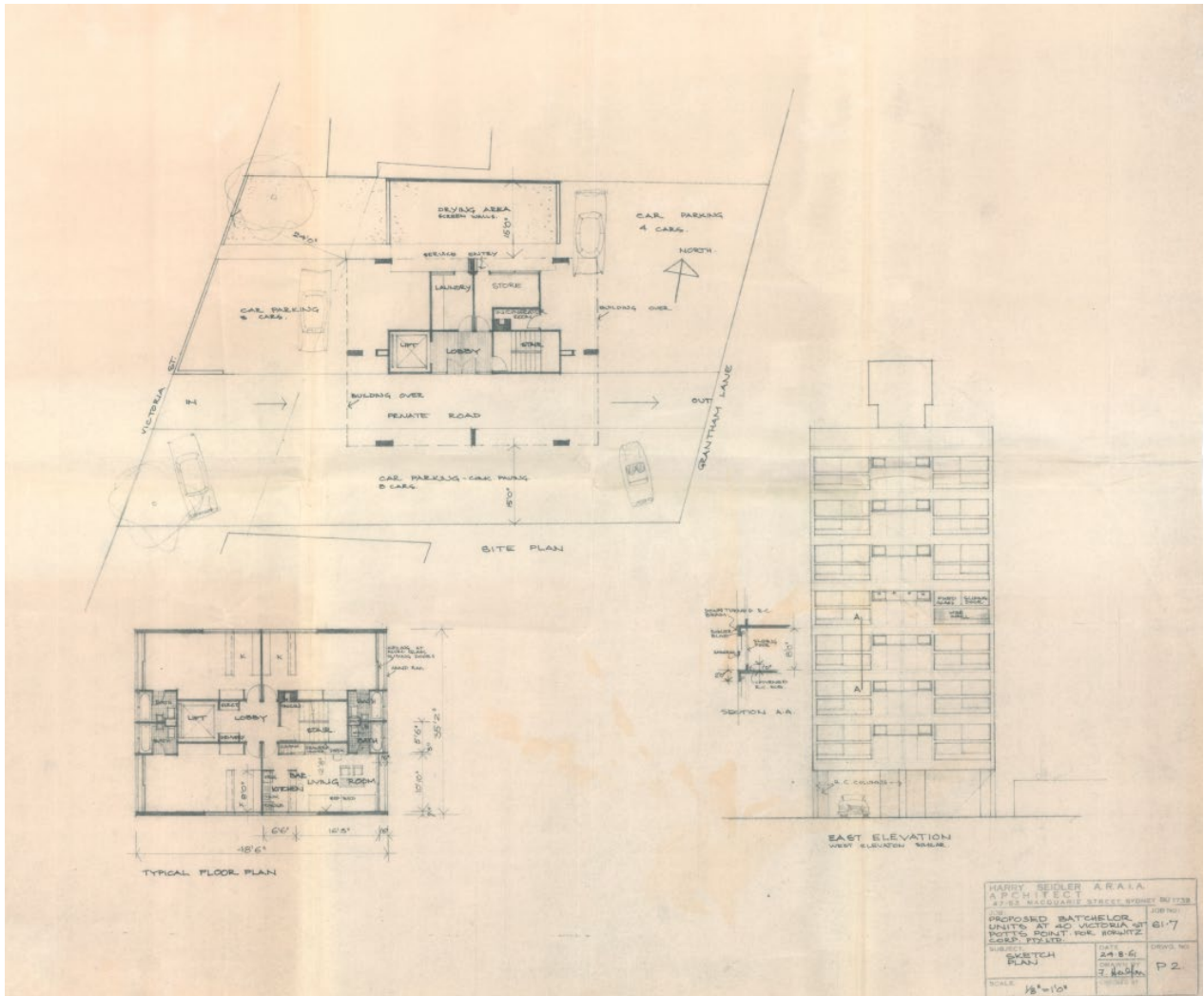


Image caption	Typical floor plan and north elevation for 40 Victoria Road, Potts Point (northern block).				
Image year	1961	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

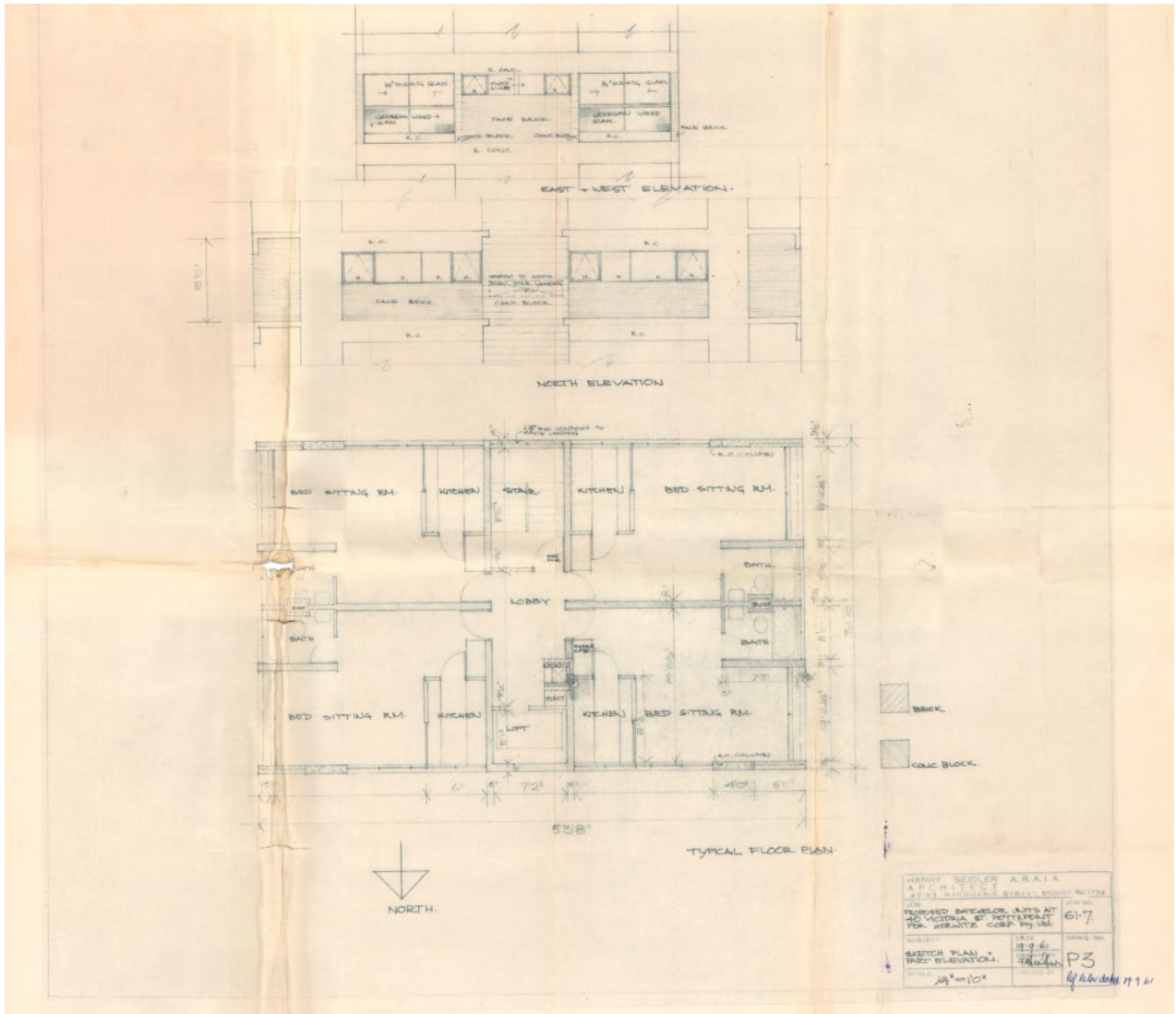


Image caption	Plans for 40 Victoria Road, Potts Point (northern block).				
Image year	1961	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

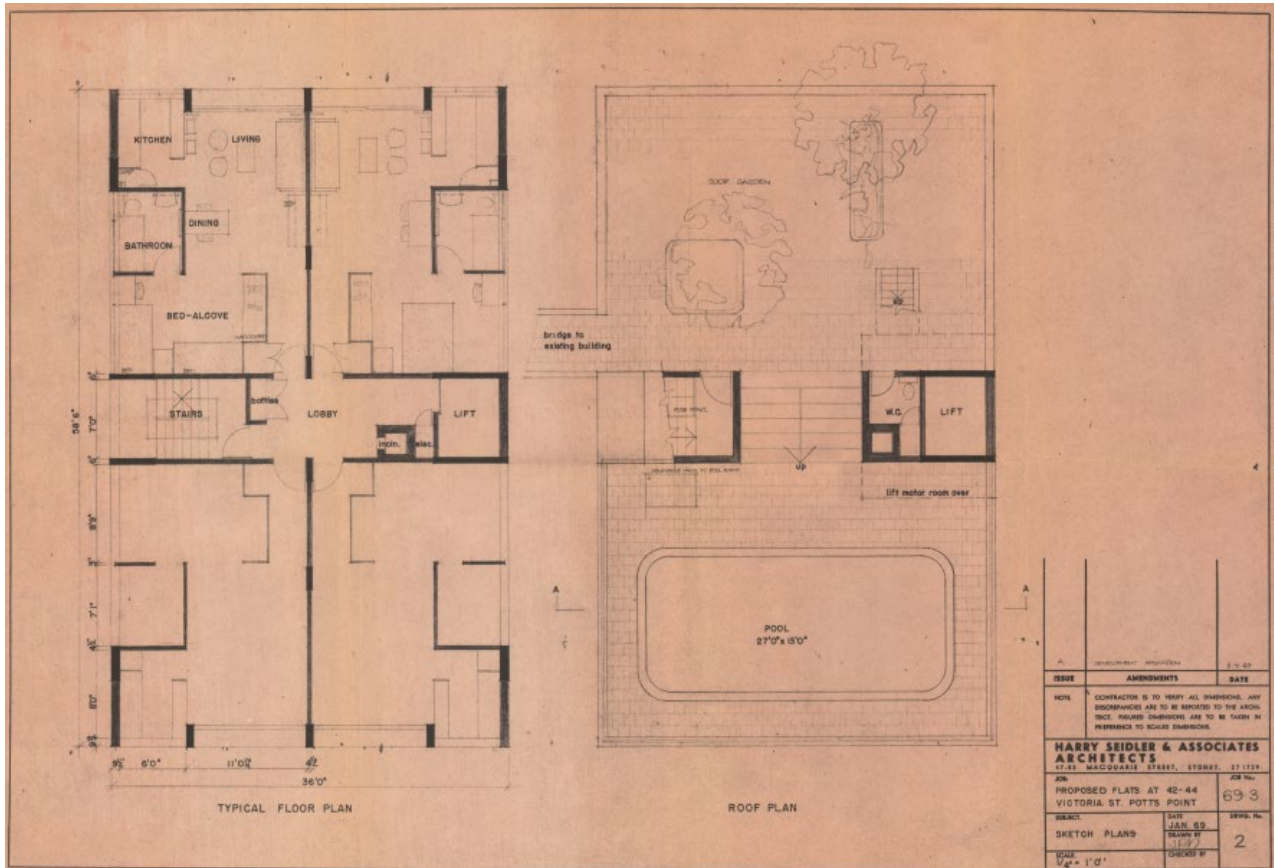


Image caption	Plans for 40 Victoria Road, Potts Point (northern block) from publication <i>Living and Partly Living: Housing in Australia</i> , Ian McKay, 1971.				
Image year	1971	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

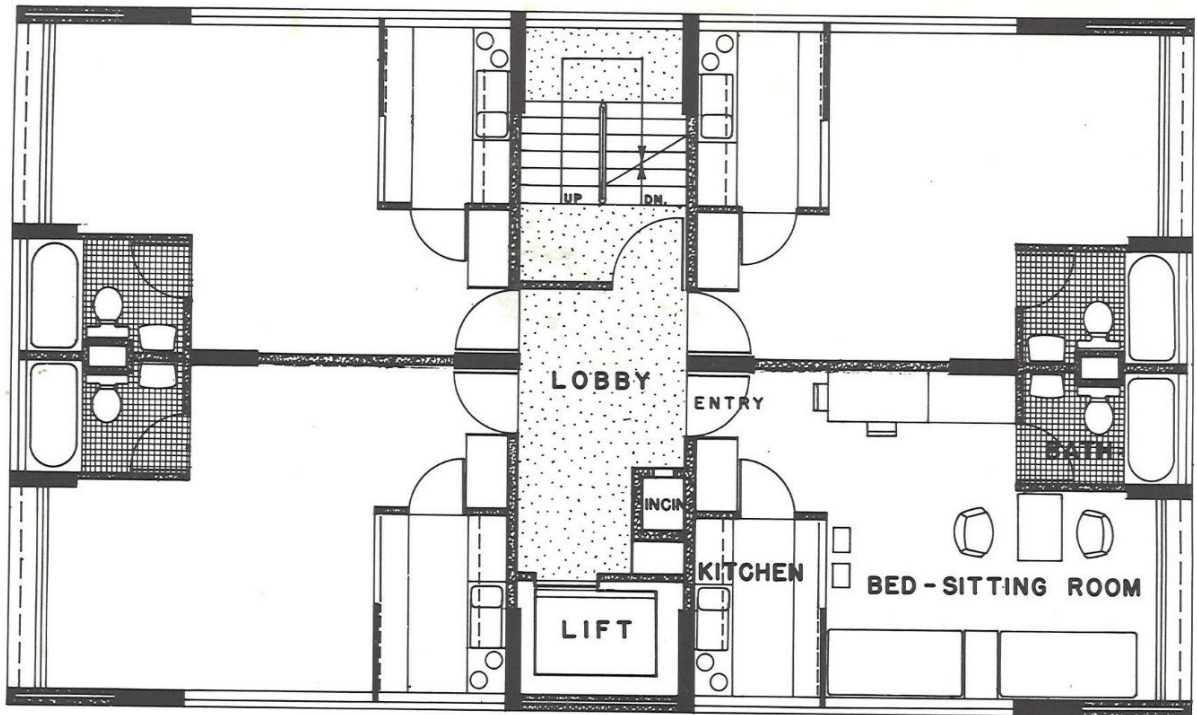


Image caption	Plans for 42-44 Victoria Road, Potts Point (southern block).				
Image year	1969	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

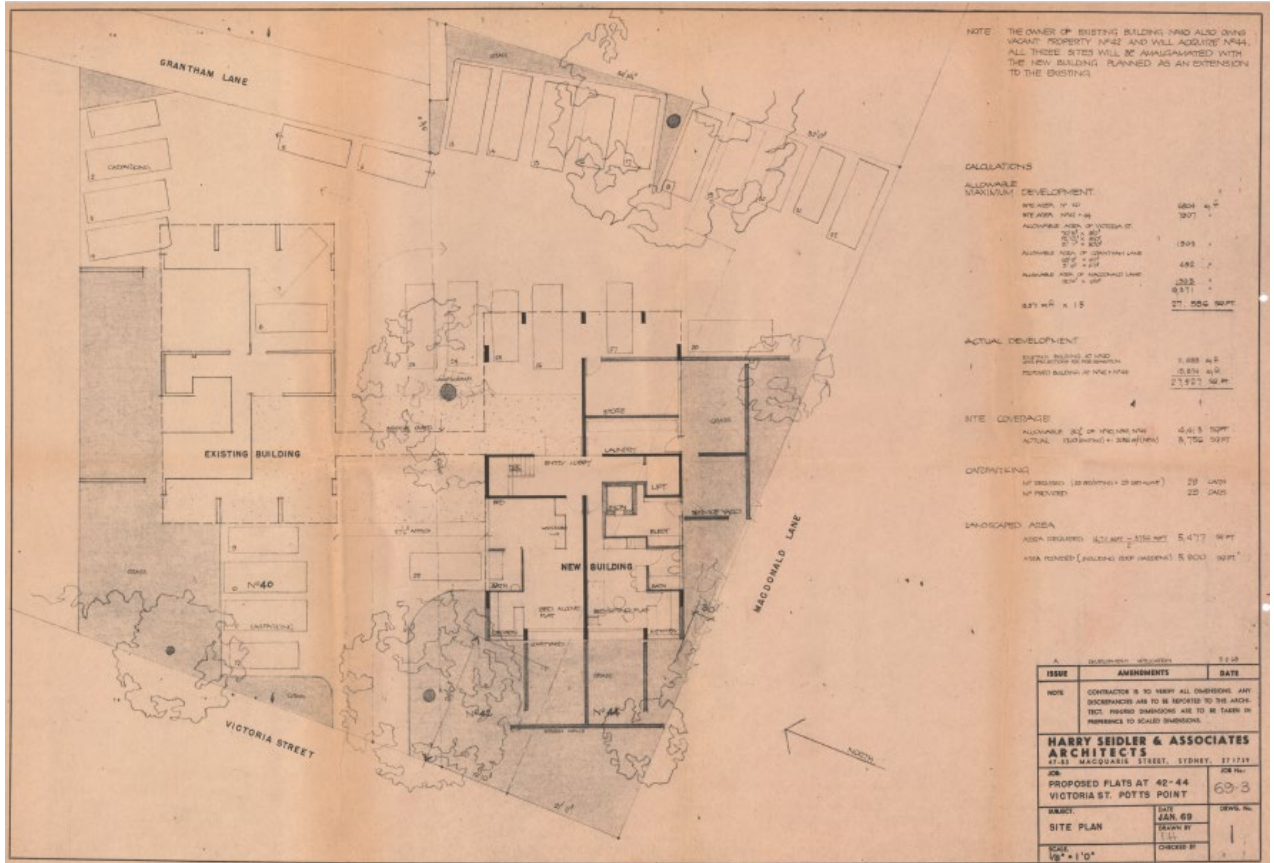


Image caption	Elevations of 42-44 Victoria Road, Potts Point (southern block).				
Image year	1969	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

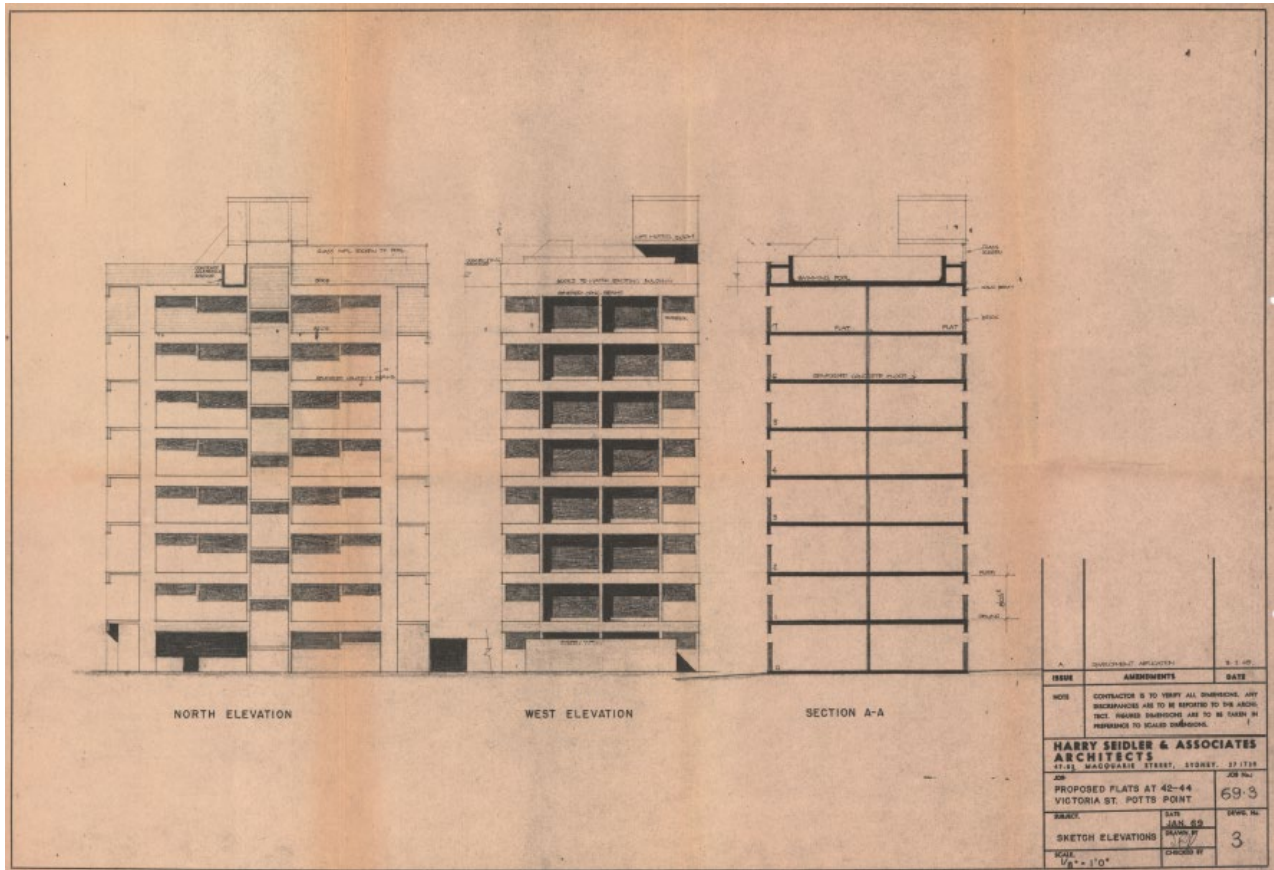


Image caption	Sketch of proposed addition of second building at 42-44 Victoria Street (now Gemini).				
Image year	1969	Image by	Harry Seidler & Associates	Image copyright holder	In copyright

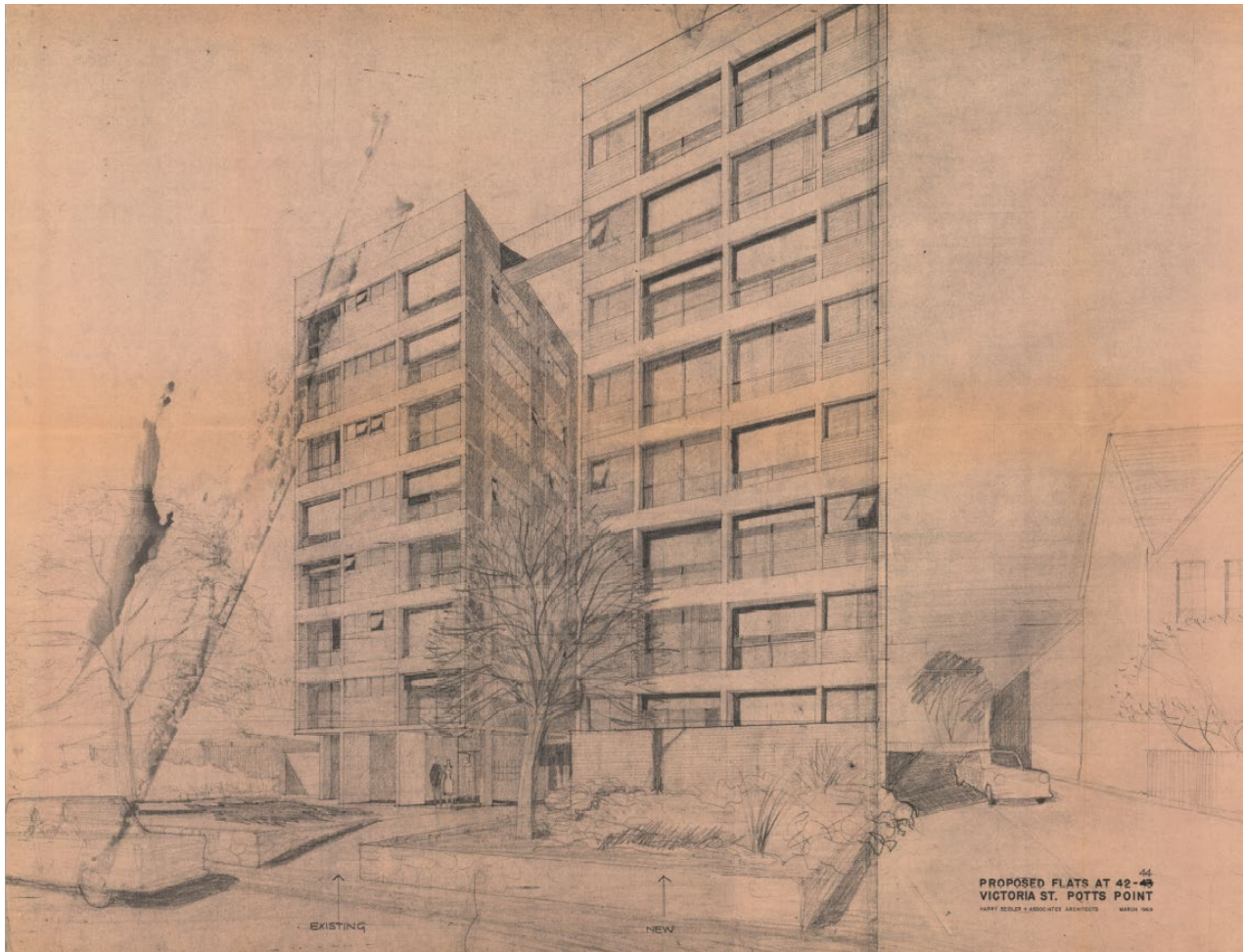


Image caption	Victoria Towers featured in a German language architecture publication. 'Apartmenthaus in Potts Point/Sydney Architekten Harry Seidler & Ass., Sydney'				
Image year	c1969	Image by	Reproduced in City of Sydney Town Clerk's Department No. 1001/1969	Image copyright holder	In copyright

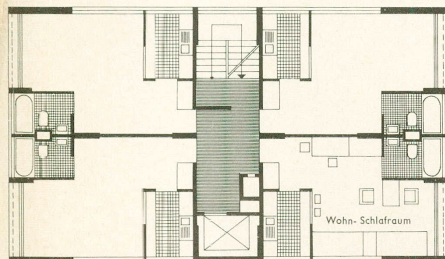


Apartmenthaus in Potts Point/Sydney

104 B DBZ 9/67 2.2



Blick in ein Apartment mit Wohn-Schlafraum, Küche
und Bad
Interior of an apartment with sitting-bedroom, kitchen
and bathroom
L'intérieur d'un appartement avec séjour-chambre à
coucher, cuisine et salle de bains



Grund-iß, Maßstab 1:200

1442

Image caption	Street view of Gemini.				
Image year	2024	Image by	Realestate.com.au	Image copyright holder	Realestate.com.au



Image caption	Gemini from Victoria Street.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Gemini showing link bridge at rooftop.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Northern façade of Gemini from Victoria Street.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Gemini from Grantham Lane.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Entrance foyer of Gemini (southern building).				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML

