

Apartment Unit-Mix Planning Brief

The unit mix is a market position expressed as a floor plan.

PURPOSE	Balance demand, ticket size, absorption, efficiency, parking and value.
EDITION	2 July 2026
COMPANION	Editable Excel planner and Apartment Mix Optimizer.
AUTHOR	Raphael Mwito / The Development Playbook

This is a planning tool, not a market study, valuation, investment recommendation or architectural instruction.

A mix must work in the market and in the building.

Test	Question
Demand depth	Who can buy or rent each product at the proposed ticket size, and how strong is the evidence?
Unit economics	How do size, price, rent, service charge and affordability interact?
Absorption	How many units can the market absorb monthly without depending on the same customer pool?
Building efficiency	What happens to cores, circulation, frontage, wet stacks, balconies and net area?
Parking and amenities	Can the site support the parking, lifts, water, power, refuse and amenities created by the mix?
Revenue concentration	How much value depends on one product, price band or demand assumption?

Move from evidence to architecture without pretending certainty.

01 / DEFINE THE MARKET POSITION

State location, tenure, household, use case, affordability band and competing supply.

02 / BUILD THE EVIDENCE TABLE

Record achieved comparables, asking stock, enquiries, rent, price, size, amenities and evidence quality.

03 / TRANSLATE DEMAND INTO A MIX

Allocate saleable area, then derive whole units, tickets, revenue, parking and absorption.

04 / TEST CONSTRAINTS AND DOWNSIDE

Stress price, absorption, efficiency, parking and concentration.

05 / ISSUE A DESIGN BRIEF

Give the architect a range, stack logic and performance criteria—not a frozen schedule.

The schedule should become more precise as the evidence improves—not merely because the design has progressed.

Count is only one view of the portfolio.

Measure	Why it matters
Area share	Connects the mix to the scarce saleable floor area.
Whole units	Turns area allocations into a buildable and saleable count.
Ticket size	Reveals affordability and financing depth better than rate per square metre alone.
GDV share	Shows where revenue concentration sits.
Monthly absorption	Identifies the product line that determines sellout.
Parking required	Tests whether commercial ambition fits the site and planning constraint.
Demand evidence	Separates researched assumptions from convenient ones.

Do not optimise one output

The highest GDV mix may also have the highest ticket, slowest absorption, thinnest evidence or most difficult parking burden. Review the outputs as a system.

The brief should guide the architect without designing the building twice.

Brief item	State as a range or performance test
Product range	Target shares and acceptable movement by product type.
Unit size	Net-area bands, storage, balconies and furniture or accessibility tests.
Stacking	Wet-stack alignment, frontage, corner conditions and repeatability.
Efficiency	Saleable-area target with an explicit measurement convention.
Parking	Bay ratio, visitor or accessible provision and alternative mobility assumptions.
Flexibility	Where units can combine, divide or change tenure without major structural disruption.
Operations	Service charge, lifts, refuse, security, metering and shared amenities.

The purpose is controlled iteration: market evidence changes the mix; architecture tests its physical credibility; cost and operations test its economic consequence.

Do not optimise before defining failure.

FAILURE THRESHOLD

Set maximum sellout, parking capacity, ticket and product-concentration limits before choosing a preferred case.

EVIDENCE QUALITY

A precise mix built on weak comparables is less useful than a range supported by current transactions and enquiries.

DOWNSIDE OWNERSHIP

Name which product becomes the bottleneck when price, demand or efficiency weakens.

UPDATE DISCIPLINE

Record pricing date, source and decision at every market or design gate.

NO UNIVERSAL MIX

Studios, one-bedroom and family units behave differently by node, tenure, buyer, rent, service charge and supply pipeline.

The preferred mix protects the project across several plausible futures—not simply the one with the largest spreadsheet GDV.

USE THE COMPLETE PACK

Plan. Test. Brief.

Use the online guide for the method, the Excel workbook for an auditable evidence and scenario record, and the calculator for quick live iteration.

ONLINE GUIDE	developmentplaybook.co.ke/resources/guides/apartment-unit-mix-planning-brief
EXCEL WORKBOOK	apartment-unit-mix-planning-workbook.xlsx
LIVE TOOL	Apartment Unit Mix Optimizer

Decision rule

Use the mix to frame a design question—not to disguise a market assumption as architecture.

Disclaimer

General educational material only. Obtain current project-specific market, architectural, planning, cost, legal and financial advice before committing capital.