



Innovative design for living produces the winning suburb of Crace

CATHERINE CARTER



A NEW SUBURB in Canberra that challenges people's perceptions of suburban life has achieved national recognition at the 2014 Property Council of Australia / Rider Levett Bucknall Innovation and Excellence Awards.

Winning the RPS Award for Best Master Planned Community, Crace was rewarded for offering the highest levels of community, sustainability and amenity.

Crace is the result of the collaborative efforts of the Crace Joint Venture, consisting of the ACT government's Land Development Agency and Crace Developments – a consortium of which CIC Australia is the lead partner and project manager.

A range of innovations were designed to create an "urban buzz" often lacking from suburban life. The masterplan was divided into two precincts – urban and suburban – to provide residents with the best of both worlds. The masterplan rejects the looping

streets so often found in Canberra in favour of a grid layout that enhances views, and makes public transport easier to access.

The Crace masterplan features a vibrant high-density urban core surrounded by a tranquil suburban precinct. Affordability was a key driver at Crace, with 15 per cent of homes sold under the ACT government's affordability threshold. A mix of housing types, including terrace and semi-detached houses, provide housing choice.

The Crace Central shopping centre, a medical centre, community garden, Goodwin Independent Living for seniors and childcare centre foster a vibrant and diverse community.

The plan included 35 hectares of green space, including a 7.5 hectares hilltop reserve at the centre of the suburb. Cycleways, pedestrian paths and a bus route were included in the masterplan, while the suburb was the first in Australia to achieve GreenSmart accreditation in recognition of its sustainability initiatives, including leading-edge water-sensitive urban design.

"The Crace Joint Venture team applied clever design solutions to maximise solar orientation, such

as block sizes that are larger on the sloping sites to allow easier construction. The streetscape, with its sustainable landscape setting of rain gardens and open spaces, also reflects the best traditions of "old" Canberra's tree-lined streets," says Rider Levett Bucknall director Mark Chappe.

Crace is a model of industry innovation – demonstrating how creativity and a commitment to design excellence can deliver better outcomes for the entire community.

■ Catherine Carter is Property Council of Australia ACT executive director