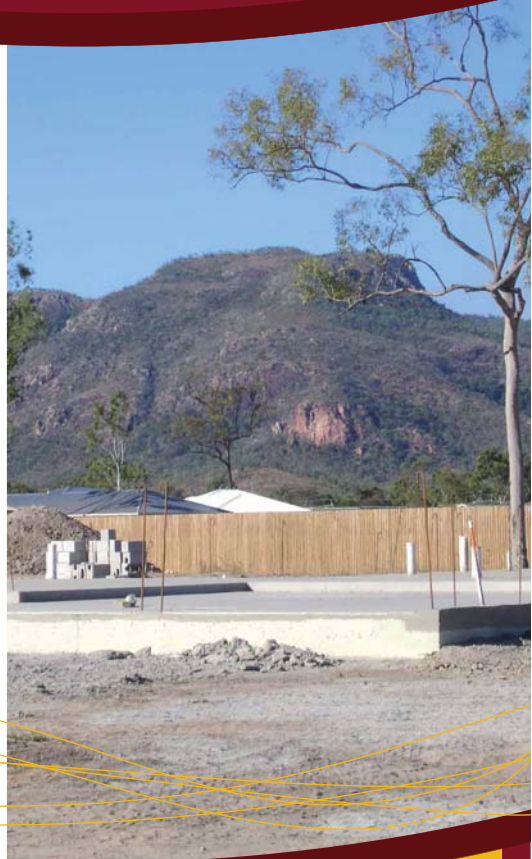


Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project



PROJECT TITLE

Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project

PROJECT CATEGORY

This award submission may be appropriate for consideration under the following categories:

Social and Community Based Planning; Urban Design - Plans and Ideas; Urban Planning Achievement; Regional Planning Achievement; Housing; Planning Achievements in Small and Local Communities; Environmental Planning, Conservation or Rural; Planning Scholarship Research and Teaching

PROJECT VISION

To accelerate the inclusion of sustainability considerations and practices into housing and urban development in Thuringowa and throughout the North Queensland region

PROJECT GOAL

For sustainable homes and developments to become available and acceptable to both the housing and development industry and the mainstream market throughout North Queensland

VALUES DRIVEN PROJECT

In all aspects of project delivery, the project sought to be:
Innovative - Tangible - Vital - Collaborative - Communicated - Commercially Viable

ADDRESSING REGIONAL ISSUES

Thuringowa is high growth regional city in a dry tropical climate with a growing recognition and desire for more sustainable development outcomes.

The project was designed to find solutions to:

- decreasing housing/land affordability,
- climatically inappropriate housing and urban development,
- a loss of sense of place and community,
- a need to identify and provide housing types appropriate to Thuringowa's future housing needs.

PROJECT OUTLINE

- An industry focused engagement process to identify commercially viable, market driven solutions for achieving sustainable housing and urban development outcomes suitable for North Queensland's dry tropical climate.
- The documentation of these findings and the wide sharing of this intellectual property to facilitate immediate adoption throughout the region.
- The awarding of a tender for the (unsubsidised) construction of a small precinct (1.1ha) in Kelso as a free market demonstration of the concepts, approaches and recommendations identified by the industry focus group process.

A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS BUILDING INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Emergence amongst industry and government practitioners of a broader sense of ownership and responsibility for more sustainable practices
- Development of local awareness, capacity and champions in the area of sustainable urban development
- The provision of an environment for harnessing and growing the collective expertise of local practitioners via a collaborative, cross-disciplinary industry focus group discussion process
- The identification of breakthrough ideas and methods
- The creation of a community owned and developed, regional guideline to facilitate and catalyse the achievement of enhanced sustainability performance in urban development projects throughout the region
- The delivery by a Council of a innovative project whose primary goal was, and is, to engage, involve and develop ownership from a diversity of urban development industry stakeholders in forwarding sustainable urban development in the region

PROJECT WEB ADDRESS

www.thuringowa.qld.gov.au/council/departments/planning/sustainable_village

Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project



FOCUS GROUP PROCESS

FOCUS GROUPS THEMES

- Sustainable Housing – Mainstream Pricing
- Planning & Urban Design
- Tropical Design (housing & urban)
- Sustainability Education & Innovation
- Economics & Legal Incentives/Tools
- Marketing & Valuing
- Infrastructure
- Natural Resource Management
- Energy & Water
- Community Wellbeing (ie health, safety, security, community creation)

FOCUS GROUP CHAIRS

- The focus group chairs were instrumental in guiding the focus groups outcomes
- Focus group chairs included: a builder, an urban planner, an architect, a professor, an economist, a market researcher, an engineer, a landscape designer, an energy specialist, and a community health worker.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION

- Between March and June 2007 over 55 industry workshops were convened by the Council all with the common objective of discussing and identifying practices for achieving more sustainable housing and urban development in North Queensland.
- Each focus group theme met 5 to 6 times.
- Around 110 people from across a diversity of industry sectors actively participated in the focus group discussions.

FOCUS GROUP SCOPE

Discussions were focused on identifying solutions that were:

- cost-comparative with mainstream housing prices;
- commercially viable for the industry to introduce,
- market (consumer) acceptable, and
- capable of being adopted primarily via market forces to become mainstream products/practices in the North Queensland area within 5 years.

POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

A DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY RATHER THAN CONSUMER FOCUSED PROGRAM

- Developers (and their consultants/advisors) were identified by Council as not only the group that Council has the most ability to influence but also the group who have the greatest potential to activate both their supply chain (ie to incorporate sustainable development practices) and influence the buying practices of consumers (through marketing and sales activities).

AN INTERGRATED AND ANALYTICAL SOLUTIONS ORIENTED PROCESS

- Recognising the existence of a range of industry guidelines, the project sought to avoid duplication and instead focus on overcoming institutional, commercial, marketing and regulatory barriers and developing cost effective region specific design solutions.

FOCUS

GROUP FINDINGS - A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

- The focus groups findings are in the final stages of being published as a guideline for use both as a reference by industry and also as the basis of the tender for the design and construction of the demonstration precinct at Kelso.
- The guidelines developed by the focus groups outline practical, cost effective, commercially viable, market acceptable solutions for creating housing and urban development that deliver triple bottom line benefits to the region. This intellectual property will be freely available to all.
- The guidelines have a strong potential of being able to create a marked difference in the sustainability performance of housing and urban developments in the North Queensland region.

KEY BREAKTHROUGHS

Breakthroughs were achieved in the following areas:

- Housing affordability
- Cost effective tropical housing
- Development application/approvals processes to support ESD
- The need for tenure and building forms to influence subdivision layouts
- Marketing tools to reduce the commercial risk of 'designing' and 'selling' sustainable development product
- The importance of landscape analysis in development design
- Water sensitive urban design in tropical climates
- Educational priorities for the NQ urban development industry
- Energy efficiencies via demand management and shared facilities
- Community creation
- Universal accessibility (particularly at the level of the precinct)

JCU RESEARCH CAPTURES COMMUNITY CONSULTATION LEARNINGS

- A review of the consultation process undertaken in the Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project is currently being undertaken in recognition that the project is one of only a few recorded cases where community development has been used to address environmental/sustainability issues.

A COMMERCIALY VIABLE, MARKET BASED STRATEGY

- A key deliverable of the Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project is that sustainable urban development must be able to be developed and the houses built unsubsidised, under a real market situation.
- The overall success of the Thuringowa Sustainable Village Project will be determined by the degree to which the concepts, methods and practices identified by the focus groups can be successfully and profitably implemented into housing and urban development in the region and the demonstration precinct at Kelso.

PEOPLES TIME AND CONTRIBUTION FINANCIALLY VALUED

Focus group participants were offered financial remuneration in recognition of the contribution given by them, and to minimise financial hardship resulting from time spent participating in focus group discussions.

ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED

Accessible Design Expert (Independent)
 Architects North
 Aussie Foil
 Bonlec
 Brazier Motti
 Building Designer (Independent)
 BWD Enterprises
 Connelly Suthers
 Conrad Gargett Architects
 Del Mondo Property Group
 Delfin Lend Lease
 Department of Emergency Services
 Department of Health
 Department of State Development
 Developer (Independent)
 Energy Consultant (Independent)
 Ergon Energy
 Finlay Homes
 GHD
 Go Green Technologies / Solahart
 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
 Greening Australia
 GVD Design
 Herron Todd White
 Housing Industry Association
 James Cook University
 John Egan Realty
 LCJ Engineers
 NAB
 North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service
 Northern Consulting Engineers
 Origin Energy
 PDT Architects
 Permaculture Townsville
 Peter Mullins Landscape Design Consultant Services
 Place Psychology
 PMM
 PRDnationwide
 Queensland Police
 Ross River Real Estate
 Smith + Elliott Real Estate
 Soil Horizons
 Spinal Injuries Association
 Spirited Communities
 Stainton Master Builders
 Stockland
 Thuringowa City Council
 Townsville City Council
 Townsville Thuringowa Safe Communities
 Tropical Energy Solutions
 Troppo Architects
 Tyler Carpentry
 Urbex
 VIVO Design

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
 Thuringowa City Council gratefully acknowledges and celebrates everyone who generously gave their time to contribute to the focus group findings. You were, and are, inspiring and we encourage you to recognise yourself as someone who is championing sustainable development in the region.

SUPPORTING A VISION FOR...