

Tullimbar Village is a new community created by urban designers who have embraced the best of the past.

A vision realised





Tullimbar Village, NSW. Miltonbrook, using PrimeLine® Newport weatherboard.



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When Neville Fredericks bought land west of Albion

Park in the Illawarra region almost 15 years ago, he already had a vision of the community he wanted to create. With 120 hectares to work with, Fredericks knew he had an opportunity to develop a unique traditional township. He is passionate about creating comprehensively sustainable townships and, following a seven-year term as mayor of Kiama, Fredericks says he became increasingly interested in the social dynamics of communities.

“I became interested in the fact that traditional townships were attracting very solid premiums in the real estate market compared to conventional sprawl products,” say Fredericks. “The public weren’t spending their time on weekends in places built in the 1960s, they were rushing to old towns like Berry and Kiama.”

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Around the time Fredericks identified this trend, he also became aware of the New Urbanism movement, which stemmed from the US. New Urbanism refers to the urban design movement which initially gained prominence in the 1980s. It encouraged the creation of walkable communities, accessible public spaces, and featured a range of housing types and created local jobs.

With this in mind, Fredericks evolved the approach into what he calls “Traditional Australian Urbanism”. “We’ve refined New Urbanism principles,” says Fredericks. “Traditional Australian Urbanism largely mirrors the traditional towns designed and built in the late 1800s which are highly valued in today’s market. We’re taking this model and improving on it significantly.”

Over the past few years, Fredericks has been able to combine his ideas to realise a vision – the creation of an innovative community which he believes will become famous because he says “there is nothing quite like it in Australia”. The result is Tullimbar Village, located in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, about 100 kilometres from Sydney and 20 kilometres from Wollongong. This is being created by Frederick’s development company, Miltonbrook.

Fredericks is so passionate about his vision, he wants to ensure that every house built at Tullimbar Village blends with the streetscape and fits in with the local vernacular. To this end, every single home is being designed by an architect who will work under the guidance of Steve Thorne, who is Design Director of Design Urban, a firm of architects and urban designers. Thorne, formerly the principal designer for the City of Melbourne and Director of Urban Design for the Victorian State Government, was hand-picked by Fredericks to coordinate the designers working on homes at Tullimbar.

Traditional Australian Urbanism

One of the key features of Tullimbar Village is that it has been designed to be a walkable community. “You need to have good footpath infrastructure – we’re putting footpaths on both sides of the street from the outset,” says Fredericks, who is insisting on this even though it is not a council requirement. “For it to be a walkable community, it has to have a town centre within a reasonable walking distance from most homes, which means no more than 500 metres from most residents. That means you need a street pattern that will lead people quite directly to the town centre. And when you are there, it should have more than just a few strip shops. There should be a range of services and retail shops that a community really needs to function well.”

According to Fredericks, 75% of residents will live

Snapshot

DEVELOPMENT	Tullimbar Village
DEVELOPER	Miltonbrook Land
TYPE OF PROJECT	Traditional Australian township
LOCATION	100km from Sydney and 20km from Wollongong in New South Wales
BROKE GROUND	December 2004
NUMBER OF DWELLINGS	Approximately 2,000
LAUNCHED	September 2006
PRICES	Start from \$317,000 to \$610,000



Tullimbar Village, NSW. Miltonbrook, using Scyon™ Linea™ weatherboard.



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within five minutes walking distance from the town centre. There are also energy savings anticipated with walkable communities. Fredericks is expecting a 30% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled. “We think it’s a spectacular environment gain,” he says.

Fredericks is also keen to ensure that streetscapes are aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Thus, he is addressing the common problem of garage dominance of street frontages by creating rear lane access.

“If you put the garage in the rear, you have a much more attractive streetscape because the garages are no longer the dominant feature at the front,” he says.

In Traditional Australian Urbanism – and its forerunner New Urbanism – diversity is important. This means that towns based on these principles are mixed use and feature a wide range of housing types – from studios for singles to four-bedroom homes for multigenerational families.

“A traditional township would have grown organically like this and catered to all segments of society. I firmly believe that you can’t have a vibrant community without having great diversity.

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“We have also catered for home-based offices that have been designed to open on to the veranda so that customers don’t have to go through the private part of the home,” says Fredericks about the development.

There is also relative density at the core of the development, with terrace-style homes in the inner ring and more standard lots in the outer ring. Fredericks says that without this density, Tullimbar Village would require another 60 hectares if the same population was catered for in the conventional way.

The 30 homes completed in Stage 1 average 4.5 on the NatHERS scale, and future dwellings will aim at a 5 star rating.

Community living and interaction is also being encouraged with verandas and small setbacks. “We have verandas on almost every home,” says Fredericks. “Typically, they are about two metres from the street frontage. This increases the chance of social engagement with people walking by.”



Tullimbar Village, NSW. Miltonbrook, using Scyon™ Linea weatherboard.

Creating cultural connections

Apart from smart town planning and a passion for community interaction, Fredericks is committed to the idea that residents should feel connected to Tullimbar Village. Although it is a new development created on a blank slate, Fredericks has gone to great lengths to study – and ultimately incorporate his findings – on cultural connection.

Fredericks and Thorne visited numerous cities in Europe including contemporary developments as well as towns that had not been disturbed by war or modern development. Thorne says they wanted to understand what gave certain towns coherence. “In the first instance, there was a consistency in building materials. Secondly, there were details that were specific to a region, these were the elements that gave buildings their character.”

Fredericks knew he wanted this kind of coherence at Tullimbar Village. So he suggested Thorne tour the south coast of New South Wales to determine the elements that were integral to the region – and that should be incorporated at Tullimbar Village.

Thorne goes on to say: “We wanted to understand the way in which buildings in the past were designed here and how a builder, using today’s technology, can carry that forward using contemporary methods of construction into the next generation.

“I went on a fact-finding trip throughout the south coast to look at the architecture and distil it down to essentials.”

Out of this, Fredericks then asked Thorne to create a character book. “This really sets out those things that are specific to that region. Then we had to work out how we could build what is a contemporary home with contemporary materials, in such a way that it still makes people connect with the best parts of Kiama, Berry or Milton. We wanted houses that are modern but with memories of the past.”

Specifically, Thorne discovered a number of factors that have shaped the local vernacular. “The proportioning systems are much more vertical than horizontal,” he says. “If you look at windows, they tend to be tall rather than horizontal and long. The roof forms are very simple. That’s different to most project homes these days, which have very complex roof forms. We wanted to instil a quality of calm in the house.

Buildings were either brick veneer or weatherboard. They were simple boxes with lightweight clip-on elements like verandas. It’s a very modest architectural heritage but it’s very elegant



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Fredericks believes it’s these architectural features, which echo the area’s history, that create a cultural connection for residents. “The architecture has to have a cultural relevance and we’ve chosen to reflect the architecture of the 1850s and 1900 periods because that’s what resonates with the community here most powerfully. If you don’t connect with the culture of the people you won’t be nearly as successful in your endeavours. Knowledge about fashion comes and goes, but cultural knowledge comes and grows.”

Both Fredericks and Thorne say that James Hardie® products have played an important role in creating the right look for Tullimbar Village. Fredericks says: “We have broken up the side of the house by effectively mixing brick with James Hardie products. That’s helps give the dwelling a more vertical feel.”

What products were used?

Scyon™ Linea™ weatherboard



What is it? A distinctive horizontal weatherboard with deep shadow lines providing a sought after design aesthetic.

Where do you use it? Ideal for exterior cladding including composite construction, upper storey and ground level extensions, gable ends and feature walls in residential applications.

PrimeLine® weatherboard

What is it? An external weatherboard available in four different profiles to help achieve a wide variety of looks, whether contemporary or traditional, making it ideal for new homes or renovations.

Where do you use it? As an external cladding on traditional or contemporary homes. Also ideal for ground or upper storey extensions and to add areas of interest, like bay windows, gables and window surrounds.

HardiGroove® lining

What is it? An interior wall lining that is designed to look like traditional tongue-and-groove timber wall panels and soffit linings.

Where do you use it? On walls in bathrooms and laundries (excluding showers) and in high traffic areas like family rooms and hallways. Also perfect for use on soffits to create a traditional tongue-and-groove look.

Thorne says Scyon™ Linea weatherboard is ideal for homes in Tullimbar Village. “The area has a lot of traditional weatherboard,” says Thorne. “But when you use that, you have to maintain it regularly and often replace it. So we are using a lot of the Scyon™ Linea weatherboard and that’s proven to be really successful because people look at it and immediately there is an emotional, a cultural connection.

Fredericks adds that the product is durable. “It also doesn’t move the way timber does,” he says. “And it’s essentially fire resistant, termite resistant and holds the paint very nicely. It has a classy finish.”

Coherent individuality and collaboration

A system of collaboration between designers and architects has been put in place to ensure that each house rates on Frederick’s “liveability index”. Thorne explains: “The idea is that every house has to be designed so that in the very dead of winter you still get sunlight in your indoor and outdoor living spaces for at least an hour at midday.”

As this can be dependant on shadows of neighbouring homes, collaborative planing and design is vital. “We get

all the architects together in a workshop and basically design ‘looking over the fence’,” says Thorne. “You have to collaborate with the design next door so the houses all work together. After this is done, the designers go off and work up their individual designs. When we come back together, everything is checked not only to the liveability index, but to ensure the design of the house fits in with the overall cultural idea of the development. If not, changes have to be made.

“What’s interesting about this development is that it’s being delivered at project home cost and yet it’s still producing architecturally designed buildings, which are usually much more expensive.”

Tullimbar Village’s unique approach ensures that homes retain individuality while blending into the streetscape, and are knitted together by Frederick’s architectural and planning vision. “Often in modern subdivisions, each individual home might be okay,” says Fredericks. “But it’s the cacophony of styles and design elements that causes the confusion that seems to reign supreme in most urban areas. We have too many choices and too many materials, so we end up with confusion. High quality design is about restraint.” ■

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