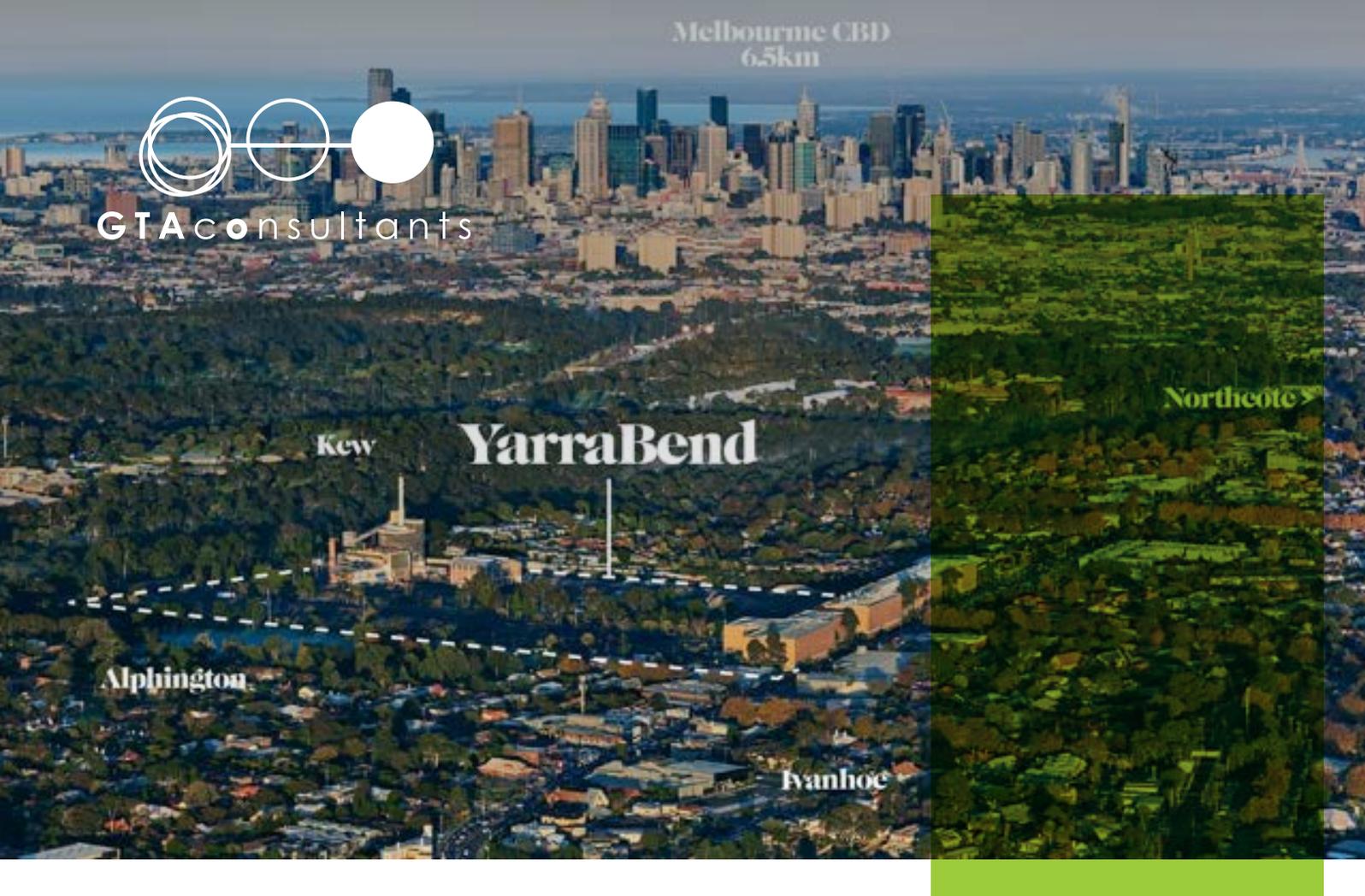


Melbourne CBD
6.5km



Curating a suburb

One of the challenges of in-fill development is to capture the essence of the area in which it sits. Too often developers can ignore that essence and, in some cases, the sense of place that a developer is trying to capture can become lost or degraded along the way.

It's a fine balance, and one many developers struggle with. Multi-storey apartment blocks may be inserted into suburbs dominated by single storey terrace housing; overdeveloped blocks bulging with McMansions in areas originally filled with free-standing bungalows on traditional suburban blocks. With these poorly realised outcomes, no one wins.

Good developers understand this conundrum and work hard to ensure their developments are sensitive to the feel and situation of each site, to give a sense of identity and place. While many developers consider community consultation a necessary evil, recognition that the local

community's views reflect the local character and aspirations of an area can lead to real insights about the nature of the site, which can drive more sympathetic and effective outcomes.

John Kiriakidis and Andrew Wisdom from GTA sat down recently with Glenvill Group Development Director Travers Nuttall and Zak Stockley from Glenvill Developments to discuss YarraBend in Melbourne's inner suburb of Alphington, to explore how the community engagement process helped provide a real sense of local identity, and ownership for the site.

YarraBend is a major redevelopment site of the former AMCOR paper mill site in Alphington in inner-city Melbourne. Covering about 16 ha, the wider development will comprise 2,500 dwellings, approximately 20,000 m² of retail, a primary school and a range of office spaces. The site is being developed by Glenvill Developments in partnership with Alpha Partners.

While YarraBend presents now as a well-considered and forward-looking redevelopment of a significant inner-city site, its history is a little more complicated. The first incarnation of the master plan represented what seemed like a good response to the site and the opportunities it presents, but one developed without any substantial community input. The result was over 1000 public submissions during public exhibition. These canvassed a range of issues in four broad themes: open space, community facilities, a commitment to sustainability issues and provision of a local school.

This sent the developers back to the drawing board, not just on the development plan for the site but also on their approach to creating that plan. The developers committed to two core ideas: to embed sustainability principles in the development and to bring the local community into the design development process. This represented a turning point for the project.

Once the community's interests and concerns were directly and overtly addressed, the development process became much easier. A development plan for the whole precinct was approved in 2015, which means that Glenvill/Alpha can proceed with staged development of the site with reasonable confidence. In turn, the approval of the development plan has allowed Glenvill to start marketing the site in advance of formal and final development approval for each of the project's stages which creates significant commercial advantage.

The advantage for the community is that they have had an opportunity to feed into the development plan ensuring that the development is sensitive to its environment and the unique nature of Alphington as a suburb.

Glenvill Development Director Travers Nuttall feels that building and maintaining trust with the surrounding community, the City of Yarra and other responsible authorities is critical. The local community maintains strong interest and involvement in the project, which Glenvill and its development partner Alpha welcome. They have worked hard to build and maintain open communications with the local community and continue to attend meetings and provide briefings as required.



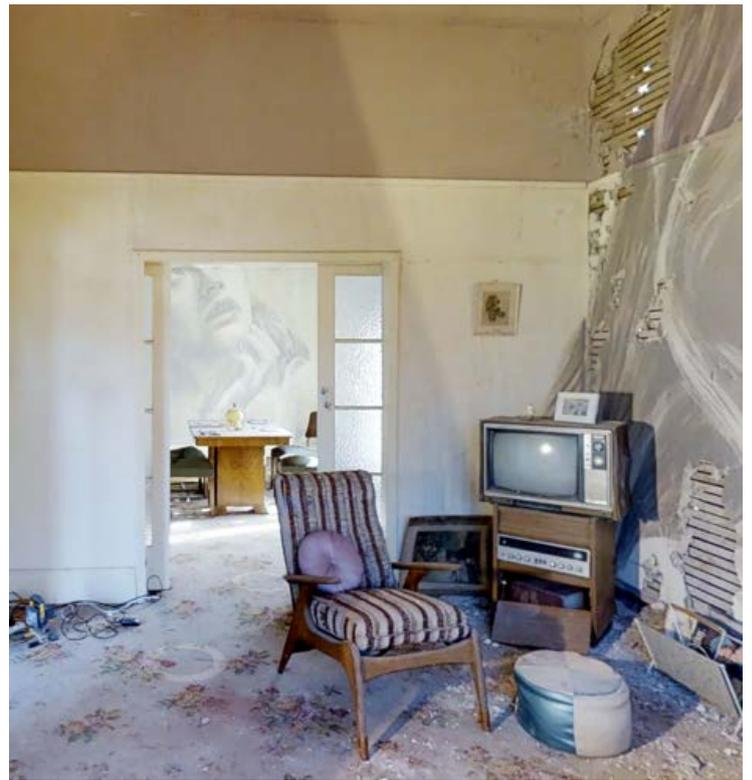
Yarra Bend's ultimate population, in a range of 5000-6000 residents, will represent an approximate doubling of Alphington's current population. Based on recent sales on the project, many of these people will be current Alphington residents or be drawn from neighbouring suburbs. This reflects both the trust in the development that has been built up in the local community and the tightly held nature of Alphington: people who live there don't want to move away.

On the sustainability issue, Glenvill embedded UDIA's Sustainable Urban Development matrix in the development planning and design processes. The most high-profile outcome of this approach has been the commitment to providing solar PVs and a Tesla wall battery in each house, however it has also resulted in a range of good design outcomes that have come to define the project. The internal street and open space network, for instance, reflects Yarra Council's strong focus on active transport and community development. John commented on how the Glenvill team has happily cooperated with Yarra Council in realising an outstanding open space and movement solution for the precinct.

Initially, the design team discussed the idea of offering the household-energy solution as an option, but they quickly resolved that a commitment to good sustainability outcomes needed to be firmly embedded in the project and so all houses will be provided with these attributes as standard features. Travers noted that Glenvill's sustainability focus has been on both purchasers' perceived value and Glenvill's own Environmentally Sustainable Development profile.

The need for good community facilities was one of the messages sent by the local community early on and heard loud and clear by Glenvill. They are working to provide community facilities, including a primary school, so that appropriate long-term living patterns can be established early on. This, of course, is something that planners always call for, something that is often promised, but not always delivered.

Of course, development is never all plain sailing. Travers noted that having multiple developers on site at the same time can make things complicated. But at the end of the day, both Travers and Zak noted that bringing the community into the development process has helped create the environment to ensure a successful 'build' as well as giving the development the best chance of being an integral part of the local community.



Engaging the community

Travers and Glenvill CEO Len Warson believe that it is important that the site not simply disappear into the background during development, but that it should become a vehicle for community engagement.

One example of this belief, is the recent art installation, the Omega Project, by street artist Rone. The project focused on a series of works and installations located in a soon-to-be-demolished house on the site. The artist saw this as an opportunity to re-create elements of a classic mid-century Australian home in its fragile final moments, providing a poignant glimpse into Melbourne's history.

 To see more of the work, you can take a tour here.

<https://captur3d.io/view/scann3d/rone-secret-location>