

# The Community Yield



**Harvest Lakes**  
from Vision to Fruition 2000-08







Creating Communities presents *The Community Yield* booklet  
as a gift to LandCorp to celebrate the Harvest Lakes community.

## The Creating Communities Contribution

Creating Communities Australia™ works with government industry and the community sector conducting sound research and planning as well as forging partnerships to ensure sustainable project outcomes that minimise social costs and maximise social and economic gains. Harvest Lakes is an exemplary example of this approach.

The multifaceted community program delivered state of the art ESD community facilities, community based environment projects, the establishment of clubs and associations, capacity building projects, strong participation in events and activities, community art and public art. The program resulted in significant measurable community improvements in community participation and residents commitment to environmental projects.

These outcomes not only point to positive impacts in social capital, wellness and quality of life, but also had significant impact on the rate of sales in Harvest Lakes.

The community edge helped make real the sustainability objectives of the project while also providing a distinctive marketing edge.



## Introduction

In the late 1990's LandCorp commenced planning for Harvest Lakes.

From the outset LandCorp fostered a collaborative planning process on the project working with consultants and the City of Cockburn to produce an outstanding housing development which delivered the 'triple bottom line' as never before.

Success was no accident. It ensued from a far-sighted decision to embrace environmental excellence, and development of a strong community. Commitment to sustainable outcomes underpinned the project. Relationships were nurtured. Trust developed. Momentum built.

Quintessentially aspirational, the Harvest Lakes project was a cynic's worst nightmare. It promised much-and it over-delivered.

*This is its story...*





*The time was right to break new ground.  
Harvest Lakes would be different.  
It would be visionary and it would prove  
to all and sundry that the marketplace  
was ready for something extraordinary.*

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## *E*scape from what might have been

The year was 1996, and the Atwell land that became the Harvest Lakes residential estate was earmarked for development. Conversion of the 115-hectare tract of former grazing land into a suburban estate, part of Perth's great southward expansion, had been programmed. It was going to happen – and it was going to happen soon.

Selling the land wouldn't be a problem. It was connected to the Perth CBD by a smooth stretch of bitumen. A drive to the city would be accomplished in barely enough time to empty a coffee mug and trips to Fremantle, Kwinana, Rockingham or Mandurah would conclude before a CD fell silent in the car stereo. Even better, the State Government was pushing ahead with bold plans for a railway linking Perth and Mandurah, with bus routes feeding flash new stations. If all this wasn't enough for a persuasive sales brochure, buyers would be enticed by a couple of lakes, an existing regional shopping hub and services and facilities provided by a go-ahead local government authority, the City of

Cockburn. Subdivide, bulldoze, advertise, sell. Down with the concrete pads, up with the houses, in with the smiling mortgagees—that's the way it goes, right? Hey presto, we've got another suburb.

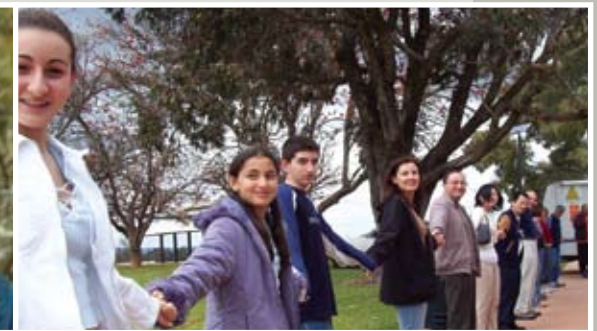
If the Harvest Lakes story was that kind of story, it wouldn't need telling. But this wasn't the way things went. The property's custodian, LandCorp – which had acquired the land in 1992 - eschewed the easy option and determined that the time was right to break new ground. Harvest Lakes would be different. It would be visionary and it would prove to all and sundry that the marketplace was ready for something extraordinary. This would be a major development that was not only green and smart – in a word, GreenSmart – but socially sustainable as well.





#### The Project Team

LandCorp  
City of Cockburn  
Roberts Day Group  
Creating Communities Australia  
RPS (formerly Bowman Bishaw and Gorham)  
PPR  
Market Equity  
Sharni Howe Architects  
McNally Newton  
Sinclair Knight Merz  
Hames Sharley  
The Shorter Group  
Selling Agent: Satterley Property Group



## *A time to aspire*

As the Western Australian Government's land and property developer, LandCorp carries a responsibility to consider opportunities for sustainable development. LandCorp embraces the goal of 'optimising triple bottom line outcomes from government-owned land', obliging a consideration of social and environmental interests alongside financial prospects. What could be better than to embark on a housing development that delivered the 'triple' in spades?

In 2000, LandCorp made decisions that would forever link its Harvest Lakes estate with high aspiration. This, it was decided, would be Western Australia's first GreenSmart community, set upon the foundation of a bold new approach to community development. It would establish the commercial viability of land development that reflected a practical and meaningful commitment to environmental excellence, while also demonstrating that urban planning should be about people as well as spaces. Creating a new suburb at Atwell wasn't enough: the goal was to create a community.

For LandCorp, this required significant investment in social planning with a strong emphasis on consultation, intentional community formation, the early provision of community facilities and social sustainability. It was a 'big ask' – but it was the better option. LandCorp's development manager, Carl Curtis, was driven by a conviction that multidisciplinary approaches conduce

*The Creating Communities team understood that the environmental objectives of the Harvest Lakes development could best be achieved by enlisting the commitment and involvement of an educated and socially engaged local community.*

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to desirable outcomes and was committed to achieving best practice in urban sustainability. "We had a vision for Harvest Lakes that it would be a vibrant, safe and integrated community, committed to environmental and social sustainability." Mr Curtis was determined that Harvest Lakes would signpost a way forward for developers in Western Australia. To help it turn a vision into reality, LandCorp engaged a range of consultants including Creating Communities Australia Pty Ltd.

Creating Communities brought to the project a belief that the key to making great places great for people lies in shared commitment and collaborative relationships between government, industry and the community sector. The experience of Creating Communities had shown that planning based on a thorough understanding of people's needs provides real opportunities for enhancing critical indicators of social sustainability, including belonging, wellness and quality of life.

The Creating Communities team understood that the environmental objectives of the Harvest Lakes development could best be achieved by enlisting the commitment and involvement of an educated and socially engaged local community. This approach dovetailed with LandCorp's ambitions for the project and, by 2001, the adoption of a strategic approach to community formation had been agreed.





*Research shows that social cohesion enhances wellness and quality of life as well as reducing anti-social behaviour and containing budgets on projects.*





*Moving to Harvest Lakes would not be just another relocation—it would be a serious declaration of intent.*

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## *When idealism met pragmatism*

Creating Communities commenced work on a Community Development Plan (CDP) in 2001 and over the ensuing two years, incorporated a number of revisions based on consultations with the surrounding community and other key stakeholders.

Described as ‘a mud map’ for the community, the CDP showed how safety, housing, community activities, arts and culture, education, sport and recreation, economic development and other aspects of life for residents of Harvest Lakes development could be brought together in a manner that would build good wellness and quality of life outcomes. LandCorp adopted the plan and approved its implementation—a significant commitment which kept Harvest Lakes on track to fulfil (and, indeed, exceed) early visions for the project.

To LandCorp’s previous commitment to sustainability at Atwell South, several desired outcomes were added as a result of the Creating Communities plan. These expressed a range of aspirations for the Harvest Lakes community formation:

- That people would have ‘a sense of purpose’;
- That the community would have ‘a rich and strong social fabric’, freedom of expression and an appreciation of diversity;
- That members of the community would be ‘empowered to manage their own affairs’; and
- That the community and environmental assets would be nurtured and enriched over time.

Incorporated into project planning, these desired outcomes were a world away from the home turf of many developers, where financial indicators reign supreme. If at first glance the developing area seemed no more than a pretty new suburb, closer scrutiny would reveal a belief in the central importance of people. LandCorp adopted the slogan ‘Change your world’, which directly encouraged people to ‘move to a better place’. At the same time, the catchphrase nudged the abstract notion of our world—our physical and social environments—into the realm of personal significance. It exhorted people to make healthy lifestyle choices, to live greener and to connect with others in their community. In short, moving to Harvest Lakes would not be just another relocation—it would be a serious declaration of intent.

Underpinning the idealism evident in LandCorp’s community development approach to Harvest Lakes, was healthy, big picture pragmatism. Creating Communities promotes the idea that individuals, communities, governments and nations benefit in myriad ways when a high value is placed upon social capital. Research shows the sense of purpose of individuals, the connections between people and various forms of civic association generate belonging. Social cohesion, in turn, reduces anti-social behaviour and enhances wellness and quality of life. Such impacts carry implications that apply well beyond any local area and may, indeed, hold a key to the containment of budgets in major government expenditure areas. A vibrant, healthy and productive community is a place of safety, feeding few malcontents into the broader city environment and exerting a positive impact on neighbouring communities.







*Harvest Lakes would be 'a people kind of place' in which people understood the importance of environmental stewardship.*

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## *Imagining a people kind of place*

The Atwell site of Harvest Lakes, bounded by the Kwinana Freeway and Bartram, Beenyup and Gibbs roads, was comprehensively investigated by project planners Roberts Day to establish opportunities and constraints for urban development. Important site characteristics identified and addressed in LandCorp's structure plan included:

- Two degraded wetland areas to be upgraded and retained for public open space (POS);
- Three areas of remnant vegetation to be retained for POS; and
- A tree-lined ridge traversing the site retained as a prominent feature in the development.

The Harvest Lakes structure plan envisaged the creation of nearly 1,000 lots, ultimately providing homes for a community of approximately 3,500 people. It featured streets oriented to assist passive solar construction and to engrave linkages and public open spaces deep into the consciousness of those who

lived in them. All residences were to be located within walking distance of remnant vegetation, wetland areas, a primary school and community facility. A range of lot sizes and types would cater to a broad market spectrum, contributing to social diversity. Urban form would respond to the physical character of the site and be conducive to the development of a true neighbourhood community.

In addition, LandCorp envisaged a village centre located adjacent to a future railway station. Again with the professional input of its consultants, it committed to a process of resident consultation to ensure that, when built, the village centre reflected community needs and values. Particular consideration was given to 'main street' principles and a strong pedestrian focus. Clearly, Harvest Lakes would be 'a people kind of place' in which people understood the importance of environmental stewardship.





*Going to the market opened a new phase of the Harvest Lakes project, and those who had invested ideas and capital in raising the bar over a triple bottom line were watchful and excited.*





*Four weeks prior to the release date, campers moved in. Yes, this seemed to say, there were people out there who recognised the developer's commitment to the future.*

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## *The triple bottom line goes to market*

Harvest Lakes site development began in March 2002 and the first 160 lots were ready for sale the following November. While confident of strong market interest, LandCorp and its selling agent Satterley Property Group were aware that the application of mandatory environmental sustainability standards to building contracts held the potential to make some prospective buyers jittery. Going to the market opened a new phase of the Harvest Lakes project, and those who had invested ideas and capital in raising the bar over a triple bottom line were watchful and excited.

Four weeks prior to the release date, campers moved in. 'Yes', this seemed to say, there were people out there who recognised the developer's commitment to the future. 'Yes', LandCorp's vision of a GreenSmart district and its work to build a vibrant and sustainable community mattered. And 'yes', it mattered to those who mattered most—everyday people who believed it was possible to 'Change your world'.

Before long, the Nine Network's A Current Affair had nationally aired a story about Harvest Lakes, portraying it as a highly innovative yet affordable development eliciting intense demand from the Perth community. GreenSmart

houses rose from judiciously oriented blocks, conforming with detailed area plans designed by the City of Cockburn specifically for the development.

On 4 May 2003, as part of the implementation of Creating Communities' CDP, a morning tea was held to welcome the first purchasers of Harvest Lakes lots. To LandCorp's general manager of operations, Mike Moloney, the gathering of 150 people was itself cause for celebration. 'Residents are already showing signs of being a vibrant and thriving community,' he said, 'just by their enthusiasm and enjoyment in meeting each other today.' The CEO of LandCorp Ross Holt, in his preword to the CDP, stated that the estate would 'attract attention as not only a great place to live, but also a living, growing example of what is possible in the fields of environmental design and community involvement'. The Mayor of Cockburn, Stephen Lee, told the crowd: 'It is a great time to be living in the City of Cockburn, with the development of the railway... The city is very pleased that you have chosen to live here at a time when great things are happening.' A cotton and hemp utility bag, filled with information about community and the environment, was presented to purchasers as a symbol of their shared investment in a better world.





*A plethora of initiatives were rolled out to guide community development and promote the estate's sustainability messages.*





*People were changing their world;  
an influx was underway.*

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## *Bricks, mortar and beyond*

With Harvest Lakes land sales continuing at a brisk pace—a further 120 lots were released in 2003, with buyers again camping out—the commercial success of the development was assured. The work of creating a community, however, was just beginning. First to become residents at Harvest Lakes were Steve and Kristie Pinto, who moved into their new home with infant son Harrison on 3 October 2003, and they were soon joined by Brian and Tanya Foster with their two daughters. People were changing their world; an influx was underway. For LandCorp, the time had arrived to roll out a plethora of initiatives to guide community development and promote the estate's sustainability messages.

The Harvest Lakes CDP adopted by LandCorp had recognised the need for education, leadership, facilitation and consultation. Already, as part of CDP implementation, Creating Communities had launched a community newsletter. Produced quarterly, Harvest Cuttings featured stories on buyers, new residents, energy and water saving strategies, waste reduction, the local environment, and community involvement opportunities. Importantly, it also provided an effective promotional tool for the launch of other CDP initiatives, including:

- 'Building Green' workshops;
- An 'Environmental Extravaganza' community fair;
- A Bilby Easter festival;

- Frog workshops
- Community enviro-art projects
- A major public art project;
- Community Christmas carols;
- The establishment of a Harvest Lakes Residents' Association which, unlike many resident groups, embraced a model of constructive and collaborative participation in community development; and
- The formation of new community groups and clubs.

By 2004—a year in which another 180 lots became available and were sold within a week of release—the momentum was considerable. To ensure the views of those electing to live at Harvest Lakes were incorporated into the program of community activities, one-on-one resident surveys were conducted and biennial surveys were instituted to monitor progress.

Soon, it was apparent that the influence of LandCorp's focus on environment and community was extending to those who had been attracted to the Harvest Lakes locality for other reasons. As one purchaser observed after attending a 'Building Green' workshop in 2004, 'I didn't buy into Harvest Lakes for its environmental features, but now I am getting really excited about what we will be part of when we build our new home.'

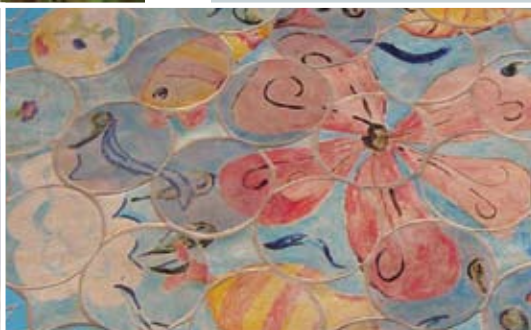


# *Bringing people together*

Of all the initiatives implemented in Harvest Lakes, perhaps the most conspicuous was the co-location of a community and environment facility with a new government primary school.

Early work on the CDP identified infrastructure required to build community involvement and capacity and, in the process, Creating Communities had perceived a need for the early delivery of a community and environment centre. A report prepared in May 2002 argued that the provision of such a facility 'up front' would enable the delivery of a range of community programs and activities that would work to develop community fabric 'by design'. Moreover, the facility would 'add value and complement the environmental and technological themes of the estate, and make a significant contribution to the development of a sustainable community'. To maximise utilisation, linkage and exchange, Creating Communities further recommended the development of a campus-style precinct incorporating the centre, the proposed primary school and a sports oval.

This, of course, was easier said than done. A particular hurdle was the need for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (DPI) to approve the designation of a community purpose site to abut the school. In addition, the cooperation of the Department of Education and Training (DET) was necessary, not only to support the concept of a shared-use community centre adjoining the primary school but to integrate environmental education programs at the





*“The development of Harvest Lakes has been marked by innovation and forward thinking with the provision of excellent community facilities, the creation of a strong community life and provision of a variety of environment initiatives.”*  
Carl Curtis, Development Manager, LandCorp.

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community facility into future curricular activity. Finance for the facility was also required, leading to the launch of a fundraising drive harnessing the excitement generated by the values-driven, future-focused culture of innovation established at Harvest Lakes. Remarkably, all these pieces fell into place. Considerable work behind the scenes by the project team led to approvals from DPI and DET and financial contributions from the City of Cockburn, LandCorp, Lotterywest and the Department of Sport and Recreation. Following this, the striking new facility began to take shape.

As this work proceeded, the new school opened with a name that explicitly conveyed the Harvest Lakes focus on both social harmony and harmonious development with the environment—‘Harmony Primary School’. At the commencement of Term 1, 2004, 169 students from kindergarten to Year 7 gathered to personify harmony in the confined spaces of only two completed buildings as construction continued around them. ‘Our twenty staff members managed to unpack and arrange furniture and teaching resources, as well as settle in a class full of students all within two hours,’ remarked the Principal. ‘They are an amazing group of people.’

The school itself was also extraordinary, setting a benchmark for Western Australian primary schools with its combination of sustainable design principles with modern education requirements. GreenSmart features included north-facing buildings, computer-controlled louvre windows and heaters, thermal bricks, rainwater tanks to flush toilets, greywater reuse. Such features – and

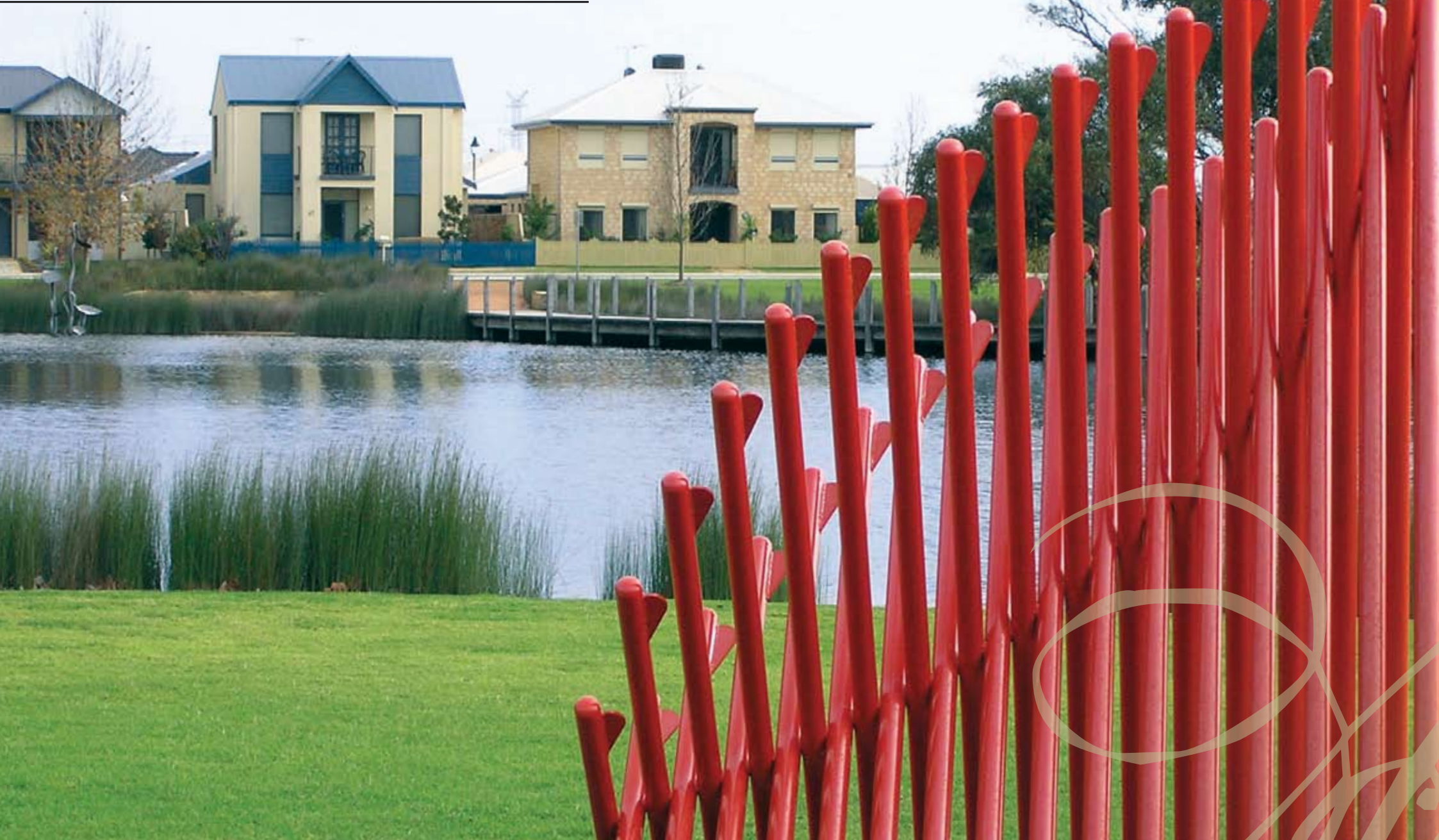
several others – were also incorporated into the Harvest Lakes Community and Environment Centre, which opened on 30 October 2004—the day of the community’s second ‘Extravaganza’ fair. As LandCorp’s Mike Moloney observed: ‘The multi-purpose-built community centre reflects the environmental principles that Harvest Lakes is guided by and sets a new standard for all future community centres to follow.’

Even as Moloney spoke, Harmony Primary School students were setting standards of their own with the development of a magnificent mosaic at the entrance of the new centre. Unveiled on 3 December 2004, the mosaic was the result of six months work by more than two hundred students under the guidance of community artist, Lesley King, and was designed to promote understanding of water conservation, water in the natural environment, drainage, stormwater and wastewater. LandCorp’s sustainability manager, Dr John Yeates, was impressed. ‘This is something that everyone can be proud of,’ he said. ‘Your children and future generations will continue to enjoy the stunning and unique public art for many years to come.’

Part of a community hub designed to accommodate recreation and education facilities, support services, an environmental workshop, public art and community facilities, the state-of-the-art community and environment centre was managed by the City of Cockburn. It provided Harvest Lakes residents with a focal point for activities and interaction and long-term benefits were also evident in biennial community surveys.

*As in so many other aspects of the development, LandCorp had set a standard to which other developers could aspire. The Sunday Times described the Harvest Lakes public art as 'spectacular'.*

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# Art for heart's sake

The water-themed mosaic at the entrance of the Harvest Lakes Community and Environment Centre was not, by any means, a token work of art. The Community Development Plan developed by Creating Communities had included a proposal for the development of art projects such as the water wise community art mosaic and the 'eco-themed sculptures for the wetlands walkways' to promote the values of the estate and attract recognition for them.

The vision of Creating Communities Director Donna Shepherd underpinned this embrace of the arts:

*'Arts are a critical component in community development programming. The arts give us the opportunity to see the world in different ways. They broaden our world view, enrich spaces with meaning and provide a medium through which people can share experience. Art also opens peoples' minds to diverse views and in doing so can assist in encouraging diversity in communities. But more than all this, it encourages each one of us to discover our own creative spirit and to share it with others.'*

To its credit, LandCorp recognised arts and culture as integral components of the development, pumping through its veins. CEO Ross Holt affirmed: 'The cultural and social value of art in a community is highly important'.

As project manager, Creating Communities worked with Artsource to select and commission a number of emerging artists to produce public artworks. More than sixty artists submitted expressions of interest and the calibre of their ideas was such that, instead of commissioning five pieces as originally planned, seven sculptures and an additional piece of wall art were included in the project, involving a total of nine artists.

Grouped around the lake and wetland areas off Harvest Lakes Boulevard, the artworks were unveiled on Saturday, 11 March 2006. The artworks were successful in providing a source of beauty and adding to the sense of community, they also helped to challenge people to think about the critical role sustainability plays in residential development.

As in so many other aspects of the development, LandCorp had set a standard to which other developers could aspire. The Sunday Times described the Harvest Lakes public art as 'spectacular'.





## *The proofs in the pudding*

In order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its community intervention Creating Communities coordinated biennial resident surveys, the first in 2004. Feedback was sought to guide further community strategies for the locality however; more broadly, it held the potential to inform LandCorp's application of community building experience to other projects. At the same time, careful assessment of progress was required if LandCorp's experience was to provide an educative tool for private developers and the local government authorities that approve their plans.

The 2004 survey produced heartening results, revealing unusually high community spirit and enthusiasm for sustainability values. Among responses to a question asking residents and purchasers to reveal their reasons for choosing Harvest Lakes were:

- 'Dedication to creating community spirit';
- 'Sustainable community, community feeling';
- 'Great environmental strategies in place';
- 'The sustainable community, proximity to city and train, the community feeling';
- 'The wetlands, environmental focus and new estate lifestyle'; and
- 'The school, the freeway, the lake, the ducks and the wonderful community atmosphere'.

In spite of low levels of participation prior to moving to Harvest Lakes, residents and purchasers demonstrated high interest in attending and engaging in activities with community and environmental themes. Taken as a whole, the 2004 survey results were unambiguous: LandCorp's schedule of community development initiatives accorded with the aspirations of the emerging community.





*If there had been any doubts about the efficacy of LandCorp's social initiatives at Harvest Lakes, the 2006 survey results laid them to rest. People had become more involved in their community and were engaging in activities to strengthen the local environment.*

Two years later, as Creating Communities prepared for the second survey of community life and attitudes at Harvest Lakes, LandCorp executives might well have experienced a few pangs of anxiety. Big ideas and good intentions had been much in evidence since the project's inception and carried significant risks. Clearly, the judgement of the residents might well have been harsh if, after a 'settling in' period, community life had fallen short of homebuyer hopes. The 2006 survey would be telling.

By 2006, the Harvest Lakes community comprised approximately 320 households and three quarters of the estate's 1,000 lots had been released and sold. While still in the realm of big ideas and good intentions, it was now peopled by householders who, from the outset, had been encouraged to speak their minds. To what extent had the Harvest Lakes vision been brought to fruition? Were private worlds being changed in the cause of better social and environmental outcomes in the world at large?

The Harvest Lakes 'Community Life Survey', conducted with support from the residents association and the City of Cockburn, comprised 28 questions with five focus areas: community life, communication, local facilities, community involvement and demographics. If there had been any doubts about the efficacy of LandCorp's initiatives at Harvest Lakes, the 2006 survey results laid them to rest, as there were a number of highlights:

- 94% of respondents indicated that they were either 'satisfied' (29%) or 'very satisfied' (65%) with life in Harvest Lakes, providing many positive comments about friendliness, their sense of personal safety and the social environment.

- The data revealed significant increases in neighbour interaction and participation in community groups, events, activities and environmental initiatives since 2004.
- The Harvest Lakes Community and Environmental Centre was being utilised by 41% of respondents. This is considered an excellent level of usage for a young community.
- 94% of respondents stated that they regularly read Harvest Cuttings, LandCorp's community newsletter, and 88% rated it as either 'good' or 'very good'.
- The majority of respondents were actively utilising public spaces in Harvest Lakes, with the walkways and cycle paths most popular (91%) followed by the parks, the school/community oval and playgrounds.

LandCorp's commitment to a community development approach had been substantial. The project demonstrated that enriching wellness and quality of life outcomes can be achieved in developments where there is a commitment to deliberate actions focused on a thorough understanding of people's needs and processes that forge community.

Harvest Lakes provided clear evidence that, for governments and developers, there is no escape from the maxim that 'you reap what you sow'. There, clearly, the yield was great.

*Harvest Lakes statistics demonstrated significant positive social outcomes, providing a solid return for LandCorp's investment in community.*

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# *Change your world*

Among the most significant revelations of the 2006 survey of residents at Harvest Lakes was the extent to which 'Change your world' aspirations had measurably changed patterns of behaviour. Findings indicated that LandCorp's investment in community development had triggered positive changes in social behaviours, interpersonal interactions, social cohesiveness and civic participation. For example:

- 30% of respondents attended local clubs or community groups at least once a month, while only 18% reported similar attendance prior to moving to Harvest Lakes.
- 54% of survey respondents attended community events or activities at least once a month, whereas only 16% had attended events each month prior to moving to the estate.
- 72% of respondents had sometimes walked or cycled before moving to Harvest Lakes, with 58% of those admitting they walked or cycled less than ten times per month. By contrast, 95% reported that they now walked or cycled and, of those, 60% indicated that they engaged in at least one of those activities more than ten times per month.



- Only 3% of survey respondents reported attending an event linked with promoting the natural and built environment before moving to Harvest Lakes, while 19% had attended at least one event or activity associated with environmental sustainability since their move. In addition, 40% of respondents flagged an interest in attending environmental education programs in the future.

There are few greater indicators of community vitality than frequency of neighbour interaction, and this too had increased. Whereas only 35% of respondents estimated that they had spoken with neighbours more than six times per month prior to moving to Harvest Lakes, 57% now talked to their neighbours between six and 31 times per month. Creating Communities recognises neighbour interaction as a progenitor of social capital, noting research findings that identify communication among neighbours as a buffer for social stress, a primer for efforts to organise community associations, and a predictor of future community participation. Harvest Lakes statistics demonstrated significant positive social outcomes, providing a solid return for LandCorp's investment in community. For Harvest Lakes, clearly, the omens were good.



*"We are confident of an exciting  
and rewarding life at Harvest Lakes."*

*Harvest Lakes resident Mike Potter.*

## *Toward a healthy future*

By 2008, LandCorp's work was done. As a land and property developer, it had met its obligations with an unprecedented emphasis on community and sustainability. Through intentional community formation, Harvest Lakes residents had developed a positive 'sense of community' and a high level of community involvement. Feedback included such comments as:

- 'We love living here and we love the community feel';
- 'Harvest Lakes is a great place to live'; and
- 'We are so happy living in Harvest Lakes... We have a healthier lifestyle because we walk more, and have made some wonderful new friends in the community'.

With higher levels of satisfaction and community belonging having been linked with increased health and wellbeing, the true dividends of this rewarding project were incalculable. Creating Communities Director, Donna Shepherd, believes: 'In all of the places that people inhabit there are enormous opportunities for the creation of something special. The challenge is to identify these potentials and bring them to fruition.' That 'something special' had been created at Harvest Lakes was beyond dispute.

As LandCorp prepared for gradual withdrawal from the development—a 'handover' to the community itself—it could feel satisfied with its demonstration that balancing social, environmental and economic outcomes can be more than just words. Harvest Lakes had proven that it was possible to deliver benefits to the environment, the community and the industry without



*“The Harvest Lakes Residents Association’s commitment and passion for the community will mean that Harvest Lakes residents can expect to be involved in an exciting future.”*

*Carl Curtis, LandCorp Development Manager.*

compromising revenue. Over a period of five years, Harvest Lakes had performed strongly in the marketplace, with intense demand for land on the estate surpassing expectations and producing a strong financial return for LandCorp, the State Government and, in turn, the people of Western Australia. The development had demonstrated that the ‘triple bottom line’ could be drawn across actual terrain, and was far from a pie in the sky. Environmental principles and a strategic approach to community development had, indeed, contributed to the competitive advantage of the project, and associated the LandCorp brand with excellence. Not surprisingly, Harvest Lakes had received prestigious Urban Development Industry of Australia awards, recognising LandCorp as a leader in its field.

Importantly, too, the scale of the Harvest Lakes development was such that it had provided a meaningful showcase for sustainability initiatives across government and industry, attracting attention around Australia. Other developers were picking up on the formula, listening to communities and going green. In short, Harvest Lakes had pointed a way forward for sustainable development.

From the outset, Creating Communities had emphasised that thriving communities form around people empowered to be involved in the management of the places in which they live. From 2006 to 2008 Creating Communities conducted capacity building projects with residents in events, publications and governance. In January 2008, Creating Communities facilitated a ‘visioning workshop’ for the Harvest Lakes Residents Association

(HLRA), an initiative sponsored by LandCorp to ensure continuity as the association moved toward independence beyond the estate’s development phase. Words participants associated with the HLRA and its journey from inception augured well for the future, including ‘families’, ‘friendship’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘social’, ‘oneness’, ‘belonging’, ‘growth’ and ‘sharing’.

Subsequently, the HLRA adopted a vision statement which, in many respects, reflected the Community Development Plan adopted by LandCorp more than five years earlier. The HLRA outlined a vision in which it worked to create ‘a safe, inclusive, vibrant and environmentally aware community that fosters a strong sense of belonging’. It planned to continue holding community functions and ‘creating mutually beneficial networks between local government, regional businesses and households’. The association gave Harvest Lakes residents a voice, and they were singing from the same page as those who had envisaged their community, daring to wed idealism with pragmatism.

As LandCorp prepared for a final, symbolic handover of responsibility for community development to the community and other relevant stakeholders in June 2008, it was clear that all were ready for the transition, as Donna Shepherd, Director Creating Communities also observed that, “Over the past five years, Harvest Lakes has emerged as a strong community with residents banding together to create a real sense of place” Residents had taken the leap of faith that Harvest Lakes inspired, proving it was possible to ‘Change your world’. Now, it was time to take charge.





## Project Partners

### Creating Communities

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Susan Quay  
Erin Borrett  
Carole Lambert  
Nicole Botica

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### RPS (formerly Bowman Bishaw and Gorham)

Martin Bowman  
Steve Rolls

### PPR

### Market Equity

### Sharni Howe Architects

### McNally Newton

### Sinclair Knight Merz

### Hames Sharley

### The Shorter Group

### Satterley Property Group



*“I love Atwell and wanted to stay local and we felt that Harvest Lakes was a great role model for the rest of the City of Cockburn in terms of making it a safe and active community.”*

*Harvest Lakes resident Steve Portelli*



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