Design label
Developers draw on architects' skills, writes Tonya Box

RESIDENTIAL developers are using the latest trend of architects' skills to design contemporary homes for new estates.

Buyers are more aware of what constitutes good housing design these days and are less accepting of the cookie-cutter approach to estates where every house looks alike.

Although less than 5 per cent of all homes in Australia are architect-designed, this figure is on the rise.

"Says no longer the feature in a good home," says James O'Hagan, principal marketing manager at PRDnationwide.

"Commerical and interesting design is now the ultimate showcase for housing diversity."

"Attacking the surge in home renovation shows and design publications in an increased awareness in housing design, developers in southeast Queensland are taking housing estates to the next stage of their evolution.

Buyers can choose between homes that incorporate the basic principles of good design, including climate consideration, house orientation and aesthetic appeal, without having to go through the process of hiring an architect.

In 2000, Consolidated Properties released the first estate of this kind, "Oceanview Beach," on the Tweed Coast between Kingscliff and Cabarita, a 3.5km oceanfront, stretching over 105 hectares. Fourteen three-bedrooms were added to design a contemporary Australian beach house for the development.

Buyers were able to build their own homes on the site in accordance with a building covenant aimed at keeping design high on the agenda.

Since then, several developers have employed multiple architects to design developments for their estates.

"While most appeal on the coastal line, two have made their way into inner city Brisbane. Brookby, by developers Aronde and Water, at Mitchelton on Brisbane's northside, and Wondoween by Bovis on Brisbane's west, recognise the value in using more than one architect to design their houses.

"There's a variety of residences to choose from, that can stop buyers going elsewhere." Peter Caves of Aronde says.

"Oceanview Beach" featured a rich and terraces designed by Cox Hayner and Associates.

"It's interesting to see how architects are used to design homes that are not just copies of each other, but are unique in their own right," says Paul Hume, senior lecturer at the School of Design at QUT and Queensland president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

"It's good that people have higher expectations but also that architects are becoming more creative in their work.

"Traditionally, architects are employed to fully understand the needs of the client and create the vision for their needs. This is a step away from that, but in a way you're limiting that," he adds.

"On the other hand, people who might have thought they couldn't afford an architect-designed house may now be able to.

"This is an important trend in the development of a new style of home that is not just a "cookie cutter" but a unique home in its own right." Paul Hume says.
rather than a stylistic relationship between the houses,” she says.

Elysium Noosa by developer Pearson Property Group is the latest estate to release architect-designed houses to the public. It differs to other estates in that the first stage will see 40 different houses designed by 12 architects built and, ideally, sold off the plan.

Managing director David Pearson says the company is not leaving good design to chance.

“If you just sell land and let everyone build their own house, no one has full control over their lot,” he says. “Other developments have employed the services of various architects including Driftwood at Driftwood Beach, also by Pearson Property Group, Seaside by Seaside Project Management on the Capricorn Coast, The Boardwalk at Cotton by Strickland, Twin Waters Coastal Community by Land Lease and Visions at Hyatt Coolan, also by Land Lease. Some of these estates also allow buyers to build their own house in accordance with a building covenant.”

Architect Shane Thompson from Hugh Walter Noll says there is a healthy competition between architects when it comes to designing houses for a single estate.

Bligh

Voller Noll has designed houses for the Elysium, Driftwood and Windermere developments – estates which Shane says gives him confidence that what they are designing will be part of a better and more innovative complex.

“You have to be more direct and conservative in a more conventional suburban community,” he says.

People who see the difference can be frowned upon by neighbours and so they take a more homogenous approach.”

Martin Crouch from Plant Architects says he enjoyed working with Gold Coast architect Paul Uhlmann on the Land Lease development. “It’s good to see the other architect take the brief and translate it differently,” Martin says. There is more scope yet for residential housing developments. Pathe says a larger scale of intervention by architects in urban planning and streetcape design would be welcome.