

Lakes — more than meets eye

A journey into future of modern living

BACK in the fun-filled revolutionary days of the 1990s, a protest song talked about "little boxes on the hillside, made of ticky-tacky and they all looked the same".

The song, written by Malvina Reynolds in 1962 and performed by Pete Seeger, ridiculed the development of suburbia and its bourgeois conformist values.

This might be applied to some of the earlier monotonous subdivisions built in the major cities of New Zealand.

But don't count the \$600 million Lakes residential community on the south western fringe of Tauranga in that collection.

The Lakes, being established by Grasshopper Properties at Pyes Pa West, is a shining example of well planned, modern urban design.

Meandering 4.6km up the valley alongside Kopurere Stream from the Route K roundabout to Pyes Pa Rd at the Crematorium, the 254ha development will turn in to a vibrant, thriving community where you can sit at the lakeside and sip latte.

That might sound bourgeois for



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Mr Reynolds and Mr Seeger but the stylish new Lakes suburb would no doubt capture their imagination and attention. It's modern living, we are talking about here, with all the conveniences on the doorstep.

There will be tree-lined streets, rustic sculptural features, wide open spaces of parks and reserves including 22 small lakes and children's playgrounds, a 10km network of walkways and cycleways and a village shopping centre the size of Cherrywood, with stores, garden centre, hairdresser and medical centre.

"We have gone over the top with everything we have done . . . we want the residents to be proud of where they are living"

— Simon Maxwell

The Government has also bought a site for a primary school.

It will be the most densely planted suburb in Tauranga — two million shrubs and trees, most of them natives, are being established — and the landscaping will arguably be more dominant than the houses.

Then again one set of houses won't stick out. The Lakes is encouraging a range of architecturally designed housing — two-storeyed and one-storeyed homes, villas, duplexes and apartments, on different sized sections, from 200sq m to 800sq m and even 3700sq m. That's not looking all the same.

The houses must be built in quality materials and within design and landscaping guidelines approved by the developer's management committee.

For instance, Grasshopper Properties is banning tall, solid concrete walls in the front of the house; instead a hedge or see-through fence should be no more than one metre high so the front section merges with the streetscape and the front door can be seen from the road for security purposes.

The traditional 1.8m fences can go up at the rear of the properties and down the side boundaries, starting from the front of the house.

A garage should preferably be built on the southern side and set back 1.5m from the front of the house. The northern side could have a sunny courtyard and barbecue area.

"It's pretty important that we deliver what we are telling people — that it will be an attractive suburb to live in and enjoy," said



TAKING SHAPE: The Lakes stage one is ready for the architecturally designed houses. The main street, Lakes Boulevard, is on the right of the picture, and in the middle the site is being prepared for the Bridgewater Lifestyle Village.

PICTURES: CLAIRE DE BARR 05047700080P



THE main lake, 900m long and 3m deep, is nearing completion in stage two and will be surrounded by a 6ha park. More housing will spread out from there.

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Simon Maxwell, planning and development manager of Grasshopper Properties.

"We want to create something special through landscaping and good urban design. We will let the work on the ground do the talking.

"We have gone over the top with everything we have done including over-width footpaths and cycleways; we want the residents to be proud of where they are living," said Mr Maxwell.

Stage one of 370 sections on the lower valley is 99 per cent sold out. Property titles are being delivered to 200 of the new owners and the remainder will be available within six to eight weeks.

The sections sold for between \$165,000 and \$220,000 and construction of the first dozen houses will begin within six

weeks. Universal Homes bought 109 sections of medium-density housing and they will also start building their duplexes and stand-alone homes on the flat and nearest to the Kopurere Stream.

Also down on the flat, the land has been prepared for the Bridgewater Village that the developers describe as more like a lifestyle than a retirement resort.

The management rights have not yet been assigned but the owners will have freehold titles to the 53 semi-detached and stand-alone villas and will have the choice of seven designs as well as access to wireless broadband and 24-hour, seven days a week security cameras.

From the Route K roundabout, passing motorists can see the start of the Pyes Pa bypass road —

Grasshopper paid \$6.7 million for the first 400m stretch — and the pegged sections on the eastern slope.

But there's more than meets the eye. The main collector road Lakes Boulevard feeds into streets called Rexford Heights, Crater Close, Caldera Crescent and Carex Close.

At the start of the boulevard, look for the underpass that connects the network of walkways and cycleways so that residents don't have to cross the busy collector road above.

The underpass, well lit and patrolled by security cameras, is made of old bridge beams and sleepers imported from Australia.

Back on the boulevard, the innovative bus stops are already in place waiting for the first Bay Hopper service that will start in



GRASSHOPPER Properties development manager Simon Maxwell shows off the final detail of the pedestrian underpass which connects the network of cycleways and walkways.

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July when the first residents begin moving in. It's just a 10-minute drive into town along Route K.

Along the boulevard are timber sculptures that depict the buried forest from long ago. When the contractors moved 350,000 cu m of earth during the stage one construction, they came upon the fallen and rotten logs.

The boulevard at present turns into Hastings Rd but on the right is a preserved, historic hilltop that was used for food storage by Maori. The hill, to be given a name by local iwi, will become a focal point of the big development and will be replanted in flax and ferns.

Behind it, the contractors are carving out the main lake, 900m long and three metres deep. Around it, in stage two, will be 6ha of reserves, lakeside cafes and 400 sections, once again of mixed

housing.

Past the lake is a row of gum trees that will be retained as the roost for a family of grey herons, which have become the icon of The Lakes development.

The stage two sections will go on the market next Spring and Mr Maxwell expects the prices to range from \$175,000 to \$300,000. All the titles for these sections should be available by this time next year.

Grasshopper Properties is planning on developing seven more distinctive stages till 2014, and by then it will have created 2100 sections catering for nearly 7000 people.

As The Lakes winds up the slim valley, even Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger may have thought it's a journey into the future of modern living.

THE LAKES PROFILE

- Currently the biggest residential development in the Bay.
- Covers 246ha with 2081 sections, 2ha village shopping centre, parks/reserves/ children's playgrounds, and cycleways/walkways.
- Two million trees and shrubs to be planted under extensive landscaping plan.
- Range of housing from stand-alone homes, villas, duplexes, apartments on different sized sections.
- First stage of 370 sections almost sold, sizes ranging from 300-800sq m and fetching between \$165,000 and \$220,000.
- Reading and services are in and construction of first houses will start within six weeks.
- Main lake covering 6ha in stage two to be dug out and another 400 sections will hit the market next September/October.
- Stage two section prices expected to range from \$175,000 to \$300,000.
- Fully developed in eight years and stretching up valley from Route K roundabout to Tauranga Crematorium.