



Baringa Town Square has been recognised for its contribution to a sense of place in the new community at Aura.

NEWS

Open spaces a key to development

WORDS Erle Levey

THE importance of open space in the urban landscape cannot be under-estimated.

As new residential communities spring up and older areas undergo rejuvenation, well-planned and landscaped spaces are essential for not just human well-being but for a sustainable environment.

Urban spaces and naturally enhanced landscape architecture projects were highlighted at the 2019 Queensland Landscape Architecture Awards.

The awards, held in Brisbane, shone a light on the importance of repurposing under-utilised areas to bring city centres to life.

The Sunshine Coast was among four sites celebrated for restoring neglected urban areas into buzzing city nodes to encourage economic development and create community destinations.

Place Design Group took out an open space award for the way it has brought life to Baringa Town Square in the new community at Aura in Caloundra West.

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Queensland president

David Uhlmann said Baringa was one of four Queensland sites that were lifting the profiles of their respective cities - the others being in Brisbane and Toowoomba.

"It is evident that these sites have already begun creating foot traffic through what were once dormant locations, and this has a flow-on effect to surrounding businesses and the local economy in general," Mr Uhlmann said.

"The winners were selected because of their contribution to a sense of place, whilst fitting in with the local character and being culturally relevant.

"A couple of key urban revitalisation trends we are seeing are stylish laneways and modern interpretations of the town square."

Mr Uhlmann said that above aesthetics, landscape architecture must serve a purpose to its surrounding community.

"The focus must not only be on appearance, but also on how the space can be transformed to benefit all aspects of society and maximise active space."

Baringa Town Square was awarded for its successful creation of a lively open space link

that allows for a multiplicity of uses.

It is the first public realm on the Sunshine Coast to incorporate skateable public infrastructure, integrating youth activities that align with the location; nearby schools, main street, local centre and community hub.

The design incorporated several elements to appeal to the varying interests of the youth including a skateable plaza, viewing zones, signage for parkour training, and chill-out zones. The town square also offers sheltered seating and shaded green space to facilitate the congregation of families, shoppers and students.

Baringa was also a finalist in the Parks and Open Space award for the sales and information precinct, and in Play Spaces award for the Aura Tree Play Park.

Other Sunshine Coast projects to be finalists were Mooloolaba Walk And Ride Bridge in the Infrastructure section, Sunshine Coast University Hospital Reconciliation Garden for the Cultural Heritage sector, Alexandra Headland Foreshore Deck for Small Places.