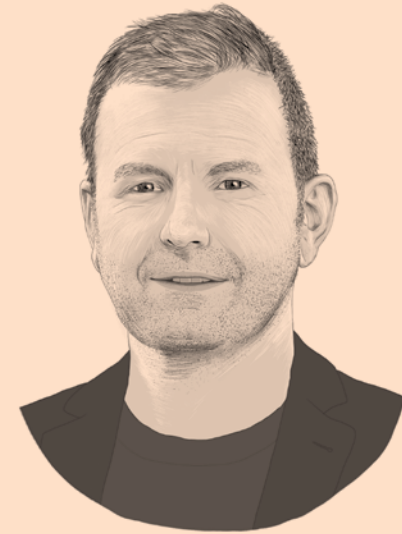




## Will we ever be famous for our suburbs?

By Dan Johnson, Partner and Group Director, Strategy and Creative, Hoyne



*Liveability equals profitability  
so let's expand our vision.*

In Australia we celebrate our liveable cities with pride. Newspaper headlines in 2015 rang out with the news that Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth had all made the top 10 in the The Economist Intelligence Unit's liveability survey.

The link between liveability and profitability has never been more evident. Especially for those property developers who made the astute decision to purchase land in Melbourne, my home, and a city that has topped the global liveability list at number one for five consecutive years.

Melbourne's liveability winning streak has coincided with an unprecedented boom in property development.

Residential towers of staggering scale and beauty have sprung up, and been snapped up, as local and international buyers wrestle for an opportunity to buy a piece of our urban paradise.

Our renowned universities and extraordinary restaurants, our expansive parks and intimate laneways, clean air and eclectic art and culture, are all factors that draw property buyers from around the globe to secure a slice of Melbourne.

As marketers of real estate, Hoyne has helped clients such as Hengyi and Lendlease to capitalise on this demand again and again. We've working alongside strategic agents such as Colliers, and seen residences with 1000+ apartments sell out in a matter of weeks.

It's been good times for property people in our most liveable of cities. But looking back on the past years of prosperity, I can't help but marvel at the fact that no one really planned this.

No one had a blueprint to create this award-winning icon of liveability. Most of Melbourne's town planning isn't new; the city's most acknowledged, desirable urban neighbourhoods are

a product of post-war planning. The current array of choice is not the result of careful choreography.

Sure, there have been initiatives and intentions, long-range projects and all the rest. But in terms of the culmination of every element that comes together to make Melbourne great – it just kind of happened. With this in mind, I look to Victoria's growth corridors – expansive tracts of land that sit outside Melbourne's city centre.

These sites are home to countless emerging housing estates. They vary in scale and density but one thing they share is a questionable ability to achieve mass international recognition – or a major global accreditation for liveability.

For the most, these places we might describe as communities are little more than networks of streets peppered with token parks; soulless dormitories that

empty out when residents are forced to drive to the action – drive to places to work, places to dine, places to learn and, well, just places.

In recent times things have improved. Schools, local stores and larger recreational facilities underpin Victoria's better estates. But very few, as I see it, are poised to pop-up in a casual conversation in London, Paris, Tokyo or New York. Few are poised to win an international accolade as salubrious as Melbourne's Economist equivalent.

All this begs the question – why? If Melbourne achieved World's Most Liveable City for five years running, why don't we create the World's Most Liveable Suburb?

With our years of advances, experience and insight, why shouldn't Australians create suburbs and communities that are globally recognised, decorated and desired? ➤

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The process is there: we master plan, we debate, we brainstorm and discuss the possibilities. Sadly, it seems that possibilities are precisely what we are denying the future residents of our outlying areas.

Of course, it’s not all doom and gloom. Among the homogeny and uninspiring are developers doing things differently. Woodlea, a community marketed by Hoyne and masterminded by Mirvac and VIP, has certainly bucked the trend.

The development is situated on a greenfield site, 30 kilometres from Melbourne’s CBD. As a land estate that will ultimately yield over 7,000 homes the project team behind Woodlea knew they had to create a compelling, long-term vision to secure buyers from the outset.

From its infancy Woodlea was curated and considered. The estate presents a rich fusion of education, recreation, neighbourhood centres and more. Outdoor cinemas and a home-side football team are long-range initiatives that will set Woodlea apart, and position the development as local liveability personified.

It’s early days but Woodlea has a café and it’s not just any café. Called Go West, it has all the urban cachet of its cool city counterparts, and has already been profiled in Broadsheet, the journal of all things foodie-chic in Melbourne.

Woodlea also has an impressive adventure playground, attracting families living in the area. For an estate in the initial stages of realisation, Woodlea already has some character and soul

and it’s easy to understand why: it was planned that way.

So what are the results? At the beginning of 2016, Woodlea was named Australia’s fastest selling land estate. In September the year before, it had already been crowned Victoria’s fastest selling community.

Woodlea is a valid benchmark for other developers who tour the community’s sales centre and display village seeking insights and answers to unlock their own success.

As I write, Victoria is enjoying a buoyant market for land sales. This makes it easier for some developers of less inspiring estates to prosper. But markets change; what goes up often comes down.

A few years ago, a developer struggling in the economic doldrums told me, “It’s never been harder to sell a block of dirt”. In times like these new clients flock to Hoyne; they want an agency that knows the landscape, they want strategy, science and guarantees, which will give their estate the best chance of commercial success.

During these periods I attend planning workshops where the conversation inevitably leads to sales and marketing. Hoyne has a reputation for marketing that turns around beleaguered estates so there’s a commonality to the questions: how do we stand out, how do we get more buyers, how do we outperform and achieve our sales targets?

My first response is always the same: “Make it somewhere people want to live.” — ●



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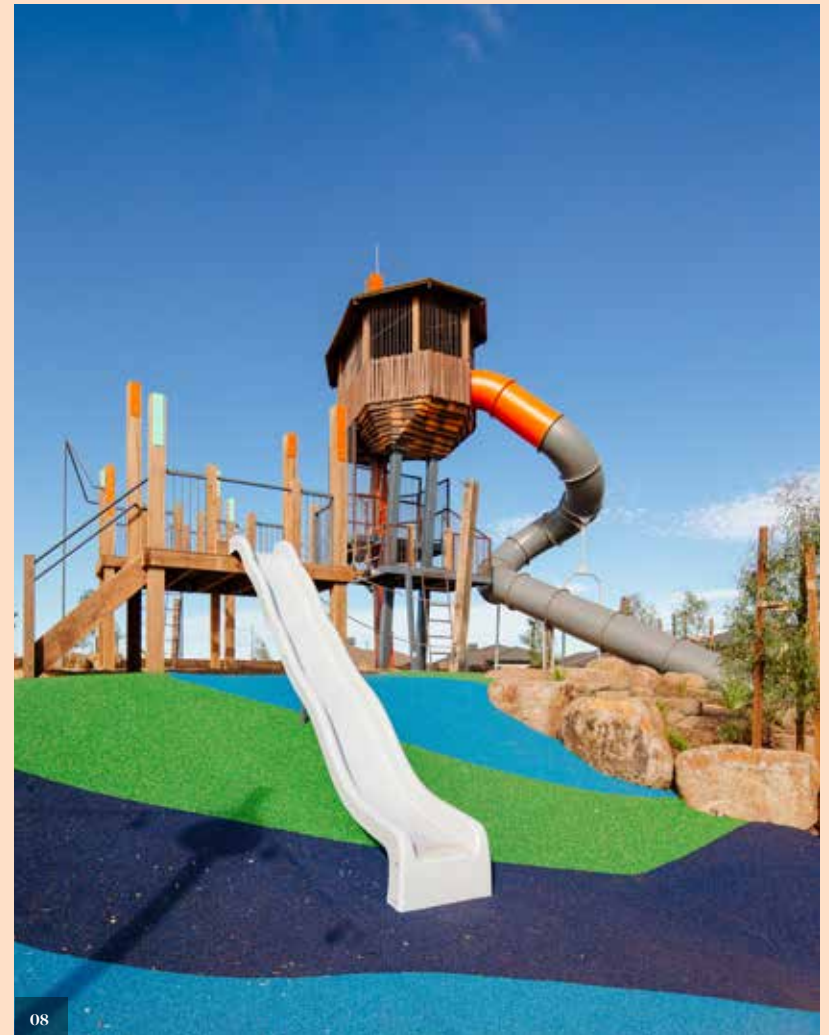


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