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The Backyard Village

Our society is rapidly changing, yet the development industry—dominated by a structural framework designed to look backwards and repeat forwards—is slow to change with it, as innovation is directly associated with risk. However, creating safe pathways to the future through vision, creativity and passion is one that needs to be framed by professional expertise, shared by all and collaborated on by many.

In this presentation, I will explore the journey through an internationally recognised and recently completed Gold Coast project that has created one of those pathways: ENVI Micro Urban Village, Southport. The unique attribute of this project is not simply that it creates housing that is respectful of its context, ecologically and economically sustainable while also being repeatable and affordable, but that it delivers those benefits within that single back yard that is so preciously guarded by NIMBY sentiments. Despite recent trends, ENVI has been enthusiastically welcomed by its surrounding community, including immediately adjacent detached home and townhouse neighbours, apartment dwellers across the street as well as body corporate managers and business owners nearby.

But despite its warm reception, coordinating the planning, design, building, infrastructure and finance legislation necessary for this innovative tiny lot village to come into being was so challenging that it was sometimes more like creating village on the moon than a small urban subdivision in the emerging CBD of the Gold Coast.

Whether familiar with the Gold Coast as a local, a professional or as a repeat visitor, or even if you are discovering it for the very first time, looking at it through the lens of the ENVI Micro Urban Village project will provide an entirely new perspective on how its maverick past is being honoured by an even more innovative future, ideally offering at least one new solution for housing its future generations.