



Raised vegetable gardens are full of produce shared between the occupants.

Sustainability is

■ **Katie Lee**

Combining straw-bale and reverse-brick veneer construction methods on the one site, this unique development embraces green living from a number of perspectives.

"It is outside the box and brings people together in the one development," Anna Wright, of Right Homes said. Right Homes constructed the development, which was initially sketched by Solar Dwellings.

"The idea behind this development was to showcase that on a standard Perth lot, a sustainable community development with different construction methods was not only achievable and affordable but could also showcase top-end water and energy efficiencies," Mrs Wright said.

It was undertaken by a group of homeowners — Alana and Mark Dowley and Eugenie and Helmuth Stockmann — who believed there was a better way of living than their respective homes.

They formed The Green Swing, which Mrs Dowley said started as a vision and morphed into a movement with the group now working on another project to spread the green living word.

"We knew what materials we wanted to build with but we just didn't have skills among ourselves to design and make it work," Mrs Dowley said.

Mrs Wright said the Lathlain development was different from a normal triplex in a number of ways.

"Firstly, it doesn't have a long driveway down the side of the homes," she said.

"Parking has been kept to the front of the properties, with a central walkway leading to the homes, enhancing the community appeal.

"A lot of the materials used have also



been recycled or repurposed. There was an old house on here that was knocked down and they took a lot from that and each of the owners had things they had collected over the years that have gone into it as well."

Mrs Dowley said they also arranged to "gut" a home near Fremantle that was planned for demolition for free if they could take the remnants away.

She said this had helped build a beautiful garden shed, complete with stained-glass windows, at the rear of the lot, along with door frames and other items inside and outside the homes.

The orientation of the development has been slightly offset from the block's frontage to make the most of the true northern sun. Solar pergolas made from recycled jarrah floorboards protect the upper northern windows from harsh summer sun. Double-glazed windows and R6 ceiling insulation help regulate internal temperatures.

Solar-panel systems have been fitted to each unit, while six-star-efficient tapware, rainwater tanks, solar hot-water systems, LED and fluorescent lighting and ceiling fans add to the homes' GreenSmart style.

Water from a grey-water system and communal bore services the whole development. The owners said they didn't receive any bills for water consumption, though the gardens were thriving.

Raised vegetable garden patches have been built from recycled materials. They are full of produce shared between the occupants.

"It works well because everyone pitches in and gets something out of it," Mrs Dowley said.

A council sump next door to the development has been beautified into a useable community space. In an



Poured concrete floors act as a thermal base and recycled bricks line some of the walls.

on the upswing

agreement with the local council, it now has native plants and pathways for people to enjoy.

Mrs Wright said managing the mixed-construction methods on the same site was challenging but was worth the effort, with both of the homes achieving high energy ratings.

Unit two has a nine-star rating and zero carbon status and unit three has a 10-star rating and almost zero carbon status.

Unit two, owned by the Stockmanns, was built from the straw-bale and reverse-brick veneer construction. It has sleek panelling combined with rendered, curved wall sections that feature inside and out.

The open-plan living area is on the ground floor with a kitchen partly tucked under the staircase.

"We didn't want to block off the understair area as it would just be wasted space," Mrs Stockmann said. "One of the ideas of the design was also only including exactly what we needed to keep the footprint small."

Poured concrete floors act as a thermal base and recycled bricks also line some of the walls.

The second level houses the main bedroom and ensuite, plus an open, multipurpose area, which could be easily divided into separate bedrooms with lightweight walls if required.

A big loft houses storage space and another multipurpose area.

Unit three, which belongs to the Dowley family of five, was constructed with reverse-brick veneer and Masterwall cladding. It has a flipped floor plan, with the open living spaces upstairs.

The two bedrooms, bathroom, activity space and understair laundry are on the ground floor. The three children share a bedroom.

The development also includes two apartments in one separate building which have the same green additions.

"The homes clearly display what can be



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achieved when passive-solar design and sustainable building principles are carefully combined," Mrs Wright said.

"You just need the GreenSmart principles of orientation, insulation, thermal mass and ventilation — starting with those four principles and adding bits and pieces has made these homes very comfortable."

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