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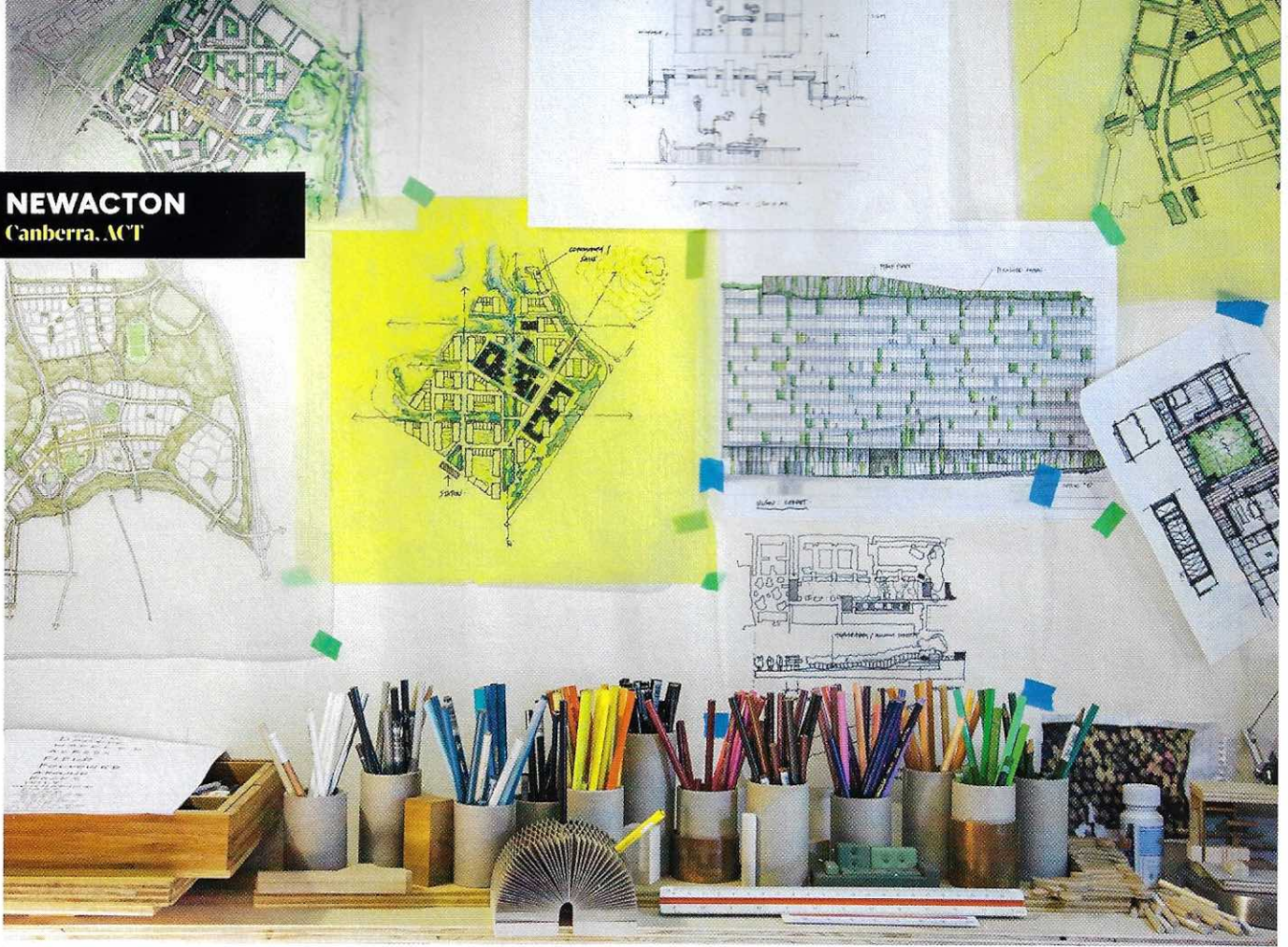


OUTSIDE THE BOX

Good architecture and design has the ability to transform communities. Here are four grand Australian developments that have made a big impact.

Words CLARE PATIENCE

NEWACTON
Canberra, ACT



YOU MIGHT BE greeted by laughter if you tell people you're off to Canberra on a holiday, but the joke is on those who aren't taking a weekend to indulge in the luxury of Hotel Hotel, which is embedded in the hip multi-functional quarter of NewActon.

Award-winning, steeped in style and loved by locals, the NewActon precinct — a development that includes Hotel Hotel's home, the Nishi building — initially took a huge effort to even get the go-ahead. "NewActon was an endeavour that took more than a decade," says Nikos Kalogeropoulos of Molonglo Group, the developers responsible for the project. "When we were caught up in the red tape there were times we thought we'd never get it off the ground. It was expensive for us but we kept on with the vision."

That vision was spurred on by a deep love for Canberra and a desire to regenerate the city. "We wanted to make a statement for Canberra," says Kalogeropoulos. "We wanted authenticity in the design and to celebrate what Canberra had [by creating] something truly Australian. Plus we had selfish motivations — we wanted to help redevelop the city so when our kids grow up, they will want to stay here."

Hotel Hotel is one of the hallmarks of the overall NewActon development. Behind its design was a wish to forge a place for serendipitous encounters and creative moments. "We have opportunities to interact but people avoid them. The beauty of a hotel is that it's disarming — people are more relaxed and open to exchanging ideas," says Kalogeropoulos. In this way, Hotel Hotel, located on three levels of the mixed-use Nishi building,

FROM TOP Designs for the NewActon precinct; Hotel Hotel's 'grand stair'; the quirky exterior. **PREVIOUS PAGE** The Nishi building under construction.

works hand in hand with the surrounding spaces, with guests having ready access to restaurants, conference rooms, a cinema, seminar spaces and exhibitions — all in one design-centric melting pot.

And true to the developers' desire to celebrate the nation's capital, the Nishi's design incorporates modern interpretations of distinctly Australian details — such as the bush shed — with curved walls that represent corrugated iron panels. "Canberra is a bush capital, why fight it?" says Kalogeropoulos. ➤

