DEVELOPING OUR CITY \

There's a Canny way to do business, writes LIZ McLACHLAN

HEART & SOUL

In the past 20 years, the Canny name has become synonymous with award-winning luxury houses in Melbourne's eastern suburbs – now the Canny Group is applying its high-end design and building expertise to multiresidential projects, with outstanding results.

Its fast-growing development division, Canny Projects, is delivering 69 multimillion-dollar contemporary architect-designed houses for Walker Corporation's Main Drive, Kew, development.

Designed by leading architects, the four-bedroom double-storey houses are set in 27 hectares of park-like surrounds with boulevards lined by historic, century-old oak trees and Moreton Bay figs on the north-facing slopes of the project, neighbouring Studley Park and close to some of Melbourne's best schools and the Yarra River.

The luxury interiors are finished in natural stone and timber, with American-oak flooring and Italian designer fittings.

Delivery of the new houses is staged, with completion scheduled for late 2014. While it's a far cry from Canny's earliest beginnings in home renovations and shop fitting, Canny general manager Greg Davy says the company's principles of timely delivery, exceptional quality and attention to detail haven't changed and continue to deliver results.

"We've earned our stripes creating iconic, award-winning homes in the Canny custom business. Now we're translating this knowledge into designing and building equally spectacular multiresidential projects," Davy says.

Walker Corporation developments and projects general manager David Gallant says Canny's build quality has given Walker Corporation confidence in Canny's ability to deliver.

"Since Canny Projects was appointed at our Kew Cottages development in April 2012, we have seen a strong sense of professionalism at every level. The first homes were delivered on time and to a very high standard," Gallant says.

"They certainly understand the level of detail required on a luxury home product, as do we, thus, the relationship has developed with a mutual respect."

Walker Corporation initially appointed Canny Projects to build a stage comprising 23 houses. After the successful delivery of that project, Canny was awarded further business with 69 houses in total across the

development and now has a team of up to 200 staff and tradespeople working at the site.

Canny managing director Damian Canny says if clients can dream it, then Canny can build it. The passion ignited by a childhood spent on his father's building sites fuelled the development of a business that today offers a range of house-building services, from full custom builds to predesigned architectural homes, integrated pools, project building and a separate in-house design studio.

Canny started in business at age 18 with friend Lachy Watson, now financial controller for the group. They completed 27 fit-outs for the Gazman men's wear chain across Australia and at the same time had home renovations on the go, listening carefully to what home buyers and real-estate agents were looking for. When the pair started smashing eastern-suburbs sales records and their client list ballooned, they moved their focus to creating beautiful houses.

Canny houses are known for their clever, integrated floor plans, room proportions and quality workmanship – attributes that have earned the business several awards. In 2012 Canny's predesigned custom home Lubelso was named Australia's project home of the year by the Housing Industry Association.

Watson says Canny wants to diversify and explore its capabilities and has discovered high demand from developers.

"Designing and building beautiful high-end custom homes will always be central to what we do. This work gives us the experience and technique to deliver commercial projects where we can see a lot of growth."

Canny's first foray into multiresidential development was a $7 million speculative development in Toorak, designing and building six four-storey townhouses in Verdant Avenue opposite the Yarra River. Its development portfolio has quickly grown and includes a $15 million luxury house and townhouse development on a prime Brighton site.

Davy says Canny differentiates itself through quality, timely delivery and cross-disciplinary expertise drawn from its architects, interior designers and landscape architects as well as construction experts.

"When you are used to delivering quality it's far easier to deliver high-end projects. When we're tendering for business it's most often against companies used to delivering at a lower level who are trying to build above what they normally do. We bring $2 million-home quality to our project work. The Canny name has become synonymous with quality.

"A lot of our new business comes from people who demand excellence in everything in their lives and recognise that in our homes," he says.

Canny is using its expertise in a new partnership with HeartKids Victoria, a charity supporting children with heart disease and their families. Canny is refurbishing three apartments opposite Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital that accommodate families with children having heart surgery and treatment. Known as "Max's Place" the apartments were bought by Adelaide couple Tim and Heather Round in 2002 after their baby son Max died from a heart condition.

After housing families for more than 10 years, the apartments needed a facelift. Canny's refurbishment, due for completion this month, will create bright and appealing homes away from home for families.

More than 20 of Canny's suppliers and trades are supporting the project, donating cabinetry, appliances, furnishings and children's games and books. \

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» **Readers interested in tracking the progress of the Max's Place project or making a donation can visit:** www.facebook.com/canny.friends

» **Canny Group**
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