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PHOTOGRAPH BY BRETT BOARDMAN

Rouse Hill Town Centre wins national AIA award

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A consortium of three architectural practices from New South Wales, Rice Daubney, Allen Jack+Cottier and Group GSA (in association with Civitas Urban Design and Planning), have won one of the country's highest architectural accolades, the National Australian Institute of Architects Walter Burley Griffin Award for Urban Design, for its work on The GPT Group's recently launched Rouse Hill Town Centre.

The annual AIA Architecture Awards, which were held this year in Adelaide's famous St Peter's Cathedral, honour excellence in all areas of architecture and are the profession's most prestigious awards. The National Walter Burley Griffin Award for Urban Design is awarded annually from the pool of state winners announced earlier in the year.

The Award's jury noted: "Rouse Hill breaks away from the 'big box' model of internal retail centres and creates a network of open and semi-open streets, lanes, squares and public spaces more closely aligned with the values of the traditional small town.

"The consortium of architects, planners and developers has worked hard to create a relaxed environment of human scale, pedestrian amenity and material quality on a large greenfield site."

Keith Cottier, Chairman of Allen Jack+Cottier and one of the Design Directors on the project said: "This project presented us with a unique challenge: it provided the rare opportunity to design both the buildings, and the public realm in which they stand.

"Our aim was to set a new benchmark for how people think about new town centres and the retail world, both in Australia and internationally."

The GPT Group's \$470 million Rouse Hill Town Centre sits at the heart of the 120-hectare New Rouse Hill site in Northwest Sydney. The New Rouse Hill is a joint venture project between GPT and Lend Lease and was developed within the context of a masterplan prepared by Civitas Urban Design and Planning in partnership with the Department of Planning and Landcom.

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In addition to the new retail and commerce space, Rouse Hill Town Centre includes cinemas, public spaces and a public transport hub. Through the joint venture between GPT Group and Lend Lease, the town centre also features 104 residential apartments, learning spaces and the Baulkham Hills Shire Council library.

The state government set the original vision for the Rouse Hill region and GPT extrapolated on this vision, setting the architects and designers benchmark sustainability and urban space targets.

In towns and cities, public space has traditionally served as a meeting place, marketplace and traffic way. Enjoyable towns and cities find a comfortable balance between these three demands, without forfeiting their links with the natural world. The starting point for the design of Rouse Hill Town Centre was a desire to achieve this balance, responding to both the climatic environment and ESD principles.

The project has also been the recipient of several other awards including:

2008 Lloyd Rees Award for Urban Design (NSW), Australian Institute of Architects

2008 People's Choice Award, Banskia Awards for Environmental Excellence

2008 Rise Apartments, High Density Housing, Urban Design Institute of Australian Awards

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