GOLD COAST URBAN HERITAGE & CHARACTER STUDY

‘God I love this place, some of these buildings are twenty years old’
Steve Martin, LA Story.

Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle • Henshall Hansen Associates • Context • HJM • Staddon Consulting
This is a digital re-publication of the 1997 Gold Coast Urban Heritage & Character Study.

Notes:
1. This document does not contain the Appendices of the original publication which is available for viewing at Gold Coast City Council libraries.
2. Maps contained within this document have not been updated to reflect the current City of Gold Coast boundaries. On 15 March 2008, as part of a local government reform process, the Beenleigh-Eagleby region on the Gold Coast's northern border was transferred to Logan City.


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FOREWORD

As it matures, the Gold Coast, like many other Australian cities, is asking of itself "What is our heritage and how can that essential character that sets us apart from other places, be recognised, promoted and protected?" In essence, the Urban Heritage and Character Study has been undertaken to answer this question.

Through the Corporate Plan, Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the beauty, appeal and sustainability of this City. The Study directly addresses two of the key objectives of Council’s Corporate Plan: Culture and Diversity and Local Character.

- **Culture and Diversity:** To enhance the choices available for living, working, learning, religious activities, recreation and entertainment by promoting diversity and recognising the distinctive history, location and culture of the Gold Coast.

- **Local Character:** To recognise the importance of neighbourhood identity in the Gold Coast, and its role in developing a distinctive character and urban form.

While the fast population growth of this City causes ever increasing pressure on the natural and built environments, the challenge to Council and the community is:

- to support that growth without losing what people come here for; and,
- to enhance the image of the region as a whole, and the identity of its distinctive local character areas.

In June 1996, Council engaged consultants Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle and others to undertake a preliminary study of urban heritage and character conservation issues for this city. This document is a result of that work. It provides and understanding of what constitutes the City’s heritage and character, through its series of essays about the history, culture and architecture of the Gold Coast, identification of themes and description of special character areas. The study then recommends a meaningful framework within which Council and the community can work, to conserve and enhance that heritage and special character. It is important to note that implementation of these recommendations will not radically change the way the planning system operates. The range of recommendations go beyond the normal statutory approach to heritage and character conservation. The overall emphasis is on education and incentives rather than regulatory means. This study shows Gold Coast City an opportunity to define a unique approach to conservation of the heritage and character of its built environment.

Progress of the Study has been overseen by an Urban Heritage & Character Technical Steering Taskgroup, which comprised representatives from Council, the Cultural Heritage Branch of the Department of Environment, and the community. I take this opportunity to thank the following community members for their contribution to this project. Mr James Weate (Southport Preservation & Renewal Society), Mr Arnold Wolthers (architect), Mr Don Williamson (Architect & Chairman of the Property Council of Australia) Dr Tommy Thomas (National Trust) Mr Craig Mercer (Urban Planner) Mr Greg Forgan-Smith and Mr Greg Kearney (Urban Design Advisory Panel), Ms Deborah Kelly (Property Industry Advisory Committee) and Mr Brian Talbot (Environment Advisory Committee).

Gary Baildon
MAYOR
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Urban Heritage and Character Study was carried out to identify the range of urban heritage issues within the Gold Coast in terms of both significant places and distinctive character areas.

Like other cities the Gold Coast contains within its boundaries places, structures and urban landscapes which reflect the history of the region and its development since European settlement. Many cities have recently prepared inventories or lists of places of cultural significance.

The particular phenomena of the Gold Coast as one of Australia’s newest and fastest growing cities, its unique location urban form and culture require however, consideration of its heritage and character in a more dynamic and critical manner than is normal.

The study therefore begins by establishing the context in which the city, its heritage and character exist. A series of essays describe not only the history of the city but the environment and the particular culture within which its urban form has evolved.

Those findings were tested by reference to community opinion in two ways. Market research was carried out with groups representing the diversity of age, socio-economic status and location within the city. A program inviting the community at large to respond to the question “What’s the best thing about living in Gold Coast City” was carried out in parallel with the market research. More than 750 postcards were received - again representing a wide range of community interests. Clearly the stakeholders or those with an interest in the heritage and the future of the city are equally wide ranging and the interests and expectations of property owners, residents and visitors as well as Council and those with a specific interest in heritage conservation have been taken into account. Strategic initiatives and statutory town planning opportunities and constraints shape the expectations of the community.

The study finds that the city has nine broad character areas. Within these are other, smaller areas of special character and a range of places, icons and images worthy of special care.

Despite opinions from some quarters the Gold Coast is rich in heritage and has substantial and recognisable character.

Its history dates back to the 1860s when the hinterland was opened up by timber getters. The hinterland still contains evidence of that period and of the subsequent development of the area for agricultural activity. Some early buildings and evidence of early infrastructure survive. So too does the rural character of that part of the city and importantly the largely unmodified environment of the mountain ranges which form the visual back drop to the west of the city. It was the development of the coastal strip however that set the Gold Coast apart from other Australian cities. Conceived as a "marine township" in 1874 the Southport area developed as a holiday destination centered on the beach in the manner of English seaside towns such as Blackpool. Early buildings were exuberant and the lifestyle characteristically and deliberately at odds with normal 19th Century convention.

The popularisation of surf bathing in the late 19th Century confirmed the south coast as a holiday destination and development along the beachfront areas from Southport to Coolangatta took place. Although some holiday houses were modest the Coast attracted its share of hotels and guest houses which celebrated holiday themes that the early marine resort had begun.

In the late 1950s and 1960s a further wave of holiday activity took place building upon the special characteristics of fantasy and escape that had shaped the development of the coastal strip. That special quality continues to this day.
The city is unusual in its lineal form parallel to the beach, in its architectural expression and in its culture and lifestyle. The visible evidence is largely centered on development from the last 40 years. It is not only one of the fastest growing cities in Australia but the most post modern - outwardly superficial but nevertheless real. Its visual and actual proximity to the hinterland emphasises those characteristics.

It is an important part of Australian cultural history and although much of the evidence is relatively recent in traditional heritage terms it is no less valuable for that. Many of the various themes of Gold Coast history have been sustained throughout more than 100 years. Market research and community consultation show it to be a city loved by its residents and its visitors. The identification and protection of those special qualities and the conservation of that heritage and character will however require particular programs not necessarily those found in other more ordinary cities.

“The study finds that the Gold Coast has a unique cultural tradition expressed in its city form and architecture. It has integrity and validity as part of Australian life.”

The primary recommendation arriving from this study is that Council should embrace and promote the diversity of the heritage and character of the Gold Coast amongst its residents and visitors and look to ways of conserving that unique lifestyle, heritage and urban character. It should do so in a way that steps outside conventional town planning urban design and heritage controls where necessary.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issues/Opportunities</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UNIQUE CULTURE</strong></td>
<td><strong>EMBRACE THE DIFFERENCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gold Coast is seen by many, from both within and out of the City, as one that has one little in the way of heritage, and a character that is superficial and indeed offensive in traditional town planning terms.</td>
<td>Embrace the diversity of the heritage and character of the Gold Coast, accepting the City’s unique position in Australian cultural life;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is clearly not so. The City is a diverse entity containing both heritage and character from its earliest history up to its present state as &quot;the most post-modern of all Australian cities&quot;.</td>
<td>Promote it amongst its residents, visitors and industry, together with individuals, professionals and community groups; and,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its position culturally is unique and excitingly so. It has integrity and validity as part of Australian life.</td>
<td>Look to ways of conserving that unique lifestyle and associated urban heritage and character in any future planning for the city, and do so in a way that, where necessary, steps outside conventional town planning, urban design and heritage conservation methods and controls.</td>
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Secondary recommendations propose the more detailed study of that unique cultural tradition and urban diversity. Recommendations include the extension of existing history programs focused on culture and lifestyle and the particular urban form and architectural expression of the city.

A more detailed understanding of the cultural significance of the natural environment and its relationship with the more developed areas of the city is also recommended.

Tertiary level recommendations deal with ways in which Council and the community may take immediate action to develop an awareness of heritage and special character issues and take action to protect and conserve those places. Case studies examine some of these opportunities in four areas or sites within the city.

The following section sets out in more detail the structure of the report.
2. THIS STUDY THIS DOCUMENT
This document reports upon the results of a study carried out in the latter part of 1996. Its aim was to identify the urban heritage and character of the Gold Coast and to recommend possible measures for further identification, documentation and conservation of those places.

It is one part of a 'suite of urban design objectives'1 that together will inform and direct Council's planning initiatives as the strategic plan for the city is reviewed and revised in the immediate future.

Other current studies to guide planning policy for the City include exercises to identify cultural development and nature conservation.

This study's principal objective is to describe and define those characteristics of the city in its urban form and man-modified environment that contribute to its identity so that the 'maintenance and enhancement of the image of the city' may be incorporated into planning policy and practice.

The study was not conceived as a simple heritage survey to identify and list a series of places to be protected through, for example, listing within the existing State Government Heritage Act, nor for that matter within local government lists either at city scale or at specific sub-areas as in development control plans.

While this more normal approach to heritage identification and protection has its place, the present study takes a wider view and seeks to identify heritage within the culture of the Gold Coast itself. In particular, the lifestyle and perception of the present community to its heritage has been taken into account. That of the visitor population has been less consciously considered although the study team has been constantly aware that the Gold Coast as Australia's premier tourist destination presents an image to that transient population that is central to its economic well-being.

While the findings of the study are aimed primarily at establishing a framework within which further and more detailed analysis may be carried out, the authors are aware that in this city, one of the fastest growing in the nation, there is an increasing awareness amongst the public and planners that the essential qualities of the Gold Coast City are being eroded as a result of the development that inevitably accompanies population growth at this scale.

The report therefore, attempts to address this immediate pressure by formulating recommendations and guidelines for action and decision-making on whether, and to what extent, places constitute the heritage or character of the city. While these are primarily aimed at decision-makers within Council, whose understanding of the issues and judgment are critical in the protection of heritage and enhancement of character of the city, it is hoped that these 'interim' recommendations may form the basis for wider discussion between those citizens who feel real concern on these matters and Council itself.

The protection of heritage and the enhancement of character are not simple black-and-white issues to be decided by experts in a single review but are, by their nature, matters for debate and judgment that will change and develop according to the perceptions and expectations of the community in all its forms.

This document attempts to set out the process of this decision-making in a logical format, beginning with the discussion of the very nature of heritage and character, before moving to a study of the history of the Gold Coast to establish a context within which the heritage and character of the city exists.
The history is itself further developed into a series of themes - necessary in a city of such recent history - to demonstrate the continuum of history and the inter-relationship between events and the physical evidence of those events over sometimes the entire historical spectrum.

For example, the reclamation of low-lying land has its origins in the drains cut through the flood plain by TB Stephens as early as 1905. Its more recent expression is in the extensive canal estates that are so much a part of the character of the city. The expression of each is equally important if the heritage and character of the Gold Coast is to be properly understood and conserved.

In the section, Places and Sites, some attempt is made to demonstrate those particular places and special sites that demonstrate the various themes of history, which have 'cultural resonance' with the Gold Coast community.

Once again, it is emphasised that the mapping exercise is not comprehensive. The examination of each and every site within the city was neither practical nor required as part of this study.

The places identified are therefore, only broadly illustrative of the range and variety of sites representing the themes of history and character identified in the previous section. Further refinement and development will be necessary in subsequent studies or as a better understanding of the significant sites and places evolve through planning practice.

The section, Stakeholders, Conflict and Opportunity, identifies the likely diversity of interest within the Gold Coast community and sets out the opportunities and constraints that such a diverse view offers. This study reports on these matters in two ways.

Firstly, it identifies the various stakeholders and assumes certain attitudes for each group within the context of the Gold Coast. That is, while the attitudes are broadly typical of communities of interest Australia-wide, they are interpreted within the Gold Coast context based on results of both market research and community consultation. The results of these two programs conducted as part of the study demonstrate that there is clearly an attitude to heritage and character in this city that sets it apart from other more established and traditional cities. To a large degree, the population of the Gold Coast has chosen this place to live and in doing so, embraces and endorses attitudes toward development that has shaped the city over the last fifty years. Conflict is therefore, potentially less dramatic than in other places in Australia and even those who espouse the need for conservation of heritage and character do so largely within the ethos and practice of existing planning and development.

Secondly, the section looks at opportunities to conserve heritage places and the character of the Gold Coast. Once again, the expectations of the community shape and direct the recommendations of this section. Few of those interviewed or who offered opinions about the heritage and character of the city proposed radical controls or saw the need for wholesale listing or protection. While some expressed concern at the erosion of amenity, most acknowledge that the Gold Coast would and should continue to develop and that controls, where necessary, should not necessarily parallel those more normal in the broader Australian context. Proposals in this section have been drafted with these comments in mind.

In order to test some of those alternate proposals, four case studies are examined.

The first focuses on the cane growing area of Steiglitz and is a product of the former Albert Shire Plan. Its success in conserving this region as both an economic unit, character area and individual heritage sites such as the Rocky Point Mill are wholeheartedly supported by local residents.

The second is centred on a cohesive area of 1960s walk-up apartments at Broadbeach, which through economic and social forces has been largely conserved. The study demonstrates that conservation may be a natural function of these forces.
The third looks at the opportunity that Council itself has to demonstrate, through urban design and the careful husbandry of its own sites to influence the conservation of heritage and character. A scheme to manage the Main Beach Surf Life Saving Pavilion, Bathing Pavilion and the surrounding precinct demonstrates this opportunity.

The fourth looks at proposals to conserve Mudgeeraba as a place which has particular character. Again the views of the local community play a part in this process.

The penultimate section sets out the findings and recommendations of this study.

The appendix contains material directly associated with this study including an elaboration of the market research and community consultation and an expanded reading list on heritage and character and on the history of the Gold Coast.

To those whose interest in this work lies only in the results of the study, the section, Findings and Recommendations, answers the questions raised in the brief and sets out as clearly as possible recommendations on future directions to encompass heritage and character in planning for the future of the Gold Coast.

To those who may be more directly concerned with the day-to-day issues of managing change, this section includes some recommendations for immediate action and deals with questions of what to keep and how to keep it. Those individuals should have at least a basic knowledge of the broader issues which have generated the recommendations and are covered in the preceding sections.

To those whose interest runs more deeply still, it is recommended that the document be read from beginning to end. It is set out in a logical order which the authors hope will not only lead the reader to the conclusions and recommendations, but it will allow the document to be referred to as a truly useful working tool by Council officers and the public alike.

Its logic will also, it is hoped, allow for a critical appraisal of the approach and findings and will encourage debate and development of the work as practice and experience demands.

“And now there is only one thing that I’d like to know. Where did the Twentieth Century go? I’d swear it was here just a minute ago.”

Steve Goodman, The Twentieth Century is Almost Over
3. ABOUT HERITAGE & CHARACTER
In considering the urban heritage and character of any area an understanding of the meaning of those terms and their relationship to each other needs to be developed. Heritage is not the same as character, even historic character, and the manner in which each is assessed and ultimately conserved or enhanced differs markedly.

Other related issues including that of amenity (including visual amenity) taste or design preference are also worth clarifying before judgment as to the intrinsic value of the place or area is made and decisions taken as to the means of promoting or enhancing these values through town planning or other initiatives.

### 3.1 HERITAGE

Introducing the concept of the National Estate, the then Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, described heritage as ‘the things we want to keep’.

Despite the passage of more than 20 years, heritage may still be defined as those places which are of such value that their attention for conservation is seen as being important to the cultural or psychological well being of the community.

*There is in dealing with heritage a sense of commitment to permanence and stability. Heritage implies a lack of change or "keeping" aspects of the built or natural environment for future generations.*

The legislation that has grown up around these beliefs reflects the need for precision in making such decisions.

The Australian Heritage Commission Act of 1975 proposed a range of criteria against which judgments concerning cultural significance could be made. Criteria have been modified or adapted since then, but the approach later incorporated into the Queensland Heritage Act, is still based on attributes which may be quantified and the conservation outcome measured against those stated values.

Concern about the protection of heritage and resulting heritage legislation is not new and dates back to Roman times at least. Modern concern for heritage dates back to the late 19th Century. Heritage interest and legislation at that time focused largely on monumental buildings, buildings of antiquity and buildings with clear artistic or aesthetic merit.

In the late 20th Century the criteria as to what constitutes the heritage of a place has been broadened. The Queensland Heritage Act for example defines cultural and heritage significance of a place or object as having "aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social or technological significance to the present generation or the past or future generations".

The less tangible concepts such as social value have increased dramatically the range of places considered to be important and subject to the protection that legislation brings. Not only individual places but groups of buildings and urban areas are now considered to be part of the cultural estate as well as more recent buildings and places that have meaning to the present generation as rapid change threatens their sense of meaning in the community.

Heritage, and its by-products, have become part of late 20th Century culture. Few cities or communities are without a desire for or sense of the past and an expression of the past in the urban environment.
There is however, too often in the minds of the public and of planners and conservationists, confusion between the idea of heritage and other qualities of the urban environment. This in turn may lead to confusion in developing mechanisms for dealing with heritage as "the things we want to keep".

### 3.2 CHARACTER

While the permanence and stability of heritage protection may contribute to the character of the area in which those places are located, urban character is more usually an evolving or developing quality and is dependent upon less tangible or measurable quantities than heritage.

Christian Norburg-Schulz in his essay "The phenomenon of place" says "'character' denotes the general "atmosphere" which is the most comprehensive property of any place".

It is the *genius loci* of a place that determines its character. "As a rule places change, sometimes rapidly" he says. "That does not mean, however, that the genius loci necessarily changes or gets lost", "To protect and conserve the genius loci in fact means to concretise its essence in an ever new historical context".

Character is no less important than the heritage of the place as a generator of historical meaning and is important in shaping visual or environmental amenity. Character therefore is not necessarily conserved by protecting urban fabric or heritage places alone.

The character of a place may often be best conserved by focusing not on fabric but on land use. Strict limitation or minimisation of change to fabric in heritage legislation through a system of registration and approval may act against the conservation of character. For example areas that have traditionally or historically functioned as housing may best maintain their character by allowing or even encouraging change for new and different forms of housing even if that means the loss of some early fabric. Unlike heritage, the notion of controlled change is central to the conservation of character.

The maintenance of character of a less tangible "genius loci" of a place in which change is considered normal is therefore not adequately addressed in heritage legislation. It is a distinctive issue more properly dealt with by town planning or other associated disciplines.

Provisions to protect character should embrace the contributions of the present generation at least as much as those, which generated or formed that character.

It is therefore reliant upon controls which are by definition more flexible and accommodating than heritage provisions, and is more closely aligned with controls which accept development or redevelopment as the norm.

The character of any area or precinct is, unlike heritage, an evolving and changing quality that depends upon a "new historical context".

At the Gold Coast, a city whose ethos has traditionally been one of change and growth this distinction between heritage and character is critical.

‘Conservation is not only keeping the material, but also recognising this spirit, this ‘non-physical’ essence and authenticity of the heritage, and its relation with the society.’

Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention, Norway 1994
3.3 AMENITY

The amenity of any urban environment depends upon a range of criteria. While the functional tradition places great emphasis upon convenience or the way in which the arrangement of the built environment suits its use, other attributes, including the way a place looks, feels or triggers memories or association is an important part of urban amenity.

Heritage and character may therefore both contribute to the amenity of a place and this may occur at a number of levels.

Modern environments tend to be at a larger and less personal scale than those of even the recent past. There is some evidence that individuals are intimidated by the scale and the architectural expression of modern building. While this may be an over generalisation there is no doubt that the extent to which architecture dominates and intimidates or simply creates unease is cause for concern amongst the public and professionals alike.

While guidelines and controls over these psychological matters are now more common, many see the retention of earlier buildings as an easy and direct means of ensuring that the amenity of urban places is conserved.

Equally, however, the community makes a direct association with earlier urban forms and buildings with a simpler and more understandable and pleasurable experience. The sense of community, of belonging and of amenity is strongly related to historical form and scale. Whether the comfort and convenience of those earlier forms is real, or only a distorted or idealised perception, is irrelevant and many will argue for the retention of earlier building stock and infrastructure on that basis alone. While valid in its own right the retention of early structure and form for this reason should not be confused with the issues of heritage or indeed of urban character.

3.4 TASTE

Taste or fashion in architectural or environmental matters is a valid part of the design and planning process. While change in fashion is more normally associated with the idea of new or modern ideas and the rejection of or modification of the present tastes, there has been in the last 20 years a particular tendency in urban and architectural tastes to look backward to historical models and precedents.
The phenomenon is not entirely new. Looking backward to forms representing idealised societies and circumstances is part of architectural history from at least the renaissance period.

In late 20th Century life however the appropriation of past models has become endemic. As modernism is seen to no longer satisfy the expectations of society the idealised past - often the quite recent past - is reconstructed.

Housing design in particular draws on early Australian models, but commercial buildings too, are influenced by earlier forms.

In more substantial buildings references to the past are more subtle but just as prevalent. The "post modern" style draws upon images from previous architectural periods freely. Occasionally the desire to relate to previous periods of architectural tastes results in reproductions that are difficult to distinguish from the original.

While each of these is a valid expression of late 20th century life and culture and their reference to historical form and earlier urban character is understandable, they are nevertheless expressions of current or popular tastes and have no intrinsic value in historical terms.

Some of these design preferences of the community are incorporated in town planning controls and it is not unusual for design guidelines, for example, to require architectural elements such as gabled roofs, picket fences or window hoods common in early vernacular or historical precedents to be incorporated in modern town planning controls.

There is too, a tendency in town planning to require the retention of early building stock of doubtful architectural quality. Led by community preference or taste or an earlier architectural style, these influences are sometimes confused with those of heritage or character and inappropriate controls are consequently introduced.

The conservation of character is equally affected by architectural or urban taste and the distinction between historic character and the creation of character based on idealised themes or popular tastes is therefore important.
4. HISTORY & THEMES
THE GOLD COAST is not without history. Despite its relatively recent development from a series of small rural and recreational centres to its present state, the early history and formative themes of the Gold Coast have given shape to the present city.

Its recent history is more influential. The truly formative years at the Gold Coast are those since the Second World War when its population, both permanent and visitor have made the city one of the fastest growing in Australia.

The following essays examine that history and the associated social and cultural forces that have contributed to the present condition.

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<th>Issues/Opportunities DOCUMENTING HISTORY</th>
<th>Recommendation ESTABLISH A HISTORY PROGRAM</th>
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<tr>
<td>The history of the Gold Coast ranges from the earlier settlement of the hinterland for logging and primary production, to its more dominant and recent history as the tourist capital of Australia.</td>
<td>Support a comprehensive and all embracing history program for the City, directing and encouraging individuals and organisations to prepare histories of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic studies of the various regions and centres have been prepared but there is a lack, within the existing work, of a cohesive overview and appreciation of the City as a whole. In particular the recent history of the Gold Coast City is seen by many residents as being irrelevant in terms of the conservation of the urban heritage and character.</td>
<td>• areas or centres presently lacking adequate study; and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• themes within the City which extend across geographic boundaries but which are central to the cultural development of the Gold Coast.</td>
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<td>Where appropriate, commission historical studies.</td>
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<td>Circulate historical material widely amongst residents tourists and the broader community.</td>
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4.1 THE GOLD COAST: A HISTORY

The Gold Coast is a city which while giving every outward appearance of eschewing history in favour of change and growth it is in fact one in which the reading and writing of history is well developed. The reading list forming an attachment to this report sets out some of the publications of recent years.

Historian Robert Longhurst, born and raised in the Gold Coast has written several of these including “From Tallebudgera to the Tweed” and “Southport: Images of Yesteryear”. In this essay he summarises the history of the city both in that period before the development boom and since.

The Gold Coast has a recorded history as old as any other part of Australia. Unlike some of the nation's urbanised regions, it can still proudly boast citizens whose forebears witnessed the sails of the first European navigators in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Kombumerri people have maintained a continuing relationship with the Coast, its rivers and hinterland.

Their survival was due in many ways to the comparative isolation of the district for some fifty years after the first European settlement at Moreton Bay in 1824. With the exception of a few secondary pastoral properties and some timber-getters, the district between Brisbane and the Tweed River was judged to be comparatively poor land, 'useless dune country', and difficult for access. The only conceivable use of the ocean beach was as a convenient track to the Tweed. What good country there was, for example on the Tallebudgera, Mudgeeraba and Pimpama flats, was initially leased for pastoral purposes, and then broken up either as potential 'plantation' land, or for farmer selection after new land legislation was enacted in 1868.

Nothing survives today beyond a few locality names (e.g. Gin House Creek at Carrara) to indicate that the Nerang, Coomera and Logan Rivers were once envisaged as prime cotton plantation land. The first serious interest in the district came shortly after the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861. Lancashire cotton millers, faced with the twin problems of shortage of supply and hundreds of thousands of unemployed mill hands, looked to distant parts of the Empire as potential new cotton fields. Queensland was high on the list, and several companies were formed in Britain and in Victoria to finance new plantations here. As a result, two large plantations were formed in 1862 on the Nerang at Carrara and Bundall, and other private and co-operative ventures also planted cotton on the Pimpama and Logan Rivers. Queensland had only been separated from New South Wales as a separate colony for less than three years, and the new capital, Brisbane, was only a few hours' sail away from the new cotton fields. The first regular boat traffic in the southern reaches of Moreton Bay serviced the plantations, bringing supplies and employees, and carrying what cotton that was produced back to Brisbane.

Whereas cotton soon proved to be a failure, by 1866 sugar was being planted on the existing plantations and much new land was being cleared along the district's rivers. Sugar has therefore been part of the Gold Coast's life and landscape for 130 years, although since the closure of the Nerang Central Mill at Benowa in 1918 it is most particularly confined to the Beenleigh and Pimpama Island areas, with one mill still operating at Rocky Point (dating from 1879) and a rum distillery at Beenleigh (dating from the 1890s). Plantations such as Benowa, Bundall, Yahwulpah and Yatala have however left their names to posterity and many of the district's roads (e.g. Broadbeach to Nerang; Bundall to Nerang; Beenleigh to Loganholme) first existed as rough tracks from wharf to plantation. Even the present central site of Surfers Paradise boasted its own plantation and small mill, erected by J.H.C. Meyer in 1882, and it was the rough track which Meyer cut from his ferry across the Nerang, past his mill and on to the beach, which is today's Cavill Avenue.

With the failure of the cotton plantations, many former employees took advantage of new land legislation to establish small farms in the years 1869 to 1880. They were joined by many new arrivals in the Colony; some from New South Wales with experience in dairying became the nucleus of a community at Tallebudgera; another German Lutheran community centred on Bethania. Small community centres developed to service the new population.
In the north, Beenleigh developed as the district's first township at the junction of five strategic roads, which survives today as the town centre. Nerang developed as the southern Gold Coast's first community centre; with its first hotel being opened in 1872. Both towns were situated close to navigable water and near principal tracks. Whilst Beenleigh's principal hotel was fittingly named the Planter's Rest, Nerang's was the Royal Mail, in tribute to the arrival of the first scheduled coach service operated by Cobb & Co. from Beenleigh to Nerang in 1871.

This was effectively the beginning of the Gold Coast as one of today's premier international tourist resort cities.

Visitors from Brisbane, mostly males, began to visit the district for recreational purposes, often staying at the Pimpama Hotel en route and then finding accommodation at either of Nerang's two hotels or pitching camp. An 'accommodation house' was even opened at Tallebudgera in 1873 to cope with the increasing number of travellers passing between Tweed and Nerang. Fishing and shooting were the main attractions, especially as the river and the nearby 'Great Swamp' was home to an abundance of bird life, and the mouth of the Nerang quickly gained a reputation as an anglers' paradise.

It was also the beginning of the Gold Coast's reputation as a speculators' paradise. As early as 1871 Surveyor George Pratten was instructed to lay out the site for a potential 'watering place' at Burley Heads (renamed Burleigh, to make it appear more attractive). It was a picturesque place indeed, but quite isolated, inaccessible by road, and flanked by a pioneer farming district still clearing its way out of dense bush. The first auction of allotments in the new township was held at Beenleigh in July 1872, with prime site blocks overlooking the ocean on today's Goodwin Terrace selling for £2 per acre. It would however be another forty or more years before Burleigh would show any signs of a 'boom'.

Two years later, Pratten surveyed the site of another new 'marine township' at 'Nerang Creek Heads', renamed Southport after a popular British resort.

Southport had major advantages over Burleigh; it offered excellent fishing, it was comparatively accessible from Brisbane (with a 'reasonable road' and a bone-rattling coach service) and most importantly it satisfied the nineteenth century requirement for a 'marine resort', with a broad expanse of still, lake-like water and beaches composed of sand of exquisite purity and whiteness. Early visitors had to make do with the questionable comforts of Richard Gardiner's slab store and 'accommodation house'. Houses however began to appear after 1877 along the Esplanade, and the next year saw the first private estate subdivision ever offered in the district (the Southport North Estate), at today's Labrador. In the true spirit of real estate promotion, two steamers from Brisbane and Ipswich brought some sixty interested investors to the site, where they camped, and enjoyed fishing and pigeon shooting. The first small Southport Hotel was erected in 1876, but the wave of visitors which arrived over the next two years saw a two-storey Pacific Hotel erected in late 1878, aimed at 'the distinguished and aristocratic element of the colony'. Tourism had arrived, and by the early 1880s the local economy was increasingly concerned with servicing the needs of a visitor and resident population at Southport, now connected directly to Brisbane by coach (thrice weekly), with its own telegraph service, stores, jetties, and after 1879 one of the young Colony's major social events, the Easter Regatta.

The final seal upon the Gold Coast's future came in February 1884, when Queensland's new Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, visited the thriving township. There was now a daily steamer or paddleboat service from Brisbane, there were some four hotels, a substantial town jetty, and even a School of Arts. Sir Anthony was West Indian born, and he and his American born wife, relished southern Queensland's coastal climate. He directed that a vice-regal residence be erected there, to be known as 'Summer Place' - the later nucleus of The Southport School.

Within a year Southport was being 'boomed' as 'the Imperial Watering- Place of the Colony', Queensland's establishment vied with each other to erect seaside homes, and the local divisional board legislated for respectability by introducing bathing costume by-laws. Estate subdivisions flourished, with familiar titles, such as 'Ocean View' and 'Sea Glint'.
The first land sales in today's Surfers Paradise took place in May 1885 when the 'Main Beach Estate' was advertised with streets named after world champion scullers (Hanlan, Trickett, Laycock and Clifford). The ultimate symbol of confidence in the resort's future was the massive Grand Hotel, opened at Deepwater Point in 1886. Like all the buildings of this remarkable era, the Grand is now only a memory, however the local newspaper established to cater for this new population, The Southern Queensland Bulletin survives today as The Gold Coast Bulletin.

Visitors to Southport quickly ventured further afield, crossing Meyer's ferry and enjoying superb buggy rides along the main ocean beach, where they might lunch at the new two-storey Burleigh Heads Hotel. A regular coach service commenced operation along the beach between Southport and Tweed Heads in 1888, bringing visitors to the first hotel erected at Coolangatta, and connecting with steam boat services to Murwillumbah. When, in January 1889, Southport was joined to Brisbane by rail, a whole new influx of holidaymakers began to arrive; coal miners from Ipswich, Government office workers on excursion, honeymooners, previously restricted to the easily accessible Sandgate. The 'Coast' was now the resort for all classes.

Regular rail connection between Nerang and Tweed Heads was opened in 1903. The Railways Department originally planned the line as a feeder for farmers in the Currumbin and Tallebudgera valleys, and also as a means of tapping the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales. It little realised that surfing was about to become the vogue for youngustralians. In spite of the distance and expense, hundreds of Brisbanites took the opportunity to travel to within a few hundred yards of an open surf beach, just as adventurous Sydney-siders were doing at Manly and Bondi. Coolangatta became the rage; Southport henceforth became better known as appealing to families, and to older visitors who preferred the safer water of the Broadwater. Little wonder that the town developed into a sedate educational centre, with two of the State's top private schools (The Southport School, and St. Hilda's Church of England School for Girls).

Whilst the railway did open up the hinterland valleys and the reclaimed Merrimac swamps to dairying and bananas - two rural pursuits which still are part of district life - its primary historical importance lies in the extraordinary prosperity it brought to Coolangatta.

Hotels, flats, substantial bungalows and villas, brick shops, cinemas and an early electricity supply arose where only a decade before there had been sand dunes.

The transformation of Southport between 1876 and 1886 was now matched by a similar 'boom' at Coolangatta, with property values soaring and a series of successful subdivisions. By 1914 what was described as the most substantial and modern hotel between Sydney and Brisbane had been erected in Griffith Street, and this was followed in 1924 by a cinema which rivaled those in the capital cities.

Each year also the railway brought a flood of campers to Coolangatta, and the beach dunes were transformed into a sea of canvas. An increasing number also after 1910 left the train at Currumbin, and also at West Burleigh (where hire buggies waited to take them to Burleigh itself). Only a few ever ventured onto the Southport Main Beach to camp, although small boats increasingly came into service ferrying bathers across to the main ocean beach where a life saving club had been formed in 1912. Thousands of campers may have brought problems to local government, especially in the provision of adequate water supply and sanitary facilities, but they also meant prosperity to local shopkeepers and to rural producers. A poor season was dreaded above all things, both on the Coast and in the Hinterland.

Like all resort areas, the South Coast welcomed the dawn of the motor age with open arms. The major problem in attracting motorist visitors was the state of the roads between Brisbane and Southport, and the almost non-existent roads further south. The attraction of motoring to Coolangatta however, was to lead, in 1918, to the Automobile Club of Queensland successfully lobbying for the formation of a Main Roads Commission, and for the creation of a South Coast Roads Scheme.

In spite of two small ferries over the Logan and Coomera Rivers, thousands of motorists were able to drive to the Coast over an improved Main Road - the basis of today's Pacific Highway - by 1925. At Southport they were now able to cross over the Jubilee Bridge to the main ocean beach and take a coastal road towards the south.
A year later, new bridges over the Currumbin and the Tallebudgera enabled them to reach Coolangatta. Estate development consequently flourished along the length and breadth of the Coast. These were the 1920s, the age of change, with most families enjoying a regular weekly diet of Hollywood at the 'flicks. Estate developers searched for the catchiest of American names for subdivisions; Palm Beach, Miami, Santa Barbara, Santa Monica, and an estate name first used in 1917 was given by Jim Cavill to his new Californian-style Surfers Paradise Hotel, opened in 1925.

The development of the Pacific Highway as the lifeline to the South Coast by 1935, with bridges constructed over the Coomera (1930) and the Logan Rivers (1932), meant that the coastal resorts were now only a few hours away for Brisbane motorists over a two-lane bitumenised road.

Service facilities quickly developed along the Highway; service stations, tea shops and gardens, bakeries (at Beenleigh especially) and pie shops (at Yatala), just as hotels along the route had once served as 'watering holes' and dining rooms for passengers aboard the rattling Cobb & Co coaches. Even the Gold Coast hinterland welcomed tourist motorists to mountain resorts at Springbrook, Beechmont and Mount Tamborine, with the Groom family opening Binna Burra as a guest lodge in 1933. The car also allowed district farmers to visit town, and Southport increasingly developed in these years as a service centre for the local region, with a dairy factory being opened in Scarborough Street in 1936. Southport could boast two cinemas, including the Pier, first constructed out over the Broadwater in 1926, and rebuilt after a fire in 1931. 'The Pier' was perhaps one of the most memorable aspects of a Coast holiday until well into the 1960s, with the water lapping over the rocks visible between the cracks in the floorboards! Nerang Street presented a substantial, affluent face with banks, draperies, jewellers, grocers, and such substantial 'thirties buildings as the Hotel Cecil (1933) and the new Southport Town Council Chambers (1935), both of which survive today. All three coastal councils constructed new tourist facilities in the 1930s, in the form of kiosks, toilet blocks, and dressing sheds, and contributed to the construction of surf life saving club buildings. These were often substantial, architect-designed structures reflecting the image of the resorts. Several remain, for example, a facility block on the Southport Esplanade near Nind Street, the pavilion and surf club buildings at Main Beach. Oskar's on the Beach restaurant at Greenmount is housed in what was previously the Greenmount Kiosk, erected in 1936.

The availability of cheap land, and reduced building costs during the Depression, saw many a South-East Queensland family erect holiday homes, many with a beach frontage, in the pre-war years. Many survive today as a tangible link with the past at Main Beach, at Northcliffe, Palm Beach and Tugun - small timber and fibrolite bungalows which were often constructed over a series of holidays. They shared both beach and vantage with larger homes, often those of Western and Downs pastoralists, and added an element of democracy, which had been lacking in the Southport of the 1880s. Pastoralist and industrialist swam, fished, or chatted over the fence with railway or meatworks employee, attended the same seaside churches and drank in the same hotels. They provided custom to an increasing range of small cash and carry stores, fish shops, newsagencies, butchers and bakers who proliferated in the string of coastal towns, and some of whose buildings still survive today.

Interstate visitors also discovered the district in these years, with a South Coast Tourist Publicity Council being formed to especially publicise winter tourism, and the glossy South Coast Pictorial being distributed through tourist bureaux in 1939. At Coolangatta an impressive Spanish-American design Hotel Grande was constructed in 1933, and a similar new Surfers Paradise Hotel opened in 1937, both aimed at catering for southern and even international tourism. Thomas Cook & Sons provided overseas booking facilities for both hotels, and New England Motor Company buses were scheduled to collect guests arriving by aircraft at Brisbane's Archerfield Airport. Numbers may have been comparatively small, however word was spreading about the magnificent arc of beaches that is Queensland's Gold Coast.

World War II would prove to be a major catalyst in the history of the district. More Allied service personnel passed through or were stationed near Brisbane than any other Australian capital, and many visited or were camped at the Coast. 'Rest and recreation' allowed many an American, British, New Zealand, and interstate serviceman and woman to appreciate the district, and many returned in post-war years to visit, reside or invest.
By 1949 Surfers Paradise in particular was flourishing, with the first riverside subdivisions, a number of restaurants (such as the 'Windjammer'), boutiques, specialist gift shops, and an increasingly cosmopolitan population.

Coolangatta Airport was now receiving regular southern flights, and, with the removal of petrol restrictions in 1950, an increasing flow of affluent southern visitors descended upon the district, especially in the winter months. Their expectations of accommodation facilities led to a flourishing building trade after the removal of building restrictions. The first motels on the American model were being built by 1955, caravan parks such as Paradise Park and Carapark equally reflected overseas concepts of 'trailer parks', and in 1956 construction began on the five-storey Lenmons Broadbeach Hotel, designed to provide international standard accommodation to an increasing number of overseas visitors. This was erected on land which had been subject to rutile mining, like much of the Coast's open dune and beach areas during and after World War II, and would encourage surrounding motel and apartment construction over the next decade. Lennon's welcomed delegates to the international E.C.A.F.E. conference in 1958, as the height of luxury accommodation. That same year however saw the construction of the Chevron Hotel in central Surfers Paradise with its glamorous Paradise Room, the like of which had never been seen in Queensland.

Every weekend, tens of thousands of cars now descended on the Gold Coast from Brisbane, with Surfers Paradise offering boutique shopping, entertainment, restaurants (such as Margot Kelly's Hibiscus Room, opened in 1955) and a cosmopolitan crowd unavailable in the Queensland capital. The Gold Coast, officially named as such in 1958, became a household name throughout Australia, synonymous with motels, and a somewhat irreverent lifestyle. The social and political conservatism of Queensland was openly defied, with Bernie Elsey's pyjama parties at his 'Beachcomber' apartments gaining their popularity mostly from their open defiance of the State's liquor laws. The emergence of surfie culture in the early 'sixties also attracted a new generation of youngsters to the Gold Coast's beaches, and board racks and Combi Vans became familiar sights.

By 1960 central Surfers Paradise could boast its first high-rise apartment block, 'Kinkabool', and within seven years the now-familiar skyline of apartment buildings was visible from a distance, growing higher and spreading north to Main Beach and south to Coolangatta over the next thirty years. A major break with the past came in 1961, when the rail line to Coolangatta was closed. The line from Beenleigh to Southport closed three years later - with the Government arguing that passenger and freight traffic was now minimal. Little thought was given at that date to future traffic congestion, yet within six years sections of the Pacific Highway were being expanded to four lanes.

Another familiar aspect of the Coast by the 'sixties was its numerous canal estate subdivisions on the Florida model; the first of which commenced in 1956 at Florida Gardens.

Within a decade previous low tidal land and river islands had been reconstructed with sand pumped from the Nerang River. Such estates as Paradise Island, Chevron Island, Isle of Capri, Rio Vista, Miami Keys and Sorrento offered investors the opportunity of a river frontage or easement. The first reclamation scheme had actually commenced in the late 1930s - the Rankin Estate at Main Beach.

The Coast's permanent population grew apace throughout the 1970s and 1980s, trebling in the space of fifteen years. A fair proportion continued to be, as ever, retirees, however an increasing number were service workers, catering for the construction and tourist industries, or working in the district's large retail sector. According to census information a high proportion came from interstate and overseas.
Many made their homes in the new estates which have progressively expanded towards the hinterland, with much of the old 'Great Swamp' now reclaimed from Burleigh Waters to Nerang. An increasing conurbation now stretches inland from the beach and accommodation areas from Kingscliff in New South Wales to the mouth of the Coomera River, and the Pacific Highway has been progressively rerouted inland since the 1970s. Considerable commercial and light industrial development now lines this route, with the former sleepy hamlets of Nerang and Mudgeeraba developing into significant communities.

The Coast experienced a radical change after the opening of Sundale Shopping Centre at Southport in 1968 and more particularly Pacific Fair at Broadbeach in 1977. The latter included the Gold Coast's first large department stores. Major commercial and shopping precincts have now developed from Coolangatta to Runaway Bay, with Pacific Fair, Robina and Australia Fair attracting many Brisbane shoppers, especially those from the southern suburbs. The Marina Mirage, and Surfers' Orchid Avenue precinct, with their concentration of luxury boutiques, provides shopping of a quality unavailable in Brisbane itself - much as Southport in the 1880s and Surfers in the 1950s offered Brisbanites something very different. The opening of Jupiter's Casino at Broadbeach in 1985 and the development of the Dreamworld and Movieworld theme parks also proved to be radically new and successful drawcards not only for locals but for the new wave of Asian tourism which had commenced in the early 1980s. On the other hand, many parts of the Gold Coast - the fishing village of Jacob's Well, and the beach townships from Mermaid Beach to Coolangatta have kept much of their character as 'family holiday centres'.

Since 1995, the Gold Coast's municipal boundaries have included those of the former Albert Shire, which for many years after 1949 had its headquarters at Southport. Many areas of the new City boundaries are experiencing estate and commercial development and associated population growth. Beenleigh and Waterford are virtual dormitory suburbs of the Greater Brisbane Area, and the reconstruction of a railway line to the Gold Coast (now opened as far as Helensvale) offers the possibility of daily rail commuter traffic in both directions. The upper Tallebudgera, Currumbin, Mudgeeraba, Nerang and Coomera valleys have all lost agricultural land to acreage and estate subdivision development, although the relative inaccessibility of Numinbah and Springbrook, together with the existence of National Parks, has meant that both districts preserve much of their early character. Sugar and banana farming, dairying, beef cattle, fishing and timber-getting still continue throughout the area as they have for over a century, and there are still vestiges of the extinct arrowroot industry at Pimpama.

West Burleigh township is a reminder of its role as railhead for the Tallebudgera Valley and 'gateway' to Burleigh Heads. The Main Beach Pavilion recalls the days when this was the most easily accessible open surf beach for Brisbane motorists. Surviving pre and post-war residential areas along the length of the Coast recall the era of 'holiday homes', be they of timber, fibrolite or brick stucco. Even the evolving skyline has become the subject of nostalgia.

The story of the Gold Coast has therefore been one in which change has been intrinsic to continuity, where sudden bouts of development have become so familiar that they are essential to the City's culture and image.

Change and memories of the past are now as much part of the Gold Coast's attraction for both residents and visitors as are the eternals of superb beaches and surf.
4.2 THEMES IN THE HISTORY

History is not a linear notion. The history of any place, region or area is the history of people in that place and inevitably various themes repeat and reoccur. Whilst some are a function of the human condition alone, most themes of history, are inextricably linked to the place by virtue of its geographic and climatic position, of the opportunities and constraints that these circumstances present and of the circumstances of time.

The Gold Coast is no exception. Present day action and practice has its roots in the past and the constant themes of history developed in the following section testify to this.

Substantial work on the establishment of themes was carried out in the ‘South- East Queensland 2001 Region: Cultural Heritage Places Study’ prepared by the Applied History Centre at the Department of History at the University of Queensland in 1995. The idea of arranging themes in period and area and in terms of human experience and endeavour comes from that work.

The themes of the SEQ 2001 Study are set out to capture all possible attributes of the study area and extend to twelve themes: environment; people; land; industry; transport; communication; community; work; education; government; lifecycle and culture. Each of these contains a series of topics as a subset resulting in 138 separate headings.

The themes developed in this study have been simplified to focus more directly upon those aspects of the Gold Coast that will be easily and readily identifiable to the lay reader. They are arranged in the three dimensional matrix of time, place and activity. Thirty-six themes related to time and activity are developed in full in Appendix 9.1 of this document. Seven more themes related to place - the physical geographical elements, are identified. These are developed in Chapter 5, Places and Sites, through description of character areas within the City.

‘Time, love, age, memory, death, chaos, passion and the spirit of place’

Love in the Time of Cholera: Jacket note

Time

History exists within the context of time. At the Gold Coast, early exploration, settlement and development of timber getting and farming certainly gave shape to the hinterland but the city’s primary period of development and influences is much more recent.

A necessary focus is therefore placed upon that time in the history of the Gold Coast from the 1950s until the present.

It is a city still being formed by its history and the theme of late twentieth century culture.

Activity

Human experience and endeavour at the Gold Coast may similarly be divided into those more normal nineteenth century themes of exploration and development in the hinterland and those that relate to the initiatives in this century to construct a city based on recreation. Both streams are important but this study gives particular weight to the latter since these have by and large not been adequately considered or given due weight in previous analyses. While some themes transgress boundaries of time many are important not in an historical sense but because they continue to give meaning and shape to the evolving urban form and culture of the city.
Remnants | Canal development | Arrival/destination | Shopping
--- | --- | --- | ---
Foods, restaurants and eating | Boating | Signs/advertising | The beach
Tourists/visitors | Introduced landscaping | Tall buildings | Highway
Sky lines | Natural environment | Images | Icons
Sporting/recreation | Clothing | Fishing | Long views
Wetlands | Wildlife | Motor cars | Housing estates/suburbia
Government | Residents (new) | Residents (old) | Farming
Loggers | Holiday houses | Camping | Weather

### Place

The physical context within which the history and development at the Gold Coast has taken place is important. Market research and consultation with the broader community carried out as a part of this study has demonstrated the affection for and meaning of places within the city to its residents. The physical geography of the city is important in this regard but so too are those places which have developed value or meaning as a result of human activity or endeavour.

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<tr>
<th>The beach</th>
<th>The sea</th>
<th>Headlands</th>
<th>The hinterland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bay islands</td>
<td>Low country</td>
<td>Mountains</td>
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#### Issues/Opportunities

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<th>THEMES OF GOLD COAST HISTORY</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<td>ESTABLISH A THEMATIC DATABASE</td>
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The study has identified 43 themes of Gold Coast history.

Clearly there are many places which might illustrate each theme. Each place identified within the City of Gold Coast as having potential heritage significance will fit into one or more of the themes already identified.

Establish a database to record community interest in places of potential heritage significance so that information and material gathered over time sits within a structure that assigns, in the first instance, a thematic value to each place so that its role in the overall history of the City is easily rationalised.

So that a truly useful basis for decision-making may be established, the database might include information such as:

- ownership;
- condition; and
- potential threats.

Encourage the community to add to that database and make the information contained within it available to the community.
4.3 STRANGE ALCHEMY: THE GOLD COAST AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

If the history of the Gold Coast is a history of its people then this city deserves a close scrutiny and understanding.

Cities traditionally evolve reflecting slowly changing attitudes of their inhabitants as economic and social conditions evolve. The Gold Coast is more a product of revolution than evolution. The subject of a concerted and focused campaign of the 1960s to "sell" the opportunities of climate and lifestyle the new Gold Coast largely absorbed and displaced the culture that characterised it prior to that date.

Colin Symes lectures at the Queensland University of Technology in Cultural and Policy studies. His essay assesses the Gold Coast as a cultural phenomenon in which the real is redefined.

Far from being culturally isolated however, the lessons are those of all "post modern" cities of which the Gold Coast is the first and most dramatic example.

The Gold Coast is a realm of the hyperbole, of the larger than life. Even the names of the city and its suburbs such as Surfers Paradise and Miami Keys, and those of apartment blocks [Grand Mariner, Rivage Royale], typify this culture of excess, of exaggeration, where things are of a magnitude and order not experienced elsewhere, and where there is a decided accent on the spectacular and utopian. It is a place of manufactured attractions that act as a contrast to the natural environment. It is also a place where leisure is the primary focus of architectural and topographical discourses. These discourses overflow with fantasy elements, with play and fun, and references to fiction and imaginative narratives, drawing on fairytale and science fiction, horror and cartoons. The Gold Coast is Luna Park become city, a place where much of the architecture tells stories.

“Things don't age on the Gold Coast, they just get knocked down”

[Gold Coast resident]

It is a city where the spurious has been turned into an art form and urban design subjected to the principles of the theme park. This should be celebrated as the quintessence of the Gold Coast.

From ludus to the ludicrous

As a city, the Gold Coast is new - a product of the permissive 1960s, when the leisure industry created around the hedonism of youth was born and when the Boeing 747 democratised international travel. Like all cities, the Gold Coast is also a product of a fortuitous geography - in this case a long coastal strip of sand and surf, bordered by a hinterland of mountains and rainforest. A favourable climate has helped to further its popularity as a site of sun and pleasure. With no industrial or cultural sites [not at least of the conventional kind] that ordinarily justify the existence of a city, the Gold Coast's raison d'être rests primarily on the attractions it offers as a leisure space constructed around the beach and associated attractions. It is a place of escape, a refuge from more conventional cities and environments. It is also a place where the conventional demarcations between work and play have been abandoned, and the city exists for the sake of play rather than work. It is a place where ludus predominates over opus, where ludus produces opus and not the reverse. In the words of the council's former slogan, the Gold Coast is ‘the premier place to live, work and play.' Its playful environment echoes this.
There are plainly two populations on the Gold Coast: those who migrated there and who call the place home and those, like the tourists, who would like to call the place home. It is a city then, that exists by virtue of the fact that people have chosen to be there, and have moved from elsewhere to be there. And there is not one Gold Coast but several. There is, for instance, the Gold Coast of the beach; the Gold Coast as resort, that of the hotels and theme parks and designer label boutiques and the shopping complexes; then there is the Gold Coast where people live, the apartment blocks and canal estates and the caravan sites; finally, there are the green parts of the Gold Coast, the rainforest backdrop that provides a natural contrast to the built-up coast.

Within these topographies, there is a north- south divide, with much of the wealth and glitziness of the coast concentrated in its northern regions, whereas the south remains less developed, more like the Gold Coast of old, the place of the fibro-weekender and the milk bar culture.

The character of the Gold Coast is not monolithic but diverse, ranging from the outrageous and off beat through to the ordinary and unremarkable.

In broader terms, the Gold Coast is the entertainment capital of Australia and is an antipodean version of Las Vegas. This is evident in the profile of its architecture and its actual topography which follows the Las Vegas pattern, and which the Council seems intent on maintaining. It is of note, for instance, that the Heart of the City Task force cites as its model for Orchid Avenue downtown Las Vegas. Orchid Avenue is to be revamped and turned into a Show Street, a precinct of eye-catching high tech-visual entertainment. The Gold Coast is also a site of the entertainment industry, particularly the film industry which has sprung up around Movie World. Moreover, the Gold Coast is itself the subject of entertainment. It is also a strongly mediated environment. At least, two soap operas [Channels Nine's Paradise Beach and Pacific Drive] based around a fictionalised Gold Coast have been produced - which in themselves help promote a certain image of the coast as place of a carefree lifestyle, of untrammelled pleasures, a place to escape.

In fact, the Gold Coast is already a version of strip city [Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, 1993], a de-centred city, a Las Vegas in a bathing suit and shorts, a Las Vegas forged from the retirement dollar in the 1960s, when the Gold Coast was sold as a place to live. Like Venturi's strip city, the street signs, the typography in this topography, particularly those which punctuate the long sentences of highway, are often gargantuan, free-standing sculptures - replaced once their novelty as attention seekers has worn off. The dominant buildings of this Las Vegas are not, as in other modern cities, office blocks or industrial complexes, but hotels and apartment blocks and, significantly, shopping complexes like Pacific Fair and Robina Town Centre [sic]. In all this, the original landscape has been transformed, the flood plains and wetlands of which much of the Coast consisted has been vanquished, and re-naturalised and re-contoured.

The environment cannot speak for itself; it must re-packaged in some mildly theatrical way. The canal estates are a particular instance of this cleaning up of nature, of a completely re-vegetated space in which luxuriance has been replaced with the luxurious, where a domesticated nature provides a habitat against which to show off the units of habitation.

Apart from the national parks, the most substantial open areas are the golf courses - nature that has also been re-packaged. Indeed, such are their number and they continue to proliferate, the Gold Coast could almost be called the Golf Coast! But above all, it is the theme park, a mini-world where people are mainly taken for a ride [Symes, 1995], which most expresses the entertainment and spatial imperatives of the Gold Coast. This is reflected in the fact that the Gold Coast is, to some extent, an environment of enclosures such as theme parks and shopping complexes. Enclosure provides a structural frame for escape, marking a dividing point between the ordinary and extraordinary, a packaging mechanism for a special place. The most extreme version of such enclosure is manifested in estates like Sanctuary Cove, which started the trend, which are walled off like medieval towns, instances of what Davies [1992] has called the carceral city. They provide secure, almost self-sufficient environments and have become tourist attractions in their own right, postcard environments, places to view the lifestyles of the rich and famous, theme parks in which to live.
A City without the city

Significant too, is the fact that there are no piazzas or civic squares where the population can assemble. The Gold Coast has no conventional civic heart centred on a public building; nor does it have a religious magnet like a cathedral as in the European city. And its hôtel de ville is the hotel. It is a city without the usual features of a city. Although the city now has a cultural centre and an art gallery, its prevailing character is urban rather than urbane. The main centre of public activity is the beach and shopping complex. Many residents [Staddon Consulting Services, 1996] see the beach as the city's common denominator. The beach represents the Gold Coast's agora, piazza, city square, where its residents exercise their bodies rather than their minds, and where social encounters occur. Apart from this beach strip, the Gold Coast's main monuments are theme parks, shopping complexes and the casino, and the ubiquitous high rise apartments - which form the dividing range between the tourist and residential strips.

Its recent provenance means that the Gold Coast is a city sans history in the conventional sense; the value of history is perceived differently on the Coast than elsewhere. Indeed, it appears to be a disposable city which destroys its past through development. Its heritage is its very lack of heritage. The residents interviewed do not seem averse to this [Staddon Consulting Services, 1996]. They value the newness of the place and see anything of a pre-1970 vintage as an excrescence on the landscape. Part of their ill-feeling towards the fibros that lurk in the backyards of the high rise is that they detract from the Coast's current aesthetic [We don't want the old slummy, scummy]. The very fact that it is an environment that is always renewing and reproducing itself, is the very thing that charms people. The cult of the new is an all prevailing discourse among Gold Coasters. Newness is also seen as an economic asset and part of the prevailing spirit of entrepreneurialism and development from which the modern Gold Coast had sprung. The idea of preservation and heritage is at loggerheads with this spirit, which is also associated with cleanliness and certain vibrancy.

It is somewhat ironic, then, that the theme park, which is always past oriented with a spurious patina of antiquity, is the dominant architectural style of the Gold Coast, particularly in its shopping complexes, where the buildings tend to don period costume and fancy dress. In many respects, these complexes are theme parks without the rides and more to buy; they are places where the story telling architecture is at its most pronounced and which let people step into a gateau of myths and fairy tales [Dunlop, 1996]. They are also places which reincarnate the Main Street that the Gold Coast never had, and in a region dominated by the car and the highway they provide a respite from rule of the internal combustion engine. This is one of the contradictions of such cities as the Gold Coast, that the only places to escape from the car are only accessible by the car.

Yet it is also ironic that the residents have feeling for heritage, albeit defined in ways that are dissimilar from that of the experts; they miss things when they disappear under the blade of the bulldozer, and perceive value in the first McDonalds, in the Sundale Shopping Centre, in Miami Ice [Staddon Consulting Services, 1996]. And there is some support for the establishment of a museum that would preserve something of the history of the Gold Coast. Among other things, such a museum should aim to record the history of tourism and development on the Coast.

Landmarking the spurious

Meanwhile, in the absence of anything of historical value, the Gold Coast, like other centres of similar character [Urry, 1992], has begun to manufacture its own form of monumentality, whose defining character is that of the theme park. Much of this monumentality tends to display itself, and it is reflection of its theme park origins, at the level of facade, in huge, exotic creations like shopping complexes, the late twentieth century version of the arcade and which are, in effect, the cathedrals of consumerism and in the foyers and entrance areas of the larger hotels.
Interestingly, the shopping complexes constitute the nodal points of the public transport network of the Coast. Buses and trains are assigned to them. The cartography of the Gold Coast is just that, a car-topography. The shopping complexes are also full references to other places and other temporal regimes, and grandeur and grossness cohabit with one another in them. Robina Town Centre, the latest of these complexes and which is promoted as a masterpiece in the making, whose inner facades echo that of Bond University, provides plenty of examples of this cultural melange in action. At its heart is a campanile, a version of a Florentine campanile, which provides the focus of a number of themed streetscapes, one of which, Bazaar Street, contains vague references to north Africa. The very fact that it is called a town centre, which includes civic facilities like libraries, and not, as with the other major shopping complexes on the Coast, a fair or village, represents a revealing discourse shift. Robina is town as corporation rather than civic environment, where consumption rather than government is the defining activity. This is in keeping with the urban style of the Gold Coast.

The architecture of the Gold Coast, domestic and public, plays a variety of games with space and time, drawing on large repertoire of references from European and American history, and producing a cultural hotch potch, a pastiche of places hither and thither in which the vectors of style and vulgarity are never far from one another. Modernism seems to be having a close encounter with the Magic Kingdom on the Gold Coast. Some of the recent essays in high-rise architecture, for example, now sport turrets and castellations of various kinds, fairy-land forty storeys up.

And Imperial Plaza, a collection of restaurants from around the world, on the rather tacky Elkhorn Avenue, another turreted complex, is described as adding a much needed cosmopolitan touch to Surfers Paradise.

One of the prevailing characteristics of postmodernism, and the Gold Coast is Australia's postmodern city par excellence, is the degree to which the co-ordinates of time and space have been de-linedated, have been compressed into one another [Harvey, 1989]. This is reflected in the place-style of the Gold Coast, which is derivative in character, particularly evident in its theme parks and shopping complexes, drawing on sources outside of its actual location in time and space.

**From weekender to the Sheraton Mirage**

There are a number of historical points in the development of the Gold Coast which are critical in its progressive expansion from a local to a national to an international resort. In the beginning there was the beach, and it remains the primary attraction of the area. It is the Gold Coast's archetypal form of strip or linearity, alongside which other forms of distinctive linearity have grown up as the Gold Coast has extended its reach into the hinterland and onto the mountainous plateaus of Springbrook and Beechmont.

Historically speaking, the Gold Coast began at its antipodes, Coolangatta and Southport, conventional townships in their own right, which are the most traditional of places on the Coast. Southport, for instance, is an educational centre, with a number of high status private schools. From the 1960s onwards the area between Coolangatta and Southport has gradually been filled in with a city. This has occurred as the intervening transport networks were developed that facilitated links with Brisbane and beyond. The building of a road bridge from Southport to Surfers Paradise is significant in this regard, along with roads down the coast. This led to a series of Gold Coast villages centred at various points, which led to weekender localities like Burleigh Heads and Palm Beach. In the mid-1960s developers began to literally build up the coast, which coincided with the expansion of the airport at Coolangatta, and the construction of the coast as a national resort. This period saw the high rise emerge as the pre-eminent form of architectural construction - the Gold Coast as Manhattan, along with the canal estates - the Gold Coast as Venice - which continues around Robina and particularly at the northern end of the coast, around Sanctuary Cove.

The development was also connectionist in character, and the villages joined together to constitute the conurbation that is the Gold Coast. The development was linear, strip-like in Venturi's sense, formed in one continuous band of development alongside the beach: a concrete echo of the strand, of the beach. It was also highly automobilised: road transport is fundamental to the urban layout of the Gold Coast.
The removal of death duties in Queensland, which came into force in January 1977 [McRobbie, 1988] caused considerable interstate migration to the Gold Coast. This has made Gold Coast Australia's premier retirement city. Thus the appeal of the Coast is at both ends of the age spectrum, among the young and the old. The airport has made the Gold Coast more internationally accessible. The Duty Free shop and the ideogrammatic calligraphy in Surfers are symbolic realisation of this trend. The construction of a number multinational hotels has accelerated this aspect of the globalisation of the Gold Coast. This has resulted in the Gold Coast becoming a more upmarket resort, which is evident in the international label [Louis Vuitton, Salvatore Ferragamo] shops that now grace the CBD of Surfers Paradise, particularly Orchid Avenue and the Marina Mirage. The familiar triumvirate of surf, sex and sun has now been joined by a fourth s, shopping! With the construction of the new railway from Brisbane, which will eventually flow through to Robina, there has been a second form of strip development on the Gold Coast, that has occurred alongside the highway and the railway. Most of the new estates on the Gold Coast are in this new corridor of development - in its flat lands. There is also third form of linear development in the hinterland mountains, in the wilderness and mountain resorts like Springbrook and Beechmont. Here the accent is on escape from the urban, on an encounter with nature, with a wilderness experience.

The Gold Coast is a city with a multitude of environmental types, a Gold Coast in the plural rather than the singular, a place with a polymorphic personality. This means that the Gold Coasters can change environments much in the way that people change channels on TV, and can program their environment to suit their immediate psychological and social needs. The survey of residents [Staddon Consulting Services, 1996] indicates the degree to which the residents value the hinterland as a place of refuge from the hustle and bustle, to have their lungs refilled with clean air.

It is a place where the tourist gaze can be exercised in manifold ways and directions: on nature, on the surf, on shopping, on sex, on the theme park.

Carnivalising the Gold Coast

The Gold Coast is primarily a site of escape and pilgrimage. Like all holiday resorts but especially that of the Gold Coast with its hedonistic reputation, it is place where the normal strictures on everyday life are relaxed. Life is placed in parenthesis at the Gold Coast.

It is place to be different and its architecture and topography reflect this. It is a place where individuals carnival, frolic... where they liberate themselves from the usual constraints regulating everyday life, where they let themselves go. Hence, its attraction for the young, and for honeymooners. The Gold Coast has a reputation of being a bit risqué, where individuals unburden themselves of their normal habits. The concentration of attractions at the Gold Coast promotes this possibility of escape from the everyday and the normal.

The promotion of the Gold Coast exploits this easy-goingness, with its photographs of much uncovered, particularly female, flesh. Pleasure is the dominant imperative of the Gold Coast lifestyle. Thus the Gold Coast is constructed as avenue for the young and the old, of individuals at the extremes of their lives. It is also place which aspires to being an event based city, which is a typical feature of the postmodern city. The Indy Grand Prix is the latest, official addition to these events, which also include the Gold Coast Marathon and Schoolies Week, which is fast being incorporated into a tourist event. These events are often associated with moral panic, and are frequently associated with concern about law and order, about promiscuity and mass libertinage.
Gold Coast as theme park

The prevalent style of the Gold Coast is one of spuriousity and virtual geographies. It is the city where the theme park goes to town. The high rise is the other dominant architectural form of the Gold Coast. Indeed, this high rise is the Gold Coast's Eiffel Tower, which acts as a metonym for the city. Aside from the beach and the escarpment of buildings alongside the beach, the most overriding feature of the Gold Coast are its theme parks, which draw on their American predecessors such as Disneyland. Indeed it has been said, such is their prevailing influence on much contemporary urban space that Disneyland and Disney World are two of the most significant public spaces of the late 20th century [Zukin, 1995].

The three largest theme parks on the Gold Coast are the logical distillation of the architecture and culture of the region, and they, in turn, have infected the architecture [see also Zukin, 1995 and Dunlop, 1996] of much of the Gold Coast, particularly its shopping complexes and many of its proliferating residential estates like Sanctuary Cove and the canal estates, which are on the tourists itineraries, and are regarded as attractions in their own right. Even Bond University, which looks like a film-set version of a sandstone university, is on this itinerary. Buildings and complexes cannot stand alone: they must be thematized. Thus the Gold Coast is a Disneyfied rather dignified city, which has learnt as much from Orlando as it has Las Vegas.

The architecture of the theme park is based on displacement - on removing people from their real time geography and taking them into another imaginary space. The Gold Coast is already a place of displacement, and the theme park multiplies the option of displacement. Theme parks also tend to be rampant with nostalgism, with a retrostyle morality and ethic, with taking people back into the past, into a world circa the 1920s, when life was supposedly simpler and less complex. And even the hinterland, the Gold Coast at is most natural, is perceived through the lens of a theme park.

One resident surveyed, for instance, mentioned it as a place of Devonshire tea [my emphasis] that occupies a totally different era [Staddon Consulting Services, 1996].

"Côte d'or: vive la différence"

The Gold Coast is a different kind of city, and as such its heritage assets need to be assessed in different terms from that which would prevail in more traditional cities. The Gold Coast is not an administrative and manufacturing centre. It is exists primarily because it is a centre of pleasure and hedonism; it is a leisure city, and its tradition owes more to the culture of the US, of California, of Disneyland and Las Vegas than any European or Australian centre. The Gold Coast is Australia's only post-modern city, and its residents, who are drawn to its attractions and lifestyle possibilities, reveal in this fact. It is a place where an architectural populism is unembarrassingly expressed, where the parameters of taste are shaped more by a film set approach to architecture that owes more to Main Street Disneyland than anything else. And it is place where the cult of new is virtually a religion. But it is also place where there is a strong interface between nature and culture, where the gold and the green meet in close proximity to one. All of this means that the residents can choose their environments, and indeed this might be part of the overriding attraction of the Gold Coast, that there is not one single Coast but many, and that residents and tourists can select the particular Coast that represents for them the best of all possible of worlds.

References
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### Issues/Opportunities

#### CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

The study finds that the Gold Coast's urban heritage and character is shaped by the attitude of its residents and visitors to the city and by the particular cultural phenomena that characterises those attitudes.

It is a city misunderstood by those who do not live or visit here and a city in which its residents and visitors have difficulty in expressing their affection for this place. It is a city which both residents and visitors choose for "lifestyle" and as a result generates a population which does not parallel other cities.

While unique in Australia the particular cultural form is not unknown in other cities worldwide.

### Recommendation

**PREPARE A CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE CITY**

Acknowledge that the culture and lifestyle of the Gold Coast is the single most important generator of urban heritage and character and that the understanding and appreciation of those qualities is similarly influenced by present cultural attitudes.

Pursue better understanding, recognition and support of community attitudes peculiar to the Gold Coast, by further and more detailed survey and consultation with its residents with the aim of providing a cultural profile of the City.

That work may be supported by looking to cities with similar cultural outlooks such as Las Vegas or Miami in the United States and by entering into this course with cultural studies professionals who are able to see the city and its population without prejudice.
4.4 THE GOLD COAST: ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

Philip Goad, Deputy Head, Architecture Stream at Melbourne University sets the scene in the following essay to celebrate and embrace the architecture of the city.

While the Gold Coast is considered by some to be superficial and certainly not part of the mainstream architectural development in this country, Dr. Goad demonstrates that the forces which shape the city’s distinct form and culture similarly influence its architecture and its planning.

The buildings and the subsequent urbanism of the Gold Coast since the Second World War are not only unique but importantly so. They make a major contribution to the heritage and character of the city, an unacknowledged source of ideas for other places in Australia.

All that Glitters can sometimes become Gold: the case for value in the architecture and urbanism of the Gold Coast

Introduction

Here is a fibro-cement paradise under a rainbow of plastic paint. It is any Australian country town plus optimism. It is a Utopia of souvenir shops, bamboo bridges spanning murky rock pools, night clubs, ‘fabulous floor shows’, ‘bikini bars’ selling floral wisps of bathers and Hawaiian shirts through windows open to the footpath, ill-lit cabarets, over-lighted cafes, indoor planting, outdoor denuding, beer gardens in no apparent hurry to close at 10, shops open so long as there are customers awake, Sunday movies, signs, hoardings, posters, neon, primary colours – purple, green and orange straight from the brimming pot.

Robin Boyd, *The Age*, 28 Dec 1957

In 1957, the Melbourne architect and critic Robin Boyd’s observations about Surfers Paradise were damning. They were probably not inaccurate but they were the words of a purist and a moralist. Boyd’s ideas on urbanism and architecture were idealised. He was an advocate of carefully planned and visually harmonious development where exuberance and excess, and the signs of commerce played no part in the visual environment. Forty years on, Boyd’s criticisms are dated. They need revision.

The phenomenon of the Gold Coast as a holiday destination has been an overwhelming success, so much so that it is now for many a place to live as well as a place for some to still vicariously seek paradise if only for a short and concentrated period of time. The urban focus of the City, Surfers Paradise, together with its global counterparts Las Vegas, Nevada; Waikiki Beach, Hawaii; and especially Miami Beach in Florida have now developed their own distinctive urbanism and their own distinctive architectural traditions. Importantly, these traditions fall outside many conventional spheres of discussion. The architecture of the holiday is invariably omitted from mainstream histories of modern architecture (Frampton, 1980; Tafuri & Dal Co, 1986). If discussed in cultural histories or texts on social geography, the values of capital and the culture of excess which these locations embody are invariably vilified (Davis, 1990; Sorkin, 1992). The representations of these places are almost always sinister rather than enlightening, and treated often in ironic and deprecating tones. To like or even to find value in such locations is to apparently reveal an appalling lack of tact and taste.

Alternative readings of late twentieth century urban phenomena are required. Two texts which examine cities for their special and often unique physical and formal qualities are Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour’s *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) and Rem Koolhaas’s *Delirious New York* (1978).
These two texts make no moral judgments but observe and record the distinguishing qualities of these modern conurbations and the new architectural forms and urban patterns that can result. These books prove that many cities cannot be judged against traditional notions of city structure, social formation and most important of all, conventional directions for their future planning. Idiosyncratic urban formations can and do exist. Such a reading is required of the Gold Coast.

This paper offers modest clues for finding value, and in so doing, proposes that perhaps all that glitters can sometimes become gold.

A Special Urbanism

The urbanism of the Gold Coast City is an urbanism of linear bands, of linear strips which run parallel to the ocean. Each band contains its own particular building types, landscapes and cultural practices which determine its social structure. Each band has its own qualities that can be described as character, with characteristic elements that determine the band's value.

Together these bands form a special linear city that is the Gold Coast. But instead of revolutionary Russian architect Ivan Leonidov's linear cities of the 1930s which described parallel bands of transport, cultural, residential, recreational and industrial zones which were meant to stretch infinitely toward the horizon, cross other linear cities and decentralise the bourgeois cities of Tzarist Russia in a utopian description of labour and living, the Gold Coast's raison d'être is its beach and the subsequent magnetic effect of that beach as a location for leisure. The series of linear bands which makes up the Gold Coast is not about a pre-planned political and economic utopia, it is an artificial paradise centred frankly around pleasure and its maintenance, the economics of leisure.

Moving inland from the ocean, the linear bands of Gold Coast urbanism can be described as 1) the beach; 2) the towers/residential coastal strip; 3) the highway strip; 4) the canal estates; 5) the suburbs; and 6) the semi-rural hinterland of the cane fields and the hills. Intruding upon all of these bands are both natural and un-natural interlopers. Natural are the pre-existing creeks, rivers, estuaries, mangroves and coastal inlets. Un-natural are the great space takers of the theme parks, the golf courses, the casino and shopping malls with their massive building volumes, carparks and apparently limitless enclosures. These interlopers make the bands impure. They enrich and give formal variety and functional diversity to each strip. They make hybrid, a simple functional description of the bands, making complex a surprisingly clear definition of land-use bands that occur within the City.

1. the beach

The beach and its golden stretch of sand is the untouched natural phenomenon which has given rise to the peculiar conurbations behind. Few structures intrude upon its purity and there is little distinctive or consistent hard and soft landscaping that defines the edge between the towers and the dunes. It is an edge that needs definition, in particular a specific landscape philosophy that maintains its charm as a natural terrace. What makes this strip so particularly unique in global terms and so Australian is that unlike Miami Beach and parts of Waikiki, the beach at the Gold Coast has not been privatised.

2. the towers/residential coastal strip

Immediately adjacent in almost surreal juxtaposition against the natural beauty of the beach is a squeezed linear Manhattan. Residential high rise hotels and towers from the 1950s through until the 1990s sit cheek by jowl with 1950s motels, 1960s and 1970s unit developments, low rise apartments and single family houses of varying pedigree. It is a Manhattan determined by aspect and high-rise privacy, of dwelling albeit often temporary. These are not New York's cathedrals of commerce, but Queensland's cathedrals of tourism.
3. the highway strip

The highway borders and contains this Miami Manhattan. Contained on either side is the thinnest strip, the strip architecture of archetypically Las Vegas but more generally all highways in built up areas across Australia and the United States. Contained within it is the drive-by and drive-in architecture of the strip: the motel, the shopping strip, the traffic interchange, the shopping mall, and the landscaped strip of exotic palms together with the trappings of strip urbanism: the illuminated signs, convenience stores, petrol stations, traffic lights, and the road itself as the dominant urban space.

4. the canal estates

Across from the highway is an artificial suburban paradise, literally man-made Isles of Capri, the canal estates which began in the late 1950s and whose development continues apace today. These estates comprise generally one or two storey houses with lush gardens, moored yachts and motor cruisers on the canal side with little outlook to the street and all focus towards the canal. The houses range in date and style from 1950s Contemporary Tropical through to 1990s Tuscan Tropical. Two storey unit developments from the 1950s and early 1960s remain in some of the earlier canal estates as a reminder of the pragmatic financing of these ambitious and ecologically uncertain reclamation projects.

5. the suburbs

Beyond the idyll of the canal estates are the culs-de-sac and kidney subdivisions of the suburbs, typical of suburban developments anywhere in urbanised Australia from the 1960s onward. Contained within them are the current speculative vernacular of hipped roof and brick veneer houses sitting within conventional suburban allotments broken only by the occasional retirement home, itself invariably a giant and institutionalised version of the single family house. The new town of Robina is the latest urban phenomenon within this linear band, a hyper-real vision of the great Australian Dream complete with its own town centre as shopping mall. Included also within this band is Southport and its pockets of heritage, of 1920s and 1930s elevated timber Queensland houses, more obvious bearers of history - but in isolated and small precincts - persisting in a diminishing context of rapid suburban and commercial consolidation.

6. the hinterland

Beyond the suburbs are the canefields to the north, the bush and the foothills and rainforest with dispersed houses, farmhouses, and a village-like atmosphere of tiny settlements to the west. Recent freeways and highways and the isolated theme park or industrial park punctuate this, the most delicate of bands. Giant advertising signs line the freeway as blatant beacons for the strips towards the coast. Hidden within this band are enclaves of other times and other more modest intentions, jetties and launching ramps, waterholes and areas of untrammeled natural bush. More obvious is the appearance of the special leisure estate such as Sanctuary Cove, large, gated and more often than not accompanied by its obligatory golf-course.

If one accepts this generalised and perhaps simplified picture of the Gold Coast as a series of linear bands, one can begin to make observations about the particular formal characteristics and overall character of each band, and begin to make judgments about the value of that character. This is a city with no centre but many strips and many foci. This is a city with specialised building types that give a very specific character to the place. These are often buildings which have not and do not always appeal as being obvious bearers of social and cultural meaning in terms of heritage. Hence instead of the 19th century terrace or homestead, in a place like Surfers Paradise, it may be a motel or a 1950s highrise apartment block complete with its cacti and pebble garden that is a better measure of heritage value.

A Special Architecture

While the essence of the Gold Coast is its ever changing persona and its ability to reinvent itself physically, there are aspects to celebrate, perhaps even to consider for preservation or at the very least, to consider the noting and recording of what has made the Gold Coast the place it is.
While the few farmhouses, public buildings, and sprinkling of Queenslander houses are straightforward in their representation of value, and often by their charm (rather than intrinsic historic attributes) have appeal, there is an under-rating of the architecture which has brought about the phenomenon of Surfers Paradise - the architecture of holiday - the resort modernism of the 1950s and 1960s.

This is an architecture which combines fantasy, glamour and is the basis for virtually all of today’s developments.

It is a special architecture notably absent from conventional recordings of built heritage partly because of its recent date, i.e. post 1950 and partly because of the necessary escapism, populism and often impermanence of its architectural symbolism, construction and overall form.

**Holiday Modern or Resort Modernism**

*I don't care if its Baroque or Brooklyn, just get me plenty of glamour and make sure it screams luxury!*


*People want hotels to be places of excitement. They are not looking for a home away from home. Why do they go to the movies or watch television? They want to see a more glamorous way of life. They want to escape from their own four walls.*


Resort architecture boomed in the 1950s and early 1960s. Internationally, the impetus was primarily American. In the decade up to 1958, there were more hotel rooms built along the five mile strip of oceanfront in Miami Beach than in the rest of the world put together (End, 1963). The post-war surge of optimism, new-found affluence and the desire to escape memories of World War II and day-to-day mundane officework as well as the increasing availability of air-travel meant that the holiday took on new meaning for the post-war generation. Hand in hand with this boom in holiday architecture was the promotion of an international vocabulary of modern architecture.

While in the city, the socialistic ideals of pre-war International Modernism were adapted to become the corporate glass and steel language of the 1950s skyscraper, in the resorts of Waikiki, Miami, Panama, the Caribbean, in fact all over the world, there developed a new modernism, a resort modernism that flaunted all the rationalities of the earnest 1920s and 1930s, and revelled in free composition and a new evocative language for the hotel, the holiday house and a new building type, the motel. Around the world, the hotels of Morris Lapidus, Welton Becket and Edward Durrell Stone brought American glamour, American know-how, efficiency and "obvious constant luxury" (End, 1963) to a host of exotic holiday locations such as Havana, Puerto Rico, Istanbul and Tunisia. While amongst architectural critics buildings such as Gordon Bunshaft's Istanbul Hilton Hotel, 1953 drew cautious praise, the unabashed pastiche and decorative modernism of Morris Lapidus's hotels such as his Fontainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach, Florida, 1953 earned scorn and in essence, permanent exile for resort modernism as a topic of serious architectural discussion. Within the United States, there also developed the pragmatic holiday architecture of the motel and the motor inn, a concept also centred around the mobility of the holidaymaker. Instead of air travel which had instigated the promotion of the international hotel by entrepreneurs such as Conrad Hilton, it was the automobile which defined an economic technique for arriving at the holiday destination and spawned a correspondingly new form of holiday architecture. The motels of architect Rufus Nims designed for the Howard Johnson chain, for example, were typical of a wholly new holiday culture for middle America. The concept of the holiday house was also being overhauled by a new aesthetic language. Again the Americans were leading the way. Glamorous and stylish modern single family houses and holiday units were being designed by Florida architects Paul Rudolph, Ralph Twitchell and Victor Lundy (Howey, 1995) amongst others across the United States and were being published in architectural and popular home journals, even special books devoted entirely to holiday house design.
In essence, a whole new branch of modernism devoted to the ethic of the holiday had arisen and had blossomed by the end of the 1950s.

In Australia, that passion for the holiday was equally felt and nowhere more graphically has the phenomenon of resort modernism been expressed in this country than at Surfers Paradise.

Surfers Paradise contains all the formal types of resort modernism: 1) the holiday house; 2) the holiday unit; 3) the motel; and 4) the highrise hotel/apartment tower. While few of the original examples of these types remain intact on the Gold Coast, all that has followed and all that is currently being built has its basis in the formal typologies and architectural elements of 1950s resort modernism.

1. the holiday house

Elements of the 1950s holiday house could include skillion roofs; occasionally a butterfly roof recalling the Brazilian architecture of Oscar Niemeyer; stone or rock veneer feature walls; cladding of fibro- cement and timber cover strips with painted eaves and white painted window joinery; lanai porches from Hawaii; elevated living rooms and decks and spindly steel columns; pastel colours; breeze-block screenwalls, carports integral with the main roof of the house; gardens of pebbles, palms, cacti and succulents. These were houses of light-weight materials, open planning and flywired dining rooms.

2. the holiday unit

Halfway between a motel unit and a townhouse these were tiny holiday units, often single storey but sometimes two storey with internal stairs and self catering kitchens, extruded into a repetitive linear block with a name in a joyous signature diagonally announcing Seabreeze or Siesta Key on its street face. Occasionally, this type in the 1960s in its larger incarnation developed into a block of flats sometimes around a courtyard, sometimes as a low rise slab facing the sea.

3. the motel

The motel typically included the swimming pool, garden or car park in a protected courtyard screened from the street, patios, walls with built-in planter boxes for succulents, breeze- block privacy screens, undercover parking or cars directly adjacent to doors of the units, access balconies supported on circular steel columns, a signature building on the street with reception at ground level concealing a linear block of motel units behind. These were modest but pragmatic holiday complexes, small and efficient based on the assumption that most of the holiday was spent at the beach.

4. the high rise hotel/apartment tower

The most obvious international model for emulation was the high-rise modern hotel with the egg- crate facade of balconies all facing a view (i.e. either a slab tower or a point tower) and at ground level, landscaping with the unreal blue of the swimming pool amidst a luxuriant garden and swirling paving, adorned by lavish function rooms and marked at entry point by an eye-catching porte-cochere. Obligatory was the floor to ceiling glass of each room. There was to be no modesty here in an unsullied exploitation of the view. The now demolished Lennon's Broadbeach Hotel, 1958 designed by Karl Langer epitomised this type which has become, in steadily increasing numbers, the dominant feature of the Gold Coast skyline. Whether hotel or apartment block, these towers invite for Surfers Paradise, the nickname of Miami Manhattan.

More recently, new typologies associated with the conurbations of leisure have arisen. Two stand out and have yet to be considered examples of heritage but their overwhelming physical presence demands their recording as defining a new character for the Gold Coast of the 1990s. The theme park and the shopping mall are vast building complexes which have given a new meaning to resort modernism. As yet there is no public nostalgia for these places of entertainment.
The theme park and the shopping mall are worlds within the 'other' worldness of the Gold Coast itself. They raise issues of obsolescence. Physically, they change their appearance both internally and externally constantly and economically it is in their interest to do so. These are the new types which are attracting the comments of social geographers and cultural historians (Sorkin, 1992). Architecturally their pedigree has yet to be fully catalogued (Rowe, 1991) but their effect on the landscape of the periphery is indisputable.

Surfers Paradise cannot be called "a poor man's Miami" (Boyd, 1960). Its continuing growth and the prosperity of its adjacent bands negate such a description. In Australia, the Gold Coast represents a peculiar and unique urbanism. Shunned by the tastemakers, it is nevertheless a vital part of our hybrid culture with its artistic, social and economic allegiances drawn from all over the globe. In urban terms, the Gold Coast is unique in Australia. Its only real formal parallel is Miami Beach in Florida.

For it is almost certain, that the current growth and continuing vibrancy of a culture sustained almost solely by leisure will presage a new cultural and urban condition for the 21st century. This special case therefore deserves special attention. It will demand new rules, new visions and almost certainly alternative visions, particularly in the management of its heritage.

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Issues/Opportunities

GOLD COAST ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The architecture of the Gold Coast is found to be important in both heritage terms and in terms of the character of the city as a whole.

Putting aside the more conventional building forms of the early hinterland, the architectural expression of the coastal strip has, since late last century been firmly centred in over statement, exuberance and invention. The particular qualities of Gold Coast architecture can be found in modest beach houses of the 1950s through to the extensive and elaborate resorts, high rise apartments and indeed communal structure. Its expression extends to the theme parks.

Recommendation

UNDERTAKE A STUDY OF 20TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Undertake a detailed study of that aspect of architectural history that focuses on the Gold Coast.

The work should develop an understanding of the historical link of resort vernacular that characterises the development of “Gold Coast” style and extend to the influences that Gold Coast architecture has had in the broader Australian context.
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<td>UNDERSTANDING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY</td>
<td>DEMONSTRATE GRAPHICALLY, THE CITY’S HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT</td>
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The history of the Gold Coast in terms of its urban development is not easy to understand. Because of the rapid growth of the city since the Second World War, early centres and discrete settlements have been absorbed, as has much of the early, low lying land to the west of the coastal strip.

Most cities have a concentric growth pattern, with residual character in areas close to the centre, that give cues to understanding their history of development.

At the Gold Coast, constant redevelopment within its lineal form, and reclamation of previously underutilised land, make the history of development less easy to read.

**Undertake a study to demonstrate graphically the history of growth and development within the city as an aid to informing the community and council planners about the nature and history of growth of the city.**

**Present the material as a series of overlays set out in chronological order, and incorporate in each phase, information such as the history of town planning influences, controls and philosophies which have directed that growth.**
4.5 THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

In parallel with the urban heritage and character study a study of the natural environment of the city has been carried out by consultants Mary Maher and Associates.

The natural environment is an important part of the Gold Coast and many residents and tourists appreciate the contrast of the beach with the hinterland and the ease with which the natural environment can be accessed from the more urban and developed coastal strip.

The following essay describes some of the wide variety of experience that the natural environment offers the Gold Coast.

The physical character of the Gold Coast City area is largely determined by the backdrop of the green sub-coastal rugged mountain ranges against the golden sands of the coast. The landscape is characterised by a diversity of landforms, plant and animal life and landscapes, complimenting the diversity of settlement and architectural styles found there.

The combination of landforms and greenery produce three distinct biophysical regions the hinterland; the floodplains and valleys; and the islands, beaches and estuaries.

The Hinterland, a dramatic rugged mountainous region, is characterised by magnificent views, waterfalls, a diversity of forests and wildlife and includes some of Australia’s finest rain forest.

The Valleys and Floodplains are created by the rivers and creeks which flow from the hinterland towards the coast. Valleys such as the Currumbin climb up through farmland, to rainforest hill tops and ridgeline settlements, some supporting permaculture. The Coomera River starts in a World Heritage listed area and cascades through rocky pools, forests and farmland into the RAMSAR designated areas of South Moreton Bay.

The coastal strip encompasses rocky headlands and beaches, islands and marine and freshwater estuaries. The Gold Coast’s coastline is world famous for its 42 kilometre strip of white sandy beaches stretching from Coolangatta to Southport.

The physical setting of the Gold Coast City area, its combination of diverse topography and vegetation types, has resulted in a rich and diverse wildlife, described as the richest of any city in Australia. Many wildlife species are of national or regional significance because they are restricted to specific habitats which either only occur in the region or are under threat elsewhere. The rainforests of the hinterland support numerous species some of which are considered rare/threatened/ or restricted.

Without strong protection however, current rates of clearing and land development will place this natural base of the city in jeopardy. The natural wealth of the city depends now more than ever on intervention to prevent further diminution and degradation.

The Gold Coast a natural playground

To say the Gold Coast’s natural assets are the most significant of any city in Australia is not a wild claim.

Nature has always been an integral part of Gold Coast City living. Blue skies, blue water, white sand and green mountains set the mood and provide the vitality for the lifestyle enjoyed there.

Nature may be experienced through the glass of a Seaworld aquarium or a window of a skyscraper. You may have it perched on a plate when feeding the lorikeets at Currumbin Bird Sanctuary. Or you may ‘get away from it all by taking a bushwalk through the depths of the hinterland’s rainforest.
Natural features have always been the basis of the Gold Coast’s appeal and they are fundamental to the economy and well-being of the place. Yet many would not be aware of the remarkable status which the Gold Coast’s natural features have.

In the recent study for the city’s Nature Conservation Strategy (GCCC, 1996) it was discovered that the city because of its combined features of marine, coastal, riverine and mountainous landscapes supports the greatest variety of plants and wildlife of any city in Australia.

It has more bird species than Kakadu. It has a high representation of Australia’s mammals, amphibians and bird species. All this wildlife is here courtesy of the large areas of native bush, existing in natural communities of heathland, eucalypt forest and rainforest.

What’s special about the Gold Coast

Landshapes

The physical character of the Gold Coast City area is largely determined by the backdrop of ‘the green of sub-coastal rugged mountain ranges just a short drive away from the sands of the ‘gold beachside coast.

The southern and western portions of the city are dominated by steep mountains and ranges dissected by several valleys which drain generally north to north-east. This pattern of valleys and ranges occupies approximately half the city and defines the city’s character.

Between the hills and the coastal sand dune strip occupied by Gold Coast City proper is a narrow plain with several distinctive river catchments. This plain is traversed by five substantial rivers (Logan, Albert, Pimpama, Coomera and Nerang) and two major creeks (Currumbin and Tallebudgera) which are subject to the tides and seasonal flooding.

In the north, the city includes a significant area of coastline to Moreton Bay and a number of estuarine islands including South Stradbroke Island with its ocean frontage. Inland from the bay there are extensive low-lying areas associated with the floodplains of the lower Logan, Pimpama and Coomera Rivers.

Diversity of landforms: The Gold Coast landscape is characterised by dramatic changes in landforms from the mountains of the hinterland to the white beaches of the coast.

Three natural regions

The landform and greenery of Gold Coast City combine to give three distinct biophysical regions—the hinterland; the floodplains and valleys; and the islands, beaches and estuaries.

Hinterland

The Hinterland is a complete contrast from the towering skyline, beach front esplanade, sophistication and glamour of Surfers Paradise. The Hinterland region - the ‘green behind the gold’ - offers spectacular views, bushwalks and a forest hideaway just thirty minutes from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The drive inland from the Gold Coast climbs into the Hinterland via winding, forest edged roads. The green ranges offer the opportunity to experience towering cliffs, to glimpse waterfalls and magnificent rainforest. This dramatic rugged mountainous region, most of which is protected as national park, includes some of Australia’s finest rainforest.

Much of the hinterland is premier sub-tropical rainforest park featuring magnificent views, waterfalls and wildlife. The park is situated in the Gold Coast Hinterland on the crest of the McPherson Range which marks the Queensland-New South Wales border. The majestic beauty of the mist capped peaks and rainforests is timeless.
The high peaks along the crest of the range, generally above 800 metres, support a distinctive cool temperate rainforest dominated by Antarctic Beech. The Springbrook and Lamington Plateau supports a ‘dry rainforest or vine forest characterised by emergent Hoop Pine in the canopy.

The highland rainforests of the Border ranges have been recognised as sites of high biological diversity and also represent the major remaining areas of subtropical rainforest in south-east Queensland. They are of outstanding international significance as conserving a unique record of the evolutionary history of Australian rainforests (65 to 40 million years ago), including relics of Gondwanan species. Such attributes have resulted in the area being World Heritage listed.

Tamborine National Park lies on the Darlington Range, a spur of the McPherson Range, providing spectacular views of the Scenic Rim and the Gold Coast from, Coolangatta to Moreton Island. The mountain contains several key patches of relatively intact rainforest and wet sclerophyll forest surrounding the plateau. Intact patches of forest are important in creating vegetated links between the fragmented national parks in the area and facilitating wildlife movement.

Diversity of forests and wildlife: The high biological diversity of the Border ranges rainforests is of international significance and has resulted in a World Heritage listing. These attributes have attracted the creation of two internationally recognised eco-resorts Binna Burra and O Reilly’s.

Floodplains and Valleys

As the rivers and creeks of the Gold Coast flow from the hinterland towards the coast they create a series of interwoven floodplains and valleys characterised by forested hills and rainforest pockets. Valleys such as the Currumbin climb up through farmland, to rainforest hilltops and ridgeline settlements, some supporting nurseries and permaculture.

Narrow fringes of riparian vegetation line most of the major waterways in the Valley. Riparian forests are highly valued because they provide wildlife corridors, facilitate the movement of plants and wildlife between larger areas of habitat; protect stream banks; contribute to life in the streams, and give the landscape definition. They are also great places for stream-side picnics.

Riparian vegetation generally supports a higher diversity and density of plants and wildlife because they are more fertile and better watered than the surrounding landscape. They are also necessary for the long-term survival of aquatic ecosystems as they provide shade, shelter, food and habitat diversity. It is essential to the maintenance of bioregional diversity that riparian systems are recognised, rehabilitated and managed to fulfill these functions.

One case study of conservation significance: The Coomera River starts in a World Heritage listed area and cascades through rocky pools, forests and farmland into the RAMSAR* designated areas of South Moreton Bay.

*Areas protected by international agreements as sites for migratory birds

Islands, beaches and estuaries

The Gold Coast coastline is world famous for its 42 kilometre strip of white sandy beaches stretching from Coolangatta to Southport. This coastal strip encompasses rocky headlands and beaches, islands such as South Stradbroke Island and estuaries (both marine and freshwater).

Two dominant rocky headlands are Currumbin Rock and Burleigh National Park. The vegetation generally occurring on rocky outcrops is Wallum heathland characterised by: magnificent large flowers, coastal Grass trees with flowering spines and prickly-leaved paperbark. Wallum heathland is becoming increasingly threatened by clearance and fragmentation as a result of rapid urban expansion and rural residential development. This vegetation type is of high regional significance as a living museum recording former patterns of coastal vegetation.
Rocky headlands: Burleigh National Park, a prominent landmark on the southern end of the Gold Coast, provides a variety of vegetation habitats including rainforests, eucalypt forests, pandanus groves, tussock grassland, coastal heath and mangroves. They also provide migratory and local wader bird species with roost sites at high tide and food resources at low tide. In recent years the pademelon (small members of the kangaroo family) population has decreased markedly owing to isolation of the park from urban expansion.

South Stradbroke Island, the largest island on the coast, is composed largely of wind blow sand. The island is characterised by near-intact coastal sand-dune vegetation, remnant palm swamp and She-oak forests.

The coastal wetlands and undeveloped areas of southern Moreton Bay, in Council ownership, protected in a relatively undisturbed state, are a significant part of the open space network in the Gold Coast. Estuaries such as the one at Coomera, including Coombabah Lake, Coomera Island, North Arm and Coombabah Creek, form tidal wetlands which contribute to a productive fisheries industry. Coastal wetlands in private ownership have been transformed by major development of canal estates and recreational areas. This type of development has completely altered the city’s characteristic swampy lowlands through large-scale earth-moving, pumping and drainage of flood-prone land.

Close to the sea

- Seagrass is important for nutrient cycling, coastline stabilisation, food production (fish and crustaceans) and habitat provision. Moreton Bay is the southernmost limit for three seagrass species.

- Mangroves provide habitat for juvenile fish and crustacean species; contribute to the detrital foodweb; are critical to fisheries production; provide roost sites for waders, other birds and bats; and reduce the impacts of waves and currents on coastlines.

- Coral reefs are rich in biological diversity. The coral reefs of Moreton Bay, situated on the boundary between tropical and temperate systems are small but extremely diverse in species.

- Sandbanks contain a high diversity of marine invertebrates (worms, molluscs etc); are important habitat for commercial and recreational fish; and are migratory wader birds roost sites.

- Un-vegetated mudflats provide a major source of food for waders at low tide and fish species at high tide; contain high densities of molluscs, polychaetes, crabs etc. and provide future sites for seagrass and/or mangrove colonisation.

Freshwater wetlands provide a high diversity of habitats including lagoons, rivers, creeks, billabongs and dams which support distinct vegetation types. Wetlands, whether permanent or intermittent, are particularly important for certain bird species as refuge areas during times of drought. In addition, during winter the freshwater wetlands provide a necessary food source for bird species normally associated with rainforest areas.

Wildlife

The rainforests of the hinterland support numerous unique species some of which are considered rare, endangered and/or restricted including frogs, reptiles, birds, mammals and invertebrates.
South-eastern Queensland supports a high diversity of bird species as a result of the effects of spatial and seasonal variations. Common migration patterns are: winter visitors (breeding to the south); summer breeding visitors (wintering to the north); and passage migrants (en route north or south). Birds also migrate according to altitude, moving seasonally between the coastal lowlands and the hinterland. Nomadic species, which follow shifting food resources, are also present in the Gold Coast area.

Many of the wildlife species of the Gold Coast City region are of national and or regional significance because they are restricted to specific habitats. These habitats occur only within this region or are under threat elsewhere. The following table indicates wildlife which are either nationally or regionally significant, or are under direct threat with many declared rare/ vulnerable/or vulnerable to extinction.

### Naturally or regionally significant wildlife

#### RAINFORESTS

- **Birds:** Albert's Lyrebird, Rufous Scrub-bird, Eastern Bristlebird, Coxen's Fig-parrot, Plumed Frogmouth, Black-breasted Button-quail
- **Amphibians:** Hip-pocket frog
- **Mammals:** Long-nose potaroo, Yellow bellied glider, Golden-tipped bat

#### VALLEYS AND FLOODPLAINS

- **Nerang State Forest**
  - **Birds:** Glossy Black Cockatoo

#### EUCALYPTUS OPEN FOREST AND WOODLANDS, MANGROVE AND PAPERBARK FORESTS

- **Mammals:** Koala and Flying fox

#### ISLANDS, BEACHES AND ESTUARIES

- **Moreton Bay**
  - **Mammals:** Dugong

- **Burleigh National Park**
  - **Birds:** Osprey, White-bellied sea eagle, Brahminy kite, Whistling kite
  - **Mammals:** Pademelon

### Losing the Gold Coast's natural heritage

Given the status and value of the city’s natural heritage, it is surprising to learn that there is a risk to the continued presence of these valuable features. With population increasing from 330,500 to 525,000 in 2011 and a similar growth rate becoming a reality for visitor levels, the pressures on these natural areas is rising dramatically.

Parallels can be drawn between vegetation loss on the Gold Coast and losses calculated for coastal South-east Queensland in general. The impacts of population growth on the natural environment are primarily the result of clearing of native bushland. In the 15 year period 1974-1989, 33% of the 1974 bushland cover in the coastal areas of south east Queensland (excluding the islands) was cleared. These figures do not include estimates for regrowth of vegetation in previously cleared areas.

Losses sustained between 1974 and 1989 by vegetation type are estimated at:

- 50% of paperbark forests,
- 36% of eucalypt dry forests,
- 34% of heathlands,
- 16% of eucalypt moist forest, and
- 5% of rainforest.

It has been predicted that if these trends continue, most bushland on privately owned land will be cleared by 2019. Losses may consist of complete clearing of sites or it may be a matter of land uses extending into formerly continuous bushland and transforming it into a ‘patchwork quilt’ of cleared areas and remnants.
Poorly conserved vegetation types

The two parts of the city where extensive natural areas remain are at the two topographic extremes - the steep sided mountains and elevated plateaus, and the tidal wetlands of Moreton Bay and South Stradbroke Island.

The lowland parts of the city have been extensively disturbed and only isolated patches of blue gum, paperbark and swamp remain. Poorly conserved vegetation types are:

- lowland rainforest communities
- sedges and dry heaths
- sea-land interface vegetation types e.g. mangroves, saltmarsh etc,
- paperbark (Melaleuca quinquenervia) tall- open forests on estuarine alluvium lowland rainforest communities
- forest red gum (Eucalyptus teretecornis) open forest on alluvial sediments
- all fringing or riparian vegetation communities
- freshwater wetlands on alluvial sediments
- mixed open forests of the dry sclerophyll type
- shrubby and grassy dry open forests on quartzose sandstones
- blackbutt (E. pilularis) open forest
- narrow-leaved gum (E. seeana) open forest
- ironbark-spotted gum woodlands and vine forest on metamorphic sediments
- elevated shrubby woodlands and open forest, and shrublands on rhyolite
- bushland areas contiguous with national and environmental parks, rainforest and vineforest pockets, lowland forests, riparian corridors and wetlands are particularly important for ecotones, buffers and habitat links
- tall open forest (wet sclerophyll) communities are restricted in their natural distribution in the region, and are of high significance for flora and fauna diversity where the sub-canopy or understorey consists of rainforest species
- remnant patches of lowland forest generally, and especially Paperbark forest on alluvial soils, Blackbutt and Gum-topped Box communities are important as 'living museums irrespective of their connectivity

The mountains and the marine shore areas represent the best remaining opportunities for conservation of both natural and landscape values. In between these two big opportunity areas, it is vital that vegetation which forms refuges for valuable wildlife, protects water supply catchments and provides corridor linkages from the coast to the hinterland be protected.

Promoting and protecting it

If nature is to have a presence in the city’s future then it needs promoting and protecting.

Council efforts, in collaboration with these other sectors, should be directed at promoting, regulating, motivating and actively supporting the ‘Green behind the Gold concept of the city and its hinterland. In practical terms this means taking action and applying Council capabilities to several critical areas. These are outlined below.

Promoting: Council should prepare clear and simple messages for the general public and visitors to the city about the high value of the city’s flora and fauna and ways that Council is working to protect and enhance it. Targets set for various nature-based programs such as waterways repair, weed removal, species propagation would play a key part in these communications, followed by reports on progress made.

Regulating: Regulations are just one part of this package of protection measures, but a vital part. Council needs to send clear messages to landowners about the economic benefits of conservation and about the requirements for natural area management and development. A climate of certainty about Council’s intentions and requirements in terms of natural areas must be created for protection to work hand in hand with the city’s prosperity. The same message needs to be communicated internally to ensure that Council leads by example in matters of conservation practices. Appropriate State legislation is also vitally important.
Motivating: Incentives are another key part of the package of protection measures. Many Australian Local Governments are working with landowners to ensure incentives for their involvement in conservation. These incentives range from transferable development rights to rate rebates and reduced levies. State Government could also provide land tax relief. Other incentives could include assistance with gaining information, land management planning or on-the-ground projects. Proper provision of incentives to landowners is critical to ensure their support and cooperation.

Actively Supporting: People cannot protect natural assets without active Council support, particularly when natural areas require hands-on operations. Once the planning scheme, the by-laws and the financial incentives are in place, Council programs to support active management of these natural areas can be put in place. Education centres, community grants schemes and rehabilitation projects are just some of the ways to actively support the large volume of voluntary work which the community engages in to ensure natural areas are protected.

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The natural environment is an important component of the urban heritage and character of the City. The concurrent Nature Conservation Strategy goes some way to addressing this aspect of the Gold Coast as it affects this study.

However, the Nature Conservation Strategy is focused on survey of natural species and their distribution. It does not address issues such as the value of views and vistas, the use of the natural environment by residents and visitors, the man modified environments of farming communities nor the qualities and characteristics of urban plantings and landscape.

While market research and community consultation identify real appreciation of the natural environment as part of the character of the City, there is little understanding of what it is about the natural environment that people perceive is really important to the City’s heritage and character in a cultural sense.

Bring together the findings of the Urban Heritage & Character Study and the Nature Conservation Strategy to analyse the people’s perception and understanding of how the natural environment forms part of the experience of Gold Coast living.
4.6 FURTHER READING

Appendix 9.2 of this document contains a list of publications which help define the history and character of the Gold Coast.

This list contains not only traditionally structured histories but publications essays and articles which address the cultural social and economic forces which have shaped the city.

The reading list also covers more broadly based matters such as the care of 20th century cities or buildings in other parts of the world.

Matters relating to conservation and the role of conservation in modern society are also addressed.

Some effort has been made to briefly summarise some of these publications as an aid to those who seek a wider understanding of the city and of the issues addressed in this study.
5. PLACES & SITES
THE URBAN HERITAGE AND CHARACTER of the Gold Coast is reflected in the places and sites making up the city. While lifestyle and the way in which these places are understood and used by the people of the city is a central tenet of this study, the city itself has qualities and form which are an important part of its understanding.

In the broadest terms the city is comprised of two parts; that focused on the coastal strip and that of the hinterland. Despite the recent encroachment of development to the west these two areas remain distinctively different.

At a finer grain the city may be seen within nine character areas. Local character exists within these at a still finer grain and the study identifies fifteen areas in which local character is important.

While some individual places of heritage significance have been identified by others including the National Trust and the Queensland Heritage Council these do not truly represent the diversity and history of the Gold Coast.

5.1 CHARACTER AREAS

The Gold Coast's character has largely been created and sustained since the early 1950s as a place distinctively different from other places in Australia.

Based on warm and sunny weather, and a new and different lifestyle the image has in part become the character as the lifestyle and culture of its residents shapes the built form of the city.

Notwithstanding that overriding cultural influence, the city is comprised of a number of distinctive character areas based upon geography, topography, land use and history. Despite this finding these are not hard edges and the areas in some instances run into each other.
The beach strip

Perhaps the best known and certainly the most promoted area within the city is the beach strip which runs from Main Beach to Coolangatta.

Centred on the beach and the frontal dunes and limited to the west by swamp and estuarine country the area developed from late last century as the site for beach and holiday housing as surfing became popular. Basically an unstable and shifting foundation and subject to erosion from the sea, early housing was, as a result, lightly constructed.

In more recent years low lying areas have been filled and larger buildings including high rise accommodation towers have been constructed. Little evidence remains of its original landform although in isolated allotments some dunal vegetation remains.

The construction of the highway along this strip from the 1920s reinforced the supremacy of the area as the holiday centre of the Gold Coast and a strip of development linking early settlements evolved.

Its present character depends now upon its planning and architectural expression and upon the particular beach culture that is centred in the strip. Its early landform and geography are to some extent secondary.

Broadwater area

The early settlement of Southport was focused upon that body of water known as the Broadwater stretching from Jumpinpin in the north to the Nerang River in the south. Recreational swimming and boating has been the mainstay of this area since that time. Activity is still centred upon boating with some tourism development such as Seaworld closer to the beach strip.

The area is framed to the east by the sand dunes of the Spit and South Stradbroke Island - generally without major development and the area has a visual openness as a result. To the west some development has taken place. Generally these are low rise although the towers at Runaway Bay form a distinctive exception.

While the early landform has changed in some areas for example in the construction of the Gold Coast seaway and in the landfill adjacent to the Southport business area the essential character of the area is one of openness.

Hope Island estates

In the 1980s a major development took place at Hope Island at a scale not seen at the Gold Coast before that time. The concept of gated communities and private estates was brought to a high point at the Sanctuary Cove development where a complete community was created centred on a golf course but offering all facilities of a resort and residential community. Similar developments have occurred since that time.

While not truly representative of the Gold Coast these places and the lifestyle associated with them represent, to many, the direction of Gold Coast lifestyle and development. Private and remote, their scale and clarity of the built form sets them apart from other areas in the city.

The overriding character of this part of the city is drawn from the openness that results from reclamation of low lying land for golf course estates, for the clustering of development in planned communities where architectural expression is absolutely consistent and cohesive, and for the sense of isolation from the more mainstream development in the city.
The bay islands

The southern end of Moreton Bay in the area around the Jumpinpin Bar contains a number of small sand and mangrove islands including Woogoompah, Kangaroo, Eden and Tabby Tabby Islands.

Generally uninhabited they are intersected by narrow and changing channels used by the boating and fishing community as access between the Broadwater and the more open waters of northern Moreton Bay.

While strikingly different from other more developed areas of the city their form and geography is not so different from that which characterised other islands which have, since the 1950s been dredged and developed. They remain as a well preserved reminder of the form of the landscape before that time and act not only as a remnant of that aspect of the Gold Coast's early character and history but provide a visual buffer between the developed areas to the south and the valued environment of Moreton Bay as a recreational area.

The character of this area derives from its surviving natural environment of mangroves and waterways and the contrast offered to other natural areas within the city.

Beenleigh and sugar cane

The area to the north of the city has been a sugar growing area since early in the history of the region. It continues to be so and is one of the few primary producing areas remaining in the Gold Coast. Its landscape is consistent, dominated by cane farms. Its character includes the farm buildings, subdivision pattern and roads. The Rocky Point Sugar Mill is part of the area and an important icon within it. The area fronts Moreton Bay and some associated hamlets and early boating activity on that interface is part of its character.

The area is associated with its traditional centre of Beenleigh and the history and form of the town may be traced to the fluctuating fortunes of sugar and associate industries. The Rum Distillery is part of that history and character. Beenleigh was also an important “half-way” stop on the road between Brisbane and the Gold Coast until bypassed by the Pacific Highway. It contains some housing representing that period and the remnants of a commercial centre including some early two storey hotels.

Southport

One of the earliest centres of the Gold Coast, Southport began as a marine village in the latter years of the 19th Century. Its early dominance, its position facing the Broadwater where access by sea was important and the later arrival of the railway from Brisbane ensured its continued importance as an administrative centre for the Gold Coast until relatively recently.

While most of the early large houses and hotels have been lost there is, in the remaining building stock and urban form, evidence of that early important role. Not only the commercial centre of Southport is important in terms of its character. Early housing including some immediate post-war housing survives and gives meaning to the character of this area.

The Southport School and St. Hilda’s, the hospitals, court house, commercial and administrative headquarters equally reflect that early development. Tree planting and vegetation is of that period and is distinctively different from that in more recently developed areas.

Its character derives from these factors and the continuation of land use patterns and in its location facing the Broadwater. It remains a centre more related to its early history and development than other places within the city.
The canal estates

From the late 1950s a form of land reclamation and development took place at the Gold Coast that had not been seen before in this country. Low lying areas within the Broadwater and the Nerang River were dredged and the land reshaped to form housing estates in which many allotments were given water frontage in a series of canals. Since that time these estates have proliferated within the low lying land behind the coastal dunes along the length of the city. These areas quickly developed their own character due in part to the necessary subdivisinal pattern of courts and cul-de-sacs. Each allotment was created with frontage to both land and water that shaped the lifestyle and in turn by the housing type that evolved.

They remain a dominant and unique aspect of the character of the city. That character is derived from the subdivisional pattern and cohesive architectural form of the housing built upon them.

Redevelopment within these areas is only now beginning to take place in some of the earlier examples.

New suburban estates

As one of the fastest growing cities in Australia the Gold Coast adds dramatically to its housing stock each year. Most of the new housing estates subdivided and developed are located in that area to the west of the coastal strip and the canal estates and are centred on the Pacific Highway.

They include the centres of Helensvale and Robina as well as the more modestly scaled and more common developments. While they include differing subdivision patterns allotment size and housing types they remain a remarkably cohesive character area.

Characterised by brick and tiled housing usually single storied and located in wide and sweeping streets these areas are not unlike housing estates in the suburban areas of capital cities.

Absence of land use other than residential and their recent development on the Gold Coast results in a cohesive character within the city that sets these estates apart from other areas.

River valleys and mountains

The hinterland of the Gold Coast comprises two elements. On the one hand the mountain escarpments which are largely protected and in the other areas which were developed in the late 19th and the early 20th Century for rural industry.

Much of this latter sector retains the character of rural land notwithstanding the fact that rural activity has given way to smaller allotments and hobby farms. The area is characterised by rural vistas, by the low density of development and by the access roads that wind their way through these areas. The areas range from the southern outskirts of Beenleigh through to the border in a wedge that widens out and comes close to the coast in the Curumbin and Tallebudgera Valleys.

Some areas of river flood plain are included in the area although generally speaking the character is shaped by more undulating and hilly topography.
5.2 LOCAL CHARACTER

Within the nine broad character areas are a further fifteen areas of more specific urban character.

Traditionally areas within cities draw their character from historical development and the Gold Coast is no exception.

Those areas to the west of the Gold Coast Highway where development is taking place in former natural or man modified rural landscapes have largely overwhelmed the former character and little remains of early or historical form.

Exceptions are the early hamlets of Nerang and Mudgeeraba which, despite recent and major growth, retain some evidence of early form in their present state.

Local character, that is the fine grain of urban characteristics, is however largely confined to the coastal strip where early beach settlement took a particular form and character as a result of their history, development pattern and topography.

While to the casual observer "the strip" has an overriding character of tourist accommodation interspersed with commercial and residential use there is real opportunity to identify the particular areas in terms of local character.
Main beach and the yacht basin

During the early years in which Southport was the urban centre of recreational activity at the coast, visitors were ferried across the Broadwater to surf at the main beach. The area was defined by narrow coastal dune between the sea and the mouth of the Nerang River. Narrowneck formed the southern boundary and to the north a spit of sand terminated in a break or bar between the Broadwater and the sea. A natural basin for boats existed at the mouth of the river.

The area became more popular following the construction of the Jubilee Bridge in 1926 when land was taken up and holiday houses were constructed. Some guest houses were also constructed but little or no permanent population was located in the area.

Some evidence remains of the area’s early popularity as a surfing beach in the beachfront planting and the kiosk and shelter shed from 1934.

The construction of the new bridge and the deviation of highway to the west of Main Beach in the late 1960s was preceded in the 1950s by early reclamation of the Nerang River to the west of the earlier subdivision, and the area centred on Tedder Avenue dates only from that time. A different subdivision pattern in that portion of Main Beach is the result.

Similarly the land to the north of the early subdivision - the sand spit that formed one bank of the bar - was only recently developed. Until the 1870s and 80s the only activity in this area was limited to facilities associated with the Southport Yacht Club and other maritime activities.

Its use is still limited although resort hotels and theme parks now occupy the land. Revegetation of the spit followed the construction of the Gold Coast seaway and gives particular character to this area and acts to link the more intensively developed area to the south with the open areas of the Broadwater and Southern Moreton Bay.

Main Beach proper has developed as a high rise area only relatively recently and is focused on Tedder Avenue. It has a sense of more permanent residential neighbourhood than other parts of the high rise coastal strip. The restaurants and coffee shops service this use. Most of the apartment buildings along the foreshore are more modest in scale. The isthmus at Narrowneck acts as a natural barrier to the more intensively developed area to the south.
Surfers Paradise high rise

The early subdivision of Elston became the centre of development activity within the coastal strip from 1925 when Cavill opened the new Surfers Paradise Hotel. The area was serviced until that time by Myer's Ferry at the Nerang River but the construction of the Jubilee Bridge in that year and the new hotel set the seal on Surfers Paradise as the centre of developmental activity.

The boom of the 1950s and 60s was largely centred on this area and the first and earliest of the tall apartment buildings that now characterise the area were constructed in the decades that followed.

Little remains of the early vegetation or natural features of the area and even the historical association of the beachfront development with the river is tenuous.

The early subdivision pattern remains although later reclamation of the islands in the Nerang River as housing estates and the bridges to those islands has created a contrast reflected in subdivision and building form.

Some early remnants survived such as Budd’s Beach - a low scale open area on the river which was even in the early history of the area was a centre for boating, fishing and still-water swimming.

Some minor changes have occurred in extending the road along the beachfront since the early subdivision and the esplanade is now very much a focus of activity in this part of the Gold Coast.

Promenading and people-watching takes place in this area where land use encourages not only residential activity but tourism with supporting shops and restaurants.

The intensity of activity, centred on Cavill, Orchid and Elkhorn Avenues is reflected in the density of building development. Of all places of the Gold Coast the buildings in this area constitute a dominant and enduring image visible from many vantage points in the city from as far south as Burleigh Heads as well as from the mountain resorts of the hinterland and beyond.

‘The skyscraper is the instrument of a new form of unknowable urbanism. In spite of its physical solidity, the skyscraper is the great metropolitan destabiliser: it promises perpetual, pragmatic instability.’

Surfers Paradise: other

Between Enderley Avenue and Queensland Avenue lies an area which contains some of the characteristics of the previous area but in a less intensive manner.

Early subdivisional plans suggest a change in orientation and street pattern south from Enderley Avenue through to Northcliffe. The pattern changes again at Fern Street where old Burleigh Road becomes the primary artery. In 1946 subdivision ceased just south of Wharf Road in what is now First Avenue. The area through to Queensland Avenue was subdivided in the following decade.

Little remains now in terms of early building to demonstrate this creeping south of residential subdivision. Some houses from each period survive but generally not in sufficient quantities to shape the character of the area.

Some isolated examples such as the Pink Poodle and the nearby Riviera Motel do give a sense of that period in the area's history.

Some suggestions of early subdivision and land use planning survive in the bowls club and areas of open park land and in the width of the streets.

Generally however the area since the 1970s has taken on a new character of apartment buildings some of a height and form equivalent to those within the main Surfers Paradise area.

Less intensely developed the area contains some lower density and lower rise buildings and even some surviving single houses. Certainly the pace of life in this area is slower without the associated shops and restaurants.

No particular landmarks, icons or symbols identify or distinguish this area.
Broadbeach

This area was vacant open land until 1955 and was the site of sand mining up to that time. The subsequent subdivision of the area broke with traditional patterns in two ways.

Firstly in the provision of a beachfront reserve or park stretching the length of the area from Queensland Avenue to Peerless Avenue at Mermaid Beach (where an earlier subdivision reinstated the norm of allotments running right up to the beach) and in the extension of Surf Parade running close to and parallel to the highway effectively breaking the concept of strip development along the highway at that point.

The development of the area was led by the construction of Lennons Broadbeach Hotel in 1955 - now the site of the Oasis Hotel and shopping centre in Victoria Avenue.

With one or two exceptions, development in the area is low rise consisting of single houses and importantly in a building form of apartments based on a terrace house concept of two storied narrow fronted apartments.

This building form and others of similar scale dominate the area. Generally set back from the street with elaborate carports in front that represent a growing dependence on the motor car for transportation and as a status symbol.

Vegetation and planting is introduced and is characteristically of the 1960s. Native shrubs and hibiscus are more common than the ubiquitous palm.

Some resort buildings of the period such as the Tropicana Motel at Mermaid Avenue and the Gold Coast highway are important in identifying the period of the area’s development.
Mermaid Beach

The area from Peerless Avenue to Chairlift Avenue at Miami appears to have been subdivided in two phases - the first ending at Seashell Avenue and characterised by small allotments and the more southerly portion of a different street pattern consisting of larger allotments.

Shown in the street directory of 1955 they appear to date from that time or before. Some early housing, low set and clad in asbestos cement survived within in the area although subsequent development has taken place in the 1960s and another wave presently is reshaping the character of that part of the area along Albatross and Hedges Avenue.

In some of the first generation development, evidence of landform including dunal grass and vegetation is still apparent but not sufficient quantity to contribute to the character of the area.

More importantly the residential nature of the area with narrow streets and simple planting has not yet taken on the overlay of the 1970s which characterises other areas.

Low lying and largely devoid of natural features or landmarks there is little to identify it clearly as an area of special or unique character in these terms. The Little Nobby's Headland at the southern extremity forms a natural boundary and the recently constructed residential apartments there set a new standard for this area.

The experience of this area from along the highway is ordinary with mixed development from various periods.
Miami

One or two areas along the coastal strip have outstanding character. That area from Little Nobby (or North Nobby) to South Nobby is one. Locked away because of these headlands the area is small and not generally subject to through traffic. Subdivision pattern is in itself unusual containing the unique (for the Gold Coast) Messines Crescent.

Probably dating from the early 1960s the area is characterised by its high proportion of single housing.

Overshadowed and enclosed on both its northern and southern boundaries by headlands Miami has a characteristic neighbourhood scale that is unusual at the Gold Coast.

The area is marked, from the highway, by the Miami High School and the well known sign identifying that institution fixed to the escarpment of an early quarry at the base of Little Nobby Headland.
Burleigh Heads

Stretching from South Nobby to Burleigh Heads this area comprises two distinct sub areas. The northern most portion consists of a strip from Brakes Crescent to the Gold Coast Highway and the second in the town of Burleigh Heads itself clustered around the headland of that name and the national park.

The northern section appears to have been subdivided by the mid 1950s but was the site of extensive sand mining in the following decades. The broad beachfront park is a legacy of that activity.

Burleigh township itself is much earlier and was the site of early development including hotels and guest houses to support the increasing interest in surf bathing that took place in the last years of last century and the first of the present century.

The beachfront at Burleigh Heads has a sense of centre or focus with its mature stand of Norfolk Island Pines - reputedly some of the earliest planted at the coast.

The area is dominated visually by the Burleigh Headland and the development in this part tends to sit within the steep escarpments of that feature. Roads within the area become elevated in a manner most uncharacteristic of the coast as a whole.

The town has a commercial centre again uncharacteristically not on the main highway which came after the initial subdivision and assignment of land use.

The turn in the highway at Burleigh Heads to skirt the headland and cross Tallebudgera Creek is in itself unusual. It passes an early water hole that is now and has been for some years the bowling club is an important landmark or icon for the area.

In the northern section a series of medium rise residential towers face the esplanade and the reserve. Dating from the 1970s they sit amongst earlier housing and unit development of a lower scale. The hotel and the steep rise to the small residential community at the northern headland helps in establishing the character of this area.
Palm Beach

The area between Tallebudgera Creek and Currumbin Creek is one with little in the way of natural features to enclose it or to set it apart from other places at the Gold Coast.

Certainly subdivided by the mid 1950s the subdivision is unusual in the way in which it straddles both sides of the highway. Streets are named from first to twenty-eighth starting at the southern end of the area and each second one terminates at the highway. Between the beach and the highway in the southern part of the area the narrow Jefferson Lane links across streets. In this lane are some of the earliest and most basic of Gold Coast beach “shacks”.

There is some suggestion that these in fact predate the subdivision and other remnants of an earlier settlement. Other housing and development in the area is ordinary.

Recent extensions of the Palm Beach area to the west have created new subdivisions with different characteristics including a small section of canal development. The area is bounded to the north by the Tallebudgera Creek and the national recreation camp and to the south by tower developments at the mouth of Currumbin Creek.
CURRUMBIN
The Currumbin area is one of a particular character. Stretching from Currumbin Creek in the north to Wyberba Street in the south the area is easily identified because of its headlands that project into the beach. The highway skirts to the rear of Currumbin creating something of a quaint backwater. Even the more usual commercial development of the Gold Coast Highway is absent as the road winds over the headland and past the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary.

Subdivision appears to date from the early 1950s and is dictated largely by the topography of the area.

At the beachfront Elephant Rock and Currumbin Rock enclose a discrete surfing beach. Some properties to the south have absolute beach frontage and the elevated land provides opportunities for views unusual at the coast. Many of the houses at Currumbin date from the period of its earliest subdivision and the area contains a substantial grouping of ‘fibro’ beach houses.

Some later development has occurred including some high rise backing onto the hillside at Pacific Parade.

Generally the area contains more natural vegetation than other areas of the coast due in part to the difficulty of building on the steep hillsides and in part to the presence of the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary - a long standing icon and landmark at the Gold Coast. The Sanctuary comprises a substantial area of land on both sides of the highway adjacent to Flat Rock Creek.
**Tugun and Bilinga**

From the Currumbin headland south to the traffic interchange and the Tweed Heads Bypass Road is the long and narrow strip of Tugun and Bilinga.

Probably subdivided in the early 1950s, the area was constrained to the west by the presence of the south coast railway which ran close to the beach at that point. The present exceptionally wide road reserve (Golden Four Drive) is the site of that earlier transport corridor. The beachfront road which shows in earlier maps is no longer present having been lost to the sea in subsequent years.

To the west of the highway, original wetland has been reclaimed for use as the Coolangatta airport and the resultant openness and absence of development emphasises the narrowness of the strip and is characteristic of it.

To the east of the highway some new multi-storey development has taken place in recent years but of a limited height because of its proximity to the airport. Some early housing and tourist apartments dating from the 1950s survives.

Notwithstanding its unusually extended form, the area has substantial character. Mature pines line the Gold Coast Highway for much of its length in this area. Commercial development is limited to a particularly urban centre at the northern end, and the width of the highway and the openness to the west, set this area apart as one of special qualities.

It has added value as the introduction to the more intensively developed urban centre of Coolangatta immediately to the south.
Coolangatta

Coolangatta was one of the earliest settlements at the Gold Coast. Focused on a steep headland at Point Danger the area was occupied by Europeans from at least 1828 by a convict station and cedar getters soon followed.

Selectors followed in the 1860s and a small settlement at Coolangatta was established. In 1883 a township was surveyed. As a border town Coolangatta included a customs office and boatshed and government wharf.

Extension of the railway from Nerang to Tweed Heads in 1903 guaranteed the success of Coolangatta as a holiday township and it flourished from that time forward. Guesthouses and hotels were erected and a commercial centre soon followed.

Subdivision and land use is therefore conventional. The early grid pattern is broken only by the ocean front and headlands and by the border which separates Coolangatta from its sister city of Tweed Heads.

Little remains of the earliest buildings at Coolangatta but some evidence remains of subsequent development in the early years of the present century.

Griffith Street remains the commercial centre and resort hotels and guest houses have been constructed between that area and the ocean front and clustered in the lee of the headland.

The border fence and gates that until recently were a characteristic of the area have now been removed but the sense of the border remains at Boundary Street running along the ridge of the headland between Queensland and New South Wales.

The headland itself is an important landmark and tourist destination. Coolangatta symbolises the terminus of the Gold Coast and the long strip of beach that begins at Main Beach forty kilometres to the north.
**Tallebudgera and Currumbin valleys**

Although agricultural land still exists throughout the city in the area to the west of the Pacific Highway, the Tallebudgera and Currumbin Valleys are particularly early and accessible remnants of this aspect of the Gold Coast story.

Both narrow valleys which terminate at the foothills of the mountain ranges to the west have a long history of cedar getting, banana plantations and dairy farming. Roads are narrow and winding following the creeks and crossing at low level bridges.

Subdivision has taken place in recent years from larger holdings to smaller ‘hobby’ farms and some new housing is apparent. In general however evidence of the earlier land use is apparent.

Old farmhouses, outbuildings and fences and steep hillsides focused on the watercourses characterise the area.

Traffic is limited because of the narrow roads and the fact that once at the end of these valleys, the only way out is to retrace ones path.

Their topography and land use sets them apart from other places at the Gold Coast. Their vegetation is equally distinctive - rural landscapes to the east and the remnants of early rainforest toward their western ends.

Access to the valleys is direct and sudden and the immediate contrast between the development and glitter of the coastal strip and the rural ambience of both Currumbin and Tallebudgera valleys is dramatic.

They are important icons of the characteristic “green behind the gold” that is at the heart of the Gold Coast heritage and character.
Nerang and Mudgeeraba

These two townships, outwardly different, are the very remnants of those townships that characterise the rural hinterland of the Gold Coast.

Together with Advancetown and Tallebudgera these settlements were brought together with the construction of the Gold Coast railway in the later years of the 19th century.

Both were centres of government at different times and served their immediate communities as commercial and service centres. It was not until this century that their coastal lands became dominant. Subdivision was conventional and buildings were traditional rural or rural commercial.

Nerang has focused very much on the river crossing and the head of navigation. Land was first sold in 1871 and coach and river transport to the settlement became more regular.

Sugar and maize were grown by farmers along the upper reaches of the river. The arrival of the railway in 1887 gave added impetus to the town.

Recent years have seen the early Nerang flourish as an administrative centre for the growing Gold Coast. The construction of the ‘new’ Pacific Highway on the old railway reserve has helped to focus development in the town in a manner which has extended and indeed largely swamped the early township. Its character is however still dependent upon the river and the early subdivision and commercial centre survive.

Mudgeeraba was, like Nerang, an early centre which rose to some prominence with the coming of the railway. The town in fact stepped from an earlier location to the west to its present position adjacent to the railway reserve.

Left behind in the more recent boom period Mudgeeraba contains important evidence of its earlier form and building. Contained on an ‘island’ within the flood plain its character remains one of a nineteenth century village despite the recent encroachment of housing estates to nearby land.
The highway

Early access to the Gold Coast from Brisbane was almost entirely by sea with steamers delivering goods and passengers to centres such as Southport, Coolangatta and Nerang.

Road transport was constrained by the necessity of crossing the numerous rivers and creeks. Gradually these problems were overcome and access to the Gold Coast by road became the norm.

The original Pacific Highway whose route led it from Brisbane through Beenleigh to Labrador and then along the coast to Coolangatta has been part of the experience of a Gold Coast holiday for generations of Queenslanders.

It became not only the access to the coast but the artery within the city. Development focused on the highway and the hotels, shops and other commercial activity began to come together in a strip or ribbon development that continues today.

The construction of the new highway to the west has relieved to some degree the pressure on the old highway as a through road but it continues to function as the major artery within the coastal strip.

Running parallel to the beach it is an important character area at the Gold Coast. Neon signs, motels, hotels and shopping centres line the highway from Labrador to Coolangatta. It is symbolic of the primary period of growth of this part of the Gold Coast when, in the wake of post war austerity, the motor car became in itself a symbol of affluence and personal freedom.
5.3 THE THINGS WE WANT TO KEEP

Within and beyond the various character areas that constitute the Gold Coast City are individual places and sites that are of such value that their retention in perpetuity is considered important by the community at large. While incentives and education play a part in the protection of these special places, it is common to introduce more specific and precise controls to ensure changes to the physical fabric and even to their use is strictly limited.

The usual approach in the care of these places is to prepare a list or register which alerts property owners in particular to the community's attitude and interest in these places. Further steps to legislate, to restrict 'development' subject to the approval of a board or committee (usually of experts in history and conservation) and where changes warranted to require any work carried out in accordance with agreed standards and philosophies.

There is no doubt that the singling out of individual places in this manner is a potential burden upon property owners (despite some evidence that listed properties can, in certain circumstances, increase in value as a result of that attention). The perceived burden occasionally results in bitter debate and inevitable administrative and legal costs. Most agree however, that some places are of such value to the community at large that these difficulties in administration are warranted.

In some places, the listing and accompanying legislative protection of groups or clusters of places within a small geographic area has the effect, through the protection that action guarantees, of protecting not only the individual places, but because of the density of listing, the character of the area as well. This effect is most often seen in central business districts of older cities of traditional concentric form where places of a consistent age and architectural form and generally representing an early or formative phase or theme of history, are valuable because of their architectural or aesthetic value.

The history and urban form of the Gold Coast does not generally suggest that pattern. The listing of places in this city must look to the particular characteristics and themes of history in the preparation of lists and legislative action.

5.4 HERITAGE REGISTERS

There is understandably some confusion as to the reason for the existence of the various heritage registers having authority in this State. The answer lies in the fact that, in the past, conservation has been largely uncoordinated and unsupported by legislation.

There are three principal registers in operation in the State. They are, in order of seniority, the list maintained by the National Trust, the register of the National Estate maintained by the Australian Heritage Commission and the Heritage Register maintained by the Queensland Heritage Council.

The registers are not totally independent and many of the listings occur in more than one list. In fact it is no secret that the Heritage Register was drawn initially from entries in both the National Trust list and the Register of the National Estate.

None of the registers are static and they are constantly being refined and extended. Neither are any of the registers simply lists, and all contain entries which describe, to a greater or lesser extent, the significance of the place or the reasons why it is included.

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects maintains a register of Twentieth Century Buildings and the Institution of Engineers maintains a list of places of engineering significance.
National Trust of Queensland List

The following places are included on the National Trust Register:

- St George’s Anglican Church, Beenleigh
- Lutheran Church, Bethania
- Seal Sculpture, Broadbeach
- Infant Saviour Church, Burleigh Heads (demolished 1998)
- Uniting Church, Nerang
- Kinkabool, Surfers Paradise
- Kleinschmidt’s Arrowroot Mill, Upper Coomera
- Southport Drill Hall, Southport
- Former Council Chambers, Southport
- Pacific Cable Station (former), Southport
- Southport Bathing Pavilion
- Southport Surf Life Saving Club, Main Beach
- Main Beach Bathing Pavilion, Main Beach
- Pimpama & Ormeau War Memorial, Pimpama
- Burleigh Heads National Park
- Cedar Creek National Park
- Currumbin Sanctuary
- Gwongorella National Park
- Joalah National Park
- Lamington National Park
- Mt Cougal National Park
- Natural Bridge National Park
- Nicholl’s Scrub, Currumbin
- Palm Grove National Park
- Tomewin Environmental Park
- Warries National Park
- Wunburra National Park

Queensland Heritage Register

The following places are included on the State Heritage Register:

- St George’s Anglican Church, Beenleigh
- Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bethania
- Former Schmidt House, Worongary
- ‘Laurel Hill’ Farmhouse, Willowvale
- Dux Hut, Dux Anchorage, South Stradbroke Island
- ‘Infant Saviour’ Church, Burleigh Heads (provisional)
- Main Beach Pavilion & Southport Surf Lifesaving Club
- Pimpama & Ormeau War Memorial, Pimpama
- Southport Bathing Pavilion, Southport

Register of the National Estate

The following places are permanently registered as historic and natural places on the Register of the National Estate:

- St George’s Anglican Church
- Lutheran Church
- Southern & Eastern Moreton Bay
- The Knoll Environmental Park
- Burleigh Heads National Park
- Lamington National Park
- Canungra Land Warfare Centre Training Area (Part)
- Border Ranges Region
- Warrie National Park
- Gwongorella National Park
- Wunburra National Park
- Palm Grove National Park
- Cedar Creek National Park
- Natural Bridge National Park

Places

The registers kept by the National Trust, the Queensland Heritage Council and the Australian Heritage Commission do not truly represent the diversity of the heritage of the Gold Coast. The natural environment is represented in various national parks partly located within the city boundaries. Cultural sites, those that reflect or represent the development of the city since its first settlement in the mid 19th century are few in number and rarely touch on the various and complex themes of the Gold Coast history. Most are located in the hinterland - only the bathing pavilions at Southport represent the more recent and dramatic development of the coastal strip. While listing of places on heritage registers is not the only mechanism to ensure the recognition or care of places of value, there are clearly places within the city boundaries that are worthy of consideration in heritage terms. The various themes of history at the Gold Coast developed in this study might act as a prompt or framework for the consideration of a much wider range of places than those presently identified.
Places might include:

**Drainage channels**

There is some concern for the protection of flood plain areas within the city. Drainage schemes to make those areas productive have been in place since last century and early drains survive.

**Canal estates**

From the early 1960s large scale reclamation projects to create useful housing estates took place in the river land behind the frontal dunes at Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach. An earlier estate was in fact created at Anglers Paradise north of Labrador. These estates and the houses constructed within them are an important part of the heritage of the city.

**Agricultural lands**

Little remains of the extensive agricultural industry that flourished in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. Most farms have been subdivided and are now residential or ‘hobby’ farms.

Some evidence remains of that early industry in farmhouses, outbuildings and fences.

In the sugar growing area of Steiglitz the industry remains. Some recognition of that landscape of early settlements and indeed the surviving sugar mill (the remnant of 40 similar places once operating) is essential in understanding the Gold Coast.

**Industrial**

Early industry within the Gold Coast City boundaries is an important part of the story of the city. While not a major manufacturing centre evidence of sawmilling, sugar and arrowroot production remain.

**Government**

The history of local government at the Gold Coast is a complex one in which boundaries moved frequently and centres of government administration were relocated according to population pressure and changing needs. Two former council offices survive, at Southport and at Mudgeeraba. Evidence of State and Federal presence survives in police stations, hospitals and courthouses.

**Architecture**

The architecture of the Gold Coast is largely conventional within the hinterland and in the evidence of early centres such as Southport and Coolangatta.

Within the coastal strip Gold Coast architecture is particularly important. Evidence of early hotels, guest houses, beach shacks, 1950s ‘fibro’ housing and 1960s boom period modernism and later high rise development is largely unique to the Gold Coast. Stylistically the Gold Coast was the centre of much that was modern and at the cutting edge of resort development.

**Transportation**

The history of the Gold Coast as a resort destination relates closely to the history of transportation. Early agricultural activity, too, required transportation of goods to markets away from the coast. Wharves, boat houses and coach roads are part of the earliest evidence. Later roads, wider bridges and the evidence of the South Coast railway are still extant.

Since the 1950s the motor car became the primary mode of transportation and evidence of that period of the Gold Coast history is important in the understanding of the city’s history. Early petrol stations, bridges and road works are worthy of study and consideration.
Beach culture

Southport was laid out as a ‘marine village’. Early bathing was focused on the calm water of the Broadwater. Later an interest in surf bathing led to the construction of pavilions and reserves along the surfing beaches from Main Beach to Coolangatta. Surf lifesaving clubs and kiosks of this later period are important in understanding the heritage of the Gold Coast.

Introduced landscaping

The creation of new estates along the frontal dunes was accompanied by planned planting into these areas. The Norfolk Island Pine, first planted at Burleigh Heads, became the model for planting until the 1960s when palms and hibiscus were introduced.

Long views

One of the enduring characteristics of the Gold Coast is the opportunity for the city to look inward to itself in a series of long views. The images of the towers at Surfers Paradise seen from the mountains to the west or from places such as Burleigh Heads is important. So too are the uninterrupted views of the mountain ranges from the beaches.

Icons

In any city some places assume a meaning beyond their value as places of cultural significance. The Gold Coast is no exception and the city contains within its borders, places which truly represent the culture of the city.

These range from broad vistas or areas to industrial places or sites.

High rise strip

One of the best appreciated icons of the Gold Coast are its high rise towers. Individually some of these buildings assume monumental quality but their real value lies in their contribution as a cluster or architectural divide separating the beach from the more ordinary low rise developments to the west.

The beach

Not every Gold Coast resident regularly attends the beach. It is however, an important aspect of the heritage of the city. Stretching the length of the city it is at once a place of relaxation and recreation and of social contact. Its recognition, and protection, as an icon of the city is important. The numerous headlands that punctuate the otherwise uninterrupted strip of sand, and the rivers or creeks that usually accompany them are equally important.

The mountains

The knowledge that immediately behind the developed areas of the city lies an area of largely natural beauty is of great value to residents and visitors to the Gold Coast. The mountain ranges and their foothills are an important icon in understanding the heritage of this place.

Sites and places

Within the more ordinary of sites and places at the Gold Coast are those whose importance lifts them to the status of icons in the city. These are not necessarily major architectural works or monuments but often modest places whose meaning goes beyond the pragmatic or even measurable.
They might include for example:

- Pink Poodle Motel, or at least its neon sign
- Miami Ice Works
- Wallaby Hotel at Mudgeeraba
- Lifesaving Pavilion at Elephant Rock, Currumbin
- Budds Beach
- Beenleigh Rum Distillery
- ‘Halfway Creek’ sign on the highway from Brisbane
- Norfolk Pine plantings at Burleigh

**In support of character**

Recognition of places as part of the heritage of the Gold Coast will have an effect upon those other qualities of the urban environment and in particular the character of areas in which places are located. Inevitably the protection of sites, large or small, whether by listing or otherwise will constrain redevelopment and focus attention upon the setting or curtilage of that place and upon the character of the broader area.
6. STAKEHOLDERS: CONFLICT & OPPORTUNITIES
6.1 STAKEHOLDERS

Those interested in the heritage and character of the Gold Coast are not limited to special interest groups concerned with heritage, to conservationists or government authorities. Heritage and character impacts upon a wide range within the community in different ways.

Stakeholders in the heritage, character and indeed future of the city include those represented in five primary groups.

Heritage groups and authorities

There is a growing interest in the heritage and character of the Gold Coast. The National Trust (Gold Coast & Hinterland Branch) and the Southport Preservation and Renewal Society are two of the more visible groups. Others however exist including groups at Mudgeeraba and some of the areas along the coastal strip. While those later groups might more properly be classified as amenity societies their interest certainly extends to questions of heritage and character.

Government authorities including the State Department of Environment and the Australian Heritage Commission have an interest in the areas as witnessed by their listing of places within the city boundaries.

The Council

Gold Coast City Council’s own interest in heritage and character extends beyond the single concerns of specialist heritage groups. Their concern is of primary importance as the body responsible for the concerns of ratepayers, residents and visitors to the city and as the body responsible for management of land use. The extent to which the heritage and character of the city is recognised, promoted and conserved is of growing concern to Council and they are a major stakeholder in the process.

Property owners

Property owners range from major landholders and developers to owners of single units or land throughout the city and to governments at all levels including the City Council. Naturally, not all property owners will have a consistent view as to the benefits or otherwise of the growing interest in heritage and character. Many will be concerned that identification of areas or places of cultural significance or character will affect property values or development potential.

While some studies show that property values are enhanced through this process there is no doubt that heritage listing in particular can cause delays and even inhibit development. At the Gold Coast development is part of the ethos and culture of the city and the interests and concerns of property owners will be of primary concern.

Residents

The Gold Coast is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia. An unusually large number of residents have chosen to live in this place for reasons of lifestyle and culture. Their attitude to the heritage and character of the city is therefore different to residents of other cities and places in Australia. Some work has been carried out as part of this study to determine attitudes of residents and these are reported on in the following sections.
The success of any program, to promote and conserve the heritage and character of the Gold Coast will depend largely upon the acceptance of those programs by this group of stakeholders.

**Visitors**

As the premier tourist destination in Australia, a large proportion of the population of the Gold Coast at any given time are visitors to the city. Little work has apparently been carried out to determine the reasons for the Gold Coast’s success as a holiday destination. Climate and lifestyle are clearly important factors but the interest in cultural tourism, including heritage, is an international trend and it is likely that an increasing number of visitors to the coast will expect to see aspects of the city’s history and heritage as part of their holiday experience.

Certainly the character of the city, even in its broadest expression of the ‘green behind the gold’ is an important part of the experience of visitors to the city and the expectations of the stakeholders must be taken into account.

**6.2 PERCEPTION, ATTITUDE AND VALUE**

The conservation of urban heritage and character will be aided and indeed informed by an understanding of the history and culture of the Gold Coast and of the various themes that illustrate those areas, places and activities that are important.

The documentation of the evidence including the preparation of lists of areas and places will be an integral part of identifying and promoting their care and conservation.

While some places identified may be universally accepted as being of value for the present and future generations, many will not. The idea of value or cultural significance of any place is not usually one in which all sections of the community will agree and proposals for the care and conversation of those places likewise will be subject of individual or corporate perception and attitude.

What is important to one individual family or community is often seen as irrelevant to others. This is a problem that faces all aspects of conservation and indeed town planning and is not unique to the Gold Coast.

Heritage legislation, including the preparation of lists or registers and the associated controls or development approval mechanisms in those places, recognises the essential discursive nature of achieving goals or objectives and is structured accordingly.

In this study the differing perceptions attitudes and values of the community have been anticipated and community consultation has formed a major part of the work in identifying issues and opportunities for the conservation of the urban heritage and character of the city.

The work was carried out into two streams.

**Market research**

Community opinion was sought, in the first instance, in market research.

Four groups representing different geographic areas within the city and differing age profiles were brought together to canvass attitudes to heritage and character within the city.

The results of that work is attached to this document as Appendix 9.3. The major implications of the findings of the market research study are:

- That the Gold Coast community looks for a wider definition of heritage and character than that used to date in preparing existing lists and character identification.
• In particular, the groups considered that the evidence of more recent history of the Gold Coast should be considered.

• That in proposing conservation solutions the group saw the challenge as a balance between "what matters then and what matters now".

• The group generally acknowledged that given the complexity of heritage and character in this city that Council should have a key role in establishing policies that take account of community opinion, attitude and knowledge and reflect the community's broader interpretation of the issues.

**Postcard program**

In association with the market research, the broader community was invited to comment upon issues of character and heritage within the city. Residents were asked to return a pre-printed post-paid postcard to Council responding to the question "what's the best thing about living in Gold Coast City? - my favourite place is ...".

More than 750 responses were received and the results tabulated. That table is attached to this document as Appendix 9.4. The information sought included not only a description of the respondents’ "favourite place" but data concerning age, gender, home address and period of residence in the city. It has been entered into a database for further analysis.

Three newsletters have been sent to respondents during the course of this study in an effort to maintain community contact.

*Both the market research and postcard program identified the extraordinary breath of opinion in matters relating to heritage and character and reinforced the expectation of differing perceptions attitudes and values within the city.*

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<th>Recommendation RESEARCH OPINIONS OF TOURISTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>The community consultation program carried out as part of this study did not target the concerns or opinions of visitors to the Gold Coast. Clearly the visitor or tourist is in this city, an important stakeholder in discussions about the shape of the city, the urban experience and the conservation of heritage and character. Their opinion should therefore be sought through market research.</td>
<td><strong>Seek the opinions of visitors and tourists (perhaps in conjunction with State or local tourism authorities), about the Gold Coast in matters concerning the conservation of urban heritage and character.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning, particularly where the objective is development of the tourism industry, would benefit from research about tourists’ perceptions, so that particular experiences at the Gold Coast can be promoted or developed.</td>
<td><strong>Existing information as to opinion or preferences, may form the basis of this research.</strong></td>
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6.3 TOWN PLANNING/URBAN DESIGN AND HERITAGE LEGISLATION

Management of the urban environment including issues of heritage and character is a complete task and cannot be relegated to any single specialisation, descriptive or interest group. While some aspects of the task are quantifiable most are not and depend upon the perceptions or preferences of individuals or groups. Those perceptions and preferences shift in time too and the management of change which is at the heart of planning and of heritage and character issues are as much subject to questions of fashion or taste as other, perhaps less critical aspects of late twentieth century life.

Increasingly the role of experts in these matters is being questioned and community consultation is now a major part of any planning or conservation process.

**Town planning**

The role of planning until quite recently has been to guide new development in urban areas looking only at the needs of present communities and of future generations. Land was reserved for discrete uses and controls were placed upon the form, scale or density of development. The past, either in terms of heritage or existing character was largely ignored on the basis that the future demanded changes and that higher and better use of land was in the interest of not only property owners but the community as a whole.

There has, in recent years, been a shift in emphasis to acknowledge the existing character of urban areas and suburban areas and to plan for the protection of the existing amenity and the enhancement of those particular qualities in town planning.

Heritage, too, has been given more emphasis as communities have expressed real concern at the loss of important icons, places or buildings which give meaning to their understanding or appreciation of their environments.

The issues are addressed increasingly in both strategic statements concerning the “liveability” of cities and in local area plans or development control plans for suburban areas within the city.

Heritage lists, demolition controls, character analysis and design guidelines are all tools currently in use. Often these controls cut across existing expectations and incentives are necessary to encourage property owners to comply.

Town planning has a major and indeed increasing role in the management of heritage and urban character.

In cities such as the Gold Coast which has taken its present form from a culture of unrestrained development, the extent to which the town planning directs and manages these aspects must be supported by other systems.

**Urban design**

The relatively new descriptive of urban design takes as its basis the physical form and attributes of the city informed by questions of history, character, economics and amenity.

The design of urban places taking into account the needs of property owners, residents, visitors and the broader community, deliberately moves beyond the system of planning, either in prescriptive or performance models into concerns about the visual impact and immediate amenity of places.
While the objectives of urban design are wide ranging the discipline does provide opportunities at a micro level to address issues of urban heritage and character, and informed design decisions must, if they are to be successful, build upon systematic analysis of existing heritage and character issues and usually incorporate relevant aspects of that analysis into design principles or objectives.

Urban design by definition involves the local authority in questions of public spaces and urban amenity and greater opportunities for publicly funded, or at least directed, initiatives.

**Who looks after the cultural heritage**

It is a fallacy that the care of the cultural heritage is the responsibility of special interest groups set apart from the more regular legislative provisions and controls of town planning and government action.

The cultural heritage of places like the Gold Coast is not confined to a limited list of places, major monuments or a few selected examples of building types.

The breadth and complexity of the urban heritage and character of the Gold Coast demands an approach involving a wide range of stakeholders. Individual action on a privately owned cottage may, in the overall perspective, be as important as government listing of a major public building.

There are however, some organisations or authorities who have particular expertise or interest in the identification, care and management of the cultural heritage.

At a government level these include the Australian Heritage Commission and the Queensland Department of Environment. Each maintains a staff of experts in heritage matters and are able to give advice and assistance. The National Trust of Queensland is the largest of the non-government organisations and itself maintains a small staff at its office in Brisbane. A branch of the National Trust, centred on the Gold Coast, is active but does not have any full time staff or facilities and most questions of a technical nature will be referred to Brisbane.

At a local level the Southport Preservation and Renewal Society has a particular interest in the heritage and character of Southport and has some useful information concerning the place.

**Heritage legislation; a summary**

Existing initiatives exist in legislation and policies at both State and Commonwealth level. While some of these will need modification or adaptation for use at the Gold Coast they are an important aspect of the opportunities available to achieve Council’s objectives.

The Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 established the Australian Heritage Commission as an independent statutory authority. Its function is to compile and maintain a list of culturally significant places - the Register of the National Estate - and to encourage public interest in and education about those places. The Act requires the Commission to consult with local government where appropriate as well as with other levels of government and community organisations.

The Act is wide ranging and covers not only the historic cultural environment but the natural environment and the aboriginal cultural environment. It is not limited to places of national significance but is intended to reflect local and regional interests.

The Commonwealth generally does not have the power to introduce legislation which would impose sanctions on property owners except in the case of the aboriginal cultural environment.
The Act does require certain action by the Commonwealth and its agencies to deal with its own listed property in an agreed manner.

A copy of the Act and a more detailed analysis of its provisions is attached as Appendix 9.5.

The Queensland Heritage Act 1992 replaced the Heritage Buildings Protection Act 1990 which was an interim measure introduced to protect the cultural heritage pending the preparation of the more comprehensive current legislation.

The Act does not apply to the natural environment except where historic significance can be determined, nor does it apply to places of cultural significance to aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders.

It covers places and objects (including submerged relics and objects and places of archaeological interest) which form part of Queensland’s Cultural Heritage.

It creates a Heritage Council and a Heritage Register or list and contains criteria which enable the Heritage Council to decide whether or not a place is worthy of inclusion on the Register.

These criteria are based on those of the AHC Act. Once listed, development at a place is subject to the approval of the Heritage Council.

A copy of the Act and a more detailed analysis of its provisions is attached in Appendix 9.5.

The Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987 repealed several pieces of legislation concerning aboriginal relics and was intended to provide for the preservation and management of all aspects of the cultural environment in Queensland, both aboriginal and historical. The Act has largely been superseded by other, more precise legislation in the historic cultural environment but is still in place and has some influence in the requirement for permits to survey and in protecting aboriginal cultural heritage.

A copy of the Act and more detailed analysis of its provisions is attached in Appendix 9.5.

6.4 OPPORTUNITIES AT THE GOLD COAST

That the Gold Coast is a city that has, in the past, ignored its heritage and looked to the creation of an ideal based on dreams of fantasy and escape is not in doubt.

In that regard the city has followed the pattern established in most cities of the new world. The drive to create a place worthy of the dream gives little acknowledgment of the past or indeed to the environment in which it is located.

The past at the Gold Coast is by contrast with other nineteenth century cities quite recent. The form of the city and its culture is still being shaped.

Its population, therefore, is not necessarily ready or able to look back to an idealised past and to accept the strictures of conventional heritage controls and legislation as a necessary impost upon development in order to achieve its dream.

On the other hand the rate of growth of the city is having a marked effect on both the natural environment of the hinterland and upon the built environment of the coastal strip. There is recognition by some sections of the community that aspects of even the recent past may have value. Certainly there are those amongst its residents who feel a sense of security within areas shaped by history and having special character.

This study finds that these attitudes have their basis in fact and that there are, in both the hinterland and on the coastal strip, places of heritage (sometimes of relatively recent origins) and particular character.
As a city still largely in its formative period however, the study finds that the necessary town planning and heritage conservation controls used in other places in Australia may need modification or special application to suit the particular culture of the Gold Coast.

The special opportunities that these circumstances present are discussed in the following sections.

**State and Commonwealth initiatives**

The existing legislation at State and Commonwealth level is largely based on the concept of identification of heritage and introduces certain controls and requirements of property owners in dealing with those places. Those expectations may in certain circumstances be of value in managing issues of heritage and character at the Gold Coast.

The constraints placed upon property owners are however onerous and although some benefits flow from listing, most property owners, particularly non-residential owners, are wary of listing and can be expected to object on the grounds of economic constraint. The *Queensland Heritage Act* attempts to forestall this event by limiting objection to questions of cultural heritage.

As a result the Queensland Heritage Council is careful in proposing places for listing and generally is reluctant to receive nominations without broad scale and comprehensive studies in which the relative merits of each place may be compared to others of potential significance. It is also reluctant to consider places of recent construction where community value has had little time to form or in which opinion about cultural value or significance is still divided.

The *Australian Heritage Commission Act* requires an equally rigorous process of nomination before places are entered into the Register of the National Estate. Criteria for listing and the need to demonstrate cultural significance in terms of those criteria are clearly defined. While broadly based it is true to say that many places on the Register have historical value in the sense of being old. Indeed there is some reluctance to consider places with a recent history or which are not able to be judged with the benefit of historical perspective.

Once entered on the Queensland Heritage Register or the Register of the National Estate places are afforded some level of protection. In particular the Queensland Heritage Register requires any “development” (a broadly defined term) to be approved by the Queensland Heritage Council. The process of negotiation that inevitably accompanies such applications provides opportunity for officers of the Department of Environment and local government planners to examine and contribute to acceptable solutions to all parties. While compromise solutions often result, radical change is, understandably not encouraged.

There is however, a great deal of expertise and good will at both the Australian Heritage Commission and the Department of Environment and discussions with officers of those Departments will inevitably be helpful.

Given the circumstances at the Gold Coast in which a recent historical past exists within a culture of development and change it is unlikely that the provisions of existing heritage legislation will be easily accommodated.

Both the Australian Heritage Commission and the Queensland Heritage Council have in the past, however, encouraged the development of listing by making grants available to carry out surveys of local government areas or themes within those areas. Grants have also been available to sponsor or underwrite seminars and discussions as part of their required educational objectives and these initiatives might usefully be pursued at the Gold Coast.
Town planning initiatives

The present town planning instruments governing development at both the former Albert Shire and the City of Gold Coast give little regard to questions of heritage in terms of the broader Australian practice.

Indeed both plans are largely development based, encouraging development and change as part of the accepted ethos of the region. Some protection is offered to parts of the natural and rural environment of the city in places such as the bay islands and the sugar cane farming land of Steiglitz, but generally the existing instruments see the economic and social future of the region as one of continuing growth.

The history of this attitude dates back to 1973 and the plans of that period. Those of 1982 made some attempt to fall back from the grand vision of the previous decade and those of 1994-5 began to look more specifically at questions of character and image. However generally the dye was cast.

The present plans and the extraordinary growth in the region act against the interests of conservation. Development opportunities exist across the Gold Coast, introduced and supported by the present town plans.

There is some difficulty in reversing this trend which has the broad support of the community. Nevertheless there are opportunities to modify and to shape the urban environment of the Gold Coast through changes to the Town Plan in the review that is presently underway.
Strategic statements and Development Control Plans for individual places or areas of agreed character are likely to be critical in this regard. Certainly no further action should be taken to broaden development opportunities in sensitive areas.

**Retention of urban heritage and character must on the one hand be seen as a viable economic option for property owners and on the other a means of improving or enhancing the image, character and amenity of areas within the city.**

Direct management of heritage and character is possible within statutory planning policy.

Individual places may be noted within the statutory system although these are likely to be the source of similar concerns in the community to listing in the State or Commonwealth lists. Council may find that a single authority such as the Queensland Heritage Council may be a better option than duplicating the listing process.

Development controls within the curtilage of a listed place is not covered by the State legislation and may in these circumstances be incorporated in the Town Plan by a few simple and comprehensive clauses.

Area conservation, also not covered by State legislation may be best dealt with by Development Control Plans. In this matter the question must be asked as to whether the area so identified genuinely constitutes part of the heritage of the Gold Coast or whether it is the historic character of the area that is to be protected. More usually it is the control of new development in terms of its form, scale, bulk, texture, colour and detail that is at issue rather than questions of demolition control or approval to change existing fabric.

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<td><strong>TOWN PLANNING</strong></td>
<td>EXAMINE WHETHER THERE ARE PLACES WITHIN THE CITY WHERE THROUGH THE PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW, THE RATE OF CHANGE MAY BE SLOWED OR LIMITED</td>
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</table>

Urban heritage and character conservation is made difficult within the Gold Coast because of the change and development that population growth demands and because of the history of town planning in this city which has traditionally encouraged change and development at a massive scale.

Conservation is in essence "the management of change" and in a culture which to date has seen little value in the past, the reversal of established trends will be difficult and indeed maybe painful.

A mature population must nevertheless face these issues squarely and look to the larger future and amenity of the city.

Examine as part of the current review of the Strategic Plan and Planning Scheme, places within the city in which the rate of development and change may be slowed or limited as a primary vehicle for achieving conservation of its urban heritage and character.

These areas may be determined from information about cultural significance as a result of information already to hand, or flowing from further studies or surveys. Alternatively, focus on areas where the rate of change and development has naturally been suppressed.

The commitment of Council to these initiatives should be at a strategic level and at a lower level.
Urban design initiatives

Council and property developers have a role to play in conserving the heritage and character of the Gold Coast through urban design. Often the character of an area or precinct adjacent to heritage places may be better understood and enhanced by sensitive design of the urban environment.

*Sometimes urban design will in itself protect or preserve elements that are not considered worthy of heritage listing in their own right but which add to the historical understanding of an area.*

Urban design must itself recognise and respond to an informed understanding of the place and should not dominate or present a caricature of the place. For example the Norfolk Island Pine trees that are part of the character of parts of the city or early and characteristic streetscape elements such as bus shelters, signs or fencing may be found significant and incorporated in new design initiatives.

Urban design has a role to play in facilitating the economic viability of places of heritage or character value. Main Street programs have had some success in Australia in recent years in demonstrating opportunities for historic areas to regenerate and take advantage of their special character. The recent document “Designing Competitive Places” published by the Australian Local Government Association takes a similar approach to urban design seeing actions and initiatives in this field as not only improving the physical attractiveness of an area but doing so in such a way that supports economic prosperity and enriches the local culture of the community. Urban design has in these terms a major role to play in the conservation of urban heritage and character and more so in a city such as the Gold Coast where constantly changing urban form leads to visual uncertainty in public areas.

### Issues/Opportunities

**URBAN DESIGN**

Within the Gold Coast there are a range of character areas both at a broad scale and in local communities. The study identifies these and describes in general terms the characteristics that distinguish one from the other.

That urban character is, in some areas easily recognised. In others, and particularly on the coastal strip, town planning initiatives over the last 20 years have blurred the distinction somewhat. Few of these urban character areas are intact examples of a particular period or style of development and evidence survives mostly in remnants.

In all areas development continues in accordance with the present planning scheme. The conservation of character will therefore be best supported in these areas by urban design initiatives that recognise the early influences and later development that gives character to the area, and of the necessary need for change to support the economic and environmental expectations of the present community.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Support local character in the areas identified in this study through urban design in planning initiatives, such as Development Control Plans, Local Area Plans, or design guidelines for development.</th>
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<td><strong>Support local character through urban design</strong></td>
<td>Such work should not focus solely on the preservation of existing fabric but should recognise the necessity for evolution of character within present cultural and economic expectations.</td>
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Taxation incentives

Since 1994 the Commonwealth government has offered taxation incentives to owners of heritage listed properties to carry out work at those properties. A rebate of twenty cents in the dollar is offered to property owners who carry out approved work.

Certain guidelines apply and are generally those that are considered good conservation practice. For example the repair of historic fabric is favoured over replacement, alterations should be done in a way which is reversible and importantly the cultural significance of the listed place must be protected.

A minimum value of individual projects is set at $5,000 and at present an annual limit nationally of $9.5 million is set.

Application is a two stage process. The first application is for a provisional certificate which authorises work to begin. Application for a second and final certificate takes place when work is complete. Upon inspection, usually by officers of the Queensland Department of Environment as agents for the Commonwealth, and if the work complies with that specified in the provisional certificate applicants are able to claim the 20% rebate. Applicants may be private individuals, partnerships, companies or firms and eligible properties may be domestic or commercial.

A copy of the information guide and application form is attached in Appendix 9.5.

Transfer of development rights

In some places in Australia and overseas the loss of development potential in listed or otherwise protected sites is recognised in planning provisions by the opportunity to transfer those development “rights” to other sites or places within the local government area.

The initiative is a simple and easy to understand concept that has some difficulties in practice especially in areas where development is encouraged or there is no shortage of development potential in other sites within the city. The sale of rights is difficult to achieve where demand does not exist.

The present planning schemes are, in these terms not ones in which transferable development rights would be an effective instrument.

Some examination of the present plans and the opportunities they offer or deny development generally might be carried out through the planning scheme review in order that a more tailored program of transferable incentives may be offered at the Gold Coast.

Waiver of town planning requirements

Some incentives might be offered to owners of listed places or places identified as having special character by relaxation of normal town planning requirements.

Expanded “as of right” development opportunities to include wider land use rights, building envelope and car parking in heritage areas may act as an incentive to some property owners to look positively at the retention of identified places.

The provision of certainty and guaranteed approval will in some instances tip the balance in cases where total redevelopment is an option. Care needs to be taken in such a proposal to achieve a balance between retention of historic fabric and other town planning objectives.

The provision in some town plans in Queensland to allow “as of right” commercial activity in residential properties for example may have an adverse affect on the character of existing residential amenity and on nearby commercial centres.
Rather, an increase in residential density and the waiving of normal site coverage or car parking requirements may, on the other hand achieve the objectives of both heritage and character conservation and of the broader strategic goals of the town plan.

### Rating, rebates, holidays and exemptions

One area of financial incentive which is relatively easy to apply at local government level is in the area of rates on land or property. While in larger projects, rate rebates, holidays or exemptions will form only a small part of the total cost. In other, more modest circumstances this effective contribution to the cost of maintaining or preserving a place or property will be welcomed and may encourage others to similar action. Some legal precedent exists for rate relief to be automatic in the case of State listed properties but there is opportunity for Council to examine carefully the likely benefits in the conservation of heritage and character in more general exemptions.

There is in fact limitless ability to provide incentives in rebates, holidays and exemptions and Council should not offer incentives of this type as a blanket or automatic consequence of heritage or character identification. Equally in making known its preparedness to offer rate rebates, holidays or exemptions Council should avoid establishing a precedent since in some cases rate relief will be of little consequence or benefit.

Certainly widespread rate relief in heritage or character areas will have an effect upon Council’s rate base and some advice as to the financial implications of this course of action should be sought.

Where it is clearly demonstrated however that the valuation of a property is truly affected or where the benefit in conservation or retention is clearly to the benefit of the wider community of the Gold Coast or the objectives of the town plan, then financial incentives in this form is relatively straightforward and effective.

### Loans, grants, low interest advances, rolling funds

Both the Federal and State governments have, in the past, made grant money available to individuals and organisations to carry out work which supports their broad objectives. Those programs have had enormous benefit not only in individual projects but in promoting the concept of heritage to a wide audience.
Local authorities may also make grant money available to individuals or organisations to carry out works to conserve or promote the heritage and character of the city. It is more usual however at local government level for direct financial assistance to be in a form other than direct grants.

Several opportunities exist. Money can be loaned or advanced to owners of culturally significant properties to carry out approved work. The system should aim to limit itself to urgent work or work which will demonstrate the value of the project to a wider sector. The amount of money advanced or loaned will usually be quite small and is usually directed at the domestic or residential sector rather than large scale commercial projects.

The interest payable will need to be attractive - less than commercial rates - and terms may be struck to suit individual situations. Some guarantee of repayment is usually negotiated.

Supervision of the work to be carried out will be necessary. The objective is to provide, from a single fund, sufficient incentive to provide heritage conservation across a range of properties at any given time and to have those funds returned to a central pool in a relatively short period to allow other ratepayers or property owners to benefit.

Council itself may use the concept of a rolling fund to promote and encourage conservation. Particularly in domestic in small commercial properties opportunity exists to purchase, conserve through adaptation and resell. Schemes have been carried out in Scotland and by the National Trust in New South Wales. A recent scheme by the Historic Houses Trust in New South Wales was similarly successful. Once again the concept of the rolling fund in which a fixed sum is used to continually promote and encourage the care of the heritage and character of the city is central to the concept.

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<tr>
<td>GRANTS, LOANS &amp; ADVANCES</td>
<td>ESTABLISH A HERITAGE FUND</td>
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From time to time, in extraordinary circumstances, Council may need to fund directly the conservation of urban heritage and character.

That is not to say that Council should embark on a program to purchase each property or place of cultural significance. Clearly that would be beyond the resources of any government, and would not necessarily result in good conservation.

Normally financial assistance and support for properties under threat is best achieved by means of short term "priming" in the way of grants loans or advances. These are usually administered in terms of a rolling fund that gives financial return in whole or part once the place is secure.

**Budget for a heritage fund which can be used for grants, loans or advances to private property owners to assist in the conservation of urban heritage and character.**

**The scheme should as far as possible be managed so that money is returned to the fund as places under threat are reintegrated into the urban system and demonstrate their viability to do so in an economic manner.**

**Heritage agreements**

The Queensland Heritage Act provides for a mechanism known as heritage agreements which enable the Heritage Council to enter into a legally binding arrangement with property owners to ensure that significant places are protected or cared for in exchange for financial support, concessions or incentives. The Act enables the local authority to be party to such agreements and in fact local authorities are best able to offer such concessions or incentives that are likely to include all or some of the opportunities outlines in the preceding sections.
Agreements may be tailored to suit particular circumstances and may exist in perpetuity or have a limited time frame. For example, it is sometimes found that action to protect a place in the short term will be sufficient to demonstrate financial viability in the longer term. Rate relief for a limited period of (say) 5 years will in some instances guarantee the long term protection of a place over a longer period. In other cases longer term agreements and concessions on questions of car parking, zoning, density or even in minor matters such as land use or hours of operation will be necessary to demonstrate or guarantee financial viability for owners of heritage properties.

Circumstances will vary from case to case and heritage agreements must be flexible and creatively constructed. They should be formed in such a way that precedents are not established but rather specially formulated on a case by case basis.

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<th>Issues/Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td>HERITAGE AGREEMENTS</td>
<td>ENTER INTO HERITAGE AGREEMENTS WITH PROPERTY OWNERS</td>
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Often the conservation of urban heritage and character is best achieved in a joint venture between property owners and government. Opportunity exists in such an arrangement to provide incentives or financial assistance to achieve specific conservation action in a manner which satisfies the objectives of both Council and property owners.

The formalisation of that agreement which may have conditions of action restraint and time is provided for in State heritage legislation with the opportunity for local government as a signatory. Similar heritage agreements maybe established directly between Council and property owners.

**Examine ways in which formal and legally binding heritage agreements maybe entered into with property owners to ensure that incentives or financial support result in understood and agreed conservation outcomes.**

**Professional/technical advice**

To many property owners the care or conservation of heritage is seen as a potentially expensive component of any development. There is amongst such sections of the community a sense that the care of heritage places requires professional or technical skills that will in itself be expensive and time consuming.

The natural reluctance of property developers and their advisers to seek appropriate advice early in any project can lead to proposals in which questions of heritage are avoided and demolition or removal of early, culturally significant fabric, is considered the only option.

Clearly the wholesale demolition or removal of early significant fabric is not the only option and countless schemes worldwide demonstrate that retention and adaptation of historic buildings can result in attractive and profitable projects.

Professional or technical advice early in project planning can sometimes tip the balance in this regard. Council might ensure that property owners and developers are made aware of the contribution that these skills can make to a project. Some councils require a “conservation plan” or heritage study to be carried out as part of site analysis and environmental impact statements. It may however be more appropriate for Council to ensure that professional and technical advice in matters of heritage and character are part of the range of skills amongst its own professional staff.
Heritage Advisory Programs

One of the more successful programs established by local authorities throughout Australia in the last decade is the provision of advice to property owners or developers in matters of heritage and character.

Sometimes funded jointly by the State through the Department of Environment, the scheme is directed at those cities whose expertise in heritage matters is limited but who recognise the need for regular advice and assistance dealing with heritage. The heritage adviser, usually contracted to the Council, has a dual role. Firstly to provide advice to property owners and developers who may require advice or assistance in dealing with particular issues or problems. That service is usually provided free of charge and acts not only to ensure that those making enquiries are properly informed but to encourage questions and concerns about the care of heritage and character in the city.

Secondly, the heritage adviser provides advice to Council on matters of heritage and character, assisting permanent staff in strategic and strategic planning matters.

Smaller local government areas usually engage heritage advisers to be present for one or two days a month. Larger authorities or those with a particular interest or commitment to heritage arrange for heritage advice to be available on a more frequent basis.

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<th>Issues/Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMING THE COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td><strong>PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL ADVICE TO THE COMMUNITY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>An informed community is essential if support and enthusiasm for the conservation of the urban heritage and character is to translate to appropriate action.</td>
<td>Establish a program to provide professional or technical advice to individual groups or organisations whose objective is conservation of the urban heritage or character. This program should include engaging a heritage adviser on a regular consultancy basis, whose time and expertise is made available to council officers and the community.</td>
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<td>Local community action groups within the Gold Coast who have an interest in heritage, and others whose expertise is not primarily in the field of heritage conservation maybe supported by means of professional or technical advice. Small amounts of advice and guidance can often make the difference between appropriate action and inactivity.</td>
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<td>Advice may range from guidance in the writing of histories, or the preparation of lists of potentially significant places, to technical advice about the care or conservation of building materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>While brochures and booklets on specific themes are helpful some communities engage a heritage adviser whose time and expertise is made available to the council planners and the community on a regular consultancy basis such as one or two days per week. This is a cost-effective means of providing access to expertise that does not presently exist within Council. Through engaging a heritage adviser, Council also benefits through gaining skills and knowledge that are passed on to staff within Council who deal with heritage matters.</td>
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Local area action

Much of the support for the care of the urban heritage and character at the Gold Coast will come from individuals or small local area groups concerned primarily with the amenity of that neighbourhood. Those individuals will have energy and commitment to local area action and will not always see the broader vision that Council may have for the city.

Local area action will, however, have benefits to the broader objectives of Council and local groups, and their concerns, should be supported where possible by Council action.

This support may range from local area studies and development control plans to less tangible activities such as local heritage trails, histories or interpretive publications relating to local areas.

The commitment of local communities in the care and management of the urban heritage and character of the city cannot be overestimated.

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<tr>
<td>LOCAL AREA ACTION</td>
<td>INITIATE LOCAL AREA ACTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasingly throughout the City of Gold Coast, local area groups are making their concerns about lifestyle, heritage and character, known to the Council. Some groups are well organised and articulate - others less so.</td>
<td>Initiate a program of local area action plans with the dual aim of demonstrating Council’s commitment to heritage and character conservation and to the involvement of local communities in those plans.</td>
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<td>With programs to promote awareness of urban heritage and character throughout the city it may be expected that more groups will establish themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that community concern and interest in this form is translated to positive action. Local area action plans maybe effective in achieving this aim.</td>
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<td>Action plans might range from surveying potential sites and photographic essays, to tree planting and maintenance and even direct conservation and restoration programs.</td>
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<td>Support and direction from Council can often ensure that the work is effective and productive within Council's overall strategies.</td>
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Education

No program to care for or manage the urban heritage or character of the Gold Coast can take place without the understanding and support of the whole community of the city and indeed its visitor population.

Many believe that the heritage of the Gold Coast is non-existent and that its urban character is superficial. The present study demonstrates that this is not so and that there is a unique and important history of the city worthy of care and conservation.
It is imperative however, that this understanding of the Gold Coast is developed and disseminated to a wider audience. Education programs may be established to ensure that other initiatives proposed in this section are understood by the broadest possible community and so that opportunity exists to develop the present understanding of the Gold Coast as a cultural phenomenon.

Such programs may range from local studies, seminars and support focused on family histories and local or residential issues through to national or indeed international initiatives which might help to place the particular significance or value of the Gold Coast in an Australian or world context.

Education programs may involve newspapers, local schools or indeed tertiary institutions. Every opportunity should be taken to promote and celebrate the difference of Gold Coast heritage and character.

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<tr>
<td>RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS</td>
<td>COMMUNICATE WITH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS</td>
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<td>The support of the community is central to any program of conservation of heritage and character. Without that support, Council initiatives are bound to create division within the community as to the worth of any program, or worse will result in claims against the Council for financial compensation by those who see themselves disaffected by these initiatives.</td>
<td>Begin a process of communication with the residents and visitors of the Gold Coast to:</td>
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<td>No amount of legislation, including town planning legislation, will protect places which the community does not respect or admire.</td>
<td>• engender support for the notion of urban heritage and character conservation and to inform associations; and,</td>
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<tr>
<td>The best and most effective conservation is achieved when the community insists upon conservation and sees the initiatives of heritage conservation as serving their own interests individually or corporately.</td>
<td>• to inform the community at the earliest possible time, of any proposals to introduce incentives or controls to achieve its objectives in this matter.</td>
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<td>Communication may be by way of citywide or local newsletters or meetings, and the community should be encouraged as part of this process to take an active role and to respond to Council proposals.</td>
<td>Articles in regional or local newspapers, activities and school programs will all help in raising a community awareness.</td>
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The conservation of the heritage and character of the Gold Coast may be achieved through a variety of mechanisms other than conventional legislative processes.

Indeed at the Gold Coast conservation is already taking place through action by the community who recognise the value that conservation brings to their daily life - to protect and enhance their urban environment.

Some action is consciously directed at protecting or limiting change to protect the physical environment or evidence of an earlier period or way of life.

In other circumstances the pressure for change is reduced because of social or economic factors. In these circumstances conservation is more easily achieved.

The following case studies demonstrate four different sites and circumstances within the city. None of the examples cited here necessarily deny the need for more permanent legislative controls or town planning action. Each does however demonstrate the importance of community support and of the necessity to look for opportunities beyond the conventional to achieve a balanced result.

**7.1 CANE FIELDS**

That area of land to the north of the highway at Woongoolba has been used for the production of sugar cane since the 1860s.

More than 5000 hectares is now under cultivation and sugar cane continues to make an important contribution to the economy of the region.

The crushing and processing of the cane takes place at the Rocky Point Mill - the last of more than 40 mills that operated in the area in the 1880s.

The farms are owned and worked by a number of families many of whom have owned land in the area since last century.

The area is therefore of some value to the city in commercial terms and has a long history of continuing use for sugar growing supported by family association and affection for the industry and the lifestyle of the area.

Present zoning of the land encourages the continuation of this pattern and indeed State planning policy protects the industry. The Albert Shire planning scheme of 1995 in considering Shire Image recommends "the conservation (of) the open character of the cane land areas east of the Pacific Highway".

Those zonings and policies are supported by community action. Studies have shown the viability of the cane growing depends upon an area of 6000 hectares being reserved for that crop.

Existing land owners and producers, cognisant of the fact that the survival of the remaining mill at Rocky Point is critical to the viability of the industry have joined together in a pact or agreement not to sell land at present used for cane production or with potential for cane production to develop it for housing or other uses.

This form of direct action is at the heart of successful conservation and the limitation of change and is applicable in urban environments as much as in the case study area.

Property owners in, for example, inner suburban Melbourne are equally determined to preserve through their own action not only the physical form of fabric of the suburbs in which they live but the lifestyle that the conservation of the physical environment supports.
7.2 BROADBEACH TERRACES

That relatively small area of Broadbeach first subdivided and developed in the mid 1950s and stretching from Queensland Avenue to Peerless Avenue contains a building type which is, by and large, unique to the Gold Coast.

This study calls them "the Broadbeach Terraces" and has identified more than 30 buildings containing nearly 180 individual units. They are of a remarkably uniform type and although there are minor variations have essentially the same plan form. Consisting usually of seven units per block they comprise a narrow fronted unit with kitchen, dining and living room at the ground floor connected by a stair to an upper level containing two bedrooms and a bathroom.

Carports, often with elaborate 60s style gestures to modernism, are usually located between the terrace and the street and accessed by a driveway that sweeps the length of the site.

Occasionally they are built in groups of two or more. They are seldom decorated and detailing is straightforward, even spartan. They do however make a major contribution to the character of Broadbeach.

Some have apparently been demolished in recent years for the large apartment buildings that the town plan allows in this part of the city. Most however survive.

Clearly this part of the Gold Coast is subject to the same or greater development pressure than others. Within one or two blocks of the small area that contains the Broadbeach Terraces large scale development projects continue to take place.

While the individual units are all occupied and most well cared for their survival for more than 30 years in such large numbers must be due to other factors.

The Broadbeach Terraces were constructed before Strata or Group Title legislation introduction in this State and most are still owned under the old Company Title system. Until recently individual units did not change hands as readily or as frequently as other apartments or units on adjoining sites or places at the coast.

Some units appear to have remained in the hands of individuals who built or bought them when first constructed. It is assumed that the return on investment was then either quite high or the individuals living in these units or having a long period of ownership as holiday apartments have been reluctant to sell in a depressed market.

That fact, coupled with perceived difficulty of developers in accumulating company titles to allow plans for demolition and redevelopment to be carried out, has simply meant that the Broadbeach Terraces have been bypassed by those who have an interest in that course of action. As a result that part of the Gold Coast has a cohesive and unique character and indeed has, by default, conserved unique part of the city's architectural heritage.

There does not, unhappily, appear to be any real appreciation of the value of the Broadbeach Terraces in heritage or character terms by those who own or live in them. While most are well maintained few have their early colour schemes or finishes intact and there seems to be little demand from the residential community for council planning policies to support their retention.

Recent newspaper reports indicate that land in this area is now amongst the most valuable in the state and it would appear that the obstructions and circumstances which to date have conserved these places is now being overcome as zoning and the opportunities that redevelopment offers outweighs the traditional difficulties which have in the past given some protection.

The case study demonstrates the opportunities of town planning, social and economic factors to work together to conserve the overriding culture of development that characterises the Gold Coast.
7.3 MAIN BEACH PAVILIONS

In 1934 the Southport Town Council constructed a bathing pavilion at Main Beach. In 1936 a Surf Lifesaving Kiosk was constructed nearby.

The buildings are an important part of the heritage of the Gold Coast and have been listed by the National Trust of Queensland and the Queensland Heritage Council.

In the years since their construction the Surf Lifesaving pavilion has been modified and extended by the association. The bathing pavilion remains largely in its original form although leased to a private operator.

The landscapes surrounding the buildings is equally important in interpreting that period in which Main Beach was the centre of surfing activity on the coastal strip - rivaling Surfers Paradise because of its close proximity to Southport and the ready access to that centre by virtue of the newly constructed Jubilee Bridge across the Nerang River nearby.

Since the 1960s when a more relaxed attitude to clothing and to bathing developed the bathing pavilion has become a less useful or needed part of those public facilities. The Surf Lifesaving club house has been extended and changed dramatically but this building, too, no longer serves the need for which it was first constructed.

Both buildings and their associated landscape have survived because of their public ownership. Although practically of no further use their redevelopment has not been a high priority for the local authority.

There is today however a real need to address the future of these buildings and the Gold Coast Council has in the past twelve months or so begun discussions with the Surf Lifesavers to find ways in which the needs of that organisation might be met at Main Beach.

At the same time pressures to accommodate the city’s own lifeguards has focused attention on the bathing pavilion.

Rather than lease the site and the buildings to private developers or allow their continued adaptation unchecked the city’s own architects, urban designers and planners have begun work, in association with the Surf Lifesavers and the Queensland Department of Environment to explore ways in which these important places maybe both conserved and reused in an economical manner and in a way which truly reflects current needs and demands of the community.

While no firm resolution as to the future of these buildings has yet been reached the case study demonstrates the role of local government in direct action to conserve heritage and character.

The opportunities for such action will normally be focused on buildings or places in the public realm (similar work is presently taking place at the former Southport Council Chambers in Nerang Street) but need not necessarily be limited to that class of building.

The opportunity for government to lead by example and to demonstrate that thoughtful planning for conservation is an important component of development activity, should be acknowledged.
7.4 MUDGEERABA

The little town of Mudgeeraba in its present form dates only from the turn of the century when the railway line from Brisbane to Southport and Nerang was extended to Tweed Heads via Mudgeeraba. An earlier settlement - some distance from the railway line - was extended and refocused on the new railway station.

The town flourished to serve the needs of the local community and clustered around the new Exchange Hotel adjacent to the station. By the 1920s it had developed into a small but effective community with a general store, butcher shop, banks and a memorial hall.

The decision to construct the Nerang Shire Council Chambers in Mudgeeraba gave added impetus and authority to the town.

Mudgeeraba was one of several small communities along the railway line. Others, including Nerang, were of a similar scale and form but have in the last decade or so lost much of their early character and evidence of their early building stock. Mudgeeraba has suffered less and its relaxed country character is still apparent. Residential pressure and development of the Gold Coast has in the last few years made its impact felt at Mudgeeraba. New residential communities to the west of the town have resulted in the construction of new shopping facilities with the consequent loss of earlier buildings in the main street.

The loss of those buildings and the imminent character of Mudgeeraba prompted formation of a group of residents to promote a more thoughtful consideration of the planning processes in the town.

Council has responded with a preliminary review of the present Development Control Plan focused more on the history and character of the town and in a public consultation program to determine more precisely the views of the residents.

It is understood that a full scale review of the DCP is now proposed to balance the competing demands of old and new residents and of tourists to the town with the aim of conserving the essential character of Mudgeeraba.

The action of residents, demonstrated in this case study, illustrates the role community groups can play in identifying town planning and conservation issues to assist the town planners and urban designers to focus attention on areas of public concern.

The inevitable compromises and controls that will affect both land owners and residents will, in these circumstances, be more palatable and are likely to be more widely accepted within the community than citywide initiatives that do not have community support.

Communities of interest in places such as Mudgeeraba should be supported and encouraged as a legitimate aspect of town planning and conservation practice.
8. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS
Despite opinions from some quarters, the Gold Coast is rich in heritage and has, within its various and diverse areas making up the city, substantial and recognisable character. Both are worthy of conservation.

8.1 THE GOLD AND THE GREEN

In terms of heritage and character, the city may be seen in two distinct regions.

The first, broadly marking that of the former Gold Coast City relates to the coastal strip from Paradise Point to Coolangatta. Relatively narrow and developed on coastal dunes, this section is the commercial heartland of the city and historically has seen the most intense development in the last fifty years. Its urban form is dictated by the strip developments centred on the Gold Coast Highway and the beach and upon recreation and tourism as the dominant industrial generator. Development has been uneven and the extent to which early heritage or character survives is limited.

The strip itself has developed a character within which these sub-areas exist and are sustained, largely derived from the infrastructure of beach and highway and the development attitude that has seen constant change as the norm.

The second, that area generally known as the hinterland, broadly relates to the former Albert Shire and comprises that country to the west of the canal estates in which residential sub-divisions are largely concentrated.

Much of this area is only recently facing development and there is, as a result, more extensive evidence of early settlement and places which are generally recognised as part of the heritage of the city. This area too, is perceived as having a distinctive character based on the natural environment of the mountains, on the river valleys, flood plain and low land. Recent development threatens that perception, the heritage and character of the area and indeed, sub-areas within it.

While the study finds that there are nine character areas within the Gold Coast City, the particular urban characteristics of each of the two major areas dictate and demand a distinctively different approach to the conservation of urban heritage and character of each.

8.2 HERITAGE

The heritage of the Gold Coast, those parts of the man-modified environment worthy of keeping in perpetuity, is diverse and scattered but no less real or important because of that. Unlike most Australian cities in which urban cores are largely representative of early development, at the Gold Coast that aspect is only of minor importance. Early centres such as Southport and Coolangatta retain some early building stock and landscape features worthy of further study and some base work has been done in those two centres in the histories recently commissioned.

Beenleigh similarly contains substantial material which is potentially of heritage value in demonstrating that centre’s role as the focus of an early farming community and as an early and memorable half-way stop on the road between Brisbane and the Coast. No detailed history of the centre has been prepared.

Other early centres, Nerang and Mudgeeraba, are less intact in heritage terms. While some individual buildings and sites survive and some may be considered of heritage value, it is unlikely that the listing of the relatively few sites or places will contribute markedly to the better understanding of the history of those centres.
Within the urban strip that has largely developed since the 1950s, some sites and places remain of potential heritage value which demonstrate the early urban form and history of that part of the Gold Coast.

These include not only buildings but aspects of early town planning and urban design that contribute to the cultural heritage of the city. These include evidence of the railway terminus at Southport and the crossing of the Nerang River at Myer’s Ferry at Surfers Paradise.

Most places are, by definition, of more recent construction and their inclusion on heritage lists would present some difficulties. While the accepted criteria for heritage listing allows for recent construction (the listing of the first high-rise apartment in Surfers Paradise is a case in point), there is inevitably more difficulty in mounting arguments for inclusion on any list both in a technical level and engendering support for places which the community sees as part of 'life' rather than as 'history'.

That is not to say that some of those places have no architectural merit. There is some suggestion that the Gold Coast high-rise developments, in some instances, were advanced examples of their genre in Australian terms. No detailed study has been undertaken to test this assertion.

While some early 'fibro' cottages and later 1960s houses, motel and apartment buildings similarly are important in architectural terms and have value in demonstrating the history of the coastal strip as a holiday destination, their relatively recent construction acts against their ready acceptance as heritage in the minds of the public. They are no less important because of that.

Importantly judgment as to what constitutes heritage value must, at the Gold Coast, be extended beyond simple architectural merit in its narrow sense. The history and the culture of the Gold Coast which generated some of the more unusual and dramatic structures must be taken into account in considering the relative merit of places.

A large proportion of places of heritage significance at the Gold Coast survive as 'remnants'. While some places within the coastal strip sit within the context of buildings of similar scale, period or style, many more remain as isolated examples devoid of historical context.

By contrast, within the hinterland, surviving remnants are most often located within a context that supports their role as indicators of the history of the city. Early houses, farm buildings, industrial and commercial structures not only qualify as rare examples of the history of the city but often are early examples and have additional value for that reason.

This juxtaposition of architectural form and style and indeed of land use must be seen as part of the urban quality of the Gold Coast and judgments as to what constitutes heritage made accordingly.

The area is not without the influence of the change that continues to characterize the city as a whole. While some primary production continues much of the area has been recently subdivided and taken up as hobby farms.

The man modified landscape and much of the early building stock however remains.

In the areas closest to the Pacific Highway more intense housing development has largely overwhelmed the early heritage of the region.

Like the development of the coastal strip however some of the more recent construction has merit in its own right. While largely constructed since the early 1960s some individual places represent seminal or early examples of their type within the Australian context.
8.3 CHARACTER

Like heritage the character of the Gold Coast must be seen within the culture that has shaped this city. The culture of the coastal strip since the later years of the 19th century has been one of a resort or holiday town.

In the first half of this century that aspect of the city was supported by a hinterland devoted to more conventional activities associated with primary production. Recent development in that area has to a large extent extended the character and lifestyle of the holiday city into the western portion of the city.

This is not to say that there exists a uniform character across the city and this study identifies a sweep of character areas ranging from the coastal strip to the river valleys and mountain escarpments and indeed the vast areas still devoted to the production of sugar cane.

The character of each of these areas is important and demonstrates a diversity based both on history and on the evolution of cultural forces. Each must be seen within these constraints. The coastal strip for example has developed from an early resort and holiday centre at Southport to embrace the entire coastal strip now centred on surfing from Main Beach to Coolangatta. Its character as a holiday place has, since the middle of this century, developed to the point where it has become the tourist capital of Australia focused not only on the beach as a place to holiday but on a lifestyle that expresses fantasy and escape from the more ordinary Australian lifestyle. This attitude, unique in Australia, has resulted in an urban character of excitement and constant change that is reflected in its urban form.

Indeed that lifestyle characteristic permeates through to some at least of the residential estates adjacent to the beach and in particular the canal estates centred on former low lying lands, river estuaries and the flood plain. Again the character of these areas is unique in Australia and is reflected in lifestyle as well as in the urban form that results.

By contrast areas such as the Bay Islands and the nearby sugar cane farming areas of Steiglitz and Beenleigh have not been influenced by the pervading culture of the coastal strip and provide a dramatic contrast of character within the city.

The protection and enhancement of the various character areas depends upon an acceptance and indeed celebration of the different historical and cultural forces that have generated them.

Importantly the present and evolving character of the city, particularly in the coastal strip and in the residential estates associated with it must be accepted as a legitimate expression.

While seen by many ‘outsiders’ to be unusual to the point of offending traditional sensitivities it is a city with real meaning and integrity. Its urban character similarly has meaning and integrity that is worthy of conservation.

The urban character of the Gold Coast is unique within Australia. Its history and development is recent dating only from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its urban form is linear contrary to conventional town planning principles. Its industry and raison d’être is tourism and the city exists within a cultural construct that sees itself remarkably different from others.

Its permanent population is aged in comparison to other places and its residents are distinguished from the norm in having chosen to live here. It is a city without precedent in this country and its urban character reflects this.

The overriding condition is that of change and of growth within the coastal strip and along the highway that bisects the city. That quality is contrasted with the character of the hinterland in which change to the man modified landscape has been more limited.
8.4 SUMMARY OF ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the discussion of various aspects of Gold Coast City’s urban heritage and character in this document, particular issues and opportunities have been identified and twenty-one (21) recommendations made for further action.

These are drawn together on the following pages to provide a suite of actions which should be implemented to conserve the City’s cultural heritage and protect the future character of the region and its distinctive parts.

No. 1 is the primary recommendation “to embrace the difference”.

Nos. 2-6 are secondary level recommendations. While this document starts to give initial appreciation of the significance of the City’s unique cultural tradition and urban diversity, these secondary recommendations propose further studies and investigation that will deepen our understanding of that significance.

Nos. 7-21 are tertiary level recommendations which deal with ways in which Council, individuals, professionals and community groups with an interest in the way Gold Coast City develops, may take immediate action to; develop an awareness of heritage and special character issues; and protect and conserve those places.

PRIMARY FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

Finding 1

UNIQUE CULTURE

The Gold Coast is seen by many, from both within and out of the City, as one that has one little in the way of heritage, and a character that is superficial and indeed offensive in traditional town planning terms.

Recommendation 1

EMBRACE THE DIFFERENCE

Embrace the diversity of the heritage and character of the Gold Coast, accepting the City’s unique position in Australian cultural life;

Promote it amongst its residents, visitors and industry, together with individuals, professionals and community groups; and,

Look to ways of conserving that unique lifestyle and associated urban heritage and character in any future planning for the city, and do so in a way that, where necessary, steps outside conventional town planning, urban design and heritage conservation methods and controls.
SECONDARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 2

DOCUMENTING HISTORY

The history of the Gold Coast ranges from the earlier settlement of the hinterland for logging and primary production, to its more dominant and recent history as the tourist capital of Australia.

Historic studies of the various regions and centres have been prepared but there is a lack, within the existing work, of a cohesive overview and appreciation of the City as a whole. In particular the recent history of the Gold Coast City is seen by many residents as being irrelevant in terms of the conservation of the urban heritage and character.

Recommendation 2

ESTABLISH A HISTORY PROGRAM

Support a comprehensive and all embracing history program for the City, directing and encouraging individuals and organisations to prepare histories of:

- areas or centres presently lacking adequate study; and
- themes within the City which extend across geographic boundaries but which are central to the cultural development of the Gold Coast.

Where appropriate, commission historical studies.

Circulate historical material widely amongst residents tourists and the broader community.

Finding 3

CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

The study finds that the Gold Coast's urban heritage and character is shaped by the attitude of its residents and visitors to the city and by the particular cultural phenomena that characterises those attitudes.

It is a city misunderstood by those who do not live or visit here and a city in which its residents and visitors have difficulty in expressing their affection for this place. It is a city which both residents and visitors choose for "lifestyle" and as a result generates a population which does not parallel other cities.

While unique in Australia the particular cultural form is not unknown in other cities worldwide.

Recommendation 3

PREPARE A CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE CITY

Acknowledge that the culture and lifestyle of the Gold Coast is the single most important generator of urban heritage and character and that the understanding and appreciation of those qualities is similarly influenced by present cultural attitudes.

Pursue better understanding, recognition and support of community attitudes peculiar to the Gold Coast, by further and more detailed survey and consultation with its residents with the aim of providing a cultural profile of the City.

That work may be supported by looking to cities with similar cultural outlooks such as Las Vegas or Miami in the United States and by entering into this course with cultural studies professionals who are able to see the city and its population without prejudice.
Finding 4

GOLD COAST ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The architecture of the Gold Coast is found to be important in both heritage terms and in terms of the character of the city as a whole.

Putting aside the more conventional building forms of the early hinterland, the architectural expression of the coastal strip has, since late last century been firmly centred in over statement, exuberance and invention. The particular qualities of Gold Coast architecture can be found in modest beach houses of the 1950s through to the extensive and elaborate resorts, high rise apartments and indeed communal structure. Its expression extends to the theme parks.

Recommendation 4

UNDERTAKE A STUDY OF 20TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Undertake a detailed study of that aspect of architectural history that focuses on the Gold Coast.

The work should develop an understanding of the historical link of resort vernacular that characterises the development of “Gold Coast” style and extend to the influences that Gold Coast architecture has had in the broader Australian context.

Finding 5

UNDERSTANDING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY

The history of the Gold Coast in terms of its urban development is not easy to understand. Because of the rapid growth of the city since the Second World War, early centres and discrete settlements have been absorbed, as has much of the early, low lying land to the west of the coastal strip.

Most cities have a concentric growth pattern, with residual character in areas close to the centre, that give cues to understanding their history of development.

At the Gold Coast, constant redevelopment within its lineal form, and reclamation of previously underutilised land, make the history of development less easy to read.

Recommendation 5

DEMONSTRATE GRAPHICALLY, THE CITY’S HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Undertake a study to demonstrate graphically the history of growth and development within the city as an aid to informing the community and council planners about the nature and history of growth of the city.

Present the material as a series of overlays set out in chronological order, and incorporate in each phase, information such as the history of town planning influences, controls and philosophies which have directed that growth.
Finding 6

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment is an important part of the urban heritage and character of the City. The concurrent Nature Conservation Strategy goes some way to addressing this aspect of the Gold Coast as it affects this study.

However, the Nature Conservation Strategy is focused on survey of natural species and their distribution. It does not address issues such as the value of views and vistas, the use of the natural environment by residents and visitors, the man modified environments of farming communities nor the qualities and characteristics of urban plantings and landscape.

While market research and community consultation identify real appreciation of the natural environment as part of the character of the City, there is little understanding of what it is about the natural environment that people perceive is really important to the City’s heritage and character in a cultural sense.

Recommendation 6

BRIDGE THE FINDINGS BETWEEN THIS STUDY AND THE NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Bring together the findings of the Urban Heritage & Character Study and the Nature Conservation Strategy to analyse the people’s perception and understanding of how the natural environment forms part of the experience of Gold Coast living.

TERTIARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 7

FOCUS RESPONSIBILITY

While conservation of urban heritage and character at the Gold Coast is not at present actively promoted, there is an increasing awareness of these issues at both the political and community level. There is however, a lack of coordination of response from Council and decision-making is spread throughout the organisation with the result that policy and decisions lack cohesiveness and direction. There is need to focus responsibility for dealing with heritage matters. This responsibility logically best fits within the Directorate of Planning, Development & Transport.

Recommendation 7

ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH URBAN HERITAGE & CHARACTER MATTERS

Within the existing general structure of the Directorate of Planning, Development & Transport, assign an individual or group of officers to coordinate all questions relating to urban heritage and character.

That officer, or group of officers might be related to the branch which focuses on the broader issue of urban design so that the twin issues of heritage and character can be considered together.

It is not intended that such officer, or group of officers be necessarily responsible for decision-making in matters affecting town planning applications, but only to advise and coordinate these matters within Council.
Finding 8

GOVERNMENT INTERACTION

Heritage in this State is the responsibility of all levels of government. The National Trust of Queensland is bound by State legislation to take an active role in heritage matters. Other local groups similarly play an important part in the process.

While local government is increasingly being expected to take the primary role, clearly there is a need to consult with other levels of government and non-government organisations, and indeed an opportunity to draw on the experienced capacity and legislative support that these can offer. Other local authorities particularly those in the immediate region may similarly be able to offer support.

Recommendation 8

ESTABLISH FORMAL ASSOCIATIONS

To ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach to all matters involving urban heritage within the Gold Coast City, establish formal associations with:

- the Australian Heritage Commission at Commonwealth level;
- the Cultural Heritage Branch of the Queensland Department of Environment;
- the National Trust of Queensland; and
- other local authorities.

That is not to say that Council should be bound or limited to the practice or legislative provisions of those groups, and indeed should in this matter, retain a level of independence.

Regular meetings, newsletters or notification would however, be of benefit in a formal issue-by-issue sense, and in development of a network of like-minded individuals whose informal opinions and advice may be sought from time to time.

Finding 9

THEMES OF GOLD COAST HISTORY

The study has identified 43 themes of Gold Coast history.

Clearly there are many places which might illustrate each theme. Each place identified within the City of Gold Coast as having potential heritage significance will fit into one or more of the themes already identified.

Recommendation 9

ESTABLISH A THEMATIC DATABASE

Establish a database to record community interest in places of potential heritage significance so that information and material gathered over time sits within a structure that assigns, in the first instance, a thematic value to each place so that its role in the overall history of the City is easily rationalised. So that a truly useful basis for decision-making may be established, the database might include information such as:

- ownership;
- condition; and
- potential threats.

Encourage the community to add to that database and make the information contained within it available to the community.
Finding 10

PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISTS

The community consultation program carried out as part of this study did not target the concerns or opinions of visitors to the Gold Coast. Clearly the visitor or tourist is in this city, an important stakeholder in discussions about the shape of the city, the urban experience and the conservation of heritage and character. Their opinion should therefore be sought through market research.

Strategic planning, particularly where the objective is development of the tourism industry, would benefit from research about tourists’ perceptions, so that particular experiences at the Gold Coast can be promoted or developed.

Recommendation 10

RESEARCH OPINIONS OF TOURISTS

Seek the opinions of visitors and tourists (perhaps in conjunction with State or local tourism authorities), about the Gold Coast in matters concerning the conservation of urban heritage and character.

Existing information as to opinion or preferences, may form the basis of this research.

Finding 11

RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The support of the community is central to any program of conservation of heritage and character. Without that support, Council initiatives are bound to create division within the community as to the worth of any program, or worse will result in claims against the Council for financial compensation by those who see themselves disaffected by these initiatives.

No amount of legislation, including town planning legislation, will protect places which the community does not respect or admire.

The best and most effective conservation is achieved when the community insists upon conservation and sees the initiatives of heritage conservation as serving their own interests individually or corporately.

Recommendation 11

COMMUNICATE WITH RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

Begin a process of communication with the residents and visitors of the Gold Coast to:

- engender support for the notion of urban heritage and character conservation and to inform associations; and
- to inform the community at the earliest possible time, of any proposals to introduce incentives or controls to achieve its objectives in this matter.

Communication may be by way of citywide or local newsletters or meetings, and the community should be encouraged as part of this process to take an active role and to respond to Council proposals.

Articles in regional or local newspapers, activities and school programs will all help in raising community awareness.
Finding 12

INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

An informed community is essential if support and enthusiasm for the conservation of the urban heritage and character is to translate to appropriate action.

Local community action groups within the Gold Coast who have an interest in heritage, and others whose expertise is not primarily in the field of heritage conservation may be supported by means of professional or technical advice. Small amounts of advice and guidance can often make the difference between appropriate action and inactivity.

Advice may range from guidance in the writing of histories, or the preparation of lists of potentially significant places, to technical advice about the care or conservation of building materials.

While brochures and booklets on specific themes are helpful some communities engage a heritage adviser whose time and expertise is made available to the council planners and the community on a regular consultancy basis such as one or two days per week. This is a cost-effective means of providing access to expertise that does not presently exist within Council. Through engaging a heritage adviser, Council also benefits through gaining skills and knowledge that are passed on to staff within Council who deal with heritage matters.

Recommendation 12

PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL ADVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Establish a program to provide professional or technical advice to individual groups or organisations whose objective is conservation of the urban heritage or character. This program should include engaging a heritage adviser on a regular consultancy basis, whose time and expertise is made available to council officers and the community.

Finding 13

LOCAL AREA ACTION

Increasingly throughout the City of Gold Coast, local area groups are making their concerns about lifestyle, heritage and character, known to the Council. Some groups are well organised and articulate - others less so.

With programs to promote awareness of urban heritage and character throughout the city it may be expected that more groups will establish themselves.

It is important that community concern and interest in this form is translated to positive action. Local area action plans maybe effective in achieving this aim.

Action plans might range from surveying potential sites and photographic essays, to tree planting and maintenance and even direct conservation and restoration programs.

Support and direction from Council can often ensure that the work is effective and productive within Council's overall strategies.

Recommendation 13

INITIATE LOCAL AREA ACTION

Initiate a program of local area action plans with the dual aim of demonstrating Council's commitment to heritage and character conservation and to the involvement of local communities in those plans.
Finding 14

CONSERVATION INCENTIVES

Sometimes the difference between action to conserve heritage character and apathy or disinterest, may be reduced to a simple incentive.

Rate relief or rate holidays is one obviously financial incentive the Council may offer, although less tangible incentives such as relief from town planning requirements or even a willingness to negotiate particular requirements may certain circumstances be sufficient to encourage some property owners to carry out works or developments consistent with Council's strategic objectives in these matters.

Recommendation 14

ADOPT AN INCENTIVES SCHEME

*Investigate a scheme of incentives to encourage property owners to comply with Council’s broad objectives to conserve the heritage of the City and enhance defined areas of distinctive urban character.*

*The incentives may be specific, or a system could be developed with the aim of determining the most appropriate incentive on a case-by-case basis.*

Finding 15

GRANTS, LOANS & ADVANCES

From time to time, in extraordinary circumstances, Council may need to fund directly the conservation of urban heritage and character.

That is not to say that Council should embark on a program to purchase each property or place of cultural significance. Clearly that would be beyond the resources of any government, and would not necessarily result in good conservation.

Normally financial assistance and support for properties under threat is best achieved by means of short term "priming" in the way of grants loans or advances. These are usually administered in terms of a rolling fund that gives financial return in whole or part once the place is secure.

Recommendation 15

ESTABLISH A HERITAGE FUND

*Budget for a heritage fund which can be used for grants, loans or advances to private property owners to assist in the conservation of urban heritage and character.*

*The scheme should as far as possible be managed so that money is returned to the fund as places under threat are reintegrated into the urban system and demonstrate their viability to do so in an economic manner.*
Finding 16

HERITAGE AGREEMENT

Often the conservation of urban heritage and character is best achieved in a joint venture between property owners and government. Opportunity exists in such an arrangement to provide incentives or financial assistance to achieve specific conservation action in a manner which satisfies the objectives of both Council and property owners.

The formalisation of that agreement which may have conditions of action restraint and time is provided for in State heritage legislation with the opportunity for local government as a signatory.

Similar heritage agreements may be established directly between Council and property owners.

Recommendation 16

ENTER INTO HERITAGE AGREEMENTS WITH PROPERTY OWNERS

Examine ways in which formal and legally binding heritage agreements may be entered into with property owners to ensure that incentives or financial support result in understood and agreed conservation outcomes.

Finding 17

HERITAGE LISTING

The study finds that there are places within the Gold Coast that are worthy of listing and a level of protection. Those lists should include places in the hinterland as well as places in the coastal strip.

The protection offered at national and state level is prescribed by existing legislation. At the local level, lists prepared and maintained by Council may offer protection according to Council's policies and initiatives within its broader strategic objectives.

Even if local lists contain no protective measures they will act as an early warning or educative tool to property owners and developers as to Council's concerns in these matters.

The preparation of lists is best carried out on a regional thematic basis so the comparative analysis of places nominated may be made and property owners are given some comfort that listings are part of a broader and considered scheme.

Recommendation 17

ESTABLISH A PROGRAM FOR SURVEY & LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT PLACES

Establish a long-term program of survey and listing of places within the Gold Coast City. The themes and character areas identified in this study may form the basis for such a program.

In the short term, carry out a pilot study of a limited number of themes or areas to establish a method or approach and to test the effectiveness and community acceptance of this program.
Finding 18

URBAN DESIGN

Within the Gold Coast there are a range of character areas both at a broad scale and in local communities. The study identifies these and describes in general terms the characteristics that distinguish one from the other.

That urban character is, in some areas easily recognised. In others, and particularly on the coastal strip, town planning initiatives over the last 20 years have blurred the distinction somewhat. Few of these urban character areas are intact examples of a particular period or style of development and evidence survives mostly in remnants.

In all areas development continues in accordance with the present planning scheme.

The conservation of character will therefore be best supported in these areas by urban design initiatives that recognise the early influences and later development that gives character to the area, and of the necessary need for change to support the economic and environmental expectations of the present community.

Recommendation 18

SUPPORT LOCAL CHARACTER THROUGH URBAN DESIGN

Support local character in the areas identified in this study through urban design in planning initiatives, such as Development Control Plans, Local Area Plans, or design guidelines for development.

Such work should not focus solely on the preservation of existing fabric but should recognise the necessity for evolution of character within present cultural and economic expectations.

Finding 19

TOWN PLANNING

Urban heritage and character conservation is made difficult within the Gold Coast because of the change and development that population growth demands and because of the history of town planning in this city which has traditionally encouraged change and development at a massive scale.

Conservation is in essence "the management of change" and in a culture which to date has seen little value in the past, the reversal of established trends will be difficult and indeed maybe painful.

A mature population must nevertheless face these issues squarely and look to the larger future and amenity of the city.

Recommendation 19

EXAMINE WHETHER THERE ARE PLACES WITHIN THE CITY WHERE THROUGH THE PLANNING SCHEME REVIEW, THE RATE OF CHANGE MAY BE SLOWED OR LIMITED

Examine as part of the current review of the Strategic Plan and Planning Scheme, places within the city in which the rate of development and change may be slowed or limited as a primary vehicle for achieving conservation of its urban heritage and character.

These areas may be determined from information about cultural significance as a result of information already to hand, or flowing from further studies or surveys. Alternatively, focus on areas where the rate of change and development has naturally been suppressed.

The commitment of Council to these initiatives should be at a strategic level and at a lower level.
Finding 20

COUNCIL OWNED HERITAGE BUILDINGS

Council should recognise the value that heritage adds to the City, and through its own historic public buildings and places, demonstrate its commitment to providing a truly world class and sustainable environment, by showing how historic places can be sensibly and economically treated. Care of its own heritage properties and places, particularly those that relate to the history of local government of the Gold Coast, is a proper and responsible role for direct Council funding.

Recommendation 20

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

In care of Council owned heritage buildings and places, lead by example and demonstrate that thoughtful planning for conservation is an important component of development activity.

Finding 21

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PROMOTION

The urban heritage and character of the Gold Coast is unique within the Australian urban context.

The values inherent in the City’s heritage and character are not always easily understood or readily appreciated. They are important however, in understanding the forces that shape the City and indeed all late twentieth century cities.

They deserve wider debate, especially amongst people with experience in similar cities, and with those who acknowledge the special qualities of resort architecture or mid century modernism.

Recommendation 21

CONFERENCES/INVOLVEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES

Initiate a program of debate and discussion both nationally and internationally to explore in more detail, the particular qualities and characteristics of Gold Coast City’s heritage and character expressed in its town planning, architecture and urban culture. Conferences or seminars would result in informed opinion about the nature of the City’s past and will help in planning sensibly for its future. Research projects carried out jointly with universities both in Australia and abroad would similarly be a source of information and help in placing the Gold Coast in a position where it’s heritage is seriously considered in the broader academic community.