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Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the preliminary consultation phase for the Sunshine Coast's new planning scheme. The Property Council's Sunshine Coast committee recognises that this phase is non-statutory and appreciated the opportunity to provide input on the scheme at a recent committee meeting. Following that meeting, the committee has identified a range of key themes that the new scheme should address as a priority.

As the industry that will be responsible working within the scheme to deliver product that caters to the Sunshine Coast's rapidly growing population, the property sector is committed to working with Council to ensure that the scheme reflects the changing dynamics of the region. The new scheme will undoubtedly be one of the most important in the Sunshine Coast's history. As Council has outlined, the region will need to sustainably absorb 170,00 additional residents by 2041.

Events like the Olympics will only turbocharge the level investment and growth that the Sunshine Coast will experience over the next decade. With an estimated ten years until the drafting of a new scheme it is imperative the opportunity this review affords us is not wasted.

The rapidly escalating cost of land has rendered the cost of living on the Sunshine Coast prohibitive for many. A rental vacancy rate of 0.5% has meant that nearly 900 Sunshine Coast residents are experiencing homelessness each day¹. This situation will only deteriorate if the property industry does not have the appropriate settings to invest in, develop, and manage a diversity of dwelling types that cater for the region's entire population.

Further, there is a risk that the current dearth of adequate commercial land (particularly industrial) may mean that the Sunshine Coast misses the opportunity to harness the significant momentum that it is experiencing. At the time of writing, there are less than 5 industrial blocks of land available for sale on the Sunshine Coast and most of these are

¹ Infrastructure Australia <https://www.hot91.com.au/news/local-news/118261-social-housing-shortfall-forcing-many-into-homelessness-as-rental-crisis-hits-hard>

already “under offer”. For industrial tenants seeking space between 1500 – 5,000 sqm to lease, there are less than 5 options available and most of these are not built. This lack of supply is inhibiting business growth and forcing larger occupants to look at other regions to accommodate their growth.

To respond to these rapidly escalating issues the Property Council believes the following issues should be a key focus within the new scheme.

Housing affordability

It is well documented that there is a significant affordability crisis on the Sunshine Coast. The aforementioned growth of the region and the ongoing influx of new residents and visitors will only exacerbate this issue if the new scheme does not adequately address it.

Currently the issue is being driven by dual factors: the current approach limiting supply to existing growth fronts and Beerwah East and; prescriptive planning requirements that limit the diversity that can be achieved in infill areas.

To address the land supply issue the Property Council believes that that Council urgently needs to consider options to free up new land supply including:

- Progressing planning for Beerwah East and the Halls Creek PFGA.
- Maintain consistency with the *ShapingSEQ* in relation to inter-urban break and growth areas.
- Exploring options to unlock new development opportunities north of the Maroochy River.
- Responding to the current infrastructure shortfall in order to unlock and connect developable land.

To enhance housing diversity and cater for the full spectrum of the region’s population the new plan should:

- Examine options to increase building height – especially around key nodal points – to enable uplift along key corridors (such as the along the proposed Mass Transit route).
- Focus on performance-based planning outcomes as opposed to prescriptive planning requirements.
- Relax height requirements on sloping land to help accommodate sustainable design requirements.
- Consider incentives for developments that achieve social and affordable housing outcomes.

Industrial land

The Property Council understands that Council is working with the State Government to bring additional industrial land to market to address the current shortfall. It is imperative that the Sunshine Coast has sufficient and adequate industrial land ready to bring to market if the region wishes to attract and retain business and investment.

The dynamics of the Sunshine Coast are rapidly changing. Previously, new residents largely moved the Sunshine Coast for lifestyle reasons. However, businesses and workers are increasingly looking to move to and invest in the Sunshine Coast. If the region wishes to capture this momentum it must have areas which new and emerging industries can utilise.

The Property Council believes that Council can assist in addressing this issue in the new planning scheme by working with property and development industry groups, such as the Property Council, to identify the quantum and diversifying nature of industrial land required over the life of the new Planning Scheme. Such open and ongoing communication could also assist Council with identifying key locational requirements, driven by such factors as accessibility to key transport modes/routes and other infrastructure needs.

Commercial opportunities

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sunshine Coast has benefitted from people being enabled to work remotely, leading to significant population growth – especially in hinterland areas. While positive, this evolution means that the region’s existing commercial centres hierarchy is no longer suitable and needs to adapt to respond to changing settlement patterns and decentralisation.

Currently, many residents -particularly in the Hinterlands - are not within close proximity to modern conveniences and amenities including shopping precincts, warehouses, and public transport. For the region to evolve and provide residents with the multitude of opportunities associated with a smart, sustainable, and dynamic region, proximity to amenities and services should be seen as a necessity.

Doing so will reduce the distance residents are required to travel. This will help diversify the region’s economy, ease pressure on infrastructure, reduce costs for residents, and render the regional more sustainable by reducing emissions.

An informed community

Finally, while the suggestions in this submission have been made with the intention of helping the region sustainably absorb the significant population pressure that it is

experiencing, it is recognised that vocal and motivated community groups often make achieving these objectives difficult.

It should be reinforced that these groups - which often feature prominently in the media and are actively engaged during community consultation - do not represent the full spectrum of the population.

The Property Council acknowledges that the industry must continue to make a concerted effort to engage with the broader community to espouse the positive outcomes of sustainable growth, whilst ensuring the significant social and economic ramifications of maintaining the status quo are widely communicated.

As such, the Property Council would look forward to the opportunity to work with Council to provide a counterpoint to many of the prominent anti-growth narratives that threaten the objectives that Council is seeking to achieve in this scheme.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide feedback. If you require any additional information or would like to discuss this matter further, please don't hesitate to contact me on 0499 181 366 or jcaire@propertycouncil.com.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jess Caire".

Jess Caire
Queensland Deputy Executive Director