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Manager, Environment and Sustainability Policy
Sunshine Coast Council

BY EMAIL: els@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Haddrill,

Re: DRAFT ENVIRONMENT AND LIVEABILITY STRATEGY

Thank you for the opportunity to make submissions on the draft Environment and Liveability Strategy.

Development Watch (DW) is a community group based in Coolum on the Sunshine Coast. One of our primary aims is to encourage policies and planning practices that preserve and enhance the quality of life in the Coolum district for both residents and visitors. We have prepared this submission with this aim in mind.

We commend Council for seeking public comment on the draft Environment and Liveability Strategy. The general intention of the document and how it will be relied on is not entirely clear but if it is for the benefit of our environment and liveability, the intention is primarily supported. We would, however, like to make the following comments:

How the Strategy Will be Used

We are making this point first and foremost as it is of the utmost importance to our Organisation. We note the text states (Part A, p21) , amongst other things:

"The final strategy will ... be used to:

- *Inform Planning: drafting, review and amendments of planning schemes*
- *Guide Decision Making: inform investment and land use planning decisions.*

These comments are of great concern to our Association. We would like to think that the purpose of this document is to benefit the community insofar as the environment and liveability is concerned. But what would be of even greater benefit for the community is for this document to align with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 and for the community, once and for all, to have some certainty from the Scheme. We would be aghast to think that the purpose of this strategy is to override the current Planning Scheme. The Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 is the higher order document and must not be overridden by strategies introduced by Council.

It is therefore our contention that this strategy must align with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme 2014 and that the Planning Scheme prevails.

Sunshine Coast an “*emerging city*”?

The use of the word “*city*” to describe the Sunshine Coast ” is not supported. The message from the community has, for many years, been quite clear in that they do not want “*another Gold Coast*”. We therefore ask that the term “emerging city”, “city” in particular, be removed from the strategy document.

Inter and Intra Urban Breaks

We agree the “*regional inter urban break*” and the “*sub regional inter urban breaks*” should be maintained to protect the Sunshine Coast image.

The landscape and character of the Sunshine Coast is the essence of our region and helps define our identity and character and a point of difference to the Gold Coast.

Council should clearly identify which areas will be protected to act as buffers between population areas. It is our contention that the site at Yaroomba (currently owned by Sekisui) should never have been allowed for mass urban development. Sites such as these provide crucial urban breaks and help to provide the “*green*” image that the community wishes to present.

The spatial layout of the region

The diversity of the various villages and townships must be maintained and new construction must be suitable to the area. Policy and strategies should be developed to capitalise on this.

“Greening” of arterial roadways

The vision of “corridors of green connecting our biodiversity to our neighbourhoods and green fingers connecting our neighbourhoods to our people” is welcomed and

should also be reflected in the manner in which our major and arterial roads are “landscaped”.

Car parking

The issue of car parking has a major impact on the liveability of an area or region. As the population grows, more and more pressure will be placed on those areas of the Sunshine Coast that residents and visitors wish to access. Access to beach areas or to entertainment and retail precincts is a case in point.

To minimise the impact of additional vehicles on our carparks, public transport needs to be affordable (or even free in holiday and off-peak times), regular and convenient.

Population Growth

We understand that the forecast population figures are drawn from the Queensland State Government’s Shaping SEQ policy. Below is an extract from Development Watch’s Submission on the SEQRP.

“We note the population of the Sunshine Coast is predicted to grow from 287,500 in 2015 to 495,000 in 2041 (an increase of 207,500 over 25 years – or an average of 8,300 per year).

In the existing SEQRP population growth for the Sunshine Coast was predicted to grow from 295,000 in 2006 to 497,000 in 2031 (an increase of 202,000 over 25 years or an average of 8,000 per year). For the 9 year period from 2006 to 2015 the population was therefore predicted to grow by approx72,000 (an average of 8,080 x 9 years), estimating the population for 2015 at 367,000. It was 287,500 an approximate shortfall of 87,000.

Additionally, the population growth for the Sunshine Coast for the 5 year period from 2011 to 2015 (a 4 year period) was 20,000, only an average of 5,000 per year, significantly less than the predicted average of 8,000 per year in the existing SEQRP and 8,300 in the draft SEQRP. One must also take into account the ageing population and the affects of the passing of the ageing population.

We note the figures are just projections and that there are peaks and troughs with population growth.... “

We note that this projected “growth” has been referred to many many times in the past 18 months by Council, particularly when a controversial development rears its

ugly head. This continual reference to growth is only serving to instil fear amongst the community on how it is going to affect their liveability and their everyday lives.

To comment on this growth one needs to have the following questions addressed:

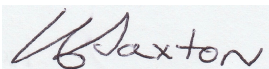
- Is the State Government putting pressure on Council to provide for this projected population growth (as has been stated several times by Council in the past) and if so, why? Surely this will only place additional pressure on the State Government to provide more jobs and infrastructure?
- Why now is this growth mantra being thrust upon the community when it never has before (even though similar population projections have been predicted in the past)?
- Does Council want this population growth and if so, why? Again, it puts pressure on the creation of more jobs.
- Do the residents of the Sunshine Coast want this population growth?
- Is this population growth sustainable?

“Liveability” is more than the environment

Whilst the overall message of the draft strategy is welcomed it should be acknowledged that this is only one aspect of “liveability”. Council needs to encourage community engagement and recognise the diversity of views and opinions that exist within the community. The development of the Sunshine Coast should be driven by local needs rather than State or national requirements. Liveability will be more readily achievable if shared values are recognised and built upon.

Finally, time is limited for volunteers to submit on such strategies. Whilst 4 weeks seems ample time, volunteers must fit these projects into their spare time and most residents who work full-time and have families will never find the time to get involved. Could we respectfully ask that more time be allowed in future for these submissions? Perhaps Council could publicly recommend that residents join their local Residents Association so they can have a voice and be represented by that Association’s submission.

Yours sincerely



Lynette Saxton,
President