



21 August 2019

Response to the SCRC Design Strategy

Introduction

OSCAR acknowledges and congratulates staff on the work undertaken by the Council in the Design Strategy development and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the strategy. OSCAR also thanks staff for the briefing session conducted for OSCAR member groups and interested community members not previously engaged in the discussion.

OSCAR notes that the Strategy has produced 4 key values, 9 design principles and a series of priority actions.

The activities produced 4 key values:

- 1 *We love our climate*
- 2 *We are embedded in and framed by the natural environment*
- 3 *We treasure our ocean and waterways*
- 4 *We are a community of communities*

To help protect and promote the values, a set of 9 design principles have been developed. In addition, there are a series of priority actions to help illustrate designing with these principles in mind.

The design principles are:

- 1 *Work with the local climate*
- 2 *Create places that respect and incorporate landscape*
- 3 *Bring our culture, arts and heritage to life*
- 4 *Capture and frame natural views and create vistas*
- 5 *Strengthen and extend a network of environmental and green corridors linking places*
- 6 *Be inspired by local and natural materials*
- 7 *Make shady streets that put people first*
- 8 *Create inclusive places that can be enjoyed by everyone*
- 9 *Ensure places are resilient and ready for change*

General comments

- OSCAR supports all the Values and the 9 Principles, however we make some specific comments and recommendations below.
- The strategy should be considered in the context of sustainable development in order to meet the principles of the strategy in the future.
- The plans for an education program amongst developers, builders and potential home-owners is essential, but the strategy will also need to have some statutory components.
- Considerable concern has been expressed regarding the voluntary nature of “guidelines” in the application of the contents of the strategy. It should be included in the Planning Scheme and enforceable sooner than later.

- We appreciate the need for a pictorial record for educational use both paper and digital format but are concerned about the potential cost of a “coffee table” style publication. Maybe the development industry would like to fund it.
- A developer’s process of designing to accommodate the buyer wants at an acceptable price point doesn’t necessarily translate to the design principles.
- The videos developed as part of the project included some high profile, experienced professional people in their field who spoke with authority. However, members felt it would have been useful to have included some community input and local comment into the videos. Similarly including more local architects and builders who design and/or build using the design principles would make the videos more relatable to the community. We understand that council does not want to be seen favouring individual businesses however.
- Within the discussion relating to landscapes and the natural environment we would like to see “wildlife corridors” referenced and their value recognised.
- The Design Strategy will need to be updated on a regular basis as and when the population grows; it cannot be used as an excuse to raise building heights in areas so that the design principles can be met.
- OSCAR would like to see consolidation of local signage and more regulation relating to signage across the Sunshine Coast in general.
- The focus of densification by council and developers also makes implementing design principles of working with local climate, incorporating landscape and framing views almost impossible to achieve. We increasingly see the problem of “all house, no yard, privacy fences” undermining amenity.
- There are many examples where developments go against these principles; eg where streets and footpaths are not suitable for the number of people and usage.
- Council is at times both a developer and regulator. How will council implement these design principles in its own developments? The Council will need to “practice what it preaches” and lead by example in these cases. The Maroochydore CBD provides an excellent opportunity for exemplar practice.

Specific comments on Principles 4 and 9

Principle 4 – “*Capture & Frame Natural Views and Vistas*” should have the word “*protect*” in it. Some of our members found it somewhat incongruous that the image they saw “capturing and framing” Mt Coolum looking over from what appeared to be the Sekisui site, compared with Sekisui’s plans (approved by Council) to block out residents’ views over their site and to the water.

Principle 9 – “*Ensure places are resilient and ready for change*”. When we asked the design team what this meant they referred to climate change as we expected, but when it was mentioned in the video, both climate change and population growth were mentioned. OSCAR members are very concerned that this may be used as an excuse for major amendments being made to the Planning Scheme to raise building heights in areas so that a skewed design principles accommodating population growth can be met.

Recommendations

- 1 That SCRC include reference in the foreword and throughout the design strategy to the concept of sustainable development.
- 2 That SCRC include the Principles of the Design Strategy in the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme as mandated considerations where possible. We acknowledge that it is difficult to mandate good design in terms of the “look” of the built environment but aspects of good design that relate to building orientation, setbacks, ventilation, insulation, parking provision, for example, are within the remit of the Planning Scheme.
- 3 That to enhance cooperation within and across council in relation to implementing the Design Strategy Council consider locating the Planning Department within the Liveability and Natural Assets department.

- 4 That SCRC develop mechanisms to engage across disciplines both within Council and across external professionals, providers, developers and builders, and those responsible for roads and parks etc.
- 5 That SCRC develop a signage component within the strategy that blends signage with the 9 Principles.
- 6 That wildlife corridors be included and recognised in their own right as a landscape element.
- 7 That SCRC commit to include the Values and Principles in its own developments; eg the CBD project. As a start SCRC might consider measuring the proposed Holiday Inn development against the Values and Principles of the Design Strategy.