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| PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 9 MARCH 2011 | 10 |
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DAINTREE GATEWAY MASTER PLAN PROJECT UPDATE – DIVISION 10

Paul Cohen : 8/26/29: #3072026

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receives and notes the report on the progress of the Daintree Gateway Master Plan project.

INTRODUCTION:

The Daintree Gateway Master Plan has progressed to a stage whereby infrastructure opportunities and options are being considered for a draft document to be placed on exhibition and broad community comment sought. This report provides a formal update to the Council and community on the progress of the master planning, outcomes and forthcoming engagement activities. Council is recommended to receive and note the report and endorse the engagement program moving forward.

BACKGROUND:

The lowland rainforest north of the Daintree River is Australia's oldest coastal rainforest and amongst the most bio-diverse areas in the world. The outstanding attributes of these natural features are reflected in the protection of the Daintree National Park and the 1988 declaration of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. These features make the Daintree's lowland rainforest one of Australia's most attractive natural attributes and support a number of small communities and an eco-tourism industry. Where the Cape Tribulation Road crosses the Daintree River is identified as the Gateway to the Daintree. In recognition of the outstanding natural assets of the Daintree National Park and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Cairns Regional Council seeks to deliver a sustainable, iconic and world-class visitor experience at its Gateway.

A number of outstanding action items relating to the Daintree Gateway (tenure of land, undefined visitor experience and poor state of appearance) require resolution. To ensure that all relevant issues are addressed in a cohesive manner, Cairns Regional Council is committed to preparing a Master Plan for the Daintree Gateway.

COMMENT:

The draft Daintree Gateway Master Plan has been evolving over the past few months through a series of Stakeholder Reference Group workshops in conjunction with project team and Steering Committee input. The following sections outline the progress of the project, current outputs from the master planning and the forthcoming planning and engagement activities.

Master Planning Progress

The master planning process has been undertaken since the beginning of the 2010/2011 Financial Year.

Key milestones achieved since project inception include:

| Milestone | Completed |
|--|----------------|
| Detailed project planning undertaken | July 2010 |
| Draft guiding principles developed | August 2010 |
| Steering Committee initiation | September 2010 |
| Master planning consultancy request for quotation | September 2010 |
| Stakeholder Reference Group initiation | October 2010 |
| Arup awarded master planning consultancy | October 2010 |
| Daintree Gateway Issues and Opportunities discussion paper completed | October 2010 |
| Government and Agency Reference Group initiation | November 2010 |
| Vision and principles workshop with stakeholders | November 2010 |
| Daintree Gateway Vision and Context Report | January 2011 |
| Draft Daintree Gateway Options Report | January 2011 |
| Options workshop with stakeholders | February 2011 |

Of these milestones, the vision and principles workshop, Vision and Context report, Draft Options Report and subsequent workshop with stakeholders represent the bulk of outputs and consultation activities to date. The Vision and Context Report and Draft Options Report are attached as Attachments 1 and 2 respectively to this update report. A summary of these is also included in the consultation activities and outcomes section of this report.

A review of the draft master plan is currently being undertaken by Council officers. A final draft is expected to be produced by mid-March. The consultation activities related to the draft master plan is outlined further in the sections below.

Current Consultation Activities and Outputs

There are a number of engagement activities and outputs coming from the project over the past few months. These are discussed below.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is meeting monthly to discuss project direction, consultation activities and outputs. The past two meetings have concentrated on the options for infrastructure elements, “place-based” enhancements and scenarios for various precincts within the study area. Future meetings will concentrate on the draft master plan and the broad consultation outcomes and comments made to shape the final master plan.

Stakeholder Reference Group

The Stakeholder Reference Group has been meeting at milestones to actively participate in workshops to refine the project’s guiding principles, a vision for the Daintree Gateway and to express their views to the options for different precincts and the place-based outcomes for each. Comments from the reference group members have informed outcomes in the Vision and Context report and the development of the draft master plan (from the Options report).

Vision and Context Report

The purpose of the report is to document the information that will inform decision making about project options and outcomes. The Vision and Context report presents the strategic framework for developing the Daintree Gateway Master Plan along with the contextual framework that defines the Gateway. While the contextual framework deals with the historic, geographic/physical, economic, stakeholder needs and legislative characteristics that define the Gateway, the strategic framework sets up the purpose, vision and guiding principles for the establishment of the Daintree Gateway. These are outlined below.

Purpose

The Daintree Gateway has two distinct purposes:

- Improve the experience for visitors to the Daintree-Cape Tribulation area.
- Increase economic benefit from visitation for local communities and businesses.

Vision

The Gateway is an enticing landmark that welcomes visitors to the magical wilderness and cultural landscape of the Daintree River and the world’s oldest rainforest.

The Gateway enhances the prosperity of the Daintree area by inspiring visitors to take more time to get to know the values and stories of this outstanding natural environment, its traditional owners and the resident communities.

Guiding Principles

A set of Guiding Principles has been established for the Master Plan following consultation with the project Stakeholder Reference Group. These principles outline the basis for decision making and outcomes sought from the master planning. The guiding principles include:

- **Sustainability**
Sustainability will be a fundamental consideration in the development of the Daintree Gateway, clearly expressed in the design of built and natural environments. Project outcomes will demonstrate a balance between community needs, economic growth, cultural practices, environmental protection and efficient use of resources.
- **Cultural Association**
The Daintree Gateway will celebrate the rich cultural fabric of the Daintree-Cape Tribulation area and provide opportunities for visitors to learn and interact with cultural history and contemporary practices through interpretive displays, materials, design and art. The precinct will honour the Eastern Kuku Yalanji as the traditional owners of the land and will also acknowledge the non-Indigenous history and association with the Daintree area.
- **Environmental Protection**
The Daintree Gateway will be a celebration of the significance and natural wonder of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and Daintree National Park. Development and land uses associated with the Gateway will improve degraded area, enhance vistas and scenic amenity and do no harm to the coastal and riverine processes of the Daintree River, endemic habitats and eco systems, or the cultural landscape.
- **Local Economy**
The Daintree Gateway will enhance the prosperity of local businesses and communities. It will contribute to greater awareness of the experiences available in the region and will promote and complement existing businesses and attractions.
- **Sense of Place**
The Daintree Gateway will clearly mark the journey from rural landscape to wilderness environment and pay homage to the natural and cultural character of the Daintree-Cape Tribulation area. The Gateway will create a strong sense of arrival, welcome and anticipation and provide a visitor experience befitting the world class values of the area.
- **Character**
The Gateway will reflect the tropical and natural character of the Daintree-Cape Tribulation area. The built form will be a high quality design that reflects and respects the natural areas and character of the local area. Planning of the project will enhance vistas and degraded areas and retain and increase vegetation.
- **Access and Mobility**
The Daintree Gateway will transform the way in which people move through the entire Daintree region and the choices they make about journeys and destinations. In the immediate development area, the Gateway will rationalise the road network, parking areas and river access, creating a safe, legible and accessible environment that meets the needs of all users.

- Planning
 - A successful Daintree Gateway project will be delivered by an integrated and collaborative planning process informed by the:
 - cultural values of the landscape and precinct;
 - wealth of local knowledge and ideas;
 - important role of tourism in the area;
 - need to make provision for adaptation and change; and
 - value of good design, innovation and creativity.

Options Report

The purpose of the Options Report is to describe and illustrate a broad range of potential development options for the purposes of community and stakeholder consultation. The report informs the basis of consultation activities with a wide range of community, business and visitor stakeholders to test and evaluate the options and develop a shortlist of preferred options for future development.

For the purposes of the paper the study area is divided into six precincts, namely:

- Intersection of Cape Tribulation & Mossman-Daintree Roads
- Western Precinct
- South Bank
- North Bank
- Daintree Village
- Wonga turnoff

A range of possible options for each precinct have been identified, including a review of advantages and disadvantages and inter-relationship with other options. The options range from 'do-nothing' to a high level of development.

The report also identifies possible combinations of the various options. These options are centred on a key location for an interpretative/visitors facility and a range of low and high development models associated with each location.

The Options Report is attached as Attachment 2.

Visitor Experience Survey

A survey of visitors to the Daintree area (north of the Daintree River) was undertaken by Council Officers during the latter half of January to gauge the expectations and experience sought from those tourists. Approximately 80 self-drive tourists completed the questionnaire. The results of the survey highlights that tourists continue to seek an adventure and wilderness experience from the Daintree area and the need to provide proper facilities at its entry marking the beginning of their experience. The detailed outcomes of the survey questions will be compiled for a formal consultation outcomes report to be tabled at a future Council meeting.

Future Consultation Activities and Outputs

The focus of engagement to date has been around involving the key stakeholders from the former Douglas Shire, including those who have business in the immediate area, the tourism and community bodies/associations and the traditional owners. There is a forthcoming need to inform and consult with a broader spectrum of community, business and tourism groups and to seek feedback from these stakeholders. There are also a number of other planning related activities to conduct. The following section is intended to provide a broad understanding of the forthcoming activities related to master plan delivery and consultation targets.

Forthcoming Consultation and Master Plan Delivery

The program of consultation and planning activities to develop, review and deliver a final master plan is outlined in the table below.

| Milestone | | Activity | Date(s) |
|-----------|---|--|--|
| 4C | Draft Master Plan Development | Project Team develops and refines draft master plan to reflect Stakeholder comments and planning matters. | 11 March 2011 |
| | | Use of media to inform community of Master Plan and feedback period. | 28 March 2011 – 8 April 2011 |
| | | Urban Design Advisory Board is provided opportunity for comment on draft master plan. | 17 March 2011 |
| | | Councillor workshop on detailed outcomes from stakeholder reviews of vision, guiding principles and options as well as providing comment on the draft master plan. | 24 March 2011 |
| | | Comments from workshops are incorporated into refined Draft Master Plan for broad consultation. | 28 March 2011 |
| 4D | Broad Consultation on Draft Master Plan | Use of media to inform community of Master Plan and feedback period. | 28 March 2011 – 8 April 2011 |
| | | Community Feedback Period commences | 4 April 2011 – 29 April 2011 |
| | | Use of shopfront to inform community of Master Plan and feedback period. | 4 April 2011 – 29 April 2011 |
| | | Drop-In Sessions | <i>Dates and venues to be confirmed</i> - Cow Bay - Daintree Village - Mossman <i>Between 4 April 2011 & 15 April 2011</i> |
| | | Website content, online surveys and YourSay forum | 4 April 2011 – 29 April 2011 |

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| 5 | Development of Final Master Plan | Project Team reviews feedback/submissions | 3 May 2011 – 18 May 2011 |
| | | Stakeholder Reference Group workshop on issues raised in feedback/submissions to feed up to Steering Committee | Week starting 16 May 2011 (To be confirmed) |
| | | Steering Committee workshop to consider recommendations of Stakeholder Reference Group and Project Team | Week starting 23 May 2011 (To be confirmed) |
| | | Councillor Workshop | 31 May 2011 (To be confirmed) |
| | | Report for Council Adoption | 8 June 2011 |

It should be noted from the table that Council will not formally endorse a draft master plan at a Council meeting prior to notification commencing. However, it is considered that the engagement of local community and business in the development of the draft master plan, along with incorporation of comments made by the Urban Design Advisory Board and Councillors (from their respective workshops) will be sufficient to take to the broader community for feedback.

These dates are for the master planning itself, for the current financial year. Planning for the next stage (the implementation phases of the greater project) will commence around the same time as the community feedback period. Phase 6 (the implementation planning) will therefore be commensurate with the evolution of the final master plan, and feed into the forthcoming budget considerations. It is not intended that a gap be observed between the handing down of the budget and the first stage of works, design or feasibility.

Consultation Targets

Milestone 4D of the project revolves around broad consultation on the draft master plan. The level of engagement of stakeholders is aligned to Council's general policy, particularly in seeking to inform, consult and seek participation of community sectors and to use their feedback to shape the final master plan.

| Stakeholder | Event | Date | Purpose | Target Level of Engagement |
|-----------------------------|----------|---------------|--|------------------------------|
| Urban Design Advisory Board | Workshop | 17 March 2011 | To provide professional advice and direction on design and outcomes in draft master plan | Consultation / Participation |
| Councillors | Workshop | 24 March 2011 | To provide leadership and direction on design and outcomes in draft master plan | Consultation / Participation |
| Steering Committee | Workshop | 24 March 2011 | To provide leadership and direction on design and outcomes in draft master plan | Consultation / Participation |

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|-------------------|---|------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Broader Community | Media coverage – local newspapers | Week beginning 28 March 2011 | To disseminate information about the draft master plan and consultation activities | Inform |
| | Media coverage – local radio | Week beginning 28 March 2011 | To disseminate information about the draft master plan and consultation activities | Inform |
| | Open Feedback Period | 4 April – 29 April | To broadly engage with the community on the draft master plan and openly seek feedback | Inform/Consult |
| | Cuppa with Council – Cow Bay | To be confirmed | To engage with the local community on the draft master plan and openly seek feedback | Inform/Consult |
| | Drop-In Session – Mossman Office | To be confirmed | To engage with the local community on the draft master plan and openly seek feedback | Inform/Consult |
| | Drop-In Session – Daintree Village Community Hall | To be confirmed | To engage with the local community on the draft master plan and openly seek feedback | Inform/Consult |
| | Drop-In Session – Mossman Markets | To be confirmed | To engage with the local community on the draft master plan and openly seek feedback | Inform/Consult |
| | Public Display Boards – Port Douglas shopfront | 4 April – 29 April | To inform the local community about the draft master plan and direct where/how feedback can be provided | Inform |
| | Website content | 4 April – 29 April | To broadly inform the community about the draft master plan and direct where/how feedback can be provided | Inform |
| | Web survey | 4 April – 29 April | To seek specific feedback on the draft master plan | Consult |
| | YourSay online forum | 4 April – 29 April | To seek general commentary on specific elements of the draft master plan and master planning outcomes | Consult |

This program of targeted engagement enables a solid review of the draft master plan and lead to a better informed (final) Daintree Gateway Master Plan which can be implemented in an efficient and effective manner.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The preparation of a Daintree River Gateway Master Plan is aligned with following elements of the Corporate Plan:

Goal 1 – Caring for the Environment

Objective: To ensure that the natural and built environments are managed and protected in a sustainable manner.

- 1.1 Deliver improved management of the region's natural resources and biological diversity for sustainability and ecosystem health.
- 1.2 Achieve greater recognition of the natural environment as an integral part of the region's identity and fundamental to quality of life.

Goal 2 – Building Vibrant Communities

Objective: To build more creative, innovative and self reliant communities where participation in community life is enabled and encouraged.

- 2.2 Improve the quality and opportunities for use of public space across the region.

Goal 3 – Delivering Integrated Planning

Objective: To take an integrated planning approach to development that creates a sustainable region reflective of our uniqueness and tropical lifestyle.

- 3.1 Implement an integrated approach to planning by Council and stakeholders.
- 3.2 Deliver integrated provision of physical and social infrastructure in existing and future parts of the region.
- 3.7 Promote good urban design outcomes which are responsive to the region's tropical environment and unique character.

Goal 5 – Creating a Prosperous Region

Objective: To increase the region's capacity for long-term economic growth by supporting opportunities for local businesses and local employment.

- 5.3 Plan and make financial and capital decisions with the state of the local economy in mind.

Goal 6 – Striving for Organisational Excellence

Objective: To ensure that Council is open, accountable, ethical and financially responsible. Recognise that Council plays a leadership role for our immediate communities and for the wider region and will strive to represent our community's needs and expectations.

- 6.3 Collect, interpret, manage and capture data and information to inform good decision making.
- 6.6 Be innovative and work in collaboration with key stakeholders, suppliers, partners and in collaboration with Council Boards and Reference Groups.
- 6.7 Consistently perform better, deliver on our objectives and operate sustainably.

Statutory:

The Master Plan is a non-statutory document. The outcomes of the Master Plan will be commensurate with statutory requirements under a number of legislative documents.

Policy:

The engagement of the community through the project is in keeping with Council’s General Policy No.1:05:15 – Community Engagement Policy, particularly in relation to consultative and participatory engagement with the community and policy decision makers.

Financial and Risk:

Council provides meeting and staff resources to support the project reference groups. Staff and resource use is afforded within the Planning Strategies operational budget.

Sustainability:

The focus of the Master Plan must be on achieving sustainable outcomes. High sustainability targets need to be set for the Daintree Gateway to be a world-class experience. The following sustainability assessment of the expected outcomes of the master plan shows high levels of achievement. The only downfall relates to natural hazard risk and disaster planning which is difficult given the Gateway’s position in the middle of the Daintree River floodplain.



CONSULTATION:

This report has been prepared with the assistance of the Regional Manager Douglas (particularly in relation to forthcoming consultation activities).

OPTIONS:

That Council receives and notes the report on the progress of the Daintree Gateway Master Plan project;

OR

That Council receives and notes the report on the progress of the Daintree Gateway Master Plan project, and seek further clarification on any particular matter.

CONCLUSION:

This report provides an update on the outputs from the master planning to date. The engagement and planning activities are actively shaping the Draft Daintree Gateway Master Plan which will be available for broader consultation to the community in the coming months. It is recommended that Council receives the report and notes the key activities and engagement of community occurring in the forthcoming months.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Vision and Context Report

<<Available on website and Councillors area>>

Attachment 2 – Options Report

<<Available on website and Councillors area>>

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