CAIRNS CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Debbie Wellington | 63/1/97-01 | #6038411

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopts the Cairns City Centre Master Plan as set out in Attachment 1 to this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council has prepared a Cairns City Centre Master Plan that will guide the ongoing evolution of the public spaces within the Cairns City Centre. The preparation of the master plan was informed by the valuable ideas, feedback and suggestions Council received during two rounds of public consultation in 2018.

The master plan identifies five key public space project opportunities that can be implemented over time and will build upon the many successful public space projects delivered throughout the city centre over recent years. The project opportunities include:

1. Cairns Gallery Precinct
2. Esplanade Dining Precinct
3. Renewed Esplanade Parklands
4. Florence Street
5. City Streets

The master plan is underpinned by five Guiding Principles that will shape each of the project opportunities and help deliver on Council’s vision and the community’s aspirations for public spaces within the city centre.

The master plan is a non-statutory document and will be an important tool for Council to guide the development of public spaces and drive positive development outcomes within the city centre.

The individual project opportunities will progress over time through further investigation, community and stakeholder engagement and concept development.

BACKGROUND:

A number of Council master plans and studies have informed and guided the development of public spaces in the Cairns city centre over the recent decades.
The Esplanade Master Plan was completed in 2001 and the Cairns City Centre Master Plan was completed in 2011 and focused on revitalising the city’s important central business precinct at Lake Street and Shields Street.

In addition, there has been significant amount of private sector investment in tourism, residential and commercial developments within the city centre. The new Cairns City Centre Master Plan builds on the completed projects and identifies new key public space project opportunities.

A report was presented to Council on the 28 March 2018 commencing the first stage of engagement on the master plan which was to seek feedback on project ideas for the city centre.

In April 2018, Council invited residents to share their view on an Ideas Paper which outlined three initial project ideas for a renewed Esplanade Parklands, an Esplanade Dining Precinct and a new Gallery Precinct. Almost 2500 people took the opportunity to share their ideas, give feedback and make suggestions.

Reflecting the community’s feedback on the Ideas Paper, Council developed a suite of project opportunities and preliminary concept sketches. Council invited feedback on these project opportunities throughout July and August 2018, with over 3300 people engaging in the process.

The five key public space project opportunities outlined in the Cairns City Centre Master Plan reflect the outcomes of the master plan engagement process as well as the community’s values expressed in the 2016 Our Cairns community survey and forums.

**COMMENT:**

The Cairns City Centre Master Plan identifies five key public space project opportunities.

These include:

**Cairns Gallery Precinct**
The project will transform and connect three heritage listed buildings and establish a vibrant new world-class gallery building. The precinct will host small community displays through to large domestic and touring exhibitions as well as contemporary local and indigenous art.

**Esplanade Dining Precinct**
The project will enhance the best features of the Esplanade Dining Precinct with the dining area expanded to provide space for additional dining and seating, views to the parklands will be improved and pedestrian connection will be increased. The design will allow the Esplanade roadway to remain open for one-way vehicle traffic and also provide the opportunity for temporary closure of the road to create a public event space when needed. The design will link into Shields Street and complete the interface with the earlier Shields Street Heart project.
Renewed Esplanade Parklands
A renewal of the parklands’ key spaces, connections and facilities building upon the Esplanade’s most valued qualities and features and distribute activity more evenly along the full length of the parklands. The project includes the opportunities for a mangrove boardwalk at the northern end and an expanded parklands and new Florence Street Pier at the southern end.

Florence Street
The project will enhance Florence Street with the creation of a shaded pedestrian boulevard that improves the connection between the Cairns Performing Arts Centre and adjacent Munro Martin Parklands and the Esplanade Parklands. The Abbott and Lake Street intersections will be signalised to create a safer environment for pedestrians, and aid traffic flow to the city centre.

City Streets
The project recognises that all streets within the city centre are valuable public spaces, playing an important role for movement and circulation. The project proposes a landscaping palette to guide future plantings and consistent footpath treatments and street furniture palette to improve the functionality and appearance of city streets. A number of streets have already been upgraded, with the balance of the city’s streets to be completed over time by Council or developers through the redevelopment of site.

The master plan is underpinned by five Guiding Principles that respond to the challenges and opportunities identified through the master planning process and include:

1. Embrace tropical urbanism
2. Support economic growth and diversity
3. Create an accessible and connected city centre
4. Celebrate arts, culture and creativity
5. Deliver a sustainable, safe and liveable city centre

The principles guide each of the project opportunities and help deliver on Council’s vision and the community’s aspirations for public spaces within the city centre.

The individual project opportunities will progress through further investigation, community and stakeholder engagement and concept development. This work will be undertaken over the longer term and be subject to a range of factors including but not limited to funding availability, service delivery priorities, investment decisions by private businesses and other levels of government, environmental and other approvals, presentation of new opportunities and changes in community needs and aspirations.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (Recommended):
That Council adopts the Cairns City Centre Master Plan.

Option 2:
That Council does not adopt the Cairns City Centre Master Plan.
CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:
The master plan is a non-statutory document that identifies five key public space project opportunities. The project opportunities have been informed by two rounds of community engagement. Whilst only opportunities at this stage, the individual projects will progress through further investigation, community and stakeholder engagement and concept development.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:
The master plan supports economic growth and diversity through projects that will deliver:

- Vibrant, activated city streets that support a diverse 24-hour economy
- A memorable experience for visitors
- Public spaces that can accommodate a range of events
- An attractive and well-designed urban environment that supports business opportunities and investment
- Flow on economic benefits to the community from the construction of the projects

Council's capital and operational budgets will be developed for each individual project as they progress.

Community and Cultural Heritage:
The master plan will create an accessible and connected city centre through projects that will deliver:

- Vibrant public spaces and streets for everyone to access, use and enjoy
- Improve walkability and access for cyclists and other modes of transport
- People-focused streets with strong pedestrian connections between key cultural facilities, the Esplanade Parklands and dining and commercial spaces
- Improve accessibility, wayfinding, car parking, public transport connections and technology.

The master plan celebrates culture, creativity, and the arts through projects that will deliver:

- Activation of cultural spaces including the new Cairns Gallery Precinct
- Public spaces integrating art, storytelling and place making to build strong arts and cultural economy
- Recognition of our unique indigenous heritage through space and places
- Adaptive, flexible public spaces that can accommodate a range of events and will support community celebrations of culture, creativity and the arts
- Retention of iconic heritage buildings as part of the Cairns Gallery Precinct.
Natural Environment:

The master plan embraces tropical urbanism through projects that will deliver:

- Lush tropical landscaping integrated at all levels of the streetscape
- A uniquely tropical character expressed through the look and feel of public spaces
- Cool, breezy, shade public spaces that can be enjoyed all year round
- Enhanced connection to our natural environment
- Views to the waterfront and mountain ranges that frame the city centre.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

The master plan is underpinned by five guiding principles and are consistent with the strategic goals of the Corporate Plan. The preparation of the Cairns City Centre Master Plan is a key deliverable of the Liveability Strategic Goal in the Corporate Plan.

Statutory:

The master plan is a non-statutory document.

Policy:

Not applicable

CONSULTATION:

The master plan is informed by an extensive community engagement process. In April 2018, Council invited residents to share their views on an Ideas Paper which outlined three initial project ideas for a renewed Esplanade Parklands, an Esplanade Dining Precinct and a new Gallery Precinct. Almost 2500 people took the opportunity to share their ideas, give feedback and make suggestions.

Reflecting the community’s feedback on the Ideas Paper, Council developed a suite of project opportunities and preliminary concept sketches. Council invited feedback on these project opportunities throughout July and August 2018, with over 3300 people engaging in the process.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Cairns City Centre Master Plan. (Available on Council Website)
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