



Maleny and District Green Hills Fund Maleny Community Precinct Public Meeting 28.9.13 Report on Outcomes

Background

The meeting was attended by over 150 people and consisted of a presentation by Green Hills President Steven Lang followed by a discussion. This is a report on the discussion.

Role of Green Hills

An attendee at the discussion questioned the role of Green Hills in hosting the meeting. Green Hills' role on the Precinct has been mainly operational (planting trees), however its advocacy role is both well established and constitutional. A copy of the Constitution is on the Green Hills website.

Methodology

Purpose and scope

Attendees were reminded out the outset that

- The purpose of the discussion was to give them, as members of the community, the opportunity to express their expectations of the Sunshine Coast Council as the project goes forward.
- The scope included the establishment of a riparian creek-side zone along the Obi Obi Creek, *as well as other relevant issues*.
- The purpose and scope were projected overhead, to help keep the discussion on track.
- The discussion was allocated 60 minutes.

Procedure

Attendees were asked to

- Present their ideas succinctly.
 - Focus on present and future expectations rather than past history.
 - Observe a time limit of two minutes.
- Ideas were noted on whiteboards and fell broadly into three categories:
- Strategic context
 - Riparian zone
 - Project management processes

Reporting

- The ideas in each category have been synthesised, amplified and presented in terms of –
 - Key message to Council, supported by –
 - A number of key points
- A couple of ideas were excluded, as they were inconsistent with the purpose of the meeting.

Strategic Context

Key Message to Council

Council is encouraged to tune its thinking about the Precinct to broader local expectations, to recognise the Precinct's wider potential especially as a tourism destination, and to take the lead.

Key points

- Local expectations: Maleny consists of families, young people and baby-boomer retirees with a love of walking, picnics and rain forest. Many have an educated understanding of environmental issues. They are not a minority. The vast majority are reasonable and articulate.
- Wider potential: The Precinct is a regional, not simply a local asset, with huge tourist potential. Tourists are and will continue to be disappointed if the experience of nature they seek is not only placed second in comparison with other recreational pursuits but falls short of environmental excellence.
- Take the lead: Council has an excellent environmental reputation in many respects. By taking the lead on environmental matters affecting the Precinct, Council will be better placed to meet local expectations and to realise the wider potential of the Precinct.

The Riparian Zone

Key Message to Council

Council is encouraged to apply well established environmental principles and practices to the Precinct's environmental assets, and to ensure that the assets are protected in the future.

Key points

- Principles and practices: if well established principles and practices are accepted by all concerned with the Precinct, dissension is likely to be curtailed:
 1. Riparian planting is a science, i.e. a row or two of 'grass and gum trees' does not suffice.
 2. Best practice width for a riparian plantation adopts a starting point of 40m.
 3. Catchment linkage: Riparian plantations are essential to water quality and stable water systems across the region
 4. Wildlife habitat: Riparian plantations also serve as habitats for native fauna, including endangered species. Wildlife habitats can also be planted away from the creek but this complements, does not cancel, riparian plantations as the latter have other, essential purposes (see 3)
 5. Connectivity: Wildlife habitats must be connected to form wildlife corridors if the wildlife is to be safe from predators.
- Protection: The environmental assets of the Precinct will be susceptible to incursion, development or destruction in the years ahead if they are not protected. To ensure protection, these assets must be Covenanted or similar, as allowed on private land.

Project management processes

Key message to Council

Council is encouraged to improve its formal advisory mechanisms; to avoid allocating land to new uses until the site is found to be suitable; to place ratepayers above sectional interests; to communicate more clearly; and to guard its reputation by being more transparent.

Key points

- Advisory mechanisms: The Precinct Advisory Group is a stakeholder forum representing a few groups with a vested interest in the estate. To redress this -
 - Replace PAG with an inclusive, strategic forum representing e.g. local community interests + tourism + commerce + genuinely independent voices.
 - Expand the advice available by holding forums and using local media, social media and surveys.
 - Land use planning:
 - Match planning to the strategic environment (see Strategic Context).
 - Accept that the Master Plan (2010) is the starting point for this process – a 'live' plan.
 - Safeguard land use e.g. assess the suitability of a site (terrain, location), before it can be allocated, even provisionally, to a particular use (revisit 2007 concept for details).
 - Ratepayers:
 - Recognise that the biggest stakeholders in the Precinct are ratepayers, not sectional interests (see also Formal Advisory Mechanisms, above).
 - Prepare a Strategic Business Plan to ensure that the revenue potential of the Precinct is realised in the interest of ratepayers.
 - Communications:
 - Tell positive stories about the Precinct and tell people about the amenities.
 - Provide regular, accurate information including on lease boundaries and leases (the tearing up of newly planted trees because they apparently crossed a boundary infuriated one attendee at the meeting).
 - Reputation: Overcome perceptions that the precinct project is dominated by certain interests and subject to 'deals' by making transparency a core value.
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