



DOUGLAS SHIRE PLANNING SCHEME

Our Plan, Our Shire, Our Destiny

KEY OPPORTUNITIES & MAJOR CHANGES IN PROPOSED PLANNING SCHEME

INTENT

The Proposed Planning Scheme is “evolutionary” not “revolutionary”, ie as opposed to the current Planning Scheme which introduced significant changes to restrict development north of the Daintree River, the overriding intent of the Proposed Planning Scheme is to empower the Douglas Shire to essentially be more responsible for its own destiny.

This is achieved through a reduction in red tape, increased economic development opportunities and responsible environmental stewardship.

The Proposed Planning Scheme promotes environmental responsibility in Douglas Shire as being fundamental to the community’s future prosperity and is consequently a common theme that will direct land use decision making.

The driving principles of the Proposed Planning Scheme are designed to achieve the following aims:

- Conserve the Shire’s natural environment and outstanding biodiversity values;
- Utilise the region’s natural resources efficiently, in particular water and energy, while reducing waste;
- Ensure the region’s atmosphere remains clear and clean;
- Contain urban growth to a defined footprint and promote the best use of land that is allocated for that purpose;
- Support development of a diverse thriving economy that complements the region’s green and environmentally responsible image.
- Provide opportunities that ensure everyone is able to participate, live, work and benefit in the healthy cohesive environment that the Shire promotes.

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THEMES

- The topography, creeks and rivers, and the coastline contribute significantly to the Shire's sense of identity. It is important to protect this sense of place as it enhances the quality of life for its residents, and is of enormous value for tourism.
- The development of Local Plans which are tailor-made to suit local needs. Amongst other things, each local plan will identify the qualities that make the individual place special, including environmental and built form characteristics; promote gateway treatments, nodes of activity, viewing corridors and landmark sites; and define an urban/rural interface boundary to reinforce the sense of town and country.
- Tourism activity will need to be Shire-appropriate with a discerning preference for nature-based tourism that has a direct association with the environmental and rural characteristics of the Shire, as opposed to large-scale attractions that have little connection to local context, particularly those that can be found anywhere.
- Port Douglas will retain its lively tropical tourism 'buzz' as a premier tourist destination. Development will be carefully planned to achieve sensitive incremental change, rather than instant, over-scaled development projects, that have little local context or character.
- The Aboriginal cultural heritage values of the Wet Tropics bioregion are acknowledged, protected and enhanced. The cultural heritage values of the Wet Tropics bioregion are protected and enhanced through the implementation of Jabalbina's cultural heritage management plan.
- Those parts of the Shire located within the Wet Tropics and Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Areas and other areas of environmental value and ecological significance, are preserved and protected for nature conservation, landscape/scenic quality, biodiversity and habitat values. In particular, the Southern Cassowary and its habitat are protected.
- Natural waterways such as the Daintree River, the Mossman River, the Mowbray River and Dickson Inlet; all wetlands but particularly those on the Directory of Wetlands Importance in Australia, being the Lower Daintree River, Alexandra Bay and the Hilda Creek Headwater; and all catchments located in coastal areas within the Shire, are managed to protect their ecological processes, enhance water quality, conserve riparian ecological values and landscape and scenic quality, while acknowledging nature based recreation opportunities.
- The unique environmental character of the Shire comprising internationally renowned landscapes, ecologically significant rainforest systems, sensitive coastal systems and areas of unsurpassed natural beauty, are maintained in association with sustainable development practices, which seek to minimise the effects of development on the natural environment.
- The distinctive character and unique sense of place of the Shire's towns, villages and other settlement areas are maintained, promoting community pride and well-being and community safety and prosperity.
- Residents have access to appropriate social infrastructure, community services and adequate housing, including a greater variety of housing choice.



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- A prosperous community with a strong rural sector, a dynamic tourism industry and commercial and industrial activities offering a diverse range of employment opportunities is supported by the sustainable use and management of the Shire's natural resources.
- The Shire's economic base will be broadened to improve employment opportunities and to provide resilience to any future adverse economic, social and environmental conditions.
- Economic benefits are maximised through the promotion of appropriate land uses, minimisation of land use conflicts and the protection of strategic economic infrastructure.
- Development is facilitated through the provision of physical infrastructure which complements the economy of the Shire in an efficient, equitable and environmentally safe manner, as well as circulation networks which provide for the efficient movement of people and goods without compromising the Captain Cook Highway as a scenic corridor in the Shire.
- An integrated transport system is developed that promotes increased walking, cycling and the use of public transport.
- Sustainable on-site waste water disposal and electricity supply occurs in parts of the Shire that cannot be connected to reticulated networks.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

CUTTING RED TAPE

The operation of the following types of development will be regulated by the local laws and not the planning scheme, significantly reducing costs and administration:

- Shared facility accommodation operation - the operation of the provision of shared facility accommodation to holiday makers or travellers.
- Temporary entertainment event - an event and the operation of an event that is held temporarily to provide entertainment to the public.
- Temporary home - a temporary structure that is erected for the occupation of the owner, and immediate family, of the land upon which there is a current approval to construct a dwelling house and only during the construction period of the approved dwelling house.

RETURN TO COUNTRY LOCAL PLAN CODE

The intent of Return to Country local plan code is to provide for a range of residential and economic land uses to reflect the aspirations of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji People. These Indigenous Land Use Agreements reflect these agreements and the planning scheme supports the Eastern Kuku Yalanji People in their return to Country.

Culturally appropriate housing is facilitated within the Return to Country local plan code which has been created to reflect the Eastern Kuku Yalanji aspirations to return to Country and derive economic benefits from their land and waters.

CHINA CAMP EMBRACES OPPORTUNITIES

An example of the Return To Country Code being implemented is China Camp where the Burungu Aboriginal Corporation occupies some 5,500 hectares of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji country.

Currently less than 20 people live there and whilst it is a small community, it has big ideas and ultimately the residents would like to see China Camp resettled. They would like to attract members of their clan back to live on country. To do this, they need to be able to offer a range of employment opportunities.

The Return to Council Local Plans lay out the framework for this to occur and by talking to traditional owners, the Local Plans will be formulated. Elements which may be included in the Local Plans is the ability to set up ranger camps, to do food production, or to have out stations for communal living. Council's CEO and Planning Officers will be talking to all the various clan groups and one of the first meetings will be held in China Camp with the BAC Directors in late August.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT PRECINCT

The proposed Live Entertainment Precinct in Port Douglas will encourage the lively night-time 'buzz' associated with Port Douglas as a premier tourist destination. It will provide Council with a mechanism to concentrate night-time activity, including live-music venues, into a defined precinct, and to discourage such activities from the quieter parts of the town.

RV CAMPING ON RURAL PROPERTIES

To support our rural activities, an exciting opportunity is facilitated through the proposed planning scheme. Self-contained RV camping, limited to a few vans will be permitted on code qualifying Rural zoned properties. This will help alleviate illegal beachside camping, while providing a small-scale rural enterprise opportunity.

ADVERTISING DEVICES CODE

Presently if you want a sign to advertise your business, you are required to put in a Planning Application. In the Proposed Planning Scheme, there's been a reduction in the number and type of signs which trigger a Planning Application. Instead, most applications will go through Council's Local Laws area. People will still need Council approval for all advertising signs, but the application process will be simpler and significantly shorter.

SMALL SCALE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES - NORTH OF THE DAINTREE RIVER

A good example is road side fruit stalls. In the current scheme if you are North of the Daintree River, putting up a road side stall requires a Development Application and is considered Impact Assessable. This means it requires the applicant to put up a sign of what's proposed, put an ad in the paper etc. In the new proposed plan, this is significantly simplified and dealt with under the Local Plans.

Another example is Council recently approved a Bike Assisted Tour operation on trails around Mason's block in Cape Tribulation. Under the current Planning Scheme, this was deemed "Inconsistent Use". Under the new scheme, this land is zoned Low Impact Rural Production and Tourism Enterprises – a code which

recognises and wants to nurture and encourage low impact tourism activities.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & DIVERSIFICATION

Douglas Shire is not characterised by a significant industrial base to support its primary economic drivers of tourism and primary production. However, value adding manufacturing and processing, research and education can play an important role in the future of economic growth opportunities in the Shire. The lower operational costs for businesses and the unique lifestyle that the Shire offers should be promoted to attract new employment opportunities and economic growth. Specific outcomes include:

- Targeting infrastructure that strengthens Douglas Shire as a tourist destination and a gateway to the region;
- Promoting the Shire's marine industries;
- Providing for higher value jobs, particularly for young people;
- focussing on education and knowledge-based industries;
- Taking advantage of the digital age and associated digital economy;
- Protecting the assets on which existing and future business relies, such as agricultural land resources and the beautiful natural environment; and
- Enhanced economic opportunities through appropriate development of Aboriginal Freehold Land.

TOURISM

The extent, range and configuration of tourist accommodation, facilities and services is based on the intrinsic and distinctive qualities of the Shire which promotes an efficient and sustainable tourism industry, and the well-being of the resident population. Specific outcomes include:

- Tourism development is consistent with, and sensitive to, the nature of tourism appropriate in different parts of the Shire;
- An efficient and coordinated pattern of tourism development is established which ensures tourist convenience and accessibility and focusses on the Tourism nodes as shown on the Strategic framework maps contained in Schedule 2;
- Low intensity tourist activities may be acceptable in the rural areas, provided there are no adverse impacts on the natural environment, good quality agricultural land, farming practices and bona-fide extractive resource activities;
- A limited number of low-intensity tourist accommodation facilities may be acceptable in Conservation areas south of the Daintree River where it is designed to integrate with its setting (e.g. similar to the Silky Oaks Resort in Mossman); and
- The development of bed and breakfast, cabin, homestead / farm-stay accommodation and other low impact tourism development is encouraged in appropriate locations.



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INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

The outstanding natural beauty of the Shire and its proximity to Cairns City and its international airport makes the Shire an attractive location for those who can telecommute or have transportable businesses in the information technology, consulting and business services sectors. The promotion of the Shire to these groups and to those seeking an improved lifestyle will lead to growth and a more sustainable economy for the Shire.

The development of specialised economic innovation precincts and service industries occurs in Mossman, Craiglie and other appropriate locations in Port Douglas, in order to provide the Shire with an economic edge and to support the local population and provide employment opportunities.

FILM PRODUCTION

Filming permit no longer required if:

- Filming is carried out solely on private property, or filming for news, current affairs or live reporting, for a period of three months or less.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

Given an increasing awareness of the need to encourage healthy active lifestyles, walkable and cycle-friendly neighbourhoods will be promoted. The Shire is developing a network of inter-connected and accessible open space and green corridors and this network will be progressively expanded to encourage opportunities for recreation, while recognising an increasing trend toward self-directed, non-organised sporting activity.

New publically accessible and usable open space is provided in new development where appropriate. Open space will be the centre piece of new communities contributing to the Shire's overall network of parkland, sporting and recreational facilities and open space corridors.

The number of tropical shade producing canopy trees of appropriate species is increased.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS & ACTIVITIES

Mossman currently contains a large supply of broad hectare land available for residential growth, whereas other areas including Port Douglas/Craiglie are constrained by ecological values and infrastructure constraints.

The coastal settlements of Wonga Beach, Newell and Cooya Beach and various other small towns, villages and rural residential land, including the land north of the Daintree River, are not intended to grow or increase in density. These communities generally have low levels of infrastructure and significant coastal or environmental constraints.

Coordinated residential development will be facilitated, incorporating tropical design principles that are responsive to the natural environment and climate.

Home based businesses are established where they are low impact in nature, subordinate to the primary residential use, and do not detract from the amenity of the area.

SENSE OF PLACE, COMMUNITY & IDENTITY

New development in the Shire should avoid the delivery of homogeneous development consisting of identical communities. In growth areas, gated enclave communities will not be encouraged. The larger new developments will be supplied with a range of facilities to support new residents and to ensure that these new developments are a good place to live.

New development will not be characterised by off-the-shelf corporate designs that have little regard for the Shire's unique communities and sense of place, in order to ensure the experience of living and visiting the Shire is not diminished.

HOUSING CHOICE & AFFORDABILITY

For the long-term sustainability of the Shire, it is important that adequate opportunities are provided to accommodate the changing lifestyles and housing needs of the existing and future population. In particular, there is a need to cater for an ageing population, while at the same time providing affordable housing opportunities for the Shire's workforce.

Currently, outside Port Douglas, there is a lack of innovative and creative medium density housing development. Opportunities exist to encourage this type of development in appropriate locations in Mossman, without compromising existing local character. Specific outcomes include:

- An increase in housing diversity is encouraged in appropriate locations while maintaining the existing character and identity of individual communities.
- Broad-acre land developments are established with mixed lot sizes and densities of development.
- The development of appropriate Indigenous Housing or Bayan is recognised as an affordable housing choice and alternative living option on Aboriginal Freehold Land.

BIODIVERSITY

Douglas Shire is internationally recognised as a high biodiversity hot spot, with our rainforests containing some of the oldest continually surviving tracts of tropical rainforest in the world and contain many plant and animal species found nowhere else.

To ensure our endangered, vulnerable, and threatened flora and fauna species and habitats are protected, aquatic biodiversity is protected through the minimisation of development impacts on waterway and wetland environments and development is required to be designed, sited, operated and managed to avoid or minimise potential impacts on natural corridors and habitat links.

Development is designed, sited, operated and managed to avoid or minimise potential impacts on natural corridors and habitat links.

A Planning Scheme Policy on Environmental offsets is to be developed, in conjunction with the development of mapping for Matters of Local Environmental Significance, including an analysis to determine the best locations to develop the Strategic habitat investment areas.

SCENIC AMENITY

Great care is required to protect the Shire's natural and rural settings given the vital contribution they make to the Shire's identity and to the everyday experiences of residents and visitors alike. Specific outcomes include:

- Development protects, maintains and enhances the region's Landscape values as shown on the Landscape values overlay maps contained in Schedule 2.
- Major scenic routes and scenic outlooks, as shown on the Landscape values overlay maps contained in Schedule 2, are protected from both the detrimental visual impacts of development and inappropriate vegetation clearing that may detract from the scenic qualities of the scenic route, outlook or ocean-side views.
- Rural and inter-urban breaks are protected from negative visual intrusion.
- The hillslopes, including Flagstaff Hill, are retained as a valued scenic backdrop to the Shire and the landscape character of the hillslopes are protected from inappropriate development.
- The location, size and scale of advertising devices located along the Shire's road networks is reduced. Older off-premises advertising devices that have become dilapidated are removed and not replaced.

LAND & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Land and water degradation issues facing the Shire include soil erosion, pest plants and animals and water quality. It is important to ensure that the Shire's natural resources are protected and actively promoted for the benefit of current and future generations.

Development and land uses will not be permitted to cause pollution or other negative impacts on water quality or the other qualities of these essential environments.

Water catchments and ground water aquifers are recognised and protected from inappropriate land use activity that may compromise the quality and characteristics of the water resource. In particular water needs to be managed to give priority to agricultural production and water supply to the Shire's communities, rather than for other purposes such as bottled-water extraction.

Traditional ecological land management practices and knowledge is recognised and acknowledged.

PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Primary production is a significant part of the natural resource and landscape value of the Shire. The Shire's townships and villages rely heavily on their surrounding sugar cultivation, tropical agriculture, horticulture and grazing industries. Continued support is necessary to ensure the continued prosperity of these townships through the exclusion of non-agricultural land use activities in primary production areas. Specific outcomes include:

- Land uses that have the potential to conflict with on-going primary production are not established in rural areas.

- Lot reconfiguration does not result in the further fragmentation of rural land. Boundary realignments only occur where improved agricultural production or environmental protection outcomes are demonstrated, or where they resolve encroachments.

Considerable opportunities exist to add value to primary produce and to diversify the base income of the rural sector and improve employment opportunities. The Shire's competitive strengths of rich agricultural soils, tropical climate with high rainfall, and proximity to Cairns should be promoted to attract new industries complementary to the Shire's lifestyle.

Opportunities to enhance agricultural industry particularly in the Shire's rural towns through the expansion of existing activities, development of value-adding processes and the introduction of new crops will be supported. However, sugar production will continue to be the most dominant cropping activity in the Shire.

Grazing activities are supported where they do not intrude into vegetated and / or steep land.

Fish habitat areas continue to be protected and managed to ensure that the Shire continues to produce a diverse range of sustainable marine/seafood industry products important to both domestic and international markets.

Carbon sequestration activities are encouraged on steep, denuded hillslope land and broken corridors and away from areas of quality agricultural land.

FISHERIES

The importance of the Shire's key fisheries activities are recognised and are protected.

Estuarine, marine and freshwater environments and their associated fish habitats are protected from the adverse impacts generated by new or intensified developments to ensure healthy and plentiful fish stocks.

ACTIVITY CENTRES

Activity centres are the focus of retail, employment and community services catering for the needs of the Shire's residential and tourist-oriented communities alike. Mossman and Port Douglas are the Shire's District activity centres where **mixed use development will be permitted.**

INDUSTRY AREAS & ACTIVITIES

Growth in manufacturing, property and business services and transport and storage will continue to contribute to Douglas Shire's economy. The infrastructure required to support industry and business development will continue to be planned and provided.

Any future expansion of industry is encouraged in Mossman rather than Port Douglas having regard to the high demand for land for tourism and residential purposes at Port Douglas and the role of Mossman as a commercial centre.

Sufficient land and infrastructure is supplied in Industry areas such as Craiglie and Mossman South to accommodate new and expanding enterprises.

CULTURAL & LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

Places and landscapes of cultural and heritage significance need to be protected and retained for their significance and importance to the history and identity of the Shire.

A Douglas Heritage Study was prepared by Cairns Regional Council in 2011. The purpose of this study was to create a local heritage register, with 47 places nominated for inclusion in the local heritage register (excluding 8 places of the State heritage register), an additional 16 as potential places for inclusion in the local heritage register and rejected a further 41 places as not meeting the threshold for inclusion in the local heritage register.

Prior to including Places of Significance list as planning scheme policy in the planning scheme, further verification is required with respect to the list which will require an independent review. In addition to being a listing of nominated sites, such review should also examine positive incentives for listing in the planning scheme.

Jabalbina Aboriginal Corporation and Douglas Shire Council will work collaboratively to develop a management plan aimed at identifying, protecting and retaining matters of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance.

STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Traditional cultural landscapes and significant places are protected in partnership with traditional owners of those landscapes and places.

Traditional knowledge, skills and cultural practices are respected and, where appropriate, reflected in land management decision making, location and in the form of infrastructure and design of community spaces.

Sites of cultural significance, including sites with cultural significance for clan groups, and sites with broader significance for the community are protected.

Council will continue to support and work with Traditional custodian / Owner groups to progress their ability to care for, work on and live on Country, and create economic development opportunities, particularly within the urban footprint of Mossman Gorge and the good bushliving precincts in certain areas north of the Daintree River.

TRANSPORT

Many of the roads within the Shire are multi-purpose in function and face increased usage by large transport vehicles associated with agriculture, as well as domestic and tourism traffic volumes.

The Daintree River will continue to operate as a Ferry Service and the road north of Cape Tribulation to Wujal Wujal and the CREB track will remain as four-wheel-drive only.

The current lack of public transport facilities within the Shire restricts the movement of residents and impedes visitors to the Shire who do not have access to a vehicle. Additional public transport facilities, such as buses (or mini-buses), may be required to improve accessibility for both the resident population and the wider community.

Specific outcomes include:

- Connectivity between neighbourhoods and communities is established in existing and new development areas ensuring road, cycle and pedestrian connections.
- The Daintree Ferry continues to be the method of transport across the Daintree River.

ENERGY

The use of alternative, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power is a small, yet significant method by which the community can address the global issue of climate change through local actions. However, a balance between the potential benefits and negative impacts of using alternative energy technologies is needed. Specific outcomes include:

- Renewable energy facilities, such as small-scale wind turbine generators and solar panels can connect to an existing, nearby high voltage electricity network (with adequate capacity) without significant environment, social or amenity impact.
- Proposals to extend electricity supply to properties north of the Daintree River take into account the sensitive environmental characteristics of the area, the fact that it is an area that is largely of world heritage significance and the climatic risks impacting the area such as cyclones and other weather events, all of which will influence decisions about the nature and scale of the electricity supply infrastructure which may be provided.

WATER & WASTE MANAGEMENT

Wastewater management is a major issue for the unsewered small towns and communities of the Shire. Reticulated water and sewerage services and stormwater drainage improvements are required to minimise impacts on the environment and accommodate projected population growth. Specific outcomes include:

- Development in urban areas is connected to the reticulated water supply and sewerage infrastructure according to demand and service standards.
- Development in rural and rural residential areas is provided with a reliable, potable water supply and on-site effluent treatment that will ensure no detrimental impacts on amenity, health or well-being of communities or the natural environment.
- Improved technologies and capture/treatment methods, such as water sensitive urban design and recycling, are used to carefully manage stormwater discharge to reduce excessive flows, improve water quality discharge and protect the natural environment from adverse impacts.

RESOURCE EXTRACTION

Douglas Shire is not, and is not likely to be, a major resource extraction area. However where extraction does occur, it is small-scale, visually unobtrusive and managed in an environmentally responsible manner. All land disturbed by mining and extractive industries is appropriately rehabilitated.

Coal Seam Gas extraction will not occur in Douglas Shire. Other extractive industries will not detrimentally impact on community well-being or the Shire's ecological, landscape, scenic amenity and rural production values.

OBJECTIVES

- A focus on building up small business in the community;
- The allocation of land for future enterprise needs within the community;
- Building up tourism opportunities taking advantage of the Cairns airport as an international gateway, and in particular marketing Port Douglas as a premier tourism destination;
- Recognition and protection of the Shire's environmental and scenic assets and realising the recreational and economic opportunity they deliver, in a well-planned and managed network of environmental parks, trails and tracks;
- Improving transport links into and out of the Shire, as well as within the Shire;
- Allowing 'start-up' business to establish as small-scale home based businesses without excessive red tape;
- A continued focus on education and training opportunities within the community;
- Taking advantage of digital technologies and the associated digital economy.
- Promoting Douglas Shire as a place to invest and conduct appropriately planned and environmentally responsible businesses.
- The community's access to the foreshore is maintained, and where appropriate, extended.

OUTCOMES

- The Shire will consist of a network of well planned, discrete settlements that integrate existing and future development while maintaining an emphasis on the natural and scenic qualities of the landscape.
- Coastal settlements are consolidated by conserving the natural state of coastal areas outside existing urban areas.
- Commercial and retail activity is concentrated into defined town centres.
- Industrial activities are located in areas that are separate from sensitive land uses.
- New rural residential development areas are not established. However existing rural residential areas will be protected from further incremental subdivision and land use activities that would compromise the ambience and amenity of such areas.
- The rights and interests of native Title land holders are recognised through provision for Indigenous housing and seasonal camps (bayan) on Aboriginal



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Freehold land within the Return to Country local plan code.

- Natural hazards and the impacts of climate change will determine the location, scale and intensity of land use activities. Development will achieve an acceptable or tolerable level of risk based on a fit for purpose risk assessment.

CHALLENGES

POPULATION GROWTH

Douglas Shire has previously had sufficient space to cater for its population growth and this is likely to continue to be the case into the foreseeable future. However the amount of land in the Shire that is constrained by one or more factors is significant. Amongst other things, such constraints include:

- Land containing vegetation of high ecological significance, including endangered, and of concern, flora and fauna;
- Wetland areas;
- Quality agricultural land;
- Land subject to significant natural hazards such as flood and storm tide inundation.

The Shire will cater for modest growth in housing and most of this growth will be accommodated in Mossman in the foreseeable future, with an adequate supply of land already catered for.


There is pressure in Port Douglas/Craigie to extend urban development on to the western side of the Captain Cook Highway. Previous planning regimes resisted such a move, as being contrary to the Shire's iconic values.

Additional land is still available at the at the southern end of Craigie on the eastern side of the Captain Cook Highway and in-fill opportunities still exist in Port Douglas so as not to warrant an immediate need for urban residential development on the western side of the highway. However the area is considered in the longer term to potentially represent an area that may be suitable for accommodating further residential growth.

No urban development is to occur within the Residential investigation areas until a comprehensive structure plan has been prepared that provides for integrated, well-connected residential settlements, taking into account constraints, infrastructure servicing and capacity requirements, flooding and drainage, and sequencing.

The coastal settlements of Wonga Beach, Newell and Cooya Beach and various other small towns, villages and rural residential land, including the land north of the Daintree River, are not intended to grow or increase in density. These communities generally have low levels of infrastructure and significant coastal or environmental constraints.

The Shire also contains some highly productive agricultural land and there is a need to preserve rural land for commercial scale primary production and avoid the extension of rural residential activities into these areas.



Where rural residential development is firmly established in parts of the Shire such as in the Mowbray Valley, Upper Cassowary, Shannonvale, parts of Somerset and Whyanbeel, and to the north of Vixies Road in Wonga, such development continues to offer a high amenity residential alternative to township living and should be protected from any further urbanisation, or inappropriate subdivision.

Existing rural residential areas are protected from further incremental subdivision that results in lot sizes less than the minimum area to ensure that the character and amenity of these areas is maintained. In rural residential areas any subdivision that is permitted MUST create lots of appropriate shape and proportions to ensure that existing rural residential amenity and character is not compromised.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Douglas Shire is susceptible to a variety of naturally occurring hazards including floods, cyclonic winds, bushfire, landslides, coastal hazards, storm tide and erosion prone areas.

Some established urban areas are already located in parts of the Shire which are periodically vulnerable to a variety of hazards. A reasonable risk-tolerant approach to development will be taken in existing areas taking into account individual hazard impacts. However as a first principle, further expansion of development into areas subject to hazards should be avoided.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Beyond its natural fluctuations, the coastal environment is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change and sea level rise. Policies are required to protect life and property from the hazards of storm surge and coastal erosion incorporating climate change variables.

Coastal resources, including foreshores, coastal wetlands, mangroves, marine ecosystems and sand dunes are protected, managed, and where appropriate, rehabilitated, with no further loss of the coastal ecosystem extent and function.

Natural coastal processes such as sand dune erosion and accretion are allowed to occur in all areas without intervention, other than where a significant strategic asset requires protection.

Coastal dependent development is carefully planned, constructed and managed to minimise impacts on the coastline. Coastal dependent development is expected to predominately occur with waterfront sub-precincts in Port Douglas.

Redevelopment of existing permanent structures in the erosion prone area is required to avoid coastal erosion risks through a strategy of planned retreat, or mitigate coastal erosion risks.

AIR & ACOUSTIC PROTECTION & HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

New industrial development may present future challenges. The key Management approach in planning is to separate sensitive land uses from generators of nuisance. Given the historical development of the Shire (i.e. the Mossman sugar mill and port industries), this is not always practical and mitigation measures need to be implemented as an alternative. Specific outcomes include:

- The air and acoustic environment and hazardous materials are carefully managed to maintain the health and well-being of the community and the natural environment.
- Industries that have the potential to cause greater air and acoustic impacts and/or that include hazardous materials are separated from sensitive land uses.
- New noisy recreational activities such as major motorsport activities are not likely to be compatible with the amenity of the Shire. Impacts on sensitive receiving environments, including environmental habitats is to be avoided.

STANDARD PLANNING ZONES

All land within Douglas Shire has been allocated a zone. Put simply, zones establish what is intended to be developed on the land and each zone has a code which contains assessment criteria for development in that zone.

In the current planning scheme, they are called Planning Areas – in the new planning scheme they will be Zones.

One of the other changes relating to Zones is that the State Government through the Queensland Planning Provisions (QPP) has specified the names Councils can use for the different Zones. In order to comply, Council has had to change some of the names of its Planning Areas (to be Zones in the new scheme) to come into line with the QPP.

For the most part, it is a change in name without impacting the land use e.g.

- Residential 1 has generally become a Low Density Residential Zone.
- Residential 2 has generally become a Medium Density Residential Zone.

There is however, one change to zoning where future land use will be impacted and that is the Rural Settlement Zone. There is no longer a Rural Settlement Zone and this has required Council to rezone the land to one of two zones:

- Rural Residential; or
- Environmental Management

With Rural Residential, the land may still be subdivided, however if a lot is zoned Environmental Management, the code is more restrictive.