The Gold Coast is on the eve of a transport transformation, with delivery of the Gold Coast Rapid Transit (GCRT) project just around the corner. Light rail will undoubtedly change the way we move in key areas of our city. But so, too, will it motivate change itself. The project unlocks opportunities to review, redesign and reinvigorate some of the Gold Coast’s major business centres along the light rail corridor. And the evolution of these centres will provide a template for future development as the light rail network grows over time.

It is important that we establish a vision for this next wave of Gold Coast development to ensure that industry and the community share the benefits of this journey. This document will help guide us as our city gets behind, and on board, this exciting phase of Gold Coast history.

Ron Clarke MBE
Mayor, Gold Coast City

With an operating consortium – GoldLinQ – in place and construction of the Gold Coast Rapid Transit (GCRT) infrastructure well underway, the Gold Coast is moving towards a new era of transportation.

Delivery of the GCRT will have a major impact on the way in which people, on the Gold Coast, move around the city, but more importantly, the project will provide a catalyst for significant change in future growth and development.

The project’s initial stage, from the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct at Southport to Broadbeach, traverses some of the city’s key business and residential centres. This GCRT Corridor Study looks to support and enhance this significant investment in the city’s transport infrastructure, helping to maximise the tremendous opportunities which will be presented to the Gold Coast community and our business sector.

The study recognises that these opportunities for change require a comprehensive and integrated plan - one that:

- Encourages public and private investment;
- guides development and management of public and private space;
- leads provision of effective connections to and from the light rail, including Active Travel, and
- creates a framework for quality design, underpinned by an appropriate mix and form of urban development.

Importantly, this study also aims to encourage optimism that these changes can contribute to a sustainable, liveable and prosperous future for the Gold Coast.

Peter Young
Chair, Sustainable City Future Committee
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Part 1.
Introduction and context
The Gold Coast Rapid Transport (GCRT) project is one of the most significant public transport projects in Australia, and will be the first light rail project in Queensland. It is a project that will be a catalyst for new investment and development on the Gold Coast, and as such creates a new spectrum of opportunity to manage and direct growth in a manner that will take full advantage of the potential inherent in such a major piece of urban infrastructure.

Stage One of the project includes the priority route from Griffith University to Broadbeach. This 13 kilometre light rail corridor will include 16 light rail stations and bus transfer stations at Southport and Broadbeach. It will service the new Gold Coast University Hospital, Griffith University, Southport medical precinct and the rapidly growing commercial, retail and recreational centres of Southport, Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.

Potential future stages would extend the route to a total of 40 kilometres, from Helensvale to Coolangatta:
- the corridor north of Stage One from Griffith University to Helensvale
- the corridor south of Stage One from Broadbeach to Burleigh Heads
- the corridor from Burleigh Heads to Coolangatta

Construction works have commenced on Stage One, and passenger services are expected to commence in 2014.

The Gold Coast City Council has responded to the challenges and opportunities represented by the introduction of the GCRT by commissioning the GCRT Stage One Corridor Study to produce a proactive framework for guiding and managing growth within the urbanised coastal strip. Through time and circumstance the Gold Coast has evolved as a place with a widely recognised and admired character and lifestyle.

The Gold Coast now faces opportunities that will define its future livability and sustainability. In planning for the future, growth must be harnessed in a manner that builds on, rather than diminishes, the attractiveness and livability of the city and its hinterland.

Study area
Gold Coast City is located on the central east coast of Australia. It one of the largest Local Government areas in Australia, with a present population of approximately 500,000.

The study area is the Stage One corridor area for GCRT, which consists of around 2,000 hectares of the most intensively populated and developed areas on the Gold Coast.

It contains the bulk of the city’s iconic coastal strip and Surfers Paradise - the globally recognised ‘postcard’ of the city.

The study recognises that the evolving shape of this area will define the image of the city into the future. It considers emergent wider thinking about the structure of the city and seeks to recognise the role the corridor needs to play in realising the collective aspirations for the Gold Coast in the future.

**The 2,000 hectare study area contains much of the city’s iconic coastal strip and Surfers Paradise - the globally recognised ‘postcard’ of the Gold Coast.**

“Gold Coast Rapid Transit will transform the face of the Gold Coast, which will boast the most modern public transport system in the country.”

The Hon Premier Anna Bligh MP

“This project will create a lasting legacy for our city and help address key activity and growth in areas such as Southport, Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.”

Gold Coast Mayor Cr Ron Clarke MBE

“It will be a world class public transport system which will change the way people move around the coast”

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
An agenda for the future

The Gold Coast Rapid Transit (GCRT) Corridor Study seeks to create a proactive framework to respond to the emerging challenges of growth on the urbanised Gold Coast coastal strip. In particular, it aims to:

> Capitalise on the strategic public investment in GCRT
> Accommodate significant population growth while preserving the natural setting and amenity that defines the Gold Coast
> Provide the development industry with a transparent and proactive statement about where the city wants to focus growth and development activity
> Encourage more diverse, compact and efficient building forms to accommodate growth without increasing heights
> Ensure the risks of climate change are recognised and managed with responsive building regulations and planning controls
> Build a stronger and more competitive economy that can stand alone in a rapidly growing region and withstand volatile global trends in the tourism and construction sectors
> Broaden the appeal of the Gold Coast to attract a more diverse workforce, skill base and businesses
> Enhance housing diversity and affordability to bring families back to the coastal strip
> Provide and support transport options other than the private car to enable access to the city’s discrete employment and activity centres
> Develop key civic infrastructure to match the city’s population base
> Create a greener and more subtropical urban landscape with street trees, shade and shelter to make walking and cycling attractive
> Boost the design quality and execution of urban development to support vibrant, memorable and distinctive places
> Broaden the capacity of Gold Coast development to accommodate the needs of an ageing and demographically diverse community
> Promote development that enhances safety, equitable access, inclusiveness and community well-being

Bold Future - Gold Coast Strategic Plan

During 2007 – 2008 the Gold Coast City Council involved the community in a major consultation process to define a vision for the future of the Gold Coast:

“Defined by our spectacular beaches, hinterland ranges, forests and waterways, the Gold Coast is an outstanding city which celebrates nature and connects distinct communities with the common goal of sustainability, choice and wellbeing for all.”

The process was titled Bold Future, and aimed to create a road map to guide the future of the city over the next 30 years, to be set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan and Land Use Planning Scheme.

Phase 1 of the Corridor Study identified the opportunity for aspects of the vision to be realised through the GCRT project and Corridor Study including an integrated approach to planning for land use, transport and the improvement of the public realm.

2009 Corporate Plan

- A city leading by example
- A city loved for its green, gold and blue
- A city with a thriving economy
- A city shaped by clever design
- A City connecting people and places
- A safe city where everyone belongs
- Corporate governance organisational capability and customer contact

2010 Corridor Study Phase 1

Themes
- Experiences
- Environment
- Connectivity
- Economies
- Community
- Placemaking

Principles
- Sense of place and identity
- Environmentally sustainable
- Access and connectivity
- Land use and activities
- Social and community
- Public realm building character and form

2011 Corridor Study Phase 2

1. Realise a bold future for one of Australia’s most distinctive and vibrant cities
2. Reconnect discrete urban communities
3. Re-engage the city with its blue edges and water rich context
4. Provide greater choice for access and mobility
5. Challenge the trend of traffic dominated streets
6. Streets for people and a greener Gold Coast
7. Design buildings to foster ‘street life’
8. Create genuine communities
9. A resilient and sustainable city

Relationship between past and future strategies
Gold Coast Rapid Transit Corridor Study - Phase 1

Phase 1 of the GCRT Corridor Study was completed in 2010 by AECOM. It looked at the whole GCRT corridor from Helensvale in the north, to Coolangatta in the south, with particular emphasis on Stage One of the route, where there is a confirmed alignment and station locations. Phase 1 covered:

> Contextual analysis
> Opportunities and constraints
> Vision and principles – established vision and themes for the corridor and precincts through consultation
> Strategic vision in the form of broad urban design principles supporting the vision and themes

The vision was supported with recommended actions and outcomes to realise the desired future character aspirations for the corridor and its precincts.

Gold Coast Rapid Transit Corridor Study - Phase 2

This document represents Phase 2 of the GCRT Corridor Study. Phase 2 builds upon the strategic directions established in Phase 1, looking at the Stage One corridor in more detail. To inform this work, economic analysis and an access and mobility study were commissioned.

Phase 2 translates the themes and visions developed in Phase 1 into nine spatially focussed overarching strategies that would guide growth within the GCRT corridor in a manner that responds to the Gold Coast community’s strategic ‘Bold Future’ vision.

Proposed Detailed Urban Design Frameworks have been prepared for each of the five precincts that make up the corridor:

> Southport
> Main Beach
> Surfers Paradise
> Florida Gardens
> Broadbeach

These frameworks articulate the manner in which the strategies would translate into desired urban outcomes in each location, including proposed land uses, streetscape function and arrangement, edge treatment and built form.

Phase 2 Study approach

A seven stage process was adopted for Phase 2, geared around two Enquiry by Design (EbD) workshops at which the input and direction of key technical experts and decision makers was obtained. A collaborative working arrangement with project partners, allowed ideas and directions to be developed in parallel across several streams of the project, including:

> Placemaking
> Economics and land use
> Streets and public spaces
> Building form
> Corridor access and mobility
> Implementation recommendations

Following an opportunity scan and ideas generation process, initial work was undertaken to define the typologies to describe the desired future form of streets, buildings and places.

The first EbD workshop was a forum within which emerging directions were tested and participant feedback recorded. Initial precinct structure options were developed to explore the range of opportunity in each area and test ideas raised in the EbD. Through a process of key stakeholder engagement, the first draft of urban design frameworks for each precinct was prepared.

The second EbD workshop focused on exploring strategic ideas for repositioning the Gold Coast and how this could be achieved at a precinct level. The draft urban design frameworks and corridor access and mobility recommendations were tested by participants and feedback recorded as a basis for further refinement.

Six ‘layers’ of design guidance were prepared, reflecting each of the project streams to support the draft urban design frameworks and articulate the desired future form of each precinct.

Recommendations were framed to outline how the urban design frameworks could be implemented through the planning scheme and other implementation mechanisms to realise the corridor vision.

Purpose of this study

Inception and initiation

Analysis, early directions and typologies

EBD Process #1

Urban design frameworks

EBD process #2

Guidelines and implementation

Reporting and collateral

Phase 2 study process

STAGE

01 Inception and initiation
02 Analysis, early directions and typologies
03 EBD Process #1
04 Urban design frameworks
05 EBD Process #2
06 Guidelines and implementation
07 Reporting and collateral

STAGE

01 Corridor Inel WORKS
02 PRECINCT STRATEGY OPTIONS
03 EBDM ACTION PLAN
04 PRECINCT LAND USES
05 PRECINCT STRUCTURE OPTIONS
06 CATALYST PROJECTS & IMPLEMENTATION
07 REVIEW & REFERENCE

PRECINCT WORKS (UNDERSTAND FOR EACH PRECINCT AREA)
A number of associated technical studies were completed to provide specialised input to the corridor study. The recommendations of these studies have been reflected in the spatial strategies and proposals of the corridor study. Further technical detail and analysis is contained in each of the supporting studies, which are briefly summarised on this page.

**Corridor Access and Mobility Study (Aurecon)**

The Corridor Access and Mobility Study (CAMS) was prepared by Aurecon. The key recommendations are outlined as part of the urban design framework for each precinct in Part 5 - Better Gold Coast Places.

Following an audit of the existing pedestrian and cycle network, station access and priority action plans were developed for each station. These access plans are used to identify the walkable catchments surrounding each station and identify projects that may improve pedestrian accessibility to the GCRT corridor.

The CAMS component of work links into the corridor study in the following ways:

- Identifies key walking routes in the vicinity of each station, and their ‘walkability’ measured in terms of catchment size adjusted for delays and actual street layout
- Informs the development of a station typology and hierarchy, based around the projected form of public realm elements including footpaths and crossings
- Identifies the current conditions of key routes and the form and priority of upgrade ‘projects’

CAMS focuses on passengers’ whole journey particularly:

- Travel and transport decision-making (choosing sustainable transport modes before travel by private car)
- Safety, convenience and comfort of walk or cycle journeys to and from the stations
- ‘Place making’, transit oriented development and public realm around stations
- Access into the station (infrastructure and way-finding to provide easy access)

**Economic Input Analysis (MacroPlan)**

MacroPlan was commissioned to prepare the Economic and Input Analysis report which provides the economic principles that underpin the precinct planning and urban design for the GCRT corridor. The report comprises four key sections:

- Economic and Regional Overview & Opportunities
- Economic Principles
- Precinct Assessment & Recommendations
- Conclusions & Recommendations

The Economic Principles are outlined in Part 2 - Corridor Vision and Strategies, and the projected growth and land use trends for each precinct are outlined in Part 5 - Better Gold Coast Places.
Meeting the challenges of growth

How the challenges of growth are met now will determine the future performance and competitiveness of the city.

The ability of the Gold Coast to realise the benefits of projected growth will depend in part on the delivery of an effective movement network. The diminishing efficiency of the road network highlights the need for additional transport options. On its own, the GCRT system will be insufficient to effectively support projected population and employment growth. A complementary, integrated bus network and significant improvements to the walking and cycle networks, along with better use of the extensive waterways network will also be required.

In addition to addressing the adequacy of the transport network, action is needed to build an integrated land use, economic, social and community development framework to ensure the Gold Coast remains an attractive destination in which to live, visit and do business.

A model for greater transparency and more robust policy

The Corridor Study advocates a shift in the way the Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) and key development stakeholders work together to build the city to which we aspire.

Clarity to the market

The study supports a transparent and proactive stance for GCCC to engage with the development community – providing clear guidance about where the city wants to focus growth and development activity.

Encourage intensification and diversity in coastal strip

The building typologies proposed would support significantly higher plot ratios than those permitted under the current planning framework. This would enable the equivalent yield supported in higher Residential Density (RD) zones to be accommodated in lower rise, more diverse and affordable building forms.

Development entitlements and building height

The framework proposes that existing building height entitlements be preserved, but that the market be encouraged towards more compact and efficient building forms through the incentive of higher plot ratios, subject to meeting typology design standards (form based coding). Assessment thresholds (i.e code versus impact assessment) could be adjusted to support this approach – for example by making plot ratio rather than building height the key trigger for a higher level of assessment.

Design quality bonus

The study recommends a review application of GCCC Policy 18 relating to urban design bonuses, to promote greater clarity for the market about what type of design outcomes are desirable and what level of development is acceptable in an area. The intention is to establish greater transparency and clarity around the criteria and assessment of incentive based bonuses. The review would seek to mandate a baseline level of design quality through codes while preserving scope for exceptional non-complying proposals.

Climate change readiness

Recognise and manage the potential impacts of climate change through Q100 flood levels and technical constraints mapping, and where applicable the application of building regulations and planning controls to minimise risk to an appropriate level.

Community dividend

The Urban Design Frameworks (UDFs) seek to harness market investment and improve the quality of the urban environment in the vicinity of development sites. Improvements proposed vary according to the circumstances of each location, and could include streetscape and footpath upgrades, tree planting, undergrounding overhead power lines, dedicating public access rights on selected canal front properties, supporting mid-block linkages, enabling wider footpaths on station approaches, and supporting tree planting within a 3m ‘green zone’ on selected properties. Improvements in the provision of social infrastructure and affordable housing options are also sought.

Maturity model

The Implementation Strategy should be developed as a ‘maturity model’ that can evolve over time. This allows Council to develop the required internal processes and also have the potential to take Council staff, politicians and the community on a journey and give them ownership and momentum of the process and outcomes. This should be a model that is unique to the Gold Coast and allows the outcomes of the corridor study and other Council programs to be successfully integrated and ultimately achieved.

A forward looking framework
This document is intended to be a ‘road map’ describing the potential form shape of the city, and how growth could be guided to achieve the 20 year corridor vision in the short, medium and long term.

It contains six discrete but interlinked parts which are intended to be read together to gain a full appreciation of the directions and recommendations proposed.

The document is arranged around the central idea that the Gold Coast can capitalise more on its unique character and context to become a more liveable, competitive and sustainable city into the future, with the GCRT as an important catalyst opportunity. It highlights three key areas for action (better streets and spaces, buildings and places), to help achieve the collective aspiration for the Gold Coast as one of Australia’s most vibrant and distinctive coastal cities.

How to read this document

Introduction and context

01 Introduction and context

This part provides the preliminary information about the study and its intent.

Key contextual drivers are explored to provide the reader with a shared understanding of the issues, opportunities and drivers influencing the recommendations and study directions.

The dynamic Federal, State and local policy frameworks within which development on the Gold Coast operates is summarised, in addition to a short overview of noteworthy parallel studies and projects.

02 Corridor vision and strategies

The overarching vision for the corridor is presented here, including how development can be guided to achieve a Bold Future for the Gold Coast.

The corridor wide Urban Design Framework (UDF) is presented along with nine ideas to reposition the city for a more liveable and competitive future.

The ideas are explored at a strategic level and present observations about the corridor and its role in the city.

This part outlines key recommendations for shaping the city for the future and the rationale for directions and recommendations made in parts 3 - 5.

Supporting documents

This document includes input from the following key studies:

> Gold Coast Rapid Transit Corridor Access and Mobility Study: Station Access and Priority Plans (CAMS), Aurecon
> Economic Input Analysis (GCRT Corridor Phase 1), MacroPlan
> Recommendations for Planning Scheme Review Process, John Gaskell Planning Consultants
03 Better Gold Coast streets
This part describes the desired future form of streets and urban spaces on the Gold Coast. Principles for improving streets on the Gold Coast are proposed. These are embodied in a range of ten aspirational street typologies, which are applied to specific localities in Part 5 - Better Gold Coast places.

The proposed street types balance transport needs to achieve a higher quality public realm. Guidance is also provided on the type and distribution of new urban spaces.

04 Better Gold Coast buildings
This part of the study describes desired building form outcomes and how they foster better streetscapes and respond to the challenges of climate change. The building typologies presented are applied to specific localities in the precinct Urban Design Frameworks included in Part 5 - Better Gold Coast places.

This part outlines values and principles for new building forms and proposes ten new building typologies as a guide for more desirable and robust building forms.

05 Better Gold Coast places
This part contains the precinct level Urban Design Frameworks (UDFs). These aim to provide clarity about the desired form of the evolving urban environment. Guidance is provided in “layers” to describe the wide range of desired outcomes.

The primary role of the UDFs is to apply the streetscape, built form and street edge typologies of the preceding sections to specific localities, and to articulate future land use patterns and catalyst sites and projects.

06 Implementation
This part describes opportunities for the implementation of the Urban Design Framework, including recommendations about implementation mechanisms, planning scheme amendments and tools to enable better places and development outcomes.

Implementation of proposals will take place over the short (immediate - 5 years), medium (5 - 10 years) and long term (10 years or more). This part also suggests areas for further action and provides illustrative material to demonstrate how the recommendations of this study could be delivered on the ground.
City image and identity
An evolving metropolis

The Gold Coast through time

The Gold Coast is a relatively new city. It was originally settled in the late 1800s but the current city form was largely shaped by significantly increased levels of development from the 1940s to 1970s. With continuous development and change over this time “the story of the Gold Coast has ... been one in which change is intrinsic to continuity, where sudden bouts of development have become so familiar that they are essential to the city’s culture and image” (Gold Coast Urban Heritage and Character Study, 2nd Edition, 2000)

A city of villages

While the current form of the Gold Coast is linear, during its formative years in the late 1800s through to the mid 1900s the city was composed of a series of interconnected villages and townships. The growth of the sugar industry in the 1850s resulted in some of these settlements growing to support inland agricultural communities like Beenleigh, Coomera, and Pimpama.

The early development of the Gold Coast as a tourism destination contributed to the growth of townships along the coast, in particular the early coastal communities of Southport and Burleigh Heads and later Surfers Paradise, Main Beach and other coastal and canal estate releases.

Southport was the first seaside resort, established in 1875 and remaining the primary holiday destination for Brisbane residents for fifty years. Surfers Paradise was originally known as Elston and developed after the Jubilee Bridge was opened in 1925.

It is significant to note that early tourism in Broadbeach and Coolangatta to the south, were fed by rail connections to Brisbane. In conjunction with the Gold Coast Rapid Transit Project a significant opportunity exists to reinforce the historic villages and activity centres.

A linear beach city

During the 1960s and 1970s further suburban and canal estate development resulted in the Gold Coast becoming a single linear urban settlement. The emphasis of growth around natural assets and transport links reinforced a linear intensive urban corridor with its densest development extending along the coast and Gold Coast Highway.

This area originally evolved as ‘The Strip’ in the 1940s and 1950s and is now densely populated with towers on the beach. This image of the Gold Coast is today globally recognised as an icon of holiday and coastal lifestyle.

The linear structure of the city provides a relatively compact focus for density and activity that can be efficiently served by the GCRT. With such a strong linear focus for density, a key challenge for the Gold Coast is how better connectivity can be achieved between the coastal strip and communities and centres located west of the Nerang River and canal network.
A car oriented city

With tourism as a primary driver for growth from the early days, the settlement pattern evolved not only around areas of high amenity, but also in step with major improvements to access in the form of road and historic rail connections.

The improvement of vehicular access through the development of the Pacific Highway in the early 1930s and the cessation of rail services beyond Beenleigh in the late 1950s reinforced growth in Southport, Surfers Paradise and later Broadbeach. Road linkages became the primary form of access and have since been a critical factor in shaping the distribution of economic and employment activity as well as residential density on the Gold Coast.

Through the 1990s and 2000s the emphasis on the private car has grown and congestion has become one of the critical issues influencing the shape of the city, where people live, work and choose to establish businesses.

A multi-nodal city

In recent decades employment areas inland from the coastal strip have risen in popularity and are now recognised as key clusters of activity in the city and region’s hierarchy of centres. Particular opportunities exist for strengthening these centres in the future and encouraging specialised clusters of activity that reinforce the economy of the Gold Coast.

Transit oriented development (TOD) and a more sustainable compact city form are policy directions that continue to gain momentum and will influence the shape of the city through the current SEQ Regional Plan and emerging Gold Coast City planning scheme review. These policy initiatives recognise that continued growth will rely on maintaining and improving the quality of life, and a functional city form with an integrated transport network.

TOD is discussed in more detail later in this part of the report.
Celebrating the green, blue and gold
The Gold Coast is renowned not only for its spectacular coastline but also its UNESCO world heritage listed hinterland rainforests. In shaping the built and landscape environment in the corridor, preserving and celebrating key views will be important to retaining a strong experience of the range of urban and natural environments the Gold Coast offers.

Key opportunities result from the predominantly east-west street structure to promote views to the Broadwater, ocean, and canal network, as well as longer range views to hinterland valleys, ranges and forests. At regular locations along the coast, opportunities should be created to celebrate long range views along the coastline towards rocky headlands, beaches and distant buildings.

A globally recognised Australian icon
In 2005 the Gold Coast was recognised as an icon by the National Trust. The citation identifies a number of iconic elements:
> “Famous for its sun, surf and sand”
> Surfers Paradise a “symbol of fantasy, nightlife and relaxation at poolside bars”
> “The first Gold Coast high rise, Kinkabool, was built in 1959. Soon canal estates also emerged on the Coast as new and contemporary developments. Today, we may add such modern achievements as The Q1—the world’s tallest residential tower, and The Palazzo Versace. These are Australia’s only six star hotels.”
> “The Gold Coast has always been known as a place of indulgence and glamour, a city that is adventurous with new developments and constantly changing.”
> “The high-rise skyline of the Gold Coast is in itself, a Queensland icon.”
> “Beachfront esplanades, shopping precincts, exhilarating theme parks and unusual entertainment venues, like wax museums and laser-light mazes, all contribute to the diverse and colourful attractions on offer.”
> “The Gold Coast is most often viewed as a ‘natural playground’. Blue skies, sun, sparkling oceans and waterways and white sandy beaches draw people in droves to the city.”

A latent subtropical city
While the Gold Coast is positioned on latitude 27.7S in the heart of the sub tropics, the form of development and public realm reflects the city’s coastal setting and high rise character more than its climatic legacy. Opportunities exist for the city to be more climate responsive and celebrate its subtropical context.

The QUT Centre for Subtropical Design and the Department of Local Government and Planning identify a range of design principles for subtropical environments including promoting outdoor living, supporting an open and permeable built environment, encouraging a local vernacular character, and promoting shaded streets and median strips.

Priorities for the Gold Coast include increasing shade and shelter in the public realm and fostering more responsive forms of development that contribute to a local vernacular.