

Mermaid Beach

The area from Peerless Avenue to Chairlift Avenue at Miami appears to have been subdivided in two phases - the first ending at Seashell Avenue and characterised by small allotments and the more southerly portion of a different street pattern consisting of larger allotments.

Shown in the street directory of 1955 they appear to date from that time or before. Some early housing, low set and clad in asbestos cement survived within the area, although subsequently development has taken place in the 1960s and another wave presently in reshaping the character of the area along Albatross and Hedges Avenue.

In some of the first generation development, evidence of landform including dunal grass and vegetation is still apparent but not sufficient quantity to contribute to the character of the area.

More importantly the residential nature of the area with narrow streets and simple planting has not yet taken on the overlay of the 1970s which characterises other areas of the Gold Coast.

Low lying and largely devoid of natural features or landmarks there is little to identify it clearly has an area of special or unique character in these terms. The Little Nobby's Headland at the southern extremity forms a natural boundary and the recently constructed residential apartments there, set a new standard for this area.

The experience of this area from along the highway is ordinary with mixed development from various periods.



Extract from the *Gold Coast Urban Heritage & Character Study*, Gold Coast City Council 1997.

Note: Mermaid Beach is a local character area within the beach strip character area. This visual diary focuses on the particular landscape character elements that contribute to the overall character of Mermaid Beach.

A Vision for the Future of Mermaid Beach

Mermaid Beach continues to develop as a residential community with clear definition and identity. Built form develops a character complementary to the casual Queensland beachfront lifestyle character. Built form along Hedges Avenue is diverse in character and integrated appropriately with the street and dunal environment.

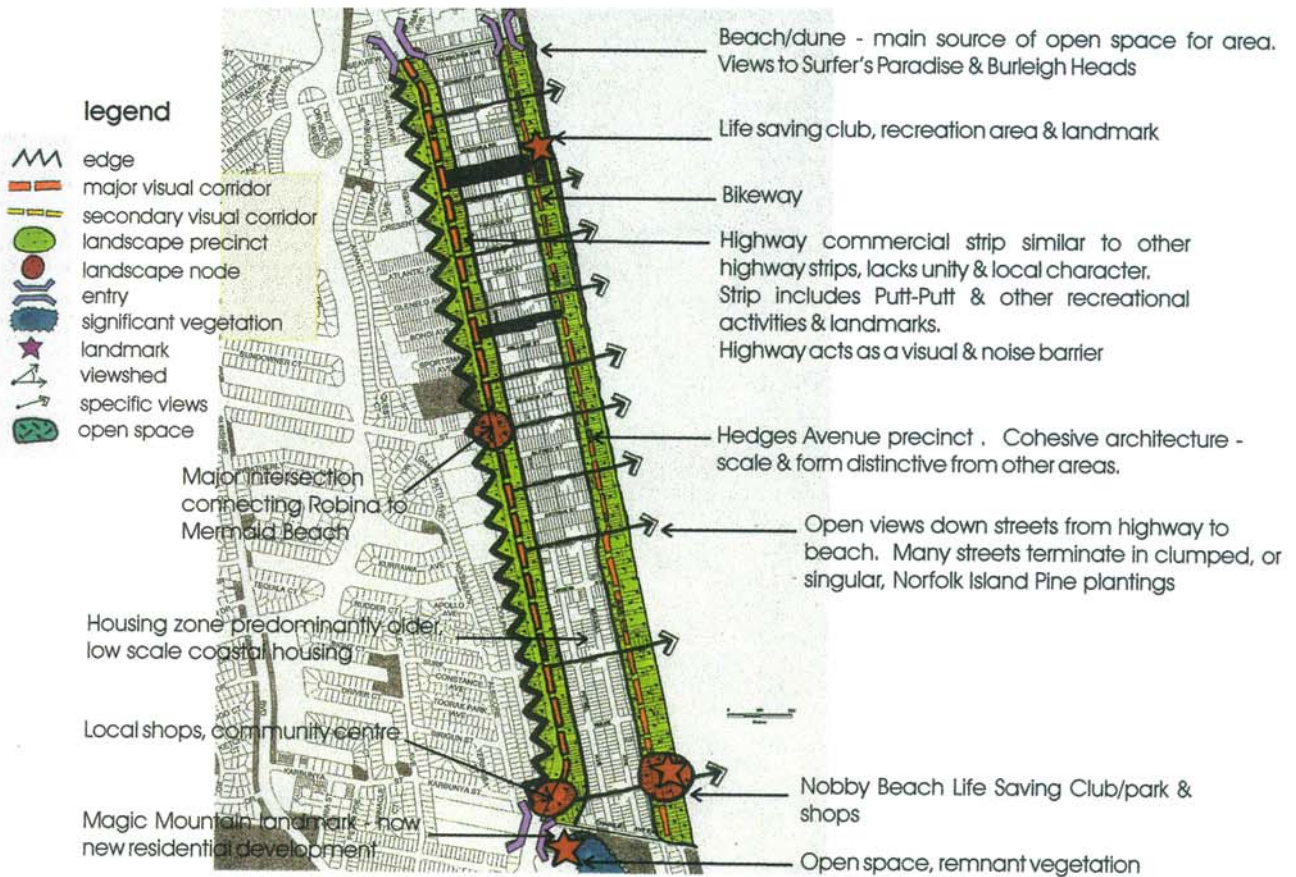
Hedges Avenue will enhance its existing function as the main visual corridor for Mermaid Beach. Shade and safer bike paths will promote a more user friendly transport route. Hedges Avenue will therefore become an integral section of the overall Coastal corridor.

The strong grid layout of the streets is enhanced by appropriate streetscape planting and the continuation of the existing

planting pattern of the Norfolk Pines at the beach ends of the east-west orientated streets. This will frame vistas and provide a landmark element unique to Mermaid Beach.



Character Map



Existing Landscape Description

Mermaid Beach is a long narrow, urban suburb that runs between the highway and the beach, with Nobby's Headland at the southern end. The street pattern consists of a traditional grid with the major north/south through-road of Hedges Avenue closest to the beach, incorporating a designated bikeway. Allotment sizes are small in the northern end of the suburb and slightly larger to the south. New housing developments to either side of Hedges Avenue have been extensive in the past years and are dramatically changing the character of Mermaid Beach. Much of the older beach houses of the 1960s are still prevalent in other areas of Mermaid Beach. The highway provides a strong edge to this area but offers a largely negative experience due to confusing signage and built form.

There is very little streetscape planting on the streets except for the signature clumpings of Norfolk Island Pines at the beach ends of the east-west streets. Most of the streetscape character is derived from private garden planting in the front setback areas. This landscape character is supported by associated coastal plantings of *Banksias sp* and *Pandanus sp* in fairly informal patterns scattered throughout the suburb in private properties and open space areas.

Important Views & Vistas

- ▶ Long views to high-rise of Surfers Paradise
- ▶ Views to Nobby's Headland
- ▶ Views from beach, back towards housing areas
- ▶ Long views down the highway

Important Landscape Elements

- ▶ Groupings of Norfolk Island Pines at beach ends of streets
- ▶ Nobby's Headland and its associated vegetation
- ▶ Cultural icons related to beach lifestyle, e.g. life saving towers
- ▶ Framework plantings of Norfolk Pines complemented by beach plantings of *Banksia sp.*, *Casuarina sp.* and *Pandanus sp.* and other native coastal species
- ▶ Remaining dunal structure and associated endemic vegetation
- ▶ Grassed road reserves and private garden planting contribute significantly to streetscape amenity

Social & Recreational Issues

- ▶ Perceived privatisation of beach & some street ends
- ▶ Visual and environmental impacts of housing on the dunal environment
- ▶ Variation in housing character between new and old development
- ▶ Redevelopment in the area is a more intense built form, reducing opportunities for private front setback landscaped areas and incorporating larger areas of paved road reserves



- ▶ Eastern street ends - Norfolk/Beach planting provides a vertical element and offers a landmark or reference point for beach - cultural markers for beach
- ▶ Associated coastal plantings such as *Pandanus sp.*
- ▶ Footpaths are continuous and shaded

Streetscape

- ▶ No landmark plantings at the end of the street
- ▶ Inappropriate heritage style street furniture
- ▶ Hard line of built form to street



Streetscape

Unit Development - Built Form



- ▶ Built form is appropriate scale at street interface
- ▶ Buildings do not appear bulky due design & the use of light weight materials and colours
- ▶ Qld beach house style complementary to character of the area
- ▶ Planting is appropriate in scale and type
- ▶ Segmented fence line utilising light materials and colours, integrated with coastal plantings

- ▶ Mass, colour & design of buildings does not appear complementary to residential street character
- ▶ Fence creates strong visual barrier to street
- ▶ Design does not complement Queensland Beach style and detracts from original remaining housing style



Commercial Development - Built Form



- ▶ Signage is contained and uncluttered and of an appropriate size and location to building
- ▶ Mix of retail and residential uses
- ▶ Scale of built form is appropriate to adjoining built form & residential uses

- ▶ Signage cluttered and dominates built form
- ▶ Building use hard to identify
- ▶ Landscape integration in design of street limited
- ▶ Hazardous, non pedestrian friendly environment



Single Lot Housing - Built Form



- ▶ Low, transparent fences do not form a barrier to the street - private landscape areas are highly visible
- ▶ House addresses street
- ▶ Garden vegetation and house are of compatible scale
- ▶ House is of appropriate colour and scale to Qld beach character
- ▶ Car parking and garages do not dominate the streetscape

- ▶ Fence has a high solid form that dominates streetscape
- ▶ Private landscape elements are not visible, thus reducing streetscape character and character of the local area
- ▶ Road reserve is predominantly concrete - minimal grassed areas



Open Space Areas



- ▶ Open space is linked
- ▶ Carpark integrated within landscape
- ▶ Vegetation is native coastal in character
- ▶ Built form is simple in design and colour
- ▶ Informal park design with style appropriate to beach character
- ▶ Vegetated and shady landscapes

- ▶ Linkages through open space are poor - separated from adjacent residential areas
- ▶ Vegetation is not reflective of a coastal character
- ▶ Planting is minimal - not supportive of park use
- ▶ Carparking is not integrated into park area
- ▶ Design does not encourage varied use



Hedges Avenue



Dunal Edges

The design of development should complement natural coastal values of the area. Scale and building mass should not dominate dunal environment.

The use of native dunal vegetation species in public and private land directly adjacent is recommended. Fences adjacent to the dunal area are to be predominantly transparent (avoid hard and solid fences to beach) and maximum 1.2m high.

Residential/beach edge is softer than urban and beach in areas such as Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.

Height and vertical form of Norfolk Island Pines reflects skyscrapers of Surfers Paradise.

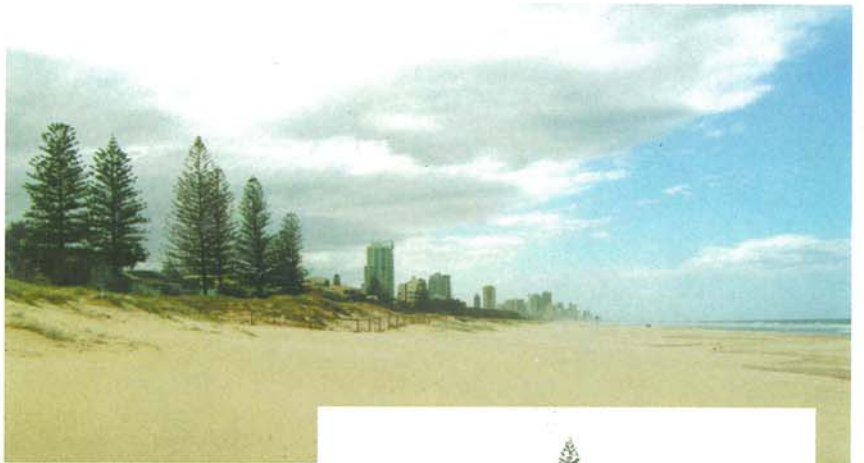
Street Ends

Landscaping of street ends can add amenity to the area. However, excessive use of vegetation can block vistas of beach and gives perception that public land is private.

Loss of views to ocean reduces the perception of proximity to the beach.

Fences

Fencing has the potential to create a barrier to the street. Fencing should be as transparent as possible, e.g. fence on right of the image above. Where transparency is not possible, fences should be articulated and integrated with planting.



Streetscape

Solid fence, lack of visible private landscaped areas and street vegetation can have a negative impact on the character of Hedges Avenue. Diversity in character and style of built form is encouraged without detracting from the "user friendly" street environment.

Streetscape elements to be encouraged, e.g. vegetation to unify street edge, transparent fencing.

