1 BASIS FOR CONFIDENTIALITY

1.1 It is recommended that this report be considered in Closed Session pursuant to section 275 (1) of the Local Government Regulation 2012 for the reason that the matter involves

(h) other business for which a public discussion would be likely to prejudice the interests of the local government or someone else, or enable a person to gain a financial advantage.

1.2 It is recommended that the report/attachment be deemed non-confidential except for those parts deemed by the Chief Executive Officer to remain confidential in accordance with sections 171 (3) and 200 (5) of the Local Government Act 2009.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gold Coast is Australia’s largest non-capital city and is famous for its iconic tall building skyline, golden beaches, world heritage hinterland and world-class surf breaks. The City is undergoing a period of significant transformation fueled by population growth and the on-going investment in infrastructure and facilities.

In recognition of these distinctive city qualities, which contribute to our competitive advantage, an independent review of the Gold Coast’s future city image was commissioned, including the preparation of a citywide strategy on building height that supports a future intentional city shape.

The purpose of the Building Height Study is to:

- identify and build upon the existing agreed intentional city shape and building height principles as established in City Plan;
- articulate a vision for the future intentional shape for the city with regard to building heights; and
- identify strategic guidance (in the form of citywide principles) to inform the future intentional shape for the city with regard to building heights.

It is important to note the Building Height Study only addresses one component of the broader vision for the future intentional city shape, and this study alone cannot form the basis for changes to building heights across the city. To create a single informed intentional city shape for the Gold Coast, the Building Height Study must be synthesised with the outcomes from other existing interconnected land use and infrastructure studies that are currently being undertaken.
Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the proposed Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations set out in Volume 2 offers Council an opportunity to:

- start informing the future intentional city shape; and
- re-define the current building height policy direction of City Plan in order to:
  
  a. balance the city’s natural landscape values with on-going infrastructure investments and built form to position the Gold Coast as a liveable world-class city for the future – a fundamental strategic objective of City Plan; and
  
  b. create a local regulatory framework that is clear and delivers a right balance between certainty and flexibility.

It is recommended the proposed Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations set out in Volume 2 are endorsed to allow the City Plan team to undertake further work to test and determine how the proposed Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations could be integrated into City Plan as part of Major Update 2.

It is anticipated this body of work will be brought back to Council for its consideration in October 2017.

3 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Council’s endorsement on the independent recommendations set out in Building Height Study – An approach to City Image, Volume 2: Building Height Strategy and City Plan Recommendations, which proposes a high level building height strategy with citywide principles and height guidance, and recommendations for its implementation in City Plan.

The proposed recommendations will inform amendments to the policy direction for building height in City Plan as part of Major Update 2 and any consequential amendments as required.

4 PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS

Council have made a number of past resolutions in relation to the Building Height Study and a summary of the previous resolutions relating to this matter is provided in Attachment A.

At the commencement of City Plan in 2013, the original scope list for City Plan identified a need for a citywide building height study to be undertaken. This was identified with the understanding that building height strategies have not been reviewed since 2003. On 6 August 2013, a list of high priority policy improvements for draft City Plan was proposed, which comprised of three parts:
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- Part A – Scope list;
- Part B – (Work in progress) First Amendment Scope List; and
- Part C – (Work in progress) Future Amendment Scope List.

The proposed building height study (previously referred to as Southern Coast Corridor and Broadwater Building Height Study) was identified in Part B and this was not formally endorsed by Council (G13.0806.20).

The following resolution on 1 September 2015 relates to the endorsed scope for the first major update to the City Plan. The report presented to Council also made reference to the scope for two other proposed major updates to the City Plan. These updates were known as:
- May 2016 City Plan major amendment (now known as Major update 2); and
- October 2016 City Plan major amendment (now known as Major update 3).

The Building Height Study was included in the scope list for Major update 3, which was not formally endorsed by Council (G15.0901.023).

The Building Height Study also addresses a series of Council resolutions responding to City Plan submissions between January 2015 to June 2015 (G15.0303.013).

Council resolved to bring forward the Building Height Study in Major update 2 at its meeting held on 15 September 2015 (G16.0915.019).

On 5 December 2016, an introductory paper was presented to the City Planning Committee to introduce the building height study, outline its purpose and advise that it was being undertaken by independent consultants, Urbis (G16.1207.016).

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Evolution of the study

The Building Height Study was initiated in response to receiving a number of planning scheme submissions on the draft City Plan. The purpose of the study was to produce a policy framework to guide development of medium and high rise developments along the southern coastal strip and the Broadwater from Southport to Labrador.

However, the study was extended to consider the entire urban area of the City to incorporate areas with growth opportunities, including the strategic east-west growth corridors and urban centres outside the designated unlimited height areas in Southport, Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach.

When the study was extended, the revised study brief excluded density and infrastructure related capacity assessments on the basis that this would be considered through separate interconnected studies as identified in Figure 2 below.

UNAUTHORISED RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OR INFORMATION may be an offence under the Local Government Act 2009 and other legislation and could result in disqualification from office and a penalty of up to 100 units.
5.2 Overview of the Building Height Study

5.2.1 Structure of the study

The Building Height Study is summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vol 1 - Background Studies, Analysis &amp; Emerging Directions</td>
<td>Volume 1 is a collection of independent studies on the context, capacity, image, identity and ambition of the Gold Coast. It includes findings from a number of working sessions with Council stakeholders, and is used as the basis to inform Volume 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vol 2 - Building Height and City Plan Recommendations</td>
<td>Volume 2 proposes a high level building height strategy with citywide principles and height guidance. This is also supported by recommendations for strategy implementation in the City Plan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Study methodology

The Building Height Study has been undertaken in three (3) stages. These are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 Understanding Context</td>
<td>Stage 1 of the study focused on three (3) individual theme based studies focusing on the global significance and context of the city’s baseline conditions, future challenges and City Plan directions of the future intentional city shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Strategy development and key directions</td>
<td>Stage 2 of the study involved two working sessions to synthesis the findings of Stage 1 into a future city shape, citywide building height principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 Building height</td>
<td>Stage 3 involved the development of building height strategy for the Gold Coast based on citywide building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Inclusion of City Plan recommendations for implementing high level values and vision for a future intentional city shape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study method is outlined in **Figure 1** below:

![Figure 1 - Study methodology (Source: Building Height Study prepared by Urbis)](image)

5.2.3 Study limitations

The Building Height Study only focuses on the city’s building height and does not consider broader planning outcomes such as land use, density, infrastructure capacity and environmental constraints. In other words, it only addresses one component of the broader vision for the future intentional city shape.

As presented in **Figure 2**, the Building Height Study must be synthesised with the outcomes from other existing interconnected land use and infrastructure studies to create an informed single intentional city shape for the Gold Coast.
**ITEM 3 (Continued)**

**BUILDING HEIGHT STUDY – AN APPROACH TO CITY IMAGE**

Table 1 details the interconnected land use and infrastructure studies that have either been completed or are currently being prepared which are required to finalise our city’s intentional city shape.

**Table 1: Summary of interconnected land use and infrastructure studies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interconnected land use and infrastructure studies</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greenfield land dwelling supply assessment</td>
<td>The Greenfield Land Supply Analysis was undertaken to confirm whether the city has an adequate supply of greenfield land to cater for the city’s population growth for the next 20 years as outlined in City Plan (one third of growth) or whether there is a need to find additional land to cater for growth.</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast Landscape Character Study</td>
<td>The study provides a detailed assessment of landscape character and landscape heritage across the Gold Coast, defining the City’s distinctive identity and sense of place. The study advocates strategies to preserve and enhance the landscape in a growing city.</td>
<td>Completed and endorsed by Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2 - Relationship to interconnected studies (Source: Building Height Study prepared by Urbis)**
Consequently, it is important to note that the Building Height Study alone cannot form the basis for specific changes to building heights across the city and as such no site specific changes to building height designations will occur as a consequence of this report. However, the Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations set out in Volume 2 of Urbis’ Building Height Study offers Council an opportunity to:

- start informing the future intentional city shape in the context of building height; and
- re-define the current building height policy direction of City Plan in order to:

UNAUTHORISED RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OR INFORMATION may be an offence under the Local Government Act 2009 and other legislation and could result in disqualification from office and a penalty of up to 100 units.
a. balance the city’s natural landscape values with on-going infrastructure investments and built form to position the Gold Coast as a liveable world-class city for the future; and

b. create a local regulatory framework that is clear and delivers a right balance between certainty and flexibility.

The following section will explain in further detail how this will be achieved.

5.3 Building Height and City Plan Recommendations

5.3.1 Overview

The Gold Coast boasts some of the nation’s most prestigious natural landscapes complemented by a truly distinct city form, and as a young city, safeguarding of our city image is critical to our competitive advantage.

Establishing an understanding and commitment to the Gold Coast’s geographic context, its city shape values and its future growth in response to its natural setting and city infrastructure investment, will position the Gold Coast as a liveable world-class city for the future.

In recognising this, Volume 2 of the Building Height Study proposes a series of high level recommendations that seek to:

- introduce a citywide decision-making policy framework that will inform decisions on building height where it exceeds the code assessable thresholds;
- simplify and streamline guidance on building height;
- establish a simple and robust regulatory framework, that has direct intent, relevance and clarity for users within private and public sectors; and
- balance certainty with flexibility.

5.3.2 City Plan recommendations

The study proposes five (5) recommendations, which are as follows:

1. Implement the citywide building height principles;
2. Introduce new building height categories;
3. Amend and recalibrate the building height overlay map;
4. Undertake a future study to review the building height overlay map; and
5. Undertake a future study to assist in the creation of an architectural and urban design guide.
It is proposed the first three (3) recommendations will inform updates to Major update 2. However, given the latter two (2) recommendations require further investigations, the outcomes arising from these recommendations are proposed to form part of a future City Plan update.

The study recommendations are summarised below.

**Recommendation 1 – Implement the citywide principles**

The inclusion of eight (8) city shape values which can be translated into a decision-making framework to guide the future intentional city shape (from a building height context only).

These principles are summarised below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iconic skyline</td>
<td>Retain the visual clarity and clustering of height along the coastal strip as the city’s defining built form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green frame</td>
<td>Maintain the visual prominence of the hinterland ranges, foothills and ridgelines, and surrounding islands as a green frame forming a visual backdrop to the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual breaks</td>
<td>Define distinct urban neighbourhoods by enhancing visual breaks in the built form as created by natural features of the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach city</td>
<td>Building height along the coastal edge respects and responds to the unique natural setting of the different beach environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A central park</td>
<td>Clearly define the boundary between urban and green, allowing development to realise the potential of a large scale open space whilst reflecting overall citywide legibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water playground</td>
<td>Leverage building height to maximise the visual amenity and recreational potential of the Broadwater, whilst generally maintaining the intimate scale of rivers, canals and inland waterways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland centres</td>
<td>Reinforce citywide prominence of activity centres whilst responding to the local landscape character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban ladder</td>
<td>Building height supports transport investment and economic growth, whilst also enhancing the city’s legibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The consultants have proposed the following approach to implement the citywide building height principles into the City Plan:

- remove all existing references to building height in the Strategic Framework;
- reference the eight (8) citywide building height principles in the Strategic Intent (where city shape is discussed);
- incorporate a new strategic element (known as building height) in the Strategic Framework, which includes the eight (8) citywide building height principles and supporting strategic and specific outcomes; and
- continue to use building height as a level of assessment trigger from code assessment to impact assessment.

Further to this, the study identifies a range of benefits associated with the implementation of this recommendation. The full details of these benefits are detailed in Section 5.0 - City Plan recommendations of Attachment A - Building height study – An approach to city image – Volume 2: Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations.

Of note, the recommended approach to implementing the proposed citywide building height principles includes the removal of the 50% building height test from the Strategic Framework. Having regard to this proposition, Council should note:

- Its application is limited to Urban Neighbourhoods.
- The current 50% building height test applies an arbitrary percentage to the existing Building Height Overlay Map, which could result in unintended development outcomes and negative impacts on the city's unique natural landscape and on-going infrastructure investment. Through Urbis' work, it has become evident that there is a need for a more rationalised approach for determining building height based on city shape values and citywide principles.
- The 50% building height test may not be as rigorous and robust as Council originally intended. It is Officers’ opinion that the existence of such a test actually supports an increase in building height and it is difficult to negotiate higher quality outcomes in such instances.
- That whilst creating a level of certainty is important in the management of community expectations, it is considered that the current 50% building height test does not achieve an appropriate balance between certainty and flexibility.

**Recommendation 2 – Introduce new building height categories**

The study proposes to re-categorise the current thirty-two (32) building height categories into seven (7) building height ranges. These ranges have been identified to reflect ‘natural groupings’ of building heights based on:

- current building height designations; and
- common design and construction trends.
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The purpose of this categorisation is to provide greater certainty on building heights to improve ease of communications and to simplify the City Plan and development assessment process in alignment with the *Planning Act 2016*. The building height categories are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>HEIGHT IN METRES / DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUPERTALL - EXCEEDING 140M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALL - UP TO 140M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH - UP TO 110M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM - UP TO 55M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID - UP TO 33M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW - UP TO 16M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWEST - UP TO 9M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study proposes the following approach to implement the building height categories into the City Plan:
- remove existing building height categories;

*Unauthorised release of confidential reports or information may be an offence under the *Local Government Act 2009* and other legislation and could result in disqualification from office and a penalty of up to 100 units.*
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BUILDING HEIGHT STUDY – AN APPROACH TO CITY IMAGE
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- regulate building height in metres only;
- introduce plain-english names for each height category;
- include new building height categories on the building height overlay map;
- include administrative definitions for each building height category; and
- consequential amendments to align definitions of high rise, medium rise and low rise building height.

Further to this, the study has identified a range of benefits associated with the implementation of this recommendation. The full details of these benefits are detailed in Section 5.0 - City Plan recommendations of Attachment A - Building height study – An approach to city image – Volume 2: Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations.

Of note, the proposed Building Height Strategy will maintain Council’s current policy position on partial third storey development, per Special Committee Recommendation CPSC15.0304.0107, dated 4 March 2015. Consequently, no change is proposed to the Dwelling House Overlay and partial third storey developments, where the total building height:

- is less than 9 metres will continue to be code assessable development; and
- exceeds 9 metres will continue to be impact assessable development.

In the case of impact assessment, development proposals will be assessed against the proposed Building Height Element within the Strategic Framework. The proposed building height principles, when applied harmoniously, will maintain the intended lowest building height (i.e. 9 metre building height category) within suburban neighbourhoods.

**Recommendation 3 – Amend and recalibrate the building height overlay map**

The study recommends the redefining of the building height overlay map in a manner that builds on the existing building height designations in a different and more consistent way.

The following approach to highlight the importance of the building height overlay map is proposed:

- make the building height overlay map the single reference for building height for every property in the city;
- update the building height overlay map to reflect the new height categories;
- update all zone codes to address building height by referencing the overlay map; and
- continue to use building height as level of assessment trigger from code assessment to impact assessment.

The study identified a range of benefits associated with the implementation of this recommendation including:

- a clear, single point of reference for planned building height across the city;
- enhanced readability; and
Recommendation 4 – Review the building height overlay map (future study)

The study recommends a future review of current overlay maps to establish an intended building height at site-specific locations throughout the city. It should be noted that this recommendation cannot be implemented until the required interconnected studies have been completed. As such, this is not proposed to form part of the Major update 2 package and should be noted.

Recommendation 5 – An architectural and urban design guide (future study)

The study recommends the development of an architectural and urban design guideline to promote outstanding built form outcomes and a responsive public realm that aligns with wider city image strategies and the future intentional city shape. This is not proposed to form part of the Major update 2 package and should be noted.

6 ALIGNMENT TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, CORPORATE STRATEGIES AND OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Building Height Study is aligned to the Corporate Plan objectives.

7 GOLD COAST 2018 COMMONWEALTH GAMES™ IMPACT

Not applicable.

8 FUNDING AND RESOURCING REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

This activity supports the mitigation of the following Directorate Risk:

CO00510 – City Plan delivers inadequate and/or ineffective strategic development policy (e.g. poor planning, built form, growth, social and environmental outcomes – including flood impacts).

10 STATUTORY MATTERS

Not applicable.

11 COUNCIL POLICIES

Not applicable.
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BUILDING HEIGHT STUDY – AN APPROACH TO CITY IMAGE
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12 DELEGATIONS

Not applicable.

13 COORDINATION & CONSULTATION

This report has been prepared in collaboration with the City Plan Team and the following stakeholders have been consulted prior to presentation of this report to Council:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Stakeholder Consulted</th>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>Is the Stakeholder Satisfied With Content of Report and Recommendations (Yes/No)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Development Manager</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Planning Manager</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Coordinator Major Projects</td>
<td>EDMP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator City Plan</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Planners</td>
<td>Planning &amp; Environment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS

Not applicable.

15 TIMING

Not applicable.

16 CONCLUSION

Through its regulatory documents and processes, Council must be committed to encouraging growth of the city in a manner that retains the city’s enviable lifestyle, protects its world-class environment and supports investment – providing a clear direction for a future intentional city shape.

This report seeks ‘in principle’ support of a building height study to assist with updates to the building height policy direction in the City Plan. The objectives of the study were to:

- identify and building upon the current policy direction about the intentional city shape outlined in City Plan;
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- provide building height guidance to assist with developing a contemporary approach to inform the future shape of the city; and

- develop a vision for the future city shape with regard to building height and recommend how City Plan can be updated to support this vision.

This study has been presented in two (2) volumes. *Volume 2 – Building height strategy and City Plan recommendations* sets out a high level building height strategy (including a set of citywide building height principles) that identifies opportunities to update City Plan to build on, strengthen and enhance the image of the city.

With the completion of this study, Council now has the opportunity to start the process of implementing a highly developed approach that aligns built form with the governing features of the city’s unique natural landscape and the on-going investment in infrastructure and facilities to promote city legibility, amenity and connectivity.

Council officers support the recommendations set out in Volume 2, subject to the City Plan team undertaking further work to test and determine how the proposed Building Height Strategy and City Plan recommendations will be integrated into City Plan as part of Major Update 2. It is anticipated this body of work will be brought back to Council for its consideration in October 2017.

17 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolves as follows:

1 That the report/attachment be deemed non-confidential except for those parts deemed by the Chief Executive Officer to remain confidential in accordance with sections 171 (3) and 200 (5) of the Local Government Act 2009.

2 That the report be noted.

3 That the document titled ‘Building Height Study – An Approach to City Image – Volume 2 – Building Height Strategy and City Plan Recommendations – dated 5 July 2017’ be endorsed to inform amendments to the policy direction for building height in the City Plan as part of Major Update 2 and any other consequential amendments as required.

4 That the Mayoral Technical Advisory Committee be consulted on the proposed amendments to the policy direction for building height in the City Plan as part of Major Update 2 and any other consequential amendments as required.
5 That a further report detailing the City Plan amendments related to the recommendations set out in ‘Building Height Study – An Approach to City Image – Volume 2 – Building Height Strategy and City Plan Recommendations – dated 5 July 2017’ be brought back for further consideration by the City Planning Committee.

Author: Deborah Chow
Urban Design Team Leader

Authorised by: Dyan Currie
Director Planning and Environment