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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Gold Coast is committed to protecting areas on the Gold Coast with a particular local identity, natural resource base or development character.

The primary intent of this place analysis is to provide a resource to ensure character elements are appropriately considered in future development decisions in Burleigh Heads, which form part of the southern Gold Coast strip.
KEY URBAN CHARACTER ELEMENTS

The key character elements and special qualities identified for Burleigh are summarised below.

ACCESS & MOVEMENT

• Nodal village structure not strip commercial.
• Street-based retail core format.
• Relatively low development intensity.
• Strong influence of topography.
• Expansive open space - beachfront park and National Park/reserve.

URBAN STRUCTURE

• ‘Postcard’ landscape and visual qualities.
• Pedestrian scale, walkable village.
• Compact, highly active retail core.
• Sense of openness.
• The iconic Norfolk Island pines.
• The Poinciana tree-lined streetscapes.

PUBLIC REALM

• Cross block links, laneways and arcades within retail core.
• The beachfront esplanades.
• Highway ‘touches’ the beach - a characteristic unique to Burleigh.
• Highway is a significant pedestrian barrier separating beach and retail core.

HERITAGE & CULTURE

• The busy village atmosphere.
• Sense of the past offered by the built environment.
• Sense of local community.
• Retail diversity and quality.
• Emerging nightlife.

BUILT FORM

• Strong retail high street traditional character in form, scale and function.
• High predominance of older building stock offering eclectic streetscape character and highly articulated street facades.
• Highly active village streets - fine lot ‘grain’ producing narrow building frontages and retail/commercial tenancies.
• Adaptive re-use of buildings and activation of laneways and arcades.
• Overall, a comparatively low intensity of development for a commercial centre in close proximity to the beach.
INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Burleigh Heads is one of the most well-known and valued destinations on the Gold Coast. It’s rich history, the Norfolk Island pine-lined beach, a traditional ‘high street’ retail precinct and the pervasive visual presence of its famous headland combine to shape a truly unique place character.

The Gold Coast is expected to undergo transformative growth over the next 20 years.

The challenge facing those who will play a role in shaping Burleigh Heads’ future will be to clearly identify and understand the essential influences of it’s character and how to ensure new development respects or enhances it’s unique place qualities.
METHODOLOGY

STAGE 1
City and suburban context

An analysis of the broad range of physical and cultural elements that can influence the shape and character of a place, drawing on site visits, research and City workshops.

STAGE 2
Village elements

An assessment of place analysis elements identifying how they collectively contribute to the function, urban form and character of Burleigh.
CITY CONTEXT

CITY-WIDE CENTRES HIERARCHY

Burleigh Heads is designated as a District Centre.

Figure 1: Gold Coast City Council Planning Scheme 2003 - Activity Centres
HISTORY OF BURLEIGH HEADS

Heritage and Built Character

The Burleigh Heads area has a strong indigenous heritage prior to land opening up for settlement in the 1870s. The area’s growth reflects two peak periods of development:

- The rapid increase in residential development in the 1920s to 1930s which is still evident in the built form character of the residential areas and the commercial centre;
- The rapid expansion of tourism in the 1960s to 1970s.

Historic residential forms are predominantly 20th Century timber cottages and post war fibro beach houses. The retail core, focusing on James Street, is a traditional high street format that has maintained its original block / lot structure and fractured ownership pattern. Combined with the scale and form of the buildings and predominance of old building stock, this structure underpins the strong heritage qualities of the retail precinct with its multiple small tenancies establishing an active centre with a busy ‘village’ character.

Social and Cultural Institutions / Landmarks

Burleigh Heads has a number of significant institutions and landmarks including:

- Burleigh Heads Bowls Club opened in 1937 - rare surviving coastal bowls club
- Surf Life Saving Club established in 1935
- Burleigh Heads Caravan Park
- The Deluxe Theatre built in 1930 (now known as the Old Burleigh Theatre Arcade).

Heritage Status

The City of Gold Coast maintains a local heritage register, nominating places that are considered an important social and historical contribution to the development of the Gold Coast. Places on this list are protected under the provision of the Queensland Heritage Regulations 2003. There are three places within the study area listed on the local heritage register:

- Burleigh Heads Caravan Park and Caretakers Residents
- Grave of Sarah Duncan
- Norfolk Pines Burleigh Foreshore.

The Burleigh Heads National Park is listed on the register of the National Estate (a non statutory list) for its natural heritage features, as well as the National Trust list.
The following analysis identifies the existing place qualities which largely define Burleigh Heads as it is today. Unique or ‘special’ features and elements that contribute to the character of Burleigh Heads are also identified, as well as high level opportunities and challenges for future development.
What’s special about Burleigh’s place character?

- Comparatively high stock of older building typologies and enduring activities
- Traditional high street format (heritage character, scale, ownership/block pattern)
- Historically significant buildings and places
- Headland and ridgeline views
- Visually significant vegetation
TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

TOPOGRAPHY

Headland and ridgeline
- The densely vegetated headland and ridgeline are outstanding topographical features of regional visual significance.
- The ridgeline system contributes an important urban break at the city-wide scale.
- The topography is a major influence of the existing settlement pattern, historically determining the alignment of the highway, centre structure and pattern of development intensity.

Flat coastal plain
- Development is focused on the flat coastal plain and characterised by the ridgeline/headland backdrop.
- Development intensity reduces sharply south of the village centre in response to the steep topography.

LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

Open space and parks
- Burleigh Heads has a number of key open spaces which contribute towards its sense of openness and ‘green’ character, including:
  - National Park and reserve
  - Foreshore dunal system
  - Rudd and Memorial Park
  - Caravan Park and Bowls Club
  - Foreshore parkland with beach amenities as well as picnic / barbeque facilities.

Vegetation
- The Burleigh headland and ridgeline:
  - Impressive backdrop to the village centre providing a unique setting with high landscape value
  - Remnant littoral rainforest
  - National park is protected by the National Parks designation
  - Steep slopes and dense vegetation.
- The Norfolk Island pines:
  - Sense of place and coastal iconography
  - Heritage value
  - The highway user experience.
- Poinciana trees:
  - Connor Street and in the retail heart.
Burleigh Heads village draws much of its landscape character from its wider setting, with a number of key elements providing dramatic effect. The structure and footprint of the centre is a direct response to the topographic setting.
Burleigh Heads’ urban structure – the arrangement of development intensity, land use, blocks and major movement networks – is unique within a city-wide context.
What's special about Burleigh’s place character?

- A green gateway where the highway kisses the beach
- The strong Norfolk Island Pine ‘edge’ lining the beach
- ‘Postcard’ landscape and visual qualities of the headland, ridgeline and the beach
- An iconic natural feature synonymous with the city
- A significant urban break at a city-wide scale
- The arrival experience
- The green backdrop – headland and ridgeline
- Sense of openness offered by the parks, bowls club and caravan park
- The ‘colour’ of the poinciana streetscapes

URBAN STRUCTURE

Historic development patterns, topographic constraints and the alignment of the highway, which meanders to traverse the ridgeline saddle, has given the centre a distinctive nodal form in contrast to a typically linear structure that can be seen in other Gold Coast Highway based commercial centres.

This urban structure has a significant influence on the character and identity at Burleigh Heads:

Settlement Pattern
- Development intensity and mixed uses focus on and radiate out from Burleigh’s patrolled beach.
- The retail core is a compact and low scale street-based centre.
- Highest development intensity is focused along The Esplanade and Goodwin Terrace.
- Influence of topography and historic land uses is strong.

Road Network
- The Highway meanders to ‘touch’ the beachfront - the only location this occurs in the city.
- The street layout is predominantly a grid network with only the major arterials - West Burleigh Road and the Gold Coast Highway - meandering in response to topographic influences.

Open Space
- The location and scale of open space establishes a sense of openness and includes:
  - Beachfront linear park
  - Rudd Park
  - Memorial Park and bowls club
  - National Park and reserve.

Block Structure
- The original survey pattern is still evident with little amalgamation of lots.
- A rectilinear 200 by 70-metre block structure in the core commercial precinct.
- Larger, irregular structure of blocks to the east of highway reflects the topographic context and historical ownership pattern.
VEHICLE ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

ROAD NETWORK

- Overall the road network is a traditional grid of local streets influenced by the presence of the coastline, topography and highway.

- The Gold Coast Highway meanders to achieve the least slope impacted alignment over the headland/ridgeline system. This results in a unique ‘window’ to the beach for highway travellers and avoids a Highway retail ‘strip’ evident at Nobby’s and Miami.

- The Gold Coast Highway and West Burleigh Road define the commercial village’s edges and district or regional trips do not impact on local traffic.

- James Street, Connor Street (north), West Street (north) and the Gold Coast Highway are active retail streets.

- Justin Lane and other shared private accessways provide rear access and servicing to most ‘high’ street retail premises within the village.

- The Esplanade and Goodwin Terrace are typical local access coastal esplanades and carry high levels of traffic at peak beach use times.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Bus routes are located on the Gold Coast Highway and West Burleigh Road.

CAR PARKING

- A combination of on-street and off-street parking throughout the area.
- Basement carparking is provided in larger scale new developments.
James Street

Gold Coast Highway touches the waterfront

Connor Street

The Esplanade

Goodwin Terrace

James Street

Connor Street
Vehicle Access and Movement

- **Primary Vehicle Route**
- **Secondary/Local Access Streets**
- **Laneways**
- **Bus Route**
- **Bus Stop Locations**
- **Signalised Intersections**
- **Car Parking**
- **Nose-in/angle parking**
- **Parallel Street parking**
What’s special about Burleigh’s place character?

- Highway window, engages and touches the beach
- The highway diverts traffic around the retail core, separating local and regional traffic
- Streetscapes - the retail high streets and the esplanades
- View corridors along streets
LAND USE AND LOT SIZE

The land use pattern and the predominance of small lot sizes are fundamental influences of current character.

**Land use pattern**

- Expansive open spaces along and near to beach.
- A well defined commercial precinct with sharp transitions to residential uses to the west and south.
- A consolidated, street-based commercial core unique from the predominant linear arrangement of other activity centres.
- Predominance of small block sizes
  - both commercial and residential
  - highly fractured ownership pattern.
- Tourist accommodation lines The Esplanade and Goodwin Terrace.

**Land use pattern within the ‘village’**

- Original survey lot structure evident with little amalgamation of lots:
  - Typical lot size 13.5 metres wide by 30 metres deep
  - Narrow shop fronts, typically 4.5 metres.
- Presence of mixed use buildings and older building stock.
- A noticeable absence of franchise and chain businesses.
- Emerging market for restaurants and bars evident.
- Urban renewal rather than new construction characteristic of recent change:
  - arcades and laneways have been maintained and activated
  - re-use and adaption of older building stock.

![Activated laneway](image1.jpg)

![Emerging night life](image2.jpg)
What's special about Burleigh's place character?

- A mixed use retail heart
- Retail diversity and character
- Sole proprietors boutique offering
- Re-use and regeneration of built form
BUILT FORM AND ARCHITECTURE CHARACTER

The built environment is diverse in age, form, architectural character and quality. There is a high predominance of older building stock and historical development cycles from the 1920s to the present day are evident - a unique nuance in the context of the Gold Coast’s tourist strip.

A key characteristic of Burleigh’s urban environment is its comparatively low development intensity and average building heights when compared to other beachfront centres of the Gold Coast.

BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

Given the wide variety of building ages represented, a broad range of building typologies are present:

Residential
- High-rise residential towers.
- Mid-rise residential buildings.
- Three to four-storey walk-up residential buildings south and west of the village centre.
- A diverse mix of 20th century and new detached houses, including:
  - Heritage significant 1920 to 1930s fibro holiday houses
  - Traditional one and two-storey post-war timber houses and ‘brick and tile’ bungalows
  - Large, modern architecturally designed homes.

Commercial/retail
- Buildings within the retail/commercial core are characterised by:
  - One and two-storey heights
  - Pre-1970 character in terms of architectural form, scale and materiality
  - Narrow shop fronts offering streetscape diversity and high activity levels
  - Continuous awnings
  - Cluttered signage
  - Arcades and lanes.

Community
- Community and service buildings framing the Village, include:
  - Burleigh Heads Surf club (established 1935) - has undergone numerous renovations since its establishment
  - Library and Council offices
  - Places of workshop
  - Burleigh Heads Bowls Club.
Residential Typologies

- High-rise residential
- Mid-rise Residential (mixed-use)
- Three to four-storey walk-up residential (Ewart Street)
- Detached housing (Ewart Street)

Commercial/Retail Typologies

- Supermarket
- Single-storey high street retail (James Street)
- Two-storey high street mixed-use (James Street)
- Mixed-use development (SWELL apartments)
Community Buildings

- Surf Club
- Library and Council Offices
- The Deluxe Theatre built in 1930
- Fibro House on West Street

Places of Worship

- Burleigh Heads Bowls Club
- The Beach House Complex
BUILDING HEIGHTS

- Generally, the greatest building height is focused adjacent the beach where the city’s famous views are captured.
- West of the Gold Coast Highway and below the headland, reflected in both the village area and broader residential environment, single and double storey building heights still dominate many streetscapes.
- Three to four-storey walk-up apartment buildings, which proliferated post-1970s, are scattered evenly across the residential area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>13 Storeys +</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-12 Storeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 Storeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Storeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Storey</td>
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</table>
SITE COVER AND SETBACKS

- A simple analysis of building footprints highlights the arrangement of development intensities and building forms within the wider Burleigh Heads area. Sharp transitions between the retail village and residential areas are evident.

- The retail village is characterised by:
  - buildings built to front and side boundaries
  - laneway access and service.

- The beachfront and residential areas are characterised by:
  - older medium and high-rise residential buildings typically set within private landscape on large blocks
  - new mid and high-rise buildings, typically set on podiums
  - detached housing and walk-ups.
**BUILDING AGE**

- Burleigh Heads has a high proportion of older building stock with varying levels of architectural quality. A number of distinct historical development cycles are evident in the wider urban character, including:
  - Detached housing of the 1920s and 1930s
  - Rapid expansion of tourism in 1960s and 1970s
  - Increased residential density and building scale in development spikes of the 1980s through to the 2000s.

- The built age has a significant influence on the overall visual quality of the retail village through diverse and eclectic architectural styles. Generally the village displays a high level of consistency in building form and scale.
Post-war fibro beach house (1950s)

1960s medium-rise apartments

1970s three to four-storey brick flats

Gold Coast Highway 1930s shops

James Street 1950s to 1960s shops

1980s high-rise

Residential (1920s-1930s)

1990s medium-rise apartments

2000s
SIGNAGE AND ADVERTISING

Signage is a pervasive visual element of the village, particularly in the retail streetscapes of James Street and Connor Street where there is long unbroken sections of retail frontage.

What’s special about Burleigh’s place character?

- A broad, eclectic mix of building typologies and age
- A strong traditional retail high street function and form (architecture, scale, age, and sole proprietor retail variety)
- Historically significant buildings
- Traditional retail streetscapes
- Use of traditional retail sign types
- Activity and diversity
- Adaptive re-use of buildings and activation of arcades within the Village
PEDESTRIAN WALKABILITY

MAJOR PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

• Major generators of pedestrian movement within and around Burleigh are the commercial village and the foreshore/beachfront.
• Primary pedestrian routes and places of high foot traffic include the routes between the beach and the village and the active retail footpaths of the village.
• Beachfront parkland is highly activated during times of peak beach use.

THE VILLAGE CORE

• Much of the activated retail streets have continuous footpath awnings providing shade and weather protection.
• Pedestrian movement in James Street is constrained by narrow footpaths (2.5 metres wide) which impact on street dining opportunities and limits space for street furnishings.
• Several retail arcades and laneways provide cross block pedestrian links and internal block activation.
• Arcades are generally only open during business hours.

BARRIERS TO CONNECTIVITY

• Generally, pedestrian connectivity in the village centre is constrained by narrow footpaths, footpath clutter (furnishings, informal/removable signage etc) and the highway.
• The Gold Coast Highway is a major barrier between the commercial village centre and the beach. Pedestrians are funnelled through two signalised intersections.
• Burleigh West Road also creates a pedestrian barrier to the west of the village centre.
• At a broader scale, topography presents challenges to cycling and walking with district level connections to the south only achievable along the highway corridor.
What’s special about Burleigh’s place character?

- Pedestrian scale and continuous awnings of the retail village
- Cross block links, laneways and activated arcades within the village centre
- Beachfront open space and Esplanades provide high quality pedestrian experiences
ACTIVATION AND STREET LIFE

VILLAGE STREET ACTIVATION

• The village has a highly activated streets - James Street, Connor Street, Gold Coast Highway - as a result of:
  – building relationships to streets and shaded footpaths
  – mix of retail, food/beverage and service commercial
  – narrow shop widths supporting retail diversity.

• West Street and Park Avenue are notably less vibrant streets with the absence or breaks in active retail edges due to:
  – inappropriate building forms and setbacks
  – vacant tenancies
  – non-retail uses.

• Footpath dining is prevalent in Connor Street and West Street where footpath space is available.

• Building portals (to upper levels), arcade entries and laneway access points are present but do not impact on the retail function of James Street, Connor Street or the Gold Coast Highway.

NIGHT ACTIVATIONS

• Night time activators also clustered within and around the village centre and comprise:
  – restaurants
  – bar/restaurants
  – takeaway food outlets.

THE BEACH AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

• Beachfront parkland is highly activated during times of peak beach use.

• Farmers markets (every Saturday morning) and the “Village Markets” (very second Sunday) use the Burleigh Heads Primary School.
What’s special about Burleigh’s place character?

- Expansive informal open space along the beachfront
- The busy Village atmosphere
- Retail diversity and quality within the village centre
- Emerging nightlife activity within the village centre
Day Activators
- Retail
- Food
- Supermarket
- Takeaway
- Restaurant/Bar
- Cafe
- Activated Laneway

Event Spaces
Service Commercial (low footfall generators such as salons, banks, real estate agents)

Night Activators
- Night Time Activators
PLACE STATEMENT
The place analysis has identified numerous key elements within Burleigh Heads that are significant to the overall character of the area and together define spatial character or activity precincts.

These elements range in scale from broad topographic features and land use to the detail of lot sizes within the village core. Based on the analysis, the plan identifies spatial boundaries for discernable precincts within Burleigh Heads.

**The ‘village’ retail core**

The retail core, focusing on James Street and bound by West Street, the highway, Connor Street and Park Avenue, is the area of most intensive retail and commercial activity. Memorial Park is also included given strong visual relationships to Connor Street and a key pedestrian link connecting to the beach.

Within the core there is a high level of consistency in building forms and scale, character and street activation.

**Non-residential land use and activity**

Surrounding the core is a ‘frame’ of mixed uses and open spaces. Its boundaries are defined by surrounding low and high density residential development.

Overall, the area has a significantly reduced site cover and development intensity to the core however there is significant residential and commercial development such as Ambience/Burleigh Hotel, The Deluxe and residential apartment buildings such as La Pacifique, Burleigh Beach Tower and Swell Apartments. Street based retail intensity is generally absent or isolated. Open space is a pervasive character element and includes several parks, the school ovals and the beachfront.
KEY INFLUENCES ON PLACE CHARACTER

- Nodal not linear ‘strip development’ urban structure based on a grid network of streets.
- A compact, street-based retail core.
- Generally a low development intensity with sharp transitions to low density residential.
- Strong influence of topography and historic land uses.
- The expansive beachfront open space and National Park/reserve.

- ‘Postcard’ landscape and visual qualities of the headland and ridgeline:
  - An iconic natural feature synonymous with the city
  - A significant urban break at a city-wide scale
  - The arrival experience
  - The green backdrop.
- Pedestrian scale of the Village.
- Diversity and activity of the Village.
- Sense of openness offered by the expansive beachfront open space, parks, bowls club and caravan park.
- The iconic Norfolk Island pines lining the beach.
- The ‘colour’ of the Poinciana streetscapes.

- Cross block links, laneways and arcades within retail core.
- The Gold Coast Highway engages and ‘touches’ the beach.
- The beachfront esplanades.
- The highway diverts traffic around the retail core, separating local and regional movement.
- The highway acts as a barrier separating the beach and retail core.

- Links to the past - the rail corridor, remnant retail buildings, active hotel since 1925.
- A strong sense of local community identity.
- Safe and family oriented.
- Relaxed coastal atmosphere.

- Retail high street maintains strong heritage character through building architecture, scale, age, and sole proprietor retail variety.
- The retail heart includes small lot sizes and narrow building frontages.
- Mixed uses and active ground plane.
- A broad mix of building typologies within high predominance of older building stock.
- Eclectic architectural characters.
- Articulated street facades diverse in form, style and materiality.
- Adaptive re-use of buildings and activation of laneways and arcades.
- A comparatively low intensity of development for a commercial centre in close proximity to the beach.