Southport Urban Heritage and Character Strategy Review

October 2010
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1 This Study

Southport is one of the earliest settlements at the Gold Coast and one of the more important historically. For these reasons the area has an urban heritage and character that sets it apart from other places at the Gold Coast.

Those unique characteristics constitute a reference point in the planning for future growth at Southport as a regional centre in South East Queensland.

Urban Heritage and Character

In a city such as the Gold Coast whose more recent history is one of change, growth and development as a holiday destination, the recognition of urban heritage and character in planning schemes and instruments is seen by some to be contradictory. Those architectural elements, infrastructure and landforms of an earlier era can also be seen as an impediment to unconstrained development.

It is however incumbent upon planners charged with the responsibility to maintain urban and environmental amenity to recognise that the urban heritage and historic character of an area is often the basis in which that amenity resides.

It is also acknowledged not only that cities and localities within cities do have particular character but that the evidence of earlier development may often constitute the collective memory of the community of that place.

The identification of heritage and character of an area is the first requirement in understanding how those qualities might be incorporated into long term planning objectives and how the management of urban change which will protect and enhance those qualities may be incorporated in local area plans.

The preparation of local area plans at the Gold Coast has in recent times given weight to the history of local areas and the evidence of that history surviving in the built form and man made landscapes of each. The proposed Southport Local Area Plan (LAP) is no exception.

The 1997 strategy

An Urban Heritage and Character Strategy for Southport was commissioned by Council in late 1997. Consultants Allom Lovell Architects carried out the work and the study was adopted by Council.
1 **This study**

Its objectives were:

- to provide an understanding of the major historic themes which have shaped Southport since its beginning and which distinguish Southport from other parts of the City
- to identify, document and evaluate buildings, works, objects, natural features, sites and areas for their architectural or historical interest or special urban character
- to make recommendations for meaningful and workable conservation incentives and/or statutory controls, and
- to prepare guidelines for building conservation controls, character protection and enhancement, architectural infill and the management and enhancement of road and park reserves within areas of significance

The study found that while Southport had particular character derived from its early history as a “marine village” and holiday destination much of its present character reflects its later role as an administrative and commercial centre with a permanent residential population.

The 1997 study identified 11 precincts based on early subdivision and land use history and more than 65 streetscapes and places of special value. Few of the individual places warranted listing in State or local lists and while evidence of historical themes or consistency of building type contributed in part to the character of individual precincts the study noted that those qualities were not “cohesive or notable in the manner of urban conservation areas found elsewhere in Australia”.

Recommendations to protect those values were directed at controls on demolition and subdivision and guidelines for new building work within each of those precincts.

The findings of the study and its recommendations found their way, in part, to the gazetted local area plan.

**2010 A Review**

The present study aims to re-examine the Urban Heritage and Character Strategy of 1997, to test the claims of the earlier study and to ensure relevance to the present circumstances both in the understanding of the heritage and character of the study area and in the strategic intent of the Gold Coast City Council Planning Scheme. It is not intended to cover the indigenous history of the area or assess places that are solely of indigenous cultural heritage significance.

The brief for the study requires the consultant to test the themes in the history of the study area, to resurvey the study area to identify places of architectural or historic interest or special urban character and to determine any loss or changes to the urban heritage or character since 1997.
1 This study

The brief also requires a re-examination of proposals for incentives and statutory controls to protect those places or areas of heritage or character and to make recommendations as to how the conservation of Southport’s heritage and character might be incorporated into the LAP.

Unlike the 1997 study, which encompassed a part of Labrador to the north of the LAP area, this study confines itself specifically to the current LAP.

Summary of findings

The study finds that the heritage and character of Southport lies at two levels. A general character related to its early history and development which sets Southport apart from other places at the Gold Coast and
1 This study

within that general area a number of precincts in which special values of heritage and character are more in evidence.

As the 1997 study found the character of Southport remains a place in which its distinctive history as an early resort and administrative centre plays a major part.

However more recent survey work finds that much of the architectural evidence of that period of Southport’s history has been lost. An audit of a survey prepared in 1994 found that 32 of 62 houses have been lost in the past 14 years. Nothing is known to remain of the years in which the ‘village’ of 1874 developed into an early resort for Brisbane. Indeed only isolated remnants survive of the first few decades of the 20th century in which Southport consolidated into an administrative centre for the wider region.

In the broader area evidence of the earliest settlement remains in street patterns and in land subdivision, in land use and in post European settlement landscape elements.

The study now identifies five precincts in which heritage and character have more visible and particular value. These are:

- Nerang Street Precinct
- Railway Station Precinct
- Town Reserve Precinct
- Racecourse Precinct
- Cable Station Precinct

In each of these precincts a more detailed historical analysis has been carried out and more precise recommendations and proposals for the conservation of heritage and character made.
2 History

Southport was one of the first holiday or resort townships in south-east Queensland and for many years acted as the administrative and commercial centre of the south coast. Despite recent changes it still contains substantial evidence of its early history. The rapid growth which has been a dominant theme recently also occurred at various times in the past; growth spurts and changes of focus are part of Southport's history and heritage. For further information about Southport the reader is referred to the brief bibliography set out at the end of this document.

2.1 Historical Context

One of the oldest and more historically important places within the City of Gold Coast, the settlement of Southport dates from 1874 when a 'marine township' was laid out at the mouth of the river at 'Nerang Creek Heads'.

The first surveys - 1874-1878

The site on the Nerang River had been proposed for a 'village' since the early 1860s, identified initially by government officials surveying farming areas in the hinterland. One of these officials, the surveyor Martin Lavelle, described the present site of Southport in 1863 as:

- a delightful healthy situation having an eminence (about 50 feet high) in the centre, a level country at the back, a sandy beach in front, and a fine view of the south end of Moreton Bay, the McPherson Range and of the Pacific Ocean for some miles.

This observation suggests that Southport was always likely to develop into a recreational 'watering place', as did Sandgate on Moreton Bay further north. The possibility of mixed use was also apparent at this stage.
2 History

as Muller and Carter were already operating a sawmill south of Gardner’s Creek near the mouth of the Nerang River. Rich resources of cedar, beech and pine were floated down the Nerang River from the mountainous hinterland. Relationships with rural centres such as the timbered mountains, the mixed farming area at Nerang to the west, sugar-growing areas on the coast to Southport’s north and grazing properties in the hinterland help to explain the diversity of Southport’s development.

In 1874 the government surveyor George Pratten, who had completed a survey of Burleigh Heads in 1871, surveyed a number of allotments, ranging from one to five acres in area, located in nine distinct sections.

Pratten’s survey appears to take account of the tracks already formed, including one to the north in the location of the present High Street and the track to Nerang, the farming village to the west. Marine Parade was set out along the foreshore and secondary roads were at right angles to that thoroughfare, which later became highly desirable as the site of elite residences. Stevens Street and Queen Street formed the northern and southern boundaries of the area first surveyed apparently delineating the grid along the cardinal points. An 1860s settler, Richard Gardiner, had selected 176 acres on the southern side of Queen Street. In the 1870s, Gardiner brought supplies for Southport and Nerang to his wharf near the present site of the Southport School where he established a store.

In 1875, the purchasers of land in Pratten’s surveyed area included Thomas Hanlon, licensee of a hotel in Yatala, Adam Black, a sugar planter from Beenleigh, Robert Muir of Benowa Plantation, David Veivers of the Albert River, the Reverend James Gilbertson of Beenleigh and Robert Little, Crown Solicitor, indeed Brisbane’s first solicitor. The area was no longer ‘Nerang Heads’; it had become the ‘village of Southport’.

A trip to the seaside

By 1877 the first houses began to appear on town blocks along Marine Parade. The first house, Balaclutha, was near the intersection with Nerang Street. Many of these early houses were let for holiday periods or used as ‘weekenders’, doubtless to the relief of visitors who were forced to camp near the beach due to a shortage of accommodation. An early enthusiast for the possibilities Southport offered for recreational fishing had definite ideas about how the new settlement should develop. He believed that the bush near the ocean should be cleared only with an eye to ‘utility and beauty’, the dunes should be protected by retaining the ‘bracken’ and that avenues should be formed with clumps of shady trees.

Despite a slow start, private subdivision of the area followed with the Southport North Estate, at present day Labrador, advertised for sale in 1878 with 200 magnificent villa sites available.

A writer in the influential Queenslander journal claimed that Southport compared more favourably than either of the other seaside resorts in south east Queensland: the white sand was more pleasant than the
2 History

Loamy stuff of Sandgate or the muddy beaches of Cleveland and it offered more natural beauty, seclusion and exclusivity than these, which were as good as suburbs of Brisbane. In 1888, the Aldine History of Queensland described Southport as Queensland’s up and coming health resort and one of its hotels as the ‘aquatic sanatorium of the colony’.

The clientele of Southport was in these early years mainly the well to do from Brisbane and the wealthy grazing areas of Beaudesert and the more distant Darling Downs, people who could afford the time and expense to travel to this relatively distant settlement. The Week reported in February 1876:

The view from the proposed township embraces a long stretch of the bay northward, the island of Stradbroke in the background, immediately opposite is the Boat Passage through which a glimpse of the ocean is obtained. Rock oysters and crabs abound, and are readily obtainable at low tide; there are also in the vicinity excessive oyster beds, from which large supplies of fine shellfish are constantly taken by the lessees. .....Altogether Southport offers many inducements to persons wishing really to enjoy a trip to the seaside.

Mr and Mrs Maddock Hughes house of the 1930s. [John Oxley Library]
2 History

The Southport Hotel was constructed by 1876 and a two storey Pacific Hotel was built by an original land buyer, Thomas Hanlon, late in 1878. These establishments were aimed at 'the distinguished and aristocratic element of the colony', and developed the distinctive flavour of English seaside resort hotels. The Southport Easter Regatta in 1879 attracted several steamers full of visitors, including the government steamer, Kate, with Cabinet ministers aboard.

By the early 1880s the local economy at Southport was increasingly concerned with servicing the needs of the visitor population which grew when Cobb & Co commenced their service via Coombabah in 1879 and a regular steamer service brought visitors from Brisbane in four hours. Southport was also in touch with the outside world via the telegraph extension from Nerang. The beginnings of a permanent population was settling in, but the hinterland town of Nerang was still the main service centre for the area. Amenity was improved with the construction of a rough esplanade along the beach, made possible by private subscriptions from Southport's supporters. A Post Office appears to have functioned in Marine Parade immediately to the south of Nerang Street almost as soon as permanent settlers arrived.

Pratten's survey did not include any areas of land reserved for government purposes, as was usual practice in town surveys in the nineteenth century. The absence of early Crown reserves for administrative, transport and recreational purposes is a significant element in explaining the pattern of later subdivisions and local government 'reserves' which appeared and disappeared. The state government's attitude may have been responsible for the absence of reserves in the early surveys. In February 1885, the Land Board refused the Southport Divisional Board's request for 2250 acres to be set aside as a reserve for 'commonage, timber, gravel, water, roads and camping purposes' because it was foreseeing a time when such land would be required for sale as 'town or suburban lands'.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, small reserves were set aside for police, a court house, post and telegraph office, for a school, for local government purposes, and for a school of arts. The choice sites along the Marine Parade were left for private and commercial development while the government took land away from the water and concentrated its activities around Nerang, Davenport, and Scarborough Streets. The 1885 plan shows a school reserve in Scarborough Street on one side of the
2 History

present Lawson Street and a recreational reserve on the other side. The triangular reserve where the present Gold Coast hospital stands is also shown on an 1886 plan.

Yet, on the other hand, some plans from the 1880s indicate subdivisions into small blocks in areas which later became either reserves of one kind or another. An 1882 plan for the ‘Sparkling Wave Estate’ to the immediate north of Nerang Street indicates that approval had been given for land in Lawson and White Streets to be divided into small blocks.

In 1883 the post office was built in Nerang Street the main street of the town. The same year saw the formation of the Southport Divisional Board. This board, later to become the Southport Shire and then Town Council, was a breakaway from the predominantly rural Nerang Divisional Board.

In the directories of 1883-4 Southport was still noted as a ‘watering place’ near the border of Queensland and New South Wales, with communication by steamers a few times a week. The Southport Divisional Board separated from the Nerang Divisional Board in 1883, indicating a developing maturity in the community and a clerk of petty sessions was resident in the town, but a police magistrate visited from Beenleigh. A provisional school, and a boarding school, had been established, a post master and telegraph operator were resident. There were two churches in the town compared to four hotels and two boarding houses. Shopkeepers, builders, sawmillers and other permanent residents brought the population to about 200.

"Summer place" and Governor Musgrave

The decision of Governor Sir Anthony Musgrave in 1884 to build a vice-regal residence known as Summer Place, on the Nerang River (at what is now part of The Southport School), gave the seal of approval to the district as a place for the social elite of Brisbane to holiday, and marked a point of superiority over Sandgate, its rival resort. Southport’s role as a resort for the establishment was reinforced. Large and substantial houses were soon constructed nearby at the ‘Government House and Domain estate’ as well as along the foreshore of the Broadwater. Visitor numbers boomed. Although travel to the area was still relatively difficult the well to do flocked to the area: the Gores and the Humes from the country, the Palmers and the Lilleyes from the urban political realm. The foreshore and areas near the Nerang River became the elite parts of Southport.

The 1885 plan showing the land the Southport Divisional Board wanted to have reserved also showed a total of 200 acres owned by the grazier, William Duckett White and large landholdings held by Richard Gardiner. An 1886 plan shows the position of some of the houses along Marine Parade.

New guest houses and hotels were constructed on the waterfront to cater for the growing attendance of holidaymakers. The ultimate symbol of confidence in the resort’s future was the construction of the massive
2 History

Grand Hotel, opened at Deepwater Point on the Broadwater in 1886. A large two storey timber building, it was one of the most lavish hotels in the whole colony. Designed by the architects John Hall & Sons, it was described as the ultimate statement of Southport’s prosperity, as:

“A magnificent hotel - equal to anything in Australia, and much larger than the crack hotels in America. To look at this hotel from a Malthusian (Deepwater) point of view, one would think that the population of Queensland was three million instead of 300,000. However it was built by a transcendent syndicate, who have spared no expense, and have built this mansion out of the immense profits from their speculations in Southport alone. The house is furnished by Finney Isles & Co, and different suites of first class furniture must have loaded several ships from America.”

Shops in Southport stocked exotic and expensive goods suitable for elite entertaining: English hams, Huntley and Palmer’s biscuits and ‘continental delicacies’. The ‘sport of kings’ also had a presence; race meetings began in 1885. Subsequent governors chose to holiday elsewhere but Southport had received the fillip it deserved and became, in the succeeding years, a place for all the people.

The railway

In January 1889 the railway arrived. The line carved through the existing subdivision in a reserve which terminated at a station close to the Marine Parade. Railway construction was not achieved without considerable rancour. From 1886 onwards, the government received many appeals against the compensation it intended to pay for resuming land for the railway line. The railway reserve was narrow – rarely wider than 66 yards – but it sliced through residential subdivisions in such a way as to sharply decrease the value of remaining land. A second station was proposed at a site which became the showground reserve but was never constructed.

The immediate and inevitable impact of the railway was to boost the number of visitors to the south coast. Southport became a place for all
2 History

classes. By 1889 the town was described as 'one of the most popular watering places' in the colony. A pier and swimming baths had been constructed and during the summer months a large influx of visitors took place as holiday populations regularly doubled the town's usual population of 900. Visitors were accommodated in hotels, guest houses and under canvas in camping grounds along the beach. There were 12 boarding houses and 6 hotels in Southport alone. One or two more hotels across the Nerang River by the ocean foreshadowed the coming shift to surf bathing.

In another way, however, the coming of the railway was a double-edged sword. The extension of the railway to Coolangatta and Tweed Heads in 1903 also brought public transport to a rival township at the southern end of the surf coast. The 1890s were not good years for Southport; cyclonic weather in 1890 and 1893 destroyed facilities and the depression of the 1890s drastically reduced visitor numbers and brought hard times to Southport businesses. In 1897-98, Stradbroke Island broke in two, eliminating the oyster industry but improving fishing; the build-up of sand from the Jumpinpin ‘break-through’ produced the long narrow Southport spit, making the Broadwater even safer for swimming and boating.

In the late 1890s, visitor numbers revived, sugar and sawmilling flourished, and government services expanded - the Pacific Cable Station was constructed in 1901 on a large site to the south of Queen Street. The cable station complex included a number of large ‘timber and tin’ buildings’ of similar size and scale to domestic buildings. The cable station represented a significant step towards modernity at the time of the Federation of the Australian colonies. The Trans-Pacific communications cable from Vancouver via Norfolk Island came ashore at Southport in 1902. The cable station was a substantial complex of buildings erected in Bauer Street.

Although ‘industries’ such as the cable station were developing, the most important industry in the first third of the twentieth century was tourism, although more retired people chose Southport as a pleasant place for their later lives.
2 History

The new century: consolidation

The promotion of surf bathing from the early twentieth century and the construction of the first of Jim Cavill’s Surfers Paradise Hotels in 1925 moved the focus of many holidaymakers to the nearby surf beaches.

Southport itself remained as the administrative and commercial centre of the coast for many years, and continued to assert its dominant role despite the development of the coastal strip and the easy access provided to those areas by the motor car. Many of the houses on the ‘surf strip’ were holiday retreats; people who resided permanently on the coast tended to live at Southport. From the early 1900s the town had consolidated into a more sedate and traditional settlement than the surf beaches, appealing more to families and to traditional visitors who preferred the safer water of the Broadwater, particularly if they enjoyed boating and sailing. Strong similarities with the English resort of Southport remained for the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Certainly there is evidence of a growing interest in the area by country people. Families such as the Whites from the Beaudesert region were substantial land holders in the region. In the mid nineteenth century, supplies for a large cotton plantation at Carrara and for the White family grazing leases were brought by sea to the Nerang River. The Whites held had the leases on the Murry Jerry and Dungogie runs comprising much of the Gold Coast and Hinterland and then leased Coombabah which comprised much of the present Helensvale area where they developed a sugar plantation with J R Robinson. After Ernest White’s death in 1884, his widow and family lived at the family holiday house, Mara, in Bauer Street.

At about this time Southport began to develop as an educational centre as had other cities in Queensland where the climate was considered to be healthy for children from the bush. In earlier eras, Herberton on the Atherton Tableland, Charters Towers on the heights west of Townsville and Toowoomba on the Darling Downs in pleasant, cooler climates had
2 History

also developed as education centres, with the establishment of two of Queensland’s best known private boarding schools in Southport. Goyte-lea girls’ school was regarded as an elite boarding school where daughters of the ‘upper 500’ influential families were educated. Goyte-lea became St Hilda’s Church of England School for Girls. The Southport School began as a school in St Peter’s Church of England parish and was later adopted by the Diocese of Brisbane. It developed on the site of the former Governor’s ‘Summer Place’. In 1903, the Roman Catholic Start of the Sea convent school opened on the Esplanade in a building moved from Ferry Street where it had been an earlier school, Miss Cargill’s Southport College.

The Town of Southport was declared in 1918, but the large Town Hall was not opened until 1935. By the 1920s the permanent population had grown to approximately 3,500 and continuing subdivision and development was taking place to accommodate this growth. Unlike the earliest development which took place close to the water to service a visitor population, by the end of the First World War settlement had begun to spread out along the railway line toward the west where land was less expensive and proximity to the water was not the priority for permanent residents. The form of the settlement as a centre surrounded by suburban estates was established.

Nevertheless, developments such as the Pacific Ocean estate also demonstrated that strong interest in sea front remained. The development of community infrastructure, including schools such as the Star of the Sea Roman Catholic School and the Thams cinema also began to accelerate from this era to service the growing permanent population.

The motor car

The opening of the Jubilee Bridge in 1925 was a major event in Southport’s history. Its construction allowed ready access across the Nerang to the ocean beaches and further opened these areas to development.

The development of the Pacific Highway as the lifeline to the South Coast was complete by 1935. Bridges constructed over the Coomera (1930) and the Logan Rivers (1932), meant that the coastal resorts were now only a few hours away for Brisbane motorists over a two-lane bituminised road. Visitor populations soared throughout the region and Southport as the administrative and commercial centre benefited. Its population grew from 7,000 in 1930 to 7,500 in 1937; this 7% growth during the Depression was, however, less than the 12.7% growth in the Queensland population between 1930 and 1940.

The car also made it easier for a regional population to visit town, and Southport increasingly developed in these years as a service centre for the local region. Southport began to overtake Nerang as a service centre in the inter-war period.
The 1930s were something of a boom time for the South Coast and for Southport. The opening of the interstate railway from the southern states made Southport and the surfing strip more accessible to visitors from Australia’s colder regions. Southport could boast two cinemas, the Regent and the Pier, the latter first constructed out over the Broadwater in 1926 and rebuilt after a fire in 1931. Nerang Street presented an affluent face with banks, draperies, jewellers, grocers, and such substantial 1930s buildings as the Hotel Cecil, replacing an earlier building of the same name, the new Southport Town Council Chambers of 1935 and a Southport court house constructed in 1933 on the court house reserve in Nerang Street. Bathing pavilions were constructed on the esplanade adjacent to the railway station. By 1933, the Southport Town Council had overcome its aversion to modern one-piece swimming costumes for both men and women, making the visitor experience more enjoyable for younger people. The official adoption of the name ‘Surfers Paradise’ for the surfside village, Elston, seduced holiday visitors from Southport and its administrative role strengthened. The Southport-based Bulletin newspaper persisted in describing the Surfers paradise hotel as a ‘a popular hotel some three miles from town’.

In 1935 the population of Southport was given at about 4,200, rising in the decade to 1945 to 7,850. In these years the residential areas to the west of the early settlement were extended catering to the permanent population that now dominated the town. The following table which links population growth to economic activity and phase of historical development shows the eras of population increase.
## History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Historical phase</th>
<th>Economic activity</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Beginning of settlement</td>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>After the railway arrived</td>
<td>Tourism, more for the masses than the elite</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1025%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Infrastructure developing</td>
<td>Tourism, fishing</td>
<td>1538</td>
<td>70.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>The English seaside resort</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>3550</td>
<td>130.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Solidifying as a service centre</td>
<td>Tourism services</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Beginning of Great Depression</td>
<td>Cars bring visitors</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Depression beginning to lift</td>
<td>Service functions solidifying</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>End of World War II</td>
<td>Suburban growth accelerates</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td></td>
<td>Permanent population grows strongly</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>13.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Height of post-war boom</td>
<td>Older buildings disappear more rapidly</td>
<td>15,208</td>
<td>60.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>The boom continues</td>
<td>Suburban sprawl becomes evident</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Recession</td>
<td>Hard times affect real estate all over Queensland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Surfers Paradise has become dominant</td>
<td>Service centre and administration. Many of the earlier twentieth century buildings have disappeared from central Southport</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Southport's role as an administration is confirmed</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Much slower growth with urban consolidation and renewal of existing housing stock</td>
<td>23,807</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24,097</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
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</table>

*Some of these figures are approximations drawn from census records and other historical sources.*
2 History

Post war: development and redevelopment

There was a similar rapid growth in population in the post war period: in 1947 the population was given as 8,400, in 1958 9,500. In 1964 the population had soared to 15,208, and in 1968 19,579. This extraordinary growth in the prosperous 1960s reflected two important influences felt by most urban areas in Australia: first, the ‘catch up’ after the 1930s depression, the Second World War and the years of building material shortages and, second, cars came within reach of the less affluent who relied much less than previously on public transport. In towns and cities which could easily spread outwards these were years of almost unconstrained urban sprawl, but in areas were natural features and other constraints were limiting factors, suburban development became more intense.

The pressure of population growth was reflected in the construction of new facilities, often within the earliest subdivisions and development of the town. The two decades following the end of World War II in 1945 were a period of rapid growth in Australia generally. New subdivisions appeared all over Queensland – war service housing estates in areas like Wavell Heights and Chermside in Brisbane, state housing commission estates like Inala in Brisbane. Most of these new estates followed conventional grid patterns.. The plan for the Musgrave Hill subdivision, approved in February 1947, differed from the dominant pattern in its semi-circular pattern. Each subdivided portion was small, rarely larger than 20 perches. The shape of the estate and street names such as ‘Deakin’ and ‘Fisher’ suggest that the plan for Canberra may have influenced the shape of Musgrave Hill.

Housing struggled to keep pace with population increase. Building materials were in short supply until well into the 1950s. Many of the houses remaining in Musgrave Hill from the early post-war period demonstrate ‘austerity’ housing influences.

A hospital had been needed since the 1930s when permanent population first began to mount, but it was not until 1947 that a hospital was established. The present complex dates from 1960.

In 1955 the new State high school, the first at the South Coast, opened on a 23 acre site at Musgrave Hill, one of the few large areas which could be used for the purpose of developing a large school convenient to central Southport and the main suburban areas. Until then, state secondary education at Southport had been provided as a ‘secondary top’ to the state school. The site of the new High School was described by the Education Department as ‘high ground overlooking Southport and the Broadwater with easy access from all parts’. The Department had secured the site ‘a few years’ before deciding to erect the high school in 1954. It is likely, therefore, that the site was set aside at the time the Musgrave Hill subdivision was approved for sale.
2 History


With these changes the *South Coast Bulletin* could talk about "Southport's new look". There was, in that description, perhaps a sense of pride in the changes and in the loss of the earlier and more gentle urban form of the 'marine township'. Although the 1960s boom which transformed Surfers Paradise largely passed Southport by, the era of Southport's art deco Council Chambers, the gracious houses on the waterfront and the distinguished large hotels was drawing to a close. Retailing, too, developed more rapidly in the 1860s and 1970s, first with the construction of the Sundale shopping complex and later the development of Australia Fair at the site of the former Pacific Hotel on Marine Parade adjacent to Nerang Street.

Throughout this period Southport remained the centre of local government for the Gold Coast City and for the newly created Albert Shire Council. There were however stronger forces at work and the Gold Coast as it was now known was undergoing a metamorphosis undreamed of before the war. Population was booming right along the coast and centred not on established centres such as Southport or Coolangatta but in the newly created strip development and in high rise apartments constructed on the coastal dunes.

By the 1970s both Albert Shire and Gold Coast councils had abandoned Southport as an administrative centre with Albert council building new premises in Nerang and the Gold Coast in Evandale.

The changes that have characterised Southport's history since 1874 are likely to continue.

2.2 Themes

History is not simply a series of unrelated events. The history of any place is inextricably linked to its geographic position, to the state of politics and economics and to the social framework or background of the people. The opportunities and constraints presented by these conditions and by the circumstances of time combine to create history. Inevitably various themes repeat and reoccur.

Southport is no exception in this. Its creation as a 'marine village' was a function of its location but so too was its early development a function of changing social conditions. Its later development as an administrative centre was equally a function of late nineteenth century government practice; its development as a railway hub demonstrated both its role as an entrepot to a holiday destination and its commercial importance to the region.
2 History

These influences continue and although the physical expression of those issues change they can be seen within a relatively constant array. The urban heritage and character of the study area is best able to be understood by understanding those themes of Southport's history.

The Gold Coast Urban Heritage and Character Study identified 36 themes of history within the broader city area. These were in turn developed from the thematic analysis carried out by consultants Uniquest in 1995 for the SEQ2000 study.

The present strategy has refined and limited those to fifteen themes. These are:

Settlement

Early settlement of Southport was very much influenced by its promotion as a seaside resort. From 1874 and the first survey the settlement flourished. Previously a pilot station had existed at the mouth of the Nerang River and timber getters had used the area as a base for their operations but it was the holiday makers that first ensured some permanence for the settlement.

Clustered around the waterfront, settlement was slow in the early years but gathered momentum from the 1880s and peaked in the years leading up to and immediately following the Second World War, apart from the inevitable slow-down during the 1930s depression.

Increasingly in the post-war years the ratio of permanent population to holiday population increased as Southport became less of a holiday destination and more of a commercial and administrative centre for the region.

While little remains of the built environment from that period the pattern of settlement is clearly reflected in the urban form of the study area.

Sub-division

The pattern of sub-division at Southport reflects the different forces of development since 1874. The early "marine village" facing the Broadwater gave way to a more conventional urban pattern within a decade centred on a government and commercial precinct in Nerang Street. The major road network largely pre-dated subdivision and creates its own influence on the character of the area. Suburban sub-division in the early years of this century largely followed the conventional grid form but was not uniform in its expression. The estate focused on the former cable station and adjacent to The Southport School for example comprises larger allotments than those to the west, reflecting the expectation that wealthier people would pay a premium for proximity to the water.

An estate adjacent to the State high school is an early example of planning around the contours of a hill on which it is located and stands in
2 History

contrast to the more usual grids of the remaining area. The history of subdivision suggests that the growth in permanent population outstripped planning for the area. Land is set aside for specific purposes and then sacrificed to subdivision. The original racecourse reserves are pertinent illustrations of this phenomenon.

Waterfront

The Broadwater was the raison d’etre of Southport in its formative years as a "watering place" in the model of nineteenth century seaside resorts. Bathing, fishing and boating were an integral part of the holiday experience. Indeed access to the settlement in its early days was almost entirely by water.

Early houses faced the waterfront and hotels and guest houses almost universally capitalised on the views and the immediate association with the Broadwater. Many houses were large, in accordance with their owner’s social status and wealth. Many of these houses were a vivid contrast to later houses on small blocks in suburban subdivisions. Hotels and guest houses – and some private houses – had their own jetties or launches for the benefit of guests and promoted waterborne recreational activities.

The railway when it arrived in 1889 came to the waterfront and bathing pavilions and other public facilities such as swimming baths and even picture theatres were located there. Facilities such as a park and pier for promenading and the cinema reflected the influence of English seaside ‘amusements’.

Reclamation of parkland fronting the Broadwater has taken place since first settlement and the original road is now a busy highway. The waterfront is however still the focus of public life and the proximity with development is an important characteristic of Southport.

Arrival / Destination

As a holiday destination the sense of arrival at Southport was an important experience. The long journey by boat, rail or motor car culminated in a sense of arrival at the Broadwater where views and cool
2 History

breezes and a different environment greeted the visitor. Today Southport remains something of a gateway to the broader Gold Coast and an identifiable destination in its own right. Its location adjacent to and facing the Broadwater is still an important aspect of the sense of arrival. The notion of the ‘first glimpse’ of the sea remains despite substantial changes to the foreshore. The modest bulk of urban form is in contrast to the highly developed belt immediately to the south and the river crossing marks Southport as an entry or arrival point to the remainder of the coastal strip. The retention of modest bulk in the urban form in Southport in the past 30 years distinguishes it from Surfers Paradise with its characteristic high rise apartments to a far greater degree than earlier decades when the ‘holiday house’ and small hotel nature of Surfers Paradise was little different from the basic Southport urban form.

Holiday population

Since its first settlement by Europeans holiday makers have played an important part in setting the character of Southport. The first houses were designed for weekend or holiday use and let to Brisbane or country families. These and other holiday buildings took their architectural style from a more generous expression or more exciting form. Some of the early hotels were amongst the most lavish in the State when first constructed.

Early beach houses and guest houses, some of which survive, were on the one hand basic, as befits a holiday house, and at the same time generous in their interpretation of elements such as verandahs and in their determination to capture views and sea breezes.

Permanent population

While Southport generated a small permanent population since almost its first settlement it was not until the 1930s and 1940s that the permanent population became a major aspect in the history of the town. During this period the suburban residential estates to the west of High Street were
2 History

developed and housing constructed that differed markedly from the specialist, holiday houses of previous eras. The rise in permanent population also saw the construction of places such as hospitals, schools and Government and community buildings. The population doubled again in the 1960s.

Government

Southport has been the centre of government at the Gold Coast for many years. The Southport Divisional Board was formed in 1883 and remained the centre of local government until the 1970s. Local government facilities such as Showgrounds and Recreational Reserves were established as the population grew, but many reserves were reduced in size and the excised portions sold when the population grew and the suburbs spread.

As the major centre within the region it was also the focus of State government facilities such as hospitals, courthouses, police stations and state schools. The presence of the railway was another expression of government and had a marked influence on the form of Southport. The closure of the original South Coast railway line at the height of the motor car era also had an important influence on urban form. Roads became larger and busier, railway buildings were either removed or transferred to other purposes. The opening of the new South Coast line in the more environmentally aware 1990s also had its effect; Southport became a convenient commuter town.

Throughout the study area evidence of that focus survives. While there was no cohesive government precinct in the normal manner on nineteenth century town layouts, government presence is well represented in the historic urban form. The site of the former railway station is marked by the transit centre where buses come and go.
2 History

continuously often to transfer passengers to the new railway station some distance away at Helensvale.

Commerce

Nerang Street has been at the centre of commercial activity in Southport since almost its first settlement. Certainly Southport, along with Coolangatta, was one of only two centres on the entire coast where retail activity was concentrated in any meaningful way. By the 1930s Nerang Street was a substantial commercial thoroughfare.

Looking West along Nerang Street.
[Gold Coast Local Studies Library]

From about the same time Southport became a centre for commercial activity relating to the agricultural base of the wider region with milk factories, processing and distribution activities. Some factories were established in the area. Timber milling also remained an important industry from the time logs were first floated from the mountainous hinterland down the Nerang River to the sea in the 1870s. Southport Timbers, for example, remained in Nind Street – conveniently close to the old railway line – until the 1970s.

The opening of the first major shopping centre at Sundale reinforced that position as did the more recent construction of Australia Fair. Commercial activity has spread in the last few years to High Street and to former residential areas. The advent of the supermarket and the large ‘shoppingtown’ idea, pioneered in Queensland at Chermside in the 1950s, also altered urban form in Southport, as in many other towns and cities. Department stores in main streets often disappeared and small butcheries and greengrocers also tended to be replaced by larger outlets in the supermarkets or shopping towns.

Education

Within the study area or immediately adjacent to it are four schools and a former school site. Even before its population warranted local schools, its remote location, the healthy environment, the convenience of train travel and the association of Southport with country Queensland soon led to the
2 History

establishment of private schools. Both The Southport School and St. Hilda’s are dominant icons in the urban landscape.

The Southport School was one of two private boarding schools in Southport.

As the permanent population grew State funded education followed. Both primary and secondary education was found at Southport before other places at the Coast. The Southport State Primary School building constructed in 1880 has only recently been moved to a new site in the old Showground Reserve and the Southport State High School, established in 1955, proudly boasts its status as the first at the coast.

Health care

A dominant element of the study area is the public hospital building at the intersection of High, Nerang and Queen Streets. The first State funded hospital at the coast was constructed in 1947 although there had been pressure for such a facility since the 1930s when the population began to boom. The original Pindara private hospital opened in 1971, pre-dating the public hospital and perhaps reflecting the wealth of the Southport area. The Allamanda private hospital opened a few years later in 1979. The state hospital at Southport is the only public hospital on the Gold Coast, demonstrating Southport’s continuing importance as a centre for services and facilities.

There has been a long tradition of health care at Southport based on the nineteenth century belief in the curative powers of sea bathing and that theme remains today with a range of supporting health care facilities within the study area.

Introduced landscape

Introduced landscaping was part of the earliest development of Southport and the Broadwater foreshore. Figs planted adjacent to the town centre and along the waters edge survive today. Norfolk pines at the Labrador end of the Marine Parade reflect the preferences of the 1930s and even the more recent palms introduce a further theme of exotic vegetation.
2 History

Some early subdivisions are characterised by avenues of figs or even mango trees. While more recent subdivisions generally lack the dominant planting of these earlier settlements the sub-division on the former Cable Station site contains throughout, plantings of Bribie Island pines that appear to have been planted when the area was occupied by the cable station. Private gardens in this area are similarly more substantial and established. Gardens in the new subdivisions reflect interest in Australian native plantings which developed in the 1970s.

Land reclamation

The settlement of Southport at the Broadwater and the principal access along Marine Parade stood the town in good stead for many years. Some of the early descriptions of the town describe advantages of the proximity of the water and the views that this afforded. Coincident with this advantage was however a constant threat that the sea would break across the sandy embankment and cause damage to roads and property in this vicinity and flood into the area behind Scarborough Street which was low lying and swampy. A sea wall constructed in 1901 attempted to stem the erosion but had the unintended consequence of destroying the sandy beach that had existed to that time. Some evidence remains of that sea wall adjacent to the river crossing. Over the years the reserve at Marine Parade was extended and the area has now become a major open space within the study area.

Long views

Part of the pleasure of the Gold Coast are the long views of the City. Southport has particular qualities in this regard because of the opportunities provided to look back to it from across the Broadwater.

Views from within the study area are equally important and characteristic. These include the major view corridors at Nerang Street, Short Street and Queen Street and the views to the south from along Marine Parade at Labrador toward the high rise of Surfers Paradise. The intimate river front view which includes the old cable station site and the Southport School is another characteristic vista.

Icons

In any city or place objects may be extolled as representing the essence of the place and in time are regarded as essential to the understanding or deeper meaning of that place. Southport is no exception in that regard.

Icons need not be major structures and indeed even modest elements such as the bathing pavilions at Marine Parade or the subtle reminders of early tree planting may be important icons of the essential character of Southport. Their value to the urban heritage or character of the study area transcends normal heritage criteria which rely for their value on comparative analysis with other, similar places. Icons stand alone and
2 History

represent in their own right the very essence of the heritage and character of Southport.

Views, vistas and topographic features can also have icon quality. In that respect the view of the Broadwater cannot be overlooked in considering iconic qualities.

Remnants

The nature of redevelopment in any city or urban area is such that evidence of earlier land use or occupation is seldom completely obliterated. Often small sites or vestiges of early use remain within areas that at first glance appear to have been comprehensively re-developed. Within the study area close observation reveals earlier housing, commercial development, tree planting and infrastructure.

Sometimes remnants are difficult to distinguish and some understanding of the history of the area will be necessary to fully appreciate their contribution to urban character. Often the remnants consist of only small items such as early kerbing, fence posts, and small houses in re-developed streetscapes or remnant landscape that individually do not constitute heritage nor represent meaningfully the broader character of the place but have value, nevertheless, as important survivors.

2.3 Mapping the evidence

Like most nineteenth century settlements, Southport had grown around an early government survey and has been subject to commercial pressures reflected in private land sales and subdivisions.

The social development of the area has been identified in the discussion of historic themes.

The change and growth of the area is best represented by mapping the development of the study area and the following maps give a clear indication of how development within the study area has taken place.

The information has been compiled from government survey maps, from estate agents maps advertising sales and even from early street directories. No claim is made to absolute accuracy and indeed some licence has been taken in assigning dates to each composite map.

While the development of the study area was taking place the Gold Coast itself was increasingly subject to settlement mostly focused along the coastal strip and particularly so since the closing years of the nineteenth century when the interest in the surfing beaches began.
Maps showing the chronological growth and subdivision within the study area from 1879 until 1972. [Allom Lovell]
2 History

1879

The government survey shows a row of town allotments facing the Broadwater with larger subdivisions away from the sea. North-South roads were skewed parallel to Marine Parade and the foreshore and Nerang Street was clearly at the centre of the survey. The line of the future Queen Street formed the southern boundary of the settlement.

The plan of Southport prepared in 1879.
[Queensland State Archives]
2 History

1886

By this time subdivision extended north across Loders Creek to take advantage of the waterfront and some closer settlement was evident within the original government survey. Queen Street was now clearly marked and Nerang Street, the road to the hinterland had also been formed further to the west.

The plan of Southport in 1886.
[Queensland State Archives]
2 History

1914

The arrival of the railway in the late nineteenth century encouraged development along the road reserve in anticipation of a station to the west of the Southport terminus. Some subdivision also occurred by this time to the south of Queen Street where the cable station was located.

The plan of Southport in 1914.
[Queensland State Archives]
2 History

1929

The 1930s was a boom period in Southport's history. Even by the beginning of that decade there was evidence of growth in closer subdivision of the original survey and in a major subdivision in the southwest of the study area in which suburban allotments were, for the first time the primary subdivision pattern. Nerang Street extended even further west through that new area.

1946

By the end of the Second World War settlement extended to the south and into the cable station reserve, and in the north west in the markedly different subdivision adjacent to the present high school.
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1960

The closure of the railway line ironically encouraged residential subdivision in that area immediately to the north of the railway reserve. The suburban settlement of the study area was effectively complete and spread beyond the original town boundaries north to Labrador and south to Surfers Paradise.

1972

Subdivision continued within the original survey area as larger blocks were reduced in size for single residential development and early housing gave way to commercial activity. Evidence was also apparent of some amalgamation into large blocks as larger scale commercial and tourist related residential projects were constructed.
3 The strategy reviewed

In preparing a strategy for the protection of urban heritage and character an understanding of the meaning of those terms and their relationship to each other must be first established. Heritage is not the same as character, even historic character, and the manner in which each is assessed and ultimately conserved or enhanced differs markedly.

Other, related, issues of amenity and taste can also cloud judgement as to what constitutes the heritage and character of an area and consequently the provision of town planning controls or incentives. In Southport, where continued growth is central to the strategic objectives of the town plan, these distinctions are critical.

Heritage

Urban heritage, its promotion and management have become part of late twentieth century culture. Few cities or communities are without a desire for a sense of history and an expression of the past in the urban environment.

In introducing the concept of the National Estate in the early 1970s, the then Prime Minister of Australia, Gough Whitlam, described heritage as ‘the things we want to keep’.

In this phrase there is an implied sense of commitment to permanence and stability. Heritage suggests a lack of change or "keeping" aspects of the built or natural environment for future generations, those places which are of such value that their conservation is seen as being important to the cultural or psychological well being of the community. The protection of that heritage through legislative provisions is part of that recognition.

Early heritage legislation focused largely on monumental buildings, buildings of antiquity and buildings with clear artistic or aesthetic merit. In the late twentieth century the criteria as to what constitutes the heritage of a place has been extended to include attributes such as social value, and the history of ordinary people. Legislation that has grown up around these more complex concepts, is similarly complex reflecting the need for precision and fairness in making such decisions.

The necessary precision in detailed documentation and assessment of these places can be an expensive and time consuming exercise for both property owners and the local authority. It is not the only tool available and does not always result in improved urban quality.

While heritage listing is an important tool in the management of individual places within the urban environment it is also a cumbersome one and can result in unnecessary conflict and misunderstanding in its application. The identification of heritage and the provision of controls for its protection should not therefore be undertaken lightly. It should be
3 The strategy reviewed

reserved for those places which are truly of value to future generations. Other mechanisms exist for the protection of more general concerns of character and amenity.

There is sometimes in the minds of the public, and of planners and conservationists, confusion between the idea of heritage and the character of the urban environment and in the appropriate protection of each.

In carrying out any survey and in drafting the subsequent recommendations the distinction between heritage and character is therefore an important one.

Character

While the permanence and stability of heritage protection may contribute to the character of the area in which those places are located, urban character is more usually an evolving or developing quality and is dependent upon less tangible or measurable quantities than heritage.

Christian Norburg-Schulz in his essay The Phenomenon of Place says ‘character’ denotes the general ‘atmosphere’ which is the most comprehensive property of any place.’ From this perspective, character, while no less important perhaps than heritage as a generator of historical meaning and understanding, is not necessarily conserved or protected by conserving heritage places alone. It is the genius loci of a place that determines its character. “As a rule places change, sometimes rapidly” Norburg-Schultz says. “That does not mean, however, that the genius loci necessarily changes or gets lost. To protect and conserve the genius loci in fact means to concretise its essence in an ever new historical context”. Nevertheless, in older urban landscapes much of the character does reside in early fabric and there is often a community expectation that change is in some way controlled.

Given these different views, the character of a place may often be best conserved by focusing not solely on fabric but also on more subtle non-physical qualities such as land use. Strict limitation or minimisation of change to fabric as expected in heritage legislation may not always be appropriate.

For example areas that have traditionally or historically functioned as housing may best maintain their character by allowing or even encouraging change for new, perhaps different forms of housing even if that means the loss of some early fabric. In some instances, such as Musgrave Hill, the ‘shape’ of the subdivision is both a ‘heritage’ feature and an important influence on character. Unlike heritage the notion of controlled change is central to the conservation of character.

The assessment of character or a less tangible genius loci of a place in which change is considered normal is therefore not adequately addressed in heritage criteria. Nor are the controls proposed in heritage
3 The strategy reviewed

legislation appropriate. It is a distinctive issue properly dealt with by town planning or associated disciplines.

The assessment of character should embrace the contributions of all generations at least as much as those historical qualities which may have generated or formed that character.

It is therefore reliant upon controls which are by definition more flexible and accommodating than heritage provisions and is more closely aligned with controls which accept development or redevelopment as the norm.

The character of any area or precinct is, unlike heritage, an evolving and changing quality that depends as much on historic places and settings as on transition to a "new historical context".

Any survey must recognise these distinctions.

3.1 Current Planning Scheme provisions for the conservation of heritage and character

The Gold Coast Planning Scheme (Our Living City) took effect in August 2003. It provides a layered approach to managing development within the city and contains broad City Strategies which are reflected in the detail of domain and constraint maps and associated codes that apply in a general sense throughout the city, or which are reflected in greater detail through local area plans and their associated codes.

Within this framework there are several means by which the Planning Scheme implements its Urban Heritage & Character Strategy identified in Part 3 Division 2 Key Strategies, Chapter 14 of the Planning Strategy. The approaches adopted are described below:

- Where development involving a material change of use, building work, or operational work (changes to ground level) is proposed for individual places of heritage significance and those properties which adjoin such places, then the development is to be assessed against the Cultural Heritage (Historic) Code (in addition to any other relevant codes or scheme provisions). For development on individual heritage places there is a requirement for the preparation of a conservation plan as the basis for work.

  This provision currently applies to 17 heritage places within the city which are identified on registers or lists adopted and maintained by organizations external to the Council. A vast majority of these places are included on the Queensland Heritage Register and are therefore subject to the statutory controls over development that are provided in the Queensland Heritage Act 1992. Currently there are three places within the Southport LAP that are formally listed under this scheme: the former Southport Council Chambers; the former Southport Bathing Pavilion; and the Southport Drill Hall.

- Approximately 400 properties within the city that adjoin the places contained on registers or lists are also subject to the Cultural Heritage (Historic) Code. These controls place a requirement for
code assessment which dictates the need for development of these sites to be undertaken in a manner that respects and complements the qualities of the adjoining heritage place.

- Within a LAP specific properties may be nominated for conservation. This appears to have been utilized so far only in the Mudgeeraba Village Local Area Plan and the Coolangatta Local Area Plan where properties have been individually listed. Development of these properties by way of a material change of use, reconfiguring a lot, building work or operational work (changes to ground level and vegetation clearing) is made code assessable against a specific code that requires the retention of facades and limits redevelopment options where a building is demolished or destroyed. Bonuses are offered for the retention of heritage buildings such as car parking requirement reductions. The code also requires adjacent development to incorporate specified building elements and forms of decoration.

- A third approach to heritage conservation is to be found in the Southport Local Area Plan. Here character areas are identified and applications in these areas for certain kinds of development require assessment against a code that incorporates requirements addressing elements such as building form and building materials. These controls are generally directed at ensuring compatible infill development rather than towards the retention of existing building fabric.

**Heritage provisions of the Southport LAP**

The Southport LAP, in its stated intent, acknowledges and supports the historic role Southport has played on the coast as a commercial and administrative centre, and seeks the enhancement of the distinctive urban form and built environment:

“Southport's distinctive urban form is based on the pattern of the traditional 'high street' commercial centre on Nerang Street, and is supported and surrounded by residential or suburban development. This urban form is to be protected by fostering and consolidating the traditional role of Southport and by encouraging new activities into the core of the LAP area, both to benefit the activity centre and to reduce pressure of high density development in the surrounding suburban or residential areas.”

This preferred outcome is reinforced in one of the Desired Environmental Outcomes (3.3), which seeks the valuing and protection of the surviving historic character of Southport. Key historic features identified are:

- Southport as a 19th century town surveyed and surrounded by later suburban development
- early, pre-survey access roads including Ferry Road and Nerang Street
- Southport's intimate association with the Broadwater, including Marine Parade and the foreshore reserve
3 The strategy reviewed

- Southport's role as one of the earliest holiday townships in South East Queensland
- The role of Southport as an administrative and commercial centre from its first settlement and, in particular, in the period up until the Second World War
- The historic built environment
- The consistency of its streetscapes and urban quality, including tree planting
- Groups of buildings which reflect the history of Southport, and
- Individual places of special value which reflect the history of Southport in its various periods

In addition, the Southport LAP specifies the desired outcomes for 12 specific precincts, which are identified on the basis of their core local area features (Fig. 28). The preferred character of these precincts is identified and discussed. To an extent this character is based on existing land use and contemporary landscape and urban form, the analysis of which is beyond the scope of this study. The precincts which incorporate heritage and historic character are:

- Precinct 1: Retail
- Precinct 3: Short Street
- Precinct 7: Broadwater Foreshore
- Precinct 9: Residential Areas
The LAP recognises that in some of the surrounding residential areas of Southport there has been extensive redevelopment which has affected the heritage and character values of those parts. Accordingly, provision is made to maintain or increase the development density in those locations to benefit further urban consolidation for the area surrounding the Southport business core. The LAP provides for high density residential development in nominated character areas in Southport.

Within the Residential Precinct, different character areas have been identified to assist in recognising and managing the different heritage and character values of the suburban areas of Southport. The definition of the character areas is based largely on early subdivision and land use
3 The strategy reviewed

history. The character areas are shown on Southport LAP Map 23.4 - Character Areas Within Precinct 9 Residential Areas. They are:

- RC(a) Old Southport Residential;
- RC(b) Queen Street Residential;
- RC(c) Marine Parade Strip;
- RC(d) Garden Residential;
- RC(e) Traditional Suburban; and
- RC(f) Suburban Renewal.

Mechanisms by which development is controlled within these Precincts and Character Areas are outlined in the Southport Local Area Plan Table of Development, where certain material changes of use, operational works and lot reconfigurations are made Code or Impact Assessable.
3 The strategy reviewed

None of these measures are expressly aimed at preserving heritage and historic character except where development is within or adjoining sites registered on the Queensland Heritage Register, National Trust of Queensland Register and Register of the National Estate, in which case it becomes subject to the Cultural Heritage (Historic) Constraint Code.

Development is also regulated through the Southport LAP Place Code. This Code aims to ensure that the scale, density and type of development, especially the design and appearance of buildings, is consistent with the intent of the LAP, including historic character and heritage. It is important to note that there is provision to retain historic street planting (PC42) and that the attributes of a place of special value identified in the 1997 Southport Urban Heritage and Character Strategy must be considered when changes, including removal, are proposed for that place (PC29). In Precinct 9 development on or adjacent to such a place must be appropriate in terms of use, scale, colour and bulk (PC30).

3.2 Summary of observations

- The survey finds that recent development in Southport has resulted in significant loss of places of heritage significance (places of special value in the 1997 study) and of precincts thought to have character based on historical urban form. (Refer to Appendix 1).

The essential character of Southport, however, remains and evidence may still be found of the early “marine village” stretched out along the Broadwater and linking through of the settlement to the foreshore reserve in streets such as Short, Nerang and Railway.

The early links to the hinterland also survive in Nerang Street and in the evidence remaining of the railway terminus at what is now Railway Street.

Little however remains of building fabric of that period and indeed more recent development of a density and scale unforeseen in the 1870s settlement has had a further impact upon any appreciation of most of Southport as a place of heritage value.

Despite the particular qualities and identifiable character of the study area it is not cohesive or notable in the manner of urban conservation areas found elsewhere in Australia.
A plan mapping the surviving character through all parts of Southport. [Allom Lovell]
3 The strategy reviewed

Within the study area however are five precincts of identifiable character. Two of these, the Nerang Street precinct and the Railway Station precinct reinforce the early history of Southport. Nerang Street was the main thoroughfare linking the foreshore, the settlement with the hinterland towns to the west and the location, from the 1870s, and retail and government activity.

The railway which came to Southport in 1889 had a major impact upon the settlement. While little physical evidence remains of the railway line or buildings the area around Railway Street and in the streets to the north contain some of the earliest housing surviving in the study area.

The other precincts date from the 1920s when Southport’s population first started to boom. The Town Reserve precinct and the Racecourse precinct were both subdivided out of Council’s own reservations of those names, and the Cable Station precinct was created to the south of Queen Street at about the same time.

Each of these has distinctive characteristics. The Town Reserve precinct in particular has housing stock and some cohesiveness of a consistent date and style and an interesting subdivision pattern of concentric streets focussed on the high ground.

The Racecourse precinct has later housing having been further subdivided from larger rural allotments and the Cable Station precinct also has a variety of housing styles but tied together by virtue of the larger allotments, larger houses and mature vegetation especially the Bribie Island Pine (*Callitris columellaris*).
3 The strategy reviewed

A plan showing the 5 precincts identified in this study. [Allom Lovell]
4 Recommendations

As previously outlined, the current provisions for the conservation of heritage and historic character within Southport have been problematic. Despite a stated intent on retaining and conserving historic buildings, the LAP has generally aimed at regulating in-fill development rather than the retention of existing building fabric. It has relied on the heritage lists of external organisations for triggering stronger controls, including on demolition. These external lists are far from comprehensive (only three sites are captured). Even if these lists were to be expanded, reliance on them as the key mechanisms for conservation is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the Queensland Heritage Register applies only to those places that have significance in a State-wide context and accordingly excludes all places which possess strong local significance but do not meet the State threshold. While the List maintained by the National Trust is more inclusive, that organization has no statutory obligation to maintain a list and, due to resource issues, is currently is not actively engaged in the listing process. The Register of the National Estate is now defunct, and while it will continue to be referred to, it is no longer an active list to which new places can be added.

Under the South East Queensland Regional Plan, Southport is designated as a Principle Activity Centre. This designation reinforces and develops on Southport’s traditional role as a centre of government administration, commerce, education and health care. Southport is also on the alignment of the proposed Gold Coast Rapid Transit, and this project introduces the potential of transforming Southport into a Transit Oriented development (TOD). Both these factors bring an expectation of greater densification of the urban environment, and therefore potential conflicts with heritage conservation. To help manage future growth of the centre, in 2009 Gold Coast City Council produced the Central Southport Master Plan (CSMP), and among its strategies is a Heritage Strategy. Although the target area of the CSMP is smaller than that of this study, the findings of this report, in draft form, were the basis of the Heritage Strategy. It is recommended that this study continue to inform future planning for Southport.

A three-part strategy is proposed to retain and enhance the heritage and character of Southport.

The first is the protection of value that makes Southport special as a whole. That is the overall quality of Southport as a “marine village” and includes the permeability which links the water to all parts of Southport via views from the tops of hills through to vista down streets such as Nerang, Short, Railway and Stevens Streets.
The second approach is in the adoption of a precinct based approach in which strict and enforceable controls are placed on demolition, changes to the subdivision pattern, modification of facades and the architectural expression of new structures. The aim of these measures is to better protect the historic character and integrity of the precincts. As already discussed, five precincts of historic character have been identified (reduced from the 11 identified in 1997). For these areas it would be advantageous to identify all character places within the precincts on an overlay map. The aim of these measures is to better protect the historic character and integrity of the precincts.

The third approach is in the establishment of a Local Heritage Register which provides protection to places of cultural heritage significance which are located in any part of the Southport LAP (refer Appendix 2). These would be identified on a heritage overlay map for the Southport LAP and
be subject to the provisions of the Cultural Heritage (Historic) Constraint Code.

A Southport local heritage register could also be incorporated into a city-wide local heritage register. Recent amendments to the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* now make it necessary for all local government authorities to maintain a register of local heritage places within their area. Places on this list, other than those also on the Queensland Heritage Register, will be subject to a new Heritage Code for IDAS which ensures that development on a local heritage place is compatible with its cultural heritage significance. Gold Coast City Council has now endorsed a local heritage register, consisting of 51 places, and the recommendation to expand this register over time.

It is recommended that part of the register formation process be the identification of those places of potential State significance for referral to the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) for consideration for inclusion on the Queensland Heritage Register. These places are:

- Howard’s Landing, Marine Parade
- Old Sea Wall, Marine Parade
- The Cecil Hotel, Nerang Street
- Former Ambulance Building, Nerang Street
- ‘Fig Tree’ Cottages, Walton Street
- Somerville’s Funerals, Nind Street

A workable heritage and character conservation management system should include incentives for owners. As demonstrated by cities such as Brisbane, Ipswich and Melbourne, these could include:

- rates rebates and the waiving or reduction of application fees
- a grants program for the repair and restoration of heritage and character places and the writing of conservation management plans
- an awards program for the restoration of heritage and character places
- the provision of free heritage and architectural advice, and
- transferable development rights and other development bonus schemes that encourage the retention and restoration of heritage and character places
The mapping of the character places (blue) allowed the precincts to be established. The heritage places (red) exist in all parts of Southport. [Allom Lovell]
4 Recommendations

4.1 The “Nerang Street” precinct

This precinct extends along Nerang Street from Rawlins Street to the end of Nerang Street at Marine Parade. It also includes the land in front of Nerang Street which connects the street to the Broadwater. It encompasses part of Precinct 1 Retail and Precinct 7 Broadwater Foreshore of the current Southport LAP.

Characteristics

This precinct has traditionally been the commercial heart of Southport since at least the late 1880s when Nerang Street was first surveyed. It remains the business centre with a variety of shops, hotels and commercial premises including some government activity. It contains a mixture of types, styles and scales of buildings with a predominance of low scale buildings mostly of one and two stories some dating from the 1930s and the 1950s - two boom periods for Southport. Commercial buildings are distinguished from government buildings by their footpath awnings and dominant areas of glass at the ground floor. The precinct is now dominated by 2 large developments. The first is a multi storey building on the corner of Scarborough and Nerang Streets containing a business college. The second is a recent residential tower and retail space on the corner of Nerang Street and Marine Parade. The more recent development does at least make some effort to have a low scaled retail edge along Nerang Street.

This precinct is relatively elevated, rising up from the Broadwater and Marine Parade toward the west. An important view corridor down Nerang
Street toward the Broadwater is presently compromised by structures in the mall.

Pedestrian activity is an important characteristic of the precinct although it is compromised by the major shopping centre of Australia Fair which draws activity away from this precinct.

The carparking across Marine Parade into the foreshore is not ideally located and access via a subway is unattractive.

A diagram showing heritage and character places within this precinct.

[Allom Lovell]

**History**

Nerang Street was surveyed in the earliest survey in the 1870s. The street was laid out at right angles to the water and within the next several decades had become the main commercial street of Southport. Along with Coolangatta, Southport was one of only two centres on the entire coast where retail activity was concentrated. The street contained the
4  Recommendations

government reserves containing Post and Telegraph Office, the Police Station, the Courthouse and Divisional Board Officers or Town Hall.

In more recent decades the street has lost its place as the commercial centre of Southport. Retail and commercial areas are now spread across a much wider area. The construction of major shopping centres including Sundale in the 1960s and Australia Fair in the 1980s and recent residential and office towers in Scarborough Street have contributed to the shift away from Nerang Street.

The heritage and character of the precinct

The heritage and character of this precinct has been greatly eroded in recent decades and now only a few historic buildings survive in the precinct. Those buildings all date from the 1920s or 1930s and many are in the Art Deco style. Several of the buildings are of a high architectural order and worthy of protection. They include the former Town Hall, the Trustee House, the former Ambulance building and the Cecil Hotel. Other buildings such as the two storey shops are worthy of protection because of their contribution to the character of the street and their historical evidence of the retail nature of the street.
4 Recommendations

The objective

The objective is to retain and encourage commercial and pedestrian activity in Nerang Street in a manner which acknowledges the historic character and scale of the earlier fabric. The objective is also to retain and conserve the historic buildings and to protect the setting of the historic buildings. The views from this precinct toward the Broadwater are important. Every opportunity should be taken to encourage a visual relationship between this area and the Broadwater. The views back toward this precinct are equally important.

It is acknowledged that there are demands for multi storey residential and office towers in this area but it is important within this precinct that great care is given to ensuring that those developments are designed with an edge to the street which is appropriate to the scale of the historic character.

Controls, incentives and initiatives

The current zoning within this precinct allows for a maximum building height of between 28 and 40 storeys and a maximum residential density of RD8 (one bedroom per 13m² of net site area). The intended land use for this area is as a focus of retail activity as well as office, residential, community, recreation and entertainment uses. The foreshore is reserved for parkland and recreation activities. Because of these factors, there is high potential tension between conservation and development throughout this precinct.

The focus of the controls in this precinct is in two parts. Firstly, the retention and conservation of heritage and character places. It is useful to think of historic buildings as ‘heritage and character places’ as the term ‘place’ is a reminder that buildings exist within a context which can be narrow, e.g. the lot on plan on which they site, or broader, e.g. the overall streetscape and related nearby structures. Retaining and conserving these places will require demolition controls to retain the places and then controls for the way in which they are changed while protecting their cultural significance.

The second are controls on the new buildings constructed between the heritage and character places. The aim of these controls will be:

- to reinforce the two storey scale of the existing character at street level and ensure that high rise development is set back
- to reinforce the use of awnings in front of the commercial buildings (not the government buildings)
- to reinforce the early subdivision pattern which is expressed in the width of historic buildings
- to encourage pedestrian activity along Nerang Street
- to encourage fine grained retail activity along Nerang Street (for example it would not be appropriate to allow a supermarket to be constructed along the street with very few openings to the street)
4 Recommendations

- to encourage the highest quality of contemporary architecture to enhance the heritage places

Incentives to encourage smaller scale development and pedestrian activity in this precinct may include:

- Relief from the normal requirements of on-site carparking.
- Trading on footpaths associated with individual tenancies.
- A balanced commercial mix with emphasis on retail/entertainment and restaurants/coffee shops.

Council initiatives might include:

The continuation of the streetscape works along Nerang Street including tree planting. The previous study suggested that the Mall be removed and an avenue of trees be planted. This has been carried out; the provision of a widened footpath to facilitate footpath trading; and long term designs to remove the subway at the end of Nerang Street and to better visually link Nerang Street with the Broadwater.

4.2 The “railway Station” precinct

This precinct extends along Scarborough Street North from Nind Street to High Street North. It includes land to the eastern end of Railway Street connecting to the Broadwater and also includes Norman Street and a pocket of subdivision around Walton Street. Under the current LAP it encompasses part of Precinct 9 Residential Area (incorporating parts of Character Area RC(a) Old Southport Residential and RC (f) Suburban Renewal), Precinct 2 Commerce and Administration, and Precinct 7 Broadwater Foreshore.

Characteristics

This contains some of the earliest housing within the study area and has a characteristic subdivision pattern of small allotments characteristic of worker housing. Tree planting within the road reserves was early and remains a characteristic feature of this precinct. Although later development along Marine Parade has limited access to the Broadwater there is still a sense of this association with the water dating from the time of Southport as a “marine village”.

The topography is generally flat however views are created by virtue of the major thoroughfares toward the commercial core, the coastline and the hinterland.

The building typology is varied, from the smaller cottages in Norman and Little Norman Street to the larger houses such as those found on Stevens and Walton Street. Most date from the turn of the century to the period between the wars. In general they are of the same typology; elevated “Queenslander” style with occasional low set fibro bungalows. The
precinct has experienced some erosion of its cohesiveness by recent unit and resort developments.

The area along Railway Street and Fig Tree Lane are more recent single storey shops constructed after the removal of the railway line and station.

The view from Railway Street to the Broadwater is dominated by the historic Southport Bathing Pavilion and the associated avenue of fig trees along Marine Parade.

This precinct is characterised by a mixture of single storey houses and some recent and out of character multi-unit residential buildings. [Allom Lovell]
4 Recommendations

History

This precinct contains land subdivided in the 1870s and the 1880s. The precinct was dominated by the Southport Railway Station constructed in 1886 and the adjoining Railway Hotel. The station fronted Scarborough Street and the line terminated behind Marine Parade. The railway line crossed and blocked off Scarborough Street. This part of Southport has the potential to interpret the “marine village” of the 19th century with visitors arriving by rail and walking past the bathing pavilion to the water’s edge. In this way, the railway precinct is an example of the relationships which develop between functions, activities and places as urban centres develop.

The area of Walton and Stevens Street to the north of the precinct was subdivided in the 1880s. It contained larger blocks some of which were further subdivided in the 1920s.

The heritage and character of the precinct

The heritage and character of this precinct has again been eroded by more recent and larger developments particularly along Marine Parade. However, this precinct does contain some pockets of character which survive. These include groups of workers cottages along Railway Street, Norman Street and Little Norman Street and along Walton and Clegg Streets. Most of these date from before the Second World War. Heritage places in the area which are worthy of protection include the “Fig Tree Cottages” in Walton Street constructed as holiday flats of the type which provided lower cost accommodation than the more elite hotels. The median strip trees along Walton and Stevens Street should also be protected and conserved.
4 Recommendations

The objective

The objective of recommended controls and incentives for this precinct is to recognise the surviving character of the area as the earliest settled in Southport. Part of that character comes from the large number of houses surviving from before the Second World War and from the fine grained subdivisional pattern.

The retention of these qualities is central to the protection of its character. So too is the protection and re-establishment of public tree planting.

Demolition or removal of existing building stock is to be discouraged and in more general terms, controls and incentives should encourage sympathetic renovation, maintenance and repair of buildings and ensure that any new buildings or works within the area contribute to the existing character.

The encouragement of the revitalisation of the former Railway Reserve would also be an important part of the objective. This would provide a centre of the precinct and a link to Marine Parade and the Bathing Pavilion.

Controls, incentives and initiatives

The current zoning of this precinct allows for a maximum building height varying from 2, 3 and 15 storeys and a maximum residential density varying between RD2 (up to 33 dwellings per net hectare), RD4 (up to 50 dwellings per net hectare) and RD7 (one bedroom per 25m² of net site area). The intended land use is for office, business and retail activity supporting the main retail precinct where it overlaps Precinct 2 Commerce & Administration, residential where it overlaps Precinct 9 Residential RC(a), and attached dwellings and medium detached
4 Recommendations

dwellings and apartments where it overlaps Precinct 9 Residential RC(e). The Foreshore is reserved for parklands and recreational activities.

It can be expected that parts this precinct are subject to potentially high levels of development pressure. This is not as extreme as in the retail core, but nevertheless may impact of heritage and character places through the amalgamation of sites and the construction of high and medium rise buildings. It is notable that in RC(a), whilst it is intended under the existing LAP to retain the residential character, the intensification of residential land or for other land uses is permissible where it is in keeping with the existing character.

The focus of the controls in this precinct is in two parts. Firstly, the retention and conservation of heritage and character places. This will require demolition controls to retain the places and then controls for the way in which they are changed while protecting their cultural significance.

The second are controls on the new residential buildings constructed between the heritage and character places. The aim of these controls will be:

- to reinforce the existing scale of elevated single storey houses
- to limit increases in density to small scaled detached dwelling forms and to discourage the construction of 3 storey apartment buildings outside the Suburban Renewal area
- to reinforce the “timber, tin and fibro” tradition through the use of lightweight materials
- to reinforce the active edge of houses which includes habitable rooms and verandahs and to discourage the construction of double garages facing the street
- to retain the early subdivision pattern and to discourage amalgamation or the subdivision of land
- to encourage, particularly within the Suburban Renewal area, the retention and adaptive re-use of historic buildings within new developments, and
- to encourage the highest quality of contemporary architecture to enhance the heritage places

Incentives to residential property owners, apart from the list already discussed for all of the Southport LAP area, might include technical conservation advice regarding building repair, maintenance and enhancement. Occasional commercial or home/office use should be considered.

Council initiatives should include replanting early street planting in traditional species such as fig and mango. These remnants should be carefully conserved and missing specimens replaced with the same species. Other streets, particularly those wider avenues should be considered for matching planting with traditional shade trees.
4 Recommendations

Council initiatives should also include the revitalisation of the railway street precinct of shops to encourage cafes, coffee shops and corner stores to support the residential nature of the rest of the precinct.

The precinct is cut through by some roads carrying non local vehicular movement and opportunity exists to redirect or slow that traffic.

4.3 The “Town reserve” precinct

This precinct occupies the former Town Reserve and is bounded by Smith Street, Stevens Street, Kumbari Close and a line extending along from Worendo Street. Under the current LAP it encompasses parts of Precinct 9 Residential Area (incorporating part of Character Area RC(a) Old Southport Residential, RC(e) Traditional Suburban Residential and Smith Street Special Development Area), Precinct 8 Park, Precinct 10 Local Centre and Precinct 11 Community Facilities.

Characteristics

The precinct was settled in the 1960’s and focused on Chirn Park as its community support area. Being elevated, it focuses both on the coast and the mountains. The subdivision layout follows the contours of the site and is laid out in radiating concentric circles.

The area is characterised by fibro bungalows, built in the Queensland pattern book style, with Super Six corrugated fibro roofing. There are within the area a number of both high and low set Queenslander and brick bungalows. There is no intrusion of unit development and the area is characterised by single family homes.

The precinct also contains the Southport State High School which takes up a large portion of the precinct. The residential nature of the precinct is supported by a row of shops along Stevens Street.

The precinct is surrounded on three sides by high traffic roads.

A plan showing Precinct 3 shaded. [Allom Lovell]

This precinct is characterised by a mixture of single storey fibro houses constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. [Allom Lovell]
History

The area was surveyed by 1914 as a single site known as the “Town Reserve”. The subdivision of the land into small residential blocks appears on the 1929 survey plan and by 1946 the subdivision shows in a more complete form. The 1930s depression and the World War II era restrained suburban development all over Australia. Manifestations of the notion that spreading cities should use a ‘green belt’ to separate older settlement areas from newer suburbs on the fringe were delayed, and reached more complete expression after the Second World War. After the War, the idea of ‘satellite’ urban centres separated from the main city by green belts was expressed, with considerable alteration, in Australia in places like Elizabeth in South Australia and Inala in Brisbane. (Ian Alexander, ‘The post-war city’). The different shape and style of the ‘Town Reserve’ subdivision reflects the influence of these ideas on town
planning which were publicised in the 1948 tour of Australia by Patrick Abercrombie, the author of the 1944 London plan.

Although population growth and suburban development was slow in the years between the two world wars, events at the government level set the scene for later growth. In all states, governments adopted the necessity for town planning and passed legislation to impose requirements on local governments. The 1923 amendments to the Queensland Local Government Act, for instance, set standards for the approval of subdivisions, set up a scheme to classify roads and streets into various categories according to their importance and traffic carrying capacity, provided a mechanism for local governments to specify building alignments in new developments and enabled local governments to declare residential areas such as Musgrave Hill.

Of some interest is the discrepancy between the layout shown in the plan of 1929 and that existing in which an additional street has been introduced to provide more, but smaller, allotments and the incursion into the subdivision of the Southport State High School (1965). The small allotments in this subdivision and the intrusion of the school is an example of competition for land use which occurs in growing urban areas which are constrained by geographic limits. In Southport, these limits were imposed by the Broadwater, the River, the town of Nerang and hills to the west. Despite the increased powers of local government to set standards for subdivisions and suburban development generally, much post-war development in Australia continued to be erratic and few local governments took an overall strategic view, reflecting the pressure for new housing imposed rapid post-war population growth and general affluence in the community.

Taking up of individual sites does not seem to have been rapid and many houses appear to date from after the Second World War.

**The heritage and character of the precinct**

The precinct has a residential character from the 1950s or 1960s and its character comes largely from the town planning pattern of the subdivision. Few sites have been redeveloped since the 1960s and this area is one of architectural integrity. Many houses show signs of recent renovation and pride of ownership in fresh paint and neatly maintained gardens.
4 Recommendations

The objective

The objective of proposed controls is to retain the single dwellings and suburban characteristics. The objective extends to the improvement of amenity within each of these precincts to enhance the sense of neighbourhood and identity.

Demolition or removal of existing character places is to be discouraged and in more general terms, controls and incentives should encourage sympathetic renovation, maintenance and repair of buildings and ensure that any new buildings or works within the area contribute to the existing character and do not detract from streetscapes.

Controls, incentives and initiatives

The current zoning of this precinct allows for a maximum building height of 2-3 storeys and a maximum residential density varying between RD1 (up to 25 dwellings per net hectare) and RD2 (up to 33 dwellings per net hectare). The intended land use is largely for detached residential dwellings, with pockets for public open space, small-scale shops offices and services, and schools.

The zoning and land use of this area significantly limits development opportunity and lessens pressure on the historic building stock. However, the process of gentrification in the area may lead to the replacement of early buildings with larger, contemporary structures. The opportunity also exists for owners to realise development potential through the construction of townhouses, buildings behind existing dwellings, or subdivision to accommodate a second house or duplex, and these activities have potential to erode the heritage and character of the area if not done sensitively.

The focus of the controls in this precinct is in two parts. Firstly, the retention of heritage and character places. This will require demolition controls to retain the places and then controls for the way in which they are changed while protecting their cultural significance. The second are controls on the new residential buildings constructed between the heritage places. The aim of these controls will be:

- to reinforce the existing scale of elevated single storey houses
- to limit increases in density to small scaled detached dwelling forms and to discourage an increase in density including the construction of duplex style developments
- to reinforce the fibro tradition through the use of lightweight materials
- to reinforce the active edge of houses which includes habitable rooms and verandahs and to discourage the construction of double garages facing the street
- to retain the early subdivision pattern and to discourage amalgamation or the subdivision of land
- to put in place enforceable controls on the form of new buildings, and
4 Recommendations

- to encourage the highest quality of contemporary architecture to enhance the character places

Incentives to residential property owners, apart from the list already discussed for all of the Southport LAP area, might include architectural advice regarding building repair, maintenance and enhancement.

Council initiatives should include the planting of single species shade trees to create avenues and to strengthen the identifiable character in this precinct. The continued encouragement of the Chirn Park village shopping area as one to service this residential precinct. Council should also be actively involved in discouraging any strategy to allow any increase in traffic levels within the precinct.

4.4 The “racecourse” precinct

This precinct occupies the former Racecourse Reserve and is bounded by Smith Street, Wardoo Street, George Street and a line extending along from Baratta Street. Under the current LAP, it is situated within Precinct 9 Residential Area (incorporating part of Character Area RC (e) Traditional Suburban Residential and Smith Street Special Development Area), Precinct 8 Park and Precinct 11 Community Facilities.

Characteristics

The precinct is undulating and falls off to Loders Creek, and has a vista back toward Southport. This precinct has a diversity of styles but predominantly fibro bungalows from the 1950 and 1960's.

The early subdivision pattern of the 1880s is also visible in parts of the precinct in particular along Johnston Street which contains rectilinear allotments and earlier housing stock from the time of the larger rural allotments.

A plan showing Precinct 4 shaded. [Allom Lovell]
4 Recommendations

History

The Racecourse Reserve was surveyed by 1886. Although a Racecourse was not constructed on the site it was subdivided into large lots by 1914. The railway line cut through the low parts of the precinct with its construction in 1886. That earlier subdivision pattern survived until the 1960s when the land was subdivided into small residential lots. The physical evidence of the place includes some houses from the earlier subdivision particularly along Johnston Street and a large number of 1960s fibro houses.
4 Recommendations

The heritage and character of the precinct

The heritage of this precinct includes a mixture of houses from the turn of the 20th century through until the late 1950s and 1960s fibro houses. The character of this precinct is less cohesive than say the Town Reserve where the subdivision was planned as a part of a single scheme for the area. However, there is a predominance of detached dwellings which provide more cohesiveness than other parts to the south of this precinct.

The objective

The objective of proposed controls is to retain the single dwellings and suburban characteristics. The objective extends to the improvement of amenity within each of these precincts to enhance the sense of neighbourhood and identity.

Demolition or removal of existing heritage places is to be discouraged and in more general terms, controls and incentives should encourage sympathetic renovation, maintenance and repair of buildings and ensure that any new buildings or works within the area contribute to the existing character.

Controls, incentives and initiatives

The current zoning of this precinct allows for a maximum building height of 2-3 storeys and a maximum residential density varying between RD1 (up to 25 dwellings per net hectare) and RD2 (up to 33 dwellings per net hectare). The intended land use is largely for residential purposes with pockets for public open space and schools.

The zoning and land use of this area significantly limits development opportunity and lessens pressure on the historic building stock. However, the process of gentrification of the area may lead to the replacement of early buildings with larger, contemporary structures. The opportunity also exists for owners to realise development potential through the construction of townhouses, buildings behind existing dwellings, or subdivision to accommodate a second house or duplex, and these activities have potential to erode the heritage and character of the area if not done sensitively.
4 Recommendations

The focus of the controls in this precinct is in two parts. Firstly, the retention of heritage places. This will require demolition controls to retain the places and then controls for the way in which they are changed while protecting their cultural significance.

The second are controls on the new residential buildings constructed between the heritage places. The aim of these controls will be:

- to reinforce the existing scale of elevated single storey houses
- to limit increases in density to small scaled detached dwelling forms and to discourage an increase in density including the construction of duplex style developments
- to reinforce the fibro and timber and tin tradition through the use of lightweight materials
- to reinforce the active edge of houses which includes habitable rooms and verandahs and to discourage the construction of double garages facing the street
- to retain the early subdivision pattern and to discourage amalgamation or the subdivision of land
- to put in place enforceable controls on the form of new buildings
- to encourage the highest quality of contemporary architecture to enhance the character places

Incentives to residential property owners, apart from the list already discussed for all of the Southport LAP area, might include architectural advice regarding building repair, maintenance and enhancement. A system of rate relief for those who chose to retain single houses should be considered.

Council initiatives should include the planting of single species shade trees to create avenues and to strengthen the identifiable character in this precinct. Council should also be actively involved in discouraging any strategy to allow any increase in traffic levels within the precinct.

4.5 The “Cable Station” precinct

The Cable Station precinct occupies the area of the Former Pacific Cable Station and is bounded by Meron Street, Gardners Creek, Winchester Street and the water. Under the current LAP it encompasses Precinct 9 Residential Area (incorporating part of Character Area RC(d) Garden Residential and RC(b) Queen Street Residential Consolidation), Precinct 7 Foreshore and Precinct 8 Park.

Characteristics

The topography is undulating and drains into Gardners Creek and the Nerang River. Some reclaimed land faces the river.

The building typology varies from the simple low set cottages, grander holiday houses of the 1920's and 1930's of wealthier residents, to the...
moderne grand estates typified by large sites, extensive setbacks and
texte de plantations qui caractérisent l’aire et modern
townhouses and unit developments, some of which have respected the
‘tone’ of the area, and others that have not been in harmony with the
streetscapes. The former Cable Station site has been redeveloped as a
nursing home site as have other adjacent sites.

The landscape of this precinct is a major contributor to its character. The
sandy ridge, on which Bauer Street is centered has remnants of a large
mature stand of Bribie Island or Coast Cypress-Pine (*Callitris
columellaris*).

Many larger, older blocks in Bauer Street, Radford/Charlton Streets and
Winchester Street contain fine mature specimen trees of note. Their scale
and density allows larger scale buildings to be accommodated without
affecting the overall character of the area. Other areas within the precinct
are bereft of street planting and display a reduced visual amenity.
4 Recommendations

A diagram showing heritage and character places within this precinct. [Allom Lovell]

History

The precinct was subdivided into larger blocks by 1914. It was subdivided into the pattern which exists today by 1929. Small pockets of land were subdivided from the lower land to the east of the precinct which was resumed in the 1960s.

The former Pacific Cable Station was the dominant development in the precinct until its demolition. [John Oxley Library]
The heritage and character of the precinct

The heritage of this precinct includes a series of medium to larger houses constructed at a time when Southport was a fashionable place to visit for holidays. The buildings which were constructed for the cable station were consonant with the style and ‘fashion’ of this part of Southport. These are rare examples in Southport. The character of the area is largely established by the established landscaping in the form of street trees and trees within private properties. These trees were first established at the turn of the 20th century when the Pacific Cable Station was established in the area.

The objective

The objective is to retain the overriding character of buildings dominated completely by tall and dense planting. Subdivision pattern results in larger allotments and larger houses. An increase in density may be acceptable if the ratio of planting to buildings is maintained. The area should remain predominantly residential however some opportunity exists for the development of further retirement villages or nursing homes.

Controls, incentives and initiatives

The current zoning of this precinct allows for a maximum building height varying from 2, 3 and 7 storeys and a maximum residential density varying between RD1 (up to 25 dwellings per net hectare), RD4 (up to 50 dwellings per net hectare) and RD6 (one bedroom per 33m² of net site area). The intended land use is largely for detached dwellings and uses ancillary to residential development, with medium and high density residential development in the Queen Street Residential Consolidation area, and pockets of open public space.
4 Recommendations

The greatest potential impact on heritage and character places is in the Queen Street Residential Consolidation area where there is a relatively high allowable building height and residential density. The amalgamation of lots for high density residential development is encouraged here. In the remainder of the precinct the intent is to retain existing historic character; nevertheless, this may be eroded by lot reconfiguration, demolition of historic buildings or the construction of new attached and detached dwellings.

In order to encourage the dominant characteristics of buildings within a landscape it is recommended that incentives be made for bonuses to existing town planning conditions for the retention of identified trees of significance. The calculation of rates on a sliding scale that does not penalise larger lot owners. A free advisory service regarding the care of trees and gardens.

Council initiatives might include:

- additional tree planting to supplement and reinforce the existing specimen planting and landscape. Avenues are not necessarily appropriate in this area
- traffic calming may be considered where necessary

The focus of the controls in this precinct is in two parts. Firstly, the retention of heritage places and heritage trees. This will require demolition controls to retain the places and then controls for the way in which they are changed while protecting their cultural significance.

The second are controls on the new residential buildings constructed between the heritage places. The aim of these controls will be:

- to retain the balance of landscape and built structures in which the landscape dominates
- to reinforce the existing scale of single and two storey buildings
- To encourage the use of dark materials to blend in with the landscape
- to limit increases in density where possible to 2 storeys so that they do not dominate the trees
- to put in place enforceable controls on the form of new buildings
- to encourage the highest quality of contemporary architecture to enhance the heritage places

Incentives to residential property owners, apart from the list already discussed for all of the Southport LAP area, might include conservation advice regarding building repair, maintenance and enhancement. A system of rate relief for those who retain heritage places should be considered.

Council initiatives should include the conservation and maintenance of the pines of Bauer Street. Experienced arborists should be employed to monitor the trees and to undertake a replanting program as required.
4  Recommendations

Loss of these trees would severely erode the character and amenity of the precinct.
Appendices
Appendices

Appendix 1

Lost heritage places

This appendix contains a summary of some of the buildings lost in Southport in the past decade. The loss of buildings. A photographic survey of Southport was carried out in 1994 by the Gold Coast and Hinterland Branch of the National Trust of Queensland and the collection given to the Gold Coast City Library. A brief review of that survey suggest that out of some 62 houses dating from the 19th and early 20th century over 50% have been demolished in the past 14 years. These houses include substantial houses from the 19th century, workers cottages from the turn of the 20th century and Californian Bungalows from the 1920s.

12 Gray Street
13 Kate Street
130 High Street
138 High Street
146 High Street
150 High Street
154 Queen Street
18 Norman Street
18 Rose Street
18 Tweed Street
189 High Street
194 High Street
Appendices : Appendix 1

92 High Street

93 High Street
Appendix 2

A register of local heritage places

It is proposed that a heritage register be established to provide real protection for places of cultural significance. The following table is a summary of heritage places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Street No</th>
<th>Street Name</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anzac Memorial Garden</td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td></td>
<td>This site includes the Anzac Memorial together with Memorial Gates and a park. Current plans are for the memorial to be shifted to a new site within the Broadwater Parklands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southport Bathing Pavilion</td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>QHR</td>
<td></td>
<td>This building is included in the Queensland Heritage Register. It is one of a series of bathing pavilions constructed at the Gold Coast for the use of bathers. This building survives in a largely unchanged setting complete with early fig trees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard’s Landing</td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td></td>
<td>This jetty is one of the few parts of the Southport foreshore which provide evidence of the arrival of visitors to Southport by water from Brisbane in the 19th century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Street No</td>
<td>Street Name</td>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Sea Wall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>This fragment of masonry wall provides evidence of the early edge of Southport which fronted the Broadwater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig Trees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>These trees along Marine Parade provide evidence of European settlement and the earlier edge of the water to the Broadwater (which has now been modified by reclamations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Star of the Sea Convent School</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Marine Parade</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This substantial building provides evidence of Southport being used as a holiday destination. The building has architectural merit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl's Court</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast and Nerang Street being the historic centre of Southport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period is concealed behind later cladding on facade. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast and Nerang Street being the historic centre of Southport.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendices : Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast and Nerang Street being the historic centre of Southport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast and Nerang Street being the historic centre of Southport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granton House</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast and Nerang Street being the historic centre of Southport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cecil Hotel</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>A substantial masonry hotel from early in the 20th century. The building provides evidence of art deco design from the 1920s. The building is an important anchor on the corner of Nerang and Scarborough Streets and is a part of the streetscape that includes the ambulance and town hall. It is the second hotel on this site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Ambulance Building</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>One of the few surviving public buildings from the 20th century. The building has architectural and historical significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southport Town Hall</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>QHR</td>
<td>This building is included in the Queensland Heritage Register. It was designed by architects Hall and Prentice and is an important example of Art Deco architectural expression within Southport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Trustee House</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This building is a good example of 1930s Art Deco architectural expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masonic Temple</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This part of the Masonic Temple is ca 1960 and is typical of the high quality architectural style present at the Gold Coast in this period. It was an extension to a much earlier timber building which still survives at the rear of the building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican Church of St Peter</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This site includes a church and hall which are designed as a group in the 1950s or 1960s. The buildings are of a high architectural quality typical of architect designed buildings at the Gold Coast during this period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This building has been incorporated into a major redevelopment of the site. However the building is an example of Spanish Mission design from early in the 20th century. The church provides evidence of the previous status of Scarborough Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper &amp; Co Building</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of art deco architecture from the 1920s boom period. Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Scarborough</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This site contains 2 buildings of architectural value. They are the timber hall with its fc shingle roof originally built as the church and the more recent brick church with its parabolic roof constructed on the site of the original manse. The church provides evidence of the previous status of Scarborough Street. The site was originally the Presbyterian Church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Fig Tree Cottages&quot;</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Walton</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>This building was typical of holiday houses which existed throughout the coast in the 1950s. It is an increasingly rare form of building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>High St North</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Located on the corner of Walton Street, this house oiled timber weatherboard house dates from the early 20th century. It is an important part of the Walton Street streetscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southport Drill Hall</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>Queen Street</td>
<td>QHR</td>
<td>This building is included in the Queensland Heritage Register. The building was relocated to the present site and is significant as a training building for the Volunteer Defence Force from 1890. The building was originally in Lawson Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Southport Showgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queen Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>The Showgrounds Reserve was established in 1898. In the past several decades the Gold Coast City Council has moved a series of threatened historic buildings to the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queen Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of the earliest settlement and the establishment of public reserves in the 19th century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Queen Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Vincent de Paul</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>Scarborough Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Houses</td>
<td>1,13,15,17,155</td>
<td>Railway Street and Scarborough Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This group of modest houses was constructed across the road from the Southport Railway Station which was constructed in 1889. The buildings provide evidence of the housing of workers in this area after the establishment of the railway line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Southport Trades Hall</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>Scarborough Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Former home of the Trades and Labour Council. Built in the 1950s, the building provides evidence of Southport’s former role as a political centre. The exterior of the building has remained largely unchanged, including retention of the flag poles from which the Australian and the red flag of the workers were flown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella Luna Restaurant</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>Scarborough Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of Southport’s former role as the commercial centre of the Gold Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerville Funerals</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Nind Street</td>
<td>NQHR</td>
<td>A good example of a Spanish Mission style constructed as a residence in the early part of the 20th century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southport Hospital</td>
<td></td>
<td>Queen and Nerang Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Site includes a group of late 1950s or 1960s buildings with stone supporting walls and timber framed buildings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig trees and median strip planting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Walton Street, Stephens St</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>These two central landscaped planting areas were a part of the 1886 subdivision of Southport. They contain important and early planting including fig trees.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Johnston Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Provides evidence of earlier 1910s subdivision of the racecourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Hilda’s School</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>First established in 1912 as an Anglican Girls School at Southport. The school had many students who boarded from country areas of Queensland. This is the sister school to The Southport School (1901) for boys constructed on the site of the former Governor’s holiday residence at Southport. The main building survives from that earliest period of its history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street tree planting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Established street tree planting including fig trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street tree planting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bauer St, Chester Tce and Heath St</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Early street tree planting including Bribie Island Pines which mark the location of the former Pacific Cable Station and the early subdivision pattern of this precinct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bauer Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Pacific Cable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Bauer Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This listing covers the site of the former Pacific Cable Station connected to Norfolk Island. The site was developed in 1901 and remained in use until 1962. There were 3 major buildings on the site including the station building, the Manager’s residence and the Staff Quarters. Two of the buildings were moved to the TSS in 1981 and are now used by the Music Department. The Manager’s Residence was removed for use as a private residence. The station site remains historically significant, although this significance is reflected in the subdivision rather than the built form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Bauer Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Meron Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Residence constructed in 1888/89 for Augustus Charles Gregory, geographer, a former Queensland Surveyor General and later Member of the Legislative Council. This house has high historic significance and is a rare surviving example of a late 1880s dwelling in Southport, but has been substantially modified, resulting in the loss of important fabric and architectural details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chester Tce</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wildash Street</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This house demonstrates the high quality of architectural design which existed in Southport and the Gold Coast in the 1950s and 1960s.</td>
</tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scout Hall Precinct</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Sykes Court</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>This precinct contains a Scout Hall and 3 pre-war timber houses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>College Avenue</td>
<td>LHR</td>
<td>Large two storey concrete pre-war house. Formally known as ‘The Hill’ and now called ‘The Lodge”. Former residence of the Bere family and later an accommodation facility for students of TSS. This house is significant for its aesthetic value and its historic and social value as a rare surviving example of an early 1900s elite dwelling in Southport and its long association with TSS. It retains a high level of architectural integrity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>