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The Southport Spit Master Plan—Consultation Report, April 2018

The master plan is being led by the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning (the Department) in collaboration with Gold Coast City Council and the Gold Coast Waterways Authority.

This consultation report provides a summary of more than 2,800 pieces of feedback you provided to help inform and shape the future vision for The Spit.

The Southport Spit (The Spit) master plan commenced in August 2017 to provide for a low-rise future for The Spit in accordance with the Gold Coast City Council’s current planning scheme.

The master plan aims to revitalise The Spit and increase its benefit to the Gold Coast as a community asset. It will focus on enhancing the public realm of The Spit to create a community space for local residents and improve the connection to the surrounding marine environment, including the Broadwater. It will also consider opportunities for job creation through tourism, entertainment and recreation.

Project background
Consultation overview

On 1 February 2018, the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning announced the commencement of a series of pop-up engagement sessions as part of the consultation process for The Spit master plan. The consultation period was open from Friday 16 February to Sunday 25 March 2018.

The purpose of the consultation was to get early community feedback about The Spit to help inform the appreciation of current conditions, opportunities and challenges and to guide an understanding of the community’s aspirations for the future. This is to inform the master planning workshop series, which commenced in April 2018.

The sessions were set up with three stations, where we asked:

1. What do you currently like about The Spit?
2. What do you currently value about The Spit?
3. What would you like to see in the future?

Each station used different coloured cards, with attendees providing feedback on blue cards for station 1, green cards for station 2 and pink cards for station 3.

We also asked attendees to nominate their first name, age and suburb on each card before posting it on the sticky wall for stations 1 and 3, or into the form box for station 2. This was to give us some information about attendees.

The community consultation period was promoted through:

- three Ministerial media announcements released prior to and during the consultation period resulting in coverage in local and online media
- weekly emails to The Spit master plan email subscribers, who signed up to receive updates at the pop-up sessions or on the project website
- social media posts on the Department’s and Gold Coast Waterway Authority’s Facebook accounts
- advertising in the Gold Coast Bulletin and The Courier-Mail
- posters at key Gold Coast libraries
- regular updates on The Spit master plan project website qld.gov.au/southport-spit.
How you participated

By having your say at the pop-up sessions or via the online survey, you have helped us understand your appreciation of current conditions, opportunities and challenges and, importantly, your aspirations for the future of The Spit. During the consultation period, we received more than 2,800 pieces of community feedback through a range of activities including:

Pop-up sessions
Between Saturday 17 February and Saturday 24 March 2018, 17 pop-up sessions were held at 10 locations on or near The Spit and at key locations across the Gold Coast:
- Australia Fair Shopping Centre, Southport
- Broadbeach Library, Mermaid Waters
- Circle on Cavill, Surfers Paradise
- Marina Mirage, Main Beach
- Muriel Henchman Park, Main Beach
- Robina Library, Robina
- Runaway Bay Library, Runaway Bay
- Southport Library, Southport
- The Spit seawall, Main Beach
- The Spit, dog beach walkway, Main Beach

In total, 882 people attended the pop-up sessions to provide input and ask questions of representatives from the department, Gold Coast City Council and Gold Coast Waterways Authority, who were in attendance at the sessions.

Online survey
The online survey was open between Friday 16 February and Sunday 25 March 2018 on the project website. The online survey replicated the questions posed at the pop-up sessions. A total of 481 online surveys were completed during the consultation period.
About you

During the consultation period we received responses from a broad range of suburbs across the Gold Coast. Around 44 per cent of participants were from suburbs immediately surrounding The Spit. People who provided feedback represented a spread of age groups, although people aged over 45 accounted for almost two-thirds of all respondents.
What you told us

We received a variety of feedback covering a large range of concerns, aspirations and ideas for The Spit at the pop-up sessions and through the online surveys.

We reviewed your feedback to determine the topics raised most often in order to develop a series of key discussion themes. We then coded all feedback against these themes to identify common views. This process was undertaken for stations 1 and 3, which asked what you currently like about The Spit and what you would like to see in the future.

For station 2, which asked you to tell us what you currently value about The Spit based on a series of photographs. We reviewed the number of times each photograph was selected at the pop-up sessions and through the online survey, to determine the most common values.

Station 1 – What do you currently like about The Spit?

We asked you to tell us what you currently like about The Spit. From the comments we received, the key themes identified were natural environment, recreation, community facilities, inclusivity and mixed use. These are explained in further detail below.

- 42% provided us with feedback about natural environment
- 24% provided us with feedback about recreation
- 14% provided us with feedback about community facilities
- 11% provided us with feedback about inclusivity
- 6% provided us with feedback about mixed-use
- 3% provided us with general comments
Natural environment

- Feedback received across all sessions indicated your strong appreciation of natural green space, open spaces, the beach and bushland areas.
- You told us that you like the tranquillity of the natural environment and go there to unwind and escape from the ‘concrete jungle’.
- You told us that, along with the natural environment, local wildlife and marine life is also important to you.

Recreation

- The range of land-based and water-based recreation activities that The Spit offers was strongly recognised.
- Of the many recreation activities that you go to The Spit to enjoy, walking, surfing, diving and swimming are the most popular.
- You also told us that the ability to fish on and around The Spit is important to you.
- Many appreciated that the Broadwater is open, uncrowded and still, facilitating different activities such as diving and jet skiing.

‘Raw, undeveloped natural green space. Leave it as ‘breathing space’ among the high density development.’

‘Contrast with developed areas; Beach environment without buildings around.’

‘Myself and international visitors love the natural environment and vegetation. Little development, massive environmental sanctuary for humans, flora and fauna.’

‘Free community access to the waterway and beach area. It is a great area to go swimming and enjoy the water for diving and snorkelling. Please keep an area for us open to still do these fun activities.’

‘I like the walking paths through the vegetation, the green space for picnics and the easy access to so many water activities like surfing, diving and wind surfing.’

‘It is a place where we go to on a Sunday, open space, fresh air, brilliant views. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city. We go to the sandy beach with the grandkids or just watch the boats. It is very important for us as a family.’
Community facilities

- You told us that the dog off leash area is a very important and valued community asset.
- You use the parks for picnics and family activities.
- Many compliments were received about the recent upgrades by Gold Coast Waterways Authority to paths, parking and the toilet block.

Inclusivity

- You told us that you appreciate that The Spit is publicly owned and accessible for all to enjoy.
- You appreciate having a natural area so close to the centre of Gold Coast city.
- You commented that the numerous walking paths make it easy to access different areas of The Spit.

- 'That it’s 100% public-owned, undeveloped and free and open to all to benefit from.'
- 'I like the easy access and wonderful views at this location. It is a place we take our visitors to get great photos.'
- 'Easy access to natural environment so close to the traffic congested concrete jungle. Great coastal bush meets the beach and clean sea water.'
- 'It’s dog heaven – a special place for dogs off leash.'
- 'I like the way that it’s been done up. Improvements at the end are beautiful.'
- 'I regularly cycle along the Federation Walk. Great route! We picnic along the ‘finger’. We buy fish and chips at Peter’s and eat it on the beach.'
**Mixed-use**

- You appreciate the many different uses and attractions on The Spit, including the natural and recreational aspects, tourism, dining and retail.
- You told us that The Spit is a destination for Gold Coast tourists and you regularly bring visitors from out of town to experience the area.
- You appreciate the current retail and dining options, including the kiosk and fresh seafood outlets.

**General comments**

- Many of you also told us that you like The Spit just as it is currently without the need for any further changes, developments or improvements.
- You told us while you appreciate the location of The Spit, the area has potential to be improved with better facilities, recreation, and development and tourism opportunities.
- Some of you commented that there is nothing that you currently like or find interesting about The Spit or that you don’t visit the area at all.

‘The variety of opportunities it offers for great dining & shopping with unique views to being able to swim in tranquil water at the northern end of The Spit & relax under the shade of trees. Buy fresh fish from the trawlers.’

‘Leave as is. Beautiful environment.’

‘Happy the way it is, but needs beautifying.’

‘Wasted land at the moment. More to see and do in other areas along the coast.’

‘The opportunity to enjoy the spectacle of the Broadwater and ocean, Doug Jennings Park and Federation Walk, great beach walks and then a coffee with a view.’

‘Not many places left where I can go with my family and friends to enjoy time away from streets and buildings and the relentless traffic in Southport. We can walk, bicycle or drive. Buy an ice cream, fish, have a relaxing fun time.’
Station 2 – What do you currently value about The Spit?

We used a series of photos taken on or around The Spit as visual representations of a wide range of the area’s attributes. At the pop-up sessions, we asked you to consider what you currently value using 20 photo prompts. The online survey offered 12 photo prompts for you to consider.¹

**Pop-up sessions**

The top five most selected values at pop-up sessions were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>183 Beach environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158 Fitness and recreation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156 Fitness and recreation – swimming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156 Conservation and environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 Recreation – dog walking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹The online survey offered 12 photographs due to website constraints. Photos chosen provided a representation of the key values of recreational activities, nature, shopping, tourism, proximity, and conservation and environment.
Online survey
The top five most selected values by online survey participants were:

- **306** Conservation and environment
- **282** Parks
- **279** Fitness and recreation
- **251** Recreation – dog walking
- **230** Recreation – surfing

The results from both the pop-up sessions and online survey show how highly you value The Spit’s natural elements, such as the beach, parks, environment and conservation.

These results also show that you value the varied recreation opportunities for fitness, swimming, surfing and dog walking.

These findings are consistent with those from station 1, which indicated natural environment (42%), recreation (24%), and community facilities (14%) are the attributes you most like about The Spit.
Station 3 – What would you like to see in the future?

We asked you to tell us, in regard to The Spit, what you would like to see in the future? The key themes identified were major developments, minor improvements, forms of development, preservation, inclusivity and access, and regulations.

'No high-rises and bridges. Maybe a low-rise cultural precinct with information on how The Spit was formed and indigenous history.'

Enhance and preserve the natural areas and open spaces. Upgrade existing cafes and retain beach areas.'

'I'd like to see less concrete, roads and development. No more buildings and commercialism.'

'Build a multi-storey building from the roundabout to Marina Mirage or a cruise ship terminal. I'd also like to see an amphitheatre and more activities in Broadwater.'

27% provided us with feedback about major developments

23% provided us with feedback about minor improvements

18% provided us with feedback about forms of development

18% provided us with feedback about preservation

12% provided us with feedback about inclusivity and access

2% provided us with feedback about regulations
Major developments

- You provided significant feedback opposing any change to building heights beyond the current three storey limit, with 212 comments opposing any change to the existing limit.
- You provided mixed feedback on the Gold Coast City Council’s proposed cruise ship terminal on The Spit with 144 comments opposing this development and 86 comments in favour.
- You told us that you do not want a casino developed on The Spit with 73 comments against it and only 13 comments in favour.
- You also gave us general feedback both supporting and opposing development on The Spit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Supporting Feedback</th>
<th>Opposing Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing height</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise ship terminal</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/resort</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General²</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²An example of supporting general feedback was ‘Any development is good’.
An example of opposing general feedback was ‘No commercial development’.
Minor improvements

- You suggested many different improvements to the existing park areas.
- Some of the suggestions for smaller scale additions include new toilets, showers, barbeques, pathways, shade structures and playgrounds.
- Many responses emphasised the importance of maintaining the current facilities, parks and beaches.

'A plan to enhance and maintain the parkland areas, especially Doug Jennings Park. Allowing a beautiful and well-kept area for major events, that is regularly maintained for use by both the general public and events throughout the year.'

'More BBQs and amenities for picnics/families. More money spent on clean-up and maintenance of reserves.'

'A place for families; more water fountains and other facilities.'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Maintained parks/beaches/current facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Walking/cycling paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14%</td>
<td>Clean up/other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>Toilets/showers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>BBQs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Shade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Picnic areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Water fountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>Bins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Forms of development

- You provided a range of ideas and proposals including upgrades to parkland, tourism and entertainment developments, and community education facilities.

  - City parkland: 181
  - Tourism/hospitality: 94
  - Entertainment: 45
  - Community education facilities: 39

- Many comments supported a mix of development and conservation, such as keeping the northern end of The Spit for open space, parks and conservation, while allowing appropriate development south of Sea World.

- You also suggested that the area could be developed into a central city park, similar to Central Park (New York, USA), Southbank (Brisbane) and Broadwater Parklands (Gold Coast).

- In regard to tourism and hospitality opportunities, you suggested more restaurants, dining options, cafes and places to shop.

- You mentioned that you would like to see more events and markets held on The Spit, including an amphitheatre for concerts and music festivals.

- You also suggested that a museum and education facilities could be incorporated in the future, including an indigenous cultural centre, underwater observatory, arts centre and aquarium.
Inclusivity and access

- There were strong views on maintaining public ownership of the area so it is free for everyone to access in the future.

- Suggestions were received in response to traffic issues, such as building a new bridge or constructing a tunnel from Labrador.

- The range of suggestions to improve public transport included extending the bus network to the end of The Spit, adding a light rail extension and introducing a ferry service from Labrador.

Preservation

- The majority of feedback received told us that you want to preserve The Spit’s natural environment and open spaces.

- Many of you also told us that you would like The Spit to be kept as it currently is.

- ‘The Spit must remain a natural, unspoilt environment for people to enjoy free of charge.’

- ‘I would like to see most of The Spit preserved for future generations, locals to enjoy, tourists to visit and appreciate with their families and wildlife to flourish.’

- ‘I would like The Spit to not have any further development and to have fauna and flora protected.’

- ‘Spit should be maintained for public recreation - active and passive. Not just a local reserve - important as regional reserve.’

- ‘I’d like to see a bridge from the Gold Coast Highway (where it curves around to the Grand - end of Brisbane road) over to The Spit. Could you imagine the traffic that would take out of Labrador. Plus it would be an alternative way to surfers.’

- ‘I would like to see it preserved. I am happy with the development up until Seaworld - but after that please leave it alone. Also the traffic over Sundale bridge needs to be addressed before more development goes ahead.’
Regulations

- Your feedback also indicated that you would like greater enforcement of rules and restrictions for campers on The Spit and people living on boats in the Broadwater.

- You also commented that you would like to see increased policing in certain areas to improve public safety.

'Better maintenance and prevention of squatters overnight.'

'Proper compliance and regulations to deal with anti-social behaviour.'
What’s next?

Using your feedback

The Queensland Government is convening a series of workshops to work toward a consensus on opportunities, challenges, values and a shared vision for The Spit. The workshop process encourages invited participants to think openly and broadly and provides a framework to consider and debate a wide range of options and alternative views.

A summary of the findings from the pop-up sessions and online survey will be presented at the workshops to provide insights into key themes, community values, desired attributes and future ideas. These findings will help inform the appreciation of current conditions, opportunities and challenges and guide an understanding of the community’s aspirations for the future.

Invited participants will be asked to consider these findings along with other technical input when planning for the future of The Spit.

The outcomes of the workshops will be made available for public comment.

Keep informed

There will be many more opportunities for you to have your say as the master plan is developed.

Visit [qld.gov.au/southport-spit](http://qld.gov.au/southport-spit) to stay informed about the project and to hear about future opportunities to get involved throughout the master planning process.