

## **Growth Vision for Lismore's CBD 2007 – 2032**

### **Background**

The Economic Development Policy Advisory Group (EDPAG) has developed a growth vision for the CBD spanning a 25 year period. Initially, this *Growth Vision for the CBD – 2007 to 2032* was developed as an economic underpinning to the work undertaken in the “Lismore CBD Traffic Study” as well as the “Lismore Development Control Plan Proposed Amendment No. 5 – Off Street Parking”, which were considered at the 10 June 2008 Council meeting. The growth vision was undertaken to provide a foundation for TTM consulting to develop traffic and parking solutions to best cope with the expected CBD growth in the future, i.e. up to 15% over the next 10 years.

Since commencing this study, research has shown that many traditional large town centres are undergoing or have undergone a similar reassessment of how best to ensure the future of their CBD, with a strong vision identified as a key element to ensuring ongoing prosperity of the whole local economy. Traffic and parking are seen as being just one issue for assessment, with the growth vision being about the ‘bigger picture’.

### **Summary of Growth Vision**

The prime purpose of the visioning growth exercise is to formulate a direction that encourages reinvestment and redevelopment of the CBD to enhance this city's ‘heart’.

Importantly, traditional town centres are key contributors to the local economy and can account for over one third of all employment. Of equal importance is the recognition that there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution and that many components are required for the ongoing success of a town centre/CBD, including:

- a) the management and funding of initiatives arising from an agreed vision
- b) the need for an integrated approach from the local business, the community, and local and state government
- c) the need for the right mix of business development and marketing; and
- d) the recognition that a town centre has a key role to play in fulfilling community, cultural, leisure and entertainment needs as well as traditional business and retail roles.

Given the above environment, a set of guiding statements has been developed. The document includes a set of precise and specific statements, rather than a range of generalisations for further evaluation and consideration.

A prioritised list of key strategic plans and action steps has been developed from these statements.

### **The Overview**

The prime purpose of this visioning look at the Lismore CBD is to formulate a direction that encourages reinvestment and redevelopment of the CBD to give this city a 'heart'. Initially this visioning was undertaken to provide a foundation for TTM to develop traffic and parking solutions to best cope with the expected CBD growth in the future....that is, up to 15% over the next 10 years. Since commencing this study it has been revealed that many traditional large town centres are undergoing or have undergone a similar reassessment of how best to ensure the future of their CBD with a strongly focused and agreed upon vision being seen as a key element to ensuring ongoing prosperity of the whole local economy. Traffic and parking are seen as being just one issue for assessment.....thus we realize that this growth vision is also about the 'bigger picture'.

Traditional town centres are key contributors to the local economy and can account for over a third of all employment.

Equally important, is the recognition that there is no 'one size fits all' solution and that many components are required for the ongoing success of a town centre/CBD; including the management and funding of initiatives arising from an agreed vision; the need for an integrated approach from the local business, the community and local and state government; the need for the right mix of business development and marketing; and the recognition that a town centre has a key role to play in fulfilling community, cultural, leisure and entertainment needs as well as the traditional business and retail roles.

Given the above environment the following set of guiding statements have been developed. Purposely, we have aimed as much as possible to bring forward a set of precise and specific statements rather than provide a range of generalizations for further evaluation and consideration. From these statements we have developed a prioritised list of key strategic plans and/or action steps.

### **Recommendation**

We are seeking that the Council adopt the Guiding Statements and Strategic Plans as the key document guiding CBD growth over the next ten or more years. In doing so it is understood that the stated strategic plans and action steps could be either modified or changed significantly once further investigation is undertaken.

## Guiding Statements

The following list is not prioritised.

- a. Lismore, like many Regional CBD's, will need to reinvent itself to remain vibrant and healthy in the future. This is primarily due to competition from shopping centres, bulky goods retailing, changing consumer buying habits and the growth of self sufficiency in neighbouring towns. From a positive viewpoint, the economic environment of Lismore and the CBD will be one of moderate to high growth.....which creates a challenge in itself.
- b. The Lismore CBD will need rebranding, repositioning and a 'unique selling proposition'.....this can only be achieved by understanding the motives of the key target markets and developing strategies to satisfy these segments; such as, workers and local shoppers Monday to Friday, community, local shoppers, visitors and tourists on the weekend, the commercial sector and local regional needs.
- c. Given changing consumer buying habits the positioning of the Lismore CBD needs to be focused on specialist non franchise retailing, lots of amenity, a place to meet, congregate and relax. We need to provide a more laid back, lifestyle enjoyment experience. We need to incorporate a stronger sense of community ownership in the CBD by introducing local community, cultural, heritage, leisure, entertainment and social issues.
- d. Whilst retailing will remain the dominant segment, strategies to grow the commercial sector will be important as they provide a strong foundation of consumers (the workers). Likewise, the three tiers of government will continue to play an important role.
- e. Given the size of the market an important strategy will be to ensure that we facilitate and encourage clustering to provide a critical mass; such as, an eat street and a town square.
- f. For Lismore CBD to become vibrant, some streets will need to operate 7 days a week (eg Eat Street) and we need to introduce a calendar of events to entice people to the CBD on weekends.
- g. Part of the Lismore CBD experience should include the benefits of passive recreation and link the CBD to the riverbank and Lismore Park.....Lismore Park needs to become a major passive recreation area whilst not losing its sporting focus.
- h. The Council will need to play a more dominant role in ensuring infrastructure and CBD management issues are coordinated and focused. This should be undertaken on a collaborative basis with the business community, CBD users, the public sector and the general community; for example, beautification, parking, security and possibly operating hours.
- i. The Council will need to ensure that regulations and policies are aligned with the CBD vision and strategies. In some cases Council will need to provide incentives to existing and new investors; for example, to encourage but not force the establishment of an Eat St, Inner City Living and Streetscapes.
- j. Whilst the Council role and support will be crucial, it alone will not create a vibrant CBD. Existing businesses will need to be proactive and supportive and investment strategies will need to be promoted and encouraged.

## **Strategic Plans and Action Steps**

As mentioned previously, we have aimed as much as possible to introduce specific strategic plans and action steps. In so doing, it should be noted that some of the action steps could in fact form part of one of the stated strategic plans; however, it was felt important that an action step was rated and prioritized as a separate item.

It is recognized that whilst the prioritizing ranks by importance, there are many other factors (such as finance) that will influence the order and timetable for implementation.

### **Top 10 Strategic Plans and Action Step**

1. Create a dynamic Town Square
2. Develop a reinvestment strategy for the total CBD to encourage private redevelopment
3. Develop new policies, regulations and procedures that encourage investment in the CBD
4. Facilitate inner CBD residential development
5. Introduce a 'car parking levy' in the business rates and then abandon car parking contributions.
6. Encourage and promote Magellan Street from Keen Street to the Rowing Club as an 'Eat Street'.
7. Complete the historic/artistic/recreational themeing of Riverside Park and promote this product to visitors and tourists.
8. Explore options to upgrade the City Hall.
9. Introduce events aimed at bringing shoppers and the community back into the CBD including a monthly 'the block' market day utilizing the centre parking bays.
10. Introduce a CBD Management Committee based on other successful Regional Town models

### **Other Strategic Plans and Action Steps – not prioritized**

11. Seek out government grants to assist in funding these CBD Strategic Initiatives.
12. To promote a revitalised CBD develop a simulated computer model of the CBD in 2032.
13. Link the CBD to Lismore Square by upgrading Uralba Street and the adjoining pathway
14. Provide for a multi storey carpark at Browns Creek
15. Develop a strategy to further grow the health industry in and around Brewster/Uralba Sts
16. Encourage and promote new unit/villa residential development alongside Lismore Park.
17. Hold investment seminars to showcase the Lismore CBD Revitalisation Plan.
18. Develop Lismore Park into a modern sporting and recreational area.
19. Develop a 'soft' community events program; such as a 'Speakers Corner'
20. Hold an outdoor CBD retailing day four times a year.
21. Investigate the development of 'verandah' retailing and offices around the inner block.
22. Link the CBD to South Lismore via a pedestrian/cycleway at the end of Eat Street (Magellan St)

The attached addendum includes a clarifying paragraph on each Strategic Plan and Action Step.

## **Addendum**

### **Top 10 Strategic Plans and Action Step**

#### **1. Create a dynamic Town Square**

Lismore has a unique opportunity to create a special place with the significant parcel of land at the old High School site and the aim should be to provide a modern precinct packed with community related facilities including a performing arts centre. It is recognized that the economics may dictate that there be some commercial development.....any such development should complement the 'Town Square' concept.

#### **2. Develop a reinvestment strategy for the total CBD to encourage private redevelopment**

It is recognized that a revitalized CBD will require ongoing development by the private sector and that one of the Council's key roles is to provide an environment to foster such investment. There are also key issues that need to be addressed such as the lack of reinvestment by developers within the traditional CBD 'block', the demand for quality office space and the likely spread of development to the outer CBD.

#### **3. Develop new policies, regulations & procedures that encourage investment in the CBD**

Many of Council's policies are based on old principles that are either no longer relevant in today's business investment environment or act as a disincentive for investment. We need to ensure that our policies encourage investment.

#### **4. Facilitate inner CBD residential development**

Whilst it is recognized that it will be market forces that determine investment in this sector we need to have policies and a strategy that encourages the move towards residential living in the CBD.

#### **5. Introduce a 'car parking levy' in the business rates and then abandon car parking contributions.**

Car Parking Contributions have long been a contentious issue and is based on an iniquitous and outdated formula which actively discouraged small business; especially, Cafés and Restaurants. A more realistic policy needs to be developed and introducing a levy as part of the rates is just one option that should be considered.

#### **6. Encourage and promote Magellan Street from Keen St to the Rowing Club as an 'Eat Street'.**

There has been a significant move towards the clustering of 'like' business activities over the past twenty years as a generator of synergistic economic growth. It is felt that the CBD could capitalize on the clustering of 'eateries' and that Magellan Street with its existing wide pathways, shade trees and traffic calming would be an ideal location. The Council should further investigate this opportunity and look at ways to offer incentives for café/restaurants/bars to locate or relocate to this area.

#### **7. Complete the historic/artistic/recreational themeing of Riverside Park and promote this product to visitors and tourists.**

A key driver of town centre revitalization is amenity and Lismore is fortunate in having a river running through its centre. We need to continue to move forward with the redevelopment of the

riverbank as it will play an important role in providing amenity to our local community as well as attracting visitors and tourists.

**8. Explore Options to Upgrade the City Hall.**

There will always be a need to reinvest or upgrade key assets. In this case it is NORPA that is the key asset and it is timely that we upgrade the City Hall to ensure they have a facility which improves their service delivery and generates additional income. Whilst it is common for City Halls to be a financial burden on the community we are fortunate that NORPA is an extremely efficient and effective operator of this facility.

**9. Introduce events aimed at bringing shoppers and the community back into the CBD including a monthly ‘the block’ market day utilizing the centre parking bays.**

There is a need for the CBD to ‘be alive’ on a seven day basis and one way to enhance and attract the community back is to conduct a monthly market day (Saturday or Sunday) whereby stalls are erected in the centre parking bays and retail shops remain open.

**10. Introduce a CBD Management Committee based on other successful Regional Town models**

There are many examples, both nationally and internationally, where a large regional town has addressed the need to revitalize in order to continue to grow or to reverse a decline. In a vast majority of cases an important part of the way forward has been the introduction of a CBD Management Committee. This committee, which includes the key stakeholders such as business, government and the community, promotes, fosters and encourages agreed change.

**Other Strategic Plans and Action Steps – not prioritized**

**11. Seek out government grants to assist in funding these CBD Strategic Initiatives.**

Lismore Council already has a sound track record in securing grants for various projects and programs and we need to actively seek government assistance to implement the CBD growth initiatives. To be successful in gaining grants we need to be planning two to five years in advance.

**12. To promote a revitalised CBD develop a simulated computer model of the CBD in 2032.**

To stimulate a vision of how the CBD could look in the future it would be advantageous to utilize modern computer graphics to develop a ‘reality’ model of the town with the ability to take a journey through the CBD as well as to run differing development options.

**13. Link the CBD to Lismore Square by upgrading Uralba Street and the adjoining pathway**

It is already accepted in this vision that the upgrade of the inner CBD streets will continue with the remaining Woodlark Street to be redeveloped in the next one to two years. At the same time it would be beneficial to continue the upgrade to include the linkage along Uralba Street to Lismore Square.

**14. Provide for a multi storey carpark at Browns Creek**

The CBD must provide infrastructure facilities that attract people downtown. One such infrastructure as a convenient, safe and secure parking which can only be accommodated by a multi storey carpark. The attractiveness of Browns Creek apart from the location is that the land has no practical alternate use.

**15. Develop a strategy to further grow the health industry in and around Brewster/Uralba Sts**

One of the key industries in Lismore is Health and with the planned expansion of Lismore Base Hospital plus the addition of another private hospital in that area it can be expected that other medically related practices will establish in the area. We should ensure that a strategies and policies are in place to facilitate this growth; particularly at the lower end of the precinct around Brewster and Uralba Street.

**16. Encourage and promote new unit/villa residential development alongside Lismore Park.**

Inner city or near city residential living is attracted to locations which provide amenity and pleasant surroundings. Rivers and parklands provide such a location and whilst there are limited opportunities along the Wilsons River there are opportunities for parkland residential living in and around Magellan and Brewster Street.

**17. Hold investment seminars to showcase the Lismore CBD Revitalisation Plan.**

A key component to the continued revitalisation of the CBD is the need to attract investors, both private and public. Once the CBD strategies and plans are finalized we should adopt a proactive approach to encourage ongoing investment and one method of achieving this aim would be to hold investment seminars from time to time.

**18. Develop Lismore Park into a modern sporting and recreational area.**

We understand that Council has already commenced the development of concept plans to create a modern sporting and recreational area in one section of Lismore Park. These plans should be expanded to include the whole of the park area.

**19. Develop a ‘soft’ community events program; such as a ‘Speakers Corner’**

Whilst Lismore already has a strong track record in attracting events it is timely to build on this success and look at ways of developing a ‘soft’ community events program centred around the CBD.

**20. Hold an outdoor CBD retailing day four times a year.**

This plan is similar to the ‘market day’ concept but is geared to local retailers being able to trade both inside and outside their premises thus creating another ‘market day’ experience as a means to attracting the community/shoppers back into the CBD; especially on weekends.

**21. Investigate the development of ‘verandah’ retailing and offices around the inner block.**

First floor retail and commercial businesses around the ‘block’ are suffering for a number of reasons; including access and poor, outdated facilities. One way to stimulate a revival would be to investigate the possibility of ‘verandahing’ the inner section of the CBD block, provide a number of common external access locations and encourage building owners to redevelop their premises based on access to and from the verandah.

**22. Link the CBD to South Lismore via a pedestrian/cycleway at the end of Eat St (Magellan St)**

This action will foster and promote the revitalisation of South Lismore to include residential development particularly alongside the Wilsons River.