3. Strong communities

Desired regional outcome
The region's communities are vibrant, safe and healthy and resilient to climate change, and diversity is welcomed and embraced.

The FNQ region has been identified as having one of the fastest growing populations in Queensland (DIP, 2008c), which creates continuous change and challenges for communities. Rapid urban growth may bring prosperity to the region, but can cause disadvantage to some sections of the community if the growth is not well planned.

Building strong communities in FNQ will be assisted by improving the quality and safety of the built environment through sensitive urban design, strengthening regional activity centres, ensuring housing meets demand, and adequately planning for community services and facilities.

The government's vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is to have their cultures affirmed, their heritage sustained and to have the same prospects for health, prosperity and quality of life as other Queenslanders (ATSIP, 2005).

Indigenous people are an integral part of, and make a major contribution to the FNQ regional community, sharing and contributing to the region's culture, economic and social development. The regional plan provides opportunities for Indigenous Queenslanders to be involved in planning processes and have input into decision making and management processes.
3.1 Social planning

Social planning is an essential component of all land use planning and should be integrated into rural precinct planning, structure planning, master planning and infrastructure planning processes. It can help identify necessary community facilities and services, and help designate land for community uses in planning schemes (see also sections 4.2 and 4.5).

Social planning can also be used to identify community and social issues and impacts in the planning and development process, and mitigate potential adverse social impacts of growth and development in the region, including climate change and oil vulnerability.

Consideration of socio-demographic trends and population shifts such as sea change, tree change and the grey nomad tourist movement helps to inform planning for future growth and infrastructure provision. For example, consideration of the grey nomad movement has, in some cases, led to the retention of existing caravan parks as a means of providing tourist and affordable accommodation. An ageing population has implications for a range of planning and design matters, such as residential design and provision of transport, and community and health services.

Objective

- The social needs of the community are appropriately considered in planning and development processes to maintain and enhance quality of life.

Land use policies

3.1.1 Land use planning and development decision-making processes incorporate social planning considerations.

3.1.2 Socio-demographic information is used to identify the effects of growth and change on regional communities and to inform social infrastructure planning.

3.1.3 Planning and development of new residential areas provides equitable access to services and avoids creating areas of disadvantage.

3.1.4 Greenfield communities and redevelopment areas are integrated with existing or adjacent communities to encourage social cohesion.

3.1.5 Appropriate levels of infrastructure and services are provided to rural towns and villages, consistent with the preferred settlement pattern and network of regional activity centres for FNQ (see Part D and section 4.2).

3.1.6 Planning and development urban design principles are adopted to ensure communities are resilient to the impacts of climate change and adapt in ways that minimise the region's contribution to the causes of climate change (see section 4.7).

Aligned strategies

3.1.A Social impact assessments are undertaken when new and expanding mining developments are proposed.

Explanatory notes

Demographic trends for the region suggest the proportion of older people in the population will increase considerably over the next 20 years and more people, both young and old, will live alone. This has implications for the way cities and towns are planned, and how housing and services are provided.

Older people will need housing within walking distance of shops and public transport. As the population ages and people live longer, residents will increasingly need options to stay in the community. Consideration of accessibility to services and infrastructure is also vital for other vulnerable persons with complex service needs such as people with a disability, people with short or long term illnesses. The Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2008-12 aims for better collaboration between government sectors when planning for and addressing issues relating to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities living in Queensland.

Climate change and oil vulnerability will also affect the way people live. Housing should be designed to cope with increased temperatures, potential flooding and more intense cyclonic events. Increases in petrol prices will place higher demands on public transport services. The Queensland Government's ClimateSmart Living campaign aims to help people understand how they can minimise and adjust to the impacts of climate change.

Resource developments, such as mining, can bring benefits to communities through the creation of new employment opportunities and stronger economies. The government, in partnership with industry and local government is strengthening social assessment within existing environmental impact processes. The Sustainable Resource Communities Policy–Social Impact Assessment in the Mining and Petroleum Industries (DTRDI, 2008a) recommends a range of measures to improve social impact assessment of mining proposals, including stronger linkages between social impact assessment and regional planning.
3.2 Social infrastructure

Social infrastructure refers to the community facilities, services and networks which help individuals, families, groups and communities meet their social needs, maximise their potential for development, and enhance community wellbeing. They include:

- facilities and services such as education, training, health, open space, recreation and sport, safety and emergency services, religious, arts and cultural facilities and community meeting places
- lifecycle-targeted facilities and services, such as those for children, young people and older people
- targeted facilities and services for groups with special needs, such as families, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Additional community services and facilities will be required to meet the needs of an increasing regional population, and respond to changing community needs over time (see also sections 6.1 and 8.1).

Objective

- The current and future needs of the community are met through coordinated and sequential provision of appropriate social infrastructure.

Land use policies

3.2.1 The coordination of community services and facilities is considered and incorporated in land use planning.

3.2.2 Accessible social infrastructure that is resilient to the impacts of climate change is provided that is well located in relation to transport, residential areas and employment, in accordance with the regional activity centres network (see section 4.2).

Aligned strategies

3.2.A Planning and delivery of social infrastructure is improved by developing and linking with existing collaborative working relationships.

3.2.B Hubs of co-located multipurpose community facilities and services are provided, which can respond to changing and emerging community needs.

3.2.C Community inclusion is promoted by providing an equitable, affordable and appropriate public transport system in the principal regional activity centre.

3.2.D New and expanding mining developments prepare and/or review local area plans outlining implications and impacts on community infrastructure and services.
Explanatory notes
While social planning considerations should form an integral part of all land use planning, the delivery of social services is outside the scope of IPA. Collaborative partnerships are required between land use planners and service providers to ensure the desired regional outcome is achieved.

Social infrastructure should be provided in appropriate locations, consistent with the network of regional activity centres (see policy 4.2) and should be accessible to all residents of FNQ, including those in urban fringe areas, rural communities, and more remote Aboriginal communities. Social infrastructure should be provided in sequence with new residential development, particularly in greenfield areas located in outlying and fringe localities with high service and transport needs.

Where possible, opportunities to co-locate services, such as health practices or cultural and arts facilities, should be explored to enhance community access and use. The development of multi-purpose community spaces and facilities which can respond to changing and emerging community needs over time is also encouraged.

The provision of human services and associated infrastructure should acknowledge and account for the movement of people within FNQ—for example between Cairns and rural centres and between FNQ and adjacent regional areas such as Cape York, Torres Strait and the Gulf region.

Communities that benefit from resource developments through creation of new employment opportunities and stronger economies may also experience an increase in social infrastructure pressures such as access to housing and community services.

Several strategies and programs that can inform social planning and social infrastructure provision are:
- **Social Infrastructure Planning, Implementation Guideline No.5** (Department of Infrastructure, 2007a)
- **Land Use and Public Transport Accessibility Index** (Queensland Transport, 2005b)
- **Edmonton Sport and Recreation Facility Needs Study** (Final Report) (Cairns Regional Council, 2008a)
- **Gordonvale Sporting Precinct** (Cairns Regional Council, 2008b)
- **Open Space for Recreation and Sport, Planning Principles, A Guide for Local Government** (Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing, 1998)
- **Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2008-12** (Department of Communities, 2008).

3.3 Healthy and safe communities
Maintaining healthy communities is a key theme of the Queensland Government’s Q2 vision for Queensland (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008). There are key links between urban planning practice and health determinants in a community. Research shows evidence of key links between the health of a community and a range of factors including:

- social disadvantage
- population characteristics
- social cohesion and sense of community
- access to social infrastructure
- safety and perceptions of safety
- housing affordability and housing density
- accessibility and transport
- physical activity and availability of public space and open space
- civic participation
- climate change and energy consumption
- water demand management (Queensland Health, 2005).

Urban planning and design play a crucial role in the development of safe and healthy communities. Urban design strategies are highly relevant in building safe communities and involve consideration of:

- good access and connections to places
- variety of place
- access to urban open space and natural areas
- adaptability and versatility
- pedestrian focused approaches
- sight lines and surveillance
- appropriate lighting
- space and place making.
Objective

- Communities are well designed, safe and healthy local environments that encourage active community participation and healthy lifestyles and prevent crime.

Land use policies

3.3.1 Crime prevention through environmental design principles are considered in the design and layout of greenfield communities and redevelopment areas.

3.3.2 State and local government and developers consider community health and safety issues in the planning and development of new urban areas and redevelopment sites including from the impacts of climate change.

3.3.3 Developments are designed, located and operated to mitigate the health impacts of biting insects.

Aligned strategies

3.3.A Community health and safety in urban and rural environments is improved by providing appropriate social infrastructure, places for community activity, and involving local communities in planning processes.

3.3.B Best practice urban design is utilised to create built environments that enhance community health and safety (see section 4.5).

Explanatory notes

The regional plan is based on the premise that all people have a right to access and use of public space. The provision of public and community space is essential to support community activity and wellbeing, particularly in newly developing and redeveloping areas. Provision of a range of places for community activity is important in fostering physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Open space, sport and recreation spaces and facilities, and walking and cycling paths are crucial in contributing to the physical and mental health and wellbeing of a community, particularly in greenfield development. New development should be planned and designed for accessibility, particularly for people with a disability and for our ageing population.

Principles of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) (Queensland Police Service, 2007) should be used to design new places and spaces which enhance community safety. Other relevant guidelines include:

- *Strong Communities Handbook* (Department of Communities et al, 2006).

The health impact of biting insects to residents and tourists in localised areas can be significant. Good urban planning and design can play an important role in minimising the potential risks to the community (see section 4.7). Strategies to mitigate the health impacts are provided in Queensland Health’s *Guidelines to minimise mosquito and biting midge problems in new development areas* (Queensland Health, 2002).
3.4 Community engagement and capacity building

Regional planning is not just about land use planning. It is about building new communities, and integrating them with existing communities. The development of new communities involves not only the built environment, but also how people live and work together, the relationships that are formed in that community, how the community develops over time, and its capacity to deal with and respond to change.

Community engagement relates to the decision making processes involving government and community interactions, ranging from information sharing to community consultation, and in some instances, active participation in government decision making processes. This requires a good understanding of the special needs and interests of different sector groups within the community.

Strong community engagement practice enables strong community support and ownership of the outcomes. Community capacity is the set of skills, relationships and networks that collectively exist in a community. These provide social support, especially when people need assistance. The more capacity a community possesses, the more likely it is to be able to take part in and influence decisions and processes for change.

Objective

- Engage the community and build community capacity through the planning and development of future communities.

Land use policies

3.4.1 Community engagement is recognised as an essential part of planning processes, enabling local communities to identify, articulate and enhance their sense of place and wellbeing.

3.4.2 Community engagement and community capacity building programs are implemented when planning for greenfield developments and redevelopment projects.

Aligned strategies

3.4.A Traditional Owners are recognised as stakeholders in land use planning processes and their relationship with the land, sea and natural resources is respected.

3.4.B The special interests of Indigenous people are taken into account in the management and development of the region.

Explanatory notes

Community capacity is particularly important in newly developed areas and areas undergoing significant change and redevelopment. Capacity building events and activities can develop social capital and help to create a strong sense of identity and belonging in a community.

A framework for effective engagement with Traditional Owners should consider regional, subregional and local levels of planning. Traditional Owners are building capacity to engage in these planning processes through a culturally appropriate engagement framework. They have expressed a desire for proper acknowledgment, respect and commitment to progress their interests and responsibilities through planning processes.

When engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it should be recognised that both Traditional Owners and historical and contemporary residents are important stakeholders with differing needs and aspirations. The Strong Communities Handbook (Department of Communities et al, 2006) provides guidance in community capacity building.
3.5 Sense of community, place and identity

A sense of place and local identity can be found in the distinctive features of an area’s physical landscape, built environment, population characteristics, economy, arts and cultural heritage. It can also be based upon the relationships, networks and connections between the people who live and work in a community. This sense of place and local identity is important in the building of new communities, and sustaining existing communities (see section 2.1).

Objective

- Manage urban and rural growth and development to create, maintain and enhance a sense of community, place and local identity throughout the region.

Land use policies

3.5.1 Adequate provision is made for public spaces and places for community activities when planning and designing greenfield developments and infill areas (see policy 3.6.2).

3.5.2 Protect and enhance existing local and regional open spaces when designing and redeveloping greenfield, infill and new areas.

3.5.3 Plan for new open spaces when designing and redeveloping greenfield, infill and new areas both locally and regionally.

3.5.4 Local character and identity is reinforced through planning and development of regional activity centres, rural towns, greenfield developments and infill areas.

3.5.5 Indigenous people’s strong connection to land and sea is recognised and respected when planning for development of regional activity centres, rural towns, greenfield developments and infill areas.

Explanatory notes

FNQ has a unique tropical character which can define an individual’s sense of place (see section 4.5). Developing a sense of place is particularly important in greenfield development. Community engagement can inform planning for new development by identifying key local characteristics that define a place and the elements of a place that are important to local people. Community engagement can also result in greater community ownership of planning and design outcomes.

The provision of open spaces, public spaces and places, used for a range of community activities, are an essential component of any greenfield, infill or redevelopment process. The Queensland Government has set a target to protect 50 per cent more land not only for nature conservation but also for public recreation: this is an integral part of the unique Queensland lifestyle (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008). Retaining the character and sense of place of existing rural communities in FNQ is also vital.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have strong family and cultural ties that are closely connected to the land and sea. Maintaining the connection with their land is important for social and cultural well being. Respecting these strong connections to the land and sea is important for the on-going survival of their culture.
3.6 Arts and cultural development

FNQ has a diverse range of cultures, involving the unique customs, beliefs, values, knowledge, heritage, traditions and way of life of this area. New residents will bring new ideas, innovation and fresh energy to the region, ensuring its vigorous multicultural and international focus will continue to develop and prosper.

Cultural spaces, centres, and facilities play an important role in providing a place for community events, functions, meetings, and festivals, used by a range of different cultural groups. Maintaining and establishing regionally significant infrastructure for cultural events, entertainment, sport, and conventions will foster creative art, recreation and leisure industries that will stimulate wealth and job creation (see section 3.5).

Objective

• Support cultural development and the arts through the planning and provision of cultural infrastructure and spaces.

Land use policies

3.6.1 Provision of public spaces for cultural activities, events and festivals, including cultural precincts where appropriate, is considered when planning communities, particularly in greenfield development.

3.6.2 New developments incorporate arts and cultural infrastructure and facilities at a scale that is consistent with the scale of the development.

3.7 Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage places and landscapes are places (either natural or built) which are important to the community because of their cultural heritage significance. The regional plan recognises the significance of different cultures and the importance of conserving Indigenous and non-Indigenous, natural and cultural heritage.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage places and landscapes are especially important in FNQ. Indigenous cultural heritage may include significant areas, objects or places with evidence of archaeological or historic significance of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander occupation.

Intangible aspects such as language, song, stories and art are part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ strong sense of heritage as well as physical places and objects. Protecting knowledge and information associated with cultural heritage places is as important as the physical protection of a place.

Objective

• Identify, protect and manage the region’s unique cultural heritage, including historic places and landscapes of significance to the community.

Land use policies

3.7.1 Queensland heritage places and local heritage places are identified in local government planning schemes.

3.7.2 Development in or adjacent to Queensland heritage places and local heritage places does not compromise the cultural heritage significance of those places.

3.7.3 Indigenous cultural heritage in the form of landscapes, places and objects is protected, managed and conserved through local government planning instruments.

Aligned strategies

3.7.A Where the knowledge is available, and it is culturally appropriate, places of significance are added to the Aboriginal cultural heritage register.

3.7.B Local governments are encouraged to identify local heritage places of cultural heritage significance through a heritage survey utilising key historical themes for Far North Queensland.
Explanatory notes

The protection, conservation and management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage is undertaken through the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and * Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003*. These laws establish a duty of care for all land users regardless of tenure which extends to all levels of government as well as developers. It requires that all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to ensure activities do not harm cultural heritage. For some activities a cultural heritage management plan is required, such as those developments requiring an environmental impact study. The legislation establishes a cultural heritage register that records significant sites along with guidelines that set out reasonable and practical measures to avoid harming cultural heritage. This helps Queenslanders to meet their duty of care.

Non-Indigenous cultural heritage includes artefacts, places and buildings that are commonly of European origin. Historic cultural heritage also covers shipwrecks and artefacts from pre-colonial occupation, such as visits by Indonesian fishermen to Northern Australia prior to 1788.

The major piece of historic cultural heritage legislation is the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*. The Act makes provision for the conservation of Queensland’s cultural heritage by protecting all places and areas entered in the Queensland Heritage Register. The register now comprises state heritage places, archaeological places and protected areas. Development of a place registered under the Act is assessable development.

The Act also requires a local government (unless it has been exempted) to keep a local heritage register of places of cultural heritage significance in its local government area. The *Queensland Heritage Regulation 2003* includes a local heritage place code—an IDAS code for development on a local heritage place. The *Queensland Heritage Regulation 2003* also includes a list of local governments for which the local heritage provisions do not apply, as their planning schemes are determined as having satisfactorily identified and provided for the conservation of heritage places in its local government area.

The EPA is currently undertaking a statewide survey of Queensland’s heritage places. Key historical themes that are relevant to the different regions of Queensland have been identified in the *Queensland Cultural Heritage Places Context Study—Report to the EPA* (Blake, 1996). These themes should be utilised by a local government when undertaking a local heritage survey of its area.
Historical themes for FNQ (non-Indigenous)

Peopling places
- The role of Chinese in mining industry and commerce
- The role of Chinese, Japanese, Italians and South Sea Islanders in development of agriculture
- The presence of Afghans on the mining fields and the use of camels to transport
- Ore prior to railways

Exploiting, utilising and transforming the land
- Mining, in particular development of tin mining in Herberton district and copper around Chillagoe
- Primary industry (cane growing) focussed on Tully, Innisfail, Babinda, Cairns and Mossman
- Primary industry (horticulture and grazing), particularly in the Innisfail district and on the Atherton Tablelands
- Primary industry (forestry) on the Atherton Tablelands
- Development of hydroelectricity schemes on the Barron and Tully rivers

Developing secondary industries
- Tourism industry centred on the Great Barrier Reef and the Tablelands with Cairns as the focal point

Moving goods, people and information
- Development of transport routes to the Atherton Tablelands—both road and rail

Maintaining order
- The use of the far north in World War II

3.8 Strengthening Indigenous communities

It is critical that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders share the benefits of the Smart State to the same degree as other citizens. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up around one eleventh of the population in FNQ, collectively they are the most disadvantaged. They generally live about 20 years less than other Queenslanders and their babies die at a higher rate than the rest of the population. The Queensland Government is looking at different ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure they have the same rights and opportunities as other Queenslanders, and enjoy comparable standards of living.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring there are no systemic barriers preventing any group of Queenslanders from having an equal share in the State’s prosperity. Where barriers do exist, the government and communities share responsibility for breaking them down or finding ways to overcome them.

Within the FNQ region there are two Aboriginal council areas—Yarrabah to the east of Cairns and Wujal Wujal on the northern boundary of the region. Aboriginal councils take responsibility for a broad range of activities within communities, not just municipal functions. They build, operate and maintain a range of infrastructure, as well as providing housing and social services that are beyond the scope of mainstream local government. Whilst these councils also aim to provide services such as road building and maintenance, rubbish removal and many of the services that mainstream councils provide, they are disadvantaged by not having the same major income stream from levying rates. Consequently most of the Aboriginal councils’ income is reliant on grants from both federal and state government.
Objectives

- Regional planning processes recognise and facilitate the need to increase Indigenous economic and housing opportunities.
- Indigenous local government areas meet best practice land use planning and local administration frameworks, which provide equitable access to infrastructure and services for all community members.
- Regional planning processes recognise and facilitate implementation of Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Land use policies

3.8.1 IPA planning schemes are prepared for Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah local government areas.

3.8.2 The special requirements of Indigenous people wishing to live on land held in trust is considered as part of the development of local land use planning frameworks.

Explanatory notes

In 2004, wide ranging legislative reform was initiated by the Queensland Government to transition Aboriginal community councils to full shire council status by 2008. January 2007 saw the final transition of Aboriginal councils to full shire council status and the councils are working towards developing planning schemes that are compliant with IPA. In the meantime the assessment manager for development in these areas is determined under Schedules 8 and 8A of IPA and Schedule 2 of the Integrated Planning Regulation 1998.

An Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) is an agreement between a native title group and others about the use and management of land and waters. ILUAs can be made separately from the formal native title process but they may also be part of a native title determination.

Some practical outcomes Indigenous groups have gained include the establishment of cultural centres or education trust funds, co-management of national parks, commitments to Indigenous employment and the creation of parks and reserves.

ILUAs in the FNQ region provide for Aboriginal land ownership and living areas, conservation areas, extended national parks, public access to designated tourist sites, some grazing areas and restrictions on the hunting of rare and threatened species.
Under the Cape York welfare reform trials the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have agreed to work together to improve the level of co-ordination and co-operation in the delivery of services in Indigenous communities. This framework aims to place a priority on increased law enforcement, enhanced financial incentives, improved health outcomes, child safety, youth and family support, diversionary activities, improved education opportunities and better housing. Initiatives within the housing stream of the Welfare Reform Action Plan aim to assist individuals and families to purchase their own home. Other projects in this stream are implementing mainstream tenancy agreements and encouraging families to take pride and responsibility for the condition of their homes and backyards.

One method for improving levels of Indigenous home ownership has eventuated through amendments to the Indigenous Land Acts. The amendments in the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 aim to:

- enable home ownership and provide leases for housing
- provide greater certainty of tenure in townships and to assist the transfer process for Deed of Grant In Trust (DOGIT) land areas outside of townships
- encourage economic development in Indigenous communities
- facilitate the construction of public infrastructure.

One of the Queensland Government’s current priorities is strengthening Indigenous communities, this is happening through a number of initiatives focussing on normalising housing arrangements to improve prosperity and quality of life. However, the differing land tenure arrangements on many Indigenous communities pose a significant challenge to achieving this goal. Often the land where Indigenous people live is held in a trust arrangement which does not allow normal freehold title for each house. Alternate mechanisms are required to facilitate the desired housing outcomes.

To assist these initiatives the regional plan designates an urban footprint around several Indigenous communities, such as Mossman Gorge and Jumbun (south west of Tully). This will allow for further subdivision of large lots, thus facilitating the creation of individual titles for existing and proposed housing in the future.

Areas needing further investigation have also been identified. These are where some form of residential development is intended on lands held in trust by Indigenous communities, often as a result of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), but the detailed community development planning has not yet been undertaken. In these situations the land remains in the regional landscape and rural production area land use category until such time as adequate investigations into the land’s capability and suitability, and infrastructure requirements have been undertaken. A change to a more appropriate regional land use category may be required to facilitate implementation of the ILUA once agreement has been reached between all parties to the ILUA.
The Queensland Government and the Eastern Kuku Yalanji People have signed a series of Indigenous Land Use Agreements to resolve native title issues over lands between Mossman and Cooktown in Far North Queensland, within the traditional country of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people. The agreements recognise the native title rights of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji people. They provide for Aboriginal land ownership and living areas, conservation areas, extended national parks, public access to designated tourist sites, some grazing areas and restrictions on the hunting of rare and threatened species.

The region is of international significance as a large part incorporates the Wet Tropics World Heritage area as well as state reserves and roads. The negotiated agreements provide a platform for land tenure and management frameworks that will protect the outstanding environmental values of the Wet Tropics.

An investigation area has been allocated over the pink zone of the Kuku Yalanji Indigenous Land Use Agreement. It is not envisaged that the whole investigation area is suitable or will be developed. Further investigation of the area identified will be required as the community development planning process identifies land use constraints, infrastructure requirements and the precise areas to be developed over time.

In the south of the region near Cardwell a small amount of land that is part of the Girramay ILUA has also been identified as an investigation area. The Traditional Owners, state agencies and Cassowary Coast Regional Council will need to work together to determine the future configuration of this parcel of land and any subsequent requirements for planning scheme amendments or changes to the regional plan land use categories (see map 8).
4. Urban development

Desired regional outcome

The region has an interlinked network of well planned, discrete, sustainable urban centres which reflect best practice urban and tropical design and offer convenient and accessible residential, employment, transport and other service opportunities.

The anticipated growth across the region will vary, with Cairns as the principal urban centre growing more rapidly than the region as a whole. Such growth will place high demand on urban systems, infrastructure and services.

The development of the region’s urban centres is influenced by tourism, agriculture, mining and service industry activity. Tourism is a prominent influence on Port Douglas, Kuranda and Mission Beach. Other centres such as Atherton, Mareeba and Innisfail rely heavily on primary industries and their role as service centres for surrounding districts. Centres on the Tablelands are also experience growth related the increase in mining activity in the North East Mineral Province.

The location, layout, land use mix and operational aspects of the region’s urban areas can have a significant influence on accessibility, cost-efficiency, community quality of life and opportunities for economic activities. Urban growth must be well planned if the region’s desired regional outcomes are to be achieved.

The tropical FNQ region is particularly vulnerable to potential disasters. Climate change, oil vulnerability and natural hazards and their effects must be considered in land use planning. Planning responses should address natural hazard risks such as the threat of cyclones and tsunamis, bushfire, drought, storm surge, sea level rise and flooding, which may intensify with climate change.
4.1 Compact urban form

Current population and household size projections indicate that another 50,000 new dwellings will be needed across the region by 2031 to address housing needs. Continuing to provide a high proportion of dwellings in low density developments on the urban fringe will not match the changing structure of households or meet the needs of a growing population. Providing a compact urban form with mixed use and a high quality living environment can help create more active, stronger communities.

One of the key challenges in managing population growth is avoiding urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is the spread of urban suburbs into rural areas such as farmland, forests and coastal lands that lie on the outer edges of towns and cities. In other words, urban sprawl is characterised by development that increases the distance between the city centre and its outer edge. Urban sprawl typically involves uniformly low density residential development on greenfield land with limited community services. Many rural residential developments match this description. Low density developments on the edge of urban areas can constrain future urban growth.

Urban sprawl can have a range of adverse impacts upon the community. Residents will generally need to travel large distances for a range of activities and rely heavily upon individual car transport. Cars are a major contributing cause to climate change, and reliance on this mode of transport makes communities vulnerable to peak oil. The larger distances tend to result in higher infrastructure costs, lower infrastructure efficiency due to maintenance costs, and in many cases, a higher living cost. Urban sprawl can also result in the loss of biodiversity, agricultural land, scenic amenity and personal health which are valued by the broader community.

To ensure sustainable development, future urban growth needs to be contained within the urban footprint and managed in a way that:

- uses land efficiently
- minimises transport demands
- encourages the cost effective provision of infrastructure and services
- mitigates and adapts to projected climate changes
- is consistent with the community's economic, social, cultural and environmental values
- creates towns with their own character and identity
- promotes and supports viable activity centres that offer a range of services and maximises local employment opportunities
- fosters a sense of departure and arrival to and from urban areas.

This is achieved through identifying a preferred pattern of development and regional land use categories (see Part D) which provide certainty for government, the development industry and the community about areas where urban development may occur and those which are to be maintained to protect and enhance natural and rural values.
Objective

- Urban development is consolidated and compact to facilitate land use and infrastructure efficiencies, conserve regional landscape and rural production land, and promote a range of other community benefits.

Land use policies

4.1.1 Urban development is contained within the urban footprint (maps 1a–1k).

4.1.2 Urban development is sequenced to ensure logical and orderly land use and infrastructure delivery.

4.1.3 Development within the key regional growth areas achieves the strategic planning intent of the subregional narratives (Part D).

4.1.4 Higher dwelling densities are achieved within appropriate areas.

4.1.5 Mixed use and transit oriented development are focused in and around regional activity centres (map 9) and public transport nodes (map 17).

4.1.6 An increasing proportion of dwellings are supplied from infill and redevelopment within appropriate areas.

4.1.7 Buildings heights are limited within village activity centres to maintain the village character and scenic amenity.

4.1.8 Activity centres are provided with growth areas, notably the Mount Peter Master Planned Area, that maximise local employment opportunities, availability of services, promote walkable neighbourhoods, and the use of alternative forms of public transport through transit orientated communities.

Aligned strategies

4.1.A An urban land monitoring program monitors residential land and housing activity including dwelling density targets.

Targets

- 40 per cent average of new dwellings constructed in Cairns are from infill and redevelopment by 2031.
- 20 per cent average of new dwellings constructed in Atherton, Mareeba and Innisfail are from infill and redevelopment by 2031.
- 15-20 dwellings per hectare average net dwelling density is achieved within the Mount Peter Master Planned Area by 2031.
- 15 dwellings per hectare average net dwelling density is achieved in new greenfield developments in Cairns by 2031.
- 12 dwellings per hectare average net dwelling density is achieved in new greenfield developments in Atherton, Mareeba and Innisfail by 2031.

Explanatory notes

All land in FNQ has been designated into either the urban footprint, rural living area or regional landscape and rural production area (refer to Part D). The urban footprint sets a clear boundary for urban growth. This is an important step in facilitating urban consolidation, compact form, and protection of the region’s significant regional landscape and rural production values.

Urban development is best located within or adjoining existing urban areas where greater land use synergies can be achieved. This includes social infrastructure such as educational facilities (e.g. schools, universities) and health facilities (e.g. hospitals, retirement villages, aged care). These facilities can act as community anchors and should generally be located within the urban footprint to facilitate access and infrastructure efficiency. In some instances this may not be possible, for example, where small primary schools are located in or near small urban centres within the regional landscape and rural production area.
Part E–Regional policies

Appropriate sequencing of development is essential for orderly and efficient land use and infrastructure delivery. Subregional narratives, priority infrastructure plans and planning schemes may provide sequencing intent. Development should extend from existing developed areas rather than create disjointed developments. Development between existing urban areas should extend from the area better serviced by infrastructure, usually the larger area, or result in significant community benefit. Structure plans will need to provide greater direction on sequencing requirements.

The intent of land use policies 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 is also to avoid development of rural zoned land within the urban footprint until planning scheme amendments and infrastructure planning have been undertaken. Not all rural zoned land included in the urban footprint is likely to be suitable for urban development. Development should be contained within the existing appropriately zoned land unless there is an overriding public need, additional areas are assessed as being suitable for development with no adverse physical or environmental constraints, and such development can facilitate further urban consolidation. Rural zoned land in the urban footprint should not be developed before an appropriate urban zoning is in place in the planning scheme.

The regional plan seeks to develop walkable neighbourhoods with defined centres (refer to sections 4.2 and 8.1). The highest densities and mixed uses should be focused in the core of the centre. Lower density housing may be suitable on the edges of the neighbourhood with increasing density towards the centre.

The dwelling density targets are forward looking and relate primarily to the four largest urban areas, Cairns, Innisfail, Mareeba and Atherton. The targets are not intended as a fixed target for individual development proposals. Rather, they are intended to be achieved through detailed strategic planning as part of local government planning schemes. Achieving a greater mix of housing will also require the commitment of land owners and developers and adaptation by the community.

The dwelling density targets represent an annual average of new dwellings constructed in broad-hectare, infill and redevelopment sites in low, medium and high rise buildings where appropriate. The targets are not meant to be reached by uniform density, such as all high rises or all low rises, but by an appropriate mix of housing types. This includes secondary dwellings, caretaker facilities, multiple dwellings, boarding houses, aged care facilities and nursing homes. The intention is also not to create increasingly smaller lots with increasingly larger houses. The Queensland Development Code sets a limit on site coverage for detached houses.

Higher dwelling densities will need to be achieved in transit oriented communities (see section 8.1). Transit oriented communities are currently being investigated at Palm Cove, Edmonton, Smithfield, Redlynch, Cairns CBD, Earlville and Gordonvale (map 17). Other potential transit oriented communities, such as Mount Peter, will be investigated through the Cairns Transit Network (under preparation) and structure plan. Planners, developers, and the community will need to consider the role of proposed activity centres and changes to existing activity centres in the achievement of transit oriented communities in the assessment of any such proposals. Master planning of these communities will help achieve the desired outcomes expressed in tables 8 and 9.

Medium and high dwelling densities may not be appropriate in all locations and may require significant infrastructure investment or highly sensitive design and construction, for example where sites contain:

- cultural heritage or character values
- biodiversity or other natural values
- scenic amenity values
- natural hazard risks e.g. landslide, bushfire, flooding
- climate change risks e.g. storm surge, sea level rise
- infrastructure constraints e.g. age, condition, capacity.

Land use policy 4.1.7 seeks to protect the values and character of village activity centres. Village activity centres such as Kuranda and Mission Beach have a strong village feel and linkages with regional landscape and rural production values. Building heights should generally be limited to two storeys in these and other village activity centres.

Planning scheme proposals to increase density at specific localities must ensure that an appropriate balance of regional planning objectives can be achieved. This includes maintaining the valued FNQ lifestyle and character, tropical urban design and open space. Both on and off-site impacts will need to be assessed, including potential environmental impacts. For example it would not be appropriate to allow higher dwelling densities at Mission Beach than those identified in the current planning schemes due to the serious threat that increased traffic would have on the endangered southern cassowary. Similarly, it is not intended that dwelling densities increase in the area north of the Daintree River.
Dwelling density

Dwelling density is the number of dwellings compared to an area of land. The regional plan uses net dwelling density. Net dwelling density includes residential zoned land, local roads and parks. Gross dwelling density includes the residential zoned land, land zoned for other purposes (e.g. industrial, commercial) and regional and local roads and parks. At the other end of the scale, net dwelling density including only residential zoned land.

Gross dwelling density is lower than net dwelling density as it includes a larger area of land allocated for non-residential use.

Indicative meanings of high medium and low density and high medium and low rise building scales are provided in tables 5.1 and 5.2. These are approximations only for FNQ and are not necessarily comparable to metropolitan areas. While related, density and scale are not always on par. For example, a low rise building can achieve medium density.

The key focus of the dwelling density targets is to provide an appropriate housing mix that meets the needs of the region's growing population while avoiding urban sprawl and environmental and economic impacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Density</th>
<th>Net dwellings density (dwellings per hectare)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High density</td>
<td>Over 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium density</td>
<td>15–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low density</td>
<td>Under 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Net dwelling density

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Building height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High rise</td>
<td>Over 10 storeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium rise</td>
<td>Between 4 and 10 storeys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low rise</td>
<td>Up to 3 storeys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Development scales
4.2 Regional activity centres

Regional activity centres support a concentration of activity including business, employment, research, education, services and higher density living. They are typically centred upon the Central Business District (CBD) of a city, and the business district or main streets of a town, and provide a range of essential urban services and facilities such as retail, commercial, government, community, cultural, entertainment, recreation, health and educational facilities.

Regional activity centres are vital to the delivery of a sustainable settlement pattern. They are economic engines and focal points for social interaction and public life, contributing greatly to local identity, sense of place and lifestyle. The concentration and co-location of goods and services, facilities, jobs and housing in highly accessible locations facilitates multi-purpose trips and alternative modes of transport such as walking and cycling. This is a key strategy for reducing travel demand in response to oil vulnerability and climate change.

Far North Queensland contains an interconnected network of regional activity centres. The function and scale of these centres and associated levels of service varies considerably across the region. Regional activity centres have been designated in accordance with the scale and type of activity, population and urban structure, and infrastructure, and include a principal regional activity centre, major regional activity centres, district regional activity centres, village activity centres and rural activity centres (see table 6 and map 9).

The primary purpose of the regional activity centre network is to identify the future centre hierarchy in the preferred pattern of development. Centre vitality and viability can be facilitated by avoiding competition between lower and higher order centres, and at a finer scale, by avoiding out-of-centre development. This will need to be balanced by the other objectives of the regional plan which seek to maximise local employment opportunities (i.e. self containment) and access to a broad range of services to minimise the need for car based travel to other centres in the region.

Objectives

- To identify a regional network of activity centres to support the preferred pattern of development and promote self-containment.
- To promote regional activity centre vitality and viability via a proactive plan-led approach to land use and infrastructure allocation.

Land use policies

4.2.1 Regional activity centres are identified and operate as a network in accordance with the regional hierarchy (see table 6 and map 9).

4.2.2 Development of regional activity centres results in consolidation in the central core and surrounding frame, is of appropriate type and scale, and is accommodated by efficient use of land and buildings.

4.2.3 Regional activity centres provide for mixed use with a high quality pedestrian environment and public spaces that are accessible, safe, active, and encourage walking and social interaction.

4.2.4 Development within regional activity centres conserves or enhances the local character and sense of place, existing activity generators, and landscape values.

4.2.5 Active street fronts are maintained in regional activity centres in the form of non-residential uses on ground level and street-fronting layouts.

4.2.6 Centre activities are encouraged within regional activity centres and should only occur outside of such centres where:

(a) there is a demonstrated public need and sound economic justification
(b) there are no alternative sites in-centre
(c) there would not be an adverse impact upon the functionality of surrounding centres, infrastructure delivery, traffic congestion, and amenity of any adjoining residential areas
(d) the site is readily accessible by a range of transport modes including public transport (where available), walking and cycling.
4.2.7 Local activity centres are generally located within 400 metres of population catchments in highly accessible locations within the urban footprint.

Aligned strategies

4.2.A Government investment in infrastructure and service delivery is guided by the regional activity centre network.

Explanatory notes

The regional activity centre network only includes regional activity centres. Local governments may additionally designate local activity centres in planning schemes. The regional activity centres are based upon existing centre localities, except for Edmonton which will be located on vacant land known as Mann’s Farm (map 9). New regional and local activity centres are expected to play a major role in delivering the objectives of the regional plan in the Mount Peter Master Planned Area and will need to be identified through the structure planning process.

There are differences in the scale and function of regional activity centres both across the hierarchy and within each centre type. For example, Cairns central business district is the principal regional activity centre whereas Chillagoe is a rural activity centre. Mossman and Port Douglas are both district regional activity centres. Mossman largely has an administrative and rural services role, whereas Port Douglas has a strong tourism focus.

The regional activity centre network is dynamic. There may be a need to signal future centre regeneration by expanding the urban footprint, promotion of centres to a future higher order function, and designation of new centres. Any changes in the regional activity centre hierarchy will be identified by the regional plan rather than development or planning scheme proposals. The intended future role and function of regional activity centres is identified in Part D subregional narratives. Section 5.1 also contains descriptions of economic activity centres.

A regional activity centre core is intended to be developed as the physical, social, commercial and functional focus for a city, town, or village and surrounding areas and include a combination of buildings, landscaped areas and streets which provide for major social, cultural and economic needs of the population.

The regional activity centre frame is intended to provide support facilities and services to the activity centre core, and to provide a transition between the activity centre core and the urban residential areas. The activity centre frame accommodates higher levels of activity than the surrounding land use elements but a slightly lower level of activity than the activity centre core. This differentiation will be reflected in the spatial arrangement, type and intensity of land uses and the physical form of development. The overall emphasis in the development of the activity centre frame is flexibility, accessibility and integration of activity and the built form with the activity centre core, transport system, open space and the path network.

The main centre activities to which the land use policies apply include:

- retail, including large format retail, warehouses and factory outlet centres
- leisure, entertainment facilities and intensive sport or recreation uses such as cinemas, restaurants, bars, pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and major sports facilities
- health, education, justice and emergency facilities
- arts, culture and tourism theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities
- regional open space such as beaches, esplanades, botanical gardens, parks and malls
- community facilities such as libraries, halls and churches
- higher density housing
- major trip generators such as food markets.

Growth of regional activity centres should to be accommodated by efficient use of land and buildings in the activity centre core and frame wherever possible. It is acknowledged that in some instances this is not always possible. The preferred approach should be to locate centre activities based on the following order:

1. locations within the centre where suitable sites or buildings for conversion are, or are likely to become, available, taking account of an appropriate scale of development in relation to the role and function of the centre; and then
2. on the edge of the centre locations, with preference given to sites that are or will be well-connected to the centre; and then

3. outside of the centre locations, with preference given to locations which are or will be well served by a choice of transport modes and which are close to the centre and have a high likelihood of forming links with the centre.

Development outside of the centre is inconsistent with the strategic intent of the regional plan as it can diminish regional activity centre vitality and detract from economic growth by diluting public and private investments in centre-related activities, facilities and infrastructure.

Planning for regional activity centres will need to address relevant regional planning objectives. Local governments play an important role, and will need to amend planning schemes and other strategic local planning documents to:

- reflect the regional activity centre network designations
- spatially define the regional activity centre boundaries
- identify the current and future role and function of regional activity centres
- ensure an appropriate zoning mix and other planning provisions to achieve the regional planning intent
- ensure adequate provision for local activity centres.

The creation of compact, self-contained, diverse and inter-connected centres will be vital for creating efficient transport systems and walkable, healthy communities. Density, housing choice and affordability, and urban design and character are key components (see sections 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4). The intent of 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 is to ensure that centres are planned as regional activity centres, not just shopping centres for example, contain mixed uses, and provide diverse employment and housing opportunities.

Consumer demand is not sufficient grounds for only increasing the retail area of shopping centres. An appropriate land use mix will need to be demonstrated that achieves broader community and economic aspirations.

Regional activity centres are to be located and developed to achieve a sense of community and community place and space—somewhere that people live, conduct business, learn and play, rather than just pass through to shop or work. Higher densities will be promoted in appropriate localities within the regional activity centres within Cairns, Mareeba, Atherton and Innisfail (see section 4.3). Future development of the higher order principal and major regional activity centres should also include adequate provision for small business, and the maintenance of market-places in locations that best serve the needs of residents.
### Table 6: FNQ regional activity centres network Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional activity centre</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal regional activity centre</td>
<td>The Cairns central business district is the region's principal regional activity centre. It contains the largest and most diverse concentration of urban activities. For some activities it has an international function particularly in the tourism sector. It is the key regional focus of employment, government administration, retail, commercial and specialised personal and professional services. It accommodates significant cultural, entertainment, health, education and public transport facilities. It also has the highest population density, greatest concentration of mixed use developments, and most diverse dwelling mix in the region, including areas of medium and high rise buildings. This centre is supported by key regional infrastructure including the Cairns Base Hospital, Cairns Seaport and Cairns International Airport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major regional activity centre</td>
<td>FNQ's major regional activity centres contain a major concentration of business, employment and population. These centres generally provide a range of retail and services, local and/or state government administration, and important health, education, cultural and entertainment facilities. Some major regional activity centres are serviced by public transport and supported by hospitals, tertiary education institutions and an airport or seaport. Multiple dwellings in mixed use low and medium rise buildings may be present within the centre core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District regional activity centre</td>
<td>District regional activity centres contain a reasonably large concentration of business, employment and population. They provide a range of convenience retail and urban services and may contain a small district or branch offices of government and other government services such as police, fire and ambulance. These centres may also contain a hospital, secondary school and provide a range of cultural and entertainment facilities such as a museum, sports parks, café and community hall. Some above-shop and attached dwellings may be present in the centre core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village activity centre</td>
<td>Village activity centres are distinct communities in rural areas that have a strong village character and links with the rural production and regional landscape values. They contain a concentration of business and employment that primarily service tourism and/or primary production industries. Village activity centres may contain some retail, government services, entertainment and community facilities. Any future growth of these centres will need to maintain the unique village character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural activity centre</td>
<td>Rural activity centres are small, relatively remote centres in rural areas with small populations and concentration of business and employment. Rural activity centres may have services disproportionate to the current population given population fluctuations associated with resource extraction and distances from other centres. Future service provision may change, for example due to improving technologies. Despite their small size rural activity centres have an important role in servicing rural communities and provide a focal point for business, community events and social interaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Urban structure and master planning

Planning for the future structure, or land use mix, of the region’s urban areas can provide significant positive community benefits in terms of improved accessibility to services, cost-efficiencies in the provision of infrastructure, quality of life, opportunities for employment and economic activities and protection of regional landscape and rural production values.

Urban development includes more than housing. Land use allocations need to facilitate developments which provide a range of uses and activities to support the community and higher levels of self-containment, including retail, commercial, industrial, government, community, cultural, education, health, sport and recreation, entertainment, and other leisure activities.

The regional land use categories identify the regional land use structure at regional level. Local government planning schemes furthermore identify an urban structure, or land use mix, at local level. Future land use mixes within the urban footprint will need to cater for changes in urban form, population demographics and community needs while protecting the valued FNQ character and lifestyle. Strategic land use and infrastructure planning will be vital components of delivering an appropriate land use mix within the urban footprint. This involves making plans upfront about the type and sequencing of land uses and associated infrastructure. A prioritised, plan-led approach will be a crucial aspect of the long term planning for the region’s main growth centres.

Objective

- The urban footprint contains an appropriate land use mix to create a stronger, more liveable and sustainable community.

Land use policies

4.3.1 Local government planning schemes ensure an appropriate land use mix is provided to accommodate future growth within the urban footprint.

4.3.2 A structure plan is prepared for regionally significant growth areas prior to urban development occurring.

4.3.3 A master plan is prepared for identified transit oriented communities.

Aligned strategies

4.3-A Planning schemes, local laws and other local planning instruments ensure that existing open space and conservation areas are protected from urban encroachment.

Explanatory notes

The urban footprint provides sufficient land for growth of a wide range of urban land uses to 2031 including residential, commercial, industrial, sport and recreation, and other non-residential land uses (refer to intent statement Part D). The amount and location of specific land uses varies across the region.

Not all rural zoned land included within the urban footprint is suitable for or meant to be used for residential development. Local government planning schemes will be amended as a high priority to identify appropriate future land uses and protect these areas from premature or inappropriate development (refer to section 4.3). The intent of land use policy 4.1.1 is to ensure that land use within the urban footprint addresses the future needs of the local and regional community. Not all greenfield land is intended to be used for residential development, and existing urban land uses may change. For example, some rural zoned land included within the urban footprint is intended to be used for industrial, commercial and open space and parks.

An important component of the region’s character and lifestyle is the availability of green open spaces and conservation areas within the urban footprint. Local government will need to protect these areas from urban encroachment using local laws or other local planning mechanisms. Redevelopment within the urban footprint that results in increased density will need to provide additional areas of open space, and in particular cater for the needs of families and children.
Changes to the land use mix may be accommodated via development on greenfield sites, and through infill and redevelopment. An increasing proportion of future residential and commercial growth will need to be accommodated from infill and redevelopment within the larger regional centres (see section 4.1).

Local government planning schemes will need to anticipate and cater for the needs of the FNQ community in 2031, including:

- mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and oil vulnerability
- self-containment, particularly development of localised economies based on regional activity centre and transit oriented community development
- changes in urban structure and form e.g. increased need for open space associated with increased dwelling density
- population demographics e.g. increasing need for social infrastructure to support the ageing population

In general terms master planning is an integrated planning process used to identify the preferred future spatial structure and land use planning intent of an area. Master planning can be undertaken on greenfield, infill and/or redevelopment sites. The term is sometimes used by developers, but has particular meaning in relation to declared Master Planned Areas under IPA.

A declared Master Planned Area is one which has been declared under IPA where state and local government work together to achieve long term planning for the area in a structured and coordinated way. The Mount Peter Master Planned Area is the first Master Planned Area to be declared in Queensland.

Master plans provide for more detailed local area planning, often for large greenfield development sites. A structure plan is prepared for the entire Master Planned Area. This plan sets out the broad environmental, infrastructure and development intent to guide further detailed planning in the area. After a structure plan has been finalised it is incorporated into the local government planning scheme and location-specific master plans will be produced where necessary.

Master planning allows for state and local policy issues to be proactively resolved during plan preparation, rather than reactively during development assessment. This is expected to make the development assessment process more efficient and have a positive impact on housing affordability. It can also be used to facilitate agricultural diversification in the regional landscape and rural production area, to amend the effect of FNQ Regulatory Provisions.

Transit oriented communities have a key role in the preferred pattern of development. The exact location of transit oriented communities will be investigated through the Cairns Transit Network (under preparation) and structure plans. Once identified, transit oriented communities will need to undergo integrated planning in future (see section 8.1 and map 17). This may occur through a declared master planned process or other integrated planning process, as appropriate. Integrated planning activities would be staged over time and be based on priorities identified by state and local government. The resulting plan will ensure that transit oriented development is initiated and occurs in sequence with planned state and local infrastructure delivery.
Facilitating growth in Mount Peter is one of the strategic directions of the regional plan. Mount Peter is part of the Southern Growth Corridor, which was identified in FNQ2010 as a future urban area. A structure plan is currently being prepared for Mount Peter by Cairns Regional Council in consultation with a consortium of landholders, the community and relevant state government agencies. The Mount Peter Master Planned Area was declared on the 9 May 2008.

The main components of Mount Peter shown on map 10 are:

• the area between Edmonton and Gordonvale, generally west of the Bruce Highway. This area is intended to contain a mix of urban uses including regional and local activity centres, mixed dwelling densities, open space and sport and recreation areas
• an area on the eastern side of Edmonton is also part of the Master Planned Area. This area is intended to be developed for industrial and logistic uses.

The master planning will need to achieve the relevant policy objectives of the regional plan. This includes, for example:

• protection of areas of ecological significance, waterways and other natural values
• avoidance of natural hazards including flooding and acid sulfate soils
• protection of cultural values, local identity and sense of place
• appropriate dwelling densities and housing mixes
• open spaces that are linked where possible to maximise their function as wildlife corridors and for outdoor recreation
• provision of a range of economically viable activity centres of a scale that will maximise the availability of local employment opportunities and available services
• an efficient public transport network, with higher housing densities and mixed use developments within transit oriented communities.

A mix of housing including higher dwelling densities will:

• enable efficient infrastructure and services, including public transport, recreational space, community facilities and the retention of green spaces within the corridor
• reduce the need for future urban areas to be developed, for example on good quality agricultural land.

An ultimate population capacity of up to 50,000 will need to be planned for in the Mount Peter Master Planned Area in the longer term. The full development of Mount Peter is likely to go beyond the life of this regional plan.
4.4 Housing choice and affordability

Access to appropriate housing is an important component of social and economic wellbeing. A range of housing options are needed to meet the need of the current and future community in FNQ. Housing options include multiple dwellings, detached houses, nursing homes, boarding houses, hostels and shelters. Housing need is influenced by a range of factors including changing life-cycle needs, socio-economic circumstances and occupations, specific needs of people with a disability, and the needs for short-term and emergency accommodation.

Housing needs are changing in the region. Some areas are experiencing rapid population growth whereas others are declining. Household size is decreasing, the population is ageing, and housing affordability has been declining. Traditional households of couples with children are decreasing and the number of people living alone without children, or as lone parents is increasing.

A significant proportion of residential dwellings in the region are currently single detached houses on individual allotments. There has also been an increasing trend towards larger houses on smaller lots. This can result in lower building energy efficiency, loss of character, and social isolation. A greater range and mix of dwellings is needed to create a more liveable, stronger community.

Objective

- A variety of housing options are provided to facilitate housing choice and affordability to meet diverse community needs.
- Sufficient land is made available to meet longer term regional housing needs for a minimum of 15 years.

Land use policies

4.4.1 An appropriate range and mix of dwelling types and sizes are provided in new residential developments.

4.4.2 Land use planning assessments for state land consider the potential for land allocations to deliver housing options and affordability outcomes that address gaps in community need.

Aligned strategies

4.4.A The urban land monitoring program monitors housing choice and affordability.

4.4.B Opportunities to provide affordable and universal housing are investigated in declared Master Planned Areas and major residential developments.

4.4.C Affordable and universal housing design initiatives are supported and encouraged.

Explanatory notes

Providing diverse and affordable housing options is an important issue and key challenge both nationally and in FNQ. A range of housing options can help create more diverse communities and avoid social polarisation and displacement.
All new residential developments in the region will need to provide an appropriate range and mix of dwellings. These factors are likely to vary in accordance with:

- housing needs assessment
- dwelling density targets
- urban character and design
- land use constraints.

A housing need assessment may be undertaken in particular local government areas by the Department of Housing to implement the State Planning Policy 1/07 Housing and Residential Development. This includes local governments that have 10 000 or more people within at least one urbanised area and a minimum average dwelling approval rate of 100 dwellings per year over the latest five year period. In FNQ this includes the former Cairns City local government area.

A housing need assessment has recently been undertaken for the Mount Peter Master Planned Area. This will inform development of the structure plan and identification of preferred housing options for Mount Peter.

Local governments should ensure that planning schemes deliver an appropriate range and mix of housing relevant to local and regional needs, including providing for vulnerable persons. Social infrastructure should generally be accommodated within the urban footprint, and higher dwelling densities will need to be concentrated in and around various regional activity centres and transit oriented communities (see section 4.1). Housing choices should be increased in these areas over time to increase opportunities for different age groups to live, work and interact together. Urban design and character will play an important role in creating attractive, high quality places and spaces, particularly in higher density developments (see section 4.5).

Universal housing design aims to provide flexible housing that is suitable for people with varying abilities and at different stages of their lives. It avoids building physical barriers for people living in or visiting the home and can be readily adapted to meet changing needs. Some of the key features are:

- absence of barriers and sharp turns in approach areas
- wide hallways and doorways
- bathroom/toilet and one bedroom accessible for a person with limited mobility or in a wheelchair
- simple logical layout without obstructions, hazards or steps
- lever door handles
- gently sloping footpaths and driveways

Housing affordability issues generally affect new home buyers and low to middle income households. All new residential developments should consider the retention and provision of a minimum level of affordable housing to cater for both the entry buyer and low income housing market.

The Queensland Housing Affordability Strategy (DIP, 2007i) aims to ensure that Queensland’s land and housing is on the market quickly and at the lowest cost. This should help reduce the timelines and associated holding costs of bringing new housing onto the market.

Regional planning policies can influence the supply of affordable housing in FNQ by ensuring sufficient land is available for development within the urban footprint. The urban footprint is expected to provide for approximately 20 years supply of residential land. There are a range of other factors which impact on housing affordability, such as market influences, interest rates and mortgage deregulation, over which the regional plan has little or no influence. The Department will monitor aspects of housing choice and affordability to inform future policy development.
4.5 Sustainable buildings and tropical design

The regional plan recognises the highly valued tropical character of the region and the built environments and lifestyles that have evolved because of it. Building design from southern parts of Australia are not suited to a tropical climate. There is a need to adapt to provide better opportunities for enjoying the tropical lifestyle. Tropical design principles underpin and reinforce good sustainable design. Incorporating tropical design principles into future development at the building, neighbourhood, suburb, town and city level will respond more effectively to the region’s tropical character and identity.

The older suburbs of the FNQ region contain many homes and buildings rich in character. As the demand for units and other high density residential houses increases, particular care must be given to protecting and maintaining these homes and planning and designing new buildings to ensure the style and character of the area is retained rather than eroded.

Although the whole region is classified as tropical, it is recognised that there are subregional variations such as coastal, range, tableland, rural and river valley, which each have different built forms and lifestyles that respond to local climates. Maintaining this unique built form strengthens the local sense of place and identity.

Objective

• Urban development recognises the unique tropical character of the region and is designed and constructed to facilitate a sustainable lifestyle.

Land use policies

4.5.1 Urban development reflects and reinforces the distinct tropical lifestyle of the region, is responsive to climate and encourages the sustainable use of natural resources.

4.5.2 Sustainable building and tropical design principles are incorporated in urban planning and development including orientation, siting and passive climate control.

4.5.3 New urban developments are built to withstand potential impacts from climate change including more intense cyclones, higher temperatures and flooding impacts (see section 4.7).

4.5.4 New urban developments provide accessible public open spaces and places that incorporate tropical design features (see section 3.5).

4.5.5 Subregional variations in built form, design and lifestyle are identified and maintained.

Explanatory notes

Urban development should be based on tropical design principles and incorporate or contribute to:

• public and private open space and/or recreational facilities
• attractive streetscapes with shade trees and awnings
• cultural and social values
• water and energy efficiencies
• sustainable buildings that respond to the local vernacular
• mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
Tropical design principles for FNQ include:

• incorporating wide verandas, ceiling fans and indoor outdoor connections to allow for natural ventilation and reduce use of air conditioners
• using lighter building materials such as timber and steel
• retaining mature trees where appropriate, and provide additional planting, to provide shade areas
• providing shaded open space areas, streets and pedestrian pathways with continuous vegetation and large shade trees
• providing covered walkways for major pedestrian routes to accommodate wet season rains
• integrating water and energy saving devices in housing design
• incorporating local vegetation in planned and existing transport corridors including all roads, and bicycle and pedestrian routes
• creating an open and permeable built environment where design allows for the presence of nature, water and a sense of openness and movement
• developing outdoor centres for dining, entertainment and recreation, and
• provide sheltered access to public services and facilities, such as public transport stops
• protecting the integrity and character of the hills, mountains and ridgelines which frame and define the tropical environment
• integrating natural elements and the natural environment with development of the built environment.

Sustainable housing is designed with people in mind, is efficient in the use of energy and water, seeks to minimise waste, is safe and secure, and incorporates universal design principles. A sustainable house is more cost-efficient over time, comfortable, cheaper to maintain and helps us enjoy our unique environment. This includes mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Climate responsive building, or passive climate control, involves using natural methods to reduce energy consumption by designing, constructing and using methods appropriate to the tropical climate.

Improvements in sustainable house design are primarily achieved through the building standards in the Queensland Development Code. This includes measures for water and energy efficiency. All new houses in Queensland will be required to achieve a minimum 5 stars (out of 10) energy equivalent rating from early 2009 under new sustainable housing provisions. These include better recognition of outdoor living areas, 4-star toilets, 3-star tapware, 80 per cent energy-efficient lighting in new houses and units, prevention of residential estate covenants that restrict the use of energy efficient design and fixtures, prevention of the sale and installation of inefficient air-conditioning and sustainability declarations when a home is sold.

A number of key initiatives, such as mandating 4-star energy efficiency in new commercial buildings and phasing out electric hot water systems in existing homes at the time of replacement from 2010, have also been announced in the ClimateSmart 2050 strategy.

The Queensland Government discussion paper on improving sustainable housing in Queensland (DIP, 2008e) provides useful information on sustainable housing solutions.

Urban design principles suitable for FNQ can also be found in:

• Cairns City Council—Cairns Style Design Guide
• Department of Public Works—Smart Housing
• Queensland Government—ClimateSmart 2050 Strategy
• Queensland Building Code—Sustainable Buildings
• Transit oriented community principles (see section 8.1)

The challenge for councils, the building industry, designers, developers and owners is to provide housing that is tropical, sustainable, climate responsive and affordable. Initiatives to develop guidelines and codes for improved urban character and design are supported and encouraged.

The overall attractiveness of an area as a place to live and is a key reason why people move to and stay in FNQ. People are attracted to the character of the urban form, which is the relationship between buildings, public and private spaces, local streets, neighbourhoods and natural landscapes, and to the general aesthetics and feel of the urban environment (see section 3.5).

Rapid urban growth can swamp existing urban values and lead to a loss of local amenity, community identity and cultural heritage. The objective of the sustainable housing, urban character and tropical design policies is to achieve a built environment that retains the character and quality of life while achieving sustainable outcomes through effective and innovative design.

State and local governments should lead by example through the design of public buildings that reflects the region's character and climate and complements the surrounding urban, rural and natural environment. All new development, redevelopment and design of public areas, urban neighbourhoods and civic buildings should enhance the tropical character and identity of the region.

4.6 Rural residential development

The creation of compact, well serviced urban areas is an important component of achieving sustainable growth. Locating residential developments close to regional activity centres and public transport nodes can improve access to employment opportunities, services and facilities and facilitate cost-effective infrastructure provision. Consolidating growth in existing centres also helps avoid fragmentation of rural lands and protect regional landscape values.

Rural residential development is large lot residential subdivision in a rural, semi-rural or conservation setting. Allotments usually have a power supply but a limited range of other services, such as reticulated water and sewerage.

The area of land required for rural residential development is significantly greater than conventional urban development. Rural residential developments have low to very low density and subsequently take up significant areas of land to house relatively small populations. The relatively inefficiency of land use results in additional pressure for urban areas to expand and can have a range of adverse economic, social and environmental impacts, including:

• higher proportional cost of road construction
• higher transport costs
• fragmentation of land
• potential pollution over time through inefficient on-site effluent disposal
• weed proliferation due to high cost of land maintenance
• potential cross-subsidisation of services by urban residents.

Objective

• Manage rural residential development to prevent fragmentation and alienation of agricultural land and loss or degradation of areas of high ecological significance and ensure efficient use of land and cost-effective delivery of services and infrastructure.

Land use policies

4.6.1 New rural residential development is located in rural living areas.

4.6.2 Future demand for rural residential housing is provided from within the existing stock of land zoned for this purpose.

4.6.3 Construction of residential dwellings and ancillary structures within rural residential zoned land is confined to a building footprint which reduces the exposure to natural hazards and avoids and minimises the loss of native vegetation through locating structures in existing cleared areas and co-locating service corridors.

4.6.4 Rural residential subdivision along watercourses should be designed to minimise the impact of rural residential water use on current and future water resources.
Explanatory notes

Rural residential development has emerged as a major component of the housing market in FNQ over the last two decades. Large rural residential estates have established near Cairns, Mareeba, Atherton, Herberton, Ravenshoe and various other centres. There is additionally a significant, as yet undeveloped, supply of broadhectare rural residential zoned land (see Part D).

Significant areas of rural residential development have taken place on good quality agricultural land or in areas of high ecological significance. Few rural residential developments are currently being used for farming in FNQ and there is often a strong reliance on private car travel to nearby centres for employment and services. The limited access to employment and social infrastructure in these areas can result in a number of adverse economic and social impacts on these communities. As rural residential communities develop, pressure often grows for additional services and facilities which are difficult to provide in a cost effective manner.

Rural residential development will be limited to the existing appropriately zoned areas to ensure that a range of regional planning objectives can be achieved. An adequate supply of broadhectare rural residential zoned land for the preferred pattern of development in FNQ has been provided as part of this plan.

Most rural residential zoned land has been included in the rural living area. Some areas that are well located with regard to urban services and facilities have alternatively been included in the urban footprint. Local governments will assess potential opportunities to increase density in these areas (see section 4.1).

Rural residential zoned land that is significantly constrained, for example by lack of appropriate infrastructure or areas of ecological significance, or located in small isolated patches, are contained in the regional landscape and rural production area. The FNQ Regulatory Provisions apply to applications for rural residential purposes on rural residential zoned land in the regional landscape and rural production area (see Part D).

Future development of rural residential zoned land should ensure that it is managed appropriately to maintain environmental and landscape values. This includes management of pest plants and animals (see section 2.2), and mitigating potential risks from flooding, bush fires, landslides and other hazards (see section 4.7).

Management of rural residential developments includes minimising the impacts upon waterways (see section 7.1) and rural water supply (see section 7.6). Rural residential developments can place additional demands on rural water usage and create competition for limited water supplies with primary producers. Rural residential development should be set back from watercourses to avoid the creation of water entitlements for urban uses.
4.7 Mitigation of hazards

Various parts of the FNQ region are at risk from natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, storm tide inundation, landslides and bushfires. These hazards are expected to pose a greater risk as a result of climate change and will create challenges for emergency response planning and management. Impacts of climate change that are likely include:

- more intense summer rain
- towns, infrastructure and resorts in low-lying areas being vulnerable to higher flood or storm surge levels
- higher risk of Cairns being inundated by 1-in-100 year storm surge
- changes in rainfall and hotter temperatures increasing the risk of water, food and vector borne diseases (see policy 3.3.3).

Development in natural hazard prone areas is a significant community health and safety issue. The expense of the repercussions of developing in these areas is a significant burden on government, business, industry and individuals. Most significantly, individuals can be severely impacted by the loss of homes and personal possessions when natural disasters occur.

Population growth, lifestyle changes and increased economic activity are generating pressure for development in these areas. In particular, this is occurring along the coast and waterways, in bushlands and on steep slopes. These areas are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and further development in these areas exposes the community to risks and should be avoided.

Objective

- Development minimises the potential adverse impacts of natural, industrial and climate change induced hazards and increases the resilience of people, environments, locations and economic sectors leading to a safer community and better quality of life.

Land use policies

4.7.1 Measures to mitigate potential adverse impacts of floods, storm tide inundation, bushfires, cyclones and landslides are implemented through identifying natural hazard management areas in planning schemes and appropriate planning scheme strategies and measures.

4.7.2 New development located in infill areas likely to be severely affected by storm tide inundation is adequately planned to manage these hazards (see section 1.2).

4.7.3 The potential adverse impacts of hazardous and high impact industries is addressed by identifying:
- high impact industry areas
- planning scheme strategies and measures
- development assessment (see policy 1.3.2).

Aligned Strategies

4.7.A Emergency service and disaster management needs are addressed in land use planning, regional infrastructure planning and development.

4.7.B Regional data sets require a coordinated and a consistent approach applied in identifying natural hazard areas and associated risks to inform land use planning, development assessment and disaster management plans.

4.7.C Increase the resilience of at-risk communities by raising their awareness and preparedness for more frequent extreme weather events, and ensure that disaster response plans and services and community recovery plans take into account the increased severity of extreme weather events.

Explanatory notes

The preferred approach to dealing with natural hazards is to avoid future development in hazard prone areas. In developing the preferred settlement pattern for FNQ, natural hazards were considered a constraint to future development. This will ensure that future urban areas are not located in areas that are currently at risk from natural hazards or likely to be at risk in the future as a result of climate change.

Most local government authorities in FNQ have addressed disaster management in some way, as required under the Disaster Management Act 2003. However, state and local governments need to coordinate regional data sets and apply a consistent approach in identifying natural hazard areas and associated risks. This can inform land use planning, development assessment and disaster management plans. Once identified, these areas are to be mapped in local government planning schemes. Conditions should be placed on development where appropriate.
There are a number of existing urban settlements in the FNQ region that are susceptible to the potential impacts of natural hazards. In these areas an adaptation approach will strengthen the community’s overall resilience to potential impacts. This involves improved prevention, detection, response and recovery systems to protect the community, environment, businesses and infrastructure from the threat of disasters. New development in existing centres will need to incorporate design mechanisms to mitigate the effects of natural hazards and disasters (see section 1.2).

Regional infrastructure facilities and services should be strengthened where appropriate. These can be addressed through local government planning schemes and structure and master planning. Land use planning in these areas should ensure new development and redevelopment minimises risk to people, property and the environment and mitigates the cost of recovering from natural disasters.

Planning decisions for housing and infrastructure needs for the entire community require consideration of changing climatic conditions. Transport infrastructure, such as roads, bridges and railways are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Design criteria for extreme events will need to allow for such events to be exceeded more often. Temperature increases and high intensity rainfall events are both likely to increase maintenance costs and reduce the lifespan of infrastructure (EPA, 2008b).

The potential of major emergency events requires a land use planning approach to ensure efficient delivery of emergency services to the community and evacuation of residents and visitors in affected areas. The provision of a world-class emergency and disaster management service will result in a safer community and better quality of life for FNQ residents, particularly in coastal areas where risks are high.

The Queensland Government has a number of existing policies to assist in the management of natural hazards, including:

- **State Planning Policy 1/03: Mitigating the Adverse Impacts of Flood, Bushfire and Landslide** (Department of Emergency Services, 2003)

Major emergency situations including floods, fires, chemical hazards and traffic accidents and the associated necessary response by emergency services need to be considered when planning new development. Useful references include the district disaster management plans and disaster district community recovery plans for the Cairns, Mareeba and Innisfail districts.

In addition, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, in partnership with the Australian Building Codes Board and James Cook University, is investigating the effects of cyclones and climate change on buildings. This will better inform government on whether current building codes are sufficient to resist potential climate change impacts. The department is also working on improving State Planning Policy 1/03 with respect to bushfire prone areas.