

17 Cultural Heritage

Council recognizes the importance of maintaining sites, and buildings and their settings, of heritage significance to the people of Townsville.

The Issues:

Townsville can be divided into key geographic regions with readily apparent heritage value. Five distinct time periods can also be identified to help define Townsville's cultural and built heritage: the periods of aboriginal and archaeological significance, the colonial period, turn of the century - WWII and post WWII. Within each of these periods can be listed many sites and buildings with heritage importance and each can be prioritized in importance by considering them relative to the following criteria:

- Aesthetic and social significance
- Architectural and building significance
- Typical representative sample (e.g. workers cottages)
- Connection of place with major historical event or person
- Information content (e.g. archaeological site)
- Uniqueness
- Degree of preservation alteration practicality of reversal of alterations
- Past usage (e.g. industrial buildings) energy expended in creation of the site.

Additionally, there is the problem that customary law prevents knowledge about sacred sites being passed on to even some members of the aboriginal community, let alone to outside planners. This means that the aboriginal community does often not advertise the presence of sites until the sites are under some threat of modification. Council needs to consult with indigenous people and heritage professionals to reduce both the possibility of damaging significant cultural sites and of getting involved in expensive delays and litigation due to inadequate planning. State legislation in place to facilitate the conservation of indigenous cultural significance allows for certain areas of Crown land to be claimed under Land Rights legislation. The Commonwealth enables listing of the most significant places on the National Estate.

Conservation of the built heritage can be partly managed through the local planning scheme, which recognizes numerous, although not all, sites and precincts such as Flinders St East and South Townsville. Provisions will be made within the Strategic Town Plan and Development Control Plans to facilitate the conservation of their heritage value. The Planning Scheme provides guidelines and incentives for the conservation and appropriate reuse of such heritage sites.

Flinders St East – an integral part of Townsville's Cultural Heritage



The environment that greeted the eyes of the early European settlers to the Townsville region was one that had been evolving for tens of thousands of years with aboriginal land management systems. The Townsville area was home for a large number of people and still shows evidence of this long pre-European occupation. However, many significant sites e.g. story sites, have no visible signs of cultural importance that could alert outsiders to their presence.

Much of the built heritage is privately owned, and thus necessary maintenance costs of these old buildings are borne by the private sector in such instances. Council never the less recognizes that some development is warranted, and has recently initiated a number of policies and guidelines for developers so that development can be achieved without compromising heritage conservation values to any significant extent.

The State Government recently enacted the Queensland Heritage Act (1992), which enables the general community to nominate places of (no Aboriginal) heritage significance to the Register of the Heritage Council, a body created to carry out the Act, which is administered, by the Dept of Environment and Heritage. Whilst the criteria required to be met by nominated places in order to be listed is quite broad in scope, the Objects of the Act state the intention to control the nature of development, rather than prohibit it. It is understood that development plans for nominated or listed places are to be submitted to the Heritage Councilor delegated authority for determination on the suitability of the plans.

The objectives for achieving Cultural Heritage conservation is to:

- Preserve the ambiance and integrity of historical precincts and buildings in Townsville; and,
- Protect aboriginal significant places from damage or modification.



A Classic Queenslander

Areas for Council Action:

To manage and facilitate the conservation of cultural heritage places, Council should consider the following actions:

- Document historical precincts in Townsville. (PD)
- Develop a set of guidelines for landscape design with respect to the landscape context of historical areas. (PD)
- Support the production of a map and coordinated information about the important historical features of the Townsville's individual precincts. (PD: CS)

Encourage local archaeologists to model areas likely to be of significance to aboriginal communities, so planners could ensure high levels of consultation if development was suggested for such areas. (PD: CS:OA)

Encourage proactive liaison with the aboriginal community. (PD: CS:OA)

Promote community awareness of issues of cultural heritage significance. (CS:OA)

In liaison with the other groups encourage and assist the Heritage Council to implement the Heritage Act in an effective, efficient and equitable manner. (PD: ENV :OA)

Determine the cultural heritage significance of specific areas such as the Ross River environs to guide sound urban planning. (PD: CS:OA)

Encourage research by community groups into Townsville's maritime history, including research into wrecks around the coastline. (PD:OA)

Initiate community involvement in the conservation of cultural heritage, such as the restoration of the West End Cemetery. (CS)

Liaise closely with the DEH and the National Trust and other relevant groups when issues of cultural and built heritage arise. (PD: CS)

Areas for Community Action:

Find out about the history of the area, houses and suburbs. Join the National Trust. Visit the National Trust Houses in West End; contact the National Trust for opening times. Get a copy of the Historic Trails booklet and do some of the self-guided walks, contact National Trust or Council for information.

Areas for Research:

Special areas that need further research or collation of existing material include the West End cemetery, houses in the inner city historical precincts, the 1930's houses behind Strand Park, and the pa_ of hotel development in Townsville. Addition. The archaeological value and status of the south bank of the Ross River area needs investigation.

Knowledge of aboriginal cultural heritage significance in the Townsville region is limited and requires coordinated investigations involving indigenous people, professional archaeologists and Council.

18 Tourism Planning

Council recognizes that responsible planning is to develop an ecologically sustainable tourism in Townsville.

The Issues:

The recently developed Tourism Concept Strategy (Kinhill, Cameron, McNamara, 1991) provides a framework for tourism development in the Townsville region. The report identified Townsville as unlikely to become a mainstream tourist destination like Cairns or the Whitsunday area, but being located between those two tourist attractions, it is well "placed to attract people as a secondary stopover. The potential exists to major capital out of the fact that the different character of the area and its attractions can provide a diversity of experience for the traveller. The City's location in the dry tropics, with clean, dry air and reliable, extended periods of sunshine can be an advantage if utilized sensitively. Tourism development needs to provide people with economic and environmental benefits compatible with local lifestyles. Poorly planned tourism can destroy the very resource upon which its success is based, and therefore, unsustainable. Townsville needs to foster adequate planning, and an environmental awareness and appreciation to achieve the long-term security and integrity of its natural resources and its economic well-being.

Magnetic Island is arguably Townsville's eminent tourist attraction. Its unique, distinctive character as an "island suburb" with a relatively small local population living alongside a National Park which covers some 55% of the island, and World Heritage Area Marine Park where fringing reefs literally adjoin the "suburb" - all of which is readily accessible is a great asset which, with careful and considered management, can sustain economic and environmental benefits for generations to come. To this end, Council jointly commissioned the 'Magnetic Is. Management Plan to guide management and development of the Island.

There is considerable scope to develop eco-tourism oriented facilities both on the Island and on the mainland. High-quality interpretation centers are needed at potential or existing draw cards such as the Town Common and Magnetic Is. Both facilities should be integrated with the Wonderland Complex so that visitors can be drawn from one to the other to both enhance their experience and stimulate the economy through lengthened or more active visits.



The nature of development associated with the tourism industry can be a cause for concern where there is likely to be impact to the natural or cultural environment. Certain types of development are required to have an Environmental Impact Statement prepared under the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act in order to assess this impact. In addition to this, Council may request an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared where this is considered appropriate, but not necessarily required under this Act. Development, which is approved invariably, has a number of conditions required to be met to ensure that it is compatible with Council's requirements for municipal management. These conditions can cover things from erosion control, the types of species to be used in landscape design, and the architectural compatibility with the surrounding environment, particularly where places of cultural significance are involved.

The environmental objectives for Tourism Planning in Townsville are to:

Encourage orderly, planned development which recognizes the need for conservation of the natural resources and which is environmentally and economically beneficial to local people; and,

Promote Townsville as a distinctive Queensland city with relatively UN spoilt natural areas and many environmental attractions different to other tourism destinations in north Queensland.

Areas for Council Action:

To encourage developers and visitors to appreciate the environment of Townsville, and for ecologically sustainable tourism development to be accommodated, Council should consider the following actions:

Preparation of development guidelines for tourist developers to ensure compliance with environmental management strategies in place in the City. Guidelines should cover appropriate landscape design; architectural aesthetics; the long-term maintenance requirement of the development; the energy efficiency of the development; and the environmental impact of the project.

(ENV: PD:OA)

The urgent upgrading of environmental interpretation facilities and provision of self guided trails and walks in the City. (ENV:OA)

The provision of natural history information and field guides to visitor information centers (e.g. Coppertop-in-the-Mall and Community Information Center) to promote natural attractions. (ENV:OA)

Development of a more efficient public transport system. (OA)

Preparation of an information package covering environmental features and activities for the region to be sent to each household, as most visitors to the city are visiting friends and relatives. (ENV:OA)

Ensuring that landscape design and implementation for tourism development (and other forms) is compatible with local environs and does not conflict other conservation objectives, such as water conservation and biodiversity. (ENV)

An EIS shall be required in relation to proposals requiring a planning approval by Council when the proposal is of a type specified by the regulations of the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act or by Council policy or when otherwise required by the Council as a part of application documentation. (ENV: PD:OA)

The development of a coherent tourism theme based on natural attractions. (OA)

Areas for Community Action:

Get involved with public debate about tourism and associated development in Townsville.

Develop a "visitor kit" containing timetables, pamphlets, maps and other information to ensure that visitors get maximum exposure to Townsville's tourism attractions.

Areas for Research:

Regular monitoring of environmentally sensitive tourist destinations (e.g. the Town Common, Magnetic Is.) should be carried out to determine whether environmental or social carrying capacities have been exceeded.

Development of effective, attractive and integrated interpretation facilities.