

Planning for the Gold Coast: processes, challenges and opportunities

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Introduction

This chapter provides a broad overview of the Gold Coast from an urban planning perspective. What are the social and physical structures of the city? How has the city developed over time? What are some of the key planning challenges and opportunities the Gold Coast is facing? To answer these questions, the chapter provides a brief social profile of the city and examines its current land use patterns and urban form. It then discusses the planning processes and the role of key stakeholders in development of the city. Next, key current planning initiatives for the Gold Coast are outlined. The chapter concludes with discussion of planning challenges and opportunities for future development of the city.

People and employment

In terms of population, the Gold Coast is the sixth-largest city and one of the fastest-growing cities in Australia, as identified and documented in previous chapters. The Gold Coast has a significant overseas-born population, with 35 per cent of the city's population born outside Australia (ABS 2013). The majority of the city's immigrants are from New Zealand and the UK. The five most populous suburbs of the Gold Coast are Broadbeach–Mermaid Beach, Surfers Paradise, Labrador, Coolangatta and Varsity Lakes. These suburbs, with the exception of Varsity Lakes, are in beachside locations. This illustrates the popularity of the beach suburbs and the prevalence of high-density, high-rise apartments within those suburbs.

The primary economic sectors in the Gold Coast are retail, tourism and construction which employ 12.4 per cent, 11.7 per cent and 11.3 per cent of the city's workforce, respectively (ABS 2011a, b). Creative and information and communication technology (ICT) industries are emerging on the Gold Coast, adding diversity to a traditionally narrow economic base. These two emerging industries will be discussed later in the chapter.

The shape of the city: land use and urban form

The Gold Coast has a linear pattern of development which closely aligns with the coastline and its major transport corridors. The city has two major north–south transport routes for