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Council expands CBD scope, reduces funding commitment

Project savings and a wider scope of works as well as certainty for traders are among the positives to flow from a Council decision to reassess timelines for the redevelopment of the Bundaberg CBD.

Mayor Jack Dempsey this week told stakeholders that a wider development scope for the project coupled with the necessity to source partnership funding from State and Federal governments are compelling reasons why the redevelopment schedule is being reviewed.

“With the re-scoped project encompassing a larger area and inclusive of extra costs for staged night construction and undergrounding of services plus new initiatives identified through consultation the project is now estimated to cost \$30 million.”

The Mayor said Council was still fully committed to the revitalisation and he believed an even better project can be delivered at a reduced cost to ratepayers “Council has now put aside its original plan to provide up to \$16 million but will allocate \$10 million which needs to be matched by the State and Federal governments. This effectively is an immediate saving of \$6 million for ratepayers.

“As we have worked through consultation and preliminary design with our stakeholders and consultants it is obvious that further discussion with Transport and Main Roads regarding traffic management and the significance of emerging flood mitigation initiatives and their impact on our project also need to be assessed.

“This undertaking will be a game changer for the Bundaberg CBD but we must get it right - a second opportunity will be a long time in coming, Council will not start this project and potentially leave it unfinished without funding commitments for the entire works,” said Mayor Dempsey.

“We have listened to stakeholder and community concerns and we remain adamant that Council is committed to an affordable, future focussed project. While funding applications and fine tuning of various design elements are progressed Council has also committed to the engagement of CBD Activation Manager to enhance region-wide retail opportunities.

“For Council to commit \$10 million to a \$30 million project - a project that is of regional importance - makes strong economic sense.

“It’s essential that we take the time to complete a comprehensive funding application to provide the State and Federal Governments the confidence to support this initiative,” said Mayor Dempsey. “Council certainly will be looking to access funds under the just announced Regional Growth Fund where minimum \$10 million grants are available for eligible and approved projects.

“Council will be ready to press the button once funding support is achieved. While this is unlikely prior to 2020, traders can rest assured Council will provide a minimum of six months’ notice prior to any work commencing in the CBD. In the meantime we will continue to pursue other projects of importance across the region.”

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