



Ballina Shire

» *Economic Development Strategy*

Opportunity – Innovation – Activation

Council report version

ballina
shire council



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Background

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Identify the key drivers and opportunities for economic development in Ballina Shire and the Far North Coast region;
- Consider national and international economic contexts driving economic change in the region;
- Set out Council's vision and role in economic development; and
- Identify actions that Council will pursue to support opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation over the next 10 years.

Strategy Philosophy

Council acknowledges that the private sector, through pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities, is the fundamental driver of economic development. Whilst not a direct driver of economic development itself, Council can support entrepreneurial activity and facilitate economic development outcomes through its core activities and operations, including:

- The appropriate and timely provision of public infrastructure, in particular roads, water & sewerage and public amenities.
- Managing the condition and quality of the public domain, thus contributing to the sense of place, liveability and amenity of public spaces.
- Maintaining an efficient and effective system for the regulation of public health and building standards.
- Facilitating adequate and appropriate development opportunities to meet the demand for residential, commercial and industrial activity in an efficient and sustainable manner.
- Communicating and promoting the economic advantages and opportunities available in Ballina Shire.

Community & Stakeholder Engagement

Initial Engagement Activities

Community and stakeholder engagement undertaken in association with the preparation of this strategy included the following:

- Publication of a discussion paper outlining key economic data and analysis of local, regional and international economic trends.
- Meetings with local Chambers of Commerce (Ballina, Lennox Head and Alstonville-Wollongbar).
- Notification of all registered trading businesses located in the shire (as listed on the Australian Business Register).
- A series of facilitated workshops with interested business people and community members to identify key economic development issues, concerns and strategies.
- An online survey to identify impediments and opportunities for businesses operating in Ballina Shire.

Draft Strategy Exhibition

This draft strategy has been prepared following initial consultation with key stakeholders to identify issues of significance to the local business community.

The strategy has been released in draft format to enable the community to review its contents, suggestions and ideas. All comments received will be considered when finalising the study for presentation to the Council following public exhibition. To this extent the draft Ballina Shire Economic Development Strategy may be subject to change once feedback has been received and prior to it being presented to the Council for adoption.

The draft strategy will be on public exhibition from **DATE to DATE**.

Submissions should be addressed to:

The General Manager
Ballina Shire Council
PO Box 450
BALLINA NSW 2478

PROJECT PROCESS



Planning Context

Economic Development

Economic studies consistently underline the importance of the “quality of place” as a key driver of regional economic development in the 21st Century. This comes as a consequence of the changing nature of work and the growing significance of mobile knowledge, innovation and collaboration in modern business.

Localities that are able to grow employment and attract businesses, talent and skills tend to leverage their strong lifestyle qualities with high quality infrastructure and connectivity and an open and collaborative social environment. Places that do this well have been termed “innovation districts”, the success of which are underpinned by three types of ‘assets’, namely ‘Economic Assets’, ‘Physical Assets’ and ‘Networking Assets’. These are explained in the following table.

Economic assets	Firms, institutions and organisations that drive, cultivate or support an innovation-rich environment.
Physical assets	Public and privately-owned spaces (buildings, open spaces, streets and other infrastructure) designed and organised to stimulate new and higher levels of connectivity, collaboration, and innovation.
Networking assets	The relationships between actors (such as between individuals, firms, and institutions) that have the potential to generate, sharpen, and/or accelerate the advancement of ideas.

To quote a U.S. study:

“Innovation districts reach their potential when all three types of assets, combined with a supportive, risk-taking culture, are fully developed, creating an innovation ecosystem... An innovation ecosystem is a synergistic relationship between people, firms, and place (the physical geography of the district) that facilitates idea generation and accelerates commercialization.

(Katz & Wagner 2014)

The implications of the importance of place, with particular relevance to Ballina Shire are outlined further below.

Global Mega-trends

Several key global mega-trends that are anticipated to impact on the economic prospects of Ballina Shire over the next 10 years:

- Economic rise of China and India – The economic rise of China and India has particular implications for Ballina Shire, particularly in terms of increasing demand for agricultural products and local tourism.
- Digital disruption – The impacts of the internet and automation have far reaching implications for workforce change and mobility, with web-based businesses and entrepreneurs becoming less reliant on being located in major cities.

- Prosperity of place – With the growing influence of the internet, the attractiveness of place as a lifestyle destination is becoming a more significant factor in attracting highly skilled workers, entrepreneurs and businesses.
- Clusters as innovation hubs - As much as technology is enabling the emergence of new business models and modes of work that are less tied to specific locations, geography still matters for most businesses. The natural tendency for related businesses to come together in particular locations gives rise to what is known as business “clusters”.

Further details regarding the impacts of these global mega-trends are provided in the Ballina Shire Economic Development Discussion Paper.

Regional Context

Ballina Shire is located in one of the fastest growing parts of regional New South Wales, the Northern Rivers Region, with growth being driven largely by tourism and lifestyle migration, particularly from Sydney and overseas.

Continuing interest in Ballina Shire as a live-work destination is underpinned by improving road connections with south eastern Queensland through upgrades to the Pacific Highway, as well as increasing passenger air services linking the region with major cities through the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport.

Ballina Shire has strong links to other regional centres, with Ballina Shire businesses supporting the region in retail, professional (legal, financial and property), industrial and transport services. Lismore supports the region in health services, education and some retail services. Byron Bay supports the region in terms of tourism products (and income) and regional brand recognition (“Byron Hinterland”) as well as entertainment and recreational opportunities for residents. The Gold Coast also services the region in terms of higher order retail and recreation services.

Several significant regional factors have a strong influence on the economic prospects of Ballina Shire, including:

- Relationship with other centres – The dispersed settlement network of larger centres surrounded by villages and hamlets influences the economic pattern of the region through the various and complimentary services and business environments.
- Major infrastructure investments – A history of strategic infrastructure investments, both delivered and planned by Council and the State Government, places Ballina Shire in a strong position for servicing local businesses and residents with a range of high quality infrastructure.
- Local land supplies – Ballina Shire continues to plan for the provision of sufficient housing and industrial land opportunities to accommodate forecast growth, to provide opportunities for the growth of local businesses and population.
- Housing affordability – Despite the availability of land for housing development in Ballina Shire, housing affordability continues to be a significant issue, as in other coastal areas of Australia.

Further details regarding these regional influences are provided in the Ballina Shire Economic Development Discussion Paper.

Local Economic Drivers

The key local drivers of economic development in Ballina Shire are explained in detail in the following sections of this strategy. In summary, the key local economic drivers (otherwise known as 'natural endowments') in Ballina Shire include the following:

- Beautiful natural and coastal environments and mild subtropical climate.
- The region's 'clean and green' reputation and countercultural heritage.
- Laid back lifestyle character and community.
- Diverse and productive agricultural base – "Food Bowl Region".
- Creative, resourceful, skilled and diverse workforce.
- Proximity to South East Queensland.

To these natural endowments can be added a number of 'economic enablers', which include the following:

- Lifestyle infrastructure – high quality public domain, community facilities, recreation and amenities which take particular advantage of the shire's natural and coastal environments.
- Strategic transport and communications infrastructure – investments in air and road infrastructure and high speed broadband that facilitate connectivity within the shire and beyond, including high quality local road infrastructure, the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport and proximity to the upgraded Pacific and Bruxner highways.
- Entrepreneurial culture – facilitated by Council leadership and a supportive outcome-focused regulatory framework that supports entrepreneurship and networking opportunities.
- Commercial land – a diversity of affordable and appropriate commercial space to accommodate the emergence, growth and relocation of businesses.

Identifying measures that Council can pursue to strengthen these local economic drivers is a key focus of this strategy. Further information on these local drivers is provided below.

Land Use Planning Context

The North Coast Regional Plan, prepared by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, identifies Ballina as a Strategic Centre, recognising the growing regional importance of Ballina in terms of residential development, transport, tourism, retail, health and financial and professional services.

Council has established the framework for residential and commercial development at the local level via the following key strategies and studies:

- Ballina Retail Strategy (2003)
- Ballina Shire Boost - Business Options, Opportunities & Sustainability Toolkit (2008)
- Ballina Shire Bulky Goods Retailing Investigation (2011)
- Ballina Shire Local Growth Management Strategy (2012)

In addition, Council has a number of locality based strategies which aim to guide the development of these areas, including the Lennox Head Structure Plan (2004), the Southern Cross Precinct Masterplan (2008), the West Ballina Structure Plan (2011), the Wardell

Strategic Plan (2016) and the Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy (2016). Place-based strategies are also in preparation for Alstonville and Wollongbar (expected to be completed in 2016 and 2017 respectively).

These strategies provide the framework for Council's infrastructure delivery programs which have delivered a high standard of infrastructure provision including an integrated and high quality local road network, sustainable water supplies, sewerage capacity and investments in strategic airport infrastructure.

The growth in housing demand is largely accommodated, through Council's Local Growth Management Strategy (2012), in major planned land releases in Lennox Head, Cumbalum/Kinvara and Wollongbar. Ballina Shire has sufficient residential land supplies identified to cater for 20-30 years of forecast demand, at current rates of development.

Council's long term planning for commercial and industrial development is based upon a retail centre hierarchy for the shire. The hierarchy establishes the Ballina Town Centre and the Kerr Street Retailing Precinct as the primary retail centres for the shire, and indicates that these facilities should be protected and consolidated at the top of the retail hierarchy.

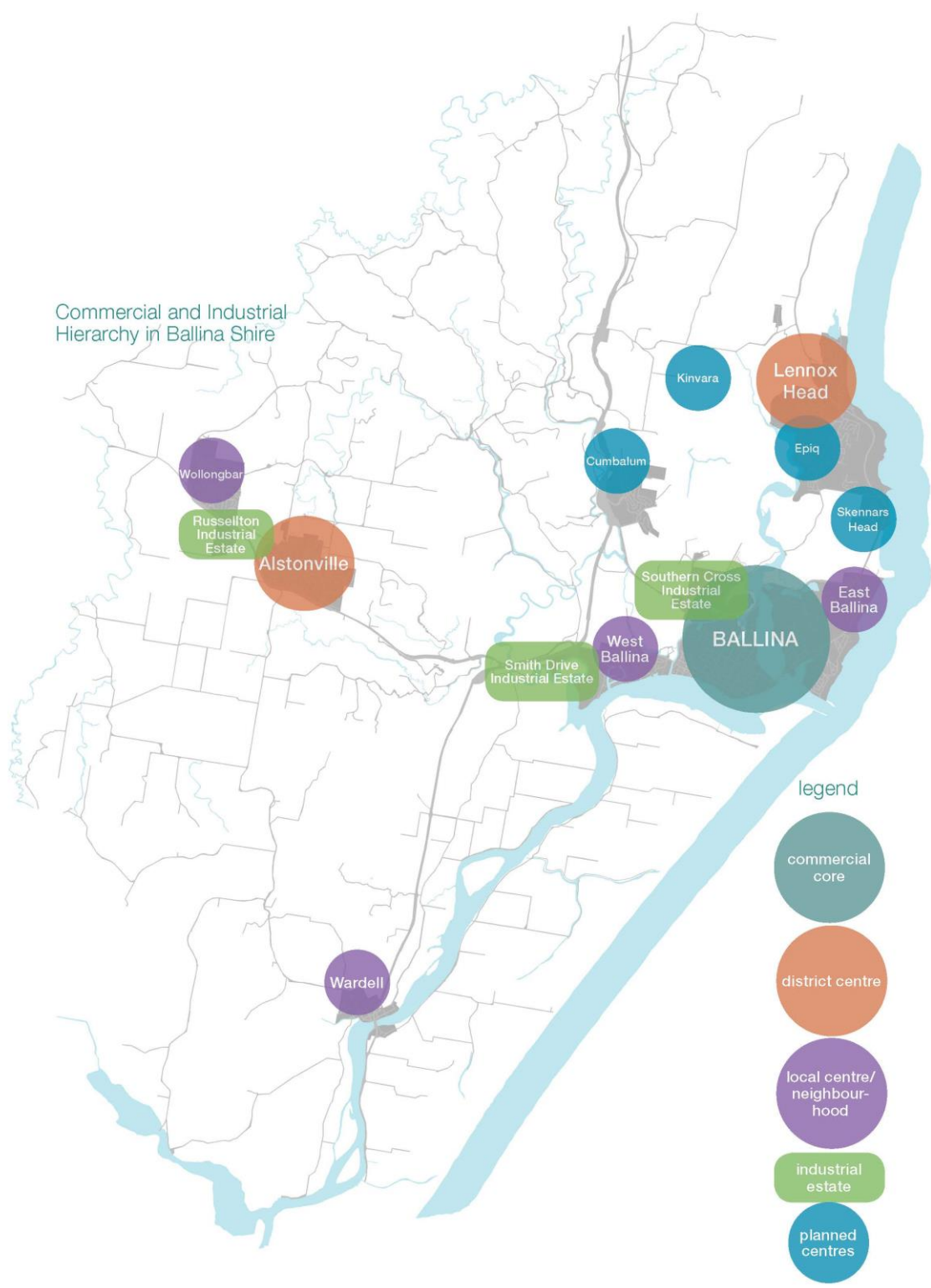
The current hierarchy is shown in the map below. Additional retail facilities of a neighbourhood/local scale are planned for the Cumbalum urban release area and Skennars Head expansion area in the future. There is also a light industrial estate planned on the northern side of Lennox Head and a neighbourhood shopping centre (being a second retail area) in the Epiq development at Lennox Head.

The commercial hierarchy is also supplemented by a range of quasi-retail activities and bulky goods outlets located within the Southern Cross, Clark Street and Russellton Industrial Estate (Alstonville) areas, as well as dispersed bulky goods activity along the former Pacific Highway, Kerr Street (eg Super A-Mart and Good Guys).

In addition to the central facilities located in Ballina, surrounding localities also include a variety of smaller scale commercial areas, in East Ballina, West Ballina, Lennox Head and Alstonville, with a smaller neighbourhood shopping centre in Wollongbar. Modest levels of retail services are also provided in the shire's rural villages such as Wardell, Newrybar and Tintenbar.

Within the rural environment, the land use planning system preferences commercial activities that compliment or are compatible with primary production. Commercial uses that conflict with or might in some way constrain agricultural activities are generally discouraged.


Commercial and Industrial Hierarchy in Ballina Shire



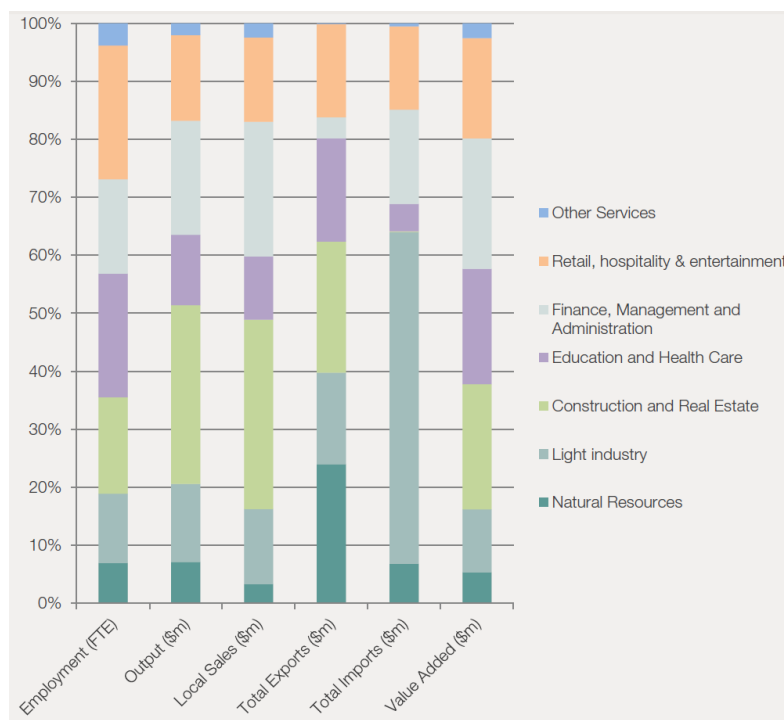
Key Economic Data

Key Industry Sectors

The most significant industry sectors in Ballina Shire, in terms of employment, number of businesses, output/sales and value-adding (a measure of productivity) are:

-  construction and real estate
-  education and health care
-  finance, management and administration
-  retail, hospitality & entertainment (incl media)
-  natural resources (incl agriculture & mining)
-  light industry (incl wholesale & manufacturing)

Performance of key industry sectors during 2015/16 is shown in the figure below.



Construction and Real Estate Sector

The development industry plays a significant role in Ballina Shire's economy. Combined with property operators and real estate, the construction industry is a major employer (2,173 FTE employees); generates the highest amount of value added (\$316 million); and is responsible for the largest proportion of economic output (\$987 million). The development industry also has the most registered businesses (1,088 local businesses) of any industry in Ballina Shire. The majority of this activity occurs within the construction services sub-sector of the industry, which includes land development and site preparation services and building trades (excluding building construction).

In addition, although the construction sector is not a major export earner directly, the property operators and real estate sector was the top export earner for Ballina Shire (primarily from property sales) comprising 26.3% of total exports in FY2014/15 of \$155.3 million.

Whilst the strength of the construction sector is a boost to Ballina Shire's economy, this concentration and relative reliance on the industry is also a major vulnerability due to the reliance of the sector on debt finance. Because of this, changes in interest rates and broader macroeconomic conditions have the potential to significantly impact on the local economy.

Health and Education Sector

The health and education sector, comprising the education & training and health care & social assistance industries, are together a significant industry of employment within Ballina Shire, with approximately 21.3% of total persons employed (2,789 FTE). These industries together also contribute 17.8% of total export earnings (through the flow of public funding by state and federal governments).

The key places of employment within this sector include:

- Preschool and school education (909 FTE employees)
- Social assistance services (514 FTE employees)
- Medical and other health care services (including medical specialists) (451 FTE employees)
- Residential care services (438 FTE employees)

Finance, Management and Administration Sector

Approximately 16.3% of Ballina Shire workers (2,131 FTE employees) are employed in Finance, Management and Administrative enterprises (including public administration), including:

- Financial and insurance services
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Public administration and safety
- Administrative and support services
- Electricity, gas, water and waste services

The Finance, management and administration sector contributes 19.6% of Ballina Shire's economic output (\$629 million) and 22.5% of the Shire's value added (\$329 million). The

financial, administrative and professional services within this sector support the smooth operation of other businesses within the shire and the region.

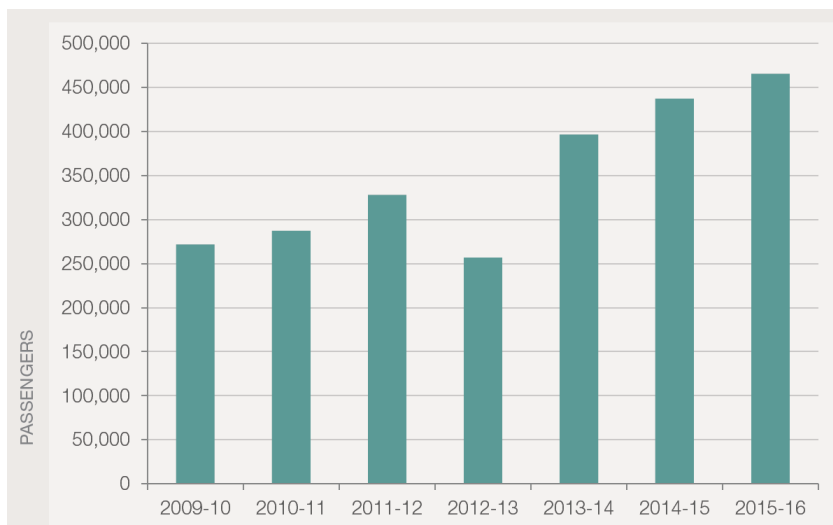
Retail, Hospitality and Entertainment Sector

The retail, hospitality and entertainment sector (which include industries such as retail trade, accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services and information media and telecommunications) is the largest industry of employment in Ballina Shire, with approximately 23.1% of Ballina Shire workers (3,020 FTE employees). The sector also contributes 14.8% of Ballina Shire's economic output (\$474 million), 16% of the Shire's exports (\$95 million) and 17.3% of value added (\$254 million).

A study by the Regional Australia Institute (Blueprint for Investing in City Deals 2017) looking into regional cities, identified that the Ballina-Lismore regional city region has (relative to other regional areas) a greater prevalence of creative occupations such as media and arts, which are an indicator of creativity and support the identity and lifestyle opportunities associated with regional cities.

Tourism and hospitality

In the five years to FY2014/15, approximately 1.3 million over night domestic visitors visited Ballina Shire, with a further 66,546 international visitors. The number of annual passengers passing through the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport has increased significantly over the past 7 years, as shown in the graph below.



The majority of international tourists visiting Ballina Shire did so for the purpose of a holiday (60.1% of holiday nights), with a further 31.1% of visiting friends and relatives. In both cases the average length of stay is approximately 8 nights.

In terms of domestic overnight visitors, the majority visit for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives (42%), followed by visiting for a holiday (38.9%), business (12.2%) and for other reasons/not stated (6.9%). Domestic overnight visitors tend to stay for 3-4 nights on average.

Additional to the above, over the five years to FY2014/15 Ballina Shire received approximately 1.7 million domestic day visitors who came for predominately for the purpose of a holiday (44.5% of visitors) and visiting friends and relatives (29.1%).

Light Industry Sector

The wholesale, transport and manufacturing sectors are included here together as they represent a group of 'light' industries that typically occupy industrial estates in the shire. These industries tend to require sizeable industrial allotments, with good transport connections and access to services. The strength of this sector is a reflection of Ballina's role as a regional centre. Together these industries represent 12% of total employment (FTE), 13.5% of output (\$432 million), 10.8% of value-added (\$159 million) and 15.8% of exports (\$93 million). These industries also function as important support industries servicing other sectors of the local and regional economy.

Though manufacturing has declined in relative importance in recent times throughout Australia, the manufacturing that remains tends to be niche and high tech, requiring specialised skills and an educated and well-trained workforce. Manufacturing can provide major benefits to local economies, by tending to support 'spin-offs' and growth in other related sectors of the economy as local businesses gear to service the manufacturing businesses.

Food product manufacturing is Ballina Shire's largest manufacturing industry, with \$68.2 million worth of output in FY2014/15. Notably, 40% of the Ballina Shire residents employed in food product manufacturing work in locations outside Ballina Shire, indicating there are more people employed in the industry than there are jobs available in Ballina Shire. Food product manufacturing within Ballina Shire makes up a relatively low proportion of regional product (7.4% of total output/sales) and the majority of this is sold locally (75% of total output).

Natural Resources Sector

Mining activities in Ballina Shire tend to be involved in the local and regional supply of quarry material such as sand, gravel and rock for local construction and development projects. As a consequence, while the supply of this material is important for other sectors of the economy, the mining industry itself represents only a small proportion of overall economic output and activity.

Although no longer as significant as it once was in terms of employment and share of total output, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries remain significant in terms of the number of registered businesses (15% of all businesses) and the value of exports (22.9% of all exports) in Ballina Shire. Despite the historical decline in number of agricultural workers, the industry remains the sixth largest industry of employment with 6.5% of all hours worked (856 FTE employees) in the shire.

The main agricultural commodities in Ballina Shire (in terms of the total value of production) are nursery products & cut flowers (30.5% of total exports), nuts (mainly macadamia at 30.4%), broad-acre crops (mainly sugarcane at 18.3%) and non-citrus fruits (12.5%). Ballina Shire generates approximately 26.5% of total agricultural exports for the Northern Rivers Region, but only 11.5% of local sales.

Notwithstanding the relative decline in the significance of agriculture to the overall regional economy, there is significant potential for the food product manufacturing industry to increase the demand for the region's agricultural produce.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

Council undertook a preliminary SWOT analysis, and reviewed this with stakeholders, seeking to identify the shire's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Strengths

Ballina Shire's beautiful natural environment of coastline and waterways, rainforests and wetlands and the amenity of the rural hinterland are the foundation of Ballina Shire's attractiveness as a popular residential and tourist destination. Additionally, the mild sub-tropical climate, moderate rainfall and productive soils provide the foundation for a varied and productive agricultural base.

Ballina Shire is well serviced by high quality infrastructure including by the Pacific and Bruxner Highways, the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport and other urban services (water and sewerage). Ballina Shire's urban centres are also well laid out, with good connectivity (by roads and pathways) and have abundant open space.

The social environment of Ballina Shire is also seen as a key strength, in particular with respect to the general friendliness of the community as well as the level of skills and education.

NATURAL ENDOWMENTS

- Beautiful natural and coastal environments and mild subtropical climate.
- The region's 'clean and green' reputation and countercultural heritage.
- Laid back lifestyle character and community.
- Diverse and productive agricultural base – "Food Bowl Region".
- Creative, resourceful, skilled and diverse workforce.
- Proximity to South East Queensland.

Weaknesses

Key weaknesses identified during the preparation of the strategy include Ballina Shire's reputation as a "retirement" destination, rather than a "lifestyle" destination, which underplays the shire's potential. A lack of night-life and entertainment opportunities and early closing times of local cafés and restaurants reinforce a perception that opportunities for socialising and networking are limited.

A lack of affordable housing and commercial floor-space and a lack of affordable and reliable public transport were seen as key weaknesses. In addition, the heavy reliance on the construction and real estate industry makes Ballina Shire's economy vulnerable to changing macroeconomic circumstances.

The currently poor environmental condition of the Richmond River was also seen as a weakness by undermining the shire's environmental reputation.

Opportunities

Many of the economic opportunities identified relate to potential to leverage the shire's environmental strengths, particularly with respect to various tourism markets, including:

- Sport tourism associated with the beautiful natural and coastal setting, for events, tournaments and training.
- Nature based tourism taking advantage of the natural coastline, local waterfalls and remnant rainforests.
- Rural tourism leveraging the productive and aesthetic qualities of our agricultural areas through food and farm tourism.
- Health, spa and retreat tourism taking advantage of the low-key, low stress environment of the shire.
- Adventure tourism such as mountain biking, sky-diving and zip lines.
- Conference and event tourism such as functions (such as weddings), education, conferences and festivals.
- Accessible tourism taking advantage particularly of Ballina's flat topography and accessible infrastructure (for people with limited mobility).

The shire's economic opportunities go beyond tourism. It is desirable, in an economic sense, to diversify the range of major industries, beyond tourism and construction in order to improve the shire's economic resilience in the case of an economic downturn.

Economic enablers are investments that may be made to leverage a place's 'natural endowments' in order to take advantage of key opportunities. In the case of Ballina Shire, potential economic enablers that leverage the shire's natural endowments are identified in the box below.

ECONOMIC ENABLERS

- Lifestyle infrastructure – continuing improvements to the public domain, community facilities, recreation and amenities to leverage the shire's natural endowments.
- Strategic transport and communications infrastructure – continuing investments in air and road infrastructure and high speed broadband to facilitate connectivity within the shire and beyond.
- Entrepreneurial culture – facilitated by Council leadership and a supportive outcome-focused regulatory framework to support entrepreneurship and networking.
- Commercial land – Ensuring that a diversity of affordable and appropriate commercial space is available to accommodate the emergence, growth and relocation of businesses.

The attractiveness of the shire as a lifestyle destination, combined with high quality transport connections with Brisbane and the Gold Coast (via the Pacific Highway) and Sydney and Melbourne (via the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport) present the opportunity to attract tech-

based entrepreneurs and other established businesses to relocate, bringing export income and adding to the vibrancy and diversity of economic activity in the shire.

Ballina Shire has the opportunities to leverage its environmental characteristics and the region's clean-green reputation and counter-cultural history through the development and marketing of local food and other lifestyle products.

The availability of additional industrial land, adjacent to the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport, through expansion of the Southern Cross Industrial Estate provides opportunities for the development and/or relocation of industrial enterprises.

The delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is expected to increase demand for workers and associated professional services to support the growth of the healthcare and social services sector. The provision of additional aged care facilities and associated health services are also potential drivers of economic development and employment growth in Ballina Shire into the future.

Threats

A number of potential threats to the economic prosperity of Ballina Shire were identified, including the following:

- An overly successful tourism strategy could undermine the 'laid back' character of the shire.
- An imbalanced worker age profile and loss of key-workers (employees in hospitality, health care and services sectors) might to arise from a lack of affordable housing, leading to social disconnect and drain of income out of the shire (due to commuting employees spending their incomes elsewhere).
- The rise of online retailing might undermine the role of traditional main streets.
- High commercial rents might discourage entrepreneurship.
- The potential impacts of climate change such as increased flooding and tidal inundation.
- The potential for increase in drugs and crime associated with rising population.
- Potential financial challenges for Council associated with rising eligibility of pensioner discounts on Council rates the difficulty of funding maintenance works brought about by the impact of tourism.

Implications for Economic Development

Ballina Shire's economic opportunities lie in preparing for the changes occurring in the global economy, in particular the 'digital disruption' caused by the rise of internet commerce and automation and its impact on the changing nature of work, which are yet to be fully realised.

Ballina Shire's key strengths, which could be leveraged to respond to these changes and drive future economic development include the natural beauty, mild climate and lifestyle character of the region, the easy access to national and international markets via high quality transport linkages and the creative, skilled and diverse local workforce.

In order to harness these opportunities and leverage our strengths, Council could:

- support measures to enhance the lifestyle character of the shire (through investing in 'lifestyle' infrastructure, attractions and amenities; supporting entertainment, culture and the arts),
- engendering an entrepreneurial culture, through providing confident leadership and a

supportive outcome-focused regulatory framework, facilitating the supply of appropriate and affordable commercial floor-space that provides for the emergence of supportive business relationships and local supply-chain networks; and by

- seeking to attract innovative employing businesses that compliment and take advantage of the shire's natural endowments.

Economic Development Strategies

Vision

Ballina Shire is a vibrant and engaging place, built on its beautiful natural amenity and lifestyle character, where Council leadership and strong business networks support entrepreneurial opportunities that contribute to the shire's prosperity and quality of life.

Objectives

The following objectives underpin the above vision:

- Support the development of a strong entrepreneurial culture – A strong entrepreneurial culture is one that welcomes new ideas, and where the knowledge, resources and skills are available to enable potential entrepreneurs to identify and pursue business opportunities.
- Build confidence through leadership – Providing stable, proactive and decisive leadership will provide business owners and entrepreneurs with confidence to invest, take a risk on establishing a new business or relocate to the Shire.
- Attract key anchor industries and talent – Attracting potential growth industry sectors and highly skilled workers/entrepreneurs to relocate to the shire could help anchor innovation and support jobs growth by increasing export income, deepening the local talent pool and driving the development of new businesses through spin-offs and associated service industries.
- Provide proactive community engagement and communication – Engaging with the local resident and business community on council projects and programs and promoting the activities and attractions of the shire to residents, visitors and businesses.

Actions

The community engagement process has identified a range of possible actions that Council could take to support the economic development of the shire. These actions fall into several key categories, which are explained in the table below.

Action Category	Involves:
Governance	Key decision makers being aware of the economic impacts of the decision making process and administrative activities including timeliness, reducing uncertainty and building confidence through leadership.
Service Delivery	Focussing on ensuring that Council services are delivered in a manner that facilitates positive economic outcomes and meeting community expectations.

Investments / Infrastructure	The prioritisation and direction of infrastructure investment towards projects that have strategic economic benefits that leverage the shire's key economic strengths.
Place Management	Building on and promoting the character, legibility and vibrancy of key strategic place-making assets, including CBDs, the rural landscape, coastal environment and open space areas.
Communications	A coordinated communications program to promote the strengths and opportunities of Ballina Shire and keep local businesses and residents informed regarding Council key projects and activities.
Digital Readiness	Facilitating better utilisation of online services and taking advantage of advances in the digital economy and automation to maintain competitiveness.
Networking	Supporting the development of local business groups and events that encourage networking and collaboration.
Policy	Reviewing and revising Council policy in a manner that seeks to reasonably minimise the regulatory impacts on local business whilst meeting community expectations.

Actions to achieve the strategy vision and associated objectives relative to the above categories are set out in the following table. The strategy actions are actions that Council sees it has a role in. Importantly, others including business and business advocacy groups also have a significant role to play in advancing the economic prosperity of Ballina Shire.

REF	Action	Category	Resources	Timing
A	Support the development of a strong entrepreneurial culture – <i>A strong entrepreneurial culture is one that welcomes new ideas, and where the knowledge, resources and skills are available to enable potential entrepreneurs to identify and pursue business opportunities.</i>			
A1	Integrate consideration of economic development outcomes into next scheduled review of each local approvals policy and Council's LEP, DCP and Local Growth Management Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Years 3-5
A2	Review customer service processes associated with regulatory and planning approvals to ensure consistency with business friendly councils approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Years 1-2
A3	Review Council's processes relating to financial transactions from a business friendly perspective, particularly with respect to integrated billing and payment options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Customer Service • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Years 1-2
A4	Establish an internal Council process with an external facilitator as Chair for coordinating the assessment of priority proposals that involve strategically important industries and/or redevelopment projects occurring in the shire's business centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources • \$5,000 p.a. 	Years 1-2

A5	Work with stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of co-working spaces that provide a variety of flexible office spaces, office facilities (meeting rooms, internet, copiers) and networking and mentoring opportunities for small business and start-ups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15,000 consultation • Grant funding available 	Years 1-2
A6	Work with local businesses to facilitate a more vibrant and active public domain through place-making projects that encourage passive networking and opportunities for social interaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$60,000 p.a. (for three years) (also see Action C7) 	Years 3-5
A7	Prepare a policy/strategy (supported by a prospectus) to attract and grow recreational tourism and accessible tourism products, working with sporting groups, tourism groups and other industry partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place management • Communications • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources • Grant funding where available 	Years 3-5
A8	Review Council's Local Growth Management Strategy to ensure that adequate residential, commercial and industrial land is available to meet future needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Years 1-2
A9	Review wayfinding signage within and towards the shire's commercial districts, including CBDs and industrial estates to ensure they are appropriately and clearly signposted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources (first stage) 	Years 1-2
A10	Work collaboratively with other shires in the region to support economic development projects and proposals that benefit the region as a whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Ongoing

A11	<p>Review developer contribution arrangements for business in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a discount to contribution charges (of 40%) for employment generating businesses within key industry sectors (including multimedia and creative arts, niche tech industries, transport and freight logistics and food product manufacturing). • Providing a discounted rate of contribution charges for permitted changes of use within established rented premises, with a higher rate of discount for smaller premises. • Allowing high water users to convert upfront s.64 (water and sewer) charges into a higher annual consumption charge. • Providing a discount to contribution charges (of 40%) for residential development within the CBD to encourage infill development. • Provide for the deferral of contributions payments where amounts payable are greater than \$25,000 (and are secured by a bank guaranty). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20,000 (can be met under existing s.94 budget) 	Years 1-2
B	Building confidence through leadership – <i>Providing stable and decisive leadership will provide business owners and entrepreneurs with confidence to invest, take a risk on establishing a new business or relocate to the Shire.</i>			
B1	<p>Incorporate transparent cost-benefit analysis into the consideration and prioritisation of Council's strategic infrastructure projects (airport upgrades, road network improvements, maritime infrastructure, community centres and open space improvements).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments / infrastructure • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate into future program budgets 	Years 6-8
B2	<p>Provide leadership in association with the development of Council's industrial landholdings such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a supply of industrial land parcels so that relocating or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Investments / infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources • Food hub 	Years 3-5

	<p>expanding businesses can be accommodated in a timely manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding the range of Council's investment activities to include long-term lease and strata development to cater to a broader range of small to medium enterprises. • Facilitating the clustering of compatible businesses (for example airport related industry and food product manufacturing “food hub”) in order to support opportunities associated with shortened supply chains, improved availability of skilled workers, spin-offs and the potential for sharing infrastructure, suppliers, marketing and distribution networks. • Investigate feasibility of establishing a manufacturing food hub (with tourism elements) in the Southern Cross Industrial Estate in proximity to the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport. 		<p>feasibility \$30,000</p>	
C	<p>Attracting key anchor industries and talent – <i>Attracting potential growth industry sectors and highly skilled workers/entrepreneurs to relocate to the shire could help anchor innovation and support jobs growth by increasing export income, deepening the local talent pool and driving the development of new businesses through spin-offs and associated service industries.</i></p>			
C1	<p>Provide a single point of contact for businesses seeking to understand the shire’s business environment and Council’s role with respect to economic development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources (Role currently performed by strategic planning staff – no dedicated economic development officer). 	<p>Ongoing</p>

C2	Establish a proactive program of engagement with the local business community through face-to-face interaction, use of social media platforms and consistent generation of promotional media content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$80,000 (annual) (additional staff resources within Communications Section) 	Years 3-5
C3	Enhance lifestyle character of the shire through investment in lifestyle amenities (such as embellishment of coastal assets and waterfalls, CBD civic facilities) and facilitate attractions such as community events (particularly local food events).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments / infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources and programs 	Years 3-5
C4	Prepare an investment prospectus to attract emerging and strategically important industries and talent that take advantage of the shire's natural endowments and opportunities. Strategically important industries and talent include multimedia and creative arts, web-based entrepreneurs and niche tech industries, tourist facilities, transport and freight logistics and food product manufacturing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Place management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30,000 	Years 3-5
C5	Prepare a creative arts strategy to support the development of a strong creative arts sector as a means of improving the attractiveness of the shire as a tourist and lifestyle location and adding value to other key industry sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place management • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15,000 	Years 6-8
C6	Facilitate low scale commercial activities in rural areas such as roadside stalls and rural food tourist activities through changes to the land use planning regime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Years 1-2

C7	Prepare a place-making strategy to encourage people to 'linger for longer' in key locations, facilitating passive networking, encouraging more residential development, improved 'night life' and entertainment opportunities and improved street lighting in CBDs and along urban waterways to improve perception of safety at night.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$20,000 planning & consultation (Implementation budgeted at \$60,000 p.a. for three years (see Action A6). 	Years 1-2
C8	Review Council's public land management policies to facilitate place activation of the open space network through the commercial use of key public land areas/activity nodes (such as "food trucks" and watercraft hire).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing resources 	Years 1-2
C9	Review the local land use planning regime to facilitate the provision of a diverse range of affordable and accessible commercial, industrial and residential spaces such as co-working, studios, live-work apartments and small-scale light industrial rental spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place management Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing resources 	Years 6-8
D	Providing proactive community engagement and communication – <i>Engaging with the local resident and business community on council projects and programs and promoting the activities and attractions of the shire to residents, visitors and businesses.</i>			
D1	Review Council's website to improve its functionality and accessibility relative to small business friendly outcomes and principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing resources 	Years 1-2
D2	Convene business/community reference panels to address matters such as facilitating co-working spaces, supporting creative industries, implementing place-making ideas, promoting digital-readiness and networking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within existing resources 	Years 3-5

D3	Hold public information events in conjunction with local chambers and other agencies (Industry NSW, TAFE, NORTEC) addressing matters such as “How to lodge a development application”, “Setting up a food premises”, “How to make your business ‘digital ready’” and “State and Federal Government grant programs”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget of \$5,000 	Years 3-5
D4	Publish population and growth monitoring statistics for Ballina Shire on an annual basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within existing resources 	Year 1 onwards

Implementation and Resources

This section provides further detail regarding the explanation and implementation of significant actions identified above, organised into the key action categories.

Service Delivery

Customer Service Review

This will seek to improve development inquiry business friendliness through a customer service review, involving:

- Customer service training for professional front-line staff.
- Encouraging greater use of pre-lodgement meetings.
- Development of pro-forma discussion cheat-sheet for staff to assist in explaining DA process and options to applicants.
- Streamlining charges payments process, including how customers are billed as well as receipting processes.
- Preparation of fact-sheets addressing: development application process; LEP & DCP amendment processes; standard requirements for key development types (such as food premises), including information regarding fees and charges, waste management, food inspections, commercial use of footpaths, commercial use of public land etc.

Internal Reference Group

It is proposed that an internal reference group be established, on an as needs basis, comprising relevant Council staff tasked to ensure the timely consideration and facilitation of proposals that involve strategically important industries. For the purpose of this process, strategically important industries include multimedia and creative arts, niche tech industries, tourist facilities, transport and freight logistics and food product manufacturing, where the total project investment is greater than \$1 million.

The internal reference group would be formed at the request of the General Manager. It is anticipated that depending on the circumstances, staff representation would comprise planners (development assessment and strategic), building inspectors, environmental health officers, engineers and (where necessary) finance staff.

An independent Chair/facilitator would be appointed and empowered by the General Manager to ensure that a clear development pathway is identified that appropriately considers the potential economic benefits of the proposal when considering requests for the variation of development standards and/or the waiving of Council fees and charges (where such discretion exists). Any recommendations regarding such matters would be clearly set out on the public record to ensure transparency and accountability.

An additional benefit of the internal reference group process would be to provide staff with confidence regarding the facilitation of particular proposals that meet the Council's strategic direction for the shire's economic development.

Infrastructure / Investments

The consideration of potential economic benefits is a key element to the sound prioritisation of infrastructure investment projects. The following categories of infrastructure are seen as having particular benefits associated with supporting or facilitating economic development.

Improvements to public amenity – Includes projects which increase the liveability, attractiveness and amenity of the shire's public domain. The benefits of such projects relate to improving the lifestyle and tourist character of the shire and attracting skills and talent. Such projects include:

- Civic facilities such as town squares, community facilities, public art installations, waterfront improvements and other “place-making” projects.
- Improvements to open space and passive recreation areas and pathway networks such as the coastal pathway and improvements to key open space nodes (such as Pop Denison Park).

Strategic transport infrastructure – Includes projects which facilitate an efficient and convenient transport network. The benefits of such projects include facilitating efficient transport for business activities whilst improving liveability for residents and visitors. Such projects include:

- Duplication of the bridges on Tamarind Drive (Ballina).
- The reconnection of North Creek Road between Ballina and Lennox Head and construction of the Western Arterial (Ballina).
- Improvement to the Bruxner Highway between Wollongbar and Goonellabah (State Road).
- Road and parking improvements in Lennox Head CBD.
- Maintaining adequate car parking within the shire's CBDs.
- Expansion of the Ballina-Byron Gateway Airport.

Capacity building infrastructure – Includes projects which provide opportunities for new business ventures. Such projects include:

- Facilitating the adequate supply of residential, commercial and industrial land opportunities.
- Facilitating the provision of maritime infrastructure such as marina development, maritime related commerce and industry, boat harbourage and moorings.
- Upgrade to the high speed broadband network (by NBN Co. scheduled to occur within the next 12-18 months).

It is recommended that Council decisions regarding the funding of projects be supported by a basic cost-benefit analysis so that Council funded projects achieve the most efficient return for the limited funding available, in terms of the potential benefits for economic prosperity and community wellbeing.

Place Management

A significant amount of Ballina Shire's economic advantage hinges on lifestyle character. Improving the liveability of our centres through increased vibrancy, activity and interest would benefit the local economy by presenting the image of progressive, open and inviting localities that encourage business networking and a positive social environment. This would

have benefits for tourism, encourage locals to spend locally and attract mobile (web-based) entrepreneurs and businesses.

Examples of possible place-making strategies include:

- Encouraging a vibrant cafe and restaurant scene (where possible focussed in specific “foodie precincts”)
- Encouraging the establishment of co-working spaces in the shire’s CBDs
- Facilitating regular festivals and public events
- Installing public art (including street art) and festive decorations
- Installing street furniture, interactive public art and street games that encourage people to linger, congregate and interact with the environment and with each other.
- Facilitating the provision of free Wi-Fi in the shire’s CBDs

Some of these place-making activities/ideas can be undertaken on a trial or temporary basis, relatively inexpensively, meaning that community support can be gauged before determining whether to make them more permanent.

Experience elsewhere in the world indicates that the success of place-making activities is best achieved with the support and participation of local businesses, with the added benefit of reducing the impost on Council resources. In some instances, projects may simply be facilitated with Council providing a regulatory framework that addresses land tenure and risk issues, and then allowing businesses to ‘take ownership’ of particular projects that have a broader public benefit, within an agreed framework.

Consequently, engaging with local businesses and the local community is critical to identifying cost effective place-making projects that will have the greatest impact and community support. To support this, it is recommended that a fund of \$80,000 per annum for three years be established towards place-making projects.

Communication and promotion

Council’s community engagement and communications are important for promoting awareness of Council operations and activities and for instilling confidence in Council’s role in the community.

Feedback received during the community engagement phase of this project, and through Council’s community survey (Micromex), have identified that the community believe Council could improve its communications and engagement.

In terms of economic development, Council will seek to better communicate and promote awareness of the activities and opportunities available in Ballina Shire to residents, visitors and beyond. This could be achieved in several ways, including:

- Reviewing the legibility and functionality of Council’s website.
- Broadening the use of social media for promotion of Council related news, activities and events.
- Publishing and distributing a prospectus focussed on business attraction.

Digital Readiness

There are significant benefits for local businesses and workers in being 'digital ready' in being able to adjust to the new realities of increasing automation and online commerce. This could be assisted by:

- Working with TAFE, local schools and businesses to partner IT students with local businesses to assist them in the use of social media and online marketing.
- Libraries as community innovation hubs 'upskilling' youth and the general community regarding innovations in technology and IT. For example Council could support the incorporation of 3D printing at the region's libraries.
- Facilitate and promote digital readiness information sessions and training for local businesses and residents
- Provision of open source data

Open source data

Council holds a range of spatial and other data that could assist the development of new online applications and provide the users of those applications with valuable information about living and visiting Ballina Shire. The kind of data that could be made available includes: the location of picnic tables, playgrounds, exercise stations, boat ramps, dog exercise areas and public amenities.

The Australian Government has an online portal for making this government data available (www.data.gov.au).

Networking

Effective business networking is an important driver of economic development due its potential to expand business relationships and support the development of local supply chain networks. Council's role in facilitating business networking, while limited, could be enhanced through:

- Facilitating the establishment of co-working spaces, which incorporate mentoring and networking opportunities.
- The provision of community facilities which facilitate networking, such as libraries, meeting and conference facilities and performance/presentation spaces.
- Development of a business welcome pack containing information regarding local business networks and business related fact sheets, supported by a dedicated Council webpage.
- Ongoing engagement with the local business community through the local chambers of commerce and the establishment of Business Community Reference Panels (outlined below).

Co-working spaces

Often start-up or home-based businesses develop to a point where they need a professional office environment in which to grow further. However, the availability of flexible small format office space that is suitable to the needs of small or start-up businesses is often lacking and/or unaffordable. Starting a new business can also be a lonely undertaking as opportunities for networking and mentoring can be limited when working out of home. Co-working spaces have the potential to address these challenges.

Co-working spaces provide sole traders and emerging businesses with access to meeting rooms, internet, printers/copiers and reception services within a professional office environment. These spaces may also provide social and professional networking and mentoring opportunities for small and start-up businesses.

Access to co-working spaces is often on the basis of a membership or subscription, with cost based on the frequency and exclusivity of use. Various models of co-working spaces exist, but they are often operated on a commercial basis. A number of State and Federal Government grants are available to assist in the establishment of such spaces. Council's role in establishing these spaces can vary depending on the circumstances but could include as landlord or simply as 'match-maker', by facilitating connections between would-be managers, mentors, landlords and prospective co-workers.

Business Welcome Pack

The preparation of a business welcome pack, containing information about doing business in Ballina Shire may assist new and emerging businesses to become established and send the message that Council is supportive of new business ventures. The welcome pack could contain:

- Council fact sheets relating to 'Dealing with Council', Change of Use, Advertising signage, Setting up a food-premises, Developer contributions, Community facility venue hire
- Information on local business networks
- Government agency support services and grant opportunities

Business/Community Reference Panels

It is proposed to establish business/community reference panels to assist the Council in the implementation of several of the strategy's key actions, specifically those relating to:

- Place-making and place activation ideas
- Facilitating co-working spaces and networking
- Social media and communications
- Supporting creative industries
- Promoting digital readiness

These reference panels may be constituted on the basis of a random selection of participants or by "search conference" (where participants are sought with particular experience or expertise relevant to the matter under consideration).

The purpose of these reference panels would be to assist and inform the Council in developing new content and ideas for economic development related projects and programs, and assist in the development of stronger business networks among participants. In some instances, Council's role may simply involve bringing parties together and identifying areas where Council policy or activities may be adjusted to assist those parties to bring a positive economic development project to fruition.

Policy

Council will continue to review the policy and the regulatory arrangements that impact business, in an effort to reduce unnecessary or onerous restrictions whilst protecting the public interest in relation to public amenity and the environment.

Council has identified several areas of potential policy changes relating to business activity that may warrant particular attention. These policy areas include:

- Farm-based tourism – providing for additional rural tourism opportunities including roadside stalls and other forms of food-based retail that leverage the agricultural character and productivity of rural areas.
- Mobile food vending – Council is considering a policy that seeks to facilitate mobile food vending (food trucks, coffee vans and the like) within the road network and at key locations in the open space network. The purpose of this policy is to encourage vibrancy, activity and economic opportunities associated with lifestyle, leisure and passive recreation.
- Filming in coastal areas – Ballina Shire is an attractive setting for film and television production. Currently such uses cannot be approved within coastal areas even where any impacts that may occur in association with such filming are considered minor, due to filming being an undefined use Council’s 1987 LEP. Consequently, it is recommended that the LEP be amended to allow applications for filming to be considered in such areas through the development consent process. The benefits of film projects, other than the direct economic impact of servicing and accommodating visiting film crews, include the promotion of the area’s natural beauty to the outside world.
- Relaxing the developer contributions regime in certain areas to encourage development and vibrancy within the shire’s central business districts. This matter is discussed further below.

Review of Contributions Plan Arrangements

Council charges developer contributions in order to recoup the cost of delivering public infrastructure, the need for which has been brought about by the additional demands created by new development. The contributions plans on which these charges are based are prepared consider the cost of delivering the required infrastructure and the equitable apportionment of those costs between residential and commercial development and the existing population.

Notwithstanding, the imposition of developer contributions can present an impediment to establishing or expanding businesses, due to cost and to the need to pay these contributions upfront sometimes before the business is generating income.

The relaxation of contributions charges could assist in encouraging certain positive outcomes, such as:

- Encouraging redevelopment and vibrancy in the shire’s CBDs.
- Encouraging the emergence of new forms of business which may otherwise struggle to overcome early cash-flow barriers, but whose success would support the achievement of broader economic development objectives.
- Reducing hurdles to the establishment of new business and the expansion of existing businesses that support local employment.

In particular, the support of new enterprises within the following industries would help achieve the broader objectives of this strategy:

- Food processing/manufacturing - ventures which “add value” to local agricultural produce and/or support food-based tourism.
- Creative arts ventures.
- Recreational facilities (including indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, gymnasiums, studios and the like).
- Event and venue spaces (including conference facilities, function centres and the like).