

Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy

Futures Forum Outcomes

Summary Report

July 2014

Background

The Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy (BMRCS) Futures Forum was held on 20 May 2014 at the Ballina RSL Club. The event sought the community's views regarding Ballina becoming a major regional centre over the next 20 years. The (48) participants were selected to be representative of the Ballina community based on a randomly selected pool of residents previously compiled by Council.

The forum involved 'themed' table discussions (i.e. housing, economic development, recreation, open space, environmental management, healthy living and infrastructure, urban design and two open topic tables), with opportunities to switch to other discussion tables.

The first two rounds of discussion focussed on the following core questions:

- *What does Ballina becoming a major regional centre mean for this theme?*
- *What are the opportunities it could create?*
- *What are the challenges that need to be considered?*

The final round sought to refine and focus the discussions on the following key questions:

- *What can be added to the earlier discussions (meaning, opportunities, challenges)?*
- *What is the preferred future for Ballina which is emerging from this discussion?*
- *What are the most significant priorities to be explored for the MRC Strategy?*

Outcomes

The outcomes of the forum, as recorded on each of the themed tables, have been analysed and organised for presentation on the basis of the following:

- Main issues/ideas/challenges.
- Core values (implied by the issues raised at the forum).
- Key questions to be addressed in the BMRCS.

Main Issues/Ideas/Challenges

The discussions resulted in the recording of 122 distinct issues/ideas/challenges. A number of these were recorded on two or more of the themed tables. In order to identify and communicate the most significant issues discussed at the forum, those (55) ideas that were raised on at least two tables have been arranged into broad subjects relating to (in no particular order):

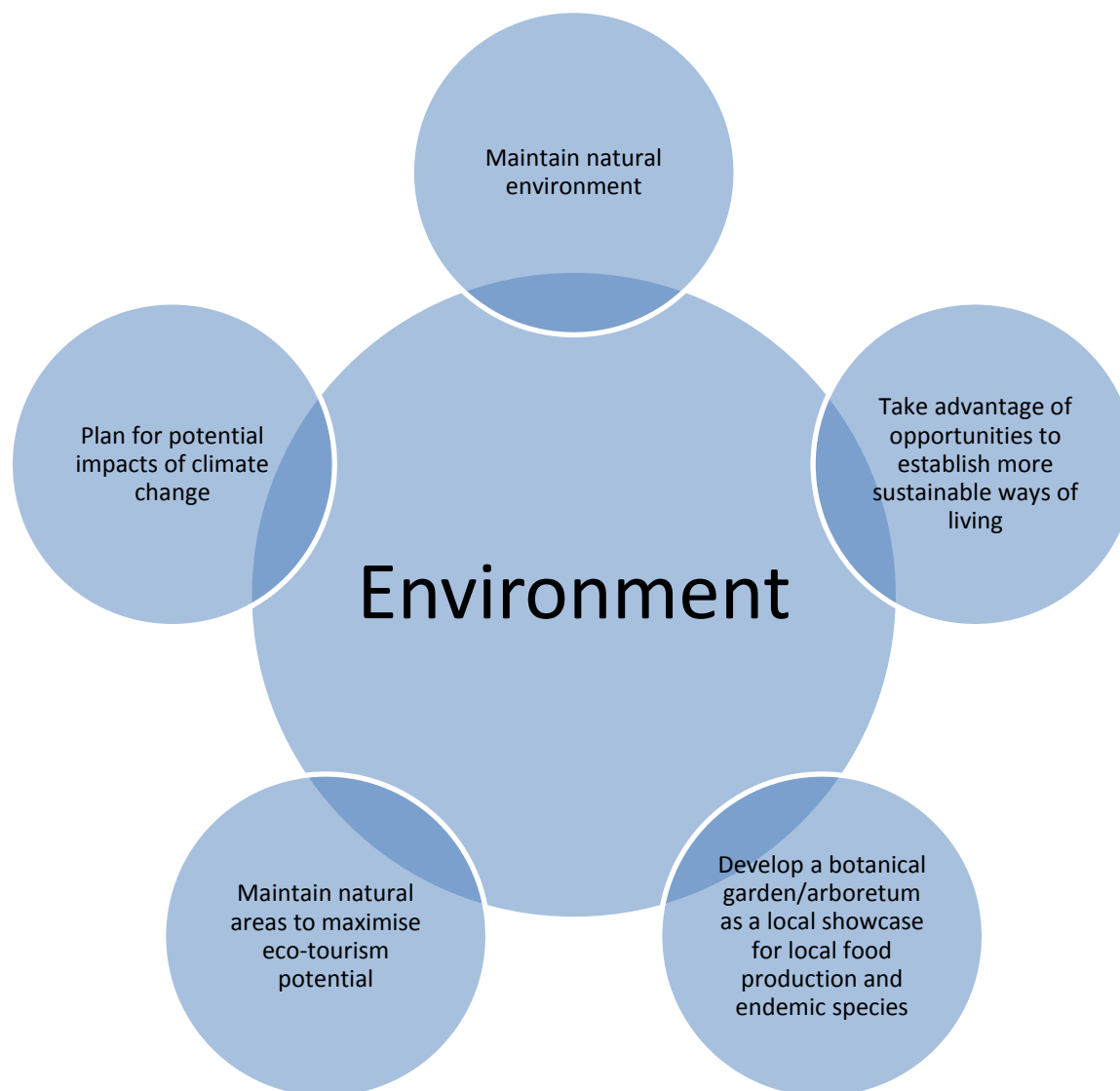
- Environment;
- Economic development;
- Tourism;
- Transport;
- Urban design;
- Foreshore access and waterways;
- Active lifestyle; and

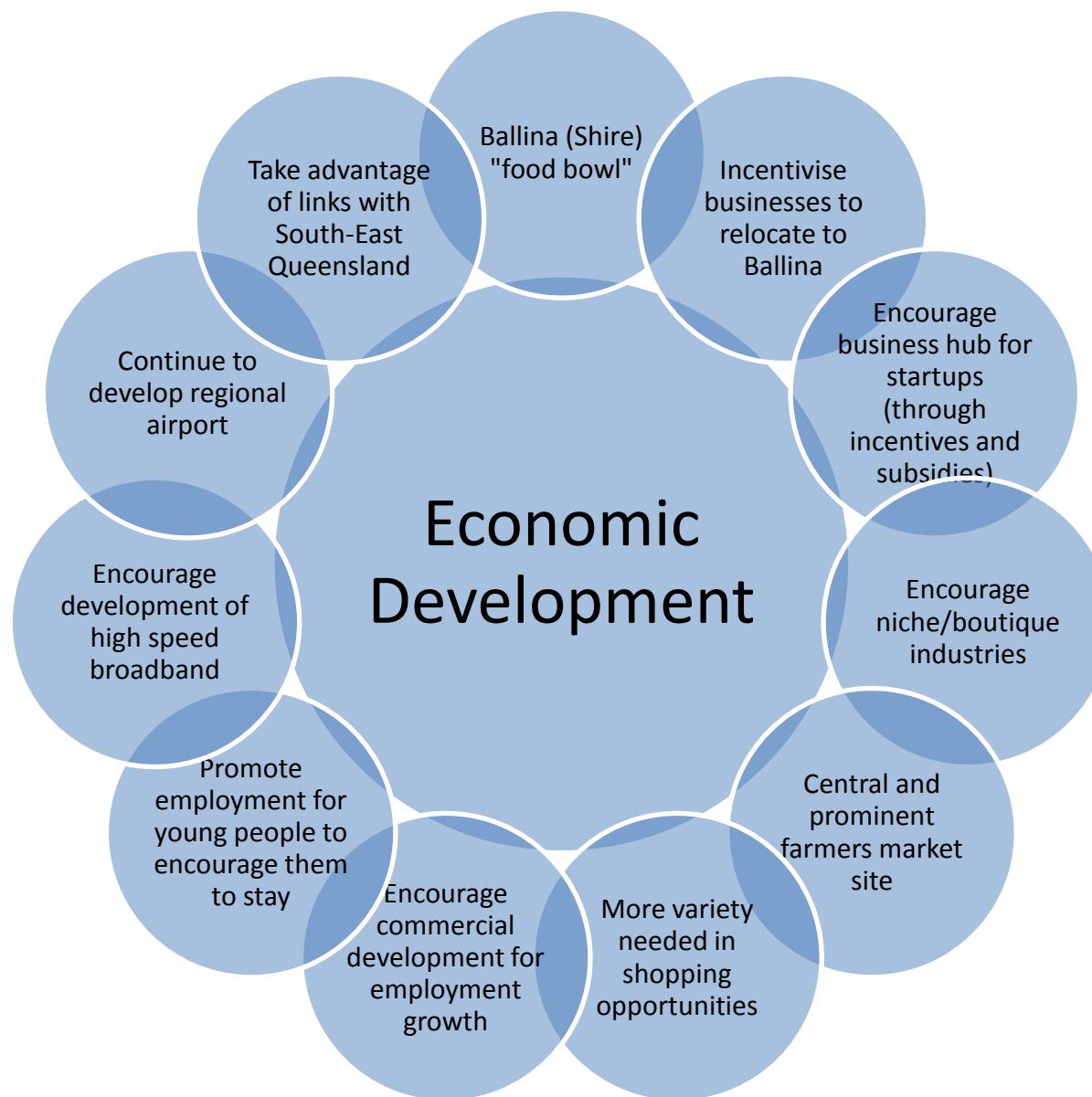
- Community facilities.

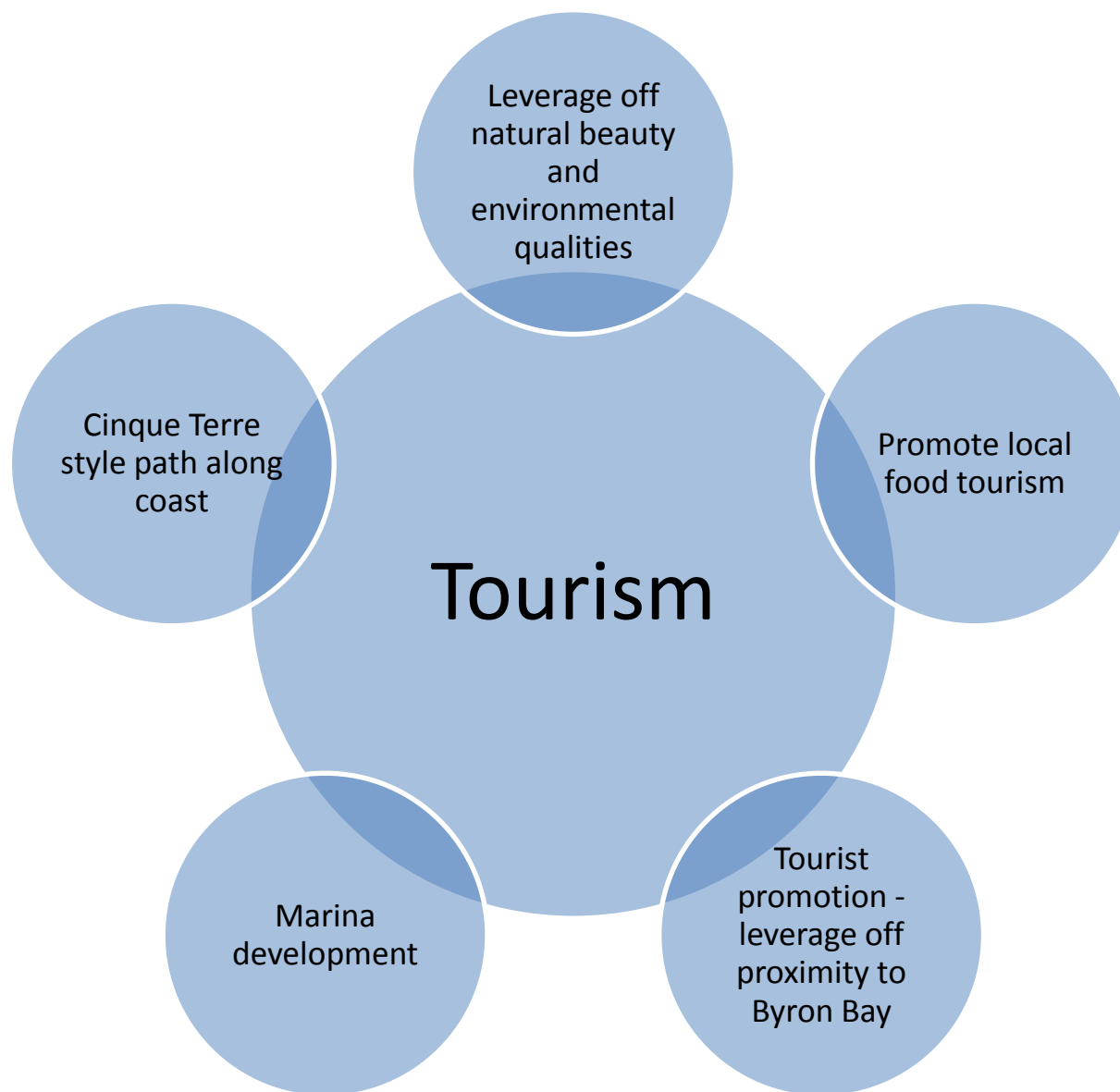
The key ideas, arranged into the above subjects, are provided in the following pages. The only exception to the minimum of two tables criteria (outlined above), was the case of several housing-related issues, as the housing issues appeared to only arise on the one specific housing themed table provided at the forum. These issues were nonetheless considered important to the development of the strategy and the future of Ballina.

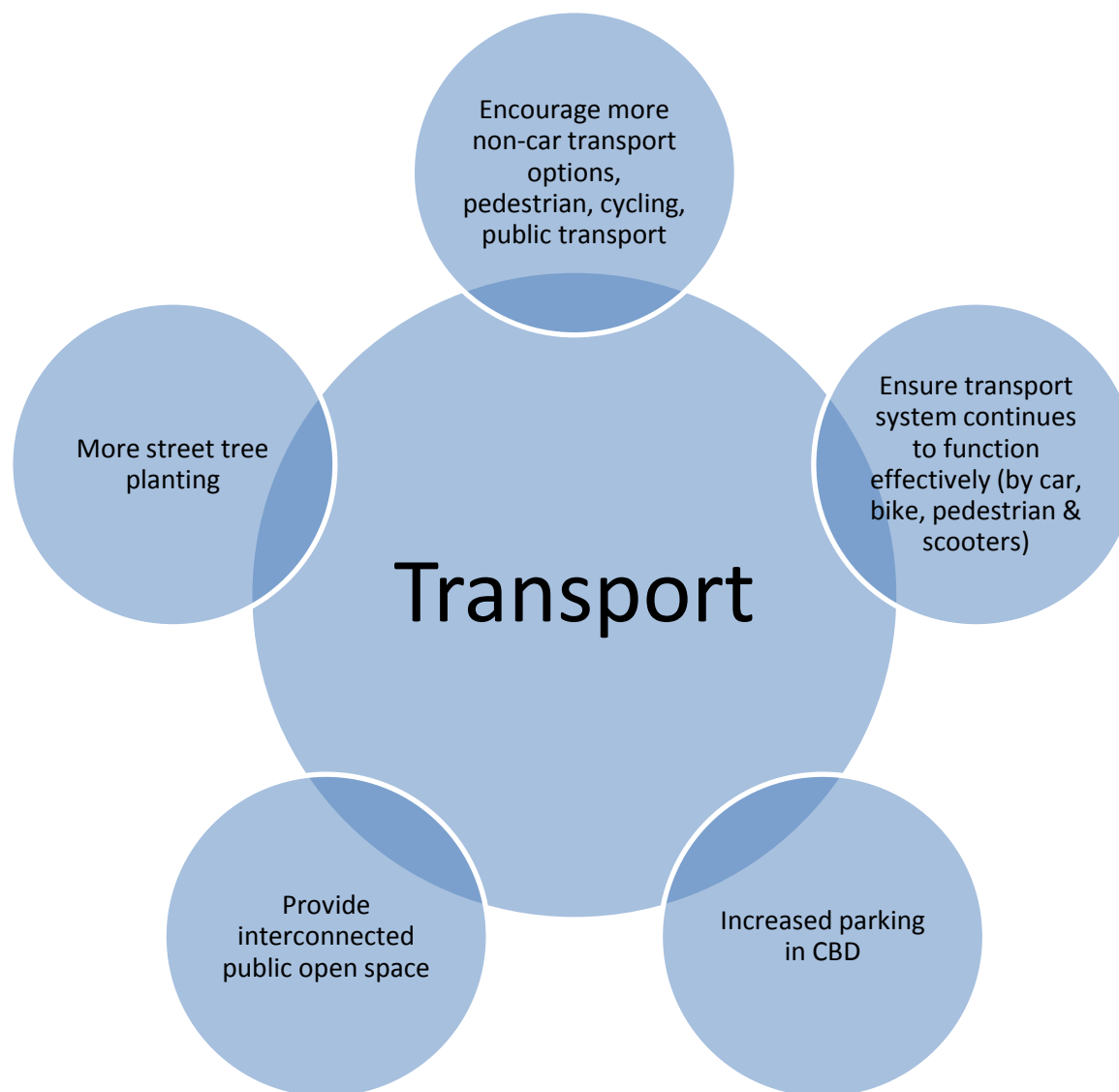
Further, many of the issues/ideas/challenges that were not noted on at least two tables were nonetheless important, interesting and worthy of further consideration. Consequently, all of the 122 issues/ideas/challenges that were raised at the forum will be considered in the preparation of the strategy and responses to these will be tracked and recorded in the strategy documentation.

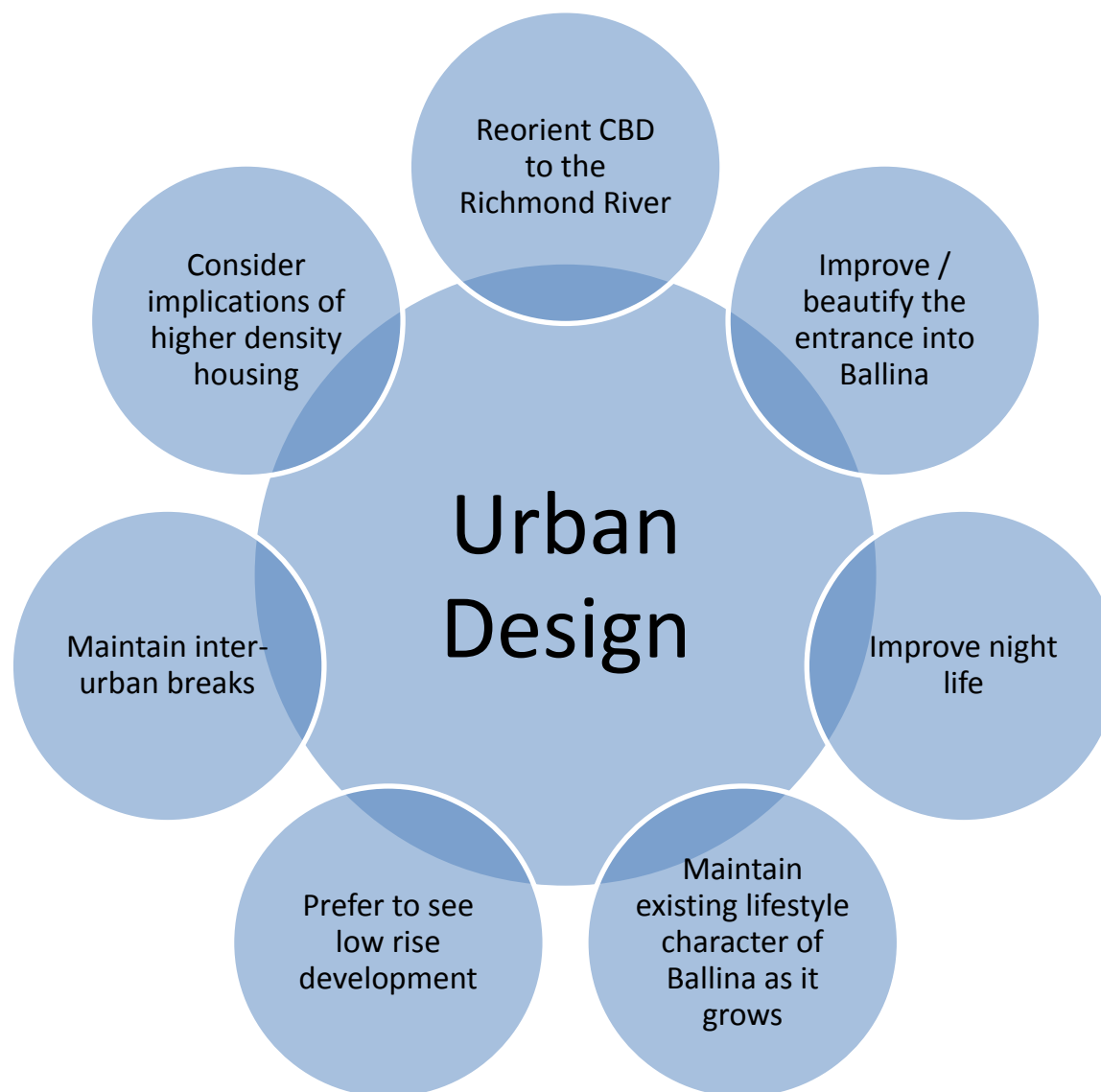
It is also acknowledged that in some cases the issues/ideas/challenges overlap a number of the above subjects. Accordingly, these interactions and interrelationships will be considered in the further development of the strategy.



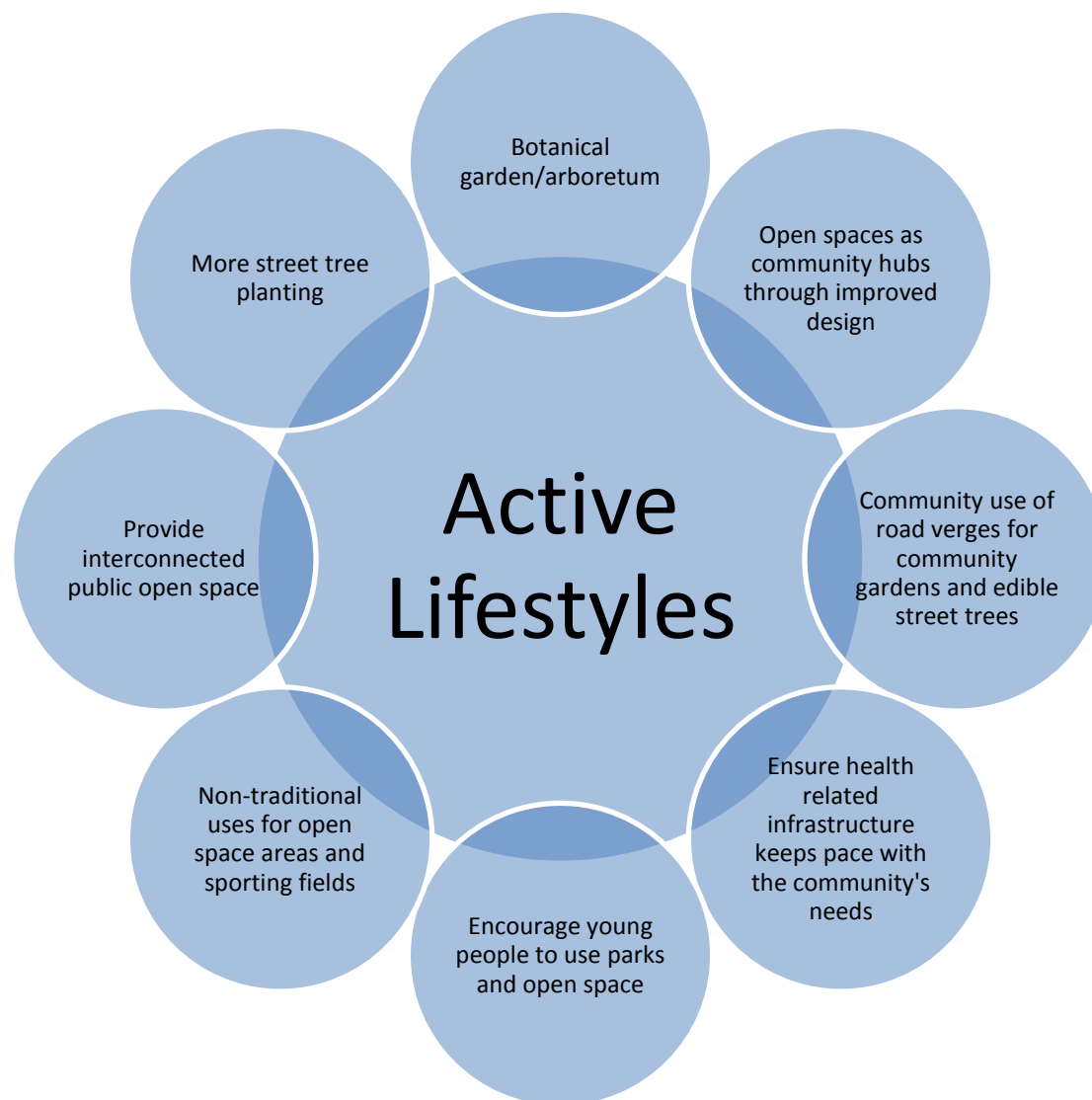














Core Values

The (122) distinct ideas/issues/challenges raised (and recorded) during the forum discussion were analysed to identify a set of sixteen consistent core values, namely:

- The **amenity** of Ballina is important;
- Providing opportunities for maintaining **active lifestyles** is important;
- Providing opportunities for **training, employment and business** is important;
- **Awareness and education** are important to the wellbeing of our community;
- **Tourism** opportunities around **natural beauty and environmental qualities** of Ballina is important;
- Maintaining a **sense of community** is important;
- A **vibrant and lively Central Business District** is important;
- **River and foreshore open space and water based activities** are important to Ballina's identity;
- Being **able to get around** in many different ways is important;
- The **quality and amenity of our open space** areas is important;
- It is important that we ensure that the **provision of infrastructure** keeps pace with the growing needs of our community;
- The production and enjoyment of **local food** is an important part of Ballina's culture;
- The **natural environment, including the Richmond River**, is important to Ballina's identity;
- Providing **sport & recreation opportunities** is important;
- Providing for **affordable and appropriate housing** is important;
- Planning for and **managing environmental hazards** is important; and
- Encouraging and supporting **creativity and innovation** in our Shire is important.

Key questions to be addressed in the BMRCS.

The (122) distinct ideas/issues/challenges raised (and recorded) during the forum discussion were also analysed to identify a set of (39) strategic questions that the Ballina Major Regional Centre Strategy should, in the view of the Futures Forum participants, seek to address. It is acknowledged that there is significant overlap between some of the questions. The key strategic questions are (in no particular order):

1. How do we make Ballina attractive for younger working people to stay?
2. How will Ballina be made to attract 'major regional activities' such as big events, festivals, competitions?
3. How will the development of Ballina be supported by the natural resource base?
4. How will access to the waterfront and water based activities be balanced with care for the environment?
5. How will public infrastructure keep pace with growth?
6. How will we be able to maintain healthy lifestyle options?

7. How will we maintain our attractiveness to tourists?
8. How can the CBD be made to develop a better relationship with the river?
9. How can we soften the built environment by appropriate vegetation?
10. How can we provide employment opportunities for existing and new residents?
11. Can we maintain our region's agricultural advantages through developing a local food culture?
12. How can we encourage new and innovative local businesses and attract businesses to relocate?
13. How can we maintain our natural environment?
14. How can we provide affordable housing?
15. How can we improve the entrance into Ballina township to be more attractive for residents and visitors?
16. How can we best cater for our community's changing needs through appropriate facilities?
17. How can we take advantage of opportunities to establish more sustainable ways of living?
18. How can we maintain the existing lifestyle character of Ballina as it grows?
19. How can we maintain a distinct sense of place for Ballina as it continues to grow?
20. How can development pressure be balanced with amenity and character?
21. How can we ensure that we can continue to get around, by many means, with increased population?
22. How can we encourage new and existing residents to get involved in community organisations?
23. How can we manage change so as to not have too much change too quickly?
24. How do we manage the potentially negative consequences of having more people (such as crime and anti-social behaviour)?
25. How do we support our local agricultural industry?
26. How do we support local niche businesses?
27. How do we take advantage of our strategic location (confluence of highways and within 2 hrs of Brisbane)?
28. How do we recognise and protect our history and local heritage as growth and development occur?
29. How do we maintain the quality of our waterways and beaches?
30. How do we balance the protection of natural areas with allowing appropriate levels of public access?
31. How do we plan for climate change?
32. How do we better recognise our local Aboriginal cultural heritage?
33. How do we cater for different household types including an increase in smaller households (and more elderly people)?
34. How do we best manage our energy needs and waste generation with the least impact on the environment?
35. How do we ensure that health and education services meet local needs?

36. How do we let others know what a great place Ballina is, without getting overrun?
37. How can we ensure our community is accessible especially for mobility impaired and elderly people?
38. How can we reinvigorate our CBD as a vibrant space?
39. How do we support and develop creativity and innovation in our Shire?