

Redland City Council’s draft Economic Development Strategy

A submission by

Redlands2030

5 September 2014

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16. **Summary**

The draft Economic Development Strategy put forward by Redland City Council is a shameful waste of ratepayer’s money and a wasted opportunity to improve business activity in the Redlands. The current Strategy is not a document that provides a sound basis on which to move forward.

The Council's draft strategy proposes just one specific initiative which is to set up an Economic Development Committee. . Obviously the appearance of activity is easier to achieve than the real thing.

The economic prosperity of the Redlands is important for the whole community. It is too important to be left to self-serving politicians with 3 word slogans like: “open for business”. The complexity of economic planning is a reality! Simplistic, populist and one dimensional “solutions” may give the appearance of being **seen** to be doing something, but the substance will be lacking.  The Redlands community deserves better.

The better way forward is for the draft Economic Development Strategy to be withdrawn and re-worked by competent people. Then it should be the subject of a proper community consultation process.

1. **Redlands2030**

Redlands 2030 is a community network established with the aim of promoting community involvement in local government decision making.

Further information about the Redlands2030 Community network is available at our website: [www.redlands2030.net](http://www.redlands2030.net). Much of the information in this document was originally published on the Redlands2030 website.

In “[Redland City’s Cunning Plan](http://redlands2030.net/?p=2273)” we discussed the absence of any specific and measurable initiatives other than a fixation on the structure and operation of an “Economic Development Committee”. We also published [videos by Howard Guille](http://redlands2030.net/?p=2703), with his assertions that the draft Strategy is a recipe for a cargo cult mentality, discussions about the opportunities for an [enterprise area](http://redlands2030.net/?p=3072) and food for thought in the “[Baby Boomers](http://redlands2030.net/?p=3183)“.

1. **Consultation Process**

Public consultation about the Redland City Council draft Economic Development Strategy has been inadequate. There were only three “public” forums for up to 20 people at each session. Consultation with at most 60 people about a Strategy that should impact on 150,000 residents is not a good look. It compares poorly with the extensive community consultation that underpinned Redland City’s previous Economic Development Strategy.

The [Draft Economic Development Strategy](http://redlands2030.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Draft-EconomicDevelopmentStrategy-Final1.pdf) released for consultation was supplemented half way through the consultation period with a 106 page [Research Compendium](http://redlands2030.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Draft_EDS_Research_Compendium-3.pdf). At least this time the technical reports were available during the consultation period (unlike the Toondah PDA scheme technical reports which were hidden from the community until after consultation ended).

It is hard for community organisations to respond to a cascade of documents within the short consultation period.  Most community groups only meet once a month, so action is hindered when documents appear with less than 6 weeks to close of a submission phase. Council should be encouraging and assisting community engagement, not frustrating it.

**4 Assessment of the draft Economic Development Strategy**

A well-made strategy should:

* + Identify competitive advantages and available opportunities
  + Select strategic directions and choose how to use scarce resources
  + Set specific and measurable objectives.

The Redland City Council's draft strategy does none of these things.

Redlands2030 has received a number of suggestions about how the Economic Development Strategy should be inclusive of smart solutions. It should focus on measures that will deliver genuine progress and an increase in per capita gross regional product.

Simplistically, the authors of the draft Economic Development Strategy need to assure the community that the outcome is smart growth. We want to make the pie bigger but we also want to make it better by ensuring that it is well filled.

The draft Economic Development Strategy has failed to “join the dots”. It should be withdrawn and re-written in concert with the stakeholders and the community.

Troubling also is that the draft Strategy is full of “waffle”.  It states the obvious as some form of deductive reasoning.  Repetition, complex sentences (one of 45 words!), mixed tense (so that we are never sure where we are!) are basic flaws that detract from readability and comprehension of the document.

The key recommended output for an Economic Development Advisory Committee (with no Community representation) is sometimes described as an Economic Development Advisory Board.  All these might be simple errors but “clouded writing” is a symptom of “clouded thinking”.

Learning from the past rather than starting all over again is smart and contemporary planning.  To this end, it may have been useful to analyse community feedback given to the authors of the old Strategy.  The Compendium asserts that the old EDS “*lacked an “economic vision” and was too broad and high level and lacked clear objectives. It appears to be a document of “intent” rather than a strategy that clearly outlines the economic development direction of Redlands”.* Like or similar criticism has already been made of the proposed new Strategy. In fact, the headline recommendation (intent) of the “new” approach is to create an Advisory Committee!

The terms of reference for the new Committee are contradictory and even confused.  A major role of the Committee is said to be to *“oversee the implementation of the Draft (sic) Economic Development Strategy”*.

But there is duplication because of the role of “Council employees” who are also “*required … to oversee the draft (sic) strategy’s implementation*“. It may be pedantic, but why would anyone oversee implementation of a draft strategy and why would overseeing be the responsibility of officers AND the Committee.  Poor writing is often a sign of poor thinking.

But the real dilemma seems to be that the new draft Strategy identifies *“Strategies required by Council employees …will need to include, but not limited to:*

* *attracting investment*
* *encourage innovation/ value-add*
* *skill development –* Note: the compendium of the previous Strategy asks: *“What will the workforce be trained in?”*
* *lifestyle promotion/ perception changing*
* *securing funds/ collaborative partnerships*

If Council staff are required to do all of (but not limited to) these tasks, then what would the Committee do?  If Council officers were to be successful in “attracting investment” there won’t be a need for a Committee.

So we have a Strategy pointing to a need for strategies, which is a plan to plan, and calls for a Committee to duplicate the work of staff.

A minimal amendment to the draft strategy is to ensure there are community representatives on the board or committee (whatever) so that Council benefits from broader approach to achieving community prosperity.  
  
A well designed strategic plan has specific objectives with performance measures that provide useful feedback. It is more effective to measure what you can influence, rather than measuring things that are largely outside your control. If the objectives and measures are chosen carefully, people will be soon able to find out if the strategy is working.  
  
The Council's draft strategy is vague and wishful. It mentions four "growth measures" but does not explain why these measures are relevant to the draft economic development strategy. They are measures of output, rather than effort so it is unlikely that they will provide useful feedback.  
  
One of the proposed "growth measures" is to have a long term annual average growth in Gross Regional Product (GRP) of 3.0%. GRP is a general measure of economic activity that will be influenced by the global, Australian and Queensland economies. Actions (or inaction) by the Redland City Council will have very little influence on GRP. We saw this with the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 which significantly affected GRP.  
  
The Council's draft strategy suggests that we should have population growth of 1.2% per year. The document notes that population growth is good for the residential construction sector. It does not explain why 1.2% is the growth rate that Redlands has to have. There is a need for detailed analysis of population growth trends and the environmental impacts of ongoing residential development. Then we can have a sensible discussion about what might be a sustainable rate of population growth in the Redlands.  
  
By way of comparison, the more specific measures of economic development put forward in the Redlands2030 Community Plan were:

* The number and types of jobs available in the Redlands
* The number of businesses attracted here
* The number of tertiary education opportunities available locally

Other councils in Australia have done a much better job of preparing strategies for economic development. Redland City Council should examine the 80 page Economic Development Strategy recently published by the Bayside Council in Melbourne's southern suburbs. This should provide some ideas as to what a proper local government economic development strategy should look like.

Howard Guille discusses the Council’s [draft Economic Development Strategy](http://redlands2030.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Draft-EconomicDevelopmentStrategy-Final1.pdf) in two videos for Redlands2030. His commentary is a “must” for anyone wanting to understand how to improve the City’s prosperity. These videos are now available on the [Redlands2030 YouTube Channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsIq6aRQuVernIBudqhivNQ). Guille is particularly concerned that the draft Strategy fails to address many important issues. He wonders why such a document would be put forward. His critical review is presented in the video titled: [*An expert’s review of the draft Economic Development Strategy for Redlands*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q8KtmrlDJo)

The Research Compendium is a hotchpotch with some “global” and “unsubstantiated” findings about the previous Economic Development Strategy, the Rural Futures Strategy and the Tourism Strategy. The Compendium shows that the draft Strategy is poorly researched and makes no attempt to build upon previous work done by Redland City Council.

The Strategy’s Compendium is not a well-written fluid document, and probably was not meant to be. It seems to be more an afterthought – perhaps a response to widespread criticism at the early community forums. It was perhaps not intended for “public” consumption.  At page 6 the following statement will stop most people: *“In addition, the philosophical positions adopted in the compendium do not prescribe to one particular ontological, epistemological or axiological stance, but instead use a variety of these throughout the work (Saunders, 2009).”*

This calls for a dictionary, where the following definitions were found:-

*Ontology – department of metaphysics concerned with nature of being*

*Epistemology – theory of method or grounds of knowledge*

*Axiology – the study of the nature of values and value judgements*

People can make their own judgement as to the value this section, but it is likely to add little to community comprehension of the City’s economic reality or the future.

The University of Queensland ‘Growing Business Technical Report’ suggests a need for Redlands to focus on maturing the economy to generate wealth and high value employment”. A focus on a maturing economy …not a “growth driven” economy is sensible.  But where was the community input?

Further the UQ researchers stated that *“the ultimate goal was to have a self-sustaining economy rather than just a dormitory suburb of Brisbane”*. An imbued understanding showing respect for our community and its Redlands 2030 Community Plan. An understanding which is seemingly lost on the author of the draft Strategy.

1. **The growth paradigm**

The draft Strategy maintains focus on “demand driven industries” – “construction” (or housing) and “retail”.  It is a strategy that ignores Council’s own stated role - *“leveraging our competitive advantages including lifestyle and geographic location”*. Further, the Strategy states the *“commitment to environmental sustainability is set against an economic development vision …”*

More jargon follows with the Strategy proposing Council …*“find a balance between the economy and environmental sustainability”.*Such assertions have no place in our city’s Economic Development Strategy, seeking to exploit and trade-off our lifestyle and presumably the liveability of our city.

The strategy fails to provide any supporting economic analysis.  Where is the cost-benefit analysis of population growth and new housing as a basis of future economic growth?

If the future is so emphatically “growth driven” then a proper analysis should be a “lay down misère”.

Questions should also be posed as to what happens after the anticipated spurt of induced population growth? Will another sugar fix be required? Should the draft Strategy itself be a transition to a more mature and sustainable economic future?

[](http://i0.wp.com/redlands2030.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Markham-suburbs_id.jpg)Further residential development will only add to Redland City’s status as a dormitory (sleeping) suburb. This means that the main employment potential coming out of the new residential areas will be for employment in trades & services jobs. Everyone else requiring employment will have to leave the Redlands. That means, effectively, that the City continues accommodating more people which adds to the need for major infrastructure.

Because much of the cost of trunk infrastructure is at Councils cost, simply adding more ratepayers to an established area is unlikely to reduce the rate burden on existing ratepayers. In fact there is little or no evidence or experience that more residential development will reduce the rates payable by existing residents. In similar scenarios anywhere in Queensland it just hasn’t happened. The financial burden on existing ratepayers will stay the same at least (or probably increase to service the debt used to develop infrastructure). However the congestion, safety, liveability & amenity of the local area will all suffer adversely.

New housing development comes at a cost to ratepayers.  This cost being the cost of infrastructure needed for each new (greenfield) residential lot.  By most estimates this is a cost to Council (ratepayers) of about $25,000 per lot. This $25k is over and above the contribution by the developers.  There are significant costs for our tax dollars as well, in the form of State infrastructure needed to support residential development.

Most of the Council’s infrastructure costs are met from borrowing or higher Rates.  But more Council debt is not discussed or justified in the draft Strategy.  At the rate of investment needed to support residential development the Council could surely consider other forms of infrastructure, including broadband.  In fact the study skips over its own finding that Council can play a role in three areas, the first being “high performance internet”.  This role is not mentioned again.

According to the recent comments on the growing population in the city, it seems that at least some people believe (or would like to believe) that an increasing population will lead to lower council rates. However history is that rates increase well in excess of population growth.  The myth that more people leads to lower rates is a flawed, in fact it is an “unlikely” scenario.  More ratepayers means the community requires more services – more costs.  It is that simple.

Rates are determined on the basis of the cost services to be provided.  The formula is based on costs divided by a Statutory site valuation.  There is no excess obtained from new residents, unlike a shop or business where more customers might mean a greater profit.  In that sense…ratepayers are not customers!!

New and old residents of the City demand services (rightly) and should not be paying more so that any other sector pays less.   So existing residents cannot expect rate relief on the basis of a myth that more ratepayers will lower rates on a per capita basis.

Geographic realities are important and difficult to ignore. [Ross Gittins,](http://www.rossgittins.com) writing in the Sydney Morning Herald on 23 July 2014 ([*Forget mining, big cities are the real engine in nation’s economy)*](http://www.smh.com.au/comment/forget-mining-big-cities-are-the-real-engine-in-nations-economy-20140722-zvk8a.html#ixzz38Zob3D4b) cites a report by the Gratton Institute.  This report found that, 80 per cent of the dollar value of all goods and services in Australia is produced on just 0.2 per cent of the nation’s land mass. Gittin’s found that just about all economic production is generated in our big cities, or as close in as possible to the city centre.  This is relevant to the Redland City Economic Development Strategy, because market forces and economic activity are blind to administrative boundaries such as the local government boundary between Redland City and Brisbane.

A premise of the draft Economic Strategy is that the Redlands should generate and capture increased employment for Redlanders.  This is naive.  A housing and development “bubble” will attract people from other localities to do the work. Further, the Redland City draft Economic Development Strategy does little to test the benefits and costs of growth driven by population growth or the flows of capital or employment into or out of the City.

The Economic Development Strategy should explain how it will deliver average wages or salaries that should be the same or higher than that resulting from a commuting workforce. The draft Strategy looks to target demand driven industries rather than high income producing or wealth creating industries. That is cargo cult thinking and a poor strategy … especially if it results in lower per capita outcomes.

The spatial distribution of economic activity (and where the nation’s economic future lies) is a reality that the Redland Economic Development Strategy should tie into. As Gittins states, economic growth is tied to Australia’s four biggest cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth).  So Redland City, being on the door step of Australia’s third largest city, should “make sense” of this reality and develop an economic strategy hinged on this reality.

Sadly, the draft Strategy is largely silent on this part of the “big picture” and pretends that an economy can be developed within the boundaries of Redland City. Simplistic populist solutions to complex problems never work. The report of the Grattan Institute, [Mapping Australia’s economy: cities as engines of prosperity](http://grattan.edu.au/report/mapping-australias-economy-cities-as-engines-of-prosperity/),  goes further to illustrate the spatial dominance of the central business districts, with the remarkable statistic, that the CBD’s of Sydney and Melbourne – covering a mere 7.1 square kilometres – account for almost 10 per of Australia’s gross domestic product.

If gross domestic product is so concentrated, then many of the daily commuters from the Redlands to Brisbane are sharing this economic activity through the wages and salaries they earn in jobs in Brisbane’s CBD.  These commuters might buy lunch in the CBD but they bring their pay home … to the Redlands.

A much touted local economy makes sense only if the “more local employment” equates to a higher income or a higher gross domestic product on a per capita basis. It seems possible that more local jobs could result in lower average incomes.  To match the wages and salaries of the knowledge workers commuting to the City, Redlands needs to attract more smart jobs, wealth creating jobs and knowledge workers.  Not just more jobs.

1. **Previous Redland City Work**

Joined-up planning, evidence based planning and adaptive planning processes are the lynch pins to effective economic development (or any other type of) planning. It is about “joining the dots”.

The draft Economic Development Strategy fails to join the dots because it does not address and integrate with other works done by Redland City Council and other governments.

**7 The Redlands2030 Community Plan**

The draft Economic Development Strategy should have clearly built on the community aspirations developed in the **Redlands2030 Community Plan**.  A Plan that has been endorsed by both the previous and current City Councils.

The Redlands2030 “important “article outlines how the Plan is the voice of the people – ‘the people’s plan’. It expresses the hopes and aspirations of our community. It documents our vision for the future and provides a clear and detailed description of what that future should look like. It is a widely lauded Plan.

The Community Plan describes the economic aspirations for the City in the section “Supportive Vibrant Economy”.  It should have been compulsory reading for the authors and a keystone of the draft Strategy.

The draft Economic Development Strategy is much less focused than the Redlands 2030 Community Plan, published in 2010. The Community Plan set out goals such as:

* Supportive business infrastructure including high speed broadband and good transport
* New office space and commercial facilities
* Providing people with employment opportunities close to where they live
* Building on regional advantages (climate, environment and lifestyle) to attract people
* Providing quality education at all levels
* Development of eco-tourism
* Development of innovative and creative enterprises, including visual and performance arts

A serious economic development strategy would seek to deliver real progress in achieving such goals.

**8 The previous Economic Development Strategy**

The Redland City: draft Economic Development Strategy and its compendium document make some broad assertions about the failings of the (previous) [Redlands City Council Economic Development Strategy 2008-2012.](http://www.more2redlands.com.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/_Moreto/Moreto%20Documents/Business%20documents/Economic%20Development%20Strategy%20Brochure.pdf) But we not provided with any rigorous assessment of what the previous strategy set out to do and how well it performed.

At the start of the consultation process for the draft new strategy the community should have been given an evidence based evaluation of the previous strategy. Even a simple SWOT analysis would have been smart way to get community involvement.

**9 Rural Futures Strategy**

Peri-urban lands are important to the property of Redlands and to the local economy

The Research Compendium’s “review” of the Redlands City Rural Futures Strategy (RFS) appears to be a “hatchet” job on the potential for ongoing rural based industries in Redland City.

The extent of the vision for the sector is seen to be limited to:

*Ensuring the long term future of the poultry industry and of Sirromet Winery are important considerations and Council should look at ways it can assist these industries to ensure their long term contributions to the Redlands.*

It is of concern to many that the review demonstrates insufficient knowledge, expertise and understanding of rural activities and peri-urban land use. In its current form, the report in the compendium will ensure that any prospective investors in this Sector would be very wary of spending their money in this City.  If the draft report is adopted it would be clear Council has no real interest in the rural sector and it would be subordinate to the other Industry Sectors.

Recent research into peri-urban planning by has been offered to Council, but there seemed to be little acceptance of this work at the forums.  This aspect of the draft Strategy needs to be revised.

It is recommended that Rural & Hinterland is added to the list of Key Industry sectors in any Economic Development Strategy

**10 Redlands Tourism Strategy**

The [Redland City Council Tourism Strategy 2010-2014](http://www.redland.qld.gov.au/AboutCouncil/Policies/Strategy/TourismStrategy.pdf) makes some comments about its implementation including a *‘lack of clear direction in relation to the key outcomes”* and*“there may be a disconnect between the current Mayor’s tourism vision and management’s implementation”.* The Research Compendium suggests a future Tourism Strategy should ‘*cascade down”* from the economic development strategy.  It appears Redlands Tourism Strategy will be some time coming despite tourism being one of drivers of the Queensland economy.  This is a concern for the future of North Stradbroke Island which is said by some to have been [“ignored”](http://www.redlandcitybulletin.com.au/story/2378301/straddie-ignored-in-economic-strategy-councillor-claims/) in the draft Economic Development Strategy.

More broadly there is an economic imperative to protecting our environmental assets, which are the drawcard to tourism. It would be ironic so much of the “growth driven” economy being advocated by the draft Strategy could devalue those very assets that we (and others) value. Think koalas, and other fauna, bushland, scenic amenity, village style urban areas and water quality both in creeks and “the Bay”.

**11 Sustainability study**

Another apparent gap in the Plan’s citations is the [Redlands Sustainability Study: Final Report](http://www.redland.qld.gov.au/PlanningandBuilding/Planning/Studies%20and%20Reports/Documents/Redlands_Sustainability_Study_Final%20-1.1.pdf) 21 November 2011.  This study identifies a series of environmental, economic and social indicators that influence sustainable population management and liveability in the Redlands. The report states that it will inform future planning…and associated strategies.

This report at least recognises the interdependencies in planning, economic development, liveability, lifestyle, environmental, cultural and social outcomes. Yet, the draft Strategy omits any reference to it.

**12 The Queensland Plan**

[](http://i2.wp.com/redlands2030.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/QLD-PLanreport-cover.png)Queensland’s LNP government has been working on the [Queensland Plan](http://redlands2030.net/?p=2925): Queensland’s 30-year vision. The foundation ideas in the Queensland Plan are to be enshrined in legislation as a demonstration of the Government’s commitment.  While the final Plan was released during the community consultation on Redlands draft Economic Development Strategy, it has been and was in preparation for over a year.

Some critical issues emerge in the Queensland Plan that impact on the Redlands and its economic development. The intent to cater for 50% of the State’s future population growth in regional areas (i.e. outside the SE corner) is profound. It is likely to have a significant impact on the Redlands economy by reducing the City’s population growth rate which will mean less need for new housing developments.

Some of the key issues (goals and targets) of the Queensland Plan that impact on the Redlands Economic Strategy are:

* Queensland cities will go up not out
* Queensland has the best balance of environmental protection and economic development in Australia
* We attract bright minds to Queensland
* Double the regional population outside the south east
* Green spaces are part of our long term plan
* Natural environment has economic value
* Decisions are based on evidence
* Environment remains a tourism and migration drawcard
* Queensland is the best place to live (in Australia) securing greenspace to secure overall health and well being

There is no mention of the Queensland Plan (or the draft that preceded it) in the draft Economic Development Strategy yet its impact was foreseeable. The question must be asked – How will the Redlands Economic Development Strategy be aligned to the new Queensland Plan, especially its intent to shift population growth to other areas of Queensland?

**13 RDA Logan & Redlands Regional Roadmap 2013–2016 Enterprise Areas**

Redland City Council collaborates with Logan City Council in the Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committee under a Committee established by Regional Development Australia: [RDA Redlands Logan](http://www.rdaloganandredlands.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=66).

This and like committees across the country have employed staff and the support of local Councils. The RDA Committee is required to develop a Regional Plan in Queensland. These economic development plans are known as Regional Roadmaps. They articulate each RDA committee’s economic, environmental and social vision for the region and underpin the work and priorities of the committees.  The Regional Roadmaps cost over $100,000 to develop.

The [RDA Logan & Redlands Regional Roadmap 2013 – 2016](http://www.rdaloganandredlands.org.au/images/pdfs/rda_logan__redlands_regional_roadmap_2013.pdf) is publicly available.  YET, there is no mention of the roadmap in the draft Economic Development Strategy. Contemporary planning, of all types needs to demonstrate that the process is ‘joined up’ or integrated with other initiatives and related initiatives.  Why does the community have to search for what should be a building block of the City’s economic future?

**14 Baby Boomers**

The draft Redlands Economic Development Strategy puts great faith in a “growth scenario”. It makes a case for population growth to sustain sectors of the economy like retail and construction. But maybe there is an “old” solution to improving our City’s economy – the ageing population of baby boomers. These are people with lifestyle aspirations for their later years and the means to achieve them.

The draft Economic Development Strategy links economic growth objectives directly to population growth, stating that:

*…in order to meet average annual GRP (Gross regional product) of 3% to 2041 the city will need to substantial  lift export oriented and value add industries, and/or aim for a higher population growth*.

Increasing our City’s population is not a panacea.  Ratepayers have to meet significant costs to service new residential development estimated at $25 000 per lot for “greenfield” development. These City costs are funded with a combination of debt and rates. An often raised furphy is that more residents will lead to lower average Council rates per property.  This has not occurred historically in the Redlands and examples elsewhere seem non-existent.  At present, the ratepayers of Redland City are struggling with a significant operational deficit and the prospect of future rate increases to fund an infrastructure maintenance backlog.

Most Australians, especially those living in Queensland, seem to agree that we do not need more people, as shown in this [opinion poll](http://www.theage.com.au/national/majority-oppose-population-growth-survey-20100413-s7n5.html). The community understands that rapid population growth causes reduced quality of life for existing residents and harm to our natural environment.

What could baby boomers do for Redland City?

Instead of being preoccupied with population growth, we should look more closely at another demographic trend – the impact that a large number of aging [baby boomers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_boomer) will have on our city’s economic development.

In a report by Bernard Salt, the [Monash Baby Boomer Study,](http://bernardsalt.com.au/uploads/09Monash-BabyBoomerStudy-BS0312-MAR.pdf) he makes the general point that:

*Boomers want an active and meaningful retirement. They are re-engineering the 55-65 time in life so that there is a balance between work and lifestyle. This is a generation that will ease into retirement prompting the over-55s to remain engaged in some form of part-time work.*

The [Regional Australia Institute](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au) recently released a report titled Talking Point: [An ageing (regional) Australia and the rise of the Super Boomer](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Talking-Point-Super-Boomers-FINAL.pdf) which examines the impacts of ageing baby boomers on local economies in areas similar to the Redlands.  It finds that:

*Baby Boomers are also the wealthiest generation to reach retirement with their share of total wealth increasing over the past two decades. The average household wealth of a Baby Boomer is one of the highest in the country. With no kids at home and fewer financial commitments, their spending power is significant*.

The report makes interesting conclusions such as:

*…the different characteristics and contributions of Baby Boomers will significantly influence the future of regions and change their development opportunities, as well as building a unique quality of life and experience for Baby Boomers themselves. To us, this makes people born between 1945 and 1961 living in regional Australia our ‘Super Boomers’!*

Many retiring baby boomers will seek to stay active through organised volunteering. This offers the community a low cost workforce as well as opportunities for individuals to develop new skills.  There are good examples of “volunteerism” across Redland City but plenty of scope for a more organised approach that could unlock the potential of our super boomers.

Further advice from Bernard Salt, reported in [“Shifting Shape of Jobs”](http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac?page=1&sy=nstore&kw=boomers&pb=age&dt=selectRange&dr=1month&so=relevance&sf=text&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=nrm&clsPage=1&docID=AGE140802FD4IU66QJ5J) suggests that the aging population will create opportunities for younger people. He says:

*Start planning for a job in hospitality or a nursing home, if you want to shore up your future options. Other careers to consider include health and aged care, education and work in cafes and restaurants.*

An interesting idea that might apply to Redlands is a need for a good design guide for ageing, and how the current housing stock could be modified to meet the needs of Boomers for smaller gardens, easier access and community support to facilitate ageing-in-place.  Building and planning mechanisms may need to be revised, but the outcomes could pay long term social and economic dividends.

Clearly, the Boomers’ views on retirement are not the same as the generation before them. An enlightened and forward thinking Council would be getting on the front foot to respond to this obvious demographic trend in a revised Economic Development Strategy.

Baby boomers might well be an “old” solution to the question of how to improve the Redlands economy.

**15 Enterprise areas**

The smart growth quest for Redlands needs to re-ignite the discussion about the Redlands Enterprise area.  Previous city planning identified an area that adjoins Boundary Rd; it was to sit between Woodlands Drive and Taylor Rd. The area was to be located on the southern side of the Boundary Rd arterial main road and the residential development presently occurring on Kinross Rd.

The development of the Enterprise area was supported by both previous Councils (i.e. when Cr Hobson as Mayor and, prior to this, the Council with Cr Seccombe as Mayor). Both of these Councils resolved that the predominant development in the area should be for employment generation with an emphasis on technology and education: a local “silicon valley”.  All to be developed using best practice, based on similar “sustainable” enterprise parks in other parts of Australia and other countries. It was to be a test tube for smart growth.

If this area was left to the market it would likely fall to residential supply and demand.  This and any other area adjoining existing residential areas will simply be taken up by residential development as part of the urban sprawl of Brisbane and South East Queensland. Naturally there are proponents insisting on further residential expansion for this area.  However residential development does little if anything for the wealth or well-being of a well-established and serviced area like Redlands.

An enterprise area, promoting smart growth, has the potential to add wealth to the Redlands, increase local employment of new and existing residents and attract wealth creation and high income opportunities.

Despite the rhetoric from some sectors and seemingly the draft Economic Development Strategy, new residential development has little “value add” and merely satisfies a demand that is easy for developers to satisfy. It is a short term benefit. Once the development is done the employment disappears.  Commercial/industrial development lags behind residential development and in the Redlands case it is for the most part trades and services for the local population.

An Enterprise Park in the Redlands needs to be developed and marketed to a much broader group of industries. This type of development will not happen overnight and will need a strong commitment from Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the broader community.

It needs smart planning not a regression to past practices and effectively more urban sprawl.