

A Critical Analysis of Four South East Queensland City Futures Initiatives

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Abstract

The four initiatives being studied in this article are large and influential City Futures initiatives and involve some of the largest community engagements the cities have ever conducted. Several city visioning initiatives conducted in South East Queensland (SEQ) have been written about in various reports but this is the first time detailed comparative analysis of methods and outcomes of the four major SEQ Cities has been conducted. This article applies Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to help identify critical factors of four major City Futures initiatives in SEQ. The Cities are Maroochy, Logan, Gold Coast and Brisbane.

Keywords: futures, city futures, community engagement

Introduction

By the middle of the 21st century, the urban population will almost double, according to The World Health Organisation's Global Health Observatory. It states that by 2030, 6 out of every 10 people will live in a city, and by 2050, this proportion will increase to 7 out of 10 people with around half of all urban dwellers currently living in cities of between 100 000 and 500 000 people. This represents an increase from approximately 3.4 billion in 2009 to 6.4 billion in 2050 (World Health Organisation, 2014). This makes the global issue of understanding the futures of cities of critical importance to sustainability. South East Queensland (SEQ) includes ten Cities whose populations are expected to double in the next 40 years. They are projected to grow from 4.6 million to 6.6 million by 2031 and to 9.1 million by 2056. The ten Cities are Brisbane, Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay, Redland, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Lockyer, Scenic Rim, and Somerset. In an attempt to grapple with this rapid population growth, SEQ cities have begun to explore if strategic foresight methods and tools can help to create alternative and preferred futures in balancing city planning issues.

City Futures Initiatives help cities explore and shape alternative futures through visioning and planning and this article seeks to identify critical factors of four major City Futures initiatives in SEQ: Maroochy Shire's Maroochy 2025 – A Visioning Journey, Logan City's

Logan 2026 – City Directions, City of Gold Coast’s Bold Future 2037 and Brisbane City’s Our Shared Brisbane – Living in Brisbane 2026. Undertaken by the four largest local government areas by population distribution in the South East Queensland region: Maroochy (5.3%) Logan (6.5%) Gold Coast (17.6%) and Brisbane (35%) these initiatives planned for nearly two-thirds of SEQ’s population during the period when the City Futures initiatives were conducted in 2003-2009.

The four Cities conducted coursework to educate staff in the foundation concepts of long term City Futures visions, tools and methods. Inayatullah (2007, p.8) describes Visions as “giving individuals and collectivities a sense of the possible. They also inspire the noble within each person by calling individuals to sacrifice the shortterm for the longer term, for the greater good. Finally, they help align individual goals with institutional goals”. As the Cities began to plan the long term future of the City it was clear that it was a relatively new experience and the futures coursework helped to guide and bring innovation to the planning process. The creation of understanding and support for City Futures initiative aims and outcomes with the Mayor and Councillors was assisted by delivery of Councillor workshops. Both the Coursework and workshops helped to build cohesiveness and understanding of the Visioning process and of futures thinking. Bussey describes futures thinking as being “something we do as individuals and as communities and civilizations” and “is alive to alternatives and resilient in the face of obstacles” (2009, p.2).

Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

The aim of this paper is to conduct an initial comparative scan to respond to the question: “What factors were critical to four major City Futures initiatives in SEQ?” In answering the question, a scan of the initiative deliverables across a sequence of phases was necessary. In identifying the phases of the initiatives the very deliverance of those phases is a critical factor. Their achievement relates to the following scale of critical factors for the successful delivery of city Futures initiatives:

1. Development of aims, Vision and other Outcomes with no support for their delivery by Council or community
2. Development of aims, Vision and other Outcomes with partial support for their delivery by Council and community
3. Development of aims, Vision and other Outcomes with full support for their delivery by Council and community
4. Actual delivery of supported Outcomes
5. Delivered outcomes continue to receive support from Council and community after delivery
6. All of the above factors and continued participation in futures thinking that refines the delivery of outcomes

The most critical factors of the four Cities are charted below. In table 1 below, scale 1 relates directly to the 6 critical factors above. The purpose of scale 2 is to indicate what rating the City futures initiative might receive if barriers (stated in the Critical Factor Discussion column) were removed.

Table 1. *Critical Factors identified during a scan of four major City Futures initiatives*

City	Critical Factor Discussion	Scale 1	Scale 2
Brisbane	Brisbane delivered their second City Futures Vision, with Council committed to all aims and outcomes . This commitment was exemplified by the CEO taking the plans into the community to validate and test them personally.	6	6
Gold Coast	Longer term politics through the electoral cycle reduced the commitment to initial plans, though they did introduce additional plans.	5	6
Logan	With the addition of the suburb Beenleigh, through an amalgamation process brought about by State Government, new stakeholder uncertainties challenged the delivery of outcomes.	4	5
Maroochy	Maroochy created Visioning aims and outcomes however these were delivered years later. Reasons for this were a lack of buy-in / input and agreement with the Vision by new Council representatives.	2	6

Factors of each City at each Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) level follow. In terms of the **litany** level the four Cities attained a single Vision. Each Vision is aimed at representing the best interests of the whole community. Initiative aims were created and were agreed by City decision makers of three of the Cities before the initiatives began.

A **systems view** provides a more holistic representation of deeper stakeholder issues and aims that ultimately affect the prioritisation and use of feedback that generates the Visions and actions. The critical factor is the depth of stakeholder engagement delivered by each City to achieve representative outcomes.

Each City delivered engagement, but three were more effective at ‘top down’ engagement of for example, workers, governance, entrepreneurs and intellectuals of the City. ‘Bottom up engagement’, is where the emphasis shifts to reaching out to existing City networks where leadership is not well established or represented such as in the not for profit community sector of Cities and even reaching up to higher levels but commencing with the smaller groups in mind.

A deeper view again is whether each of the systemic interests e.g. social, environmental and economic **world views** were engaged and involved deeply enough such that their level of commitment would sustain long term participation with the City Vision and Outcomes. **The critical factor at the world-view level** is that aims and outcomes must be prepared in view of the whole City’s developmental context e.g. global influences, geography, size, place and position amongst other Cities, traditional views, economy and City capacity and other drivers and barriers and as they develop into the future.

With such systemic complexity existing in Cities, it is helpful to think of the Vision as a broad based **myth/metaphor** that creates City cohesion. The myth is that these groups would be fairly represented while the reality remains that Cities must work very hard as must each stakeholder and each voice of the community to develop more than a tacit understanding of complex City issues and to have their voice heard and their involvement sustained meaningfully for the long term. Delivery of preferred outcomes under the Vision ultimately contributes to a refined

cycle of sustainable city life.

Overall, the City Futures engagement initiatives suggest that the capability for 24/7 engagement is required to co-enable deeper systems and worldviews of all stakeholders in the City. Long term City Futures initiatives require longitudinal City Futures engagement approaches that can work across the boundaries of electoral cycles and State amalgamations and other challenges, building knowledge amongst changing populations and cohesion between stakeholders of local and regional communities.

Maroochy Shire's Maroochy 2025 - a Visioning Journey

Maroochy 2025 was a two-year community planning initiative to develop a twenty-year Vision and a five-year Action Plan for the community of Maroochy Shire. A visioning journey, the initiative produced a series of events, consultations and products, which were comprehensive participatory and democratically driven processes and outcomes including the plan for the shire. "Most of all, it was an opportunity to develop new levels of empowerment, knowledge, and trust, between local government and the wider community" (Gould, 2008, p.94).

Context and drivers

The geography of Maroochy was described in May 2005 as "a lush, coastal region of Queensland covering 1,157 square kilometres. It included towns of Maroochydore, Nambour, Kenilworth, Buderim, and Eumundi. The Shire relies heavily on the tourist, retail and construction industries, but is also an agricultural and fishing district" (Department of Local Government and Planning, 2005, p.25).

Initiative drivers for the Maroochy 2025 City Futures initiative arose as early as 1999 with the employment of the Council's first official Social Planner and discussions about developing a Social Plan, the completion of the publication "Maroochy Community Profile 2000: a social portrait of its community and people" and how a Social Plan related to other internal Corporate reports. Also, Maroochy 2025 was driven by results from Community Survey No.1 (2003) which reported concerns about local government planning practices and "the frustration of planning remaining in the domain of experts and elected councillors who were designing, controlling and creating the communities future" (Gould, 2008, p.25). A further key driver included accelerated population growth with a potential doubling of the population by 2025 and State Government support. Queensland Health embraced Council's concept of a Community Plan through a \$10,000 award which helped to initiate Maroochy 2025 (Gould, 2008, p.92).

Initiative aims

Early discussions for how the future City should look were described as "a snapshot of tomorrow" and were based on current trends and a possible future (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.11-24). Initiative aims were developed following the creation of the snapshot and were framed in terms of short and long term objectives. Maroochy 2025's long term objectives were to:

Synergise planning and actions with regional perspectives; Build community's capacities for engaging with, and questioning, their

future; Build partnerships between Governments and communities; Increase levels of trust between local governments and communities; Increase communities' use of anticipatory and 'alternative thinking' methods; Empower the community to move ahead of changes and thus increase the level of pro-active measures for shaping the future; Evolve and further develop community-produced consultation frameworks; Support community-developed strategies and actions; and Evolve the concept of community visioning in as a way of life in Maroochy Shire (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.31).

In addition to the short and long term objectives, Maroochy developed an extensive rationale of philosophies and methodologies that would help to “derive outcomes in terms of Futures Studies-oriented planning and visioning concepts” (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.51). Maroochy 2025's planning and engagement aims were further based on the role of important terms of reference such as social capital, social trust, community development, community consultation and capacity building (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.54).

Planning

Planning phase aims emerged with increase awareness of “sustainability” as a best practice concept for Local Governments. This concept was important to how Maroochy 2025 was planned as it implied the need to develop shared community leadership. “The way community is engaged is inextricably linked to how sustainable communities are created and how they produce outcomes” (Gould, 2008, p.20-21). Initiative planning commenced with the introduction of specialist social and corporate planning staff. An external, independent and international futurist led a series of futures studies seminars in the Council that introduced the initiative management team to futures studies methods and tools.

Community engagement

Maroochy 2025s' community engagement commenced with a priming summit to review strategic documents about Maroochy's future. Aims for the engagement phase were developed to guide delivery of the whole initiative. Maroochy focussed on scenario planning as a main means of identification of alternative futures for the City, as well as community empowerment through “education”, “action planning” and use of the implementation committee which achieved community sustainability objectives, as well as guidance of outcomes into the corporate planning process. Engagement for Maroochy 2025 included: The “Maroochy 2025 Background Paper”; informative website; stakeholder consultation and questionnaires; community workshops; school summits; Youth Council (“Youth Voice”) visioning sessions; staff workshops; community summits including presentations by an international futurist expert, and summit pre-polling; Creation of a Community Task Force; action planning groups; an Action Planning ‘Integration Night’; document and literature reviews; community surveys; Maroochy 2025 community newsletters; and articles in Maroochy Shire Council newsletters and local newspapers.

Outcomes

Following planning and community engagement, the “broad areas of the

community's interest" were described as "Key Focus Areas" and each Key Focus Area included objectives and concerns, the factors affecting those concerns known as "drivers of change", "trends" and "current initiatives" (Gould & Daffara, 2005, pp.12-13).

The Maroochy 2025 Outcomes Phase was facilitated by the Community Taskforce handing over the Maroochy Vision to the Shire's Mayor, July 2004:

From the Mary River Valley over the Blackall Ranges to the Pacific Ocean, Maroochy Shire on the Sunshine Coast is a place that our connected community is proud to call home. We, Maroochy's residents, live in harmony alongside our clean waterways, beaches, and our diverse bush and farmlands. We respect and protect these natural places because they are home to our valued wildlife; they nurture our wellbeing, our physical and community needs and our economy. We are happy, healthy, safe, productive, creative and empowered. Learning, sharing knowledge and experiences, inspiring each other and together making decisions is our way of life. Our leadership is responsive and is focused on building trust and a better inclusive future whilst holistically providing for our basic needs in the present. Maroochy's distinct towns and villages are designed to minimise energy-use, resource use, and environmental impacts. Our communities are connected by efficient public transport, and walk and cycle paths. Maroochy's viable rural and urban economies mutually benefit each other to protect our natural assets and provide diverse long-term employment. We have a unique 'Bush and Beach' culture – we know this and we actively care for it and for each other (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.86).

In addition to the Maroochy Vision, objectives were created for what the City Futures initiative could achieve long term:

synergise planning and actions from regional perspectives; build on the community's engagement capacities; ongoing engagement in anticipatory action leaning experiments pertaining to the Maroochy 2025 vision and actions; manage ongoing future orientated planning and partnerships between local government and the community; further empower Maroochy's community to implement the Maroochy 2025 strategies and actions; and evolve the concept of community visioning as a way of life in Maroochy Shire (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.31).

Further community engagement

Maroochy conducted four surveys over the life of Maroochy 2025 with the first being delivered in October 2003 answering "where is the community now?", while the second was delivered in May 2004 matching the validity of the emerging core values, goals, key initiatives and priorities of the Maroochy 2025 Visioning Initiative against the views of the community. The surveys helped the Community Task

Force to develop the Vision. In November 2004, a third survey answered “how will we get there?” and gauged support for the strategies under development. A fourth survey evaluated Maroochy 2025 as a whole and was followed by 331 stakeholder interviews, concluding that there was high confidence in the implementation of the Plans and almost a consensus (92%) that the Maroochy 2025 Community Initiative had been worthwhile (Gould & Daffara, 2005, pp.67-81).

Integrated governance

Maroochy 2025’s Integrated Governance Phase does not emphasise bureaucratic integration, however it is premised on early aims of developing Maroochy 2025 as a community focused product and empowerment program. Regular involvement of the wider community is publicised in the Maroochy 2025 Process Chart including “Formulation of an implementation and monitoring committee, Quarterly reporting to wider community and stakeholders, Collection of addendums for future vision and actions”, leading up to an “Annual Summit” (Gould & Daffara, 2005, p.33).

Critical factors

The critical factors that led to the success of Maroochy 2025 include having expertly planned and delivered strategic foresight methods and tools on a large scale inclusive of delivery of a well-organised series of forums, underpinned by philosophy and method. These led to a well produced set of City Vision and Plans for action and the validity of strategic actions was evaluated and aligned through extensive survey and interview research and a community inclusive summit. Additional success includes Maroochy’s achievement of numerous aims of community empowerment and capacity building throughout the initiative.

Logan City – Logan 2026 City Directions

“Logan 2026 City Directions” (Logan City Council, 2006) is Logan City’s twenty year vision integrating smarter planning and managing growth to create a better future.

Context and drivers

The geographic context of Logan City features connectivity to neighbouring Cities of Brisbane, Gold Coast, Redlands and Ipswich and “comprises a range of urban and rural communities with urban development and a series of regional activity centres located along major road and rail corridors, particularly the Pacific and Logan motorways, Mount Lindesay Highway and the Brisbane-Gold Coast rail line.” Logan’s population in 2006 was 260,000 and was forecast to grow to 434,000 by 2031 and its 90,000 dwellings will grow to 160,000 (Department of Local Government and Planning, 2005, p.26). It was with this macro level geographic information in mind that Logan prepared their planning phase.

While planning for Logan 2026 was underway, the Local Government Reform Commission was also planning boundaries for Queensland local government areas with amalgamations being a very real possibility and eventual reality. The drivers of long term planning included the influence of the State Government as well as a range of other regional City Futures initiatives. These included *Brisbane 2026 Vision Refresh* of community values and organizational development as well as *Maroochy*

2025 and Gold Coast City Council's *Bold Future 2037* initiative, but Logan was mostly influenced by its own consideration of the value of futures methods (McGown & Russo, 2007, p.132).

Initiative aims

Logan 2026 City Directions was seen to be:

An opportunity to fulfil the desire to build on Logan City's strong community spirit and protect natural assets such as parks and bushland. It was also an opportunity to move from being of regional significance to one recognised for global connections (Logan City Council, 2006, p. 3).

Drivers of the need for Logan 2026 included the wider State drivers of the SEQ regional plan and findings from a community values report prepared by AC Nielsen (2006). The study was undertaken alongside "detailed time series demographic studies and projections" (Planning, Information and Forecasting Unit, 2006).

Logan 2026 grew in the historic context of being young and unrestrained:

Logan City has the perfect opportunity right now to seize the future. It's a young city, relatively untrammelled by the twentieth century. It has the vision, the energy, and the people to do it and do it well. We must not serve our own short-term gain or political advantage. We must serve nothing less than the big vision itself: a city that is genuine, wholesome, and worth calling home (Planning, Information and Forecasting Unit, 2006, p.20).

Planning

Planning aims for the initiative included a City Plan and Vision Statement and a framework for ongoing planning and delivery of Council services and to inform strategic planning developed within the Planning and Performance Framework. A significant aim for the initiative was the application of foresight methods and tools where the image of potential futures is the goal. This was to be achieved at the organisational level where staff would constitute part of the local response to the South East Queensland Regional Plan.

Community engagement

An international futurist consultant was engaged to deliver the internal staff workshops that helped to build awareness about the purpose, methods and tools of Futures Studies. McGown and Russo (2007, p.135) refer to the following passage to describe the content of the workshops:

"The training and workshops were based on Inayatullah's *Futures Studies* process of developing a shared view of the organisation's history, mapping the future, identifying emerging issues, deepening of issues, developing alternative futures, visioning and backcasting (Inayatullah, 2002)".

City-wide consultation was then coordinated by staff members who were more knowledgeable about what they were seeking from the initiative. They were united behind the initiative as being beneficial to organisational development and saw the Visioning initiative as being timely as it was: “derived from a number of perspectives from the people who live and work in the community and is indicative of the learning dynamics of an organisation ready for major change” (McGown & Russo, 2007, p. 141).

Community Consultation with residents and organizations was achieved via:

“a City-wide community values survey, focus groups and interviews. Over 1,000 entries were received from our young people for the colouring and digital arts competitions and more than 80 community submissions provided valuable feedback to the draft document” (Logan City Council, 2006, p.2).

Part of the consultation aimed to identify current and future values assessments to be gained from five focus groups, seven in depth interviews with business and community organizations and 400 responses via telephone from residents over the age of 18.

Outcomes

Logan 2026 outcomes included extensive social demographic profiling and brief economic, social and environmental status reports. Logan aggregated this in the report “Home is where the Heart Is – An Exploration of Community Values”. Factors that made the biggest impression were: location, affordability and accessibility, green space and the people.

The final Vision for ‘City Directions 2026’ centres around “quality of life”:

In the year 2026 Logan is a city of opportunity. Strategically positioned within a rapidly changing region and a global economy, we live in a dynamic city that sustains our quality of life. Here, neighbours, generations and cultures connect. Our lifestyles are in harmony with our environment. Logan City is a safe and healthy community, a place all generations will be proud to live and thrive in (Logan City Council, 2006, p.1)

Critical to Logan was a focus on organisational staff engagement as a resource for developing futures scenarios. It then focused on transformation of the organization. In essence, the initiative enabled Council to explore a completely new learning dimension and assimilate newly learned behaviour into the corporate hegemony.

A series of informal introductory workshop and training briefings were conducted with prospective participants. They provided an opportunity to illustrate the rapid rate of change and to draw from the experience of participant’s adjustment to organisational change. “The most widely raised observations were of workplace transformation through technological advancement and whether staff as individuals will be able to keep up with the greater rate of change” (McGown & Russo, 2007, p.136).

Further community engagement

All of this information helped to create Draft City Directions 2026 which was then progressed through further community engagement via City wide open days in key shopping centres around the City.

In 2013, Logan City is still working with strategies that have integrated the five Logan 2026 guiding themes.

Integrated governance

Logan 2026 City Directions' integrated governance phase includes The Logan 2026 City Directions framework (Logan City Council, 2006, p.19) commences with community engagement being integral in the preparation of 5-10 year long-term infrastructure and resource strategies, 4 year corporate plans and annual operational plans and budgets.

Critical factors

The critical factors that led to the success of Logan 2026 include having planned for a delivery model that engaged significant staff, executive and political support early and throughout the initiative. The model was said to be based on Brisbane's model generally, aiming for organisational and staff transformation through futures training sessions led by a Professor of Futures Studies, as well as through extensive demographic profiling and telephone survey values assessments combined with parallel community and stakeholder engagement face to face and online. This foundation led to a set of City Vision and Plans for action being embraced by all City leaders. Additional success eventuated with the outcomes being endorsed by Council leading to integration of City Futures outcomes into strategic governance framework of Corporate plans.

City of Gold Coast – Bold Future 2037

Bold Future was developed during 2007 to 2008 and defined a City aspiring to be bold with its planning processes. With a Council and community co-created vision, it incorporates the most extensive community consultation process that it had ever undertaken. Bold Future was a Council foresight initiative looking ahead to 2037 and was the precedent to the current Gold Coast 2020 Corporate Plan and Vision.

Context and drivers

The Gold Coasts' geographic context shows the Gold Coast to be Australia's second-fastest growing local government area and Australia's sixth largest city, comprising an area of 1400 km². Often perceived as a city of skyscrapers by the sea, it is actually one of Australia's greenest cities, with public parklands and reserves covering almost half of its total area. Its current population of 550,000 could grow to 749,000 by 2031 and its 202,500 dwellings are forecast to increase to 345,000 by 2031 (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b, p.19).

Initiative drivers included the challenges of "population growth, climate change and changes in the global economy" (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b, p. 3). Consequences of these drivers were for example, meeting demands for jobs, economic stability, housing and associated community and environmental

management services that could sustain the City's foundation assets – its biodiversity and ecological footprint, alongside demands for access across the City. Foresight for the Our Bold Future Initiative grew from a 2006 Gold Coast City community attitudes survey, which found that “planning for the future had the greatest impact on residents’ overall satisfaction with Council’s delivery of its services and activities.” (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b, p.13). Other drivers include the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005-2026 (2005a) and the direction of other regional Cities in developing City Visions. Another factor was identified in February of 2007 - sustainability, when Councillors undertook a workshop to fully consider the need and drivers for a new vision for a sustainable City.

Initiative aims and planning phase aims

Planning phase aims were melded with methods and milestones of achievement and were applicable to the planning phase as well as to the phase of implementation beyond the creation of the initiatives’ outcomes and integrated governance frameworks:

“Take steps to ensure success in an uncertain future; Prepare to respond to emerging and unknown challenges; Lead the Gold Coast Community towards a successful common future; Be visionary and intuitive about the future of the city; Develop a common view of our preferred future; Align the city’s actions and plans under a common view of the future; Formulate robust plans that all the city’s stakeholders know and understand; Develop partnerships to deliver those plans; Consider further actions to lead the planning and delivery of our city’s future (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b, p.11).

The initiative goals of gaining a new City Vision and actions were confirmed by an international futurist who was commissioned to advise the initiative from a long term planning perspective. In a video that was presented at 25 of the Bold Future Community Forums, Professor Inayatullah (2008a) advised of the need for Bold Future, inclusive of the following comments:

“The key to a foresight project to succeed is it must include the stakeholders. Leaders start a project of innovation in the City with those who live here. It ensures the worst of the big cities doesn’t happen: congestion, pollution, digital divide, cultural divide – let’s set up structures so this does not happen. The alternative scenario is more socially, culturally and environmentally responsible. Industry yes, but we need to think through the outcomes of our actions. What is the City we want to be in and what can we do today to realise that?”

Additional planning phase actions in 2008 included Professor Inayatullah’s delivery of City Futures Planning Workshops to build Councillors familiarity with visioning and the production of alternative City futures as well as to provide input into key phases of the Community Advisory Groups’ development.

Community engagement

Aims for Bold Future 2047's community engagement phase were provided in the final report of "How We Got There" where it is stated that "A focus on community engagement in all aspects of the exercise can lead to a well balanced, bold yet practical and locally relevant vision with a well developed action plan to take the city towards this desired future. Also, because the vision and action plan have been developed by the City using inclusive processes, the action plan and the desired future are well known and respected by the citizens. This helps to foster common goals and a shared sense of responsibility for the achievement of the city's vision, which is essential." (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b, p. 8). Aims were also to gain City wide feedback about community values for each of nine themes. This mapping of the future was based around gaining a thoroughly representative understanding of firstly what the community valued and secondly where the community wanted to go in the future in terms of each theme. To help map the future, an adaptation of the three areas of the futures triangle, a model developed by Sohail Inayatullah (2008b, p. 7) was applied to identify from City wide community feedback (a) preferred images of the future (b) why those images were important drivers of the future and (c) constraints to their achievement.

Community consultation commenced in August of July 2007 with the Gold Coast City Council appointment of a Bold Future Advisory Committee made up of community stakeholders representing each of the nine theme areas. Consultation was publicly launched in October 2007, via a media conference attended by politicians, staff and selected Bold Future community champions. Consultation methods included use of trends and issues sheets and facts and figures sheets to inform discussions about the future in 28 community reference group meetings and 25 City forums that included expert presentations of City achievements and directions for particular themes, along with visualization exercises. Youth and academic involvement was gained by staff and students of the local educational sector: schools, universities and TAFE institute. The sessions were facilitated by a team of 'futurist and engagement' consultants. Presentations at local schools and the Gold Coast City Council Junior Youth Council and from a local city builder's exhibition at the Gold Coast Arts Centre provided feedback. Community Consultation resulted in 11,000 responses.

Outcomes

Bold Future 2037's Outcomes phase commenced with an analysis and reporting of all community consultation feedback about each of nine key themes. The highest number of responses (25%) were about the topic of 'our beaches bold future', closely followed by responses about the topic of 'out water bold future' (19%) and 'our environmental bold future' (18%).

Following the delivery of the engagement process the final Vision document included the following vision:

Defined by our spectacular beaches, hinterland ranges, forests and waterways, the Gold Coast is an outstanding city which celebrates nature and connects distinct communities with the common goal of sustainability, choice and well being for all (Gold Coast City Council, 2008b).

The Bold Future Advisory Committee followed with criteria to prioritise more than fifty ideas generated from community feedback, into a final report to Council: Range of benefits (i.e. a cross-cutting action that delivers on multiple outcomes/themes); Scale and timing (ease of implementation); Responsibility for implementation; Cost; Visibility; and Compliance with Bold Future Principles.

Further community engagement

Further engagement via focus groups was conducted to validate the Draft Vision. The Bold Future initiative team conducted additional focus groups and provided community access to the draft outcomes online for an extended period.

Integrated governance phase

The Bold Future 2037 Integrated Governance Phase began on 15 April 2011, when Council adopted the Bold Future Vision, plans and reports. An interim Community Plan was developed to support the delivery of the Bold Future Vision through the identification of strategic priorities, high level actions, targets and performance measures against each of the six key focus areas. The Bold Future strategic framework for delivering outcomes incorporated the new planning scheme, corporate plan, city-wide strategies, programs and initiatives, partnerships and advocacy.

Critical factors

The critical factors that led to the success of Bold Future 2037 included having expertly planned and delivered futures methods and tools developed through internal training . The garnering of support for the City Futures initiative outcomes from the executive and CEO, Mayor and Councillors, staff and through training and Councillors workshops by an international futurist, meant that cohesion was developed and the Vision was attainable. The Bold Future Advisory Group helped to show where there was community alignment and together with Council’s aims, a well produced set of City Vision and Plans for action was endorsed and integrated right throughout the Strategic Governance Framework.

Our Shared Vision - Living in Brisbane 2026

“Living in Brisbane 2026” commenced in 2005 and was completed in 2007. It refreshed the Vision setting document “Living in Brisbane 2010” first established in 2000-2001. Living in Brisbane 2026 is described as “a landmark evocation of Brisbane’s exciting future, with eight themes each revealing a special factor of, and ambitions for, our City” (Brisbane City Council, 2006b, p.1 inside cover).

Living in Brisbane 2026 focuses on Council’s partnering with local and global business, industry and research institutions, new ways to work with community, improved quality of life and standard of livability, with continuing prosperity, stability for all residents, an open welcome to worldwide visitors and responsible stewardship of precious natural resources on behalf of future generations.

Context and drivers

Brisbane’s population of 991,000 in 2006 was the largest City population in SEQ. The City of Brisbane comprises significant economic drivers including the

CBD, adjacent employment areas, and the region's main air and sea ports. Brisbane's existing and planned inter- and intra-regional transport and telecommunications infrastructure supports the city's highly skilled labour force and the export of goods and services. Brisbane City comprises a series of centres that support diverse communities, such as high-density apartments, well established 'timber and tin' suburbs and new communities (Department of Local Government and Planning, 2005, p.17).

The forecast additional 250,000 residents by 2031 and the SEQ Regional Plan (Department of Local Government and Planning, 2005) drove Brisbane City to consider preparation of Living in Brisbane 2026. The wider international drivers that influenced the local context and strengthened the need for the Plan, included water shortages, fluctuating fuel prices and climate change as well as accelerating economic growth of global regional neighbours of China and India that were considered to be pressures on Brisbane's competitive advantages. Forecasts of sustained growth also brought the pressure of "skill shortages" (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.3).

An additional driver of the initiative emerged from a survey of community members that identified eight qualities that residents prized above all others: lifestyle and community; recreation; a connected Brisbane; living in a progressive and prosperous City; safety and security; eco-friendly environs; green and shady; and a City with character (Brisbane City Council, 2006, pp.4-8). Values of "friendliness, green open spaces and outdoor" climate was also identified through neighbourhood planning workshops as key values (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.2).

Initiative and planning phase aims

In 2000/2001 Brisbane prepared its 2010 City Vision and refreshed it during Brisbane 2026 workshops in 2005 with senior executive leaders of Council and Vision refresh Workshops with Councillors. Aims for the planning phase of the City Futures initiative Living in Brisbane 2026 included focusing on milestones for the Vision and articulation of outcomes for the City. Aims were developed through the Senior Executive workshops where the City was embedding learning from Vision 2010 by ensuring that the Vision had sufficient detail to allow managers and employees to work with it in a tangible way. Communication of key messages about the Vision to staff and development of graduate scenarios to be applied as a device to engage Senior Executives in discussion about Brisbane's future, were designed to start the process of thinking long term. In September 2005 the Senior Executive committee requested a single Vision for the City combining neighbourhood planning, values and Vision through a City Plan. The initiatives' outcomes were required to demonstrate to the community that their input was taken on board and that the Plan would be a roadmap to inform all the stakeholders contributing to creating Brisbane's future. Councillors would be consulted in December 2005 and again in February 2006 where all community and organisational feedback would be considered.

Whole of initiative aims emerged from Council as follows: "Building on *Living in Brisbane 2010*, it is a proposal for action between Council and all our partners – residents across the communities of Brisbane, our national and local colleagues across levels of government, business and industry, and those in the research and education sectors around the world" (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.9). With

the above inclusiveness of partners as an overarching aim, Brisbane City further identified initiative aims to sustain a City with a high quality of life, highly livable and optimistic and encouraging of innovation and high standards:

Our aim is to agree on a package of goals that, together, will improve the quality of life for today and tomorrow's generations, and position Brisbane as a highly-livable city of great optimism that is: confident of its continuing prosperity; vigorous in providing stability for all its residents; enthusiastic in its welcome to visitors from all the reaches of the world; proud of its responsible stewardship of precious natural resources on behalf of future generations. We want to identify targets in our city-wide outcomes and our aspirations are a bold 'call to action'. We need to do more than 'just turn up' in meeting our challenges. We aim to extend our expertise and encourage our innovative capabilities to set the highest standards and rates of improvement (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.9).

Community engagement

In 2006 Brisbane conducted four months of community and employee consultation. Feedback was gathered from 150 participating employees during workshops and sixteen Vision champions were engaged from areas within the organization to reach further across the organization gathering employee feedback. Three scenarios were prepared by Brisbane's graduate youth program to raise awareness of emerging issues. These were based on life in 2026: green is the new black, I'm the king of the world and e-book – the changing State of Brisbane.

Additional creativity and innovation was provided by Councillors who created a video postcard to future children. This was a legacy task that communicated what Councillors were proud of that they were able to hand to future generations, including getting really serious about sustainable development.

Community engagement included 18,500 responses from the City Shape survey, Vision Refresh postcards, children's Citizen 2026 artworks, young people's visioning projects, community values workshops conducted through Neighbourhood Planning workshops which included a Vision Refresh display and an accompanying website with links to the youth website. The Neighbourhood Planning team also engaged primary schools. Focus groups and telephone surveys gained targeted responses. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities were consulted directly. A mail out of the refreshed vision was distributed to 1,100 schools, businesses and other government agencies. More than eighty percent of participants agreed on what they valued most about living in Brisbane. (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.3). The engagement process was promoted via 83,000 postcards in a recruitment drive mail out and newsletter that included highlights of Living in Brisbane 2010. An online discussion forum was also prepared for YCYS youth participants and youth were also involved through Community Development Services youth team partnerships and workshops and via The Lord Mayors Youth Advisory Committee. A video "Fresh Futures" was prepared to help communicate their visions.

Outcomes

Eight themes were prepared from the community engagement to help structure the narrative in the document “Our shared vision - Living in Brisbane 2026” in terms of the present (the story so far), the past (history timeline) and the future (bold aspirations), (Brisbane City Council, 2006, pp.12-43).

The final Vision included in ‘Our Shared Vision – Living in Brisbane 2026’ is:

Brisbane is a youthful and enthusiastic city – spanning city to bay and hills to bush. It is appreciated by residents and visitors for its friendliness and optimism, and respected for its leadership and achievements. Brisbane’s leadership in civic governance and technology will deliver active and healthy communities, drive a strong economy, sustain a clean and green environment, create a city of cultural vibrancy and provide an enduring legacy of livability for future generations (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p.10).

Integrated governance

Integrated Governance Phase aims publicised in Living in Brisbane 2026 apply to the period when the Council’s administration would manage the achievement of outcomes: “We must measure and monitor our progress towards our city-wide outcomes. This is done by Council’s program areas that develop high-level plans and strategies to implement and integrate all elements of Council’s vision” (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p. 44). Aims for governance are regarded as important as they create a commitment for how the community should ultimately expect to see the City Futures initiative’s aims being actualised. Brisbane’s Strategic Planning is the set of mechanisms to achieve the aims. These include mechanisms activated across timeframes such as “20 years, the Living in Brisbane Vision; Longer term City-wide outcomes; Medium Term Strategic plans and organizational strategy and its Corporate Plan; Annual Program plans and budget, Divisional and business unit plans and individual performance plans” (Brisbane City Council, 2006, p. 44).

Further community engagement

A further two months of City wide community consultation on the draft Vision and Plan, was delivered prior to a launch in December 2006. The further consultation included communication of the Vision and Outcomes via CEO road trips to communicate the Vision Citywide. The additional engagement may have been driven by a separate Vision Implementation Plan 2026 which had engagement with the Vision by Councillors as an objective and the bus Vision tour as a tactic. Residents were bussed around neighbourhood planning localities and were asked to help detail the opportunities and challenges for each theme.

Critical factors

The critical factors that led to the success of Living in Brisbane 2026 included having learned from Living in Brisbane 2010 to create a tangible and workable Plan and having delivered expertly conducted internal futures training programs that produced methods that work in with the existing local authority bureaucracy of scheduled committee/ CEO and Council meetings to design an inclusive

process including an extensive community engagement program demonstrating community input. Support for the City Futures initiative built through the Futures training programs extended through involvement of 16 internal champions into the Council organisation. The early conduct of Values assessments, community and neighbourhood consultation and the CEO evaluations of draft outcomes in community localities helped to prepare the final Our Shared Vision – Living in Brisbane 2026 City Vision and Plans. Following endorsement by a full meeting of Council, the City Plan outcomes were integrated successfully into the strategic governance framework of Brisbane City Council.

Conclusions

Critical to the whole City futures initiative is engagement of stakeholders early in initiative phases of aims, engagement and development of outcomes. This creates the best conditions for cohesiveness and carries additional social capital and stakeholder interests through the Visioning process into City and Council practices. Official initiative aims that can be recorded through Council and Committee resolutions can help all initiative stakeholders to understand, prepare and refine the intended program, but this begins with expert City futurist consultant involvement that is best sustained throughout the initiative.

Engagement of the wider community will build cohesion which is essential if they are to play a role in delivering aspects of the final plans. Community awareness raising and engagement through direct, face to face and digital communication is a valid and achievable aim that also assists with longer term initiative outcomes. Continued application of City futures concepts is the most important factor to emerge from the City futures initiatives. A new model of community consultation that considers the validity of consultation through the lens of CLA could help to achieve this nexus.

While an over riding critical factor for the City futures initiatives was the creation of a Vision and integration of outcomes into the corporate governance frameworks for delivery, the City Futures initiatives demonstrated that it is possible to increase community empowerment and capacity by applying Futures Studies methods and tools in group situations. This futures work can greatly assist with traditional planning of the long term infrastructure and land use and other asset based environmental and economic outcomes.

City futures initiatives are uniquely positioned to map and transfer community values into long term cycles of planning that better assist Cities to prioritise actions for the long term. The three regional Cities struggled more with this mainly because long term City futures thinking and processes rested with the commencement of new political cycles.

The application of alternative and preferred futures tools along with trends and situational analyses must be matched by a tangible and coherent set of actions. Engagement of political, executive and other staff early and throughout the initiative ensures ongoing commitment to this discipline by filtering values, futures studies outcomes and strategic action development. Sustaining internal political and staff interest is just as important as sustaining community interest. Engagement of the wider community will build cohesion which is essential if they are to play a role in delivering aspects of the final plans. Community awareness raising and engagement through direct, face to face and digital communication is a valid and achievable

aim that also assists with longer term initiative outcomes. Continued application of City futures concepts is the most important factor to emerge from the City futures initiatives. Brisbane showed that it is possible to learn the lessons of previous City futures initiatives even though they may be years apart.

A long term change process includes mapping of City views and each City has managed to achieve at least that. This shows that City futures can lead to better strategy when all critical factors are considered. Critical factors of the four initiatives emerge through the use of critical futures tools and methods and Maroochy was highly successful at doing this, however it remains an example of the need for experienced City futures leadership to be involved in more aspects of the initiative from inception to completion.

Factors critical to City Futures initiatives that are unique, universal and that were unmet by the City Futures initiatives are more critically compared in a second paper.

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