



**Sunshine Coast Business Council**

# **What do you want to be when you grow up?**

*Maintaining the essence and vibe of a fast-growing region*

February 2025

# *Three* Things to Talk About

**#1** Change paradigm

**#2** Looking for clues

**#3** Success Factors

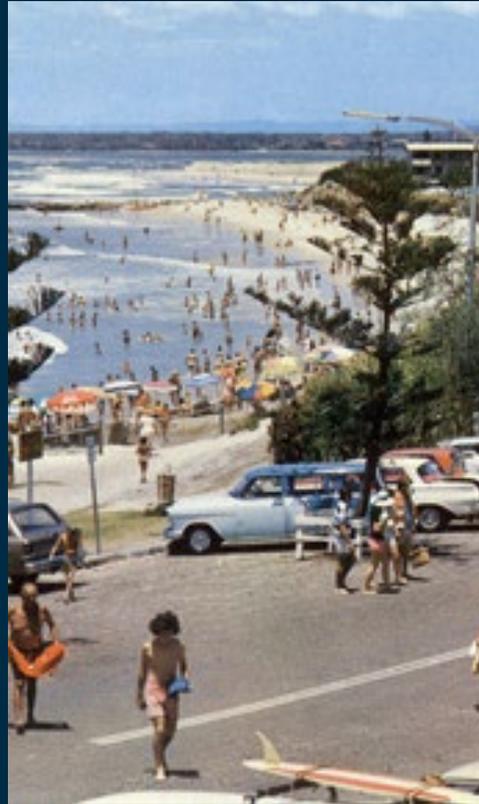
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# A History of Change



**1900s**  
Agriculture, timber,  
fishing & isolated  
settlements



**1975**  
Tourism, beach  
holidays & relaxed  
coast lifestyles



**2025**  
Fast-growing regional  
city & wellbeing  
economy

**The Sunshine Coast  
Region is in a defining  
era of change.**

It always has been.

# A Growing Region



## Major Projects Shaping the region

- > Aura
- > Maroochydore City Centre
- > Sunshine Coast Airport Masterplan
- > Sunshine Coast Athletes Village
- > Sunshine Coast Stadium
- > Sunshine Coast Mt Bike Centre
- > The Wave
- > Beerburrum to Nambour Rail Upgrade

Sunshine Coast's strong population and economic growth is evident by:

**\$19.5 billion**

infrastructure projects underway or recently completed

**5.1%**

Annual GRP Growth

**+~565,700 by 2046**

(Shaping SEQ 2023)

**\$2.84 billion**

in Transport Investment  
(2019-2024)

**\$11.2 billion**

in Transport Investment  
(2025-2030)

**\$60 million**

in Tourism Investment  
(2019-2024)

**\$1.62 billion**

in Tourism Investment  
(2025-2030)

**\$3.93 billion**

in Residential Investment  
(2019-2024)

**\$5.23 billion**

in Residential Investment  
(2025-2030)

# “No Change is not an Option.”

The places that succeed in the long term are not anti-growth.

They are pro-identity—  
and disciplined enough to defend it.

# Regional Competitiveness and Lifestyle are a choice

Attractiveness to investment

## Short Termism:

Open for business but with no clear end state or value proposition



## Strategic:

Clear view on what matters, and what doesn't



## Reactionary:

No plan or view on how to manage change



## Protective:

Limit change at all costs



Sense of identity

# Red Pill, Blue Pill

## What might *Resisting Change* *(Falling Out of Love)* Look Like?

### Reactive rather than proactive

- > **Lag:** Infrastructure delivery not aligned population / economic growth
- > **Equity:** Limiting new & diverse housing – housing becomes less affordable
- > **Chaotic:** Growth is fragmented and piecemeal – lacking a shared long-term vision
- > **Political:** Failing to take the community on the journey

## What might *Managing Change* *(Falling in Love)* Look Like?

### Actively shaping how, where, when

- > **Public Value:** Growth is aligned with infrastructure
- > **Fairness:** Housing diversity improves affordability
- > **Innovation:** Supporting stronger, more resilient economy around growing industries
- > **Distinctive:** Directing growth to where it is needed most and protecting what makes the Sunshine Coast special
- > **Civic Pride:** building confidence and trust

What relevant places  
have managed  
**growth & change** in a  
way that protects  
their **essence?**

# Queenstown, NZ Malaga, Spain Boulder, Colorado

“Queenstown, Málaga, and Boulder are very different places. What unites them is not geography, culture, or politics— it’s demand.”

- Strong lifestyle proposition
- External demand outpaces local systems
- Infrastructure, housing, and amenity strain follows



“You can develop here, but the mountains get the final say.”

# Queenstown

*New Zealand*

# An un-expandable competitive advantage

## *Problem to Solve for*

**Rapid population growth + Tourism saturation pressuring the core landscape value proposition**

## *Change Strategies*

- > Clearer rules including limiting hard landscape, tighter urban edges and enforceable visual impact rules  
*Spatial Plan ("Grow Well")*
- > Shift from volume-based tourism to value-wellbeing-based tourism, high-value, low-impact: *Destination Management Plan & regenerative/carbon-zero visitor economy.*

## *Outcomes*

“They protected character and built value by making it legally inconvenient not to.”

**+17.5%**

**Tourism GDP**

**+8.8%**

**Tourism employment**

“Málaga shows that managing growth does not always mean saying no—it sometimes means saying something else instead.”

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# Málaga

*Spain*



# Changing what demand looks like

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## *Problem to Solve for*

**Repositioning the city beyond tourism that was destroying its historic heart.**

## *“Managing Change” Strategies*

- > From industrial decline, to tourism to a **technology and innovation city**: A polycentric growth model reducing pressure on historic core i.e. *Málaga TechPark*
- > 1.2km Metro extension: high-capacity transit linking outer neighbourhoods with employment areas
- > Cultural-led regeneration to diversify and differentiate

## *Outcomes*

“Málaga discovered that museums and innovation age better than beach bars.”

## *Málaga TechPark*

- > **~700–715 companies**
- > **~28,000 employees**  
**+11.3% employment**
- > **~€4+ billion annual turnover (2024)**  
**+21% increase from 2023**

“Boulder traded maximum growth for maximum certainty”

# Boulder

*Colorado*



# Growing People, Nature & Talent

## Drugs, Sex and Truffles

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### *Problem to Solve for*

**Accommodating demand spillover from Denver and a lack of economic distinctiveness.**

### *“Managing Change” Strategies*

- > **“The Blue Line”**: Nature as permanent growth boundary: Voter-funded Open Space & Mountains Parks program
- > **Land acquisition**: Taxes and bonds used to secure open space, permanently fixing the urban–rural edge.
- > **Cost effective**: Zoning, height limits, and growth caps aligned with infrastructure capacity

- **Productive land use**: environmental protection drives a 11.2% increase in density (2010–2020) and ~3.75% housing price premium
- **Talent and firm attraction**: 18,000+ ha of protected open space create amenity-driven growth model.
- **Lower infrastructure costs**: Urban service boundaries reduced delivery costs.
- **High return on public assets**: Preserved lands support ~6 million visits per year

# Common Success Factors

“The point is not that trade-offs exist. The point is that they were chosen consciously, rather than inherited accidentally.”

1. *There is no perfect model, just your preferred one – always trade offs*
2. *Character is treated and valued as an “infrastructure” – it needs investment and maintenance*
3. *Visions are important, but they need regulatory support – sentiment with teeth*
4. *Not ‘anti-growth’, just ‘pro identity’ – being in control of the change*
5. *Certainty enhances ‘investability’ – ambiguity kills place essence*

# Provocations for the Sunshine Coast

## **Boldness**

Is your level of ambition relevant to the scale of the opportunity?

## **Choices**

What would you trade off about 'today' in order to manage growth?

## **Truth**

Is environmental quality one of the region's distinctive economic assets?

## **Nostalgia**

Is the Sunshine Coast still planning for yesterday's lifestyle narrative?

## **Acumen**

Does hindering growth around infrastructure undervalue your future?

## **Clarity**

Are your priorities certain enough to manage growth and change?

**THANK YOU**

**What do you want to be when you grow up?**