

Booming city has so much in store

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By Zane Jackson

A PROJECTED population in 2016 of almost 91,000 in the Bundaberg area is behind the push for two new major shopping centres.

Residents will be spoilt for choice if Bundaberg City Council ticks off on the shopping and entertainment precincts.

And one of the developers says the region's forecast growth confirmed the demand exists for their \$100 million Bundaberg Central Plaza project on the corner of Walla Street and Park Street.

"Bundaberg is an area with a population that will continue to increase for some time," Insight director Rod Colwell said.

"There is a need for entertainment businesses - we'd be looking for something along the lines of a JB Hi-Fi or Dick Smith, also sporting retailers and fashion stores."

Mr Colwell said research commissioned by the Insight group not only found the region's population rapidly on the rise, but some shoppers were "heading south" to get what they wanted.

"We had an extensive economic study done focusing on the retail business in the area and the impact our proposed development would have," he said.

"RESEARCH found a lot of people travel to places like Hervey Bay and the Sunshine Coast to do their shopping because they can't get what they need here.

"The CBD is not currently servicing the town's shopping needs."

Although yet to put forward an application to council, Sunshine Coast business Ryan Group recently announced plans to also develop a state-of-the-art shopping centre called The Boulevard in West Bundaberg.

Bundaberg town planner Robert Thompson said Insight's projected 90,900 population for the combined Bundaberg City and Burnett Shire areas was fair.

"That's probably a good estimation of the numbers we'll be looking at," Mr Thompson said.

"Bundaberg is a town with a population that is definitely on the rise.

"We have about 50,000 in Bundaberg and about 30,000 in the Burnett Shire so their figures sound pretty close to me."

He said a council decision on the project was expected soon.

"A final decision will probably be made in the next four to six weeks," he said.

Testament to Bundaberg's growth is the news engineering services firm Cardno has recently opened an office in the city.

Office manager Peter Hirst said an increase in infrastructure and rapid population growth dictated the need to open up shop here.

"Bundaberg presents an excellent opportunity," Mr Hirst said.

"It was lagging for a while, but now it's really moving up - the growth is just phenomenal."



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