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# Sense of Place and Urbanity: Challenges and Interventions at the Gold Coast

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## **Sense of Place and Urbanity: Challenges and Interventions at the Gold Coast**

**ABSTRACT:** *For many decades the Gold Coast was largely perceived as a seasonally occupied beach-holiday resort strip of linked settlements that started life as dispersed service centres for the hinterland. While this was its origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Gold Coast is now the sixth largest city in Australia and the most rapidly growing. The city has many layers of complexity related principally to rapidly increased urbanisation. Arguably the overarching ‘spirit of place’ at the Gold Coast derives from its ocean coastline and secondly from river and canal waterway edges. Other characteristics that make Gold Coast special derive from those qualities that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging. As urbanisation intensified with it came growing numbers of small and large businesses to service the new city residents as well as transient visitors. Increased activity and services was the catalyst for visits from hinterland suburbanites and out-of-town trippers seeking to participate in the emerging urbanity as they partake of the natural attractions. At risk is degradation of ‘sense of place’. Theoretical constructs relating to ‘sense of place’ will be explored. Three milestone initiatives are discussed in terms of fixed, semi-fixed and un-fixed elements as well as their functioning and contribution to the city’s urban vitality and ‘sense of place’. Speculative design interventions are also discussed that could initiate debate about encouraging Gold Coast City to adopt a sustainable healthy balance between urbanisation and sense of place. These respond to the uniqueness of every place.*

**Keywords:** *Sense of Place; Spirit of Place; Milestone Architecture; Conceptual Designs; Gold Coast*

### **Introduction**

Media descriptions of developments on the Gold Coast typically use phrases such as, “...each property embraces the local culture to create a true sense of place for guests” or another, more elaborately expressed, “to create a more convenient and enjoyable place to live....the epitome of diversity with a fine selection of quality residential property options that satisfy aesthetics, enrich comfort, create a sense of place and nourish the human spirit”. Description of the location’s attributes typically follows with emphasis such as, “....premium views towards Pacific Ocean, Hinterland and Surfers CBD, short walks to beach”.

Without necessarily knowing the Gold Coast intimately, from this snapshot we can reasonably deduce that the writers of such material regard the ideal ‘sense of place’ of the City as being incorporated in enjoyable access to an attractive built and natural environment.

Less positive perceptions regard Gold Coast City as a cultural desert and a superficial destination of extravagant beaches, glitzy, shallow and egotistical (Ditton, 2009) (pp 165-166). Weaver and Lawton (2004) are equally damning through their adoption of Relph’s (1976) idea of ‘placelessness’ to summarise the character of the City. Such negative observations may be summarised as positing the Gold Coast City as mostly an inauthentic place.

This paper explains perceptions, ideas and concepts relating to ‘place’ with a view to understanding some recent initiatives and to exploring potential interventions that may improve the ‘sense of place’ for long-term residents, which it is anticipated will also heighten place experience for tourists (visitors). The paper discusses what are considered to be relevant theoretical constructs.

Optimistic conclusions are drawn, encouraged by Bosman and Dredge who support the proposition of 'minor placemaking' at the Gold Coast as a measure to "reconcile the home/local and tourist/global dichotomy" (Bosman and Dredge, 2011) (p 4).

### **Healthy Cities and Sense of Place**

'Sense of place' elements are one aspect of several that underpin criteria considered essential for sustainable and healthy cities (O'Neill and Simard, 2006). While having a strong 'sense of place' may be seen as a lower priority than safe drinking water or sewerage systems for the health of a city it is widely accepted that a holistic approach to city planning includes encouraging a recognisable 'sense of place'. 'Sense of place' strengthening is key objective for contemporary planning strategies in Australia, see for instance: the Queensland Board for Urban Places document "A Charter for Queensland Places (2010)" and the documents "Melbourne 2030: Planning for Sustainable Growth, Direction 5 (2002)"; and "Sustainable Sydney 2030: City of Sydney Strategic Plan (2008)".

The World Health Organisation firmly establishes a relationship between sense of place and healthy cities. In the WHO publication "Healthy Cities and the Planning Process" eleven key parameters for healthy cities, communities and towns are proposed. Of these four relate to 'sense of place' elements, being: high-quality environments; sustainable ecosystem; access to wide variety of experiences and resources; connections with the past; and city form (Duhl and Sanchez, 1999) (pp 23/24).

Further, connections between healthy cities and 'sense of place' physicality and experiences are expressed in the first and third of three criteria reported by Johnson et al, in quoting Baum (1993)

"places can be judged for their health – and equity – according to three sets of criteria:

1. Physical form, including the use of land, housing type and standard, communications infrastructure, transport provision and the quality of the built and natural environment
2. Interaction, recognizing that people come to regions, cities and towns for contact with others. This contact includes politics, work, economic activity, caring, education, recreation and home life
3. Individual experiences of a place, which includes the sense of history and tradition, life-style, culture, expressions of creativity and art" (Johnson et al, 2007) (p1)

The link between 'sense of place' and sustainable healthy cities is summarised by Susan Moore (1997), who is quoted by Newman and Jennings (2008)

"a sense of place may not be sufficient for sustainable practice but a lack of sense of place may be related closely to unsustainable practices" (p6)

## **Authentic Place**

One of the strongest forces in contemporary global tourism is a search for authentic experience (Cohen, 2002, Yeoman and Brass, 2007). In addition to the attraction of the natural environment of the Gold Coast, the local culture and urbanscape, together the 'sense of place', is the main vehicle for providing authenticity. Local culture has a symbiotic relationship with tourism, as explained by Chang and Yeoh (1999)

“The relationship between global tourism and local culture is a two-way process. Tourism affects the way cultural practices and landscapes are shaped, and cultural change reflects the influence of tourism as one agent in place transformation” (pp 101-115).

The natural environment of the Gold Coast could be considered as underpinning its inherent 'spirit of place', or Genius Loci (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). Relph (2009) says that “sometimes 'sense of place' is used to refer to what might more accurately be called 'spirit of place' – the unique environmental ambience and character of a landscape or place” (p26). He proceeds to say that he prefers, as this author does, “to keep a distinction between 'sense of place' and 'spirit of place', though clearly they are closely related” (p26). He further explains that 'spirit of place' exists outside of us while 'sense of place' lies inside of us, but is aroused by the landscape we encounter.

Separation of 'spirit' from 'sense' allows us to more clearly consider human-made interventions (Cantrill, 1998). For 'spirit of place' Cantrill adopts the word 'natural' and for 'sense of place' he adopts the word 'social'. An image depicting the Gold Coast's historical 'spirit of place' is shown in Figure 1, while Figure 2 shows the current physical overlap of human-made 'spirit of place' with nature's 'sense of place'.

Figure 1. View looking south from Nobbys over to Little Burleigh. Miami Beach is seen in its original 'authentic' state with dunes reaching inland, circa 1885.

Image credit -: Gold Coast City Council Heritage Tours



Figure 2 shows a section of the current physical overlap of the Gold Coast's 'spirit' and 'sense' of place - looking South from Q1.

Image credit – Gordon Holden



Bosman and Dredge remind us that “place meanings and values emerge out of everyday activities...and, for touristed areas such as the Gold Coast, place is not simply a location”. If everyday meaning and values of an actively engaged community (home/local) are not also incorporated into urban development the result may be a “risky place that holds little meaning for local people and fails to capture and hold the interest of tourists” who know global culture (Bosman and Dredge, 2011) (p3).

Gold Coast City Council frequently refers to ‘sense of place’ in planning documents, but not ‘spirit of place’. Not surprisingly ‘spirit of place’ is always presented as a positive attribute or goal. In its use the term appears to embrace both ‘sense’ and ‘spirit’ of place, as defined by Relph (see: Gold Coast City Council, 2004, 2009a, 2009b). It is suggested that greater clarity of purpose and capacity to

manage and/or enhance both natural place and human-made place, as directed through planning documents, may be better achieved through treating the two terms 'spirit' and 'sense' separately.

### **Placelessness**

In reflecting on the meaning of 'sense of place' in 2009 Relph states that

"Place is an expression of what is specific and local, while placelessness corresponds to what is general and mass-produced.....it is helpful therefore, to think of place and placelessness arranged along a continuum and existing in a state of tension. At one extreme, distinctiveness is ascendant and sameness diminished; at the other extreme, uniformity dominates and distinctiveness is suppressed" (p25).

Jorgensen & Stedman (2006) add the further dimension that 'sense of place' is multidimensional, incorporating beliefs, emotions and behavioural commitments. Seamon and Sowers (2008) explain that

"Ralph suggests that, in general, placelessness arises from kitsch – an uncritical acceptance of mass values, or technique – the overriding concern with efficiency as an end in itself. The overall impact of these two forces, which manifest through such processes as mass communication, mass culture, and central authority, is the 'undermining of place for both individuals and cultures, and the casual replacement of the diverse and significant places of the world with anonymous spaces and exchangeable environments'" (p46).

### **Spirit of Place and Sense of Place**

There being such a strong 'spirit of place' at the water's edge of the Gold Coast it could be speculated that the 'sense of place' qualities of urban development on the adjoining land is less significant. Such speculation may be a case of Ditton's 'extravagant beaches' being sufficient to overwhelm place perception sensibilities. With low attention given to the urban design of many Gold Coast urban areas, back from the coastline, some areas deteriorate into places of low significance with few 'sense of place' attributes. Respectful of the community, some of these areas could be described as placeless.

Research indicates that there is a further dimension to consider. Stedman (2003) introduces the concept of 'baseline effect' citing the example of wilderness lakes in Canada where if the pristine qualities of a lake are compromised through increasing settlements on the shore, with consequential more boating and other human activity, then 'sense of place' deterioration is perceived by long-standing residents. By comparison, new users (or visitors) who only know the place in its current state, consider this to be normal and perceive it as having a positive 'sense of place'. The difference is the starting baseline. Fitchen (1991) and Relph (1976) reinforce this relativity idea through their conclusions that place attachment and meaning can erode due to changed physical conditions.

It is suggested that while 'spirit of place' remains substantially intact and highly relevant for both visitors and residents at the Gold Coast the 'sense of place' baseline is variable, with the major divide being that long term residents see urban places differently from short-term visitors. Long term residents are especially interested in the places that they frequent such as the local shops, parks walking/cycling routes and favourite swimming/surfing sites. Visitors are mainly attracted to the exceptional beauty of the ever-present seascape coupled with access to the changeable and exciting urban activities symbolised by tall buildings and street life (Bosman and Dredge, 2011) (p 2). We may conclude from this that visitors tend to not engage with the ordinary or minor places of the city.

Bosman and Dredge explain that "Minor placemaking is an approach that recognises difference and diversity and has the potential to heighten images of localness in a global tourist landscape and thus, broaden the tourist profile" (p4). The types of arousal needed by the residents and visitors are different at a baseline level but it is postulated that potential is available that may derive from there being greater authenticity in minor places. This will be explored further with the conjectural designs.

Our experience of travel tells us that a place can be attractive to people and have a distinctive 'sense of place' because it has a unique human made identity, activity and vitality that is authentic to the location. This distinctiveness can be present notwithstanding the attributes of the natural environment (Relph, 1976).

"An authentic attitude to place is understood to be a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places – not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions. It comes from a full awareness of of places for what they are as products of man's intentions and the meaningful settings for human activities, or from profound and unselfconscious identity with place" (p64).

The concept 'topophilia' or 'love of place' was injected into 'sense of place' research in the mid 1970's by Yi-Fu Taun although the concept had been coined earlier. Taun (1974) advocated that topophilia embraced all emotional connections between physical environments and humans. This idea has substantially remained in place theory development.

Although not central to 'sense of place' theory, Jay Appleton's 'prospect-refuge' theory is considered to have relevance in understanding our preference for favourite places, through the proposition that there is a survival motivation that underpins aesthetic engagement when viewing landscapes. Prospect-refuge theory has been used in landscape architecture to underpin designs that encourage

engagement with place. Appleton (1975) believes that the ability to see and the ability to hide are both important in calculating survival prospects...

“Where a person has an unimpeded opportunity to see we can call it a *prospect*, where the person has an opportunity to hide, a *refuge*” (p79).

In discussing what built environment elements relate to experience and behaviour, Heath (1991) adopted Rapoport's (1982) three types of elements: fixed, semi-fixed and unfixed. The fixed elements are those which constitute the form makers of the city, including the streets, parks and buildings. Semi-fixed are elements such as street furniture and street landscaping. Heath argues that the elements in both of these categories contribute little to people's need for stimulation, but rather are important in establishing a sense of order and place. He concludes that the unfixed or temporary elements such as window displays, market stalls, banners and the presence of people are the ones which provide most stimulation and 'life' to the city.

Heath's somewhat 'strict' classification derives from environmental psychology research into stimulation but may not be as certain when considering the multi dimensions imbedded in 'sense of place'. Evidence from research in Bilbao, Spain suggests that innovatively designed new fixed elements, such as buildings, and semi-fixed element upgrades, such as those incorporated in pedestrian streets and malls, have resulted in positive responses amongst residents and visitors alike and higher vitality for an area (Gospondi, 2004). We may conclude that innovative high quality new design elements can strengthen 'sense of place'. It is asserted that through supporting and rewarding a culture of seeking high quality design throughout the Gold Coast for small scale local, private and public elements, as well as for large scale private and public elements that Gold Coast City will establish a stronger 'sense of place' that is integral to resident's experiences and can also be recognised by both visitors and critics.

### **Three Milestone Initiatives**

The following projects are discussed mainly in terms of their contributions and limitations in improving authentic 'sense of place'.

#### *1. Broadwater Parklands*

The Broadwater Parklands (refer to Figure 3) are one of the city's major, regional foreshore parkland areas, popular with both residents and visitors. The long history of the Parklands as a favourite place for local residents as well as a family holiday destination has shaped its future as a world class community and cultural parkland. The recent upgrade of the Park offers a wider variety of recreational options than in the past, including picnics and barbecues, strolling on the rooftop terrace to take in the spectacular views of Surfers Paradise, fishing off the pier, swimming, and lunchtime sports on the

Great Lawn (Gold Coast, 2009 b). While the Parklands have a long and successful history the upgrade has generated increased visitations by both residents and tourists. The area is highly authentic and helps to bridge the local/global divide discussed by Bosman and Dredge.

Figure 3 Broadwater Parklands– Fixed and semi-fixed elements including buildings, shelters, paths and jetty. Image credit – Gordon Holden



Broadwater Parklands re-connects Gold Coast central business district at Southport with the Nerang River/Broadwater waterways and harbour. The design integrates public art to provide an effective and important means of generating a strong, wide-reaching sense of community and regional identity. The place provides events spaces for large organised activities including Yugambah Corroboree Food, Art and Language Festival and the Gold Coast Marathon. Parklands functions are supported by fixed and semi-fixed elements but also encompass un-fixed elements, such as banners, posters and temporary facilities thereby completing the full range of Rappoport’s elements discussed by Heath. A wide scope of experiences is available to serve individuals and groups across a wide age and gender profile during day and night hours and this coupled with historical usage and high quality design provides the ingredients for a strong and authentic ‘sense of place’ (refer to Figure 4).

Figure 4. Broadwater Parklands – Semi-Fixed elements including sun shades Un-fixed elements including banners. Image credit – Gordon Holden



## 2. Tedder Avenue, Main Beach

A place on the Gold Coast of great vibrancy is Tedder Avenue's restaurant and retail district. This area was originally a minor local-shop service provider. Through the initiatives of local retailers supported by residents it has blossomed into a world class centre that receives considerable local patronage as well as attracting global visitors. This is a good example of local authenticity strengthening 'sense of place' experience (refer to Figure 5).

The driving force behind the success of Tedder Avenue is the Main Beach-Tedder Avenue Association, a community group which was formed to improve and maintain the physical character and community life. The Association seeks to work proactively with the Gold Coast City Council and other authorities for the betterment of the area and it does so through close community consultation with local stakeholders. As referred to earlier, Bosman and Dredge suggest that an engaged community can assist 'sense of place' strengthening.

Despite the perception that the Association harbours 'up-market' ambitions of an exclusionary nature, of significance to 'sense of place' strengthening for Tedder Avenue, in common with Broadwater Parklands, is that they are public places, not private ones. Public places can be freely accessed by everybody at all times and such accommodation encourages the development of everyday meaning and values, important for 'minor placemaking' in Bosman and Dredge's terms.

Figure 5. Tedder Avenue – Encompassing Fixed, Semi-fixed and Un-fixed elements to establish a strong sense of place attracting visitors and locals.

Image credit – Gordon Holden



### *3. Circle on Cavill*

Another milestone example, but one of a different nature to those already discussed, is 'Circle on Cavill' in Surfers Paradise. This is an award winning high-rise twin tower development with ground level retail and public plaza spaces. The difference is that this is a private 'fixed' development (refer to Figure 6). Circle on Cavill creates several spaces for public access from streets, including avenue/malls and a central gathering place which accommodates a large suspended screen capable of showing television as well as video clips, a popular gathering place to view major events such as the 'World Cup'. The linking space on the West side visually connects towards the Nerang River and beyond and could physically connect to future urban development.

However, being privately owned, management has the capacity to exclude access and thoroughfare and this inherently can work against developing an authentic 'sense of place' because the community can never regard the place as freely accessible.

The development is considered to be well intentioned in urban design placemaking terms but after a few years of use there appears to be less public activity, a 'sense of place' indicator, in the spaces than might have been anticipated through applying placemaking principles to a detached study of the design. Some of the lower than expected use may be attributable to retail downturn as a result of the Global Financial situation, but anecdotally there also appears to be a perception that the 'public' spaces are somewhat utilitarian, suggesting that further attention to design detailing with expanded functions could address the matter.

Figure 6. Circle on Cavill at Surfers Paradise. Fixed elements. This is a valuable contribution to the city skyline and it provides well connected, public places and activities at ground level that with better detailing and management could strengthen 'sense of place'.  
Image credit – Gordon Holden



Whether private developments can ever attain the level of authentic 'sense of place' available to public places is a subject worthy of further study. Nevertheless Circle on Cavill is considered to incorporate basic characteristics essential for establishing a 'sense of place', including accessibility and visual linkages. What appears to be needed are a wider profile of functions and facilities that attract more people across all ages for longer periods of time. Starting with a focus on modifications that attract local residents may build the authenticity that could underpin a stronger interest for visitors.

#### **Student Special Place Field Work**

Griffith University, Gold Coast, 2010 first year architecture student project 'Special Place' called for students to select a place that has significance for them and to analyse the place in order to understand its special qualities and reasons why it appeals. Theoretical constructs about 'place' had not yet been discussed in class that might condition student thinking and selection. However it was clear from the results of the sixty students that their place selection could be considered in three main ways: Appleton's 'prospect-refuge' theory (1975); Place as a social-cultural construct imbued with meaning derived from experience of the place (Taun, 1974) and, the 'essence' of the place as

explained through 'genius loci, which proposes that the qualities of a place are not constructed by experience, but are already there (Relph, 2009).

Almost two thirds of the places selected fall into in the 'prospect-refuge' category. Typically these places were on a headland, sand dune or river bank overlooking an expansive view of the ocean or waterway, each of great 'prospect'. Typically they had trees or shrubs, or a large rock or embankment to the back of the position all of which provide a sense of security or 'refuge'. Most of the rest of the places selected were of an enclosed nature, without long distance views.

That the majority of significant places selected interacted with water, though predictable given that seventy percent of students live at the Gold Coast, may be interpreted as communicating the importance of the water's edge 'spirit of place' and its essential contribution to a collective 'sense of place'.

Student narratives for almost half of the places selected included discussion about sharing experience of the place with others, including friends and family, often dating back to childhood. This is allied to Taun's social-cultural experience theory of place.

Almost all of the narratives discussed the place in terms of natural beauty of the place, reinforcing that the essence 'spirit of place' was very important, connected to Relph's theory. Also almost all of the places selected were discussed in terms of at least two of the categories above, thereby aligning with what Stedman describes as the 'meaning-mediated' model. In this "Physical features do not produce sense of place directly, but influence the symbolic meanings of the landscape, which are in turn associated with evaluations such as attachment" (Stedman 2003) (p674). This may simply be described as an interactive model where people find the landscape attractive and thereby interact with it frequently resulting in strong attachment and strengthen 'sense of place'.

It is suggested that this pilot study is a model that could be extended to engage local residents in identifying 'special' places throughout the Gold Coast, which in turn could inform planning instruments for protection and enhancement, which further could lead to directed development of authentic places with positive outcomes for both residents and visitors. It is recognised that the Gold Coast City Council's 'Bold Future' initiative went some way in seeking the community's views about people and places, but it stopped short of identifying sufficiently detailed 'sense of place' indicators for interventions to be explored.

## **Student Conceptual Designs**

In 2011 the same group of students (now in second year) analysed the coastal edge strip of the Gold Coast from Runaway Bay to Burleigh Heads searching for 'sense of place' indicators. In doing this the students used knowledge about the nature of favourite places from the previous year's work but added further dimensions. These drew from Taun's thesis that 'place' is marked by human engagement in the urban landscape and this must be experienced firsthand. In a sense they were Baudelaire's 'flaneurs', or urban strollers 'a person who walks the street in order to experience it', but more in the Benjamin (2006) use of the term, as 'highly perceptive observers'. The students also studied the history of the place and they interviewed people at the place, thereby deepening conclusions.

This work underpinned conceptual urban design intervention proposals intended to strengthen community 'sense of place' within an environment of increased urbanity. Each student adopted a section of the urban area that is adjacent to the land and sea edge. These sites were chosen because of the meaning conveyed over time and through popular media that the water's edge symbolises the city.

Design interventions by students mainly addressed public place design which ranged from minor works that improve amenity to an existing place, such as new paths, seats or shelters in a park, to a new park (refer to figure 7), to the re-design of roads that are currently bland or placeless locations to people, but with the potential to strengthen a sense of community and provide linkages to significant place markers (refer to figure 8) and to major structures that bridge waterways (refer to figure 9).

A few design intervention proposals focused on private development, mainly on intensifying residential building, with associated service facilities. Motivations for private residential development derived from a strategic view that there are many parts of the Gold Coast, near the water's edge, that currently have low resident density but lend themselves to medium density, which in turn would provide populations that would support better services and facilities. Further logic to increasing residential density in existing areas derived from the simple expectation that less new urban growth at the periphery of the City would consequently be required.

Three conjectural design interventions are shown below that relate to public projects. These conjectures seek to provide authentic places for increasing numbers of residents, but with the expectation that visitors would then recognise qualities of place resulting in more memorable experiences. The student projects are being prepared for public exhibition as a stimulus to community

debate about Gold Coast City's capacity to work with its natural physical attributes and its built fabric to strengthen authenticity and the link between 'spirit of place' and 'sense of place'.

### 1. Urban Sculpture Park

Figure 7. Student John Kurko Project

Fixed and semi-fixed elements – proposal for an urban sculpture park at Broadbeach on vacant land, adopting themes that reinforce the place. The Park explores prospect-refuge concepts and marks a nearby artisan precinct. Through its distinctiveness it could also act as a 'way finder' for this part of the Coast.

Image credit – John Kurko



### 2. Street re-design

Figure 8. Student Pam Deasy Project

Fixed and un-fixed elements – proposal to re-design a street in Labrador at right angles to the Broadwater incorporating children activity areas. Intention is to encourage safety and security through community interaction and involvement, while also strengthening the visual link to the water. This design idea has authentic place-making potential, a model for adaptation elsewhere. Image credit – Pam Deasy.



### 3. Pedestrian/Cyclist Bridge

Figure 9. Student Chris Byron Project

Fixed element – proposal for a pedestrian/cyclist bridge across Nerang River connecting Southport with Tedder Av and Main Beach via a boulevard and park. (perspective view from East side). As a major new element this design has the potential for 'iconic' distinctiveness that could reinforce 'sense of place' for both residents and visitors. Image credit – Chris Byron



## Conclusion

This paper shows the multi-dimensional nature of 'sense of place' theoretically and in terms of Gold Coast City built examples, investigations and design conjectures. 'Sense of place', interpreted as a human phenomenon, is discussed as being linked but different from 'spirit of place' which relates to the inherent natural environment.

Milestone place making initiatives at the Gold Coast were discussed in terms of fixed, semi-fixed and un-fixed elements and they scoped across public works (Broadwater Parklands), private development (Circle on Cavill) and community initiative (Tedder Avenue). These examples illustrate the Gold Coast's broad engagement with and commitment to strengthening 'sense of place' through high quality contemporary design. In the public and community cases an authentic 'sense of place' that is perceived as being meaningful for residents is evident. For the private development, modifications that may improve 'sense of place' are explored.

Conceptual design intervention proposals engage with 'sense of place' enhancement, especially in terms of improving authentic experience for residents, which in a similar way to built examples may also strengthen 'place' experience for visitors.

The design conjectures may stimulate debate and encourage further initiatives to help Gold Coast City authorities and the wider community to achieve a sustainable healthy balance between the challenges of urbanisation and the development of a 'sense of place' that is in a symbiotic relationship with 'spirit of place'.

International parameters for the creation of healthy and liveable cities include the need for authentic human generated 'sense of place', which in the case of the Gold Coast when overlapping the natural 'spirit of place' may lift the Gold Coast's attraction as a place to live and to visit.

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