

REPORT ON COMMUNITY WORKSHOP 1

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MOUNT PETER MASTER PLANNING GROUP



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	PURPOSE OF REPORT.....	1
2	WORKSHOP APPROACH	1
2.1	RECRUITMENT METHODOLOGY.....	1
2.2	WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA.....	1
2.3	ATTENDANCE.....	2
3	WORKSHOP OUTCOMES	2
3.1	CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES.....	2
	Likes	2
	Changes.....	3
3.2	DRAFT VISION STATEMENT	3
	Biggest hope for the future.....	3
	Biggest concern or fear for the future.....	4
	Rating the vision.....	5
3.3	ISSUES FOR MASTER PLANNING	5
4	ANALYSIS	8
5	KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	9
5.1	HOUSING DENSITY.....	9
5.2	SURROUNDING AREAS.....	10
5.3	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	10

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A Workshop presentation
APPENDIX B Workshop results

Document Control					
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides a summary of feedback received at the Mount Peter Master Planning Community Workshop 1 held at Bentley Park College on the 15th of October 2008.

2 WORKSHOP APPROACH

2.1 RECRUITMENT METHODOLOGY

As this was the first community workshop during this stage of the process, there was an emphasis on involving community members who may not have previously participated in the master planning process.

The primary means of notification for the workshop was a newsletter that was distributed by Australia Post to 6,750 households and businesses in the Mount Peter study area, Gordonvale and Edmonton. This distribution was considerably larger than previous newsletters and was an attempt to raise awareness of the process, and of the workshop, with the wider community, particularly residents and businesses in Gordonvale and Edmonton.

Other means of communication about the workshop included:

- Letters and emails of invitation to the Mount Peter Master Planning Taskforce, the Community and Landowner Reference Group and local community organisations
- Advertising of the workshop on the project web site
- Attendance at a Family Fun Day at Hambleton House Community Centre (Edmonton) to promote the master planning process and the workshop
- Outreach activities in Gordonvale Town Centre to promote the event to local shoppers and businesses, and
- A media release to local press (which resulted in an article in the Cairns Post on the day of the workshop).

2.2 WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Inform community members about Mount Peter master planning
- Seek community input to inform the master planning process
- Seek feedback to affirm the vision for Mount Peter, and
- Generate community interest in the master planning process.

The structure of the workshop included:

- A short introductory presentation that provided an overview of the master planning process, the products or outputs that will be produced, and the various means for people to participate (a copy of the presentation slides is attached as Appendix A)
- A short general question and answer session



- Two sessions of self facilitated small group work that focussed on characteristics of existing communities and neighbourhoods and the draft vision statement, and
- An individual reflection exercise to identify the most important issues to be considered in the master planning process.

2.3 ATTENDANCE

Approximately 80 people attended the workshop. 76 people completed the sign in sheet/attendance register while a small number preferred to not leave their details. Of those that completed the sign in sheet, the suburbs represented included:

- Gordonvale
- Edmonton
- Bentley Park
- Mount Sheridan
- White Rock
- Bayview Heights
- Kamerunga
- Earlville
- Parramatta Park, and
- Cairns.

While details on people's ages were not collected, observation suggests that younger age groups (youth and younger adults) were less represented at the workshop.

3 WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

This section provides a summary of the top five responses to each of the workshop activities. A fuller reporting of responses with graphs is included in Appendix B.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The first set of questions for small group discussion focused on characteristics of where people currently live. The introductory remarks reinforced that an important part of the Mount Peter master planning process was to understand what local people valued about where they lived now and explore ways to incorporate those favoured aspects into the plans for Mount Peter.

LIKES

When asked to identify the three things that participants liked most about where they live now, the five most commonly report responses included:

- Peaceful, quiet area (35 responses)
- Green environment (25)
- Mountain/valley views (15)
- Sense of community (15), and



- Relaxed rural living (14).

CHANGES

As important as learning from what people value about their existing communities, is understanding and learning from the things that they do not like, or would like to change if they could.

When asked to identify the three things that participants would change about where they live now, the five most commonly report responses included:

- Less traffic/better traffic management (19 responses)
- Public transport (15)
- Open space and recreation facilities (14)
- Development control (13)
- Community facilities/services (11), and
- Road/highway upgrade (11).

3.2 DRAFT VISION STATEMENT

The second set of questions for small group discussion focused on the draft vision statement for Mount Peter. The introductory remarks reinforced that the draft vision statement was:

- Developed by CRC with landowners, community representatives including the reference group, and State Government
- Describes how Mount Peter will be in the future
- Guides the planning process, and
- Used as a 'yardstick'/reference point.

After a summary of the draft vision statement was read, participants were asked to again work in small groups to discuss their 'biggest hope' for the future Mount Peter and their 'biggest concern or fear'.

BIGGEST HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

When participants were asked to identify their biggest hope for the future Mount Peter, the five most commonly reported responses included:

- Well planned, sustainable development (36 responses)
- Green, open space, peaceful (32)
- Provision of good quality facilities and services (14)
- Provision of required infrastructure including transport (12), and
- Access to employment including industry (11).

Comments related to 'well planned, sustainable development' included:

- "A model of environmentally sustainable living that will inspire and inform all future development in the region."



- “That it demonstrates absolutely innovative master planning, urban design, sustainable development and recognises losses in ‘sense of community’ for residents in the area”
- “Effective interaction between residential, commercial, social facilities and transport. Efficient and connected public and alternative transport”
- “We have an integrated (environmental, social, economic, cultural) development with interurban breaks defining suburbs/towns.”, and
- “To be a series of country villages, not like suburban sprawl.”

Comments related to ‘green, open space, peaceful’ included

- “That it stays peaceful, sensibly developed and lots of greenery (parks, trees, lakes).”

Comments related to ‘good quality facilities and services’ included:

- “We don't have to go to Cairns City for doctors, Medicare etc”
- “Facilities not just for young families but for ageing families - different requirements of the ages of the community.”
- “Have an attraction and services to prevent people from travelling further north for the same.”

Comments related to ‘required infrastructure including transport’ included:

- “Good infrastructure under capacity and in advance”

Comments related to ‘access to employment including industry’ included:

- “Provides employment and opportunity for our children to live and work close by”.

CONCERNS AND FEARS FOR THE FUTURE

When participants were asked to identify their biggest concern or fear for the future Mount Peter, the five most commonly report responses included:

- Over development/density (42 responses)
- Environmental damage (13)
- Crime and safety concerns (11)
- Traffic and transport problems (10), and
- Issues related to the local economy and industry (9).

Comments related to ‘over development/density’ included:

- “High density, unsympathetic development that is not designed to cope with the impacts of climate change”
- “How you fit an extra 60,000 people in Mount Peter and manage people's expectations and maintain a nice environment i.e. rural residential feel”, and
- “The area turning into a high density housing area – slum. High density area means crime, gangs, drugs.”

Comments related to ‘environmental damage’ included “Destruction of beautiful natural environment.”

Comments related to ‘crime and safety concerns’ included “Lots of growth unfortunately also goes hand in hand with more crime and drugs.”



Comments related to 'traffic and transport problems' included:

- "The powers that be seem reluctant to use the existing railway for public transport"
- "Transport snarls as with other major cities"
- "Inefficient / unconnected alternative modes of transport (ped/cycle/public) "

Comments related to the 'local economy and industry' included "Neglect of Gordonvale district and the effect it may have on small businesses in the area."

RATING THE VISION

Participants were also asked to identify to what extent the draft vision statement captures what is important to them. A response scale was provided that ranged from 'very well' to 'not well at all'. Of the 34 respondents that answered this question the results were:

- Very well (3 respondents)
- Well (16)
- No opinion (9)
- Not well (6), and
- Not well at all (0).

Therefore, 19 of 34 respondents indicated the draft vision statement captured what is important to them either 'well or very well'; 6 of 34 respondents either 'not well or not well at all'; with 9 respondents of 'no opinion'.

For the group who expressed 'no opinion', typical comments included "It is the interpretation and application of the vision that is most important."

For the group who responded 'not well', comments included "That the condensed lots will cost as much as the large lots now, and families will not be able to afford family size lots making less families and children."

Of those people who did not answer the question, some recorded comments including "On the right track, but how well it will be enforced and monitored is a concern. Destruction of agricultural land and arable land for housing is a real concern. Hopeful of the vision – how sure can we feel that our endorsement will be carried out!"

3.3 ISSUES FOR MASTER PLANNING

Workshop participants were asked to complete a 'postcard' to send to the master planning group. Respondents were asked to complete the sentence 'The single most important thing for the master planning group to consider in planning for the future of Mount Peter is ...'

General comments included:

- "Create a self sufficient community that has a unique Far North Queensland feel or design and that sets a standard for all future developments."
- "Environmentally sustainable development that caters for a wide range of development options."
- "Avoid ghetto development with its attendant crime etc by ensuring good facilities so young people have plenty to do. To consider families and



individuals who need to live well but without living above their means, while staying safe, and while having access to a good range of facilities. I know this sounds generalistic and appears impossible, but I believe it is achievable. Thank you for this opportunity for information and consultation.”

- “Keep the tropical lifestyle, peaceful, open. Keep areas for different age groups e.g. families with kids, older people, couples with no kids. Schools near family homes, old people near hospitals.”

Other responses can be grouped as:

Community engagement process. Comments included:

- “Be sincere with the vision – don’t stuff it up – listen.”
- “Listen to the people and don’t stuff up the future for my grandchildren.”
- “Planners listen to the people and don’t overdevelop the area. Please don’t stuff up my lifestyle.”
- “To become familiar/intimate with the physical attributes (natural and man made) within Mount Peter, as well as community aspirations for the area.”
- “Listen to the people and use the ideas. Do not force your ideas on the community otherwise its nothing more than an education to people and slowly getting them to accept your plans.”
- “To consider those already living in the Mount Peter area. Who is planning this development of ‘our’ area.”
- “Don’t stuff it up and take good care about what people want.”
- “Listen to people who already live in the area and their opinions/concerns.”

Housing diversity and density

- “Variety of housing styles and allotment sizes to cater for all wants and needs. Don’t forget the ageing population – its not all about young families.”
- “15 dwellings/hectare is too small. 10/hectare is max.”
- “Keep it countrified. I like the 15 dwellings/hectare concept because it is cleaner ... but plenty of bike and foot pathways and end of street parks etc. are needed to avoid claustrophobic feeling.”
- “Reduce the population density to less than 15 dwellings per hectare. Maximum of 10 dwellings would be acceptable. How to reconcile the proposed high density with quality of life and open space/natural environments. Creating a community that is responsive to the impacts of climate change.”

Environment

- “Environmentally friendly living – pollution, energy usage, reuse, reduce and recycle.”
- “Look after the environment.”
- “Environmentally responsible energy and waste removal options must be a priority – along with preservation of natural environment, habitats and wildlife!! If all the arable land is dedicated to housing how will we continue to feed the population.”
- “Environmentally friendly housing with solar power to save on current electricity costs, wind generators on the hills, large water tanks on houses.”



Infrastructure

- “To determine at an early stage the main road infrastructure through Mount Peter.”
- “Water, better roads, hospital.”
- “Roads, hospital and enough water.”
- “More water.”

Strong planning

- “Preserve the hillsides and tropical outlook i.e. make sure Mount Peter is well planned.”
- “Interurban breaks to define existing and future settlement – and don’t say they’ve built on these in SEQ, this is FNQ.”
- “Containing urban sprawl through solid planning.”

The unique FNQ character

- “Keep the North Queensland flavour.”
- “Distinctively Far North Queensland.”
- “This is FNQ and amenity and lifestyle needs to be maintained.”

A focus on children and future generations

- “Social sporting and educational development of the local children.”
- “Keep the children in mind, sporting complexes and a safe community. Think of the next generation please.”

Impacts on surrounding, existing communities

- “Not turning a blind eye on the effect and impact that this development would have on the Gordonvale area.”
- “Add to the local cultural heritage and commerce of existing centres Gordonvale (in need of most help) and Edmonton (overwhelmed already).”

Sense of community and safety

- “Safe community environment with regard to all segments of the community.”
- “Safety, environment, not turning the area into a slum with crime, drugs, gangs.”

Community, sport and recreation facilities

- “There should be more tennis and sports oriented areas, especially in parks to prevent drugs/crime.”
- “Social sporting and educational development of the local children.”

Employment and economic development

- “Look after employers by not overcrowding business and making existing ones unviable (main point jobs).”



4 ANALYSIS

The Community Workshop confirmed that lifestyle issues are of high importance. These issues are summarised in workshop participants' identification of what they like about where they live now: peaceful, quiet; green environment; mountain, valley views; sense of community; and relaxed, rural living.

The workshop feedback suggests that lifestyle is strongly associated with place and is often described as 'FNQ lifestyle'. It is embodied in the natural environment, the 'peace and quiet', natural features such as mountains and creeks, and also relates to the social connections, cultural values and the village/rural style living found in the study area and in towns like Gordonvale.

It is also apparent that for some community members, the Mount Peter master planning process is seen as putting those valued characteristics at risk. This represents a key challenge. It is fundamentally about peoples' capacity to deal with change and this form of adaptation, that may require changes to lifestyle patterns, is particularly challenging.

Understanding the different elements that make up 'lifestyle' is important and may present some opportunities for the master planning process to respond to. Examples include protection of valued ecological features and restriction (or prohibition) of development from encroaching up the escarpment. How the master planning process responds to neighbouring areas, particularly Gordonvale, will also be critical. The character and viability of Gordonvale and its town centre will likely continue to be an important issue as master planning progresses.

Responses to questions about what people would like to change about where they currently live provide further guidance to the master planning process. Responses from the workshop included: traffic; public transport; open space and recreation; development control; community facilities and services; and road/highway upgrading.

Further opportunities and direction are provided through people's 'biggest hopes for the future Mount Peter', with responses including: well planned, sustainable development; good quality facilities and services; green, open space and peaceful; provision of infrastructure including transport; and access to employment. Some of the comments provide some additional insights including the 'hope' for Mount Peter to set a new standard in development ("a model that will inspire and inform all future development") and also suggestions for urban form with the creation of a "series of country villages" with "interurban breaks defining suburbs/towns."

The question about 'biggest concern or fear' highlighted two of the biggest issues for this process: density and environmental protection.

Housing density was linked by workshop participants with a wide range of potential problems including: crime and safety issues; creation of slums and ghettoisation; inability to deal with climate change; and being "unsympathetic" to what people understand to be the character of the area. Housing density was a 'hot button' issue with a strong view being that the things that people value about the area, and the lifestyle characteristics identified, could not be preserved if the housing densities discussed (15 dwellings/hectare) were introduced. As one comment highlighted "How to reconcile the proposed high density with quality of life and open space/natural environments."

One of the strongest messages to come from the 'send a message' postcard activity was about process and the genuineness of community engagement. A process that is genuine and robust in terms of community engagement was identified as a priority by participants. Challenges may arise in future phases of the



project when what is considered to be important from a community perspective is inconsistent with planning and policy priorities. A possible key tension here is the issue of housing density.

A number of comments alluded to the need for 'balance'. Examples include "liveability and blending with the environment", and "how to reconcile the proposed high density with quality of life and open space/natural environments." These issues of balance and reconciling what are seen to be competing priorities will be challenging but are fundamental to the success of the master planning process.

5 KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of key issues that have emerged from this first round of community engagement that will need to be addressed in the next phases of the project. These issues include:

- Housing density and community response to it
- The viability, sustainability and character of surrounding areas, and
- The community engagement process.

5.1 HOUSING DENSITY

Housing density is a key issue. As reported, housing density was associated by workshop participants with crime and safety issues; the creation of slums; being unresponsive to climate and climate change; and being "unsympathetic" to 'local character'.

One of the problems with housing density is the lack of good examples to show what different communities, at different densities, are like. Some suggestions for the next round of community engagement include:

- Providing more information on what 15 dwellings/hectare looks like. With as many examples as possible having relevance to a tropical environment
- Using scenarios or options to show community members what Mount Peter would be like under different density scenarios. While there may be a number of options showing different ways that 15 dwellings/hectare can occur in the study area, at least one option should demonstrate a majority of 800 square metre lots. Information on these options should also show analysis of what each scenario means for public transport, traffic, affordability, level of community and recreation facilities, open space provision, protection of natural areas etc., and
- Providing information on how tropical design can be incorporated into a variety of housing forms including medium and higher density forms.

While not specifically related to housing density, more information on the context for planning for Mount Peter could also be provided. Information could include:

- Providing more information on population projections for Cairns to provide a greater understanding of the role of Mount Peter in accommodating the city's expected growth, and
- Providing more information on the constraints associated with other areas and why Mount Peter has been identified as the major growth area.



5.2 SURROUNDING AREAS

The need for integrated planning that considers both the physical and social context of Mount Peter is a key issue. As reported, many workshop participants have a keen interest in, and some concerns about, the impact of Mount Peter master planning on existing study area residents, Gordonvale and its town centre and other nearby areas. Gordonvale is an important part of the local area and the viability, sustainability and character of this community is a key issue for the master planning project.

It does appear that there are a range of views within the local community about the future of Gordonvale. As planning progresses for Mount Peter, strategies to address the relationship between Gordonvale and Mount Peter will be critical. The strategies related to centres and economic development will both be critical. Both will need to be informed by consultation with key local groups including chambers of commerce and a local taskforce comprised of Gordonvale residents.

Edmonton Traders group also have their own interests and issues that will need to be considered regarding the relationship between Mount Peter and Edmonton. Another issue related to the surrounding areas was how development in areas outside the study area will be planned and controlled both during and after the master planning process.

5.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The need for the local community to feel engaged in the master planning process was identified as a priority. Process implications from the workshop include the importance of maintaining communication with local communities, particularly the study area, Gordonvale and Edmonton. While it is extremely difficult for all affected stakeholders to be completely satisfied with all aspects of a complex and comprehensive master planning project, it is important to ensure that local communities continue to be informed and kept up to date about this process.

The need to acknowledge and respect local views was strongly expressed by workshop participants. Equally important will be the need to continue to manage expectations as it will not be possible to address all concerns to the complete satisfaction of all interested stakeholders.

It is particularly important that the next phase of engagement prior to the Enquiry by Design (EBD) process furthers the dialogue about housing density and impacts on surrounding areas. It is important to ensure that community members are well informed about these and other key issues, and the master planning group's approach to them, prior to the EBD and the release of draft plans in the post EBD phase.



APPENDIX A



Workshop presentation



MOUNT PETER MASTER PLANNING


Community Workshop

October 15 2008



Today

- Introduce the master planning process
- To understand more about what works and what doesn't in your existing communities
- To hear your views on the draft vision for Mount Peter



Overview

- Introduction to the project
- What is master planning?
- What will be produced?
- What is the process?
- How can you participate?
- Why are we here today?



Introduction to the project

- Project is led by Cairns Regional Council (CRC)
- Involves a partnership between CRC, landowners and State Government
- CRC has engaged a master planning group



The master planning study area





Ways to participate

- Key stakeholder interviews
- Community and landowner reference group
- Community workshops
- Working with local schools and communities
- 'Enquiry by Design'
- Community information sessions
- Public display
- Community open day
- Targeted press releases and feature stories
- Public exhibition and representations report
- Newsletter
- Web site



Questions





Small group work

- Each table nominate ...
 - One facilitator
 - One scribe (group notetaker)




Facilitator

- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak and be heard
- Encourage people to listen
- Allow the conversation to flow
- Keep an eye on the time



Scribe

- Write down a summary of the main points agreed by the group
- Write neatly



Green Sheet


Individual reflection

- 3 things that you like most about where you live now
- 3 things you would change about where you live now

Group discussion



- Short list of group likes and changes





The draft vision

- Developed by CRC with landowners, reference group, State Government
- Describes how Mount Peter will be in the future
- Guides the planning process
- Used as a 'yardstick'/reference point



Orange Sheet

Individual reflection

- Biggest hope for the future
- Biggest fear for the future
- Does the vision 'hit the mark'

Group discussion

- Short list of group hopes, fears and response to vision



Send a message

- Single most important message to send to the master planning group



For more information:

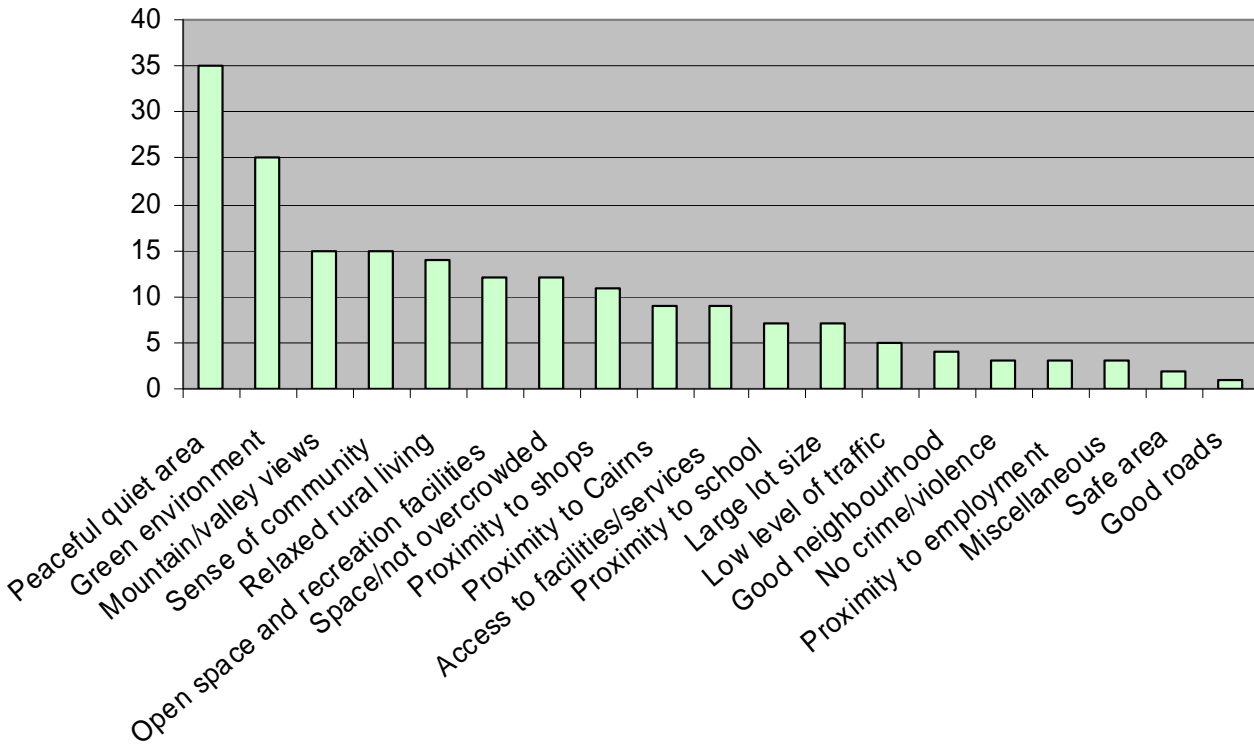
Web: www.mountpetermasterplanning.com.au
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Phone: 1800 888 374



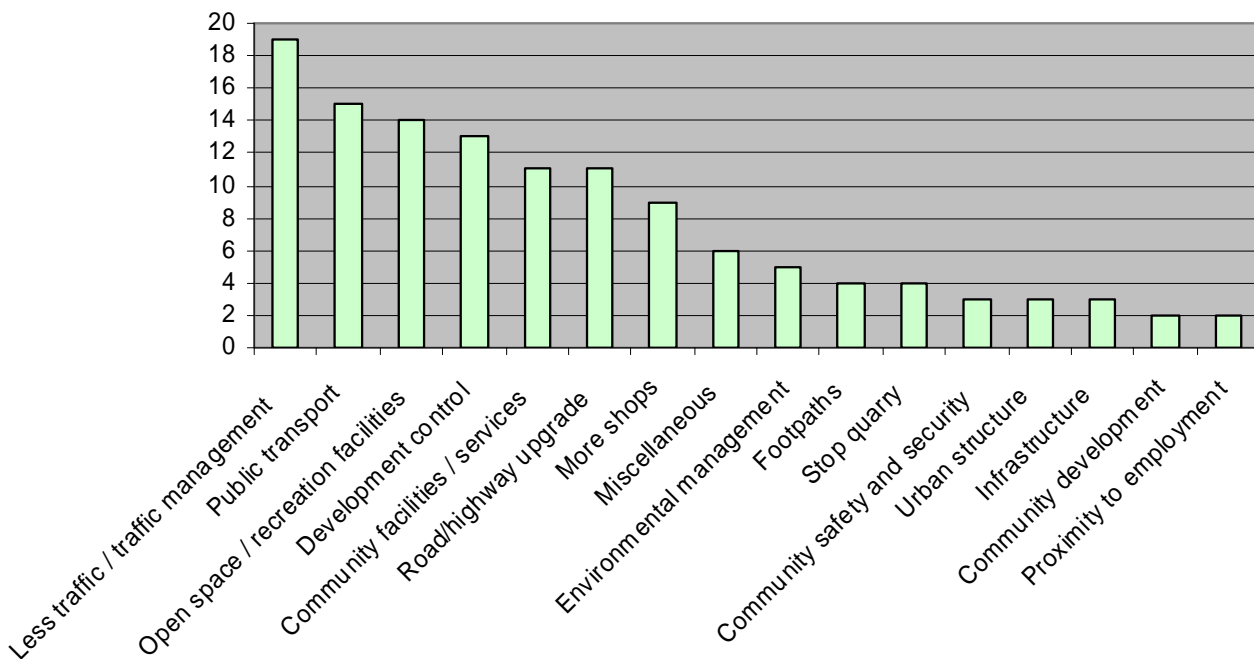
APPENDIX B

Workshop results

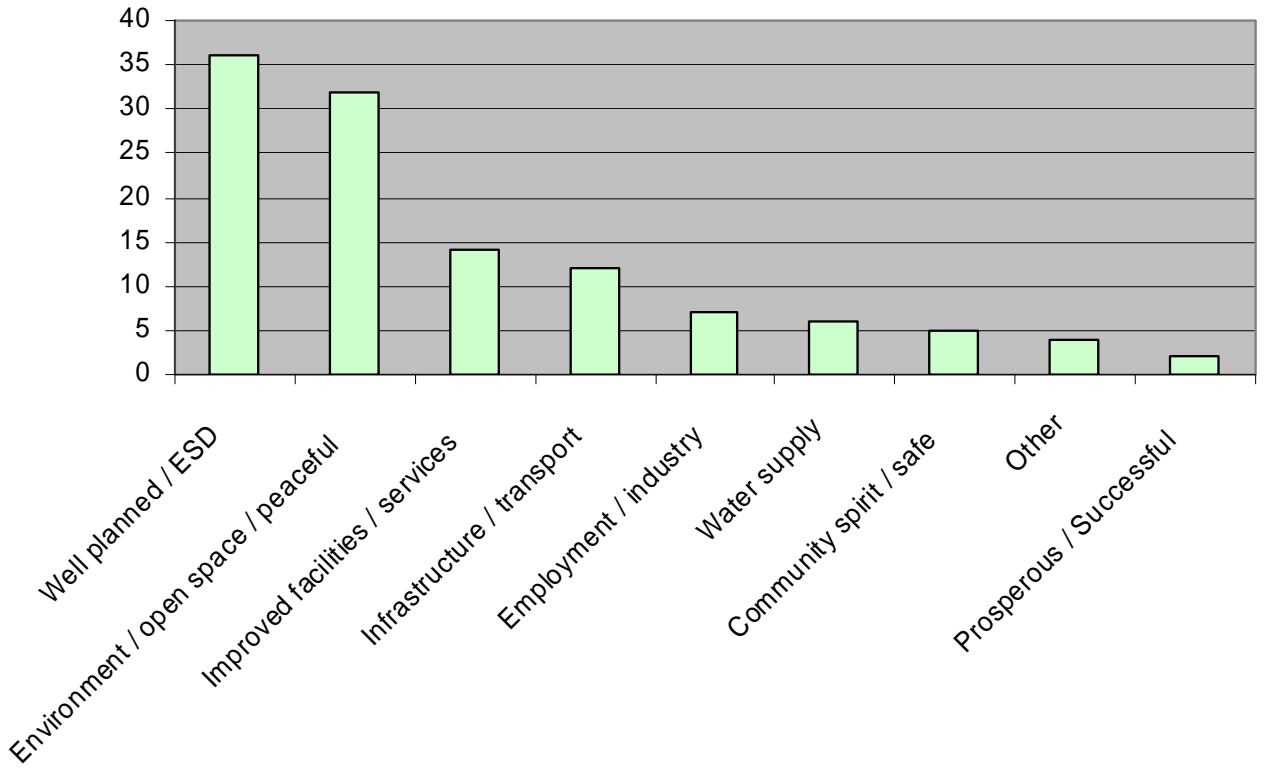
3 things that you like most about where you live now



3 things that you would change about where you live now



Biggest hope for the future Mount Peter



Biggest concern or fear for the future of Mount Peter

