

Policy Type	Corporate
Function	Economic Development
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Contact	Economic Development Coordinator
Effective Date	26 November 2024

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to serve as a strategic framework to foster growth, attract investment and enhance the overall economic well-being of the Burdekin. The policy aims to create a conducive environment for businesses and support job creation to support the vibrancy, diversity and sustainability of the Council area.

Additionally, it helps identify opportunities for collaboration between public and private sectors to influence the factors that facilitate the resilience, competitiveness and success of local businesses and the capacity of the Burdekin to attract new investment, diversify the economy and create the jobs of the future.

It ensures that resources are used efficiently to stimulate the local economy and improve quality of life for residents.

## Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, employees, contractors and consultants engaged by Council in their dealings with the Burdekin Shire's community. This policy has application across the full range of policy, planning, programs and services delivered by Council.

Council recognises that it has a vital role to play in the leadership, organisation, delivery and promotion of local economic development and is committed to supporting effective partnerships to encourage economic development, particularly through brokering, facilitation and information sharing.

## Policy Statement

Council is committed to fostering a vibrant, sustainable economy that enhances the quality of life for all residents.

Council will collaborate with stakeholders, including other levels of government, regional partners, Council advisory groups, business and industry groups, existing and new businesses and community members to create an inclusive environment that encourages economic development, innovation and job creation and highlights Council's role as an enabler of economic development activity.

By investing in public infrastructure, workforce development, sustainable practices and building on the shire's competitive advantages, Council strives to build a resilient economy that meets the needs of current and future generations. Council's goal is to ensure that economic opportunities are accessible to all, fostering prosperity and enhancing the community's overall well-being.

## Exceptions

This policy does not commit Council to any economic development activities or initiatives that do not align with Council's corporate plan, planning scheme, local laws or deemed to conflict with the community's values, planning or environmental standards or Federal and State Government legislation and plans.

## Objectives

Burdekin Shire's economy and community has grown from a strong agricultural base, enjoying the benefits of quality land and abundant natural resources with significant water availability and sunshine.

This policy aims to achieve the following key objectives:

- **Attract new and diverse industries:** Implement initiatives to attract new businesses and investments to the area, focusing on sectors that align with the shire's strengths and priorities. Council will continue to support the role of the sugar industry as an economic driver and key employer in the Local Government area, but will also encourage the diversification of the local economy to reduce reliance on any single industry and increase resilience against economic downturns or natural disasters.
- **Increase employment opportunities:** Foster an environment that encourages the growth of businesses, leading to increased employment opportunities for residents.
- **Grow and retain existing business:** Provide resources and support services for local entrepreneurs and small businesses, including access to funding, training, and mentoring programs.
- **Attract and retain new residents:** enhance the community's population growth and demographic diversity, which can encourage increased economic activity and a vibrant and connected community. By promoting the shire's unique qualities, such as affordable housing, quality education, recreational opportunities and a strong sense of community, the Burdekin shire will become a location of choice to live, work, play, visit and invest.
- **Infrastructure Provision and Improvement:** Invest in and maintain public infrastructure that supports economic activities such as roads, water and sewerage infrastructure, strategic land use planning, master planning and place activation.
- **Sustainable Development:** Promote environmentally sustainable practices in economic activities, ensuring that growth does not compromise the community's natural resources. The Burdekin is becoming increasingly attractive for a range of new industries which will further diversify and strengthen the local economy. Opportunities include biofuel and hydrogen production from sugar cane, renewable energy facilities (in the form of solar farms), mining and extractive resources and aquaculture – all of which may establish in appropriate locations in rural areas. By encouraging and supporting the establishment of renewable energy projects on marginal land in identified renewable energy zones, this will protect Agricultural land classification class A and B and priority agricultural areas to maintain the viable agricultural land supply available for intensive horticulture (eg. sugar cane cropping and fruit and vegetable production). If a development is proposed on agricultural land, each application is assessed on its merits and impacts to the agricultural industry.
- **Workforce Development:** Collaborate with regional partners, educational institutions and training providers to ensure a skilled workforce that meets the needs of local industries.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve other levels of government, regional partners, Council advisory groups, business and industry groups, existing and new businesses and community members in the economic development process, ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in decision-making.
- **Quality of Life Enhancement:** Support initiatives that improve the overall quality of life and making the Burdekin a vibrant and connected community and a location of choice in which to live, work, play, visit and invest.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Assess the effectiveness of economic development initiatives and adapt projects as needed to achieve desired outcomes and to determine whether Council is meeting the needs of the community and local businesses and industry.

## Challenges

There are several key challenges to effective Economic Development including but not limited to: resources, economic diversification, infrastructure needs, stakeholder engagement, regulatory barriers, workforce development, housing affordability and availability, attracting investment, sustainability and political stability. These challenges have been considered by Council in accordance with its risk management approach to Economic Development Activities.

## Risk Management

Council's adopted Enterprise Risk Management Framework is to be applied to all economic development activities. Economic development projects undertaken by Council will involve a formal risk assessment to be undertaken as part of the project planning process. Developments by external proponents is managed through the development and planning process. This Policy helps to mitigate against the risks of poor public perception and address concerns about the Council's efforts in promoting economic development in the shire.

## Legislation

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Local Government Regulation 2012*

*Planning Act 2016*

*Economic Development Act 2012*

*Burdekin Shire Planning Scheme 2022*

## Definitions and Abbreviations

**Economic Development** is about continuous improvement in an area's level of income and capital (wealth) and the distribution of that wealth (through local expenditure and jobs) to the community. Typically measured in terms of investment, income flows and employment, economic development is also measured by improvements in education, skills, health, culture, community wellbeing, 'place' and the environment. Ultimately, it is about improving quality of life or to capture the concept in a single word, it is about prosperity. (Source: SC Lennon & Associates)

**Council** refers to the Burdekin Shire Council

## Related Documents

Reference Number	Document Title
Council website	Burdekin Shire Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027
Council website	Burdekin Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2020-25
Council website	Burdekin Shire Planning Scheme 2022
LGAQ website	How economic development is defined for councils
LGAQ	LG Elected Leaders & Economic Development Trade and Investment Resource for Qld Councils

## Document History and Version Control

<b>Title of Document</b>	Economic Development Policy
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