

Council backs major Edmonton project

A COMMERCIAL precinct proposed to cater for the population swell in Cairns' southern suburbs and generate up to 4000 jobs has finally received council support.

Cairns Regional Council has agreed to provide in-principle support for the Edmonton Business and Industry Park after the project was held up for two years because of state and local government red tape.

The project, a venture by Cairns-based Pregno Family Investments, would occupy 212ha south of Swallow Rd and is the largest proposed greenfield site development outside of southeast Queensland.

It would also comprise community and recreational facilities including two dis-



trict sporting fields, park and picnic areas, cycle paths and walking trails.

The application states it would create about 4000 jobs – mainly in construction and earthworks.

But the project's future hinges on a position report from the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Pregno Family Trust spokeswoman Meredith Gardiner could not comment on the proposal's future but said the application process had been frustrating.

The first round of applications were submitted to the council in March, 2008, but refused because the State Government had yet to decide on the Bruce Highway realignment path at the time.

"The development is taking a lot longer than we would have liked," Ms Gardiner said. "There has been a lot of unnecessary delays."

Cr Rob Pyne, who has backed the application since it was submitted, said the precinct would be an economic boon for the city and host a range of existing and emerging industry sectors.

He said the council's lack of willingness to fast-track the development beggared belief, particularly given the lack of activity in the construction industry and the

region's high unemployment rate.

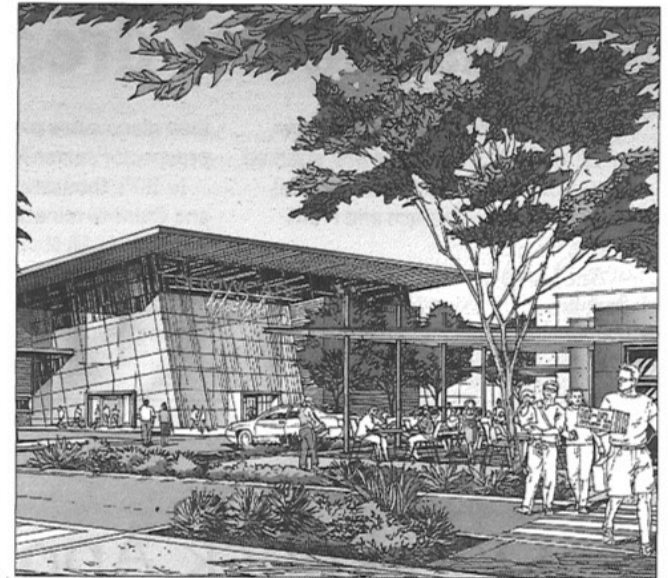
"This will be massive ... it's just a shame it's taken so long," Cr Pyne said.

"We're in a financial crisis; we should be bending over backwards for these projects."

Cr Pyne said its potential to create new jobs should be a priority when the council next met to decide its future.

"A part of a reason for doing this is to allow Edmonton people to work locally," he said.

He said the development would complement the Mount Peter Master Plan, a development blueprint for the area to cater for an estimated 40,000 people over at least the next 20-30 years, and the Edmonton Town Centre.



Future growth: An artist's impression of the Edmonton Business and Industry Park, which includes community and recreation facilities.