

GCB 20/

# Towering Coomera

by Kathleen Donaghey

COOMERA will move from back yards and double garages to high rises of up to 15 stories as council moves to create a Surfers Paradise in the 'burbs.

The Gold Coast City Council plan would make the 'family belt' at east Coomera one of the city's most densely populated suburbs.

The council's 'new urbanism' design allows up to 200 dwellings per hectare (10 per hectare is normal for suburbia) which is a similar density to Surfers Paradise.

Coomera is being settled by young families who want

## City plans to drop back yards for high rises

bigger, affordable blocks. But with population projections of up to 350,000 people in Coomera by 2012, the council has to find new ways to squeeze them in.

'Surfers Paradise in the 'burbs' is planned for the bush around the train station.

Local councillor Donna Gates said the State Government required the density to accommodate the huge numbers of people moving to the Coast, especially to the northern end.

"We need to accommodate them within the urban

footprint and I don't see how else it can be achieved."

Cr Gates said the region would be well serviced, with council's four-year capital works plan including a community centre, pool and library.

"We're looking at the west (Coomera) now because that's where people are now. But it's all there in the forward planning."

Buildings between two and six storeys will constitute most of the high rises but some as tall as 15 storeys will be allowed between the

M1 and the station, said Cr Gates.

However developers say families will not want to live in high rises without beaches, shopping centres, restaurants and entertainment nearby.

Midwood Report author Bill Morris said east Coomera would have the same density as Surfers Paradise and Broadbeach - without the amenity - and in an area where people wanted bigger blocks.

"They are imposing this vision on east Coomera which may have the effect of ceasing development," he said.

"It's just wall-to-wall high density."

The Coomera Town Centre Structural Plan revolves around a town centre near the railway line close to land owned by the State Government for future facilities such as a TAFE or a hospital.

Around that, the council wants high-density residential of up to 200 dwellings per hectare and for people to rely on local public transport.

Moving out from the town centre, housing will become less dense - between 25 and 150 dwellings per hectare -

and include townhouses and average-sized blocks.

Peter Dunkley, state development manager with Devine Ltd, said it was likely high rises would not eventuate and the council would be left with an empty shell.

Leda Developments state property manager Phil O'Callaghan believed units and apartments were a more affordable option for couples and families.

"There's been anecdotal evidence from sales offices that there are larger proportions of people who don't want the big yard because they have to mow it," said Mr O'Callaghan.