

First step

Wentworth Shire Council backs large-scale tourist attraction at Gol Gol

THE construction of a large-scale tourism attraction at Gol Gol is one step closer to reality, after Wentworth Shire Councillors unanimously backed the 'Northbank on the Murray' concept this week.

Northbank is aiming to offer resort accommodation, cafes and

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restaurants, a gymnasium, shopping outlets and indoor and outdoor attractions and activities.

Northbank will also look to incorporate a four to five-star resort,

family fun and adventure options, a golf course, adventure and recreation facilities and water sport facilities.

On Wednesday, Wentworth Shire Councillors unanimously resolved to submit the Northbank planning proposal to the New South Wales Minister for the Department of Planning and Environment for consideration of a Gateway Determination to

amend the Wentworth Local Environmental Plan 2011.

The planning proposal, lodged by Des and Joyce Lush and Grand Junction Pty Ltd, seeks approval to rezone a parcel of land located one kilometre from the Gol Gol township from primary production to a tourist zone, while also introducing mixed use and commercial core

zones.

And while the proponents behind the Northbank concept were pleased with Wednesday's outcome, they were quick to point out there was still "a long way to go" before the project will be shovel ready.

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"This is long process, with the next part (a Gateway Determination) more involved," Addco Property director, David Fowler, said.

Addco Property is a Sydney-based group that has been consulting with Grand Junction and the Lush family on the Northbank proposal, with Mr Fowler saying that Wednesday's decision marked the first step in a five-step planning process.

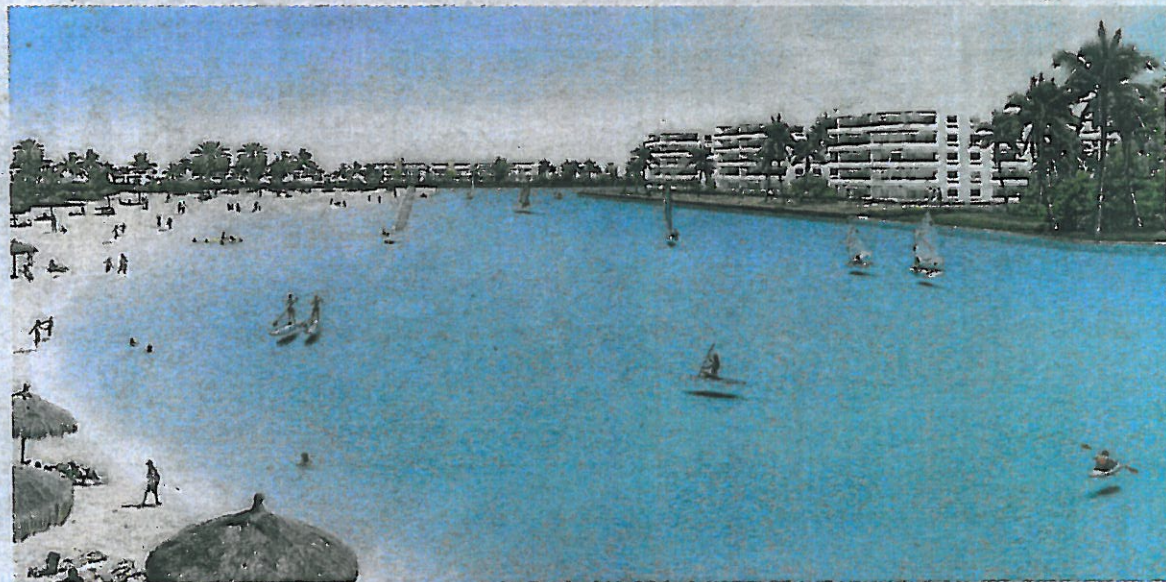
"At the end of the day we have to work through some things before we can even begin to start thinking about this project being shovel ready," he told the *Mildura Weekly* yesterday.

"Northbank, regardless, will be staged and developed over many decades, however, it was important to get the ball rolling now, which this outcome allows.

"This is step one in a long process, with achieving a Gateway Determination opening the door for community consultation. Fundamentally we believe this is an extremely good proposal, one that will benefit all stakeholders.

"Wentworth Shire, and the Gol Gol and Buronga townships in particular, is crying out for a development of this nature."

In their submission to Wentworth Council, Grand Junction stated that "with the addition of tourism demand, Buronga/Gol Gol will have the population to warrant its own retail/commercial shopping precinct that will serve tour-



ists and existing residents and future residents."

"Northbank can provide a destination of sufficient scale and size to allow a larger range of retail and entertainment offerings to augment existing neighbourhood offerings," the proposal reads.

"Another objective of Northbank is to reduce 'escape spending', ie. dollars of NSW money being spent in Victoria. For the majority of residents of Gol Gol and Buronga, retail and entertainment needs and wants are serviced in Mildura, Victoria.

"What this equates to is millions of dollars heading over the bridge into Victoria every month, with little of that money return-

ing to NSW."

Mr Fowler also made a presentation to Wentworth Councillors on Wednesday prior to the vote, unveiling the "key attraction" of Northbank - the 'Crystal Lagoons', PICTURED.

"The Crystal Lagoons will become a unique attraction for Wentworth, offering a beach lifestyle for visitors," he told Councillors. "There is nothing like this in Australia."

Crystal Lagoons is an international brand, with the concept proving extremely popular in the United States.

The man-made Lagoons are considered environmentally sound, and will cover approximate-

ly 25 acres of the proposed Northbank site.

Council had previously outsourced an assessment of the Northbank proposal to the Aurecon Group prior to Wednesday's vote, with Aurecon recommending further work be undertaken to support the proposal.

Grand Junction responded to Aurecon's independent assessment by making minor changes to the proposal, before resubmitting it for consideration this week.

Aurecon's review found that the Northbank proposal was "vague and lacking consideration of critical issues, such as the economic viability and sustainability of the site... socio-economic impacts and

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- Addco Property director, David Fowler

benefits to surrounding communities at a regional or local level."

Aurecon's review also found that without further planning and assessment, the Northbank proposal posed "considerable risk" to Wentworth Shire Council.

Grand Junction, in reply, said the Aurecon report had contained "a number of errors and omissions".

In a letter to Wentworth Shire Council director Health and Planning, Ken Ross, Grand Junction Planning and Environmental manager, Kathryn Baird, said: "Aurecon speaks of 'risks to both Wentworth Shire Council and adjoining Councils' without identifying what these risks are or explaining why Mildura Council should play a part in determining Wentworth's planning."

"It omits the significant potential benefits to Wentworth Council (rates, jobs, fees) or the benefits to the wider local tourism industry," Ms Baird concludes.