



# Town centre back on as charges cut

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WESTFIELD has secured a massive discount on infrastructure charges for the proposed Coomera Town Centre, clearing the biggest hurdle to the \$400 million project in recent years.

But while the council has put Westfield on notice to start construction within 12 months of approval, local business owners and residents – let down by countless false starts for the project over the past 20 years – are finding it hard to get excited.

The Coomera Chamber of Commerce has slammed the continued secrecy from the council, State Government and Westfield over progress on the town centre, delays of which have stymied development on the eastern side of the M1.

Chamber president Lionel Barden said it could be five to eight years before a single shop opened in the development, which will be a catalyst for a major new CBD on the Gold Coast.

“We can’t even draw an opinion (on the centre) at this stage because we don’t know what’s going on,” he said.

The town centre has stalled in recent years after Westfield was stung with a

reported \$140 million in infrastructure charges.

The Bulletin can reveal that Westfield and the city council came to agreement in November on significantly lower charges, which are understood to be well below \$100 million.

A relaxation of State Government fees last year is understood to have whittled proposed charges to about \$40 million.

The final figure has not been disclosed and a council spokesman said it would depend on the approved master plans, of which the first of four has been lodged.

A start date is still some time away, although a council spokesman said it “wants to see the project up and running as soon as possible because of the obvious benefits it will have for the Coomera region”.

The town centre is being developed by Westfield in partnership with the government-owned QIC on a 35ha site adjacent to the railway station on Foxwell Rd. Westfield declined to comment on the infrastructure charges or an estimated start date.

Area councillor Donna Gates confirmed the charges to be levied were

subject to confidentiality.

Cr Gates did reveal it was an “outstandingly different sum” to the amount previously touted.

“The agreement allows for a 12-month timeframe for Westfield to commence construction,” Cr Gates said. “It’s a very good outcome.”

But the Coomera Chamber of Commerce has had enough of the talk, calling for a meeting next month to bring all parties involved in the development to the table to brief the local community.

“Since becoming chamber president in September last year, my committee and I have been trying to find out the exact state of play of the Coomera Town Centre,” Mr Barden said.

“We have been confused by the different messages from press releases as well as from the various individuals involved who have spoken to us privately.”

The Coomera chamber is hosting a business breakfast on February 2 as an open forum on the issue and has invited representatives from Westfield, QIC, the council and State Government to attend.



**Lionel Barden**



**Donna Gates**



One of the early designs for the Coomera Town Centre, which has been on the drawing board for 20 years