



## **Resembling Florida: Transpacific Transfer of Ideas from One Gold Coast to Another**

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The Gold Coast City, Queensland, is one of Australia's most famous tourist destinations. Its sub-tropical climate and coastal location attract over eleven million visitors each year. Its reputation as a major holiday destination has contributed to its growing economy and its attractiveness for tourism and retirement. Over time, Gold Coast City transformed from a series of small towns and villages in the early part of the 20th century into one of the fastest growing local governments in Australia, with a current population of 500,000 that is expected to rise to one million by 2030. It is the largest non-capital city in the country, and in some cases larger than several state capitals.

The fast pace development of Gold Coast City began in the 1930s, at a time during which Australian planning practices started to turn away from traditional British approaches and were looking at "new world" planning ideas inspired by the United States. Despite major differences between Australia and the United States, in terms of population size and distribution, the United States was considered a model because of its technical know-how and planning visions.

During the early phases of Gold Coast City development, the limited amount of readily-available buildable land along beaches led developers to turn towards the reclamation of floodplains and the development of canal estates on these reclaimed lands. Similar practices had been employed in some parts of South Florida beginning in the 1920s. The property boom was fuelled by marketing campaigns advertising Gold Coast City as a man-made miracle and selling Australia's first, truly "Florida Keys' style" waterway developments. The parallel drawn with the American Sunshine State clearly shows that Gold Coast City shares strong similarities with Florida's Gold Coast cities such as Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood. In fact, aerial photos of the two cities are virtually indistinguishable in parts, despite the differences in political structures and planning regimes.

These similarities raise the following question: to which degree are these similar outcomes coincidental or intentional, resulting from using American cities as a model for newer developments in Australia? To understand the pace and shape of development that occurred in Gold Coast City, Queensland one needs to look at the transfer and diffusion of specific ideas regarding the development of coastal resort towns. To this effect, this paper explores the historical links between Gold Coast City in South East Queensland, Australia, and the Gold Coast of South Florida, U.S., using archival data and historical documents.

**KEY WORDS:** Development history, tourism urbanization, diffusion of planning ideas.