

SE News
HD **AIRLIE AWAKENING AIRLIE TO BE INVESTMENT HOLE-IN-ONE**

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AIRLIE BEACH, A LONG-TIME HOT SPOT FOR INTERNATIONAL BACKPACKERS, IS ABOUT TO REINVENT ITSELF WITH SEVERAL EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS, REPORTS CHRISTIE ANDERSON.

AIRLIE BEACH is tipped to transform from backpacker central to a high-class tourism destination, with **Chinese** investors spending up big to develop the coastal town.

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Several exciting new developments are either in progress or on the drawing **board**.

A "**Chinatown**" development is on the cards, with its own Buddhist temple to attract cashed-up Asian tourists.

A multi-million-dollar golf course is under construction to help attract the luxury market.

Chinese consortium bids of up to \$5 billion dollars have been received for the Whitsundays to be granted a casino licence, while the council is keen to upgrade the airport to international status.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Jenny Whitney said Airlie Beach was undergoing a huge transformation after attracting interest from new investors who have been dubbed "the flash pack".

"The **Chinese** have identified there is opportunity in Whitsundays and there is more than one brand of **Chinese** companies interested," she said.

"One of the groups expressed interest in an integrated resort development to do a Buddhist temple and **Chinatown** development but at this stage we haven't received a development application.

"I think it's very positive we are seeing growth within Airlie Beach and Cannonvale." Work has recently finished on the multi-million-dollar Whisper Bay development by **Chinese company** Nanjing Construction.

The development includes 104 luxury waterfront buildings on the Airlie Beach foreshore with views of the Coral Sea and Whitsunday Islands.

Ground has also been broken on a \$70 million ONE Whitsundays resort development at Shingley Beach.

The planned luxury, five-star resort will be the first of its kind in the area and comprises 75 strata-titled apartments with many attracting price tags of up to \$3.2 million.

The resort will be run as a **hotel** complete with restaurants, a spa and 300 person conference centre, and is expected to be opened within two years.

ONE Whitsundays CEO John Zappia said he was predicting Airlie Beach would become the next investment hot spot and the resort would take advantage of the region's spike in tourism.

"Airlie Beach is on the brink of huge economic growth," he said. "Given the recent infrastructural developments in the area, and the fact that occupancy rates are already going through the roof, this is an imminent boom investment opportunity." Work is well in progress on Airlie Beach's \$500 million golf course, with the driving range opening earlier this week.

The 18-hole golf course will form part of the Regatta Waters **residential** development and will be available for use by locals and visitors, but it is hoped the facility will be a drawcard for tourists.

Regatta Waters will ultimately comprise 2500 **residential** lots made up of traditional homes, villas, townhouses and apartments and will include a gym, Olympic-sized heated lap pool, tennis court, resort pool, saunas and spas.

The upmarket development has attracted interest locally, from interstate buyers and international investors, and 26 of the 49 lots in stage one have already been **sold**.

Ray White project marketing manager Steve Marks said the golf course would be a valuable asset for the region.

"There hasn't been an accessible golf course in Airlie Beach for over eight years, which just isn't good enough," he said.

"This is a major coup for the region and a golf course is a huge tourism pull." Mr Marks said he was predicting **property** prices in Airlie Beach would soon rise.

"Things you'd have on the market for months and months are moving in 30 to 60 days," he said.

"The first stage of recovery is an increase in **transactions** and we are already seeing that." "There is an abundance of development sites **sold** in the last three of four years and the sites are going very well in terms of pricing."

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