



Sculptor Midge Johansen believes the city desperately needs a major art gallery

Photo: BRENDAN RADKE

Cultural centre would earn \$1b a year, say art lovers

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THE stream of Gold Coasters leaving the city for a cultural fix in Brisbane or Sydney would be turned around if the Evandale complex went ahead - pumping as much as \$1 billion a year into the economy, say arts lovers.

The Arts Centre Gold Coast chairman Kerry Watson, who will be one of many people heading along today to have his say on the cultural precinct masterplan at a

series of workshops, said he thought the project was vital for the city's future.

"It will be a major tourism attraction for a destination that relies on attractions," he said.

"We would be targeting major Broadway musicals and art shows if this complex is built.

"People would come from the Gold Coast and all over Australia and internationally to see them."

The council's administration building would be relocated to Robina to make way for the com-

plex, which includes a 5000sq m art gallery and 2000-seat theatre, plus a 300-seat drama theatre.

Mr Watson said tens of thousands of people would head to the city annually to see the shows and the value of the cultural precinct could be as high as \$1 billion a year.

Sculptor Midge Johansen said the city "desperately needed a major art gallery".

"People have been saying that the Gold Coast is a cultural desert for a long time," she said.

"The art centre we have is too

small - we can't even put the Gold Coast collection on display because there is not enough space."

The existing arts centre is 440sq m and only allows the exhibition of about 10 per cent of the city's collection, according to Mr Watson.

19 Karen gallery director Terri Lew said the city did not have a reputation as a cultural centre, despite hundreds of artists and five commercial galleries being based here. The new cultural hub would be constructed by 2017.