

# Urban Renewal and the Needs of the Coloured Community

— Part Two  
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In Part One of his article, which appeared in the December issue, the author produced evidence of the rapid migration of the Coloureds into the larger metropolitan area of Cape Town. The policy of separate development is resulting in the emergence of a "double city" structure and this is having the effect of withdrawing Coloured manpower from the established commercial centres of the metropolis.

Inadequate provision is made for the rapidly increasing masses of middle and lower middle class white-collar Coloured workers who are best absorbed in the economic activities of the Central Business District. Adequate provision should be made for housing within the city precincts to enable this economic force to be absorbed in the CBD. According to the author District Six should logically form part of this residential provision for the Coloureds.

In Part Two, which follows below, the author discusses Coloured housing.

On the assumption that the number of dwelling units expected to be built during 1973 will in fact be produced, a total provision of 77 769 dwelling units in the Peninsula, and a further 17 406 in the adjacent areas will have to be provided between 1974 and the end of 1980 if we aim at meeting the total demand for housing by that date.

On the same occasion a number of proposals were made whereby the backlog could be reduced from 54 908 at the beginning of 1973 to a mere 7 905 at the end of the decade. None of these recommendations have up till the present been formally accepted or implemented. However, not one of the recommendations has been formally rejected or proved to be unsound or impracticable. Nor have any alternative proposals been publicly advanced.\*\* Virtually the only positive step that has been taken with regards to the planning of a staff housing scheme to be launched under the auspices of the Cape Chamber of Commerce.

It would seem that it is not yet realised that inadequate housing is probably the greatest source of insecurity to the Coloured people and the single important factor impeding the social and economic advancement of this population group. It contributes to the instability of Coloured labour, lowers the physical and psychological abilities of workers, and will largely undo all the potential benefits to be derived from social, cultural, economic and educational measures aimed at uplifting and advancing the population.

Housing relates not only to numbers of dwelling units required. As a residence, it provides shelter to the physical human being, privacy, safety and a sense of security to the person, the setting and location for man's involvement and relations with his fellowmen through the family, the neighbourhood and community in which it is located, and expresses the totality of the meaning of existence, the *genre de vie*. This significance is perhaps best expressed in the simple statement that home is the place where one lives. Given these meanings, a dwelling or residence is then a place where some of the most important of man's actions are performed or related to. These actions refer to role-categories meshed into the social structure of the family and the community. The family and community are systems of social action and the residence and physical layout of the neighbourhood provides the physical setting in which these systems of social action perform their functions just as the plant or the office provides the physical layout for the performance of the functions of the company or firm.

From the preceding it follows that the provision of housing involves much more than just building dwelling units. Since the family and the community are the primary agencies through which the individual is prepared for and launched into his role-involvement in the wider society, it is essential that an adequate physical setting and social infrastructure for the performance of these functions should be available.

## Housing and Community structure:

During 1972 a comprehensive survey was undertaken to determine the position with regards to the provision of housing for the Coloured population. The results of this survey were made public in a paper entitled "Facing the crisis in Housing for the Coloured People", presented under the auspices of the Cape Chamber of Commerce on November 21st, 1972, in Cape Town. These findings may be summarised in tabular form as follows:

Table 3. Dwelling Units Required

	Cape Peninsula	Rest of * Greater Cape Town	Total Greater Cape Town
Estimated Backlog, December, 1972	41 806	13 102	54 908
Units required for expected population increase up to December 1980	40 102	5 822	45 924
Total Requirements	81 908	18 924	100 832
Expected Public Provision, 1973	3 701	1 454	5 155
Expected private provision, 1973	438	64	502
Total Requirements '74-'80	77 769	17 406	95 175

\* The magisterial districts of Strand, Somerset West, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Wellington and Malmesbury.

\*\* These recommendations are summarised in Appendix A, attached to this paper.

Societies differ from one another with reference to the nature of the role-involvement of the individual in the wider society. Our type of society is characterised by its structurally highly differentiated yet mass-consensual nature. This implies firstly a high degree of role- and organisational differentiation. With reference to housing, it simply means the separation of the home (and home-bound activities) from the locations of activities associated with other roles (e.g. work) and the structural differentiation of the social structures of the family and the community located at and around the dwelling from other types of social structures such as economic organisations and political organisations.

This implies that communication and transport, both as a system and as a network, is of paramount importance in our type of society. In the case of the Coloured townships modern communication networks are virtually completely lacking and transport overwhelmingly inadequate.

It also implies that neighbourhoods and communities should be so located and organised that it will be possible for social classes and strata to be differentiated from one another, so as to facilitate social mobility and the upgrading of the social standing of the family. Again, in the layout of Coloured townships and in the allocation of accommodation under conditions of shortages, hardly any consideration is given to these requirements. Under such circumstances very little scope exists for the single person and individual family to upgrade their standing and for neighbourhoods and communities to develop a sense of identity without which order and stability cannot be maintained.

The mass-consensual nature of modern society is embodied in the characteristic feature of urban concentration of large masses of people and in the tendency for increased involvement in and by increasing proportions of these masses (either directly or indirectly) in the central institutions of society and specifically in the central decision-making processes. Here again the Coloured population in the urban complex are located in truncated housing schemes and townships and are, by virtue of the fact that they have been excluded from the rights of citizenship debarred from effective involvement and participation in the central institutions of society. The system of management committees now in the process of being instituted is as yet but a poor substitute for full citizenship at the municipal level. The same applies at the higher level of national political institutions.

The acute shortage of developed public amenities in Coloured housing schemes and private townships is well known. Apart from the fact that the minimum standards of provision prescribed are in many respects very low, inadequate funds often results in such amenities not being developed fully. The backlog in educational provision is such that compulsory education can only now be introduced on a progressive scale. The result is that most schools are overpopulated and many have to work double shifts. Given the high birth rate and the high proportion of economically active Coloured women, the provision of creches and nursery schools are most inadequate. Civic amenities such as theatres, cinemas, etc. are inadequate, and there are not enough full-scale civic centres providing a variety of services. Passive open spaces have not been developed at all, while active open spaces are either inadequately provisioned or not properly supervised. Street lighting is often either non-existent or low-powered, while streets and pavements are very often not properly surfaced and maintained.

Probably the most pressing problem in many of the housing estates and townships is the omnipresence of violence, lawlessness and crime — especially of a nature directed against the person and property. Such forms of aberrant behaviour are fairly common in the mass city of our times and is as prevalent in the high rise, high density working class tenement areas of New York as in the sprawling low density, low rise townships of the Cape Flats.

Aberrant behaviour is overwhelmingly contained through the workings of the normative system of social control. By this is simply meant that the behaviour of people is largely controlled by the expectations of their fellow men, which derives from the relationships between people. The mass situation in modern urban society, with its high degree of structural differentiation leads to anonymity so that informal normative control is difficult to realise. Under these circumstances functional alternatives have to be developed, and/or the physical structuring of layout

and design should be such that the normative system of social control will be reinstated. Functional alternatives are *inter alia*:

1. Institution of effective formal control-policing.
2. Effective systems of communication which will allow for opportunity to report misbehaviour and summon help (telephone).
3. Commercial systems of control — alarm systems, burglar proofing, supervision and caretaking services.
4. Vested interests through home ownership.
5. Shared responsibility through participation in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The physical structuring of layout and design in such a way that the normative system of social control will be reinstated, is obtained through the implementation of what is known as the concept of "defensible space". The central idea is that certain kinds of space and spatial layout favour the clandestine activities of criminals and deviants. Layout and design can, however, given a sensitivity for the need, be structured in such a way that particular zones can be perceived by both insiders and outsiders as areas of territorial influence — as being "under the control" of someone; that residents and their agents can have opportunity of surveillance over non-private areas of their living environment; that the project will not be symbolically stigmatised as vulnerable; that "safe zones" will be geographically juxtapositioned to exert an influence on the security of adjacent zones.\*

In view of the utter chaos and desperate position in many of the Coloured housing schemes and townships, it is essential that urgent consideration be given to measures that can be taken to institute some of these functional alternatives and where possible to change layout and design so as to promote defensible space. Furthermore, it is essential that these principles be incorporated in the design and layout of new schemes.

In this regard, special mention should be made of the proposed new complex referred to as Mitchell's Plain. It is envisaged that virtually a quarter of a million people are eventually to be accommodated here. If the preceding paragraphs have highlighted some of the shortcomings in the quality of urban development for the Coloured people up till the present, it should at least convince us of the need for comprehensive and expert planning before we proceed too far with this scheme. Mitchell's Plain is not just one more housing estate. It offers us an opportunity to plan and design for human living in a dynamic situation in which the Coloured people will and must be assisted to make massive strides towards a worthy standard and style of living.

#### Conclusion

In the preceding paragraphs I have dealt with some urban problems as they manifest themselves in Metropolitan Cape Town, and particularly in regards to the Coloured population. It is clear that these problems cannot be dealt with in isolation from the broader framework of our national life of which it is both part and expression. Specifically, the needs of the Coloured community in Cape Town is such that it cannot be adequately met through action and planning at the local level only. My overview of the situation and needs show clearly that we have not as yet been able to find direction that will assuredly lead to an amelioration of the situation. Yet the urgency of the need is pressing that we cannot afford to sit back and hope that we will do better in future. It should be stressed that if the Cape Peninsula is to rid itself of its shameful record with regards to the needs of the Coloured community by the end of this decade, it will have not only to make provision for an additional 300 000 people, but will also have to upgrade significantly the standard of provision in most of the existing housing estates and townships, and provide for an estimated 239 548 people at present not catered for.

It means, in fact, that more than half a million people will have to be provided for during this decade, and considerable redevelopment have to be undertaken. This is indeed a most formidable task. It would seem that the most fruitful step to ensure that effective action be taken, would be in the formation of a body in which the various authorities involved as well as experts with an

understanding of the needs are brought together so as to ensure that future action in the field of urban development will meet the requirements of human worth and dignity.

*\*Oscar Newman: Defensible Space, Macmillan, 1972, p. 50*

## **Annexure A**

### **List of Proposals to Reduce Backlog in Housing for Coloured Persons**

1. An embargo on the relocation of persons "disqualified" in terms of Group Areas provision at least until all families living under squatter conditions have been properly accommodated.
2. Rezone the whole or part of District Six for occupation by Coloured people, and redevelop it for occupation by middle and lower middle class workers.
3. Lift all curbs on the provision of funds for housing schemes for Coloured persons in the Cape.
4. Give highest priority to the completion of approved schemes.
5. Give the private building and construction industry a bigger share in building homes for Coloured persons.
6. Reconsider the policy of limiting the provision of housing Coloured people to the public sector.
7. Enable white-controlled private enterprise to participate in the development of townships and housing estates for Coloured people.
8. Employers should take a greater share of the responsibility for the provision of housing.
9. Provision for unattached persons.
10. More effective squatter control, if need be, through amendment of the Township Ordinance.
11. More provision of erven for personal home ownership schemes.
12. Marshall public opinion through a forceful Citizens for Housing Committee.