

# Cape Town's central city development: A strategy of partnership and inclusion

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## Abstract

The legacy of South Africa's past continues to upset the country's drive towards inclusive and democratised spaces. This is particularly true in Cape Town, perhaps more so than in any other city in the country, where the spatial divides of colonialism and apartheid contribute to a most unequal and segregated geospatial existence. In order to address this urban challenge, the Cape Town Partnership developed the Central City Development Strategy (CCDS), a ten-year plan that calls for the densification of the central city to re-plan Cape Town into a more liveable, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable urban space. By critically examining the role that inclusionary housing policies, public transportation, and increased economic opportunities play in a more sustainable form of urban development, this article emphasises the need to expand the way in which planners approach urban design to take on a more holistic and partnership-based approach.

## KAAPSTAD SE MIDDESTAD-ONTWIKKELING: 'N STRATEGIE VAN VENNOOTSKAP EN INSLUITING

Die nalatenskap van Suid-Afrika se verlede ontstel steeds die land se strewe na insluiting en demokratiese ruimtes. Dit is veral die geval in Kaapstad, miskien meer as in enige ander stad in die land, waar die ruimtelike verdeling van kolonialisme en apartheid bydra tot 'n mees ongelyke en verdeelde georuimtelike bestaan. Ten einde hierdie stedelike uitdaging aan te spreek, het die *Cape Town Partnership* die Sentrale Stads-ontwikkeling Strategie ontwikkel, 'n tien-jaar plan wat vra vir die verdigting van die sentrale stad deur 'n herbeplanning van Kaapstad in 'n leefbare, inklusiewe, demokratiese en volhoubare stedelike ruimte. Deur krities die rol te beoordeel wat inklusiewe behuisingsbeleid, openbare vervoer, en verhoogde ekonomiese geleenthede in 'n meer volhoubare vorm van stedelike ontwikkeling speel, beklemtoon hierdie artikel die behoefte dat die manier waarop beplanners stedelike ontwerp benader na 'n meer holistiese en vennootskapgebaseerde benadering uitgebrei moet word.

## TSWEDISO PELE YA TEROPO E BOHARENG BA MOTSE KAPA: MORERO WA TSHEBEDISANO MMOHO

Mehleng ya Afrika Borwa yak hale e ntse tswela pele ho kena kenana le morero wa naha wa tshabedisanano mmoho le ho phedisana mmoho ke bohle. Sena se bonahala haholo Motse Kapa ho feta teropo tse ding tsa Afrika Borwa. Motse Kapa ke teropo e ntse na le bopaki ba dikarolo tsa nako tsa dikolony le Apartheid. Ho sebetšana le bothata bona ba teropo basebetsi ba *Cape Town Partnership* ba tlile ka morero oo bitsoang 'the Central City Development Strategy' kapa (CCDS) ka mantswa a mang. CCDS e na le morero oa dilemo tse leshome o sebetšanang le rera teropo ya Motse Kapa qalong hore e tsebe ho ba sebaka se senang dikarolo, moo batho ba fapaneng ba phelisanang mmoho, ebile ban a le tshabedisanano mmoho. Ka ho sheba dipheo tsa ho haha matlo, likoloi tsa baeti le mekhoha ya ho eketsa mekhoha ya mesebetsi ka lleihlo le hloahloa, serapa sena se sebeletsa ho bontsa tlhoko ea hore bareri ba linaha ba sebetse ka mokhoa wa tshabedisanano mmoho.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, Cape Town faces a double urban planning crisis of resilience and long-term sustainability (South African Cities Network, 2011; Swilling, 2010). Increasing levels of urbanisation have put unexpectedly large economic, social

and environmental pressures on the city's existing infrastructural components, throwing into question the city's ability to maintain functional operations in the longer term future. Spatially, the city's growth has progressed unabated: between 1977 and 2006, the size of the City of Cape Town's land area increased by 40% (Swilling, 2010). Spatial growth of this nature, encroaching on the city's fragile ecosystem through low-density greenfield developments, only further exacerbates the environmental strain and social separation embodied in the spatial fabric of the 'Apartheid City' (OECD, 2008: 52). Indeed, the legacy of colonial and apartheid spatial planning runs deep beneath South Africa's surface and continues to govern resource distribution, spatial use patterns, and social (dis)connections (Samara, 2011). Unequal infrastructural and housing provision, inadequate transportation options, constrained and disparate access to economic opportunities, and disconnected communities all serve to hold Cape Town back from its full growth potential (OECD, 2008: 61-62). These are planning legacies of a divided past that must be reversed through present-day innovative, pro-active and forward-thinking planning policies.

Working in partnership with government, the private sector, local stakeholders, and others, the Cape Town Partnership has taken an active role in the promotion of a new way of structuring urban planning in Cape Town's Central City. The organisation's 'Central City Development Strategy', developed in 2008, encourages a stronger and more collaborative approach to urban planning through its Development Guidelines for Land Use Management (DGLUM) policy. In the final phase of development, this new way of analysing urban planning was developed in partnership with the City of Cape Town to promote a stronger dialogue between City officials and the private sector. The policy supports the notion that, for planning to be a truly transformative tool in restructuring the urban legacies of Cape

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Town's past, planners must consider a wider scope of socially inclusive development. By laying out a unique strategy for analysing the Central City's interconnected spatial development, DGLUM expands the approach of planning to cover affordable inclusive housing, stronger social connections, interconnected public transportation networks and sustainable densification in addition to the needs of traditional urban development. The resilience and sustainability of Cape Town's urban fabric depends upon a creative new approach to urban planning: DGLUM, in conjunction with the Central City Development Strategy, expands the ways in which multiple actors are able to participate in the holistic development of Cape Town's Central City area, thereby strengthening economic and social connections to the benefit of the wider metropolitan region.

## 2. URBAN PLANNING IN THE CENTRAL CITY

Cape Town's Central City (see Figures 1 and 2), located between the city's harbour and the iconic slopes of Table Mountain, has a vital role to play in transforming the wider metropolitan region into a more inclusive and opportunistic urban area.

Stretching from Woodstock and Salt River into the CBD and out into Green Point and Sea Point, the physical Central City supports a diverse population that roots in local heritage and spans global historical and cultural

connections across centuries of economic and social linkages. It also serves as a venerated cultural canvas for much of the memory and culture that comprise Cape Town's diverse urban cultural history – a quality that fosters strong social connections among the larger metropolitan population (Field, Meyer & Swanson, 2007). Connected to this rich memory is a truly unique built spatial form that combines multiple architectural histories, heritage buildings and monuments with a spatial form that conjures poignantly diverse narratives related to the city's broader urban development.

Economically, the Central City hosts a large proportion of the metropolitan region's economic activity and forms the nexus of the metropolitan region's larger transportation infrastructure. The vast majority of roads, rail, and bus routes originate out of the Central City, placing the city centre at the heart of Cape Town's social and capital linkages.

The Cape Town Partnership, a non-profit urban development organisation launched in 1999, actively promotes the important place of the Central City in Cape Town's larger metropolitan region to encourage a more economically and socially inclusive form of sustainable urban development. Key to this strategy is the Partnership's Central City Development Strategy (CCDS), a 10-year vision for the future sustainable and inclusive development of Cape Town's Central City, originally launched in 2008. Together with the City of Cape

Town, the Provincial Government of the Western Cape, local businesses and other urban development stakeholders, the Partnership set forth a vision within the CCDS that enhanced the Central City's role as a catalyst of Cape Town's socio-economic development through a process similar to what Beall & Fox (2009: 207) identify as "an iterative process of negotiated action" between government, businesses, and civil society – Partnership. Made up of five overarching strategic outcomes, the document proactively coordinates the efforts of planners, politicians, businesses, and citizens to provide a framework for the sustainable densification of Cape Town's Central City.

By planning based on a model of partnership, the CCDS encourages the continued expansion of economic and social production that not only drives economic growth in the Central City, but also leverages this growth through expanded opportunities across the metropolitan region, helping to build a more inclusive model of urban development. The strategy seeks to reverse what some have identified as the potential for relative economic and social isolation of Cape Town's Central City with respect to the surrounding areas (see Pirie, 2007; Samara, 2011). In order to be a truly successful example of inclusive urban development, the Central City must be not only connected to, but also in constant developmental evolution with the rest of the metropolitan area. Growth and development in the Central City must catalyse new growth and development opportunities across the metropolitan region and open up spaces of opportunity for more people – permeable and expandable urban development across diverse and distinct neighbourhoods and communities.

Inclusive urban planning is at the heart of making the Central City Development Strategy a success. Exclusionary colonial and apartheid spatial planning is responsible for many of Cape Town's present challenges; developing a new way of planning must accordingly play a key role in shaping the city's integrated future. Since the launch of the CCDS in 2008, a series of new strategies and policies across the city have given rise to new planning possibilities, particularly in respect of the idea of sustainable densification. Documents such as the City of Cape



Figure 1: Cape Town's Central City.  
Source: Map Courtesy of Geocentric Information Systems, 2013.

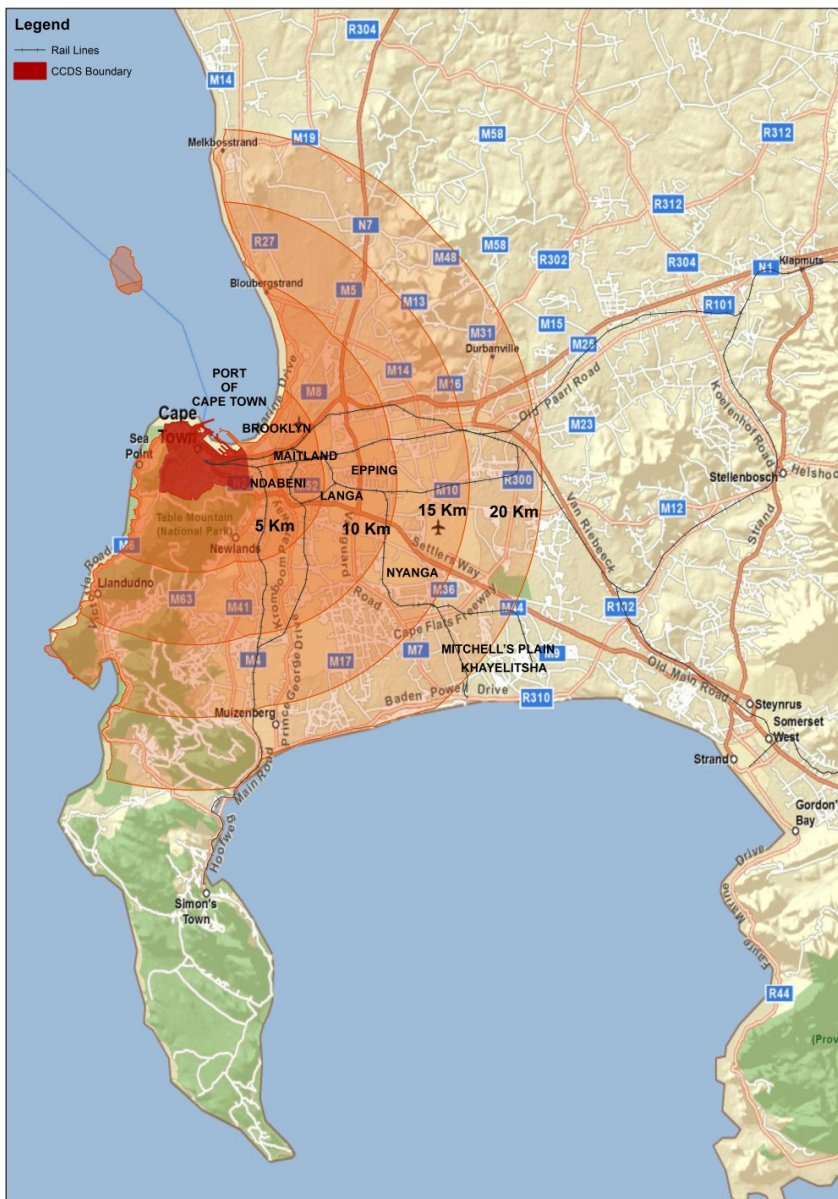


Figure 2: The Central City in the metro-wide context.  
 Source: Map courtesy of Geocentric Information Systems, 2013.

Town's *City Development Strategy*, which informed the urban policy aspects of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape's *One Cape 2040* (forthcoming, see Pieterse, 2012), and the City of Cape Town's *Spatial Development Framework* (City of Cape Town, 2012b) all serve as long-term visions of what a future Cape Town will look like, given a sizeable restructuring of the urban developmental and socio-economic fabric, within both a metropolitan and a provincial context. It is important to note that each of the policies maintains a dedicated focus on densification as one of several core strategies that will drive policy-wide change across a variety of interconnected geographies.

While the above policies position densification as one piece of a greater urban planning solution, the City of Cape Town's latest Densification Policy, approved on 29 February 2012, goes further to set forth a new vision of how a denser Cape Town would alleviate the "rapid and continuous low-density development" that threatens the "long-term sustainability of the city" (City of Cape Town, 2012a: online). The policy puts densification at the centre of an urban planning and development vision for Cape Town, incorporating a discussion on the ways in which housing, transportation, and community development policies can promote a healthier reversal of Cape Town's problematic inverse densification

through targeted and proactive planning policies.

In light of the many new policy documents coming forward from governmental, academic, and popular fields, a review of the CCDS's focus on planning for densification will underscore the ways in which a denser, better connected, and more inclusive Central City can promote the inclusive economic and social development of a sustainable, long-term, and interconnected metropolitan region. With five years left in its lifespan, a re-assessment of the CCDS also corresponds with the launch of the City's latest Integrated Development Plan, a document that lays out a five-year operational mandate for all city departments and focuses on its own set of five key pillars for future development (City of Cape Town, 2012c). The CCDS supports a more holistic urban planning strategy by promoting site- and character-specific densification within 20 unique Central City neighbourhoods, encouraging shorter term benefits of densification within a focused geographical context while concomitantly supporting the evolution of longer term, city-wide policies that focus on the wider densification and development of the city as a whole. By becoming a denser, more inclusive, and better connected economic and social space, the Central City will act as a connected urban development catalyst for the longer term, metro-wide reversal of the destructive and separated spatial realities of Cape Town's present, helping to sustainably re-connect and re-build Cape Town for the future benefit of the city and its citizens.

### 3. PROMOTING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH ENABLED PLANNING

In creating a policy that plans the Central City into the inclusive and sustainable growth strategy of the wider metropolitan region, the CCDS capitalises on the critical economic growth structure already in place in Cape Town. At present, the Central City holds the highest concentration of business turnover at both metropolitan and provincial scales (30%), and contains the largest geographic concentration of employees in the metropolitan region (25%), making it a vital crossroads of both people and economies (Global Insights, 2011).

As both a source of municipal rates and employment opportunities, the economic importance of the Central City cannot be overstated. In Cape Town's growing urban development, mainly recognised as being polycentric and nodal in nature (City of Cape Town, 2012b), the Central City serves as a critical connection site for the metropolis's larger economic system. The linkages between the Central City and other areas of Cape Town create the opportunity to activate larger economic opportunities through forward-thinking urban-planning interventions that maximise spatial integration. Further strengthening these connections through transport, housing, and other infrastructural upgrading is pivotal for ensuring Cape Town's long-term urban sustainability in the face of growing rates of in-migration from within South Africa and abroad (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

The activation and expansion of economic linkages through planning occurs at the most pragmatic of levels through the enhancement and streamlining of planning regulations to allow for the further expansion of physical capital within and across the city – in an inclusive and sustainable way. Cape Town, arguably more so than any other urban area in South Africa, faces the double planning challenge of heightened heritage preservation and a topographically constrained city centre. Historically, these challenges have resulted in a seemingly schizophrenic history of town planning where, as Stephen Townsend points out, conservation has been equated to "intentions to protect identified conservation-worthy buildings and with demands to reduce the scale of new buildings" (Townsend, 2008: 9). At present, developers continue to face vague and confusing heritage restrictions, zoning schemes that seem to reduce development rights, and a lack of infrastructural capacities and bulk usage availability (Townsend, 2008: 10). Similarly, the City often finds itself inundated with multiple iterations of seemingly uncoordinated new building applications and zoning departures that have not been vetted against any regulated framework, leading to a severely backlogged and cumbersome institutional approvals process. This institutional friction directly impedes economic growth and targeted urban development and stifles a larger

dialogue supportive of partnership-based planning policies.

In order to ameliorate this developmental imbalance, the CCDS supports the ongoing development of a series of policies designed to enable more productive collaboration between planners and the City, based on economic development horizons, desired land use patterns, and neighbourhood development trajectories. Titled the Development Guidelines for Land Use Management (DGLUM) and currently under review, these Guidelines break the Central City down into 20 neighbourhoods and set forth specific urban development outcomes within each area, based on the City's zoning scheme and Spatial Development Framework. By laying out this framework in a way that is understandable to City officials, urban planners and private developers, the DGLUM Guidelines, once approved, will help to facilitate synchronised development plans and targeted planning interventions across the Central City. The Guidelines will also enable developers to submit plans that are more in line with the urban form which the City legislation seeks to promote, and empower the City to make decisions that are more predictable and understandable for developers. DGLUM Guidelines will further reduce the amount of zoning rejections and re-applications that planners and officials go through by clarifying developmental intent at the outset of the planning approvals process.

In order to promote a more inclusive physical urban form, the DGLUM Guidelines will help the city to target specific types of mixed-use development throughout the Central City. This is one of the key tenets of the latest Spatial Development Framework, in which the economic value of putting housing together with retail opportunities and formidable transportation options is not only recognised, but also highly encouraged (City of Cape Town 2012b: 32). The promotion of mixed-use developments will further facilitate the expansion of larger planning collaboration tools across the metropolitan region, opening up new opportunities for developers to engage with the city on a variety of developmental targets, such as housing, transportation, and other urban interventions. By being aware of

the recommended planning strategy for one specific area, planners and City officials can co-create physical interventions that link neighbouring areas with complementary policies in transportation, housing, commercial zoning, and density. Historic preservation will also become a more understood planning component through DGLUM, allowing planners and developers to actively collaborate to enact an urban conservation that promotes heritage through the economic and social revitalisation and conservation of the city itself (Townsend, 2008: 22). Urban spaces such as the Fringe, located in the Central Business District (CBD)'s Eastern Precinct between District Six, the CBD itself, and the Foreshore, stand to benefit greatly from guidelines that lay out the ways in which specific urban zones should speak to one another and promote a diverse yet connected form of spatial development.

Effective and understandable planning regulations have a great deal to add towards the increasing dialogue of urban densification, particularly with regards to commercial property. A recent study conducted by the Central City Improvement District shows that the Central City's Employment Density – the average floor space that an employee occupies in a commercial building – sits at 21.5m<sup>2</sup>, roughly on par with the City of London (Lohrentz, 2012). Newer buildings and those that have been retrofitted are more capable of supporting higher employment densities in a more productive workspace, thus saving tenants more money on rent by occupying less total floor space. Higher densities also encourage landlords to design better buildings that promote more environmentally sustainable qualities for more discerning tenants. By better understanding the physical needs of companies, developers and planners can better collaborate to target specific buildings and upgrades through a neighbourhood-focused strategy, aided and encouraged by the DGLUM Guidelines. One of the latest large-scale planning and construction projects in Cape Town, *Portside*, reflects the possibilities and benefits of combining planning and development initiatives. By collaborating at an early basis, FNB and Old Mutual Properties established the building site and design to match employee density with neighbourhood planning forecasts

to actualise logistical, infrastructural, and transportation benefits in the construction itself.

Augmenting the planning synergy of the DGLUM Guidelines is an infrastructure and bulk capacity assessment survey, undertaken by the Provincial Government of the Western Cape as part of the CCDS and designed to aid the planning activities of developers, who regularly identify a critical lack of data and information on the under-ground and transport infrastructure in the Central City. The CCDS infrastructural survey has currently completed its second phase – an assessment of the 'status quo' of Cape Town's Central City infrastructure. A plan is underway to analyse the best way to present and communicate the results of this survey to developers, engineers, City and Provincial officials, and the general public for further developmental advantages. Future plans call for a third component of this study to take place. This will entail the creation of a modelling and forecasting programme that will enable developers to analyse the impacts of their proposed developments on the infrastructure. By providing more information about the current and future capabilities of the infrastructural networks, the CCDS infrastructure survey complements the DGLUM Guidelines, enabling planners to create denser and more sustainable environments for businesses, employees, and economic activity.

#### 4. RE-CONNECTING AND DENSIFYING

The economic benefits of forward-thinking urban planning are undoubtedly advantageous for the Central City. Their true test, however, comes in assessing their transformative benefits for the wider metropolitan region. Cape Town's divided history, based on centuries' worth of unequal and divisive class- and race-based planning policies, continues to govern the sprawling metropolitan region (see Maylam, 1995; Bickford-Smith, 1995; OECD, 2009:145; Samara, 2011). Exemplifying true 'inverse densification', the outer areas of Cape Town hold a disproportionately higher number of people on lesser quality and economically poorer land, while the economically more well-off Central City and surrounding suburbs experience a disproportionately

weaker level of densification (see Figure 3) (Swilling, 2010; South African Cities Network, 2011). The poorer and disproportionately densified areas exist further afield from the economic areas of production in the Central City, placing a high cost of transportation and economic access on those who live in these distant communities. In line with the City's Densification Policy and Spatial Development Frameworks, the CCDS and DGLUM promote a reversal of this vision and posit the Central City as a high-density and economically vibrant area – a 'Metropolitan Node' in terms of the City's Spatial Development Framework that links to various sub-metropolitan nodes throughout the metropolitan region via integrated public transportation, economic corridors and mixed-use targeted development sites.

defined, in this instance, as the share of the housing market earning a monthly income between R3.500 and R15.000. Planning for a dedicated Affordable Housing strategy, particularly located on brownfields sites within the Central City, will help to ensure not only a mixed-use and higher density environment, but also curtail the negative aspects of unsustainable and exclusive urban development – exclusionary gentrification, environmental decay, and urban sprawl – and keep neighbourhoods as inclusive and integrated spaces (Turok, 2011b).

A greater supply of affordable housing will also ensure that the planning of our Central City accounts for a larger sector of the population in an economically pro-active way. By planning larger mixed-use and transportation-linked nodes within

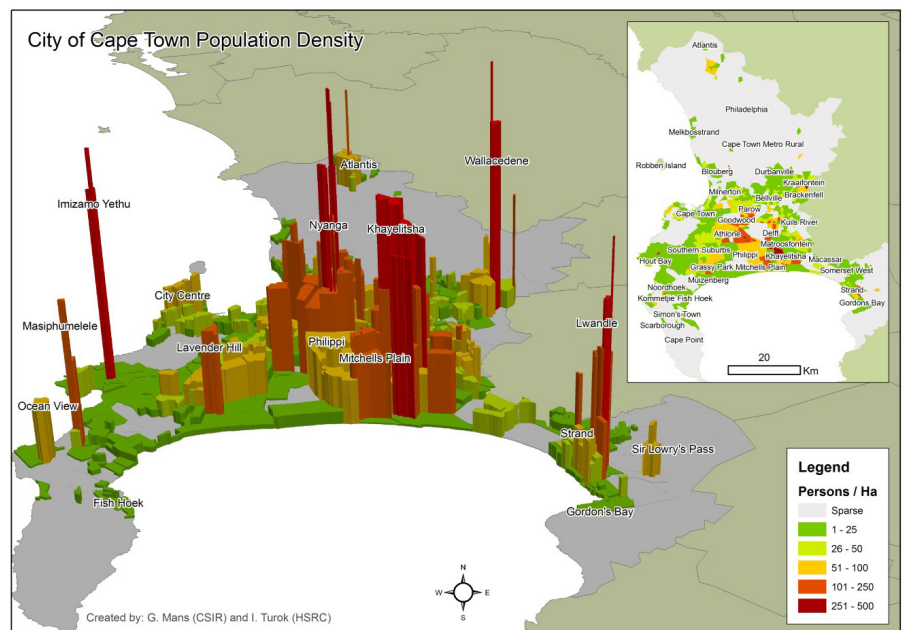


Figure 3: Population density in Cape Town  
Source: Courtesy of Mans (2011) and Turok (2011a)

If pursued in conjunction with appropriate mixed-use housing initiatives and integrated public transport, densification is recognised as a key driver of urban growth in Cape Town along with a strong force to reverse the inequitable and inefficient city of the previous apartheid regime (City of Cape Town, 2012b). In order to promote higher densities and stronger communities, the CCDS contains a directive to promote the increased residential population of the Central City area by 150,000 by 2018. Twenty per cent of this residential increase is further stipulated to be in the affordable/"gap" market sector,

and surrounding the Central City, new economic opportunities will be created for a greater percentage of the population in physical spaces which simultaneously help to de-stigmatise the notion of affordable housing. To date, the establishment of affordable housing has been one of the largest challenges of both the CCDS and the larger array of government housing initiatives (OECD, 2009: 190) and will require a further emphasis on the benefits of working partnerships and functional dialogue between the City, the private sector, future residents, and other urban stakeholders. The housing partnerships built through

CCDS affordable housing strategy will be vital in order to complement City, provincial, and national housing policies to ensure that benefits reach beyond the scale of the neighbourhood. As stated by Ivan Turok, (2011b: 470-471) "residential densification should be seen as a broad developmental issue and located within a city-wide and national context, rather than essentially a matter of physical investment and neighbourhood alteration".

By planning for communities that bring people closer together through integrated housing, employment, and transportation solutions, 'activity corridors' and public spaces activate new economic opportunities where people come together. As more people walk from place to place, more street-level retailers and traders will get more foot traffic, helping to increase business turnover and support both formal and informal businesses throughout the Central City, a crucial aspect of breaking down economic division across Cape Town's cityscape (Samara, 2011). This economic chain reaction has become a key component of the CCDS through the DGLUM Guidelines and also underpins the City's 2012 Spatial Development Framework, in which activity corridors connect the Central City's economy with the other vital areas of economic production across the region, helping to encourage a more unified, connected, and inclusive economy. By linking the expansion of the Integrated Public Transportation Network to this strategy, proactive planning will place over 85% of the City's population within 1km of high-quality public transport (City of Cape Town 2012b: 30). Such plans have the potential to activate previously disconnected areas such as District Six and the East City Precinct with greater commercial activities, housing and transport, and link that activity to the rest of the metropolitan region.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Over the past 30 years, the physical land area of the greater Cape Town metropolitan region has increased by over 200%; its population has increased by only 125% (Turok, 2011b: 471). As a city, our density has simultaneously decreased and inverted, placing a growing number of people in increasingly overcrowded and underserved peripheral townships. This reality is unacceptable. In order to change this, the Central City

Development Strategy has put forward a collection of unique planning tools and policies designed to encourage city officials, politicians, developers, economists, and other stakeholders to implement policies that create denser, more inclusive and more sustainable urban settlements. These planning tools anchor the CCDS, a mainly visionary strategy, in the practical realities of administration, construction, and development, while also contesting the dominance of blueprints, master plans, and blanket zoning requirements as the ultimate source of political urban development intervention through its assertion of the importance of social integration and economic inclusion in planning (Beall & Fox, 2009: 203).

Planning for a denser Central City holds many benefits for Cape Town's development. However, the tangible benefits extend well beyond the Central City itself. The DGLUM planning policies augment the CCDS's thematic mandates that further promote inclusive economic and social development within Cape Town's Central City. Doing so encourages the re-connecting and re-building of the metropolitan region's urban framework in a way that confronts the truly urban challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as poverty, security, and climate change, by emphasising the need to collaborate and act together as one interconnected and unified metropolitan region (Beall & Fox, 2009: 202). Challenges such as affordable housing, environmental policy, social development, and others have put the initial CCDS framework set out in 2008 to the test, and have underscored the need for a stronger emphasis on the power of partnerships to leverage inclusive urban transformations. A new emphasis on planning also opens up a renewed focus on the ways in which the Central City can be used as a transformative engine for the larger inclusive urban development of the Cape Town metropolitan region. Programmes that encourage stronger linkages with specific sectors of economic growth, such as the "creative industries", will also benefit from having a more broad-reaching planning strategy. By understanding the economic, social, and infrastructural targets across a wider space, initiatives such as Creative Cape Town can avoid the failures and divided development patterns that have affected other cities around the world that have pursued "Creative City" developmental

frameworks (see Zimmerman's account of Milwaukee, 2008).

The social and economic success of the Central City has much to offer Cape Town, and the metropolitan region has even more to offer the Central City. Economically, the Central City is dependent upon the diverse and dynamic workforce that comes in and goes out of the area daily. Socially, the Central City exists as the cultural and historic heart of the Cape Town region. This living connection mandates that the successes and challenges encountered in the Central City cannot and should not be limited exclusively by geographical boundaries. A forward-thinking planning strategy is a crucial component of expanding inclusive geographic spaces. While DGLUM has yet to be written into official policy, it represents an exciting vision for the creation of a more open-sourced and partnership-based planning policy. By connecting the successes and challenges of the Central City to Cape Town's larger socio-economic urban development through proactive planning, the broader CCDS augments the efforts of government-led planning and private-driven development to promote an economically and socially connected and integrated urban space through functional and strategic urban partnerships.

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