



# Alexandra Urban Renewal Project and Neighborhood development: An unanswered questions?

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# An Aerial View of Alex



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## INTRODUCTION

- **Urban growth has been strongly associated with poverty and slum growth.**
- **According to UN-HABITAT report 2010/11 a number of countries have to some extent managed to curb the further expansion of slum and improved the living conditions of the citizens.**
- **Between 2000 and 2010, a total of 227 million people in developing world will have moved out of slum conditions. Governments have collectively exceeded the slum target of Millennium Development Goal 7 by at least 2.2 times, and 10 years ahead of agreed 2020 deadline.**
- **Asia stood at the forefront of successful effort to reach the slum target with governments in the region together improving the lives of 172 million slum dwellers between 2010 and 2011. This figure represents 74% of the total number of urban residents in the world.**
- **In Africa an estimated 24 million slum dwellers have improved in the last decade representing 12% of the global effort. North Africa (Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia) were the most successful. This are followed by Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, Rwanda and Guinea. How far have we fared in this regard?**



## Introduction continued.....

- In South Africa levels of unemployment and poverty are extremely high and remain two of South Africa's most pressing problem.
- The level of unemployment was 9.18% in 1972, 7% in 1980, 10% in 1985, 15% in 1990, 22% in 1995 (Human Development Report, 2004 cited in Thwala, 2009:1), 30.2% in 2002, 27.4% in 2003, 25.6% in 2004, and 26.5% in 2005 (Labour Force Surveys (LFS), 2000-2005) and 24.5 ( StatSA, 2011).
- The unemployment rate rose rapidly throughout the 1990s, then fell in 2003 and 2004, and rose again in 2005 and this is due to drastic fall in the demand for unskilled labour in the formal sector caused by structural changes in the economy as a result of a decline in the importance of the primary sector (Thwala, 2009).
- The high unemployment rate is also directly contributing factor to inequality and poverty in South Africa (Labour Force Survey, 2000-2005).



## Introduction continued.....

- Although the proportion of people living in poverty is shrinking, high population growth in poor countries means that the absolute numbers of poor people are rising.
- According to Community Survey (2007:12) the percentage of persons with no schooling decreased from 19% in 1996 to 10% in 2007; percentage of persons with secondary education has increased from 34% in 1996 to 40% in 2007; housing condition has greatly improved with 71% of the household in formal dwelling and 15% in informal dwelling; 80% of household use electricity as compared to 58% in 1996 and majority of household have access to pipe water 88%.
- The population of South Africa has continued to grow in the face of these increase in access to services. It increased from 40.5 million in 1996, to 44.8 million in 2001 and to 48.5 million in 2007 with current estimate putting the population at 50 million ( StatSA, 2011).



## Why Urban Renewal? Theoretical Perspective

- The Urban Renewal Infrastructure Project Development has the potential to address the issue of housing and municipal infrastructure needs of community if properly coordinated and administered. What is Urban Renewal?
- The process where an urban neighborhood or area is improved and rehabilitated. The renewal process can include demolishing old or run-down building , constructing new, up-to-date housing , or adding in features like a theater or stadium. Urban renewal is usually undergone for the purposes of persuading wealthier individuals to come and live in that area. Urban renewal is often part of the gentrification process (<http://www.businessdictionary.com>)
- Urban Renewal took a centre stage of Planning as far back as 1940 when renewal advocates develop the argument that “Cities were in Crisis” and only major changes in property law and development planning approach could prevent urban decline (Pritchiett, 2003).
- In 1952 the momentous case victory of District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency (DCRLA) with a sweep plan to clear and redevelop the southwest quadrant of the nation’s capital which affected two business owners Max Morris and Goldier Schneider set the stage for nationwide expansion of urban renewal programme (Pritchiett, 2003).



## The Case of Alexandra Urban Renewal Project

- Alexandra Urban Renewal Programme (ARP) is an off shot of the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) and the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) introduced as a national and presidential priority programme in 2001.
- Former President Thabo Mbeki in his State of the Nations address announced that the aim of URP and ISRDP was “ to conduct a sustained campaign against rural and urban poverty and underdevelopment, bringing in the resources of all three spheres of government in a coordinated manner” (DPLG & GTZ,2008).
- Some 10 million South Africans live in the 21 nodes identified in the two programmes: 8 urban renewal nodes; 13 rural development nodes
- Objective of the Programme: 10 year life span.
- Address poverty eradication; underdevelopment; equity, social cohesion and to enhance local government capacity to deliver (Ibid).



# History of Alexandra

- Alexandra or Alex for short. It is part of Johannesburg, close to the wealthy suburb of Sandton and is bounded by Wynberg on the west, Marlboro and Kelvin on the north, Kew, Lombardy West and Lombardy East on the south. Alexandra is one of the poorest urban areas in the country.
- Alexandra is situated on the banks of the Jukskei River. The township covers an area of more than 8 km<sup>2</sup> and has an estimated population of 470,000 people. In addition to its original, reasonably well-built houses, it also has a large number (estimated at more than 34,000) of informal dwellings of which approximately 7000 are located in “backyard” or “shacks” (Thwala, 2006:40).
- The township of Alexandra was established in 1912 on land originally owned by a farmer, a Mr. Papenfus, who tried to establish a white residential township there, naming it after his wife, Alexandra and is located close to Johannesburg. Because the township was proclaimed prior to the South African 1913 Land Act, it was one of the few urban areas in the country where black people could own land under a freehold title. However, in 1916 the Alexandra Health Committee was appointed to manage the township but was not allowed to collect local taxes, nor was the Johannesburg City Council willing to take responsibility for an area that it claimed fell outside its jurisdiction, leading to a **lack of resources and proper management**.
- When the National Party came into power in 1948 and started to implement its policy of apartheid Alexandra was put under the direct control of the then Department of Native Affairs.





# History of Alexandra cont..

- Alex experienced high levels of political conflict and mobilisation during the apartheid era (Rauch, 2002). In the late 1970s, after decades of community resistance, evictions, removals and the expropriation of properties were halted. In 1979, Alexandra was granted full status as a residential area.
- In 1980s, the number of people moving into Alex increased tremendously and this trend was not taken into consideration nor was alternative land made available to accommodate those displaced.
- A new area known as East Bank, was built during this period. The period between 1991 and 1992 saw high level of communal and political conflicts in Alex, during which many people died, were injured or displaced.
- Most residents up to today lived in Alex for more than a decade and this combined with the political history of the area created a sense of community and local identity.



## Urban Renewal Infrastructure Programme in Alex, Prospects and Challenges

- Since the Political independence in 1994, the population has dramatically increased as people in search of employment in the city flocked into Alexandra from rural areas in South Africa and neighbouring countries, dramatically, overloading an infrastructure that is already overstretched.
- Congestion in informal settlements, in the hostels and along the banks of Juskteki River have made living condition in Alexandra stressful, unhealthy and dangerous.
- The Urban Renewal Programme area includes 'Old Alex', East Bank, the Far East Bank, Marlboro Industrial Area, Wynberg, Kew, Marlboro South and Marlboro Gardens. The need for this was because the industrial and retail areas have been declining and Alexandra is dislocated from the surrounding economy, which includes Sandton CBD, Midrand high tech-belt and Kempton Park as well as Johannesburg CBD.



## Urban Renewal Infrastructure Programme in Alex, Prospects and Challenges

- Urban renewal and inner city regeneration have become serious issues for the South African government with huge investment in the 8 major cities.
- At official opening of Parliament in February 2001, the then state president Thabo Mbeki announced a seven year plan to re-develop Greater Alexandra but this has now being extended for additional 2 years 2010.
- The objective was to uplift living conditions and human development potentials via (1) upgrade of living conditions and human development (2) creation of healthy living environment (3) providing services at an affordable and sustainable level (4) reduction of the level of crime and violence (5) upgrade existing housing environment and additional housing opportunities (6) dedensification to appropriate land.



## Urban Renewal Infrastructure Programme in Alex, Prospects and Challenges

- Desired outcome includes 1. Reduction of Unemployment 2. Provide affordable services 3. Safety and Security 4. Effective local administration 6. A healthy environment 7. An effective housing environment with secure tenure 8. A sustainable community with civic pride, empowered with easy access to social facilities.
- Key Achievements;
  - a) A survey conducted in 2008 portrays that a number of residents have found employment on ARP construction sites. There is now small business development programme, employment information centre and Tourist cluster
  - b) M2 Hostel upgrades, Extension 7 housing project, Vasco da Gama Bridge
  - c) Refurbishing of Wynberg Police station, Alex Police station, Schools (Relocation of Gordon Primary school), Upgrade of London Road, Ultra modern Pan African Shopping Mall and Taxi Rank with three levels.



## Urban Renewal Infrastructure Programme in Alex, Prospects and Challenges

- Key Challenges:
- **A strong sense of social stratification exists. The key distinction is no longer between ideological enemies but rather between "old" and "new" residents of Alexandra.**
- **The "old" residents can be defined as those who owned the original freehold properties and the backyard shacks that over time occupied the yards.**



## Urban Renewal Infrastructure Programme in Alex, Prospects and Challenges

- **Key Challenges.....**
- **Iphuteng school cluster**
- The first is the relocation of the 1 200 households that have occupied the Iphuteng school cluster land. Some 4 800 pupils are denied the safety and security and facilities required for a decent education by the high-density shack settlement that has encroached on virtually every square inch of school land. A court eviction order is in place. As houses become available this school site will be emptied and redeveloped as a proper school resource.
- **Setjwetla shack settlement**  
Secondly, the Setjwetla shack settlement of approximately 7 000 houses, located along the Jukskei River, needs to be resettled because it lies on both an unstable and dangerous (gas) infill dump and below the 100 year flood line.

# Aspects of Renewal





# RDP houses at Far East Bank



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# The redevelopment of London Road



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# Manifestation of Shacks



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# Environmental Issues associated with shacks



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# Sustainable livelihood strategies



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# Pan Africa Mall 1<sup>st</sup> (MacDonald) in Alex



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# Shoppers at the New Mall



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# END OF SLIDE

- THANK YOU ALL FOR LISTENING
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