

Durban to host cities summit

WHEN Mark Hildebrand, the head of the Cities Alliance Secretariat (World Bank, Washington) visited Durban in early February this year, he was impressed.

He was in the city to confirm logistical arrangements after Durban was selected in Brazil last year as the host for this year's international Cities Alliance Conference. As the city planners took him around Durban, showing him the vibrant informal economies of the inner city, the housing achievements in Cato Manor and the Presidential Project in Inanda Ntuzuma KwaMashu (INK) areas, he was convinced that showcasing Durban to the rest of the world had been a wise choice.

In fact, he proposed that, rather than run the Conference from an air-conditioned international conference venue, the three-day conference be held at three separate venues, where delegates could feel the soul of the city.

After months of logistical preparations to ensure this 'conference with a difference' would be success, the city planning team and the conference organisers confirmed this week that it "is all systems go" for the conference from November 1-3.

The Conference, which serves as a Public Policy Forum and is sponsored by the Cities Alliance, provides an opportunity for the range of actors who support city development to share lessons. It is an opportunity to learn from experiences, policy options and standards of practice in areas related to the Alliance's goal of improving the living

conditions of the urban poor.

Delegates are drawn from the Cities Alliance Consultative Group, client countries and cities, non-governmental organisations, unions, tertiary institutions as well as the private sector.

This year's Public Policy Forum, which focuses on the theme of making city development strategies come alive, is premised on the need to move beyond conventional responses to dealing with the complex set of issues that cities grapple with.

It calls for exploring new ways of doing things, unleashing creative energies and inspiring policy-makers, practitioners and donors to be more innovative in the way they approach city challenges.

The Forum, hosted by the eThekweni Municipality, will unpack issues arising out of and linked to the implementation of city development strategies, as experienced by the nine member cities of the South African Cities Network.

Focusing, in particular, on the provision of shelter, the promotion of economic development, and the financing of city strategies, the Forum will address both the opportunities and the challenges in implementing city development strategies.

The conference which will be opened by the national minister of Housing, Dr Lindiwe Sisulu on 1st November at the Elangani Hotel, will run until 3rd November with sessions being held in Warwick Avenue, Cato Manor and KwaMashu.