

TOWNSHIP REGENERATION IN SMALL TOWNS: A CASE STUDY



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TRAINING FOR TOWNSHIP RENEWAL INITIATIVE CASE STUDY SERIES

The Training for Township Renewal Initiative (TTRI) is a partnership between the National Treasury (Neighbourhood Development Programme), South African Cities Network (SACN), the Department of Cooperative Governance (Urban Renewal Programme), the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and Urban LandMark. The partners are also supported by occasional associates. TTRI aims to promote, encourage and support township development and renewal in South Africa through the training of township managers and practitioners.

The TTRI case studies series aims to document experiences that illustrate innovative approaches to area-based development in order to share practical ideas and lessons to inform future development initiatives and practices for South Africa's townships. The case studies are primarily for role-players involved in township regeneration, including planners, trainers, policy makers, investors, community leaders and municipal officials.

Small towns have an important role to play in rural development. There is renewed national discussion about the ways in which municipalities can promote and facilitate small town development. These include integrating the regeneration of previously marginalised township areas with broader development plans for small towns.

This case study reflects some approaches to township regeneration in a small town context. It aims to highlight experiences from which other practitioners may learn. It forms part of a series of case studies for the TTRI.

ACRONYMS

CBD: Central Business District

IDP: Integrated Development Plan

ITB: Ingonyama Trust Board

NDP: Neighbourhood Development Programme of the National Treasury

NDPG: Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant

SDF: Spatial Development Framework

SARS: South African Revenue Service

SANRAL: South African National Roads Agency Limited

TRS: Township Regeneration Strategy

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1. INTRODUCTION

This case study illustrates initiatives for small town regeneration from three municipalities:

- Stutterheim, Eastern Cape: Creating a more compact, less fragmented town structure so a town can function more efficiently (Amahlathi Local Municipality)
- Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal: The creation of a new town centre to transform a marginalised settlement into a rural development node (eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality)
- Zeerust, North West: Rerouting a nationally important freight transport route to unlock a small town's potential to become an effective economic and social service centre for surrounding rural settlements (Ramotshere Moila Local Municipality).

Each profile includes a summary of the municipality's plans for regeneration and the approach taken for small town development, highlighting some lessons learned through the process. Some general guidelines are provided in Section 5.

As the cases are still at planning and early implementation stages, they are not presented as 'best practices'. Rather, they provide practical examples from which practitioners and stakeholders may learn.

The rationale for small town regeneration¹ and its potential for local and regional development is outlined below.

SMALL TOWN REGENERATION

International research indicates that economically vibrant small towns are important for rural development.

As well as social services, they provide employment and commercial opportunities for people living in rural areas. Rural towns are also important urban-rural linkages and can actively contribute to their regional economies.

However, many countries have experienced a decline in the viability of their small rural towns. This has been partly due to urbanisation, with the concentration of skills and resources in larger towns and cities. A contributing factor has also been the lack of effective initiatives to support development in small towns that enable them to cope with economic and social change. Such change includes the local impact of global or national economic recessions, or falls in the price of a particular commodity on which the local economy is based.²

¹NDP refers to 'small towns' in the context of South Africa's Category B3 (rural small town) and B4 (mostly rural) municipalities. NDPG programmes in rural disadvantaged areas remain focused on townships and the potential for their socio-economic inclusion through improved growth and access to opportunities in the small town and region.

²One of the source documents for this case study was 'A Study on the Revitalisation of Rural Towns in South Africa' by Kilimakore Synergetics, commissioned by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Chief Directorate of Spatial Planning and Information, Pretoria, May 2010.



PHOTO: RACHEL ADATA

Challenges of small towns

In South Africa, there are many small towns that are in economic decline and unable to provide sustainable services for people living in the surrounding rural areas. Features of such towns typically include:

- Stagnant or declining economic or industrial activity
- High levels of unemployment
- A structure that reflects the impact of apartheid planning, with marginalised township areas on the outskirts of the town

- Decaying and unused buildings
- Basic infrastructure that is not maintained properly
- Road layout and transport linkages that predispose the towns to act as conduits for goods and services rather than as regional service points.

The challenges of small towns, it is argued, must be addressed in order to facilitate rural development and improve the quality of life of people in the surrounding villages and townships.

Opportunities for small towns

Each town has its own unique characteristics and potential for development, including natural and cultural resources as well as the skills, knowledge and experience of local people.

There are opportunities for small towns to stimulate rural development, for example, through acting as:

- Centres for a variety of industries such as agriculture, cultural and eco-tourism
- Sites for innovative projects, for example renewable energy schemes and organic farming

- Local centres of trade and commerce – providing centres of demand and markets for goods and services produced in the rural areas as well as those imported from larger towns and cities.

A vibrant economy, with more employment opportunities, small, medium and micro enterprises will generate more income for the municipality. This can be used to invest in bulk infrastructure and public services for people in rural areas, which are vital not only for improving people's quality of life but also for the future economic development of the area and encouraging investment.

Vibrant small towns that can provide employment opportunities for people in rural areas will also help to ease the pressure on larger urban settlements and the challenges faced by cities of rapid urbanisation.

Specific examples of how some challenges and opportunities in three small towns have been addressed are given in the following sections.

2. STUTTERHEIM/ MLUNGISI REGENERATION INITIATIVE

A key element of this initiative is spatial integration within an existing small town economy.

CONTEXT

Stutterheim is a small town in the Eastern Cape, on the N6 highway about 80km north-west of East London. It is an administrative and business centre for neighbouring towns and rural villages, and the main economic node for Amahlathi Local Municipality.

The town's economy is built on government services, forestry and agriculture, manufacturing and retail services.

The population within Stutterheim's urban and peri-urban area is about 25 000. In addition, the town serves approximately 23 000 people living in the surrounding rural area. Income levels in the town's service area are low, with an average of 86 per cent of households earning less than R1600 a month.

Stutterheim's most densely populated township is Mlungisi. It is here that the lack of community and commercial infrastructure, poor quality neighbourhood environment, and other development challenges are most visible.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

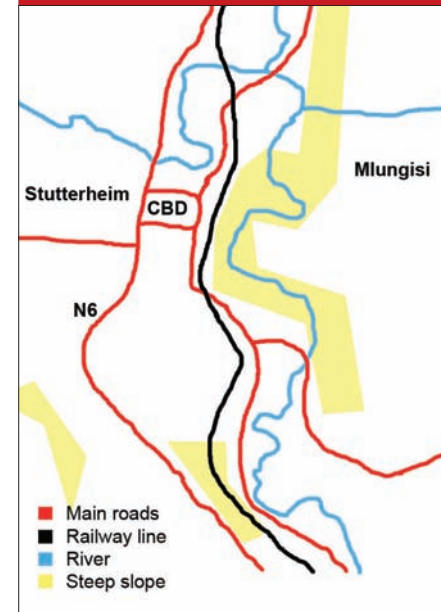
Key challenges for the town's development include:

- A spatially fragmented structure with commercial, administrative and industrial infrastructure concentrated around the central business district (CBD) and with lower income areas generally less accessible (see Figure 1).
- Unreliable infrastructure, with interruptions in water and electricity supplies and poor roads, constrains manufacturing operations in the industrial area.

Features of the town that offer opportunities for development include:

- Main road and rail linkages that make the town accessible from surrounding areas, as well as East London and Gauteng (N6 Corridor)
- Available raw materials for processing

Figure 1: The existing fragmented structure of Stutterheim



- and manufacturing enterprises, such as timber and locally grown products
- Tourist attractions related to the environmental assets in the surrounding area, such as the Amatole Mountains, indigenous forests, Thomas River Conservancy, and cultural heritage sites.

STUTTERHEIM'S DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Planning for spatial integration involves thinking about how the town operates not only within its urban boundaries, but also over the wider rural area that the town serves.

Plans for regeneration

The spatial plans for the regeneration of Stutterheim will re-define the town's urban edge by linking the town's development with that of Mlungisi and consolidating development along the urban zone of the N6 into Stutterheim (see Figure 2).

Key initiatives are:

- Building a new road and a bridge to link Mlungisi and Stutterheim
- Developing a community-commercial park in Mlungisi which will include community services, space for formal and informal business activities, a supermarket, restaurants, a sports field, gym and an amphitheatre
- Developing the Amahlathi Gateway Petro Park on the N6, which will include a service station, visitor's information centre and children's entertainment area
- Upgrading Stutterheim's CBD, including

restructuring the taxi rank and creating a new public open space with trees and benches

- Upgrading infrastructure in the industrial area
- Establishing Abenzi Woodhouse company to train local youth in wood-work and business skills, and to manufacture furniture and other products using local timber.

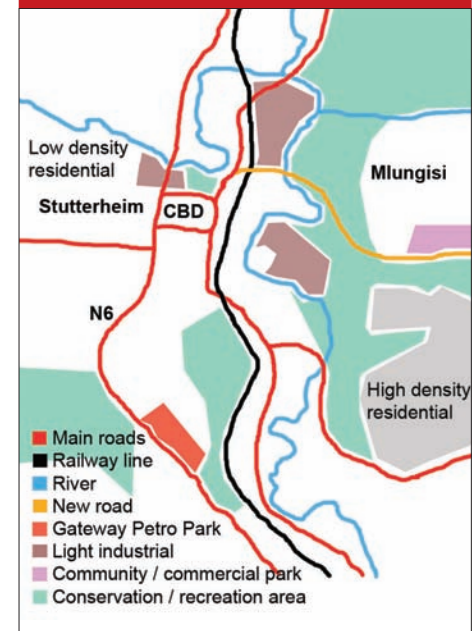
Planning process

Amahlathi Municipality is working in partnership with ASPIRE, the economic development agency of the Amathole District Municipality. ASPIRE is facilitating and project managing the regeneration initiative.

The planning phase resulted in a document comprising of: a Situational Assessment, a Regeneration Strategy and a local Spatial Development Framework (SDF). After a period of public comment, a municipal council resolution ensured that the municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and SDF will be amended in line with the town's regeneration initiative.

Some of the concepts that informed the initiative and examples of projects are outlined on page 8. See Box 1, page 25 for an overview of ASPIRE's approach.

Figure 2: Some of the development plans for Stutterheim



Planning for integrated towns

Two key concepts informed the Stutterheim/Mlungisi regeneration initiative:

- Economic development – to grow the key opportunity sectors of forestry, agriculture, local manufacturing and tourism; as well as to increase opportunities for residents to enter the formal economy as employees, entrepreneurs, investors, service providers or manufacturers.
- Quality of urban environment – which depends on people being able to access social, business and services facilities in a clean and safe environment.

Both concepts are influenced by the layout and structure of the town and its transport linkages. A key focus of the Stutterheim initiative is to improve the 'spatial functioning' of the town, i.e. where particular business areas, residential areas or facilities are located in relation to each other and how efficiently people and goods can move between them. However, this needs to be done in a way that protects the natural environmental

assets in the area, given the importance of these for the sustainability of economic development. For example, land near the new Stutterheim-Mlungisi road was set aside as a recreational park, which also serves to protect the catchment area of the stream.

Redefining the town's boundaries

The town's function as a primary service node, as described in the municipal SDF, formed the starting point for the town's regeneration planning documents. However the study area was defined by the functional boundaries of the town which relate to the town's road and rail linkages and its roles within the wider catchment area, rather than merely the ward boundaries.

The SDF review made proposals to reduce urban sprawl, and aim for a more compact urban settlement. It excluded smallholdings and farms that were previously included in the urban edge. However, certain residential areas that were previously excluded have been included so that better services and infrastructure can be provided to residents

and they can be better integrated with the other facilities in town.

The Mlungisi-Stutterheim bridge

Construction of the Mlungisi-Stutterheim bridge and access road began in January 2010, with funding from the Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant (NDGP). For generations, residents of the Mlungisi township had to travel 4km on dangerous roads or walk 2km through a steep valley to reach Stutterheim.

"I am so very happy," said one Mlungisi resident. "The development will help us get jobs and combat crime." The valley between Mlungisi and Stutterheim is notorious for criminal activity.

Residents had initially envisioned a pedestrian bridge linking them to town. However, the project was upgraded to accommodate motor vehicles by ASPIRE who were thinking ahead to the needs of public transport users, small businesses and higher income groups in an economically vibrant Mlungisi.

A challenge for ASPIRE was the unrealistic

expectations among community members of the number of jobs that the project would provide. The bridge is being built using a labour-intensive method, based on an arched design using bricks. Although the construction project provided only short-term jobs, it was an opportunity for 45 people to gain work experience and learn new skills which will assist them in the job market.

An infrastructure investment to stimulate local business

The bridge and new road will not only make life easier for residents of Mlungisi in general, it will also encourage the development of small businesses by making it easier to move goods and attract custom. Together with other plans to provide facilities and support for small businesses, it is an example of how ASPIRE

is making markets work better for Mlungisi.

In particular, the bridge acted as a catalyst for the Mlungisi community-commercial park, construction of which began in February 2011 with another NDPG grant.

Inspiring future development

Upgrading Stutterheim's CBD is being done in line with a community campaign to develop an image, or 'brand' for Stutterheim. Local people are asked to express, through any medium they wish, their response to the question: "What is Stutterheim to you?"

The idea is to generate pride in the town and encourage people from all sectors to participate in the town's future development. For example, local businesses may use the Stutterheim 'brand image' on their goods to encourage people to buy local products or to advertise the area. It is also a way to stimulate private sector investment so the town's economic development will continue after ASPIRE withdraws from the area.



PHOTO: WILLIAM MARTIN

Building the Mlungisi-Stutterheim bridge

LESSONS LEARNED

The planning phase was completed by mid-2009, and the initiative is moving into the implementation phase. Some key lessons drawn from the experience are outlined below.

1. Plan for functional integration

Planning for more compact, integrated towns involves looking at the functional boundaries of a town – how it is linked to

the areas it serves – rather than the usual boundaries set by ward-based planning.

2. Review the existing municipal SDF and compile a local SDF

If the urban edge is going to be redefined to make the town function more efficiently and address the challenges of marginalised areas posed by apartheid planning, it is likely that a local SDF will be needed. The local SDF needs to be aligned with the municipal SDF, compiled as part of the IDP process. However, the local SDF can also inform the IDP and help refine the municipal SDF to reflect the township's longer-term regeneration plans. Remember that the local SDF must include a focus on the protection of the area's natural systems, which are vital for long-term development.

3. Manage expectations

Recognise that construction projects that employ local people, such as building the Mlungisi–Stutterheim bridge, are not long-term job creation projects. Rather they are opportunities for skills training and development. Job creation through the regeneration initiative takes time

and involves developing the conditions for successful business initiatives. The municipality can facilitate this through infrastructure improvements, effective governance, provision of training and other support for small business development. However, it also depends on the partnerships and relationships developed between public and private sector investors, local community organisations and entrepreneurs.

4. Consider partnering with an economic and development agency

In the Amahlathi Municipality/ASPIRE partnership, the municipality plays a supportive role in terms of land zoning, approval of building plans and other regulatory processes. It also assists with communication among ward committees and communities. ASPIRE manages the regeneration initiative from social facilitation through to project implementation. However, the municipality has to ensure that it has the capacity for the long-term operation and maintenance of the new developments and additional municipal infrastructure after ASPIRE's development role comes to an end.



PHOTO: WILLIAM MARTIN

Pavements in need of upgrading, Stutterheim CBD

3. MPUMALANGA NEW TOWN CENTRE

This initiative illustrates how, in an area where there were complicated land ownership issues, the municipality mobilised multi-stakeholder partnerships to invest in developments that would unlock the potential of the area to become a regional service centre.

CONTEXT

Mpumalanga is a rural settlement about 60km west of Durban between Hammarsdale and Cato Ridge, KwaZulu-Natal. It is on the periphery of eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (Metro), beyond the urban edge.

The town was created in 1962 as a dormitory residential settlement to provide labour for the Hammarsdale clothing and textile industry (which has now collapsed).

Mpumalanga has a population of about 130 000. The population is growing at a rate of 5 per cent per year, mostly due to natural growth and the in-migration of people from deep rural areas. The unemployment rate is high, at 47 per cent,

and 48 000 people are estimated to be living in poverty (less than about R15 a day).

Newer settlements in the area have become part of Mpumalanga, including three informal settlements and two low-cost housing areas. However, the area lacks public transport, commercial and social facilities.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key challenges for development of the area include:

- The lack of bulk infrastructure, the provision for which was not included in the Metro's next three-year budget
- The communal tenure of the land, which often complicates the provision of municipal services and the sale or lease of land for development.

The area's opportunities for development include:

- The settlement's good location in terms of transport linkages. It is near a provincial main road (MR385) that links to the N3 highway (identified as a

development corridor), and the Durban to Johannesburg railway runs parallel to the MR385 (see Figure 3)

- The identification of the settlement in all the municipal plans as a rural development node with a regional function.

Figure 3: The part of Mpumalanga identified for development, with settlements on either side of the main road



APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING MPUMALANGA

This section outlines some key elements of the Metro's approach to transforming a marginalised settlement into a viable small town. It highlights some key factors that helped to strengthen partnerships between different role-players.

Plans for regeneration

The regeneration initiative has become known as Mpumalanga New Town Centre (see Figure 4). The plans include:

- Housing projects for low-income and middle-income groups, including rental units as well as units for private ownership
- Various types of public facilities such as a community health centre, facilities for informal traders and agricultural co-operatives, a business support centre, a library, two new parks, and a new railway station
- A retail centre
- Water and sanitation services, street lighting, stormwater drainage, roads and other infrastructural projects to support the new developments.

Overview of the planning process

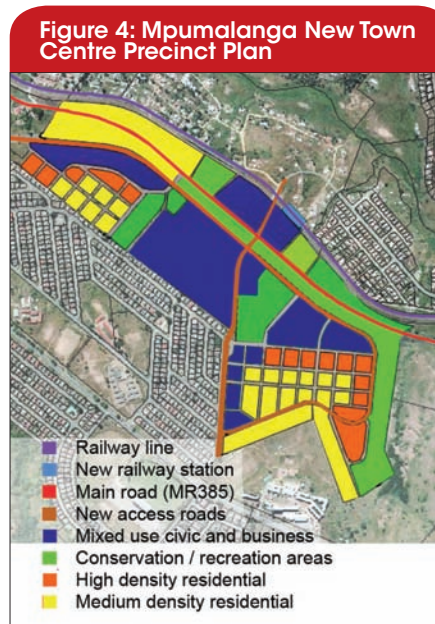
The Metro received funds for the planning process from the NDPG and the provincial Department of Economic Development. It commissioned the development of a Precinct Plan and a Local Economic Development Strategy. The municipal Economic Development Unit, which

drove the development initiative, compiled a Township Regeneration Strategy (TRS) and a Business Plan, as requested by the Neighbourhood Development Programme (NDP).

All the municipal plans were thoroughly researched and supported the concept of Mpumalanga nodal development outlined in the IDP. In addition, time and resources were invested in developing relationships with community members and other stakeholders and potential investors.

Key partners in the development were the traditional authorities and the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB) who administer the communal land in the area. Any development in the area was subject to their agreement to make the land available to the Metro or private developers.

The institutional arrangements, which included a project steering committee and community stakeholder forum, ensure the close involvement of the ITB, ward councillors and other community representatives in the development plans.



Training and relationship-building with community leaders

Development in rural areas is often complicated by the existence of two types of land tenure³ both of which have advantages and disadvantages. In KwaZulu-Natal recent changes in planning legislation require spatial plans to be developed in rural areas and land administered by the ITB. Local Area Development Plans will be used as the basis for the spatial plans.

The Metro and provincial government prepared in advance for the changes to the statutory planning framework. They provided training for traditional leaders about planning processes and concepts, to help them make more informed decisions about development proposals on their land. Through the training process municipal officials also developed constructive relationships with community leaders, reducing political tension between traditional authorities and the Metro.

When the time came for the ITB to consider making land available for development, the



PHOTO: PETER GILMORE

A new pedestrian bridge now links residential areas on either side of the main road, Mpumalanga

decision-makers were able to engage with the various municipal plans and strategies constructively. They also understood that some changes to the communal land system would have to be made in order to finance some of the developments – as potential investors in houses and businesses would want formal ownership of the land.

Initially, the ITB has agreed to lease land for development to the Metro and property developer. However, only the retail centre

will remain on communal land, the land required for housing and public facilities will be excised out of communal tenure.

³There are two types of land tenure: Communal tenure in which land rights belong to a whole community rather than an individual; and formal tenure under which land may be privately owned. The formal system allows for land to be surveyed, registered, and zoned, which facilitates municipal land-use planning.

Facilitating private sector investment

ERIS Property Group is funding a retail centre and taxi rank in Mpumalanga, as well as various planning processes for other phases of the project. It is unusual for a private sector company to consider such a big investment with only a two-year lease and no guarantee that the tenure situation would change to private ownership. This suggests that there is a great deal of trust in the relationship between ERIS, ITB and the Metro.

One of the factors that contributed to ERIS's commitment was the level of public sector commitment when the initiative was still at conceptual stage.

Although ERIS initially approached the ITB to investigate investment opportunities in the area, it was only after the NDPG was awarded that the company made a commitment to any investment.

In addition, through well-researched development plans and support from provincial government departments and other agencies, the municipality has given ERIS confidence in the ability of the Metro to provide the services and infrastructure required for the development.

Securing public sector commitment

Plans backed up by quality research

The need for community facilities in

Mpumalanga had been identified by a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) accessibility model, based on an assessment of the under- or over-supply of community facilities in all parts of eThekweni. The Metro used this research as a basis for its consultation with relevant provincial and local government departments.

A long negotiating process resulted in in-principle commitment from a range of stakeholders and an agreement that municipal services would operate from facilities in Mpumalanga.

Follow-up with provincial departments

After receiving the NDPG award, the Metro asked the provincial departments to facilitate land allocation, and to develop time schedules and finance programmes for the developments. This work was needed to ensure that enough land would be allocated in the Precinct Plan for any projects supported by provincial departments. For example, the Department of Health saw the need for a regional hospital, rather than a clinic, but would only be able to allocate funds to the hospital in five years time.



PHOTO: PETER GILMORE

Land allocated for the new town centre, Mpumalanga

LESSONS LEARNED

Through many years of careful preparation and partnership building, eThekweni Metro has established a sound platform for investment in the Mpumalanga New Town development with financial commitments from a property developer, a national bank, and various government departments and agencies. Three key lessons drawn from their experience are given below.

1. Communal tenure is not necessarily an impediment to development

The Metro's experience shows that it is possible to integrate dual systems of land tenure and retain advantages from both systems. For Mpumalanga, this was achieved through the Metro respecting traditional forms of land management and working with traditional leaders rather than challenging them. The willingness of the ITB to be open to innovation and change was also an important factor.

2. Preparation is important for successful development

Throughout the process, the Metro took

care to gain an in-depth understanding of the area, the needs of the people and the issues of concern relating to the potential development. This involved providing training in planning and development processes when required, backing up development plans with thorough research and requesting provincial departments to provide relevant information at an early stage in the process.

Through such preparatory work the Metro developed strong relationships with potential partners, based on trust and confidence that the municipality would be able to deliver the infrastructure services required.

Thorough preparation takes time, and the Metro was able to resist pressure for quick visible development that often comes from funders, politicians or government officials.

3. Development plans need to be economically viable

To attract private sector partners, development plans need to make economic sense. eThekweni Metro developed the Precinct Plan and Town



PHOTO: PETER GILMORE

A side walk built by residents from Mpumalanga

Centre Urban Design jointly with ERIS. Without this early consideration of the needs of the private sector, the plan may have needed to be amended at a later stage. Private sector partners are important as investors and for their leverage potential in attracting other partners.

4. TRANSFORMING ZEERUST

This is an example of a development approach that took advantage of a town's location on an existing national freight transport route, while also including plans to stimulate development in outlying settlements.

CONTEXT

Zeerust is an agricultural town in the North West Province, 240km north-west of Johannesburg and 40km from the Botswana border. The town serves a large rural area with over 40 villages within a radius of 120km of the town. The main road from Gauteng to Botswana (N4) runs through the town centre (see Figure 5).

Zeerust is within the Ramotshere Moila Local Municipality which has a growing population of about 150 000, with high levels of unemployment and poverty. For example, in Dinokana, a village near Zeerust, only 20 per cent of the population is formally employed.

Ikageleng is the township closest to Zeerust's CBD, within a 30-minute walking

distance. Near the road leading into Ikageleng are some low-level economic activities and an area of low-income housing. There is a small municipal service centre with a clinic, an under-utilised sports precinct and community hall. More affluent housing has developed around the edges of the township.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key challenges for the development of the Zeerust CBD and Ikageleng are:

- Traffic congestion, air and noise pollution in the CBD due to the high volume of traffic on the N4. About 4 600 motor vehicles drive through the town every day, of which 600 are trucks.
- A limited potential for projects within Ikageleng to lever investment, due to Ikageleng's proximity to the CBD and the limited disposable income available to residents.

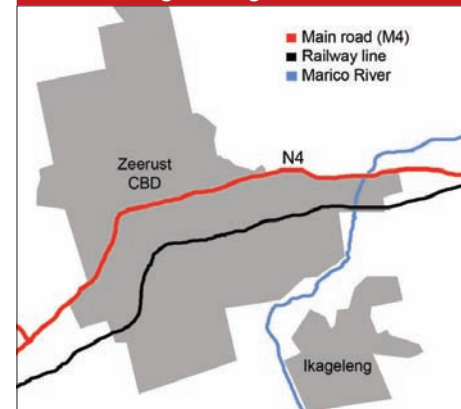
Opportunities for the town's development include:

- Its location at the junction of the main road running through Vryburg and Mafikeng (Western Frontier Corridor),

and the N4 (Platinum Corridor)

- Prime agricultural land and mineral resources in the surrounding rural areas.

Figure 5: Plan of Zeerust showing the existing N4 alignment



APPROACH TO TRANSFORMING ZEERUST

The municipality's approach to the regeneration of Zeerust is described below. A key feature was re-routing the freight road which opened up opportunities for development in the CBD and peripheral areas.

Plans for regeneration

Key development initiatives identified for Zeerust are:

- An N4 by-pass road and acquisition of land for a business node. Re-routing the heavy traffic from the town centre will relieve the problems related to traffic congestion in the CBD (see Figure 6) A better functioning CBD will help Zeerust to operate more efficiently and effectively as an economic and social service centre for Ikageleng and rural villages
- Upgrade the road and bridge linking Ikageleng to Zeerust CBD
- Build a new multi-purpose community centre in Ikageleng and upgrade the existing sports facilities
- Formalise Dinokana to facilitate the development of a future economic and social node. It is expected that this development will also benefit surrounding

Figure 6: Plans for the N4 bypass and improved access road to Ikageleng



communities through improved linkages and integration.

Planning process

The municipality initially applied for an NDPG to develop a multi-purpose community centre in Ikageleng. However, the NDPG award was made when the SDF was being drafted. This provided an opportunity to investigate whether any other economic opportunities identified at a regional level through the SDF process could add value to the NDP initiative in Ikageleng. The SDF identified Zeerust as an urban

priority intervention area and Dinokana as a rural priority intervention area. Various development initiatives were identified through the SDF and IDP processes, including the N4 by-pass road and improving the access road to Ikageleng. These were verified through additional studies and prioritised according to NDP selection criteria.

Ongoing and dedicated community and stakeholder input identified additional projects and sub-projects, examples of which are given on the following pages.



PHOTO: DAWIE BOS

Congested Zeerust CBD

Resolving the trucking problem

A key challenge facing Zeerust's CBD is the road congestion related to the trucks using the N4 freight route. Addressing this issue required the participation of two major role-players – South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) and Bakwena (responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Platinum Corridor) – without whom the N4 by-pass could not go ahead.

Despite a council resolution prohibiting the parking of trucks in the CBD, most trucks still park along the N4 in town. There are two reasons for this:

- The lack of facilities at the truck stop on the outskirts of town
- The fact that trans-border truck drivers have to go to the South African Revenue Service (SARS) office in the CBD to process SARS clearance documentation.

These needs have now been addressed, as negotiations with relevant stakeholders led to:

- A commitment from SANRAL to fund a new weigh bridge, with job creation opportunities, as well as future link roads to improve access to the border
- A commitment from the existing truck stop owner to invest in improving existing facilities and establishing a SARS office at the truck stop.

There is now potential for the development of a transport node that was not anticipated in earlier plans.

Figure 6 shows the latest plans for the re-alignment of the N4. As well as relieving the congestion in the Zeerust CBD it has the potential to revive the under-developed industrial zone through improving access to the area.



Reconsidering initial plans for a retail centre

A new shopping centre, including a taxi rank, was identified as a project that could lever substantial investment from the private sector. In the initial plans this would serve as a gateway to Zeerust for people approaching from the Mafikeng side. However, there were delays in procuring the land from private owners. In the meantime, a proposal was submitted from another developer for a retail centre about 800m from the intended site, and this has obtained municipal approval. Although it is not in the best location it is still on the N4.

The original gateway plans have been put on hold, because studies indicated that the local market is not strong enough to support two retail centres of similar size and tenant mix.

Exploring opportunities for investment in Ikageleng

Although there is limited potential for private sector leverage in Ikageleng due to its proximity to the Zeerust CBD, the few opportunities that have been identified are being explored with relevant stakeholders.

For example:

- Negotiations are on-going with government departments that will have offices in the Ikageleng multi-purpose community centre (see Figure 7)
- Representatives of the local business community are being consulted about the potential for small business development in the area
- The potential to develop the sports facilities into a regional sports node that can be leased to a private sector company under a management contract is being investigated.

Figure 7: Plans for Ikageleng's multi-purpose community centre



LESSONS LEARNED

Projects for the regeneration of Zeerust are still mostly at design stage, with some construction projects due to begin in 2011. Three key lessons drawn from the experience of Ramotshere Moila Local Municipality are given below.

1. Include a regional perspective

External, or regional, factors can enhance or constrain a local development. The willingness of the municipality to engage with regional plans resulted in the initial focus on a community centre in Ikageleng being broadened to include developments outside the township that will have an impact on the economic development of Ikageleng in the longer term.

2. Involve a wide variety of stakeholders and be flexible

Municipal officials identified strategic stakeholders at the concept stage of the projects and included them in discussions from the beginning. This approach has facilitated relationships based on trust and co-operation. In addition, an openness to include ideas contributed by other stakeholders as negotiations proceeded



PHOTO: DAWIE BOS

Dinokana, one of the villages served by Zeerust

allowed for plans to be adapted and enhanced.

3. You don't need a lot of money to initiate a far-reaching programme

A relatively small injection of funds can unlock ambitious and large-scale programmes that can have far-reaching

effects. The initial grant made by the NDPG allowed the municipality to embark on a thorough planning process that involved multiple stakeholders. Ideas for the development evolved through the process and commitments for further funding were made as potential partners saw the implications of the project.

5. REFLECTIONS AND GUIDELINES

Municipalities have an important role to play in creating the preconditions for successful development. Through careful planning and building relationships with potential partners, each municipality in this case study created a sound platform for attracting investment for future development.

Although each approach to small town regeneration will be different, shaped by local challenges and opportunities, some broader insights from the Stutterheim, Mpumalanga and Zeerust examples can be drawn to help guide other municipalities. This section also includes insights gained from a conference on small town development organised by ASPIRE in October 2010.

5.1. INVEST IN CAREFUL PREPARATION AND PLANNING

Viable, long-term development plans require careful preparation. It is important to invest in such work, despite pressure for quick visible development. It can result in savings in time and resources at later

stages. Here are some guidelines for such a planning phase:

- **Participatory planning:** Actively seek information and ideas from people living and working in the area. For example, arrange focused interviews with private sector and ward representatives. Build on local assets and the community's needs and desires.

Include strategic stakeholders at the beginning of the process to allow full participation and build the foundation of trust between role-players.

An effective communication and public participation process is essential, not only for ensuring that project plans meet the needs and aspirations of community members, but also to respond to people's concerns and to manage any unrealistic expectations.

Be clear about time frames related to the initiative, for example planning processes take time and it may be two years or more before any visible signs of development are seen.

- **Research:** Base the plans on thorough research to ensure that they will be viable and suitable for the area. For example, undertake household surveys, supplement general statistical socio-economic information with additional research to establish current local and regional dynamics. Understand how the local CBD operates and the regional economy to which the town is linked. Identify ecological areas that cannot be developed because of the environmental services they provide.

Potential funders will need comprehensive investigations to support a project. Similarly, the municipality needs to examine proposals made to them by developers, and projects identified in SDFs or IDPs require investigation. Research may reveal other more urgent or catalytic projects.

- **Public-sector support:** A relatively small amount of public-sector funding can kick-start a planning process that identifies opportunities for a variety of investors.

Provincial departments need time to plan their resources before committing their support for an initiative. Facilitate this by involving them at an early stage in the process and regular follow-ups with relevant departments. Obtain in-principle agreements for co-operation and investment before the plans and time-frames are finalised.

- **Governance structures:** Establish structures to manage and co-ordinate the planning processes. For example, the Stutterheim initiative involves monthly project steering committee meetings, held now for more than two years, chaired by the local ward councillor.

- **Flexibility:** Be open to explore innovative solutions that can stimulate further development. As in the case of Zeerust, pre-conceived plans for one focused project can be opened up to embrace a broader development initiative.

- **Long-term view:** Consider the development of a regeneration strategy, as shown in the Zeerust and Mpulamanga cases; it can be a key element in the small town regeneration approach.

5.2. INVOLVE A VARIETY OF PARTNERS

The outcomes of an effective planning process are not only quality planning documents to guide implementation projects, but also partnerships based on trust and a shared vision for the area.

A wide range of people will have something to contribute and invest in the planning and regeneration process, whether it be money, time or 'sweat equity'. Therefore, a municipality's partners should include not only private and public sector investors, but also a variety of civil society role-players such as local residents and business people, university researchers, facilitators and trainers.

Here are some guidelines for the development of effective partnerships:

- **Consensus-building:** Find common ground among partners by identifying a joint vision for the town and facilitating a process to develop a strategy for the town's development.

- **Community representation:** Work with elected and traditional leaders, and

identify local champions. Involve community members in the early planning stages, for example in drawing up the vision for the regeneration strategy. Facilitate an on-going community and public participation process.

- **Proactive work:** Actively look for potential investors, developers and other stakeholders to include in the process (issuing expressions of interest may not generate the required responses). Understand their needs and objectives. Show them the advantages of the project. As in the case of Mpumalanga, government departments and agencies can be convinced to invest even though they may not have budgeted for the initiative.

Actively communicate with potential private investors, without necessarily making commitments, so they are kept up-to-date with plans and the projects' progress.

- **Leverage:** Partners can act as levers to create potential for development and attract new partners. For example, in Mpumalanga, a relatively small injection of funds unlocked a large programme.

A variety of issues can be addressed through partnerships including land availability and funding. Partners can help to identify innovative ways to overcome challenges, as in the case of Zeerust's truck stop.

- **Perseverance:** Partnership building is time consuming and requires perseverance. If you have a worthwhile concept, it is worth staying on track with the projects, even if political leadership changes.

- **Economic and development agencies:** As the Stutterheim experience shows, an economic development agency

can facilitate and project manage a regeneration initiative in partnership with a municipality that plays an enabling and supportive role. The municipality needs to ensure that it has the capacity for the long-term operation and maintenance of the municipal services related to the development after the agency's role has come to an end.

5.3. PLAN FOR INTEGRATED TOWNS

Addressing the inequities of apartheid planning involves changing the physical structure of a town so that marginalised

township areas are accessible to the CBD and other centres of economic, recreational, social and cultural activity.

A more compact, integrated town will generally facilitate the provision of infrastructure services. The physical plans for the town need to take account of not only functional elements relating to service provision and movement of goods and people for commerce and industry, but also aesthetic and environmental elements to ensure that the town is a pleasant, safe and healthy place to live.

Here are some ideas for a holistic approach to town planning:

- **Functionality:** Understand the town as one unit rather than as separate suburbs or townships. This involves considering how the different areas of the town relate to each other and the infrastructure that they require to operate effectively.

In addition, it is important to consider how the town relates to surrounding rural settlements, regional towns and cities. This involves identifying the unique services the



PHOTO: RACHEL ADATIA

town provides, or has potential to develop, at local, regional and national level.

- **Operation and maintenance:** It is important to include funding for the long-term operation and maintenance of infrastructure and municipal services that will be required as the town develops.

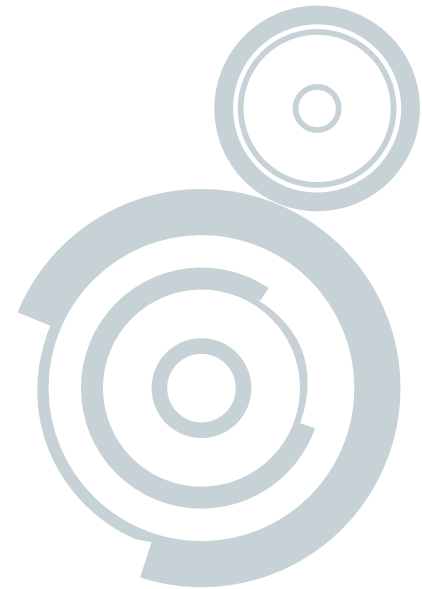
A willingness to enforce by-laws is also likely to help with on-going maintenance issues, for example, enforcing regulations related to waste dumping can help to maintain storm water systems and public open spaces.

- **Environmental assets:** Clean air, water and soil are vital resources for economic and social development that need to be looked after if long-term development is to be achieved. For example, avoiding building on wetlands and borders of streams and rivers not only reduces the risk of damage from flooding but also protects long-term water supplies. Trees help to improve air quality in towns, and parks and wildlife corridors can be important recreational and educational areas for residents.

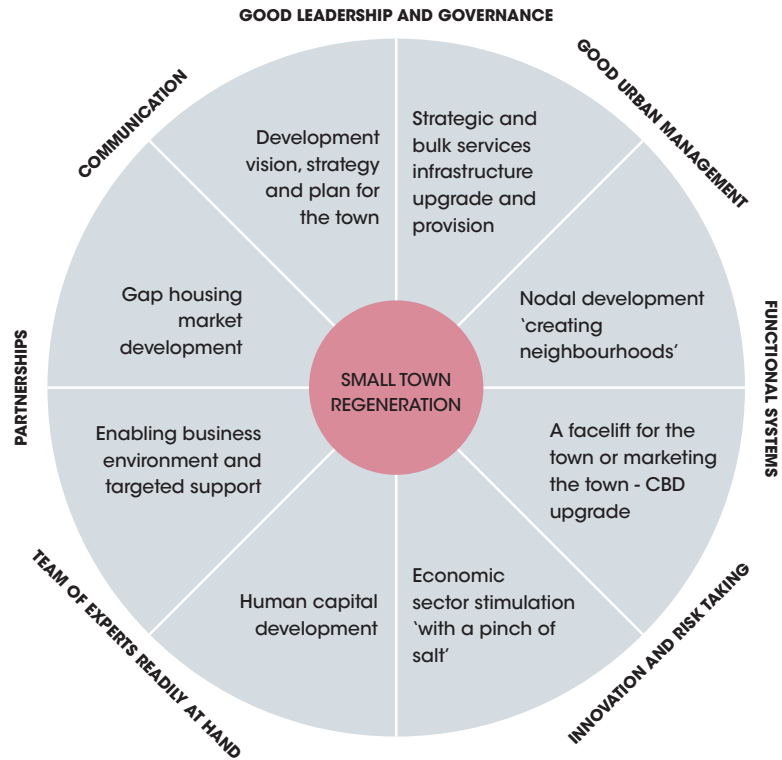
- **Economic sector:** A vibrant economic sector is essential for long-term job creation. Identify economic anchor projects that build on local resources and provide opportunities for the development of skills and small businesses. Provide holistic support for small businesses, from business planning to mentorship and facility management.

As in the case of Mpumalanga, give confidence to potential private sector partners through plans to develop, operate and maintain effective infrastructure and municipal services, particularly road and rail networks, electricity and water services. Include opportunities for renewable energy systems and alternative infrastructure provision, as these have many advantages over conventional technologies for meeting increasing demands for electricity and water services.

- **Decentralisation:** Bring the service to the people instead of people to the service. For example, include municipal service centres in community centres, as planned for Ikageleng. Develop projects that build on local knowledge and expertise rather than large top-down projects.



Box 1: A holistic approach to small town regeneration



Small town regeneration is about 'people' making it work with the residents of the towns. It involves:

- Dedication
- Perseverance
- Risk taking
- Confidence
- Frustration, tolerance and patience
- Initiative
- Test and trial
- Transparent communication on all levels

Believe in your concept and sell it!

Source: 'Implementing small town regeneration,' a presentation by Saskia Haardt, for ASPIRE/Small Towns Conference, 21-22 October 2010, see: <http://www.aspire.org.za>

