



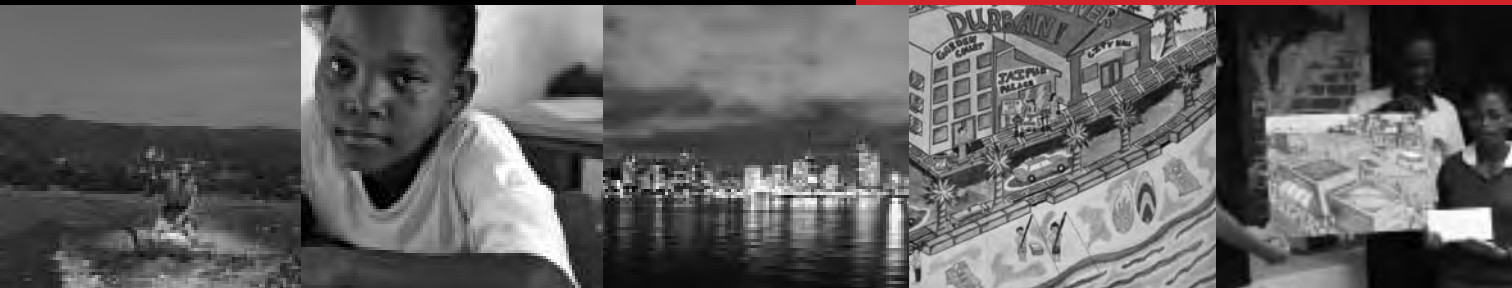
The Power of IMAGINATION

Long Term Planning for City Sustainability

50 Lessons

from Durban, South Africa

2007 - 2009



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Sogen Moodley
September 2009
Senior Manager, Corporate Policy Unit
eThekweni Municipality, Durban, South Africa.

Foreword

By Dr Michael Sutcliffe, City Manager

It is an honour and privilege to be heading up the administration of a Metropolitan area of the size and complexity as ours at such a critical time in the history of City, country and continent. A time of immense hope and optimism as the entire world watches us in anticipation of delivering a first-class, unforgettable soccer World Cup in 2010. A time of great expectations for local disadvantaged communities that are eagerly awaiting services that have been promised, as well as a time of hard slog for our officials who are doubling their efforts as we roll out our delivery programmes designed to redress the legacy of apartheid, in order to ensure a better quality of life for all in our City.

Fundamental to our service delivery programme, have been integrated planning processes that have helped determine priorities, guide and phase holistic development in the City. Our city's strategic planning abilities have gained international recognition during the last five years. We currently serve as the Vice Chair of the Urban Strategic Planning Commission in the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Co-Chair of the international PLUS Network of over 40 cities throughout the world and Chair of the NEPAD Cities Forum that co-ordinates strategic planning on the continent.

We believe that planning must encompass time frames beyond that of elected offices if they are to serve our children. Over the last two years, our planning team has led an impressive process of mobilizing key stakeholders to craft a long term vision, plan and a set of workable strategies to achieve this vision. What has been really impressive about the process and the

plan, is the emphasis on partnerships and on different stakeholders taking responsibilities for their actions, in recognition of the premise that by working together, much more can be achieved.

Future cities are the realization of our imagination, but also spaces which contain our memories. We have tried to link our imagination with action-orientation through a project called Imagine Durban. Imagine Durban has been a process of non-stop learning through doing. It is facilitated by a team of reflective practitioners who place a premium on sharing lessons learned and this publication will go a long way to provide useful insights to our colleagues from other cities who are contemplating engaging in similar, long term planning processes. May we thank our co-funders CIDA and our Canadian-based NGO partner, Sustainable Cities, for their support.

Wishing you all the best as you begin your own processes of building the cities of tomorrow...

Dr. Michael Sutcliffe
City Manager: eThekweni Municipality

Message from Political Leadership

By City Durban Mayor, His Worship Councillor. Obed Mlaba

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the work of the Imagine Durban team during its 2007-2009 term in raising the profile on the eThekweni Municipality's commitment to current global issues. I am referring to matters of safer and sustainable cities, climate change, energy saving, conservation, environment and greenhouse gas emissions.

Spearheaded by the City's Corporate Policy Unit, the roll-out of the Demonstration Project reached many communities and created enormous awareness on environmental issues in the urban and rural areas of the Greater Durban Region in the past two years.

Through our partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency, the eThekweni Municipality led a successful community-driven initiative on integrated, long-term planning for Durban. I am pleased that this project – which was implemented in conjunction with Sustainable Cities, a Non-Governmental Organisation from Vancouver, Canada, and the PLUS Network of 35 cities in 14 countries - provided Durban with an international platform to share experiences in sustainability planning and sustainable community development.

An added boost to the project was Durban's hosting of a conference on Sustainable Cities in 2008. After South Africa hosted the first World Summit on Sustainability at the turn of the new century, Durban became one of the first global cities to have signed protocols on Sustainability and Climate Change.

As a progressive city, the political leadership and the Municipal administration are guided by the City's 2020 vision that states: "By 2020, eThekweni Municipality will enjoy the reputation of being Africa's most caring and

livable city, where all citizens live in harmony. This vision will be achieved by growing its economy and meeting people's needs so that all citizens enjoy a high quality of life with equal opportunities, in a city that they are truly proud of."

We are a city that cares for its citizens and the environment, which is why as a local government, we remain committed to transforming Durban into a truly sustainable city by striving to achieve the following key focal areas and themes:

- Creating a safer city;
- Ensuring a more environmentally sustainable city;
- Promoting an accessible city;
- Creating a city where all enjoy sustainable livelihoods;
- Fostering a more caring and empowering city;
- Celebrating the city's cultural diversity, history and heritage;

Through Durban's Long Term Planning for City Sustainability, I am confident that this publication known as "The Power of Imagination", which is published by the Corporate Policy Unit, will chronicle the short history of the Imagine Durban project and bring to the public domain the 50 Lessons from Durban, South Africa.

May the "Imagine" concept continue to highlight Durban's commitment to change ahead of the United Nations' Climate Conference that will take place in Copenhagen in December this year.

Hopefully, Africa's contribution, concerns and perspectives to governmental negotiations will lead to the formation of a continental network on environmental and Climate Change issues.

Thank You

Message from the ICSC (International Centre for Sustainable Cities)

By President, Dr Nola-Kate Seymoar


When we launched the Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network in 2004 we were charting unknown territory. Our vision was to create a small and diverse network of cities that are learning and sharing that learning with one another. PLUS is an acronym for Partners for Long-term Urban Sustainability and the concept of partnerships – voluntary relationships of equality – is at the core of the network. Our mission became one of accelerating the transfer of learning from city to city through partnerships. We are convinced that change comes from bringing diverse groups to a common table – local governments, community groups, businesses, and academics - to tackle complex challenges of building better cities and vibrant communities.

I would like to reinforce a few observations about the Imagine Durban initiative.

- Firstly, the fact that the leadership team is headed by and includes exceptional women (and exceptional men) who are willing to share power and take risks is a significant factor in its success. They have a sense of openness to ideas, experimentation, and making mistakes – the opposite of a bureaucratic worry about saving face or covering one's derrière. It is to the credit of the City Manager and Mayor of eThekweni, that this small group is nurtured and protected as they give birth to Imagine Durban and now to Create Durban.
- Secondly, the notion of backcasting from a desired future rather than forecasting from trends or scenarios is the essence of the long-term planning process as espoused by the PLUS Network. In MetroVancouver we had come to the realization that looking forward 50 to 100 years (or several generations) is required for a vision, a perspective of 30 years or so is needed to choose strategies and a timeframe of 5 years is appropriate for plans that are made concrete with budgets and workplans. Durban's reflections on its experience and the need to align plans, strategies and visions, confirm our own learning in this regard.
- Thirdly, the need to demonstrate action while creating the vision builds trust in the people and process. Too often public participation processes are full of aspirational goals that raise expectations and then are left on shelves or display tables, undermining peoples trust or willingness to participate in the process the next time. Imagine Durban is doing an exceptional job of listening and responding as it proceeds.
- Finally, Durban's willingness to lead by sharing its experience with others- within its city region, on the African continent, and beyond - is making a contribution to city-building all over the world. Cities are like acupuncture points – interventions in cities can improve the health of the whole planet.

It is a privilege to share this journey with Imagine Durban.

Introduction



Time sure flies when you're having fun! Gosh, we can't believe it is now more than two years since our Imagine Durban team first started working on what has been without doubt an exciting, deeply fulfilling and richly rewarding project. As change agents for a new and collective imaginary, there has been a constant, subtle pressure exerted on each of us to begin examining our daily choices to ensure they are far more sustainable and non-threatening to our future generations.

It has been the little behavioral changes that we have made as Imagine Durban Ambassadors that have helped us personally invest in a process that we have realized just had to begin with ourselves. Little changes like each of us signing a formal pledge to do everything possible to reduce our energy consumption by 10%, or starting our own vegetable gardens, making sure that all our household recyclables are recycled, or even just walking a little bit more...

In recognition of the fact that the project is attempting to chart new

ground, and that it was co-funded by an international learning network, we made a conscious effort to reflect during the planning process about what worked particularly well and what did not appear to be yielding effective results. At the end of (most of) our weekly Project Team meetings or field trips, we were encouraged to introspect and identify key lessons that we could share with other members. As a rule, we also tried very hard to build in time for evaluation and reflection into the planning process, in order to make sure that we were as responsive as possible.

It must be confessed though that when Ms Jacquie Subban, Head of our Unit, and Project Champion of Imagine Durban suggested in July 2008 that it was time for the Durban team to publish our lessons learned during the Imagine Durban planning process, many of us we were a little concerned that perhaps such a publication was a bit premature. Sure, we were more than half-way in a very productive planning process, but we had not yet started the actual

programme and project implementation phase. Would it not be better to wait another two years until implementation was well under way before publishing our experiences, we wondered?

Well, we found our answer later that year when our City hosted the Plus Network's 2008 Biennial Planning Conference¹. What became very clear during the conference was that cities from all over the world who were at different stages in their planning cycle, really looked to their international planning colleagues from around the world who were at similar or even more advanced stages for ideas, suggestions, tips, lessons learned and sometimes, just for support! The City of Calgary in Canada for example, was just ahead of our city in their process and provided a wonderful opportunity for us to learn from. Similarly, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Dakar, Senegal looked to us as a potential learning partner.

And so feeling re-assured that the lessons we had learned over the first two years in the Imagine Durban process would add some value to other cities who were on the same planning journey as us, work in earnest on this publication began in January 2009. At the time of going to press, the Imagine Durban process had just entered its Implementation Phase, and so it is still very early days to reflect on the outcomes of the process.

We must add at the outset, that we are indeed

¹The Sustainable Cities: PLUS Planning Cycle is a generic summary of the principles and stages of long-term planning for sustainability developed by Nola-Kate Seymoar and the PLUS Network Steering Committee, using a participatory action research approach and based on the experiences of various cities that are members of the PLUS Network. For more information see APPENDIX TWO

²The PLUS NETWORK is a learning network of about 40 cities from all over the world that focuses on sharing learnings in long term planning and urban sustainability.

acutely aware that every city is different, and that planning processes must be tailor-made to suit the local context. This book is by no means a blueprint or even guide-pack on how to embark on a long term strategic plan for your city or town. Instead it is intended to share the key lessons that we have learned along our own journey to sustainability.

With regard to the structure of this book, in the next chapter we tell the story of Imagine Durban – how it began, its aims and objectives and how it came to be where it is today. Thereafter in Chapter Three, we distill the TEN most important overall lessons that we have learned along the way. In the fourth chapter, using the phases in the Long Term Planning Cycle developed by the PLUS Network² as a structuring element, we share important lessons that we think may be useful to practitioners, politicians, communities and indeed everyone involved in the long term planning journey. Finally we share our closing thoughts with you in fifth chapter.

We invite you now, to join us as we share the story of our long-term planning journey, and the lessons that we have learned along the way...

The Imagine Durban Story

2

Touching Down, Setting Up

When Andrew Plunkett arrived in sunny Durban, after his long flight from Vancouver in late 2006, he had no idea of what to expect. As the international Project Officer appointed by the PLUS NETWORK after securing Canadian funding for the long term planning project in Durban, all he knew was that he had six months to help Durban organize itself for a two year long-term planning project. He obviously had a good sense of what the project was about, but was not as yet clear about the exact outcomes. He was a total stranger to our city, did not understand our people,

our culture, our ways of working and had not even finalized his personal accommodation.

Little did Andrew realize that in the following six months, he was to play an important role in laying the foundation for a unique and historic process that had never before been embarked on, certainly in Durban, and perhaps even on the continent; A process that was to unlock the imagination of ordinary people, from all walks of life. A process that not only helped crystallized the dreams and aspiration of citizens into clear achievable goals, but produced action plans and strategies outlining exactly how to make those dreams a reality.



Andrew acculturated very quickly and our small team that he worked with opened their hearts, minds and homes to him. Staying with our Project Administrator, Thomas Ferreira, until he found his feet, Andrew learned about the hospitality and openness of Durban's people. In working every day with our team in our offices on the 3rd floor, Shell House (notoriously dubbed Hell House because of the temperamental elevators, and air-

conditioning that fails during the hot summer months), Andrew learned too about the pain and frustrations of the modern bureaucracy, the challenges and joys of managing local politics and the fine art of ensuring that every sector is included during the process of planning for the planning process!

Having Jackie Subban at each meeting to give leadership and direction to our team in those formative months was clearly invaluable. So too was having the then Head of the City's Communication Unit, Vasantha Angamuthu to whom the credit for branding the project Imagine Durban must be given. It was through the Plus Network that the team was introduced to the "Imagine" concept that was initiated in Chicago by Bliss Browne, internationally recognized social entrepreneur, friend to the city of Durban, and current mentor to the Imagine Durban team. Vasantha felt strongly about the power of imagination in helping to lift people from their current reality towards envisioning the city of their dreams. She also argued that if the Canadian city of Calgary had adopted the approach and it was working for them, it would not be such a bad idea for us to explore how well it would work for us.

And so with the energy, creativity and imagination in our Boardroom at an all time high, several brainstorming sessions began as the team charted out its methodology. This buzz and energy helped enthuse team members drawn not only from the Corporate Policy Unit, but from other Units in the City; Genevieve and Deshnee from the City Planning Unit, Beverley from the Participation

Unit, Siva from Environmental Health and Fikile from Durban Solid Waste. Our team was slowly beginning to gel.



During those six months, the outcomes for Imagine Durban were developed and a broad draft framework on how to proceed for the next two years was conceptualized. Before Andrew returned to Canada, the Project was launched publicly at a full-scale Media Breakfast held at the Durban Art Gallery. The expectations for Imagine Durban were incredibly high as the launch made headlines in newspapers and on local radio stations. And so when Margaret McKenzie was appointed the Local Project Officer for Imagine Durban in early 2007, she knew she had her work cut out for her...

Receiving the baton

As a committed Durbanite and having lived in the Province of KwaZulu Natal, studied here and worked with many neighbouring municipalities as an environmental consultant, Margaret was

familiar with the challenges of a city like Durban. Still the task that lay ahead was clearly daunting... Without being involved in the first six months of project set-up and inheriting a process plan that she had no part in designing, Margaret had to find her feet very quickly. Working in partnership with a team of municipal officials that she had never worked with before, she was accountable to the Vancouver-based Sustainable Cities that had co-appointed her, to make sure that the following outcomes were achieved:

- to create a broadly accepted, long-term common understanding of the future of Durban
- to produce a clear and effective long term action plan that outlines the steps to be followed by various sectors to implement and operationalize the vision for the future.
- to engage, educate, empower and activate citizens, organizations, institutions, and businesses to think and act more sustainably.

A piece of cake indeed! Imagine being accountable for getting other people to change their behaviour. And not just citizens, but businesses and institutions....and doing this with a limited budget and with a team that she has had no history of working with before. Hmmm! Actually though, this sounds much more overwhelming than it was. Thankfully, Margaret was a brilliant Project Manager, and a calm and clear thinker, who stuck to the game plan, no matter how often it changed.

Fully supported by our team, and provided with ample direction from City leadership, Margaret wasted no time in working out the steps that lay ahead.

Postcards from the edge

Drawing on the lessons learned in the Imagine Calgary experience, the team decided to cast the net as widely as possible in the visioning process. It began with the appointment of a reputable social survey company to administer a survey of residents based on a random stratified sample to determine their concerns and dreams. This scientific approach of eliciting a response from 1 400 respondents across race, gender, and geographic locations, was supplemented with a six-month exercise that reached out to over 3 000 people from all walks of life, through utilising postcards that asked residents what they liked or disliked about their communities. These postcards were distributed in libraries, Regional Centres and even in popular restaurants throughout the city. Postcards were also handed out to hundreds of school children from both primary and high schools. Budget was made available to ensure that various stakeholders were reached and different approaches were used to ensure access to all communities. So for example Councillors were encouraged to capture the views of their wards through Ward Committees and other community structures. Our Imagine Durban team even went out to institutions like Old Age Homes to canvass the views of senior citizens whose life experience proved invaluable!

Death by analysis!

As our little office storeroom filled up with Imagine Durban return boxes from our public libraries and restaurants, the realization quickly dawned on us that if we were to capture all of the data from the postcards and begin the analysis and interpretation of results in time for the commencement of the next phase, we desperately needed to have people working full time assisting with data capture of results from our postcards. The team decided to hire three full time interns who had some training in communications and public relations. In looking back now, we realize that this was one of the best decisions that we could have made as the three interns have become an invaluable part of the Imagine Durban team, assisting the Project Officer on a range of issues from communications to logistics, administration to public liaison. Investing in this mentoring was important to the team as we had recognised that most young graduates were unable to secure employment without relevant experience and we hoped that our project could prepare them for working life.

Postcard priorities

- Crime reduction
- Safety improved
- Friendly neighbourhood
- Public participation and volunteerism
- Create employment
- Accessibility to schools, transport and services
- Cleaner environment

- Upgrade infrastructure
- Develop tourism

Most of the interns' time in the first two to three months was spent capturing data from these postcards. As the database grew, they were asked to help with interpretation of the results, and even given the opportunity to make a slide presentation of the results to the full team. Soon, a very clear picture began to emerge from the postcards which were not too different from the scientific survey that was conducted. The following were the key issues that people from all walks of life were raising:

Setting goals: working hard in the boardroom

One of the interesting things about the Imagine Durban project was that it managed to balance a very large scale consultative and participative process with technical outputs generated from small, non-consultative brainstorming sessions. Using the information obtained through the postcard process, the team applied their minds to craft a set of six thematic areas that brought together the key issues raised by respondents. Over a series of internal workshop sessions held in our boardroom, facilitated by Margaret, and fuelled with lots and lots of caffeine and cookies, we began to draft goals for each of the thematic areas. Written simply and concisely, these draft goals were to be used as the starting point for a series of workshops with stakeholders.

The six themes are as follows:

1. Creating a SAFE city
2. Promoting an ACCESSIBLE city
3. Creating a prosperous city where all enjoy SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
4. Celebrating our CULTURAL DIVERSITY, ARTS AND HERITAGE
5. Ensuring a more ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE city
6. Fostering a CARING and EMPOWERING city

Strategies in the park

Having created draft goals for each of the six themes, the next chapter in the Imagine Durban story had a most beautiful, tranquil and indeed energising setting. Overlooking the duck pond and Orchid House, the conference centre in the City's Botanical Gardens was the location that brought together so many people with different interests, of different ages, cultural backgrounds and political affiliations - yet all unified by a single common interest: that of actively shaping the plan for the future of the City that they love.

With strong overall facilitation provided by the Imagine Durban team, participants split into groups to test the draft goals, and then began the difficult task of drafting key strategies to help

achieve the draft goals. Working throughout the morning, participants self-managed the process, electing their own group facilitator, scribe and recorder. Using cards, felt-pens and flipcharts the groups discussed and debated and by lunchtime produced a first draft strategic framework for each theme area that was accepted in principle by the workshop plenary. Such workshops were held for every theme after which a first draft of the Imagine Durban Plan could be seen to be taking shape.

Keeping the dream

Another interesting angle to the Imagine Durban story is that out of each workshop in the park, a set of volunteers were recruited at the end of the session. These "dream keepers" as they were called, vowed to be custodians of the plan and more importantly agreed to spend the succeeding month or so helping firm up and provide greater depth and detail to the plan. Whilst this process was a bit uneven, with some groups far more active than others, within a short space of time, each of the Themes emerged with a solid set of strategies.

Seeking the counsel of the Wise

In order to temper the wild imaginations of inspired and passionate dreamers, each of the draft plans was submitted to technical experts who had a solid reputation coupled with many years of experience working in their sector. Their task was to interrogate the plans, subject

them to a reality check, identify key gaps, pick out potential contradictions, and where necessary, rework some of the content of the draft plans. Of course we make this process sound a whole lot easier than it actually was. We just don't want to scare you with the complexities of identifying just who qualified to be an "expert", deciding their professional rates, agreeing on how to procure their services, negotiating their timeframes and the other joys that come with making contractual appointments!

Writing up the plan: A mid-summer's dream

With all the hard work done, all that was left was to begin the process of writing up the Imagine Durban Plan, as the Durban summer sun beat down on us furiously. Using the information from each of the Theme Groups, and a format suggested by Glen Robbins, an academic from the University of KwaZulu Natal who served on our Steering Committee, Margaret and Sogen (although really more Margaret than Sogen) began detailing the plan, proposing appropriate draft targets, and identifying actions each of the key stakeholders would need to champion, in order to realize the goals. Most of the writing was done by late November and December 2008.

Testing the plan

By January 2009, a first draft of the Imagine Durban Plan was ready. We were set to consult all our stakeholders on the content of the Plan. If the plan was to be truly owned by all our citizens and they were to become active implementers of the plan, we knew that our consultation process needed to be as far-reaching as possible. We decided to maximize the use of our print media and through using dedicated pull-out newspaper supplements that contained the Imagine Durban Plan in summary, we wanted to reach as many households as possible. We also wanted to again use all municipal libraries throughout the city as contact points for citizens to read and comment on the plan.. However, before we engaged on our external consultation campaign, we were reminded of Bliss Browne's advice... "put your money where your mouth is". She argued that before we engage citizens, our team ought to mobilize all our own internal staff... that is... all 20 000 of them! She felt that it is no use a municipality expecting residents to change their behaviour before the municipality and its' staff were on board. And so the stage was set for a major internal staff roadshow.

Keeping up with the Jones's

We knew that we needed to do something different with the staff. We knew that we would not hold the attention of thousands of employees with different backgrounds, educational levels, interests, etc with a standard presentation. But

we were at a loss for brilliant ideas. Thankfully, Sue Jones a service provider already contracted to the municipality to do an internal perception survey of staff in the municipality entered the scene. She was all fired up and was tasked with coming up with a magic formula...

...And so, very late one autumn evening, when Sue was chatting to her daughter who is involved in the field of drama, they stumbled on the idea of running a road show using local talent from within the municipal staff to perform a skit that would popularize Imagine Durban and convey the essence of the plan in a lively, entertaining and even humorous way. To be perfectly honest when she announced her exciting plan to the team, we were not as excited as she was. No, let's qualify that... we were excited but were not sure how we would pull off such an idea with thousands of staff how within one month!

Fortunately, as the universe would have it, the Jones's family more than came to the party. Sue and her daughter conceptualized and scripted the entire dialogue. Within a week, posters calling for auditions of staff were complete and soon, some of our team found themselves sitting in the City Health auditorium auditioning constables, accountants, beach maintenance crews and executive secretaries for key roles in the Imagine Durban Roadshow!

The success of the show was beyond our wildest imagination! Using local staff to act out the message

was a winning formula. Whilst we only managed to reach 15 % of our entire staff, due to the exigencies of their service, every single department was reached, and all participants agreed to pass the message back to their colleagues after the show.

From dreaming to action

With the roadshows complete, and comments being received from the public, the team is gearing up for Phase Two. Branded as Create Durban, this will involve organizing and mobilizing other spheres of government, business, civil society and individuals themselves to begin the implementation of programmes and projects related to the strategies within the plan.

Whilst this phase of implementation will only commence at the time of going to press, one of the important lessons that we learnt early on in the



Imagine Durban process is that action is important from the very beginning. While in theory we are following a step by step process that culminates in implementation – implementation actually started when the process was initiated. Various initiatives have taken off which have helped demonstrate the type of action necessary to achieve long term sustainability, but also how important collective action is to making a difference. A few examples are worth sharing.

The Danville Park Secondary School was one of the first schools to receive a presentation on Imagine Durban. One of the issues that pupils in schools identified as a problem was a lack of understanding and respect for different cultures. As a result, the school took the initiative to arrange a heritage week where students came in traditional dress and explained the main elements of their different cultures to one another. At the PLUS Network Conference that September, two of the student leaders told the story of how this week had changed their personal relationships, forging new friendships across cultural divides. This highly successful event was even graced by Ms Ela Gandhi, grand daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, and member of the Imagine Durban Steering Committee. We are told that the Danville Park School may make heritage week an annual event!

A second example of good implementation is the OPEN FORUM SERIES which serves as a discussion forum to get people to debate pressing issues or to hear inspiring stories from other cities. During

our workshops more and more stakeholders felt that as a municipality there was not enough of a public platform for people to be able to have a frank and open debate about issues that affect their lives. Topics that have been covered range from debating the viability of cycling as an option for Durban, to evaluating participatory democracy in our city. Again, these events have demonstrated tangibly what Imagine Durban is about.

A third example of implementation in action is through Imagine Durban's priority to engage the youth in the city. Children, the project found, are the most positive and engaging and excited about the future. As a result Imagine Durban had a specific schools programme that rolled out presentations to schools throughout the city. A very positive initiative was the schools competition with prizes for art, essays and school sustainability projects. One of the schools in an area called



Verulam has initiated a vegetable garden after an Imagine Durban presentation earlier in the year. Another initiative that schools engaged in include for example the Orient Islam School's proposal for twinning with less fortunate schools.

A fourth important example is the partnerships between Imagine Durban, the Electricity Department and DANIDA to come up with creative demand side management strategies for the energy crisis. A fully developed programme that was implemented throughout the city has gone a long way to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of saving energy.

Of course, the most important examples of implementation are the demonstration projects, funded by CIDA. The details of the Demonstration Projects are covered in the next chapter.

The Top Ten lessons learned during our journey

3

In this section, we reflect on the ten most important general lessons that we have learned during the Imagine Durban planning process. Many of these may sound like simple common sense lessons, but they are important lessons learned, that we believe may help improve the success of your own long-term planning process.

1. Don't go at it alone. Instead, **PARTNER!**

It is amazing the difference that a partnership with a non-governmental organisation can make.

There has been something unique about the Imagine Durban initiative. Somehow, unlike our legislated municipal strategic planning exercises that sometime meet with resistance from some sectors within our communities, Imagine Durban was always very warmly received by people from all walks of life. Our mainstream press, which normally never misses an opportunity to challenge the City – like all good press should - happily came on board the project, attending our sessions and offering excellent coverage and publicity. Even our Council's main opposition party threw their full support behind the project, provided guidance and sometimes even leadership at public events. NGO's which normally played a watchdog role gladly used the neutral space created by Imagine Durban to be part of developing a new imaginary for the City.

What made this initiative different from other planning exercises? What is the reason that people and organizations from different persuasions, with different, often conflicting interests came together



and felt a sense of ownership of Imagine Durban?

It is our strong contention that it was because the project was specifically designed not as an exclusively municipally-driven project, but as a partnership with an international not-for-profit organization (the International Centre for Sustainable Cities). This has the the necessary legitimacy and credibility to enjoy the prolonged support of a diverse group of stakeholders. The fact that the Local Project Officer who ran the project was not a City Council staff official but a neutral service provider appointed by the NGO, also strengthened this position. Having Margaret to chair all events, answer public queries and be the face of the project, allowed stakeholders to raise their concerns constructively. This, together with the fact that the Local Project Officer was always publicly supported by senior officials, reinforced the notion of a healthy partnership.

This is indeed a critical learning that other municipalities (or even NGOs) may want to ponder, as it could have a profound effect on the sustainability of the project. At the time of going to print on this publication, the team has been grappling with what this means for Phase Two of the Imagine Durban project. Now that the Long Term Plan has been completed, who should be responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of projects that arise from the process? The team is challenging itself to look for another creative and innovation response.

Resources / Contact:

For more information on the experiences, challenges and lessons learned, contact: Imagine Durban.

Mail address : imagine@durban.gov.za



2. Focus on the here and now... not the long term!

As crazy as this may sound, success in securing citizens' long-term future must focus on the short and medium term.

When we first heard about the notion of planning for a fifty or even hundred year horizon from our Canadian colleagues at the PLUS NETWORK, we were a little bit sceptical. We wondered about its relevance and applicability to a post-apartheid African city like ours. A city that was still grappling with the challenges of poverty and unemployment, the scourge of HIV and AIDS, the need to create a much safer city, addressing service delivery backlogs and a range of other pressing issues that were staring us in the face right HERE, right NOW! Even if we, as the technical planning team could appreciate the merits of long term planning, how would we convince everyone else? Planning

for the next fifty years (and beyond) seemed somewhat like a luxury, especially when our political leadership's mandate was for a five year term!

And so drawing on our internal collective wisdom, we decided that before we ride like Messiah's into the sunset, spreading the gospel of long-term planning, we needed to test and pilot how well received this message would be. Embarking on some pilot surveys, even before we rolled out our formal postcard and questionnaire process (mentioned in the earlier chapter), we found that there was a strong resistance from ordinary residents, like Ma Subban (mother of Imagine Durban's Project Champion) to the notion of a long-term plan. In fact, as the team spoke to more and more people we detected a slight irritation from respondents that City officials could talk about a long-term plan when they, the residents were faced with innumerable daily struggles and challenges.

Hmm! The invaluable lesson of doing pilots! Armed with these insights from our fieldwork, the team decided not to use the words "100 year" or "long term" or "long term plan" in any of the questions in our postcards. We figured that it would be better to invoke people's imagination of the future by asking them about their hopes and dreams, and then focus on the actions that could be implemented immediately and in the medium term to realize people's dreams for the future. As the project progressed, and as Imagine Durban

gained more familiarity and support, we then slowly revisited the idea of long term planning. We found that only very recently has there has been more of an acceptance of thinking about the long-term. Perhaps this is a result of the energy crisis that our country was confronted with, when Eskom our national electricity supplier was forced to run an electricity load-shedding programme that resulted in planned country-wide blackouts, or perhaps it was due to TV programmes like the Oprah Winfrey Show, or documentaries like Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth. Whatever the reasons, the lesson that we've learned is that whilst we can adopt a long-term lens, we must consciously focus all our energies and efforts into what can be done in the short and medium term to yield the long term results that we want.

What has worked remarkably well in this regard is the implementation of Demonstration Projects that show how long term urban sustainability can be achieved through small actions NOW. Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), eleven small-scale projects across the metropolitan area managed to harness the energies of various local stakeholders to come together in a project that aimed to further the goals of particular Theme/s in the Plan. Whilst more details on the Demonstration Projects can be found on page 44 under the section "Phase Five Implementation", the point that we want to stress as a general lesson is that there is nothing like real, on the ground projects to bring to life our sometimes elusive concepts. So, for example,

when we raised the importance of unlocking the knowledge capital through strategic partnerships between local tertiary institutions and community organizations in long range planning, this sounded like rhetoric. But, when some academics from the Sociology Department from the University of KwaZulu-Natal facilitated a process with community safety organizations and other key actors to generate a community safety manual, the power of the message was clear. So too, the power of partnering local universities with other actors was demonstrated when other University academics from the Centre for Environmental Management facilitated a process of twinning two previously advantaged schools with two previously disadvantaged schools to promote greener school campuses.

3. Make sure that your process is fully supported.

Lots of hard work may be required up front to gain the support of all... especially political leadership!

Fortunately, we were never under the illusion that getting everyone in our city to change their behaviour and their actions to align with our plan will be an easy task. And so we pulled out all the stops... Building on a solid legacy of community consultation established through the traditional municipal planning process, the team worked very hard in setting up a range of structures to make sure that all sectors owned the entire process from

beginning to end. We set up a Steering Committee that was representative of all sectors in the city, with members drawn from many walks of life. We made sure that every Theme Group meeting was a public one, allowing absolutely anyone who has a stake in the city to be a part of the process. In this way, we not only gained public support for the process, but obtained greater richness of content, given the diversity of views.

Whilst our political leadership was kept in the loop, and they supported Imagine Durban during the entire project, on reflection, we admit that we could have done more to engage them, and make them much more active ambassadors of the plan. As we get ready to begin the implementation process, we are now working twice as hard to make sure that Councillors understand the content of the plan and will be able to champion its implementation at a local level.

4. Mobilise schoolchildren.

Our experience has shown that children bubble with enthusiasm and excitement and are very interested in the future. They also enthuse you and help keep you focused!

A key thrust of Imagine Durban is about protecting the future of generations that are yet to live in our city. So, whilst it is about doing things right now, it is about ensuring that our current generation leaves a legacy that their grandchildren will be

happy to inherit. Perhaps the appeal of planning for future generations has energized and activated young people, like no other planning process in our city has ever done before.

In fact, there is little doubt in our minds that working with schoolchildren has given us the most joy and fulfillment since the inception of the project. Unlike most of our adult audiences who have to deal with the realities of their daily struggles, and who have through the years become increasingly weary of even well-intentioned planning processes, the children with whom Imagine Durban interacted were filled with optimism and hope for the future.

Working through the Provincial Education Department, Imagine Durban accessed all primary and secondary schools in the metropolitan area and gave them the opportunity to share what their future Durban should look like. Doing this

a poster and essay writing competition, we found that school children have great ideas and invaluable contributions to make..

In order to grab the attention of schoolchildren and heighten their interest in sustainability, Imagine Durban launched a competition that awarded prize money for the school with the best sustainability project or idea that needed start up funding. This was followed by another competition for the greenest school campus in the city. As the Imagine Durban project moves into its implementation phase, the team has decided to allocate dedicated time and resources to focus on the Schools Programme.



Resources / Contact:

For more information on the Imagine Durban Schools Programme, some of the lessons learned in working on the programme, or for advice on how to get your schools programme going, contact:

Hyacinthia Naidoo
Mail address : naidooHi@durban.gov.za

5. Be BOLD. Don't be afraid to experiment.

As one of our Imagine Durban Ambassadors put it, "it is often easier to apologise than to get permission!"

Working in a government bureaucracy that lays down rigid procedures and well defined systems for doing things, can sometimes limit the creative spirit. For a team involved in unlocking imagination, thinking out of the box and attempting to do things in new and unexplored ways, we were continually challenging ourselves to find the balance between being really innovative and ensuring that our actions did not contravene municipal procedures.

We found that having the courage to do things differently actually did pay dividends. For example, engaging with school children is certainly not a local government mandate. But, we found that after partnering with the Education Department we had free reign to work with any school in the city and the results were impressive. Similarly, local government had never partnered with local restaurants to entice their patrons to be surveyed on their vision for the city's future. This was indeed lots of hard work, but again allowed for an extensive outreach to citizens.

Another very important example is the bold decision that we made to enter into a partnership with Durban creative artists for the PLUS Network's 2008 conference. When we suggested

to Jackie that we work with local urban designers, sand sculptors, musicians, community performers and media students from the Durban University of Technology to help make strategy come alive, she unhesitatingly agreed. The result was an unforgettable conference experience for all delegates.

It is quite interesting to note too, that as the Imagine Durban process is not been a legislative, mandated requirement, with strict guidelines on how to proceed, there has been space to do things differently, to be bold and to experiment. Practitioners from other cities are really encouraged to try explore new approaches with an open mind. You will be amazed at the outcomes...

6. STOP! Critique, Evaluate and then continue...

Don't wait until the end of a process to take stock. Make sure that you take time continually, to evaluate how well things are going.

Bureaucrats in local government are sometimes often criticised for often plodding ahead along a chosen path before stopping to consider whether we are going in the right direction. This is understandable as clearly it is not easy just to get agreement on a common direction when you are dealing with many stakeholders. Typically, this would require weeks or maybe months of consultation, reports to Committee, motivation for funding, drafting of terms of reference, etc etc. And so any idea of changing the course once you've got

the machinery turning is often not entertained, without a good stock of anti-depressants!

And yet, we have learned from the Imagine Durban process that unless you have the courage to stop and evaluate whether the process is really working, you may run the risk of traveling down the wrong road. This in the long term is really more dispiriting than enduring the pain of going back to the drawing board.

One of the most important lessons that we have learned is that it is best to build into the methodology the continued need to reflect and evaluate. This does not need to be a formal or scientific exercise. Just round up the team, get out of the office for the day, use a strong facilitator and ask the hard questions about your process. Make sure that you set the ground rules up front... such as “don’t be defensive”... “there are no wrong answers” and “lets agree that we can disagree”.



7. Follow through.

Don’t under-estimate the power of keeping your word. Just doing what you say you would, can help bring credibility to your process.

In a post-apartheid context, where many communities still have some doubts about the commitment of (local) government to truly listen to their ideas and deliver on them, the one really important thing we have learned is to make sure that we do act on our promises.

These range from the little things like sending out minutes by the date undertaken, or holding report-back meetings as promised, or simply making sure that people continually receive e-mails informing them of progress being made. Demonstrating that the team is serious about keeping its promises helps build the credibility and legitimacy of the long term planning process.

At a practical level, this means it is quite important to have some dedicated resources to make sure that the project is well administered. In our case, not only did we have a Local Project Officer who made sure that follow through happened, but she was backed up by an internal Project Administrator / Co-ordinator and Assistant Project Officers who were able to ensure that minutes and notes of all meetings and workshops were sent out within the agreed upon timeframes and that all e-mails were responded to quickly.

Sometimes, even though as a team every effort is made to follow up and to make sure promises

are kept, circumstances beyond the team's control may result in disappointment for stakeholders. A good case in point was the sense of disillusionment from the cycling community after the team explained that progress with regard to making the City friendlier to cyclists was very slow. Cyclists who attended the workshop and expected the Imagine Durban team to understand their needs and to table these to senior managements, felt that nothing was delivered and that the process was indeed a waste of time! The challenge for our team now is to make sure that this agenda is still pursued with senior management and to keep up open communication with the cyclist community.

8. Communicate, communicate, communicate!

Although this has become such a cliché recently, having the right set of tools



for effective communication cannot be emphasized enough; it can make or break the project.

How often has the importance of communication been stressed by so many practitioners involved in planning processes, and indeed in projects all over the world. And yet, how often do we fail to communicate satisfactorily? For us in the Imagine Durban project, no expense (human and financial) was spared to invest time and energy in extensive communications throughout the process and to as many stakeholders as possible. After all, as behaviour change was one of the key goals of our long term planning process having a range of effective communication tools was non-negotiable.

Dedicated Communications Capacity

Part of our strategy was to have a dedicated, experienced and senior Metro Communications Officer as part of the team and who brought writers and photographers into the process, as and when needed. By being part of the team and developing an intimate understanding of the project and its communication needs, she was able to guide us on what communication medium was relevant for each aspect of the project. She also brought with her, access to the rich network of local community and mainstream journalists that assisted in ensuring that communities were aware of Imagine Durban events and workshops. In thinking about the positive role that she played,

it is important to make the point here that such a person must share the same commitment and belief in the project as the other team members, and must constantly be on the look-out for strategic communication opportunities.

During the project however, we found that even between our communications representative, our Local Project Officer and our interns, it was impossible for us to keep up with the pace of demand for weekly, bi-monthly monthly articles. So we contracted the services of a professional writer / journalist to write key communication pieces. In retrospect, we realize we should have had such a service-provider from the outset. Having a dedicated writer reduced the strain on the team to ensure a steady stream of articles and to manage press deadlines.

Using multiple forms of media

Another important lesson that we learned is that an effective communications strategy must comprise many different forms of communication media and tools. We found that merely sharing information with senior management and assuming that they will cascade the information to all their staff just did not work!!! Instead we used Groupwise (the e-mail service for Council staff). However as not all levels of staff have access to Groupwise, we found that by having an Imagine Durban Roadshow that we took to all Units within the Council was a good way to increase reach. In addition we made sure that all Council staff knew about Imagine

Durban through the insertion of articles in the WorkPlace, a bi-lingual monthly newsletter for all Council staff.

For external stakeholders we found that using the mainstream media to carry our press releases, run stories and announce the details of key events and workshops worked well. Perhaps the most important lesson for us here though was the power of local community newspapers which carried lead stories about local Imagine Durban events, or involving local residents. This activated more energy and enthusiasm than an article in the city-wide mainstream press.

What did work well in the mainstream media was the inclusion of a dedicated bi-monthly column in the City-owned supplement esazeGagesini Metro Gazette that was inserted into all the main newspapers with a circulation of more than 450 000 Copies. The use of the City's local magazine Metrobeat to feature Imagine Durban happenings also helped generate interest in households, as this magazine is distributed free to all households that received their Metro bill! Radio interviews on popular national regional and community radio stations (SAFM, Lotus FM, Highway Radio, Radio Al Anzaar) helped keep the Imagine Durban buzz alive in the city. Equally effective was the coverage of Imagine Durban by the national television broadcaster on SABC 1, SABC 2 and by KTV - a private children-focused TV Network. Imagine Durban also has been communicated to international audiences through organizations like the PLUS NETWORK and the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG).

Harnessing the power of technology

In the information age, it goes without saying that maximizing the wonderful opportunities created by the range of ICT tools is not only a good idea, but is becoming a necessity. As a municipality that is positioning itself as an e-learning centre, we have recognized the importance of the Internet. During 2007/2008 the Internet user base in our country has seen its highest rate of growth since 2001 - it has increased by 12.5% to 4.5-million.³

Bearing this in mind and having a Project Champion who also heads our City's IT Unit, it will come as no surprise that Imagine Durban has invested substantially in creating and maintaining a state of the art independent website (www.imaginedurban.org). The success of the website which has on average 11 500 visits every quarter, with nearly 21 000 page views is partly due to the Web Master taking the initiative to ensure that the site is current, with new material being downloaded almost daily. The site has proved invaluable in serving as the platform for stakeholders to access the latest versions of our Imagine Durban plan, and to post comments on the plan.

Speaking about how the website could be used to elicit comments, we found that introducing an interactive BLOG is a good way to get people who have access to cyberspace to comment on a range of issues pertinent to Imagine Durban. This is a powerful technology as everyone is able to view each others' comments. Another innovation

was the establishment of a community website (<http://imaginedurban.org/network/>) that allows community organizations to post their needs on this site and for anyone who feels that they could help respond to these needs to post their offer to help.

For those with access only to e-mail or who are not able to use our blog or website, we found that having every single stakeholder on an e-mail database is very useful. Also having a dedicated e-mail address (imagine@durban.gov.za) and an intern responding to all e-mail queries proved very useful.

For the internet junkies, the Imagine Durban team set up dedicated pages on Facebook, Flickr and even has a restricted access Google Site for Project resources. Oh! By the way another important learning in this regard... make sure though that your local Web Administrator will allow its users to access these sites. Unfortunately (and funnily!) our Council staff (including the Project Team members) are still unable to access Imagine Durban pages on sites like Facebook, Flickr, GoogleSite, etc!

Take the time to understand your audience

What made the Imagine Durban process very interesting was the range of audiences with whom it interacted. The one important communication lesson we learned over time was that a single standard communication medium for all roleplayers

³ Source: Internet Access in South Africa 2008 Report.

just does not work. We discovered that taking time to understand the target audience and how they will react to the form and presentation of the content was critical. So for example, whereas senior managers in the Council preferred presentation slides, ordinary staff members responded well to a skit enacted by other trained staff that depicted the core content of the plan. School children too preferred the lively energy of young presenters, while Amakhosi (traditional leaders) expected to be treated like elders and were accorded the full respect and dignity of having the head of the Project address them, with full isiZulu translation.

We also learned that writing up plain language versions of reports rather than just communicating the longer official versions, translating from English into isiZulu, which is the local language in Durban, and making sure that the team that is presenting was able to communicate in both languages were all really important lessons that made our target audience feel that we had put their needs first.

9. Embrace new opportunities, look for synergies.

Keep your eyes open for initiatives that support your outcomes. You will be amazed at how harnessing these opportunities can help create great synergies.

Resources:

Check out the Imagine Durban's website www.imaginedurban.org for links to facebook, flickr and the Durban Community Network.

When we first started out on our journey, we had absolutely no idea that Imagine Durban would grow into the “brand” that it has become. Our Project Team currently fields numerous requests from local, regional and even national initiatives to partner with, support or just endorse. Whilst the team is still grappling with how to handle these requests, in the absence of a robust policy for stakeholder engagement and support, we have learned that reaching out to other organisations has helped take Imagine Durban to the grassroots, whilst at the same time helping to increase its profile.

Merely by taking time to meet with interested organizations, has helped us plant seeds that over the last two years have germinated into local actions in various quarters. So for example having the School Principal of the Birches Pre-Primary Eco-School at one of our Imagine Durban Team meetings to meet the team and hear about our project, resulted in her being inspired to re-brand all her school sustainability initiatives under the Imagine Durban banner. Simply by taking the Imagine Durban team to meet the Inanda Ntuzuma KwaMashu (INK) project team in KwaMashu and talking about mutual co-operation resulted in a local Imagine INK programme. And again, agreeing

to visit the Chatsworth Youth Centre after hours for an initial meeting, resulted in our Project Champion, being invited to inspire young people from the Greater Chatsworth area and has the possibility of resulting in the “Imagine Greater Chatsworth” programme, run exclusively by young people.

Whilst looking for synergies and creating productive networks that result in useful action on the ground again cannot be overemphasized, allow us to make this equally useful next point. There is the ever-present danger of getting far too involved in “tempting” local projects and also running the related risk of creating unrealistic expectations on the ground. It is important therefore to be mindful of project goals when reaching out to organizations. Also, make sure to develop a clear policy on stakeholder engagement and support sooner, than later!

10. Trust in the process.

Sometimes as planners and project managers we doubt ourselves and second guess our processes. We need to learn to trust more and have faith in our plans.

On many occasions, as a team we felt unsure of ourselves. Was our methodology going to work? Will schoolchildren respond to our competitions? Are we too ambitious in our goals? Will the trade unions and senior management come to the party? How will the private sector respond to

our emerging plan? Questions raced through our minds, debates were raised at our weekly team meeting. And yet, each time we found that our fears and concerns were unfounded. Stakeholders bought into the process because they recognized the commitment shown by the team to making sure that all voices were heard and that everyone felt that the project was their very own.

The lesson here is that as planning practitioners we need to have faith in our processes. Often we try to predict outcomes or worry unduly about stakeholder responses or reactions to the outputs that we produce. As planners who sometimes want to take control of the process and make sure that outcomes are achieved, what the Imagine Durban planning process has taught us is to have patience and learn to open our hearts and have faith and trust in the process.

Key Learnings during Project Cycle

4

Phase One: Awareness and Scoping

On Starting Up

11. Make sure that enough time is allocated for preparation.

We set aside six months just for preparing and getting ourselves geared up for Imagine Durban. But we found that this time was just not enough. As the project was co-funded by our international partner, who had paid for the services of an international Project Officer to assist with the project set-up, at least two months of this time was spent with the Project Officer acclimatizing to the city, its systems and its way of doing business. From the local project team side too, we needed to gear ourselves up conceptually and organizationally to be able to launch into a long term planning process.

12. Be sure to set clear outcomes right from the start.

Embarking on any long term planning project anywhere in the world is bound to be an ambitious project. There is a very real tendency to be overwhelmed given the very nature of the project. From climate change mitigation strategies to projects to create a safer city, from supporting local impoverished communities to lobbying national government... where does one draw the line?

One of the key strengths of our process was that right from the very outset the Project Team was clear and unambiguous about what it wanted to achieve. We knew what the project was about and what it was not about. We had set out three Project Goals which we referred to time and time

again. In fact, we insisted that these be included as the first slide in all of our presentations and workshops. Of course, life being as complex and messy as it is, this does not mean that at times we were not pulled away into areas that needed pressing attention. For example when our City was coming to terms with the xenophobic attacks, Imagine Durban was drawn into assisting find immediate solutions to the crisis. But our Project Team was able to re-focus, because we were constantly reminded ourselves of our Outcomes, our mandate and project deliverables.

As the project gained credibility and became more established, the Team has been inundated with requests from civil society for urgent intervention, assistance or support. Whilst each request is given its due consideration, the Project Outcome continues to be the guiding frame of reference. Not having such clear Terms of Reference may mean a dilution of team effort and the possibility of missing key project deadlines.

13. Be realistic when budgeting for the process.

Unfortunately, investing in an inclusive and effective planning process means that financial resources must be committed upfront. In a resource-scarce environment, with competing demands this is clearly a challenge. However, if one considers the gains that can be made from the process, the value certainly outweighs the cost of the investment. It is important to dedicate some time thinking

about all the (hidden) costs that may be incurred during the planning process so that these can be carefully itemized and presented for funding approval. It is very easy to underestimate the costs involved in preparing a long term plan. Not only have labour costs of specialist service providers escalated during the years, but so too have the cost of refreshments, hiring of venues, printing of publications and related materials and general communication.

So, how much does a city set aside for long term planning? Actually, how long is a piece of string? It all depends on the depth and width of the stakeholder engagement, the amount of internal capacity that the organization has to complete key tasks compared to the expertise it would need to procure. As a general indication, for our planning process in a city of 3.2 million residents, with a very intensive stakeholder engagement process, an amount of approximately USD 200 000 per annum was budgeted for.

A good idea (especially for cities in the developing world) is to consider applying for funding from international funding agencies that may be able to co-fund your planning process. In this way the financial burden on local ratepayers can be minimized. See Resource Box for potential funding sources:

Potential Funding Sources / Partners to lever funds:

Cities Alliance
United Nations Habitat
United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
European Union (EU)
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)

14. Make sure that the funders' expectations are aligned with the project.

Whilst on the subject of funding, a lesson that we have learned is that it is critical to ensure that where a project may have external co-funding, that there is an exact alignment between the organization's intentions, outcomes and project deliverables on the one hand and the Funder's expectations - in particular, their measurements of project success.

In looking back at our experience, this has been quite an important learning exercise for our Local Project Officer who had the difficult task of attempting to deliver on meeting the City's outcomes whilst also ensuring that the Funder's requirements were met. (For more details on the lessons learned from the Demonstration Projects that were funded by CIDA, please see Lesson 45, page 46)

On building a team to manage the planning process

15. Set up a small, multi-disciplinary team to drive the process.

We found that having a team of about eight young and dynamic staff drawn from various departments within our municipality was quite an effective way to run the project. In our instance, the team was made up of professionals from the City's Policy and Research Unit, Planning Department, Communications Office and Economic Development Unit. The benefit of having a multi-disciplinary team to co-ordinate the project, rather than it being led by a single department, helped deepen ownership of the project by other departments. Whilst these team members were not working exclusively on the Imagine Durban project, it did require large amounts of their time, at various points in the planning cycle.

We believe that part of the success of the project was having the right individuals on the team: a Project Champion drawn from senior management who led from the front, and despite a hectic schedule regularly attended weekly Project Team meetings; a Project Administrator who understood the bureaucracy's rules and how to survive them; a Local Project Officer who worked tirelessly and inspired a team of folk who were very dedicated and passionate about the project; Project Team Members who were good listeners and trained facilitators with many years

of community engagement experience; a team that was not shy of putting in the extra hours to ensure that the project reached its goals.

We also found that engaging three full-time interns helped to bring additional capacity into the team to manage the day to day operations of the project, especially the numerous workshops and events that were being rolled out throughout the city.

Does this mean that if you don't have the right team to drive your process, it may not be as successful? We are not entirely sure, but do think that having such a dedicated team really does help!

16. Meet weekly. Really this is not negotiable!

As trivial as this might sound, we found that there was no way that in the first year of the project we would have survived unless we met without fail at least once a week. Even though the Project Team members were meeting to plan workshops, organize events, run sessions, etc. we insisted on the discipline of weekly meetings to make sure that everyone understand what each other was doing, to track progress of the project, plan for the following week, and to trouble-shoot if necessary.

17. Play hard and have lot's of fun!

Planning for long term city sustainability is of course quite a serious business. But that doesn't mean that getting there can't be a whole lot of fun! In fact, we found that the one sure way to keep team spirit and energy consistently high was to make sure that all team members loved every minute of the process. This was necessary as all team members were expected in a project like this to work long hours and go beyond the call of the duty. It was important therefore for everyone to feel a sense of belonging, identity, team spirit and to enjoy what they were doing.

Jacque Subban led the way in this regard by making sure that no team meeting was entirely serious, lightening the meeting with her humour, or allowing us to rotate meetings to other venues or even by authorizing cookies for our meetings and by paying for the team to enter Fun Walks organized by the private sector. The last Gandhi



Salt March saw many of the team members participate in a walk of 21 kilometers. Clearly we can attest that there is nothing like an event such as this to build camaraderie, even at the expense of sore calves!

Pictured below is the team dressed in their traditional attire for the History and Heritage Theme Group meeting. Of course this is not quite the regular attire for workshop facilitators from local government, but then again, this was no regular project. When members of the public saw Zama in her traditional Swazi regalia, Hyacinthia in her South Indian sari and Genevieve in a traditional Zulu skirt, they did not see planning professionals from a bureaucracy, but passionate people who dared to do different things, people who were committed to a cause...!

18. Build opportunities for staff empowerment and capacity building.

Something that we think we could do a whole lot more of, if we had to do the project again, is more actively to create training opportunities for staff members. Whilst an incredible amount of training happened on the job, and team members gained an enormous amount of confidence as they played key leadership roles, in looking back at the process, perhaps a more rigorous approach to training and team capacity building could have been adopted. Enrolment of staff in training courses in innovative workshop methodologies for example, would have been a good investment.

19. Consider dividing tasks within the team.

There sure is merit in the adage “safety in numbers”. We found that the team preferred to work in groups for each of the key tasks that were allocated: even for doing presentations a “buddy” system was devised. Whilst this worked very well in the formative stages of the project, we found that we could have improved overall productivity of the project if the more senior members of the project had worked independently on different tasks which would be reported back at our Project Team meetings.

In the last few months of the project, we found that this happened organically, and it proved to work very well by freeing up more time for other team members. Of course, there wasn't the psychological comfort having a buddy or support of other team members, but it certainly helped get things done quickly, especially when there was much to be done!



20. Empower internal departments to take ownership.

This is something we can't stress enough! Make sure that you spend time and energy in facilitating the action of others – and not just doing it yourself. We have to remember constantly, that a sustainable city requires everyone to get on board. Of course it is tempting to try to do everything yourself, but you can't, or just should not. As far as possible, we must get into the habit of helping other departments and organisations make changes and initiate projects so that they can take forward sustainability actions without your support in future.

We made a conscious choice during the project to empower our Energy Office and Electricity Department to run with the City's energy savings campaign. Even though the idea came from us, through a project proposal written by us, and funding for the project was awarded, we resisted playing a lead role in the process. The result was really good, as the relevant departments took ownership of the project and all we did was provide support.

On designing an appropriate methodology

21. Invent your own methodology and frameworks.

There are many ready-made, tried and tested planning frameworks and methodologies such as The Natural Step, Smart Growth, MetroQuest and a range of others. It is invaluable, we believe, to examine these and see if they are able to help inform your own planning process. Ultimately though, we found that what worked for us was to create our own local, home-grown process. In fact, when we first started out, we intended using the Imagine Calgary planning methodology to guide us along the way.

So in our first meeting with Theme Groups we put out the Five Themes that Calgary had generated and suggested that we also use the themes as sustainability planning was pretty generic, but of course we could generate different bottom-up content. Our stakeholders clearly had different ideas. They suggested rather, that we agree that we have blank “placeholders” (or themes that were undefined) and that these not necessarily be limited to five, but get determined by the number of issues that emerge. And so we tried this approach and it worked remarkably well.

The lesson that we learned from this experience was not to be afraid to experiment with doing things differently. Whilst frameworks and tools used in other cities are great to get you going, freedom must be created for adapting and evolving unique, local approaches.

22. Adapt your methodology as you go along, but be sure to manage the change.

What is interesting about Imagine Durban is that all our team members have been very responsive and flexible, and always willing to change course, if required, as the process developed. Rather than insisting that our methodology was the most appropriate one, we openly acknowledged the messiness of the process that we were in. It is interesting to point out here that this openness and flexibility may be misconstrued as not having enough of a clear direction. It may be the case that stakeholders only want to engage in a process in which the facilitators are fully in control, and there is no room for uncertainty or any perception of a lack of direction.

At one of the initial Theme Group meetings one of the stakeholders asked a question about our methodology and was dubious when we admitted that we were amending and adjusting as we journeyed together with our stakeholders. It was felt that, as the City, we should know exactly what will happen at each stage of the planning process and that as the process-owners we should be putting more effort in this regard. Other stakeholders disagreed and were content that as long as we were clear about our outcomes, it was healthy to amend and adjust our process as we developed more and more content.

So the lesson is to have the courage to admit that as planners and project managers we don't have all the answers and that our approaches are indeed complex and require that we, together with all our stakeholders, co-create the process. On the other hand, it requires that if we adopt such an open approach, that we temper this with strong leadership that continues to inspire stakeholders and give general direction about how the process should unfold.

Phase Two: Visioning

On Visioning and Goal Setting

23. Use existing visions.

As part of previous and current municipal strategic planning processes, the City developed a Vision Statement that has been popularized through various consultative and marketing processes. The five year integrated development planning process is currently focused on helping to achieve the twenty year vision that the City has set out for itself. In this context then, we felt that it was not appropriate to start the long term planning process by re-inventing or even re-visiting the Vision for Durban.

Some of the stakeholders that participated in the Imagine Durban process, sought assurance on what would happen to the vision that they had helped develop in the early 2000s. They were anxious too to determine how the Imagine Durban planning

process would relate to the planning that occurred earlier. Even for officials and Councillors involved in Imagine Durban, there was always the insistence that the long term planning process builds on the work that had been done before, and aligns with the five year IDP process.

The important lesson is therefore to state most explicitly at the outset, how your long term planning process, and in this case how any visioning or scenario building will build on existing plans and processes. Stakeholders are not at all comfortable with processes that start again, without building on, or aligning to existing, legitimate processes, especially if they have been legitimate, effective and consultative processes.

24. Keep goal statements short and sweet!

In engaging with our stakeholders in writing up Goal Statements that help summarise where we want our city to be in the future in relation to each of our thematic areas, we found that most people prefer short, succinct and concise goals statements rather than wordy and abstract goals.

In the Safety Plan for example, we developed a goal that stated “all those who live, work and play in Durban feel and are safe in private and public spaces”. Although this may be a short and succinct statement, it does convey, we contend, the key aspects that encapsulate the aspirations that citizens have for safety.

25. Make sure all stakeholders own the vision as it lays the basis for the strategies and action plans.

In our process, we put in lots of effort to make sure that the visioning was as open and public a process as possible. Using many forms of public media, the team encouraged many stakeholders to be part of the workshops that generated goal statements. This was important as inputs into the development of goal statements needed to represent a divergent range of stakeholder interests and aspirations. Since the next steps of creating strategies and action-plans were dependent on the goal statements, it was crucial that all stakeholders felt that the visioning process was indeed representative of their collective aspirations.

Phase Three : Exploring Options

26. Pragmatism Rules!

The Third Phase in the Plus Network’ Planning Cycle Model involves setting baselines and targets as well as exploring key options as the plan moves from visioning towards strategies. One of the key decisions that we had to make was whether to adopt the scenario planning model which forecasts different futures, or to adopt a “back-casting” model that actively determines the future

envisaged through setting end state goals and plans on how to achieve it.

The team decided that rather than invest much effort in collecting data on existing baselines, as we had done with previous strategic planning processes, and in building up models that could predict various future scenarios, we would go for the less rigorous approach. From past experiences, we learned that a vision-led process rather than forecasting approach will be favoured by more people and help mobilize the energies of more stakeholders. In the end, we felt that making a practical and pragmatic decision was really important for the overall success of the project. This appeared to be the right call and is a useful lesson learned.

27. Setting targets is the hardest thing to do. Work hard at it!

We discovered that target setting is far from an exact science, and there is no assurance that you are on the right track. So using intuition and being guided by some good practice from other cities internationally, we put out draft targets.

We are still not sure how effective our targets are, and not many people have given us feedback on our targets. This in itself is telling! If you are contemplating setting clear targets, perhaps provide lots of time to do this, and allow for some specialist input in this area too.

Phase Four: Developing Strategies

Mobilizing stakeholders to craft realistic and workable strategies

28. Don't consult stakeholders, instead let them draft the strategies!

Perhaps one of the biggest differences between the methodology employed in the City's five year Integrated Development Planning process and the Imagine Durban planning process, is the exclusive reliance on the general public – as compared to Ward Committees or other structures, to help develop key strategies and action plans. Stakeholders invited through a public invitation process, rolled up their sleeves and worked in self-managed groups to devise a set of action plans and detailed strategies. In the City's IDP process,



strategies were crafted by senior City officials and then discussed by the City management and political leadership. Once draft strategies were generated, the public was given an opportunity to comment on the plans and strategies.

It was interesting though, that even though the strategies and action plans were developed in this fashion, in the main, they were not too different from those done through conventional planning. In many instances, the facilitators had to nudge the workshop plenary sessions towards more imaginative and bold interventions.

We also found that whilst the open-ended public process to craft strategies worked fairly well, we had to complement this bottom-up approach with subjecting the strategies and action plans to scrutiny from a set of technical experts that we had contracted to evaluate and ensure that the plans were rigorous enough in terms of its content. This is a good mechanism to build into the process that to help ensure that a healthy mix of public and expert opinion is obtained.

29. Consider holding “after hours” workshops.

If we had to run the project again, we would consider having more Theme workshops on Saturdays and Sundays. Although the team took a decision to continue with weekday workshops because of the excellent attendance, we recognize that many working folk who did not have the

means to take time-off work and therefore did not have had the opportunity to participate.

In order to compensate for holding workshops almost exclusively during business hours, we ran our final Public Consultative workshop on a weekday evening. It was advertised more widely than our other workshops, in that a public notice was placed in an Imagine Durban pull-out supplement that was inserted into all mainstream newspapers two Fridays before the event.

We found that to our surprise, we had an excellent attendance, with many new participants. This has made us realize that after-hours workshops will be able to attract additional key stakeholders. This is something that we will factor in, as Imagine Durban moves into its implementation phase.

30. Make sure that there is plenty of food!!!

This might sound a little crazy, but we think that this is quite an important lesson learned. More than just ensuring that stakeholders were able to sustain themselves during the workshops we felt that it was our duty as hosts to ensure that no participants left the workshop until they have enjoyed a finger lunch or a more substantial hot meal. We also used the meals to help structure conversations and to break the ice in formal workshop settings. So often participants were encouraged to serve their meals from the buffet set out at the back of the venue and then return

to their groups and continue group discussions. As the process unfolded, the provision of hot, tasty meals became a signature of Imagine Durban workshops. In fact, by the time the fifth workshop was organized, we were receiving feedback from stakeholders advising the team to consider scaling down on the refreshments provided. Some comments were based on an observation that there was a perceived incongruity between stakeholders enjoying sumptuous hot meals whilst brainstorming strategies how to unlock rural communities from cycles of poverty.

Whilst on the subject of food, it was mooted that we take the cue from Whistler, one of our fellow Plus Network cities in Canada that has encouraged only the serving of vegetarian meals and the use of exclusively regional and organic food products in all their City events. As the Imagine Durban team, we discussed the idea of serving only vegetarian food, but felt that we were not yet ready to adopt this as a policy as it curtails the choices of many people. As we move into the next phase of Imagine Durban though, we are quite eager to revisit this decision...

31. Make sure that as many politicians as possible attend workshops.

The importance of having political leadership fully behind the plan was raised at the outset. Whilst our Imagine Durban process did involve Councillors, members from the public continually questioned

our workshop facilitators about not having enough Councillors at our theme workshops. Stakeholders felt that in an important stage such as the drafting of strategies, it was necessary to have a strong show of political support – not only to demonstrate that politicians were behind the plan through their obvious visibility, but also through their inputs and valued insights.

The team learned to pay more attention when planning the workshop dates and to ensure that these events did not clash with other commitments that Councillors are expected to honour such as Council Committees, EXCO meetings or Political Caucus meetings.

32. Consider shorter, intensive consultation rather than drawn-out processes.

Despite having conducted a number of consultation events and getting an acceptable level of media exposure, it is interesting to note that some people there could not remember much from their earlier interactions. The key lesson seems to be that it would be ideal for a long term consultation process to take place in a shorter more intensive time frame.

On Drafting the Plan

33. Keep the Plan simple.

In talking to our stakeholders during our many workshops, and in engaging with our Steering Committee members there was a clear and unanimous call for us to draft a plan that was short, simple and easy to read. If this was to be a plan prepared by the citizens and a plan truly to be implemented by the citizens, then it just had to be in a language most accessible to the citizens.

As we set out to draft the plan, we therefore made a conscious effort to minimize the use of jargon. We also tried to be as conversational in our tone as a strategic planning document allows. A leading communications company was contracted to help with the design and the layout of the document to ensure that it was easy to read and that the ideas were presented clearly and simply. The consultant team advised on the use of colour, pictures, photographs, symbols, and icons to help make the document as user-friendly as possible.

34. Summarise the plan.

Feedback from our stakeholders on the summary of our current draft that has been summarized, suggests that what is most useful is having a short summary version of the plan that captures the essence of the document. People often prefer reading a

summary to the full document, even if the main document is not too long and written in language that is user-friendly. It might be worthwhile, therefore, to invest in producing an accompanying summary document.

35. Consider different plans for different stakeholders.

Another idea that the Imagine Durban team is considering at the time that this publication is going to print, is the preparation of separate, tailor-made products for each of our broad stakeholder groups. The idea is that there will be a plan for individuals in society which will focus on what they can do to implement the plan in the communities in which they live. For provincial and national government, there will be another plan which will explain what government is expected

Imagine Durban Comments from eThekweni Staff

As a resident of eThekweni do you have any key concerns that you want to highlight to imagine Durban ?

How can your department contribute to a more sustainable city ?

After reading the attached summary or the full plan. What changes would you like to see ?

Name and Address:



Imagine Durban Draft Long Term Plan

Summary

Imagine Durban is a Council-led project on integrated, long-term planning. It is being implemented in conjunction with Sustainable Cities, an NGO from Vancouver, Canada and the PLUS Network (a network of 35 cities sharing experiences in sustainability planning) who have received funding from the Canadian International Development Agency to support the project.

Imagine Durban is a process that started with mobilizing each of us (from government to non-government, civil society organizations, faith based groups, tertiary institutions, business organizations and ordinary folk) to imagine where we want to be in the future.

Imagine Durban has now put together a first draft of an Action Plan based on the feedback received from people. More than a set of principles, the Action Plan will be the driver of change for the municipality to ensure that all its plans are now aligned with the spirit and goals of Imagine Durban. Similarly opinions of industry and leaders from academia and civil society organizations will be invited to ensure that their programmes are in concert with the Action Plan. Additionally, the average citizen will have a role to play too: the opportunity to get informed, get involved, and to live in a way that does not inhibit the ability of future generations to also enjoy a high quality of life.

Through the consultation process of the outset of the Imagine Durban project six themes were identified for the plan. A brief summary of each of the themes is presented below. In the more detailed plan that will be available for comment shortly a set of actions to implement the strategies are identified.

These actions are tabulated according to respective actions from the following key stakeholder groups:

1. Individuals
2. Civil Society (Non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, schools, faith based organisations, tertiary institutions etc)
3. Businesses
4. Local Government
5. Provincial and National Government

In this summary we provide an overview of each of the Themes, the Goals and strategies to achieve these goals. We strongly encourage you to read the full Imagine Durban Plan to find out how YOU can make a difference by actually implementing the strategies.

to do to action the Imagine Durban plan. Similarly too, it is anticipated that there will be another plan targeting the business sector and outlining its targets and action areas.

36. Think about new ways to present the plan.

As a team, we strongly believe that any planning process that has as one of its explicit goals attempting to change the behaviour of citizens, we must make every attempt to ensure that the relevant materials, documents and plans are as accessible to citizens as possible. The issue of what it means to produce an accessible document that any person in any community will be able to read, understand and ultimately be sufficiently enthused to want to implement it, has been a subject of considerable discussion in the Imagine Durban team. The team suggested that a Plain Language document written up in every-day language, with cartoon characters and lots of pictures will be a useful way in which to get across the message of sustainability.

The City Manager however, in questioning this idea of plain language writing, challenged the team to go beyond the print form towards using video and art, and harness the energies of the creative community in the city to help popularize the plan. This is an exciting and innovative suggestion yielded excellent results during the internal consultation process, and will be pursued again in Phase Two.

On Testing the Plan

37. Start with your municipal staff.

As soon as the first draft of our plan was available, we decided not to test its content with civil society, but to run it past our own internal staff, for comments and ideas. We were inspired to do this from a previous engagement with Bliss Browne who has been a mentor to the team. She challenged us to make sure that every single employee was behind the plan before taking it outside the municipality.

Of course this was no small task, as eThekweni is one of the largest in the country with over 18 000 full time employees and more than 2 000 contractors. In deciding how best to inform, elicit comment and ultimately enthuse staff to be Imagine Durban ambassadors, we realized that



doing a standard slide presentation will just not be good enough. Fortunately, we contracted the services of Sue Jones - a fulltime service provider to co-ordinate the entire campaign with us – a task that would not have been successfully executed within the crazy time frame of just one month! (For full details of this story, please see Chapter Two, page 9)

The lesson that we learned is that there is real value in investing time and energy in engaging with municipal staff before reaching out to others. We worked out that if each employee of the municipality spoke to his or her family about Imagine Durban during dinner, over 100 000 people would have been reached overnight, and without too much effort!

38. Use local libraries and local government centres to help raise awareness about the plan.

We found that by spending a little time telling our librarians in the City about the importance of the project, we were creating strategic centres of outreach in local communities. We used libraries as points of contact for communities, where they could fill in our postcards or comment on our plan. As the librarian in charge knew about the project, community members could chat to them about the project too. In addition to all hundred of our municipal libraries, we used our Regional Centres to help popularize our Imagine Durban plan. We

found though that because we had not invested in building a relationship with the Regional Centre staff, the response from the Regional Centres was not as good as from the libraries.

39. Use a targeted approach to elicit comments from key sectors.

In this phase of testing the draft plan with stakeholders, we found that there was less enthusiasm and energy to comment on the draft document than there was earlier when stakeholders were asked to participate in drafting the plan. As a result, we decided to target key sectors and elicit comments from them. Often, stakeholders chose not to request a workshop or even a presentation, but wanted merely to send comments on the draft back to the team. In engaging with some of the stakeholders, we found that they were generally happy with the direction, and were anxious to move into the implementation of the plan.

40. Use existing stakeholder meetings / workshops rather than setting up new meetings.

There have been two ways in which we attempted to reach all our stakeholders. The first involved us organising and hosting tailor-made consultative workshops to test the draft plan. The second was a more ad-hoc arrangement that involved Imagine Durban requesting to join events already organised by other organizations.

Interestingly, in this phase where the plan was drafted only and where participants were not expected to be part of writing up the plan, but merely to test it, we found the most success with our consultation efforts came when our team went to people and organisations who are already participating in an event of their own. The key lesson has therefore been to make the effort to align with existing events and meetings for consultation purposes.

Oh by the way, be sure not to run your consultation process in the middle of potentially divisive conflicts between your municipality and civil society stakeholders. Timing is always critical as it influences how people view the municipality, and could affect the level of engagement.

41. Content and action drive engagement works best.

Another important lesson that we learned in this phase of consultation was that where engagement around specific issues were held, for example, a Saturday workshop exclusively on Community Safety, the turn out and engagement was excellent. In this example, there appeared to be some real content in the workshop and safety stakeholders found it very useful. The workshop attracted people who actually are doing interesting projects in safety groups because this was going to make a difference to how they did their work.

Testing specific aspects of the plan with specific groupings therefore does appear to be a good idea. How practical this is though, in a Plan like ours that covers six themes, is something one must think through.

Phase Five: Implementation

On Implementing the plan

42. Implement as you plan.

One of the conceptual challenges that exist with even very useful models such as our Plus Network's Planning Cycle model is that it can give the impression that the phases happen in neat succession. The model does acknowledge the "messiness" of strategic planning, but the reader gets enticed with the logic of dream – strategise – implement – review.

What we have found is that, whilst in principle there is a fuzzy logic to the sequence of steps, implementation does and should happen as soon as the process kicks off. In our case, high expectations were created very early on in the process and people were not in a position to wait for two years for the planning process to be wrapped up before feeling the impact of the project.

It is fundamentally important therefore, to make sure that tangible products, mini-projects, key events or anything that is able to demonstrate

the intentions of the plan are consciously built all along the planning timeframe to ensure credibility and sustain interest in the process. A good case in point is the Imagine Durban Energy Saving Project that was implemented by our Energy Office: this helped immediately demonstrate what the impact would be of acting immediately now to build a sustainable future.

43. Align municipal planning instruments to the long-term plan to maximize implementation efforts.

In all our consultations with citizens, a question that came through without fail was how the long term plan will relate to the short and medium term planning processes in the Imagine Durban implementation phase. Stakeholders were always anxious about whether this plan for which they felt so much of co-ownership, were able to direct the City municipal priorities, budget and implementation. Fortunately for us, the long term plan and the short/medium term city planning processes are coordinated from the same office, and therefore headed up by the same officials.



As the Imagine Durban process winds down, one of the first steps of the next phase entitled Create Durban which will focus on implementation of the plan by the various stakeholders will be to make sure that the City's next five year Integrated Development Plan is written in accordance with the strategies, programmes and projects of the Imagine Durban plan.

44. Devise an Implementation Plan with outcomes and resources clearly allocated.

At the time of going to print, the Imagine Durban team was busy brainstorming the details of the next phase of the implementation process. Starting with an overall Guiding Framework, much time and energy will be devoted towards developing detailed plans for each of the components of the next phase.

We contend that it is very important to put in many hours of preparation time before the plan is implemented, in order to maximize the impact of the plan, unlock creative energies, ensure as much synergy as possible with other similar initiatives and help create the conditions most conducive for its implementation.

45. Invest energy in establishing Demonstration Projects.

When Durban accepted funding from the PLUS Network for Imagine Durban through the Canadian

International Development Agency (CIDA), one of the requirements was that demonstration projects be implemented. To the Project Team this was a bit of a burden, as it required that a representative and independent Demonstration Committee be established and a range of other mechanisms be put in place. As the projects were identified and implemented, however, we realized just how critical demonstration projects were.

Essentially, these projects demonstrated in a very real and tangible sense the practical meaning of sustainability. They inspired those working on the projects themselves, and as media exposure on the projects increased, it excited other people to notice the projects. Like ripples on a pond created after throwing a little pebble onto the still waters, demo projects created little buzzes in the community and had several spin-offs of their own.

For example, the Street Signage project which involved identifying crime hotspots in the city and the erection of chromadek signage that warned criminals that they were being watched brought together many stakeholders who had never partnered before. Thus, it helped forge an excellent relationship between the Imagine Durban team and the Safer City Office, and also helped us work much closer with the Metro Police, South African Police Services, our ward Councillors and our local communities who organised themselves as Ward Safety Committees. This project will now be scaled-up by the Safer City Office to other parts of the city. Most importantly, this office will now be working closely with the Imagine Durban team to roll out many other safety projects.

Lessons Learned from Durban's Demonstration Projects Experience.

- Having funds to spend on actual projects greatly increased enthusiasm among certain sectors for the Imagine Durban project. Many people and organisations are more interested in “doing” than “planning”. The key lesson learnt is that implementation projects are a critical way of creating enthusiasm for long term planning projects.

- The demonstration funding application process for Imagine Durban was lengthy and complicated. Factors that contributed to this were: a two stage application process; the need for approval from a committee based in South Africa and then approval from the Plus Network based in Canada, and then the open ended nature of the first application call that allowed any application that aligned to any



of the six themes. The lengthy approval process delayed the start of the projects which now have a very short time to complete their projects. The key lesson learnt is that the approval process needs to be shortened considerably to allow for better project implementation.

- There was great value in onsite meetings with projects to describe funding requirements i.e. for progress and financial reporting as opposed to telephone and email contact. These requirements must be designed in an easy language and format, as a number of organisations struggle to understand the technicalities i.e. 'deliverables'.

- It is really important to know what all the funding requirements are at the outset. For example, the funders informed us fairly late in the project about the Environmental Assessment requirement for any projects implementing physical deliverables that will alter the environment. As a result, we had to drop a school's based project and select another one. This could have been avoided if we had known about this valid policy prior to advertising the competition, so that entrants could accommodate this requirement, perhaps with their own environmental assessments.

- Another key learning is not to under-estimate the importance of building the local capacities of participating organisations and institutions for the future. Many of the projects affiliated to organisations showed respect working with a high-profile project as Imagine Durban, but when

it comes to meeting deadlines for reports or agreed deliverables, they defaulted due to poor organisational and governance capacities. For the more experienced organisations, this may be because they are accustomed to investing a lot of effort in the process of acquiring funding, and after this, they become complacent about the implementation stage.

- There was a large bureaucratic burden placed on the projects. This took away from time to visit the projects and interact with their actions which would have been more valuable. The lesson is to try by all means to reduce bureaucracy and get more involved in the projects.

On monitoring and reviewing the planning process

46. Use an independent Steering Committee to monitor and review the process.

We found that establishing a Committee drawn from various sectors of society such as non-governmental organizations, business, labour, academia, other spheres of government, etc. that was responsible for not only providing direction to the team, but continually monitoring and reviewing progress made every few months was quite a useful mechanism to make sure that the project was on track.

Of course the ultimate accountability of the

project rested with the Project Champion and Head of our Unit, who sent through monthly progress reports to our Council EXCO. So, whilst final decision-making powers did lie with the Council, the Steering Committee served as an independent body that was able to provide constructive criticism to the Project Team, help shape the strategic direction of the process, and influence the general content of the plan.

47. Encourage peer learning from other cities locally and abroad.

One of the really great benefits of Durban being a member of the PLUS Network, is the invaluable insights gained from listening to the experiences of similar cities that have begun on their long term planning journey. Through the Network, Durban has been sharing its experiences with Dar es Salaam and Dakar through regional peer exchanges. Whilst Durban is ahead in terms of the development of a long term plan, the peer exchanges always created excellent opportunities for our team to pause and reflect, as we presented progress made to our colleagues.

It may also be worth mentioning here that the occasional Boot Camps organized by the Network also provided a unique opportunity for those who attended these capacity-building sessions to sharpen their skills and come back with new ideas and innovations for our project.

The Plus Network's Biennial Conference which was hosted by our city again gave the team an

incredible opportunity to open up our process for comments and suggestions by hundreds of planning practitioners who were grappling with similar challenges faced by our planning team. In addition to offering possibilities for learning, international planning networks like the Plus Network can be a very useful mechanism to evaluate progress made by your planning team, by comparing with other cities of similar size, complexity and challenges.

48. Internally evaluate the processes periodically.

As already mentioned, one of the cornerstones of the Imagine Durban project has been its commitment to build evaluation into the planning process. Evaluation is not seen as something to be done at the end of a step or at the end of the process with a view to improve outcomes the next time. Instead, continual evaluation is seen as a fundamental and ongoing process that helps



improve the quality of the plan. It certainly has helped to have team members who have worked with each other before, and who recognize that criticism is important, not only for the process, but for our own personal growth and development.

A practical way to build evaluation into your planning processes is to dedicate the last ten minutes of your planning team meetings to reflect on what lessons you may have learned over the last week, and what little changes you may want to suggest in order for the process to be improved. After each of our field trips to projects in the city, we have closed the session with reflecting on what lesson each member has learned. We have found that the simple and sustained practice of scheduling time for evaluating project progress, away from the office under the shade of a big tree in the park, or in a facilitated workshop out in the suburbs is another great way to incorporate evaluation into the process.

49. It may be useful to build in an informal external review of process

In as much as it is invaluable for the team to do a continuous internal evaluation of its process, and to subject their process to scrutiny by the Steering Committee, there is nothing like a getting a fresh, wise pair of outside eyes to look in on your process and give frank, but constructive criticism. Bliss Browne, the founder of Imagine

movement, active member of the PLUS Network's International Advisory Panel, and long-standing friend and mentor to Durban's planning team, was wonderful in this regard.

Without charging for her time, and sometimes flying at her own cost into Durban from whichever South African city she may have been visiting, Bliss has always agreed to facilitate a workshop with the entire team and ask the hard questions about the track that we have been down, with a view to help chart a better way ahead.

For example, Bliss has impacted Durban by nudging us to work more with school children and to consider running an entire programme with them. She argues that they hold the key to city sustainability, and unless we put them at the centre of our plan, the future will look bleak. She also challenged us to make our municipality "put our money where our mouth is", and get our own Council staff fully behind Imagine Durban before we began our external mobilization programme. This advice was duly followed and with most amazing results!

Some Closing Thoughts... ...under the Natal Mahoganies

5

So there! These are the lessons that we have learned on our long term planning journey over the last few years. Our team officially closed Phase One of the Imagine Durban project at the end of June 2009, the last day of the CIDA funding for the project. During our farewell party for the interns, we had chance to reflect and look back as we relaxed on the soft grass under the shade of the old Natal Mahogany trees in Durban's Mitchell Park. As Margaret thanked all members of the team, and summarized what had been achieved over the last two years, and as Jackie reflected on how every member has grown during the project, we realized that a few committed people can indeed make a difference.

And perhaps this is the last lesson: that collectively we CAN make a difference! Who says that a new, happier, more caring, more sustainable world is beyond our reach? What if more and more planners and development practitioners all over our planet start taking collective action right now to help achieve the

city and towns of their dreams? It is about taking small steps, together. About experimenting and learning. About daring to do differently...

As we close this publication, the Durban Imagine Team wants to re-iterate that this book is not a blueprint for action, but merely a collection of important learnings and lessons. If you are about to embark on a similar journey, we wish you all the very best, and really encourage you to document our story and your lessons learned. For, the more we share ideas, practices and stories from across the world, and the more we connect with each other through sharing that we begin to realize just how small our planet is.

A more sustainable planet is within our reach. Let us begin that journey now, so we can arrive there together.

Appendix One:

Durban: At a glance

By Fezile Njokweni

South Africa experienced the first ever democratic elections in April 1994 and this led to the formation of new municipal entities in December 2000. During the same time, the eThekweni Municipality was also established following an amalgamation and restructuring process that led to the consolidation of the seven erstwhile Council entities administering parts of the old Durban Metropolitan Areas. This meant that South Africa had moved from an apartheid state to a democratic society and this resulted in a process characterised by new challenges for the eThekweni Municipality. During the local government elections in 2000, at least 200 Councillors were duly elected comprising 100 ward and 100 proportional representatives from the various political parties. Following the elections, a political and administrative structure was borne to include Council and its committees that are now fostering community participation in decision making processes and are continuously reshaping eThekweni Municipality.

The eThekweni Municipal Area (EMA) is located on the eastern seaboard of South Africa, in the Province of KwaZulu Natal (KZN). It covers an area of approximately 2297 square km and consists of 98km of coastline that stretches from Umkomaas in the South and Tongaat in the North and strides West (inland) to Cato Ridge. The area covered by EMA comprises of 1.4% of the total

land area of the whole of KZN. It is characterized by highly diverse and mixed spheres ranging from urban (35%), peri-urban (29%) to rural (36%) and a number of activity nodes. It consists of 100 wards and three sub districts namely, North, South and West demarcated as operational areas.

The EMA is an amalgamation of racial and cultural diversity with the African community making up the largest population group (71%), Indians (19%), Whites (8%) and Coloureds (2%). It currently has an estimated population of approximately 3.5 million people and this constitutes at least a third (30%) of KZN and 7% of the total South African Population. The comparison between male and female is 49% and 51% respectively. According to SSA Community Survey 2007, it has been noted that people living with disabilities are approximately 97 609 in total whilst there is a relatively large youthful population, with 28% under the age of 19 years (2008/2009 IDP Review).

The EMA plays a significant role in the South African economy. It is a major economic investment node and is home to the largest and busiest port (and South Africa's leading container Port mainly driven by imports) and urban concentration on the eastern coast of Southern Africa and this means it assumes a local, national and international significance. The Port has experienced increasing container traffic over the years and plays a vital link to freight corridors in South Africa and the rest of the global community. Creating economic opportunities is a

priority in the eThekweni Municipality IDP and hence well positioned to play a major role in the economy at large.

It has been noted that there is a correlation between the performance of the national economy and that of eThekweni Municipality (eThekweni Economic Review, 2005). This suggests that both have been characterised by economically sound and sustained management alongside structural reforms geared towards economic growth over the years. The GDP growth in Durban has grown at an average annual rate of 3.9% over the period 1996-2006 (2008/2009 IDP Review). Durban's per capita GGP income is R19 943.00 pa and the economy grew at an average rate of 3.65% per year between 1995 and 2005. The manufacturing sector within Durban is the biggest contributor to the EMAs GDP growth, followed by finance, trade and transport. The four largest manufacturing industries in the EMA are petroleum and chemical products, food beverages and tobacco, transport equipment, metals and related products. It is also the second largest business and industrialized hub in South Africa providing at least 10% of South Africa's manufacturing jobs as well as general economic contribution. Furthermore, the EMA as an economic hub of KZN as well, accounted for 75% of its total output in 2005 (eThekweni Economic Review, 2005).

The eThekweni Municipality is accelerating further development opportunities in order to create sustainable business to grow in its already established economic base. A number of infrastructure investment plans and major

projects have been introduced to act as catalysts to the EMAs economy and these include the Dube Trade Port and King Shaka International Passenger Airport, the 2010 World Cup Stadium, the Port Expansion and various Shopping Malls. Tourism is one of the most significant components of the EMA. In 2004, the eThekweni Municipality was visited by at least 1.1 million foreign tourists and the most popular attraction was the Durban Beachfront and the value of foreign tourism was R2.3 billion (SA Tourism, 2005 and eThekweni Economic Review, 2005).

The EMA is characterised by subtropical weather and almost 320 days of sunshine per year. It boasts itself with 63 114 hectares of open space; 18 catchments; 17 estuaries; 4000 km of rivers and provides approximately R3 billion in value for core ecological/biodiversity assets that deliver free environment goods and services to residents per annum (assessed in 2002). In essence this means that the EMA enjoys an increased quality of life, and also registers financial benefits from cost savings on goods and services.

The EMA has a variety of vegetation types and these include grasslands, wetlands, dune and coastal forests to mention a few. In addition to the estuaries and dunes, key biophysical features are a high energy sandy coastline with associated coastal erosion, high levels of marine and terrestrial biodiversity and relatively high water temperatures all year round.

However, the EMA faces a number of socio-economic and complex development challenges

and this has afforded the eThekweni Municipality an opportunity to realise and respond accordingly with an array of initiatives almost on a continuous basis.

Although job prospects are high in terms of the creation of jobs and the fact that approximately 8% of the SA labour force participants reside in the EMA, unemployment remains relatively high. The City faces a severe and worsening unemployment situation with estimates placing unemployment between 30-40% whilst 40% of working age group (i.e. ages 20-64) which comprises 68% of the economically active population is unemployed (2008/2009 IDP Review). Formal job loss is estimated at 1.5% per year (40 000) since 1997 and there is a gap between skills required in workplace and current skills available in the working population (eThekweni Economic Review, 2005).

The number of people living in extreme poverty in the EMA has increased, mostly affecting the Black Africans and this is a result of a legacy of apartheid and racial exclusion which created poverty gaps, wealth disparities and inequality between racial groups. Currently, an estimated 44% of the total households earn less than R1500.00 per month and this has created a window for change and a need to strengthen the economic base of the City in order to generate jobs and income. The prevalence of HIV/Aids pandemic also needs to be addressed alongside poverty and this poses a challenge to the Municipality. It is estimated that at least 700 000 people in KZN will be infected with HIV/Aids by 2020 (eThekweni Review, 2005).

Although 75% of households have access to adequate levels of basic household services, there is a backlog in terms of the eradication of informal settlements. There are approximately 140 000 urban and 65 000 rural households that do not have access to adequate services. At least 10% of the population do not have access to running water and have to travel to acquire water.

The goal of the eThekweni Municipality is to build 16 000 newly services low income houses yearly; however, the EMA faces enormous housing and infrastructure backlogs. Since 2006 approximately 35 000 new houses have been delivered in over 90 housing projects across the EMA. Since July 2006, approximately 1981 units have been transferred; 4830 hostel beds converted to family units in 71 hostel blocks and 845 social housing units provided. However, 257 000 households are living in shacks in approximately 540 informal settlements within the EMA (eThekweni Review, 2005).

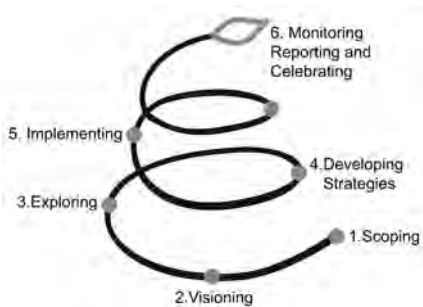
The spatial distribution of economic activity in the EMA is heavily skewed towards the Durban City Centre, the Port and surrounding Industrial areas and to a lesser extent to previously disadvantaged areas such as former the townships and rural settlements. There is a complex set of development challenges facing the EMA. However, it should be noted that there are a number of catalytic development initiatives that will undoubtedly impact on the future of the EMA. The IDP Review for 2008/2009 and the Imagine Durban Long Term Plan provide a detailed account of these initiatives.

Appendix Two:

The Planning Cycle

The Sustainable Cities: PLUS Planning Cycle is a generic summary of the principles and stages of long-term planning for sustainability developed by Nola-Kate Seymoar and the PLUS Network Steering Committee, using a participatory action research approach and based on the experiences of various cities that are members of the PLUS Network.

Six Stages of the PLUS Planning Cycle



1. Awareness and Scoping

Planning for sustainability begins when a community recognizes their need to become sustainable, usually in response to a serious challenge, like climate change or a mine closure, or

because they have been inspired by another city. This ‘push’ or ‘pull’ helps to build commitment to change the status quo. Having decided to change, the city then scopes out the nature of its planning project. During this stage, the community typically assesses its capacity to engage in a long-term planning process, establishes the geographic and jurisdictional scope and the timeframes, budgets and resources, and creates a multi-stakeholder project team.

2. Visioning

In this stage, the community articulates a vision of the city in 100 years, or two generations out. Some cities use large-scale participatory processes, like Imagine Calgary or Imagine Durban, whereas others use smaller multi-sectoral processes like roundtables, focusing on themes such as environmental, social, cultural, economic and governance systems. The vision is based on shared community values, strengths and assets, and on sustainability principles.

3. Establishing the Baseline, Exploring the Options

The project team gathers data to establish the current status on various issues such as energy

or water. With the baseline established, the team then sets exploratory targets and indicators for review with municipal staff and others who will be critical to implementation.

4. Developing Strategies

With targets and indicators defined, the timeframe is shifted to the medium term for the identification of strategic priorities for reaching the vision and goals. The resulting action plans are both comprehensive and integrated.

5. Implementation

The implementation stage involves the creation of a budget and workplan and aligning it both with the vision and goals and with other municipal operating plans. Responsibilities are assigned and decision matrices to guide actions are adopted.

6. Monitoring, Reporting, Celebrating and Adapting

Progress is measured against sustainability goals, targets and timeframes using the sustainability indicators and base-line data in a transparent process. The information is used to celebrate successes and adjust action plans.

