URBAN DEVELOPMENT:
THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MITCHELLS PLAIN TOWN CENTRE (MPTC)
OVERVIEW

• Background
• Origins of the project
• Problem statement
• Problem analysis
• Targeted outcomes
• Intervention logic
• Solutions – current and proposed
• Results
• Lessons learned
Mitchells Plain is about 20km from the Cape Town city centre
Built in the 1970s for coloured people forcibly removed under the Group Areas Act
A dormitory town with lots of vacant, unsafe space
Spatially marginalised
Isolated from the rest of the city, amenities and opportunities
30% of people are unemployed
41.8% earn less than R1 600 per month
74.9% of adults do not have matric
In 2003, Mitchells Plain Town Centre (MPTC):

- was the third busiest nodal public transport interchange for rail, bus and taxi in the metropolitan area
- was the busiest taxi terminus in the Western Cape
- had 75 000 people moving through the interchange during the morning and afternoon peaks
Aerial photo of MPTC in 2000
ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT

• Mitchells Plain was declared a URP node in 2001
• The MPTC project started in 2003 as a public transport interchange upgrade
• Since public transport was effectively MPTC’s ‘anchor tenant’, the project sought to leverage an integrated upgrade of the entire 70ha town centre out of the public transport upgrade
• The taxi industry and informal trading, normally seen as ‘problems’ to be kept out of sight, were seen as opportunities for economic development which:
  – deserved good locations
  – had the latent capacity to manage themselves
PROBLEM STATEMENT (1)

• MPTC an unsheltered, unprotected, unlit, inaccessible, unsafe environment
• A high level of conflict, and diverse and conflicting stakeholder interests
• Problems associated with buses:
  - facilities had become inadequate
  - bus movements were restricted (under-designed)
  - the bus rank occupied prime trading space
• Problems associated with taxis:
  - no facilities for 1 000 taxis and their passengers
  - 24 taxi associations in frequent violent conflict
  - gangs demanded protection money from taxis
• Problems associated with informal trading:
  - 1 000 traders
  - five trade associations in constant conflict
  - traders obstructed pedestrian walkways:
    ▪ hampered movement of pedestrians, law enforcement officials and emergency vehicles
    ▪ hampered formal business activities

• The City of Cape Town was in a no-win situation: the law was being infringed, but enforcing informal trading regulations would require pushing traders onto unsafe vacant land outside the town centre
• Crime:
  - gangsterism, robberies and drug dealing were rife
  - law enforcement was hampered by trader encroachment of public space

• Problems associated with formal business:
  - businesses were represented by property owners’ and merchants’ associations, and there was a well developed and profitable retail sector
  - however, encroachment of public space by informal traders and high crime meant business was in decline
  - businesses threatened a rates boycott
PROBLEM ANALYSIS

• MPTC’s infrastructure was inadequate for the number of people and range of activities present there

• This led to high levels of conflict between and within sectors, creating unsafe conditions, and making law enforcement very difficult

• Municipal service delivery problems worsened the situation:
  – historically inadequate capital and operating budgets
  – a lack of development facilitation to integrate service delivery beyond engineering services
  – reactive rather than proactive
  – an inability to conduct urban management activities in what had become a chaotic situation, including an inability to effectively enforce the law
TARGETED OUTCOMES

• A safe, convenient, seamless environment for public transport users
• A safe and pleasant environment for shoppers
• As much informal trading as possible in a prime location
• Opportunities for further retail development
• Opportunities for further economic development activities, e.g. training
• An enabling environment for leveraging private investment to generate jobs and support the reinvestment of disposable income
• A stable platform for the expression of community interests through accountable elected representatives

• Ongoing consultation with the community and flexibility throughout the process, even during construction

• The scope of work must not be reduced under any circumstances:
  – if necessary, more money must be found to implement the project to the original specifications
  – the quality of infrastructure delivered in poor neighbourhoods must be on a par with the best in the city. In fact it must be better, because it is used more

• The locus of decision-making and control must move from a centralised authority to a locally autonomous system to:
  – build local ownership
  – effectively manage, operate and maintain public assets
INTERVENTION LOGIC (2)

Devolving planning, implementation and management to community level:

- **Central administrative system**
  - Public/Regulator
  - Private/Provider
  - Community/User

- **Local autonomous system**
  - Plan.
  - Impl.
  - Mgt.
METHODOLOGY

Community participation

- Area identification
- Community dynamics audit
- Baseline survey
- Prioritising interventions
- Development of local strategies
- Design of interventions
- Implementation
- Ongoing M&E
- Sustainability through operation and maintenance

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

CAPACITY BUILDING

MENTORSHIP

- Trust
- Accountability
- Set of principles
- Development approach
Current (1)

- The establishment of a stable entity to ensure stakeholder participation:
  - Mitchells Plain CBD Steering Committee:
    - reps from the taxi industry, informal traders, formal businesses, property owners, rail authorities, Golden Arrow Bus Company, city officials and councillors.
    - a platform to establish unity in the various sectors, provide a platform for deciding what the elements of an upgrade might look like, and ensure ongoing consultation and participation, even while project work is in progress
SOLUTIONS (2)

Current (2)

- Task teams:
  - taxi task team to unify sector, agree on taxi infrastructure, and agree on operations and management of allocated taxi association blocks
  - informal traders’ task team to unify sector, agree on trader infrastructure, and agree on operations and management of trading facilities

- Ad hoc committees to disseminate information
- Monthly updates to Mitchells Plain Sub-Council
Consultation process

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Community organisation
- Informal and formal traders
- Ward councillors
- Metrorail
- Bus operators
- Taxi forum
- Intersite
- Modalink
- SARCC

CCT – Transportation forum
CCT – Spatial planning
CCT – Business area management
CCT – Design services
CCT – Roads & services
CCT – Traffic control

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS
Identification of problems & issues

TECHNICAL MEETINGS

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETINGS

TASK TEAM MEETING 1
Presentation of proposals

TASK TEAM MEETING 2
Presentation of preferred conceptual plan
Proposed formal entity

- A non-profit community-based operations and management company under a decision-making board (successor to current steering committee)
- A TID – targeted investment district – with a rates top-up levy, and with representatives from all sectors on the current steering committee
- Operating under a head lease with the city over MPTC informal trading areas, bus terminal, taxi rank, parking areas, public spaces and administration buildings
- City would relinquish certain income streams to the proposed new entity
- City would supply defined set of services according to service level agreements and be able to enforce the law because the environment is more stable
- Specific company mandate to promote local economic development and the employment of local people.
Physical upgrade

Physical infrastructure (about 75% complete):

• A bus terminus of 25 destinations
• Converting the existing bus terminus in the middle of the town centre to a central market square
• Closing off and creating a pedestrian walkway on an existing road to provide seamless access between the station and the town centre
• Building various new roads to link the interchange with arterial routes
• Building five signalised intersections and one signalised pedestrian crossing to ease traffic congestion
Physical upgrade (contd)

- Building five signalised intersections and one signalised pedestrian crossing to ease traffic congestion
- Building administration buildings
- Improving public space through landscaping
- Improving security through closed circuit television cameras
- Building a pedestrian bridge across the railway line
- Reinforcing the existing pedestrian bridge
Aerial photo of MPTC in 2006
• Continually build consensus with the community.
  – do regular site visits
  – build relationships with people, not only leaders
  – keep in contact with people on the ground to stay aware of shifting community dynamics
  – ensure ongoing negotiation and consultation, even as implementation is happening
  – do whatever it takes to keep community stakeholders on board

• Forget about having the perfect plan:
  – any plan is the product of stakeholder participation
  – the plan must constantly be responsive and evolving
  – make a start, knowing mistakes will be made
  – the MPTC plan will only be final once the last brick has been laid.

• Keep evidence of changes
LESSONS LEARNED (2)

• Be willing to stick with the process, knowing that at times community members will:
  – try to play officials off against one another
  – start undermining rumours about officials
  – accuse officials of corruption and nepotism

• Get high-level political buy-in: MPTC team reported directly to sub-council

• Regularly revise budgets to ensure necessary cash flow to keep up the momentum

• Remind stakeholders of agreements reached

• Scrupulously minute every stakeholder meeting

• Build good relationships with key line department officials, and do legal preparations as early as possible

• Emphasise teamwork and allow people to perform to their strengths