

SECTION C: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the theoretical and empirical research conducted. These conclusions serve as the basis for the recommendations to be made in the hopes of improving low-cost housing delivery. It is important that the following conclusions not be evaluated in isolation, but that they be assessed in the context of the research conducted.

Table 12 provides a clear representation of the linkages between different chapters and sources of research, which directly influenced the conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

13.1 Policy and legislative overview of the South African housing context

It becomes clear that the problems faced in delivering adequate housing in terms of qualitative and quantitative measures cannot be attributed to any singular factor. Instead the entire context of low-cost housing delivery with regard to the governmental and private sphere and the socio-economic realities faced by South Africa, play a part in the enormous need for housing and the inability to comply with this need.

Government literature such as the White Paper on a New Housing Policy and Strategy of 1994, the Breaking New Ground Initiative of 2004 and the National Housing Code of 2009, provide proof that government has identified weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. The practical merits of these theoretical concepts are however not easily put into practice in the diverse low-cost housing landscape.

The White Paper does cover a broad range of inhibiting factors, addressing various institutional and socio-economic issues. This document has however had a limited effect on improving housing delivery on a large scale, as most of the problems identified in 1994, still constrain housing delivery today. Recommendations are thus needed which aim to address these issues in a pragmatic manner given the realities faced in South Africa.

The BNG Initiative suggests many promising solutions to the issues and challenges faced in delivering low-cost housing in South Africa. Many of these Initiatives have improved conditions in the developments where they have been introduced, but this too has been limited. It is thus necessary to promote those Initiatives which have proven to be successful and to further investigate less successful concepts.

The National Housing Code of 2009 provides various supporting programmes intended to deliver more sustainable human settlements. These programmes have had varied success rates and implementation realisations. The fact that government has recognised the need for and drafted these programmes, again shows that an atmosphere of complacency with the current housing approach is not the problem. Implementation and the integration of the various policies and programmes adopted remain principal obstacles.

13.2 A theoretical background on alternative layout proposals (Clarence Perry and Clarence Stein)

It is apparent that the same problems have faced suburban structures for almost as long as suburbia has existed. Research clearly shows the resemblance between the problems faced in numerous housing developments and how historical models and their solutions can be adapted to the South African low-cost residential context. Clarence Perry's and Clarence Steins' approaches to the importance of pedestrian movement and the vital role of institutional spaces and green areas are but some of the concepts to be of value in South Africa.

Only once an approach focussed on quality of life instead of the delivered quantity is followed, can one start to expect improved results. The fact that researches have been exploring alternatives to housing delivery for such an extensive time, points to the fact that it is not the acceptance that change is needed, but implementation and a general acceptance of alternative approaches which remains a hurdle.

13.3 The role of the local municipality in housing delivery

Municipalities differ greatly across South Africa, specifically with regard to capacity, resource and expertise restrictions. This makes the formulation and implementation of a standardised approach to improve delivery, complex.

Many municipalities do not have dedicated housing departments, with most of the activities necessary for the delivery of housing projects transferred to other municipal departments such as the departments of engineering, planning, and/or community services.

The absence of municipal housing departments and the subsequent transferral of duties to other understaffed and under qualified departments, has often led to the transferral of housing delivery responsibilities to provincial departments. The local municipality is undermined by the power given to provincial government as ultimate housing deliverer. The local authority is left to influence the housing process, in a limited extent, within the provincial and national framework.

A clear division between the roles and responsibilities related to housing delivery is often absent in the local and provincial sphere, resulting in undefined mandates and prolonged processes. Capacity restrictions result in the insufficient monitoring and evaluation of housing projects at both the local and provincial level.

Communities are still left with the notion that the municipality is the main entity responsible for housing delivery. This leads to protest aimed at a local authority which has little power to influence the process and improve delivery.

As municipalities are often not involved in the housing process, the allegations of corruption and fraud frequently associated with housing delivery in South Africa are misdirected when aimed at the local authority.

Local governments have no authority to engage underperforming contractors, consultants and suppliers, because these service providers were appointed through tender process led by provincial authorities. The inferior housing products delivered to communities by contractors result in finished units which require further repairs and imply increased construction costs. It would be most appropriate for local managers from the municipality to manage and oversee the emerging contractors often utilised in housing delivery.

Local government may be the most appropriate sphere of government to administer housing delivery, given its proximity to the community and understanding of the local area.

13.4 Local Economic Development (LED)

LED has the potential to build economic capacity and improve living conditions. In order to maximise benefits LED strategies should always be well defined and adapted to fit location-specific characteristics such as the availability of local resources, community outlooks and the existing economic context. All measures possible should be taken within the LED strategy to improve the area's competitiveness and ability to attract and retain investment.

In order to increase chances of success it becomes apparent that planners need to facilitate economic development by supporting the establishment of housing development, civic institutions, adequate infrastructure provision and small and medium enterprises.

Housing can directly improve local economic conditions by providing the formerly destitute with an asset which can also be used to generate an income in the form of renting and small scale development to increase asset value.

Completed housing can generate a source of income for municipalities in the form of rates and taxes and income from equitable share transfers. Taxation may however provide minimal income in low-income residential developments where inhabitants earn very little.

The local economy benefits from low-cost residential development by supporting local suppliers, contractors and labourers of both a skilled and unskilled variety. Unskilled labourers will undoubtedly gain valuable experience throughout the development process, implying impressive levels of skills transfer. New skills can be applied in service of employers or by labourers starting their own small building enterprises.

Labourers and local businesses will also undoubtedly spend a great deal of the income generated by housing development in the local area, resulting in an injection of new funds into the local economy.

Low-cost housing development will provide a larger labour pool. Business enterprises scouting for a location to establish a new branch take the location and availability of labour into account. It thus becomes clear that housing development will increase labour availability which will improve the area's ability to attract investment.

Housing development may also create a greater need for employment opportunities as more people may subsequently migrate to the area to take up residence in backyards and informal areas.

Community participation, involvement and support will go a long way in understanding the requirements, strengths and weaknesses of the community and also in attaining sufficient support for a specific strategy and its projects.

13.5 The backyard rental sector

The sheer size of South Africa's backyard rental sector makes it a housing entity which cannot be ignored. The size of this sector makes it difficult to construct and administer effective backyard solutions.

Backyard structures place immense pressure on infrastructure, leading to a demand which cannot be met by lower density infrastructure provisions. Thus backyard living creates a myriad of health and safety problems, ranging from inadequate water and sanitation provisions to unsafe electrical connections.

Traditional SA housing policies have always regarded informal rentals as a temporary state, with the expectation that residents are in transition, in the process of moving to RDP projects. South African politicians are hesitant in their validation and endorsement of informal renting, given the liberal promises made to communities regarding the provision of sustainable human settlements with housing for all.

Most backyard dwellers remain in the backyards, as RDP projects are often located at quite a distance from socio-economic opportunities and their established communities; leading to the conclusion that the backyard sector needs to be accepted as a part of SA's housing stock.

Given the realities faced by South Africa's poor it is essential that policies aimed at improving living conditions are informed by the plight of the poor and their ability to conform to changes in backyard rental policies.

Most owners and renters have little or no contact with the formal legal system or building regulation system.

There are some successful examples of housing developments which efficiently address the backyard dilemma, including the PELIP project, Nelson Mandela Bay, Far East Bank project in Alexandra, Johannesburg and Lufhereng, Mogale City.

13.6 Increased Densities

The lack of high-density development in South African housing delivery can be blamed for many of the urban problems faced today. Higher density development can increase access to goods and services, reduce development and infrastructure costs and reduce the urban footprint, thus addressing the urban sprawl phenomenon.

Design considerations are important in the facilitation of higher density development and the ultimate delivery of more sustainable settlements. In light of design adjustments the introduction of a variety of housing typologies of varying higher densities can provide several benefits.

The use and combination of single detached, semi-detached, row housing and walk-up apartment options may increase the functionality and cost-effectiveness of low-cost residential development whilst freeing funds for the improvement of individual unit quality. Each typology reveals certain benefits and disadvantages which will influence choice of typology according to area and community specific characteristics.

South Africans are generally not accepting of higher density development as the benefits and trade-offs between higher densities and improved living conditions are not effectively communicated.

13.7 Alternative housing design and construction proposals

Alternative construction materials can prove vital in the quest to provide better quality residences within the restrictive environment in which low-cost housing is to be delivered in South Africa.

Some governmental agencies have expressed a desire to implement alternatives more widely, but various constraints, including a lack of role assignment and knowledge regarding alternatives prohibits this. The most important factor when considering alternatives is a commitment from government to actively research and implement these alternatives.

The benefits derived from alternative construction materials include generating employment opportunities, skills transfer, reduced construction times, environmental sustainability, structural strength and excellent insulation, to name a few. These benefits warrant the introduction of these materials and methods.

Alternative construction can influence design elements such as available funding, choice of development location, stand size and other design parameters which relate directly to urban planners.

Community participation is vital in the introduction of alternative construction materials, as the community has to understand and accept the homes they are to spend their lives in. Negative perceptions need to be broken down in order to successfully introduce alternatives without protest and opposition.

13.8 The Importance of community participation

Research clearly shows the importance and relevance of community participation in a democracy such as South Africa. Care should however be taken to ensure that the processes and role players are managed to arrive at the best possible outcome: a development which bares the needs of the community in mind and reflects their preferences and way of life.

It should also be noted that planning professionals should use their professional expertise to guide the process and to manage expectations, thereby ensuring that the often ignorant community does not become the project leader. Where community participation is not properly managed it can delay processes and cause mistrust, disillusionment and conflict. Care should thus be taken not to fall into the pitfalls and problems which participation can often bring. When conducted successfully, participation can lead to the acceptance of alternative concepts and in ultimate public approval, thus ensuring happy and thriving communities.

13.9 Interviews

13.9.1 NuPlan Africa, Durbanville Cape Town, 26 June 2011

Even where government made commitments to alternatives aiming to create liveable and sustainable settlements, maladministration and mismanagement of funds by unqualified and incompetent governmental agencies, led to alternatives not being implemented. Support from government is undoubtedly needed as the first step in providing housing developments of a better quality, but this support is meaningless when a lack of commitment to what was discussed and maladministration leads to the abandonment of alternative concepts.

NuPlan Africa stressed the need for innovative and demand-responsive design by urban planners. The firm advocates the placement of buildings close to street boundaries and the introduction of a network of green and communal spaces as pedestrian linkages as possibilities to improve low-cost residential neighbourhoods. The approaches advocated by NuPlan Africa leads to the conclusion that innovative design adjustments and a focus on the social connections within a community can never be underestimated.

In light of the importance of social interaction; placing the focus on educational uses as centres for development and community life, and providing uses close to educational facilities to promote social exchange and pedestrian safe movement can be of great value.

A focus on urban design as the motivator for layout concepts can ensure that layouts enforce the quality and interconnectivity of public spaces. Urban design improves the aesthetic quality of the environment and creates a sense of individualism in low-cost areas which have traditionally been synonymise with the provision of sterile and monotonous environments

Urban design concepts are often seen as the last step in the delivery process, as a form of simple beautification, which results in these concepts being reduced or eliminated due to budget and time restrictions.

13.9.2 Ilette Swanevelder, ProPlanning Academy, Potchefstroom, 20 September 2011

The most prominent setback in the South African low-cost residential environment lies in a lack of competency and commitment in both the public and private sector. Prominent problems include corruption in government and the tender procurement process.

Political will exists to implement changes for the better, but a lack of commitment and accountability prevents implementation. A duplicated and disorganised governmental structure leads to a lack of effective application.

Too often unregistered and inexperienced persons are charged with planning and management responsibilities for which they are not suitably equipped.

Public participation is for the most part administered ineffectively in South Africa. Community participation can only be successful where the planner utilises his/her professional expertise to guide the public in making informed decisions. Too often a situation occurs where the uninformed community prescribes what is to be done.

Through personal interaction with the community, planners need to utilise public participation processes to identify the true needs of the community as opposed to what the need and solutions are expected to be.

South African authorities can be very sceptical regarding alternative building materials, due to a lack of knowledge and experience in the field. Another problem relates to which department is to be held accountable for the consideration and implementation of alternatives in low-cost housing developments.

Alternatives would stand a better chance at success once engineers are on board, as engineers can implement alternative concepts in their tender documents.

The management of the backyard sector merits more research. To date very few municipalities have adopted policies to address and direct the sector. Capacity constraints to monitor and inspect backyard structures and the social implications related to removing these structures are all concerns.

Where Initiatives such as subsidies for the construction of legal and safe backyard structures are put in place, the question arises of what is to stop the recipients of these subsidies from still erecting shacks and other structures alongside the subsidised rental structures.

13.10 Case Studies

13.10.1 Cosmo City

It becomes clear that the Cosmo City development reveals a unique situation where the success achieved can be greatly attributed to the abundant funding this project enjoyed. The financial resources made available to this project led to the development of high quality public spaces and an improved quality of life.

It also becomes evident on a site visit that the integration of different socio-economic groups is promoted in a geographically fragmented manner. A clear divide is visible between subsidised and bonded areas. This should however not be seen as a failure, but rather as possibly being the best solution to the problem of sustainable integration. It is doubtful that integration in the form of placing subsidised and bonded units directly next to each other would be truly sustainable in the light of the economic role of housing in the bonded sector as a form of savings and assets.

The likelihood of investors buying homes next to subsidised units, which could infer social and economic problems which could hamper the value of their investment, is very questionable.

One of the most positive contributions to be taken from Cosmo City is the continuous involvement of the developer, Basil Reed Developers, in the daily running and maintenance of the development. The continued success and growth of Cosmo City can be attributed to sustained accountability and inputs by the developer.

The successes of the Cosmo City development can be seen as a step in the right direction, but it is just as important to see it as one of the very first steps in creating a working and realistic model for low-cost housing delivery.

13.10.2 Olievenhoutbosch

The Olievenhoutbosch development can be seen as progression in the process of creating a successful model for low-cost housing delivery.

Olievenhoutbosch improved the level of services delivered greatly in comparison with the Cosmo City development, due to an agreement with the Tshwane Municipality to provide internal services on a top up basis. The collaboration between different governmental departments and agencies and the private sector can be seen as one of the most positive contributions to be taken from Olievenhoutbosch for future housing developments.

It is important to note that expensive investments such as sub-surface infrastructure provisions, are part of a focus on proactive planning. Sub-surface power lines will last well into the future and provide a clean and uncluttered environment. This adds to the visual appeal of the project, which even in a low-cost development, is of vital importance, especially when trying to lure private bonded home owners.

Pedestrian movement and an emphasis on the connectivity of a community, are aspects to be implemented in all low-cost housing developments. The Olievenhoutbosch development facilitates this through the design of a central activity hub which is a walking distance to most areas, creating and enforcing the idea of community.

Olievenhoutbosch furthermore takes the principles of the Breaking New Ground Initiative into account. The developers state this document as one of the primary guideline giving documents applicable to this development. The relative success of this development to date thus leads to the conclusion that the Breaking New Ground Initiative has contributed positively to low-cost residential development.

13.10.3 The N2 Gateway Project

The N2 Gateway project was overambitious and not adequately planned for a development of this magnitude. The time table set for the delivery of units was idealistic and led to backlogs and community dissatisfaction.

On a visit to the N2 Gateway project it became clear that planners had to deal with a harsh and wind swept sandy landscape which made building and the provision of a sand free streetscape and neighbourhood fairly difficult. Here the placement of individual units closer to the street act as a buffer to prevent windswept, sandy streetscapes; leading one to conclude that simple and cost-effective adjustments in layout and design which address site-specific problems can be of great value.

The absence of the public facilities planned by firms such as NuPlan Africa in the N2 Gateway project leads to vast open spaces covered in sand and trash, leading to unsafe and aesthetically displeasing spaces framing main roads. Other planned open spaces were filled in with awkward configurations of various housing typologies in an effort to overcome wasted spaces. If funding was secured and efficient financial management of the funds committed took place, the planned public spaces would have been delivered and an improved environmental quality provided.

The emphasis placed on urban design as point of departure for the layout of certain precincts in the N2 Gateway Project is certainly a step in the right direction. The fact that most urban design concepts were severely adjusted and some even phased out due to a lack of funding, again relates to the discussion on securing and managing funds effectively.

13.10.4 The Ethekekwini Municipal Study

One of the main lessons to be taken from this study is the importance of providing the opportunity to extend structures as the needs and circumstances of inhabitants change and evolve. Various models have been developed to accommodate the expansion of structures in an ordered, safe and sustainable manner.

The Ethekekwini study also focuses on the implementation of adaptable and varied design which incorporates a variety of housing typologies, as well as the opportunity to combine different typologies as need arises to best suit the situation at hand. The opportunity should exist to repeat or combine units such as detached, semi-detached or row housing in varied storeys, as needed. This principle will aid in increasing densities and creating more compact urban forms.

The study also advocates the use of alternative layout concepts such as cul-de sacs, courtyards and housing clusters and also that planners should not immediately begin designing developments in the grid iron fashion simply because it is the norm.

Another simple adjustment made by the Ethekekwini study refers to the placement of housing on the street. This refers to creating minimal front yard spaces in order to maximise backyard spaces which would prevent fragmentation and provide more private and safe spaces for personal use. This concept also improves street safety and encourages interaction between neighbours and pedestrians at street fronts.

The importance of aesthetic urban design is also stressed in the Ethekwini Study. This is promoted because of the fact that cost-effective urban design principles which are effectively and promptly implemented, could drastically improve quality of life and aesthetic appeal. The most prominent example given in the Ethekwini study is a variation in building facades to create interest and individuality.

13.11 Rose Valley

As in most municipalities, the Oudtshoorn Municipality faces a high demand for housing with very limited resources to meet housing needs. This results in a large desperate homeless population who are forced to adopt informal living in the Rose Valley settlement.

The majority of Rose Valley's residents were formerly backyard settlers, farm labourers and other persons already on the housing waiting list. There is however not currently a defined housing recipient list for the housing to be delivered in Rose Valley, which could lead to protest and problems once housing is distributed.

The Oudtshoorn Municipality facilitated community participation to a limited extent within the resources available to implement community suggestions. This indicates that participation was not seen as a primary objective to guide development concepts on a provincial or local level, as resources were not specifically allocated for participation facilitation.

The need for deviation from the traditional RDP approach to housing delivery was recognised by the municipality, but again the resources made available by Province and restrictions put in place by the ASLA development agency prohibited an alternative approach

The location of the Rose Valley extension duplicates the traditional Apartheid city structure, by placing the poorest residents in demarcated areas on the urban periphery. It must however be noted that the initial settlers chose this location to settle on, as the Rose Valley Extension started as a landgrab. Reasons for this may include a desire to live close to an existing community where residents have social ties and a sense of community identity.

The fact that residents were placed by the municipality according to an out dated and inaccurate layout which will be adjusted once construction commences, leads to various concerns. It may prove difficult to move residents from stands where they have established themselves. The provision of a temporary camp to house residents during the construction phase will also imply further costs and location problems.

Province will provide all funding for the Rose Valley development and no private funds or resources were sourced. The fact that Oudtshoorn is situated in a rural area, devoid of big industry, made it impossible to utilise local private resources to complement funding from province.

The Oudtshoorn Municipality currently has no backyard rental management policy, as is the case in most South Africa municipalities. Controlling the occurrence and expansion of backyard structures in Rose Valley will thus prove problematic.

Table 19 is provided as a brief summary of the conclusions drawn from the research conducted.

Table 20: Summary of best practice conclusions

	Best practice lessons learnt
Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A standardised approach to delivery is complicated by the difference in capacity and resource restrictions between different municipalities. -Local municipalities have no authority to address underperforming contractors and consultants who have been appointed by provincial departments. -Local government may be the most appropriate sphere to administer housing delivery. -The layout concepts of Clarence Stein and Clarence Perry may still provide useful concepts to be implemented in SA. -Higher density development may provide financial and spatial benefits. -A mix of housing typologies may be used to increase residential densities. -Alternatives building materials promote sustainability and provide financial and time benefits. -The implementation of alternative building materials is restricted by a lack of role assignment and ignorance in government. -Planners need a working knowledge related to the challenges and requirements posed by alternatives. -Any alternative approach will require community participation and stakeholder engagement. -Participation processes may be complex and professional guidance is essential. -Low-cost housing development can facilitate sustained LED. -The backyard rental sector is currently undervalued and policy and design intervention is required.

<p>Legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Government has identified weaknesses and the need for change. -The White Paper of 1994 was the first to address the housing crisis, but with limited success. -The BNG Initiative has influenced housing delivery in a positive manner, but effects have not been wide spread. -The supportive programmes captured in the National Housing Code of 2009 have had varied success rates. -Current legislation and policy empowers provincial government as primary housing agent, undermining the worth of the local municipalities. -LED is addressed in the policy framework, but a well-defined, sustainable strategic intervention is required with regard to housing delivery. -The legislative framework provides for an inclusive approach which facilitates community participation.
<p>Structured Interviews</p>	<p>NuPlan Africa:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In terms of design adjustment it is concluded that the following can provide several benefits. >Placing buildings as close to street boundaries as possible >Placing educational uses as central focuses. >Linking educational uses with institutional and green uses to promote pedestrian safety and community interaction. >Utilising aesthetic urban design principles as the basis for layout concepts. <p>Ilette Swanevelder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The public and private sectors' lack of competency and commitment prohibit effective low-cost residential development. -The professionalization of the planning and housing sector may improve delivery. -Public participation is generally administered ineffectively.

	<p>-Alternative construction materials are not widely implemented due to a lack of role assignment, responsibility and accountability in government.</p> <p>-The backyard rental sector demands strategies which consider governmental capacity restrictions.</p>
<p>Case studies</p>	<p>-The value of public private collaboration cannot be overemphasised.</p> <p>-Integration may only be realised in a geographically fragmented manner,</p> <p>-Continued developer involvement can be of great benefit.</p> <p>-Cosmo City provides a worthy starting point for a new housing development approach.</p> <p>-A focus on high quality infrastructure provision is commendable.</p> <p>-BNG objectives may need to be adjusted to suit contexts.</p> <p>-Inadequate planning and implementation strategies will always undercut the noblest of development intentions.</p> <p>-The Ethekwini Municipal study proves the value of cost effective development concepts including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >Providing the opportunity to extend starter units according to predesigned and preapproved extension options. >Incorporating a variety of housing typologies. >Implementing alternative layout concepts including courtyards, clusters and cul-de-sacs. >Placing starter units as close to street boundary as possible. >Incorporating aesthetic urban design Initiatives.

Rose Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A large group of Rose Valley settlers were formerly backyard dwellers , emphasising the need to address the sector. -The disregard for extensive participation may infer problems in future. -Funding and development structures disallow the delivery of more demand-responsive housing developments. -The manner in which a new layout concept is to be introduced and constructed whilst established residents remain in the settlement is questioned. -The difficulty in attracting private investment in more rural areas indicates a need for improved strategy and policy.

Source: Own construction (2012)

Chapter 14 will address the issues summarised by the conclusions drawn and will provide recommendations according to possible planning, management and design considerations to be implemented in the hopes of improving delivery processes and housing products.