

# Sustainable Community Planning

## GUIDE



JUNE 2007





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#### EDITORIAL NOTES

This Planning Guide is produced by the Land Planning and Management Division of the Housing and Land Directorate of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, in partnership with other departments, SIPU International and SSPA

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# Foreword

This planning guide presents an approach that aims to address and improve conditions in our cities and towns. Though all municipalities have undertaken many projects since our new era of democracy began in 1994, it has become clear that we need a comprehensive new approach to re-planning entire cities. Integrated Development Planning has been the guiding concept for municipal planning in general, and this guide takes this approach further in three important ways.

*Firstly* it applies integrated development planning to urban spatial and structure planning, taking account of social, economic and environmental considerations. To achieve this, it identifies Sustainable Community Units as distinct planning units at an intermediate level between the city or town level Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and the local neighbourhood level. This has hitherto been a significant gap in our planning approach that has made it difficult to link and integrate SDF and detailed planning.

*Secondly* the guide places Sustainability alongside Integration as a second great guiding principle that is increasingly recognized as essential in all development thinking, given the increasing environmental problems that we face alongside our social and economic challenges. It shows how sustainability is essential in all these aspects.

*Thirdly* the guide elaborates urban spatial planning principles that will lead to more integrated and sustainable cities, and most importantly, it gives many practical examples of how these are applied in practice. It doesn't only deal with the question of what is desirable, but also how to achieve it, in that it describes how to organize the planning process as a complex process involving many stakeholders, and how to achieve community participation in planning.

We thank all those within the municipality who have contributed their valuable time to this project in spite of very busy schedules, the Swedish consultants and South African consultants, Sida as project sponsor, and all others who have contributed.

Hopefully this guide will prove to be most useful to ourselves and other municipalities in planning the integrated and sustainable cities and towns that we need in order to provide a good quality of life for all our communities.

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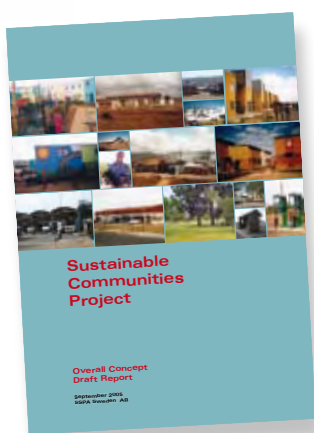
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## Introduction

This book is intended as a practical guide and resource to help planners, professionals, community representatives and politicians understand and apply sustainable community principles in planning processes, in order to achieve more integrated and sustainable towns and cities with a better urban environment and quality of life.

The planning guide introduces new development and planning principles and a participative planning process that is particularly relevant in South Africa, given:

- the legacy of divided apartheid cities, with townships as strategically isolated 'labour dormitories' with minimal facilities and services
- low-cost areas with rows of standardised houses on square grid layouts
- urban sprawl with its high transport and environmental costs
- widespread poverty and high levels of unemployment in vast peripheral informal settlements



This planning guide is the culmination of a long process that began with the development of a Comprehensive Urban Plan for Port Elizabeth, which included Sustainable Community Units (SCUs) as a basis for intermediate level planning and as the building blocks for the city (metro). The SCU concept was later elaborated in a concept report on which this guide is based (Sustainable Communities Project, September 2005, published by NMBM). The concept was then tested in actual planning for the Bloemendal area, as a delineated SCU, which resulted in the Bloemendal Pilot Report.

### The aim of this planning guide

The planning guide aims to share the principles and methods developed, as a basis for a new approach to urban planning that will result in integrated

#### GLOSSARY

#### NMBM

Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

and sustainable cities and towns. It is intended for use by all stakeholders involved in urban planning, including planners and other professionals in municipalities, other government departments and the private sector, as well as community representatives.

### How to use this planning guide

The guide as a whole articulates a new and comprehensive approach to urban planning at the intermediate or Sustainable Community Unit level. As such it deserves reading and study from beginning to end, and is intended to stimulate thinking about and discussion of what is presented and suggested. The intention is to contribute to developing the capacity of planners and other stakeholders, which is the only way in which a new approach will become recognised and sustained. Learning in this sense requires some effort, and is greatly enhanced where undertaken by teams working together in real planning processes.

It could also be a useful text in the education of new planners, both in universities and as part of induction and orientation in the workplace. At best the planning guide may be adopted by municipalities or planning departments as a guide to their preferred approach, which they require staff, consultants and other stakeholders to understand and follow.

While clear on principles, the guide does not provide a simplistic recipe or a set of standard solutions, but rather an approach for others to understand and adapt to their own particular situations. Innovation and creativity in developing better and varied design solutions in different contexts is fully endorsed. Many and varied examples are included to illustrate the approach, give a sense of practical results and benefits, and inspire others to get seriously involved in further developing what is suggested in their own practice.

It will also be fruitful to share and give feedback on any projects that follow this or similar approaches – we need more examples of good urban planning from which to learn.

The guide is also designed to be used on an ongoing basis as a practical reference and guide on specific matters and in relation to practical questions such as:

- How do we organise stakeholder participation in the planning process?
- How do we involve other departments and agencies?
- What are the phases of the process?
- What are the options for types and layouts of housing?
- How is transport planning to be done?
- What should a baseline study cover?

To enable this type of use, the contents and overall layout are designed to facilitate the finding of particular sections and themes. As with any useful tool, its actual usefulness will depend on how well it is used. Hopefully it will often be at hand on desks, at team meetings, lively discussions and presentations to stakeholders, and be shared with and lent to others, who will then want their own copies. Further ideas on using the guide for capacity building and for strengthening learning in the planning process are included in *chapter 5*.

### This guide covers:

- Key development and planning principles
- How the principles are applied in practice to the six functional elements of housing, work, services, transport, community and character and identity, and to spatial planning in general
- The planning process and the organisation, management and co-ordination of stakeholders in the process
- How to achieve stakeholder and community participation and effective communication as an essential component of the process

### GLOSSARY

#### **Sustainable Community Units – SCUs**

planning areas of a size defined by accessibility of services within a maximum walking distance of 2 km or 30 minutes. Intermediate level urban planning units.

#### **intermediate level planning**

planning at a level between that of the whole town or city and the local neighbourhood, i.e. planning a suburb or SCU

#### **integrated**

combining and harmonising different functions and/or groups

#### **sustainable**

able to continue indefinitely without system-threatening harmful environmental, social or economic effects

#### **stakeholders**

different groups or role players that are involved in or have a direct interest in a process, project or organisation

**Integration and sustainability are essential for efficient development, balanced urban structures and equal opportunities for different groups in society.**

# 1

## Sustainable Community Planning

**S**ustainable Community Unit Planning is a planning methodology devised in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (NMBM) which fills the planning gap that existed between Spatial Development Framework Planning (SDF) which deals with the broad level metropolitan or city wide planning and more detailed layout planning. In this way the spatial planning at sustainable community planning level, also called a Local Area Spatial Development Framework (LASDF), translates the overall vision and principles into more concrete and implementation related guidelines. It also provides a basis for detailed planning, sector planning and project identification. In this way the different levels of spatial planning will be appropriately interlinked.

The Sustainable Community Unit concept involves defining planning areas in terms of a reasonable walking distance i.e. 2 km or 30 minutes from a central area. Fundamental to the concept is the notion that the majority of local daily needs for any inhabitant should be within a reasonable walking distance of the home.

The concept is not only for application in new planning areas but also in revisiting existing planning and development in established areas, to increase compliance with the concept.

The basis for sustainable community planning is found in the development principles that have been adopted at national, provincial and at local government level, and which are supported by legislation and government policies. The development goals and principles of particular importance for spatial planning in Sustainable Community Units are:

### GLOSSARY

#### **efficient development**

urban development that maximizes development goals such as sustainability, integration, accessibility, affordability and quality of living, relative to financial, environmental and social costs, including ongoing and future costs.

#### **balanced urban structures**

areas that have a balance of different uses (residential, services, economic activities and recreation) and of built and green environments

#### **Spatial Development Framework – SDF**

an overall plan for the physical structuring and development of a municipal area.

#### **special needs groups**

HIV/AIDS affected persons, children, the aged and people with disabilities

**Integration & Sustainability**

**DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- Poverty alleviation and the satisfaction of basic needs
- Focus on special needs groups – HIV/AIDS affected persons, children, the aged and people with disabilities
- Gender equality and equity
- The environment – physical, social and economic
- Participation and democratic processes
- Local economic development
- Accessibility – public transport and pedestrian focus
- Mixed use development
- Corridor development
- Safety and security
- Variation and flexibility
- Densification
- Reducing urban sprawl

**PLANNING PRINCIPLES**



Example of the Sustainable Community Unit plan from the Bloemendal Pilot Project

These development principles should be reflected in spatial plans and urban development in different ways. The spatial structure of a Sustainable Community Unit will have certain characteristics related to a combination of functional elements. The following elements have been identified:

- Housing
- Work
- Services
- Transport
- Community
- Character and Identity

**FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS**

Each of these elements will be incorporated in the spatial planning and provide a focus for the realisation of the development principles. The spatial form will contain the elements, and can be assessed according to the extent to which the principles have been achieved. The Sustainable Community Unit will have different urban structures depending upon the type of area and its location within the municipality, but the overall structure and elements should manifest the principles.

**GLOSSARY**

**compliance**

acting in accordance with a law, regulation or condition

**spatial planning**

planning of physical space, incorporating economic, social and environmental aspects

**corridor development**

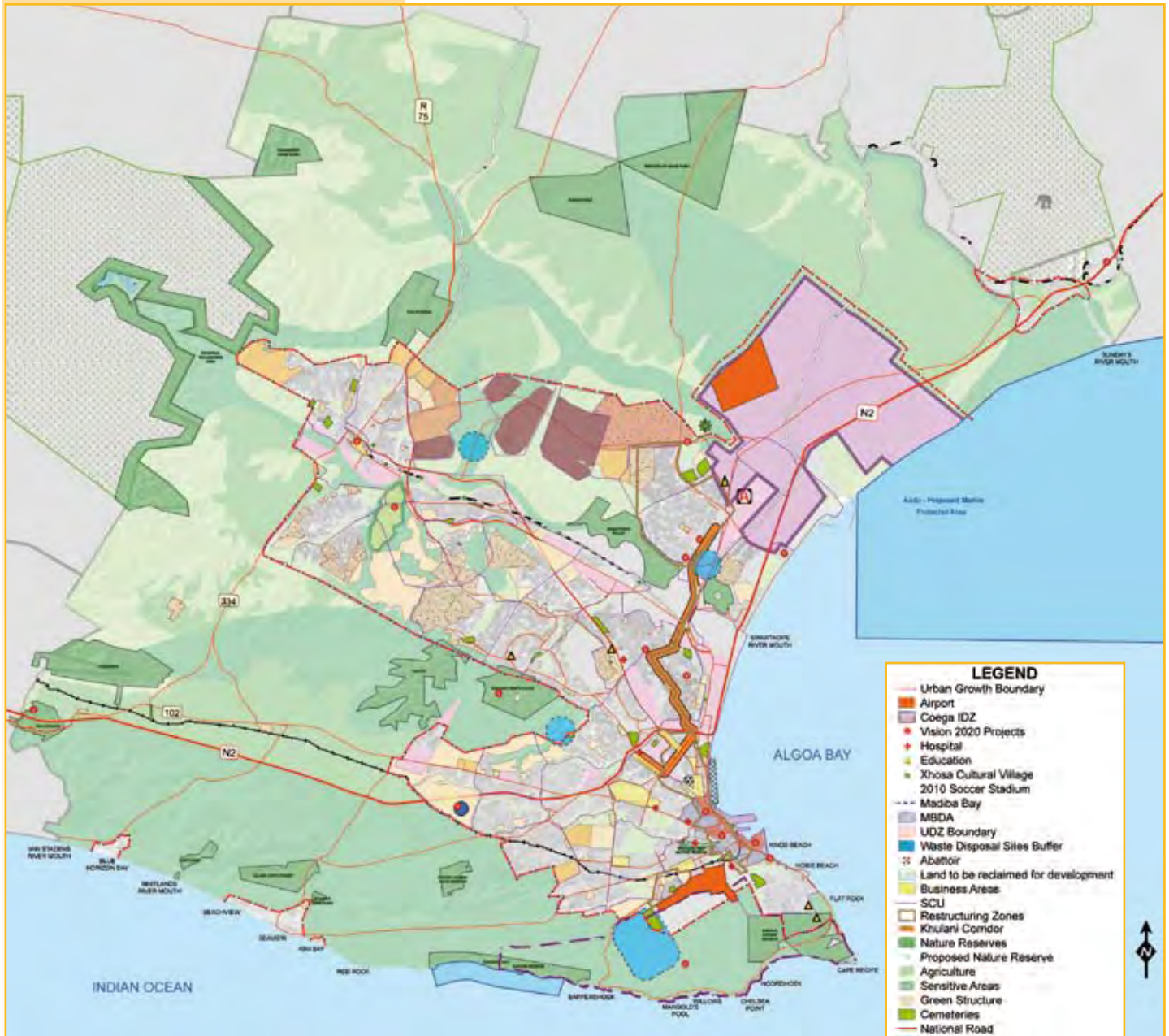
densified development along major routes where mobility, accessibility and the provision of public transport concur

**densification**

increasing the number of residential or other units per specified area, e.g. by building adjoining units, multi-storey buildings and having smaller plots

**urban sprawl**

low density, inefficient land use that extends the urban edge unnecessarily



The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) for Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality provides the basis for sustainable community planning

**LEGEND**

- Urban Growth Boundary
- Airport
- Coega IDZ
- Vision 2020 Projects
- Hospital
- Education
- Xhosa Cultural Village
- 2010 Soccer Stadium
- Madiba Bay
- MBDA
- UDZ Boundary
- Waste Disposal Sites Buffer
- Abattoir
- Land to be reclaimed for development
- Business Areas
- SCU
- Restructuring Zones
- Khulani Corridor
- Nature Reserves
- Proposed Nature Reserve
- Agriculture
- Sensitive Areas
- Green Structure
- Cemeteries
- National Road
- Trunk Road
- Proclaimed Main Road
- Station
- Rail
- Rail - Narrow gauge
- Housing (Ten year plan)
  - 2005 - 2010
  - 2011 - 2015
  - 2016 - 2020
  - 2020 >
- Housing Development
  - 2005 - 2010
  - 2011 - 2015
  - 2016 - 2020
  - 2020 >
- Groendal State Forest & Addo Elephant National Park
- Existing / Infill Development
- Municipal Districts

This will result in sustainable urban development and integrated, safe, dynamic and vibrant environments based on community participation.

**The Spatial Development Framework (SDF) is a part of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process**

The Municipal Systems Act requires that all municipalities develop in IDP and SDF. After adoption of the IDP by a Municipal Council, the SDF is binding on the local authority for a period of 5 years. Newly elected Councils may adopt the IDP of the preceding council or develop a new IDP, taking into account the existing IDP.

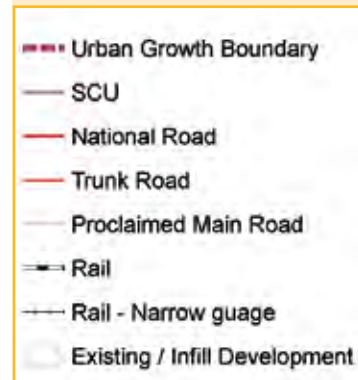
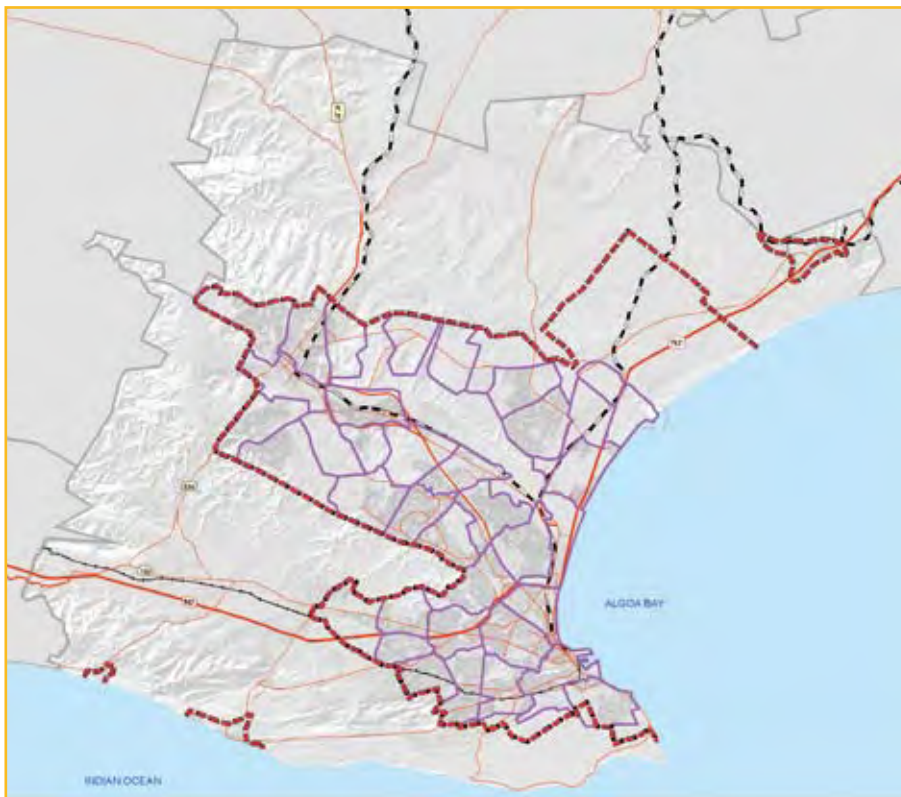
The SDF must be reviewed annually, which could result in amendments that can only be effected by following a statutory process. The SDF covers the entire municipal area and provides the basis for all other levels of spatial planning, including Sustainable Community Unit planning.

**Integrated Development Plans**

IDPs are comprehensive five year plans for all areas of municipal responsibility including:

- Land and housing delivery
- Basic service provision
- Infrastructure development and maintenance
- Local economic development
- Care of the environment
- Poverty alleviation
- Local democracy, public participation and accountable governance

*Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000*



**Sustainable Community Units were delineated during preparation of the SDF for NMBM**

**GLOSSARY**

**IDP**  
Integrated Development Plan