

Tembisa seeks to draw lessons from some of Soweto's rejuvenation successes

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21st April 2011

www.engineeringnews.co.za

Tembisa ('promise', in the Nguni language), north-east of Johannesburg, is receiving a facelift that seeks to reverse apartheid-style planning from a dormitory-type of township to an area that meets new guidelines for human settlement development.

The phrase coined by Human Settlements Minister **Tokyo Sexwale**, that housing developments should be "where people play, stay and pray", has set the tone for planning requirements.

Further guidelines for Tembisa, in Ekurhuleni, are provided by achievements in Soweto, which has benefited recently from major investment in terms of shopping centres, sports infrastructure and tourism attractions in the area.

Soweto residents reportedly have spending power estimated at about R4,3-billion, of which R3,4-billion is spent outside the township, according to the Unilever Institute at the University of Cape Town.

Sowetans, who previously flocked to malls outside the former township, now have no reason to travel far to find the perfect place in which to exercise their growing spending power.

A recent study by TNS Research Surveys, one of the world's largest consumer knowledge and information specialists, states that Tembisa has a population of 442 054 and 105 257 households.

The household monthly income is estimated at R3 683,22.

Tembisa is part of the Gauteng provincial 20 Priority Townships Programme (PTP), aimed at building better communities and upgrading economic and social infrastructure.

The townships targeted are Atteridgeville, Saulsville, Mamelodi, Soshanguve, Orlando, Zola, Katlehong, Tembisa, Watville, Daveyton, Munsieville, Kagiso, Sebokeng, Sharpville, Boipatong, Bophelong, Rethabiseng, Refilwe, Mohlakeng and Ratanda.

Other townships, not covered by the 20 PTP, are being upgraded and renovated under the province's urban renewal project.

At the launch of the 20 PTP in 2006, then Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa set a budget of R3-billion over three years to improve the province's townships. This was later reported to have exceeded R4-billion.

Recently, during the State of the Province address, Gauteng premier **Nomvula Mokonyane** announced that, based on good practice, which had emanated from the City of Johannesburg's development of Soweto, a master plan had been produced for Tembisa and would be implemented in 2011/12.

The plan includes a housing development, road construction, stormwater drainage and the beautification and development of commercial and public precincts.

The Tembisa project will be linked to the development of the industrial development zone (IDZ) near OR Tambo International Airport. The OR Tambo IDZ has been approved and the required certificate has been issued by the Department of Trade and Industry.

This development is expected to generate diverse economic activities, which will include, besides others, a jewellery precinct as part of mineral beneficiation.

The relocation of the Madelakufa informal settlement to alternative human settlements at Strydom Land is part of the Tembisa renewal project, which will produce 1 416 serviced stands. The construction of the first 500 houses will start this month, in line with the Department of Human Settlements strategy.

VISION 2055

Nokonyane said that there was a base document for the development of Gauteng between now and 2055.

“It is the path that all of us must walk, embrace and help to shape so that Gauteng can be in the league of the most globally competitive city regions of the world. Through Vision 2055, we envisage propelling the growth and development of Gauteng to new and greater heights.”

She added that a Gauteng Planning Commission had been established to coordinate and drive the realisation of Vision 2055. Key to the functioning of the Planning Commission would be the setting up of the Gauteng Advisory Council by the end of March to provide a platform to facilitate consultation, strategic advice and sectoral expertise from key sectors of society.

INTERACTION WITHIN CITIES

“Neighbouring municipalities need to work together on development plans as what one does has a knock-on effect on others. A common understanding is needed,” City of Johannesburg development planning and urban management department assistant director Peter Ahmad says on the city’s website.

He argues that, for effective future planning and growth, the city needs to interact with neighbouring municipalities on significant cross-border development issues.

“Each of the local municipalities bordering the City of Johannesburg has its own spatial development plans that have both a direct and an indirect impact on the city. As the City of Johannesburg, we need to note that what’s happening on the other side of our borders has significant impact on our side as well.”

Johannesburg is bordered by the metro- politan municipalities of Tshwane, in the north, and Ekurhuleni, in the east, and the district municipalities of Sedibeng, in the south, and the West Rand, in the west.

Ahmad adds that Joburg, together with these municipalities, has to come to a common understanding on specific spatial and development planning issues relating to infrastructure, housing and public transport, besides others.

The City of Johannesburg believes there is room for it to engage with the City of Ekurhuleni on several projects relating to economic development, transport and housing.

The key development corridor – an area surrounding major mobility and activity spines containing high concentrations of transport and land use – in Ekurhuleni, affecting Johannesburg is the Tembisa–Kempton Park–Boksburg–Germiston–Kathorus corridor.

This is an activity corridor that will create a north–south development link within Ekurhuleni for high-density economic development focused on mixed-use and transit-orientated development.

Following a recent public consultation meeting in Tembisa, Ekurhuleni mayor Mondli Gungubele told the Ekurhuleni Legislature that a clear and unequivocal message emerging from the people was that they wanted uninterrupted, reliable and accessible delivery of basic services.

“They are not asserting entitlement to these services. Instead, the people of Tembisa and surrounding areas want us to sort out our problems relating to water meters, increase facilities for the purchase of prepaid electricity, maintain our electricity infrastructure and ensure correct readings of meters for billing purposes for them to be confident that what they are paying for is what they have used,” said Gungubele.

BEAUTIFICATION

Ekurhuleni urban renewal project head **David Morema** tells *Engineering News* that a township renewal programme includes the beautification of key areas, housing, the greening of parks, upgrading and infrastructure development and the establishment of specific nodes for specific economic activities.

The project is expected to take five to ten years to implement and the municipality is committed to spending over R50-million in the next financial year, which will increase gradually as the plans become more ambitious.

Morema adds the municipality is also considering redesigning a civic precinct, which will have public services, such as libraries and offices, but will also include business linkages.

“The business model is to start linking Tembisa with various opportunities. On a bigger scale, we want the township to find relevance and relationship with businesses in Kempton Park, and to take advantage of the linkage and close proximity with OR Tambo International Airport,” avers Morema.

He points out that, in terms of the municipal decision-making and structural development frameworks, there is growth potential in Germiston, Kempton Park and Boksburg. OR Tambo International Airport is near these areas, and Tembisa, therefore, becomes one of the townships in this triangle that is the centre of growth.

“We have started developing and formalising street trading around Oakmoor station, also in Tembisa, and want to clean up street trading. We are also looking at one of the busiest streets, the Swazi Inn, which houses a number of informal businesses.”

He stresses that the council does not want to change the character of the Swazi Inn businesses, which are informal, but wants to bring more regulation so that business is done in line with existing by-laws “so that the traders thrive and are organised”.

“Sometimes, when one formalises informal business, it dies; and our whole idea is to leave it as a casually organised informality. In the north of Tembisa, there is small-scale industrial development, [featuring] dilapidated buildings. We will be partnering with the private sector to bring more investment into these areas,” explains Morema.

He reiterates that the municipality does not consider the economic development primarily as a standalone phenomenon but more as an opportunity for partnerships.

“We are also looking at existing businesses that are not doing well, owing to lack of space and other limitations. We are looking at what we can provide, as well as what the private sector can contribute as a collective venture, to assist them.”

TOURISM

The renewal project will also capitalise on attractions, like the Dries Niemand park, in Kempton Park, which is en route to Tembisa, and the Thami Mnyele centre, as the hub development of a tourism route around Andrew Mapheto drive.

Through its Economic Development Department, the municipality is also considering the development of 'Struggle Routes', where one can link the homes of struggle heroes to a route and develop tourism around that. Places like Caprivi, one of the popular hangouts in the area, would also form part of the attraction.

Major investments were made in the revamping of the Makhulong stadium at a cost of R38-million for the 2010 soccer World Cup. Nigeria and North Korea played a friendly match at the stadium as part of their preparations for the tournament.

The Department of Arts, Sports, Culture and Heritage will be looking at how to develop, create and access sport facilities like the Makhulong stadium to promote other sporting codes in the area.

SHOPPING CENTRE

Morema states that, as part of the metropolitan municipality's detailed planning, it will be studying available shopping facilities, "because there is a difference between building new malls and looking after what is available".

"Our approach is to look at what is available and, if our market analysis discloses an increase in the buying power . . . building a mega shopping centre like the Maponya Mall, in Soweto, will be viable, and then we will approach the private sector for investment."

He hastens to add that his personal approach is to review existing businesses as, historically, owing to the township's economy, most businesses have died as a result of the entrance of big businesses with more spending power than small businesses.

"There needs to be a relationship between small, medium-sized and macroenterprises (SMMEs) and big business, especially in the townships. In terms of job opportunities, a larger percentage of permanent jobs will be created by investment in the township areas."

At the moment, Tembisa has two malls: the Phumulani mall, situated in the busy retail node opposite the Clayville industrial area, opened in 2008, and the Birch Acres shopping centre, on Andrew Mapheto drive, which was opened late last year.

Phumulani mall centre manager Luyolo Mdlazi tells Engineering News that the mall is doing well as it has one vacancy out of 58 available shops.

"Our tenants complement one another, which augurs well for competition, and the mall is also complemented by the taxi ranks, which bring in shoppers from all the areas in Tembisa," says Mdlazi.

The monthly foot count at the mall is 600 000 shoppers.

Mdlazi states that the mall is a viable business as it caters for the different needs of the nearby communities.

"It helps in terms of employment as well as supplying SMMEs in the area."

He cites competition as a potential challenge as well as the global credit crunch, especially in terms of the property sector, which is driven by a buyer's market, and comments that the rental market demand has increased.

Morema says the municipality wants to start with visible projects, such as the Andrew Mapheto drive development, as well as developments around the beautification of entrances and the cleaning up and formalisation of informal settlements.

With informal settlements, the municipality believes eradication is not the only solution because there are a number of limitations in terms of available land. If it waits for eradication, people might wait a long time for permanent housing and, in the meantime, live without basic amenities.

The local authority wants to manage informal settlements by providing refuse removal, water and sanitation, chemical toilets and the grading of roads for easy access to policing and emergency services, and creating access to energy. The proposal is to use different sources of energy.

Mokonyane said that one of the hallmarks of successful city regions was the ability to make speedy decisions about development, without compromising the quality of such decisions.

“We wish to restate that these decisions will be driven by well-researched plans, and not in reaction to external pressures and expectations.”

She added that the Gauteng Spatial Development Framework provided for a single provincewide plan for future private and public development in the quest to build a nonracial, livable, equitable, accessible, sustainable and prosperous city region.