



Urban LandMark

making urban land markets work for the poor

INTRODUCING URBAN LANDMARK

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The observable lack of access by the poor to urban land is increasingly emerging as a hotly debated policy issue in South Africa and other emerging countries.

In response to the imperative of developing pro-poor urban land markets, Urban LandMark was launched in May 2006, under the auspices of the UK's Department for International Development. It plans to take up the challenge of establishing an evidence base and developing an advocacy strategy aimed at "making markets work for the poor". Through ongoing research and active engagement with various entities of government, the private sector and communities, Urban LandMark aims to position itself as a focal point for engagement around the critical issue of urban land rights and access for the poor, thus contributing towards positive policies and practice in South Africa.

Following from the objectives of defining what pro-poor land access means, establishing an information base from which to develop innovative approaches to urban land access,



and engagement with diverse sector players towards the promotion of policy dialogue, Urban LandMark will be pursuing these objectives using the following key strategies:

- Research;
- Information dissemination;
- Targeted support for key role players in government, civil society and the private sector;
- Professional development; and
- Networking and advocacy.

The Programme Director, Mark Napier, manages the Programme with the assistance of the Programme Administrator, Lerato Ndjwili-Potele.

For further information, visit the website at www.urbanlandmark.org.za

INITIATING THE DEBATE WITH URBAN LANDMARK'S FIRST URBAN LAND SEMINAR

As a platform to launch the debates surrounding pro-poor urban land issues, Urban LandMark hosted its first Urban Land Seminar on the 15th November 2006 in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg.

Exploring diverse perspectives on the meaning of making urban land markets work for the poor in South Africa, the seminar was attended by academics, practitioners and various government and private sector stakeholders. Seven position papers, presented by experts in the field, ex-

plored diverse views on the scope and nature of the issues faced in developing approaches to transforming urban land markets in respect of the poor.

Action statements emerging from these diverse perspectives, as explored in these position papers, ranged from the provision of instant cheap housing options in good city locations, as advocated by Catherine Cross of the HSRC, to the reconceptualisation of dominant paradigms related to the economy and economic growth, as espoused by Colin Marx of Isandla Institute.

Summaries of the papers can be found on page 2.



LOCAL NEWS

STATE LAND SALES TO BE PROMOTED SOON

Public Enterprises Minister Alec Erwin indicated at the National Council of Provinces on September the 5th that provincial and local road shows would soon commence in aid of marketing state-owned land earmarked for sale.

Noting that black economic empowerment formed an important part of the planned sales, Erwin conveyed optimism that the land sales offered "interesting opportunities", and that preference would be given to local communities in the disposal of land.

Government departments would be given first option in the acquisition of land, through consultations with various departments regarding pressing land requirements, including those related to housing and to the 2010 World Cup. The latter will include the need for improved transport infrastructure and tourist accommodation.

(Business Day, September 6, 2006)

"Land sales will respond to pressing departmental land requirements associated with 2010"



DOUBLE-STOREY PLANS FOR TOWNSHIP HOMES A RESPONSE TO LAND SHORTAGES

In response to critical land shortages experienced in townships, the eThekweni council has entertained the possibility of employing a strategy aimed at encouraging owners of old four-roomed houses to extend these homes to double-storey buildings. Spatial density in the municipality has forced the building of homes in more remote locations, impacting severely on the transport expenses of beneficiary families. The idea emerged from a council site visit to newly built double-storey family units at Durban's Glebe Hostel near Durban International Airport, where 144 four bedroomed family units have been built as well as existing hostels converted to accommodate families. Given the need for low-income housing near the business hubs, the idea of "building up" was offered up as a potential solution to housing deficits near the city centres.

(Daily News, Wednesday November 15, 2006)



WHAT THE URBAN LAND SEMINAR PAPERS SAID

Lauren Royston of Development Works advocated for the recognition of the nature of local institutions (commonly known as informal institutions), understanding how they work and identifying potentials of integrating them into the formal system to promote both city-wide and local approaches.

Catherine Cross of the Human Sciences Research Council, argued for instant, dirt cheap housing options in a range of good city locations to be coupled with a strategy to enhance the asset value of government provided housing.

Colin Marx of Isandla Institute called for engagement in activities that re-conceptualise key understandings of the economy such as the poor's significant contribution towards economic growth.

Michael Kihato and Stephen Berrisford flagged the opportunity for Urban LandMark to engage in refining of regulations that need to accommodate pro-poor policies.

Mercy Brown-Luthango of Development Action Group advocated "bold" initiatives and strategic interventions in the market at municipal level so as to ensure that it works for the poor.

Jeff McCarthy cautioned against actions penalizing the market, and suggested leveraging market forces with earmarked public funds for more effective impact on the poor.

Dr Karina Landman and Nana Ntombela of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research argued for state intervention against spatial practices that encourage the exclusion of the poor in the urban areas and suggested proactive engagement to encourage inclusionary urban planning and design.

Sarah Charlton of Wits University presented a synthesized report of the eight papers.

To access the papers go to <http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/archive.html>



“A downward movement in house price growth was expected to continue into the fourth quarter of

LOCAL NEWS

ABSA HOUSE PRICE INDEX SHOWS SLOW DOWN

After a house price growth peak of over 35% near the end of 2004, the Absa house price index, released in 2006, indicated that the trend of declining residential markets has persisted, with a nominal house price growth of 13.6% year on year in August 2006.

Interest rate hikes in response to high levels of credit extension, household debt levels, worrying current account deficits and strong consumer demand were expected to further check the market, with Absa senior economist Jacques du Toit anticipating “single digit growth” by the end of 2006.

Francois Viruly, of Viruly Consulting, held the view that a downward move-

ment in house price growth was expected to continue into the fourth quarter of last year, and has anticipated that the market will only start recovering in late 2007.

Viruly also predicted that responses to interest rates could include lower market prices in the buy-to-let market, as home-owners struggle to make bond repayments, while other households may consider the option of renting over buying.

Land costs remain a major factor with growth of 17% year on year for the third quarter of 2006. According to the report, “the scarcity of suitable and properly serviced land for residential development has been a problem for some time, especially in the rapidly growing urban areas of the country”.

(Business Day, Wednesday September 6, 2006)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK LAUNCHED

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), an initiative responding to observed global barriers to equitable and pro-poor land access, aims to facilitate the realisation of Millennium Development Goals through improved land management and tenure tools for poverty alleviation and development.

The GLTN aims to address three principle barriers to pro-poor land access, namely the lack of sufficient pro-poor tools to realise Habitat Agenda policies, the lack of implementation-oriented policies, and inadequate integration of human rights frameworks into the development of land tools. It originated from requests made by

Member States and local communities spanning the globe who, together with the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the World Bank initiated the network. Some key priorities for GLTN activities include the development of robust, engendered land governance and administration tools and the establishment of pro-poor regulatory frameworks for the private sector to ensure sustainable access. Recognising that sound land governance is key to peace-building and post-conflict transformation, GLTN aims, in addition to the development of accessible governance tools, to assist in the management of administration processes to post-conflict societies in particular.

For further information go to <http://www.glttn.net>

Urban LandMark is a programme of DFID Southern Africa. To subscribe to this newsletter please register at <http://www.urbanlandmark.org.za/newsletter.php> or contact us at:

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