



CITY FOCUS

Cape Town



# Reintegrating a Post-Apartheid City





Worlds apart: crowded informal settlement (right) alongside Hout Bay's wealthy homes (left).

**F**or 50 years, apartheid rule cleaved Cape Town along ethnic lines, resulting in a physically and socially divided city. Today, the city is working to overcome the legacy of a highly oppressive and discriminatory administration in myriad ways, including urban design and public investments.

Some months ago, American photographer Johnny Miller published aerial images of Cape Town that evoked strong reactions. Each showed a contrast between housing types and income groups. On one side were clusters of small, tightly packed homes in dusty, squalid conditions; on the other side—buffered by scrubland, a sliver of a highway or a park—were beautifully designed condominiums and large homes, bathed in leafy, lush environs.

The aerial images bear out the legacy of South Africa's apartheid policy, which displaced non-white people to peripheral townships where access to public services and jobs was poor. Apartheid may have ended 20 years ago but today, it continues to impact the city's spatial planning.

“The apartheid legacy continues to impact the [people's] opportunities. The face of poverty largely remains black,” said Cape Town Mayor Patricia de Lille. “[Apartheid] also impacts integration because many people lived most of their lives hating each other because of institutionalised racism. This intensifies the challenge already posed by urbanisation.”

Fifty years of racism, discrimination and inequality have affected not just the city's landscape, but crucially, its psyche. Today the city is working hard to overcome its past.

One way has been to tap urban design—the very thing exploited to segregate people. Cape Town's central train station, built in 1966, was designed to segregate white commuters from non-whites. In 2010, the architectural barriers were demolished, resulting in an open and naturally lit space that represented the democratisation of the station.

In June 2016, seven footbridges were named after local heroes who not only influenced the culture and character of the city, but also bridged divides across communities in their fight to end apartheid. Capetonians were also invited to propose names of people whom they felt enriched the city's cultural and historical heritage.

Beyond the symbolic, the city aims to become an inclusive city, where every resident feels they have a legitimate stake in the city's future.

“Given South Africa's fractured history of entrenched discrimination and oppression, the need to emphasise the importance of our diversity and employ means to bring different communities together is critical for a thriving society,” said Mayor de Lille.

One way of breaking down barriers is to physically link the city and allow people to move freely and connect with each other. To enhance mobility, the city is investing in public transportation systems, such as the new Integrated Rapid Transit bus system called MyCiTi.





Apartheid-era segregation between white and non-white commuters at Cape Town Train Station.



Now, the forecourt of Cape Town Train Station is a pedestrian-only, all-day accessible public space.



01



02

“[P]oor residents spend up to 40% of their salaries on travelling to work,” said Mayor de Lille. “[It gives] the previously disadvantaged a safe and affordable way to travel across the city to economic opportunities.”

The service, which is seeing increasing usage, now has 40 routes, 42 stations and more than 700 bus stops. “This service is used by the rich as well as the working class,” added the Mayor.

The city is also moving to help the disenfranchised own property for the first time. During apartheid rule, non-white residents were not allowed to buy property.

“[T]his would be empowering and also give residents a sense of belonging, which is the central tenet to creating an inclusive city,” said the Mayor.

Eight large-scale social housing projects will be built between 2017 and 2019, at an estimated cost of over R250 million (US\$17.8 million). Considerable investment has also gone into improving and extending free or highly subsidised services like clean water, electricity, public

toilets, sanitation, and refuse removal into informal settlements.

Going further, the city council adopted the Transit-Orientated Development (TOD) Strategic Framework in March 2016. This prescribes all new developments to address apartheid spatial inequality, urbanisation and the high cost of public transport, while stimulating economic growth.

“Essentially, we are reimagining a Cape Town ... that works more efficiently and effectively, for all our residents. This is definitely going to be a legacy which continues to exist ... well into the future,” said Mayor de Lille.

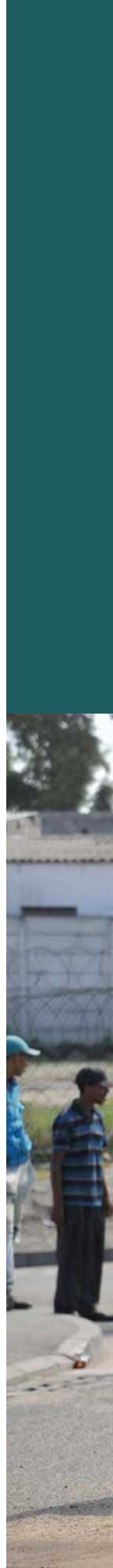
An inclusive city also means a city where people are not economically excluded.

“The sad reality of the apartheid legacy is that it’s left large sections of the population unemployable,” said Mayor de Lille. “They now lack the basic education and skills denied to them in apartheid. As much as we want gainful employment from the private sector, that cannot be the reality for many.”

01 Mayor de Lille at a ceremony in which footbridges were named after local Cape Town heroes.

02 MyCiTi provides accessible, affordable transport for all Capetonians.

03 An all-female road repair team under the EPWP’s Women at Work programme.



“Beyond the symbolic, the city aims to become an inclusive city, where every resident feels they have a legitimate stake in the city’s future.”





Among the measures to address employability is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which hires unemployed residents for public works projects. Since 2011, Cape Town has created almost 16,000 EPWP work opportunities, paying R555 million (US\$40 million) in direct wages.

“Our research indicates that these wages are ploughed directly into local businesses, creating local economic development within their communities,” added the Mayor.


Like many big cities, homeless people live on Cape Town’s streets. The city, together with NGOs, has increased its support to street people over the years, from running shelters and soup kitchens to providing supplies. Two Capetonians collaborated with the Napier Haven Night Shelter to set up the Street Store, which lets the homeless pick out free donated outfits. The pop-up store concept has since been replicated globally.

Last October, the city hosted its second conference on World Homeless Day that brought social workers, city officials and street people together. There, the

homeless were given the stage to voice their needs. The city responded with a timeline to equip street people with skills to raise employability.

The journey to becoming an inclusive city cannot be achieved without its residents. Last year on Human Rights Day, Cape Town launched its Inclusive City Campaign with a tagline “Don’t let racists speak for you”. It urged residents to call out racism when they see it. The Inclusive City desk would then investigate and offer to mediate between conflicting parties.

“We know that the majority of residents are not racists and we mobilised them to drown out the racist individuals who were being given the power to shape wider perception,” said Mayor de Lille. The campaign also promoted residents’ rights and organised dialogues to talk openly about racism.

With increased awareness on rights and of existing prejudices, Cape Town hopes it can emerge from the darkness of apartheid to realise its vision of becoming an Inclusive City. 

01 The Street Store gives homeless people a dignified shopping experience.

02 Mayor de Lille speaking at the launch of the Inclusive City campaign.

03 Events such as the Cape Town Carnival celebrate the city’s rich cultural diversity.

