

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. LESSONS LEARNT
- 7.2. PROCESS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Much of the work produced here is forged over the foundations of a myriad of technical and spatial studies done throughout the years. We have attempted to frame the problem through the lens of our time; we trust this will add to and bring depth to the work produced previously. More importantly, we aim for this work to be realisable. This document is as much a call for action to leadership as it is a guiding technical report.

Our call is set against a host of projects that the process has identified; some of them will be complex to implement, others less so. In rebuilding a rich and vibrant public realm, much of the implementation work will need to be driven by the officials of the City of Cape Town. The alignment of budgets/ resources with the tasks identified will be a critical first step in achieving these goals.

Engaging with the content in this report can be a daunting task, and it is likely that very few people will make the effort to engage in its entirety. We have made a concerted effort to ensure all information contained within this report is accessible to both the layman and professional teams whose duty it will be to interpret and implement the various tasks. Each chapter can be independently pulled out and used as a reference when developing projects. We encourage the reader to 'dip in and out' of the various sections, including the important annexures, to build a keen sense of the place and an empathy for the problem. Driving an affinity for the place and its challenges will be as important in accessing the ambitions set out in this report.

We encourage implementors to understand the intent of the recommendations or guidelines and to apply their minds with creativity, nuance and responsibility, in order to further build the depth of each proposal.

6.1. Lessons learnt

The complexity of District Six lies as much in our collective inability to resolve the restitution process, as it lurks in the wildly varying and entrenched views that are shared by various interest groups. Building an understanding of how to engage with complexity has been a valuable learning experience.

A key lesson learnt during this process lies in finding empathy for the problem, particularly for those of us who have not had a deep history with District Six. This empathy includes understanding the hurt that Caretakers carry into workshops.

In this context, complexity often expresses itself as conflict, where it is understandably difficult to separate emotion from the technical brief. Co-production/ design is therefore vital, if not a prerequisite, in better understanding complexity and building trust. As such, a "charette" methodology was adopted. This fostered a creative dynamic which was often impossible to predict. Therefore, it was important for us to adapt our methodology to the changing dynamics of workshops as the process unfolded.

Building trust, in arenas of distrust and suspicion, is a significant challenge to overcome. Workshops typically started with a feedback session from Caretakers, where any conflict or disagreement about the process and the outcomes from the previous workshop were discussed. Caretakers continued to participate in the process, implying that they felt it was important to remain engaged so that they could continue to influence its outcome. Their vested interest, in the face of misgivings, required a similar investment from the professional team. We adopted three strategies that assisted us in meandering this morass and aided us in building trust. The fourth strategy, developed by the Caretakers, filled the gap in our initial three strategies. These were as follows:

1. We speak the truth. Particularly when technical solutions or professional views differed with popular opinion [both inside and outside the workshops] or what the prognosis for delivery was;
2. We made room in the agenda for these issues to be raised and debated;
3. We communicated the outcomes of workshops quickly and widely using social media, pamphlets and video clips;
4. We recorded moments of dissent as alternative positions that would require more work and further engagement.

Generally, the Co-Design Workshops met their ambitions and resulted in participants being engaged and regularly expressing their satisfaction with the process.

The charette process is rooted in the idea that designing is an act of negotiation. This implies that all participants share the same language and are able to engage with the problem. The tasks that we found to be the most successful were those that required a different tool-set to drawing. These largely focused on the making of models, where a vibrant toolkit of materials were prepared that could be easily manipulated or reimagined by participants. The process of making, not only offered a more inclusive conversation, but also made the ideas presented visually more accessible.

It is generally expected, in "bottom-up" planning processes, that the role of the professional team is to facilitate the workshop and not to distort the ideas driven by the "community". However, to be clear, the professional team is driving the process from the onset. This includes choosing the method of engagement, setting the location and devising agendas for meetings. From the onset, we were clear that our role was a participatory one, which involved bringing our respective technical expertise and experience into workshops. The success of this position is dependent on the ability of the professional to draw out views from those who are less technically minded.



6.2. Process and Way Forward

The publishing of this report marks the start of a program of work that will shape how people experience District Six in the future. There are two key tasks that will drive the way forward in implementing the projects identified:

1. The planning and implementation of specific projects. This report recommends that a series of interventions in Chapel Street, from Trafalgar Park to Muir Street Mosque, are implemented first. This will connect the two existing communities on either side of the elevated freeway. This should mark the start of a continuous process of rolling out, both proactively and reactively, public spaces. The City should gear itself up to fulfill this role. In particular, projects planned for restitution will require a proactive engagement with implementors outside the City and well before plans are submitted for approval. The role of the City, in reviewing building plan applications, comes far too late in the process and does not leave sufficient room to guide designs.
2. This document is conceived as being a live set of ideas. As such, these can be refined and layered with iterations shaped by changing political and economic conditions. This is not a masterplan, fixed in time, but a tool for collective action. Therefore, the plan requires ongoing review, particularly during and after the implementation of projects.

In the face of the shear scale of the site and the amount of work that needs to be done, it is no surprise that a task, of this nature, can be considered daunting. It is our suggestion that the City focus on executing a number of projects simultaneously and that this momentum be maintained. Through the principle of incrementality, the City can start by fixing everyday problems with ideas embedded in the broader vision.

Integral to a coherent way forward, we make the following recommendations of activities and tasks that require urgent consideration:

1. District Six requires tools for its heritage to be protected and managed. There is consensus that there are many assets that are heritage worthy, but no consistent plan exists with formally approved status. Without a coherent plan, work has progressed piecemeal and is reliant on individual development applications to make its own assessments and mitigation recommendations. A Heritage Impact Statement, with guidelines for the whole of District Six, that has been approved through statutory process, is vital and will remove ambiguity and any room for idiosyncratic interpretations.
2. Work in establishing the public realm in District Six requires a large program of action and a budget rolled out over many years. For this to be executed diligently, we recommend that the City identifies a champion to drive the process. We recommend that the City undertakes the task of identifying the type of vehicle required to manage a significant program and deliver this large scaled project, in much the same way as it has other significant infrastructural projects [Convention Centre, Cape Town Stadium, etc.]. Similarly, we recommend that the City establishes a dedicated task team of line department officials that will focus on programmes of delivery.
3. The “Caretaker” structure that was used to engage with stakeholders has proven to be valuable beyond their participation in workshops. It would be prudent to retain the structure, fill the gaps in representation, and build on the momentum and trust that has been built through this process.

The success of this work will be dependent on whether it has been assimilated into other projects in the future. Its effectiveness will ultimately be judged on whether it has delivered any infrastructure. We recommend that the City make this report widely available, both internally within the City and to those who may be involved in the implementation of projects.

