

Integrated leadership is the key City's sound future, says State of Cape Town Report

The City has issued its first-ever State of Cape Town Report, which provides an up-to-date snapshot of the issues that most affect Cape Town – and provides practical suggestions to tackle them.

Produced by the Strategic Development Information and GIS Department, it highlights some of the opportunities and challenges faced by the City, and places these in an international, national and local context.

The Report concludes that as the challenges facing the city are inter-related, these must be tackled in a more sustainable and integrated way, and must involve all major stakeholders. To do so, the researchers recommend a concept of “city” leadership by all key stakeholders in the city – rather than by the City of Cape Town government only. A sound future lies in the integrated leadership of the City underpinned by partnerships between the City of Cape Town, other spheres of government, parastatals, civil society and business.

Although the first decade of democracy delivered a significant improvement in the quality of many Capetonians' lives, there remain a number of challenges associated with urbanisation, notes the Report. Poverty has persisted in the midst of affluence; the problem is not the absence of economic growth, but the failure to harmonise economic, social development and sustainability objectives.

Cape Town's problems include urban sprawl, unemployment, poverty, a housing backlog, HIV and AIDS, TB, crime, an overburdened infrastructure, the unsustainable use of resources and increasing pollution.

Importantly, therefore, the Report hopes to serve as a basis for discussions on the urban-management choices the City needs to make.

Environment

- The environment is one of the strongest assets driving tourism and attracting skilled staff to the city's economy.
- Finding the balance between sustainable development and an improved quality of life remains a challenge.
- Key issues are the growth in consumption, waste, air and water pollution, and the protection of the city's biodiversity.

Spatial and regional planning

- Cape Town's current urban form is unsustainable, economically unproductive and prohibits spatial, racial and economic integration.
- A key challenge is to tackle the city's urban sprawl through densification
- Addressing the city's spatial and regional planning challenges will only be successful if the city is seen within its context of a city within a region, rather than as an entity separate from its region.

Human and social development

- Decades of distorted development, evident in the highly skewed distribution of income and wealth, have left Cape Town with immense social and economic challenges.
- This is reflected in growing poverty, in inadequate housing, in poor health (especially in the impact of HIV and Aids) and in social exclusion.

Economy

- The gross geographical product growth rate has remained below 4.5% for past four years and is likely to remain so for 2006/7.
- The main challenges are to create productive employment opportunities and to reduce poverty.
- Unemployment has grown from 13% in 1997 to almost 23% in 2004, with a drop in 2005 to 21%.
- The distribution of economic growth is highly skewed towards those with the greatest skills and access to resources, and is accompanied by a growth in joblessness.

Integrated human settlements

- As a result of migration to the city and population growth, most new households are poor.
- There is insufficient funding and capacity to meet the housing demand
- Infrastructural demands resulting from increased economic and population growth have to be managed.

- Insufficient funding and a lack of institutional capacity to tackle backlogs remain a key challenge.

Transport

- Transport challenges are evident in the increased reliance on private cars, ineffective public transport and the lack of coordination between stakeholders.

Crime

- Some crime statistics in past few years have demonstrated an improving situation: there has been a reduction in murder and business crime. However, things have not normalised. Drug-related crime has increased.
- The incidence of murder is still extremely high, with a total of 1 856 murders in 2005/6, representing an annual murder rate of 57 per 100 000 population and an average of five murders a day. Drug crime has almost tripled in four years.

Governance

- The challenges facing the City are inter-related; tackling these must cut across responsibilities of all spheres of government and civil society.
- It is critical to find innovative ways to deal with challenges in a more sustained and integrated way.
- Partnerships between spheres of government and with businesses, and a move from a top-down “government” approach by the public sector to a “governance” approach by all key stakeholders, will become increasingly important.