

Introduction

If architects are to be seen affecting social, economic, urban and aesthetic prosperity, I maintain that they get themselves co-opted by those patrons with a similar mandate - local government. Two recent developments in the windy city of Port Elizabeth hold promise for the realization of such lofty goals: The Interim Development Plan released by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) and the establishment of The Madiba Bay Development Agency (MBDA). The following is an attempt to carve a project from the deluge of 'challenges'.

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality

The NMMM Interim Development Plan (currently circulated for comment) has set itself certain economic development interventions as goal: The following selection pertains to the current investigation:

Development and promotion of SMME's as well as tourism. Trade and investment promotion. Procurement and market development.

Tourism: Efforts to attract tourists focus on an international market (HSRC, 2001): United Kingdom; Germany; France; Benelux (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) and emerging markets: Central and Eastern Europe; United States; India and Africa.

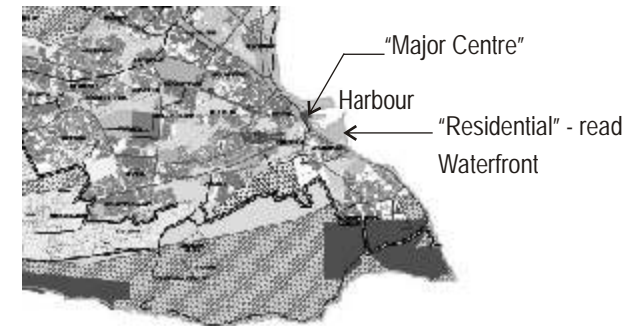
The Eastern Cape Tourism Master Plan affirms that business and tourism development zones are to be matched with each other. It also seeks to attract investment for the building of new hotels or for the upgrading of existing hotels. Also, the areas that are seen as strengths are beaches, shopping experiences and other entertainment attractions of city life.

The NMMM sees itself as an attractive venue for investment, development and conferencing.

The NMMM sees its cultural heritage residing in Xhosa villages, British, Dutch and German settlements as well as the early decades of European colonisation focusing on a heritage of Victorian buildings.

Specifically, the Port Elizabeth Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry seeks to answer the South African competition in conferencing. A new high-tech multi-purpose conference centre in Port Elizabeth should be a cost-competitive project to increase PE's capacity to provide a "much needed, one-stop shop for conferencing needs". It would also add mass to the value of the developments at Coega, as well as those such as Madiba Bay and the Statue of Freedom. (Nelson Mandela Bay Review).

The Interim Spatial Development Framework is a document currently being circulated for comment by the NMMM. Graphic 2. shows a zoning plan for the entire NMMM. Of specific interest here is the so-called Major Centre envisioned in the vicinity of the campanile. It will therefore be assumed that the city planners see this as a growth point and allowances for traffic impact, utilities, zoning and supporting services will be upgraded for the development of a "Major Centre".



Graphic 2. Spatial Interim Development Framework, for the NMMM

Madiba Bay Development Agency

Based on the development agencies of Sweden and France, the MBDA was established in December 2000 to co-ordinate a range of projects that would "re-invent" the inner metro area to make it pleasant to visit and valuable to invest in. apart from an as yet unprepared Redevelopment Master Plan for the demarcated area, the agency have been set the following goals that pertain to the current investigation:

Removal of the oil tank farm; Removal of the manganese ore loading facility; Removal of the Settler's freeway; Development of a comprehensive public transport system and facilities; Location of the Nelson Mandela Freedom Statue; Rehabilitation of the Lower Baakens river valley; Redefinition of the role of the existing

harbour and its railway stations (main line and Apple Express); Attracting public, private and international funding and partnership; Govan Mbeki Avenue, CBD, Strand street urban design and redevelopment; Lower Baakens river valley Main railway station King's beach redevelopment; Establish a civic character in the metropolitan area.

Furthermore the agency should be self-funding and as financially independent as possible within a short period of time. Lastly the agency must ensure effective and sustainable urban development and reverse urban decay in the demarcated area. A secondary role of the agency is that it will become "a major source of income for the municipality. The projects are therefore primarily focused on being reliable sources of income".

Aspirations summarised

From this synopsis of the real-world problems a brief summary can be made of categories of needs.

1. Tourism

1.1 Focus on an international market

1.2 Location of the Nelson Mandela Freedom Statue

1.3. Match tourism and development zones

1.4. Build new hotels and upgrade existing ones

1.5. Provide entertainment attractions associated with city life

1.6. Develop conferencing ability by way of a new conference facility that:

1.6.1. Answers competition of the South African market

1.6.2. Is a high-tech multi purpose facility.

1.7. Celebrate cultural heritage as evidenced in local Xhosa, British (Victorian and Georgian colonial), Dutch and German settlements

2. Urban regeneration.

- 2.1. Re-invent inner metro area,
- 2.2. Removal of the oil tank farm
- 2.3. Removal of the manganese ore loading facility
- 2.4. Development of public transport systems and facilities
- 2.5. Rehabilitation of the Lower Baakens river valley
- 2.6. Redefinition of the role of the existing harbour and its railway stations
- 2.7. Strand street urban design and redevelopment
- 2.8. Improve quality of business, residential and tourism in the designated area
- 2.9. Reverse urban decay
- 2.10. Provide an example of sustainable urban development.
- 2.11. Development of a 'major centre' as indicated on the interim Spatial Development Framework (SDF).

3. Industry:

- 3.1. Recognition of the automotive industry as a major contributor to the economy of the region
- 3.2. Facilitation of the invaluable taxi industry because it is often the only means of access for people to jobs and access for industry to labour.
- 3.3. Facilitation of Small to Medium Enterprises (SME's).

Urban Framework Proposal

In lieu of the above a narrower scenario is necessary for the development of a grounded architectural concept. To this end the author proposes an urban framework. This framework is hereafter assumed to be city's accepted development strategy and all planning will be based thereon.

1). A 100m grid is overlain on the existing oil tank and manganese ore farm. This Cerdian grid allows maximum freedom severally for each block but gives the whole an urbanised legible structure that extends the CBD. It also promotes a higher density.

2). The Nelson Mandela Freedom Statue is located at

the furthest edge towards the breakwater. This allows maximum view of the CBD and its built-up hill profile. To the east lies Algoa bay and shark rock pier in the distance. Further more it allows this monument to be clearly visible and remains enigmatically in the distance while geographically in the heart of the city. The implication of its location for the Nelson Mandela Forum is that it sets up a viewing platform from the south-east. The Forum therefore has to turn a long distance iconic elevation towards the statue.

3). Although zoning is not an essential part of the urban framework, allowance is made for grouping recreational activities towards the northern beach area. Commercial activities towards the harbour and more business like activities towards the CBD.

4). The implication of the above strategy is that the mouth of the lower Baakens river which is essentially the northern-most extremity of the Waterfront development, will already have a more formal character that assimilates the civil heart of the CBD. The river mouth will therefore be a gateway element for the Waterfront. In light of this it is essential that the mouth together with lower Baakens river valley be in an aesthetically acceptable condition. This framework proposes a naturalised setting with planting, landscaping and amenities reminiscent of a river mouth. This should create an amicable setting for the activities of formalised businesses, financial institutions, offices and the like.

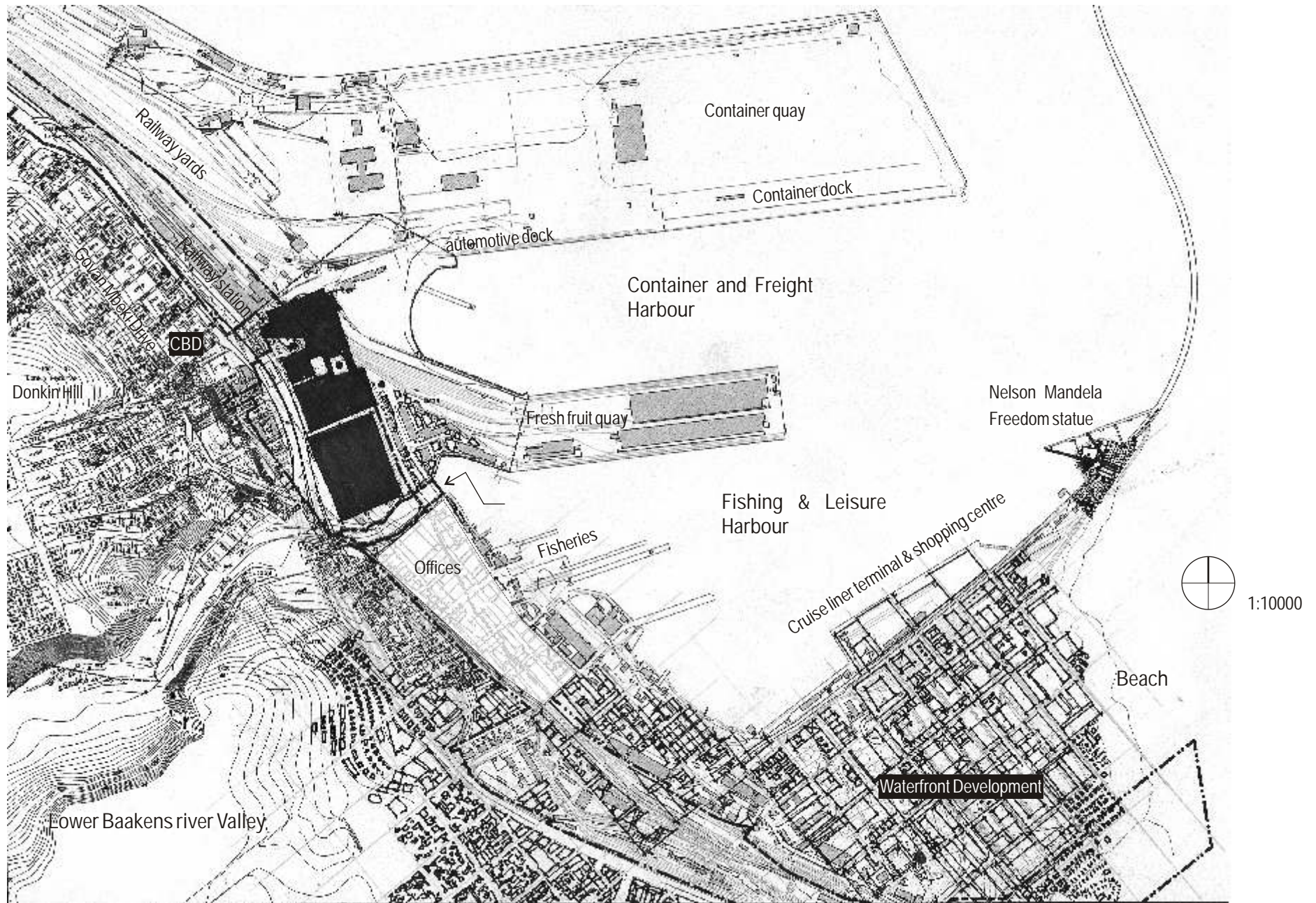


Figure 3. Port Elizabeth Downtown Area. Proposed Urban Framework