

Prospectus

Action inspires hope

THE ADAM TAS CORRIDOR: Stellenbosch

An 'urban laboratory' for a more equitable society

We need all hands on deck – historical advantage, no historical advantage, men, women, children, the old. United, we're going to rise; divided, we're going to fall

—Thuli Madonsela

This is a bold, groundbreaking urban change project along a development corridor in Stellenbosch that looks to build a better urban society for all. It looks to develop this corridor as an 'urban laboratory' – a place for testing new ideas, tools and tactics across the broadest spectrum of social, economic, cultural and physical change and turning this learning into action. Using constructive thinking combined with social innovation; alternative planning, design and development models; and, new forms of active citizenship, enabling civic leadership and ethical professionalism, it looks to start by starting, learn by doing and scale up this change.

Stellenbosch in context

Despite many riches and attractions, Stellenbosch presents challenges to dignified and sustainable living and working. These challenges impact on all citizens. The current threat to Stellenbosch is twofold. Firstly, social and economic inequality undermines the idea of the town as a shared space. Secondly, the pressure on the town to expand quickly, and the necessity to do so, forces choices to be made between competing alternatives. The settlement model that made Stellenbosch an attractive choice differs fundamentally from the current growth model. Stellenbosch cannot accommodate this model. But there is hope.

Stellenbosch through its emerging spatial development framework (SDF) - focusing on the future of the Adam Tas Corridor - can become the vital incubator for new solutions to deal with the most pressing issues facing South Africa – housing, land, social cohesion and opportunity in all its forms. It will only work if we can build compact urbanism and social capital to realise the potential of people with the potential of place – the vital ingredients of a functioning urban society. The new SDF recognises that we need to focus energy on a few catalytic areas that offer extensive opportunity and address “deep” need.

The urban change agenda

We are using the same old thinking and getting the same old results. Our housing development models are broken. We do not have any viable alternatives to the suburban/rural tradition of living that operates in the absence of any tried-and-tested African models for compact urban living. We know government has to do more with less, but it also needs to realign its sights to be effective again. There is a new national interest in ensuring universal access to land and the opportunity offered by larger settlements and cities. We aim to show how this is possible.

This problem is not unique to Stellenbosch. Our system is found wanting and we are not delivering on the promises of a better future for all of our country's citizens. This comes at a time of increasing social upheaval, a rising climate of fear and a crisis in action. On top of this, urban sprawl continues, infrastructure is failing and the poor are getting poorer. Things have to change.

We are all in this together. People can play a far bigger role in solving complex urban problems. People have abilities and capacities. They increasingly get on with things despite government, not because of it. Just imagine what could happen if we can harness this creativity and energy to do it better. They just need to be shown a different way.

We recognise that the government alone cannot solve all of the problems. They need to work with people to achieve something that neither could achieve alone.

In the face of recent negative experience related to the behaviour of elements of government and corporate leadership and management country-wide, there appears to be a renewed commitment among key leaders – across sectors – in Stellenbosch to manage enterprises, institutions, and resources, mindfully and with a view to setting Stellenbosch on a more sustainable development path.

This is the purpose of this project – to start to show a different way and learn by doing. Stellenbosch is uniquely placed to show a different way if it deploys its vast array of assets, both physical and human, to the opportunity. With its commitment to be the 'Innovation Capital' of the country, it has the potential to lead the way.

The opportunity

The Adam Tas Corridor (ATC) is the place where it can happen. Stretching along the R310 and R44 from the Cape Sawmills site in the southwest to Kayamandi and Cloetesville in the northeast, it is a transport-orientated, urban development corridor running alongside Stellenbosch's town centre. This corridor sits within the potential for a new district that could eventually link to new development nodes from Khayelitsha and the Cape Town film studio complex on the N2 to Klapmuts on the N1. Amongst the factors that are now providing some momentum for the regeneration of the ATC is the fact that Distell (Distillers Corporation), previously the biggest employer in Stellenbosch, is moving the whole company and all his employees to Klapmuts. At the same time, the old sawmill - the site that housed the biggest mill and related factories in the Western Cape – is also available. If we include municipally-owned land, specifically the Droeë Dyke, previously a vast agri-industrial complex and now deserted, and land owned by Sanral, essentially the South African Railways, the total potential development area along the corridor is some 200 hectares.

All together, this presents the opportunity to build a new and relevant model of urban development that builds on Stellenbosch's unique assets – its people and its place.

The project

This project is all based on the foundations of developing an open/adaptive, responsive and collaborative settlement where the town is not divided but united, in all its forms. We see it pointing the way to a paradigm shift in thinking about land management and social integration to develop learning that can be applied elsewhere. We are also looking to place STIAS with related university institutions at the centre of this 'urban laboratory' to attract a centre of excellence around 'bottom up' social change.

The project looks to focus on three main areas of change in the corridor and the corridor in its entirety:

1. The western gateway of the corridor, drawing together major public and private owned sites, creates the opportunity to develop a new socially-diverse, mixed use neighbourhood of sufficient scale that provides for the full spectrum of choice for the widest range of citizens, especially those with the deepest need. In combination with a new station in this area, it becomes fully integrated into the mainstream of the town.
2. A new high-density living and commercial zone in the central Station precinct focussing on the Bergkelder area as a new cultural and creative quarter for the town, allowing it to be fully connected to the town centre.
3. A new main street for Kayamandi focusing on the George Blake Street industrial area with potential for street markets, enterprise, higher density housing and education uses. This project provides the vital and positive interface between Kayamandi and Stellenbosch town centre.
4. In combination with the above the project looks to provide a model for new public transport development along the rail corridor to reduce the dependency on the car and provide high quality accessibility for all.

The process

A project of this kind needs to be executed within the parameters of a set of broad principles that have been negotiated in advance. In the case of the Cape Town Waterfront, an independent consortium was established in which all relevant stakeholders were represented. The National Development Plan was likewise devised in consultation with stakeholders outside government. The legislation, as well as development practice in South Africa, allow for this kind of approach.

The following process will unlock this project:

- An independent company or agency that takes a long-term, curatorial view in the interest of landowners, the community of Stellenbosch and other stakeholders, must execute the plan for this new Stellenbosch corridor district. We need to consider the most effective organisational vehicle to secure funding, manage the process, realise this project and undertake its

long-term management. It needs to be agile, free thinking and challenging – but it also needs to be realistic.

- Professional urban designers and funding model experts have contributed and continue to add to the proposition. It has in principle support from key decision makers at the Stellenbosch Municipality and Stellenbosch University. The SDF, to be completed in March 2019, will support the plan. National government agencies, such as the City Support Team of Treasury have expressed interest in helping the project. So have key individuals like David Jack, who lead the Cape Town Waterfront Development, and Trevor Manuel.
- We need to assemble a small group of patrons to unlock action at all levels of government, in business, in other institutions and at the university. The university will play a critical in shaping the future of this corridor in the context of their needs. Building a strong alliance with Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) in this process is critical to ensure fresh thinking, diverse views and innovation. Through this process we also need to develop an advisory board of sectoral and political interests, alliances with partner organizations and clear channels of communication with local, regional and central government.
- An interim executive group with supporting consultant advisors must start to coordinate further preparatory work on the plan and get in principle buy-in and agreement from stakeholders. The group will start at the STIAS research centre and move into an office with a visible presence in the corridor as soon as possible.
- The landowners could establish an interim office and appoint an interim project leader within four weeks. The interim project leader/CEO could coordinate a broad master plan and develop a starter project within six months.
- Stakeholders, including Stellenbosch Municipality, must aim to approve the master plan within eight months. Then the independent agency/company must oversee execution of the project over years and decades.
- A tentative budget for the first phase to get an agreement on broad principles is needed to secure the team. Remgro, the investment company with a major interest in the corridor, should provide the overall leadership to establish the new Stellenbosch corridor district and also to provide seed funding to establish an interim office, which will consist mainly of a CEO, who may use expertise from others if and when it is needed.

Collaborative planning between stakeholders that address the real needs of the town and community will help to create humane neighbourhoods for the poorer, repair the broken cycle of housing for younger families, and increase land values. Collaborative procurement and innovative, long-term funding models will bring down development costs.

A 'coalition of the willing', supported by local, provincial and national government will, with the security of tenure, spread wealth and build social capital for a stable community could be a model for open/adaptive, responsive and collaborative urban development in South Africa.