

MEDIA RELEASE
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CITY APPROVES RECOMMENDATIONS OF INDEPENDENT PANEL ON RESIDENTIAL CITY
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

The City of Johannesburg's Mayoral Committee and Council approved the recommendations made by an Independent Advisory Panel on Residential City Improvement Districts (RCID). The Panel was established by the City to address the complexities associated with the extension of the City Improvement District (CID) concept to residential areas.

Johannesburg's Member of the Mayoral Committee for Development Planning and Urban Management, Clr Ruby Mathang, says there are a number of legal and ethical issues that need to be considered before a final decision can be taken. "The extension of CIDs to residential areas is an important precedent-setting step for the City and we have to ensure that a well informed policy framework is in place before we proceed," says Clr Mathang.

The City therefore took the decision to run an open and transparent public consultation process, and to appoint an Independent Advisory Panel to support the City in its decision-making process. The process commenced as a result of controversies within residential communities over the introduction of CIDs. Whilst certain segments of these communities were strongly in favour of CIDs, others objected to levies over and above municipal rates and their personal monthly payments to private security companies.

Clr Mathang says the City has received a number of applications to extend the CID concept to residential areas. In May 2008 the City called for members of the public to make written submissions on how this can be achieved.

An independent advisory panel chaired by the former CEO of Business Against Crime, Mr Kenny Fihla, was established to consider public submissions and

advise the City on future actions. The rest of the panel comprised of Mr Ashraf Adam, President of the SA Planning Institute, Mr Stephen Berrisford, a planning consultant, Ms Sarah Charlton, a lecturer at Wits, and Ms Becky Himlin, the Executive Director of PlanAct.

Clr Mathang says the comments and recommendations from the panel raised important issues that prompted the City to decide that specific policies need to be in place before it can proceed with the consideration of applications.

The key recommendations of the Advisory Panel approved by the City are :

1. That the required proportion of landowners consent for a RCID be increased to 75%, and that this include all owners of rateable property, including sectional title;
2. That the approvals of RCIDs be effective for three years, after which an application for extension be submitted which would be subject to an independent evaluation;
3. That the RCID proposals provide a detailed breakdown of all costs relating to the establishment and maintenance of a RCID.

Comment [VAC1]: In a community like Orange Grove where there is a possibility of a large number of properties NOT owner occupied and/or overcrowded>It would be difficult to contact the legal owner for sign up >. What recourse will the city provide to facilitate prosecution of illegal land use or bylaw contraventions

It must be noted that these recommendations relate to residential areas that fall outside the UDZ boundary of the Inner City, and outside mixed business and residential nodes that are suffering symptoms of urban decay. The approach currently applied in business areas in terms of the Act will be applied without amendment. The 75% requirement is to ensure that CIDs in residential areas are not divisive and have the support of the community at large, especially given the additional financial contribution that will be required in the form of the CID levy.

Comment [VAC2]: One is lead to assume that the original 51% will apply to these areas< Need clarification>>

Comment [VAC3]: 75% appears to apply solely to RCID's

All applications received before 1 October 2008 will be evaluated in terms of the Panel's recommendations, while applications received after 1 October 2008 will be placed on hold until the City finalises a detailed CID policy framework by mid 2009.

Clr Mathang says the submissions received by the City reflected a dominant concern about crime and safety issues but this can only be one factor in

the consideration of applications.

“The intention of a CID is to fund the provision of services that can halt the degeneration of cities and to promote economic growth and sustainable development within cities,” he says. Proposals from residents must indicate how the establishment of an RCID can contribute towards neighbourhood regeneration.

“We don’t want RCIDs to be nothing more than a high-security neighbourhood or to promote a paramilitary approach to controlling public spaces. It is the policy of Johannesburg to promote the growth of inclusive neighbourhoods that reflect the diversity of the City’s population,” says Clr Mathang.

City Improvement Districts were introduced in Johannesburg in the late 1990s. A decision was taken at the time to focus on non-residential areas such as central business districts and the inner city.

The concept of CIDs is rooted in national and provincial legislation introduced in 1997. It takes into account the impact of rapid urbanization in South Africa since the abolition of apartheid control mechanisms in the early 90s. In some of the older areas it has resulted in urban blight and decay, increased criminal activity and an influx of poor and homeless people.

The city realised that these areas need to be revitalised in a manner that is sympathetic to the real human needs of people but that it must also introduce equitable urban management in order to maintain acceptable standards.

CIDs seek to achieve this. Urban management of a defined area is brought down to the street level with the active participation of the local community. This results in a focus and attention to detail that is not possible to achieve through regular local governance.

The objective of a CID is to ensure that an area becomes safe, clean, attractive and user friendly in order to project it as a premier retail, business, cultural or entertainment destination that can retain its existing inhabitants and attract new business and visitors.

The districts are financed by a self-imposed levy borne by the property owners and tenants which is based on the total costs of services to be provided plus management costs and an equitable distribution of payment among all participants.

In return the City delivers targeted services to improve the public environment in commercial areas. This is especially visible in the areas of safety and security, the environment, waste management and actions to combat deteriorating buildings and dumping on vacant premises.

Clr Mathang says it is a logical next step to extend the CID concept to residential areas, "but it has to be done in a structured and equitable manner." The issue was discussed at the Inner City Summit in 2007 and has been on the agenda of the Inner City Partnership Forum that was subsequently formed.

The draft policy will be available for public comment before it is finalized and submitted for approval. Details of the public comment process will be advertised in the press.

Comment [VAC4]: So the process is not final<< We now go into an extended period of LIMBO for RCID's << or am I misreading this?

Ends

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