Unprecedented Innovation
A CASE STUDY OF THE MARCONI BEAM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT
By Simone Haysom
Unprecedented Innovation: A Case Study of the Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project
By: Simone Haysom
© Development Action Group, August 2009


Published by Development Action Group (DAG)
101 Lower Main Road
Observatory 7925
Cape Town
South Africa

Tel: +27 21 448 7886
Fax: +27 21 447 1987
Email: dag@dag.org.za

www.dag.org.za

Development Action Group (DAG), a leading non-profit organisation, deepens democracy by working as a facilitator of change in South Africa’s urban development arena. DAG supports communities in need of adequate housing to lead their own development by enhancing their capacity and resourcefulness. DAG influences State policy and practice through partnerships, research, training and lobbying activities.

DAG is a registered non-profit organisation with the South African government’s Department of Social Development, registration no: 0069-194 NPO. DAG is an association not for gain incorporated under Section 21, of the South African Companies Act, registration no: 1993/006859/08. DAG is a public benefit organisation with South African tax exemption, registration no: 930016961.

Photographs: DAG Archives unless otherwise indicated, Cover photo by Andrea Couvert
Design and Layout: www.themediachilli.co.za
Printed: Fingerprint Co-op Ltd
Unprecedented Innovation

A CASE STUDY OF THE MARCONI BEAM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

By Simone Haysom

Development Action Group
DAG thanks the residents of Marconi Beam who suffered extraordinary hardship and indignity. They united and organised to shape their destiny in the face of a callous regime. Their courage not only inspired us, it challenged us to develop and innovate and provided a valuable learning experience which shaped our organisation indelibly.

We also acknowledge the efforts of various current and former Development Action Group staff members whose efforts contributed to the various phases of the project and the production of this report: David Abrahams, Kathy Aranes, Jacqui Boule, Ayanda Canca, Eunice Christians, Charles Croeser, Rick de Satge, Seabata Dinthe, Rob Dobrucki, Anthea Houston, Charlene Houston, John Jacobs, Chetna Lakhoo, Dan Lewis, Yoliswa Matthews, Sean McCarthy, Dickie Meter, Nomandla Mfeketo, Bellion Ndakayi, Phillip Piki, Alastair Rendall, Julia Shapiro, Sandi Sijake, Bahle Sibisi, Ntsiki Tiko, Sandile Tyini, Olivia van Rooyen, Norah Walker, Astrid Wicht and Weziwe Xamini.

In particular, DAG wishes to acknowledge the efforts of the following three team members whose work influenced either the conceptualisation of the project, its implementation or the lessons we derived from the experience: Kim van Deventer, Alida van der Merwe and Constance Yose.

We also thank all those who participated in the study by taking the time to share their honest reflections with us.

Documenting this case study was made possible through the financial support of Cordaid, EED, Ralph Freese and the Western Cape Department of Housing.
"The laying of this brick symbolises the building of our nation, by all of us, working together in partnership to bring a better life for all South Africans."

Nelson Mandela
The Provincial Housing Ministry is proud to provide a foreword to this important document researched and compiled by the Development Action Group, an organisation at the forefront of urban development and self-help housing in the Western Cape province.

Since its inception, the People’s Housing Process (PHP) has been fraught with challenges for local government and communities to deliver decent, well-planned, and sustainable shelter for families throughout the Western Cape. Although many of these challenges have now been explored and addressed in the Enhanced People’s Housing Process (EPHP), there are still many lessons to learn from the communities and organisations involved in PHP.

The case studies in this series, the Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project, the Netreg Housing Project, and the Freedom Park Informal Settlement Upgrading Project, critically reflect upon the challenges of delivering PHP housing. They offer new suggestions and insights regarding how local and provincial governments and communities can work together most effectively. We welcome DAG’s efforts and will take steps to learn from the lessons presented in the report and the recommendations made. We will continue to scale up the People’s Housing Process and other housing mechanisms to ensure that every family in the province has a place they can call home.

The highlight of these case studies is the importance placed on active community participation and control. The efforts of the Netreg, Marconi Beam and Freedom Park Housing Associations are exemplary – devoting up to 20 years of struggle, hard work, and determination in their pursuit of dignified shelter. The case studies demonstrate the challenges faced by organised community groups and how they have managed in the face of considerable adversity to sustain their collective agency, engage in complex relationships with stakeholders, manage conflicts that arise and finally succeed in building their houses.

We congratulate such united community efforts and wholeheartedly support such partnerships in the continued delivery of PHP housing.

Bonginkosi Madikizela
Provincial Housing Minister
Western Cape
A Joe Slovo Park house with extensive improvements
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................................................................. 11

2. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 12

3. METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................................. 13
   3.1. Data Collection Method .............................................................................................................. 13
   3.2. Sampling and limitations ........................................................................................................ 14

4. HISTORY AND PROFILE .................................................................................................................... 15
   4.1. Establishment of the Marconi Beam transit area ........................................................................ 15
   4.2. Negotiating the land deal ....................................................................................................... 15
   4.3. Construction ............................................................................................................................. 17
   4.4. Beneficiary profile .................................................................................................................. 17
   4.5. Size of land, houses and plots ................................................................................................. 20
   4.6. Project budget and finance .................................................................................................... 21

5. LESSONS FROM THE MARCONI BEAM DEVELOPMENT .......................................................... 22
   5.1. Resident participation and capacity development ................................................................... 22
   5.2. Land, location and density ..................................................................................................... 25
   5.3. Not-in-my-back-yard (nimby) ................................................................................................. 30
   5.4. Amenities and facilities ........................................................................................................ 33
   5.5. Local economic development ............................................................................................... 35
   5.6. Project finance ......................................................................................................................... 38
   5.7. House type, tenure and incrementalism ................................................................................ 39
   5.8. Partnerships and the role of dag ............................................................................................... 42

6. CONCLUSIONS ................................................................................................................................. 46

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................... 49
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Figure 1: Location of Marconi Beam ........................................................................................................ 10
2. Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the land acquired by MBDT in the land deal ........................................... 19
3. Figure 3: The Joe Slovo Park layout plan ................................................................................................ 19

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC African National Congress
AWB The Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging
BNG Breaking New Ground
CUSSP Community and Urban Services Support Programme
DAG Development Action Group
EPHP Expanded People’s Housing Process
EED Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst
EEU Environmental Evaluation Unit
HIV/AIDS Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
LED Local Economic Development
MBDT Marconi Beam Development Trust
NGO Non-government organisation
NIMBY Not-In-My-Back-Yard
NURCHA National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency
PHP People’s Housing Process
RDP Reconstruction and Development Programme
SPP Surplus People’s Project
SANCO South African National Civic Organisation
TIGF Thembani International Guarantee Fund
UCT University of Cape Town
Figure 1: Location of Marconi Beam
In the last 16 years of democracy, the government has struggled to deliver on campaign promises to house the poor of South Africa. There are many bottlenecks that impede delivery from beginning to end – lack of government owned land, failure of innovative financial models, NIMBY-ism of established neighbourhoods and breakdown of community participation. The list goes on. However, one very early housing project, from the 1990’s, stands as an impressive model of low-income housing development – Joe Slovo Park – as it managed to address many of these challenges two decades ago. Though the innovations of Joe Slovo Park seem to have been largely forgotten in the housing sector, it is a project worth revisiting because it offers many concrete approaches on how to tackle the problems obstructing housing delivery. Ten years on from the construction of Joe Slovo Park and six years since the dissolution of the Marconi Beam Development Trust, few other communities have succeeded in driving their own development project, drastically improving their living conditions and securing tenure to a lifelong asset.

The Marconi Beam settlement was originally comprised of people, who had lived in Milnerton for three decades and worked as grooms for the Milnerton Race Course. Due to its excellent location, the settlement grew to accommodate many other migrants with a variety of skills, seeking employment in Cape Town. The Marconi Beam Informal Settlement was hotly contested, with community members often facing harassment, raids, and evictions. Residents, however, could see the political tide was turning, and in 1990, they took advantage of the historical moment and entered into difficult negotiations with ratepayers, developers and other interest groups. The Development Action Group (DAG) and the Surplus People’s Project (SPP) supported the community to remain in Milnerton, when all other interest groups, were intent on moving them to Du Noon.

Marconi Beam residents were living in an area identified as a major urban growth corridor, making the land strategic for commercial development, but entirely unmarketable due to the abundant informality. Upgrading the settlement (or relocation as was originally proposed) was thus pivotal to unlocking the development potential of the larger Marconi Beam site. Eventually, through the foresight of Bahle Sibisi of DAG and Leslie Viljoen of Telkom, an innovative land deal was reached: Telkom sold a 25 ha parcel of the land to residents at a nominal fee and Rabie/Cavcor purchased the rest for development. Thus was born the first public-private-community partnership in low cost housing delivery. From the outset, one of the primary concerns about the Marconi Beam development was that it would decrease the property values of neighbouring middle class areas. Playing on these anxieties, Rabie/Cavcor suggested a mixed-use, mixed-income development in order to cross-subsidize the RDP houses: the Marconi Beam residents were able to build better quality houses that were appropriate to the Milnerton suburb; and the middle class ratepayers’ associations were able to feel confident in the stability of their property values. Additionally, with involvement from DAG, Marconi Beam residents were able to participate fully in the design and construction of their development, ensuring the maximum satisfaction with their new housing.

Even the most cursory survey of low-cost housing delivery will tell you that Joe Slovo Park is a treasure amongst mediocrities. By securing prime land in Milnerton, the Marconi Beam residents directly challenged apartheid planning principles and asserted their equal right to live on well-located land close to employment and urban opportunities. Few communities in Cape Town have been able to follow; most have been forced to take up residence in the urban periphery. The tacit policy of pushing South Africa’s poor to live on the outskirts of town stands in contempt of our liberation struggle and our new democracy.

This case study traces the history of the Marconi Beam Informal Settlement to the development of Joe Slovo Park. It highlights some of the unprecedented innovations in housing delivery and questions why this model has not been put to better use. While there is no panacea for the every-increasing housing backlog, the Marconi Beam case offers very tangible ways to ensure that all South African’s can assert their rights to housing, and, at the same time, assert their rights to the city.
“The laying of this brick symbolises the building of our nation, by all of us, working together in partnership to bring a better life for all South Africans.”

These are the words of former president Nelson Mandela as he launched the Masakhane campaign at Marconi Beam in 1995. Mandela’s words capture the ideals of urban development at the time: justice, cooperation and the construction of a new society. This optimism arose as a democratic government promising social justice replaced a racist regime that had wrought suffering in the country for decades, choosing the cities as their primary battleground. Cities had been racially zoned and barricaded through legislation and pass control. Their Black inhabitants had been forcibly evicted and resettled on the outskirts, had their homes destroyed and suffered raids. When influx control was lifted, the rate of rural migration to the Cape increased. In 1995, hundreds of thousands of people were without adequate shelter, and hundreds more arrived each month.

Against this backdrop, The Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project represents an innovative model of how the massive housing backlog and inefficient use of land in South African cities might be addressed. Importantly, it is a model of how public investment can be used to generate profit while serving the greater good – in this instance investment in low-income housing development. A mixed land use arrangement – incorporating industrial, commercial, retail and residential developments – cross-subsidised the land and the bulk infrastructure for the state-subsidised low-income housing project. It was carried out through an unusual institutional arrangement: a partnership between the private sector, the public sector, the community and a non-government organisation (NGO), Development Action Group. Also innovatively, the community was part of every step of the decision making and implementation of the project.

This took place in the heart of an economically thriving, centrally located suburb, and Marconi Beam was heralded as the indication of things to come. “What is happening here is happening in more and more places each day. Soon it will be happening everywhere in our country,” said Mandela in the same speech.

Yet, there have not been an abundance of Marconi Beams. Since then, some 2.5 million houses\(^1\) have been built nationwide, and most of these have been located on the economic, social and spatial outskirts of the city. Much has been demonstrated but far less learned about how to, and as importantly, how not to provide shelter. Millions more people living in shacks in informal settlements and backyards still wait to access housing.

In view of this, it is crucial to evaluate the Marconi Beam project to unpack its achievements and disappointments and critically reflect on the lessons it offers policy makers and development practitioners.

3.1. Data collection method

Research was conducted between March and February of 2009 in accordance with a brief to compile an in-depth case study of the Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project with a view to distilling lessons for policy makers, officials, politicians, community leaders and development practitioners. A particular focus on the key innovations of the project and an assessment of how those innovations have impacted the Joe Slovo Park residents over the last ten years was stipulated.

Data collection drew on two primary sources: interviews with key role players and beneficiaries and archival research, using project documentation accumulated over eight years and stored by DAG.

Nine semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with four DAG staff members, four former-Trustees and the developer. These interviews aimed to establish how respondents were positioned with regards to the project; their role and duties; their interactions and relationships with the partners; their recollections of the negotiations leading up to the land agreement; their assessment of the successes, challenges and failures of the project; their impressions of capacity building; and their observations of financial schemes and construction programmes.

In addition, interviews were conducted with six beneficiaries with no involvement with the Marconi Beam Development Trust (MBDT). These interviews were structured differently and focused on: their life histories; their socio-economic position before and after the move; their quality of life; their capacity to improve their houses; and their perception of the local economy.

Furthermore, four interviews with former MBDT Trustees covered most aspects of both questionnaires to gather their knowledge of the project as implementers, beneficiaries and community leaders.

The DAG archives provided a significant amount of documentation: 42 case files and hundreds of electronic folders containing minutes, budgets, receipts, emails, faxes, plans, progress reports, architectural drawings and information packs put together for staff training. The files provided a framework for the development of the questionnaires as well as verification of detail that had faded from stakeholders’ minds.

Due to its high profile nature, the project was the subject of a number of academic studies including a geographic analysis of the project’s effect on property prices and integration, an economic analysis of the area and an anthropological interrogation of the social effects of the transition from an informal settlement to a formal housing project. DAG also commissioned studies into the socio-economic profile of the community and the degree and extent of community organisation.


**Ethel’s story:**
Ethel moved to Cape Town in 1971 from the Transkei to look for work. She found a job as a domestic worker in Milnerton and worked for the same family until her arthritis got so bad that she had to leave her job. She is currently living with seven of her grandchildren in her one-bedroom house in Joe Slovo Park. Three bungalows have been added to the property, constructed from materials scavenged from nearby industrial areas. Ethel’s biggest problem with ‘Cuku Town’ was the fires. Then she lived in a four-room wooden shack that was vulnerable to fire. “I like Joe Slovo so much. Everything changed when we moved here. It’s just a nice place.”

**3.2. Sampling and limitations**

The major limitation of the study was time, which limited the project scope, the number of respondents interviewed and memory recall. Choosing depth rather than breadth, the respondents selected were those with the most experience of all facets of the project and the most interaction with the full range of stakeholders. For the most part, these were DAG employees who, by virtue of their role as advisors and facilitators, were informed of most aspects of the project. While great effort was made to interview private and public sector actors who had knowledge of the project, many had, over the last eleven years, immigrated, migrated or passed on.

Three of the Trustees interviewed had been residents of Marconi Beam and were still living in Joe Slovo Park, bringing the number of residents interviewed to nine. This represents less than 1% of the number of households relocated. As such, interviews with beneficiaries are not wholly representative but have been used to illustrate the analysis of community leaders and the professionals involved. A further study with residents of an appropriate sample could follow to more accurately assess the impact of the development on the lives of former Marconi Beam residents.

The Marconi Beam project began in 1990, the land agreement was signed in 1994 and the construction phase ended in 1998. This represents a distance in time of 12 to 20 years in which many respondents have not had cause to reflect on the project frequently. For many, the finer details of the project have been lost and strong sentiments have faded. Thus, the questionnaires were intentionally kept broad to uncover lessons learned over the course of the project and patterns of interactions between the different stakeholders.

Life in Marconi Beam informal settlement, for the beneficiaries, is mostly a distant memory of hard times, now eclipsed by the pressing reality of present day poverty. This material reality most likely affords this report a very different tone to the one it may have had ten years earlier. Hindsight has softened some judgements and sharpened others. The achievements and frustrations of Marconi Beam are now seen in the context of the newest challenges to equitable and adequate housing provision.

7. Cuku Town was the name given to the Marconi Beam informal settlement by its inhabitants. It means ‘place of problems.’
8. A municipal official cancelled the interview twice and eventually another official answered some questions in writing.
4.1. Establishment of the Marconi Beam transit area

The history of Marconi Beam begins with the long and illegal journeys women and children made from the homeland of the Transkei to visit their husbands and fathers who worked as grooms at the Milnerton Turf Club. They settled on empty land opposite the stables in the 1970s and 1980s, and the Marconi Beam informal settlement gradually grew.\textsuperscript{10} By the early 1990s, it comprised about 800 households.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1990, police and postal workers arrived with batons to evict the informal settlement residents from land owned by Telkom, a telecommunications parastatal, causing public outcry. The municipality intervened to declare an eight hectare transit area under Section 6 of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951) with the intention of later moving the residents to land where they could be permanently accommodated.\textsuperscript{12} The recently unbanned African National Congress\textsuperscript{13} (ANC) rallied to support the residents of the settlement in resisting eviction.

4.2. Negotiating the land deal

Negotiations began between the municipality, the ratepayers associations and the informal settlement residents but were soon deadlocked. DAG was approached by the Surplus People’s Project (SPP) to facilitate the negotiations.

DAG advocated for the informal settlement residents to retain their advantageous location close to the city centre and to industrial and commercial employment opportunities in the area.\textsuperscript{14} In contrast, the municipality preferred creating a dormitory suburb and proposed Du Noon for relocation, an area five kilometres (km) outside Milnerton towards Malmesbury.

DAG conducted a land availability study and identified 18 possible sites for relocation within Milnerton.\textsuperscript{15} However, the ratepayers objected and cited rising levels of crime and a decline in property prices as two inevitable consequences of integrating the informal settlement residents into the existing neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{16} Nevertheless, only a minority of informal settlement residents wished to go to Du Noon.

\textsuperscript{10} Yose, From Shacks to Houses. Unpublished MA, University of Cape Town. Cape Town, South Africa. p21-23.
\textsuperscript{11} DAG, s/a. Overview of Project. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.
\textsuperscript{13} The African National Congress was an integral political force in the struggle to end Apartheid. In the first democratic national election held in 1994, it was the primary opposition party to the National Party government and has been the ruling party in South Africa since then.
Press Statement from the Marconi Beam Civic Association: Chairperson Terence Mhlangatshoba

“The overwhelming majority of residents at Marconi Beam do not want to move to Du Noon. At present, we are well situated. We have the stables opposite us and the Montague Gardens industrial areas behind us, which draws its workers from our community. In addition, we are within walking distance from the shops and other public facilities of Milnerton. We are no less entitled to live near our places of work and other resources and facilities than the rest of the Milnerton residents. … The decision to develop Du Noon was made by the Milnerton Municipality who does not represent us without proper consultation with us. This decision is only motivated by unfounded White fears and bias. … We have no desire to live in Du Noon. It is out of the way and we would have to use transport to our places of work and shops. The Milnerton Municipality thinks that by hiding us, their White constituency would be satisfied and that our needs would disappear. That is certainly not the case. Marconi Beam is here to stay.”

Other interest groups also lobbied against the relocation of the Marconi Beam residents to Du Noon, including property developers who were interested in developing land in the area. Meanwhile, the settlement, plagued by fires, gained significant media attention and public sympathy grew for the plight of its residents.

The negotiations were heated, intense and protracted. An innovative land deal was worked out and proposed by Bahle Sibisi of DAG and Leslie Viljoen, who represented Telkom at the time but who joined the property developers, Rabie and Cavcor, soon after the land deal was made. The Rabie/Cavcor consortium wished to buy the 243 hectare (ha) Marconi Beam site from Telkom for a mixed-use development (residential, industrial and commercial); the proposal was to incorporate an affordable housing development for the Marconi Beam residents within this larger development.

The wheels turned slowly, but in September 1993, due to the efforts of role-players like DAG and the informal settlement residents themselves, ninety-nine people representing diverse interests finally agreed in principle that residential accommodation be developed for Marconi Beam residents within the mixed-use development.18

During the first half of 1994, numerous meetings were held with stakeholders and interest groups, facilitated by DAG and Viljoen. Objections from a number of ratepayers and the municipality delayed the process, but despite this, a public meeting of over 400 residents held in September 1994 eventually ended with the endorsement of the land agreement plan.19

Telkom agreed to sell 20 ha of residential land and 5 ha of commercial land to the Marconi Beam residents at a nominal fee and more than 200 ha to Rabie/Cavcor for the proposed mixed-use development, which would incorporate and help subsidise the low-income housing project for Marconi Beam residents.

The land agreement included several conditions intended to appease the ratepayers or facilitate the project’s success including:

1. provision of formal houses,

---

19. Ibid.
• minimum erf and house sizes,
• inclusion of a buffer strip,
• commitment to completely vacate the original site,
• establishment of a Trust to manage the investment and the project, and
• appointment of DAG as project co-ordinator.

Furthermore, the land would be transferred in four phases of 250 plots each. The first transfer would take place after all the residents had been registered, the finance secured, the Trust established, the overall development plan approved and the detailed site development plan for the residential land drawn up. Subsequent phases would see the transfer of the remaining land once all the informal settlement residents moved to the new site (33% in Phase 2, 66% in Phase 3 and 100% in Phase 4).20

While bulk infrastructure was cross-financed by the development and the land was donated, the top structures of the houses were to be paid for by the provincial housing subsidy.

4.3. Construction

Construction began in 1996, and by 1997, the first group of beneficiaries occupied their houses. The last houses were occupied in 1998. During 1998, the Trust lost momentum. Many Trustees resigned and internal conflict obstructed decision making, which effectively halted construction. In total, 936 units were completed, 64 were left incomplete and 1005 families moved from Marconi Beam informal settlement to Joe Slovo Park.21

4.4. Beneficiary profile

Most of the Turf Club workers were recruited from the same region of Tsolo in the Eastern Cape, where people were said to be good at handling horses.22 Influx control, the Homelands policy and the Pass laws forced these men to move alone to the city. These laws confined Black tenure to poor, inadequate, rural land and barred entry to the cities to Black women and children. The Turf Club workers were accommodated in single-sex hostels on the racecourse compound. During the 1970s and 1980s, their families built informal dwellings from plastic and cardboard on an area of bush across the road, destroying these structures daily and rebuilding them at night to avoid reprisals from the police. After a strike in the 1980s, many of the Turf Club workers moved into informal dwellings with their families, and the settlement acquired a degree of permanence.23

Urbanisation increased with the relaxing of influx control regulation in the late 1980s, and there was a continual stream of rural immigrants from the Eastern Cape into Cape Town. Many settled in Marconi Beam. Intra-city migration also accounted for the population growth of the settlement during that period. People moved from Crossroads or Langa to Marconi Beam to be closer to work opportunities. Others moved there as fugitives or fleeing cultural or political persecution, taxi violence or police evictions.24

23. Ibid., p23.
An Urban Foundation Study, conducted in 1993, revealed a community of 2,835 people in 834 informal dwellings, where less than a third of economically active people had permanent employment. The average level of schooling was grade six, literacy stood at 45% and skills were scarce. Of those permanently employed, only 18% were Turf Club workers, indicating that Marconi Beam had grown and diversified significantly since its inception as a secret settlement of the relatives of the racecourse grooms.

By 1994, the Marconi Beam informal settlement community was a transient population with no common history or struggle and no shared vision for the future. Although this diversity made social cohesion difficult, the community was able to put forward leaders and organise themselves sufficiently to secure formal housing in a centrally located suburb.

**Nobeandla’s story:**

Nobeandla was born in the Transkei in 1969. She came to Cape Town to join her husband and to look for a job. She and her husband now live in Joe Slovo Park with their adult son. Nolubabalo and her baby daughter also stay with them as tenants (in a room built from wood on the side of the house). Nobeandla and her husband built a church at the back of their house called St John’s Apostolic Faith Mission. “’Cuku Town was difficult, more than Joe Slovo Park. ’Cuku Town is not like Joe Slovo Park because we stayed in shacks. A lot of people didn’t get a job, even now people don’t, but it’s still better than ’Cuku Town. … And another thing, when you stayed in ’Cuku Town in your shack, you were afraid of fighting. Maybe the next time you are sleeping you are going to find a fight. … The shacks were dirty and small, and we didn’t have toilets, we didn’t have lights, only water in [communal] taps. … We got the problems in ’Cuku Town in the winter because the shack is raining when it’s raining and we are staying on the water; and my shack burnt three times with the fire. We didn’t have clothes or food. I didn’t manage to save anything. We were not happy in ’Cuku Town.

…I moved into Joe Slovo Park in 1997. This house looked different then. The house was very small and the toilet was inside the house. We moved the toilet outside. We extended with these shacks because we couldn’t afford to extend the house. This floor used to be cement but we have tiled it and we painted inside and outside. We cemented the yard too and changed the drain. The houses in Joe Slovo Park have not burnt down…. You can break my heart asking about ’Cuku Town. It was a very hard time. My husband was not working – for five years. And when he did an odd job we’d just have R20 for food. And I was selling lappies [dishcloths] in Nyanga and ’Cuku Town. Now my husband works at Montague Gardens, making air conditioning, and my son works as a casual in that firm too.”

---

Figure 2: Diagram illustrating the land acquired by MBDT in the land deal

Figure 3: The Joe Slovo Park Layout plan
The Marconi Beam informal settlement and the new Joe Slovo Park were situated on an area of land called Marconi Beam, about five km north of the central business district of Cape Town. The land borders Koeberg Road (a major arterial road) and is surrounded by the Montague Gardens industrial area, the middle class suburb of Milnerton and the Milnerton Turf Club. It is also near other industrial areas, such as Paarden Eiland (7 km) and Epping (3 km).

Montague Gardens is one of few diversified and mixed industrial use areas in the city. A range of industries including transport, engineering, petro-chemicals and warehousing are located there. In the early 1990s, Montague Gardens was the only industrial area in Cape Town without a housing scheme to accommodate its workforce, most of whom commuted 40 km or more daily.28

At the time, Milnerton was a middle to upper income White area with an extremely low density development pattern. A survey of 438 businesses in Milnerton, in the early 1990s, revealed 10 816 employees, of whom 34% (4 589) were manual labourers and approximately 2 200 were domestic workers.29 Of lower skilled workers, only the Turf Club grooms and some domestic workers were accommodated in the area.30

Marconi Beam is located within a major urban growth corridor in Metropolitan Cape Town. In the early 90s, this North-West axis, stretching from the Foreshore to Tableview, was identified by planners and policy makers as an area that provided excellent opportunities to change the spatial structure of the city. The area had a remarkably low density and incorporated many vacant sites. By targeting such relatively central sites, planners hoped to alter the urban fragmentation and inefficiency, resulting from apartheid planning and legislation, by developing land close to employment and transport routes for communities of all races.

4.5. Size of land, houses and plots

The total size of the development area was 243 ha; 25 ha were sold to the community by Telkom at a nominal fee (20 ha for residential use and five ha for commercial use). The rest was divided and sold for different development projects: Rabie/Cavcor took charge of the lucrative industrial and commercial developments; and the Phoenix residential development targeted the lower end of the non-subsidised housing market.

Most houses built at Joe Slovo Park were 25m², though some of the first houses were 22m². Plots varied in size between about 100m² and 200m², depending on the location and zoning.

29. DAG, s/a. Overview of the project. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files, DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.
30. Ibid.
4.6. Project budget and finance

The budget for the Marconi Beam Affordable Housing project was R34 million, including land and infrastructure. The land was sold by Telkom to the community at a nominal value of R60 000. The provincial government provided R12 million in subsidies, and the private sector R18 million in investments in infrastructure.31

A rotating loan scheme was set up, funded by the sale of one hectare of the commercial land, to finance the houses of those who did not qualify for housing subsidies.

A community Trust was established to drive the housing project and administer the revenue raised from the sale of the community’s commercial land.

31. DAG, s/a. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project: Executive Summary for SANCO and DAG. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa. These projections seem to have been made before construction started and may have been inaccurate.
5. LESSONS FROM THE MARCONI BEAM DEVELOPMENT

5.1. Resident participation and capacity development

A key innovation of the Marconi Beam project was that, from the outset, the informal settlement community participated actively, initially in the negotiations and later by leading the planning and implementation. While Marconi Beam residents were not a cohesive or homogenous community, they organised themselves to protect their position in Milnerton.

For years, residents reconstructed their informal dwellings after fires and police raid and informally resisted the imposition of the apartheid planners’ vision of the city. In 1990, their unofficial resistance became a determined lobby to retain their position with the aid of SPP, and later, after the transit area was declared, DAG.

DAG played a crucial role as facilitator in the intense negotiations between the marginalised community, the municipality that had led its persecution for two decades and the right-wing or conservative ratepayers associations, which faced political disempowerment at the time. In these negotiations, the community put forward South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) members as representatives.

Due to the weakness of the Marconi Beam SANCO branch, it was agreed that a community Trust be established. In November 1994, the community set up a Trust comprising thirteen members: eight from the Marconi Beam community, one from the Milnerton Municipality, one from the Ministry of Housing and three professionals (a lawyer, an accountant, and a business person).

Mass meetings were called and advertised to establish the Trust and elect the eight internal Trustees. Each of four sections of the transit camp nominated two members. DAG supported the community in establishing the Trust, provided ongoing training to enhance the capacity of Trustees and supported the Trust in its operations.

The role of the Trust was to facilitate planning and construction of Joe Slovo Park and administer the funds for the development. The Trust organised and coordinated a registration process for all residents of the settlement to create an allocation list.

An office was set up in Marconi Beam, using a grant from the Community and Urban Services Support Programme (CUSSP), and some community members were employed to register residents, ensure subsidy applications were completed and run the rotating loans scheme.

The Trust faced several difficulties in executing its duties. Former Trustees cite jealousy over Trustees’ relative power position as an obstacle to gaining co-operation from the beneficiaries. Communication between Trustees and the residents of Marconi Beam was often poor, allowing rumours to spread which damaged the Trust’s credibility and caused conflict in an already

32. Several associations represented the interests of Milnerton residents including an Afrikaner Weerstands beweging (AWB) affiliated residents’ association. The Afrikaner Weerstands beweging is a right-wing political movement and paramilitary group committed to the establishment of a Boer republic within South Africa. See DAG, 1994c. Marconi Beam Team Meeting Held on 8 & 9 November 1994, p2. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.

33. The South African National Civic Organisation has brought together township-level civic organisations under a national structure since 1992.

34. DAG, 1994d. Funding Proposal for Establishing an Office at Marconi Beam. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.

35. DAG, s/a. What DAG wanted to achieve vs. what has actually been achieved. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.

36. A USAID funded project dealing with housing and urban development.
fractious community. Powerful individuals, who were not part of the Trust, obstructed its operations as a means of negotiating entry into positions of relative power. Enormous friction also arose around the allocation process, continued growth of the settlement and the rate of construction of the houses.37

The Trust's position also weakened because of the lack of alternative community organisations and the pressure placed on it to play many roles beyond the scope of the housing development. It was originally conceived that civic organisations would support and help to disseminate information to the community, but this never occurred.38

With these dynamics at play and the demands placed on people's time, the Trust became increasingly less cohesive. As construction neared completion and the transit area cleared, the Trustees began to lose purpose. Several members resigned and attendance at meetings dropped. Many stakeholders, including DAG, began cautioning the Trust that it was in crisis, failing to perform its duties and unable to stick to decisions.39 By 1998, the Trust was no longer legally constituted and stopped having regular meetings. Then in 2004, MBDT ceased to exist.

In 1999, its assets and responsibilities were officially transferred to Rabie/Cavcor40 and sold in lieu of settling a debt the Trust had incurred in the course of the development. There is no clarity on what this debt was for and to whom it was owed. DAG records provide evidence only that Rabie/Cavcor took responsibility for the Trust's assets.41

Many of the Trustees interviewed did not recall that the land had been transferred to Rabie/Cavcor at all and were unaware that it had been sold: “There was commercial land that we were promised…that was going to be sold and Joe Slovo would benefit out of that amount. … As you can see now from Phoenix there is a lot of development there, but nothing was mentioned again about the money to come to the Joe Slovo people. And there is nobody now to go and ask for those things.”42

The Joe Slovo Park neighbourhood is vibrant, in that various issue-based organisations exist, but no new co-ordinating civic body has been established to act on the community’s shared objectives.

While the dissolution of the Trust had disappointing implications for the secondary aspects of the project such as the development of a commercial property and facilities, its primary objective had been achieved: almost 5 000 people had been formally housed, and the conditions of the land agreement had been upheld in an empowering and equitable process.


41. Ibid.

5.1.1. Lessons: The value of capacity enhancement and choice of institutional form

DAG spent considerable time debating which legal entity could best serve such projects. Ultimately, the choice of a Trust did not optimally serve the Marconi Beam residents. A Trust is an agreement between a Founder and Trustees, whereby a Founder relinquishes ownership of specified assets to Trustees, who administer the assets for the benefit of the Trust’s stated beneficiaries. Prior to legislative changes in 1997, Trusts, although registered with the Master of the High Court, did not have a legal personality other than for certain purposes such as payment of taxes and insolvency.

The advantages of using a Trust were seen to be its efficiency, flexibility and objective management of the assets in the best interests of the beneficiaries. In addition, it was a legal entity that the project’s private and public sector stakeholders were familiar with and therefore favoured. However, a Trust is a commercial body whose organisational structure is not democratic. Trusts are not legally required to account to their beneficiaries, and Trustees may hold their positions for life without any mandatory review of their performance.

Although the MBDT Trustees were expected to act in the interests of the community, they were not accountable to them, and eventually, this resulted in the Trust ceasing to represent the community’s interests. Meetings were sometimes poorly attended, and when communication broke down, the Trustees were not replaced or held to account. “Eventually it became more disempowering than empowering.”

DAG now recommends the use of institutional forms that enable accountability and rotation of leadership such as Section 21 companies or registered Voluntary Associations with constitutions that bind leaders to rotation and accountability.

The dissolution of the Trust could be ascribed to the lack of turnover in leadership, when Trustees became disillusioned or overburdened by their involvement. Ultimately, this led to the loss of the commercial land, which was taken over by Rabie/Cavcor. A new wave of leadership may have reinvigorated the Trust with a fresh sense of purpose and geared it towards developing the commercial strip. Eventually, such new leadership could also have taken the municipality to task on service billing, title deeds and the provision of facilities.

In an immediate post-project evaluation, one DAG employee commented: “The members of the Trust were all volunteers. From 1995, they met in the evenings, fortnightly and sometimes weekly to make critical project decisions – sometimes under great stress. They also had to account to a community that often relied on rumour for information. Some development researchers have observed there seems to have been a two year ‘bio-rhythm’ cycle in community involvement. Our experience

43. A Trust has legal personality when registered as a non-profit under The Non-Profit Organisations Act, No 71 of 1997.
47. The Non-Profit Organisations Act, No 71 of 1997 provides a voluntary registration facility for non-profits (including Section 21 companies, Trusts and Voluntary Associations) subject to the satisfaction of certain requirements.
bears this out – the Trust was exhausted and needed regeneration. In long term projects, this needs to be planned for from the outset through succession or rotation of leadership. 49 A tremendous amount of stamina is required from leaders to sustain community struggles for land and housing rights and to then lead a participatory housing development process. 

While some political activities are present, overall community organisation is weak and meetings are poorly attended because “people are disillusioned with politics and they don’t trust their leaders.” 50 Religious groups have a strong presence and involve many people from the community, a number of whom attend church on a daily basis. Sites for the development of public facilities remain vacant, although some have been occupied unofficially and have informal dwellings erected on them. This land remains in the hands of the MBDT, although the structure dissolved and lost the means to finance construction.

Coordinated civic engagement has not been sustained in Joe Slovo Park, which now lacks a vehicle to engage as active citizens, articulating their needs, pursuing their rights and participating in decision making processes. The participatory development process implemented in Marconi Beam was time-consuming and exhausting for the leadership, but it empowered the community by enabling them to make informed decisions and challenge the status quo.

These reflections should not diminish the significance of the achievements at Marconi Beam. One lesson worth drawing from the project is the role that an organised community can play in representing and pursuing its interests. Without this, Marconi Beam settlers would have been evicted in the early 1990s or excluded from the design and construction of their settlement.

In designing participatory development processes, it is important to recognise that the signing of the agreements are just the beginning and that community participation must be sustained over the long term. 51 Effective participation requires civic education, access to information, time, resources and appropriate platforms for local level engagement to support community involvement in planning and implementation. Government’s engagement strategies and housing subsidy delivery mechanisms should adequately provide for the financial and human resources necessary for meaningful and sustained community participation, information sharing and capacity development. 52

5.2. Land, location and density

Good location is a complex concept but could be defined as land located close to transport, employment and other urban opportunities. Land should be within urban activity nodes or within walking distance of an existing public transport route, schools, clinics and libraries. 53 For the poor, location is often more important than housing quality, as it directly impacts the accessibility of urban opportunities and underpins social networks and livelihood strategies critical for survival. However, low-density low-income housing continues to be developed on the periphery of urban settlements, despite these disadvantages and the many approved

49. DAG, s/a ‘Marconi Beam: A view through the key-hole and some lessons.’ Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.
policies that promote integrated, sustainable settlement planning and encourage the provision of a range of housing types.\textsuperscript{54} The issue of location and its relationship to sustainable livelihoods for the urban poor is an important consideration. The sustainable livelihoods approach holds that “land and housing assets in urban areas can improve livelihoods by providing the poor with access to services and the urban economy.”\textsuperscript{55} It is thus important for the urban poor to have access to well-located land.

Given this, the location of the new Joe Slovo Park development is possibly the most remarkable aspect of the project. Over the last century, Black South Africans have been systematically pushed to the outskirts: mine compounds, dormitory townships, single-sex hostels and serviced and unserviced informal settlements far from economic hubs. Despite the powerful imperative of urbanisation as an economic necessity, apartheid ideology conceived of Black people as transient sojourners to the city and sought to engineer this fantasy through extensive racial zoning. In contrast, the Marconi Beam community was eventually housed in an affluent White suburb that attracted substantial attention from property developers.\textsuperscript{56}

The importance of this location is reflected in the arguments put forward by the informal settlers in the negotiations leading up to the land deal. Their objection to being evicted was that they would lose the economic advantage of living in Milnerton. A large scale survey conducted for DAG prior to signing the land agreement revealed that residents were predominantly employed in the surrounding suburbs of Milnerton, Bothasig and Tableview. Montague Gardens was a site of employment and provided access to inexpensive materials, for example wholesale prices for sugar bought directly from factories and building materials that could be scavenged or bought cheaply. The most common mode of transport was by foot (76%), and the average journey was about 30 minutes, indicating the central location of the Marconi Beam site.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56}. Other developments initiated at this time include the controversial Big Bay project and several hotels.
Industrialists with investments in the area supported the idea of the scheme, although they were unwilling to invest in it. They envisaged the project providing housing to hundreds of workers employed in the area, many of whom were commuting from Mitchell’s Plain and Khayelitsha on unreliable public transport.58

Milnerton had many undeveloped parcels of land. DAG identified 18 out of 27 vacant sites ranging from 0.9 ha to 230 ha which met the following conditions:

- access to public transport;
- access to economic opportunities;
- access to public facilities;
- access to services;
- availability for development; and
- suitable geotechnical characteristics (slope, soil condition, adequate drainage, size, etc.).59

The form of the housing project was partly dictated by concessions made to appease the ratepayers and municipality. Ratepayers demanded that formal housing be provided and the minimum erf and house sizes be specified.60 The settlement was subsequently planned on the advice of professionals, the constraints of the subsidy, the characteristics of the land and the aspirations of the community.

Urban planning (GAPP Architects and Urban Designers and Chittenden Nicks Partnerships) and other consultants were solicited by DAG and the Trust to design the layout of the new settlement. A range of house types were designed by DAG, and a show village was developed to present the range of houses to the community.

The resulting urban form – small freestanding units surrounded by one meter of yard space at a density of 48 units per hectare – is seen by some as a missed opportunity to create a denser settlement appropriate to the needs of post-apartheid cities. Some believe that DAG should have done more to advocate flats or row housing, using its experience and position as urban professionals.61 Others feel that the houses should have been closer together and the yard space disregarded to allow for more public space.

The municipality, however, was insistent on the setbacks and yard space, and strong cultural attachments to freestanding houses would most likely also have prevented densification. Many of the residents originate from the Eastern Cape countryside and traditional Xhosa culture requires yard space for performing ceremonies. The flats built as part of the show village were very unpopular with the residents, though they were occupied during the invasion. Densification was therefore unlikely to have been chosen as part of the consultative, democratic decision making process that was pursued throughout the project: “The only way we would have got people to accept higher density then would have been to tell them ‘that’s the way it’s going to be.’”62

59. Ibid.
60. DAG, s/a. The Agreement to Move. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.
Furthermore, given that Milnerton was, at the time, a very low-density suburb and social integration was an explicit aim of the project, high-rise buildings may have stigmatised the community.\textsuperscript{63}

The layout plan provided for community facilities to be developed, and by the end of the construction phase, the community had a primary school, a crèche and three churches.\textsuperscript{64}

The commercial land was an important, though largely unrealised, part of the deal. At least one hectare was sold off to finance the construction of the show village and a small loan scheme that allowed families, who did not qualify for the subsidy, to purchase houses. The remaining four hectares were envisaged as a commercial development that catered to the needs of the community, providing employment and stimulating the local economy.

5.2.1. Lessons: How to make this unusual situation the norm?

Marconi Beam was heralded as a project to redefine housing projects post-apartheid, but sadly, in terms of location, it has proven to be the exception and not the rule. In Cape Town, there are few other subsidised housing projects which are well-located.\textsuperscript{65} If the rate of replication is to increase, it is important to understand the reasons for this project’s success.

The Marconi Beam community achieved victory by virtue of occupying land despite State harassment, unifying to secure the right to remain there and successfully negotiating with other stakeholders. The land agreement provided the community with more than location, it gave them sufficient land for their residential requirements and for economic development. The unique cross-financing arrangement paid for bulk and link services, which allowed them to use the full capital subsidy to pay for the local services and top structure of their houses.

In the case of Marconi Beam, the occupation of the land before it became commercially desirable played a crucial role, given the political environment in which summary evictions were not tenable. This occupation gave the community bargaining power that forced the State and other actors to the negotiating table. Such an environment no longer exists. Democratisation has, in certain ways, weakened the leverage of informal settlement residents on well-located land: “In Milnerton... the perceived illegitimacy of all government structures and the segregated nature of the suburbs in question clearly worked to the benefit of the informal settlement dwellers. In such circumstances, any large-scale eviction of informal settlement dwellers was bound to have both racial and political implications, something that both the central government and the local municipalities were desperate to avoid. It is thus ironic that the establishment of more legitimate government structures together with the desegregation of suburbs are likely to undercut the bargaining power that many squatter settlements enjoyed during the transition.”\textsuperscript{66}

In the Marconi Beam case, the passage of time, the identification of a major urban growth corridor and the development of the surrounding Montague Gardens industrial area made the Telkom land (including the original site of the settlement) strategic for commercial development. The site had little market value though due to the existence of a then socially undesirable informal

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{65} Notable examples are Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay, Westlake in Tokai, and Redhill in Simonstown.
\end{thebibliography}
settlement within its boundaries. Upgrading the settlement (or its relocation as was originally proposed) was thus pivotal to unlocking the commercial value of the larger Marconi Beam site. Had the conditions in the settlement not been addressed, land in its immediate vicinity would have little market value. This reality influenced the land deal considerably.

The land deal and Joe Slovo Park development did not only benefit the Marconi Beam residents, it also directly led to Telkom realising significantly increased land values and billions of Rands in profits for the developers, Rabie/Cavcor, who subsequently developed the Marconi Beam site and others in the surrounding area.

Post-apartheid South Africa has a land and property market that excludes the poor and exacerbates inequality. The market pushes land values up, causing the residents of informal settlements to frequently face relocation to cheap land on the urban edge. Mixed-use land developments on well-located land, like Marconi Beam, should be encouraged, as such land arrangements offer win-win situations for all stakeholders.

One way to achieve this is through State regulation of the market to ensure that land is used and distributed in more efficient, sustainable and equitable ways. The national government can use its prerogative and authority to “regulate the use of private land for the health, safety and welfare of all its citizens and to help provide roads, water, sanitation, schools, parks and airports.”67 This can be achieved through forging new fiscal relationships with citizens with the intention of capturing the increases in land value and directing urban land development for the common good.

The community as a whole would share in the increase in land value. This would be fiscally and socially appropriate, as most increases in land value result from the efforts of government or community actions such as:

- changes in land use regulations (e.g. rezoning);
- provision of infrastructure to land parcels;
- settlement upgrading; and
- growth of the population, which increases demand for land thereby increasing the price of land.

Value capture mechanisms (i.e. fiscal tools such as taxes and fees aimed at generating additional revenue for municipalities and regulatory tools such as exactions and planning gain supplements aimed at integrating land use planning and management) can transform the urban landscape and facilitate the poor’s access to resources and economic opportunities. Revenue captured can be used to provide infrastructure and services to areas most in need and can assist municipalities to speed up the provision of bulk infrastructure and services,68 while also improving the financial sustainability of the municipality. A substantial increase in political will is needed to achieve this, and it should be shown in practice and not only in policy documents.69 There is also a potential role for industrialists, who benefit from such developments by having a proximate work force. Industry should lobby for such land use and consider investing in such schemes.

Mhiki’s story:  
Mhiki Dyandi stays across Freedom Way with her mother. Five members of her family live in the same house, which has had one extra room added to it. Mhiki supports everyone with her income as a community care worker. She didn’t like ‘Cuku Town because it was dirty and the shacks provided poor shelter. Nevertheless, she says her family is not settled in Joe Slovo Park. “We have got a small house and we are not working, so there are a lot of problems. There is no money. We are suffering because we stay in the house and we are more than five people.” Mhiki wishes that more opportunities for employment would be created in Joe Slovo Park and that the police would do more about crime and the shebeens.

5.3. Not-In-My-Back-Yard (NIMBY)

The Not-In-My-Back-Yard syndrome is an international phenomenon, referring to objections to development projects that benefit the poor or the common good in one’s own neighbourhood. One of the largest obstacles to integrated development in South African cities is the NIMBY syndrome, which prevents low-income housing developments in wealthy and well-located areas, reinforcing the spatial dynamics of the apartheid city. Resistance by the relatively wealthy inhabitants of Milnerton was strong in the Marconi Beam case, but a land agreement was reached despite it.

The attempted eviction of the Marconi Beam informal settlement residents in 1990 occurred at the behest of ratepayers, who were represented by a variety of associations like the Milnerton Action Group and the Milnerton Residents Association. The ratepayers’ main objection to the continued presence of the settlement in Milnerton was that it would lead to increased crime and declining property values. Milnerton residents were threatened by the manner in which the land negotiations elevated the landless Marconi Beam residents to equal status, symbolising the political change taking place in the country at that time.

The Marconi Beam residents were in turn suspicious of the municipality, the only party responsive to the ratepayers, because of its historical role in segregation and implementing influx control. Tempers often flared when stakeholders felt that the process or other parties marginalized their interests. Outside the meetings, the situation was charged. Every housebreaking was reported to local newspapers as evidence of the increasing crime, and all acrimonious exchanges between White and Black residents of Milnerton became newsworthy. At one community meeting, a group of White Milnerton residents called one of the negotiators over to a car and silently showed him a boot full of shotguns.

Communication barriers made it difficult to build understanding between the groups. Translation was needed as the Marconi Beam residents were predominantly Xhosa speakers, while the ratepayers spoke Afrikaans and English. Compounding this, the negotiations took place in an institutional, legal idiom, which the Marconi Beam residents had not previously encountered and for which their low levels of formal education had not prepared them.

“[When I got involved, the negotiations] had gone completely haywire. They were at war. You had all the factions literally at war. The guys on site wouldn’t speak to the municipality, the municipality and the rate payers were up in arms with each other. So, that went completely off the rails because they were then still trying to do it in the style of the olden days, when you come along and you tell people this is what is done, pack your bags and go. … [The informal settlement dwellers] were very suspicious and to win their trust was very difficult. And as far as the White people were concerned, they saw this as a huge threat. It was the end of their world to think that Black poor people were going to come and stay and have rights in their vicinity. It was just unthinkable. … So to marry those two worlds, that was a huge challenge…”

A deadlock soon arose. One of the factors that helped to resolve the situation was the skill with which DAG facilitated the negotiations. DAG staffers played a vital role in the negotiations, building bridges between the community and the various stakeholders. DAG was able to translate between the English and Xhosa speakers and to communicate the core messages disguised by technical and legal jargon.

Leslie Viljoen, now the head of Rabie/Cavcor Limited, represented Telkom’s interests in the negotiations. He and Bahle Sibisi of DAG played a crucial role in securing the agreement of local stakeholders. They eventually won the trust of the conservative ratepayers and the wary informal settlement residents by selling the development as a huge investment that would benefit everyone.

Most notably though, the political environment affected the negotiations, which commenced during the run-up to South Africa’s first national democratic election and concluded thereafter. In the early 1990s, it became clear that the ANC would take control of the country, and the ratepayers’ were fatalistic regarding the marginalisation of the White minority as inevitable. The prospect of ANC rule left many uncertain about the future of the country, and White citizens were especially gripped by fear. Proponents of the Joe Slovo Park scheme cleverly argued that change in the class and race composition of Milnerton was unavoidable and that the development offered an opportunity for residents to influence the way such change was managed.

Critically, the municipality was unable or perhaps unwilling to champion the interests of its constituency. This too may have been influenced by the changes taking place in the country. After 1994, local government in South Africa was being restructured, and preparations were underway for the first democratic local government election in the Cape. Without the support of the local authority, the ratepayers’ bargaining power weakened, and after the municipality officially condoned the deal, it was a fait accompli. “In the end, Telkom said to them: ‘we are selling the land, and it is going to be developed and the deal does include the current informal settlement dwellers.’”

72. Ibid.
74. The first democratic local government election in the Cape was held in 1996; a Marconi Beam resident was elected as councillor.
Another major factor which enabled the land deal was the incorporation of a buffer strip to allay Milnerton residents’ anxiety. Koeberg Road itself provided a buffer, as did the industrial developments and working class Phoenix residential area. Phoenix was a private residential housing development with houses then valued between R90 000 and R100 000. It provided a physical buffer and assuaged White fears, as the mixed-race and lower-income development preceded Joe Slovo Park. Phoenix was clean and orderly with small but well-built houses, gardens and driveways, which created confidence in the residential potential of the area.

Once the ratepayers accepted the development, they focussed on addressing their concerns about the physical appearance of the development and ensuring that their conditions were upheld. Many became positive and called for the development to be sped up.

5.3.1 Lessons: Overcoming NIMBY

The degree to which the political transition enabled NIMBY issues to be overcome in Marconi Beam has implications for the replicability of this aspect of the development. Regime change and extensive governmental restructuring are not replicable tactics in most cases, and local authorities will need to convince communities of the benefits of interventions, such as low-income housing projects. NIMBY arises when ratepayers discourage integration in an attempt to protect their own interests at the expense of the interests of others. To counteract this, local authorities must act assertively for the greater good, even where this conflicts with the demands of a given constituency.

Higher quality standards and specifications may, in some cases, help to garner support. Care should be taken not to burden poor people with the increased costs that arise from concessions made to gain support from those who are better-off and acting out of self-interest.

At the same, it should be noted that the fight against NIMBY is political and requires political leadership, as it may not be resolved through consensus building. The spatial distribution of political power affects whether Councils, which take such unpopular decisions, will remain in power to implement their ‘unpopular’ visions. Where political will exists at a local level, provincial and national governments can play a crucial role in providing practical support and incentives, such as access to funding and land for mixed developments.

Efforts to overcome NIMBY can be strengthened when the rights and responsibilities afforded by the Constitution are understood and exercised. This requires that residents are appropriately educated and empowered. While encouraging integrated settlements, the practice of creating buffers strips to make low-income housing more acceptable must be cautioned against.

79. See the Cosmo City development in Johannesburg, another example of a cross-subsidised development with a wetland used as a buffer zone.
Buffer strips accommodate prejudice, reinforce apartheid-era spatial divisions and discourage cultural integration. The short-term gains of acceptability are ultimately outweighed by the long-term concretisation of social barriers. Alternative spatial arrangements should be proposed to fulfil their function, without preventing integration.

Interestingly, it was the ratepayers who, fearing a decline in the value of their assets, argued most strongly that the Marconi Beam informal settlement residents should have access to higher quality housing. Later, once it was understood that the project would proceed, they encouraged DAG and the municipality to accelerate the development. If ratepayers are forced to accept proximity to low-income housing, it is possible that wealthy ratepayers, acting to protect their own interests, could lobby government for speedy and superior service delivery.

**Pateka and Thembinkhosi Sibhozo’s story:**

Thembinkhosi Sibhozo is one of the original Turf Club grooms. He has worked at the racecourse for 18 years and supports his unemployed wife, Pateka and three children. The family struggles financially and earns extra income from rent paid by a tenant who has built an informal structure on their property. With three children and a small house, the Sibhozo’s have too little space. They have been unable to expand their house since moving in – the ceiling leaks and draught creeps in through holes in the wall due to poor workmanship. “This floor,” Thembinkhosi says, “we cry about this!” The Sibhozo’s say there is a lot of unemployment and crime in Joe Slovo Park but despite this they prefer it to ‘Cuku town. ‘[Since] I am staying in Joe Slovo Park I think it is better than ‘Cuku Town. Because here we have got light, there is [piped] water and there are no fires,’” says Thembinkhosi.

### 5.4. Amenities and facilities

The entire 243 ha Marconi Beam site was undeveloped prior to 1994, and no amenities or facilities existed in the immediate vicinity. Milnerton’s low density led to high volumes of commuter traffic in and from the area’s central business district. The approved Joe Slovo layout plan included sites for public facilities, and it was intended that some of these facilities would be financed through the sale or rental of the 5 ha of commercial land, which the community purchased in the land deal.

As the transit area grew considerably in the lead-up to relocation, some of these sites, including the sports field were sacrificed and used to develop more formal housing. Upon completion, Joe Slovo Park had two crèches, three churches, a job creation centre and a primary school – all financed through means other than proceeds from the management of the community’s commercial land.

A nearby sports field in Phoenix, owned by Telkom, is only available to the Joe Slovo Park community on Saturdays, and teams compete for use of this space. The only sports facility in Joe Slovo is an unpaved neglected open-air basketball court, which no longer has nets and is strewn with broken glass.

---


A few pre-fabricated buildings serve as a high school, and many learners travel into Milnerton to attend school. The nearest clinic is in Brooklyn, costing R14 to access by public transport. Residents complain: “I want a clinic here because the clinic is so far. If you don’t have money you can’t go to the clinic because you must take a taxi. But when you are sicking, and you don’t have a money, nothing can you do. So the clinic and a library [is what we need].” There is also no library in the community, and the nearest one, in Milnerton, is not within walking distance.

A community hall was built in Phoenix, but a Joe Slovo resident claims it is booked out nine months in advance and is constantly used by church groups, which are abundant and in need of operating space. Many church groups currently operate out of houses or tents on Freedom Way. They provide an important social network in the community offering spiritual, material and emotional support: “I am renting with a shack. Now I am losing my job, I can’t pay the rent for my shack. … Nobeandla is not my [blood] family, she is my family from the church. I found my family through the church. I don’t have [blood] family in Cape Town, they are in Eastern Cape. When I was sick, I found this lady. When I’m having difficult times, I’m coming here to stay here and she’s helping me. And I have my child since 2006 and she looked after it until now. I know her only with the church, but now she’s like family. She’s like my mother. It’s very wonderful.”

The commercial land has been sold by Rabie/Cavcor without generating revenue for the community, and it is unclear why the sites for facilities have not been developed, or why people have been allowed to erect shacks on these sites. “We don’t know really what is happening on those sites. The people that came into Joe Slovo Park started to build the shacks on the open spaces. We don’t know why the open spaces are there. If they can’t build the fields, they should build houses. … Behind those houses there is a big land where [the government] promised to build a high school. It’s not been built.”

Ten years later, the municipality claims that this transfer is still underway and is being negotiated as compensation for the accumulated rates and water bills owed by Joe Slovo Park residents. Many respondents commented that the lesson they draw from many housing projects is the central need for educational, health and recreational facilities in housing provision.

---

5.4.1. Lessons: Toward sustainable human settlements

The primary objective of the Trust was to provide housing for the inhabitants of the transit area rather than the development of an integrated settlement. While the aims and plans for the project acknowledged the need for facilities, the pressure to provide as many houses as possible and the dissolution of the Trust led to the effective deprioritisation of the development of these sites by all stakeholders. The housing subsidy did not provide for facilities and it should remain the municipality’s responsibility to provide facilities to an indigent community, such as Joe Slovo Park. The availability of communally-owned land should encourage rather than discourage such developments. Development of the sites offers the opportunity for a public-community partnership, which can strengthen citizenship and reduce the municipality’s default rate on service payments.

Community initiatives, programmes and activities, undertaken through partnerships between community organisations, other communities, NGOs and the private and public sectors, are key components of integrated approaches to the development of sustainable human settlements. Such approaches can effectively respond to the multi-dimensional and complex nature of poverty by simultaneously addressing the social, economic and physical aspects of housing development.

The municipality’s hands-off stance is in keeping with the trend of the State to retreat from its responsibilities to low-income communities after the construction of houses. Huchzermeyer remarks on this phenomenon, terming it the ‘ghettoisation’ of new housing developments: “Such ‘ghettoisation’ is caused not only by inadequate servicing and maintenance, but also through the lack of consolidation or improvement of minimal starter houses, and by delays in the provision of social, educational, commercial and recreational facilities, i.e. the lack of inter-departmental co-ordination.”

As seen in Marconi Beam, without long term investment by the State, the once-off capital subsidy is inadequate for the creation of sustainable housing developments.

The Joe Slovo Park community’s response to the municipality’s dereliction of duty also identifies the need for civic education. The ability to access resources is closely linked to an individual or group’s capacity to assert their rights. Poor people are therefore often passive role-players against other economic and social interest groups, as they compete for resources. As a result, poor communities struggle to force the State to deliver on its mandate and meet their basic needs, as may presently be the case in Joe Slovo Park. Participating actively in neighbourhood or urban development processes requires that residents are sufficiently motivated to take on the role of citizens and to assume the associated rights and responsibilities. This in turn requires a level of understanding of these rights and responsibilities and the role of government.

5.5. Local Economic Development (LED)

Stakeholders recognised the need to stimulate economic development within Joe Slovo Park through the following initiatives:

- MBDT was to sell a portion of the commercial land to finance the development of a commercial strip along Freedom Way, the link road running through Joe Slovo Park. This commercial development could have provided trading space for both small and established businesses. The latter, it was hoped, would create employment for Joe Slovo Park residents. The commercial strip was, however, never developed and the Trust lost the ability to use the strip to generate income in 2002.

- MBDT developed residents’ skills and created jobs through the use of the Nu Way Building System, an alternative building technology that was labour intensive and affordable. Selected Marconi Beam residents were trained in the construction of

———

houses using this technology. Once trained, construction teams were developed and the project beneficiaries then had the option to select the teams to construct their homes. Two construction teams mastered the use of the technology, although a greater number of people were trained. Even though less than five percent of the houses were constructed using this technology, the two building teams went on to construct houses in Du Noon and Phillipi after the Marconi Beam development.

- Other Marconi Beam residents were employed and some also trained by building sub-contractors.

Despite these intentions, initially local economic activity in the new Joe Slovo Park declined as municipal by-laws were applied. Shebeens were illegal and were shut down. Vendors who purchased and slaughtered sheep, goats or chickens and cooked and sold these to residents had their activities curtailed. The spaza shops that had flourished in the informal settlement faced competition from accessible local supermarkets, whose economies of scale enabled them to sell goods at lower prices. Since then, spaza shops have recovered by catering for small and convenience purchases. Shebeens have re-opened and enjoy a booming trade. On Freedom Way, many businesses operate: hair salons, electrical workshops, airtime vendors and others.

‘Tenants’ and ‘lodgers’ were a phenomenon in the informal settlement, and there continues to be a marked proliferation of informal structures in the last three years. Many households generate income by renting out these structures in their backyards to others in need of housing. Tenants were common in the Marconi Beam informal settlement, but once the transit area was declared, the municipality mapped the shacks and forbade the construction of new dwellings. Immigration persisted and new arrivals typically became lodgers of those who were registered when the transit area was declared. Despite the efforts of the project managers and the MBDT, this phenomenon is even more acute in Joe Slovo Park. Homeowners receive approximately R200 per month per tenant family. This is a much needed income for Joe Slovo residents, who often rely on the income of one employed household member, the State old age pension or the child support grant. The tenants mainly relocate from other informal settlements or low-income areas like Langa and Khayelitsha to be closer to their places of employment.

A secondary housing market is also active, albeit informally. The lawyer responsible for registering the title deeds in Joe Slovo Park ceased operating in 2000, when charges of fraud surfaced, and was later liquidated. Administrative problems at the municipality also prevented most residents from receiving their title deeds. No real estate agents operate in Joe Slovo Park, and no data is available on how many houses have been sold, as these sales have not been registered at the Deeds office. Nevertheless, sources indicate that when some homeowners urgently need cash, houses have been sold for values lower than the R17 250 State subsidy originally utilised to build them. These sales are usually transferred through signed affidavits, certified at police stations. Residents claimed that only a minority of the original residents have sold their homes, and some respondents argued that a secondary housing market is an encouraging indication that these homes are desirable.

The informal settlement population and Joe Slovo residents generally had low levels of education and limited skills, which presented a barrier to their entry into the surrounding commercial and industrial economy. Prime location close to industry and commerce did not translate directly into employment for the residents. Those who are employed work in the area primarily as domestic workers or in the factories of Montague Gardens. The Milnerton Turf Club still employs many men from the community as grooms. Notwithstanding, the rate of unemployment is still high.


90. Most residents estimated the rate of unemployment to be around 50%.
Residents speculate that the factory managers regard Joe Slovo residents as unreliable and thus prefer to hire people from other locations. A study by Patrick Brennan commissioned in 1995 by DAG and the Marconi Beam Business Association suggests another argument for the persistent unemployment. This study involved a large survey of businesses in Montague Gardens, revealing that the area had a high prevalence of small and micro enterprises that focussed on niche and speciality products. Most companies were categorised in either the manufacturing or services sectors and required skilled labour. Brennan observed that this resulted in an entry barrier for the typically unskilled Marconi Beam residents.

Thirteen years on, it is possible that the education levels and skills profile of residents may have changed as well as the nature of nearby industry. However, no subsequent studies have occurred. Brennan’s conclusions cannot therefore simply be overlaid on the current situation, but they do raise questions about the cause of continued high levels of unemployment.

Arguments for well-located low-income housing development rest heavily on the idea that closer proximity to economic opportunities will lead to higher rates of employment for the communities concerned. Indeed, those residents of Joe Slovo Park who do have jobs are employed in the vicinity and are able to walk to work, resulting in significant savings in transport costs. Good location cannot buck nation-wide macro-economic trends that favour the development of industries that do not cater for the unskilled or whose skills requirements are beyond the opportunities of the average poor urban citizen. Supporting this notion, the South African Cities Network reports that 77% of people under the minimum living level in South Africa are located within 60 km of areas that generate at least R1 billion of geographic value.

5.5.1. Lessons: The relationship between location and LED

Marconi Beam illustrates that economic development plans need to take the skill level of intended beneficiaries into consideration. The Joe Slovo Park case underscores the need for economic strategies to accompany housing developments – there must be investment in skills development for residents of areas like Joe Slovo Park or strategies for creating jobs with low skills requirements.

LED that catered to the profile of Marconi Beam could have made a significant impact on the livelihoods of residents. Unfortunately, there was “no structural handle on an integrated local economic strategy.” It is clear with hindsight that the project stakeholders did not sufficiently understand the livelihood strategies of Marconi Beam residents, and without fully appreciating this, could not develop a LED plan which strengthened their assets, enhanced their capabilities and reduced their vulnerability. Given this weakness, the formalisation of housing represented a shock and stressor for many of the affected households, who, in some cases, had to devise new livelihood strategies. This indicates the importance of creating integrated and holistic approaches to development and building the community capacity to sustain them.

93. Brennan also cites gender and race prejudice as barriers to employment, factors that may well still be at play.
5.6. Project finance

The original project budget was R34 million. The land agreement resulted in a unique project finance solution for low-income housing and significantly boosted the value of land, which was, until then, of little worth in the property market due to the existence of the Marconi Beam ‘squatter camp.’ The financial value of the Marconi Beam land could not be realised without the land deal, since its market value prior to making the deal was negligible.

Telkom sold the 25 ha land parcel to the Marconi Beam community at a nominal fee of R60 000 to unlock the value of their other prime commercial land. A private developer, Rabie/Cavcor, used the larger, lucrative 243 ha mixed-used development to cross-finance the construction of bulk and link services (estimated at R18 million). The Provincial Government of the Western Cape provided subsidies (R12 million) for the construction of the houses, and the local government provided partial funding of the north-south road running through the development.

First National Bank, a private bank, provided bridging finance backed by guarantees from the Thembani International Guarantee Fund (TIGF) and the National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency (NURCHA). The residents assumed financial responsibility for the first 15% of any losses that might occur, while TIGF and NURCHA together assumed 70% responsibility.96

By accessing the land, the community was able to secure their tenure, construct homes and finance other projects. A Trust was set up to administer the process and sign off payments to contractors and suppliers. Several small grants and loans were also made to assist the community, such as a grant to set up the Trust office and finance its operation as well as a loan for skills training of women in the community.97

One hectare of the Trust’s commercial land was sold-off when construction started; this generated R2 million which financed the construction of the show village and the establishment of a rotating loan scheme. Loans were extended to the 400 households who did not qualify for the government subsidy. Almost every applicant was awarded a loan and nearly none of them made repayments.98 Whilst the rotating loan scheme did not function successfully in the Marconi Beam project, the model devised was tested and subsequently refined.99

5.6.1. Lessons: Improved access to land and housing through cross-subsidisation and micro-finance

The housing subsidy was inadequate to address the needs of the Marconi Beam residents. It barely covered the cost of constructing the houses, let alone the infrastructure and land. The project finances were therefore packaged innovatively, involving mixed-income and mixed-use developments; public, private and civil society role-players; and local and international development actors.

97. The former was provided by the Community Development Advisor in Community and Urban Services Support and the second from War on Want.
100. See www.thekuyasafund.co.za.
This represents a model for financing post-apartheid housing delivery. Government frequently cites the rising cost of inner city land as a primary reason why low-income housing projects cannot be more centrally located. Affordable land lies on the outskirts of cities, and the land economics of urban real estate therefore reinforce the dormitory town structure of South African cities.

Cross-financing schemes have the potential to play an important role in providing sustainable housing in South Africa, but these are seldom pursued. There is scope for research into which factors contribute to cross-subsidisation, and what makes it successful once initiated.

Olivia van Rooyen, an ex-DAG employee who managed Marconi Beam’s loan scheme, is the Executive Director and driving force behind The Kuyasa Fund. She highlights that a lesson from both Marconi Beam and Villiersdorp housing development projects is that loan schemes associated with rights and entitlement are unsuccessful as there is little incentive for borrowers to repay the loans. In Marconi Beam, borrowers felt that the money had come from the sale of land that was already theirs and that others were being awarded free RDP houses by the government. This created a relationship permeated by a discourse of rights and entitlement, undermining the effective functioning of the loan scheme, which needed to relate to its clients on a commercial basis. Incorporating these lessons, The Kuyasa Fund has achieved success and is recognised as a good practice model that demonstrates the viability of housing microfinance and its potential to address the need for incremental home improvements.

5.7. House type, tenure and incrementalism

Even after being declared a transit area, the living conditions in Marconi Beam were much the status quo for marginalized communities of Cape Town. People lived in shacks made of wood, corrugated iron and plastic. There was little sewerage or waste collection, no piped water or electricity, the roads were unpaved and the settlement was consequently dirty and unhygienic. Many people shared few toilets, and women collected water from communal standpipes. Every few months a fire ripped through the settlement, incinerating homes and possessions. The wooden shacks ignited like tinder, and most often people lost all their possessions.

The stakeholders of the affordable housing project wanted a very different kind of settlement: one where people had access to services, were insulated from extreme weather, had a diminished fire risk and could create a safe housing environment where social networks were maintained.

DAG advocated the use of a range of house types to enable households to choose the house that would suit their situation and to empower them as homeowners responsible for the physical form of their houses. In cooperation with the Trust, DAG solicited a range of low-income house designs from a number of architects, and a variety of designs were chosen to market to the informal settlement residents. DAG encouraged the Trust to build a show village, providing life-size models of the designs. These were mostly one-room designs, which, if funds became available, could subsequently be extended to have multiple rooms.

101. The Reconstruction and Development Programme was a policy framework with the core values of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy and democratising the state and society.

or second storeys. These extensions demonstrated the potential to incrementally improve the initially small RDP houses. There were also two unusual models on display, built according to sustainable designs or with eco-friendly materials.

Anthea Houston, former CEO of DAG

“In the show village there were some houses built with alternative technology. The Environmental Evaluation Unit (EEU) at UCT sponsored the construction of one house in the show village. At one point, there was a fire and a huge number of people were affected. The next day people occupied the houses in the show village because they needed somewhere safe to be. They didn’t occupy the house that was built by the EEU. I think the technology was too foreign for people — they thought “Even if my house burnt down I would rather not live in this house.” … Later in the project, when we started selling the show village houses themselves, we couldn’t sell that house. Even at some point we marked it down to less than what the house actually cost… and nobody wanted it.

….We attempted to use the Aruba building system [a modular system using polystyrene formwork filled with concrete]… that performs very well in terms of insulation and thermal efficiency. It is easy to extend and it’s very quick to build. It’s also cheaper than most of the other houses that we built, which meant the house could be bigger. Only one person who was a Trustee, and therefore was a lot more exposed to the information than anyone else, chose that as an option. Even after the house was built, and people could see that the house was bigger and better than everyone else’s, no one chose it. At that time, there were still houses burning. I mean, there were still fires in the settlement and people were still having to stand in the queue and wait for their house, which could take months.”

Despite the variety available, most people chose the same standard one-room typology, and the development resembles many early RDP projects with rows of single-room freestanding brick and mortar houses. The size of the houses, a source of frustration, arose from the limited housing subsidy. When the project commenced, the project-linked subsidy was R15 000. This figure increased during the construction phase, but only to a mere R17 250 at the maximum.

Even with the low land cost and the cross-subsidisation of bulk and link services, this amount was inadequate. “You could get bugger-all for R17 000. Everybody had a vision, double storeys, three or four rooms… but what was it going to cost to do it? I think that led to tremendous friction.” The situation was compounded by an upswing in the construction industry and by the industry’s unfamiliarity with RDP-type building projects. The first houses were a mere 22m², the minimum required at the time. This was later increased to 25m², as new innovations were found enabling the subsidy go further. By comparison, the minimum size for a low-income house is presently 40m² — a standard achieved by years of lobbying by the non-profit housing sector.

Construction was carried out by a range of actors. The large-scale construction company, Condev, which was building the Phoenix development, built some houses. Smaller construction companies took on others, and a few subcontractors emerged


104. Bob Low, interview by S. Haysom, 2 March 2009. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Electronic Files. J Drive. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa. As a former employee of Murray & Roberts Construction company, Low was in charge of the construction portfolio on the MBDT.

105. Ibid.
from amongst the informal settlement residents themselves. MBDT negotiated the use of the Nu Way Building System, a labour intensive building technology, and selected Marconi Beam residents were trained to form construction teams and build Nu Way homes. Only about 20 people took this option and these houses were of mixed success. A ‘self-build’ option was also encouraged. Families were offered training to build their own homes, thereby saving 15% of the cost of building a house through a contractor.106

The tenure arrangement was such that the community held collective tenure over the land through the MBDT until the units were developed. Once a family moved into a house at Joe Slovo Park, they gained individual tenure over that erf. In 1996, families began to move into their houses, demolishing their shacks as they left them, thus clearing the transit area.

Residents were generally satisfied with their new homes, although the houses were too small to accommodate most families. Several complaints about poor building standards or incomplete units were raised, but these problems were not endemic.

Many of the houses built have been upgraded with paint and plaster or have been extended. A variety of renovations are apparent: some houses have formal or informal extensions, new coats of paint, new doors and windows, neatly kept yards, gates and walls, animal enclosures and a few even have second storeys. These improvements are evidence of the ‘incrementalism,’ envisioned through the provision of starter houses, which establish security of tenure and improve health and safety conditions. However, many households in Joe Slovo Park still cannot afford such formal renovations, and their houses remain unplastered and in a state of disrepair.107 “Presently, it’s only the employed and the self-employed who can afford to extend on their own. There are still quite a lot of houses that are the way they were originally.”108

The beneficiaries interviewed had mixed responses to the question of how their lives had changed between the squatter camp and formal houses. Most answered that the Joe Slovo Park was unequivocally a better place to live than Marconi Beam informal settlement. Most significantly, this was because it was not prone to fires, which had been a constant source of terror, injury and material insecurity. Others felt that piped water, electricity and the private space afforded by having their own yards were positive changes. Nevertheless, many felt that crime was indeed worse in Joe Slovo Park, that illness through the spread of HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis had become more prevalent and that unemployment and poverty remained static.

Mavis Macekwisana’s story:109

Mavis Macekwisana lives at 10 Ingwe Street in a brightly painted house with her daughter, who is 6 years old. She does not have any lodgers. Mavis works at a firm that makes air conditioning units. Since moving in, she has changed the ceiling, painted the house, put in burglar bars and moved the toilet. Mavis dislikes Joe Slovo Park because of the crime, but enjoys the fact that she can go to church five days a week in the area.

107. There is not, however, a clear relationship between income and incrementalism. In 2009, DAG conducted research in the settlement of Hangberg, which indicated that the high level of incrementalism there was more closely linked to social networks and family ties than above-average incomes. Helen Macgregor, Personal Communication, 21 April 2009.
5.7.1. Lessons: National problems and local success

Tenure rights and adequate shelter give indigent households a foothold in the city, but economic security also requires education and employment. A more integrated approach to settlement development (taking livelihood considerations into account) is therefore required to transform the relative advantage of tenure security and decent shelter into material improvements.

The case of Joe Slovo Park suggests that until the chronic lack of housing in Cape Town is redressed, the phenomenon of backyard shacks must be accommodated, rather than lamented. Backyard shacks are a city-wide trend, which provides income to the landlords and housing to the tenants. The project could have made better provision for the lodgers by positioning the houses on their plots in a way that provided more space for informal extensions, which were to be anticipated given the location, the high number of lodgers in the transit area and the reliance of many households on the lodgers’ rentals. Houses were placed in the centre of plots, leaving little over a metre of space on either side. Placement at the corner of plots or the construction of row housing might have been a more realistic planning option, and the latter could have achieved higher density.\textsuperscript{110} The rotating loan fund could also have been used more creatively to build larger houses from the outset for households with lodgers, as such households would have been in a relatively better position to repay the loans.

South Africa suffers from high unemployment, crime and HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, low literacy levels and a country-wide housing crisis. There is a degree to which the problems that exist in Joe Slovo Park are national, rather than local, placing limitations on the extent to which they can be resolved through any housing development. On the other hand, these socio-economic conditions make it necessary for every housing development to innovate and maximise available opportunities to improve these conditions.

The housing development succeeded in enabling Marconi Beam residents to realise their constitutional right to housing. Section 26 of the Constitution of South Africa grants everyone the right to access adequate housing. It measures adequate housing as including: “legal security of tenure; the availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; and location and cultural adequacy.” The Joe Slovo Park development satisfied all these criteria in stark contrast with most subsidised housing developments, which, even fifteen years later, struggle to achieve such results. The project has given people access to services, an asset to be held for the future and entrenched their position in a central location.

5.8. Partnerships and the role of DAG

Few low-income housing projects involve the multi-stakeholder partnerships displayed in the case of Marconi Beam. This project engaged local and provincial government, property developers, construction companies, the community and its Trust and an NGO. These partnerships were not without difficulties, as each organisation operated differently and held different value systems.

The Trust complained that the commercial partners were condescending and authoritative: “The Trust didn’t have experience to develop the land because it was their first time to build, but the people who know how to do it just robbed them, if I can put it that way, just robbed them. They didn’t say exactly what is happening. If they called a meeting, they called a meeting telling them what to do. They were [there to instruct the] Development Trust and that was all.”\textsuperscript{111}


The private sector partners found DAG's approach overly humanistic and idealistic; whilst DAG, the private sector role players and the Trust experienced the municipality's standards as an unrealistic hindrance.

Beneficiaries and those who worked on the project complain that the municipality was slow to integrate the community into its operating systems and has not risen to the challenge of upgrading the area. For many years, water and rates bills for Joe Slovo Park residents arrived in their hundreds to the offices of DAG, despite DAG repeatedly notifying the municipality of this error. This resulted in widespread arrears: “It is nice to stay in the houses, but the problem is the water. … When we get the bill for the water, it was a long time the letters were not coming, and the letters is coming to say a lot of bills for the water: We didn’t get those letters for maybe two years or three years.” Moreover, in the last eleven years, the City has not yet drawn up and finalised title deeds for the owners of houses in Joe Slovo Park: “We don’t have a title deed yet. We were told to wait, that it is coming but it has not come yet.”

DAG played an active part in the Marconi Beam project from 1992 until 1999, performing a number of roles and devoting at least six full time staff members to the project. They were a vital support and advisor to the community from the negotiations until the completion of construction. DAG also played an active role in the conceptualisation of the project.

In 1992, DAG took over from the SPP in negotiating for the residents to remain in Milnerton. DAG supported the community to put forward a cohesive and organised front during negotiations, translated between technical and informal discourses and across language barriers and held bi-lateral negotiations with the ratepayers and the municipality. “From the first time, they [DAG] were fighting for us to stay there in the squatter camp because government wanted to chase us away from the squatter camp there and they stood with us. … Without them, we won’t be here today.”

Aside from fighting eviction, DAG led the conceptualisation of the development proposal for the community. This included taking aerial photographs of the area, identifying suitable locations for housing developments, commissioning and conducting studies into the economy of Milnerton, gathering demographic information on the community and conducting surveys on the informal settlement residents’ interest in where they were located.

In 1994, DAG was appointed project coordinator and advisor to the Trust by the Land Agreement. DAG worked with the local branch of SANCO to establish the MBDT, facilitated workshops and provided training for the Trustees. DAG applied for loans and grants to support the operations of the Trust as well as giving legal, organisational and technical advice to the Trust. In this capacity as advisor, DAG was required to be familiar with all aspects of the project and engaged in extensive communication with all the stakeholders over financial and construction matters, challenges within the community and disagreements between different parties.

In 1996, DAG solicited applications from a range of professionals to be selected by the Trust as urban planning and architectural consultants. DAG also advocated for building the show village, including a self-build option and training members of the community to become sub-contractors.

---

113. Ibid.
DAG established links with Provincial government and provided extensive assistance to the community in securing their project-linked subsidy from the State. DAG also assisted MBDT with the establishment and operations of the rotating loan fund.

Frequently during the project, DAG found itself being held accountable for all aspects of the development when things went wrong, yet without the authority to make or implement decisions to rectify problems. Over the course of the project, DAG shifted between their role as an advisor to take on aspects of project or construction management.

Playing multiple roles simultaneously had consequences for DAG and how effectively it executed its duties: “It becomes very hard to play an advisory role when one starts taking on roles related to project management, the construction management and so on. Because then one becomes responsible for quality…and delivery itself, and one becomes responsible for whatever financial implications there are for non-delivery or poor quality. Then it becomes very hard to protect DAG, as an institution, from the legal risk associated with failing in the role of project manager or construction manager. ...And that also competes with providing good advice to a community and allowing them to make independent decisions based on that advice.”

By 1998, the MBDT diminished in size, and internal conflicts impeded decision making. DAG focused on resolving the conflicts within the community and the lack of consensus in the Trust. Its repeated efforts were unsuccessful and the organisation’s role reduced significantly. Unable to effectively advise a dysfunctional Trust, DAG was largely uninvolved from 2000, although continued to record correspondence with MBDT and other partners until 2002. “There are a lot of things that didn’t go right since DAG moved out. Then nothing happened as we agreed that it is going to happen.”

5.8.1. Lessons for multi-stakeholder partnerships and the role of NGOs

The project demonstrates that a multi-stakeholder approach can work and encourages institutional change. The implementation of a low-income housing development in a White middle class suburb and the cross-subsidisation which enabled it is unlikely to have been accomplished without this multi-stakeholder partnership. Marconi Beam was a pioneering project for all concerned and took place in a politically charged environment. This implied a steep learning curve for all role-players. Yet, these partnerships functioned well enough to achieve the project’s primary goals.

DAG has since refined its approach to supporting self-help housing delivery and implemented award-winning projects in this field. After completing the Marconi Beam mixed-use development, Rabie/Cavcor went on to set up its social responsibility division. This enabled the company to attempt a similar mixed-use development that included a cross-financed low-income housing project at Westlake in Tokai, a predominantly middle-class suburb in Cape Town.

The role of communities in such partnerships cannot be underestimated. When communities are organised and active participants in partnerships, they can provide a collective voice for the project’s intended beneficiaries (or those precluded from benefiting), contribute significantly to ensuring that development addresses the real needs of affected communities and


influence project outcomes and processes. The level of community participation and organisation differed between Marconi Beam and Westlake, and much has since been reported about the high rate of downward-raiding in Westlake.

The Marconi Beam case illustrates the important role that NGOs can play in building multi-stakeholder partnerships and in supporting projects, where community participation or control is pursued. Effective, meaningful and sustained community participation requires intense capacity enhancement, which NGOs are well-placed to provide, whilst also pushing for innovative solutions that create more inclusive development processes and broaden the space for participation. This role is critical in public-private-community partnerships, where stakeholders participate with unequal power and influence.

DAG added value to the development by enhancing the leadership capacity (particularly of MBDT), ensuring that the development proceeded and protecting the community interests. As a result the degree to which the project show-cases a public-private-community partnership can be attributed to the investment made by DAG. This contribution is often undervalued by private and public sector developers, and NGOs are often treated with contempt and abuse by officials and private stakeholders and sometimes also by the communities they support.

It's noteworthy that DAG's expenses were not financed by the project but were sponsored by international development agencies. Importantly, all stakeholders received a return on their investment: the private sector through the development of the commercial land, the State through the sale of the parastatal land and the community through the delivery of housing.

DAG drew many lessons to guide its own practice from the Marconi Beam project. Two significant ones were the need to adopt a Sustainable Livelihoods approach and the future role of DAG in similar developments.

In 1998, research into the effects of formalisation of housing exposed the potentially negative impact that formalisation could have on the livelihoods of households. The research showed how the livelihoods of some Joe Slovo Park residents had been disrupted through the enforcement of municipal regulations, which, for example, prevented the construction of informal dwellings for residential use on plots, the keeping of livestock or the cooking of meat on open fires on sidewalks. While the quality of the shelter had improved, the livelihood strategies of some residents had weakened. Evaluating this, DAG concluded that a Sustainable Livelihoods approach should be adopted in projects to ensure that livelihoods strategies are strengthened through the housing development process.

DAG subsequently noted the limitations of the advisory role and that it had taken on aspects of the project management function from time to time in the interests of the success of the project. Frustrated by its relative powerlessness in the Marconi Beam development, DAG opened itself to the possibility of playing a project management role in future projects.

The decision was heavily debated within the organisation. Some people expressed concern about the extent to which playing a project management role would undermine the developmental objectives of the projects. They felt that being a project manager would impact DAG's relationship with their community partners, since their independence as an advisor would be compromised. DAG's subsequent projects heightened this debate, as DAG indeed implemented five smaller self-help housing projects in Khayelitsha immediately after Marconi Beam, where it attempted to play a different role. The lessons distilled from the Marconi Beam experience were applied in these developments, and the projects were later recognised by the Department of Housing and United Nations Human Settlements Programme as best practice examples.
6. CONCLUSIONS

It has been ten years since construction on the Joe Slovo Park housing project stopped and six years since the MBDT officially dissolved. Today, Joe Slovo Park is a vibrant, functioning Milnerton suburb. The Marconi Beam Affordable Housing project is different things to different people: icon, learning curve, lost opportunity and example to the nation. Measured by its objectives, the project is only a partial success, but apart from this, it stands as an unprecedented achievement because of what was accomplished at the time, given the political and institutional climate. The project championed the cause of people, who lived peacefully in Milnerton for up to three decades. Denied their rights, they had been harassed, raided and faced eviction. Despite this, they were able to drive the development of a formal housing project for their community and drastically improve living conditions, secure tenure and obtain a lifelong asset, a home of their own.

The Marconi Beam project pioneered institutional and financial models for development. It was the first project in South Africa to innovatively provide land, cross-subsidise infrastructure and utilise subsidies available under the new Housing Subsidy Scheme for the development of a low-income housing project for Black people in a former White only suburb through a partnership between private and public sector role-players, a NGO and a community-based organisation. Importantly, the project had many replicable elements. The loans model initiated by DAG at Marconi Beam was considerably refined and led to the establishment of an award winning micro-finance organisation, The Kuyasa Fund. The cross-subsidisation of low-income housing through commercial and higher-end residential development was replicated by Rabie/Cavcor in their Westlake development. DAG also refined its approach to supporting self-help housing delivery and is now a very well respected support organisation in this field.

The project represented many ‘firsts’ and offered a multitude of lessons from its successes and shortcomings.

Marconi Beam set a precedent for well-located housing development, as the location was one of its most remarkable features; housing for indigent families was provided in an affluent suburban neighbourhood set within a growing economic hub. The project represents a long-term intervention in urban form and successfully addresses the exclusionary effects of apartheid spatial planning. The project proves that good location, mixed-use planning, cross-subsidisation and a multi-stakeholder approach can work and can overcome the limitations of land economics that perpetuate urban sprawl and spatial inequality.

Small, basic starter houses were provided with the belief that residents would subsequently upgrade their houses incrementally. Although some residents have done this, for many it has been impossible. The reasons for this are manifold, but the lack of money and continued poverty rate high amongst them. This, in turn, appears to arise from the high level of unemployment and the possible continued skills mismatch between Joe Slovo Park residents and the needs of the surrounding industries.

Proximity to economic opportunities offered many benefits for some Joe Slovo Park residents. High unemployment and poverty rates highlight the need for an education and skills match to enable residents to exploit the opportunities afforded by good location. In areas like Joe Slovo Park, where a mismatch exists, strategies are needed to develop skills or to create economic opportunities that match the skill level of residents.

The project’s failure to substantially improve the livelihoods strategies of its beneficiaries points to the need for more integrated approaches to housing delivery, so too does the need for the development of adequate community facilities and amenities. Housing delivered through an integrated approach can promote overall well-being and economic development, while creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. It allows implementing agents and communities to design processes that address the vulnerability of poorer households to shocks, stressors and seasonality.
It would be useful to complement this contextualised evaluation of Marconi Beam with evaluations of similar projects, like Westlake and Cosmo City. These findings could guide future developments and encourage practices and policies that enable integrated and sustainable human settlements.

Joe Slovo Park is adequately maintained but was not upgraded and lacks the necessary facilities to meet the needs of the community. The involvement of the municipality in the project did not lead to a sustained public investment in the area. The Marconi Beam Development Trust was dissolved due to fatigue of the Trustees and a lack of turnover in leadership. The dissolution of the Trust led to the loss of the opportunity to develop the commercial strip and the local economy. The drive to provide houses quickly and deal with problems expediently led to the provision of a large amount of well-located housing but not to an integrated and sustainable settlement that fosters local development.

One of the most valuable lessons demonstrated by the Marconi Beam project is the powerful role of **meaningful community participation**. A well-organised, though not homogeneous, community representing its own interests can better access its rights and resources, especially when supported by sympathetic role-players like NGOs.

Since the dissolution of the Trust, there is no longer a mandated body to assert the need for community development, and consequently, coordinated civic engagement is absent in Joe Slovo Park. **Accountable and democratic leadership together with strong community organisations** contribute significantly to a community’s sense of ownership of the neighbourhood. Civic organisations provide residents with a vehicle to engage as active citizens, articulating their needs, pursuing their rights, participating in decision making processes, while deepening their understanding of the links between local and macro issues. **Participatory development processes** may lengthen delivery processes, but they also empower communities by enabling them to make informed decisions and develop self-confidence to challenge the status quo and overcome obstacles to development.

Despite intentions to develop **sustainable towns and cities**, as stated in policy documents such as the *Housing White Paper* and the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the delivery of affordable housing (especially of higher densities) on well-located land like Joe Slovo Park for low-income households has been limited since 1996. Low-density subsidised housing on the periphery away from a range of opportunities, such as employment, health and recreation, has been popular and stands as an example of misdirected investment. Such housing results in increased public spending on transport subsidies, increased costs to the State and affected households and growing levels of inequality. South African housing policy has only recently shifted to encourage alternative tenure arrangements and more compact urban development, since adopting a new national housing policy framework, *Breaking New Ground* (BNG). However, the lack of access to affordable and well-located land as well as the dictates of a skewed urban land and property market has made it difficult for practice to align with policy and for groundbreaking projects like Marconi Beam to be replicated.

The Marconi Beam project made its mark by seizing the window of opportunity that political transition presented. Stakeholders used the uncertainty created by the restructuring of government and its policies to overcome NIMBY issues and rally support from all spheres of government. The community utilised this climate to stand their ground and refuse eviction.

More than a decade later, the climate is distinctly different. The Constitution of South Africa recognises housing rights, but the housing needs of many urban residents are yet to be met. Given South Africa’s participatory democracy, the State should actively engage citizens in the development of **long-term city plans**. Such visions and strategies can address the range of complex challenges facing urban areas and reduce inequity and inefficiency in cities. Taking a long-term and city-wide view...
of housing and urban development issues helps overcome the increasing separation of housing and planning functions and improves co-ordination between different government departments and spheres.

Despite these benefits, the South African Cities Network notes that the urban visions that have been crafted by municipalities so far remain the exclusive property of local government and are not owned by all city stakeholders. This they regard as a challenge to addressing the complex problems (including bankruptcy, crumbling infrastructure and rapid urbanisation) faced by South African cities.

There is no panacea for the urban housing crisis in South Africa, but mixed-use higher-density developments, involving a range of stakeholders, as was the case in Marconi Beam, should play a greater role in a portfolio of strategies to achieve equitable and adequate housing for all.


DAG, 1994b. Housing Subsidy Case Study: Interim Housing Subsidy Workshop, Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.


DAG, s/a. ‘Marconi Beam : A view through the key-hole and some lessons.’ Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.


DAG, s/a. What DAG wanted to achieve vs. what has actually been achieved. Marconi Beam Affordable Housing Project. Case Files. DAG Archive. Cape Town, South Africa.


