

ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY'S RESPONSE TO URBAN DECAY

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TRANSFORMATION IN A NUTSHELL

Many if not all cities throughout the world have experienced challenges related to urban decay. Urban decay is defined as the gradual deterioration of a formally functional city or town. The eThekwini Municipality has over the years introduced various responses to address the challenge of urban decay prevalent within the eThekwini Municipal Environment.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Ethekwini Municipality has promulgated specific by-laws dealing with problem buildings, public nuisance and littering.
- Weekly Municipal Senior Management planning and report-back meetings concerning the 'Clean and Maintain my City Campaign' which is spearheaded by the Mayor's office.
- Area Based Management Programmes, Safer Cities Programme and Urban Safety Plan.
- The roll out of Urban Improvement Zones, Priority Zones Project and Urban Management Zones.
- The use of social media tools to monitor the cleanliness of city spaces.

BENEFITS TO ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

- The enforcement of By-laws and legislation will help improve the image of the city, once urban decay is managed and addressed
- An integrated approach to cleaning up the city will reduce costs and provide efficiency within the city operations
- Public involvement and private sector initiatives ensures buy-in and a clean, attractive and well-maintained city

EXPANDED SUMMARY

The influx of people into cities to find economic prosperity, jobs and basic services, has challenged the deteriorating infrastructure within cities, as well resources required to provide basic services. One of the critical focus areas for metropolitan cities, like the City of Durban, is the need to transform city space into clean, attractive and well-maintained areas, which impacts on tourism, and economic development. Practically however, this is a formidable undertaking, given the urban decay that has taken place of late. It is therefore essential for metropolitan cities to have dynamic leadership in place, corporate partnerships and planning for sustainable practices, which are essential to the administration of metropolitan cities.

In 2010 the eThekwini Municipality released a set of bylaws for the 2010 FIFA world cup, held in South Africa, which articulated the bylaws around Advertising, Controlled Access sites, Public Open Spaces and City Beautification, and principal provisions regarding public

open spaces and city beautification; Public Roads and Traffic Guidance, and Street Trading. Following on this, the Municipality also introduced By-laws in 2015 and 2016 providing much needed guidance and restrictions regarding litter, bad buildings and nuisance behaviour. The Problem Buildings By-law, regulated in 2015 deals with the identification and declaration of buildings as 'Problem Buildings' throughout the municipal jurisdiction, provides for procedures for declaring a 'Problem Building' as well as dealing with the rehabilitation of buildings.

These by-laws are further supported by the National Building Regulations which provides that persons shall be guilty of an offence, if the local authority is of the opinion that any building is dilapidated or in a state of disrepair or shows signs thereof. The local authority may order the owner of such building, land to demolish such building or to alter or secure it in such manner that it will no longer be dilapidated or in a state of disrepair or show signs thereof or be could be found guilty of an offence and fined.

Compliance and enforcement of legislation is a major factor in ensuring that the city remains vibrant, safe and attractive and can only be measured if there are sufficient tools available to city administration. In 2010, the eThekweni Municipality introduced the Priority Zones Project, a public-private partnership, which was introduced as a pilot initiative to manage the city's public realm. The project was very successful in reducing crime and was able to achieve cleaner environments on sustained basis and to attract the public and tourist back to the City centre. Subsequently, the Municipality took over the management of the program and named it the Urban Management Zone programme. Having proven to be a highly successful program, it was introduced to all wards within the Municipal Area in 2016. The private business sector in certain areas have also initiated the Urban Improvement Management programme, to keep specific areas clean and secure. These have proven to be highly effective in maintaining a clean, attractive and safe area for its residents and its tourists.

To support the enforcement of by-laws and regulations, the Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, launched the 'Clean and Maintain My City Campaign' within the Metropolitan area, in 2014. Weekly meetings of the Senior Management of the Municipality had already started in 2012, to discuss plans for cleaning up the city and also reporting back on progress made on issues identified the previous week by the team.

Area Based Management Programmes, Safer Cities Programme and Urban Safety Plan are also some of the initiatives that have been implemented by the eThekweni Municipality in order to address the issues around urban decay.

In 2017, the Mayor of eThekweni Municipality launched a Whatsapp number for citizens to report any issues around Water. Other Whatsapp groups have subsequently been initiated by the Deputy Mayor of eThekweni Municipality to deal with Service Delivery issues. These initiatives have proven very successful in engaging the citizens of the City in reporting problem areas in the city.

Through these initiatives, the eThekweni Municipality hopes to curb the Urban Decay afflicting the City of Durban and its surrounds.