FUTURE
CAPE
TOWN

MAY 2013
Urban Design Policy Workshop
Hosted by Future Cape Town and the
Cape Institute for Architecture

Workshop Proceedings and Position Statement:

Cape Town Urban Design Policy

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION

On the 11th of May 2013, Future Cape Town co-hosted a discussion along with the Cape Town Institute for Architecture on the newly released for commentary Cape Town Urban Design Policy. This afternoon session took place at the offices for the Cape Town Institute for Architecture and included urban design and architecture professionals from local government, planning, development and architecture organizations, as well as researchers from Future Cape Town.

This document provides a summary of the themes to come out of this discussion, as well as a brief list of proposed future steps in accordance with the ideas and objectives of the summit.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Roots and Purpose of Urban Design in Cape Town
- A useful urban design policy would address both existing zoning policies and the nature of design in the Cape Town context in a uniform manner that allows for dialogue about the environmental and developmental constraints in place.

Policy Principles and Prescriptions
- The city should emphasize public participation and investment in urban design at a proactive and positive level by engaging with the public and other development stakeholders.

Key Steps to Future Implementation
- The city should reach out for multi-disciplinary engagement and support going forward to supplement where the policy is now, and in detailing how the policy will be enacted in the future.

Concluding Thoughts
- The Urban Design Policy must be viewed and interpreted in relation to local context and practice, and engage in a consistent dialogue with the public end-users of the future spaces and buildings of Cape Town, as well as with those development professionals that work in and around the city - which will provide necessary pressure against the siloing of departments crucial to the overall growth of the city.

Simmy Peerutin

Rudi Botha

Rashiq Fataar

Whitney Johnson

Michellene Williams

Nicholas Webb

Rory Williams

Cedric Daniels

Matthew Gray

Ifeoma Ebo

Jacqui Barhouch

THE ROOTS AND PURPOSE OF URBAN DESIGN IN CAPE TOWN

Urban Design is a relatively new term coined in the 1950's by professionals concerned with the urban environment and the gap between architecture and planning that was felt to be increasing. Urban Design was purposed to be a straddling focal to bridge the gap.

Cape Town, and South Africa at large are not immune to the siloing that was observed in the 50's and 60's, and lags behind on some of the developments in urban design. Cape Town needs to have some common vision and common sense principles about public space. There is both experiential and quantitative evidence that we can do better, for example, Cape Town has worst carbon footprint compared to other similarly sized areas around the world.

A useful urban design policy has two faces, **firstly** addressing new zoning schemes in a uniform way; and **secondly** addressing the nature of design and development process and the environment we have.

Currently, policies have created an environment that doesn't support quality design. This is a critical moment for Cape Town's zoning scheme and for guiding future development. The current planning environment functions in silos - ideally, the Urban Design Policy presented at this juncture is a first step that can move and interact between these silos to the benefit of the design and development community and the Cape Town environment. The current policy needs a concise statement guiding developers and policies set in a language which multi-disciplinary professions can understand, so that it can be utilized as a trans-disciplinary tool and as a practical guide on how to navigate the development process. If there is now a belief in urban design at the level of government then an appeal can be made to utilize the Urban Design Policy to appeal to multi-disciplinary professions and bridge the distance between silos.

POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRESCRIPTIONS

Further outlines describing implementation of the Urban Design Policy are needed to further guide the application of the policy as well as the underlying economic and environmental pressures inherent to building. Consistent knowledge of and application of the design principles detailed as well as readily available pre-consultations would be extremely useful in order to guide and correct flawed design concepts and ideas - would help streamline the approval process and lead to better design outcomes. Having guiding principles in place along with clear guidelines for the implementation of the policy and consistent application of these principles across professions would greatly help garner support for the policy and future steps towards governing development and design.

Currently, the new integrated zoning policy has removed what were entrenched guidelines and has created a uniform zoning scheme across the city. Thus, it is a critical moment for urban planning and design policies to directly influence the zoning process and potential incentives for developers therein. Towards this, the Urban Design department needs to delineate itself as a bridge builder and a facilitator between built environment professionals as well as the public.

The City of Cape Town's capacity to implement may be limited at the present stage, but it must lead in building and supporting well-conceived designs. While the policy as it stands, is promoted as an advising document and not prescriptive - the city should emphasize engagement at a proactive and positive level by engaging with the public and other stakeholders.

KEY STEPS TO FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

The Workshop highlighted a need to for stakeholder and civil buy-in for successful future implementation of an effective policy. Our suggestions about the way forward include:

- Monitoring those with key "gate-keeping" roles and responsibilities, for efficient consultation, consistent standards, and collaborative focus across disciplines dealing with the built environment.
- Outline a public engagement process that can outline the principles of the Urban Design Policy and campaign for greater investment by civil society in design and development processes
- Multi-disciplinary engagement and support going forward to supplement where the policy is now, and how the policy will be enacted in the future.
- Campaign for public debates and greater political education in regards to design principles within the Cape Town context.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Urban Design Policy must be viewed and interpreted in relation to local context and practice, including the social, political, and environmental layers that comprise the development milieu. Policy implementation must go forward with continued stakeholder engagement and dialogue, and also with an eye towards broader public education and discourse. In educating those professionals from different built environment silos, politicians, and civic advocates, we can encourage bolder choices, and progressive decision-making in future stages of policy implementation. In addition, consistent dialogue with the public end-users of the future spaces and buildings of Cape Town, as well as with those development professionals that work in and around the city, will provide necessary pressure against the siloing of departments crucial to the overall growth of the city.

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