

Kliptown Social Housing Project

Human Settlement Success

By: Sello Mabotja

In the heartland of the densely populated South Western Township (SOWETO), a sprawling commercial and residential development is sandwiched by two areas - Pimville and Klipspruit. The area targeted for regeneration was renowned more for its historic and political significance and not as a thriving residential and commercial property node. But now it has two housing developments in the form of blocks of flats for both low and middle-income earners. One of the blocks of flats is the neighbour of the celebrated heritage site, the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication while the other is on the border of the area and Pimville township. According to the Johannesburg Social Housing Company (JOSHCO) the tenants pay rent of R1 550 per month. This is Kliptown-Jozi's oldest multi-racial urban settlement - an area established in 1903.

Other property developments in Kliptown include the refurbishment of the railway station and a shopping complex in the vicinity of the Walter Sisulu Square, where an assortment of businesses have leased space and are doing roaring business.

The Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) allocated an estimated R436 million some five years ago. According to the JDA "fundamental to the long-term growth of Kliptown is the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods." This is being done through various housing programmes and the provision of services and social housing projects. These include construction of new social housing units and the upgrading or new freehold development of 5 700 units.

However, there are potential challenges for this model development. Among others, these include inevitable social decay problems. But this can be solved by on-going upgrades of facilities and maintenance of those areas. Crucially, the boycott of payment for services is not anticipated in the new South Africa, therefore the developments



and adjacent areas will be well serviced. The current municipality also enjoy legitimacy in communities and can be relied on to address their grievances.

But the advantages outweigh the above immensely. In the first instance, it is not a tired refrain that the vast majority were deliberately excluded from the mainstream economy and could not access basic and vital services critical to human survival such as decent shelter. Moreover, townships did not have their own social amenities in the past and if any, these were not maintained adequately with many in a shocking state of disrepair. Unlike developments by the past regime, these are integrated into communities and can readily access services due to their strategic location within areas of business activity. Social housing projects are a complete reversal of the old, apartheid-era hostels removed from the communities.

The social housing approach has obviously alleviated the accommodation challenges of people falling within the R5 000 to R10 000 income group who do not qualify for property finance due to the rising costs of houses caused by the recession. These people are also excluded from

WALTER SISULU SQUARE

Walter Sisulu Square in the heart of Kliptown is one of South Africa's first township entertainment centres, attracting both national and international attention with its broad variety of outlets suitable for local traders, event coordinators and international tourists. The Square embraces a unique historical background mingled with the modern urbanization trendsetting that South Africa is best known for. Its diverse cultures and way of life is a total fascination to the outside world.

The Square celebrates what township life is all about - its people, their spirit, their passion and aspirations, yet also has a vibey dose of eastern vibrations that entice all walks of life. It sends a culture shock to the pessimist yet doesn't fail to impress with its rich historical quality or the spirit of Freedom that lives on at the Square and its people in Kliptown. This is one of the 'must see' places on your 2011 list.

With over 10 retail shops, 6 commercial offices, banks and service providers, you are guaranteed great time. You can visit for the day or spend the night at the Soweto Hotel or any local B&B or Backpackers around the Kliptown area. Feast your eyes and fill your mind on the Open Air Museum, the Freedom Charter Monument, the Hawkers Stall with famous township 'Tshisa Nyama' and a Tourist Centre at your service. As one of the City of Joburg's properties The Square houses a 3 level Multi Purpose Hall to suit any event, whether it's fashion, a conference or wedding - The Square has it covered.

Start 2011 with a bang and visit a place where the language spoken is one that we all understand, a place where freedom reigns. Come to The Walter Sisulu Square 'e' Kliptown.



benefitting from Government's mass housing provision known as RDP houses (named after the Reconstruction and Development Programme, which was implemented at the dawn of democracy in 1994). Moreover, the targeted beneficiaries may also not be ready to own houses and deal with the responsibilities that come with the ownership of such an asset.

It appears social housing is the way to go for the country's urban area, especially because of its association with the broader development of infrastructure and regeneration and rejuvenation of most cities and townships. The approach is in sync with the human settlement philosophy.