

# Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan

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Policy Influences on the Plan  
2009

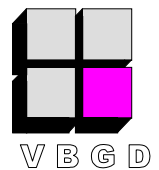
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# Preamble

## Approach to the Study

The intention of this report is to obtain sufficient knowledge of the policy documents which are currently used by the City Planning Department to inform the IBMD of their content, and to assess whether there are any issues which arise from examination of these documents, which could have a bearing on the current precinct plan for the Illovo Boulevard Precinct.

For the purpose of this assessment it was decided that the following documents would be consulted:

1. Growth Management Strategy 2008 : City of Johannesburg
2. Draft Spatial Development Framework 2009/10: City of Johannesburg
3. Parktown Sunninghill BRT : Land Use Guidelines 2007: Maluleke Luthuli & Associates
4. Draft RSDF : City of Johannesburg 2009/10
5. Rosebank and Sandton UDF 2008 : Akanya, Karabo Consulting and Studio MAS architects
6. BRT Guidelines March 2009: Muhammed Mayet Architects, Ikemaleng Consultants 2009

The above documents have been examined, and some have been found to be somewhat rudimentary and inadequate as far as details are concerned. In this regard we refer to the documents relating to BRT Guidelines in particular, which are highly conceptual. While they do show the current thinking within the department, considerable detailed work will be necessary in order to make a full assessment of their eventual applicability to the Illovo Boulevard Precinct.

The overall approach to the report is to have an overview of the various planning documents, so as to set a context for evaluation of the precinct, in the current planning environment. The intention is not to be detailed, but rather to gain insight into the likely influences on the precinct which arise in these documents.

## History and Revisions

The Illovo Boulevard precinct falls within the area demarcated by Melvill Rd in the west, Harries Rd in the north, either side of Fricker Rd, which forms the central spine, and Bompas Rd in the south.

The Illovo Boulevard Precinct Development Plan was prepared and approved by the City of Johannesburg in 1998 and has continued to serve as the guiding document for urban design, land use management and district management, ever since. The precinct plan has been adopted as the official Planning Policy for the area and is endorsed in the Regional Spatial Development Plan or RSDF. All of these official documents will be described later on.

In 2007, the Precinct Plan was amended, only in so far as the erven along Melvill Rd and Harries Rd were concerned, in order to allow for either offices or residential development on these erven. These amendments were also approved by the City of Johannesburg, and incorporated into the subsequent RSDF documents. The extent of the Illovo Boulevard Precinct is shown on the plan overleaf:

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## Precinct Management

The Illovo Boulevard Precinct is managed by a formally constituted Section 21 company, called the Illovo Boulevard Management District (IBMD), which was formerly known as Illovo Property Owners Association (IPOA). The district is officially managed by Kagiso Urban Management, a company specialising in the management of city improvement districts.

The success of the Illovo Boulevard precinct is owed to the direct participation of this Section 21 company, and all participants of the established Forum, who have upheld their role as managers of the urban environment in this area since its inception in 1998, more than 10 years ago. The IBMD's role in the development of this precinct has been to monitor and oversee the implementation of planning guidelines and detailed land use management parameters approved for each and every property which has been rezoned for redevelopment over this

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period. This meticulous monitoring role has seen to it that the precinct is undoubtedly a premier destination for those who have developed here, and which now commands some of the highest valued land developments in northern Johannesburg.

It is important to emphasize that the participation of owners in the precinct and the management of the area, is a formalized arrangement, which is embodied in each Title Deed of the properties in this area. This elevates the status of the IBMD, as it places a mutual responsibility on all owners, and the IBMD, to participate and manage the area, in terms of the determined terms of reference stated for this Section 21 company.

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## **The Need to Assess Current Policy Influences**

The precinct plan has for all practical purposes been fully implemented along the central core of the precinct area , which is either side of Fricker Rd, from Harries Rd in the north to Bompas Rd in the south, and there are very few development opportunities remaining in the area in general. Consequently, the precinct is stable, as far as immediate development pressures are concerned. However, it is necessary to note that the parameters set for development in this precinct in the original plan, were formulated more than 10 years ago. This was in an entirely different era in the evolution of the City, and although development of the node has been highly successful, it is necessary to examine current trends and new initiatives which are high on City Planning agendas, and thereafter to assess the potential effects on the Illovo Boulevard Precinct.

It is important to emphasize that the Section 21 Company, via IBMD, has a formal responsibility to manage the urban environment, and in this context needs to inform all members of the company of any elements which may impact, positively or negatively on the area in the coming years. This is one of the most important reasons for this exercise.

# 2 The Current Planning Environment

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## General Planning Context

### Historical Perspective:

The parameters devised for the development of the Illovo Boulevard Precinct, were set more than 10 years ago and were in response to the growing Illovo business area at the time, which had emerged around the so-called Thrupps shopping centre, and a strip of offices which had been approved for development on the opposite side of Oxford Rd. The question asked was whether the Oxford Rd offices should be seen as the boundary of non-residential development, or whether in the long term, the more appropriate boundary was Mellvill Rd, located two street-blocks to the west.

Having considered the context of this area in the City, and the anticipated pressures which were likely over time, it was decided to allow for the transformation of the area west of the Oxford Rd offices, centered on an axis along Fricker Rd, which was earmarked to become the core of the Illovo Boulevard Precinct. The principle was to have a predetermined urban street, with particular attention paid to the street scene along the spine. Special measures were taken to transform the status of Fricker Road from a residential street, into an urbanized zone incorporating a public domain within the street reserve, accommodating activities such as restaurants, as well as comprehensive street landscaping. The idea was to emphasize the sense of place, and control the use of vehicular traffic along the Boulevard. The results are evident today and although not without any problems, has been very successful, and has undoubtedly benchmarked the node as a premier location.

The boundaries of the area which became known as the Illovo Boulevard, were defined as being between Harries Rd in the north, Oxford Rd in the east, Bompas Rd in the south, and Mellvill in the west. The principle was to encourage higher intensity of land use in the boulevard, with a scaling down of intensity and land use, towards the more sensitive boundaries on the periphery. The Mellvill Rd boundary was seen as the most sensitive interface, because of the lower density residential precinct to the west, and development controls for this part of the precinct were devised to reflect these sensitivities.

## **Current Perspective:**

Before we consider any current policies and initiatives, which are likely to influence the context within which the precinct will find itself in future, it is important to understand that the City is an organism, continually evolving in response to pressures and forces, both physical and economic, which keep changing established paradigms and context for the various components of the city.

It is relevant to consider that almost without exception, all business nodes in the Greater Johannesburg area, and certainly in the northern areas, were previously residential suburbs, which became transformed, as a consequence of external pressures and influences brought to bear on them over time. This includes nodes such Braamfontein, Parktown, Rosebank, Sandton, Randburg, Rivonia, Sunninghill etc., which were all originally residential suburbs. Illovo itself had the same status, before the precinct was devised.

In all of the above cases, normal pressures present in a vibrant urban environment such as Johannesburg, dictated that these areas were either no longer suitable for their originally intended land use, or that market forces had identified them as areas in which pressures for various alternative uses such as offices, high density residential, or shopping could be diverted, in order to serve the needs of the metropolitan area. Prevailing conditions and attributes such as accessibility to the road and freeway network, location in relation to associated employment market, population distribution and growth, market sector preferences, etc., paved the way for a change in land use, and gradually the area in question changed, to accommodate new trends. Provided these changes are identified, acknowledged by authorities, planned for, and managed, the ensuing new environment which emerges represents a normal evolutionally process, witnessed in all major metropolitan centres throughout the world. This indeed, is precisely how the Illovo Boulevard Precinct came into being.

If one considers that it is now more than 25 years since the northern areas began to absorb a high percentage of the decentralized, and suburban office growth in Johannesburg, previously located only in the City Centre, it is not at all surprising that there are new pressures to consider within the City of Johannesburg, which is still the hub of economic activity in the South African context.

Illovo Boulevard itself, moving into its second decade, will need to respond to new pressures, which were not in play when the initial parameters were devised, for the redevelopment of the area in 1996.

As will become clear in this report, the City of Johannesburg and the provincial government, has embarked upon very significant infrastructure development and is aligning its future plans with these investments. The most notable is the Gautrain, the construction of which is well advanced, and the supporting public transport network, which is required to feed it.

The City has a clearly stated policy of shifting away from private transport, towards public transport, centred in the north around Gautrain. Creating conditions which enhance the viability of Gautrain and its feeder system, will undoubtedly require intervention from the City, and co-operation from the property development industry, to establish a land use pattern which will support the new facilities. Therefore suburbs which are positioned along the network routes can expect significant change in land use over time. Obviously, the success lies in the efficacy of the public transport system itself, and a supporting environment in which to operate. If this does not meet expectations, the property development industry is unlikely to respond by investing in uses and buildings which support the new infrastructure.

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## **Emerging Planning and Development Trends**

An established trend in the city, in general, is the overall principle of “densification” and the desire for a more compact city. These are sensible ideals which aim at a better functioning city in the long term, however are constrained, particularly in redeveloping older areas, due to the inability of service infrastructure to cope. Large components of the infrastructure including sewers, water, power and roads, were designed and installed many years ago, and with a different land use pattern in mind and therefore, significant investment in such infrastructure is required. The northern suburbs of Johannesburg are transforming from low density, exclusively residential precincts, to a mixed use environment aligned with current parameters for development. Infrastructure however has not been upgraded, and will need time and investment to facilitate the change. This could be a retarding element in the transformation process.

The extremely high value of land, compared with 10 years ago, dictates that the era of low density, "office park" environments, developed at FAR's of 0,4 or even less and heights of 2 storeys, are, except in special circumstances and locations, a thing of the past. High land values and development costs have shifted the viability of, e.g. office development, which is eventually expressed in the rentals of floor space. The achievable rentals dictate that intensity of land use must increase.

Decentralised nodes in the past were viewed as relatively low intensity business environments, with limitations on FAR and height, even in very significant nodes such as Sandton and Rosebank. Nodes such as Woodmead have FAR's as low as 0,25, while others such as Bryanston, Rivonia, Hyde Park and Sunninghill were established, in general, at a floor area ratio density of between 0,4 and 0,6. Even major nodes such as Sandton Central, were developed at relatively low intensity, which resulted in continual lateral expansion, and is the reason today, for its exceptionally large footprint as a node. This paradigm has moved on, and all nodes in future are likely to be more intense and with a greater mix of land use. Nodes and suburbs associated with the upgraded public transport facilities, such as Gautrain and the proposed BRT, are likely to be particularly pressurized, to align with any new guidelines established for raising the efficacy levels for these new facilities.

The re-emergence of high rise apartment buildings is also a relatively new trend, which had not occurred on a large scale in Johannesburg since the Hillbrow days. This is now commonplace in the major nodes, and will continue in future once the residential market recovers.

The above observations are evident in areas such as Sandton CBD and Rosebank, and elsewhere, where buildings, which have not nearly reached the end of their normal anticipated lifespan, are currently being demolished to make way for more intense use of the land. This trend would suggest that the early redevelopment of strategic nodes is set to continue, which could mean that other precincts such as Illovo also see significant repositioning and re-development, in the medium term.

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## City Planning Initiatives

In the next chapter, the report will examine the policy environment prevailing within the City of Johannesburg, and address the likely influences on Illovo Boulevard, and its immediate

environment. It can immediately be stated that the City of Johannesburg has committed itself to specific development directions and prioritised them accordingly. The focus is on integrating the city, transforming it in a post apartheid era, and orienting it towards a public transport environment. While these are sound principles in general terms, it is imperative that investment by the city, in the full spectrum of infrastructure, follows these ideals. Investment will also need to be aligned with the property development industry, to ensure that the market conditions are harnessed and directed in appropriate directions. The City will need an embracing approach to development, if their overall ideals are to be achieved, and only time will tell whether the city grasps this opportunity to reconfigure the city, in partnership with the property development industry.

## 3 City Policy Initiatives and Plans

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### The Set of Plans and Policies

(Note: Plans and tables included in the text are to enable quick reference as they are not of high quality. These are attached in the Annexure as well, to avoid the need to consult the source)

The basic set of policy documents and planning tools devised by the City to guide them as decision makers in so far as land development is concerned, can be summarised as a “cascade” of interrelated documents which set overall principles at a metropolitan level on the one hand, and specific development parameters, at a fairly detailed level, for suburban “sub-areas” on the other. This cascade of plans includes the **Growth Management Strategy (GMS)**, the **Spatial Development Framework (SDF)** and the **Regional Spatial Development Framework (RSDF)**. Aligned with the above are more detailed planning documents which focus on specific areas such as the BRT route and the major nodes along it. These are the **“Urban Development Frameworks” (UDF’s)**, for various components in the city. There are also a multitude of **“Precinct Plans”** of which Illovo Boulevard is one.

These documents will be discussed, as to their impact on the environment influencing the Illovo Boulevard Precinct. It is important to note that in these documents the reference to Illovo is not to Illovo Boulevard, *per se*, but rather the wider area.

## Growth Management Strategy (GMS):

This document sets the basic parameters for the other documents to follow, and creates a context for the policies relating to the development of Johannesburg. It interprets the National Government's desire to see Johannesburg as a major growth centre and in doing so acknowledges the role of the private sector in achieving new directives. In its introduction, it concludes that the strategy **“must include strategic and coordinated planning, of all departments, all resources, all infrastructure and all development approvals”**. This suggests the intention to have an all embracing approach, which in our view, is essential for a City such as Johannesburg.

To understand the relevance of the GMS and its basic content, we note the following:

1. The GMS aligns itself with Gauteng Provincial Development Frameworks, and sets the following strategies as a pretext for a spatial development framework for the city;
  - **“Establishment of an efficient movement system”** that focuses on effective public transport
  - **“Creation of strong viable nodes”** to balance the activities of work, play, shopping and living, and to support public transport.
  - **“Strategic Densification”** also to support the viability of public transport
  - **“Corridor Development”** to strengthen dedicated corridors and facilitate linkages within the city
  - **“Sustainable environmental management”**
  - **“Sustainable housing in appropriate locations”**
  - **“Delineating an urban development boundary”** to combat urban sprawl.
2. In the above overall context, the GMS highlights the following guiding principles as essential elements for the creation of a desired growth pattern for Johannesburg:
  - The **“proactive absorption of the poor”** wherever possible throughout the city
  - An **“efficient, city wide public transport system”** based on the framework for Gautrain and the BRT, which will feed it.
  - The establishment and/or reinforcement of **“an accessible and diverse network of activity nodes”** which incorporate employment, social and residential components.
  - **“Densification and intensification of land uses along strategic development corridors”** to support public transport.

3. Other statements in the document which elucidate the city's intentions are, **“the future form will be anchored on an efficient public transport system”**,..... **“anchored on the Gautrain and a complete refurbishment of current infrastructure, rail will be a mode of choice”**..... and in discussing transportation,..... **“movement systems, supported by strong high-intensity, mixed use nodes and higher residential densities”**.
4. Flowing from all of the pronouncements in the GMS, the plan translates them into priority areas, and categorizes the city as follows:
  - **High Priority Areas :**
    - Public Transport Priority Areas
    - Marginalised Areas (i.e. previously disadvantaged)
  - **Medium Priority Areas:**
    - Consolidation areas ( the majority of the Johannesburg area)
    - Expansion areas (the area on the periphery)
  - **Low Priority Areas**
    - Peri Urban (outlying) areas

In the above context, it is clear that the Illovo Boulevard Precinct falls in a “high priority area”, being positioned along a BRT Route, close to Gautrain, and within an identified development corridor. This is significant, because it determines the strength of focus for the next level of plan, as well as the extent to which the city will concentrate its investments in the short to medium term.

## **Spatial Development Framework (SDF):**

The next level of plan in the series of documents is the Spatial Development Framework which seeks to interpret the GMS, and translate it into urban structure and form. It, together with the next level of plans, represents the spatial planning policy framework, within Johannesburg.

So as to contextualise the discussion, we will concentrate on the SDF's pronouncements for the areas closest to Illovo. It should be noted that the SDF focuses strongly, in the northern suburbs on the BRT and Gautrain facilities, which will create a public transport network from Soweto to Sunninghill. This network has as its backbone in the northern part of the city, the Oxford Rd/Rivonia RD corridor, and identifies this as a “flagship route” of the highest priority. The Illovo area also falls within Phase 1 of the implementation program. The route is shown in

the attached Annexure of plans. The following pronouncements in the SDF are significant for the Illovo area and environs.

1. The SDF categorizes nodes in the city as follows :
  - CBD
  - Metropolitan
  - Regional
  - District
  - Neighbourhood

These nodes all have different roles in the city, and are assigned different attributes and scale of development, as they progress up (or down ) the order. Obviously, the highest order is the CBD with the lowest being a neighbourhood node.

Illovo has been viewed in all policy documents to date as a district node, however it is proposed in the current revision of the SDF, to elevate its status to a regional node. This is significant, because a regional node is a higher order category, and as such, can expect to have more intense land uses and be encouraged to accommodate what is known as “strategic densification”. For instance, as far as residential densities are concerned, they are encouraged to be as high as possible, subject only to infrastructure capabilities.

2. In the SDF, Priority Nodes are identified, within what is termed the current “investment footprint”. These high profile nodes align with Gautrain, the BRT and 2010 soccer facilities. Illovo is one of the so-called priority nodes.
3. The attached Map 27 shows the BRT corridor and the position of the identified nodes along the route from Parktown to Sunninghill. The map is supplemented with a more detailed plan, (Plan 42 after page 14) and a table, i.e. Table 4.2, which identifies Land Use Guidelines in relation to the type of node. Illovo, as a Regional node, could see the suggested intensity of land uses, expressed in terms of FAR's raised considerably, to between 2.4 and 3.6, depending on how these tables are interpreted. These items will be mentioned again later on.
4. The SDF makes reference to more detailed studies undertaken for the BRT route, more specifically the document entitled “**Parktown Sunninghill BRT UDF- Land Use Design Guidelines**”, which provides details on envisaged land use guidelines for this corridor. These will be discussed in due course.

## **Development Frameworks (UDF):**

Although the next level of plan in the “cascade” of plans is the Regional Spatial Development frameworks (RSDF), it is more useful to discuss the relevant UDF's first, as they appear to flow

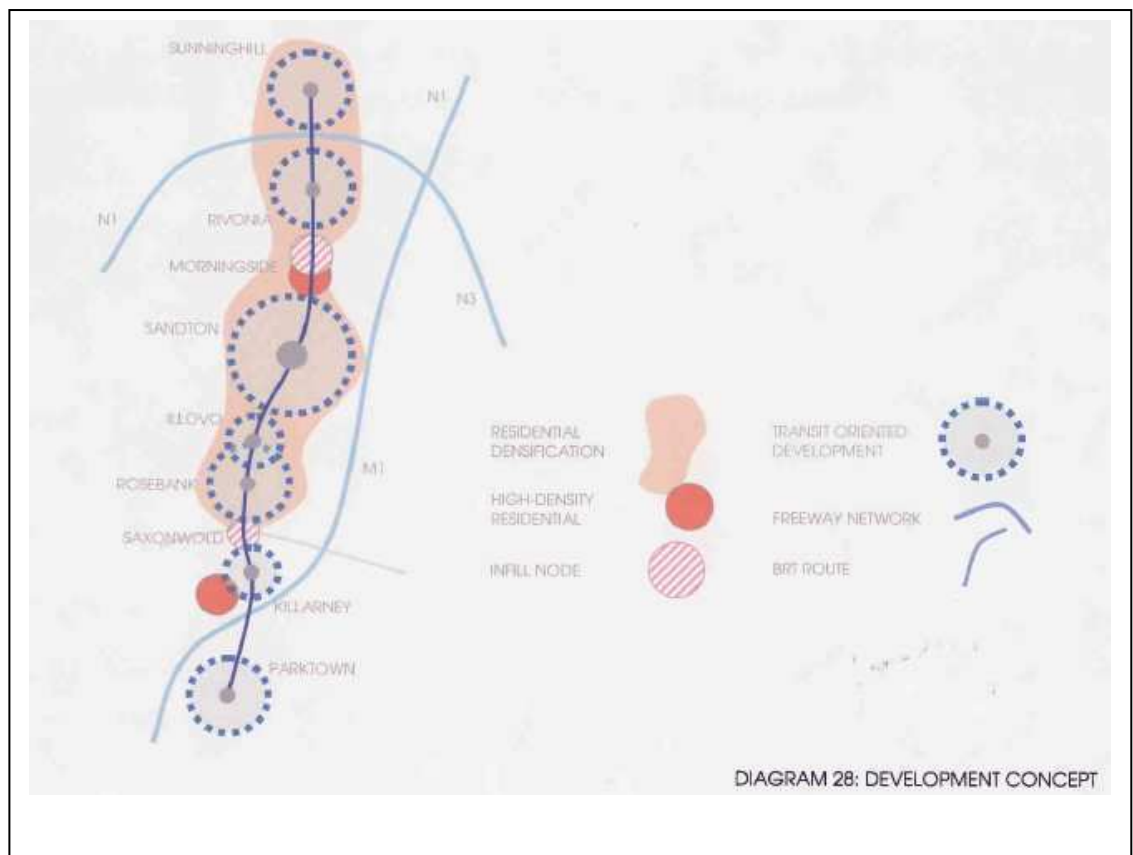
from the ideals which emerge from the SDF, rather than the RSDF. There are three sets of documents to consider in this regard, one of which is still very much in a draft form. These are:

- **Parktown Sunninghill BRT (UDF)- Land Use Design Guidelines**
- **The Rosebank and Sandton UDF's**
- **BRT Urban Design Guide Lines (Draft)**

## **Parktown-Sunninghill BRT Urban Development Framework (UDF) - Land Use Design Guidelines**

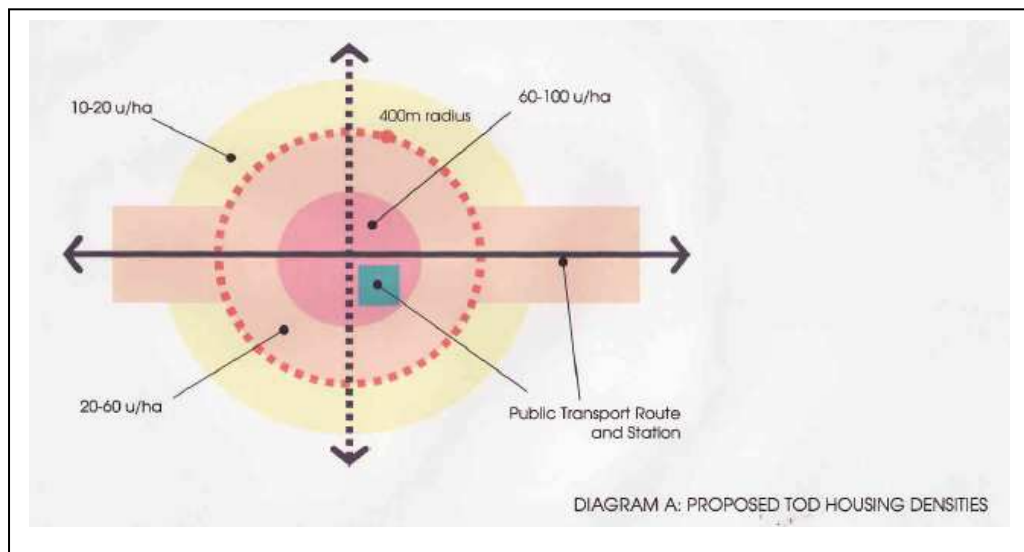
The following elements of the above-mentioned document are relevant to the Illovo Precinct.

1. The principle, in city wide terms of the development concept is shown in the plan below.



This shows a defined corridor route extending from Parktown in the south to Sunninghill in the north with a number of nodes identified along it. Illovo is one such node.

2. The attached plan (figure 2.4) extracted from the document shows the BRT from Parktown to Sunninghill, with the proposed stations along the route. In the Illovo area three stations are planned, these being St Davids, Illovo Square and Corlette Drive. Although in a conceptual form in this document, these station positions could directly influence the land use configuration in the adjoining areas because the mix and intensity of land use is determined in a radius from the bus station of at least 400m. We will discuss the implications of bus stations later on, however the principle is shown in the diagram below.



3. The Illovo area is currently categorized as a District node in this document and is placed for reference sake in Zone 2a and 2b. This reference is defined as “a medium density mixed-use nodal core” and “low density mixed-use periphery”, and suggests land development controls to be, a FAR of 1.2 to 1.6, Height of 3 to 4 storeys and coverage of 40%. Firstly, these controls do not align with the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan, but secondly and more importantly, is the potential effect of elevating the status of Illovo to a Regional node, as is suggested in the SDF, because this would change the land development controls to reflect a FAR of between 2.4 and 3.6 and the height to between 4 and 6 storeys. We do understand that the UDF for this zone is conceptual, and that existing precinct plans are not over-ruled by virtue of this document, however, it does show direction in thinking, and will potentially open the door for motivating town planning applications which align with these sentiments.

4. The UDF also suggests a “density bonus program” which “incentivises” additional development density, close to BRT stations, which can lift the FAR limits to as high as 5.4 in a Regional node. We do not intend to attempt to address this concept in this report, as it is a complex matter and virtually untested in the city. We simply make reference to it to indicate that such incentivised provisions of policy, could become a factor in nodes such as Illovo, in future.
5. So called “mixed use development” is strongly promoted along the corridors and in nodes, which implies a wider diversity of land use for nodes. The UDF is strongly biased towards high density residential developments, although the overall sentiment is for land uses which support public transportation.
6. In discussing Spatial Structure, the UDF identifies Mixed Use nodes, as shown on the attached Fig3.1 in the Annexure to this report. It also introduces the concept of “**transit oriented development**”, (or TOD), which places a priority on nodes which are viewed as being strategic to the functioning and integration of the transit system, including Gautrain, BRT and the other feeder modes of transport. The idea of TOD's is to create a mixed, intense development environment within between 400m and 1000m of stations. In summary it is stated that “key to the design of TOD's as (a) achieving higher land use densities, and (b) achieving a greater mix of land uses.” This is aimed at “boosting the viability of public transportation systems”. From a conceptual point of view, TOD development is linked to the hierarchy of nodes. The table below (an extract from the UDF), gives an indication of the direction which the city is thinking:

TABLE 3.3: TOD HIERARCHY AND COMPOSITION

Type	Location	Relevant BRT Stations	Additional Multi-Modal Facilities	Maximum Walking Distance	Maximum Density	Typical Land Use Mix
Regional	Sunninghill, Rivonia, Parktown.	Terminus (Sunninghill); Rivonia Centre and Mutual Road (Rivonia); Victoria Avenue (Parktown)	Park and ride, bicycle storage, taxi rank	1000m	6 storeys	Range of higher-density residential leaning towards affordable housing, regional shopping centre, head offices of companies, tertiary educational facility, day hospital, regional sports club
District	Morningside, Illovo, Saxonwold, Killarney	Pavillion Shops and The Wedge (Morningside); St. Davids, Illovo Square and Corlett Street (Illovo); Rutland Street and Englewood (Saxonwold); Waltham Road (Killarney)	Park and ride, bicycle storage, taxi rank	400m	4 storeys	Range of higher-density residential leaning towards apartment housing district shopping centre and rental offices, medical clinic, secondary or primary schools, local sports club.

Source: Maluleke Luthuli and Associates, 2007

- While the Illovo area has been categorized as a “district” node one can see that if the status is elevated to a “regional” node, different elements do come into play.
7. In this document the following is stated regarding the delimitation of land use management zones in relation to the BRT:

***“Land use management zones have been identified to support the functioning of Parktown-Sunninghill BRT system. These land***

**use management zones are demarcated on Figure A and aim to create a specific land use character in nodal areas along the BRT route. As far as possible, the proposed land use management zones have given consideration to existing land use patterns, zoning precincts and the mixed-use zones demarcated by the Johannesburg SDF. Land use and development density guidelines that are proposed within each of the land use management zones, are presented in the Table A."**

Table A referred to above is shown below:

TABLE A: STANDARD LAND USE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Development Controls	Category	Detailed Category	Regional Node		District Node		Residential Area				
			Zone 1A High-density mixed-use nodal core	Zone 1B Medium-density mixed-use nodal periphery	Zone 2A Medium-density mixed-use nodal core	Zone 2B Low-density mixed-use nodal periphery	Zone 3 High-density residential node	Zone 4 Medium-density residential zone	Zone 5 Low-density residential zone	Zone 6 Very low-density residential zone	
Land Use	Residential	Very low-density (10 u/ha)									•
		Low-density (20 u/ha)									•
		Medium-density (30 u/ha)		•		•		•			
		High-density (80 u/ha)	•	•	•		•				
		Accommodation	•	•	•	•					
	Social	Educational		•	•	•	•			•	•
		Medical	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
		Community facility	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
	Business	Retail	•	•	•	•					
		Office	•	•	•	•					
		Entertainment	•	•	•	•					
		Motor trade		•		•					
	Institutional	Municipal		•		•					
		Government		•		•					
	Industrial	Light									
		Commercial		•		•					
		Heavy									
	Open space	Active		•		•		•		•	•
		Passive						•		•	•
Max. FAR			3.6	2.4	1.6	1.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Max. Coverage			60%	60%	40%	40%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Max. Height			6 storeys	4 storeys	4 storeys	3 storeys	4 storeys	3 storeys	2 storeys	2 storeys	2 storeys
Max. Density			n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	80 u/ha	30 u/ha	20 u/ha	10 u/ha	

Source: Maluleke Luthuli and Associates, 2007

The plan overleaf, which is Plan 42 found in sub-area 16 of the RSDF, shows the demarcation of these zones within the Illovo Boulevard and surrounding area as they relate to BRT stations. The Illovo Boulevard precinct is positioned in Zones 1A and 1B.

We will not discuss the detail in the table, but reference to it shows the change in status for a Regional node, as far as land development intensity is concerned. Note the changes in FAR, Height and coverage, which far exceed those currently applicable in Illovo Precinct.

- The last section of the Parktown-Sunninghill UDF defines an area north of Illovo Boulevard Precinct, i.e. north of Harries Rd, as the "Illovo Precinct". This is the same area previously known as Illovo Point which is shown on the attached Figures 5.3, 5.6, 5.9 and 5.12, in the Annexure of Plans. These sketches are highly conceptual, and cannot really be used to sensibly assess the future intentions; however, it does show intent as far as densifying this part of the BRT route is concerned.

## Rosebank Urban Development Framework (UDF):

As part of the planning process for the BRT route from Parktown to Sunninghill, the city has singled out two highly significant precincts, and compiled separate UDF's for them. These are Rosebank and Sandton Central, which are both precincts accommodating Gautrain Stations.

The precincts identified as high profile development areas, aligned with these stations, extend considerably beyond the nodes of Rosebank and Sandton as they are currently experienced. The Rosebank UDF boundary extends either side of Oxford Rd from Bompas Rd in the north to south of Glenhove Rd in the south, and as far west as Jan Smuts Ave. (See the demarcated study area in the plan below). Although the study area has different attributes, there are a number of potential influences on the Illovo Boulevard Precinct which need to be examined.



The following elements are relevant in the document:

1. As with previous documents mentioned, the UDF sets the same or similar objectives as those found in the GMS and SDF. In summary they are:

*"Developing a more compact urban form that promotes:*

- Residential and employment opportunities in close proximity to, or integrated with, each other
- A diverse combination of land uses, also at the level of individual erven
- Densification and integration
- Optimising the use of existing infrastructure, including bulk infrastructure, roads , transportation and social facilities
- Supporting and prioritising the development of viable and sustainable public transportation systems to provide access to opportunities"

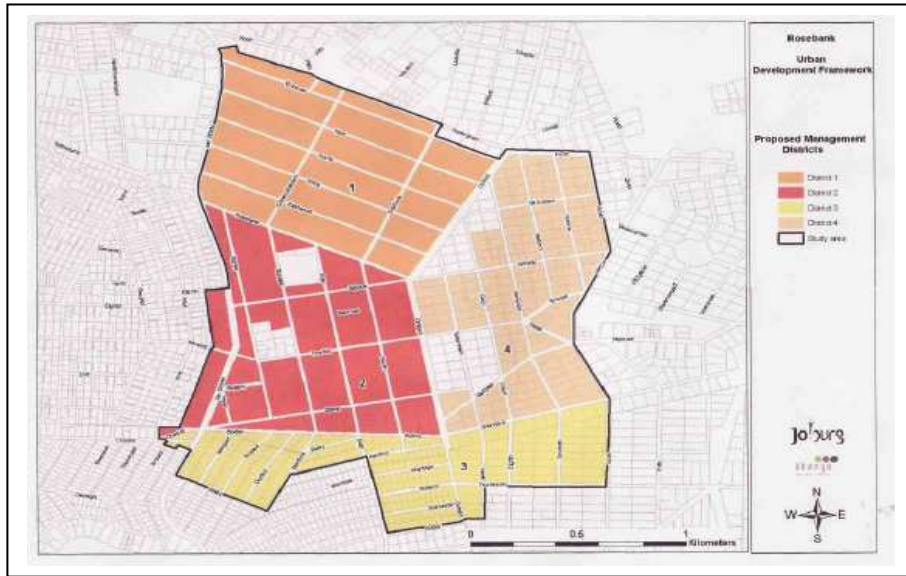
2. In assessing the status quo, the report concludes , inter alia, as follows:

- "Rosebank is located within the core economic area of the province.
- A adequate mix of uses exists in the node
- The node has good global accessibility and linkages to other nodes and commercial activities
- There is a high level of local and urban management within the boundaries of the CID
- Through planning and management there is the opportunity to establish viable public transport
- Electricity infrastructure capacities need to be monitored
- The Gautrain/BRT will result in more economic growth"

3. The UDF places a high level of attention on the Gautrain Station and the 800m radius around it which is seen as the main focus area for intensification of development. The importance of accessibility, including pedestrian movement is emphasized. In determining an overall framework which integrates all forms of transport modes, and enhances accessibility, the concept includes reinforcing the links between Illovo and Rosebank via an extension of Fricker Rd southwards, as shown on the diagram below. A new development precinct is mooted as well:

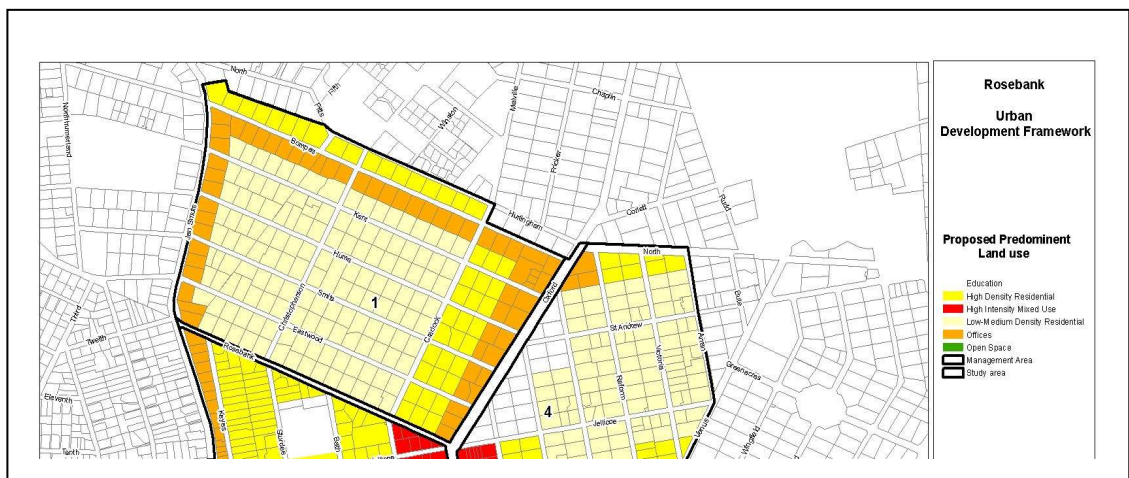


4. In defining the basics principles for the study area as far as urban design is concerned, the UDF divides the area into 4 districts as shown in the next diagram below:



The most relevant district is District 1 and more specifically the area which is situated between Oxford Rd, Bompas RD and Cradock Ave which abuts on the Illovo Boulevard Precinct.

As shown in the diagram below, the area mentioned is singled out as an area for redevelopment and again the extension of Fricker Rd becomes an important feature.



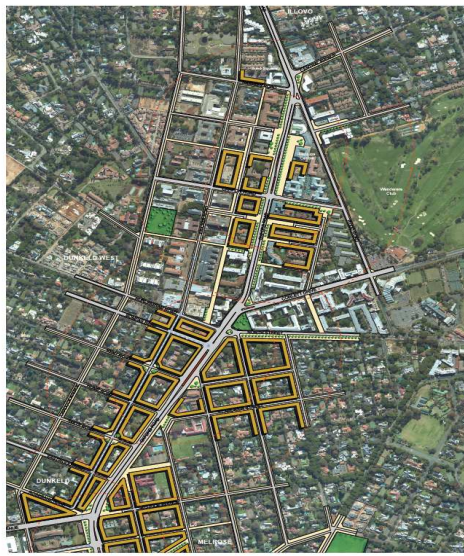
5. In addressing interventions for the study area, the proposals are still somewhat vague, and will in due course be supplemented with detailed plans for each



## **BRT Urban Design Guide Lines (Draft)**

The City Planning Department have also commenced with Urban Design Guidelines for the BRT route which is still very much in a Draft form, and we have only looked at a copy of a presentation made to various stakeholders recently.

The extract below shows that the thinking is to densify development along the BRT route, as with the previously discussed policy documents. The documents available in this regard, for this area as well as the Illovo Point area, are **too preliminary and are too elementary** to draw any conclusions at this stage, and we should draw the city council's attention to this as soon as possible. Examples of these plans are shown in the annexure.



## **Regional Spatial Development Framework (RSDF);**

The document which spells out the detail for each region in the Greater Johannesburg area is the RSDF. It is divided into regions, of which Region B and E both have relevance.

The RSDF interprets both the GMS and the SDF and translates these into “**Development Objectives**”, “**Interventions**”, and “**Guidelines**” for suburban “**Sub-Areas**”. This document is used as a direct means to assess land use applications in the sub-area within which such applications are submitted. Our view is that this assessment is not always cognizant of the higher order principles contained in the SDF and the GMS, and the rather abbreviated guidelines are interpreted too rigidly, allowing for very little scope for flexibility. This is in our view a shortcoming in the entire cascade of plans; however, it is an important policy document, in spite of its somewhat superficial format.

The following are relevant components to consider:

In Sub-area 16, the following pronouncement in the description of the sub-areas is relevant:

***“This area has been identified as a priority area because it has the BRT running through it and contains a node. The implication in terms of the GMS is that issues relating to appropriate and effective densities, mixed uses and infrastructure provision are foremost in the city’s designation for these areas as priority areas along the identified corridor, from an infrastructure perspective. Aspects relating to inclusionary housing to facilitate affordable and gap market housing incentives, to facilitate socially geared developments in these locations, are critical.”***

The RSDF’s for Region B and Region E are repetitive in their pronouncements on issues which originate in the GMS and SDF, and therefore we will not discuss these elements.

The following is relevant for each Region and sub-area, in so far as they affect the Illovo Boulevard Precinct.

**Region B: Sub-area 16:**

- The wider Illovo area is elevated to a Regional node, and further identified as a high priority area because of the BRT initiative.
- Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan is again incorporated into the RSDF, as it was in the previous revision year. No amendments are proposed.
- Rivonia Rd, Oxford Rd as well as Bompas Rd and Corlett Drive have an elevated status, where it would appear that the BRT Land Use Guidelines will apply. These assign new Floor Area Ratios, and land uses along the route. On the assumption that this is read with the bullet point above, (i.e. that the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan is incorporated into the RSDF in its current form), it implies that these guidelines are, for the time being, to be applied **outside** the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan area. We wish to emphasize this point, and reserve our comments on the potential effects of these guidelines on the Illovo Boulevard, as they are certain to impact on the precinct, one way or another.
- The Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan, shown on Plan 36 in the Draft Regional Spatial Development Framework which was put out to public comment in April 2009, did not accurately reflect the rights associated with the various properties included in the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Development Plan. A copy of the plan which reflects the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan more accurately, have been submitted to the Department of Development Planning and Management as part of the comment process on the Regional Spatial Development Framework. Through interaction with the department it would be ensured that the correct data is reflected in the all planning guideline documents.

**Region E: Sub-area 21:**

- In this sub-area, not much additional content has been added and therefore last year's RSDf is repeated in the Tables. Only one exception, as with Region B, is that Illovo node is now identified as a Regional Node. In this regard, our comments above are applicable.
- As with Region B, there are wider influences, but these are not direct references to our area, and will be picked up with the second submission.

**Other considerations which may influence the area:**

The primary task in this exercise has been to examine and assess the current policies and documents available from the City Council, in order to judge influences arising there from, on the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan.

Some aspects related to the plans, have not been included in the report to date, due to time constraints and also because it requires moving into a more detailed planning realm, which was not the intention of the report.

The first is the possible effects which may be relevant for parts of Illovo Boulevard, as a consequence of the BRT, such as position and operation of BRT stations. It has been mooted that the BRT may require vehicular traffic to be moved to alternative routes such as Melvill Rd, so as to take the pressure off Oxford Rd. Depending on how this is done, there could be influences on Bompas and the Melvill Rd properties. This requires further investigation.

The second is the presence of town planning applications on the fringes of the Illovo Boulevard, both in the Illovo Point area, as well as the new development precinct linking Illovo to Rosebank in the south. These applications have been motivated by the changing status of the northern corridor, and will in all likelihood be endorsed by the City, if they do indeed assist in facilitating the ideals of a functional transportation system in the northern corridor. IBMD should take cognisance of the presence of these applications and get directly involved with the detailed planning, which will be required by these applicants in assessment of their respective merits.

The third are the local economic considerations within the IBMD area, which determine whether the area is likely to change, under the new pressures exerted by the new planning era explained in the report. The Boulevard, particularly Fricker Rd, is a very stable and developed environment and in our view unlikely to change in the short term due to

the practicalities of building ownership, leases, tenanting profile etc. This is a subject on its own, but is mentioned, perhaps for further consideration, in a more detailed report.

## 4 Assessment of Policy Documents

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### **Observations and Comments:**

The following general comments are made regarding the various policy plans and documents we have assessed in this exercise:

Although the Illovo Boulevard Precinct is practically fully developed and consequently stable as far as immediate development pressures are concerned, the Precinct Plan relies on parameters which were set more than a decade ago, in a different cycle of the City of Johannesburg's evolution. If one considers that it is now more than 25 years since the northern areas began to absorb a high percentage of the decentralized, and suburban office growth in Johannesburg, previously located only in the City Centre, it is not at all surprising that there are new pressures to consider.

1. The northern suburbs of Johannesburg are transforming from low density, exclusively residential precincts, to a mixed use environment aligned with current parameters for development.
2. The extremely high value of land in the north, dictates that the era of low density, "office park" environments are a thing of the past. High land values and development costs have shifted the viability of all developments, which suggests that intensity of land use must increase.
3. Nodes and suburbs associated with the upgraded public transport facilities, such as Gautrain and the proposed BRT, are likely to be particularly pressurized, to align development in these areas with any new guidelines established for raising the efficacy levels of these new investments.
4. In areas such as Sandton CBD and Rosebank, relatively new buildings are currently being demolished to make way for more intense use of the land. This trend would suggest that the early redevelopment of strategic nodes, is set to continue, which

- could mean that other precincts such as Illovo also see significant repositioning and re-development, in the medium term albeit in specific parts of the node, on sites which have a better propensity for redevelopment.
5. The City of Johannesburg has committed itself to specific development directions and prioritised them accordingly. The focus is on integrating the city, transforming it in a post apartheid era, and orienting it towards a public transport environment. All plans and policies are consequently aligned with this strategic direction.
  6. The cascade of plans which guide the future vision includes the **Growth Management Strategy (GMS)**, the **Spatial Development Framework (SDF)** and the **Regional Spatial Development Framework (RSDF)**. Aligned with the above are more detailed planning documents which focus on specific areas such as the BRT route and the major nodes along it. These are the **“Urban Development Frameworks” (UDF’s)**, for various components in the city. There are also a multitude of **“Precinct Plans”** of which Illovo Boulevard is one.
  7. All of the above have a common vision of **“proactive absorption of the poor”** wherever possible throughout the city, an **“efficient, city wide public transport system”** based on the framework for Gautrain and the BRT, which will feed it and the establishment and/or reinforcement of **“an accessible and diverse network of activity nodes”** which incorporate employment, social and residential components.
  8. The **GMS** identifies high, medium and low priority areas for Johannesburg as a whole, and in this regard, the Illovo Boulevard Precinct falls in a “high priority area”, being positioned along a BRT Route, close to Gautrain, and within an identified development corridor. This is significant, because it determines the strength of focus and where the city will concentrate its investments in the short to medium term.
  9. The **SDF** does likewise, and focuses strongly in the northern suburbs on the BRT and Gautrain facilities, which will create a public transport network from Soweto to Sunninghill. This network has as its backbone in the northern part of the city on the Parktown to Sunninghill BRT, and identifies this as a “flagship route” of the highest priority. Illovo falls within this area.
  10. The Parktown/ Sunninghill UDF identifies Mixed Use nodes, and introduces the concept of **“transit oriented development”**, (or TOD's), which places a priority on nodes which are viewed as being strategic to the functioning and integration of the transit system, including Gautrain, BRT and the other feeder modes of transport. The idea of TOD's is

- to create a mixed, intense development environment within between 400m and 1000m of stations.
11. The guidelines for development in the BRT areas create what is called a “density bonus”, which is aimed at incentives for developers to include low income or “affordable” housing into developments, in exchange for additional floor area. This is a naïve concept which requires consideration with due circumspection and full discussion with the city.
  12. As part of the planning process for the BRT route from Parktown to Sunninghill, the city has singled out two highly significant precincts, and compiled separate UDF's for them. These are Rosebank and Sandton Central, which are both precincts accommodating Gautrain Stations. The Rosebank Study area extends up to the boundary with Illovo Boulevard and makes proposals which can affect the precinct. The Sandton precinct does not abut directly on Illovo Boulevard, and is therefore less significant.
  13. The location of a number of BRT stations combined with the Gautrain station at Rosebank means a significantly higher level of public investment in the vicinity. Enhanced transportation facilities are likely to attract further development to areas of this nature.
  14. The RSDF document spells out the detail for each region in the Greater Johannesburg area. It interprets both the GMS and the SDF and translates these into “**Development Objectives**”, “**Interventions**”, and “**Guidelines**” for suburban “**Sub-Areas**”. This document is used as a direct means to assess land use applications in each sub-area.
  15. The most significant pronouncement in the RSDF is in our view the elevated status of the node to a regional node, as this has implications for intensity of development and land use mix. This aspect also requires full discussion with city planning officials in an attempt to understand the implications of this change in status.

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## Implications for the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan:

The assessment of the policy documents and plans, as attempted in this report, is done **mainly to contextualize the Illovo Boulevard Precinct in a revised era of planning**, by the City of Johannesburg. The so called “cascade of plans”, which we have used as a term to describe

the documents, are all well aligned with one another, and without any question of doubt, show the City's priorities for development in the future.

The ideals and concepts expressed in these documents are difficult to fault in theory, and would be found in most text books discussing desirable spatial form for metropolitan areas. The emphasis on a compact city, as opposed to "sprawl", nodal development with a strong public transportation bias, and in the context of a South African city, the absorption of the poor, together with the correction of any disparities originating in the apartheid era, is also understood.

The key, however, is how far the city will go to invest in all supporting infrastructure, such as water, sewer and electricity, as the ideals for intense nodal development cannot happen in practice, without such investment. This aspect is raised now, and has not been fully incorporated into the body of this report, although it is an important component for the potential success of the city plans. The assumption is therefore that the necessary investment will follow, however one needs to address this through an engineering report, if the impacts on such significant intensification of development is to be accurately understood.

A further important ingredient is the degree to which the city will allow free expression of the property development industry to operate in the market cycles. Currently, the city has a strong bias towards residential development, which is not an appropriate approach or a universal solution to achieving their planning ideals. The city needs to plug itself in to the property development industry, and harness the forces at work, whatever the predominant preferences may be in the market cycle. For example, the emphasis should be on incentives for any activity which contributes to the city wide ideals, and not just "density bonuses" as appears to be the case from the current policies. This approach is not evident in their planning documents, which seem to reward residential developments only.

The following are our impressions from the documents assessed:

1. It is very clear that the Illovo Boulevard Precinct is positioned in a part of the city where every attempt will be made to transform the land uses to support and assist the massive investment by the City and the Province in public transport infrastructure.
2. The Gautrain is a reality, and despite the current opposition to the BRT by the taxi industry, this facility will have to follow, as it underpins the viability of the Gautrain itself. Planning and development focus will therefore definitely continue on the path as outlined in current planning documents.
3. All of the plans and pronouncements show very clear intent, however the detail of each affected precinct, remains sketchy and conceptual. While there are "urban design concepts" on the drawing boards of the city's consultants, there is a rather worrying lack of

detail, which needs to follow in order to devise properly conceived plans. If these are not produced, every developer with projects within the priority area, will make their own interpretations and plans, and apply pressure on the city to accept them. The city does not have the expertise, or the capacity to do detailed plans, and therefore one risk is that new initiatives will mushroom without due consideration for wider (or detailed), implications.

4. There are sufficient pronouncements, diagrams and conceptual plans to indicate that the Illovo Precinct area will be affected by the focus on the zone in general. Points of contact with the study areas aligned with Gautrain and the BRT stations, such as along Oxford Rd, Illovo Point, the Rosebank zone to the south, and the future expansion of the BRT network in an east-west direction, will apply pressure on seam areas such as Bompas Rd, Melville Rd and the interface with adjoining redeveloping areas.
5. As has been seen in Sandton and Rosebank, redevelopment has commenced on key properties, even where buildings are relatively new, and this is likely to repeat itself along the corridor, and especially in identified priority precincts such as Illovo. The elevation of the node to Regional status is likely to heighten this type of focus.
6. Although the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan is again endorsed in its current form and incorporated into the RSDf for 2009/10, this is mainly because the area is stable, and has relatively little developable land available for development. This may not stay this way in future, particularly if the bordering areas begin to change.
7. It is necessary to understand , more fully, the planned details of the BRT, in so far as aspects such as the re- routing of private vehicles, exact position and functioning of BRT Stations, and treatment of their immediate environments. Aspects such as parking, inter-modal transfers, etc, can have significant impacts on adjoining land uses, and these need to be understood. We have not had any insight into these matters, and will need to conduct further discussions with JRA in order to draw conclusions.
8. More clarity is required regarding the ability of the city's agents to supply the necessary infrastructure, such as power, water and sewers. These are addressed to some degree, however, judging on personal experience with individual projects in the northern areas, lack of capacity is an issue, which could affect the ability of the city to transform, as mooted in their plans.
9. The strong bias towards residential developments, density bonuses, and the concept of "inclusionary housing" needs to be questioned and debated, as there are no clear pronouncements offered on how these will function in practice. This is a topic in itself, which needs to be fully aired before any attempts are made by the city to implement a policy in this regard.

10. As has been the case in all precincts throughout the city, including Illovo Boulevard, there are established procedures required in order to amend such plans. While the city has shown its general intentions for the northern corridor, it has not made any pronouncements in any of the plans which supersede the currently approved policy for this area. Therefore, it should be noted and recorded that Illovo Boulevard Precinct would need to subject itself to a process as was the case when the initial plan was approved. Such a process will in our view require detailed urban design, and probably other specialist inputs, in order to revise the parameters for development in this precinct, and therefore the status of the precinct plan should not change until an exercise of this nature has been completed. In other words, ad hoc assessment of town planning applications, with out a contextual framework, should be avoided.

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## **Final Comments and Recommendations:**

Our general recommendations are the following:

1. The content of the various policy documents and plans should be noted.
2. We strongly advise that a study be commissioned to focus on the implications of intensification of the corridor, with specific reference to fringe areas and seams which abut with redeveloping areas. This study should essentially be an urban design framework to set new development principles, and also a planning assessment thereof, to devise suitable land development controls and parameters. Our thoughts in this regard would be to look primarily at the Oxford Rd land uses, which are older and more suitable for redevelopment, the northern fringe with Illovo Point, the Bompas Rd fringe, and the Melville Rd interface.
3. The city should be advised that until the abovementioned study has been undertaken, the Illovo Boulevard Precinct Plan must be retained as the guiding policy document for the area, due to its current investment profile and success, extending over more than a decade. They should be reminded of the formal responsibility which IBMD have as a managing agent, on behalf of all owners in the precinct.
4. It must be acknowledged that the precinct lies in a high priority zone, and that the elevation of Illovo Node's status to a Regional node could have significant

repercussions. This aspect requires further discussion with the city, however, in this regard; it should be made clear, that there is insufficient detail at present to pronounce on the potential effects of this revised status. Until such detail is available for perusal and consideration, the IBMD should express their concerns. Ideally, the city should undertake more detailed work in consultation with stakeholders such as IBMD.

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## **Documents Consulted:**

The following documents were consulted and perused in order to undertake the assessment in this report.

1. Growth Management Strategy 2008 : City of Johannesburg
2. Draft Spatial Development Framework 2009/10: City of Johannesburg
3. Parktown Sunninghill BRT : Land Use Guidelines 2007: Maluleke Luthuli & Associates
4. Draft RSDF : City of Johannesburg 2009/10
5. Rosebank and Sandton UDF 2008 : Akanya, Karabo Consulting and Studio MAS architects
6. BRT Guidelines March 2009: Muhammed Mayet Architects, Ikemaleng Consultants 2009

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# **Annexure of Plans, Extracts and Tables:**