



Press Release – 29 June 2012

uMhlanga's Rejuvenation Continues

At a briefing held at the Protea Hotel today, the uMhlanga Urban Improvement Precinct (UIP) briefed property owners, businesses and the media on the last five years of the UIP's role in uMhlanga's revitalisation as well future developments in the precinct.

Over the past five years, uMhlanga has experienced a visible rejuvenation thanks to a combination of municipal infrastructure upgrades and the expansion of the Urban Improvement Precincts (UIPs).

This rejuvenation is set to continue, as the UIP works with the municipality; property owners; businesses, and developers to maximize the potential of the area by securing property investment and building investor confidence; creating an environment which supports vibrant business, and improving the general environment and quality of life.

In order to achieve this, the UIP will follow its strategic and operational objectives for 2012 / 2013, all the while ensuring that security, cleanliness and maintenance remain top of its list of priorities.

UIP Security

The UIP fulfils a support role to the SAPF and Metro Police. The productive relationship with these authorities is fundamental to the success of the UIP in securing public areas.

It is important to remember that the UIP only reports on the incidents reported to it, so as awareness of the UIP grows so it is expected that the number of reported incidents will increase. Furthermore as Associated Areas have joined the UIP so have they been included in the monthly stats. However, in reviewing the crime reports which commenced in June 2009, there is a noticeable reduction in contact crime in public areas such as mugging and assault and private property crimes including house and business break-ins. Added to this, the SAPF crime stats provided to the CPF show that those areas within the UIP and Associate Managed Areas have lower crime stats than areas outside the management structure.

The UIP works at integrating all components of security and the driver for this is the UIP monthly Security Forum. Public area and private property stats are shared at these meetings, which also serve as a central forum for identifying hot spots and agreeing on plans to address issues. The UIP also chairs the Community Policing Forum for Sector 6.

UIP Cleaning, Maintenance and Greening

Generally speaking, uMhlanga is cleaner with fewer maintenance requirements, however both functions require daily attention and consistent management. Evidence of this is clear in the gallery section of the UIP website, where before and after images show the level of work the UIP cleaning and maintenance teams undertake.

Strategic Objectives

The UIP's strategic objectives are key to creating exceptional public spaces and include:

The Municipal Special Rating Area (SRA) policy review process

The current municipal policy governing both the SRA set-up process and subsequent operation is limiting the performance of existing SRA's (also known as UIP's) and restricting expansion. In November 2010, the UIP was invited by the City to a session on "Learning and sharing on Urban Management Initiatives – Durban and Johannesburg", where a number of challenges experienced by SRAs in setting up and operating SRAs were raised. As a result of this session, the UIP was asked to submit a document detailing these constraints with suggestions on SRA policy amendments that would provide for a more effective SRA structure / mechanism.

A positive addition to the draft 2012/2013 Municipal Rates Policy wrt Special Ratings Areas was included, and makes provision for the expansion of current SRA boundaries. However further lobbying is required to motivate policy changes to create a more enabling SRA mechanism for both operational effectiveness and expansion and the UIP is driving this.

Electronic Communication and Marketing

The UIP must keep its commercial and residential property owners up-to-date on anything that affects their property, business or quality of life and thus the UIP has adopted a communication system that integrates real time messaging for relaying essential information; text message services; a newsletter function and a website.

This system was adopted and implemented in June 2012 and combines the UIP website www.umhlangauip.co.za and the d6 communication tool. The website has been established as a central point for all information on uMhlanga including contacts; security reports; news; events; attractions, and a commercial business, tourism and property directory. The d6 Communicator is a customized tool that provides relevant information to a targeted group that signs up to receive it. The UIP has developed a branded d6 template with news, calendar, gallery and contact categories that ensure the user knows what the UIP is about.

Together the website and d6 will substantiate the services UIP members are receiving for their contribution; demonstrate to the municipality the success of the UIP/municipal partnership structure, and build investor confidence in the management structure and delivery of the UIP. The website and d6 will evolve as the UIP receives feedback from its members.

Operational Objectives

The Green Plan

The UIP's intention is to develop a Green Plan for uMhlanga incorporating greening and waste. This is a long-term project that will be rolled out in phases and will be supported by a Code-of-Conduct. Under this objective, the following has been achieved:

- The municipality has provided a list of recommended indigenous plants and trees suited to the uMhlanga environment
- The UIP has scarified and fertilised all promenade and Village grass areas.

- Bollards have been installed on the grass areas allowing for the closing of areas during off-peak periods to allow grass regeneration.

Management plan for dogs on the promenade and beaches

An issue of much concern for all users on the promenade and beaches, the UIP is working with the municipal Architectural Services and Parks Dept to address this issue with the development of plastic bag dispensers and signage to be erected on the promenade.

Northern Beaches /uMhlanga Nature Reserve management plan

While this area lies outside the management contract, substantial time has been invested by the UIP management team to secure this area and improve environmental management. A thank you is extended to the project sponsors including the UIP, Breakers Resort, Northern Promenade Properties, Tongaat Hulett Developments and Southern Sun and many others without whom this project would not have been possible. Much work has been done to get to the point where guided tours are conducted 7 days a week and two security guards are posted on the southern and northern banks of the Ohlanga River mouth. Furthermore, government has been successfully lobbied to fund restorative work; the development of flyers and poster, and accredited site guide training which included their employment on the site. Most importantly, additional funding has been found to keep this project going as well as the inclusion of an NGO who will develop a project plan for infrastructure upgrade and environmental management. A booking system is provided by the Breakers Resort.

CCTV system for public areas

A CCTV system proposal and costing was tabled to the UIP board. The system specifications for the area are high and currently, the low crime levels within the UIP precincts do not warrant this expensive investment. Instead the UIP identified key crime 'hot-spots' relating to vehicle theft and theft out of motor vehicles and properties in the affected areas have been approached to add additional cameras to their existing systems.

McCausland Crescent upgrade and clean-up

McCausland Crescent is a major pedestrian thoroughfare to the promenade. The southern portion has been upgraded, however it will be a year or two before the remainder is upgraded. In the interim the UIP has been working with property owners to improve the levels of building and green area maintenance. Visible progress has been made, but there is still more work to be done.

Improve levels of cleaning on the promenade

The UIP will be introducing mechanical push sweepers to the promenade and servitudes to improve the quality and efficiency of cleaning, this will free up staff time to assist with necessary maintenance and special projects

Working With The Municipality

The UIP's partnership with the municipality is fundamental to enhancing the quality of uMhlanga's public areas. This partnership has strengthened to a point where the UIP is invited to input into municipal design and planning processes. Here it motivates for infrastructure and design that would add to the user experience while ensuring cost effective servicing to maintain high standards. A past success is design requests that were implemented by the municipality during the recently completed upgrade to the promenade.

Current municipal projects motivated by the UIP that are underway:

- Repaving of Lighthouse Rd sidewalk alongside Protea Mall
- Planting the entrance to uMhlanga with completion expected mid July
- Planting the large bed at the corner of Lighthouse and Ridge Rd's - completion mid July.

Municipal infrastructure upgrades that the UIP is lobbying for:

Phase 6 of the uMhlanga Node upgrade -This upgrade is currently in planning stage and is set to begin in early 2013. Within this phase, the UIP is lobbying for:

- The completion of the McCausland Cres upgrade and traffic calming measures. Initial designs are complete, but the Ukusa and Pearls site plans, particularly the direction of traffic circulation on the one-way system, will be taken into account in the final design.
- Traffic calming measures for Lagoon Drive, adjacent to servitudes onto the promenade
- The Village sidewalks to be repaved with same clay brick spec as the promenade
- An upgrade of the Lagoon Drive Island with 34 x 3m high Coral Trees
- 12 additional benches with backrests for the promenade

Iconic welcome sign at entrance to uMhlanga - this will not be included in the current upgrade but has been agreed upon in principle by the municipality.

Village and Promenade way-finding signage - based on the same spec as that which was installed in Durban prior to the 2010 World Cup.

Beach and Promenade interpretive signage - this is to be provided by National Government and is being chased up by the UIP.

Lifesaving Club – This building is in desperate need of an upgrade, the provisional plan is to double the existing footprint to the south and will thus require an EIA process.

Upgrade of the Main Beach toilet facilities - This has been tabled to the municipal Economic Development Unit, and has since been referred to the Parks Dept. This will require substantial motivation due to limited budget.

Municipal service delivery successes

Municipal service delivery is critical to the functioning of any area and in the UIP, the management team are constantly motivating for high levels of service delivery that include:

Stormwater outflows and sewage spills onto the Beach – Water quality from stormwater outlets discharging onto the beach has in the past been problematic. The municipality is installing back-up generators to ensure sewage does not flow into the stormwater system. The old problematic sewage line running parallel to the promenade between Lighthouse Rd and Ocean Way is being relocated to Lagoon Drive extension, which will resolve the overflow problems. Since then there have only been two minor sewage spills which were quickly repaired and cleaned by the municipality. The UIP has received a map of private property connections to the stormwater system from the Pollution and Environment Department. The aim is to improve response time to spills by assisting the municipality in tracking frequency, identifying reoccurring pollution outfalls and possible location of pollutant source.

Promenade grass management plan – The Parks Dept. has agreed to allocate four dedicated staff to service the promenade grass areas, whose duties include weekly mowing, edging and weeding, and maintenance of the vegetated areas. The UIP has also developed a cutting / maintenance schedule for the Parks Dept which is monitored by the UIP.

Promenade irrigation system - Adequate watering of the promenade grass areas is essential and, given the high usage, needs to be done at night and the requires an irrigation system. The eTM has installed an irrigation system that covers the area from Hawaan Lane to Black Rock. The Parks Dept are carrying irrigation spares with the UIP making the required repairs.

Management plan for municipal recycling bins located in public areas -Bins have in the past not been adequately serviced and this has created both a health hazard and a negative impact on the area's aesthetics. Servicing of these bins has been greatly improved with a dedicated resource allocated to the UIP.

Replacement of uMhlanga M4 signage - A full signage audit was conducted in April 2010, and the majority of signs, barring two, have been replaced. The replacement of these two boards are being followed up with the M4 Bridge being used as a motivating factor.

Reduce / eliminate pole advertising within the precincts -The current postering of street poles in uMhlanga is detracting from the strides made in improving sense of place. Removal of the posters was achieved over the World Cup 2010 making a visible improvement, however the posters returned. There is provision in the municipal Advertising and Signage Policy that makes allowances for areas of maximum control in tourism nodes. In December 2011 the municipality approved the proposed Street Pole Poster Management Plan. A poster free zone has now been declared in the CBD, Lighthouse Road, McCausland Cres and the dual carriage portion of Lagoon Drive. Adherence with the management plan is being monitored by the UIP, and the result is a greatly improved public environment.

Promenade traders- It has been agreed with the municipal Business Support Unit and importantly the informal traders themselves that there will only be 12 permanent trading sites on the promenade in fixed locations. The 12 sites include the fruit sellers at the top of the Main Beach and McCausland servitudes. Business Support funded the provision of trading infrastructure for the promenade traders including two purpose built kiosk located at Bronze Beach a and the Pier. Sites have been demarcated on a map, and names and licenses have been allocated to sites. There is also no roving trading allowed. Urban Design is busy with the design and costing of infrastructure for the McCausland and Main Beach servitude fruit sellers that keeps within the style of the promenade upgrade. The municipality agreed to physically demarcate the trading sites on the promenade to stop trading 'sprawl'. This was completed at the beginning of 2012.

Beach traders- Beach traders are licensed to rove on the beach but are not allowed to trade on the promenade, steps to the beach or servitudes. The Business Support Unit has agreed to cap the number of licenses at the current 22.

Lagoon Drive traders - The Business Support Unit has agreed to cap the number of licenses at the current 15. The current trading infrastructure opposite the Cabana Beach is in poor condition and not optimal for trading viability. The current facilities are on private land which does not allow for the municipality to upgrade the infrastructure.

Beach and Promenade Signage Plan - The agreed plan with Parks Dept. has been implemented with multi bylaw signage erected at every promenade servitude and relevant bylaw signs located on the promenade balustrades at every access point to the beach.

The signage proved very effective in supporting bylaw enforcement, which directly reduces conflict. The Marine and Coastal Management (MCM) interpretive signage in on order with the National Dept in Cape Town.

Management Growth

The UIP and Associated Managed Areas have grown, with a substantial increase in administrative requirements. A high capacity dedicated UIP operational manager in Dewet Geldenhuys was appointed in November 2011, which has significantly improved visible service delivery.

Cara Reilly, formerly the Marketing Manager for the Sandton Central Management District (an equivalent to the UIP) has joined the management company on a consultancy basis. Cara brings valuable experience in the marketing / PR areas and has provided valuable input into the website development process as well as future marketing plans. Jenny Mckenzie has joined the UIP management team as the office manager – her capacity will lift service levels.

ENDS

Note To Editor:

The Structure of uMhlanga Urban Improvement Precinct (UIP)

The uMhlanga Urban Improvement Precincts (UIPs) were established by the uMhlanga property owners to retain existing investment in uMhlanga; stimulate new investment; create economic opportunity; improve safety and quality of life, and respond to the challenge of environmental sustainability.

In terms of structure, there are two UIPs or Special Ratings Areas (SRA) as they are official termed by the municipality namely, The uMhlanga Promenade UIP established in March 2003 and the The Village UIP, established in July 2008. These UIPs, collectively known as the uMhlanga UIP represent 29 large erven. In addition to the two UIPs, there are a further two Associate Managed Areas namely the Southern Promenade Properties (SPP) – established 2004 and the Northern Promenade Properties (NPP) – established 2010. These areas represent approximately 42 large erven.

The UIP partners with the eThekweni Municipality to ensure that this key node delivers an exceptional experience of public space. The UIP management team is constantly responding to the ever evolving needs of uMhlanga, whether it be service levels or special projects.

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