CHAPTER 2. SOUTH AFRICA’S URBAN REALITY AND AN OVERVIEW OF ITS KEY CITIES

There is no comprehensive picture of South Africa’s human settlement patterns and forms. However, an overview of what is ‘urban’ and of the nature of the South African city is key to understanding the current state of the country’s major cities.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ‘URBAN’: UNDERSTANDING THE SHAPE AND SIZE OF CITIES

Definitional issues
Any assessment of broader urban trends depends on the definition of ‘urban’. There is always a sense that one will know an urban (or rural) settlement when one sees it. But translating this ‘intuitive obviousness’ into a formal definition that enables sensible quantitative data collection and analysis, let alone meaningful policy, is not easy.

Countries use very different criteria to define urban and rural, and South Africa’s own definition has changed over time. Almost half of all countries use administrative criteria to distinguish when a settlement is urban. So, for example, South Africa has historically defined any settlement covered by a local authority as an ‘urban area’. Many countries agree that settlements over 20 000 people, and over 1 000 persons per square kilometre in density, are urban. But some countries use much lower cut-offs. A few use economic activity to distinguish those areas where agricultural livelihoods pre-dominate as not-urban, often in combination with other criteria. South Africa is currently experimenting with a method that involves categorizing census enumerator areas on the basis of a mix of criteria, including the structure of the built environment (eg formal or informal housing), land use (eg farming) and political institutions present (eg tribal authorities).

Because of the shortcomings in defining ‘urban’, this report focuses on what is happening in South Africa’s larger population centres, specifically the nine SACN cities and, where appropriate, an extended group of 12 additional ‘secondary cities’. The data collection and analysis is done in respect of the municipal area that defines the location of these cities.

The rural in cities
A key challenge is that the ‘cities’ discussed in this report are not all entirely ‘urban’ in settlement character. During 1999-2000, in preparation for the second democratic local government elections, the boundaries of municipalities were redrawn to rationalise the numbers of municipalities in South Africa’s wall-to-wall local government system.

Prior to 2000, ‘urban’ municipalities were clearly identifiable. Their boundaries usually extended only to the edge of the built-up area of towns and cities. The hinterland beyond this was covered by a system of regional services councils and rural local councils with much reduced powers. Through demarcation this system was replaced with one that amalgamated not only urban councils with their rural hinterlands, but also a number of previously separate urban
municipalities themselves. There is now no such thing as an urban as opposed to a rural municipality. And any typical municipality may today include within its extended boundary a number of town centres, as well as areas of large commercial farms, peri-urban small-holdings, isolated traditional homesteads and/or apartheid homeland style rural ‘villages’. Most of the nine SACN cities are characterised by this complex settlement pattern.

Displaced urbanisation

Choosing to identify South Africa’s key cities by the name of the municipality whose jurisdiction is then said to ‘be the city’, and analysing ‘city data’ at the scale of the municipal area, presents a related difficulty. A result of apartheid was the forced displacement of large numbers of African people, who might otherwise have been permanent residents of urban centres, to sites of so-called displaced urbanisation. These are densely populated areas with tightly clustered village settlements, informal settlements and micro-sized ‘town’ centres jumbled together in an extended sprawl. These dormitory areas, some located quite close to historical large urban centres, others in isolated parts of the country, have small-city sized populations, but none of the other features typically associated with cities. Two of the nine SACN cities enclose such areas: Mangaung incorporates Botshabelo, and Tshwane now includes Winterveld.

A number of other municipal areas in the country contain these kinds of settlements. These municipalities consequently have population sizes equivalent to medium-sized secondary cities. The best example is Bushbuckridge. In 2001 this area had a population of 499 697 (down from 534 697 in 2001). This means that apart from Emfuleni, (the Vereeniging-Vanderbijlpark-Vaal complex) and Polokwane (Pietersburg), Bushbuckridge has a larger population than every other municipality described in this report as a ‘secondary city’, including easily recognisable medium-sized cities such as Mogale City (Krugersdorp) and Mbombela (Nelspruit). It has 90.3% of the population of Msunduzi, the smallest SACN city. Yet Bushbuckridge has no other feature that would ordinarily characterise it as a city.

Metropolitan vs local municipalities and polycentric urban regions

The South African local government system distinguishes between single-tier metropolitan municipalities and a two-tier system of local and district municipalities. A municipal area is designated metropolitan on the application of a number of criteria spelt out in the Municipal Structures Act. Amongst other things the area must be a ‘conurbation’ having: high population density; an intense movement of people, goods, and services; extensive development; multiple business districts and industrial areas. It must also be a ‘centre of economic activity with a complex and diverse economy’ and have ‘strong interdependent social and economic linkages between its constituent units’.

Six of the nine SACN cities have been deemed to show these characteristics. They are categorised as metropolitan municipalities. The remaining three cities – Buffalo City, Mangaung and Msunduzi – are all important population and economic centres in their own right. However they do not meet all the criteria for metropolitan municipality, or Category A, status. They are therefore local, or Category B, municipalities. And they are also covered by an upper-tier District, or Category C, municipality that spans a number of adjacent local municipalities.

Metropolitan municipalities were established to deal with the problem of high externalities in extensively built-up areas. Where a number of urban cores lying contiguous to each other are managed by separate municipalities,
there is a high incentive for each municipality to engage in competitive and cost-shifting behaviour. This may include, for example, town planning decisions that discourage less-wealthy residents, who may seem to cost the tax base more than they contribute to it, from seeking residence in the municipal area. It may also include destructive forms of inter-locality competition to attract investment, and a lack of collaboration on key infrastructure investment and economic development that rationally should be managed at the scale of the broader metropolitan area.

By and large, the demarcation of single-tier metropolitan municipalities has solved the problems that occurred in and between core urban municipalities in the pre-2000 period and in the majority of cases the administrative boundary matches that of the metropolitan economy. However, it should not be assumed from this that all metropolitan municipalities are now perfectly ‘bounded’ to each encompass a single, self-standing and internally integrated city system.

Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane have been defined as separate cities. But they form part of a much larger urban system that now spans much of Gauteng and beyond. Together with two other key centres that are not SACN cities – M ogale City (Krugersdorp) to the west and E mfuleni (Vereening-Vanderbijlpark) to the south, these three cities constitute a virtually continuous urban ‘extent’ of some 8,6 million people. If the populations of these five cities are projected forward at their respective current annual growth rates, they will have a combined population of over 10 million people by next year. By 2015, their combined population of 14,6 million will begin to compete in size with some of the largest megacities in the world.

There are many reasons why this ‘conurbation’ should not be treated as a single city. But it is important to recognise that the Gauteng cities comprise a ‘polycentric urban region’ presenting unique opportunities and challenges. On the opportunity side is the fact that urban regions, rather than individual cities, are increasingly being seen as the locus of strategies for promoting global competitiveness. On the risk side is the potentially crippling dysfunctionality of an increasingly crowded urban region where transport, environmental control, land-use planning, economic development strategies, and household infrastructure networks cannot be properly co-ordinated.

Other features of the national space economy
The National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), released in March 2003, took a long hard look at how population, economic activities, transport connections and key public infrastructure investments are being organised in space across the country. This is a significant intervention, and begins to analyse very important settlement dynamics. The Gauteng polycentric urban region is only one of many features of a rapidly evolving national urban environment. It is vital that South African cities begin to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this national ‘economy of urban space’.

THE LEGACY OF THE APARTHEID CITY

Many of the challenges facing cities are a legacy of apartheid, and the nature of the South African city must therefore be understood in this context. At its heart the apartheid city was a political economy of space. This had two central features: racially based spatial planning, and a political economy that meant development for some at the expense of the majority.

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<th>CITY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tokyo</td>
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<td>2. Dhaka</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Mumbai</td>
<td>22.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Sao Paolo</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mexico City</td>
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<td>17. Rio de Janeiro</td>
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<td>21. Tianjin</td>
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Racially based spatial planning
The apartheid city was consciously designed to separate races and classes into distinct segments of the city. The figure shows a model for a typical apartheid city that informed many urban master plans. Poor, and especially poor black residents, were pushed to the margins of the city. With rigorously enforced apartheid laws on residential location and movement, they were given no option but to live in sprawling, squalid dormitory townships of undifferentiated ‘matchbox’ houses. In general, these were relatively poorly serviced with infrastructure and urban amenities, and were virtually devoid of work opportunities or shopping and entertainment facilities.

A large part of the city was set aside for white residents. The size of this slice was generally far out of proportion to the numbers of the white population. White residential areas were generally well laid-out and well-serviced tree-lined suburbs, conveniently located close to employment and major urban facilities.

Indian and coloured residents were given their own slivers of city space, often bizarrely situated ghettos adjacent to industrial zones.

The components of this ensemble were kept apart with deliberately unused land forming ‘buffer zones’, or major infrastructures such as highways and railway lines that could not easily be crossed.

A political economy of systematic under-development
Overlying this physical planning model was a set of institutional arrangements that ensured that areas not designated white remained permanently under-developed.

Under apartheid, the South African city was fragmented into discrete administrative jurisdictions, with areas designated ‘white’ and ‘black’ given institutionally separate municipal structures. White local authorities were able to forcibly relocate poor black people to the areas covered by black local authorities, beyond their boundaries and off their budgets. They were therefore able to govern areas of concentrated economic activity and small wealthy populations. Able to defend their borders and budgets from the claims of people in poverty, relatively well-off white local authorities could quite easily raise the majority of their own income from service charges and property taxes, and kick-start and sustain a virtuous development cycle.

Black local authorities, meanwhile, ended up responsible for large poor populations and, due to apartheid zoning and planning laws, were able to attract very few businesses to their areas. With no commercial activities to speak of, they had their tax bases further weakened by the inevitable seepage of black household-expenditures to shops in white local authority areas. They therefore had virtually no resources to provide their residents with adequate infrastructure or social services. Anti-apartheid urban social movements mobilised under the banner of ‘one-city-one-tax-base’ in response to this situation. The slogan incisively summed up the nature of the apartheid city.

The election of democratic local government in 1995/6, and later the re-demarcation of urban municipalities, as well as the establishment of single-tier metropolitan government in key areas, has given South African cities an opportunity to address this distorted situation. Whereas urban local government systems in many parts of the world are in the process of fragmenting, South Africa has moved in the opposite direction, consolidating separate local authorities into bigger structures able to tackle urban problems in a co-ordinated way over a larger geographical area.

Urban apartheid provided a legal framework for white municipalities to effectively exclude the largely black majority of the urban poor and ensure that high-ratable commercial development fell within their jurisdiction. Although the consumer and labour power of township residents contributed to the tax base of white municipalities, services in the townships were not funded from this tax base.

Metropolitan government provides a mechanism for addressing this dynamic of inequity, and ensuring that everyone who contributes to the tax base benefits from it. (White Paper on Local Government, March 1998)
However, the legacy of the apartheid political economy remains stamped on
the face of the South African city. Many of the development challenges
described in this report arise directly from this legacy. And many of the
development strategies currently being led by cities are attempts to reverse
or compensate for it.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF KEY CITIES

Collective contributions
Together, the nine member cities of the SACN play a vital role in the social
and economic life of the country. They make a very substantial contribution
to accommodating the South African population, funding local development
needs and driving the national economy.

• The nine cities are only a few of the hundreds of ‘settlements’ that
 accommodate South Africans. Yet as of 2001 they were home to 16,5
 million people, some 37% of the country’s total population on less than
 2% of its land area.

• The nine cities make up a large proportion of South Africa’s built
 environment. In 2001 they had some 4,6 million formal and informal
dwellings, 41% of South Africa’s total 11,2 million dwellings. Of these,
74,2% were formal dwellings. The nine cities’ total number of formal
dwellings, 3,4 million units, represented 44,8% of all formal dwellings
across the country.

• Municipalities approved R25,8 billion in new building plans in 2002. The
nine cities contributed R17,7 billion of this new fixed investment – 68,6%.

• The combined municipal budget for the nine cities stood at R50,5 billion
in 2002/3 (R7,7 billion capital budget and R42,8 billion operating budget).
This was 65% of the total local government budget, R77,5 billion – 58%
of the total capital budget and 66% of the total operating budget.

• The per capita local government spending power in these cities far exceeds
that for the rest of the country. If 2002/3 budgets are divided by estimated
populations in 2002, municipalities in the nine cities spent on average
R452 per capita on infrastructure expansion and other capital items. By
comparison, the average municipal capital budget for the rest of the country
was only R188,8 per capita. On aggregate, municipalities for the nine
cities were able to spend R2 511,3 per capita in their 2002/3 operating
budgets, compared to R754,5 per capita in all other municipalities.

• By 2001, the nine cities were providing water to the dwellings or yards of
3,6 million households. This was 32,5% of the total number of South
African households (excluding collective living quarters), and 53% of all
households in the country receiving this level of service.

• In 2001 the cities gave employment to 4 866 812 people, some 50,7% of
the country’s total working population of 9 583 761.

• The quality of work opportunity available in the cities is on average much
higher than that in the rest of the country. In 2001, the average monthly
income for employed people in the nine cities was R5 927,22. The average
monthly income per worker in the rest of the country was R2 789,26.
Collective challenges
The aggregate contribution of South Africa’s major cities cannot be ignored. However, the nine cities also present huge challenges. Together they represent the greatest relative concentration of poverty in the country.

- 25.8% of households in the nine cities, some 1.2 million households, continued to live in informal dwellings in 2001. This was 33.9% of all informal dwellings in the country. 20.8% of households lived in dwellings with only one room (including households that shared one room with other households). The national average was 17.6%.

- Huge progress has been made over the last decade to extend infrastructure to previously disadvantaged communities in all the cities. But in 2001 some 1,020,783 households (22.1% of total), still had inadequate access to toilet facilities, and were using a ventilated improved pit latrine (VIP) or even lower level of sanitation.

- Despite the jobs they provide, the nine cities continue to see high and growing levels of unemployment. Census 2001 showed that of the 7.8 million people of working age in the cities, 38.28% did not have a job. This figure grew 58.8% from the previous census of 1996, equating to a million more people without employment. In 2001, the cities contained 44.22% of South Africa’s total unemployed population.

It is clear that the relatively high average wealth of the cities masks considerable levels of urban poverty and inequality. Making sure that these cities are able to continue to contribute to the economy and address issues of poverty is a national priority.

BUFFALO CITY LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

SELECTED KEY FEATURES
Like Mangaung, the boundaries of Buffalo City extend to encompass both an historical large urban centre (East London), and outlying formerly bantustan areas (Bisho). Of the nine cities this is the least advantaged. Between 1996 and 2001 the city grew hardly at all (at just 0.6% per annum). This reflects relatively poor environmental conditions and a declining economy. 36.9% of the population live in informal dwellings, and 41.1% have no water to dwelling or yard, the highest service backlogs across the nine cities.

The city has the lowest budgetary capacity at R 1869.55 per capita. The economy lost 21,970 jobs between 1996 and 2001. Available jobs are also relatively less well-paying than elsewhere. Buffalo City workers took home R 3694.04 per month on average, R 3368.70 less than the national average.

Encouragingly, though, the city gained some 4,000 jobs in the finance/business sector, almost as much as the far larger Nelson Mandela Metro.

Figure 3. The relative advantage and disadvantage of the nine SACN cities. A comparison of each city’s share of the country’s total employment and unemployment in 1996 and 2001.
**EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**SELECTED KEY FEATURES**

Ekurhuleni, based on what has historically been known as the East Rand, has traditionally been South Africa’s manufacturing heartland. Industry declined from its peak in the 1970s, and between 1980 and 1996 the city lost 117,000 manufacturing jobs.

However the sector is still strong and showing some signs of rebirth. Manufacturing provides 19.2% of the city’s employment and grew 26% between 1996 and 2001, adding 30,235 new jobs.

This growth is bringing its own unique challenges, as the city attracts large numbers of relatively low skill and semi-skilled job seekers. Ekurhuleni currently has the fastest population growth in the country. Its population grew 4.1% per annum in 1996–2001, and it saw a remarkable 39.2% increase in households, most of these into two or three room dwellings.

In 1996 68.2% of households had water piped into their dwellings; in 2001 this had fallen to 42.4%.

**KEY INDICATORS**

- Population 2001: 2,480,276
- Projected population in 2004: 2,799,707
- Number of households 2001: 744,935
- Projected households 2004: 794,504
- Size of municipal area: 1.923 km²
- Average density 2001: 1,290 / km²
- Largest economic sector (by employ): Manufact
- Official unemployment rate 2002: 31.38%
- % hshs without formal shelter 2001: 29.75%
- % hshs without on-site water: 30.31%
- % of population without matric: 62.52%
- % population in LSM 1 to 4: 26.70%
- Municipal category: A
- Number of staff/1,000 population: 4.79
- Total municipal budget/capita 2002/03: R 3,131.50

**ETHEKWINI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**SELECTED KEY FEATURES**

eThekwini is centred on the major port city of Durban. Since 1960, when it was the fourth largest city in the country, eThekwini has grown rapidly to overtake Cape Town, Ekurhuleni and, briefly in the 1990s, Johannesburg. It is currently the second largest city in South Africa and growing at a moderate 2.4% annually.

For a large urban centre, eThekwini has a unique settlement form: because of its demarcation only 35% of the city is ‘predominantly urban’. 60,000 households live in traditional-rural style dwellings.

Despite this challenge the city is addressing its service backlogs. It saw only a 13.3% increase in non-formal dwellings in 1996–2001, and gave over 30,000 households in-yard water connections.

Its manufacturing-led economy is sluggish, but it saw 36,782 (+ 38.2%) new jobs in the wholesale/retail sector between the last two censuses.

**KEY INDICATORS**

- Population 2001: 3,098,122
- Projected population in 2004: 3,313,205
- Number of households 2001: 786,747
- Projected households 2004: 819,021
- Size of municipal area: 2,292 km²
- Average density 2001: 1,348 / km²
- Largest economic sector (by employ): Manufact
- Official unemployment rate 2002: 29.54%
- % hshs without formal shelter 2001: 29.45%
- % hshs without on-site water: 18.10%
- % of population without matric: 63.58%
- % population in LSM 1 to 4: 28.90%
- Municipal category: A
- Number of staff/1,000 population: 5.58
- Total municipal budget/capita 2002/03: R 2,951.76
Urban Reality

Key Indicators

**Selected Key Features**

The City of Cape Town is now the third largest city in the country, after Johannesburg and eThekwini.

By a number of indicators it is the most advantaged of all the nine cities. It has the lowest percentage of people without formal housing (21.1%) and the lowest percentage of households without water to yard or dwelling (15.58%). It also has the least unemployed people (census: 29.1%) and the highest per capita municipal budget (R3 297.67).

This profile is gradually shifting as the city receives more jobless and homeless people, mostly from the Eastern Cape. The city saw a 46.1% increase of households in dwellings with only one room between 1996–2001.

As the legislative capital of the country, its economy is dominated by the social/government sector. However finance/business and wholesale/retail trade have also recently shown strong growth.

### Key Indicators

- **Population 2001**: 2 893 247
- **Projected population in 2004**: 3 111 039
- **Number of households 2001**: 759 767
- **Projected households 2004**: 783 688
- **Size of municipal area**: 2 499 km²
- **Average density 2001**: 1 158 / km²
- **Largest economic sector (by employ)**: Social/Gov
- **Official unemployment rate 2002**: 19.58%
- **% households without formal shelter 2001**: 20.04%
- **% households without on-site water**: 20.26%
- **% of population without matric**: 61.98%
- **% population in LSM 1 to 4**: 11.30%
- **Municipal category**: A
- **Number of staff/1 000 population**: 8.74
- **Total municipal budget/capita 02/03**: R 3 297.67

### Location and Settlement Form

Blue = formal / red = informal / green = traditional / purple = mixed

**CITY OF JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**Selected Key Features**

Johannesburg is the largest city in the country at the moment, having regained this status from eThekwini after very fast growth in the late 1990s.

With Tshwane to the North and Ekurhuleni to the East, as well as Emfuleni to the South and Mogale City and other centres to the West, Johannesburg forms the ‘heart’ of a polycentric urban region of ‘mega city’ proportions, easily exceeding 10 million people.

In-migration is driving growth. Between 1996 and 2001 the number of people in the typically migrating 15-34 age bracket grew 27.8%, and the number of households with only 1 member increased to 23.9%. This is keeping unemployment high (37.4%) even while the economy is growing steadily.


### Key Indicators

- **Population 2001**: 3 225 812
- **Projected population in 2004**: 3 638 715
- **Number of households 2001**: 1 086 932
- **Projected households 2004**: 1 074 330
- **Size of municipal area**: 1 644 km²
- **Average density 2001**: 1 962 / km²
- **Largest economic sector (by employ)**: Finance/Bus
- **Official unemployment rate 2002**: 26.35%
- **% households without formal shelter 2001**: 22.20%
- **% households without on-site water**: 15.52%
- **% of population without matric**: 57.55%
- **% population in LSM 1 to 4**: 16.70%
- **Municipal category**: A
- **Number of staff/1 000 population**: 3.18
- **Total municipal budget/capita 02/03**: R 3 269.27

### Location and Settlement Form

Blue = formal / red = informal / green = traditional / purple = mixed
MANGAUNG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

SELECTED KEY FEATURES

The city is centred on Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State Province and the judicial capital of the country, but the municipal area stretches to include two major centres of apartheid ‘displaced urbanisation’ (Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu) some distance away. It is the second smallest of the nine cities in population size, yet it has by far the largest municipal area, giving it a density of just 103/km².

The city has historically had the fastest annual growth rate of all the nine cities, at over 4% per annum between 1946 and 1996. This growth slowed dramatically in 1996-2001.

Because of its settlement form, Mangaung has extremes of wealth and poverty. 49.64% of the population uses VIP toilets or lower levels of sanitation.

This is a largely static economy, based mainly on the social/community/government sector. The city shed over 10 000 jobs in the last decade.

KEY INDICATORS

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<th>Key Indicator</th>
<th>Mangaung</th>
<th>AVG for all cities</th>
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<td>Population growth 1996-2001</td>
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<td>Change in employment 1996-2001</td>
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MSUNDUZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

SELECTED KEY FEATURES

Msunduzi, centred on Pietermaritzburg is currently the smallest of the nine cities, both in numbers of people and land size. It is growing relatively slowly at 1.2% per annum.

A key feature is the number of households with six or more members. On average 15.6% of households across the nine cities have 6+ members. In Msunduzi it is 23.6%, probably due to the high proportion of households living in traditional dwellings (18.1%).

This brings unique service delivery challenges. In its favour, the city has a higher than expected per capita budget, reflecting a sizable economy relative to its population size.

Its households bring home on average R49 164 per annum, more than counterparts in the larger cities of Buffalo City or Mangaung.

However, the local economy is not showing strength at the moment. The city has the highest unemployment rate at 48.2%, having lost some 9 000 jobs between 1996 and 2001.

This is a largely static economy, based mainly on the social/community/government sector. The city shed over 10 000 jobs in the last decade.

KEY INDICATORS

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<td>Population growth 1996-2001</td>
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<td>Household growth 1996-2001</td>
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<td>Change in employment 1996-2001</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in household size 1996-2001</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population in LSM 1-4</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official unemployment rate 2002</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official employment rate 2002</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Official unemployment rate 2002</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population in LSM 1-4</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Official employment rate 2002</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
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NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

SELECTED KEY FEATURES

Nelson Mandela is a new metropolitan municipality centred on Port Elizabeth. It is the sixth largest of the nine cities. The city saw the second lowest rate of population growth between 1996 and 2001 (0.7% per annum).

With slower than average growth the city has made better headway than others in housing and serving its population. The number of informal households increased only 2.72% in 1996-2001, while the number of formal households grew 22%. But this reflects people leaving the city as much as anything else.

There was an actual decline in the number of people in the 20-34 age bracket in 1996-2001, when all other cities are seeing strong growth in this age group. Declining employment opportunity is the main cause.

The key manufacturing sector held steady, but the city shed 7.4% of its jobs and unemployment climbed to 46.39%.

Tshwane is centred on Pretoria, the country’s seat of executive government. Its economy is therefore dominated by the government sector, but economic growth is being driven mainly by manufacturing, especially a burgeoning automotive industry node. Between 1996 and 2001 manufacturing jobs grew 25%.

Fast population growth is bringing challenges. In 1996-2001 the number of households in informal dwellings grew 57.7%, and today 24.81% of households do not have adequate accommodation.

In meeting these challenges Tshwane has both comparative advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side economically, a remarkable 38.8% of its population over 20 has post-school qualifications; the cities average 23%.

A negative is that it is the only large city with a boundary overlapping a provincial border, raising complex governance challenges.
URBAN REALITY
LIFE ON THE STREETS

QUARTZ STREET, JOHANNESBURG

Quartz Street runs through Hillbrow, one of Johannesburg’s few inner-city residential neighbourhoods. It has always offered an entry point to the city for foreigners, and was once home to many young whites seeking an ‘alternative’ lifestyle. There has been a dramatic change in the area’s demographics over the past 20 years – in 1985 only 10% of Hillbrow’s residents were African. By the mid-1990s this figure had risen to over 80%.

The northern end of Quartz Street has been pedestrianised and converted into a linear market. The street is full of people: young women in tight jeans with bare midriffs, smooth-looking men in pressed slacks and paisley shirts (buttoned to the collar); stocky women in Pedi skirts; groups of kids in jeans.

There are stalls selling cell phone accessories, bright cloths and T shirts, fruit and vegetables, floppy hats emblazoned with Reebok, Diesel, and Adidas logos, hair-care products, marie biscuits and cheap international phone calls. Some traders sell cassette tapes (including bands like ‘The Hard Walkers’, the ‘Soul Brothers’, and ‘Precious Manyonyoba M duli & the Young Followers) and say that tapes by local artists are most popular, although most of their clientele are foreigners. Others have set up barber shops, and offer styles ranging from the ‘serious kutz’ (advertised with a photo of basketball star Dennis Rodman) to ‘senior boy’ (a neat corporate cut).

Through the hum of voices and nearby traffic, one can hear the sound of Lucky Dube, played too loud for boombox speakers and distorting into occasional bursts of white noise.

Beyond the Pretorius Street intersection, Quartz Street is quieter. It is narrow and paved, with slanted parking spaces on both sides. There are fewer women and children on the street, and fewer shops. Most of the street is lined by residential buildings. An occasional ornate façade or colourful awning stands out amongst the strongly geometrical modernist architecture, but generally the monolithic greyness is broken only by colourful items of clothing draped across the balconies to dry.

There is a vacant lot opposite a ‘Revival Outreach Ministries’ poster urging the faithful to “come and receive your miracle” at their next meeting. It is littered with rubbish and scrap metal. The back of the building behind the lot is derelict, and two women sit smoking high above on the fire escape. Groups of men stand in the sandy space, talking quietly. In one corner, a line of standing exhaust pipes marks the space where a mechanic has set up shop. Sitting alone, an old man shaves his face, using a shard of broken glass as a mirror.

At night, this space is occupied by small groups of people gathered around fires burning in metal drums. Quartz Street is far less busy after dark – most blocks are desolate, although here and there people cluster near the entrance of an open bar. Over the past two or three years government has cracked down on crime in the area, closing several hotels which were notorious for drugs, prostitution and crime. Hillbrow is now quieter than it used to be, and drug dealers and sex workers are less visible.

Some people walking on Quartz Street at night carry guns, there are still dealers on some corners, and every now and then an argument or fight breaks out on the pavement. But the street still seems benevolent, light and shadows play on the building facades, and muted music and voices drift from bars into the street.
LONGMARKET STREET, MSUNDUZI

Longmarket Street, which bisects the centre of Pietermaritzburg, provides a snapshot of history from pre-colonial, Voortrekker and Victorian origins, through the apartheid era to the democratic era where the inner city is a melting pot of people and culture.

In the past, black residents were unlikely to visit this part of town, put off by separate entrances for ‘non-whites only’. For them the city centre was an alien place in a town clearly demarcated along racial lines. The CBD belonged to the whites.

For many black residents their ties to Longmarket Street – with its eclectic architecture and some striking Victoriana – were through relatives who served as waiters, cleaners, handymen or messengers.

It’s different now. Longmarket Street is a place where the changes brought by democracy are tangible.

The local authority is the Msunduzi Metropolitan Council, but this street is home to two other structures of democracy. One is the uMgungundlovu District Council, located next to the post office. The other is the Provincial Legislature Building, with its imposing statue of Queen Victoria. When this building was opened in 1889 by the Governor it was the legislature of the Natal Colony. When the Natal government was disbanded in 1910 by the Act of Union, the building became the Provincial Council Chamber. Today it is KwaZulu-Natal’s Parliament, and for the first time in its history as a legislature represents all citizens.

Longmarket Street has layers of memories. The first Voortrekker settlers who lived here established the market that gives the street its name. English colonists used the street, which runs for the two kilometres from east to west, as the entrance to the garrison headquarters at Fort Napier. At the western end are buildings with names such as the Laager Centre or Tavern House reflect that when there are soldiers around, drinking holes are always close at hand. The Laager Centre is where SA Breweries first started brewing its popular brand of Castle Lager.

These buildings have now been converted to shopping centres, and the changing face of the city is reflected in the number of afro-chic dress shops and hair salons that dominate the area.

Moving east, the complexion of the street changes dramatically. Below Retief Street you enter what used to be described by whites as ‘cooler town’ – the old Indian group area. There’s a rich history here as well. The corner of Longmarket and Thomas streets was called Red Square, where the Communist Party established its own speaker’s corner during the 1950s. Further down is the Lotus Hall built by the Leather Workers Union and the site, in the 1980s, of some of the largest United Democratic Front gatherings.

The bottom end of the street is dominated by Indian temples, serene places of worship come alive once a year when thousands gather to participate in Kavady, the annual fire-walking ceremony.

The top end of Longmarket Street is dominated by the old Governor’s Mansion, where Chief Langalibalele Hadebe was tried for insurrection. According to historians, he was one of the first African activists to mount an armed struggle against the colonial authorities and to be imprisoned on Robben Island nearly a century before Nelson Mandela. The Council is considering re-naming the street Langalibalele Street.

The Governor’s Mansion was converted to a teacher training college, and today is used by Unisa and an NGO that offers science and mathematics classes to disadvantaged students.

The changes that have taken place in Pietermaritzburg and Longmarket Street reflect the dramatic changes in the country’s history. Nowhere is this more visible than at the old Voortrekker Museum, where in the apartheid days the only black people to traverse the hallowed halls were servants. Today it’s used by groups of black children, nine and ten years old, their clothes splattered with paint. ‘Hello, we’re Voortrekker children,’ they say. ‘We have finished our painting class and we’re waiting for the bus to take us home.’