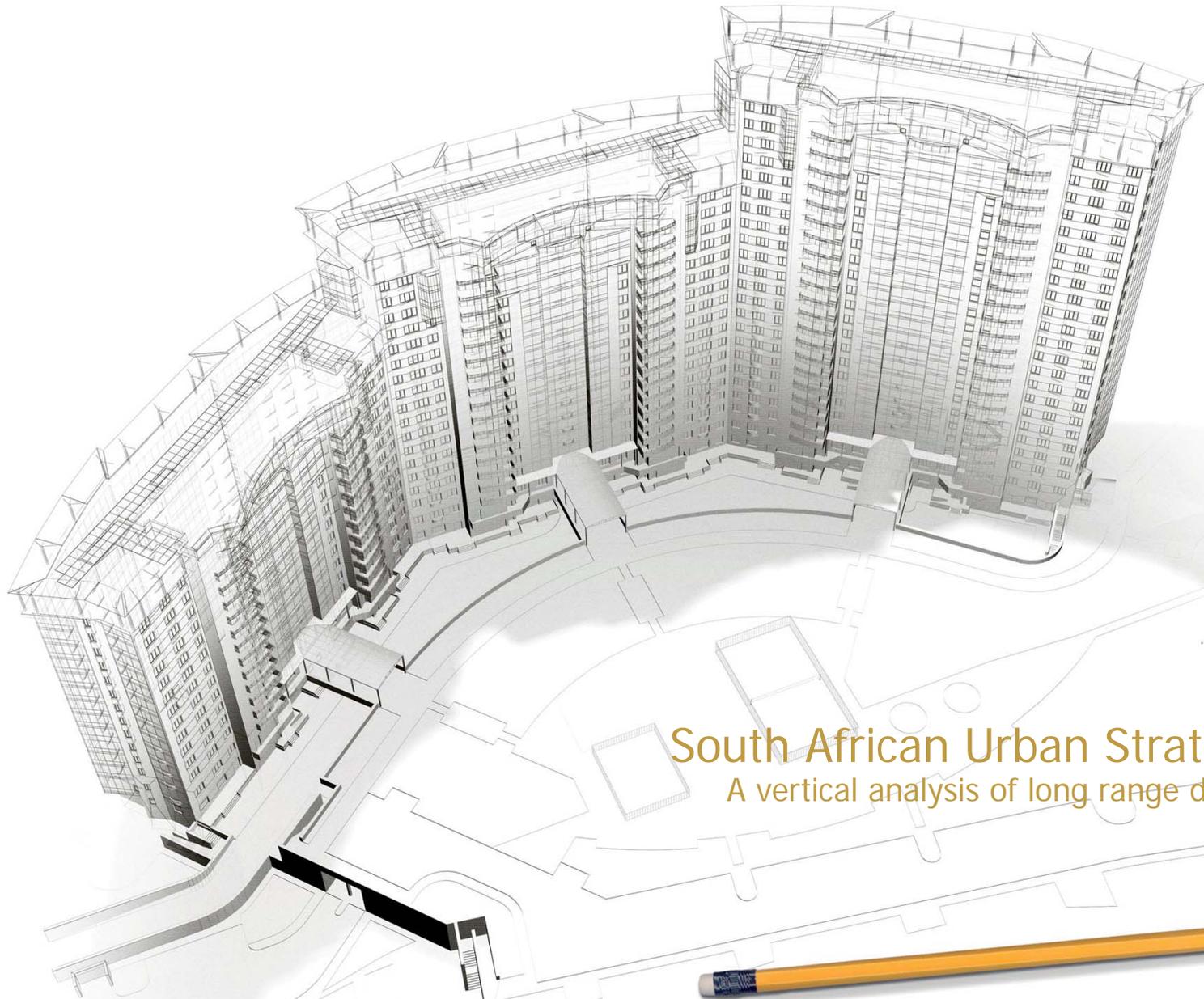


Executive Summary

August 2013



South African Urban Strategies Alignment Study

A vertical analysis of long range development strategies and plans



human settlements

Department:
Human Settlements
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



BUILDING THE FUTURE TODAY, TOGETHER

FOREWORD

Following the introduction of the National Development Plan (NDP), there has been a move towards ensuring that plans at other spheres of government are aligned with the NDP. However, some cities and provinces have initiated their own planning processes that have in some instances preceded the development of the NDP as they seek to grapple with a range of issues in the urban sphere. While long-range strategic planning is an important focus and tool for decision makers and policymakers at various levels of government, the proliferation of new plans and strategies with overlapping scope but possibly with different assumptions, diagnoses and strategic responses raises the question of what the extent of alignment or non-alignment is between these long-range strategies, many of which have significant implications for our cities. Furthermore, in the context of the development of the Integrated Urban Development Framework and a Green Paper for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements, it becomes important to take stock of what is implied about our urban spaces across these different long-range perspectives.

In response to this and the lack of information and analysis on long-range planning and plans and their alignment with other plans, this study was conceived and commissioned. The national **Department of Human Settlements (DHS)** and the **South African Cities Network (SACN)** jointly initiated a project to undertake an analysis of long-range development strategies and plans, with a view to assessing vertical alignment and informing City Development Strategies (CDS) and national urban development and human settlements policy. The objective of the project 'is to analyse how various long-range development strategies and plans of relevance to South Africa's large (primary and secondary) cities align (or not) and reflect upon national urban development and settlement planning'.

This report must be considered a high-level discussion document. The intent was not to provide a detailed analysis and review of each individual plan but rather to do a comparative analysis to understand the trends, challenges and concerns that face long-range planning and vertical alignment, specifically for the urban sector. It is hoped that the study will be useful for those responsible for long range planning as well as various sector departments in all three spheres of government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by Gemey Abrahams, Margot Rubin and Wendy Ovens on behalf of Gemey Abrahams Consulting. The team leading the project comprised of Stacey-Leigh Joseph and Matodzi Amisi (DHS) and Geci Karuri-Sebina (SACN).

1. INTRODUCTION

South Africa has been proactive in looking at long-range planning to direct government spending, projects and programmes. However, the origins, forms and rationales for these plans have been quite diverse. South Africa is increasingly becoming urbanised, and cities and urban areas are important engines of growth and investment. Guiding and directing urban development through urban development strategies and plans have therefore become increasingly important. Presently, there is limited guidance or regulation that makes long-range planning a requirement or directs its formulation. Nevertheless long-range plans have been prepared at national, provincial and local spheres, by different sectors and departments, by state-owned organisations and the private sector. But is not clear how these may support or contradict each other and contribute to the achievement of policy, strategic or investment coherence. Questions therefore emerge as to the importance of long-range plans, and their alignment between spheres of government, in contributing to development visions, policies, strategies and plans for achieving integrated urban development.

Since 1994 South Africa has introduced a robust system of governmental planning which has a strong emphasis on medium-term planning that then guides annual performance plans. Much of the emphasis of strategic planning therefore has been on (five-year) medium-term planning and annual plans. There is strong guidance from government for these plans, and a system is in place to prepare and monitor them, and to base policy, budget, programme and project decisions on them. However there is less guidance for longer term planning; national departments, provinces and local authorities have prepared their longer range plans in what can be considered a slightly ad hoc manner. Some metropolitan and large cities have developed long-range plans, many providing a vision for their future in 15 or 20 years (or even longer) to direct development. Nationally, there have been scenario-planning exercises, development perspectives and, most recently, the National Planning Commission prepared a National Development Plan, which was accepted by Cabinet in October 2012, acknowledging the importance of promoting a common vision for the country and guiding investment by government and the private sector. All these plans were prepared at different times, in different ways, by different departments and were influenced by different factors, as there is no

regulatory framework. It is not sure how they may relate to one another, if they should relate to one another, how useful they are or could be, and whether our growing cities and other spheres of government can benefit from such exercises.

2. KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONTEXT

The following set of working definitions was used:

Long-range urban strategies and plans: extend over periods longer than 10 years, have clear visions and goals and a sense of how they could be achieved.

Alignment: while a difficult concept to explore, it is important to understand alignment as a relative concept, as it is only possible to have alignment in relation to something else. Alignment can be described as the correct position of different components with respect to each other or something else so they perform properly. This could be likened to a vehicle not moving in the right direction if the wheels are out of alignment. In common development parlance, alignment is usually understood as policies or plans having some common link or relationship so that they “talk to each other”, demonstrating intergovernmental cooperation.

Legal considerations: In the South African context, it is also important to be aware of the legislative and institutional context in which long-range planning is located. Constitutionally, South Africa has spheres rather than hierarchical tiers of government, and various powers and functions have been allocated to these spheres in both concurrent and exclusive arrangements. This influences what can be expected of alignment.

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Given the above contextual considerations and the working definition of alignment and long-range planning, the study selected the following plans to analyse:

National Plans:		
National Spatial Development Perspective	2006	Four national plans
New Growth Path	2010	
National Development Plan	2010	
Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Committee: Provincial and Local Government Conference: A Summary of the Infrastructure Plan	2012	
Provincial Plans:		
Eastern Cape Growth and Development Strategy	2004	Six provincial plans from five provinces
Gauteng Growth and Development Strategy 2005	2005	
Gauteng Growth and Development Strategy 2055	2011	
KwaZulu-Natal Growth and Development Strategy (KZN GDS)	2011	
Free State Growth and Development Strategy	2012	
OneCape	2012	
Local Municipal Plans:		
Ekurhuleni Growth and Development Strategy 2025	?	Eight local plans from six metros
Joburg 2030	2003	
Buffalo City City Development Strategy	2006	
Tshwane City Development Strategy	2006	
eThekweni Long-Term Plan	2010	
Joburg 2040	2011	
Ekurhuleni 2055	2011	
Tshwane 2055	2012	

All of the plans considered periods longer than ten years and had some form of spatial/urban development consideration. Local plans were chosen from provinces that had corresponding provincial long-term plans. The method of analysis used was highly iterative and experimental and involved some trial and error. The resultant method found a way of working that matched a definition of alignment to a set of indicators (issues or criteria) that could be analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in order to understand the moments at which commonalities, coherence and coordination occurred or did not occur. The criteria of analysis were set out in matrices, so that they could be compared across all the plans. The criteria were arranged into categories that broadly mirror the structure of plans and included:

Category 1:

Inputs: problem statement/understanding current context; information/data and methodology; influence of other plans.

Category 2:

Key considerations; type of plan; vision/spatial focus; roles and responsibilities; goals and objectives/role of the urban plan; activities/sectoral aspects.

Category 3:

Outputs: Measurable targets; monitoring points; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

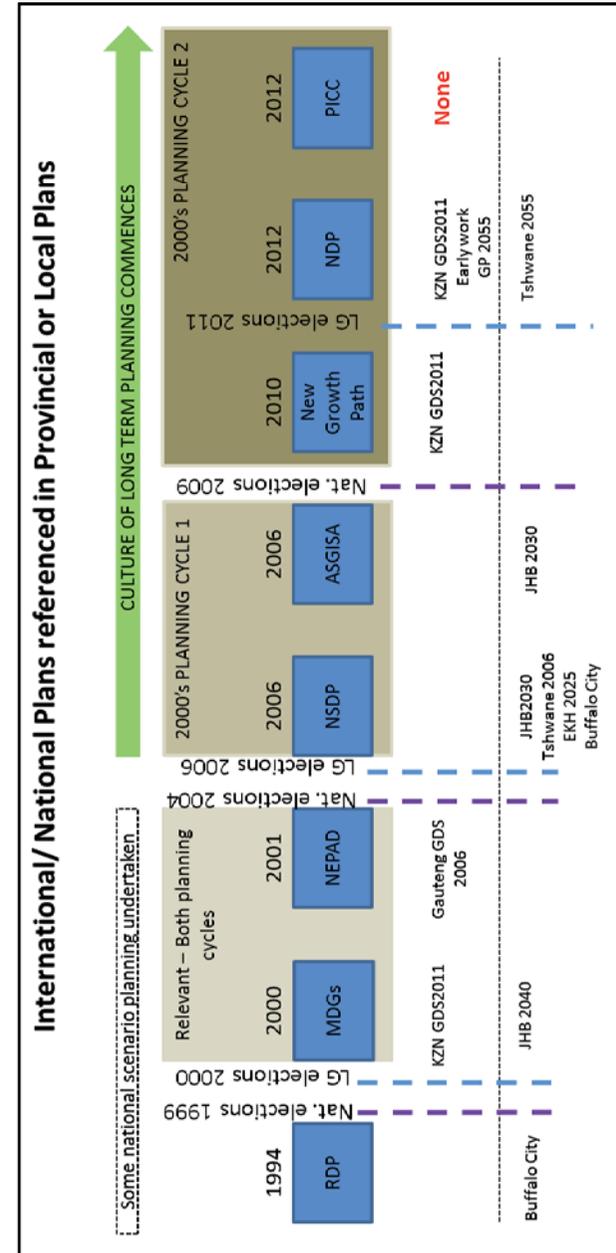
4. KEY FINDINGS:

Using the above methodology to assess alignment between plans, the following was observed:

Category 1: Inputs:

- i. **Names and aims:** There is little coherence in the terminology and the intent of the plan – the names of the plans (i.e. plan, vision, strategy, framework etc.) are largely unconsidered and do not correlate to the purpose or aim of the documents, most of which cover very similar ground (i.e. visions, problem statements, general plans for the future, and some form of goal or target).
- ii. **Time horizons:** There is very little consistency in the period spanned by a long-range plan. Despite some form of justification (e.g. a generation; a future event or anniversary) for the time horizons used, vertically few plans share similar time periods. Related to time horizons is that the long-range plans tend not to be divided into periods, making it difficult to align with the five-year strategic plans of government and their planning system.
- iii. **Methods employed:** Plans in a vertical relationship showed very little consistency in methodologies employed. Plans generally did not explain their methodology, making it difficult to test this criterion of alignment. There was commonality around the data used (e.g. Census) but it was mostly used descriptively rather than analytically to support strategies in the plans. Most plans tended to be developed independently and included own research.

- iv. **The influence of the context:** The date that a plan was prepared influences its reference points and what it uses as its guide. So national positions and policies, such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and international events (e.g. prime market crash) or trends (e.g. global warming, sustainable development, resilience) find their way into plans developed close to those events and influence what the plan is responding to and what problems it seeks to address. These also go out of fashion and get dropped in new plans, for example: Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) and Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (Asgi-SA);
- v. **Referencing of other plans:** It was found that in general provincial plans seldom reference other plans, so that the vertical “link” is broken. The National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) was very widely referenced prior to 2010 but had little influence in the plans that referenced it, with Buffalo City plan being the exception. Unexpectedly, broadly influential plans such as the RDP were not referenced much, nor was the Constitution. It is assumed that these may have been taken as a given in the plans. Over time, there has been a much clearer alignment of policies and plans between the various spheres. The last set of plans developed post-2010 reflect the new thinking in the NDP as well as incorporating previous trends around the ideas of sustainable human settlements and Breaking New Group (BNG).



Category 2: Key Considerations:

- i. **Roles and responsibilities:** The lack of assignment of responsibilities in long-range plans is problematic and points to a clear lack of discussion and consensus between the various groups. It also means that there are no entities or institutions with a clear set of tasks to undertake the strategies that will result in the vision being achieved. Such vagueness also makes these plans difficult to implement and monitor. The NDP breaks with this tradition and identifies extensive actions.
- ii. **Planned activities or clearly defined actions:** A majority of the plans did not have clearly laid-out activities with clear timelines and objectives. There is a discernible need for clearer activities that are linked to long-term goals, so that there is clarity on not only what needs to be achieved but also how it needs to be achieved.
- iii. **The role of cities and spatial visions:** Not all long-range plans translate their vision and strategies into a spatial vision. This is especially true for plans that have an economic development focus. Municipalities do prepare Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) but as part of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), which is a five-year plan, not a long-term strategic plan. The new planning legislation will set in place a requirement for the alignment of spatial plans. Currently South Africa does not have a long-range spatial vision, but government is working on one. A broad assessment of the plans examined in this study suggests that, as a country, we still need to develop a clear set of ideas for driving the growth and development of our cities. The lack of such ideas has resulted in weak vertical alignment of urban visions. The lack of unambiguous direction from national and provincial plans for an urban vision has resulted in plans at local and provincial sphere having different emphases, strategies and projects. The NDP balances strategies for rural and urban development and begins to move away from the dichotomy of urban and rural visions by using the concept of spatial targeting to explain the need to differentiate the type and spatial location of development interventions. Few plans tackle urbanisation holistically and strategically, while fewer show any

signs of vertical alignment. International debates on city visions are finding their way into the long-range plans, but few are able to translate these into clear strategies.

- iv. **Housing, human settlements and spatial restructuring:** The inequality in the location, form and standard of low-income housing in South Africa has placed human settlements at the “sharp end” of strategies to restructure our spatial form. Central to many plans has been the re-thinking of the role of housing and human settlements in restructuring space to create better integrated cities. Local plans also need to be able to influence plans at a higher sphere; in other words, influence provincial and national policy to achieve alignment with local priorities and needs.

Category 3: Outputs

- i. **Empirical targets and goals:** The vast majority of plans spoke in fairly general terms about their long-term aims and goals. Few provided actual targets, and only two of the plans actually put figures to what needed to be achieved. Furthermore, with the exception of the NDP, the New Growth Path (NGP) and the KZN GDS, most of the plans did not include monitoring points or proposed dates when certain goals should be achieved; thus the vast majority of plans could not be easily broken down to influence medium-term planning.
- ii. **Monitoring and evaluation:** mechanisms for measuring progress were also very scarce, and only the NDP and the NGP indicated how progress would be measured over time.

5. OBSERVATIONS

- There is little guidance on what alignment means, how to achieve it, or how to assess it which meant the team had to develop a definition and an analytical framework for this study.
- There is no clear definition of a long-range plan, making it difficult to identify the relevant plans for this study. What a plan is called may not be an indication of what it contains or how it sees its purpose.
- Long-range plans up to 2010 have tended to be less aligned, more independent of each other and have greater variety in how they are prepared, their methodology and content. This makes comparison difficult but also reduces the likelihood of achieving alignment.
- There are promising trends that this is changing since the appearance of the New Growth Path and National Development Plan in 2010. Long-range plans prepared after that date have taken cognisance of these key documents and appear to be incorporating much of the language and the intent.
- Legislation dealing specifically with long-range plans has been absent, and so there has been no legal imperative to prepare such plans. Yet the plans have been prepared in any event but without any guidance in the form of regulations for the content.
- Government, with its interdependent spheres of government, is inherently structured to promote cooperation and, as a result, one would expect improved alignment. But this has not been the case. The allocation of powers and functions within the government system is such that each sphere of government has both its own executive powers and concurrent powers. This means that the system of government is not hierarchical and each sphere does not undertake similar functions. So, while national government may be expected to set guidelines and broad strategic direction, it is the preserve of the provinces and municipalities to develop laws and policies for the matters for which they have executive powers. Given this structure of government, the alignment of certain functions cannot always be expected.
- Currently there is no long-range national plan that sets out the spatial vision for the country's development. However, municipalities must prepare SDFs, which cover a medium-term, five-year planning period, rather than a long-range, strategic period. Trends towards understanding the differentiation of areas and the need to use spatial targeting are emerging in the new plans, such as the NDP.
- A national vision of urbanisation was provided independently of long-range plans in urban development strategies in the past. With rapid urbanisation, national migration trends and increasing informality of areas, a national vision for towns, cities and rural villages needs to be developed to guide long-range provincial and local plans. It will be important that the development of the new national framework for integrated urban development is done collaboratively, includes all spheres of government and finds its way into processes that are driving long-range plans if the strategy is to have any impact.
- Municipalities are at the sharp end of long-range planning because they must align their plans with higher sphere plans and all sectoral plans (many of which they may not have a mandate to undertake such functions). Higher sphere plans therefore need to be clear about their vision, goals and strategies and targets to give clear direction to help municipalities to prioritise the important elements.
- Long-range plans are weak on setting targets. If long-range plans are to guide medium-term plans, it would be instructive to have targets at different intervals of the plan.
- Higher offices of government have generally been responsible for plan preparation. This is positive and can lead not only to a better coordinated plan but also to improved vertical alignment through similar offices at each sphere of government.
- Monitoring of plans is weak. The NGP has included monitoring aspects, which could be a good example to explore further to learn lessons from. Monitoring should be linked to the government's outcomes that are overseen by the Presidency's Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown that long-range planning is an important part of the governmental planning system and should be supported. However, the system of long-range planning is weak at present and will benefit from more guidance in many areas.

Importantly, there needs to be clearer guidance on what is meant by alignment, what the main tenets (the “mainstays”) of alignment should be and how to achieve alignment. Presently long-range plans are being prepared in different ways, at different times, span different time horizons, contain different visions, emphasise different content and contain little in the way of targets, outcomes and monitoring, making alignment difficult. While referred to in many government policies and even some laws, government has no statutory requirement to prepare long-range plans, which are not part of the established (medium-term) governmental system of planning. Given the current variation in the plans, greater guidance is needed on the content of long-range plans and how to prepare them. While this need not necessarily be in the form of regulations, government could develop guidelines for preparing long-range plans.

Specific conclusions – inputs: The analysis showed that direction is clearly needed on timeframes, data and methodology in the preparation of long-range plans. Included in this is the need to identify milestones (or points along the timescale of the plan) to measure progress and to direct medium term plans. How a plan is prepared also affects the influence that the plan may have. It was found that plans were influenced differently by a range of factors and other plans. It is therefore difficult for plan makers to prioritise what inputs and plans when preparing their plans. As it stands there is little evidence of policy and visions “trickling up”, such that local-level visions and goals are reflected in the other spheres of government.

Specific conclusions – key considerations: Surprisingly, not all plans categorised as long range have explicit visions or vision statements. Economic plans tend not to have visions, but one local plan also did not. Visions play a key role in building consensus around the plan. Municipal long-range plans tend to cast their vision in “city” terms, indicating a focus on the role cities play in their overall developmental vision. Currently, there is no overarching national vision of how cities should or could look and their role in the wider developmental (spatial, economic, social, environmental) context. This makes the vertical alignment of urban issues difficult to achieve. As a consequence there is little harmonisation of activities required to make cities work. The proposed National Urban Strategy may offer some guidance in this respect.

Housing interventions can play a key role in restructuring our divided cities. Most plans make reference to housing interventions, but the plans need to take an integrated and long-term approach to transforming residential spaces into sustainable human settlements (and all the sectoral inputs this requires) at municipal level. However, municipalities have not (yet) been allocated the constitutional powers to do this, providing a compelling example of how long-range plans must take cognisance of the legal powers and functions of each sphere of government and what can then be expected of alignment.

Specific conclusions – outputs: Few of the long-range plans analysed revealed details on what should be achieved, when, by whom and how. The plans lacked targets and processes for monitoring. There are exceptions, and there are lessons to learn from the comprehensive targets in the NDP and the monitoring and review provisions in the NGP. If long-range plans are to inform medium-term plans, targets also need to be set at different intervals. This was absent in most plans.

A key closing conclusion is that there are promising trends in the potential for long-range plans to become better aligned in the future, with the introduction of the NGP and the NDP evidenced by plans that have come after these such as the OneCape and the Gauteng 2055.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the conclusions, a number of tentative recommendations can be made.

Guidelines: For long-range plans to be more effective than they have been up to now, it is recommended that more guidance and direction be provided to all three spheres of government for their preparation, to address aspects such as:

- The timeframe of the long-range plan;
- The intervals for review within the timeframe;
- The creation of a vision, purpose and methodology;
- Possible methodologies to employ in preparing the plan;
- Guidance on content and how to get to the strategic, long-term issues and their impacts;
- Turning visions into actions – responsibilities;
- Targets, monitoring and review;
- What is alignment, why it is important and how to achieve it;
- The importance of partnerships and how to develop plans that build partnerships.

Law or policy: Consideration should be given to whether long-range plans need to be inserted more formally into the overall system of government planning. To entrench them, legislative and regulatory approaches could be considered most effective to give legal effect. But it is also possible to embed them through government policy and commitment. The above-mentioned guideline on long-range plans will go a long way to promote the plans and ensure greater consistency and alignment.

Importance of monitoring and evaluation: Long-range plans have tended to be broad-brush and become less directive as the time horizon extends outward. However, the vision and strategies in a plan may never be achieved if targets are not set or milestones are not identified. For long-range planning to be more effective, the guideline mentioned above must address monitoring, setting targets and effectively linking medium-term plans to long-range plans.

Support of other processes that will help shape a long-term vision for South Africa: This study found that there is a lack of clear message about the future spatial form/vision of the country, the role of cities and the impacts of increasing urbanisation. These shortfalls are being addressed elsewhere, for example through the development of a national framework for integrated urban development (in progress) and the NSF. It is recommended that SACN and DHS contribute where possible to the following processes:

- The preparation of the NSF by the Development Planning Commission (DPC);
- The intended discussions that the DPC intend having about the role of towns, cities and rural villages;
- The preparation of the national framework for integrated urban development.

In particular the DHS must be mindful of the discussions and debates to take into their Green Paper process. The Green Paper (and subsequent White Paper) will present a new vision for achieving sustainable human settlements and must not only be influenced by the national spatial and urban visions but also influence these visions by illustrating the role that human settlements have to play in restructuring space.

8. FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was exploratory, as it is the first study to analyse the alignment of long-range plans. It had a specific, contained brief, but during the investigations a range of related issues emerged that presented opportunities for further future studies. Suggestions are made to explore further horizontal alignment, to extend the vertical alignment enquiry to medium-term plans such as IDPs and SDFs, to interrogate budget allocations and “follow the money”, and to investigate a range of other plans to see how they hold visions that impact on alignment.