

DISTRICT SIX FITS CITY DEVELOPMENT

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WITH the proclamation of District Six as a White area, a major change has been proposed in the use of an important part of Cape Town.

As a city grows, the different aspects of its life such as residence, commerce or industry become associated with specific areas best suited to their needs. Therefore the gradual emergence of a characteristic pattern in the use of land is a natural urban process. As such, any artificial change in that pattern will inevitably affect the functioning of the entire city. Consequently a change in the use is only warranted when the reasons for its location have lost their validity.

Work proximity

District Six was established on open land as a low-income residential area after freedom was given to the slaves in 1833. Light industries began to develop in the Woodstock-Salt River area benefiting from the labour force in the vicinity and from proximity to the city centre, docks and the railway line.

The growth of these industries caused those who could afford it to move to preferable residential locations, leaving the district to the lowest income group. This follows a general pattern of residential location where proximity to work increases in importance with the drop in wage-earning capacity. The lower-income group forfeits amenity for the saving in cost of travelling (which in Cape Town can reach 10 per cent).

Local Hillbrows

With the growth of the city's population and economy, the central area is expanding. Open land on the Foreshore affords Cape Town a unique opportunity to extend its business district and according to estimates will accommodate development for at least 50 years. For this reason, although District Six is adjacent to the centre, no pressure for central expansion is being exerted in its direction.

Warehousing at the edge of the district is not developing owing to better conditions available on the Foreshore and elsewhere. Drawn by the attraction of the seafront, high density housing (many-storeyed blocks of flats) has developed in the Sea Point area, detracting from the growth of residential areas closer to the city centre. When Sea Point cannot grow any further, the amenities of the Gardens area may cause it to develop as the Hillbrow of Cape Town.

Industries in Woodstock and Salt River are expanding. However, suitable flat land with ac-

cess to the railway line and trucking routes exists beyond Sir Lowry Road. Upper District Six does not enjoy any of these advantages and cannot therefore compete as an industrial location. In short, there are no external pressures to change its present use.

Unattractive

As a location, District Six has few of the attributes associated with a desirable residential environment. It is adjacent to residentially obnoxious uses such as industries and warehousing. Major roads such as De Waal Drive, Sir Lowry Road, the future ring road, surround it, and Eastern Boulevard will cut diagonally across it. Between 5,000 and 6,000 cars carrying persons foreign to the area are expected to pass through it during the rush hours, thereby effectively preventing residential seclusion.

Wind conditions are particularly bad and vegetation is virtually non-existent. The stigma attached to the area for generations will take time to eliminate. In a city well endowed with optimum residential areas, the only advantage District Six can claim is proximity to major employment centres, thereby meeting requirements of low-income working class people.

Residential districts for the lower-income groups stretch from District Six to Mowbray, north to Epping, Maitland, and Brooklyn and include parts of Oranjezicht, Tamboers Kloof and the lower Gardens. These areas provide greater opportunity for attractive development than District Six though they may not be as conveniently located in relation to work. As the least desirable area, only the lowest income groups live there for lack of choice. In Cape Town the lowest wage earners are exclusively non-White.

Development of District Six for white habitation will serve no purpose because areas of greater environmental potential already exist. High land values due to proximity to the city centre, would necessitate high densities, requiring anything up to 60,000 persons to be rehoused. It is doubtful that this number of low-income Whites could be made to move to the district where they would benefit neither from proximity to the industries employing primarily Coloureds, nor from improved environmental conditions.

Higher crime

The nature of the district has not changed for 130 years and to alter it now, apart from the human implications, will mean destroying the inter-dependence established over the course of time between the area, the city centre, and the light industrial belt. For example, 90 per cent of the workers in District Six are employed within a radius of three miles, and a high proportion of clothing and food industries are located in the area because they depend upon female labour.

Forcible clearance of a slum will not prevent its re-creation elsewhere. The deterioration of an area is only a physical manifestation of the social problems which, if left unsolved, will remain with the inhabitants wherever they live. Precedent has shown that relocation, in destroying established social relationships, can create maladjustment. This is expressed in the abuse of the physical environment and higher crime rates.

In each city at any given time a section of the population has always existed who could not afford to live in anything but slum conditions. Only through the social and economic advancement of the population can slums be eliminated.

Little development

The condition of the area is lamentable, but this does not prove that the *use* is wrong. Had the land been too valuable for occupation by a sub-economic group, pressure to replace this use would have been felt. The lack of renewal dur-

ing the past 40 years indicates that land values have not risen sufficiently to necessitate a more lucrative usage.

High density alone does not indicate that an area is a slum. The density of District Six at 113 persons an acre is lower than Sea Point or Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Successful environments have been established with densities of 400 persons per acre. What makes District Six a slum is the fact that high density is achieved within structures designed to accommodate less than one quarter of the population.

It must be emphasised that the deficiencies of the environment can be attributed almost exclusively to local factors, such as minimum ownership of property by Coloured people who comprise 94 per cent of the population but own only 25 per cent of the land. Very little development has occurred since the '20s, and there is no incentive for tenants to improve rented property. Moreover, development has been frozen for many years.

There is nothing wrong with District Six that comprehensive urban renewal cannot remedy. The reasons for its existence have not lost their validity; if anything, they have been strengthened by the expansion of light industry and central activities. Urban renewal, through good design, can raise the density to correspond to rising land values and can thereby provide an expanding economy with the labour it requires.

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DISTRICT SIX "PLANNED SOCIAL SABOTAGE"

From BARBARA WILKS

THE decision of the Ministers of Community Development and of Planning to proclaim a large part of District Six a group area for Whites has been described as "quite a bombshell".

By those who care for the dignity and happiness of their fellow citizens, it could still better be described as "planned social sabotage". In whatever official terms and under whatever official initials the Ministers try to cloak their intentions the effect is plain: under the cynical disguise of slum clearance further to disrupt and dismember the community of Cape Town.

No one denies that the area has been in need of slum clearance, but it was the City Council's intention to rehabilitate the people in the area in which they lived — a far sounder plan than that of the Departments of Community Development and Planning of forcible removal. It has been found, not only in South Africa, but elsewhere,

that even *voluntary* break-up and removal of communities is often attended by worse evils than those it was intended to remove, and in this instance a settled community is to be transferred to a rootless, soulless environment.

Dreary tale

It is the belief of the Black Sash that from this ill-considered decision evils will flow which will not only affect approximately 30,000 people of District Six who are to be moved, but all the citizens of Cape Town — the evils of suspicion, dissension, hopelessness and hatred.

The dreary tale of sins committed in the name of *apartheid* or separate development is growing longer until even a lifetime of penance could not earn forgiveness for all of us who share in the blame of either actively helping or passively acquiescing in acts which are the real sabotage of peace and harmony in South Africa today.

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