

MAKANA LEAP

GREEN INFRA-STRUCTURE

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Prepared by

The Greening Working Group of the LEAP Stakeholder Group

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Makana LEAP: Implementation: Greening Infra-structure

INTRODUCTION	3
LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES.....	3
Open Space Projects.....	3
Project Level Urban Landscaping and Tree Planting Project	4
SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES.....	4
Cradock Heights Greenbelt	4
Southern Commonage Conservancy	4
Vukani Greenbelt Park.....	4
Millennium Tree Planting Project.....	5
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS	5
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR SOUTHERN COMMONAGE	5
Management Objectives.....	5
Public Access	6
Controlled Use	6
Ecosystem Management	6
Monitoring	6
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR MILLENIUM TREE PLANTING PROJECT.....	6
Resource Objectives.....	6
Geographic Coverage.....	6
Maintenance	6
Monitoring	6
REFERENCES.....	6

INTRODUCTION

The public participation process of the Makana Municipality Local Environmental Action Plan (LEAP) produced a number of recommendations for improved management of grazing and conservation lands within the Municipality and for the establishment of “Greenbelts” around the developed areas. These issues are reviewed in the summary of the Environmental Issues Audit of the LEAP process, and include:

- Conservation of the Southern Commonage
- Craddock Heights Greenbelt
- Vukani Greenbelt Park
- Millennium Tree Planting Project

These proposals fall under the broad category of “Green Infrastructure.” Green Infrastructure (GI) is defined as, a natural life support system - an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for communities (Conservation Fund 2003). Infrastructure typically refers to those built urban systems that maintain our quality of life such as roads, sanitary sewers, storm drains, electric lines, etc. Green Infrastructure broadens that definition to include other “natural” systems, such as rivers, productive soils, biodiversity, open space; natural systems that also help to maintain our quality of life. GI can further be categorised into two types of projects: identification, planning and establishment of open space and the site-specific incorporation of urban landscaping concepts into individual project proposals.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

The long-term objectives of the Makana Municipality Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) is to increase the availability of open space (passive and active) within the Municipality, while providing simultaneous protection of sensitive ecological regions and landscape aesthetics. The Eastern Cape State of the Environment Report (ECSOER 2004) identifies the Makana Municipality as having only four percent of its land area formerly protected as opposed to an average of ten percent for the province as a whole. In order to increase the overall percentage of protected lands within the Municipality, projects such as those identified in this Proposal need to be implemented. The Preliminary Sustainable Development Framework (SDF) prepared as part of the LEAP makes specific recommendations for an increase in open space and protected areas within the Municipality.

The implementation of an appropriately identified and planned GIP will improve the overall quality of life for the residents of Makana Municipality. A few of the anticipated long-term benefits are identified as follows:

Open Space Projects

- Protection of sensitive habitats and valuable ecological systems
- Opportunity to rehabilitate previously degraded ecological systems
- Protection of local biodiversity
- Controlled and sustainable use of natural resources (i.e., medicinal plant harvesting)

Makana LEAP: Implementation: Greening Infra-structure

- Protection of historic and culturally sensitive areas
- Increased access for the public to view and interact with nature
- Increased opportunities for recreation and tourism development
- Increased landscape aesthetics and viewshed characteristics
- Watershed protection and maintenance of water quality

Project Level Urban Landscaping and Tree Planting Project

- Visual enhancement of local development projects
- Reduction of reliance on vehicle trips by utilizing pedestrian friendly design
- Reduction of water usage by using indigenous plants in landscaping
- Reduction of the introduction of alien vegetation
- Reduction in energy use through appropriate landscape techniques (windbreaks, shading)
- Opportunities for carbon sequestration (and potential carbon trading credits)
- Reduction of light pollution and increased security through project appropriate lighting

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

The status of the various projects is as follows:

Cradock Heights Greenbelt

The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) has been involved in proposals for a green belt development that stretches from Cradock Dam over into Gowie's Kloof and behind Somerset Heights as far as Sugarloaf Hill, to help conserve our local plant biodiversity, amongst others. Interested parties were contacted with respect to retaining the green belt that stretches from Cradock Dam over into Gowie's Kloof and behind Somerset Heights as far as Sugarloaf Hill. The appeal was sent to Mr. Hennie Faasen of Setplan Settlement Planning Services, who was in charge of the Makana regional plan. Though discussed at the initial IDP meetings, no further information has been forthcoming.

Southern Commonage Conservancy

The proposed southern conservancy should incorporate part of the commonage. Mr. Nick James has announced a plan to enclose farms between Thomas Baines Nature Reserve and Featherstone's Kloof and possibly further as far as the Mountain Drive. The area is poor grazing for cattle and small-stock, and WESSA is supportive of the scheme.

Vukani Greenbelt Park

Makana LEAP: Implementation: Greening Infra-structure

A preliminary plan has been developed by SetPlan, however the status of the project has not been determined to date.

Millennium Tree Planting Project

The Millennium Tree Planting Project was started in 1999 and to date, approximately 500 trees have been planted within the Municipality. Indigenous trees are planted, including Wild Olive, Wild African Plum and Cape Ash. Non invasive alien species such as the Brazilian Pepper are also planted. The work is sponsored and coordinated through the Makana Municipality Department of Parks and Recreation. The scope and resources of the project could be increased to include additional plantings, species, and areas such as Riebeek East and Alicedale.

The short-term objectives of the GIP are to establish the Southern Commonage Conservancy (SCC) and to increase the amount of tree planting within the Municipality through the Millennium Tree Planting project.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The fundamental underpinning of the LEAP is the engagement of various stakeholders throughout the process. The Greening and Conservation proposals reviewed in this document (chapter) originated from the initial public meeting held on 6 April 2004. During that meeting a total of nine different respondents expressed concerns over this issue. In interviews conducted with Makana Municipality officials (Mrs. Buile Madlavu, Mr. Koos Schoombie and Mr. Kevin Bates), the issue of urban greenscaping was again mentioned as an underfunded priority for the Municipality. The need for greenbelts and tree planting was again brought up during the Rhodes University Environmental Education Unit (EEU) Municipal Workshop held on 25 May 2004. The Stakeholders Group (SG) identified greening and open space as a specific action item during their initial meeting held on 8 June 2004 and again at their follow-up meeting held on 3 August 2004 leading to the development of this draft Project Proposal. In addition to the LEAP process, the proposal for the Southern Commonage and Tree Planting is also contained in the Makana Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR SOUTHERN COMMONAGE

Management Objectives

Makana LEAP: Implementation: Greening Infra-structure

Public Access

Controlled Use

Ecosystem Management

Monitoring

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS FOR MILLENIUM TREE PLANTING PROJECT

Resource Objectives

Geographic Coverage

Maintenance

Monitoring

REFERENCES

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