BROOK STREET MARKET, DURBAN

Area based contribution towards managing the informal economy for iTRUMP (inner Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme), eThekwini Municipality Durban 2001-2010

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LEARNING

Receptivity to Stakeholders’ Ideas. The evolution of the Brook Street Central Market was undoubtedly as a result of the approach by the Badsha Peer Mazaar Society to erect a permanent roof adjacent to their Mazaar. The idea was unconventional and the innovation required an acceptable joint venture and the redirection of the design to achieve a more substantial outcome.

Concept Evolution: iTRUMP was able to imagine the potential of the initial approach and insist on the implementation of a first phase that accommodated a range of future opinions. The later provision of infrastructure in support of the immediate informal economy activities was evolutionary and responsive to their observed needs and those of the Local Authority.
eg. the purpose built storage facilities. Key to this achievement was the early production of a flexible master plan and phased implementation.

**Phased Implementation:** The adoption of a phased implementation strategy has been a key learning for iTRUMP and their projects developed for the informal economy. A number of practical considerations have supported this approach: It has enabled concept evolution in a sector where prior precedent is not generally available. Over time, it has enabled an aggregated, enhanced budget commitment that has translated into a more substantial and significant intervention. It recognized that many of the informal economy activities are survivalist in nature and are therefore vulnerable to disruption. Ensuring that there is income continuity is an important consideration that can best be achieved by phased implementation. It enhances the attributes of area based management in that funds can be placed to maximize leverage, but spread more uniformly to enable the creation of a broader platform that has the possibility of intersecting projects with commensurate benefit, rather than sequentially “starting at one end.”

**Strong Vision:** The Project illustrates the need for strong and clear vision as a key requirement for a phased implementation approach. Area based management is one of the only Local Authority approaches that can sustain and evolve this necessity. Line departments can articulate the vision but sustenance depends on area level inputs eg. stakeholder participation, design evolution, on-going maximization of opportunities and local institutional memory. All the latter are the preserve of an area based management approach. Strong vision is also applicable to “holding the course” where the local presence understands the significance of the Project and can retain its prominence over 6-7 years.
Urban Uniqueness: Generally, only an area based presence would have detected the implicit potential of the Society’s proposal. It is speculated that a routine approach into a Local Authority line department would have either lost or diluted the potential. The KZ-NIA Journal [Issue 3 / 2001. Volume No. 26] refers to the Brook Street Central Market as being “akin to the Galleria in Milan” [Italy]. Unique in form, concept and use. The interactive use of the space must rate as an international distinguished practice and occurrence. This practice has also developed a local idiosyncrasy where the local informal trader permits will have a qualifying condition that acknowledges the Society's annual use of the space ie. informal trade will be restricted during the veneration ceremony! The urban uniqueness is also an important contributor to the post-apartheid transformation of South Africa’s urban centres. This project site is obviously very significant as the “doorstep” into the previously segregated inner city. Cultural fusion is one means of securing sustainable transformation.

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