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iTRUMP [inner Thekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme] AREA BASED CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS MANAGING THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

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TRADITIONAL HERB AND MEDICINE MARKET

1.PROJECT

At inception, the traditional herb and medicine traders were located along the western Russell and northern Leopold Street sidewalks. Their presence was managed but unregulated; the practice presented significant urban management challenges; embodied health and safety concerns; was dangerously located alongside busy public roadways [especially the Leopold Street location] endangering not only the traders but also pedestrians who were obstructed in their use of the sidewalks.

Considering the cultural significance of traditional herbs and medicine, this wayside location did not dignify traditional practice.

2.BACKGROUND

Early photographic records of colonial Durban, depict the presence of traditional herb and medicine traders. Colonial life and later apartheid, alienated African people from their customs and diet, thus high-lighting the importance and connectivity of traditional herbs and medicine. A ready market also meant good business, hence the significant scale of the traditional practice on the Russell and Leopold Street sidewalks. Although managed, the trade was unregulated and in order to secure their products at night [the quantity of goods making it impractical to move on a daily basis] traders lived on the

same sidewalks - in essence a residential community. In approximately 1992 the Local Authority's City Health Department commenced work amongst this sector, primarily to manage the attendant health and safety challenges. This resulted in the formation of a street committee with elected representation and the interactive documentation of the trading community's needs and aspirations. Generally these included improved retail conditions but also differentiated accommodation for the izinyanga [traditional doctors] and overnight accommodation, particularly for the women [approximately 100] engaged in seasonal trade or the supply of products. This progressive work by City Health formed a solid project base for the inception of Warwick Junction's intervention. The early sector work focused on the presenting challenges of health and safety ie. there was only a general awareness of the economic magnitude and employment chains within the traditional herb and medicine community.

3.LOCATION

Although the significant presence of the traditional herb and medicine community was located [as described] in Russell and Leopold Streets, dispersed pockets of herb and medicine traders were also located throughout the Warwick Junction district eg. Victoria Street Bus Rank [on Leopold Street], in Brook Street, parts of Grey Street and the Ajmeri Arcade. Some izinyanga were also renting rooms within the Grey Street area, often in underutilized office space. These dispersed traders later became significant because of their dynamic linkages to the retail component of the traditional herb trade, or in some other manner. The actual extent of the sector was therefore masked at the inception of the project. Equally, some who were trading in remote locations were not necessarily doing so out of choice, so when the Market was developed, many wished to be absorbed into the Project.

4.INTERVENTION

The extensive yet desperate sidewalk trading was relocated into a purpose built, specialist Market. This relocation came under discussion in 1996, with the new facility being commissioned in 1998. The intervention was ground breaking in a number of respects.

1. Scale: At the time of commissioning the Market, provision had been made for approximately 700 tenants [the approximation relates to the complex seasonal and shared tenancy preferences amongst some of the stall-holders]. The author currently believes this figure to be 1000.
2. Specialist Market: No local or national precedent existed to inform the project approach, design or implementation. It became evident that the internal, obscured dynamic and the cultural encoding was both enabling [as it transformed into strong stakeholder project "ownership"] and daunting [in the risk that the project implementation might destroy vital energy].
3. Significant informal economy intervention: Nationally, local authorities were demonstrating a conservative approach towards public realm trading. However buoyed up by the positive political mood, they were demonstrating permissiveness but were nevertheless still rooted in an abolitionist belief. The

eThekwini Council's approval of the Project was a decisive reversal of this apparent uncertainty. This study will show that the Traditional Herb and Medicine Market set the Local Authority's development of the informal economy on a new trajectory.

4. **Bold investment:** The first phase of the Market [built over two Local Authority financial years] represented an investment of R4.0 million. By comparison, the current Warwick Junction Renewal Project's annual capital budget was approximately R8.5 million. No other national Local Authority was considering an informal economy investment of this magnitude.

5.PROCESS

In 1992 City Health commenced working with the traditional herb and medicine traders; structured the formation of an elected street committee; identified and documented those trading in the public realm [particularly on Russell and Leopold Streets]; introduced minimum health requirements and an enabling education / awareness programme; and initiated a process that documented the trading community's infrastructure preferences. In addition to the street committee, the then Self Employed Women's Union [disbanded in August 2005] was also active amongst the traditional herb and medicine traders.

In 1996, at the inception of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project and its focus on improved urban management, the Russell and Leopold Street traders became a prominent concern for the reasons identified earlier. The public realm within the district was already oversubscribed, suggesting that additional trading space needed to be acquired or created. It had been tacitly accepted that the Leopold Street sidewalks were not appropriate for development as a permanent location for the traditional herb and medicine traders. The sidewalks were narrow [insufficient for trading and passing pedestrians]; relatively busy connections to the northern Grey Street precinct; and Leopold Street was an extremely busy vehicular and public transport exit from the inner city. The latter had real pedestrian safety concerns.

Of equal concern at the time, was the management of the two unutilized freeway spurs that crossed the railway corridor north of, and adjacent to, the Berea rail commuter station. As essentially open and unoccupied space, the spurs were continually occupied by opportunistic activities, mainly for the erection of informal residential structures. Continuous action to prevent wholesale occupation of the spurs utilized valuable urban management resources.

It is uncertain who can claim authorship of the idea to establish the Market on the unutilized freeway spurs [it has been suggested that an architectural thesis that predated the Warwick Junction proposal had already exploited this concept - this has not been verified] but from the Warwick Junction Project's perspective, the concept embodied its emerging philosophy of regenerative effort matched with urban management ie. the Market required space and by occupying the unutilized freeway, the Market prevented the opportunistic "invasions".

The Warwick Junction Project prepared a preliminary sketch design, was assisted by the Local Authority's Architectural Services [currently known as Architecture and Buildings] with the production of a scale model and a preliminary cost estimate. This information was used to progressively obtain interest and approvals in principle from the Local Authority line departments. A key consideration was the future status and possible utilization of the freeway spurs within the inner city transport network. The spurs had been constructed at the time of the relocation of the Berea rail commuter station and represented the transport network under consideration at that time. To avoid future disruption, the elevated crossings over the rail corridor were implemented together with the construction of the adjacent rail station. Upon analysis, Traffic and Transportation [currently known as the eThekweni Transport Authority] agreed that the future transport plans would not incorporate the spurs, and at the inception of the Market a ten year tenure was agreed. Subsequently, this limitation has not been entrenched and adjacent development projects have reinforced the preclusion of the transport network connecting into Queen and Victoria Streets.

Architectural Services were commissioned by Informal Trade and Small Business Opportunities [ITSBO, currently named Business Support] to prepare a Council report: ITSBO obtained Council support and approval; funding was allocated over two local authority financial years and the implementation process commenced. The Warwick Junction Project's preliminary sketch designs were utilized as the briefing document for the commissioning of private sector architects, OMM Design Workshop. Architectural Services provided the Development Management Service; ITSBO were the Client and the Warwick Junction Project Implementation Team Leader provided area based facilitation and lead the ground-level consultation process with the traditional herb and medicine traders.

The potential complexity of the Project; the early challenges emerging after the initial implementation project indicating the necessity for more intensive stakeholder engagement and the desire to "weld" an interdepartmental Project team, moved the Project to adopt **an area based approach** that was finally implemented upon the availability of an optimally located under-utilized Council owned warehouse. The premises were able to accommodate the administrative offices and a community hall, the latter well suited to give effective implementation to the stakeholder participation strategy. A snap assessment taken during the Informal Economy Policy writing process, revealed that for the months of March and April 2000, 1500 people used the hall for over 90 meeting with over half being with Council officials. [Ref. Annexure 5 page 40. Durban's Informal Economy Policy.] Symbolically, the restoration of the severely neglected building was also a signal of Council and Project intent for the district.

See: Document 1. Page 9 4iii. Area Based Approach.

The Local Authority's consultation team comprised representation from Markets [who were to be the operators of the off-street portion of the Market]; ITSBO [who were to manage the traders located in the on-street portion of the Market ie. the Russell Street sidewalk]; City Health and the Warwick Junction Project.

The initial capital expenditure 1995 / 1996 of R500,000 was for predominately civils works, preparing the freeway for the following building works contract of R3.5 million in the 1996 / 1997 financial year. The Market was occupied in 1997.

6.PRODUCT

At the time of commissioning, the Market consisted of an off-street portion of open roofed stalls and 12 semi-enclosed izinyana kiosks. The latter could be secured with metal roll-down doors that faced the pedestrian circulation routes. There were two blocks of toilets and individually metered water points throughout the Market, each shared between approximately 10 traders. Each open roofed stall provided approximately 6 m² of space per trader. Smaller open-air spaces were also provided alongside the un-roofed portion of the thoroughfares of approximately 2m² in extent. It was intended that these be roofed at a future date but would be specifically for products that were displayed vertically - particularly animal products. The on-street portion of the Market consisted of open roofed stalls located along the western sidewalk of the Russell Street Bridge. This was not a preferred solution, but the number of traders exceeded the capacity of the off-street portion and those who had already been trading in Russell Street were reluctant to relocate for fear that this would erode their existing business. Subsequently, the viability of the off-street portion dispels this concern but during the consultation process it was a substantial point of negotiation. In total approximately 700 traders were accommodated in the Market. The final interpretation of the sketch design followed the freeway configuration by locating the roofed stalls on the outer edges, thus creating a contained space with a measure of tranquility within the busy transport and pedestrian hub.

A significant design consideration was the management of stormwater run-off from the new roofs to prevent high voltage electricity [from the overhead railway conductors below the bridge structure] being conducted up a continuous stream of water! The roof gradients therefore followed the geometry of the freeway with transverse gutters intersecting the roofs at regular intervals - resulting in the appropriate technical solution but also an integrated design aesthetic reinforcing the serpentine “flow” of the existing freeway spurs. Treated timber poles and pre-painted corrugated metal sheeting are the predominant construction materials, producing an architectural expression sympathetic to the products found in the Market.

In order for the Market to operate optimally, it was necessary to connect the western end of the freeway to an existing adjacent pedestrian bridge to provide a new district pedestrian thoroughfare over the rail corridor. [See: Document 1, Page 4, Para. 2] Intensive environmental design was incorporated into the detailing of bridge eg. walkway widths, alternate routes [to prevent entrapment] balustrade heights and visual permeability. In December 1999 the Market Bridge was identified by the [South African] *Sunday Times* as one of the architectural “Best of the Century” with the following citation:

“This is one of the first South African structures which addresses -

and celebrates - the informal traders who have come to dominate our city centres. The building, which is not much more than a pedestrian bridge with some shady pergolas, is located at the city's commercial centre, where hawkers, shacks and shebeens cluster around a busy transport intersection.

Lightweight structures with shading devices made of wattle branches announce the entrance to the market. The transient quality expresses the informal trading patterns of the hawkers who ply their wares on the bridge."

Associated with the off-street Market and located in an underpass below Russell Street are the "lime sellers", traders retailing kaolin [high quality clay either white or brown] used for medicinal purposes because of its high calcium content or as a traditional sunscreen.

Subsequent phases to the Market have seen the addition of more kiosks for the original number of izinyanga [approximately 40 in total], a herb processing facility and a tourism interpretative centre. The latter has not been commissioned.

7.LEARNING [PROJECT LEVEL]

i. Preparatory Organization:

The work commenced in 1992 by City Health proved to be invaluable. In a functional and "low key" manner it established a data base; organized democratic street level representation; facilitated the articulation of the stakeholders' infrastructural preferences, all whilst providing an initial urban management function. In various permutations, this became an inception format for all of the Warwick Junction informal economy projects eg. a preliminary data base; organized democratic representivity and articulated development preferences. All this would evolve without raising project expectations.

ii. The City Health initiative:

The establishment of the Market, the enhanced profile of traditional herbs and medicine; regular meetings in the Project Centre Hall, all established a strong sector identity. It is firmly contended that this work was instrumental in the ultimate formation of the Traditional Healers Council [first at provincial, now at national level.] A consequence of this progressive development is that traditional medicine is now recognized by medical aid organizations.

iii. Catalytic Project:

The Traditional Herb and Medicinal Market became a catalytic project for the Warwick Junction Project. It provided a new district pedestrian thoroughfare over the rail corridor that had been deliberately obstructed in the apartheid years; it

gave prominence to a valued cultural practice that had existed furtively within the “shadows” of the inner city; the project delivery and consultation process established confidence in and a rapport with the Warwick Junction Project Team; and the Market represented a major investment in the informal economy ahead of policy certainty.

The Market was also the “key” that unlocked the spatial congestion experienced in the District and because this was previously unutilized space, the construction sequence was seamless ie. minimum disruption to all the stakeholders. [Richard Dobson was in discussion with a member of the public some 5 years after the Market had been commissioned, and this person was amazed that the traditional herb and medicine traders had been relocated onto the freeway spurs. He had been under the abiding belief that the Local Authority had outlawed the practice and “removed” the traders!] An analysis of the Warwick Junction project list [See Document 1.6 Interventions. Page 11] demonstrates how many of the subsequent projects “hung” off the Market on either side of the rail corridor.

iv. Consultation Process:

The Warwick Junction Project Team was able to exercise a unique area based role in that it was able to assemble, participate in and direct the consultation process. The implications were that the right people were involved; that there was a continual sense as to how the process was progressing, and in the event that this required remedial attention, this leadership role could be exercised.

The Local Authority’s consultation team was multi-departmental with a broad range of skills. There was a conscious recognition that architectural ideas and drawings were being presented to stakeholders who did not necessarily understand this form of communication. There was care taken to present models rather than drawings; build full-size mock ups eg. the proposed stall display bins; conduct regular site visits to communicate progress and explain the evolving forms. The nature of the traditional practice, meant that the elected street committee tended to lean towards patriarchy. The constructive role played by SEWU was to bring women’s opinion to the consultation process. Because they were active in other projects eg. cardboard salvaging, there was a continuous and incidental interaction with their membership that alerted the Warwick Junction Project Team to any mounting disease. Later, in 2000, a woman was elected Chairperson of the Market.

Ms Pat Horn, a street vendor organization leader wrote the following with respect to the consultation process:

“... the Council afforded the informal traders - a stakeholder grouping more commonly ignored unless they become troublesome - the opportunity to participate on a sustained and continuous basis in negotiations about their needs and priorities and the Council’s concerns, in a low-key way, often on an issue-by-issue basis.”

[Development Update. The City and Its Future? Vol. 5, No. 7 April 2004, Page 211.]

v. Allocation Process:

Notwithstanding the early preparatory data base, the actual extent of those wishing accommodation in the Market was masked by 1. Seasonal and kinship trading arrangements, 2. Preference to relocate from another remote location with the knowledge that a “new” facility was being constructed, 3. Forced sharing of “sites” ie. if space now permitted, individuals would prefer to establish their own enterprises and, 4. Reticence to register on the initial data base for fear of victimization ie. information being gathered in an abolitionist era. As a design check, the pavement lengths occupied by the traders in Russell and Leopold Streets were measured to ensure that excess curtilage was provided in the new facility.

Inevitably, the Market space was over subscribed and negotiations followed to ensure a fair and transparent allocations process. A recurring preference expressed by the traders, was the retention of communal associations developed over the years eg. neighbouring traders with whom they had co-shared and, at times, even operated one another’s businesses.

The culmination of allocations negotiation was the community’s decision to hold a public roll-call to jointly identify the traders who had been “short listed”. This event took a day in the height of summer; required that the trader’s name be called by an official; that they stand to be identified and then acknowledged as either “old” or “new” ie. time spent trading on the street. Those in contention were listed for later clarification / negotiation. The event passed with humor and pathos, confirming an allocations list not dissimilar to that compiled by the Project Team! The intactness of the trading community was clearly evident upon their installation into the Market.

vi. Economic Impact:

Economic research undertaken at the end of the Market’s first year of trading [1998] indicated a gross turnover of R170,0 million amongst approximately 700 traders, with an employment chain eg. rural suppliers etc of 14,000 people. Of the gross turnover, R150,0 million was attributed to the izinyana and R20.0 million to the retailers.

This evidence clearly indicated that the Local Authority's development programme should focus on benefaction and diversionary sector activity. This has resulted in the project based promotion of plant propagation [now 5 nursery sites], and the farming of traditional herbs and their commercial processing. Within the Market, a small processing plant is available to grind / crush material for specialist preparations and dispensing.

It was also the first meaningful economic data emerging from the informal economy that suggested that investment by local government in appropriate infrastructure could be programmatic and developmental.

vii. Provision of Services:

At inception, provision was made for electricity, telephones [landlines were still popular!] water and toilets. Electricity is now [2007] being installed to some traders on a pre-paid meter basis; telephones have not been installed [not even for the public]; water was installed at regular stall intervals throughout the Market, but were progressively shut off by the tenants who were being inconvenienced by the use of the taps adjacent to their retail space. Water is now drawn from taps located at the public toilets. The public toilets are maintained by a co-operative engaged by Markets on behalf of the Local Authority.

viii. Area Based Management [ABM] Contribution:

The ABM contributed significantly in the conception of the Market; the community participation and consultation; the interface between the Client [ITSBO], stakeholders, Architectural Services' Development Manager and the Consultants [See: Document 1, Fig 4, Page 9]

Being area based enabled the Project Team to direct the design development with insights gained from area observation and "intelligence". In 1998 the Project embarked on an extensive urban greening project with a preference for indigenous planting - obvious material for harvesting by the traditional herb and medicine traders! Initial negotiations with the traders identified the valuable species ie. those that would be potentially vulnerable and then the preservation of the selected plant material was specifically agreed. Initially, a number of "fever trees" were indiscriminately debarked but the traders confirmed that the manner in which it had been done was not the work of herbalists. It was agreed that the Market would not purchase material from opportunistic suppliers and the Traders Against Crime monitored and prevented any further incidents. The trees survive, untouched to this day!

Integrated urban management was achieved through the planting of indigenous aloes. Only the dried ie. "dead" leaves around the base of the plant are used by herbalists for snuff. These are the very leaves to which the Local Authority has to devote resources to ensure their removal and disposal. In Leopold Street they are

harvested by the herbalists!

ix. Phased Development:

No prior precedent was available to inform the design and construction of the Market. Area based observation, workshops and information gathering from the traders assisted the process but ultimately, interactive and phased implementation guided the Project. An implicit design tension was the desire to develop a weather-proof facility, yet have sufficient exposure to sunlight to prepare the products and prevent their premature decay.

Stakeholders' understanding of development proposals vary. Phased implementation permits the re-alignment of expectations and a measure of design modification. The appropriateness of the design of the izinyana kiosks exemplifies this aspect. They have been modified between project phases.