

SDCEA WANTS more commitment to sustainable urban development in eThekweni including:

1. A coherent municipal sustainability plan against which any planned investment & development in the city is vetted, to ensure ongoing well-being & prosperity for the diverse communities in eThekweni.
2. Increased community engagement as a requirement for each level of the planning and development process. This involvement should be regular, open, representative and include a hands-on approach from municipal staff.
3. An enabling environment that supports and encourages volunteers and community organisations to get involved in community development initiatives.
4. The acknowledgement that the development of people's skills is the most important aspect of creating true sustainability. Therefore we need more provision & open access to free skills development programmes that teach literacy, life skills and skills suited to local production based on renewable resources.
5. the protection and promotion of subsistence fishing and farming within the city, and the development of large-scale urban agriculture programmes to produce Durban's food requirements locally.
6. A vast improvement in people's access to services through larger amounts of free basic services & lower tariffs for poorer consumers, financed through cross-subsidies from higher tariffs for excess & luxury consumption.
7. Greater focus on alleviating the energy & fuel crisis within the City through cross-subsidisation of poor consumers; incentives for middle class investment in solar power; forced industry investment in renewable (solar, wind etc) energy technologies; and the use of BAT (Best Available Technology) for energy conservation in production & transport.
8. The development & implementation of sustainable transport plans that prioritise pedestrian & cyclist safety, provide reliable & safe public transport, remove trucks from residential areas & the city centre, prevent congestion, fix existing road damage and generally reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
9. The delineation & enforcement of no-go areas for industrial & business development where residential communities are jeopardized through the disintegration of community fabric, livelihoods or the cumulative impacts of pollution.
10. Promulgation of City by-laws for allowable air, water & waste emissions equal or better than international best practice, and related to ambient air & water quality monitoring aimed at reducing the cumulative pollution impact on health & ecosystems.
11. More stringent permitting and policing of all types of industry based on this assessment of both point source and cumulative pollution impacts. By-laws must include meaningful punitive measures in the event of permit violations, accidents, pollution and adverse health outcomes.
12. Banning of incineration at all levels, and implementation of waste prevention & other alternatives that are less harmful to the environment and people.
13. Detailed monitoring and calculation of the CO₂ emissions associated with the port operation & expansion. We see this is an amazing oversight.
14. A well-publicised and easy to follow Disaster Management Plan for Durban.
15. More accountable & accessible governance through devolving authority to the most local level possible; greater citizen participation in decision-making; curbing of the City Manager's discretionary powers, and more noticeably diligent, committed and accountable Councillors and municipal officials.
16. By-laws that protect existing green spaces with ecological value and that require new developments to set aside a percentage of land for new green spaces.
17. Deliverables & timeframes for addressing beach and bay degradation.
18. Deliverables & timeframes for the provision of amenities to poor communities.
19. Better public notification of planned public & private developments & opportunities to give input, as well as reports on the progress of all approved projects.
20. Aspirations for Durban, communicated through public media, which are less concerned with glamour & image, and more focused on a culturally diverse, biodiverse, skilled, resilient, harmonious and content City.

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Reimagine DURBAN

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

Position Paper No. 1

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Real Sustainability for Durban

A key concern of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) is the well-being of all people living in eThekweni now and into the future. Further development of the city, suburbs and peri-urban areas needs to address the fundamental human needs of all eThekweni's residents. These needs include access to nutritious & affordable food, water and energy; a home; mobility; safety; good health; the ability to make a living; and active participation in community life and decision-making on issues affecting us. True sustainability can be achieved only when these needs are met using local resources, without compromising our environment and when all people are beneficiaries of the City's promise to be Africa's most liveable city.

The 'Imagine Durban' campaign poses the question 'what do you dream for the sustainable future of Durban?' To achieve a sustainable future we need to take radical changes to the way we do things now. The SDCEA is concerned that the City seems to have no immediate plan for sustainability that addresses problems like unbearable pollution, unacceptable living conditions, increasing fuel & food costs and climate change in a strategic and integrated way across the Municipality! 'Imagine Durban' is in the process of setting sustainability goals and drawing up action plans that the municipality will hopefully take on board in the future. In the meanwhile the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for Durban aligns plans with City budgets and therefore determines what actually happens in the City. There is a need for these processes to merge so that budgeting is aligned with more strategic sustainability goals, and informed through genuine and ongoing public involvement.

The SDCEA call for:

- A Strategic Environmental Assessment of eThekweni that acknowledges the real problems that communities face & that will provide baselines for measuring improvement.
- A participatory process to develop strategic sustainability goals and action plans, which direct municipal spending to meaningfully address the long-term wellbeing of residents; and which tackle the vested interests that compromise wellbeing and environmental sustainability with gusto.
- Community derived sustainability indicators, by which the city's residents can measure both day-to-day and longer term progress, and which are linked to the performance bonuses of City staff.

Without credible indicators sustainability cannot be measured, progress celebrated or failures assessed and learnt from.

South Africa has advanced environmental legislation and policies. Yet, many people in Durban (and elsewhere in South Africa) continue to suffer environmental racism based on past exclusion from decision-making and ongoing policies such as GEAR. Our 'development' model continues to increase the gap between rich and poor by encouraging industries that extracts profits and resources, while providing few jobs, and leaving communities with heavy health and environmental burdens to bear.

To reverse this trend the City must redefine its concept of what sustainability entails. Many people assume that the 'environment' is limited to green spaces, plants and animals. This limited concept is indicative of the type of project approach the City has. A strategic environmental assessment and sustainability indicators must encompass all aspects including social development, governance, and economic access that affect the way that we impact, use and interact with the environment around us and from which we draw resources. Environmental issues are not only green issues. They have to do with the space around people and the conditions in which they live and are subject to.

Without substantial action now sustainability will remain in the realm of our imaginations, while countless people continue to suffer in poverty and ill health. Environmental degradation and injustice needs to be challenged at the grass roots so that Durban is not only the 'most liveable city' for an elite few, but is the City where the majority of people can live in well-being into the future.

SDCEA

