

In a local context, there are estimated to be approximately 6 150 people residing within the planning area, immediately next to the station in the Bufferstrip informal settlements. A further 2 100 people live in Eluxolweni, which is to the north of the national road (the N2).

3. PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

The Mount Ruth Precinct has been identified as a node through all documents prepared for the Mdantsane area. The proposal of Mount Ruth being a node was formalised in the Mdantsane East London Development Corridor (MELD) and its proposals were endorsed in the following documents:-

3.1 Mdantsane East London Development Corridor (MELD)

This Plan provides a broad conceptual overview and integrated planning framework of the corridor and identifies various implementation projects and developments in strategic areas along the corridor and at nodal intersections.

The MELD document identified Mount Ruth as a major node for mixed use according to the following main goals:-

- ❖ **Public Transport:** To provide a viable and safe public transport system and improve access to opportunities, in particular to promote public transport, higher urban densities and more efficient movement patterns;
- ❖ **Economic Development:** To stimulate economic development by creating an appropriate climate for private sector initiatives;
- ❖ **Housing:** To increase housing densities and create well located opportunities for new housing;
- ❖ **Environment:** To promote the use of natural resources and to respect the natural characteristics of the area;
- ❖ **Services:** To provide basic infrastructure that supports and encourages new private sector development and housing;
- ❖ **Facilities and Amenities:** To improve access to facilities; and
- ❖ **Institutional:** To ensure effective participation of all role-players and to improve the quality of service of the local government.

3.2 Mdantsane/Potsdam Development Plan

The Mdantsane/Potsdam Development Plan identifies Mount Ruth Station as a higher order node and advocates the establishment of a Pilot Project for higher density housing at Mount Ruth.

It proposes that Local Economic Development focussing on small scale service industry and manufacturing should be accommodated in business hives located at nodal points. An important criterion in the identification of these hives is accessibility.

3.3 Integrated Development Plan

The Buffalo City Municipality Integrated Development Plan was developed and adopted in 2002 as a strategic tool to assist the municipality to achieve integrated and sustainable development. The Plan was able to analyse the key issues and identify the opportunities and constraints.

The Mount Ruth Nodal Precinct has been identified as an area with very high potential for development as a mixed land use node, based on its accessibility from the railway line/station and feeder routes into Mdantsane as well as the fact that it is connected directly to the Mdantsane CBD (Highway Centre).

The Integrated Development Plan describes the concept of nodes and suggests that at each node it is desirable to integrate a number of physical elements, including:-

- ❖ **Public Transportation Terminals:** An important theme that runs through the concepts is the integration of different modes of transportation, particularly public transportation. The existing rail system, although badly under utilised at present, represents a major potential asset. A conscious attempt should be made to activate this potential by significantly increasing housing densities around stations and by integrating stations with taxi and bus terminals. The success of the plan, however, is not dependent on the utilisation of the train system;
- ❖ **Public Facilities:** Wherever un-served demand for public services exists, the nodes should become the focus of social facilities and services such as schools, clinics, community halls, sports fields, pension payout points, libraries and so on;
- ❖ **The Public Spatial Environment:** At all nodes, careful attention is given to this. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that the quality of the public spatial environment has a profound impact on private investor confidence. The second is that the public spaces have a direct economic role, in that they provide viable opportunities for informal trade at very low overheads;
- ❖ **Housing:** The nodes provide opportunities for high density housing where households who wish to do trade off space for much greater convenience and lower costs; and
- ❖ **Manufacture and retail:** Opportunities for smaller and larger forms of manufacture and trade, both formal and informal.

The IDP recommends that new investment in housing, commercial buildings, industrial sites and recreation facilities should be used to increase the intensity of land use within the confines of the existing urban area and thereby raise living densities, improve public transport viability and increase economic activity.

3.4 Buffalo City Municipality Spatial Development Framework (BCMSDF)

The BCMSDF identified Mount Ruth Station as a major mixed land use node in the Mdantsane area and defines a node as an area of mixed use development with a high intensity of activities involving:-

- ❖ Retail;
- ❖ Office;
- ❖ Traffic;
- ❖ Industry; and
- ❖ Residential land uses.

Nodes are the places where most interaction takes place between people and organisations, enabling most efficient transactions and exchange of goods and services. Nodes are usually located at nodal interchanges to provide maximum access and usually act as catalysts for new growth and development.

3.5 Mdantsane Urban Renewal Programme Business Plan (MURP)

Mount Ruth Station was highlighted in the MURP Business Plan as a major node for development in the context of three main clusters:-

❖ **Economic Development**

- A vibrant Regional Commercial and Retail Centre;
- Transportation hub;
- A place where Investment Partnerships could be fruitful; and
- Retail/Office Park.

❖ **Social Development**

➤ **High Density Housing**

A pilot project on high density high density housing development was proposed at Mount Ruth which will show the community the opportunities presented by high density housing. If this development is a success it could be implemented in other parts of Buffalo City;

➤ **Transport Interchange**

A transport interchange on either side of the station would provide access to commercial properties and up to 1 200 medium/high density housing units within a radius of 400m from Mount Ruth Station; and

➤ **Land and Linkages**

The plan also indicated that there is at least 16ha of vacant land within walking distance of the station which could be developed. Future access to the N2 is also considered a strategic link.

❖ **Infrastructure Development**

➤ **Transport System**

Establishment of an integrated and efficient transport system ensuring that linkages are provided from the railway stations to other nodes within Mdantsane in a safe and efficient manner with the creation of transport linkages linked to the N2, Newlands and the N6; and

➤ **Pedestrian Safety**

Pedestrian mobility routes will also be investigated to ensure that pedestrians are safe and secure when walking from the station to their destinations.

3.6 Township Planning

3.6.1 Bufferstrip

The settlement that took place in the Bufferstrip area since the early 90's was uncontrolled and no planning in any form was undertaken to accommodate and control the influx of new residents to this area.

The Bufferstrip in its present development form mainly provides for the residential settlement needs of the inhabitants and is characterised by the absence and under-provision of social and economic facilities and amenities as well as engineering infrastructure.

Land utilisation in the Bufferstrip is confined to residential use with Spaza shops being the only economic activity that is present in the area.

Planning for the Bufferstrip has made provision for the following land uses:-

❖ Residential sites	1 672
❖ Community facilities	9
❖ Business sites	5
❖ Higher Density Development node	4
❖ Public Open Space	11

Provision has been made in the Bufferstrip layout plan for additional erven that would accommodate beneficiaries affected by the introduction of Higher Density Development Nodes. Three of these sites are located near to the Mount Ruth Station (refer to Plan 3).

A survey of the Bufferstrip indicated a need for a pre-school and recreational facilities. The planning philosophy and approach to the upgrading of the Bufferstrip area was to avoid as far as possible any unnecessary intrusion on the settlement pattern, apart from providing for amenities that would lead to the improvement in the quality of life in the area.

The area known as Masibulele, has been included in the Mount Ruth Nodal Precinct for future development. The existing settlement consists of 116 households. These households consist of 145 adults with 202 dependants, 77 are employed and 59 are unemployed (refer to Table 1 below).