

PROVINCIAL PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

BACKGROUND:

The Spatial Planning Directorate is responsible for commenting on applications of a Spatial Nature in the Free State (Both urban and rural development).

In this respect the Directorate have been the initiators of guidelines towards the subdivision of Agricultural Land.

These guidelines were developed over many years and have been updated during the Pilot Land Use Management Schemes Process (including a scheme for Dihlabeng) Maluti a Phofung is now in process (2nd round) of LUMS. These guidelines are general guidelines developed in accordance with many role players and applicable for all Agricultural Land within the Free State.

Furthermore the Department is also responsible to assist and monitor the Integrated Development Process (IDPs) in the Free State. Local and District Municipalities have reviewed their IDPs and as part of it the SDFs. Unfortunately the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality failed to submit a reviewed SDF for the period 2004 -2005, although Dihlabeng and Maluti a Phofung have submitted theirs.

Although the general guidelines are in place and have been used in the past in the Clarence area it was decided by concerned parties (including The Department) who realizes the uniqueness of this area to have a moratorium imposed on any development in the Clarens area until such time as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Study (SEA) and LUMS (currently being done) is finalized. The moratorium is a result of increasing pressure on existing services (e.g. roads, electricity, water) as a result of increasing development. The Local Municipality and Government authorities are concerned about the question of limits to use (i.e. the scale of sustainable development.) The Department of Agriculture for example is concerned about the impact of rural housing estates and other forms of tourism development on agricultural potential in the area. There are a number of authorities worried about the impact on sense of place in the area as well as the area's natural and cultural resources.

The SEA and additional info to be included in the LUMS is financially assisted by the Maloti Drankensberg Transfrontier Project and is due towards the end of September 2005 and recommendations of this study would be taken into account and included in the general guidelines as well as LUMS where applicable. No development proposals will be commented on until such time that the MEC for Local Government and Housing have lifted the moratorium. (The moratorium has been endorsed by the Free State Townships Board and is currently with the MEC for Local Government Housing for his signature.)

It is the vision of this Department to have sustainable, controlled development in the whole of the Eastern Free State and therefore the Department is of the opinion that drafting proper guidelines to regulate development in this area (specific) are not debatable and worthwhile waiting for.

There is an urgent need for development in this area (more than 16 names of possible developers) has come to the attention of this Directorate. These developers are requested to await the outcome of the SEA study and "micro" SDF/LUMS before submitting their respective applications.

It is further the request of this department that South African National Parks (SANParks) work in close collaboration with the consultants on the SEA study and that the recommendation thereof be taken into account when the Golden Gate Highland Park make any decisions on development within the park. It would be a shame if development within the Park differs completely and vastly with development adjacent to the park, as this' would not be in line with the principle of integrated development.