

There shall be housing

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The ACO suggests that the far East Bank should be regarded as a scarce and precious resource for the people of Alexandra. Accordingly, the land on the far East Bank should not be developed according to conventional private sector criteria.

The ACO stresses that it is not suggesting that private sector developers have no role in a low-income development programme, nor that development projects should not be based on efficiency, cost-recovery, sound management and professional expertise. However, special conditions should pertain to ensure fair and equal distribution of scarce resources, to ensure affordable housing for all in Alexandra, and to avoid speculation.

The suggested "special" conditions are:

- The land on the far East Bank should be placed in a non-profit Community Land Trust, rather than being allocated directly to private developers. The main function of the Trust would be to prevent land speculation, including the resale of stands for profit and the holding of land allocations by private developers for profit.

- Serviced stands and houses on the far East Bank should be allocated to Alexandra residents only.

- No residents should be allowed to buy or own more than one house or serviced stand on the far East Bank.

THE ACO proposal also argues for affordability as a development principle, on the basis that housing is a human right and that most residents are poor.

It suggests that low-income housing and serviced land should be developed at cost. It rejects as contradictory and unacceptable that low-income and unemployed residents should have to cover high interest repayments and profits of private developers in order to have houses.

The proposal also calls for the subsidisation of low-income development, in the form of grants or subsidised loans. Such subsidies should not be viewed as hand-outs but as compensation to urban residents who have contributed their labour and spending power to the city, yet who, up to now, have housed themselves at very little cost to the city.

The ACO proposal calls for a development programme that integrates the provision of community facilities like creches, clinics, schools, recreational areas, halls and so on, with the construction of residential accommodation.

It therefore suggests that the planning process should include guidelines for determining priorities.

The TPA was due to respond to the ACO proposal a few days before publication. Here's hoping that we've seen a breakthrough! □

Patrick Banda is regional co-ordinator of Idasa in Johannesburg.

New-look NP stress party politics

By Paul Graham

POLITICAL parties - not groups based on ethnic identity - will be the crucial "groups" in the exercise of constitutional political power, according to the Deputy Minister of Provincial Affairs, Tertius Delport.

Addressing an Idasa "Future Forum" in Durban, Delport said in laying down two basic tenets for the reform process he was speaking as a member of the National Party rather than expressing the "sentiments of the government in its role as administrator of the Republic".

Commitment to the principles of non-discrimination and freedom of association were the base from which commitment to multi-party democracy should flow, he said.

"A constitution may have safeguards for the protection of individual rights, it can protect freedom of religion, language and culture, and it can protect principles such as culturally oriented education. What it cannot do is guarantee a particular language, culture, or racial group leadership or decisive political power."

"Therefore, the political choices of the future will be between the principles of the various parties, between the different values they represent and defend and between the different policies they pursue."

This emphasis on the party as the necessary expression of people's political interests ran throughout his speech.

"When I refer to power-sharing," he asserted, "I refer to the concept of power-sharing between political parties."

His audience, many of whom had expected only a discussion of development proposals, warmed quickly to what was clearly for them an entirely new approach to constitutional development. He was challenged repeatedly to clarify this position.

"Is the party talking about the identification of ethnicity with party affiliation?" asked one

person, who pointed out that Zulu-speaking persons supported a range of political organisations.

Delport replied that this separation of party affiliation from ethnicity was exactly his point and re-iterated a commitment to a constitution which encourages multi-party democracy.

"Are minority rights protections then necessary, rather than a strong protection of individual rights?" asked another person.

"The individual right to speak a particular language cannot be exercised other than in a group," Delport replied, "but this cannot be seen in the same light as constitutional power arrangements."

Power-sharing in this concept could be achieved in two practical ways: it could be devolved to regional and local governments, and/or electoral procedures which "allow representation of all parties with substantial support" could be adopted.

This would reject the policy of "winner takes all" and make it possible to choose a system which accepts the fact "that we have many (conflicting) interests and that these interests must be represented in government".

A strong commitment to individual rights, which enables the exercise of rights which have community or group significance, and the creation of a constitution which not only allows for but encourages multi-party democracy, seemed to lie at the heart of the discussion which Delport had with his audience.

A number of questioners wondered whether the National Party and the government would be able to move in this direction in the face of right-wing and constituency dissent.

"How will you deal with the threat from the right?" was one question.

"We will outpace them," Delport declared. "Politics is about results, and we intend to get the necessary results." □

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