

Nairobi Metropolitan Region:

Networking the Sustainable African Metropolis
issues, visions, concepts, strategic areas and projects

Summary Version

BY: Center for Urban and Regional Planning and Associates, Kenya; Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Nairobi, Kenya; Center for Sustainable Urban Development, Earth Institute, Columbia University, United States of America; Department of Architecture, Urbanism and Planning, University of Leuven, Belgium; OMGEVING, Belgium; EURO IMMO STAR, Belgium; Latitude, Platform for Urban Research and Design, Belgium and Italy.

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CENTER FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL
PLANNING AND ASSOCIATES

NAIROBI, KENYA



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

OMGEVING
PASSIE VOOR RUIMTE



LATITUDE
PLATFORM FOR URBAN RESEARCH
AND DESIGN

Preface

This report, "Nairobi Metropolitan Region: Networking the Sustainable African Metropolis: Issues, Visions, Concepts", was developed in response to the first International Planning Competition in Nairobi's history.

In the fall of 2008, eager to gather new ideas, the Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development put out a call for proposals for a Spatial Planning Concept for the Nairobi Metropolitan Region. The objective of the competition was to develop a sustainable land use system for the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (NMR) which will result in an environmentally sustainable region that will:

- Build an internationally competitive and inclusive economy for prosperity
- Deploy world class infrastructure and utilities for the region
- Optimise mobility and accessibility through effective transportation
- Enhance the quality of life and inclusiveness in the region
- Deliver a unique image and identity through effective place branding
- Ensure a safe and secure Nairobi Metropolitan Region
- Employ World Class Metropolitan Governance Systems

The plan is meant to ensure that the Nairobi Metropolitan Region's 15 local authorities are developed to be interdependent nodes within the region. It will clearly identify the role of core Nairobi and define its functional relationship with the other constituent local authorities.

Nineteen teams responded to the Ministries initial Expression of Interest (EOI) and in July of 2009, the Ministry invited eight qualified consortia to submit a full length spatial planning concept for the competition. The international consortium led by the Centre for Urban and Regional Planning in Nairobi was one of the eight invited teams.

This competition and the challenge it presented created a unique opportunity to dialogue on the future of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region, a dynamic and diverse area ranging from an economically powerful urban core, fuelled by local entrepreneurial and intellectual skill, to areas of great natural beauty and high agricultural potential. It provided a chance to anchor a metropolitan spatial concept in Kenyan realities and a way for government to tap into the formidable expertise and creativity in the country; a step forward in the government's attempt to address the complex problems of rapid urbanization and harness the opportunities it presents in the 21st century.

Summary

This concept was built upon the principal that a spatial concept is not an urban plan, but an articulation of the principles and ideas that will guide a larger urban planning process.

In this proposal, our multidisciplinary team is proposing a vision, a spatial planning concept, strategic projects and a strategy for the Nairobi Metropolitan Region.

We aim to reconcile the urban reality of metropolitan Nairobi's present with its past in a way that will permit the region to successfully meet the social, economic and environmental challenges of the present century.

We believe that any plan and planning process to address metropolitan Nairobi's contemporary urban spatial problems must come to grips with their roots. These roots are evident in the socially segregated and spatially fragmented inheritance of its colonial design.

Proposal

This proposal is not a plan in and of itself. Instead, it serves as an articulation of the principles and ideas to guide a participatory process of developing a spatial concept for the Nairobi Metropolitan Region.

Our approach will create a planning process that ensures development of a plan that can be effectively implemented.

We believe that the urban challenges that metropolitan Nairobi face are less about what needs to be done and more about finding effective ways to attain the needed ends. To achieve this, the initial concept, the process for

developing and refining this concept and the process for implementation are all critical and inter-related.

We present the vision of the Nairobi Metropolitan Region (NMR) as a sustainable African metropolis. Underpinning this idea is development that improves and creates the long term health of human and ecological systems. The aim is to make cities liveable places, and to care for human life and the ecological and economic systems on which life depends in the present and in the long term.

We propose a network organization to develop the strategic plan for the NMR. The principles through which this network organization operates include:

- Granting authority and resources to subsidiaries to allow decision making and competitiveness at local levels of government;
- Empowering neighborhoods, including informal settlements, to solve their local and regional problems through negotiation across jurisdictions;
- Nurturing social networks and fabrics through a clear planning process;
- Maintaining accountability and building trust through ensuring a wider democratic process.

These principles can be applied to the NMR Strategic plan through a four track process. First there is a period for visioning, then preparation of actions, then a process to involve stakeholders in decision making, and lastly the building of capacity for different categories of actors.

Finally we propose to organize different capacity building arenas with non- conventional (weaker) actors aiming at the transfer of technology and knowledge and at the creation of a deep insight in issues and possibilities and the empowerment of the population.

An aerial photograph of a city, likely New York City, with a strong green color overlay. The image shows a dense urban area with a prominent river or waterway running through it. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD)
Earth Institute | Columbia University

475 Riverside Drive
Suite 520
New York, NY 10115

Phone: +1 (212) 851-2983
Email: csudei@gmail.com