

**Detailed response by Phila Mayisela, Chief Director: Human Settlements (Implementation), on allegations made by residents of Syferfontein regarding a housing development next to Rosedale:**

Your enquiry on the Rosedale development also known as Syferfontein East refers. My response will be in four parts as guided by the issues raised by the community who protested at the site last week.

**1. Houses are inhumanely small and erven cramped**

- All human settlements developments across the country should be based on norms and standards which are set and approved by the National Department of Human Settlements.
- All subsidised housing must comply to the norms and standards and currently the size of a single storey BNG unit is 40sqm and 43sqm for a double storey to make allowance for staircase.
- The Syferfontein development has fully complied in terms of the norms and standards.
- From time to time the National Minister together Provincial MEC's review the norms and standards based on the technical inputs received and subject to approval thereof these are revised and the same goes for the subsidy quantum. To emphasise this point, when subsidised housing was introduced in the country the standard then was 17sqm with an external toilet, the current standard now is a 40sqm with 2 bedrooms, lounge kitchen and a bathroom.
- Regarding the issue of "cramped erven", due to scarcity of well-located land coupled with rapid growth and high demand of subsidised housing a decision was taken nationally to review the low-density development patterns and opt for medium to high density developments in order to increase the number of housing opportunities in response to the Municipality's growing housing backlog. In terms of the Municipality's Housing Demand Database there are approximately 17, 409 people on the waiting list. If we were to continue with low density development with bigger erven of about 240sqm it would mean that 435ha of land will be required to assist the people and this will inevitably result in urban sprawl.
- Densification therefore prevents urban sprawl and ensures that more people are assisted closer to areas of economic opportunities and other amenities. As the Department working very closely with Municipalities in the Western Cape we have implemented medium to high density projects in all the high growth towns and within the Garden Route district projects of similar nature were implemented in Bitou, Knysna, Mossel Bay, Oudtshoorn so the current densification approach is not only unique to George.

## **2. Development not on par with what the other housing development offer**

- As stated above, this project was planned and currently being implemented along similar densification principles as in other towns and is on par with other developments across the province. The people may have been making reference to older projects which were implemented before the adoption of the densification strategy as with any review all projects planned and implemented after policy reviews have to comply to such. I alluded to the fact that back in the days we used to build 17sqm units with external toilets and that was the standard at the time, this has since been reviewed and revised to bigger houses and we have to comply with current norms and standards and cannot stick to building 17sqm houses.

## **3. Public Participation wasn't satisfactory**

- The consultation process is governed by law and has been complied with in all instances.
- All of the public meetings that were held, was advertised and written notifications were sent to the registered interested & affected parties that participated during the two-year environmental process.
- Meetings were scheduled in the evenings to accommodate working people.
- All meetings were scheduled to take place in Pacaltsdorp to allow people from the local communities to attend same without having to incur costs for travel.
- Various stakeholders opted to submit their comments in writing instead of attending the meetings.
- Councillors and community forums were requested to also inform the community about upcoming meetings.
- Information about the project was shared via the Ward Committees who are responsible what happens in their communities over the course of the process;
- All of the Ward Committee meetings have been well attended and committee members were given documentation/maps to use as references when engaging with the communities.
- Below is the detailed timeline of engagement held wrt to this project
  - o Notification of the availability of a draft Impact Statement Report for public review and comment and notification of the public meeting on 23 July 2014 at the Pacaltsdorp Community Hall at 18h00 (in the George Herald);
  - o A meeting held on 22 July 2014 with the respective Ward Councillors in preparation of the public meeting to ensure that the correct information is communicated with community members and to ensure that Councillors have all the information regarding the proposal and processes in order to respond to questions from the community at any point in time;

- Public meeting held on 23 July 2014 at the Pacaltsdorp Community Hall to present the development proposal (typology and density) / draft Impact Statement Report findings and source input and comments from participating stakeholders to inform the plan and process going forward; This was for both planning and environmental processes.
  - Presentation of the proposal to the Municipal Housing Committee (Section 80 Committee) on 19 August 2014 to discuss the topology (type of houses and density);
  - Ward Committee meeting held on 31 October 2014 to present the revised proposal and obtain input on where further changes may be required (Ward Committee members will share the information with the community);
  - Ward Committee meeting held on 22 September 2015 to provide feedback on the topology (type of housing) and proposed density and to gather feedback from their community members (Ward Committee members will share information with community); This was for both planning and environmental processes.
  - Ward Committee meeting held on 18 November 2015 to present feedback and discuss changes to the layout (Ward Committee members will share the information with the community); This was for both planning and environmental processes.
  - Advertising of the Impact Statement Report in the George Herald of 24 August 2016 along with a notice of the Public Meeting that was scheduled for 30 August 2016;
  - Public meeting held in Pacaltsdorp on 30 August 2016 to discuss the final proposal (typology / density / outcome and recommendations of the Impact Assessment);
  - A focus group session with Delville Park Neighbourhood Watch and Delville Park residents on 20 September 2016, to discuss their specific concerns following the General Public meeting held on 30 August 2016. Councillor J Stander was present at this meeting.
  - The Land Use application was advertised in the George Herald on 16 February 2017. Letters were sent to the neighbours advising them of same as well. A total of 245 responses were received, which were commented on.
- Meetings were also held with the potential beneficiaries of the project in 2018. The purpose of the sessions was to provide progress update and also to present the housing typologies. Below are the dates when the meetings were held.
- Syferfontein Community – 09 April 2018
  - Rosedale Community – 10 April 2018

- Syferfontein Community – 27 November 2018.
- Rosedale Community – 28 November 2018

**4. They weren't shown the houses they are going to get.**

- Kindly refer to point (3) above which clearly demonstrates that public meetings were held to present the typologies.

Lastly there seem to be a perception that this project is only for the people residing in Rosedale and Pacaltsdorp, I wish to emphasise the point that the beneficiaries of the project will be sourced from the waiting list which has about 17, 409 registered potential beneficiaries and the allocation of houses will be subject to the beneficiaries meeting the subsidy qualification criteria and in line with the Municipality's housing allocation policy.