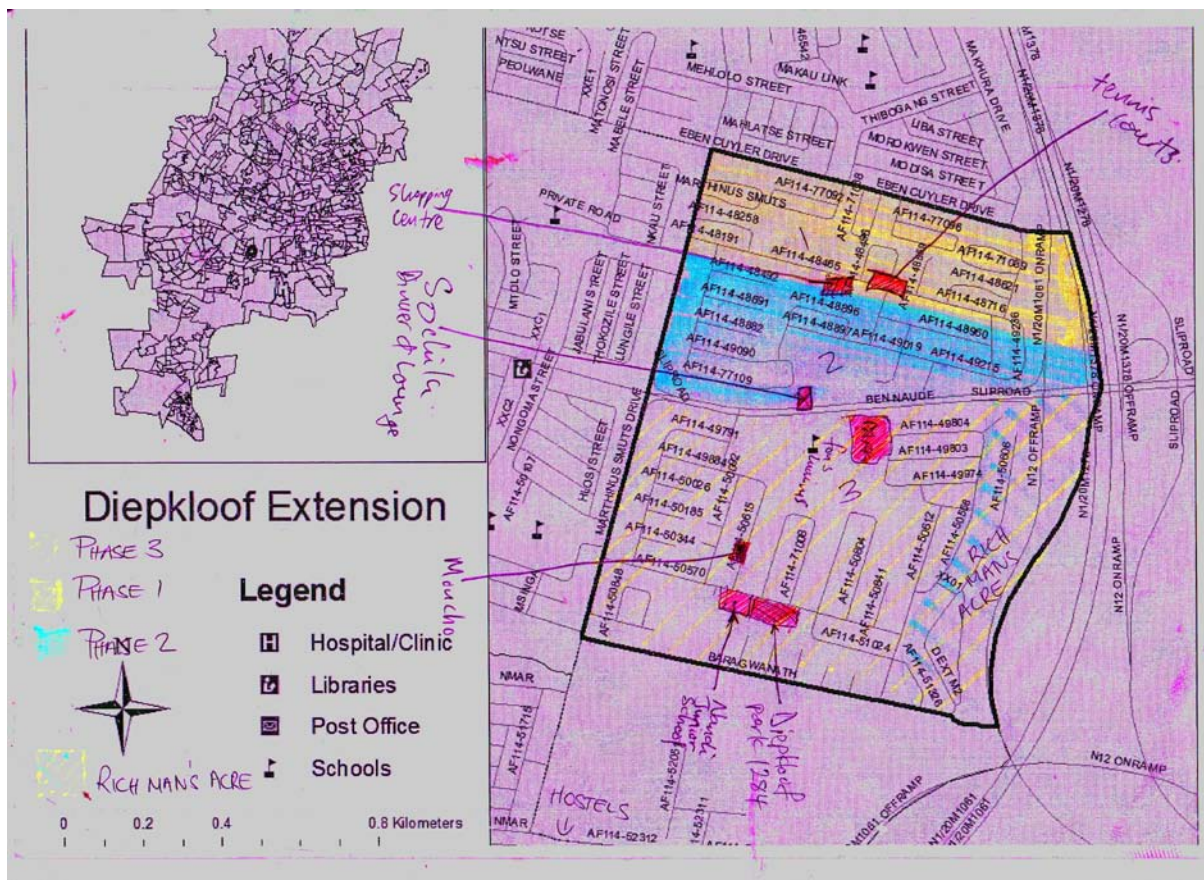


OVERVIEW OF DIEPKLOOF EXTENSIONS



Background

Diepkloof is part of Diepmeadow Township (comprising Diepkloof and Meadowlands). It was built in 1959 to accommodate the removal of people from Alexandra. The Diepkloof Extensions were built during Apartheid in the early 1980s. Phase 1 was built first, followed by Phase 2 and finally Phase 3. Some stands in Phase 3 near the highway were set aside and only developed later – after 1994. They are called “Rich Man’s Acre” by the residents because the stands here are bigger and intended as a more exclusive area.

The extensions were built in response to the urban crisis, which brought with it explosive resistance and political unrest, particularly in the townships. In fact, the

Extensions were built in close proximity to the site of the 1976 student uprising, which was in Orlando. In response to this political instability the government began to introduce some reforms, including upper class neighbourhoods in black townships for wealthier blacks. (Other reforms included the introduction of the Tricameral Parliament, in which Indians and Coloureds were allowed to participate, Black local Authorities, and Labour reforms such as legalisation of the formation of Black Trade Unions). Diepkloof Extensions were built as part of this package, which has often been described as a “divide and rule” strategy (i.e. splitting the black population along class lines) in an attempt to diffuse the intense resistance that was being experienced. Therefore, Diepkloof Extensions was built for middle to upper class blacks (largely professionals employed by the state, but also privately employed professionals), which were offered 100% loans for the stand and the structure as part of the government housing scheme. There are many famous sports figures and political activists living in the area.

Racial Change

There has been no racial change in Diepkloof Extensions since its establishment. There were some brief mentions of mixed race couples, and the occasional visitation by whites for business purposes or visits to friends, but the overwhelming impression is that the Extensions have always been a black area. While there have been ethnic tensions among African residents in the older areas of Diepkloof over the years, this has not been expressed in the Extensions. This is likely due to the class situation of most Extensions residents who have little reason to be concerned about the presence of non-South Africans in the area since they are fairly secure in terms of employment and do not receive benefits.

Economic Change

There has been very little change in terms of class. The only change that was described in these terms was with regard to an influx of new residents after 1994, when white suburbs were opened to black residents. At this time it seems that some of the residents moved out into the old white suburbs, and new residents moved in. However, these new residents were of a similar class position to those that left. Some respondents spoke about clustering, with Phase One being middle-lower and middle class, and Phase Two and Three (particularly Phase Three) being upper-middle to upper class. Rich Man's acre is deemed to be the most exclusive area. This seems to be (generally) confirmed by the appearance of the areas. Residents living in the extensions (particularly in Extension 3 and Rich Mans Acre) are generally as wealthy as people living in areas like Edenvale, Benoni or Parkhurst. However, it is not clear whether anyone living here (except perhaps the famous people mentioned, who have houses here, but don't actually live here) would be as rich as residents of suburbs in the Sandton area. The houses in the extensions are often more ostentatious than houses in the above-mentioned areas - a sign of new wealth.

There is not much change in terms of businesses in Diepkloof extensions since the area is generally residential and has always been that way. However, the last decade has seen a slight increase in businesses run from home. There are several B&B's in the area; some restaurants (Sochila, meaning "so chilled" in Sowetan slang in Phase 2 being one, Moncho's Place in Phase 3 being another) and two or three "tuck shops" run from home. Sochila's is more exclusive. It has a buffet service, fully licensed bar (and whiskey lounge) and a la carte menu, which serves classical Western foods (prawns, ribs and steaks etc) as well as some African

dishes. It describes itself as “epitomiz[ing] the new definition of 'black', with its sophisticated décor...” (visit <http://www.sochila.co.za/aboutus.html> for more details). Monchos place is less exclusive, with plastic tables and chairs, but serving similar food. Tuck Shops generally stock everyday necessities such as bread, milk, airtime, cold drinks, sweets etc. In Phase 1 and 2, there are more businesses, including a shopping complex comprising a grocery store, laundromat and fish and chips shop. The complex is rather run-down and old. It is face brick and plastered/painted. Lots of the exterior tiles are missing and advertisements are painted on the street-facing wall. Down the road there is a small petty trader on the roadside selling eggs, chips, loose cigarettes, sweets etc (this was the only one I saw in the area) as well as another Laundromat. There are more small businesses this side of Ben Naude (Phase 1 and 2) than in Phase 3. The area is very quiet during the day – with no taxis entering the area, no traffic, and no informal trading or shebeens.

Infrastructure and Services

Roads in the area are tarred and well maintained. All roads are sufficiently wide to accommodate double lanes of cars, and grassy pavements are the norm. It was mentioned that the area experiences some problems with flooding due to bad stormwater design. There are two schools in the area (Nandi Primary and Fons Luminous High), neither of which accommodate children from the Extensions. Both Schools are typical looking schools designed in blocks with corridors: Nandi is single storey with a corrugated iron pitched roof. Fons Luminous is similar, except double storey and much bigger. Both are face brick and in adequate/average condition. There are several churches including a very well maintained face brick Catholic church opposite Moncho's Place, with a garden area (and service) and attractive parking. The major complaints from the residents of the area revolve around typical

suburban (as opposed to township) issues regarding crime and high rates and taxes. There are no pre-paid meters in the area (which have been hotly contested in the rest of Soweto), and there are no illegal squatters or electricity connections. Similarly, there are few if any backyard shacks in the whole area, which is very different from the situation in the township surrounds. The one strange issue is that there are no street names in the area – which was mentioned as an issue for some residents.

Housing

Houses are generally quite large (estimated between 200 and 300m sq on average) and well-maintained. In Extension 3 at least 60% are double storey. In Ext 1 and 2, more are only single storey (with about only 40-50% being double storey). Most are quite modern and there is a substantial amount of alteration work going on. They are noticeably different from the houses in the old township and the hostels: the structures are more permanent, and the building materials are more expensive (brick and tiled roofs as opposed to corrugated iron walls and roofs), yards are much neater and better maintained. Interestingly, most houses fill the entire yard – this being the major difference between this area and other suburbs. All houses are single-family homes with one or two garages and most are owned by the residents in them. There are cars parked in some driveways, sometimes more than one. There are very few internal gardens, and trees are not very common except where they have been used to decorate the pavements. Also, many houses have very low, or no outer walls and electric fencing is rather rare compared with houses in other suburbs. Housing foreclosures don't seem to constitute a major problem. There are some ostentatious houses, and it is common to see decorative brickwork, curvilinear designs and very decorative garage doors and gates. Some houses have roman

statues displayed outside, or neatly trimmed English-style hedges or shaped bushes forming the threshold to the road.

Relations with government

Interestingly there are no residents associations at all with which residents interface with local government. Residents of the Extensions are relatively apathetic when it comes to politics and interaction with government due to their general lack of knowledge in this area. Some residents didn't know who their councillor was and some admitted that they didn't know anything about politics. It seems that the residents who dominate the ward meetings aren't generally those from the Extensions, but from the old township – since there really aren't many problems in the Extensions. (For example, there are no residents from the extensions in the Community Policing Forum – there used to be one, but he apparently he moved out a few years ago).

Politics

The majority of residents support the African National Congress (ANC). However there is some support for the Democratic Alliance (DA), Pan African Congress (PAC), Congress of the People (COPE) and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), but these tend to be a small minority. It was mentioned that people feel an affinity with the ANC because a large number of the struggle veterans were Sowetans (Mandela, Tambo, etc) and because the ANC is seen as the party having brought liberation. There is some dissatisfaction with the ward councillor. For example, the naming of the roads has still not been carried out, which is the responsibility of the councillor. The residents of the hostels opposite the Extensions actually attacked the councillor because of failed service delivery.

Overall Impressions:

Residents seem to have very similar concerns and values as those in wealthier suburbs. Crime constitutes the major concern and residents are not actively involved in community meetings. Most residents are proud of their achievements, as well as the fact that there are residents in the area from very high social standings. They see themselves as a separate community from the old township and hostels.

Photos of Diepkloof Extensions





