

A fresh perspective on rural development in Gauteng

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Social deprivation and underdevelopment continues to haunt many rural areas in South Africa. In an attempt to mitigate this, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) commissioned Business Enterprises at University of Pretoria (BE at UP) to produce the Gauteng Rural Development Plan (GRDP) at the end of 2014. The Department of Town and Regional Planning, a number of external contractors in civil engineering, geomatics, urban design and agricultural economics, and senior officials in the DRDLR participated in this project.

The GRDP is not only the first integrated, strategic plan prepared for the rural areas of the province, it also represents an attempt to avoid regarding rural areas as only places of farming, isolation, marginalisation, poverty and/or despair. According to the GRDP, rural areas have many opportunities for economic activity, job creation and a better quality of life. In support of this decidedly opportunity-centred approach, the project team introduced a number of novel rural development concepts. These include functional regional rural zones, rural design, and transit-oriented rural development.

While it was commissioned by the DRDLR, this plan is not a blueprint for any one entity in government. Instead, national and provincial departments and the municipalities in the province, communities and private-sector stakeholders can address common challenges within this development framework. They can also discuss the prospects the province offers and collectively map ways forward in which all those living in the rural parts of the province can lead a dignified and meaningful life.

The plan was conceived, prepared and refined over two years. This was achieved through a number of processes. The first stage included intensive data gathering,

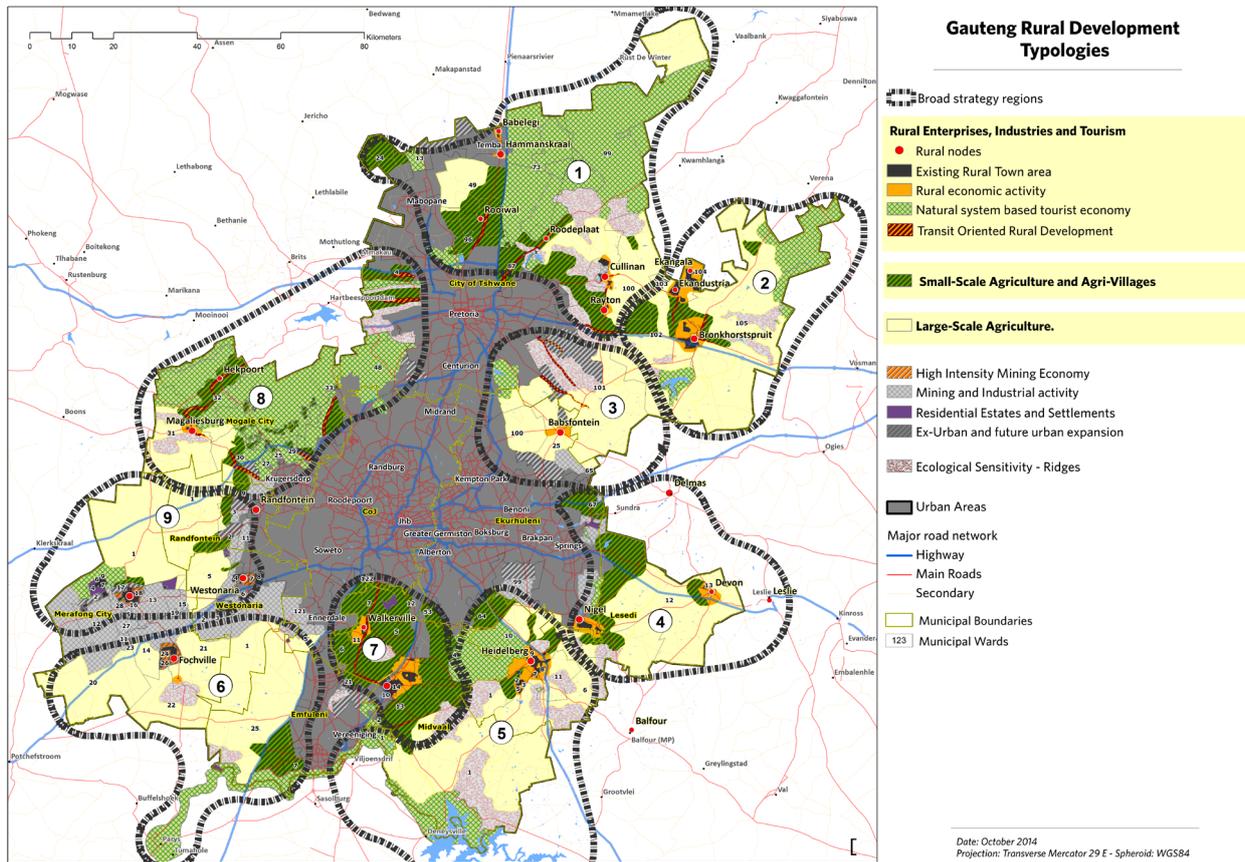
site visits, the analysis of data and integration with the legislation, policies, strategies, plans, frameworks, programmes and projects of national and provincial government departments and municipalities. The second stage consisted of geographical information system (GIS) analyses using purpose-made land needs and suitability criteria, and rural development typologies. The third stage included work sessions with DRDLR officials, officials from national and provincial government departments, as well as municipalities and experts in the areas of rural development, engineering services, agricultural economics, and environmental management. During the last stage, distillation of all the data, ideas, inputs, proposals and concerns into the key GRDP outcomes were carried out.

A number of key GRDP outcomes and components were identified. Nine functional rural regions spanning rural Gauteng and – in many cases – “functionally tied” parts of neighbouring provinces were identified. The outcomes and components include nine templates – one per functional rural region – for intergovernmental planning, budgeting and implementation scheduling sessions, as well as a three-phase approach to developing each of the nine functional rural regions. A set of significant “quick gain

actions” can be undertaken in Gauteng to meet government’s overarching objective of addressing the country’s inequality, poverty and unemployment. These actions also contribute to the realisation of government’s Outcome 7: “Vibrant, equitable and sustainable rural communities with food security”. It does this by means of the following:

- Transforming rural nodes into high-potency, catalytic regional rural development anchors and rural service centres
- Expanding small-scale farming and supporting small-scale farmers and associated agro-processing
- Enabling and supporting transit-oriented rural development (TORD) along suitable provincial routes
- Strengthening and deepening natural system-based tourism in the province

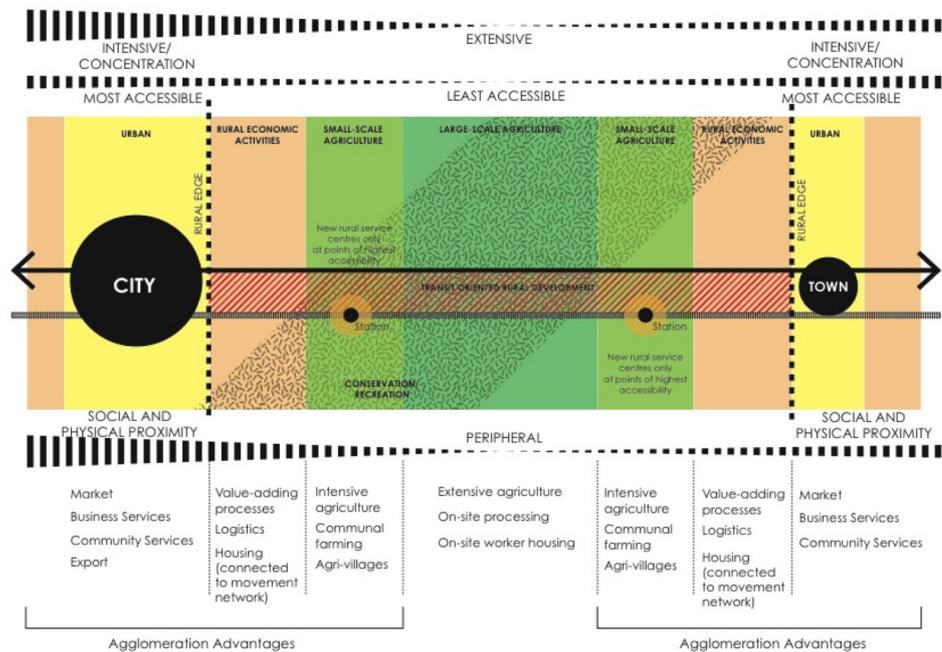
While the implementation of the plan rests on the enthusiastic, sustained and collaborative efforts of a wide range of stakeholders and role-players, the project team proposed that an internal, coordinating DRDLR Advisory Committee be established. It was also proposed that the DRDLR’s Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Unit assume the lead role with regard to rural development in the province, as set out



→ The nine functional rural regions and the three rural development typologies proposed for Gauteng.

in the plan, and undertake the following tasks on a sustained basis:

- Regular engagement with all relevant stakeholders in and outside the state
- Lobbying and influencing other stakeholders and role-players for the inclusion of the GRDP's objectives, concepts and ideas in plans, frameworks, policies and strategies that have an impact on rural development in the province
- Aligning proposed plans, policies and strategies in the DRDLR with those of other spheres and sectors of government
- Populating and regularly updating the geographical information database with all relevant information about rural



→ A conceptual design of the Gauteng urban-rural continuum.

development projects and programmes

- Keeping an eye open for new national, provincial and municipal legislation, policies, plans, frameworks, strategies and programmes that

may have an impact on rural development in the province, and informing – as and where necessary – the other units in the DRDLR who can contribute to such documents

The project team is of the opinion that, should all stakeholders and role-players play their unique roles, the plan could make a real, positive difference in rural Gauteng and the lives of everyone who lives in this space. 📍