

APPLICATION FOR THE NATIONAL REGENERATION PROGRAMME (NRP)

FOR THE CITY OF PORT LOUIS



THE PORT LOUIS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

APRIL 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. CONTEXT APPRAISAL.....	4
2.1 OVERVIEW OF PORT LOUIS	4
2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY.....	5
3. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT	6
3.1 FOCUS GROUP.....	6
3.2 FINDINGS	7
3.3 DISCUSSION.....	12
4. DESIGN STATEMENT.....	13
5. LITERATURE REVIEW	14
6. ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF PLOTS	15
7. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE	15
7.1 TRANSPORT	16
7.2 DRAINAGE.....	16
7.3 SEWERAGE AND WATER SUPPLY	16
7.4 ELECTRICITY SERVICES	16
7.5 COMMUNICATION SERVICES.....	17
8. METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION	17
9. PROPOSED STAGING OF DEVELOPMENT	17
10. CONCLUSION	20
REFERENCES.....	21
ANNEX.....	24

1. INTRODUCTION

Since Independence in 1968, Mauritius has been able to shift economic policies very quickly. This ability has been hailed by economists such as Paul Collier [1] as a trait that many countries lack ; this has much to do with the small size of the island. While Port Louis was an economic driver for the country for centuries, benefitting greatly from economic expansion and diversification [2], it has nonetheless suffered from recent policies aimed at decentralisation of activities, leading to the emergence of new cities [3]. Those new cities, branded as Smart Cities, were supported by a valid framework, released in 2015 [4]. The Framework incentivises investment in greenfield, previously sugar cane land, to encourage the creation of emerging cities. While this approach of building emerging cities has been criticised by some [5], Mauritius hosts a high urban density rate where its infrastructures are failing to support demographic growth [3].

While the Government of Mauritius branded the 'Smart Mauritius' initiative, there is only a predominant focus on emerging cities. Existing cities, like Port Louis, the capital city, is being criticised as being neglected [6]. Government moreover plans to relocate the administrative functions away from the city, as well as the police headquarters [7]. The Government is also planning its own Smart City; Cote d'Or, which hails to brand itself as the new administrative city of Mauritius [7].

It is believed that the emergence of new cities will bring an increased competition to existing cities [8]. This will pose a challenge to Port Louis to retain and attract business, thus challenging its role as the economic capital of the island. Moreover, there have been numerous headquarters, employing thousands of people, that have expressed interest to relocate to other Smart Cities [9]. Since 2003, with billions invested to create Ebène triangle's towers, numerous companies have implanted both their operational units and their headquarters in that new business hub. With both the private and public sector losing interest in investing in the capital city, it is sadly observed that the city falls in decay [10]. It is believed that an increased cooperation from both public and private sectors is required for the regeneration of urban fabric [11]. This is further supported by the fact that the Municipality of Port Louis spends over 95% of its budget for administrative reasons and has little left to invest in infrastructure or services to the city [9].

Over the years, there have been numerous proposals for uplifting Port Louis [12] but the lack of public funds and lengthy administrative hurdles have been blamed for the failure of urban regenerative measures and embellishment [13]. The role of the private sector is being hailed as a potential solution to the regeneration of the city [14]. However, it was noted that the political climate in Mauritius does not foster an environment conducive to investment [15].

Most literature is seen focussing on social and technical challenges and dimensions for urban regeneration ; their relationship with urban economics and governance has not been widely researched [16-18]. There is also little research on the Mauritian sphere on how to engage in both the question of urban regeneration and approaches to smarting an existing city from the viewpoint of professionals and leading actors in the field. This was changed with the adoption of the National Regeneration Programme (NRP) by the Government in the national budget of 2018-2019 [19]. Against this backdrop, this document acts as an application for a defined area of Port Louis to the NRP.

2. CONTEXT APPRAISAL

2.1 OVERVIEW OF PORT LOUIS

Port Louis is situated in the North West coastal side of the Island and is bounded inland by the Port Louis-Moka mountain range. Having an area of 46.7 km² for 119,333 inhabitants, as of December 2016), the capital city of Mauritius is the most densely populated district of the island with 2,954 P/km² [20]. Port Louis remains one of the most vibrant cities of the Island with a prominent historical and cultural dimensions infused within a multi-ethnic community [21]. Moreover, the capital city is the seat for major judicial and administrative instances of the state, such as, the Supreme Court, the Government House and the parliament. In fact, Port Louis is the seat for the only trade port of the Island and is responsible for handling more than 95% of the country's external trade [22]. There is, nonetheless, the possibility of Port Louis losing its main administrative role due to changes in the administrative landscape of the island as a result of emerging technoparks and privately-owned Smart Cities [23]. Such a situation will challenge the economic and administrative sustainability of the city [24].

From a historical perspective, when Mauritius was first colonised by the Dutch between 1638-1710, they established a harbour at the southern village, which they named 'Grand Port'. However, Port Louis was the chosen ground for the capital city, as it hosted a naturally safe harbour in terms of its geography and terrain morphology [25]. The Dutch named it Noordt Wester Haven and it was not until the French colonisation, that the city was named Port Louis. In fact, the French governor Bertrand François Mahé de Labourdonnais is considered by many historians, as the one who led the initiative to develop Port Louis as a major trade port [26]. Nonetheless, the capital city of Mauritius faced dire challenges even in olden times. For instance, in the 18th and 19th century, there had been a series of fires, plagues and tropical storms, including bouts of malaria and cholera, that afflicted Port Louis [27]. Nonetheless, the city showed great resilience and is nowadays viewed as one of the most important financial centres and Port Cities in Africa.

The urban planning for Port Louis, was led under French colonisation from 1715-1810, and then under the British until independence in 1968. The French's approach was to favour large alleyways and to maintain a lush canopy. Their designed infrastructure satisfactorily sustained the Port Louis population of around 6,779 inhabitants in 1968. However, today, Port Louis accommodates a population of 155,226 [28], being a demographic increase of 2,290% over 50 years. The city witnessed this exponential increase in population without expanding its basic infrastructure services in many areas. Coupled with the effects of climate change, sandwiched by the Signaux Mountains, the Port-Louis Moka Range and the Indian Ocean, this rapid urbanisation has created concerns in terms of city planning.

The contemporary post-independence government's response to Port Louis' urban planning, has been haphazard, with poor consideration to the historical and ecological dimensions of the city. Moreover, the national urban planning frameworks, favour car dependency and urban sprawl [3,29]. This has led to a rapid reduction of the French established green areas and several historical buildings in the city. Today, one major hurdle to the proper development in the inner city, is essentially linked to a frozen rental price of property since 1962, following the devastating consequences of Cyclone Carol. The 'Landlord and Tenant Act' was enforced to prevent excessive rental rise from landlords during that time of crisis. However, property rental has been the same for 56 years [30]. With no attractive

revenue, this condition forces landlords to abandon their properties which slowly leads to an urban decay [31].

From a cultural perspective, Port Louis stands as one of the most culturally diverse cities in Mauritius, however that is defined [32]. Siew and Allam [33] suggest two dimensions of culture that should be present in a broader definition: (i) culture being viewed as a set of attitudes, customs and beliefs shared by a particular group, and (ii) culture as a series of activities related to intellectual, moral and artistic uplifting of human life. These key dimensions support a prominence of an economic perspective in culture. For instance, it is recognised that culture englobes key industries like cultural tourism and creative industries that are both viewed as the driver and enabler of key pillars of sustainable development [34,35]. Throsby [32] highlights the need to consider cultural heritage as one key driver of the city's economics. Such consideration puts forth the rich cultural capital that Port Louis represents in terms of centuries old historical buildings, paved roads, museums, forts and traditional and craft markets. In fact, the capital city has 81 sites that are listed as national heritage [36]. Moreover, several culturally rich areas such as China Town, the Champ de Mars race course and the Aapravasi Ghat, are also found within the city's boundary; the latter being classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO [37]. The cultural vibrancy of the city also manifests in intangible forms and contributes to the vibrancy of the urban fabric of Port Louis. These include gastronomy, crafts and entertainment activities [38]. However, it has been noted that the maintenance and uplifting of these key cultural facets of the capital city of Mauritius will not only be a major economic boost for Mauritius, but it will help in the upgrading of the social fabric of the city [38]. This converges with the viewpoint of Newman [39] who supports the liveability of cities through human dimensions.

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED BOUNDARY

The proposed boundary is featured in annex of this document. To the West, the outlined area comprises, on one side of the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage site, the harbour area's production zone, hosting inter alia shipyards' dry docks. The other side hosts an at times vibrant urbanised waterfront. The latter is close to quite an extent stretch of undeveloped land, with quite a seafront and adjacent to Les Salines urban village.

Besides the above parts of the harbour area, the outline under review also includes the stone walled Line Barracks, a legacy edifice and a potentially highly valued green space. At present, it supports a relatively poor use, hosting the police headquarters. From the south-east corner of that large piece of masonry, from the d'Entrecasteaux-De Chartres junction, the outline travels East, cutting across the middle-class Ward IV residential urban village, largely along the wide Volcy Pougnet Street. The latter is a critical connector, the more so, the most direct artery to Dr Jeetoo Hospital and its emergency services. Volcy Pougnet Street is a very contrasted one. From the West to Labourdonnais Street, a south-north perpendicular connector, the street displays the agitation and traffic fitting a medical facility's neighbourhood. Volcy Pougnet's other segment, from Labourdonnais to nearly the mountain edges of the town, the wide street hosts cosy houses, in a very sedate ambience. The wide street, however, across which six or seven cars could drive in a row, may be used for commercial attractions such as a flea market or neighbourhood bring&buy animations.

Roughly half way along the Eastern leg of Volcy Pougnet, the outline heads North, getting around the racecourse and delineating a large rectangle, from East to West, including the densely populated and somewhat derelict Vallée-Pitot and Plaine Verte neighbourhoods as well as the CBD and Chinatown.

Though often deprived and plagued with unwanted social scourges, the inhabited neighbourhoods North of La Citadelle are the places the more conversant with a contemporary urban experience: the spatial layout is compact, neighbours distribution is dense, markets, shops and schools are at walkable distance, a thriving street food market and attendance to late prayers at the mosques afford the neighbourhood an evening animation quite unknown elsewhere.

3. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

3.1 FOCUS GROUP

A focus group methodology was adopted for this study. This approach is well documented as a reliable and cost-effective method for qualitative data gathering in both public and private organisations [40]. For Parker and Tritter [41], participants in a focus group are engaged in the process due to a shared lifestyle circumstance or condition. Lewis [42] also hails the robustness of focus groups in providing insights on a specific issue from a group of selected participants. As the focus group technique relies on effective interaction between the various participants [41,42], it has been recommended that a conducive environment is fostered for interaction based on common interests. This is supported by the fact that well designed focus groups can help the researcher to observe how theories emerge in respect to the viewpoint of the participants. In this regard, it has been observed that the opportunity must be provided to all participants to express their thoughts [43,44].

Massey [45] provides a deeper understanding on the 3-key dimensions and expected data outcomes from a focus group: (1) Articulated data, where participants express thoughts from a direct question; (2) Attributional data, where the moderator discreetly provokes discussion; and (3) emergent data which refers to normative understandings.

Professionals from leading private firms in Port Louis, Members of Foreign Delegations and High-level representatives from various Governmental Ministries or Parastatal Bodies as well as the Municipality of Port Louis were solicited for a full day workshop in January 2018. They were invited by e-mail, in which the purpose, the participation in groups and the course of work were duly explained. 31 professionals, representing a 85% attendance of invitees, participated in the focus groups. Considering the nature of the discussion and the high-level professionals on the panels, most of the participants knew each other. The participants average age was 43 years, the seniormost at 68 and the youngest at 23. The collective panel represented organisations employing approximately 24,388 people, where 52% worked in the city and 73% transit therethrough at least once per day. The panel moreover comprised 74% of Private sector participants, 19% Public sector and 6% from Foreign Institutions.

3.2 FINDINGS

Initial findings showcase that participants demonstrate an extensively innovative viewpoint while proposing and collectively designing solutions to urban issues. However, when faced with realities of local administrative regulations, there seem to be a collective sense of defeat. Moreover, it was also noted that some regulations like the (1) Landlord & Tenant Act [46] and the (2) Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone [29] can be in discordance to property value and development. From a political standpoint, it was highlighted that policies are driven by short-term economic interests, with no prior consultation with economic operators of the country and, at times, without consultation across government' ministries. However, it seems that participants felt restricted by their beliefs and accepted the limitations of their respective roles through the status quo. This was surprisingly supported by the fact that they appeared more eager to elaborate on their action limitations rather than discuss on how to concretely advocate policy changes. This further highlights the perceived realm of policies in force to alienate innovative measures.

The textual analysis revealed 112 distinct recommendations that were regrouped in 28 nodes as illustrated in figure 1.



Figure 1. Tree map showcasing hierarchy through the 28 identified nodes.

3.2.1 Incentives

The most frequent keyword identified is: ‘Incentives’, with a recurrence of 3.7% from the overall textual analysis. Table 1 showcases the frequency from the top 10 recurring keywords from the 5 focus groups as well as across.

Overall		Group 1		Group 2	
Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
Incentives	3.5%	Incentives	2.7%	Incentives	4.9%
Encourage	1.9%	Demand	2.7%	Frontage	2.8%
Buildings	1.0%	Encourage	2.0%	Traffic	2.1%
City	1.0%	Agency	1.3%	Pavements	2.1%
Through	0.9%	Allowance	1.3%	Waste	2.1%
Activities	0.9%	City	1.3%	Encourage	2.1%
Heritage	0.9%	Business	1.3%	Owners	2.1%
Cultural	0.9%	Land	1.3%	Schedule	1.4%
Private	0.8%	Building	1.3%	Urban	1.4%
Public	0.8%	Historic	1.3%	Drains	1.4%

Group 3		Group 4		Group 5	
Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency	Keyword	Frequency
Incentives	3.4%	Through	3.8%	Incentives	6.8%
Cultural	3.0%	Investment	2.5%	Activities	4.1%
Heritage	3.0%	Housing	2.5%	Spaces	2.7%
Buildings	2.5%	Youth	2.5%	Encourage	2.7%
Encourage	2.5%	Food	2.5%	Pedestrianisation	2.0%
Private	2.1%	Idea	1.3%	Commercial	2.0%
Sector	1.7%	Fruition	1.3%	Development	1.4%
Art	1.7%	Project	1.3%	Where	1.4%
Public	1.3%	Proposal	1.3%	PPG	1.4%
City	1.3%	Allowance	1.3%	Exemptions	1.4%

Table 1. Frequency of top 10 recurring words through the various focus Groups where those underlined in yellow highlights the primary areas of concern and those in blue highlight their relating clusters

The approach relying upon fiscal incentives is well documented and practiced in Mauritius. Fiscal incentives are in effect for businesses operating in the Freeport[47] and in Smart Cities[4]. It is thus rationalised that the various professionals from both the public and private sector would highlight this measure as a rational tool to catalyse Urban Regeneration. It is also noted that requested incentives were aimed for: (1) the benefit of the private sector to generate revenue and thus stay in Port Louis; (2) to generate municipal revenue for the municipality of Port Louis in the form of taxes, and (3) to encourage investment from the private sector in the public domain for public good. The NRP is known to provide for those incentives and thus cater for the development in the proposed boundary.

3.2.2 Emerging Themes

Six themes, as illustrated in figure 2, are seen to emerge: (1) Metabolism; (2) Culture; (3) Collaboration; (4) Governance; (5) Business Support and (6) Smart Infrastructure.

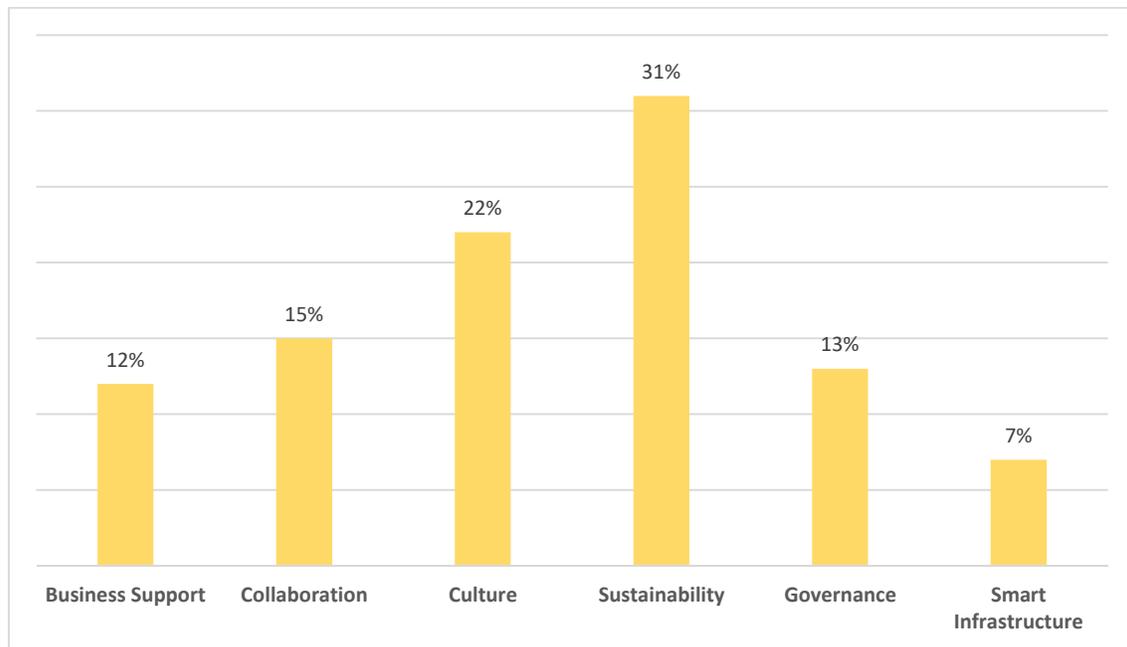


Figure 2. Six emerging themes from the focus groups

3.2.3 Sustainability

There were numerous nodes that were highlighted in the social infrastructure cluster; namely sustainability and liveability and their relevant governing structures. This cluster gained more traction as opposed to the other two emerging themes. This was due to the fact that there was a natural agreeing consensus that the liveability components of the city need to be first resolved and enhanced prior to the addition of smart infrastructural components. It was also noted that this cluster alone would not suffice to regenerate the fabric as it lacked economic and governance dimensions.

3.2.4 Business Support

It was noted that public funds are allocated by the central government and that the Municipal council spends most of its funding on administrative resources. It was thus noted that revenue can be generated by encouraging the retention and attractiveness of businesses. This will in turn generate revenue to the Municipal council which can then invest in embellishing the city for its residents and users. It was also noted that in order to create a competitive ground with Smart Cities, businesses in existing cities need to be able to compete. Arguments on economic empowerment and the need to support Small and Medium Enterprises were also noted.

3.2.5 Collaboration

There is a noted emphasis on the need to enforce (is it “enforce” or “reinforce”?) collaboration between public and private sectors; namely for (1) Encouraging business; (2) Better managing public assets and (3) Disaster management. Some clear examples of collaboration noted during the discussion included the revamping of Governmental assets through lucrative Public Private Partnership models; two examples highlighted were that of heritage buildings that are left in decay, and the case of commercialising pavement space for encouraging coffee shops, promenades and artists to perform.

3.2.6 Smart Infrastructures

While one of the primary goals of the focus groups were to define approaches that include smarting the urban fabric of Port Louis, it is interesting to note that Smart Infrastructures were not noted as a primary point of concern by the participants. This is mainly due to the fact that there were many other nodes that seem to require intervention prior to smarting a city; notably increasing its quality of life. In that respect, concerns relating to resilience, namely flash floods and disaster management were raised. However Smart infrastructures relation to (1) Parking, (2) IT Connectivity, and (3) Big data were also noted.

3.2.7 Culture

As the second most relevant identified keyword after incentives, culture was noticed as a potential thread through the various focus groups. Culture was brought forth in numerous occasions to highlight: (1) the need to encourage artists to perform in public spaces; (2) cultural landmarks are closed and crumbling ; frameworks allowing private funding is sought; (3) culture as a branding tool, and (4) the potential of cultural digital goods.

3.2.8 Governance

The Governance nodes highlighted issues pertaining to health care, law enforcement, targeted inclusive policies and security. It is worth noting that the other emergent themes regarding (1) culture; (2) business support and (3) metabolism were strongly emphasised in this theme. There was a general understanding that governance, more specifically in the form of targeted policies, had the capacity to regenerate key dimensions in the urban realm.

3.2.9 Summary

A summary of findings from the five groups is presented in table 2 below.

Group	Research Question	Data Type	Main findings
1	How do we create an inclusive and vibrant business environment for Port Louis?	Articulated	It was noted that an increased environment for collaboration between private businesses and public economic policies is desirable.
	How to we increase urban affordability?	Attributional	The conversion of vacant office buildings and soon to be vacant buildings (due to smart cities) to housing units is seen to be widely sought to increase housing affordability. Incentives targeted to residential units were also noted to support retrofitting, construction and refurbishment.
2	How to we encourage a sustainable fabric responsive to the environment?	Articulated	The reduction of vehicular traffic has been widely discussed and linked to the issue of air pollution in Mauritius. Incentives for Green mobility equipment (including cycling) was noted.
	How do we create a healthy urban fabric for Port Louis?	Attributional	Urban farming and disaster management plans were proposed to increase resilience and liveability.
3	How do we protect our heritage?	Articulated	It was noted that Architectural landmarks with cultural significance are part of public assets, an whereas there are no public funds available for their restoration.
	How do we enforce (is it not "reinforce" rather?) the	Attributional	Creative and cultural industries were proposed as a theme for urban regeneration, which may infuse culture

	shared identity and sense of belonging?		in Port Louis. To this effect the private sector must see this as a profitable business venture.
4	How do we make use of technology to facilitate everyday activities in Port Louis?	Articulated	A focus on smart urban management solutions was noted, supported by policy and current financial practices; like property rental and purchase schemes.
	How do we encourage an environment where innovation thrives in Port Louis?	Attributional	Innovation was highly linked with the youth, where it is understood that there is a lack in Port Louis. Incentives targeted to Innovative Startups were proposed.
5	How do we create a vibrant city?	Articulated	It was noted that infrastructures to support a 24/7 city is not present in Port Louis, namely; lighting, pavements, parking and pedestrian friendly connections; there is no public funding available for providing those services.
	How do we enforce (is it not “reinforce” rather?) the role of the youth in the city?	Attributional	It was noted that there is a clear absence of interest from the youth to reside in the city due to high property prices and to the lack of public open space where they are free to express themselves.

Table 2. Summary of Main findings

3.3 DISCUSSION

The outcome of the consultative meetings with relevant stakeholders and the public, the proposed new development’s or redevelopment’s impact assessment, due to any loss or changes to the existing site, its structure including any heritage building as part of the landscape or townscape and a set of buildings of similar character within the surrounding context...

Whether they are occupying owners, tenants, non-operator landlords or owner operators, the consulted stakeholders’ views were unambiguously determined by the location of their property in the city. Whereas north of Plaine Verte garden, entrepreneurs run their businesses not far from their residence, sometimes in close proximity to one another. This further develops a holistic identification to the neighbourhood which is rarely the case elsewhere.

In the Ward IV neighbourhood, where income groups range from lower middle to upper middle class, the main connectors – Volcy Pougnet, St-Georges, Edith Cavell, Labourdonnais – are now host to leading business players which do provide employment to some Ward IV inhabitants but these « happy accidents » do not proceed from a thought out Live-Work-Play engineering. When consulted, many Ward IV inhabitants say that they wish to preserve the neighbourhood’s sedate and laid-back ambience, rather than seeking vibrancy and night-life. As elsewhere in the town, in the Ward IV as well, owners of plots of land, with or without a building thereon, transform them into parkings.

North of Maillard and Georges Guibert, the two only cobblestone streets in Port Louis, the blocks stretching from Jules Kœning St to the outline’s upper border host the CBD, Jumma Mosque, Chinatown, the Bank of Mauritius and the main banks headquarters, the capital’s oldest trading houses. With quite affluent landlords, engaged in various other businesses, one would expect the neighbourhood not to be in want of investments for renovation and upgrading. Due to a Landlord and Tenant Act with a strong bias towards tenants, rents accruing to owners encouraged the latter to put

their money elsewhere whereas leaving their property in a state of near decay. Ultimately, upon recovering their premises, the only activity which appeared likely to bring a revenue was the parking business.

Besides choking circulation along the city's main arteries, the automobile aggravates its devastating effect on neighbourhoods, transforming likely places of interest and socialisation into soulless parkings.

Stakeholders – owners, business operating tenants, scarce residents – questioned about urban repair and new developments in their property's neighbourhood have showed contrasted feelings. If some seem satisfied with the quick buck parkings deliver, others have shown a real interest for regeneration proposals, even mentioning unexploited properties they own and requesting advice for both use and design.

Other stakeholders, operators, have also been quick to foresee the business growth which vibrant and animated Port Louis neighbourhoods would bring about.

4. DESIGN STATEMENT

Testimonies to the elegance of Port Louis buildings of old still stand erect on their foundations, either in their original consistence or renovated: The Military Hospital, the oldest standing edifice, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, hotspots such as the main places of worship, the theatre.

Over the years, whereas the city's social fabric grew plural, its diversity showed as well in a variety of styles, from French and British stately colonial architecture to graceful wooden houses, from Dravidian to Moorish-Moghol building codes. Mauritius is comfortable with this lively variety. It should naturally express itself in the renovated Port Louis in the pipeline. The design's objective is not to turn Port Louis into a uniformly sanitized shopping centre, it is rather to enhance the city's attributes likely to favour placemaking, attracting residents and commuters to pedestrianised areas and connectors.

The primary need today is not a style but a city narrative. The first Port Louis' narrative, further to the city's creation in 1735, was a story line for times of war, conquest and defense. It romanticised privateers and commerce raiding, leading to the island's conquest by the British in 1810.

The second Port Louis' narrative, pieces together elements of urban brilliance, before the 1867 malaria epidemics. The much acclaimed cultural, musical, pictural events on offer reflected a single identity. It was bourgeois and colonial, while leaving the legitimate aspirations of Asian-Mauritians as well as popular culture at the margins.

Over the years leading to independence and since 1968, Port Louis has symbolised political power and its economic corollaries, as can be sized up by the height of towers in the CBD. But nothing has provided the capital city – not even elevation to city status – the story telling expected from such a place.

Today, Port Louis' rejuvenation entails a « smarter city protocol ». Port Louis cannot afford to allow its populations to get entrenched in largely ethnicized neighbourhoods (From Sainte-Croix to Camp Chapelon). On the contrary, while being smart and respectful vis-à-vis cultural and religious sensitivities, Port Louis can turn its diversity into its place identity. It could adopt anyone of the following branding slogans:

- Plural Port Louis
- Port Louis: weaving identities
- Port Louis: shared memories
- Port Louis ville-monde

The city's plural character, the flavours it provides to visitors, the Mauritian intercultural savoir-faire it illustrates, the diversified experience on offer for tourists, the possibility to translate plural Mauritius into fusion cuisine, musical and dance shows, theatre experiences, all this suggests the type of narrative which can be pieced together around the «diverse, open, creative, innovative, uninhibited» story line.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a need for Urban regenerative measures aimed at increasing the liveability levels of areas, oriented towards sustainability and the unique cultural values that old fabrics hold as legacies. The contribution of culture to society is immeasurable and unending. Ernest and Young [48] argues that, together with creativity, culture serves as the societal binding glue, especially noting that it has a relationship with politics, society, environment, economy and technology. The ability to link the past, the present and the future furthermore makes culture a strong societal component that needs to be placed at the centre stage of any policy framework.

On the economic front, the investment in cultural heritage zones, just like in the PPG6 - through the Immigration Urban Square Urban Terminal, can be seen as one of the most potent strategy that a city can employ to promote its job creation strategies, increase income flow and foster competitiveness of the urban fabric to support local policies of economic empowerment and resilience. Bowitz and Ibenholt [49] argue that by promoting cultural heritage and conserving historical sites, activities celebrating the urban fabric such as local festivals, amusement parks and culturally oriented products can be made to mushroom; hence, increasing tourism activities both from domestic and foreign visitors and impacting on the local and regional economy.

Vegheş [50] posits that the advancement in technology has allowed different cities and governments to market their cultural heritage, thus evoking interest among people, irrespective of locality and context to learn more about - and to seek - cultural experience. This is accentuated by a flourishing economy surrounding the urban cultural dimension. An OECD [51] report documented that the marketing strategy on cultural goods and services is enabled by modern trends like digitalisation and globalisation. Those enabled access to technologies applicable to the cultural sphere at almost real time and at a reduced access cost. The report advances that these trends are made possible by the fact that culture is now already well integrated in areas like education, health and welfare and

economic sectors where it plays an instrumental role; especially in improving quality of life. Lekaota [52] adds that, unlike the past when only locals or central governments were benefitting from most cultural heritage products and services, the increased profit-sharing strategies adopted in different places incorporating even the local communities is yielding positive results which are benefitting immediate economies. In view of this, there are numerous creative and innovative products and services in the offing (is it “in the offing” or “on offer”?) in different parts of the world; hence, fueling conservation drives which are hailed. To affirm this, a UNESCO report [53] highlights that, in the recent past, the number of cultural products and services being patented are increasing and range from artefacts, songs and music to festivals and games, documentaries, jewelries and other wearable and historical sites amongst many others. This highlights the increasing interest, adoption and economic potential of such approach, and as such development aimed towards urban regeneration, while supporting cultural dimensions, can be made to tally with cultural heritage and should not be prevented, as there are local positive economic returns on both landowners and businesses alike.

As the set of incentives is applicable specifically to the boundaries of the site, this approach is similar to that of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which has been documented extensively in various areas around the world and which have contributed to economic growth in terms of budgetary revenues and employment.

It is noted that even though issues like structuring deficiencies, economic abuse and sometimes more investor oriented policies may occur [54], positive yields are expected to occur as these zones have high a potential to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) [55,56], as in the case of the Immigration Square Urban Terminal. It is notable to comment that those incentives are also offered to adopt greener practices, in line with SDGs. Going further, the larger Aapravasi Ghat Buffer Zone benefits from another set of fiscal incentive, that of the National Regeneration Scheme (NRS) [19], which aims the regeneration of ‘existing building’ and in attracting investment in the ‘public realm’ as per an approved regeneration plan. Interestingly, it can be seen that the combined adoption of both fiscal incentives from the urban terminal and the NRS will be made to contribute positively to the UNESCO buffer zone, and to the larger Central Business District, with fiscal incentives as explained by Sinenko [57], those areas are able to increase output which leads to growth at both local and regional scale. The backdrop of these outcomes is the potential growth in employment opportunities, which most countries benefit of where SEZs are located, spurring on local economies directly or indirectly [58].

6. ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF PLOTS

The outlined area comprises of an amalgamation of residential and commercial land owned by both public and private entities and hosts a number of ongoing constructions projects. It is estimated that the boundary defined in annex boasts around 19,600 landowners and includes a waterfront area of Port Louis, amounting to 4,385 m, which is linearly utilised at only 42% of its capacity.

7. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

The defined site is located in a well-developed area of Port Louis. The constricted zone comprises the main non-residential buildings of the Capital. The public transport is well covered in the region with a high traffic obstruction on a daily basis, amounting to MUR 2 BN and to high levels of air pollution. Further to this, the drainage system along with the electricity and communication services need upgrading to promote greater efficacy and better usage of these resources. While this falls under the service of the local municipality and various public bodies, funds attributed to those are scarce and the speed at which capital injection is attracted is outweighed by the speed of decay.

7.1 TRANSPORT

A significant transformation in Port Louis is currently in progress in the public transport sector; this is made apparent by the number of ongoing projects. In the concerned ward of the NRP, the public transport infrastructures are undergoing extensive innovation, especially with the construction of the Immigration Square Urban Terminal, Victoria Urban Terminal and the pathway for the Metro Express.

Renewed infrastructures are bound to develop the area by generating advanced transport management proficiencies. With the assistance of the scheme, roads will be less congested, helping the inhabitants of the precinct along with all the passengers converging in Port Louis especially on weekdays. The city life will be subjected to an improved urban metabolism, where the energy flows will be reduced from the reduction in fossil fuel intake while the liveability levels will increase from cleaner air and a more sustainable lifestyle.

7.2 DRAINAGE

The enactment of the programme in the designated zone is expected to considerably improve the drainage system from investments from the private sector in the public domain. Similarly, those have the capability of benefitting the whole of the Capital in the long term from the potential expansion of the NRP's boundaries in a secondary term. Additionally, an upgrade in the drainage system in the defined sector is a step forward in reducing flash floods that Port Louis often struggles with. Thus, offsetting the high costs in infrastructural upgrades aimed at better channelling surface water runoff can be rendered by the public and private sector rather than awaiting long procedural systems. The NRP provides for this and can actualize disaster management plans that have been long awaited.

7.3 SEWERAGE AND WATER SUPPLY

No direct impact to be noted, except for the application of water saving features, such as rain water harvesting. Consumption from national reservoirs may be reduced, though minimally at first; this will be accelerated when the NRP is more documented and marketed.

7.4 ELECTRICITY SERVICES

The NRP allows a large scope for sustainable development in the area concerned. It will enable an increase in the utilisation of green energy which will consequently cause a major decline in the

emission of greenhouse gas. Likewise, the dependency on fossil fuels in the region bounded by the scheme will lessen with the expansive use of renewable energy. This will ultimately yield an encouraging reduction of dependency upon the national grid even though the rate of urbanization is expected to boom in the region, as per recent reports of the United Nation, amounting to a staggering figure of 68% by 2050.

7.5 COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The prospects of enhanced digitalization in the outlined area are favourable with the implementation of the scheme.

8. METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

Private developers are contributing immensely in refurbishing parts of Port Louis located in the Buffer Zone. The scheme will be of great aid for land owners to (re)develop their plots of land or upgrade any existing infrastructures. The local environment of the selected area is expected to undergo a substantial change, tallying with the reconstruction and rejuvenation concepts of the NRP. Further, the scheme is focusing on engaging residents, commercial operators as well as urban dwellers throughout the zone by promoting an increased involvement in the building of a more coherent urban infrastructure and identity. The NRP is bounded by the Smart City Regulations piloted by the EDB; and hence, provide an added focus on designs, leading to a more balanced coordination with the rest of the existing buildings falling in the proposed boundary.

9. CALENDAR AND PROPOSED STAGING OF DEVELOPMENT

As the proposed boundary encompasses a number of private and public development it is expected that a large number of small projects are to be actualized in the form of embellishment of private properties. Even though the embellishment of small properties is key in the process of urban revitalization, those are visually seen to have a slow process. Large projects on the other hand can have a high visual impact while providing for an economic spur and further encourage smaller landowners to (re)develop their properties or embellish them. A list of expected large projects for a 3-year period, along with a timeline breakdown for the year 2019, 2020 and 2021, as well as their investment magnitude is shown in Table 3.

PROJECT	YEAR			ESTIMATED PROJECT VALUE (M MUR)
	2019	2020	2021	
Chinatown - Business Hotel		X		200
ABC		X		250
Aquarium		X		550
Art District			X	2,000
Barclays		X		200
Central Market		X		90
CIM Orchid			X	400
Granary		X		750
Heen Foh Tower		X		400
Immigration Square Urban Terminal		X		1,500
Metro Express	X			1,880
PL Theatre	X			85
Place d'Armes		X		75
Supreme Court	X			1,000
Tower 88		X		380
United Docks	X			1,100
Victoria Urban Terminal		X		1,800
TOTAL PROJECT VALUE				12,660

Table 3. Expected Staging of works and project value

Those projects when actualised will provide a new skyline for Port Louis. An artistic representation is provided below.

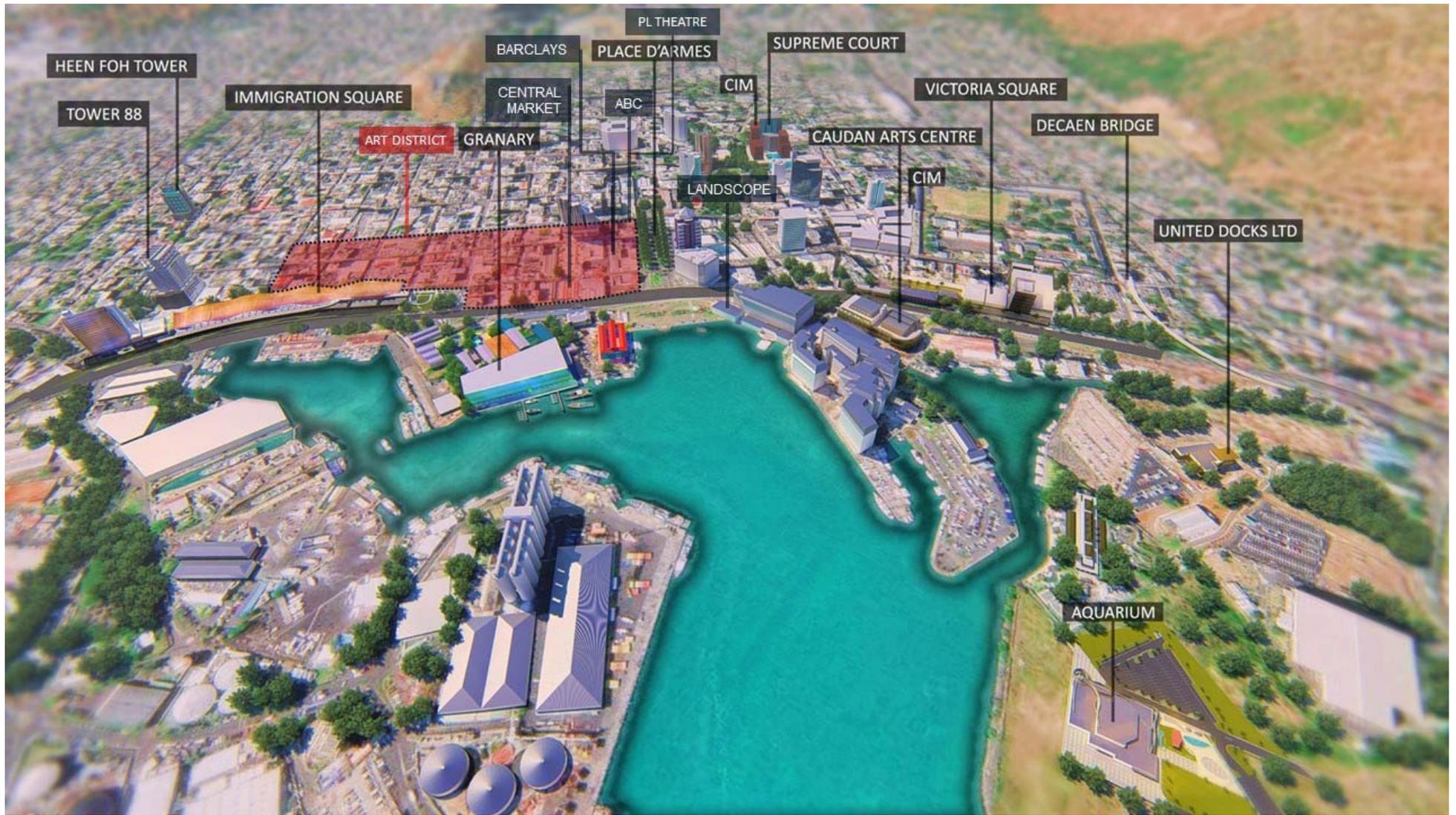


Figure 3. Artistic representative of the future of Port Louis following the enactment of the proposed boundary in the NRP.

10. CONCLUSION

The world is witnessing a mass exodus of people from rural areas to urban areas. In fact, there are already more people living in cities and this trend is being predicted to be constantly on the rise for decades to come. While the sustainability of cities has been pondered upon by learnt scholars, there has been an equal commendation of potential solutions aiming essentially at promoting sustainable development. Nonetheless, each city and state face their own sets of inherent domestic issues in terms of socio-economic dimension, geo-political status and volatile trade and commercial ties with potential markets. Balancing the odds of these issues in the wake of the need for sustainability, brings forth the need for tailor-made solutions that encompass the key pillars of each city, while proposing pathways to greener cities.

In this digitally-infused era, maximising on the potential application of ICT in revamping cities and their subsequent greener rejuvenation has been in the limelight of numerous studies in the form of the Smart City paradigm. To further align the Smart City paradigm with the goals of the SDG 11, the National Regeneration Programme sets forth to economically regenerate existing cities to match developments from emerging Smart Cities.

Urban decay is a potential danger faced by many cities which struggle to cope with the calls of economic attractiveness, liveability and sustainability. Port Louis may face similar fate following setting up of new, highly incentivised, smart cities in Mauritius. Fiscally incentivising economic development as an urban regeneration tool is well documented. As such, to ensure a sustainable, smart and inclusive framework for business, culture and people, a proposed boundary for the application of the National Regeneration Programme is proposed, with an aim to revamp the city of Port Louis. An estimated 19,600 landowners are expected to benefit from this application, and a number of important projects, both in size and investment magnitude is expected to be actualised and accelerated through this scheme; hence, leading to the organic and natural regeneration of the Central Business District of Port Louis and subsequently having a positive economic spill on the larger Port Louis area.

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ANNEX – PROPOSED BOUNDARY FOR THE NRP (PORT LOUIS)

