



# SALGA

South African Local Government Association

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*Local Government Briefs are bi-weekly electronic updates for municipalities on critical areas of law, policy, facts and data affecting the sector.*

### Guidelines to assist municipalities with the formulation of Spatial Development Framework

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Rural Development and Land Administration developed a set of guidelines to assist municipalities with the formulation of Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) that complies with the requirements of the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) and the National Environmental Management Act and reflect and implement the principles for spatial development set out in the Development Facilitation Act (76 of 1995).

The guidelines have been prepared in growing recognition that SDFs are not assisting sufficiently with addressing the spatial inequalities and inefficiencies in the society. The department has investigated in 2010 the quality and status of SDFs throughout the country. The results of the investigation showed that compilers of SDFs struggle with applying national and provincial policies, principles and related planning concepts to the reality at a municipal level, formulating practical implementable SDFs with measurable targets that will allow for accessing a success of SDFs etc. Detailed guidelines are accessible at: <http://www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za>

SALGA made specific comments with regards to these guidelines. This brief provides general comments of SALGA's view on the guidelines.

#### 2. DISCUSSION

The guidelines provide a very useful and rich resource and are a compilation of a lot of thinking and practice that has emerged around formulating Spatial Development Frameworks in spite of the legislative malaise around this issue with its attendant complexity of multiple requirements from different sources, lack of resolution of the Land Use Management Bill, and resultant confusion.

Particularly useful resources in the Guideline include:

- Indications of linkages with IDP processes and relationship with Sector Plans (including the Annexure on Sector Plans and their Implications for SDF)
- Emphasis on alignment with surrounding SDFs and engaging with neighbouring municipalities

- Pointers on preparing a spatial vision statement
- Section on achieving support for the Draft SDF
- Annexure 4 providing an example of the use of a GIS based system showing the relationship with the land use management system (although reproduction of the spread sheet is not that clear which makes it difficult to use)
- Critical Assessment Framework: Spatial Principles

However, gaps that could be addressed more fully, or in a more sophisticated manner, in the guideline itself or in supporting documentation/annexures include:

- The need for emphasis on dynamic spatial relationships which may be overlooked if the Status Quo Analysis matrix (useful as this is) is used to produce static analysis by category rather than a focus on relationships between categories, flows, overlays and combinations of indicators into matrices etc. Admittedly, the '*ecological, socio-economic relationship framework*' is an attempt to overcome this danger but its level of sophistication may exclude low capacity municipalities which, although they do not have the capacity to use such a framework, still need to undertake dynamic analysis.
- Tools for spatial analysis or reference to where these may be accessed.
- Use of the Regional Planning concept which could potentially assist with addressing District Planning and its linkages with Provincial Planning.

The Guideline makes a useful attempt to distinguish between different types of municipalities in terms of their SDFs (Metro, District, Local, Sub-Metro and Sectoral), what they should address within them. It also begins to attempt to distinguish between 'Rural and 'Urban'. The distinction between Rural Areas/Rural Development and Urban Areas/Urban Development, in terms of densities and type of activities, is however, somewhat artificial and not necessarily helpful because most municipalities have a range of types within them. In terms of the overall planning approach, a 'Regional Planning' concept may be more helpful as municipalities function within broader regions and need to understand those spatial relationships better. In terms of requirements of municipalities for SDFs, one can, however, understand that municipalities that are more 'rural' in nature require different approaches to their spatial planning and may have different requirements for their SDFs.

However, a thought should be given to distinguishing municipalities in terms of capacity (i.e. do they have access to planners and other required skills?), complexity of spatial planning issues, etc. and perhaps tailoring the SDF requirements to these criteria, or making support available from District/Province to enable those under capacitated municipalities to meet their minimum requirements for SDFs.

It may not be possible to come up with hard and fast blanket categories/types of municipalities and their SDF requirements but may be preferable that each case or group of cases should be dealt with in a more context-specific, negotiated manner. The district and local municipalities may need to come to a negotiated and workable arrangement of the SDF requirements for each municipality. Province would then need to ensure that planning at District level is coordinated and comparable and aligns with Provincial and National strategies/frameworks. This does not necessarily address the desire for national uniformity but may be a more workable approach to effective spatial planning in support of context specific development challenges and priorities.

It is understandable, although unfortunate, that the issue of provincial spatial planning and SDFs is avoided. This will undoubtedly need to be addressed in more detail, if not here, then elsewhere, if the proposed 'hierarchy' of spatial planning is to work effectively. Surely Regional Planning is a key concept around which to conceptualise all the various layers/levels of spatial planning. It is a useful conceptual construct from which one can address spatial planning from local to international. So it is unfortunate that it is relegated in these guidelines to something that is associated only with provincial spatial planning and therefore not addressed here.

District planning is also a form of regional planning so this is a bit of an artificial distinction – should the Guidelines not be extended (or at least make reference to an associated set of Guidelines, which may still need to be developed) to make reference to provincial planning which has many aspects in common with District planning and which is a key component in the hierarchy of spatial planning?

Whilst the guideline may contribute to the formulation of a credible SDF, the challenge always lie in the actually implementation of SDFs. To that end, it would help to link the system of delegation on planning related matters to the objectives and specific aims of the SDF and ensure that decision making at a Council committee level is restricted only to those decisions that would support the SDF proposal. Failure to make the linkage between SDF proposals and the relevant system of delegations will likely create a disconnect between the SDF proposals and planning decisions made at a local level and further widen the gap between forward planning and land use management.

Even though there are still discussions on the climate change response green paper, the key principles regarding how the built environment can contribute towards the reduction of the carbon foot print, should among other things influence the vision and strategy of local communities when developing strategies. The whole notion of thinking “globally and acting locally” can assist in mainstreaming response to climate change. The required actions at a local level can then be articulated in local area policy plans and other land use management instruments such as local development frameworks, town planning schemes and zoning schemes.

The objectives of SDFs as contained in paragraph 4.1 may not necessarily assist in the formulation of SDFs that speak to key strategic transformation agenda as contained in other higher order policy instruments such as the white paper on spatial planning and the chapter 1 principles of the DFA. Perhaps, the emphasise on the SDF being a plan that reflects “how the municipality sees desirable future patterns of land use and development in its area of jurisdiction” reflects the planning chasm created by the lack of an overarching functional regional plan that must be the point of departure for desired municipal spatial development. The disparities between rural and urban settlements and the challenges that rural-urban migration create for the urban areas, provide a compelling proposition for the SDF guidelines to place a strong emphasis on the functional relationship between settlements when determining what the desired future spatial development of a municipality should be. Such spatial functional relationships

cannot be determined by “the spatial vision and goals.....issues raised by stakeholders.....” An SDF of a municipality should also be a reflection of the competitive advantage of that particular municipality in such a way that the proposed spatial vision of a municipality reflects the role and function of the particular municipality within the regional and in certain cases national space economy. Such an approach may inform and be informed by other sector departments initiatives thereby achieving alignment.

Alignment of the SDF with sector departments’ strategies and programmes is indeed a vexing issue that requires further investigation to determine the best possible techniques and instruments to achieve alignment. Whilst consultation with sector departments is important, there is a need to investigate possible institutional arrangements that will ensure that the planning, prioritization and implementation of the sector departments programmes are aligned to the IDP and the SDF.

Whilst there is an acknowledgement of the challenges caused by the disconnect between proposals contained in progressive SDFs and real rights as contained in Zoning/Town Planning schemes, not much practical guide is provided on overcoming that challenge. Thorough investigations on possible tools and techniques to bridge the gap between LUMs and SDFs could be helpful. As a follow-up to these inputs on the Guideline, SALGA will be conducting an evaluation of a sample of nine municipalities’ SDFs against the approved guidelines.