

Redefine makes a case for asset based community development

Soweto, South Africa – 18 June 2019: A few months after JSE listed diversified real estate investment trust Redefine Properties started conversing with the community members surrounding Maponya Mall in Soweto, it managed to create 15 permanent jobs and gave entrepreneurs in the community access to valuable space worth over R1 million to showcase services and products at no cost.

These efforts are part of Redefine's commitment to asset based community development approach (ABCD) which seeks to recognise communities as partners possessing the agency and skills to develop and support solutions that will deliver sustainable transformation.

The community engagement programme at Maponya Mall, is being rolled out by Redefine together with FNB Philanthropy, which it commissioned to develop and host a series of community-centred conversations in Soweto, specifically in the immediate vicinity of mall.

The approach involves full and meaningful engagement with the communities around the buildings it owns and manages, with the objective of achieving sustainable transformation through impactful partnerships with key role players in the community.

Marijke Coetzee, Head of Marketing and Communications, Redefine Properties says, "In finding ways to be meaningfully involved, we quickly realised that the communities surrounding our properties have a better understanding of their needs and combined with new and creative thinking can guide and inform the best way forward. We recognised that we could deliver a far greater impact by investing with the communities rather than trying to invest for them."

"We wanted then to create a platform for people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge and lived experiences of the issues they encounter in their daily lives."

In its initial phase, the process involved an extensive engagement with over 1 000 community members, community-based organisations, local NGOs, political representatives and local businesses and entrepreneurs.

This was followed by a Challenge Convention late last year during which the community and other key stakeholders were invited to highlight the real challenges they face and identify existing community assets that could be leveraged to help address these challenges. Using #ifihaditmyway to lead discussions; innovative solutions emerged which are now being developed further for implementation.

"Social change will only occur when people and communities mobilise to use available assets, skills and strengths, to create opportunities and build their own solutions that have long-term impact. We recognise that asset-based community development will not

immediately alleviate all the social challenges prevalent but rather view it as a vitally important approach, aligned to our philosophy of using our spaces to change lives," says Coetzee.

Prince Siluma, Head of Philanthropy at FNB Fiduciary says, "Such approaches work well if the communities are involved. The way community members mobilised and contributed to the solutions provided great insights to the Redefine social investment proposition; and confirms that this approach is very likely to deliver maximum positive impact."

From these crucial engagements, Redefine will prioritise its activities in favour of working with the youth, SMMEs and the NGOs active in the vicinity of the mall.

These groups identified a number of issues that prevented them from fully optimising their potential and Redefine will engage them further to agree on interventions to support capacity building. With an approach as simple as ABCD, the needs of employment, entrepreneurship and empowerment will be met through the efforts' the community has invested in framing their needs and acting to advance quality of life.

"The asset based approach will seek to find a balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of people and communities. It is also a journey of self-discovery, in that identifying our own strengths, capacities and abilities to be able to deliver tangible and positive outcomes," adds Coetzee in conclusion.

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