



Prospectus

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Spatial Data Services Africa NPC

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MAIN POINTS TO TAKE AWAY

In 2015, the United Nations defined an agenda for sustainable development to be implemented by 2030. No other profession has the potential to systematically coordinate multi-sector efforts with underpinning social justice in achieving a sustainable outcome for the citizens of a country than town and regional planning. However, town and regional planning have been criticised for its lack of impact and inability to affect change in recent years. The lack of a positive impact on development and growth is mainly because town and regional planning, specifically spatial planning, has become a normative exercise that lacks the factual basis to deal with the issues on the ground.

A lack of understanding of the development environment and no coherent, factual base to work from has led to inefficient plans and the inability of practitioners to make informed decisions. These issues are perpetuated by a lack of appropriate skills and industry rapidly moving into the digital age, leaving most professionals behind.

Spatial Data Services Africa is a leading planning and spatial analytics non-profit organisation that believes in harnessing the power of data and technology to create knowledge and insight through information to improve decision-making and deal with the significant issues facing our society.

Vision: Advancing a digital future to ensure Spatial Justice, Spatial Sustainability, Efficiency, Spatial Resilience, and Good Administration

Mission: Spatial Data Services Africa is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting government and business in better understanding and utilising data and digital technologies to promote spatial transformation and strengthen development and policy outcomes to benefit the poor and vulnerable.

SDSAfrica's work is organised into four key programme areas, namely;

- *digital readiness,*
- *advisory support,*
- *data and technology access,*
- *training and capacitation, and*
- *applied urban development research.*

Through these programme areas, SDSAfrica's work is geared towards effective and innovative approaches to strengthen the capacity of government and business to improve decision-making and transparency in the planning and service delivery process.

Spatial Data Services Africa operates a non-profit organisation (NPO) registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) in terms of the provisions outlined the Schedule 1 of the Companies Act of 2008 (Act 71 of 2008).

The company structure and operations as an NGO are based on the fact that:

- SDSA works independently from the government to promote change and improved efficiencies in local government spatial planning and service delivery,
- SDSA takes on projects and operates nationally or internationally if required and as the opportunities present themselves.
- SDSA works actively with the government, NGO's and the private sector alike to build spatial planning capacity and improve municipal service delivery as outlined in our mission and objectives above.

SDSA lodged applications to register for preferential tax treatment as a Public Benefit Organisation in terms of the Tax Act of 1962 and as a Non-Profit Organisation in terms of the NPO Act of 1997

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1 Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations defined an agenda for sustainable development to be implemented by 2030. This *"... provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which ... recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."*

No other profession has the potential to systematically coordinate multi-sector efforts with underpinning social justice in achieving a sustainable outcome for the citizens of a country than town and regional planning. However, town and regional planning have been criticised for its lack of impact and inability to affect change and improve the situation of poor and marginalised peoples in recent decades.

This is mainly because town and regional planning, specifically spatial planning, has become a normative exercise that lacks the factual basis to deal with the issues on the ground.

A lack of understanding of the development environment and no coherent, factual base to work from has led to inefficient plans and the inability of practitioners to make informed decisions. These issues are perpetuated by a lack of appropriate skills and industry rapidly moving into the digital age, leaving most professionals behind. Consequently, poor and vulnerable communities are suffering due to an increasing inability of local governments in South Africa to fulfil their Constitutional duties of providing access to essential services and furthering local economic development.

2 The history behind SDSA

Spatial Data Services Africa (SDSA) is a leading planning and spatial analytics organisation that believes in harnessing the power of data and technology to create knowledge and insight through information to improve decision-making and deal with the significant issues facing our society.

The establishment of SDSA is a result of restructuring MapAble (Pty) Ltd (established 2013) and the need to advance spatial data services beyond the technical confines of MapAble® as a spatial platform. The establishment of SDSA was driven by:

- The rapid expansion in available (spatial) data and associated technologies
- The increased inability of built environment policymakers and planners to access, understand and grasp the meaning and implications of data.
- Technological solutions exist in abundance for almost any challenge and also hold for spatial analysis and decision-making. Access to technology is simple, but the productive use and application thereof is complicated and requires specialised skills currently not always available in the urban planning fraternity.

In working closely with its sister company, BC Gildenhuys and Associates, in urban spatial development, infrastructure investment planning and municipal economics, SDSA realised that improving service delivery to the poor will remain incumbent on the improvement of the skills and ability of towns and regional planners to focus service delivery, not based on normative goals and objectives, but their ability to intervene and lead the different sectors in the municipal environment towards a better environment for all.

3 Why converting SDSA to a non-profit company

SDSA operated as a private company with a small but experienced staff complement. The initial intention was to provide a technical platform and database for urban planning professionals in the private and public sectors. This initiative was, amongst others, based on the intentions of the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), which envisaged a more substantial leading role of urban planners in spatial development and service delivery in South Africa. Furthermore, the drive towards improved service delivery in our municipalities and specifically to our poorer communities remains central to the government's objectives. Alleviating poverty is a golden thread running through the government and opposition politics at all levels. However, notwithstanding this consensus, the service delivery ability of the municipal government continues to deteriorate, as is evident in daily media and from official sources such as the Auditor-General Reports, service delivery protests and the promises of improved service delivery in virtually every political speech at every level.

Furthermore, through SDSA's involvement in drafting more than 12 capital expenditure frameworks, a growth management strategy for one of our major metropolitan municipalities and being part of the pilot for one of the first District One Plans, we have realised that the skill levels and abilities of our urban and regional planners are substantially below expectations. The deteriorating skill levels are also evident in the continuous decline in the quality of our Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), the quality and content of different Spatial Development Frameworks and the increased frustration expressed by the private sector regarding the impact of skills levels, experience and capacity in municipalities to allow them to implement development projects. A final but significant point is that town and regional planners in South Africa, and for that matter internationally, are not technically skilled to embrace and promote the development of the smart city concept and lead our cities into the fourth industrial revolution¹.

The situation that faced SDSA was that SDSA has vast amounts of experience, the largest and most comprehensive spatial database, and the technology developed by urban planners for urban planners to meet the challenges of spatial planning and municipal service delivery. However, the demands for municipal service delivery, the ability and capacity of urban planners in the municipal environment, and available decision support, technical solutions and instruments become an ever-widening gap.

SDSA realised that commercial ventures such as advisory services and the digitisation of municipalities have very little chance of success while skills and capacity decline daily. The net result is that we currently have more people without water, sanitation, roads and refuse removal services than 25 years ago. So although we preach and promise improved service delivery, reality shows that we are falling behind in service delivery in quantitative and qualitative terms. Consequently, the plight of the urban poor cannot be addressed, and the objectives of spatial planning, as outlined in SPLUMA and associated government policies, cannot be achieved. This resulted in financially, institutionally and, very important;y, environmentally and economically unsustainable communities in urban and rural areas.

The shareholders and directors of SDSA see the lack of capacity and skills as a major constraint in building the business. Over the past two years, it became clear that there is no commercial sense in building a business where the market cannot cope with or internalise the products and services offered. Overcoming inherent structural impediments around the skills of town and regional planners and the adoption, internalisation, and use of spatial data technologies makes the current business model unviable. However, these impediments do not distract from the need for spatial planners to adopt and use technology should municipalities want to deliver on their mandates.

Another element, which SDSA pursues, is applied urban research. SDSA started internal research projects due to general needs identified in the municipal environment to have more specific localised data available for planning purposes. However, SDSA soon realised that with its technology, data and skill set, it is possible to do large-scale data research projects that can have a broad planning impact and planning benefit across South Africa. Applied urban research became necessary since little similar work is done at scale by universities and established research institutions such as the CSIR and HSRC. Universities and

¹ See the following report for a very good assessment on a digital future for planning [Digital Task Force for Planning – An Independent expert panel to raise awareness, expertise and skills to empower planning profession in the digital era \(digital4planning.com\)](https://digital4planning.com/)

research institutions adopted a contract-based research model, which eliminated necessary national-scale research for the general benefit of society. Contract research is, by its nature, project-based, and the benefits and results are usually not sustained or maintained beyond the project's scope. A further contributing factor is that, for various reasons, our research institutions and especially our universities, are not sufficiently equipped or skilled in technology-based spatial research.

The shareholders of SDSA decided to convert the private company to a non-profit company (NPC) for public benefit. The NPC will strive to improve the spatial planning capacity of municipalities and actively work toward assisting them to achieve their constitutional mandate of providing access to at least basic services and facilitating local economic development within a framework of environmental, administrative and financial sustainability.

4 The mission and objectives of SDSA as an NPC

4.1 Vision

Advancing a digital future to ensure Spatial Justice, Spatial Sustainability, Efficiency, Spatial Resilience, and Good Administration

4.2 Mission

Spatial Data Services Africa is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting government and business in better understanding and utilising data and digital technologies to promote spatial transformation and strengthen development and policy outcomes to benefit the poor and vulnerable.

4.3 Objectives

Our objectives are:

- To capacitate and empower spatial planners in municipalities to play a meaningful leadership role in integrated development planning and service delivery
- To promote an integrated digitally enabled approach to spatial planning by capable and skilled planners through introducing and institutionalising appropriate data and digital systems in spatial planning
- To provide advisory support to municipalities to allow them to deal with confidence with service providers, internal departments and intergovernmental relations
- To compile, package and disseminate spatial data for the benefit of municipal planning
- To render spatial technology and data services on a consulting basis to both the private and public sector

5 Operational focus areas

In 2015, there were just over 140 000 registered NGOs, which increased nearly 200% since 2005. However, "... the economic recession, unemployment and *failed service delivery* may impact the sector's growth".² Most South African urban development NGOs had their roots in this country's anti-apartheid struggle when urban townships represented the battlefields of the physical resistance against the apartheid regime. In many instances, these struggles were organised around rent boycotts and a refusal to pay for (inadequate) basic services to pressure the apartheid regime to transform its policies. Shortly after democracy, urban development NGOs were extremely active in policy advocacy work, promoting

² [NGOs today: Competing for resources, power and agency - The Mail & Guardian \(mg.co.za\)](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/ngo-2015)

people-centred approaches in housing and local government policy formulation and advocating for changes to the segregated apartheid landscape.³

The work of NGOs in the urban development environment focuses mostly on housing and giving a voice to the destitute. Although some NGOs focus on local government, no NGO currently addresses the issues of capacity building of the planners and institutions of local government.

SDSA aims to capacitate planners employed in the national, provincial and local spheres of government. Our projects will target priority local municipalities where SDSA will build long-term support relationships to improve service delivery in those municipalities. The support will be structured as ring-fenced “projects” with very specific objectives and measurable deliverables. As a matter of principle, support will always try to capitalise on existing initiatives and targeted interventions by custodians and sector departments of local government nationally or at the provincial level.

SDSA’s involvement and support will draw on SDSA’s operational focus areas, namely:

- Capacity-building support to the municipal sector
 - Advisory support
 - Data and technology access
 - Training and capacitation
 - Internships and young professional development
- Applied urban research
- Commercial services to the development environment

5.1 Capacity-building support to the municipal sector

5.1.1 Advisory support

The need for improved decision-making based on an evidence-based approach is undeniable. Our advice is anchored in decades of experience as town and regional planning professionals and experts in using and applying digital technologies in this space. This allows our partners and beneficiaries to engage with us and improve data and technological efficiencies for better planning outcomes for our communities and the poor.

5.1.2 Data and technology access

The pace at which data and technology advances has left most of South Africa’s 1 600 professional planners unable to engage with the quantitative characteristics of spatial planning issues effectively. A core component of our approach is ensuring that the correct and most up-to-date data and information is used to add value to the planning process and outcomes. SDSAfrica provides our beneficiaries with the most appropriate technology options and access to the most comprehensive spatial database in South Africa. This data can be augmented with local information to ensure accurate reporting, improved analysis and ultimately better, more informed, and transparent decision making.

5.1.3 Training and capacitation

Training and capacitation within a framework of continuous professional development are at the heart of what is required to tackle the major issues facing our communities. Unfortunately, a significant gap has emerged and is growing between the formal training that town and regional planners receive and the demands of the new technological age. Our training, skills transfer, and mentorship approach are vital to bridging this divide. Although SDSA’s core business is data and data systems, it also realises that it has to capacitate town and regional planning in understanding and mastering municipal finances and infrastructure development and planning. Through SDSA’s involvement in developing capital expenditure frameworks as contemplated in SPLUMA and IUDF, it is evident that planners lack an understanding and the ability to lead the planning process because of their inability to engage with municipal CFOs and engineers on a peer-to-peer basis. Capacity building for planners in the municipal environment will address financial and technical concepts, issues and processes

³ [Guide to Urban Development NGOs in South Africa | NGO Pulse](#)

5.2 Applied urban research

SDSA has access to the most extensive spatial database in South Africa, which host more than 2 000 national data sets. As part of SDSA's public responsibility and to enhance spatial planning, SDSA do projects to integrate and make data accessible for the general benefit of the broader South African community. These projects are done as internal projects through SDSA's resources. However, if the nature and scope of the project allow it, SDSA will partner with an appropriate value-adding institution. The deliverables of the project must, however, reside in the public domain with no cost to any beneficiaries.

5.3 Commercial services to the development environment

SDSA will continue to offer a range of services on a commercial basis.

5.3.1 Data and system access

MapAble® as the technical base of SDSA is also available as a subscription to any interested users. It allows drawing on the data in MapAble, adding user data and exporting the results to a inhouse corporate GIS.

5.3.2 System Generated Reports

The ability to extract information in a user-friendly format from any system is important. SDSA offers a range of standardised reports that bridge the divide between technology and the needs of the person who will use the results.

5.3.3 Municipal service package

Improved service delivery in South Africa is incumbent on better management and decision-making. In light of capacity issues in municipalities and challenges with accessing and managing basic spatial data, we developed a municipal service package designed around three-year access, capacity building, and support contracts. Our aim is to support municipal planning, decision-making, and service delivery. The complete service package focus on:

- Spatial data for the municipality
- An affordable geo-information analysis and data management system that is compatible with mainstream geoinformation systems (GIS)
- Technical support
- Skills transfer
- Data analytical support is delivered as municipal socio-economic profile reports.

6 Custodianship and management

Spatial Data Services Africa operates as a non-profit organisation (NPO) registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC)⁴, in terms of the provisions outlined the Schedule 1 of the Companies Act of 2008 (Act 71 of 2008).

The company will be structured and operated as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) within the framework as set out in Section 4: The mission and objectives of SDSA as an NPC. The choice of operating as an NGO is based on the fact that:

- SDSA will work independently from the government to promote change and improved efficiencies in local government spatial planning and service delivery,

⁴ A Non-profit company is quoloqually referred to as a "Section 21 company". Section 21 of the Companies Act was does not exist in terms of the Current Companies Act of 2008 (Act 71 of 2008) as ammended by Act 3 of 2011. The legal requiremenst for non-profit companies (NPCs) are now governed by Schedule 1 of the the Companies Act of 2008 (Act 71 of 2008)

- SDSA will take on large projects and operate nationally or internationally if required and the opportunity presents itself.
- SDSA will work actively with the government to build spatial planning capacity and improve municipal service delivery as outlined in our mission and objectives above.

SDSA lodged applications to register for preferential tax treatment as a Public Benefit Organisation in terms of the Tax Act of 1962 and as a Non-Profit Organisation in terms of the NPO Act of 1997

6.1 Directors

The three founding members was appointed for NPC in terms of Section 5 of Schedule 1 of the Companies Act of 2008 (Act 71 of 2008). SDSA currently has three directors, Burgert Gildenhuis, responsible for all operations and financial management, and Johan du Toit, responsible for software development and maintenance. Johan currently resides in North Carolina, USA. Burgert and Johan were the founding directors of SDSA (Pty) Ltd. In addition, a third director, Roelf Kotze, with long-standing experience and expertise in municipal government, was added to the team.

6.1.1 Burgert Gildenhuis

Burgert is a founding director of Spatial Data Services Africa NPC. He is also the founder of BC Gildenhuis and Associates (Pty) Ltd in 1997 and MapAble (Pty) Ltd in 2013. Burgert is an internationally recognised expert in municipal planning, spatial, economic development, and local government finances. Burgert is responsible for the overall management and business development of SDSA

6.1.2 Johan du Toit

Johan is a founding director of Spatial Data Services Africa NPC and co-founder of MapAble (Pty) Ltd. He is a Leading expert in software development, database development and web-based mapping. Johan operates from the USA.

Roelf Kotze

Roelf has more than 20 years of senior executive management experience in local government and is an expert in development strategy and PPPs in the municipal environment. He was responsible for managing Mbombela's involvement in the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup and has been involved in many strategic projects to further local economic development.

SDSA will continue to expand its directorship to meet the challenges and to add the required expertise to the team. Given the profile of the current three directors, the immediate focus will be on a director experienced in South African governance and transformation and a director with an academic and research background related to the objectives of SDSA NPC

6.2 Staff requirements

SDSA has a small core staff responsible for geoinformation-related matters. All other activities and operations are covered by voluntary work done by BC Gildenhuis and Associates staff. Networking and partnerships will drive future internal staff requirements.

7 Technology base

MapAble® is the technology base of Spatial Data Services Africa (Pty) Ltd to which SDSA has exclusive use rights in terms of a back-to-back agreement between SDSA and MapAble (Pty) Ltd. This agreement will be renegotiated in order to allow MapAble® to provide full information technology services to SDSA NPC. The services will include the development and maintenance of MapAble and its functionality, server housing, and general IT support.