

❖ **Scenario C: An upgraded railway operation with feeder and local bus and minibus system**

In this scenario the railway is the backbone in the public transport system. It is the trunk line on the north side of Buffalo River whilst buses operate the trunk line on the south. Passengers are transported between residential areas and the railway stations by feeder systems (mini or midibuses or ordinary buses) depending on the demand. The feeder system forms an integral part of the local public transport system which will be significant in making the railway more attractive. This is the system where an integrated through-ticketing system could be offered with the commuter bus route to supplement the railway service implemented at peak periods.

The plan compares the three scenarios under the headings of Travel Standards, Economics, Environment, Traffic safety and Other Impacts (Social and Spatial). The plan concludes in its scenario analysis that:-

“The analysis indicates that Scenario C will best achieve the goals set up for public transport in Buffalo City.”

5. DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Opportunities

Mount Ruth is located to the north of the Business and Transport Centre of Mdantsane and the railway line that connects to East London and its hinterland. It is also centrally positioned in relation to Newlands and the CBD's of East London and King Williams Town.

- ❖ Mount Ruth Station is at the centre of the node;
- ❖ The N2 freeway passes within 250m of the station;
- ❖ Nearest access is at the Nahoon interchange (3km towards East London);
- ❖ Fort Jackson (5km in the opposite direction);
- ❖ The R102 runs parallel to the N2 and connects East London to Fort Jackson and Berlin and passes close to the station; and
- ❖ Newlands Access Road connects with the R102 at Mount Ruth Station and takes traffic onto the N6.

The primary area of focus for the nodal precinct development is approximately 50 hectares. There are 16 hectares of vacant government and municipal owned land in the nodal precinct, most of it lying between the N2 and R102 (refer to Plan 4 in section 4.2 above).

Mount Ruth has development potential for substantial additional residential accommodation, significant wholesale and a range of retail and office activities, some small manufacturing activity and a significant transport interchange function (refer to Plan 8).

Although infrastructure improvements will be necessary to develop the area, it is highly accessible to the rest of the city in a regional context.

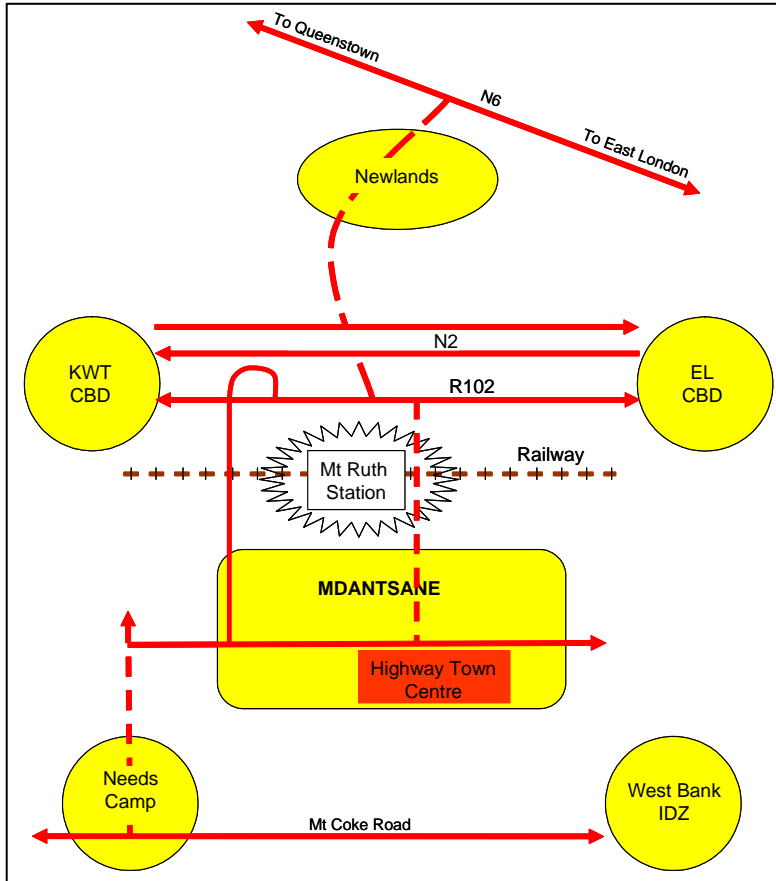
5.2 Constraints

- ❖ The node is situated on the crest of the watershed in an area which has been marginalised over many years. As a result, bulk infrastructure has never (until now) been seen to be a priority for this area. Significant costs will be incurred in creating appropriate linkages with infrastructure and achieving integration of road, rail and pedestrian transport systems. There are topographical constraints in the area due to natural water courses, excavations and stock dams. Existing roads and the rail system are barriers to free movement between areas (refer to Plan 9);
- ❖ Some land is occupied by families residing in informal structures and these will have to be accommodated in future planning and development. Associated with the 7 000 people residing within close walking distance of this node is the reality that some of the open areas are used for sport, grazing of livestock and traditional ceremonies. Development of this land will have an impact on existing social systems;
- ❖ A large percentage of the land belongs to the state and the process by which this land is secured can be slow and complex;
- ❖ There are two major roads in the area, the N2 and R102 which have building restrictions in place. Development in the area will necessitate a close working relationship with the authorities concerned. The R102 is aligned alongside the railway, with a deep stormwater channel alongside the fence. The road and stormwater channel will make it difficult to create an integrated node; and
- ❖ Whilst Mount Ruth is perceived to have considerable potential for mixed use development, the consequences of such development needs to bear in mind the impact on the Mdantsane CBD (Highway Town Centre) and the economic system of the suburbs of Mdantsane and Newlands generally.

5.3 Key Issues

Having considered the opportunities and constraints presented by Mount Ruth node, the following key issues need to be considered in the planning process (refer to Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Opportunities and Linkages



5.3.1 Hierarchy of Nodes

It is envisaged that in the short to medium term, Highway Town Centre would be the major development node in Mdantsane itself. Mount Ruth, being positioned on the periphery of Mdantsane is presently a minor node and is expected to develop in more regional significance, to become a major node, only when and if linkages are created with the N2, the N6 and, when mixed use development is achieved.

5.3.2 Relationships between Nodes

The consequences of commercial development in nodes close to each other needs to be evaluated so as to develop relationships between nodes, rather than competition. Gap analysis evaluation should be utilised to identify niche markets and development opportunities which would not necessarily threaten existing nodes.

5.3.3 Linkages between Nodes

The Public Transport Plan proposes a public transport feeder service between Mdantsane and transport nodes. This strategy is considered to be a significant idea to try to establish linkages between nodes as well. For example, such a feeder service between Highway and Mount Ruth could serve to strengthen both nodes and build on opportunities for compatible/complementary land uses and facilities.

5.3.4 Land Use Mix Viability

Consideration of the possible types of land uses in the nodal precinct needs to evaluate the viability of such uses. For example, considerable emphasis is being placed on High Density Housing by the IDP, SDF and MURP Business Plan. However, the viability of high density housing is dependant upon affordability, market demand and availability of sufficient members of tenants (informal employment) who want to rent rather than own a home.

Also, in the context of retail and office uses, there needs to be careful evaluation of the viability of such premises, in terms of the adjacent suburbs of Newland and Mdantsane.

5.3.5 Investor Interest

Designing for certain land uses in Mount Ruth node will need to consider the extent of land set aside for public development (such as high density facilities, high density housing and public places) relative to private development land. This will necessitate achieving a balance between the “subsidised” part of the node and the privatised part. If the investors and business people of Mdantsane see opportunities in the area, measures need to be devised to enable their participation of the development. Larger external investors may see opportunities in the area as well and their inclusion would need to be balanced with the local component in order to achieve sustainability and empowerment.

Finally, high density housing may necessitate the involvement of High Density Housing Institutions who would design, construct and manage their housing estates in the area. Innovative mechanisms and procedures need to be devised to obtain their commitment to the development in an equitable and fair manner.

5.3.6 Seamless Linkages

The Mdantsane Urban Renewal Programme has the vision of Mdantsane becoming an integral part of Buffalo City, as an economic hub having seamless linkages to the surrounding city systems. Mount Ruth is a flagship project of this urban renewal programme and opportunities to achieve those seamless linkages could be piloted in this nodal precinct. The question is, how can these linkages best be achieved? Are they only to be physical linkages, links to the N2, links to services and physical buildings; or could the linkages include economic opportunities, social infrastructure and environmental opportunities?

5.3.7 Functionality

In a simple way, the functionality of Mount Ruth Nodal Precinct needs to be considered in the context of two options (refer to Diagram 2 and 3 below):-

- ❖ Should Mount Ruth continue to be a station/taxi rank simply “on the way” to other destinations? or
- ❖ Should Mount Ruth become “a destination” itself?