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## **2. PLANNING AREA**

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Mount Ruth Station is located on the northern urban edge of Mdantsane, alongside the R102 and the national road (N2) to King Williams Town to the west and East London to the east (see Plan 1).

Mount Ruth lies at the top of the ridge on the southern slope of which Mdantsane is located. The land slopes to the north into the Nxahune Valley and to the south into the Buffalo River Valley.

Mount Ruth node is located to the north of the centre of Mdantsane on the railway line that connects East London to the hinterland. Mount Ruth Station is at the centre of the node. The N2 freeway passes within 250m of the station. However, the nearest access at the Nahoon interchange is 3 km towards East London and at Fort Jackson some 5km in the opposite direction. The R102, is parallel to the N2, connects East London to Fort Jackson and Berlin and passes close to the station. The newly constructed Newlands Access Road that serves the area of Newlands and Farm 303 joins the N2 at Mount Ruth Station.

Mount Ruth Station is connected to the Qumza Highway via a secondary road which originates near the Highway Centre and loops back to the Qumza Highway past the Cecilia Makiwane Hospital and other major institutional sites. This represents opportunity to intensify the use of land between Highway Centre and Mount Ruth.

Significantly Mount Ruth lies at the divide between formal suburban Mdantsane with its informal bufferstrip and the relatively informal peri-urban Newlands area. It is the point at which people from these two areas meet and gain access to the rail system.

The Mount Ruth Nodal Precinct area comprises of Wards 30, 39 and 45. However, it is often stressed that over the years the station has played an important and widespread role in the distribution of good and people. As a result all the Mdantsane Ward Councillors have an interest in the future of this node.

The primary planning area of this project comprises Municipal and Government owned land situated around the Mount Ruth Station and the area between the railway lines and the N2 (refer to Plan 2).

The secondary planning area which extends further afield, includes the area to the north of the N2 known as Newlands and Mdantsane to the south and also includes two possible sites for high density housing located on either side of the node at Thembelihle and Illinge.

In a regional context, Mount Ruth is positioned directly between the suburbs of Newlands and Mdantsane with a combined population of some 300 000 people. Of significant importance, is the trend whereby the Newlands villages of Eluxolweni and Cuba (situated alongside the N2 near the station) are urbanising rapidly. The Newlands Development Plan concluded that this area showed similar characteristics to the Bufferstrip within Mdantsane, whereby settlement and construction of informal structures has resulted in difficulties being experienced in attempts to formalise the land use in the area.