



Chapter 2

Turning Warwick around



Some trader leaders and Project officials

Chapter 2: Turning Warwick around

The Warwick area described in the previous chapter is a relatively recent phenomenon. Its history is steeped in racial discrimination, exclusion and infrastructural neglect. Until the early 1990s an all white local authority imposed social, political and economic restrictions on the black inhabitants of the city. Government at all levels passed laws that permitted this repression, which was enforced through fines, raids, the confiscation of goods and the removal of residents and traders.

That this bitter history has given way to a vibrant, profitable and non-racial trading area makes its success all the more remarkable.

Warwick from the mid-1880s to the mid-1990s

The early history of Warwick centres around the Indian community, as more than 300 migrants arrived in South Africa in November 1860 to work as indentured labourers in what was then the Natal Colony. After two five-year spells of indenture they were given permanent residence in the country.

One such immigrant, Aboobaker Jhaveri, played a central role in establishing Indian business in Durban. In 1872 he set up the first trading store in the Grey Street area and later opened a bazaar there. Jhaveri's buildings still grace the area.

Jhaveri also donated land for the building of the Juma Masjid Mosque – often referred to as the Grey Street Mosque – which is one of the oldest and largest in the southern hemisphere and integral to the atmosphere of Warwick Junction. These initiatives encouraged Indian people to take up residence in the area and to set up small formal trading and service businesses.

In time rural African people moved to the city to set up trading sites not far from Grey Street along the pavements around the railway station and bus terminal. Although congested and lacking basic services, an integrated and viable community began to develop. By the 1930s the Warwick area was the dominant shopping, trading and business destination for a large proportion of Durban's population. At this point, however, it was declared a slum and the local authority began a campaign to clear the area and divide the community.



The Juma Masjid Mosque



Traditional medicine trading conditions before the Project interventions

The apartheid years of oppression and exclusion

When the National Party, with its apartheid ideology, came to power in 1948 it enacted ruthless legislation aimed at restricting black economic activity in so-called 'white areas'. By 1960s street trading had been prohibited in Durban, and traders harshly punished and evicted if found in the city.

A daily newspaper recorded that nearly 500 people had been charged with illegal trading in less than six months in 1966.

In the early 1970s police were described as 'fighting a running battle' against illegal traders. This continued until the introduction of the Natal Ordinance in 1973. The ordinance allowed very limited trading which was regulated by what became known as the 'move on' laws: traders were only allowed to occupy a spot for 15 minutes, and trading of goods was restricted to within 100 metres of a formal business.

The Hawker's Action Committee, formed in the late 1970s, mounted a campaign against the city authorities to protest about the harassment of hawkers in the area.

Harassed fruit and vegetable hawkers in the Grey Street Complex have vowed 'to declare war' on the Durban City Police whom they say are determined to force them out of business.

Daily News, 5 February 1981

When I first started trading in Warwick in 1982 it was a terrible place. It was the time of the blackjacks. Blackjacks, that's what we called the City Police... They were harassing us. On the street, it was very bad. You couldn't sit where you wanted to sit. The blackjacks were everywhere. We were running with our bags. All the traders... were running like hell. The blackjacks would come and take all of our goods.

Traditional medicine trader

Shifting the approach to street trading

As the 1980s progressed government authorities were beginning to feel the pressure from anti-apartheid organisations both within and outside the country. In the early 1980s the more liberal Progressive Federal Party took over Durban's local government from the National Party. The new council commissioned a survey on street traders in the inner city. The results of the survey, and the report that followed, were milestones that saw the start of a new attitude on the part of local government towards the informal economy in general, and street traders in particular.

Following the production of the Hawker Report... the city council recognised the need to make allowance for the economic needs of at least some of the more than 100 000 people flocking to the peripheries of the city every year in the hope of finding work in a shrinking urban job market.

The Daily News, 18 June 1987

Traders were finally acknowledged not only as a permanent part of the city but also for their economic contribution. However, the management of this new dispensation was daunting. By the early 1990s the national laws restricting 'black' economic activity were relaxed and thousands of people moved into the city to look for work and to trade informally where business was favourable, and pavement space available. Communities settled informally in open spaces near their places of trade. In Durban an estimated 4 000 street traders moved into the Warwick area alone. There was no management of these activities, nor were facilities provided and there was a very real threat of slum conditions developing.

The council was forced to rethink its approach. It formed a sub-committee to draw up recommendations for a new policy. In 1991 the Department of Informal Trade and Small Business Opportunities (DITSBO) was established to manage and facilitate this process.

National government gave local governments the power to pass street trading bylaws. National legislation attempted to ensure that these bylaws should regulate rather than inhibit inner city trading. While prohibiting trading in some zones and restricting it in others, the Durban City Council did pass bylaws that allowed street traders to operate in most of the inner city. In contrast, many other South African cities declared some of the most viable trading areas as prohibited trade zones.



Brook Street trading conditions before the Project interventions

Post-1994: Setting up the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project

When South Africans elected their first democratic government in 1994, transformation became a priority at all government levels. The new Constitution created three spheres of government – national, provincial and local⁹ – and gave the local sphere much greater independence than it had enjoyed in the past, as well as new tasks. Not only was it a time of elation and excitement throughout the country, but also of anticipation. The gates were open for long-awaited change.

This book cannot give a comprehensive account of the multi-levelled structure and highly detailed planning that led to Warwick Junction's internationally acclaimed turnaround. The sections that follow provide an outline of how the Project was structured, the broad approach it adopted and an overview of its achievements. This is offered with a view to help others grappling with the task of incorporating the informal economy into urban plans.

Initial challenges for the Project

At the start, the Project faced seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Due to years of apartheid planning that aimed to separate different race groups, the area was poorly designed. The ever-increasing number of traders caused congestion and overtrading, which in turn led to declining incomes. Crime was also rife in Warwick.

The area was divided politically and economically, with the more affluent traders in Grey Street and the poorer in Warwick Junction. Further, during the early 1990s the province of KwaZulu Natal was racked by political violence between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Many of the traders were migrants fleeing from this with the result that those operating in Warwick lacked trust in one another. Given the apartheid history they also lacked trust in local government officials.

The Project started and was implemented in the context of the political and administrative restructuring of local government. Under apartheid local administrative areas were divided on the basis of race. In Durban there were 48 racially separate local authorities that were in the mid-1990s combined into an expanded metropolitan area with six sub-authorities. In turn, these were combined into one larger municipality, named the eThekweni Municipality, in 2001. The Project was thus faced with an ever-changing institutional environment.

From this challenging point of departure, the Project reversed the status of Warwick in three years. A perceived centre of 'crime and grime' became a flourishing part of the inner city.

⁹In other contexts what is termed national government in South Africa, would be called federal government and what is called provincial government would be called state government.

A head start

Local government officials had already begun work to improve trading conditions for street traders so the Project was well placed to maximise the historical moment. The earlier survey had paved the way for a major reversal in the municipality's approach to street traders. This involved a change to working with, rather than against, the interests of street traders, and the subsequent incorporation of this approach into new plans for the Warwick area.

The city's health department had started working with street traders. They set up health and safety awareness training to introduce minimum health requirements. They had also compiled a preliminary database of street traders detailing their activities and documenting what infrastructure they wanted.

Street traders also started to become better organised. In 1994 the Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU) was launched, modelled on the Self Employed Women's Association in India. Its national office was in Durban and one of its first and most consistently active branches was of street traders working in Warwick.

SEWU brought to the forefront the particular concerns of women traders – issues such as child care provision and the lack of overnight accommodation. A SEWU leader and long-standing trader working in Warwick noted:

We women must be there. Any meeting, any policy, they must think about women. The women must be there.

She reflected on her experience in SEWU:

SEWU's done a lot for me. If I hadn't joined SEWU I would not be in this site now. SEWU opened my mind. I knock at the doors and the doors open.

A number of other street trader organisations were active in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Informal Traders Management Board (ITMB) was set up in 1995 to represent trader organisations and serve as the umbrella body that the council could negotiate with. By the time the Project began its work the ITMB had earned the support of the majority of street traders in the area. It is still active in the area and has played a role in exerting pressure on local government to incorporate traders into city planning.

In addition to the street traders' organisations, there were also street or area committees (more or less loosely structured in form).

When the local authority shifted its approach, these organising initiatives meant there were already negotiating partners for Project staff to work with.



Informal settlement in Brook Street, prior to the Project interventions

First task: operation cleanup

There was something mysterious in the way that this regular group of officials, called together for a routine task, chose to act in a collaborative, consultative and frankly compassionate manner. Perhaps the daunting prospect of engaging in such a notorious part of the city urged them beyond these tentative beginnings into a relationship of growing reciprocal respect between street traders and themselves.

Project leader

By 1996 the council recognised that daily maintenance in Warwick was proving almost impossible because of years of accumulated waste along the pavements, and it allocated a sum of money for an initial cleanup of the area.

Unwanted material was to be removed from the street and the whole area scoured with high pressure hoses. To carry this out successfully, traders would be disrupted temporarily and so their cooperation was essential. The cleaning process took place area by area and traders were consulted at each point through a trader organisation, a street or trade committee. In hindsight the Project staff realised that not only was the cleanup achieved but, more importantly, it started the process of understanding the area dynamics.

Durban Solid Waste, the city's waste collection and cleaning department, initially took charge of the operation, assisted by officials from a range of other departments, including City Health, the City Police, Traffic and Transport, and DITSBO. Although scheduled for three months, it eventually lasted for six.

This 'face-lift' operation was a milestone in the regeneration of Warwick in that it showed what could be achieved through inter-departmental cooperation. Instead of reverting to the old response of simply removing traders, departments' staff had begun to work together to solve problems more creatively. Some of the officials involved at this early stage later became part of the Project's operations team. This inter-departmental approach was subsequently adopted as a format for the Project as a whole.

As was so often the case in the work of the Project, one set of objectives exposed further challenges that required urgent attention. Allowing for this type of organic development has been central to the way in which project teams operate.

There is more detail in Chapter 5 about this initial cleanup as well





Durban Solid Waste pressure-cleaning trader stalls

Project structure and way of working

In 1995 the council set aside R4.72 million to make a start on the regeneration of Warwick Junction and establish a structure for operating at an inter-departmental level.

The Project's aims

The main aim was expressed in a 1995 report:

... to improve the overall quality of the urban environment in the Greater Warwick Avenue and Grey Street area in terms of safety, security, cleanliness, functionality and the promotion of economic opportunities. The redevelopment of the Warwick Avenue area, specifically, should be geared towards promoting its primary role and function as a major regional hub for public trading and transportation, with a particular focus on the needs of the urban poor.

The Project was part of a city-wide experiment with integrated area-based development. This meant that planning and the management of public resources would be decentralised to a geographical area and that the various departments responsible for managing the area would work together rather than in isolation. Area-based development also allows for participation of the citizens of the area in all aspects of development planning.

Institutional location

Initially two options were considered for the institutional location of the Project. It could be an agency located alongside the council, with dedicated staff; or it could be located directly under the council, drawing on department staff. The latter option was chosen and has proved to have many advantages:

- It gave the Project access to an invaluable range of human and technical resources from a wide range of departments in the city. This has been crucial for the success of the multi-faceted projects that have been undertaken.
- It facilitated cooperative teamwork within and between council departments. It ensured that the council and its departments were an integral part of the Project's work.
- Officials responsible for the ongoing management of projects were involved from the start and understood what would be needed to sustain each project.

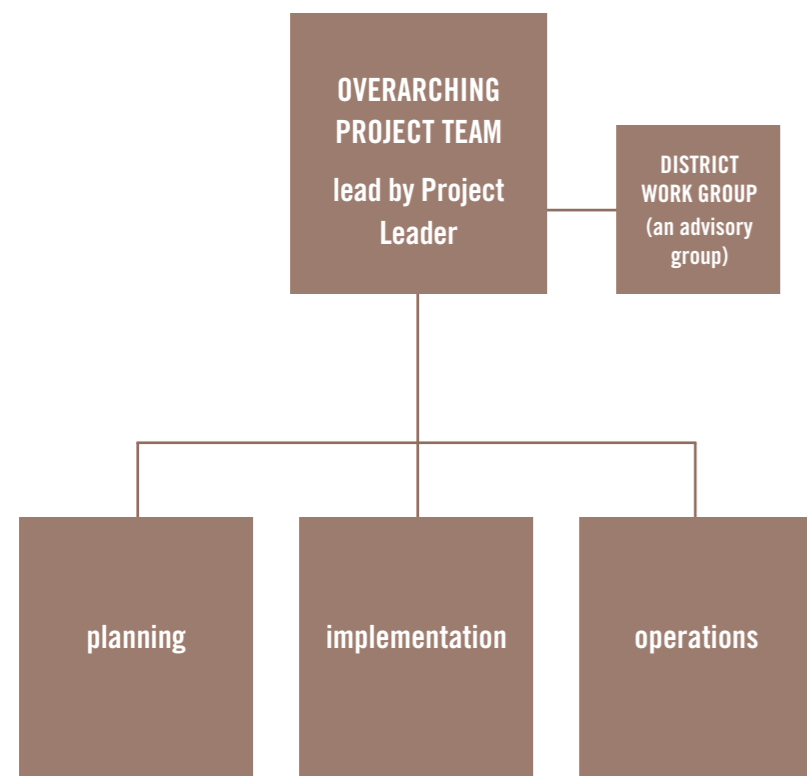
The Project staff

A few individuals drove the Project in its early years. The first Project leader was located in the Urban Design Department. A planner by training, she was responsible for setting the Project up and headed the planning team. In 1995 Architectural Services employed an architect as the team leader responsible for implementing capital works projects¹⁰ and an experienced environmental health officer was drawn in from City Health to oversee the urban management team.

A number of other council officials, already working in Warwick, were drawn into the Project team. In some cases they had worked there for some time and had established a rapport with stakeholders in the area. For example both the DITSBO and City Health had assigned staff to the area.

In amongst this group were some seasoned council officials who knew how to take Project initiatives through the correct reporting procedures within the council. This was critical for the functioning of area-based development.

¹⁰ In time, as the focus of the work shifted from planning to implementation, the architect became the Project leader. The quotes attributed to the Project leader throughout this book stem from the second rather than the first Project leader.



Examples of planning tasks:

- Road network plan
- Public transport study
- District urban design framework
- Economic strategy

Examples of implementation projects:

- Traditional Medicine Market
- Brook Street Market
- Cannongate and Alice Street shelters

Examples of task teams:

- Water delivery and management
- Public toilets
- Street lighting
- Mini-bus taxi washing and rank management
- Childcare facilities
- Mealie cooking
- Bovine head cooking
- Cardboard salvaging

The operating structure

It was not an entity, it was a series of tasks that had to be done and had to achieve a set of outcomes. This was the catalyst to interlink departments.

Project leader

The Project, from its position within local government, had to develop a structure that was appropriate to the wide range of issues arising in the area. As the account of the cleaning initiative shows, the structure also had to allow for new and unforeseen issues for which it would have to find creative solutions. All this called for a flexible structure that was appropriately linked to the council.

The diagram shows that the Project was structured around three core tasks. Officials drawn from a range of departments were grouped into project teams associated with these.

- The planning team was responsible for overall planning and urban design of the area. They focused on macro-planning and thereby identified projects requiring capital expenditure.
- The implementation team implemented the plans formulated by the planning team. These were often packaged in discrete projects – for example the redevelopment of the Traditional Medicine Market. This team oversaw each stage of development from detailed project design to final completion.
- The operations team saw to the maintenance, service delivery and the general day-to-day management of Warwick as well as the integration and ongoing management of any new developments. Under the Operations team a number of smaller focused task teams were set up to deal with specific urban maintenance and management problems. Over 30 such teams were established to deal with issues as diverse as kerbside cleaning, ablution facilities, childcare facilities and pavement sleeping.

Depending on the nature of the work, officials working on all of these multiple teams were drawn in from the appropriate council departments.

Council officials working on Project initiatives

Over time, and in different teams, officials were drawn from the following local government departments¹¹:

- Architectural Services
- City Health
- City Police
- Development and Planning
- Drainage and Coastal Engineering
- Durban Solid Waste
- Electronics
- Housing
- Informal Trade and Small Business Opportunities
- Licensing
- Parks
- Protection Services
- Real Estate
- Roads
- Traffic and Transportation
- Urban Design
- Waste Water Management.

Officials involved in the three core teams formed an overarching project team which met weekly to share progress, information and identify further issues that required attention. This ensured that the planning, implementation and operations work informed each other.

A council official involved in a number of teams described the process as follows:

Individual department staff were working in the area and observing the dynamics. They had often established relationships with people using the area. What we would do once an issue was identified was to get council staff around the table to pool existing information and observations. It was this process of hearing often incidental observations, gathering ideas and going back onto the streets to test them, which led to us finding solutions.

¹¹Through the restructuring processes within local government, the names of many local government departments changed. For example, City Police became Metro Police, Traffic and Transportation became the eThekweni Transport Authority (ETA) and the Department of Informal Trade and Small Business



Through this project structure a cohesive group formed that worked within and across departments. This was unlike the conventional structure of local authorities in which departments work in parallel.

At times I would go and sit on the pavement for an hour. People would think I was mad. I was just watching how people were doing things within the space.

Project leader

A walkabout with any council staff working on the Project is characterised by many greetings and conversations. This stems from their having spent so much time on the streets. The DITSBO area manager and his three community liaison officers spent the better part of every day on the streets while the Project leader himself spent between two and three hours a day walking the streets. This allowed for developing relationships but also on site observation. An interest, enthusiasm and curiosity developed among staff about what was happening in the area and their ability to improve conditions.

Funding and accountability

Funds for the Project came from the municipality, although provincial and national government allocated amounts for specific projects such as road infrastructure or public transport. The National Department of Transport, for example, funded the establishment of taxi ranks. The European Commission routed funding through the municipality and contributed 11% of the municipality's total allocation to the Project.

The Project was ultimately answerable to the elected representatives in council, the councillors. These politicians approved funding allocations and received regular reports. In the early years the Project leader reported on developments in Warwick to the subcommittee of councillors responsible for planning. Officials working in the Project reported to the heads of their departments who in turn reported to their respective subcommittees of councillors. The final element of political oversight of the process was through the formation of the District Working Group. This advisory body of stakeholders and officials included between three and four councillors. Although there were differences of opinion on some issues, the Project operated in a broadly supportive political environment.

Opportunities (DITSBO) became Informal Trade and Small Business Opportunities (ITSBO) and then Business Support. Departmental names are used in line with what the department was called for the majority of the time being referred to.



The newly renovated Project Centre

Opening a Project Centre

A project building was opened early on. The Project Centre is a converted old warehouse, centrally located and with large and small meeting venues and offices for council staff. Both Project staff and department officials working mainly in Warwick were – and continue to be – located there.

For street traders, an important advantage of locating the Project in Warwick, was the proximity of council officials to their sites, should they want to raise a problem or discuss a concern. The centre not only provides rooms for consultation between council staff and traders, but also space for trader organisations to meet and discuss their concerns independent of council interference.

THE PROJECT CENTRE – A VENUE FOR MEETINGS

There are three meeting venues in the Project Centre – a small discussion room that accommodates up to ten people, a larger meeting venue that accommodates up to 30 people and a large hall that comfortably accommodates 200 people.

These venues are and have been used for:

- Internal council meetings especially planning, implementation and operations meetings.
- Broad consultation meetings between council officials and stakeholder groups in the area – residents, formal and informal business e.g. the District Working Group.
- Project-specific consultation meetings between officials and recipients;
- the Community Policing Forum.
- Training sessions run by the City Health Department for food and traditional medicine traders.
- Regular meeting slots for a number of trader organisations. Both leadership and members meet. For example the Informal Traders' Management Board holds their weekly executive and general meetings here, and Traders Against Crime and the organisation of street barbers, Siyagunda, meets here regularly.
- Various independent initiatives (by arrangement). People living near the Project Centre have used the hall for celebrations and memorial services and groups of artists have displayed their works there.



The building that was converted into the Project Centre



An example of Warwick Junction signage

Marketing the 'new' Warwick: changing people's perceptions

The common perception of Warwick as a run-down, dirty and crime-ridden area had to be turned around. Early on, the Project established a communications team that aimed to change the perceptions of the area among the users, council officials, politicians, the private sector and the public at large. A marketing company was employed to assist with this and through a consultative process a common project image was developed. The Project then made use of billboards, posters, brochures and t-shirts to promote the 'new' Warwick.

Attention was also paid to getting the media to cover what was happening in the area – with some success. In addition the Project leader made numerous public presentations to business and professional bodies.

This exercise was important for traders and commuters as it enhanced a sense of ownership and pride in the area. City officials and councillors started to take the area seriously and acknowledge the role it played in the city. For the public at large as well as the powerful private sector interests in the city this campaign was critical in changing perceptions, not only of the area, but also of the contribution made by informal activities to the city economy.





A community meeting in the Project Centre hall

Two Project fundamentals

Looking back over the Project period, two inter-related Project fundamentals that were critical to the success of the Project can be identified: the area-based and inter-departmental project structure, and the commitment to participation and consultation.

Our approach was the opposite of a hierarchical process where decisions are made at the top without taking into account the knowledge and requirements of those – both traders but also officials – working in the area. This top-down approach is neither viable nor sustainable.

Project leader

Area-based and inter-departmental

The Project concentrated on a specific geographical area. This, combined with the working style of the Project staff, meant that both high- and lower-level officials spent the better part of every day either on the streets or engaging with stakeholders. As a result responses or interventions carried out in the area were based on a firm understanding of specific local conditions.

The Project was integrated closely into existing council departmental activities. Only the Project leader and his assistant were dedicated Project staff. All other council staff working on the Project were drawn from existing council departments and accountable both to the Project and the heads of their departments. Instead of city officials from separate departments managing their areas of responsibility in isolation from other officials, all were brought in at the start of the regeneration process, together with the traders and their representatives.

An environmental health officer who has been working in Warwick since the early 1990s commented:

Area-based management is a good way of working because it helps officials know what other departments are doing... If another department official sees that traders are exposing their foodstuffs on the streets they won't say 'Oh well, this is for the health department and it is not my job'. Now they know the work of the health department so they will just go there and advise the traders. It also helps that even if I am not able to resolve a particular problem, I know who to call... We often complain about there not being enough staff, but I know that I can just contact somebody and then we can look at the problem... We are

all equally responsible for making our city a successful one and together we are able to conquer... That is how we should look at our informal economy.

This approach resolved coordination problems between departments and allowed for a close link between planning and implementation. It was put to the test in the Project's first big initiative – the building of the herb and medicine market – and progressed as the Project gained experience.

Commitment to participation and consultation

As the quotes below show, the participation of all stakeholders was fundamental to the way in which the Project operated.

To build up trust and support for the Project's work, it was essential to negotiate with all stakeholders rather than superimpose any plans; we needed to bring everyone on board.

Project leader

The most important thing is communication. The council doesn't come and tell us what to do – at least not in the area I trade. We talk about things. When I raise issues the council respects that.

Trader leader, trading in Brook Street

The area manager would come to your site. He liked to sit down and explain things and get your point of view.

Trader leader, music seller

If you make an appointment with the Project manager, he gives you a chance to come and sit with him. He takes your issues seriously. He is a good man. You know if you go to him he will deal with your problem. In the Muthi Market we would go and sit down with him and everything went well.

Trader leader, trading in the Traditional Medicine Market



Inside the Project Centre

Consultation occurred at a number of levels – area-wide, with specific groups, and with individuals.

The District Working Group consisted of council officials and councillors combined with representatives from formal business, informal business and residents in Warwick. This consultative forum met monthly and received report backs from the Planning, Implementation and Operations team leaders. It was an opportunity for all parties to share information and concerns.

As mentioned, trader organisations and committees were active in the area at the Project inception and both these organisations and the council officials working with them developed consultation and negotiation skills as the work of the Project progressed.

Particularly intensive consultation occurred when new projects were identified. Language and cultural diversity meant that this was often very challenging. Many council officials were not fluent in Zulu – the dominant language among the traders – and so meetings with traders took place either in Zulu or in English with Zulu translation. Some of the techniques used to address these and other challenges to achieve consensus positions are discussed in detail in the next two chapters

The Project Centre played an important role in facilitating both the formal and informal consultation processes. Officials were close to traders and vice versa while the different sized meeting venues allowed for meeting small groups but also holding mass meetings.

An overview of completed projects

Within three years of the Project being set up, the area had changed dramatically. Different Project interventions are dealt with in some depth in the chapters that follow. The timeline below gives an overview of the key Project milestones between 1995 and the present.

Timeline of Project milestones

