



SERVICE DELIVERY PARTY

District Six: Development and Distribution

*A Policy for Restitution, Reconstruction and the Return of a
Community*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Finish What Was Started

District Six is the clearest test of whether democratic South Africa can convert historical justice into practical delivery. Nearly three decades after claims were lodged, the majority of redevelopment beneficiaries are still waiting for their homes. Service Delivery Party proposes a District Six Development and Distribution Compact to finish the job, with a named delivery office, a public dashboard, and enforcement anchored in an existing court order, not a new promise.

918

beneficiaries still waiting
for homes

R2.4bn

estimated cost to
complete construction

27

years since claims were
lodged (1998)

2028

government's own
completion target

The Five Ds

R

Restitution

D

Development

D

Distribution

D

Delivery

D

Dignity

What SDP Is Asking For

- A binding District Six Development and Distribution Compact between national government, the Western Cape Government, the City of Cape Town and claimant structures, with enforcement anchored in the 2018 Land Claims Court finding that the state failed its constitutional restitution duty.
- An 8-to-12-person District Six Delivery Office with one integrated programme, one risk register and one accountable director, reporting quarterly and publicly.
- A public 918-to-zero beneficiary dashboard tracking every household from waiting to housed, compliant with POPIA.
- A ring-fenced, published funding envelope against the estimated R2.4 billion completion cost, with the City's own infrastructure contribution quantified alongside it.
- An Elderly Claimant Principle for original claimants still living, applied within a legally reviewed allocation framework so it strengthens rather than exposes the programme to challenge.

"The question is no longer whether District Six can be redeveloped. The question is why it has not already been done."

The measure of success is not another announcement. It is people receiving keys.

PART ONE

The Unfinished Promise

01

Executive Position

A test of whether government can return people to a place from which government once expelled them.

The people of District Six were removed by a state that had the power to destroy a community. The democratic state subsequently acquired the moral and legal responsibility to restore what was taken. Nearly three decades later, that responsibility remains unfinished.

This is not a housing project that has fallen behind schedule. It is a test of whether government can return people to a place from which government once expelled them. Service Delivery Party believes the time has come to change the question: not whether District Six can be redeveloped, but why, after thirty years of democracy, it has not already been done.

"The question is no longer whether District Six can be redeveloped. The question is why it has not already been done."

SDP proposes a District Six Development and Distribution Compact between national government, the Western Cape Government, the City of Cape Town and the District Six claimant community. The objective is simple: finish the restitution housing programme, build the infrastructure around it, restore a living neighbourhood, distribute access to opportunity, publish the progress, and hold every institution accountable. The measure of success must be people receiving keys.

02

The Unfinished Promise

Twenty-seven years after the claims were lodged, roughly four in five redevelopment beneficiaries are still waiting.

Apartheid destroyed a dense, diverse and economically active community through forced removals under the Group Areas Act. The democratic settlement created an opportunity for restitution. In 1998, 2,760 claims were lodged; 1,165 qualifying claimants chose redevelopment over financial compensation. Only 247 homes have since been completed and allocated: 24 in 2008, 115 in 2013, and 108 in 2022. Parliament confirmed in 2025 that 918 beneficiaries were still waiting.

The pattern is not merely administrative. In 2022, government's own Deputy President announced that a further 954 homes would be finished by 2025. Construction on that commitment had still not started by the deadline. Behind every outstanding unit is a family that has already waited through most of a democratic lifetime. Some claimants have died waiting; their grandchildren have inherited a promise made to someone who may no longer be alive to receive it.

03

Restitution Is Not Ordinary Housing

The objective is not to place houses on valuable urban land. It is to restore belonging.

Ordinary housing policy asks where affordable homes should be built and how many units can be delivered. Restitution asks a prior question: what does justice require when the state itself was responsible for the original dispossession? The original redevelopment understanding envisaged an integrated development producing a vibrant, multicultural community with social and economic opportunity. SDP rejects the idea of rebuilding District Six as a collection of houses. We must rebuild a neighbourhood.

04

Government Has Lost the Thread

Committees cannot build houses. Steering committees cannot install stormwater pipes.

National government leads the restitution process; the City holds land, planning, and municipal service responsibilities; the Western Cape Government carries provincial responsibilities; claimant structures shape the character of the redevelopment. The existence of multiple institutions is not itself the problem. The problem is that responsibility has become so fragmented that nobody is clearly accountable for the final outcome. A family waiting thirty years does not experience government as a set of constitutional competencies. It experiences government as either delivering, or not.

The Delivery Compact

05

The District Six Delivery Compact

One integrated schedule. One dashboard. One risk register. One programme director.

SDP proposes a formal District Six Development and Distribution Compact. It would not replace the constitutional responsibilities of any sphere of government; it would bring those responsibilities into one delivery programme with one integrated schedule, one public dashboard, one risk register and one clearly identified programme director. National government retains restitution responsibility; the City contributes planning, engineering and infrastructure capability; the Western Cape Government coordinates provincial competencies; claimant representatives hold a formal role in beneficiary matters. Whoever owns a task owns its deadline.

06

Enforcement and Dispute Resolution

This Compact does not start from zero. It starts from a court finding that government already lost.

A Compact without consequences is merely another coordinating committee. It must therefore include a binding dispute resolution mechanism: a thirty-day resolution window when an institution misses a committed deadline, automatic escalation to the relevant MEC or national Minister if unresolved, and referral to the Presidency where intergovernmental deadlock persists beyond sixty days, with a further thirty-day response requirement.

Crucially, this mechanism is not being asked to carry the whole weight of enforcement on its own. In November 2018, the Land Claims Court ruled that the department, the Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, and the Western Cape Premier had failed their constitutional duty to provide restitution to District Six claimants. That finding already exists. SDP proposes that the Compact be framed explicitly as the state's compliance mechanism for that order, with the Delivery Office required to report progress against it to the Court's registrar as well as to the public. This gives the Compact a legal anchor that a voluntary intergovernmental agreement alone would not have.

The District Six Delivery Office

The question at every meeting should be the same: what is preventing the next family from receiving its home?

A small, professional District Six Delivery Office of eight to twelve professionals should be established under the Compact, with expertise in programme management, construction, municipal engineering, planning, beneficiary administration and public communication. Its functions include maintaining the master development programme, tracking every outstanding beneficiary and site, coordinating approvals and infrastructure, monitoring procurement, maintaining a live risk register, and escalating decisions that cannot be resolved operationally. The Programme Director should be appointed jointly by the national Minister of Human Settlements and the Mayor of Cape Town, with direct authority to escalate to the Presidency.

The 918 Dashboard

Government should report how many families have moved closer to their homes, not how many committees have met.

Government should publish a District Six beneficiary dashboard, starting from the 918 beneficiaries Parliament identified as still awaiting homes in 2025, and tracking the movement from 918 to zero. The dashboard must comply fully with the Protection of Personal Information Act: the public does not need private details, but does need to know whether the programme is moving.

Stop-Start Development, Continuous Pipeline

There should be no point at which one phase ends and the next has not been prepared.

Phase One produced 24 homes, Phase Two produced 115, Phase Three eventually produced 108, each an isolated project with its own procurement and administrative challenges rather than a continuous programme. SDP proposes a rolling construction pipeline: while one package is being built, the next must already be designed and procured, and the one after that already in planning.

Construction Packages

No package so large that one contractor can paralyse the programme; none so small that procurement becomes inefficient.

The remaining development should be divided into manageable construction packages, each with a defined scope, budget, contractor, start date and completion date. Where legally permissible, government should use standardised designs and repeatable construction systems to reduce design duplication and accelerate procurement, without sacrificing the distinctive character of District Six.

PART THREE

Building It Right

Infrastructure, Stormwater and Lifecycle Responsibility

A house without functioning infrastructure is not a completed home.

Every housing package must include the water, sanitation, stormwater, electricity, roads, lighting, waste, fire access, telecommunications, transport connections and public open space needed to operate the development from the day residents receive their keys. As redevelopment increases density, every package should carry an integrated stormwater plan covering collection, conveyance, attenuation and extreme rainfall events, using permeable surfaces and sustainable urban drainage where appropriate.

Capital expenditure must be matched by lifecycle responsibility. A pump station without a maintenance plan is not infrastructure; a sewer network without capacity planning is not resilience. Every water, sanitation, electricity and stormwater project should include the maintenance arrangements and lifecycle budget required to operate it properly, not just the cost of building it.

Heritage Without Paralysis

Protect the past, build the future, and do both deliberately.

The redevelopment must protect significant cultural, archaeological and historic elements while allowing the neighbourhood to become a living community again. Heritage assessments should be completed as early as possible and incorporated into the master programme before construction begins, with predefined protocols for discoveries made during construction.

Where a heritage assessment recommends preserving a site earmarked for housing, the relevant heritage authority and the Delivery Office should jointly decide whether the site can be redesigned, an alternative site found, or the programme adjusted. Heritage should inform the programme without becoming a veto over delivery.

13

Beneficiary Distribution Must Be Fair

Distribution here means distributing the benefits of urban citizenship, not just houses.

Housing allocation must be transparent, lawful and explicable to the community. Beneficiaries should know the criteria applicable to their allocation, the documentation required, the stage their claim has reached, and have access to an independent dispute mechanism. The system must protect legitimate beneficiaries without allowing unresolved individual disputes to freeze entire construction packages.

14

Beneficiary Resolution and the Beneficiary Register

One unresolved family matter should never hold an entire building package hostage.

A dedicated beneficiary resolution function should deal rapidly with deceased claimants, descendants, documentation gaps, family disputes and changes in settlement election, running in parallel with construction rather than blocking it. Within ninety days of the Compact's adoption, government should establish a verified baseline register categorising beneficiaries as verified, pending verification, disputed or lapsed, with a separate track for succession resolution and realistic published timelines for each category.

15

The Elderly Claimant Principle

Justice delayed for a person in their seventies or eighties may become justice denied altogether.

Where lawful and practicable, elderly original claimants who are still alive and have not yet received their homes should receive priority within the allocation and construction programme. The objective is not arbitrary preference but recognition that time itself is now part of the injustice.

This principle must be built on defined, published criteria rather than discretion, and should be signed off by legal review before implementation. An allocation preference that cannot withstand a challenge from another lawful claimant would undermine the programme it is meant to protect.

16

Death Must Not End the Claim

A claim should not be lost because the state took so long that the claimant died waiting.

Where rights lawfully pass to qualifying descendants, the administrative process should continue without unnecessary interruption. Government should proactively identify deceased claimants and unresolved succession matters so that continuity, not another queue, is the default.

PART FOUR

A Living, Funded Neighbourhood

17

Build a Community, Not a Housing Estate

District Six contained schools, churches, mosques, shops and public life. It was not only residential.

The rebuilt District Six should support a mixture of residential, cultural, civic and economic uses. Ground floors should create opportunities for shops, services and small businesses; public spaces should be designed for people, not left as residual space between buildings. The objective is a neighbourhood with life in it.

18

Distributing Access to the City

Apartheid did not only distribute land unfairly. It distributed access to opportunity unfairly.

Restitution requires more than returning people to a geographical location. It requires restoring meaningful access to the city. District Six must be connected to the CBD, public transport, education, health services and employment. A house that leaves a family economically isolated would represent only partial restitution.

19

An Economic District Six

The construction programme itself should create economic opportunity, and the finished neighbourhood must create more.

Local procurement and labour targets should be set and published, with apprenticeship and skills development requirements attached to construction contracts. Small businesses within the development should have access to affordable commercial space, business development support and links to the City's wider economic programmes.

20

A District Six Maintenance Charter

A beautifully rebuilt District Six that deteriorates through neglect would be another form of institutional failure.

The City should establish a long-term maintenance charter in which every street, public space, stormwater facility and public facility has a responsible municipal unit, published maintenance schedules, and defect response times. Reconstruction must include stewardship, not just completion.

21

Funding the Completion

No government should announce a completion date before it can demonstrate how that date will be financed.

Funding uncertainty has repeatedly undermined the programme. As of March 2025, the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development itself estimated the cost of completing the remaining housing at roughly R2.4 billion, while R684 million had been allocated to the redevelopment overall and only R280 million of that remained available. SDP believes the complete remaining programme, covering housing, infrastructure, professional services, escalation, contingencies, public realm and project management, should be costed as a single package and the funding envelope secured against a realistic construction programme, not negotiated phase by phase.

22

Funding Strategy and Fiscal Responsibility

Identifying the funding gap is not enough. Government must explain how it will be closed.

National government should establish a ring-fenced District Six allocation within the Human Settlements budget, protected from annual reallocation for the full duration of construction. The City of Cape Town should commit and publish a defined infrastructure contribution from its capital budget. The Western Cape Government should explore conditional grants and technical support mechanisms, and value-capture mechanisms, such as commercial development within or adjacent to District Six cross-subsidising restitution housing, should be considered where appropriate.

District Six competes with other national priorities for funding. The case for ring-fenced treatment rests on the unique historical obligation the state has already accepted, and on the existing 2018 court finding that the state is currently in breach of that obligation.

23

A Single Programme Budget

This makes it harder for cost overruns in one component to quietly consume funds meant for another.

The budget should distinguish clearly between land and restitution costs, housing construction, municipal infrastructure, professional services, heritage work, public realm, community facilities, project management, maintenance and contingency, and should be published in that form.

Value for Money

The cheapest tender is not necessarily the cheapest project.

Phase Three is a warning: the original contractor left the project half-completed, a second contractor had to be appointed to rectify defects and finish the work at significantly higher cost, and the City raised safety and compliance concerns before occupation. Contractor capability must be assessed rigorously, quality assured throughout construction, and defects identified before handover. District Six cannot afford another cycle of poor contracting followed by expensive remediation.

PART FIVE

Government, Law and Delivery

The City's Role and Delivery Partnership

The City should stop asking whether District Six is technically its project, and ask what it can do to make it succeed.

National government leads restitution, but the City controls or influences many of the conditions that determine whether a redevelopment succeeds: planning, municipal engineering, infrastructure coordination and public realm investment. The City should offer national government a formal delivery partnership, committing a dedicated technical team subject to Council approval, identifying the municipal decisions required for every construction package, and publishing its own quantified financial contribution so the Compact cannot become a mechanism for claiming credit without committing resources.

No More Administrative Silos

A delay in one system must immediately appear as a risk in the others.

Planning cannot operate independently of engineering; engineering cannot operate independently of housing; housing cannot operate independently of beneficiary allocation. The Delivery Office must maintain one integrated programme in which a delay anywhere is visible everywhere.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Act within the law while using the law, including an existing court order, to accelerate delivery.

The Compact and Delivery Office must operate within the Restitution of Land Rights Act, the Municipal Systems Act, the Municipal Finance Management Act and applicable procurement law. SDP does not propose legislative amendment as a precondition for action, but government should identify any provisions that constrain this approach and any authorisations required. Because the 2018 Land Claims Court order already found the state in breach of its constitutional duty, the Compact should be structured as the state's own compliance response to that order, giving it a legal foundation beyond a voluntary intergovernmental agreement.

PART SIX

Timeline and Accountability

The 90-Day Reset and 180-Day Delivery Test

The public should never again discover years later that a project had quietly been waiting for an approval nobody had identified.

Within 90 days of adoption, government should complete a District Six Reset establishing the definitive beneficiary baseline, the remaining housing requirement, the status of every site, the infrastructure and heritage constraints, the funding gap and the critical path, with every unresolved issue given an owner and a deadline. Within 180 days, every remaining housing package should have a confirmed design, site, infrastructure plan, procurement route, budget, responsible institution and target construction date, with reasons published wherever any of these remain unresolved.

The Delivery Window

A false deadline is not accountability. A credible one, backed by money and contracts, is.

Government has previously worked towards completing the remaining redevelopment by 2028, the same government that, in 2022, promised 954 homes by 2025 and did not begin construction. SDP will judge the 2028 target not by whether it appears in a document, but by whether the programme has a funded, contracted and independently monitored pathway to completion. If 2028 remains achievable, government must demonstrate how; if not, it must say so honestly and publish a revised programme.

30

Public Accountability and Independent Oversight

The objective is to make it difficult for failure to remain invisible.

Every quarter, the public should receive a District Six Delivery Report containing facts, not speeches: homes completed, occupied, under construction and outstanding; infrastructure completed and outstanding; money budgeted and spent; contracts awarded and delayed; beneficiary matters resolved and outstanding; and material risks, with every deviation from the programme explained. The Auditor-General, parliamentary and municipal oversight structures should retain their constitutional roles, supplemented by a periodic independent technical review of progress, quality, expenditure and risk.

PART SEVEN

Addressing the Critics

31

Anticipated Objections

The question is whether politics serves delivery or delay.

"The City should stay out of a national responsibility." The City controls planning, infrastructure and municipal services that the programme cannot succeed without. Non-involvement has already been tried; it produced 27 years of fragmented delivery.

"The Compact is just another layer of bureaucracy." South Africa has stood up delivery units before, war rooms and Operation Phakisa-style structures among them, with a mixed record, and that history is a fair challenge to this proposal. The difference SDP proposes is specific, not rhetorical: a binding escalation timeline with named political principals at each step, a dispute mechanism anchored in an

existing court order rather than a fresh political undertaking, and a public dashboard that makes stalling visible in real time rather than at the next parliamentary briefing.

"The 918 dashboard will create unrealistic expectations." Expectations already exist, set by three decades of missed deadlines. The dashboard does not create them; it makes progress, or its absence, visible.

"This politicises a sensitive restitution process." Restitution is inherently political. It was created by a political decision to dispossess and must be reversed by a political decision to restore.

"South Africa cannot afford this now." The estimated R2.4 billion completion cost is real and should be stated plainly, not obscured. The case for funding it now rests on the fact that a court has already found the state in breach of a constitutional duty, so this is not a discretionary spending choice competing with other priorities on equal footing.

PART EIGHT

The Bigger Picture

32

The Broader Question of Land

Who gets to live in the city?

Cape Town has some of the country's most valuable urban land alongside deep housing need. The geography of apartheid did not disappear in 1994; it remains visible in where people live, how far they travel, and how easily they can access opportunity. District Six sits at the intersection of restitution and spatial transformation. It demonstrates what happens when people are deliberately removed from the economic heart of a city, and it should demonstrate what happens when a democratic city deliberately brings them back.

33

From Restitution to Spatial Justice

The purpose is not to construct a museum. It is to create a living community.

District Six cannot be frozen in 1966, since the city, the economy, transport and the population have all changed. The purpose of restitution is to create a living community in which the descendants of the dispossessed can once again belong, not to recreate the past literally.

34

The Principle of Dignified Return

A house is the minimum. A dignified return requires more.

Dignified return requires safety, reliable water, sanitation, electricity, functioning streets, public transport, schools, economic opportunity, public spaces and a maintained neighbourhood. Most importantly, it requires the knowledge that government has returned people not simply to a building, but to the city.

35

District Six as a National Model

If South Africa can complete District Six credibly, that model can inform every other urban restitution project.

South Africa has many communities affected by forced removals. District Six is particularly important because the original neighbourhood remains substantially identifiable and the restitution process has been active for decades. Failure here teaches the opposite lesson, that recognising an injustice does not necessarily mean repairing it.

PART NINE

Risk, Stakeholders and Monitoring

36

Risk Management

The Delivery Office should maintain a live risk register and report material risks publicly each quarter.

Risk	Description	Mitigation
Construction	Contractor failure, defects, cost escalation	Rigorous contractor assessment, ongoing quality assurance
Beneficiary	Succession disputes, documentation gaps	Parallel beneficiary resolution, clear claim categorisation
Institutional	Intergovernmental deadlock	Binding escalation mechanism (§6)
Funding	Budget shortfalls, competing priorities	Ring-fenced, published funding envelope
Heritage	Archaeological discoveries, preservation demands	Early assessment, predefined protocols

37

Stakeholder Engagement and Beneficiary Communication

No beneficiary should learn about programme developments from the media before hearing it from government.

Key stakeholders include national Human Settlements, Public Works and Treasury; the Western Cape's provincial departments; the City's planning, transport, water and electricity functions; claimant structures including the District Six Beneficiary and Redevelopment Trust; heritage authorities including the South African Heritage Resources Agency; and surrounding communities in Woodstock and Salt River. A dedicated communication function should provide regular, multi-channel, multi-language updates to beneficiaries on programme and individual claim status.

38

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress must be measured against defined indicators, not announcements.

Primary indicators should include homes completed and allocated, beneficiaries moved from waiting to housed, and time from verified claim to key handover. Secondary indicators should include infrastructure completion, beneficiary satisfaction, construction quality and cost per unit, published quarterly, with an independent evaluation at the programme's mid-point and again at completion.

The SDP Commitment

39

SDP's Delivery Principle

The lesson is not that government needs another promise. It needs a delivery system.

Service Delivery Party believes government should be judged by the distance between promise and outcome. District Six makes that principle painfully visible: the promise was made, the land was protected, claims were lodged, plans were developed, committees were established, money was allocated, houses were eventually built, and hundreds of families remain waiting.

40

The Final Objective

Not 918 houses. Zero outstanding restitution households.

Not a completed construction contract, but a functioning neighbourhood. Not merely the expenditure of billions of rand, but the restoration of lives disrupted by the deliberate action of the state. Not the completion of another government programme, but the completion of an unfinished democratic obligation.

41

The SDP Commitment

The five Ds: Restitution, Development, Distribution, Delivery, Dignity.

Restitution. Those dispossessed must be enabled to return wherever the lawful settlement provides for it. **Development.** Homes must be delivered alongside the infrastructure, services and economic opportunity required for a functioning community. **Distribution.** The benefits of central urban land must not be confined to those who can afford them. **Delivery.** Government must operate through one integrated programme with clear responsibilities, deadlines, budgets and public reporting. **Dignity.** Every returning family must receive more than a house. They must receive the foundations of a safe, connected and sustainable life.

"South Africa cannot change what happened to District Six. It can decide what happens next."

CONCLUSION

Finish What Was Started

District Six has become a measure of time. The people who lodged claims in 1998 are now elderly; some have died; some will never walk through the streets they were promised they could return to. That should disturb us, not because government has failed to build quickly enough, but because the passage of time has changed the meaning of the promise. Every year of delay transfers the possibility of restitution from one generation to the next.

District Six should become a national delivery priority. Not another committee. Not another consultation. Not another announcement. A programme, a budget, a timetable, a dashboard, a responsible person for every outstanding decision, a home for every qualifying beneficiary, a neighbourhood built around those homes, and a city that understands restitution is not charity, but the repair of an injustice.

South Africa cannot change what happened to District Six. It can decide what happens next. Service Delivery Party believes the answer should be clear: build it, connect it, populate it, maintain it, finish it, then make sure that the people once driven out of the city finally have a permanent place within it.