Below we will present some background information that is important for the project and some relevant history of Port Elizabeth and South Africa

The development of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality

Port Elizabeth is located within Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) in the Eastern Cape Province. The city is located in Algoa Bay, and is one of the major seaports in South Africa. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality was formed in 2001 by joining Port Elizabeth with the neighbouring towns of Uitenhage and Despatch and the surrounding agricultural areas. The metropolitan area has today an estimated population of 1.3 million. (NMMM, 2005b) The city of Port Elizabeth has about 800 000 citizens and is the fourth biggest city in South Africa. The city was founded in 1820 and became an important port in the Cape due to the railway connection to Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province. The national route N2 from Cape Town to Johannesburg runs through the city and gives Port Elizabeth good access to communications.

The development in the metropolitan area is spreading from the central city area in a north-west direction towards Uitenhage. The development to the north-west focuses on Standford Road and the MR448 (the main road from Bloemendal to Uitenhage). Development in this direction is in the process of infilling and considerable capacity still exists for further infill on open land between Uitenhage, Despatch and Port Elizabeth. Approximately 15-20% of the metropolitan area can be considered to be developed. The remaining areas are undeveloped and consist mostly of agricultural land. (NMMM, 2005c) The project area, Bloemendal, is one of the areas that will be developed.

Bloemendal is located about 26 km North West from the city centre of Port Elizabeth and 15 km from Uitenhage city centre. Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth are both growing and Bloemendal is situated in between both cities where they in the nearest future will connect to each other. Bloemendal is therefore in a strategic place for becoming a small central cluster in between instead of a suburb in the outskirts of Port Elizabeth. Bloemendal has today a population of approximately 17 000 people. With only 3 people/household and single family houses the area is a low density area. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality plans to accommodate 100 000 people in the future. (NMMM, 2005a)

Urbanisation is an essential issue for the planning work in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality. Because of the migration, Nelson Mandela Met-
BACKGROUND

Bloemendal’s location in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality
Planning in South Africa

South Africa is today classified as a middle income country according to Swedish international development cooperation agency. The country is highly developed in terms of good infrastructure, valuable nature resources and opportunities for tourism. But there is only a minority of the 45 million citizens that live by the standards that would be expected with these resources. The gap between rich and poor is huge. South Africa is a spatially segregated country; cities are often divided in high cost, medium cost and low cost areas. This is partly because of the town planning during the apartheid system. Laws implemented during the apartheid system severely affected the town planning and increased the physical segregation between blacks, coloured, Asians and whites. (Sida, 2005c)

Planning during apartheid
Between 1948 and 1994 the white minority pursued the policy of apartheid, a policy of racial segregation. It divided the population into groups according to the colour of the skin. This led to an inconceivable oppression of the black population and has left deep scars throughout the South African society. (Sida: 2005c). The different groups were referred to different residential areas. Even before apartheid there were laws that laid the foundation for the physical segregation. Black people had limited access to lease or own land. The white minority controlled the best rural land and most of the urban areas.

Townships emerged when former mixed areas were demolished and new areas was planned and built in order for the white to control the black, coloured and Asian inhabitants. People in the townships were used as labour reservoirs to uphold the economy in the white society. The townships were often placed far from the city centre and large areas were left open in between, so called buffer zones. The buffer zones made it possible for the white minority to control the movements of the black population. As a result of the over population informal settlements appeared in the outskirts of the township. After the end of apartheid system the physical segregation is still visible in the South African society. (Mochaki, 1995)

Planning after apartheid
The apartheid system no longer exists but the marks it made in the South African society still remains both physically and socially. Planning is now focused on integrating the segregated cities.

In 1994, the first democratic election took place in South Africa when African National Congress (ANC) came into power. ANC launched The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), an integrated socio-economic policy framework which is now the policy for the government. The focus of the framework is to provide basic needs like education, health, employment and housing as well as clean water and sanitation. (Knight, 2001)

Even though the housing standard has increased the last ten years the backlog of housing is still high. Many people still live in informal houses that are overcrowded. The government has made great strides in providing housing and basic services such as electricity and water to the people of South Africa. Much remains to be done to overcome the housing backlog and make necessary facilities available. (Sida, 2005c)
IMPORTANT CONCEPTS
This project will focus on three concepts that we find important to take into consideration during the work with spatial development. The concepts are high density, public space and safety. Below we will describe these concepts in theoretical terms. Together with other background information and the analyses this will be a base in our plan proposal.

High density

High density urban development is a central principle of growth used by cities all around the world. Compact urban development contributes to sustainability and use of spaces is one of the most important issues when addressing sustainability. Land use planning is therefore an important element to this. The compact city has become a strategy to reduce the spread of low density areas and to preserve the countryside.

Low density contributes to urban sprawl and influences negatively the cost effective provision of services and do not support an efficient use of urban infrastructure.

To get a more sustainable community it is considered crucial to minimise urban sprawl by new development being focused on high density. High density development supports a more efficient land use and contributes to social and commercial services and a more efficient infrastructure. The environment gets more urbanised and it allows work and service close to where people live. This gives a benefit of reduced travel demands. High density would also make it possible to achieve an efficient public transport and through that accomplish accessibility to work, service and other facilities in longer distance.

Planning for high density should be in zones along activity corridors and transport routes, in and close to community nodes, commercial and social service centres and employment areas. In already built-up areas increased densities can be achieved through infilling and redevelopment. (NMMP 2005d)

High density can be accomplished through planning for smaller sites and by allowing a higher number of houses in the same area. The negatives are that this takes away a lot of the advantages about living in single family houses; for example being able to grow vegetables or park the car in the front of the house. Another way of increasing the density is to build multi family houses. This makes it possible to fit in many households on a relatively small area. But it is not always a good solution to build in several stories. The big scale can be impersonal and not always be suitable with the surroundings. Semi detached houses, town houses and row houses are also means to achieve high density. These types of houses are a combination of the two earlier mentioned house types.

Building high density areas even if there is much space available can be motivated by economic reasons. Roads, health care and public transport are expensive and there need to be many people to share them. Living in high density areas can give other benefits than having an own site around the house. In central areas people have nearness to commerce and transportation nodes. It is especially important for the low income groups that do not have a car to rely on.

Public space

Public space is places in the city where people can meet, that are open for every one and no one can be excluded because of economic reasons or social conditions.

The space is generally divided into public and private. Public space is streets, squares and parks. Private space is the own home. It is also possible to add two more subtitles; semi-public and semi-private space. Semi-public space can be a park or other site within a block to be used by the block inhabitants but is open for everyone who wants to be there. A semi-private space can be a yard belonging to a group of houses. It is possible to enter if the person entering has a reason for doing so, that they have an errand into one of the houses. It is a quality to have all the four types of spaces in an area. Their different functions and environments encourage the social life. (Gehl, 2001)
According to Gehl (2001) it is good to divide residential areas into sub areas, smaller defined units to make a gradual transition between the private and the public space. Having spaces next to the resident that is intimate and familiar creates a sense of that place belonging to the dwelling. This makes it possible to know people in the area better and a greater use of public spaces; children may play outside in an earlier age than otherwise because the parents can see their children from the house. The sense of the outdoor spaces belonging to the residence creates a greater degree of surveillance and a collective responsibility for the space. This is a good protection against vandalism and crime in the public spaces.

Dividing the area into sub areas is also good for the orientation; a small area often has a stronger identity and an own character. The sense of togetherness is important for when mutual problems have to be solved; small units are quicker and more effective to organise themselves. (Gehl, 2001)

What is good quality in a public place? Most important is the people; people like to see other people. What will appeal the people then? If they are just passing by they will not spend much time in the public place, but if it is possible to make them hold up for a while and spend some time there more people will do the same thing. Things to make this happen are first of all possibilities to sit down, preferably with the back free and facing some sort of an activity. It does not have to be an advanced activity, it can be people passing by on their way to the store. It also works the other way around; the route to the store and other necessary shores can feel long and boring, but if there are several alternative ways to get to the store and if there are activities along the way where one could hold up for a while talk to a friend and see other people, the trip would at once be more enjoyable. (Gehl, 2001)

An old Scandinavian proverb is that “people come where people are”. Activity on a site can be an attraction; people generally go where there are other people. Even the small children show this behaviour when they much rather play around the adults or their friends than where there are only toys. This is also very obvious in the residential areas; if given the choice to either sit down in the backyard or in the front of the house where it is possible to view the activities in the street, many choose to sit in the front. (Gehl, 2001)

In urban public places it is important to give people the opportunity to sit and look at the public life just like when they sit in their own semi private lawn. Benches that are placed in a way that make this possible are more frequently used than other benches.

It is necessary for public places to be accessible otherwise they are not used in the extent they could be used. For example if a public space is in the back of the house it is important that it is accessible from the back of the apartment and not that it is necessary to go around the house. Levels are also important, if the windows or the door is high up it decreases the communication between the indoor and the public place. (Gehl, 2001)

The scale of the area is an important factor in the accessibility. In a big scale city the distances are long and the speed is often higher because of the cars. In a big scale town the environment with wide streets high buildings and large spaces often feels impersonal and cold but in a smaller scale town where the houses are lower and the streets are narrower; the environment often feels close and warm. (Gehl, 2001)

Gehl’s opinions are based on Scandinavian contexts but we believe they are applicable in South African societies like Bloemendal as well.

**Safety**

Nice physical environments are important for people to feel safe among other important aspects like social security, policemen patrolling, and crime preventive measurements. Our challenge in this project is what physical measurements we can plan for to prevent people to feel insecure. But we want to point out that they are just a part of the solution and other measurements have to be taken as well.

The physical design of the environment has a big impact on how people feel. To go outside at night and feel safe is of great value. When we refer to safety it is about how people experience their environment; what makes people feel secure. It is not about actual things that happen on specific places. It is the feeling of insecurity we want to decrease. If a person thinks that a place is scary that person will not visit that area regardless of what the statistics say. The issues relating to safety in the physical environment need to be taken into account in community planning.

A city with life is a safe city. Safe cities rely on public life; the more people stay in the public space the safer the city becomes. To create a lively city it is important to provide places for people to meet and allow for different social groups to interact. It is good to create opportunities for recreational activities and entertainment. Public spaces need to be improved so that they will be used for other purposes. For example to create playgrounds for both the younger and older children and also places where parents can sit down and watch their children play.
The structure of the built environment, especially the street net system, has a great impact on how people move in the area. Carina Listerborn (2000) discusses the difference between a grid plan and a tree structure plan. The grid plan has a high amount of people and cars. It is easy to orientate in this structure and because of the many crossings it gives opportunities for meetings between people. Smaller blocks in the structure give shorter streets and more crossings. When there are many alternative ways to go to a place, people feel safer because they are in control of which way they take. The tree structure plan is not as easy to orientate oneself in, it often has streets that end with a cul-de-sac and it is easy to be lost in this system. This makes areas with tree plan patterns feel more confusing and it is easier to feel unsafe. But they can be improved by having lot of pedestrian routes between the roads to allow for the pedestrians to move around with many alternatives.

In the planning process it is important to think about how places are experienced in daylight and how they change during night. People may choose a way that is nice and pleasant during day but it may be dark and scary at night and therefore they will choose another way if possible during night time. Alternative ways of moving are important in the physical structure of the city, people need to have a choice. A way, although longer, that is more illuminated is for most people the obvious choice. (Listerborn, 2000) Light is important for the experience of the physical environment. Bad lightning in combination with isolated places with no sightlines and places where people can not be seen makes the environment unpleasant and insecure.

Creating safe cities can be a conflict with other issues, such as the desire to design a pleasant or interesting environment. Green spaces and trees are important elements in the design of the urban environment. They are wanted but they can also make people feel unsafe, especially during night when they make a place difficult to overview. To make people feel safe they need to have a good overview of the environment. Trees have many advantages so there is no option to not have trees in the city. What is important is to work with the vegetation in the area so people can feel safe even if there are trees; avoid low bushes and putting trees in a way so that they hide things.

The experience of the environment is individual; places that feel unsafe for some people may feel safe for others. In big open spaces people can feel alone and exposed, in closer spaces people can feel trapped. Places where there are much people or places that are empty can both feel scary but generally it feels safer to walk down a street where there are other people than an empty alley. Both open and closed spaces can be frightening; it all comes down to the control people have over their own way of moving and the possibility to escape if something is threatening. (Listerborn 2000)