

## CITIES ALLIANCE NEWS - November 2009

Alexandra Renewal Project wins prestigious UN award



The Alexandra landscape is transformed as more homes are built. © Copyright Alexandra Renewal Project.

The **Alexandra Renewal Project** (ARP) in South Africa has been awarded the **United Nations Scroll of Honour** award at the World Habitat Day 2009 held in Washington, D.C.

The ARP was initiated in 2001 as a regeneration project of the urban township north of Johannesburg. The project is a key component of the South African government's approach to addressing urbanisation and housing challenges and comprises the integrated development of an area grappling with economic, social, and physical challenges. To date, the ARP has seen over 7,000 families relocated from the banks of Jukskei – a polluted local river - to settlements where living conditions are better.

As a direct result of ARP, almost three quarters of the residents now have access to water and sanitation and 88 percent enjoy safe electricity, a significant achievement in a place once referred to as "Dark City".

Julian Baskin, who has since joined the Cities Alliance as a Sr. Urban Specialist, was the Chief Executive Officer of the ARP from 2005-2008. "The success of the ARP is in part due to the alignment of interest between the national, provincial, and local government levels," Baskin said.

The project saw the development of new housing, new schools and the refurbishment of many other facilities. New health clinics improved residents' access to healthcare while garbage collection was improved through widely distributed refuse bins. Residents have also found employment on many ARP-related construction sites.

"Many commendable candidates were considered for this award. It was our unanimous opinion that the Alexandra Renewal Project should receive the award this year for its outstanding efforts in upgrading the housing, social and physical infrastructure of the Alexandra neighbourhood and improving the living conditions for its residents," said UN HABITAT in a statement.

*The United Nations Scroll of Honour awards have been given out by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHSP) since 1989. Each year, the award acknowledges initiatives that make remarkable contributions in various fields related to human habitats. It is currently regarded as the most prestigious human settlements award in the world.*