

Second phase of Better Living Challenge to focus on upgrading informal homes

The Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) recently launched the second iteration of the Better Living Challenge (BLC) at the Nyanga Arts Development Centre in the Western Cape.



Better Living Challenge phase two launch

The project aims to surface local innovative solutions to pressing or persistent socio-economic challenges. The second phase, funded by the Western Cape Department of Human Settlements and Department of Economic Development and Tourism, runs until 2019 and focuses on finding solutions to incremental upgrading.

The first phase of the BLC consisted of an in-depth, design-led research covering consumer needs, access to finance, case studies and challenge methodology.

According to Kelly Arendse, the BLC project manager, the researchers put considerable effort into ensuring that the findings correctly reflected the real challenges and needs of those living in informal dwellings in the greater Cape Town area. To effect systemic and long-term change, with homeowners being key agents and drivers of change, four key themes emerged from the research:

1. The need for correct and accessible information;
2. The need for skills development and capacity building;
3. The need to understand the upgrading process; and
4. The importance of place-making.

Using the findings, the BLC has been designed as a 'cooperative challenge' to explore ways of supporting incremental home upgrades – it emphasises cooperation, collaboration and participation. It will bring together people from diverse disciplines – in a range of activities – to surface existing and discover new innovative solutions.

Co-design workshops

The first of these activities began recently with a series of design-build workshops that culminated in the construction of a structure built from recycled materials in Nyanga. Future events will include co-design workshops and hack days, design-build labs and business modelling, entrepreneurial development and enterprise support programmes. Incubated projects, toolkits, product showcases, real case studies and other outputs will emerge throughout the process, presenting feasible

responses to the needs of residents in informal settlements. This body of knowledge will be made widely available to anyone involved in the process of upgrading informal housing.

"We have a backlog of over 500,000 and the department can only provide around 18,000 human settlement opportunities a year. We therefore need to find creative and innovative solutions to assist with the housing challenge," says Thando Mguli, head of the Western Cape Department of Human Settlements.

"People in townships always find innovative solutions to everyday challenges. The Better Living Challenge provides us with an opportunity to create innovative and affordable solutions for our people in informal areas. With BLC, government moves from creative ideas to implementation. We want to see communities taking a leading role in their living environments – government will provide services and infrastructure. The citizens' role is to use and convert infrastructure into a home."

For more information, go to www.betterlivingchallenge.co.za.

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