

# BACKYARD HOUSING

AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE **SOLUTION** TO  
SOUTH AFRICA'S HOUSING CRISIS



Backyard Matters is a partnership initiative between the Development Action Group (DAG) and Isandla Institute. The project recognises that backyard housing is a community-driven response to housing shortages for many who fall through the cracks of state programming and unaffordable private rentals. Backyard housing, however, remains a neglected and sometimes invisible sector. The project is aimed at strengthening the backyard rental market and contributing towards well-managed, quality rental stock that provides affordable, dignified and safe housing solutions in thriving neighbourhoods. The project thus advocates for inclusive policy and programming that embraces the voice, needs and agency of backyard residents and landlords as an integral part of the municipal community. Backyard Matters is funded by Comic Relief.



This publication is based on the animation titled 'Backyard housing: an essential part of the solution to South Africa's housing crisis'



The animation is a synopsis of the joint civil society submission titled 'Backyard Housing - An essential part of the solution to South Africa's housing crisis- A submission into the proposed new Human Settlements Policy and Human Settlements Bill' (2022)

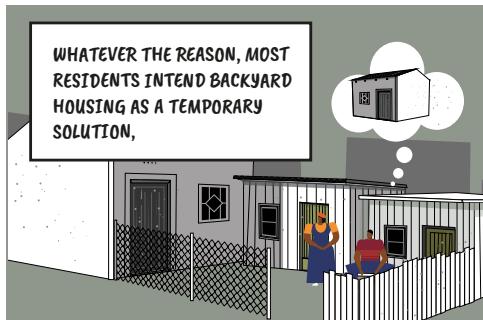
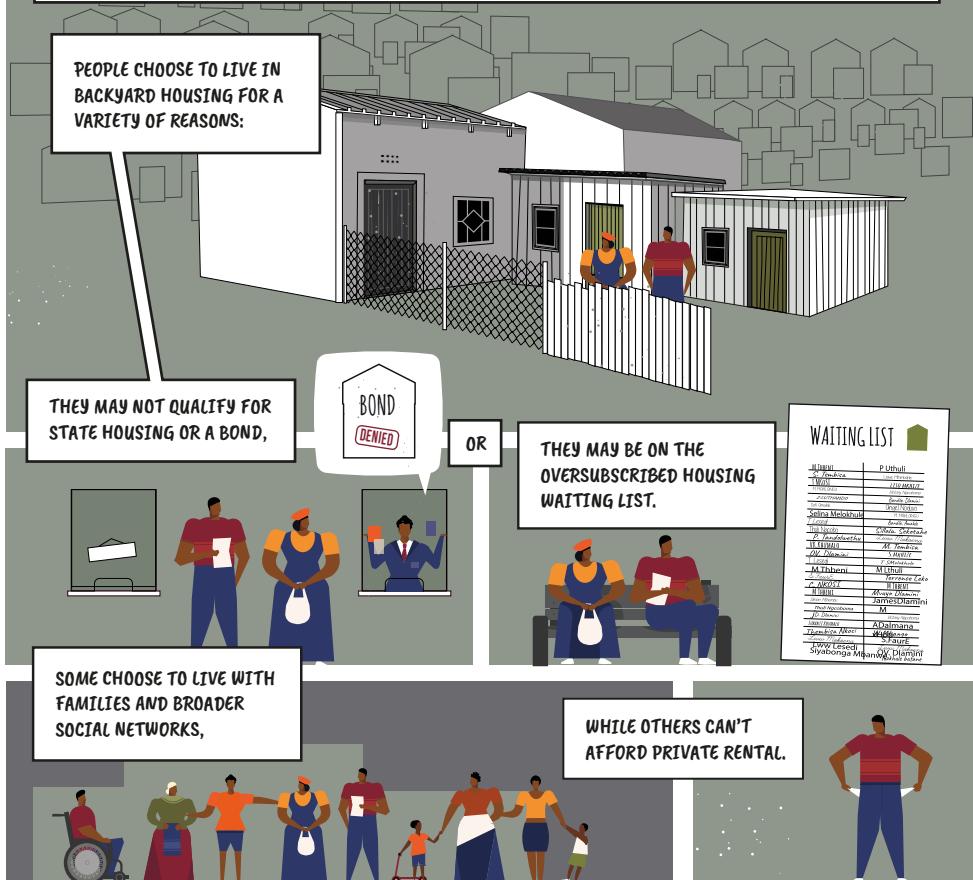


For further resources visit:  
<https://isandla.org.za/en/resources>

Cover image: Isandla Institute/Anotherlove Productions

Isandla Institute, 2023  
Email: [admin@isandla.org.za](mailto:admin@isandla.org.za)  
[www.isandla.org.za](http://www.isandla.org.za)

AS MANY AS 1 IN 7 URBAN HOUSEHOLDS LIVE IN BACKYARD STRUCTURES, MANY OF WHICH ARE SUBSTANDARD. THE BACKYARD HOUSING SECTOR IS ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING HOUSING SECTORS IN SOUTH AFRICA. YET, IT FUNCTIONS LARGELY WITHOUT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OR INTERVENTION.



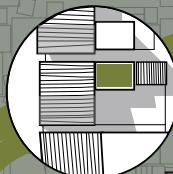
POOR HOUSING, LACK OF BASIC SERVICES, RISK OF EVICTION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS CAN CREATE A DIFFICULT LIVING ENVIRONMENT.

## DIFFICULT LIVING ENVIRONMENT



BACKYARD HOUSING IS NOT A PERFECT SOLUTION, BUT IT IS OFTEN CLOSER TO OPPORTUNITIES AND AMENITIES,

## NOT A PERFECT SOLUTION



IS AFFORDABLE FOR TENANTS AND PROVIDES FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LANDLORDS.

TO HELP OVERCOME THE URBAN HOUSING CRISIS, WE MUST IMPROVE BACKYARD HOUSING. TO DO THIS, FOUR AREAS OF INTERVENTION ARE CRITICAL:

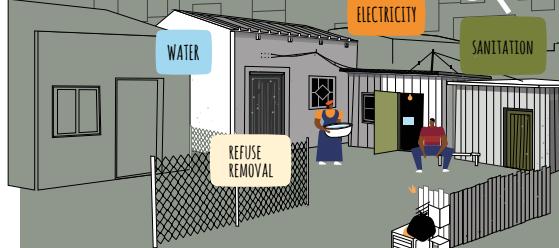
## FIRST: ENSURE ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES



BACKYARD RESIDENTS COMMONLY ACCESS BASIC SERVICES LIKE WATER, ELECTRICITY, SANITATION AND REFUSE REMOVAL VIA THE MAIN HOUSE.

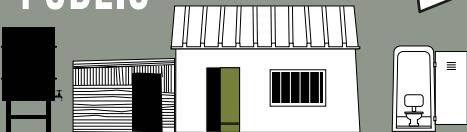
MUNICIPALITIES OFTEN OVERLOOK BACKYARD RESIDENTS WHEN THEY ALLOCATE FREE BASIC SERVICES

AND DISPUTES ABOUT USAGE FREQUENTLY OCCUR.



CERTAIN MUNICIPALITIES ONLY PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE TO BACKYARD RESIDENTS LIVING ON PUBLIC LAND, EXCLUDING THOSE LIVING ON PRIVATE LAND.

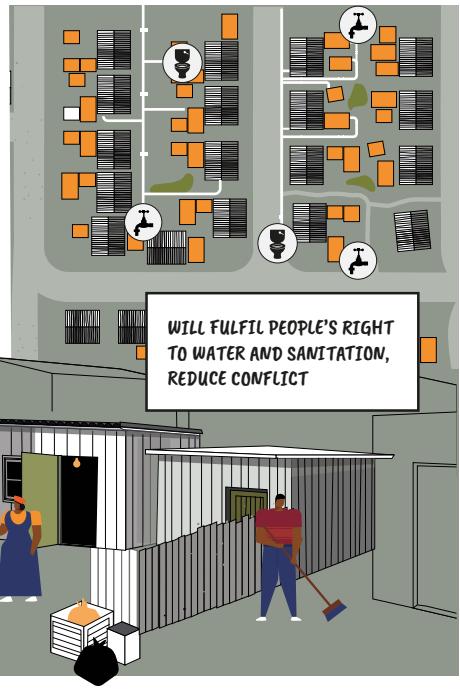
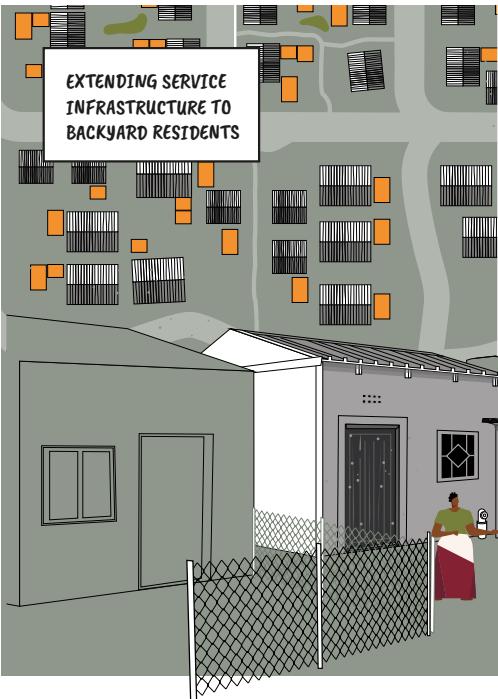
PUBLIC



PRIVATE



EXTENDING SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE TO BACKYARD RESIDENTS



AND ENABLE DIGNITY.

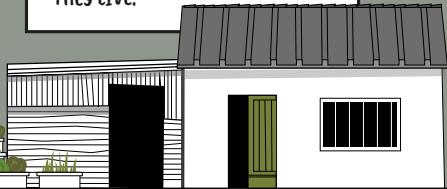
DIGNITY



## TITLE DEEDS

### SECOND: STRENGTHEN TENURE SECURITY

DESPITE NOT HAVING A LEASE AGREEMENT, MOST BACKYARD RESIDENTS FEEL SECURE WHERE THEY LIVE.

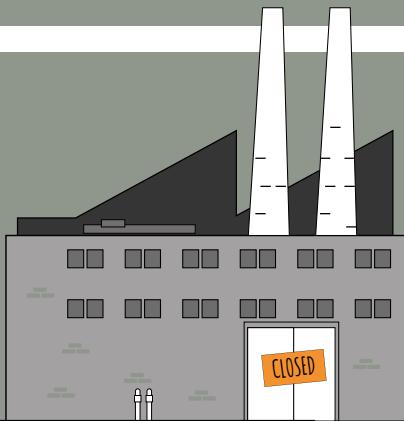


LEASE AGREEMENT

BUT THIS CAN CHANGE IF THEY FACE ECONOMIC HARSHIPS.

SPAZA

CLOSED



SOME BACKYARD RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN UNFAIRLY EVICTED.

UNFAIRLY  
EVICTED



WITHOUT ALTERNATIVE HOUSING OPTIONS, HOUSING INSECURITY AND EVICTIONS OFTEN RESULT



IN LAND OCCUPATIONS.



## TO STRENGTHEN TENURE SECURITY THE FOCUS SHOULD BE TO:

PROVIDE RIGHTS EDUCATION  
TO BACKYARD RESIDENTS  
AND LANDLORDS;

PROPOSE WRITTEN LEASE  
AGREEMENTS TO PROTECT ALL  
PARTIES;

TENURE  
SECURITY



HELP RESOLVE DISPUTES  
BY, AMONGST OTHERS,  
FACILITATING ACCESS TO  
HOUSING TRIBUNALS;

AND ISSUE TITLE DEEDS TO  
LANDOWNERS TO ENABLE  
THEM TO IMPROVE  
BACKYARD STRUCTURES.

STRENGTHENING TENURE  
SECURITY IS BETTER THAN  
DEALING WITH THE COSTS OF  
EVICTIONS, HOMELESSNESS  
AND LAND OCCUPATIONS.



TENURE  
SECURITY

EVICTION

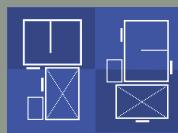


## THIRD: ENABLE THE RIGHT TO SELF-BUILD

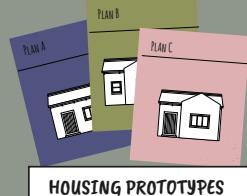
TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF  
BACKYARD STRUCTURES,  
LANDLORDS NEED SUPPORT.  
THIS CAN INCLUDE:



QUALITY

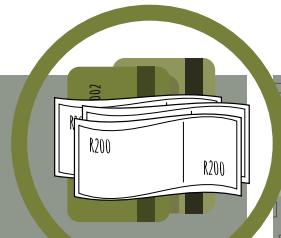


BUILDING PLANS

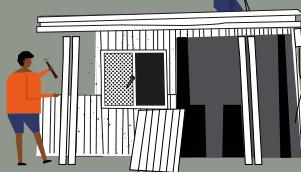


HOUSING PROTOTYPES

ASSISTING LANDLORDS TO COMPLY WITH BUILDING STANDARDS, AND ACCESS TO FINANCE.



BY ESTABLISHING HOUSING SUPPORT CENTRES IN COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENT CAN ENABLE THE RIGHT TO HOUSING THROUGH SELF-BUILD.



## FOURTH: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



BACKYARD RESIDENTS ARE CONCERNED WITH CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN AREAS WHERE THEY LIVE.

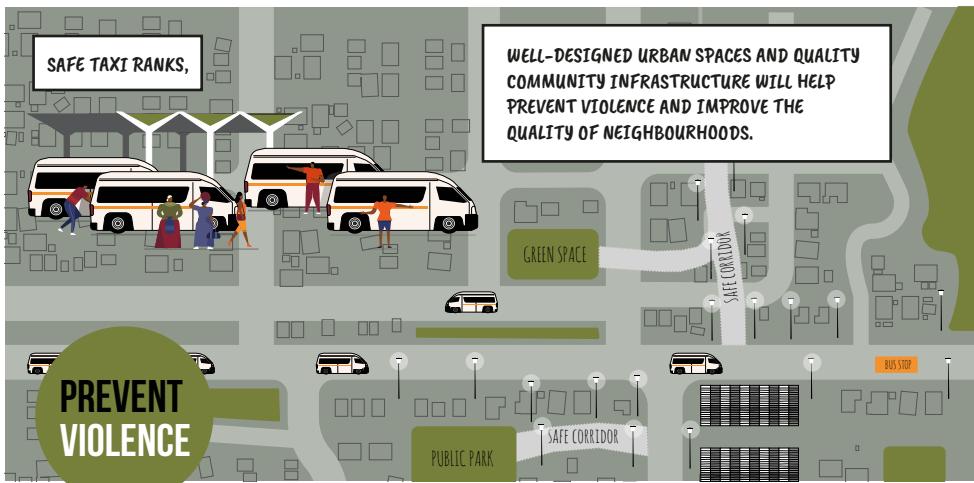
IN ADDITION TO POLICING, STREET-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS LIKE WELL-LIT WALKWAYS,



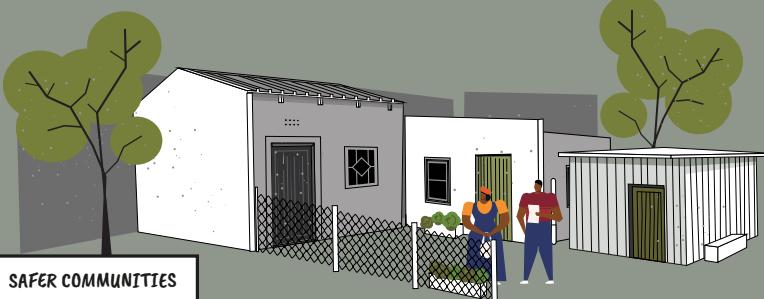
SAFE TAXI RANKS,

WELL-DESIGNED URBAN SPACES AND QUALITY COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE WILL HELP PREVENT VIOLENCE AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF NEIGHBOURHOODS.

PREVENT VIOLENCE



THESE FOUR INTERVENTIONS CAN LEAD TO MORE DIGNIFIED HOUSING FOR URBAN RESIDENTS,



AND GREATER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN LOW-INCOME NEIGHBOURHOODS WHILE CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS URBAN DENSIFICATION.



**ISN'T THIS A FUTURE  
WORTH BUILDING!**



The joint civil society submission 'Backyard Housing - An essential part of the solution to South Africa's housing crisis - A submission into the proposed new Human Settlements Policy and Human Settlements Bill' (2022) was produced by Isandla Institute and endorsed by:



Afesis-corplan  
Built Environment Support Group (BESG)  
Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC)  
Development Action Group (DAG)  
Habitat for Humanity South Africa  
Legal Resources Centre (LRC)  
Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU)  
People's Environmental Planning (PEP)  
Planact

