

# 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

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An illustration of a residential backyard featuring a main house with a grey roof and a white wall, and a smaller white shed with a green door. Two men are standing near a white picket fence in the foreground. A speech bubble from the left contains the text: "PEOPLE CHOOSE TO LIVE IN BACKYARD HOUSING FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS:". The background shows a grey silhouette of a city skyline.

THEY MAY NOT QUALIFY FOR  
STATE HOUSING OR A BOND,

BOND  
DENIED

THEY MAY BE ON THE  
OVERSUBSCRIBED HOUSING  
WAITING LIST.

[illegible]

PEOPLE CAN'T  
ATE RENTAL.

A stylized illustration of a residential building with a grey door and a window. A black chain-link fence runs along the front of the property. Two people are sitting on a white bench in front of the fence. The person on the left is wearing a blue shirt and a yellow headband, and the person on the right is wearing a red shirt. The building has a white roof and a small chimney. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds.

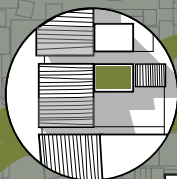
POOR HOUSING, LACK OF BASIC SERVICES, RISK OF EVICTION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND TENANTS CAN CREATE A DIFFICULT LIVING ENVIRONMENT.



**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.

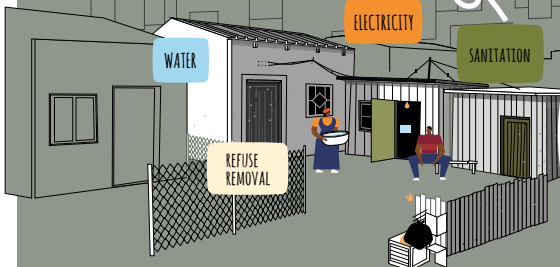


ELECTRICITY

SANITATION

WATER

REFUSE  
REMOVAL

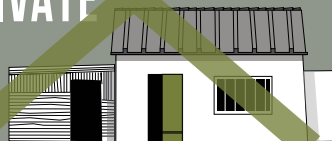


CERTAIN MUNICIPALITIES ONLY PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE TO BACKYARD RESIDENTS LIVING ON PUBLIC LAND, EXCLUDING THOSE LIVING ON PRIVATE LAND.

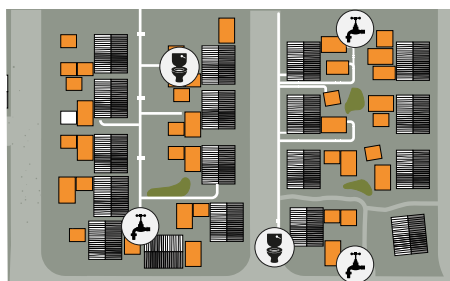
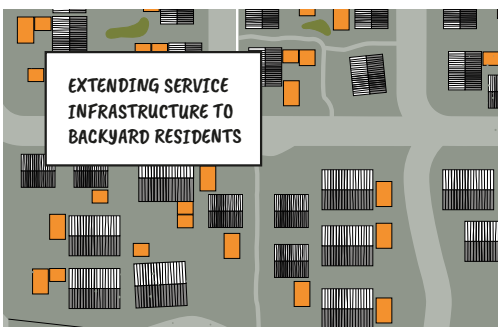
PUBLIC



PRIVATE



EXTENDING SERVICE  
INFRASTRUCTURE TO  
BACKYARD RESIDENTS



WILL FULFIL PEOPLE'S RIGHT  
TO WATER AND SANITATION,  
REDUCE CONFLICT



AND ENABLE DIGNITY.

DIGNITY



## TITLE DEEDS

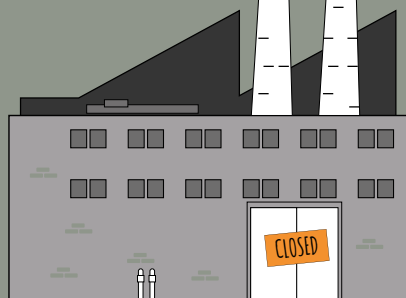
## SECOND: STRENGTHEN **TENURE** SECURITY

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

LEASE AGREEMENT



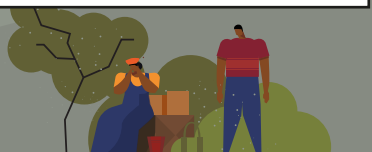
BUT THIS CAN CHANGE IF THEY FACE ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS.



SOME BACKYARD RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN 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**

LEASE AGREEMENT



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.

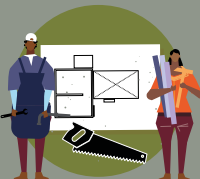


**TENURE  
SECURITY**



## **THIRD: ENABLE THE RIGHT TO SELF-BUILD**

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



TRAINING AND  
TECHNICAL SUPPORT

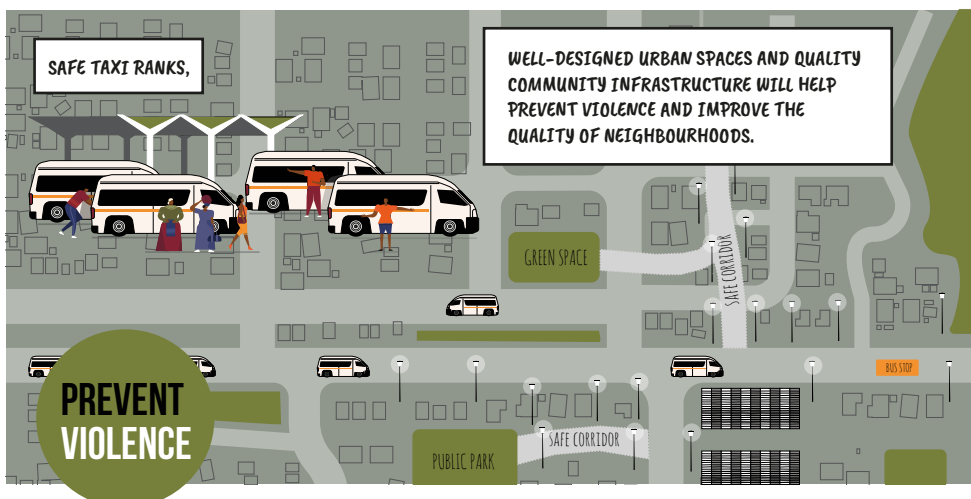
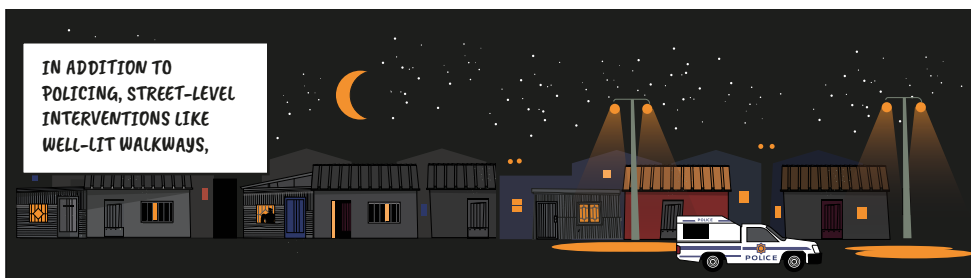
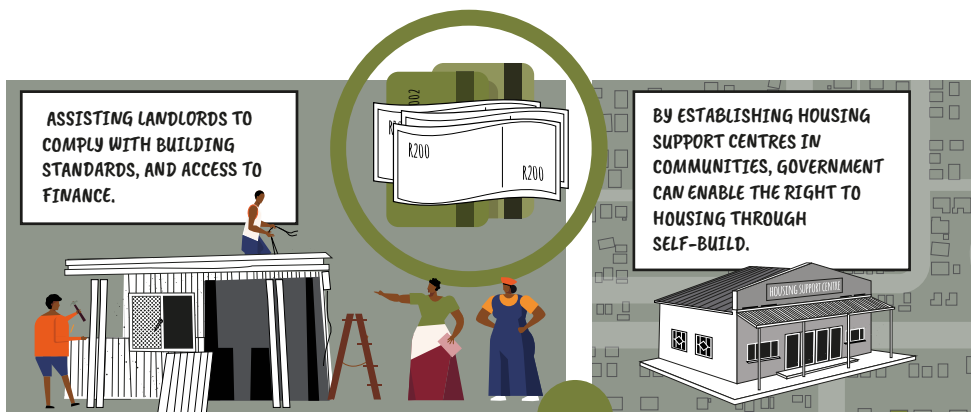


BUILDING PLANS



HOUSING PROTOTYPES







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



**TITLE  
DEEDS**



**SAFER COMMUNITIES**

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-corporan  
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

