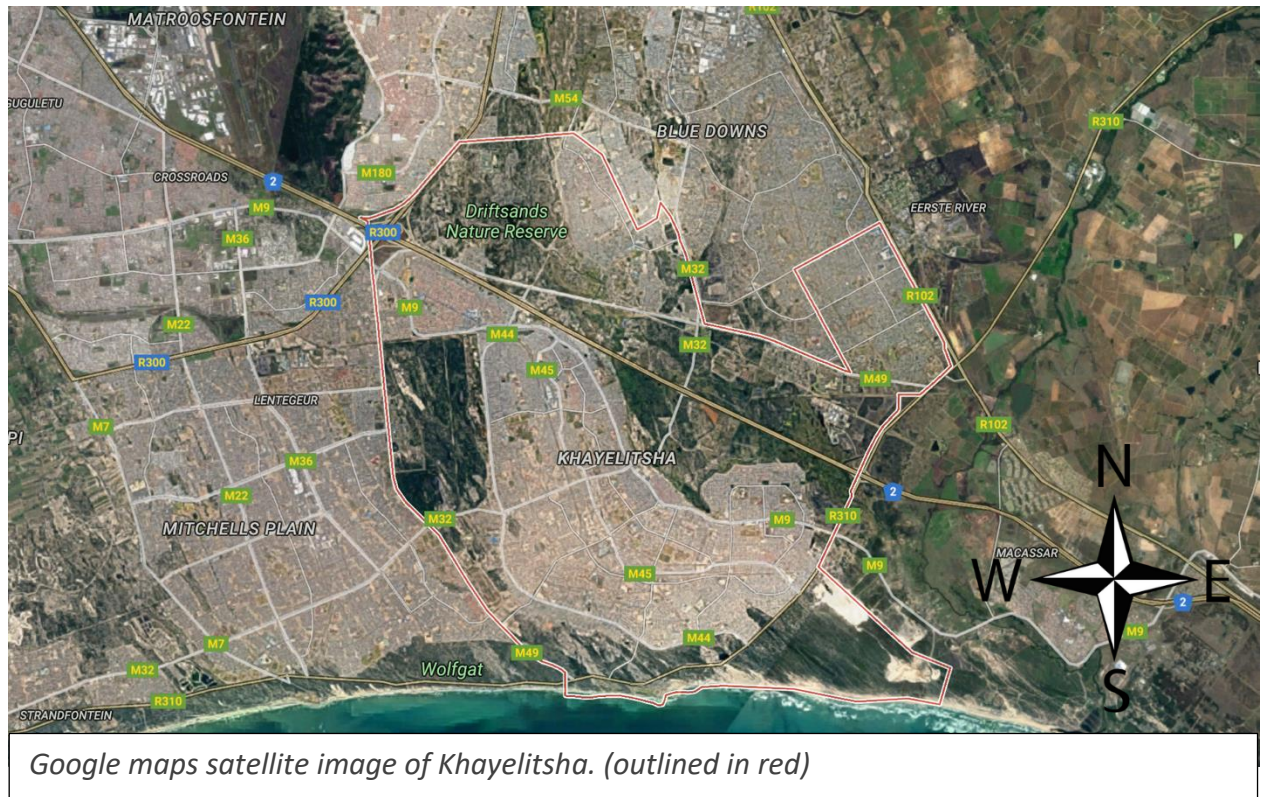


Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa

Khayelitsha satellite image



Google maps satellite image of Khayelitsha. (outlined in red)

Overview

Khayelitsha is a partially informal township, situated in Cape Town, South Africa. Geographically diverse encompassing the Driftsands Nature Reserve; one of South Africa's fastest growing towns, and a coastal landscape. Unfortunately, this fast population growth rate coupled with the remnants of the group areas act, have also led to one of South Africa's fastest growing slums. The high concentration of low-income individuals living in 'informal dwellings' created by said individuals in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, make large parts of it textbook slums.

Why?

Khayelitsha is an interesting concept. It is a classic example of unplanned urban sprawl, in an area (Cape Town) rated world design capital of 2014. This urban sprawl can be attributed to a few key factors, the majority of which are a result of the former National party's apartheid regime. Apartheid meant to keep apart and was a system of racial segregation in South Africa between 1948-1994.

It is best summed up by Edgar Pieterse, director of the [African Centre for Cities](#) at the University of Cape Town: "Cape Town was conceived with a white-only centre, surrounded by contained settlements for the black and coloured labour forces to the east, each hemmed in by highways and rail lines, rivers and valleys, and separated from the affluent white suburbs by protective buffer zones of scrubland,"

CAPE TOWN - KHAYELITSHA



Khayelitsha - (Other Side)

Cape Town

39000 *

Population in Khayelitsha Slum

3.74 Million*

Population in Cape Town

2455 km²

Total Area in Cape Town

Apartheid meant that by the mid-80s Khayelitsha had become one of the most segregated cities in South Africa. This high concentration of poorly paid black workers meant that Khayelitsha quickly turned from a coastal town to an urban sprawl of low value and slum housing. There is a clear correlation of mean income to ethnicity. With 0.5% of the population being white the average income per family is only \$1,872 US, a year. Most if not all of the white population does not live in these slums for two key reasons. The first reason being that they are statistically much more likely to earn a significantly higher yearly income. The second reason is that while people were living in Khayelitsha before the group areas act came into effect; it was considerably less than today. Low income alone does not account for the creation of slums. However, low revenue and large-scale migration in a reasonably small period do.

Slum conditions

Living in a slum like this has a few obvious negatives, what is surprising though are the positives. The big positive to life in a slum is a lessened crime rate compared to other neighbourhoods in the surrounding area. Due more in part by community tightness than lower value goods. This can often mean a lower murder rate in these regions, especially in the “murder capital of South Africa” is not a bad thing. The second although slightly more evident, is the cost of living. This can have an especially large impact in places like South Africa where getting above the poverty line is especially hard.

Living in a slum does have its fair share of negatives, though, and Khayelitsha is no exception. Health and safety have to be the two significant drawbacks. While overall crime rates do tend to be lower in slums, the real danger comes from fire or poorly constructed housing. Having so many houses, garbage and people in such a small area mean that any major fire will rapidly spread. This is made even worse by the narrow lane ways and lack of overall infrastructure making it next to impossible to combat any blazes.

There is a multitude of negative health factors in the Khayelitsha slums, but the two most important ones have to be sanitation and population density. Obviously, slums are not the cleanest place in the world; Khayelitsha is no different. Garbage litters the little laneways crisscrossing the slums, and open sewers. One local family of 7 even says “We cannot sleep at night because of the smell”. Their mother quoted as saying “I am worried that the children are always getting sick”, seems

to relate this to the poor sanitation. In slums like Khayelitsha, there is an incredibly dense population of people living in small areas. The same family with sanitation issues has a little shack of a house with two beds between the 7 of them. This is not a one-off occurrence; this is all too standard in an area like this. Such a large amount of people all packed into a small area make it a breeding ground for disease. Meaning that people are considerably more likely to develop a life threatening condition as a child then in standard low-value housing.

Slum improvement

Safety

While slums may be safer in many ways than other areas, that does not mean that they are safe. The fact that Khayelitsha is the “murder capital of South Africa” means that crime has a massive effect on people's wellbeing with an average of 4 murders every weekend. This is due to two key things. Financial disadvantage and police inaction. The financial disadvantage is a tough one and will come with time, hopefully, sped up by charities like Beyond Our Borders. Policing in Khayelitsha is so bad that most of it are carried out by vigilantes bashing suspected criminals into submission. The local police force is ‘lazy’ and underequipped to deal with such a high amount of crime. The only real fix is further funding by the South African government.

Sanitation

Open sewers and backed up rubbish do not make for the cleanest environment. This is the leading cause of disease. The fact that communal toilets are often unsafe and often flood adds to the need for better sanitation. While a long-term solution is a while off, for now, the government has created a “communal ablution facility” to help tackle the need for better sanitation.

Food Security

Life in a Khayelitsha slum is one that can often involve walking 200 meters or further for water. Also, food is routinely sold in between shacks without any cooling or protection from flies and other insects that may compromise its cleanliness. This, in turn, leads to a reduction in clean food and water and further spreads sickness. The first real way to combat this would be to raise awareness of how to properly store food. Unfortunately there are currently no local organisations doing this on any large scale. The water issue will require further investment in infrastructure which is slowly happening through the Vision 2030 Initiative but is still a way off.

Housing and toilets:



Source:

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