

Fante New Town: Leveraging the Edge

Carolina Montilla
Columbia University

The Fante New Town community lies in the heart of the city of Kumasi in Ghana, along the main Asafo interchange. It occupies 2% of the total land of the Kumasi Metropolitan District and it is home to native Fantes and other recent immigrant ethnic groups. The current fabric consists of a large number of informal small businesses, colonial architecture and traditional mixed-use building typologies. This environment allows for a collaborative and efficient productive system. Fante New Town's proximity to the Kejetia Market- one of the largest open markets in West Africa with over 10,000 stalls- and the financial district of Adum amplify real estate pressures on the existing urban fabric and social dynamics.

A significant value of this traditional fabric is its encouragement of social interactions and business collaboration. Allowing this fabric's replacement with large-scale, mono-use development would hurt current residents, their culture and the larger systems at play in Kumasi. The proposed bilateral strategies encompass: top down implementation, bottom up innovation and maintenance. Based on New Town's central location, the proposal leverages relationships with surrounding neighborhoods and nurtures the existing community by providing infrastructure and support for traditional small businesses to thrive. The proposal consists of three strategies for treating the edges.

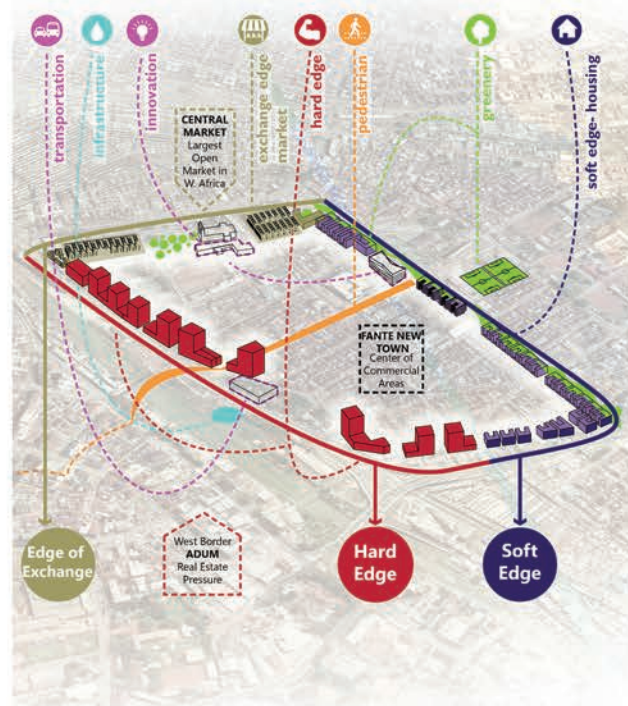
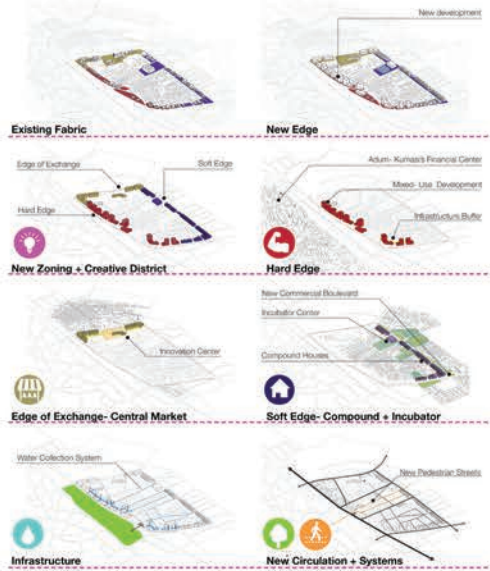
HARD EDGE – The first strategy for revitalizing Fante New Town includes developing the western hard edge to create a two-sided approach that absorbs real estate pressures from Adum while protecting and nurturing the community. The design allows public-private partnerships that develop the edge as a profit generator; providing infrastructure and social services in return to the community. This infrastructural buffer could prevent demolition and loss of essential social capital in Fante New Town.

EDGE OF EXCHANGE – This edge proposal helps organize informality and absorb the overflowing commercial and retail activity from the Kejetia Market on the north side. By streamlining exchange systems and providing an integrated platform to market the goods, this strategy contributes to the community's prosperity.

SOFT EDGE – The strategy for the eastern part of Fante New Town includes the design of a porous edge. A new typology of the compound house is proposed, preserving the existing culture and the pedestrian scale. This will connect ground floor courtyards to create a unified public realm of productive and retail spaces. Activating Jubilee Park as a flexible civic and recreational space will increase the park's functionality.

The proposal's effectiveness is amplified with the insertion of three programmatic nodes within these various edge conditions: an incubator for shared production space; an innovative training center for small business development; and a transportation and logistics center connecting to Adum. By employing these proposed strategies, Fante New Town has the potential to become a Creative Business District that nurtures and promotes the essential small-business component of the Kumasi economy. The large-scale alterations in the physical urban fabric are expected to manifest themselves as social changes through the empowerment of the local community, healthier environments and an improvement of the overall quality of life.

FANTE NEW TOWN Leveraging The Edge



Hard Edge
FIREWALL
a two-sided strategy

Infrastructure
social services
community
Adum development
profit-generator

Soft Edge
Incubator and Transformation of Jubilee Park
Compound Houses: Nurturing the Inside

edge of exchange
Absorbing Overflowing Central Market Activities
Organizing Through Innovation

inside strategy
compound house
the heartbeat of Fante New Town

Strategies

