



NORWOOD ORCHARDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

incorporating the Gardens and Cheltondale

Chairman's Report for the Year Ended 28 February 2018

At the start of the year we identified the following challenges for our neighbourhood:

- Continuing the momentum that had been achieved in the rejuvenation of Grant Avenue;
- Reversing the deterioration of The Avenue;
- Rehabilitation of The Gardens Conservancy;
- Finding ways to maintain Norwood Park, with or without the help of JCPZ;
- Holding the JDA to account for its interventions in the neighbourhood; and
- Working with the City, and fighting it if need be, to ensure that the Paterson Park North Development is modified to conform with the Louis Botha Corridor Strategic Area Framework and takes account of the feedback provided by NORA residents.

How did we fare in addressing these challenges?

The year in review

1. A focus on our public spaces

I'm often asked – why do we place so much emphasis on public spaces (our parks, but also our pavements)? The answer is twofold:

- Firstly, the state of our public spaces has a direct correlation with safety. When pavements and parks are clean, beautiful and walkable, citizens across socio-economic groups use them, they become safer, and we are less likely to retreat behind high walls. When they are unwalkable, unloved and dirty, they become a collection point for even more rubbish, attract anti-social behavior, and are unlikely to be used by anyone who has a choice.
- Secondly, the state of public open spaces has a direct correlation on property prices. At the time that Norwood Park looked its worst, sellers struggled to get buyers to even look at houses around the park. Properties next to the park still sell at a discount. The same can be said of Grant Avenue – property owners who do not maintain their pavements struggle to get quality tenants, and tenants who rent struggle to get customers. Nobody wants to shop on a dirty street.

So everybody, from the very poor to the very rich, should care about the state of our pavements and parks.

This seems obvious to me, but I'm amazed by how few residents and property owners seem to get it. Here's an example - inspired by the Mayor's call to clean up our City, NORA has arranged several Grant Avenue clean ups.

Our approach was as follows:

We would sweep the pavements and gutters, pick up litter, and get rid of weeds. And we would have conversations with every single shop owner about the importance of doing this every day. To this end we printed a pamphlet asking shop owners to do the following:

Keep your pavements and gutters clean

Do not sweep dirt from your pavement onto the road

Do not put waste from your businesses into the municipal dustbins on the road

Do not leave waste from your business in black bags on the road

Confront those who litter

And we encourage them to see the benefits:

A cleaner Grant Avenue will attract more customers, who will spend more!

Clean streets are good for business!

We held three clean ups last year. All were poorly attended, despite aggressive marketing, and having clean ups on both Saturdays and Sundays, to accommodate all faiths. With the exception of the wonderful **Purple Pomegranate**, no businesses participated or contributed to the clean-up. Every shop owner I spoke to agreed to keep their pavement clean, and accepted the pamphlet. Yet, within a day or two, their pavement looked as unkempt as before.

Here are the worst offenders:

- The Check-In Centre on the corner of Grant and Iris
- The building on the south-eastern corner of Grant and Iris
- Café New York
- The building on the north-eastern corner of Grant and Algernon
- The building on the north-western corner of Grant and William (including the Woolworths)

I personally will not patronize any of these businesses, as they clearly have no regard for the neighbourhood.

Let's review where we are with other public space matters:

The Gardens Conservancy, fenced and cleaned up by volunteers over the past two years, looks amazing. But the Hilson Bridge will soon collapse, and perhaps The Avenue with it. The City allocated funding to deal with the issue last year, but it hasn't been spent, a result of a bureaucratic lack of urgency and failure to be held to account by our Councillor. Will they spend the budget before it disappears in June? Your guess is as good as mine...

We have made significant progress in **Norwood Park** this year. Through the generous donations of residents – and I must make particular mention of Gillian Gresack who makes a financial contribution every month – we have been able to extend the beds, repair the ablution blocks,

place wooden poles on Henrietta Road, landscape the Henrietta Road pavement, fence a section near Ivy Road, place bird boxes in trees, and generally beautify and maintain the park. As the park has improved, so has anti-social behaviour diminished. There is now less litter, public urination and drinking in the park than there has been in 5 years. We will continue our efforts here in the coming year.

2. Town Planning

The **Joint Plans Committee East** assesses all town planning and heritage applications for our neighbourhood. It has been in operation for over two years now and in partnership with applicants has achieved notable successes. In the past year we assessed a number of applications on the Louis Botha Corridor of Freedom with good results.

The Avenue remains a concern, and my great disappointment for the year is that we did not get to revise our land use policy on The Avenue. This will be our focus in the new year. We were however successful in dealing with illegal land uses, including shutting down an illegal Mr Delivery / Takealot operation on the corner of The Avenue and Grove Road.

3. Flood Damage

A repeat of the flash flood that destroyed homes and killed pets in November 2016 happened a year later in November 2017. To say that the City's response to this dire situation has been disappointing is an understatement. The JRA has been negligent in not maintaining our storm water infrastructure, and the JDA's response to the severe flooding in Louis, Garden and Oaklands Roads has been to propose the daylighting of the stream in Cheltondale Park, much further downstream. They have done this without proper consultation with the JRA and relevant water experts in the City. We have opposed and will continue to oppose the spending of millions of Rand that will not resolve the very serious issues we face, with or without the support of our political representatives.

4. City of Johannesburg Initiatives

4.1. Paterson Park Recreation Centre

The JDA-led project has lurched from problem to problem. We still do not have a functioning Paterson Park Recreation Centre.

4.2. Orchards Clinic

This JDA-led project has been a disaster. The structurally unsafe clinic will now be underpinned and will hopefully open in 2018.

4.3. Paterson Park North Development

In 2016 we achieved significant concessions in the scale of the Paterson Park Development, particularly along the Norwood border:

Portion	Description	Before		After	
		Height	Dwellings	Height	Dwellings
C	Between Paterson and Frances roads, bordering Norwood	6	155	4	55
E	Between Frances and Algernon roads, bordering Norwood	3	99	3	44
J	On an extension of Algernon Road, between Nellie and Algernon	3	123	3	84
K	Between Lucy Lane and Ivy Road	10	216	4	36
		Before	593	After	219

In July 2017 the Municipal Planning Tribunal affirmed the decrease in scale, but did not agree to our very reasonable proposals for a setback of buildings exceeding two storeys from the Norwood border, the retention of mature vegetation along this border, and the right of NORA to comment on Site Development Plans. We therefore had no choice but appeal the decision. We expect the appeal to be heard in 2018.

4.4. *Grant Avenue Precinct Plan*

18 months after finalization the Plan has still not been approved, and budget has not been allocated. We expect the Plan to be presented to Council in March 2018. We will campaign vigorously for capital allocation in the City's new financial period post June.

5. Our Financial Statements

NORA's cash reserves increased by 50% from R 62,421 to R93 358 , mainly due to the very successful 2017 Love Norwood Day which made a Net Profit of R52 000 and Donations/Subs increasing by 146% from R20 967 to R51 606.

Our largest expense over for the year has been R52 200 towards the upkeep of Norwood Park (R30 700 for Gardener Wages and R21 500 for park infrastructure).

6. Association Subs

Despite Norwood having one of the lowest annual fees of any Residents' Associations (only R200/R300 per annum) with most others requesting contributions varying between R50 and R150 per household every month and up to R500 per month per business, low participation rate from residents remains an area of concern.

Considering that our suburbs have over 2,500 households only 90 residents and businesses paid their subs (98 in previous year) which equates to a mere 3.6%, just imagine what could be achieved if this % increases significantly!

Annual subs will remain at R200 per household and R300 per business for the 2018/2019 period.

7. The Outgoing Committee

Thank you to 2016/2017 committee for their substantial efforts in making our suburbs work better: Nadine Hocter, Raymond Knuppel, Marius van Vuuren, Malcolm Goldsmith, Brendan Lombard and Elain Steinberg.

A special thanks to Steve Jaspan for his town planning advice and assistance.

We thank our Councillors, Eleanor Huggett for Ward 73 and David Fisher for Ward 74, for their service.

The year ahead:

In 2017/2018, we will focus on:

- Resolving the erosion problems at Hilson Bridge;
- Continuing our efforts in Norwood Park;
- Continuing our town planning work with the Joint Plans Committee East;
- Addressing illegal land uses on The Avenue, and refreshing our policy for the road;
- Holding the City to account on their commitments at the Paterson Park Rec Centre and Grant Avenue Precinct Plan;

- Ensuring the City keeps its promises on the Paterson Park North development;
- Holding the JRA accountable for storm water drain maintenance and pavement reinstatement;
- Fighting Corridor of Freedom proposals that we believe are poorly thought out and potentially detrimental to our suburbs; and
- Encouraging greater resident engagement.

We look forward to your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Brett McDougall

Chairman - Norwood Orchards Residents Association