



NORWOOD ORCHARDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

incorporating the Gardens and Cheltondale

Chairman's Report for the Year Ended 28 February 2019

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

- 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.

How did we fare in addressing these challenges?

The year in review

1. The City's involvement in our neighbourhood

Projects initiated and run by the City of Johannesburg in our neighbourhood have been nothing short of a disaster.

At the **Paterson Park Recreation Centre**, the City fired Rembu Construction after it failed to fulfil its obligations under the contract. The fact is Rembu should never have been appointed in the first place, and were not competent to execute a project of this magnitude or complexity. They have left behind them not only an incomplete project, but one littered with defects. Unable to read architectural drawings, they have destroyed the heritage Pavilion. But the real victims of this project have been the surrounding community. The Paterson Park Recreation Centre was initiated 2014, with a completion date of 2016. It is now 2019, and nobody takes the JDA's promise that the project will be delivered in November of this year seriously. So, our neighbourhood has been denied the use of a valuable community resource for five years, and Joburg's ratepayers will foot the bill for completion of the project as it is unlikely Rembu will be in a position to repay anything.

There appears to be no progress on the **Paterson Park North** housing development. Though the sites have been declared, the City has not concluded key studies, including Heritage, which means they cannot progress. In the meantime they have landscaped the park without a mechanism for security or maintenance. So the park deteriorates, and will probably require substantial investment again in the near future.

In 2015 the City announced a R40m revamp of the **Orchards Clinic**, to serve the Louis Botha Corridor of Freedom. The project was meant to complete in 2016. Three years later, we still don't have a clinic in Orchards and costs have ballooned to more than double the original tender value. The reason? The structural engineer under-designed the building, and it was declared unsafe. Now additional structural supports have had to be built. When will it be complete? Your guess is as good as mine.

Our neighbourhood has been the victim of severe flooding since 2015. Homes in Orchards have been made uninhabitable, and erosion along the Orange Grove Spruit in The Gardens has destroyed infrastructure and threatens lives and property too. This has been highlighted to our Councillor Fisher and the Johannesburg Roads Agency, and escalated up to Mayoral level with no success. The matter of **Hilson Bridge** highlights the City's incompetence and lies. After years of lobbying by NORA, in April 2017 Councillor Fisher announced that the Hilson Bridge was to receive R7.5m in funding in the 2017/2018 year to restore the Bridge and resolve erosion problems. But the budget allocated was lost due to delays in appointing contractors to do the work. To get the City to admit to that took an inordinate amount of effort – it seems the City are prepared to announce good news, but avoid telling the truth when it reflects poorly on them. Now there is a very real possibility that The Avenue will collapse.

The **house hijacking situation in Orange Grove** is perhaps the most scandalous of all. At least 26 houses in Orange Grove owned by the Joburg Property Company have been hijacked. Residents in the area describe living in a war zone, with illegal electricity connections, rubbish in the streets, and frequent battles between factions of hijackers. In 2014, the City of Johannesburg started purchasing properties along Louis Botha Avenue in support of the Louis Botha Avenue Corridor of Freedom densification plans. The purchases were made without prior consultation with residents, and agents of the City are alleged to have used scare tactics to get owners to sell, including threatening expropriation or a drop in property values due to the densification plans. In the engagement between the City and residents associations, the City was alerted to the impact of uncoordinated and poorly planned property purchases, including the City's poor track record of maintaining and securing properties they own. But the City ignored these warnings, and proceeded with the purchases. Not surprisingly, many of those houses have now been hijacked. And what have they done to restore the rule of law? It seems some hijacked properties have been served with an eviction notice, but not all. At least one eviction notice we have seen is defective and will not stand up in a court of law, and there seems to be little to no progress in taking the matter further. The Mayor last week announced that these properties will now be put out to tender to developers – but which developer will purchase a property that is illegally occupied? The costs of evicting occupiers will outweigh the benefits to be gained.

All these disasters are quietly happening against a backdrop in which both the governing DA and the opposition ANC (who initiated all these projects) crow about their achievements and ability to govern. The evidence suggests otherwise...

Finally, a word on the City's **Nodal Review**. The Nodal Review was driven by Transformation in the City, and initiated by the previous administration. Despite significant concerns over the content, and poor public participation, the current regime appears oblivious to dissent and very nearly

passed the document earlier this year. DA councillors, who have been alerted to the problems with the document, have not done their job in sending it back to the drawing board. NORA will be joining other residents associations, the Johannesburg Urban Forest Alliance and Johannesburg Heritage Foundation in opposing the policy. A more detailed critique of the Nodal Review is attached to this report as an annexure.

2. NORA's involvement in our neighbourhood

I'm pleased to report that we have a much better story to tell.

After years of campaigning, fundraising, and lots of hard work, **Norwood Park** has been rescued from the cesspit it once was. We now have a gardener working in the park three times a week, we have made the Henrietta Road pavement of the park one of our neighbourhood's most beautiful, and we're thrilled to see that the park is being used more and more. This year we planted 23 trees in the park (a donation from City Parks) and have created beds with over 400 new plants, almost all donations. And we have renovated and beautified the ablution block too. City Parks has entered into a partnership agreement with us, in recognition of our efforts here. I would like to recognize the contributions of a few residents who make all this possible: Gillian Gresack and Danit Herr, who make monthly financial contributions, and Richard Holden, who takes the rubbish bags we have filled to the dump each and every week.

Frustrated by the lack of movement from property owners in maintaining **Grant Avenue**, we now also hired a cleaner once a week for the high street, and his efforts are augmented by additional cleaning blitzes on The Avenue, Ivy Road, and African Street. We also purchased ten dustbins for Grant Avenue and The Avenue. We will be leading new efforts in the coming year to improve Grant Avenue cleanliness and security.

The **Joint Plans Committee East** assesses all town planning and heritage applications for our neighbourhood. This year it assessed twelve heritage applications for NORA, and NORA objected to an additional seven rezoning applications in the neighbourhood. All this work is unseen, but through these efforts we have been able to prevent insensitive developments along The Avenue and Grant Avenue, and to guide others to protect trees and respond better to their neighbours.

We continue to **promote our neighbourhood** as a great place to live, work and have fun. Our Facebook page has a reach of 4,626 people, and our e-mail database a further 700. Beside for social media and newsletters, we also run neighbourhood events. Love Norwood Day has been running for four years now. This last year was the toughest yet – it was difficult to find sponsorships, and the City's rules for hosting an event have grown more complex and expensive every year. Nevertheless we still managed to raise R32,387 from the event. To promote Grant Avenue as a destination, we hosted the second annual Halloween on Grant. The highlight of the event was the "Wacky Wizard" magic show that we offered free to our neighbourhood's children. A new strategy this year is the promotion of our neighbourhood through guided tours. I led two this year, one showcasing "Mandela's Norwood" and the other the history of Norwood, Orchards and The Gardens. Both were well attended, and we were able to raise R9,600 in donations towards our work in Norwood Park.

3. Our Financial Statements

NORA's cash reserves increased by 35% from R93 358 to R125,965. Income was slightly down on 2018, due to a less successful Norwood Day, but good control of expenses resulted in Net Income rising to R32,607.

4. 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. Just over 4% of households and business contribute subs.

Annual subs will rise to R300 per household and R400 per business for the 2019/2020 period, but we will gratefully accept any contributions residents can afford.

5. The Outgoing Committee

Thank you to 2016/2017 committee for their substantial efforts in making our suburbs work better: Nadine Hocter, Raymond Knuppel, Brendan Lombard, and Martin Behr.

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.

We are sad to report the passing of Chris Schulze, who previously served as Treasurer of NORA. Chris recently lost his battle with cancer. We extend our condolences to his family and friends.

The year ahead:

In 2019/2020, 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;
- Improving the cleanliness and appearance of Grant Avenue and The Avenue;
- Holding the City to account on their commitments in various initiatives around the neighbourhood; and
- Encouraging greater resident engagement.

We look forward to your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

Brett McDougall

Chairman

Norwood Orchards Residents Association

**Norwood Orchards Residents Association
Statement of Income and Expenses**

Year ended 28 February 2019

Income Received:	R	120 191
Membership Fees	R	32 222
Donations	R	20 544
Love Norwood Day		
Sponsorships	R	39 000
Table Rental	R	18 825
Park activities		
Walking Tours	R	9 600
Interest		
Expenses Incurred:	R	87 584
Norwood Park	R	35 471
Love Norwood Day	R	25 439
Web Hosting & Social Media	R	2 547
Legal Costs	R	-
Events	R	5 447
Equipment/Branding	R	1 198
Tree Planting	R	2 994
Bank Charges	R	1 608
Grant Avenue	R	12 880
Net Income for the Period	R	32 607

Year ended 28 February 2018

Income Received:	R	123 413
Membership Fees	R	24 559
Donations	R	21 997
Love Norwood Day		
Sponsorships	R	55 000
Table Rental	R	21 450
Park activities	R	407
Interest		
Expenses Incurred:	R	92 476
Norwood Park	R	52 940
Love Norwood Day	R	26 188
Web Hosting & Social Media	R	1 643
Legal Costs	R	3 716
Events	R	1 528
Equipment/Branding	R	4 768
Tree Planting	R	563
Bank Charges	R	1 131
Net Income for the Period	R	30 937

Year ended 28 February 2017

Income Received:	R	69 211
Membership Fees	R	16 567
Donations	R	4 400
Love Norwood Day		
Sponsorships	R	36 000
Table Rental	R	12 200
Interest	R	44
Expenses Incurred:	R	41 050
Norwood Park	R	17 703
Love Norwood Day	R	20 396
Web Hosting	R	1 327
Bank Charges	R	1 625
Net Income for the Period	R	28 161

Year ended 28 February 2019

Net Assets as at 01 March 2018	R	93 359
Bank	R	93 359
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets as at 28 February 2019	R	125 965
Bank	R	125 965
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets Movement for the Period	R	32 607

Year ended 28 February 2018

Net Assets as at 01 March 2017	R	62 422
Bank	R	62 422
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets as at 28 February 2018	R	93 359
Bank	R	93 359
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets Movement for the Period	R	30 937

Year ended 28 February 2017

Net Assets as at 01 March 2016	R	34 261
Bank	R	34 261
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets as at 28 February 2017	R	62 422
Bank	R	62 422
Accounts Payable	R	-
Net Assets Movement for the Period	R	28 161

The Nodal Review – Areas of Concern

1. Need for further public participation

It is our view that the vast majority of Johannesburg's citizens do not know about the Nodal Review and its implications for the areas where they live and conduct business. The City's engagement process also appears to have merely been a "tick-box" process, as opposed to truly understanding and responding to concerns on the policy. Very reasonable concerns and amendments appear to have been completely ignored. The failure to publish the final version of the Review for public comment before its adoption by the Mayoral Committee on 6 December 2018 was unreasonable, and has resulted in the current public outcry.

2. Need for a critical evaluation of Nodal Review recommendations

The Nodal Review, read with the SDF, 2016, portrays a future city form that is to be achieved, it is indicated, by directing and approving land development applications according to a set of development zones, guidelines and density parameters, and by concomitant City investment in new infrastructure.

The City covers some 1 650km² and the more intensive development zones proposed in the Nodal Review, such as the Inner City, Metropolitan, and Regional Nodes, and the General Urban Zone, cover vast tracts of largely developed land.

The transition from the existing circumstances to those envisaged in the Nodal Review is not explained or quantified, leaving an impression of likely sporadic and ad hoc densification and land use change, with the attendant land use management problems, disruption of stable areas, and difficulties in matching the changes with new infrastructure and the like.

Quantification of the proposed household numbers, and illustration of the future City form, would help clarify the need and scale of City interventions required to sustain the new development. This is understood to be a prescribed aspect of spatial development frameworks, as set out the SPLUMA and the City's own Municipal Planning By-law. The hexagonal model used could readily be used to give an idea of the scale of change.

It is considered imperative that the Nodal Review should, prior to adoption, be evaluated by a suitable committee with external specialist inputs to clarify its implications for the City's further development, the financial and other obligations it places on the City's administration, and the already-voiced concerns of the neighbourhoods and other parts of the City that are directly affected by the policy.

3. The absence of detailed development information and integrated planning in the Nodal Review

The Nodal Review replaces all previous nodes, RSDFs, Precinct Plans and similar plans (other than the approved Strategic Area Frameworks). It reflects a move away from any detailed understanding of the neighbourhoods and areas where the new development guidelines will apply. This detailed understanding is generally provided by interaction with affected

communities, investigations into topography, existing development, infrastructure, roads, social factors and the like.

The generic nature of the development guidelines suggests that for meaningful and manageable development to occur, detailed frameworks and development strategies will be required to bridge the gap between the metropolitan vision and local area development. This local level of planning is recognised in the Nodal Review, but it is doubtful whether City Transformation has the capacity and funding to address this need.

In the earlier iterations of the SDF similar requirements were meant to follow the overall planning and particularly in identified nodes. These were, however, seldom undertaken by the City, notwithstanding the stated intention to do so, leading to community opposition to ad hoc developments without the requisite supporting infrastructure, etc. A similar scenario is expected as a result of the Nodal Review, given the much greater area devoted to high intensity development zones, such as the proposed Metropolitan Development Zones depicted on the mapping.

In order to counter the current lack of detail in the Nodal Review planning, all of the guideline proposals are stated to be dependent on infrastructure availability, and do not over-ride environmental and heritage approvals. In our view the failure to address existing topography, watercourses, heritage resources, and built development, including infrastructure, is problematic in determining an appropriate future.

The scale of change proposed is hard to comprehend, and so is the scale of City commitment that this change requires. There is no indication of integrated input or matching planning from Johannesburg Water, Johannesburg City Power, City Parks, Johannesburg Roads Agency, let alone Provincial Authorities for schools, heritage, environment and the like. It is also not clear that the Gauteng Provincial Spatial Development Framework or that contiguous municipalities have been consulted.

4. The written document and application of the Nodal Review

The Nodal Review is in the form of an annexure to the existing SDF, a 175 page document.

It is submitted that this format, and with conflicting mapping, as opposed to a comprehensive re-write of the current SDF, makes the revised document complex and hard to read, understand and interpret.

The local communities' experience with the City's interpretation and application of the development guidelines imposed in current spatial development frameworks is that the By-law requirement for all land development applications to comply with the SDF is the key element in determining support or otherwise for a particular application, with the other prescribed considerations about compatibility and the like being subservient considerations. The interpretation of the guidelines is found to vary greatly within the Department of Development Planning, and the complicated nature of the revised document is not likely to assist in this regard.

In addition, and in the absence of local development frameworks for some time after the approval of the Review, the likelihood is that the extremely generous development guidelines and densities will be construed to have addressed the detailed circumstances of the affected

area, giving rise to potentially substantial differences in scale and intensity between existing developments and new ones.

5. Unintended Consequences

In its current form, and in the current development environment of Johannesburg, there is no doubt that the policy will have unintended negative consequences. Two likely consequences are:

- Moving the focus of development away from the Corridors of Freedom to the “golden triangle” between Parktown and Sandton. It is easier and cheaper for developers to develop relatively large erven between Parktown and Rosebank, than smaller (and for the moment, less advantageously sited) erven along the Corridors of Freedom. The Nodal Review proposes higher densities for Houghton east of the M1, than currently exist along Louis Botha Avenue. Developers will take advantage of this, with the result that the Louis Botha Avenue Corridor of Freedom will not achieve the densities needed to justify the City’s investment in public transport and social amenities here, while Houghton will be plagued by overdevelopment that is not supported by public transport, or even the basic infrastructure required.
- Loss of the City’s urban forest. The lack of by-laws protecting trees is already resulting in massive loss of trees in the northern suburbs, contradicting the City’s commitment to fighting climate change. The Nodal review provides no additional protections for trees.

6. Concluding remarks

The Nodal Review proposes a radical transformation of the City to a more dense and urban landscape. The extent of the transformation has not been quantified nor have practicable steps to achieve the vision been set out as required in SPLUMA and the By-law.

The impact on existing built development, infrastructure, environment, heritage, communities and neighbourhoods will be substantial. The City has failed to clarify these factors and how they are to be managed to achieve a future liveable outcome.

The tools to achieve this transformation vision appear to be limited, and the indication from previous iterations of the SDF guidelines is that there is little prospect of timeous detailed planning frameworks to guide the ongoing and promoted densification process.

The City has a responsibility to its citizens to promote a sustainable and integrated development plan that aligns with the SPLUMA development principles. It is not evident that these principles have been adequately applied and that the proposals are within the financial, institutional and administrative means of the City.

Until, and unless, these concerns have been adequately addressed, it would be preferable to err on the side of caution and to first ensure that the previous SDF nodes and strategic densification areas are adequately resourced and functional (which was thought to be the intention of the Nodal Review, rather than the transformative vision that has been proposed).