



NORWOOD OAKLANDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATING ORCHARDS, THE GARDENS AND CHELTONDALE

Chairman's Report for the Year Ending 29 February 2020

What NORA is and isn't

What NORA does:

- Town Planning:
 - Objects to town planning and other applications that will negatively impact neighbourhood amenity.
 - Reports illegal building.
 - Provides comment on heritage applications.
 - Objects to outdoor advertising applications.
- Public Space:
 - Champions public open space – through activism, maintenance, beautification, and activations.
 - Increasingly takes responsibility for pavement maintenance of high-traffic roads.
- Promotes the Neighbourhood:
 - Through social media, print media, engagement with neighbourhood stakeholders, tours and events.
- Engagement with the City:
 - Represents the neighbourhood in engagements with City agencies.
 - Work with councillors of Ward 73 and 74 to solve neighbourhood issues.
- Engagement with other Stakeholders
 - Leverages relationships with CAP and other organisations for the good of the neighbourhood.

What NORA doesn't do:

- We don't log calls – but we help to follow up on long outstanding ones.
- We'll campaign for service delivery, and sometimes just roll up our sleeves and get it done, but we do not have the City's resources.
- We are not a law enforcement agency.
- Our primary focus is not on security, but we do work with CAP.

And most importantly, we're only as effective as the support we receive.

Here follows a summary of major interventions in the past year.

Incorporation of Oaklands

Oaklands was incorporated into NORA at a Special General Meeting held on 3 June 2019. A new constitution for the association was adopted, and it was renamed the Norwood Oakland Residents Association.

Oaklands Cellular Masts

Challenging the erection of cellular masts by Vodacom in Oaklands was a key objective in 2019/20. The effort was ably and passionately led by Dr Taddy Blecher. The outcome agreed, after extensive engagements and legal input, was that the mast erected on the corner of African Street and Park Street would not be activated, as it had clearly been erected without following proper process, and that Vodacom would use the input provided by NORA in determining future mast placement. NORA contributed R10,000 to legal fees, but the vast majority of these have been funded by Oaklands residents. This has been an excellent example of resident and NORA partnership.

Garden Road Crisis

At the 2019 AGM Garden Road residents approached NORA for help. A liquor outlet at 264 Louis Botha Avenue was selling liquor to patrons, who were consuming it on the pavement with all the expected related problems – public drunkenness, public urination, broken bottles, dumping, and a great deal more too. We facilitated an initial meeting between residents, JMPD and Councillor Fisher to determine the extent of the problem and possible solutions. This was followed by numerous engagements with the JMPD, SAPS, and MMC for Public Safety. Perhaps spurred on by the 2019 elections, we saw some action from law enforcement agencies – joint raids from JMPD and SAPS – which had some effect. We also deployed the NORA gardener to the corner of Garden and Louis Botha Avenue on the worst of days to clean up, and create an unfriendly atmosphere for the local drunks.

In June 2019, we were alerted to an application from the liquor outlet owner to extend his license to a tavern licence, and made the decision to prevent this at all costs. A tavern license would in effect have legalized the consumption of alcohol on the premise (which is the cause of our problems). With the help of resident Marita Alexander we obtained objections from neighbourhood institutions and some residents, and funding was generously provided by the New Covenant Baptist Church, Garden Road Montessori School, and a handful of residents. Leon Slotow, whose specialization is in liquor license

applications, represented us at the Gauteng Liquor Board, and he was successful in having the application blocked.

This, however, did not change the ongoing problems on the corner. This is where we stand:

- We have inadequate law enforcement from both JMPD and SAPS. We requested that the matter be a Sector 3 Crime priority, and we will be renewing that request.
- We have inadequate local resident ownership of the issue. Residents feel that it is not their responsibility to report problems as they arise to JMPD and SAPS and CoJ agencies. Most prefer to complain on WhatsApp groups.
- The solution may require different thinking, and an investment from residents. If Garden Road Mews, the complex at the epicenter of the problems, merely looked after their pavement and installed a sprinkler system, it would be a far less inviting environment for the problem makers. If Garden Road residents pursued a road closure, they might be able to shut the problem out. Residents complain they cannot afford this, but inaction results in an erosion of their property values.

Marita Alexander, who really is a neighbourhood hero, has been leading an exercise for Garden Road residents to regroup. We have stated that if residents are prepared to be an active part of the solution, NORA will help them coordinate and drive efforts.

Town Planning

We have been pleased to note higher density residential developments on The Avenue and Grant Avenue, particularly the attractive medium-density development at 12 The Avenue, the spectacular refurbishment of 74 Grant Avenue, and the Gregory Katz-designed apartment development at 16 Grant Avenue. We strongly support residential intensification along this arterial as we believe that it will contribute to a vibrant high street.

The proposed enclosure of a portion of Orchards bounded by African, Henrietta and The Avenue has been more controversial. It has strong support from residents within its boundaries (75%), but there is a vocal group of residents in neighbouring The Gardens who oppose it, largely because they believe it will deflect traffic to them. What has become apparent in engagements with these residents is that they misunderstand the legal process governing Security Access Restrictions (SARs). SARs are governed by Section 10 of Act 45 of 1998. The process to apply for a SAR is described by the Act as follows:

- An application is made describing the area to be restricted, a motivation for the restriction, and details of how it will be implemented.
- Those residing or working within the area of the SAR are described as Affected Persons. At least two-thirds of those residing or working within the SAR must support the application.
- A Traffic Impact Study (TIA) must be conducted.
- Details of the Security Company must be submitted.
- This documentation must then be submitted to the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) for consideration.
- The CoJ consults with SAPS, JRA, JMPD, EMS in forming a view of the application.

- A S45 hearing is arranged between the City and the applicant.
- Thereafter CoJ makes a decision on whether the application may or may not proceed.
- If it agrees that it can proceed, the applicant is required to advertise for public comment. It is at this time that the broader neighbourhood may submit official comments or objections. The comment period is 30 days from advertising.
- Within 60 days of closing date for comments, the City considers all comments and invites the applicant to make representations on the comments.
- Based on the comments received, the CoJ may decide that further consultation is required.
- The CoJ then makes its decision. If granted, further processes follow, including applying for wayleaves.

The proposed Orchards enclosure had a S45 hearing in late 2019. It was favourably received, but the JRA has made the recommendation that the swing gates on The Avenue and Orange / Orchard / Oaklands / Garden are open during the peak times of 06h00 to 09h00 and 16h00 to 19h00. The boom gates on High and Henrietta / African will remain in the upright position during this time, and High Road will be permanently accessible through the boom at all other times. The committee leading the effort are now waiting for a Notice of Intent from CoJ. Should the recommendation support the closure, this and the conditions will be published. On the publication of the Notice of Intent, the proposed closure will be published in the Government Gazette and newspapers, and it will be open for public comment. At this time, NORA will send out a notice to residents highlighting the notice and advising residents on their right to comment.

The **Cydna** Sewage Works once served northern Johannesburg. After its closure and the building of the highway, Cydna was split into a number of portions, including James and Ethel Gray Park (two separate parks on either side of the highway), the Cydna electrical substation, SASCOC, and various municipal uses on the Oaklands border. In 2018 the City engaged with interested and affected parties on potential changes in use to the part of Cydna north of Oaklands, west of Athol-Oaklands Road, and south of the Cydna Substation. There was widespread panic about the creation of a mega dump site for Pikitup on the location. The panic was unfortunately not based on fact, but the reaction resulted in the City reflecting on how better to engage with residents on potential changes in the area. This culminated in a meeting with the Planner representing the City and representatives of residents associations of the surrounding area on Tuesday 26 November. The following was presented:

- The current use of the property is not in line with the zoning or the title deed (and has not been for several decades).
- The City requires space to relocate the City Parks and Zoo Depot from Paterson Park and intends to merge it with the Cydna Depot. The usage is low impact, with a small group of office workers and field workers based here.
- The relocation will result in the redevelopment of the derelict nursery and other neglected spaces.
- No garden or other refuse areas will be developed on the property.
- No Pikitup Depot or Offices will be relocated to the property.
- Community support and input is sought for the redevelopment and regularization of the property.

The presentation was well received, and the following was agreed:

- A steering group of representatives of local residents associations would work with the City's Planner to craft appropriate conditions and controls for the rezoned properties.
- These would be presented to the City and to local communities for input prior to finalisation.

Overall, both what has been presented and the City's approach to working with local communities is positive, and is supported by NORA. At the time of writing, the City's town planner had not yet convened the steering group.

The long-debated **Nodal Review** was passed in February 2020. Tragically, but inevitably, it ignores almost all comment provided, including by NORA. It provides no protection for Johannesburg's urban forest, and makes no allowances for neighbourhood character.

It is a blunt instrument. 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 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.

It will be interesting to see whether a legal challenge will be mounted. Sadly, it is a politically driven policy, so legal challenges are unlikely to succeed in the long run.

Finally, Steve Jaspan has been chairing the **Skydeck** Committee, which is fighting a proposal to place a service station over the M1 at Athol-Oaklands Road. We support his efforts, and thank him for his town planning support on a number of matters during the year.

A Focus on Grant Avenue

The state of Grant Avenue has been of concern to NORA for a number of years. We actively participated in the Grant Avenue Precinct Plan process, the outcome of which was a planning approach to the high street, and participated in a number of unsuccessful attempts after that to launch a management vehicle for the precinct area. At the time of the Precinct Plan adoption, the City made a number of promises of capital expenditure that did not materialise. The City's own service delivery capability has also noticeably deteriorated. The result was a despondent retail and real estate environment that was increasingly dirty and uninviting.

NORA has always believed that Grant Avenue solutions need to be crafted and owned by Grant Avenue property owners and businesses, but we came to the conclusion at the beginning of 2019 that do nothing was not viable. In response, NORA committee member Brendan Lombard proposed and led a massive beautification and maintenance programme. 41 attractive pots have been planted with mature olive trees along Grant Avenue. The cost of this has been R103,547, with R45,300 being funded by Grant Avenue property owners and businesses and R58,247 being funded by NORA. This was accompanied by a regular cleaning service provided by NORA on at least a twice a week basis along Grant, augmenting cleaners already provided by many other property owners and businesses. These efforts have had a significant impact – the street is cleaner, more beautiful and more inviting than it has been a very long time, perhaps for more than a decade. And we are pleased to report that property and business owners have subsequently become more active in other aspects of urban management, including security.

In the past year we have also purchased and placed 20 dustbins in dumping hotspots. These have had a positive impact on both Grant Avenue and The Avenue, and elsewhere too, including Fanny Avenue.

Noting the deterioration of the state of The Avenue in 2018, a number of cleaning blitzes were conducted in 2019. These appear to have had the desired effect, and we had had to stage fewer cleaning interventions in 2020.

Anti-dumping Campaign

Towards the end of 2019 NORA pushed an anti-dumping campaign on social media. Culprits were identified on camera, and named and shamed. We are amazed by how many middle class residents, and the restaurants serving them, think that it's ok to dump rubbish on street corners. We will not tolerate this, and have reported repeat offenders to Pikitup.

Norwood Park

We continue to expend enormous effort and expense on Norwood Park. Why? Because if we didn't, it would become what other unloved parks in Joburg have become – an urban sinkhole that only attracts vagrants and drug addicts, and provides no amenity to residents. We employ a gardener three times a week, and do regular cleaning blitzes. Our efforts along the Henrietta Road pavement have been particularly successful, and the stretch of Henrietta Road between Grant and Fanny is really amongst the most beautiful in Joburg. To achieve this we have relied on donors, both in cash and plants. Cindy McIvor, Valerie Fichardt, Gabriela Silva Figueira, Nicky Abrahams, and Andre Scheepers regularly donate plants. We are thankful to Marie Aoun and The Accidental Gardener's Club for landscaping a bed. Richard Holden regularly removes rubbish collected (and dumped) from the park. Gillian Gresack donates a monthly amount for park maintenance. Other monthly donors include 64 Ivy Road and 16 Iris Road. Your contributions are appreciated!

Love Norwood Day

Love Norwood Day was conceptualized in 2015 as a way to activate Norwood Park, and to raise funds for its maintenance. It has unfortunately become very difficult to run at a profit, due to growing bureaucratic hurdles from the City of Johannesburg, and we will be reassessing the viability of continuing it this year. We are immensely grateful for the very generous CAP sponsorship we receive for the event. We wouldn't be able to run the event without CAP!

The Gardens Conservancy and Hilson Bridge

Hilson Bridge, constructed in 1926 to link The Avenue, The Gardens, to 6th Avenue, Highlands North, was named after Councillor Hilson. It is recognised as the earliest suburban bridge built in Johannesburg, and remains remarkably unchanged to this day. Unfortunately, City of Johannesburg neglect has caused significant erosion issues at the bridge which threatens to destroy it.

Engagement between NORA and the City of Johannesburg is summarised as follows:

- Dangerous erosion and undermining of the road is highlighted to the JRA and the Ward 74 Councillor for a period of 2 years from 2015 to 2017.
- Councillor David Fisher announces that the Hilson Bridge is to receive R7.5m in funding in the 2017/2018 to restore the Bridge and resolve erosion problems. Here is the article: <https://northeasterntribune.co.za/201066/the-historic-hilson-bridge-to-be-restored/>
- Despite the announcement, no progress is made in 2017/2018. Numerous follow ups are made with the JRA and Councillor Fisher to no avail.
- A water licence is finally sought, but the work is done in the 2018/2019 year. Correspondence from the JRA states that the site will be established in November 2018. This doesn't happen.
- The budget is lost, due to inaction on the part of the JRA.

Throughout this period NORA continued to lead clean ups of the river, but we realised that we ourselves would have to find a solution to the massive erosion problem. In 2019, the work that Brett McDougall had performed in leading efforts to clean up The Gardens Conservancy and Orange Grove Stream were nominated in the Walmart #sparkkindness campaign. After a rigorous vetting process, Walmart donated an amount of R138,674,68 to the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation in recognition of work performed by Brett McDougall. It is the intention of the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation to use the donation to continue work already started on the Orange Grove Stream, at:

- Hilson Bridge, where severe erosion has occurred, and
- The Orange Grove Waterfall.

The Walmart donation allows restoration of the river in the vicinity of Hilson Bridge to take place. The work is being supervised by Richard Holden, a civil engineer who already does so much for our neighbourhood, and is being performed by Thulani Madondo. The approach being followed is to “retrain” the river by gradually altering its course towards the bridge and away from the area of erosion. This is accompanied by regular cleaning of the bridge entrance.

Sector 3 Crime Forum and NCPF

After years of dysfunctional CPF committees, representing a narrow range of interests, and quite frankly not doing the job they were elected to do, we breathed a sigh of relief that we have a Sector 3 Crime Forum (covering the NORA suburbs) and an NCPF committee chaired by the very able Colin Wasserfall. We urge our community to support their efforts – attend meetings, and contribute meaningfully to a safer neighbourhood.

Committee Members

Without the dedicated service of a handful of volunteer committee members none of this would have been possible. I thank Brendan Lombard, Martin Behr, Trevor Lunt, Cindy Meltzer, Bradley Janse van Rensburg, and Nadine Hocter for their service and passion. Thank you too to the Ascot Hotel for allowing us to use their boardroom for meetings.

Financial Statement Review

2018/19 was an expansive year for NORA. Our income increased by 96%, and our expenses increased by 188%.

Membership Fees and Donations increased from R52,766 to R102,648. R16,000 was due to subs received from the Oaklands incorporation, with the remaining R34,000 increase the result of better resident participation in existing suburbs. We are pleased to report that over 200 people are now subs contributors.

Love Norwood Day increased by 10% on prior year, but expenses for the event increased by 40%.

Garden Road residents and community organisations contributed R15,300 in legal fees, and R16,000 in legal fees were incurred in fighting the liquor license application.

We spent R36,530 on cleaning and beautification activities at Norwood Park, and a further R36,112 on similar activities in Grant Avenue, The Avenue and Garden Road. We spent a further R103,547 on the Grant Avenue olive tree project, of which R45,300 was funded by Grant Avenue businesses and property owners.

We are pleased to note that we earned more in interest than we spent on bank charges in the year.

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

Year ended 28 February 2019		Year ended 29 February 2020	
Income Received:	R 120 191	Income Received:	R 235 463
Membership Fees	R 32 222	Membership Fees	R 83 626
Donations	R 20 544	Donations	R 19 022
Love Norwood Day	R 57 825	Love Norwood Day	R 63 200
Walking Tours	R 9 600	Walking Tours	
		Garden Road Liquor Objection	R 15 300
Interest		Pot Plant Project	R 45 300
		Hilson Bridge - JHF	R 4 720
		Interest	R 4 295
Expenses Incurred:	R 87 584	Expenses Incurred:	R 252 077
Norwood Park	R 35 471	Norwood Park	R 36 530
Love Norwood Day	R 25 439	Love Norwood Day	R 35 695
Web Hosting & Social Media	R 2 547	Web Hosting & Social Media	R 6 506
Legal Costs	R -	Legal Costs	R 26 500
Events	R 5 447	Events	R -
Equipment/Branding	R 1 198	Equipment/Branding	R -
Tree Planting	R 2 994	Tree Planting/Pot Plant Project	R 103 547
Bank Charges	R 1 608	Bank Charges	R 2 466
Grant Avenue/The Avenue/Garden Rd	R 12 880	Grant Avenue/The Avenue/Garden Rd	R 36 112
		Hilson Bridge Repair	R 4 720
Net Income for the Period	R 32 607	Net Income for the Period	R -16 613

Year ended 29 February 2020	
Net Assets as at 01 March 2019	R 125 965
Bank	R 125 965
Accounts Payable	
Net Assets as at 29 February 2020	R 109 352
Bank - Current Account	R 11 057
Bank - Call Account	R 104 295
Accounts Payable	R -6 000
Net Assets Movement for the Period	R -16 613

Priorities for 2020/21

The priorities determined by our committee members are:

Priorities	Led by
Ongoing	
Norwood Park maintenance and beautification	Brett McDougall
Grant Avenue cleaning and beautification	Brendan Lombard
Engagement with the City on Cydna, Paterson Park, and Orchards Clinic	Brett McDougall
Engagement with the Steve Jaspan on the Skydeck	Brett McDougall
Town Planning matters	Brett McDougall
Working with Grant Avenue business to increase resident participation	Nadine Hocter
Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halloween • Trinity Sessions Event • Boosting existing events 	Nadine Hocter
Increase number of subs payments	Brendan Lombard
New	
JHF-funded Hilson Bridge restoration with Richard Holden	Brett McDougall
Fencing Hilson Street Park	Trevor Lunt
Repainting of street names	Brendan Lombard
Reinstatement of pavement on Grant Avenue	Brendan Lombard
Recycling education for residents	Nadine Hocter
Partnering with reputable organization for the Homeless in order to channel resident contributions	Nadine Hocter
Oaklands gateway project – improving the aesthetics of Kruger Street between Beaumont Street and Pretoria Street	Trevor Lunt and Cindy Meltzer
PSHB response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a tree survey • Education • Tree Planting 	Cindy Meltzer
Orchards Enclosure comms	Brett McDougall

Threats and Opportunities in the Coming Year

- Norwood Library – the move of the Library out of its premises on Iris Road exposes this building to vandalism and hijacking. We are engaging with the Councillor and JPC on the matter.
- Orange Grove hijackings – the hijacking of 26 City of Johannesburg properties has not been resolved. Thankfully, through the pressure of Orange Grove Residents Association and NORA, and the heroic actions of Councillor Huggett, the problem has at least been recognized by the CoJ, and hijackers are no longer being given carte blanche to terrorise the neighbourhood.
- Orange Grove redevelopment – the City has awarded the redevelopment tenders on the properties it owns in Orange Grove. The developments are largely for student housing. We have doubts about the economic viability of the tenders, and are concerned about the quality of the developments and their impact on the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, this is out of our jurisdiction.

- Orchards Clinic – this continues to remain unfinished.
- Paterson Park North – the City botched the Heritage Impact Assessment and the Tender, and Paterson Park North continues to deteriorate. The collapse of the eastern culvert in the park adds to these problems.
- Paterson Park South – the build was absolutely disastrous until the handover of the project to GVK. Quick progress is now being made.
- Trinity Session – The arts collective Trinity Session has found a permanent home at the Orchards Project. We are immensely excited at the possibilities this creates for cultural capital in our neighbourhood, and it brings stability to our eastern edge.

I thank you for your continued support.

Brett McDougall

Chairman

Norwood Oaklands Residents Association