



# NORWOOD ORCHARDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

incorporating the Gardens and Cheltondale

## Chairman's Report on the Year Ended 28 February 2017

We started the year with the following challenges:

- Rehabilitation of The Gardens Conservancy;
- Finding ways to maintain Norwood Park, with or without the help of JCPZ;
- Completing the FTTH rollout;
- Holding the JDA to its promises for the Paterson Park Recreation Centre;
- 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; and
- Supporting the Grant Avenue Precinct Plan process.

How did we fare in addressing these challenges?

### The year in review

#### 1. A focus on our public spaces

Over the past year eight clean ups have been conducted at **The Gardens Conservancy**, which was severely degraded as a result of informal recycling activities. Many of these clean ups have been led by Delbert Botes and the Geocachers. Thank you Delbert – your efforts have transformed this public open space! Committee member Raymond Knuppel must be commended for his leadership of our efforts here.

We reported severe erosion at the **Hilson Bridge** to the City two years ago, and despite several follow ups received no commitment to deal with the problem until February 2017. The erosion not only threatens to destroy a valuable heritage resource – the 1926 bridge – but could also wash away The Avenue at this point. We will continue to place pressure on the City to act, and if it does not we will hold all City officials with whom we have engaged personally responsible for any damage to property or person, or loss of life that may result.

At the beginning of 2016 **Norwood Park** was a blight on our neighbourhood. It had become the focal point of anti-social behavior, public drinking and litter in Norwood, and the gardens were severely degraded due to years of neglect by City Parks. JCPZ's commitment to managing this and other parks according to existing by-laws had not materialized, and the NORA committee realized that it was up to us to take on this responsibility. We made a call to residents to provide donations, and were inspired by some initial contributions, and by Juan Duvenage who has

contributed R250 on a monthly basis. But it was the profits of Love Norwood Day that have allowed us to employ a gardener for two days a week. The results are clearly visible: our park is clean, the beds are plump, and anti-social behavior though present is diminishing. Committee member Marius van Vuuren deserves our gratitude for his leadership of efforts in the Park, but we all have a responsibility to maintain this momentum. When I walk my dogs in the park I clean up the litter that I see, and chat to park users and the hawkers on Ivy about the importance of keeping the space clean. And when I see public drinking I immediately report the matter to the JMPD on 011 375 5555.

## **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 a year now and in partnership with applicants has achieved notable successes. In the coming year its role will expand to include assessing applications for structures impacted by the Corridors of Freedom proposals, and in enforcing the planning recommendations of the Grant Avenue Precinct Plan.

**The Avenue** is of concern. Illegal land uses and advertising by-law infringements are rampant, and businesses do not maintain their pavements. Our response to this is a review of the NORA policy on The Avenue, to determine whether our recommended controls still make sense, and a crackdown on illegal land uses and advertising, aided by the City.

## **3. Fibre to the Home**

In 2016 CAP and NORA came to the conclusion that our preferred provider, Vulacom, was not able to deliver on our Fibre expectations. Our relationship was terminated and we handed over the FTTH challenge to Fibrehoods. Fibrehoods has made significant progress and much of our neighbourhood is already connected, but they are running behind schedule. A detailed update will be provided at the AGM. Thank you to Giulio Magni for his tireless efforts in this area.

## **4. Flood Damage**

A flash flood in November 2016 resulted in the loss of property and the death of many pets in our neighbourhood. Residents affected have driven an initiative to understand and solve root causes of the flooding, and to hold the City accountable for stormwater drain maintenance. This last point is important, because blocked drains in Orange Grove, Norwood and Orchards were a significant contributor to the magnitude of flood damage. Sadly, the JRA has been criminally negligent in clearing debris since the floods, and this matter has now been escalated to the head of the JRA.

## **5. City of Johannesburg Initiatives**

### *5.1. Paterson Park Recreation Centre*

The JDA-led project has not been without its challenges, and the City is now in the process of appointing new contractors to complete the project.

### *5.2. Paterson Park North Development*

In 2016 we reported:

*“The proposed development of over 2,000 dwelling units in buildings as high as 12 storeys has been rejected by NORA residents. The Urban Development Framework presented has significant flaws, not least that it contradicts the principles of the Strategic Area*

*Framework for the Louis Botha Corridor of Freedom, and has not been subjected to a robust public participation process."*

In the course of 2016 we made several attempts to engage with the City on our concerns, but these really gained momentum with the appointment of the new Mayoral Committee following the August elections. In two sessions held in November the City responded positively to our concerns resulting in: a significant decrease in height (from 10 storeys to 4) and dwellings (down by two thirds) on the Norwood border, an increase in parking ration (to 1.3) to encourage a professional population, and agreement to retain mature vegetation and significant heritage resources. We now believe that if properly implemented the development will have a net positive impact on our neighbourhood.

This is an overview of the direct Norwood impact (developments on the borders of Lucy Lane, William Road, Nellie Road and Frances Road:

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
		<b>Before</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>After</b>	<b>219</b>

### 5.3. Grant Avenue Precinct Plan

The Grant Avenue Precinct Plan was an example of what can be achieved when the City engages in meaningful public participation. We believe that the final Plan will have a beneficial impact on our neighbourhood if properly implemented. But we are cynical about the City's commitment to implementation. The Plan envisages improved pedestrian access on Grant Avenue, but in the meantime the JRA and City Power have destroyed Grant Avenue pavements and have been unresponsive to requests to reinstate them. If the City does not commit capex to the Plan in the new budget period it will have lost all credibility won in the process.

### 5.4. Louis Botha Avenue Corridor of Freedom

The City has published the Orange Grove Special Development Zone (SDZ) planning proposals. They are an improvement on the City's initial thoughts, but we disagree with the City's blanket approach for a neighbourhood that is as diverse as Orange Grove and Orchards, and the City has misrepresented the Heritage planning process. We will be engaging on these matters in the coming months.

### 5.5. Norwood Primary Sports Facilities

Committee member Zenzile Khumalo was the Community Liaison Officer for work that has now been completed on Norwood Primary sports facilities.

## 6. Our Financial Statements

This year saw a marginal increase in resident and business subs contributions. Only eighty-two households and sixteen businesses contributed and sadly, there were fewer direct deposits from residents this year as we collected several resident subs contributions from some of our new residents at the Love Norwood Day event.

We are disappointed at the low participation rate, considering that our suburbs have over 2,000 households and who are often vocal about local issues on local WhatsApp groups and our Facebook page.

After incurring the substantial increase in bank charges during the 2016 financial year, as a direct result of accessing internet banking facilities on our ABSA account, the committee decided to take steps to move our bank account to FNB midway through the year, which included a six month transition period where both account remained open.

No savings were achieved as we had to maintain both accounts for the second half the year. Expected savings due to the migration will reflect in the coming year.

Our single biggest expenditure has been over on R17,000 towards the upkeep of Norwood Park. This will increase to over R20,000 next year.

Cash Reserves increased 65% from R37,622 to R 62,421.

Our thanks to our Treasurer, Frank Julicher, for his management of our finances.

## **7. Association Subs**

The Treasurer also reviewed Resident Association subs across several neighbourhoods with similar demographics (so not Parkhurst) and found that Norwood has one of the lowest annual fees of any Residents' Associations. Most request contributions varying between R50 and R150 per household every month and up to R500 per month per business, which allows the businesses to advertise on the websites and community facebook pages.

With subs income of several hundreds of thousands of rand, these associations are able run several projects in a year in their neighbourhoods.

What could we do with increased income? Assist Norwood Primary school with the repair of their fence, expanding the scope of our Park landscaping efforts to cover the whole of Norwood Park, clean The Avenue and Grant Avenue, maintain drains that are a floods risk, and much more!

We have also set ourselves a target of increasing reserves to at least R100 000 in anticipation of legal challenges or consultations on any issues that the committee believes may harm our community.

Given the community has not increased the annual sub for several years, we will be seeking a vote to increase the annual subs this year to R200 per household and R300 per business.

## **8. Communication**

Members of the new committee enthusiastically applied themselves to the task of a NORA brand refresh, a website redesign, and a new comms strategy involving the use of Mail Chimp to distribute and track mails. Well done to Frank Julicher and Clive Vanderwagen for the fantastic results achieved!

## **9. The Outgoing Committee**

Thank you to 2016/2017 committee for their substantial efforts in making our suburbs work better: Clive Vanderwagen, Raymond Knuppel, Frank Julicher, Marius van Vuuren, Shorai Kaseke, Yael Katz, Giulio Magni, Zenzile Khumalo, Malcolm Goldsmith, Brendan Lombard and Elain Steinberg.

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

### **The year ahead:**

In 2016/2017, 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 an 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