



NORWOOD OAKLANDS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATING ORCHARDS, THE GARDENS AND CHELTONDALE

Report for the Year Ending 28 February 2023

This has yet again been another challenging year for NORA – in fact it was a stormy year for the whole country and indeed the whole world as events such as the Ukraine conflict had implications on the global economy which caused financial market disruption that directly implicated all South African markets. At the same time, we gradually lifted Covid restrictions and learned how to live within the new normal. This turned out not to be unproblematic. Problems which had been shelved or not perceived suddenly were in sharp focus – homelessness and vagrancy, drug addicts in parks, financial tightening which left many on tight budgets, ever increasing security threats and of course the beginnings of the collapse of municipal infrastructure within Johannesburg. As service levels dropped, loadshedding began. We found NORA in a situation where residents had to undertake to clean and maintain the neighborhood or have it fall into disrepair. Thanks to the incredible efforts of the NORA committee this was undertaken in a great spirit and achieved results for which we are all grateful.

Town Planning

NORA's constitutional objectives regarding developments are:

4.2.1. Taking note of town planning, roads and infrastructure planning, outdoor advertising and other applications that may derogate from the amenity of the Area, and objecting and taking other action against these as is necessary;

4.23. Providing comment to the Gauteng Provincial Heritage Resources Authority on applications for alterations, additions or demolitions to properties, as defined in the National Heritage Resources Act.

An important matter of this kind was the development proposed of the property formerly known as Our Parents Home. A notice of proposed demolition of 3 properties on OPH site was first noticed on Saturday 4 February 2023. Submissions for registering as an interested and affected party in terms of the application to be sent to the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority were called for with a submission deadline 20 February 2023 and NORA registered as an interested and affected party on 8 February 2023, noting concerns about the buildings, about the suburb and the environment.

A residents' meeting was held on Sunday 15th January 2023 and NORA representatives attended as well as 50 residents.

On 19th January 100+ residents from NORA region and surrounding suburbs, attended an information session called by developer Africrest. NORA committee member posed questions listed by residents in meeting of 15 January 2023 meeting as well as questions posed on community Whatsapp group, to Developer, Africrest.

NORA raised funds from the affected community and hired, briefed and paid Town Developer, Carolyn Douglas to act in the interests of residents by answering technical legal questions regarding legal requirements around developments, bylaws, building laws, heritage matters. She also went on an Africrest site visit, attended the Africrest presentation on 19th January 2023 and has followed progress of Heritage Impact Assessment progress and been in contact with Developer when required. NPRA retained a watching brief through February 2023. On April 22nd 2023 the Africrest developers called a meeting with NORA at which they produced the complete Heritage Impact Assessment which includes the Site Development Plan. Our town planner has, inter alia noted:

"It has covered all aspects required by the checklist of the Act in respect of the impact and the appraisals thereafter of the quality and significance of the site and its buildings as a Heritage Site evaluated for preservation or permissions to alter , extend or demolish parts or in whole.

- very pleased to see that in the overall proposal they are only using 37.4 % coverage of the site where the rezoning approvals permit a coverage of 60%.
- that the retention of the original OPH building will preserve a memory of the original facility and will form an integral part of the identity and spirit of the proposed new project."

To date the majority of NORA committee members have indicated that they agree with this assessment that the heritage value of the original buildings are medium to low and that retaining the original building is acceptable, the 4 houses opposite the main site have no heritage value. A number of modifications were agreed to by Africrest. The site development plan and these agreements can be discussed after this meeting, under matters arising, since it is still ongoing.

Grant Avenue

Grant Avenue and surrounds (the Norwood CBD) has, for at least the past 15 years, tended to be somewhat problematic. In better times, it seemed vibey and cosmopolitan, but lately comes across as an almost textbook study in urban decay.

The Grant Avenue businesses have seemingly been the architects of their own downfall, unable to cooperate on even the most basic issues of self-interest, e.g. keeping the pavements swept and shoppers safe. In +/- 2009, they turned down a proposal for a Business Improvement District after it had been approved by the COJ, while in 2018, the launch of a management district was announced with great fanfare, but no appreciable improvement resulted.

2022 in particular saw a marked decline in the quality of the Grant Avenue experience, with shoppers, diners and residents being forced to confront litter, overflowing bins, blatant traffic violations and harassment by car guards, as well as begging, vagrancy and rough sleeping in the heart of the CBD.

This was simply the backdrop to the threats, marches and demonstrations by Operation Dudula in December 2022. On the one hand, this led to the collapse of the Grant Avenue Security initiative (due to the arrest of the coordinator), while on the other, it resulted in the Norwood Business Association (NBA) taking centre stage.

Much to the surprise and concern of many, however, the NBA chose not to implement CAP's comprehensive "Grant Avenue Reimagined" proposal, deciding instead to partner with a number of security companies and implement its own security infrastructure and strategy. (This despite the key role and massive deployment of resources by CAP during the Dudula episode, including posting two dedicated CAP guards on Grant in the wake of the protests.)

While there has been some improvement in the whole Grant Avenue "experience", this has not been marked or dramatic, and at least some of it is due to NORA's continued cleaning operations along Grant, as well as its monthly Community Clean-Ups in the area. NORA now cleans The Avenue as well as Grant Avenue.

We have not noted any inclination on the part of the NBA to cooperate with NORA on areas of common interest (which are many). NORA stands ready to work with the NBA for the good of businesses, residents and all other stakeholders in the precinct. We should ultimately attempt to emulate the example of the most successful precincts and suburbs in JHB, where combined business and residents associations prevail.

Fun events

Halloween 2022 on Grant was a huge success! We saw an increased number of scary little people dressed up and enjoying the maze. Store owners contributed in a good spirit, prizes awarded for best dressed and a great time was had by all. Money was raised to pay for a cleaner om Grant Avenue. Congratulations to Nadine Hochter and Taryn Rose for organizing the event and for being there to supervise safety. Thank you!

Our public spaces

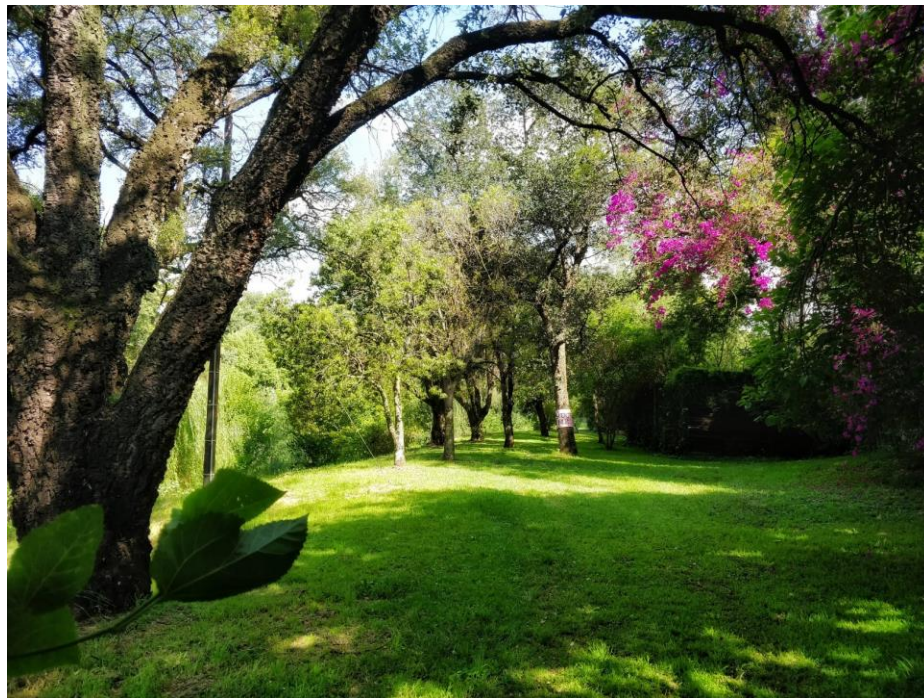
The Gardens Conservancy

The Gardens Conservancy is a beautiful natural and unspoiled open space located along the Orange Grove Stream which surfaces at the southern end of the Norwood Mall parking lot. This space was previously an unkept no-go area with crime, drug-dealing and violence occurring on the stream banks, resulting in serious pollution and vagrants lighting fires against neighboring residents' fences.

Because of the dedication and hard work of The Gardens resident Brett McDougall and volunteers, the area was securely fenced off, cleaned up, cleared of invasive plants and beautified by means of donations of plants and trees. For approximately 10 years Brett has also generously sponsored a gardener, Jonathan, who is passionate about the space and works once a week to plant and maintain the cultivated section of the Conservancy. Brett moved this year but his work has been maintained by an amazing group of dedicated volunteers led by Louis Marx, who ensure that it is litter free, is in good condition, report on any water quality issues and generously donate time and plants. The CAP Green Team has also assisted with a river cleanup, Richard Holmes is another volunteer who passionately and tirelessly works to repair and rehabilitate the stream's banks! He can be seen every weekend ensuring that erosion is minimised and the banks stable. Special thanks to Louise Marx for her work in maintaining the park, supervising cleaning and repairs, gardening and fundraising.

The Conservancy is open every weekend and public holiday from 0700 - 1800 (summer) and 0800 to 1700 (winter) The gates are unlocked, but are kept latched as many visitors' dogs enjoy a good unleashed romp!

We would love even more residents to experience this beautiful neighbourhood treasure!



Norwood Park

The park remains the heart of Norwood and due to its size, it will be an on-going project for NORA until city parks increases its man power and resources allocated to the park. During this year the Norwood Park was maintained by Taryn Rose and her team of volunteers in spite of huge obstacles. A group of drug peddlers using young itinerant boys set up in the park and created a hostile and difficult threat to the cleaners. Taryn Rose is to be congratulated on persisting in the face of these odds, including the heartbreaking destruction of vegetation, fires built under trees, tents erected and then re-erected after JMPD dismantled them, clearing human faeces and the intentional spreading of rubbish that had been collected. It is still NORA's intention to adopt the park with the aim of fencing it, but this will require funding by the residents in a special project. Taryn is thanked for her regular arranging of cleanups on the 1st Sunday of every month during the past year and for supervising cleaners and generally involving the resident helpers with her boundless energy and enthusiasm.



Pretoria Street Bridge Park/ Hilson Park

This park has a stream running through which forms part of our water heritage. It was a dumping ground in 2020 and badly polluted. Thanks to Trevor it was cleared and fenced during 2022 -2023. The fencing was funded largely by residents and businesses and gates were erected. The park to the north of Pretoria Street is not in Oaklands, but Ward 74, however the park is considered as one. The incredible task of maintaining the Pretoria Street park is achieved by Trevor Lunt and his team together with Residents Associations from our neighboring suburbs. In May 2022 a joint operation by JMPD, City Parks and Residents Associations cleared out the park and cleaned the river. The park on the northern side is fenced but still has waste pickers and vagrants. The Pretoria Street Park on Oaklands side is clean. The playground equipment is in urgent need of repair and the jungle gym is in danger of falling due to erosion from the stream. There was a successful cleanup in March in the Pretoria Street park. This part of the park is monitored on a daily basis by Trevor and his team. We thank Trevor for his ongoing work on this park.



Algernon Park

In January 2023 a group initiative of NORA, CAP Green Team and residents cleared up Algernon Park. The park has been identified in the NORA Moms (and Pops and Tots) WhatsApp as a suitable park for younger children, however it had become overgrown and had garbage left by drug users. An excellent turnout resulted in a park that can now be used and communication with neighbors of the park established.



Cheltondale Park

Cheltondale Park continues to be a challenge. In spite of maintenance by Joburg City Parks and cleanups there is very little resident participation. A cleanup was held in June 2022 and only 1 resident turned up and no further support from residents has been offered, although Taryn does Monitor the Park regularly and report issues to JMPD or City Parks.



Special Projects

Taryn Rose working with Richard Holden began NORA's pothole repair project in February 2023. NORA has the permission of Joburg Roads Agency to do this work. It is done on request so NORA members can message Taryn with requests for repairs. It will be funded by NORA so residents are encouraged to pay their subscriptions for repairs in their street. This will hopefully become a much-appreciated service in the year to come.

Financial Statement Review

Income is up year on year 38.1% due to general fund raising initiatives and special projects for which these funds are ring-fenced. Without which donation income has declined 5.6% in line with membership numbers.

Expenditure is down 18.3% year on year as in the prior year Nora undertook a street name painting project at the cost of R38.5k. The result of which is a net income of R41k compared to a loss of R27.4k in the prior year.

The cash position of Nora has improved by R41.5 or 53.3%. The committee remains committed to self-funding projects and reinvesting in the community where our council fails to deliver.

Areas of focus for 2024 should be on growing community and household contributions by demonstrating relevance in the communities we serve.

See attached Financial statement

Councilors

Our thanks to our incredibly helpful and competent councilors Eleanor Huggett and Belinda Kayser-Echeozonjoku, who yet again solved innumerable problems.

Committee Members

Committee members are volunteers who love their neighborhood and generously give of their time and energy. Thanks to Trevor and Taryn, who contributed so much of their time and energy this past year to maintaining our parks – I hate to think what it would be if you hadn't! - Thanks also to Nadine who has managed the Love Norwood Facebook page and website, sent out email newsletters and much more over the last 9 years with such great spirit and care.

Special thanks to Brendon, our outgoing Treasurer who managed finances so brilliantly on a voluntary basis and was always so generous of his time and energy, we will miss you. Special thanks also to Gillian who has taken over so competently – it really is a lot of work on a voluntary basis and we really appreciate it! A warm welcome to the new committee members Amanda, Nic, Russell and Sabina.

As the present Chair, I have seen NORA through the years of lockdown and pandemic and am hopeful that we are through the worst of it. I consequently think it is time to rotate the position of Chair to give a turn to a committee member who can take on the new challenges. The position of NORA Chair will be elected by the new committee.

Thanks also to the Street Reps and to all the people of our neighborhood who participated so energetically in river and park cleanups! We really would love to have more people join us. Please do let us know if you would like to join!

Cindy Meltzer

Chair, Nora Committee 2022 - 20223