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## PHILIPPI AS A HERITAGE RESOURCE

The Philippi area encompasses a distinctive cultural landscape as well as some of the last remaining agricultural and natural landscape within the metropolitan area. This unique landscape is the result of the dynamic relationship between topographical form, climate, geology, usage, history and settlement. This includes the Horticultural area, the sand dunes along the southern border of area, the wetlands ecological/green corridor (Edith Stephans natural park) which links rural and urban domains, as well as the rural area around the old Klipfontein Mission.

The Philippi area juxtaposes urban, rural, industrial and natural environmental elements and contributes to a distinctive character within the city.

## Historic Importance

The broader cultural landscape of the Philippi area has the ability to reveal various roles of the place over time; namely:

- a place used by indigenous hunter gatherers over millennia;
- a grazing ground for Khoi herders dating to the last 2000 years;
- a place of contact between herders and Europeans during the 17th century;
- a colonial farming settlement area during the 19th century onwards;
- a place for the location of urban fringe activities during the mid 20th century onwards;
- a place of separation and fragmentation during the apartheid planning era;
- a place for mass-housing far removed from work opportunities and for township settlement during the late 20th century.

The area reflects the broad patterns and processes underpinning both South African and Cape Town's history. The historical layering reflected in the place ranges from the Early Stone Age (assumed), to the herder and early contact period through the colonial and apartheid era to the democratic period.

The inherited landscape has escalated from gradual change over millennia towards much more rapid change over the last three hundred years, especially the last hundred-and-forty years. Various periods within this history have left their mark in the form of buildings, complexes, ruins, routes and patterns of habitation and of plantings. These physical traces have an ability to demonstrate or contribute to an understanding of a past way of life, technique, design, attitude, tradition or association with an activity, event or a person/s.

These distinctive landscapes include the still intensively farmed inner core of the horticultural area, as well as the fringe to the urban landscape where the land has often become redundant or degraded with invasive activities.

## Heritage Aspects

Major heritage informants for the definition of land outside the urban edge include:

- Very valuable agricultural land
- High-grade silica sand deposits
- Scenic rural landscapes
- Significant green backdrops and distinctive edges to urban development

## Productive farm in the Philippi Horticulture Area



- Rural settings of historical rural precincts
- Ecological and biophysical environments, including river and wetland systems and the Edith Stephans Nature Reserve
- Intensive agriculture
- Gateways between urban and rural landscapes

## Problems encountered in the transitional Urban / Rural areas of the Horticultural area

The area is characterised by a range of issues and concerns:

- Farmsteads and their associated lands have a visual-spatial and historical relationship with the area. Disused farm houses are being vandalised and should rather play a positive role in upgrading the surrounding landscape.
- The area must be carefully managed and controlled to prevent urban encroachment and unsympathetic development. There is a lack of adherence to land use regulations.
- Conflicting land uses without a clear distinction between urban and rural activities could lead to the total loss of this unique area.
- Public utilities and infrastructure, such as sewage and water processing facilities and cemeteries, have a negative impact on the character of the area.
- Industrial activity including car scrap yards, storage of large construction vehicles, have a negative impact on the area.
- Practical difficulties of farming adjacent to urban area, such as crime is degrading the area and agricultural land is under-utilised.
- Illegal and informal settlements accelerate loss of farming area.
- The area has poor levels of security.
- Incorrect perception that land is earmarked for urban development.
- In the south the silica mining and urban intrusion threatens the dune system.
- There is a lack of protection of agricultural land for development. An appropriate relationship between urban, rural and natural environments needs to be implemented by the City.
- Large Scale illegal dumping along roads is creating environmental impact.



Some farms have become dumping yards . . . . .

## Horticultural Area

The Horticultural area is the most valuable land within the Philippi area. This agricultural/rural landscape is both vivid and intact and reveals continuity in terms of land use and response to the terrain. It is a product of a dynamic, creative and cultural interaction between the natural environment and its inhabitants over time. The response of the cultural landscape to the natural landscape is a function, in part, of the carrying capacity of the land and changing agricultural patterns. Farm buildings respond to the natural demands of the context and are placed comfortably in the landscape in terms of scale and form.

The Horticultural Area performs a number of significant roles:

- It serves as the interface between the city and farmland. The area is a large green lung for the surrounding residential area.
- It provides an ecological link to the False Bay coast via Strandfontein and Weltevreden Expressway.
- It exhibits a range of conservation-worthy qualities, namely historical, aesthetic, social and scientific.
- It provides amenity spaces for the urban environment in the form of nurseries, riding schools as well as being an educational environment.
- The historical fabric associated with earlier rural land uses, is embedded within the area: the homesteads, the landforms generated by farming requirements such as the water dams and the use of long rows of branches and bushes as windbreaks. The large clumps of gum trees soften the edges and create distinctly different sub-spaces within the larger whole.
- The characteristic tendency to plant clumps of blue-gum trees for shade and wind protection, further accentuate their significant landscape value.

The Philippi horticultural area, comprises several features which are integral to the various components of the city-wide 'green space':

- Major component of the ecological conservation areas and green corridors as per CMOSS (Cape Metropolitan Open Space System)
- It is part of an integrated green web system, such as the Lotus River stormwater relief system and detention system.
- Abuts open space systems such as the Strandfontein sewer plant which is a direct link to the False Bay coast contributes to a unique and special public open space.
- Contains dune thicket in southern portion.
- It has the Varkensvlei Forest Reserve.
- Contains the Edith Stephan Wetland Nature Park as part of the Cape Flats Nature Reserve



Farm Schultz, 1899 © Bid en Werk, 1983; Lizette Rabe

## Protection Measures for Philippi

- A heritage mapping survey and report has been compiled of the area.
- This survey has analysed the heritage significance of the area and has recommended that some areas be declared Heritage Areas with specific conservation guidelines for each area.

The following areas are recommended as Heritage Areas:

- The Horticultural Area
- The German Church complex
- Edith Stephan's Nature Reserve
- Springfield Estate
- Ottery Road Precinct
- Klipfontein Rural Area
- Sand Dune Area



Typical farm house built on higher ground



Long dam used to drain and store water



Stud farms: new modern uses

# SPECIFIC AREAS OF HERITAGE RESOURCES

These areas have varying degrees of heritage significance. These short descriptions describe the significance of some of these areas

## 1 Klipfontein Methodist Mission



This Methodist mission community is one of the oldest in the area. Established in 1849, it became a Wesleyan Mission in 1864. Although the church has withdrawn from running the community it still has a primary school and church there.

A distinctive characteristic of this rural area, are the profusion of large gum trees. The approximately 220 houses are loosely scattered along winding sandy or gravel roads and paths. There are many tin houses.

## 2 Avenues and scenic routes



The metropolitan significance of the Philippi area relates to the presence of a number of major scenic routes, namely Weltevreden, Strandfontein, Klipfontein, Ottery, Varkensvlei and Stock roads. All these traverse a range of noteworthy peri-urban, agricultural and rural landscapes. With the exception of Varkensvlei Road, these are avenues planted with gum trees which are significant landmarks in this flat environment.

## 3 Browns Farm residential area

This area, originally called "Die Duine", (the Dunes) was mainly used for grazing until in the 1970's. There were a few farms as well as a German church at the intersection of Sheffield and Neu Eisleben Road. The church was built early in 1900's and enlarged in 1947.

The history of the townships to the east of Philippi horticultural area, like most black South African townships, is linked to a myriad of apartheid policies. It is linked to the 'homelands' which were seen as labour reserves and the joblessness and poverty that existed there.

Most people in Philippi townships came from the former Ciskei and Transkei homelands and settled in places like Nyanga, Langa, Gugulethu. Due to political conflict and violence within these communities, Philippi increasingly became a place of refuge.

The farmers started to leave and by the 1990's all had left their farms. The church no longer functions but the Lutheran Pastor has set up an Aids assistance centre there. The old German graveyard located opposite the church had most of the graves exhumed early in the 1990's. The area is now densely occupied with informal shacks.

The mature gum trees that line parts of Neu-Eisleben, Stock and old Klipfontein Roads have contextual significance, and contribute visual and spatial qualities in this vast and flat landscape.

The present inhabitants of the area have expressed a need for a place to memorialize the history of Philippi in the form of a "garden of remembrance". The old police station could be a suitable location.

## 4 Edith Stephans Wetlands Nature Reserve



The reserve is part of a few remaining protected natural environments located on the Cape Flats. It protects various plant species endemic to this context such as seasonal wetland, sandplein fynbos and rare dune thicket as well as various bird species. The Park has ecological and biophysical as well as scientific and social significance.

## 5 Old Philippi Police Station

The police station moved to its new location on the corner to Ottery Road in the 1970's. The old station still exists but is now a used car parts warehouse.

During political unrest in early 1960 in the Nyanga bush, the police shot a child and the body was taken to the Philippi police station for identification.

The famous Afrikaans poet Ingrid Jonker visited the station and saw the body of the child. In March 1960, she published the poem "Die Kind" (the child). Shortly afterwards she committed suicide by drowning in the sea off Mouille Point. Nelson R. Mandela recited this poem at the opening of SA's first democratically elected parliament in 1994.

This building has very important associational, social and cultural significance and could play a further role in healing in our society.

## 6 Ottery Road Precinct (northern end)

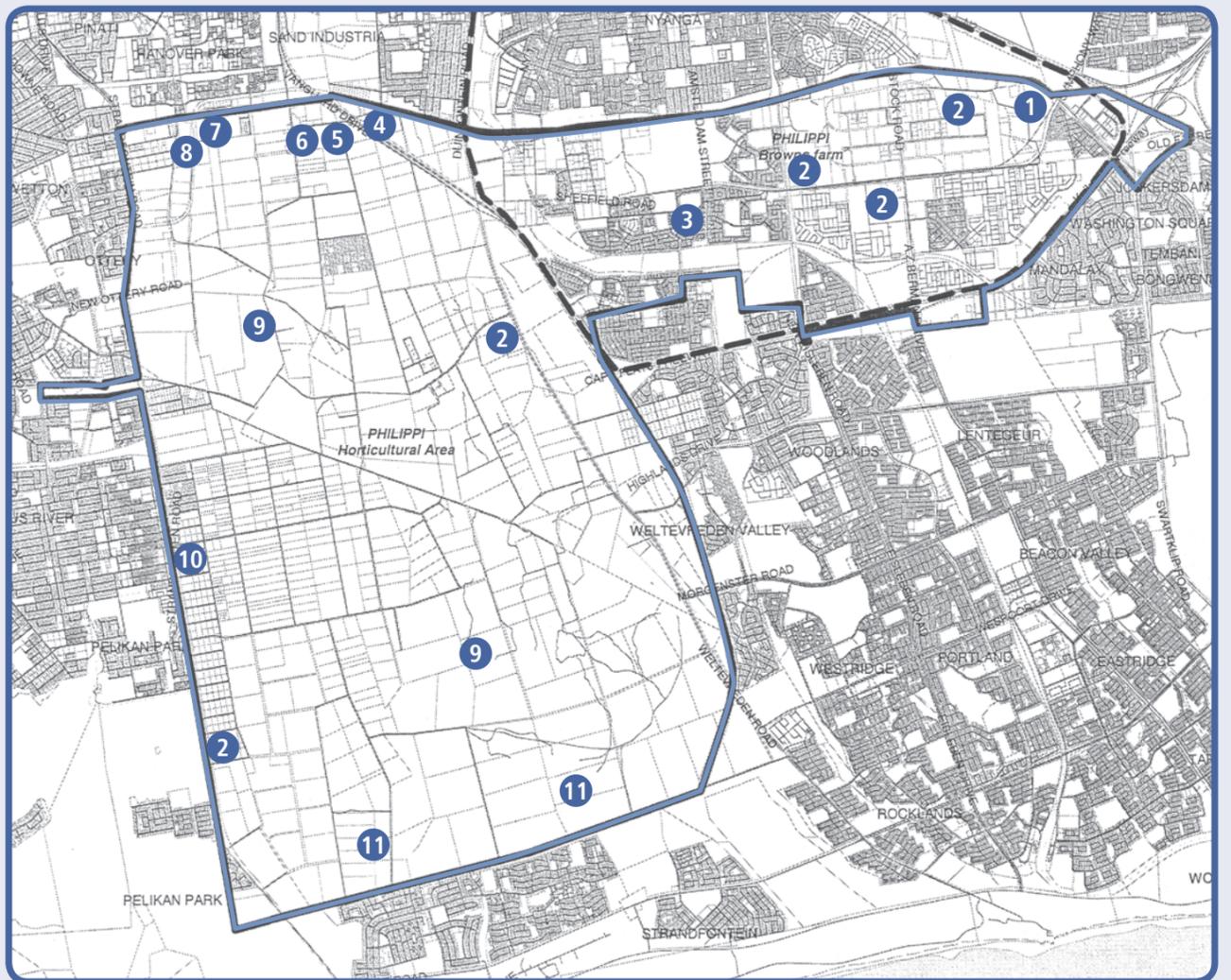


Old Landsdowne Road used to make a sharp right and left turn before it carried on eastward. Ottery Road joined this dogleg from the south and reinforced its importance as a junction for this area.

Public institutions such as the post office and police station, where located near this junction. The western edge of Ottery Road has been fairly extensively built up with houses. The eastern side has the well-preserved farmhouse on Philippi Plaas farm.

The houses vary in size and architectural detail. Some are large houses built between the 1920s and 1930s in the gabled "Victorian" and Cape Dutch revival type with substantial verandahs. Some houses were built very close to the road whereas others have large front gardens.

The houses generally have intrinsic significance and create a memorable urban streetscape in this farming context.



The present condition of almost all of the houses is quite poor as they no longer are used as houses but are being used as businesses such as car wreck lots and building material storage yards.

## 7 Springfield Estate Precinct (Hilton and Mornay Roads)



This is one of the earliest residential subdivisions in the area. The two roads with their identical erven are situated next to the old Springfield School, which was built in 1905 to counteract the German school.

Of the thirty-odd erven, about half have been built on, most of them in Hilton Road. The houses are generally similar in size with corrugated iron or tiled-hipped roofs. Many houses are symmetrical around a protruding covered stoep, are square in plan and have a similar sized front garden with large backyards.

Enhancing the residential urbanity of the area are the large mature trees and planting between the street and houses. Boundary treatment is mostly similar low brick walls and large front gardens.

The last house in Mornay Street is an original tin house with an attached brick and plaster stoep. The area has an urban consistency that is significant and creates memorable places within this farming area.

## 8 Old German Church Complex



This is the spiritual and cultural home of the descendants of the German farming community. The precinct is built on one of the higher ridges in the area and was called "Zionhöhe" (Zion's Height). In the centre of the complex is the church, built in 1897 (where services were conducted in German until 1957), which is almost entirely surrounded by gum and palm trees. To the south of the church is the graveyard with mature palm, gum and cypress trees.

The northern part of the complex has an impressive avenue of gums, which used to lead from the church to the old entrance on Landsdowne Road. On the western side of this old entrance was the school building presently a Sunday school and museum, as well as an L-shaped late Victorian teachers' house. The old "Victorian" pastor's house was demolished in the sixties and replaced with a modern house.

The complex is a legible landmark and contributes to a sense of place in the broader context.

## 9 Horticultural area



The German immigrants arrived in Philippi mostly in 1877/78 and 1883. The latter group came from the Lüneburger Heide in northern Germany, a region with similar sandy and marshland conditions as the Cape Flats.

The immigrants were poor but they were skilled farm hands as well as craftsmen. In a short time they changed the natural landscape into a cultural landscape with a distinct German look. The German image is enhanced by the physical presence and spiritual role of the Lutheran church. The farmers' union, the Kaapse Vlakte- en Distrik -Boerevereniging (Cape Flats and District Farmers Association) is now the oldest farmers' union in South Africa. The farms were family enterprises in which every member of the family took part. In an astonishingly short time Philippi became known as the market garden of Cape Town, providing much of the city's vegetables.

It is estimated that only about 10% of the original farming area still remains but the farmland, farmsteads, church complex, trees, hedges and even methods used by the early settlers to manage the shifting sand-dunes, finding and preserving water (dams partly still in use), irrigation methods, etc., are all more than a hundred years old. What remains of the German settlement is a veritable open-air and rural living museum.

The Philippi market garden is still active. It produces tons of vegetables and flowers annually for local consumption and export. It is labour-intensive and, a source of employment for the communities in the vicinity.

This distinctive farming landscape is unique in the city. It forms a large green

lung within a dense urban environment. It provides a valuable resource for diverse employment opportunities, recreational enjoyment and cultural activities.

## 10 Strandfontein Road small holdings area



This area is quite different to the other areas. There are some old farm buildings amongst the structures but generally they have been so altered that they no longer can offer any heritage significance.

Some of the more established areas do exhibit some special qualities formed by established gardens and planted boundary treatments

The larger erven have however attracted usage that are in conflict with each other and in particular with the farming area and are having a detrimental effect on the whole area.

## 11 Coastal dune area



The undulating dune landscape and ridges in the south of the horticultural area are the last remaining intact dunes in the area. They form the only elevated landform in the area. The dunes are a reminder of the great size and physical barrier these dunes were in the early history of the area.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

If your property is situated in a Heritage Area, your building is older than 60 years or you believe it may have heritage value, it is advisable to discuss your proposals in sketch form with your local Planning and Environment office and particularly with the Heritage Resources Section, who will advise you about any regulations or laws that might impact on your proposed building work.

The officials of the Heritage Resources Section also advise architects and designers on appropriate designs for Heritage Areas and historic buildings. Other Heritage Advice pamphlets in this series include:

- 1 Heritage Resources, 2 Heritage Areas, 3 Cultural Landscapes and Historic Vegetation, 4 Design Guidelines for a Heritage Context, 5 Boundary Enclosures in Heritage Areas and to Historic Buildings, 6 Garages and Carports in Heritage Areas and Historic Buildings, 7 Roofs in Heritage Areas and of Historic Buildings, 8 Security in Heritage Areas and for Historic Buildings, 9 Langa Heritage, 10 Company's Gardens, 11 Alterations and Additions in Historic Residential Areas (Woodstock, Salt River, Observatory and Wynberg East), 12 Guidelines for work in St. James & Kalk Bay Heritage Area, 13 Guidelines for work in Bo-Kaap Heritage Area, 14 Guidelines for work in Bungalows' Heritage Areas, 15 Guidelines for work in Mamre Heritage Area, 16 Philippi Heritage Information Brochure