



Friends and Neighbours

An initiative to increase community awareness of and appreciation for the False Bay Ecology Park



SUMMARY

'Friends and Neighbours' is an initiative of the False Bay Ecology Park (FBEP) steering committee that seeks to build meaningful and effective relationships with neighbouring communities. The intention is to implement processes and projects that ensure the integration of the conserved area into local landscapes for the benefit of those living adjacent to the park, and the improved conservation and protection of the FBEP through education. The initiative is motivated by the need to increase awareness of, and appreciation for, the work of the park, facilitate community buy-in to its programmes and projects, and improve environmental literacy among Capetonians.

The City needs to develop a people-centred approach to nature conservation which is about looking for common ground and mutual benefits, and building bridges between people and nature. It's a slow, long-term, time and energy consuming approach that is centred on the belief that the biggest threat to biodiversity is not people, but ignoring people.

There are various aspects to 'The Other Side of the Fence' – each implemented by different stakeholders. These include the existing library and crèche, a community centre and a community garden.

BACKGROUND

The FBEP is bordered on three sides by very different urban communities. This makes it important that, in its management approach, the park recognises the need to interact with surrounding communities in such a way as to build meaningful relationships with its neighbours. These should provide value to the

IDP LINKAGES



Caring city



Inclusive city



Safe city



Opportunity city



Well-run city

The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is a plan for how the City will prioritise its budget spending over a five-year cycle. The IDP is agreed between local government and residents, and is adjusted to accommodate changing needs.

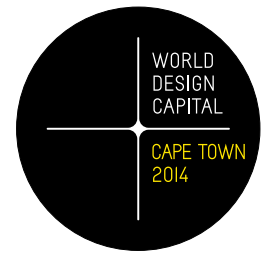
ENABLERS

Economic,
Environmental and
Spatial Planning
Directorate:
Environmental Resource
Management
Department

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This case study describes one of the City of Cape Town's innovative projects that demonstrates how the City applies **design-led thinking** to support City strategies and goals and help to improve the lives of residents. For more, scan the QR code alongside or see www.capetown.gov.za/WDC2014/



communities and demonstrate that the park is actively engaged with, and interested in, improving the quality of life for all Capetonians according to its mandate and in line with its own resources.

In light of the national strategy on buffer zones around protected areas, proclaimed in February 2012, the City has taken the opportunity to encourage positive relationships between its own nature reserves and their surrounding communities. FBEP recognises and adheres to the principles guiding the national strategy, and recognises “environmentally sound and sustainable development adjacent to protected areas” as vital for a healthy green economy.

The current activities and proposed intervention in Village Heights has been termed ‘The Other Side of the Fence’, as the project seeks to connect the communities which live on both sides. Several components have been identified through community engagement: Clearing alien vegetation, solving the illegal dumping problem, a nature garden, a children’s play area, food allotments and, most importantly, a safety and security aspect.

To fulfil these objectives, the project draws from a multi-disciplinary team of role players. The Village Heights community ensures that residents’ needs inform the aims and objectives of the initiative while the FBEP steering committee provides oversight of the project and strategic guidance. Zandvlei Trust, Projects Abroad and volunteers, Abalimi Bezekhaya and City departments (Solid Waste Management, the Alien Invasive Unit, City Parks and Economic Development) provide resources and expertise to ensure that each of the project components is accomplished in a manner that also increases the social capital in the community.

‘The Other Side of the Fence’ is part of the ‘Friends and Neighbours’ approach, which seeks to implement projects in different communities around the park that will better integrate the nature reserve with neighbouring communities. These are identified through community champions or clear needs as expressed by community representatives.

Thus far, the project has achieved the following:

- A strengthened relationship between the community and the neighbouring nature reserve.
- Invasive vegetation has been cleared from the buffer zone and this not only gives the community better views of the nature reserve but also created employment for ten community members who were on the invasive clearing team.
- The involvement of multi-disciplinary team has also resulted in improved communication between the community and the Solid Waste Department. This has enhanced an understanding of responsibilities and rights.
- A vegetable garden has been established for the community. Investment in the training and skills transfer to community members is under way.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN LINKAGES

- **CARING CITY:** The project beneficiaries are living in poverty and have benefited through improved living and health conditions, the creation of enhanced children’s facilities at the crèche, a vegetable garden and opportunities to access the nature reserve
- **INCLUSIVE CITY:** The stakeholders’ forum is representative of the beneficiary community and surrounding interested and affected organisations. This upholds the impact of developing a people-centred approach to nature, conservation which looks for common and mutual benefits, building bridges between people and nature and recognising that the biggest threat to biodiversity is not people, but ignoring people.
- **OPPORTUNITY CITY:** The project is based on taking an opportunity to promote a win-win through working with park management and the community ‘on the other side of the fence’, and utilising opportunities with minimal budget and maximum energy to deliver results.
- **SAFE CITY:** A large part of the strategic outcome of the project is to secure the vulnerable western boundary of the nature reserve, by building strong community buy-in due to tangible benefits to the community as opposed to bigger, higher fences.

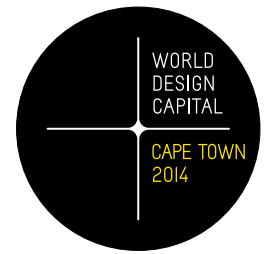
DESIGN THINKING

Design-led thinking is a collaborative and user-centric process through which challenges are identified and creatively addressed to deliver innovative and relevant solutions. With the responsibilities placed on a city administration, the core driver for embracing design-led thinking is the improvement of the quality of life of citizens, the ethos that underpins the World Design Capital programme.

DESIGN TOOLS

For an explanation of the key constructs which support design-led thinking in project conception, design and implementation, see the [Toolbox](#).

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● **WELL-RUN CITY:** Efficiency in government can be assessed according to the efficiency and effectiveness with which the public's money is spent. Much of the City's budget goes toward service delivery. A recent publication – *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* – emphasised the important role of intact ecosystems and protected areas for the delivery of basic services. This efficient use of time and money is in the public's best interest. It can also contribute to an improved relationship between the community and its government as they work as partners to build a community treasure.

HOW HAS DESIGN BEEN USED?

Of the key tools which support design-led thinking in project conception, creation and implementation, the following are fundamental to the success of this project:

- + **INNOVATION CO:** The project is an initiative of the False Bay Ecology Park steering committee, comprising City line functions and a similar number of community organisations. This committee has contributed ideas to some extent, but lacks ongoing input through the project cycle.
- + **DREAM TEAM:** The project has been informed and guided by a multi-disciplinary stakeholders' forum, including City and Provincial Government (seven line functions), business, academic, civil society and private sector representatives. The project beneficiaries are also represented on the forum.
- + **CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION:** Project beneficiaries have been involved in the project from the outset – represented on Project stakeholders' forum. Workshops are held with the community to define project. Special days are used to promote community involvement (e.g. Mandela Day, Arbor Day).
- + **EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH:** While there is a 'big plan' strategic overview to strengthen community buy-in along the western boundary of the FBEP, the pilot nature of the project in Village Heights has enabled the identification and implementation of a number of quick wins, which were identified by the community at the project commencement. There are regular report-backs to the FBEP's steering committee and an evaluation of the project's effectiveness is currently underway.
- + **QUICK DELIVERY:** Similar to above – emphasis has been on demonstrating tangible benefits to the local community before looking to extend the project further. Risks have been taken (successfully) given a limited budget to implement capital projects with unspent funds within short timeframes.
- + **OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION:** More could be done to make information available to others – both within the City and externally. One of the civil society partners (Zandvlei Trust) has created a project website; sharing photos through social networks has been done, but lack of capacity in the project management team and focus on delivery on the ground has inhibited a more rigorous compilation of information.
- + **BIG THINKING, LOCALISED IMPACT:** Five executive directors supported this project and identified key persons to represent them in the field at a site inspection when a specific community challenge arose. This contact offers the potential to develop a high-level team for more permanent engagement.
- + **COMMUNITY AT THE CENTRE, CREATIVITY ON THE FRINGE:** Experts in certain fields (both City officials and external partners) have contributed to the success of this project during its implementation. Arguably more could have been done in the planning stages to engage innovation champs to motivate and deliver a budget. The project was developed in response to urgent issues on the ground, and possibly lacked optimal planning and engagement at the outset.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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