

IMAGINE PRINCESS VLEI



A COMMUNITY VISION



BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

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HISTORY

MEMORY

LEGEND

COMMUNITY

NATURE

IMAGINATION

SPIRIT

The Soul of Princess Vlei

*“ We come here to baptise because the Holy Spirit is in these waters. If they build a mall here, they will anger God.”
Joseph Dai, Holiness Church of God, Inyanga*

INTRODUCTION

Princess Vlei is a complex site, with a complex history. Its natural features, location, and social and cultural heritage come together to create a space that is uniquely placed to bridge many divides in our divided City.

For this reason, the vision that we have created for Princess Vlei was submitted to the World Design Capital under the theme: **Bridging the divide**. This perfectly sums up the role that the space could play with the right sort of development. However, equally, with inappropriate development such as the large-scale shopping mall proposed for this site, Princess Vlei can entrench divisions that exist in our city.

The Princess Vlei Forum is an association of concerned individuals and organisations, formed to:

- **Protect the space:** to ensure through legal and civic action that the land is not sold, and that the public open space around the vlei is granted long term protection on environmental and heritage grounds
- **Imagine the space:** To gather and consolidate a community vision for how the space could be developed as a nature and heritage park
- **Claim the space:** encourage community use of the space for different activities
- **Build connections, and empower community** members through networking and organised action.

Through all of the above processes, we have formulated a vision of how the space can be used, a vision that is:

- Rooted in community needs;

- Has grown organically by seeing how communities engage with the space;
- Honours the many tangible and intangible values the space has for communities.

This document summarises this vision.



Figure 1 The work of Princess Vlei Forum

GROWING OUR VISION

When local community conservationist Kelvin Cochrane began with the rehabilitation project of Dressing the Princess, he would walk the banks of Princess Vlei and imagine something different there, something that would beautify the space and nurture both people and nature. Over the years, these dreams grew as more people joined the conversation about what they would like to see at Princess Vlei, and these ideas were consolidated in the People's Plan.

The People's Plan was used to start a conversation with pensioners, school children, nature lovers, historians, shopkeepers... people from all walks of life. But this was just the beginning of the conversation. We wanted to deepen and enrich the plan through workshops and discussions with all who have an interest in Princess Vlei. To this end we formed the World Design Capital Subcommittee, a group of design professionals, conservations and community activists, which was responsible for putting forward our proposal to the WDC, but also for driving the process of community consultation.

Over the past few months we have:

- Held place-making workshops with different community groups. These workshops have involved site visits, group discussions, and interacting with an aerial photograph of the space.
- Collected responses through questionnaires and an online survey.
- Interviewed user groups at the vlei.
- Hosted a range of events at the vlei which have deepened our understanding of how the space can be used to build

community, build bridges, promote a sense of ownership and responsibility; promote environmental awareness; and harness creativity and vision. Activities at these events have included art, drama, planting Fynbos and trees, clean ups, educational hikes, Scouts, sailing and Canoeing, prayer meetings, cultural rituals, kite flying, bird watching, dancing and many others.

- Engaged with designers, conservationists and other relevant professionals.

This document summarises the findings of these processes. We believe that it provides a solid springboard for developing a relevant and visionary plan for Princess Vlei that can be synthesised with the existing Management Plan of the area. We hope that the City authorities take this groundwork into account, should the mall proposal be scrapped and other options considered for Princess Vlei.



Figure 2: Group discussion at a workshop to discuss a vision for Princess Vlei

CAPTURING THE SOUL OF PRINCESS VLEI

“ My haven of refuge I found
Where the carp and the trout abound;
Where the Weeping Willow softly sway.
This, dear Reader, is Princess Vlei.”

Cecilia Johnson, 90, Grassy Park Resident

“Princess Vlei is not just land and water waiting to be destroyed.
It’s a place of memories, our heritage and our life.”

Kaitlin Spiers, Steenberg Primary

The vlei is more than the water, the vlei is more than the vegetation around it, the vlei has a soul. And it gives expression to our souls, and to what we believe in ...

Philip Bam, Chairperson Princess Vlei Forum

Before exploring the vision that has emerged, it is important to give some background to the site.

Princess Vlei is a contested site, with a layered history. Like any landscape with a long engagement with human settlements, it is has meant many different things to different communities.

The rich mythology and history of the vlei speaks of genocide, slavery, dispossession, marginalisation, discrimination, and gender violence... but also of community, family, spirit and healing. It holds collective memory and identity, and one of the few links to our Khoisan heritage, still living in its name and legend; it is a refuge for wildlife, a water source and a garden

Princess Vlei has four particular features that make it worth conserving, and also provide an important context for any vision of how the space should be used.

Location:

Situated on the border between formerly “coloured” and white group areas, and accessible to both wealthy and poor, the Princess Vlei is ideally located to offer a meeting point for Capetonians from diverse backgrounds. It can also provide much needed green and recreational space for the bleak lower income housing estates nearby. However, its proximity to lower income communities mean that its resource base is limited, and it also faces the security challenges of any open space in this context. Community engagement, and creating a space that has multiple uses and attractions will help to mitigate against these concerns.



Figure 3 Princess Vlei is a vital green lung for the bleak housing estates in the area, reconnecting urbanised communities with nature.

Ecology

Princess Vlei is the first substantial water body in the massive wetland system extending through Grassy Park to Strandfontein. As a wetland, it offers a range of ecosystem services such as mitigating winter floods, providing habitat, purifying water, and retaining nitrogen, lowering the demands on public sewage and water worksⁱ. These functions are particularly urgent now for building resilience to climate change.

Princess Vlei also has value in sustaining the fragile floral kingdom of the Western Cape, which is a world heritage site. A 2008 Biodiversity Network study established that Cape Flats Dune Fynbos - the most critically endangered vegetation in South Africa - could be restored at Princess Vlei, which would be of huge benefit in protecting the diversity of this fragile biome. This process of restoration has begun through in a civic-led rehabilitation project: Dressing the Princess.

Princess Vlei also offers an opportunity to reconnect highly urbanised societies with nature, and to be a centre of practice for community rehabilitation projects throughout the region. To do this, it needs to be accessible to these communities, which means it needs to serve a recreational as well as conservation function. It is important to remember that the passion with which people have defended this space is because it has always been accessible – they have grown up there, played there, swum there, fished there. People are passionate about the nature at the site because they have had the opportunity to be in it. Had it been fenced off with limited access, they would have little connection, and would not have come to its defence.

Figure 4 Fynbos garden planted by high school students. Community efforts such as this have transformed the area.



History

“The Princess Vlei campaign is part of a much wider campaign to remember that landscapes form part of people’s identity... So often developers choose areas with no idea of stories that have emanated from this landscape. By destroying these landscapes, they close the doors on a wealth of memory and deprive communities of their sense of belonging. In damaging the landscape, you damage the soul of the community.”

Ian McCallum, Author and environmentalist

Princess Vlei derives its name from a story of a Khoi Princess overpowered and raped by Portuguese sailors, whose tears flowed down the mountain to fill up the vlei. It is one of the few Khoisan myths about a natural feature in our city that still persists in different versions, passed down orally through multiple generations.

While the veracity of this story cannot be established, tests have shown that there has been human activity around Princess Vlei for several thousand years, and it was certainly a site occupied by Khoisan communities.

The earliest record of human disturbance of the environment with minor impact happened about 2000 years ago when Khoi herders arrived at the vlei to settle and graze their cattle. About 300 to 400 years ago the vlei would have had ample supplies of waterblommetjies, one of the few edible fynbos plants. The run off of herbicides from agriculture killed most of the waterblommetjie in the Cape.

In the 1960’s, under Group Areas Act, whites who lived on the “wrong side” of Princess Vlei were forced out of their homes to accommodate so-called “coloureds” who had been forcibly removed from areas closer to the city.

As the apartheid planners imposed their vision of a Balkanised city, carving the neighbourhoods into racially defined townships, Princess Vlei became one of the few recreational natural spaces where those not classified white could go to fish, play and gather for braais and picnics. It became a place for working out in community the pain of being forced into mean precincts because of racist discrimination. It has also long been a site for water immersion baptism, attracting church groups from all over South Africa.

As a “coloured” amenity, the vlei was neglected and degraded by the authorities, exacerbated by the widening of Prince George Drive which polluted the vlei and cut it off from Grassy Park, Lotus River and Parkwood.

However, the bid to build a shopping mall on its banks has galvanised the community into reclaiming and rehabilitating the space. For some years, the community has been engaged in a discourse about what is meaningful and valuable in this space, while doing the work of restoration. This engagement has enabled us to develop a vision that is organic and deeply rooted in the community.

Figure 5 The vlei is a strong repository of collective memory and identity, as is reflected in the memories of people such as 90 year old Cecilia Johnson who has lived near it for her whole life,



GIVING SHAPE TO THIS VISION

There can be few public spaces in Cape Town that have been as hotly debated as Princess Vlei. This highly publicised environmental and heritage struggle has taken the vlei outside the ghetto, connecting it to citizens from all over the metropolis and beyond.

One would expect with so many voices joining this chorus that the vision would be fragmented, contested and contradictory. But amongst those who have rejected the mall, there is remarkable synergy to the vision. There are minor variations – some emphasise the recreational aspect more than the natural, but all give value to both the natural and heritage features of the space.

The vision that has emerged may be distilled follows:

That Princess Vlei and its surrounds should be developed as a nature and heritage park at Princess Vlei, where both the social and natural heritage are conserved, celebrated, and made accessible to its visitors.

What does this mean in practice?

In most of the processes we have engaged in, we begin with a simple question:

What do you value about Princess Vlei?

There are varied answers, but they may be encapsulated in the following three points:

- It is a place to **connect** with nature
- It is a place to **connect** with people

- It is a place to **connect** with the spirit

These three may be competing usages of the space, but with sensitive design the can also be complementary. The challenge for any design framework of the space is to maximise the opportunities for different types of connection offered by the space, while holding these usages in balance.

In the course of exploring the vision with different groups, and in the course of engaging with different types of activity on the vlei, we have identified many such opportunities. This is why we entered the project under the theme of Building Bridges in the World Design Capital. These opportunities are explored below:



Figure 6 Planting enables the children to feel a real connection with the earth. They make a difference, and build a future.

Building connection through design

Connecting with nature

Princess Vlei offers several opportunities for ecosystem-linked connectivity, which any design will need to enhance:

- It is an important link in the chain of **watercourses** and wetlands flowing from the southern mountain chain to the sea. It plays a critical role in connecting these, and in fulfilling ecosystem services such as flood alleviation, water storage, habitat, breeding grounds for fish, and purification of water.
- The vlei also has floral and faunal **biodiversity** on its banks, proving a valuable **corridor** of connection for these systems. Although the vegetation is in poor condition, a 2008 Biodiversity Network study identified it as an “irreplaceable consolidation” area in support of the adjacent wetland and Strandveld vegetation. Restoring and sustaining these systems is important to honour Cape Town’s commitment to conserve the Fynbos Kingdom, which is a world heritage site.
- The site can play a valuable role in supporting **biodiversity corridors** elsewhere in the Cape Flats by providing a nursery and knowledge centre to spread the knowledge required for Fynbos conservation. The City Parks Department is actively encouraging the creation of small communal gardens in open spaces – a centre such as this could provide the resources and knowledge to plant appropriate indigenous vegetation on road verges and open spaces, thereby strengthening biodiversity corridors.
<http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/Pages/CParksidentifiespilotCommGardenProject.aspx>. A nursery and conservation centre could help with this.

- The site can also play an important role in **reconnecting communities with nature** and promoting environmental awareness, by making a natural area accessible to highly urbanized neighbouring communities. The design needs to enable communities to enjoy nature with low impact, through raised walkways, bird hides etc. and to make nature accessible through providing educational opportunities
- In the long term, **ecoduct** bridges over Prince George Drive could facilitate connections with biodiversity corridors running through the Grassy Park area, thereby linking the vlei to the Rondevlei and Zeekoeivlei reserves.
- Princess Vlei can play a **gateway** role to the other sites in the greater **False Bay Ecology Park**, complimenting the efforts at these sites and introducing visitors to the other spaces.

Any built structures need to be low impact, both in terms of their environmental footprint, and their intrusiveness, to promote its identity as a nature conservation area. The entire space needs to be conceptualized to allow for higher trafficked more recreational areas, and lower impact areas where biodiversity can flourish.

Connecting with people

Princess Vlei abuts areas with poverty-related problems, including substance abuse; domestic and gender violence and gang related crime. It has played an important role in building connections within families and communities, and helping to forge cohesive social units more able to deal with these challenges. These connections can be further facilitated through braai and picnic areas, walkways and hiking trails.

A safe, recreational space could provide children and youth with a place to congregate and connect in a healthy and positive way. This could be through formal activities such as classes in martial

arts, dance, sailing or canoeing, which could be enabled with built features such as a small community centre, club house, jetties for boating.

There could also be facilities for informal congregation, such as a playground, skateboard park or restaurant. While many youth have asked for a skateboard park, if this is too high impact more eco-friendly opportunities for challenging physical activities could be explored. Any built structures would need to synthesise with the aesthetic value of the vlei, and have minimal impact on the ecosystem services and biodiversity. It is suggested that structures have multiple functions, to minimise how many you would need.

Existing community facilities (such as the Retreat Civic, Jolly Carp, the City Eco-adventure centre) could be reconnected to the space to enhance their community-making capacities.

A balanced mix of these types of activities will encourage use of the vlei by different groups at different times, enhancing its safety and attractiveness as a connecting space. A stable could provide riding opportunities and a location for a mounted security force to keep horses. This will also greatly enhance the safety factors.

The site provides opportunities for **connection across historical rifts** and divisions. The entire project, if done sensitively, can be a living testimony to the City's commitment to healing past wounds, and to building a shared and equitable future. As a site with easy access to black and white, and rich and poor communities, Princess Vlei offers a space where Capetonians from diverse backgrounds can connect in an organic and spontaneous way.

More specific features enhancing its healing capacity could be included, such as a garden of healing, with a memorial wall for those who have lost their lives in the vlei; a labyrinth, a small museum or interactive display to recall the Legend of the Princess and educate visitors about the Khoisan communities; a display

around group areas and forcible removals and Princess Vlei's significance (these features can also be incorporated creatively in other features, such as a children's play park; a 'bridge of reconciliation' across the canal to symbolically reconnect Cape Town's different communities and enable a walk around the vlei).

Further connection could be provided by locating Princess Vlei as the starting point of three hikes: one around the vlei, that links the two halves of the divided communities; a hike along the waterways through Elfindale, Bergvliet, and Constantia up to the Elephant's Eye cave, and a hike through the wetlands of Rondevlei, Zeekoeivlei, the sewage works, along the coast to Macasser dunes reserve. These hikes could enable visitors to experience socationature – how we have impacted on nature through history, and how nature has shaped us.

Connecting with spirit

The site's rich cultural history offers myriad opportunities for connection with memory and identity, and our Khoisan heritage. This connection can be enabled through art or memorial structures, interactive displays, in chosen names, in facilities for educational programmes, ceremonies, and events.

The site offers immense spiritual connection through its function as a baptism site. This connection can be enabled with facilities for changing clothes and dedicated spaces to allow baptism to occur in a dignified and secluded manner. There has also been a suggestion for a non-denominational chapel to be used by different groups – this could be an outdoor structure. Other suggestions include meditation gardens and a labyrinth.

In addition to these, the Vlei provides the following opportunities:

Connection to knowledge, wisdom and skill

The Vlei has already been used as an educational resource by a number of schools. Here pupils learn about life sciences by testing the water; planting and tending Fynbos (seedlings are cultivated at the schools); observing birds and other wildlife. In addition, they learn life skills such as civic responsibility, teamwork, planning ahead, leadership, and connection to nature, each other and place.

The educational power of Princess Vlei could be enhanced with the creation of a centre of knowledge around the ecosystems featuring in that area. This could make it a hub of knowledge generation, to guide similar rehabilitation projects and neighbourhood Fynbos gardens in surrounding communities. Some kind of built facility/centre could assist in this function, and could be combined with a community centre (similar to the “boma” at Rondevlei for example). The site can also link to education about Khoisan knowledge systems and culture.

Connection to resources

The space could be used to facilitate connection to economic and other resources by:

- Providing employment in maintenance, security, building and servicing a small coffee shop and other facilities
- Providing income generating opportunities and community-building through a small weekly craft and fruit and vegetable market
- Attracting visitors and tourists to the area, thereby boosting local business opportunities
- Improving the value of properties around the vlei.

In addition, an urban nature park of this kind contributes significantly towards increasing the well-being of the community, and assists in mitigating the negative effects of poverty. Engaging in this project in the short and long term will increase human capacity in the area, build community and mutual trust, and empower community through building networks.



Figure 7: Princess Vlei has long been a site of spiritual connection.

The People's Plan

The People's Plan encapsulates some of these ideas, and provides a springboard for discussion. It is not a blue print, but an expression what people have identified as possible features of the park. These are described in more detail on the following page.



Figure 8 The People's Plan

- **Fynbos rehabilitation centre**
A Centre for rehabilitating urban green spaces. This would be a centre of knowledge, a space to co-ordinate rehabilitation efforts at Princess Vlei and in surrounding areas; as well as a centre for propagating and distributing sand plain and other localised indigenous Fynbos.
- **Cultural and environmental education centre**
Princess Vlei is an important educational resource for lessons about ecology and cultural history. Some kind of an educational centre would enhance this.
- **Khoisan Memorial**
With the legend of the Princess, Princess Vlei is an idea venue for a monument to teach people about our Khoisan heritage, and offer a gesture of healing and reconciliation to the descendents of the Khoisan tribes that were enslaved and massacred.
- **Outdoor market**
A weekly market for locally produced goods, fresh vegetables and food could provide income-generating activity.
- **Facilities**
Specialised facilities for baptisms, sailing and other user groups
- **Braai and picnic areas**
Upgraded braaing and picnic facilities
- **New play park for children**
An eco-friendly play park for children. Many people have also asked for “outdoor gym” structures for use by adults.
- **Ecoducts**
A bridge to enable pedestrians, cyclists and animals to cross

the M5 motorway safely. An ecoduct also facilitates the movement of pollinators.

- **Sunset Concert Park**
The backdrop of the Vlei provides a dramatic amphitheatre for musical and dramatic performances. This could also be an income generating activity.
- **Walkway around Princess Vlei**
A 7km walkway around the vlei with board walks through the wetland areas and bird hides along the way.

Princess Vlei could also be used as the start of the following two hikes:

- **Hiking trail to Elephant’s Eye Cave**
Start at the Princess Vlei, follow the waterways across the city and learn how people have shaped nature through history, then admire the magnificent view of the vlei from the Elephant’s Eye Cave.
- **Two day hiking Trail to Macassar Dunes**
Explore the wetlands of the False Bay Ecology Park, enjoy the rich birdlife, spend a night in hostel or township B ’n B to see how different communities are getting involved in and benefiting from nature conservation

What makes a great place?

Another helpful paradigm which has guided our engagement with groups is the Project for Public Spaces quadrant of what makes a great place. This is a modified illustration of the model. On the following page we summarise suggestions for how these four important elements can be applied to Princess Vlei:



Figure 9 Project for Public Spaces: What makes a great place?

Sociability

The vlei needs to be accessible to a range of groups, and should

- offer spaces where people can congregate
- offer activities which build community and connection
- reflect the cultural identity and history of its users
- be safe
- continue to engage community in its management through clean ups, stewardship programmes.

Activities and Uses

- Should offer a range of different activities and uses to invite different groups
- Activities should be fun, playful and interactive, and provide for local youth
- Activities should favour community building, and be accessible to low income communities
- Activities should facilitate engagement with nature and community
- Activities should be low impact and sustainable ecologically.

Comfort and image

- The ecosystem should be restored to maximise the aesthetic value of the vlei.
- All structures should fit in aesthetically with the natural surroundings.

- Structures should be provided to facilitate comfort of the users, and manage their interaction with nature- pathways, benches, braai areas, shade trees, lawn areas.
- Structures should have a low ecological footprint.
- It should be kept clean and safe.
- The cultural and social heritage should be reflected in the structures e.g. Expressing the Khoisan heritage through the design.

Access and linkages

Note: this refers to both physical access and information access

- Access points from the road should be safe and well-managed.
- Prince George Drive limits access from the Grassy Park community. This needs to be remedied with at least a pedestrian bridge, ideally an ecoduct that allows for the movement of plants and animals as well.
- Walkways and paths are needed to facilitate access to different parts of the site, especially a walkway around the vlei. This would need to include a raised boardwalk through the reed beds.
- The bridge over the Italian Road canal near the Jolly Carp needs to be made safer, and another bridge installed over the Southfield canal closer to where it feeds into the vlei.
- Bird hides and information boards can enable better access to the natural character of the site.
- Information boards, creative monuments etc. can enable access to the heritage and history.

What the Survey showed

Over the past few months, we have been conducting an online survey to explore diverse views of what people would like to see at Princess Vlei. We have asked people to rate the various features of the People’s Plan in terms of how much they would value these features at Princess Vlei. These findings are summarised below.

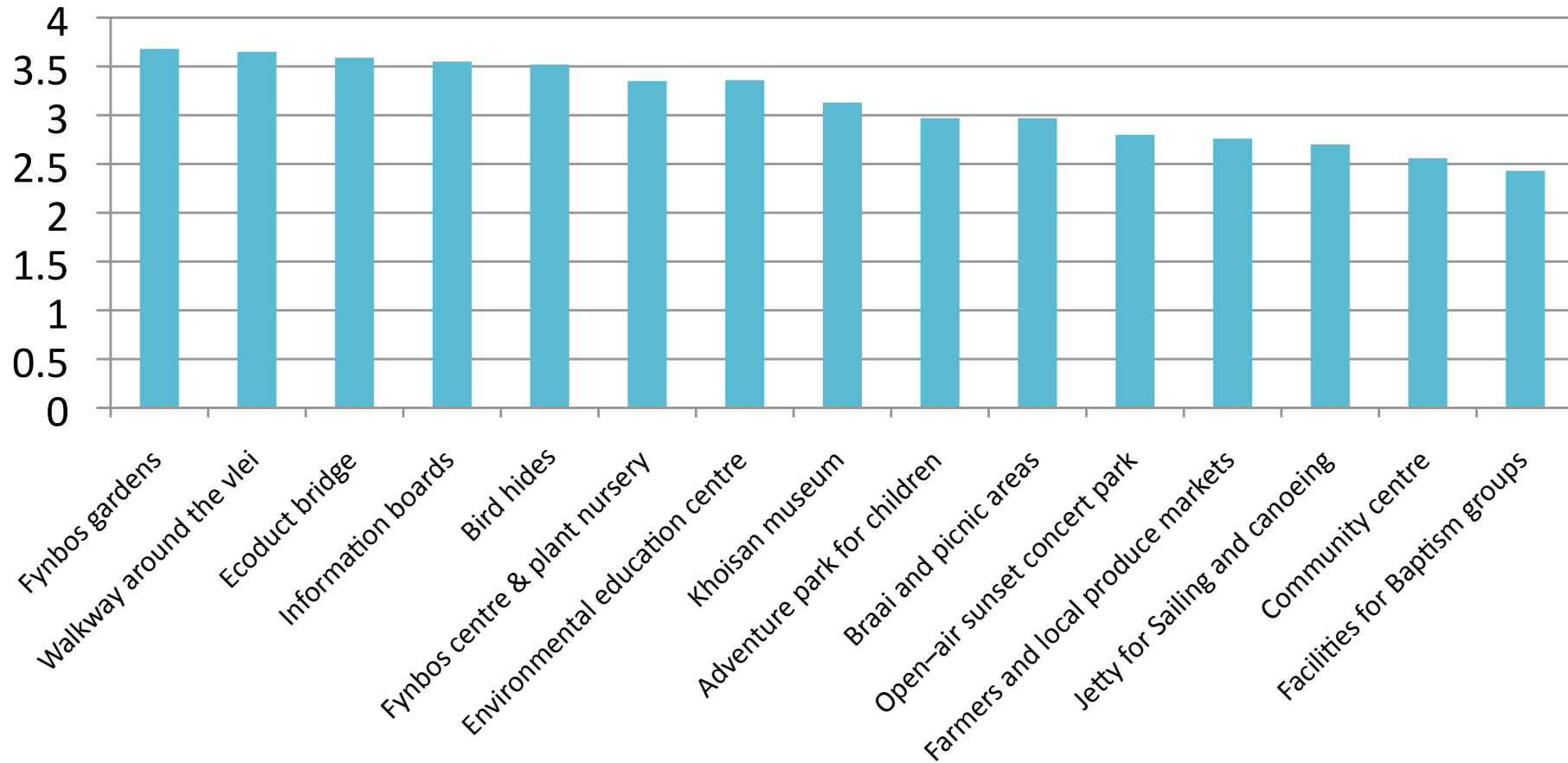
1. Rating of features

Respondents were asked to rate possible interventions at Princess Vlei on a scale of 1 to 4 in terms of their importance they were. The survey also captured a number of expanded suggestions for improvements which are available on request.

	1. Not important	2. Quite important	3. Important	4. Very important
Information centre for fynbos restoration and plant nursery	1.29%	10.38%	35.06%	53.24%
Facilities for Baptism groups	31.03%	15.58%	32.46%	20.77%
Jetty for Sailing and canoeing	11.68%	33.76%	34.17%	22.78%
Farmers and local produce markets	11.68%	27.63%	32.89%	27.63%
Adventure park for children	10.38%	20.77%	29.87%	38.96%
Environmental education centre	1.29%	10.52%	32.46%	54.54%
Khoisan museum	4.05%	18.91%	36.48%	40.54%
Community centre	19.48%	31.16%	20.77%	27.27%
Café/place to get food and drink	22.66%	35.06%	21.33%	30.66%
Open-air sunset concert park	10.81%	29.72%	28.37%	39.87%
Braai and picnic areas	5.13%	30.77%	25.64%	38.46%
7 km walkway around the vlei	0%	6.41%	22.07%	71.17%
Bird hides	1.29%	6.4%	27.27%	63.63%
Fynbos gardens	0%	3.89%	24.67%	71.42%
Information boards about the animals and plants	0%	5.26%	34.21%	60.53%
Eco duct bridge over the M5 for people and animals to cross safely	2.56%	10.26%	12.82%	74.36%

Below is the above data shown in a bar graph:

Rating of importance



THE WAY FORWARD

When we compiled our proposal to the World Design Capital, we proposed the following process:

STEP ONE: A vision is generated through community engagement, workshops, surveys etc.

STEP TWO: This vision is refined in consultation with important stakeholders, in particular the relevant departments of the City of Cape Town, and in consideration of practical issues such as funding and budgeting.

STEP THREE: Designers (who had been part of this process) would put together suggestions for design, and a timetable for roll-out of the different features. This would be made available for public comment.

STEP FOUR: The vision would be implemented.

We have completed Step One of this process. The City of Cape Town obviously has its own processes to follow, and we are completely respectful of these. However we would strongly urge that this process outlined above be followed as far as possible.

Community engagement in natural and public spaces offers the greatest insurance against long-term abuse or neglect of these spaces, and also helps to ensure that the spaces are fulfilling a community need. In the case of Princess Vlei, the community has proven itself to be a diligent custodian of the space, and without vociferous community support this area may now be supporting a shopping mall.

The wisdom of the community in this regard needs to be respected. In order to inspire community partners to take ownership and responsibility, community engagement needs to be meaningful, and not simply rubberstamping a plan drawn up without consultation regarding community needs and interests.

We therefore would appeal to the City to work with us and other appropriate community structures in formulating, developing, designing and implementing a vision for this space and for the long-term management of the area.

We look forward to continuing this conversation.



Figure 10 A young Princess Vlei supporter shows her ideas for the space

CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR VISION

The following groups have all assisted in creating this vision, through attending workshops, engaging in rehabilitation activities, answering questions, participating in cultural events and so on.

Community & Political organisations

Lotus River Ottery Grassy Park Residents Association
Bottom Road Sanctuary
Greater Cape Town Civic Alliance
Kenwyn Civic
Retreat/Steenberg Civic
De Waterkant Civic
SCEA Schaapkraal Civic & Environmental Association
Schaapkraal Developing Farmers Association
AGANG
ANC (Southern Suburbs)
ANC youth
COSATO local
Rise and Shine Youth Development

Educational

African Centre for Cities (UCT)
Michaelis Art School
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Lotus River High School
South Peninsula High School
Wynberg High School
Fairmount High School
Cedar House School
Crestway High School
John Graham Primary
Plantation Primary School
Hyde Park Primary
Steenberg Primary School
Frank Joubert Art School
The Children's Art Centre
Battswood College

Environmental

SANBI
Zandvlei Trust
Kirstenbosch Botanical Society
Cape Flats Wetlands Forum
Wildlife and Environment Society of SA (WESSA)
Cape Town Environmental Education Trust
False Bay Ecology Park
Cape Bird Club

Cultural/Religious & Sporting organisations

Heal The Hood & Emile Jansen
Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute
The Diocesan Environmental Group
Noah's Ark
Fellowship of Love ministries
Gospel church of God
Gospel Church of Power
Church of God and Saints of Christ
The House of the Xoraxouhoe
The House of Cochoqua
Zeekoeivlei Sailing Centre

Legal

Southern Suburbs Legal Advice Centre
Legal Resources Centre

THE TEAM

Princess Vlei Forum Management Committee

Philip Bam (chairperson) is a community activist and leader of LOGRA CIVIC the Ratepayer and Residents Association of the area next to Princess Vlei. He works and lives in the area. He is involved in the local Community Policing Forum and serves on the boards of many NPO's. He is a former councillor.

Bishop Christopher Gregorowski, Bishop of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa has had a life-long involvement in community support and activism. He is the author of numerous publications, including children's literature. Formerly rector of parishes in and around Cape Town and the former Transkei, he has maintained a deep connection with the diverse people of South Africa. Gregorowski is a long distance athlete and keen environmentalist.

Avril Harding, local resident and community activist, is a former Member of Parliament and Chief Whip of the Independent Democrats. He attended UCT Graduate School of Business and currently consults to the Petroleum Industry.

Mea Lashbrooke is an English Teacher with a lifelong connection to the wetlands in which Princess Vlei is situated. From her early days as a journalist Mea has been involved with issues of health, social justice and environment, the publication of fiction, non-fiction and poetry and education for adults and children

Vilma Maritz (Treasurer) has spent the major part of her career, both locally and internationally, working in the field of building bridges and reconciliation, currently serves as a Council Member of Initiatives of Change (IOFC) Southern Africa. Vilma was a Founder Member of KONTAK, an Afrikaans Women's Organisation whose mandate it was to

create opportunity for interaction between women from diverse backgrounds. Transformation, reconciliation and forgiveness have been the lifelong motivations for Vilma.

Bridget Pitt is an author of several published works, environmentalist, artist and process facilitator trained in art facilitation and nature guiding. She has several years of experience doing media and materials development for community organisations, and was commissioned by SANBI to research and write a book on community involvement in nature conservation. She uses art in training workshops for various sectors, including training in community-based conservation for urban conservators working for the City. She is committed to enabling urban communities to experience and become stewards of nature.

Elton Rinquest (Deputy Chair PVF) has lived all his life in the area near Princess Vlei and now dedicates his life and time to the upliftment of the community. Currently he serves as Deputy Chair of ANC Ward 65 (Lotus River/Grassy Park). He is Chair of the Communications Workers Union Local 1; Chair of Cosatu Greater Grassy park Local, and Vice Chair of Western Cape Black Ball Federation with particular emphasis on youth development and upliftment projects

Matilda Smith is Vice-Chairperson of the Southern Suburbs Legal Advice Centre, and practising as an attorney at the University of Cape Town Law Clinic. She is dedicated to ensuring that the community is made aware of their constitutional rights and have access to legal services. She is also an executive member of the National Association for Democratic Lawyers (NADEL). She is a trained mediator in ADR and is currently doing her LLM in environmental law at UCT.

World Design Subcommittee (excluding forum members)

Ralph Borland is a South African artist, designer and researcher, and a postdoctoral fellow at the African Centre for Cities, UCT. He has a BA in Fine Art from UCT, a Masters in Interactive Telecommunications from New York University, and PhD from the School of Engineering at Trinity College, Dublin. His thesis 'Radical Plumbers and PlayPumps – Objects in development' (2011) analyses the relationship between first world audiences and developing world users via designed objects. Part of his

work with the African Centre for Cities is to contribute to their position on design for social impact, in the context of Cape Town as World Design Capital 2014. His protest-performance suit, Suited for Subversion (2002) is in the collection of the New York Museum of Modern

Art.

Malcolm Campbell is a built Environment Design Professional. Principal of ACG Architects & Development Planners, who work across the disciplines of architecture, development planning, urban design & landscape architecture. Has extensive experience in community development & participation with respect to design & spatial planning. Has worked with teams at a mega project scale at the one end & with rural communities in people's participatory housing processes at the other. Has also specialised in public art /memory work, having previously been commissioned by the city to undertake two significant projects in this area.

Kelvin Cochrane lives in Grassy Park where he runs a bakery. He grew up wanting to be an environmentalist, but under apartheid had limited options. He is a spokesperson for the Princess Vlei Forum, leads CAMPS, an organisation working the city to recreate green public spaces on Cape Flats. Since 2005 he has championed several community-led partnership rehabilitation projects around Grassy Park. In 2011 he received an award from WESSA for his civic-led ecological rehabilitation work on Bottom Road Sanctuary and Dressing the Princess, at Princess Vlei.

George Davis is a retiree and Fellow of the South African National Biodiversity Institute. He trained and worked as a researcher in the fields of plant ecophysiology and systems ecology before shifting focus to people-centred conservation in urban settings. This included implementation work with the Expanded Public Works Programme's "Working for Wetlands" initiative, in the context of wetland restoration in metropolitan Cape Town. Over the past 10 years he has also been involved in film making as a communications, education and advocacy tool in nature conservation. He is a graduate of U of Alberta (MSc) and UCT (PhD).

Russell Dudley trained as a senior mathematics and physical teacher started work in the National Union of Metalworkers as a regional educator, local industrial area coordinator and organiser during the transitional period. Later he worked as a Senior Social Development Facilitator and Acting Director of the Development Facilitation Unit, City of Cape Town. He has facilitated public participation processes related to the Wetton-Lansdowne Corridor, RDP, Presidential and Provincial Urban Renewal Projects that included a period of secondment to the Department of Community Safety (Western Cape).

Henrik Ernstson (PhD) is an ecologist/sociologist, currently based at the African Centre for Cities (2010-2012), University of Cape Town and the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. He draws on systems ecology, sociology, and political ecology to explore the governance and politics of urban ecologies. He is interested in developing frameworks that can account both for ecological complexity as well as issues of social equity and power. He draws on a wide field of scholars from sociology, social movement research, critical geography, and ecology and natural resource management.

Matthew Gray is Founder of Matthew Gray Architects and Urban Designers, in operation since 1994. His particular interests are in seeking to enrich the human experience by tending to the built environment in complement to the natural environment. By promoting sustainable modes of land use, urbanism and architecture appropriate to context, both cultural and natural. Matthew Gray is a graduate of UCT, doing both his B.A.S and B.Arch there and has furthered his studies in Urban Design at Oxford Brooks University, Oxford.

Paul Hendricks is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. His research interests are in history of education, education policy development and philosophy of education. This focus forms part of a wider research area exploring alternative education discourses and practices. Paul has been engaged in art teaching and art workshops in the Western Cape and further afield from the early 1990s. He has been actively part of collaborative public installation projects centering on history and memory, as well as education initiatives involving youth, the arts and environmental education.

Ivan Kleintjies is a business executive and entrepreneur, with many years experience in the retail sector. He has been responsible for driving business performance through leading teams such including Sales Managers. He is currently serving as the operations Director for the Ruben Richards Foundation, a member of the Lavender Hill High School Trust Board, and a Volunteer at Cheshire Homes and Heatherdale Children's Home. He holds an MBA from the University of Stellenbosch.

Samantha Lee is an Environmentalist and is currently doing her Masters degree in City and Regional Planning at the University of Cape Town. She lives in the area and has an avid interest in the sustainable development of the community that is undertaken by the community.

Vanessa September is a Cape Town born Built Environment Professional and principal of an architectural practice that chooses to work in the public sector, where community participation is a core ingredient to place-making. She is currently working as a consultant for UN Habitat, providing technical support to the City Council of Nairobi, in the implementation of two pilot projects which form part of a larger citywide place-making program. She also serves as a non-executive Board Member of Project for Public Spaces in New York, USA.

APPENDIX: THE FOUR ELEMENTS AT PRINCESS VLEI

The following project by Cape Town designers Ralph Borland and Lyall Sprong gives a good idea of what can be done with the space with some creativity.

This was an application to the international competition [PlayScapes](#), which was won by another South African project, *Mill St Skate Park*, in July 2013. PlayScapes asked for proposals for interventions in the city which activated a sense of play for adults or children. Our proposal was for a set of interventions on Princess Vlei.

Though neglected, Princess Vlei is used for a variety of activities. People braai. There are some publicly-provided concrete fire structures for this, in a broken-down state, around a carpark area. People also find their own sites under trees spread out across the scrubby Eastern banks of the Vlei, often picnicking next to their cars (the boom has since prevented this). People fish in the lake. There are baptisms on the weekends, an activity which has been taking place at the vlei for generations, and which draws people from different communities across broader Cape Town and even across the country.

The consistent 'lean' to the trees on the site testifies to the pervasive, seasonal South Easterly wind. Apart from the trees, much of the Eastern side of the vlei, the area already in most use and most accessible to neighbouring communities, is sand and grass. Dotted around are occasional weathered logs brought onto the site. Down by the waters edge, reeds grow, and water birds such as pelicans and cormorants can be seen. To the southern end of the site, a project to rehabilitate the vlei with indigenous vegetation is underway, as part of a project called 'Dressing the

Princess'.

On the southern edge of the site is the Jolly Carp, a community centre which is an active part of the Forum, and which hosts concerts, food markets, and educational and community-building activities. A demonstration permaculture garden is used as a teaching tool, and for food growing by local people. An ethnobotanical garden contains traditional medicinal plants. Children play in tree houses and on wooden playthings carved by a Zimbabwean sculptor who works on the site.

For PlayScapes we proposed four interventions on the site, towards the southern end of the vlei, where they are accessible through the Jolly Carp, and continue the existing 'Dressing the Princess' project. These four interventions, described on the next page, go from a hilltop to the South-East, across the banks of the vlei, and into the water. In our proposal, we want to reflect aspects of the site as it is now, as well as aspirations for its future. We intend the structures we propose to sit lightly, so that they are movable and malleable, and not an obstacle for future developments. They are also intended as discussion points for communities and interested parties around the development of the vlei.
