



Objection to the sale of Tafelberg

4 June 2016

Nationally all indicators of progress show that things are going badly in South Africa: inadequate GDP growth, record unemployment, weak education outcomes and endemic national government corruption. Further, as seen in mainstream media, in general political rhetoric and in Penny-Sparrow-style social media outbursts, racial, class and economic polarisation is intensifying.

Mixed income housing, is a social solution that is shown throughout the world to create opportunities for the economically excluded and to reduce polarisation by bridging a growing divide between rich and poor,

In Cape Town and the Western Cape, better government has resulted in economic progress that is less bad than elsewhere in the country. This has resulted in a significant domestic migration of people into Cape Town.

In the combined lottery win of post 94 political reform and natural scenic beauty, Cape Town has transformed into an internationally palatable and highly desirable destination. This has resulted in significant international migration into Cape Town.

These factors combine to add more pressure to housing availability and affordability in Cape Town than elsewhere in the country.

Yet since 1994, no new affordable housing has been provided anywhere near the economic centre of Cape Town. On the contrary, social housing near the centre has been steadily reduced or placed under threat, as we see from high profile attempts to dispose of eg the De Waal drive flats, from neglect of maintenance and upkeep of state property everywhere around the CBD, and from constant private pressure to evict the poor from servants' quarters and similar accommodation throughout wealthy areas.

When people are evicted and displaced, the best they can often hope for is accommodation on the periphery of the City (eg Blikkiesdorp) and consequent permanent exclusion from any opportunity. Even the very best state options (eg Pelican Park) are 25km or more from the CBD. This weak delivery runs contrary to the stated principles of the DA: at the very least it indicates that there is a "long way to go" (as acknowledged by Cllr Benedict van Minnenⁱ)



Yet, bafflingly, the Province and City are steadily disposing of state property everywhere in Cape Town. In a City that boasts of good economic management it seems unnecessary to sell capital assets in order to cover operational expenditure, at the risk of permanently squandering the opportunity to meet long-term strategic goals.

Areas like the Atlantic Seaboard are experiencing unprecedented demand for parcels of land for private development: here exists the additional and wholly unexploited opportunity to use private developer capital for the provision of affordable housing in mixed-income developments. The state should require quid pro quo concessions from private developers in exchange for either gifting them LUPO departures from the public realm or for simply providing them these 'golden' opportunities.

Reciprocal commitments to mixed-income development would entrench equality, save the City some money and earn it much-needed political capital in respect of its social policy credibility.

Simultaneously, the provision of mixed income housing in this area would benefit residents and businesses: it would improve the efficiency of employees; it would mitigate against the sterility that accompanies wealth - as evidenced by urban design studies everywhere. Even the V&A Waterfront recognises this problem and has attempted to counter it by creating rental only apartments.

Further, there is no obvious reason why the Tafelberg site need be an all-or-nothing solution: it could easily accommodate *both* a school *and* affordable housing. Indeed there are many unexplored models: different accommodation types for differing requirements, different allocation, rental and ownership strategies and different private-public-NGO partnership patterns.

But we have largely wasted 22 years of freedom without even beginning to properly address the future. One of the very last opportunities to do better is about to be lost.

It would be an extreme and irresponsible dereliction of duty for the state to sell the Tafelberg property now.

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ⁱ <https://www.capetown.gov.za/en/MediaReleases/Pages/Citymakingstrideshousingopportunities.aspx>