

Sea Point Residents In Support of a More Integrated Community

As residents of Sea Point, Green Point, Bantry Bay and Fresnaye we strongly reject the comments made by Deputy-Chair of the Sea Point Fresnaye Bantry Bay Ratepayers Association (SFB) Mr. David Polovin (“Hands off the Tafelberg site”, 21 May 2016). We wish to place on record that these divisive, offensive and misleading comments do not represent all community members, many of whom wish to see a more racially and class integrated community in Sea Point.

With reference to proposals to build affordable housing on the old Tafelberg school site, Polovin claims that doing so is “neither practicable nor in the interests of the Sea Point community”. This response exposes his comments as being both ignorant of the facts, and is counter to what many in Sea Point see as a special communal obligation to ensure spatial redress to Apartheid town planning.

Claims by the SFB that affordable housing at Tafelberg is “not in the interests of the community” expose the limited interests SFB serves. Its version of ‘community’ excludes the thousands of working and middle class Sea Point residents struggling under rapidly rising rents, threatened daily by evictions to make way for new luxury development, and commuting workers who can spend up to four hours getting to and from their places of work in the area.

The SFB represents those who profit significantly from the “gentrification” of the area - a trend that is progressively turning Sea Point into a neighborhood exclusively for the super-rich. Many committee members either work directly for property developers, or are in businesses that profit from the expansion and access to new properties. The association’s prominent sponsors are real estate companies Pam Golding and Seeff (see their website). This poses a serious conflict that suggests SFB is primarily concerned with profiting from and not protecting residents and local workers.

Beyond questions of rights and representation, SFB’s claim that affordable housing at Tafelberg is “impracticable” are verifiably false for the following reasons:

Firstly, the headline of the article: ‘Hands off Tafelberg’, suggests that Tafelberg is private property. It is not - Tafelberg remains publicly owned, and as such provides a unique opportunity to serve the interests of the public at large. This is not just an ideal, but a legal obligation. The Government Immovable Asset Management Act (GIAMA) orders that state-owned land first and foremost be used for service delivery purposes (including housing). It is not the SFB’s prerogative to decide on what is done with public land, nor is it only the residents of Sea Point - it must advance broader citywide service delivery needs.

Secondly, when Polovin and the SFB speak about “social upliftment needs”, “enrichment” and “affordable housing” they are happy for this to happen “elsewhere”. This is in conflict with municipal, provincial and national government policy that emphasises that affordable housing must be integrated into well-served areas of economic opportunity, and be geared towards reversing the segregated and fragmented settlement patterns we inherited from apartheid. The Western Cape government’s own 2014 Spatial Development Framework (SDF) acknowledges that one of the biggest barriers to advancing this objective is the availability of land, and that securing well-located land for affordable housing must be prioritized.

Thirdly, detailed independent and government supported research shows that affordable housing on the site is viable. In 2013 The Western Cape Department of Human Settlements formally requested that the land be used for affordable housing, presenting a detailed case

for why the site and Sea Point more generally are well-suited for social housing (see [here](#)). Furthermore, an independent feasibility study conducted by the National Association of Social Housing Organisations (NASHO) in 2012 showed that affordable housing was both practically and financially viable (see [here](#)).

For these reasons, Polovin's accusation that calls for affordable housing at Tafelberg are "political imaginings" that take "no account of town planning considerations" conveniently ignore the facts and should be rejected.

In contrast to the nimby ("Not In My Backyard") position of the SFB - and the implicit racial and class undertones these present - we support opportunities to reverse the Apartheid spatial planning of our neighbourhood, which continues insidiously today through the largely unregulated property market. We refuse to let black African and coloured workers in Sea Point be condemned to store-rooms, basements, rooftops or expelled to the urban periphery. Equality and dignity are fundamental to our Constitution.

We want our children to grow up in a Sea Point that functions outside of apartheid's divisions and is accessible to all social classes, races, religions and other groupings, not as visitors or commuting workers, but as residents. Tafelberg provides an immense opportunity to make Sea Point and Cape Town, a more socially just and inclusive city. We wholeheartedly support its development for affordable housing.

Signed:

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