



**PRESS STATEMENT**  
**21 October 2020**

## **MayCo's in-principle approval of lease renewal of Rondebosch Golf Course blindingly shortsighted**

Yesterday, the City of Cape Town's Mayoral Committee (MayCo) announced its in-principle approval for the Rondebosch Golf Club lease renewal - a recommendation that will be passed on to City Council for the final decision on 29 October. This recommendation demonstrates short-sightedness about the urgent need to reimagine and leverage the role of public land to directly address entrenched spatial inequality in Cape Town. On 9 March 2020, the City of Cape Town closed the public participation process. We are aware of at least 1 682 objections that were submitted by the public, calling for the City to not renew the RGC lease, but rather to redistribute this land. This followed a campaign by Ndifuna Ukwazi supported by Amandla.mobi, Reclaim the City and the Social Justice Coalition calling for the land to be sensitively developed as an inclusive new neighbourhood with mixed-income housing (with a significant component of affordable housing), truly public open space and offices, shops, schools and social amenities

Rondebosch Golf Course uses 45.99ha of public land, equivalent to roughly 45 rugby fields or a small suburb. This expansive parcel of public land is located right next to the King David Mowbray Golf Course which also uses public land for the enjoyment of a minority for the same purpose - golf. After receiving an overwhelming number of objections to the RGC paying R1 000 rent per year to lease the property, the City proposed a new rental tariff for golf courses - R10 000 a year. This increase does not address the core issue: that vast tracts of prime public land continue to be tied up in inefficient, exclusive and unjust uses rather than being used to tackle spatial apartheid.

The City's Draft Human Settlements Strategy (open for public comment until 30 November) notes that to eradicate its housing backlog, 500 000 housing opportunities need to be created every year until 2028. Currently, the public and private sector are jointly developing less than 20 000 housing opportunities per year, many of which fall outside of the affordability range of the vast majority of Capetonians. This is a far cry from closing the 356 000 housing backlog in Cape Town alone. The redistribution of public land should be approached holistically to close this gap and promote spatial, racial and economic inclusivity.

Based on our feasibility study, the land leased to the RGC has the potential to build a new mixed income community including at least 1 433 affordable homes. The in-principle approval proposes a potential reduction in the size of the golf course to leverage income-generating compatible uses, which may include infill housing opportunities. The in-principle approval also includes a new two-year cancellation clause should Council want

to use the land for another use. Rather than these small tweaks, we call on the City to take a radical stance for spatial justice by urgently developing the suitable land (the section which is not below a floodline) as a dense inclusive neighbourhood.

Twenty six years after apartheid, Cape Town continues to be characterised by deep and enduring spatial inequalities that have been brought about by its colonial and apartheid history and an exclusionary housing market. This spatial injustice has meant that the vast majority of poor and working class families (who are predominantly Black and Coloured) have been excluded from accessing housing in the well-located areas of Cape Town. But spatial injustice has been exacerbated by the City's state-subsidised housing programme, which prioritises building houses on the outskirts of the city where land is cheap. Where a person lives in a city matters – it determines a person's access to opportunities and the quality of services. Many peripheral areas in Cape Town have limited access to basic services, schools generally perform worse, gang violence is rife, substance abuse is more common, and social amenities such as hospitals and clinics are not easily accessible. Poor and working-class people spend a disproportionate component of their income and time on unreliable transport - according to the City's own projections some pay up to 45% of their income on transport.

In this context, it is critical that well-located public land be used to alleviate the housing crisis. The City owns vast amounts of public land and continues to lease this land out to private institutions at nominal amounts, meaning that most of this prime public land has failed to yield additional affordable housing. How can the City claim that it is acceptable to lease land to a golf club when the City already has 24 golf courses (10 of which are on public land) but not a single social housing unit has been completed in the City centre since the dawn of democracy?

The City must reconsider the use of publicly owned land that it avails for exclusive use like golf courses and bowling greens. These sports do not have maximum domestic membership which clearly indicates that the use of land in a housing crisis is only used for the enjoyment of the few. If we are serious about being on the right side of history then this is where it all starts: by redistributing well-located public land and seeking alternative models to redress the apartheid spatial injustice. We hope that the City Council will revisit and genuinely consider all public comments on the use of Rondebosch Golf Course, which included the voices of many experts in the fields such as urban planning and economics.

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