

Dear Liz,

OBJECTION TO THE FENCE AROUND WYNBERG PARK

I am writing this letter to you at your request and on behalf of the property owners and residents of 58th avenue in order to list our objections to the fence currently under construction around Wynberg Park.

Before we begin, we would like to thank you for attending the meeting last night and for your time and attention to this matter. We are extremely grateful to you for your many years of public service to our constituency and for all that you have done to make Wynberg park the successful and beautiful community park that it is.

We would also like to convey our commitment to working with you and the park management to assist wherever and however we can to ensure that the park is secure and clean, and to resolve those problems that currently confront the city department responsible for the park.

This letter is written with great urgency as the fence first came to our attention only last week when construction began. None of the property owners and residents in the area were either notified or consulted about the proposed fence. We still have very limited information; however, we understand from our meeting with you last night that:

1. The fence will cost approximately R1.6 million to erect and this will be done in two stages. The first stage will be completed this year, the second, budget permitting, in the next financial year.
2. The fence is being erected to protect the city's assets and to solve problems of vagrancy, vandalism at the ablution blocks, theft of plants and other city property, including taps and water pipes, crime and anti-social behavior.
3. No assessments have been conducted to determine the impact of the fence on the public use and enjoyment of the park, the environment and bird life, or traffic congestion and road safety.

4. No other alternative strategies have been explored to resolve the problems that the fence seeks to address.
5. No public participation or consultation was undertaken in reaching the decision to erect the fence. It is, further, your view that this is not required as the park is an asset of the city and it is entirely within the discretion and authority of the park managers / city officials to fence it as they deem necessary to protect their asset.
6. You have been aware of the decision to fence the park for about two years and have expressed your support for it to the current park manager.

We, together with those other local residents and park users that we have had the chance to consult in this limited time, object strongly to the fence. We also have a number of concerns about the rationale for and process followed in making the decision to erect it.

Our objections, formulated in haste and without the benefit of legal opinion or all the necessary information, include, at this stage, the following:

1. The fence spoils the character of a unique, well-loved and well-used city park.

The second largest park in the city, more wood than park, much of the attraction and charm of Wynberg Park stems from its rambling openness and the fact that it can be accessed from all sides. In a city from which so many are excluded, it seems an inappropriate and insensitive measure to close off access to a public space like this. The fence detracts not only from the atmosphere of the park but also from the neighborhood that surrounds and is so defined by it.

2. The fence will restrict access and limit the use and enjoyment of the park by the people who use it most. Key users of the park who will be affected by the enclosure of the park include:

2.1. The many residents of greater Cape Town who drive to the park on the weekends. Anyone familiar with the park can attest to the number of people who arrive by car from other suburbs bearing tables, deck chairs, tents, and braais to

set up picnic for the day, particularly on weekends and public holidays. With open access, these visitors park on the roads and in the parking areas around the park, including the length of our street, from whence they are able to enter the park directly. This will no longer be possible. Most visitors will be required to park and then walk some distance to gain access, or wait in their cars to drop off their passengers and equipment before looking for parking. The restricted access will result in families being required to trek along fenced off roads, wait in crowded parking lots or stop in the roads at the pedestrian gates to offload.

2.2. The local schools that use the park for cross country and sporting events. This includes the local schools of Springfield, Wynberg – Boys and Girls – and The Grove, at least. Sporting events that extend out from the park into Chart Farm, Glen Dirk and up into Kirstenbosch will have to be re-routed. The collection and dropping off of children by the many parents that used to stop in our road will now be blocked by the fence and they, too, will either sit in traffic jams to the parking lots, have to walk around the park or stop in the streets at the pedestrian gates.

2.3. Filmmakers and advertising companies. The local film and advertising industry is an important source of revenue for the city, both directly, and indirectly in terms of the number of people it employs and the services it uses. The industry is struggling to compete internationally. The park is a popular multi purpose venue for shooting – houses, roads, and wood – in a central city location. The fence will impact not only on the desirability of the venue but also on the logistics of the location – the large crews and equipment will not be able to be accommodated. This will drive a regular user of the park away

2.4. The party events companies that arrange children's parties and other events in the park. There are currently at least three companies that organize activities in the park on weekends, setting up jumping castles and obstacle courses etc. Again, the restricted access, the difficulties of pedestrian access and the shortage of accessible parking will negatively affect the suitability of the venue for these community activities.

2.5. The local residents. The fence blocks direct access to the park from our homes

and confines us to one or two entry points, at some distance by foot. Access for the many locals that stroll into the park during the week will be more difficult. Access will be denied to those who like to use the park in the early mornings or late evenings.

3. The fence will cause traffic congestion and pose a threat to road safety. The current open access means that day visitors park their cars around the extent of the park. On busy weekends and when there are school sporting events, our road is usually lined with cars legally parked along its length. The fact that there will no longer be access from the street will deter people from parking there and put pressure on the park parking lots and those areas close to the gates. Further road safety and traffic issues that arise include:

3.1. The fence increases the risks of pedestrians on Klaassens Drive being hit by cars. Pedestrians walking along that road on the park side are now required to walk on the verge of the road next to the fence. There is no pavement.

3.2. The fence increases the risk of collisions on the intersection of 58th avenue and Klaassens Drive. The turn from 58th avenue into Klaassens drive, particularly right down towards Wynberg Hill, is already tricky – the curve is almost blind and many road users on Klaassens do not expect a road into the park. The fence has dramatically reduced visibility from both sides, especially at certain times of the day.

3.3. The fence will increase traffic congestion and logjams in the streets around the park. The restricted access will cause drivers to try and park closer to pedestrian gates and cause congestion in the parking areas where drivers will have to drop their passengers and offload before parking.

3.4. Obstruction of roads to drop and park. The restricted pedestrian access makes it probable that visitors will stop their cars in the road to offload their passengers at the pedestrian access gates before driving on to find parking, blocking traffic and increasing risks of car accidents.

4. **The fence will block the movement of the varied and migratory bird and animal life in the park.** The park is home to a large and changing bird population. The fence will block, or at least hinder, the easy movement into and out of the park of many of the birds that currently wander in and out of it. The park is also the water source in the area, access to which is now complicated, if not blocked. Birds will kill themselves on the fence. Plastic will get caught on it adding to the problems of litter.
5. **Wynberg Park is a heritage site.** The fence constitutes a change that dramatically alters, if not destroys, a key city heritage location.
6. **The fence is not an appropriate solution to the problems it is being erected to resolve.** Our experience of the park as residents that live on it is of a fully functional, safe, clean, beautiful and well organized open space. We are not aware of serious crime and other anti-social issues but if the fence is being erected to resolve these problems we consider it an irrational and exorbitant response that will not resolve but exacerbate them. There appear to be many other suitable strategies to resolve these problems in the park, the employment of more wardens being an obvious one.
 - 6.1. Homelessness and vagrancy. Most of the homelessness and vagrancy in the area is under the bridge, an area excluded by the fence. Inasmuch as there is a problem with this in the park, the fence will only cause the displacement of those in the park to the bridge, which is also a part of the park.
 - 6.2. Vandalism to the ablution blocks. The fence will only prevent the vandalism that occurs at night. Proper locked gates and fences on the ablution blocks surely resolve this best and cheapest.
 - 6.3. Crime. There are many studies that establish that fences do not resolve crime. In many instances they make it worse. Certainly there are clear additional crime risks that will arise from people being fenced in, trapped and unable to escape the park. At best, the fence, will displace what crime and anti-social activity is happening at night inside the parts of the park that are fenced to the areas of the park that are not; including the area under the N3 bridge alongside Chart Farm, the top park above Klaassens Drive or to the unfriendly cul de sac that 58th

avenue will now become.

6.4. Theft of property. The fence will not resolve theft that occurs during the day when the park is open. A more appropriate strategy seems to be securing or adjusting those items that are stolen - the installation of taps that cannot be removed, pipes that are dug in etc. The fence itself is likely to be a target for theft. We understand that the park does not consider this a concern as the fence is insured, which begs the question as to why other park assets are not insured as effectively.

6.5. Antisocial activity. Wardens surely best resolve this. The fence will, at best, cause it to be displaced at night to other places nearby as with the crime and vagrancy.

7. **The value and our enjoyment of our properties**. We all bought our properties for the proximity and access to the park. We believe that the fence will detrimentally affect our use and enjoyment of our homes and depreciate the value of our properties. We also believe that the fence will increase the crime risk to our families, the road safety and street access to our properties and the beauty of our neighborhood.

8. **Misuse of city resources**. In a city confronting the issues of poverty, inequality, water supply and exclusion that ours is, the allocation of R1.6 million to keep people out of a public space seems to be a most unjustified and inappropriate allocation of state resources.

In addition, we believe that there are a number of procedural irregularities relating to the erection of the fence. These include:

1. The lack of consultation or public participation
2. The absence of an impact assessment, particularly in relation to the environment and bird life in the park and the traffic congestion and road safety.
3. The lack of heritage permission

We would urgently like a meeting with the park manager to discuss our objections and to discuss alternative strategies for solving the problems confronting the park.

Thank you, once again, for your assistance in this matter.

Kind regards

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