

Observatory Civic Association

# Chair's Report 2019

## Tauriq Jenkins

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A Civic...It's a curious place of broad representation, a magical place of meaning, placemaking, and for the OCA in particular – heritage protection and the protection of the vulnerable. We fight the bullies. The civic is a space for the community. It is an honour to report on the work of the OCA this year.

We hosted townhall talks on various issues of concern and interest to our community, including the issue of inclusive housing, Two Rivers Urban Park,

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The River Club, the Circus, developing a Local Spatial Development Framework for Observatory, Heritage talks on our rich history, on crypto currency and the digital age, and various other engagements.



Of the projects that has brought meaning, the subway project has been a wonderful community initiative of reclaiming a space of trauma into an artistic place of renovation. The OCA would like to thank Tanya Bonello, Edwin Angless, all the artists and members of the community who helped make this happen, and we appreciate the support from the Observatory Improvement District who have supported this.

The issues around Malta Park brought to the CoCT last year remain unresolved. The fencing of Malta Park remains a tense issue among residents. The building of the astroturf without an answer to the question

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posed to the City of whether an hydrology report was undertaken that would justify this on a flood-plain remains unanswered.

Currently on the City Cape Town's latest proposed Local Spatial Development for TRUP includes a 10 000 seater stadium at Hartleyvale, an issue the Observatory community have strongly objected to in the past.



A PAIA request was submitted to CoCT asking for clarity on the Circus, as well as, whether the City has precinct plans for the area. Issues around the circus include health and sanitation, the Circus tent, as well as if any eviction

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process is underway. There has been no formal communication on the issue of the circus to OCA by the City for months. What we do know is that currently an eviction is underway. Earlier in Winter this year, the tent succumbed to the South Easter, and in its falling caused some infrastructural damage to the front patio of the building. Two layers of low brick walls were smashed during the collapse of the tent. Fortunately, no injuries were incurred. Prior to this incident, the OCA had sent emails urging the City to respond urgently to the concerns of a collapsing tent.

Development Action Group and Social Justice Coalition have been engaging the social issues surrounding the Circus, the current occupancy, and the various challenges affecting the site. DAG has been helpful in providing feedback on their assessments, and the current eviction process which are still on going.

### HPOZ Violations

The OCA's Large Development Group led by the extraordinarily skilled Leslie London has seen a lot of action this year. The Anson remains a contentious issue with its extra floor now having being built. This violation of the HPOZ was approved by both the MPT and Council. The OCA asked Cllr Chapple to provide an affidavit in this matter to assist the Observatory committee and the OCA in restoring this violation. This request remained unfulfilled.

The OCA was pleased to see victory on stopping the proposed development on Koornhoop, one of the oldest free-standing buildings in South Africa, and

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of immense heritage significance. The community's response here was fantastic and a special thank you to Leslie London and Marc Turok.

### Our Observatory Community Centre

The Observatory Community Centre is currently running into problems because of the unclarity surrounding the City's relationship to the OCC. The OCC at the moment sports a number of constitutions which have either not been signed properly or have evidence of their adoption at a ratified SGM. The MOU with the City is expired. Most concerning is that a constitutional change occurred with no evidence of an SGM. The changes include removing the OCA and the Business Forum from the board, reducing Obs residents representation, as well as, taking away custodianship of the Village Green. OCA and the existing board have agreed to rectify this, and have formed an interim committee and are committed to reinstating the original constitution. The interim board agreed to hold an AGM this month but sadly this has been halted due to information by our Ward Councillor stating a new policy for community centre buildings is in the process of adoption by the City. We are unclear as to how long this adoption process will take. Our call for an AGM has been declared as 'ultra vires' by the local Ward Councillor. The OCA is investigating the voracity of this claim. It is our intention to restore the community centre in accordance to the original constitution which was replaced without due process.

As the Ward committee representative for the OCA I have brought all our major issues to the forum, unrelentingly. For months, minutes were redacted or incorrect. The Ward Councillor has been unhelpful with regards some of the

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major issues the community faces. I will report there has been some improvement in this regard in the last set of minutes which makes a big difference. I will continue to push our needs and concerns forward and look forward to more progress on this front.

The Two Rivers Urban Park and the River Club remain critical concerns. A big thanks to Marc Turok who continues after 21 years of engagement on this issue continues to hold the line of principle against major odds.

I have asked in the previous Ward Forum meetings that SubCouncil 16 Chair, Cllr Kempthorne please provide clarity on who ordered the hiring of Adv Peter Kantor to act on the City's behalf at the Ministerial Heritage Tribunal on the River Club. I further asked this question personally to the Mayor Dan Plato in a meeting on the proposed Public Participation By-Law (led by Civic for Action Campaign The City of Cape Town) and why the City was in support of the withdrawal of provisional heritage protection of TRUP, and in support of the River Club development. No answer has been received. Currently, the River Club application to the Municipal Planning Tribunal for rezoning has been paused. The most recent report is that only once the HIA and EIA reports have been approved, will the rezoning application recommence. We would like to know what is the City's position with regards to heritage protection of TRUP? It must be noted that the River Club, Malta Park, Hartleyvale, and Circus and swimming pool all fall within the Two Rivers Urban Park and hence are protected under the current status recently re invoked by Heritage Western Cape Council. OCA continues to monitor, engage, and activate on this issue.

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## Car Park

Much order and hope has been restored through the administration and tenacity of De Vos in engaging the City with favourable results on this valuable resource for the OCA. An improved rental arrangement has been achieved and is good news for the model Social Enterprise that has this reclaimed open space once synonymous with crime and disturbance into a car park that allows a living wage to staff.

## State, Civic Capture, and TRUP



The OCA has submitted a request to the Zondo Commission to investigate the sale of the publicly owned (PRASA) land on which the River Club is situated.

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The recently re-invoked protections of TRUP by the special Council of Heritage Western Cape is a major victory for us and it goes without saying that any precinct plans are required to go through a legitimate public consultation process.

The protection order by HWC is currently being opposed by the River Club developers, DEAD&P, Department of Transport and Public Works and the City of Cape Town. The OCA, TRUP, various civics, and environmental bodies including various First Nations groups have been active in supporting the protection of our heritage in this regard.

I believe Observatory stands on the right side of history.

## Constitution

The OCA successfully completed a process of implementing improvements to the current constitution. Workshops and public meetings was held on the proposed draft, after which an SGM was held where our brand new constitution was unanimously adopted. We encourage all OCA members to read the new constitution.

I would like to thank all the Management Committee for their incredible hard work. It has not been easy. This work is done by a few for a great many, and with much meaning. I salute you, and remain in deep admiration of you all.

My love, and gratitude to the people of Observatory. You are the keepers of the most beautiful place on earth. Thank you for allowing us the honour of



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serving you. With your support, and encouragement, the Obs Civic continues to hold the line.

Tauriq : Chair, OCA