



OBSERVATORY CHARTER

Based on the Visioning Workshop hosted by OCA, OBSID and ONW: 30 May 2017.

Revised by OCA in workshop in preparation for consultation with OBSID and ONW: 20 May 2018.

UNIQUE SOCIAL CHARACTER

In Observatory we value

- the funky, bohemian, multi-cultural style for which Observatory is known;
- that we have always been a diverse, inclusive, tolerant community that is friendly and bustling;
- the charm offered by the historical heritage of the human-scale built environment;
- inclusive and affordable living spaces to retain this character;
- enterprises and public events that enhance this character;
- actively recognising the forgotten and silenced histories of the area;
- providing a welcoming context for creative initiatives like theatre, music and visual arts, and supporting socially-positive public art; and
- nurturing a diverse variety of eateries and recreational venues that enhance Observatory as a safe, enjoyable recreational destination.

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- more actively marketing all arts and culture events, working with all civic structures;
- having “Open Streets” on a more regular basis, perhaps closing off Lower Main Road monthly – and more actively promoting participation in these kinds of activities;
- regularly promoting car-free days for Lower Main Road;
- promoting more public ownership of open spaces in Observatory – like the village green, Malta Park, TRUP, Liesbeeck;
- researching and mapping the social character with a view to naming what is held dear in the community as well as finding new forms of life in Obs;
- having a membership drive – and activities in which new members can be involved - which enhances diversity and inclusivity, especially of students
- participating in the Observatory oral history project to
 - revitalise the intangible history of the area, including memorialising the First Nations’ battles; and
 - document the known histories of various commercial and residential buildings;
- promoting various histories through murals, public information and walking tours;
- continuing to link ObsLife more directly into the social character;
- editing the Wikipedia entry on Observatory.

In the longer term we would like to:

- link with other 'village' areas such as Muizenberg, Harfield, Wynberg in order to strengthen the village identity;
- work towards a more in-depth process, involving more residents, to develop long-term goals and visioning for Obs's unique social character.

SAFETY

In Observatory we value

- streets in which it is safe to walk,
- parks and open spaces in which it is safe to play and walk,
- safe public spaces that are used for a range of community events.

We pursue these through

- personal habits that promote safety;
- active good neighbourliness;
- communicating with one another, including through social media;
- more active use of public spaces, like the village green and the Liesbeeck river area; and
- co-operating with local organised and state initiatives that promote safety

with a view to

- making Observatory the safest suburb in South Africa!

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- resurrecting Observatory's representation on the Woodstock Community Policing Forum;
- researching the right people and their contact details in liquor authority structures wrt assisting with liquor licence policies and planning;
- lobbying the authorities to impose restrictions on liquor outlets requiring them to close at midnight during the weeks and 2am over the weekends;
- identifying the correct authorities wrt liquor licences, and using media exposure, to pressurise them with regards to enforcing compliance;
- working with OBSID to maintain a community complaints database of noisy, errant establishments so we have firm evidence when approaching the authorities for sanctions against such establishments;
 - advertising on various noticeboards and through various Obs media avenues for citizen complaints to suitable authorities regarding noisy, errant establishments;
 - ensuring that there is information about avenues for complaints about SAPS;
- identifying low-lit areas along Lower Main Rd and requesting those businesses to improve the lighting outside their establishments;
- creating a policy regarding car guards, using existing informal structures of trusted key figures to self-organise and perhaps develop a register of known guards,
- reclaiming the subway project to promote safety, including using them as spaces for artworks;

- identifying students to drive the development of Virtual Buddy Buses (safety in numbers) that could take students (and residents) from Lower Main Rd to their places of residence, and vice versa;
- identifying students to work with us to engage with students via social media and in residences and student hotspots regarding their safety on our streets, ensuring that we reach international students in particular;
- appointing Student Safety and Media Officers;
- continuing to promote and organise the WhatsApp groups.

In the longer term we would like to:

- lobby the City Council to improve lighting throughout the suburb;
- extend the CCTV and LPR cameras within the neighbourhood;
- have a satellite SAPS station in Obs;
- develop Buddy Bus stops throughout the neighbourhood;
- explore the idea of creating cul-de-sacs in some roads which would hinder criminal access and create safe, quality spaces for residents.

CLEANER, SMARTER

In Observatory we value

- an area that is 'smart' in the broadest sense (i.e. not just neat and tidy but including intellectually savvy), characterised by public infrastructure which is in good repair and an aesthetic environment that is stylish and clean.

We pursue this through

- ensuring the authorities attend to damaged infrastructure;
- participating in the upkeep of green and street spaces, especially in our local environments where we each live;
- mindful management of our own domestic waste - like judicious use of black bins and recycling; and
- supporting community initiatives like greening projects and cleaning the Liesbeeck river.

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- regarding complaints and repairs to be done by the City:
 - publicise the central reporting mechanisms especially the City's C3 facility and OBSID's role in this;
 - have regular reports in Obslife on the C3 items, indicating those that are resolved and those still outstanding
 - ensure that unresolved issues are a regular item on the sub-Council meeting agenda and that the Councillor reports on these;
- auditing all public litter bins and adding more in high traffic areas;

- identifying and mobilising selected organisations/institutions to participate in environmental clean-ups - which could provide them with positive PR/profile and potential financial or other support in exchange;
- publicising the recycling company active in Observatory as well as the locations of the recycling igloos;
- facilitating the installation of recycling igloos at schools, in Lower Observatory, at the Community Centre and in other identified areas;
- promoting guerilla gardening;
- liaising with sculpture artists who would like to display their works in the parks and facilitate the implementation of this;
- considering the erection of large noticeboard to publicise a range of Observatory issues.

In the longer term we would like to:

- facilitate the installation of more public litter bins in areas such as the Waverley area;
- have more public recycling igloos that are appropriately located;
- have two daily litter bin cleaning shifts along high traffic areas – like between the station and Groote Schuur;
- develop an eco-trike for speedy litter clean-ups;
- include in each edition of Obslife cleaner, safer, smarter ideas
- ensure that the existing business directory includes local maintenance contractors of all kinds;
- invite sculptors to display their works in the gated parks and other public spaces such as the village green and the Liesbeeck– this adds to the appeal of the park and gives the artist exposure.

GREEN & HEALTHY (EX ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY)

In Observatory we value:

- the natural environment in which we are located - like the Liesbeeck river and wetlands on one side and the mountain on the other;
- our natural heritage and historicity (Khoi belief that “we are part of nature”);
- the urban greening which continues to enhance the built environment where we live, work and play, and
- a consciousness that natural resources need to be managed and protected.

We pursue these through:

- active greening of urban spaces;
- managing park spaces for recreational and sports use;
- participating in promoting the sustainability of the environment, like cleaning the river;
- engaging with property developments that may negatively infringe on the natural environment;
- having organised recycling and composting; and
- educating residents and businesses.

By the end of 2018, we will work towards the following:

Recycling

- undertaking a recycling census by Recycle 1st and other collectors;
- running a recycling drive to educate businesses, NGOs, backpackers and student houses;
- expanding the current glass recycling igloos to include paper and plastic.

Get outside

- encouraging community to #WALKOBS: walk together to meetings, to Lower Main Road and cultural events, walk along the river;
- assessing outdoor sports areas for community use;
- exploring options for creating an outdoor gym and circuit path on the river
- exploring the possibility of community bike rental;
- encouraging community members to get involved in the river clean-ups;
- #WALKOBS having
 - bird/nature walks in the TRUP area to encourage use and awareness of these outdoor spaces;
 - community walking tours that include the floodplain to highlight history and activism [repair the heritage sign on the river];
- having educational articles in ObsLife on wildlife (morea, leopard toads, etc), natural heritage and historicity, and outdoor exercise (Observatory Running Club, etc.);
- educating the community through workshops and info sheets on water saving and recycling tips, like multiflush systems, harvesting grey water;
- encouraging community members to weed the areas outside their properties to avoid the use of chemical weed killers;
- planting trees in public spaces; and
- guerrilla gardening in public spaces - planting cuttings and seeds especially of edible plants "Incredible Edible Obs"; and
- creating planter boxes/containers in the neighbourhood.

In the longer term we would like to:

- encourage the community to walk and cycle more by pedestrianising Lower Main Road between Trill and Station roads and Trill and Bowden roads; [Join monthly #BikeBus organized by Open Streets];
- install artist's rendition of a Quagga crossing at the Kwikspar to ensure pedestrian safety on Station Road (for which application has already been made);
- discuss building developments with developers to encourage them to have less paved surfaces and more green areas;
- encourage households to install solar/PV water heating initiatives;
- green the area by planting trees;
- promote soil building and establish a soil composting area for organic waste with posted signs on "What to Compost & What NOT!".
- organize workshop by Soil for Life or Urban Harvest on soil-building / food gardens noting:
 - business interest in composting from Touch of Madness;
 - sites at Trill Road railway line, Herman Road dog park;
 - the existence of Obs Permaculture Group & Urban Harvest at Mary Kihn School.

INTEGRATED SOCIAL ISSUES

In Observatory we value

- that socially marginalised people are part of our community and are engaged with constructively;
- that students, interns, immigrant communities and transient groups bring business opportunities and diversity to our neighbourhood;
- that a number of civil society organisations (NGOs, NPOs) including arts/culture/sport initiatives are based here, some of whom also engage with our community;
- that we recognise a variety of social norms, and accept that people can express themselves in a variety of ways that respect others' rights and wellbeing;
- that we monitor – and limit where suitable – the proliferation of liquor outlets and the sale of drugs on our streets, while recognising individual choices.

We pursue these through

- developing relationships with marginalised people and offering suitable services;
- monitoring law enforcement bodies regarding their relationships with marginalised people;
- engaging with civil society organisations (NGOs, NPOs), faith-based organisations and arts/culture/sports initiatives regarding local issues;
- engaging with the proprietors of frequently noisy venues;
- monitoring the granting of liquor licences and working with initiatives to curb the drug trade; and
- liaising with law enforcement bodies regarding their actions relating to noise, liquor and drugs.

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- continue communicating and liaising with local representative groups - esp OBSID and Observatory Neighbourhood Watch – as well as with surrounding neighbourhoods and the CIDs and civic organisations in these areas to develop a more effective and area-specific strategy with regards to common social issues; and
- engaging consistently and actively with local organisations working on social issues so that all the role players work together in a more integrated way;
- finalising the database of civil society groups (NGOs, NPOs) and arts/culture/sports initiatives that are working in the neighbourhood;
- adding to the database groups which organise volunteers and communicating with them regarding Observatory activities /areas in which volunteers could help;
- offering to pilot the City of Cape Town's Open/Safe Place in Observatory with a view to providing local services as well as sewing the seed for other areas to follow suit;
- inviting those who are elderly and/or vulnerable to register themselves with OCA (through Obslife) so that they can be supported in neighbourly ways;
- working with OBSID to launch and publicise the 'token' project;
- organising and publicising activities in which people can get involved in Mandela Day (18 July);
- creating signage in the neighbourhood welcoming people to Obs, asking them to donate responsibly, and asserting that the community has zero tolerance for anti-social behaviour related to excessive alcohol consumption and drug dealing;

- having those in the neighbourhood who are involved in the assessment of liquor licence applications strengthen ties with SAPS;
- engaging with the issue of car guards in a more focussed way (being aware that some are homeless people trying to make a living and some are criminals), and working together with OBSID to create a workable plan regarding the 'regularisation' of car guards in Observatory; and
- continuing to educate the general public regarding issues around rough sleepers in the neighbourhood through workshops (such as on 2nd June 2018 facilitated by NewHopeSA) as well as placing 'collection bins' in backpackers and large student accommodation establishments for collection of clothing, books and toiletries.

In the longer term we would like to:

- create a facility (toilet, washing clothes, shower, lockers) for marginalised people and to promote this concept for duplication in surrounding neighbourhoods and throughout the city.

COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES

In Observatory we value

- a diverse range of retail outlets and services, both those suitable to the needs of the local community as well as those that bring day (and night) visitors into the area;
- a streetscape of human-sized enterprises (rather than larger chains and malls);
- a wide range of eateries and recreational venues;
- the light industrial area and other office blocks on our perimeters that bring trade into the area, as well as provide employment for some residents;
- that a proportion of Obs residents work from home, which means that their homes are commercial as well as living spaces; and
- the accommodation suitable for visitors to the area, be they short-term tourists or longer-term (international) students.

We pursue these through

- supporting local retail outlets and service providers, and encouraging others to do so;
- recommending local retailers, restaurants, cafes, suppliers and accommodation to others, both local and visitors; and
- contributing to a safe, clean, smart environment that attracts a range of enterprises and encourages customers, especially from outside of the suburb.

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- ensuring that we attract businesses that enhance Observatory, working with the liquor licence group;
- engaging absent commercial property owners regarding the types of businesses the community wants (more independent speciality retailers, art/craft shops, arts/music venues (with sound-proofing!), etc and does not want in the area i.e. fewer bars and superettes.
- putting the on-line directory of local businesses on the OCA website to facilitate access and to encourage local support;

- working with OBSID to have a ‘buy local’ / ‘#I love Obs” campaign (including stickers) to grow a positive brand for Obs throughout all businesses and to encourage local patronage;
- identifying a number of central places to publicise ‘What on in Obs’ (Obs Facebook, OCA website, Oblife) - including setting up a physical noticeboard so that we can encourage and support art/creative enterprises;
- pedestrianising Lower Main Rd to improve the visitor / shopping experience;
- re-energizing the Business Forum in ways that focus on the future (not only on complaints and crime) – by identifying common issues that bring people together;
- having the Business Forum work with the Obs Neighbourhood Watch to improve safety.

In the longer term we would like to see:

- a wider range of enterprises for residents, visitors and for those who work in Obs;
- a “shopping experience” that is resident-friendly – and is promoted by better access to parking and public transport such as *MyCiti* and trains;
- no parking in the Lower Main Rd strip (i.e. between Norwich & Station roads) to make this a more pedestrian-friendly space;
- fewer liquor licences (for establishments that involve drinking primarily or only) and earlier closing times (midnight from Sundays to Thursdays, and 2pm at the latest on Fridays and Saturdays);
- a vision shared by business owners, commercial property owners and local residents for the commercial future of Observatory;
- the development of an investment/growth policy for Obs - i.e. a “Wesgro for Obs” - that could promote Observatory as a brand;
- a social enterprise being established which would be responsible for an Obs-wide promotion campaign (which will include marketing Observatory for investment: packaging what the area has to offer and identifying what is missing to attract investment by a wider range of enterprises).

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In Observatory we value

- the history of the area, actively recognising the range of diverse heritages;
- the preservation of the built environment – especially the Victorian architecture – within the context of inevitable densification;
- the repurposing of old buildings – and the sensitive design and co-existence of the new and the old;
- housing for people from a wide range of economic means, continuing the history of housing in this area;
- streets where cars and people can co-exist;
- our central location and easy access to main arterial roads; and
- better development that comes from constructive engagement with authorities and stronger participation by community members.

We pursue these through

- researching and enlivening our diverse material heritages;
- educating homeowners and businesses in Observatory regarding heritage and development;
- preserving our own properties in ways that are sensitive to the heritage fabric of the area;
- balancing concerns for the preservation of the built environment with the development of high density buildings – and lobbying for a sensitive fit;
- positively engaging with City of Cape Town and Heritage Western Cape authorities to negotiate appropriate development;
- finding solutions to the increased vehicular congestion, including parking;
- advocating for housing for people from a wide range of economic means;
- promoting socially positive public art;
- incorporating certain of the above in a Local Spatial Development Plan (LSDP).

By May 2019, we will work towards the following:

- adding to the current Observatory Welcome Packs a best-practice kit for homeowners with regards building and renovations (e.g. emphasising that high walls statistically contribute to crime as they hide criminal activity);
- extending the distribution of the Welcome Pack to all homeowners and new residents in Obs (not just new homeowners);
- developing a proposal for Observatory to be declared a heritage area in law - linked to a campaign of community education around heritage and appropriate development;
- running social history tours to increase heritage awareness and instil civic pride;
- uploading a 6-minute version of the documentary on Observatory on the OCA website;
- consider visually documenting recent and ongoing changes in Observatory;
- consider linking to Simon van der Stel historical organisation for documentation of old buildings;
- identifying a pool of people to be enskilled (i.e. understand the regulations and the way in which the City of Cape Town and Heritage Western Cape operate) to engage with the authorities e.g. at sub-council meetings;
- running workshops, starting with the community around 321 Main rd, in order to enskill people;
- engaging with officials at the City of Cape Town (and drawing on the expertise of other parties who work in the field of development) regarding the appropriate application of the Heritage Protection Overlay Zone in development decisions, and challenging them to follow good practice;
- including on the OCA website information on how to have plans approved;
- enabling people to check zonings by adding a link on the website to the City of Cape Town 'Zoning viewer';
- regarding illegal building works, using the OCA website
 - to inform all on how to lodge a complaint; and
 - to register illegal works for 'architecture and heritage' to confirm; as well as publicise illegal works in ObsLife;

- exposing estate agents' false advertising on the OCA website;
- lobbying for, and participating in, the development of an overarching Spatial Development Plan which takes into account the implications for traffic for the densification of the area.

In the longer term we would like to:

- collaborate with other civics around issues of development; and
- ensure good practices are applied to Zoning Scheme applications.