

WRA wrapport

Westcliff Residents' Association



Newsletter for the residents of Westcliff

www.westcliffassociation.co.za

January 2019

Nodal Review will change the face of Westcliff

The Nodal Review, if adopted, will impact severely on Westcliff homeowners and the character of our suburb.

The Nodal Review introduces new development zones that replace the ones in the SDF 2040 and these are described in a set of development guidelines.

Westcliff falls into two of these zones:

- the General Urban Zone that applies to the southern part, and
- the Suburban Zone that applies to the northern part (see diagram below).

The General Urban Zone proposes a medium-intensity mixed land use, with buildings of up to five storeys. The Suburban Zone proposes a predominant residential use, but with supporting shops and facilities, with buildings of up to three storeys.

In addition, the Nodal Review provides density guidelines:

- a minimum of 60 dwellings per hectare for the General Urban Zone (about 24 per acre, the average size of a Westcliff stand)
- a minimum of 20 to 50 dwellings per hectare in the Suburban Zone.

IMPORTANT: All previous local precinct plans, including the specific guidelines for Westcliff in the Regional Spatial Development Framework (RSDF), will be withdrawn if the Nodal Review is adopted.

Provision is made for local precinct plans to be reinstated, or redone, within 180 days of the adoption of the Nodal Review, but such reinstatement or new local precinct plans would need to align with the new development guidelines.

WAY FORWARD: The WRA will oppose the densification plan as set out in the Nodal Review, as being inappropriate as a cookie-cutter approach for one of the City's most iconic historical suburbs. We will seek our own bespoke precinct plan. There will be a consultation process with residents and a 'townhall' meeting where all views can be expressed and debated. On the one extreme of the land debate is "expropriation without compensation". On the other extreme is the view that any densification represents "the thin edge of the wedge". WRA advocates the retention of the current rules as set out in the RSDF – stands of 2 000m², no subdivision of 1:3 slope or steeper – as measures that have served to protect the suburb. Until we receive a different mandate from residents, we will continue to advocate for the consistent application of those provisions, notwithstanding more liberal or conservative views to the contrary.

Help future-proof our suburb

The Westcliff Residents Association (WRA) is going to need support if residents want to stem the tide of such proposed development. We are going to need new surveys to determine residents' opinions, new blood on the committee to start a new debate, and financial support to challenge undesirable proposals.

- Volunteer your services as a WRA member
- Pay your WRA subscriptions.
- Attend the AGM.



Residential density (dwellings per hectare):

- 20 to 30
- 30 to 40
- 40 to 50
- 50 to 60
- Min 60



The bad news about the Nodal Review

At least 24 dwellings on a Westcliff stand



The good news about the Nodal Review

Your chance to work with the WRA on an alternate plan



Subdivision's divided stance

During 2018, the Westcliff Residents Association (WRA) received several applications to subdivide properties, and one application to rezone a property for high-density development. These have caused affected residents great concern.

As a concession to controlled densification, the WRA has allowed sensitive subdivisions of 2 000 m² as complete prohibition of any subdivision would never have been sustainable. This will change if the Nodal Review is adopted in its current form (see main article).

Certain areas within Westcliff, are currently not allowed any subdivision. The City's Regional Spatial

Development Framework (RSDF) states that: "No new applications for subdivisions of properties situated on the east, north or south sides of Pallinghurst Road, the north side of Woolston Road, the south side of the Valley Road to the east or west side of Jan Smuts Avenue will be supported, where any subdivided portion to be developed comprises a north- or east-facing aspect of the Westcliff/ Parktown Ridges."

The current Westcliff guidelines will fall away with the approval of the Nodal Review. The City will use the new development guidelines to assess all applications for rezoning and subdivision.

IMPORTANT:

While the WRA will not object to a "good" subdivision, every resident who feels they are affected by a subdivision can file their own objection and the matter will proceed to a town planning hearing where objections will be considered, and may be upheld if they are valid.



Miniscule borer leaves huge gaps in our gardens

The shot hole borer is a tiny flying beetle, about the size of a sesame seed, that is killing our trees. The beetle comes from Vietnam where trees have natural resistance and where natural predators keep the beetle under control.

Only during the past year has the beetle been identified and the national extent of the problem understood. This beetle is an invasive pest that threatens our cities, agriculture and indigenous forests. It has recently been found in the Kruger Park.

Some trees are magnets for the shot hole borer and will become a breeding ground for hundreds of thousands of tree-killing beetles. Arborists believe that the Boxelder should be removed immediately, or at least receive intensive treatment. Other susceptible trees, such as the English Oak and the London Plane, need to be treated with a combination of natural and synthetic insecticides, fungicides and bio stimulants.

What to do:

- This website will give more information: <https://polyphagous-shot-hole-borer.co.za>
- The Tree Survey mobile app will allow you to register diseased trees. You can also report dead public trees using the Tree Survey mobile app. City Park needs to remove them immediately as each tree can be the breeding ground for the beetles.



How sacred is heritage?

Westcliff has some stunning heritage properties, with many of the Heritage Association's blue plaques confirming official recognition.

Residents want to preserve these gems, as well as the special character they bring to our leafy suburb. But we also recognise that modern requirements will demand some flexibility in how these properties will be used by future generations.

The Joint Plans Committee (JPC), which is an association of Westcliff, Parktown, Forest Town and Parkview Residents' Associations, as well as the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation, meets fortnightly to discuss building plans and land use applications.

While sensitive to "heritage gems", the heritage specialists on this committee are not inflexible.

The JPC is open to consider proposed plans, as prepared by a qualified heritage architect and in accordance with international best practice, for the sensitive alteration of heritage properties. A spokesperson confirms: "The restrictive conditions from a heritage point of view depend more on the nature of alterations and additions that would be proposed for the building, than the expectation of a complete preservation of the building as it stands. We believe that a well-designed, contextually sensitive and carefully considered proposal could transform these properties into dwellings more attuned to modern living."

Same price, more value

Subscriptions to the WRA have increased by just R20 for 2019.

The committee meets a minimum of six times a year to discuss residents' concerns, and implement remedial plans.

In 2018, the WRA did the following:

- Contributed to road repairs in Waterfall Road
- Regularly cleaned up the steps and verges
- Paid for a traffic study

related to the Mosque Application

- Paid VBH planning annual fees
- Donated R5 000 to the Zoo Lake Development Fund
- Printed residents' passes.

In 2019, we need your support more than ever (see cover story on the Nodal Review and the challenges it poses to our suburb).

ACCOUNT DETAILS:

Westcliff Residents Association
FNB

A/c No: 50331249702

Branch: Hyde Park (255805)

REF: Please use your house number and street name/

surname as your reference for accurate allocation of your payment, eg. 2 The Valley NAME/SURNAME.

Please pay your annual subscription of R970 today.

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Councillor WhatsApp group

We have the most supportive ward councillor in the form of Bridget Steer. If you are not yet on her 'Westcliff Council Issues' group, you are missing out.



If you would like her to add you, send her a WhatsApp message on **083 604 0404**, citing your name and street address.

... but do your homework first

Bridget has been performing backflips in helping to solve residents' issues, but please do your work before you contact her:

- Report your problem to the relevant authority
- Get a reference number
- Wait for a reasonable time (10 minutes does not count as reasonable) and only then
- Ask Bridget to escalate the issue for you.



Download the free EskomSePush App for load-shedding notifications:

<https://sepush.co.za>