

**COMMITTEE MEETING DATES:**

GDRC: 22/06/20

EXCO: TBC

HRM COM: TBC

COUNCIL: TBC

## DECLARATION SUBMISSION

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**SUBMITTED BY:** Heritage Protection Unit**DATE:** 15 June 2020**SAHRIS SITE ID:** 117044**SAHRIS SITE CATEGORY:** Place, Building**SIGNIFICANCE CATEGORY (THEMES):** Historical, Association with an event/organisation**ENQUIRIES:** Ms H. Weldon**ITEM:** Proposal for National Heritage Site Declaration: The Rocklands Community Hall; Erf 11553; Mitchell's Plain; Cape Town, Western Cape

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### A1. BACKGROUND

- A1.1. The Rocklands Community Hall, based on the award winning "people's place" design by Graham Parker, was built by the City of the Cape Town in 1981. The centre was built to serve as multi-amenities hall for the community of Mitchells Plain, many of whom had been forcefully relocated from District Six. The UDF which that was formed in this building was to contribute significantly to the downfall of Apartheid
- A1.2. Due to its central location, it provided a convenient space for mass resistance and large-scale political gatherings, such as the pivotal gathering establishing the United Democratic Front on 20 August 1983. The UDF was a political organisation that was specifically formed to unite people over a broad spectrum, across racial, religious and social barriers, to resist the oppressive Apartheid political system. As an organisation the UDF was to play an invaluable role in sensitising ordinary citizens to resist the evils of the Apartheid system

- A1.3. The meeting was attended by over 10 000 people including anti-apartheid activist veterans such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, Rev Frank Chikane, Albertina Sisulu, Oscar Mpetha, Helen Joseph, Frances Baard, Archie Gumede and RD Naidoo.
- A1.4. The establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF), which at its peak had over 700 affiliates, was to have a profound influence on the democratisation of South Africa. As the largest socio-political movement, the UDF united South Africans from diverse backgrounds and was at the forefront of protest action in the early to mid-1980s. Through their intensified and sustained resistance including organised boycotts, school protests, and worker strikes they contributed largely to the downfall of the Apartheid government.
- A1.5. The site is given added significance by the UDF Memorial that was erected by the City of Cape Town in front of the Hall in 2011.
- A1.6. Heritage Western Cape declared the site a provincial heritage site on 27 September 2017. At the meeting unveiling the declaration on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019, sentiments were expressed that the site has greater significance than that of a provincial site. Therefore, HWC submitted to the nomination to SAHRA to consider the national significance of the site.
- A1.7. The Grading and Declaration Reviews Committee graded the site as a Grade 1 site on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

## **A2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

- A2.1. *Rocklands Community Hall, built by the City of Cape Town Council in 1981, was the venue of an historic gathering on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1983 which saw the establishment of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and signified a turning point in the struggle against Apartheid.*
- A2.2. *The UDF was formed to unite people and organisations across South Africa despite racial, social and religious differences, and called for a united non-racial, non-sexist democratic South Africa. The gathering was attended by over 500 organisations from youth/student organisations, trade unions, church groups, civic, and women organisations, in response to the social economic and political changes that had been taking place since the 1976 Youth Uprisings. This included, and was in fact, spearheaded by, the introduction of the Tricameral Parliamentary system, a government system along racial lines which excluded the majority (Black) South Africans.*

- A2.3. *The gathering at Rocklands heralded a new phase in the Liberation Struggle as the UDF placed itself at the forefront of intensified and sustained mass protests that took place across South Africa between 1984 and 1986. The UDF demonstrated that a diverse coalition of groups and individuals could stand together, even in the most difficult times of suppression, despite differences in ideologies, to successfully put pressure on the Apartheid regime.*
- A2.4. *Socially, Rocklands Community Hall was built as a multi-amenities facility to provide for the social and recreational needs of the Mitchell's Plains community (many of whom were forcefully removed from District 6), a "people's place". Rocklands continues to be such a "people's place" to the residents of Mitchell's Plain, providing various social and recreational needs such as issuing of social grants, sports clubs, church services, library, creche and senior citizens meeting place.*
- A2.5. *Architecturally, Rocklands Hall was one of eight halls built by the City of Cape Town in the Cape Flats between 1970s and 1980s, based on the design by Graham Parker. Parker was awarded the Architectural Award of Merit by the Cape Provincial Institute of Architects for the design. This led to the design being used for several community halls across South Africa.*

### **A3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- A3.1 The Rocklands Community Hall including the UDF memorial, memorial square, community health center and community library on Erf 11553, was declared a provincial heritage site by Heritage Western Cape in 2017. Following the unveiling on 20 August 2019 HWC submitted the nomination to SAHRA for consideration as a national heritage site. This was due to the sentiments raised at the meeting that the site has greater significance than provincial site.
- A3.2. After the site was graded as a Grade 1 site in February 2020, SAHRA sent letters of notification. Unfortunately, SAHRA did not receive any responses. Therefore, alternatives are being investigated. Due to the restrictions caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown, SAHRA was unable to hold the planned public meeting.
- A3.3 SAHRA is negotiating a heritage agreement with the City of Cape Town, who own and manage the site.
- A3.4. The site is currently, and will continue, to be used as a multi recreational center, a space for large gatherings and other social amenities such as delivering social grants.

A3.5. It is recommended that the submission to declare the site a national heritage site is approved.

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION

- 1.1 The submission is made to discuss and recommend the declaration of the Rocklands Community Hall, Erf 11553, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, Western Cape, as a National Heritage Site.

### 2. LANDOWNER'S DETAILS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS DECLARATION

- 2.1. The site is owned and managed by the City of Cape Town who are in full support of the declaration.
- 2.2. The City is represented by Mr L. Mbandazayo, the Municipal Manager.

Mr L. Mbandazayo  
Municipal Manager  
City of Cape Town  
PO Box 16548  
Vlaeberg  
8018

### 3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND NOTIFICATION

- 3.1. Letters of notification were sent on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 to the following interested and affected parties, with the 60-day period ending on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020:

- City of Cape Town
- Heritage Western Cape
- United Democratic Front
- Department of Arts and Culture
- Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sports
- Ward 81: City of Cape Town
- United Reformed Church
- Iziko Museums
- House of Faith
- Breakthrough HR Solutions

3.2. Unfortunately, SAHRA did not receive any responses.

3.3. Heritage Western Cape declared the site a provincial heritage site on 27 September 2017. At the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019, when the declaration of the site was unveiled, it was felt that the site is of greater importance than a provisional heritage site. Therefore, Heritage Western Cape submitted the nomination to SAHRA.

3.4. Further, SAHRA has telephonically communicated with the City of Cape Town's Environmental Resource Management Department who are in support of the declaration and have requested that the Provincial declaration be withdrawn. This matter has been referred to the Legal unit for a legal opinion.

3.5. While it was planned to hold a public meeting in April, however, due to the restrictions of the COVID 19 pandemic the public meeting was not held. Therefore, alternatives of reaching the community were sought and a notice in the local community newspaper, the Plainsman is being considered.

3.6. It has come to SAHRA's attention that we may need to consider broader notification as the event of establishing the UDF was a national event. Therefore, other alternatives are also being investigated.

#### **4. OFFICIAL DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCE (AS PER THE TITLE DEEDS)**

4.1. The site inclusive of the Rocklands Community Hall (both minor and main halls), the UDF Memorial and Memorial Square, Community Health Care Centre and the Library situated on Erf 11553, Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, Western Cape.

## 5. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA TO BE DECLARED (SITE BOUNDARIES)

Site Name	Erf/Farm Number	Province	Town	Municipality	SG Diagram
Rocklands Community Hall	Erf 11553, Mitchell's Plain	Western Cape	Cape Town	City of Cape Town	47/81



Figure 1: Rocklands Community Hall NHS Boundaries

## 6. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OF THE RESOURCE


6.1. The site is owned and managed by the City of Cape Town. SAHRA has started the negotiations for a heritage agreement with the City. Annexure A.

## 7. RESOURCE UTILIZATION

7.1. The site currently has multiple uses as a multi-amenities community hall. In addition to the recreational use it is also currently used as a venue where social grants can be received, meeting place for senior citizens, sports clubs, church services and a creche.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1. It is recommended that the declaration of the Rocklands Community Hall is approved.

<b>Prepared By:</b>		<b>Supported By:</b>	
Heidi Weldon Heritage Officer: Grading and Declaration		Nkosazana Machete Manager: Heritage Protection	Signature
<b>Date: 17 June 2020</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

<b>Recommendation supported by GDRC</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by GDRC</b>	
Mamakomoreng Nkhasi-Lesaoana Chairperson: GDRC		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by EXCo</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by EXCo</b>	
Adv Lungisa Malgas Chairperson: EXCo		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by HRM Committee</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by HRM Committee</b>	
Mr Motsathebe Serekoane Chairperson: HRM Committee		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by Council</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by Council</b>	
Mr Moses Themba Makhweyane Chairperson: Council		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			