



an agency of the  
Department of Arts and Culture

**COMMITTEE MEETING DATES:**

GDRC: 28/08/19  
EXCO: 11/09/19  
HRM COM: 04/10/19  
COUNCIL: 25/10/19

## DECLARATION SUBMISSION

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SUBMITTED BY: Heritage Protection Unit

DATE: 20 August 2019

FILE REFERENCE NUMBER: 9/2/228/203

SAHRIS SITE ID: 93081

SAHRIS SITE CATEGORY:

SIGNIFICANCE CATEGORY (THEMES):

ENQUIRIES: Ms H. Weldon

ITEM: Proposal for National Heritage Site Declaration: Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication; Kliptown, Soweto, Gauteng

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### 1. BACKGROUND

A1.1. In the 1953, ZK Matthews proposed that a concise vision of a future democratic South Africa be drafted, "I wonder whether... a Congress of the People representing all the people of this country, irrespective of race or colour, to draw up a Freedom Charter for the democratic South Africa of the future." The idea was supported and adopted by the ANC. A campaign through the Campaign Alliance between the ANC, National Indian Congress, South African Coloured Peoples Organization and the Congress of Democrats and South African Congress of Trade Unions, commenced in soliciting ideas and input from all South Africans, in what was one of the most democratic processes in South Africa.

A1. 2.. The campaign culminated in the Congress of the People in Kliptown on the 25 and 26<sup>th</sup> June 1955. Here, representatives from all over South Africa gathered on the dusty field and clause by clause read, debated and adopted the Freedom Charter.

- The gathering was the most representative gathering in South Africa where ordinary South Africans were able to voice their vision for a future democratic South Africa.
- A1.3. The Freedom Charter, labelled a communist document and banned in South Africa, formed the basis of the liberation movement and eventually found expression in the Constitution of the South Africa.
- A1.4. Kliptown is one of South Africa's oldest urban settlements established in 1903 accommodating people from all races. Not only was it the location of one of South Africa's most pivotal and democratic events, it was also home to the likes of Charlotte Maxeke, Lilian Ngoyi, Gerald Sekoto etc and a refuge for Nelson Mandela (Stanley Lolan's mother's house).
- A1.5. Due to the Apartheid policies of segregation and oppression, Kliptown was subjected to systematic underdevelopment. To address this, in 2002 the City of Johannesburg embarked on the Kliptown Precinct Renewal Development Project to be implemented through the Johannesburg Development Agency funded by both the City and Provincial governments. R436 million was injected into the project that would aim to regenerate Kliptown and give it the status it deserved based on its historical values. The focus was on the following:
- Development of the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication precinct into a national heritage site;
  - Refurbishment of the Kliptown Railway Station;
  - Development of a new taxi rank and informal traders' market;
  - Building of new houses;
  - Cleaning of the Klipspruit River and the creation of recreational facilities along the river banks; and
  - Creation of economic opportunities in the area
- A1.6. The business plan that was proposed in 2004 proposed the creation of an Open-Air Museum, a community driven cultural site that recognizes the Freedom Charter and promotes community development. The construction of the two rectangle building blocks (retail, events, hotel, office and education facilities), conical memorial and the Jada House museum is as far as the project seemed to have progressed.
- A1.7. Despite the aims and predictions, the business plans, the community of Kliptown have yet to realize any benefits from the proposed developments. The community of Kliptown have endured many years of neglect despite the many promises made through the project, politicians and government. The lack of service delivery, increased unemployment and lowering levels of disposable income persist for the people of Kliptown.

A1.9. The site has been identified as one of the ten initial sites for the Human Rights Liberation and Reconciliation: Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites World Heritage Nomination.

A1.10. Council graded the site as a Grade 1 site on the 12 July 2015.

## **A2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

A2.1. *As the site of the 1955 Congress of the People, the Walter Sisulu Square represents the most representative gathering in the history of South Africa and the democratic approach taken in documenting the vision of ordinary South Africans. The process of drafting the Freedom Charter was the first time in South African history where all South Africans were given an opportunity to voice their dreams and hopes for a future democratic South Africa, irrespective of race, colour, education, language, sex, personal beliefs and organisational affiliation.*

A2.2. *This process culminated on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> June 1955, at the Congress of the People on a dusty field that is now the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, to adopt the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter further, gave the liberation movement a uniform and coherent vision for a future South Africa and became the basis of the movement. The Constitution of the new post-apartheid democratic South Africa is based on the demands and rights reflected in the Freedom Charter and encapsulates its vision as a goal for a fully integrated and inclusive South African nation*

## **A3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A3.1 Kliptown is an important historical settlement in South Africa, established in 1903 and is the place where the pivotal event of the Congress of the People took place and where the Freedom Charter, the basis for the liberation movement and the Constitution of South Africa, was adopted. Walter Sisulu Square has been identified as one of the ten sites to be nominated to UNESCO as apart of the Human Rights Liberation and Reconciliation: Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites World Heritage Nomination. The site was graded by Council in 12 July 2015. The submission will discuss processes completed and recommended the declaration of the site as a National Heritage Site.

A3.2. The City of Johannesburg (who are the custodians of the site) plans to reconfigure the site through the Kliptown Renewal Development plan and include proposals for the development of a shopping mall. Although a business plan was submitted for a Community-driven Open-Air Museum in 2004.

- A3.3. However, despite the importance and historical significance of the site and the Klijtown Renewal Project developments, the area and the community have continued to be neglected, leading to anger and frustration among the community.
- A3.4. The anger and frustration were expressed at the public meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019. However, as the community understand and feel proud toward the history of the site, have agreed to the declaration. Unfortunately, no formal responses were received from any of the Interested and Affected parties written to, including those departments and agencies involved in the site.

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### 1. PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION

- 1.1. The submission is made to discuss and recommend the declaration of the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication (previously known as Freedom Square), Kliptown, Soweto Gauteng as a National Heritage Site.

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

- 2.1. The site falls under the custodianship of the City of Johannesburg who are in full support of the declaration. The center is currently managed by Milzet Consulting Services.

The City of Johannesburg is represented by:

Mr. V. Mshudulu  
Director: Community Development Arts, Culture and Heritage  
City of Johannesburg  
P.O. Box 517  
Newtown  
2113

### **3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND NOTIFICATION**

3.1. Prior to the formal notification process, SAHRA has previously, on its own and together with the NHC engaged with Johannesburg Properties Company (JPC) regarding proposed reconfiguration developments of the site and both for the national declaration and world inscription processes and requirements.

3.2 Initial plans for the reconfiguration were presented and submitted to SAHRA for the development of a shopping mall. Reports regarding the national declaration process have been submitted to JPC in 2017, to be taken up to the Mayoral Committee. Unfortunately, no feedback was received from this.

3.3. Letters of notification were sent on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to the following interested and affected parties, with the 60-day period ending on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2019:

- City of Johannesburg - Community Development Arts Culture and Heritage (Owners)
- Johannesburg Properties Company
- Johannesburg Development Agency
- Soweto Hotel
- Walter Sisulu Square Centre Management
- Department of Arts and Culture
- Gauteng Growth and Development Agency
- Johannesburg Heritage Foundation

3.2. Following this, letters were hand delivered to the tenants on the site on 12 June 2019. This allowed for some engagement with the tenants who raised concerns regarding the promises made back in 2011 when the square was developed. The tenants were given the impression that the development and declaration of the site would attract an increase in business. Concerns regarding the management of the centre were also raised. Letters were delivered to the following:

- African National Congress Branch
- Bigman Cash & Carry
- Soweto Chef Academy
- Nobantu Publication and Phones
- Indra Hansragh T/A Shirley's
- South West Gauteng College
- JB Curios & Gift Shop
- Kliptown Sweet Market
- Kenakobiz 107 CC T/A Sufys Chicken
- New Heights 1082

- Friyal Import and Export CC
- Orient Wholesalers and Retail CC
- Wits Health Consortium (PHRU)
- Shah Fresh Produce (Pty) Ltd
- Badat Wholesalers
- Dept of Roads and Transport
- SA Post Office
- Becomo Art Centre
- Ballim Furniture

The following businesses were closed on the day and letters were handed to the Centre Management for delivery:

- Tshwarisano General Security Services
- Tulapart (Pty)LTD / Harcourts Real Estate
- Boja Nala
- Nthabi's Traditional Wear

3.3. Acknowledgments of receipt of the notifications were received from the Johannesburg Properties Company and two craft traders, Zwakele Buthelezi and Sibonokuhle (Samantha) Dube

3.4. To date no formal responses have been received.

3.5. A public meeting was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> August together with the National Heritage Council regarding the World Heritage Nomination process. Due to what seemed like a miscommunication as a result of NHC initially cancelling the meeting, very few people attended the meeting. However, as the meeting progressed more people arrived.

3.6. The community members and tenants represented at the meeting did not oppose the declaration of the site. Everyone agreed on the historical importance of the site and that the declaration would bring benefits in educating youth. However, they were weary of further developments at the site while their living conditions and socio-economic situations were not considered.

3.7. Currently the community are still subjected to improper sanitation and drainage, no proper road systems, lack of electricity, no amenities such as libraries, clinics, skills development centres etc. It would seem as the Kliptown Renewal Project bypassed the community entirely. They were led to believe that the development of the Walter Sisulu Square would bring development to them, however they claim that 90% of the traders at the square are not from Kliptown and nor do they employ from the community.

- 3.8. As such the community wanted to understand how the site can receive the recognition of national declaration while they are subjected to the poor conditions they current endure. SAHRA proposed that these issues are raised with City and will facilitate a meeting between the different role players to determine a way forward in contexts of the national declaration and world heritage inscription
- 3.9. At the end of the meeting all parties agreed that the declaration should proceed and that further engagements will take place in terms of the World Heritage Nomination process.
- 3.10. One community member informed us that they had written to the Human rights Commission, who visited the site shortly after the public participation meeting. The Commission will be writing to the provincial government to raise the community's concerns and request that the City and Province attend to the needs of Kliptown communities , hopefully through a round table discussions.

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

- 4.1. The site is referred to as the Walter Sisulu Square is situated on Erf 11915 Pimville Zone 9; Kliptown; Johannesburg; Gauteng

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

Site Name	Erf No / Farm	Province	Nearest Town	Municipality	Survey Diagram
<b>Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication (formerly known as Freedom Square)</b>	Erf 11915 Pimville Zone 9	GP	Kliptown	City of Johannesburg	3944/2055

**6. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OF THE RESOURCE**

- 6.1. Eco-Africa together with NHC are developing a site management plan in terms of the UNESCO nomination process. The nomination and the site management plans are currently undergoing an African World Heritage Fund Upstreaming process. This process guides the development of the nomination and plans with UNESCOs requirements .
- 6.2. SAHRA will enter into a heritage agreement with the relevant managing authority once It is appointed by the Department of Environment Forestry and Fisheries.



## **7. RESOURCE UTILIZATION**

- 7.1. The site is currently used as an open-air museum, hotel, retail centre, events facility, informal trading, crafts trading, colleges such as South West Gauteng College, New Heights and the Soweto Chef Academy.
- 7.2. The site is zoned according to the Johannesburg Spatial Development Framework as a high residential area with mixed land use. Through the Kliptown Renewal Development Plan the site has a high potential for tourism and is recognised as a historical heritage site and business node in the City's SDF.

## **8. RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1. It is recommended that the declaration of the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication is approved

## **9. REFERENCES**

Birch, M; (1995); *Submission to National Monuments Council: Freedom Square Kliptown, Soweto*. SAHRA File Reference: 9/2/228/203 Volume 1.



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Proposal for National Heritage Site Declaration: Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication;  
Kliptown, Soweto, Gauteng

<b>Prepared By:</b>		<b>Supported By:</b>	
Heidi Weldon Heritage Officer: Grading and Declaration		Nkosazana Machete Manager: Heritage Protection	Signature 
<b>Date: 20 August 2019</b>		<b>Date: 22 August 2019</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>	
Chairperson: HRM Committee		Signature	
<b>Date:</b>			

<b>Recommendation supported by Council</b>		<b>Recommendation not supported by Council</b>	
Chairperson: Council		Signature	
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