

Friends of Golden Harvest Park

BUSINESS PLAN FOR GOLDEN HARVEST PARK, RANDBURG MARCH 2006

Executive Summary

This business plan has been prepared by the Friends of Golden Harvest Park (FGHP). FGHP represents 7 complexes bordering the Park as well as 188 private households who live locally and are regular users of the Park.

Golden Harvest Park is the largest green space for the residents of Randburg and was proscribed as a “green lung” for Randburg in 1972. With the phenomenal growth of town house developments in the vicinity of the Park there is an ever increasing need for a Park where citizens can enjoy fresh air, greenery and space to exercise their dogs.

Sadly over the past few years the Park has suffered from inadequate investment and maintenance and is underutilised by local residents because of perceived threats to their security. The security situation is exacerbated further by the number of people living permanently in the Park, both legally and illegally.

The Park itself is now under threat from proposed developments. At the northern end of the Park there is a proposal to build Display Gardens and on the southern side of the Park rumours exist of a townhouse development between the dam and First Road, Northwold.

This proposal recognises that Golden Harvest Park is not a priority for the limited resources of City Parks and seeks to identify potential sponsorship from the local business community in order to upgrade the Park’s facilities, thereby providing a secure attractive amenity for the enjoyment of all the local community.

The proposal identifies key areas that require attention to arrest the Park’s decline and once these have been addressed, projects have been identified to develop the Park into a popular, well utilised amenity which benefits the local community.

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1 Vision & Mission

Vision

A secure, well-managed and attractive Park, providing a “green lung” for the enjoyment of the local community, facilities for children to play in safety and a haven for wildlife.

Mission

To work in conjunction with City Parks to establish a sustainable maintenance programme for Golden Harvest Park.

To encourage the participation of the local business community as well as local residents in a development initiative to improve the amenities offered by the Park.

To promote the amenities of the Park and mobilize support from community interest groups to broaden the appeal of the Park and encourage greater usage.

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2 Background

2.1 History of the Site

In 1972 Randburg Town Council adopted a Master Plan for Randburg, produced by Withers & Gerke, which earmarked the site for the P1 Municipal Regional Park at Golden Harvest, between the suburbs of Sundowner and Northwold. This Master Plan included the designation of land for recreation and special mention was made at that time, and adopted by the Council, of the need to preserve the natural environment, create nature reserves and bird sanctuaries and generally keep the Park as natural as possible. The objective of the park design was to create a good blend of active and passive recreation and keep away from facilities that would require large scale excavation such as sports fields.

The Archaeological Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the direction of Prof. R.J. Mason, visited the site in 1983 and confirmed the existence of a small Iron Age village of the late 18th century and materials from a house built between 1900 and 1910. These sites are located on the south eastern side of the main koppie. The main koppie is of particular educational value due to the interesting combination of geology, archaeology and indigenous vegetation, giving it a unique character in the Randburg area. It was anticipated in the Master Plan that a conservation area be created at the main koppie to provide a focus for educational-type facilities but because of its fragility it will be necessary to control access by fencing and to restrict access to guided tours by an experienced educational officer.

2.2 Location

Much of the land now comprising the Park was originally 40 agricultural holdings of which 7 remained in private ownership. Between 1972 and 1992 the council proceeded to expropriate this land to create a Park of approximately 90 hectares.

There have been various alterations to the exact Park boundaries and the exact area of the Park is unclear. No map appears to exist clearly defining the boundaries of the Park. However, the open space available as Parkland is bordered by Maple Drive and Olivenhout Road to the north, Douglas Road and Drysdale Roads to the west, First and Second Roads to the south and townhouse developments to the east.

At the northern end of the Park (Erf 1 to 6, Brushwood Haugh) bordering Olivenhout Road is a parcel of land which was once used as a nursery for the Park and is now lying derelict. This land, plus a portion of Park land, is currently the subject of a proposal from a private developer to build Display Gardens for which an Environmental Impact Assessment (E.I.A.) is in progress.

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2.3 Entrance Charges

In 1998 City Parks introduced an entrance fee for all visitors to the Park. The current charges are R15 per car and R5 per individual, collected at the main gate. The entrance charges have resulted in a decline in the number of people using the Park as many people think that they are already paying for the facility in their municipal levies and resent paying again. For regular users of the Park i.e. daily dog walkers the charges are prohibitively expensive.

FGHP supports the idea of charging an entrance fee as it improves Park security and provides an element of control over visitors. However it is only viable if the Park's boundaries are secure.

FGHP operates 4 pedestrian gates into the Park.

- Gate One, at Second Road between Harvest Lodge and Park Lodge complexes
- Gate Two, on First Road
- Gate 3 on Douglas Road, between Ambleside and the Bridles complexes
- Gate 4 on Maple Drive opposite Greenacres complex

FGHP is responsible for the maintenance of these gates and issues keys to its members at a cost of R15 per key. In addition a few members have a key to the old main gate which is operated by City Parks.

Membership of FGHP is either on an individual basis at R120 per annum or group membership, when an entire complex joins at a fee of R5 per month per unit.

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2.4 User Groups

The predominant user groups of the Park are:

- Members of Friends of Golden Harvest Park who comprise:
 - Nature lovers
 - Walkers
 - Runners
 - Dog walkers
 - Children with /without bicycles
 - Anglers
 - Mountain bike enthusiasts
- Family groups
- Picknickers
- Children and teenagers
- Domestic workers
- Pedestrians taking an illegal shortcut from Drysdale Road to Banbury Cross
- Individuals renting houses in the Park
- Individuals living illegally in the Park
- Walking, rambling and birdwatching groups
- Groups hiring the Kiepersol Lapa
- Groups hiring the lawns, such as PicknPay, Metrobus, YFM, film crews etc

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2.5 Stakeholders

The following stakeholders have been identified:

- Friends of Golden Harvest Park
- City Parks
- Propcom
- Johannesburg City Council Region 5
- Northwold Residents Association (?) – defunct but still have funds
- Cheshire Homes
- Complexes bordering the Park

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2.6 Facilities

The Park has the following facilities:

- 12 houses, currently rented out by Propcom on behalf of City Parks to various private individuals
- 1 house used as a place of safety for abused children, vacant at present
- 1 house used as a polling station at election time
- 1 depot used by City Parks
- 1 house used as Offices for City Parks
- Boundary Fencing
- Kiepersol Lapa, rented out occasionally by City Parks for private functions, mainly municipal events
- Thatched main gate, comprising staff room and two gates, one electrically and one battery operated
- Old main gate
- 4 pedestrian gates, operated and maintained by FGHP
- 1 Toilet block
- 2 playgrounds with assorted equipment and two wooden jungle gyms
- Braais and picnic tables
- Benches
- Trees
- Main dam with fish
- Birdlife including ducks, Egyptian geese, cormorants, kingfishers, guinea fowl etc
- Wetland providing excellent habitat for birdlife
- Small dam by Maple Row complex
- Waterfall
- Small dam upstream from wooden bridge
- Overgrown dam beside old main gate, no longer in use
- Vlei from Pampoenspruit
- Cellular mast owned by Vodacom
- Lawns
- Open veld
- Roadways
- Lighting
- Koppie with remnants of an iron age settlement
- Old windmill
- Borehole (s)?
- 2 parking areas, one on the north side of the dam, the other by the toilet block

The status and problem areas associated with these are described in the next section.

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3 Current Status of Problem Areas & Proposed Solutions

3.1 Security

3.1.1 Permanent Park Residents

Having residents in the Park makes it difficult to enforce security. All legal tenants have a remote (paid for by FGHP) to access the battery operated main gate out of hours. The main gate is frequently not working which means that it is left standing open throughout the night to allow Park residents access. If there were no tenants to consider then the two main gates could simply be padlocked shut each evening. All tenants were served with eviction notices in 2003 but these were never enforced and the tenants have remained in situ.

3.1.2 Illegal Park Residents

As well as legal tenants in the Park there are also people living in the Park illegally who have broken down palisade fencing in order to gain access to the Park and who may also be responsible for the recent damage to the gate motors. There is also strong evidence that these people are responsible for a series of break-ins to complexes bordering the Park, where access has been gained from inside the Park.

- The Bridles (30.11.2005)
 - Park Lodge (2.12.2005)
 - Harvest Lodge (11.12.2005)
 - Somerset Place (although unable to prove from inside the Park)
 - Palermo (mid Dec 2005)
- [c.f. letters sent to Mr L Williamson dated 3.10.2005 and 2.12.2005]

3.1.3 Insecure Park boundaries

- Gate motors not working at main gate and gates left open all night
- Side gate by main gate not padlocked at night
- Fencing by Drysdale Road damaged to allow illegal entry
[c.f. letter sent to Mr L Williamson 3.10.2005]
- Fencing by Drysdale road damaged by trees in recent storms requires repair
- Several people seem to have keys to the old main gate (e.g. members of a recent film crew) and cars are being driven through this entrance.
- The chicken wire fencing along Maple Drive is constantly being broken down.
- Porous boundary with the old Park nursery means that people can access the Park through the nursery using the gate on Olivenhout Road which is left unlocked
- Palisade fencing has been erected around the office to provide security for Park personnel but does nothing to protect the security of park users.
[c.f. letter sent to Mr Thabang Mokone 27.10.2005]

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The insecure park boundaries mean that anyone can enter the Park at any time of day or night and the risk of more people residing illegally in the Park is high. FGHP understands from Suzette Gordon, Manager Park Security, that if these people can demonstrate occupation of the land for a minimum of 48 hours then they acquire rights and must be re-housed at City Parks' expense. This would be a very expensive and time consuming problem for City Parks to resolve.

There is also the lost revenue to City Parks as people enter the Park through gaps in the fencing without paying the normal entrance fee.

Proposed Solution

The only people resident in the Park should be the Park Manager and one Park Warden. All other occupiers of houses in the Park should be re-housed elsewhere. The houses should either be demolished or renovated to provide venues for community activities (such as a Trauma Counselling Centre, a community hall for scouts, amateur dramatic societies etc).

All swimming pools (e.g.. at the Conference House) must be filled in as they are a danger to people and animals.

The fencing between the old Park nursery site and the Park needs to be made secure and the gate on Olivenhout Rd to the nursery locked to stop unauthorized access to the site.

Both the entrance and exit gate motors at the main gate should be removed and both gates should be padlocked shut at night.

The boom across the old main gate entrance should be brought back into use to stop unauthorized vehicular access through this gate.

The entire Park should be fenced with strong palisade fencing which must be checked regularly for breaches. Any repairs necessary must be carried out immediately.

If the Park's boundaries were secure, there would be no need for separate palisade fencing around the office, depot and Kiepersol lapa. This palisade fencing should be removed and used around the perimeter of the Park.

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3.2 By-law Enforcement

3.2.1 Lack of supervision and monitoring of events such as PicknPay and Metrobus parties (Xmas 2004) and the YFM event held on 26th December, 2005.

Bookings are made with a central booking unit and the numbers stated on the booking form often bear no relation to the number that actually turn up for the event. The bylaws are flouted in terms of the amount of noise, loud music and alcohol and often the function carries on late into the evening. There is no one present to enforce these bylaws. No additional litter bins are provided to cater for the amount of rubbish and the only toilet facility is left in a disgusting state. This has a negative impact for the regular Park users the following day and requires additional resources from City Parks to clean up the Park. The toilet facilities are inadequate for events with large numbers of participants.

3.2.2 Lack of Park Wardens

The Park is at its busiest at weekends and it would be helpful to have 2 Park Wardens on duty who could enforce the bylaws regarding alcohol consumption, motor bikes, quad bikes, dogs on leads etc. The presence of wardens would also help users of the Park to feel more secure and might curb the incidence of drug dealing that is reputed to occur both in and outside the Park.

3.2.3 Confusion over fishing permits

This issue was first raised in December 2004 but no progress has been made. Various signboards at the entrance to and inside the Park carry conflicting information about fishing. One says fishing is not allowed, another says that fishing can only be carried out with a permit. FGHP is in favour of limited fishing at the dam with an appropriate permit limiting the number of lines to a maximum of two per fisherman.

3.2.4 Quadbikes/Motorcycles

These should not be permitted into the Park as they cause considerable damage to the environment and the noise disturbs the birdlife as well as local residents.

3.2.5 Inadequate Signage

This issue has been raised regularly since December 2004. For people to use the Park they first of all need to know how to get to it. There is no signage to the Park from the main access point on Olivenhout Road. The only sign to the Park is on Hans Strydom Road and directs traffic down Maple Drive to the old main gate which is no longer in use. For people to access the main gate from Maple Drive they would have to drive up a dirt track full of dongas.

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Proposed Solutions

Bookings department must clearly advise each potential event organiser of the bylaws i.e. that no music or alcohol are permitted and that all events must finish by 1800. If the events are unsuitable then the booking should be declined.

No events are to be permitted in the Park without adequate monitoring and supervision by either City Parks or Metro Police. The cost of providing this supervision should be met from the fee levied for the event. The supervision has to include a permanent presence from City Parks/Metro police for the duration of the event to monitor the noise level, to ensure that alcohol is not consumed (and in particular that glass bottles are not left lying around to get broken), and to ensure that the participants leave by the normal Park closing time etc.

Additional litter bins should be provided to facilitate the clean up on the following day.

A decision should be taken by City Parks over fishing in the Main Dam and all Park notices should reflect the new policy. If permits are to be introduced then the staff at the main gate must have details of the procedure so that they can inform the fishermen accordingly. FGHP will undertake to inform its membership of the new policy.

Stricter control needs to be exercised at the Main Gate to stop motorcycles and quad bikes from entering the Park and the bylaw signage need to be updated .

Signs to Golden Harvest Park need to be erected at the junction of Hans Strydom and Olivenhout and Olivenhout and Northumberland directing traffic into Olivenhout. Signage then needs to be erected on both carriageways on Olivenhout Rd directing traffic to the Park into Maple Drive.

3.3 Parking

In the original Master Plan for the Park mention was made of the need to concentrate people as closely as possible to access points so as to minimise the penetration of vehicles into the Park. Some years ago two areas for parking were constructed, one on the northern side of the dam and the other south of the toilet block, but they are not signposted and cars are free to drive through the park (except for a padlock and chain closing off the dam on the south side installed by FGHP). Cars do not keep to the roadways and bulldoze down wooden fencing designed to keep traffic off the grassy areas. During weekends, cars park next to the waterfall, on the grassy lawns, and beside the western bank of the dam. This damages the lawns, especially in wet weather, and disturbs plovers' nests.

In the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens no vehicular traffic is permitted and people are quite happy to walk considerable distances to their picnic spot. It should not therefore be too onerous to expect people to walk a short distance from the car park to their chosen picnic site.

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Proposed Solution

Vehicular access should be restricted to the specifically designated parking areas on the northern side of the dam and by the toilet block, so that people have easy access to the children's playgrounds. The gum pole fencing should be renewed where necessary to stop vehicles from driving onto the lawns. Designated parking areas must be clearly signposted and the bylaw signage must be amended to indicate where people can and cannot park.

3.4 Paintball

Signs have appeared recently in the Park advertising Paintball and a cell number and directing people down Hunter's Hill. Paintball is a dangerous activity in an area where members of the public are free to walk and it is damaging to the environment.

Proposed Solution

This activity must be stopped by contacting the organiser on the cell phone number advertised. All advertising signs in the Park must be removed.

3.5 Drinking Water

There are no drinking fountains in the Park and no facilities for giving water to dogs. Dogs often enter the water in the dam (which is contrary to the bylaws and disturbs the wildlife) simply to have a drink of water. Three taps do exist but these are not signposted and the water simply runs into the ground.

Proposed Solution

Drinking fountains should be installed in various locations in the Park (i.e. by the dam and by the playground) to provide drinking water for Park visitors. In addition, the taps should have a concrete bowl underneath them so that water can be given to dogs when required.

3.6 Toilet Block

The toilet block is in need of refurbishment and is not suitable for the disabled. It does not appear to be cleaned regularly (particularly the women's section) and does not have basic amenities like soap and toilet paper. The number of toilets is wholly inadequate when the Park's lawns are hired out for events such as the YFM party held on 26.12.2005 and consequently they are left in a disgusting condition for Park users the following day. There are no signs directing people to the toilet facilities and so people tend to use the bushes instead.

Proposed Solution

The toilet block should be refurbished and thereafter regularly maintained. A check should be carried out on Friday afternoons to ensure that sufficient quantities of soap and toilet paper are available for the weekend. A cleaner should be employed over the weekends to make sure that the toilets are kept in good order.

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3.7 Playground Equipment

One of the circular swings does not move and a wooden ropeway is broken in the playground closest to the old main gate. In the play area near the waterfall rubber tyres are hanging off the wooden jungle gym. Otherwise the equipment appears to be in good order and has been recently repainted.

Proposed Solution

As well as fixing the defective items listed above, the playground facilities could be improved still further by the addition of cricket nets and basketball hoops and by adding long picnic benches on which children could have birthday teas. The playground areas need to be clearly signposted and perhaps each area could be given a special name which would make identification easier. Consideration should be given to promoting the playground areas as ideal venues for children's parties.

3.8 Braai facilities & Picnic benches

Each of the braai facilities needs to be inspected regularly to ensure it is functioning and has a rubbish bin nearby. Most of the picnic benches have been recently repaired and repainted and are in good condition. However, the braai facility on the southern side of the Main Dam has been vandalised and sprayed with graffiti and the bench has been damaged.

Proposed Solution

The braai facility on the southern side of the Main Dam needs to be refurbished and a new picnic table placed alongside. The existing metal drum used for rubbish should be replaced with a standard rubbish bin. A bench should be placed by the shore of the dam for fishermen and those (such as the Cheshire Home Residents) who would enjoy looking out over the water. [c.f. letter sent to Thabang Mokone 4.4.2005]

3.9 Trees

Some alien trees were removed in 2002/2003 but not a single tree has been replanted in their place. Developers of the Maple Row complex were given permission by City Parks to fell some Eucalyptus trees on condition they replaced them with indigenous trees. This has not happened and the cut logs are still lying on the ground. In addition there are lots of dead trees, particularly in the western side of the Park that need to be cut down and removed.

Proposed Solution

All dead trees should be cut down and removed and replaced with indigenous trees. A programme needs to be put in place to identify the alien trees that should be removed on a phased basis and the indigenous trees that should be retained. Care must be taken to ensure that the Park is not left denuded of trees and without shade so this has to be a long term strategy.

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4 Maintenance

There are several outstanding maintenance issues:-

- Removal of dead trees from island, requested at end of September, 2005
- Renewal of wire fencing around island to protect birds, requested at end of September, 2005
- Repair of wire fencing around koppie to protect breeding ground of guinea fowl
- Removal of branches cut down by First Road, requested 9.11.2005
- Trees on the boundary by Drysdale Road
- Repair of wooden bridge
- Clearing of trees from stream by wooden bridge
- Clearing of vegetation in the waterfall
- Regular clearing of undergrowth from verges of Maple Drive
- Repair to the stone bridge in front of Park Lodge damaged by the recent storms
- Removal of reeds from in front of Park Lodge, washed down towards Sunrise retirement village and now causing a blockage.
- Refurbishment of the toilet block
- Repair of playground equipment (although recently repainted some repairs are still necessary)
- Removal of an electricity cable running across the roadway by Plot No 18

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5 Management Structure

5.1 Background to Friends of Golden Harvest Park (FGHP)

FGHP was set up by the late Mrs Pam van Lier approx. 8 years ago to raise funds to help maintain the Park. Since her death in July 2004 a Committee was formed to carry on her efforts. This Committee discussed the status of FGHP at a meeting with Howard Nel, Company Secretary, City Parks on 6.12.2004 and FGHP was advised that it could continue with its activities with the full knowledge of City Parks.

The current committee comprises:

- Mrs Ilse Morgan, Chairperson
- Ms Heather Nice, Treasurer
- Ms Shelley Salmon, Secretary
- Mrs Sally Zimmer, Member
- Mr & Mrs Don Christie, Members

To date FGHP has a membership of 7 complexes, totalling 324 units and 188 individual households. Funds collected by way of the membership fee are spent on carrying out maintenance to the Park's facilities and funding a regular feeding programme for the geese.

FGH has also been active in trying to obtain sponsorship from the local business community. In 2005 FGHO was able to arrange for a corporate sponsor to erect approx 250m of palisade fencing on the boundary of the Park with Drysdale Road, replacing a dilapidated, rusty chicken wire fence that was full of holes.

FGHP is keen to carry out more fund raising initiatives and to canvass support from local community groups such as mountain bike clubs, birding groups etc.

5.2 Role of City Parks

It is difficult for FGHP, as outsiders, to understand the policies and procedures of City Parks and to appreciate fully the constraints under which their personnel operate.

FGHP should like to suggest therefore that City Parks makes a presentation to their Committee outlining the following:

- The responsibilities of key members of City Parks staff
i.e. who is responsible for cutting trees, clearing branches, mowing lawns etc.
- the regular maintenance programme for the Park
i.e on what days are the lawns cut, trees trimmed, undergrowth cleared etc.
- The correct procedure for submitting ideas for improvements, complaints etc.
- Clarification of the exact roles and responsibilities undertaken by Park Wardens and the Metro Police

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5.3 Communication with City Parks

FGHP has an excellent working relationship with Mr Simon Mmantsa, the Manager of Golden Harvest Park. Mr Mmantsa attends FGHP's regular committee meetings and also gave a report to FGHP's membership at their AGM in October 2005 which was greatly appreciated.

However, communication between FGHP and City Parks often goes unanswered. FGHP does not know whether the communication has gone astray or whether it has been sent to the incorrect department for action.

FGHP should like to propose that all communications must be acknowledged within 10 days. That way FGHP knows that the communication has been received and can redirect it if it has been sent to the incorrect person. FGHP is not asking for a response to the issues raised within this time, simply an acknowledgement that the communication has been received and confirmation that the matters are receiving attention.

It would also be helpful if City Parks could be pro-active in advising FGHP of activities that they are planning to undertake so that FGHP can have an input. At present FGHP finds out after the event when it is too late. For example, the erection of the palisade fencing around the office. [c.f.letter to Mr Thabang Mokone dated 27.10.2005]

It would also be useful if FGHP could be notified in advance of any bookings for the Kiepersol lapa and the lawns. At present FGHP only finds out when irate local residents ring members of the Committee to complain about the noise.

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6 Finance

6.1 Admission Fees

Since 1998 City Parks adopted a policy of charging for admission into the Park. At the time, Jenny Moodley, Spokesperson for City Parks was quoted in the Randburg Sun as saying that these admission charges would be used for the benefit of Golden Harvest Park. We do not know how much is raised from this source nor how it is sent. (c.f. copy of article attached).

6.2 City Parks Budgets for Maintenance & Capital Expenditure

We understand that City Parks has a budget for maintenance for the Park but we do not know the amount or how it is allocated.

We understand that no money has been allocated to the Park for capital expenditure and to do so a specific proposal would need to be placed before City Parks.

6.3 Vodacom Rental

We understand that Vodacom pays a substantial monthly rental to Propcom for leasing a small site in the Park on which their cellular mast is situated. FGHP has requested Propcom to release at least a portion of this revenue for the benefit of the Park but to date no response has been received. [c.f. copy of letter attached]

6.4 Propcom Rental Income

We understand that Propcom also receives rental income from tenants of various properties within the Park. We have again requested that a portion of this revenue be released to maintain the Park, in particular the battery operated gate motor which is solely for the use of tenants entering the Park after hours. We have not received any response. [c.f. copy of letter attached].

6.5 Income from Events

Income from events held at the Park is not ploughed back into the Park yet the Park's maintenance budget has to cover the additional costs of cleaning up.

6.6 Income from FGHP

FGHP raises funds each year from annual memberships and makes a small profit from the sale of keys.

FGHP will also enthusiastically target potential sponsors from the local business community to help fund specific projects.

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7 Strategy

- To protect the Park from developers so that a 'green lung' can be preserved for the benefit of future generations of residents.
- To ensure the security of the Park for both visitors and residents living on its borders
- To maintain the Park's facilities.
- To enhance the Park's facilities to appeal to all sections of the community and encourage greater usage of the amenities
- To consider expanding the Park to include the site of the Park nursery and the Commando Headquarters.

8 Action Plan

8.1 Preservation of the Park

FGHP will continue to seek assurances from City Parks that the Park is not threatened by the various proposed developments.

FGH will continue to seek registration as an Interest and Affected Party whenever a development is proposed and will contribute to the E I A process.

FGHP will continue to campaign amongst local residents and the local media for the preservation of the Park.

8.2 Park Security

FGHP will continue to work with City Parks to address the serious security concerns as outlined in Section 3.

8.3 Regular Maintenance

FGHP will work with City Parks to draw up a maintenance schedule to include the following:

- Removal of dead trees and branches and replanting with indigenous trees
- Regular mowing (including the area by Gate 2 First Road)
- Regular checks of perimeter fencing and repair as necessary
- Regular clearing of main waterfall and small waterfall by wooden bridge
- Regular inspection and cleaning of toilet block
- Regular clearing of verges on Maple Drive
- Regular clearing of undergrowth and trimming of trees
- Regular emptying of dustbins

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8.4 Improvements to the Park

Once the security issues highlighted in Section 3 have been resolved, the outstanding maintenance work completed (c.f. Section 4) and a maintenance schedule put in place (c.f. Section 8.3) FGHP would like to work with City Parks on new initiatives to enhance the quality of the amenities in the Park and to increase its attractiveness to the local community.

FGHP envisages the Park as three distinct areas – a more formally laid out park with mown lawns, an area of natural veld with wetland and nature trails, and an area housing civic amenities such as theatre, community hall etc..

8.4.1 Incorporation of the Old Nursery Site into the Park

FGHP notes that the site of the old Park nursery has been rezoned and is the subject of an E.I.A. for development. FGP also understands that the site of the Commando Headquarters at the northern end of the Park on Olivenhout Road may also be disposed of by the Municipality. These sites should be incorporated into the Park to enhance the facilities already available in the Park and provide a highly visible entrance directly from the road on Olivenhout Road. Situated directly opposite Northgate Shopping Centre the Park would form the centre of community life, occupying a prime location in the heart of the community with access directly from Olivenhout Road, rather than being tucked away as at present, with access at the back of Banbury Cross shopping centre.

The area includes an important stretch of wetland, which together with the section of wetland in the main Park itself, could be made into a very attractive feature, of interest to nature conservationists as well as birdwatchers. The land would also fit well into the plans for the western side of the Park, as it comprises natural veld with many indigenous trees and shrubs.

FGHP would like to see Golden Harvest Park play a pivotal role in the community, providing the focal point for civic amenities for the area and becoming the social hub for local residents. Part of the site could be developed to include a civic centre, housing a small theatre where concerts and plays could be staged. The Commando Centre could be converted into a community hall which could be used by local organisations such as cubs and scouts.

Developing the area of the Park closest to the entrance would minimise the penetration of vehicles into the Park and concentrate people as close to the access point as possible, thereby keeping noise and potential disturbance away from the sensitive areas of the Park that are close to residential housing.

Obviously discussions would need to take place with City Parks, the current owners of the land, and a comprehensive consultation process would need to be undertaken with all the interested local community groups to determine their needs.

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8.4.2 Western Area of the Park

Because of its inaccessibility from the main gate the area on the western side of the Park is underutilised. It is difficult to get to from the eastern side of the Park as no pathways exist and in summer the route is impassable because of the wetland. FGHP does operate a Gate (Gate 3 at the end of Douglas Road adjacent to the Ambleside complex) in order for members of FGHP living in Douglas Road /Sundowner to access the Park. However, few people are inclined to use Gate 3 as there are no pathways, no shade, nowhere to sit and because of the dense overgrown vegetation, they do not feel safe. The area is used mainly by people seeking a shortcut from Dysdale Road up to Olivenhout / Northgate who enter the Park illegally through gaps in the boundary fencing. There has also been recent evidence of people living in this section of the Park illegally and attempting to break into complexes (The Bridles) from inside the Park.

FGHP is very concerned that unless this section of Park is developed and utilised it may be lost to developers. Already the proposal to build Display Gardens proposes annexing Portion 97 of the farm Olivenhoutpoort 196 IQ from the Park for use as a car park.

This area has an important wetland as well as indigenous trees and natural veld. Whilst the indigenous nature of the veld should be retained, this section of the Park requires a comprehensive landscaping plan to connect the area with the eastern side of the Park with proper pathways, including the construction of a bridge over the area of wetland.

The natural features of this section should be developed into an attractive amenity for the community to enjoy. A feature should be made of the wetland area, a nature trail should be laid, highlighting the many species of indigenous trees and shrubs and a hide created to observe the birdlife in this area. There are several dead trees in the area which need to be removed and replaced with indigenous trees. The dense undergrowth needs to be thinned out to ensure greater visibility and a feature made of the rocky outcrops once they are cleared of overgrown vegetation. There is also a small dam in the area which is inaccessible at present but could be developed into an attractive place for bird watchers.

In addition, picnic benches and a braai area with shade trees should be sited in the vicinity of Gate 3 (situated at the end of Douglas Road) for the residents of complexes in Douglas Road who access the Park through this gate.

As well as a pathway for pedestrians a second track should be created through the veld for cyclists. There is considerable demand from cycling clubs as well as from children of local residents for somewhere safe in which to cycle and FGHP has already been approached by one mountain biking club looking for a safe venue. Cycling is environmentally friendly and cyclists tend to be people who enjoy nature and respect the outdoors. Increasing the numbers of people using this side of the Park on a regular basis will also help with the overall security. Once the track is in operation mountain biking events could be held on the site which would raise additional revenue. In addition a bridle path could be established and pony rides could be offered during weekends.

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8.4.3 Improved usage of Park buildings

FGHP has already stated that it does not believe the Park should be used as a permanent residence for anyone other than the Park Manager and a Park Warden. However several buildings exist within the Park which could be refurbished to provide venues for various community activities during the Park's opening hours.

For example FGHP understands there is a need for a permanent venue for a Trauma Counselling Centre. At present trauma counselling takes place in local police stations which is hardly appropriate. The surroundings of the Park would provide a much more congenial atmosphere for this activity and as buildings already exist, the cost would be significantly less than a new building. The Park provides a peaceful and tranquil setting which would be ideal for an activity of this nature and as the building would only be occupied during the day they would be ideal tenants.

Other community organisations should be approached to see if they have a need for a permanent home. Suitable organisations could include:-

- Randburg Horticultural Society
- Local Scouts and Guiding Groups
- Johannesburg Floral Club
- Local Residents Associations
- Local Artists' Groups
- Local Birdwatching Groups
- The Randburg Orchestra
- Horse Riding for the Disabled

FGHP understands that the organisation Horse Riding for the Disabled is in need of a permanent venue and consideration could perhaps be given to providing this organisation with a building in the western side of the Park for stabling their horses as well as use of the bridle path suggested in Section 8.4.1.

One of the existing buildings could be converted into an exhibition hall depicting the art and culture of the various tribal communities. In addition changing exhibitions could be held to showcase the work of local artists or the venue could be used to hold flower shows, lectures etc. Perhaps a small gift shop could be incorporated, along the lines of the facility at the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens.

Another of the existing buildings could be converted into a tea room. The building overlooking the dam by Maple Row complex would be a suitable location. Various voluntary organisations could be invited to sell their produce on a rota system each weekend.

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A kiosk could also be opened during the weekends to sell cool drinks (in cans), snacks and sweets as well as firewood/charcoal for people wishing to braai. This should help to stop people using brushwood and vandalizing wooden seating and log barriers to use as firewood. Small bags of maize could also be sold for people to feed the ducks and geese.

These ideas would encourage people to visit the park in greater numbers and also provide opportunities for income generation as well as employment.

A consultation process should be undertaken with local community groups to establish what facilities are lacking in the area and whether support exists for the ideas expressed.

8.4.4 Improved facilities for children

There is a lack of places for families with children to go, as evidenced by the large numbers of children and teenagers frequenting shopping malls during weekends and public holidays. The children's corner at Lifestyle Garden Centre on Ysterhout Rd, Randpark Ridge is probably the most popular venue for children up to 11 years and is always crowded throughout the weekend.

Golden Harvest Park is well placed to compete with Lifestyle as it already has playground equipment and much more green space in which children can play. Improving the playground areas, as described in Section 3.7 and providing a seating area nearby for their parents together with a tea room would make this a very desirable location.

The original Master Plan proposed the creation of a mini farm and this could play an important role in providing environmental education for children along with the educational aspects of the nature trails and the main koppie.

The provision of a cycle track as described in 6.4.1 would be another draw for children and their parents and pony rides could be held on the bridle path.

Consideration could also be given to a small number of rowing boats available for hire on the main dam.

All these facilities could be promoted to local schools, clubs and associations who could become major users of the Park as part of their curricula.

8.4.5 Improved Access for the Disabled

The original Master Plan for the Park envisaged the provision for at least one walking trail that can be negotiated easily by wheelchairs, particularly in view of the proximity of several retirement villages as well as the Cheshire Home for the disabled.

FGHP has already been approached by the Cheshire Home to investigate the possibility of creating a wheelchair accessible pathway to the main dam from either Gate 1 or Gate 2 in order for their disabled residents to enjoy the Park.

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Disabled horse riders could also make use of the bridle path suggested for the western side of the park in Section 8.4.1.

The existing toilet facilities are not accessible by people using wheelchairs and would need to be adapted with ramps and special facilities.

8.4.6 Recycling Facilities

The potential for siting recycling bins by the main entrance to the Park should be investigated. This would give the Park increased visibility in the local community and should encourage more visitors to come and visit the Park. It would provide an ideal facility for the users of the Park to put their empty cans, glass bottles etc rather than leaving them littered around the Park as at present. This could also be an opportunity for income generation.

8.4.7 Augmenting wildlife/birdlife

- The bulrushes are a natural habitat for red bishops and weavers and should be made into a feature similar to those at the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens
- The poaching of guinea fowl must be stopped by regular inspection of the Park for traps and protection of their natural breeding ground on the koppie by the restoration of the protective fencing
- The small island at the main dam should be replanted to provide shade for geese and encourage them to nest here as previously
- The protective fencing around the island should be repaired
- A bird sanctuary with a specific birdwatchers' nature trail should be created and marked with information signs
- Owls should be encouraged into the Park with nesting boxes available from the charity Free Me.
- There should be an ongoing process to clear alien trees and vegetation to be replaced with indigenous varieties to attract more birdlife.

8.4.8 Walking Trails

Some people are nervous about getting lost while in the Park and to help them get the most out of the Park walking trails of varying duration should be marked out using different colour markers.

For example:

- A circuit around the dam would take say 15/20 minutes
- A circuit from the main gate to the Maple Row dam and back would take say 30 minutes
- A circuit from the main gate down to the dam to the wooden bridge, along the south side of the dam and back up to the main gate would take say 40 minutes.

In addition a path for joggers and trim tracks could be developed.

Consideration could be given to holding a guided walk up to the koppie once a month (similar to the Wilds and Melville koppies which prove very popular).

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8.4.9 Development of an Arboretum

The original Master Plan for the Park envisaged the development of an Arboretum, north of the main koppie. This could be associated with a wood museum or other educational exhibition areas associated with trees. An educational facility for indigenous trees is likely to generate a good deal of interest and institutions such as Kirstenbosch may well be interested in assisting with such a facility.

8.4.10 Publicising the Park

The main reason the Park is underutilised is either that people are unaware that it exists or they believe it to be unsafe. Once City Parks has addressed the security concerns as outlined in Section 3.1 there is a great deal that can be done to promote the Park and encourage people to come and visit.

8.4.10.1 Holding special events

The Park should be the natural choice for a day out, particularly at weekends and on public holidays. The Park can attract visitors in large numbers by holding special events on a regular basis. These events should be consistent with the ethos of the park i.e. they should be environmentally friendly. It must be borne in mind that the Park is surrounded by residential housing so the Park's bylaws **must** be enforced regarding noise etc.

Suggested events could include:-

- Dog and cat shows
- Dog obedience training competitions
- Mountain biking events
- Flower shows
- Art and craft exhibitions
- Model aircraft exhibitions
- A carol concert used to be held in the Park each Christmas and this event should be reinstated.

8.4.10.2 FGHP Website

FGHP is presently designing its own website and this medium can be used to highlight the various attractions of the Park as well as any special events that might be held there.

8.4.10.3 Information Leaflet

An information leaflet, together with a map of the Park indicating the location of each of the facilities, should be handed out to every visitor.

8.4.10.4 Regular Newsletters

A database of interested Park users could be created and bi-monthly newsletter could be sent out by email informing them of the latest developments in the Park and forthcoming events. This is used successfully by the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens.

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8.4.10.5 *PR in local media*

A PR campaign should be drawn up to ensure regular, positive coverage in the local media.

8.4.10.6 *Information campaign to local schools clubs and associations*

An information pack should be sent to local schools, clubs and associations outlining the facilities available in the Park and the procedure for making bookings etc.

All these events would help to generate awareness of the Park as well as increase usage.

8.5 Increased Employment Opportunities

Once the Park becomes well known in the local community visitor numbers are likely to increase dramatically. This should mean greater employment opportunities for Park Wardens, parking attendants, toilet attendants, people selling tickets for pony rides, boating on the dam as well as for personnel to man the exhibition hall, tea room, kiosks etc.

The Committee
Friends of Golden Harvest Pak
March 2006