

# KLIPRIVIERSBERG CONSERVANCY

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Dear Sir

## KLIPRIVIERSBERG CONSERVANCY: CITY OF JOHANNESBURG: REVIEW OF INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009/10 SUBMISSION

The establishment of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy was initiated in 2008 with an Inaugural Meeting held on Wednesday, 19 November 2008 to launch the Interim Constitution and Interim Executive Committee. The purpose of this submission is to introduce the Klipriviersberg Conservancy by providing some background and information regarding its current status and to make a submission regarding the integrated development of southern areas of Johannesburg included within the area of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy.

### 1. Background information regarding the Klipriviersberg Conservancy

The southern areas of Johannesburg include large open tracts of unspoilt land stretching from the Klipriviersberg Range of hills in the north to the Klip River further south.

The area is rich in natural resources, varying from the beautifully wooded Klipriviersberg range of hills, to grasslands and wetlands and to prolific birdlife along the Klip River, a tributary of the Vaal. It contains red data species as well as numerous heritage sites, such as the ruins of the dwellings of Sotho/Tswana people who lived there 300 and more years ago, an old Voortrekker farmstead, Boer war fortifications and sites of interest from the gold rush days.

The Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve (KNR), 680 hectares in extent and the largest proclaimed nature reserve in Johannesburg, lies at the centre of the area. The reserve, in which a variety of game roams freely, is an urban conservation jewel.

The wider area has considerable tourism, recreational, cultural, educational and developmental potential, but needs proper and careful environmental management and protection from untoward development.

With the above in mind, landowners and residents initiated discussions with the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environment (GDACE) and Johannesburg City Parks with a view to establishing a Conservancy. Following an initial public meeting to establish whether a Conservancy would be an acceptable initiative, a constitution was drawn up and accepted at a public meeting on Wednesday, 19 November 2008 as an Interim Constitution and an Interim Executive Committee was also established.

Prior to this public meeting, discussions were held with Cnr Prema Naidoo regarding this initiative and a request was made for representation and participation from the City. We were informed that the Council would only be able to participate in the Conservancy after the initiative had been reported through to the Mayoral Committee and the relevant committees.

In terms of the Interim Constitution, the aims and objectives of the Conservancy are:

- a. *To raise awareness in the community of the environmental, social and economic opportunities of the area based on its natural resources.*
- b. *To guide and encourage suitable and appropriate development that supports sustainability, attracts tourism and furthers job creation.*
- c. *To establish a mutually beneficial relationship between property development and conservation.*
- d. *To encourage sound conservation and environmental practices by land owners and users in the area.*
- e. *To retain the natural beauty of the area.*
- f. *To conserve the biodiversity of the area*
- g. *To preserve all heritage, archaeological and historical sites within the area.*
- h. *To encourage residents, businesses and other organisations in the area to be environmentally aware.*
- i. *To link in with a wider network of conservation areas and organisations*

The Interim Constitution provides for a unique diversity of membership of the Conservancy in that it encourages participation from a wide range of landowners, residents, schools, community members, interest groups and organisations, business, sports and recreation enthusiasts and authorities.

The Interim Executive committee includes representatives from:

- *Ordinary members: Any land owner or land user, resident, business, educational institution, sports and recreational organisation, or association, institution or body corporate, situated within the borders of the Conservancy or who owns property within the borders of the Conservancy and who wish to subscribe to the aims and objectives of the Conservancy, may apply for membership of the Conservancy.*
- *Ex officio members:*
  - *Each of the three municipalities, viz. Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Midvaal, in whose borders the Conservancy is situated, shall be ex officio members of the Conservancy.*
  - *A representative from Gauteng Conservancy Association.*

As a major landowner in the area of the Conservancy, we would suggest that it is of vital importance that the City is represented not only has an *ex officio* municipality member but also as a major landowner.

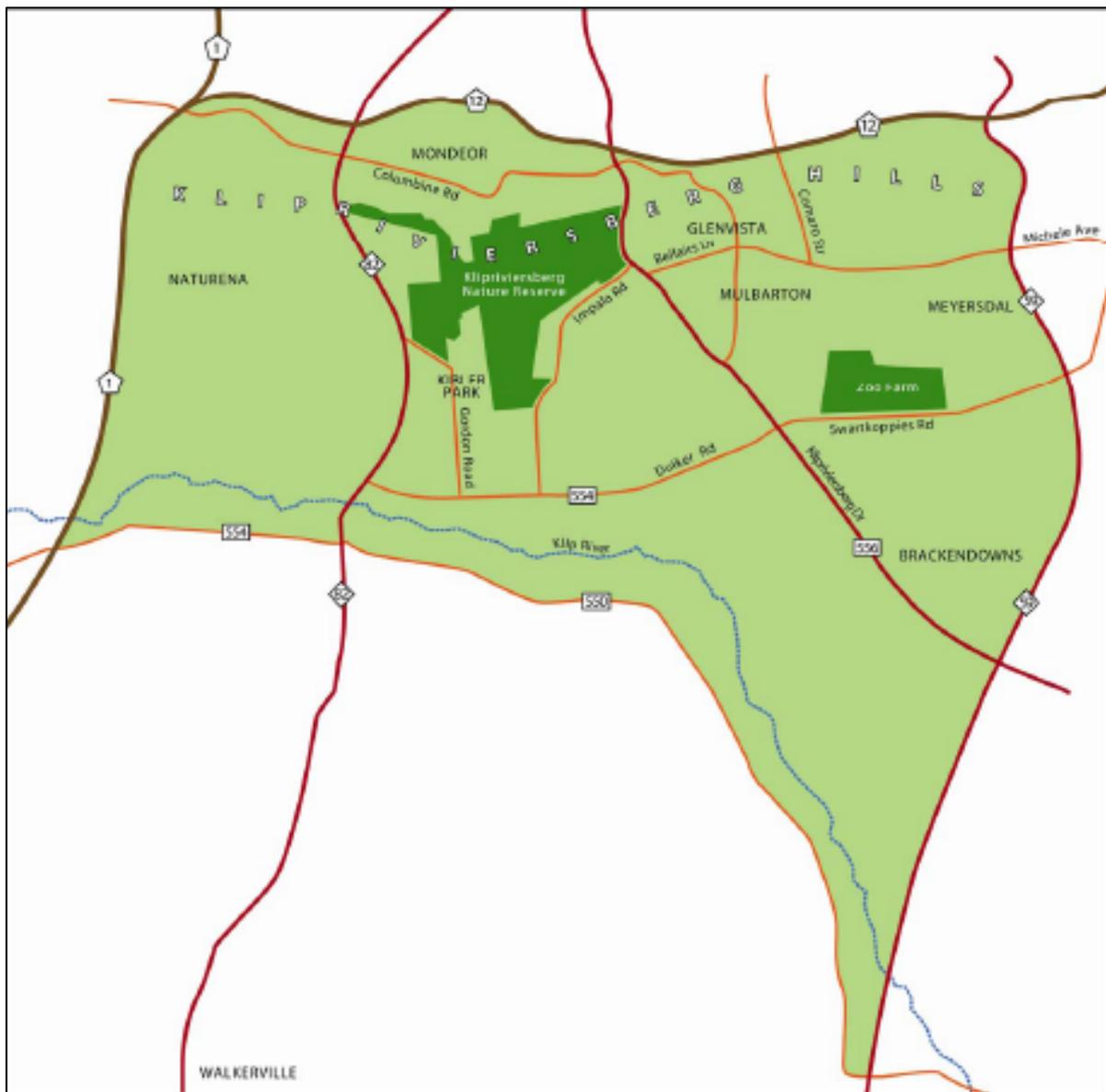
GDACE has allocated an interim registration number for the Conservancy being GCA061.

The boundary of the core area of the Conservancy is determined by the N12 highway to the north, the R59 highway to the east, the R550 and R554 to the south and the N1 highway to the west, as shown in Figure 1. The area of the Conservancy is approximately 150 square kilometres.

The Conservancy is located within the municipal areas of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Midvaal and needs to be recognised as a cross-border project which is of relevance to each of the municipalities and also to the Gauteng Global City Region initiative.

With respect to the Johannesburg area, the Conservancy lies in portions of Wards 23 and 54 of Region F and Ward 24 in Region D.

**Figure 1: Klipriviersberg Conservancy Core Area**



The location of the Conservancy at the centre of Gauteng provides an opportunity for promoting tourism, recreational and sporting activities focusing on the natural and physical environmental attributes of the area to communities and tourists ranging from adjacent areas in Soweto, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Midvaal through to the rest of Gauteng, South Africa and internationally.

It has been suggested that if the natural and physical assets are managed and promoted correctly, the Conservancy could become an important "playground" contributing to environmental, economic and social development of the local communities and address unemployment and poverty alleviation by capitalising on the matchless tourism, recreational and sporting opportunities.

## **2. Development Integration and Environmental Management**

While the importance of the natural environment and assets is recognised and the necessity to protect and manage the significant biodiversity, physical and cultural resources is appreciated, it is also important to promote appropriate spatial and economic development from which mutual benefit and opportunities can be derived for the communities, municipalities and the region as a whole.

We recognise and endorse the current Urban Development Boundaries as established by Gauteng Province and each of the municipalities. The related urban development management policies will be important in ensuring the protection and enhancement of the area and particularly the natural assets.

Within Johannesburg, the designation of major portions of the Conservancy area as Peri-Urban is therefore supported. We would request that every effort be made to ensure compliance with the development management strategies, objectives, policies and conditions of the Johannesburg Growth Management Strategy for such areas to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and assets.

It will also have to be an important priority to establish working relationships with authorities and developers that will realise added value to the natural and environmental assets of the Klipriviersberg, Klip River and grassland areas.

It is considered important that the Klipriviersberg Conservancy be recognised as a key component of the Johannesburg SOJO tourism, recreation and sporting development loop. In this way appropriate development can be managed and guided to support the realisation of economic and social benefits while promoting and enhancing the unique environmental attributes of the area.

We would suggest that the aim and objectives of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy are also aligned to supporting environmental, spatial, economic and social development as set out in the Midvaal Local Municipality IDP and its stated vision, strategic objectives and associated programs.

With respect to Ekurhuleni, the recently completed Environmental Management Framework (EMF) and Ekurhuleni Biodiversity and Open Space Strategy (EBOSS) provide strong guidelines and directions for the protection of important areas of the Klipriviersberg ridges.

In view of this, it is our contention that there is an opportunity for the establishment of a partnership between each of the municipal councils and the Klipriviersberg Conservancy. This partnership can be used for realising shared aims and objectives regarding the environmental, spatial, economic and social development of the area. This partnership should also counter the unsustainable and exploitative use of resources and preserve and protect the natural resources and sensitive environmental areas.

Furthermore, it is suggested that this partnership would benefit by being recognised through the Inter-Governmental Relationship structures and strategies to assist in effectively coordinating, aligning and integrating the three municipalities and Province with respect to environmental management and urban development in this area to contribute to the realisation of the Gauteng Global City Region.

We support the need for the Johannesburg Environmental Management Sector to engage with provincial authorities as it is an opportunity for the development and implementation of the ideas and concepts regarding conservancies and their role in assisting authorities with respect to the management of development in environmentally sensitive areas. In addition, we believe that the Conservancy will be able to support the implementation of key programs especially with respect to the Klipriviersberg ridges, Klip River, wetland, biodiversity and grassland management and addressing alien vegetation issues.

We would suggest that it is an opportunity for the Klipriviersberg Conservancy and other conservancies within the Johannesburg municipality area to participate in related working groups and to assist in the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

It is anticipated that these partnerships will form a critical component of the proposed Conservancy Management Plan.

### **3. Development of a Conservancy Management Plan**

The major project for the Conservancy over the next few months will be the development and preparation of a Management Plan. A consultative process has been prepared whereby representatives and members of the different categories of membership will be invited to participate in a series of workshops which will be used to develop an overarching strategic framework for the Management Plan. It will also be used to identify priorities for projects and interventions. A further consultative process will then be used for developing implementation and action plans based on the strategic framework and priorities.

It is of vital importance that this Management Plan is prepared in close collaboration with the municipalities, not only as a major landowners within the Conservancy, but also to ensure alignment and integration of respective environmental and developmental strategies and plans.

It will be important that representatives be identified from the Council to assist in coordinating and integrating the components of the municipality that need to be involved from the relevant municipal departments, agencies and regional structures.

With specific reference to Johannesburg we believe that it will be important to align and integrate the Conservancy Management Plan with various strategic objectives and programs identified in the IDP such as:

- Waste minimisation through public education and participation in better practices of waste management and recycling and establishment of necessary facilities;
- Improvement in the integrity of water courses and river health through watercourse rehabilitation and management - the possible extension of the current rehabilitation of the Klipriver/Klipspruit Legacy Project corridor to the south of Soweto;
- Wetland rehabilitation and upgrading of the Klipriver catchment area;
- Biodiversity and open space management through the official recognition and protection of the area and increasing the total land area recognised for such purposes within the City;
- Public Transportation Plan -with particular relevance to non-motorised transport and the promotion of cycling and pedestrian commuter and recreational facilities to address environmental and safety issues as well as promote opportunities for local, regional and international tourism;
- Enhance the tourism potential of the area - through the promotion of ecotourism and avitourism opportunities as well as active and passive sports and recreation and incorporation within the SOJO Development Loop;
- Implement proactive measures to protect the environment;
- Assisting with ensuring mitigating measures are considered in development proposals.

We would suggest that due to the value of the natural assets within the area that serious consideration should be given to the preparation of an Environmental Management Framework. This would encompass the area and involve provincial and municipal authorities in the establishment of a legislated framework for the management of development with a particular focus on the environmental and biodiversity value.

#### **4. Initial developmental and environmental issues that have been identified**

As has been noted above, a Conservancy Management Plan will be prepared for the area. It is anticipated that this Management Plan will provide a better understanding of the developmental and environmental issues and concerns for the area. However, since the establishment of the Conservancy a number of issues have already been raised and identified by members.

In this submission we wish to raise these issues for your consideration and incorporation into the appropriate levels of the IDP and SDF for Johannesburg.

Initial issues that have been identified include the following:

- 4.1. Illegal dumping is a major problem throughout the area which requires greater enforcement and compliance. It is suggested that stronger partnerships be established with local communities to monitor and support the Council in this regard.
- 4.2. In addition, stronger enforcement of the bylaws and more meaningful penalties should be imposed on those who are caught dumping illegally.
- 4.3. Alien vegetation can be found in many areas within the Conservancy which requires constant management and control through the implementation of removal programs.
- 4.4. The importance of the Klip River and its associated wetlands not only in terms of providing extremely valuable environment for birds and animals but also its vital wetland functions and potential for recreation and tourism opportunities needs to be carefully managed.
- 4.5. There are development pressures on the open areas of grasslands between the Klipriviersberg ridges and the Klip River which need to be identified and managed to protect essential grassland areas.
- 4.6. Pressures for urban development are high within areas of the Klipriviersberg and particularly around the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve (KNR).
- 4.7. There is an opportunity for the Council to investigate and implement strategic acquisition of land holdings in the area to protect and preserve open space and natural assets. A number of properties have been identified to protect the integrity of the KNR.
- 4.8. A strong request is made for the protection of open space areas and retention of properties owned by the City, in particular the Rietvlei Zoo Farm and surrounding properties.
- 4.9. With the raised priority and promotion of Non-Motorised Transport (NMT) there is an opportunity to promote cycling and hiking through various areas of the SOJO Development Loop such as Soweto and the Klipriviersberg Conservancy. Suitable plans should be prepared and implemented to provide necessary safety facilities for pedestrians and cyclists for commuter and recreational purposes.
- 4.10. There is a growing pressure for the development of the areas located to the south of Johannesburg particularly in Midvaal which need to be recognised and addressed through ensuring adequate infrastructure is available to service such development. Of particular importance is the potential impact on traffic moving north and south to and from Johannesburg along the future development corridors of the R82 and R59.
- 4.11. The future PWV 16 is aligned through the KNR and other environmentally sensitive areas of the Klipriviersberg. A strong request is made for the Council to enter into discussions with the provincial authorities involved in road planning and environmental management to realign this future road into areas that are less valuable and sensitive in terms of environmental biodiversity.

- 4.12. The recognition and importance of creating linkages and working relationships between the various conservancies that already exist within the Midvaal Local Municipality area to assist in the management and nurturing of the Conservancy areas in the region as a whole.
- 4.13. Every effort must be made to ensure that there are no compromises or contraventions of the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) to protect rural areas.

## **5. Requests for consideration**

Arising from the above we would request your Council to give due consideration to the following:

- 5.1. *That the Klipriviersberg Conservancy be recognised as an important contributor to the institutional capacity of Johannesburg municipality in the protection of the natural assets of the area.*
- 5.2. *That the Klipriviersberg Conservancy be recognised as a cross-border project involving adjacent local authorities of Johannesburg, Midvaal and Ekurhuleni.*
- 5.3. *That the Council confirms the representatives with whom we can engage for the development of the Management Plan and ongoing representation and participation in the Conservancy as one of the relevant local authorities and as a major landowner.*
- 5.4. *That the Klipriviersberg Conservancy be recognised as a key stakeholder and partner in developmental and environmental applications and processes with a view to establishing working relationships with communities, developers and authorities for the benefit of the Conservancy area and its communities.*
- 5.5. *That the Council initiates the preparation of an Environmental Management Framework for the area.*
- 5.6. *That the specific issues raised in the submission are given due consideration and are appropriately addressed and included through the IDP and SDF review process.*

We look forward to receiving your response to this submission and to initiating a meaningful working relationship regarding the environmental, spatial, economic and social development in the southern areas of Johannesburg.

Please contact us should you require any further information or clarification regarding any of the points made in this submission.

Yours sincerely



**ANDREW CW BARKER**  
**Chairman**  
**Interim Executive Committee**  
**Klipriviersberg Conservancy**