



Committee Report, 2022-2023

Parks and Environment Portfolio

Paul Booth (20 Nov 2023)

1. Portfolio handover and restructuring

After his many years of service Paul Johnson resigned from the PRABOA committee and handed over the 'Verity Park' portfolio to Paul Booth at the prior AGM in November 2022.

The Committee took the decision to expand the remit of the portfolio to cover all of the Parks in Parkhurst, and to go beyond park management to thinking about the use of Parkhurst's green spaces for the benefit of its residents and visitors.

This report provides a summary update of the work of the Environment and Parks portfolio.

2. The parks

Parkhurst, as the name suggests, is home to a number of community parks. These range from small and little known (3rd street river frontage), to hidden (5th to 6th Street forest [along the spruit that borders pirates cricket fields]) to our beloved Verity Park. There are approximately 9 parks in Parkhurst, and we are doing our best to touch all of them. Below is a selection of the work we've managed to do this past year:

2.1. Hamilton Park (Cnr 21st St and 2nd Ave)

Parkhurst shares this park with the Craighall. The Craighall Residents' Association (CRA) have been active supporters of Hamilton Park and we have committed to supporting them in their efforts to keep the park in a great condition for residents and users.

This included PRABOA and CRA sharing the costs of repairing the brick pathways in the park and deploying the Bubele Africa clean-up crew to the park regularly to do general maintenance and to conduct river cleaning as required.



2.2. 2nd St Park, Little Chelsea

The residents around this gorgeous 'Little Chelsea' park do a fantastic job of maintaining this park themselves. However, PRABOA has deployed the Bubele Africa clean-up crew to the park on two occasions to do a general clean-up as well as to go into the river to clear out some of the accumulation clogging up the river.

2.3. 5th Ave Park (cnr 22nd St)

This beloved Park is well maintained (at great expense) by a dedicated nearby resident, so THANK YOU. 5th Avenue Park is the entry into Delta Park for the residents of Parkhurst who live up towards 22nd Street, although access can be treacherous across the rickety planks and rocks.

PRABOA's limited contribution to 5th Ave park during 2023 has been to run a satellite Spruit Day clean-up start point in 5th Ave Park – which brought out a handful of nearby residents – and to deploy the Bubele Africa clean-up crew into the Spruit and river that borders this park, which it has done on 4 occasions.

Entry into the park – and ultimately into Parkhurst through this pedestrian access point – is managed by the PRABOA SafeParks initiative, with the gate locked at sunset and unlocked at sunrise by 24/7 Security.

2.4. 6th Ave Park / Green bridge park (accessed via 12th St / Parkhurst Road)

The Green bridge Park (otherwise known as 6th Avenue Park) is the entry into the spruit trail and ultimately into Delta Park for many Parkhurst residents. It is also a pedestrian access point into Parkhurst (and beyond).

This large park is a high (pedestrian) traffic zone and sadly suffers from significant littering. It is also becoming a Sixty60 and Uber Eats motorbike route. Local residents do their best to organise regular clean-ups. In Q3 2023 PRABOA started to deploy the Bubele Africa clean-up crew to try to keep this area as clean as we can. However, this is a large park that borders the (bottom of the) old 'Parkhurst bowling club' (with lots of foot traffic into and out of the old bowling club coming into and out of Parkhurst through this park). The increasing number of vagrants who have taken up residence along the spruit (on the opposite (non-Parkhurst) side of the river) also does not help matters. For this reason, the principal Parkhurst starting point of the annual Spruit Day clean-up (more on that later) was in the 6th Ave Park.

Entry into the park – and ultimately into Parkhurst through the pedestrian access points into 6th Ave (via 12th St and via Parkhurst Road) – is managed by the PRABOA SafeParks initiative, with the gate locked at sunset and unlocked at sunrise by 24/7 Security.



2.5. 10th Street footbridge towards 9th Street

This is another high traffic point. While the foot bridge itself is not a park, the fencing borders the extension of 6th Ave park. PRABOA has deployed the Bubele Africa clean-up team to this short stretch once a quarter.

Entry into Parkhurst through this pedestrian bridge has been managed by ADT security. Sadly, this is a primary conduit into and out of Parkhurst for 'residents' of the old 'Parkhurst bowling club'. While the gate is locked at sunrise and at sunset each day, the gate and adjoining fencing has become severely damaged and no longer restricts access. PRABOA (through the SafeParks initiative) has recently committed to taking over management of this access point and is in the process of effecting the hand-over with ADT. We have also begun initial discussions with residents of 9th St to see what we can do together to fix the gates and fence in the short-term while we explore a long-term solution.

2.6. 5th to 6th Street forest

This spectacular forested stretch of the Spruit is rarely accessed by residents. Sadly, the limited footfall has made this spot a prime location for vagrants to set up camp. Today there are roughly 30-40 vagrant residents in this small section of forested park.

Next week (late November 2023) PRABOA has arranged for the City (JMPD and City Parks), supported by 24/7 security, to effect a clean-up operation in this park. This will move the resident vagrants out of an area classified as a stormwater drain – and therefore dangerous for habitation. **PRABOA (with the help of two corporate sponsors) will then replace >100m of fencing along both sides of 6th Street** (across 6th St bridge, in the dip as you travel from Parkhurst towards Verity Park. This will create a less accessible barrier into this park. (more on this below). PRABOA is working with Pirates Club and with Green Park Nursery School – two adjoining neighbours of this park – to strengthen the fencing that might otherwise provide access points into this park. This will include replacing the fence along 4th Avenue as it crosses the Spruit (next to Green Park Nursery and just before the entrance into Pirates).

2.7. Verity Park

As most of you know, PRABOA formally adopted Verity Park in 2017. The adoption was for a period of five years, expiring in August 2022. In June 2022 PRABOA submitted a renewal application to City Parks (JCPZ), requesting the adoption agreement to be extended for a further period of five years. JCPZ have yet to process this application. In October 2023 PRABOA submitted a new renewal application (in the hopes of one of them being considered). This application has also yet to be considered.

In terms of the earlier adoption agreement, PRABOA maintains and manages the park on behalf of City Parks (JCPZ) who continue to clear the dustbins and provide grass cutting.

PRABOA has a service agreement with Jolly Walker dog walkers, who PRABOA funds to replace the poop bags. Through the efforts of Billy and his team, much of the dog waste that walkers ignore is cleared. Not only is the man he employs removing waste, he also generally cleans up the park (3x per day), particularly the worrisome Liquid Amber seedpods. Jolly Walker also provides some support to the general maintenance of the park (including the installation of the dog drinking fountain and occasional repairs to the (defunct) ablutions.

The children's play area within Verity Park is in a generally good condition. PRABOA attends to periodic sewage overflows into the play area (caused by the defunct adjacent ablutions) and deploys the Bubele Africa clean-up crew to perform a basic general clean-up on a quarterly basis. The fencing around the Children's play area has become an increasing concern, with holes in the fence allowing dogs to gain easy access into the play area and with a makeshift wooden board in one section providing the only barrier between the children and the road. The lovely children's mural is also being overtaken by graffiti. On November 28th-30th PRABOA will conduct a clean-up of and repaint the children's play area wall as well as the wall of the adjacent ablutions. The fence around the children's play area will also be replaced in its entirety, providing a secure space for our children to play. This project will be completed by the end of November, in time for the children to enjoy our park and playground by the time the school year finishes.



Figure 1: Zapper QR code for donations to Verity Park Childrens playground



Over the past week many of you will have seen the new fence being installed around Verity Park itself too. The replacement of a full 460m of fencing is a by-product of recent corporate stakeholder engagement led by Michael Barretta of the PRABOA Committee. It is a trial of a new form of corporate engagement where PRABOA is working to build mutually beneficial relationships with businesses who have an interest in the residents and patrons of Parkhurst. In the absence of CoJ service delivery it is one of the ways we are trying to fill the many service delivery gaps we now experience daily. These capital-intensive projects are an expression of PRABOA's (and its partners') commitment to Parkhurst and to the public infrastructure on which we all depend and which drive the desirability of our suburb.

The Verity Park user group exists to raise funds for Verity Park, to compensate Jolly Walker for the work that they do to help maintain our park and to fund the variety of projects that are beginning to bear fruit. We would appreciate any (regular or ad hoc) contributions to help us maintain your park. Donations can be made through Zapper:



Figure 2: Zapper QR code for donations to Verity Park



3. Relationships

3.1. Grow Parkhurst (formerly Incredible Edible): (<https://growparkhurst.garden>)

The energetic team of Grow Parkhurst has been hard at work during 2023. Grow Parkhurst manages the community gardens within the REC centre behind the tennis courts (Cnr 5th Ave and 12th St), including the compost bins. They also run projects aimed at inviting children into the gardens. During 2023 this has included running a 'Mini Bug Hotel Workshop' (21st May), and the installation of an Owl House (and talk) (10th June). Grow Parkhurst also maintain the compost bins that you'll see adjacent to the tennis court parking lot. PRABOA is working with Grow Parkhurst to try to create a circular economy loop with the garden waste that the Bubele Africa clean-up crew clears from our suburb, depositing the green-waste into the compost bins. This saves PRABOA the transport cost to the dump and provides Grow Parkhurst with material that they convert into compost and sell to fund their activities. <https://growparkhurst.garden/how-to-volunteer/>

3.2. Relationship with CoJ Community Development Department

The City of Johannesburg Community Development department manage the Parkhurst REC Centre. (This is essentially the parcel of land on which 'Verity Park' is situated - with the grassy area of the park and the kiddies playground managed by JCPZ and the rest of the footprint managed by Community Development. This includes the tennis courts, small dance hall, library, parking lot, sports hall, clinic and swimming pool.

PRABOA maintains an ongoing relationship with CoJ Community Development, with the intention of supporting CoJ to provide facilities which all Parkhurst residents can enjoy. PROBOA provides ad hoc support to the department, who in turn have been very supportive of our efforts. This has include providing facilities for PRABOA meetings and providing tables and chairs for PRABOA events (including Spruit Day).

3.3. Relationship with City Parks and Zoo

PRABOA is working to develop better relationships with Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ). JCPZ manage the various parks dotted across our suburb and are responsible for grass cutting, refuse removal and general maintenance. It is in our interest to strengthen relationships, which we are actively trying to do.

4. Annual Spruit Day river clean-up (16 September 2023)

Parkhurst residents once again came out in force for the PRABOA clean-up. 47 participants helped to clean two parks and the full section of the spruit between Parkhurst Road / 12th Street and 22nd St / 5th Avenue Park as well as the stretch of spruit in 'Little Chelsea' between 2nd and 3rd Streets. More than 200 bags were removed from these stretches of the spruit alone! So, a big thank you to those who came out to support the day.

PRABOA hired Bubele Africa to provide an 11-person crew to do lots of the heavy lifting in the river itself, so a big thank you to Wendy and her team. I would also like to extend thank you's to:

- Emely: Street resident volunteer: for helping to drum up support for the 5th Ave park leg of the day and for leading the clean-up efforts from 5th Ave park on the day.
- Marc: Holt-Quin Street resident volunteer: for helping to drum up support for the Holt-Quin side clean-up, and for working his way down from 9th /10th St bridge to 22nd Ave
- Yolande: Little Chelsea resident for coordinating a spruit clean-up between 2nd and 3rd Streets in Little Chelsea, who cleared out an enormous amount of rubbish!
- Jan (PRABOA Treasurer): For setting up and taking down on the day and for the use of his bakkie to set up the various sites!
- Michael Baretta (PRABOA Committee): For developing the marketing material for the 3 clean-up points and for arranging shade gazebos on a scorching hot day.
- Pat (PRABOA Committee): For managing the registration table and participants at the 5th Ave park with Emely.

- Mike Rosholt (PRABOA Chair): For coming down with his kids to get his hands dirty
- Theresa (PRABOA Committee): For marketing the event to the 4th Ave traders and for securing sponsorship for pizzas for some of the volunteers.
- Urban Braza (Danielle) and Nan Roberts Estate (Michael Capela): For generous sponsorship of the pizzas
- CoJ: Alessandro from COJ Community Development (who manages the REC centre) for coming down to spend some time with us and to get his hands dirty.
- Rotary: Paul Chin from Rotary for coordinating the Jo'burg Spruit clean-up which covered more than 40km of waterway. Paul also sourced the rubbish bags and gloves provided to participants.
- Pikitup for collecting the rubbish!



5. Bubele Africa weekly clean-up

Bubele Africa is a small non-profit organisation that combines the energy of its founder (Wendy Malpage) with high rates of unemployment and a local river system over-run with litter. Bubele Africa recruits unemployed men and women and deploys them to clean up the river systems of Johannesburg.

Bubele Africa has supported PRABOA's spruit day clean-ups. We have decided to take the

partnership one step further by providing regular employment to a team of 5 who now work in Parkhurst one day a week.

Since March 2023 the Bubele Africa Parkhurst clean-up crew have conducted 33 clean-up operations, helping to transform this:



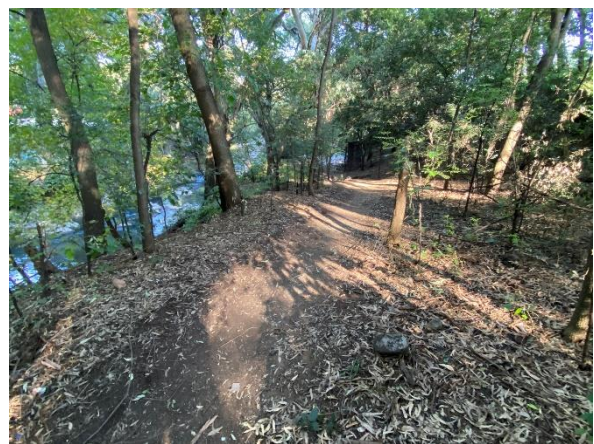
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Into this:



and



These 33 clean-up efforts by the 5-person team have been funded entirely by PRABOA. The clean-up is proving to be highly effective and has been appreciated by those who see the team hard at work, but it is not sustainable to run without financial support from the community. We really do require more community support to ensure we can maintain and expand this service across the suburb.

Thank you to the 4th Ave traders who have committed to hiring the Bubele Africa clean-up team once-a week from 10th November 2023.

END.