



## **KLIPRIVIERSBERG CONSERVANCY**

### **INAUGURAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**TUESDAY, 13 APRIL 2010**

#### **INTERIM CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It gives me great pleasure to present the Interim Chairman's Report for the period of 2009 to 2010 at the Inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy.

### **WHAT MAKES OUR AREA UNIQUE AND SPECIAL?**

As residents, we are extremely fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful and unique areas of the central Gauteng province and Witwatersrand region. The beauty and uniqueness are derived from the Klipriviersberg ridges, the Klipriver and the recognised unique grasslands and open areas with a wide range of fauna and flora with a rich and valuable biodiversity and several "red data" species. We also have a rich human archaeological and cultural history and diversity from the people and communities who have lived and are currently living in the area which has included Sotho speaking Tswana, Khoi San and Voortrekker settlers and farmers, Boer and Witwatersrand goldfield invaders through to our current mixed and diverse South African communities.

In amongst the hills and valleys of the area we have established townships and development with a wide diversity of residential communities, retail and commercial activities and a tremendous selection of sports and recreational interests and pastimes. The area is incredibly accessible to the whole of Gauteng due to the network of roads that has been established. We are surrounded by a cross-section of rich and poor communities all looking for opportunities for economic and social growth and development.

What we have is recognised by us as local residents, communities, businesses, local and provincial authorities as something which is of hugely unique and special environmental, social and economic value to us all. As local communities, our three municipalities and the Gauteng province as a whole.

### **WHY ESTABLISH THE KLIPRIVIERSBERG CONSERVANCY?**

However, there is a real threat that we could lose a huge amount of what we have that makes us so unique and special unless we establish an approach and philosophy regarding future private and public sector development initiatives and investment. This approach and philosophy needs to protect, promote and enhance our natural diversity and environmental value. To achieve Conservation through Collaboration.

It is primarily for this reason, that a group of interested and concerned people have taken the initiative to establish the Klipriviersberg Conservancy. What began as a local focus to protect and support the 680 hectare Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve and its immediate surrounds has grown into establishing a Conservancy encompassing an area of 150 square kilometres.

The primary focus still remains the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve. However the wider area has considerable tourism, recreational, cultural, educational and developmental potential. All of this requires proper and careful environmental management and protection. The focus must be the sustainable protection and enhancement of the biodiversity value of the hills, grasslands and wetlands from untoward and inappropriate public and private investment and development.

As a group of voluntary people who are concerned about the environment and want to monitor and enhance it, we believe that the Conservancy is also an opportunity to address sustainable urban living. This will help to realise appropriate economic and social development to protect, promote and enhance the biodiversity of the area and retain its natural beauty. In times where costs and prices of water and electricity are rapidly increasing, there are also huge opportunities for real savings from sustainable urban living practices.

The Conservancy does not want to stop development, we cannot do that. What can be done is to encourage landowners, residents and all the other stakeholders in the area to become more environmentally aware and to embrace the practices and principles of sustainability and sustainable urban living. This will be achieved through appropriate collaborative development and cooperative integrated management of our natural biodiversity and assets.

There are many and frequent examples where conservancies and environmental organisations and developers and investors have spent huge amounts of money and resources fighting and resisting each other. At the end of the day both sides are poorer and the natural biodiversity and environment over which many of these battles have been fought is also poorer.

The intention of the Conservancy and its approach and philosophy towards development is to find realisable opportunities for the natural environment as well as for the investor and developer. It is important for everyone to find value which will enhance the richness of our unique biodiversity and environment, communities and interests and bring about sustainable management of our natural resources integrated with appropriate social and economic development.

## **HISTORY**

The idea for the establishment of a conservancy arose from a number of meetings and discussions between major landowners, developers and local residents who saw a need to come together in some form of organisation which would protect the natural assets of the Klipriviersberg ridges. There were initiatives, led by the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association and some concerned residents and landowners with the then Johannesburg City Council Parks Department, looking at the establishment of conservancy areas to the east and west of the Reserve.

It was realised that by bringing everyone together a greater impact could be realised. It then became known that ideas also existed from developers in Midvaal for the establishment of a conservancy area along the Klipriver. Further discussions took place which resulted in an initial public meeting on 18 June 2008 to test public opinion regarding the establishment of a conservancy area. The unanimous support shown at that meeting resulted in the establishment of an Interim Committee with an Interim Constitution on 19 November 2008.

## 2009: DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSERVANCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This Committee embarked on an extensive process of discussions with local and provincial authorities, residential communities, business, religious and educational organisations to introduce the ideas and concepts of the conservancy. These meetings and workshops were also used to identify what the different stakeholders and interested people felt the Conservancy should address and do by way of activities and actions.

From these interactions the Conservancy was also able to understand the concerns and issues of community members regarding the area and its environment. The outcomes of these interactions have been used to establish the strategic priorities and framework for the Conservancy from which projects can be identified, action plans prepared and implementation initiated.

In addition, the activities through the year have also included:

- recruiting members and establishing databases;
- addressing administrative and financial issues regarding establishing bank accounts, securing postboxes, appointing auditors;
- trying to find funding and sponsorship;
- initiating discussions and building relations with major landowners, developers and authorities;
- reviewing and commenting on development and environmental policies, plans, proposals and applications;
- finding out more about the provincial and national conservancy structures and organisations and other conservancies in Gauteng and nationally;
- raising awareness through events, newsletters and publicity in newspaper articles and in radio interviews;
- establishing a website and links to popular social networks on the Internet.

As noted above, the Management Framework for the Klipriviersberg Conservancy has been developed in consultation with many stakeholders. The strategic priorities and some of the activities and interventions which will be embarked on for the Conservancy include the following:

- Establish Constitution
  - Finalise review of Constitution
  - Finalise registration of the Conservancy
- Catalyse Projects
  - Promote sustainable urban living for residential & industrial areas
  - Involve schools
  - Support cleanup campaigns
  - Encourage greening
  - Support Bylaws
- Share Information
  - Build distribution channels
  - Establish website
  - Erect billboards & signs
  - Give presentations
  - Establish brand
  - Distribute Newsletters
  - Schedule specialist talks
  - Use media
- Grow Membership
  - Run events programme

- Establish relationships with similar organisations
- Build business loyalty programmes
- Establish International twinning partners
- Develop interest groups
- Coordinate, Protect and Rehabilitate Biodiversity
  - Initiate Biodiversity Stewardship Program
  - Prepare landowner programmes
  - Develop Environmental Management Framework
  - Areas to focus on: wetlands, hills & kopjes, historical sites, grasslands, rivers and streams, agricultural areas
- Integrate Urban Development
  - Manage and guide development
  - Build authority relationships
  - Engage developers
  - Address illegal uses
  - Influence future roads
  - Inform policy
  - Support Bylaws
- Establish Enviro Centre
  - Build collection of historical anecdotes
  - Establish Library
- Secure Resources
  - Finance
  - Resources
  - Events
  - Carbon credits
  - Recycling
- Integrate Business development
  - Promote economic growth
- Support special stakeholders
  - Land owners adjacent to KNR
  - Major landowners

It is a daunting and extensive framework of activities and interventions which in many ways matches the wide diversity of issues and interests within the area of the Conservancy. The delivery and implementation will provide many interesting opportunities and challenges.

## **2010: INITIATION OF IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY**

The full framework has been provided in this report as it is essentially the basis for identifying the projects which the Conservancy is initiating during 2010. This will involve the establishment of a number of project teams headed by a member of the Executive Committee supported by other members of the community who wish to become involved and assist.

To date the following projects have been identified with a view to the establishment of appropriate committees and project teams:

- Administration and finance
- Membership and constitution
- Resource generation
- PR and publicity (including newsletter & websites)
- Stakeholder management

- Authorities liaison
- Event coordination
- Sustainable urban living
- Environmental resource centre
- Historical records
- Schools river monitoring
- Alien vegetation
- Development integration
- Major landowners
- Branding and marketing

As can be seen from what the Conservancy wishes to achieve from the Management Framework and from list of projects noted above there is a tremendous amount of work to be done in the coming months.

## **2010 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The year ahead will have many challenges as the Conservancy embarks on the implementation and delivery of projects which have been already identified. Some of the projects have already been initiated and now need to be consolidated and developed further.

Apart from the normal day-to-day challenges and problems of establishing and growing an organisation of this nature the key challenges and opportunities that lie ahead include:

- Harnessing resources and sponsorship

As can be seen from the financial report, the Conservancy does not have a large amount of money. However, there is a tremendous amount of support and goodwill which has assisted in achieving what has been done so far. For this the Conservancy notes its gratitude and appreciation.

It is now time for actively finding sponsors and donors to support the projects and initiatives that are being embarked on.

The issue of subscriptions is the focus of continuous discussion. However the decision has been taken to rather identify a number of key donors and sponsors than to encumber the administration of the Conservancy with the management and collection of subscriptions. Also, free membership will hopefully encourage more people to become involved in the Conservancy and its activities.

To take advantage of tax refunds for sponsors and donors we will be seeking registration as a Non-Profit Organisation and a Public Benefit Organisation.

Obviously, sponsors and donors will also be given the opportunity for recognition and exposure through our activities and events.

The Conservancy would also be very grateful to any member who wishes to make donations or establish monthly contributions to the running and activities of the organisation.

- Establishing project teams

The Conservancy has a lot of work to do. For this reason the Committee is very keen to encourage people to become involved as volunteers in the projects and activities which have been identified.

Obviously if there are a greater number of people involved the workload can be spread. In addition, there is scope for more ideas and suggestions as to the best way to achieve what needs to be done.

Forming partnerships and working with existing projects, initiatives and agencies already involved in environmental and related activities will be a prime focus for bringing resources into project teams. In this way the project teams will be able to learn from existing knowledge and experience and hopefully the teams will be able to add value and contribute to the work of the existing projects and agencies.

There is an opportunity for people who volunteer to become involved in project teams not only to contribute and share their knowledge and experience but also to learn and gain experience regarding the Conservancy and environmental matters and issues. To date, there has already been an amazing amount of information and knowledge sharing through the activities of the Conservancy.

The Conservancy will be actively promoting the sharing of information in everything it does to enable more people to become aware and knowledgeable about sustainability in their daily lives at home and at work.

The year ahead will be of vital importance to the Klipriviersberg Conservancy and its future as the resources and project teams lay the foundations of the activities and initiatives of the Conservancy in order to protect, promote and enhance the unique natural assets and biodiversity of the area.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND APPRECIATION**

Many people have assisted and contributed to the establishment and development of the Conservancy over the last few months. For this, as the Interim Chairman, I wish to record my personal gratitude and appreciation for everything that everyone has contributed. In particular I would like to acknowledge and recognise the following:

- Nic Vermaak and Taryn Barker for establishing and running the web site and social network sites;
- Bob Dehning, Ivan Parkes, Reg Humphrey of the GCSA and John Wesson of NACSSA for their guidance and support;
- Van Nicolaou, Marion van der Walt and Mondeor High School for providing us with a venue for hosting our monthly meetings, special presentations and workshops and for this evenings AGM function;
- The politicians and officials of Gauteng Province, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Midvaal municipalities for their recognition, support and encouragement which will lead to strong working relationships in the future;
- Lee Harvey and Graeme Stanton from our Honorary Auditors Bryan Ferreira & Co;
- Each of the Committee members who have become involved and given willingly of their ideas, time and resources, this includes Gail Andrews, Bronwen Dawson, Nathan Gilbert, Malcolm Hack, Willem Hattingh, Kevin Lavery, Pat Leech, Reuben Louw, Felicia Matiti, Darryl Snyman, Joe Stevens, Sizeka Tshabalala, Nicky Vakaloudis, Marion van der Walt;

- Our Honorary Secretary/Treasurer Sue Edwards for her administrative and financial management, minute taking and diligence in establishing and keeping our records, financial and administration management systems;
- Our Vice Chairman Clem Kourie who with his extensive interest and passion for the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve has been a major strength and guide in assisting and supporting the establishment of the Conservancy from its inception;
- On a personal note, my wife Delia and family for their support and allowing me to pursue this very exciting project;
- Residents, businesses, church and school groups who have shown their interest and support in the establishment of the Conservancy;
- Finally and not least to each of the members of the Conservancy for their participation and involvement.

In closing, one of the most encouraging and also humbling phenomenon about the last couple of years has been the incredible support and positive response regarding the Conservancy and its establishment. As the Interim Chairman I am yet to experience anyone voice their resistance or any objection the establishment of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy and what it is trying to achieve. This gives me huge hope for the future of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy.

## **CLOSING OBSERVATION**

If we as landowners, residents, businesses, educational institutions, sports and recreation organisations who live, work, play and visit in the area do not wish to see the southern areas of Johannesburg become choked with congestion, densely overdeveloped, lacking in engineering services and social facilities, and more importantly, devoid of natural vegetation and open space it is vital that we all become involved and make a positive contribution towards the Klipriviersberg Conservancy and the attainment of its objectives.

Many people living in the area will sit back and only when everything has been irrevocably lost and destroyed will they realise what has been taken from them. Then we will all be losers and much poorer. We will also be held accountable for not being proactive and taking the initiative in protecting, promoting and enhancing our unique environment not only for ourselves but also for future generations.

What we have in the area of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy is acknowledged and recognised by all of us as being absolutely special and unique. It is for this reason that we all need to become more knowledgeable and understanding of our environment and its sensitivities to be able to look after and keep what we treasure.

The Klipriviersberg Conservancy looks forward to your participation and working with everyone towards realising Conservation through Collaboration.

**Thank you**

**Andrew Barker  
Interim Chairman  
Tuesday 13 April 2010**