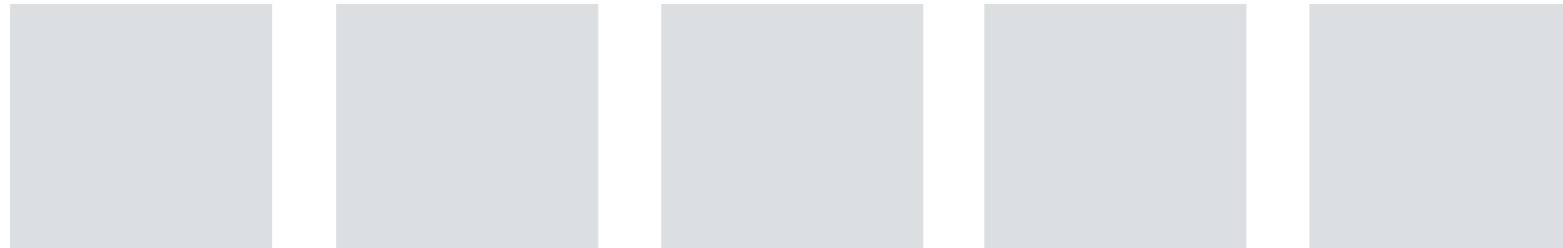
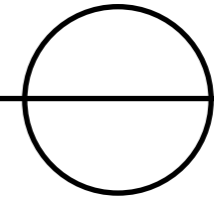


02

# Contextual Analysis



## 2.0 Contextual Analysis

### 2.1 Background

Before the declaration of District Six as a white group area in 1966, the area was inhabited by approximately forty-thousand people. Within this historically significant urban environment the community enjoyed a rich social and cultural life. With the beginning of forced removals in 1968, communities and families came to be divided and scattered across the Cape Flats. With the removal of families completed by 1980, a major part of the City's historic built fabric was destroyed.

From the mid-1980's community organisations opposed the redevelopment of the blighted area as a 'white group area'. While some building development, including the construction of the Cape Technikon, occurred towards the east-city, community opposition prevented the full development of the area. It was out of this community struggle that the District Six Beneficiary Trust (D6BT) was born. With the proclamation of the Restitution of Land Rights Act (Act 22 of 1994) the opportunity arose for communities who were dispossessed to submit land claims. More than 2 500 ex-residents (including landowners and tenants) have lodged claims of whom approximately 1500 claimants have been verified and are expected to be re-accommodated in the redeveloped area.

### 2.2 Historic development

The development of District Six occurred sporadically over time and initially no controlled planning process took place - planning was often implemented in a piecemeal fashion. In this process housing development did not necessarily occur chronologically. For example, urban block extensions planned in the 1820's were only occupied by housing after 1862. According to Ström (2003) three basic forms of planning took place in District Six, namely, the infill of older east-city blocks and the blocks planned between 1800 to 1830, the occurrence of an experimental phase where different block, row and court layouts were tested, and, a period of deliberate planning, especially from the 1850's where general plans for small house layouts were proposed (see Ström, Chapter 7, p.1). Despite such unevenness in the development and planning process, it was the facility and 'power' of the typical grid-iron plan as applied to District Six and as distorted by the local topography, that provided a greater order which could accommodate piecemeal growth, different house layouts and experimentation.



1818



1900



1944



1962

As early as 1812, the area was broadly defined by the sea to the north and Devil's Peak to the south. While farming estates on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak were still in existence, some of them were now being subdivided. During this early period of its growth, the planning of District Six is defined by the morphology of the slopes of Devil's Peak, the extension of roads in the east-city area (e.g. Darling Street, Caledon, Longmarket Streets), the property/ boundary lines of the farms and smallholdings, roads/tracks serving this agricultural land and the lines of the old French Battery to the east (now Trafalgar Park). With the planning of the New Market, east of the Castle, a grid of streets developed resulting in measuring about 56 by 58 metres. Between 1812 and 1860 the area developed by way of piece-meal planning involving some twenty landholdings. By 1938 urban blocks of longitudinal shape were developed along Hanover, William and Caledon Streets. Extended row-houses were typically constructed along the street edges, sometimes including mid-block courts. By the early 1840's much of this development was occurring through unregulated speculative developments, rather than by way of a clear local planning strategy.

Around 1862, a clearly defined grid of streets had emerged, including the extension of the street grid of the east-City area (See Snow's Map, 1862, in le Grange 2003). From 1869 property developers were required to submit plans and specifications of proposed buildings. With the proclamation of a new municipal act dividing the city into six districts, District Six acquired its familiar name. From 1867 activity streets such as Sir Lowry Road and Hanover Street became dominant. Along Sir Lowry Road, larger sites came to be occupied by smaller working class housing and commercial buildings. In general after the 1880's, developments acquired a more regularized pattern, largely through the enforcement of municipal controls and the scrutiny of proposed building plans. During this period the development of urban blocks was often piecemeal and sporadic (le Grange, 2003).

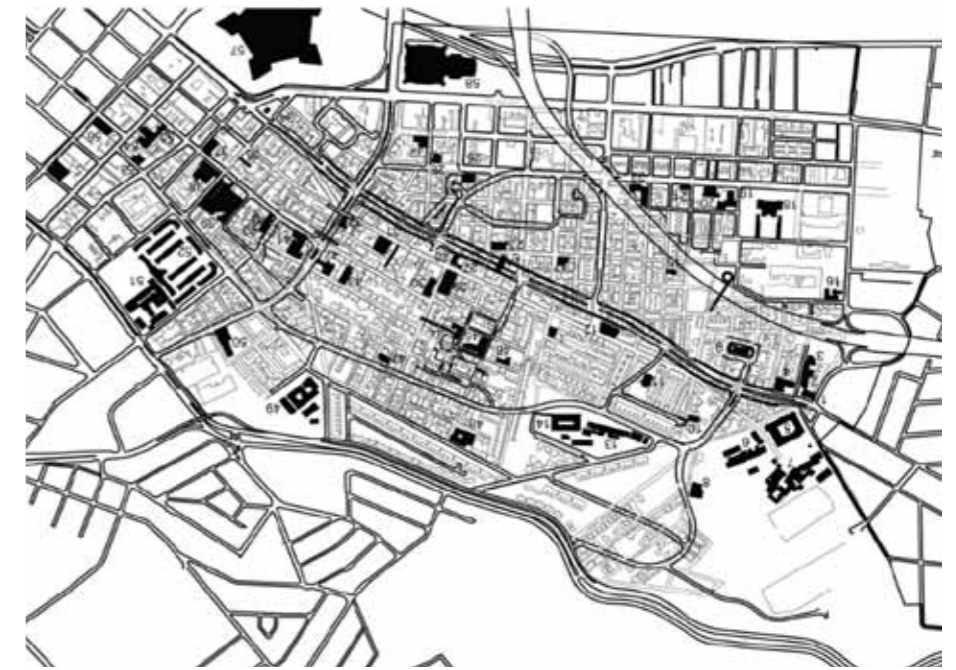
By 1900, District Six had been substantially developed and precincts between Sir Lowry Road and Hanover Street, as well as those near the east-City area, were consolidated. A tightly structured network of streets



1948 District Six figure ground (le Grange 2003)

characterized these precincts. The expansion of the city to the east was augmented by the introduction of the railway line, which created a barrier between District Six and the sea. With the outbreak of the Influenza epidemic of 1918 and later with the occurrence of tuberculosis, the Cape Town Municipality embarked on a city-wide public health program that saw the breaking down of some of the older housing stock in the area. In the place of these houses the city built some of its first social housing projects, such as the Stirling Street Flats and the Constitution Street Flats (see le Grange, 1985/1988/ 2001/2003).

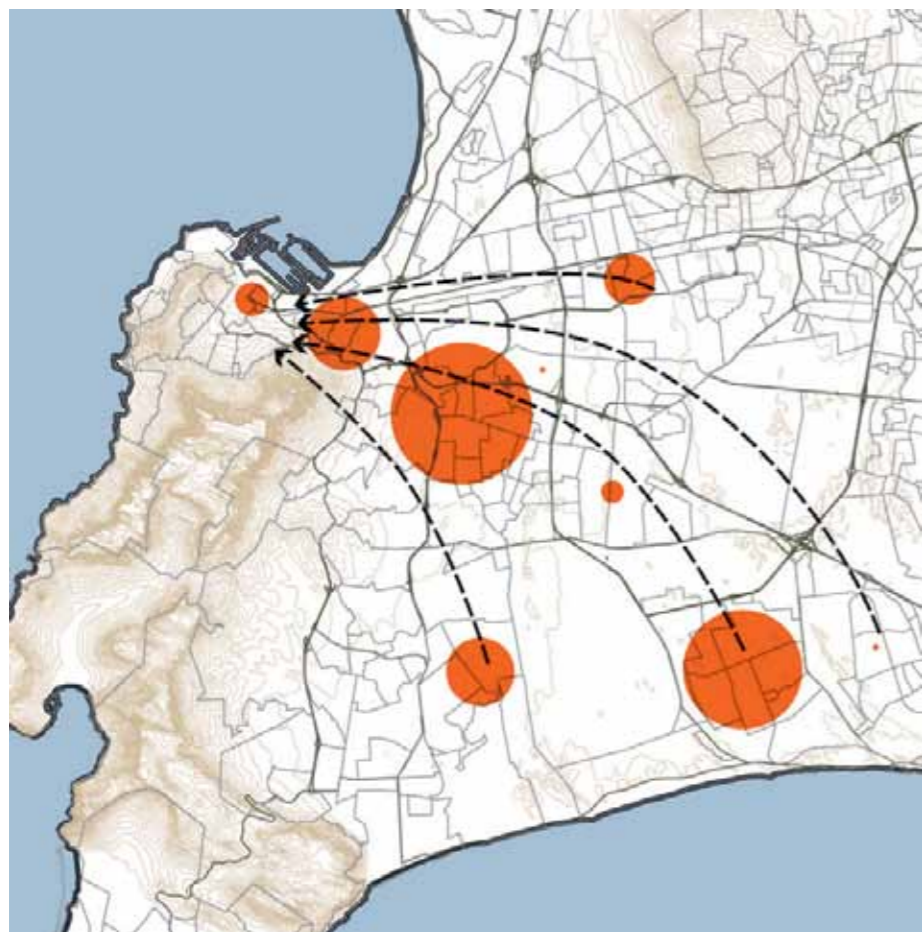
In 1944, the local street grids as structured by Sir Lowry Road, Hanover Street as well as Constitution Street were completed, and District Six became a fully developed area with parts of it having been upgraded through local authority slum clearing and social housing interventions. As part of this strategy the City Council had built tenement housing such as the Bloemhof Flats. Along the eastern edge of the District, the lines of the French Battery have been incorporated into Trafalgar Park and to the north the Foreshore landfill and road construction scheme



Remaining fragments of the historic fabric (le Grange 2003)

was implemented. To the south De Waal Drive, sited on the lower reaches of Table Mountain and Devil's Peak, now became formalized and consolidated forming an edge and barrier between the mountain and District Six.

With the construction of the Eastern Boulevard, renamed the Nelson Mandela Boulevard freeway, in 1964 the first forced removals in the area occurred, cutting a swathe through the housing fabric and occupying the southern edge of Trafalgar Park. In the process of such large-scale road engineering works, the old fine-grained urban fabric of the area was marred by the dominance of freeways. In February 1966 District Six was declared a white group area and all new development was frozen. In 1970 the area was renamed Zonnebloem after the original farmstead and the first victims of Group Areas removal were evicted. By 1979 redevelopment was limited to state sponsored building projects such as the Oriental Plaza, the Cape Technikon (occupying 22% of the land) and apartments for white policemen. By 1985 with all the original inhabitants now displaced to the Cape Flats, the population of District Six consisted of some 3 500 white people (see le Grange 2001).



Plan indicating where the former residents of District Six were relocated to during apartheid



Hanover Street (Noor Ebrahim)



Hanover Street at carnival time Putteril and Bloch, (1978)

By 1992, most of the old historic housing fabric had been demolished, with a few community buildings (churches, mosques and schools) and selected terrace-housing remaining (e.g. Constitution Street, Upper Ashley Street, Chapel Street, Searle Street, etc.). With the demolition and re-routing of most of the old roads, the last remaining traces of the area were wiped out. Old Hanover Street became replaced by Keizersgracht which follows a new alignment. In the late 1980's defiant developers built middle class housing for whites in isolated areas (e.g. north of Upper Ashley Street, and on the corner of Constitution and De Villiers Street).

With the launching of the Hands Off District Six Campaign in 1986 the redevelopment of the area as a white suburb was largely frustrated. In the early 1990's, as the BP (SA) initiative of 1986 came to be consolidated in the work of the original District Six Steering Committee and its Technical Working Group, privately owned land was expropriated by the State and the growth of the Cape Technikon was re-directed towards the west.

### 2.3 Contextualising District Six within the City Bowl

The two plans which follow (Figures 2.1 and 2.2 ) are the result of a wider contextual analysis of the city bowl, the contextual setting of District Six. The plans identify cultural linkages and strategic opportunities which become the informants to ensure that the future layout of District Six contributes to the identity and functionality of the city.

The Cultural Linkages and Assets plan (Figure 2.1) identifies the key public institutions, historic sites, natural water courses and strategic green open spaces.

The Strategic Opportunities (Figure 2.2) builds on the previous plan and suggests interventions which would contribute to celebrating and improving the city and the way it works. These include improved cultural and social linkages, green and open space systems, interfaces, movement routes, nodes of opportunity and infrastructural upgrades.