

More than half the plots earmarked for backyarders in Cape Town's southern suburbs are on wetlands

More than 60 properties on at least 100 hectares have been identified for possible housing development in several Cape Town southern suburb areas. But more than half are on wetlands, residents were told at a meeting at the Grassy Park Civic Centre on Monday night, 10 Decemb

By [Barbara Maregele](#) 13 Dec 2018



Abdul Dhansey of Delta Built Environment Consultants briefed residents on progress with the Greater Retreat Housing Projects.
Photo: Barbara Maregele

At the meeting, called to brief residents on progress of the Greater Retreat Housing Projects, several residents raised complaints.

Abdul Dhansey of Delta Built Environment Consultants (Delta BEC), which is the project manager, said 44 the properties belonged to the City of Cape Town, 13 to provincial government, three were owned by national government, three were privately owned and the ownership of one was yet to be determined.

About 50 residents were at the meeting with representatives from the provincial Department of Human Settlements, City of Cape Town and the team working on the project. The project, led by Human Settlements, follows a wave of [protests](#) in May by hundreds of Parkwood residents, mostly backyarders. They are frustrated by the lack of housing in the area and complained of high rental, electricity and water costs.

Last week, a Parkwood community leader told GroundUp that backyarders complained that they had been [kept in the dark](#) about progress with the project.

Snapshot of housing project

On Monday, Dhansey gave residents a snapshot of what the housing project could look like if at least half the properties are used.

Dhansey said 66 properties on 279 hectares had been identified and assessed. Twenty-seven of the properties, on 127 hectares, were in Parkwood.

He said additional parcels of land could be added to the project in the future.

Dhansey said that the properties found to be more favourable would go to the top of the priority list. He said many of the sites might need to be rezoned for housing.

“One of the sites is in a critical biodiversity area and 34 had wetlands on them,” he said. “Where wetlands are present, this could pose a potential problem and maybe a portion of the site will not be used,” he said.

Dhansey said that if half the sites were acquired, “we could potentially build a total of 5,428 homes and units”.

“This would include a mix of free standing houses, semi-detached and walk-up apartment blocks. As we increase the density on the site, we can accommodate more units.”

“If you look at free-standing houses, roughly 2,000 units can be accommodated based on the scenario. Using the same scenario for four-storey apartments, we could build about 8,000 units. This is just based on one development scenario,” he said.

Most residents applauded as Dhansey ended his presentation, except for several members of the Gatvol Capetonian group seated at the back of the hall. They also heckled throughout the event. Several police and law enforcement officers monitored the meeting.

Steering committees

At question time tensions flared as residents raised various complaints and objections, particularly with the establishment of at least two of the steering committees set up to represent residents on the project.

Resident Aubrey Roberts said, “There are people in Pelican Park who are on the waiting list for almost 30 years. It’s not fair that youngsters have houses there. We cannot allow this to happen again.”

Charles Daniels, of the Lavender Hill Civic Association, said residents in ward 68 were unhappy with the process followed for the project thus far. “We have asked for this presentation and details on each of the companies involved in this project because we don’t want any Guptas here. We haven’t received anything yet,” he said.

“They [government] are pushing this thing through without proper consultation. What happened at Steenvill where people have been evicted? At the end of the day, our people will be evicted again ... They can’t come here and tell us what we want,” he said.

Parkwood resident Rashaad Allen said residents in his area were unhappy with the manner in which ward 66’s steering committee was elected. “They were elected in a private room, the community wasn’t invited. People in Parkwood are angry because they don’t think the people on the steering committee will represent them as they want. A letter was given to subcouncil about this issue,” he said.

Sharon Davids, a resident of Steenvilla, asked the department to do an audit on the development to put a stop to evictions there.

In response to questions, Thando Mguli, head of the Western Cape Department of Human Settlements, said that the province had decided to prioritise people over 35 when allocating free homes.

On the steering committees, Mguli said they would return early next year to meet with wards separately to resolve the matter.

This article was [originally published](#) on [GroundUp](#).

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