

Socio-historical Study

353 Main Road, Sea Point, Cape Town

(consolidated erf 1424 including unregistered erf 1675)



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Naomi Roux

naomiroux@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

a. Purpose of report

This Socio-Historical Study (SHS) is a specialist study intended to inform the Heritage Impact Assessment process in terms of Section 38 of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) for consolidated erf 1424 (including unregistered erf 1675) at 353 Main Road, Sea Point, Cape Town.

The Socio-Historical focuses on the intangible significance and collective memories of the site and structures at 353 Main Road. The brief for the study requests an assessment of two aspects of the site's associational and tangible significance. Firstly, it calls for a consideration of the history of the site as a public educational facility in the context of the development of Sea Point. This includes discussion of the role of the school in the community fabric of Sea Point, and the degree of importance of these historic connections in the present day and in current public consciousness. Secondly, the report examines the role of the site as a recently contested space in the struggle for social and spatial justice in Cape Town.

Although a previous Notice of Intent to Develop (NID) and a subsequent Phase 1 HIA were submitted to Heritage Western Cape (HWC) in 2010-2011, the context and circumstances of the site and its development have changed significantly since then.¹ As a result, HWC recommended a new NID application be submitted and a new HIA process undertaken.

The current application, including the HIA and this SHS, is for site enablement only and has not been developed in response to any specific design proposal. However, it is the stated intention of the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure to enable the construction of a mixed-use development on a portion of the site, to include affordable, social, and market-rate housing, retail uses and other facilities. The portion of the site including the school building and the land directly in front of it have been allocated to the Department of Social Development, with exact plans for its usage currently unknown.

The entire site including all structures and landscaping is formally protected as a Grade II site under Section 27 of the NHRA. It was declared a National Monument under the previous National Monuments Act in 1989, automatically receiving Provincial Heritage Site status in 1999 in terms of the NHRA.

b. Study methodology

This study has been informed by extensive interviews, desktop research, and archival research.

Desktop research has included relevant literature on the history of Cape Town and Sea Point; online sources, including the extensive media coverage of housing activism and the court cases related to the site's attempted sale; and previous reports and studies on the site.

Interviews were a key source of information on associations, memory, and significance of the site. Participants have been anonymized for this report. All interviewees signed informed consent release forms, and were made aware that the report would be made publicly available.

¹ Bridget O'Donoghue, *Ellerslie/Tafelberg High School, Erf 1424 and Erf 1675 (Portion of Erf 1424), Main Road Sea Point Cape Town Western Cape, Heritage Report*, Phase I HIA (2011).

Interviews covered as many relevant groups as possible, including representatives of Ndifuna Ukwazi and Reclaim the City, representatives of the Sea Point Fresnaye Bantry Bay Ratepayers' Association, representatives of YIMBY Sea Point (formerly Sea Point For All), alumni from both Ellerslie and Tafelberg schools, and long-term Sea Point residents from a range of backgrounds.

In addition to those listed in the table below, background information was provided by discussions with Ndifuna Ukwazi leadership; Nicola Jowell, the Ward Councillor for Ward 54; and by Ndifuna Ukwazi and Reclaim The City representatives who took me on a walk through Sea Point in the vicinity of 353 Main Road. Additional background information about the custodianship and ownership history of the school site, in the context of the politics of education at the time, were provided by a retired senior official from the National Department of Education. Attendance at the public information sessions and focus group discussions hosted by the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure in May-June 2025 also provided useful insights. This report would not have been possible without these generous donations of time and energy.

The following pseudonyms are used for interview participants:

Participant A	Ellerslie alumna, lifelong Sea Point resident and homeowner
Participant B	Member of the Sea Point Fresnaye Bantry Bay Residents' and Ratepayers' Association committee, speaking in their personal capacity
Participant C	Sea Point resident and spatial justice activist with YIMBY Sea Point
Participant D	Ellerslie alumna, Sea Point resident, former teacher at Tafelberg High
Participants E & F	Ellerslie alumnae and Sea Point residents, interviewed together
Participant G	Long term Sea Point resident and RTC activist
Participant H	Long term Sea Point resident and RTC activist
Participant I, J, K, L	Tafelberg High alumni, online group discussion
Participant M	Retired senior official, National Department of Education

Limited use was made of archival material, mostly focusing on records held by the Western Cape Government on the rental histories of Wynyard Mansions. The supplied records mostly pertained to the building's occupation and changes of ownership in the 1990s.

c. Author's position and statement of independence

This report is authored by Dr Naomi Roux, an expert in social history, heritage studies and urban development. This study has been completed in my capacity as an independent consultant and heritage practitioner. I have no legal ties to any professionals involved in this project and have no vested interest in the subject property.

2. Historical context: Sea Point in the 20th century

a. Sea Point's early origins and development

The purpose of this report is to assess the socio-historical significance and associations with the site 353 Main Road. This assessment includes developing an understanding of the relationships between this site and its various occupants, and the broader development and history of Sea Point. The story of the site, the schools which occupied it until 2010, and its connections to housing activism in Cape Town reflect many of the key changes and continuities in the Sea Point area.

As noted in Rennie Scurr Adendorff's 2023 Heritage Baseline Study on 353 Main Road, "the early settlement and development of Sea Point... is intertwined with the story of the Cape's most financially well-established and influential burghers, colonial administrators and merchants."² 353 Main Road itself, like many of the roads, boundaries and structures in Sea Point, is shaped by this early history of colonial development. It occupies land once part of two well-appointed estates, Ellerslie and Bellevue.

It is important to note, however, that while the archive and official records most often reflect the influence of landowners, merchants, burghers and colonial administrators, the unrecorded labour of many people was intrinsic to the shaping of Cape Town's early homesteads, estates, and urban areas. This includes the labour of enslaved people, whose presence is often silenced in the archive. In the case of Ellerslie and Bellevue, for example, the estates would not have been able to function – indeed, could not have been built and furnished – without the work of artisans, labourers, enslaved people, agricultural workers, domestic staff, and others. Arguably, Sea Point has remained a space where the relationships between wealth, property ownership, urban development and working-class labour have existed in close entanglement for over two hundred years.

Before colonial incursion, the land where Sea Point sits today was part of the transhumance routes used by the Gorachoqua and Gorinhaiqua people.³ Initially lying well outside the boundaries of the city, the first land plots along Signal Hill were auctioned by the Burgher Senate in 1813. These lots were used for agricultural settlement and the development of productive homesteads. Estates were increasingly subdivided and developed throughout the rapid urban expansion of the 19th century, as Sea Point became home to growing numbers of merchants, business owners and officials.⁴

By 1839, Sea Point had become sufficiently established and populated to warrant joining with Green Point into a single municipality. By the mid-19th century, Sea Point had access to basic municipal services and a bus route into the city, indicating its shift in status from agricultural to peri-urban residential land.⁵ The arrival of the first tramways in 1863 and the extended railway line in 1905 further reflect Sea Point's urbanized status by the early 20th century. Its growth is indicated in the census figures, with its population of just 1 425 people in 1875 expanding to 8 839 by 1904. By the late 19th century, it had also become a popular holiday destination, with growing numbers of hotels and boarding houses providing

² Rennie Scurr Adendorff, *Heritage Scoping Baseline Study: 353 on Main (Ellerslie/Tafelberg High School Site) Erf 1424, 353 Main Road, Sea Point East* (2023), 10.

³ Nigel Worden et al., *Cape Town: The Making of a City* (David Philip Publishers, 1998), 16.

⁴ Rennie Scurr Adendorff, *Heritage Scoping Baseline Study*, 10.

⁵ 'Sea Point', South African History Online, accessed 16 May 2025, <https://sahistory.org.za/place/sea-point>.

holiday accommodation for visitors to Cape Town.⁶ Then as today, this leisure economy would have depended heavily on working-class labour in order to function.

Sea Point has also historically had a large and well-established Jewish community, dating to the late 19th century. Jewish arrivals in the Cape often established themselves first in District Six, Woodstock or Salt River, with many families later moving to the City Bowl and Sea Point.⁷ The Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation dates to 1926. Gwynne Schrire notes that by the early 2000s, the Jewish population of Cape Town in general was in decline, including in Sea Point, which she ascribes to a reduction in the size of traditionally large families.⁸ Nonetheless, the community remains well established in Sea Point: the area contains at least five places of worship and several Kosher delis and restaurants.

b. Race, labour and segregation in Sea Point in the 20th century

Like all Cape Town suburbs, Sea Point was fundamentally shaped by segregationist politics in the 20th century. Yet, despite its apartheid designation as a “white” area under the Group Areas Act and its history as a relatively wealthy enclave, it has long been home to people across diverse identities of race, class, income levels and background. As one interview participant put it, to speak of the Sea Point “community” is actually to speak of many “communities”, including people from across the greater Cape Town area who come to make use of its public spaces and beaches.⁹

The Cape Town and Green Point Tramway Company built housing for their employees in Sea Point in 1877. This housing was located in Tramway Road and Ilford Street, designated for the company’s tram drivers, stablemen and grooms. Long after the Tramway Company closed in 1895, this enclave remained home to generations of mostly working-class coloured families along with smaller numbers of white, Indian and black residents.¹⁰ Most residents of the Tramway Road area worked in homes and businesses in Sea Point, or for the Municipality of Green Point and Sea Point. Oral histories record a place where “extended family and neighbourhood networks, established over generations, provided a strong sense of identity and community spirit that cut across social boundaries”.¹¹

The earliest forced removals in Sea Point date to 1903, in the wake of the 1902 Native Reserves Location Act. The Green Point and Sea Point municipal council moved black men living in a block known as “workmen’s quarters”, later as “the Council Flats”, from the Tramway Road area to the Docks Location. In 1957, Sea Point was declared “white” under the Group Areas Act and residents of Tramway and Ilford Roads and the Council Flats received eviction notices. Between 1959 and 1961, all remaining black and

⁶ Worden et al., *Cape Town: The Making of a City*, 252.

⁷ Worden et al., *Cape Town: The Making of a City*.

⁸ Gwynne Schrire, ‘The Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation from Its Origins to 2010’, Web exhibition, Kaplan Centre, UCT Faculty of Humanities, accessed 23 June 2025, <https://humanities.uct.ac.za/kaplan-centre/discover-our-web-exhibitions/green-and-sea-point-hebrew-congregation-its-origins-2010>.

⁹ Interview with Participant B, online, 14 May 2025

¹⁰ Michele Pause, “‘Everyone Had Their Differences but There Was Always Comradeship’: Tramway Road, Sea Point, 1920s to 1961’, in *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town*, ed. Sean Field (David Philip, 2001); Pierre H. Nortje, ‘Trams and Bus Tokens of Cape Town’, Western Cape Numismatic Society, December 2024, <https://www.wcnumsoc.com/tram-bus-tokens-of-cape-town>.

¹¹ Pause, “‘Everyone Had Their Differences but There Was Always Comradeship’: Tramway Road, Sea Point, 1920s to 1961’, 44.

coloured residents were forced to leave Tramway Road and surrounds. Some accepted housing in newly built Bonteheuwel, while others chose to move to areas like Mowbray, District Six, Lansdowne or Milnerton.¹² The last empty houses of families who had left were demolished in 1963.

Although legally a “white” area, Sea Point remained home to many people of colour who were employed in homes, businesses and public facilities. Sea Point’s residential architecture retains the markers of this history through apartment blocks with basement or rooftop rooms designed for caretakers and domestic workers, and the presence of so-called “servants’ quarters” attached to freestanding homes. Sometimes retail workers were offered basic rooms at the backs of shops. Participants interviewed for this study spoke of their experiences living in these designated rooms on their employers’ properties well into the 2000s, describing the built-in precarity and generally poor conditions of these housing options.¹³

This history is significant for the purposes of this study, given that a key point of contention in the proposed sale and/or development of 353 Main Road has been its suitability for social and affordable housing. There is precedent on the site itself for subsidized housing, explored in more detail in the sections that follow. The current dynamics around housing, work, and struggles for housing justice in Sea Point do not occur in a historical vacuum. From its very beginnings as a peri-urban agricultural area to its current incarnation as a dense urban core, Sea Point has been home to working-class and low-income people whose labour and presence has fundamentally shaped the suburb and its character.

c. 21st century changes in Sea Point

Many interviewees for this report reflected on the major changes they have witnessed in Sea Point and its community since the 1990s. Across a wide range of backgrounds and positions, participants’ experiences of these changes tended to cohere around a few key themes. These descriptions of change provide a useful context for reading the intangible heritage significance of the 353 Main Road.

At a governance level, the period from 1990-2010 was a period of immense change and structural transformation of the City of Cape Town. Following the democratic transition of the 1990s, Cape Town became a unified metropolitan council combining of over 50 formerly separate municipal bodies. This signified a major departure in the city’s governance structures, along with new provincial departments impacting on the city’s infrastructure, housing, and other amenities.

Although apartheid-era spatial classifications had fallen away with the repeal of the Group Areas Act, race and class divisions remained entrenched in Sea Point as they did in all other parts of the city. As such, Sea Point remained a relatively expensive and sought-after place to live. As in many other formerly “white” suburbs, Apartheid-era patterns of labour, residence and transportation remained in place, including long commutes for many lower-income workers travelling daily between their homes in townships on the city’s outskirts and their places of work in Sea Point.

¹² Paulse, “‘Everyone Had Their Differences but There Was Always Comradeship’: Tramway Road, Sea Point, 1920s to 1961’.

¹³ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025; Interview with Participant H, Green Point, 27 June 2025

Class dynamics and income disparities

That said, it is not correct to characterize Sea Point of the 1990s and early 2000s, or indeed prior to this, as simply a “wealthy” area. The reality was more nuanced, with Sea Point also offering a home to middle class and lower-income people despite high levels of inequality. In the 1990s, it offered a foothold in the city for many people in precarious circumstances, via options such as subsidized housing at Wynyard Mansions and affordable residential hotels and boarding houses.

Interview participants with memories of Sea Point prior to the 1990s corroborate that while there certainly were wealthier people living in the neighbourhood, it was home to a wide mix of people from different backgrounds and income levels. Participant A is a long-term Sea Point resident with generational connections to Sea Point, currently living in the house where she was born and which once belonged to her grandparents. She recalls:

People have got the wrong idea about Sea Point [as somewhere where only rich people lived]. It’s never been like that. The rich people lived up in Fresnaye. The “mediocre” ones like us lived in little houses like this. And there were poorer people living in [the residential hotels], you found a lot of families lived in the residential hotels.¹⁴

Participant A’s father was a bus driver, while her husband’s father – who also lived in Sea Point – was a builder. Others living in their street, where Participant A and her husband still live today, worked as retail workers and artisans. She describes her memories of the street as “an ordinary community. And it was very much a community in the early days. We used to pull out the chair and sit outside on the pavement and chat to one another on a summer evening. You don’t see that anymore.”

Specific portions of Sea Point, in the 1990s and early 2000s, were considered by some to be dangerous “no-go” zones. As one resident recalls of her decision to buy an apartment in Sea Point in the early 2000s:

At the time that I moved from Joburg, Capetonians were saying you’re crazy to buy in Sea Point... There were drug dealers on the corner, it was a very different place. In particular, this area between Main Road and high Level was considered to be a no-go zone and really dangerous. So it’s changed considerably.¹⁵

Two interview participants with long histories as domestic workers in Sea Point have similar memories and experiences supporting the idea that Sea Point was home to a wider diversity of people than sometimes assumed. Housing options for lower income workers such as domestic workers included rooms attached to employers’ properties, or purpose-built rooms on the roof or in basements of apartment buildings. In some cases, it was possible on a domestic worker’s income to rent a small apartment. Participant G and Participant H both rented apartments in Sea Point in around 2000-2010.¹⁶

Community cohesion and fragmentation

¹⁴ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

¹⁵ Interview with Participant C, Sea Point, 14 May 2025

¹⁶ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025; Interview with Participant H, Green Point, 27 June 2025

Even in the context of deep inequality, many long-term residents describe the changes in Sea Point since the 1990s in similar terms. A key theme, repeated in almost every interview, is a strong historical sense of community which has become increasingly fragmented since the uptick in development from around 2010.

Participant G, for example, who has worked in Sea Point as a domestic worker since 1987, recalls:

At that time it was so nice in Sea Point, you could have walked 24/7. Nothing would happen to you, you can walk day and night... People were all friendly, you lived like a family. That was the Sea Point that we loved. There was a sense of community... We lost that, there is no such thing any more. We lived there all together as a family. It's changed totally... Its because of the money, these developers are just building expensive buildings and it's becoming a rich Sea Point.¹⁷

Participant C, meanwhile, remembers the dynamism and integration of the neighbourhood when she moved into the area in the early 2000s:

What you did notice at the time was that it was a very integrated environment and neighbourhood. It was very inclusive. There were people down the road from me who could afford to rent flats there who were obviously working class. You know, the guy who washed cars from Congo was living upstairs in a flat in Sea Point. What happened after that, I think, changed everything fundamentally, because it became very, very clear that people were being chased out of their own neighborhood where they've lived for 40 years or more.¹⁸

One lifelong Sea Point resident particularly strongly recalled the sense of community she experienced growing up in Sea Point in the 1950s and 60s. She described her mother sending her with a plate of food to visit elderly neighbours in the road, and the pleasure she took in the sense of intergenerational connection: "That's the way we were, and everybody knew everybody else. And it followed through to the school [Ellerslie], people knew each other. We were a community, you just fell in with one another."¹⁹

As noted in the section of this report dealing with the history of Ellerslie school, this sense of cohesion and connection was supported by the specific dynamic of Sea Point's schools. Schools served mostly families living in the area, and as such were entangled in a close sense of neighbourly community. (Of course, this was not a fully inclusive sense of community, given that the area's schools were designed to serve only white learners under apartheid).

Many interviewees describe the loss of this sense of community cohesion from the 1990s onwards and particularly after about 2000-2010. In many interviews, this sense of fragmentation is linked to the specific type of development now becoming common in Sea Point, much of it driven by just a small handful of private developers. Typically, apartments in new developments are small and expensive, more suited to digital nomads or AirBnB rentals than to families. In relation to the rise of small apartments and transient rentals, one long-term resident stated:

Your neighbourhood loses its character when you get people who don't really care about the place where they're living... [Development] was gradual before, you didn't suddenly notice it.

¹⁷ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

¹⁸ Interview with Participant C, Sea Point, 14 May 2025

¹⁹ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

But now [the independent shops on Main Road] are all gone. In a week or two's time, they're busy putting up a big block of flats, it's just like a wall that goes up in front of you.²⁰

As a result, many long-term residents are experiencing Sea Point as increasingly unliveable for families, particularly young couples with children. One resident, currently living in the house where she was born and which once belonged to her grandparents, notes that her son, “a fifth-generation Sea Pointer” had to move out of the area when he had a family of his own as it was impossible to find an affordable place to live.²¹ Other long-term residents who live on pensions report that it is becoming more difficult to keep up with increasing property rates, even for those in fully paid-off properties.²²

3. The schools at 353 Main Road: Ellerslie and Tafelberg

a. Early development of site

Ellerslie and Bellevue Estates

353 Main Road sits in between what was once the neighbouring estates of Ellerslie and Bellevue. The north-south orientation of these estates and their neighbours shaped the eventual layout of Sea Point's roads, and the central routes of Main Road and High Level Road connecting Sea Point to the city centre.

By 1860, Ellerslie had a large homestead complete with extensive gardens, outbuildings, workers' accommodation, a central fountain, and a central avenue corresponding to the current tree-lined driveway off Main Road. Between 1854 and 1862, in keeping with the increasing densification of Sea Point, the land was divided and sold as separate lots although it retained its character as a unified estate.

In 1882 three of these lots including the portion with the homestead, with the later addition of a fourth behind the original homestead, were bought by JH Van Ryn. The surrounding portions of Ellerslie and Bellevue Estates were soon absorbed into the densifying urban fabric of the growing suburb.²³ The retention of this relatively large land parcel is therefore something of an outlier in an area that was quickly being absorbed into the urban core, with accompanying pressure on housing, increasing numbers of businesses, and the need for more public facilities.

b. Ellerslie School for Girls

Development of site and buildings

The need for a dedicated school for girls indicates the extent to which Sea Point had grown and become an intrinsic part of urban Cape Town by the end of the 19th century. Ellerslie Estate was bought by the Undenominational Public School Committee of Green Point in 1900, and the oldest portion of the school was completed in 1901 next to the original homestead. The original single-storey building was designed

²⁰ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

²¹ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

²² Interview with Participant B, Online, 14 May 2025; Interview with Participant E, 23 May 2025

²³ Rennie Scurr Adendorff, *Heritage Scoping Baseline Study*, 11.

by the architect John Parker, who also designed Rustenberg and Wynberg Girls' High Schools and several other notable buildings in Cape Town.

Ellerslie Green and Sea Point for Girls opened its doors in the new building in 1902. (Some records give the establishment date of Ellerslie School as 1898; it is possible the school was hosted elsewhere while the new building was being completed). By this time parts of the neighbouring estate had been subdivided for development, including a cluster of villas, row houses and a bungalow. By the 1970s, the school included double-storey extensions to the south and west and several infill buildings. Its basic north-south orientation, however, remained in place along with its iconic tree lined avenue, where the original pine trees were replaced by the current wild figs in 1926. The original homestead was demolished in 1935 to accommodate extensions to the central school building. In interviews, many Ellerslie alumnae specifically mentioned the architectural qualities of the historic building and the fig tree avenue as particular places of connection and pride.²⁴

In 1969, the Cape School Board (as the provincial body overseeing education was then known) purchased an additional plot next to the school containing a block of flats, a small row of houses and a villa. The villa and row houses were demolished to create space for new sports facilities and a swimming pool. A small five-storey 1950s Modernist block of flats, Wynyard Mansions, remained in place with flats let at low-end market rates, generating income for the Cape School Board.²⁵

Education in Sea Point

Ellerslie School for Girls was a key part of the educational ecosystem in Sea Point. Many of the neighbourhood schools have similarly long roots in the area. The area's educational needs were first served by the Undenominational Public School of Green and Sea Point, founded in Three Anchor Bay in 1884. Its female pupils were later transferred to Ellerslie, and the boys' school became known as Sea Point High School for Boys. The boys' school moved to the premises currently occupied by Sea Point High School in 1925.²⁶

By the 1930s there were at least three public primary and two high schools serving the Sea Point community. This rapid growth in schools indicates the extensive residential development of Sea Point in this time, particularly as most pupils would have been drawn from surrounding communities. Under apartheid, Sea Point's schools served white pupils only, becoming what was then known as "Model C" schools in the early 1990s. Model C schools were formerly "white" schools whose funding models shifted from fully state-supported to "state-aided" schools at which parents could be asked to pay fees. In return, these schools gained a higher degree of autonomy over their own governance.²⁷

Many Sea Point residents and school alumni noted in interviews that up to around 2000 most schools in Sea Point, including Ellerslie, would have primarily served learners who lived in the area. This dynamic

²⁴ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025; Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025; Interview with Participants E and F, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

²⁵ Wynyard Mansions rental records, H8/3/1/2, Western Cape Records and Archives Service; Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025

²⁶ P Botha, 'Sea Point High School 130th Birthday', *The Good Times School Newspaper* (Cape Town), March 2014, 16.

²⁷ Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025.

has significantly changed in the last 20-25 years. At present, the vast majority of learners attending Sea Point High, Ellerton Primary and other public schools in the area spend long hours travelling into Sea Point from other areas, including Khayelitsha which is some 30km away. This shift in transport and residential patterns was identified by several interviewees as a factor impacting on the sense of the school as a centre of gravity or cohesion in the community.²⁸ Participant B observed a similar dynamic in terms of people travelling into Sea Point for work:

You've got a lot of people coming in from outside now, into the service industry and retail. [Sunset Beach] has turned into an informal taxi rank now, where at any time you'll get 800 standing in line for the taxis... These are people who are coming into work and service. These are mostly women going back to their families and they're standing in the pouring rain and wind... It's one of the most horrible things for me, the notion of people living in dormitory suburbs and coming into Sea Point and then going back.²⁹

Memories of Ellerslie School

Although the current Heritage Impact Assessment process does not focus specifically on the Ellerslie/Tafelberg school building, it is impossible in practice to separate out memory and socio-historical significance between the school building, the school grounds, and the school as institution. In addition, the memories of many Ellerslie alumnae and connected families are deeply entangled with memories of everyday life in Sea Point and the changes that have occurred in the area. Many interviewees conflated a sense of nostalgia for the school with nostalgia for a sense of community, safety and belonging that they feel has been lost. In this section, interviews with Ellerslie alumnae and others point not only to the specifics of experience at the school, but also to the meaning these memories hold for long-term Sea Point residents today.

In interviews, several Ellerslie alumnae expressed a strong continued identification with the school and a sense of pride, often expressed through memories of the school building and the grounds. One participant recalls:

The lawns were so beautifully cut, and there was a lovely little building called Heatherbelle [which became our art and music rooms, before it was demolished]. Just everything about the whole school was well run. There was hardly any trouble, there was a feeling of belonging. We were proud of our school, it was Ellerslie and we were proud of it.³⁰

Interviewees who attended the school in the 1960s have strong memories of the headmistress at that time, Mrs Griffiths, remembering her as a strict but fair teacher. She is particularly remembered for the black academic gown she wore everywhere on school premises and the image of her gown billowing around her as she walked the corridors. Interviewees also made specific mention of the beautiful staircase and the sense of historic presence of the building.³¹

²⁸ Interview with Participant C, Sea Point, 14 May 2025; Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025; Interview with Participant B, Online, 14 May 2025

²⁹ Interview with Participant B, Online, 14 May 2025

³⁰ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

³¹ Interview with Participants E and F, Sea Point, 23 May 2025; Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

The gendered nature of the school is significant. One participant recalled a sense of strictness and discipline, being rebuked because “young ladies do not run in the corridor”.³² Rules about hair and uniform were strongly enforced. Others recall consternation from the teachers when the girls became distracted as the marching band from Sea Point Boys’ High came down Main Road, to the extent that they were asked to change their route to avoid having over-excited “young ladies” rushing to the window or trampling the headmistress’s plants as they came past.³³

A gendered approach to education was also apparent in subject choices and the academic expectations of Ellerslie learners. One interview participant attended Ellerslie in the 1960s, while her husband had attended Sea Point Boys’ High at around the same time. In discussion about gender roles at school, they agreed that while Ellerslie offered academically rigorous education, it was also expected that the girls were being trained to be “homemakers” via subjects like domestic science: “There was quite a big emphasis placed on the things which the old-fashioned ‘women of the house’ would do.”³⁴

Community dynamics

Across all interviews, Ellerslie alumnae expressed the sense that the school was closely embedded in the Sea Point community, or at least the community of middle-class, white residents who would have sent their children to the school. The school acted as an anchor within the community, and in turn learners felt themselves embedded in community through their association with the school. This association is highly significant given the views expressed by many interview participants that Sea Point has experienced a deepening sense of community fragmentation over the last two decades.

Beyond living memory, there is evidence that Ellerslie was converted to a temporary hospital during the influenza outbreak of 1918-1919, as were many public facilities across the city. According to the South African Medical Record, 71 patients were treated at Ellerslie with 16 deaths occurring in the school. (Also in Sea Point, the Baptist Mission Hall in Tramway Road was converted to a “temporary hospital for Coloured females”, admitting 19 patients of whom 3 died.) The Medical Record reports that the hospital at Ellerslie had been “fitted up by the residents of Sea Point” – indicating a close association already at this time between the school and the local residential community, as well as the school’s use as a public facility in a time of great need.³⁵

One interviewee expressed the sense of cohesion in the school community by referring to the highly active role played by parents in the school’s functioning and development. She pointed to fundraising efforts in the 1960s to expand the school’s facilities: “The parents worked very hard to keep the school as we liked it. Everybody joined in. The swimming pool was paid for by the parents, and that was all through fundraising... So the parents didn’t sit back.”³⁶

³² Interview with Participant E, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

³³ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

³⁴ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

³⁵ Jasper Anderson, ‘Influenza in Capetown’, *South African Medical Record*, 8 February 1919. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA20785135_755

³⁶ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025

This sense of cohesion and anchoring within community was also supported by the fact that almost all Ellerslie pupils lived in the surrounding area, or at most a short bus ride away. One alumna recalls being able to run home for lunch every day at break:

We lived around the corner, and you were allowed to go home in the long break... I used to run up, my mum used to hear the school bell from the house and she'd put my lunch on. You probably had 45 minutes or something. People used to run up that hill and catch the bus to Green Point, have their lunch, get back on and come back to school.

Some interviewees also reported close family links to Ellerslie, including mothers, grandmothers and aunts who attended the school. Many also had fathers, brothers and uncles who attended Sea Point Boys' High, which was a closely linked institution and generated a similar sense of being anchored in place and community. This generational connection to the school generated a sense of belonging and historical connection to place, often supported by generational connections to Sea Point itself.³⁷

However, this experience of embeddedness in the community through family, school, and home was not shared by all children or families in Sea Point. These memories sit in stark contrast to stories of domestic workers unable to see their children who they had left behind in Cape Town's townships to come and work in Sea Point, and to the experiences of children today bussing into Sea Point's schools from distant areas.

Amalgamation

Several of the Sea Point schools amalgamated in the 1980s. The primary driver for these changes was the decline in numbers of white school-age children in the area, as young families left Sea Point for more affordable areas such as the city's Northern suburbs. This was not an uncommon pattern at this time, with many Cape Town schools amalgamating and closing down as neighbourhood demographics changed.³⁸

Ellerslie and Sea Point Boys were amalgamated in 1989, creating a new co-educational school named Sea Point High on the premises of what had previously been Sea Point Boys. Participant M, a retired senior official from the Department of National Education with close knowledge of the Western Cape education system and its history, noted that this decision would have been purely practical with little consideration for heritage or other matters. The Ellerslie building was older than Sea Point Boys and in need of more repair work, while Sea Point Boys had a larger school hall. This formed the basis of the decision to locate the new school at the former boys' school campus.³⁹

This move was felt as a heavy loss of identity for Ellerslie. One commentor on a Facebook post by the Cape Town Heritage Foundation about the condition of the school buildings in 2022 notes that "the school ceased to exist when it was forced to amalgamate with Sea Point Boys' High... Talk about a hostile takeover." The same commentor also noted that they found it sad and inappropriate to refer to the site

³⁷ Interview with Participant A, Sea Point, 23 May 2025; Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025

³⁸ Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025

³⁹ Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025

in 2022 as Tafelberg School: “It seems people have forgotten that this was Ellerslie High School – at one time considered the top girls’ school in South Africa. Its history is being systematically wiped out.”⁴⁰

c. Tafelberg Remedial School

Moving to Sea Point

After Ellerslie amalgamated with Sea Point Boys, the school property was allocated in 1990 to Tafelberg Remedial School as temporary home for its new high school campus. Tafelberg had been allocated land in Bothasig in the city’s Northern Suburbs, and was waiting for its new campus to be constructed. Tafelberg’s primary school, meanwhile moved into the vacant property previously occupied by King’s Road Primary School.

As a remedial school, Tafelberg served a key need in the Cape Town educational landscape. It catered for children with learning difficulties, including small classes and additional support such as on-site therapists. It was not based on a geographic community, but served learners from across the city.

Appreciation for teachers

In interviews, several Tafelberg alumni noted that this support and the dedication of the Tafelberg staff were invaluable to their educational experience, and was appreciated even if they did not particularly enjoy school in general. One alumni remembers that “we were seen as adults, we used to joke around with the teachers and that was kind of accepted. We knew where the line was and we never crossed it.”

Another recalls a particular teacher who she was willing to always put in extra effort for with her homework, “because she respected us. Through that respect we’d go the extra mile for her.” Another recalls that for her the key memory of Tafelberg is “the amazing teachers... I honestly hated school. But to think back despite everything, the teachers are more amazing than I thought, to put up with all of us... The dedication in rewriting notes, the audio tapes, they just had to do extra in everything.”⁴¹

Changing dynamics

Tafelberg School served a much wider community than just Sea Point and surrounds. Unlike Ellerslie, most Tafelberg learners were commuting in from across the city, with many using public transport or getting lifts from teachers in order to reach school.⁴² Participant M noted that this dynamic is inherent in the structure of public remedial schools, which are based on meeting specific learning needs from across the city rather than serving a particular neighbourhood.⁴³ This change impacted not only learners, but also the surrounding community as the sense of intrinsic connection between school and surrounding residents and families was lost. It also meant that extramural activities and sports at the school were limited, as learners had to leave early to get home.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Comment on public post by Cape Town Heritage Foundation, Facebook, 21 June 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/www.simonvdstel.org/posts/3218738485009559/>

⁴¹ Interview with Participants I, J, K, and L, Online, 28 May 2025

⁴² Interview with Participants I, J, K, and L, Online, 28 May 2025

⁴³ Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025

⁴⁴ Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025

In interviews with Tafelberg alumni and one former teacher, the school environment is described both as supportive and as sometimes disruptive. Some alumni struggled with a combination of their own learning difficulties and the behaviour of classmates. A former teacher at the school recalled this sense of “naughtiness” with warmth and humour, recalling that teaching at the school could be hard work but that working at Tafelberg was very rewarding overall.⁴⁵

Several Tafelberg alumni spoke about specific memories of the school buildings, which they remembered with fondness and clear associations. This is a thread of connection with the recollections of Ellerslie alumnae, who connected their memories of the school building and grounds with a sense of warmth, belonging and nostalgia. One Tafelberg alumna recalled with great humour being banned from using the school’s central staircase after falling down it several times.⁴⁶ A former Tafelberg teacher who had also attended Ellerslie, however, noted that the school building became less well-maintained after Ellerslie moved out, including leaky roofs and broken gates that were never properly repaired.⁴⁷

Moving to Bothasig

A former teacher also recalls that it was challenging for teachers, therapists and other staff to move between the separate high school and junior school campuses in Sea Point. The intention had long been in place to move to Bothasig, but the move was delayed by the need to ensure the new campus had the correct specifications and facilities for special education.⁴⁸ As a result, Tafelberg occupied its “temporary” home in Sea Point for twenty years. The primary and high schools moved to new purpose-built premises in Bothasig in 2010.

The move to Bothasig was a significant change in learners’ experience of the school. For some, it meant a more difficult commute and a disruptive shift to new surroundings – echoing the disruption felt by Ellerslie teachers and learners twenty years previously. A former teacher also recalls a subtle but keenly felt change in student behaviour from the 1990s, although it is impossible to ascribe this to the new campus specifically: “[Some of the kids] were really naughty, but they weren’t malicious. And that sort of crept in a bit. There was just like a bit of an edge, just a different feel [at the school in Bothasig].”⁴⁹

While Tafelberg School in Sea Point is remembered with affection, these memories are a little more ambivalent than those professed by Ellerslie alumnae. Tafelberg alumni interviewed for this report often spoke simultaneously of warmth and appreciation for the school’s facilities and teachers, alongside a dislike of the school experience overall. There was certainly less of a deep entanglement between school and community after 1990. However, it is significant that Tafelberg school was fulfilling an important inclusive educational mandate in Cape Town at this time (and continues to do so). This culture of supportiveness, inclusivity and enablement is a key aspect of its intangible heritage.

⁴⁵ Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025

⁴⁶ Interview with Participant L, Online, 28 May 2025

⁴⁷ Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025

⁴⁸ Interview with Participant M, Online, 4 July 2025

⁴⁹ Interview with Participant D, Sea Point, 21 May 2025

4. Housing at 353 Main Road: Wynyard Mansions

The apartment block known as Wynyard Mansions is situated at the back of the 353 Main Road property, facing onto Herbert Road. It was built in around 1951 and bought by the Cape School Board in 1969.⁵⁰ In a previous heritage report on the Wynyard Mansions, Andre van Graan found the building to have no heritage significance based on its architectural qualities and current state of dereliction.⁵¹ However, as archival records and oral histories show, the block carries deep social significance and sets an important precedent for subsidized and low-cost housing on the property, which should inform any future impact on the site. Despite its current state of neglect, the site carries deep intangible heritage significance.

a. History of building and ownership

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Cape School Board bought several properties surrounding Ellerslie including Wynyard Mansions. Most of these properties were demolished to make way for expanded school facilities, but Wynyard Mansions was left intact and rented at market rates to private tenants. Rentals were managed by an agent, H. Lewis Trafalgar, and paid to the Cape School Board. Although the flats were rented on the open market, prices were relatively low and remained stable for several years, making the flats an attractive affordable option for tenants. The four-storey block consisted of 12 apartments ranging in size from bachelors to three bedrooms.⁵²

At around the time Ellerslie vacated the property, the Cape School Board declared the site was no longer needed for educational purposes and relinquished it back to what was then the Department of Local Government, Housing and Works. Records indicate that ongoing maintenance, services, and management of the building had become something of a liability to the Education department. The Department of Local Government, Housing and Works effectively became the new landlord between 1991-2 and the Education Department ceased to have any responsibility for the site's management.

A list of rental costs from the early 1990s indicates that apartments were let for between R230 for a bachelor, to R425 for a three-bedroom flat. This is equivalent to about R2100-R3875 in 2025 value based on inflation, although the actual purchasing power of these amounts would have been somewhat higher. Nonetheless, this indicates that although let at market rates the flats were relatively affordable, corroborated by the details of tenants' records from this era.

In 1994, Wynyard Mansions' management passed to the Development and Housing Board, which drew up new leases with existing tenants and conducted income surveys to determine affordability. At this time, the block was formally allocated for subsidized housing, with new tenancies based on housing waiting list applications and rentals charged proportional to income. A memo from the Development and Housing Department indicates that to qualify for this housing, applicants had to be married, or single with dependants, and earning under R1200 a month (about R6800 in 2025 terms). Interestingly, a memo from the Department of Housing and Works in 1993 indicates that part of the rationale for allocating Wynyard Mansions (and another small block in Gardens, Mandarin Court) as social housing was that

⁵⁰ Wynyard Mansions rental records, H8/3/1/2, Western Cape Records and Archives Service

⁵¹ Andre Van Graan, *Heritage Report: Wynyard Mansion, Erf 1675 Sea Point* (Cape Town, 2022).

⁵² Wynyard Mansions rental records, H8/3/1/2, Western Cape Records and Archives Service

both these areas had become built up with apartment blocks mostly aimed at higher-income residents, and that there was therefore a pressing need for affordable housing in these areas to prevent workers from having to undertake long inconvenient commutes.

The name and mandate of Provincial departments changed several times between the 1990s and 2010, affecting the custodianship of the building. In 2010, the Provincial Department of Local Government, Housing and Public Works was split into separate departments: Human Settlements, Transport and Public Works, and Local Government. At this time, the newly formed Department of Human Settlements took over management of Wynyard Mansions, while the Department of Public Works and Transport was the building's legal custodian.⁵³ At around the same time, the decision was taken to vacate the entire property, including the move of Tafelberg School. Eviction notices were issued to Wynyard Mansion's tenants from 2010. Several tenants resisted eviction, with the last residents moving out in 2014.

b. Housing stories from Wynyard Mansions

Attempts to locate and interview former Wynyard Mansions tenants for this report have not yet been successful, but much of the socio-historical story of the block can be read through the rental records held by the Western Cape Provincial Government as well as media reports and other public information. The story of Wynyard Mansions and its significance also needs to be understood in the larger context of housing economies and struggles in Sea Point.

The only rental records made available via the Western Cape Provincial Government for this study date to the 1990s, but even this small collection sketches a picture of how Wynyard Mansions operated, who it served, and what it meant to its tenants. These stories reflect the fact that while Sea Point in the 1990s did have many wealthy residents, it was also a space where people could gain a foothold in the city in precarious situations. It was home to many low-income workers, single parents, divorcees and widows struggling to establish new lives and homes, and new arrivals to Cape Town. Many of these individuals and families also found safety in the residential hotels and boarding houses of Sea Point, where one could rent a small room with a shared bathroom and some meals provided for low cost.

Some of the stories from the archive are illustrative of both daily life at Wynyard Mansions and the people who found space here:

Ms B

Mrs B was a divorced single parent with three children, who had been on the housing waiting list since January 1997. In 2003, she was offered a bachelor flat in Wynyard Mansions, which she accepted although this would mean her two older children would have to go and live with family members in Steenberg and Mitchell's Plain. The fact that this was a viable option for her, along with the six-year waiting period for housing, indicates how urgently she needed the subsidized housing.

⁵³ In 2022 the newly formed Department of Infrastructure took over some of the previous functions of Public Works and Human Settlements, becoming the new custodian of the property at 353 Main Road including Wynyard Mansions.

Ms G

Before Mrs B moved in, the flat had been offered to Ms G, a single woman with no children in her 50s. Mrs G had first applied for housing in Sea Point or Gardens in 1992. At this time she was unemployed except for a small occasional income from a fleamarket stall at the Grand Parade Market. She was only offered housing in December 2002, by which time her only income was a small government disability grant. She signed the lease for Wynyard Mansions sight unseen, having just been discharged from hospital. On arrival at the flat in January 2003, she found it in such bad condition that she refused to take occupation. Given her circumstances, the flat must have been in extremely poor condition for her to make this decision, as she was then placed back onto the housing waiting lists.

Ms R

Ms R was a widow in her late 50s. She moved into Wynyard Mansions in 1995 and lived there for about two years. She worked as a waitress in the Catering department of the Houses of Parliament and was one of the highest earners in the block with a salary of R1700 per month. She had been on the waiting list since 1992, stating in her application that her housing situation was urgent as Parliament would soon be moving to Pretoria, taking her job along with it. In her two years in the block, she issued several letters of complaint to the Housing Board, some of these supported by other tenants: her complaints included two flats with aggressive dogs, noise disturbances caused by tenants and their children, and tenants hanging their washing over their balconies instead of on the outdoor washing line.

Ms L

Ms L, a recently divorced mother to an 11-month old baby, moved into Wynyard Mansions in early 1994. In her housing list application, she stated that she had to move as she was living in cramped conditions with 11 other people. Her only income at the time was a R370 government grant. Like Ms R, Ms L wrote several lengthy complaints about conditions in the block, including litter, lack of regular cleaning, other tenants' dogs, marijuana use, and the lack of fencing around the block which resulted in washing being stolen off the lines. In her letters she is deeply concerned with the appearance and "respectability" of the block: "The people should be told to do their part in trying to make the place look Respectable... I think the whole neighbourhood thinks it the local dumping grounds... We would like to try and make it nice, so when people come they don't say horrible things." She also indicates that a small group of residents had agreed to club together to pay for fencing, suggesting that she was not necessarily alone in these complaints.

Ms J

Ms J was a single woman in her 60s who moved into Wynyard Mansion in August 1994. She had been abandoned by her husband 30 years previously, and was unable to obtain a divorce. As a result, under Apartheid legislation she was not permitted her own pension fund or medical aid as she was considered a married woman. Her late sister was a well-known South African writer, and Ms J was the custodian of her sister's archives as well as the trust fund set up to care for her child but did not receive any income from the trust herself.

Ms J had set up a freelance writing and editing business, which had ground to a halt in the recession of the early 1990s. She was dependent on the goodwill of friends and the financial support of her children. She also notes that she was partly responsible for the upkeep and at times the full-time care of her

niece's children. She noted that she required crutches to walk but would manage stairs if she had to, and gratefully accepted a 4th-floor flat in Wynyard Mansions. She lived in the flat until she died in 1997.

A foothold in the city

There are many more such stories, but this indicative sample indicates some important threads of the socio-historical and intangible heritage significance of Wynyard Mansions. The rental records indicate that the majority of tenants here were women, often women who were marginalized through single parenthood, divorce, as new arrivals in the city or as women in low-income jobs. The flats therefore represented an important source of security, safety and respectability.

They also represented places of safety for families with children. Many tenants moved in with new babies or small children, in some cases having left cramped or even dangerous living circumstances. In these cases, the flats enabled families in precarious situations to get a safe foothold in a convenient location in the city. As is evident from interviews with housing activists in present-day Sea Point, family dynamics are closely associated with geographies of housing and work: quality family time is highly constrained if one is spending 3-4 hours or more on public transport every day to work or school. Given that this is still a pressing issue for many people living and working in Sea Point, Wynyard Mansions offers an important precedent on the site of 353 Main Road for housing practices that enable the well-being of families and children.

It would be remiss to romanticize life in Wynyard Mansions. As some of the complaint letters in the archives suggest, there were many problems with the flats themselves and tensions between tenants – perhaps even more so because it was such a small block, with only 12 apartments requiring close living quarters. Nonetheless, the responses of those who were evicted between 2010 and 2014 point to its continued value as a living and community space within an area that was becoming increasingly unaffordable. One of the tenants evicted in 2012 told a journalist, “We endured the [apartheid-era] trespass raids on our rooms, but we cannot endure this”.⁵⁴ The last tenant to leave Wynyard Mansions, Angela Wise, resisted eviction until May 2014.⁵⁵

5. Housing activism in Sea Point

Wynyard Mansions is only one iteration of a long, complex struggle for affordable housing that has played out in Sea Point for decades. As noted earlier in this report, Sea Point's residential history has included working-class residents since the 19th century, although these communities were irretrievably fractured by forced removals under apartheid and earlier.

More recently, much of the housing activism in Sea Point has been led by women, many of whom arrived in Sea Point as domestic workers and have lived and worked in the area for decades. As the

⁵⁴ Daneel Knoetze, ‘De Lille’s Promise to Reverse Apartheid Design Rings Hollow’, GroundUp, 19 January 2017, <https://groundup.org.za/article/sceptical-de-lilles-promise-reverse-apartheid-design/>.

⁵⁵ Nashira Davids, ‘A Pad Worth Fighting For’, TimesLive, 25 March 2014, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2014-03-25-a-pad-worth-fighting-for/>.

Tafelberg/353 Main Road⁵⁶ story exploded in the media in 2016, bolstered by the highly visible occupations led by Reclaim The City, this deeper history has at times been forgotten. It is important that contemporary struggles and occupations are understood within this longer historical context.

a. History of housing struggles

Several individuals interviewed for this report pointed to the history of the Rainbow Housing Group as a key part of the story of housing activism in Sea Point. Rainbow Housing was started in 1996 by “a group of domestic workers, caregivers, cleaners, gardeners, caretakers, chauffeurs and restaurant/hotel workers”.⁵⁷ A former member of Rainbow Housing, now a member of the Sea Point Chapter of RTC, recalls that the lack of adequate family housing was part of the impetus for starting the organization:

We find that for us as domestic workers of Sea Point, we haven’t got our own places to stay. And some of our people are coming from far, travelling from the location, and the leave their kids in the darkness to come and work. And when they go home, they find their children sleeping. So it’s very difficult for them to see their families. Even if a child has an injury, the mom might not see that because you find the child sleeping.⁵⁸

According to Anzabeth Tonkin, formerly of the Development Action Group (DAG), Rainbow Housing approached DAG in 2000 for support to register the group as a cooperative. It was incorporated as Rainbow Housing Cooperative Limited in May 2003. DAG played a supporting role for the group, assisting with coordination and facilitation, capacity-building, research, and advocacy and lobbying support.

A 2005 survey of Rainbow Housing members indicated that over 80% organisation’s membership was made up of women. The vast majority of members were single, and most were between the ages of 30 and 50. Around 90% of members had children, but only about a third of these had their children living with them. About a third of members had been living in Sea Point for over 15 years. The majority of its members were employed, over half as domestic workers who were also living in Sea Point. 69% of members lived either in a room with a toilet at the back of an employer’s house, or in a room with a shared kitchen and toilet in a block of flats.⁵⁹

Rainbow Housing advocated for accessible, affordable, family-oriented housing to support workers in Sea Point, and initiated processes to gather and register lists of individuals in need of subsidized housing on the City of Cape Town’s housing lists. It emerged in response to shared experiences of subpar living conditions and housing precarity, including for many the experience of repeated evictions without due process.⁶⁰

Many people in Sea Point accommodated on employers’ properties were not allowed to have their families and children stay with them. This particularly affected women, who report this as a painful and

⁵⁶ In this section of the report, the term “Tafelberg” is sometimes used as it was in campaigns and advocacy against the sale of 353 Main Road. It is acknowledged that the term “Tafelberg” erases other layers of history of the site, but also that it became shorthand at this time for larger activist campaigns in Sea Point and Cape Town.

⁵⁷ Anzabeth Tonkin, ‘The Plight of Domestic Workers: The Elusiveness of Access to Adequate Housing’, *Law, Democracy & Development* 14 (2010): 354, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ldd.v14i1.11>.

⁵⁸ Interview with Participant H, Green Point, 27 June 2025

⁵⁹ Tonkin, ‘The Plight of Domestic Workers’.

⁶⁰ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025; Interview with Participant H, Green Point, 27 June 2025

isolating experience that fragmented families. In some cases, women were forced to choose between being able to spend time with their children, or remaining employed. Participant G recalls her oldest child coming to stay with her in Sea Point during the school holidays and her employer refusing to let the child stay:

I said, I am the mother. If my child can't enter here and be with me, as her mother, and I must do your job and look after your family and clean your house, but my child is not good enough to be here: Then I think I'll leave your job. And then I left it, because my child comes first to me.⁶¹

In response to these issues, "The Rainbow Housing Cooperative... actively and extensively lobbied politicians, officials and leadership of the three spheres of government over an extended period to secure government-owned land, public rental opportunities and appropriate buildings in or around the Atlantic Seaboard".⁶² Over this time, Rainbow Housing proposed a number of models and possibilities for housing that could accommodate Sea Point workers, including social or cooperative housing models.

At various times it was able to secure verbal support and attendance at its meetings from local government representatives, ANC members, and the City's Housing Department. Discussions were also held with representatives of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) about the potential use of Rockland Villas, a small block of apartments owned by the SABC and positioned in a prime location behind the SABC offices in Sea Point. However, despite many years of lobbying and the institutional support of DAG, none of these commitments were ever realized and ultimately Rainbow collapsed.⁶³

A 2016 submission by the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers' Union (SADSAWU) to the Premier of the Western Cape regarding the sale of Tafelberg draws specifically on the history of Rainbow Housing and domestic worker-led struggles in Sea Point, linking these earlier struggles to the story of Tafelberg. It is not accidental that many of the women who had been active in Rainbow Housing later took on leadership positions in Reclaim The City during the campaign for housing at Tafelberg.

The SADSAWU statement briefly outlines Rainbow Housing's campaign to secure Rocklands Villas, at the time owned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), as a suitable location for accommodation aimed at domestic and other workers employed in Sea Point. The statement notes:

[Many domestic workers] live in back yards, separated from their children and family. Some live in tiny rooms in the basement of some flats... some face eviction and move from one room to the next room as they work in Sea Point.⁶⁴

In a statement echoed by some of the interviewees for this report, the SADSAWU submission notes the irony that "Many of these children that are in business or highly educated were reared by these very domestic workers that are now denied housing where they have worked all their life."⁶⁵ One interviewee, on a walk around Sea Point with a group of NU and RTC representatives, recalled telling one of Sea Point's most prominent property developers during a sit-in at their offices that she remembered him as a

Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

⁶² Anzabeth Tonkin, p.7

⁶³ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025; Interview with Participant H, Green Point, 27 June 2025

⁶⁴ SADSAWU, 'Submission to the Premier of the Western Cape Re Objection to the Sale of Tafelberg Remedial School', 2016, <https://stopthesaleblog.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/sadsawuseapointhousing-doc.pdf>.

⁶⁵ SADSAWU, 'Objection to the Sale of Tafelberg'.

small boy because she used to work for his mother, but that now she was being denied accessible housing in the same area because of development-driven rising prices and evictions.⁶⁶

b. The role of Tafelberg (353 on Main) in housing struggles in Cape Town

The sale of Tafelberg

The catalyst for 353 on Main to become a symbol and flashpoint for housing activism in Cape Town was the sale of the premises to the Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School in 2015. The property, at this time, was under the custodianship of what was then the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW). The sale was challenged by activist groups including Ndifuna Ukwazi, Equal Education and the Social Justice Coalition, resulting in a series of court cases to overturn the sale and force the Western Cape Government to use the land for social and affordable housing. The sale of Tafelberg was also the catalyst for the formation of activist campaign Reclaim The City (RTC), and the highly public occupation of Ahmed Kathrada House (previously the Helen Bowden Nurses' Home) and Cissie Gool House (previously the Woodstock Day Hospital). The most recent court hearing was held in the Constitutional Court in February 2025, still pending judgment at the time of writing. This story of activist organizing, occupation, and the formation of new social movements is an important additional layer in the socio-historical heritage of 353 Main Road.

The site was initially advertised for private sector development by DTPW in March 2014. It had been declared "surplus for government needs" and was identified as suitable for mixed-use private development, including market-rate residential units. An additional three sites identified for disposal and development were the Helen Bowden Nurses' Home in Green Point, the Alfred Street complex in the city centre, and Top Yard in Gardens.⁶⁷ This was something of a surprising decision given that both the Social Housing Regulatory Authority and the Provincial Department of Human Settlements had indicated previously that the site could be suitable for housing provision.

At the point that the sale was advertised, the Tafelberg site had been vacant for almost four years. Soon after Tafelberg School vacated, a 2012 feasibility study by the Social Housing Regulatory Authority had found that it could potentially accommodate at least 200 homes at social housing rates, plus a community hall or similar facility and a retail portion. At around the same time, the Provincial Department of Human Settlements had indicated in 2013 that the site was suitable for social housing development.⁶⁸

In response to the advertisement for disposal, Ndifuna Ukwazi, the Social Justice Coalition and Equal Education made a joint submission to the provincial government. They called for a halt to the process and further investigation of the potential of the site to address Cape Town's rising housing crisis and the related entrenchment of apartheid geographies of living, working and commuting.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Statement made by RTC member during a walk through Sea Point led by NU and RTC, 22 May 2025

⁶⁷ Nicole McCain, 'New School at Tafelberg', News24, 25 January 2016, <https://www.news24.com/News24/new-school-at-tafelberg-20160125>.

⁶⁸ *Minister for Transport and Public Works: Western Cape & others v Adonisi and Others* 2024 ZASCA 47 para. 6

⁶⁹ Ashleigh Furlong, 'Calls to Halt Sale of Prime City Land', GroundUp, 8 February 2016, <https://groundup.org.za/article/calls-halt-sale-prime-city-land/>.

The sale, however, proceeded and in November 2015, the site was sold to the Phyllis Jowell Day School for R135 million. One media source quotes the Phyllis Jowell School's Board of Governors' deputy chairperson, Lance Katz, drawing on the site's built heritage as a framework for its future planning:

We will be putting a great deal of effort into restoring the school building to its former glory and enhancing the environmental aspects of the site which have deteriorated due to lack of use over a number of years. The Tafelberg property should return to take pride of place in enhancing the overall Sea Point surrounds.⁷⁰

Formation of Reclaim The City

Following the announcement of the agreement between the school and Province, activist groups continued to put pressure on the provincial government to halt the sale of public land. On 13 February 2016, the Reclaim The City (RTC) campaign was officially launched.

In Thozama Adonisi's 2017 founding affidavit in the High Court case to reverse the sale of Tafelberg, RTC is described as:

A voluntary social movement that is made up of Cape Town working class residents (including domestic workers, waitrons, call centre workers, carers and security guards), learners, university students and professionals who seek to promote and protect the right to land and housing for all residents in Cape Town. Reclaim the City consists of over 200 supporters in its Sea Point chapter and has approximately 3000 supporters across Cape Town.

Reclaim The City would soon become the face of post-apartheid housing struggles in Cape Town, beginning with a well-attended march in March 2016 under the slogan "Land For People, Not For Profit" and the announcement of its intention to take the matter to court.⁷¹ After an attempt at mediation failed, Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) launched an interdict to halt the sale of the property, granted in April 2016. In May 2016, the Provincial government committed to reopen the intended sale plans for a 21-day public commentary period, and agreed to refer the final decision to the Provincial Cabinet.⁷² In this period, over 5000 submissions were made to the Provincial Cabinet.

By this time, the Tafelberg case was firmly in the public eye, with sustained media attention and high-profile statements of support from public figures and supporters of NU and RTC. Public statements and articles were released by figures includes the novelist Margie Orford, Dr Tolu Oni, Professor Leslie London and NU's co-founder Zackie Achmat. It was seen as not simply a space with the practical potential to provide much-needed housing, but also as a place with symbolic potential for spatial redress in a city still constrained by apartheid geographies.

At a public meeting hosted by Ndifuna Ukwazi in June 2016, many attendees relayed experiences corroborated in interviews conducted for this report. Many people who had worked in Sea Point for years, sometimes decades, reported repeated experiences of eviction and housing insecurity, long

⁷⁰ McCain, 'New School at Tafelberg'.

⁷¹ James Stent, 'Tafelberg: Four Years of Battle. The Campaign That Led to a Landmark Court Decision on Housing', GroundUp, 2 September 2020, <https://groundup.org.za/article/tafelberg-four-years-battle/>.

⁷² Stent, 'Tafelberg: Four Years of Battle'.

overcrowded commutes from distant suburbs, or inadequate, cramped conditions in employer-provided housing. One attendee made a sharp observation in response to objections received to the possibility of social housing in Sea Point, namely the oft-repeated claim that the presence of affordable housing would downgrade the value of surrounding properties: “Why is it that I downgrade your property if I don’t downgrade your children when I go to work?”⁷³

A feasibility study released in November 2016 by DTPW found that the site could accommodate as many as 270 social housing residential units. At around this time, RTC’s attention publicly moved beyond the struggle over Tafelberg to encompass broader calls for housing justice in Cape Town and an expanded mandate to campaign for spatial justice, redress and affordable housing in the wider city. This was in the context of ongoing evictions and threats posed by gentrification in neighbourhoods like Woodstock and Salt River, where long-term residents were being displaced by high-end property development. A march against evictions in Sea Point was followed by a January 2017 public meeting at the Sea Point Methodist Church, where several long-term residents and workers spoke about their experiences and aspirations for housing in the area.⁷⁴

The meeting was chaired by Andrew Boraine, CEO of the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership, who stated that “Tafelberg would be the beginning of affordable housing in the inner city, and a model for the future”.⁷⁵ These calls were reiterated in Reclaim The City and Ndifuna Ukwazi’s Heads of Argument in the recent Constitutional Court case, where they argued that “The Tafelberg property had come to symbolize a broader campaign for affordable housing in and around central Cape Town”.

RTC occupations: Ahmed Kathrada and Cissie Gool Houses

In March 2017, the Provincial Cabinet found in favour of proceeding with the sale of Tafelberg. This was the catalyst for RTC’s most visible and enduring protests, the occupations of Ahmed Kathrada House and Cissie Gool House. Over the weekend of 25-26 March, RTC activists occupied the Helen Bowden Nurses’ Home in Green Point and the abandoned Woodstock Day Hospital in Woodstock. Helen Bowden was soon renamed Ahmed Kathrada House, and the Woodstock occupation became Cissie Gool House.

The Western Cape Cabinet’s decision, and the occupations, took place in a context of continuing evictions and rising prices in Sea Point. One of RTC’s Sea Point leaders points to a specific eviction case in January 2017 as a major personal catalyst for intensified organizing around housing in Sea Point in the leadup to the Provincial Cabinet decision:

Another lady was evicted from her room where she was staying with a baby, a small little child. It was very cold, in the winter time... She called me and said, I’m being put outside and the locks are being changed. The baby was only two or three months old and they were being put outside... That’s when we started the real struggle, was with that eviction. [Later, she was being

⁷³ Niab Malan, ‘Debate on Future of Tafelberg Property Heats Up’, GroundUp, 6 June 2016, <https://groundup.org.za/article/public-meeting-hears-sea-point-residents-object-tafelberg-sale/>.

⁷⁴ Stent, ‘Tafelberg: Four Years of Battle’.

⁷⁵ Stent, ‘Tafelberg: Four Years of Battle’.

threatened with eviction again], we kicked the door open and put her back inside, and then she stayed there again... It from there we took up the struggle seriously, up until now.⁷⁶

Explaining the fundamental impetus for RTCs work and the occupations, one of the leaders of RTC's Sea Point chapter explains: "Sea Point became Sea Point because of poor people's energy and power. The people making Sea Point what it is now, is the workers. Sea Point was built by poor people and workers, but today they're powerless, they can't be part of it because they don't have money."⁷⁷

Both occupations were carefully planned and executed. At Ahmed Kathrada House, a small group of occupiers gained access and hid in one of the rooms for several days before being discovered. The occupation soon grew, with one of its leaders explaining in an interview that they had to ensure there were enough people that the building was never empty, so that they could not be barred from access.⁷⁸ According to RTC leadership there are currently about 800 people living in the five-storey building, in a prime location opposite the Victoria and Albert Waterfront and Somerset Hospital. Many of those in the building are working between the Atlantic Seaboard and the city centre, and many were evicted or previously in precarious housing situations in Sea Point and surrounds.⁷⁹

In the eight years since, the occupations have taken on a life of their own and have become visible centres of organizing and activism around housing and spatial justice in Cape Town. At the time, the intention was not necessarily for these to become permanent or long term occupations: "Reclaim the City... did not expect their act of civil disobedience to last long. They thought the provincial government would move to evict the occupiers within a few days. The intention was to use the occupation to highlight what housing activists call the 'apartheid spatial planning' of Cape Town".⁸⁰ However, they have since become established communities in their own right. Both houses host public events such as exhibitions, film screenings, and educational meetings and serve as centres for continued activist mobilization.

Tafelberg in the courts

The Tafelberg case has been working its way through South Africa's courts since May 2017, when Ndifuna Ukwazi and RTC launched a High Court application to overturn the sale. One of their central arguments was that the Western Cape Provincial Government and the City of Cape Town had failed in their obligation to address spatial injustice and the legacies of apartheid in the city, and to provide well-located social housing in Cape Town.

Besides RTC and Ndifuna Ukwazi, four individual applicants submitted founding affidavits in the case. Their personal stories and circumstances are indicative of kinds of struggles that working and poor people were facing in Sea Point, and the contexts that had led to the formation of RTC. Thozama Adonisi, the first applicant, worked as a nurse at a hospital in central Cape Town and lived in the basement of an

⁷⁶ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

⁷⁷ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

⁷⁸ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

⁷⁹ Interview with Participant G, Green Point, 15 May 2025

⁸⁰ Groundup Staff, 'How Two Audacious Occupations Are Shifting the Housing Debate', GroundUp, 29 August 2018, <https://groundup.org.za/article/how-two-audacious-occupations-are-shifting-housing-debate/>.

apartment block in Sea Point. Phumza Ntutela had lived in Sea Point since 1981, living with her children in various basements and “maids’ quarters” in apartment blocks around Sea Point. As rentals in Sea Point became more unaffordable, she and her family had to move to Nyanga in 2005. A third applicant, Selina Le Hane, had lived in Sea Point since 1974 and had lived in Wynyard Mansions since 1995. After her eviction in 2012 along with her grandchild, she had to relocate to Sanddrift about 15km north of Sea Point.⁸¹

A second application to overturn the sale was made two months later by the National Department of Human Settlements and the Social Housing Regulatory Authority, arguing that the Provincial Government had not met its legal obligations in the process of disposing of the land. The cases were heard together in November 2019. In August 2020 the High Court overturned the sale of 353 Main Road, and ordered the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government to create an inclusionary housing plan for the city in line with their constitutional obligations.

The court also found that the Western Cape Government had been remiss in not consulting with the National Government about the intention to dispose of the land, contravening its constitutional obligations and the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act No 13 of 2005. It had also not met the provisions of the Government Immovable Asset Management Act No. 19 of 2007 (GIAMA), including the requirement to consider whether a government asset could be used in support of socio-economic objectives such as land reform and the redistribution of wealth.

Both the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government appealed the decision to overturn the sale. Although the sale agreement with the Phyllis Jowell Day School was officially cancelled in 2021, the principle of the sale of public land in the context of enormous pressures on housing and the slow pace of post-apartheid urban transformation remained at the core of the case.

The case was heard by the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) in February 2023, which upheld the City and the Western Cape Government’s appeal. The SCA judgment found that the claim that the Province and the City had not met their constitutional obligations in terms of housing were not supported by the evidence, and disagreed with the High Court finding that the provisions of GIAMA had not been complied with. The court dismissed earlier High Court orders to overturn the sale and to create an inclusionary housing plan.

NU and RTC appealed the ruling, turning to the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court hearing took place on 11 February 2025. (As many media reports noted, while the date of 11 February was coincidental, it also happened to be the 59th anniversary of the declaration of District Six as a white Group Area under apartheid, as well as the 35th anniversary of Nelson Mandela from prison). At the time of writing, the court’s judgment is still pending.

In the meantime, the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure has announced the intention to build a mixed-use development including social and affordable housing on the Tafelberg site, while the portion containing the school building itself has been committed to the Department of Social Development via a GIAMA process.

⁸¹ *Adonisi and Others v Minister for Transport and Public Works Western Cape and Others* 2020 ZAWCHC 87 para 7-9; Knoetze, ‘De Lille’s Promise to Reverse Apartheid Design Rings Hollow’.

353 Main Road as a symbol of housing struggles in Sea Point

353 Main Road has played an important symbolic role in struggles for housing justice in Sea Point and Cape Town. The sale of the property, alongside ongoing evictions and a sense of rising inequality and insecurity, was the major catalyst for the launch of RTC and for the occupations of Helen Bowden and the Woodstock Day Hospital.

RTC and the occupations quickly became the highly visible faces of spatial justice activism in Cape Town, speaking to much broader issues than only the fate of 353 Main Road. In a May 2017 open letter to Helen Zille, then Premier of the Western Cape, RTC leader Sheila Madikane explained what Tafelberg had come to symbolize to her and others in the movement:

I have told you what the Tafelberg site represents to me, and other domestic workers and carers in Sea Point: for us it is a symbol of hope, a way to desegregate our city; to recognise the struggles of working-class people; to live and work in the inner city... That the government could allow Tafelberg, Helen Bowden Nurses Home and the Woodstock Hospital site to remain empty for all these years, battered by the elements, and home to only the birds, shows little regard for us... We want to be able to live in Sea Point. We don't want to be evicted. We want to pay a fair rent for a decent home. That is it.⁸²

Or, as one of Ndifuna Ukwazi's political organisers put it at the time of the Constitutional Court hearing in February 2025: "The Tafelberg case [is] very important because... it's what started the movement called Reclaim The City. Reclaim The City started as a campaign to stop the sale of Tafelberg, and that campaign evolved into a movement."⁸³

6. Findings and recommendations

a. Research findings and themes

The intangible, associational and social significance of 353 Main Road is complex and multi-layered. From its earliest iteration as part of a wealthy colonial estate to its most recent significance at the centre of activism for spatial justice in Cape Town, its development speaks to the changes that have occurred in Sea Point and in the city over two centuries.

Its social history is interconnected with narratives of land ownership, gender, education, community dynamics, apartheid geographies, labour, housing, and social justice activism. As a result, it is a rich source of heritage narrative and intangible informants for any future development on the site.

Among the key themes emerging from the research conducted for this report are:

⁸² Sheila Madikane, 'An Open Letter to Premier Helen Zille', GroundUp, 18 May 2017, <https://groundup.org.za/article/open-letter-premier-helen-zille/>.

⁸³ Marvin Charles, "'We Don't Have Any Other Hope': Battle for Affordable Housing in Sea Point Heard in ConCourt", News24, 11 February 2025, <https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/watch-we-dont-have-any-other-hope-battle-for-affordable-housing-in-sea-point-heard-in-concourt-20250211>.

1. Community and family connections:

Almost every interview participant spoke in general terms about a past sense of community connection and identity in Sea Point, as a dynamic which many people are experiencing as being under threat or disappearing. Many are deeply discomfited by the type of development currently shaping Sea Point, and its impact on neighbourhood dynamics and integration.

The history of Ellerslie School is also closely connected to memories of community in Sea Point. Most of its learners lived in the neighbourhood and as such, the school acted as an anchor of community, from generational family connections to events at the school and nostalgic stories of everyday life in Sea Point for the women and girls who attended school here. With the shift to Tafelberg School, this sense of embeddedness was lost as most pupils travelled in from elsewhere.

It is significant that this experience of a particular kind of community was, in general, a white, middle-class, family-oriented one that was dependent on specific family structures and neighbourhood geographies. The experiences that were available to Ellerslie students and their families were not available to all of Sea Point's many communities, many of whom suffered separation from family and constant housing insecurity.

2. Educational histories:

353 Main Road functioned as a school for the vast majority of its existence, from 1901 to 2010 – a period of 109 years. As Ellerslie High School for Girls, it served the educational needs of generations of women, many of whom still live in Sea Point today and retain close connections to their identity as Ellerslie alumnae. Former pupils retain clear memories of significant spaces at the school, memorable teachers, and their everyday experiences of living and learning here.

As Tafelberg Remedial School, the site served the needs of pupils with learning difficulties for twenty years before moving to Bothasig. Although the dynamics were quite different to those of Ellerslie, it served a crucial social and educational need. Alumni of both schools remember their teachers with great respect and warmth, from the strict headmistress of Ellerslie in the 1960s to the supportive teachers at Tafelberg who went above and beyond for their students.

3. Gender:

As a girls' school, Ellerslie shaped particular ideas of gender and womanhood in its disciplinary and educational approach. Beyond the school itself, Wynyard Mansions provided a safe landing place for many women and women-headed families in times of need. The site therefore includes associations with multiple threads of gendered history, including the place of safety and the first foothold in the city that Wynyard Mansions represented for many marginalized women.

In addition, many of the current and past struggles for affordable housing in Sea Point have been led by women, including the domestic workers who formed Rainbow Housing in the 1990s –

many of whom are now in leadership positions in Reclaim the City, as a continuation of this history. 353 Main Road therefore also speaks to a history of women's leadership and courage.

4. Affordable housing:

The most obvious link in public consciousness to affordable housing is the site's symbolic status as the catalyst for the formation of Reclaim The City, the occupations of Ahmed Kathrada House and Cissie Gool House, and a flashpoint for housing struggles in Cape Town.

However, a forgotten history of the site is the story of Wynyard Mansions, which provides a decades-long precedent for subsidized housing at 353 Main Road. The rental records indicate how crucial Wynyard Mansions was to those who would otherwise have been priced out of Sea Point or out of the city altogether. As far back as the early 1990s, the records show that Wynyard Mansions was considered a crucial part of the area's housing ecosystem, not least because it provided access to the economic centre of the city for those who would otherwise be pushed to peripheral urban areas.

5. Spatial justice:

More recently, 353 Main Road has acquired important symbolic status as the catalyst for contemporary activism around housing and spatial justice in Cape Town. The sale of Tafelberg in 2014 sparked significant court cases, the formation of Reclaim The City, two longstanding housing occupations, and the emergence of new discourses and public debates about housing and justice in the city. This history needs to be understood in the broader context of Sea Point and Cape Town's development, as a city still scarred by apartheid geographies and dynamics. Many of the struggles described by those working in Sea Point as domestic workers, gardeners, caretakers and others in the 1980s remain salient today, bolstered by persistent spatial inequality and a lack of urban integration.

Summary table: socio-historical heritage values

Socio-historical themes	Associated values	Associated spaces	Implications for development
Community and family connections	- Community cohesion and inclusivity -Addressing and mitigating current sense of community fragmentation and loss of cohesion - Wellbeing and cohesion of families, including the wellbeing of children	- Site as a whole - School buildings - Wynyard Mansions	This theme and associated values are of high local significance at the neighbourhood and city level. Values associated with community and family connections and cohesion should be a key informant for future development plans.

	-Inclusive approach to family and community cohesion and wellbeing: expanding a sense of community belonging and embeddedness to all.		353 Main Road has the potential to act as a 'centre of gravity' for a revived and more inclusive sense of community cohesion and family integration in the neighbourhood and the city. This includes the opportunity for people at all income levels to live in close proximity to workplaces and schools, supporting a sense of belonging, integration and the wellbeing of families. If parts of the site are developed for housing, it is important that sufficient provision is made for families (as opposed to, for example, an oversupply of bachelor/micro-apartments). In light of this, it is also important that design supports physical accessibility for elderly and disabled residents. These values could also potentially be supported by amenities which support inclusive community functioning. These may include, among others: civic facilities, information hubs, education, childcare, elder care, space for outdoor leisure and play, public health and other domains alongside housing. The site's social and community functions should be well-integrated, rather than siloed, with particular attention paid to shared facilities and public/leisure spaces on the site.
Educational histories	-Inclusive, accessible education (with strong links	Site as a whole	The site's history as an educational centre is of high

	to both women's education, and inclusive remedial education) -Integration of educational facilities in surrounding community	School buildings	local significance at the neighbourhood and city level. This history also carries high significance at a provincial/regional level, given Ellerslie School's connections to early educational histories in the Cape. This does not necessarily mean the site must be used specifically for educational purposes. However, the core values of inclusivity and accessibility should be key informants for both the design and future use of the site. This may include solutions which enable families with school-going children to live close to the existing public schools in and around Sea Point, further supporting community cohesion and the integration of schools in the day-to-day life of the surrounding community instead of requiring children to undertake long, difficult commutes.
Gender	- Gender inclusivity and sensitivity in design -Reflecting histories of women's leadership	Site as a whole School buildings Wynyard Mansions	The site's gendered histories are of medium local significance at the neighbourhood and city level. This is based on its important role in women's education via Ellerslie School, and the role Wynyard Mansions played in giving many women in difficult circumstances a well-located foothold in the city. It also draws on the broader history of women's role in housing activism in Sea Point via Rainbow Housing and

			These values should be reflected through a gender-sensitive approach to development and design. This includes spatial elements and facilities (for example, on-site childcare, consideration for safety and security, awareness of the specific needs of women-headed households) and structural aspects of delivery, decision-making and participation.⁸⁴
Affordable housing	-Addressing housing inequalities, including affordability and security of tenure -Integrated, dignified living space well-located for work, economic opportunities, social and civic amenities	Wynyard Mansions Site as a whole	The site's connections to affordable housing provision and activism is of high local significance at the city and neighbourhood level. This is based both on the role of Wynyard Mansions in affordable housing provision in Sea Point historically, and in the important symbolic role of the site in catalysing housing activism in Cape Town. These values should inform development through a clear and intentional focus on providing not only affordable and social housing, but also integrated amenities and facilities with the potential to foster a sense of the site as a 'centre of gravity' for community cohesion, accessible housing, and equitable access to civic amenities. It is clear that the struggle for housing in Sea Point and in

⁸⁴ See, for example: The "Equal Spaces: Social Housing to End Spatial Apartheid in South Africa" Project, *Gender Equality Strategy for the Social Housing Sector in South Africa* (NASHO, 2018); Mziwandile Sobantu, 'Revisiting Gender and Housing: Housing as Seen through the Eyes of Women in Social Rental Housing in Gauteng, South Africa', *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 56, no. 1 (2020): 63–77.

			Cape Town is about more than just shelter: it is also about equitable access to economic opportunities, the wellbeing of families, and embeddedness in the community. In light of this, it is important that any development takes a holistic view and aims for a sense of integration rather than separation or siloed facilities.
Spatial justice	-Redress and transformation of apartheid geographies -Meaningful realization of rights and equal access to opportunity -Social justice reflected in spatial design, housing provision, and access to civic facilities and amenities	Site as a whole	The site's history as a symbol of spatial justice activism in Cape Town and more widely is of high local significance at the city level. This significance also extends to the provincial/regional level as it speaks to the redress and transformation of apartheid planning and social fragmentation beyond the city's borders, impacting on the broader region and the Western Cape province as a whole. Closely related to the site's associations with affordable housing, these histories call for integrated development looking beyond only the provision of shelter. This calls for a creative development approach to create space that supports access to opportunities, community cohesion and inclusivity, and access to civic facilities that support these goals. Affordable housing is a key pillar of realizing spatial justice, but should not be treated in isolation.

b. Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following considerations are recommended in terms of recognizing, building on and preserving the intangible and associational heritage of 353 Main Road:

1. Presently, the plan under consideration is for mixed-use development on the eastern portion of the site, incorporating social housing, affordable housing and market-related housing, as well as retail. This plan is still under development and current HIA processes relate only to site enablement. While development at this scale would impact on the character of the school grounds, there is great potential for such development to support the associational, intangible heritage qualities of the site.
2. Besides the highly visible link to contemporary spatial justice struggles, there is clear precedent for affordable housing on the site. Although Wynyard Mansions is small, its story acts as a microcosm for many of the struggles still faced by working people in Sea Point. It provided a crucial foothold for vulnerable individuals and families in the city, and enabled crucial access to jobs and urban facilities. The proposal to develop affordable and social housing is strongly supported from an intangible heritage perspective in this regard.

If it is feasible from a development and usage perspective to retain part of the physical fabric of Wynyard Mansions as the physical manifestation of this history, this would be appropriate and supported. Design for future development should be mindful that Wynyard Mansions holds a deep connection to housing struggles in Sea Point and its links to everyday stories of urban survival in Cape Town. However, this should not form a blockage to the realization and reflection of the site's associations with affordable housing and spatial justice. If the design and feasibility scoping processes do not support the retention of the block or parts thereof, consideration should be given to reflecting its memory through other creative means: this could include use of the footprint, design aesthetics, naming, or some form of publicly visible interpretation, exhibition or historical storytelling.

3. The sense of the property as a community anchor, supporting individuals' and families' interconnection between neighbourhood, home, and community, is one of the most central associations with the site. Any development should be oriented towards acting as an integrated and inclusive community anchor. Affordable housing is a key lever for this kind of community integration, enabling people to live where they work and where their children go to school – echoing the experiences of the Ellerslie alumnae who had the privilege of going home for a quick lunch, participating in school extramurals, and having parental support for school activities and fundraisers. The proposal to develop social and affordable housing on the site is therefore entirely in keeping with the community-oriented social history of the site.

In practice, this means development should be focused not only on housing alone but also on the creation of community facilities and points of connection, with the potential to counter some of the fragmentation experienced by residents in recent years. There are many possibilities for achieving this: for example, active and well-programmed community centres, citizens' advice

bureaus, a focus on businesses in the retail portion which support day-to-day needs, safe spaces for children, and well-designed spaces for community gatherings.

4. The educational history of the site is highly significant, but this does not necessarily mean that the site requires literal reinterpretation as a school. This aspect of its heritage can be broadly interpreted to include facilities and housing design that are genuinely supportive of family life and healthy psycho-social development. This could include elements such as a creche, safe play spaces for children, and social amenities suitable for families. This is especially important in a context where most new developments do not cater for families with children.

The development of affordable housing on the site also opens the possibility for children currently attending schools in Sea Point to live close to school, shifting the current dynamic where children leave home early in the morning to travel into the city on public transport. This would represent a revival to historical dynamics of interlinkage between schools and the residential community of Sea Point.

While this HIA process does not include the school building itself, it is worth noting here that the older portions of the building, including the interiors, are highly significant from a socio-historical perspective. A more detailed heritage study on the school building itself will be necessary when decisions are finalized about its future use.

5. The site's multiple connections to gendered histories could also find expression in its future development. These links are visible in the site's connections to women's education, the high concentration of women who found homes at Wynyard Mansions, and the women who have led housing struggles in Sea Point for decades. It would be appropriate to honour this history through a gender-sensitive approach to design in future development, including considerations given to public space design; safety and visibility considerations in the design of entrances and walkways; and – as noted above – design which supports safety and thriving for children and families.⁸⁵
6. As a rich, multilayered site that speaks to so many aspects of Sea Point's history, it would be appropriate to include an interpretive element in the site's development which tells some of these stories. Besides the historical narrative of the schools, it is also important to have a public reflection of histories which are in danger of being forgotten, including those of Rainbow Housing and of Wynyard Mansions. These stories are also intrinsically connected to contemporary housing activism in Sea Point and the impact this activism has had on Cape Town at large. Possibilities for such interpretation could include a small public exhibition, well-designed mural art, and/or naming practices for future buildings on site.

⁸⁵ See, for example: The "Equal Spaces: Social Housing to End Spatial Apartheid in South Africa" Project, *Gender Equality Strategy for the Social Housing Sector in South Africa*.

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