

Timeline

The shadow of the mall was first cast over the Princess Vlei in 1998, when Insight Property Developers made bid to buy the land from the City. At that time, the vlei had been degraded after years of neglect by the City authorities. This neglect began in the sixties, a symptom of the apartheid city managers' callous disregard for the living environment of 'coloured residents.' It was made worse when Prince George Drive was built and rubble dumped around the vlei.

In **2008**, after a three year study established that the vlei contained Cape Flats Dune Strandveld and Sand Fynbos, which were unique to the area, the Cape Town Biodiversity Network declared it part of the Biodiversity Network. Local community member and conservationist, Kelvin Cochrane, partnered with SANBI and the City to lead a project to rehabilitate the vlei called '[Dressing the Princess](#)'. This included planting indigenous fynbos, removing alien plants, creating walkways and cleaning litter.

In **2009**, Insight Property Developers applied to have the rezoning. The community rallied behind efforts to save the vlei, and opposed this. Based on public opposition and an environmental assessment, the Spatial Planning Environment and Land Use Management Committee (SPELUM) reversed their original recommendation and urged the City of Cape Town not to support the development. They declined to extend the commercial rezoning of the Vlei, thereby effectively putting an end to the developer's bid.

In **April 2012**, the Western Cape Provincial Government ignored public opinion, and overturned the Spatial Planning Committee's decision. The rezoning was extended, enabling the developer to continue with his bid. In response to this, concerned community members and environmentalists formed the **Princess Vlei Forum** to protect the vlei from this development, and to fight for the right of communities to decide on how our city's natural resources should be used.

In **September 2012**, after years of investigation, Kelvin Cochrane uncovered irregularities and possible fraud in the development bid process. These were brought to the attention of the City in a meeting with Councillor Jeremiah Thuynsma, Chairperson of Subcouncil 9 and a member of SPELUM. The evidence was taken to both the National Prosecuting Authority.

On 30 **September 2012**, MEC Bredell was quoted in the [City Press](#) as saying that the city had "made a mistake" in selling the land.

In **February 2013**, Cochrane laid charges of fraud against developers involved in the shopping mall bid (see [Fraud charges laid against developers](#)). This case is still being investigated by the Hawks (Police). In July, in response to a query from our lawyers, the Mayor's office indicated that the sale of the land would only proceed once these charges had been investigated and resolved.

In the year that followed, the PVF held numerous meetings and community events on the vlei, and continued with efforts to rehabilitate the vlei. Thousands of people signed the petition against the mall, wrote letters, and voiced their opposition. Our repeated efforts to meet with the Mayor were unsuccessful, however. The City authorities cited the investigation as a reason to refuse to meet with us, or allow us to address Council structures, although the matter was not in court and is not sub judice.

The forum also developed [Community Vision](#) in consultation with local community stakeholders to give a vision of how the Vlei could be developed to honour its historical, cultural and environmental significance and to serve our community for generations to come. In March 2013 year, we put forward a proposal to the **World Design Capital 2014** to consolidated and develop this plan through a process of community consultation. This was shortlisted in the first round of assessment, and earmarked as a model for aspiring entrants (See [Imagine Princess Vlei on WDC shortlist](#)). The project was initially denied a place on the final list, evidently because of the "legal dispute" surrounding the space. However, in April 2014r we were reinstated and given a place in the final programme.



In **January 2014**, in an interview with Argus reporter Rebecca Jackman, Nielson stated that the City was now ready to talk. Finally on **March 22, 2014**, the historic decision to scrap the plans for the mall was announced by Deputy Mayor Ian Nielson at the Princess Vlei Forum's day of Action and Celebration.

On **May 22, 2014**, members of the Forum met with Alderman Belinda Walker and various members of the City Council. At that meeting, the City affirmed its commitment to working with the community to transform Princess Vlei. Since that time, we have been working with the City on designing a process of community engagement and collaboration between community Stakeholders, the City and Designers.



July 2014: Community workshop held to discuss the terms on which the Forum should work with the City

August 2015: City released a Draft Concept Development Framework for Princess Vlei, based on the community vision. The Forum hosted a community workshop to obtain feedback on the vision.

December 9 2015: MOA signed with the City recognising the Princess Vlei Forum as a community partner

July 2016: The City's released a finalised Conceptual Development Framework