

Motivation for a Local Area Overlay (LAO) in Fish Hoek

History: In the past there has been an absence of a unified vision for Fish Hoek. Over the past 5 years though, the Fish Hoek Ratepayers and Residents Association has encouraged and engaged in discussion with the community, regarding the Future of Fish Hoek. Currently there is an initiative to work together with the City, South Peninsula Business Improvement Districts and Developers, resulting in concrete proposals, the formation of a Fish Hoek Future vision and strategy, and an architectural Local Area Overlay working group, resulting in this proposal towards the DMS.

Why Propose a Local Area Overlay (LAO) for Fish Hoek: Fish Hoek is currently seen as the 'ugly duckling' of the Deep South, with a less appealing look, feel, and desirability compared to other parts of the False Bay coastline. It serves as a main transport hub but has experienced prolonged physical and architectural decline, coupled with socio-economic challenges.

Recent developments include a new Galley Restaurant and Beachfront complex lease, a traffic calming and mobility proposal submitted to the City, and advanced discussions about merging the beach and town precincts by converting the railway line from Fish Hoek to Simonstown into a tramline. While Fish Hoek serves a functional role, it is currently seen primarily as a thoroughfare to Simonstown and Cape Point, rather than a destination with distinctive appeal.

Aligning with the long-term goals and initiatives underway in the South Peninsula, an LAO will guide development in a positive direction and bring benefits to the community, architects, developers, businesses and tourism. A well designed LAO will give residents and developers security regarding the value of their investment, both financially, and in the choices they make about living or operating in its area.

Fish Hoek's Assets:

- **Natural Features:** The area boasts a beautiful beachfront, wetlands, and surrounding mountains (nature reserve).
- **Recreational Opportunities:** There are abundant sports and recreational activities available both on land and at sea.
- **Transportation Hub:** Fish Hoek is a key transportation node with its railway and Main Road.
- **Family-Friendly Environment:** The area offers strong educational resources and a community-focused infrastructure, including municipal buildings, a library, churches, and a police station. The hexagon street network symbolises community (as we choose to view this :)
- **Sunlight:** The area enjoys both morning and afternoon sun.

Benefits of an LAO:

An LAO can ensure adherence to positive standards and enhance value by addressing:

- Building topographical effect in relation to adjacent and neighbourhood properties
- Grain of fabric: for example main road colonnades reinstatement, in alignment with the other key developed towns and villages from Muizenberg to Simonstown
- Property density and bulk
- Security of value for developers, especially in the Business Improvement District

Key considerations: Compliance with the zoning scheme does not always equate to desirable outcomes. Some developers may exploit the zoning framework for their own advantage. The introduction of the overlay zone is not intended to restrict development negatively; rather, it aims to positively influence building design to enhance the area. The goal is to benefit the entire community, by protecting and rewarding good development, attracting investors, appropriate businesses, and attracting tourists to want to stop and stay in Fish Hoek.

This approach aims to improve the area's overall appeal and functionality, transforming it from a thoroughfare into an attractive destination.

Mountainside: This area, extending to the urban edge of Kommetjie Road and up the mountainside, serves as an important backdrop to the town. Inappropriate developments over the past fifty years have created visual intrusions. There are concerns that new buildings or alterations are being constructed too high and with excessive bulk, obstructing views and natural light for neighbouring properties, negatively impacting the streetscape and disrupting viewing corridors.

Valley: Many structures are being built up to their maximum allowed height right at the property boundaries, negatively impacting natural light, privacy, and even views for adjacent properties. This is especially problematic where GR2 and GR2, and GR2 and (S)R1 properties are adjacent to each other, and in particular where an existing building on the Southern boundary of a new development is impacted by loss of sunlight, privacy, views and aesthetic.

Business Precinct: The overall condition of the area is declining, characterized by a lack of maintenance and pride in the buildings. Many along the main road are aging and in desperate need of repairs. A significant number of these properties are owned by companies or trusts whose representatives are rarely present, reflecting a lack of interest in investing in their maintenance. The shops lack a welcoming atmosphere, with excessive signage, minimal transparent glass, and blank walls that create barriers to pedestrian engagement. Furthermore, the types of businesses present, such as numerous small phone shops, do not enhance the area's appeal.

In all the above cases, the development of a larger or more substantive building, which does not take into account the design and aspect of the existing buildings in the street, can have a significant detrimental effect on the value of all neighbouring properties.

Promoting Positive Development and investment: Communicate the positive developments in the vision for Fish Hoek, reinforcing that progress is underway and that participation in this vision will benefit the entire community.

Implementing Colonnades: Encourage the incorporation of colonnades for buildings fronting the main road whenever new alterations or additions are proposed. This architectural feature will secure value for developers and create continuity in the grain of fabric along the False Bay East coast, enhancing the shopping and tourist experience as it does in Muizenberg, Kalkbay and Simonstown.

Encouraging Permeable Windows: The installation of at least 50% permeable fenestration along the ground floor of buildings on the main road and shopping streets will improve visibility, engagement, and connection with pedestrians.

Transforming Blank Walls: Alter existing blank walls by creating openings for doors or windows, enhancing engagement with pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers. Promoting active street fronts will contribute to a more inviting atmosphere as well as create a friendlier and safer environment addressing concerns about crime, and improving the overall experience for residents and visitors.