

New R85 million police station built with 'efforts of activism and mobilisation of the community'

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"In the beginning we had to fight to be here and they made us scrub walls but soon they realised we were here as carpenters," said Ms Jacobs.

Ms Xhego, who has two children – a boy aged 10 and a five-year-old girl – had been unemployed for almost six years.

"Even though we're working for peanuts, at least now I am working," she said.

Mr Sarels, who was retrenched from his job in the engineering field about a year before he started the programme in 2012, said he was glad to have another skill.

The national Department of Public Works was approached by the police to fund the construction of the community facilities after the township was identified as a high crime area.

Mitchell's Plain is in the top 10 areas plagued by violent crimes and has the seventh highest number of recorded murders in the Western Cape.

Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin said maintenance is key with all buildings.

"The building is user- and people friendly and we are sure it will be of service to the community. Maintaining it is important and we need to ensure that public resources last," he said.

The police station is a multi-storey face-brick building with six holding cells and numerous offices.

It will house the detectives and members of the visible policing unit.

The station has been in planning since the 1980s before the first police station was built in Eastridge, across from the Town Centre, in 1983, for a town-



■ Anthony Sarels, 31, from New Woodlands; Minister of Public Works Thembelani Thulas Nxesi; Rugshana Jacobs, 28, from Lentegeur; Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin; Nyameka Xhego, 34, from Philippi; and Ramano Goliath, 22, from Woodlands. The workers were part of the department's Expanded Public Works Programme to train and skill residents in carpentry.

ship which City planners envisaged would accommodate 250 000 people ("Cop shop to be bigger and better," Plainsman November 9, 2011).

The police station and the local criminal record centre covers 7 097 square metres of the 9 857 square metre property.

The local criminal record centre is the only such facility on the Cape Flats, which will house laboratories for forensic evidence such as finger-prints and ballistic data.

Entrance to the victim support office is around the corner from the main entrance so that victims of crime do not have to walk through the police station to get to the support office.

The station has a lobby in which people can sit if there are long queues.

There are no light switches in the building; lights are motion activated to cut down on energy costs. Reflective windows were used to allow as much natural light in as possible. Offices around the front desk allow occupants a view of the front foyer and police close proximity to the community.

It also has a drive-through cell block with gates to prevent detainees from escaping.

Michael Jacobs, chairman of the Mitchell's Plain

and Strandfontein Cluster Community Police Forum, said the police station was needed in the community and the new building was a job well done.

"It will accelerate service delivery," he said.

Even though I am working for peanuts, at least now I am working

Major-General Vearey described the station as history in the making.

"Its history of struggle extends back into the 1980s, with the efforts of Lieutenant Gregory Rockman, founder of Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU).

"This police station was built with

the consistent efforts of activism and mobilisation of the community," he said.

He announced Colonel Elizabeth Hermanus as station commander; Captain Edwina Muller, as acting head of visible policing; and Lieutenant-Colonel Sagadevan Reddy, as detective commander.

Major-General Vearey said the police station will be open for basic services at 6am on Monday May 13.

An official opening will take place in August, to coincide with National Women's Day on August 9, as domestic violence is a problem in the area and therefore a focus point for the Mitchell's Plain and Strandfontein SAPS cluster.

The police precinct includes Woodlands, Colorado Park, Mandalay, Lentegeur East and West, and will extend its services beyond the R300 to The Leagues, Weltevreden Valley and Samora Machel.



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