

# Premier Zille, did you forget your promises?

OPEN letter to the premier of the Western Cape:

I have read the depressing proposal from the Department of Transport and Public Works for the Somerset Precinct. While you were promising affordable housing on this site, it seems the department was selling out to property developers, and now only a small percentage of the site is proposed for nebulously defined "affordable housing". You have also been supporting the sale of Tafelberg school in Sea Point for purposes other than low-income housing.

I would like to tell you the stories of three basement

rooms in Sea Point.

I have lived in Sea Point as a white middle-class person for the better part of 10 years, and have come to know a number of low-income workers in the area. These are brief stories of their lives in basement rooms:

1) One of my friends is a building caretaker who lived in a basement room in Sea Point, with his wife and two children, with no hot water or proper ablutions, for 27 years. All this time he has worked hard and faithfully in his job.

He sacrificed to pay his daughter's model C school fees, but she dropped out of high school and became pregnant.

As you will see below, she is not an isolated case.

The challenges of living without dignity are sometimes too much of a burden for young people.

2) My other friend has worked for decades in various low-income jobs around Sea Point and the city centre: as a building caretaker, a domestic worker and an HIV counsellor.

She shared a basement room and a double bed with her daughter in Sea Point, until she was evicted from these meagre accommodations in January. She is currently homeless.

Her daughter also dropped out of her former model C

school and later became pregnant.

3) My third friend is a nursing assistant at Chris Barnard Hospital. She has lived in a basement room in Sea Point for 10 years. In this room, she used to share a double bed with her teenage daughter until an electrical fire engulfed her belongings.

She has been sleeping on a single slatted bed base, with her daughter, without a mattress. My friend has dark circles under her eyes. Before moving to Sea Point, she lived in Langa for two years, where her daughter, then four years old, was almost raped. In Sea

Point, my friend's daughter went to a former model C school but she dropped out last year. Her grades were excellent but she was bullied and became isolated as she could never show her middle-class friends where she lived.

My three friends are among the many low-income workers who sweep and clean middle class buildings and homes – they are the people who change our bedpans when we are lying helpless in hospital beds. They work long hours and they certainly work harder than most people I know.

It is not good enough to say that my friends are living

beyond their means by wanting to live near their workplaces, with dignity, in a suburb where they have communities and have resided for decades.

Historical redress for spatial apartheid requires integration, including integration within affluent suburbs. It does not require creating an even more divided city by banishing black and brown people to places such as Wolwerivier.

**Dr Lucy Graham**  
Sea Point

● *Objections to the rezoning of the Somerset Precinct can be sent, by midnight tonight, to: [Comments\\_objections.tablebay@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Comments_objections.tablebay@capetown.gov.za)*



**UNAFFORDABLE:** Premier Helen Zille has been urged to reconsider her stance on affordable housing.

Picture: PHANDO JIKELO