

■ FORCED REMOVALS

Welcome home!

Remaining ex-residents of Protea Village and their descendants to return to Bishopscourt

MARVIN CHARLES marvin.charles@inl.co.za

A NEW housing development in Bishopscourt is set to welcome the Protea Village Community back to the area after they were forcibly removed in the 1960s.

"The Bishopscourt Residents Association Committee (BCRA) resolved back in March last year to welcome the Protea Village community and to work together constructively on their development plans, with the goal of seeing them return to their land," said David Baker of the BCRA.

He said they were looking forward to welcoming the community as "our neighbours".

"It's a little too early for us to comment on the detail of the specific development plans. We received the Development Plan Overview documents on Thursday last week.

"The plan has already been circulated to our residents and residents committee. The committee has not had time to get together but we plan to do this by November," Baker said.

In 2016, a 21-year-long battle by claimants of Protea Village to return to the area became a reality.

A signing ceremony took place at the stone cottages opposite the Church of the Good Shepherd on Rhodes Drive, to officially mark the start of the development of houses for 86 restitution claimants.

A developer was appointed to assist in developing two erven on either side of Kirstenbosch Drive.

The handover ceremony of the properties, which were owned by the city council and the Department of Public Works, took place almost 10 years ago – on Heritage Day in 2006.

According to the restitution agreement, the city council would provide the bulk services while the claimants would develop the land at their own costs.

None of the original residents of



MAYOR Patricia de Lille hosted a ceremonial handover of prime land in Bishopscourt to 86 claimant families, part of a larger group who were removed from the land between 1966 and 1969 under the Group Areas Act. The dispossessed families were moved to areas such as Lotus River, Grassy Park, Steenberg and Manenberg. | **DAVID RITCHIE** African News Agency (ANA)

Protea Village are alive, but their families took up the cudgels to have the land returned.

Most are settled in suburbs on the Cape Flats including Manenberg, Lotus River, Lansdowne, Steenberg, Retreat and Heideveld.

There is a public participation process under way.

"We understand this is a legal requirement when there is land usage

rezoning. Bishopscourt are merely participants in the process," Baker said.

Protea Village was established in 1834 on the farm Protea. The name of the farm was changed to Bishopscourt by Bishop Gray when the property was acquired by the Anglican Church.

In the 1960s there was the forced removal of the residents with the destruction of many of their homes.

Recently, the remaining extant ex-

residents and their descendants were granted the right to return to the area and to develop a residential suburb on the vacant land below the stone cottages, adjacent to the Good Shepherd Church and in the Arboretum.

The proposed development is expected to take place on erf 242 and erf 212. The public has from November 26 to 30 to submit their comments.