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City fails Gugs

THE recent battle between the City of Cape Town and the community of Gugulethu because of the sale of the historic NY14 sports field highlights a lot of questions about community sport.

The field is situated along NY4 and NY12, next to Luzuko Primary School.

The main anchor of the space is United Aces, the club that introduced us to major talents such as the late Anele Ngcongca, former Amajita captain Ayabulela Konqobe and SA basketball legend Vincent Ntunja.

Aces have been the main thing in the area called Kakyard for many years, since the establishment of Gugs back in the early 1960s.

Rich

Football is so rich in the area that the old guys that I play with and against had to register two teams for our over-30s six-a-side Sunday Social League at Johan Cruyff Court at NY91 sports field.

All this while the rest of us scramble to keep a core of seven available.

It's no surprise then that many of the talent from the area are



HOME: United Aces in action.

SPORTS DREAMS SHATTERED AS NY14 GROUND IS REPURPOSED

recruited by clubs such as the former Ajax Cape Town, now Cape Town Spurs by age 10.

Ajax CT's class of 2014 star Konqobe graduated with former Engen Knockout Challenge player of the tournament Luthando Mateza, MTN8 winning captain Travis Graham and Olympian Grant Margeman, were introduced to the organised game on that field.

While we can go on about the special talents that have been produced, there's a much larger number of people who might not have had the talent, but have become upstanding members in the area.

These make up some of the community leaders like Aces' chairman Vasi Nyakaza, whose first response to the sale was: "Why at the expense of sport, with so much proof of the good work that we have been doing with the youth in the area?"

He was of course referring to the termination of the lease and sale of the land by the City to the Department of Transport and Public Works (DTPW), who plan to build a hospital, which according to the City's media office will be called the "Barcelona Community Health Care Facility".

Explaining the move, the City says: "The proposed sale was circulated to all internal service departments and was supported."

I bet you your next question is probably: "Was the public consulted?"

I asked that too and the City replied: "A public participation process had not been followed as this is a transfer of land between two organs of state."

"Public Participation is not required in terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act in this particular instance. On 8 December 2022, a full Council approved the sale to DTPW."

With only a month-to-month deal and the proposed development submitted as part of the lease application not materialising according to the City's expectations, they felt it best to sell it to the DTPW.

Challenges

With budget challenges, Aces didn't want to risk building structures, as they would not be able to afford the security needed to safeguard them.

The City expected to see dressing rooms, a clubhouse and such structures but the Gugulethu Sport and Development Trust prioritised the installation of an irrigation system to make sure the field is well-maintained.

There's been a rise in new crimes along NY4, with the railways abandoned and vandalised by street scavengers, referred to as Amaphara-phara, who cross the tracks and harass people.

This has now even opened up a much more serious gap of gun hold-ups from the corner at the police station and the College of Cape Town along the railway all the way up to Nyanga Junction. There's a huge challenge which



HAVING A BALL: NY talents.

one of the Aces alumni, Anele Magqwaka, who is also Ayabulela Konqobe's uncle, has recognised and has launched a primary-schools netball and soccer league.

The league kicked off there this past Friday, with that recognised as ideal to make it the regular day with the aim to activate the areas surrounding NY49 and NY116 stadiums as well.

Netball teams will use some of the schools' courts which are mostly inside the premises.

The plan is to invite schools from Bonteheuwel, Netreg, Valhalla Park, Manenberg, Nyanga, Philippi and later Langa and Khayelitsha and foster "social cohesion" between the communities.

But all that may not be possible now with the available ground sold and the City only saying that the "City's Recreation and Parks Department intends to further engage the Sports and Development Trust regarding the various sporting codes' needs impacted by the lease termination".