

Green Point Urban Park – background information



History

Throughout Cape Town's recorded history of over 350 years, Green Point Common played an important role, with diverse uses ranging from the grazing of livestock, staging of sailing regattas in the shallow seasonal vlei (filled-in during the 1800s), to housing the British prisoner-of-war camp during the Anglo Boer War. The Green Point Common was granted to the Cape Town City Council in 1923 as Commonage for general public recreation and sports fields. By the turn of the 21st century, the Common consisted mostly of dedicated sports facilities (some disused and overgrown) with associated clubhouses – many of which were dilapidated and unused. The advent of planning and building the new 2010 Cape Town Soccer Stadium on the Green Point Common became the catalyst to realise the City of Cape Town's long-standing objective; to transform what had become a dysfunctional public open space into a vibrant public amenity; through the construction of a high quality multi-functional park.

Green Point Urban Park consists of the stadium precinct, golf course, sports fields and a public park for passive recreation and concession use areas. The completed golf course accommodates an extensive pond system that functions as a water reservoir for irrigation use as well as a management system for the stormwater flowing from the stadium and surrounding paved-surface areas. On the south-western edge, the golf course interfaces with the Green Point Park, adding to the ambience and landscape diversity of this urban setting. Green Point Park as a distinct entity, independent of the Stadium forecourt precinct, may be considered a 'Park in the City' – a place for relaxation and urban respite – for mind and body. It is a place for recreation and social interaction within a green context. *The park is by its very nature, a green landscape, and as such needs to be defined in the appropriate terms to convey its meaning. It is seen in contrast the harsh urbanity of the surrounding city, by portraying a consolidated green image.* The 12.5 hectare park within its physical limitations embodies a network of pathways, multi-functional spaces, shade structures, play park, an amphitheatre, signage and park furniture. The park's poetic landscape "spirit of place" is derived from landform, tree avenues, windbreaks, diverse vegetation and a strong presence of water in the form of water ponds and cascading streams.

Water in the Park

Ameliorating the poor on-site soil conditions and tempering the severe prevailing winds posed major challenges. Most problematic however, was the uncertainty of a source of water supply for irrigation purposes. Relying on potable water for the irrigation of a large-scale park is simply not sustainable from cost, moral and environmental perspectives. This problem was overcome by procuring water directly from Cape Town's original and forgotten water source – the numerous Oranjezicht spring fountains on Table Mountain. With a gravity fed and secure source of water, it became possible to ensure a green common and to transform the park to include water features, ponds and wetlands. At the point where the water emerges from the underground pipe, it is articulated as follows: it wells-up to resemble the source of a river; from there it flows over a textured surface and then falls over rocks into a pond. From this, city children can learn about nature and the dynamics of water. In addition, a water wheel showcases the possibility of alternative power sources by generating enough electricity to operate the wetland pumps. A turbine, driven by the gravitational pressure of the water supply will, in future, supply electricity to planned Eco-Centre.

The Eco-Centre

Earmarked for the future is the development of a 'smart living educational centre' – a building that will display technology and innovations related to sustainable development. Green technologies such as construction from renewable resources, environmentally-friendly building materials, solar and wind energy supply systems, water conservation systems, recycling of materials and Green Star standards are to be incorporated in the building.

Biodiversity showcase garden

In line with its educational function, the park also contains a bio-diversity show garden, the aim of which is to educate people about biodiversity and water-wise landscaping. The Garden is integrated into a wetland eco-system, showcasing amongst other roles, the wetlands water-filtering ability, whilst also providing the opportunity for habitats to develop hosting insects, amphibians, birds and small reptiles. Storyboards, signage and hand-outs tell the story of the importance of biodiversity conservation in Cape Town through the ages and offer tips on what people can do in their own environments.

