

ISSUE PROFILE | WOODSTOCK & SALT RIVER

Developing this issue-based profile of Woodstock and Salt River involved building relationships through one-on-one engagements with stakeholders across Woodstock and Salt River. These conversations were transcribed as notes and further analysed to surface key neighbourhood issue themes, which includes:

ISSUE	COMMENTS
Crime and Grime	
<p>Residents spoke of crime decreasing in Woodstock and Salt River over the last ten years. Many related this experience to increased community mobilising efforts against crime, gangsterism and drugs in conjunction with increasing property prices.</p> <p>The booming property market on the other hand has encouraged the establishment of a special ratings area in both Woodstock and Salt River. Property owners have the opportunity to access top-up cleaning and security services provided by Woodstock and Salt River Improvement Districts.</p>	<p>Crime-prevention remains the most prioritised issue, evident in the manner community organises, i.e. within community police forums, respective sector forums and neighbourhood watch structures.</p> <p>However, with no clear plan aligning neighbourhood crime-prevention initiatives, crime prevails escaping through cracks of less patrolled and serviced precincts.</p>
Problem Buildings	
<p>Residents spoke of criminal activities commonly unfolding either within 'bad' buildings and or on vacant land. They relate this to their experience of 'greedy/ selfish' property owners or landlords that are not concerned with antisocial tenant behaviour. They expressed that while 'hard-crime' has been decreasing, streets are still unsafe to enjoy and walk freely as petty-crime, i.e. robbery, theft from cars, and housebreak-ins has increased.</p>	<p>Crime-prevention structures are frustrated by ineffective government mechanisms such as the 'step tariff' meant to urge property owners to upgrade, maintain or dispose of their property. The WCPF is drawing up a document that allows the CPF to notify problem building landlords about complaints on their property.</p>
Vacant land and underutilised public open space	
<p>Residents spoke of criminal activities and poor sanitation commonly unfolding on vacant land in Woodstock and Salt River. Community efforts have therefore been focused on both patrolling and clearing hazardous litter such as hypodermic needles, condoms, hair, nappies, etc. Residents also spoke of criminals 'emanating' from informal settlements and are concerned by the poor living conditions that results from overcrowding, unemployment, etc.</p> <p>Residents express frustration around being excluded when these sites are eventually redeveloped.</p>	<p>Families living within these informal settlements find it hard to access affordable living options and express frustration in raising their families in an environment where antisocial behaviour is rife. They relate this to the settlement being used as a 'hotel' by 'street people', i.e. a place to sleep in exchange for food or substance.</p> <p>While Woodstock and Salt River are well serviced with social amenities, new development continues to encroach on public space resulting in increased contestation.</p>
ISSUE	COMMENTS

Property Sales and Exclusionary Redevelopment

Residents speak about increasing cases of 'out of town developers' who have purchased sites and (re)developed 2, 3, 4 -storey apartment blocks. Additionally residents express increasing cases of (re)development that has not 'accommodated' their needs. While many share the sentiment of liking the improvements, i.e. cleaning and beautification of their neighbourhood, they feel that exclusionary and inappropriate (re)development has diminished their quality of life, which they describe as a diminishing 'neighbourly sentiment'.

Property prices in Woodstock and Salt River has drastically spiked over the last ten years. Property agents explain this as a result of the area's low entry base coupled with an increasing demand for properties along the Atlantic seaboard. This, alongside regeneration incentives in an unregulated property market.

Residents express their concern around increasing cases of displacement of the most vulnerable to city peripheries.

In 2012, Walmer Estate Resident Community Forum submitted 'transitory' housing proposal plans for Searl Street embankment for developing temporary affordable housing for vulnerable families.

A great concern exists around its implications and the insecurities it creates for the larger (54%) tenanted population of Woodstock and Salt River. Furthermore, residents believe while the area may have escaped racial segregation, they now face class-separation.

Empty building syndrome

Residents spoke about the extra worry of having to patrol buildings that are vacant after working hours. They call this the 'empty building' syndrome. Residents are concerned by the prioritisation of commercial over residential space in a mixed-use area like Woodstock and Salt River.

Redevelopment plans has been facilitating an exclusionary change in Woodstock and Salt River. Ground street parking and inward facing buildings results in low contribution to street life and residential safety. Redevelopment plans should therefore be more considerate of residential use.

ISSUE

COMMENTS

'Affordable' Housing

ISSUE PROFILE | WOODSTOCK & SALT RIVER

Residents express, they now feel like strangers in their own back yards, stating 'there is nothing for us except coffee shops on every other corner and places we cannot afford to eat at, buy from, and enjoy'. While 46% of the residents own their property, inflation rates have created deep tenure insecurities. Many residents struggle to keep up with their monthly property taxes.

In the last five to eight years increasing number of 4-8 storey upmarket apartment blocks has been developing across Woodstock and Salt River. New ownership, upgrade and investment have increased property rates often attracting additional investors. Exposed to an aggressive form of growth, Woodstock and Salt River's affordability is being lost to an unregulated market. Residents experience this impact in the form of an eroding neighbourly sentiment. The change has created a deep uncertainty in the community around their ability to buy, sell, rent or even retain their property in the area.

Sub-letting

Precincts and or pockets in Woodstock and Salt River in decline offer 'affordable' and unregulated forms of rentals to marginalised residents. Residents explain, in many cases these buildings are in derelict condition due to hands-off landlords. In these cases landlords are found to do alterations to secure and convert a property. It is on these properties that sub-letting occur. While it may provide 'affordable' rentals, questions arise around the vulnerability status of these tenants who in many cases are migrants and or asylum seekers. In this environment, it is seen to be more profitable for landlords to sublet a free standing or semi-detached 3-bedroom house, typically generating R4500 per month, by converting it into 8-10 rooms accommodating families in each and generating an income of R17 000 to R20 000 a month.

-

ISSUE

COMMENTS

Social Integration

ISSUE PROFILE | WOODSTOCK & SALT RIVER

<p>Residents reminisce about the unique diverse nature of their neighbourhood. They attribute this to neighbours sharing similar values and respecting and celebrating each other's cultures. Residents express that while the neighbourhood still maintains its diversity, the cultural respect is what is being eroded. Those moving in are attracted to the areas aesthetic and historical character, i.e. close proximity to city and creative industry, with little regard for lived-culture, i.e. relationships, networks and a shared neighbourly sentiment.</p>	<p>Between 2001 and 2011 Woodstock and Salt River has experienced a significant shift in population demographics partially as a result of African continental migration and social fluidity.</p>
<p>Community representatives express the need for increased community engagement to facilitate interaction and foster understanding and respect for one another.</p>	<p>Public institutions/ open spaces play a significant role in bringing the community together – by creating a safe environment for relationships to develop.</p>
Social Development	
<p>Residents share a general sentiment of the change in Woodstock and Salt River. That it has contributed to eroding community life as they know it. By being exclusionary, increasing disparities and separating according to class. Community based organisations have therefore been lobbying for community-centred development that meets the needs of and benefit the community.</p>	<p>-</p>
Youth Development	
<p>Residents express that the change has significantly impacted the youth of Woodstock and Salt River. The function of public open space and institutions becomes that more essential in accommodating youth needs through supporting and securing their development and promoting healthy lifestyle habits within their community.</p>	<p>-</p>
Health Committees	
<p>Woodstock and Salt River has been a stronghold for health promotion and education, by ensuring the provision of health services to its communities. A significant amount of the area's population is pensioners, with a moderate rate of chronic patients. The mixed-use nature of the area and its resulting influx of workers, students, commuters, and others during working hours increases the incident rate of acute cases unfolding. This is evident in the manner the community organises within health structures.</p>	<p>-</p>