

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTIONS IN JOHANNESBURG MUNICIPALITY:
ELLIS PARK 1902 TO 1920s

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE RE-
QUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF HONOURS
IN
HISTORICAL STUDIES
IN THE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: Prof LWF Grundlingh
JULY 2015



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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Modernization¹ has been guided with rapid transformation in societies after the Industrial Revolution due to increased population in the city. The increased population was as a result of the availability of job opportunities in Johannesburg after the discovery of gold which attracted immigrants into the city of Johannesburg. This provided capital and prompted awareness for the transformation of the city to provide for the needs of the urban population especially social needs such as leisure. This has necessitated social changes as suburbs were transformed to provide leisure to the increasing population and municipal government strive to plan for a modern city. Thus, the gold revolution in Johannesburg raised the expectations and needs of the urban population as capital was made available for the Town Council to plan and create open spaces for leisure activities.

The discovery of gold led to the growth of Johannesburg from a mining camp to a city and lead to mass migration to the gold fields. The increase number of people in the gold fields meant that effective sanitary arrangements were required. The Digger's Committee was created as a temporary institution to take care of local administration² but answerable to the Transvaal government. The Digger's Committee's priority was to provide a healthy sanitary environment, focusing specifically on water and electricity³.

The population increase prompted the government of the Transvaal to provide proper town planning. Thus, a grid system of small blocks was created. The Transvaal government priority of creating small stands was to earn as much revenue as possible.

¹ Modernization is a process of change from a traditional society to a modern society while adopting social evolution and development with respect to the rapid process of industrialization.

² Appelgryn, M. S. 'Johannesburg Origins and Early Management 1886-1899', University of South-Africa Pretoria, 1984, pp44.

³ Ibid., pp. 44-50.

The town planning of the 1880's, however, did not include the creation of parks basically because the Transvaal government did not think that a city would eventually develop. The only open space⁴ created after the discovery of gold was market square. The reason behind this one can argue was because there was still a lack of a proper municipality⁵. However, by 1902 after the end of the Anglo-Boer war, the British government took over the administration of Johannesburg. This gave the British government the opportunity to set up a proper municipality of Johannesburg and transformed the city including leisure spaces. The planning of Johannesburg reflected the image of colonial authorities. Thus, implementing the town policies was the prime concern of the Town Council which facilitated the reconstruction of the city including the provision of more open spaces. As part of its post-war reconstruction agenda the Town Council took it upon itself to provide public services such as water, electricity and the management of open spaces⁶.

In addition, the Town Council responded to demands for the creation of leisure facilities such as parks to improve upon urban life of especially the urban white elite. They became wealthy as a result of their investments in and ownership of mining companies. In turn, they had the resources to make some investments in the city's infrastructure enabling the Town Council to develop and transform some open spaces into parks as capital was readily available. The Town Council planned the city in such a way that 'nature' would take its place in the city where human happiness and health were necessary⁷.

This study focuses on the creation, development and transformation of Ellis Park from a park to a sporting arena. The essay explores various reasons for this change. Within the context of

⁴ Open spaces are areas allocated for outdoor recreation and quiet enjoyment such as athletic fields and playgrounds.

⁵ Appelgryn, Johannesburg Origins and Early Management 1886-1899, pp.50.

⁶ Grundlingh, L, "Parks in the Veld"; the Johannesburg Town Council's efforts to create Leisure Parks, 1900s - 1920s" *South African Journal of Cultural History*, Volume 26 (Number 2), November 2012, pp.4.

⁷ Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp. 17.

the development of a modern city the essay argues that health consciousness and body fitness was a matter of great importance to the Johannesburg's white residents. The end of the 19th Century witnessed a rising consciousness in body fitness and wellbeing. This again prompted an increase in physical exercises and sport activities. Some of Johannesburg's residents also expressed these sentiments.

While chasing and angling might have supported the exercise needs of the country populace, Johannesburg's city environment necessitated other forms of exercise and recreation. The Town Council became increasingly aware of this demand and was inspired to plan for the establishment of playing grounds and even for their transformation into sporting fields.

This was done through implementation of park policy. The park policy would enable the creation of more open spaces for different social activities. The policy also reconsidered public health and entertainment as essential for the increasing population in the city. The park policy enabled the Town Council to take care of the social and general wellbeing of the urban population. Thus, improvement of recreational spaces and transformation of Ellis Park as an open urban space to a sporting area was necessary where different kinds of sporting activities were performed.

The essay argues that the concept of "modernity" constitutes the root cause for the transformation of parks for leisure activities to a playing ground for sporting facilities. Modernization prompted town planning to include open spaces for leisure activities to the increasing urban population and has amazing social changes. With the increasing desire for leisure in the city during the early 20th Century, this left no choice for municipal governments to make new living social structures as a method for advancing the city and making it liveable for the rich and wealthy whites. It was hence that the municipal government discovered itself giving social comforts to the residents and enhancing the physical and social environment, for

example, improvement of Ellis Park. As modernization in urban areas expands, so does the commitments of the Town Council increased with respect to the welfare and amusement of subjects. Such a change was strengthened in the transformation of Ellis Park to playing ground.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to write up the history of Ellis Park as an example of the changing landscape of Johannesburg as part of the post-war reconstruction program. The specific objectives are:

- To provide an historical background of Johannesburg open spaces.
- To describe the philosophy/general thinking behind park development in Johannesburg
- To describe the initial proclamation, layout and design of Ellis Park.
- To identify changes in the development of park and specifically explain the transformation of the park to a major sporting arena
- To describe the various usages of the park.

This study therefore seeks to examine how Johannesburg Town Council developed a strategy to create playing grounds to meet the needs of its growing population.

Literature Review

So far, several studies have been carried out on the recreational facilities⁸ but little research has been done on Parks in Johannesburg especially Ellis Park. With regards to the background studies on the developments on Johannesburg as a city since the 1880s, Keith Beavon points out the infrastructural expansion of Johannesburg and the work done by the Town Council. In what appears to be the reason for expansion in the city's development, Beavon states that increase population in inner-city, noise and pollution led to the outward expansion of inner-

⁸ D. Booth and J. Nauright, '*Embodied identities: Sport and Race in South Africa*', paper published in defunct *Contours: Journal of African and Diaspora Cultures*, 1:1(2003): pp. 16-36.

city to suburbs as there was available space⁹ which led to the creation of more open spaces. For the layout of the city, he was able to draw on a wide range of evidence on how segregation, class and race determined the initial layout of the city.

The discovery of gold fields on the Witwatersrand sparked off the outward expansion of Johannesburg. This is well documented in J.R. Shorten, *The story of Johannesburg (Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1970)*¹⁰ and D. Jacobsson, *Fifty Golden Years of the Rand, 1886-1936*¹¹. Both authors emphasises on how the discovery of gold led to increase population in the mines. This will be of importance to this research as the increased in population in the city demanded for reform strategies to be considered by the municipality with regards to social conditions. From this standpoint, the Town Council took the lead in the provision of social amenities in the city especially Ellis Park in the 1900s. Shorten. Also throw some lights on the creation and expansion of Ellis Park¹².

The role played by local administration in the provision of social needs in the city of Johannesburg has been analysed by G.A. Leyds¹³. With the dusty nature of Johannesburg, it was often difficult to carry out outdoor activities but given the dry climatic conditions of Johannesburg, it permitted different kinds of outdoor activities such as tennis, swimming, boating and cycling¹⁴. For this reason, the Town Council had to provide for these amenities.

There is also information in books and articles on the development of parks as a post war reconstruction in order to create open urban spaces for leisure activities for urban whites in

⁹K. Beavon, *Johannesburg. The Making and Shaping of the City*.(Unisa Press, 2004), pp. 71-120

¹⁰ J.R. Shorten, *The story of Johannesburg*(Voortrekkerpers, Johannesburg, 1970).

¹¹ D. Jacobsson, *Fifty Golden Years of the Rand 1886-1936*, London: Faber, 1936.

¹² J. R. Shorten, *The Story of Johannesburg*, 1970, pp. 650-652.

¹³ G. A. Leyds, 'A History of Johannesburg: The Early Years', Nationale Boekhandel Beperk, 1964, pp.20-36.

¹⁴ Leyds, *A History of Johannesburg: The Early Years*, 1964, pp. 235-243.

South Africa. As a post war reconstruction agenda, S.J Brooks, ¹⁵ shows how the growing interest in leisure facilities after the war years prompted politicians and bureaucrats to provide for social facilities to the cities. But he did not show why there was the creation of parks at the end of the Anglo-Boer war. Thus, this research seeks to show that the creation of more open spaces (parks) at the end of the war was because proper municipalities developed after the end of the war.

In Johannesburg, the Town Council was set up in 1902 after the Anglo-Boer war to deliver important services such as electricity, water, roads and parks. This point has been acknowledged by Louis Grundlingh and he also gives a description of the policies of the Johannesburg Town Council's aim of the development of parks and shows how parks were created to serve the needs of the urban middle class and the wealthy¹⁶.

Despite the fact that parks were created in Johannesburg to serve the needs of the urban working class whites after the gold revolution, in cities in America like in Los Angeles as stipulated by ¹⁷Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Orit Stieglitz, the allocation of parks in the neighbourhood of Los Angeles, was meant to serve the need for children's outdoor activities. They produce a comparative analysis of the provision and quality of Park facilities, as well as the level of satisfaction of children users in both the inner city and the suburban neighbourhoods of San Fernando Valley. This will help to show how as the desire for more recreational grounds emerged in the city, for example in Ellis Park during the 1920's, the Town Council had to

¹⁵S.J. Brooks, "Planning for Leisure in the 1940s Natal: Post-war Reconstruction and Parks as Public Amenities" in Dubow, S and Jeeves, A: *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, Double Storey Books Cape Town, 2005, pp129-148.

¹⁶Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp. 1-25.

¹⁷Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Orit Stieglitz in *Children in Los Angeles Parks: A study of Equity, Quality and Children's satisfaction with Neighbourhood Parks*, *Town Planning Review*, Vol.73, No.4 (Oct., 2002), pp.467-488.

structure the playing grounds according to the people's needs. Thus, separate children's play grounds from adults play ground.

Given the importance of nature in beautifying the city, providing good conditions for public health and human happiness in the Twentieth Century, the work of Brantz, D and Dumpeimann¹⁸ gives insights into how the establishment of green urban spaces and parks attracts international visitors in to the city. The playing ground was necessary in the 20th Century western cities as playgrounds moulded urban and regional identities. It is also necessary to address the history of urban ecology and urban environmental movement which influenced the layout of parks in Western cities. This will help to strengthen the relationship between different social classes as they come together at open spaces to participate in leisure activities.

Open urban spaces included parks and green spaces which are needed to be developed in order to offer health benefits to city residents and adding beauty to the city. This fact has been recognized in the work of ¹⁹L Simon, as he gives an explanation of 'open spaces' with emphasis on open spaces in cities like Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town as areas where recreation is necessary for the modern city. He explained that in the modern city, open spaces, both for organized sport, informal play and relaxation are essential components for the urban population²⁰. He also examines parks and gardens as adding beauty to the city.

With regards to the pleasure principle in providing leisure and recreation facilities in the city,

²¹G Torkildsen highlights the role played by the local government for the provision and

¹⁸Brantz, D and Dumpeimann, S (eds.) in *Greening the City: Urban Landscapes in the Twentieth Century*. Charlottesville University of Virginia Press, 2011.

¹⁹ Simon, L. "*OpenSpace and Park Development of Johannesburg*" University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1998.

²⁰ Simon, L. "*OpenSpace and Park Development of Johannesburg*" University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1998, pp.2.

²¹ George Torkildsen, *Leisure and Recreation Management*, Routledge, 2005.

planning of leisure facilities in Britain during the 20th Century after the Industrial Revolution. This signifies the importance that leisure and recreation facilities in the city offered to the ‘urbanites’ and the government with private stakeholders recognizes this fact.

Planning of parks is also necessary in the provision of leisure. This is well documented by ²²J Hultsman et al. as they show how planning entails the division of playgrounds into sections such as playgrounds for older children, play areas for adults, play courts and playfields and shelter buildings. This approach takes note of the significance of control in the playgrounds, albeit on a micro level.

Urban open spaces are natural and cultural resources consciously acquired or publicly regulated to serve conservation and urban shaping functions in addition to providing recreational opportunities. Thus, allocation of parks requires location decisions for integrating open spaces into total metropolitan public environments to avoid conflict among inhabitants and users of the recreational facilities. This is documented in the work of M. Myers²³. This will help this research to show how the Town Council, in order to provide recreational opportunities to the city’s growing population, had to take into consideration location decision for creating Ellis Park and fit into the Johannesburg’s urban planning.

Above all, the books that have been reviewed above are relevant in that they point out the usefulness of parks in the improvement of the beauty of the city and to human health and leisure. They are also relevant in that they point out some important role of the government in the development of open urban spaces as cities expanded in the 20th Century. However, the above mentioned books and articles did not fully give a historical background on the importance and function of parks for sporting activities in the city of Johannesburg. They did

²² John Hultsman et al., *Planning Parks for People* (Venture Publishing, Inc: State College, PA 16801), pp2-9 & 166-171.

²³Marilyn Myers. “*Decision Making in Allocating Metropolitan Open Space: State of the Art*”, *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*, Vol. 78, No. 3/4, 1975, pp.149-153

not as fully analyse the decision taken by the Town Council to redevelop Ellis Park which eventually led to the transfer of control of the sport grounds from public to private stakeholders.

Sources and Methodology

Material was collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, articles and reviews on open urban spaces as well as on parks and recreation in Johannesburg, Britain and America in the 19th Century and 20th Century. Material was also obtained from unpublished works such as thesis and dissertation of past research works on parks and open urban spaces. Primary sources were collected from minutes of the Johannesburg Town Council and press cuttings from newspapers such as *The Star*, *Rand Daily Mail* and *Leader* that was done by the Johannesburg Public Library for the Town Council.

Organization of the Work

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One provides the aim of the study; Chapter Two discusses the importance and function of open spaces, specifically parks and the role of the Town Council with regards to the provision of open spaces. Chapter Three describes the initial plan for the identification of land to develop Ellis Park and early work on the park physical features and layout by 1910's. Chapter Four looks at the growth of sporting activities in Johannesburg which necessitated provision for additional sport centres. Chapter five dwells on the negotiations between the Town Council and the Transvaal Rugby Football Union (TRFU) to re-develop the park and the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

Importance and Function of Parks in the Context of Johannesburg 1900's-1920

The founding of the city of Johannesburg was based on the discovery of gold by chance on the Highveld farm owned by a widow Oosthuizen²⁴. This led to a mad rush by people of different origins as prospectors migrated into the mines seeking gold. Increased population in the mines led to poor living conditions because of lack of a proper self governing body to take charge in the provision of social amenities. The only administrative body that was formed was initially the Digger's Committee which was replaced by the Sanitary Committee to take care of the provision of basic social needs such as sanitation, water supply and public order²⁵. After the discovery of gold coupled with the poor living conditions in the mines and increased population, planning was necessary and thus, an effective sanitary system was required²⁶. There was also the construction of roads linking the mines to the ports to facilitate transportation of goods and movement of people in and out of the mines.

For the capitalists who invested in the gold mines, wealth increased due to the increasing profits, especially during the gold boom of 1899. This facilitated town planning to be carry out but little attention was given to the establishment of more open spaces such as parks.²⁷

Before the 1900s, Johannesburg's open spaces were minimal because the Transvaal government paid little attention in the provision of these spaces for social activities such as sports to be carried out as it viewed Johannesburg to be a temporary mine village. For this reason, the only open spaces created was made up of a mining village of some 600 stands of

²⁴ K. Beavon, Johannesburg. The making and shaping of the city, 2004, pp. 21.

²⁵ Leyds, A history of Johannesburg: The Early Years, 1964, pp. 21-25.

²⁶ Appelgryn, Johannesburg Origins and Early Management 1886-1899', pp. 44.

²⁷ Leyds, A history of Johannesburg: The Early Years, 1964, pp. 25.

which revenue from the stands was geared towards the Kruger's government treasury. Thus, many stands were created to generate more revenue, with the streets organized in blocks in order to control traffic flow along the streets as population increases around the mine areas.

Notwithstanding, De Villiers, as surveyor of the town had wanted to include open spaces²⁸ in the development plan of the town. However, the government did not allow him to attain this goal of including open spaces such as parks but rather allowed De Villiers to lay out a large market square which served as a space for all market activities. The Market Square was later transformed into a functional business centre of Johannesburg²⁹.

The lack of a separate financial account set aside for the planning of Johannesburg could be blamed for the lack of the creation of open spaces for outdoor recreation where inhabitants could engage in leisure activities. From this standpoint, one is tempted to argue that the lack of open spaces before the municipality was formed in 1902 was because there was no separate financial account set aside for the planning of Johannesburg as a city. Also, lack of financial support from the Kruger's government could be blamed for lack of open spaces before 1902. Kruger's government interest was vested in the creation of more stands which will generate more income to the government treasury.

Nevertheless, Johannesburg was rocky and in its 'quartzite' form which characterised the geology of the area not favourable for cultivation but rather good for the 'grazing of goats'³⁰. This made the environment dusty and not good for outdoor activities. However, the British took over the administration of the town and a self governing authority was established along British lines. This created the opportunity for the provision of a modern city development where all kinds of public services such as the creation of more open spaces in the city could be

²⁸Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld" *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp.2.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 2.

³⁰ J.R. Shorten, *The story of Johannesburg*, 1970, pp.644.

provided³¹. From the way Johannesburg was structured after the proclamation of a municipality foretells the inclusion of open spaces. Also, one reason that led to the delay in transforming Johannesburg open spaces was the lack of good knowledge on the geology of the site. Notwithstanding, the uncertainties and doubts of creating temporal mining camp with narrow streets and many stand leases soon gave way for the provision of open spaces as recreational zones were necessary to the urban population.

Despite the fact that the Municipal law of 1886 Act 10 stipulated that any town in the Republic with a population of over 500 was supposed to be entitled to a municipality³² but Johannesburg was never given this opportunity by the Transvaal government but rather referred to Johannesburg as a village stands not good enough for a municipality. However, since Johannesburg was regarded as a ‘village stand’, it was not officially declared a town nor qualifies for a municipality and so had no right of its own to planned for developmental activities like establishment of leisure facilities³³. Nonetheless, the pleas were never listened to until in 1899 when the British and other European powers emerged against the Transvaal government demanding a municipality for Johannesburg because nothing satisfactory was created in the town³⁴. Despite this controversy, after 1900s, Johannesburg municipal government was approved by Kruger after the end of the Anglo-Boer war. This granted the municipality the chance to consider creating more open spaces and Johannesburg was transformed into a city³⁵.

By 1900’s certainly, Johannesburg had gained greater authority with an improved municipal administration which facilitated the provision of outdoor recreations. For example swimming

³¹ Leyds, A history of Johannesburg: The Early Years, 1964, pp.26.

³² Appelgryn, Johannesburg Origins and Early Management 1886-1899, pp. 50.

³³ Leyds, A history of Johannesburg: The Early Years, 1964, pp.76.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 25.

³⁵ K. Beavon, *Johannesburg. The making and shaping of the city*, 2004, pp.73-74.

bath were constructed in Ellis Park by 1908³⁶. These sporting amenities were primitive but helped to satisfy the needs of some urbanites as they were situated far away from the residential zones of the poor³⁷. However, these amenities boosted up the morals of the community and protect and secure the environment for the benefit of future generations.

Also, the climatic condition of Johannesburg characterised with eight months of the year witnessing dry and clear weather was good enough for outdoor sports. This influenced outdoor sports to become the most popular leisure activity in Johannesburg as Ellis Park was transformed into playing grounds. Even though the summers were hot but were most often cool down by frequent rain during the late hours of the afternoon with hail which cools down the temperature, the mornings were often dry enough for open air games³⁸. This enabled the park committee to provide the community with the opportunity to have informal sport and recreational spaces which reproduces healthy individuals and revived the human soul.

Thus, it can be said that the transformation of Ellis Park to a play ground and later a sports field, was driven by the growing awareness of a healthy lifestyle supported by excellent weather. In addition, the park was also important to the Town Council as income was generated through sponsorships, leased facilities, income from visitors (tourist) and advertising at the sports ground during events which helped the council to carry out other developments at the park³⁹. With the benefits and functions of the park both to the Town Council and the inhabitants of the city, it was necessary for the council to locate the piece of land at the Doornfontein slums where land was made available to establish Ellis Park.

³⁶ Municipal Offices (hereafter MO), Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 210th Meeting, 27th October, 1927, pp. 1592

³⁷ Leyds, A history of Johannesburg: The Early Years, 1964, pp.235.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 235.

³⁹ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 489th Meeting, 8th March, 1927, pp. 178-181

CHAPTER THREE

Initial Identification of Land to Develop Ellis Park and Early Work on the Park's Physical Features and Layout by 1910s

In the 1910s after the creation of the Johannesburg Town Council, the council in its developmental agenda decided to include the provision of social amenities to wholly white urban population in the city. A good example of such provision was the formation of Ellis Park.

The development of social amenities in Johannesburg during the 1900s, such as parks was faced with location problems for example lack of a good knowledge of the geology of Johannesburg. The problem of locating and developing social amenities arose partly because after the establishment of the Johannesburg Municipal Council, every councillor put forward a claim. For example after the British conquered the Transvaal in 1901, Lord Alfred Milner as administrator of the Transvaal recruited administrators (councillors) who were responsible for administering Johannesburg. A case in point was Lionel Curtis, with each councillor formally requesting the government to reconsider structuring Johannesburg with regards to health, safety and public order⁴⁰. The claim was meant for the municipality to consider granting the construction of social infrastructures that will contribute to physical or material comfort of the white urban population. Because of the nature of the geology in Johannesburg, it was therefore difficult for the Municipal Council to decide where exactly the amenities should be established for urban use⁴¹.

Despite the location problem, the Town Council decided to choose the site of the old reservoir, an area located in the heart of Hillbrow's slums and garbage dumps in Doornfontein to create Ellis Park⁴². The Town Council successfully acquired about thirty acres of the land from the

⁴⁰ City of Johannesburg, Brief History of the development of its systems of government, compiled by the Public Relations Office, City Hall. Retrieved from: wiredspace.wits.ac.za Accessed: 29/07/15.

⁴¹ J. R. Shorten, *The Story of Johannesburg*, 1970, pp. 650-651.

⁴² In as much as naming of streets in Johannesburg was done to take after names of people or activities, the area was named after the mayor Councillor J. D. Ellis who made the land available for the construction of Ellis Park-Shorten, J. R. 'The Johannesburg Saga', John R Shorten Limited, Johannesburg, 1970, pp.651.

Rand Water Board in 1908 and implemented a reclamation plan for recreational facilities such as swimming baths⁴³.

Layout of Ellis Park

In order to add beauty to the surroundings of the park, the Town Council had to implement trees planting. Although, the climate and rocky soils of Johannesburg were not favourable to the growth of most trees such as the Oaks, the Town Council embarked on planting gum trees. By 1911, the Park's sub department appointed a Botanical assistant who had a good knowledge in selecting the collection of indigenous flora and carryout a systematic and scientific study on the problems affecting the growth of trees in the park⁴⁴. Ellis Park was also provided with well designed dressing-rooms.

As a developmental agenda of the Town Council to transformed Ellis Park, they constructed a 'ubiquitous camera fiend' which was meant to monitor movement in and around the park for security purposes⁴⁵. The swimming baths were constructed with tiles and the sides beautifully finished, with an edge grip for the bathers of unique design, which also serves the purpose of a drift water catchment channel. It was thanks to Mr Dowsett, of the Municipal Architectural branch who was a fanatic of aquatic life and interested in the Municipal government task to developed Ellis Park⁴⁶.

The Town Council constructed 49 dressing rooms and a meeting room for clubs designated for sportsmen/sportswomen to change their clothes during and after sporting activities on the South and West side of the park. On the eastside of the park was constructed children's shelter

⁴³Historical Papers (hereafter HP), University of the Witwatersrand (hereafter Wits), Johannesburg Public Library Press Cuttings (hereafter PLPC), File No. 294 Rand Daily Mail, "The Municipal Swim Baths" 24th December, 1908.

⁴⁴ J. R. Shorten, The Story of Johannesburg, 1970, pp.652.

⁴⁵ HP, Wits, PLPC, File No. 294 Rand Daily Mail, "The Municipal Swim Baths" 24th December, 1908.

⁴⁶HP, Wits, PLPC, File No. 294 Rand Daily Mail, "The Municipal Swim Baths" 24th December, 1908.

and tickets collector office, on the north side was also filled up with dressing rooms⁴⁷. Ellis Park baths were constructed in a way that will attract people not only within South Africa but also to attract and entertained people all over the world as international competitions were hosted at the park. The garbage dump of Doornfontein was filled up with the use of old brickworks by the municipal government. They used soil on top to level the ground in such a way that was good for the construction of playing grounds for outdoor recreation for example tennis court, bowling greens and sports fields⁴⁸.

Accessibility into the park was limited due to lack of roads linking the residential areas to the park. With regards to this problem, the Town Council began a project of establishing connecting roads which helped solve the problem of lack of accessible roads at Ellis Park. An example of such connecting roads was the road connecting between Beit Street and Miller Street that is between Doornfontein and Fair view was created⁴⁹ and by 1910, a tramway was constructed to facilitate transportation system.

Ellis Park in the past has faced the problem of lack of good shelters to be used by spectators especially during wet weather conditions. This problem was addressed during 1912 when a stand to accommodate about 800 spectators was erected at the north side of the park⁵⁰ and was beneficial to the public who had interest in outdoor activities. The stands helped the municipality to shelter the baths from dust during the dust storm season.

Given the importance of water to life, the old reservoir was exploited; make practical and effective use of as an artificial lake. This was used for boating and was leased out for temporary users for an agreed payment. Nevertheless, the area was later on drained and the stone built to prevent river flooding and the land reclaimed in order to extend the sport ground due to increase

⁴⁷ HP, Wits, PLPC, File No. 294 Rand Daily Mail, "The Municipal Swim Baths"24th December, 1908.

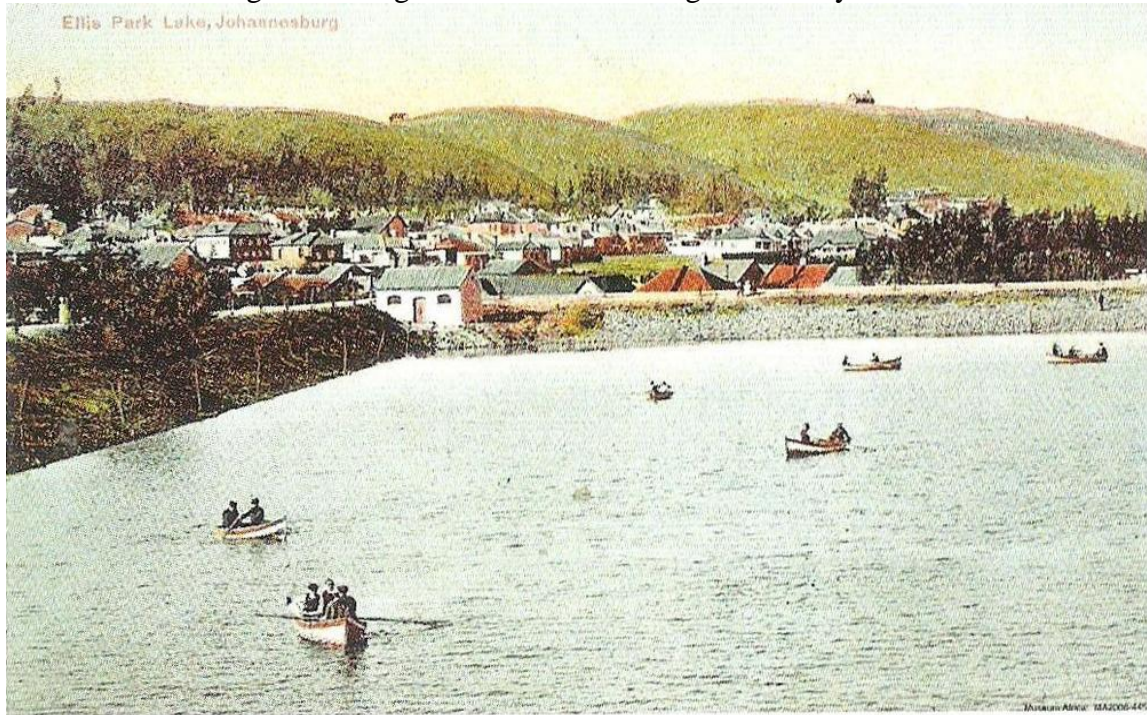
⁴⁸J. R. Shorten, The Story of Johannesburg, 1970, pp.651.

⁴⁹ HP, Wits, PLPC, File No. 294 Rand Daily Mail, "The Municipal Swim Baths"24th December, 1908.

⁵⁰ HP, Wits, PLPC, File No. 447 Leader, "The Municipal Baths"4th January, 1912.

demand for recreational facilities. Its embankment was removed and the area was given a flat and even surface and formed terraces round the oval-shaped sport ground⁵¹.

Figure 2: Image of Ellis Park Boating Lake Early 1900s



Ellis Park Lake

Source: johannesburg1912.wordpress.com

A running tract was also created surrounding the football playing ground for athletes to be used during training of organised running competitions. A lawn tennis court was also constructed with high quality facilities.

51 J. R. Shorten, The Story of Johannesburg, 1970, pp.651.

Swimming Baths

In 1908 a bath of 150 feet by 100 was proposed to be constructed at Ellis Park and by January 1909, the bath was completed and hosts the opening of the 50-yard race for councillors. By 16th of January 1909, the Town Council was able to successfully open the first public built swimming pool in Johannesburg. Upon its completion in 1909, ten caretakers were employed by the Town Council and intended to employ even more⁵². From this standpoint, one can say that the construction of swimming baths helped the Town Council to reduce the rate of unemployment in the municipality.

In order to ensure proper management and maintenance of the swimming baths, the Town Council formulated by-laws which stated the rules and regulations enacted by the Parks and Estate Committee on the use of the park. This will ensure there exist, no mismanagement of the amenities as it was agreed that anybody who goes against the laws was liable to pay a penalty not exceeding £10 sterling. In the case of not paying the penalty, the person was to be imprisoned for a period of 3 months without hard labour⁵³.

Ellis Park by 1920's was no longer the garbage dump it once was due to the many playgrounds set aside for outdoor recreation and quiet enjoyment. Ellis Park with its expansion with regards to the recreation ground over the years, turned to produce more income to the park's department as many recreational facilities were operated. Thanks to the park's committee who accepted the responsibility to equip the park with more sporting facilities.

⁵² MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 212th Meeting, 12th February, 1908, pp. 1,648.

⁵³MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 225th Meeting, 8th September, 1909, pp. 567.

CHAPTER FOUR

Growth of Sporting Activities in Johannesburg Necessitated Provision for Additional Sport Centres - Decision to Redevelop Ellis Park

The growing importance of recreational facilities in Johannesburg with its physical health benefits to the urban population provided the opportunity for the Town Council to provide more facilities at Ellis Park. The Town Council thought that an increase in the number of sport centres within the neighbourhood will encouraged the population to participate in physical activities. Thus, a redesigned of Ellis Park was necessary for the Town Council to increase the size of the park and included many sport fields. The council also constructed path and sidewalks, running tracks, and proper management of the parks in terms of security up keep avoiding vandalism and littering environment.

Additionally, the early twentieth Century was a period when sports were seen as advantageous to the city regarding its financial worth. Sports were perceived as an essential segment of a monetary movement, a piece of the inexorably vital relaxation industry and pull in huge sums of cash through sponsorships, renting and payments from onlookers. This fact was recognized by the Town Council and explains why the council took the decision in leasing out portions of Ellis Park for further development⁵⁴.

Aside from the medical advantages and wage advantages of sport, it gave amusement opportunities for the expanding Johannesburg urban populace and foster fellowship as individuals of distinctive social backgrounds (most often white working classes and the rich) associated with each other at the game grounds. This is why by 1920's; Ellis Park was transformed into an entertainment ground to promote harmony among whites urban population.

⁵⁴ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 214th Meeting, 20th January, 1909, pp. 20-22.

The increasing changes in recreational facilities particularly concerning the entertainment needs of the Johannesburg citizens motivated the Town Council to obtain greenery enclosures⁵⁵ and provision of band stands. The Town Council made provisions available for a bowling green in 1923 on the eastern section of Ellis Park⁵⁶. This facility was to cost the Town Council an amount of approximately £850⁵⁷.

In 1910 after the construction of many swimming baths and the boating system engaged into at Ellis Park and the growing desire by both adults and children in outdoor activities, the Town Council deemed it necessary to lay out the park. They established footpath around the park because of fear that children might fall into the lake. This was estimated by the Town Engineer to cost about £974 of which £151 was dedicated for a dwarf railing at the water edge⁵⁸.

With regards to the changes in the provision of recreational grounds in Ellis Park, the council made it an imperative choice in further advancement of the park. This was spearheaded by the council with assistance from other sport association such as the Transvaal Cricket Union (TCU) in 1912, although the club was already using the ground during this period⁵⁹. At its own costs, the club constructed simple dressing rooms As this turned to be absolutely deficient. The union asked for the building of a pavilion and believed that it will serve not only to energize the younger and the old individuals within the sporting community, it would likewise be in the council's interest to frame the core of a sport ground in Ellis Park⁶⁰. The Town Council consented to develop a pavilion at an expense of £250 on the condition that it would offer a

⁵⁵Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp.16.

⁵⁶MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 439th Meeting, 23rd October, 1923, pp. 846.

⁵⁷ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 439th Meeting, 23rd October, 1923, pp. 846.

⁵⁸ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 240th Meeting, 24th August, 1910, pp. 1416.

⁵⁹Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp.21.

⁶⁰ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 272nd Adjourned Ordinary Meeting, 24th September, 1912, pp. 795.

new outlook to the layout of the sporting grounds. The club proposed to build a pavilion made of wood and iron so that at any point in time in the future, the pavilion could be reshaped⁶¹.

By the 29th April 1913, the Town Council was given a full plan for the construction of Ellis Park. This plan entailed the future growth of the park in terms of sporting facilities such as a cycling track with running tracks close by and sprinting tracks inside; a stand steel for development for 300 persons and uncovered wooden seating settlement for 1,200 people and changing areas⁶². The evaluated expense was £17,500 of which only £2,000 was accessible during this stage. As the financial situation at the time was not favourable for the Town Council, the council then decided to build an uncovered stand and pavilions for spectators at cricket, football, hockey and other sporting activities in the area and was estimated to cost £1,930⁶³. The remaining work at the park such as more dressing rooms, refreshment rooms, motor cycle track, ordinary cycle tracks and ironstone gravel surface was to be done in segments as finance become available.

Several clubs such as Athletic Association, Cricket Associations and Rugby had made proposals with the Town Council guaranteeing it of significant income from the utilization of the grounds. The fact that the council was aware of the financial benefits from the facilities at the park, gave them assurance to provide more sporting grounds at Ellis Park. This accounted for the reason the foundation of Ellis Park eventually saw the parks department in the sport business⁶⁴.

By 1920's, the Town Council had well provided for both recreational and leisure facilities to the wealthy and rich 'Johannesburgers'. The town engineers engaged themselves at work to

⁶¹ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 272nd Adjourned Ordinary Meeting, 24th September, 1912, pp. 795.

⁶²Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp.21.

⁶³ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 281st Meeting, 29th April, 1913, pp. 326.

⁶⁴Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp.22.

develop Ellis Park. At the Eastern portion of the park lawn tennis courts and three additional bowling greens were constructed. In addition, a drainage system was built to prevent storm water from getting into the lake at Ellis Park⁶⁵. Stands were built at all the four corners of the court amongst which one of the stands was dedicated for players as dressing room, the remaining three was intended to accommodate about 5,400 persons⁶⁶. At the Western portion, additional cycle tracks were developed, and additional grand stands constructed with a capacity of 3000 persons, new offices and bathrooms were also built. To enable the safety of spectators and the racing grounds, fencing of the ground was also placed under construction⁶⁷.

The key issue to sustain the facilities not to become liability assets to the Town Council was to ensure proper use and maintenance of the tennis courts. This made the council in 1922 to hand over new tennis courts to the Southern Transvaal Lawn Tennis Association (STLTA) in order to facilitate utilization of the extended sport grounds and foster the game⁶⁸.

At the football grounds in 1923, the council also constructed sanitary conveniences at Ellis Park in virtue of the expansive participation of people in general at the football grounds⁶⁹. The evaluated expense of building the infrastructures such as toilets for gentlemen and women was £500. At the east side access of the ground was established with a building consisting of about thirty yards and connects it to the sewer⁷⁰. In 1924, additional seating accommodation with maximum seating of about 1,000 persons was included at the park to add to the 5400 in 1920.

In the periods of November and December of 1923 and February 1924, there was improvement on entertainment at the swimming baths as jazz groups performed on Sunday evenings at an expense of £7 for every performance. Each group comprised of six performers. The band

⁶⁵ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 394th Meeting, 23rd September, 1920, pp. 646.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 646.

⁶⁷ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 470th Meeting, 24th November, 1925, pp. 908.

⁶⁸ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 416th Adjourned Meeting, 3rd May, 1922, pp. 224.

⁶⁹ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 435th Meeting, 24th July, 1923, pp. 568.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 568.

performances were proposed to give comparable public display at the park and entertained onlookers. The income from the ever increasing onlookers at the swimming baths was used to take care of the expenses of the orchestra performances⁷¹.

As years passed by, the desire for leisure was at its peak and other sport clubs engaged in providing more sport facilities to the community of Ellis Park in 1925 such as the Bowling club⁷². The bowling green club constructed a club house at the park.

Furthermore, with the growing desire of leisure in Johannesburg by 1927, the Southern Transvaal Lawn Tennis Association (hereafter STLTA) launched an undertaken with the Town Council to provide for more stands at the park. This was so because the redevelopment of the park and growing desire for sporting activities has encouraged international matches to be hosted at Ellis Park. For example in the 1927, the park had to host an international match played by the STLTA and the visiting French team⁷³. An additional stand was built at the north side of the park and was estimated to cost £3,000 with the seating capacity of 1,500-2,000 persons⁷⁴. By 1929 given the increasing demand for provision for more open spaces for outdoor activities, the Town Council increasingly gave attention to the needs of the Rugby Football. The football ground was redeveloped given its position to host an international soccer game at the football pitch with the visit of the English Association Football team⁷⁵.

⁷¹ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 454th Meeting, 21st October, 1924, pp. 871.

⁷² MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 470th Meeting, 24th November, 1925, pp. 908.

⁷³ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 497th Meeting, 30th August, 1927, pp. 679.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 679.

⁷⁵ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 518th Meeting, 28th May, 1929, pp. 441-443.

CHAPTER FIVE

Negotiations between the Town Council and the Transvaal Rugby Football Union

The choice taken by the Town Council to redevelop Ellis Park was not at a sudden change of mind. The Town Council had long planned the development of open spaces. Thus, in early 1909, the Town Council agreed with private stakeholders to redeveloped Ellis Park given the growing interest of recreational spaces within the municipality. The Town Council received request from clubs to grant to them portions of Ellis Park on the basis to construct more sporting grounds at the park for example the Transvaal Rugby Football Union (hereafter TRFU) requested for portion of the park to be leased to them for the development of football pitch.

On January 1909, the Town Council had to respond to the needs of the people and so leased 12 acres of the land at the Western side of Ellis Park to the union⁷⁶ with restricted conditions which the union must follow. Among the conditions upon which the leased was granted were the following: the lease was given for a period of 15 years but renewable twice for a period of 5 years each. But if the Town Council after the 15 years contract expires needed to use the ground could terminate the agreement through a written notice giving the fact that the council will not lease the ground to another sporting club. It was also agreed that the ground will be leased for a rental price of £300 per annum. According to the lease agreement, the TRFU was granted all rights to control the ground provided the union obeyed all the rules and regulations of the Town Council⁷⁷.

Furthermore, the Town Council agreed to level all holes on the ground but the cost of levelling the ground was to be paid by the union. The Town Council also agreed that all top matches

⁷⁶ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 214th Meeting, 20th January, 1909, pp. 20.

⁷⁷ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 216th Meeting, 3rd March, 1909, pp. 121-123.

ought to, be played on this ground. This meant that Ellis Park was not only reserved for rugby football but to all other sport activities. This implies that the Town Council officially consented to change the recreation centre into a game venue.

The lease of Ellis Park made the Town Council to realise that the capital consumptions for advancement of the park could easily be recuperated from the union's rental. The changes that the union proposed to make will normally upgrade the rest of the recreation centre and its surroundings. While the foundation of an appropriately prepared and controlled games ground will without a doubt be of interest to the swimming baths and Tramway division⁷⁸.

The Town Council set a few provisions that the TRFU could seek an alcohol permit following two years; the levy for admission to the grounds ought to be endorsed by the Town Council and the Union must spend in any event £2,000 on the ground inside of two years and erect a wall around the ground⁷⁹.

The agreement provided by the Town Council to the union stipulated that the council will have free utilization of the ground at least 12 days in a year⁸⁰. During this period, school boys ought to don't hesitate to play on the ground without any payment due whenever the Town Council is in control of the grounds⁸¹. The TRFU should likewise give the civil games clubs such as Athletic Association, Cricket Associations easy access to the ground to play other games. Besides, the Town Council had the privilege to build up recreational facilities in the park. Examples of such facilities included tennis courts, swimming baths, water chutes, skating arenas, among others and entertainment separated from football and cricket⁸². The importance

⁷⁸Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp. 20.

⁷⁹MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 215th Meeting, 10th February, 1909, pp. 83.

⁸⁰ Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp. 20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20.

⁸² MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 216th Meeting, 3rd March, 1909, pp. 122.

and purpose of the proviso was that the games or entertainments of the lessee might not interfere with any city games and/or entertainment.

Nonetheless, the TRFU discovered that the terms of the lease were at their detriment. A portion of their ground had been acquired by the railway administration to construct a new railway station and suspected that more of the land could be taken away in the future⁸³.

Subsequently in 1927, the TRFU and the Town Council got involved deeply into the sport business at the park. The union drafted general principles under which will govern the lease of municipal sport ground to the union. With regards to the general principles outlined by the union, the period of lease was extended to 50 years of which the price of the rentals was fixed based on the percentages gotten from gate receipts. The deal could be cancelled by the Town Council on the grounds that the council must pay back all the cost incurred in the improvement of the park or the union remove all assets constructed and thus no compensation. All refreshments at the park should be allowed to be sold by the union and advertising at the park as well to be carried out by the union. This would help the union to raise more money for the upkeep and maintenance of the park. The Union also demanded full control of the ground and stated that during the winter season the sole purpose of the ground will be reserved for only rugby football and during summer for outdoor activities⁸⁴. The union requested the right of collecting entrance fee to all matches and games taking place on the ground. The union also asked for the council to give fitting streets at Ellis Park and give parking lots for spectators and players and provide sufficient transport facilities to and from the Park⁸⁵. The Town Council agreed to lease the ground for a period of 30 years as it was understood that the union will upgrade the remaining portion of the recreation centre and the surrounding property⁸⁶.

⁸³ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 489th Meeting, 8th March, 1927, pp. 178.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 179.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 179.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 180-181.

The Town Council upon acceptance of the request of the union on 28th June, 1927 stated that the council will at all times be allowed access to the books and papers of the union and get full financial transactions⁸⁷. The Council wanted to have the privilege of one delegate on the account advisory group of the lessees. According to the terms of the proviso, the Town Council agreed that the lessees had nothing to do with any other alterations at the ground other than the structures and changes on the approved plan in terms of adjustments of the grounds except the council affirms the adjustments. Moreover, the council also set a clause that in case of the union desire to change any buildings or any improvements on the ground, then they must submit to the council the plans and type of structures to be build⁸⁸. The union also had no right to sub-let the ground without the permission of the council⁸⁹. The Council also stated that the strip of land on the Western side of the Park lying behind the grand stands should be reserved for a children's playground⁹⁰. With the increasing enthusiasm for open air games at Ellis Park by 1930, the union requested for permission by the Town Council to permit the union sub-let smaller portions of the ground for golf and 'tennikoit', also known as ring tennis. The union intention was to enhance the ground and its popularity in terms of sporting amenities. The Council agreed to this request⁹¹. The union's aim was thus not to 'monopolize' the ground for TRFU alone but to include other recreational exercises at Ellis Park.

In accordance with the Town Council's policy as actualized in Ellis Park, it is important to take note that some of the responsibility of the Town Council to provide open spaces for outdoor activities by the 1930 had shifted from the Council to sporting clubs. Therefore, the Town Council's willingness to lease grounds at Ellis Park to clubs to run the game grounds implied that the Council had the concern of the provision of more recreational facilities for sport and

⁸⁷ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 494th Meeting, 28th June, 1927, pp. 495.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 495.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 496.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 491.

⁹¹ MO, Johannesburg, Law Library, Minutes of Town Council, 537th Meeting, 17th December, 1930, pp. 1077.

entertainment⁹². Ellis Park by 1930's was seen as providing all forms of competitive physical activities to the white residents of Johannesburg.

⁹²Grundlingh, "Parks in the Veld", *South African Journal of Cultural History*, pp. 20.

Conclusion

Since the establishment of Ellis Park, it was already clear that there was growing interest in sporting activities. Consequently the Town Council adopted measures for the development of Ellis Park. However, Ellis Park by 1930 was set at the taste and likeness of Johannesburg urban population.

Despite the fact that the park was accessible for the general public, it was also necessary for the Town Council to control access into the park. For this reason, the council implemented somewhat strict by-laws which helped to regulate and control the grounds at Ellis Park.

The growing interest in sporting activities prompted the council to respond to the needs of its people by granting lease request from sporting clubs to improve the facilities at the park. This signified the council's willingness to transform Ellis Park into a solely sport venue. By 1920's Ellis Park had turned into a standard element in the design of its sporting facilities as redevelopment was done by the various sport clubs at the park.

The extension of recreational grounds at Ellis Park brought more responsibility to the Council and therefore if proper maintenance and management not taken into consideration, the park might become a liability to the government. Thus, the council put into place proper upkeep of the park's layout and design up to standard and give out portions of the grounds to private stakeholders for proper maintenance.

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