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## **BACKGROUND NOTES ON ORANGE FARM INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN GAUTENG**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this brief is to provide a concise overview of the human settlements landscape and challenges in Region G, specifically Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg, in preparation for Provincial Week events taking place in Gauteng during March 2022.

### **2. HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF ORANGE FARM**

The Orange Farm community is a semi-rural, underdeveloped area approximately 40 km south of Johannesburg towards Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark. It is one of the largest informal settlements in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Orange Farm was established during the late 1980's and early 1990's by the former Transvaal Provincial Administration (TPA) in an attempt to move towards mass black urbanization in the region and to provide space for the resettlements of families from nearby informal settlements. Farmland was expropriated for township development. This occurred during a time when job seekers were flocking to Johannesburg, resulting in informal settlements especially to the south of the city.<sup>2</sup> By 1989, more than 300 families from nearby informal settlements (notably Weilers Farm) have been settled at Orange Farm.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Orange Farm Human Rights Advice Centre (2016).

<sup>2</sup> City of Joburg (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Terence (2009).

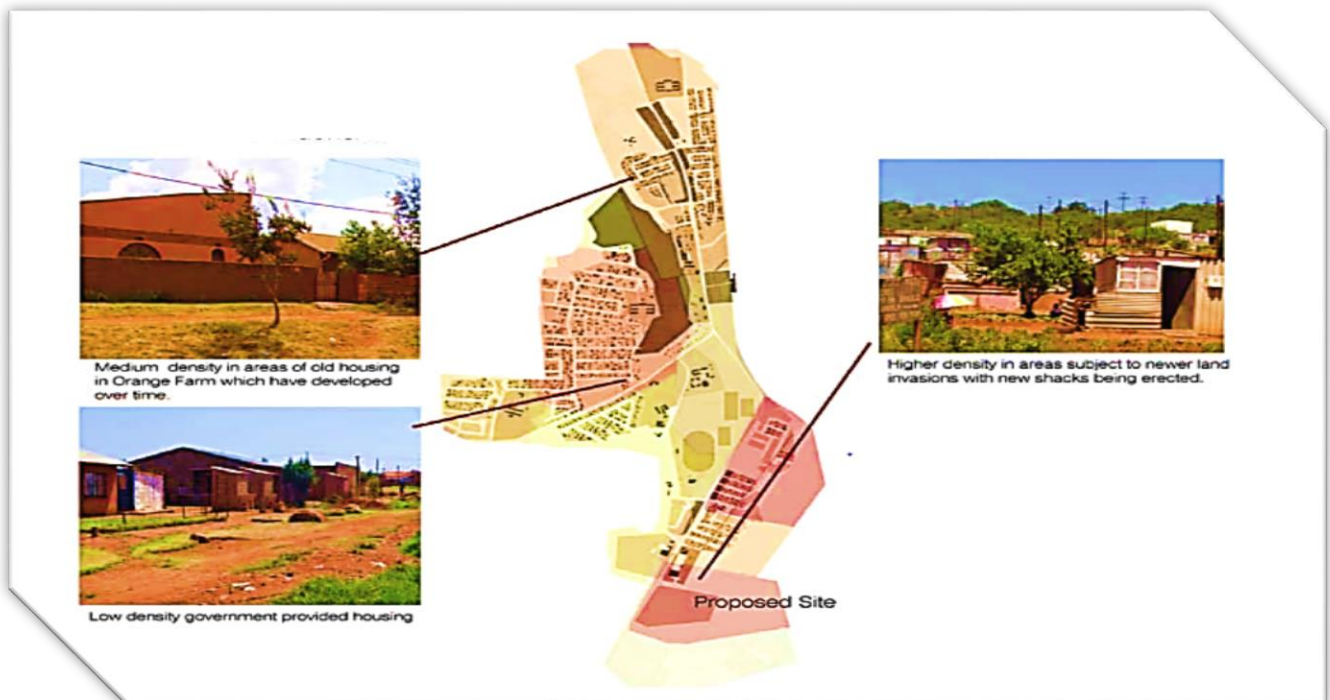


By May 1989, around 4 300 sites became available and the TPA offered the community a chance to purchase a 210 m<sup>2</sup> piece of land (site and service stand) for R500, or otherwise rent it for R10 per month. In both cases a R29 monthly service levy applied.<sup>4</sup>

By 1991, more than 70 000 people resided in Orange Farm. At that stage, developers have started to build low cost brick housing for sale to the community, of which 3 000 units have been built at the time. Electricity reached the community in 1991 in the form of an Eskom pre-paid system.<sup>5</sup>

By 2018, Orange Farm was home to more than 380 000 families, of which the majority are living in galvanized iron shacks. The majority of residents are young, falling into the 20 to 40-year age bracket. While the population is diverse, the predominant languages are isiZulu and Southern Sesotho.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1: Population Density, Orange Farm**



Source: Leong, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> City of Joburg (2018).



### 3. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN ORANGE FARM AND SURROUNDING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

#### Basic services



There are six extensions, (Extensions 1,2,3,6,7 and 8) and all have basic services, such as electricity, metered water, sanitation and sewerage. Orange Farm is characterized by extreme levels of poverty and unemployment, with social challenges that include alcoholism, domestic violence, child abuse, substance abuse, HIV, AIDS, crime and gangsterism. Poor street lighting contributes to crime at night.<sup>7</sup>

The area also experiences a low quality of basic services, with poor road infrastructure in the informal settlement that hampers proper public transport and sufficient healthcare services. Land in and around Orange Farm that is earmarked for residential and subsidised housing is often invaded with the continued expansion of informal settlements. Orange Farm is further a dormitory town without its own economic base, that is marginalized from economic opportunities in the city. The closest business and economic opportunities are in Lenasia and Ennerdale.<sup>8</sup>

The City of Joburg has commenced with work to improve living conditions in Orange Farm. Some of the initiatives include the Orange Farm Regional Park, which aims to turn the region into an integral part of the greater Johannesburg area as a viable and sustainable environment. This forms part of an initiative to regenerate informal areas across the region.<sup>9</sup>

In partnership with the private sector, the City of Joburg also rolled out a number of improvement initiatives, including a modern library, some tarred roads (most roads are gravel roads), permanent houses within the proclaimed area, low cost housing, four clinics, an information and skills development centre with internet access, a multi-purpose community centre, and some on-site government offices. These are the Department of Health, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Human Settlements, the Department of Transport, and the South African Police Service.<sup>10</sup>



In 2016, the provincial government of Gauteng committed to relocate the communities from Kapok and Hopefield to Kanana Extension 6.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Terence (2009).

<sup>8</sup> City of Joburg (2018).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> IOL (2016).



In the City of Joburg's budget for 2020/21, R1 billion was allocated to job creation and small business engagement through projects that include sewer upgrades, storm water upgrades, tarring of roads and housing developments. Some of the target communities include Orange Farm, Kapok and Kliptown.<sup>12</sup>

In the 2022-2027 draft Integrated Development Plan for the City of Joburg, a planned deliverable for the 2022/23 financial year is to issue 300 title deeds in Orange Farm.<sup>13</sup>

### **Corruption allegations**

During the main event of Taking Parliament to the People (TPTTP) in 2018 in Gauteng, some residents raised concerns about alleged corruption in the allocation of housing in ward 1 of Orange Farm, claiming that foreign nationals have been allocated housing after paying an amount of R6 000. In general, delays in housing allocation were also raised as a concern.<sup>14</sup>

### **Poor quality houses**



By September 2021, more than 50 families were still waiting to move into their state subsidised housing five years after construction commenced in Orange Farm. These houses are located in Stretford Extension 4 in Orange Farm. In 2020, 53 houses were demolished due to poor workmanship and a new contractor was appointed, but only constructed 20 houses without roofs, doors or windows. At the time, the Gauteng Department of Human Settlements had more than 1 300 houses that were incomplete and some were abandoned as a result of shoddy workmanship.<sup>15</sup>

### **Dolomite**

Parts of the southern region of Johannesburg, including parts of Tjovitjo and Orange Farm, may be built on dolomite, which dissolves and carry the risk of forming sinkholes. While it is possible to build on dolomite under certain conditions, technical studies are often required, which delay the township establishment process. In extreme cases, resettlement of communities to safer areas take place, which the courts have found to be substantially different than evictions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> City of Joburg (2021).

<sup>13</sup> City of Joburg (2021a).

<sup>14</sup> Parliament (2018).

<sup>15</sup> SABC News (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Webster (2021).



In Tjovitjo in particular, with a population of more than 4 500 people, communities have insisted on housing developments, municipal services and infrastructure, but the presence of dolomite may mean that geotechnical studies and eventual development could take years to take off.<sup>17</sup>

The Department of Public Works has a dedicated Dolomite Risk Management Programme, which monitors dolomitic conditions in identified areas, as well as monitoring the Department's facilities constructed on dolomitic land and to classify the dolomitic status for each greenfield and brownfield project.<sup>18</sup>

### Land invasions

During 2021, challenges were experienced in the southern parts of Johannesburg, notably in and around Orange Farm, related to syndicates illegally selling vacant plots. As a result, a large number of new informal settlements sprouted in the region. A warning was issued by the City of Joburg to alert residents about these illegal sales and land invasions.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> PMG (2018).

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