

Revitalising Cape Town City Hall and Grand Parade, paying homage to Madiba

The City of Cape Town's Naming and Nomination Committee considered the report on the outcome of the public participation process regarding the proposed heritage project to commemorate the life and work of Madiba and those were involved in South Africa's transition to democracy. The committee recommended to the Executive Mayor, Patricia de Lille, that the City commence with the proposal to install a life-size statue of the late former president, Nelson Mandela, and a permanent exhibition at City Hall - the initiatives form part of the broader revitalisation of the Grand Parade and surrounds as a tourist destination.

"We have discussed the report and have recommended to the Executive Mayor that the City accept the donation of a life-size statue of the late former president, Nelson Mandela, from the Western Cape Government. Should the mayor and full council agree with the recommendation, the statue will be installed on the balcony at the City Hall where Madiba delivered his first public address after his release from prison on 11 February 1990," said the Chairperson of the City's Naming and Nomination Committee, Councillor Brett Herron.



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Turning a historic landmark into a prime cultural tourism destination

The committee supports this project as it is key to the city's vision to redevelop City Hall and the Grand Parade as civic spaces.

"City Hall and the Grand Parade have great potential as tourist attractions and could contribute significantly to local job creation and economic opportunities. Those who have recently visited the Grand Parade, in particular, will be aware of the challenges we face in keeping the area clean and attractive. Given its location next to the Castle and opposite City Hall, we now have the opportunity to turn this historic landmark into prime cultural tourism destination," said Herron.

The proposed project is a joint effort between the City and the Western Cape Government's Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the Sport Department.

"Any investment that will boost our local tourism sector by extending the tourist season, creating special destinations in Cape Town itself, and which will encourage tourists to spend more time and money in our city, is worth every cent. Our residents need jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities and we will leave no stone unturned in pursuing this objective," said

Herron.

The Grand Parade and City Hall have been the theatre of many national and local events and activities. The area has presided over civic protests and public jubilation. "Constructed in 1905, the City Hall is a major public heritage asset. It is one of South Africa's most imposing early 20th century buildings, an exemplary building of its type and an important visual icon of Cape Town. Set against Table Mountain, it forms a dramatic backdrop to the Grand Parade – the City's main place of public gathering which we also intend to revitalise through this project," said Herron.



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The Nelson Mandela statue - part of the National Liberation Heritage Route

The Western Cape Government will fund the Nelson Mandela statue which is to be donated to the City, should the Mayor and Council concur with the Naming and Nomination Committee's recommendation.

"Thus, the procurement of the proposed statue will be at no cost to Cape Town's ratepayers. The city has, however, budgeted approximately R1.3m for the operational costs, inclusive of the ongoing maintenance of the exhibition and statue. The R1.3m must be seen as an investment in the neglected area adjacent to Darling Street. All of us – be it job seekers, artists, entrepreneurs, tourists or ordinary Capetonians – will share in the long-term benefits of uplifting and redeveloping these spaces," said Councillor Herron.

The memorialisation and permanent exhibition at the City Hall form part of the National Liberation Heritage Route, an initiative of the National Heritage Council and the National Department of Tourism.

It is proposed that the permanent exhibition at the City Hall will consist of interpretive panels, audio-visual equipment, and interactive displays, to commemorate Madiba's legacy and to honour the organisations and people who were involved in the liberation struggle, the events leading up to Mandela's release, and the transition to democracy.

"The City Hall falls within the National Liberation Heritage Route, but little has been done to date to highlight its prominence and the significant events that took place here in 1990. The permanent exhibition will assist us to mine the full potential of the City Hall by turning it into a popular tourist attraction where visitors can visualise the events and have a full experience of our journey to democracy. Numerous people and organisations had a hand in one of our nation's most historic moments and we want to honour them as well," said Herron.

Madiba legacy route

The development of a Madiba legacy route is included in the Western Cape Government's Project Khulisa which intends to add approximately 100,000 jobs to the local tourism sector. The Madiba legacy project traces former President Mandela's footsteps in the Western Cape and City Hall counts among one of the four significant sites in the province.

"Counting among the main pillars of the City's new Organisational Development and Transformation Plan is to create a city based on integrated communities, economic inclusion and access to opportunities. The proposed exhibition and statue of Madiba will give the area and surrounds a much-needed economic injection and assist with job creation," said Herron.