

STRANDFONTEIN CULTURAL MAPPING

BUILDING MITCHELL'S PLAIN AND STRANDFONTEIN



In 1972 the Minister of Community Development announced that '33,918 Coloured people (about 5,640 families), 1,494 Indians, 144 Africans and 424 Whites were still living in District Six'. Construction of Mitchell's Plain and Strandfontein in the mid 1970s - necessitating the deproclamation of the former Strandfontein Forest Reserve land - was a direct response by the Cape Town City Council to this announcement. It was spearheaded by the then City Council's Chief Engineer, Solly Morris, who viewed its development as an opportunity to create a more upmarket area within the Cape Flats - especially for thousands of people still residing in District Six.



The first phase of Mitchell's Plain began in 1974, with the construction of Westridge which was completed by 1976. The apartheid government actively promoted Mitchell's Plain as a 'new era in mass housing delivery' and by the end of 1979, the 10 000th person was reported to have moved into the new housing development. Interviews with former residents from Mitchell's Plain and Strandfontein indicate that a significant number who moved into Mitchell's Plain moved there from less desirable sub-economic housing estates on the Cape Flats, as well as from District Six and other inner city areas.



By 1980, Strandfontein, Westridge, and Woodlands were completed. In December 1980, the Town Centre was officially opened as the area's first shopping centre and heart of the Mitchell's Plain Commercial Business District with formal businesses trading side by side with informal traders selling their wares in the centre as well as on the outskirts of the CBD. In 1981, a reported 800 houses were being built per month. Construction of rental housing began in 1982, to the east of the railway line. By the end of 1983, all major large scale housing construction contracts were completed, marking the start of private sector development.