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The greening of Muizenberg: an uplifting experience for the community

In a society plagued by crime, how can South African communities reclaim their neighbourhoods and make a stand against criminality? According to one theory, they should plant gardens and spruce up their surroundings.

And that's a tactic being applied by the Muizenberg Improvement District (MID) in its quest to clean up crime and grime in the Muizenberg Village and beachfront areas.

Evidence from various urban neighbourhood and community initiatives around the world shows that the upliftment and beautification of people's surroundings leads to lower levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

With this in mind, the MID has been implementing a 'greening' policy, kicking off with the recent completion of the first MID-sponsored garden in front of the Muizenberg Civic Centre, at the corner of Atlantic and Beach roads.

One of the main drivers of the MID's new greening and gardening projects, MID Board member Sandy Crossley said: "People behave better when they find themselves in a smarter environment."

The garden has already made a difference visually to the previously stark corner, and it features about 600 Strandveld indigenous fynbos plants able to withstand the harsh South-Easterly winds that buffet Muizenberg.

Neil Major from Cape Flats Fynbos Nursery was awarded the tender for the Civic Centre gardening project, and Karen Hultzer from The Landscaper installed the garden's underground watering system. With co-operation from the city council and sponsorship from the MID, the Civic Centre garden is truly an example of successful community collaboration.

According to Sandy the garden has already attracted an overwhelmingly positive response from locals: "The feedback has been heartfelt and lovely, with young and old alike showing much appreciation for this improvement to their neighbourhood."

Said Sandy: "This initiative is very exciting because it's our first major gardening project, and also the first of many visual upliftments you're going to see in our quaint little town. The fact that we're using Strandveld indigenous plants is a big plus too, and could be a trend-setter in coastal urban greening."

More gardens are planned for various locations around Muizenberg Village and the beachfront area, plus another recent improvement is the 'wavy' new paved area in front of the library and clinic, which will be completed shortly with the planting of several hardy Camphor (*Tarchonanthus Camphoratus*) trees.

"We've identified a number of places that could benefit from having gardens planted, including the beachfront ablution area and the Muizenberg clinic, where we hope to put in a medicinal herb garden that the nurses can use as an additional means of helping to improve the health of their patients," Sandy continued.

She encouraged all Muizenberg locals to take ownership of these initiatives: "Please help: take responsibility - become a 'do-er' in the beautification and upliftment of Muizenberg. Get involved by 'adopting' the garden - help ensure that it is kept watered, clear of debris and junk, gently weeded and generally maintained."

While much has yet to be achieved in making Muizenberg look ship-shape, these exciting greening projects show that progress is slowly but surely being made through the determined efforts of community-minded people, which certainly bodes well for the future of the area.

[519 words]

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Attached please find the following article that may be of interest:

'The greening of Muizenberg: an uplifting experience for the community'

Please feel free to contact us for any additional information.

Thanks.

**Regards,
Erica**