



January 2019

### ESRC Welcome Letter

As a new resident, the Closure Committee would like to welcome you to Edenglen South. We wish you a long, happy and secure stay in a very special suburb. We are sure you have noticed that there is a road closure in place and hope that it contributed positively towards your decision to buy in Edenglen. This letter will provide you with information as to why the Closure was implemented, how it operates and how it has contributed not only to the wellbeing of residents but also to the value of their homes.

**Why is there a road closure?** - Crime was out of control in our suburb with hijackings and armed robberies occurring on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, there were also 2 murders in the period just before we closed. In 2001, in the 7 months before we closed, the following crimes were committed –

- Theft from premises 28
- **Hijackings** 26
- Car theft 19
- Car break ins 62
- Attempted vehicle theft 6
- **Armed** robbery 18
- Shootings at **hijackings** 4
- **Fatalities** at hijackings 2

The numerous benefits of a closure are listed in this document, but the major benefit is the significant reduction of crime in our suburb.

While serious crime (as reported by SAPS) continues to rise in South Africa (10-11% last year), our crime rate has declined to 4-5 incidents a year over the last 4 years. We are experiencing significantly less crime than the non-closed suburbs around us. Closures (just as burglar bars, security gates, alarms, armed response, car alarms, secure estates, body guards, carrying a weapon) do not guarantee that you will never be a crime victim but they significantly reduce your chances of becoming one. Residents should know that one crime a year is regarded by the Committee and Mamba (our road Closure security provider) as one too many and we are constantly working to prevent crime and ensure that those who commit it are arrested.

**The Primary Closure Mandate** is to do everything we can, with the resources at hand, to significantly reduce all crime in our suburb but prevent any of our residents from becoming a victim of a serious/contact crime. By this we mean any crime incident where the victim comes face to face with the perpetrators such as hijacking, robbery, assault, home invasion, attempted murder and murder.

**How was the road closure implemented?** – Due to the intolerable levels of crime, several residents formed an association to embark on the lengthy process of applying to Council for permission to implement and operate a closure. Most residents had to sign an agreement to close off the suburb. In our case, more than 95% agreed to the closure. As we were under siege from crime it was not difficult to gain such a majority. Money had to be collected from residents to fund the required steps in the application process. These funds paid for an extensive traffic study, plans, gates, fences, booms, huts, computer equipment, cameras and road signs. The application was submitted to council, objections/concerns addressed, and council then approved the Closure and the site plans.

**What is the difference between a secure estate or complex and a road closure?** – The main difference is that an estate/complex is built on **private** land while a closure is all about fencing and booming off **public** roads and spaces. Due to their exclusivity and a contract between the Body Corporate and the residents, estates and complexes can function differently to a closure. This allows them to operate in a manner that would be considered a breach of the law if a public closure operated in a similar fashion.

**What legislation and conditions apply to a closure?** - How a closure operates is dictated by several legal acts and conditions imposed by Council. This includes The Constitution and Bill of Rights of South Africa, The Gauteng Local Rationalisation of Government Affairs Act and the National Road Traffic Act. Recommendations and guidelines are also provided by the Human Rights Council of SA and there are numerous Council policies, by-laws and directives that must be followed.

It must be noted that the gate and boom locations, what time they can open and close and how we operate at the booms are dictated to us by these laws and regulations. Council has imposed conditions on the Closure and we have no choice but to follow these. If we do not operate legally the Closure could be in danger of being removed.

This means that we legally cannot stop anyone from entering the suburb, we can't stop and search, we can't force anyone to sign a register, have special stickers, access codes, fingerprints and visitors cards. The main role of the guards is to observe and report anything suspicious. At this stage you are probably asking why road closures are so effective in reducing crime. We have added an item on this subject later in the document.

Although we can't make people sign in we do have many strategically placed cameras which take several pictures from many different angles of every car that enters or leaves our suburb. Even when the booms are up the cameras are still operational. The cameras act as a deterrent and pictures can be utilised by residents and SAP where necessary.

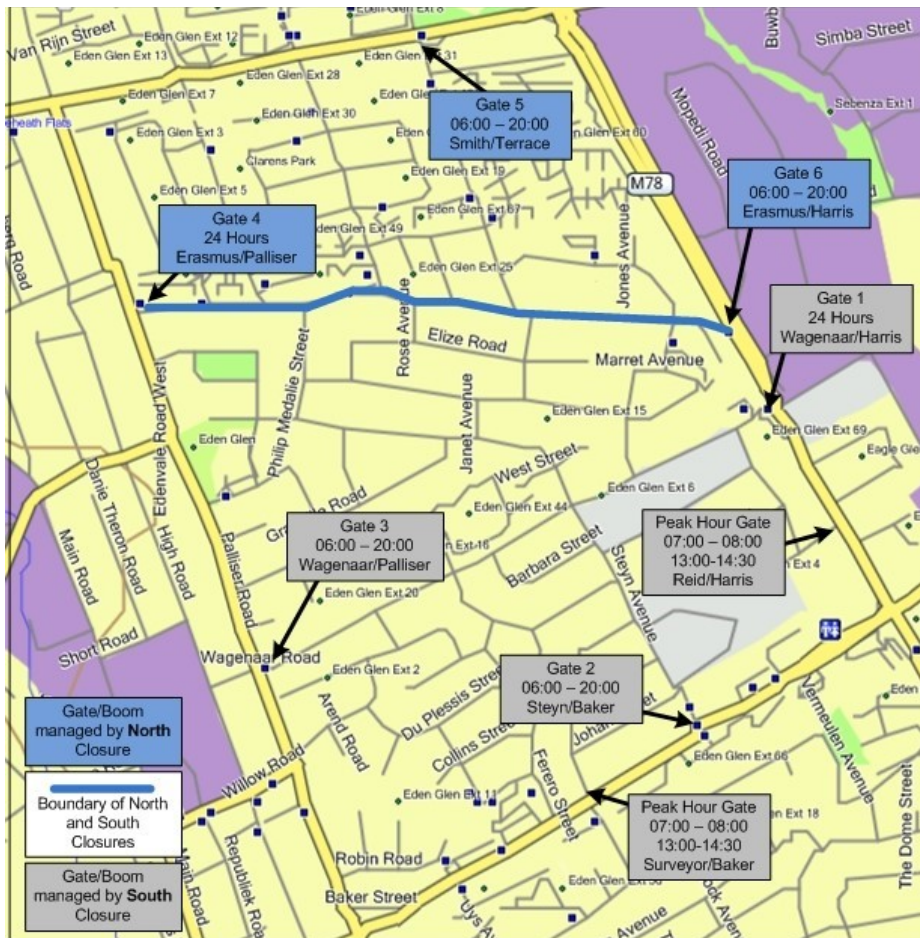
The Closure is registered as a Section 21 company and we are governed by the Companies Act and have to comply with this legislation for financial management and reporting.

In December 2016, the Johannesburg City Council removed and confiscated the entire road closure infrastructure of Hurlingham Manor North. All gates, palisade fences, booms and any related access control infrastructure gone in a single day. Council said Hurlingham was not complying with the Johannesburg security access policy. Hurlingham had implemented electronic access (this was either keypad or fingerprint access) and anyone who could not prove they were expected in the suburb was turned away. Hurlingham closure consisted of public Johannesburg roads that were closed off and it is not a private estate where such security measures are permitted. In a public space closure entry cannot be refused for anyone. The Hurlingham Closure took Council to court and won a reprieve and the closure infrastructure was restored. Council retaliated by ordering the Closure to re-submit their application. Submitting an application for a closure is time consuming and very expensive. Council may or may not approve the closure and if it is approved it will probably be with conditions that prevent Hurlingham from being so restrictive with access to their suburb.

We cannot allow this to happen in Edenglen as it will compromise our security and incur substantial costs for the residents, so we operate within the law and any local legislation or regulations.

### Where are the gates/booms and what times are they in operation? –

The position, opening and operating times are dictated by Council and are **non-negotiable**.



Peak hour gates (as dictated by Council) accommodate additional traffic during school drop off and pick up times. All other roads are permanently closed. Please note that the North Closure is a separate entity managed by its own committee.

## What are the benefits of the Closure? –

- **Significant** reduction in crime.
- 24 hour dedicated patrol vehicle to patrol the suburb creating a visible presence to deter crime and for a faster response to your home in the event of an incident. On average closure members have a 2 minute response time from the dedicated vehicle which they fund.
- We have a LPR (Licence Plate Recognition) system in place for the South and North Closures. This system automatically sounds an alarm in the Mamba control room if any vehicle entering our suburbs has been previously flagged on the Mamba database or the SAPS database.
- Photographic evidence in the event of a crime, follow up with SAPS and assisting in criminal investigations.
- Direct communication channel between the guards at the gates, the Mamba control room and the dedicated vehicle which, in the event of a guard alerting the control room, provides instant reporting and co-ordination across all levels of our security.
- Gates and fences closing off the suburb and additional gates closed at 8:00 pm leaving only two entrances for our Closure at night.
- If you have a breakdown in the suburb you can call on the 24 hour vehicle to wait with you until help arrives.
- Working with a community (rather than individually) to prevent crime from happening.
- Committee working with Mamba to always improve services and to analyse crime information to proactively prevent crime.
- Newsletters informing you of what is going on in our suburb and external suburbs. Informing you about crime and criminal methods as well as suspicious vehicles increases your knowledge allowing you to take steps that could prevent you or a family member becoming crime victims.
- The Mamba Whatsapp Emergency Group which allows residents to **immediately** warn each other if there is any suspicious or criminal activity.
- A website for residents to view all info about the Closure and a blog site for them to post and communicate about any non-crime related activities.
- Garden service that assists to keep some areas of our suburb, such as the areas around the entrances and the park neat and free from litter.
- If you are a Mamba armed response client and a road Closure contributor then you will receive a R100 discount off the Mamba armed response fee.
- Homes in our suburb are more desirable because of the Closure and so home values are improved. As crime is a major factor in buy decisions, we have noticed an increasing trend of prospective buyers asking for our suburb's crime stats.
- Reduced householders' insurance.

**Why are closures successful? –** A closure provides an additional security layer which helps to keep criminals away from your front door or gate. Quick getaway routes are closed off and criminals do not know how the security firm will respond if they are seen or commit a crime in the suburb. They also do not know what the follow up will be after the crime and Mamba has, in the past, made arrests way outside our suburb. The visible presence of the guards and the 24-hour patrol vehicle is a major deterrent as criminals know that any incident will be quickly attended to. Well informed residents who are alert and quickly call Mamba and use the WhatsApp emergency group is also a deterrent. Criminals know which suburbs are more clued up and aware of crime and this makes them think twice about committing crime in our area.

An example of this occurred on 25/10/2018. In the morning, a burglary was committed in our suburb. The registration of the vehicle was added to our license plate recognition system. At night there are only 2 entrances into our suburb and the suspect vehicle passed through one of these entrances at 11 pm. The LPR system triggered an alarm in the Mamba control room. Several Mamba response vehicles, including our dedicated vehicle, were immediately dispatched. The two entrances were each covered by a response vehicle and the others started searching through our suburb. The suspect vehicle was caught by Mamba trying to leave our suburb and the driver was arrested. This would not have been possible if every road was open at night.

### What are the Committee's biggest problems? –

- The Committee and Closure is often viewed as a business by many of the residents. We would like the residents to understand that we are not a business but a residents' association. We are not a business that attempts to make profits each month – in fact, we tightly manage income and expenses and our experience is that we come out marginally above break-even from one month to the next. The Committee consists of 5 people – the Chairman, our accountant and three members. We are just like any other resident in that we have jobs, families, friends, hobbies and chores. We are volunteers and when we spend time on the Closure, we have to sacrifice time spent on other activities. Please do not treat us like a “for profit” business but rather as a group of concerned fellow residents trying to do their best under difficult circumstances. Somewhere along the line some residents think we are making a lot of money. We can assure you that this is not the case and that all monies received go to paying mainly for the guards, the 24-hour dedicated patrol vehicle and its drivers. The annual financial accounts are available for viewing at any time.
- When the Closure was first implemented, we had over 85% of residents contributing. Due to the high crime rate and the horrific nature of many of the crimes, the residents needed no convincing about supporting the Closure. Over the years we have seen decreasing numbers of contributors especially with new residents. Sometimes we worry that support is dropping because the suburb is so quiet and that it might take a significant crime event to reverse this. We hope we never get to this situation, but we can't keep our heads in the sand and pretend there are no issues with crime in our country.
- We get some good suggestions from residents, but they do not realise we do not have the manpower to execute on them. As mentioned above, there are only 5 of us and we do not have the finances to pay others to do the job. Residents need to realise that to effect any changes they need to get involved in the change.

**What are the contributor signs?** – Once you have signed up for the Closure a triangular sign will be placed on your gate or wall. This identifies you as a contributing member of the road Closure and informs Mamba that you are entitled to the exclusive services offered by the Closure e.g. fast response from the 24-hour dedicated patrol vehicle.



**Other road closures do it differently/better - why don't we do the same?** – While the Committee is happy to look at any positive suggestions, we would like residents to consider the following –

- Are there physical differences between closures? Not all closures are the same. Some, for example, have dual lanes for entering and leaving the suburb. It is physically impossible for us to implement any suggestions where protocols involve multiple lanes. Others have shops, business centres or schools they must accommodate. We have two schools in our area and, as per Council directives, we must allow large volumes of cars and children (many who do not live in our suburb) to efficiently move through the suburb.
- Are there legal constraints? As per the legislation and conditions discussed above are they acting illegally e.g. making all visitors sign in?
- Are there financial constraints? It is more likely that a closure in the northern suburbs will be better off financially than closures in other areas. For example, we have had suggestions about providing foot and or bike patrols in our suburb. We used to have these but due to decreasing contributor rates we can no longer afford to do this.
- Is it practical? – We are often asked about making visitors sign in. Apart from this not being legal it does not take much to imagine the chaos that would result in forcing every car and school child coming into our suburb in the morning to sign in. Traffic would be queued up to the main street in Edenvale. It would also be impossible to administer.

- Are there manpower constraints? – As mentioned above the Committee is run on a voluntary basis. We are small and sorely lack the physical capability to get things done. We need residents to assist but our experience in the past has been that they are unwilling to do so. Suggestions that come with an offer to implement are the best suggestions!

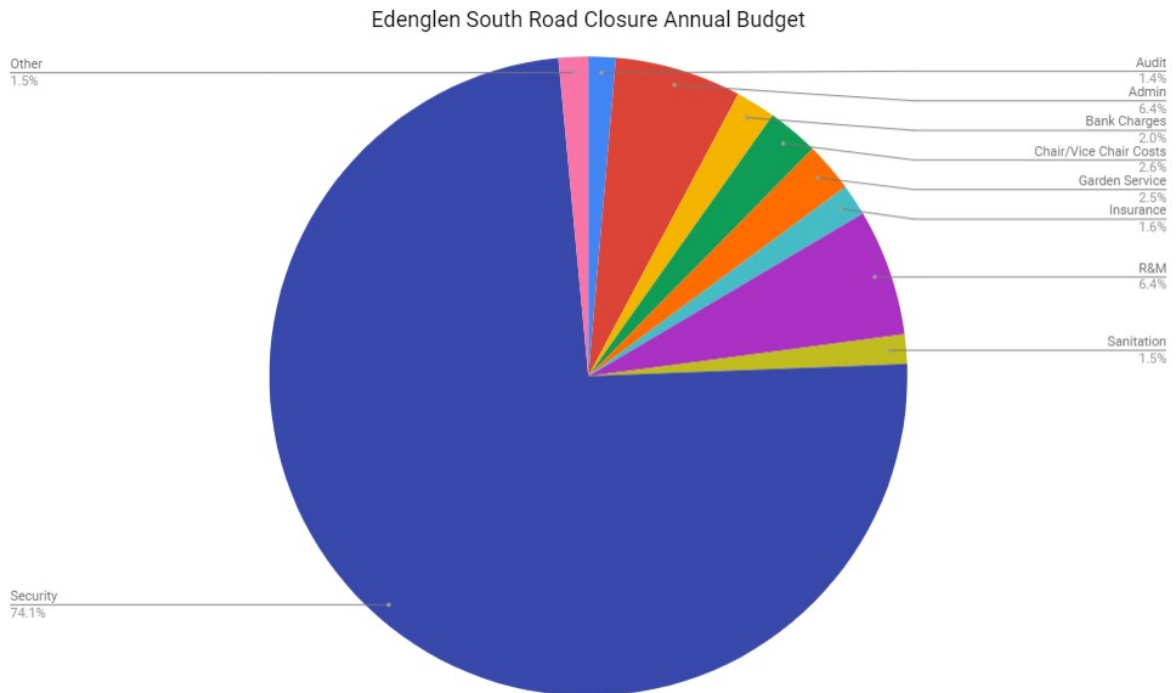
**We must not allow the guys who go through the rubbish bins into our area** – As per the laws stated above, we are not legally allowed to exclude them. Some residents support them, leaving recycling in separate bags, while others object to them. Our suburb is divided on this. However, it should be noted that Mamba does watch them closely and there have been no crimes committed by them in our suburb. If you are concerned about their behaviour, please call Mamba.

#### **What does the Committee expect from the residents? –**

- To maintain our Closure, the serenity of our suburb and the well-being of our residents we obviously need your financial support and a willingness to get involved in any matters relating to the Closure.
- As stated previously, road closures, while they significantly reduce crime, do not completely eradicate crime. We ask that our residents remain alert and immediately report anything suspicious or a crime in the following ways -
  - Call Mamba control room on 011 609 0227 (in all cases this is the first thing you should do).
  - Message on the Mamba Whatsapp Security Group (to join contact Mamba or SMS your name and address to 083 300 2975) to alert other residents on the group. This group is open to Mamba clients and road closure contributors.
  - Call the SAPS Sector 3 vehicle 071 675 6841 (this number is also used for Sector 1, Sector 2 and Sector 4 can be contacted on 071 675 6844)
- **DO NOT BECOME COMPLACENT! BE CAREFUL WHEN LEAVING OR ENTERING YOUR HOMES OR ANY OTHER PROPERTY.** In discussion with security companies, SAP and other road closures we have been able to determine a trend in that almost all incidents take place when you are entering or leaving your home. **We urge residents to take personal responsibility for their security – to check the road before leaving or entering, be aware of your surroundings and of any vehicle following you home, waiting in the road or cruising by slowly. Get through your gate as quickly as possible, and close it immediately.**
- **WHEN YOU MOVE INTO A NEW HOME YOU ARE VULNERABLE** - based on the discussions above the other trend is that new owners often become the victims of crime shortly after moving into a new home. New owners are distracted by the logistics of the move and the excitement of being in a new house. Many of the people involved in the move are strangers and are not known to the new owners. New owners often let their guard down and do not pay attention to their security.
- Sign up for our email communications and please pay attention to any warnings or advice related to criminal activity and suspicious vehicles. Please inform all your household members, including staff, about these warnings.
- We also have a web site where we publish all our newsletters and any relevant information. Residents who have businesses may advertise on this web site.
- If you have any concerns about any of the services of the Closure, please report them to us using our email address. Provide the location, day and time along with a description of your concern. We will use this information to identify which of our security staff were involved. Feedback from residents is vital because we cannot be everywhere all the time. We ask that you put it in writing because we simply do not have the free time or manpower to visit or call every resident (600 homes in total). We frequently get asked to visit or asked to call people but please understand, we are not being rude but are trying to be practical and ensure everyone's concern or idea is noted and addressed.
- If you are unhappy with the Closure or the Committee then the best option to effect any change is to join the Committee and get involved with any changes you think are best for the Closure.
- Please take note of the various telephone numbers and web sites below. If you want to contact the Committee, please do so in writing and send it to [edenglensrc@gmail.com](mailto:edenglensrc@gmail.com). You will receive a prompt response.
- Get to know your neighbours – they can keep an eye on your property whenever you are away.
- Most of all – the Closure is not a business. It is a community effort. It is there for the good of all residents and they need to be involved to make sure it survives. It is not the Committee's Closure – it is **your** Closure.

## Financials –

The annual budget of approximately R2m is broken down as follows -



**Closure Fee** – The levy for the Closure is R460.00 per month, including VAT. Mamba will give any armed response customers a discount of R100 from their monthly armed response fee if they are a paying member of the closure. A debit order is attached. Please fill in the debit order and either fax it or email it back to us. The fax number is at the top of the debit order. If there is no debit form, please contact us on [edenglensrc@gmail.com](mailto:edenglensrc@gmail.com).

Behind the scenes there are some dedicated people working hard to try and prevent any incident of crime happening to you, your family and your property. By combining road closure infrastructure, 24-hour vehicle, armed response and providing relevant information we have reduced crime by significant levels in our suburb. We ask that residents play an active part in sustaining our Closure and fighting against crime.

Regards,

The Edenglen South Road Closure Committee

Emergency - Mamba (011 609 0227)

SAPS Sector 3 vehicle SAPS Sector 3 vehicle 071 675 6841 (this number is also used for Sector 1, Sector 2 and Sector 4 can be contacted on 071 675 6844)

Whatsapp – use the Mamba emergency group to report suspicious activity or crime in progress to Mamba and residents.

[www.edenglensouthclosure.co.za](http://www.edenglensouthclosure.co.za) - Our official web site, all past newsletters are posted here.

[www.edenglensrc.blogspot.com](http://www.edenglensrc.blogspot.com) - Community notice board. Do not post crime reports or closure operational issues here rather use our email for this.