

Extract from NV Local Spatial Development Framework (NV LSDF), 2018

1. Unique Natural Environment

Natures Valley, which lies at the foot of the coastal escarpment and is accessible only from the historic Groot River Pass, is bordered by the protected lagoon and estuary, the sea and the indigenous rain forests of the Tsitsikamma Section of the Garden Route National Park (GRNP). Natures Valley is one of only a few villages in South Africa that are surrounded by a proclaimed national park.

2. Geographical Constraints:

The township only comprises 406 erven and, as its boundaries are the Groot River Lagoon, the ocean and the Tsitsikamma Section of the GRNP, no further development outside the residential area is possible. These same constraints impose severe restrictions on any further development of existing infrastructure with particular reference to sewage management and availability of water.

Nature's Valley has limited accessibility due to its location. As far as linkages with Plettenberg Bay and other areas are concerned, the only access is via the N2 and the R102, the old Groot River pass road. Nature's Valley is situated approximately 30 kilometers from the nearest shopping and work opportunities. For this reason, Nature's Valley does not function as a "dormitory town".

3. Services Infrastructure

Nature's Valley's demand for **electricity** has shown a steady increase over the past two decades however the bulk supply appears adequate provided there is no inappropriate development residential densification.

Civil services infrastructure, especially **sanitation infrastructure** (or the lack thereof) requires urgent attention to deal effectively with the present volumes and to avoid the contamination of the Groot River estuary which could pose a health threat to residents and visitors.

The potable **water supply** relies solely on water from the Groot River which, combined with limited reservoir storage is already constrained during periods of high occupancy in Natures Valley.

The **stormwater drainage** system is inadequate and flooding causes damage to a number of low-lying properties during heavy rains.

4. Natural Environment and Habitats under pressure

The following ecologically sensitive habitats occur in Nature's Valley; coastal forest, ridges, wetlands, coastal dune fynbos and estuarine areas. Animal and birdlife are prolific.

Parks/Open Spaces

The public open spaces (parks) are under threat of development. Each of the four park erven have a specific use or function and represent a different type of habitat namely wetland reserve (Erf 380), afro-montane indigenous forest (Erf 381), coastal dune fynbos reserve (Erf 460) and botanical garden (Erf 429). The loss of any one of the parks would result in a loss of environmentally sensitive areas and consequent negative impacts on the ambience and sense of place of Nature's Valley. Open spaces are also used by the Nature's Valley Trust for the purpose of syllabus approved Environmental Education of school children.

Wetland

Wetland is defined by the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998) as:

“Land which is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is periodically covered by shallow water, that naturally supports vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil.”

In 2003, the Department Water Affairs and Forestry published a document for the identification and delineation of wetlands.

All the distinguishing conditions exist on Erf 380 and should therefore be protected in terms of the National Water Act.

Indigenous Forest Habitat (Afro-montane)

Erf 381 hosts indigenous forest trees and habitat which is 60 years or older. The National Heritage Act refers to *“landscapes and natural features of cultural significance”, and especially those older than 60 years*”. In terms of the Act, these trees have natural heritage value based on their age, let alone their value, and therefore enjoy protection in terms of the National Forest Act of 1998 read with the National Environmental Management Act of 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA).

Botanical Garden

The Phyl Martin Park was established as a park during 1955, and developed as a botanical garden a few years later. It currently incorporates an indigenous park landscape, botanical garden and nursery where indigenous plants are propagated. The park has been maintained by the Nature's Valley community since its establishment.

Fynbos Reserve

Erf 460 is a rare remaining example of coastal dune Fynbos habitat.

Fynbos as a vegetation type is under severe pressure, and any opportunity to preserve even small areas should be taken within the context of South Africa's responsibility as the only custodian of this vegetation type in the world.

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From the above it is clear that Nature's Valley is unique and that planning and development must be closely scrutinised to retain and protect both the urban and natural environment.