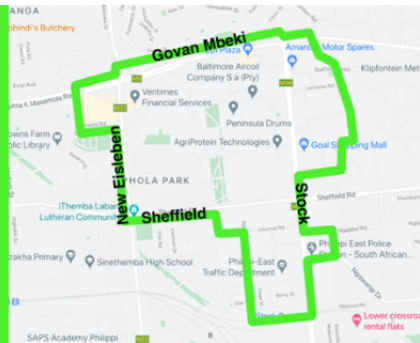


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Dear Reader

As promised in [Wednesday's newsletter](#), I'm pleased to share this special report about the success of the Neighborhood Watch initiative in Philippi and how it's changed residents' lives.

Our thanks to [Buziwe Nocuze](#) for the story and photos.

Kind regards,

Egbert Wessels
PMU Manager

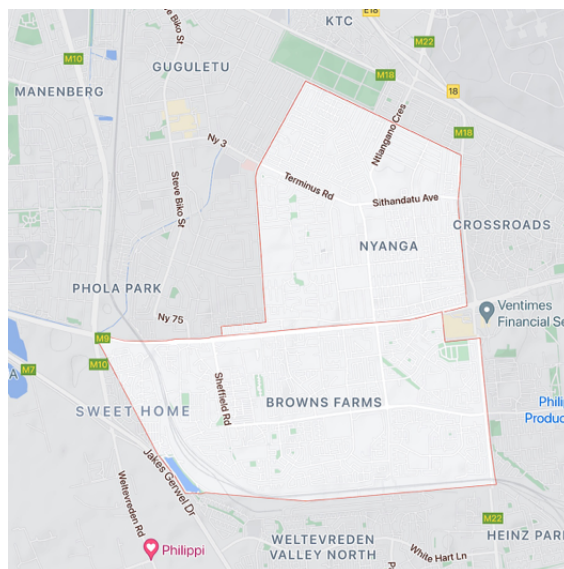
The Neighborhood Watch in Philippi

In 2019, Nyanga police station had reported, once again, the [highest number of murders in South Africa](#) and residents thought their township would remain the "murder capital of the country."

Yet barely a year later, [Nyanga's murder rate had dropped by 36%](#) and Delft had replaced it at the top of the Murders: Top 30 Police Stations list.

[This year's statistics](#) offer even more reasons to wonder: Has there been a turnaround in Nyanga's crime situation?

Next-door to Nyanga is the Browns Farm area in Philippi, where a decline in crime is happening just like in Nyanga and for the same reason: because of the growing number of volunteers who join a local Neighborhood Watch and patrol the streets to ensure the safety of their community.



The first Neighborhood Watch in Browns Farm — called Fireburn, now with 80 members — started in March 2020. Soon after, another four branches were launched: Kwakhanya, Siyazama, Masiqhame, and Sisithemba. Altogether, there are now nearly 500 volunteers engaged in Neighborhood Watch patrols.



Members of Masiqhame Neighborhood Watch gather for their night shift — 17:30, 14 June

“Before the Neighborhood Watch started, we were easy victims of crime. We weren't comfortable sending our kids to the shops and feared for their lives. So we appreciate what the patrols are doing, because crime has decreased.”

— Zukelwa Baliso, resident of Browns Farm

Melikhaya Gadeni, secretary of Sector 4 Community Policing Forum, says that the idea of starting the Neighborhood Watch initiative is part of their strategy for policing Browns Farm.

In the face of prevalent crime in the area, they sometimes doubt if they can really win in this war for the community's wellbeing — yet because of the Neighborhood Watch, the situation is slowly turning around for the better.



Community Policing Forum members Mandla Wonxa (head of safety and security), Melikhaya Gadeni (secretary) and Anele Madondile (chairperson)

“We were getting robbed on our way to work or returning home, but since the start of the Neighborhood Watch we feel safe because the thugs know the patrols will deal with them if they engage in criminal activities.”

— Lusindiso Ntanjana, resident of Browns Farm

All branches of Browns Farm Neighborhood Watch operate two daily shifts. Morning and evening patrols (5-9am; 5-9pm) cover the residential areas and also Junxion Mall; and because members don't get paid for their service, daytime patrols (9am-5pm) only happen on weekends.



Neighborhood Watch members standing guard outside a shop on Ngulube Street to make sure shoppers are safe — 18:15, 14 June

"We notice that crime has decreased and are glad that our effort to keep our community safe is paying off. But it's dangerous, because we have invaded the criminals' spaces and stopped their activities, so now we are a target."

— Abide Bhukwana, Neighborhood Watch member

To join Neighborhood Watch, a security clearance is needed that's facilitated by the Community Policing Forum (CPF) and that involves registration, fingerprinting and criminal background checks.

"We have a good working relationship with both SAPS and Law Enforcement," says CPF secretary Melikhaya Gadeni; and he applauds Alderman JP Smith, the City's Mayco Member for Safety and Security, for his support of Neighborhood Watch operations.



Standing watch next to a street vendor at the Village Four — 18:30, 14 June

“Street vendors are now free to operate until late, because they know there are patrol members around who are protecting them.”

— Lusindiso Ntanjana, resident of Browns Farm



Residents enjoying the free wifi provided by a Somali shop. Previously the community could not make use of this service because of cellphone robberies — 19:00, 14 June

"I am worried about the Safety of our patrollers, that's why each member has the direct line numbers of the command centers at Browns Farm and Nyanga Police Station, where they know how to share sensitive information without any leaks occurring. So far it's been working well."

— Melikhaya Gadeni, CPF secretary

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