

If you can pay, you can stay

By Bev Mortimer

St Francis is not for the working class. It is an area for those who own homes and for those who wish to holiday here.

And because of these real facts, there is no affordable accommodation to be had for any class besides the landed gentry.

As an elderly lady in her 80s who lived in a beautiful home here for nearly 40 years, and who knew Leopold Hulzen who built St Francis Bay 60 years ago, says: "St Francis Bay was never meant for employees. It was for wealthy, retired people and for those who wanted to take vacations in this idyllic spot. And the new parts of St Francis Bay, such as Santamerne and the canals, were initially built for the rich and famous."

Early this century there were plenty of business people who came here hoping to run small businesses, to retire here, have a peaceful lifestyle, where their children could grow up and have a better life than in the city jungles. Many survived, some did exceptionally well and rose to the upper class heights, others folded and disappeared. Many of the businesses in existence a decade

ago are no longer around.

And in the digital age, as St Francis Bay has become more renown globally, more people have wanted to live here, retire here or holiday here. This has placed huge demands on accommodation. And where there is a shortage, the prices rocket. Home owners have put their monthly prices for permanent rentals way out of the reach of most lowly clerks, shop

assistants and artisans.

There is no accommodation for these people. Builders have told this newspaper over the past 13 years that the price of building costs means builders need to get a return and cannot afford to offer cheap, affordable accommodation for the working class. Plus the strict building rules in this St Francis area prohibit high rise flats for employees. Townhouses can be built but the prices charged will be beyond the reach of the workers.

Consequently the life for those working here is sometimes intolerable. There are some horror stories.

The majority of employees either stay in the townships or neighbouring towns and they have to commute here. There are taxis and lift clubs catering for their transport needs. But the long trips and queues of cars leaving and arriving at the start and end of working hours, means they may as well be in the cities but being able to work nearer to their homes.

There has over the past decade been about 2-3 dozen modest homes available for rental on the market. Those who have been able to pay for these homes have often spent half of their income at least to have a roof over their heads in the town. So saving has been impossible. Most tell of moving every two years when the houses have been sold or when the owners decide to retire in their own homes. Every time one moves, there are breakages and huge losses

furniture.

Those tenants who can afford the local rents say they are sometimes paying to live in substandard homes. Unless tenants rent through the few organised estate agencies who solve problems, those who deal with home owners direct, sometimes endure difficult living conditions.

Tenants cannot complain, they have to sit in silence, knowing there is nowhere else for them to move to, while at the door is a long queue of wannabe tenants waiting for them to vacate!

But for the past 20 years there were at least homes available for a 'middle class'. But not anymore.

The rise of the windfarmers has seen the middle management of these new industries snap up all the affordable accommodation in the R4000-R6000 range in this area. This trend started last year June and with more and more wind farms cropping up, the situation is exacerbating.

The real situation of affordable accommodation is that there is currently nothing under R10 000 a month and most business workers don't even take that amount home in any month, plus many shops don't even make that turnover in the winter months. So these highly priced homes to rent stay unlet for longer, then during season the owners are persuaded to rent them out at a minimum of R2000 a day.

For affordable accommodation, places like small garden cottages are like jewels and almost as pricey... tiny bachelor flat-lets with enough room to swing a cat that have basic furniture (so you cannot bring your own) and that forbid pets, are going for R3500 without electricity – and these are even out of the reach of the average employee who takes home R4000-R5000 a month in wages. And the prices are escalating as homeowners dream of rich pickings they can make out of the dearth!

And many tenants have resorted to compromising by having to give up their dear pets. And if they cannot find homes for them, have to put their pets down! The heartaches endured are relentless.

Daily there are desperate requests for accommodation to let on FB for people who have jobs lined up for the festive season in this St Francis area, but there is absolutely 'no room at the inn' for them unless they can afford the R2000 and upwards a day holiday rates.

Then there are stories abounding such as building developers from Gauteng wanting to apply to do huge housing developments in St Francis. And they want to bring about 13 middle management employees to rent here over the construction period. "Oh no!" they are told. "You cannot do that. There is nowhere for employees to stay in St Francis!"

And the current *no accommodation for employees syndrome* is only going to get worse, most agents agree. They are forecasting a huge hike in the price of houses as a result.

Just imagining the accommodation shortage that could arise if Thyspunt is chosen as the next site to build two or three nuclear reactors! In Lephalale/Medupi, which was once a platteland one-horse *dorpie* called Ellisras, where 60 years ago, there used to be a grimy, seedy hotel, a boersestad, a ko-op., a post office and one or two tiny shops, plus a few small, shopkeeper homes, rentals of houses are in 2015 going for around R20 000 per month!! And the town is booming!

It has been predicted that if Thyspunt doesn't happen, the St Francis of the future could eventually be a huge residential estate, owned by the landed gentry, to which hundreds of workers commute to and from each working day from neighbouring towns.

Food for thought... or action?

CONTACT ST FRANCIS CHRONICLE

Address: P.O. Box 343 St Francis Bay 6312.
Tel: 042 294 0264

Email: sfc@stfranchronicle.co.za

Websites: For the 'Best and Latest Local News in St Francis 24/7' visit our daily online news' site: stfranchronicle.com.

Fill in your email address at the end of any post or article online where it says "Follow" and you will get news straight after it has been posted in your email inbox.

Editor: Plain English Layout & Design: Bev Mortimer (083 609 5835, 042 294 1964); Marcel Mortimer (082 300 6542).

Advertising: Bev Mortimer (083 609 5835; 042 294 1964).

News/Advertisement physical drop-off point: Calibre Security, St Francis Bay Village Centre; Bay Estates, St Francis Drive.

Material deadlines: 25th of every month

Display Advert Space Bookings: 21st of every month.

Notes: All adverts to be paid strictly before print. All unpaid adverts by due date are considered cancelled.

All articles written, all photos taken, plus all adverts designed, by the Editor and printed in the St Francis Chronicle are protected by Copyright.

©Reproduction or copying of any part of the contents of this newspaper and its concept and design can only be done with the Editor's written permission.

Try Our Word Puzzle

See how many words you can make from the letters.

No words to be less than four letters. Every word has to contain the middle, bold letter. The goal is to also find the nine letter word(s). No plural nouns, capital letters, slangs, or foreign language words (except those accepted in the English dictionary) This month's goal:

30 words exactly 20 words good, 15 words for

Apologies. Last month we gave the incorrect solution. The correct solution is on p12



After hours problems
042 291 0250

Private Ambulance: 042 291 0749

Fire department:

042 291 0283

Flooding:

Willie Botha: 082 857 2253

10177;

042 291 0749

Cannot wait a month for the next edition to read *St Francis' news?*
Follow us daily on FB or Twitter @stfranchronicle or at stfranchronicle.com

St Francis Chronicle's circulation figures have been audited by ABC, the SA circulation figures auditor, in 2014.

Disclaimer: St Francis Chronicle and its printers cannot be held responsible for poor quality adverts sent in with incorrect colour codes.

Emergency Numbers

SAPS 042 200 1817/ 10111

Calibre Security

042 294 0038

G4S 042 294 1303

Smhart Security

0861 10 15 16

NSRI 042 294 0131

Doctors 042 294 0047;

042 294 0719

Ambulance 10177;

Private Ambulance: 042 291 0749

Fire department:

042 291 0283

Flooding:

Willie Botha: 082 857 2253

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749

10177;

042 291 0749