

# greening SOWETO

## GREENING SOWETO: – TRANSFORMING DUSTBOWLS AND LANDFILL SITES TO AWARD- WINNING PARKS AND ECO-SERVICES

Johannesburg's "green divide", a legacy of inequality separating the wealthy north from the dusty south west, is disappearing in the wake of award-winning greening initiatives championed by Johannesburg City Parks.

As an implementing agency on behalf of the City of Joburg, City Parks is responsible for park development, conservation, management, open space protection, cemeteries, education, recreation, beautification and tree planting.

Implementation of the greening initiatives, spearheaded by the Office of the Executive Mayor in the City of Joburg was given impetus during the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup and the allocation of 'beautification' funding under the generic banner of the 'Greening of Joburg'.

In general, City Parks objective is to provide 4 hectares of open space land for every 1 000 people. This carrying capacity is based on a population of 4.434 million people in Johannesburg, which covers an area of 1 644 sq km.

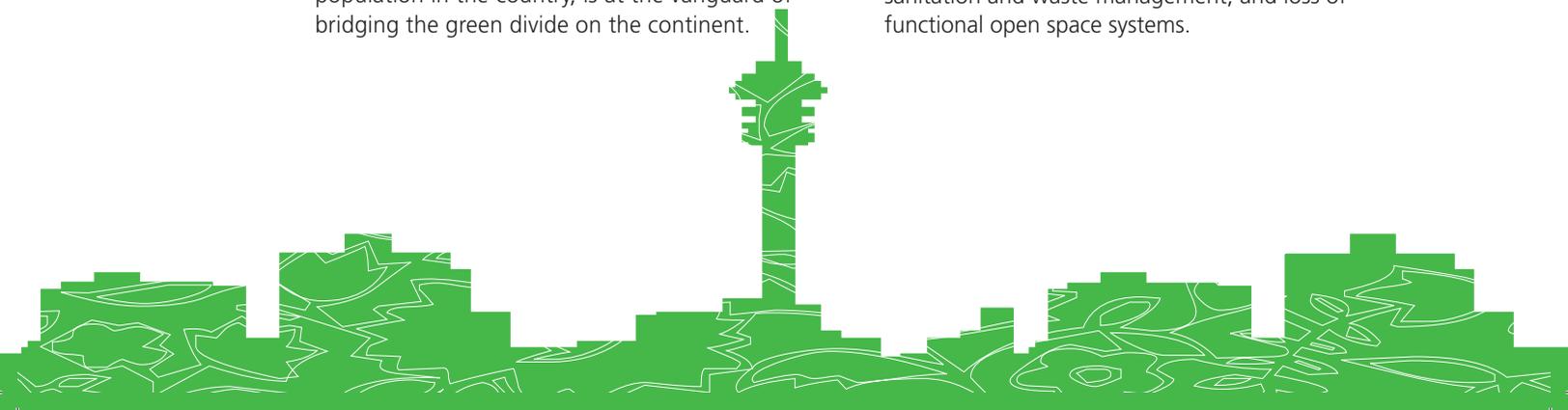
There is no question that Johannesburg, an area with the largest economy and with the most dense population in the country, is at the vanguard of bridging the green divide on the continent.

Overall, Johannesburg's long term approach is underpinned by the 2040 Growth Development Strategy (GDS) and the five year integrated development plan (IDP). In turn, the GDS is driven by six developmental principles comprising proactive absorption of the poor; balanced and shared growth; facilitated social mobility; settlement restructuring, sustainability and environmental justice; and innovative governance solutions.

The city's rapid growth since it was founded in 1886 has resulted in a number of challenges arising in part from the shaping of the city's form and landscape by mining activities, exacerbated by apartheid policies that created a fragmented city. Among these challenges are rapid urbanisation, urban sprawl and

*City Parks' objective is to provide 4 hectares of open space for every 1 000 people.*

decay, unemployment, traffic congestion, flooding, security of energy, food and water supply, air quality, sanitation and waste management, and loss of functional open space systems.



Two complementary initiatives: the Greening Soweto Project and the rehabilitation of the Klip River/Klipspruit (KK project), are at the core of the Greening of Johannesburg project.

The Greening Soweto initiative predated the KK project, having been launched in September 2006 with the planting of 6 000 trees in 10 minutes with the assistance of 12 000 learners. The target, which was achieved in June 2010, was to plant 200 000 trees in Soweto before the start of the World Cup.

The World Cup provided City Parks with an avenue to garner additional funds for its greening initiative and to use greening as a conduit to build civic-ownership and community pride.

The Member of the Mayoral Committee of Community Development in the City of Johannesburg, Clr Chris Vondo stated: 'Our development stance was to make the biggest impact with the least amount of resources to benefit as many people as possible, while being mindful of the future needs of Joburg to create a liveable, resilient and sustainable Joburg.'

## *The masterpiece is the Klipspruit Kliprivier (KK) project.*

It may be stating the obvious, but funding of the greening initiative was among the primary challenges facing City Parks, which receives about 1.21% (R457.2 million in 2012) of the total Johannesburg Metro budget of R37.6 billion.

Vondo points out that both the Greening of Soweto and the KK project are based on internationally benchmarked standards. 'These are invaluable in addressing the greening disparities and contribute to transformation of targeted areas into vibrant, green and sustainable landscapes.'

'The masterpiece is the Klipspruit Kliprivier (KK) project. This is a development framework made up of 36 interlinked park nodes of open spaces along the corridors of these two rivers. It was smartly packaged and sold to solicit partnerships for development.'

The multi-stage project was launched in August 2008 and by June 2012 eight sites, that comprise of various phases had been completed to create a green corridor. These include large-scale developments in Mofolo South, Orlando West, Orange Farm, Mapetla, Diepkloof, Dlamini, Zola and Dobsonville.'

At national level, City Parks' greening efforts fall within the realms of the government's 'Million Trees' programme officially launched in 2007 by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In partnership with the business sector, NGOs, municipalities and dedicated individuals. The focus of that programme is to plant indigenous trees in homesteads, streets, public areas and rehabilitation areas.



# THOKOZA PARK

The 'Green Divide' so clearly apparent in Johannesburg during the apartheid era is a soft metaphor for the disparities that separated communities on racial lines. The wide-ranging significance of the greening initiatives in Johannesburg was recognised at the United Nations-endorsed Livable Communities awards in Chicago 2010 when City Parks won the First Place Gold award against 37 projects entered by more than 35 countries.

The judges were impressed by the projects' impact on daily lives and made special mention of its cutting edge concept, design, consultation, maintenance, implementation and monitoring.

*"It's not only about restoring the integrity of the area but restoring dignity to people."*

'The main objective of the greening campaign is to change the dust bowl landscape of townships and new settlement areas to become green and beautiful, while at the same time contributing towards the fight to mitigate climate change and increase food security. In brief, the aim is to create sustainable and liveable human settlements,' says Vondo. The northern areas of Johannesburg have been described as having amongst the most dense man-made urban forests in the world.

'It's not only about restoring the integrity of the area but restoring dignity to people in these areas.'

## THE KK PROJECT

The Klip River catchment covers the southern portion of the Johannesburg area and flows from north to south through greater Soweto, forming part of the catchment area that empties into the Vaal Dam from which Rand Water draws its raw water stock to provide potable water services to millions of people in the Greater Johannesburg area.

The Department of Environmental Management, in partnership with Johannesburg City Parks, prioritised the Kliplriver/Klipspruit Project mainly, to develop a continuous system of functional green open spaces and link parks along the Klip River.

The project encompasses a wide range of interventions including river rehabilitation measures such as bank stabilisation, weirs, pollution mitigation, wetland rehabilitation and management





interventions, the development of eco-parks and eco-recreation amenities, greening and landscaping, as well as the promotion of economic and job creation opportunities associated with these,' says Vondo.

The project also comprises river cleaning and awareness and capacity building initiatives. Total budget for the multi-stage is R600 million over a period of several years.

Vondo mentions that ecological goods and services offered by the Klipriver/Klipspruit system are viewed as equally important as other basic services due to their contribution to an improved quality of life for residents. 'This programme further highlights the City of Johannesburg's political commitment to bring about change in the quality of life and a sense of responsibility for communities to take pride in their environment.'

'City Parks has transformed a number of open spaces along the Klipriver/Klipspruit wetlands into ecologically functioning parks. An example is the Dorothy Nyembe Park, which was upgraded while making the people living in and around the area more aware of the environment. The park has an ecological training centre with a medicinal educational garden.' More recently City Parks rolled out a golf driving range. As much as this is not as popular as soccer – it does attract the avid golfer in the area.

It was clear that the greening initiative – which included mature endemic trees, ground cover and other plants – would need to draw on substantial stocks. City Parks' nurseries at Huddle Park and at Mofolo Park were given a specific focus on growing tree stocks that were sizable and could be planted on streets with minimal loss stemming from inclement weather.

Among the outcomes of the KK project to date are:

- A clean, healthy river, free of pollution and odours
- Safe and beautiful parks for enjoyable recreation alongside the river
- Well managed conservation within the riverine corridor, free of alien vegetation and supporting enhanced biodiversity
- Well managed reed beds
- Social and economic opportunities and associated activities.
- An opportunity to nurture environmental awareness in hearts and minds of benefiting communities

*World struggle-icon, Mr Nelson Mandela and music legend, Mr Lionel Richie have endorsed the Greening Soweto Project.*





## THE GREENING OF SOWETO

The actual planting process was quite an extensive one because part of the implementation comprised going door to door to enquire if residents wanted trees. So apart from planting trees on streets, trees were also planted on private property in close consultation with beneficiaries. In some instances residents did not want trees due to space constraints. Residents who accepted the trees, committed to ensuring that they would be nurtured and through this process City Parks' environmental education department were able to educate beneficiaries on the importance of trees to build a healthy and liveable city

Vondo says many organisations became involved in the initiative, and donations ranged from R100 000 to over R2 million. Support was received from various organisations, including financial institutions, mobile telephone network operators and companies interested in offsetting their carbon footprints.



*An opportunity to nurture environmental awareness in hearts and minds of benefiting communities*

'City Parks ensured that all donations received were directed towards the actual procurement of trees and in return absorbed all costs related to the planting and maintenance of the trees. The average price of an established tree is about R1 000, including planting and labour, and therefore expenditure on the planting of 200 000 trees was just over R200 million.

### Job creation

Turning to the need for additional labour, Vondo says the greening initiatives 'are so labour intensive that we were able to support the Department of Labour's national call to create green jobs.' Contractors are also briefed that benefiting communities must be prioritised when sub-contracting – again a deliberate process to build community ownership for greening and to reduce maintenance costs relative to litter and vandalism.

'However, we found in the beginning that we weren't able to source enough skilled workers. We therefore set up the City Parks Training and Development Academy, sourced job seekers through the City of Joburg's, unemployment database. Over 100 learners have gone through the Academy and many of them are now part of City Parks permanent workforce. This award-winning initiative is funded by savings from the salary bill.





## Education and awareness

City Parks has linked the schools environmental programmes with the objectives of getting learners to nurture tree plantings and to inculcate a greater value of the environment. An estimated 300 000 learners have been addressed through school assemblies and through the large screen TVs installed at 9 parks. About 28 000 learners per annum are taken on nature-tours through City Parks conservation facilities.

## Additional outcomes

Among the benefits that have accrued to the greening legacy initiatives are:

- Reduction in air pollution. The most recent air quality surveys in Soweto have shown a 2% reduction in air pollution
- Decrease in litter, vandalism and petty crime in parks
- A greater awareness of the benefits of clean and green spaces
- A catalyst for socio-economic development in the area.

## Maintenance

The City Parks maintenance plan categorises facilities in terms of flagship and neighbourhood parks. Each of Johannesburg Metro's seven regions has a maintenance team that is responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of the facilities in their region.

## Food gardens

Johannesburg City Parks is aware of the importance of nurturing an urban gardening mindset. Community-based food gardening is one of the key outcomes of the Joburg 2040 vision to alleviate poverty. Over 42 gardens predominantly in schools have been rolled out. This has been complemented by the planting of over 7000 fruit trees in 2012.

## Lessons

Vondo says City Parks has learned a number of lessons as part of its aggressive plans to resolve environmental and recreational imbalances that could be of benefit to other local authorities.

Among the lessons that could prove invaluable are:

- A master plan must be in place. Know where you are going and know what is still outstanding. A framework based on an environmental assessment must also be in place
- As much as it is crucial to have the initial budget, make sure that sufficient



*“Growing eco-conscientious children that can take pride in the environment is a critical component of the greening programme”*



## MAPETLA WETLANDS

funding is in place to maintain projects.

- Consult with communities from the outset, including the design and job creation elements. Through that you are able to build ownership.

Without proper consultation, people will not take ownership of the development and this might lead to actions such as vandalism and non-utilisation of the developed facility. The stakeholders common to all the case studies undertaken by City Parks are community based organisations (including NGOs), schools (teachers and learners),

initiatives must be aligned with other city initiatives to get leverage.

- Make sure through internal departmental checks that everybody receives equal servicing, not just the people who make the most noise. That's what bridging the 'Green-Divide' is all about
- Be open to input from other local authorities. In terms of sharing, City Parks plays host to many delegations from different parts of the world, including Africa, the United States, Japan and China in order to share greening best practices and to learn from other cities
- The KK project demonstrated that in order for the project to be a success, it is:-

*“the green initiatives are so job intensive that we were able to support the Department of Labour’s national call to create green jobs”.*



ward councillors and ward committees, local businesses, youth, women and religious groups, commonly, other government departments.

- It is important to understand who your customers are, as any successful businessman will tell you. Find out how important facilities and services are to customers, and also how satisfied they are with their provision. The best way is through a user intercept survey in which actual users of parks are canvassed for their views as opposed to the views of the general community.

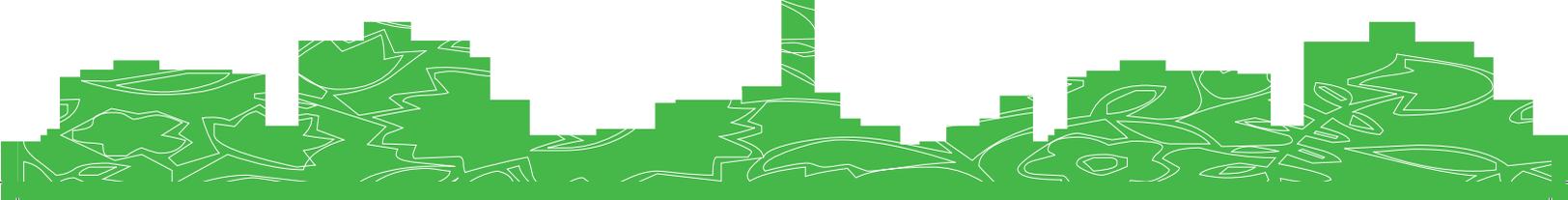
- The entire planning, monitoring and maintenance programmes need to be aligned with the capital development process. If management is not in place, these programmes can disappear virtually overnight and in the long term can be viewed as wasteful expenditure.
- Public private partnerships and media interaction are required to publicise activities to help generate donor funding for other initiatives. These additional

- important to address community behaviour towards conservation and biodiversity management in general. It is crucial to have institutional partnerships in place and to keep the communication channels open with all partners before, during and post the development of the project as they have shown to have fast tracked the implementation of the nodes of the KK project.
- So often people say something is just not doable – but it can be achieved with enthusiasm and commitment.

Vondo gave the development of Thokoza Park, in Rockville, Soweto as an excellent example of the benefits of a well-planned and implemented participation process.

The community was an active participant in all phases of the project and their concerns were made part of the project. One of those concerns was a road closure which was suggested on the project designs. Through community suggestions, the road was incorporated into the plans. The rewards were:

- Friends of the Thokoza Park Committee was formed. The committee assists in the care of the park, ensures a security presence in the park, and reports on services shortfalls and bylaw transgressions. ■





AREA OF MANAGEMENT	QUANTITY
Number of parks and arterials	2 343
Area of developed parks	4 239.5 hectares
Area of undeveloped parks	2 080.6 hectares
Selected sidewalks	3 593.2 hectares
Nature reserves	1 202,6 hectares
Street trees	1,4 – 1,7 million
Number of cemeteries	36
Area of cemeteries	1 254 hectares
Number of crematoria	2
Number of nurseries	4
Water surfaces	174 hectares
Bird sanctuaries	366,4 hectares
Trails and river trails	107km = 1 587 hectares
Environmental & education centres	6
Size of fleet	312 Vehicles; 131 Trailers

Total number of employees as at 30 June 2012: 1 579

*The rollout of food gardens to address food security, the threat of climate change, and to reclaim neglected spaces, is vital.*

JOHANNESBURG CITY PARKS

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