

# **INAUGURAL SPEECH OF THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2021 – CONNIE BAPELA COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY OF JOHANNESBURG**

## **Part 1 – Intro – City of Opportunities Alive with Hope**

Mr Speaker, Honorable Members of Council.

I believe that today is a momentous occasion.

I believe that today holds unlimited potential for us to realise the opportunity presented to us by the people of this great City.

I believe that today was made possible by our Heavenly Father who is the creator of the universe and the totality of all existence.

I stand before you today thanks to the family that believed in my potential, and who gave me the ability to realise the opportunities available to me.

It is my family who gave me hope and made me believe that a better future was indeed possible.

To stand here as the first black female mayor of the largest and most important city in this country, is proof that Joburg really is the City of Opportunities.

This is the City of Opportunities which is alive with hope.

This is the City of Opportunities to thousands who come here every year in pursuit of their dreams of a better life.

It is the City where every person from every walk of life comes together to make this the most dynamic and innovative centre of economic and cultural activity - the beating heart of our country, where the City of Opportunity is alive with potential.

Today we see the living proof of our vibrant constitutional democracy, alive with this potential: 18 parties from across the political spectrum: democratically elected by the people of Johannesburg and united to make Joburg the best it can be, so that it can provide the best quality of life to all who call this great City their home.

It is this united vision which I believe we all share, and which I believe will allow us to work together to build the Johannesburg we all dream of, and overcome the challenges which we know it faces.

These challenges are massive, and will require us to work together, not just with each other, but with every sector of our society through true partnerships that reflect the spirit of our society.

We have overcome great challenges in the past, and I believe we can do it again, together, driven only by what's in the best interests of the people of Johannesburg.

## **Part 2 – Loss of hope**

Fellow Councillors, we know these challenges all too well. They were here before the Covid-19 pandemic, but this pandemic has only made them worse.

This global pandemic has caused many of us to lose that which sustains us: hope.

This makes our challenge to work together to rebuild Joburg all the more important.

We must bring back hope to our great city.

We feel this lack of hope when we learn that unemployment has reached critical levels - now over 40% of residents do not enjoy the dignity of work, of earning a living to support themselves and their families.

Worst of all is the impact of this on the youth - over 55% of the young people of our City, our future, are unemployed, and face an uncertain tomorrow without hope.

We feel this lack of hope when we see families going hungry because of no jobs.

We feel this lack of hope in the massive crime rates that leave us all feeling unsafe.

We feel this lack of hope in the crumbling roads, in the power that constantly goes off, in the taps that run dry, and in a city that we can't trust to get the basics done.

We feel this lack of hope in families who occupy land, desperate for housing opportunities, desperate to build a home.

## **Part 3 – Crossroads and Common ground**

Against this background, we find ourselves at a crossroads today.

We face an important choice: we can either let Johannesburg struggle along as an increasingly unlikely pathway, or we can decide to unite in our efforts to improve the lives of all residents.

As the incoming Executive Mayor, I wish to ensure that we govern inclusively, in a manner that bridges and connects, rather than divides.

In doing so, I have highlighted five areas where we share common ground.

1. **Ensure fairness for all.** It is our responsibility to ensure that all citizens should be able to access public services that meet their basic needs, regardless of their community, their current circumstances, or their ability to pay.
2. **Emphasise Customer focus and flexibility:** As public service employees, the focus must be on improving customer service and providing customers with services that meet their individual needs and circumstances must be prioritised.
3. **Govern with integrity, honesty, transparency and accountability.** Citizens have a right to know how and where their money is spent. They have a right to know how government tenders are awarded and what steps government is taking to reduce corruption and waste. We must ensure greater accountability and ensure that spending reflects the real needs of citizens.
4. **Partner, connect and coordinate better.** To address complex societal challenges and enable sustainable development we must partner with businesses, nongovernmental organizations and other agencies from different sectors to find ways of collaborating more effectively to make services more integrated.
5. **Become more accessible.** The delivery of services must be easily accessible. This will require us to reduce waiting times and extend public services into parts of the City that are poorly served. We need to be more responsive as we become more accessible.

It is imperative that we rebuild the public's trust in the City of Joburg. To rebuild trust, we must engage the public, enable individuals to "have a say" and demonstrate how the City is committed to delivering services that improve people's quality of life.

## **Part 4 – The Vision & Priorities**

As Executive Mayor, it is my fervent hope and vision to rebuild Joburg as the City of Opportunity – where anyone from any background can realise their potential and enjoy a quality standard of living.

I believe that this vision can restore hope to all residents of our great City.

To achieve this vision, I would like to share our 7 priorities for building a better Joburg:

### **Priority 1: Quality services to all residents**

- This is non-negotiable: all residents deserve quality services and must get them - there are no excuses for not keeping the lights on and the tap running. There can be no economic growth without getting the basics right.

## **Priority 2: A safe and secure City**

- Safety is another non-negotiable: we all crave it, it is important to a quality life and strong economic growth, and we will achieve this through dedicated partnerships, technology, and investment in our safety and emergency services.

## **Priority 3: A caring, supportive City**

- A society can be judged on how it takes care of its most vulnerable, and we will make sure that there will be improved healthcare, drug recovery programmes, support for the homeless, food security programs, and dignified old age homes.

## **Priority 4: A pro-business and pro-jobs City**

- Government must do everything possible to create an environment for economic growth, so that entrepreneurs and businesses can invest and create the jobs that will continue to make Joburg the City of Opportunities.

## **Priority 5: An integrated, inclusive City**

- We need to make every corner of Joburg a place where residents have all the amenities they need to live a quality life, with access to housing and job opportunities.

## **Priority 6: An efficient, well-run City**

- Joburg must become a center of clean, honest government that puts residents first, spends money wisely and is a pleasure to deal with.

## **Priority 7: An innovative, smart City**

- A truly successful city makes the most of the talent and innovation available - we need to maximise our use of technology to empower residents and find solutions to our most pressing challenges.

## **Part 5 – Conclusion**

Fellow Councillors, I believe these priorities are the only way to build a better Joburg, and bring back hope for all residents.

In time, and with my new Mayoral Committee, I will unveil the plans to make these priorities a reality.

A reality I believe will allow all residents to realise their full potential and access all opportunities available to them, just like a young woman from Mabopane who came to Joburg with the dream of studying Public Health Medicine.

I look forward to working together with all of you to realise this dream of building a better Joburg.

I believe that we can make this work.

I believe that we can inject into the City of Johannesburg the hope it needs to occupy its rightful place as the economic hub of the country and the gateway to the continent.

With your unwavering support, I know this is doable!!

I thank you!!