

May 5 2007: Inner
City Summit

05 May 2007

Speech by the executive mayor, Cllr Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the inner city summit, Braamfontein recreation centre, Braamfontein - Johannesburg.

Programme Director
Members of the Provincial Legislature
Madam Speaker-Cllr Nkele Ntingane
Chief Whip of Council-Cllr Bafana Sithole
Members of the Mayoral Committee
Leaders of all Political Parties
Fellow Councillors
City Manager: Mavela Dlamini
Managers and Officials of Council
Members of the Ward Committees
Business Community
Parastatals and Municipal Owned Entities
Representatives of Tertiary Institutions
Civil Society Organisations
The Greater Inner-City community
The media
Distinguished guests
Fellow Citizens

Programme Director on behalf of the Council, the residents and citizens of the Greater Inner-City I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to this – Inner City Summit.

At the launch of the JDA's 'Progress in the Inner City indicators' last November, I spoke about the fact that I had been hearing a number of individuals from some stakeholder organisations saying that there was a perception that the City was no longer prioritizing the Inner City. I said then that 'nothing could be further from the truth'.

It is important to state that anyone who is familiar with the complexities and challenges of urban renewal and regeneration will agree that we cannot under-estimate the strategic importance of the Inner City. The Inner City has not only just been the historical centre of Johannesburg, it has also been its symbolic, economic as well as its cultural centre.

This City, Johannesburg, grew from tent town to wood and iron shanties to bricks and mortar buildings at the pace of an historical wink of an eye. Within less than two decades since its formal proclamation the broad outlines of the City, as we know it today was already well established.

This City has also continued to shape our history as it evolved over decades.

When we think of Johannesburg as a city:

- What comes to mind is great symbolic landmarks. Think of the Hillbrow tower, Diagonal Street, the Carlton Centre, and more recently Constitution Hill and the Nelson Mandela Bridge. These Inner City landmarks give all Johannesburg residents a sense of place.
- What comes to mind is the Central Business District. Many of the great mining houses and financial institutions that anchor the Johannesburg and South African economy continue to be headquartered here.
- This Inner City also has an enormous concentration of cultural assets – from the Market and Civic Theatres, to the Standard Bank and ABSA galleries, to the City's own Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Central Library. Allow me to also add that additions to this list are being made all the time. This include, amongst others institutions such as the new Origins Centre at WITS University.

The importance of the Inner City also extends to the fact that it is also a key location and a transportation hub. It is the biggest transport interchange in the country, with many different modes – car, taxi, bus and train, both local, national and international – coming together in the same place. It is estimated that well over 800 000 people pass through the City daily as they go to their different destinations. Programme Director, for all of these reasons and more, the Inner City of Johannesburg is of central strategic importance to the working of our city as a whole. We therefore have no intention of relegating it to a lesser place or position.

At the State of the City address in April 2006 we made a commitment to convene an Inner City Summit. The process of holding such a summit demanded, amongst others, that we do the following:

- Establish six (6) Stakeholder Working Groups. These Stakeholder Working Groups are:
 - Economic development;
 - Social development;
 - Public spaces, arts, culture and heritage;
 - Urban management, safety and security;
 - Transportation; and
 - Residential development

Programme Director, I am pleased to report that over the last few months each of these six Stakeholder Working Groups met four (4) times.

In the first round of meetings we asked stakeholders to raise their issues of concern. In the second round, we asked them to prioritize these issues. In the third round we proposed and asked for solutions to these problems. In addition, there were 8 smaller focus group sessions that considered and discussed issues such as bad buildings, street trading and how to ensure visible policing.

In the fourth round (last round) we looked at the first draft of sections of an Inner City Regeneration Charter. This document sought to capture our commitments meant to provide solutions to key challenges facing the City.

- Furthermore, the Stakeholder Working Groups, interacted with a number of role players including various civil society organizations: Wits University, Johannesburg Inner City Business Coalition, the Property Owners and Managers Association, groups of businesspeople who focused their inputs on particular concerns such as risks to 'business continuity' because of what they referred to as "disasters".

- On the 21st of April 2007 the City convened a special session with councilors and the Ward Committees. In all of these sessions we have listened, carefully considered the issues raised, grappled with complex questions and possible solutions.

- We also held a number of sessions to develop a draft Spatial Framework for the Inner City. We have also afforded those who were unable to be in these meetings an opportunity to write their concerns and make related relevant proposals.

- Lastly, but not less important, we have been running countless processes behind the scenes to do the following:

- analyse trends and current initiatives happening in the Inner City,
- to examine additional creative initiatives aimed at improving programmes such as the City's Better Buildings Programme;
- to examine new approaches to deepen urban management.

Programme Director, when we announced the Inner City Summit we sought to mobilize the energies and generate practical ideas on how to ensure an Inner City of the future. Efforts were made to reach out to every possible stakeholder out there.

Programme Director, this Summit, may not mark an end to this important process. But it does lay the firm foundation for a sustained programme.

Programme Director, perhaps we should remind ourselves of the Growth and Development Strategy vision statement that declares:

"In future, Johannesburg will continue to lead as South Africa's primary business City, a dynamic centre of production, innovation, trade, finance and services. This will be a City of opportunity, where the benefits of balanced economic growth will be shared in a way that enables all residents to gain access to the ladder of prosperity, and where the poor, vulnerable and the excluded will be supported out of poverty to realise upward social mobility. The result will be a more equitable and spatially integrated City, very different from the divided City of the past. In this World-Class African City for all, everyone will be able to enjoy decent accommodation, excellent services, the highest standard and safety,

access to participatory governance, and quality community life in sustainable neighbourhoods and vibrant urban spaces".

What is critical is the commitments we jointly make, government, business and civil society, to take this process forward.

Of course, before speaking about commitments, we must acknowledge that we have come a long way. Five (5) or six (6) years ago there was no MetroMall, Constitution Hill, Drill Hall, Faraday Taxi Rank, Gandhi or Mary Fitzgerald Square. Indeed there was no Nelson Mandela bridge of the Bricksfield Housing development. Over the last few years we have seen the transformation of Main Street and Braamfontein, with major private sector investment. We have also seen new investments in corporate head offices, from ABSA to Standard Bank to AngloGold-Ashanti. In addition, only a few months ago we saw the demolition of four (4) buildings a block away from this venue, to make way for the new Gautrain Station.

We have much to be proud of. But the challenges that remain are huge.

- Firstly, I share the concerns of many stakeholders that we are not yet on top of the issues of crime and grime. I drive through the Inner City on my way to the office every morning. The Mayoral Committee has organised and participated in many roadshows. I have a fairly good sense of both the experiences and what people say.

Yes, we have run clean-up campaigns and by-law enforcement blitzes. But these have not left a lasting effect. We still see dirty streets, unmanaged street trading, pavements in disrepair, people urinating in public, litter and illegally dumped waste on the side of the road. We still see many players failing to comply with the City's by-laws.

I am aware that some people still do not walk freely on our streets because of petty-crime. It's a good thing that our Inner City is busy and vibrant. But the management and maintenance of our public environment, including crime, should improve. I don't think there is anyone here today who would disagree with that. And that is important because keeping our Inner City clean and safe is not just the responsibility of local government alone, civil society organizations and business should make a significant contribution.

- Secondly, it's true that some of our large anchor companies are reinvesting in further head-office development. This is very positive. But I think it would be a mistake to think that we have reached full potential in commercial re-development in our Inner City. There has been a huge decline in the amount of A grade office space in the area over the last decade. While ground floor retail is active, there is little sign that many owners are investing in their shops, and trying to keep them clean and attractive.

Initiatives like the fashion district are exciting but I don't think we can say it has contributed hugely to giving the garment industry new life, and facilitating new jobs and businesses. There is a lot of talk about sectors such as tourism and business process outsourcing / call centres, but we don't yet see huge new investment in these areas. First and foremost the

Inner City is a place for business and we must continue to promote this use. We must think boldly about what more we can do to restore the Inner City as Johannesburg's primary business centre.

- Thirdly, over the last 15 years, the Inner City has come to house many more people than it was originally built to accommodate. These are people from rural areas, young people moving out of their parent's homes and immigrants from other countries who are trying to make a home. Because the Inner City was not built with enough residential accommodation, many have ended up in sub-divided flats, illegally converted commercial buildings, abandoned industrial sites, or even on the pavement. Some residential development has happened, but not nearly enough, and a lot of what is being built is unaffordable because there is such high demand. This is not a desirable situation. It is also a very sensitive one, because in the past we have had to move people out of unsafe buildings that they really should not be occupying. We are not saying we do not want the poor in the Inner City. What we are saying is that we do not want anybody to live in the kind of horrible circumstances such that many are forced to suffer and even die. We have to move very boldly to promote large scale residential development that compliments and balances our vision for the Inner City as a primary centre of business. The two go hand in hand. We can't expect people to just move out somewhere else, and we can't expect business to reinvest in commercial activities in an area that looks and feels like a slum. Balancing commercial re-development with appropriate residential development that caters for all income groups is the only way forward.

- Fourthly, on 17th April 2007, we launched a Help Desk for Migrants, which is accommodated here in the Inner City, at Region F Peoples Centre. The Helpdesk will look at the following:

- On how to access appropriate government services;
- Co-ordinate the City's support for migrants;
- At refugees and economic opportunities;
- Provide information and accommodate various service providers;
- Examine community networks; and
- Needs of asylum seekers amongst others.

As the City, we say, like urbanisation, it seems migration can and should be managed. It cannot be completely be controlled let alone halted

- Fifthly, over the last ten years the Inner City has become the point where many people move through in order to get to and from work. It is the biggest transport interchange in the country, with many different modes – car, taxi, bus and train, both local, national and international – coming together in the same place. The challenge is that it does not work optimally as a point of interchange. The various modes don't connect well. There are too many taxis ranking illegally on our streets because we don't have the facilities to house them

properly. There has been some development of new parking garages but there is still far too little parking to support the balanced commercial and residential development we want to see. And all this spills over into the public domain as an urban management challenge. We must address this.

Programme Director, I have been very clear about what I want to see happen in the Inner City. Within the next few years, by the time of the 2010 Soccer World Cup and the end of this Council's term of Office, we want the complete transformation of our Inner City. We want this Inner City to be clean and green. We want it to be safe for residents and visitors. We want a proper balance between residential development and business development. We want it to be a desirable location where both the wealthy, and those who are just getting on to the ladder of prosperity, can live, work and enjoy themselves in harmony.

So, what are the commitments that we are prepared to make to achieve this?

When we look closely at the draft Inner City Regeneration Charter, we see that there are many commitments that we will pursue together with our stakeholders in the next few years. Here I will talk briefly about some of our proposed programmes and initiatives that we will be embarking on as local government. Some of the things that we believe will make a meaningful difference in the years ahead include:

1. We will set up a new structure and improve urban management. By urban management we mean the proper management and maintenance of the public environment. We have realized that we can't just assume that the work of Pikitup, Joburg Water, the Johannesburg Metro Police Department, our environmental health officers and building control will somehow just come together by itself to make for a clean and orderly Inner City. We need more than the sum total of the parts. Over the next year we will put up a structure and a relevant mechanism in Region F for this purpose.
2. We aim to replicate the work that we have done in Braamfontein across the Inner City within the next five years. To kickstart this programme we are committing R100 million of public environment upgrade funds over the next 5 years. We trust that this will leverage equally large contributions from the private sector. Together we will completely upgrade all pavements, put in place decent streetlights, plant trees, build decent street furniture, install waste bins, develop public conveniences, and upgrade available plots into new mini-parks and public-spaces.
3. We are finalizing plans to significantly improve regular everyday waste management and collection in the Inner City. To ensure the full implementation of these plans we have devoted almost R100 million in operating subsidy to Pikitup in the coming financial year.
4. The Inner City will be fully covered with CCTV cameras within the next five (5) years. As a first step in this direction we commit to doubling the number of CCTV cameras in the Inner City by the end of this year. This will bring the number of cameras to 216. We are also working to link this system up with private sector systems.
5. We aim to address the crisis in residential accommodation in two ways. First, we are already working on a first phase Housing Plan for the Inner City that will be released publicly in July this year. A second phase operational plan will be ready by the end of 2007. Following this plan we aim to see the development of some 50 000 new residential units

before 2015. Many of these of course will cater for middle and upper income residents. We will also develop emergency, transitional and social housing at scale.

6. Programme Director, national and provincial government policy is strongly in support of the new concept of inclusionary housing. We will be working with national and provincial government to promote this idea in the Inner City. We will also be working with developers to incentivise this form of development, which is becoming the norm in many cities around the world, so that many of our Inner City buildings become vibrant mixed-income communities in and of themselves.

We know that desirable residential neighborhoods don't only depend on good accommodation. They need all those other things that allow residents to exercise a sense of community. Over the next few years we will completely refurbish all swimming pools, sports fields and community sport centers.

7. Programme Director, we are one of very few municipalities that have a comprehensive transport policy in place. The City's approach is informed by the Integrated Transportation Plan.

In addition, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will be integrated into the broader transport system with feeder routes being serviced by minibuses and taxis that will link to the Gautrain network. Our objective is to move at least 10 percent of City's commuters from private vehicles onto the public transport network.

8. An International Transit and Shopping Centre will be built in the Park Station area in the next financial year. This is a major public-private partnership opportunity.

9. One of the critical issues facing parts of the Inner City is unmanaged street trading or micro-retailing. The City regards informal trading as an important and integral part of our broader economy. It is the City's view that informal trading, as is the case in many countries and cities in the world, should be legally controlled and properly managed. Trading should occur only in those areas that are suitably designated for this particular purpose.

This Council is encouraging groups and individuals to be involved in income generating activities. Street trading constitutes part of this. The Growth and Development Strategy, our long-term plan in this municipality, as adopted in May 2006, recognises this fact and encourages this type of productive activity. Our policy is based on the development of informal trading as a strong economic sub-sector, which, if developed, can robustly add to the City's growth and employment.

The City's Informal Trading Development Programme envisages that trading should take place in markets, stalls and other demarcated spaces.

10. Lastly, Programme Director, we want to indicate that we will be setting up a Charter Partnership Forum to help steer the implementation of the Charter.

Please allow me to express my appreciation to all the participants who have demonstrated commitment and dedication in this process. We value your insights and inputs.

Finally, in conclusion, Programme Director, it would be regrettable if anyone here was to leave with a feeling that they could not raise their concerns, or were not given an opportunity to put forward a good idea that can help take our Inner City forward. Let us cease the opportunity by making the most out of this process.

Thank you.