

Media conference on the 2008 Soweto Nedbank Marathon

15 October 2008

Statement by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, at a media conference on the 2007 Soweto Nedbank Marathon, Ubuntu Kraal, Orlando West, Soweto – Johannesburg

Programme Director

Speaker of Council: Clr Nkele Ntingane

Chief Whip of Council: Clr Bafana Sithole

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City Manager: Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials of Council

President of Athletics South Africa: Leonard Chuene

Athletic South Africa Officials

Representatives of Nedbank

The Community of Greater Soweto

The Media

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

The 17th running of the annual "People's Race" – as it has become known among participants, residents and the media, the Nedbank Soweto Marathon takes place on Sunday 2nd November 2008. The starting and finishing of the race will take place at Elkah Stadium in Rockville/Moroka. The City of Johannesburg is, once again, proud to be associated with this prestigious event on our national sporting calendar.

Last year the Nedbank Soweto Marathon attracted more than 25 000 runners making it, by far, the biggest event of its kind in the country. The organisers are confident that this year's event will surpass everything and draw even more participants and spectators to line the streets of Soweto and cheer on the runners.

Johannesburg has become synonymous with the hosting of top-level sporting and cultural events. In the past few years alone we organised globally acclaimed sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup, the All Africa Games, the Cricket World Cup and the 20/20 Cricket tournament. Early next year some of the best golfers in the world will tee off in the third Joburg Open, which has now become a firm fixture on the European circuit.

In terms of mass events the 94.7 Cycle Race and the 702 Walk the Talk are amongst the biggest sporting occasions in the world and the City has been a proud participant in organising these events.

What makes the Soweto Marathon unique is that it combines the thrills of top-level sporting competition with the more relaxed atmosphere of mass participation and leisure activities. Most of the big names in the South African track and field will compete for the more than R100 000 in prize money. Among the foreign entries for the 42, 2 kilometer race are big names in road running from the rest of Africa, Europe and North America.

And for those who are less serious about running there are the options of a 20 kilometer

walk, a five kilometer fun run for athletes of all ages and a 10 kilometer wheelchair race for people who live with disability.

Once again, the entire race will be broadcast live on SABC 2 – from the starter's gun at 06h00 to the prize giving at around 12h30.

The Soweto Marathon presents a unique opportunity for Johannesburg to showcase the rapid developments that are taking place in Soweto and the ripple effect it is having on the entire southern part of the City.

The route of the Marathon will meander through the biggest part of Soweto. From Alkah Stadium will be a steady climb towards Freedom Square in Kliptown heading towards the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. Last month we saw the opening of the long-awaited Baralink Project – a R150 million investment in transport infrastructure and informal markets in the area.

Among the many features to note along the route are the Legacy Projects that are starting to take shape as part of our hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The refurbishment of the Diepkloof Hostels into family units and the greening of open spaces in Meadowlands are examples of these projects that will ensure that 2010 is not a once-off event but one that will bring lasting benefits to all the people in Soweto.

Just past the halfway mark in Orlando West the runners will pass the Nelson Mandela museum on Vilakazi Street and shortly afterwards the Hector Pietersen Memorial.

But both the participants and the TV audiences will also see the rapid pace of economic development taking place in Soweto.

Please allow me to share with you some of the developments that are taking place:

- Orlando-Ekhaya, a more than R1 billion project with mixed-use residential development comprised of townhouses, lakeside flats, shops, office buildings and entertainment facilities all contained within one precinct.
- The Jabulani central business precinct which will add a change in the skyline of Soweto with buildings arranged around open spaces and an emphasis on pedestrians and leisure activities. This will include the new Soweto Theatre, one of our 2010 legacy projects.
- Lufhereng will be the biggest mixed-use, mixed-income housing to be located at Doornkop, the largest development ever undertaken in any township.

The City of Johannesburg is actively promoting the growth of tourism and in the marketing of our unique heritage sites such as Vilakazi Street, the Hector Petersen museum and Kliptown.

We also note with interest that participants of the "People's Race" since it came back to its rightful place Soweto, 3 years ago – 2006, have been able to run this showpiece event on properly tarred roads. This intervention is a result of R485 million investment by the City of Johannesburg to tar every untarred road in Soweto, which was completed within budget and ahead of the December 2005 schedule.

I trust that this 17th running Marathon will inspire more and more young people in Johannesburg to become involved in sporting activities. Be athletics, soccer, swimming, tennis, or any sporting code of their choice. Sports and organised leisure activities make a significant contribution to social stability and community development in our City.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to the sponsors of this event, Nedbank, for their continued and generous support. Athletics South Africa for being a competent organizer, the athletes, and everyone present.

Thank you