

Official handover of the land to build the Soweto Equestrian Centre and the SOD Turning ceremony

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**Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, CLR Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the official handover of the land to build the Soweto Equestrian Centre and the SOD Turning ceremony, Elkah Stadium, Rockville/Moroka, Soweto – Johannesburg**

Programme Director

Chief Whip of Council: Clr Bafana Sithole

MMC for Community Development: Clr Nandi Mayathula-Khoza

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

Acting City Manager: Mankodi Moitse

Managers and Officials of Council

Chairperson of the Soweto Equestrian Foundation: Mr Enos Mafokate

Members of the Soweto Equestrian Foundation Board

Distinguished Guests

The Media

Community of the Greater Soweto

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to say a few words. I am honoured to be here. I believe that today we cross yet another milestone in the history of Soweto.

Today we gather here to talk about an Equestrian Centre. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines Equestrian as: "of or relating to horses and horse-riding" and goes on to say "on horseback".

We are also here on behalf of the Johannesburg Council to officially hand over stand or ERF 1679 and 1680 to the Soweto Equestrian Foundation to build and develop the 1st Soweto Equestrian Centre.

There may be people amongst us who are not aware that the passion for horse riding is growing fairly rapidly among all sectors of the South African population. We have noted that despite this growth, for many, Equestrian still remains largely a sport for the elite. We seek to ensure that all kinds of sport and different sporting codes become a reality in the Greater Soweto community. Soccer may be a dominant sport, and I love the beautiful game, but Soccer is not sport. There is a clear need to question the conventional wisdom and encourage new ideas and thinking on this particular issue.

This event, should be seen as the "rise of the South." It is an important part of transforming Soweto from a mere dormitory into a normalised neighbourhood. We are striving to change Soweto into a sustainable human settlement that is known not just as a place where people come from but where people also go to.

But what is this organisation called the Soweto Equestrian Foundation? Where does it feature in the equation?

The Soweto Equestrian Foundation is a non-profit making organisation, constituted of equestrian legends who are keen to advise both the municipality and the beneficiaries on matters related to horses and horse-riding. This organisation was established in September 2006 and registered as a non-profit making organisation on 12 July 2007.

Through a deepened partnership the City seeks to ensure that not only do we have a Soweto Equestrian Centre but that the sport relating to horses and horse-riding become a reality in this community.

But, what is the bigger picture about horses and horse-riding? It is important to take the following into account:

- This intervention will introduce youth to the sport,
  - Show jumping,
  - Equestrian vaulting,
  - Horse-riding, etc,
- Ensure that young people become regular proficient riders,
- It will provide employment:
  - Careers as barriers (blacksmith), leather tack, harness makers and allied industries.
- Provide education
  - Riding training,
  - Course building,
  - Horse care,
  - Veterinary nursing,
  - Judging,
  - Stewarding, etc,
- Provide a venue for conferences and seminars.

This Centre will be built in phases.

The target value for phase 1 of the project is R3,7 million. This phase will see a secure site with the erection of a stable block for twenty horses, paddocks, field shelters, workshop, an office, tack and feed stores, on site staff accommodation and a schooling arena. The Centre will be provided with a horse transporter, jumping and teaching equipment.

The target value for phase 2 of the project is R3,4 million, this phase will see another 20 horse stable block, larger competition arena, improved riding training facilities and lunging ring. The Centre will be able to offer enhanced non-riding equestrian training facilities for the Gauteng region.

When phase 2 is completed the Centre will be able to train horses and riders to compete on the national and international stage.

The centre will offer subsidised riding lessons to locals; this is both to children and adults. Some of these trainees will go on to compete in the Centre's sporting programme. To those who advance further, vaulting and jumping lessons will also be offered.

The target Rand value for phase 3 – the final phase is R8,3 million. This phase will complete the development by including stabling for a further twenty horses, a clubhouse, accommodation for students, show arena, spectator grand stand and a judging arena.

When this phase is complete the Centre will be able to host regional and national competitions. The Centre will provide world class Equestrian sports training facilities, a house training centre for those interested in developing a career in Equestrian sport and business and to be a national welfare Centre of excellence right in the heart of Soweto.

I am told Programme Director, that the Soweto Classic Show already attracts 900 entrants and it is hoped that the development of this Equestrian Centre will further increase this number.

The City of Johannesburg wishes to take this opportunity to thank the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH), which has pledged an amount of 80 000 pounds for a period of five years. The money will also be used for the rehabilitation of abused horses and getting them back to being working horses.

Please allow me to also say that I am impressed by the broad vision and the ambitious nature of this Centre. I would like to congratulate the Chairperson of the Soweto Equestrian Foundation, Mr Enos Mafokate for his leadership as well as the board of Directors for their effort and passion.

Our appreciation also goes to the Horse Cart Association, People Dispensary Sick Animals, and the Society Preventing Cruelty to Animals who share our vision to make Johannesburg a cultural and sporting destination.

Programme Director, we are forging a nation out of disparities of the past. We are looking forward to consolidating these gains even further as we move into the future. This township where 40% of Johannesburg's 3.8 million residents live deserves better.

Thank you