

Pennyville Housing Project launch

11 September 2008

Speech by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Amos Masondo, on the occasion of the launch of the Pennyville Housing Project, Pennyville, Greater New Canada railway station area – Johannesburg

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Managers and Officials of Council

Investors

The Greater Community of Pennyville

The Media

Ladies and Gentleman

Programme Director, it is an honour and privilege to be part of this important occasion – the launch of Pennyville Housing Project. The theme that is appropriate for this historic occasion is: "Building Sustainable Human Settlements".

Home ownership in post 27 April 1994 South Africa represents an area of tangible progress registered by the new democratic dispensation. This is not just the fact that over 2 million houses have been built to date.

To fully appreciate this tangible progress, we need to pose a few questions to ourselves:

What does it mean to own a house and the ground on which the house is built? What are the developmental and economic opportunities that present themselves to the owners of such

properties? Judging from where we come from, to what extent does such ownership serve as an indicator of progress?

Let us not forget that we are emerging from that period in our history that restricted home ownership to a privileged few. The era of institutionalised racism that sought to deny all those other than whites, ownership of property in general and that of land in particular. Part of this was to deny the majority of our people their dignity. Thus our struggle was for freedom, equality, justice and human rights.

To be free means in part:

- Access to housing;
- Access to water and sanitation;
- Access to electricity;
- Access to health care and roads; and
- Living in communities that are safe and secure and more.

Today is about seeking to give back and a realisation of the quest to restore the dignity of our people.

The theme, "Building Sustainable Human Settlement" reflects the fact that Housing is one of our critical service delivery challenge.

The population of Johannesburg is currently growing at a rate of between three and four percent every year. According to estimates the number of people living in the City will grow by about 3, 5 million people in the next 25 years. This is not an experience, which is unique to the City of Johannesburg. More and more people across the globe, especially in developing countries, are moving to and settling in urban centres in ever-greater numbers.

These figures illustrate, in part, some of the challenges facing the City of Johannesburg in its effort to provide housing and other services.

In our Growth and Development Strategy we committed ourselves to the concept of sustainable human settlements where people have access to a wide range of accommodation opportunities. We also made a pledge that "the City of Johannesburg will strive to be inclusive and ensure that the poor are taken out of poverty and helped to climb the ladder of prosperity".

Programme Director, the launch of the Pennyville Housing Project brings us a step closer to the attainment of this noble objective.

We are unwavering in our commitment to ensure that all citizens of Johannesburg have access to affordable and decent housing. Housing is a central pillar in our overall effort to restore the dignity of our people and in the pursuit of a better life for all.

Our housing budget for the financial year 2007/2008 was R301 million. The 2008/2009 housing budget increased by 130%. It now stands at R720 million.

In addition, the 182 informal settlement in Johannesburg. The City, led by both Housing and Development Planning and Urban Management Departments is engaged comprehensive process of formalising all our informal settlements.

During this financial year, the City will formalise fifty (50) these informal settlements.

In addition, we have set ourselves the objective of building a 100 000 houses in the over the next three years.

This City has also embarked on a mixed income-housing building programme. This is in line with both the national and provincial government policies that seeks to ensure integrated and inclusive human settlements.

The conversion of hostels into self-contained family units remains one of our key focus areas. To date, 336 units have been completed. Additional 1160 units will be delivered by the end of this year.

The demand for rental housing is on the increase. There is therefore a need for public rental housing for the poor. To this end we have set ourselves a target of deliveringdeliver 15 000 rental housing units by the year 2010.

In the City of Johannesburg, our commitment to deliver housing is self evident. It is important to note the following:

- Housing Projects such as Cosmo City and Lehae,
- Kliptown, Protea South, Vlakfontein, Alexandra Township, Orange Farm and Lawley,
- The Brickfields development in the Inner City.
- On 29th July 2008, we launched the B G Alexander housing project in the Inner City.

This Project aims to provide affordable and sustainable housing and tenure options within the resources available. This is in line with the National Department of Housing's policies regarding mixed and integrated development principles contained in the Breaking New Grounds (BNG) initiatives document.

The City's Housing Policy Framework and Strategy approved by Council in February 2007, states that: "Housing needs to expand beyond subsidy eligibility".

Through this Pennyville Housing project the City is eradicating Zamimpilo informal settlement and is also providing housing opportunities for neighbouring communities of Orlando East backyard dwellers, Riverlea, Noordgesig and Westbury.

This project offers different housing opportunities and options for end users/beneficiaries. Among them are:

- fully subsidised;
- partially subsidised;
- bonded;
- social housing;
- and rental stock.

Social Housing adds alternatives to existing ownership formats by making available well managed low cost housing for beneficiaries.

The Pennyville development will yield 3200 housing opportunities:

- Fully subsidised RDP = 1600 for Zamimpilo qualifiers and surrounding communities – Noordgesig, Orlando East and Riverlea;
- JOHSCO affordable rental units = 600 rooms with shared facilities;
- JOSHCO social housing units = 200; and
- Middle and high-income rental by others = 800.

Programme Director, it is important that we prioritise housing but housing alone does not build communities.

We have built a crèche at the cost of R1.5 million as part of the City's Early Childhood Development programme. The City's Early Child Development Unit has deployed four staff members to assist in building the capacity of the new management of Pennyville crèche and to enable them to offer quality programmes to children. This means equipping all the childcare practitioners through in-house training and linking them to organisations offering level 1 –4 accredited training.

This crèche, Programme Director, boasts four (4) classrooms, office, kitchen, activity room, sick room and two sets of bathrooms for the children.

There is also a commitment from the Provincial Departments of Health and Education to build a school and a clinic. The construction will begin this year, 2008 and be completed in late 2009.

In support of all these Council initiatives, the South African Rail Commuter Corporation (SARCC) is also upgrading the New Canada Station, which in the past was a transfer station. It is currently being upgraded to become a full passenger train station.

In addition, the City has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PZR, the developers of this area, for the Fleurhof housing project which is anticipated to yield approximately 6 000 mixed integrated development as part of Breaking New Grounds. An amount of R2 billion will be spent on this project. The funds will go towards housing, schools, crèches and other related facilities.

Programme Director, we are also working on the management and rehabilitation of mine dumps in line with the City's greening strategy. The hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup has created an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy which will change the landscape of Johannesburg that has been characterised by mine dump tailings.

This City is currently working with DRD GOLD SA, Crown and Harmony mines in rehabilitating the mine dump tailings and make them green. This work will directly aid in responding to air pollution impacts experienced by the nearby residents.

Our greening programme is part of the work we are doing in the South and similar areas. Our aim is to plant more than 200 000 trees before the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Some of this work will be done in collaboration with the private sector.

We are grateful that on 04th September 2008, Tata Madiba planted the 90 990th tree as part of Arbor week in part in the celebration of his 90th birthday. This will surely add momentum to our greening campaign.

Programme Director, this project has employed approximately 150 local people, from Zamimpilo, Orlando East, Riverlea, Noordgesig and Westbury; this number includes women and the youth. As the project gathers momentum this number will increase. Those who come in as labours have been getting training on site as plumbers, bricklayers and carpenters.

We continue to strive for and remain committed to the creation of sustainable human settlements and communities.

The demand for housing remains high but we are indeed making progress. I believe it is time that we acknowledge the progress we have made and celebrate the victories we have achieved.

Please allow me to express my sincere appreciation to all the role players that are involved in this project. I would like to call on the people of Pennyville and the surrounding areas to take ownership of this project.

Programme Director, let me conclude by reminding all of us and perhaps emphasise that housing is not an end in itself. What we require is the building of sustainable human settlements.

Together we shall succeed.

Thank you