



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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**A City of Johannesburg Media Statement by
Executive Mayor, Cllr Mpho Phalatse**

14 February 2022

Today, marks the beginning of building a new Alexandra

Note to Editors: The following remarks were delivered by the Executive Mayor at the Alexandra Township Business Development and Investment Summit, which was hosted at We Love Alexandra headquarters in Sandton.

Esteemed guests

President and Chairperson of We Love Alexandra, uBaba Linda Twala – *The Father of Alexandra*

Deputy President and Deputy Chairperson of We Love Alexandra, Mr Lawrence Ruele

Chairperson of South Africa Day, Mr Kevin Wakeford

Sandton Precinct General Manager, Mr Preston Gaddy

The late President Nelson Mandela, in his book *A Long Walk to Freedom*, fondly wrote that “Alexandra occupies a treasured place in my heart. It was the first place I lived away from home.”

President Mandela’s story of Alexandra being his first home away from home is the story of thousands of Alexandra’s residents, who relocate from mostly rural parts of the country in search of work in the country’s economic capital, Johannesburg.

Alexandra is an important community in the City, and it has long been neglected and exploited by politicians for their own gain, all while the residents continue to live a life of indignity. Today, I say not in my name, and not in my City!

Today, marks the beginning of building a new Alexandra. With you, I want to build an Alexandra where residents can access both opportunities and services: where women feel safe walking the streets at any time of the day; where the sick are able to access quality healthcare; where quality basic services are delivered by the City; and most importantly the residents are economically active.

These are not just platitudes but a real commitment to a community that has given and continues to give so much of itself to the City of Johannesburg.

I am no stranger to Alexandra and its amazing people. As some of you may know, I am a medical doctor, and at the beginning of my career I served as a casualty officer at the Alexandra Health Centre, so I am fully aware of the issues affecting the community. So, in many ways I have come full circle as I stand here once again committing to lend my hand and the authority of the Office of the Executive Mayor to Alexandra.

Already the City of Johannesburg has started the work of ensuring services are delivered to Alexandra. My previous engagement before this, I was with service delivery teams who will be in Region E over the next few days filling potholes, cleaning open spaces, fixing leaking pipes and taps, and repairing faulty power infrastructure. This may not sound significant but if we are to rebuild Alexandra on a meaningful scale, we must start by getting the basics right. Getting the basics right is not only how we are going to rebuild Alexandra but it also how we are going to rebuild the City of Johannesburg.

As the Multi-Party Government, we are determined to bring the City's administration closer to residents, as such the MMC for Finance, Cllr Julie Suddaby, will be conducting a site inspection to the Alexandra Community Centre to ensure that the walk-in centre is operating optimally. Customers must be able to go to any walk-in centre and be assisted on that same day and be met by a friendly and respectful City official.

On the 24th of February MMC Suddaby will be requesting an extension from Council to allow residents to apply for the once-off debt write off for the rehabilitation of defaulting debtors. This will allow for further applications from 1 March 2022 to 30 June 2022. Residents will be able to apply online or at any walk-in centre.

In an address to Council, I stated that I want Johannesburg to become a construction site, and as we embark on this journey of bringing dignity to Alexandra, the same must apply to the historical community.

Therefore, the MMC for Development Planning, Cllr Belinda Echeozonjoku, and the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) are working hard to finally complete the construction of key projects that have been promised to the residents of Alexandra.

For example, the Alex Hospice that will support patients and their families, is now ready for handover to the City and the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC). The R71-million Hospice has 12 wards with 48 beds, as well as consulting rooms, recreational and dining facilities, administration offices, a garden, and a wall of remembrance.

The 4th Avenue and Thoko Mngoma Public Health Clinics are also now complete and have 18 and 12 consulting rooms, respectively.

Our administration is committed to empowering and uplifting the youth by equipping them with skills and facilitating access to opportunities; and through the R17-million Alex Safe Hub, the youth of Alexandra be able to access education programmes and enterprise development tools. The modern multi-purpose centre is made up of a football pitch, an administrative office block, and SAFA boardrooms.

Another important project brought to Region E is the Watt Street Interchange, which is a transport interchange with BRT and mixed traffic lanes. The construction work included the careful demolition of an existing bridge and interchange, in order to bring reliable public transport to the people of Alexandra. The R42-million Watt Station is 80% complete, and includes the construction of a station terminal, as well as the building of new passenger lifts to ensure universal accessibility for all commuters.

The City has shown its commitment to bringing improved public transport to Alexandra, by constructing the Alexandra Depot, a bus layover facility. We are currently designing the Alexandra Depot Access Road, which will be an access road to the newly built Alex Bus Layover Facility. Moreover, the City's Alex Automotive project is at an advanced construction stage and will include the building of a community-based car servicing centre that will benefit businesses and residents in Alexandra and surrounding areas.

Work is well underway, and we expect to do even more.

A hallmark of this administration is partnerships with communities and the private sector, especially where there is an intersection of interests; because the truth is that government at all levels cannot build South Africa on its own.

If we are to build a well-run and business-friendly City, it will require us all to roll up our sleeves, which is why I lend my full support to the We Love Alexandra Community Makeover Project -- a genuinely great initiative.

The initiative also taps into the idea and practice of active citizenry that says I am not going to wait for someone else or the government to fix what is broken but instead I will do what I can and with what I have, to make a difference for myself and my fellow residents.

It warms my heart, and it pushes me to do even more as Mayor, to know that there are City residents like uBaba Twala and Mr Wakeford who see the value of working together towards a common goal.

Finally, there have been many unsuccessful attempts over the last 110 years to reduce Alexandra to rubble, but today we commit to building a community and a partnership that will stand for another 110 years, where will be able tell a story of its success as we move away from its story of sorrow.

Ends.

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