

# **SPEAKER'S NOTES FOR CLR MPHO PARKS TAU, EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG AT A BREAKFAST MEETING WITH INNER-CITY SOCIAL HOUSING INVESTORS**

20 November 2013

Over the past few months the City of Johannesburg has taken a number of game-changing steps to change the urban landscape and prepare the ground for a period of unprecedented development and economic growth.

At the core of this, is our belief that a rejuvenated infrastructure and a strong focus on transit-oriented development should guide our development priorities in the coming decades. In this, Johannesburg is not different from other global cities such as Vancouver, Hong Kong, Melbourne and the San Francisco Bay Area, where investment in infrastructure resulted in a resurgence, in broader economic activity and the rebirth of the city landscapes.

When we delivered the annual State of the City Address, in May, we referred to it as an opportunity to “*change the City after our heart's desire.*” A renowned urban geographer, Professor David Harvey, says that “*the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality, is one of the most precious of all human rights.*”

Now, six months later, we have the occasion to take stock of the initial progress we have made and to focus the attention on a few specific aspects of the urban renewal process – most notably that of the provision of strategic infrastructure and the opportunities for social housing.

**Programme director, distinguished guests, members of the Mayoral Committee, ladies and gentlemen.**

A warm word of welcome to you on this beautiful summer morning in the heart of Johannesburg, Africa's greatest City. Your presence is highly appreciated by the City and it is indicative of your continued interest in our collective future growth and prosperity.

I believe there is broad agreement that the legacy of decades of separation enforced by some of the most oppressive apartheid laws – such as the Land Act(1913), the resultant Group Areas Act and the Natives' Land Act – have shaped our urban landscapes to what they look like today. Black South Africans were shunted to the fringes of our city, forcibly removed and provided with inferior housing far away from economic opportunities.

The democratic transition of the 1990s and especially the introduction of democratic local governance, provided us with opportunities and policy instruments to reverse the legacy of this social engineering, based on race. There should be no doubts about the commitment of the democratic government of South Africa, to introduce and support measures, that will lead to the creation of a just and equitable society, and enable all our citizens to share in the wealth of opportunities.

The recent national census figures, confirmed that Johannesburg has 1.3 million households which are estimated to grow to 1.4 million by 2015. As the economic hub of the continent, Johannesburg is a magnet for people from far and wide, in search of better opportunities and a better future for their families.

As a city, we do not regard migration and population growth, as threats that must be contained. This is a City of migrants, conceived by rough-and-tumble miners in search for gold; sustained by workers flocking towards work opportunities from across southern Africa; nurtured by traders from Asia and inspired by the collective contributions from a multitude of cultures.

What is, however, incumbent on us, is to manage the process of urban growth through various policy instruments, and city-led initiatives. And, on the basis of these strategies, to mobilise the support of our private sector partners, to become involved in programmes and projects which will not only meet our public policy objectives, but also lead to excellent returns on investment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a widely-held myth that Johannesburg is an over-crowded city. The truth is exactly the opposite.

The fact is that Johannesburg has one of the lowest population densities of any major world city -- at 2 500 residents per square kilometre. Let us compare this with London at 5 100 residents per square kilometre or Rio de Janeiro with 6 850.

Our concern is not over-crowding, but skewed settlement patterns, caused by the legacy of apartheid and aggravated by urban sprawl.

Through our emphasis on transit-oriented development, the City intends to rectify this situation, and create an environment that will lead to more balanced and equitable growth. We are already seeing that happening in

Soweto, and the south where our investment in transport infrastructure, including the tarring of roads and the introduction of Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, has resulted in a resurgence of economic activity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A second misconception is that we are merely introducing a modernised transport system – a bus lane here; a Gautrain there; a few bus stops and train stations, to facilitate the movement of people and services.

This is, definitely, not the case. Transit-oriented development looks at the future growth of the urban environment from a holistic perspective.

You will recall that we recently published a comprehensive Growth and Development Strategy (GDS), following an extensive process of consultation with communities, interest groups, academics, strategists and organised business.

The Joburg 2040 strategy(GDS), as the framework the city is directing its implementation plans, and medium-term budget allocations, assist us to achieve a number of tangible objectives.

Through transit-oriented development, we are directing the future economic growth patterns, along certain arteries which have become known in public as “Corridors of Freedom.”

An effective public transport network is, no doubt, a core element of this blueprint, and the first stages of this is already visible in the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit, which recently opened its second connective route linking the inner-city with our higher education precincts.

Programme director,

One of our objectives is to establish a seamless public transit network, where commuters can connect effortlessly between a quality bus service, passenger rail, the Gautrain and taxi routes.

Earlier this week, we opened the Ndingilizi transport interchange in Soweto. This, for the first time, provides park-and-ride facilities for taxi commuters, as part of our broader efforts to promote the use of public transport.

At this event, we indicated that we envisaged the move towards an integrated ticketing system for taxis, buses and trains, as the taxi industry also start to implement smart cards to conduct their business.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The City's vision regarding Corridors of Freedom is, thus, to establish a series of mixed-use boulevards connecting key economic growth points in the City with the Rea Vaya system and public transport serving as the arteries.

Like "beads on a necklace", transport interchanges will be established at distances of between 600 and 800 metres apart. These hubs will be surrounded by high-rise developments containing a mixture of office, commercial and residential space, as well as leisure opportunities.

Through these corridors, we will be meeting many of our developmental objectives. We will bring people closer to work opportunities. We will cut down on travel time between home and work and retail opportunities.

We will create a healthy sense of community, where people have access to quality schools, clinics, police stations and leisure opportunities close to their residences. A reduction in travel time, will enable parents to

spend more quality time with families and children, leading to a reduction in social ills, crime, truancy and substance abuse.

Future residential development will focus, on high-density accommodation and the generous provision of rental space. The City wants to increase the number of people living close to economic opportunities, arrest the current process of urban sprawl, on the fringes of the City, and reverse our legacy of racially-based settlement patterns.

In short, ladies and gentlemen, our vision is to create sustainable human settlements, that are more than mere piles of bricks and mortar. In our housing development, and in our future growth patterns, we want to truly reflect the values of Johannesburg's aspiration, to be a world-class African city.

The City will play a key role in the provision of strategic infrastructure. In the State of the City Address, we announced that Johannesburg is in the process of spending over R100 billion on infrastructure, over a period of ten years.

During the current three year medium-term framework, we have budgeted for an amount of R30 billion on new infrastructure, and the maintenance and replacement of ageing infrastructure.

Earlier this month, we announced our plans to address the pressing issue of the City's road network through a sustainable, long-term rehabilitation programme, rather than merely "chasing after potholes."

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are committed to support the positive growth in the inner residential property market. We have embarked on an inclusive mixed-use housing

project in the Inner City. We are spending R450 million on precinct development and infrastructure provision in 2013/14; and we have a 5-year capital investment plan that is based on sequenced investment in strategic precincts.

We offer incentives for *social housing developers, to increase the portfolio of their stock*. A coordinated crime and safety enforcement effort, will ultimately improve the liveability of the inner city. Within the CBD, too, our objective is to create sustainable human settlements, through the elimination of crime and grime, and the strict application of by-laws aimed at safety, health and environmental protection.

In addition, through the corridor approach, we will create new housing opportunities for thousands of Johannesburg's residents, and alleviate some of the housing pressures in strategic nodes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The initial planning for our Corridors of Freedom development has been done, and we welcome this opportunity to share our vision and future perspectives.

This is not a journey that can be travelled by the City's administration on its own. It will require the concerted efforts of all our stakeholders, communities, civic society and, most notably, the private sector.

Our appeal to you, is not to consider this as a short-term strategy based on the political programme of the governing party. As I noted in the beginning, our vision is in line with many similar trends that are underway in major world cities in North and South America, Europe and Asia.

In addition, we are confident that this will open up a wide array of new opportunities for investment in land development, the provision of housing and the growth of the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

I think you will agree with me that the success of precinct developments in areas such as Newtown, Braamfontein and the CBD, demonstrates that wise investments at an early stage, leads to considerable returns.

I thank you for your presence at this event and want to give you the assurance that, the City wants to walk this road together with our partners in the private sector.

We welcome your contribution and input, and are looking forward to a continuous partnership in the interest of a sustainable and thriving city of Johannesburg.

I thank you.