

Keynote Address by the Executive Mayor in the City of Joburg, His Worship Councillor Mpho Parks Tau on the opening of the Metro Park in Newtown, 19 September, 2014

Programme Director

Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development, Cllr Chris Vondo

Member of the Mayoral Committee for Infrastructure Services, Cllr Roslyn Greef

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Board Members from Joburg Parks and Zoo

Board Members of the Johannesburg Development Agency

City Officials

Business Community

Nelson Mandela Foundation and other NGOs

Johannesburg Community

Dumelang

Two years ago, City Parks saw a need to transform this once neglected open space, which is adjacent to the Nelson Mandela Bridge, into a park that would meet the needs of our Inner City residents. This dream has been realized and we are all gathered here today to witness the official opening of Metro Park. Most importantly, this event is taking place on the eve of a special day, the World Parks Day.

In the past, parks were often characterized by green space, trees and playgrounds. That brief has changed and this is demonstrated through this park. Residents living in high-density, high rise units have a need for their own 'Central Park' in close proximity to their homes. Our mandate as city planners and decision-makers is to ensure that we design spaces that are fit-for-purpose and resonate with communities. Programme Director, Metro Park is a well-designed, modern park which has already won an award. Metro Park secured a first place Gold Excellence Award at the recent SA Landscaping Institute Awards hosted in Durban.

Metro Park boasts an outdoor gym with an instructor; a synthetic five-a-side enclosed soccer pitch; vandal proof water features and fencing; new generation play equipment; an ablution facility with dedicated cleaning staff; landscaped lawns with trees; an amphi-theatre for community gatherings and visiting performing artists.

This park has its own dedicated security and maintenance personnel to ensure that it is looked after in a proper way. Ladies and gentlemen, this development forms part of the City's envisaged Corridors of Freedom, testimony to the fact that as the City we are committed to transforming the Inner City landscape.

World Parks Day reminds us that parks are not just spaces for relaxation but also for active engagement, interaction, developing civic ownership, uniting residents and in that way bringing about social cohesion and harmony. Such interaction is vital for a country like ours which has just emerged from the doldrums of apartheid. We therefore hope that people from all walks of life will utilize Metro Park. In addition to this initiative, Programme Director, 12 Inner City parks are set for a facelift in this financial year. City Parks and the Zoo will be working closely with the Johannesburg Development Agency in realising this dream. To add, Johannesburg City Parks and the Zoo are also launching the 10th free-to-use outdoor gym with 5 more in the pipeline. With all these projects in place, we have reasons to be positive with regard to physical fitness and wellness of our citizens.

More importantly, Programme Director is that through these impressive green development projects, we have been able to restore the integrity of our environment without forgetting about the dignity of our citizens. The impact of new greening initiatives in changing mind-set can never be underestimated. For example, park developments in Soweto have led to adjacent homeowners beautifying their private spaces and renovating their homes to complement nearby parks. Illegal dumping, littering and vandalism have also decreased substantially, easing financial burden from the City.

Lastly, we would like to thank all of you for attending this important ceremony. As the City we have a moral responsibility to enhance the quality of life of our citizens including delivering parks of this nature: With that comes the responsibility from all of us to look after this park. I trust that as a collective we will work hand in glove in ensuring that this award-winning park is really and well looked after for generations to come.

Thank You