



JPC CEO Helen Bates | Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni

THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG LAUNCHES FIRST EVER, MIXED-USE R27- BN BIODIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT



Groundbreaking Southern Farms development set to transform the City



Cllr Nomoya Mnisi, MMC of Economic Development, and JPC CEO Helen Botes (Flanked by Southern Farms Community Leaders, Thabang Makhele and Thama Hukwe) break ground for the Southern Farms development

In a significant milestone, Southern Farms, the R27-billion mixed-use biodiversity development by the City of Johannesburg, was launched amid a carnival atmosphere at Freedom Park Primary School in Devland, Soweto, on Monday 11 December 2023.

The groundbreaking development on 4,000 hectares of land in the south of Johannesburg is expected to change

the face of the city, provide an economic fillip to residents, bring opportunities for housing and small businesses in the area, as well as create jobs and provide training opportunities for the youth.

At the launch of the project, Councillor Nomoya Mnisi, a Member of the Mayoral Committee for Economic Development, said a key challenge facing developing regions was the need to

respond to population and economic growth while simultaneously managing their impacts on the environment.

Watched by several hundred residents, who sang and danced before the start of the proceedings, Mnisi said: “By addressing environmental social and economic factors through long-term strategic planning, these pressures can be addressed in an effective and positive way.”

Guests at the launch included Council Speaker Councillor Margaret Arnolds, Chief Whip Councillor Sithembiso Zungu, MMC for Finance Councillor Dada Morero, MMC for Community Development Councillor Lubabalo Magwentshu, MMC for Development Planning Councillor Eunice Mgcina, and other dignitaries.

The mega project will provide approximately 45,000 housing units, seven local neighbourhood parks with play facilities, six multi-purpose sports courts, a local library, two Home Affairs offices, and more.

The Southern Farms

project has been a long journey with the Council first approving the initiative in 2013 before commissioning studies to inform the planning. In 2018, the Council approved the business plan after the studies were completed.

The area where the Southern Farms development is taking place has been used by Johannesburg Water (JW) for wastewater treatment. However, with changes in technology, smaller portions of land are being utilised, leaving vacant areas exposed to land invasion and illegal land-use activities.

In 2006, JW indicated its intention to manage only the areas needed for its operations, made allowances for some extensions, and handed over the remaining properties to the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), to manage in terms of its mandate.

The city took a strategic decision to intervene in the area by protecting environmentally sensitive properties, but at the same time had to address the various needs of the communities surrounding Southern Farms.

It was proposed that the city investigate a model where the environmen-

Figure 2: Southern Farms Development Precincts Precincts A, B, C, D, E, F, AND G)

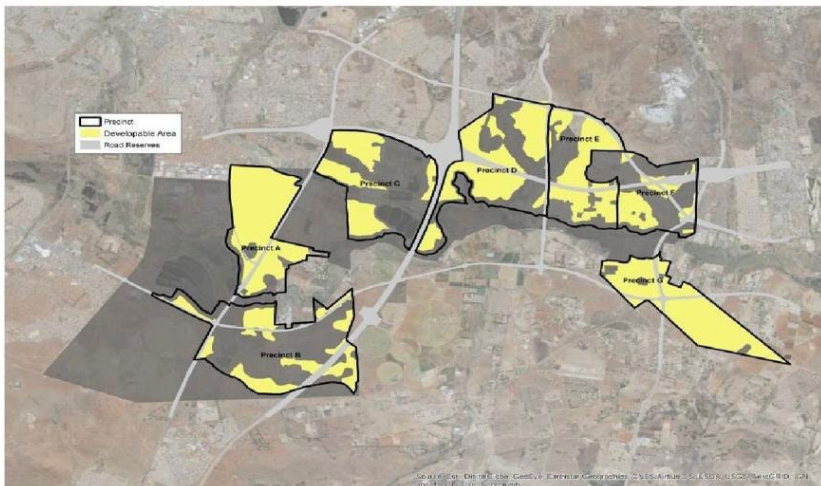




Photo by Eabie Mtsweni

Community members and dignitaries at the launch of the Southern Farms project.

tally sensitive areas could be protected sustainably, while land that could be developed was identified to alleviate poverty and the critical housing shortage in the area.

This, however, needed to be done with a sustainable approach – where both environmental needs and those of the city are addressed. “Accordingly, a Regional Sustainable Development Programme is envisaged for the Southern

Farms area,” said MMC Mnisi. “This programme must work to promote a holistic approach to the planning and development of this area.

“[It] must protect matters of environmental significance. While meeting the challenges of population and economic growth in a balanced and shared manner.”

On a day filled with anticipation and excitement, performances

from local dancers, the Dreams Come True Drum Majorettes and the Amaphikelela Traditional Dancers added to the carnival atmosphere.

Following the celebrations, dignitaries and attendees were taken to Southern Farms to provide them with an idea of what the project entails, amid a promising start to greener pastures for the community.

The Biodiversity Precinct Plan provides for mixed-use housing and businesses

The development concept entails the establishment of a network of inclusionary, conservation-based and mixed-use precincts and biodiversity.

The Precinct Plan provides for seven sub-precincts, or “Urban Villages” referred to as Precincts A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Each of these precincts is designed to be a self-sustaining human settlement that integrates into the larger Southern Farms Development.

The precincts will have an estimated 32 575 residential units in various

categories – bonded, Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Program, rental, RDPs / site and services.

Public facilities and infrastructure such as government schools, government social amenities, Emergency Management Services, government hospitals and clinics, municipal offices, etc will also be integrated into the precincts.

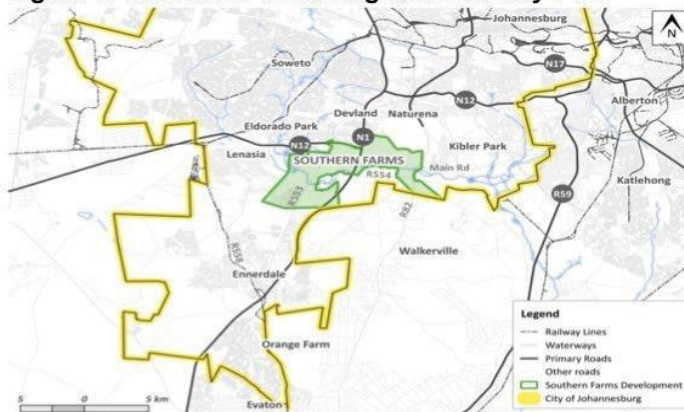
The precincts will also include businesses involved in sectors such as retail, commercial, industrial, warehousing, private medical services

and short-stay accommodation.

Southern Farms is located south of the existing suburbs of Naturena, west of Kibler Park, east of Lenasia and Lehae, and is abutted by the N1 and N12 national highways.

The N1 divides the project area into two distinctive quadrants – the area to the west of the N1 and the area to the east of the highway. The N12 highway forms the north-western boundary of the project area.

Figure 1: Southern Farms Regional Locality Plan



Development will benefit future generations, says Chairperson



JPC Board Chairperson Simon Motha says the community must benefit from biodiversity project which will transform lives of people in the Southern Farms region.

Simon Motha, Chairperson of the JPC Board, described the project as an “exciting turnkey development” by the city.

“From the onset, it is critical to emphasise that the city continues to face a massive housing backlog, with more than 300,000 residents still in need of proper housing,” Motha said. “It is in this context that I invite all of you to celebrate this milestone, which means that we are now actively working towards decreasing

housing demand in the city.”

The Chairperson said the project will be a catalyst for change in that it not only provides a solution to the housing crisis in the city but also creates economic and employment opportunities that significantly contribute towards addressing socio-economic challenges.

“The 40,000 housing units to be developed here, must help us enhance the fight against

unemployment and poverty in our communities. The local people must benefit! It is through projects like these that our transformation and localisation plans are tested the most – we must ensure that we prioritise our transformation objectives in this development and its oversight as the JPC Board,” said Motha.

He added that the Board would work with JPC Management to ensure the development’s ultimate success and



Community leader and entrepreneur, Pastor Thobeka Ndabula, committed the day's proceedings and the future of the Southern Farm project to prayer.

will play its oversight role with diligence to ensure that the project prioritises principles of good governance.

“In such a mega project, accountability will be critical, and as a collective, together with key stakeholders, we will be inclusive and united

to ensure successful execution and transparency. Ultimately, we assure the MMC of Economic Development that this project will result in sustainable economic growth and development for the city. This development must promote a conducive environment for the

residents of the city,” Motha said.

“We believe that, through collective efforts, this development will be a success that will benefit future generations,” Motha added.

The Significance of Launching Southern Farms

The launch of Southern Farms is a pivotal moment in the history of Johannesburg. This transformative project represents a bold vision for the future – one that embraces innovation, sustainability, and inclusive development.

Southern Farms is expected to provide an economic catalyst by creating over 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, boosting the local economy and providing much-needed employment opportunities for

residents.

The creation of a Business Hub will attract a diverse range of businesses, from commercial enterprises to agricultural and industrial firms, creating a vibrant and dynamic economic ecosystem.

Sustainable development will underpin Southern Farms as the development will incorporate sustainable practices into its design and operations, minimising its environmental

impact and promoting eco-friendly living.

The enhanced quality of life created by the project will lead to a thriving community with access to quality housing, education, healthcare, and recreational facilities, improving the overall well-being of residents.

“Southern Farms stands out as a pioneering project in Johannesburg, combining multiple industries and land uses within a single development,” said JPC Chief



Photo by: Eddie Mtshepo

JPC CEO Helen Botes and MMC of Economic Development, Cllr Nomoya Mnisi



Photo by: Eddie Mtweni

Executive Officer Helen Botes, who signed the deal securing the R27-billion investment on council land. “This unique approach will foster collaboration, innovation, and economic synergy, establishing a new model for urban development.”

Botes told the cheering audience that 34,000 housing units will be developed on the land with provision for 50 hectares allocated for commercial development, 175 hectares for industrial development and provision for schools and clinics. “It’s

a brand new town/city coming up in the south of Johannesburg,” she said.

The JPC has been instrumental in transforming the city through several landmark projects, including the award-winning, green-



Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni

star-rated Council Chambers, reflecting a commitment to sustainable and innovative property development.

The JPC has also been behind the development of the Soweto Theatre, the Diepkloof Plaza, Melrose Crossing, 27

Boxes, Newtown Junction, the Jabulani housing development and Orlando Ikhyaya, which is under construction.

In addition to high-profile projects, the JPC is also actively involved in smaller ones aimed at promoting social devel-

opment and unlocking economic potential.

The development will bring immense benefits to the community – MMC Morero



The MMC for Finance,
Cllr Dada Morero

In his keynote address, Finance MMC Dada Morero said the project will have innumerable positive impacts on the lives of Southern Farm residents and the broader Johannesburg community.

Morero said the project will address economic challenges and be a source of pride for both Region G residents and the city as a whole.

“Our commitment is to ensure that the community of Region G not only gains from the housing component but

also benefits from the business aspect of this project,” he said.

Thobile Zondo, the Councillor for Ward 119, was upbeat about the project unlocking opportunities for the community and welcomed its job creation potential and the housing challenges it would alleviate.

The official launch of Southern Farms fills the community with hope for a brighter future, Zondo said, aligning with promises of housing, economic and job creation opportunities

that resonate with the community’s needs.

Residents and business owners attended the launch in large numbers, eager to understand the potential impact of the project on their lives and businesses.

One of them was Sedi-ma Moseamedi, owner of the construction company Sephahaphaha Trading and Projects, who hopes to benefit from the development and said he was glad that the project would prove a boost for local entrepreneurs.

Phase One gets the green light, says Southern Farms Project Manager



General Manager, Mega Projects
Musa Makhunga

Musa Makhunga, born in Vryheid in Kwazulu-Natal, is committed to pivotally addressing the country's housing challenges in South Africa's most significant city through the ground-breaking R27-billion Southern Farms development.

Makhunga, the project manager of the biggest housing project in Johannesburg, launched in December 2023, says the initiative is akin to creating a new city, providing housing for thousands, unlocking economic potential and creating jobs.

"It's such an exciting project. If you look at its size, you'll see that it's one of a kind in scale. It's a large-scale, mixed-use development focusing on the housing component," he says.

Approval for the township establishment as Phase One of the project is expected in April. But what most excites Makhunga, an auditor by profession, about the transformative project is its community buy-in with untold benefits.

"What we've done at present is to secure the

perimeter around the property to avoid land invasion, ensuring that we are on track to begin once the necessary approval is obtained."

Makhunga says the development of 4,000 hectares of land in the south of Johannesburg will change the face of the city, providing an economic boost to residents, bringing opportunities for housing and small businesses in the area, creating jobs, and providing training opportunities for the youth.

"We have received good news that approvals for the first phase have received the green light, which is expected formally in April," he says.

Once this has been obtained, a meeting that is on the cards with the developer and the Gauteng Human Settlements department will finalise the project's timelines.

Usually, projects of this magnitude benefit large



corporations involved in the planning and construction process.

“[But] we wanted to ensure from the onset that communities are involved and benefit by participating in the project,” Makhunga says.

“We didn't want a successful project run purely by a big entity. We want a successful, inclusive project that creates new permanent jobs. It also ensures that people that will participate in this project, actually growing as part of the construction, [and] will be able to stand on their own and sustain themselves after this project.”

The involvement of the

community is critical to the project's success.

“As our key stakeholders, we are constantly looking at how to engage them and ensure that they feel and know that they own the project,” Makhunga says. “If they own it, they will also help us protect the place, which ensures extra protection against criminal elements.”

As project manager, Makhunga says he has wondered at times whether the project would succeed given the length of time it took to manage all the necessary processes and approvals.

“To me, it is a scary project but one that cannot fail, given its size and importance in addressing our country's

housing challenges.”

Having been involved in several other housing projects to put roofs over people's heads, Makhunga says his job is immensely rewarding when people move into their new homes.

“They say that one must be fulfilled in a job. When you see the project and maybe at some point you drove past, it was just a vacant piece of land, and now it's just something else. That is fulfilling.

“In my job, no day is the same as the day before. When you see people moving into their houses built as part of our project, that sense of making a difference is most rewarding,” Makhunga concludes.

The reason for the development



MMC for Finance Cllr Dada Morero and Council Speaker Cllr Margaret Arnolds

Why a development?

The bulk of the Southern Farms property – largely unutilised agricultural land – is environmentally sensitive and falls outside the city’s urban development boundary.

The City of Joburg and the JPC were approached by the Environmental Department to find an innovative way of protecting what is deemed to be sensitive and “priority biodiversity areas” forming part of the Southern Farms project area, while also identi-

fying areas that are not sensitive and that can be possibly developed.

The JPC identified the need for an intervention with Southern Farms because the City needs to protect its natural resources from illegal land use and degradation.

The JPC did not have the capacity or financial resources to actively manage 3,900 hectares of land daily.

As a result, the City had over time failed to actively manage the

Southern Farms project area, which led to large areas being used for illegal cattle and livestock farming and grazing.

Certain areas had been targeted for illegal land invasions by groups in the south of the City and the land had come under constant threat of land invasions, similar to what has happened in Ennerdale.

The protection and conservation of the area is key, based on an ecosystem and biodiversity model which will find ways to identify areas

that merit protection.

Areas that are no longer classified as sensitive in terms of relevant environmental regulations and legislation can be developed by the City to fund and sustain the ongoing management of the environmentally sensitive areas.

If there was no active use of the land, illegal invasions would continue. The land would be used for illegal dumping and environmentally sensitive areas would be destroyed through overgrazing.

In the absence of a master plan, the land portions would be invaded

or used in an unstructured and haphazard manner.

To enable the City to preserve environmentally sensitive land, income is needed from active users to sustain the area.



A Brief History of Southern Farms



MMC of Economic Development Cllr Nomoya Mnisi

Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni

Southern Farms was initially managed by Johannesburg Water as portions of the property were developed for its Treatment Works Stations. In 2006, JW indicated its intention to manage only the areas developed for its operations, making allowance for possible extensions, and handed over the bulk of the property to JPC to manage in terms of its mandate.

Approximately 200 hectares of the site are being prepared for cemetery development by the JPC, while a portion was developed by the City's Housing Department as the Lehae Township.

The project comprises of the following farm portions: Olifantsvlei 316 IQ, Eikenhof 323 IQ, Misgund 322 and Rietfontein 301 IQ

The Southern Farms project area, including the privately owned land parcels located to the east of the N1 highway, is approximately 3 997 hectares.

Of the total project area, approximately 2902 hectares are undevelopable due to environmental sensitivities, heritage, and major road reserves (PWV 5 and K-routes) of which the majority will form part of the Biodiversity Conserva-

tion Area, representing approximately 73% of the total project area.

Approximately 27% of the total project area (1, 094 hectares) is considered suitable for development.

High/ Medium and low sensitivity areas / no-go areas / buffer zones:

The rocky ridges and outcrops are regarded as areas of "High Sensitivity" and, together with the wetlands systems, are considered important ecosystems that are protected by regulated buffer zones of 100m around the Kliprivier and 50m around other

wetlands.

The vast majority of the “High Sensitivity” areas that are associated with the network formed by the Kliprivier and adjoining wetlands are protected conservation areas.

The area of “Medium Sensitivity” is limited to a small section located in Precinct C or more specifically the privately owned land parcels and a small section to the east of the privately owned land.

Although these areas are largely associated with the occurrence of “Vachellia Kar- roo-Themeda triandra open woodland and Themeda triandra-Stoe- be Vulgaris grassland” according to the Fauna and Flora Specialist Report, the area is mostly affected by heavy and continuous grazing by farm animals.

Due to indigenous invasive and pioneer species becoming prominent, the vegetation generally possesses a moderate to low species richness.

Consequently, the areas are not regarded as threatened or unique ecosystems, with similar and more pristine systems in various other places in the Province. However, the condition of the vegetation can be improved, and it is recommended that sections be maintained if possible, but that this be done within the designated buffer zones of the wetland systems.

The majority of the Southern Farms Project Area is classified as “Low Sensitivity”



From left: Chief Whip Council Sithembiso Zungu, MMC of Economic Development Cllr Nomoya Mnisi and MMC for Finance Dada Morero

Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni

and substantial parts are utilised by the two Waste Treatment Works and the existing Lehae Township. Precincts A1, A2 and B, all located to the west of the N1 highway, are predominantly “Low Sensitivity” areas and suitable for development.

The Southern Farms Regional Precinct Plan takes specialist recommendations into consideration. All of the “High Sensitivity” areas are protected as conservation areas, the “Medium Sensitivity”

area, which is restricted to Precinct C only, has been considered for development based on the findings of the specialist studies and the recommendations made that sections of the “Medium Sensitivity” areas should be protected through the inclusion of sections within the wetland buffers zones around the Kliprivier and other wetlands.

The Southern Farms Regional Precinct Plan protects all of the “Highly Sensitive” areas and creates links between

the various sensitive areas through the extensive wetland system throughout the project area.

The associated buffer zones along ridges and wetlands create massive green corridors that link the sensitive areas whilst still maintaining the viability of the ecosystem.

Following this approach will ensure that there are linkages created between ecological systems through appropriate land use planning



The MMC for Finance Cllr Dada Morero

Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni



Photo by: Eddie Mtsweni

which recognises the urban areas as conservation environments that link conservation areas.

Southern Farms offers a unique opportunity to establish a system that differs from most other areas in the city where fragmentation has taken place to the extent that these systems have

failed or are severely jeopardised and where the City's stormwater management policies cannot be implemented due to the fragmentation.

At Southern Farms, the systems will be included under a stewardship program that will ensure the preservation of open space. However, the City

is committed to seeing the development not only protect the environment but also address the housing needs, create jobs, promote entrepreneurs from the community and enable youth to have access to training and skills development.

Picture Gallery

Photos By Eddie Mtsweni







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