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JOZI MY JOZI

BABIZE BONKE

TO COME SEE HOW JOZI DOES IT

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SA TAKES IT'S PLACE AMONG GLOBAL PEERS

Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

DADA MORERO
MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG

As G20 president, South Africa ends the year by hosting the bloc's Leaders' Summit — the first in Africa — an opportunity for the country, the province of Gauteng and Johannesburg to put their best foot forward.

From the 1995 Rugby World Cup to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, with the 2003 Cricket World Cup, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and BRICS along the way, post-apartheid South Africa has showcased its warmth on the global stage. The G20 Leaders' Summit now tops that list.

One of the challenges faced by most G20 countries, especially the middle-income emerging market members, is that of rapid urbanisation, from Buenos Aires in Argentina, to both São Paolo and Rio de Janeiro in neighbouring Brazil.

China grapples with migration from its coal-laden, rural interior to its urban metropolises of Shanghai and Beijing, while India has the bustling metropoles of Mumbai and New Delhi. This pattern replicates itself from Jakarta in Indonesia to Ankara in Turkey.

In August last year, the Economist Intelligence Unit released a report which stated that six African cities will have populations of more than 10 million people by 2035, with the continent's booming young population making it the world's fastest urbanising region.

Angola's capital, Luanda, and Tanzania's commercial hub, Dar es Salaam, will join the metropolises of Cairo, Kinshasa, Lagos and of course Greater Johannesburg with populations of more than 10 million. These countries and cities will be represented at the G20 Summit by the African Union, which has been a member of the G20 since 2023.

The G20 Summit offers these countries and regions opportunities to exchange ideas on how to tackle rural-urban migration and urban sprawl. These countries and cities can learn from developed peers in the G20, such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, South Korea and Japan.

> "I would personally like to not only welcome world leaders but also urge them to heed the advice of their host, President Cyril Ramaphosa, to tackle inequality, which threatens to destabilise the global social and economic order."
>
> — Dada Morero

They all need to invest in infrastructure to supply their growing cities with food, energy and water, while offering human settlements located in the vicinity of viable economic opportunities. They need to do all this while mitigating the effects of climate change. The G20 Summit offers an opportunity to exchange ideas on these and other issues.

Johannesburg offers a vibrant, historic backdrop for important deliberations to take place throughout the summit and related events. From its historic foundations as a gold mining town to its evolution as a bustling metropolis, a commercial hub and economic anchor for Sub-Saharan Africa, the City has much to offer visitors and dignitaries who have made their way here.

I have had the privilege to lead and witness first-hand the work by the various entities of the City of Johannesburg to get us ready for this auspicious event. From the supply of water and electricity to the clear marking and repair of roads, potholes and stormwater drains to the improvements of our green spaces and clean-up of our inner city. The preparation has kick-started work that we need to keep up beyond the summit to reclaim our city spaces.

As the mayor of this great City, I would personally like to not only welcome world leaders but also urge them to heed the advice of their host, President Cyril Ramaphosa, to tackle inequality, which threatens to destabilise the global social and economic order.

It is a pleasure hosting each one of you in this city we call home, and at this glorious time of year.

Welcome to Johannesburg, and enjoy.

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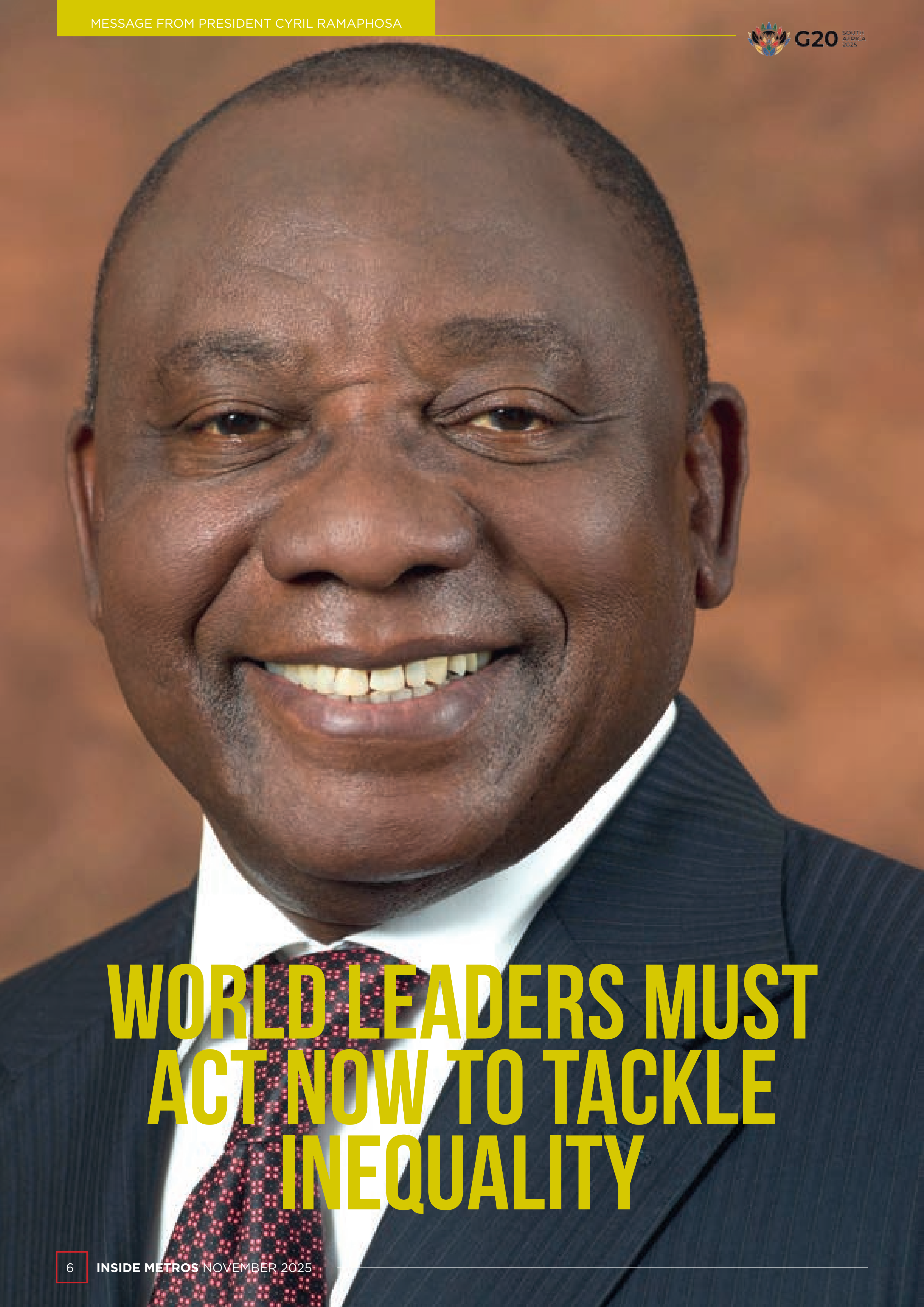


WORLD LEADERS MUST ACT NOW TO TACKLE INEQUALITY

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

When South Africa took over the Presidency of the G20 nearly a year ago, we identified 'equality' as one of the pillars of our term, alongside 'solidarity' and 'sustainability'.

We chose to focus on equality because it is essential to a more stable, prosperous and sustainable world. If the G20 is going to live up to its mission to tackle pressing global economic and financial issues, then it needs to significantly and urgently reduce inequality.

Global wealth inequality is stark. The world's richest 10% account for more than half of total global income. These people account for a staggering 74% of total global wealth. The human cost of these inequalities is severe; one in four people globally face moderate or severe food insecurity.

These huge disparities are unjust and consign billions of people to poverty. Inequality is bad for everyone. It makes the world less stable, fuels conflict and undermines democracy. It stifles inclusive economic growth and prosperity.

It is for this reason that I appointed an Extraordinary Committee of Independent Experts on Global Inequality as part of our G20 Presidency. The Committee, chaired by Nobel Laureate and renowned economist Joseph Stiglitz, handed over its findings last week. The report examines the causes and consequences of inequality and makes important recommendations.

Given the importance of equality to sustaining global growth, to social and political stability and to the legitimacy of international economic governance, it is good that, at South Africa's instance, this will be the first time the G20 will focus on this matter and consider an in-depth report of this nature.

As Professor Stiglitz and his fellow experts note, the features of the international economy that perpetuate inequality "can be significantly affected by the decisions and actions of G20 governments". They say that inequality is a policy choice. It is therefore critical that G20 leaders recognise the extent and urgency of the problem of inequality – and that they act accordingly.

> "We are using our G20 Presidency to advocate for the reform of the global financial architecture."
>
> — President Cyril Ramaphosa

Among the committee's recommendations is the establishment of a permanent international body on inequality. This would be modelled along the lines of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which has been vital to global efforts to measure and respond to the climate emergency. Similarly, the proposed International Panel on Inequality would bring focus to bear on inequality and measure, monitor and report on global and national trends in inequality among and within countries. It would be mandated to advise governments, multilateral bodies and institutions and the G20 on effective policy responses.

The report suggests policy levers that governments around the world can use to reduce inequality. It is noteworthy that South Africa already has a number of these policies in place. These include progressive taxation, minimum wage legislation, public expenditure on free or subsidised healthcare, zero-rating essential foodstuffs and strong social protection systems.

The report courageously cites market concentration, monopolies and anticompetitive business practices as key drivers of inequality.

Another important part of our response to inequality is to promote debt sustainability, especially for developing economies. Interest on sovereign debt repayments, particularly in Africa, is stifling public spending and economic growth. It is widening the gap between countries and within countries.

That is why we are using our G20 Presidency to advocate for the reform of the global financial architecture. The committee's report echoes our position, calling for multilateral development banks to have an 'inequality-reducing agenda'. In a similar vein, it suggests that governments might agree to establish 'National Inequality Reduction Plans', which would set clear goals to reduce both income and wealth inequality.

Although not all the recommendations made in the report are new, what we are pleased about is that this is the first time the G20 will be considering the issue of global inequality. It will be critical in the lead-up to the Leaders' Summit that the report is widely read and its recommendations given proper attention in the public discourse.

Inequality is one of the most pressing global issues of our time. This report provides a credible blueprint for the actions we need to take to overcome it.

WHERE HISTORY WEIGHS HEAVILY AND WEEKENDS FEEL LIGHT

A GUIDE TO JOHANNESBURG

Mandela House Vilakazi Street. Photo: Supplied

SIMON NARE

Johannesburg's hustle and bustle, its skyscrapers and high-life sheen, may mislead you into thinking this is only a city for nightlife.

However, there is much more to be explored in this vibrant metropolis if you know where to look.

Start with township and cultural tourism, where local guides open doorways into daily life and layered history. Follow the smoke to shisanyamas, where braaied meat and music turn sidewalks into social clubs. Seek out the Mai Mai market experience, a carnivore's paradise where you can, quite literally, feast on meat for days and buy numerous African artifacts.

Then wander into the nearby Maboneng Precinct, fast becoming a trendy urban neighbourhood, where you will be greeted by exquisite boutiques, coffee shops and restaurants stitched together by street art and sunny courtyards.

And, of course, make for Nelson Mandela Square, where you can snap a picture beneath the giant statue of the former president, his bronze gaze cast over the crowd.

Night may announce Johannesburg, but day reveals it. The city is bigger, warmer and more surprising than its skyline suggests.

If you want to connect with nature, there are the nearby Sterkfontein Caves in an area


Cradle Moon . Photo: Supplied

where it is said, every step takes you a million years back in time.

To get the full context of the liberation struggle and the dark days of South Africa, step into the Apartheid Museum at Northern Parkways, just next to Gold Reef City. It is here where the rise and fall of apartheid is illustrated in all its shame and the people's resilience.

Here, on a guided tour — with compelling film footage, photographs and artefacts — you're led through the South African story, absorbing a deeper understanding of how the country pulled back from the brink of what could have been a bloody civil war and became one of the world's thriving democracies.

If the brutal force of apartheid makes you choke a bit, don't let that chapter wear you down. There is plenty of beauty and grandeur in and around this city, established during the gold rush and still rightly called the City of Gold.

Just outside the centre, in the sprawling township of Soweto, the history of the liberation struggle offers its own kind of lift. Here, the story of how the oppressed black majority resisted one of the most brutal systems on record still echoes, an inspiration as present as the streets you walk.

This is captured powerfully at the Hector Pieterson Museum in Orlando West, a mere two blocks away from where the student was gunned down by apartheid forces during the 1976 uprisings.

Within walking distance is the township's famous Vilakazi Street, which was home to Nobel laureates Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

It is the only street in the world on which two laureates once lived, and authorities have tapped into this uniqueness and turned it into a rightfully massive tourist destination.

Despite all of those tourist destination trappings, the street has cultural offerings that include dance performances, curio shops, restaurants serving local cuisine, and bars.

Every weekend, without fail, a cosmopolitan scenery is formed here, as visitors from around the globe descend on the area, some to view the homes of Mandela and Tutu, others to experience the unique township culture, where the local cuisine at Sakhumzi Restaurant is a must.

Kwa Mai Mai. Photo: Supplied

Sakhumzi was one of the first restaurants to be established in the area, and has garnered a reputation for hosting international tourists. But other establishments have also made it their home, and travellers would be missing out if they didn't sample these as well.

The South African Township and Village Tourism Association's national coordinator, Thato Mothopeng, is excited about the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit, particularly because it will be hosted right up the road from Soweto at the Nasrec Exhibition Centre.

Mothopeng sees this as an opportunity for those who want to experience township life, and has spurred on township tour operators to seize the opportunity.

"We are happy to showcase what South Africa can offer. A destination like Soweto, which is a few kilometres from the venue, is one of the iconic tourist destinations people can visit.

"This is where you will find nine provinces represented culturally. The townships surrounding Johannesburg are bringing so much value to the market. They are safe and offer an authentic cultural experience where, if you want to know how South Africans are living and how they are surviving, this is where you need to go," said Mothopeng.

Maboneng Precinct, as mentioned earlier, is a must-visit destination. A place of light in the local Sotho language, the precinct has breathed life into this once neglected area of Joburg and has pulled the inner-city crowd as well as art-going suburbanites. Most are drawn to the place because of its artistic zest, which thrives night and day.

If you have the energy for the dance floor, you will find that in myriad nightclubs. And if you enjoy a quiet meal instead, well, there are countless restaurants, too.

Let's get back to the Sterkfontein Caves, where a guided visit can take you millions of years back in time. This is where numerous hominin fossils were discovered — finds that help explain our earliest origins — and it remains one of the most remarkable places in the world.

A UNESCO World Heritage site, the caves are a gate to the past, one that reveals some


Soweto Bungee. Photo: Supplied

of the most ground-breaking chapters in human evolution.

As recently as the last decade, in the nearby Rising Star Cave, researchers announced the discovery of Homo naledi after uncovering a large trove of fossils from at least 15 individuals — one of Africa's richest single-species hominin finds.

If adventure is your thing, head to nearby Cradle Moon. It's a playground for hikers and trail runners, with cycling routes, wildlife safaris, and a lake where you can take a boat cruise, paddle, or swim. For a moment, you might swear you've slipped onto an island far from Johannesburg. Some travellers come to spend the night in luxurious rondavels; others say it's simply the best place to leave the city, or the township, behind, and to unwind, breathe unpolluted air and enjoy a lazy afternoon.

With so much to explore in and around the city, Johannesburg is pinning its hopes on the summit to give its tourism industry a meaningful lift.

The city has left little to chance in its summit preparations, aware that the gathering will unlock a wealth of economic prospects and draw high-profile delegates, global investors and international media.

"Increased investment during this period is anticipated to stimulate local economies, create jobs and foster new business partnerships across sectors such as finance, technology and tourism," it said.

JOHANNESBURG

ECONOMIC ENGINE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND THE CONTINENT


Photo: vecteezy.com

■ THEBE MABANGA

Johannesburg stands as the foundation and anchor of the sub-Saharan African economy. The discovery of gold in commercial quantities on the Reef in 1886 transformed the fortunes and economic trajectory of Southern Africa. This pivotal moment paved the way for Johannesburg to become the largest inland city in the world and one of the greenest, located within the geologically significant Witwatersrand basin, which is estimated to account for up to half of all gold ever mined.

Historical Context

Founded in 1897, Johannesburg has influenced nearly every aspect of development in the region. For instance, Rand Water was established in 1903 to supply water to the mines and the burgeoning tent town of Johannesburg. The first railway line in South Africa was laid to transport imported capital equipment to the newly established mines, marking a significant milestone in the city's development.

The Johannesburg Stock Exchange, rooted in the Gold Rush of 1887, was created to facilitate trade with mining companies before banks and other businesses emerged. Over the years, it has evolved in both size and sophistication, relocating from the heart of the city to the affluent Sandton area, often referred to as the richest square mile in Africa.

Railway lines connecting Springs in the east to Randfontein in the west were constructed to link coal mining towns such as Benoni, Boksburg, and Germiston, initially transporting coal to the mines before these areas transitioned into gold mining towns and later industrial hubs.

As Johannesburg evolved, it transformed into a vibrant commercial centre, first attracting industry and later expanding to encompass financial and trade services, especially as mining and manufacturing began to stagnate or decline. Suburbs like Braamfontein and Parktown owe their existence to the gold rush, with Parktown still showcasing buildings and homes constructed by the Randlords.

Geographical Influence

The proximity of Pretoria, the nation's capital, located approximately 70 km to the north and established in 1855 — 30 years before the gold rush — has also shaped Johannesburg's economic landscape. Midrand, for instance, was named as it served as a halfway station for horse-drawn carriage travel between Johannesburg and Pretoria. According to Lindsay Bremmer, a former Professor of Architecture at Wits, travellers would stop at local boulders to allow their horses to drink, a legacy evident in modern-day Boulders in Halfway House.

Demographics and Economic Growth

Following the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, areas surrounding Johannesburg became labour reservoirs for the mines and industries. Alexandra township was founded in 1912 as one of the few places where Africans could own land, while Soweto emerged in the 1930s.

Today, Johannesburg serves as the regional economic powerhouse. According to the City of Johannesburg's Annual Economic Review, the population of Johannesburg, defined by the administrative boundaries of the CoJ Metropolitan Municipality, was estimated at 6.13 million in 2024, surpassing cities like Barcelona, Alexandria, and Abidjan. Projections by the Economist Intelligence Unit indicate that Johannesburg will be one of six African cities to reach a population of 10 million by 2035.

The economic review notes that global growth is projected to slow to 3.2% in 2025. Despite this, the review emphasises that "with its favourable climate, developed infrastructure, and strategic geographic position at the nation's centre, Johannesburg has the potential to overcome sluggish economic growth and achieve its vast capabilities." To unlock this potential, attracting investment into its primary and secondary sectors is crucial — not only for the city but also for South Africa as a whole.

Economic Contributions

Johannesburg is not only the financial and economic hub of sub-Saharan Africa but arguably the continent's most influential city economy, accounting for approximately 15% of South Africa's total economic output and 44% of Gauteng's GDP. The city's contribution to national Gross Value Added rose from approximately 12.3% in 1996, peaked at just below 15% in 2009, and reached 15.0% in 2024.

Despite minor declines during the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009, Johannesburg remained the economic nucleus of South Africa. From 1996 to 2024, the city's population grew by 120%, compared to a 99% increase in Gauteng and a 52% increase nationally. With an average annual growth rate of 2.9%, Johannesburg's population growth has nearly doubled the national rate of 1.5%.

The working-age population mirrored this trend, increasing by 142% in Johannesburg compared to a 76% rise nationally from 1996 to 2024. Strong inward migration patterns likely drive this growth, as noted in the economic review.

Disposable Income and Employment

Aggregate disposable income in Johannesburg surged from R62.7 billion in 1996 to R234.6 billion in 2004. However, Johannesburg's share of Gauteng's disposable income peaked at 39.7% in 2007 and gradually declined to 33.8% by 2024. Real per capita disposable income fell from R76,000 in 1996 to R57,000 in 2024, while Gauteng's dropped from R68,000 to R63,000. Nevertheless, the average disposable income per person in Johannesburg was R87,400 in 2024, exceeding the national average of R76,000.

Johannesburg faces a 33% unemployment rate, slightly above the national average, yet boasts a higher labour participation rate of 70% compared to both provincial and national averages.

Future Strategies

Phaphedi Phukubje, a Director for the City of Johannesburg, emphasises the need for a self-reliant economic strategy in light of a fragile global recovery characterised by tentative growth and persistent trade tensions. He highlights plans to leverage digital strategies and smart city infrastructure to enhance efficiency. Initiatives will include building industrial parks, empowering small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs), and attracting targeted investment to bolster export capabilities. In the 2024/25 financial year, Johannesburg attracted R19 billion in investment and aims for R20 billion in the 2025/26 financial year. Revitalising the inner city is a critical component of this growth strategy.

Regional Economic Disparities

Johannesburg is divided into seven regions, ranging from Diepsloot and Midrand in the north to Ennerdale and Orange Farm in the south, as well as Randburg, Rosebank, and Parktown in the interior. Economic developments continue to shape the outlook for each region, with the decline in gold production contrasting sharply with the growth and diversification of the financial, business services, and trade sectors.

The mining and manufacturing sectors have shown relative declines in Gross Value Added from 1996 to 2008, while financial services surged from 40.4% to 76.7%, and community services increased from 17.6% to 27.2%. The review warns that the decline in manufacturing is particularly troubling, as it is crucial for developing upstream and downstream economic linkages, integrating into global and regional value chains, enhancing competitiveness, creating jobs, boosting exports, and seizing localisation opportunities.

JOHANNESBURG INVESTS BILLIONS TO REVITALISE INFRASTRUCTURE, DRIVE SERVICE DELIVERY


City clean up: Supplied

AKANI NKUNA

The City of Johannesburg presented a R89.4 billion budget for the 2025/26 financial year, reiterating its commitment to revitalise ageing infrastructure, regenerate the inner city, drive economic growth, and raise health and safety standards for its inhabitants, and positioning the city as an attractive tourist destination.

Electricity received R25.6 billion, while water and waste services were allocated R20 billion. The remainder of the budget covers, among others, property rates, refuse removal, and maintenance and repairs.

During the budget presentation in May, Finance MMC Margaret Arnolds said the budget aims to remedy past setbacks by driving urban development, sustainability, economic growth, and safety, to ensure the city can effectively address crime and enforce law and order.

"It is a budget for progress – designed to improve spatial planning, promote inclusivity, and ensure that no community is left behind," she said.

The City has worked with key stakeholders, including NGOs such as Jozi My Jozi, to combat crime, and with Thero Services to assess unsafe and abandoned buildings and evaluate their overall impact on the city's performance, ensuring alignment with international benchmark standards.

Thero Services said these assessments and the raiding of abandoned buildings are more than technical exercises, calling them a "step toward

Lillian Ngoyi Street Repairs: Supplied

safer infrastructure, economic opportunity and urban renewal".

The Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Dada Morero, in his weekly newsletter, said there were myriad challenges that the city was still dealing with, such as revenue decline and poor planning, which he attributed to the disruption of service delivery.

He also said that an influx of migrants has strained the city's capabilities, rendering it unable to provide major services.

But, he said, the city is improving on delivering basic services, and restoring recreational areas, libraries and heritage spaces to cater for residents.

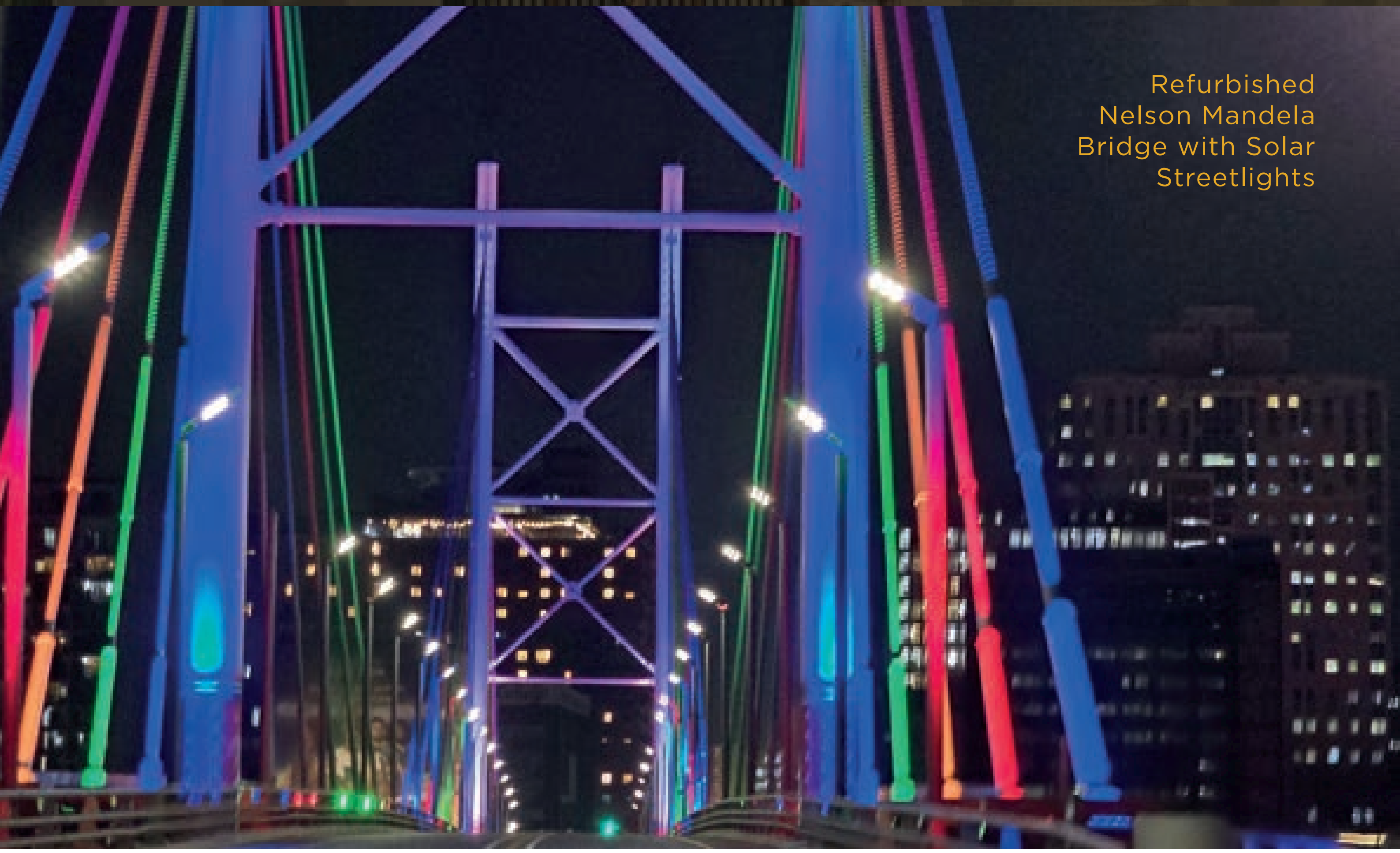
"To fast-track recovery, Johannesburg has been placed under the Presidential Support Package — a collaborative effort between the City, Province, and National Government. This partnership strengthens our financial systems, improves service delivery, helps revive our economy, and focuses attention on our inner-city and township communities," said Morero.

This month, a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and Jozi My Jozi, pledging commitment to accelerate inner city regeneration. The intention is to foster collaboration between the government and the private sector in creating a thriving city.

Morero said the agreement seeks to revitalise the Johannesburg High Court precinct, deploying collaborative efforts to restore specific areas.

JOZI MY JOZI

the Movement for Change



Refurbished Nelson Mandela Bridge with Solar Streetlights

Jozi My Jozi is a movement for the people by the people that aims to inspire people of Johannesburg, South Africa, and the world to help bring hope back and instil pride into our city. Established in 2022, the movement fosters collaboration among individuals, government, civil society and the private sector, through a call-to-action encouraging people to RElove, REimagine and REexperience the magic of our beautiful city.

Since its inception, Jozi My Jozi has grown into an ecosystem of 146 partners that continues to enable the implementation of projects within the inner city, and includes the City of Johannesburg, Gauteng Provincial Government and other relevant national government departments.

The collective effort of Jozi My Jozi and its partners has translated into tangible impact across its various workstreams: Safety, Security and Environment; Social; Education; Tourism, Arts and Culture; Sports; Commerce; Tourism; and Public Transit Revitalisation (focused on the taxi industry).

Story Doing

Jozi My Jozi is about 'story doing'. Working with the City of Johannesburg and through the funding support from the private sector and active participation from civil society and individuals, the organisation has delivered, and continues to deliver, impactful projects.

Refurbishment of Gateways into the Inner City

The organisation has identified 13 gateways, the main entry points into the city, that are in the process of being transformed through infrastructure updates and placemaking. To date, Jozi My Jozi has completed work on the Nelson Mandela Bridge with Absa and the Queen Elizabeth Bridge with FNB. The transformation includes the cleaning of sidewalks, removing graffiti, installing solar lighting, maintaining infrastructure and enhancing security on the bridge.

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JOZI MY JOZI the Movement for Change

Installation of Solar Streetlights

To bring light to the darkest corners of the city, Jozi My Jozi has installed 1,113 solar streetlights along key pedestrian routes, improving safety and mobility, with the support of Standard Bank, FNB, RMB, Maharishi Invincibility Institute, Johannesburg Housing Company, Johannesburg Inner City Partnership, Divercity Urban Property Group, and Wits University.

Education a Key Foundation

With Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres playing a vital role in providing young children with a strong educational foundation, Jozi My Jozi has engaged 104 ECD centres to assist them in registering with the Department of Basic Education and enable them to receive support and funding from the department.

Addressing the Challenge of Homelessness

Johannesburg has a significant challenge when it comes to homelessness, and there is a pressing need for a comprehensive solution. In August -2025, Jozi My Jozi coordinated the first citywide pilot Point-in-Time Count of people experiencing homelessness in Johannesburg. The exercise mobilised over 200 volunteers in the inner city, Hillbrow, and Linden, to collect data on rough sleeping, living conditions and access to services. U-Turn, MES, Department of Social Development, Nando's, Standard Bank, Wits University and University of Johannesburg provided invaluable support to ensure that the Point-in-Time Count was a success.

Making Inner City Creatives Visible

With the inner city of Johannesburg bursting with creative energy, Jozi My Jozi has embarked on a journey to make the invisible creatives visible. With South Africa hosting the G20 this year, this created a platform to partner with Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) for the Creative Africa Futures Summit that is aligned with the G20 priorities of inclusive growth, sustainability, and economic resilience, and positioning the creative economy as a key driver of innovation, economic transformation and global relevance.

Resuscitating Sports and Recreation

To bring sports and recreation for the benefit of the youth in the inner city, Jozi My Jozi partnered with the Maharishi Invincibility Institute to launch the Maharishi Sports Park in March 2025. Currently, Standard Bank, Maharishi and Jozi My Jozi are developing a comprehensive sports facility featuring a full-size soccer field as well as basketball and netball courts.

Inviting all to "Come See How Jozi Does It" in the inner city of Johannesburg

One of our key objectives is to get people back into the inner city as tourists, shoppers, business investors, students, and to live in the city. This requires a concerted effort. The launch of the Babize Bonke Campaign by Jozi My Jozi aims to celebrate Johannesburg's vibrant people, their resilience, creativity and the collective spirit that drives the city's renewal as we call on everyone to "Come See How Jozi Does It".

G20 as a Springboard

The revitalisation work that Jozi My Jozi has undertaken, working in partnership with government, the private sector and civil society, has benefitted the city's hosting of the G20 Summit. But the work we have undertaken precedes the G20 and will most definitely continue far beyond the G20.

A Growing Movement

While the inner city remains our primary focus, Jozi My Jozi has extended its reach into Soweto, with plans to expand into Alexandra. The organisation recognises the importance of actively involving the youth in its endeavours and has established a Jozi My Jozi club at the University of Johannesburg, with plans underway to launch another one at Wits University.

Babize Bonke Launch outside 44 Main Street Marshalltown

WIRED FOR CHANGE

JOHANNESBURG'S ENERGY FUTURE UNDER CITY POWER CEO TSHIFULARO MASHAVA

Tshifularo Mashava, Chief Executive Officer of City Power

JOHNATHAN PAOLI

As world leaders converge for this month's G20 Leaders' Summit, energy security and climate resilience have taken centre stage in global policy discussions.

For South Africa's economic engine, Johannesburg — where the leaders are meeting — those debates are not theoretical, but urgent and immediate.

The city's electricity grid, burdened by ageing infrastructure, illegal connections and rising demand, sits at a crossroads between crisis and transformation.

At the heart of this challenge stands Tshifularo Mashava, Chief Executive Officer of City Power, who has become synonymous with pragmatic leadership and ambitious reform.

Her mission is to stabilise, modernise and decarbonise Johannesburg's power system; a vision that mirrors the G20's call for sustainable, inclusive energy transitions in the developing world.

City Power's immediate focus is on replacing infrastructure that, in some cases, is over 90 years old.

Transformers, substations and cables that have long exceeded their service life are now being replaced in what Mashava describes as the largest renewal drive in the utility's history.

Technical failures and vandalism have cost the city billions of rand annually, and the risks are mounting as Johannesburg's population grows.

To counter this, City Power has embarked on an extensive maintenance and upgrade programme that includes new high-voltage substations, digital control systems and advanced fault detection networks.

The Eldorado Park substation has become a flagship example of this transformation.

Equipped with real-time monitoring technology and integrated into a central control room, the substation symbolises both progress and accountability.

"It's not just about engineering, it's about proving that City Power can deliver under pressure, that we can build infrastructure that lasts," the CEO said at the unveiling.

Johannesburg's expansion has resulted in more than 300 informal settlements, many historically excluded from legal electrification.

Mashava has made connecting these communities a moral and operational priority.

Under her leadership, City Power has accelerated formal electrification projects, delivering thousands of safe, metered connections that replace dangerous, illegal wiring.

To her, reliable power means more than light; it means dignity, safety, and opportunity.

"Electricity brings light, but also hope," Mashava said. "When we protect our infrastructure, we protect that hope."

Cable theft, vandalism and illegal connections remain City Power's most destructive enemies.

Mashava has called the problem a pandemic, saying that stolen copper and sabotaged infrastructure cost the city billions of rand each year and endanger lives.

To combat this, City Power has intensified joint operations with the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department, private security contractors and community safety forums.

Contractors complicit in theft have been dismissed and blacklisted.

At the same time, the utility has launched public education campaigns urging residents to report illegal connections and suspicious activity.

However, Mashava recognises that enforcement alone is insufficient.

"People steal electricity because they are excluded. The long-term solution is legitimate access, fair billing, and community partnership," she said.

For decades, Johannesburg's dependence on Eskom, the national power utility, has made it vulnerable to load-shedding and price volatility.

Mashava's long-term strategy is to cut this dependency by diversifying City Power's energy sources.

The utility has already secured power purchase agreements with independent power producers, ranging from solar farms to gas-to-power and waste-to-energy projects.

> "Electricity brings light, but also hope. When we protect our infrastructure, we protect that hope."
>
> — Tshifularo Mashava, Chief Executive Officer of City Power

Over the next decade, Mashava envisions reducing Eskom's contribution to less than two-thirds of Johannesburg's total electricity supply.

This decentralised energy model aligns with South Africa's broader Just Energy Transition agenda, a key topic at the G20 Summit, and positions Johannesburg as a pioneer in municipal-level energy reform.

At the centre of City Power's modernisation drive is the construction of new transmission lines and bulk substations capable of supporting both population growth and renewable energy integration.

Projects currently under development include new 275 kV transmission corridors serving Johannesburg's northern and western growth zones, as well as a major substation in Reuven, which will strengthen the city's industrial supply backbone.

"These lines are not just cables in the ground, they are arteries of economic growth. Without them, we cannot connect new developments, integrate renewable producers, or ensure stability during peak demand," Mashava said.

City Power is coordinating with the National Transmission Company of South Africa and the Transmission Development Plan to align these projects with national grid expansion efforts.

Mashava has also hinted at exploring public-private partnerships to accelerate construction timelines and improve transparency.

The funding model is still being refined, combining municipal capital budgets, ring-fenced borrowing, and potentially international climate finance.

Beyond crisis management, Mashava's defining ambition is to transform City Power into a digital, decarbonised utility capable of managing energy dynamically; what she calls "the intelligent grid".

The rollout of smart meters is already underway, allowing residents to track usage in real time while enabling City Power to detect faults and reduce non-payment.

Plans include virtual power plants that connect customer-owned solar panels into the broader grid, enabling two-way energy flows.

City Power is also investing in electric vehicle infrastructure, both for public use and for its own fleet of service vehicles.

Charging stations are being installed across the city as part of Johannesburg's clean transport initiative.

This shift mirrors the G20's 2025 Energy Agenda, which urges cities to pursue net-zero strategies while maintaining affordability and inclusivity; goals Mashava says are non-negotiable for City Power's long-term survival.

Financial sustainability remains one of Mashava's toughest battles.

City Power faces a massive

Photo: Vecteezy.com

infrastructure backlog requiring tens of billions of rand, while revenue collection has been undermined by billing errors, non-payment, and economic hardship.

To close this gap, Mashava has championed a dual strategy: improve efficiency and rebuild fiscal discipline.

Smart pre-paid meters, now being deployed citywide, ensure accurate and real-time payment.

City Power has also taken over billing responsibilities from the City of Johannesburg, aiming to reduce errors and improve transparency.

Tariff reforms are under review to ensure they reflect the true cost of supply while protecting vulnerable households.

Internally, Mashava has driven a campaign of ethical and governance reform.

Forensic audits, disciplinary reviews and procurement overhauls have sought to root out corruption and restore public confidence.

Delivering Johannesburg's energy transition will require not only funding but also skilled labour.

City Power has launched partnerships with technical colleges and universities to train young electricians, engineers and project managers in renewable technologies and grid maintenance.

Mashava has also emphasised local content requirements in procurement, ensuring that components for transmission and distribution upgrades are sourced domestically whenever possible.

Despite visible progress, Mashava's transformation plan faces formidable obstacles.

Funding constraints threaten to delay key projects, while vandalism, cable theft and sabotage continue to undermine reliability. Coordination with Eskom and national grid planners remains complex, and load-shedding remains an ever-present risk.

Rebuilding a live grid while maintaining supply is a delicate technical and logistical challenge. Delays or errors could slow progress and erode public confidence. Yet Mashava insists that standing still is not an option.

The CEO has hope for measurable outcomes over the next five years, including reduced load-shedding and faster fault response times; expanded electrification of informal settlements; growth in renewable generation within city boundaries; increased local grid stability and lower technical losses; and improved financial performance and higher payment compliance.

If City Power meets even half of these targets, Johannesburg could emerge as a continental model for how urban utilities modernise under pressure, balancing social equity, fiscal prudence and environmental responsibility.

JOBURG WATER IS BUILDING A RESILIENT FUTURE FOR THE CITY OF GOLD

■ THAPELO MOLEFE

As Johannesburg prepares to host the G20 Summit, the spotlight is not only on the city's economic potential, but also on its ability to provide reliable services to its more than five million residents.

Among the most critical of these is water, the lifeblood of any growing city.

For Johannesburg, a city facing the twin pressures of rapid urbanisation and ageing infrastructure, ensuring a stable and sustainable water supply has become both a technical challenge and a civic responsibility.

At the heart of this effort stands Joburg Water, the municipal entity responsible for managing and maintaining the city's water and sanitation networks.

Under the leadership of Managing Director Ntshavheni Mukwevho, Joburg Water has embarked on a far-reaching turnaround programme aimed at modernising its infrastructure, improving efficiency, and rebuilding public trust.

"Our immediate focus is network stability and reliability," said Mukwevho.

"We're accelerating renewals, refurbishing key reservoirs and towers, reducing bursts and leaks through pressure management, and improving call-to-repair times. Over the medium term, we're expanding storage and pump capacity, such as the 26-megalitre Brixton Reservoir and Erand Pump Station and Tower, and reinforcing bulk pipelines in areas like Woodmead, Linbro Park, and Blue Hills. Long term, we're executing the JW Turnaround Strategy to ramp up capital investment and build capability to sustain performance."

Johannesburg's water network is one of the largest and most complex in the southern hemisphere, an interconnected web of reservoirs, pipelines, and treatment systems that serve both residents and industry. But the system is old, with many pipelines dating back decades, and the city's population has grown dramatically faster than the infrastructure designed to serve it.

"It's an old and complex network facing growth and climate pressures, with historic under-investment in renewals," Mukwevho said.

"Load-related pumping constraints, ageing mains, and governance challenges have all contributed to instability. But our ring-fencing process with the City and National Treasury is addressing these structural issues so that capital and operational spending can flow predictably."

That financial ring-fencing is central to Joburg Water's turnaround strategy. The process, done in partnership with the City of Johannesburg and supported by the National Treasury, aims to give the utility clearer control over its finances while ensuring more predictable funding for infrastructure renewal. The goal is to increase annual capital expenditure from around R1 billion to R3 billion by 2026.

A walk through Joburg Water's project map reveals a city in transformation. From the western suburbs to the south and the ever-expanding north, dozens of infrastructure sites are in various stages of planning, construction, or completion.

"Reservoirs and towers remain the backbone of our system," Mukwevho says.

"In Phase 1, we're executing projects at Hurst Hill 2, Meadowlands, Aeroton, and Dunkeld, with procurement already advancing for Yeoville, Jabulani, Power Park, Ennerdale, Alexander Park, Modderhill, and Crown Gardens. Design work for the next package includes Lenasia, Marlboro, Helderkruin, Linden, and Erand."

Among the most significant of these is the Brixton Reservoir 2, a 26-megalitre facility now 98% complete, which will dramatically improve water security for central and western Johannesburg. Similar progress is evident at the Erand Pump Station and Tower, now over 90% complete, and several new storage facilities, such as Carlswald (20 ML) and Woodmead (20 ML).

Bulk pipeline upgrades are

Photo: Vecteezy.com

another priority, with major work underway in Woodmead, Linbro Park, Halfway House, Blue Hills, Lion Park–Lanseria, and Lenasia. Together, these projects will strengthen the city's ability to balance water pressure and reduce losses during periods of high demand.

Joburg Water's work also extends below the surface, into the sewerage system.

"We've completed major upgrades at the Olifantsvlei and Goudkoppies Wastewater Treatment Works, and we're progressing electrical and capacity improvements at the Northern WWTW," Mukwevho said. "By January 2026, the Northern WWTW Unit 5 will be 90% complete."

For many residents, visible construction is only part of the solution. The daily reality of leaks, bursts, and inconsistent pressure has made reliability the most important measure of success.

Mukwevho says the utility is shifting from a reactive to a proactive maintenance culture.

"We're strengthening preventative maintenance through structured planning, routine inspections, and data-driven prioritisation. Smart monitoring tools, such as real-time pressure and reservoir level data, help detect issues early. These combined measures reduce emergency failures and improve reliability across the network."

A major part of this approach involves pressure management and active leak detection. The city has already installed 225 noise loggers to monitor potential leak zones and is rehabilitating bulk meters to improve flow accuracy.

"Smart controllers are being rolled out to trim night pressures and protect fragile mains," Mukwevho said.

Sustaining these upgrades requires significant investment. Joburg Water's projects are funded through the City of Johannesburg's multi-year capital programme, supplemented by national grants and project-linked funding streams.

"The Turnaround Strategy, supported by the City and the National Treasury, is designed to ring-fence Joburg Water's finances and ramp capex to around R3 billion in 2025/26," said Mukwevho.

"We're also exploring structured borrowing via the City's treasury, where appropriate."

> "With continued support from the City and national partners, and with residents using water responsibly, we can achieve a modern, dependable water network that serves every community consistently."
>
> — Ntshavheni Mukwevho

Partnerships are also playing an important role. Joburg Water works closely with Rand Water on system balancing and augmentation, while engagements with National Treasury and the Presidency's Johannesburg Working Group are driving governance and funding reforms. Private developers are also contributing to infrastructure, such as at Founders Hill and Main Reef, where developer-built assets are integrated into the municipal system.

In recent years, residents across Johannesburg have endured intermittent water cuts, often linked to power failures affecting pump stations, ageing pipes, or maintenance delays.

Joburg Water has implemented both short- and medium-term measures to stabilise supply.

"Short-term interventions include pressure valve adjustments, tactical rezoning, rapid repairs, and targeted tanker support when required," Mukwevho said.

"Medium-term solutions involve expanding storage and pumping capacity through projects like the Brixton Reservoir and Erand Pump Station, and reinforcing bulk mains in critical corridors such as Woodmead, Linbro Park, and Blue Hills."

Nothing frustrates residents more than waiting days for repairs after a burst or blockage. To address this, Joburg Water has redesigned its operational systems to make repairs faster and more efficient.

"We've re-optimised depot dispatch, expanded contractor panels, and implemented a new Field Services Management platform," Mukwevho said.

"The platform integrates fault logging, routing and closure, including a public fault-logging mobile app launched in October 2025. We've also procured more jetting and combination trucks to clear sewer blockages and cut backlogs."

Modernisation is a central theme of Joburg Water's turnaround. The entity is scaling up digital tools to improve monitoring, planning, and decision-making. "Technology is at the core of our modernisation drive," said Mukwevho.

"We're scaling telemetry and smart pressure control, integrating bulk-meter data, and using analytics dashboards to track bursts, leaks, and consumption in real time. This visibility helps us prioritise renewals and manage risk more effectively."

Data analytics now guide where leak sweeps and pipe replacements happen first. With meter reading and billing processes transferred to Joburg Water from July, the utility now has more accurate information to track non-revenue water and improve targeting.

The entity's Water Conservation and Water Demand Management programme is showing measurable results.

"We're combining pressure

Photo: Vecteezy.com

management, leak detection, faster repairs, and improved meter accuracy with by-law enforcement and public awareness campaigns," Mukwevho said.

"Our rolling 12-month assessment shows average daily demand reduced by about 95 megalitres per day year-on-year, clear evidence that the Water Conservation and Water Demand Management programme is working."

Looking ahead, sustainability also means diversifying water sources.

"We're adding reservoir storage, including the planned President Park 80ML reservoir, and piloting groundwater projects in areas like Kokotela and Water Works," said Mukwevho.

"We're also exploring effluent reuse at all six wastewater treatment works, supported by a transaction advisor appointed through the Government Technical Advisory Committee."

Poor communication during outages has long been a source of public frustration, and Joburg Water recognises that transparency is key to rebuilding confidence. Mukwevho said significant progress has been made.

"We're publishing frequent, time-stamped updates across our platforms, issuing early alerts for planned and unplanned maintenance, and providing real-time updates through social media and ward councillor channels. The Daily Water Notice system now includes area-specific details and expected restoration times. We've also introduced proactive media briefings and stakeholder engagement to keep residents and councillors informed."

These efforts are complemented by the new mobile app, which allows residents to report faults and track progress directly.

"By being consistent, transparent and honest, publishing plans, reporting progress, and owning setbacks — we can rebuild trust," said Mukwevho.

Over the next year, residents will begin to see tangible progress.

Mukwevho highlighted several milestones on the horizon.

"We're commissioning key projects like the Brixton 26ML reservoir and the Erand Pump Station and Tower. More pressure-management zones will come online, pipe-replacement kilometres will increase, and bulk-meter uptime will improve. Most importantly, residents will notice faster call-to-repair and reinstatement times as the Field Service Management platform and new vehicles come fully online."

Joburg Water's long-term vision extends far beyond crisis management. It's about building a modern, sustainable, and responsive utility that supports the city's growth for decades to come. "We're strengthening the system progressively while preparing Johannesburg for a more reliable and resilient water future," Mukwevho said.

"Every pressure-reducing valve we rehabilitate, every reservoir we refurbish, every upgraded meter and repaired leak brings us closer to stability. With continued support from the City and national partners, and with residents using water responsibly, we can achieve a modern, dependable water network that serves every community consistently."

RAND WATER SAYS POTABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR G20 SUMMIT IS STABLE

Photo: Vecteezy.com

■ THAPELO MOLEFE

Johannesburg's ability to guarantee a reliable flow of water for scores of local and international dignitaries is under the spotlight as the city hosts world leaders for the G20 Summit.

At the centre of this effort is Rand Water, the bulk water utility responsible for supplying millions of residents and businesses across Gauteng.

Speaking to Inside Metros, Rand Water spokesperson Makenosi Maroo said the entity continues to fulfil its mandate as a bulk potable water supplier, ensuring Johannesburg and surrounding municipalities receive sufficient water ahead of and beyond the global gathering.

"Rand Water is a bulk potable water supplier and it is fulfilling its mandate as per the Bulk Contract Agreement of supplying water to its customers," Maroo said.

"We are pumping at full capacity and don't anticipate any disruption during or after the G20 Summit."

Rand Water and Joburg Water, which handles the city's water distribution, are independent institutions that operate under separate mandates.

Rand Water's role is to supply treated bulk water to municipal entities, while Joburg Water manages the reticulation and delivery to households and businesses.

Maroo said that Rand Water continues to engage Joburg Water and other municipalities regularly to manage supply challenges and coordinate solutions.

"Rand Water meets with the three metros daily to discuss a myriad of issues and solutions to water supply challenges," she said.

To secure the region's future water supply, Rand Water has invested heavily in expanding its purification and pumping capacity.

One of its most significant infrastructure upgrades is the Station 5 project at the Zuikerbosch Water Purification Plant, completed in two phases.

"Phase 1 added 150 million litres per day to the network in August 2023, and Phase 2 added 450 million litres per day, bringing the total to 600 million litres per day," Maroo said.

"This project is part of Rand Water's effort to ensure a sustainable future water supply."

While no new treatment plant or reservoir upgrades are currently planned for Johannesburg specifically, Rand Water maintains that its Infrastructure Augmentation Plan will continue to increase storage capacity across Gauteng in the long term.

To tackle system losses and promote efficiency, Rand Water is partnering with municipalities to reduce leaks and encourage responsible water use through ongoing public education campaigns.

The utility is also investing in research and innovation to modernise its operations. Recently, Rand Water signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Pretoria to establish the Rand Water Research, Development and Innovation Hub (RWRDI), aimed at driving technological advancement in the sector.

"Rand Water is continuously working on technological innovations and conducting research," said Maroo.

"The RWRDI at the University of Pretoria is a step forward in strengthening innovation and knowledge-sharing in the water industry."

Despite concerns over rapid urbanisation and climate variability, Rand Water insists it has sufficient capacity to meet the growing demand from its customers.

"There's sufficient water to supply all Rand Water customers," Maroo said.

The utility's long-term strategy focuses on expanding infrastructure, improving operational efficiency, and deepening collaboration with municipalities to sustain a reliable water supply across the economic heartland of South Africa.

As Johannesburg takes the global stage at the G20 Summit, Rand Water says it remains committed to ensuring an uninterrupted water supply, not only during the event but as part of its broader mission to support the region's growth.

"Rand Water is partnering with municipalities to reduce leaks and encourage efficient water use through education and public awareness campaigns," Maroo added.

"Our role and mandate remain clear – to supply water to our customers."

> "[We are] continuously working on technological innovations and conducting research."
>
> — Rand Water spokesperson Makenosi Maroo

JOHANNESBURG PROPERTY COMPANY

A PASSION FOR PEOPLE AND PROPERTY

Musa Makhunga, the CEO of the Johannesburg Property Company. Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

■ THEBE MABANGA

The preparations for the G20 Summit have focused the minds of those who work for the City of Johannesburg and its entities, and created a momentum around developing the city that needs to be sustained. This is the view of Musa Makhunga, the CEO of the Johannesburg Property Company (JPC), who assumed the role two months ago after acting since the beginning of the year.

"A lot of good has been done, now we must keep it up," he says of the City's efforts to ensure a stable electricity and water supply, clear stormwater drains and clean streets.

The JPC manages the City's R8,6 billion land and property portfolio and is responsible for keeping a range of public spaces clean and properly maintained. The entity employs just over 1,500 people.

At a recent staff event to honour those with long service, Makhunga described his vision for the JPC as being to "build a world-class property management company that not only serves the City of Johannesburg with pride, but also empowers its employees and uplifts communities."

He reminded his staff of the need and importance of acting with integrity and accountability, two of the key values of the JPC. He also reminded his executive team to "lead with humility". His

message resonated with staff and leadership alike in a celebratory mood for those who marked longevity with the organisation. The JPC came into being in 2000 when the City of Johannesburg was formed by amalgamating several town councils.

The JPC operates four main divisions. The first is Property Asset Management, which manages about 30,700 parcels of land on behalf of the City. The division also drives the City's land strategy and does property research.

Property Management handles various types of accounts from blue chip clients to mixed-use accounts, socioeconomic accounts for social housing, as well as municipal accounts. These generate management fees and rental income for the JPC on behalf of the City.

Then there is the Property Development, which includes developments of over R4 billion, with developments of R8 billion facilitated over the past five years. "The JPC's approach to the redevelopment and management of office space is progressive and transformative, leading to mixed-use developments along the Corridors of Freedom," the company notes.

There is also Facilities Management, which includes the management of taxi ranks, informal trading spaces, public conveniences and the refurbishment and maintenance of all council facilities.

The divisions give the JPC a mixed skill set that starts with those in areas such as finance, but also property industry professionals like valuers and conveyancers, and the bulk of their skills in facilities management includes general workers and cleaners.

In the year to June, the JPC had assets of R1,4 billion and liabilities of R1,1 billion to indicate healthy solvency.

Over the same period, the JPC generated revenue of R1,2 billion, with R695 million in subsidies from CoJ for managing its portfolio. That means the entity must still go out and raise

Photo: vecteezy.com

R500 million through rentals, cleaning service recoveries, commission from property sales and facilitation fees from developments, as well as rental income from outdoor advertising through billboards.

Some of the major developments are the Ekhaya Centre around the Orlando Towers in Soweto, the Alexandra Mall and Pan Africa Mall in Alexandra, and the 27 boxes development in Melville, among others.

An interesting development in the pipeline is a student housing project in the suburb of Cottesloe for the University of Johannesburg. The suburb was established after World War II as a resettlement hub for returning white soldiers who were awarded houses.

The densification development will see a dilapidated structure converted into a 16-storey building to provide student accommodation, a pressing issue in Johannesburg. There is also a mixed-use development planned for the vicinity of Diepsloot just off Winnie Mandela Drive, north of Johannesburg.

Makhunga says one of the areas he would like to drive is private sector collaboration to expand beyond the current area of cooperation with private developers. Increasing the role of the private sector to expand to areas like financing developments is recognising that the City has limited resources and vast competing developmental needs, which require entities to be creative to raise revenue.

He proudly declares that a significant number of their developments are undertaken with black-owned developers, a requirement he deems non-negotiable.

Makhunga says the JPC frequently meets with international counterparts to understand how cities manage their land and property portfolios. The JPC has interacted with cities such as Madrid, Paris and Singapore to gain an understanding of how they have undertaken inner city rejuvenation.

Makhunga says he is driven by a passion for people, whether it's employees or communities, and sees property as a vehicle he can use to achieve these goals.

His love for community is rooted in his upbringing in Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal.

Due to the violence and instability in the area, his parents moved him to Ulundi, where he completed his high school education. He then went to Rhodes University to gain a B.Com in Accounting. While pursuing articles at Ernst & Young, then at Sizwe Ntsaluba and Associates, he audited property companies, and that is how he obtained exposure to the sector. "I decided at this point that this is a sector I must get involved in," he says.

Makhunga joined the Metro Trading Company in 2011, which was responsible for managing City property around taxi ranks and informal traders. This has given him a handle on the current impasse between the City and Informal traders, where the City obtained a court order to move informal traders to designated spaces. He believes the solution lies in education, both for consumers and hawkers.

"When you need to get petrol, you go to a specific place. When you need to purchase grocery items or clothing, you go to a

specific place," he says, arguing that the goods sold by hawkers, especially food, cannot be placed randomly in pedestrian spaces and must be regulated. He argues that in many other countries, markets are a defining feature as they house informal traders who sell their wares. This is the environment in which informal traders must operate, he says.

The Metro Trading Company was incorporated into the JPC; that is how he entered the entity and grew a step closer to realising his dream. After working in audit and risk, he became head of strategy and later decided to join the operations side of the business. This led to him being appointed as General Manager for Mega Projects, which are projects above R1 billion.

In January this year, he was appointed as acting CEO, and he assumed the role permanently two months ago.

Part of what he likes about property is that, unlike accounting and auditing, he can explain to someone like his late grandmother what he does daily to change people's lives.

Makhunga notes that he assumed the role at a busy time for the organisation, including the preparatory work for the G20. The result is that he hardly finds time for himself outside of work. When asked what he does to unwind, he notes that "I am working, planning something".

He spends limited time with his family and, as a keen hiker and cyclist, he religiously spends Sunday morning in the open hiking, but also planning and strategising work-related issues.

The City of Johannesburg's land and property portfolio is in safe and capable hands.

GREENING JOZI'S FUTURE

JCPZ Managing Director Thanduxolo Mendrew. Photo: Supplied

CHARTING A PATH TO A SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT CITY

■ JOHNATHAN PAOLI

As dignitaries descend on Johannesburg for the G20 leaders' summit, the city is also tending to quieter priorities: the green spaces that keep it breathing.

In a metropolis racing toward its Growth and Development Strategy 2040 goals, parks, cemeteries, open tracts, and the biodiversity corridors that stitch them together have taken on renewed urgency.

At the heart of this green transformation stands the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ), the municipal entity charged with maintaining and expanding the city's natural heritage amid growing urban pressures.

JCPZ Managing Director Thanduxolo Mendrew has said that the entity's strategic direction includes tackling financial constraints, maintenance backlogs and driving innovation, climate resilience, and equitable access to green spaces.

"Our focus is to build a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient city by investing in ecological infrastructure, enhancing biodiversity, and ensuring equitable access to safe, green, and well-maintained public spaces," he said.

Mendrew described JCPZ as a key implementing arm of the city's Growth and Development Strategy 2040, a roadmap aimed at creating a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient Johannesburg.

Short-term priorities are being tailored to this long-term vision. This includes climate-smart landscaping, water-wise irrigation, and rehabilitating degraded ecosystems; all designed to make the city's green infrastructure more adaptive and efficient.

Mendrew said that inclusivity remains central to this vision.

"Our greening projects increasingly target historically underserved areas to ensure that every Johannesburg resident benefits from healthy, green environments," he said.

Like many public entities, JCPZ operates under tight fiscal conditions. With shrinking municipal grants and rising operational costs, balancing ambition and affordability is a daily challenge.

"We operate in a fiscally constrained environment, but our approach is to remain agile and innovative," Mendrew said.

While municipal grants remain the backbone of its funding, JCPZ is diversifying its revenue streams through partnerships, sponsorships, and self-sustaining amenities.

These include event hosting, plant nursery sales, and eco-tourism opportunities at the Johannesburg Zoo; all part of a broader strategy to reduce dependence on municipal transfers.

Internally, the entity is also tightening its belt through improved contract management and preventative maintenance, alongside the use of technology to boost efficiency.

"These steps will strengthen our long-term financial sustainability, even amid reduced transfers and rising input costs," Mendrew said.

Johannesburg's residents are often vocal about overgrown parks, damaged infrastructure, and neglected cemeteries.

Mendrew acknowledged these frustrations and said JCPZ is responding with urgency.

"To address service backlogs, we've implemented a Rapid Response Programme focusing on high-traffic public areas, as well as seasonal maintenance drives," he said.

The MD stressed that the next five years will see a major shift toward digital transformation. JCPZ is developing a smart asset management system to digitise maintenance schedules and map facilities using GIS technology for real-time tracking.

The entity is also piloting remote irrigation controls, allowing better resource management and quicker response to issues.

"These tools will improve accountability, reduce downtime, and extend the lifespan of our green assets," Mendrew said, adding that technology will be central to modernising how Johannesburg maintains its green spaces.

From heatwaves to flash floods, Johannesburg is increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. For Mendrew, environmental resilience has evolved from an operational concern to a strategic imperative.

"Climate resilience is now a strategic pillar in our planning," he stressed.

The entity is integrating nature-based solutions across its projects: expanding urban canopy cover to counter heat islands, restoring wetlands to improve stormwater management, and promoting indigenous vegetation to conserve water and support biodiversity.

"Our long-term goal is to build

an environmentally adaptive city, where green infrastructure plays an active role in mitigating climate impacts while enhancing liveability and biodiversity," he said.

He agreed that Johannesburg's history of spatial inequality remains visible in its parks. While suburbs like Parkview and Rosebank boast lush, manicured spaces, areas such as Soweto, Alexandra, and Orange Farm continue to struggle with underinvestment.

"We recognise the historical disparities in the quality and distribution of green spaces," Mendrew said.

To address this, JCPZ has made equitable service delivery a cornerstone of its strategy. Recent initiatives include tree-planting corridors, park rehabilitation in townships, and community-led maintenance programmes.

"Our goal is to ensure that every resident, regardless of where they live, can access a clean, safe, and well-maintained park within walking distance," he said. These projects not only improve urban aesthetics but also foster community ownership and pride, which are critical ingredients for long-term sustainability, he added.

Behind many of JCPZ's success stories lies a network of partnerships with NGOs, schools, corporates, and community associations.

Mendrew highlighted several transformative examples: the 3,000-tree corridor project from Fourways to Diepsloot, the Zoo Lake restoration initiative, and numerous Adopt-a-Park programmes across the city.

"Partnerships remain at the heart of our greening success. We are expanding these collaborations through memoranda of understanding with civic and environmental groups to encourage shared ownership, stewardship, and volunteerism," he said.

The MD said this collaborative model not only amplifies impact but also builds public trust, an essential factor in maintaining Johannesburg's expansive network of open spaces.

As one of the city's largest contributors to the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), JCPZ has long been a gateway for young people seeking work and skills in the green economy.

"Each year, we provide thousands of short-term opportunities in horticulture, landscaping, and maintenance," Mendrew said.

But the goal extends beyond temporary employment. JCPZ offers accredited training in environmental management, tree felling, and urban ecology, helping youth transition into long-term careers in environmental services and sustainability sectors.

"Our aim is to transform these opportunities into sustainable career pathways that support both livelihoods and environmental resilience. In the process, we're cultivating a new generation of environmental custodians," he said.

Globally, urban parks are becoming multifunctional hubs that blend recreation, technology, and education. JCPZ is following suit with an ambitious innovation agenda.

"We are reimagining the future of public spaces through innovation," Mendrew said. JCPZ is piloting smart park models featuring free wi-fi, solar lighting, rainwater harvesting systems, and interactive environmental learning zones.

The Johannesburg Zoo is also evolving into an eco-education hub, combining conservation efforts with digital interpretation tools to enrich visitor experiences.

"We envision our parks as multifunctional spaces combining recreation, learning, and technology for community benefit," he explained. This future-facing model aligns Johannesburg with global trends while making its parks more accessible and engaging to younger, tech-savvy audiences.

Public trust, Mendrew acknowledged, is the currency of any municipal entity, and to safeguard that trust, JCPZ has undertaken several governance reforms.

"Good governance and transparency are central to our credibility," he said.

The organisation has introduced automated performance monitoring, independent audits, and managerial scorecards linked to service delivery outcomes.

"These systems ensure accountability at every operational level. Despite fiscal and administrative challenges, our leadership remains committed to ethical governance and delivering measurable public value," he said.

Such reforms aim to build a culture of accountability and responsiveness, key to maintaining public confidence in an era of tightening budgets and growing citizen expectations.

Looking ahead to the next decade, Mendrew's vision is both ambitious and attainable.

"Our vision is for Johannesburg to become Africa's greenest, most liveable city where biodiversity thrives alongside urban growth, and every community takes pride in its open spaces," he said.

To reach that goal, JCPZ has identified three strategic priorities that will guide its work through 2040.

First, building climate-resilient green infrastructure through sustainable design, indigenous landscaping, and water-wise technologies.

Second, ensuring equitable access to safe, functional, and beautiful public spaces across all communities.

Last, modernising operations through technology and partnerships to achieve both financial and environmental sustainability.

The MD confirmed that progress will be measured through environmental impact indicators, public satisfaction surveys, and visible improvements in the quality and accessibility of parks, cemeteries, and open spaces across Johannesburg.

As Johannesburg continues to urbanise, its open spaces play a crucial role in balancing growth with sustainability. Mendrew called for a shift toward innovation, accountability, and inclusivity, recognising that parks are not just leisure spaces, but essential urban infrastructure.

"Green spaces are not peripheral to development. They are central to our city's resilience, health, and sense of community. Our task is to protect and expand them so that every Johannesburg resident can breathe cleaner air, enjoy safer spaces, and live closer to nature," he said.

MEET BUKELWA NJINGOLO

THE MD DRIVING CHANGE AT PIKITUP

■ LEVY MASITENG

Bukelwa Njingolo is a purpose-driven leader committed to advancing public service and environmental sustainability.

As the Managing Director of Pikitup, Johannesburg's primary waste management company, she is responsible for driving the city's vision of a clean, safe, and liveable urban environment.

With a strong background in strategic management, community engagement, environmental sustainability and a master's degree in environmental management from the University of Johannesburg and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Cape Town, Njingolo has been instrumental in transforming Pikitup into a leading player in the waste management sector.

Her leadership style is collaborative, inclusive, and performance-driven, which inspires her team to achieve excellence in service delivery.

"My journey to becoming the Managing Director of Pikitup has been both purpose-driven and people-centred," Njingolo says.

"I have always been deeply passionate about public service and about creating systems that enable people to live with dignity in clean, safe and sustainable environments."

Under her leadership, Pikitup has

Photo: Vecteezy.com

prioritised operational efficiency, waste diversion, and behavioural change.

The company has implemented innovative solutions, including smart technologies, GPS-based fleet tracking, and digital route optimisation, to improve waste management services.

"We are integrating waste management planning into urban development, ensuring that new housing, commercial and industrial zones have sustainable collection and recycling solutions built in from the start," Njingolo explains.

"Our goal is to shift Johannesburg from a 'collect and dispose' model to a circular economy that values waste as a resource."

She is committed to stakeholder engagement, working closely with ward councillors, community-based organisations, industry associations, and government departments to co-create solutions.

"Stakeholder engagement is at the heart of everything we do," she says. "We work together to align our services with the evolving needs of residents and businesses."

The company has also launched initiatives to promote sustainability and reduce waste, including the separation-at-source programme, waste-to-energy initiatives, and partnerships with industry partners to promote extended producer responsibility and circular value chains.

"We aim to reach 30% recycling in the medium term by investing in infrastructure, incentives, and partnerships that make recycling accessible and rewarding," Njingolo says.

"Our investment in waste-to-energy and renewable technologies will further reduce emissions and landfill dependency."

Njingolo is proud of the company's contributions to the City of Johannesburg's goals and objectives, enabling public health, environmental resilience, and economic opportunity.

"As the city grows, Pikitup will continue to lead innovation in waste management, champion green jobs, and build the foundations for a cleaner and more circular urban economy."

Njingolo's leadership has been widely recognised: she won the 2023 Women in Leadership Award, received the 2022 Environmental Sustainability Award, and was listed among the Top 100 Women in Africa in 2021.

"My passion for public service and environmental sustainability drives me to lead Pikitup with purpose and integrity," she says. "I believe that together, we can create a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable future for Johannesburg and beyond."

EIGHTY YEARS AND GOING STRONG

PUTCO SETS SIGHTS ON SHAPING THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

AKANI NKUNA

Transport giant PUTCO has set its sights on leading South Africa's transport industry — and expanding its influence beyond the country — by integrating new technologies and strategies that keep it adaptive and relevant to commuters, according to its managing director, Franco Pisapia.

"Our long-term goal is to become the leading public transport company in South Africa and beyond. Our immediate goal is to be the best in the country and develop PUTCO into the commuter transport of choice," he said.

He said the focus is on being the go-to transport provider, keeping pace with change, and ensuring the organisation is equipped for whatever comes next.

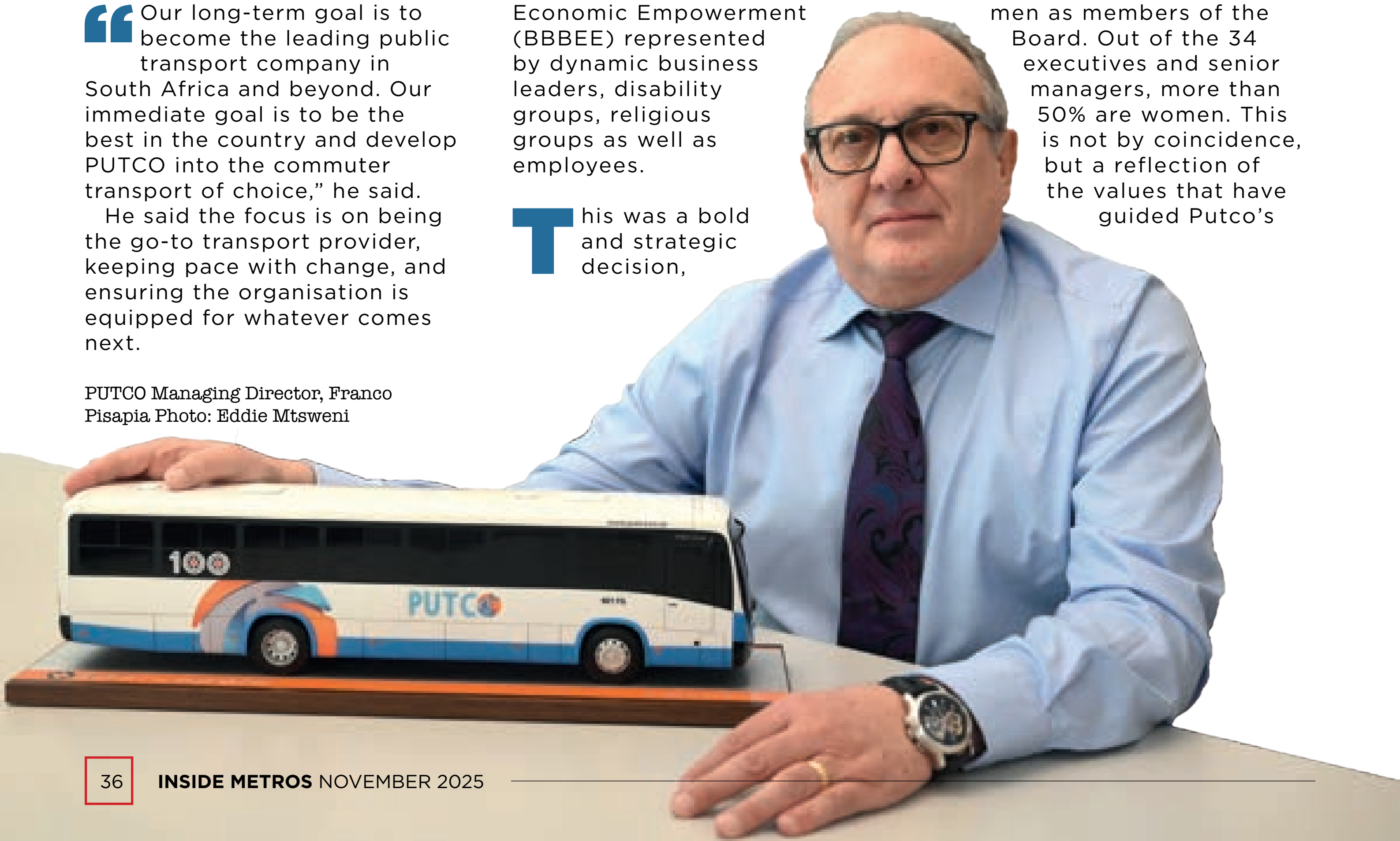
Pisapia, speaking as PUTCO marks 80 years in operation, hailed the company's post-1994 transformation to reflect the new dispensation as critical to delivering exceptional services.

He said PUTCO's mandate sought to empower communities and employees

Putco, delisted from the JSE as a transport group in 2005 and sold 42.6 percent of the company in a deal worth R225 million to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) represented by dynamic business leaders, disability groups, religious groups as well as employees.

This was a bold and strategic decision, a commitment to transitioning fully into the new South Africa and the realisation that the empowerment of the previously marginalised groups was the right thing to do. This was long before BBBEE was fashionable or legislated by government.

This deal transformed not only Putco's ownership structure but also its governance. It gave rise to eight (8) Board of Directors, chaired by a woman with six (6) females and only two men as members of the Board. Out of the 34 executives and senior managers, more than 50% are women. This is not by coincidence, but a reflection of the values that have guided Putco's



PUTCO Managing Director, Franco Pisapia Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

transformation journey.

"We would like to be known for transforming and continuing to transform," said Pisapia.

A strategic businessman and seasoned public-transport administrator, Pisapia was effectively born into PUTCO after his family acquired the company in 1971.

He worked his way through every rung of the business before assuming the MD role in 2004, and has since steered steady growth to a fleet of 1,400 buses, transporting more than 210,000 passengers and operating daily from 2am to 10pm.

The company operates in Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga, employing over 3,600 personnel — including drivers, mechanics, and administrative staff. Pisapia added that PUTCO aims to diversify its services to deliver "the best customer experience".

He said a key driver of diversification is the company's wealth of motor and transport industry expertise among its directors and executives, enabling expansion into adjacent sectors where opportunities are within reach.

Pisapia said that to enhance the company's sustainability and diversification efforts, PUTCO is ramping up its Vehicle


Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

PUTCO Managing Director, Franco Pisapia Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

Photo:Eddie Mtsweni

Overhaul and Maintenance Services (VOMS), originally established in 1945, to provide technical and mechanical support to ensure higher maintenance standards across the fleet.

As a division focused largely on refurbishing bus materials and parts, VOMS has received numerous accreditations from several Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), such as IVECO, MAN, BOSCH, and others.

VOMS overhauls engines, gearboxes, prop shafts, and all major bus components, including refurbishing tyres and manufacturing bodies, achieving approximately 95% South African content through labour insourced to PUTCO.

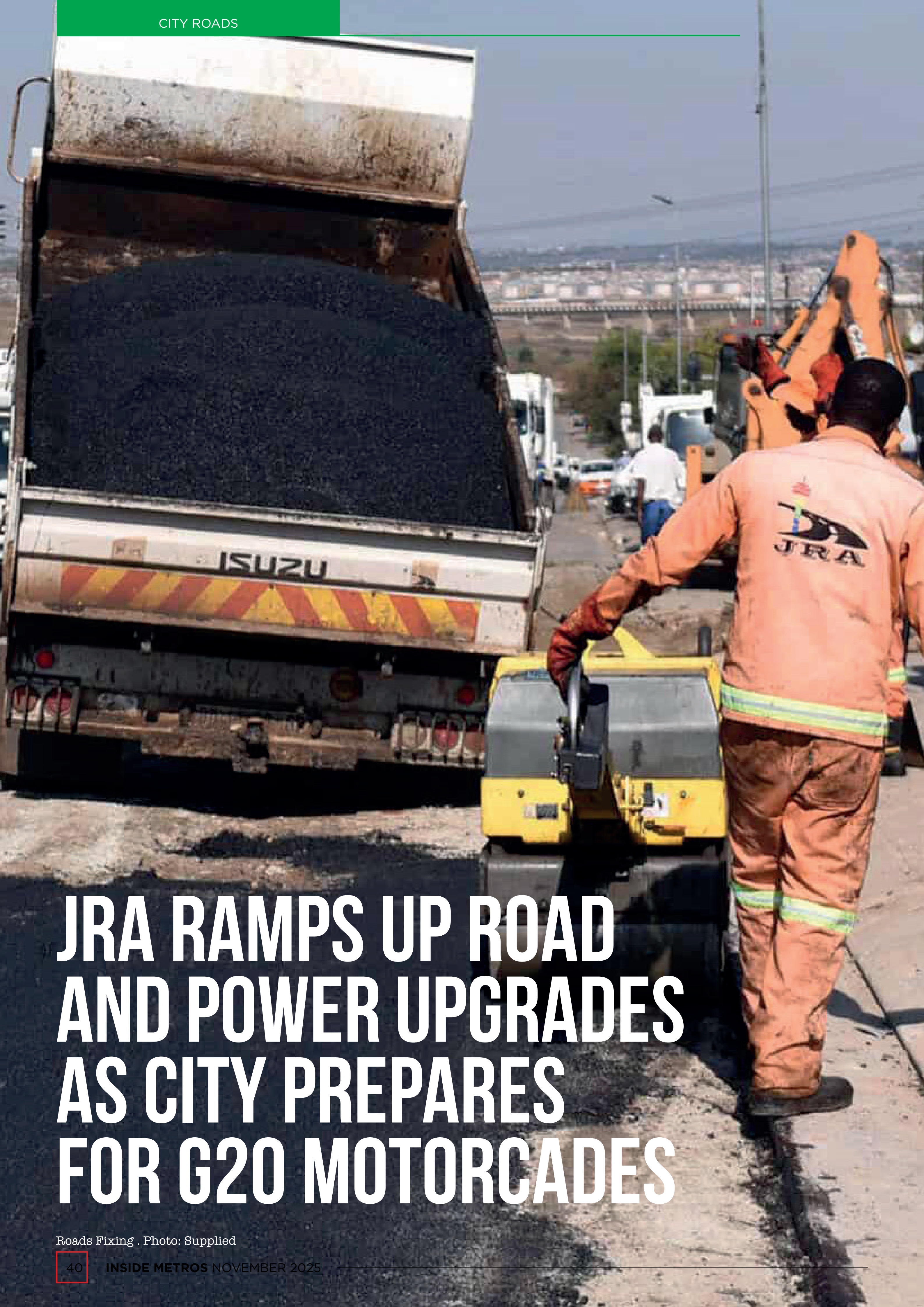
"Putco has a fully-equipped Training Academy, accredited by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)

"The Academy offers driver training, Artisan development through Apprentice training for Diesel Mechanics and Auto Electrical Trades, plans are at an advanced stage to diversify training offerings" said Pisapia.

Pisapia emphasised the significance of integrating new technology into daily operations, and said the company has, over the past few years, gradually introduced Electronic Ticketing System, fitted camera systems in buses enabling real-time tracking of buses, ensuring compliance with both road-safety standards and monitoring driver behaviour on the road.

Since the advent of the empowerment transaction, Putco has been unstoppable. We are one of the few companies if not the only bus company in the country to embrace empowerment in all areas of the business, opened doors and incubated emerging and small black bus operators. Our flagship was the funding and set-up of one of the first black women owned bus company's in Gauteng, called Gauteng Women in Transport (GWIT). Today we have more than 12 small bus companies operating some of the Putco routes and small companies participate in the value chain to provide goods and services and to Putco.

As a responsible Corporate Citizen, Putco continues to support the vulnerable communities in areas of our operation working with Municipalities to implement some of the projects identified through their Integrated Plans.



JRA RAMPS UP ROAD AND POWER UPGRADES AS CITY PREPARES FOR G20 MOTORCADES

Roads Fixing . Photo: Supplied

■ SIMON NARE

As Johannesburg hosts world leaders for the G20 Leaders' Summit, the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) says the city's road network is in top gear, with key routes already identified to ensure a smooth flow of traffic.

With more than 30 heads of state and government from G20 member and guest countries set to be escorted from various locations to the summit venue at the Nasrec Exhibition Centre outside Soweto, traffic in the area is expected to be extremely congested, but the JRA has plans in place to keep it under control.

Johannesburg has hosted major international events before, but none on the scale of welcoming dozens of world leaders, each with heavy security convoys that must be escorted. Adding to the challenge is that many of these dignitaries will be under the same roof and travelling on the same routes at roughly the same time.

However, the JRA says it is all systems go. In the weeks leading up to the summit, the agency intensified road maintenance efforts.

It has described the summit as a cornerstone for the city, saying Johannesburg's readiness includes extensive infrastructure upgrades across key routes and sectors.

"The Johannesburg Roads Agency has intensified maintenance efforts, especially along high-profile routes like Sandton, Alexandra, Lanseria, M1, M2 and Soweto, ensuring smooth traffic flow and safety.

"Road resurfacing, pothole repairs and beautification initiatives are ongoing, complemented by vegetation control and cleanliness drives in partnership with Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo and Pikitup," it said.

Stormwater management, said the agency, has been prioritised through clearing stormwater inlets and outlets, particularly in flood-prone areas, to mitigate risks during the rainy season.

One of the main concerns around hosting such high-profile visitors has been the reliability of traffic lights during gridlock, particularly with the possibility of unscheduled power cuts. To address this, the JRA has partnered with several private companies to improve traffic signal functionality.

JRA CEO Zweli Nyathi. Photo: Supplied

This partnership forms part of the JRA's Back-up Power Initiative, which has already led to progress and a significant reduction in traffic congestion at major intersections across the city.

The city said the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department has implemented a dual security and traffic management plan focusing on high-security zones, motorcade routes, and overall public safety. These included strict perimeter controls, enhanced patrols, and enforcement of bylaws across the city.

City Power has undertaken a major overhaul of the electricity network, with over 30 substations undergoing maintenance and upgrades to ensure a reliable power supply.

"Streetlighting has been rehabilitated along strategic routes, enhancing both safety and visibility. Critical water infrastructure, including Rand Water's Eikenhof Pumping Station, has received reinforced power supply systems to prevent disruptions during the event," the city said.

JRA throughout the year continued to address road safety concerns and responded to emergencies affecting traffic signals across the city, despite significant challenges posed by rampant vandalism and widespread power outages, particularly in the city centre.

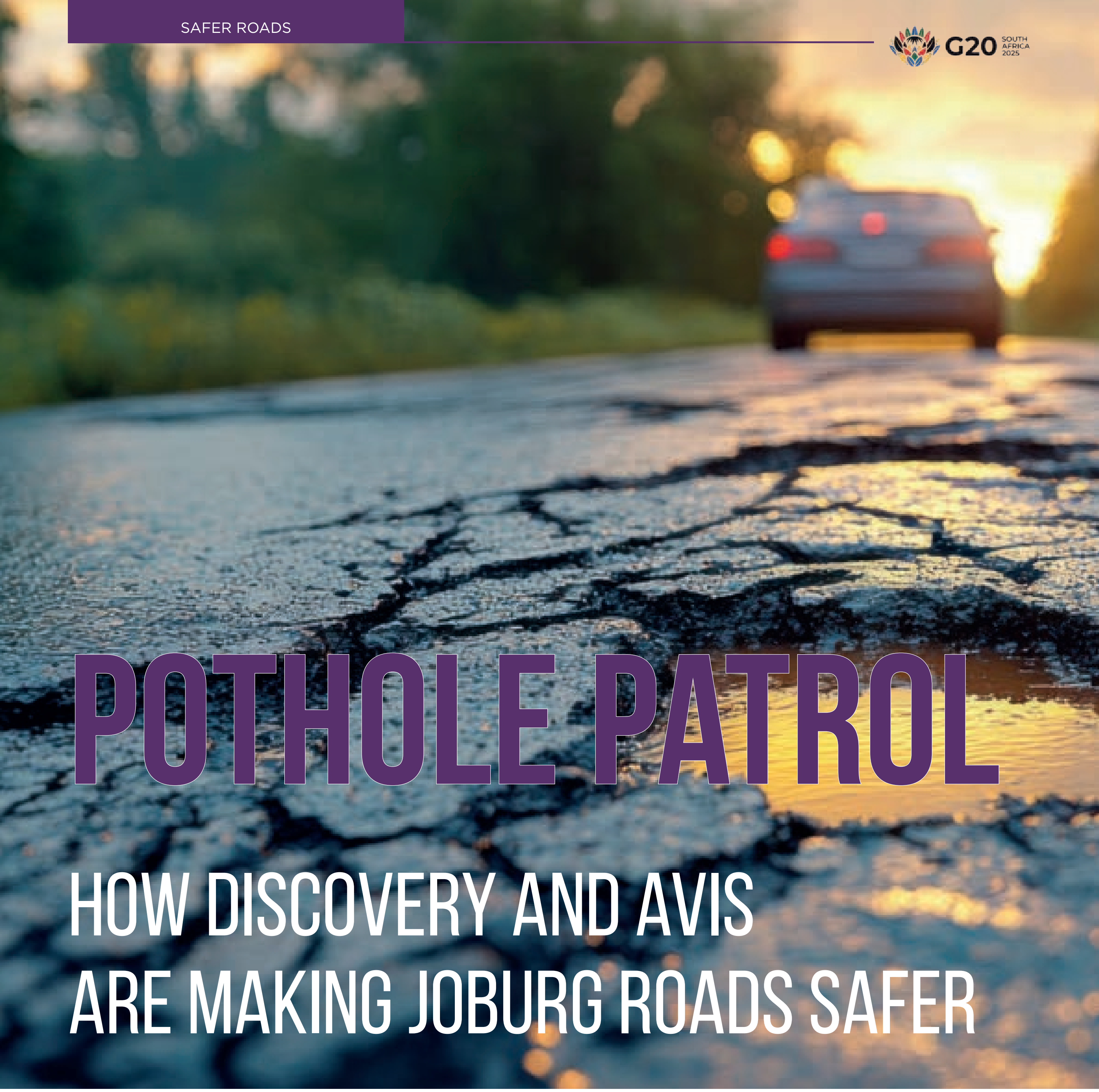
The agency had set out to install, maintain and repair traffic signals throughout Johannesburg. This was done in collaboration with private sector stakeholders and academic institutions.

JRA Chief Executive Officer Zweli Nyathi at the time said primary contributors to malfunctioning traffic signals included technical faults, power outages, theft, vandalism and accidents.

"Globally, cities face similar challenges, but it's up to us to develop solutions tailored to South Africa's unique context. To address technical faults, the JRA has installed Remote Monitoring Systems on more than 80% of our traffic light controllers.

"These systems detect and report over 90% of faults before they become apparent to the public, enabling faster responses," he had said.

Repairs due to theft, vandalism, and accidents exceeded R70 million, placing significant strain on the entity's maintenance budget.



POTHOLE PATROL

HOW DISCOVERY AND AVIS ARE MAKING JOBURG ROADS SAFER

Photo: Vecteezy.com

LEVY MASITENG

Discovery and Avis have joined forces with the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) to tackle the city's pothole problem, and the results are impressive.

Since the launch of their Pothole Patrol initiative, the partnership has fixed an astonishing 314,000 potholes, with over 93,000 reported via the Pothole Patrol app, according to Eddie Maluleke, Discovery's reputation manager.

The initiative, which aims to improve road safety and reduce pothole-related claims, has been a resounding success.

Maluleke said that the partnership has led to a 26% reduction in pothole-related motor claims, demonstrating the direct impact of improved roads on safer driving conditions.

"We deploy eight road-repair vehicles daily to support the City's operations," Maluleke said.

"Our partnership with the JRA has been key to our success, allowing for faster response times, efficient coordination, and broader coverage across key routes."

The Pothole Patrol initiative uses advanced technology, including high-pressure cleaning and thermal repair methods, to ensure durable and long-lasting repairs.

The process involves cleaning and preparing the area, applying a waterproofing spray, and compacting aggregate and

asphalt residue.

"We are proud to maintain a 99% repair success rate since 2021, with fewer than 0.2% of repaired potholes requiring further attention," Maluleke said.

Avis CEO Ramasela Ganda said: "This partnership will ensure that we stay true to this commitment. By working together with Discovery Insure and the JRA, we can make a real difference in the lives of our customers and broader society."

The JRA has praised the partnership, highlighting the significant impact on road safety and infrastructure in the City.

Lucia Mhlanga, JRA's PR and communication assistant manager, said: "The partnership has increased the City's capacity to fix potholes and established a sustainable skills development programme through the Pothole Patrol Academy."

The academy, launched in 2024, has trained 24 learners in road construction, with 22 graduating with national certificates.

JRA said that the programme aims to develop accredited road-construction skills which will drive employment and empowerment in local communities.

"The Pothole Patrol initiative has been a game-changer for us," Mhlanga said. "It has allowed us to focus on larger, more complex road defects, while Discovery and Avis handle the smaller repairs."

However, Maluleke said there are challenges in the rainy season, and also challenges with resources in relation to the demand for assistance in repairing defects.

"We aim to continue this partnership, to contribute to making our roads safer," he said.

The partnership has also encouraged community engagement, with citizens reporting potholes via the Pothole Patrol app and WhatsApp.

The app provides real-time updates and allows users to track the repair process.

"The Pothole Patrol app makes reporting quick and transparent. Using geolocation, users can log the exact location of a pothole within the JRA's jurisdiction, attach photos, and receive confirmation when repairs are completed. The system allows the team to track reports, optimise routing, and fix nearby defects proactively, ensuring broader coverage and efficiency," Maluleke said.

As the partnership looks to the future, he said there are plans to expand the initiative to other areas and cities in South Africa.

"We are carefully evaluating opportunities to ensure the right infrastructure and partnerships are in place before scaling."

The JRA is also open to further collaboration, with Mhlanga stating: "We see opportunities for further collaboration and are committed to working together to improve road safety and infrastructure in Johannesburg."

As the city continues to grow and develop, initiatives like this are set to play a crucial role in shaping the future of Johannesburg's roads.

"We aim to continue this partnership and contribute to making our roads safer," Maluleke said.

Discovery, Avis and the JRA mentioned future projects, including the possibility of expanding the Pothole Patrol initiative to other areas and cities in the country, and continuing the skills development programme through the Pothole Patrol Academy.

"Our partnership with the Johannesburg Roads Agency and the City of Johannesburg has been key to our success," Maluleke said.

"Working together allows for faster response times, efficient coordination, and broader coverage across key routes. It shows what's possible when businesses and government collaborate to solve real issues and deliver meaningful, lasting impact for road users."

CITIES ARE ENGINES OF GLOBAL SOLUTIONS, SAYS DADA MORERO

Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Dada Morero. Photo: Eddie Mtsweni

■ THAPELO MOLEFE

The Executive Mayor of Johannesburg, Dada Morero, opened the Urban 20 (U20) Mayoral Summit in September by declaring that cities are not just sites of global problems, but "engines of economic opportunity and social care," capable of driving the solutions to some of the world's most urgent challenges.

Speaking before delegates from across various cities around the world, Morero stressed that the success of cities depends on access to the right financial tools.

"From climate action to social services, from housing to local infrastructure, municipal finance is the bridge that turns ambition into results," said Morero.

He emphasised that the summit, held on African soil for the first time, provides a platform to mobilise resources so that no city or community is left behind.

Morero highlighted Johannesburg's resilience, from its origins as a mining town to its current status as a metropolis of over five million people, and framed the city's hosting of the U20 as a historic step in strengthening the influence of local governments within the G20 process.

"This is a pivotal moment for city diplomacy. Cities are not junior partners, but global political actors in their own right," he said.

Tshwane Mayor Nasiphi Moya, co-chairing the summit, reinforced Africa's leadership role in global urban governance.

She pointed to the African Mayors' Assembly in June, where over 40 leaders spoke with a united voice.

"Africa is not a bystander. Africa is the driver of solutions," she said.

Moya announced that Tshwane had recently secured R86 billion in investment pledges at a city investment summit, describing it as part of a broader strategy to raise capital for infrastructure.

"Too often, municipalities have the will and the vision, but lack the financial resources to drive those ambitions. We cannot continue to allow this to limit progress," she said.

Both leaders tied the summit's agenda to four priorities: Economic opportunity and financing, climate action and urban resilience, social inclusion and equity, and digital transformation and innovation.

Over the three-day summit, city leaders are expected to shape these discussions into a communique that will influence G20 decisions under South Africa's presidency.

The South African Local Government Association President, Bheke Stofile, used the platform to call for a reformed funding model.

He noted that municipalities in South Africa receive just 9% of national revenue compared to a global average of 20%.

"If municipalities are underfunded, the nation limps," he said, urging greater recognition of local governments as equal partners in shaping global policy.

Stofile also linked city leadership to peace-building, warning that wars and conflicts devastate local infrastructure and drain resources from development.

"Cities must become advocates for peace," he said, citing Nelson Mandela's words that courageous people do not fear forgiving for the sake of peace.

The U20, convened by C40 Cities and the United Cities and Local Governments, is the only G20 track led by mayors rather than national governments.

Johannesburg's hosting of the summit marks a milestone for Africa's role in global city diplomacy, with leaders insisting that global change must begin city by city and community by community.

Photo: Chris7cn

PUSH FOR DIRECT FINANCING AMID RISING URBAN PRESSURES

THAPELO MOLEFE

African city leaders are demanding stronger financing tools to address climate change, infrastructure gaps, and rapid urbanisation, warning that without direct access to predictable funds, municipalities will struggle to deliver services to their growing populations.

At the U20 Summit in Sandton in September, mayors, municipal leaders, and development banks debated "Finance Your Cities: Sub-National Development Banks & Country Platforms for Localising Finance."

The discussion highlighted both innovative financing models and the ongoing challenges faced by smaller municipalities.

Mayor of Antananarivo, Harilala Ramanantsoa, presented Madagascar's new Fi-nance for Cities Madagascar initiative, a country platform designed to channel resources directly to local governments.

"It is not a slogan, it's an operating model – a financial architecture that brings us closer to sources of financing," Ramanantsoa said.

The platform integrates national ministries, local authorities, and development partners, backed by the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust and the V20 Climate Prosperity Plan.

At its heart is the Local Development Fund, described as a "bank of the last kilo-metre," connecting smaller municipalities with international and national financing sources.

Ramanantsoa called on African governments to institutionalise such platforms, formally integrate sub-national development banks, and create predictable pipelines for climate and infrastructure funding.

"We promise to transform promises into activities, intentions into infrastructures, and discourses into jobs," she said.

South Africa's Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) showcased how a strong national development bank can anchor municipal financing.

Head of Transacting for Municipalities and Water Boards at the DBSA, Ben Mokheseng, said the bank acts as a "municipal bank", with a third of its portfolio dedicated to cities and utilities.

Over the years, DBSA has shifted from lending to providing end-to-end support from master planning and project preparation to financing and implementation.

"Financing alone is not enough. The real challenge is municipal capacity," Mokheseng said.

"When we provide financing, we also deploy planning and capacity-building instruments. Otherwise, you get projects that run over budget or fail to deliver services."

DBSA also plays a role in strengthening governance and revenue management while supporting municipalities with long-term partnerships, often lasting five years or more.

Johannesburg and Tshwane have already accessed DBSA loans to expand infrastructure, with Mokheseng noting that robust financial markets allow South Africa's metros to issue bonds – a model that could be replicated elsewhere on the continent.

Despite progress, rural and smaller municipalities remain at risk of being excluded from financing conversations.

Mayor of Tswelopele Local Municipality in the Free State, Kenalemang Phukuntsi, welcomed DBSA's assistance with master plans but said her community of 60,000 lacks the technical and financial capacity to implement climate transition projects.

"Our communities understand the effects of climate change, but municipalities are not ready," she said.

"We cannot be left behind while bigger cities move ahead with just transition plans."

Phukuntsi urged DBSA and development partners to accelerate support for rural municipalities and ensure equitable access to financing.

"It's not enough to only support Johannesburg, Cape Town or Tshwane. Secondary and rural municipalities must also be included if we are to meet climate targets," she said.

The African Development Bank noted that it had just completed its first municipal loan to the City of Johannesburg and was working to expand financing to other cities.

Its Urban and Municipal Development Fund provides early-stage support to help municipalities prepare for financing.

Session facilitator Carlos de Freitas of FMDV stressed that sub-national development banks provide stability in ways that international partners often cannot.

"If there is a national crisis, DBSA stays. That is why country platforms and NDBs must be central to financing local governments," he said.

Africa is projected to add one billion urban residents in the next two decades. Without sustainable financing at the local level, experts warn, cities will not cope with infrastructure demand or climate pressures.

The U20 debate underscored both innovation and inequality, while platforms like Madagascar's show promise and cities like Johannesburg benefit from established financial systems, but smaller municipalities continue to lack access.

For African cities, the path forward is clear: financing must move closer to the ground, empowering local governments to turn national commitments into real infrastructure, services, and jobs.

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