



Press Release

Urban Festival 2021 – “Rebuilding Sustainable Cities”

There is little contestation that Cities are a vital part of determining a globally sustainable future. The future will require collective thinking, planning and action by all of society. The New Urban Agenda, which can be considered a global manifesto, indicates that *“cities can be the source of solutions to, rather than the cause of, the challenges that our world is facing today. If well-planned and well-managed, urbanisation can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries.”* From this vantage point, the South African Cities Network (SACN), in partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance (COGTA), will present and host the annual Urban Festival during October, culminating on World Cities Day.

The SACN Urban Festival joins global movements led by UN-Habitat dating back to World Habitat Day, first convened in 1986. The UN-Habitat theme for Urban October is *31 Days for Promoting a better urban future*. Thus, situated within that global dialogue, the SACN Urban Festival will focus on local and contextual factors under the theme, “Rebuilding Sustainable Cities”. The festival will provide a significant contribution from the Global South and aims to provide a platform for learning, experimentation, and knowledge exchange to implement a transformative urban agenda to enable active dialogue between a range of urban actors.

The festival will take place virtually across a range of digital platforms. In line with the objectives of the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), this year’s programme aims to unpack and map out how cities will recover and rebuild to transform the urban phenomenon amidst the crisis and how cities can become levers to create youth employment opportunities through social media activations, webinars, short films, and masterclasses.

As CEO of South African Cities Network Sithole Mbanga notes, “The Rebuilding Sustainable Cities theme of the Urban Festival will provide a platform to explore what can be achieved by an all-of-society effort. We need everyone to collaborate and partner to drive the recovery of our cities from crises.”

Directors: Ms. Yolisa Kani (Board Chairperson & Non-Executive), Mr. Ashraf Adam (Non-Executive), Ms. Nontando Ngamlana (Non-Executive), Dr. Modjadji Malahlela (Non-Executive) & Mr. Sithole Mbanga (CEO)

SACN Council Chairperson: Cllr. Xola Pakati (Executive Mayor of Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality)

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Urban Festival's overarching focus on inclusivity, accessibility and resilience is based around the Main Programme of speakers from government, independent organisations and industry. SACN and partners, therefore, invite all civil society, organisations, designers, planners, storytellers, civil servants, and city-dwellers to join the virtual conversation so that stories, research, and voices are preserved and can be used to foster greater understanding and better solutions.

Visit our website for more information on <https://sacities.net/>

Note to editors:

For more information about the Urban Festival 2021, press and interview requests, please contact:

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About South African Cities Network

The South African Cities Network (SACN) is an established network of South African cities and partners that encourages the exchange of information, experience and best practices on urban development and city management. Since 2002 the SACN's mandate has been to:

- Promote good governance and management in South African cities
- Analyse strategic challenges facing South African cities
- Collect, collate, analyse, assess, disseminate, and apply the experience of large city government in a South African context
- Encourage shared learning partnerships among all of society and spheres of government to enhance good governance of South African cities.