



Members of the Masakhe Ladies Stokvel walking on the streets of Gugulethu. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

## Gugulethu women building a legacy

*Women's housing stokvel reaches the 30 house mark*

[CAPE TOWN]

In 2019 a group of women residing in Gugulethu formed the Masakhe Ladies Stokvel to save and systematically provide housing for themselves. Now, three years later, over 28 houses and home extensions have been completed and function as formal housing or rental properties for the stokvel's members.

Stokvels are a uniquely South African informal funding scheme consisting of a certain number of members, each contributing a fixed amount of money every month. The pooled savings from each month are then disbursed to each member on a rotating basis. A stokvel group may be formed with a common goal of saving towards a particular item or service such as monthly groceries, funeral plans or holiday trips.

Masakhe, which is the isiXhosa term for “let’s build”, was formed when its founder and chairperson, Ntombekhaya ‘Ntosh’ Nyama-Plati (43) was excluded from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which is mandated with providing government subsidised housing in South Africa. However, Nyama-Plati was determined to upgrade her and her family’s informal dwelling to a formal structure, so she approached another local community member, Nobantu Jeannette Malgas. The two women co-founded the stokvel with the aim of assisting other women by servicing their housing needs.

“We put it on Facebook so all the people who are interested can come aboard. We said, “We are the stokvel ladies, we need more ladies to join - we build each other’s houses” says Nyama-Plati as she comments



The spaza shop on Nyama-Plati's property, which was previously the shack she shared with her family. (Image by Our Future Cities).

on the almost immediate response the post received from interested women around the country. Currently, the group has a rotation of 30 members, which has decreased from its initial membership of 56 due to the effects of Covid-19. The stokvel aims to first complete building projects for all of its current members before accepting new members from their nationwide waiting list.

Members are expected to contribute a monthly fee of R2 400 by the 6th day of every month which, when combined, is used to purchase building materials from a BUCO Hardware store. Nyama-Plati is also thankful for the working relationship between Masakhe and the Mitchells Plain BUCO store. She

adds, “BUCO Mitchells Plain is the best. They even help us and do the measurements for the building we want, and then they give us a good quote on how many bricks we need, how much cement, and all that”.

The co-founders are strict with the management and expenditure of the monthly contributions noting, “we want to see the money be used for the structure only”. The collected money, which is deposited into the stokvel’s bank account, can only be withdrawn by the group’s three elected signatories. Once it is with-

## OP-ED

# Good Hood Stories: celebrating the practitioners driving good practice



**Kayla Brown**

**Project Manager**

**South African Cities Network**

Since launching the first round of the Good Hood Stories in 2021, the South African Cities Network (SACN) has witnessed the films receiving an unexpected level of exposure and attention. Featuring in film festivals as far as Poland and the United States and racking up a combined number of views of over 4000 across the four stories, the reach of the Good Hood Stories has been significant.

The success of the Good Hood Stories can be attributed to the power of using storytelling as a methodology of capturing and sharing experiences of running collaborative and

creative city projects. Through the videos, we don't just get to read or hear about the details of the different projects. We actually get to meet the people behind them, see the work they are doing and feel their passion.

With this in mind the SACN is pleased to release the second season of the Good Hood Stories, with this season focusing on city champions and unique collaborations developing innovative partnerships to address critical urban issues. In this season we focus on homelessness and substance abuse; crisis mapping and providing services in the face of crisis; parks collaboration for management and activation; and community-led financed housing programmes.

Storytelling is a powerful way to celebrate good practice as it centers the person behind the project, and not just the project itself. In this way, we get to acknowledge and credit the practitioner, which is uncommon in city development. We are used to knowing which government department or organisation is responsible for a particular project, but the actual people driving the work often remain any-

mous. Especially in the public sector, rarely do we get to meet the passionate and driven individuals that make up the municipal workforce, leading to an incorrect negative perception of municipal workers.

Getting a sense of the individual practitioner is critical for rebuilding trust. In recent years a chasm seems to be growing between government officials and the people they serve. This trust deficit between government and communities is perpetuated by the perception that government officials and urban practitioners do not care and are not listening to the needs of communities. The reality is not that simple.

To address some of these complex urban issues, what is required is passion and innovation not only from local government but also community actors and private businesses working in our cities. Where partnerships between these actors happen, we see in the Good Hood Stories the magic of cities coming to life. As SACN, we get to work with inspiring and driven individuals who are working in extremely challenging city contexts. It is these people that the Good

Hood Stories aim to acknowledge. By profiling these people and their projects, we can begin to shift the narrative and spread hope as well as inspiration for further good practice. We show that collaboration is possible, and it is happening. Individuals are working across sectors and spheres of government to achieve creative solutions to complex problems.

As we mark 20 years of SACN and host the 2022 Urban Festival under the theme of "Transforming Cities through Research and Practice", we are delighted to be profiling a new cohort of remarkable Good Hood Stories from across South African cities. We have no doubt that they will inspire and excite as much as the 2021 round did.

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drawn, it is sent directly to BUCO for the purchasing of building materials. "You can't do groceries, you can't do travelling, you can't do nothing because her vision is straight – it is to build each other" explains Malgas.

With limited resources and governmental support, Masakhe has slowly but surely carried out its vision for its members. "[The rotation] started with Mama Mkenku's place... she is an old lady staying in Phillipi, and her daughter passed away – she was the breadwinner – while she was building them a house. So, she was staying in the shack; her situation was so bad ... So we said, "let's start with her" Nyama-Plati recounts. Nyama-Plati herself was also able to finally build a stable home through Masakhe. "This place where we are now, it was my shack where I stayed with my family".

For others, Masakhe has provided an opportunity for additional streams of income. Malgas adds, "for me, I built backyard rooms because I wanted the

extra income". The stokvel has also moved beyond empowering women through housing, and is also actively involved in various skills development programmes. The co-founders have received training from Corobrik and the cement group, PPC, which is knowledge they are keen to use in the national expansion of their organisation.

When commenting on the role that the government can play in supporting Masakhe's ambitions, Malgas notes, "if the government can just give us a chance... to see the potential in Masakhe; to close that [housing] gap... where we have proven that people are able to have beautiful decent houses in an affordable way – this will teach more people, and the government can then get relief from a project like ours".

Despite the challenges, the women of Masakhe are proud of their successes and remain steadfast in their pursuits with Malgas remarking, "Here we are. This is something golden. Utilise us, use us!".



The additional dwellings leased for rental on Malgas' property. (Image by Our Future Cities).

# Tshwane marks 7 years of success in drug harm reduction efforts

[TSHWANE]

In a serene setting in central Tshwane, shaded with trees and housing food gardens, 12 wendy houses are clustered around a central covered gathering area. This is not the typical view one would have of a drug harm reduction centre. In addition to providing transitional housing to homeless people and substance users, the site also provides medical and psycho-social services, and spaces for personal development.

Known as Reliable House, it is one of 17 sites across the greater Tshwane forming part of the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP), the City's progressive approach to substance abuse, based on the clinical model of harm-reduction. Back in 2015, health officials and politicians raised concern about opioid and substance abuse in the city which was recognised to have complex, strenuous and far-reaching consequences on all levels of Municipal governance including the health, economic, social justice and legal systems.

The City's Mayoral Committee approached the University of Pretoria's (UP) Department of Substance Abuse to develop an evidence-based programme, which would holistically investigate substance misuse and its effects on users and their communities. The findings revealed that substance users required services that would accommodate both their basic medical needs, as well as their psychosocial needs. COSUP is the brainchild resulting from this partnership and the service level agreement between the City and the university, and offers healthcare and social services to substance users. The services are administered by Clinical Associates (CAs) from UP and their primary role is to provide opioid/substance-substitution therapy.



Patients at a drop-in centre waiting to receive care services. (Image by Matthew Griffiths)

Dimakatso Nonyane, one of the senior CAs, notes the surprising willingness with which the Government supported the implementation of a harm-reduction programme stating, "what I loved about it was that [the government] was willing to engage with the issue of substance misuse without just seeking an umbrella approach or a half baked solution". The programme is novel in its approach to drug-use intervention in South Africa since it is not centred on completely eradicating substance use within the communities it works in. Instead, it strives to create safe and judgement-free spaces in which substance-use can occur with reduced risk and harm to the users and their communities. Nonyane admits an initial hesitancy in the programme's approach, especially given her background in the health sector, "I struggled when I was introduced to the concept of harm reduction, honestly, because the way I received it was you weren't really getting rid of the drug". However, the importance of the approach became evident when the initial research that was conducted revealed that substance-use negatively affected users' health-seeking behaviours.

The CAs realised that due to the ongoing stigmas associated with substance

use, many users were hesitant to access healthcare services. This stemmed from the fear of interacting with healthcare workers who might be insensitive to their situations. When Nonyane understood this dynamic she saw that COSUP represented an opportunity for people to access their basic, fundamental right to healthcare, regardless of "how they may choose to have their human experience".

The programme also functions beyond a medical context and also offers psychosocial services. Molebatsi Maila, another senior CA in the programme reflects, "even outside of the medical aspect of things, the psychosocial role in the programme is so massive." One of the key non-medical services offered by CAs is community-based training around substance abuse. According to Nonyane, this is aimed at encouraging the community to focus more on the people afflicted by drug-use, rather than placing all the focus on the substances. Maila further adds, "counselling, and family and social integration are important, as relationships are strained and people have been homeless for a long time".

The several services on offer are made possible by COSUP's partnerships with

various NGOs throughout the City. These NGO networks inform the location of the programme's various drop-in sites and what services are on offer. "Some sites are inside healthcare facilities, and some are inside churches. We had to link ourselves with people who were already functioning in the various communities," explains Nonyane. Different sites provide different services with each location designed to service a population of users with specific needs. One of the goals COSUP tries to achieve is "reshaping people's ideas of having fun", hence, one of the NGOs offers gardening as a recreational activity that users can enjoy as part of their participation in the programme. In a case like the inner-city where space is limited, the programme has partnered with various local NGOs that provide particular skills for skills development. A significant number of users in this area also tend to be homeless, so healthcare services may be accompanied by a plate of food.

There are, however, also some internal challenges that arise from within the sites. Nonyane admits that among the healthcare centres, some practitioners still harbour negative attitudes towards the programme's intended users. This can result in users abandoning the programme and not returning for their follow-up visits. She maintains, "integration back into healthcare systems is essential. The goal should never be to create parallel systems for marginalised communities. Instead it's critical to consider how they can be reintegrated and maintained within the main system".

2022 marks the 7th year of the programme and its statistics highlight the impact it has had on the City's substance use issue.

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A community gardening programme is one of the services offered in partnership with a local NGO. (Image by Our Future Cities)



A substance user receives an opioid substitute from a registered Clinical Associate. (Image by Matthew Griffiths)

## PROFILE

# Masakhe Ladies Stokvel Founders

*Ntombkhaya Nyama-Plati & Nobantu Jeannette Malgas share their stories of a legacy built*

[CAPE TOWN]

When Ntombekhaya Nyama-Plati, or 'Ntosh' as she is affectionately known, was disqualified from the RDP housing programme, she was determined to find other means to improve her family's living situation.

"It appears that I am married and already have a RDP house because my husband had already received one in the past - so I cannot leave my husband and divorce him because of that" explains Ntombekhaya 'Ntosh' Nyama-Plati.

One night, in January 2019, Ntosh had a significant dream that she was part of a women's housing stokvel. The following morning, she shared the dream with her friend and fellow Gugulethu resident, Jeannette Malgas, who encouraged her to carefully retain the message and work towards making it a reality. As Jeannette recalls that conversation, she reflects, "when a person brings a vision, you can only polish it, take it forward, and make it shine. [Ntosh's] vision is to build each other".

While the concept of a housing stokvel is an innovative approach to South Africa's housing shortage, Masakhe has one simple goal and that is, as Jean-

nette puts it, "to gather women with the little money we have and we make a home for our children". Ntosh and Jeannette recognise the vulnerable socio-economic position of South African women. And yet, despite these vulnerabilities, these women tend to be the breadwinners within the home, bearing responsibility for multiple dependents while simultaneously receiving little to no social support.

The stokvel may be unwavering on its women-only criterion, but Ntosh's love for her wider community is not lost. As our team spoke to the women of Masakhe on a wintery Friday afternoon, her home was a hive of activity as she also ensures that her weekly soup kitchen is running effectively and warm plates of food are ready to reach her community members.

Between Ntosh's boisterous and commanding presence, and Jeannette's measured demeanour and analytical eye, it's unsurprising that Masakhe has made the strides it has within its short existence.



Ntosh proudly shows off her renovated, double-storey home behind her. (Image by Our Future Cities).

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

With 17 functional sites which cover various urban landscapes including townships and suburbs, the programme has provided services to 5861 people with 1513 people being successfully initiated into opioid substitution therapies (OST). It has established 19 community advisory groups, and has fostered relationships with 169 organisations. This has resulted in the employment of 121 people and with the engagement of over 3000 students. By mid-2019, COSUP had signed 14 cooperative agreements with NPOs.

While reflecting on the project's impact, Nonyane and Maila concede to the novelty of the approach and understand why the harm-reduction model might be met with scepticism.

However, they emphasise the importance of acknowledging drug-use as a feature of human behaviour and why eradication might not be an effective goal to work towards as Nonyane points out, "it cannot be avoided. It's on your street corners, at your traffic light, it's in your shopping complex".

Instead, harm-reduction can be used to significantly reduce the risks involved in drug and substance-use behaviours. This has been the case with the needle-exchange programme which provides substance-injecting users with sterile needles to minimise needle sharing and, in turn, reduces the risk of contracting HIV.



COSUP's center for harm reduction, and part of Reliable House. (Image by Our Future Cities).

**UPDATES**

# 2021 Good Hood Stories

*We hear from the 4 projects that were filmed in 2021 as part of the first season*

**CAPE TOWN**

## Langa Bicycle Hub

After receiving proceeds from the SACN Seed Funding in 2021 the Langa Bike Hub was able to organise an event they called “Bicycles as a Mode of Transport in Langa”.

At this event, the Hub was able to create meaningful relationships with government stakeholders and other cycling networks who have interests in Langa mobility. The funds were also used to undertake repairs at the Hub’s container.

The Bike Hub has also since won two world mobility awards and has been appointed by the City of Cape Town (CoCT) to facilitate activities at a new pump track in Langa.

Pump tracks are relatively simple to use and cheap to construct, and cater to a wide variety of rider skill levels.



**Mzikhona Mgedle**  
Founder,  
Langa Bicycle Hub

This bicycle hub, which started as a small community initiative aimed at delivering medicine to bedridden people in the neighbourhood, has transformed into a local enterprise that shapes mobility patterns in Langa. Langa Bicycle Hub continues to foster a place-making environment for employment and mobility innovation that aims to spark a cycling revolution in Africa.

**Scan the code to view the 2021 Good Hood Stories**



**SCAN ME!**

**JOHANNESBURG**

## Urban Agriculture Initiative

The Urban Agriculture Initiative (UAI) has altered its operational plan due to funding challenges. The UAI alongside the Johannesburg Inner-City Partnership (JICP) are in discussions to hand the project over to the private sector, on condition that the farms’ commercial operations will also include a developmental component.

Currently, some of the farmers remain active on an informal basis but are without the support of the UAI.



**David van Niekerk**  
CEO, Johannesburg Inner City Partnership (JICP)

**DURBAN**

## Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre

Since opening its doors on 1st June 2020, the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre (BHRC) has serviced more than 500 substance-using people belonging to homeless and low-income populations. The BHRC is the only facility that remained functional during the 2021 riots in Durban, and throughout the flooding period that occurred in the wider KZN area in 2022. During these periods the BHRC became a place of refuge and because it also offers life-saving services, it continues to be a critical placemaking space in the city’s landscape, transforming narratives around drug use and homelessness.

However, despite the Centre’s positive impact, the directors are struggling to obtain long-term funding for the methadone programme and are appealing to private donors to assist them in maintaining operations.

Without the necessary funding, the programme will be unable to continue its work and the negative ef-



**Prof. Monique Marks**  
Urban Futures Centre,  
Durban University of Technology

fects thereof would likely affect the wider Durban community, with beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries likely to transition to injecting drug use, engaging in hustling and petty crime, and losing hope for the future.

The BHRC management team recognise that the Centre may be the only space of hope and safety for homeless people in Durban, and are doing their best to keep this Good Hood Story alive!

## Q&amp;A

# Molebatsi Maila

*We speak to Molebatsi Maila, a Clinical Associate from the City of Tshwane's innovative Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP)*

**How did you originally get involved with COSUP?**

**MM:** I heard about COSUP from a friend I had gone to university with and knew immediately that this was an initiative and movement I had to be a part of.

**How has the programme influenced the way you think about healthcare now?**

**MM:** As clinicians, it's very easy to see healthcare problems, as healthcare problems. Being a part of this programme has helped me to always approach healthcare holistically, to understand the role and weight that environmental and social factors have on healthcare and if those are not addressed it limits the impact of the healthcare provided.

**Which was your favourite NGO to work with?**

**MM:** As a clinician myself, it has to be Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières/MSF) and the work they do with vulnerable populations not only by providing primary health care but helping integrate them into the healthcare system.

**What do you wish you could see happen with future implementations of the COSUP initiative?**

**MM:** I wish to see this initiative grow and being taken up by other municipalities, for these services to be available to all, not just in the City of Tshwane.

**Can you think of a specific person or moment that has stayed with you during your work with COSUP?**

**MM:** I don't think I can pinpoint just one but working with populations that are vulnerable within this key population (e.g. the elderly and pregnant) always reignites the love I have for the work that we do.

**What has been your proudest moment working with this programme?**

**MM:** One of my proudest moments has to be seeing the impact we have in real time. Seeing clients that have been with us really begin to thrive in their lives. Helping them reintegrate back into their families and communities, become functional members of society and advocates for people who use drugs (PWUD), is really big for me.

**What else do you think can be done to make Tshwane a healthier and happier place for all?**

**MM:** As residents of the city of Tshwane, to have more of us realising that we get to have a say in how we want to shape our city. Having more

people starting initiatives that benefit and grow communities. Everything starts small and when all those small acts come together, change happens.



COSUP's Clinical Associate, Molebatsi Maila. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

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## GQEBERHA

# Helenvale Safety and Peace through Urban Upgrading (SPUU)

Since visiting the Helenvale SPUU initiative in our previous season of Good Hood Stories, the project continues its mission to create a safe and peaceful environment for the local community. Currently, the programme is focused on finalising the construction of a Youth Centre – the Helenvale Barcelona Youth Centre – which will be aimed at cultivating a positive and therapeutic space to support the needs of vulnerable young people.

After extensive engagement with the local community of Barcelona, located in Helenvale, it was decided that this under-served area would be best suited for this phase of the programme. Although work on the

Centre is still underway, the space is functional and active, and already consists of a small community hall, a computer/library room, games room, ablution facilities, kitchen, and an office. The Centre's development has also given rise to employment opportunities that have been directly beneficial to the Barcelona community, with community members playing a primary role in the election of rotational security guards tasked with the surveillance of the premises.

The communal ownership of both the space and its programming have become an important feature of the SPUU initiative, with the Centre's daily running now being handled by

a community-elected steering committee. This committee, consisting of youth and adult members, has further initiated its own programmes including teenage-pregnancy support groups, after-school activities, a soup kitchen, and holiday programmes.

The committee, in collaboration with the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA), also frequently partner with external stakeholders such as the South African Police Service and the Department of Social Development to address various challenges affecting the community.



**George Eldridge Jerry**  
Social Facilitator, Mandela Bay Development Agency

# Innovative Crisis Map strengthens Durban's response to floods

[DURBAN]

In April of 2022, severe flooding and landslides caused by heavy rainfall hit Durban, resulting in the death of 448 people; displacing over 40 000 people, and destroying over 12 000 houses. For KwaZulu-Natal residents, the devastating effects were compounded by the scarring effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil unrest and riots in 2021.

“The pandemic, then unrest, then flooding - it is a sensitive and vulnerable place and many people lost hope. You can see civil society being stretched, and no one is going to come from government to fix the problem” says Nkululeko Mthembu, director at PISTA Ventures - a research and development practice. This was the motivation behind the development of the Durban Crisis Map, which saw PISTA collaborate with Black Box, a product design and development company that specialises in digital solutions.

As the rain came down on KwaZulu-Natal, PISTA and Black Box, using their own funding, developed the Durban Crisis Map within 36 hours to aid stranded residents. “The recipe for success was our sense of urgency, preparedness, good timing and a concept” states Jean-Luc Koenig, Business Develop-

ment and Finance Manager at Black Box. People needing relief could input their location and the nature of assistance they require while also sharing what resources or aid they could offer nearby neighbours and communities. It is estimated that between 27 000 and 30 000 people made use of the platform and within the first week it gained approximately 17 000 users. “Overall, we asked if there is a way we can engage people and create a democratic way of access to knowledge in real time,” says Mthembu.

“The Durban Crisis Map proved useful in bridging the gap between groups of people who might be able to access shelters and help-centres and those who are unable,” adds Dr Sandile Mbatha, the Senior Manager of City Research and Policy Advocacy with the City of eThekweni, who forms part of the Disaster Nerve Centre.

“Access to near real-time information catapulted the Crisis Map we built to people seeking quality information on how best to deploy resources, the catapult landed us being part of a nerve centre made of multiple technical stakeholders” remarks Mthembu. These centres work with the commu-

ty and determine where the situation is under control, and where it is dire. As a result of the Crisis Map's available data, Dr. Mbatha saw departments such as Social Development and Human Settlements able to coordinate their efforts so that they would reach affected people who have been unable to locate or access a resource centre.

The platform's available data was an important resource for the government and as a result, Black Box and PISTA advocate “investment into research”. Mthembu explains this is important because “different spheres of government may be operating based on outdated or legacy systems, and the data they have may not be useful in today's world”.

Although officials like Dr. Mbatha have displayed a keen interest in supporting the initiative, government departments are still constrained by the bureaucracy around procurement and supply chain processes. Mthembu states that there is a lot of red tape surrounding these processes, making support or cash injection from the government difficult to obtain.

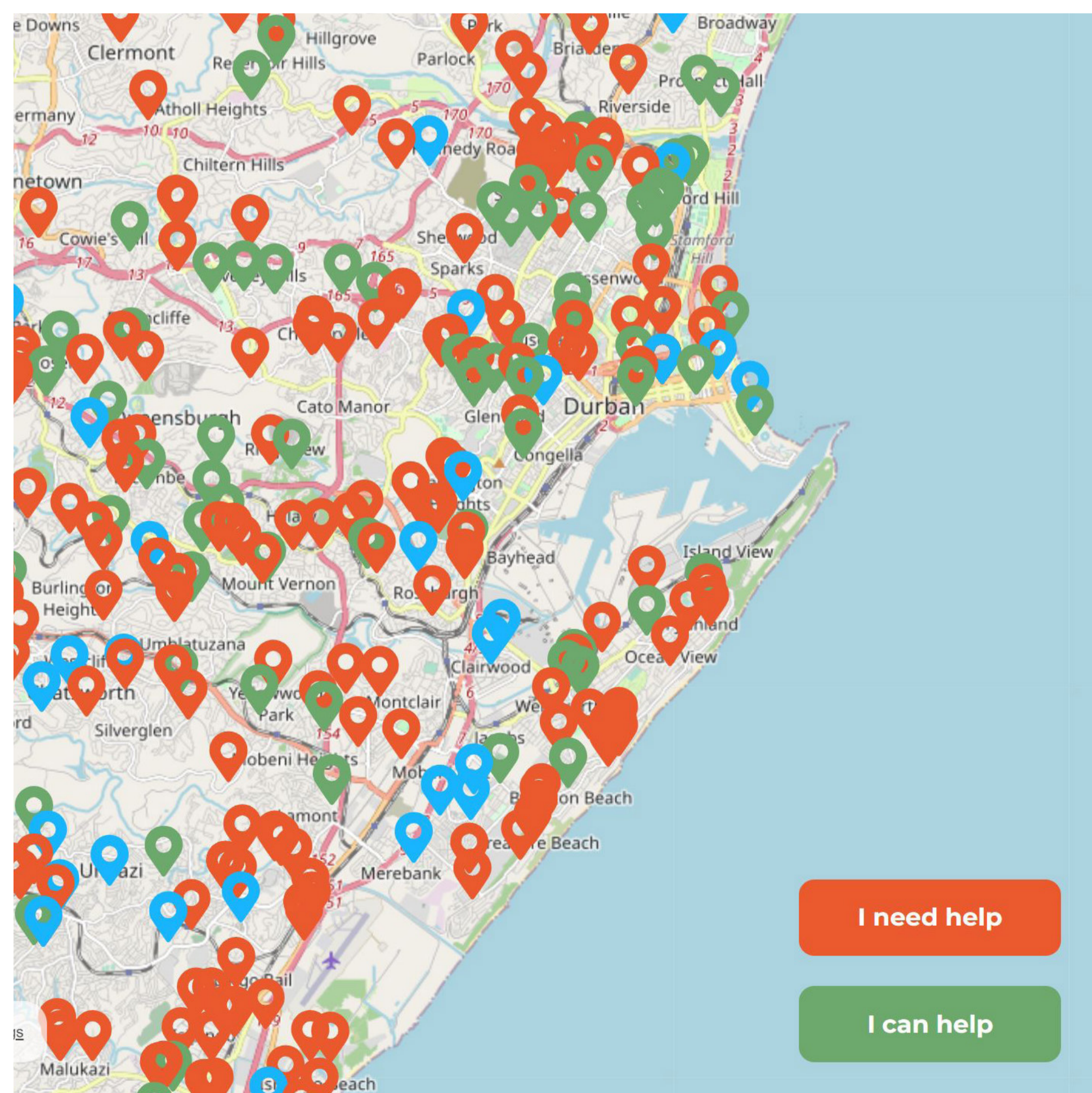
Although the developers note that with additional funding and sup-

port, the Crisis Map platform could be significantly improved, the tool's basic design has still provided a framework for the “untapped potential of technology within the social development sphere,” adds Mthembu.

Dr. Mbatha remarks that the city's first response to the platform was met with a “level of scepticism and said it hasn't gone through the channels... questioning how can they be doing this for free, there must be a catch”. However, Mthembu adds that “[Partnerships] require humility on the government's side and an ability to accept shortcomings so that departments can interact with external stakeholders [such as PISTA and Black Box] with reduced scepticism”.

Beyond crisis time, the team believes that there is potential for the map to be redeveloped to function as a general information-sharing tool, particularly between communities and local governments. “For example, community members could receive security warnings about potential threats and, conversely, communities in certain areas could raise awareness to the state on concerns such as heavy rains causing

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LHS: The BlackBox team (pictured from L-R): Callum Oberholzer, Carla-Leigh Ziady, Ayanda Nene, Jean-Luc Koenig, Phakamani Xulu. (Image by Out Future Cities). RHS: A screenshot showing some of the queries logged on the Crisis Map during the floods. (Image sourced from The Crisis Map platform.).

## OP-ED

# It's time to scale up South Africa's good civic ideas



**Rashiq Fataar**  
Director

Our Future Cities

For urbanists in the urbanism and built environment sectors, it is widely believed that applying cookie-cutter strategies to various neighbourhoods is a big no-no and should be avoided at all costs. However, the 2022 selection of Good Hood Stories, which led us from KwaMashu to Hatfield; Gugulethu to Hillbrow, and beyond, each have seeds of brilliance and the kind of influence that even the most pessimistic urbanist would want to fast duplicate throughout South Africa.

To increase the success and their benefits to people, while also growing these “Good” ideas and initiatives to become even more sustainable and viable, scaling these projects and adapting them to different places may be a better course of action when faced with such a wide range of contexts, communities, and cultures.

We learned that a self-funded initiative (which still has no government funding) was able to navigate the harsh realities of the flooding disaster in Durban, and develop a map as a tool to help all parts of society. Headed by Nkululeko Mthembu, a self-described disruptor at PISTA Ventures, and Callum Oberholzer of Black Box, their goal is to create a Community Care Map, where anyone in a city may seek support, assistance, and resources from their larger community, and those who can help can do so on a regular basis. This will allow them to advance the Durban Crisis Map and enable it to function outside of emergencies

One could imagine these innovators expanding on the lessons learned from their original map, and launch-

ing comparable tools in South African neighbourhoods and cities, possibly speaking to the priorities and needs, but building on the same platforms and expertise. The team could quickly get involved with a number of concerns or obstacles facing the country, such as increased safety for women and girls, networks of feeding programs, food security initiatives, and several others. They could design, construct, and manage a “map” where it was required.

In Cape Town, the Masakhe housing stokvel was founded by the larger-than-life personality Ntombekhaya Nyama-Plati, fondly known as “Ntosh”. In a short amount of time, again with little to no backing from official institutions, the group has saved and built homes or made home improvements for nearly 30 women. Ntosh and the Stokvel’s co-founders have ambitions to expand their initiative nationally; they have already started in the Eastern Cape. In addition to their community work and self-organised feeding program, they also have other ideas, such as a brickmaking factory, and initiatives to include marginalised women in outreach and construction.

Urbanists are aware that the sustainable density our cities require to address their spatial fragmentation does not lie with medium to high rise buildings in city centres, but rather with a massive transition of numerous micro developers homeowners expanding existing homes with second and third dwellings — reducing carbon emissions, fostering integration, and creating new income streams for the homeowners. One could envision the Masakhe Stokvel and its unique strategy: combining efficient management, an attention to detail, and a friendly demeanour, among other things; landing in various urban and semi-urban contexts; starting with smaller groups of women as catalysts; and growing a national movement for women’s financial and social empowerment.

And over in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, in Pullinger-Kop park, local school children may be seen during lunchtime enjoying all that it has to offer: using play equipment, kicking a soccer ball, etc. With all of its social and economic complexity, Hillbrow is

possibly the ultimate urban experiment. Can this program succeed elsewhere if it succeeds here? I believe so, and it has already spurred action in Durban’s KwaMashu, where the program is currently being tested with both young and elderly populations, with music and sports, and even potential Olympic BMX competitors.

Every Park Activation Coordinator we encountered was local, connected, and enthusiastic. They all went above and beyond the call of duty. In the words of Ayanda Roji, one of the project’s champions acting as community touchpoints” with parks acting like a welcoming office door for residents, where PACs provide information and resources. The PAC program’s long-term advantages are clear to see. Despite obstacles, parks have evolved into places where PACs operate as orchestra conductors, bringing together a diverse group of social partners, NGOs, and students who are now essential to the parks and communities where they work. One such instance is the Thobza Bike Centre in KwaMashu where, with the use of simple facilities like miniature BMX tracks, a shipping container used as an office, and the enthusiasm of its staff, the park becomes a vibrant hub in the late afternoon.

Despite the difficulties the PAC program is facing, expanding it to South African parks facing various challenges is more than feasible, especially since the EPWP program has previously been tried and tested as a means of introducing PACs to parks. And, Roji is already thinking of a few more parks in more suburban sections of Johannesburg with various options that might be advantageous.

The City of Tshwane’s historic COSUP program in Tshwane has seven years of experience, and its harm-reduction concept has already had an impact, lately gaining hold in Durban at the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre. The reasons for scaling and replicating here come from those working daily as part of the programme - it is evidence backed and embedded in a human response to the healthcare of the marginalised and vulnerable.

The City of Tshwane should be commended for enabling this evolution

because the diversity of the COSUP centres and drop-in sites’ locations, structures, and communities has already tested the ideas of scalability and replication.

In its own special way, the COSUP model has created environments that are caring, serene, and peaceful. The model has lowered barriers to care, services, skill development, and provided a warm meal for those who are frequently shunned and discriminated against for seeking care, whether in more urban or more rural settings, churches, or inner city buildings.

Now that the post-pandemic phase has mostly passed, it is imperative that these “Good” and excellent civic ideas receive the funding they need to develop, scale and take root throughout South Africa. We may all strive to live in a South Africa with vibrant parks, improved access to healthcare, digital tools to help in and out of crises, and where are women leading the delivery of shelter across the nation. These 4 projects - both combined and individually - give creative expression to the ideals of more inclusive, sustainable, and thriving cities.



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LHS: Nkululeko Mthembu from PISTA Ventures. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

concerns such as heavy rains causing rivers to overflow; essentially pre-empting some emergencies” adds Mthembu.

“A major push for us is morphing the Crisis Map into a community map with an overarching mission to promote citizen care”. The team plans to transfer the Durban Crisis Map to a new system called Community Care Map which will focus on engagement and creating resilient, disaster-preventing communities. “A system like this could achieve a wider societal benefit resulting in a caring and connected city.” adds Mthembu

Despite the challenges in driving the project forward, Mthembu continues to have big hopes for civic-led action in Africa. “New open-democracy is dislodging how citizens can action a new democracy. Let’s give democracy a chance.”

Black Box and PISTA are open to engaging with concepts which come from community members and in this way collectively spark more civic investment and adoption.

Those interested can complete the form: <https://black-box.io/#/>



Callum and Carla-Leigh from Black Box working on a project.. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

## PROFILE

# Nkululeko Mthembu

*We speak to Nkululeko Mthembu, a self-proclaimed “disruptor” in the South African civic technology space about the role this industry can play in co-creating resilient and sustainable South African cities*

**Why do you label yourself a disruptor?**

**NM:** A big part of my personality that spills over into my work is persistent altruism. My work carries a strong African vernacular, a mindful understanding and amplification of African traditional religion and diviner culture, in a contemporary way.

**Which other projects at PISTA are you most proud of?**

**NM:** Research conducted in a local school revealed that 52% of its pupils had visual impairments; we learnt that this is one cause of how a child performs and behaves. Combining this learning, and the advent of ocean plastic pollution, we are designing spectacles made from recycled plastics. We are also working with an Africa-wide network

of young people in the creation of an African Youth Foods Manifesto to advocate for the interests of future food systems. It touches on the themes of the promotion of indigenous foods; resilience; and sustainability.

**What do you enjoy about civic tech and the South African community?**

**NM:** I have a view that South Africa is evolving into an ‘open democracy’, where communities rely less on government and co-create their own solutions - a devolution of the government in the way that is currently understood. This self-organising provides very practical solutions to some of the toughest problems. Civic technology enables the growing and scaling of active citizen’s efforts.

**How did the civil unrest and floods affect your urgency to launch the map?**

**NM:** The Crisis Map served to provide access to near real-time disaster-related information. Every disaster and crisis provides a small window of learning to prepare for the next encounter. This opportunity of learning drove the urgency.

**What advice would you give to other changemakers who are thinking about starting a project like yours?**

**NM:** Connect to the community - uncover and discover the design language received by the people you are developing for; a strong human-centeredness and over-emphasis on empathy.

Have a clear line of sight and draw the hard line. Clarity precedes success and,

in this instance, defining limitations early on maintained levels of focused intent and effectiveness. Passion trumps smarts. The team cared for what they were building. There was no promise of pay. We simply wanted to do good.

**How could other cities and municipalities work with you?**

**NM:** “Collaboration is the new Innovation.” This is a call to action to other cities and municipalities to share information, tools and technologies. I have a view that we are in a period of new knowledge creation that will help cities and municipalities do better work in future.

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# New programme puts life back into community parks

[JOHANNESBURG & DURBAN]

As South Africa's cities develop, so does the need for active and public shared spaces, which has been amplified through the pandemic years. Research indicates that parks are a vital aspect of the social, economic and physical well-being of South Africa's urban residents.

Picture an open green space full of facilities and multiple activities underway: youth dancing and singing; children riding around on bicycles; the elderly doing Zumba in a circle, and athletes going for a jog. This was just one of the scenes at Freedom Park in KwaMashu in eThekweni where the City and Green Corridors are piloting a new approach to activate community parks.

In 2019, the eThekweni Municipality and the City of Johannesburg launched separate but related projects which initiated the launch of the Park Activation Coordinator (PAC) Programme. A number of parks were selected: 6 parks from the City of Johannesburg and 4 parks from the eThekweni Municipality. The goal is to reimagine the existing structures of park management and care to ensure their functionality going forward.

Ayanda Roji, the General Manager of Research, Policy and Knowledge Management at Joburg City Parks and Zoo, has been leading the Park Activation Coordinator Programme effort which aims to train and employ local residents as Park Activation Coordinators (PACs). The PACs conduct safety au-

dit and implement a variety of activities. These activities include sports, games, reading clubs and debates involving children and parents of different neighbourhoods to promote safer, inclusive public spaces.

In eThekweni, "PACs have been trained and appointed, and the programme has piloted but due to COVID-19, floods and, riots the programme hasn't been launched yet" explains Nomfundo Phewa, a Green Spaces Project Officer at Green Corridors. Based in Durban, Green Corridors is a social-purpose and impact-focused organisation which coordinated its efforts with the eThekweni Municipality and JCP to implement the PAC programme in several Durban Parks.

"People no longer feel safe in these parks. But the minute the park becomes active, people naturally start to gravitate towards the park and utilise it" adds Phewa. As has been the experience in major cities like Johannesburg and Durban, these spaces often become unsafe and unclean, and activities such as public day drinking, substance abuse, illegal dumping, as well as crime make it difficult for all residents to comfortably access the benefits of these spaces.

Phewa further explains, "in Durban, crime was a large issue. If it is an open space people don't naturally understand the purpose of a park in township setups. So, it ends up being a place for criminal activity to happen".

According to Roji, the formation of the PAC Programme was initiated when some parks within Johannesburg Municipality and eThekweni Municipality were under-serving the neighbourhoods around them, which decreased the potential to build stronger, safer, and more resilient communities.

Collaborative efforts between the Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP), City of Johannesburg, eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality and Green Corridors envisioned a programme that would ignite the potential for resilient communities once more. Government Agency, GIZ, and other stakeholders such as the NGO, Sports for Social Change Network (SSCN), were also instrumental in the programme.

The PAC Programme recognised that government departments, NGOs and communities frequently have programmes or objectives that overlap yet often operate separately from each other. "Cities often work in silos but the GIZ was really instrumental as well as the Urban Safety Reference Group in forcing groups to collaborate on a wide variety of matters," adds Roji.

In the eyes of the Park Activation Programme leads, success is defined when the community and residents take ownership of their urban park and bring their own identity to the programme.

In eThekweni, the programme plans to launch activations such as children's aftercare.

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**LHS:** A group of children riding their bicycles on a mini BMX track in one of the parks. (Image by Our Future Cities). **RHS:** Other park activities include indigenous dancing by local youth. (Image by Our Future Cities)

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**What does Durban's 2040 vision of a world class, caring city mean to you?**

**NM:** Durban, for me, resembles an African city, more than a South African city. By way of custom and tradition, one that oscillates between the past and future, in the present. This vision is people-centred. It postures Durban as a city that invests in its people, as though a custodian of a village of young people in the creation of an African Youth Foods Manifesto to advocate for the interests of future food systems. It touches on the themes of the promotion of indigenous foods; resilience; and sustainability.

Nkululeko Mthembu, who was one of the lead developers of the Durban Crisis Map, is the Director of PISTA Ventures, a Durban-based company focused on product design and development.



Nkululeko Mthembu, Director of PISTA. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

**Q&A**

# Callum Oberholzer

*In our conversation with Callum Oberholzer from Black Box, he shares the lessons learnt from the development of the Durban Crisis Map, and how they could be applied to other civil technological projects*

**How does one start to create a platform like this? What are the basic building blocks?**

**CO:** Firstly, we had years of experience using leaflet.js which is an open source interactive mapping library built in JavaScript. Knowing this software helped us considerably. So having experience in the software and having been positioned in the civic tech world, having worked with companies operating in the space, was a big help. Secondly, we built the platform based on how we hoped people would use it, and not how we feared they might. This allowed us to design important features really quickly without also taking worst case scenarios into account. This was only applicable during the crisis though.

**Describe the experience of building the platform?**

**CO:** It was very intense, and quite exciting as once launched we were building and deploying while people were using the platform. We were incredibly aware of all that was going on around us, and were connected on various WhatsApp groups that were reporting the flooding consistently. This led to a team of 5 individuals being able to produce the software in 36 hours.

**Which elements or functionalities of the Crisis Map would you want to improve?**

**CO:** As the crisis is no longer current, we would want to shift the entire theme of the crisis orientation to that of a "citizen care map", focused on highlighting community development needs across the country in order to prevent a crisis. This would work by consolidating needs submitted through WhatsApp bots onto a distilled dashboard and map where non-profit and state organisations would be able to distribute themselves around communities, and prevent overlap. We still would provide crisis relief measures as well, but not only.

**How did lessons from other projects feed into the Crisis Map?**

**CO:** We had previously experienced a situation where a partner company of ours, Open Cities Labs, tested an idea (My Candidate App) of theirs in public, and it was received really well by the public. It went viral on twitter, and users gave them incremental feedback on what they wanted as they developed features in real time. We took this scenario and applied it to ours, releasing the MVP (minimum viable product) really early on to get it into people's hands as

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Community members taking part in a park activation in Freedom Park, Kwamashu. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

aftercare programmes; monthly flea markets; concerts; food gardening programmes led by local senior citizens; and sports/active clubs are underway. Whereas in the Johannesburg programme, activations such as sports tournaments, youth engagement, community clean-up campaigns and access to public information have seen much success.

"We looked at sports clubs in the inner city that we can train so that they can take the project further. One of them was the Hillbrow Boxing Club, which started working with SSCN and became empowered through training. The city worked with clubs, and the clubs hosted sports tournaments," says Roji.

Reflecting on the many lessons thus far, Roji found that parks were key for social services. "There is an education component; PACs were vital in sharing public information about COVID-19, and how the public can keep themselves safe," explains Roji. Phewa adds that PACs "conducted door-to-door awareness, to share the importance of picking up litter, safety and how to utilise the parks".

Within the Johannesburg programme, Roji highlights the programme's potential to learn from and use the skills from the complex issues faced in the inner city and expand to parks further out, each with its own characteristics and needs.



Soccer field part of Ekhaya Park, Hillbrow. (Image by Our Future Cities).

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

quickly as possible, and then resolve issues as we went along.

**How could other communities create their own tools like this?**

**CO:** Well I would start by familiarising yourself with the tools that exist out there and then utilise them where possible, and only building when there is something that doesn't meet your need. Otherwise in specific relation to the crisis map, if you're not a developer, you would be able to use Google Maps to create a static map which you can then overlay information on top of through a Google spreadsheet.

**What are some of your company's ambitions in the civic tech and open democracy networks?**

**CO:** Right now we're focused on building sustainable tech ventures that steward resources to impact people and the planet. We believe that resource stewardship is a healthy role of tech in communities, and has the potential to create new access when resources are distributed correctly.

**How would you like to see this platform grow?**

**CO:** We would like to see this become a national tool for 1) Analysing community needs while connecting state and non-profit interventions and 2) Connecting those in need during a crisis with those that can help on an individual-to-individual level. We would then like to see the platform integrate with other digital platforms out there that are involved in the same line of work.



Callum Oberholzer, Founder of Black Box. (Image by Our Future Cities).

## Q&amp;A

## Ayanda Roji

*Ayanda Roji and Dawn Govender from the Park Activation programme, currently underway in the City of Johannesburg and in the eThekweni Municipality, share their perspectives on rejuvenating the inner city, and reclaiming parks as safe and accessible public spaces*



Parks Activation project champion, Ayanda Roji. (Our Future Cities).

**What excited you the most about starting, and being a part of the PAC Programme?**

**AR:** It was after working in the inner-city and seeing how powerful activation was in terms of building social ties, and countering crime by preventing the occurrence of adverse behaviour in parks. It was also seeing community members who were active and served as champions in the communities.

**DG:** The reclaiming of our public open spaces; they are now being used by the communities for the purpose they were intended.

**What are some of the successes of the programme?**

**AR:** Creating a safe space for children after school and on weekends and for community members; keeping young people busy and channelling their energy towards something positive. Also, seeing young people involved in some aspects of governance (taking care of the park) and that they have a responsibility to actively sustain city infrastructure.

**DG:** Bringing community, government and small businesses together to implement active programs (e.g boxing and aerobic classes).

**What are some of your favourite park activation methods?**

**DG:** The hosting of soccer and netball tournaments, school sports days and community clean-up campaigns.

**Are there any unexpected outcomes you've witnessed during the Programme?**

**DG:** Communities wanting to run festivals and host plays in the park. They also want to use this as a platform to market their business and share skills and knowledge with each other.

**What has been key to being able to sustain the project's positive impact?**

**AR:** The support of an existing non-profit network already working within the communities such as the George Boxing Club, as it continued with the programmes beyond the project's timelines.

**DG:** The SSCN initiative which brings students from university to train PACs and run programmes with children.

**How could other cities get involved in this programme?**

**AR:** By sharing knowledge about our experiences: what works, challenges, and how the programme could be improved.

**DG:** Learning from each other and trying to formalise the PAC program in their context.

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**What advice would you give to other changemakers who are thinking about starting a project like this?**

**AR:** Identify diverse champions from the community e.g. school teachers, parents, clubs and other institutions that offer similar projects and ensure synergy by partnering with them.  
**DG:** Try to link your program with other programs out there and in this way, more impact can be created. The drivers of the program must be passionate, hands-on and must be able to work with communities.

**What is your dream or aspiration for other parks in the city?**

**AR:** We carried out a COVID-19 survey looking at implications of the pandemic on the use and management of parks and green spaces. One of the findings was around park wardens that are needed for each and every park. This is impossible to have given inadequate resources for park maintenance. But, if in every park there could at least be a Park Activator, that could improve safety of the facilities and assist communities with the information they need in terms of engaging the city.

**DG:** Parks to bring communities together and to help ensure that our children's minds are stimulated in a positive way. These types of programs give purpose and, in a tough environment, allow children to forget their problems at home and just be happy.



Pictured L-R: Margaret Sekobelo, a Park Activation Co-ordinator; Dawn Govender and Ayanda Roji- City Parks and Zoo, City of Johannesburg.



Children playing in the safety of Pullinger Kop Park. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

**Q&A**

# Nomfundo Phewa

*We speak to Nomfundo Phewa from Green Corridors, a Durban-based organisation focused on the maintenance of natural habitats, and their involvement in the Parks Activation programme.*



Nomfundo Phewa, a Green Spaces and Agroecology project officer with Green Corridors. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).



Nomfundo demonstrating how the community makes use of the parks outside gym in Freedom Park. (Image by Our Future Cities).

**How did you first become involved in the improvement of parks?**

**NP:** I first became involved through my role at Green Corridors; one of our focus areas is the management of open spaces. This often includes the clearing of alien invasive species, and/or cleaning up illegal dumpsites then beautifying them so they can be used as community pocket parks.

**What is the role of Green Corridors in the city?**

**NP:** Green Corridors is a special purpose vehicle for the municipality to encourage stakeholder relations and partnerships, for the implementation of projects that deal with the management of open spaces; riverine management; and waste beneficiation.

**What excited you most about joining the PAC programme?**

**NP:** Being afforded the opportunity to work with people who have an interest in using open spaces for their intended purpose, which is to relax and be tuned in to nature. More especially, exposing children from a young age to nature in open spaces.

**What would success look like for this programme in Durban?**

**NP:** Success would be different stakeholders coming together, driven by purpose to take the programme further. Success would mean an expansion of the PAC programme in different areas of the Durban region.

**What have you learnt about the communities you work in e.g. KwaMashu?**

**NP:** Communities have different strengths and it's important to capitalise on those strengths to achieve success.

**What are some of the activations planned for the coming months?**

**NP:** The plan is to establish ways of strengthening the existing activations, and reaching out to different stakeholders.

**What do you think other cities could learn from Green Corridors and its work?**

**NP:** The importance of building strong partnerships with different stakeholders to get the most out of any project implementation processes.

**GOOD SNAPSHOTS**

# Additional good practice stories from across South Africa's metros

**BUFFALO CITY**

## Civic Centre Greening project



Infographic explaining the civic centre's greening project. (Image by SACN),

The Civic Centre Greening Project is an initiative of the Buffalo City Municipality's Electricity and Energy Department as part of the City's commitment to retrofit many municipal buildings to become more energy efficient.

Borne out of a working relationship with Sweden and the City of Oldenburg in Germany, the objectives of the project were to improve energy efficiency of buildings and to educate the public on alternative sources of energy.

The interventions made to the building are also showcased to the public with information shared on displays set up in the lobby of the building, pamphlets and screens to showcase the project's impact.

In particular, measurement and reporting on the project is done through a display screen in the main entrance of the building which shows renewable energy production, total usage and specific usage sites. Staff members are also included through education, which ensures that they understand the signifi-

cance of being energy conscious in the workplace.

The project's impacts are already evident. Within 18 months, the savings from the project equated to the initial capital layout. This project also allows the municipality to put electricity back onto the grid. It works alongside Buffalo City's solar lighting project where approximately 15 000 streetlights have been replaced with LEDs.

While the energy department is spearheading this work, it is trying to bring other departments into the fold. There have also been meetings held with building maintenance officials on the importance of energy efficiency. Some of the challenges to more widespread retrofitting is the reality that many municipal buildings are not directly owned by the municipality thereby limiting interventions. However, the demonstration project at the Civic Centre is intended to change the mindsets of property owners across the city and inspire a wave of change.

**NELSON MANDELA BAY**

## Moore Dyke Sports Precinct

*An interview with George Jerry of the Mandela Bay Development Agency.*



Mr Jerry shares the ins and outs of being a social facilitator for the Helenvale SPUU programme. (Image by Matthew Griffiths).

**What excites you most about this project?**

The Moore Dyke sports precinct is one of the oldest sports facilities in the metro. What excites me is to bring all stakeholders together under one roof. To work with the stakeholders to ensure the smooth running of the project, but mostly the involvement and hopefully ownership by the community.

**Who are the project partners and funders?**

The funder is the municipality and like all MBDA projects, we implement projects on behalf of the municipality. After completion we hand it back to the relevant department of the municipality, in this case, the Sports, Recreation and Arts Department. Currently we work with 13 stakeholder groups who benefit both directly and indirectly from the project.

**Which challenges did you overcome and how did you do so?**

Before the November 2021 local government elections, the project was in a different ward with different stakeholders. After the local government elections, the ward boundaries changed. This had an impact on the stakeholders especially those who stood to gain financially. It was a difficult process of negotiations to explain to the one group why they were no more direct beneficiaries of the project. This could be seen as a success, as at times these talks can take a violent turn if not properly managed.

Therefore it was important to identify all the relevant stakeholders from the onset of the project. After that is to get all the stakeholders to work together, following on is to build a healthy relationship between the stakeholders and the contractor. Thereafter is to keep the relationship active and encourage constructive dialogue to ensure no breakdown of communication that can lead to the disruption of the project. The successful completion of the project and ultimately handing it over to the municipality with an active stakeholder group to take ownership of the project going forward.

**What has been the biggest lesson thus far of working in Schauderville?**

To keep the communication lines open by sharing information and trusting the process.

**What do you think other cities could learn from this project?**

Other cities should clarify in the tender document everything related to SMMs. Develop an all inclusive approach with regards to employment and where possible stretch the reach of the project beyond the immediate ward boundaries. I would also advise that cities do not hold separate meetings with any relevant stakeholder in the absence of the other. Be clear about the locality of the project and which community it serves.

**EKURHULENI**

# Tackling the World's Worst Aquatic Weed



Infographic explaining the importance of wetlands. (Image by SACN).

Wetlands are water sponges. They store water and release it slowly, filtering it. They also provide a supportive habitat for flora and fauna. Wetlands therefore play a critical role in reducing the negative impacts of Climate Change through their ability to attenuate floods, in turn decreasing the risk and vulnerability for surrounding communities. But in South Africa, wetlands are unfortunately the most threatened ecosystems.

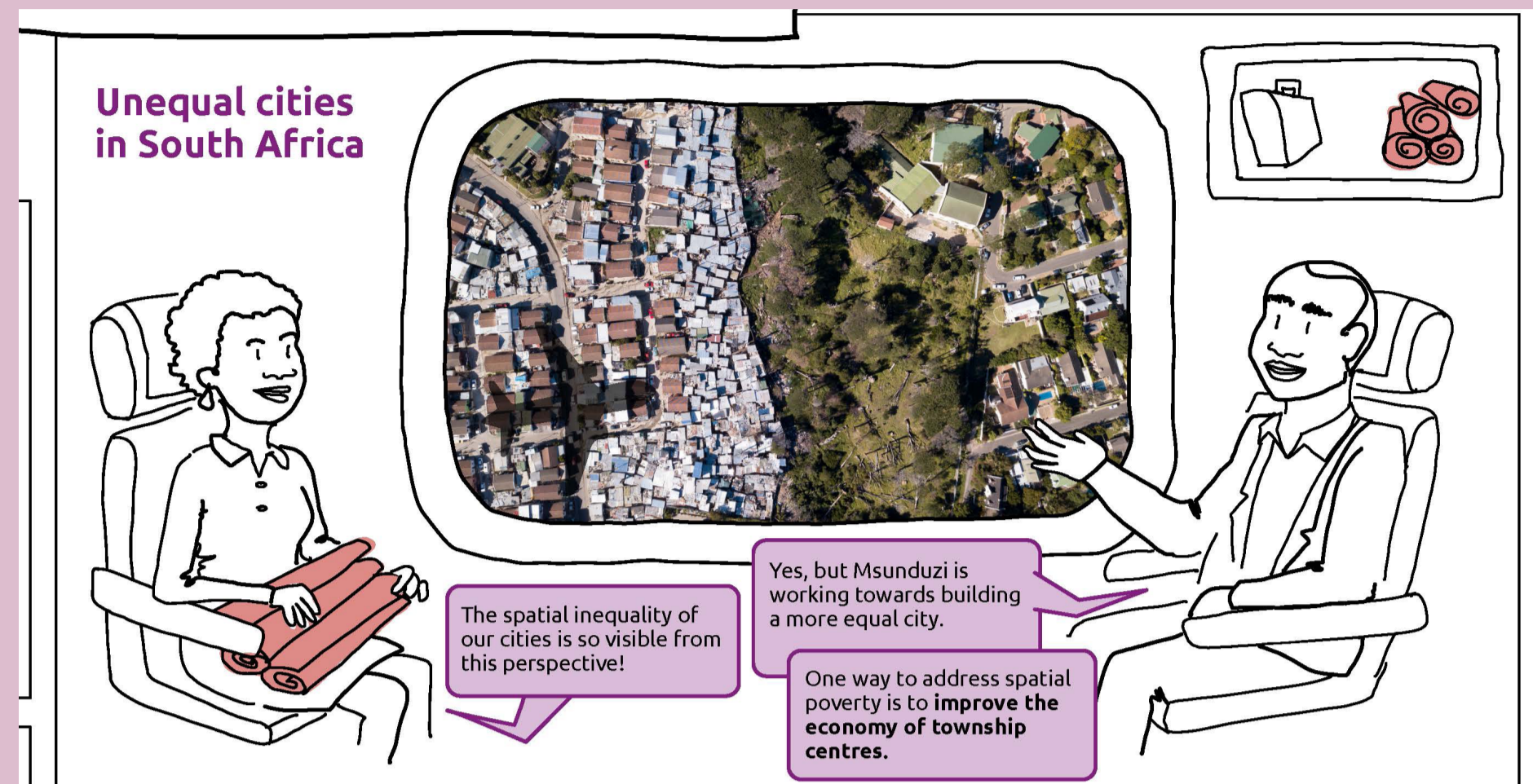
The City of Ekurhuleni (CoE) is home to a broader wetlands system that is of great significance to South Africa; and of those wetlands, the Blesbokspruit catchment system is of global importance. The wetland serves as a sponge and buffer for the water that enters the Vaal River, the main source of water for Gauteng. Blesbokspruit is also rich in biodiversity and is home to a variety of birdlife. The health of Blesbokspruit is being threatened due to the activities of

industry, mining (acid mine drainage), dams, drainage channels, sewer leaks, and agricultural activities. This makes it prone to the infestation of aquatic invaders such as the water hyacinth. South Africa is obliged to rehabilitate the wetland to get it back to international standards, and the CoE is working hard to do this.

For the CoE, ridding its water sources of the water hyacinth has been a long process involving the development of policies, strategies and plans as well as on-the-ground interventions. There are a large number of stakeholders involved: international, national, provincial, local and academic, coming together to tackle the water hyacinth. Many methods are being used which include mechanical, chemical and biological control. There has been much success to date, with water quality improving, and bird life returning but there is still much to be done to tackle this stubborn and invasive species.

**MSUNDUZI**

# Planning as a Change Agent in Edendale



Infographic explaining the inequalities in South African Cities. (Image by SACN),

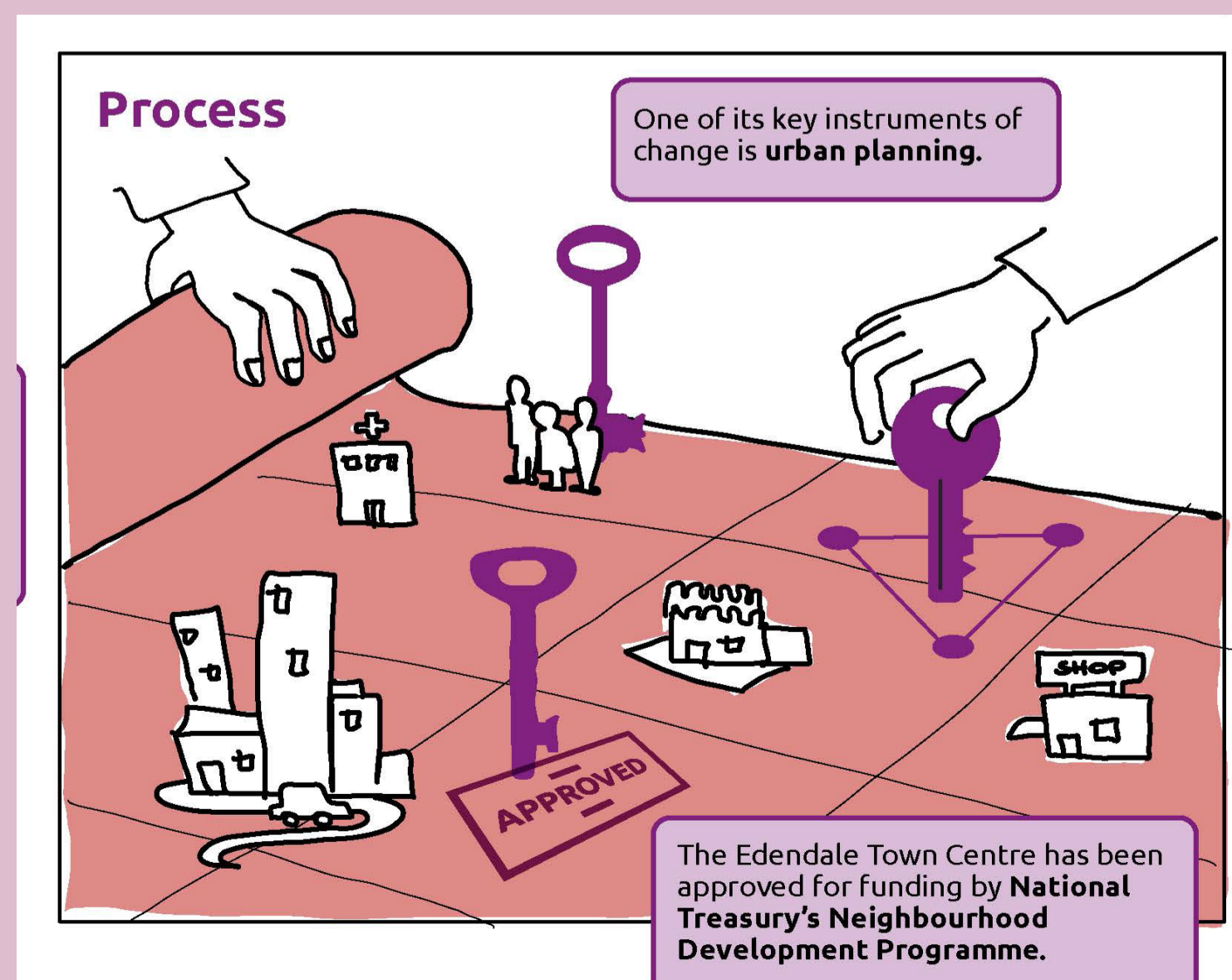
The Msunduzi Edendale Town Centre seeks to create a new mixed-use modern precinct in the heart of Edendale - that complements and improves the existing urban fabric and built environment. The defined town centre will be a focal point to the rapidly developing area of Edendale.

The plan is for the town centre to add to existing industrial and commercial uses and improve the physical environment by better integrating and connecting uses, by adding new facilities and through beautification. The aim is that through the improved facilities, the town centre's economy will be stimulated and the vibrant informal economy will be supported.

This precinct plan will include the Edendale Mall, whilst providing for a government precinct, mixed-income housing, new commercial and retail space, and new public services. New public transport services such as the Bus Rapid Transit System will move commuters to and from the town centre and the greater Pietermaritzburg area.

Creating a greener landscaped environment is an important element of the Edendale Town Centre plan. According to those involved, the intention is for the green spaces to spill into the proposed new urban fabric with design interventions such as planted boundary edges combined with built-in seating and street furniture to soften the urban fabric. The Edendale Precinct Safety Plan will also ensure that there is a safety lens applied to all aspects of design, development, activation and maintenance. Collaboration has been essential within the municipality and beyond, both with other tiers of government and with civil society, as safety has been noted as a transversal and complex issue, requiring exposure to different perspectives, experience and skills.

The plan is being developed through a partnership between national, provincial and local government role players. While it is too early to measure the success of the project, it has been vigorously debated and discussed at a plan-level, both with other spheres of government as well as with local communities.



Infographic explaining the three keys to good urban planning. (Image by SACN),