TRANSFORMING PUBLIC PARKS INTO SAFE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

Lessons on collaboration and participation from the City of Joburg

Joburg

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

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THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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BACKGROUND

Across the world, city officials are realising that the quality of public spaces hugely affects the general quality of life for their urban citizens. Safe, inclusive, accessible, functional and sustainable parks and open public spaces are important to all neighbourhoods and cities, while well-managed and maintained public spaces promote sociability, cohesion and well-being.

As in many cities, Johannesburg faces the problem of ensuring the safety and upkeep of its parks and public open spaces. Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) is responsible for developing and managing over 3000 parks and public open spaces (from cemeteries to road islands) across the city, but the department has limited resources, budget and capacity to deal with the many challenges. A huge frustration is that, even after investing significantly in upgrading parks and public open spaces, the same maintenance and operational challenges persist.

Realising that local people were not using their local parks and public open spaces because of safety and other concerns, the JCPZ embarked on a pilot project to test alternative ways of sustainably developing and managing parks, to make them safe and attractive. The approach would be holistic and collaborative, involving not only the local users and stakeholders but also City departments. The initiative was a joint partnership between JCPZ (as project leader), the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), the Johannesburg City Safety Programme (JCSP) within Joburg City Safety Programme (JCSP), Special Projects Unit in the Office of the City Manager and the Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention Programme (VCP), a joint cooperation programme between South Africa and Germany implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The intended outcome of the project was the development of a practical, integrated model for managing public open spaces that could be replicated in other parts of Johannesburg, as well as across other African cities. The project was aligned to the City's Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) 2040 and to the Joburg City Safety Strategy (JCSS), which includes a specific outcome on public spaces: "JCSS Outcome 2: Safe and secure urban environment and public spaces". At a global level, the project speaks to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no. 11.7 that states: "By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities". In the process, the project became more than a park redesign and activation process. It showed that managing projects within the City using a whole-of-society approach, as advocated by the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), is possible, provided certain principles are followed.

This document explains the process followed and highlights the lessons learnt (many of which fed into the revised JCSS). It also offers some guiding principles for managing projects within a resource-constrained environment and the current institutional context of African cities. It is hoped that readers will be able to use these lessons and principles to adopt a whole-of-society approach when implementing projects, whether related to parks or in other sectors.

PLACEMAKING

This is an approach to designing, developing, activating and maintaining public open spaces that is based on community-driven and research-based processes. Collaborative community participation is at the forefront of creating public spaces, inviting local users to collectively reimagine and reinvent the public spaces where they are active. Collaborative engagement is used to shape the public realm, strengthening the connection between local users and the public places that they share. With community-based participation at the centre, effective placemaking processes recognise communities as resources and capitalise on local assets and potential. It is a very powerful way of approaching public open spaces. Genuine placemaking is when people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds can not only access and enjoy a place, but also play a key role in identifying, creating and maintaining it. Placemaking is a catalyst for pulling in investment for the economic growth of an area and for bringing communities together to improve their neighbourhood spaces. This results in more "eyes on the street", which contributes to making places safer.

END STREET
NORTH PARK

End Street North Park

End Street North Park is a small park located in Doornfontein, on the north side of the railway tracks. The park is bordered by Beit Street (to the north), Hancock Street (to the south) and Nugget Street (to the west). Nugget Street is a major thoroughfare for vehicles and pedestrians (mostly workers, students and school children) who commute daily from Hillbrow, Berea and Yeoville into the central business district and back again. Doornfontein was once a city industrial area but now comprises mostly residential or commercial properties. The park is surrounded by low-rise, (mainly) residential buildings, with a mix of schools, churches, formal and informal shops, as well as nightlife facilities nearby.

Like many parks and public open spaces across Johannesburg, End Street North Park and its surrounds were characterised by vandalism, neglect, litter, and criminal and illegal activities, including drinking and smoking narcotics in public, and illegal gambling. The park was perceived as an undesirable space that had uncontrolled access and was home to several homeless people, waste recyclers and drug users. Families, children, the youth and elderly who were keen to use the park avoided it because of crime and the fear of crime.

The JCPZ lacked the appropriate resources to tackle these challenges. For example, the department has no dedicated safety division and only a limited number of park rangers available to provide security. In addition, park rangers have no mandate to arrest people and must rely on Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD) for support.

PROCESS FOLLOWED

Transforming Public Parks into Safe and Inclusive Community Spaces
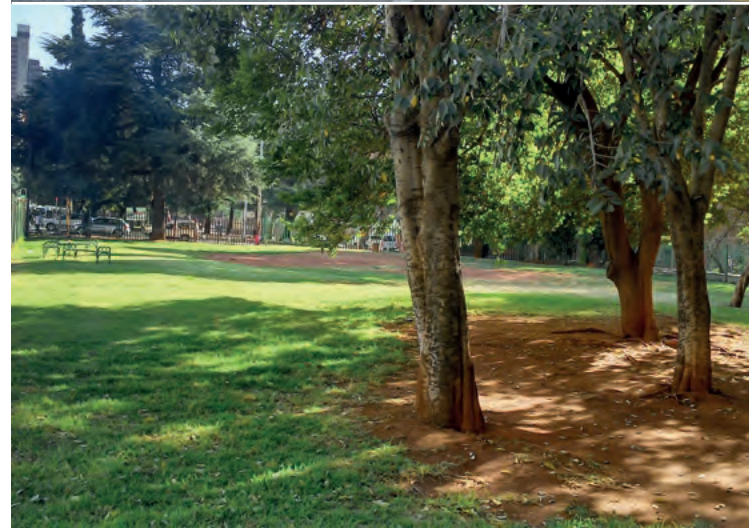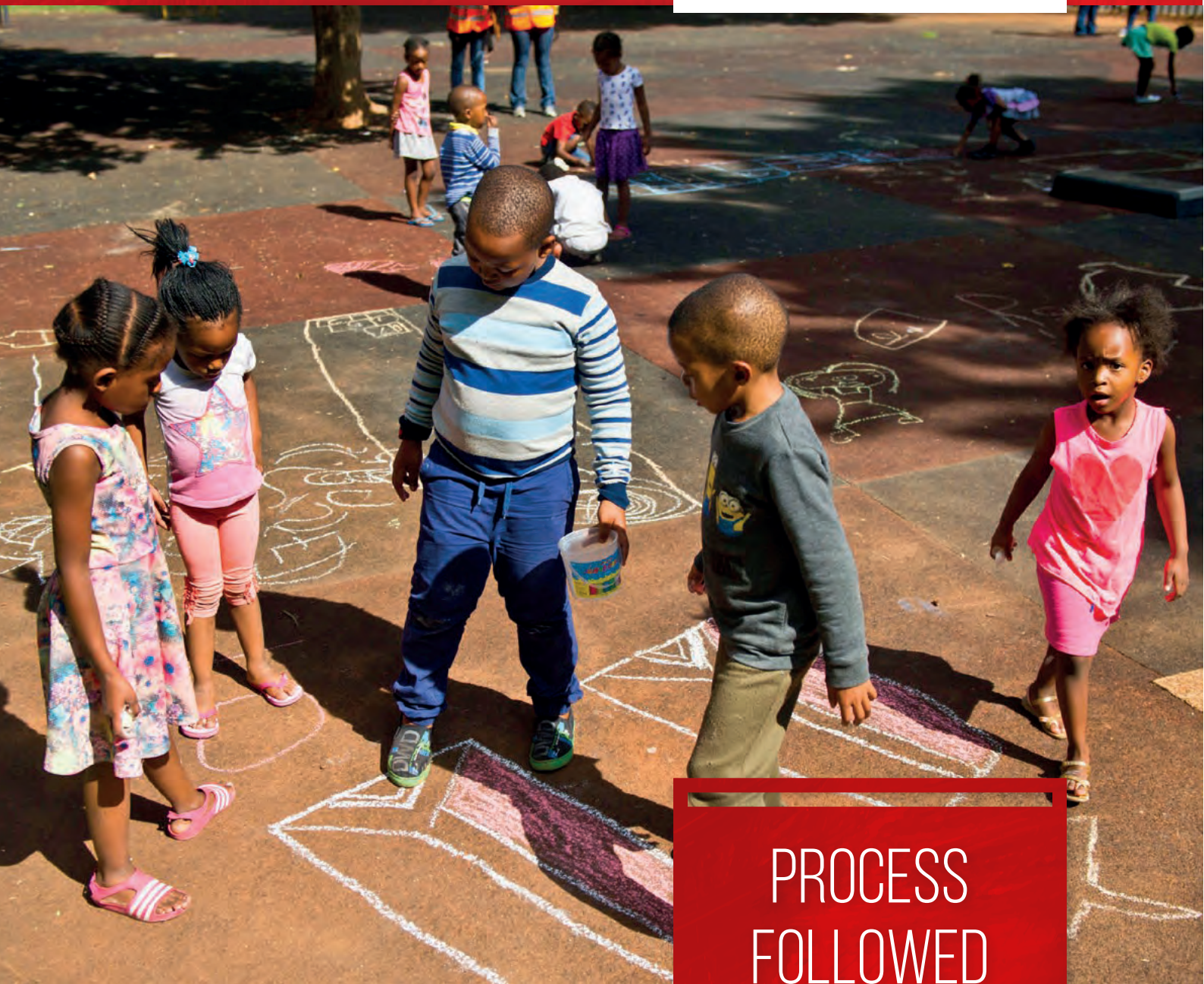
The process started in 2013, after a seminar on urban safety in public open spaces and a review of the annual customer satisfaction surveys. The decision was taken to formulate an integrated safety strategy for parks and public open spaces collaboratively, with the involvement of other departments.

In 2014, the JCPZ undertook a scoping survey to select one unsafe inner-city park to be upgraded, as a pilot project. End Street North Park was selected from a shortlist of 14 parks, as it epitomised many of the challenges common to urban parks and public open spaces, and presented a feasible scale.

From 2015, the project management process began in earnest and is detailed below. It should be noted that the different stages of the process are not linear and some occurred during the same period.

#1 Brainstorm internally and with city departments

A facilitation session with relevant city departments and parastatals produced a project vision and a roadmap to define the goals, objectives and desired end result. Participants included Special Projects Unit in the Office of the City Manager, the Department of Development Planning, JCPZ, GIZ-VCP, the Department of Public Safety (JCSP), JDA, the Department of Environmental Health and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA). The objectives achieved were:

- The establishment of a task team and definition of roles.
- The development of a project roadmap and next steps.
- Procedures for integrating End Street North Park into the broader strategy.

The establishment of a task team and definition of roles.

The development of a project roadmap and next steps.

Procedures for integrating End Street North Park into the broader strategy

#2   Allocate tasks

The next stage was to flesh out details of the project roadmap and allocate tasks and activities to various team members. The core team was made up of three City departments, each of which had individual roles (described below). In addition, the three departments shared responsibilities and tasks, including project management and stakeholder facilitation, which is generally not the norm for government processes.

- As the overall coordinating body, JCPZ's role was to engage with ward councillors and other city departments in order to secure cooperation and budget support for park operations, to involve the non-public sector (experts, NGOs and academia), to facilitate the implementation of the Minecraft[1] process, and to organise events in the park on weekends.

- The role of the Department of Public Safety (JCSP) was to organise and coordinate the safety audits and the mapping exercises with a holistic view at precinct level (supported by GIZ-VCP) as well as to align the pilot project with the revised JCSS.

- JDA's role was to secure budget and manage the physical development of the park – thereby also engaging and effectively coordinating with other city departments and entities.

Other stakeholders were brought in to support the core team through advice, participatory engagements and finance.

- GIZ-VCP provided technical support and assisted with the initial design and management of the project, as well as supporting the first mapping activities in the community. In time, as city departments took on full responsibility, GIZ-VCP became more of a sounding board, providing assistance where needed; for example, developing a video about the project and supporting dialogues with new stakeholders that wanted to organise activities in the park.

- The UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme contributed by exposing the City to global best practices and lessons from other cities. End Street North Park users were trained in using Minecraft to design what they would like to see in the park. The UN-Habitat Programme also organised a train-the-trainer Minecraft workshop for two city officials to be able to use Minecraft for future participatory park design.

- Sticky Situations, a social enterprise specialising in collaborative engagements with public and private sector and community partners, supported the public participation and stakeholder engagement that was crucial for improving communication and building trust. In addition, the organisation facilitated the stakeholder mapping and several recreational activities in the park over many months.

- Third-year students of the University of Witwatersrand (Wits University) provided practical inputs to the city's park assessments. The inputs included commonalities and differences in terms of co-management and key issues, which had emerged from the spatial and site design assessments that the students had done of various parks within the inner city.

- Tshimololong precinct (TechnoHub) was commissioned as a service provider that supplied the venue, equipment and technical support for the Minecraft workshop, and translated the Minecraft outcomes into technical design.

- Prof. Peter Gotsch, an urban researcher, international planning expert and registered architect, played a continuous advisory role, facilitated partnerships with key departments and linked the JCPZ with international agencies. He also provided access to global lessons about public spaces and linkages to the national urban policy (the IUDF).

- Prof. Claire Benet-Gbaffou gave advice on public open spaces and began to institutionalise inclusive public space management within Wits University, thereby ensuring that the knowledge generated did not reside exclusively within city government.

- The Department of Development Planning provided input on city-wide (local) guidelines for design considerations for public open spaces.

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1   Minecraft is a popular world-building computer game that is used as a community participation tool in urban design for public space projects. It enables players to construct buildings or landscape areas using 3D 1mx1m blocks in real-life locations and scenarios. It allows for greater public participation in the design of open spaces, does not require a technical understanding of plans and designs, and facilitates the inclusion of needs across genders and age groups. Johannesburg is a partner of the Block-by-Block project, which is a collaborative initiative of UN-Habitat and Mojang, the makers of Minecraft.

#3   Map stakeholders

A crucial stage was to get on-the-ground information about the park and which key users and role players influence the function of the park. This was done through an inclusive mapping process, which involved locating all the stakeholders who use the park and/or are based in the surroundings of the park. This method specifically focused on the inclusion of women and girls as one important user group. It meant spending a lot of time in the park (almost daily) for several months to:

- understand the activities within the park,
- identify challenges and opportunities, and
- build trust (which was missing) and establish relationships between the City of Joburg and residents as well as the broader park community.

It took several months for the collaborative organisation, Sticky Situations, who was carrying out the mapping, to gain the trust of the community, and even longer before the community actively began to participate in the park activities. Having built the trust, Sticky Situations was able to add information, such as park use, times when the park was active, type of activities and user profiles. What took longer was getting buy-in from the community for the active participation of city officials.

The mapping was the first stage in the multi-stakeholder engagement. It was followed by recurring meetings and workshops of the stakeholders involved.

STAKEHOLDERS NEAR THE PARK

This map locates stakeholders we have engaged with, who are based in the nearby vicinity of the park. The yellow indicates people we have had various stages of discussions with, some have engaged in workshops. Blue indicates stakeholders who contributed to minecraft design workshop. This map will be expanded and more detailed in the coming months as engagement processes deepen.

Stakeholders engaged

1. Shop Traders
2. Bar/Club/Ladies venue
3. Ridgeway Court residents (upper floors)
4. Shop Traders (ground floor)
5. MES
6. Street Traders north side
7. Razzmatazz and other linked businesses (apparently one owner)
8. Men living in park north side, some grew up in the area
9. Residential Building (no name)
10. Men living in park southside
11. I.H. Harris Primary School
12. Street Traders south side
13. Tashkent residents
14. Street Traders west Nugget st
15. Mechanic renting from PRASA
16. PRASA Site guards
17. Shirwyn Court residents
18. Shop Traders (near station entrance)
19. Taxi drivers
20. Street Traders
21. UJ Traders
22. Residents from buildings not on this map

Minecraft attendees

1. Other residential buildings in proximity, one near Joubert Park
2. Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo
3. Wits University

#4　Conduct safety audits

The initial safety audit looked at the built and physical environment, and so could be done without interacting directly with the community. As trust was built with the community, information about several crime and safety incidences, which emerged from interactions during the mapping stage, was fed into the safety audits. The aim was to obtain a better understanding of the park – who uses it, what activities take place within it, what factors within the built and physical environment facilitate unsafety or even crime incidents – and to come up with recommendations for improving safety, based on the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and social crime prevention strategies. The initial assessment produced the following suggestions:

- Enhance visible policing.
- Implement signage to educate and inform the public about prohibited activities within the park (which would also make law enforcement easier).
- Manage access and through movement, by limiting the number of entry points and implementing a signalised pedestrian crossing on Nugget Street.
- Repair any damaged infrastructure and improve lighting.
- Develop a precinct plan for the sub-area, including the park.
- Initiate a community policing forum/ management model together with key community stakeholders.

Findings from the assessment were used to engage stakeholders on safety issues in the broader precinct. This initial audit was crucial to subsequent engagement with stakeholders and for ensuring that the real (and sensitive) safety issues were discussed.

#5 Engage with stakeholders

The safety concerns raised through the safety audit were complemented and verified by issues that emerged from the engagement with various stakeholders, which included other city departments/councillors, park users and neighbours, among others. Several methods were used to engage with the stakeholders:

- Workshops with the core team (JCPZ, Public Safety and JDA) and Sticky Situations (to understand the different stakeholder-engagement approaches) and with the local primary school (to understand their safety issues related to the park).
- Meeting with councillors, to sensitise them to the project and to get input on their vision for the park.
- A two-day Minecraft workshop (25–26 November 2015): one day to train residents, school children, neighbouring stakeholders and park users to "play" on the Minecraft tool, and one day for them to design their own park, from materials to activities and facilities, using the tool. Each group gave a presentation of their design, explaining reasons for including various activities and facilities. Of the facilities requested, ablutions/toilets were top of the list, followed by water, soccer, games and free WiFi.
- Focus group discussions and workshops with stakeholders who use, work or live near the park.
- Visible events in the park every Saturday. These were used not only to market the park design options and obtain input from park users for the final park design, but also to turn the park into an active community space.

- Facilitated discussions with residents and the landscape designer, as well as other relevant city departments and entities that were required for the implementation of strategic interventions, such as the Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA), JMPD, Social Development and Development Planning.

The issues experienced by local users were taken seriously, with the aim of finding joint solutions. For instance, the initial focus was on designing and greening the park, but consultation with residents revealed that accessibility and linking the park to other amenities were crucial issues for users, and influenced whether or not they used the park.

#6 Deepen internal collaboration

The need for inter-departmental collaboration was highlighted during the engagement process, which included workshops, seminars and facilitated dialogues. What emerged was that many of the issues raised fell outside the JCPZ's mandate. Through ongoing bilateral meetings and inter-departmental sessions, city entities and departments developed a more informed understanding of each other's mandates and how each could contribute to safety in public open spaces. Officials who participated were from the Departments of Development Planning, Transport, Community Development, Public Safety, Housing, and Environment and Infrastructure Services, as well as the JRA, Joburg Water, Pikitup and City Power, among others.

Ideas put forward included:
- Community development – sports, theatre, dance programmes.
- Community meetings in the park, to discuss safety issues, with the participation of JMPD.
- Economic development – job creation, e.g. Vulindlel'eJozi and Jozi@work (street patrollers to be part of the programme).
- Youth development programmes.
- Mobile health stations offering free HIV testing.

An action table was drawn up with specific interventions/projects per city department that were directly linked to the institutional/operational challenges identified.

#7 Develop sustainable engagement with multiple stakeholders

In addition to the deepening internal collaboration, bilateral meetings were held with non-governmental players, including community representatives, with the aim of putting in place ongoing activities and structures. These included:

- A Public Space Committee and Community Policing Forum, to act as coordinators and contact points for all activities to be held in the park.
- "Meet your neighbour" and "reading corner" events.
- Theatre exercises, as well as the usual sports and games.
- Training in the park by a local boxing club.

Subsequently a stakeholder forum was formed, as a platform for residents and other park users to engage with local government departments to address concerns, such as crime, pedestrian safety and homeless people sleeping in the park. A local park management team is emerging organically, as the community is able and willing to contribute to the management of the park. Linkages have been made with a new stakeholder, the Sports for Social Change Network (SSCN), to run football and other sports programmes at the End Street North Park and other parks in the inner city. The SSCN plans to assist with the co-management of the park through active activation.
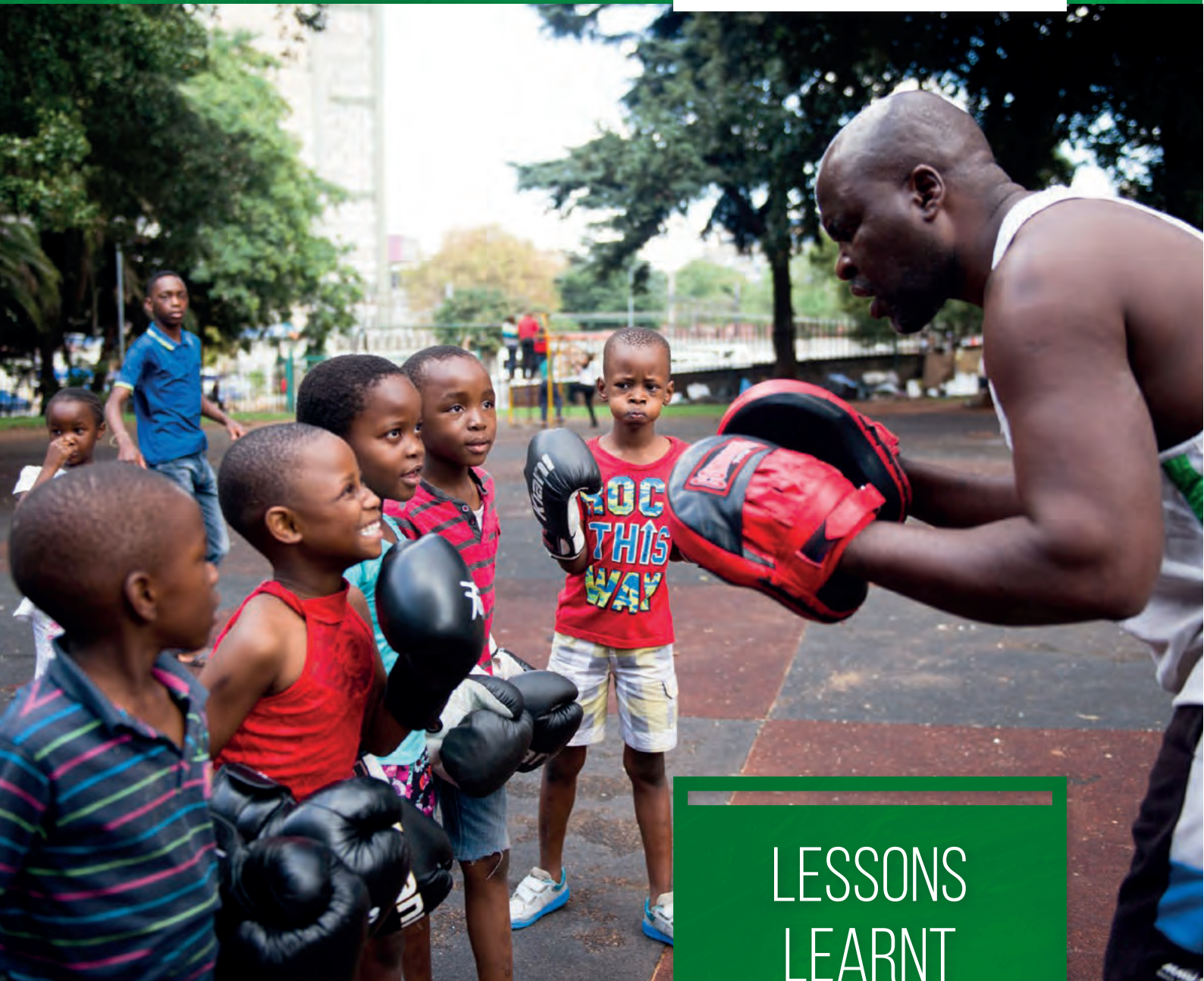
LESSONS LEARNT

#1 Parks are more than green open spaces – they are a dynamic part of a neighbourhood's social fabric

Officials developed a new and holistic understanding of space and managing parks, realising that parks are more than simply physical spaces for relaxing and playing. This opened up new considerations about the functions served by parks in urban spaces and about managing parks – park management does not only involve picking up litter and cutting grass.

The project became more than a park redesign and activation process. It opened up a new way of viewing parks and public open spaces, and how communities use them in dense and diverse neighbourhoods.

#2 Partnerships and collective action are essential for the success of any project

A city department, such as JCPZ, cannot operate in a silo. To be sustainable, park activation and management requires the creation and nurture of partnerships, networks and forums involving a broad range of actors. The End Street North Park process created the space for new collaborations and partnerships to emerge, both across City departments and between the City and civil society and other organisations. It also helped to strengthen the City's existing relations with organisations such as the South African Cities Network (SACN), South African Local Government Association (SALGA), UN-Habitat and GIZ-VCP. The process was strengthened through the synergy and chemistry of several invested individuals with a common passion and goals.

Partnerships add capacity and knowledge, and help develop skills within local government. GIZ provided technical and facilitation skills, while Sticky Situations' creative methodologies showed a way to implement engagement processes. Linking the UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme, the Wits School of Digital Arts and Tshimololong ensured that skills related to Minecraft as a participatory tool for urban design and planning remain within the various institutions, including the City of Joburg.

#3 Park users are not a homogeneous group

Inner-city residents are not a homogenous mass of disengaged and disinterested people, but reflect the demographics of the neighbourhood. Park users are not limited to those people who live right next to the park but include users such as school children or visitors. Therefore, to develop inclusive, safe and accessible parks requires understanding the needs, desires and challenges of the different park users.

For instance, homeless people and waste collectors are two of the most marginalised groups that use parks and public open spaces, and cannot be excluded. Indeed, they are often the eyes and ears of parks and public spaces, and can help maintain safety and security. Most users can be accommodated through communication and negotiation about who uses the park at different times and different places.

#4 Safety is multi-dimensional and is more than policing

Doing a safety assessment at the start of a process assists in identifying issues within the park and the larger precinct that affect the safety of park users. Safety audits allow for the mapping of crime and safety issues, which enables a better understanding of how the space functions and what spatial elements or activities within the bigger precinct affect the park. Safety permeates every aspect of social life and cannot be separated from the surrounding, broader communities – a space cannot be isolated and managed effectively if the broader neighbourhood is unsafe. Safety involves more than fences, CCTV and security guards – it is also about preventative measures, especially promoting social control by activating spaces through community engagement and using the community as key agents. Not least, it is about supporting institutional crime prevention measures, such as the implementation of rules and regulations and better communication and coordination among institutions.

The audit highlighted safety issues that had not been considered previously. One was the lack of pedestrian crossings in Nugget Street, a major thoroughfare where speeding and (often fatal) traffic accidents were common, as children had to cross the street to get to the local primary school. Another was the lack of ablution facilities in the park, which contributed to people urinating in public. These were some of the reasons why women and children did not feel comfortable or safe in the public space.

#5 Meaningful stakeholder engagement takes time and skill

Real participation is not the same as consultation – it requires continuity and trust building between park users themselves as well as between civil society and government. It takes time, much communication, negotiation, respect and honesty. It also requires the ability to be open to making mistakes. Meaningful engagement is not about officials attending meetings to disseminate information to the community, nor is it about relying on technology and social media to communicate with civil society. It is about all stakeholders being active participants and active resources, and about developing relationships through proper participation, i.e. by physically walking into the relevant space and speaking to real persons. This is especially true in complex and diverse inner-city areas that have specific socio-economic dynamics.

To engage properly and effectively, officials need to be able to work flexible hours and to develop different skills. Understanding people's needs, desires and challenges requires "soft" skills, such as facilitation and listening, not only hard skills. For instance, JCPZ has traditionally focused on developing "hard" skills such as horticultural knowledge, which are needed but do not contribute to real participation. Officials also need to be aware that micro or local politics is integral to all participatory processes and cannot be ignored. There will be tensions between different user groups (e.g. local residents vs. park users from other areas) and between residents who are aligned politically and those who are not. This may lead to alienation, distrust, division and anger. Therefore, all invested stakeholders (residents, ward committee and councillor, the City, etc.) should be openly acknowledged, which will also require managing local politics, so that the process is not held up.

> The key is to start with small steps, to demonstrate commitment and to mobilise synergies. Even small projects will encourage resource mobilisation, help overcome silos and promote working together, including with ward councillors and other City departments. 〞

#6 Committed leadership and a win-win approach is crucial

Committed leadership from the City is needed to coordinate regular engagement and build a dedicated park committee. Committed leaders and departmental champions are crucial for the success of the project, especially because of the current institutional structure of the city. The institutional structure (and culture) does not make cross-departmental collaboration easy, nor does it encourage the integration of activities, tasks or budgets. Traditionally each City department has its own priorities and targets, limited to a year, whereas a project like the End Street North Park is a multi-year project and at a very small scale (local or ward level, rather than regional or city level).

What helps is to encourage a cross-sector response by presenting a win-win situation – the various departments must see that actively participating will also contribute to achieving their own departmental targets. Cross-departmental communication and facilitation also improved thanks to the closer working relations that developed between officials from different city departments.

#7 Community buy-in and support makes the City's work easier and is sustainable

Communities that have a sense of ownership take care of their public spaces, whether in the inner city or in the suburbs. Most inner-city residents have a strong sense of belonging to, and ownership of, the space around them, but the different groups often do not know each other. However, they develop better relations through the meetings, discussions and activities associated with the project. In addition, residents do not always understand how the City operates or how to access different departments. Therefore, officials need to know how to manage expectations and educate communities about how the City works, helping them to shift from complaining to joint problem-solving.

Park users and local residents are key resources to any park development. As they are empowered to take responsibility for their own parks and public spaces, they become more likely to contribute to ensuring that their spaces remain safe, secure, clean and functional. And encouraging people to take responsibility for their own local urban spaces ultimately makes the City's work easier, especially in a resource-constrained environment. The key is to start with small steps, to demonstrate commitment and to mobilise synergies. Even small projects will encourage resource mobilisation, help overcome silos and promote working together, including with local ward councillors and other City departments.

GUIDING
PRINCIPLES

The following principles are aimed at guiding future projects that require a whole-of-society approach:

Principle 1   Identify the purpose and problems

Each park has a unique role within the neighbourhood and challenges that need to be understood. Parks are places for recreation and play, for meeting, interaction, transaction, negotiation and learning, as well as spaces of imagination, design and desire. Therefore, the focus needs to be on the physical space as well as its the meaning and function – how the park integrates into the external environment (streets, the built form, transport, economies). Parks are part of the social fabric of the urban environment in which they are situated and reflect the social dynamics, diversity and quality of the broader neighbourhood, and so cannot exist in isolation to their environment.

Principle 2   Map the stakeholders and park users

Park users and stakeholders most often are neither homogeneous nor limited to residents who live near the park. The process of participatory and inclusive mapping ensures all stakeholders and park users are involved and are part of building a relationship for the future joint management of the park. Women and girls are an important stakeholder group that must be part of the process. The mapping also helps build a picture of the connections and movements through and around the space, as well as when and where different users frequent the park.

Principle 3 Select champions and/or core team from the responsible department(s)

Building relationships with stakeholders requires continuous and regular engagement and coordination. A champion (from the designated municipal department) should drive the process at park level. This champion is known to – and stays in direct contact with – the community, managing the process and being the main conduit for information flow, such as explaining the current steps in the process and managing expectations. For example, the champion would share ideas about redeveloping and co-managing the park, and any financial constraints for funding activities.

Principle 4 Recognise and enable the officials' mandate to engage with stakeholders

Coordinating community engagement at park level requires time, skills and commitment from officials. This mandate needs to be formalised, acknowledged and supported in the officials' functions. The institution must recognise that officials need flexible working hours, and not expect them to work overtime informally. The institution should support officials by elevating issues raised by park users and by providing training in community facilitation.

Principle 5   Activate the park committee and beyond to solve problems jointly

The objective of building a functional park committee to co-manage the park cannot be achieved overnight. Activating a park means taking small steps that make a difference: organising small events in the park, and ensuring continuity and responsiveness to local issues. When municipal officials engage through regular meetings, communities feel that they are being taken seriously, even if problems cannot be solved immediately. The result is increased trust and a committee that shifts from complaining to joint problem-solving, and is ready to mobilise the community.

Principle 6   Create a vision and mission

Joint vision building and the development of a roadmap for each park or cluster of parks is a useful tool for mobilising community resources and building commitment.

Principle 7   Involve all relevant city departments/state organs

Commitment comes from the departments/state organs seeing value in the project (i.e. it will address their frustrations and bring benefits) and being able to think out of the box. It is easier to commit other departments once a formalised partnership between the designated municipal department and a park committee is in place and projects (no matter how small) are happening.

Principle 8   Form a stakeholders' forum

The sharing of experiences among the relevant park officials and park committees in a regional or metropolitan park stakeholders' forum can assist in generating ideas and mobilising resources. Such a forum provides a mechanism for consolidating the connections made among stakeholders into formal partnerships or institutional structures. The forum should be held at regular intervals.

Principle 9   Monitor and evaluate the process

An engagement process needs to be documented from the start, not only to record essential information (successes, failures) but also to measure and evaluate impact, and to generate and share knowledge. By investing resources and dedicating officials to community engagement in specific parks or clusters of parks, the relevant city department is able to generate value in terms of joint park management, resource mobilisation, and reduced vandalism and maintenance costs. The process needs to be evaluated regularly, so that it may be enhanced and lessons may be learnt within the institution.

CONCLUSION

The End Street North Park project is not only aligned to the implementation of SDG no. 11.7 that is about providing "universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces", but also an example of how to respond to the IUDF. South Africa's IUDF states that "success lies in collaboration and strong leadership at all levels of government, as well as a shared objective, as opposed to sectoral interests and goals". The project responds to two levers in particular:

- **Policy Lever 3:** Sustainable Human Settlements, especially the policy priority "Transform public spaces into safe places of community life".
- **Policy Lever 7:** Empowered, Active Communities, as these result in "[a]cohesive, tolerant non-violent society that respects and harnesses diversity, and does not discriminate or slip into destructive patterns of tension and conflict when different interests collide". The lever acknowledges that collective problems can be solved through building partnerships among stakeholders, and that "[c]ommunity organisation and mobilisation is a key dimension of inclusive, innovative and responsive delivery".

The City of Joburg GDS 2040 provides four key outcomes in terms of its vision for the City's growth and development. The End Street North Park pilot project addresses many elements of these outcomes, specifically the two outcomes that relate directly to public open spaces and to collaboration and inclusive development.

- "**Outcome 2:** Provide a resilient, liveable, sustainable urban environment", through addressing safe eco-mobility, safe human settlements and climate change-related risk management.
- "**Outcome 4:** A leading metropolitan government that pro-actively contributes to and builds a sustainable, socially inclusive, locally integrated and globally competitive GCR". This is achieved through collaborative engagement and partnership with citizens, and delivery of a professional, trustworthy safety service.

The End Street North Park project also demonstrates implementation of the JCSS, which is underpinned by three key tenets:

- A well-regulated, responsive city.
- Safe and secure urban environment and public spaces.
- Informed, capacitated and active communities.

The End Street North Park project resulted in new relationships, new activations in the park and important lessons learnt. Many aspects of the pilot project are replicable and could be scaled up to other public open spaces across the city and in other African cities. The project's success to date has been in spite of having to operate within the City's current institutional systems and processes, which bring the following challenges:

The City currently allows for public engagement only *after* the design has been completed

Public engagement needs to be *part of* the design process. This will require that the City hold public meetings allowing for multiple voices to give meaningful input into how spaces should be developed. Currently, the City holds public meetings (as required) to present a design for a project and seek input from stakeholders, but the design presented has already been formulated, and the format of the public meeting does not allow for adequate input from the public. The technical language and format also makes it difficult for the average person to understand the design or any implications of the design on the ground for the park resident/user.

Funding for capital projects is easier to obtain than funding for operational issues

After construction or upgrading, operational expenditure is needed to manage the park facility and precinct, and for continued stakeholder engagement. However, long-term operational funding requires a larger pool of resources than annual capital allocations.

The city does not have specific units to manage public spaces

Outsourcing maintenance that requires technical skills is expensive, but the City does not have sufficient budget to maintain the park or to ensure that technical skills are developed and retained within the JCPZ. The City also has no specific units within a department or across departments to manage public spaces, and no work package to enable communities to manage open spaces or parks. Instead, the City has used participants in the Jozi@Work programme and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to undertake grass-cutting and maintenance work. This is less expensive but is unsustainable – for example, the EPWP fund can only be used for short-term work opportunities, not for permanent jobs.

Despite these challenges, the project has succeeded in certain aspects, such as community capacitation. For instance, the End North Street Park community is able to put pressure on the City for services and (for now) has assistance for community-based programmes, such as through the EPWP. Nevertheless, the plan is not yet fully implemented; certain aspects have just begun (e.g. management models), while other aspects have not yet been delivered (e.g. the toilets). A full evaluation – of the operations, equipment, infrastructure and general safety in the park – is still required.

Another success factor is the way in which individuals from three different departments broke the "silo mentality" and worked together in a multi-department approach to project management, covering a variety of tasks and interventions. Champions from the three departments – JCPZ, JDA and the Department of Public Safety (JCSP) – managed in unison various aspects of the End Street North Park pilot project and used the lessons from the process to develop the Strategy for Safe Community Parks in the Inner City. This strategy aims to upscale the design and implementation of parks and open spaces across the inner city, and includes stakeholder roles and responsibilities, key interventions and estimated budget/resource allocations for sustained programmes.

What has emerged clearly from the project is a genuine desire, across many city departments and entities, to engage more with communities and stakeholders. However, what is missing is how to do this within existing, rather rigid institutional processes. It is hoped that the End North Street Park pilot project offers some guidelines for other departments and cities seeking to implement similar projects that involve a whole-of-society, multi-sectoral and collaborative approach.

The project shows what is possible when officials from different departments work together to break the silos and seek solutions. A combination of champions within the City and civil society, as partners in the co-design, co-implementation and co-management of development programmes and projects, is what is needed to ensure that urban, public spaces remain inclusive, safe and accessible to all.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CPTED   Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles

EPWP   Expanded Public Works Programme

GCR   Gauteng City Region

GDS   Growth and Development Strategy

GIZ   Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

IUDF   Integrated Urban Development Framework

JCPZ   Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo

JCSP   Joburg City Safety Programme
(within the Department of Public Safety)

JCSS   Joburg City Safety Strategy

JDA   Johannesburg Development Agency

JMPD   Johannesburg Metro Police Department

JRA   Johannesburg Roads Agency

PRASA   Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa

SACN   South African Cities Network

SALGA   South African Local Government Association

SSCN   Sports for Social Change Network
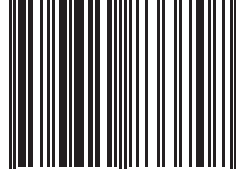
VCP   Violence and Crime Prevention Programme

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC PARKS INTO SAFE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

Lessons on collaboration and participation from the City of Joburg