



Durban's big success tackling drug abuse

Pioneering approach to substance abuse could be new model for South African cities and towns

[DURBAN]

Located in a refurbished formerly-abandoned community hall, the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre has been supporting narcotic and heroin users to overcome their addiction through opioid substitution therapy to reduce withdrawal symptoms - a pioneering form of treatment in South Africa.

The center has been the result of a powerful collaboration between different spheres of government, private agencies, NGOs and academia. The cause has been tirelessly spearheaded by Prof Monique Marks of the Durban University of Technology, Michael Wilson of Advance Access and Delivery, and the former Deputy Mayor of eThekweni (now Urban Lime COO), Belinda Scott.

The harm reduction approach focuses on meeting drug users where they're at, understanding that the process of reducing someone's reliance on drugs is gradual, and mobilising strategies to support drug users with aspects of their care that have been negatively impacted by their drug use.

Opioid substitution therapy, a key method of the harm reduction approach, provides drug users with doses of medication like methadone, which reduces

withdrawal symptoms and drug cravings, giving drug users a better chance of building their lives outside of addiction. Traditionally, drug rehabilitation processes focus solely on the addiction itself and can fail to engage with the broader context of the individual. Many South African drug users have pursued rehabilitation for their addiction with little to no success, as rehab facilities require individuals to arrive at the centre already clean, and the relentless effects of withdrawal can be too much to overcome.

When South Africa went into its first hard lockdown on 26 March 2020 the eThekweni Municipality provided its homeless populations with a network of shelters across the city.

Drug users among these populations battled severe withdrawals and often tried to escape the shelters in search of drugs and relief from their symptoms. The desperate chaos and violence often caused by the severity of withdrawal, made these shelters frightening to live inside and almost impossible to manage safely.

The eThekweni task team in charge of these shelters, comprised of politicians, academics, police representatives, and non-profit organisations, was moved

to respond to this dire situation, and with input and buy-in from a myriad of stakeholders, were able to move forward with a methadone program for these shelters. Through the insights and efforts of Marks, Wilson, Scott, and Shaun Shelley, of SANPUD (South African Network of People who Use Drugs), shelters were connected with psychiatrists and the other medical professionals necessary to safely administer the drugs, while Scott collaborated with SAPS and Metro Police to build a new approach for how the police could best support the harm reduction efforts and ensure the safety of all involved.

Through Scott's connections with the private sector, the programme was able to secure funding from FNB and Urban Lime for the provision of costly methadone to drug users entirely beyond what the local government would have been mandated to finance. This group of collaborators also campaigned for the Department of Home Affairs to spend time inside Durban's shelters during the hard lockdown to ensure that each citizen had an ID book, enabling them to access much needed grants and other government resources.

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Good Hood Stories: lessons for an all-of-society approach

Municipalities in South Africa are undoubtedly going through a difficult time. This has been particularly true since the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the multi-dimensional pressures the pandemic has placed on municipalities. Yet even before the outbreak, there has been a growing sense of dissent and unhappiness from residents towards municipalities. While the cause for residents’ discontent has no doubt been legitimate, there have nonetheless been cases of exemplary work from all sectors of society that need to be recognised and celebrated.

The Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) is our national framework to drive urban development in an integrated and sustainable way. It recognizes that government cannot do it all, and instead relies on innovative and collaborative partnerships through an “all-of-society” approach. The projects celebrated through the Good Hood Stories campaign, can serve as a blueprint for what an all-of-society approach might look like. It is an approach where government enables the innovation and energy from ordinary people doing extraordinary things for their neighbourhoods and cities.

It is an approach where government has the humility to reach out for help when it is needed. It is an approach where communities are treated as partners and not just as constituents. The projects showcased here demonstrate that South African cities are still places of creativity, collaboration and innovation. It is my wish that the lessons drawn from these stories can be applied across our urban spaces.

As citizens, government officials, businesspeople – young and old – we all have a part to play in the development of our city spaces. ■



Sithole Mbanga
CEO
South African Cities Network

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



IMAGE BY MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: LEFT: A nurse measures each client’s dosage of methadone. Each client works with by doctors and psychiatrists to tailor their journey towards a life less dependent on drugs. RIGHT: one of the 150-200 clients that come to the center each day takes his dose of methadone.

Moving out of hard lockdown, the methadone program within eThekwinini’s shelters has allowed multiple users whose addictions had kept them on the streets for years to reunite with their families, access social grants, build careers and become more present parents, friends and citizens. Some of them now sit on the board of the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Center.

The Bellhaven Harm Reduction Center now serves as a site of permanent provision of these services for anyone who needs them, and

currently serves over 500 people. The centre’s commitment to non-confrontational healing enables users of the space to engage with, appropriate and adapt the building and its spaces in new and personal ways that respond to their journeys and needs.

The Centre is situated along a busy street, which some may consider a hindrance, but according to Marks, having a harm-reduction space located here is incredibly important. She believes that because drug use has become such a large part of urban life, the Centre needs to be properly

present within the urban fabric in order to have meaningful contact with the drug using population. The location near a shopping mall, close to public transport services and the inner city has been key in moving towards the de-stigmatization of this group of people and in fostering their reconnection with society.

On a typical day, clients of the center spend time doing their laundry, playing, dancing, praying indoors and outdoors in green spaces, gardening, socialising, and taking part in various art projects.

The kinds of partnerships and approaches on display here are unprecedented not only because of the way that each collaborator reached beyond their usual roles to achieve a goal, but also because of the humility with which all stakeholders approached this project. Witnessing a government that was willing to ask for help in order to serve its citizens effectively has proved incredibly impactful, and we look forward to seeing more role-players learn from this collaborative approach in the future. ■



IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage celebrating the Bellhaven Memorial Centre

PROFILE: MONIQUE MARKS

Professor Monique Marks shares her journey from riding in the back of a police van to becoming a national advocate for the homeless and drug using population

[DURBAN]

Monique Marks, who currently heads up the Urban Futures Centre at the Durban University of Technology, started her career as a trained social worker, who then expanded her interest further into sociology, criminology, security governance and youth movements. Her current role, as part of the leadership team at the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Center began with a genuine conversation and a daring step into the experiences of drug users in our cities.

Early on in the life of the Urban Futures Centre, a group of drug users came to speak to Marks about the human rights city violations that their community were experiencing. Moved by their stories, and determined to act, Marks arranged to spend a few nights in the back of a city police van to observe drug operations, and to better understand the plight of this group. Those that she encountered on these trips, kept mentioning the need for methadone, with a firm belief that this would dramatically change their circumstances

After doing some research on methadone, she discovered its immense potential as a feasible alternative treatment for those struggling with drug addiction. After reaching out to Shaun Shelley, of the South African Network of People who Use Drugs (SANPUD), she got a sense of the very real challenges involved in pursuing this course of treatment in South Africa; government opposition, stigmas and misconceptions around this kind of approach as well as the overwhelming cost of this medication seemed to make the dream impossible.

Today, Monique continues to be one of the foremost advocates for the rights of drug-using populations, and actively demonstrates her philosophy of care alongside the rest of the leadership team at the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Center. Core to the work that she does at Bellhaven is the belief that drug use and drug users actively shape the urban fabric and engaging with the dynamics of addiction and the journeys of drug users is key to building better, more inclusive and more empowering cities. ■



IMAGE BY MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: Monique Marks standing outside the bellhaven harm re-

Bellville Clinic in a Container wins International Downtown Award

[CAPE TOWN]

The Greater Tygerberg Partnership (GTP)) has been awarded the Downtown Achievement Pinnacle Award for its work on the Sha’p Left healthcare hub in Bellville in Cape Town. The award by the International Downtown Association (IDA) is bestowed annually upon projects which identify improvements to urban centers by dedicated organizations around the globe. The GTP won in the category of Public Space Management and Operations.

Constructed from three repurposed shipping containers, the hub provides quality, affordable, accessible healthcare to commuters and residents in the area. It is located opposite the city’s busiest public transport interchange, the healthcare hub is sponsored by the Cipla Foundation and enabled by the City of Cape Town.

GTP Chief Executive Officer, Warren Hewitt said: “This project is an example of how the public sector can partner with the private sector to achieve shared goals. By delivering the Sha’p Left Nursing Hub in partnership with the City of Cape Town, we were able to put Cape Town, and Bellville, on the map in terms of global best practice in urban management. We are very pleased with this award and will continue to strive for the same levels of excellence, in partnership with the City and other stakeholders in the future.”

The centre is run by Sister Mandiswa Swart, a nurse who has taken up the challenge of managing the hub and to keep operating even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The centre offers primary health care, diagnostic testing, eye care and a chronic medicine dispensary unit.

The healthcare hub was opened formally in November 2019 by Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Dan Plato. “This is an acknowledgement that our commitment to finding innovative ways to improve lives for all Capetonians is on the right track.

We will continue in our quest to enhance the urban environment to achieve that goal. We all have a role to play for the love of our people, said the City’s Mayoral Committee Member for Spatial Planning and Environment, Alderman Marian Nieuwoudt. CEO of Cipla South Africa, Paul Miller, said: “This international award is a clear demonstration that healthcare and urban development go hand in hand.

The Sha’p Left healthcare hub in Bellville is an example of how innovative thinking and partnerships can help to ensure that people have convenient access to affordable, accessible healthcare.”

“The Greater Tygerberg Partnership’s innovative project received the IDA Pinnacle Award for setting the new standard for improving cities worldwide,” said David Downey, IDA President and CEO. **“The Sha’p Left Nursing Hub in Bellville has made an impact on the environment and the people who live, work and play in the community, and also demonstrates the continued commitment to champion livable, vital and thriving urban centres.”** ■

Skate Park on City land bridges neighbourhood divides



IMAGE BY LAWDEN HOLMES: The skate park is available for events bringing together all members of the Hout Bay community.

[CAPE TOWN]

The 925sqm Eyethu Hout Bay Skate Park is a community drive and co-designed public space situated in Hout Bay at the centre of three divided neighbourhoods. However the youth in all these neighbourhoods share a love for skateboarding. The park offers a unique opportunity for social integration amongst its diverse user groups, offering after-school training programmes and an emphasis on socialising and spectatorship. It was developed over time overcoming the complexity of privately developing a public recreation space on City-owned land. ■

Meet your local hero: Zanele Zandile Ndlovu

[JOHANNESBURG]

Zanele Zandile Ndlovu was born in 1973, Soweto. She moved to Bramfischerville 16 years ago to live with her sister, a beneficiary of state subsidised housing. She is a mother of two and grandmother to four. mme’Zanele does not have an easy life, she has been unemployed for approximately 17 years, her eldest son is a drug addict and is living with HIV. Her day-to-day life mirrors that of the majority of South Africans, mme’Zanele lives within the context of poverty. Unlike those who suffer in silence, she is an advocate for justice in her community. Much of her time is spent finding creative ways to survive and uplift others with as little as possible. It is with this undying spirit that she began a backyard vegetable garden in 2019. After months of producing only enough vegetables to feed her family, she realised that her backyard garden was too small to sustain them or contribute to the welfare of the community. With limited resources, she identified the nearby open field which is largely an informal dumping site, as the ideal space for a community garden. Mme’Zanele rallied together eight other women in the same socio-economic predicament as herself for the Thata Ezakho Women Gardening Project. Together, they cleared the rubbish that had over-run the piece of land, gathered wooden posts and enclosed about 450 square metres for the Project.

Dumping site transformed into community garden by local heros

[JOHANNESBURG]

In Braamfischerville, Johannesburg a local resident Zanele Zandile Ndlovu has come together with 8 other women to form the Thata’Ezakho Women Gardening Project. Having realised her backyard garden was not sufficient to sustain her family or contribute to the welfare of the community she identified a nearby open field which was largely an informal dumping site. Each member of the garden is allocated a strip of land to grow vegetables and crops and together they share gardening tools, seeds and skills. While some of the women are eager to generate an income from this initiative, most of what is harvested is consumed by their individual households. In addition, this project contributes to local job creation by employing the youth to help with the garden. The field was an ideal site for a community garden and the women soon got to work clearing the rubbish and installing wooden posts to enclose the approximately 450 square metres. The women soon discovered that the soil there was not ideal for cultivation, but with the help of young men battling drug addiction, they set aside the second half of 2020 to dig out the layers of waste that had accumulated over the years. Each member of the garden is allocated a strip of land to grow vegetables and crops and together

“This project makes me feel proud of my city because it displays and advocates for active citizenship. The women identified issues in their community and instantly sought to alleviate them. This is largely done without government collaboration yet the initiative is thriving.”

Four months after the garden was started, the Solidarity Fund approached the women to support their project with vouchers of R2000 each. ■



IMAGE BY THAT’A EZAKHO GARDENING PROJECT: Joy and smiles which comes with working with the land, for and with the community

The women soon discovered that the soil there was less than ideal for cultivation, but this did not deter the determined group. With the help of young men battling drug addiction, they set aside the last half of 2020 to dig out the layers of waste that had accumulated over the years. Four months after the garden was started, the Solidarity Fund approached the women to support their project with vouchers of R2000 each. Zanele’s vision for the project is to involve the troubled youth by creating a soup kitchen. She believes that nurturing them as they find sobriety can achieve sustainable change. ■

Langa Bicycle Hub has big hopes of improving cycling for all



IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: The bicycle hub is currently running out of a container. Mzikhona has plans to upgrade the container and is currently under discussion with the city regarding leasing other available land.

[CAPE TOWN]

When one thinks of the Cape Town cycling scene, Langa - one of the oldest townships in South Africa - might not be the first place that comes to mind. However, Mzikhona Mgedle is on a mission to change that. Mgedle is the founder and director of the Langa Bicycle Hub and is working to create a community of cyclists in Langa. But more than that, he is creating a community of care by using cycling as a means of improved service delivery and community development.

Mgedle, or “Mzi” as he is affectionately known, founded the Langa Bicycle Hub in 2020 at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a short space of time he has managed to create a hub which provides a number of bike centred services including delivering medicines and food parcels to housebound patients (in partnership with St John’s NPO), bike and wheelchair repairs, bike rentals, mentorship and skills training for youth, and a community

centre of sorts where local youth can go to study, work, relax and have fun.

The hub aims to be a home for all cycling needs. By increasing access to bicycles, Mgedle is helping to make the citizens of Langa more independently mobile and connected to the space around them, as well as providing a space for exercise and recreation.

Mgedle’s “just do it” attitude and his deep understanding of community dynamics have been key ingredients for his success thus far. Mgedle says of the hub, “We have created a community of care,” and the evidence in support of that is clear when one visits the space.

The vision is for the hub to one day be a profitable social enterprise, but as of now a lot of the work put in by Mgedle and his partners is done at their own expense. Thulani, one such partner, makes a living outside of the hub by working for the Red Cross Children’s Hospital’s Child Safety Programme.

Prior to the formation of the hub, Mgedle was involved with the Langa Safety Patrol, the Langa Community Action Network (CAN) and Open Streets Cape Town.

Mgedle has faced numerous challenges and obstacles. He has made many applications through the formal bureaucratic channels in order to formally set up the hub. While this has been a slow and painstaking process, it has not diminished his enthusiasm. Mgedle identified a well-located space as part of a local playground and adjacent to a school which had long been unused and largely neglected. There he placed a 10m2 container, out of which the hub now operates.

Another ingredient of Mgedle’s success is his connection to the community. Mzikona originally hails from the Eastern Cape but he has called Langa home for many years.

“Those relationships to me are so crucial. To one, understand the ecosystem and the landscape and two, to have the credibility that one needs.” says Marcela Guerrero Casas, former head of Open Streets Cape Town **“We can learn so much from people who are doing stuff in their own neighbourhoods...because they understand their environment so well...it is so much more authentic and effective at the end of the day.”**

Mgedle has demonstrated that effective community development action can and should centre the residents of the area in which development is meant to take place. He has also transformed the role of the bicycle. In Mgedle’s hands, the bicycle is a means of service delivery, community building, safety upgrading, recreation, exercise and of course, a means of transport. ■



IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage showing the partners involved in the Langa Bicycle Hub

Q&A with Mzikhona Mgedle

26-year-old Langa bicycle activist Mzikhona “Mzi” Mgedle has big hopes for his Bicycle Hub



OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage celebrating the Langa Bicycle Hub champion - Mzikhona Mgedle



IMAGE BY MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: Mzikhona Mgedle walks in the streets of Langa with his bicycle. He is advocating for safer road conditions for cyclists in his neighborhood.

Tell us about your life before moving to Cape Town

MM: So, originally I’m from the Eastern Cape, I come from a disadvantaged community in the rural areas. I was brought to this province [the Western Cape] by my cousin without planning it. When I came here I didn’t know anything. I worked at Pink Carwash to pay for my school uniform because I was in grade 10. It was a tough beginning for me in Cape Town. I didn’t see how Cape Town was divided [before coming]. After school I did a marketing course at NorthLink college. It was then I got involved in Open Streets in a Langa open meeting run by them. And then I registered as a volunteer on the day. That’s when I started to fall in love with public space.

Where does your love of bikes come from?

MM: My first bike was donated by the former managing director of Open Streets. I just tried a bike and loved it. I didn’t have any bikes in my childhood.

What is your aim with the hub?

MM: I’m trying to run a business in a socially innovative way which belongs to the people.

My aim is to normalise the use of bicycles as a form of transport in roads in townships. To provide income for people in Langa and to provide the first-of-its-kind hub in Langa. I would particularly like to see more women and children on bicycles.

Can you describe the hub for us?

MM: We are supporting community kitchens in our community by delivering food with bicycles for free. All of this work we are doing with a kind heart and also with a passion for bicycles. At the start of COVID we approached St John’s clinic about delivering medication to bedridden persons in Langa. There is also the Bicycle Brigade checking on kids whose bikes may not be safe and who did all the delivery services.to provide the first of its kind hub in Langa. I would particularly like to see more women and children on bicycles.

What is your vision for the hub?

MM: The hub will be a cycling home for all in our community and do bicycle repairs including e-bicycles for local enterprise. I really want to grow it to a stage where it can run itself. ■

Stories of tenacity and transformation in South Africa's communities



RASHIQ FATAAR

Director

Our Future Cities

It would have been more convenient if urban and community development processes were linear, stable and predictable. But from the Good Hood stories, we learnt how these processes often include negotiation, sacrifice, agility, active partnership and collaboration. In Cape Town (Langa), Johannesburg, Gqebera, and Durban, we learned the power of collaborative action, networks of connection, successes, losses, tenacity, and persistence.

From a distance, it seems almost difficult to pull out the individual lessons from each project that we can apply elsewhere across different urban contexts. But a common thread between the projects is the digging through and unpacking of not only processes and policies, but uncovering and celebrating the kind of people needed to spur tangible change, their leadership skills, and their resilience.

Timing and the importance of the government-NGO interface come to mind when I think about the journey of Monique, Michael, Belinda and the many parts which came together to ignite the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre in Durban. The Harm Reduction Centre illustrates an important collaborative partnership, where government objectives align with the NGO sector's goals at the right time. Key to the success of this project was the timing of the pandemic and the massive need from the vulnerable homeless community in Durban, some of whom are dependent on substances, and who were in desperate need of shelter and psychosocial support during the

Belhaven's series of victories was also in part due to the partnership of the eThekweni metro government and with particular support from the former Deputy Mayor. The South African Police Force in Durban also bought into the project, and became sensitive to the kinds of struggles that drug users face on a daily basis.

The project has become more than just a way to engage with drug addiction. It has become a shared community space and active placemaking project. A space of socialisation. A recreational space. A space open to all within the community. The centre has indirectly, and organically, become an example of placemaking, spurred by social action.

The limitless energy and persistence in Durban must surely have made its way to Cape Town on a container ship because of the youthful energy of Mzikohna Mgedle, a local Langa resident who is promoting a vibrant cycling culture, and nurturing the future generations by using cycling as an empowerment tool. Mzi demonstrates a youthful optimism, a commitment to bringing about positive change in his community, and an unjaded view of cycling that has allowed him to take action without the support from City government or the business sector. He has also single-handedly taken the responsibility for marketing, promotion and advocacy strategies to strengthen his small enterprise.

The need for a national movement and agenda to improve walking and cycling becomes even more apparent on visits to Tshwane and Joburg. The local government in Tshwane highlights a commitment to partnerships and international networks such as the C40. These relationships have enabled the City to capitalize on policy action and transfer policy plans into tangible non-motorised transport outputs - including the redevelopment of Solomon Mahlangu Drive in Mamelodi to be more pedestrian friendly and also more accommodating to cyclists.

Inner City Walkable Network, a project managed in partnership with the City of Johannesburg. This project

promotes greater walkability and the integration of people and business within core inner city precincts. With their important oversight and strategic coordination skills, the Johannesburg Inner City Partnership is playing a crucial role in getting this plan off the ground and aims to leverage off existing inner city urban development and public space projects.

The Urban Agriculture (UAI) has made the business case for rooftop farming in Johannesburg. The Johannesburg Inner City Partnership (JICP) understands the value of partnership and coordination and was a key role-player in bringing various parties together to facilitate the establishment of the UAI. The JICP also further facilitated the procurement of funding from the Department of Small Business Development.

What we've learned from the UAI is that there is an invisible layer of parts holding the project together. This layer is the networks of key role-players including the JICP, the UAI farmers, Jozi Housing, and ultimately the markets and end-users where the produce from UAI rooftop farms ends up. The JICP was able to open up doors: of funding, of partnerships and of knowledge to ensure the successful incubation of the UAI. This requires immense expertise and leadership skills, which we highly commend.

Our time in Helenvale was a humbling experience. The case of Helenvale is not a romantic story. But it does show the power of humility. One of the lessons that came through is that partnerships need not be static. Also, community development engagement and public participation are not linear processes. These processes include lots of lobbying, lots of legwork and negotiation, and relies on building trust with the local communities.

We learnt how the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) walked the tightrope between government agency and community activists. Helenvale therefore reveals how a government agency can be nimble,

can respond, and adjust in the process of pivoting. Overall, we highlight the humanity of the project and its emphasis on soft infrastructure and building soft skills. In this way, the community can be managed but also empowered.

It is vital to continue sharing and promoting inspiring stories of urban champions steering impactful projects, and how positive change can be facilitated through small actions at the local scale. We have learnt of the immense intricacies, complexities and challenges of these Good Hood Stories, but also of their potential, their capacity to inspire, and their tangible positive impacts at the community level. In telling and documenting these stories, we acknowledge and celebrate the richness in the research process.

The question remains how to partner with the government in a manner that provides mutual benefits and in pursuit of the common public good. All of the Good Hood Stories underscore the value of partnerships and a commitment to affect social and economic change. We would love to see all of these projects be replicated in other South African cities while responding to context-specific conditions. If local action and leadership is matched with the appropriate government and, where appropriate, private sector support, it can catalyse a community action, ensuring sustainable and successful precedents for future urban development projects. ■

University of Venda and Municipality Collaborate to Empower Future City Planners

[CITY OF EKURHULENI/THOHOYANDOU]

The University of Venda (UNIVEN), unlike most other planning schools, is located in a predominantly rural setting (Thohoyandou, Limpopo) far from any large cities. To ensure students gain exposure and experience with city planning in an urban context, the University has collaborated with the City of Ekurhuleni (CoE).

Students gain a practical insight into theory as 1 week of the semester if the 3rd Year Bachelor of Urban & Regional Planning (B.URP) takes place in the urbanised metropolitan area, of the City of Ekurhuleni.

The first few days are spent orientating the students to the City and the planning policy environment. There is then a focus on a particular project area which involves a detailed site visit and surveys with the community. Officials and lecturers then review students proposals for their precinct. Later in the year a full written document is submitted for final assessment by their lecturers.

The collaboration has ensured that the University’s planning programme is now accredited by the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN), the statutory body for planners in South Africa. Upon graduating with the planning degree and gaining the necessary experience, graduates will be able to register as Professional Planners with SACPLAN.

This collaboration is mutually beneficial. The University has also offered to assist the City’s registered planners to meet certain requirements of the Continued Professional Development (CPD) program of SACPLAN.

“Start small and build a sound foundation for your initiative, obtain support from key role-players and structure your initiative in a manner that will result in win-win benefits for all parties involved.” says Matin Bekker. ■

Sea Point Library Garden brings residents together



IMAGES BY MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: TOP: Some children playing on the newly painted mural; BOTTOM: The Sea Point and Gugulethu CANs have collaborated to share plants, resources and knowledge. The result has been an impressive food garden.

Q&A with Warren Hewitt



Warren Hewitt
CEO, Greater Tygerburg Partnership
Cape Town

What are two major lessons learned through the Sha’p Left healthcare hub?

WH: Partnership is critical to progress.

Which challenges did you face working with diverse partners?

WH: Relationships between siloed departments can be a challenge, and the ability to navigate and connect the various relationships was key to unlocking this project.

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

WH: Never underestimate the importance of being able to move in the spaces between relationships and stakeholders. The GTP plays an important role as a connector and facilitator and it is this role that helped to make this project a reality. And finally, maintain a strong hold on the vision and find as many routes through your ecosystem to help drive the vision to become a reality. ■



IMAGE BY WARREN HEWITT: A patient receiving an eye test, one of the many services on offer at the the Sha’p Left healthcare hub in Bellville

R6 million for safer school walking routes in Helenvale

[GQEBERHA]

Helenvale in Gqeberha has one of the highest levels of gang activity in the Eastern Cape, and young children walking home from school are often caught in the crossfire when gang violence occurs.

To ensure a safer way home, the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MDA) launched its Safe Home-To-School routes through its Helenvale Safety and Peace Through Urban Upgrading (SPUU) initiative.

Through research and a masterplan developed as far back as 2014, the MBDA identified three main routes for intervention based on which were most used and most likely to be affected by gang violence.

The R6 million allocated to the new routes form part of a myriad of other SPUU built environment and psycho-social programmes to tackle major challenges in the area. Some of these challenges include unsafe schools, domestic violence, youth unemployment, waste management and a lack of career opportunities and skills.

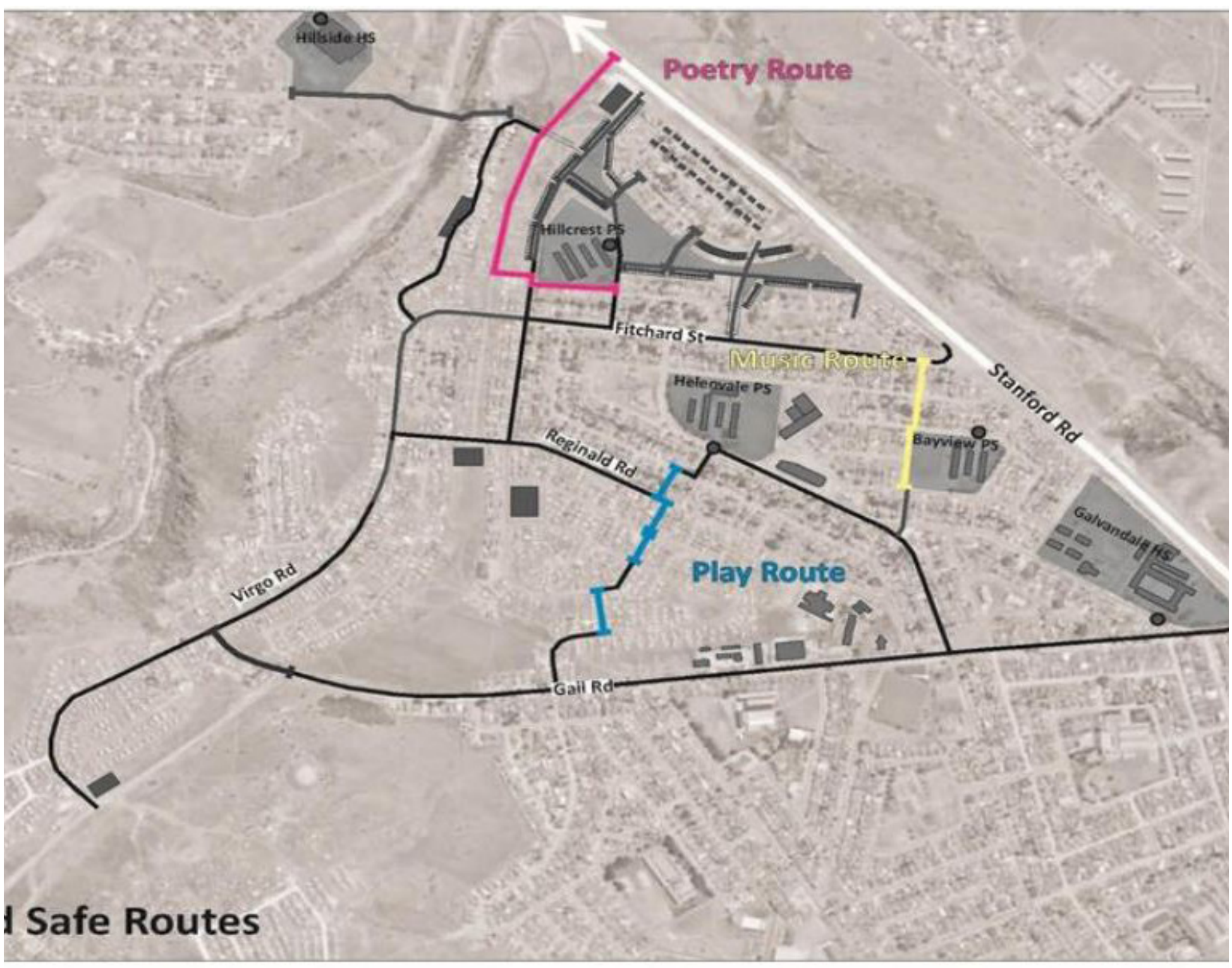
While the project was paused in 2017 due to gang intimidation and threats, the construction of the routes are well underway currently, with the majority of the project complete.

“The agency is fairly small...but it’s got a lot of agility to do things a lot quicker than a municipality can typically do. It’s able to move a lot faster and conclude a lot more partnerships with different entities and community organisations that the municipality struggles to do,” explains Debbie Hendricks, Operations Executive at the MBDA.

The routes were designed to prioritise and encourage use by children and incorporate fun themes like play, music and poetry. Through the community engagement process, some Helenvale residents created mosaics which were used to help decorate the routes and the poetry used to decorate the route was authored by local children.

The project brings together volunteers, parents and SMMEs in innovative ways and relies on community cooperation to keep these routes and spaces safe for children.

For more information visit www.mbda.co.za ■



TOP: IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage celebrating the Helenvale SPUU project champions - Debbie Hendricks and George Jerry; LEFT: IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: Children sliding down the walkways with make-shift toys. RIGHT: IMAGE BY MBDA: A plan showing the proposed safer school routes which are heading towards completion



OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage showing the partners involved in the Helenvale SPUU

Helenvale SPUU Project Champion: George Eldridge Jerry

[GQEBERHA]

George Eldridge Jerry is a lifetime community activist and social facilitator who has been working with the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) for over eight years with a focus on the Helenvale Safety and Peace through Urban Upgrading (SPUU) project. Throughout that time his main goal has been to create a space where the voices and activism of the people of Helenvale can be valued and supported. A space that the people themselves see as valuable and that can serve as a catalyst for change.

For Jerry, developing the physical space is useful but it is not the most essential element of community building and social development. He sees the community - and their relationships with each other and with institutions of power - as the key element to the work of the MBDA and the Helenvale SPUU.

“So whatever we are doing in psycho-social [work] was identified by the community. Understanding, in the bigger picture, you need to deal with the social ills if you want to

Jerry sees himself as a servant to the people. And he values all citizens of Helenvale as community members, even those who are members of gangs. When speaking on the gang violence that is so prolific in the are he says,

“We are not here to stop gang violence, that’s the job of the police. Through our programmes we hope that gang members or young people would be enticed to participate in the programmes. So it’s kind of a more indirect approach. They [gang members] are not separate from the Helenvale community. Having faith in the people and having trust in the process is for me key.”

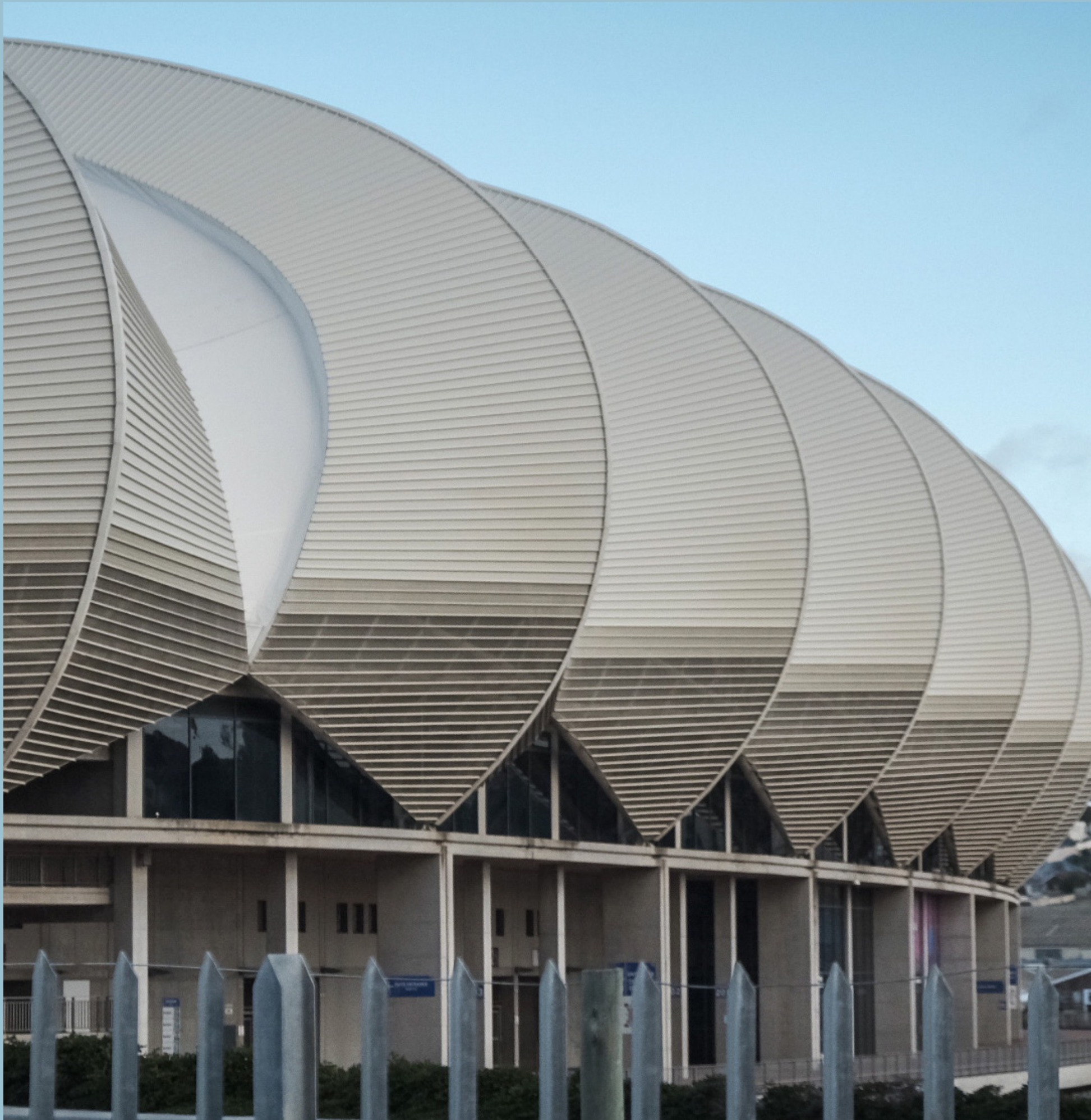
Jerry played a key role in establishing the Helenvale Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) (later the Helenvale Development Forum (HDF)). The forum was created as a non-political, community representative forum. It exemplified the social contract process which characterises the work of the Helenvale SPUU and helps bridge the gap between the community and the MBDA allowing for clear communication between two groups.



IMAGE BY MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: Mr Jerry talks us through the ins and outs of being a social facilitator for the Helenvale SPUU programme

The creation of a community representative forum is one of the key learnings identified by the SPUU and an idea which they feel could and should be implemented elsewhere. Jerry notes that this might not look the same everywhere saying, “as a social facilitator you need to be able to adapt to the social conditions that prevail.”

George Jerry is ultimately a man who places the community and the centre of all his work. He makes sure to treat all community members equally, as complex, full human beings who should be given the opportunity to be active participants in the development and running of their area.



LEFT: IMAGES BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: The multi-purpose hall at the Helenvale Resource Center. RIGHT: MATTHEW GRIFFITHS: The Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium, where community stakeholder engagement meetings were held on neutral territory when the project was threatened to be ground to a halt as a result of gang tensions.

Transforming Joburg’s inner-city one rooftop farm at a time

Thanks to the JICP, Joburg’s inner-city rooftops have become sites of sustainability and transformation

[JOHANNESBURG]

In the heart of Johannesburg’s inner-city neighbourhoods, the Urban Agriculture Initiative (UAI) has transformed 11 rooftop spaces into a network of productive farms with the aim of empowering and elevating budding businesspeople while actively addressing food insecurity.

In neighbourhoods like Hillbrow, Doornfontein and Braamfontein these farms have been the brainchild of the Johannesburg Inner City Partnership (JICP). The JICP works to facilitate growth within the city through collaborating with local government, the private sector and other city stakeholders. In partnership with groups like Wouldn’t It Be Cool (WIBC), who nurture and train young entrepreneurs, property management companies like Afhco, and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), who provide support with the training and start-up costs for these farms, amongst others, the JICP has sparked new ways to innovate with our city spaces, and has transformed underutilised areas into zones that shift this city towards more sustainable living.

Prior to this initiative, urban agriculture projects in Johannesburg had largely been experienced as unsustainable and unprofitable and were not understood as a feasible long-term endeavour. The JICP aimed to shift this by creating a role for corporate social investment within urban agriculture, and adopting innovation technology and financial sustainability into its business model in order to achieve what is referred to as “the triple bottom line” in sustainability: economic empowerment, social empowerment and financial sustainability.

While the UAI has established 11 hydroponic farms and a seedling farm, the goal is to have 80 farms by the year 2025. This kind of hydroponic, intensive farming not only saves enormously on water, but also makes important strides towards more sustainable, future-orientated farming practices. Small-scale food security solutions like this bring affordable, healthy, and locally and ethically grown produce to the city, and demonstrate that small businesses are able to take the lead in sustainable urban living.

Each of the UAI’s farms are run by young, independent business owners who have graduated through the WIBC programme. The partnerships with WIBC and the DSBD, are driving the creation of future-focused agricultural jobs in the city, and are equipping young people with the skills to grow this innovative farming practice even further.

The UAI is structured so that all produce from its independent farms is packaged and distributed from one central kitchen, which helps to boost market accessibility and customer relationships. This approach allows these smaller-scale farms to sell to large retailers and restaurants and assists them to transport produce more conveniently. The Urban Agriculture Initiative hopes to continue expanding their number of rooftop farms, extending their work into the food processing industry, and identifying existing farming enterprises that they can support with skills, market accessibility or other agricultural resources.

One of the fundamental principles that carries throughout its many projects across the city is the importance

of recognising people, movements and actions that are already making a difference, and partnering with these initiatives to further extend their efficacy. As David van Niekerk, CEO of JICP explains, **“The most important thing is relationships - get government, the city and your property owners together and start talking about it”**.

The involvement and leadership of an entity like the JICP, which over the years has built up strong relationships within multiple different branches of government, the private sector, the nonprofit sector and the broader Johannesburg community, means that this enterprise is able to draw on the insights of many different stakeholders when charting its course forward. The involvement of these varied perspectives from the project’s conception also allows the initiative to impact the city space and population in many different ways, moving beyond simply a food-focused initiative to one which incorporates small business development, urban regeneration, carbon emission reduction, environmental sustainability and so much more. ■



IMAGES BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: LEFT: The Hydroponic set up at one of the 11 roof top farms in the inner city of Johannesburg. RIGHT: Makgole Lekgau, the farm manager who oversees the eight farmers working on the roof top farms

Q&A with Brendon Marten

How young farmers and property owners are joining forces in Joburg's inner-city



Brendon Marten
Project manager, UAI
Johannesburg

How did the relationships between property owners and farmers develop?

BM: The Johannesburg Inner City Partnership (JICP)'s strong existing relationships and history with the Johannesburg Property Owners' Association meant that the UAI was able to communicate the necessary specifications for rooftop gardens to this group, and then the property owners came forward and offered buildings that fit those specifications. These spaces were offered free of charge, with the only costs being the use of the building's utilities. Property owners recognised this as an initiative that would revitalise the city, and for many whose buildings serve low-income communities, the prospect of nearby job opportunities for their tenants was seen as a large benefit.

Once suitable properties had been identified, what were the next steps?

BM: The UAI then signs a lease agreement with the property owner, and sets up the necessary infrastructure on the building rooftop so that farming can begin.

How are the UAI farmers first identified?

BM: Through working with partners like Harambe, who work to help individuals with career development, the UAI identifies individuals who have an interest in working in the agricultural sector, and brings them on to learn more about rooftop farming.

What does the training and development of farmers entail?

BM: Young business people work across multiple different UAI farms for a year, gaining experience, and learning from their fellow farmers. Once they have proven themselves to be reliable and dedicated, the UAI contracts them and their new business to run one of the rooftop farms. Over the next 2-3 years the UAI supports the new business with seedlings, distribution and marketing to help the business build its reputation. Once the business has built up a strong track record of financial feasibility, the business becomes independent from the UAI incubator. With the accumulated finance from their first few years of farming, the farmer is now able to conceptualise, design, set up and operate their own, entirely independent, facility. They then have the choice to continue to access the market relationships that the UAI has built and sell their produce under this banner, or to build their brand independently.

How does the UAI support farmers to get their produce to market?

BM: Both through the programme's agro-processing agency, who also work on marketing and engagement with produce retailers, and through actually taking produce through the city and visiting restaurants and retailers to deliver samples and build connections. The UAI also supports their agro-processing facility - AFGRI, through providing seedlings for their sustainable food security programme. ■



IMAGE BY OUR FUTURE CITIES: Collage celebrating the Urban Agriculture Initiative

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Durban

Helenvale

Langa

Tshwane and mamelodi

Braamfontein, hillbrown and the johannesburg inner city

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