



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Councillor Jack Sekwaila

MMC: Environment and Infrastructure Services

MMC MEDIA STATEMENT

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City of Johannesburg to Host Clean Air Week and Launch Breath Cities Initiative

The Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) of the Environment and Infrastructure Service Department, Cllr Jack Sekwaila, is proud to announce the upcoming Clean Air Week, scheduled from 2nd to 6th September 2024. This annual awareness campaign aims to combat air pollution and promote cleaner air for all.

The Environment and Infrastructure Services Department has organised a series of activities to engage the community and promote cleaner air. Key events include a community activation, school activations, and a visit to an Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Station by the MMC for Environment and Infrastructure Services Department, Cllr. Jack Sekwaila. These activations will culminate in the main celebration, which is the commemoration of the International Day for Clean Air for Blue Skies.

Complementary to the Clean Air Week events and the celebration of International Day for Clean Air for Blue Skies, the Department of Environment and Infrastructure Service will launch the Breath Cities Johannesburg initiative on the 6th of September 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Brixton Multi-purpose Centre.

Breath Cities is an innovative programme developed by the Clean Air Fund, C40 Cities, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, aimed at improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing public health in urban areas worldwide. Launched in June 2023 by Michael R. Bloomberg, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions, and Mayor Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London and Co-Chair of C40 Cities, the initiative aims to dismantle barriers to action and ensure that communities have access to clean air.

Breath Cities integrates air quality data, community involvement, and leadership from city officials to achieve a 30% reduction in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions across participating cities by 2030. This effort is projected to prevent 39,000 premature deaths and eliminate 284 megatons of CO₂e emissions. Currently, Breath Cities programs are active in eleven cities globally, including Accra, Brussels, Jakarta, Johannesburg, London, Milan, Nairobi, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Sofia, and Warsaw.

Furthermore, as the first Breath City in South Africa, the City of Johannesburg acknowledges this as an opportunity to work with its stakeholders to improve air quality for all and demonstrate leadership in action on the improvement of air quality.

Cllr Jack Sekwaila emphasised the crucial importance of clean air for public health and daily life. "Air pollution remains the foremost environmental risk to human health and a significant preventable cause of death and disease globally." He further highlighted that vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and the elderly, bear a disproportionately heavy burden of exposure, and that ecosystems are also further impacted by the impacts of air pollution. He further stated that it is crucial to maintain the health and livelihoods of all Joburg citizens by ensuring clean air.

"We're excited to welcome Johannesburg to Breath Cities and to work with the city to ensure cleaner, healthier air for all," said Jaime Pumarejo, Executive Director of Breath Cities. "By joining our global initiative, Johannesburg has taken their place alongside ambitious cities from around the world, from London to Jakarta, who are taking action to cut air pollution. We aim to save lives and address the climate emergency by collaborating with the City of Joburg and local communities."

The City has identified several projects under the Breath Cities initiative, including a source apportionment study to understand air pollution drivers, expanded awareness campaigns, stakeholder engagement, policy commitments targeting specific emission sources, and enhancements to air quality monitoring.

The city invites all community members and stakeholders to participate in Clean Air Week events. During this week, everyone is encouraged to participate in various activities to promote the fight against poor air quality and to achieve the goal of clean air.

For more information on Clean Air Week and the Breath Cities Johannesburg initiative, please contact the Environment and Infrastructure Services Department.

Issued by the City of Johannesburg

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Issued by the Office of the MMC, Cllr Jack Sekwaila
