



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG, CLLR DADA MORERO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE ALEXANDRA AUTOMOTIVE HUB, 22 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
MMC for Economic Development, Cllr Nomoya Mnisi,
The leadership of the Automotive Industry Development Centre and the Gauteng Growth and Development Agency,
Ward Councillors and leaders of Greater Alexandra,
Members of the media,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good morning.

Today is not merely a symbolic ceremony. It is a testament to our commitment to rebuild trust between government and residents. Much has been written about this project. In fact, some even wrote its obituary. When the media approached the City, we were open about the challenges the Alexandra Automotive Hub faced, and today we stand here because those challenges did not have the final word. Let me remind the community of Alexandra. Alex is resilient by nature. It is a township that has always survived adversity. It rises when things fall apart, rebuilds when systems fail, and restores hope where others see despair.

Alex has always found a way to fix what was broken, and that spirit remains its greatest strength. For generations, Alex has kept Johannesburg moving. The delivery vans that stock our shops, the taxis that carry our workers, the family car that takes a child to school: many of them have passed through the hands of a mechanic in this township. Yet for too long, these skills lived on the pavement, in the backyard and under a tree. The people of Alexandra earned a living but didn't build wealth. They served the city, but the city did not serve them back as it should have.

Today, launching this Hub begins to change that. The backyard mechanic gets a workshop, a certificate, a customer base and a seat in the automotive value chain. Today, we officially open the Alexandra Automotive Hub.

Programme Director, Joburg Growth and Development Strategy 2040 sets out the city we are building: an inclusive, job-intensive, resilient and competitive economy that harnesses the potential of every resident. Strategies are judged not by the elegance of their words, but by what they change on the ground. This Hub is the GDS 2040 with its sleeves rolled up. It speaks about the economic outcome of the GDS: growth that creates jobs and includes those left out. It speaks to the quality-of-life outcome, because a young person in Alex who learns a trade here, earns a wage here, and supports a family here has a future.

It speaks to the liveable city outcome, as we turn a strategic piece of land between Alexandra, Marlboro and Wynberg into productive economic infrastructure, close to the M1, close to Sandton and close to the market. And it speaks to the governance outcome: a City that plans, builds, finishes and opens what it promised. I will be frank with you. This project has taken longer than it should have. The people of Alex have waited, and we do not hide from that. But we are here today because this administration chose to finish the job rather than make another announcement.

Let me tell you what stands behind me. The Hub was developed by the Johannesburg Development Agency of the City of Johannesburg. The facility offers dedicated workshops, wash bays, offices and shared facilities for small automotive businesses. Its anchor tenant is the Automotive Industry Development Centre. The AIDC brings what our entrepreneurs have long been denied: technical training, accreditation, business support, and links to major industry players. Here, established automotive businesses from Alex and Marlboro will be paired with emerging operators, so that experience is passed on and nobody is left at the gate.

We have also been clear that this programme must open its doors to women, to young people and to persons with disabilities. This is not just a building. It is a ladder. A mechanic who enters as an informal operator should leave as a registered, compliant and certified business that can service a fleet, bid for a government tender or supply a dealership. Ladies and gentlemen, there is a habit in our country of speaking about the township economy as if it were a side economy, a survival economy, something small. As leaders entrusted with serving our people, we must reject that view.

The township economy is where most of our people work, buy and sell. It is where a significant share of household income moves every day. When we strengthen it, we strengthen Johannesburg. Our task is not to replace the township entrepreneur with outside companies. Our task is to formalise, to equip and to connect. That means four things, and this Hub does all four. It provides space through safe, serviced, and affordable premises with proper leases, not on the side of the road. It provides skills through training and certification, so that quality can be proven and trusted. It provides access to markets by linking tenants to insurers, fleet owners, dealerships, parts suppliers and City procurement. It also opens access to finance, because a formal business with a lease and a track record can approach a bank or development funder. Let me add that as the

automotive industry moves towards new energy vehicles, we want Alex's mechanics to move with it, not be left behind. We must teach the skills of the future here in the township, not only in the suburbs. Allow me now to speak directly to business. At our last Council meeting, we adopted an Economic Growth Strategy anchored on high-growth sectors including financial services, manufacturing and industrialisation, and, importantly, the township economy.

The strategy is modelled on the national industrialisation strategy adopted by Cabinet and led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. The City has done its part. We have provided the land, the infrastructure and the management model. We have brought in the AIDC. But no city builds an economy with public money alone. So today I extend an open invitation. To the vehicle manufacturers and dealer groups: use this Hub for your supplier and enterprise development programmes. Train your technicians here. Contract the businesses here.

To the insurers and fleet owners: bring your repair work to accredited township workshops. Quality, convenience and competitive pricing are right here. To the parts distributors: establish supply partnerships and trade counters that serve these tenants. To the banks and development finance institutions: design products for these entrepreneurs. A lease at a City-owned facility, with AIDC support behind it, is a lower risk than you may think. To the taxi industry, which moves the majority of our commuters, and in this Transport Month: let the Alexandra Automotive Hub service the fleets that serve Alex.

Partnership with this City will be simple, transparent and accountable. Johannesburg is open for business, and Alexandra is open for business. To the community of Alexandra: this Hub belongs to you. Protect it. Use it. Hold us accountable for it. We will report back to you on how many businesses are operating here, how many people have been trained and how many jobs have been created. To the young people: the motor industry is not only about fixing cars. It is about diagnostics, electronics, logistics, sales and business management. Come through these gates and learn. A child of Alex can build the future of this industry.

To the tenants: you carry our hopes. Run your business with pride and excellence, so that every customer leaves saying the best service in Johannesburg is found in Alex. Alexandra has given this city and this country so much. Its streets are shaped by leaders who went on to build our democracy. Its people have endured overcrowding, neglect, and hardship, and still rise every morning to work. The least we owe Alex is an economy worthy of its people. This Hub is one step. Others will follow, in Alex and in every township of Johannesburg, because the GDS 2040 vision of an inclusive, world-class African city will only be true when it is true in Alexandra. It is now my honour and privilege to declare the Alexandra Automotive Hub officially open. Thank you.