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Media Statement

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JOBURG CELEBRATES EXPANSION OF BREATHE CITIES AS BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES COMMITS \$45 MILLION TO IMPROVE URBAN AIR QUALITY WORLDWIDE

The City of Johannesburg welcomes Bloomberg Philanthropies' announcement of a \$45 million investment to expand Breathe Cities, a global initiative delivered with Clean Air Fund and C40 Cities to improve air quality and protect public health. For Joburg, this represents an opportunity to deepen its clean air work and share the lessons learned with the newest cities joining the initiative, Addis Ababa and Madrid.

Bloomberg Philanthropies [officially launched](#) the second phase of Breathe Cities at London Climate Action Week, on Tuesday 23 June 2026, continuing to support world-leading cities and welcoming two new cities to the initiative.

Michael R. Bloomberg, UN Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions and founder of Bloomberg L.P. and Bloomberg Philanthropies, said: "Through Breathe Cities, local leaders continue to lead the way in cleaning the air. Every step forward helps to save lives, improve public health, and reduce emissions – all while making cities better places to live and work. This new investment will build on the progress mayors are making and help spread that progress to even more cities."

Building on Bloomberg Philanthropies' global air quality work and inspired by pilot programs in London and Warsaw, Breathe Cities was launched in 2023 to help mayors turn air quality data into action. As cities around the world face growing pressure to address pollution and its impact on public health, the initiative has become a model for helping local leaders pair better data with practical solutions. Bloomberg Philanthropies' new investment will build on strong early momentum by expanding support for participating cities and strengthening peer learning among mayors and city leaders, helping proven clean air approaches reach more communities worldwide.

Since joining Breathe Cities, Joburg has seen firsthand what becomes possible when cities are equipped with the right data and technical support and engage with local communities. The expansion of the initiative to include Addis Ababa and Madrid reflects the growing global momentum behind local clean air action.

"Johannesburg is building sub-Saharan Africa's first Clean Air Zone hand in hand with our young residents," said **Cllr Dada Morero, Executive Mayor of Johannesburg**. "The energy and

leadership of our youth has been extraordinary. With Breathe Cities' support, we have the data and the will to make it happen for the future of our city.”

Joburg joined Breathe Cities in 2024 as part of a global effort to bring together data, communities and city decision-makers to cut urban air pollution. Since then, Joburg has:

1. Clean Air Week and Breathe Cities Launched in September 2024

Breathe Cities supported Clean Air Week 2024, culminating in the Breathe Cities Johannesburg launch (6 September 2024), attended by over 228 stakeholders. Delivered school competitions, tree-planting activities, and a community-based organisation workshop in Alexandra (61 participants).

2. Polling on residents' thoughts and perceptions on air quality and related health impacts

- The polling study was conducted in partnership with COJ, Breathe Cities and Seriti Institute across all seven regions of the city.
- 30 areas in the COJ were selected for this study. A total of 3000 surveys completed. 100 surveys per area.

Results showed that 92% of the respondents were concerned about air quality. Only 5% of the respondents have knowledge about air pollution initiatives in the city

3. ICCT Vehicle Emissions Testing

- In partnership with COJ, Breathe Cities, ICCT and UJ Peets an analysis of real-world vehicle exhaust emissions data from Johannesburg undertaken over 33 days between July to September 2025.
- The study collected over 250,000 real-world vehicle exhaust emission measurements from over 145,000 unique vehicles across 11 different measurement sites in Johannesburg.

4. #PauseandBreathe Campaign

- Delivered the “It’s In The Air – #PauseAndBreathe” campaign in June 2025, engaging over 200 attendees.
- This marked Johannesburg’s first major mainstream media engagement on air quality.

5. Air Aware Youth-led air pollution awareness project

- Mobilised over 1,100 young people, with 189, 000 views & impressions across Instagram and LinkedIn through the Youth@SAIIA youth-led air pollution awareness campaign project.

With the addition of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Madrid, Spain; Breathe Cities will span 16 cities across five continents, creating a growing network of mayors working to reduce pollution and improve public health. The other Breathe Cities include Accra, Ghana; Bangkok, Thailand; Bogotá, Colombia; Brussels, Belgium; Jakarta, Indonesia; Johannesburg, South Africa; London, England; Mexico City, Mexico; Milan, Italy; Nairobi, Kenya; Paris, France; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sofia, Bulgaria; and Warsaw, Poland.

“Air pollution damages our health from before we take our first breath until our last and every child deserves to grow up breathing clean air. This funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies allows us to go further: reaching more communities and cities, supporting more local partners and giving more people the tools to act on clean air in their own neighbourhoods,” **said Cecilia Vaca Jones,**

Executive Director of Breathe Cities. “We are grateful to Bloomberg Philanthropies for their continued commitment to the cities that are proving what's possible.”

This commitment builds on Bloomberg Philanthropies’ decades-long work to improve air quality in cities. Rooted in Mike Bloomberg’s leadership as three-term Mayor of New York City, where air pollution reached a 50-year low, Bloomberg Philanthropies supports air quality efforts at the national and local levels through data collection, technical support, public awareness and science-based solutions that help cities reduce pollution and share proven approaches with peers around the world.

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Issued by the City of Johannesburg

For all media queries, send an email to mediaqueries@joburg.org.za

About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on creating lasting change in five key areas: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg’s giving, including his foundation, corporate and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a philanthropic consultancy that advises cities around the world. In 2025, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$4.3 billion.

About Breathe Cities:

Breathe Cities is a global initiative supporting cities to clean the air and enhance public health. Delivered by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Clean Air Fund and C40 Cities, the initiative offers cities tools to take ambitious clean air action by expanding access to data and raising public awareness. Launched in 2023 by Michael R. Bloomberg, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Climate Ambition and Solutions and founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London and C40 Cities Co-Chair, Breathe Cities is accelerating action in 14 cities to improve the air 77 million people breathe.