



a world class African city



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Media Statement

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For Immediate Release

City of Joburg earns global recognition for bridging the green divide

Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) has earned prestigious international recognition after Johannesburg's *"The Greening of the City of Joburg, as part of Bridging the Green Divide"* initiative was named a *Highly Commended Finalist in the Living Green for Health and Wellbeing* category of the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) World Green City Awards 2026.

The announcement, made in Bari, Italy, places Johannesburg among the final three initiatives internationally in its category, following a rigorous assessment process.

The AIPH World Green City Awards recognise cities demonstrating how plants, nature and innovative urban greening can create healthier, greener and more climate-resilient communities.

For Johannesburg, the recognition has particular significance.

Historically, access to trees and quality green spaces reflected the spatial inequalities of the city.

Through sustained programmes such as the *Greening Soweto Legacy Project*, Johannesburg has worked to bridge this divide by planting trees, developing parks and encouraging communities to take greater ownership of their environment.

Ms. Thenjiwe Mjoli (Chairperson of the Board), Mr. Andile Jabavu, Mr. Mahlubi Madela, Ms. Winnie Sikhosana, Mr. Lizo Makele, Ms. Ziyanda Mncanca, Ms. Johanna Mapeko, Mr. Mbuso Poswa, Ms. Thandi Mlotywa, Ms. Olga Netshikulwe, Mr. Thanduxolo Mendrew (Managing Director), Mr. Luyanda Gidini (Chief Financial Officer) Ms. Ayanda Shongwe (Company Secretary)



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Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development, Cllr Thapelo Amad, said the accolade demonstrates that environmental equity must remain central to Johannesburg's development.

"Bridging the green divide means ensuring that where you live does not determine whether you have access to trees, parks and healthy public spaces. This international recognition celebrates Johannesburg's journey, but it also challenges us to do more. We must protect what previous generations planted while ensuring that future generations inherit a greener, healthier and more resilient city."

The recognition comes during Arbor Month, as JCPZ continues its drive to protect Johannesburg's existing urban forest while replenishing its ageing tree canopy.

Johannesburg's ageing street tree canopy faces increasing pressure from climate change, pests and diseases, fires, illegal removals and infrastructure requirements to accommodate increasing urbanisation.

JCPZ is therefore calling for existing trees to be incorporated into planning and development wherever possible, while encouraging residents, businesses, schools and other partners to plant and care for the next generation of trees.

JCPZ Managing Director, Thanduxolo Mendrew, said the international recognition belongs to the many employees, communities and partners who have contributed to Johannesburg's greening journey.

"Greening is not cosmetic. A tree, a park or a restored green space contributes to health, dignity, climate resilience, increased property value and the quality of life of communities. Johannesburg's experience shows what can be achieved when government, communities and partners work together with a shared commitment to creating a greener city."

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The City's greening journey has increasingly focused on eco-ownership, where communities participate in protecting and caring for green infrastructure.

Greater ownership can contribute to more sustainable public spaces, reduced vandalism and lower long-term maintenance pressures, and, as in the case of Soweto, can act as a catalyst for economic empowerment.

As a Highly Commended Finalist, Johannesburg now joins an international community of cities sharing practical knowledge and experience on how urban greening can help address climate pressures, inequality and rapid urbanisation.

JCPZ dedicates this international recognition to its employees, residents, communities, volunteers and greening partners who continue to plant, protect, and grow Johannesburg's green legacy.

Issued by:

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