



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Councillor Thapelo Amad

Member of the Mayoral Committee

Community Development

MEDIA STATEMENT

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For Immediate Release

JOHANNESBURG'S GREEN CHAMPIONS HONOURED WITH 7 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS AT THE 2026 WORLD URBAN PARKS SYMPOSIUM IN ISTANBUL, TÜRKIYE.

The Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development, Cllr Thapelo Amad, celebrates the awarding of six African regional honours in the prestigious 2026 World Urban Parks Awards Programme, to the City of Johannesburg.

The awards were bestowed to Mr Thanduxolo Mendrew, Managing Director of Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ), and five of Johannesburg's treasured green spaces.

The international programme honours excellence, innovation and leadership in urban parks and open spaces. This year, it attracted 55 nominations from five global regions, with regional juries recognising 28 winners.

Johannesburg's six recipients are:

- Distinguished Individual: Thanduxolo Mendrew, Managing Director of JCPZ.
- Large Urban Parks: The Kloofendal Nature Reserve.
- Large Urban Parks: The Zoo and Zoo Lake Precinct.
- Park Revitalisation Project: The Wilds Nature Reserve.
- Neighbourhood Parks: Beaulieu Birds Sanctuary.
- Neighbourhood Parks: The Little Falls Nature Reserve and Resort.

These honours celebrate the leadership, dedication and partnerships that sustain Johannesburg's green spaces as places of recreation, biodiversity, wellbeing and belonging.

International recognition provides a valuable benchmark against which Johannesburg can assess its parks and conservation practices. It encourages learning from other cities, strengthens accountability and helps identify approaches that can improve maintenance, restoration and community participation. For residents, its lasting value

lies in translating recognition into better cared-for, more welcoming green spaces that support health, protect nature and bring communities together.

JCPZ Managing Director, Thanduxolo Mendrew, said: “I am deeply honoured by this prestigious recognition. This award is shared with the many unsung heroes who pitch up, show up and work tirelessly to reclaim the integrity of our green spaces. At a time when these spaces are undoubtedly under threat across the globe, their commitment reminds us that protecting nature is a collective responsibility.”

MMC Amad acknowledges the exceptional contributions of volunteers including James Delaney, Dr Steven and Karien Spottiswoode, Fran Haslam, Heloise van Beerschoten-Roschlau, Kristin Kallesen, and a host of scholars, volunteers, partners, safety roleplayers and employees of JCPZ who have worked passionately to protect and preserve the city’s green lungs. Their efforts demonstrate the enduring value of public participation and partnerships in caring for Johannesburg’s natural heritage.

Appreciation is also extended to Africa’s adjudicators, landscape architects Graham Young and Pawel Gradowski, and Nokulunga Khumalo from the Johannesburg Development Agency, for their time, expertise and considerable assessment of the submissions, alongside the international adjudication panel.

The recognition renews the call for residents, businesses and community organisations to help safeguard Johannesburg’s parks and reserves, keep shared spaces clean, and report vandalism and damage to public infrastructure.

The complete list of winners across all five World Urban Parks regions accompanies this statement.

“A city’s green lungs sustain more than nature; they sustain the dignity, health and hope of its people.

These honours belong to everyone who cares for Johannesburg, and they strengthen our resolve to protect these spaces for every community and every generation,” said MMC Amad.

Issued on behalf of Cllr Thapelo Amad
Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development in the
City of Johannesburg

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Link to the 2026 World Urban Parks Awards
<https://share.google/1XUuPvJGh3u6j9k0x> and Chairperson of World Urban Parks
Statement <https://share.google/FN8C4jLGfoouszytU>

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