



Dear Residents of Johannesburg,

Johannesburg stands at a turning point and the future of our city rests on the compassion, resilience, and commitment of all its people. Residents, businesses, commuters and investors have watched for too long parts of our inner city deteriorate under the weight of crime, hijacked buildings, illegal mining, infrastructure vandalism and collapsing urban management. These challenges have not only threatened public safety but also undermined economic growth, investor confidence, and the dignity of our people.

As the City of Johannesburg, we are taking decisive action. This week, the Mayoral Committee received a comprehensive presentation outlining the City's Inner City Rejuvenation Programme and the proposed partnership with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), SAPS, JMPD and other stakeholders to restore law and order across the inner city. The intervention is aligned with President Cyril Ramaphosa's authorisation of Operation Prosper, which allows for SANDF deployment in support of SAPS to combat illegal mining and gangsterism across Gauteng and other provinces until March 2027.

For Johannesburg, this presents an opportunity to strengthen enforcement operations and reclaim communities captured by criminal syndicates. Our inner city remains the economic heart of Johannesburg. It is home to more than 400 000 residents and serves as the transport gateway for Gauteng commuters every single day. Yet years of neglect and criminality have created conditions where hijacked buildings, illegal electricity connections, drug syndicates and infrastructure vandalism thrive openly.

We cannot accept this as normal. Johannesburg cannot fail - too many lives, dreams, and futures depend on our collective success. The City is determined to lead with compassion and professionalism as we tackle these immense challenges together. The City's vision is clear: by 2040, Johannesburg's inner city must be safe, clean, inclusive, productive and sustainable. We are determined to build an inner city that residents are proud to live in, businesses are confident investing in, and visitors feel safe exploring.

Central to this work is the fight against the hijacking of buildings. These buildings have become hubs for criminal activity, illegal utility connections and dangerous living conditions. The City's strategy focuses on enforcing the law, securing affected buildings, recovering municipal revenue, rehabilitating infrastructure and integrating buildings back into the formal economy through redevelopment and affordable housing initiatives. The City is also intensifying operations against illegal mining activities in Region F hotspots such as Booyens Reserve, Cleveland, Denver and Langlaagte. Illegal mining syndicates continue to pose a serious threat to public safety and critical infrastructure, including roads, bridges, gas pipelines and electricity networks. Their activities have contributed to sinkholes, road collapses, cable theft and billions of rand in losses.

City Power alone recorded distribution losses amounting to R5.67 billion during the 2024/25 financial year, driven largely by illegal connections, vandalism and organised criminal activity. The Johannesburg Roads Agency has similarly suffered extensive damage to roads, bridges and traffic infrastructure linked to illegal mining and theft. This is why a coordinated and multi-disciplinary response is required.

The proposed SANDF support will assist with stabilisation operations in high-risk areas, including joint blitz operations, cordon-and-search activities, protection of strategic infrastructure and support for specialised SAPS units combating illegal mining and organised crime. At the same time, the City continues to drive broader urban renewal initiatives through seven priority



precincts, including the Inner City Core, Hillbrow, Yeoville, Braamfontein and the Transportation Precinct around Park Station. These interventions include enhanced urban management, public lighting restoration, informal trading regulation, improved park maintenance, infrastructure upgrades and stronger law enforcement visibility.

This work is not simply about enforcement. It is about restoring dignity, rebuilding trust in government and creating an inner city that works for everyone. Johannesburg belongs to its residents, not criminal syndicates. We are committed to restoring investor confidence, protecting municipal infrastructure, improving service delivery and ensuring that our inner city once again becomes a thriving centre of opportunity, culture, commerce and safe communities.

Until next time,

Johannesburg Executive Mayor Councillor Sello Dada Morero

