



**ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF MOGALE CITY, CLLR LUCKY SELE AT THE SALGA URBAN MONTH HELD AT THE CENTENARY HALL, MOGALE CITY ON THE 29<sup>th</sup>OCTOBER 2024**

Programme Director,

Speaker of Mogale City Local Municipality, Cllr Doreen Davids

Chief Whip of Mogale City Local Municipality, Cllr Tsholofelo Ramaisa

Leadership of SALGA in Gauteng, Gauteng City Region Observatory and the South African Cities Network,

Honourable Councillors and leaders of various municipalities, including municipal managers and their teams

Leaders of business and organs of civil society here present,

Distinguished guests and people of Mogale City:

On behalf of the Government of Local Unity in Mogale City, I wish to express our humble appreciation of this invite to celebrate this important gathering with SALGA Gauteng; the 2024 Gauteng Region Urban Festival.

First and foremost, it is my absolute privilege and pleasure to welcome all of you to the City of Human Origins – Welcome home!

I wish to thank the Gauteng Provincial Government for bestowing us the honour to host the provincial event to commemorate the Urban Month – we do not take this lightly.

Let me from the outset declare, Programme Director. I am a young person and everything that has to do with youth development is close to my heart. Therefore, we are very excited that the main focus of this gathering is to address the outcry from young people for bold steps to tackle climate change issues in our cities. Young people are saying that governments must think out of the box and develop ambitious and achievable climate change targets.

Young people make this call against the backdrop of rapid urbanization that at once addresses our people's needs for shelter and comfort while at the same time it threatens the environment and thus the future of the world that generations that are coming will inherit. We have a responsibility to ensure that future generations inherit a livable globe.

Programme Director, Urban October holds particular significance for Gauteng, the economic powerhouse of South Africa and one of the fastest-growing urban regions in the world. This month serves as a vital platform for addressing various urban challenges and opportunities unique to the province. These are:

### **1. Urbanization Awareness:**

Gauteng is home to a diverse and rapidly increasing population. Urban October raises awareness about the complexities of urbanization, encouraging dialogue on how to manage growth sustainably.

### **2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

The month of October aligns with the global agenda of the United Nations, promoting the Sustainable Development Goals. Gauteng can use this opportunity to focus on sustainable urban planning, environmental protection, and social equity, ensuring that development benefits all communities.

### **3. Community Engagement:**

Urban October fosters community participation, encouraging residents to engage in discussions about their living environments. This engagement is crucial for inclusive decision-making and fostering a sense of ownership among citizens.

### **4. Innovation and Solutions:**

Gauteng's cities are hubs of innovation. Urban October showcases local initiatives and solutions to urban challenges, such as housing, transport, and climate resilience. It's an opportunity to share best practices and inspire collaborative efforts.

### **5. Climate Action:**

With the pressing issue of climate change, Urban October allows Gauteng to highlight its commitment to sustainability. Activities during this month can focus on green initiatives, promoting eco-friendly practices and enhancing urban resilience.

### **6. Economic Opportunities:**

By addressing urban challenges, Gauteng can unlock economic potential. Urban October provides a platform to discuss urban regeneration, smart city technologies, and economic inclusivity, ultimately driving growth and job creation.

### **7. Cultural Exchange:**

As a melting pot of cultures, Gauteng can celebrate its diversity during Urban October. Events can highlight local arts, traditions, and community stories, fostering unity and understanding among residents.

Therefore, Urban October in Gauteng is a crucial time to reflect on the region's urban landscape, promote sustainable practices, engage communities, and innovate solutions for a better future. It's an opportunity to envision a thriving urban environment that serves all its citizens.

### **Bringing it back home...**

As we gather here today to wind down the Urban Month, I am filled with a sense of pride and excitement for our city and its potential. This month is not just a celebration; it's a call to action—a time for us to reflect on our urban environment and envision the future we desire.

Urban Month reminds us that cities are more than just places to live; they are the vibrant centers of culture, innovation, and community. However, as we know, urban areas also face unique challenges, from environmental concerns to social inequalities. Urban Month provides us with an opportunity to address these issues head-on, fostering dialogue and inspiring change.

This year's theme focuses on creating sustainable and inclusive cities with young people at the forefront. As we embark on this journey, let's prioritize green initiatives that enhance our urban landscapes. Investing in parks, promoting public transportation, and championing renewable energy are just a few ways we can work towards a healthier environment. Together, we can turn our city into a model of sustainability and resilience. It is on this score that Mogale City was the host last year of the National Dialogue on Waste to Energy as sponsored by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.

Moreover, inclusivity must be at the forefront of our efforts. Every resident deserves a voice in shaping our city's future. Let us ensure that all communities, especially those that have been historically marginalized, are included in our planning processes. By fostering engagement and collaboration, we can build a city that reflects the rich diversity of its people.

### **Going forward....**

As a City faced with enormous challenges, we want to make the Urban Month in Mogale City a pivotal time for reflection, action, and community engagement regarding urban development and sustainability. Here are some key significances of this month for the city:

- **Promoting Sustainable Development:** Urban Month emphasizes the importance of sustainable urban planning. Mogale City can focus on initiatives that promote environmental stewardship, such as green spaces, waste management, environmental education etc.

- **Community Engagement:** Urban month provides an opportunity for residents to engage with local governance and contribute to discussions about urban development. Workshops, forums, and events encourage public participation, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement in the city's growth.
- **Addressing Urban Challenges:** Mogale City faces various urban issues, such as housing shortages, infrastructure needs, and service delivery. Urban Month highlights these challenges, promoting collaborative solutions that involve community and private sector inputs and expertise.
- **Celebrating Local Culture and Heritage:** Urban Month can be a platform to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Mogale City. Events showcasing local arts, crafts, and traditions help strengthen community bonds and promote local identity.
- **Economic Development:** By focusing on urban revitalization and infrastructure improvement, Urban Month can stimulate economic growth in Mogale City. It encourages investment in local businesses and promotes initiatives that create jobs and enhance the local economy.
- **Awareness of Climate Issues:** Urban Month allows Mogale City to address climate change and environmental sustainability. Activities can focus on promoting renewable energy, water conservation, and climate-resilient practices, preparing the community for future challenges.
- **Strengthening Collaboration:** The month fosters partnerships between local government, businesses, NGOs, and community groups. Collaborative efforts can lead to innovative solutions and resource sharing, enhancing the overall urban environment.
- **Vision for the Future:** Urban Month encourages the community to envision a sustainable and inclusive future for Mogale City. It inspires collective action towards creating a vibrant urban space that meets the needs of all residents.

Talking about urban challenges, I would not be doing justice if I did not take you into confidence on two matters that have caused the City to be a subject of negative media coverage in the recent weeks ... the two being the issue of the sewer network as well as waste management.

With regards to Percy Stewart Wastewater Treatment Works in particular, and sewer pumpstations in general, whilst these facilities face a number of challenges and are in a general state of poor functionality, the factual account as contained in the media coverage is inappropriate and does not fully reflect on the refurbishment programme being undertaken by the City on the Waste Water Treatment Works and pumpstations.

Percy Stewart and Flip Human were built in the 1970s. Over the years minor refurbishments and upgrades have taken place at the treatment works. The age of infrastructure, ever growing City population, the capacity constraints flowing from the demand and insufficient budget availability for maintenance have all contributed to the deterioration of the wastewater treatment infrastructure.

The Percy Stewart programme (interventions) for the 2024/5 is intended to increase security at the plant and refurbish some of the damaged infrastructure owing to theft and vandalism. Work has commenced on both core deliverables. Mogale City has put aside R15 million for mechanical works and R7,5 million for the security boundary for the 2024/25 financial year. This, however, is not enough.

From a human capital perspective, Mogale City has invested in the following professionals – appointed in 2023/4 financial year to strengthen technical capacity at Percy Stewart:

- Executive Manager: Infrastructure Development
- Manager: Water and Sanitation
- 12 Process Controllers – for direct support to wastewater treatment plants
- Senior Superintendent: industries
- Industrial monitor and sampler

Sadly, and unfortunately, whilst the the construction of the first two phases was implemented successfully, the progress was undone and even reversed by coordinated and targeted incidents of theft, sabotage and vandalism amounting to R48 million. This alarming trend of theft and vandalism at wastewater treatment plants is unfortunately increasing throughout the country.

The criminal incidents have not only undone the progress achieved as indicated, but the condition at the Percy Stewart Wastewater Treatment Works is in a worsened state than it was prior to the commencement of the refurbishment project. These have forced the municipality to provide high performance risk security services on site. These incidents, totalling to 14 have also been reported to the South African Police Service, the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Auditor-General of South Africa.

To prevent recurring incidents of theft and vandalism, the Gauteng Department of Cooperative Governance together with the municipality is facilitating a multi-stakeholder partnership which will include government (community safety and environment), civil society, the private sector, and local communities. This collaborative effort aims to safeguard critical infrastructure for the benefit of all businesses, residents, and the environment collectively.

Additionally, and given the increasing threat posed by armed vandals, the municipality is exploring the possibility of elevating the security status of key infrastructure, including wastewater treatment plants, by seeking national government support for its designation as National Key Points.

With several cases of vandalism reported to SAPS, law enforcement is actively participating in Mogale City's By-Law Enforcement Steering Committee on theft and vandalism. Furthermore, the municipality continues to work closely with private sector partners, including Sibanye Stillwater, under a Memorandum of Agreement for 2023/2024.

**With regards to waste management:** The City like any other city is experiencing challenges related to waste management. This is due to population increase/migration into the city and the limited resources available to cater for the needs of the community. Recently the Luipaardsvlei Landfill site had fire outbreaks due to illegal occupation of the site by the illegal miners (Zamazamas). The municipality is working tirelessly to restore the operations of the landfill after the fire outbreak by ensuring full compliance to the licence conditions. The temporary closure of the landfill site has adversely affected the community and the livelihoods of the reclaimers including loss of income to the municipality. Such closure has also led to increase in illegal dumping activities. The municipality has deployed the high risk security personnel to deal with criminal elements and to ensure the safe environment for the site users. Recycling initiatives are also beefed up to reduce carbon print and minimize the amount of waste ending in the landfill.

In summary, Urban Month serves as a crucial platform for fostering collaboration and envisioning a prosperous future for all residents. As we plan on embarking on commemorating Urban October annually going forward, I encourage each of you to participate in the various events and activities we will be planning. Attend workshops, engage in discussions, and share your ideas. Your participation is crucial in building a city that meets the needs of everyone.

As we move forward, let us remember that the future of our urban spaces is in our hands. Together, we can create a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive city for generations to come.

Thank you for your commitment and passion. Let's make Urban October going forward a month of action and inspiration!

Thank you!