

Chapter

5

Listening to our citizens' voices – The GDS outreach process

The GDS outreach process was rolled out as conceptualised, with implementation including an array of platforms through which the City solicited input, ideas and suggestions

#### 5.1 Introduction

Johannesburg is constituted of unique people and organisations. The manner in which the metropolitan government addresses its mandate and functions is driven through the identification of its stakeholders' needs, and the subsequent implementation and execution of strategies designed to continuously improve the quality of life of all. To assist the city in understanding these needs to a greater degree, the City implemented a feedback and engagement process, called the 'GDS outreach'.

The outreach was launched by the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg on 2 August 2011. The intention was to produce a strategy for local government that would be based on an understanding of the experiences of those within the city, and would address the needs and opinions of the entire city's population. The GDS outreach also aimed to inspire the city's stakeholders with a sense of shared ownership of, and the freedom to participate in, a developmental local government strategy for all.





The GDS outreach process was rolled out as conceptualised, with implementation including an array of platforms through which the City solicited input, ideas and suggestions:

- **Thematic weeks:** with the schedule for weekly events appearing on the City's website. These thematic weeks addressed the nine themes identified within this Joburg 2040 GDS. Thematic weeks included round table discussions and conversations with stakeholders. The themes included: Liveable Cities, Resource Sustainability, Health and Poverty, Governance, Transportation, Community Safety, Environment, Economic Growth and Smart City. The general public was invited to comment on these topics – and be full participants of the process.
- **Ward-level participation:** that incorporated the voices of local communities and which ran parallel to the nine thematic weekly.
- **A GDS Conference:** in which leading global, regional and local experts invited to participate. This provided a platform to discuss critical issues and establish mechanisms through which they could best be addressed.
- **A GDS Launch:** still to take place – with this event, to be attended by the city's key stakeholders, serving as the culmination of the Outreach process.

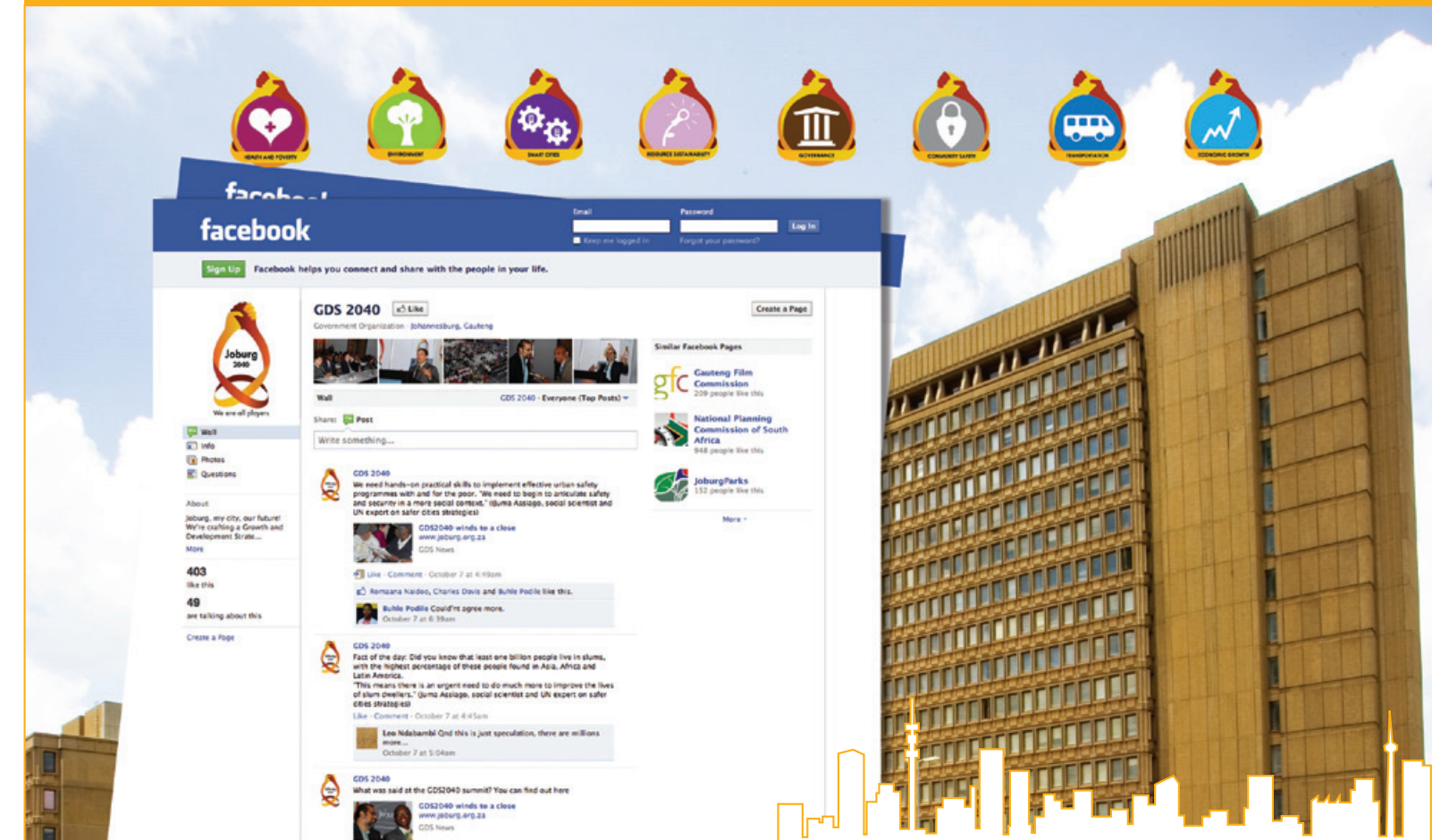
## 5.2 The process

The first rudimentary paragraphs of the Joburg 2040 GDS document were written during a year of intensive research and inquiry. A completed draft document was launched on 2 August 2011, providing a basis for further discussion and collaboration. During the GDS outreach process, the document was refined and updated, based on the input received from ordinary citizens, experts and thousands of emails, reports, social media updates, printed media and radio reports. A content management process was developed, to process and analyse various comments, queries and all the other inputs received. The City established an internal committee for this purpose, referred to as the 'Content Co-ordinating Committee' (CCC), to sift through thousands of submissions. Information was also obtained from a number of other sources, which included:

- The theme-week reports written after each week's activities, during the nine consecutive weeks of the Outreach. This consisted of inputs from panel discussions, workshops and community-based sessions.
- Inputs received from several of the City's departments.
- Suggestions received from numerous suggestion boxes placed throughout the city.
- Social media sites – Twitter and Facebook
- Comments on the City blog site
- Emails received by the City

The CCC analysed all inputs weekly and then produced a synthesis report of the relevant theme. The reports were shared at the weekly Executive Management Team (EMT) meetings with senior management. Weekly meetings were also held with the Executive Mayor and his team, to discuss recommendations, and to highlight the major weekly content updates of the Joburg 2040 GDS document. Weekly updates reflected key priorities, solutions, and suggestions, as indicated within the various comments received during the thematic weeks. In this way, internal stakeholders in the City were kept abreast of major issues arising.

After an intensive nine-week process and dedicated work done by content writers, who have worked hard to incorporate all the critical points of input, a final draft of the document is now produced.



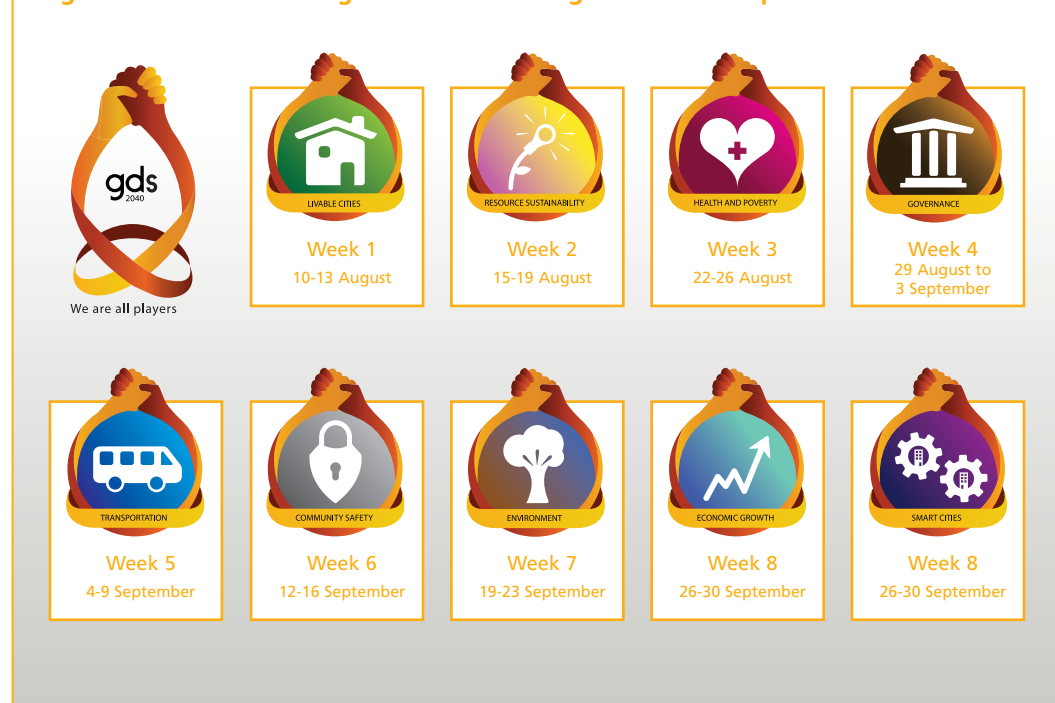
## 5.3 Using various tools for participation

The GDS outreach used a wide variety of platforms to ensure maximum participation, from people from all walks of life – and all communities – within the City. Keeping up with modern communication, the City used social media to encourage participation in its GDS process. A Facebook citizens' page was created, alongside a City page on Twitter, and a video on YouTube. Picasa photo album sites were also set up. A micro-site was set up through the City's main website ([www.joburg.org.za/GDS2040](http://www.joburg.org.za/GDS2040)), to provide an online 'landing base' and a central repository for all relevant information pertaining to and emanating from the GDS outreach process.

Printed media and radio content was also mainstreamed through the key platforms, throughout the thematic weeks. The media interviewed key Members of the Mayoral Committee (MMCs) and some Senior Officials, providing coverage through the written platforms and radio.

The 2010 FIFA World Cup gave the City the opportunity to reap useful support advantage. Comparable branding was created by the City for the GDS outreach, using slogans like "We are all players" and "My City – Our Future". Effective visual branding was created via unique icons for each of the theme week topics. This very successfully associated the GDS outreach with the City of Johannesburg, and was further propagated by the various tools, platforms and media used for the GDS outreach process. The icons were designed to provide a simplistic yet easily understood graphic representation of the themes that were discussed.

**Figure 5.1: GDS branding icons used during the outreach process**



#### 5.4 Managing input and suggestions emerging through the GDS outreach

The four predominant streams through which inputs and suggestions were received throughout the GDS outreach process were as follows:

- Thematic reports that were produced as a comprehensive overview of the weekly events;
- Deep analysis undertaken in respect of comments provided through the online platforms;
- Analyses of facts from various print and radio reports
- Suggestion box inputs – with the GDS team sifting through and noting suggestions placed in these boxes, located at strategic wards across the City.

##### 5.4.1 Analysis of responses to the nine theme weeks:

Drivers for the City of Johannesburg produced week reports in accordance with each theme week, showing not only the key discussion contained, but also lifting out important strategic priorities from these discussions.

Issues were divided according to the various chapters in the Joburg 2040 GDS document, making it easier to revise and update content. These thematic reports were useful as they provided a comprehensive view of the weekly events by providing descriptions of the events, tallying the total number of participants and making the content publicly available through the GDS micro-site.

##### 5.4.2 A deep analysis of the online platforms:

The online GDS community often posted additional links to other websites containing relevant content. These online communities provided important insights, into their own personal visions for the future city of Johannesburg – and often expressed views freely and openly. Social media content moderators ensured that debates and discussions were kept alive, on social media platforms. This was done through constant blog posts, status updates and responses to various discussion threads.

##### 5.4.3 Analyses of facts from various print and radio reports:

Printed media and radio content was also captured and analysed. This included radio talk shows, discussions and various articles published relating to GDS. This information was important, as it gave

the CCC a more nuanced perspective of how the media and public in general were responding to the GDS outreach process. There was considerable positive feedback regarding the process itself, however many expressed doubt as to whether the GDS outreach process would translate into concrete programmes and actions. This prompted the CCC and then the content writers to ensure that key strategic programmes and indicators were developed, in response to the concerns identified by stakeholders.

##### 5.4.4 Suggestion boxes at wards:

Suggestion boxes and discussions in various wards were used as a further complementary approach through which to involve citizens in the GDS process. It was important to reach citizens who do not ordinarily have access to the internet, and to reach those who could not attend various themed week sessions. Through this process, the roles of ward councillors and ward committees were activated. They were empowered to understand the city's long-term future. These tools and live sessions served as an important mechanism through which to engage and hear various voices, across regions and wards – allowing this view to bear on the GDS process and outcome. Collection boxes and reports of the proceedings were gathered and analysed by the CCC. These comments were used to update the Joburg 2040 GDS document.

The information included in the box below is indicative of the key strategic issues that were received and analysed from the GDS outreach process.

#### Box 5.1: A high-level summary of the key strategic issues extracted from the GDS outreach process

##### Key strategic issues extracted from the GDS outreach process

###### Liveable city

- A workable and 'Joburg-specific' definition of liveability is required – a broad vision of what a liveable city or 'ideal' settlement is, going forward
- A regional perspective of Joburg is necessary. The positioning of Joburg is critical in the context of its surrounds and what Joburg continues to offer
- Social facilities and libraries need to be retrofitted into neighbourhoods where most needed – with a focus on designing social facilities first
- Design the city to eliminate poverty by bringing economic opportunities closer to people
- Encourage public spaces that offer diversity and flexibility in both purpose and use
- Better spatial-economic design is needed to stimulate behavioural change and gear in businesses and investment, to allow for greater resilience
- There is a need for people to live, work, learn and play in close proximity

###### Resource sustainability

- Education and awareness should be improved across all sectors, with the view on responsible public behaviour towards natural resources/public goods
- Increased access to better quality services
- Heightened need for an integrated resource sustainability strategy
- Building regulations need to be revised to accommodate new technologies
- A long-term perspective is required on the future of water in Joburg
- Scale-up water conservation and demand side management
- Continued research and development in the fields of water, energy and waste – employ smart technologies as well
- Diversify energy sources for the city to reduce reliance on fossil fuel power stations
- Scale-up energy demand side management
- Waste generation must be reduced through alternative practices
- Decoupling resource extraction from economic growth is needed

#### Health and poverty

- Unemployment needs to be considered in the context of poverty and inequality, because the three are intrinsically interlinked
- Prioritise, transform and uplift the most deprived areas of the city first
- Address poverty and inequality simultaneously
- The city needs to become a resilient producer and consumer of affordable, good quality food
- The City needs to reconfigure its tariffs and charges to provide incentives for commercial firms, that will create formal employment and livelihood opportunities to operate in the most deprived areas
- Up-scale information and awareness about HIV/AIDS – especially targeting the youth
- Changing attitudes towards good nutrition and healthy lifestyles
- Ensure access to health food and medical facilities at reasonable prices
- Design cities to promote a healthy lifestyle – green space, ‘walkability’, ‘cyclability’
- Environmental health conditions should be factored into the space economy – integrated urban design

#### Governance

- Joburg’s position as the leading metro in the country needs to be sustained and managed effectively
- Sustained engagement between the City and its various stakeholders is required, to tackle developmental challenges collectively
- Greater focus is needed on financial stabilisation, alternative funding options, long-term capital planning and competitive tariffs to support sustainability
- Breeding a new cadre of local government leaders through mentoring and mutual learning
- Greater co-ordination between the spheres of government, the city region and the global arena
- Governance structures and processes provide the platform to contribute to social cohesion

#### Transportation

- The City should strive to reduce the need for transport and travel through land use planning, housing and urban design initiatives
- There needs to be scaling up of mass public transit provision
- Partnerships should be sought to reduce road congestion and promote road safety
- All City fleets (bus, minibus, waste collection and other City owned cars and trucks) to utilise green energy/fuel sources
- Better use of existing infrastructure is needed – storm water management systems must be transformed to be environmentally friendly and respond to climate change including contributing to rain water harvesting
- Streets need to be designed, constructed and maintained so that they are accessible and safe for pedestrians, commuters and motorists
- The raising of dedicated sustainable funding for transportation is critical for the successful implementation of public transport
- The City should create a network of green walking and cycling pathways between all origins and destinations
- Public Transport Empowerment Models to empower operators, to offer quality services and build sustainable businesses, need to be developed and supported by government
- Building a value-based culture and high level of partnerships is critical to achieve transport safety

#### Community safety

- Community engagement, collaboration and partnerships are critical in the broader context of community safety
- Re-evaluate relevance, practicability and awareness of by-laws, with 2040 focus in mind
- Disaster management should be integrated into all aspects of long-term and short term planning
- Invest in prevention; build a more resilient infrastructure, storm water drains, transport systems, building codes; stress test against disasters. Invest now to save later.

- A long-term communication strategy is needed, incorporating listening, engaging, branding, mobilising, motivating, promoting, acknowledging and informing

#### Environment

- Protection of water resources is crucial
- Build community resilience and safeguard communities against the unexpected events associated with climate change
- High-priority significant bio-diversity assets identified and protected
- Urban ecological network of open spaces should be maintained
- The city’s urban forest should be strategically managed and enhanced
- Urban agriculture should be promoted – this can be linked to the food security issue

#### Economic growth

- Economic policy needs to create an enabling environment for investment and promote the ease of doing business in the city
- Strategic land parcel development for industrial use – will assist the City to generate income
- Building city competitiveness by ensuring a conducive environment for doing business in the city
- Support the NGP to “to eradicate unemployment and create at least 5 million jobs in strategic economic areas by 2020”
- Sustainable skills development initiatives promoted through valuable internships
- Improve labour productivity through work security by creating decent working conditions
- Provide adequate pension funding and implement appropriate wage policies to reduce inequality as such, to promote growth in the economy
- Public employment schemes need to be more sustainable and focused towards the acquisition of life-long skills and learning
- Support the informal economy and allow for social entrepreneurship and innovation ventures
- Utilising skills and efficiencies to build the economy of the city
- The City should develop its own incentives: Preferential procurement for investors; Rates and taxes incentive for new investment; Infrastructure offset incentives for new investment; Minimal or no rent incentive

#### Smart city

- Invest in technologies that ease the service delivery imperatives of the City
- Support learning initiatives by providing access to information through technological means
- Technology should be the enabler to create a better city of Johannesburg
- Facilitate built environment, social and technical linkages through a networked city
- Maximise ICT to catalyse employment and growth

### 5.5 Impact of the GDS outreach process

The GDS outreach process was a comprehensive public participation programme, that was carefully planned, to specifically focus on the identified themes and draw out a strong cross-section of perspectives and inputs in this regard. The Outreach Process was a first in long-term strategy making processes portrayed in the history of South African local government. Through the GDS outreach, the City was able to carefully update and compile a strategy that can be collectively owned, by all of Johannesburg’s citizens.

Weekly thematic programmes were precisely designed to be all-inclusive. In each thematic week, a series of discussions, consultations, debates and events took place from Mondays to Fridays. Weekends were strategically used to include participation from wards and the city’s seven regions. The target audiences and participants were wide-reaching and varied from ordinary citizens, to thematic experts, business forums and chambers, schools and tertiary institutions, religious groups, NGOs, Non-Profit Organisations and the informal sector.



Through platforms such as the mainstream media, the Joburg micro-site and social media, each and every event was publicised and advertised. Each day, the city invited an expert, whose expertise was related to a particular theme. This specialist set the tone of the conversation in a thoughtful way, to encourage constructive discussion, and to frame the theme with a practical view of what is needed and what is possible. During the course of the thematic weeks, the City's political leadership, MMC's, Heads of Departments and senior officials were all well represented, and were able to facilitate and strengthen discussions. The City was able to effectively mobilise its senior administration, to allow for the GDS outreach process, ideas and experience to filter down to all within its 25 000 staff complement. Overall participation from all platforms was overwhelming, with more than 50 000 interactions made, through the social media platforms alone.

Early on in the process, the draft GDS was also disseminated for comment to national and provincial spheres of government, and to the City's international counterparts. Similarly, it was also given to experts in the fields of City development strategies, for further engagement. The GDS Conference also included renowned international speakers and senior government officials, who were able to relate to the GDS outreach process as it unfolded. More than 1 000 members of the public and interested stakeholders were afforded the opportunity to gain feedback from the outcomes of the thematic weeks.

The impact of the GDS outreach process was to allow an inclusive policy direction to be developed and adopted by the City. The GDS outreach also brought about a greater understanding of the causal relationships between long-term strategy, its implementation, and service delivery imperatives. The Outreach allowed the City to work with citizens and stakeholders in finding sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs – and to improve their quality of life. This in itself is a measure of the GDS outreach's success.

### 5.6 The importance of the GDS outreach process

The GDS outreach process creates a new precedent, and is the first in its kind for the City of Johannesburg. Never before has an open call by the Mayor been used to “crowd source” Joburg citizens from all walks of life, to participate in a strategy-making process.

The approach has been significant, due to a number of factors:

- It has allowed for significant participation and collaboration in the city strategy-making process – to an extent never before attempted in South Africa.
- This is the first known attempt of using online social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to allow citizens to participate in the strategy-making process of a South African city.
- Through a comprehensive process of collaboration, which included not only online platforms, but also suggestion boxes and live participation sessions in neighbourhoods, the City was able to reach out to its diverse citizenry.
- In turn, strategy writers were, for the first time, able to clearly see what citizens really identified as critical issues, problems and solutions.
- The citizens of Johannesburg found the opportunity to share their problems and collective solutions. They found a voice and a platform for expression.
- For the first time, the strategy writing and development process was opened up to a wide range of citizens – with input also coming from ordinary people – representing a shift from the traditional focus on input by academics and technocrats.

This collaborative strategy-making process provides an important lesson for designing strategy-making processes that are more participatory and inclusive in nature. It has also set the basis for the coming term of office (2011-2016) for the City of Johannesburg – a municipality that is making a much greater concerted effort to deepen communications and enhance participation with all citizens who live in the city.

### 5.7 Concluding insights from the GDS outreach

The GDS outreach process has provided a unique opportunity to engage the citizens of Johannesburg. The process has been both inspiring and challenging, with hard strategic choices needing to be made.

Through a process of collaboration, the Joburg 2040 GDS has emerged from the GDS outreach programme, as a strategy that is actionable and bold, and that sets a new strategic path for the City of Johannesburg for the decades to come.

The GDS outreach process has made great strides in improving the relationship between the citizens of Johannesburg and the City of Johannesburg. This is the first time that a public outreach process of this scale and nature has been developed, specifically, for the participation and involvement of the citizens of the City.

The GDS outreach process has sent a clear message to all citizens that the City of Johannesburg is committed to meaningful public participation, and seeks, most importantly, to bring everyday citizens into the process of planning and participation. Through the GDS outreach, the City has been humbled by the countless stories and submissions received by many. These submissions have been tirelessly documented, and have formed the basis for updating the document and defining the strategic programmes for the next term of office and beyond.

Citizens have expressed their desire to live in a city that inspires, a city that they can be proud of. It was also an opportunity for the City to educate the citizens of Johannesburg about the immense challenges the city faces and in turn, allowed the City the opportunity to employ and harness the intellectual capacity of citizens, in establishing solutions to these challenges. Through this process, the GDS has developed as a document that expresses the collective aspirations of many of the citizens who participated in various thematic weeks. This exercise in collaboration, has only served to strengthen the content in the document, and has created a much-needed platform for further engagement and on-going participation.

No longer is the strategy process merely resigned to technical experts. Through this exercise important lessons about collaborative working, learning and doing have taken place. It served as a challenge to the policy makers, community activists, bureaucrats, business representatives, councillors and citizens, who were all able to deepen their own knowledge and apply their thinking towards tackling some of the most complex city challenges, with vigour and with a sense of optimism. The Joburg 2040 GDS bears testament to this.