

True State of the City Address: City of Johannesburg

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Fellow Johannesburg residents, colleagues, and members of the media,

I present to you today an honest and open True State of the City Address based on the Democratic Alliance's strong commitment to good governance, accountability and economic growth for all.

Johannesburg, our nation's economic heartbeat, deserves leadership that prioritises its people over political expediency. Yet, as we reflect on the state of our city, it is clear that Johannesburg is in a state of collapse, with misplaced priorities, systemic inefficiencies, and a lack of accountability have eroded the promise of a world-class African city.

The state of Johannesburg's infrastructure paints a stark picture of neglect. Potholes scar our roads, broken traffic lights endanger lives, hijacked buildings fester in neglect, piles of litter tarnish our streets, and illegal electricity connections drain the City's resources. These are not mere inconveniences but symptoms of a deeper failure of leadership to prioritise the basics of service delivery.

The Executive Mayor's acknowledgment of a staggering R200 billion infrastructure backlogs, coupled with a vague plan to raise R100 billion over five years, lacks credibility without transparent feasibility studies or a track record of fiscal discipline. Across three decades, successive ANC-led administrations have allowed Johannesburg's infrastructure to deteriorate, burdening residents with the consequences.

The budget allocated for infrastructure, particularly for critical areas like water reservoirs, is grossly insufficient.

Despite the Mayor's commitments to upgrade reservoirs, no updates have been provided, and the necessary funding has not been prioritised.

The Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) had been marred with inefficiencies and despite the City's assertion that it has 28000 properties;

residents of Johannesburg have not seen the benefit of the assets owned by the City.

For instance, by disposing of just 2,000 of the City's 28,000 properties, we could raise significant funds to address the infrastructure crisis.

We all agree, what needs to be done, would require money, which the city does not have, we have to work within the limited constraints of what is possible.

However, in line with our DA policy to maximise the City's immovable asset – revenue generated could be redirected to finance infrastructure upgrades.

That is why the DA after scrutinizing the ANC budget came up with an alternative budget which informs this True State of the City Address.

While the city is looking at vanity projects, in contrast, the DA would focus on core priorities: fixing roads, ensuring reliable electricity, and upgrading water infrastructure.

It is telling that only now, with the spotlight of the G20 Summit approaching, has the Presidency deemed it urgent to intervene with a working group. This is not leadership - it is reactive crisis management.

In contrast, DA government will prioritise critical upgrades, creating 5,000 jobs and reducing service failures:

- City Power: reallocating R1.9bil for SCADA Expansion, mega devices solar high masts, cable replacement and substation upgrades, reducing outages by 15% and creating 2,000 jobs
- Joburg Water: Reprioritise R1.6 billion for the replacement of 220km pipes, and the completion of Randburg Depot, which will cut bursts by 20% and create around 1,500 jobs.
- Pikitup: Reprioritise R170 million towards An incinerator to assist in achieving 8% landfill diversion, Railway yard Exploration and Additional 30 trucks, leading to an improvement in collection and creating 500 jobs.

- General Infrastructure: Reroute R500 million from the sale of properties to roads, traffic lights, and sewage repairs, and R110 million for stormwater upgrades across the City, creating 300 jobs.

Wasted Resources and Courtroom Defeats

The City's irresponsible expenditure of money defending unlawful judgements before the courts is a breach of public trust.

Millions of rand that could be spent on fixing potholes, repairing traffic lights, or addressing water leaks have been wasted on litigation – litigation the City consistently loses.

When challenged in council to quantify these costs, the administration refuses to provide answers, hiding its failures in secrecy. The DA caucus has taken this matter to court, as money meant for service delivery should be directed to the people, not wasted on litigation. Citizens have been forced to go to the courts to access basic services, and their victories highlight the City's failures. The cost of these court battles, however, remains unquantified due to the City's stonewalling of adequate oversight.

The DA calls on every resident to exercise their rights under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) to demand transparency and uncover how much of their money has been wasted defending the indefensible. Johannesburg deserves leadership that conducts due diligence, follows proper procedures, and prioritises service delivery over courtroom defeats.

The DA will review litigation decisions, ensuring disputes are resolved efficiently rather than defended in costly legal battles.

Problematic Symbolic Gestures Over Service Delivery

The proposed renaming of streets such as Sandton Drive is only another sign of the City's misplaced priorities. While public consultation has been initiated, the DA questions that resources are being channelled towards symbolic gestures when infrastructure fails, and service delivery falls apart.

Public participation often feels like a box-ticking exercise, ignoring the real needs of residents.

Johannesburg's residents deserve leadership that focuses on tangible outcomes - fixed streets, reliable electricity, and clean water, over symbolism.

The City proposed budget, hikes tariffs **without** improving services,

Proposing -

- 4.6% property rate increase,
- 11.8% electricity hike,
- 10% water increase
- 6.4% waste management hike.

These, will burden residents already struggling with poor service delivery.

That is why in contrast, **the DA proposes welcome relief** for Joburg Residents:

- **On Property Rates:** No increase, with zero rates on the first R450,000 of your property value.
- **On Service Charges:** A DA Government would freeze tariffs for electricity , water, and waste management
- **Urgent Indigent Register Audit and** regional open days over the next 90 days to ensure those that should be registered are benefiting from the City Expanded Social Package (ESP)

Instead of acquiring new properties, we would repurpose existing City-owned buildings for shelters and skills centres, saving costs while addressing homelessness and unemployment.

For example, allocating R20 million per region to convert one property into a shelter which would reduce crime and provide dignity to residents.

Lost Revenue and Lax Enforcement adds to major service delivery failures

The City's failure to enforce bylaws, collect fines, and recover rentals from entities like JOSHCO, is costing all Johannesburg residents dearly.

Half the revenue in these entities goes uncollected and represents a missed opportunity to fund service delivery. Half a billion rand in unutilised grants was returned to the National Treasury last financial year and could have been invested in upgrading infrastructure and creating jobs. The Lax enforcement

perpetuates illegal connections and vandalism, draining City resources and discouraging investment.

To address this, a DA government would:

- **Add 500 new JMPD officers and train 200 additional park wardens** as peace officers with the power to arrest and enforce bylaws, creating 700 jobs.
- We would **Increase Emergency Medical Services and Disaster Management Budget by R100 million to hire 200 firefighters and increase JMPD budget to R356 million for 500 additional officers**, which will reduce crime by 10% and create about 1,200 safety jobs. A good start to proper ward-based policing.
- We would **install CCTV cameras in Illegal Dumping hotspots** and Train ward-based teams with cameras to curb illegal dumping, saving R50 million and creating 200 jobs.
- We would **Revive the Infrastructure Protection Unit to combat cable theft** and corruption, ensuring Johannesburg becomes a hub for enterprise and job creation.
- **Unlock R2 billion in private-sector investment** through mixed-use development, creating 3,000 jobs and renewing urban areas.

These initiatives would be funded by maximising City assets, such as outdoor advertising and property auctions, raising approximately R150mil – R200mil in the first year.

The Johannesburg Property Company (JPC) currently pays 25% tariffs to external parties for revenue collection, while these funds should go directly to the City to ensure city revenue is spent on services not costly agent fees.

The DA would streamline this process and make it more efficient so that the City is able to collect its own revenue and report back to council monthly.

In social Development and Health, the lack of a clear homeless shelter framework is an obvious oversight.

As a DA government, we would spend R140 million to repurpose a city-owned building per region as a shelter, restoring dignity and ending homelessness. By

making use of existing stock, we would save money while addressing social issues.

Major Governance Failures and the Auditor-General's Warning

The Auditor-General's reports expose deep governance challenges in Johannesburg. The inefficient use of assets and evidence of collusion between officials and service providers erode public trust.

At entities like City Power, probes into officials colluding with contractors reveal entrenched issues in millions.

As I am addressing you to today, I am reliably informed that the Executive Mayor is deliberately delaying the recruitment of a full time City Manager by allowing the current process to lapse, because he has a vested interest in who becomes the City Manager.

We must caution the Executive Mayor, that should this be true, he will cause the City to incur Fruitless and Wasteful Expenditure.

The DA will be left with no option but to explore our options within the framework of the law.

The DA demands lifestyle and skills audits for City officials to ensure that those who work with public funds are capable and honest, not appointed through cadre deployment that promotes party loyalty over competence and capability.

The DA-led multi-party administration had previously established an Infrastructure Protection Unit to combat vandalism and corruption, involving all government spheres.

The current administration has, however, abandoned this valuable initiative, leading to cable theft losses and mismanagement. Johannesburg cannot afford to subsidise inefficiency while its citizens suffer.

The city currently Bloated Bureaucracy, which Stifles Progress

Johannesburg's thirteen municipal entities, each with boards of eleven directors, alongside departments led by highly paid directors, create a bloated bureaucracy that consumes millions monthly yet fails to deliver.

The establishment of a Presidential working group to "assist" these entities only underscore their inability to perform. A DA government would simplify

operations by consolidating duplicative functions, saving approximately R100 million, to focus on service delivery rather than administrative bloat. Residents expect outcomes, not a top-heavy system that wastes resources.

We have A Vision for a Better Johannesburg

Under DA leadership, you will have a working Johannesburg – one with infrastructure that enhances economic development, transparent and effective governance, and where all residents have access to high-quality services. What we've committed to you is:

- **Restoring Accountability:** Adopting skills and lifestyle audits to remove incompetence and corruption, so officials are serving the public interest, not personal interests.
- **Infrastructure Prioritisation:** Shifting funds from vanity projects and frivolous court cases to repair potholes, traffic lights, and water pipes, building a business-friendly environment.
- **Maximising Revenue:** Enforcing bylaws, collecting rentals, and utilising grants to fund service delivery and job creation, including support for SMMEs.
- **Reviving Protection Measures:** The Infrastructure Protection Unit will be reinstated to combat vandalism and theft and safeguard assets critical to economic growth.
- **Promoting Transparency:** Answering council questions openly and encouraging residents to hold the city accountable through PAIA requests.
- **Fostering Job Creation:** Implementing policies to empower entrepreneurs and drive employment, such as One-Stop Opportunity Centres and Business Starter Toolkits.

With our proposed budget, the DA would:

- Create 10,000 jobs through infrastructure, safety, and economic initiatives.
- Save on outages and wasting water, saving households approximately R1,000 annually, boosting city-wide disposable income by R1 billion.
- Making the city safer with 1,200 new safety and enforcement officers, reducing crime by 10%.
- Install incinerators and solar masts, saving R50 million and decreasing emissions, helping meet green ambitions.

As the official opposition in the City of Johannesburg, we have not been shy to be transparent. We challenged the irregular appointment of the former City Manager and won with cost. We also challenged the unlawful unconstitutional VIP protection policy and won with cost.

We also opened two big cases that were intended to root out maladministration, so that the public purse does not end up being misused.

Last week, I wrote to President Cyril Ramaphosa, requesting that he authorise a Special Investigation Unit (SIU) investigation into all financial transactions and property dealings at the Johannesburg Property Company over the past 10 years, considering that the JPC is not able to properly account to council for the revenue generated for the City from these property transactions

These are steps that tell of our unwavering commitment to good governance even from the opposition benches.

Johannesburg residents, YOU are NOT mere bystanders – YOU are the heartbeat of this City. The DA invites you to insist on more:

- Request PAIA to show you how your money is spent.
- Hold this administration accountable for its failures.
- Make better leadership decisions that put you first when the chance comes.

The DA is determined to build a functioning Johannesburg – a City where potholes are fixed, streetlights shine brightly, and all citizens feel the pride of efficient service delivery.

Together, we can restore the promise of our great City.

Thank you.