

JOHANNESBURG:**BUILDING A PUBLIC CITY THROUGH PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES**

Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, is highly fragmented, sprawling and divided, still struggling with the legacy of apartheid urban planning processes. Although quality of life has improved since the start of South African democracy in 1994, Johannesburg remains highly unequal, something which is often embedded in space. Public space is scarce, and, in many areas, non-existent. Added to this challenge is the element of fear and lack of safety due to high crime rates and poor policing. Many existing public spaces are underutilized and empty. Residents often feel

excluded from urban planning processes and trust in local government officials is low, particularly in the more deprived areas.

Through the “Building the Public City” project, UN-Habitat and the City of Johannesburg are responding to these challenges by testing inter-departmental collaboration about public space and safety. The project is developing a policy and framework that will help different city departments co-manage public spaces and help the city adopt civic participation tools in public space design and upgrading. As part of

the project three public spaces are being upgraded; one in Hillbrow, a low-income inner-city neighbourhood with significant safety challenges; one in Braamfontein, a gentrifying area on the edge of the Empire-Perth important transport corridor; and one in Diepsloot, an informal settlement comprised of shacks with little infrastructure and no spatial linkages with neighbouring areas.