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SOUTH AFRICA, GAUTENG CITY REGION

City-Regional Integration for Prosperity

Gauteng accounts for just 1.5% of the territory of South Africa, but is the highest populated region in the country, with 12.3 million inhabitants, a quarter of the national population. It has a diverse economy which contributes to over 35% of the country's GDP. This is driven by four main polycentric conurbations, comprising large populations and labour markets, dense commuting flows and spatial agglomeration economies. A functioning city-region can create a thriving economy through spatial and social integration. For Gauteng, the enduring legacy of apartheid has left high levels of social exclusion, poverty, inequality and spatial dislocation. Additionally, high polluting industrial uses and derelict manufacturing areas has left city cores in a state of decline and created further spatial discontinuity.

Realising that these urban pressures were impeding Gauteng's sustainable development and economic competitiveness, in 2004 the Provincial Government rallied the twelve municipalities within its boundaries to commit to establishing the Gauteng City-Region (GCR). At the forefront of this challenge was moving from a sectorial approach of development to a territorial approach. To begin, the provincial government established an Integrated Urban Planning Framework, to guide inclusive, resilient and liveable urban settlements through spatial integration. Achieving this required consensus from multiple public and private stakeholders on the idea that Gauteng as a city-region would provide more sustainable and competitive development as compared to a sectorial approach. Working collaboratively between provincial and municipal governments, a unified agenda was establishing, with the view to promote the city-region concept among stakeholders and abroad.

This was essential to attract investments and lead to the implementation of key programmes and projects aimed at transforming the social, economic and spatial profile of the city-region. It has also paved the way for the Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan, using spatial data to guide the balanced regional development and the Municipal Integrated Transport Plans has led to a 'golden era' of transport planning, with the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link, and various BRT systems being implemented.

While the expected outcomes of GRC are expected to be delivered over the long term, some indications of progress are already being made. Access to basic services has increased across the region, even when still experiencing rapid population growth. The move away from a siloed approach to an integrated territorial strategy has led to the horizontal and vertical coordination of public and private actors. It has also led to increased acknowledgement of, and investment in the informal economy, with an economic revitalisation summit being held for 50,000 township enterprises and increased investment from the procurement budget from 5% to 30%. This was further supported by the empowered regional Department of Economic Development (DED) who used the city region to identify opportunities for economic growth and job creation, with the "Strategy for a Developmental Green Economy". Further regional institutions have been created to foster inter-governmental collaboration and to promote the concept of City-Region, such as the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), which has been integral in finding and providing data, maps and research outputs for the better understanding of the city-region in order to enable informed decision making.