

Great cities are built on great collaborations

 By [Elaine Jack](#)

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Urbanisation continues to be one of the most powerful megatrends reshaping our world. It is a shift that is creating countless problems, but even more opportunities.



Elaine Jack, city improvement district manager of Sandton Central Management District

In a world where populations are migrating and urbanising faster than the capacity of cities to cater for them, infrastructure comes under strain and the traditional public sector tools are insufficient to provide properly managed quality urban spaces.

The good news is that city improvement districts (CIDs), such as the three that make up the Sandton Central Management District, are proving to be a practical solution. They have gained recognition as an effective new model of sub-municipal governance that secures private capital to improve the attractiveness of a city's central spaces.

SA urbanisation

South Africa reflects the global urbanisation trend. The United Nations puts South Africa's population around 57.5-million, of which 63% of its population is urban. It expects this to increase to 77% by 2050, placing even more pressure on our already stressed cities. The City of Johannesburg currently has the largest population, around 5-million all-in-all, followed closely by Cape Town.

Challenges that big, growing cities face are evident. The effects of climate change became apparent with the drought and water crisis in Cape Town that reached desperate levels in 2018. Our cities are also dealing with growing migrant populations, pandemics like the listeriosis outbreak and even cyber-attacks such as those experienced by Pay Fine. Crime is a particular challenge, especially the opportunistic crime that a thriving urban area often attracts.

Deteriorating infrastructure

Ageing and inadequate city infrastructure for water, power and public transport has already become an alarming concern. Joburg revealed its citywide 2017 Roads Condition Index showed a 25% deterioration in the condition of its road network,

dropping from 89% in 2013 to 64%. Joburg Water has infrastructure assets with a current replacement cost of R55bn and 25% of its asset base has a remaining useful life of fewer than 10 years. Countrywide, only 10% of waste is recycled and landfill space is expected to run out in six years if more waste is not recovered for recycling.

Our cities need new and innovative solutions. Fortunately, the other megatrend driving our future is technology. According to Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF), the fourth industrial revolution is a technological revolution "that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work and relate to one another".

Smart cities

Many South African cities have shown an appetite for 'smart city' solutions, programmes that support innovation and new uses for technology. Joburg has introduced longer opening hours for its libraries, Tshwane now has free Wi-Fi networks around places of learning and eThekweni has launched a smart city app.

This is a great start. As urban practitioners it is our job to uplift, regenerate and benefit public spaces so that people want to use them and recognise them as public assets.

CIDs are showing their value in unlocking solutions which harness technology, private capital and collaboration to create excellent experiences of their districts. For instance, the Sandton Central CCTV surveillance project will help to better monitor and respond faster in its public space and will work in partnership with the City of Joburg's departments of public safety.

Sandton Central is also planning to activate Wi-Fi in its public space and introduce a bike-share scheme in partnership with the Department of Transport and Mobike. It is also in discussion with Gautrain to see the viability of running a managed bus shuttle and introducing a Sandton Central information kiosk at the Gautrain Station, improving visitor services in the city.

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Elaine Jack is City Improvement District (CID) manager of Sandton Central Management District.

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