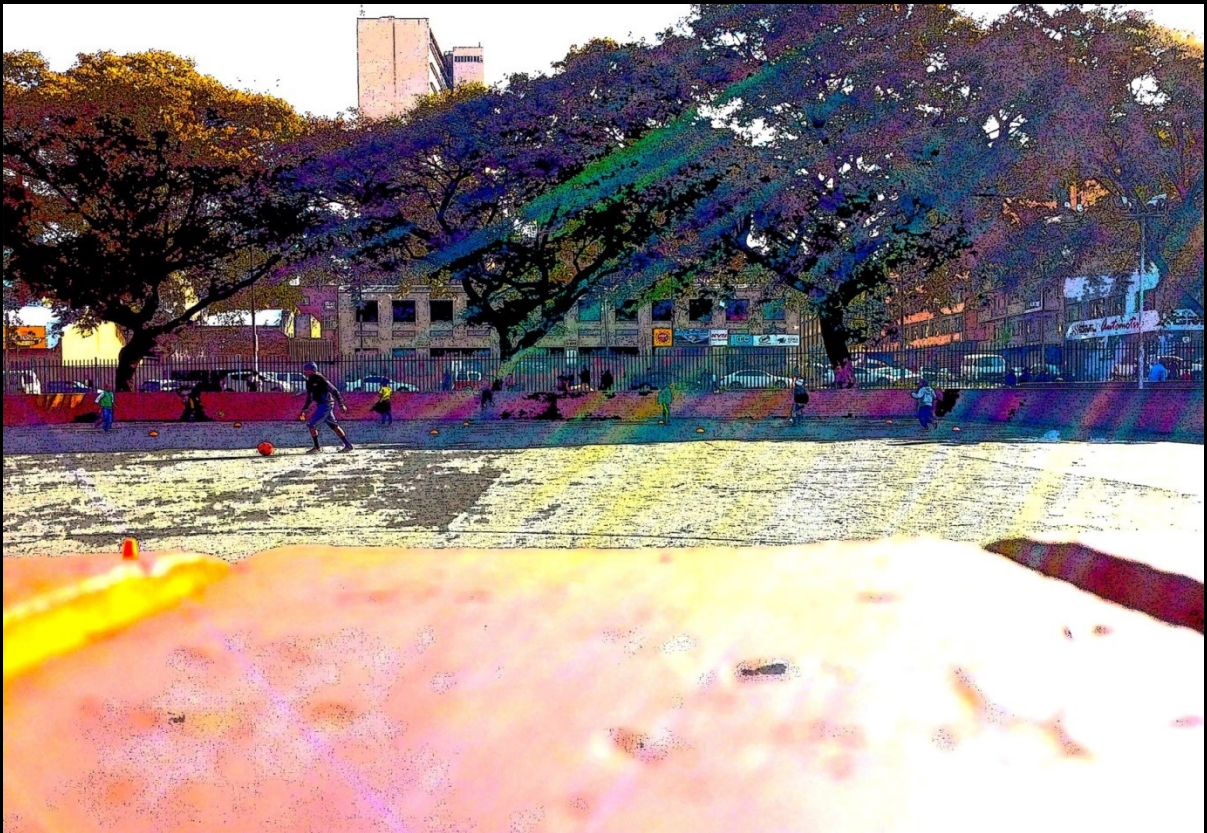


# Rethinking Park Design & Management in Inner-City Johannesburg to Improve Park Use and Safety

Learning the lessons from End Street South  
Park Upgrade



## **Nkosilenhle Mavuso**

A report prepared for Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo,  
as part of the CUBES series: Exploring Participatory Governance of Johannesburg  
Urban Parks

February 2016

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## Contents

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<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. The Importance of Parks as public spaces in Johannesburg Inner-City</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Urban Design and Management of Inner-City Public Spaces: The Continuous Challenge</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>3. The End Street North Park Pilot Project - Testing an Integrated Stakeholder Engagement Approach for Park Design</b> .....	<b>8</b>
3.1. A pilot project around park management in inner city Johannesburg: partnership and objectives.....	8
3.2. End Street North Park – A Contested Space in a Dynamic Neighbourhood .....	11
<b>4. Learning from the End Street South Park Upgrade Project</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1. Findings on the Ground in End Street South Park – Successes and Failures of the Park’s Upgrade.....	15
4.2. What Is Public In the Park? – Perceptions of Managers and People.....	20
<b>5. Critique of the End Street South Park design process - Readily made designs might not be conducive to solve park issues</b> .....	<b>21</b>
5.1. Implementing and Managing Park Safety Measures .....	22
5.2. Determining Appropriate Park Activities and User Groups .....	23
5.3. Community Value and Sense of Ownership in the Park.....	24
<b>6. Recommendations –The benefits of a participatory approach in the design process</b> ....	<b>25</b>
6.1. Inclusive/Collaborative Management for Reduced Maintenance Costs.....	26
6.2. Using Community Based Measures for increased Safety and Security.....	27
6.3. Investing in the Process rather than Product of a Park Design .....	28
6.4. Reducing of Outsourcing of Design Services .....	29
6.5. Continuous Engagement & Evaluation of Design Outcomes after Park Hand-Over .....	30
6.6. Concluding Remarks.....	31
<b>References</b> .....	<b>32</b>

## List of Figures

---

Figure 1: Johannesburg Inner-city Parks in Context .....	6
Figure 2: End Street Park and its surrounds .....	11
Figure 3: End Street North Park is largely vacant in most parts of the day.....	12
Figure 4: The Park is completely fenced off.....	12
Figure 5: Young school boys often seen playing soccer in the Park in the late afternoons .....	12
Figure 6: Homeless people found using the park to sleep.....	12
Figure 7: "This Park Belongs to Children" .....	13
Figure 8: End Street South Park Facilities and surrounding uses.....	14
Figure 9: Design Successes of the park: Urban Playground for Youth .....	15
Figure 11: Park predominantly consists of kids playing facilities .....	16
Figure 12: Elders and Religious groups use Park for meetings.....	16
Figure 14: Design Failures: Negative Effects of Park Fencing.....	18
Figure 15: Illicit Activities happening in corners and fence edges of the park.....	19
Figure 16: Design Process followed in Design of End Street South Park .....	22
Figure 17: Illustration of recommended collaborative park design and management model .....	26

## Executive Summary

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This report investigates how current park management approaches, aimed at achieving increased levels of use and public safety (using in particular fences, gates and security guards) have had an impact on the city's public open spaces.

It looks at End Street North Park, located along Nugget Street in Doornfontein Johannesburg, and engages with the proposed plans and pilot project driven by Johannesburg City Parks and Zoos (JCPZ), suggesting more inclusive, collaborative and community engagement based approach towards park design and management.

In looking towards building a set of recommendations for undertaking the End Street North Pilot Project, the report also presents an analysis conducted on End Street South Park, a recently upgraded park located just south of End Street North, and assesses the process in which it was designed and upgraded as well critically assess the outcomes of its design in order to learn from both the successes and failures of the upgrade. Though the park's upgrade has reduced violent crimes such as muggings in the park, the park contains illicit activities such as gambling and drug use spots along its edges and corners.

This is attributed to the dominance of youth activity and facilities that allow for youth gangs to engage in excessive gambling and smoking without adult watch or supervision in large parts of the park. The use of high fencing and deployment of private security in the park was also found not to be entirely solving issues of safety in the park. Although the fence was intended to assist in the management and control of who accesses and uses the park for safety reasons, it contributes towards creating hidden spaces for gambling, drug use and bullying to occur away from the eyes of the public. This set of findings from End Street South revealed that Park management and safety issues cannot be completely addressed through high fences, law enforcement and regulation of use by security guards or park managers alone.

The report therefore provides a set of recommendations on the benefit of the City undertaking a participatory approach in the design process of parks. It argues for an investment in the design process rather than on the design product and demonstrates how an increased focus on this process would help in reducing the day-to-day impacts on park facilities (such as misuse and vandalism), which often engender huge costs to JCPZ, and increase levels of self-reliance, community integration and sense of ownership amongst all park users and stakeholders involved.

Findings from the fieldwork reveal that current users of the park, including the so called "undesirable" and often victimised users such as the homeless and informal traders, are willing to be involved in daily management and maintenance of the park, in taking up responsibilities such as cleaning and looking after it. The City would benefit from making use of homeless people and informal workers in maintaining parks as a less costly and more inclusive management approach. As

part of the goal to improve safety and security in the park JCPZ can undertake is facilitate the creation of a network of local residents who live near the park and observe its day to day activities. This network of 'Park Watchers' would be mandated to take footage of incidents of muggings or robberies and alert the community on potential danger zones and times using various media platforms such as social networks or leaflets. This would be a very effective and low cost measure to improve safety in the park that the city can take up as an alternative to employing private security guards who are at times found to be ineffective in reducing incidents of crime.

JCPZ would also benefit from putting together a system of park evaluation after the upgraded park has been open for use, where User Participation and Demand Surveys can be conducted on how the Park facilities are used on a monthly, seasonal and annual basis. The surveys would help the City record and evaluate how community needs are changing after the park has been opened for use, as the demographics and residents of the area are constantly changing. These surveys can provide detailed information about community preferences and needs and can help JCPZ anticipate which facilities in the park will receive the most use and need the most maintenance building. In order to effectively do this post-upgrade evaluation, JCPZ will also need to increase internal skills capacity in the undertaking of park design and community co-design work, for the department to be better able to critically assess the possible impacts of a design proposed for a new park development or upgrade.

It is recognised within the report that implementing this participation process and facilitating the aforementioned recommendations would require increased resources within JCPZ, in terms of skills, facilitation and time; and that the availability of these resources is scarce. However, as the report illustrates, it would be beneficial for JCPZ to invest in these resources from the beginning of the park design and upgrade process as, producing better public spaces that are better managed, this would save more resources in the medium and long term.

## Introduction

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Johannesburg is experiencing a deteriorating rate of quality in its open public spaces, due to growing levels of privatisation and the challenges of managing and maintaining public (open) spaces in the city, by both government and the private sector.

The focus of the study<sup>1</sup> is on End Street Park, a park located in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, and assesses the process in which it was designed and upgraded, as well as the outcomes of its design in terms how its current users engage and feel in the space. The report focuses on the management aspect of the park in terms of how it deals with safety and user control. The report indeed proposes a more sustainable urban design approach to urban park design that will aid in improving the use and management of parks in inner-city Johannesburg. Part of this process involves looking into alternative design related ways of dealing with aspects of safety and surveillance in parks (either than the use of fences, gates and security guards), as well as aspects of public participation, community co-design and co-management processes.

The report argues, based on a constructive critique of this process, for a more participatory design approach, demonstrating how it could mitigate some of the negative outcomes that the park design has on park uses and on its long-term management. Whilst the participatory design (and management) approach is not a complete solution to current challenges faced in Johannesburg's parks, it is argued to improve knowledge and understanding of the contested nature of public space in the city and how design can aid in achieving inclusive management of the parks.

The report is composed of six sections. Firstly it illuminates the importance of parks as public spaces in Johannesburg Inner-City and how they are an essential part of the social life and fabric of communities. The next section discusses the continuous challenge faced in the City of Johannesburg on designing and managing its public spaces particularly with regards to ensuring safety and their increased use. The fourth section introduces the End Street North Park Pilot Project, initiated by Johannesburg City Parks and Zoos (JCPZ) to test out integrated stakeholder approach towards park design in Johannesburg inner-city. It outlines the aims and objectives of the project and gives an account of some of the issues raised in the first stakeholder engagement workshop that need to be addressed in order to drive forward an integrated urban approach to safer and more inclusive parks.

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<sup>1</sup> The report is based on a master thesis research (Mavuso, 2016), in the Master of Urban Design, School of Architecture and Planning, at Wits University. It has benefited from CUBES support and ongoing engagement with Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, within the NRF-funded research programme 'Practices of the State in Urban Governance' (96277) coordinated by Prof. Claire Bénit-Gbaffou. It has also benefited from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year Urban Design class project, conducted by Solam Mkhabela, and focused on park uses in Joubert Park and End Street South Park.



Section five looks into End Street South Park and gives a narrative of the findings on the ground in the field work that was done to determine the successes and failures of the park's upgrade in 2008. From a normative and analytical perspective, the sixth section provides a critique of the End Street South Park design process and outcomes, arguing that park safety and management issues cannot be completely addressed through employing security guards, high fences, law enforcement and regulation of use by private sector management alone, without involving resident communities, local businesses and institutions.

The concluding section provides recommendations based on the critique of the design process and current conditions of the park, of how a more participatory design approach can be used to mitigate some of the negative outcomes of park design and management. Whilst the participatory design and management approach is not proposed as a complete solution to current challenges faced in Johannesburg's inner-city parks, it is an approach argued to improve knowledge and understanding of the contested nature of parks in the city and how it can aid in achieving safety and reduced costs of managing them.

## **1. The Importance of Parks as public spaces in Johannesburg Inner-City**

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“Public Parks are an essential part of the social life and fabric of communities across the world. They are a heavily used and much loved public asset that enhances the character identity and vitality of local neighbourhoods, towns and cities” (Neal, 2013, pg.5).

According to Németh and Hollander (2010), the availability of public space and its degree of use is a critical element in achieving citizenry and fair representation in the city. By allowing city users to claim and freely use space is an act of creating public space where different social groupings in the city become ‘public’.

This idea of public space has however declined over the last few decades of the post 20th century. Since the end of the apartheid regime in 1994 the quality of open public spaces in South Africa's inner-cities began to languish and is now often perceived as chaotic, filthy, unsafe and undesirable spaces where homeless people sleep and criminals engage in illicit activities (such as gambling and drug trade). This has particularly been the case with open public spaces in the city of Johannesburg's inner-city in the post-apartheid period.

Though the inner-city experienced a massive flight of white populations who used to occupy dense high rise areas such as Hillbrow, the city did not lose its overall high population numbers as a large non-white population (mainly black), that was previously restricted, began to move into the inner-city. The current population size of is estimated that an excess of 198,143 people live in the Inner City (CoJ RSDF, 2011, pg. 18). This figure is however is not entirely accurate as people living in the

Inner City on a temporary basis are unknown, with over 800 000 commuters travelling in and out of the city on a daily basis.

The inner-city of Johannesburg has a severe lack of open space and parks to cater to the existing and rapidly increasing population. This high population size in the inner-city has caused a strain on its limited amount of open spaces and parks, with park spaces in particular being over-utilised and rapidly degenerating in physical condition.

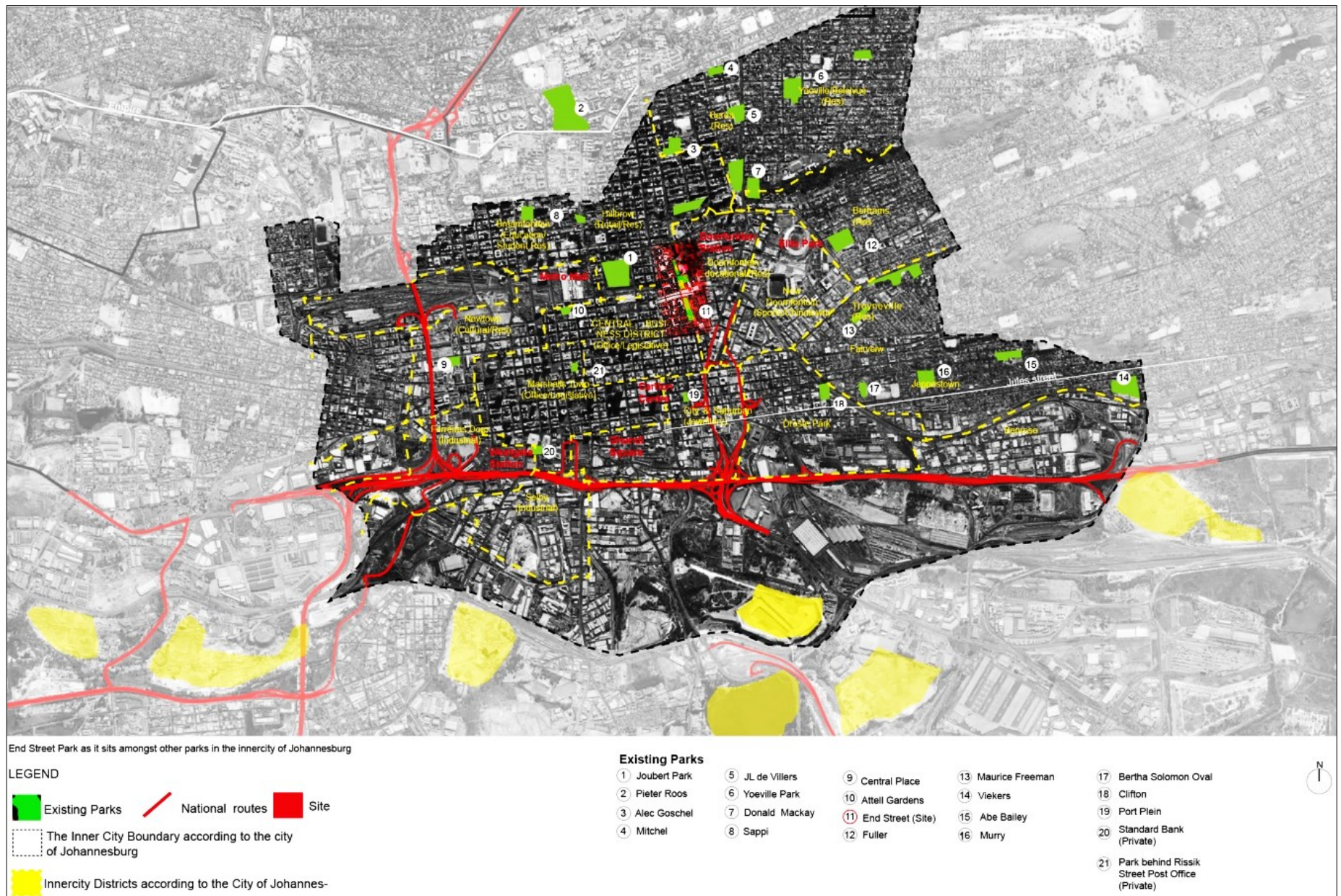


Figure 1: Johannesburg Inner-city Parks in Context (Mandyanda, August 2015)

The inner-city has for many years had only one notable (developed park) of reasonable size: Joubert Park, and has only recently conducted an upgrade of six parks (Donald MacKay Park, JL de Villiers Park, Mitchell Park, Edith Cavell Park, Metro Park and End Street South Park) as part of a regeneration programme conducted by the CoJ to restore them to local communities.

Despite these notable upgrades, inner city parks, for the most part, continue to be few in number, small in size and difficult to manage and maintain. Issues of lack of cohesion, levels of poverty and homelessness, issues of safety, issues of density and highly mobile/transient communities in the inner-city have rendered public space management there more challenging than in any other part of City. Parks (and public spaces in general) therefore continue to be the centre of issues faced in the inner-city and the State is faced with the daunting task of managing them.

## **2. Urban Design and Management of Inner-City Public Spaces: The Continuous Challenge**

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According to Jacobs & Appleyard (1987), it is of utmost importance to emphasise public spaces within the city; and that the design of these spaces prioritises their use and access by pedestrians. Johannesburg's park spaces are in a state of deterioration due to low levels of maintenance and supporting infrastructure. Despite the improvements that have been made in a number of public spaces in the city, there still exists a largely negative form of use and public perception of public spaces in the inner-city, particularly with the use of public parks. This has led to the growing perceptions, and in many cases realities, of lack of safety in some of Johannesburg's park spaces which deprives a large majority of the city's population (particularly women and children) to enter and freely use these parks. Characterised by high metal fences, lack of street furniture underutilised recreational facilities, certain parks in the inner-city of Johannesburg are in need of intervention and a different approach in both in terms of physical design and management.

The existing lack of social cohesion between residents and users of the inner-city (Simone, 2004) has weakened the level of social control within public parks hence allowing illegal activities such as muggings, drug-dealing and rape to occur in many instances within these spaces. There therefore needs to be a shift in how designers and managers in the city understand and perceive the use and value of public parks and the (context-based) needs and preferences of its users. With regards to the design process and management approach to inner-city parks, there is a current gap in the research and knowledge gathering and decision making phases of parks design that determine what eventually goes into parks. Decision making processes on public infrastructure are often made with haste and a lack of engagement with communities, business owners and other stakeholders in city spaces to gain an understanding of how current city users use and perceive public space.

The provision of well-functioning and maintained urban parks (and public space in general) in post-apartheid Johannesburg has been earmarked as one of the key aspects that can be used to redress the inequalities of the apartheid regime – grounded in racial discrimination within space – as well as the

clear contrast in the presence and absence of green open spaces between the 'leafy', northern white suburbs and the dusty, under-serviced southern black townships (Crankshaw & Parnell, 2002). It is however important to recognise that the task of providing and managing urban parks is a difficult and daunting one, particularly within a developing city such as Johannesburg where government has a limited budget (often targeted towards infrastructure and housing backlogs) and highly relies on generic model of income generation or cost-recovery that are quite irrelevant when dealing with public open space. This is made even harder within a context such as Johannesburg where high urban inequality prevails and often leads to high levels of violence and crime occurring in public spaces. It is even more daunting in the inner city where the urban decay might mean there is less community cohesion and control than in suburban spaces (Simone, 2004).

In response to this the City of Johannesburg (CoJ), in its year 2000 Mayoral term, shifted its focus towards inner-city regeneration and, alongside the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA), formulated an Inner-City Regeneration Strategy in February 2003. This strategy aimed at attracting investment back into the inner-city through upgrading the physical conditions and maintenance of its public spaces (COJ Inner-city Regeneration Charter, 2007). Within these, the public open spaces and/or parks in the inner-city were targeted for physical upgrades and redesign (e.g. eKhaya Park and End Street Park). Despite the efforts of the inner-city regeneration strategy, there still remains a great amount of public spaces that are in need of intervention and this report aims at discussing ways in how these interventions can be best undertaken.

### **3. The End Street North Park Pilot Project - Testing an Integrated Stakeholder Engagement Approach for Park Design**

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JCPZ has embarked on a pilot project to rethink and reformulate its approach to park management, particularly in parks in Johannesburg inner-city. JCPZ, in partnership with, the Johannesburg City Safety Programme (JCSP), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), is planning in particular on implementing programmes focused on promoting active community participation in maintaining and looking after the city's parks.

#### **3.1. A pilot project around park management in inner city Johannesburg: partnership and objectives**

This project is aimed at coming up with a creative approach of creating safer parks in the inner-city whilst also empowering its communities and investing in longer term management. The main vision/ goal of the project is to build safe, accessible, inclusive, vibrant and environmentally sustainable public spaces whilst achieving the objective of deepening citizen involvement in improving the management aspects of the open spaces. Over and above park design and use, the

pilot project will test out best practices in community based maintenance and long term management of park spaces.

Questions that were asked by JCPZ and its partners in the beginning of the project included;

How can we best ensure quality and safety of parks?

How can inner-city parks be made attractive for women and children to use?

How can some of the users and small enterprises be brought in to 'co'-own and manage the parks?

How can the parks be activated through programming and temporary events?

How to integrate the parks with each other and with pedestrian and bicycle networks?

What needs to be let go first so that something new can emerge?

How to facilitate processes that will enable change with tight timeframes

These questions were followed by an outline of what needed to be done in the early stages of the project. This included:

Generating base line studies including spatial analysis, behavioural mapping, stakeholder mapping for all parks.

Exploring the interrelation between urban planning & management.

Developing a comprehensive plan including design, management, regulations and finances.

A shortlist of parks that had particular problems and assets and would make of an interesting and informative study and/or project to test a public sector, private sector and civil society involvement approach was then drawn as priorities for the Jo'burg Safer Parks project. Amongst these parks were Jager Park, Edith Cavell Park, End Street Park, Pullinger Kop Park and Joubert Park.

End Street North Park (see Figure 1) was then chosen as a first priority, and through a partnership with UN-Habitat, to test a new participatory approach that will strengthen community and stakeholder relationships towards park design and management. As part of the End Street North Pilot project, JCPZ conducted a stakeholder engagement workshop<sup>2</sup> that aimed at bringing together various relevant stakeholders from within the City of Johannesburg's departments and strengthening the City's internal coordination towards undertaking this park improvement pilot project. Part of the stakeholders that were deemed relevant and important in being involved in the project included:

Johannesburg City Parks (JCPZ) (Main stakeholder)

Johannesburg Region F

Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) - Development Facilitation Unit

Johannesburg City Safety Programme (JCSP)

Johannesburg Environmental Health Department

Johannesburg Social Development

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<sup>2</sup> This workshop was the first working session of the City Of Johannesburg's departments and entities on the End Street North Park Pilot Project which was held at the Old Elephant House in Johannesburg Zoo on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2015.

City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Development Planning Unit  
Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD)

Part of the discussions in the workshop involved looking into past and/or present challenges of community/stakeholder engagement in managing parks in the city. Successes in community involvement were said to be often seen in northern suburbs, where community members have knowledge, resources, strong sense of ownership, interests and value for parks as environmental assets. This was contrasted to inner-city and townships parks' experiences of community engagement, where some of the highlighted challenges included:

Dealing with homelessness, drug abuse and crime in parks. Inner-City and township communities often have a lack of involvement from crucial stakeholders that need to deal with social ills in their parks e.g. Homeless shelters, Rehabilitation facilities, contractors/employers, law enforcers, waste pickers/recyclers.

Most Inner-city parks were upgraded 8 years ago and have since physically deteriorated.

Park improvement projects in the inner-city and in townships (or other low income communities) are often not sustainable due to lack of will for volunteering amongst community members as they often have high needs and high expectations for jobs or other income generating opportunities.

Inner- city region (Region F) is the most populated and dynamic region with the highest amount of needs; however City government policies and budget allocations treat all regions the same.

Based on these challenges part of the objectives of the workshop was to formulate an integrated stakeholder's engagement approach and come up with a set of tools and guidelines to improve inner-city park use and safety. Some of the key areas of focus included:

Building community value and sense of ownership on parks in the inner-city

Forming a comprehensive urban park management plan that will involve the City, business owners and surrounding residents.

Conducting a continuous engagement process with communities in the inner-city due to their transitional nature

Consideration of a collaborative institutional management of spaces

Get investors/developers to buy in to bad buildings around the park

In response to the above mentioned areas of focus, a strategy proposal was put on the table which suggested the following:

Sharing of all information, plans and strategies affecting the park and the Doornfontein area at large amongst all City Departments involved, ensuring an integrated institutional management approach.

Plan/design the stakeholder and community engagement process

Arrange meetings with developers on purchasing of bad buildings

Undergo stakeholder and context analysis as well as an urban inspection of surrounds

Identify clear forums and work streams in which discussions have to take place.

### 3.2. End Street North Park - A Contested Space in a Dynamic Neighbourhood

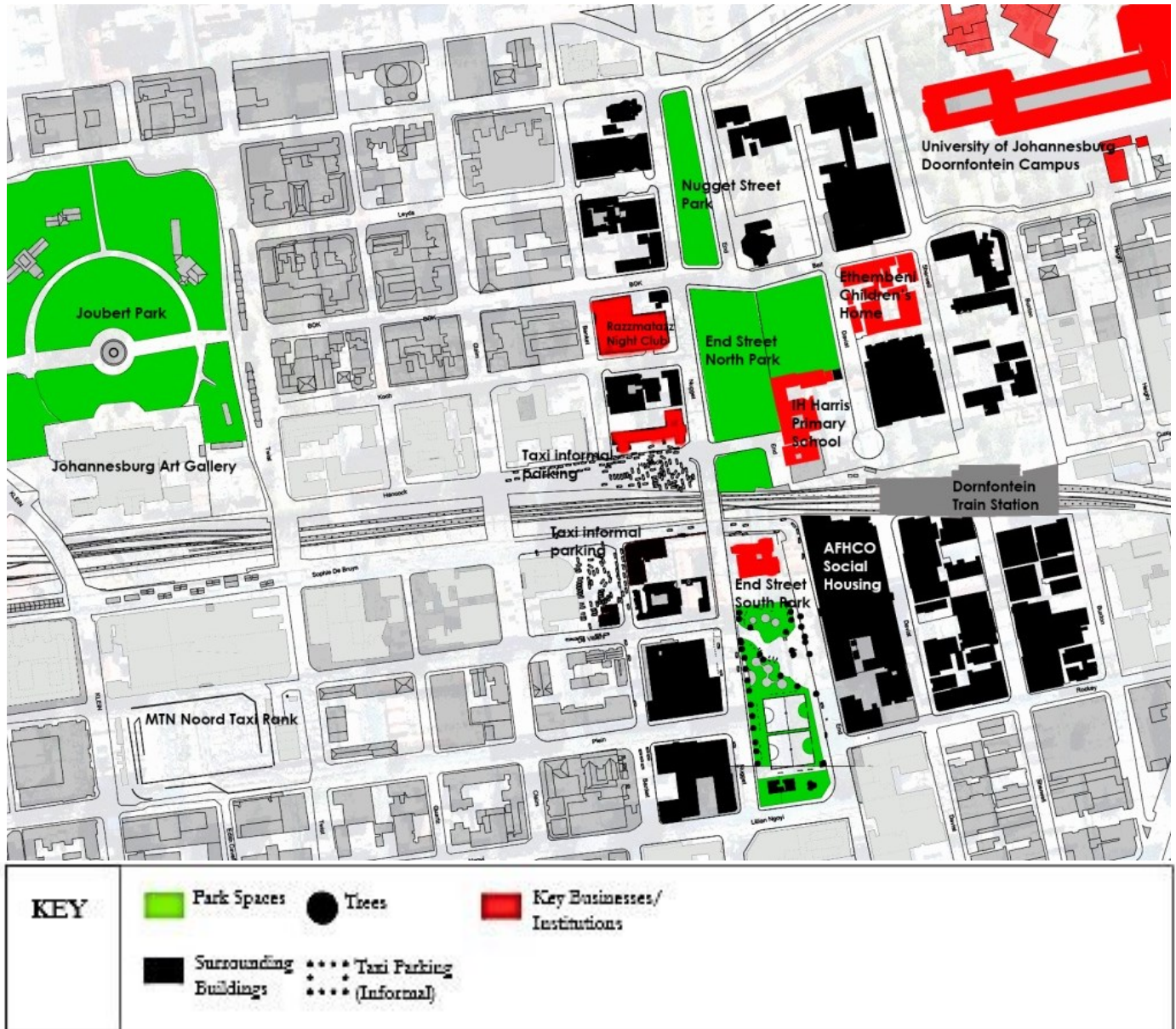


Figure 2: End Street Park and its surrounds (Mavuso, November 2015)

End Street North park is located in Doornfontein on the north end of the railway tracks. Its surrounding buildings consist of more commercial than residential use with various night clubs, gambling houses, shebeens and brothels, on its western edge. It is also surrounded by various learning institutions such as IH Harris Primary School, Ethembeni Children's Home and the



University of Johannesburg's Doornfontein Campus. Though these schools are directly adjacent to the park, they do not officially make use of it during schooling hours as they have their own green playing fields and spaces. The Park lies along Nugget Street, a major arterial that links Doornfontein to Johannesburg CBD, where many people (mainly workers, school children and students) walk and drive past every day. It has a number of informal traders on its edge selling sweets, snacks and cigarettes as well as mini bus taxis that are informally parked on the streets adjacent to the parks. The area is undergoing change where old industrial warehouse buildings are gradually being transformed into residential and commercial buildings.



**Figure 3: End Street North Park is largely vacant in most parts of the day**



**Figure 4: The Park is completely fenced off, with current users using a vandalized entrance to enter**



**Figure 5: Young school boys often seen playing soccer in the Park in the late afternoons**



**Figure 6: Homeless people found using the park to sleep**

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Upon analysis of its users and amenities, the Park seems to be a place of contestation in the types of users that it, and the surrounds it has. The park itself is fairly underutilised, however it is often occupied by a number of homeless people and informal waste pickers who assemble their waste there and also use the park as a place to sleep. The time where the park is mostly busy is in the late afternoon where young boys play soccer and a few young people sit and rest in the park. However organisations such as IH Harris Primary School try and enforce control over who can use the park.

It has a metal fence surrounding it and is completely locked on all its edges. It is supposed to be only open upon receiving permission from the school to whosoever wants to rent it out for use during the day. It has however been was vandalised and opened by the waste pickers as an entrance on a small corner on its southern end.

According to an NGO called the Inner City Ambassadors (ICA) that facilitates soccer related activities for children in the inner-city, the programmes and activities in End Street North Park have been prohibited by the IH Harris School who own the park.

“The school has been a stumbling block for us to utilise that facility and it is not in use. I have never seen their children using the park for their sports programme there. What they do is they either rent it out to outside people who come here to utilise the facility and pay for whatever that they pay”.



**Figure 7: Park has sign saying "This Park Belongs to Children" however local school children are blocked off and prevented from using it**

© Mavuso 2015

The surrounding night clubs and shebeens are also a contentious part of the surrounds of the park as they are deemed to be inappropriate use/activity to be situated next to a park. They operate mostly during the night and are said to be very noisy during late night hours by surrounding residents. This can also be seen to have a potential negative impact on the area that is line to benefit from new park upgrades on End Street North Park and Nugget Street Park (see Figure 2).

The new park developments could also be problematic if no socio-economic change occurs in the area, where people are still poor and unemployed, as current residents may not value the public space if it doesn't help towards solving their socio-economic issues.

In line with the CoJ's Corridors of Freedom (CoF) densification plan, the Doornfontein area is earmarked by a set of developers who are set to redevelop bad buildings in the area, in projects worth approximately R200 million (The Star, 2015). These future developments are set to benefit the End Street Park as well as future businesses set to be located around the Park are interested in investing into the park's upgrade, particularly with the prospect of new customers coming from the

new student accommodation being built nearby. This however raises the question of the place of current residents in the new space being imagined by developers.

#### 4. Learning from the End Street South Park Upgrade Project

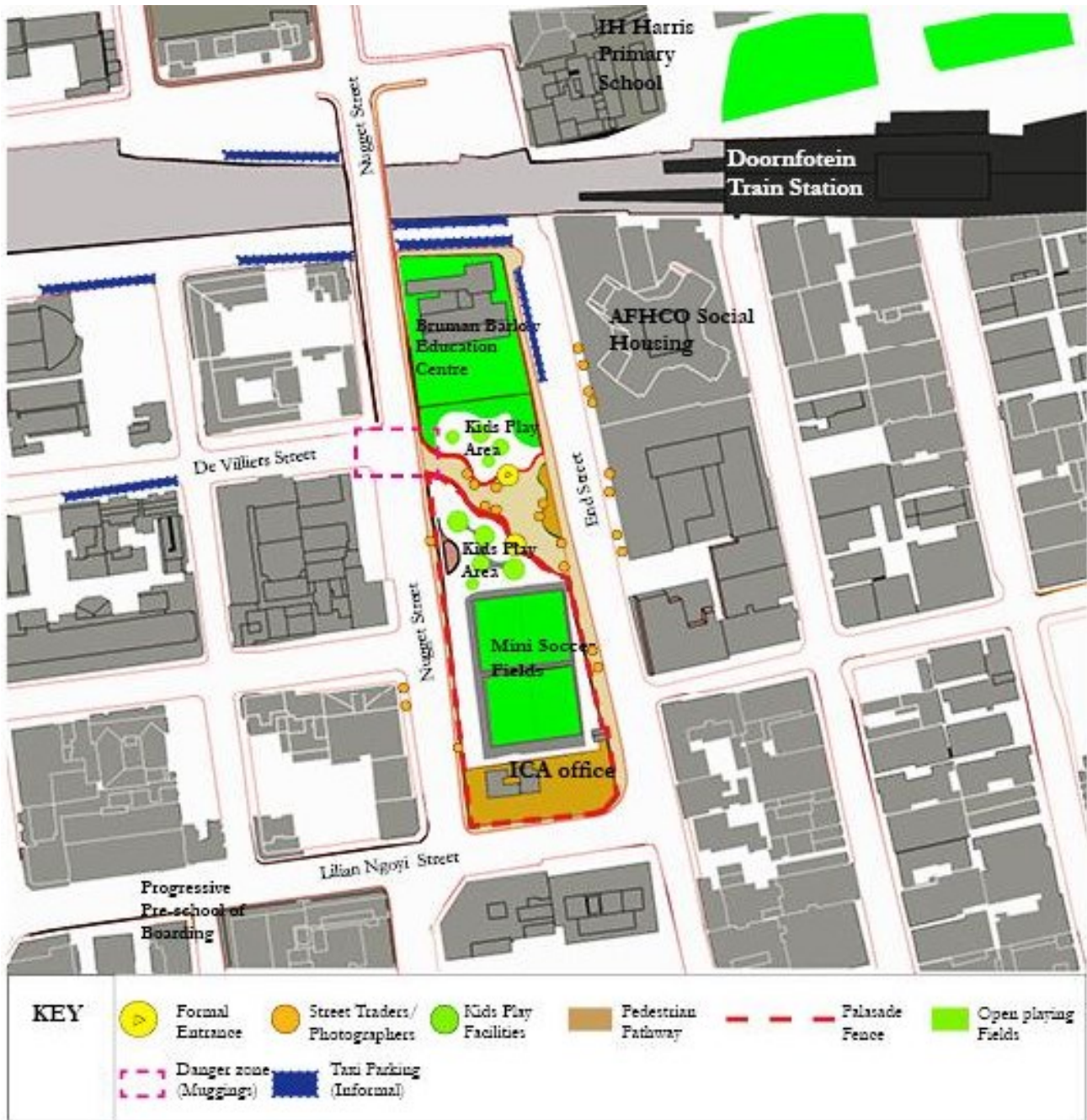


Figure 8: End Street South Park Facilities and surrounding uses

End Street South park is located on the on the south end of Nugget Street and the railway line (see **Figure 8**) and was commissioned for a R6M upgrade in 2008 by the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA). It was redesigned prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup held in South Africa as part of the final phase of the upgrading of the upgrading of the Ellis Park Sports Precinct. The original park was completely neglected and deteriorated; however its redesign has given it a new lease of life with sporting facilities and child play areas. The upgraded park is approximately 12,000m<sup>2</sup> in size and has a pedestrian walkway going through it that connects Doornfontein train station to Noord taxi rank (AFHCO, 2015). It has provided inner-city users and residents around Joubert Park, Marshalltown and Jeppestown with a place to meet, play and rest within the largely hostile state of the inner-city.

#### 4.1. Findings on the Ground in End Street South Park – Successes and Failures of the Park’s Upgrade

The park’s upgrade was part of greater urban renewal project and was to be used as a play park linked to the Ellis Park Sport Precinct.

##### *Activities and User groups*

This resulted in the park predominately consisting of kids playing spaces and active sports facilities such as soccer fields and is hence predominantly used by children and the youth. Although the park caters mostly for the youth, elders use it for community or religious meetings whilst informal traders sell along the edges of its fence.



**Figure 9:**  
Design  
Successes of  
the park:  
Urban  
Playground for  
Youth  
(Mavuso,  
October 2015)

The park also has a pedestrian walkway that allows pedestrian flow through it and acts as a space of transition between the inner-city and Doornfontein area. Due to the amount of pedestrian thoroughfare that the walkway allows, it has also become a gathering space for a few informal traders (mainly photographers, broom and shoe makers) who take advantage of the high number of pedestrians passing through it as prospective customers.

The play and sports facilities in the park have had a lot of positive impacts in the area (particularly for children and the youth) as they are now able to stay active and socialise after school as well as engage in educational/learning outdoor activities during schooling hours. However, youth gangs have formed in large parts of the park and engage in excessive gambling and smoking. On countless occasions of my visits to the park I witnessed young children (particularly boys) smoking cigarettes or drugs and engaging in gambling activity in the corner spots of the park, which was a highly alarming and worrying scene. The installing of dominantly youth orientated facilities, and less for other groups such as adults, might have been a mistake in the design that has allowed for these illicit activities to happen as these activities happen because of lack of adult watch or supervision.



**Figure 10: The Park is maintained and managed by AFHCO & ICA**



**Figure 10: Park predominantly consists of kids playing facilities**



**Figure 11: Elders and Religious groups use Park for meetings**



**Figure 13: Photographers and traders use benches along path to do business**

### ***Park Design and Management: Negative Effects of Park Fencing***

As mentioned earlier, the park was commissioned for an upgrade in 2008 by the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) who, after the upgrade, approached AFHCO Property Management seeking assistance with the management and maintenance of the park, due to AFHCO's experience and presence in the area. AFHCO Property Management has been managing the park since 2009, and has been funding all the costs of its management, maintenance and surveillance through AFHCO Holdings (AFHCO, 2015).

Local shop (located adjacent to the park) owner Leon (not real name), stated how he felt the park's upgrade and current management has had positive impacts on the area:

“From the stories that I have heard about this area before, [the park upgrade] was apparently extremely dangerous. Because of all of the homeless kids and people that were sleeping there, the theft and crime levels were much higher. So the overall presentation to this area that the park upgrade has brought is really good. It makes our section look much better than the rest of Nugget Street, because it's palisaded off and it's cleaned up”.

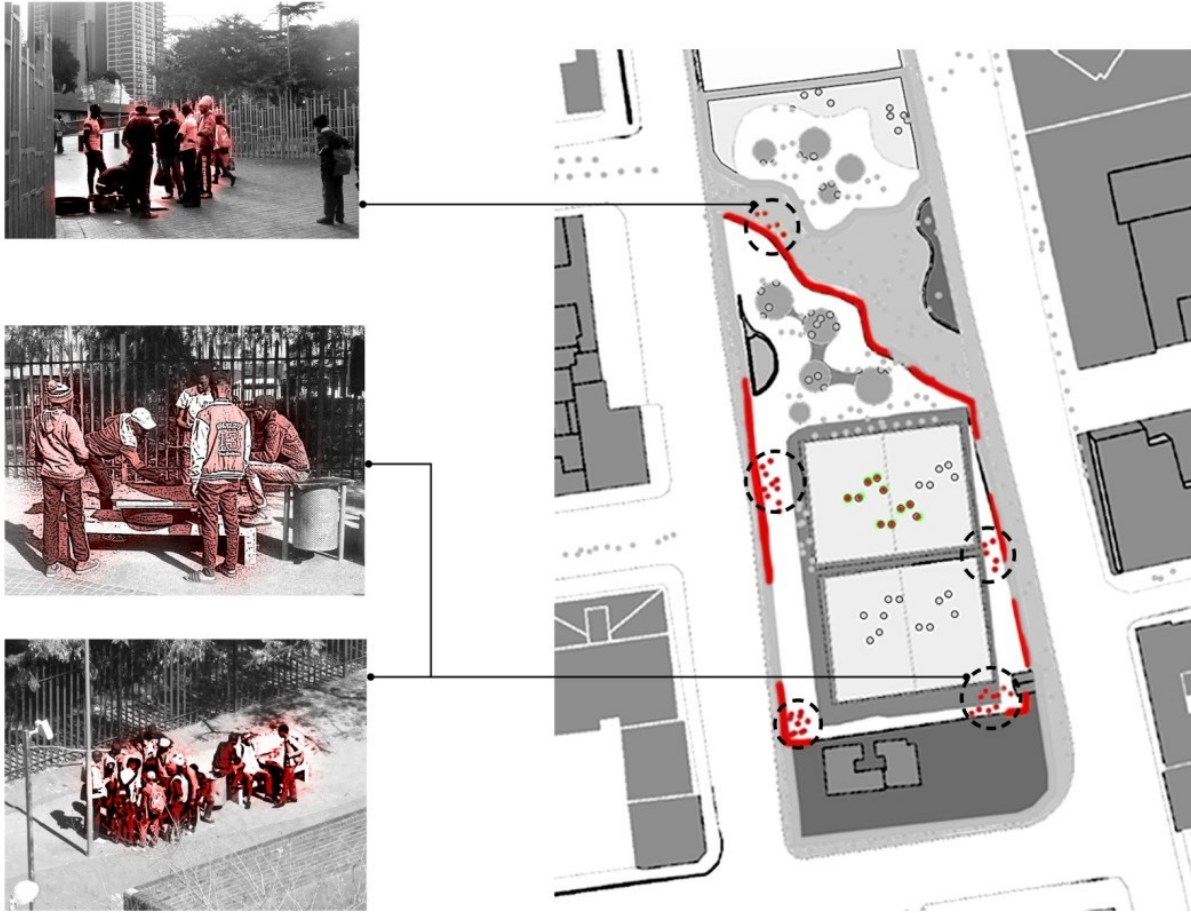
With regards to the servicing and general maintenance of the park, Leon stated that it gets cleaned on a regular basis and had (on the time of the interview) been recently painted, particularly the toilets.

“There was an accident here not so long ago that damaged the palisade fence and the repairs to the fence were done the following day. So the general maintenance is improving the overall look of the area”.

When asked about what could be changed or done better to the part for it to benefit them, Leon stated;

“I think what they've done with the park is mostly good for the community simply because on a daily basis we see a lot of kids playing soccer and they set up teams and so on, which is obviously keeping kids off the street and giving them something to do. So I think in general, the park has uplifted this community”.

At face value, the park looks to have no visible problems, with its renovation seemingly successful and current conditions looking good according to surrounding residents and business owners who often don't make use of it. However, upon spending time there and conducting various interviews with its various users, it appeared that there were a lot more issues in the park than those that immediately meets the eye. From the interviews conducted with some of the users of the park it seems that the presence of security guards and cleaners has not been enough to ensure cleanliness and safety within the park.



**Figure 12: Design Failures: Negative Effects of Park Fencing**

A number of the young boys (mostly primary school going) interviewed in the park expressed how unhappy they were with the current condition of the park and expressed how unsafe they felt most of the time. They mentioned how they sometimes get bullied by some of the older boys who use drugs and gamble in the park and because of the hidden spaces created by the fencing; they are not seen and assisted by older people or the security guards outside the park. One of the boys (primary school going) interviewed in the park stated:

“What I don’t like about the park is that there is gambling and smoking of weed taking place and all these things are bad. The security guards do not monitor the park as they should and we don’t feel safe inside. The park is also no longer well maintained, even though it is cleaned every day but it is hard to see that it is clean”.

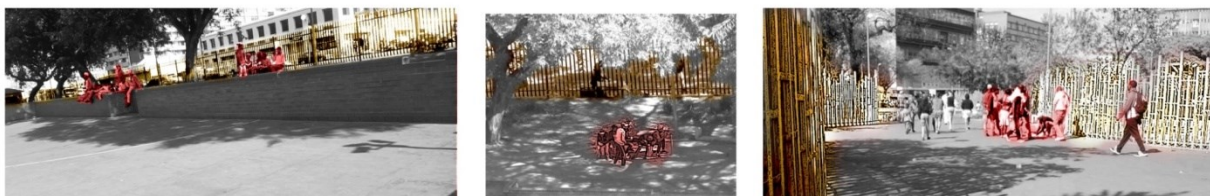
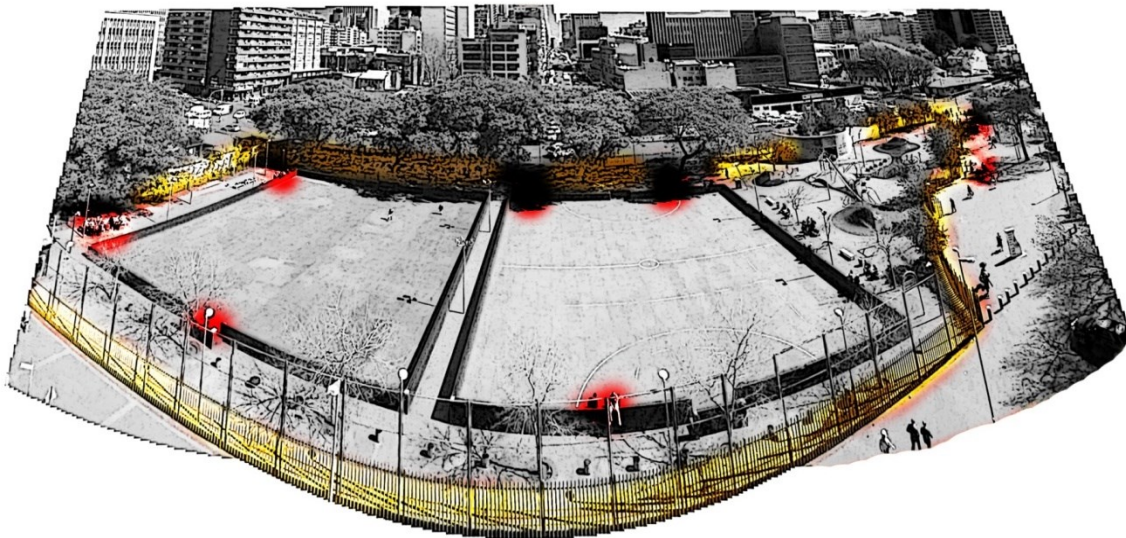
Some of the school children who were ever-present in the park mentioned that only time they felt completely safe in the park was when Thomas from ICA was around, as he would reprimand and chase out all the guys that were gambling and smoking in the park which would give them relief from the fear of being bullied. Residents, shop owners, informal traders and taxi drivers in the area

also expressed how they often witness how criminal activities such as muggings happen on the edges of the park, particularly in late or early hours of the day.

Wilfred (not real name), a worker at a shop adjacent to the park, also expressed how he felt the area around the park isn't completely safe despite it being fenced off and watched over by private security guards:

“The park is good and safe inside, but outside it is not alright, especially along Nugget Street from the top to the bottom where it ends. I always see when students from UJ [University of Johannesburg] walk past here along the park they get mugged”.

It can therefore be said that although the fence was intended to assist in the management and control of who accesses and uses the park for safety reasons, it can be argued to, paradoxically, be one of the contributors to the occurrence of illicit activities in and around the park.



**Figure 13: Illicit Activities such as gambling and drug dealing happening in corners and fence edges of the park**

Indeed, it contributes towards creating hidden spaces for illicit activities such as smoking and gambling inside the park (see Figure 15) and acts as a hindering edge between the street and the park itself, allowing for muggings to happen away from the eyes of the public and the deployed private security inside the park.



## 4.2. What Is Public In the Park? – Perceptions of Managers and People

Part of the investigation of the happenings of End Street Park South involved obtaining the perspectives of the end-users and the managers of park on what they deem are the meanings of publicness in a park and what the key aspects of a park's design and management are that ensure that the park remains as public and as open as possible. Findings from the interviews conducted with the users of End Street (North and South) Park and managers of the parks such as AFHCO, ICA reveal differing thoughts on how the parks need to be designed and managed.

For some of the end-users interviewed, the level of publicness in the park is represented by the ability of different users with different interests and needs to use the park freely without any dictatorship by security forces such as private security guards, the police or city authorities on what they can or cannot do in the park. For the more vulnerable (and often undesirable) users of the park, such as the homeless, waste pickers and informal traders, they believe that if public parks weren't so regulated by City officials and the police, they would feel a greater sense of ownership towards them and ensure that they stay clean and well looked after.

According to a street photographer, Abel (not real name), who runs his photo-taking business around the park, photographers like himself are able to freely and safely take photos in the park as opposed to outside on the streets.

“The particular reason why I like this park is that we [photographers] don't get hindered by other people. Forces like the Metro Cops or some other criminals who would do as they please to us in the streets don't do so in the park. The park is safer... safer than outside by the streets. Because when people are taking photos anything can happen from all the *tsotsis* [criminals] that are moving around the area. On the street they can rob us off the cameras, but when we are here, we are safe. We see this park as our own office”.

The vision that private managers of the parks such as AFHCO often have, however, is contrary to this as they seem to see public park space along the way in which Mitchell has defined official conception of a park: an “open space for recreation and entertainment subject to use by an appropriate public that is allowed in” (Mitchell, 2002, pg. 115). This means that users such as the homeless, informal traders or waste pickers are not allowed to sleep, sell or collect their waste in the park.

Answering on his thoughts on issues of use and publicness in End Street South Park, Thomas from ICA expressed that he believed that there needs to be a higher level of control and coordination from park managers for their use and maintenance to be sustainable.

“If you are going to keep having ‘public space’ where there are going to be activities that are uncoordinated then it is useless, because believe me, it can be refurbished this year, then next year it will be worse than last year in what you saw before it was refurbished, because nobody is controlling it. Hence the example of AFHCO as a sponsor that has leased the park from JCPZ to ensure that it is properly maintained and managed is a good one. If all the parks, after being refurbished could enter

into this kind of an agreement then I tell you, you can have anything happening there, as long as it is going to be coordinated”.

This comment from Thomas suggests that the managers of End Street South Park (i.e. AFHCO and ICA), don't see the park as a “public” space but rather as their own “private” space that they need to have full control over in terms who comes into the park and what they do there. With reference to the findings illustrated above however, they, as managers, are failing to fully enforce control over the daily users and activities in the park on their own, as the illicit activities illustrated in the section continue to happen. This therefore highlights the shortcomings of a completely ‘private’ led park management system and will be further critiqued in the following section. One could argue that no solution is perfect, and that this “privatisation” is a lesser evil and allows for at least minimal level of management. What we would like to investigate however, is whether another type of (more inclusive) collective management would not be possible, and also more efficient.

## **5. Critique of the End Street South Park design process - Readily made designs might not be conducive to solve park issues**

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In looking towards implementing the End Street North Pilot Project, it is crucial that JCPZ considers and learns from both the successes and failures of the End Street South Park upgrade. As part of their main goal of improving use and safety in the city's parks, JCPZ envisions making parks accessible, inclusive, safe, vibrant and environmentally sustainable public spaces. Part of this according to their vision will involve deepening citizen involvement/engagement in improving quality, management and safety in the parks. It is however important to acknowledge that maximum use and safety in parks is not something that can be achieved or ‘fixed’ once and for all through design. The processes and outcomes of the design, particularly with regards to the stakeholder engagement process, of End Street South, are therefore critiqued in this section to build a set of recommendations for the execution of the End Street North Project.

Figure 16 (below) is an illustration of the process that was undertaken in the upgrade of End Street South Park. Prior to the park's upgrade, AFHCO applied to lease the park from JCPZ as it wanted to help improve its condition and reduce the high rate of crime in and around it, which was negatively affecting their business. The park was then commissioned for an upgrade in 2008 by the JDA who appointed Newtown Landscape Architects (NLA) to redesign and redevelop it. Upon completion of the upgrade the JDA approached AFHCO Property Management seeking assistance with the management and maintenance of the park, because of AFHCO's experience and presence in the area. Since 2009 AFHCO Property Management has been managing the park, with all expenditure being funded by AFCHO Holdings, which to date has cost in excess of R1million (AFHCO, 2015).

## The Project Process & Stakeholders

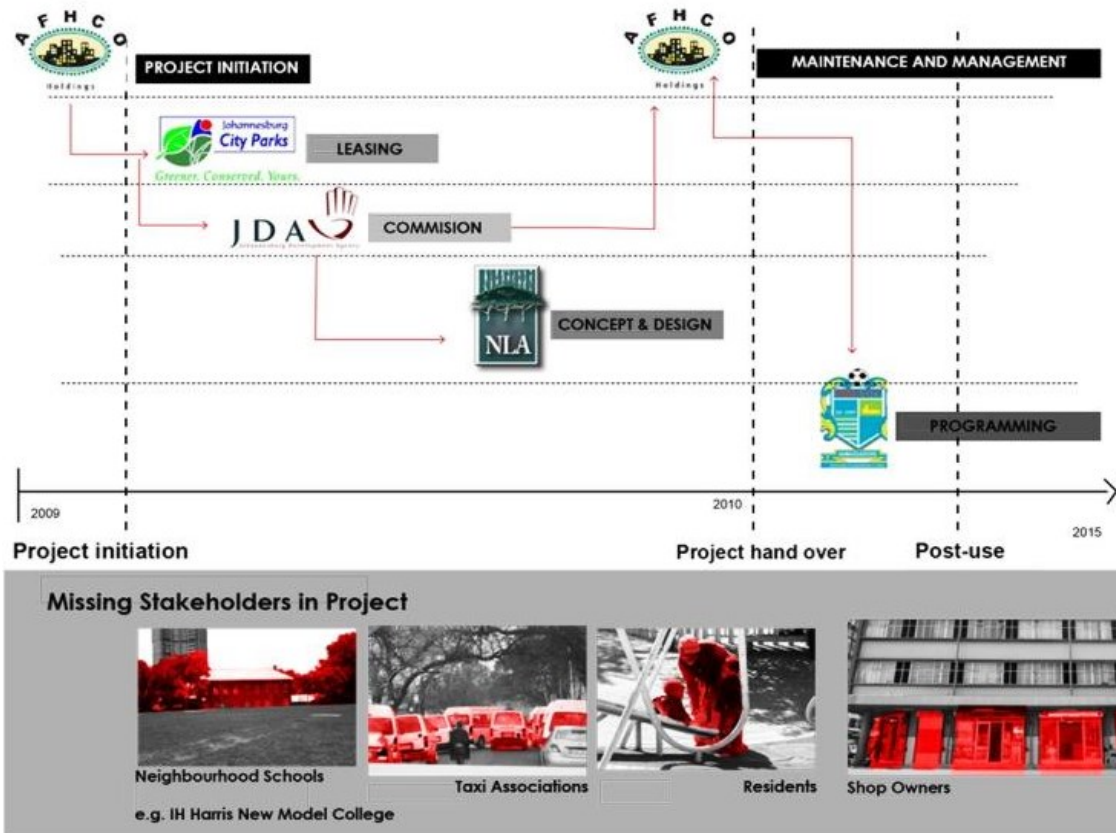


Figure 14: Design Process followed in Design of End Street South Park (Mavuso, 2015)

The process and outcomes of the design of End Street South Park, as section 4 revealed, weren't entirely successful with various shortcomings and can therefore be critiqued in the following ways.

### 5.1. Implementing and Managing Park Safety Measures

Firstly, the approach to the control and regulation of park use and activities as well as general access by AFHCO revealed certain flaws and shortcomings on both their own capacity to manage and how the general users of the park feel about the space. In terms of regulating and controlling the illicit activities that occur in the park, AFHCO, as a sole manager, is not able to stop the gamblers and drug dealers often situated in the park from entering and using it for their dealings. It completely relies on the security personnel it has hired to prevent such activities, who (according to the park users interviewed) are either involved in these activities or choose to turn a blind eye on them due to fear or disinterest in intervening.

The lack of a community/stakeholder engagement process before the upgrade of End Street South Park was done meant that visions, ideas, current and potential challenges of the park upgrade were not discussed and shared amongst all relevant stakeholders in the park which has had various (social

and financial) costs on the day to day running of the facility. Findings from the interviews suggest that crucial stakeholders in the area such as Residents, Schools, Shop Owners and Taxi Drivers, Street traders and Homeless people in the area were not involved to discuss ways in which they can all collaboratively or separately play a role in dealing with the social ills in the area through the park upgrade. Only the more institutionalised stakeholders such as AFHCO, JCPZ, JDA, NLA and ICA were involved (according to an interview with AFHCO) in the process of the park design, upgrade and management.

AFHCO has since 2009 spent, an excess of R1M in expenditure relating to management of the park and continues to spend a lot of money in employing security guards and cleaners and installing high fences to try and keep the park and its surrounds clean and safe. This is very important and useful for the park management. This however, as the aforementioned findings reveal, is not dealing with safety issues in the park or overall area sufficiently. The cost implied by this vision of management, which requires private security and the ICA to be permanently present, as opposed to supplemented by a more community driven social regulation of park uses, has been very high with limited results in achieving safety and security.

Stakeholders such as Residents, Shop owners, Taxi Drivers and Street traders who witness and are directly affected by crime in the area could have been engaged in coming up with a neighbourhood based surveillance measures or methods such as the “I’ll-be-seeing-you” community enforcement strategy, which primarily aims at deterring anti-social behaviour through the increased possibility of detection (Jones, 2002, pg.23). This surveillance approach operates through introducing an ‘authority presence’ in and around the immediate park area by putting responsible people in the park to look over daily proceedings.

## **5.2. Determining appropriate Park Activities and User Groups**

The lack of involvement of crucial stakeholders in the conceptualization and design stages of the End street South Park upgrade can also be argued to be detrimental to the final outcomes of how the park is currently used and who it caters for.

The informal traders situated around the park provide an example of this, where they were not considered during the process of formulating the design, as they are not seen as formal or appropriate for the park. They have found themselves needing to appropriate the park in certain ways that often hinders users to use the park (e.g. using benches/sitting areas to trade). This can be linked to them not being involved in the design process and their need for trading spaces in and around the park not being considered. A photographer stated;

“...This Park was not built for traders. It is for people that take photos and the rest of the people... Traders are not allowed to be selling here. Some traders would be chased away from the park by the security guards because they are not allowed to be trading in the park.”

A higher presence of adults in the park, through the inclusion of facilities suitable for them would have contributed to a less costly and more effective community driven park management system where elders would watch over the younger people and ensure that they do not engage in the aforementioned illicit activities. This dynamic of an inclusion of other users and adult supervision is alluded to by Abel the street photographer. When asked about how the park in End Street South can be improved he said;

“What I would like to see happening in the park now is for the peace to be maintained and that arrogant attitudes from school-kids should not be allowed. And the park should be available for us to sell inside it as currently traders are not allowed to be selling here”.

The decision by NLA Architects to include predominately kids/youth oriented active facilities such as the soccer fields, swings and jungle gyms has meant that the park excludes a lot of older people in the area. In addition to failing to meet objective of inclusivity that is desired within a public space, this decision has also proven costly in terms of achieving safety and security for the children and youth who use the park as gang activity and drug abuse by some of the youth who use the park goes on without adult supervision and reprimanding.

The re-introduction of park facilities for elders into End Street South Park would for instance provide a permanent adult presence during working hours that would watch over and condemn activities such as gambling and drug use by young people that currently happens in the park. In comparison to AFHCO’s current approach which is more exclusive and costly, this approach would be more inclusive, less costly and would help increase the community’s capacity to self-manage. It would not mean doing away completely with private security, but it would importantly complement, fill the gaps, and multiply instances (people, moments, institutions) where collective control is exerted.

### **5.3. Community value and sense of ownership in the Park**

The research revealed the park to be a place of contestation due to conflict in senses of ownership. From the interviews conducted and some of the remarks made from the various stakeholders of the park, it seems there is division and differing thoughts between the general public and managers of the park. The outcomes of the park upgrade reflect an “Us vs. Them” situation between the general users and the institutions responsible for managing and maintaining the park, where neither party is entirely happy with how the park is used or managed. The community also didn’t seem to see the park as their own asset but rather as something that belongs to AFHCO and the City. On one hand the park is seen as a public space, open to all, but on the other hand organisations such as the ICA feel there needs to be an element of control over who can use the park. According to Thomas from ICA,

“To support the arrangement that is happening between our sponsor [AFHCO] and the City, we are ensuring that whatever activity that happens here, be it sport related or not, is coordinated by us [ICA], because we are the residents of this park. These [the public] are the visitors of this park. Everybody

here is a visitor and we [ICA] are the residents. However we say we welcome everybody, provided that this is how you are going to visit us; tell us what time you are coming and what is it that you are coming here to do. If it's just about all-day hanging out, how are you going to do it? We want to know that. If you are not going to tell us then it means you are an intruder, which means you are not welcome”.

The above comment from Thomas reveals that both ICA and the main managers AFHCO do not see the End Street community as a stakeholder in the park. They see the park as their own (private) asset and not a public asset that community members can have control over. This can also be seen in them not involving community members in the planning and design process as well as in the current management of the space in any way. The consequence of this could be increased instances of vandalism, theft of facilities and littering within the park, which would increase the costs of maintenance to AFHCO. This lack of value and ownership from the community also causes an increased withdrawal of legitimate users from using the parks, resulting increased criminal activities and a complete appropriation of the space by gambler's and drug dealers.

## **6. Recommendations –The benefits of a participatory approach in the design process**

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Too often, parks or other recreational facilities in Johannesburg inner-city suffer from the prevalence of lawless behaviours such as illegal occupation and activities by the homeless, drug dealers as well as the misbehaving youth (Gotsch *et al*, 2013). These facilities are also vandalised and misused as park users often lack a sense of ownership of the facilities and lack reasons on why they as citizens have a stake in management and maintenance of the park facility. JCPZ acknowledges that these issues found in the city's public open spaces are often a manifestation of the fragmentation and fluidity of the inner city's community and that these issues cannot be completely addressed through high fences, law enforcement and regulation of use by park officials alone.

“We need new visions of how parks can be managed and maintained, how they can generate income and use resources differently, how they can empower communities and drive social action. It's time to re- imagine parks” (Neal, 2013, pg.4).

This section of the report presents a set of recommendations on possible approaches to inner-city park design and management that JCPZ can test as part of their vision to foster inclusivity and safety in the city's public open spaces. It proposes various alternatives that can be used to manage against the day-to-day misuse of facilities and engagement in crime within the respective inner-city parks which would inclusive and reduce the huge social and financial costs that both the City and communities who use the public spaces currently incur.

## The Project Process & Stakeholders

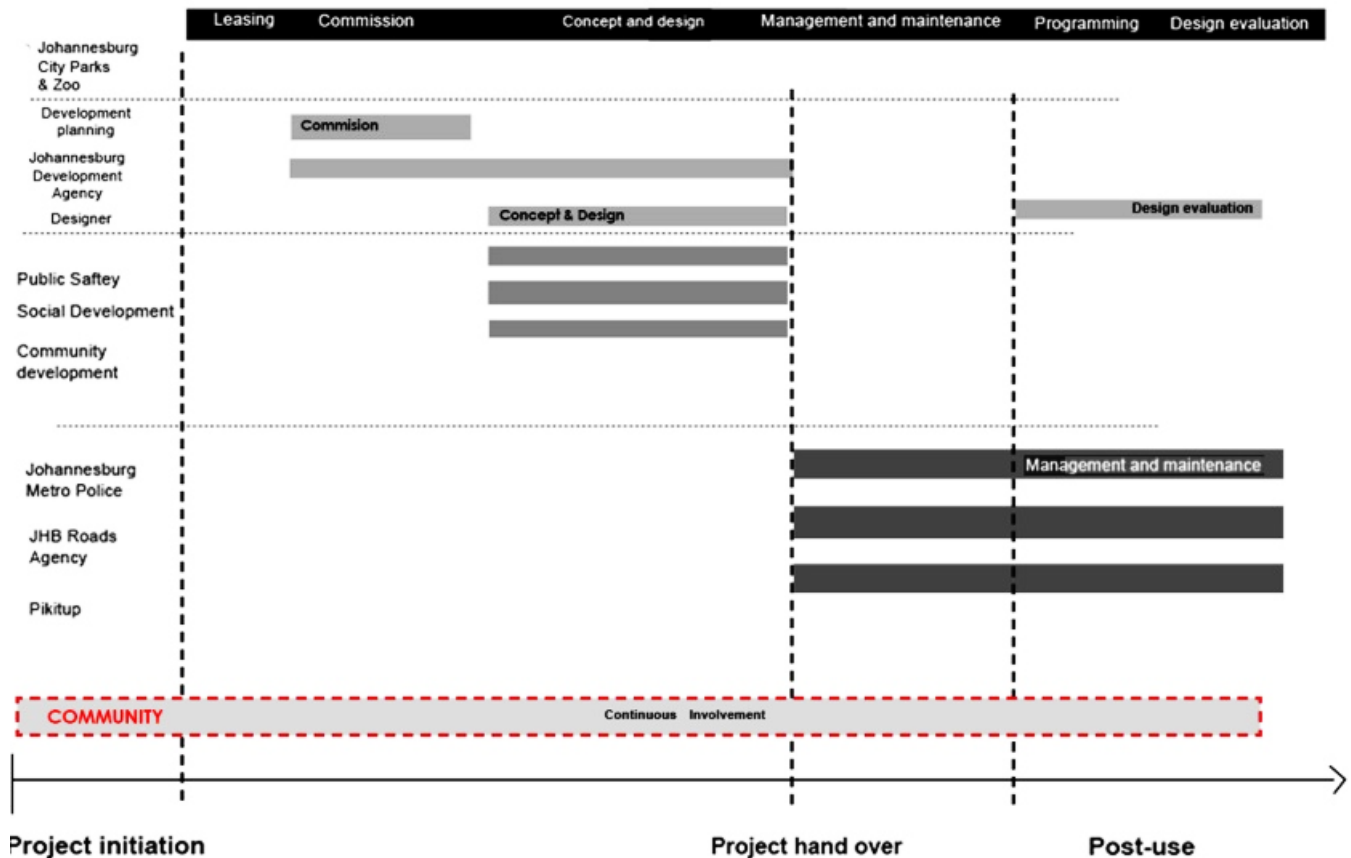


Figure 15: Illustration of recommended collaborative park design and management model

### 6.1. Inclusive/collaborative management for reduced maintenance costs

As it has been argued throughout the report, JCPZ could benefit from a higher degree of community engagement and participation with users of inner-city parks within the planning and design phases of park upgrades, if these spaces are to reach their desired level of use and safety. For community participation to be most effective in terms of time and resources it has to occur early and often.

“In fact, the most fruitful meetings may occur even before planners put pen to paper” (Enger, 2005, pg. 22).

One of the greatest challenges the City continues to face is that of homelessness and informal activities that happen in around parks. It is the argument of this report that these often ‘undesirable’ users of parks be involved when possible in the design and post-management of the parks if acts of vandalism, drug dealing, misuse of facilities and crime are to be reduced in the city’s parks.

Interviews that were conducted with some of the homeless user of the End Street North Park, who are also informal waste pickers, revealed their desire to be engaged with during the park planning and management process. They expressed how they would like to be allowed to use the redeveloped park, with an acknowledgement that some of illicit activities they sometimes engage such as smoking should not be done when young people are in the Park.

“Children should be allowed to play in the park as we all know that parks belong to them. However they [Park designers/Officials] should give us a portion of it as well so we can also relax and watch as the kids play.”

“When the kids want to play during the day maybe we disturb them when we smoke our “stuff”, so we are willing to vacate the park during the day and return at night when the kids are not around anymore”.

Institutions such as homeless shelters, rehab facilities, contractors/employers, law enforcers (police), the private sector and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that deal with social development issues could be brought in as an intermediary as they possess knowledge on the issues and needs of the more vulnerable users of parks that are aforementioned, and could usefully mediate to assess needs and capacity and involve a variety of informal groups into the design and management of the park. They are the most adept in identifying potential problems and opportunities that the park will present based on their knowledge of their various fields of social development. Programming the park in consultation with the homeless (perhaps mediated through social workers and NGOs) can therefore allow for an agreement to be reached on how best they can use the park in certain times of the day and night without infringing on children’s play activities.

“Since we are poverty stricken when they [city officials] come [to upgrade the park], they shouldn’t handle us with violence. They should just give us things to clean such as leaf racks and plastic bags so that we can clean the park. We don’t even want them to pay us. They can pay us by not chasing us out of the park and not beating us”.

This response from the interviewee suggests that the homeless users of the park are willing to be involved in daily management and maintenance of the park, in taking up responsibilities such as cleaning and looking after it. The City would benefit from making use of homeless people and informal workers in maintaining parks, in at least two ways: it would be a pragmatic approach to deal with the presence of homeless people (who are there and will remain there in the foreseeable future), making them contribute to the management of the park, and modify or regulate the potentially negative effects of their own current practices (littering, smoking, damaging the fence to get access, for instance).

## **6.2. Using Community Based Measures for increased Safety and Security**

Continuous high levels of crime in the inner-city continues to be the dominant challenge JCPZ faces in managing parks and ensuring safety and security for all park users. Fragmented families, poverty, economic exclusion, unemployment and inequality faced by a lot of the inner-city’s residents are



amongst the main socio-economic drivers or causes of violence and crime that occurs in the city's parks (Gotsch *et al*, 2013). In light of this, JCPZ can better understand and effectively deal with the multiplicity of factors that affect safety in urban park's if it pursues more unconventional methods of crime prevention that are based on a collective, community based approach to park control, policing and criminal justice.

One of the less costly (and more inclusive) safety and security measures JCPZ can undertake is facilitating the creation of a network of local residents who live immediately overlooking the park and keep a watchful eye on its comings and goings would be a very effective and low cost measure to improve safety in the park. This network of 'Park Watchers' would be mandated to take videos and photographs of incidents and offenders and publish them on various media platforms (e.g. leaflets or posters) and on social network applications such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, for the rest of the community to see and be aware of. This direct use of community members and people such as the homeless in the surveillance of parks would make for quicker and more direct action against crime by omitting the need for the local council to act as an intermediary and ease the burden on park officials to deal with safety issues.

In the case of End Street North Park, the surrounding night clubs, shebeens and brothels can be also be engaged to come up with agreements to provide surveillance cameras and security personnel during the night. This can include employing some the homeless occupants of the park as informal watch men that guard the facility against thefts, drug dealing, vandalism and graffiti and also giving public assistance to retrieve stolen items and identify perpetrators, since they spend a lot of time in the streets and bear witness to a lot of crime. Not only would this measure be less costly to the City, in opposition, or in complement to, employing private security personnel: it would also reduce the number of homeless people who resort to crime due to them being unemployed and constantly being evicted from public open spaces such as parks.

### **6.3. Investing in the Process rather than Product of a Park Design**

It is the argument of this report that an investment in the design *process* (community/stakeholder engagement process) rather than only on the design *product* would ensure that the investment in the design product does not become vandalised and misused – as early as in the short and medium terms- in the city's parks. Allocating more time into process allows for a debate or dialogue to occur between the people who own, manage and use the park and provides a platform for learning and understanding of why and how they can all work towards keeping the facility clean and well maintained. Representatives of current and (anticipated) future users of the park should be involved in all stages from goal setting to program and project design to ensure that the park caters (spatially) for the needs of all possible users of the parks

These representatives should also include the so-called “undesirables” (the homeless, waste pickers, informal traders, drug users etc.) who are often ignored and excluded as users and stakeholders in parks. Interviews with the one of the homeless people in End Street North Park revealed some

useful ideas on how the park can be best designed to ensure inclusiveness in use for the people in the city who need it, including themselves.

“What they must do since this park is so big, is that they must separate the park activities into different parts; whereby those who want to smoke and hangout with their lovers or friends and basically do things that are not related to playing in the park can do that on one side. And then on the other side it can be the side where small children can play the games and so on”. If they separate it like that it will be alright for us and there won’t be any problems”.

Although this kind of set-up may seem undesirable in a park, particularly because of the danger it provides on children being influenced into drug abuse, it is important to acknowledge that the will always be a presence of homeless people sleeping (and sometimes using drugs) in inner-city parks. Ignoring their existence or excluding them from the park through high fences, security guards or (brutal) eviction by police will not result in the homeless disappearing and not wanting or needing to use the park. Instead it increases instances of vandalism of fences and crime around the park and does not contribute to goals of social development that parks aim to achieve. As one of the homeless people in End Street North Park lamented;

“This thing of us being beaten up is not alright. You know when these people (police) come and wake you at night whilst you were just sleeping, and they beat you up with sticks and canes, what are they saying to you? They are basically waking you up and sending you to go and steal. They are saying, ‘why are you sleeping? Wake up, go and steal and rob people’. After that when you steal you get arrested, so what are they doing then?”

It would therefore be more beneficial to engage with the homeless, possibly through various intermediary representatives such as social workers, to come up with ways in which they can be used to ensure safety and security in the day to day activities of the park, in exchange for them using the park for their uses in designated areas or times.

It is however important to note that when a park is used by drug users it is not really kids friendly or when a park becomes a homeless shelter full time, it is no longer a park. This means that discussions done with the homeless should also involve the regulation of some of the things they do in the park such as smoking drugs or littering.

#### **6.4. Reducing of outsourcing of design services – Building internal design skills capacity within JCPZ**

The outsourcing of designers and or project managers by the City to design and/or (re)develop the parks is often problematic as designers often fail to sufficiently engage with communities to gain knowledge on the current conditions and needs of the context and the people they are designing for. They also fail to bridge the gap between the state and people. Design consultants are often detached from JCPZ’s institutional vision and framework and, in spite of their professionalism, skills and goodwill, are not necessarily concerned by the challenges of management and maintenance that follow after project handover.

Moreover, upon project handover, there is often no evaluation of the outcomes of the design and how it is impacting (both positively and negatively) to end users. There is generally no follow up or evaluation of the design which will often take time (years) in engaging, evaluating and re-evaluating the design. Having internal designers in JCPZ would allow for this post-park hand-over evaluation to happen, as they can be mandated to do so under the City's Park's management and maintenance policy, which externally appointed designers are not obligated to do. This internal design expertise can also help in the development of a JCPZ park design project team that would be in charge of developing open space urban design frameworks and implementation plans that would ensure that parks are physical integrated to built form, streets, transport, institutions and economies. Project timeframes and budgets will also need to adjusted in order to do this as the process takes time (often years) in engaging, evaluating and re-evaluating the design.

JCPZ would therefore need to build internal skills capacity in order to reduce outsourcing of design work and be better able to first critically assess the possible impacts of a design proposed for a park development or upgrade; second, integrate community participation and management into the design of the park process and product themselves. This insourcing of design expertise will require some resources from City Parks (skills, facilitation, time) and of course the department would have to lobby for increased funding from the City, arguing for how design expertise within the department will in the medium or long run reduce instances of park facility misuse and overall costs of park upgrades.

## **6.5. Continuous Engagement & Evaluation of Design Outcomes after Park Hand-Over**

Community members are often the best source of information what the community's open space needs are and on who will use and benefit from that open space. Engaging them as early as possible in the park development process is therefore highly beneficial. This engagement process can also be more beneficial and sustainable if it is conducted on a continuous (back and forth) basis, both during the concept development and design process as well as after the park is in full operation. This continuous engagement will help in reducing the day-to-day impacts on park facilities (such as misuse and vandalism), which often engender huge costs to both the City and JCPZ in terms of maintenance by increasing the community's sense of ownership and capacity to self-manage the facilities.

This can be done through conducting User Participation and Demand Surveys on how the Park facilities are used on a monthly, seasonally and annual basis. The surveys will help the City record and evaluate how community needs are changing after the park has been opened for use, as the demographics and residents of the area are constantly changing. These surveys can provide detailed information about community preferences and needs and can help JCPZ anticipate which facilities in the park will receive the most use and need the most maintenance. They can also help evaluate the changes in levels of safety in and around the park and if the implementation of other safety measures is needed. Such recreational facility surveys, or other comparable approaches which obtain

feedback from a representative cross section of the community, are essential to developing effective local standards for parks in the inner-city.

## **6.6. Concluding Remarks**

In concluding the discussions on the need to rethink and reformulate the approach towards the way Johannesburg's inner-city parks are designed and managed, it is important to keep in mind that the main aim of this change should be to achieve the highest degree of 'representation of difference' within public spaces and bridge the power divide between the 'haves' and the 'have – not's in terms of the influence and dominance they have on design, management and politics of public space in the city (Schmidt and Németh, 2010). The City would benefit from a strong reflection on the real value of intervening in Inner-City Parks and a higher investment in developing knowledge and internal capacity in design expertise in JCPZ in order to drive and direct the design process towards coming up with relevant solutions for the challenges faced by communities (and JCPZ) in using and managing the parks.

“It is in the right to access, enjoy and participate in urban life, that we must measure how the work of urban designers either denies or provides the ability to exercise that right” (Van Deusen Jr, 2002, pg.150).

JCPZ and all the stakeholders involved in the design and management of parks work hard to ensure that open spaces in the inner-city of Johannesburg (existing and new) enhance the public sphere and improves the sense of belonging and freedom of occupation for all its users. However this task is a difficult one to carry in the inner city post-apartheid Johannesburg marked by crime, poverty and fluidity. To plan and implement the recommended participation processes for inner-city park improvements will require increased resources within JCPZ in terms of skills, facilitation and time in order to implement appropriate and effective design processes and outcomes. Though the availability of these resources within JCPZ is scarce; as the recommendations in the report suggest, it will be beneficial to JCPZ to invest these resources in the collaborative park design or upgrade process as this will create a sense of ownership amongst park users, reducing cases of vandalism, theft and other illicit activities in the park, which will save more resources in the medium and long term– and contribute to increased social development in the Johannesburg inner-city community.

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Inner city parks are both exciting and daunting public spaces to design and to manage. Of crucial importance in dense urban settings, potentially used by an incredible diversity and number of users, they are also always at risk of crystallising inner cities social ills – concentration of poverty, high level of crime, limited sense of community ownership and social control in highly mobile and fluid environments.

Johannesburg inner city parks are no exception. This report looks at the experience of End Street South park, in Johannesburg, which recently underwent a physical upgrade and whose management has been delegated to local housing institutions and related NGOs. Whilst the park upgrade, and its delegated management, have considerably improved the neighbourhood and its public space, there are important shortcomings in terms of safety and security, as well as park management, that come to the fore when engaging with park users and surrounding communities. Issues of gambling and drug use are significant, and perhaps protected by the very exclusive nature of the security management of the park – the fence, the youth orientation of the park, the exclusive reliance on private security and NGO monitoring.

The report explores these practices, and argues for a more socially inclusive, and community oriented, approach to park design and management – pragmatically acknowledging the reality of homelessness and informal traders in and around the park, and offering ideas to make them meaningfully contribute to a sustainable management of the park.



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