

# MEETING REPORT

APRIL 2023

# BEITT MEETING EKURHULENI



**CELEBRATING CONNECTION,  
EXPLORING CONNECTIVITY**



**BUILT ENVIRONMENT  
INTEGRATION  
TASK TEAM**



South African  
**CitiesNetwork**

# BACKGROUND: WHO IS THE BEITT?

“  
The BEITT remains the most relevant and simplified gathering and learning exchange opportunity for the BE community of practitioners. It explores realistic urban solutions and drives implementable solutions.  
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In 2017, the SACN re-established the Built Environment Integration Task Team (BEITT) as a core pillar of its Inclusive Cities Programme. The aim of the BEITT is to place city built environment practitioners at the centre of the programme, to develop a deeper intelligence on the realities of built environment practice, and to start to shift these practices.

The BEITT comprises built environment practitioners from various disciplines across SACN's participating cities, members of the SACN Secretariat, as well as the National Treasury's City Support Programme (CSP). It brings together a community of practitioners to engage in generative conversation, learn together, fail forward and reflect on how to change the institutions tasked with transforming South Africa's cities.

## The BEITT's objectives are:

- To formulate a collective city voice on issues of built environment integration and spatial transformation that is led by city practitioners and rooted in their lived experiences.
- To deepen the collective understanding of practice through case studies, thereby creating a repository of city experiences and practitioner voices to shape the discourse on spatial transformation.
- To continuously improve built environment practice in cities, by using a collective understanding of practice as shaped by the case studies and experiences.

# INTRODUCTION: CONNECTING IN EKURHULENI

On the 18 and 19 of April 2023 the Built Environment Integration Task Team (BEITT) convened in person for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic took the group's engagements online in 2020. Before Covid-19, the BEITT met regularly at venues that were chosen to reflect an appropriate backdrop to the discussions and were intended to be historically meaningful environments. Each meeting, a different city would partner with the BEITT Secretariat to host the meeting and use their city as a physical space through which issues of the built environment could be explored. Re-establishing this tradition of partnering with a city to host the group, **Ekurhuleni's City Planning Department** graciously put up their hand to welcome the BEITT and use Ekurhuleni as a backdrop for the meeting.

This BEITT Meeting was planned slightly differently than usual and took on the format of a **"travelling meeting"**, moving around Ekurhuleni to visit different sites. The programme for the two days worked with the multiple interpretations of **"connection"**, with transport/mobility connectivity featuring as a key focus area, as well as the physical connection of BEITT practitioners meeting again after so long. The Barefoot Facilitator, Rehana Moosajee, facilitated the session, using a methodology that is deliberately designed to create a safe space for reflection and generative conversation among participants.

## MEETING OBJECTIVES

- **Meet and reconnect (first physical meeting since Covid-19) as the Built Environment Integration Task Team (BEITT)**
- **Connect to people, places and parts of the mobility system of Ekurhuleni**
- **Experience and reflect on issues affecting the built environment and its connectivity to the natural environment, economic opportunities and community development**
- **Reflect on the journey of the BEITT and identify the next priority focus areas**



# DAY 1

## OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - THEM BISA

*Why, as public servants,  
do we not use public  
services, such as BRT?*

After gathering under the iconic statue of Oliver Tambo at the OR Tambo International Airport (ORTIA), the group made its way to the City's tourism kiosk to kickstart a conversation about the City's recently launched Harambee bus rapid transit (BRT) service. We had the opportunity to experience Harambee for ourselves by taking the bus to Thembisa. Throughout the ride we heard from Ekurhuleni's transport colleagues about the successes and ongoing challenges of the project. Other Cities congratulated Ekurhuleni on making the strategic decision to link Thembisa and the ORTIA economic precinct through Harambee infrastructure.

Led by a community activist from EnviroCare, Samuel Mashimbi, the group was taken through Thembisa on a walking tour to experience the impact of insufficient waste management on the Kaalspruit Wetland Catchment Area. The Thembisa tour ended at the well-run Thembisa West Library where the group discussed current research about Small-Scale Affordable Rental (SSAR) housing that uses Thiteng in Thembisa as a case study.

*After 20 years how do we  
not know how to  
negotiate better with the  
taxi industry?*



**OR TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (ORTIA):  
TAMBO STATUE**

Contributors: Palesa Tsita (CoE)

Emerging Themes:

- ORTIA as an international point of connection
- CoE: a City of partnerships
- Welcome and check-in

**ORTIA: CITY OF EKURHULENI TOURISM KIOSK**

Contributors: Anele Siwa & Matikane Mathebe (CoE)

Emerging Themes:

- Lack of integration of planning with transport
- We need a nationally integrated transport system
- Taxi negotiations have stopped BRT fully functioning across the country, by we can't use taxis as an excuse
- Using taxis for feeder routes to incorporate them, but they can play a bigger role in the BRT system
- Cities must share their BRT experiences and how to integrate mobility, economic development and settlements; as well as working with taxis



**HARAMBEE BUS TO THEMBISA**

Contributors: Matikane Mathebe (CoE)

Emerging themes

- Harambee is an example of a well-prioritized route linking Thembisa to work opportunities at ORTIA, and connecting key touch-points along the route
- Transport corridors can be better capitalised to improve the built environment offering and economic development along the route
- Transport carries the costs of upgraded infrastructure and service provision

**WALKING TOUR OF THEMBISA**

Contributors: Is'haaq Akoon (CoE); Samuel Mashimbi (EnviroCare Thembisa)

Emerging themes

- We haven't been able to manage waste in Thembisa and it is polluting the Kaalspruit
- We need to advocate for care of water bodies and appropriate infrastructure and service delivery for preservation of water systems
- Community initiatives are not supported by govt but are impacting communities positively
- Community partnerships must be harnessed for quality of life interventions



### THEMBISA WEST LIBRARY & LUNCH

Contributors: Councillor Thoabala Legala Oriel

- Arrival at Thembisa West Library for the afternoon session
- Welcome by Ward 11 councillor
- Lunch served by local caterers



### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON SMALL-SCALE AFFORDABLE RENTAL (SSAR) HOUSING

Contributors: Ros Gordon (consultant); Jack Mosehlane (CoE)

Emerging themes

- Backyard housing is the largest delivery of housing in SA, but it's not regularized
- How to encourage safe buildings through a developmental approach?
- Advocating for a pragmatic approach to planning of encouraging and incentivising compliance



### TOUR OF THEMBISA WEST LIBRARY

Contributors: Marcus Masibi (CoE)

Emerging themes

- The importance of civic amenities that are well run and managed
- Multiple uses of libraries make them well-used and resilient to vandalism



### DINNER AT THE ITALIAN CLUB

- The day ended with a dinner joined by community members from Thembisa and EnviroCare



# REFLECTIONS FROM DAY 1

- Despite incredible infrastructure investment, we are not reaching our spatial transformation objectives.
- We need to pause and reflect, and look at where we have failed. There have been two decades of BRT, but where are we at?
- There is a lack of alignment between what people on the ground are planning for and what we as government are planning for.
- How do we plan in-situ?
- BRT in Ekurhuleni might not be perfect, but still did better than some cities in terms of prioritization, connecting people to where they live and where they work.
- There are so many opportunities for activation and integration along the BRT route in terms of human settlements and economic development.
- Inspiring to see how the BRT route has been designed around key points of connection for the city.
- Why as public servants do we not use public infrastructure or amenities? It means we are disconnected from the user experience.
- It's important to continue in the BEITT, sharing lessons and learning from each other, possibly to share
- While Thembisa might be well connected now to ORTIA, there is a place-making aspect that is missing, that is about basic human dignity.
- Important now is to plan along the BRT to take advantage of the opportunities.
- The walk through Thembisa represented the long walk of how far we still have to go.
- We are not doing enough around the SDGs.
- It was striking to experience the passion of community members (such as Samuel). We have the same goal, but how do we work together to achieve it. And do we as planners actually know best?
- The experience of seeing the community members perceive us as threatening was eye-opening. A community member thought we were there to search the area. What does the community think when they see officials?
- The CPF is doing the work, but they are not given the tools they need to do the work. They are risking their lives.
- Officials are reluctant to go back to the communities and spend too much time in meetings and sitting at computers. It means they are disconnected from what's happening on the ground.
- We can't sit back as Ekurhuleni officials and say "we have achieved" because of BRT.
- After 20 years how do we not know how to negotiate better with the taxi industry?



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# DAY 2

## GERMISTON LIBRARY - CHRIS HANI MEMORIAL

Day two had the group convene at the impressive Germiston Library where a variety of creative initiatives demonstrated the role that libraries can play as a critically important community facility and a space of connection. Using a stage of musical instruments, the group role-played how coalitions and instability in local government is affecting city officials and communities. To end off with a sense of purpose in developing more inclusive Cities, the Chris Hani Memorial and gravesite was the final gathering site of the meeting. The Ekurhuleni team took us through the conceptualisation of the design of the memorial site, the remarkable legacy of Hani, as well as some challenges such as the tragic vandalism of the site.

“  
*Instead of complaining about all the challenges, we focus on the opportunities that do come.*  
”

“  
*Where would South African be today if we still had Chris Hani?*  
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### GERMISTON LIBRARY: COALITIONS DISCUSSION

Contributors: Lwazi Sikiti & Danga Mughogho (SACN)

Emerging reflections on state of coalitions:

- "Uncertainty; no accountability; destroying continuity; poor leadership; political interference without skills; chaos on all my projects; wasted money; challenge to complete projects; selfishness; killing service delivery; kills morale; economic collapse; discouraging youth participation; crime; hunger; community discord"
- "Opportunity for new thinking, creativity, younger leaders, innovation"



### GERMISTON LIBRARY TOUR

Contributors: Karin Muller & Eduard Coetzee (CoE)

Emerging Themes:

- Using technology to make libraries well-used and relevant spaces
- The ability to utilise municipal infrastructure creatively
- The ability to partner to bring funding and projects to the library

### CHRIS HANI MEMORIAL TOUR

Contributors: Eduard Coetzee (CoE)

Emerging Themes:

- To connect historical sites to a tourism route, a more integrated approach is needed between departments
- Vandalism of sites, even of sacred historical significance, has become a key issue across SA cities
- Reflecting on the legacy of Chris Hani



### LUNCH AT HARVARD CAFE, RAND AIRPORT

Contributors: MMC Ald Nomadlozi Nkosi & Palesa Tsita (CoE)

- Closing the meeting
  - Establishing a continuing relationship between SACN and Ekurhuleni
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# WAY FORWARD FOR THE BEITT



The themes emerging from the meeting – both planned and unplanned – will continue to feed into the BEITT work and its research projects, particularly work around vandalism of infrastructure, integration between transport and planning and mobility that will be the focus of the 2023-2024 programme of work. This meeting confirmed how important a safe, engaging space of connection the BEITT provides, especially at this time of institutional instability and ever-more complex working environments for practitioners.

We thank our partners, notably EnviroCare Thembisa as well as the City of Ekurhuleni across its multiple departments for joining hands with us.

**THE EKURHULENI BEITT MEETING HAS DEMONSTRATED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING IN-PERSON IN A CITY.**

“  
*The BEITT must keep encouraging distressed practitioners to remain positive.*  
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# ATTENDANCE

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE PARTICIPATION AND HOSTING OF THE EKURHULENI BEITT 2023

## **City of Ekurhuleni practitioners (host city)**

Palesa Tsita  
Rudzani Mabaso  
Nobuzwe Soldati  
Andile Sitshaluza  
Jack Mosehlane  
Karin Muller  
Nontuthuzelo L. Sipambo  
Celani Myeza  
Tshifhiwa Nkhumeleni  
Eduard Coetzee  
Nyeleti Mahlaule  
Oupa Papo  
Lebogang Mogakabe  
Nisa N. Mthombeni  
Relebohile Mokoqo  
Godfrey Rakhivhani  
Mpho Makgalemele  
Anele Siwa  
Caiphus Netshishivhe  
Is'haaq Akoon  
Marcus Masibi  
Matikane Mathebe

## **Participating city practitioners**

Siyabonga Kakaza (BCM)  
Metse Mabebe (CoT)  
Lemohang Cindi (CoJ)  
Beryl Khanyile (eTh)  
Gcinekile Luthuli (eTh)  
Thobile Dlamini (CoJ)  
Nevana Srikiissoon (eTh)

## **Non-governmental Contributors**

Samuel Mashimbi (EnviroCare)  
Ros Gordon (research consultant)  
Frans Tselapedi (community)  
Chakela Moletse (Ward 11)  
Bekani Rodgers (EnviroCare)  
Meshack Mabaso (EnviroCare)

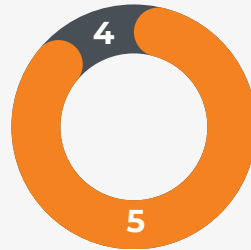
## **SACN Secretariat**

Rehana Moosajee  
Nicolette Pingo  
Clement Mhlekwana  
Lwazi Sikitini  
Danga Mughogho  
Kayla Brown



# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

**How relevant was the BEITT Meeting to your work?**  
(scale of 1 - 5)



**How interesting did you find the experience and content of the BEITT Meeting?** (scale of 1 - 5)



## **What have been your highlights of the BEITT Meeting?**

- Insights from colleagues. Site visits. Facilitators and organisers.
- How city problems are common just different experiences but cannot be solved in isolation.
- Demonstration of how a principle of connectivity can play a role in spatial transformation.
- Together we can if we involve communities. Holistic planning is very crucial to promote sustainable cities.
- The emerging reflection of technocrats to actually take a radical shift in terms of the way of doing things. The mushrooming chronic urbanization really pressured the existing infrastructure and cities need to strengthen linkages and maintenance.
- Having experienced the living conditions of people in informal settlements, the Eku public transport from a big economic hub such as the airport.
- The discussions with the community representatives.
- The BEITT remains the most relevant and simplified gathering and learning exchange opportunity for the BE community of practitioners. It explores realistic urban solutions and drives implementable solutions.

## **What did you find challenging during the BEITT Meeting?**

- Development challenges in communities.
- Seeing the spatial disparity between the ORTIA and Tembisa.
- Confronting some of contraveners of SPLUMA and NBR in Tembisa
- Thinking about how to balance the scales and get community to take ownership and partner with government.
- Changes in the practitioners, it does impact on consistent treading of solutions taken. Lack of engagement or using any existing platform of MMC's so that the direct political accountability is aligned with current realities.

**To what extent did the BEITT Meeting connect you to other practitioners?**  
(scale of 1 - 5)



**Should we continue to host in-person BEITT Meetings?**  
(YES or NO)



**What should be the focus of BEITT meetings moving forward?**

- Integrated development planning.
- Spatial development initiatives that respond to issues on the ground. Climate change as it relates to BEITT, and funding.
- Community awareness on set pieces of legislations guiding the built environment.
- Tools to strengthen IGR and interdepartmental relations to improve service delivery.
- Sustainable development measures to accommodate all the spheres of human habitation.
- Issues around the issuing of building permits and the building standards requirements that communities need to adhere to.
- Improving public participation processes. Improving relationships for efficient governance.
- Programme outcomes on how what we saw on previous meetings - it's important to take a record of account and formulate what could be postured at the City budget Forums, such as reforms, etc. CSP should assist.

**Based on the insights of the BEITT work, what 1 thing in your view could the BEITT collective champion towards improving built environment practice in cities?**

- Sharing info.
- Assess and monitor where we are.
- Collaboration.
- Keep encouraging distressed practitioners to keep being positive.
- Getting the vested interest of the affected stakeholders.
- Collaborative Planning between cities.
- We need to engage on how we can improve collaboration/ partnerships both within municipalities and with community/business, etc.

**FEEDBACK GATHERED FROM 8 REPOSSES**



# PHOTO GALLERY



# PHOTO GALLERY

