

26-30 OCT

Regenerating The City

Regenerating The City

Urban Festival 2026

The South African Cities Network will host a dynamic, week-long Urban Festival that moves beyond traditional conference formats to showcase stories actively contributing to more inclusive and regenerative urban futures. Rather than focusing solely on policy discussions, the event will celebrate the people, partnerships, and practical innovations shaping urban development outcomes in South African cities. October is internationally recognised as Urban Month, culminating in **World Cities Day** on **31 October**. World Cities Day provides an opportunity to reflect on the future of cities, celebrate urban innovation and strengthen partnerships that advance sustainable urban development.

The global theme for World Cities Day 2026 is "Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All." While recognising the importance of adequate housing, the South African Cities Network (SACN) will focus its Urban Festival on the broader theme of **Regenerating the City**, providing space to explore the many social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of urban regeneration. Cities across South Africa are increasingly grappling with complex, interconnected challenges—from deteriorating inner cities and infrastructure pressures to climate resilience, spatial inequality, social cohesion, and inclusive economic development. At the same time, inspiring examples of regeneration emerge through partnerships between government, communities, academia, civil society and the private sector.

The SACN Urban Festival aims to create a platform for sharing these ideas, highlighting practical initiatives, and stimulating conversations that contribute to more inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities. The individual sessions will take place at different times during the week of **26 – 30 October 2026** through a combination of virtual and hybrid events. SACN hosts **Urban Festival 2026** in partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), with individual sessions co-hosted with the Cities Support Programme (CSP), UN-Habitat South Africa Country Office, Metropolis, and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

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Urban Festival 2026

Event Details

The Urban Festival will take place over five days (26–30 October 2026) as a series of online and hybrid sessions hosted on the SACN's virtual platform. Sessions are of varying lengths and will be scheduled at different times during the week to create a flexible, engaging festival atmosphere.

The programme is designed to accommodate busy urban practitioners while encouraging participation from a broad international audience. The festival will prioritise conversation, storytelling and knowledge exchange.

Day 3 is hosted by UN-Habitat South Africa Country Office and Day 5 is hosted by SALGA.

- **Format:** Series of virtual and hybrid sessions staggered over 5 days
- **Dates:** Monday 26 - Friday 30 October 2026
- **Venue:** Online via MS Teams
- **Host:** South African Cities Network (SACN)
- **Partners:** Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Cities Support Programme (CSP), UN-Habitat South Africa Country Office, Metropolis, and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).



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Urban Festival 2026

FESTIVAL THEME – "REGENERATING THE CITY"

In the South African context, **regenerating the city** is about renewing urban places, systems and relationships to create cities that are more inclusive, resilient, productive and sustainable. It recognises that regeneration extends beyond physical renewal or infrastructure investment to include strengthening local economies, improving governance, restoring environmental systems, fostering social cohesion, supporting community-led initiatives, and addressing the spatial inequalities inherited from apartheid. Regeneration is therefore both a process and an outcome—one that requires collaboration across government, civil society, communities, academia and the private sector to reimagine and revitalise South African cities in ways that improve quality of life for all.



26–30 October

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Programme subject to change and confirmation

Urban Festival 2026

26 OCT

MORNING SESSION | ONLINE – 10:00–12:00

Opening of Urban Festival

Regenerating Johannesburg through Community Innovation

AFTERNOON SESSION | ONLINE – 14:00–15:30

Local Government Elections Roundtable

27 OCT

MORNING SESSION | ONLINE – 10:00 – 12:00

Regenerating South African Inner Cities

Co-hosted in partnership with **Cities Support Programmes (CSP)**

28 OCT

PARTNER LED SESSION | HYBRID – 09:00 – 13:00

UN-HABITAT: Advancing the New Urban Agenda

Hosted by **UN-Habitat SA Country Office**

To attend this day in-person, please **click here** to register.

29 OCT

MORNING SESSION | ONLINE – 10:00–11:30

Foresight Masterclass: Designing the Decades Ahead

Co-hosted in partnership with **Metropolis**

30 OCT

PARTNER LED SESSION | HYBRID – 09:00–14:00

SALGA: Urban Month and World Cities Day Celebration

Hosted by **SALGA**

To attend this day in-person, contact Zodidi Meyiswa at **zmeyiswa@salga.org.za**

FOR MORE INFO VISIT **WWW.SACITIES.NET**

Register once. Join throughout the week.

REGISTER HERE

South African CitiesNetwork · cooperative governance Department: Cooperative Governance REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA · cITIES SUPPORT PROGRAMME · SALGA South African Local Government Association Inspiring service delivery · UN-HABITAT · metropolis

Regenerating The City

DAY 1

26 OCTOBER 2026

Urban Festival 2026

MORNING SESSION | 10:00 – 12:00 | ONLINE

Urban Fest 2026 Opening

10:00-10:10: Welcome from the South African Cities Network CEO, Nosipho Hlatshwayo

10:10-10:30: Keynote Address, CoGTA Deputy Director-General Dr Kevin Naidoo



Nosipho Hlatshwayo



Dr Kevin Naidoo

Panel Discussion & Q&A | 10:30-12:00 | ONLINE

Regenerating Johannesburg through Community Innovation

The session explores how Johannesburg can pursue urban regeneration that strengthens community resilience by placing residents, civil society, business and government at the centre of decision-making, drawing on practical examples and lessons from the city's regeneration experience.

10:30: Session Framing

10:45: Moderated Discussion

11:45: Discussion and Audience Q&A

11:50: Closing: Rapid-Fire

MODERATOR



Rehana Moosajee



Tanya Zack



Mbhalenhle Chemane



Lusanda Netshitenzhe

SPEAKERS

Regenerating The City

Urban Festival 2026

DAY 1

26 OCTOBER 2026

AFTERNOON SESSION | 14:00 – 15:30 | ONLINE

Local Government Elections Roundtable

The session explores whether the proposed reforms in South Africa's 2026 White Paper on Local Government can address the systemic governance, performance and political challenges facing municipalities, and improve citizen trust and satisfaction.

14:00: Welcome and Introductions
14:10: Opening Remarks
14:25: Roundtable Discussion
15:10: Plenary Discussion
15:25: Closing Remarks

MODERATOR



Seana Nkhahle

SPEAKERS



Sithembile Mbethe



Andrew Boraine



Bongumusa Zondo



Dr Mpho Tladi

Regenerating The City

Urban Festival 2026

DAY 2

27 OCTOBER 2026
Co-hosted with **Cities Support Programme (CSP)**

MORNING SESSION | 10:00 – 12:00 | ONLINE
Regenerating South African Inner Cities: From Partnerships to Implementation

The session will draw on the experience of the Cities Support Programme and participating cities to explore collaborative approaches to inner-city revitalisation and regeneration.

10:00: Welcome and Introductions
10:10: Setting the Scene: Input from CSP
10:30: City Experiences: From Partnerships to Innovation
11:30: Discussion and Audience Q&A
11:50: Key Takeaways and Closing

MODERATOR



Diale Lodi



Seth Maqetuka



Krishni Gounden



Innocent Mabusela

SPEAKERS



Katlego Dikobe



Lungelo Buthelezi

Regenerating The City

Urban Festival 2026

DAY 3

28 OCTOBER 2026

Partner-led event by the **UN-Habitat South Africa Country Office**

HYBRID SESSION | 09:00 - 13:00

Towards the New Urban Agenda:
The day will focus on advancing implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in South Africa by reflecting on progress captured in the 2026 NUA Progress Report, sharing practical experiences and innovations, strengthening collaboration among government and urban stakeholders, and exploring how national commitments can be translated into inclusive, resilient and regenerative action in cities and communities.

The day will include a number of sessions to share and reflect on the 2026 NUA Report and to highlight the role of community-led efforts in achieving the NUA's transformative commitments.

This session will take place online via the original **Microsoft Teams** link provided. If you want to attend in person, please **register here**

*In-person **spaces are limited**, so please confirm attendance in advance.*



Regenerating The City

metropolis

Urban Festival 2026

DAY 4

29 OCTOBER 2026

Co-hosted with **Metropolis**

MORNING SESSION | 10:00 – 11:30 | ONLINE

Foresight Masterclass: Designing the Decades Ahead

The Urban Futures Masterclass will explore how South African cities can use futures thinking to anticipate change, navigate uncertainty and make better decisions today. Led by Metropolis, the interactive session will introduce practical approaches and international city experiences to help urban practitioners identify emerging trends, question assumptions and consider how these could shape cities over the next 10–20 years. The session will also preview SACN's sixth State of South African Cities Report (SoCR VI), highlighting its future-focused perspective towards 2050.

10:00: Welcome and Introduction to the Urban Foresight Masterclass
10:10: Foresight Masterclass: Designing the Decades Ahead
11:10: SoCR VI Sneak Preview: Transformed Future-Focused City
11:25: Closing

MODERATOR



Rebecca Gatang'i

SPEAKERS



Julia Munroe



Amber de la Haye

Regenerating The City

SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
SALGA
Inspiring service delivery

Urban Festival 2026

DAY 5

30 OCTOBER 2026

Partner-led event hosted by **South African Local Government Association (SALGA)**

HYBRID SESSION WITH INNER-CITY WALKABOUT
09:00 – 14:00
Venue: *Constitution Hill, 11 Kotze Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg 2017*

Urban Month and World Cities Day Celebration
The commemoration of Urban Month and World Cities Day 2026 provides an important opportunity to position local government at the centre of discussions on urban regeneration and affordable housing. Through a focused stakeholder roundtable and a practical learning tour of Johannesburg's regeneration initiatives, the event will advance dialogue, partnerships, and action towards more inclusive, resilient, and liveable South African cities.

This session will take place online via the original **Microsoft Teams** link provided. If you want to attend in person, please contact **Zodidi Meyiswa** at zmeyiswa@salga.org.za to check availability.

In-person **spaces are limited**, so please confirm attendance in advance.





@SACitiesNetwork

www.sacities.net

info@sacities.net

Urban Festival 2026

South African CitiesNetwork

cooperative governance
Department: Cooperative Governance
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

cITIES SUPPORT PROGRAMME

SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
SALGA
Inspiring service delivery

UN-HABITAT

metropolis

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