

City of Joburg supports the rise of 'Silicon Braamfontein'

Newly appointed MMC for Economic Development, Councillor Sharon Peetz has confirmed that economic growth and entrepreneurship will be a core focus of the City administration over the next five years. MMC for Finance, Rabalani Dagada, has also stated that the new City political leadership fully supports ICT programmes and plans to build on the successes that have been recorded thus far.



The recently launched [Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct](#) marks the beginning of 'Tech-in-Braam', an ICT cluster in Braamfontein. The precinct aims to promote the creation of start-up digital technology companies by young entrepreneurs and to also provide skills development. It forms part of the City's goal to ensure that Joburg becomes a smart city by 2020 and that every citizen has access to free Wi-Fi.

Partnering for development

The Tshimologong partnership integrates the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg City administration and major ICT-related corporates. The City has been a partner in the development of the precinct, including having co-founded the Wits-based Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE) in 2005. Since 2014, the City, through its Department of Economic Development, has intensified its partnership with the university and invested in the installation of an extension of its B-Wired fibre network to enable seamless connectivity.

The City has run its digital economy innovative entrepreneurs challenge, [#Hack.Jozi](#), through the partnership with Wits. Joburg has also sponsored 200 incubator places at the Wits-based Digital Innovation Zone, enabling young ICT entrepreneurs from a diverse background to access a one-year programme of support services and business networking.

Private sector support

Work has also been done with the private sector to encourage them to cluster their investments in Braamfontein. Currently companies such as a Telkom, Microsoft, MMI, Cisco and IBM have invested in this digital innovation precinct, with [IBM Research](#) recently launching its twelfth international laboratory in the precinct as part of a R700 million investment project.

ICT entrepreneurship and skills development have been prioritised, including running a digital skills internship called City of Joburg Educating Digital Interns ([Cojedi](#)). Thus far, 500 matriculants have been provided with four months of in-class training and six months of work experience with leading ICT corporates such as Microsoft, Cisco and FibreCo.

The executive director of economic development in the city, Ravi Naidoo, emphasised that the City of Joburg will continue to support the development of the Tshimologong Precinct which is to become Africa's premier technology hub. He explains, "Johannesburg is responsible for 40% of the country's GDP and for 10% of the African continent's GDP. Our city is home to a top-rated university. These facts will ensure that the Tshimologong Precinct becomes the digital hub of our new smart city – and the Silicon Valley of the African continent."

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