

# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CITYLAB



## Green Infrastructure Citylab 1 (Thursday 23 January 2014): REPORT

On 23 January 2014, the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) launched a Green Infrastructure Citylab as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of its Green Assets and Infrastructure project. The Citylab builds on the foundation laid by the 'State of Green Infrastructure in the GCR' report, launched in July 2013. The Citylab will provide a platform for the co-production of policy relevant knowledge between government practitioners and researchers. The aim of this Citylab is to collectively develop, over the course of two years, a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Gauteng City-Region (GCR). This will feed into the Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan being developed by the Gauteng Planning Commission (GPC).

### **Attendance:**

Timothy Nast	GPC
Thembeke Nxumalo	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
Phuti Ngoasheng	GDARD
Mahlodi Tau	SANBI
Elsabeth van der Merwe	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality
Stephan Du Toit	Mogale City Local Municipality
Ayanda Roji	Johannesburg City Parks & Zoo
Theo Bernhardt	Johannesburg City Parks & Zoo
Graeme Gotz	GCRO
Kerry Bobbins	GCRO
Christina Culwick	GCRO

### **Meeting proceedings**

The first Citylab meeting focused on introducing the concept of green infrastructure (GI) and setting the agenda for future sessions. The findings of GCRO's 'State of Green Infrastructure' report were presented and these laid the base for subsequent discussion. The discussion proved valuable in highlighting some of the challenges faced by cities in protecting green assets and promoting the idea of green infrastructure. Key discussion points, together with reflections from the State of Green Infrastructure Report, will be used to set the agenda for further discussions and will be unpacked in greater detail in Citylab sessions to follow. Key points that emerged from the session include:

- The aim of the GI Citylab is to develop a GI Plan for the GCR (by 2016). The process of how this plan will be developed through the work of the Citylab and will be outlined in a GCRO Occasional Paper, the first draft of which is due in May 2014.
- The overall objectives of the Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan were discussed and the importance of incorporating GI into the integrated plan was noted.

- Municipal officials highlighted that their departments are grappling with valuing ecosystem services and how to use this to guide planning decisions. The group discussed examples where these valuations were not sufficient to convince decision-makers to preserve green assets in cases where there was a tension between preservation on the one hand and urban development or densification on the other.
- Some of the challenges related to financing GI were discussed. These include the fact that municipalities typically use operational expenditure (OPEX) rather than capital expenditure (CAPEX) to fund investment and maintenance of GI. Capital expenditure is given greater attention in annual plans such as the SDBIP. There is also a concern over insufficient operational expenditure to maintain assets such as parks once developed.
- Within municipalities it is sometimes unclear where the responsibility lies for maintaining green infrastructure. For example it is not clear at what point the maintenance of watercourses becomes a national Department of Water Affairs responsibility; and much of a city's green assets is on private property.
- It was suggested that standards could be used to specify GI targets (e.g. number of people per hectare of open space or number of people per number of trees). These standards could be used for benchmarking purposes and to convince politicians to consider GI investment as an integral part of infrastructure development.
- A first step in this process could be to approach the Auditor General about reporting on sustainability in municipal reporting. This reporting could be done by incorporating green assets as a note in financial reports and in a 1-page addition to the annual performance report.
- It was highlighted that the right people should be involved in the Citylab discussions, as well as the need to get buy in from the various stakeholders, including politicians and infrastructure/planning departments.
- It was decided that developing a Mayoral Committee resolution on the GI Citylab is important to ensure commitment and participation from each municipality.

## Action items

*Note: Bold text indicates who is responsible for each item.*

1. Participant list – ensure the right people are included **(ALL PARTICIPANTS WITH GCRO)**
2. For presentation and discussion at the next meeting, a short input on “What are the most important assets in your municipality or area?” **(ALL PARTICIPANTS)**
3. Any comments on or additions to what we put in the GCRO's *State of Green Infrastructure in the GCR* report? **(ALL PARTICIPANTS)**
4. A draft Mayoral Committee resolution regarding the GI Citylab **(GCRO)**, which participants can adapt and use as required **(MUNICIPAL PARTICIPANTS)**
5. Hosting upcoming citylab sessions **(GCRO WITH WILLING PARTICIPANTS)**

## Upcoming Citylabs:

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Green Infrastructure Citylab*

**Date:** Thursday 20 February 2014

**Time:** 09h00 - 13h00

**Venue:** Wits P&DM Campus, Johannesburg

**Topic:** Valuing green infrastructure and spatial data challenges

### *3<sup>rd</sup> Green Infrastructure Citylab*

**Date:** Thursday 20 March 2014

**Topic:** A process towards a GI Plan for GCR

### *4<sup>th</sup> Green Infrastructure Citylab*

**Date:** Thursday 8 May 2014

**Topic:** Presentation and discussion on the draft Occasional Paper