

GCRO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CITYLAB

1. SECTOR AREA

Sustainable development

2. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the municipality's participation in a Green Infrastructure Citylab being co-ordinated by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO), which will lead ultimately to the development of a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Gauteng City-Region. Approval is sought for selected officials to represent the municipality at meetings of the Citylab and input into key deliverables produced through the Citylab process.

3. BACKGROUND

Governments in the Gauteng City-Region (GCR) are under pressure to provide infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population and economy. Historically, infrastructure development has been achieved at the expense of environmental systems because of a limited emphasis on sustainable development. This situation is changing with government – guided by an array of national, provincial and local strategies – increasingly required to take into account principles of sustainability. However a fundamental paradigm shift is still required in planning and developing infrastructure, including how we understand the role of ecological assets in sustainable service-delivery.

The concept of green infrastructure has emerged internationally as a way of understanding how green assets and ecological systems can work as part of the infrastructural fabric that supports and sustains society. Green infrastructure refers to the interconnected set of natural and man-made ecological systems, green spaces, and other landscape features. It includes planted and indigenous trees, wetlands, parks, green open spaces and original grassland and woodlands, as well as possible building and street-level design interventions that incorporate vegetation, such as green roofs. Together these assets form an infrastructure network providing services and strategic functions in the same way as traditional hard infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure is multifunctional and provides numerous benefits in the form of ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are the benefits supplied to humans from nature. They are the naturally occurring functions of ecological processes, ranging from air purification, water flow regulation, reducing erosion and disaster risks associated with environmental change, the provision of green space for growing food and in which people can relax, as well as the provision of habitats and ecosystems that support biodiversity. These benefits are being recognised by city and regional governments in other parts of the world, valued in quantifiable terms, and incorporated into service-delivery planning and

capital investment decision-making. Cities such as New York have accordingly developed comprehensive Green Infrastructure Plans.

This sort of planning is not yet happening in the Gauteng City-Region. There has been some interest in the idea of greening, and some important projects have been implemented, but municipal planning and finance systems are not yet geared towards valuing the services provided by green infrastructure, or thinking long term about how green infrastructure can be used instead of or in tandem with conventional grey infrastructure.

The Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) has launched a Green Infrastructure Citylab to facilitate a strategic dialogue across local and provincial government, and with selected stakeholder groupings concerned with the development of more sustainable urban infrastructure. The Green Infrastructure Citylab builds on the base laid by GCRO's State of Green Infrastructure in the GCR report, released in July 2013. It aims to further promote shared understanding of how green infrastructure can be incorporated into spatial and service-delivery planning for our region's fast growing cities and towns. The ultimate objective of the Citylab is a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Gauteng City-Region jointly developed by municipalities across the GCR together with the Gauteng Provincial Government. This plan will feed into the Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan, development of which is being led by the Gauteng Planning Commission (GPC). All data and products produced through the Green Infrastructure Citylab are freely and publicly available, save for data that may be purchased by GCRO from private sector service providers where licensing restrictions may apply.

The Green Infrastructure Citylab will entail a series of dialogues, one held every two months, spanning the course of about 2 years. The success of the Citylab depends on the commitment and active participation of the participants in all the discussions. Each participant is required to provide critical insights on the formulation of the envisaged Green Infrastructure Plan for the GCR, based on their departmental programmes and work experiences.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate policy implications from the commitment to the Green Infrastructure Citylab. However products developed through the work of the Green Infrastructure Citylab may be considered for adoption and inclusion into municipal policies and plans. In particular policies may need to be developed in line with the envisaged Gauteng Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan. Any proposed policies developed through the process will be submitted to the Mayoral Committee for approval at a future date.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate and direct financial requests that accompany this report. Costs of running the Citylab are covered by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO).

6. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

7. COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS

None

8. OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND FORUMS CONSULTED

Gauteng Planning Commission; GDARD; GCRO; SALGA-Gauteng; ICLEI; SANBI.

9. RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the participation of x municipality in the Green Infrastructure Citylab be approved;**
2. **That x official be mandated to represent x municipality in the proceedings of the Green Infrastructure Citylab, and to provide future progress reports as required at a suitable date.**

Approved/Not approved
