



Johannesburg
Urban Forest
Alliance
P.O. Box
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Craighall
2024



Mr. Herman Mashaba
Executive Mayor, City of Johannesburg

21 March 2018

Honourable Mayor Mashaba

The International Day of Forests [established by the United Nations in 2012](#) and the theme of which is '[Forests and Sustainable Cities](#)', coincides this year with our own Human Rights Day, which commemorates Sharpeville Day, and celebrates our democratic Constitution — one that provides for rights for all, including the protection of our environment in Section 24.

The [Johannesburg Urban Forest Alliance \(JUFA\)](#) was established in 2017, by about 20 different environmental, heritage and residents' associations across the city, to protect and expand our urban forest. Indeed, according to the World Economic Forum, Johannesburg ranks sixth in the world in terms of tree coverage, with almost a quarter of the city covered in trees.

We have been lobbying for a recognition of that urban forest, which provides significant benefits to the citizens of Johannesburg. From available scientific research we know that urban forests reduce pollution but also lower temperatures, and may even bring the rain. In a water-scarce country, our forest is therefore an important asset.

Yet, that urban forest is under threat, and may well disappear if it is not afforded some protection. On the occasion of the Human Rights Day, and the International Day of Forests, we therefore call on you to help bring about measures that protect all our trees — on public but also on private grounds.

JUFA has already proposed amendments to the new Land Use Scheme — which are attached — and for which we have started a public petition.

Introducing these measures will also fulfill the vision of the Council's Spatial Development Framework, which rightly emphasises the following:

'The natural environment is an essential element in the structuring of the future city. It is the environment around which all planning, development and land use decisions should be made. The natural structure should be seen as an irreplaceable city asset that provides valuable ecosystem services and not merely as unused land available for development. Protecting these areas is not done for the sake of conservation alone, but to make surrounding developed parts of the city more sustainable, liveable and valuable (socially, financially and in terms of green infrastructure). As such, the protection of the City's natural assets must be a starting point for all development.'

As you have said before, we need *'to plan for the future and address the threat that cities pose: emitting 80 percent of greenhouse gases'*. We do already have a significant asset — our trees — but we must stop despoiling that asset, if we want to build a city that becomes indeed more *'sustainable, liveable and valuable'* for all.

We look forward to working with you and the Council to create the City of Opportunities that you have envisioned — the *'greatest on the continent'*.

Sincerely

Andrea Rosen
Co-Chairperson

Markus Scheuermaier
Co-Chairperson