



**SDP: BRING BACK THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cape Town's safety problem is certainly a policing problem. Serious violence requires effective law enforcement, investigation, prosecution and functioning courts. However safety is only one part of the problem.

Beneath it lies another problem that is harder to measure but impossible to ignore. That problem is the weakening of the neighbourhood. When people stop sitting outside, children stop playing in public spaces, shops close early and community facilities become underused, a neighbourhood loses part of its informal protection system.

Neighbours stop knowing one another. Families retreat behind walls. Public space becomes something people pass through rather than something they share.

Fear can create a vicious cycle. People withdraw from public life. Legitimate activity decreases. Informal social oversight weakens. Disorder becomes more visible. Fear then encourages further withdrawal.

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is an attempt to reverse that cycle. The plan is based on a simple proposition. **THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IS WHERE GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS MEET REAL LIFE.**

Government sees departments. Residents see one street, one school, one park, one shop, one family and one community.

A broken streetlight may belong to one department. An unemployed teenager may belong to another programme. A neglected park may belong to another. A family struggling with substance dependency may encounter several different agencies. The resident experiences all of these things as one neighbourhood.

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD therefore proposes a neighbourhood operating system that connects existing government services, community institutions, businesses and residents around a common local plan. The system is simple. **KNOW. PRIORITISE. ASSIGN. ACT. VERIFY. PUBLISH. LEARN.**

The objective is not to create another collection of disconnected programmes. The objective is to connect what already exists, identify what is missing and make responsibility visible.

The plan rests on five foundations. **SAFE. KNOWN. ACTIVE. CONNECTED. PROUD.**

It then organises practical action around five areas. **KNOW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. FIX THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. PROTECT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. GROW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. OWN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.**



The final objective is not permanent government dependence. It is a neighbourhood where residents, businesses, schools, faith institutions, civil society and government can increasingly work together to maintain the places they call home.

1. THE PROBLEM

Cape Town already has many of the ingredients required for safer and stronger communities. The City supports local safety initiatives, neighbourhood watch activity, safer community facilities and broader crime prevention measures. The Western Cape Government operates a formal Neighbourhood Watch accreditation and support programme.

Its current community safety work also includes Community Safety Forums and community level safety and development initiatives. In 2026 the Western Cape Government introduced an integrated community level Safety and Development Programme focused on prevention, youth, families and community partnerships. Community level initiatives are also being implemented in places such as Mitchells Plain through Safe Zones and local partnerships.

The challenge is therefore not to pretend that nothing exists. The challenge is to connect what already exists around the neighbourhood.

Cape Town has residents, businesses, schools, religious institutions, Neighbourhood Watches, Community Policing Forums, youth organisations, social workers, health services, community facilities and government departments. What is often missing is a common operating system that connects these resources around local problems, gives each problem an accountable owner and allows residents to see whether anything actually changed.

That is the purpose of **BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**.

2. THE FIVE FOUNDATIONS OF A HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOOD

Every healthy neighbourhood needs five foundations.

SAFE

People must be able to move through their neighbourhood without unreasonable fear. Serious violence must be dealt with through effective law enforcement. Public spaces must be maintained, visible and properly managed. Safety also means preventing avoidable conditions that allow disorder to become entrenched.

KNOWN

People should know their neighbours, local businesses, community institutions and the people responsible for local services. Children, families, older residents and vulnerable people should not become invisible until there is a crisis. Knowing one



another does not prevent every crime. It creates opportunities for earlier support, stronger relationships and greater informal awareness of what is happening in the neighbourhood.

ACTIVE

There must be legitimate reasons for people to use public space. Sport, business, culture, food, markets, worship, recreation and community activities can create opportunities for people to meet, participate and use the places around them. A neighbourhood cannot simply be instructed to become active. The services, businesses, facilities and programmes that support legitimate activity must exist.

CONNECTED

Schools, families, businesses, religious institutions, civil society, police, health services and government must be able to communicate and coordinate around local problems. The purpose is not to create another meeting. The purpose is to create a functioning network in which information can move, responsibilities can be assigned and problems can be followed through.

PROUD

Every neighbourhood has a history, identity and collection of people, places and traditions worth protecting. Pride should not be manufactured by government. It should be strengthened by giving residents meaningful opportunities to shape and improve the places they call home.

These five foundations form the social architecture of **BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**.

3. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATING SYSTEM

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is built around one operating system.

KNOW

Map the neighbourhood. Understand its people, places, economy, safety conditions, institutions and existing resources.

PRIORITISE

Identify the problems that matter most. Not every problem can be solved at once. The neighbourhood must establish priorities using evidence, resident experience and available resources.

ASSIGN

Give every problem an accountable owner. Give every case a person or office responsible for following it through the system.



ACT

Deploy the relevant resources. The response may involve a municipal department, **SAPS**, the Province, a school, a business, a community organisation or several institutions working together.

VERIFY

Check whether the promised action actually happened. A departmental status update is not necessarily proof of resolution.

PUBLISH

Make performance visible. Residents should be able to see what has been reported, who is responsible, what the deadline is and whether the problem has been resolved.

LEARN

Measure what happened. Identify what worked, what did not work and what needs to change.

This creates the central operating cycle. **KNOW. PRIORITISE. ASSIGN. ACT. VERIFY. PUBLISH. LEARN.** The cycle should repeat continuously.

4. KNOW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Government should not begin by announcing a programme. It should begin by understanding the place. Every pilot neighbourhood will undergo a structured Community Audit during the first 30 days.

The audit will map five areas.

PEOPLE

Population characteristics, children, young people, older residents, vulnerable households and existing community organisations.

PLACES

Schools, parks, libraries, halls, sports facilities, religious institutions, clinics, transport interchanges, vacant land, abandoned buildings and significant public or privately owned sites.

ECONOMY

Shops, spazas, salons, barbers, restaurants, markets, informal traders, workshops, small manufacturers and local employers.



SAFETY

Crime and disorder patterns where reliable data exists, poorly lit areas, dangerous routes, problematic transport locations, neglected spaces and places where residents report feeling unsafe.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Youth clubs, sports clubs, food programmes, homework centres, senior groups, cultural organisations, faith organisations and other community resources.

The result will be a **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICE MAP**. The principle is simple. **YOU CANNOT MANAGE WHAT YOU HAVE NOT MAPPED.**

The audit must be conducted by a trained team. This team should include municipal officials, community researchers and where possible residents themselves. The engagement methodology must be inclusive. This means reaching residents who do not attend public meetings, including older residents, people with disabilities, informal traders and young people.

Data collection tools must be standardised across pilot neighbourhoods so that findings can be compared. The findings must be validated with residents before they are published. The principle is straightforward. Nothing about the neighbourhood without the neighbourhood.

5. COMMUNITY ANCHORS

Every neighbourhood already has places around which community life develops. These may include a mosque, church, school, library, community centre, sports club, market, town centre or another place that residents use and trust.

Government should not automatically construct a new building. The first question should be **WHAT DOES THIS COMMUNITY ALREADY HAVE?**

The Community Audit will identify a network of existing community anchors. The objective will then be to strengthen connections between them. A school may provide afternoon space. A mosque may provide a hall. A sports club may provide coaches. A business may provide apprenticeships. A library may provide study space. An **NGO** may provide social support.

The neighbourhood becomes stronger when these capabilities are connected. **BUILD AROUND WHAT THE COMMUNITY ALREADY HAS.**

6. FIX THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Visible neglect matters. A broken streetlight, overflowing bin, blocked drain, unsafe crossing or abandoned public facility can become part of the daily experience of a neighbourhood.



The response does not always require a major capital project. Sometimes the intervention is lighting. Sometimes it is paving, seating, shade, trees, signage or repaired sports equipment. Sometimes it is a clean public toilet, a safe pedestrian route, a small trading area or a community garden.

The principle is **MAKE NEGLECTED PLACES USEFUL AGAIN.**

Public space should be treated as social infrastructure. International experience including Medellin demonstrates how public spaces, libraries, community facilities and transport connections can be combined with wider social and economic interventions. The lesson for Cape Town is not to copy Medellin. The lesson is to recognise that physical infrastructure can become social infrastructure when it is properly designed, managed and connected to community life.

7. NO ORPHAN INFRASTRUCTURE

No new public asset should be approved without a plan for keeping it functional.

A playground without maintenance is orphan infrastructure. A community hall without programming is orphan infrastructure. **A CCTV** system without response capacity is orphan technology. A youth centre without youth workers is an empty building.

Every public asset should therefore have one owner. It should have one budget. It should have one maintenance plan. It should have one service standard. It should have one community purpose.

Before a new facility is approved the responsible authority should identify who will operate it, who will maintain it, what it will cost and how residents will use it. The question should not be **CAN WE BUILD IT?** The question should be **CAN WE KEEP IT WORKING?**

8. ONE PROBLEM. ONE ACCOUNTABLE OWNER. ONE CASE OWNER. ONE DEADLINE. ONE VERIFICATION.

This will be a core accountability principle. A resident reports a broken streetlight. The system records the problem. The legally responsible institution is identified. A deadline is established. A case owner follows the issue through the system.

The distinction is important. The accountable owner is the institution legally responsible for resolving the problem. The case owner is responsible for ensuring that the problem does not disappear between institutions.

For a municipal streetlight the City may be the accountable owner. For a policing matter **SAPS** may be the accountable owner. For a provincial road the Province may be the accountable owner. The Community Guardian can remain the case owner



without pretending that the City controls every function.

The case is not closed simply because an institution changes a status to complete. Where practical physical repairs should be supported by evidence. The reporting resident or designated Community Guardian should be able to verify that the problem has actually been resolved.

The principle is **ONE PROBLEM. ONE ACCOUNTABLE OWNER. ONE CASE OWNER. ONE DEADLINE. ONE VERIFICATION.**

9. THE COMMUNITY GUARDIAN

The Community Guardian is the neighbourhood's accountability coordinator. The Community Guardian is not a police officer. The Community Guardian is not a vigilante. The Community Guardian does not investigate criminal activity, collect sensitive intelligence or confront suspected criminals.

The role is to receive, record, route, follow, escalate, verify and report. A resident reports a problem. The problem receives a reference. The accountable institution is identified. A deadline is established. Progress is tracked. Resolution is verified. Unresolved problems are escalated through the appropriate channel.

The Community Guardian should use an accessible digital case management system that can connect with WhatsApp or other reporting channels. However WhatsApp should not become the system itself. The underlying case record must remain structured, searchable and auditable.

The role should initially be established through municipal policy, operating procedures and clear service standards. Legislative reform can be considered later if implementation demonstrates a need for it.

Possible staffing models include municipal employees, part time community workers, contracted **NGO** staff or a hybrid model. Whatever model is chosen Guardians must be trained, supervised and subject to clear performance standards.

The policy must specify expected ratios of Guardians to residents or households. It must describe the training curriculum and its duration. It must describe the supervision structure. It must describe performance standards and the consequences of failing to meet them. Indicative cost estimates must be provided for the chosen model.

RELATIONSHIP TO CONTRACTED SAFETY RESOURCING

Where a neighbourhood already funds contracted safety resources, most notably a private security service financed through a Special Rating Area, the Community Guardian is not a competing layer and does not duplicate that function. The distinction is one of role, not seniority. Contracted private security under an **SRA**



provides visible patrol presence and rapid physical response, procured and governed by that **SRA**'s own board. The Community Guardian provides case management and cross-institutional accountability, tracking a reported problem, whether a safety matter or a service failure, until it is verified resolved, regardless of which institution is responsible for fixing it. In a neighbourhood with an **SRA**, the Guardian and the **SRA**'s control room should establish a simple protocol. Incidents requiring patrol response are the **SRA**'s responsibility. Incidents requiring coordination across the City, **SAPS**, the Province or a community institution are the Guardian's responsibility. Where the two overlap, such as a patrol officer identifying a broken streetlight, the **SRA** logs it once and the Guardian's case system takes it from there. The Guardian never assumes **SRA** funding exists and never assumes it does not. Where an **SRA** has already been established, the Guardian is the wider accountability layer that the **SRA**'s own reporting plugs into. Where no **SRA** exists, the Guardian remains the primary local mechanism and refers safety matters to **SAPS**, **LEAP** and City law enforcement in the ordinary way.

The principle is **THE RESIDENT SHOULD NOT HAVE TO NAVIGATE THE SYSTEM ALONE.**

10. PROTECT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Community renewal cannot substitute for effective enforcement against serious violence. **SAPS** remains responsible for national policing functions. The City has its own law enforcement responsibilities including Metro Police and other municipal functions. **LEAP** is a joint safety initiative involving the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government.

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD therefore does not propose replacing policing. It proposes connecting policing with the wider neighbourhood system.

Serious violence should receive focused attention based on reliable intelligence and evidence. The community itself should not be treated as the problem. The principle is **PROTECT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. TARGET THE VIOLENCE.**

Community participation must also be safe. Community representatives should not be placed in situations where participation exposes them or their families to retaliation. Sensitive intelligence must remain within appropriate law enforcement structures. Community facing discussions should focus on patterns, conditions, service failures and prevention rather than compromising investigations.

The existing Western Cape Neighbourhood Watch programme provides a formal structure for accredited community safety organisations. Accredited Neighbourhood Watches are eligible for training, resources and funding under the provincial support system. **BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD** should strengthen these structures rather than create competing informal security organisations.



11. THE ENFORCEMENT PROTOCOL

The policy must be explicit about how intelligence flows and how enforcement priorities are set at neighbourhood level. Without this clarity the enforcement layer remains aspirational.

SAPS led intelligence briefings should operate separately from community facing discussions. These briefings should involve **SAPS** station leadership, relevant City enforcement officials and where appropriate provincial structures. They should focus on identified harm patterns, priority individuals and networks and operational coordination.

The Community Safety Table should escalate concerns about specific harm patterns without compromising investigations. The escalation route should be defined. It should specify who receives the escalation, what information can be shared and what response can be expected.

The City's Metro Police and **LEAP** resources must align with **SAPS** priorities at neighbourhood level. This requires formal coordination mechanisms. It requires regular meetings between City safety officials and **SAPS** station commanders. It requires protocols for joint operations where appropriate.

The limits of City influence over **SAPS** must remain explicit. The City cannot direct **SAPS** operations. The City can commit to working with **SAPS**, escalating local concerns and advocating for the resources that neighbourhoods require.

A formal coordination mechanism should connect City safety officials, **SAPS** station leadership and relevant provincial structures. It should include regular meetings, agreed protocols and clear escalation routes. Where coordination fails the reasons should be documented and escalated to the relevant political leadership.

12. NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFETY TABLE

Every participating neighbourhood should have a standing **COMMUNITY SAFETY TABLE**. It must not become another talking shop.

The table should connect residents, ward representatives, the Community Guardian, **SAPS**, City enforcement, accredited Neighbourhood Watch representatives, Community Policing Forums, schools, faith organisations, youth organisations, local businesses, social services and health services. Where a neighbourhood has an **SRA**-funded private security service, its operations manager should sit at the table as well, so that patrol intelligence and Guardian case data inform the same conversation. The table should meet monthly.



Every meeting should answer a fixed set of questions. Where are people afraid? What has changed? Which young people require support? Which public spaces have deteriorated? Which service failures are contributing to disorder? Which reported problems remain unresolved? Who owns each action? What is the deadline?

The table should maintain a live action register. It should publish a simple neighbourhood scorecard. The scorecard is not a political rating. It is a record of commitments, responsibilities, deadlines and verified outcomes.

Existing structures should be used wherever possible. The Western Cape already operates Community Safety Forums designed to bring together government, business and civil society. The neighbourhood system should strengthen existing structures rather than create parallel bureaucracies.

The policy must describe how the Community Safety Table relates to Community Policing Forums, Neighbourhood Watches, ward committees and Community Safety Forums. It must describe how duplication will be avoided. It must describe how existing structures will be strengthened rather than bypassed. It must describe the process for reviving dysfunctional structures.

Where a Community Policing Forum is functioning well the table should coordinate with it. Where it is not functioning the table should support its revival. The objective is one coherent neighbourhood system rather than competing structures.

13. THE LIVING NEIGHBOURHOOD

A healthy neighbourhood should not become deserted once the working day ends. The objective is not to require every neighbourhood to operate businesses until a particular hour. The objective is to create legitimate activity across the day and into the evening.

Morning activity includes schools, workers, parents, transport and local businesses. Daytime activity includes businesses, services, libraries, community facilities and activities for older residents. Afternoon activity includes children returning from school, sport, homework clubs and youth programmes. Evening activity can include family activities, worship, cultural events, restaurants, markets and safe transport.

The sequencing matters. A neighbourhood cannot simply be told to become active if there are no businesses, services or programmes to support that activity. Economic support and community programming must therefore develop alongside public space renewal.



14. SEE THE CHILD BEFORE THE CRISIS

Young people should encounter trusted adults before they encounter a crisis. Scotland provides a useful example through its Street Guardians and Common Ground work. The programme places visible trusted adults in areas where young people gather and focuses on early intervention, safeguarding and relationship based support.

A Scottish Government report recorded 1 863 young people engaged across 627 interactions during the first 25 weeks of the Glasgow Guardians approach with around 80 per cent of interventions remaining early, relational and preventive. The approach is being independently evaluated.

Cape Town should learn from this without attempting to copy the Scottish model mechanically. Every participating neighbourhood should have access to appropriately trained trusted adults. These may include youth workers, coaches, community volunteers, social workers and other appropriately qualified people.

They should receive training in youth engagement, safeguarding, conflict de escalation, first aid, referral systems and recognising vulnerability. Appropriate background checks, supervision, indemnity and child protection arrangements must be mandatory.

The operational home for the Safe Adult Network must be specified. Options include embedding it within existing youth development programmes, contracting it to accredited **NGO** s or establishing it as a municipal volunteer corps with formal conditions of service. The policy must specify the training provider, the supervision structure and the reporting lines. It must describe how the programme coordinates with statutory child protection services.

The principle is **SEE THE CHILD BEFORE THE CRISIS**.

15. THE 3PM TO 7PM NETWORK

For many children the vulnerable period begins when school ends and before parents return from work. The answer is not necessarily another building. Cape Town already has schools, libraries, mosques, churches, community halls, sports clubs and **NGO** s.

The **3PM TO 7PM NETWORK** will connect willing existing facilities into a structured afternoon network. Activities may include sport, homework, reading, music, coding, arts, mentoring, food programmes and career exposure.

Institutions that participate should receive appropriate support. This could include insurance arrangements, security coordination, minor maintenance, supervisor stipends, cleaning and referral pathways. The policy must describe in concrete terms



what support government will provide. It must also describe how institutions that decline to participate will be treated. The policy should not penalise them but it should be clear about what is expected.

The principle is **DO NOT BUILD 500 NEW BUILDINGS IF 500 EXISTING BUILDINGS SIT EMPTY AFTER 3PM.** The exact number would only be determined through the Community Audit.

16. THE YOUTH PATHWAY

Youth policy should not consist of disconnected projects. It should create a pathway.



Young people need sport. They need skills. They need culture. They need mentoring. They need work opportunities. They need a voice in shaping the programmes that affect their neighbourhoods. Young people should participate in appropriate community structures subject to safeguarding requirements.

17. FAMILIES BEFORE CRISIS

A family should not first encounter government when a child has been arrested or a crisis has already occurred. Neighbourhood referral networks should connect families with schools, social workers, clinics, counselling, substance use services, parenting support, employment services and youth programmes.

The pathway should be **IDENTIFY. ASSESS. REFER. SUPPORT. TREAT. STABILISE. REINTEGRATE. FOLLOW UP.**

The Community Guardian does not provide these services. The Guardian makes sure that a family does not disappear between agencies. The objective is early intervention.



Some problems require law enforcement. Other problems may be addressed earlier through health, social support, education or family intervention. The system must be capable of doing both.

18. SUBSTANCE USE: SUPPORT THE FAMILY TOO

The response to substance use cannot simply be enforcement. It cannot simply be counselling either. It requires a pathway connecting identification, family support, health intervention, treatment, recovery, reintegration and employment.

Families living with substance dependency can carry a significant burden. They may face instability, financial pressure, fear and repeated crises within the home. Neighbourhood support should therefore include family counselling, safety planning, referral to treatment, financial advice and peer support where appropriate.

Law enforcement remains necessary where criminal conduct is involved. The principle is **TREAT THE PERSON. SUPPORT THE FAMILY. PROTECT THE COMMUNITY.**

19. GROW THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Safety and economic development should not be treated as separate policy areas. A functioning local economy creates legitimate activity, employment, services and reasons for people to remain connected to their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Enterprise Zones should provide practical support to viable local businesses. The support package may include predictable trading locations, simplified permits for specified micro enterprise categories, reliable electricity and waste arrangements, signage and storage solutions, security coordination, business registration assistance, skills development, apprenticeships and access to procurement opportunities where lawful and practical.

The policy must describe how the zone is designated. It must describe how businesses are selected for support. It must describe the eligibility criteria for simplified permits and the published timeline for approval.

The objective is not to protect businesses from competition. The objective is to remove unnecessary barriers that prevent viable local businesses from starting, operating and employing local people.

20. LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Neighbourhood renewal should create opportunities for residents to become economic participants. Support should extend to traders, artisans, barbers, salons, food businesses, repair shops, mechanics, home based enterprises, micro manufacturers and digital businesses.



Local procurement should be used where lawful and practical. Apprenticeships should be linked to local employers. Young people should be able to see a pathway from school to skills, skills to work and work to enterprise.

Economic renewal should therefore be measured through more than business registrations. Measures should include local employment, business survival, apprenticeships, enterprise growth and local ownership.

21. BELONGING: HERITAGE, EVENTS AND KNOWING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

A neighbourhood's food, culture and history are part of its social infrastructure, and belonging is best built through repeated, ordinary encounters rather than a single flagship event. Three linked activities give this shape.

HERITAGE AND FOOD

Boeber, daaltjies, bobotie, denningvleis, tomato bredie and many other foods associated with Cape communities are connected to stories of migration, faith, family, memory and place. A Cape Neighbourhood Food Month could allow communities to celebrate this heritage through local markets, family recipes, cooking events, intergenerational storytelling and small business opportunities, designed primarily for local people rather than as a tourist display. The same programme can extend to music, oral history, architecture, local names and neighbourhood stories.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD NIGHT

Once a quarter, participating neighbourhoods could hold a Neighbourhood Night involving local businesses, schools, sports organisations, faith institutions, community groups and residents, through food, music, sport, markets, children's activities, heritage events, community awards and local enterprise showcases. Its purpose is not entertainment for its own sake. It is to create repeated positive encounters between people who might otherwise never meet.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR should become a simple, continuous public campaign running between the quarterly Nights, not a one-off event. Know the elderly person living next door. Know the child walking home from school. Know the shopkeeper. Know the coach. Know the imam. Know the pastor. Know the teacher. Know the local business owner. Knowing people does not prevent every crime. It creates the human relationships through which residents notice problems earlier, support vulnerable people and build a stronger sense of responsibility for the place they share.



The message across all three is simple. **WE ARE STILL HERE. THIS IS OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD.**

22. THE PUBLIC SPACE GUARANTEE

Every priority neighbourhood should have at least one functioning maintained and programmed public gathering space. The appropriate facility will depend on the size, density and character of the neighbourhood. It could be a park, square, sports field, library, community centre, civic space or market.

Every priority public space should meet basic standards. It should be clean. It should be maintained. It should be accessible. It should be usable. It should be appropriately lit. It should have a clear management responsibility. Where appropriate it should be programmed with activities that bring legitimate users into the space.

Public space is not a luxury. It is part of the social infrastructure of the city.

23. RECLAIM ABANDONED AND NEGLECTED PLACES

A neighbourhood cannot be reclaimed while significant physical assets remain unmanaged. The Community Audit will therefore include a property inventory.

The inventory will distinguish between abandoned properties, vacant properties, unsafe buildings, illegally occupied properties, state owned properties and properties requiring legal or administrative intervention. These categories must not be treated as interchangeable.

The objective is to restore lawful safe and habitable buildings while protecting the rights and dignity of lawful occupants and vulnerable residents. State owned properties that become neglected or unsafe must have a clearly identified responsible department and escalation pathway.

The same accountability principle should apply. **ONE ACCOUNTABLE OWNER. ONE CASE OWNER. ONE DEADLINE. ONE VERIFICATION.**

24. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD COMPACT

Community renewal cannot be something government does to communities. It must be something government builds with communities. Each participating neighbourhood should therefore be invited to develop a Neighbourhood Compact.

GOVERNMENT WILL

Maintain public spaces. Respond to reported problems. Support safety partnerships. Provide and maintain community facilities. Support youth and family programmes. Publish performance information.



THE COMMUNITY WILL

Participate in neighbourhood structures. Report problems. Help protect public spaces. Support vulnerable residents. Participate in youth and community programmes. Reject vigilantism and intimidation.

LOCAL BUSINESS WILL

Maintain premises. Participate in appropriate local safety networks. Support apprenticeships where practical. Contribute to neighbourhood activation.

COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS WILL

Open appropriate facilities where possible. Support youth activities. Participate in referral networks. Contribute existing capacity to neighbourhood renewal.

The Compact is not a contract to punish residents. It is a framework for shared responsibility.

25. VIGILANTISM AND INFORMAL JUSTICE

Vigilantism often arises where residents believe that the state has failed. That perception should not simply be dismissed. However informal justice cannot be accepted as a legitimate substitute for lawful institutions. Vigilantism can endanger innocent people, undermine lawful authority and deepen cycles of violence.

The programme must address the conditions that allow vigilantism to gain support. That means visible service delivery, accountable policing and accessible complaint mechanisms.

Community leaders should be supported to speak clearly against vigilantism and intimidation. The Neighbourhood Compact should contain an explicit commitment to lawful dispute resolution. Where vigilantism occurs the programme must respond consistently and without ambiguity.

26. CITY, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD must be honest about the constitutional division of responsibilities.

The City controls important elements of local government including municipal services, public spaces, local economic development, community facilities, Metro Police and traffic enforcement. The Province has important responsibilities involving community safety, Neighbourhood Watch support, social development and provincial functions in education and health. National Government controls **SAPS**, prosecution, courts, correctional services, social grants and several other functions relevant to community safety.



No municipality can honestly promise to control all of these functions. The neighbourhood system must therefore distinguish between what government must do, what government must coordinate and what the community can lead.

When a matter falls outside City jurisdiction the responsible provincial or national institution should be identified. The Community Guardian follows the issue across the system without pretending that the City has powers it does not possess.

27. COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS

Cape Town is a multilingual city. The programme should communicate in the languages residents actually use including isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English alongside other relevant languages where appropriate.

Reporting channels must be accessible. WhatsApp can be one channel but it should not be the only channel. Alternative options must exist for residents who do not use smartphones or who prefer other methods.

Accessibility standards must apply. This includes provision for residents with disabilities, older residents and residents with limited literacy. No resident should be excluded from the programme because of language, technology or ability.

28. THE 100 DAY NEIGHBOURHOOD RESET

The first 100 days should establish credibility through visible action. The programme must not pretend that every structural problem can be solved within 100 days. It should demonstrate that the system can identify problems, assign responsibility and deliver practical improvements.

DAYS 1 TO 30: KNOW

Listen to residents. Complete the Community Audit. Produce the Neighbourhood Service Map. Establish the Community Safety Table. Identify priority problems. Establish the baseline.

DAYS 31 TO 60: FIX

Address obvious service and public space failures. Repair where possible. Clean neglected areas. Improve lighting. Address illegal dumping. Fix dangerous crossings. Restore usable public facilities.

DAYS 61 TO 100: ACTIVATE

Start youth activities. Activate community facilities. Engage local businesses. Connect community institutions. Begin family referral pathways. Programme public spaces.



At Day 100 publish a Neighbourhood Scorecard. It should show what was promised, what was assigned, what was started, what was completed, what was verified and what remains unresolved. There should be no spin. There should simply be a record.

29. PRE-POSITION THE RESOURCES

The 100 Day Reset must not become a disguised promise to begin procurement on Day One. Procurement, budgeting and departmental approvals can take longer than 100 days.

Resources must therefore be identified and where possible pre-positioned before the public launch. The annual budget should identify the financial commitments required for the first year. Departments should agree their responsibilities before implementation begins. The Community Safety Table should know which resources are available and which decisions require escalation.

The principle is **DO NOT ANNOUNCE A 100 DAY PROGRAMME WITH A 100 DAY PROCUREMENT PROCESS.**

30. MINIMUM NEIGHBOURHOOD STANDARDS

A functioning neighbourhood should have measurable minimum standards. These standards should be adapted to local conditions but the basic framework should be consistent.

PUBLIC SPACE

At least one maintained public gathering space in every priority neighbourhood. A named management responsibility. A published maintenance standard. Appropriate lighting and accessibility.

ACCOUNTABILITY

A reporting mechanism. A reference number for every recorded case. An accountable owner. A case owner. A deadline. Verification of completion.

YOUTH

Accessible after school opportunities. Structured sport or recreation. Youth development opportunities. Referral pathways for vulnerable young people.

COMMUNITY

A functioning coordination mechanism. Links to relevant community institutions. Accessible communication channels.

GOVERNMENT

Public performance information. Published unresolved problems. Clear escalation routes.



These standards define what government means when it says that a neighbourhood is functioning.

31. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERVENTION MENU

Not every neighbourhood requires the same intervention. Cape Town's neighbourhoods differ dramatically in geography, population, income, infrastructure, safety conditions and existing community capacity. The Community Audit should therefore determine which intervention packages are required.

PUBLIC SPACE PACKAGE

Lighting, cleaning, parks, pedestrian routes, facilities and maintenance.

SAFETY PACKAGE

SAPS coordination, City enforcement, **LEAP**, **N** neighbourhood Watch, Community Policing Forum and hotspot planning.

YOUTH PACKAGE

After school activity, sport, Safe Adults, mentoring and skills.

FAMILY PACKAGE

Social work, health referrals, substance use support, parenting assistance and employment pathways.

ECONOMIC PACKAGE

Trading, permits, apprenticeships, enterprise support and local procurement opportunities where lawful.

HERITAGE PACKAGE

Food, culture, local history, oral history and community events.

Government should not deliver every package everywhere. It should deliver what the neighbourhood actually needs.

32. THE ONE YEAR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

After the 100 Day Reset every participating neighbourhood should receive an annual plan. The plan should contain measurable objectives across five outcome areas.

SAFE

Measures selected according to the neighbourhood's baseline risks.

CONNECTED

Resident trust, institutional cooperation and functioning referral networks.



ACTIVE

Public space use and participation in community programmes.

OPPORTUNITY

Youth participation, apprenticeships, employment and local business activity.

RESPONSIVE

Service resolution times, unresolved problems and verified completion.

Targets should be established after the baseline audit. Targets should not be invented centrally before the neighbourhood has been properly understood.

33. THE CITY WIDE NEIGHBOURHOOD DASHBOARD

Every participating neighbourhood should have a public digital page. Residents should be able to see information across six areas. **SAFETY. SPACE. PEOPLE. ECONOMY. SERVICES. BELONGING.**

Every service commitment should have an accountable owner, a case owner, a deadline and a status. Residents should be able to report problems through accessible channels. The system should route reports to the responsible institution. The Community Guardian should follow the case.

The dashboard must have data integrity. Departments should not be able to close cases simply by changing a status. Where practical physical fixes should include evidence. Resolution should mean verified resolution. Sensitive personal information and operational intelligence must not be published.

The purpose of the dashboard is not to embarrass departments. Its purpose is to make responsibility visible.

34. EVALUATE WHAT WORKS

The programme must be evaluated rather than assumed to work. A baseline should be established before major interventions begin.

Where feasible participating neighbourhoods should be compared with similar neighbourhoods that have not yet received the full intervention. A difference in differences approach can help assess whether changes in participating neighbourhoods differ from changes in comparable areas over the same period.

Comparison areas should be selected using relevant characteristics such as population, baseline safety conditions, deprivation, geography, infrastructure and existing community capacity.

Evaluation should measure five broad outcomes.



SAFETY

Crime and violence indicators where reliable data is available.

BELONGING

Resident perceptions of safety, trust and attachment to place.

ACTIVITY

Use of public spaces and participation in community programmes.

OPPORTUNITY

Youth participation, apprenticeships, employment and local business activity.

GOVERNMENT

Service resolution times, unresolved problems and verified completion.

Measurements should be taken at baseline, 12 months, 24 months and 36 months.

The five year policy should be refined using evidence gathered during implementation.

Data quality must be treated as part of the programme. Crime data can be incomplete. Resident surveys can be expensive and slow. Administrative data can remain fragmented between departments. The programme should therefore specify how data will be collected, quality assured and shared. It should describe how comparison neighbourhoods will be selected and what characteristics will be used for matching. It should describe what will happen if reliable data is not available for a particular indicator.

35. LEARN, ADAPT AND SCALE

Not every intervention will work equally well in every neighbourhood. The programme should therefore contain a formal learning cycle.

MEASURE. W hat happened? **UNDERSTAND. W** hy did it happen? **ADAPT. W** hat needs to change? **RETEST. D** id the change work? **SCALE. S** hould the intervention be expanded?

A programme that fails should not be hidden. It should be reviewed, redesigned and tested again where appropriate.

The policy must describe how failure will be identified, assessed and communicated. It must describe the process for discontinuing interventions that do not work. It must describe how failure will be communicated publicly without undermining confidence in the wider programme.

The principle is **MEASURE IT. PUBLISH IT. CHANGE IT.**



36. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD MATURITY MODEL

Neighbourhoods do not begin from the same starting point. The programme should recognise five stages.

STAGE 1: STABILISE

Address immediate safety, service and public space problems. Government has a stronger operational role.

STAGE 2: CONNECT

Build the Community Safety Table, institutional relationships and referral networks. Government and community institutions begin working through a shared structure.

STAGE 3: ACTIVATE

Develop sport, youth, culture, enterprise and public space programmes. Community participation increases.

STAGE 4: GROW

Strengthen local businesses, apprenticeships, markets and civic participation. Community institutions increasingly contribute resources and leadership.

STAGE 5: OWN

Residents and local institutions increasingly initiate and sustain appropriate neighbourhood activities. Government shifts progressively from operator to enabler.

Each stage should have defined criteria, interventions, resources and exit conditions. The objective is not permanent dependence on government. The objective is to create the conditions in which communities can do more for themselves.

37. PILOT SELECTION

The first neighbourhoods must be selected transparently. If only easy neighbourhoods are selected the programme will prove little. If only the most severely affected neighbourhoods are selected implementation risk may become unnecessarily high. If neighbourhoods are selected politically credibility will be weakened.

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD does not begin its pilot selection from zero. The Cape Town Safety Partnership Model has already identified three initial pilot communities, Rondebosch East, Gugulethu and Manenberg, selected as a deliberately mixed portfolio spanning different safety conditions, institutional capacity and socio-economic circumstances. These three communities become the first wave under this programme as well. **BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD** is the



wider neighbourhood operating system within which the Safety Partnership Model's safety architecture operates in those three communities. It is not a separate or competing pilot process.

A second wave of pilot neighbourhoods should be selected once the first wave has completed its Community Audits and reached Stage 2 of the Neighbourhood Maturity Model. The selection methodology for that second wave should be published before it begins. Selection criteria should include baseline safety indicators, existing community infrastructure, community participation capacity, demographic diversity, geographic spread, existing institutional capacity and the willingness of local institutions to participate, with published weightings.

The policy must specify how many second wave neighbourhoods will be selected and what geographic spread is intended. It must explain how conflicts between criteria will be resolved. What happens if a neighbourhood scores highly on safety need but poorly on community participation capacity?

The objective is to learn what works in different circumstances rather than manufacture a favourable result.

38. FUNDING THE PROGRAMME

The programme requires funding across multiple years. A programme should not be announced without a funding plan.

Potential funding sources may include existing City safety and security allocations, economic development programmes, social development programmes, provincial community safety funding and relevant national conditional grants.

The final implementation plan must identify the primary funding source for each component. It must also distinguish between capital expenditure and ongoing operating costs. The cost of maintaining a facility, employing or contracting people, supporting programmes and operating the accountability system must be included.

The policy should provide indicative cost ranges for each phase. It should indicate the order of magnitude for pilot and scale phases. It should identify which components can be funded from existing budgets and which require new allocations.

The funding model must also answer a critical question. **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PILOT FUNDING ENDS?**

A neighbourhood programme that collapses when a grant ends is not a sustainable neighbourhood system. The objective must be to integrate successful functions into normal government budgets and sustainable community or institutional partnerships.



39. GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The programme requires governance arrangements that protect it from short term political pressures. It also requires political leadership to sustain it through difficult periods.

An oversight structure should include City officials, relevant provincial representatives, community representatives and independent expertise. The structure should meet regularly and report publicly.

Political accountability must remain clear. The programme should report to the relevant Council structures. Performance information should be published. Failures should be acknowledged rather than hidden.

Operational decisions should follow published criteria. Community Guardian appointments, pilot selection and service resolution should not depend on political preference. The credibility of the programme depends on this separation between political accountability and operational administration.

The policy must describe the role of the relevant Mayoral Committee member and the Council oversight structure. It must describe how political leadership will champion the programme while respecting operational boundaries. It must describe how political changes will be managed without disrupting the programme.

40. INTERNATIONAL LESSONS, CAPE TOWN APPLICATION

International experience can inform the programme. No international model should be copied mechanically.

MEDELLIN

Medellin demonstrates how public space, mobility, libraries, community facilities and social investment can be combined as part of broader urban transformation. The World Bank has described the city's approach as an effort to reconnect previously disconnected neighbourhoods through integrated urban interventions. The Cape Town lesson is **TREAT PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS POTENTIAL SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.**

GLASGOW

Scotland's violence prevention work demonstrates the potential of early intervention, visible trusted adults and relationships with young people. The current Glasgow Guardians work is focused on safeguarding young people in public spaces and providing early intervention without treating young people as criminals simply because they are present in an area of concern. The Cape Town lesson is **SEE THE CHILD BEFORE THE CRISIS.**



FOCUSED ENFORCEMENT

Serious violence requires effective enforcement. Resources should be directed towards identified patterns of serious harm rather than treating entire communities as suspects. The Cape Town lesson is **PROTECT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. TARGET THE VIOLENCE.**

CAPE TOWN'S EXISTING SYSTEM

Cape Town does not begin from zero. The City, the Province, **SAPS, N** neighbourhood Watches, Community Policing Forums, schools, community organisations and other institutions already perform many relevant functions. The Western Cape's Neighbourhood Watch programme provides a formal accreditation and support structure. The Province's 2026 community level Safety and Development Programme also demonstrates that community based prevention and development are already part of the current policy landscape. The **SDP** proposition is therefore not that government has never attempted community safety. The proposition is that the existing pieces should be connected around the neighbourhood through a common operating system.

CAUTION

These international models are sources of insight rather than templates. Medellin's transformation occurred over decades and involved significant national investment and institutional reform. Glasgow's violence reduction involved a sustained public health approach with strong political leadership across multiple administrations. Focused enforcement depends on reliable intelligence and effective prosecution both of which vary significantly across contexts. Cape Town's programme will be evaluated on its own terms. Failure to replicate international results will not be treated as failure of the programme itself. The limits of international comparison must be acknowledged in a context of constitutional federalism, resource constraints and different historical conditions.

41. WHAT BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WILL NOT PROMISE

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD does not promise to end crime. It does not promise to make Cape Town crime free. It does not pretend that the City controls **SAPS**, prosecutors, courts, correctional services or national social grants. It does not promise that every intervention will work everywhere.

The commitment is more practical. Use every power available to the City. Build partnerships where responsibility is shared. Identify problems earlier. Make public spaces work. Support families and young people. Strengthen local enterprise. Measure performance. Publish failures as well as successes.



The objective is not to promise what government cannot control. The objective is to make the parts of the system that government can influence work better together.

42. MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

The policy promises visible action within 100 days. It promises verified resolution of service problems. It promises public accountability. These promises are credible only if they are met.

In the early phase there will be problems that cannot be resolved quickly. Some will require budget allocations. Some will require legal processes. Some will require cooperation from institutions outside City control. Some will simply be too complex to fix within 100 days.

The programme must describe how it will communicate about problems that cannot be resolved immediately. It must describe how residents will be informed of progress and delays. It must describe how the programme will avoid the perception that it has over promised and under delivered.

The principle is **HONESTY ABOUT WHAT IS POSSIBLE. C** redibility depends on it.

43. THE SDP DIFFERENCE

The distinction is not another programme. It is a system.

FROM MANY PROGRAMMES TO ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.

FROM MANY DEPARTMENTS TO ONE ACCOUNTABLE OWNER FOR EVERY PROBLEM.

FROM COMPLAINTS DISAPPEARING INTO GOVERNMENT TO EVERY CASE RECEIVING A DEADLINE.

FROM PROJECTS BEING DECLARED COMPLETE TO RESOLUTION BEING VERIFIED.

FROM GOVERNMENT DELIVERING TO COMMUNITIES TO GOVERNMENT BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY.

FROM CRIME POLICY ALONE TO NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY.

FROM GOVERNMENT WORKING AROUND COMMUNITIES TO GOVERNMENT WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES.

The central question is **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTUALLY FUNCTIONING?**

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is designed to make that question answerable.



44. IMPLEMENTATION: 2026 TO 2031

SUB | PHASE ONE : MONTHS 1 TO 6: KNOW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD S elect pilot areas. Complete Community Audits. Create Neighbourhood Service Maps. Establish Community Safety Tables. Define Community Guardian responsibilities. Identify baseline indicators. Confirm budgets. Confirm departmental commitments. Establish comparison neighbourhoods for evaluation where feasible.

PHASE TWO: MONTHS 6 TO 12: FIX THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Implement the 100 Day Neighbourhood Reset. Address visible service and public space failures. Launch the reporting and accountability system. Begin youth and family referral pathways. Activate community anchors. Publish the first neighbourhood scorecards.

PHASE THREE: YEAR 2: GROW THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Expand the 3PM to 7PM N etwork. Develop youth pathways. Establish Neighbourhood Enterprise Zones where appropriate. Strengthen apprenticeships. Activate community institutions. Develop Heritage and Belonging activities. Implement Neighbourhood Compacts.

PHASE FOUR: YEARS 2 TO 3: SCALE WHAT WORKS

Expand to additional neighbourhoods. Use evaluation findings to refine the model. Strengthen local enterprise. Expand youth employment and apprenticeship pathways. Develop additional public space networks. Stop or redesign interventions that do not demonstrate sufficient value.

PHASE FIVE: YEARS 4 TO 5: OWN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Shift increasing responsibility for appropriate activities towards residents, businesses and community institutions. Continue public accountability. Evaluate long term outcomes. Integrate successful functions into sustainable budgets and operating systems. Scale interventions supported by evidence.

45. THE BROADER PRINCIPLE

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD is about more than crime. It is about how a city works.

A broken streetlight is not only an electricity problem. A neglected park is not only a parks problem. An unemployed teenager is not only an employment problem. A family in crisis is not only a social development problem. An abandoned building is not only a property problem. A deserted street is not only a policing problem.



These problems interact. Government departments are organised into functions. People experience the city as one place. **BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD** is an attempt to close that gap.

46. THE BIG IDEA

Cape Town's communities have not disappeared. Many remain extraordinarily strong. They exist in families, mosques, churches, schools, sports clubs, businesses, cultural organisations, Neighbourhood Watches and countless informal networks.

The task is not to manufacture community. The task is to create the framework in which existing communities can become stronger.

We cannot police our way into a healthy society. We cannot build our way into one either. We have to rebuild the relationships, institutions and places that allow people to feel that their neighbourhood belongs to them.

A safe city is not simply a city with more police. It is a city where ordinary people can walk, work, trade, worship, play, meet, raise children and grow old without feeling that they have surrendered their neighbourhood.

That is the objective. Not a quieter city. Not a more controlled city. A more connected city.

A city where public spaces belong to the public. A city where young people have somewhere to go. A city where local businesses can grow. A city where families can find help before crisis. A city where government answers for the problems within its reach. A city where communities have a meaningful role in shaping the places they call home. A city where people know one another again.

BRING BACK THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR.

RECLAIM YOUR STREET.

BUILD THE COMMUNITY.