

PRESS RELEASE

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Johannesburg's LivCom winning City Parks team goes "extreme"

JOHANNESBURG'S City Parks team is perfecting the art of creating parks, from wasteland to lush oasis, in lightning quick time – so-called extreme parks.

The first, established in 2007 in Wilgeheuwel took 24 hours to build. It was followed by the Diepkloof park in 2008, built in 24 hours; the park in Protea Glen in 2009, which took six hours; and the Claremont Park in 2010, also built in 24 hours.

So successful has the extreme parks project been in its four years, that it won gold in the United Nations' International Liveable Communities (LivCom) awards in 2008, specifically for the Diepkloof Xtreme Park.

Now, it is planning to build a new park from scratch in Pimville, Soweto, in just half a day. The park will be built on 17 April, supervised by City Parks staff and with help from learners from the local school and community members.

The team will create a mini soccer field and will install play equipment. "We will start early ... we will have people assisting in planting lawn,

setting up benches, and installing equipment,” said the City Parks spokesperson, Jenny Moodley.

City Parks’ extreme parks are dotted across areas of Joburg that were historically neglected in greening campaigns, in the west and in Soweto. This is part of the utility’s strategy to create beautiful surrounds and improve quality of life.

Moodley says these parks form an important part of the community, because they give children a place to play and an environment for adults to relax and socialise.

That facility is one of the busiest parks in the city. After school, youngsters come to swing and play games, while adults relax on the benches. Young residents also get to nurture their talents – every afternoon a team of young soccer players, the Diepkloof United Brothers, practise at a mini soccer field at the park.

“Johannesburg’s City Parks team has made a significant contribution to the global community’s understanding of the strategic and practical planning involved in improving surroundings and people’s quality of life,” said Alan Smith, chief executive of LivCom. “This latest exciting project is no less impressive an evocation of the parks’ team’s approach which is all about the art of the possible.”

Johannesburg at LivCom

LIVCOM judges were "blown away" with Joburg's Xtreme Park, back in 2008 according to City Parks' managing director, Luther Williamson.

Johannesburg City Parks walked off with a gold award at the Liveable Communities Awards ceremony held in Dongguan City, China, for its Diepkloof Xtreme Park.

The park was created in just 24 hours. Williamson said the world was sitting up and taking notice because the entity was making greening issues attractive.

"Instead of focusing on legislation and regulation, we are focusing on making greening issues more sexy, more marketable," he said.

Compared to some of the competitors, Johannesburg's budget for projects was "insignificant". But, where others threw billion-dollar budgets at greening projects, City Parks was throwing in the "passion of the people", Williamson said.

Accolades for all

Johannesburg entered three projects in the competition - the Xtreme Park, Cosmo City and the Klipriver Greening and Rehabilitation Project; it also entered the Whole City Award category for cities with a population of more than 750 000 people.

It received accolades for all four entries.

Endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme the LivCom awards are the world's only awards recognising excellence in the sustainable development of cities.

Finalists from some of the world's largest, oldest, newest, richest and poorest communities take part each year in the awards to share knowledge, ideas and support for establishing a global network of communities committed to respecting the environment, actively

protecting and enhancing it, actively engaging in the future planning of their communities and living healthy lifestyles.

The 2011 International Awards for Liveable Communities will take place in Songpa, Seoul in October. Communities must register entries by 31st May and submit a written report by 30th June, which is assessed by an independent panel of judges in July. The Judges invite a number of communities to attend the finals of LivCom, where they will be required to make a verbal presentation to the judges, with other delegates observing the presentation, and to answer a series of questions from the judges. There are three sections to the awards – Whole City, Sustainable Projects and a Bursary Award to the value of £10,000.

There is no community registration fee, and a number of delegates from each community may attend the Finals without the payment of any fee.

For full information regarding the 2011 Awards go to www.livcomawards.com or contact the LivCom head Office on +44 (0) 118 946 1680.

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