

Vilakazi Street to be the blueprint for township tourism

The Department of Tourism's Director-General (DG) Victor Tharage, led a senior multi-departmental government delegation to meet with tourism stakeholders around the Vilakazi Precinct, in order to develop a framework which seeks to address the challenges faced by these stakeholders.



Photo: Joburg.co.za

At the core of the challenges raised was the historic spatial planning deficiencies which continues to hinder the expansion of the pristine tourism destination to its full potential. Such includes public amenities like ablution, parking, street furniture, pedestrian walk ways, bicycle lanes, as well as congested public transport routes.

The immediate concern for many, is the safety and the crime rate within the precinct, with reported syndicates targeting tourists. The situation is exacerbated by illegal tour guides and parking attendants hustling in the precinct.

Parking and traffic assessment

Thabang Sithole who is responsible for strategic urban planning at the City of Johannesburg, highlighted that interventions have been implemented regarding parking and traffic assessment.

"We plan to embark on piloting the idea of using Vilakazi Street as a one-way street during weekends, as part of our traffic assessment and the impact thereof. We urge you to give us feedback regarding this intervention," he said..

The City of Johannesburg is also considering rezoning the area, which will help stimulate the economy for the people of Soweto, by using their properties to improve their standard of living and livelihood.

Pilot model

The Department of Tourism has resolved from its recent Lekgotla, to adopt the Vilakazi Street Development as a pilot model for the development of a blueprint for township tourism precincts and has already developed a framework for consultation with the stakeholder and various provincial and national government agencies.

“The framework will include the development of a stakeholder plan based on capacitating local communities to guide the effectiveness of operating a community policing forum, as well as supporting the existing tourism enterprises with business support services ranging from funding processes, management systems and promotional platforms to achieve resource efficiency”, said Tharage.

“Our aim is to establish and coordinate linkages across all spheres of government and other precincts, routes and municipal management structures, with the view of increasing the length of stay, spend and repeat visitation in line with the Department’s Domestic Tourism Strategy – ultimately. It should not matter whether the precinct is township or not, it must just be a world class, uniquely South Africa destination, and that is what this place will sooner or later start looking like,” he concluded.

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