



**FOUNDATION RECOGNIZED AS A BLUEPRINT FOR MODERN JOINT URBAN PARK MANAGEMENT, FOCUSES ON INCREASED SAFETY AND SECURITY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN URBAN RECREATIONAL SPACES, AS IT INTENSIFIES INITIATIVES THROUGH THE MOMENTUM OF VOLUNTEERS, SUPPORTERS & PARK-USERS DURING WOMEN'S MONTH 2020**

**For immediate release**

**Johannesburg, 8 August 2020.** After extensive research, the James and Ethel Gray Park Foundation (JEGPF), in partnership with the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ), has developed a pragmatic approach to bolster safety and security efforts for all park users, but especially for women and children. This approach has been informed by a detailed analysis of the park's design, with an emphasis on the physical characteristics of the park. The analysis revealed several critical factors that needed to be addressed. These included the need for perimeter fencing, improved lighting, management of physical and noise isolation, higher visibility, effective access to help, management of concealed areas, regular maintenance and prevention of vandalism. Clear, concise additional signage also emerged as important in the research findings because people, especially women and girls, tend to feel safer when they know how to navigate the park's various open spaces.

The Foundation has implemented several programmes to realize a safer and more enjoyable environment for park users. These include the installation of Cochrane ClearVu perimeter fencing, crown-lifting of trees, installation of more effective lighting in the park, regular park clean-up drives, grass cutting, litter and waste-removal. These initiatives, most of which have been undertaken by volunteers from the local community, have augmented JCPZ's scheduled maintenance. To further strengthen the support and involvement of residents and the community, the Foundation has also recently set up a volunteer WhatsApp group <https://chat.whatsapp.com/CYITHbB6al9HGeHjsD5rlb>, which has rapidly gained momentum and which now has more than one hundred and fifty (150) volunteer members registered from across the length and breadth of Johannesburg.

For Mandela Day this year, over the weekend of 18 July 2020, Foundation members, park-users and volunteers undertook a major park clean-up campaign, as they went about their usual exercise and walking routines. This initiative resulted in the collection of thirty (30) bags of litter and rubbish which was properly disposed of afterwards. Encouraged by the success of that campaign, the Foundation planned further weekly volunteer days in the park on all Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. These have been well supported by residents, volunteers and park-users as well as by the CAP Green team. As part of its efforts to support JCPZ activities the Foundation has also established a weekend maintenance volunteer programme.

On the weekend of 25 July 2020, the Foundation, together with volunteers and in partnership with JCPZ, JMPD, Pikitup and the CAP green team, undertook a massive clean-up of the Sandspruit river in the park. Working from the Athol Oaklands entrance of the park, the clean-up resulted in the removal of many non-biodegradable items such as plastics, clothing, metal knives, stick weapons as well as animal carcasses. The exercise also saw the dismantling of a constructed dug-out which has been utilised for illegal activities in the park, including the lighting of fires by the occupants of the dug-out that have caused damage to the park. The clean-up exercise also revealed benches and other infrastructure meant for park-users, which have been obscured over time by dense growth in some parts of the park.

MMC Margaret Arnolds who is responsible for oversight of the Community Development, portfolio commended JEGPF for initiating community involvement in the facility. Arnolds stated that, "The work of the foundation in partnership with JCPZ, other COJ entities, volunteers, resident associations and the private sector is a blueprint for best-practice in modern joint urban park management. Park safety has improved and a clear indicator is a huge number of mums with their babies that visit this space."



Regular park-user Carla Berman of Melrose North believes that “Group efforts and support for the JEGPF have been inspiring. The park has had a long overdue rebirth and given way to a safe, clean and consistently improving space where families can really relax and enjoy the outdoors. As a mother of two young kids, it’s assuring to know that we can return to our neighbourhood park with little concern.”

Abbotsford resident Thembi Shabangu said that “As women we would like to thank the board of the foundation, the volunteers and supporters for their selfless commitment in organizing the joint efforts for the benefit of the park and all communities. We call on the JCPZ to enable physical security in the park at all times to ensure the long-term safety of women and children”

Long-standing Johannesburg resident Pippa Smith encapsulated the progress in the park as follows “Strong Women walk. Strong women exercise in nature. Strong women walk with dogs and children. And they do it in the James and Ethel Gray Park. In safety and security, because the park belongs to a community that strong women built”.

Chairperson of the James and Ethel Gray Park Foundation, Sunil Geness highlighted that, “Park utilisation has increased exponentially under lockdown level 3 conditions.” He added that “The Foundation will continuously and consistently intensify efforts and specific actions during Women’s month and beyond to allow girls and women to utilise and enjoy the park to the fullest extent without experiencing fear or discrimination. The Foundation is committed to supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment as a right and as an important prerequisite for a free society. We encourage park-users, residents of Johannesburg and businesses to support the work of the Foundation through in-kind support and cash donations which can be made through the following link; <https://clickndonate.com/donations/james-and-ethel-gray-park-goal-r-2-500-000/>”

#### About the James and Ethel Gray Park Foundation:

The Foundation is a Non-Profit Company(NPC) incorporated under certificate number 2019/037318/08 issued by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission(CIPC) under South African Law and is a South African Revenue Services(SARS) approved Public Benefit Organisation (PBO number 930066624). The Foundation has been established as an initiative of the Melrose North Residents and Ratepayers Association (MNRRA) and Birdhaven Residents Association (BRA), in partnership with the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) and the City of Johannesburg. It is focused on the safety and sustainability of the James & Ethel Gray Park.

Donations to the James and Ethel Gray Park Foundation NPC, can be made at **Nedbank** Account number, **1188780247**, Branch Code 19660500, Melrose Arch Branch, Swift Code **NEDSZAJJ**, Reference your full name/business name and email your details to [info@jamesandethelgrayparkfoundation.org](mailto:info@jamesandethelgrayparkfoundation.org) to receive your tax deductible Section 18A certificate. You can also find snapscan details at: <https://jamesandethelgrayparkfoundation.org/>

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