How the City of Gold is turning the SDGs into action
The City of Johannesburg, often referred to as Joburg or the City of Gold, is the largest city in South Africa and is located in the eastern part of the country. It is the capital of the Gauteng Province and serves as the economic hub of the country, as well as the gateway to Southern Africa.

The centrality and value of cities in the realization of Agenda 2030 cannot be overemphasized. The City of Joburg has put its focus on SDG on reducing inequality and SDG11 on achieving sustainable cities and communities. Through its vision of a “World Class African City of the Future,” the city aims to create a vibrant, equitable environment strengthened by diversity, provision of quality and sustainable livelihood, and a resilient and adaptive society. The city’s Climate Action Plan, March 2021, also highlights an Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) which uses an environmental lens to focus on other SDGs such as:

- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being
- Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- Goal 13: Climate Action
- Goal 15: Life on Land
- Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Waste collection site in Johannesburg
Joburg boasts a number of sustainable programs for its residents, all geared towards transforming their lives for the better while leaving no one behind. Some of these include the Inner City Revitalization Program, E-Health (an online system for registering and storing patients' information), the Ekhaya Neighbourhood Project, and the Landfill Gas to Energy Project, among others.

According to Kate Joseph, an Administrator with the city, the Metropolitan entity seeks to drive SDG realization through initiatives such as showcasing clean energy by transforming waste into energy. They also aim to upgrade informal settlements into more sustainable apartments/flats, accelerate and champion improved healthcare, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, and address safety concerns to make the city safer for everyone by reducing crime, promoting peaceful communities, and ensuring inclusion to leave no one behind.

SDG Tracking Portal
To track their progress, the City of Joburg has developed an SDG tracking platform where they are monitoring 92 of the 249 indicators towards realizing Agenda 2030. Ms. Joseph explained that the portal aims to produce a voluntary local review in 2024 that will showcase the successes of Johannesburg. It is a publicly accessible website that creates more awareness around the SDGs for the communities and serves as a call to action for the private sector, academia, and everyone to participate in the advancement of the SDGs in their spheres. It also allows the communities to hold the city accountable as the drivers for the initiative. The portal was developed in consultation with the national government and other cities to create an aligned system for benchmarking, measuring successes, and identifying challenges in their long-term strategic agenda.

Leaving No One Behind
In terms of inclusion, Johannesburg has strong programs to combat gender-based violence and incorporate women and youth, particularly economically and socially, as decision-makers and participants in participatory governance. The city’s Integrated Development Program (IDP) incorporates the SDGs into the national development plan and serves as the city’s 5-year action plan. Johannesburg has engaged with various groups, including youth, LGBTIQA+ communities, and people with disabilities, to ensure their interests and needs are represented in driving the governance agenda. The city also promotes inclusivity in procurement processes by involving women, local youth, and people with disabilities, creating jobs in socially disadvantaged areas.
The Role of Local Leaders
Public figures such as mayors and other local government representatives play a crucial role in creating awareness about the SDGs and the city’s vision. They facilitate partnerships and mobilize communities to get involved in driving the developmental agenda from the bottom-up as well as the top-down. They also legislate for policies that bring together the national government and other cities to ensure cohesive reporting.

Way Forward
Moving forward, strong leadership, coordination, and alignment are needed to effectively report to the National reporting framework. This requires collaboration between the government and the UN to ensure all cities in South Africa are speaking the same language and working towards achieving the SDGs.