



Dear residents of Johannesburg,

As I navigate our vibrant streets in Johannesburg, the unyielding spirit of our city continually inspires me. Johannesburg embodies hope, hard work, and an abundance of stories, tales of individuals striving to build better lives for themselves and their families. This compelling spirit assures me that our City can rise to meet any challenge. In recent months, we have focused our efforts on restoring order and dignity at the core of Johannesburg.

Our approach hinges on enforcing municipal bylaws, a responsibility that has, regrettably, lagged for too long. Many have questioned why the City failed to enforce its bylaws consistently over the years. The reality is a mix of administrative breakdowns, resource constraints, and legal complexities that have weakened the systems essential for upholding order.

For far too long, our informal trading permit system has been ineffective. Traders have attempted to apply for permits but have faced barriers. While many wish to comply, the system has failed them to a certain extent. The institutions tasked with enforcement have been overwhelmed, juggling too many priorities with inadequate resources. This has resulted in a perfect storm: unmanaged trading, hijacked buildings, blocked pavements, and a hallmarked decline of order in the heart of our City.

Let me be clear: the people did not cause this problem; the system failed them. When systems break down, the burden falls heavily on the individuals affected. Today, we are resolute in changing this narrative. Every resident, be it a commuter, student, business owner, or informal trader, deserves a city that functions properly. A city must protect livelihoods and dignity while maintaining the rule of law.

Without order, no one can thrive. However, without compassion, order holds no meaning. Our approach is straightforward: we will enforce bylaws firmly, yet we will do so with fairness and humanity. We will differentiate between those permitted to trade and those left behind by a broken system. Our commitment is to help people regularise their operations where possible so that they can earn a living. We are implementing a more intelligent and a more transparent permit system to eliminate the uncertainty traders face.

Those who operate within the law deserve our protection. Those who violate the regulations will be allowed to comply. However, we can no longer enable sidewalks to be crowded, public spaces to be obstructed, or our inner city to deteriorate. No great city can survive without rules respected by everyone. Some have challenged our initiatives in court, and we respect that. The law is a right for every citizen. Yet, we cannot shirk our responsibility to create a clean, safe, and organised city.

I carry this responsibility with deep conviction. I understand that people's lives and families are affected by these decisions, which is precisely why our actions must reflect dignity, transparency, and fairness. As I walk through the inner city today, I see both challenges and immense possibilities. I see traders setting up their stalls at dawn, parents walking their children to school, and young people striving to realise their dreams. They deserve open pavements, safe streets, and a city brimming with opportunity and hope.

We acknowledge the need to provide infrastructure and reduce red tape and expensive license fees, which are a barrier to boosting the informal economy. These structural barriers are addressed in the City's adopted Informal Trading Policy and Bylaws, which were adopted by Council as enablers of the growth of the informal sector.

Our work is not against anyone; it is for everyone. We are building a city where informal traders can operate legally and proudly, where businesses can invest with confidence, where residents can move freely, and where all who walk our streets feel secure. Johannesburg belongs to all of us. Each citizen must play a role in this renewal. This journey will not always be simple, but together, step by step, we can rebuild a city that truly represents its people. One that reflects our collective values of respect, dignity, and order.

Once again, I thank you for continuing to walk this difficult path with us.

Until next time,

Johannesburg Executive Mayor Councillor Sello Dada Morero