



SAFER PLACES:  
RESILIENT INSTITUTIONS AND  
NEIGHBOURHOODS TOGETHER

# SPRINT

## ACTIVATION: CREATING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE SAFE PLACES

**AUGUST 2021**

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Public spaces reflect the identity of society. This can be seen in the form and quality of the spaces and the activities that happen in and between public spaces; even the presence (or absence) of public space and how it is connected to pathways and nodes within a spatial network relays information. The historical spatial injustices of apartheid and colonialism have led to unequal development, leaving many areas under-developed and many public spaces unsafe and unattractive. The existence, accessibility and quality of public space can contribute significantly to public safety, particularly where public spaces and their usage are co-created with local communities, as this builds social cohesion and buy-in. Public space activation involves the creation of a programme of activities, characteristics or features to enable or encourage utilisation of the space. Activation can be beneficial, or even essential, in the creation of quality, vibrant, safe and sustainable public spaces.



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**20**  
YEARS

The intelligence of change

# PREFACE

The task of building safer and more resilient communities in South Africa is a complex and challenging one. Severe inequality, high levels of youth unemployment, abuse of alcohol and drugs, rapid urbanisation, and poor health and education outcomes all contribute to an environment of risk and vulnerability to crime and violence. Violence and crime stem from a complex web of risk factors. South Africa has developed a progressive and enabling policy framework for crime prevention as articulated across the Constitution, the White Paper for Safety and Security (WPSS), the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), the recent National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP GBVF) and others. Despite this, violence prevention is not systematically and holistically prioritised and criminal justice-focused responses are still predominant.<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on many communities in South Africa. Consequently, social cohesion is even more at risk, which might amplify risk factors for increased violence and crime. The pandemic has exacerbated already extremely high rates of crime and violence endemic in vulnerable communities and it is clear that inequality affects availability, access and quality of services.

The Safer Places: Resilient Institutions and Neighbourhoods Together (SPRINT) Project is a joint initiative of the South African German Development Cooperation with the support of the GIZ - Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme, implemented by Isandla Institute and Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU NPC).

The initiative was initially conceptualised in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim to assist communities across the country to build resilience in a context of precarious social cohesion and risk factors for increased violence and crime.<sup>2</sup>

**The SPRINT Project has two distinct, but inter-related, pathways to achieve this:**

- A **Learning Network**, which consists of civil society organisations (CSOs) from a cross-section of sectors, and creates opportunities for peer exchanges resulting in learning and advocacy documentation.
- A **Laboratory**, which involves capacity-building processes with participating municipalities and local CSOs, and focuses on co-designing and implementing practical, area-based solutions to violence-related challenges.

Through these initiatives, the SPRINT Project works towards the long-term vision of effective area-based violence prevention interventions (ABVPI) integrated into the development and management of vulnerable urban communities, including informal settlements.

**Three critical areas of advocacy have been identified:**

- 01** Embedding ABVPI in informal settlement upgrading
- 02** Resourcing for ABVPI
- 03** Activation as a key entry point for creating sustainable and inclusive safe places

This output speaks to the third topic, “Activation as a key entry point for creating sustainable and inclusive safe places”.

Isandla Institute would like to thank Thendo Mafame for her contributions to an earlier version of this document.

<sup>1</sup> SPRINT Brochure [2020] p.1

<sup>2</sup> Knowledge Management across the Field of Violence Prevention within the South African-German Development Cooperation; National Treasury, BMZ (2020) developed a series of booklets aimed at sharing the collective knowledge about violence prevention to facilitate the institutionalisation, upscaling, adaptation of, and fostering of synergies amongst, successful violence prevention approaches.

# BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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**The COVID-19 pandemic has had (and continues to have) negative impacts on South African society, including illness, loss of life and devastating economic, social and psychological implications. Through these impacts, the pandemic also increases the risk factors that underpin violence and crime.**

Furthermore, the pandemic and associated national lockdown measures have negatively affected social interaction and co-existence. For example, during the pandemic many schools have periodically been closed. Given that schools are a primary place for social gathering amongst youth, their closure has impacted the youths' education and social engagement. The closure of schools has also meant that some youth are more exposed or vulnerable to experiencing and/or perpetuating violence. This is particularly the case in resource constrained environments, where both schools and families have not had the resources to enable online learning.

While COVID-19 has certainly limited possibilities for social interaction, the reality is that poorly resourced communities often lack well-designed, inclusive public spaces that are actively used by the community for social, recreational and/or economic activities.

Activation is a key component of creating well-designed, vibrant spaces that promote a positive experience of the public realm. Such spaces foster social cohesion and increase safety. Public space activation programmes can reduce violence and crime in South Africa. This is supported by existing South African legislation which encourages the use of public space as part of violence prevention interventions.

# RELEVANT POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ABVPI

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**The South African public policy environment has long supported the importance of using public spaces for public benefit. The table below presents a brief overview of the relevant policies and strategies that support area-based violence prevention interventions (ABVPI), with a focus on environmental design, social violence prevention and sustainable safe spaces, together with the lead departments responsible for their implementation.**

These policies and strategies provide guidance on how the spaces can be activated by ensuring the engagement processes are accessible and transparent. They form the foundation for advocacy for the inclusion of activation in ABVPI and can be used as a catalyst for discussions about the conceptualisation of, and resource allocation for, activation interventions. The policies and strategies highlight how multi-level engagements of different depth and at different stages of an intervention are needed to align to different priorities.

Government Department	Policy/ Strategy	Relevant Sections	Key Considerations
Inter-departmental strategy team comprising of the Departments of Correctional Services, Defence, Intelligence, Justice, Safety and Security and Welfare.	National Crime Prevention Strategy (1996)	<b>Pillar 2:</b> Reducing crime through environmental design.	Emphasises that the causes of violence and crime need to be disaggregated for preventative interventions because different types of crimes have different causes and will require a specific solution.
Department of Social Development	Integrated Social Crime Prevention Strategy (2011)	<b>Relevant Strategic Objectives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating targeted collaborative partnerships with other government departments and civil society organisations.</li> <li>• Promoting sustained institutional mechanisms in communities.</li> <li>• Improving social fabric and cohesion within families.</li> <li>• Ensuring investment in prevention and early intervention services with long-term benefits.</li> </ul>	Provides the rationale to enable the government departments to respond to crime-related issues in a coordinated and focused manner, by looking into issues causing crime.  Emphasises the importance of having measures to prevent crime by the government departments, communities, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and the general public.
Multiple departments; the Civilian Secretariat for Police Services to coordinate and facilitate	White Paper on Safety and Security (2016)	<b>Section 7.1.2:</b> Early intervention to prevent crime and violence and promote safety.  <b>Section 7.1.5:</b> Safety through environmental design.  <b>Section 7.1.6:</b> Active public and community participation.	Reflects on the importance of preventive interventions aimed at reducing the social, economic, and environmental risk factors.  Suggests that building safer communities requires evidence-based initiatives which aim at addressing underlying risk factors at the individual, relationship, community, and societal level.
Department of Cooperative Governance	Integrated Urban Development Framework (2016)	<b>Cross-cutting issue:</b> Urban safety within the main objective of creating safe and liveable urban spaces.  <b>Policy Lever 3:</b> Integrated Sustainable Human Settlements.  <b>Policy Lever 7:</b> Empowered Active Communities.	Promotes the mainstreaming of crime and violence prevention initiatives in urban planning.  Emphasises that public infrastructure should create conditions for the people to have a sense of belonging and that municipalities should provide quality public spaces where citizens feel valued.
Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities	National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (2020)	<b>Relevant Key initiatives:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing social norms and behaviours through high-level awareness-raising and prevention campaigns.</li> <li>• Strengthening existing architecture and promoting accountability.</li> <li>• Creating opportunities for women and youth who are vulnerable to abuse because of poverty.</li> </ul>	Focuses on comprehensively and strategically responding to gender-based violence and femicide by providing a multi-sectoral, coherent strategic policy and programming framework.  The importance of having an inter-generational, youth-friendly approach that is co-created for different social milieu.

# UNDERSTANDING ACTIVATION

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**Public spaces in South Africa have the potential to be both sites of increased exposure to violence and crime as well as catalysts for social cohesion. This is important to consider in relation to South Africa's historical background and ongoing inequality and poverty. Theorist Jane Jacobs (1961) believed that design could create a sense of security in the space and deter crime and violent activities.**

Open public spaces play a critical role in supporting social cohesion and in turn, building a resilient social fabric. Socially productive public spaces build community capacity and drive growth which increases adaptability and resilience to shocks. Examples of possible activities to build a resilient social fabric include:

- Introducing more communal seating and recreational areas to encourage social interactions and relationship building between community members;
- Strengthening community networks and capitalising on the present social assets such as saving schemes or stokvels;
- Encouraging, enabling and celebrating multi-cultural diversity; and,
- Having youth development, youth recreational and youth employment programmes which promote a sense of personal pride and increase social value.

Activation is a critical part of creating and animating public space. Activation of spaces “focuses on how the spaces between buildings can be used for community building” (District of Columbia Office of Planning. 2018:07). This might include the creation of a programme of activities, or characteristics or features to enable and encourage the utilisation of the space, including the examples shared above. Activation of public spaces in South Africa can have many benefits, including:

- Promoting social connection and deterring potential transgressions by engaging people in activities that create a sense of fulfilment or potentially benefit their livelihoods;
- Bringing vibrancy to space and suitable alternative activities to participate in;
- Contributing towards the strengthening of economies (including micro-economic and related activities);

- Improving the mood of the space because it encourages foot traffic in a given space, providing ‘natural surveillance’ by having more people around (Gehl Institute 2017); and,
- Allowing for communities to improve the general quality of life, address spatial issues, increase safety and security, bring people together in new ways, create a sense of belonging, promote recreational activities, and bring vitality, which might attract new economic activities in the area (Parolek 2014).

In South Africa, at a community level, some examples of good public space activation programmes for violence prevention include:

- The **End Street North Park in Johannesburg**<sup>3</sup> was not being used because it was considered unsafe. The City of Johannesburg trialled alternative management methods and initiatives to increase safety and attractiveness, such as a weekend park activation process, which included an invitation to “meet your neighbour”.
- The **Congella Park in eThekweni**<sup>4</sup> had high levels of violence and was only utilised by homeless persons. The activation activities included park clean-ups, relocation of homeless people to proper facilities, a community food garden, and a recycling project to increase accessibility and public use.
- The **Warwick Junction in Durban**<sup>5</sup> was considered dangerous and unsafe. This space was activated by various infrastructure upgrades such as increased pedestrian sidewalks, improved trading conditions, informal economy spatial redesign, trader storage, water and electricity.
- The **EPWP Park Activation Coordinator (PAC)**<sup>6</sup> Programme was piloted in Johannesburg and eThekweni to keep public parks vibrant and well-maintained, by bringing temporary activities into the space. The activities included sports, games, reading clubs and debate activities that involve parents and children, aimed at building social cohesion.

3 For more information, see: <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/be-inspired/entry/inner-city-safer-parks-and-open-spaces-strategic-framework-end-street-north> and [https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/WEB\\_CoJ\\_Lessons\\_Learnt\\_public\\_spaces.pdf](https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/WEB_CoJ_Lessons_Learnt_public_spaces.pdf)

4 For more information, please see: [http://www.durban.gov.za/City\\_Government/Administration/city\\_manager/RAPA/Other%20Reports%20of%20Interest/State%20of%20Urban%20Safety%202018-19.pdf](http://www.durban.gov.za/City_Government/Administration/city_manager/RAPA/Other%20Reports%20of%20Interest/State%20of%20Urban%20Safety%202018-19.pdf) and <https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Urban-Safety-Policy-Brief-No.1-of-2020.pdf>

5 For more information, please see: <https://www.marketsofwarwick.co.za> and <https://aet.org.za>

6 For more information, please see [https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/200609\\_VPUU\\_SEF\\_CASE\\_STUDIES\\_digital.pdf](https://www.saferspaces.org.za/uploads/files/200609_VPUU_SEF_CASE_STUDIES_digital.pdf)

• **Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading**<sup>7</sup> in Cape Town where public spaces were considered key factors for space upgrade with the purpose to prevent violence. This programme included having safety nodes in various informal settlements with activities such as re-blocking, enhanced housing process and public park upgrades.

Public space activation creates an opportunity to examine how existing empty and vacant spaces can be used for community-building activities that enhance the safety and vitality of the

neighbourhood (Cozens & Love 2015). It includes **placemaking**, which invites users to collaboratively recreate a space, **tactical urbanism**, which is the methodology of treating public spaces as resources, and **urban acupuncture**, an urban regeneration approach in which small scale, targeted interventions can contribute to large scale impacts. The past 30 years have seen increase use of **placemaking** and **tactical urbanism** globally in the creation of sustainable spaces, that are safe, comfortable, and inclusive.

## TACTICAL URBANISM

**Tactical urbanism** is an international movement that brings the paradigm shift of how communities think about their spaces. It utilises temporary, relatively low-cost initiatives which enable organisers to avoid extensive bureaucracy or resource-intensive projects while still having an impact. The tactical urbanism approach has been recognised as an important form of planning and it has been widely used in South Africa. There are several reasons why tactical urbanism is beneficial in the activation of spaces for violence prevention. Tactical urbanism:

- Helps to inspire actions that can be taken forward in space in the future;
- Widens public engagement in spatial development activities;
- Deepens the understanding of space's social fabric;
- Draws special attention to shortcomings that might exist in policies of spatial designs;
- Assists in the gathering of the data about the current use of the space and potential spaces for the activation projects;

- Encourages people to work together with the common goal of improving the space, which builds stakeholder partnerships;
- Provides strategies in testing the prototypes of the activation programmes before they are turned into larger and long-term investments; and,
- Helps create activation programmes using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions guided by existing policies and strategies, which can be led by non-profits, government, civil society organisations, or grassroots organisations (Treskon 2015).

As such, tactical urbanism can be used to create flexible short-term, scalable intervention projects, to advance and catalyse the long-term goals of improving the space. The temporary, fast and relatively inexpensive nature of activations in tactical urbanism mean that it can lead to more permanent activations for neighbourhood building (Street Plans Collaborative 2016).

<sup>7</sup> For more information please see [www.vpuu.org.za](http://www.vpuu.org.za)

## PLACEMAKING

**Placemaking** is a participatory and collaborative process that encourages people to collectively reimagine and reinvent their spaces to maximise the shared value. According to Project for Public Spaces (2018), placemaking is more than just a better spatial design process because it facilitates creative uses of spaces by paying attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that exist in the space.

Effective placemaking processes should capitalise on readily available community assets, inspirations and potentials to create healthy and safe spaces. This aligns with a bottom-up approach to development which considers those 'on-the-ground' as well equipped to identify and implement the kinds of changes they would like to see in their communities. Some examples of the utilisation of placemaking to increase a sense of safety and security include introducing improved road designs, easy access walkways, street lighting, and having landmarks and wayfinding. Within placemaking, one might refer to productive and/or creative placemaking.

**Productive placemaking** speaks to the importance of the built environment in supporting economic and social opportunity. In other words, through infrastructure investment and land use mechanisms, people can be

better connected to each other and to social and economic opportunities. Improved access and connectivity, spatial management and community safety, and appropriate intensity and mixing of land use activities are all outcomes of productive placemaking.

Some examples of possible activities include activating businesses located where pedestrian footfall is highest (including spaza shops, shebeens, beauty salons, mechanics and others) as these tend to be streets where main transport infrastructure (e.g. a train station) and destinations (e.g. social facility) connect; and utilising design elements that allow for universal access of vulnerable people, such as elderly persons.

**Creative placemaking** is that in which a cross-sector partnerships uses art and cultural activities to animate public and private spaces and "brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired" (Markusen & Nicodemus 2014:35).

Examples of creative placemaking include promoting and restoring the community's identity by creating an environment for creativity and cultural sharing; and, having functions in structures and streetscapes, such as museums, exhibitions, public displays and public performances that can be used to advance the activation of public space.

## GOOD PRACTICE FOR THE PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION PROCESS

Public spaces can be revitalised and revolutionised by utilising the activation approaches of tactical urbanism to create critical engagement and placemaking to foster inspiration and re-imagination of space. This can lead to an increase in productive behaviours and efficient, effective use of space. This can also lead to economic returns and increased social interactions, which are key drivers of building safe spaces, productive activities and a successful local economy.

Public space must be activated in a way that it can bring people together. The White Paper on Safety and Security (2016) emphasises the 'whole-of-government and whole-of-society' approach in building safer communities, arguing that it is the collective responsibility of government, citizens and other sectors of society. When designing a public space activation programme, it is important to:

• **Consult** and let the community **participate** in dialogues, to gather information about their needs and aspirations;

- **Co-create** the resulting spaces so that they benefit the targeted audience and there is a sense of ownership;
- **Identify** programme champions, local partners and trusted 'doers' and invest in building local capacity which will improve the outcomes of activated public spaces;
- **Utilise** various global best practice methods such as tactical urbanism and place-making;
- **Adopt and adapt** localised practices such as township economies to ensure the longevity of the programme; and,
- **Monitor progress** to see if the programmes are still in existence, what has changed, and what has improved.

Drawing on these key project components, we see that creating an active network, adapting and creating best practice and monitoring progress all help to increase the sustainability and longevity of a programme. To adapt best practice, it is important to understand the different types of public space activation activities.

# OVERVIEW OF TYPES OF PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION ACTIVITIES

Local conditions, such as the type of public space, the purpose of the activation and local needs and opportunities, will determine which form or forms activation activities take. Examples of different forms of public space activation processes are temporary public space activation, programme-based public space activation, revitalisation of public space through activation, and collaborative activation. Each of these are briefly explained with examples.

## TEMPORARY PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION

Temporary public space activation activities can come in many forms. Their purpose is to pilot and gauge public interest. While termed 'temporary' there is no limit for how long they can last.

In fact, these initiatives may be recurring and become permanent. Examples of possible activities include:

Type of activity	Examples
Street performances	Dance, bands, short plays
Street festivals	Public holiday celebrations or other globally relevant festivals such as pride months
Parades	The 2nd of January, KaapseKlopse
Demonstrations	Peaceful demonstrations on ending gangsterism in communities
Outdoor sports	Weekend sports tournaments
Block parties	Street celebrations with the neighbours, bring and share activities, cultural exchanges
Weekend Walks	Walks to the parks, hiking, or organised neighbourhood walks

## PROGRAMME-BASED PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION

Some activation activities evolve from temporary or once-off events into a formalised programme. Such activation can enable the quick organisation of activities, experimentation and creativity. Programming does not reduce the flexibility of the activities, but

rather can allow for experimentation with ideas, to see what works and what does not work, and can be on a short-term or long-term basis, depending on commitment. Examples of long-term programming that can evolve from single events or activities include:

Type of Programme	Examples
Educational	Afterschool programmes, skills development programmes, career guidance
Social	Life orientation activities, regular meet and greet sessions, social clubs for emotional support
Cultural	Cultural sharing programmes, language classes, cultural foods celebration days
Artistic	Learning of the new skills such as crafts or knitting programmes, drama performances and plays



## REVITALISATION OF PUBLIC SPACE THROUGH ACTIVATION

South African communities often have several spaces which can be activated to create safe, useful spaces. Without a deliberate effort, these spaces fall into disrepair and can become hotpots for violence and crime. Enabling public space revitalisation

activation requires commitment from various stakeholders (Parolek 2014), particularly government officials who might need to issue permits to use the space. Examples of such activities include:

Type of activity	Examples
Pop-up businesses	Pop-up craft markets or holiday shops in previously abandoned spaces, pop-up weekend markets, business incubators
Outdoor cafes	Temporary outdoor cafes, food trucks
Murals and public art	Painting of neglected and open spaces, installation of public art displays
Commemorations	Events that pay tribute to community heroes, learning about the community culture and history
Celebrations	Celebrating some of the country's public holidays such as Youth Day and Freedom Day

## COLLABORATIVE ACTIVATION

Public space activation requires that there are diverse people and organisations involved in the process. It is therefore important to form partnerships with the general residents, civil society organisations, government departments, religious institutions, academic institutions, businesses, and anyone committed to building sustainable safe spaces.

These partnerships maximise the individual's impact on the programme and can be used to create successful sustainable networks for the activation programmes. Collaborative activation is required for adaptability and informality, supporting and encouraging equity and inclusivity, and ensuring flexibility when designing the programmes. Examples of such activities include:

Type of collaborative activity	Example
Vending development zones	Having spaces dedicated for vending in collaboration with vendors, local government, and malls
Programme champions	Campaigning for the activation programme and advertising the activities
Free libraries (book exchange)	Book exchange programmes in collaboration with the library and the local residents
Outdoor theatres	Facilitating spaces for participants to use for performances

The various forms of activation described above can be pursued independently or jointly, as part of a strategic approach to public space use and optimisation. In other words, they can co-exist in a particular space.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider possibilities beyond temporary activation to make sure a programmatic, strategic and long-term perspective underpins the approach to public space.

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION PROCESSES

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Since every space is shaped by its own unique social, spatial, and regulatory environment, the type of activation applied must be appropriate for that space and be context-responsive. Thus, public space activation exists in the nexus of spatial context, the social-demographic context and cultural components, which are complementary in creating a programme that has a larger impact on the environment (Treskon, Esthappan, Okeke, and Vasquez-Noriega 2018). It is therefore important to consider these various components when embarking on a public space activation programme.

## SPATIAL CONTEXT FACTORS

Spatial Context Factors	Points to consider
<b>Safety and Security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The programme itself must be safe for the participants.</li><li>• Greatest accessibility for a wide range of the participants.</li><li>• Sites need to be easy to reach by the targeted participants.</li></ul>
<b>Having a prototype</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having a prototype for an activation programme can increase the public interest which will potentially result in having more permanent programmes.</li><li>• Having a formalised prototype allows for the programme to be replicable elsewhere.</li><li>• Prototypes also potentially open doors for more permanent solutions.</li></ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The duration of an activation process can influence its impact as some programmes might be beneficial if left running for an extended period, while others can work as once-off activities.</li><li>• Ideally, the activation programmes should run for an extended period to ensure maximum benefits.</li></ul>
<b>Scale dimension</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Small-scale activities can get people used to the idea, and large-scale ones can reach many people.</li><li>• It is recommended to start small and work towards achieving a larger target goal in the longer term.</li></ul>
<b>Costs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Temporary activities such as block parties can have a lower budget because the participants will provide materials for the activity.</li><li>• Long-term activation projects have additional maintenance fees, staffing fees and material costs.</li></ul>

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Socio-demographic Factors	Points to consider
<b>Favouring Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not showing bias or preference over areas or genders is important when activating a public space.</li> <li>• The activated space must be inclusive and visibly show equity in its activities to avoid isolation and discomfort.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All relevant legislative frameworks on violence prevention initiatives emphasise stakeholder engagement for sustainable safer space creation.</li> <li>• In public space activation processes, community engagement can assist in building social capital and reaching consensus on activities that are beneficial to the community.</li> <li>• To move through the community engagement continuum from a space of fear and scarcity to one of courage and creativity, it is essential to practice clear communication, inclusion and trust and relationship building<sup>8</sup>.</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Champions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing a public space activation programme as part of an ABVPI will require creating awareness that shows an attractive alternative to violence and crime to reach out to people.</li> <li>• Change agents and programme champions are beneficial.</li> </ul>

## CULTURAL COMPONENTS

Cultural Factors	Points to consider
<b>Artistic-based activation activities:</b>	Public space activation can be used to showcase the local community members' talent through music, art shows, comedy shows, and live performances such as plays and musicals. Artistic activities can also go to the international level for performance, which can motivate the others to participate.
<b>Heritage Events:</b>	South Africa is a country full of cultural diversity. Sharing these in public spaces can assist in understanding each other better while encouraging people to learn more about their own culture and that of others. Activating the public spaces for heritage activities can create a sense of identity and pride.

As we can see, a variety of different actors are needed for different initiatives – especially (but not exclusively) local actors, whose responsibilities and abilities align with such initiatives. This may include:

- Local municipality
- Local civil society organisations
- Local youth
- Local schools
- The private sector
- Civilian Secretariat for Police Services

- Provincial Departments, e.g. Department of Social Development; Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Department of Education; Department of Community Safety; Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities; Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation
- Where relevant, National Departments such as Department of Social Development; Department of Cooperative Governance; Department of Education; Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation

When coordinating such diverse groups and considering the different aspects of the programme, it is helpful to hold on to key lessons that have been learnt across different activation interventions.

<sup>8</sup> For more information, please see <https://www.saferspaces.org.za/resources/entry/community-engagement-for-community-safety>.

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION

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**Activation of public spaces is integral for creating sustainable, safe and accessible spaces. As discussed in the preceding sections, there are many different articulations of and ways to utilise activation. Public space activation is implemented with recognition of the spatial context, socio-demographic and cultural factors and can be conceptualised new, or by amending existing initiatives. There are ten key actions that respond to the challenges that many public space activation programmes will experience.**

- I** Ensure public space programmes are coordinated and involve dynamic, adaptive activation programmes.
- II** Expand and strengthen existing activation programmes for public spaces, including in unused spaces.
- III** Protect the longevity of public space activation activities by including their management, repair and maintenance as part of the planning and implementation and ensuring sufficient resources including funding and human capital are invested in the initiative from public funds, donors and/or the private sector.
- IV** Have a common understanding of the specific context and operational language amongst stakeholders which speaks to the programme's operations, including to clarify expectations and share potential benefits.
- V** Develop long-term life skills and social development programmes that are aligned with and amplified by activation programmes.
- VI** Assist champions of the public space activation programmes to ensure the longevity of the programme.
- VII** Utilise activation activities to build social cohesion and address cultural and social norms that enable or condone violence and exclusion.
- VIII** Work closely with key stakeholders in the activation to facilitate engagements, differences and benefits – ensuring good communication across the programme.
- IX** Use proper planning and coordination to assist in avoiding the unintended consequences, such as gentrification. Global research has shown that sometimes public space activation programmes attract people who would not have visited the space before, which leads to the local community feeling alienated from using the space because the activities do not suit their needs (Shaw and Sullivan 2011; Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk. 2016).
- X** Encourage collaborative partnerships between interested stakeholders to guarantee the sustainability of the activation programme.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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This document highlights ten actions that are required to increase support for the public space activation programmes for area-based violence prevention. Given that the activation of public spaces often happens at a neighbourhood level, local government has been identified as a key actor. In such activation processes, the municipality has the opportunity to act as the initiator (partner with other stakeholders), the funder (fund the operations and maintenance of the programme), the implementer (collaboratively design and implement the programme), the facilitator (facilitate the activation of public spaces), the enabler (provide the enabling conditions for communities and other actors to implement activities and programmes), the regulator (ensure that health and other standards are adhered to) and the monitor (assess the activation's social, economic and environmental benefits, as these will influence its longevity). Having a strong spatial governance system that is transparent and effective is also important to ensure the quality of the activation process.



Some aspects for the municipality to consider in public space activation are as follows:

- **The municipality must enable participation in the design of public space activation** processes by working in collaborative partnerships with local communities, relevant civil society organisations, the private sector and, where appropriate, other spheres of government. Setting clear expectations for deep engagement over time and allocating sufficient resources

(including time, funding and human capital) to support participation will enable a holistic understanding of the issues and the development of comprehensive solutions.

- **The activation process should be implemented in line with international standards, and national and local government strategies**, along with existing good practice and some lessons learnt from similar initiatives implemented in the past. Looking at what has been done in the past, what worked and what did not work will assist building upon past learning.

- **The municipality should avoid the privatisation of the activated public spaces**, to ensure the activated public space is accessible to all people (especially local residents) and that it is inclusive and equitable. Public land, whether parks, gardens, squares or paths, should remain publicly owned. The municipality may also need to consider imposing conditionalities on activation programmes to avoid exclusive and exclusionary use of public space.
- **Diverse and sufficient resources for an activation programme need to be identified** to support the long-term sustainability of the activation programme as not only one stakeholder would be relied upon. In this way, various stakeholders together with the government can ensure the maintenance and operations of the programme.
- **Programme champions should be identified and fostered** as they can be effective in advertisement and maintenance. Programme champions can be essential for the 'place keeping' of an activated space.

Local government has the mandate to create, maintain and manage high-quality public spaces in collaboration with the people and for the people. Public spaces are a unique and tangible factor of consideration in area-based violence prevention interventions and activation of these spaces is critical. The potential widespread impact of such activations relies on the inclusion of all stakeholders who are directly or indirectly affected. Subsequently, an inclusive, collaborative effort will have the greatest impact.

This inclusive, collaborative effort can be directed through engagements between local government, such as ward committees, and people living in the area or through formal groups such as community safety forums. Processes and measures for guiding and enabling such interventions can be found in various manuals and guidebooks such as JCPZ's Transforming Public Parks into Safe and Inclusive Community Spaces: Lessons on collaboration and participation from the City of Joburg (2019).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when embarking on public space activation, there are five critical lessons:

- Activation activities are an important component of area-based violence prevention interventions. Evidence-based advocacy should be used to increase awareness of these amongst various government departments.
- Partnerships with various stakeholders to aid in the design of the activation project, will improve its usability and increase its sustainability.
- The spaces designed as a result of an activation process should enhance social experiences and activities, which are inclusive for all members of the community.
- Activation activities can and should address livelihood needs and reflect local culture, heritage and arts.

- Connecting activation activities with existing programmes can attract participation and enhance sustainability and pooling of resources around shared, identified synergies.

Drawing inferences from the literature, policies, best practices, and case studies, it is evident that when spaces are activated, they help to build the communities. These spaces become places where people can come together, form relationships, be innovative and be protected from violence and crime.

South Africa has several spaces which present the opportunity for such activations; to do so will require cooperation, collaboration, partnerships and willingness from local communities, civil society and the public sector. Activation of public space can be flexible, low cost and either temporary or sustained, yet the impact can be significant.

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