



Grahamstown Business Forum 2016/7 Annual Report

Trevor Davies, Chair

1.1 The organisation's main aims and objectives are as follows.

- 1. To promote the interests of business in Makana Municipal area.**
- 2. To be a unified, non-racial, all-inclusive body that represents our members.**
- 3. To engage with the Municipality and Local Government in order to be involved with decision making processes which affect Commerce and Industry in Grahamstown.**
- 4. To promote ethical, legal and socially conscious business practices amongst our members.**
- 5. To encourage networking and information sharing amongst our members in order to foster business relationships.**
- 6. To create and manage an interactive platform for members and the general public to share information.**
- 7. To engage with other business organisations.**

1.2 Secondary Aims and Objectives

- 1. To assist in facilitating a clean, safe and appealing Grahamstown Central Business District.**
- 2. To use reasonable measures to ensure the delivery of services by the Municipality and local government.**
- 3. To assist in creating employment.**



INDEX

Introduction	2
Management Committee	2
Internal Structure	2
External Relationships	3
Sub-Committee Reports	3
Municipal Engagement	3
Clean and Safe	4
Membership	5
Business Development	5
Creative City	6
Civic Price	6
Creative Entrepreneurial Activity	6
Overarching “Creative City” Brand	6
Performing Arts	7
Other	7
Grocott’s Column	7
Business Breakfasts	7
Conclusion	7

Introduction

2016 has proved to be an extremely challenging year for the GBF, during which we have been steadfast in our approach of constructive engagement with Makana Municipality and other government structures, and retained a fairly narrow focus on making Grahamstown cleaner and safer.

Management Committee

Internal Structure

We have formalized our structure and capacitated a number of subcommittees. Please see Annexure A for a breakdown of the roles and responsibilities of the various incumbents.



We have also taken on an extremely efficient administrator who we quite honestly cannot afford. However, by virtue of the incumbents' social conscience and diligence, the GBF now has the benefit of the services of an amazingly competent individual for a price that not one of us could ever ask someone to work for.

We simply cannot rely on goodwill to keep the organization going. We therefore hope to grow our income stream in the year ahead and retain and develop this as it is critical to the ability of the organization to function.

External Relationships

We have also had to consider our relationships with a number of other local organizations, some of which required us to make some tough decisions.

The Assumption Development Centre (ADC) in Joza is doing fantastic work at developing entrepreneurship in Joza (amongst a host of other good work). It has always been central to our thinking that we as a business forum need to be responsive to the needs of the entire Grahamstown. If we are very honest, we have to admit that this broad focus has been absent in most of our activities to date. We have thus extended an invitation to Maso Nduna from the ADC to sit on our management committee which he has accepted. The ADC reciprocated with a position on the its board for our chair which we have accepted. It is our hope that this relationship as well as other initiatives described below help to narrow the divide between Grahamstown East and West starting from where we have influence i.e. business, and hopefully spreading over time to other aspects of our shared community. We have also had interactions with the ministers' fraternal and find them to be honest brokers who we would love to engage with further in our continued joint efforts to bridge the divide and make Grahamstown a better place for all.

Since we are clear in our commitment to constructive engagement with the Municipality we have decided not to not join forces with Makana Unity League's court action. Whereas we understand the frustration of citizens and do not criticize the decisions made by other organizations, we would like to retain our stance.

As much as we have high appreciation for the amazing work that the Grahamstown Residents' Association is doing all over the City and are keen to work with the organisation on projects where there is synergy between both the strategic objectives and operational strategies of the two organisations, we have found some of the GRA's modus operandi to sit uneasily with the GBF's operational strategies, especially as it relates to our relationship and engagement with Makana Municipality. For this reason, we will no longer have a representative of the GRA on the GBF Management Committee.

Sub-Committee Reports

Municipal Engagement

The GBF has built extremely close relations with Government during 2016. Our commitment to supporting Makana Municipality and the Council was displayed in August 2016 when the GBF sponsored the tea and snacks for a Councillor Orientation during which we introduced our organisation to the newly elected Councillors and other Municipal officials.

This early positive encounter was followed by numerous engagements with the Council, the Mayor, the acting Municipal Manager, various Directors of Makana Municipality, as well as with the Premier of the Eastern Cape, which eventually culminated in a full day Turnaround Strategic Planning Session on 16 February 2017. Coordinated by the GBF, this a meeting saw engagement between the Office of the Premier, Provincial Government Departments, the Mayor, Speaker and acting Municipal Manager, relevant Makana Municipality Directors as well as key NGO's and representatives from key stakeholders from within the City. The workshop displayed an unbelievably honest assessment of

the problems facing the Municipality as well as proposed solutions and a hard look at the areas where we needed to change the way we do things.

The areas of agreement are too numerous to mention in this report. Suffice to say that we are in agreement of what needs to be done. All we must do is to roll up our sleeves and do it.

We have also signed a service level agreement with Makana Municipality to assess the cleaning of Grahamstown and provide input into how this city can do better with less.

Clean and Safe

Since our last annual report, the GBF has been actively involved in a quite a few projects relating to cleaning and safety.

Whilst we cannot claim a victory on either issue we certainly won some battles and learned from the process. Both cleaning and safety are never issues that get resolved and need constant attention and innovative thinking. Whilst some of the projects were in partnership with Makana, Creative City, Extended Public Works Program, Provincial Government, Schools we feel that we have gained some ground. Some of the projects that we were involved with were/are:

- 14 Week clean-up campaign of CDB and some areas in Grahamstown East,
- Installation of bins outside Victoria Girls and Victoria Girls High School,
- Facilitation with Makana on various cleaning projects,
- Facilitation of getting Schools in town to “own” areas around their schools.

The challenge we found with many of these projects were that they are time-consuming and costly. Furthermore, they did not necessarily add capacity to Makana or be self-sustaining. This is lesson pivotal in the GBF finding a model that works.

We have just engaged with a group of Rhodes PDEM students who are looking at spending the year building a sustainable business surrounding both security and cleaning. Whilst nothing concrete has happened we hope to be launching a new project within the next few weeks.

Another initiative that the GBF is proud to be associated with is the IWARS' Masihlule Recycling Project. Established in 2008 in the Eastern Cape, *Integrated Waste & Recycling Services (IWARS - <http://www.iwars.co.za/>)* currently operates in the Makana and Ndlambe Municipal areas. IWARS offers a fully integrated service that incorporates education, awareness programmes, skills development and correct implementation of collection and separation methods. While the programme is multifaceted its ultimate aim is to create a cleaner environment and job opportunities, raise environmental awareness and impact on the local economy. The Programme ties into the *Waste to Energy* initiative where recyclables will get extracted before the remaining waste gets converted into electricity.

Buy-back Centres (BBCs) are central to the Masihlule Project in that collected waste is exchanged for cash. While only the Carlisle Street and the Landfill Site Buy-back Centres (BBCs) are operational at the moment, Masihlule Recycling will have BBCs collecting waste at the following additional sites in

Makana by mid-year: Rhodes University, Link Street, Sugar Loaf, Joza, Northern Area, Alicedale and Riebeeck East. Each BBC will be fitted with a solar panel to generate sufficient electricity to run a tablet, a scale, a printer, and a fingerprint reader which will be used for stock and petty cash control and to develop a database of sellers of waste. In addition, Masihlule Recycling will have a small factory where waste will be processed.

Masihlule Recycling currently has a new Hyundai caged vehicle, a Hilux Bakkie and ten small skips, the latter which are available for hire at very reasonable rates to move larger quantities of recyclable and non-recyclable waste to the dump site. While a 6-ton truck will be added to the fleet soon, Masihlule Recycling plans, once sufficient support is obtained from residents and the Municipality, to procure a heavy-duty trailer which can be hitched to the municipal compactor, thus allowing all recyclables to be loaded separately into the trailer for sorting, baling and bagging. In addition, the Project will procure a fleet of bicycles with carts for transporting recyclable products to the BBC from various parts of town.

Similar to areas where recycling projects of this nature have been implemented successfully, awareness programs and training will be rolled out by partnering with local role-players: Makana Municipality, Rhodes University, Schools and individual residents.

Membership

Over the last year, our membership has more than doubled. The success of the GBF's constructive engagement with Makana Municipality and other government structures has been the seed for the new growth we've seen. We continue to actively encourage business people to become a member of the GBF and support the sustainability and direction of commerce in our community.

We are in the process of developing a webpage which we believe will encourage networking and information sharing amongst our members in order to foster better business relationships. The site includes a Member Directory with direct contact links to businesses and we encourage our members to run special promotional offers that are available only to our members. In addition, there is a 'Down to Business' page that regularly provides interesting articles that can assist a business owner. Please visit our webpage at gbforum@org.za.

Business Development

As explained above, in establishing a supportive environment in which Business can prosper, the GBF focussed mainly on the "low-hanging fruit" of a clean and safe city. While supporting the development of new business is therefore not currently our main focus, the GBF is delighted to be associated with the Assumption Development Centre (ADC) in Joza, where the development of entrepreneurs is seen as key to reviving the township economy and in doing so, address the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Apart from being represented on the ADC's board, the GBF is particularly keen to support the ADC's entrepreneurial development programme by soliciting local businessmen and women to act as mentors for the participants of these courses.

Similarly, GBF Management Committee Members often avail themselves to in-depth discussions with students on the Rhodes Business School's Postgraduate Diploma in Enterprise Management aimed at developing collaborative arrangements between students' coursework requirements and

ongoing developmental and business projects within the City.

Attracting outside investment to our City in the form of new businesses seems to be an area that is currently not well served, primarily due to the GBF's narrow focus on a clean and safe City, but also because of a lack of capacity (mainly in terms of time) within the Management Committee.

Creative City

The Creative City initiative's overall marketing objective is for Grahamstown "To become South Africa's Creative Capital by 2020".

A Creative City, is best described as "A city with: Cultural activities – which are an integral component of the city's economic and social functioning;

1. Strong social and cultural infrastructure
2. High concentrations of creative employment, and
3. Attractive to inward investment because of their well-established cultural facilities."

This sub-committee envisages using the "Creative City" as a springboard to harness local based skills and drive small business formalisation and creation. The objective is therefore to create jobs within creative industries so as to boost the economy of the town. There is also an undeveloped business sector and the fact that there is not enough competition in the town, indicates that there is room for the business sector to be creative.

We see driving 4 important streams in order to achieve the overall objective:

- Civic Pride
- Creative Entrepreneurial Activity
- Overarching "Creative City" Brand
- Performing Arts

Civic Pride

A critical part of the Creative City project is a stream which will inculcate civic pride in the residents of Grahamstown. This stream will focus on issues of beautification of the city; litter and waste management; civic responsibility; bylaws and regulations aimed at restoring pride in the city; steps and projects which will break down the barrier between 'east and west'.

Creative Entrepreneurial Activity

A short-term goal of the project, and a 'quick win' is to seek out those activities which will rapidly escalate creative industries into the mainstream of economic activity in the City. This Stream will seek out those opportunities and get them going. It will include: the establishment of a 'Created in Makana' craft shop in town; the creation and management of a regular programme of craft markets and night markets; the rehabilitation of the Fiddlers' Green area, the provision of new infrastructure at Fiddlers' Green and in Church Square for hawkers etc.

Overarching "Creative City" Brand

This stream will see the establishment of a 'Created in Makana' brand and logo, which will be used in conjunction with all creative activity as a seal of approval. It can appear on posters, in advertising campaigns, in packaging, in store windows etc.

Performing Arts

Establishing Grahamstown as a site for (a) the presentation of performing arts on an ongoing basis and (b) the training and development of artists as being a core export of the city are objectives central to Grahamstown becoming known as a 'Creative Capital'. This stream will devise a calendar of live performance and festivals and will work with the project office to promote the calendar as a tourism tool. It will then inject into the calendar new performance dates and mini-Festivals to fill the year, provide artists with an opportunity to work, and appeal to a regular influx of visitors. On the training and development side, this stream will promote the Makana Arts Academy concept and begin establishing new small businesses operating in the arts sector.

Other

Grocott's Column

The GBF expresses our appreciation towards the editor of Grocott's Mail for an invitation to contribute a bi-weekly column, *Down to Business*, to the paper. This publication is seen as a useful and efficient channel for engaging both local business-owners and residents in issues related to the purpose, aims and objectives of the GBF, as well as the challenges and successes experienced by business owners and managers.

Business Breakfasts

In September 2016 and January 2017, the GBF organised two successful business breakfasts at the Graham Hotel, the primary aim of which was to provide opportunities for members and non-members to socialise, network and indirectly promote their businesses. Two of our members, Ron Weissenberg and Grant Meldrum, were presented on the future of business and "Love Marks" respectively. Such events are useful for the GBF to promote itself within our target population, to honour members or officials who support the GBF and to raise much-needed funds to support our activities.

Conclusion

The GBF has more than fulfilled its mandate during this year. To quote Nelson Mandela, "Do not believe that a small group of committed people cannot change the world. To the contrary, this is how the world changes".

While we do not pretend to be changing the world, we certainly are a small group of committed individuals - therein is the rub. We bat way above our weight in terms of influence and positive change in the City.

However, as my term as chair expires I am deeply concerned by the lack of support that the GBF gets from businesses in Grahamstown. If Grahamstown is going to prosper organizations such as the GBF need to be strong. Without ongoing commitment from young business leaders and at least the rest of the business owners supporting the GBF this organization may well fail. To miss out on an opportunity to work with government in an environment of open communication and influence would be criminal.

Our amazing City has challenges, which are however not insurmountable challenges - especially if we

work together to tackle them.

In conclusion, no-one can have an idea of the work put in by the members of this management committee: time, effort and a lot of money from their own pockets, all with only the one goal to make the City better for everyone. I could not be prouder than to have served with such individuals to whom Grahamstown owes a deep gratitude, even though they shall remain nameless.