

MMC Mfikoe opens a R16m multi-purpose depot

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The City of Johannesburg's drive to promote recycling moved up a gear on Monday when Member of the Mayoral Committee for Environment and Infrastructure Services Cllr Matshidiso Mfikoe officially opened a R16-million multipurpose Pikitup waste management depot in Orange Farm, Region D. Pikitup, the City's waste management company, has embraced Executive Mayor Cllr Parks Tau's vision to promote the green economy. It has been spearheading several campaigns to preserve and improve the environment.

The construction of the depot was started in 2011 to cut the cost of moving waste from Orange Farm to the Avalon depot 18km away, according to Ika Magasa, Pikitup's Chief Operating Officer.

The depot will service about 60 000 households. Cllr Mfikoe thanked Mayor Tau for his vision and urged the community to support the City's development efforts. She praised the community for buying into the recycling project, run at the depot by the Siyaphumelela Cooperative. She said as society changed and technology improved, waste management would no longer be business as usual.

"We need to rise to the challenge and develop innovative ideas to improve waste management systems in order to drive the recycling economy. We have built a fully equipped buy-back and multi-recycling centre that handles paper, plastic, cans and glass. This is a direct cash payment and the centre has created scores of jobs.

On average, 150 people bring their recyclables to the depot daily," she said.

"Waste is a treasure. Look after this depot, be vigilant and don't allow people to illegally dump their waste and rubble here."

The green depot has solar panels. Rain water is also harvested.

Mapitso Kgoale, the depot's Operational Manager, leads a team of six executives and 72 staff members – all from Orange Farm and nearby Poortjie, one of the most economically deprived areas in the region.

Magasa praised the 26-member Siyaphumelela Cooperative for its efforts in educating and empowering the community about environmental protection. Enock Malanda, a

supervisor in the cooperative, said the community's response was encouraging. Established in 2012, the cooperative works closely with Pikitup, which provides it with transport to collect recyclable materials from the community.

The cooperative buys back 1 000 tons of waste a month.

"Most people are now aware of the importance of recycling. Some make up to R100 a day," he said. Local youth have been drawn into the project, according to its chairman, Slindile Shongwe.

Seven of them established Zimele Cooperative to green open spaces and educate other young people about the importance of recycling. Region D Director Mickey Padiachee said the depot would succeed if the community worked closely with Pikitup and the City.

"This is a collective effort. It needs a consolidated approach to take care of our environment. We need to join hands to achieve our goals," Padiachee said.

Every month Pikitup moves more than 1,7 million tons of waste, most of which ends up in landfill sites.

The entity also supplies bins and plastic bags to residents and encourages them to separate their waste at source.

Ward Councillor Mlindelwa Nhose was among those who witnessed the opening.