

Good leadership could make our city the envy of the world

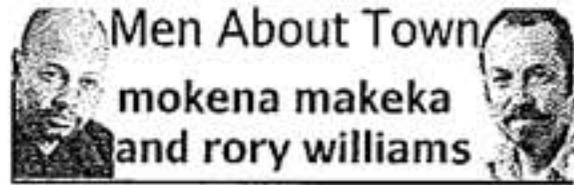
A CITY'S value lies in having many threads of activity – diversity not only in its people, but also in the things they engage in, and the scale of this activity.

A city evolves and gradually reinvents itself as entrepreneurs weave new fabric from overlapping threads. Cape Town is a creative, design-oriented city, but it needs also to be an entrepreneurial city of dynamic commercial exchange, with all the activities that support this.

New York is a global centre for cuisine, theatre and fashion, but is also an economic powerhouse and has an amazing tourism offering.

Rio de Janeiro has its carnival, but has a vibrant knowledge-economy sector and businesses associated with Brazil's position as a global leader in energy industries. These complexities make great cities.

The positioning of cities in the global network of relationships is critical. In



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the economic and social conversations between cities, each place has its strengths and specialisations, reflecting what that city is really about.

Balancing a city's public image with the diverse needs of its residents requires an understanding of the complementary nature of the different facets of the city – but more than that, an integration of the various spheres of civic and governmental leadership.

Authority and leadership are not the same thing; but where they converge, effective governance becomes possible. Where they are estranged, indecision and deferred action often predominate. When the fear of exposure and plain

speaking is greater than the reward for innovative action, we all suffer.

Leadership requires a results-oriented approach to processes, whereas lack of leadership often results in celebrating the process of governance as the product itself. Bureaucratic scorecards based on procedure are given credence over impact and transformative results. In the name of transparency we find government procurement policies that go for the cheapest, rather than the most creative solutions to urban challenges.

Cape Town, despite its contradictions, remains a city of global potential, due to its natural assets, sophisticated infrastructure, high ratio of technically competent persons, and the foundations of a cosmopolitan culture. However, these characteristics can lead to complacency and even fear.

Is Cape Town destined to be a parochial business destination and

trade on its wine farms, fruit and fynbos for ever? Will our interpretation of culture remain trapped in nostalgia, a smattering of bohemian streets or a romantic interpretation of brutal township life? Surely there is more to Cape Town?

With a results-oriented approach to governance we could create a dynamic global destination.

The deferred support for densification of our city is not only a threat to its long-term economic success, but has vast implications as it prevents the critical mass required to make public transport affordable, to reduce resource consumption and air pollution, to address inequitable patterns of distribution and overcome social dysfunction.

The knock-on effects for business and our ability to retain talent and attract entrepreneurs are also diminished. Yes, the physical and cultural complexion of the city would have to evolve and adapt to

the implications of densification, but the benefits of a compact city far outweigh the risks of a sprawling, divided city.

One example of what we, as citizens need to demand of those in authority, leadership that is bold and engaged with the future as much as with the pleasures and the conveniences of the present. Embracing and engaging with change allow our city the flexibility to respond to tomorrow's needs and to compete with and complement other cities, to our benefit. The image of our city can do many things, but complacent, conservative, cynical and fearful to evolve should be the furthest from all thoughts.

With leadership we can make this an excellent city for business and social integration, one the world wants to emulate. That is an image we can all relate to. Branding and managing a city are more than a logo or a title, they are an attitude.

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