The Search for SA's Fittest City
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Factors that influence lifestyle choices, particularly in the ‘ecology’ or the environment (social, physical and policy environment) are particularly relevant in a country like South Africa where there are extremes between levels of poverty and wealth,” says Vitality Fittest City Index collaborator Prof Vicki Lambert. Prof Lambert is professor at the UCT/MRC Research Unit for Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, Department of Human Biology, Faculty of Health Science at the University of Cape Town.

Research shows that if public and private entities worked together to bring movement back into our cities, to facilitate exercise through urban planning policies and promote community participation, as many as 1.3 million lives could be saved.

Non-communicable diseases account for more than a third of all deaths in South Africa, with notable increases in the prevalence of contributing risk factors such as inactivity and obesity. Modern lifestyles reduce the opportunities for physical activity by eliminating much of our need to move: physical labour has become largely mechanised; cars take us to work; unplanned, fast-growing and overcrowded urban environments have squeezed out recreational and sports facilities; and even leisure activities are remote-controlled (television, children’s games, etc).

Increasing levels of physical inactivity have been recognised as a pandemic. Worldwide, non-communicable diseases cause 35 million deaths, with health systems and economies significantly weakened as the disease burden grows.

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As a health insurance and financial services provider, Discovery looks at innovative ways to make individuals, communities and the nation healthier.

The vitality fittest city index ranks each of our six major metropolitan areas according to physical activity-related health and infrastructure.

Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni (East Rand), Tshwane (Pretoria), Cape Town, eThekwini (Durban) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth) were specifically measured on personal health indicators, physical activity, transport and facilities. This was determined through reliable and publicly available published resources.

The index highlights some ways in which cities and communities can facilitate more physical activity in their city to raise awareness of the health benefits of physical activity.

“We would like the index to act as a motivation to encourage people to find opportunities to move more or sit less so that they can get moving for their health. We also hope that it will encourage policymakers and local government to create supportive environments which will improve the health and physical activity profile of their city,”

says Dr Tracy Kolbe-Alexander, a senior lecturer and biokineticist who co-conceptualised and co-developed the Vitality Fittest City Index.
Data for the Vitality Fittest City Index was collected from reliable, publically available resources and research, and divided into several categories, such as personal health indicators, self-reported physical activity, and transport and sports facilities. From this information, an algorithm* was designed by members of an advisory board comprising experts in public health, physical activity, urban planning and environmental studies to determine SA’s “fittest city”.

“Finding reliable data and extrapolating it to the metropole level, particularly the facilities data, was very challenging. This algorithm is unique to the South African setting and is among the first to integrate the data from various credible sources to calculate a fittest city index,” Prof Lambert says.

*See ‘designing the algorithm’ on page 9
To score our cities, a ranking from 0 to 100 was assigned to each factor contributing to the personal health indicator and transport categories in each metropole, compared with the national average. A score of ‘50’ indicated the measure was equal to the national average, ‘100’ being a 20% improvement on the national average, and ‘0’ being 20% worse than the national average.

In the self-reported physical activity category ‘100’ was indicative of a 50% improvement on the national average, and ‘0’ equalled 50% worse than the national average.

For the facilities category, because there is no data indicating the national average with respect to the number of facilities per 100 000 people, the metro average was assigned to be ‘50’ so that the metros could be ranked against each other on the same scale as the other categories.

Each category was weighted equally and thus contributed 25% to the overall fittest city score.

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**INDICATORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE VITALITY FITTEST CITY INDEX**

- **Personal health indicators (SA Demographic Health Survey 2008)**
  These are measures that have been shown to have a relationship with regular physical activity, including Body Mass Index (BMI), waist circumference, the prevalence of diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol. These were then compared to national averages.

- **Physical activity (SA Demographic Health Survey 2008)**
  Self-reported participation in physical activity was assessed in relation to international minimum requirements for health, and compared to the national average.

- **Transport (National Household Travel Survey, 2003; Stats SA 2011)**
  Public transport availability, proximity and costs to and from work were compared to national averages.

- **Facilities (sports federations, national fitness facilities, metro websites)**
  The number of major sports and fitness clubs and parks per 100 000 people was compared to the metropole average.

**DESIGNING THE ALGORITHM**

**THIS ALGORITHM IS UNIQUE TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SETTING AND IS AMONG THE FIRST INTERNATIONALLY TO INTEGRATE THE DATA FROM VARIOUS CREDIBLE SOURCES TO CALCULATE A FITTEST CITY INDEX.**

Experts in the field of public health, physical activity, urban planning and environmental studies met (via email, telephonically and in person) to discuss, among other things, which variables to include; the level of data, for example, province versus city versus metropole; the number of metropoles or cities to include; credible data sources; the final values to be considered in the calculation; and the final calculation in the algorithm. Sometimes the smallest level of data was by province. In those cases, the data was weighted or adjusted based on population (for example, by proportion that is health insured, and also by using Stats SA population data).

**THERE IS ACADEMIC VALUE IN THIS ALGORITHM, SAYS DR KOLBE-ALEXANDER, AS IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE THAT THE METHODOLOGY IS ROBUST. “THE RESULTS AND MANUSCRIPT WILL BE PEER REVIEWED, WHICH AGAIN ADDS TO ITS CREDIBILITY. PUBLISHING THIS IN BOTH THE LAY PRESS AND SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS WILL ALSO PROVIDE CREDIBILITY AND COMPARISON FOR FUTURE VITALITY FITTEST CITY INDEX CALCULATIONS.”**

Prof Lambert says in addition, future Vitality Fittest City Indices may benefit from relevant sources of data having more stringent data collection methods and publishing the data. "We aim to improve the algorithm for future indices where necessary, so that subsequent results can be compared. I think the area that needs improvement is the collection of and record-keeping relevant to facility data in particular.

"The cities that performed well have a number of initiatives but without empirical evidence, one cannot attribute the results to specific initiatives, as there may be many other contributory and confounding factors that influence the relationship."
How our CITIES RANKED

Personal HEALTH INDICATORS

In terms of personal health indicators, we looked at body mass index (BMI), waist circumference, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. These indicators are specifically included in the Vitality Fittest City Index as the World Health Organization (WHO) has shown that there is a proven relationship between physical activity and these health outcomes. Improvements in regular participation in physical activity have a positive effect on these health indicators. The results below show that the population of eThekwini has the healthiest measures, whereas the people of the City of Cape Town have the least healthy measures with respect to these health indicators compared to the other five metros. eThekwini was the only city that measured better than the national average for all these measures combined.

Self-REPORTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The results below are based on the percentage of people who reported that they participate in at least moderate amounts of physical activity. Moderate physical activity is defined as any one of the following:

- Three or more days of vigorous activity of at least 20 minutes each day
- Five or more days of moderate-intensity activity or walking of at least 30 minutes each day
- Five or more days of moderate-intensity activity.

Nelson Mandela Bay scored the highest, indicating that more people in Nelson Mandela Bay reported being moderately active than in the other metros. The City of Cape Town came in second and eThekwini reported having the lowest proportion of people who are at least moderately active. Nelson Mandela Bay and the City of Cape Town were the only cities above the national average for people reporting being at least moderately active.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Bay (PE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>City of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>National Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>City of Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Tshwane (Pretoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Ekurhuleni (East Rand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>eThekwini (Durban)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 = National Average
The image below ranks the six metros in terms of the number of physical activity-related facilities available per 100,000 people. These facilities include major registered sports clubs, gym or fitness facilities, and recreational parks. From the results, we can see that the City of Cape Town has the highest number of facilities per 100,000 people, with Tshwane being the second highest and Ekurhuleni having the lowest number of facilities per 100,000 people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Physical Activity-Related Facilities per 100,000 People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Cape Town</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eThekwini (Durban)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>50 = National Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tshwane (Pretoria)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela Bay (PE)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Johannesburg</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekurhuleni (East Rand)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results below are a representation of the use of non-motorised or public transport (or low car dependence). It is a combination of the percentage of people who don’t use their cars to get to and from work, the percentage who live less than 30 minutes’ walk from a train station, bus stop or taxi rank, and the average monthly cost of public transport. From the results, we can see that the City of Cape Town is the least dependent on cars and uses the most public transport, with eThekwini being the second least dependent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Transport Use (Non-motorised or Public Transport)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Cape Town</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eThekwini (Durban)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>50 = National Average</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshwane (Pretoria)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson Mandela Bay (PE)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Johannesburg</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekurhuleni (East Rand)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SA's Fittest City is... Cape Town
The Mother City knocked the socks off its rivals, offering its residents the greatest number of facilities (sports clubs, gyms, fitness amenities and recreational parks) per 100 000 people.

It also has the lowest car dependency, using substantially more public transport than the national average. However, when it comes to the number of people who reported being physically active for at least 30 minutes at moderate intensity, five or more days a week, Nelson Mandela Bay’s residents scored tops.

The table below shows how each metropolitan area fared compared to the others in terms of personal health indicators, self-reported physical activity, transport and physical activity-related facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Personal Health Indicators</th>
<th>Physical Activity</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Facilities</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Bay (PE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Tshwane (Pretoria)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>ETHEKWINI (Durban)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>City of Johannesburg</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Ekurhuleni</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Better than national average ▶️ Equal to national average ✔️ Worse than national average ▼️

The overall results
Cape Town’s MyCiTi bus rapid transit system was launched in May 2011 and is spreading fast across the greater metropolitan area, providing express bus connections between the commuter suburbs of Table View and Milnerton and the city centre. There are also several feeder services.

Within the next 15 to 25 years, the network will spread to the densely populated areas of Khayelitsha and Mitchell’s Plain, with the intention of offering residents access to safe, reliable, affordable public transport within 500m of most homes. Critically, the buses also allow for bicycles so users can cycle to a bus station and take their bikes with them.

The city has built a cycle path between Paarden Island and Milnerton – a busy commuter belt – offering cyclists a safer alternative to the regional road. The path is clearly signposted and has cycle-friendly features like drop-kerbs.
WHAT

Durbs & Jozi

ARE GETTING RIGHT
Making a city more liveable and attractive to its residents, employers and visitors contributes to a city’s overall wellbeing.

Home to South Africa’s third largest city, Durban, eThekwini has made significant strides in improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists along its beachfront and coastline with its promenade upgrade and Suncoast cycle route.

Walkers, cyclists, joggers and pram pushers make daily use of the promenade, a paved walkway linking Blue Lagoon in the north with uShaka in the south, and water sport enthusiasts enjoy snorkeling, kayaking, windsurfing and jetskiing at vetch’s pier. This year’s Discovery east coast radio big walk, with its record 33,500 entrants, made full use of the new stretch of promenade between Sun Coast Casino and Blue Lagoon.

eThekwini deputy mayor, councillor Nomvusa Tshabalala says of the promenade: “Having a beautiful walkway all the way from uShaka to Blue Lagoon encourages people to take up walking and cycling.” Cyclists also enjoy “designated cyclist only” times along the Sun coast cycle route. The redesign of the traditional medicine and herb market at Warwick Junction has made pedestrian routes safer for walking, improved shopper access to transport and equipped vendors with more hygienic cooking and storage amenities.
To keep Johannesburg’s citizens on the move while reducing traffic congestion and air pollution, the authorities launched the Gautrain, an 80km mass rapid transit railway linking South Africa’s capital city of Tshwane (Pretoria) with Johannesburg and OR Tambo International Airport.

There are also 20 secure bicycle parking spaces at the stations, with space for expansion. However, bicycles may not be carried on the trains. Increasing the number of bicycle racks and allowing bicycles on the trains would improve and support this popular public transport infrastructure.

To further reduce the city’s carbon footprint, the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System offers residents a variety of dedicated bus routes. They will eventually cover more than 330km, enabling more than 80% of the city’s residents to take the bus rather than drive. Bicycle storage at bus stations is needed.

Outdoor gyms in public parks, equipped with all-weather exercise machines, have been opened in Soweto, Diepsloot and Eldorado Park, with plans for more.

**JOZI’S JOY ride**

**Johannesburg, Jozi, eGoli**

**Known for:**
- Its bustling streets,
- incredible nightlife
- and thunderstorms

**Population:**
4.5 million

**Land area:**
1 645 km²

**Primary languages:**
- English,
- Zulu,
- Afrikaans,
- Sotho
Creating environments that encourage movement
Physical activity is not an individual act: policies and practices in education, transportation, parks and recreation, media and business all influence how much or how little we move.

Creating Environments That Encourage Movement

A World Health Organization systematic review (2009) on environmental influences on physical activity found that the most effective interventions were policy-driven. It is imperative for health providers to focus on physical activity, thus making the healthy choice the easy choice for communities.

So how do we get all stakeholders involved?

### Workplace Wonders
Employees who make use of on-site workplace exercise facilities have fewer sick days.

### Traffic Incentives
Better bus services will encourage more people to leave their cars at home.

### A Community’s Contribution
Creating cycle lanes on busy streets or designating times in slow lanes for cyclists only and improving cycling routes by ordering and lengthening approach lanes.

### Cool Schools
Improve physical structures like netball hoops and soccer posts or hopscotch markings on playgrounds.

### In Every Neighbourhood
Keep pavements in good condition to encourage walking.

### Government Campaigns
Safer streets will encourage citizens to get outdoors and use their city not just for commuting but also for sport and leisure.
A community’s contribution to improving the city’s infrastructure significantly increases the likelihood that its citizens will improve their activity levels through walking, cycling and sport.

This is done by:

- Producing and promoting a citywide “active living” map of parks, trails, cycling and walking routes and facilities that offer sport and physical activity programmes.
- Improving security measures in open spaces, keeping them clean and making them more attractive to users including providing shade.
- Constructing free outdoor gyms and providing sports structures like soccer goal posts and basketball hoops as these could contribute to physical activity uptake.
- Establishing trail running and walking paths and routes.
- Consulting disabled children and their families when planning for play spaces.
- Launching neighbourhood renewal programmes which offer equitable access to playgrounds, sports facilities (skateboard parks, soccer fields, netball courts) and safer routes to and from schools and public transport stations.
Schools can:

- Focus classroom-based health education on the link between television viewing and video games and health consequences.
- Increase the time spent on physical education, and ensure that these classes are designed for all children and not just those who are naturally athletic – a comfortable and enjoyable exercise environment will help children develop a life-long love of movement.
- Work with local councils to turn vacant spaces into sports facilities.
- Commit adequate resources for Physical Education instruction and programmes, including budgets, facilities and specialist teachers.
- Involve children in designing a new sports facility and choosing its name.
- Improve physical structures like netball goals and soccer posts or hopscotch markings on playgrounds – multicolour playground markings are a low-cost way of increasing children’s daily physical activity by re-igniting their enthusiasm for physical activity engagement.
- Provide loose equipment like balls and skipping ropes and offer higher levels of supervision during playtimes.
- Evaluate how a school is doing by publishing an annual report card with grades assigned to physical activity promotion.
- Use the journey to and from school to encourage physical activity and adopt the WoW CoW (Walk once Weekly, Cycle once Weekly) programme in which the school chooses a WoW CoW day for the term and gets students to take part.
- If they are private schools, assist government or rural schools to increase physical activity by volunteering to teach sport or improve their facilities.

**Cool SCHOOLS**

**Education is essential in making the link between health and movement.**

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*The Discovery Johannesburg Primary Schools Soccer Programme hosts a series of soccer tournaments for primary schools in Johannesburg each year.*

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*Image showing children playing soccer.*
Local authorities can do this by:

- **Closing quiet residential streets** to traffic on Sundays, allowing children and their families to use these streets as safe, secure playgrounds
- **Patrolling** neighbourhoods on foot and by bike
- **Educating** the public about the need for exercise and supporting exercise efforts through community events and risk factor screening
- **Creating** safe walking routes
- Creating separate lanes for cyclists on busy streets or designating times for “cyclists only” traffic
- **Installing traffic calming features** to slow down or discourage automobile traffic, thus making the streets safer and more attractive for pedestrians and others – this can lead to an increase in physical activity
- **Providing convenient and safe cycle parking** in shopping areas and at railway stations etc
- Creating cycle lanes on busy streets or designating times in slow lanes for cyclists only and improving cycling routes by **widening and lengthening approach lanes.**
Keep pavements in good condition to encourage walking
Make lightly trafficked routes more attractive (artworks and paint on a path’s surface) and offer natural play features that will attract children and encourage them to walk to school or to visit friends
Host sports and competitive events in parks and launch campaigns that will encourage communities to exercise again, like a “Dust off your Bike” campaign offering bike safety and tune-up information and education for people who haven’t cycled in years
Seaside dwellers could be encouraged to use their ocean again through campaigns like “Share a Smile” – a multi-sport programme to pair existing water sport enthusiasts with keen novices to teach them more about watersports; or “Walking the Coastal Way to Health”, a series of organised guided walks along the beachfront
Set up buddy systems and informal groups that demand physical activity, like pram walking for moms with babies
Get kids to plant flowers and trees in their local park
Get adults involved in building playground equipment and increase adult supervision in play areas by involving grandparents and teenagers and non-working adults
Organise activities around global health events like “Move for Health Day”, a World Health Organization initiative to create awareness and promote the merits of physical activity (http://www.who.int/moveforhealth/about/en).
Employers can improve the health of their workforce by:

- Introducing employee wellness programmes that support staff
- Providing individualised risk education for high-risk employees, and individualised exercise programmes
- Initiating a “buddy system” where employees make “contracts” with others to complete set physical activities or arrange walking or other groups for friendship and support
- Providing exercise facilities such as showers and lockers and establishing work sites near safe walking routes and vice versa
- Using motivational signage to increase stair use, for example how many calories used per stairs climbed
- Offering flexi-hours so that employees are encouraged to be active before or after work.

The results of the 2012 Discovery Healthy Company Index showed that:

- 92% of employees have a Vitality Age that is higher than their actual age
- On average, employees have a Vitality Age that is 6.4 years older than their actual age
- 68% of employees do not meet recommended physical activity guidelines
- 43% of employees are at an unhealthy weight (high BMI).
Better bus services will encourage more people to leave their cars at home, which is better for the environment and encourages people to be more physically active.

Installing traffic calming measures makes streets safer and more attractive for pedestrians.

Safe cycling routes and a greater understanding of the sport may lead to greater numbers of cyclists on the road.

“A healthy city is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.”

World Health Organization
ACTIVE cities:

- Have less air and noise pollution and more, easily accessible green spaces.
- Encourage social cohesion and community identity through integrated transport networks and shared sports and recreational facilities.
- Provide outdoor exercise facilities that encourage community physical activity such as cycle and walking paths, swimming pools and outdoor gyms.
- Stimulate neighbourhood revitalisation through more attractive living spaces, higher densities and diversity of use.

5 good reasons TO EXERCISE ARE:

- It strengthens your heart and improves lung capacity.
- It aids weight loss.
- It strengthens your bones, reducing the risk of fracture.
- It is a brilliant stress buster, secreting hormones that heighten your mood.
- It reduces disease risk, lowering the risk of high blood pressure and stroke, strengthening the immune system, and increasing good cholesterol.
THREE CITIES MAKING MOTION MAGIC

BOOGYING IN BOGOTA | MOVING IN MEDELLÍN | KICKING BUTT IN RIBERA
Bogotá, the Colombian capital – a city deeply divided between rich and poor – introduced a mass transport system in 2000 incorporating dedicated lanes and fixed bus stations. Central to the campaign was the development of the TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit system, which provides fast, efficient and reasonably priced transport to large areas of the city. By 2010, this system accounted for 25% of daily public transport usage, decreasing commuting times, reducing car use traffic and congestion and improving air quality. But, perhaps most importantly, it prompted increased physical activity as users had to walk longer distances to get to designated bus stations.

Part of the motivation for this new transport system was to bridge the social divide between the haves and have-nots and create equal opportunities for all citizens to enjoy the city. Another way in which this was done was to close off most city streets to cars on Sundays and on holidays. For several hours, only pedestrians and cyclists may use these streets, helping to raise awareness of the negative impact car traffic has on residents’ lives. Bike routes traverse both rich and poor areas of the city.

**The Example**

**There are currently around 1.4 million people using the system daily and when completed, there will be 388km of routes.**

In addition to ironing out traffic issues and encouraging exercise, the city has developed many more green spaces, parks and playing fields, which have had a direct impact on crime, particularly in gang-infested neighbourhoods where residents can now safely enjoy outdoor recreation with their families.
Medellin, Colombia’s once notorious capital, has undergone a significant social transformation thanks to an integrated transport system. An aerial tram system, the Medellin Metrocable, brings residents from the city’s hillsides – formerly among the most crime-ridden, gang-infested areas – safely to the city’s main subway system. Plazas at the bases of the pylons supporting the trams have become lively neighbourhood gathering places, with food vendors, seating and landscaping creating safe entertainment areas for residents and travellers.

Parks, sports fields and libraries support these new social gathering spots, with new pedestrian walkways linking those parts of the city that used to be controlled by rival gangs. Murder rates have plummeted, and residents of the city now feel safe visiting the poorer barrios.
An unkempt soccer field that had become a magnet for criminals was transformed into a safe, enjoyable neighbourhood meeting place thanks to community efforts in Nairobi, Kenya. In Kibera, an informal settlement housing around 200,000 people, the Silanga Sports Field was upgraded to the extent that it could be used not just for sport but also for concerts and other community events.

Links between the field, a primary school, a pottery studio, community garden and other public facilities ensured that all resources in this area were better utilised, making this a desired destination for the neighbourhood.