

What a mess!

Filthy Joburg CBD fast becoming an eyesore as refuse is dumped on the streets

By **Penwell Dlamini**

Businesses and those working in the Johannesburg inner city are facing a serious problem: filthy streets flowing with garbage every day.

Despite the City of Johannesburg cleaning the CBD three times a day, the impact of those efforts are barely noticeable when one walks the streets of SA's economic hub.

Street corners, which are mostly occupied by informal traders, have become dump sites, creating a filthy environment.

The corner of Pritchard and Smal streets, right next to the Johannesburg High Court, is littered with plastic bags, food waste, disposable nappies and even tyres. Men also have a

habit of urinating on the dump site, which creates a foul stench. Marvelous Chirunga, one of the informal traders working next to the spot, said shop owners and people selling food throw their garbage on nearby waste bins, and people living in surrounding flats also dumped household waste in the bins.

"The bin gets full and spill over. When the Pikitup truck comes to collect, some of the waste spills and is left on the ground. That is why it is such a mess here," Chirunga said.

Smal Street is one of the busiest parts of the inner city, with hundreds of shoppers and pedestrians passing through every day.

Chirunga has been selling on this spot for about 12 years and she says the situation is getting worse.

About 150m from Chirunga Rose Letsie runs her hair business on the corner of Jeppe and Smal streets.

"Garbage is picked up by Pikitup but more garbage comes from all the people



Garbage in the Joburg CBD is becoming a nuisance both to businesses and informal traders. / ANTONIO MUCHAVE/SOWETAN

around here. Now it is difficult for me to get customers because the place is just a mess. This place stinks. In summer it is worse. A dam is created by the rain and the heat makes the stench worse," Letsie said.

Andrew Ada, who runs a clothing business along Plein Street, shared the same sentiments. "What I've observed is that the municipal workers

clean and put garbage in plastic bags. But the recycling guys open those plastic bags and leave the garbage scattered on the ground. It is a mess. The city has to find a better way of handling this," Ada said.

The Johannesburg inner city gets swept at 6am, 8am and 8pm on a daily basis. Besides roads intersecting Smal Street, there are several other spots that are filthy, on roads surrounding Noord and Bree Taxi Rank, and Von Brandis and Jeppe streets.

MMC of environment and infrastructure services Mpho Moerane blamed the filth on undocumented migrants, informal traders and landlords of the high rise buildings.

"By law, the high rise building owner should come to the city and say in this property there is such a number of people. We will give them a specified number of bins and say we will collect these bins on a certain day – but they have to pay. Landlords do not come because we levy for that service. Their tenants then go down and throw their garbage on the street," said Moerane.

He said they would now use

by-law enforcement to fight the filth.

"Each ward will have 10 new recruits from JMPD [Johannesburg Metro Police Department]. One of their tasks will be to implement by-law enforcement. We will deploy most of them in the Johannesburg CBD. If they see you illegally dumping they will arrest you. If they see you littering, they will arrest," Moerane said.

Anyone who is arrested will pay a fine of R5,000 for illegal dumping and R1,500 for littering.

"This is the only way we can address the problem of littering and dumping in the inner city," he said.

Moerane agreed that the filth in the inner city has caused investors to look elsewhere to set up their businesses.

Earlier this year, Moerane launched the #KleenaJoburgReload campaign. In this new model, each ward in the city will be assigned 15 Expanded Public Works Programme employees who will assist with waste management.



Joburg CBD with piles of rubbish dumped on the streets. / ANTONIO MUCHAVE