



**Catalysing district-scale sustainability through the EcoDistricts Protocol**

Complex socioeconomic risk factors are colliding worldwide. Income, education and health disparities; ecological degradation; and the growing peril of climate change are threatening our collective future. Within the South African context, the stakes are high, as we seek to tackle the systemic issues that have resulted in our notoriety as the most unequal country in the world – ranking first among 164 countries<sup>1</sup>. While tackling these challenges at a macro level is critical, it is not the only way forward.

Districts and neighbourhoods provide a uniquely valuable scale to introduce and accelerate investments that can achieve profound improvements in equity, resilience and climate protection.

Districts are small enough to innovate and big enough to leverage meaningful investment and public policy. However, success hinges on building robust public-private civic partnerships to align leadership, improve cross-sector collaboration, and create new models of inclusive governance to drive effective planning and project delivery.

In line with this thinking and to foster a new model of urban regeneration, the EcoDistricts Protocol was developed by the EcoDistricts NPO – a rigorous, sustainable urban development framework for achieving people-centred, economically vibrant, district-scale sustainability. Since 2013, EcoDistricts has been promoting a new model of urban development to empower just, sustainable and resilient neighbourhoods.

Redefine’s purpose – **to create and manage spaces in a way that changes lives** – articulates what is central to our organisation and captures our continuous, ongoing commitment to sustainable development in the area we know best – property. We are therefore incredibly proud that S&J Industrial Estate became the first project outside North America and the first in Africa to secure an EcoDistricts Certified™ endorsement.

S&J Industrial Estate forms part of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, the largest metropolitan municipality in Gauteng, and the sprawling estate spans an impressive 210 hectares, catering predominantly for industrial use, and is a commercial offering in the area. The City of Ekurhuleni is also a part of the international C40 Cities initiative, which includes driving meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change.

The successful conclusion of the certification component is an exciting start to the long-term journey for this project. It also showcases what can be achieved in the SA property sector in securing a future we can all be proud of. This is not a once-off certification, however. The future reporting requirements are stringent and ongoing, aligning with our continuous pursuit of rigorous ESG management. The project is required to submit biennial progress reports, beginning on the second anniversary of certification and continuing every two years thereafter. Every urban regeneration decision will be viewed through a comprehensive lens, driving the delivery of meaningful performance outcomes and setting the conditions for sustainable, collective impact.

To achieve our purpose, we take an integrated approach to making strategic choices that will sustain value creation for all stakeholders by focusing on what matters most. This commitment has borne fruit with the S&J certification – the quickest yet, from registration to certification. This success is a crucial stepping stone and endorsement of our progress to ensure a better future for all South Africans.

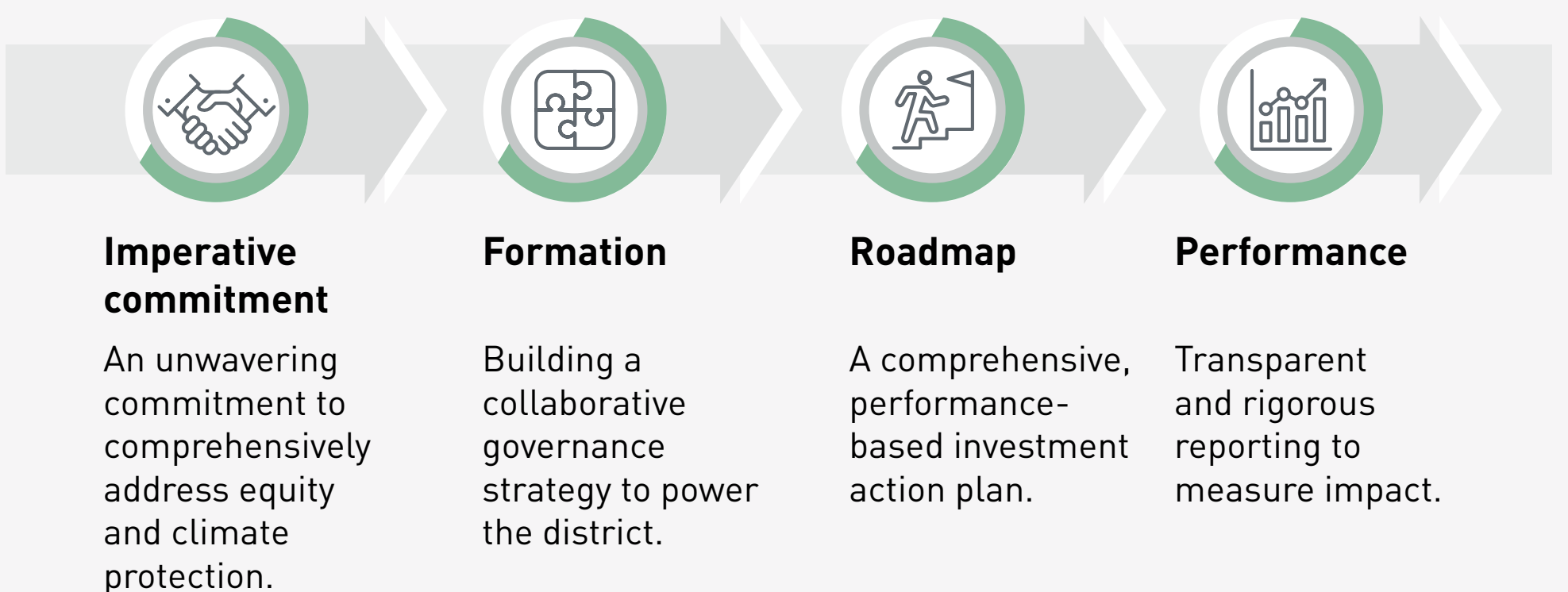
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/> New World Bank Report Assesses Sources of Inequality in Five Countries in Southern Africa

**Using the protocol**

The EcoDistricts Protocol is a powerful way to move projects from vision to reality and make equity and sustainability fundamental to neighborhoods for all.

Embracing and using the EcoDistricts Protocol is a mark of neighborhood- or district-scale leadership. It confirms a district’s commitment to inclusiveness, transparency, information sharing, and peer-to-peer learning.

**APPLYING THE PROTOCOL MEANS TAKING ACTION IN THE FOLLOWING FOUR AREAS:**



EcoDistricts Certification is the new standard for community development. See page 29 and [www.ecodistricts.org](http://www.ecodistricts.org) for more details.

Regards,  
**Redefine Properties ESG team**