

**BRANDING MANGAUNG CITY 'AT THE HEART OF IT ALL'**

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As a city with a rich history, heritage and geographical position in the centre of South Africa, we have taken a conscious decision to rebrand Mangaung in an attempt to reposition ourselves against a background of transition from a local to a metropolitan municipality, as well as for the articulation of a new metro vision.

We see ourselves as the epicentre of where major decisions are made. Our goal is to create a world-class city brand without creating fragmentation from the brands of both the Free State and South Africa.

The 2011 local government elections saw the status of Mangaung change from a local to a metropolitan municipality. As a new organisation we are under pressure to ensure that we conduct business in line with our newly acquired status, that is, "metropolitan".

We are now competing on a high level that is similar to Johannesburg city and eThekweni municipality. As a city we need to look at our niche, or an opportunity of marketing ourselves. During 2012, there were three major strategic events that showcased Mangaung metro as a rising brand.

These events were the annual Macufe Cup, ANC centenary celebrations and the recent ANC national conference. During Macufe and the Centenary only, we hosted more than 150000 visitors in total. These events presented us with an opportunity to go out and market robustly.

Even though we share metro status with other municipalities, we cannot compare ourselves with the above mentioned cities. For example, we are not situated next to the sea so we must utilise what is at our disposal, which is rich heritage and a political history.

The National Party was born here and so was the current ruling party. The city's strength therefore lies more in its people, arts and culture as well as its political heritage.

As the municipality, we are looking at ways and means of exploiting this rich history, and getting leverage out of it in terms of marketing.

“We envision becoming a progressive municipality that is globally safe and attractive to live, work and invest in” – those are the words of the executive mayor of the Mangaung metro, Thabo Manyoni, during his inaugural speech. This phrase, among others, necessitates the municipality to reposition itself as one of the world class brands. As a metro, Mangaung has moved from being a “city on the move” to rightfully claiming its position as the pulse of South Africa, hence the new pay-off line - “at the heart of it all”.

Through Macufe, the centenary and the ruling party’s national election, we have showcased our pay-off line and what it means to be At the Heart of it All. This pay-off line captures the sentiment of the city with regard to connectivity as a concept and also allows for an emotive positioning space.

It is our understanding that in terms of our history, major political decisions have been taken in this city.

Our strategy has always been to capture the attention of those people who are in the city during major events. But this goes a step further: as the city we will continue to gain leverage out of all the big events that are happening, with the view of popularising our brand as Mangaung “at the heart of it all”.

Looking at these events, we have been able to, once again, assert ourselves globally.

[Source: [www.thenewage.co.za](http://www.thenewage.co.za)]