

Tshimologong: Wits' new digital innovation hub

The University of the Witwatersrand and its partners in government, business and industry have officially launched the Wits Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.



Source: JCSE/Wits University

Setswana for 'new beginnings', Tshimologong is Johannesburg's newest high-tech address in the inner-city district of Braamfontein, where the incubation of start-ups, the commercialisation of research and the development of high-level digital skills for students, working professionals and unemployed youths will take place.

Through Wits' Joburg Centre for Software Engineering (JCSE), Tshimologong has been three years in the making and is a development that encourages tech innovation and collaboration between the University's researchers and students and the private, public and civil society sectors in Johannesburg.

"We hope that transforming Braamfontein into Africa's premier technology hub will inspire new talent, create jobs and lead to an economic renaissance," says Barry Dwolatzky, Professor of Software Engineering in the Wits School of Electrical and Information Engineering and Director of JCSE.



Professor Barry Dwolatzky. Source: JCSE/Wits University.

Dwolatzky, who has been driving the Tshimologong initiative, envisions 24/7 activity in the new precinct, with events running day and night, as well as a hub where ideas are hatched and creativity has a space to breathe. "Tshimologong will be a start-up incubator, business accelerator and source of skills. The focus is on digital hardware, software and content. We are creating a hub space where people can get together, brainstorm and work on creative projects," he says.

Developing a tech ecosystem

Programmers, designers, developers, entrepreneurs and start-ups will congregate in this half-a-city-block along Juta Street. It has open-plan co-working areas with broadband connectivity for ICT start-ups, meeting and refreshment zones, computer laboratories, training rooms, maker spaces, creative content development environments, and administrative and infrastructure support offices.

Drawing on models that have proved hugely successful in major cities around the world, Wits is driving the development of a successful technology ecosystem in the centre of an important African business and economic hub. It will complement the University's suite of ICT-related offerings in research, courses and programmes in software engineering, data science, big data, digital business, and others.

"Wits aims to inspire the development of a new generation of digital technology experts, innovators and entrepreneurs and Tshimologong will provide an enabling space for our country's most creative young minds to develop new digital technologies that are crucial to South Africa's economic growth and international competitiveness," says Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor and Principal at Wits University.



Source: JCSE/Wits University.

Not only accessible or open to University researchers and students, the Precinct is membership-based and will provide a space for skills development in the software and digital technology sector, help address unemployment, and encourage the growth of new businesses. An important element of the Tshimologong Precinct is the recently launched [IBM Research Lab](#), the first such facility anywhere in the world that is tightly integrated into an innovation hub.

An addition to the Tshimologong development is the establishment by Wits of The DIZ (Digital Innovation Zone), a space in Smit Street Braamfontein where creatives, innovators and programmers can come together and collaborate.

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