

## Cape Town Delegation (September 2024)

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Eddie Andrews (Deputy Mayor), Rob McGaffin (Director of Spatial Planning and Environment), Denver van Schalkwyk (Director of International Relations) and his assistant Boitshoko Grace Mathakoane from Cape Town were guests in Aachen from 19 - 21.09.2024.

Ron Roger Breuer picked up the guests from the airport in Maastricht on Wednesday evening and immediately introduced them to Aachen's student quarter and took them to the cult fast food restaurant Kathy's Frietnesse in Pontstraße for German Currywurst and chips.



The official visit on Thursday morning began with a visit to the "Digital Church". Udo Glaser welcomed the guests and gave them a tour of the deconsecrated church. Andi Dreger gave a short presentation on the history of the Digital Hub, the start-ups based there and the Eco Hub. Marlene Lerch introduced the online platform dooiy.org, which shares simple tips and tricks to solve everyday problems for people in underserved urban areas. Dorothea Ernst from INFORM (software company) spoke about sustainability in business and the cooperation between business and civil society within the framework of the AGENDA 21 partnership between Aachen and Cape Town, in particular the partnership's climate ticket, which INFORM has been supporting for years. This was followed by an introduction to the work of the partnership association.



For lunch, the delegation went to the Ferbers restaurant in Aachen-Burtscheid. The afternoon of the first day was dedicated to an exchange with Aachen University of Applied Sciences, where topics from science and business were discussed in the context of the partnership and cooperation between the two cities. Particular attention was paid to the activities of AGIT (Aachener Gesellschaft für Innovation und Technologietransfer) and the department of economic development of the City of Aachen. The delegation then visited the Voltfang company, where they were introduced to sustainable battery technologies.



This is also where contact was established with Everwave, an Aachen-based start-up that frees rivers and oceans from plastic and waste. The mobile applications of Everwave's technology particularly appealed to the delegation from Cape Town. In the early evening, the guests were able to enjoy a view of Aachen from above from the Ferris wheel at the September Special on the Katschhof, before heading to the restaurant in the historic Postwagen for dinner.



The second day began with an official reception by Lord Mayor Sibylle Keupen in the Old Office of Aachen's medieval town hall. Here, the delegation was informed about the "100 climate-neutral cities" project and the city of Aachen's digital twin. Other topics included urban development, in particular the Büchel old town district, which was presented by Nils Jansen, co-project manager for the eastern city centre.



After the reception and a short tour of the city centre, the delegation was accompanied to the Heinrich Heine Comprehensive School in Laurensberg. The school presented its current projects as part of the Aachen-Cape Town partnership to the guests:

- During the so called Social Day the school garden has just been extended with the help of over 30 employees from Abiomed (a company from Aachen that manufactures heart pumps and membranes) to include an open classroom and some other new facilities. The garden was already fundamentally improved during the school exchange with Soneike High School from Cape Town last year and as part of an exchange with Cape Town garden experts this summer.





- In recent weeks, a so-called shack (a corrugated iron hut) has been erected in the school's inner courtyard to show students and teachers how people (have to) live in the townships of Cape Town. Information boards at the shack show the amazing life achievements of some township residents. In November, a workshop with university students from the RWTH Aachen will take place in the shack.
- For a few years now, there have been various art projects on the subject of sustainability. The best known is the redesign of the pedestrian underpass in Aachen-Richterich. Workshops are held every year in advance. The results can be seen not only in Richterich, but also on large banners in the school foyer. During the school exchange in June 2023, the young people from Heinrich Heine Comprehensive School and Soneike High School worked together to create artistic banners for the shack. These banners are now hanging in both schools as a symbol of their partnership.





The Cape Town guests from politics and administration were not only able to see the garden, shack and banner, but also watched a video showing how the Heinrich Heine Comprehensive School implements its sustainability projects.

A feedback session provided an opportunity to reflect on the cooperation between Aachen and Cape Town to date and to discuss plans for the future. The focus was on the next five years of the city partnership and the question of how cooperation between civil society, business and administration can be further strengthened.

At the request of Deputy Mayor Eddie Andrews (former Springbok in the South African National Rugby Team), there was a final meeting with players from the Aachen Rugby Club on the sports field in Laurensberg before the delegation was invited to dinner with the Lord Mayor and other guests in the Kaiserwetter restaurant in the evening. The visit of the delegation from Cape Town to Aachen underlined the strong ties between the two cities.



In many productive and inspiring discussions, ways to deepen cooperation, particularly in the areas of education, sustainability and business, were discussed. Once again, it became clear how important face-to-face exchanges are compared to virtual meetings. Next year will mark the 25th anniversary of the city partnership and there is justified hope that the development of joint projects and initiatives can be further expanded in the coming years.