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ESWATINI URBAN FORUM:

Rethinking how Eswatini finances urban development

BY MTHOSISI BUTHELEZI

ESWATINI'S urban development ambitions are increasingly being tested by the financial, infrastructural and environmental demands of growing towns.

As urban populations expand, local authorities are expected to provide better roads, reliable water and sanitation, decent housing and efficient municipal services, often against the limitations of their existing revenue bases. This raises an important question about the sustainability of urban development: How can municipalities finance their own growth without remaining heavily dependent on traditional revenue sources and government support?

It is against this backdrop that the 2026 Eswatini Urban Forum seeks to create a platform for rethinking how the country's urban centres are financed, planned and managed. With a focus on financing smart solutions, resilient infrastructure and housing for all, the forum will bring together local and international financiers, development partners, government representatives and urban development practitioners.

The initiative, which was first undertaken in 2024 during the Urban October celebrations, is expected to move discussions beyond identifying urban challenges towards exploring practical and sustainable solutions. Minister for Housing and Urban Development Apollo Maphalala said the forum would bring together stakeholders in housing and human settlements, urban governance and local government to deliberate on improving service delivery within the urban space.

"The discussions will revolve around among others: finding additional sources of financing Urban Local Authorities instead of their reliance on property rates; curbing informal settlements, etc.," he explained.

RETHINKING MUNICIPAL FINANCING

One of the most pressing issues facing urban local authorities is their ability to generate sufficient revenue to finance infrastructure and improve service delivery.

Heavy reliance on property rates as a primary source of municipal income presents limitations, particularly as towns face increasing development demands. The challenge, therefore, is to diversify municipal revenue streams while creating an environment that attracts private investment.

Maphalala identified municipal bonds as one possible financing mechanism, explaining that urban local authorities could issue bonds in the same way the national government does to raise funds for development.

"One option is for ULAs to sell bonds, just like Eswatini Government. This has the ability to boost

their revenues," he said.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) also offer municipalities an opportunity to unlock the development potential of assets such as vacant land. Under such arrangements, local authorities can make land available while private investors provide the financial resources required to undertake development projects.

Maphalala pointed to the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) model as one mechanism through which these partnerships could be implemented.

However, diversifying municipal financing will require more than identifying alternative funding instruments. It also calls for a supportive legislative and policy environment, including political commitment towards implementing Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers as provided for under the Constitution.

The implication is that municipalities need a stronger financial foundation, combining their own revenue-generation capacity with appropriate fiscal support and private sector participation.

SMART CITIES REQUIRE PRACTICAL LOCAL SOLUTIONS

Financial sustainability must also be accompanied by improvements in how municipalities operate and deliver services. As urban populations increase, traditional approaches to municipal administration may struggle to keep pace with residents' expectations.

Digital transformation and smart-city technologies present opportunities to improve municipal efficiency, strengthen transparency and make services more accessible.

The ministry is encouraging all urban local authorities to adopt smart-city principles, although

Maphalala acknowledged that implementation would differ according to the size and capacity of individual municipalities. "Whereas some have introduced smart city principles such as Municipal Council of Mbabane, Matsapha is following suite and Manzini Municipal Council, the Ministry continuously encourage the rest to follow suite," he said.

He further emphasised that smart-city development should not be understood as a fixed concept, but rather as a collection of solutions that can be adapted to local circumstances. "However, we should note that smart city consists of a number of ideas but not static. Its implementation, therefore, comes in different forms," Maphalala explained.

Through its programmes, the Ministry is coordinating efforts to equip urban local authorities with smart and innovative solutions that can improve service delivery and sustainable urban planning.

The hosting of the Urban Forum is also intended to translate international initiatives and experiences into practical interventions at local level. The challenge will be ensuring that these technologies extend beyond isolated municipal projects and become part of a broader transformation of local government operations.

FORMALISING SETTLEMENTS AND BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Housing and access to secure land tenure remain equally important to sustainable urban development. As towns expand, informal settlements present a growing challenge, particularly where residents occupy land without formal ownership or access to properly planned infrastructure.

The ministry is addressing this through its Informal Settlements Programme, which involves working with urban local authorities

to identify and formalise informal settlements within their respective jurisdictions.

Maphalala revealed that the exercise had so far identified 52 informal settlements within the country's urban space. "To date, this exercise has led to the identification of 52 informal settlements within the urban space," he said.

Working alongside international partners, including UN-Habitat, the Ministry aims to formalise these settlements and provide occupants with title to the land they have occupied over the years.

Implementation has already commenced in towns including Mbabane, Siteki, Ngwenya and Pigg's Peak. In Pigg's Peak, some beneficiaries have already been allocated the plots they have occupied for a number of years.

Where Crown or government land remains available, the ministry is also supporting urban local authorities in developing human settlements that can contribute towards increasing the supply of affordable housing.

However, formalising settlements and expanding housing opportunities must go hand in hand with infrastructure development. Roads, drainage, water and sanitation remain essential components of liveable communities, particularly as urban areas become more exposed to climate-related risks.

In this regard, the ministry is participating in the Building Climate Resilience with Urban Poor (BCRUP) initiative, a United Nations-driven programme aimed at mobilising resources to address climate-induced disasters affecting vulnerable urban communities.

The initiative recognises that urban resilience is not simply about constructing infrastructure, but also ensuring that communities, particularly those most exposed to environmental risks, are protected against the effects of climate change.

PUTTING RESIDENTS AT CENTRE OF DEVELOPMENT

While financial capacity, infrastructure and technology are important indicators of urban development, the ultimate measure of success is whether residents benefit from these improvements.

The ministry is therefore emphasising public participation as a fundamental requirement in the planning and governance of urban local authorities.

Maphalala explained that municipalities are expected to consult residents and relevant stakeholders when developing their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), town planning schemes and annual budgets. These consultations should include people with disabilities,

churches, the business community and ratepayers' associations, among other stakeholders.

To ensure that participation is not limited to central municipal offices, urban local authorities are encouraged to organise ward meetings across their jurisdictions, bringing consultations closer to the communities they serve.

The ministry's policy direction also requires local authorities to demonstrate public participation in their integrated development planning and budget processes, as well as annual financial audits, governance processes and organisational appraisals.

Beyond participation, economic inclusion is another important consideration. The ministry has developed Local Economic Development (LED) and Public-Private Partnership/ Private Finance Initiative (PPP/PFI) policies aimed at supporting local businesses and enhancing economic opportunities.

These policies are intended to strengthen the role of local authorities in stimulating economic activity, attracting investment and creating opportunities within their respective communities.

For residents, particularly young people, women, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, the expectation is that urban development should translate into more accessible services, safer neighbourhoods, economic opportunities and public spaces that accommodate everyone.

TURNING URBAN AMBITIONS INTO MEASURABLE PROGRESS

The 2026 Eswatini Urban Forum comes at a time when municipalities must rethink how they finance and manage the growing demands placed upon them.

Its emphasis on alternative financing, smart-city solutions, housing, climate resilience and public participation highlights the interconnected nature of sustainable urban development.

However, the real test will lie in translating the discussions and policy commitments into measurable interventions at municipal level.

For urban local authorities, this means developing stronger revenue bases, making productive use of available assets, attracting private investment and improving institutional capacity.

It also means ensuring that the expansion of towns does not happen at the expense of vulnerable communities or leave residents behind.

Ultimately, building sustainable urban economies will require municipalities that are not only capable of financing development, but also accountable, innovative and responsive to the needs of the people they serve.

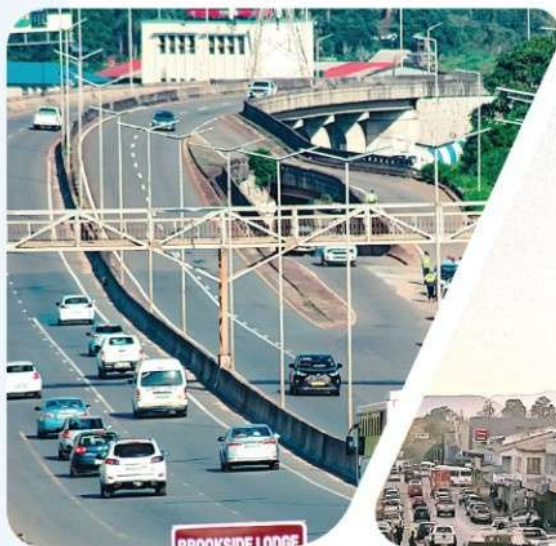
Minister for Housing and Urban Development Apollo Maphalala.



The newly developed Malkerns Parkview in Malkerns.

WORLD CITIES DAY 2026

15 TOWNS, ONE SMART FUTURE. ESWATINI LEADS THE WAY



Theme: Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All



Prime Minister Russel Dlamini officially opened the Eswatini Urban Forum. 2. Minister for Housing and Urban Development Apollo Maphalala. 3. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Regional Director for Africa Oumar Sylla.

Building resilient cities requires collective

BY MTHOBISI BUTHELEZI

FINANCING urban development, strengthening institutional collaboration and building climate-resilient infrastructure have emerged as key priorities during the first two days of the second Eswatini Urban Forum 2026, as stakeholders deliberate on the future of the country's towns and cities.

Officially opened by Prime Minister Russel Mmiso Dlamini at the Palazzo ICC on Wednesday, the three-day forum has brought together government ministries, local authorities, development partners, the private sector and international delegates under discussions centred on empowering local authorities to deliver sustainable urban development.

In his opening address, the Prime Minister emphasised that Government could not independently meet the growing infrastructure and housing demands resulting from expanding towns, calling for stronger public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms.

He said: "The resources of Government alone cannot answer the full measure of our infrastructure needs, nor release the latent vigour of our local economies."

He further stressed that housing should be viewed beyond physical structures, describing it as a foundation for dignity, security and stable communities.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Apollo Maphalala challenged stakeholders to assess progress made since the inaugural forum in 2024, particularly regarding commitments to address informal settlements through policy interventions, resource allocation and structured programmes.

The discussions on the second day shifted towards practical approaches to infrastructure



The PM with dignitaries after the first day of the event. (All pics: Municipal Council of Mbabane)

ture resilience, climate adaptation and improved service

delivery. Speakers highlighted the importance of risk-informed infrastructure planning and designs that minimise vulnerability to climate-related disasters.

The National Disaster Risk Management Authority also called on chief-

doms and municipalities to develop risk profiles for their respective areas and ensure residents are informed about potential hazards to guide safer settlement and construction practices.

A ministerial round-table discussion further highlighted the need for national and local government institutions to break operational silos and strengthen collaboration. Participants noted that although the government system is de-

signed to facilitate cooperation, mismatches between available budgets and service delivery expectations continue to present challenges.

Affordable housing and the upgrading of informal settlements also featured prominently, with discussions exploring ways to expand access to decent housing.

Meanwhile, His Majesty King Mswati III, who addressed delegates on the second day after touring exhibition stalls, emphasised sustainable urban planning, innovation and local economic growth.

As the forum approaches its final day, the discussions have reinforced the need to translate policy commitments into practical interventions that strengthen local authorities and ensure urban development benefits communities across the country.



Municipal Council of Mbabane stall.



effort - Forum



Piggs Peak Town Council CEO Roison Pave.



Ezulwini Municipality CEO Mathokoza Shongwe.



Mankayane Town Board CEO David Madiapha.



Central Bank of Eswatini Governor Dr. Phil Mntsi.



4. Buhleni Town Clerk Gordon Mbuli. 5. Eswatini Housing Board CEO Mduduzi Dlamini. 6. CEO and Town Clerk of the Malkerns Town Council Cinisela Dlamini. 7. Municipal Council of Manzini CEO Dr. Lungile Dlamini. 8. CEO of the Matsapha Town Council Sizwe Dlamini. 9. Ngwenya Town Board CEO Phumzile Tshabalala.



Municipal Council of Mbabane CEO Gciniwe Fakudze. (R) Mankayane Town Board Communications Officer and EA Thabiso Mamba sharing the town's developments with stakeholders.



Municipal Council of Manzini stall.



KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



MINISTRY OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT



URBAN FORUM

WORLD CITIES DAY

THEME: REGENERATING THE CITY: ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL

31 OCTOBER 2026

Beyond four walls: Matsapha's vision for housing for all

A home is more than four walls and a roof. It is a safe neighbourhood, a reliable road, a healthy environment and a community where families can build their futures. This understanding is shaping Matsapha Town Council's approach to sustainable urban development as the world commemorates World Cities Day 2026.

Under the theme "Empowering Eswatini's Local Authorities: Financing, Smart Solutions, Resilient Infrastructure, and Housing for All," highlighted at the Eswatini Urban Forum 2026, attention is being drawn to the important role municipalities play in creating inclusive, resilient and liveable urban communities.

For Matsapha, the theme speaks directly to Council's development ambitions. Known as Eswatini's industrial powerhouse, the town continues to drive economic activity and employment opportunities. Yet its vision extends beyond factories, businesses and investment. It is about ensuring that the people who contribute to Matsapha's growth can also enjoy safe, connected and sustainable communities in which to live.

Guided by its vision of becoming a liveable and sustainable investment town, Council recognises that housing for all is not simply about providing residential land or buildings. It is about creating the conditions that make a place truly liveable.

From environmental protection and road improvements to settlement upgrading, recreational facilities and community participation, Matsapha is pursuing an integrated approach that connects housing opportunities

Housing begins with liveable neighbourhoods

Adequate housing cannot be separated from the environment in



King Mswati III Street Upgrade.



which people live.

Through the eco-park initiative, Council is working to protect and restore Matsapha's wetlands, which play an important role in reducing flood risks, supporting biodiversity and improving water quality. Protecting these natural systems contributes to safer, healthier and more climate-resilient neighbourhoods.

Council's environmental awareness initiatives, including World Environment Day activities and water stewardship engagements, further encourage responsible management of the natural resources on which communities depend.

Connecting homes to opportunities

A well-located home must also be connected to employment, schools, businesses and essential services.

Council's road improvement initiatives along Tubungu, Mndoni, Pineapple, Matalalala and King Mswati Avenue are part of efforts

EXPANDING ACCESS TO HOUSING

At the heart of Council's housing agenda is the Likhwane informal settlement upgrading initiative, where processes relating to plot allocation are underway.

The project follows an incremental development approach, with essential services and supporting infrastructure to be introduced progressively. This is intended to promote orderly settlement development, improve living conditions and expand opportunities for residents to access secure, serviced residential land.

Council is also strengthening its capacity to support different forms of property ownership. Staff training on the Sectional Titles Act will assist in the processing of sectional title applications, supporting broader housing choices and opportunities for property ownership.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate that achieving housing for all requires both access to land and the systems needed to support sustainable residential development.

Giving communities a voice

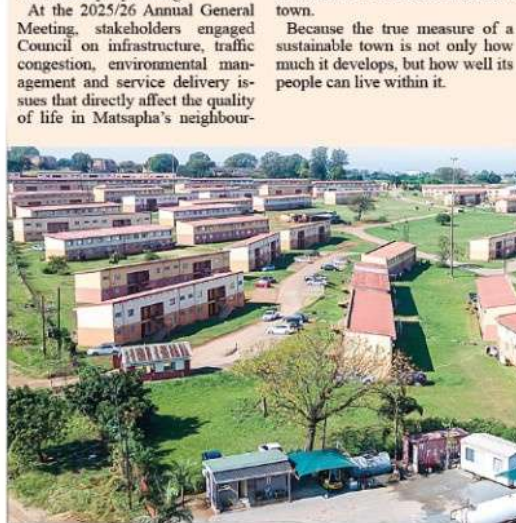
Housing and urban development are most meaningful when the people affected have a say in shaping them.

Council continues to promote participatory governance through engagements that bring residents, businesses and other stakeholders into municipal planning.

At the 2025/26 Annual General Meeting, stakeholders engaged Council on infrastructure, traffic congestion, environmental management and service delivery issues that directly affect the quality of life in Matsapha's neighbourhoods.

The development of the Likhwane sports ground adds another important dimension to liveability, providing recreational space that supports youth development, family interaction and community well-being.

Looking ahead, plans for a modern bus terminus, additional children's facilities and more community spaces reflect Council's ambition to develop neighbourhoods that offer more than residential accommodation.





WORLD CITIES DAY

THEME: REGENERATING THE CITY: ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL

31 OCTOBER 2026

Govt moves to upgrade informal settlements

BY MTHOBISI BUTHELEZI

ESWATINI Government through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development outlined a comprehensive strategy to upgrade informal settlements across the country as part of efforts to ensure that emaswati living in urban areas have access to safer, better planned and serviced communities.

The ministry already begun implementing upgrading initiatives in some areas, with the broader goal of gradually integrating informal settlements into the formal urban system while improving the living conditions of residents.

Senior Housing Officer at the ministry, Samkeliso Makhubu, explained that informal settlements have become a significant feature of urbanisation in the country.

What is an informal settlement? Makhubu said an informal settlement refers to a residential area where development has taken place outside formal planning and regulatory systems.

"An informal settlement refers to a residential area where housing has been developed, and/or land occupied outside the formal planning and regulatory systems. These settlements typically emerge when people build homes on land without formal approval, secure tenure, or adherence to approved planning standards," said Makhubu.

He explained that these settlements usually arise due to the urgent need for shelter among low-income households who cannot easily access formally serviced land or affordable housing.

"As a result, homes are often constructed incrementally and may lack basic services such as proper sanitation, stormwater drainage, road access, electricity and waste management," he said.

Makhubu added that such settlements are characterised by self-built structures ranging from stick and mud to brick buildings constructed on land without formal legal titles. "In Eswatini, a significant proportion of the urban population lives in informal settlements," he said.

HOW THE MINISTRY IDENTIFIES INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

According to Makhubu, areas are classified as informal settlements when they display characteristics associated with unplanned development.

He said the identification process is carried out in collaboration with urban local authorities through surveys, mapping exercises and spatial analysis.

"To determine informality in settlements, the ministry together with relevant partners typically considers the following indicators," he explained:

- Lack of formal land tenure or unclear land ownership arrangements
- Absence of approved township layouts or planning permission
- Settlement patterns that do not follow planning standards
- Limited or no access to basic



An example of an informal settlement at Mangozeni in Malkerns, such settlements are characterised by self-built structures ranging from stick and mud to brick buildings constructed on land without formal legal titles. (File pic)

- infrastructure services, including water supply, sanitation, drainage, roads and electricity
- Substandard or temporary housing structures
- Settlement in environmentally sensitive or high-risk areas, such as flood-prone land, steep slopes, or riverbanks

WHY INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS CONTINUE TO GROW

Makhubu said several socio-economic and spatial planning factors contribute to the growth of informal settlements in Eswatini. "The growth of informal settlements in Eswatini is driven by several socio-economic and spatial planning factors," he said.

Firstly, he noted that rapid urbanisation has significantly increased demand for housing in urban centres. "Rapid urbanisation has increased demand for housing in urban centres, while the supply of affordable, serviced land has not kept pace with population growth," he said.

Informal settlements are therefore commonly found on the outskirts of growing towns and cities where the demand for land is high.

Secondly, he said limited access to affordable housing finance prevents many households from accessing formal housing through conventional markets. "Low-income households often cannot easily access formally serviced land or affordable housing. As a result, homes are often constructed incrementally using available materials," said Makhubu.

Migration from rural areas to towns in search of employment also places pressure on urban land. "Often, these people will tend to settle on the margins of cities where land and housing is cheaper," he said.

Makhubu further noted that historical land administration processes and limited serviced land development have contributed to informal development. "Generally, the mushrooming of informal settlements would occur

by households illegally settling on un-serviced government and private land within urban jurisdictions," he said.

The senior officer added that some informal development is also observed on Eswatini Nation Land (ENL) around urban edges as people move closer to economic opportunities. "A combination of these factors has resulted in the expansion of informal settlements in and around urban centres in Eswatini," he said.

Areas already benefiting from upgrading programmes

Government has already initiated upgrading projects in several areas through pilot initiatives. Makhubu said some of these projects were implemented through the World Bank funded Urban Development Project.

"Some areas within urban jurisdictions have already benefited from pilot upgrading initiatives, particularly within the municipal areas of Mbabane and Manzini through the Urban Development Project that was funded by the World Bank," he said.

Other initiatives have also been implemented outside the World Bank programme. "The ministry together with the urban local authorities have initiated the formalisation of settlements in Matsapha (Likhwane Township), Moyeni Township (Siteki) and Nkhungu (Sivusimti Township) in (Ngwenya) among others," he explained.

Within Mbabane alone, the Municipal Council has identified several informal settlements. "Municipal Council of Mbabane has a total of nine informal settlements including Fonteyn, Malagwane, Mvankwelitje, Manzana, etc," he said.

Makhubu, however, noted that these initiatives are still at different stages of the upgrading process. He explained that once a settlement is fully formalised, it is zoned under a planning scheme known as High Density Residential Upgrading (R3U).

"The zoning of the settlements

allows for a diversity of uses and building standards are permitted to encourage home occupations and a variety of housing types, including incremental housing," he said.

Residents in upgraded areas can expect improvements such as:

- Provision or upgrading of internal road networks
- Installation of water supply and sanitation infrastructure
- Stormwater drainage systems to reduce flooding
- Electricity connections
- Land regularisation and improved tenure security (legal ownership or user rights to property)

PREPARATION OF FORMAL TOWNSHIP LAYOUTS

Makhubu said these upgrades significantly improve safety, health conditions and overall quality of life for residents.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO REDUCE INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

The government has also launched a national programme aimed at addressing informal settlements in a structured and sustainable manner.

"The government, through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, has initiated a national informal settlements upgrading programme aimed at upgrading informal settlements, rather than simply removing them, in all the declared urban areas in Eswatini," said Makhubu.

The programme focuses on gradually improving living conditions while integrating these communities into the formal urban system.

According to Makhubu, the approach prioritises in situ upgrading, which involves regularising land through proper spatial layout plans and plot demarcation. This is followed by improving tenure security through plot allocation and the issuing of title deeds or 99-year leaseholds to beneficiaries.

"Lastly the incremental installation of basic infrastructure services such as roads, water, electricity, sanitation and waste management is undertaken," he said.

To prevent the continued emergence of informal settlements, the ministry is also working to increase the supply of serviced land. "On prevention of the mushrooming of informal settlements in urban areas, the ministry is increasing the supply of serviced land through planned township developments and disposal of government land through the crown land management framework i.e. the Crown Land Act, 1911 and the Crown Land Disposal Regulations, 2003," said Makhubu.

He added that the ministry is strengthening urban planning and land management systems in collaboration with local authorities to guide orderly and sustainable urban growth.

COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Makhubu stressed that upgrading informal settlements requires strong collaboration between multiple stakeholders. "The ministry recognises that successful informal settlement upgrading requires strong collaboration and community participation," he said.

The ministry works closely with:

- Local authorities and municipalities responsible for service delivery
- Community leadership structures and traditional authorities where applicable
- Development partners and technical institutions
- Community engagement is a key component of the process.

"Residents are involved in consultations during the planning, layout design and implementation stages to ensure that interventions respond to local needs and are socially acceptable," he said.

Makhubu mentioned that this participatory approach helps communities take ownership of projects and ensures upgraded settlements become sustainable and integrated parts of urban areas.

Eswatini is also collaborating regionally through the Southern African Development Community. "The Government of Eswatini is participating in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Working Group on Transformation of Informal Settlements in the development of a regional Strategy for Transformation of Informal Settlements," he explained.

The strategy aims to support effective decision-making and guide national strategies for the prevention and transformation of informal settlements across member states.

"This strategy will further inform Eswatini's informal settlements upgrading programme as it constitutes a framework for knowledge and best practices and encourages regional cooperation among member states in the SADC region," concluded Makhubu.



Mankayane Showcases Urban Development



...At Eswatini Urban Forum



Prime Minister Russell Dlamini (C), Minister for Housing Apollo Maphalala with Mayors of Eswatini's cities/towns during the Eswatini Urban Forum.

The Board has this week joined Eswatini Urban Forum 2026 hosted by Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, along with Eswatini Municipalities, under the theme "Empowering Eswatini's Local Authorities: Financing, Smart Solutions, Resilient Infra-

structure, and Housing for All." The Board commended the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Hon. A. Maphalala, for convening a platform that brings together local authorities, government, development partners and communities to exchange ideas on sustainable urban growth.

At its exhibition, the Board highlighted the proposed Mankayane Extension 3 Industrial Township. The Crown Land Disposal Committee and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade have approved the site for industrial development upon visiting Mankaya-

ne earlier this year. A General Plan (GP) and infrastructure cost estimates have been prepared, while funding options are being explored.

The Board is proud of the strides made towards building a sustainable, resilient and economically vibrant town, below are highlights of some of the implemented projects and plans towards infrastructure development and urban greening;

LILANDA AVENUE DEVELOPMENT;

The recently completed upgrade of Lilanda Avenue from gravel to asphalt has improved access for residents, businesses and investors. Roads in the central business area have also been upgraded, with further improvements planned for residential areas.

LED SOLAR POWERED STREET LIGHTS INSTALLATION;

The Board has converted conventional streetlights to solar-powered LED lighting along the route from the government offices through town to the intersection near Buy Cash complex. The initiative aims to improve road safety and visibility while reducing energy and maintenance costs. Expansion to other streets and residential areas is under consideration.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN FINANCING

The Board has developed township plans for the proposed Industrial Area and Mabovini settlement. These developments are intended to unlock investment opportunities, stimulate local economic activity, create

employment and support future housing development.

Importantly, the Board is also exploring financing approaches through which proceeds from property sales could support essential infrastructure, including roads, streetlighting, water and electricity.

URBAN GREENING

Environmental sustainability remains equally important. We have successfully planted 250 trees across town and currently pursuing a comprehensive urban greening and development master plan to guide future growth while preserving our natural environment, this master plan is currently at tendering stage, with plans of implementation from the next financial year.

The Board's vision is to build a Mankayane that is attractive to investors, responsive to the needs of its residents, and resilient for future generations.

"The Board's vision is to build a Mankayane that is attractive to investors, responsive to the needs of its residents, and resilient for future generations."



The Board has converted conventional streetlights to solar-powered LED lighting along the route from the government offices through town to the intersection near Buy Cash complex.



The recently completed upgrade of Lilanda Avenue, before and after, from gravel to asphalt has improved access for residents, businesses and investors.



CEO Madlopha David at the Urban Forum Eswatini engaging with stakeholders.

EMPOWERING VUVULANE:

Building financially sustainable resilient, inclusive urban centre

VUVULANE Town Board recognises that financial sustainability is fundamental to effective local governance and sustainable urban development. The Board is strengthening its revenue mobilisation strategies, with a particular focus on improving property rates collection, broadening the revenue base and enhancing financial management and accountability. In line with its Integrated Development Plan (2023-2028), the Board aims to achieve at least 80% revenue collection from rateable properties.

The Board is also pursuing innovative approaches to mobilising resources for infrastructure development. One such initiative is the proposed pilot disposal of 50 Government residential plots in accordance with the Crown Lands Disposal Regulations of 2003. The intention is to ensure that proceeds generated contribute towards local infrastructure development.

Furthermore, Vuvulane is positioning itself as an investment destination through the promotion of partnerships, industrial development, entrepreneurship and small-business opportunities. The Board is engaging relevant stakeholders, including the Eswatini Investment Promotion Authority, SEDCO and other development partners, to facilitate investment and economic activity.

Strategic partnerships with Government ministries, utilities, development institutions and the private sector remain central to bridging infrastructure financing gaps and improving municipal service delivery.

Smart solutions and digital transformation

Vuvulane Town Board acknowledges that digital transformation is increasingly important in improving local government efficiency, transparency and accessibility.

While the Board is still developing its institutional capacity for smart-city solutions, it recognises the need to progressively integrate digital technologies into municipal operations. Priority areas include digital property and revenue records, improved financial and administrative information management, digital communication with residents and businesses, and more efficient systems for managing municipal services.

The Board's long-term vision is to establish a more connected and responsive urban environment where technology supports evidence-based planning, efficient service delivery and greater citizen participation. Partnerships and technical support will be important in accelerating this transformation.

Resilient infrastructure and housing for all

Infrastructure development remains one of Vuvulane's key development priorities. The Board is pursuing the upgrading of approximately eight kilometres of access roads to improve connectivity, accessibility and economic activity. Engineering designs, cost estimates and environmental compliance assessments have been undertaken to support the implementation and resource mobilisation process.

The Board is engaging the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, RES Corporation and other stakeholders to explore funding and implementation partnerships, including opportunities for phased infrastructure development.

In addition, the Board is prioritising improved



The Board is pursuing the upgrading of approximately eight kilometres of access roads to improve connectivity, accessibility and economic activity.



Recreational facilities at Vuvulane.



Municipal service delivery.



The Vuvulane Civic Centre.



Community engagements by the Board.

...Our commitment is to build a financially sustainable, economically vibrant, environmentally resilient and socially inclusive town."

waste management, public sanitation, access to essential services and the maintenance of municipal infrastructure. Collaboration with the Eswatini Water Services Corporation remains important in addressing water and sanitation challenges.

On housing and spatial development, the Board is working towards improved land-use planning and the preparation of a new Town Planning Scheme to guide orderly urban expansion. The proposed residential plot pilot is also intended to contribute towards improving access to land and promoting planned development.

Climate resilience and environmental sustainability will be important considerations in future infrastructure investments, particularly in road construction, stormwater management, land-use planning and waste management.

People-centred and inclusive urban development

Vuvulane Town Board believes that sustainable urban development must place people at the centre of planning and decision-making. The Board therefore continues to engage communities, traditional leadership, Government institutions, businesses, farmers, schools and other stakeholders in identifying development priorities and shaping local interventions.

Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups, children, women and young people through community and social development initiatives. The Board operates a Social Centre catering for young children aged four to six years, while its community development programmes also support health awareness, social welfare and community participation.

The Board is also working towards transforming its approximately 46,000-square-metre multi-purpose recreational site into a more inclusive public space incorporating recreational facilities, an outdoor park and gym facilities. This will provide opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and community recreation.

Public safety, improved road accessibility, effective waste management and a clean urban environment remain essential components of the Board's people-centred development agenda.

Looking ahead - Our commitment at the 2026 Urban Forum

At the 2026 Urban Forum, Vuvulane Town Board seeks to champion stronger intergovernmental collaboration, innovative infrastructure financing, investment promotion, digital transformation and inclusive urban development.

Our commitment is to build a financially sustainable, economically vibrant, environmentally resilient and socially inclusive town. We recognise that local authorities cannot achieve this vision in isolation. Stronger partnerships between Government, the private sector, development partners and communities will be essential in translating urban development plans into tangible improvements in people's lives.



BUILDING A BETTER PIGG'S PEAK:

Council reaffirms commitment to inclusive and sustainable urban development

PIGG'S PEAK, ESWATINI - As the world commemorates World Cities Day on 31 October 2026, Pigg's Peak Town Council reaffirms its commitment to building a sustainable, inclusive and resilient town through continued investment in infrastructure, housing, environmental management, access to essential services, economic development and digital inclusion.

This year's theme, "Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All," highlights the importance of creating urban environments where everyone has access to decent housing, reliable infrastructure and opportunities for improved livelihoods. For Pigg's Peak, this occasion provides an opportunity to reflect on the development interventions undertaken to improve the town and the lives of its residents.

PROMOTING DECENT HOUSING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO WATER

In line with the global theme, Council is prioritising the formalisation of informal settlements, with Macambeni identified as an important area of intervention. The initiative seeks to promote orderly settlement development, improve living conditions and facilitate the provision of essential services. Alongside this, Council intends to facilitate the formation of housing cooperatives to assist low-income earners in collectively pursuing affordable homeownership opportunities. At Macambeni, Council has also completed a spring protection project in partnership with UNICEF and the Government of Japan, aimed at protecting the community's water source and improving water security.

STRENGTHENING WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



A clean and healthy urban environment remains central to Council's development agenda. Council continued implementing initiatives to improve solid waste management and enhance the general appearance of Pigg's Peak.

Pigg's Peak is endowed with rich biodiversity, encompassing a diverse range of indigenous flora and fauna that form an integral part of its natural heritage. The conservation and preservation of this ecological wealth is among Council's key environmental priorities, with a commitment to protecting natural habitats, promoting sustainable land use, preventing environmental degradation, and encouraging responsible stewardship of natural resources. Through partnerships, environmental awareness programmes and sustainable conservation initiatives, Council seeks to safeguard this biodiversity for present and future generations while promoting a clean, healthy and environmentally sustainable town.

IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Council recognises that well-maintained infrastructure is essential to creating an attractive and functional town. Efforts have therefore continued towards maintaining

roads, public facilities, market infrastructure and trading spaces. Council is also advancing its spatial planning and development agenda through residential township development and the promotion of the Nazarene Industrial Park as an opportunity to attract investment, stimulate economic activity and create employment. These initiatives form part of Council's broader vision of developing a town where residential, commercial and industrial activities complement one another.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

Recognising the importance of technology in modern urban development, Council is pursuing the rollout of free public Wi-Fi to expand residents' access to online learning, information and economic opportunities. Council has also engaged MTN Eswatini on the MTN Skills Academy, exploring ways of connecting local young people to digital skills development and online learning opportunities. These initiatives reflect Council's commitment to ensuring that young people are not left behind in the digital economy.

BUILDING CLIMATE RESILIENCE

With climate change increasingly affecting communities across Southern Africa, Council



is strengthening its focus on environmental protection, water conservation and disaster preparedness. The anticipated El Niño-induced drought conditions have reinforced the need for coordinated stakeholder interventions and community sensitisation on responsible water use. Council remains committed to integrating climate resilience into its development planning to safeguard residents, businesses and essential municipal services.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR A BETTER PIGG'S PEAK

As Pigg's Peak joins the global community in commemorating World Cities Day, Council acknowledges that sustainable urban development requires collective responsibility. Residents, businesses, community leaders, government institutions and development partners are encouraged to actively participate in keeping the town clean, protecting public infrastructure, conserving natural resources and supporting community development initiatives.

Council remains committed to strengthening partnerships, mobilising resources and implementing interventions that respond to the needs and aspirations of its residents.

Regenerating Pigg's Peak is not merely about improving the physical appearance of the town; it is about improving lives, creating housing opportunities, strengthening resilience and building a future in which everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

