

## CITY COLLABORATES WITH BUSINESS TO BOOST INVESTMENT IN DURBAN



**The business sector, mainly in the property development industry under the All Shall Prosper Movement, met with eThekweni City Manager Musa Mbhele to discuss challenges, resolutions, and opportunities for collaboration in Durban.**

**E**THEKWINI City Manager Musa Mbhele led a high-powered delegation to a meeting with astute business leaders, property developers, and investors in the region on 13 February. The engagement was organised by the All Shall Prosper Movement and was

aimed at bolstering private sector collaboration with the City. The discussion focused on challenges, resolutions, and opportunities for collaboration to improve economic development in the region as well as establishing eThekweni as the City of choice for

investment.

Mbhele gave assurance of the City's sound financial status, providing an overview of future catalytic development and inner-city regeneration efforts. Constructive and honest engagement ensued with stakeholders who resolved

to establish a forum that will move the City forward.

Mbhele said: "The City is on the brink of an economic rise, with approximately R217 billion of investment being ploughed into the eThekweni region through our catalytic projects. These are expected to create over 300 000 construction job opportunities and 120 000 permanent employments. We welcome the confidence shown by investors in the private sector and the City is committed to supporting their developments."

Businessman Andrzej Kiepiela, from the KZN Growth Coalition, explained that there are ongoing efforts - in partnership with the City - to ensure a conducive business environment and opportunities for growth and development.

Businesswoman and leader of the All Shall Prosper Movement Adele Benvie said the purpose of the meeting was to ensure that Durban is seen as a premier investment destination.

"The business sector has vested interest in eThekweni, and we aim to change the Durban narrative," she said.

## BEACHFRONT PROPERTIES LEASES ARE FAIR AND EQUITABLE

DURBAN'S beachfront will be undergoing a massive overhaul with buildings on the promenade being given a facelift and redeveloped. Over the past few years, changes have been made to improve the offering to visitors on the beachfront, ensuring that it remains a world-class facility.

As tenant leases expire, the

City follows proper processes to advertise for bids to develop new and interesting spaces and eateries. This forms an integral part of the City's Proactive Land Release Strategy.

Head of the Real Estate Unit Thapelo Mmusinyane explained: "In the period between May 2021 and November 2022, a total of 25

properties were advertised and 10 awards were made to new lessees. All 10 awards were made to companies that are 100% owned by historically disadvantaged individuals. On the beachfront in particular, properties that have been affected are Circus Circus, Bike and Bean, and Minitown."

The historic building in which

Joe Cools and other eateries are housed will be upgraded soon by a developer who will then sublet this space to suitable tenants.

Mmusinyane assured the public that a fair, equitable, and transparent process was followed as stipulated in Section 14(5) of the Municipal Finance Management Act.

## WESTOWN SQUARE TO OPEN ITS DOORS SOON

THERE is a feeling of anticipation in the air as the long-awaited Westown Square in Shongweni is due to open its doors in a month. Contractors are racing against a deadline to finish all work so that retailers are ready to welcome shoppers on 27 March.

eThekweni Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba said: “The City is excited to have reached this milestone in this public-private partnership catalytic project and looks forward to its opening. Fundamentum Property Group invested R1.5 billion into the development while the City contributions for bulk infrastructure amounted to R600 million over three years. Thousands of jobs have been created and are still to be created in this area. This is an indication of what can be achieved when government works together with the private sector.”

Westown Square is mooted to be a catalyst for much bigger investment in the region. Westown will be the new economic hub for Durban’s Outer West, set to



generate some R15 billion in investment over the next 10 to 15 years, and significantly contribute to the growth of the local tourism sector and that of eThekweni.”

Perfectly positioned just off the N3 highway, Westown will enhance the regional offering with a shopping, lifestyle, entertainment, and business destination. Designed to connect people with spaces and bring new opportunities to visit, live, work and thrive, Westown reflects the character and personality of the location and Durban as a whole.

More than a shopping destination, Westown Square

includes the Town Gardens and an open-air amphitheatre, The Bowl On The Square, where the stage will come alive with concerts and performances. The Barn is positioned as the spatial heart of Westown Square, with an iconic-barn-shaped structure.

The Catalytic Projects Unit is responsible for facilitating large scale spatial transformation projects in partnership with the private sector. The investment value for these projects are usually more than R500 million and they contribute substantially to job creation and economic growth in the region.

## Clothing and textile SMMEs empowered

FINANCIAL management and negotiation strategies play a critical role in the success of a business, often leading to growth and partnership opportunities. Recognising this vital fact, eThekweni’s clothing and textile sector in partnership with the City facilitated a finance and negotiation training workshop in Kloof for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in the industry.

The workshop aimed to equip these SMMEs with the skills to accurately negotiate and manage their finances, helping them retain market share, stay competitive, and ensure their offerings are customer centric.

The focus is to create platforms which provide the business support infrastructure and regulatory environment that enables entrepreneurs to thrive.

eThekweni Municipality through the KZN Clothing and Textile Cluster, supports the Origin8 Accelerator Programme that demonstrates a strong commitment to transforming and localising the sector.

The Accelerator connects SMMEs with big business to unlock mutually beneficial commercial opportunities.

## RIVERTOWN TO GET UPGRADE

THE Rivertown Precinct is due to get an upgrade in the coming weeks as part of the Inner-city Regeneration Project.

The precinct has a rich history in the Durban city centre and is strategically located between the award-winning Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) and the Beachfront. The Municipality intends to transform this precinct into a cultural node that visitors and residents can enjoy. “The Municipality began this project in 2021 where hard upgrades were complete, and through the current Inner-city

Regeneration Project, it will provide further interventions within the Rivertown precinct this financial year,” said Kamalen Gounden, Programme Manager, Catalytic Projects.

Mohammed Haq, an Urban Designer from the Architecture Department, presented the vision for the precinct saying: “The upgrade will include urban design and beautification upgrades along Hunter Street to the Durban ICC, like the planting of trees to green the area, the introduction of street furniture, security kiosks with visible policing, and a vertical visual branding element.”

A street market that will add a vibey, cultural space where people can enjoy music, arts and various foods all form part of the plan for the next phase of work. These upgrades are expected to invite more investment into the area and make it an attraction for visitors and locals alike,” he said, explaining that the vision is to ensure a safe space where people can enjoy the rich cultural heritage of the precinct and Durban.

The City hosted a public engagement on the upgrade of the Rivertown Precinct recently where concept and vision for the precinct were discussed with stakeholders.



**Small, medium, and micro enterprises in the clothing and textile sector attended an accelerator workshop in Kloof.**



# ENTER DURBAN TOURISM BUSINESS AWARDS

DURBAN Tourism invites the tourism and hospitality sectors to participate in the 4th annual Durban Tourism Business Awards. Entries opened in November last year and close on 23 February. The Awards recognise business excellence, resilience and innovation within the industry. Community tourism organisations, industry stakeholders, and the public still have time to identify and motivate tourism businesses in their areas to enter the awards.

To start the entry process, all tourism businesses within eThekweni Municipality must follow this link: <https://durbantourismawards.com>

Once the entry is submitted, an automated email response confirming a successful online entry will be received.

This is the fourth edition of the highly successful Durban Tourism Business Awards. The ceremony will take place on 18 June at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre.



All category winners will receive up to R50 000 in cash, while winners of the exceptional achievement category will be awarded R100 000 to attend an international tourism exhibition or study tour. The first runner-up will receive

R35 000, and the second runner-up will receive R25 000. The Durban Tourism Business Awards aim to identify and award excellent products within the sector that can be packaged and marketed nationally and globally to

attract visitors to our shores. This platform ensures that local tourism businesses remain relevant, and that Durban remains a destination of choice for visitors. The categories focus areas include service excellence which has subcategories that include Accommodation; Visitor Experience and Restaurants; Meetings, Exhibitions, and Special Events; Tourists Guides; Tour Operators; Rickshaw Pullers; Crafters; Event Owners and Promoters and others. Under the Sustainable Development Category there is a Universal Accessibility Sub-category, while the Entrepreneurship subcategories include Emerging Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year and Upcoming Filmmakers. The Exceptional Achievement Award has five subcategories namely Investment, Creative Industry, Township and Rural Investment Economy Development, Hospitality, and Product Owners with Disability.

## PLANS UNDERWAY TO HOST 'BEST EVER' AFRICA TRAVEL INDABA

DURBAN Tourism has launched its plans for the 2025 Africa Travel Indaba, with a bold vision for the success of Africa's largest trade and tourism event.

Durban Tourism Regional Marketing Manager Melusi Khumalo presented the proposed programme to the City's Economic Development and Planning Committee for their recommendation. During the presentation she highlighted that preparations are already in motion for this flagship event, scheduled to take place from 12 to 15 May at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre. At the committee meeting held on 13 February,

Khumalo said 2025 marks the City's final contractual year hosting the Indaba, underscoring the importance of this event in securing future bids. "We aim to pull out all the stops to host the best-ever Indaba to ensure Durban becomes the permanent home of this prestigious event." The Africa Travel Indaba is a crucial platform for showcasing Africa's tourism offerings and engaging with international trade, while also boosting local tourism.

Khumalo also shared last year's impressive figures which included 1 200 exhibitors, 9 217 delegates, 1 737 buyers, and participants from 75 countries.

## MR PRICE'S DISTRIBUTION CENTRE TO BOOST THE CITY'S ECONOMY

THE City's Economic Development Unit conducted a visit to the Mr Price Distribution Centre (DC), a 65 000 square metre facility located in Hammarsdale. The retailer highlighted how it has adopted automation, technology, and systems to support its focus on being a leading retailer.

The DC's focus is to distribute products to customers as efficiently as possible in line with Mr Price's store requirements.

The Mr Price DC is the first highly mechanised warehouse of this scale in South Africa.

The warehouse features a 2.8 million litre reserve water harvesting facility and a light-

ing system saving 1.2 million kWh per year.

The site has become an example of climate resilience after withstanding multiple flood events without any damages.

The DC is situated on one of the last remaining infill portions of land in the rapidly expanding outer-west corridor of eThekweni and promises to be one of South Africa's strongholds of logistics and an area of exponential future growth for the country.

The economic impact for the City will be through job creation as well as a boost to the freight industry as goods will be transported from the DC to different parts of the country.



# ETHEKWINI'S TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC BUSES

WITHIN the next year, eThekweni Municipality will introduce three e-buses/ electric buses as part of a pilot phase, and an additional 16 in the next three years. The City's move to transition from diesel to battery electric buses has been hailed as a significant move to sustainable transportation systems, joining cities worldwide in reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. This was announced at a three-day E-Bus workshop held at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre from 11 to 13 February. EThekweni Municipality in partnership with C40 Cities hosted 18 African countries to share best



**Speaking at the E-Bus workshop, eThekweni Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba welcomed the City's transition to electric buses, saying eThekweni Municipality is finding practical and permanent solutions to the climate change crisis.**

practices and key learning lessons on the deployment of electric buses in the African region. The City's transition to E-buses compared to traditional diesel buses, is in line with the Department of Transport Green Transport Strategy for South Africa 2018-2050 that proposes a

target of 10% of municipal bus fleets to be clean energy in the next 10 to 20 years.

EThekweni Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba said the workshop demonstrates that the City is taking proactive measures to promote eco-friendly and low-emission transportation systems. "As we implement

this transition, we must ensure that it just, inclusive and leaves no one behind. It must protect people's livelihoods and contribute towards the creation of sustainable jobs."

Head Zero Emission Freight C40: Lusanda Madikizela was excited that the workshop inspired robust discussions and feasibility studies around eThekweni's readiness for electric bus deployment.

EThekweni Transport Authority Senior Manager of Public Transport Services Babalwa Nyoka said the workshop explored the various business models for public transport electrification, private-public funding opportunities, and available electric bus technologies.

## CITY AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA FORGE STRONGER PARTNERSHIP

A DELEGATION from the City, led by eThekweni City Manager Musa Mbhele, met with the Independent Media Group in a media stakeholder engagement on 12 February.

The engagement aimed to strengthen working relationships and explore coverage opportunities. Joining Mbhele was the Communications Unit Deputy Head Gugu Sisilana, Communications Manager Mduduzi Ncalane, and other communicators.

The meeting aimed to foster collaboration and better understand the newsroom's priorities.

Ayanda Mdluli, Editor of the Daily News, highlighted the importance of collaboration while Philani Mazibuko, Editor of The Mercury, emphasised the role of media in driving local entrepreneurship and investment.

Zoubair Ayooob, Head of



**City officials met with Independent Media as part of forging stronger relations and fostering collaboration.**

Post Newspaper, said in the newsroom it was important to cover issues that affect readers.

In his address, Mbhele acknowledged the improvement in reporting since the previous engagement in October last year.

He urged journalists to ensure factual accuracy and to avoid misleading headlines when reporting about the City.

## INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE WITH CITY'S FLOODS MITIGATION STRATEGY

LEARNING from international countries will help eThekweni Municipality be resilient and establish flood mitigation strategies.

This follows an intensive study that was independently conducted by the Netherlands government and Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to assist the Municipality to mitigate the impact of floods in the South Durban Basin (SDB) and other areas.

The feedback meeting was attended by eThekweni Municipality, provincial government departments, the Office of the Presidency, and state-owned entities.

The report seeks to provide a roadmap that will assist in the development of a comprehensive flood-resilient strategy.

The objectives of the study were to reduce flood risk, enhance disaster

preparedness, improve infrastructure resilience, and promote community awareness and education.

A task team consisting of crucial stakeholders will be assembled to look at the report and its recommendations.



**Japanese International Cooperation Agency Project Manager Takeshi Watanabe presented findings of a study conducted on the City's flood mitigation strategy.**

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