ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

ETHEKWINI WEEKLY BULLETIN

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By 2030 eThekwini will be Africa's most caring and liveable City

26 May 2026 [Issue 462]

PROPERTY CONFERENCE UNLOCKS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

TEN deals, worth over R1 billion, are currently on the table, thanks to the City's inaugural closed-door deal room, a platform that brings together potential property developers and funders.

The deal room formed a key component of the third annual Property Conference, which concluded on 22 May at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre. Three of the transactions will be on municipal-owned land.

Held under the theme, 'From Access to Assets: Scaling Bankable Development on Public Land', the two-day conference delivered a strong message that the City is a willing, capable and consistent investment partner.

This is supported by extensive work undertaken over the past five years to create an investment environment grounded in governance certainty and delivery capability. This year's edition centred on scaling bankable development, equipping delegates with information and an understanding of what it takes to transform a municipal land release into a funded, construction-ready, income-generating property asset.

The third annual eThekwini Municipality Property Conference, held on 21 and 22 May, was a resounding success.

EThekwini City Manager Musa Mbhele said catalytic projects currently under facilitation in the City across all investment categories are valued at more than R217 billion.

"These projects are projected to generate over 300 000 construction-related jobs and 120 000 permanent opportunities. These are live projects in various stages of planning, approval, funding and implementation," said Mbhele.

VOTE FOR DURBAN IN WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS

DURBAN has once again garnered international acclaim with its nomination for the prestigious 33rd Annual World Travel Awards 2026. This recognition highlights the City's outstanding tourism offerings and global appeal, reaffirming Durban's ongoing commitment to cementing its status as a leading hub for business and leisure travel.

Voting is currently open for all remaining regions in the 2026 World Travel Awards programme. The City encourages everyone to cast their vote and make Durban shine by securing these prestigious awards.

Durban is competing in the following multiple coveted categories, showcasing its diverse and vibrant tourism landscape:

- Africa's Leading Business Travel Destination 2026
- Africa's Leading City Destination 2026
- Africa's Leading Festival and Event Destination 2026
- Africa's Leading Meetings and Conference Destination 2026.

The City's world-renowned attractions have also received notable recognition:

- UShaka Marine World as Africa's Leading Water Park 2026
- Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre as Africa's Leading Meetings and Conference Centre 2026.

Voting closes at midnight on 17 July 2026. To vote, visit: www.worldtravelawards.com

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CITY'S PROACTIVE LAND RELEASE STRATEGY UNLOCKS MASSIVE OPPORTUNITIES

SIGNIFICANT gains have been made under the City's Land Release Strategy, which falls under the umbrella of the Property Valuations and Management Directorate which is led by Thapelo Mmusinyane.

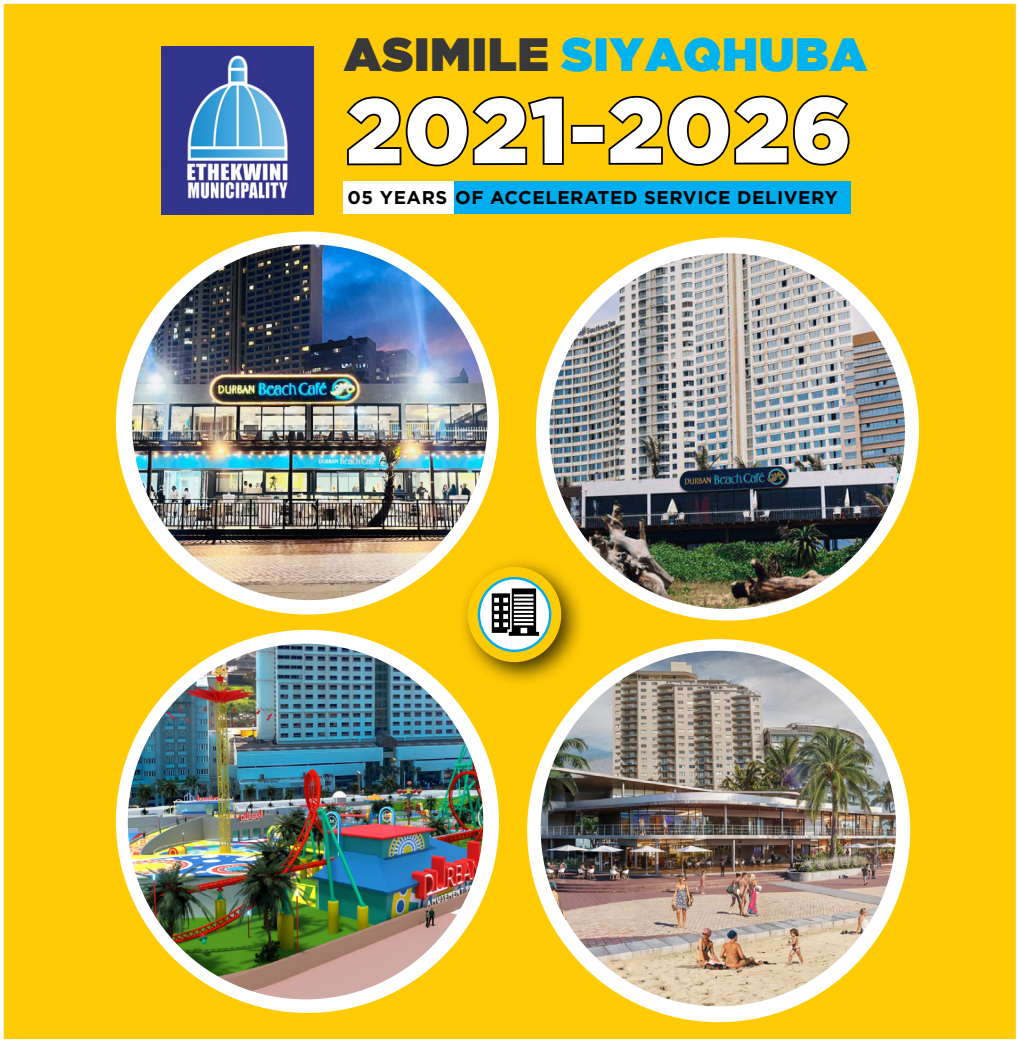
Highlighting these achievements is the City's Five-Year Service Delivery Milestones campaign being rolled out under the theme: Asimile Siyaqhuba: Resilience Through Adversity. The campaign highlights transformative efforts that have shaped service delivery during the 2021 to 2026 term of office.

The Land Release Strategy was implemented in 2021, and stands as a proud enabler of empowerment, economic impact and success, particularly along Durban's Beachfront. The strategy aims to enable growth through partnerships, stimulate investment, support small business development, all while advancing spatial transformation.

The beachfront has evolved into one of South Africa's most compelling urban-economic success stories where design, data, and development work together to generate measurable financial value.

Durban's experience challenges the notion that public spaces are cost centres. They are, in fact, city-scale revenue generators driving measurable returns through rates, rentals, and reinvestment. The promenade's consistent visitor growth, coupled with a strengthened trading mix, demonstrates how thoughtful urban design can turn municipal assets into engines of inclusive economic growth.

Between 2018 and 2025, monthly footfall along the promenade has grown from an average of 770 000 visitors to more than 1.3 million. In 2024, the precinct recorded 14.5 million visitors, the highest annual total ever measured. By mid-2025, year-to-date counts had already exceeded 11.7 million. These are volumes comparable to the country's top regional malls.



A shining example is the old Circus Circus, which was renovated to a stunning fusion of Africanism and Art Deco and is now the Durban Beach Café. The vision of this establishment was to create an iconic tourism destination restaurant while capturing the spirit of the City.

The existing Joe Cools building, a 1700 m² structure that has served the beachfront for over four decades, has reached its functional limit. The data now supports its replacement with a new 4000 m² building, a modern, glass-fronted development with expanded terraces, upper-level dining, and flexible event zones designed for year-round activation.

Additionally, the City has received a R1 billion commitment from the Southern Sun Hotel Group to redevelop the iconic Maharani and Elangeni Towers. The billion-rand capital investment will be broken down to R622 million on the upgrade of the Elangeni and Maharani, R157 million on movable assets and R348 million on two additional hotels owned by the same entity. This is in line with a functionality requirement that required bidders to further invest on the Durban beachfront precinct. Another R5 million will be invested towards the development of the Sunken Garden, which is a municipal park on the beachfront.

Just a stone-throw away from these hotels, will be the billion-rand, breathtaking Durban Amusement Park, which was announced in December 2025. The project is being led by a Durban-based, 100 percent black-owned firm with more than 17 years' experience in delivering large-scale urban development projects. The development is expected to create approximately 900 construction jobs and over 500 permanent jobs in operations, hospitality, technical services and entertainment programming.

The City has also recently released various strategically located properties across Durban with a combined market value exceeding R360 million, covering 18 hectares. These properties represent a diverse mix of industrial, commercial, mixed-use, and hospitality opportunities.

ECOD STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT TOUR

THE Economic Development and Planning Committee (ECOD) conducted a strategic oversight tour across Durban to audit the efficacy of municipal capital allocation and programme implementation.

Led by ECOD Chairperson Councillor Thembo Ntuli, a delegation of 40 councillors, municipal technocrats, and key economic stakeholders conducted localised market interventions.

The initiative directly evaluated micro-economic performance, structural employment generation, and macro-local economic development yields.

By analysing factory-floor operations, the delegation captured primary data on structural bottlenecks.

This evidence-based approach enables eThekwini Municipality to design targeted fiscal interventions, mitigate market failures, and de-risk private sector growth.

The strategic itinerary focused on high-multiplier sectors optimising Durban's industrial output including visits to:

The Economic Development and Planning Committee conducted an oversight site visit, led by Chairperson Councillor Thembo Ntuli, to several sites including Smart Xchange, Jockey Umgeni Road, and the KwaMashu Furniture Incubator.

- **SmartXchange (ICT Sector):** A specialised small business incubator that accelerates black economic empowerment of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME). The hub expands digital labour supply and human capital through a triple-helix ecosystem of industry, academia, and state departments.
- **Jockey Umgeni Road (Clothing and Textile):** A premium apparel manufacturer anchoring local supply chains. By maintaining domestic production in Durban, the firm strengthens localised manufacturing capabilities and cluster economies of scale.
- **KwaMashu Furniture Incubator- Furntech (Furniture Sector):** Operating via a strategic partnership with Furntech, this incubator provides critical industrial infrastructure, vocational training, and enterprise development. It enables early-stage firms in the wood value chain to scale and absorb operational shocks.

Speaking on the visit, Councillor Ntuli said: "We must position eThekwini Municipality at the vanguard of enterprise development by implementing demand-side policies, such as preferential procurement frameworks that mandate the state to source 10 percent of its furniture directly from MSME incubators like Furntech."

STRIDES MADE TACKLING PROBLEM BUILDINGS

EFFORTS to address unsafe, abandoned, hijacked, and illegally occupied properties across the inner city and surrounding areas was welcomed by the Economic Development and Planning Committee during their meeting on 20 May.

The committee tabled a report that highlighted significant progress made in the eradication of problem buildings during the 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26 financial years.

During the reporting period, the Municipality attended to approximately 53 buildings, of which eight were government-owned and the remainder privately owned. The City addresses issues at these buildings through coordinated enforcement, compliance monitoring, and stakeholder engagement initiatives. The intervention forms part of the City's broader urban regeneration programme aimed at improving public safety, restoring investor confidence, enhancing the built environment, and unlocking economic activity in strategic precincts. To encourage redevelopment, qualifying developments within targeted precincts may benefit from fast-tracked applications and incentives of up to 50 percent on development-related fees.

Committee members welcomed the visible progress made to strengthen Durban's appeal as aninvestment destination. The report remains subject to approval by the Executive Committee and Full Council.

CITY'S TOUGH STANCE ON FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

ETHEKWINI Municipality has taken a firm stance against fraud and corruption by swiftly investigating reported cases.

During a special meeting held in May, Director of the City Integrity and Investigations Directorate (CIID) Jimmy Ngcobo said inroads have been made to curb fraud and corruption.

Speaking on successes, he said in the third quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, 79 cases of fraud and corruption were investigated and finalised, 66 infrastructure theft cases were investigated and finalised, while 19 cases of employees who were implicated have been recommended for disciplinary hearings.

A further six cases were recommended for recoveries, three services providers were recommended to be blacklisted, and one criminal case was registered with law enforcement. During the 2024/25 financial year, 420 cases were resolved including the disconnection of a hospital that had illegally connected to the Municipal grid. CIID also conducted civil recovery of about R27 million and curbed infrastructure theft.

From July 2025 to March 2026, CIID finalised 250 fraud and corruption cases, of which 199 were infrastructure theft and vandalism cases.

Of the 250 cases, 23 were recommended for recoveries and are quantifiable to the value of just over R100 million.

URGENT COLLECTIVE ACTION NEEDED TO END ROAD CARNAGE

Executive Director in the City Manager's Office Sipho Cele speaking at the high-impact two-day Road Safety Conference.

THE rising death toll on South Africa's roads took centre stage at a high-impact two-day Road Safety Conference. The event was hosted by eThekwini Municipality's Municipal Institute of Learning, in partnership with the eThekwini Transport Authority and CIFAL Durban. The conference brought together key leaders to confront the country's deepening road carnage crisis.

Globally, road crashes claim more than 1.19 million lives each year, while in South Africa, over 11 000 people lose their lives annually. This alarming reality continues to place immense strain on families, communities, and the economy. In eThekwini alone, road traffic accidents carry an estimated economic impact of R10.65 billion, underscoring the scale and urgency of the crisis.

Executive Director in the City Manager's Office Sipho Cele said behind every statistic lies a human story—a life lost, a family devastated, and a future cut short.

Director-General from the National Department of Transport, Prasanth Mohan, reinforced the need for decisive leadership. "Road safety is not a transport problem but a leadership responsibility."

The conference concluded with a united call towards decisive action.

BIODIVERSITY STRENGTHENS DURBAN'S GREEN FUTURE

ETHEKWINI Municipality's commitment to advancing environmental sustainability and protecting biodiversity in Durban was applauded by the City's Economic Development and Planning Committee.

This followed a presentation by the Municipality's Biodiversity Management Division, which provided a high-level overview of the City's annual state of biodiversity. In his presentation, Biodiversity Planning Senior Manager, Sabelo Nkosi, highlighted ongoing environmental conservation, ecosystem restoration, and climate resilience initiatives being implemented across eThekwini. The report outlined interventions aimed at protecting natural ecosystems, restoring degraded environments, managing invasive alien species, strengthening coastal and riverine management, and conserving biodiversity assets.

During the reporting period, more than 1 000 hectares of invasive alien plants were cleared through environmental restoration programmes, benefiting 248 beneficiaries and creating 991 training opportunities linked to green jobs and climate adaptation initiatives.

Furthermore, the Municipality planted approximately 19 908 indigenous trees, comprising of 52 species, across 25.29 hectares to support ecosystem restoration and climate resilience efforts.

The Committee unanimously welcomed the progress report.

Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor Thembo Ntuli, said: "EThekwini Municipality continues to prioritise biodiversity protection as a key component of sustainable development."

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ROADSHOW LAUNCHED

DEPUTY Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Seiso Mohai, officially launched the national Geospatial Information Management Strategy (GIMS) roadshow at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre, underscoring the critical role of spatial data in advancing South Africa's Medium-Term Development Plan.

Deputy Minister Mohai emphasised that effective planning must be grounded in accurate, location-based data to address persistent socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and underdevelopment.

Chairperson of the Governance and Human Resources Committee Councillor Nkosenhle Madlala, reaffirmed eThekwini's commitment to leveraging geospatial technologies to improve service delivery and planning outcomes.

Deputy Minister of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Seiso Mohai with Chairperson of the Governance and Human Resources Committee Councillor Nkosenhle Madlala.

VIRTUAL SUMMIT CHAMPIONS AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RISE

THE Africa Day Global Virtual Summit, hosted on 25 May, concluded with a strong call for African unity, diaspora investment and inclusive economic growth, positioning Africa as a continent ready to lead through collaboration and innovation. The summit was hosted as part of the build-up to the reSURGEnce Durban Conference 2026 which takes place from 24 to 28 July under the theme: 'Access. Connect and Thrive'. The summit brought together influential African and diaspora leaders to explore solutions to youth unemployment, manufacturing, food security, innovation and investment.

EThekwini City Manager Musa Mbhele said the summit reaffirmed Durban's position as Africa's gateway city for trade, tourism, and innovation. President of the Institute of the Black World and Pan Africanist, Dr Ron Daniels, said Africa's development must be driven by Ubuntu and unity.

reSURGEnce Global Chair, Reverend Dennis Dillon, highlighted Africa's youthful population and growing economies as key strengths capable of driving an economic breakthrough. Other panel speakers included former Zambian Vice President Dr Nevers Mumba and Africa Rising Foundation Chairman Ndaba Mandela.

Pictured from left are eThekwini City Manager Musa Mbhele, eThekwini Mayor Councillor Cyril Xaba and reSURGEnce Global Chair Reverend Dennis Dillon at last year's opening of the reSURGEnce Durban Conference.

KZN AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR PRIORITISES LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

KWAZULU-NATAL'S automotive sector has been urged to establish robust leadership pipelines to remain competitive, stable, and sustainable. This was the central theme at the Durban Automotive Cluster Annual General Meeting held recently at the Toyota Wessels Institute for Manufacturing Studies. The event, themed: 'Engineered to Last: Succession Planning for KZN's Automotive Future', brought together industry stakeholders and manufacturing leaders to address succession planning and leadership continuity as critical regional priorities.

Following the keynote address, an interactive panel discussion unpacked actionable strategies for developing local talent and future-proofing automotive firms. Industry leaders, including Paul Vermaak from Hesto Harnesses, shared insights on strengthening leadership continuity and building sustainable skills pipelines.

Deputy Head of the Economic Development Directorate, Takalani Rathiyaya, said the meeting provided an important platform to review the automotive industry's performance over the past year and outline priorities for the new financial year.

The Durban Automotive Cluster Annual General Meeting saw industry giants gather to secure the future of the manufacturing sector.

INVESTMENTS TO BOOST JOBS AND GROWTH

THREE major strategic developments were tabled before the City's Economic Development and Planning Committee on 20 May, seeking recommendation for incentives under the Economic Development Incentive Policy (EDIP) as part of ongoing efforts to attract major investments to Durban.

The Committee recommended approval of incentives in terms of the EDIP for strategic investment projects by Image Packers and Distributors (Pty) Ltd, Insimbi Ridge (Pty) Ltd (SPV), and Carelli Investments (Pty) Ltd, noting that the developments are expected to significantly boost local economic growth.

Dr Ajiv Maharaj, from the Economic Development Directorate, presented the report to the Committee. He said Image Packers and Distributors will invest approximately R17.3 million in a warehouse and distribution facility at the Dube TradePort. The development is expected to create jobs and qualifies for a 30 percent rates rebate over three years. Insimbi Ridge will invest approximately R653 million in a 33 500 square metre agro-processing and logistics facility in Cato Ridge. The development will include cold storage, cargo handling, and export infrastructure, and is expected to create 120 temporary and 21 permanent jobs. The project qualifies for an 80 percent rates rebate.

Carelli Investments will invest approximately R1 billion in a new industrial and warehouse development in New Germany, creating an estimated 330 permanent jobs. The report remains subject to approval by the Executive Committee and Full Council.

If you would like to submit feedback or contribute to eThekwini Weekly Bulletin

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