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Dear Sir / Madam

Buffalo City Municipality:

Integrated Development Plan (IDP) 2021-2026: Review 2024/25

Comments from the South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA)

The comments below are submitted by Urban-Econ Development Economists on behalf of the South Africa Property Owners Association (SAPOA).

1. Introduction

The South African Property Association (SAPOA) is an organisation founded in 1966 aimed at uniting stakeholders and the commercial and industrial property sector and creating a platform for property investors. SAPOA is a representative body and voice of the commercial and industrial property industry in South Africa and is dedicated to advocating for its members' interests within the industry in a proactive and responsible manner. It aims to represent, protect, and advance the interests of its members by providing them with access to relevant information, networking opportunities, and industry insights.

Integrated development planning involves a thorough analysis of a community's needs and using the resources available to address these needs. This development planning is aimed at ensuring that the municipality's planned interventions are aligned with the planning efforts of the national and provincial governments.

The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 governs the operations of municipalities. One of its key requirements is that municipalities must have an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) guiding development, budgeting and service delivery

priorities. Therefore, Buffalo City Municipality has developed a five-year municipal IDP 2023/24 in compliance with the Municipal Systems Act.

2. Participation in the IDP Processes of Municipalities

National, Provincial, and Local Governments have prioritised public participation in the planning of cities since the start of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process. Public meetings in cities and towns are used as a mechanism to enable residents to engage with Municipal representatives and achieve the desired outcomes of growth and development in South Africa. The IDP Representative Forum was another legislative measure implemented to monitor progress and raise questions and issues regarding Local Governance and policy implementation on a quarterly basis.

We express our support for the efforts made by the Buffalo City Municipality to enhance public participation processes. We also appreciate the work being done by Ward Councillors in keeping people informed about these processes. These efforts have enabled broader participation, increased transparency, and facilitated feedback from residents, resulting in more effective decision-making and implementation of policies.

3. Key Challenges Identified in the IDP

The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is a vital tool for municipalities to prioritise their development goals and implement strategies to achieve them. In order to plan for future growth and development within the municipality, the key issues and challenges need to be identified and addressed. The key development challenges include:

- Service delivery and infrastructure challenges
- Illegal land use
- Informal settlement
- Housing issues

4. Views and Inputs for Consideration

To this extent, SAPOA has compiled several inputs as part of the process of drafting the 2021 - 2026 IDP for the Buffalo City Municipality. We trust the Municipality will find this useful and take them into consideration in compiling the Draft IDP. SAPOA continues to reiterate the importance of addressing all the previous comments of our members. The views and inputs submitted by SAPOA on behalf of its members are discussed below.

4.1. Service Delivery and Infrastructure Challenges

The municipality has an obligation to provide services to its residents and although the IDP promises improvement in the current state of service delivery, the contrary is evident. Service delivery is still lagging behind as the supply of water and electricity to communities remains a major challenge. The ongoing issues related to the lack of service delivery with no clear plan of action provoke unrest among community members. Some of the issues brought forward exacerbating service delivery can be attributed to the lack of institutional capacity, and proper budget allocation.

Further adding to this is the city's ageing infrastructure and capacity expansion. The city has a network of ageing pipes and sewers, strained further by the increasing population. Leaks and overflows have become a common occurrence and demand urgent attention. Further to this, theft and vandalism have also lead to degraded infrastructure resulting in financial losses and service disruptions. The city also faces water scarcity which is exacerbated by leaking pipes and unauthorised connections. The electricity backlog in Buffalo City stems from rapid urbanisation, particularly in informal settlements, exacerbating strain on infrastructure. This backlog not only hampers residents' access to essential services but also poses safety risks. Additionally, ageing infrastructure and inadequate maintenance further escalate issues, leading to frequent outages and service disruptions.

SAPOA therefore urges Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality to:

- **Prioritise upgrading and expanding its water and wastewater systems.**
- **Take concerted efforts to control urban influx in certain areas to limit the pressure on existing infrastructure.**
- **Prevent or limit theft and vandalism, by enhancing security measures in key areas through increased surveillance, deploying visible policing and security personnel, and working closely with the community to identify perpetrators.**
- **Develop or erect barriers like fencing and lighting at critical infrastructure to help deter vandalism and theft.**

- **Actively pursue and rigorously implement metering systems.**
- **Implement swift action to leak repairs so as to effectively conserve water resources.**
- **Tackle the electricity backlog, by implementing strategies to electrify informal settlements safely and promptly.**
- **Invest in grid expansion and upgrades to meet the rising demand for electricity and to ensure equitable access for all residents.**

4.2. Illegal Land Use

Buffalo City is constantly battling with issues of land invasion mainly due to the lack of a dedicated unit to deal with these issues. Key positions to be filled remain vacant with no funds allocated towards this. Thus the municipality is not well-equipped and does not possess the necessary resources to deal with issues of land invasion. Some of the major areas vulnerable to land invasion and illegal land occupation are along the coastline and the R72.

The inability to prevent these activities has further lead to the failure to enforce regulations and gain control over land illegally occupied. Additionally, these invasions also hinder or disrupt other projects planned for a given area leading to delays which have cost implications. Illegal structures along the coastline also lead to disruptions in ecosystems and destruction of natural habitat therefore having significant environmental impacts.

To address Buffalo City's persistent issues with land invasion, immediate action is necessary. The city urgently needs to:

- **Allocate funds to fill vacant positions dedicated to addressing issues related to land invasion, providing the municipality with the resources needed to combat this problem effectively.**
- **Establish a specialised unit focused on preventing and addressing land invasions along vulnerable areas.**

4.3. Informal Settlement

Buffalo City is facing a significant challenge as informal settlements rapidly expand. These settlements are straining the city's already limited service delivery capacity and infrastructure, affecting all residents. They lack basic amenities like clean water, sanitation, electricity, and waste management services. The growing number of informal dwellings also increases pressure on electricity and other infrastructure.

SAPOA urges the municipality to address these challenges by:

- **Prioritising effective urban planning and land management strategies.**
- **Regularising informal settlements through land tenure regularisation programmes. This will enable the provision of essential services and infrastructure. This approach meets immediate community needs while laying the groundwork for sustainable development.**
- **Establishing partnerships with non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations. This is critical to leverage external resources and expertise to tackle the service delivery backlog.**
- **Transitioning from reactive to proactive measures to manage the rapid expansion of informal settlements. This requires comprehensive community engagement and participatory decision-making processes to involve residents in urban planning initiatives.**

4.4. Housing Issues

The city's emphasis on upgrading informal settlements overlooks the needs of backyard dwellers, disabled individuals, senior citizens, and child-headed households. Furthermore, the city lacks well-located and affordable land for housing provision.

The city needs to prioritise these marginalised groups and this can be achieved by:

- **Conducting comprehensive needs assessments to identify the specific requirements and preferences.**
- **Implementing inclusive housing policies that cater to diverse needs and ensuring equitable access to housing opportunities**
- **Collaborating with relevant stakeholders to inform the design and implementation of tailored housing solutions.**

To address the shortage of well-located and affordable land for housing provision, the municipality should:

- **Focus on implementing land-use planning policies that prioritise the allocation of land for housing development, particularly in accessible locations close to amenities and public transport.**
- **Invest in the development of bulk infrastructure, such as water and sanitation systems, to enable the timely development of earmarked land for housing.**

5. Conclusion

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality faces several challenges spanning service delivery, illegal land use, informal settlements, and housing issues. Persistent shortcomings in service delivery, marked by water and electricity supply deficiencies, demand urgent attention. The municipality's ageing infrastructure is strained by rapid population growth, exacerbated by theft and vandalism, leading to service disruptions. Illegal land use, further compounds these challenges, disrupting planned projects and threatening ecosystems. The municipality must prioritise infrastructure upgrades, population control, and security measures to combat theft and vandalism. SAPOA calls for urgent attention to these issues as this unreliable service delivery disrupts business operations, and can also affect property values in areas most often affected. Collaboration between the municipality and stakeholders is essential to address these challenges and also to ensure a conducive environment.

We aim to actively engage in the IDP review process and appreciate the city's extensive endeavours to fulfil its responsibilities.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned at any of the following numbers or email addresses:

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Regards



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