

Gauteng townships set for a facelift

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PRETORIA: Gauteng townships are set for a major facelift as part of a R4.4bn budget that will be used to build more houses.



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"The multi-billion investment will see old townships such as Alexandra, Bekkersdal, Soweto, Evaton, Tembisa and Vosloorus being revamped within five years' time," said Cooperative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements MEC Jacob Mamabolo.

He was delivering his Budget Vote speech, in the Legislature, on Tuesday, 29 July.

MEC Mamabolo said part of the stake will assist in completion of projects to eradicate informal settlements, the boosting of the local economy and the construction sector.

Programme Management Office

The MEC pronounced on the creation of a Programme Management Office (PMO), which will assure the quality of work by housing service providers in the province.

"Through this PMO, we will also conduct a full audit of all service providers to establish their performance based on sound service level agreements and contracts, monitor status of their projects, ensure quality and timeous completion of projects, and ensure that they are paid within 30 days," he said.

Interventions to stabilise Gauteng

The MEC's budget speech focused on monetary investments in the province and a status report on community engagements on issues of service delivery in Gauteng.

"Since assuming office, we have taken major interventions to stabilise the province and to address the major issues around Human Settlements that were raised by communities before the elections."

He said there were also interventions in the Johannesburg inner city, Alexandra and Rayton-Cullinan where government either prevented illegal evictions or assisted families that were stranded after the evictions.

MEC Mamabolo said part of the money will also be used in promotion of social and spatial integration, acquiring and unlocking well located land.

Cleaning up housing data base

MEC Mamabolo said his department will establish a biometric finger print system that would assist in cleaning up the housing data base.

"This will be a major milestone in using technology to ensure that the poor masses, who have been waiting for years, finally receive their homes.

Through this process no person will have more than one RDP house and we would have gone a long way to dealing with housing corruption" said MEC Mamabolo.

He aligned his speech to South Africa's 20 years celebration of freedom and democracy.

"In Gauteng alone in the past 20 years, over 1-million human settlements opportunities were provided through houses, units and serviced stands... ensuring that millions of citizens have a roof over their heads and that they live securely with their families," said MEC Mamabolo.

Housing challenges

Despite the provincial government's success, MEC Mamabolo said his department had challenges including the peripheral location, poor design and racial integration with regard to state sponsored RDP houses post 1994.

"Part of de-racialising housing in South Africa is to nullify the perception that government-subsidised houses are for Black people only. We have seen today that poverty knows no colour or race," he said.

He urged all qualifying South Africans to apply for government subsidies, irrespective of their historical background or colour.

MEC Mamabolo also committed government to improving the rate of issuance for title deeds.

"We need to resolve issues perked with township establishment - the delay of issuing title deeds - and work towards the final issuing of title deeds," said MEC Mamabolo.

He said his department will work closely with the Deeds Office to change the turnaround time and fast-track the issuance of title deeds for residents.