

Government strikes a new deal for SA cities

The Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) marks a "new deal" for South African cities and towns.



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It will steer urban growth towards a sustainable model of compact, connected and coordinated towns and cities, says cooperative governance and traditional affairs deputy minister Andries Nel.

“[IUDF] provides a roadmap to implement the NDP’s vision for spatial transformation – creating liveable, inclusive and resilient towns and cities, while reversing the apartheid spatial legacy,” Nel said on Wednesday, 13 June.

The objective of the IUDF - which was adopted by government in 2016 - is to transform urban spaces by reducing travel costs and distances; preventing further development of housing in marginal places; increasing urban densities to reduce sprawl; improving public transport and the coordination between transport modes; and shifting jobs and investment towards dense peripheral townships.

Many of the issues that intermediate cities are dealing with are structural and require a long-term vision and plan which is implemented with determination.

“The aim is to create more compact cities structured around public transit corridors and nodes. This will improve city productivity - by improving efficiency and inclusivity and by improving the access of historically disadvantaged citizens to

employment and consumption opportunities,” the deputy minister explained.

He was addressing the SALGA Municipal Innovative Infrastructure Financing Conference under the theme “Unlocking infrastructure financing to accelerate service delivery”.

National Development Plan

He cited South Africa’s National Development Plan (NDP) which talks about the need to transform human settlements and the national space economy and sets the vision that: “By 2030, South Africa should observe meaningful and measurable progress in reviving rural areas and in creating more functionally integrated, balanced and vibrant urban settlement.”

The framework recognises that the country has different types of cities and towns with different roles and requirements.

The deputy minister said IUDF must be implemented in locally relevant ways that also promote sustainable rural development and strengthen rural-urban linkages.

Improving governance and financial management in the intermediate cities will allow them to more effectively use and leverage both grant and own sources in pursuit of development objectives, he said.

These measures will be backed up by reforms in infrastructure grants with incentives for performance and for more flexibility and strategic use of funds.

Integrated Urban Development Grant

As such, government has introduced the Integrated Urban Development Grant (IUDG) which aims to provide funding for public investment in infrastructure for the poor and to promote increased access to municipal own sources of capital finance in order to increase funding for investment in economic infrastructure.

“This grant is our incentive component to the implementation of the IUDF in the intermediary cities in order to ensure that our infrastructure implementation programmes in these cities are linked to our spatial development framework, which are our spatial transformation tools.”

The ultimate goal is to ensure that these public investments are spatially aligned and to promote the sound management of the assets delivered by cities.

World’s urban population

According to the United Nations (UN), about 54% of the world’s population lives in urban areas. Nel said this will increase to 66% by 2050.

This continuing population growth and urbanisation will add 2.5-billion people to the world’s urban population by 2050. About 90% of this increase will be in Asia and Africa.

“In fact, according to the UN, Africa is expected to be the fastest urbanising region between 2020 and 2050. By 2050, most of the world’s urban population will be concentrated in Asia (with 52%) and Africa (with 21%).”

Approximately 63% of South Africans already live in urban areas. This will rise to 71% by 2030. By 2050, eight in ten South Africans will live in urban areas.

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