

3. KEY DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

Integrated development planning is not and cannot be a universal remedy for all problems facing the municipality and its people. As a result, one of the distinguishing features of integrated development planning is its focus on strategic areas of intervention and concern with interventions with a high impact using the limited resources available to the municipality. This focus is intended to achieve faster and appropriate delivery of services and create an enabling framework for social and economic development. Based on the assessment of the current situation, Matatiele Municipality has identified the following as key development issues.

3.1 CHALLENGES FACING THE MATATIELE AREA

Matatiele IDP through a consultative process identified various challenges that need to be addressed in order to meet the needs of the voters and achieve sustainable development and the vision for the future development of the Matatiele area. These challenges were identified as follows;

Access to social facilities – is considered to be challenge. The existing police stations are considered to be inadequate and a need exists for satellite police stations. The health facilities are also said to be inadequate to cater for community needs and the Department of Land Affairs is reluctant to give land for the development of clinics. There is a shortage of sports and recreation facilities as well as other facilities such as banks, post offices. There are areas that may require satellite municipal and government offices. The educational facilities are considered to be inadequate particularly the technical skills centres and public schools. There is a major backlog with general maintenance of infrastructure and service delivery.

Improved safety and security – the low cost townships need street lights in order to minimize the occurrence of crime. Stock theft is considered to be very high. Community Policing Forums (CPFs) need to be established, an allowance needs to be made as compensation to the CPFs as a form of motivation.

General moral regeneration – is a need in the Matatiele municipal area. The level of alcohol consumption amongst the youth is attributed to the lack of entertainment centers.

Land and Housing – land ownership and access to land is a severe problem. Limited land use management and development control makes it difficult to prevent and control land invasion. Upgrading tenure security is important for this area, particularly providing more secure rights for people that already occupy land. A need for rural planning is noted. There is a shortage of housing within the urban areas and access to funding is a major problem for middle income housing. Settlements are mushrooming in an uncontrollable environment.

Local Economic Development and Tourism – Due to the high rate of unemployment in Matatiele, there is a need to attract private sector investment. The local resources are underutilized due to poor skills base. The business skills are required not only technical skills. The tourism potential not being harnessed (heritage) and no access to Markets. Matatiele does not have a Local Tourism Organisation. There is a need for an information centre at the entrance of Matatiele.

Environmental pressure – there are several environmental threats and limitations which if not addressed could contribute to decline in the supply of natural resources and livelihoods in the municipality. Key limitations include poor soil and highly erodible soils contributing to land degradation poor crop yield. In addition to that the harsh climatic conditions such as high temperature, heavy rainfall, and periodic strong winds which under favourable conditions could result in natural disasters such as floods and runaway bush fires. The highly rugged terrain can significantly reduce the development potential of the municipality. The management of wetlands is a critical issue.

Encroachment of settlements onto high potential agricultural land - Land capability of the Matatiele Municipality is significantly limited. Only an estimated 30% of the total land area of the municipality has land with minor limitations to agricultural production. The remaining 70% is either not arable or has severe limitations to agriculture. Unfortunately, the limited land for agriculture is decimated by extensive settlement and the associated uses. Currently, it appears that commercial agriculture is not a viable land use option for a development programme in most parts of the municipal area. Viable agricultural schemes have also proved to be difficult to implement in rural areas die to shortage of land.

Uncontrolled settlements – the sprawl of rural settlements and growth of informal settlement in commonage areas and around the rural service centres of Matatiele and Maluti is considered a critical issue affecting the municipal area. This phenomenon could be ascribed to the factors such as the collapse of the land administration system and the tendency for people to be opportunistic and move to highly accessible areas (such as along R56 corridor and road to Lesotho).

3.2 OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE MATATIELE AREA

3.2.1 HERITAGE AND ECO-TOURISM

The environment within Matatiele Municipality provides several opportunities for eco-tourism development provided these would be harnessed appropriately and utilised on a sustainable basis. The key environmental opportunities include:

The largely rural wilderness areas for the development of ecotourism and wilderness education

Rugged terrain with its relatively undisturbed and water sources environment for biodiversity conservation initiatives.

Huge wetlands system that provide suitable habitats for wildlife and raw materials for local economic activities

The heritage resources in the municipality that could augment tourism and education

The LED Strategy identified a strong potential for the development and promotion of winter tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, adventure tourism, avi-tourism (e.g. bird-watching) and water sports facilities for supporting tourism.

3.2.2 MATATIELE CBD AS A POTENTIAL VIBRANT AND DYNAMIC RURAL CENTRE

Matatiele town plays a significant role within the municipal area. It is an administrative, service and main economic centre with a threshold that covers the full extent of the municipal area and beyond. It is a link between Matatiele and other towns within the district as well as the major provincial centres and beyond. As such, the town should be planned as a rural town and be structured and managed to enable it to perform its functions efficiently and effectively. The opening of road link between Matatiele and the northern parts of Greater Kokstad as a potential trade and tourism route will improve access to Ukhahlamba-Drakensburg Park and add further impetus to a need to develop Matatiele Town as a vibrant and dynamic rural centre.

3.2.3 VALUE ADDING PRODUCTS

There is a strong potential for large-scale production, processing and marketing of local products in external markets (e.g. agricultural, forestry products and related products and sandstone, and introduction of value-addition activities in all economic sectors. The opportunities also exist for establishing and identifying new markets for locally-produced products and services. The need exists to explore opportunities for investment in activities, businesses or services currently not offered in Matatiele as well as exploring the potential for use of available underutilised land and other natural resources (e.g. rivers) resources for income generation purposes.

3.2.4 AGRICULTURAL LAND

High potential agricultural areas offer unique opportunities for cultivation and food security. Areas of high agricultural potential are identified as areas with inherent potential for cultivation based on the soil, slopes and climate of the area. It is recommended that activities that will result in the loss of agricultural potential such as the subdivision of land, settlement and extensive infrastructure development

should not be undertaken in this zone. Ultimately these areas should not be developed for purposes other than agriculture, and should retain the opportunity for future agricultural production. As such, they should be maintained either for cultivation or grazing.

In areas of high agricultural potential that also have high biodiversity value it will be important to attempt to identify land uses that may achieve both objectives such as grazing or less intensive cultivation that include areas to be set aside for biodiversity management. High potential agricultural land located within existing settlements but is too small or lack the appropriate infrastructure to become viable agricultural areas could be considered for small scale or intensive food production and urban agriculture.

Agricultural development should be promoted based on latent potential with high production potential land being reserved mainly for agricultural purposes. The following agricultural activities are prevalent in the area:

Timber plantations should be established in areas where on the environment will be mitigated otherwise the area is too environmentally sensitive for timber plantations.

Extensive livestock farming should be promoted, particularly in communal areas, but grazing land management programmes should also be introduced to address the increasing problem of soil erosion.

Crop production (irrigated and dryland) should be promoted in low lying areas and irrigation along the main river tributaries.

Irrigation estates along the major rivers.

Pastures and dairy in and around Cedarville.

Farms say within a five to ten kilometre radius from Matatiele Town and Cedarville should be considered for the establishment of smallholdings where limited processing of agricultural products and tourism facilities should be allowed. The same applies to farms located immediately along development corridors.

3.2.5 REGIONAL ACCESS

R56 which runs through Matatiele in an east-west direction serves as the main regional access route that links Matatiele with other urban centres such as Kokstad to the east and Mount Fletcher to the south west. Secondary to the N2, it serves as the main link between the Eastern Cape Province and KwaZulu-Natal Province. It is identified in the Draft Provincial Spatial Development Plan (PSDP) - Eastern Cape as one of the Strategic Transport Routes. R56 is a multi-sectoral corridor as it facilitates access to agricultural zones in the Cedarville-Matatiele Area, tourism zones in the Ongeluksnek area and commerce and industry in Matatiele. It forms the basis for a road system that connects different parts of the municipal area.

Development along R56 Development Corridor should follow the following guidelines:

R56 is a regional limited access and high speed public transport route, as such direct access onto this road is subject to the provincial road transport regulations.

Higher order land uses should be accommodated in the nodes, but lower order land uses could develop in a linear fashion subject to alternative access opportunities; and

A 15m buffer should be observed from the boundary of the road reserve. This has implications for settlements that have encroached onto the buffer areas.

This road provides an alternative shorter route to Cape Town with views of scenic beauty, which can attract both domestic and International tourist thereby promoting LED projects at some locations.