



UDM
UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT


MANIFESTO 2026
2026 Local Government Elections

CONSISTENT.
PRESENT.
ACCOUNTABLE.

*Local government
that works*

VOTE UDM	 <small>UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT</small>	
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Message from UDM President

Bantu Holomisa



Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people. When a municipality fails, residents feel it immediately. They feel it through dry taps, sewage spills, broken roads, unreliable refuse removal, unsafe streets, collapsing infrastructure, poor billing systems, and councillors who are absent when communities need them most.

The United Democratic Movement (UDM) believes that local government must return to its core purpose. Municipalities must deliver basic services, manage public money honestly, maintain infrastructure, enforce by-laws fairly, support local development, and treat residents with dignity.

For too long, many South African communities have been failed by municipalities that are politically captured, financially weak, administratively unstable, and disconnected from the people they are meant to serve. The result is that residents pay the price for poor leadership, weak oversight, corruption, poor appointments, neglected maintenance, and a lack of consequence management.

The UDM offers a disciplined and practical alternative.

Our offer is simple, municipalities must be:

- **led by ethical councillors,**
- **managed by competent officials,**
- **funded responsibly,**
- **maintained daily, and**
- **judged by whether residents actually receive reliable services.**

The UDM will build local government that is consistent in service delivery, present in communities, and accountable to residents.



What has gone wrong with our municipalities?

Many municipalities have not failed because communities are impossible to serve. They have failed because basic principles of governance have been abandoned.

Political loyalty has too often been placed above competence. Public money has too often been treated as a tool for patronage instead of service delivery. Maintenance has been neglected until infrastructure collapses. Communities have been consulted only when elections approach. Audit findings have been ignored. Corruption has gone unpunished. Councillors have disappeared into council chambers while residents face daily service delivery failures.

Municipal collapse is usually not sudden. It is the result of years of poor planning, weak administration, bad appointments, irregular procurement, unpaid creditors, broken billing systems, neglected infrastructure, and a failure to hold people accountable. The UDM also recognises that municipal sustainability is linked to unemployment and poverty. When local economies collapse, households struggle to pay for services, municipal revenue declines, infrastructure deteriorates, and communities become trapped in a cycle of decline. Local government must therefore deliver services while also creating conditions for local economic activity, job creation, and dignity.

The UDM believes that local government must be rebuilt from the ground up, beginning with the basics.

A municipality must know what infrastructure it owns. It must know what condition that infrastructure is in. It must know what must be repaired first. It must budget honestly. It must appoint capable people. It must collect revenue fairly. It must protect indigent households. It must communicate with residents. It must act on complaints. It must enforce rules without fear or favour.

Local government does not need more empty promises. It needs discipline, competence, honesty, and daily work.



The UDM's local government philosophy

The UDM believes that local government must be practical, ethical, people centred, and development oriented.

Practical local government means fixing what already exists before chasing expensive new projects. It means repairing leaks, maintaining roads, keeping streetlights working, removing refuse regularly, protecting municipal infrastructure, and ensuring that municipal workers, managers, and councillors understand their responsibilities.

Ethical local government means protecting public money, rejecting corruption, appointing people on merit, acting on audit findings, protecting whistle-blowers, and ensuring that those who abuse public office face consequences.

People centred local government means that residents are not treated as spectators. They must be informed, consulted, respected, and served. A municipality belongs to its residents, not to political factions, tender networks, or officials who forget that they are public servants.

Development oriented local government means that municipalities must help create conditions for economic activity, investment, small business development, informal trade, rural revitalisation, urban renewal, tourism, skills development, and local employment.

The UDM's approach to local government is guided by six principles:

1. Basic services must be reliable.
2. Public money must be protected.
3. Councillors and officials must be accountable.
4. Communities must be treated as partners.

5. Municipalities must be stable, ethical, and capable.
6. Councillors must exercise oversight and must not interfere in procurement or administrative processes

These principles will guide UDM councillors, UDM-led municipalities, and any coalition or governance arrangement in which the UDM participates.

I thank you.



UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT MANIFESTO 2026 2026 Local Government Elections



Pillar 1: Reliable basic services and maintenance

Access to basic services is a constitutional right, not a privilege. The UDM believes that municipalities must first get the basics right: reliable water, sanitation, refuse removal, roads, stormwater systems, streetlights, and clean, safe public spaces.

The UDM will place maintenance at the centre of local government, focusing on fixing and protecting existing infrastructure before pursuing expensive new projects. It will also support practical internet access points at suitable municipal managed facilities, especially in disadvantaged areas, to expand access to jobs, services, learning and economic opportunities.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Water and sanitation infrastructure maintenance, as well as leak detection and reduction.
2. Reliable electricity distribution and protection of municipal grids.
3. Regular refuse removal and clean communities.
4. Maintenance of municipal roads, stormwater systems, and street lighting.
5. Proper asset management and preventative maintenance planning.
6. Clear service delivery schedules and public reporting.
7. Fast response systems for urgent infrastructure failures.
8. Protection of municipal infrastructure from vandalism, theft, and neglect.
9. Practical internet access points at libraries, community halls and other suitable municipal facilities, especially in disadvantaged areas.
10. Regular reporting to communities on service delivery performance.

The UDM will focus on fixing what already exists, protecting infrastructure, and ensuring that maintenance becomes a daily municipal discipline. This is not only about technical work. It is about dignity. A community without reliable water, sanitation, refuse removal, roads, and lighting is a community denied the basic conditions of a decent life.



Pillar 2: Clean governance and financial discipline

Municipalities cannot serve communities if they are captured by corruption, patronage, maladministration, and weak financial controls.

The UDM believes that clean governance is not a slogan. It must be visible in appointments, procurement, budgets, oversight, audit outcomes, public reporting, and consequence management.

UDM-led municipalities will enforce zero tolerance for corruption, maladministration, abuse of public funds, and political interference in administration.

The UDM will ensure that municipal managers and senior officials are appointed strictly on merit, qualifications, experience, and performance. Local government cannot work when key administrative positions are used to reward political loyalty.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Merit-based appointments of municipal managers and senior officials.
2. Stronger council oversight.
3. Functional audit committees.
4. Transparent budgeting.
5. Open access to municipal information.
6. Action on Auditor-General findings.
7. Protection of whistle-blowers.
8. Consequence management for poor performance, corruption, and financial misconduct.
9. Realistic and funded budgets aligned with service delivery priorities.
10. Improved revenue collection while protecting indigent households.
11. Stronger billing systems, data integrity, and financial controls.
12. Proper use of conditional grants for their intended purposes.
13. Reduction of wasteful expenditure and irregular procurement.
14. Regular monitoring of municipal debt, creditors, and service delivery risks.

Every rand must work for the community. The UDM rejects the culture of excuses that has damaged many municipalities. If money is budgeted for water, roads, sanitation, electricity, refuse removal, or infrastructure maintenance, it must be used for that purpose. If officials fail, councils must act. If councillors fail, communities must know.

Clean government is the foundation of working local government.



Pillar 3: Fair tariffs, responsible revenue, and protection of indigent households

In South Africa, urban property owners often carry a heavier municipal rates and service-charge burden because their properties are more formally valued, more fully serviced, and more consistently billed. Rural households, especially in communal, traditional-authority or agricultural areas, may be billed differently because land tenure,

property values, service levels, rebates and billing systems are not the same.

The UDM believes municipal revenue collection must be fair, transparent, properly explained, and matched by reliable service delivery. Residents should pay for services that work, while poor households must be protected through credible indigent support. Municipalities cannot demand payment while failing to deliver basic services, issuing inaccurate bills, ignoring complaints, underspending funds, or allowing corruption and waste.

Mixed municipalities must serve suburbs, townships, farms and rural villages with different property values, tenure systems, service levels and revenue bases. Rates and tariffs must therefore be fair, affordable, and linked to property category, ability to pay, and actual services provided. Public money must be used responsibly. Municipal budgets and conditional grants exist to deliver services, not to be returned to National Treasury because of weak planning, poor capacity, procurement delays or failed project management.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Fair tariffs, rates, and levies that take local economic conditions into account.
2. Credible indigent registers to protect households that genuinely cannot afford basic services.
3. Transparent billing systems.
4. Regular correction of inaccurate municipal accounts.
5. Improved customer care and dispute resolution.
6. Revenue collection linked to improved service reliability.
7. Protection of poor households from unfair exclusion.
8. Consultation with residents, businesses, and community stakeholders on major tariff decisions.
9. Reduction of municipal waste before placing additional burdens on residents.
10. Responsible, lawful and timely spending of allocated budgets and grants.
11. A culture of payment built on trust, reliability, and accountability.

The UDM will not treat residents as cash machines for broken municipalities. It will rebuild trust by linking payment, service delivery, fairness, responsible spending, and accountability.



Pillar 4: Local economic development, opportunity and dignity

A municipality must not only deliver services. It must create conditions for people to live, work, trade, move, learn, and build better lives. Local economic development must be practical. It must support the people who already drive local economies: small businesses, cooperatives, informal traders, local contractors, farmers, young entrepreneurs, and community-based enterprises.

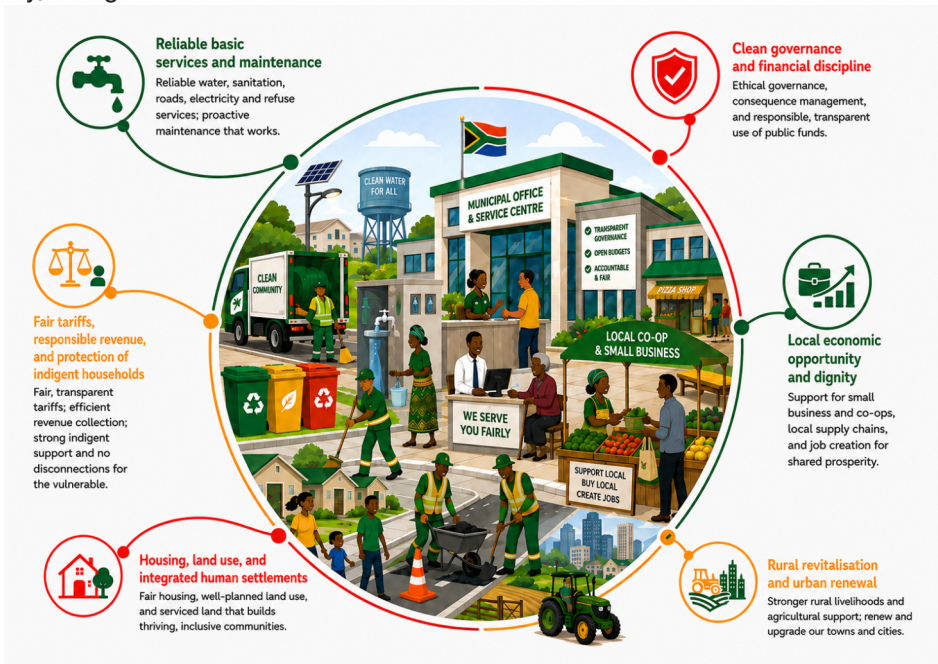
The UDM believes that municipalities must be enablers of opportunity, not obstacles to development. This means giving practical support to South African-owned local businesses, township and rural enterprises, informal traders, cooperatives and emerging entrepreneurs, while ensuring that all economic activity takes place within fair, lawful and transparent municipal rules.

UDM-led municipalities will promote:

1. Support for small businesses, cooperatives, and informal traders.
2. Local procurement that prioritises South African-owned enterprises, especially in townships, informal settlements and rural areas.
3. Fair and transparent access to municipal economic opportunities.
4. Revitalisation of town centres, industrial zones, township economies, informal settlements and rural economies.
5. Skills development linked to municipal projects.
6. Youth employment initiatives and reduction of red tape that stifles entrepreneurship.
7. Better management of trading spaces, markets, and local business zones.
8. Support for tourism, local heritage, cultural assets, and community-based tourism.
9. Local enterprise support through municipal information desks, supplier development, and partnerships with business and civil society.
10. Improved access to information on available funding, grants, development finance, private-sector investment, and government support programmes.
11. Practical internet access points at suitable municipal managed facilities to support job-seeking, enterprise development, online applications, skills access and participation in the digital economy.

The UDM will support informal traders with dignity. Municipalities must protect South African-owned small businesses and informal traders, especially in townships, informal settlements and rural areas, through fair rules, safe trading spaces, transparent permits, and action against illegal trading, fronting, counterfeit goods and unfair practices.

The UDM will promote responsible partnerships and local investment that create jobs, support South African-owned enterprise, and improve access to public and private capital. Supporting local economic activity strengthens municipal revenue, reduces poverty, and gives residents a stake in their communities.





Pillar 5: Housing, land use, and integrated human settlements

Housing, land use and human settlements are central to dignity, spatial justice and local economic opportunity.

The UDM recognises that housing is a shared responsibility across all spheres of government. National and provincial departments carry key responsibilities for housing policy, funding and delivery, while municipalities are central to planning, land use, infrastructure, beneficiary administration, building control and local law enforcement.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Fair, transparent and corruption-free housing allocation.
2. Release of well-located land for integrated human settlements where possible.
3. Upgrading of informal settlements with basic services and dignity.
4. Spatial planning that reverses apartheid-era inequalities.
5. Housing development planned with national and provincial departments, close to jobs, schools, transport, clinics, infrastructure and economic opportunity.
6. Serviced sites where appropriate.
7. Proper management of municipal rental stock, hostels, accommodation for the aged and other regulated residential buildings.
8. Action against building hijacking, illegal occupation, criminal control and unlawful exploitation of residential buildings.
9. Clear beneficiary screening systems.
10. Tenure security and ownership where legally and practically possible.

The UDM believes that human settlements must support livelihoods, not trap people in poverty far from work, services and opportunity. Municipalities must plan communities that are connected, serviced, safe, lawful and economically viable.



Pillar 6: Rural revitalisation and urban renewal

The UDM recognises that rural and urban municipalities face different challenges. Local government policy must not treat all municipalities as if they are the same.

Urban municipalities often need renewal, maintenance and better management of dense, ageing infrastructure, while rural municipalities often need expanded basic services, stronger access routes and practical support for local livelihoods.

Rural municipalities require better roads, water access, agricultural support, land-use planning, rural enterprise development, tourism support, cooperation with traditional leaders, and practical support for communities far from major economic centres.

UDM-led municipalities will promote urban renewal through:

1. Maintenance and protection of existing urban infrastructure.
2. Renewal of town centres and neglected public spaces.
3. Better planning for housing, transport, schools, clinics, and open spaces.

4. Protection of surrounding agricultural land and environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Improved public transport planning and traffic management.
6. Support for local business districts, industrial areas, and informal trade zones.

UDM-led municipalities will promote rural revitalisation through:

1. Improved access to water, roads, sanitation, electricity, and refuse services.
2. Support for emerging farmers and agricultural value chains.
3. Training and skills development linked to agriculture, tourism, and community development.
4. Support for rural cooperatives and community-based enterprises.
5. Better coordination with traditional leaders where applicable.
6. Protection of rural land, heritage, and livelihoods.
7. Local economic initiatives that help rural communities create income and retain skills.

The UDM believes that rural and urban renewal must be treated as complementary. Strong towns support rural economies, and strong rural communities support food security, culture, land-based livelihoods, and social stability.



Pillar 7: Safe, liveable, and climate-resilient communities

The UDM believes that safe and liveable communities require more than policing. Safety is also about lighting, clean spaces, maintained public areas, enforced by-laws, managed public facilities, proper disaster response, and trust in local government.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) carries the primary policing mandate, but municipalities cannot wash their hands of community safety. Broken streetlights, abandoned and hijacked buildings, illegal dumping, unmanaged taverns, unsafe public spaces, traffic disorder and non-enforcement of by-laws all create conditions where crime, decay and disorder grow. UDM-led municipalities will use every lawful municipal power to make communities safer and more liveable.

The UDM will prioritise:

1. Stronger, fair and consistent by-law enforcement.
2. Improved municipal policing capacity where applicable.
3. Better street lighting in high-risk areas.
4. Expanded closed-circuit television (CCTV) coverage where practical.
5. Safer urban design and better management of public spaces.
6. Support for community policing forums and neighbourhood safety initiatives.
7. Cooperation with SAPS, prosecutors, provincial departments, property owners and other stakeholders.
8. Action against illegal dumping, unsafe buildings, hijacked buildings, unlawful land use, illegal connections and unmanaged public spaces.
9. Enforcement of building-control, fire-safety, health, zoning and occupancy rules where buildings endanger residents, neighbours or the public.
10. Better traffic management and road safety enforcement.
11. Properly trained community emergency volunteers under lawful municipal supervision.

The UDM also recognises that municipalities are on the frontline of environmental and climate challenges. Floods, droughts, fires, pollution, waste collapse, soil erosion and poor land-use decisions affect communities directly.

UDM-led municipalities will promote:

1. Protection of water sources, wetlands and green spaces.
2. Improved waste management, recycling and pollution control.
3. Climate-resilient infrastructure planning.
4. Disaster preparedness and rapid response capacity.
5. Responsible land-use management.
6. Environmental impact assessment for major developments.
7. Cleaner public spaces and stronger anti-dumping enforcement.
8. Public education on recycling, conservation and responsible resource use.
9. Green battalions to combat rural soil erosion, protect land and create local jobs.
10. Regular clearing of stormwater drains, culverts and waterways to reduce flood risks.

A safe municipality is not only one with law enforcement. It is one that is clean, planned, maintained, prepared, lawful and responsive.



Pillar 8: Public health, clean communities, and environmental health

The UDM recognises that public health is affected by the daily functioning of municipalities.

Dirty water, failing sanitation, irregular refuse removal, illegal dumping, polluted spaces, unsafe food handling and poor environmental health enforcement place residents at risk. These conditions are especially harmful to children, older persons, people living

with disabilities, indigent households and communities already facing poor living conditions. Although health care is shared across spheres of government, municipalities have a direct role in creating healthy living environments and cooperating with provincial and national health authorities.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Clean water and functioning sanitation and regular refuse removal and
2. Environmental health inspections and food safety enforcement.
3. Action against illegal dumping.
4. Clean, safe and accessible public spaces.
5. Cooperation with provincial health departments where municipal clinics or health programmes are involved.
6. Preventative health awareness through community partnerships.
7. Maintenance of municipal facilities that affect community health.
8. Disaster response planning for floods, fires, disease outbreaks and other local emergencies.
9. Fair access to basic services and indigent support for qualifying households.
10. Better accessibility of municipal facilities and public spaces for people living with disabilities.

The UDM believes that clean communities are healthier communities. Public health must be supported through reliable services, environmental discipline, protection of vulnerable households and responsive local government.



Pillar 9: Youth, sport, culture, and social development

Young people are the present and the future of our communities.

The UDM believes that municipalities must create spaces where young people can develop their talents, access opportunities, participate in community life, and avoid the destructive pull of crime, drugs, and hopelessness.

UDM-led municipalities will prioritise:

1. Safe and accessible sports and recreation facilities.
2. Support for arts, culture, and community programmes.
3. Youth development initiatives linked to skills, innovation, and local economic opportunities.
4. Partnerships with civil society, schools, sporting bodies, cultural organisations, and community groups.
5. Inclusive services for women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and vulnerable groups.
6. Maintenance of libraries, community halls, sports fields, and recreational spaces.
7. Transparent and fair access to municipal facilities.
8. Community programmes that promote dignity, social cohesion, and nation building.

The UDM believes that social development builds resilient communities. Municipalities must not treat sports fields, libraries, community halls, parks, and cultural programmes as luxuries. These are the spaces where communities meet, young people grow, and social cohesion is built.



Pillar 10: Participatory democracy and accountable councillors

Democracy does not end at the ballot box. The UDM believes that communities must be partners in governance, not spectators. Residents must know what their municipality is doing, how money is being spent, what services are planned, what problems exist, and who is responsible for solving them.

A UDM councillor must be visible, accessible, ethical, informed, and accountable. A councillor is not elected to disappear into council chambers, protect officials, or distribute favours. A councillor is elected to represent residents, monitor service delivery, report honestly, and ensure that municipal decisions serve the public interest.

The UDM expects its candidates to sign a pledge to serve with discipline, loyalty, ethics and accountability.

UDM councillors will be expected to:

1. Hold regular community meetings and feedback sessions.
2. Report honestly on council decisions and municipal performance.
3. Assist residents with service delivery complaints.
4. Monitor municipal projects in their wards.
5. Support functional ward committees.
6. Promote public participation in municipal planning and budgeting.
7. Use digital platforms to improve communication and service reporting.
8. Respect traditional leaders where applicable.
9. Place residents above factional or personal interests.
10. Raise community concerns through lawful council processes.

The UDM will strengthen ward committees and community participation, ensuring residents are consulted on major decisions affecting budgets, development, land use, service delivery, tariffs and local economic opportunities.

Local government must be visible again. Residents must know their councillors, where to find them, what they are doing, and how to hold them accountable.





Pillar 11: Traditional leaders and community governance

The UDM recognises that traditional leaders continue to play an important role in many communities, especially in rural areas. They are custodians of culture, tradition, social cohesion, local identity, and community stability.

The UDM believes that the relationship between elected councillors and traditional leaders must be constructive, respectful, and clearly defined.

Traditional leadership must not be used to undermine democratic local government, and democratic local government must not ignore the practical role traditional leaders play in community life.

UDM-led municipalities will support:

1. Consultation with traditional leaders where applicable.
2. Respectful cooperation between elected representatives and traditional authorities.
3. Inclusion of traditional leaders in development discussions affecting their communities.
4. Cooperation on rural revitalisation, land-use planning, moral regeneration, social cohesion, and community development.
5. Training and capacity support where traditional leadership structures engage with development processes.
6. Clear procedures to manage interaction between municipal structures and traditional authorities.

The UDM believes that development works best when communities are respected, consulted, and properly represented. In areas where traditional leaders exist, municipalities must engage them constructively while upholding constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and the rights of all residents.



Pillar 12: Responsible coalitions and cooperative governance

The UDM recognises that no single party may secure an outright majority in many municipalities. Where coalition or shared governance arrangements arise, the UDM will participate responsibly and transparently in the best interests of residents.

Coalition politics must never become a marketplace for positions. The UDM will not enter coalitions for power, status, or access to municipal resources. Any coalition engagement at local level will be guided by clear principles that place service delivery, ethical governance, financial discipline, stability, and the rule of law above political expediency.

The UDM will insist that coalition agreements must be:

1. Written.
2. Publicly disclosed.

3. Based on measurable service delivery outcomes.
4. Clear on roles and responsibilities.
5. Linked to financial discipline and clean governance.
6. Capable of being monitored by residents.
7. Consistent with the UDM's values and public commitments.

Where coalition partners undermine service delivery, ethical governance, financial discipline, or the rule of law, the UDM will not hesitate to withdraw its support and act in defence of residents and municipal integrity.

The UDM also understands that local government cannot succeed in isolation. Municipalities must work with provincial and national government, state-owned entities, traditional leaders where applicable, civil society, business, and communities.

The UDM will work constructively within the Government of National Unity (GNU) framework where this benefits residents, while still demanding accountability from all spheres of government.

Cooperation must never mean silence. Constructive governance must go hand in hand with oversight, accountability, and the protection of community interests.



The UDM's commitment to residents is clear.

We will work for municipalities that deliver reliable basic services, protect public money, appoint competent people, maintain infrastructure, enforce by-laws fairly, support local economies, involve communities, respect traditional leadership where applicable, and hold leaders accountable.

The UDM will not promise what municipalities cannot do. We will focus on what municipalities must do, what they are legally required to do, and what residents have a right to expect.

Local government must work again.

It must work in villages, townships, suburbs, towns, cities, and rural communities. It must work for workers, pensioners, young people, women, persons with disabilities, informal traders, small businesses, families, and all residents who simply want honest government and reliable services.

The UDM offers local government that is consistent in action, present in communities, and accountable to the people.

Consistent. Present. Accountable. Local government that works.



UNITED DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT MANIFESTO 2026

2026 Local Government Elections

- 1



Reliable basic services and maintenance

Reliable water, sanitation, roads, electricity and refuse services; proactive maintenance that works.
- 2



Clean governance and financial discipline

Ethical governance, consequence management, and responsible, transparent use of public funds.
- 3



Fair tariffs, responsible revenue, and protection of indigent households

Fair, transparent tariffs; efficient revenue collection; strong indigent support and no disconnections for the vulnerable.
- 4



Local economic opportunity and dignity

Support for small business and co-ops, local supply chains, and job creation for shared prosperity.
- 5



Housing, land use, and integrated human settlements

Fair housing, well-planned land use, and serviced land that builds thriving, inclusive communities.
- 6



Rural revitalisation and urban renewal

Stronger rural livelihoods and agricultural support; renew and upgrade our towns and cities.
- 7



Safe, liveable, and climate-resilient communities

Safer communities, disaster readiness, and climate-resilient infrastructure for a liveable future.
- 8



Public health, clean communities, and environmental health

Clean water, effective waste management, pollution control, and healthier environments for all.
- 9



Youth, sport, culture, and social development

Invest in youth, sport and culture, and programmes that build skills, inclusion and social cohesion.
- 10



Participatory democracy and accountable councillors

Visible, accessible councillors; open communication; communities co-creating and holding us to account.
- 11



Traditional leaders and community governance

Respect, partner and empower traditional leaders for constructive cooperation and community well-being.
- 12



Responsible coalitions and cooperative governance

Written, ethical public agreements that stabilise municipalities and improve service delivery.