

# UMEDA NEWSLETTER



## WELCOME TO OUR QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

The uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency is a state-owned entity for the uMgungundlovu District Municipality and it was established as a result of the mandate of the decision taken at a Kwazulu-Natal Provincial Cabinet Lekgotla in September 2012.

### Mandate

Our mandate is to implement and promote the economic development policies of uMgungundlovu District Municipality in the areas of economic production, investment and trade. This includes fast-tracking the implementation of strategic and catalytic local economic development projects within the District Municipality.

### Vision

To be a dynamic Agency which acts as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and development thereby making uMgungundlovu District the investment destination of choice

### Mission

To identify, facilitate and implement strategic projects which transform the District both economically and spatially To become a self-sufficient and sustainable entities.

### Values

- Transparency
- Integrity
- Innovation
- Inclusivity
- Consultative

### COMING UP...



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# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S FOREWORD

As we reflect on the third quarter of 2025, it is truly inspiring to witness the progress and impact of UMEDA's initiatives across the uMgungundlovu District. From empowering the next generation of leaders to unlocking new economic opportunities, this quarter has been marked by significant milestones that reinforce our commitment to sustainable development, investment attraction, and community empowerment.

One of the most heartwarming moments of the quarter was UMEDA's participation in the Mpumuza Traditional Council Matriculants Recognition Ceremony. This event celebrated the outstanding achievements of the 2024 matriculants, many of whom overcame great challenges to reach this milestone. It was an honor to be part of an initiative that not only recognizes academic excellence but also inspires young minds to dream big and embrace the opportunities ahead.

In a groundbreaking move for the Hemp and Cannabis industry, UMEDA was proud to host the Annual General Meeting of the KZN Hemp & Cannabis Association. Under the leadership of Mr. Bobby Goldstone, this gathering brought together key industry players, researchers, and business leaders to shape the future of an emerging sector with immense economic potential. This aligns with our vision of fostering innovation and supporting industries that can drive job creation and investment in the region.

Our commitment to revitalizing key tourism assets was evident in the continued progress of the Howick Falls Development Project. On 6 February 2025, UMEDA, in collaboration with key stakeholders, reviewed the progress of Phases 1 and 2 of this transformational project. The revitalization of Howick Falls is set to establish the site as a premier tourism destination, attracting visitors and boosting local businesses. This approach is mirrored in the Mpophomeni Tourism Precinct, where UMEDA is working closely with stakeholders to unlock tourism potential in the area.

Sports and recreation are also key components of our economic development strategy. Discussions around a world-class sports precinct in Pietermaritzburg have been progressing steadily. The collaboration with PMB Gymnastics and other stakeholders aims to position the city as a hub for both competitive and recreational sports, offering new opportunities for youth development and economic growth through sports tourism.



**Mike Newton**

**Chief Executive Officer**

On an international front, we are proud to announce that the Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in KwaZulu-Natal has expressed keen interest in establishing a satellite office at UMEDA headquarters in Pietermaritzburg. This initiative is a significant step toward enhancing trade relations, investment opportunities, and diplomatic ties between South Africa and Germany.

Additionally, UMEDA had the honor of participating in the SALGA Municipal Investment & Development Trade Show, held in Umhlanga on 13-14 March 2025. This event provided a platform to engage with industry leaders and government representatives on unlocking investment potential and fostering economic transformation across KwaZulu-Natal.

Our commitment to risk management and operational excellence was reinforced by the Risk Workshop hosted by UMEDA on 5-6 March 2025, in collaboration with the KZN Provincial Treasury. This workshop provided essential training and strategic insights, ensuring that UMEDA remains proactive in identifying and mitigating risks to sustain our development initiatives.

A moment of great pride for UMEDA was receiving the Silver Award for Best Functional District Development Agency at the KwaZulu-Natal Municipal Excellence Awards on 25 March 2025. This recognition reaffirms our dedication to driving impactful economic development initiatives and serving as a catalyst for growth in our district.

# Celebrating Academic Excellence at Mpumuza Traditional Council Matriculants Recognition Ceremony



A spirit of celebration and achievement filled the air at the Mpumuza Traditional Council Matriculants Recognition Ceremony, held at Blackburn Sports Ground in Sweetwaters, Pietermaritzburg on the 24th of January 2025. The event was a momentous occasion dedicated to honoring the outstanding accomplishments of the 2024 matriculants, many of whom achieved remarkable academic results despite various challenges.

Dignitaries from various levels of government graced the ceremony, highlighting the significance of education in shaping the future of South Africa. Among the esteemed guests were Deputy President Honorable Paul Mashatile, MEC for KZN Department of Transport Honorable Siboniso Duma, Minister of Higher Education and Training Honorable Dr. Nobuhle Ncabane, uMgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor Honorable Cllr Mzi Zuma, Msunduzi Municipality - City of Choice Mayor Honorable Cllr Mzimkhulu Thebolla, and respected Traditional Leaders. Their presence underscored the government's commitment to recognizing and supporting young achievers.

## CELEBRATING MATRICULANTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

The highlight of the ceremony was the recognition of the 2024 matriculants for their academic achievements. Students who had excelled in their final exams, particularly those who achieved Bachelor passes, were honored with awards, including laptops to assist them in their continued academic journey. The ceremony served as a beacon of hope for the young learners, encouraging them to pursue higher education and professional careers.

Honorable Deputy President Mashatile addressed the crowd with an inspiring message to the learners. He urged them to "dream big and not be discouraged by their backgrounds or challenges," emphasizing that success is within their reach. His words of encouragement served as a reminder that the opportunities for growth and advancement are available to all, regardless of where they come from. "You deserve the best life has to offer, and as government, we are here to support you in making your dreams a reality," said Mashatile.

## UMEDA'S ROLE: SUPPORTING THE ECONOMY AND THE FUTURE

As part of the broader initiative to empower the youth and promote educational excellence, UMEDA utilized the event as a platform to engage with stakeholders and the community. UMEDA's participation provided an opportunity to share information about the ongoing projects that are focused on uplifting the local economy and creating sustainable opportunities for growth in the uMgungundlovu District.

UMEDA representatives took the opportunity to engage with learners, providing them with valuable information about entrepreneurship and the business opportunities available through the agency's One Stop Shop. This initiative is designed to assist individuals who are interested in starting their own businesses by offering services such as business registration, tax compliance status, and other essential processes needed for success.

# UMEDA Hosts Historic KZN Hemp & Cannabis Association AGM



On a landmark day for the Hemp and Cannabis sector in KwaZulu-Natal, the uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency proudly hosted the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the KZN Hemp & Cannabis Association. Chaired by the highly respected industry leader, Mr. Bobby Goldstone, this historic event marked a significant step in the growth of an industry poised for expansion in South Africa.

The AGM brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the sector, including hemp and cannabis growers, seed importers, product exporters, and key research institutions such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The event provided a platform for industry players to discuss the challenges and opportunities within the sector and chart a course for the future of hemp and cannabis in the region.

## A NEW ERA FOR THE HEMP AND CANNABIS SECTOR IN KZN

The success of the AGM symbolizes the dawning of a new era for the hemp and cannabis industry in KwaZulu-Natal. As a province on the cutting edge of cannabis cultivation and product development, KZN has the unique opportunity to position itself as a global leader in the emerging market for both medicinal cannabis and industrial hemp.

The discussions at the AGM focused on a wide array of topics crucial to the growth of the industry. Among the key issues discussed were the regulatory framework for cannabis cultivation, the importance of sustainable farming practices, the role of research in product innovation, and the untapped potential of hemp as a resource for a variety of industries, including construction, textiles, and biofuels.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Bobby Goldstone emphasized the need for a unified and proactive approach to developing the sector. "This industry has the potential to drive economic growth, create jobs, and establish KZN as a global hub for hemp and cannabis production," said Goldstone. "We must work together to overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead."

## ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE HEMP AND CANNABIS SECTOR

The agency's involvement in hosting the AGM reflects its dedication to fostering economic growth through innovation and sustainable practices.

UMEDA plays a pivotal role in helping businesses within the sector navigate the regulatory landscape, access and establish partnerships with other key players in the industry. The agency's focus on supporting sustainable practices and ensuring local communities benefit from the growth of the industry further strengthens its commitment to economic development and job creation.

Through its support for the KZN Hemp & Cannabis Association, UMEDA is helping to create a robust ecosystem for the hemp and cannabis sector in KZN. This ecosystem is built on collaboration, innovation, and a shared vision for a sustainable and profitable industry.

# Revitalizing Howick Falls for Tourism & Economic Growth



A significant milestone was reached on 6 February 2025 as key stakeholders gathered at uMngeni Municipality to assess the progress of the Howick Falls revitalization project. The meeting brought together representatives from the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), uMngeni Municipality,

The uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency (UMEDA) continues to play a leading role in facilitating this project, reinforcing its commitment to economic development and tourism expansion within the district. The meeting also served as an opportunity to formally introduce the newly appointed contractors, who will be instrumental in executing the revitalization plans. With a structured project timeline and clear milestones in place, the team is working towards delivering a world-class tourism precinct that benefits both visitors and the local community. **UMEDA's Role**

## PROJECT PROGRESS & KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Following productive discussions at the municipality, stakeholders proceeded to Howick Falls for a site visit, gaining firsthand insights into the ongoing developments. This visit ensured that all teams remain aligned in executing the planned improvements effectively. The revitalization of Howick Falls is not just about infrastructure development but about positioning the area as a key economic driver, attracting tourists, businesses, and investment into the region.

## THE PROJECT ENCOMPASSES MULTIPLE UPGRADES, INCLUDING:

**Infrastructure Enhancements** – Upgrading visitor facilities, walkways, and viewing platforms for a better tourism experience.

**Business & Investment Opportunities** – Creating spaces for local entrepreneurs to thrive, including retail stalls, craft markets, and food establishments.

**Environmental Preservation** – Ensuring that development aligns with sustainability efforts, protecting the natural beauty of Howick Falls.

**Community Involvement** – Engaging local stakeholders to maximize job creation and long-term economic benefits for the surrounding communities.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

With Phase 1 & 2 underway, UMEDA and its partners remain focused on delivering a world-class tourism destination that showcases Howick Falls' natural beauty while driving sustainable economic development. The agency is working closely with contractors and local government to ensure the project stays on track, meeting high standards of quality and efficiency.

# A Vision for a World-Class Sports Precinct in Pietermaritzburg



Exciting discussions are underway for the future of sports development in Pietermaritzburg! A recent strategic meeting brought together key stakeholders to explore the possibility of establishing a world-class sports precinct in the city. This initiative aims to elevate local sporting infrastructure, create opportunities for young athletes, and position Pietermaritzburg as a hub for competitive and recreational sports.

The Agency hosted this pivotal discussion at its offices, engaging with PMB Gymnastics, a prominent academy with a strong track record in nurturing talent. The focus was on how PMB Gymnastics can contribute to the vision of this new sports precinct, leveraging their expertise to develop young athletes while simultaneously driving economic growth in the region.

## A GAME-CHANGER FOR SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

The proposed sports precinct is envisioned as a multipurpose facility catering to a variety of sporting disciplines, offering world-class training and competition venues. This development would provide local athletes with access to top-tier resources, allowing them to train and compete at a higher level without needing to travel to other provinces. It would also serve as a key driver for tourism and investment, attracting national and international sporting events to the region.

For PMB Gymnastics, the opportunity to be part of this project is a significant milestone. The academy has been instrumental in developing gymnastics in the city, producing athletes who have excelled at provincial and national levels. Their involvement in the sports precinct would help solidify Pietermaritzburg's position as a center for excellence in gymnastics and other disciplines.

## BOOSTING ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH SPORTS

Beyond athletic development, the creation of a world-class sports precinct aligns with UMEDA's broader economic goals for uMgungundlovu District. Sports infrastructure is a powerful economic driver, generating revenue through sports tourism, event hosting, and job creation. From facility construction to event management, coaching programs, and local business opportunities, this project has the potential to significantly impact the region's economy.

Additionally, the sports precinct would encourage youth participation in athletics, providing structured programs to identify and nurture young talent. By fostering sports education and community engagement, this initiative would contribute to social development, promoting healthier lifestyles and offering positive alternatives for the youth.

## Exciting Developments for Mpophomeni's Tourism Sector



Addressing socio-economic challenges requires a united effort, and recently, key stakeholders came together to discuss strategies for revitalizing the economy of Mooi River. A critical meeting was held between Graham Armstrong and his team from the Mooi Mpofana Agricultural Association (MMAA) and representatives from the uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency (UMEDA). The discussions focused on identifying pressing issues that have hindered economic growth in Mpofana Local Municipality and exploring solutions that can drive sustainable development.

Graham Armstrong provided valuable insights into the role of MMAA in supporting both commercial and developing farmers, as well as rural communities. The association plays a crucial role in ensuring agricultural sustainability and economic stability in the region by offering essential services such as:

**Agricultural training courses** to enhance skills and efficiency among farm staff.

Coordination of security, water usage, and fire protection to safeguard farming operations.

**Liaison with key authorities** such as Transnet, municipal departments, and road management entities to address infrastructure and service delivery issues.

**Community engagement** on municipal rates and other governance matters that directly impact businesses and residents.

### INVESTING IN COMMUNITY GROWTH

Beyond its agricultural initiatives, MMAA actively funds and supports community-driven projects that foster economic empowerment and social development. These include:

**Upper Midlands Agricultural Association (UMAA):** A non-profit organization dedicated to assisting small-scale and developing farmers by providing resources, training, and technical support.

**Mpofana Eyethu:** A grassroots initiative focused on improving Mooi River's socio-economic landscape through education, skills development, and local business support.

Both initiatives align with UMEDA's mission to foster sustainable economic development in the district. By collaborating with MMAA and Mpofana Municipality, UMEDA aims to enhance economic resilience, create job opportunities, and improve service delivery in the region.

### STRATEGIC COLLABORATION FOR A THRIVING FUTURE

The collaboration between UMEDA, MMAA, and the municipality will focus on strengthening infrastructure, improving municipal services, and creating an environment conducive to business and investment.

A key outcome of this engagement is the development of actionable strategies that will not only benefit the agricultural sector but also uplift the broader Mpofana community.

# UMEDA Hosts Economic Data for Municipal Decision-Making Workshop



On 25th February 2025, the uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency successfully hosted an insightful and productive workshop at the UMEDA Training Centre focused on "Economic Data for Municipal Decision-Making." This event brought together key stakeholders and experts, all united by the goal of enhancing the understanding and application of economic data to inform decision-making processes within municipalities.

The workshop was opened by UMEDA's CEO, Mr. Michael Newton, who extended a warm welcome to the esteemed guests from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Among the guests were Ms. Vailet Kowayi, Mr. Sonwabile Sigwela, and Ms. Lungile Mbatha, who represent SALGA National and SALGA KZN. Their presence and insights added significant value to the discussions, underscoring the importance of collaboration between government, municipalities, and development agencies in using data for economic growth.

## UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC DATA FOR INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

One of the core sessions provided an in-depth overview of UMEDA's role within the uMgungundlovu District as both a source and a user of economic data. UMEDA's involvement in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data is essential in shaping the region's economic strategies and ensuring that investments and resources are directed to areas of greatest need and opportunity. By understanding economic trends, challenges, and growth potential, municipalities can make better-informed decisions to foster a thriving and resilient local economy.

## IDENTIFYING ECONOMIC DATA NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Another key focus of the workshop was to assess the specific economic data needs within the uMgungundlovu District. As the region continues to evolve, understanding the emerging data needs of municipalities is crucial for ensuring that local governments are equipped with the information necessary to respond to new economic challenges and opportunities.

Discussions centered around identifying gaps in current data collection processes and how these gaps can be

addressed. For example, there was a collective recognition that more detailed information on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the district is essential for developing tailored support programs. Moreover, understanding the economic landscape at a granular level can help in formulating strategies for sectors such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, and technology—key drivers of economic growth in the region.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

This workshop was an essential step in strengthening the capacity of municipalities to use economic data effectively in their planning and decision-making processes. By fostering a data-driven culture, UMEDA is contributing to the development of a more informed and strategic approach to local governance.

UMEDA's commitment to supporting municipalities with robust data tools and resources is critical in helping them achieve sustainable growth. The ability to analyze and interpret data in a way that drives policy decisions will help municipalities unlock new opportunities for development, address socio-economic challenges, and create environments conducive to investment.

UMEDA CEO Mr. Michael Newton emphasized the importance of continued collaboration and learning between municipalities, government agencies, and development partners. He stated that this workshop was just the beginning of a broader initiative to build a culture of informed decision-making that will shape the future of uMgungundlovu District.

# Strengthening Business Growth: Progress on the Business Retention Framework



A significant step toward economic sustainability was taken yesterday, 27 February 2025, as key stakeholders gathered at the uMshwathi Municipality LED office to discuss the progress of the draft Business Retention Framework. This initiative, developed to ensure businesses within the district thrive despite economic challenges, was entrusted to UMEDA following deliberations at the District Strategic Planning Session.

## ENGAGING WITH BUSINESSES ON THE GROUND

The meeting served as an important platform for updating the Projects and Investment Committee on the framework's development and setting the stage for the upcoming Business Retention Workshop. This workshop will unite local businesses, government representatives, and other stakeholders to refine and implement strategies aimed at improving business longevity, fostering investment, and addressing systemic challenges affecting economic growth in the region.

Following the meeting, UMEDA's General Manager, James Martin, accompanied by Mr. Siphesihle Ziqubu and Ms. Anele Cele, embarked on a series of site visits in New Hanover and Dalton. These visits were essential in understanding the real-time challenges faced by business owners and community members while assessing how municipal interventions, both positive and negative, are shaping the local economic environment.

The engagement with local entrepreneurs and business stakeholders revealed valuable insights into operational difficulties, infrastructural needs, and potential areas for municipal support. By directly interacting with businesses on-site, the team gained firsthand knowledge of obstacles that may be limiting economic expansion, allowing for more targeted interventions in the Business Retention Framework.

## APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of this framework aligns with UMEDA's mandate to drive sustainable economic growth in uMgungundlovu District. The agency remains committed to ensuring that businesses have access to the necessary support systems, resources, and policies that foster long-term success. By working alongside municipalities, business chambers, and industry leaders, UMEDA is spearheading initiatives that will not only retain existing businesses but also attract new investments into the district.

With preparations underway for the upcoming Business Retention Workshop, stakeholders are encouraged to participate and contribute to the discussions that will shape the final framework. The success of this initiative will depend on a strong collaboration between the public and private sectors, ensuring that local enterprises receive the support they need to grow, create jobs, and drive economic transformation. UMEDA is excited to be part of this dynamic journey and remains dedicated to supporting the economic development aspirations of the uMgungundlovu District.

Through continuous engagement and strategic planning, the district is taking significant strides toward fostering a business-friendly environment that enables sustainable economic development. The insights gathered from site visits will play a crucial role in refining policies and ensuring that businesses remain resilient in a competitive economic landscape.

## UMEDA Engages with Mpophomeni Community on Upcoming Tourism Precinct



A new chapter in tourism development is unfolding in Mpophomeni, as plans for a dedicated Tourism Precinct begin to take shape. This transformative project, similar to the Howick Falls development, aims to position Mpophomeni as a vibrant tourism hub, boosting local economic activity and creating new opportunities for businesses and community members.

UMEDA held a meeting to engage with key stakeholders and ensure that the project aligns with the community's needs and expectations. The session brought together representatives from the Department of Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), uMngeni Local Municipality, Trade & Investment representatives, and tourism stakeholders, including the dedicated team from Zulu Mpophomeni Tourism Experience, which currently oversees the tourism center.

### A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

With funding secured through EDTEA, renovations to the existing tourism center are already in motion. The project's goal is to enhance the tourism experience, attract visitors, and create a sustainable economic boost for the region. Discussions during the meeting focused on identifying critical areas of support and the next steps required to bring this ambitious vision to life.

The uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency has taken a proactive role in ensuring the success of this initiative. By working closely with stakeholders, UMEDA is committed to providing strategic guidance, facilitating investment, and aligning the project with broader tourism and economic development goals.

Following the meeting, Team UMEDA proceeded to the Howick Falls Project site to assess the progress made in revitalizing the area. Lessons from this initiative will help refine strategies for the Mpophomeni Tourism Precinct, ensuring a well-structured and effective implementation plan.

This project marks a significant milestone in unlocking the tourism potential within the district. As development moves forward, the community can look forward to a rejuvenated Mpophomeni that celebrates its cultural heritage, attracts visitors, and contributes to sustainable economic growth. The journey has begun, and with strong collaboration and commitment, Mpophomeni is on track to becoming a must-visit destination in KwaZulu-Natal. development aspirations of the uMgungundlovu District.

## Successful Risk Workshop in Collaboration with KZN Treasury



On the 5th and 6th of March 2025, UMEDA successfully hosted a Risk Workshop at its offices, conducted by officials from the KZN Provincial Treasury. This critical engagement aimed to enhance risk management practices within the organization and ensure a structured approach to identifying and mitigating potential risks.

### STRENGTHENING RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The workshop provided valuable insights into the context of risk within an organization, highlighting its impact on operations and strategic objectives. Treasury officials collaborated closely with UMEDA to draft the Risk Register for the 2025/2026 financial year, ensuring that all key risks were identified, assessed, and documented. Additionally, they facilitated the process of uploading relevant risk data onto the CURA system, reinforcing accountability and transparency in risk monitoring.

### KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Participants engaged in detailed discussions on:

**Risk Identification & Description** – Understanding various risk categories and their relevance to UMEDA's operations.

**Root Causes & Consequences** – Analyzing the underlying factors contributing to risks and their potential impact.

**Mitigation Strategies** – Developing proactive approaches to manage and reduce risks effectively.

This hands-on session equipped UMEDA staff with the necessary knowledge and tools to implement best practices in risk management, ensuring compliance and organizational resilience.

### A PARTNERSHIP FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS

UMEDA's CEO, Mr. Michael Newton, extended his sincere gratitude to the KZN Provincial Treasury for their insightful presentations and support. He emphasized that the knowledge shared during this workshop will play a crucial role in strengthening UMEDA's risk management framework moving forward.

"We are committed to fostering a proactive risk management culture within UMEDA. The expertise provided by KZN Treasury has been invaluable in ensuring that we align with best practices and continue to operate with accountability and efficiency." – Michael Newton, UMEDA CEO

### LOOKING AHEAD

This successful collaboration underscores UMEDA's commitment to continuous improvement and sound governance. By implementing the best practices discussed during the workshop, the agency aims to enhance risk resilience and maintain a forward-thinking approach to sustainable development.

# Highlights from the SALGA Municipal Investment & Development Trade Show



The recently held SALGA Municipal Investment & Development Trade Show provided a powerful platform for industry leaders, government representatives, and key stakeholders to engage in discussions that shape the future of local economic development. Hosted at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Umhlanga, Durban, from 13-14 March 2025, the event focused on unlocking investment potential and fostering economic transformation across KwaZulu-Natal.

## SHOWCASING ECONOMIC GROWTH INITIATIVES

The event was officially opened with a keynote address by Honourable MEC for KZN COGTA, Rev. Thulasizwe Buthelezi, who highlighted the crucial role municipalities play in unlocking economic potential and fostering sustainable growth in the province.

UMEDA's CEO, Mr. Michael Newton, took center stage to present on the agency's catalytic projects that are driving economic transformation within uMgungundlovu District. His presentation outlined key initiatives aimed at boosting investment, supporting local businesses, and enhancing tourism. Among the featured projects were:

**Tourism Wine Route** – Showcasing the rich winemaking heritage of the district.

**Beer & Zol Route** – An innovative tourism experience combining local craft beer and cultural attractions.

**Infrastructure and Business Development Projects**  
– Strategies to enhance economic sustainability and attract investment into the region.

## INSIGHTFUL DISCUSSIONS

The trade show served as a dynamic platform where CEOs and executives from various government entities shared insights on economic activities, investment opportunities, and development strategies. Key presentations included:

**KZN Municipal Investment Landscape** – Delivered by the SALGA KZN Provincial Executive Chairperson, providing an in-depth analysis of municipal-led investment initiatives.

**Why KZN Makes Business Sense** – Presented by Trade & Investment KwaZulu-Natal (TIKZN) CEO, Mr. Sihle Ngcamu, on behalf of Honourable MEC for EDTEA, Rev. Musa Zondi, highlighting the province's investment potential and key economic drivers.

**KZN Property Market & Investment Horizon** – Exploring real estate opportunities and economic pulse points within the province.

UMEDA remains steadfast in its mission to drive impactful projects and foster investment opportunities that will transform not only uMgungundlovu District but also contribute to the broader KZN economy. The SALGA Municipal Investment & Development Trade Show reaffirmed the importance of strategic partnerships and proactive economic planning in achieving sustainable growth.

## UMEDA Welcomes German Consular Presence in Pietermaritzburg



The uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency is proud to announce a major milestone in fostering international relations and economic collaboration. The Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in KwaZulu-Natal has expressed keen interest in establishing a satellite office at UMEDA headquarters in Pietermaritzburg. This initiative will provide vital consular services closer to German nationals residing in the uMgungundlovu District while enhancing diplomatic and trade relations between South Africa and Germany.

### WHY THIS DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

The presence of a German consular office in Pietermaritzburg presents several key benefits:

**Improved Accessibility** – German nationals in the district will have convenient access to consular services without needing to travel to Umhlanga Rocks, Durban, where the main office is currently based.

**Stronger Trade & Diplomatic Relations** – A local German consular presence will bolster international cooperation, opening doors for enhanced business opportunities, investment, and knowledge exchange between uMgungundlovu and Germany.

**Advancing the Twinning of Msunduzi & Stuttgart** – This initiative takes us one step closer to solidifying the sister city relationship between Msunduzi and Stuttgart, a move that promises economic and cultural benefits for both regions.

**Reigniting the KZN-Baden Württemberg Partnership** – Discussions with KZN Premier Ntuli have reaffirmed the desire to renew the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between KwaZulu-Natal and the German state of Baden-Württemberg. This renewed commitment will strengthen bilateral ties and encourage collaborative development projects

infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, and technology.

### UMEDA'S COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

At UMEDA, our mission is to unlock economic opportunities and position uMgungundlovu as a dynamic hub for global business and investment. This latest achievement is a testament to our dedication to international partnerships and our vision for a thriving district that attracts key global players.

The collaboration with the German Honorary Consul marks an exciting new chapter, bringing closer cooperation, increased investment potential, and enhanced service delivery to our district. We remain committed to working tirelessly with our partners to make this vision a reality.

# Mooi-River LED Strategy & Alignment: Strengthening the Local Economy



Mpofana Local Municipality in collaboration with UMEDA and key stakeholders gathered at Farmers Hall, Mooi-River, for an important engagement on the Local Economic Development (LED) Strategy and Alignment. The session focused on business retention, investor sustainability, and fostering economic growth within the region.

## A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The meeting brought together a diverse group of industry leaders and municipal representatives, including Mhleli Sithole (Mpofana Local Municipality), Mr. Richard Kellad (Reil Association), Mr. Clem Dos Santos (Spring Water Firm), Londi Ngubane (Mpofana Yethu), and the UMEDA team. Their collective expertise and insights were instrumental in identifying key priorities to accelerate local economic development.

UMEDA reaffirmed its commitment to driving economic transformation and investment growth in Mooi-River, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and accountability in working alongside Mpofana Local Municipality on various strategic projects. The discussions centered on ensuring a sustainable and business-friendly environment that would attract investors and boost economic activity in the region.

## Key Focus Areas and Future Plans

Several key initiatives were outlined during the meeting to align Mpofana's economic objectives with UMEDA's mandate:

**Alignment of Community Tourism Organizations (CTOs):** Mpofana Local Municipality is laying the groundwork to ensure that CTOs align with UMEDA's strategic goals, enabling a more coordinated approach to tourism development and economic growth.

**Billing and Rates Discussions:** Addressing concerns related to municipal rates and billings remains a priority. Stakeholders explored ways to create a more business-friendly environment by ensuring fair and transparent billing structures that support both small enterprises and larger investors.

**Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships:** UMEDA is actively working to enhance economic resilience by fostering partnerships between public institutions and private enterprises. These collaborations are vital for sustaining growth and ensuring long-term economic stability in Mooi-River.

## A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR MOOI-RIVER

The discussions at Farmers Hall marked a significant step forward in solidifying a robust economic framework for Mooi-River. UMEDA and Mpofana Local Municipality remain dedicated to implementing sustainable solutions that promote business development, create employment opportunities, and attract new investments.

As these initiatives take shape, stakeholders can expect continuous engagement, transparent decision-making, and impactful projects that will drive economic progress in Mooi-River and beyond. The future looks promising as UMEDA continues to work hand in hand with local businesses, government officials, and community leaders to unlock new economic opportunities.

## UMEDA Brings Home Silver at the KZN Municipal Excellence Awards



We are thrilled to announce that the uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency (UMEDA) has been recognized with the prestigious Silver Award for Best Functional District Development Agency at the KwaZulu-Natal Municipal Excellence Awards. This esteemed accolade was presented at a grand ceremony held on 25 March 2025 at the Greyville Convention Centre in Durban.

### A PROUD MOMENT FOR UMGUNGUNDLOVU

The UMgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor, Honourable Cllr Mzi Zuma, proudly accepted the award on behalf of UMEDA, acknowledging the agency's relentless commitment to economic development and strategic growth initiatives. Joining him on stage for this significant achievement were UMEDA Board Chairperson Dr. Sihle Ndlovu, uMgungundlovu District Municipal Manager Dr. E.X. Muthwa, and UMEDA CEO Mr. Michael Newton. Their collective leadership and dedication have played an instrumental role in driving impactful projects that enhance economic opportunities across the district.

### RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE

The KZN Municipal Excellence Awards, spearheaded by MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Reverend Thulasizwe Buthelezi, serve as a platform to honor municipalities that excel in governance, service delivery, and strategic planning. This annual event recognizes outstanding performance in areas such as good governance, audit outcomes, integrated development planning, and urban management, inspiring local government entities to continuously improve and attract investment.

UMEDA's recognition as a top-performing development agency underscores its commitment to fostering economic growth, job creation, and sustainable development within uMgungundlovu District. The Silver Award is a testament to the agency's dedication to excellence in service delivery and innovative economic interventions.

### A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

This achievement not only highlights UMEDA's success but also reinforces uMgungundlovu District Municipality's status as a leader in economic transformation. With a continued focus on impactful partnerships and forward-thinking initiatives, UMEDA remains dedicated to unlocking new opportunities for businesses, investors, and local communities.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone, we extend our congratulations to UMEDA, the leadership of uMgungundlovu District Municipality, and all stakeholders who have contributed to this success. The journey toward economic excellence continues, and UMEDA is committed to reaching even greater heights!

## No Time to Rest – The Agency is Driving Development Across uMgungundlovu!



UMEDA is on the move, unlocking opportunities and driving economic growth in every corner of uMgungundlovu District! With a focus on fostering investment and strengthening key industries, UMEDA continues to champion initiatives that create jobs and uplift communities.

### STRENGTHENING THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

On a significant day for industrial development, the uMgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor, Honourable Cllr Mzi Zuma, together with UMEDA's Senior Management—Mr. Michael Newton (CEO), Mr. Sandile Gabela (GM: Trade & Investments), and Mr. James Martin (GM: Project Development)—visited Mountain Onyx, a leading timber processing factory in uMshwathi Municipality.

Specializing in timber processing and furniture production, Mountain Onyx is a major contributor to the local economy. With over 300 employees, the factory not only supports livelihoods but also strengthens uMshwathi's position as a key player in the manufacturing sector. By supplying high-quality timber to local businesses and exporting finished products to international markets, Mountain Onyx plays a critical role in the global supply chain, making uMshwathi an emerging manufacturing hub.

### UNLOCKING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

During the visit, engagements with factory officials provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the timber industry. Discussions focused on strategies to enhance production efficiency, expand market reach, and drive further job creation. UMEDA reaffirmed its commitment to supporting businesses like Mountain Onyx, ensuring they have the necessary resources and partnerships to thrive.

This visit marks a crucial step towards positioning the uMgungundlovu District as an industrial powerhouse. Through collaboration with businesses, municipalities, and key stakeholders, UMEDA continues to drive impactful economic interventions that benefit both enterprises and local communities.

### COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UMEDA remains dedicated to fostering economic growth that is both inclusive and sustainable. By identifying and supporting high-potential industries, the agency is paving the way for long-term development across the district.

The journey towards economic transformation is well underway, and with initiatives like this, uMgungundlovu District is set to become a beacon of industrial excellence. Stay tuned as UMEDA continues to spearhead initiatives that create jobs, attract investments, and uplift communities!

# A Partnership for Progress



UMEDA and Msinsi Holdings are forging a transformative path towards sustainable water solutions, economic growth, and improved livelihoods across the uMgungundlovu District. This partnership is a significant step in ensuring responsible water management while unlocking business and tourism opportunities in the region.

## A HISTORIC MOMENT AT BRAHMAN HILL

At Brahman Hill, a momentous occasion unfolded as UMEDA proudly signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Msinsi Holdings. This agreement cements a strategic alliance dedicated to enhancing economic development, generating employment, and safeguarding critical water resources.

Msinsi Holdings plays a vital role in managing water resources around Umgeni Water-owned dams, ensuring environmental sustainability while creating avenues for economic expansion. The collaboration with UMEDA is set to bring forth long-term benefits for businesses, local communities, and tourism in the uMgungundlovu District.

## DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AND VISION

The ceremony was graced by District Mayor, Hon. Cllr Mzi Zuma, who expressed his unwavering confidence that this partnership will steer the district towards remarkable achievements. He emphasized that, in the years ahead, uMgungundlovu District will celebrate significant milestones in both water conservation and economic transformation.

Mpofana Local Municipality Mayor, Hon. Cllr T.M. Magubane, warmly welcomed all attendees, affirming the importance of collaboration in addressing local development challenges. UMEDA Board Chairperson, Dr. Sihle Ndlovu, further highlighted the bright future this alliance promises, while UMEDA CEO, Mr. Michael Newton, reinforced the shared commitment, stating, "We are going to generate more economic opportunities together.

## A FUTURE BUILT ON COLLABORATION

The event brought together key stakeholders, including board members, executive management, municipal leaders, media representatives, and government department officials. Their presence underscored the significance of this initiative and the shared vision for a thriving, water-secure, and economically vibrant district.

As UMEDA continues to champion strategic partnerships, this collaboration with Msinsi Holdings represents a cornerstone for sustainable progress. With a focus on water resource management, job creation, and tourism development, this partnership is poised to uplift communities and build a prosperous future for generations to come.

The journey towards economic empowerment and environmental sustainability has begun, and UMEDA remains steadfast in its mission to drive impactful change. Stay tuned for more updates as we embark on this exciting new chapter of growth and development.

## Re-Imagining Richmond: A Step Towards Growth and Opportunity



On 27 March 2025, key stakeholders gathered at The Oaks Hotel in Byrne Valley, Richmond, for a strategic engagement aimed at reshaping the future of Richmond's tourism and economic landscape. This pivotal discussion brought together representatives from Richmond Municipality KZN, local tourism establishments, and the Community Tourism Organization (CTO) to address challenges and explore opportunities for sustainable development.

The session began with a warm welcome from Mr. James Martin, who emphasized the significance of collaboration in driving tourism growth across the district. His address set the tone for a productive discussion on how Richmond can harness its rich heritage, natural beauty, and available resources to attract more visitors and investment. Adding to the occasion, Richmond Mayor, Hon. Cllr M.K. Ngcongo, reaffirmed the municipality's commitment to leveraging tourism as a tool for job creation and economic upliftment. He also proudly acknowledged Richmond Municipality's recent achievement of a clean audit, a testament to good governance and financial accountability.

A key highlight of the engagement was a presentation by Richmond Municipality's town planner, who outlined available land and the spatial development framework. This provided valuable insights into areas primed for investment and growth. The CTO further shed light on existing tourism programs and scenic routes, identifying crucial interventions such as improved signage, infrastructure, and enhanced marketing efforts to position Richmond as a must-visit destination.

As part of the way forward, a resolution was made to convene a follow-up meeting between the uMgungundlovu Economic Development Agency (UMEDA), Richmond Municipality, and the CTO. This session will specifically focus on the utilization of 700 hectares of available land for strategic development projects that align with Richmond's economic and tourism aspirations.

The discussions at The Oaks Hotel marked an important step toward unlocking Richmond's full potential. Through continued collaboration, investment, and innovative approaches, the region is well on its way to becoming a thriving hub of economic activity, offering new opportunities for local businesses and communities.



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