



EARTH HOUR CITY CHALLENGE 2014

JOURNEYS TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY – BUFFALO CITY

Buffalo City aims for quality of life for residents and visitors

The Buffalo City Metro, which encompasses the cities of East London, King William's Town and Bisho, believes that sustainability begins with providing quality of life for residents and visitors alike. That is therefore its primary objective, and the foundation on which it intends to build on progressively in the future. The task of delivering on this objective falls to the city's various directorates, each of which is responsible for fulfilling certain well-defined functions.

Sustainable development initiatives are the mandate of the Directorate of Development Planning, which is responsible for ensuring that Buffalo City's developmental vision and strategies are properly formulated and implemented. The directorate functions within the framework of the metro's integrated development plan, and manages a number of interrelated spatial, housing, land and transportation programmes.

One of its main areas of focus is the development of sustainable human settlements, with the aim of providing housing opportunities and secure tenancy for all residents. In keeping with national policy, the city offers housing subsidies to qualifying residents, including grants for the construction of residential properties in terms of the Department of Human Settlements' People's Housing Process.

From a broader city planning point of view, the directorate is responsible for managing urban growth and development throughout the metro. It facilitates the preparation of development strategies and policies, and manages land usage, land reform and the shape of the built environment.

The Directorate of Engineering Services is responsible for managing power supply and usage. Among its many responsibilities is the electrification of RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme) houses and the roll-out of the city's solar water geyser programme. It is also responsible for street lighting, and is in the process of installing energy efficient LED light bulbs throughout the metro. With its eye simultaneously on the future, it has further undertaken a pilot project to investigate the viability of powering the city's street lights using solar energy. If the pilot project proves to be technologically and economically viable, solar-powered street lights will be rolled out throughout the city.

When it comes to renewable energy initiatives, the city is in the process of investigating the possibility of drawing power from privately run wind generation facilities, but this is only in the exploratory phase.

From a waste management point of view, the Department of Solid Waste Management is tasked with providing services that are sustainable, accessible and affordable to all Buffalo City communities. On average, the department collects 470 000 tons of solid waste every year, including 30 000 tons of industrial waste. This is processed through eight transfer and disposal stations, which are supported by buy-back centre for recyclable waste. Approximately 3 100 tons of paper is collected in this way every year, and is recycled through a dedicated supplier.

In addition to these efforts, the city has established a recycling forum, at which issues related to recycling can be discussed by interested and affected parties. It also runs several public awareness and education programmes, particularly in schools, which deal with waste minimisation and composting.

Buffalo City has often been exposed to the natural disasters that tend to affect cities located on the country's east coast. For this reason, disaster management is high on the city's sustainability agenda, and it has comprehensive plans and procedures in place to deal with disasters ranging from floods, fires, storms and high winds to incidents involving hazardous materials.

"Our foremost objective is to quality of life for our residents, and a pleasant and safe environment for visitors," says Mayor, Zukiswa Ncitha. "With this in mind we conducted a quality of life survey in 2001, which reached 2 477 households representing 10 000 people. This gave us valuable insight into the lives of the people of Buffalo City, and everything we do is based on creating a better future for each and every one of them."

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