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Author: GIVEN MAJOLA
given.majola@inl.co.za

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DEVELOPMENT

Nkandla to benefit from project to develop unused rural land

GIVEN MAJOLA
given.majola@inl.co.za

PUBLIC Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson and KZN Premier Thamsanqa Ntuli yesterday officiated the handover of previously unused, long dormant land to the Nkandla Local Municipality to support the development of a shopping centre that will create jobs and boost local economic activity.

"Today is not just a ceremonial hand-over. It is an important turning point for our department and how we work in rural municipalities to ensure that the land that we own is used for communities and by communities to grow their economy and to create jobs," says Macpherson.

The initiative forms part of a national push to repurpose state-owned properties — particularly in underdeveloped areas — and transform them into public assets that can fuel economic activity.

"The department that I lead is no longer just a department of land and buildings. We are a department that wants to drive economic growth and turn properties and land (into) opportunities that turn our communities and our countries into a construction site."

The planned Nkandla shopping mall, Macpherson said, will provide a local hub for trade, employment and enterprise, while similar projects are already underway in Gauteng and Mpumalanga, where disused buildings are being converted into safe havens for abused women and children and small business hubs.

"We are transforming farmland and houses into small business hubs and opportunities. These are not just gestures — they are purposed actions of turning dormant properties into assets that serve the public good. And so this property here in Nkandla, which currently has a broken building and grass all over the place, has been a lost potential for this municipality and the people," he said.

The initiative forms part of Minister Macpherson's commitment to repurpose state-owned properties for the public good, ending the practice of leaving assets unused and decaying.

He said this property now belongs to the Municipality of Nkandla. "I know you will transform it into something good and meaningful."

Macpherson reiterated that the department is more than just about bricks and leases. He said it is about being in the centre of the country's economy, not just in urban areas but also in rural areas.

"Today is a first in rural South Africa.



KWAZULU-Natal Premier Thami Ntuli, left, and Public Works Minister Dean Macpherson, extreme right, handed over a plot of unused government land to the Nkandla Municipality yesterday.
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The government must not hang on and hoard the land for itself. We do not need it but it is the people that need it. So we will go around the country to hand over land and buildings to communities who want to use it for their development and their growth."

"The Municipality of Nkandla is glad for this work to be started in such a manner," said Nonhlanhla Nzuza, Nkandla Municipality mayor.

She added that local people will benefit from construction jobs on the project.

"We urge the local community to support us. We also ask the local community to join us in fighting crime, which is taking place in this area, so that such a good project will not be compromised."

She said the town's former mayor, Ntuli who is now the KZN Premier, saw back in 2016 that the town needed to develop but encountered challenges with regard to acquiring the land.

The mayor committed that in two months, work would begin on the site.

Ntuli said: "Nkandla is one of the rural areas that lags behind when it comes to economic development and development in general.

"The milestone achieved today is going to turn around the misfortune of the people of Nkandla. For their needs, they are no longer going to travel to far-away towns like Empangeni and others. They will have all they need when the development is complete."

Ntuli said they have audited all government properties in KZN with the intention of repurposing them and availing them for the people of the province who want to do business, such as for student accommodation, flats and the like. He said the government is in constant communication with the business sector of KZN about how the land and properties could be put to better use.