

# Sh6b estate plan and how it has transformed 'cheap' housing

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By Ishaque Jembe

ijembe@standardmedia.co.ke

In September 2020, officials from GulfCap Africa convened a meeting with tenants residing in the dilapidated Buxton Estate in Mombasa. Originally planned for two hours, the meeting stretched into an eight-hour discourse, unexpectedly becoming a contentious topic that involved political leaders and human rights activists. What was meant to be a straightforward follow-up on the relocation of over 500 tenants evolved into a complex situation.

Prior to this prolonged meeting, representatives from the developer, county government officials, and tenants had mutually agreed on a relocation plan, including compensation and other related expenses.

The tenants had consented to accept Sh240,000 for relocation and were granted the opportunity to purchase the new housing units. However, they later claimed financial constraints, citing unemployment as the primary hurdle.

Suleiman Shahbal, the driving force behind the project and an opposition leader in Mombasa, found himself under suspicion from critics who perceived the initiative as a political stepping stone for the 2022 elec-

tions. Collaborating with the outgoing governor, Shahbal faced accusations of being Hassan Joho's heir apparent. Despite initial setbacks, the Buxton Housing project now stands prominently in Mombasa.

Reflecting on the journey, Shahbal acknowledged underestimating the political complexities associated with a project of this magnitude.

"But we received a lot of goodwill and support from those who appreciated the impact the project was to have on the common mwananchi. My team also were steadfast and we were able to deliver," he said.

However, he expressed gratitude for the overwhelming goodwill and support from those who recognised the positive impact the project would have on the common mwananchi. Shahbal's resilience, coupled with his steadfast team, ensured the successful delivery of the project.

The ambitious venture comes with a price tag of Sh6 billion, with Phase 1 accounting for Sh2 billion and Phase 2, recently inaugurated by the president, projected to cost Sh4 billion.



SH2.9M

THE PRICE of a one-bedroom house at Buxton Estate in Mombasa

Mombasa residents touring the Sh6 billion Buxton Point estate during the hand over of the completed houses to their owners in Mombasa in September. [Kelvin Karani, Standard]

Developed by GulfCap Real Estate in collaboration with the County Government of Mombasa, the project represents a significant collaboration where the county provided the land, and GulfCap Real Estate mobilised the capital.

Growing up in the vicinity of the old and dilapidated Buxton Estate, Shahbal's exposure to successful affordable housing projects during his travels sparked a transformative vision.

This vision aimed to bring modern, elegant, and affordable housing solutions to the common mwananchi, addressing the endemic housing problem in Kenya.

The ambitious project faced its most formidable challenge in Buxton, a twelve-and-a-half-acre piece of prime land on Mombasa Island hosting 500 dilapidated apartments on the brink of urban decay. Collaborating with the County government, Shahbal implemented a three-month vacation notice to facilitate tenants in seeking alternative accommodation. An agreement was reached, offering a transition allowance of Sh240,000 to tenants during the construction period.

The project, beyond mere relocation, incorporated several community benefits. Youth from the area were enrolled in construction-related courses at NITA, with their tuition fees covered by the developer. Former Buxton tenants were offered preferential buying prices,

including up to a 40 per cent discount, facilitating their transition to homeownership.

Navigating the delicate transition for the tenants set the stage for the subsequent demolitions. Shahbal's visionary idea, conceived in 2008, materialised in his gubernatorial manifesto during the 2013 elections, envisioning the rehabilitation of prime estates built in the 60s.

"We weren't just putting up buildings that were to turn into slums a few years down the line; we were building a lifestyle that owners would be proud of."

The project's efforts have garnered recognition, with Buxton receiving awards in architecture, environmental considerations, and being hailed as the most promising emerging affordable housing developer in Africa.

The one-bedroom units are priced at Sh2.9 million, while the two and three-bedroom units are offered at Sh4.4 million and Sh5.9 million, respectively. Suleiman Shahbal's journey from a visionary idea to a tangible reality exemplifies the power of determination and community-focused leadership in creating positive change.

The Buxton housing project not only addresses the critical need for affordable housing but also contributes to the empowerment and upliftment of the Buxton community, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape and the lives it touches.

## DEVELOPMENT

### Property developer Mi Vida breaks ground for three more projects



Mi Vida Homes CEO Samuel Kariuki speaking after signing an agreement for delivering affordable homes. [Wilberforce Okwiri, Standard]

Property developer, Mi Vida Homes, has commenced construction of its three key projects, namely Amaiya, 237 GC anchored within Nairobi's Garden City Development and KEZA in Riruta, Nairobi.

The developer is targeting a mixture of investors and homeowners who are looking for affordable and quality houses within and without the city.

KEZA is an 1,150-unit affordable housing project in the Riruta area of Nairobi County with a mix of studio, one, two and three-bedroom apartments.

The demand for such houses has been on the rise.

Amaiya is the second phase of the developer's mid-market product within Garden City in Nairobi.

It follows the successful sale and completion of

Mi Vida's first project within the precinct.

The project comprises one and two-bedroom duplexes and three-bedroom units.

237 GC is a 640-unit affordable housing project within the Garden City community, with a mix of studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments.

#### Institutional offtake

It includes a component of bulk institutional offtake that was recently announced by Mi Vida.

"237 offers high-quality housing within Garden City, complemented by a diverse array of amenities. Life in this community grants you access to a variety of essential services, including supermarkets, delis, over 100 retail shops, restaurants, as well as financial and health facilities," said Mi Vida

Homes Chief Executive Samuel Kariuki.

Commenting on the groundbreaking events, Mr Kariuki noted that this was a significant milestone in keeping the company's promise to its customers.

"The projects are fully funded, and the current phases are more than 80 per cent pre-sold. I am confident that they will be delivered on time, in meeting our customers expectations," he noted.

He said the mixed-use developments have proven to be increasingly appealing to tenants compared to standalone developments.

"They boast impressive returns, including an up to 13 per cent yield across completed projects. Furthermore, the modern home buyer is more informed and wants value beyond the unit they purchase," said Kariuki. [Graham Kajilwa]