

KCCA TIGHTENS RULES ON LAND USE

PHOTO BY LAWRENCE MULONDO

By Lawrence Mulondo

The Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) has rolled out stricter land use standards under detailed physical plans targeting the central business district (CBD) and key lake-front zones.

The new framework, anchored in the Kampala Physical Development Plan 2025-2030, moves from broad planning to enforceable zoning rules that dictate how land can be used, developed and conserved across the city. Officials say the move is designed to rein in unregulated construction, protect fragile ecosystems and address persistent urban challenges such as flooding.

DEFINED ZONING STANDARDS

The detailed plans introduce specific zoning standards to control how land is used and developed.

In commercial zones, the minimum plot size is set at 200 square metres, with a building coverage ratio of 70% and a floor area ratio of 30%. Developments must also allocate space for paving, greenery and on-site parking.

Residential zones have also been categorised into low, medium and high-density areas, each with tailored development controls.

"These standards are not optional. They are intended to ensure that every development



Benon Kigenyi of KCCA addresses city dwellers during the inaugural Kampala City Physical Planning Open Day gathering at the Constitutional Square last Friday

fits within a sustainable urban system," the KCCA physical planner, Joy Mike Yiga, said.

EXPANDED DEFINITION OF CBD

Under the new framework, KCCA has also expanded the definition of Kampala's CBD beyond traditional upscale areas such as Kololo and Nakasero, to include emerging urban zones like Bugoloobi and Nsambya.

Officials say detailed plans have already been finalised for several high-

POPULATION GROWTH

Beyond environmental concerns, the new standards are also aimed at addressing infrastructure strain caused by rapid population growth. Kampala's population has surged from under 400,000 in the 1970s to about 1.7 million today, with projections indicating it could reach 10 million within the next decade.

This growth has intensified demand for housing and contributed to the expansion of informal settlements, many of which fall outside the planned development zones.

impact zones, including the Munyonyo lakefront, Kololo-Nakasero precinct, Mulago-

Makerere education hub, Naguru medical hub, and the Kyengera-Busega corridor.

These plans form part of the wider Greater Kampala Metropolitan Area Integrated Urban Development Master Plan.

The new standards were unveiled during the inaugural Kampala City Physical Planning Open Day at Constitutional Square last week.

MUNYONYO LAKE-FRONT ZONING

A key highlight of the new standards is the Munyonyo Lake-front Detailed Plan, which introduces strict ecological and development controls on the Lake Victoria shores.

The lake-front has been divided into three regulated zones. The inner core, stretching 100-200 metres from the shoreline, is now a protected ecological belt where development is heavily restricted and limited to tourism, recreation and cultural activities.

The middle core is designated for controlled commercial and mixed-use development, while the outer core allows structured residential expansion across different density levels.

Urban planners say this zoning approach is intended to balance economic activity with environmental protection, particularly in areas that have faced intense pressure from real estate development.

The introduction of stricter

land use standards comes against the backdrop of mounting environmental and infrastructure challenges. KCCA estimates that more than half of Kampala's wetlands have been lost over the past three decades, largely due to informal construction.

This has significantly weakened the city's natural drainage system, contributing to frequent flooding.

The KCCA deputy executive director, Benon Kigenyi, said the recent heavy rains exposed the scale of the problem, with floods affecting even areas previously considered safe.

"With more concrete and fewer wetlands, water has nowhere to go. That is why flooding is becoming more widespread and severe," Kigenyi said.

Kampala city currently spends an estimated \$100m (sh370b) annually on flood management, but officials say without strict enforcement of land use regulations, these investments will continue to yield limited results.

TECHNOLOGY AND CALL FOR COMPLIANCE

KCCA is also leveraging technology to support enforcement. The use of geographic information systems is helping planners map land use, detect illegal developments and plan infrastructure more efficiently.

In addition, the KCCA physical planner, Joy Mike Yiga, encouraged developers to submit the building plans through a digital platform, a process that takes about 28-30 days and is intended to improve transparency and reduce bureaucratic delays.

He called on property owners, developers and residents to align with the new regulations, saying failure to comply could undermine the city's long-term sustainability.

"Every piece of land in Kampala must serve a planned purpose," Yiga said.

"That is the only way we can build a city that is resilient, organised and livable."