



2026 Ghana Urban Forum

Summary of Key Recommendations

Over the two days of the Ninth Ghana Urban Forum, one message has emerged with remarkable consistency: Ghana does not lack policies, laws, plans or technical knowledge. The challenge is to convert them into disciplined, coordinated, adequately financed and locally owned action. The Forum therefore makes the following key recommendations.

1. Make political leadership and attitudinal change the foundation of implementation

The National Urban Policy and the National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Strategy cannot produce different results if institutions, public officials and citizens continue with the attitudes and practices that undermined previous policies.

Implementation must be driven by sustained political leadership and accompanied by deliberate efforts to promote discipline, productivity, patriotism and responsibility. Political and administrative leaders must model the change expected of citizens. Citizens must also comply with planning requirements, manage waste responsibly and protect public infrastructure, waterways, green buffers and open spaces. Engineering solutions alone will not succeed without corresponding changes in human behaviour.

2. Translate the national frameworks into integrated local plans and budgets

MMDAs should urgently incorporate the new frameworks into their medium-term development plans, spatial plans, annual action plans and budgets. National policy must not remain at the centre; it must be translated into specific, locally relevant and properly costed interventions.

Long-term spatial development frameworks should guide successive medium-term plans and investments. Ghana should accelerate the preparation of spatial development frameworks, structure plans and local plans, particularly given the very low planning coverage across districts.



Planning must serve clear outcomes: local economic growth, inclusive housing, environmental resilience and improved quality of life. Financing should follow approved plans rather than predetermined allocations dictating priorities that may not reflect local needs.

3. Plan strategically across administrative boundaries

Flooding, transport, housing, waste management and urban expansion do not stop at district boundaries. Contiguous districts should therefore undertake joint spatial planning and coordinate major infrastructure and service-delivery interventions.

Urban growth boundaries should be established and supported by detailed lower-level plans. Emerging growth areas should be planned before development overtakes them, while blighted and underused inner-city areas should be regenerated to promote compact development and reduce uncontrolled sprawl.

Assembly boundaries and conflicting maps should be reviewed and resolved. Strategic infrastructure networks must be planned as connected systems rather than divided into isolated municipal projects. Flood management, in particular, requires basin-wide and metropolitan planning rather than fragmented local responses.

4. Strengthen development control and enforce existing laws

The gap between Ghana's legal framework and its implementation must be closed. District planning and building inspectorate units should be properly staffed, equipped and financed. MMDAs should reinvest an appropriate share of permit revenue in plan preparation, inspection and development control.

Where assemblies are overwhelmed, the Ministry and LUSPA should develop clear guidelines for the lawful outsourcing of appropriate inspection and development-control functions, while retaining public oversight and accountability.

Approved plans should be advertised within communities, digitised and made accessible through public data rooms and online platforms. Land registration, development permitting and spatial planning systems should be integrated. Enforcement must be consistent and protected from political interference, because the cost of failing to enforce plans is ultimately paid through flooding, congestion, environmental degradation and expensive remedial action.



5. Establish clear responsibilities and enforceable accountability

Responsibilities should be assigned across the entire delivery chain, from central government institutions to RCCs, MMDAs and communities, and matched with adequate authority, personnel and resources.

Institutions and office holders should have specific and measurable performance obligations. Progress should be independently verified and publicly reported, with incentives for good performance and consequences for persistent non-performance.

Political and institutional continuity should be protected by involving technical officers, strengthening institutional record-keeping and building implementation systems that can survive changes in leadership. A clear national coordinating mechanism is also required because urban policy cuts across local government, finance, housing, roads, transport, water, sanitation, energy, land and environmental management.

6. Build a credible and diversified financing system

The Forum emphasised the distinction between **funding** - who ultimately pays for an intervention - and **financing**, how the upfront capital is mobilised. Government must clarify the contributions of central government, MMDAs, communities, service users, development partners and private investors.

MMDAs cannot depend solely on the DACF. They must grow their local economies, strengthen internally generated revenue and work with businesses within their jurisdictions. The DACF formula should increasingly incentivise sound planning, local economic growth, innovation and independently verified performance.

Policies and plans must be converted into properly prepared, bankable projects. Financing should then be matched to the appropriate stage: grants and technical assistance for feasibility and project preparation; public and development finance for enabling infrastructure; and private capital for commercially viable components.

Government should also clarify the routes available for PPPs, municipal borrowing and private participation. A structured partnership framework would help MMDAs engage development partners and investors consistently. Proposed mechanisms through which private contributions to public goods receive tax recognition should also be operationalised and promoted.



7. Use land and housing instruments more innovatively

Ghana should operationalise land-value capture provisions, including betterment charges under L.I. 2384, and transparently ring-fence the proceeds for affordable and social housing. Other instruments - including public land leasing, inclusionary zoning, developer contributions, land pooling and land readjustment, should be adapted and piloted in suitable growth corridors.

Government should expand social and affordable rental housing, recognising that ownership schemes cannot reach the poorest households. Central government can support large-scale interventions, while MMDAs undertake smaller, locally responsive schemes.

Slum upgrading should prioritise improvement in place rather than displacement. Residents should be treated as partners who contribute savings, land, labour, data and local knowledge. Traditional authorities, faith-based organisations, civil society and community groups should be mobilised to support secure tenure, housing and basic services.

8. Make Ghana's cities greener and more resilient

Green urban development should integrate five essential components: sustainable transport, renewable energy, circular waste management, green and open spaces, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Waste should be treated as a resource. Segregation must begin at the point of generation and be supported by effective collection, recycling, composting and recovery systems. Producer responsibility should be strengthened so that the cost of managing waste does not fall entirely on citizens and government.

Spatial plans must protect wetlands, waterways, parks, green buffers and other common goods. Preventive investments in drainage, planning and enforcement will generally cost less than repeated emergency responses to avoidable disasters.

9. Create one trusted urban data and learning system

Government institutions should stop producing different datasets for different reporting channels. Ghana needs one harmonised and trusted body of urban data for planning, budgeting, financing and accountability.



The Ghana Urban Observatory should be institutionalised and integrated with district, sector and national systems. MMDAs should provide regularly updated and validated data, while GSS and relevant agencies ensure common definitions, metadata and quality standards.

Data should be openly accessible through dashboards, maps, spatial databases and public reports. Most importantly, it must be used to target investments, measure performance, compare progress and trigger timely corrective action.

The overarching recommendation of the Forum is therefore clear: **connect policy to plans, plans to finance, finance to accountable delivery, and delivery to measurable improvements in people's lives. Different outcomes will require a fundamentally different culture of implementation and behaviour change across board.**