UMHLABUYALINGANA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW
The uMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality is situated in the north-eastern part of KwaZulu-Natal. The Municipality has an area of 4,042 square km and a population of 156,736, with an average household size of 4.5 people per household, according to Statistics South Africa (Census 2011). The Municipality is one of the five municipalities that constitute the uMkhanyakude District Municipality. The Municipality has a rural character, with 99% of the Municipality classified as rural, and consists of 17 wards. Nearly 60% of the municipal area falls under traditional authority ownership, with the remaining 40% consisting of commercial farms and conservation areas.

VISION
To be a people-centred, premier socio-economic development and environmentally-friendly service delivery municipality.

MISSION
Creating an enabling environment and sustainable development that promotes quality of life.

STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES
• To improve quality of life and create a pleasant living and working environment
• To create an environment that promotes investment and economic growth
• To involve local communities and stakeholders in municipal affairs in a structured manner
• To develop uMhlabuyalingana Local Municipality as a viable and sustainable local government structure
• To deliver services efficiently and effectively.

uMhlabuyalingana is one of the rural local municipalities with high development potential. Its competitive advantages include being a unique and diverse tourist destination known for its unspoilt natural and cultural attractions and world-famous conservation areas, which straddle international boundaries.

UMHLABUYALINGANA: NORTH COAST EXPERIENCE AT AN EDGE TOURIST DESTINATION OF TRANQUILLITY
Tourism has been identified as one of the six fixed priority areas in the New Growth Path (NGP). The uMhlabuyalingana Municipality, through its Tourism Development and Promotion Programme, aims to prioritise the marketing and further identification of the already existing, but unremarkable, tourism products and services within the area. The focus of uMhlabuyalingana Municipality is on both the development and facilitation of tourism growth within the area, through providing support to a variety of key public and private tourism sector stakeholders. To ensure continued tourism growth in the area, the key priorities include the following:
• stimulating domestic tourism and education
• developing rural tourism through adapting responsible tourism practices
• improving job creation opportunities and tourism service excellence
• channelling efforts towards entrepreneurial opportunities in tourism.

Furthermore, the Municipality’s focus is on ensuring overall competitiveness as a tourist destination through expanding its tourism product base and packages. This will create an effective operating environment and enable tourism products to bring hope to the local people of uMhlabuyalingana. During the preceding financial year, the Municipality managed to train a total number of 34 local youth members from the Mazambane Reserve. This reserve is the farthest north, situated on the border between uMhlabuyalingana Municipality and Mozambique, where most tourist activities take place. Some local community members safeguard tourist camps, providing hospitality services such as washing and cooking, while others offer their services as tour guides.

uMhlabuyalingana has had several achievements and challenges. It takes pride in having achieved milestone projects such as the electrification of Madonela, which has brought light and hope into the lives of the uMhlabuyalingana people. The Municipality has also successfully completed the construction of the Mntanenkosi and Qongwane Roads, amongst others. The following infrastructure projects are currently in progress: construction of Zangomeni-Mvelabusha Road (4km) and Mfihweni-Mfakubheka Road (4km). The construction of the following sportsfields is also in progress: Scabazini, Mboza, Nyamazane and Bhekabantu Sportsfields. The Municipality has allocated R10 million to electrify 500 households in Sibhoweni and Mboza.

As much as this is a rural municipality, it has big dreams and aspirations for its citizens, and its leadership is working tirelessly to achieve good service delivery to improve their lives.

Above from top left: Kosi Bay, Black Rock; Construction of Mboza Sportsfield; Construction of Mfihweni-Mfakubheka Road.