MUNICIPALITY OF MARONDERA VIES FOR CITY STATUS

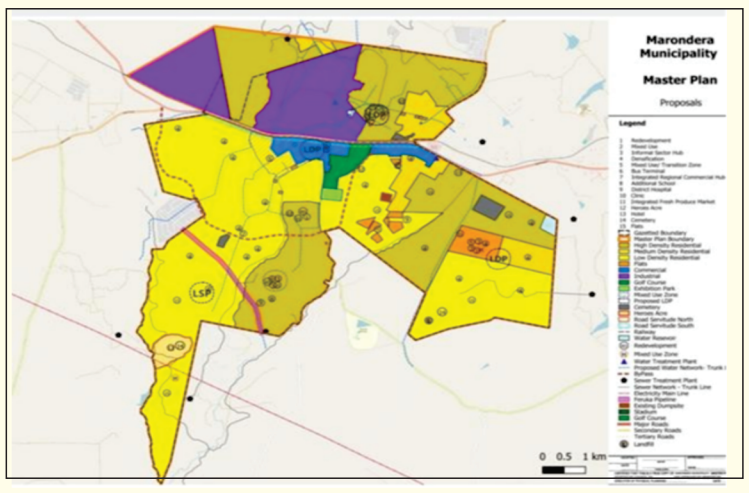
The Municipality of Marondera has formally applied to the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works for conferment of city status, marking another important stage in the town's long urban development journey. Following the application, the Minister appointed a Commission of Inquiry in terms of section 14 of the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] to assess Marondera's readiness for city status and make recommendations. The Commission is chaired by Ms K. Ncube and includes David Mamukira (PAO Local Authorities), Theodora Dzvairo (Financial Advisor) and Pamellah Chitengu (Commission Secretary). The process provides an opportunity for Marondera to demonstrate its administrative maturity, economic significance, infrastructure capacity and preparedness to assume the responsibilities of a city.

Marondera's case is grounded in a long record of orderly institutional growth. Established in 1890 as a transit settlement on the route linking Harare, Mutare and Beira, it became a Village Management Board in 1913, a Town Management Board in 1943, a Town Council in 1968 and a Municipality in 1974. In 1984, Marondera was designated the provincial capital of Mashonaland East. This progression reflects more than a change of title: it records the steady expansion of the settlement's administrative, economic and service-delivery functions.

According to the 2022 Population and Housing Census, Marondera had a population of 66,204. The Municipality covers approximately 58.86 square kilometres and is divided into 12 municipal wards. Its functional influence extends well beyond the municipal boundary because it serves as the provincial administrative centre and a major service centre for the surrounding agricultural hinterland. Continued residential development, densification and demand for commercial, industrial and institutional land point to sustained urban growth that must be supported by forward-looking planning and infrastructure investment.

That growth is increasingly visible in the built environment. New residential developments, shopping facilities, service stations, commercial premises and industrial investments are reshaping the town. The entry and expansion of national businesses - including hardware, retail, health and food-service operators - signals growing market confidence and a widening consumer and investment base. The Municipality's approved Master Plan provides the spatial framework for managing this growth and for opening additional land for residential, commercial and industrial development.

Marondera occupies a distinctive position within Mashonaland East as the provincial capital and the province's principal municipal urban centre. It hosts provincial government functions and provides commercial, financial, educational, health, transport and professional services to a much wider regional population. Conferment of city status would therefore recognise functions that Marondera already performs while creating a stronger platform for investment, infrastructure upgrading and regional economic development.



MARONDERA WITHIN THE APPROVED MASTER PLAN

MARONDERA WARDS DISTRIBUTION

Marondera is divided into 12 municipal wards. The ward structure supports local representation, community participation and the spatial organisation of municipal service delivery. The ward map below illustrates the distribution of the Municipality's administrative areas.



MARONDERA WARD MAP

City status would have significance beyond the municipal boundary. As Mashonaland East's provincial capital, Marondera is positioned to stimulate investment, employment, value addition and improved service provision across the province. Its elevation would complement the national development agenda under NDS2 and Vision 2030 by strengthening a strategic secondary urban centre and promoting more balanced territorial development.

Council's development ambition is captured in its vision, 'A Vibrant Smart City of Service Excellence by 2030', supported by a mission centred on inclusive and sustainable socio-economic service delivery. The application is being considered within the framework of section 14 of the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15] and the matters prescribed for assessment. Council's case is therefore not based on aspiration alone, but on the scale of its urban functions, institutional capacity, planning framework, service-delivery investments and economic potential.

The 2022 Census population of 66,204 over approximately 58.86 square kilometres gives an indicative population density of about 1,125 persons per square kilometre. The urban form includes high-, medium- and low-density neighbourhoods, flats, suburban areas, commercial centres and industrial zones. Newer residential and gated developments are broadening the housing market, while the approved Master Plan provides for additional land to accommodate future growth. These characteristics demonstrate an increasingly complex urban system requiring coordinated city-level planning and management.

Institutionally, the Municipality has established professional and technical capacity across its core functions. The Town Clerk provides overall administrative leadership, supported by senior management and departments responsible for governance, finance, engineering, planning and development, audit, housing, health and community services. The workforce includes professional, technical, skilled, semi-skilled and general employees required to deliver the broad range of services expected of an urban local authority.

The planned release and development of additional industrial, commercial and residential land will expand the local economic and employment base. In particular, the Master Plan creates opportunities for industrial growth, value addition, logistics, construction and supporting services. This planned expansion provides a basis for new formal employment, SME growth and increased municipal revenues.

The diversity of municipal functions and professional skills is an important indicator of institutional readiness. City status would strengthen the Municipality's ability to attract specialised skills, deepen administrative systems and coordinate increasingly complex urban development and service-delivery responsibilities.

Marondera's property base continues to expand through new residential, commercial and industrial development. The approved Master Plan provides for substantial future development areas, including land for industrial expansion. This growth is expected to broaden the rateable property base, strengthen local revenue potential and support long-term investment in municipal infrastructure.

Council has aligned its service-delivery programme with the national Call to Action: No Compromise on Service Delivery and the Minimum Service Delivery Standards. Fire and emergency capacity has been strengthened through the acquisition of three new fire tenders, bringing the fleet to four, together with additional firefighters and drivers. Two of the new fire tenders were acquired through the Zimbabwe-Belarus government-to-government arrangement, while another was financed from Council resources.

The wider recapitalisation programme, valued at over three million united states dollars has provided the Municipality with machinery and equipment needed for road construction and maintenance, waste management, sanitation, emergency response and day-to-day operations. This includes graders, bulldozers, front-end loaders, rollers, compactors, utility vehicles, refuse compactors, honey suckers, ambulances, fuel-handling equipment and skip bins. The photographs below illustrate part of the service-delivery fleet and equipment now available to Council.



The Honourable Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. Daniel Garwe (MP) cutting the ribbon to commission the plant and equipment acquired by the Municipality of Marondera



The fire brigade extinguishing a haulage truck that had caught fire along the Harare-Mutare road

The new plant and equipment has improved Council's capacity to respond directly to service-delivery needs. Road maintenance can increasingly be undertaken with municipal equipment; emergency response capacity has been strengthened; refuse collection and sanitation operations have improved; and water-supply interventions have included refurbishment of filter beds, acquisition of pumps and installation of new low-tension power lines. These investments provide a practical foundation for progressively meeting higher urban service standards.



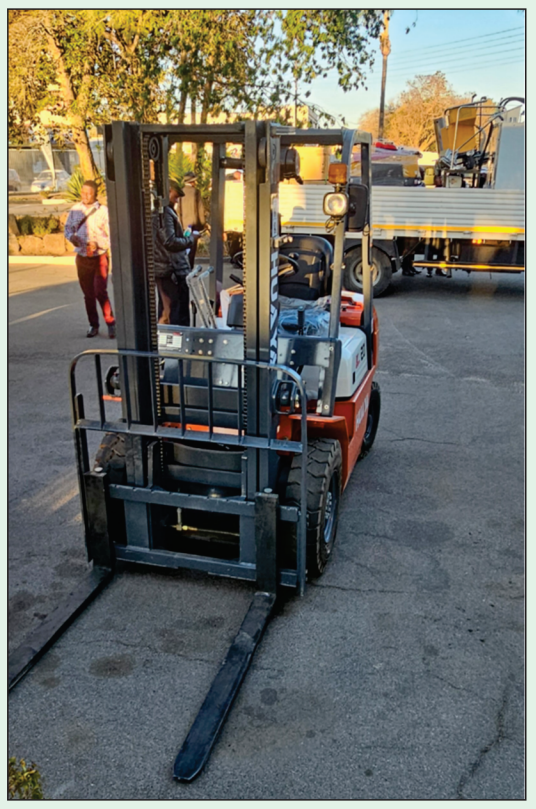
The newly acquired motorized grader



The brand-new drum roller and seven tonne lorry



The backhoe loader



The new fork lift



The newly acquired compressor



The new skip tractor



The newly acquired skip trailer

Greater use of Council-owned plant and equipment also reduces dependence on external contractors for routine municipal works. This approach can lower operating costs, improve response times and allow scarce financial resources to be redirected towards priority infrastructure and service-delivery needs.

Marondera is also progressively modernising municipal administration and customer service. Council operates parking facilities and is pursuing more automated parking management. Digital initiatives include the LADS Customer Relationship Management module and chatbot, an Enterprise Resource Planning system, online bill inquiry facilities and the use of digital communication platforms. These initiatives support the Municipality's vision of becoming a smart, responsive and service-oriented urban authority.

Taken together, the recapitalisation programme, digital transformation initiatives and continuing infrastructure improvements demonstrate that Marondera's city-status bid is linked to measurable institutional change. The objective is not simply a change in designation, but a transition towards higher standards of urban management, accountability, resilience and service excellence.

Geographically, Marondera is strategically located about 74 kilometres east of Harare along the Harare-Mutare transport corridor and the national railway network. It lies on the route towards Mutare and the Beira corridor, giving the town important logistics and trade advantages. Its relative proximity to Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, together with a local aerodrome, further strengthens accessibility. These connections position Marondera to serve as a multisectoral regional hub for administration, agriculture, agro-processing, commerce, logistics and related services.



Part of the Service delivery equipment that was commissioned by the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. Daniel Garwe (MP)



The Director of Works, Eng Mashonganyika explaining to the Honourable Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. Daniel Garwe (MP) some of the equipment on display

MUNICIPALITY OF MARONDERA VIES FOR CITY STATUS

As the capital of Mashonaland East Province, Marondera accommodates key provincial government and public institutions, including registry, health, education and administrative functions. This concentration of services reinforces the town's role as the primary point of access to government and specialised services for residents from across the province.

Marondera lies within Natural Region II, an area generally suited to intensive crop and livestock production. Its agricultural hinterland produces tobacco, maize, wheat, soybeans, groundnuts, seed crops, horticultural produce and livestock products. The presence of tobacco marketing facilities and supporting agricultural businesses has reinforced Marondera's long-standing role as an agro-commercial centre.

The combination of agricultural production, access to markets and the Harare-Mutare-Beira transport corridor creates strong prospects for agro-processing and value addition. Opportunities include food processing, packaging, cold-chain activities, warehousing and other industries that can convert locally produced commodities into higher-value products for domestic and export markets.

Forestry resources in the wider region also support opportunities in timber processing, furniture production, joinery, roof-truss manufacturing and related SME activities. These linkages broaden the Municipality's industrial base and create scope for additional value-chain investment.

Property development is another visible indicator of confidence in Marondera's growth prospects. New shopping facilities, service stations, commercial buildings and residential developments are extending the urban footprint and diversifying the property market. The Master Plan provides a framework to direct this growth towards serviced and appropriately zoned areas.
The local economy is supported by major financial institutions and a wide range of payment and money-transfer services. Banking and financial services improve the ease of doing business for residents, farmers, traders and investors, while Council's investment-promotion approach seeks to reduce barriers to productive investment in priority sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, housing, commerce, conference facilities and tourism.
Agriculture and forestry provide important raw materials for a growing manufacturing and SME sector, including steel fabrication, furniture production and pole treatment. The continued expansion of SMEs is particularly important for employment creation, local value addition and broadening the Municipality's revenue base. City status is expected to enhance Marondera's profile and strengthen its ability to attract both small and large investors.
Although Marondera itself is not primarily a mining town, its position between major economic centres and within reach of mineral-producing areas creates opportunities in logistics, engineering services, warehousing and mineral-related value addition. The Master Plan can provide appropriately planned land for compatible processing and support activities, subject to environmental, infrastructure and statutory requirements.
Council also recognises the informal sector as an important component of the local economy. Working spaces have been provided for vendors, steel fabricators, furniture manufacturers, tombstone makers, flea-market operators and other enterprises. The new People's Market along First Street, designed to accommodate more than 400 traders, represents a practical investment in safer, more organised and economically productive informal trading space.



Paving currently underway at the new modern market construction site

Quality of life is also central to the city-status case. Marondera has a municipal public library, children's library, community halls and other civic spaces that support learning, meetings, cultural activities and social interaction. These facilities contribute to an inclusive urban environment and strengthen community identity.

Council supports local creativity by making spaces available to artists and craftspeople for production and display. Such initiatives help preserve cultural identity while creating opportunities for small enterprise, tourism and community participation.

Marondera has a broad education network comprising pre-schools, primary and secondary schools, including day and boarding institutions. This educational base serves residents of the Municipality as well as learners from surrounding districts and contributes to the town's role as a regional service centre.

Tertiary and professional education further strengthens this role. Institutions serving the area include the Zimbabwe Open University, Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUAST), Women's University in Africa and Kushinga Phikelela Polytechnic in the wider hinterland. Their presence supports skills development, research, innovation and the supply of human capital required by a growing urban economy.

Recreation and public open space remain important components of urban liveability. Marondera has parks, a stadium and sporting facilities distributed across residential areas, while the approved Master Plan provides a basis for additional recreational facilities as the town expands. Continued investment in these amenities will be important in meeting the expectations associated with city status.

Marondera's historical evolution provides context for its present ambition. From its establishment in 1890, the settlement progressed through successive local-government stages - Village Management Board in 1913, Town Management Board in 1943, Town Council in 1968 and Municipality in 1974 - before becoming the provincial capital in 1984. This institutional history demonstrates continuity, administrative experience and a sustained trajectory of urban growth.

The progression to municipal status was accompanied by expansion of infrastructure, public services and administrative responsibilities. The present application for city status is therefore the next proposed stage in a long process of urban development rather than an isolated change in title.

Marondera also retains sites and narratives of historical significance that contribute to its identity and tourism potential. These heritage assets, together with established civic spaces, provide opportunities for conservation, interpretation and place-making as the Municipality develops.

The Green remains one of Marondera's recognised civic spaces and contains memorial features associated with the town's history. Protecting such places while improving public-space quality will help ensure that future urban development respects Marondera's heritage and identity.

Its location on the Harare-Mutare corridor remains one of Marondera's strongest comparative advantages. The corridor facilitates the movement of people, agricultural produce, manufactured goods and services between the capital, eastern Zimbabwe and regional markets. This accessibility supports Marondera's continuing development as a logistics, commercial and administrative node.

Marondera is supported by established policing, correctional and other public-security institutions serving the town and surrounding areas. These institutions form part of the wider public-service network required to support a growing provincial capital.

The proximity of additional national security and public-service facilities in neighbouring centres complements local arrangements and contributes to regional preparedness and institutional support.
Religious and heritage tourism adds another dimension to Marondera's identity. The Bernard Mizeki Shrine attracts significant annual pilgrimage activity, while Tsindi Ruins and other heritage and faith-related sites in the wider area provide opportunities for cultural tourism, local enterprise and destination development.



A COMARA (Combined Marondera Ratepayers Association) representative, Mr Makuni making a contribution during one of the many stakeholder engagement meeting conducted by Council



The Public Health Manager, Mr T. Paraiwa presenting council achievements during the LEAP document review

The Municipality continues to strengthen the policy and planning framework that underpins sustainable urban growth. Key instruments include the Local Economic Development Plan, Local Environmental Action Plan, the approved Master Plan, municipal policies and by-laws, and the Council's strategic planning framework. Together, these instruments provide direction for investment, environmental management, spatial development and service delivery.

The city-status application therefore rests on a combination of historical progression, provincial-capital functions, strategic location, demographic growth, economic diversification, service-delivery investment, institutional capacity and forward planning. Marondera's ambition is to translate city status into higher standards of governance, infrastructure, investment and quality of life. If conferred in accordance with the statutory process, city status would recognise the town's existing regional role while providing renewed impetus towards the Council's vision of

'A Vibrant Smart City of Service Excellence by 2030'.