



Knysna communities may benefit from special rating areas

The Knysna Council at its meeting of 30 September adopted its draft Knysna Municipality: Special Rating Areas By-Law. “This has been a long time coming,” said Acting Municipal Manager Dawid Adonis. “This by-law sets the stage for neighbours and communities to invest even further in our communal development.”

Local municipalities are responsible for providing basic services to their residents and are obligated to sustain existing service levels throughout their area of jurisdiction. A special rating area (SRA) is a defined geographical area such as a residential, commercial or industrial section within which the property owners have decided to pay for certain additional services from the municipality. This can only be initiated by the relevant ratepayers – not the municipality – and the services agreed upon will be supplementary to those commonly provided by the municipality.

“Additional services mostly include safety, cleaning and maintenance of communal areas,” Adonis explained. “It could also include upgrading of the environment or even social services. It is important to note that these are supplementary services over and above those we continuously provide to our citizens.”

“When individual property owners pool their resources in an SRA, they can enjoy the collective benefits of a shared sense of communal pride, safety and social responsibility,” he continued. “They also gain access to a variety of potential joint initiatives like energy- or water efficiency programmes, waste reduction or recycling, and much more.”

Property owners’ revitalisation efforts gave rise to the concept of City Improvement Districts in Toronto, Canada in the 1960s. This model has since spread across the world and are known as SRAs in South Africa. Some of the advantages associated with establishing an SRA include the improvement of property values; the cost of providing supplementary services is borne by all property owners; the private sector gains management responsibility and accountability; and it creates a closer relationship with the local authority from within which new ideas for change can be put forward.

“Residents are often looking for ways in which they can contribute to the upliftment of their area, or how their area may benefit from specific services that do not form part of the local municipality’s mandate,” Adonis concluded. “At the same time, we are often requesting residents to take ownership of their communities. Rallying with your neighbours to establish a special rating area is the ideal way to reach both goals. This is a perfect example of how we can work together to create an inclusive, innovative, inspired Knysna.”

The Knysna Municipality: Special Rating Areas By-Law specifies all application procedures to establish an SRA, as well as their structures and financial management regulations. The by-law will be available online at <https://www.knysna.gov.za/government/important-documents/bylaws/> once it has been gazetted.

ENDS