

about evaton

Emfuleni is one of three Local Municipal Councils in southern Gauteng that fall within the boundary of the Sedibeng District Municipality (SDM). The Emfuleni Local Municipality (ELM) comprises 83% of the total population of the Sedibeng District Municipality. The number of households residing within the ELM is 243 758 which calculates to an average of 3,9 persons per household. Bordering on the Vaal River, and hosting the most important industries in the region, Emfuleni constitutes the economic hub of the northern side of the river.

The establishment of townships that now form the economic hubs of Emfuleni owe their existence to the discovery of coal deposits in the region by George William Stow, in 1878. Rapid population growth resulted in the town of Vereeniging being established by 1882. Gradually, the region became a centre for iron and steel manufacturing, and by 1941 the state-owned ISCOR decided to erect a major new iron and steel works 16 kilometers west of the town. The plant was finished in 1943, and attracted increasing numbers of people to the area. The need to address the rapid growth of employee numbers, as well as their accommodation needs, led to the development of another town in the area, Vanderbijlpark, in 1952.



Today, the Emfuleni Local Municipality comprises these two towns, as well as a large number of townships in the surrounding areas, such as Sebokeng and Evaton. These townships were erected during the previous political dispensation under a dualistic approach to urban planning, which resulted in these towns being detached from the economic core. The main towns were places of business and residence of whites, while blacks were confined to townships in surrounding areas – often quite distant and deliberately segregated. Additionally, the Emfuleni Local Municipality's boundaries extend well beyond the townships into rural areas such as North Vaal and the Vaal Oewer, where very limited economic development exists. The resulting spatial economy is characterised by medium-density towns that are relatively high-income areas with comparatively good services and urban facilities.

The surrounding townships, however, have traditionally been severely under-resourced in terms of jobs, incomes, services, and urban facilities. There are also very few businesses located in these townships, resulting in the need for residents to travel to the main towns for work and shopping. For example, the Vaal Research Group estimates that between 80% and 90% of groceries and clothing bought by township residents are sourced in the major towns. The net effect is that most township expenditure leaks into other parts of the Emfuleni Local Municipality, further aggravating the poor economic position of township communities.

Evaton takes up less than 8% of the geographic area of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. It forms part of a cluster of historically marginalised townships, which collectively have a population of about 500 000 people (Census 2001).

Evaton itself has a population of about 220 000 people, or 65 000 households. Physical and socio-economic conditions in the area are poor, such that there is low investment in both public and private environments; levels of income are low with 90% of households earning less than R 3500 per month; and levels of education and employment are low.



In Evaton, the Emfuleni Local Municipality has had to deal with a situation where many properties did not have access to services. Landholders in the area were originally donated this land from a private landowner. While these new landholders held title to their land, they were not part of the council's programme of infrastructure. This is now being corrected.

More generally, however, the magnitude of these issues in the townships is such that the municipality cannot possibly correct many of the disadvantages of the past from within its current operations. Given the low economic status of many residents in these communities, additional services cannot always be afforded.

Although detailed information is not available on a number of development indicators, it is clear that there is substantial need for physical infrastructure and service provision across the development sectors, and that significant improvement in respect of municipal resources is essential.

Since 1994, the Government of National Unity initiated a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP constituted a policy framework specifically aimed at addressing reconstruction and development challenges encountered at local level. Amongst other things, this became the basis for constructing thousands of low-income houses in the area. Issues of sustainability, however, were not sufficiently addressed, leaving the areas lacking socio-economic facilities to support the housing initiatives.

