

Masaka sells Mayor's Gardens at sh1.5b

MASAKA

By Dismus Buregyeya

Masaka municipal council has sold the Mayor's Gardens at sh1.5b to raise funds for the re-construction of the town hall, which was destroyed during the 1979 war.

A prominent businessman in Masaka town, Moses Kaliisa, bought the gardens after he emerged as the highest bidder during the procurement exercise in June.

The first attempt to sell the facility flopped in 2016 when the then council, led by Richard Lukyamuzi, dismissed the resolution to sell the facility.

Recently, Masaka municipality mayor Godfrey Kayemba Afaayo and councillors unanimously revived the deal and were cleared by the finance and local government ministries plus the Solicitor General.

The *New Vision* has reliably learnt that the municipal council will sell off several other properties, including the old Kumbu housing estates, the public library and other idle plots to raise the sh5b required for constructing the town hall.

Kayemba said the council has secured land at the golf course to construct the town hall. He said the town hall will be constructed near the Bank of Uganda Currency Centre while golf course will be relocated.

He said Kaliisa will construct a modern shopping centre at the Mayor's Gardens, which will also house the municipal headquarters.

"We agreed with the investor that one of the floors on the shopping centre will

house the municipal offices," he said.

The sh20b modern shopping centre will have hotels, banks and basement parking space, among other facilities.

Kayemba noted that the shopping centre will increase the district revenue on its completion by 2019.

He said infrastructure development is among the priorities for Masaka district.

"We currently need a population growth of over 500,000 people to propel development," he said.

The Mayor's Gardens have been serving as the lorry park for Masaka municipal council. The lorry park will be relocated to plot 15 on Buddu Street, according to Afaayo.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Masaka municipality will sell off other properties to raise sh5b for the construction of a town hall.

He said the municipal council will spare eight open green spaces and recreation grounds to keep the environment and beauty of Masaka municipality.

Earlier on, the environment minister, Sam Cheptoris, warned Masaka municipal council against plans to degazette Kumbu forest reserve.

He said the forest reserve protects the Nabajuzi water supply wetland from erosion.

Cheptoris said the leaders should drop plans to turn the forest reserve into a golf course and other recreation developments.



An artist's impression of the shopping centre which will also house the Masaka municipality headquarters