Property investments face decay

Build it. Maintain it. Or lose it.

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Back in Uganda, industry leaders see this as a necessary correction to a long-standing imbalance.

"Many times, so many people rush to build, set up very expensive infrastructure and they give little attention to their management, their sustainability, and to the long-term value that these facilities can provide," says Mr Henry Mulindwa, the president of IFMA Uganda Chapter.

He frames the issue in human terms, not just economic ones. Poorly maintained buildings affect how people live and work, from the comfort of homes to the productivity of offices.

"It is not true that when you build, it is a one-off; a building is a very dynamic place," Mr Mulindwa says, stressing the need for continuous maintenance and professional oversight.

He points to early adopters within government institutions, such as the National Social Security Fund, which has already trained certified facility management professionals. The aim now is to replicate that model across both public and private sectors.

"Our country needs professionals who will manage what is already existing and prepare what is coming to be standard and really valuable over the long term," Mr Mulindwa adds.

From his perspective, the issue extends beyond institutions into everyday life. Homes, estates, and apartments all depend on maintenance systems that are too often ignored until failure occurs.

"For the ordinary Ugandan, what is most pressing is how you manage your home, your building, your estates, your apartments, and it goes down to maintenance," he says.

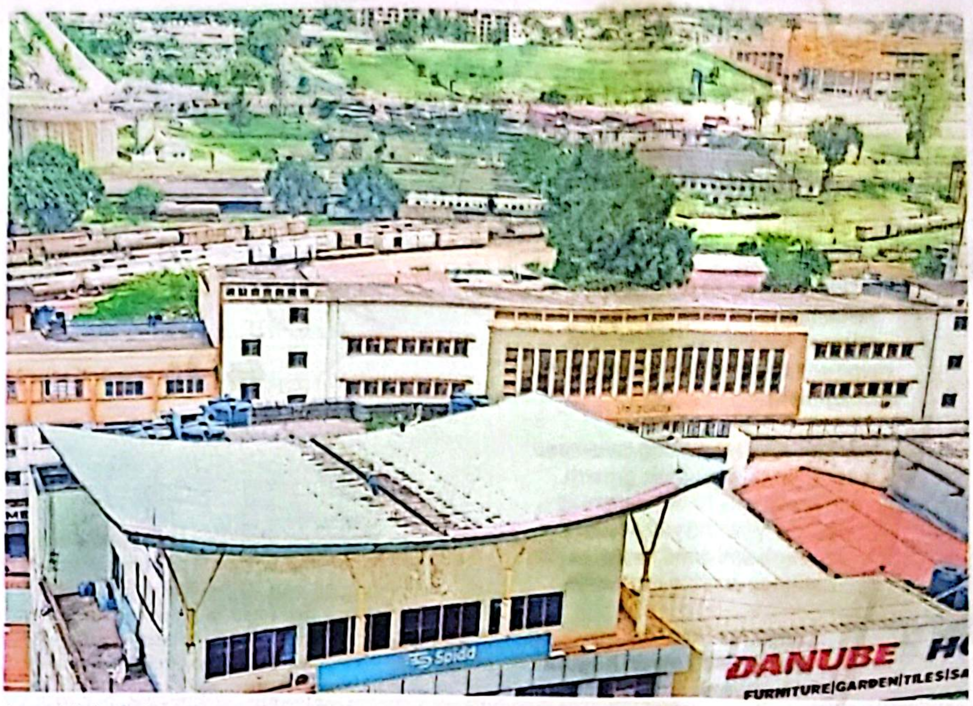
Mr Mulindwa warns that treating buildings as one-time projects is a costly mistake.

"A building is a very dynamic place, and when you have a property manager, a facility manager, this is how you will know that much as you painted once when you are entering this house or starting to use this apartment, it is important that you have a maintenance regime," he explains.

He emphasizes that maintenance is not cosmetic but central to value preservation.

"When you paint again after some time, it will help your building to be more sustainable, it will be a building that you can have for more time, it will not degrade as fast as one that you are not minding about building and cleaning up," Mr Mulindwa says.

What emerges is a simple but often ignored truth: buildings do not fail suddenly; they decline gradually through neglect.



An aerial photo showing some of the storeyed buildings in Kampala City on May 8, 2026. Many buildings, including high-value developments, are still operating without trained facility managers. PHOTO/ MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

Uganda's buildings: Big investment, quiet decay

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On a busy morning in Kampala, elevators stall without warning, office air conditioning systems struggle against the heat, and tenants quietly adjust to flickering lights or unreliable backup power. These are not headline-grabbing failures, yet they define the daily experience inside many of Uganda's most expensive buildings.

For decades, the country's development story has been told through what rises into the skyline: new housing estates, office towers, and industrial parks. But beneath that visible progress lies a less-discussed reality: Uganda has built rapidly. But it has paid far less attention to what happens after the ribbon is cut.

That imbalance, experts say, is now emerging as one of the costliest blind spots in the country's growth.

"When we reflect more deeply on that experience, one lesson stands out: the challenge was not just about ownership, it was about assets or property or facility management," says Ms Irene Umoja, Commissioner for Housing Development at the Ministry of Lands.

Her reflection draws from Uganda's past. In the 1990s, the government, weighed down by the high cost of maintaining public buildings and housing stock, opted to sell off large portions of its real estate. The decision was meant to ease fiscal pressure, but it also exposed a deeper issue that ownership alone does not guarantee value.

Currently, Uganda is at a turning point. With urbanisation rates exceeding five percent annually and large-scale investments under Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan, the country is building faster than ever. Yet Ms Umoja warns that construction without structured management risks repeating history.

"It is not enough to build, we must sustain, manage and optimise what we build," she emphasizes, pointing to a growing shift within government towards a lifecycle approach, where maintenance and long-term performance are planned from the very beginning.

The entry of the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) Uganda Chapter, marks a significant step in strengthening Uganda's built environment management ecosystem.

Speaking at the engagement, Ms Umoja notes that the Association's arrival aligns with the government's shift towards professionalised, lifecycle-based management of infrastructure assets, where emphasis is placed not only on construction but also on long-term sustainability and performance of buildings.

Ms Umoja emphasizes that this shift is not theoretical. Uganda has already introduced key regulatory frameworks such as the Building Control Amendment Act of 2025 and the forthcoming Real Estate Bill. She explains that these reforms are expected to enforce higher standards in the construction and management of buildings, strengthen accountability across the built environment sector, and elevate professionalism in how both public and private assets are handled.

While regulation is important, it cannot, on its own, resolve the deeper challenge facing the sector, which she describes as a persistent skills and technical [illegible]

Takeaways

- In the 1990s, the government, weighed down by the high cost of maintaining public buildings and housing stock, opted to sell off large portions of its real estate. The decision was meant to ease fiscal pressure, but it also exposed a deeper issue that ownership alone does not guarantee value.
- With urbanisation rates exceeding five percent annually and large-scale investments under Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan, the country is building faster than ever. Yet construction without structured management risks repeating history.

set gap.

According to Ms Umoja, many developments continue to be executed without sufficient technical input on post-construction management, leaving a gap between construction quality and operational sustainability.

Ms Umoja also observes that within the industry, the challenge has become more practical than policy-driven.

She notes that a significant number of buildings, including high-value developments, are still operating without trained facility managers.

Maintenance

In such cases, maintenance is often delegated to administrative personnel or outsourced informally, a practice that leads to reactive problem-solving instead of structured preventive maintenance, undermining the efficiency and lifespan of buildings.

"Facilities management is everything between air conditioning, lifts, generator, security, cleaning, catering and everything that is non-rental involved," explains Mr Moses Lutalo, managing director at Broll Uganda.