

Downtown K'la gets a facelift

The Minister for Kampala gave the directive: Street vendors must leave. Deadline issued, we laughed, of course, you know the drill. We have seen many deadlines in this city. Speaking of which, I hope y'all still have dustbins in your cars. But on this night, KCCA backed by police locked in and decided this one would actually work. By sunrise, the central business district looked like it had taken a cold shower. Old Taxi Park breathing like it had just completed yoga. You could see actual pavement.

Kampala was no longer giving K'la. It was giving... small small New York. Tiny Cape Town. Our taste is Manhattan, but our effort is sometimes... let us say Campton. Ambition international. Execution experimental.

For a brief, confusing moment, the city

looked like a PowerPoint slide titled Urban Order: Vision 2040. Clean walkways. Open sightlines. Even the air felt organised. Then the conspiracy cappuccino was served. Eyes turned to one *mugagga* and his shiny drainage Channel developments. Empty shops waiting patiently. The timeline connected dots faster than KCCA painted road markings. "So we clear hawkers and suddenly retail space is available?" People asked. Coincidence or convergence? Twitter for FBI, do not just trade goods, they trade suspicion professionally.

But beyond the memes and *mugagga* theories, let us be honest: Kampala was organised chaos. And not just because of vendors. We pedestrians move like we are conducting a live physics experiment. Brownian motion, but make it Ugandan.

One man walking north while texting south. Someone crossing the road diagonally with full confidence in destiny. Boda bodas appearing from angles geometry never approved. We had grown used to squeezing through the old streets, side-stepping matooke and *phasss* people, hopping over drainage channels. Now there is talk of planting grass and beautifying pavements. Green grass! In Kampala!

The streets are cleaner, yes. Easier to walk, yes. But also quieter. Thousands displaced and hustles paused straight to survival recalibrating. Kampala has always danced between order and opportunity. Today it looks polished, tomorrow, it may freestyle again because this city can take a shower but it will never lose its personality.

