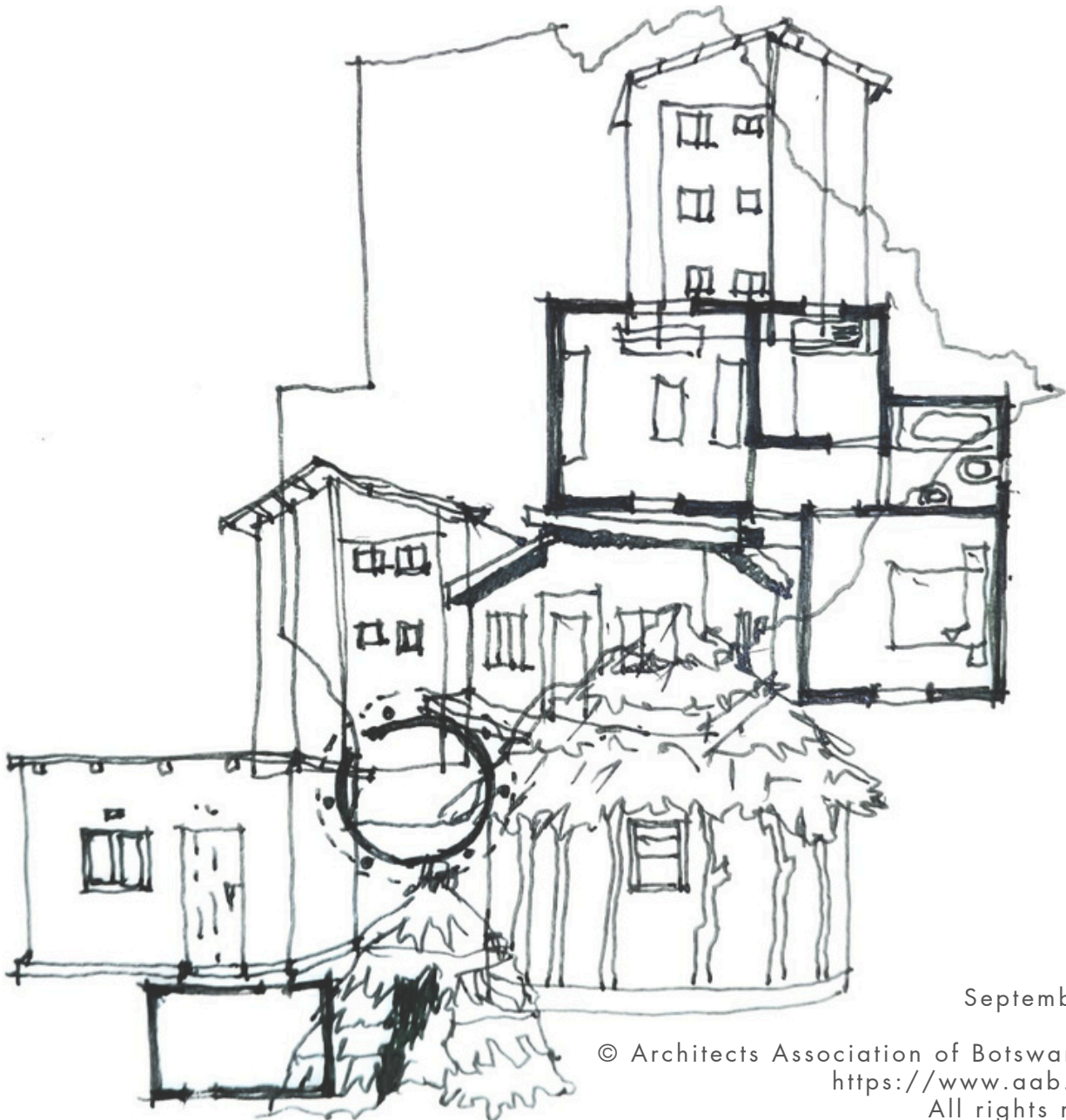


WHITE PAPER
01

RETHINKING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN BOTSWANA

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO INNOVATIVE AND
AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS



September 2025

© Architects Association of Botswana (AAB)
<https://www.aab.org.bw/>
All rights reserved.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Architects Association of Botswana (AAB) would like to thank the following individuals who contributed to the research, writing, editing, and reviewing of this paper:

Bruce Tshepiso Kapele, Gorata Kgafela, Boineelo Masuku, Baone Eureka More, Thandeka Palai, Kolobetso Selemena, Hillary Zebron

Special Credit to Kolobetso Selemena for the artwork & Baone Eureka More for the design layouts

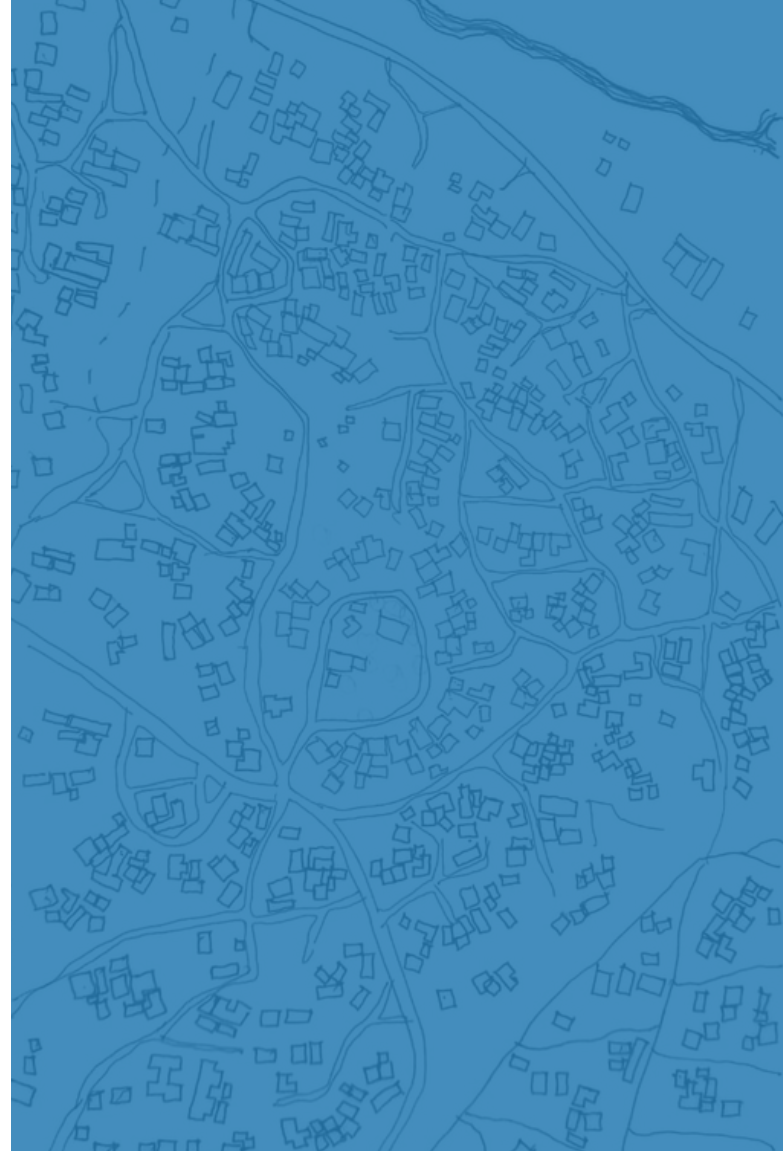


ABOUT

THE ARCHITECTS ASSOCIATION OF BOTSWANA (AAB)

The Architects' Association of Botswana is the preeminent professional and voluntary body representing the interests of locally registered architects, technologists, and draftspersons in Botswana and globally. The AAB mandate encompasses promoting architectural excellence, upholding professional standards and ethics, advocating for the profession's role in national development, and fostering an environment conducive to innovative and sustainable built solutions.

The AAB is vital in shaping the nation's architectural landscape, developing Botswana's unique architectural identity, and expressing our national ideals. As a member of the International Union of Architects (UIA), the African Union of Architects (AUA), and the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), AAB participates in global discourse on the built environment.



Architectural input is critical to addressing complex national challenges such as the severe housing deficit and fostering holistic alignment with the objectives of the country's development and transformation strategies, as well as its long-term vision. The AAB is aligned with multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG11 (Sustainable Cities), SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals), SDG9 (Industry Innovation and Infrastructure), and SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities).

AAB members possess comprehensive expertise in integrated design, project management, sustainability, and civic engagement and offer invaluable input to housing policy formulation and its practical implementation to achieve housing affordability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PG 01

02.
INTRODUCTION PG 02

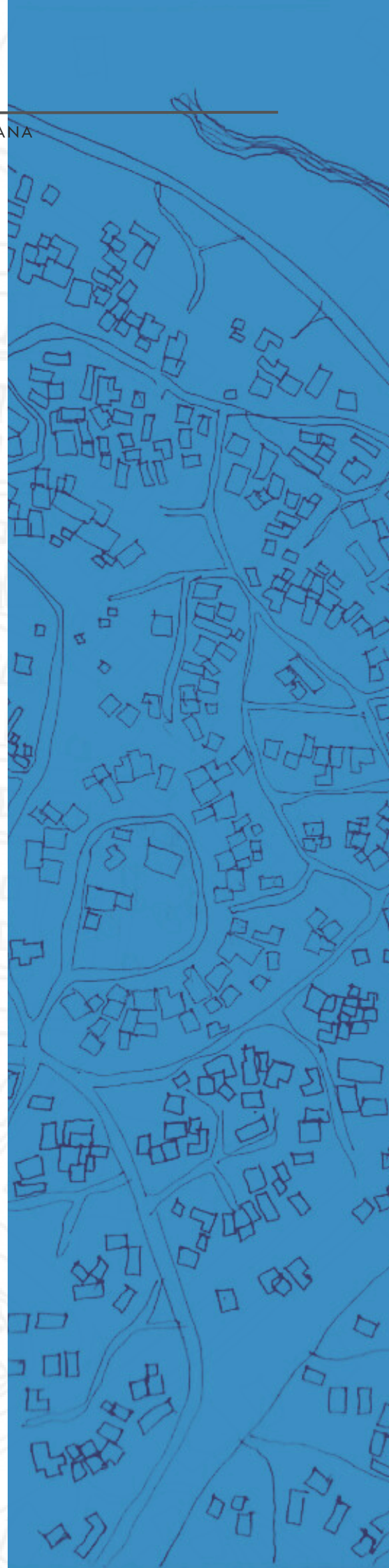
03.
A CALL TO ACTION PG 03

04.
UNDERSTANDING THE
HOUSING CHALLENGE IN
BOTSWANA PG 04

05.
INNOVATING HOUSING
DELIVERY PG 07

06.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
INNOVATION THROUGH
BROAD-BASED SUSTAINABILITY PG 10

07.
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS PG 12



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Botswana faces a growing housing crisis, shaped by systemic issues in land governance, fragmented policy implementation, unaffordable market pricing, and rapid urbanisation. Despite the country's commendable legacy of promoting land ownership and housing access, current frameworks have proven inadequate to meet evolving social, economic, and demographic realities.

A persistent disconnect between housing delivery mechanisms and the lived experiences of citizens has left many, particularly the youth and low-to-middle-income households, excluded from access to affordable, dignified, and well-serviced shelter. The inefficiency of siloed institutions, outdated land policies, and infrastructure lags in peri-urban growth zones like Mogoditshane and Oodi have further exposed the limits of current housing models. Fiscal constraints have pushed the government to austerity, underscoring the need for collaborative, innovative, and sustainable solutions that align with Botswana's national development goals and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11.

APPROACH

This white paper, developed by the Architects Association of Botswana (AAB), proposes a tripartite collaboration model rooted in design-led policy and policymaking, where the public sector, private sector, and communities co-create housing solutions through a shared responsibility and innovation. The approach positions architecture as an agent of spatial transformation that can influence economic development, environmental stewardship, and social cohesion. It advocates for using low-cost, climate-responsive construction technologies alongside localizing housing value chains through youth cooperatives trained in sustainable construction. Central to this vision is integrating local knowledge, incremental development models, and participatory planning processes that empower citizens as stakeholders in housing production. Additionally, the paper introduces a bold proposal for a Botswana Housing Innovation Lab as a collaborative platform for experimentation, co-creation, and adaptive policymaking that leverages existing resources while inviting capital, civic, and academic partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The AAB recommends a coordinated national strategy built on three pillars:

1. Policy reform and institutional integration to eliminate redundancies, bridge delivery gaps, and embed design thinking into the full housing policy lifecycle.

2. Scalable implementation of a youth-led cooperative housing prototype, underpinned by accessible green technologies and a localized skills development ecosystem.

3. Establishment of the Botswana Housing Innovation Lab as a national platform for prototyping policy and design interventions, uniting public institutions, private enterprises, and civil society. This lab is envisioned as an open, collaborative, and speculative space where new ideas for sustainable and inclusive housing are developed and tested in real-time. The AAB invites government, private investors, local communities, and development partners to contribute to shaping this innovation ecosystem thus transforming Botswana's housing sector from reactive and fragmented to proactive, resilient, and equitable.

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This white paper examines the ecosystem of policies concerned with enabling the attainment of housing in Botswana and responds to the key question:

HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT, THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND COMMUNITIES COLLABORATE TO DELIVER AFFORDABLE HOUSING INNOVATIVELY IN BOTSWANA?



Despite Botswana's historical economic prowess and small population, policy initiatives have not adequately yielded desirable results to house Botswana in urban and rural contexts. Since 1967, Botswana's government has pursued supply-side and demand-side policies through housing-mandated state agencies such as the Botswana Housing Corporation, reforms to tenure security, subsidized housing development through the SHHA, low-interest housing loans by the National Development Bank, and workforce housing schemes. The World Bank ascribes the persistent housing crisis to various factors such as widening inequality, a geographic shift of poverty to urban areas, stifled private sector growth, and a lack of effective planning.¹

Housing affordability is a global crisis that afflicts developed and developing nations alike, and Botswana is no exception. In Botswana, the housing crisis is exacerbated by poverty, unemployment, lack of access to long-term finance, and underdeveloped public transport infrastructure. The 2015/16 household survey recorded a national decline in home ownership, while approximately 24% of household income was spent on transport and 17% on housing². With a Gini coefficient of 0.53, an upper-middle-income country (UMIC) poverty rate of 67%, and an unemployment rate of 23.14%, Botswana's statistics tell of these disparities³.

THE HOUSING CRISIS AT A GLANCE



- BWP 670,000 for a basic 55m² urban flat
- 1 in 2 households nationally own their homes
- 3 in 4 urban households live in rented housing

¹(CENTRE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE IN AFRICA 2023)
²(STATISTICS BOTSWANA 2018)
³(THE WORLD BANK 2024)

A CALL TO ACTION: THE ARCHITECT'S INFLUENCE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPERATIVE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN BOTSWANA

Marking this critical juncture in Botswana's development, President Advocate Duma Gideon Boko has pronounced the delivery of affordable housing as a priority for the new government. This articulation was a significant shift, with the government unveiling a bold ambition to deliver 100,000 housing units within five years, recognizing housing as both a human right and an economic stimulus. Injecting BWP 3 billion into the economy and generating over 100,000 jobs⁴, this initiative goes beyond shelter provision but also represents the government's resolve to reframe housing as a vehicle for social equity, job creation, and economic diversification. The success of this renewed housing drive is crucial for diversifying the economy and creating employment, particularly given the nation's current economic challenges, including a downturn in the diamond industry and rising government debt⁵.

At this critical juncture in Botswana's development, architecture emerges as a strategic instrument for achieving national objectives. Architectural professionals can envision and execute integrated design solutions to translate these goals into a built reality. Architecture is not merely the act of designing and constructing buildings; it is a process of imagining and producing space that mirrors the spirit and aspirations of the nation. By designing cost-efficient, modular homes and planning livable communities that foster dignity and belonging, architects ensure that affordable housing is not simply an emergency response to a housing deficit but a visionary framework for long-term human development. The AAB's commitment to excellence, ethics, and innovation positions its members to play a meaningful role in this transformation as strategic collaborators in national development.

THE ARCHITECT'S ROLE IN HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



- **Shaping National Identity and Culture**
- **Driving Economic Development**
- **Promoting Social Well-being and Inclusivity**
- **Leading Sustainable Development and Environmental Stewardship**
- **Influencing Policy and Urban Planning**

⁴(SAT REPORTER 2025)
⁵(PWC 2025)

UNDERSTANDING THE HOUSING CHALLENGE IN BOTSWANA

| SIGNS OF DISTRESS

Botswana has a low population density of 2.5 million people in a land area of 570,000 square kilometres. Despite a long-standing commitment to promoting land and home ownership through government-led programs, signs of distress in the housing sector are increasingly visible in both urban and rural contexts. This paradox reveals a deeper, multifaceted crisis rooted in land tenure complexities, inadequate urban planning, rising housing costs, and poor access to serviced land. The country's housing distress signals are hard to ignore, especially the gap between delivery and the lived needs of citizens.

A major indicator of this distress is the rise in households living in inadequate conditions⁶ and the number of Batswana living in substandard or insecure conditions. While tribal land makes up 71% of the country and is allocated on the principle that every Motswana has a right to land. However, weak policy implementation, inconsistent landboard practices, and insufficient infrastructure have hindered effective land use and led to a rise in land-related contestations⁷.

Urbanization has amplified these issues, with significant pressure on peri-urban villages, which have been subjected to the economic magnetism of Gaborone. According to the 2022 census Mogoditshane and Tlokweng are the first and third most populated villages, while Sese, Modipane, Oodi, and Shashe Mooke registered the highest population growth rates in the country⁸. Botswana's land policy has neglected the unique position of these villages despite evidence that they are growing faster than Gaborone.

According to Statistics Botswana, more than 18% of residents in urban villages are accommodated by relatives, resulting in occurrences of larger-than-average household sizes, such as 13 people in a household, compared to a national average of 3.3⁹. Peripheral urbanization has been marked with conflicts ranging from illegal land transactions that led to the 1995 Kgabo Commission on land problems in Mogoditshane, the Lesetedi Commission on illicit land allocations in Gaborone, cases of squatting in Ledumadumane and Kgaphamadi, and the 2012 and 2013 public outbursts at Tlokweng and Oodi Landboards, respectively¹⁰.

Affordability remains the most acute expression of the housing crisis. Most households cannot afford the lowest-cost formal home, and a minimum household income of BWP14,000 is required to purchase the cheapest unit on the urban market¹¹. This is far beyond the reach of most Batswana, especially in single-income households that dominate urban areas. Households living in inadequate conditions include those living within planned and serviced areas within the cities, towns, and peri-urban villages. Lack of access to finance and delays in providing serviced land further compound the situation, resulting in an increasing number of citizens occupying unsafe dwellings out of economic necessity.

⁶(CENTRE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE IN AFRICA 2023)

⁷(GWEBU 2014; ISAACS AND MANATSHA 2016)

⁸(SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL POVERTY NETWORK 2002), (STATISTICS BOTSWANA 2022)

⁹(KGAFELA 2025; STATISTICS BOTSWANA 2018)

| SIGNS OF DISTRESS

Collectively, these signs, ranging from ineffective land governance to urban sprawl to unaffordable housing and service deficits, reveal a systemic failure to align policy, land-use, and economic realities with the needs of a growing and diversifying population. Botswana's housing challenge is not one-dimensional.

Addressing it will require a coordinated and inclusive strategy rooted in reforming land management, strengthening urban infrastructure, and ensuring that housing solutions are economically accessible, legally secure, socially responsive, and environmentally sensible.

SIGNS OF DISTRESS



- 39.7% of households live in inadequate housing
- Ineffective land governance frameworks
- Hyper-demand for Peri-urban land and illicit land transfers
- Average household income is 50% the requirement to purchase the cheapest house on the market



¹⁰(GWEBU 2014; ISAACS AND MANATSHA 2016; KGAFELA 2025)
¹¹(CENTRE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FINANCE IN AFRICA 2023)

ARTICULATING THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

The central problem is that Botswana's housing sector is constrained by a fragmented, outdated, and poorly coordinated policy and governance framework that fails to meet the growing demand for affordable, accessible, and adequately serviced housing. This crisis stems from systemic structural deficiencies, including an outdated 2000 National Housing Policy that is misaligned with current urban dynamics and development goals, and a centralised land governance structure that limits local responsiveness. Institutional inefficiencies further compound the issue, with key actors such as the BHC, Land Boards, and Village Development Committees operating in silos, leading to duplicated efforts, procedural delays, and confusion among applicants.

Although efforts such as the, Land Procedures Capacity Systems (LAPCAS) initiative, aimed at modernising land administration, progress of the system has been met with implementation failures, often due to poor coordination, outdated data, resource constraints, limited public buy-in, and land hoarding¹².

These challenges are intensified by rapid urbanisation, inadequate land servicing, and the erosion of traditional construction knowledge and community financing models. As formal settlements proliferate in peri-urban areas, formal delivery fails to keep pace with socio-economic shifts.

At the same time, the loss of indigenous building techniques and underuse of communal financial systems such as mafisa and motshelo represent missed opportunities for cost-effective, locally rooted housing solutions. Botswana's housing challenge therefore requires an integrated, forward-looking strategy that addresses policy reform, institutional coordination, land governance, and socio-cultural innovation.

CENTRAL PROBLEM



- Fragmented policy formulation and implementation
- Outdated and misaligned Housing Policy
- Uncontextualized response to localized circumstances
- Missed opportunities for locally rooted housing solutions



¹²(MAGOSI ET AL., 2024; TEMBO, KAMPAMBA & NKWAE, 2014).

INNOVATING HOUSING DELIVERY

| THE CASE FOR A TRIPARTITE COLLABORATION

The central problem is that Botswana's housing sector is constrained by a fragmented, outdated, and poorly coordinated policy and governance framework that fails to meet the growing demand for affordable, accessible, and adequately serviced housing. This crisis stems from systemic structural deficiencies, including an outdated 2000 National Housing Policy that is misaligned with current urban dynamics and development goals, and a centralised land governance structure that limits local responsiveness. Institutional inefficiencies further compound the issue, with key actors such as the BHC, Land Boards, and Village Development Committees operating in silos, leading to duplicated efforts, procedural delays, and confusion among applicants.

Although efforts such as the Land Procedures Capacity Systems (LAPCAS) initiative, aimed at modernising land administration, progress of the system has been met with implementation failures, often due to poor coordination, outdated data, resource constraints, limited public buy-in, and land hoarding..

These challenges are intensified by rapid urbanisation, inadequate land servicing, and the erosion of traditional construction knowledge and community financing models.

As formal settlements proliferate in peri-urban areas, formal delivery fails to keep pace with socio-economic shifts.

At the same time, the loss of indigenous building techniques and underuse of communal financial systems such as mafisa and motshelo represent missed opportunities for cost-effective, locally rooted housing solutions. Botswana's housing challenge therefore requires an integrated, forward-looking strategy that addresses policy reform, institutional coordination, land governance, and socio-cultural innovation.

This paper asserts that sustainable housing development must mirror the three branches of sustainability: economic, environmental, and socio-political¹³. To this end, we suggest a tripartite framework anchored in collaboration between the government, the private sector, and communities. These dimensions are deeply interconnected: economic sustainability ensures capital and knowledge flow; environmental sustainability safeguards ecosystems for present and future generations; socio-political sustainability fosters collective action through inclusive governance. A tripartite approach, consisting of Government, Private sector and Communities, which calls on co-creation across the entire housing lifecycle, from policy design to implementation and maintenance, and a holistic view of housing as part of a broader ecosystem involving transport, services, healthcare, and education¹⁴.

A roadmap incorporating the full spectrum of actors and disciplines is necessary to reconnect the broken chain between income, employment, infrastructure, and housing. This system breakdown leaves many without a viable path to homeownership.



¹³(THEIS, TOM AND TOMKIN, JONATHAN 2015)

¹⁴(W.E.FORUM 2019)

| GOVERNMENT

The government must lead and coordinate in: Policy Reform and Streamlined Governance - To reshape the housing ecosystem through comprehensive policy reform and better coordination. While various departments and agencies, including BHC, SHHA, and Land Boards, have taken commendable steps to address different aspects of the housing challenge, these efforts are siloed and fragmented. The absence of integrated service delivery makes it difficult for citizens to navigate housing options. This is particularly evident in the 'missing middle' phenomenon, where a growing segment of the population earns too much to qualify for subsidized housing but too little to access market-based loans, excluding them from both ends. Coordinated Infrastructure Delivery and Enabling Regulation - Another major constraint is the disconnect between infrastructure delivery

| PRIVATE SECTOR

Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)s and Design-Led Innovation – The private sector, comprising architects, developers, engineers, financiers, and innovators, has a pivotal role in closing the housing delivery gap. Their contributions extend beyond funding and construction to include spatial intelligence, material innovation, and operational efficiency. A growing global consensus recognizes that the integration of design-led frameworks into private sector engagement can radically enhance housing outcomes. Design-led policy embeds architectural and urban design principles into policy and planning, ensuring that housing solutions are context-sensitive, incremental, integrated, functional, and dignified¹⁵. Rather than treating design as a luxury, it becomes the core problem-solving tool to create spaces that reflect the local cultural, environmental, and economic realities.

PPPs should evolve to leverage private sector capital and champion design-led policy-making, emphasizing user empathy, prototyping, collaboration, and iteration in policy design¹⁶. This integrated approach can overcome common pitfalls such as mismatched housing typologies or poor site selection, which are evident in previously cited failures. By engaging early and substantively in both the design and governance of housing policy, the private sector can drive innovation in construction techniques, low-carbon materials, alternative financing mechanisms, and mixed-income development models that are both scalable and inclusive.

| COMMUNITIES

Participatory planning and Traditional Knowledge – Communities are not passive beneficiaries but active stakeholders whose lived experiences, knowledge, systems, and spatial practices are critical to sustainable housing delivery¹⁷. Research findings confirm that Botswana continue to express a deep desire for collaboration, transparency, and meaningful participation in shaping their living environments. Participants in recent studies have cited delays in land allocation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a loss of trust in existing institutional mechanisms as significant barriers to achieving housing aspirations¹⁸. These insights echo long-standing calls for contextualized bottom-up approaches that recognize the legitimacy and value of community-driven solutions¹⁹.



¹⁵(ARAVENA, 2016; COLREAVY, 2020).

¹⁶(BASON, 2014; IDEO.ORG, 2015).

¹⁷(KGAFELA 2025)

¹⁸(KGAFELA 2025)

¹⁹(PATEL & MITLIN, 2010; VESTBRO, 2010; THE HOUSING AGENCY, 2020)

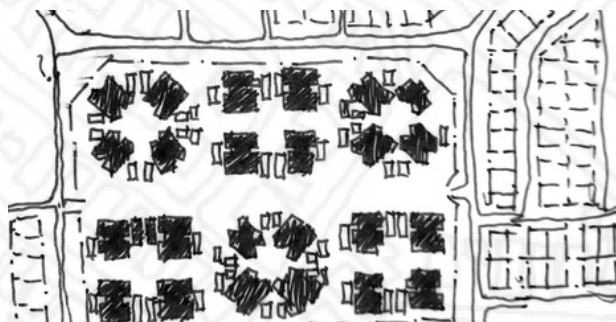
COMMUNITIES

Incorporating design-led policy within community engagement means embracing models that are participatory, culturally grounded, and adaptable over time. This includes incremental housing strategies, phased development, self-build options that allow residents to construct and expand based on evolving needs and available resources²⁰. It also includes reviving and repurposing traditional practices such as mafisa, motshelo, and community cooperatives, historically enabling collective ownership and support mechanisms for housing and property. When supported by enabling policy and technical assistance, these practices can become powerful vehicles for democratizing housing access and enhancing resilience.

Critically, design-led policymaking calls for integrating spatial designers, planners, and engineers into the policymaking process, ensuring that local voices are reflected in implementation, policy conception, and strategy development²¹. This enhances the fit between policy intent and on-the-ground realities, especially in peri-urban areas like Mogoditshane, Oodi, and Tlokweng, which are growing faster than Gaborone, yet remain underserved²².

Through collaborative governance structures, innovation hubs, and localized design teams, communities can become essential co-producers of housing solutions, helping to restore legitimacy, build trust, and ensure that homes are not just shelters but foundations for dignity, opportunity, and equity.

Botswana can transition from reactive, fragmented interventions to a holistic, forward-looking housing ecosystem by embedding design-led thinking within a tripartite collaboration model. The government provides the enabling frameworks and infrastructure, the private sector brings innovation and scalable delivery models, and communities offer insight, legitimacy, and local adaptability necessary for success²³. This co-creation approach is essential for producing housing that is genuinely inclusive, sustainable, and transformative.



THE CASE FOR CO-CREATING HOUSING



- Tripartite Collaboration – government + private sector + communities
- Design-led policymaking
- Harnessing public sector capacity
- Participatory planning and traditional knowledge
- Private sector innovation – capital, innovation, operational efficiency

²⁰(ARAVENA, 2016; COLREAVY, 2020)

²¹SEE (BASON, 2014; IDEO.ORG, 2015).

²²(BATISANI AND YARNAL 2011; GWEBU 2014)

²³SEE (THE HOUSING AGENCY 2020, UN-HABITAT 2020)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION THROUGH BROAD-BASED SUSTAINABILITY

As Botswana contends with the dual pressures of rapid urbanisation and the growing demand for housing, innovation emerges as a necessary strategic lever for transformation. Innovation in housing must incorporate technological novelty while remaining inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainability-driven. Opportunities for innovation lie in rethinking what we build, how we build, with whom we build, and the broader societal impact. This means approaching housing as an ecosystem that integrates spatial design, environmental performance, economic development, and cultural continuity.

A key area for opportunity lies in broad-based sustainability, which positions housing as a vehicle for long-term human and ecological well-being. Innovation in this sense includes upskilling local labor forces in sustainable construction methods, creating vocational training pipelines in green building technologies, and embedding sustainability in national curricula. These interventions provide benefits well beyond the provision of shelter by stimulating local economies, creating employment, and empowering communities with transferrable skills. The integration of sustainability across design, materials, and policy also contributes to national goals on climate adaptation and resilience.

By investing in sustainability at entry level, from construction methods to community involvement, housing becomes a foundation for economic inclusion and environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, innovation in low-cost, climate responsive design and materials presents an opportunity to rethink affordability without compromising quality. Locally sourced, environmentally appropriate materials such as adobe, compressed earth blocks, fly ash blocks, and thatch, reduce costs as well as improve thermal comfort, energy efficiency, and environmental impact.

These climate-sensitive solutions align with Botswana's climate, reducing dependence on imported construction materials and costly mechanical cooling systems. Architectural professionals and developers can lead the shift towards passive design strategies that leverage orientation, shading, ventilation, and minimising the ecological footprint of new housing developments while enhancing long-term habitability.



Incorporating traditional architecture and local knowledge systems into contemporary housing design offers another frontier for innovation. Indigenous design traditions in Botswana have long exemplified adaptive, resource-efficient building practices suited to the local climate and way of life. Reviving and modernising these practices, such as courtyard layouts (lolwapa), community-oriented spaces, and shared infrastructure (kgotla), can produce housing that resonates culturally while meeting current performance standards. These methods are often incremental and participatory, allowing households to grow their homes as resources allow, and reinforcing the agency of residents in shaping their environments.

Such models represent technical and epistemological innovations that challenge the dominance of uncontextualized imported housing models that may not fit local realities.

Ultimately, the true benefit of housing innovation lies in its multiplier effects. When implemented thoughtfully, it addresses shelter and the broader imperatives of equity, economic opportunity, cultural identity, and environmental resilience. By embracing low-cost, climate-responsive, and culturally grounded methods, Botswana can pioneer a truly sustainable housing delivery model.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION



- **Broad-based Sustainability**
- **Inclusive, context-sensitive**
- **Stimulate local economies, create employment, empower communities**
- **Low-cost, climate-responsive design and materials**
- **Traditional architecture and local knowledge systems**
- **Socially, economically, and ecologically responsive**

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

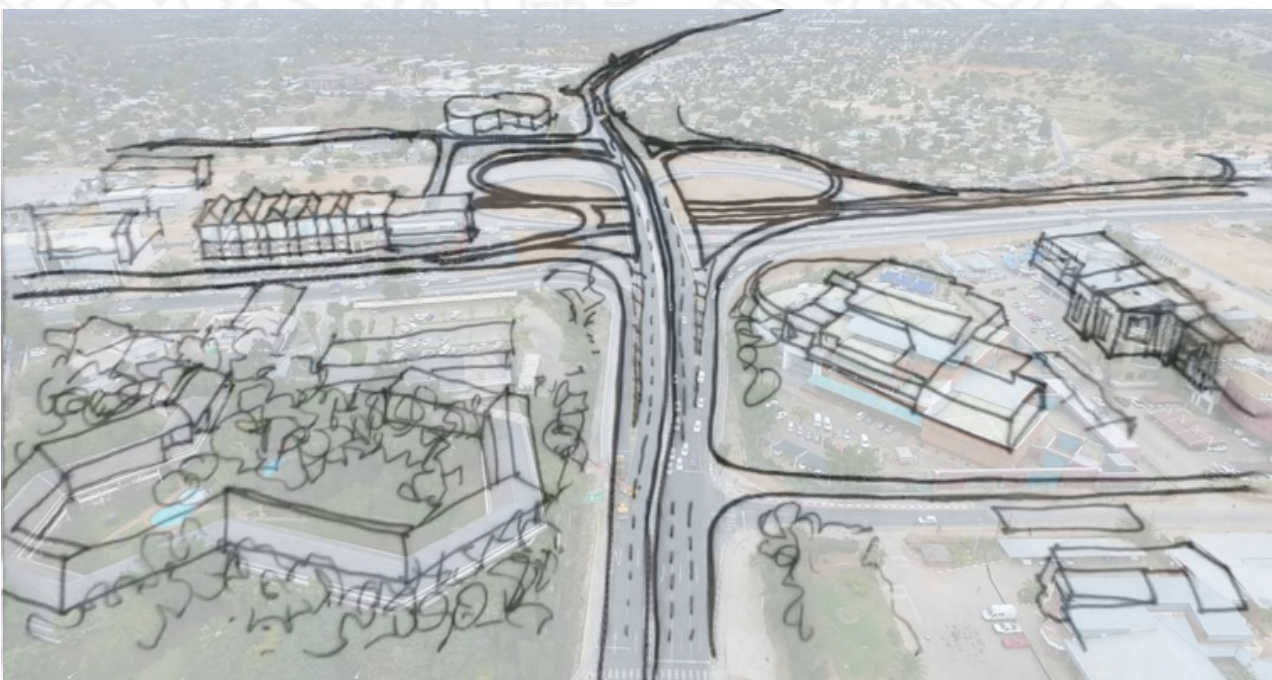
| POLICY REFORM AND INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

Policy fragmentation, outdated regulations, and the disjointed mandates of various government agencies hinder effective housing delivery in Botswana. The 2000 National Housing Policy no longer reflects the realities of Botswana's urbanization, land pressures, or socio-economic disparities. To resolve these challenges, Botswana must pursue policy reform that modernizes existing frameworks, closes coordination gaps between institutions, and better aligns national development goals with housing needs.

A central aspect of this reform should be creating an integrated housing delivery framework that synchronises land administration, infrastructure provision, and housing finance under a shared national strategy. This would require harmonizing the mandates of agencies, such as the Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC), Land Boards, local councils, and the SHHA program, with clearly defined responsibilities and a centralized oversight mechanism.

Housing policy must be adaptive and responsive to accommodate innovations and community participation. An integrated approach also means coupling infrastructure delivery with housing projects, providing timely water, sanitation, energy, and mobility networks that support viable, sustainable communities.

Institutional integration, streamlining policy and institutional coordination, will position Botswana better to scale inclusive, cost-effective, and environmentally sound housing solutions that reflect its people's aspirations and lived realities.



DEVELOPMENT OF A COOPERATIVE YOUTH-DRIVEN SCALABLE HOUSING PROTOTYPE

The Architects Association of Botswana (AAB) proposes the adoption of a scalable, youth-centered housing prototype leveraging Habiterria Interlocking Block Technology or other similar innovative and sustainable solutions to the national housing deficit. Such modular technologies distinguish themselves through superior cost effectiveness, environmental compatibility, and construction speed, achieving up to ten times faster build rates and 36% lower costs than conventional masonry systems. Habiterria has been successfully tested through a partnership between a regional cement company and the EU-funded UN Green Jobs Programme, as a technology that presents clear potential for Botswana. Using fly ash, an abundant by-product from Morupule Power Station, reduces material costs and environmental impact. It is designed for modularity and minimal mortar use, supporting the efficient development of housing, schools, and public infrastructure with locally available resources.

At the core of this prototype is a youth empowerment model structured around cooperative-led construction enterprises. These cooperatives, supported through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework, would receive training via institutions such as CITF and operate as an independent, quality-assured development units delivering public housing and infrastructure projects.

The model includes a mentorship program, business incubation, and a cooperative graduate scheme tied to vocational pathways such as the Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET). Skills training would be inclusive, targeting youth from junior secondary education levels and equipping them with construction disciplines.

Additionally, a parallel technology transfer and localization strategy would ensure local production of block-making machinery, reducing import dependency and stimulating secondary industries such as metal fabrication and equipment servicing. By embedding interlocking block technology within a broader framework of skills development, entrepreneurship, and cooperative governance, the initiative links affordable housing delivery to sustainable economic growth and industrial revitalization.

To ensure longterm viability, the AAB proposes structured government support in the form of guaranteed construction contracts for youth cooperatives, tax incentives, and policy directives positioning this technology as the preferred option for civil service housing. Furthermore, the model allows for blended financing mechanisms, from public infrastructure funds to private equity and mortgage-based homeowner support, to drive the turnkey development process. Complementary service partnerships would be forged to integrate renewable energy, sanitation, and waste management solutions, aligning housing with sustainability objectives.

The anticipated outcome is a robust ecosystem of affordable, green infrastructure, driven by youthful participation and innovation. This would address the urgent housing needs and catalyze a transformative shift towards broad-based sustainability and socio-economic inclusion, delivering homes as platforms for dignity, productivity, and opportunity.

| ESTABLISHMENT OF BOTSWANA HOUSING INNOVATION LAB

In this vein, The Architects Association of Botswana (AAB) further proposes the establishment of the Botswana Housing Innovation Lab as a collaborative, design-led platform to imagine, test, and advance transformative approaches to housing policy, delivery, and design. This lab will serve as a strategic response to the structural fragmentation, fiscal limitations, and policy inertial currently impeding affordable housing delivery, anchored in the belief that solutions must emerge from the interplay between government, private sector, and communities.

The lab would offer an interdisciplinary space for co-creation, bringing together architects, planners, technologists, civic groups, financial institutions, and policymakers to collectively prototype and iterate scalable housing solutions grounded in Botswana's local realities.

The Housing Innovation Lab is envisioned as a dynamic ecosystem and hub for experimental policymaking, applied research, and grassroots empowerment. It will draw on lessons from global public innovation units such as Denmark's MindLab, the UK's Behavioral Insights Team, and Finland's Helsinki Design Lab, while deeply rooted in Botswana's own cultural, environmental, and socio-economic contexts. Its functions may include testing new

materials, construction systems, piloting alternative finance models for the "missing middle", refining land administration strategies, or designing participatory frameworks for community-led planning. Importantly, the Lab would amplify and leverage available government programs, existing research, and public infrastructure to close the gaps in the housing delivery chain and make policy more implementable, responsive, and people-centred.

While the specific structure and scope of the Housing Innovation Lab remain open to co-creation, the AAB extends an open invitation to government, private capital, academia, civil society, and local communities to contribute to its vision and development. It may be conceived of as a national think-and-do tank, a catalytic innovation fund, a network of decentralized pilot sites, or a fusion of all three, emerging from collective dialogue and shared ambition.

What is clear, however, is that the complexity of Botswana's housing crisis demands new governance arrangements, new tools, and new relationships. The AAB stands ready to convene and facilitate this national conversation, proposing the Lab as a scaffold and foundation on which Botswana can collaboratively build a future of housing as infrastructure and a vehicle for dignity, sustainability, and inclusive growth.

WAY FORWARD



- Policy reform and institutional integration to accelerate housing production and dismantle silos
- Development of a cooperative youth-driven scalable housing prototype
- AAB to champion the establishment of a Housing Innovation Lab
- Leverage TVET and CITF for skills development in modular housing construction
- Explore alternative finance models
- Open access to data on housing stock, land, and citizen needs
- Reform land allocation and administration

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bason, Christian. 2014. Design for Policy. Gower.
- Batisani, Nnyaladzi, and Brent Yarnal. 2011. "Elasticity of Capital-Land Substitution in Housing Construction, Gaborone, Botswana: Implications for Smart Growth Policy and Affordable Housing." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 99 (2): 77–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2010.08.016>.
- Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa. 2023. Botswana Country Profile. <https://housingfinanceafrica.org/country-detail/botswana/>.
- Government of Botswana. 1991. Report of the Lesetedi Commission of Inquiry into State Land Allocation in Gaborone. Gaborone
- Government of Botswana. 1995. Report of the Kgabo Commission of Inquiry into State Land Problems in Mogoditshane and Other Peri-Urban Villages. Gaborone
- Gwebu, Thando D. 2014. "Policy Implications of Urbanisation Patterns and Processes in Botswana." *Botswana Notes and Records* 46: 84–98.
- Isaacs, Senwelo M, and Boga Thura Manatsha. 2016. "Will the Dreaded 'Yellow Monster' Stop Roaring Again?: An Appraisal of Botswana's 2015 Land Policy." *Botswana Notes and Records* 48: 383–95.
- Kgafela, Gorata. 2025. "Imagined Futures of Housing Policy in Botswana - Unveiling Spatial Narratives Through a Phenomenological-Critical-Postcolonial Lens." Dissertation, Harvard University.
- National Policy on Housing in Botswana (2000).
- PWC. 2025. "Botswana Budget 2025/2026." PWC, February. <https://www.pwc.com/bw/en/assets/pdf/botswana-budget-2025-26.pdf>.
- SAT Reporter. 2025. "Botswana Embarks on Ambitious Housing Initiative to Stimulate Economic Growth and Social Equity." News. *The Southern African Times*, April 24. <https://southernafricantimes.com/botswana-embarks-on-ambitious-housing-initiative-to-stimulate-economic-growth-and-social-equity/>.
- Southern African Regional Poverty Network. 2002. "Growing Land Hunger in Botswana? A Commentary by SARPN on Issues Framed in a SARPN-Funded Workshop in Botswana Organised by BOCONGO and FONSAG." Southern African Regional Poverty Network, June. https://sarprn.org/CountryPovertyPapers/Botswana/june2002/land_hunger.pdf.
- Statistics Botswana. 2018. Botswana Multi-Topic Household Survey Report 2015/16. Gaborone. Botswana.
- Statistics Botswana. 2022. 2022 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results. <https://www.statsbots.org.bw/sites/default/files/2022%20Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%20Preliminary%20Results.pdf>.
- The World Bank. 2024. Poverty and Equity Brief: Botswana.
- Theis, Tom, and Jonathan Tomkin, Jonathan. 2015. Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation. OpenStax CNX.
- W.E.Forum. 2019. "Making Affordable Housing a Reality in Cities." *World Economic Forum*, no. June: 1–60.

NOTE ON THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI

This document acknowledges the use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools to support the summarisation of original research content. These tools were employed solely for structuring sections of the text and drafting summaries to enhance clarity. All core ideas, arguments, and original analyses presented remain the product of the author's research, insights, and intellectual framing. The use of AI does not diminish this work's authenticity, originality, or scholarly rigor.



White Paper 01

September 2025

© Architects Association of Botswana (AAB)
<https://www.aab.org.bw/>

All rights reserved.

Link for Shorter article

