

VARs NEWSLETTER

Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources – Vanuatu Affordable and Resilient Settlements Project Weekly Newsletter



THE WORLD BANK



SHEFA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL SECRETARY GENERAL LIONEL KALUAT & VARs MANAGER LAWRIE CARLSON GOING THROUGH THE ETAS SUBDIVISION PLANS

WHY COMMUNITY DESIGN MATTERS FOR ETAS SUBDIVISIONS

The Government of Vanuatu has embarked on the Etas Subdivision not just to provide land for people to build homes, but to learn by doing — creating an opportunity for testing and refining the policies, planning standards, and delivery approaches that will guide the rapid growth of Greater Port Vila.

This hands-on approach is helping government agencies build experience while paving the way for the private sector to take on future developments with confidence.

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BUILDING COMMUNITIES, NOT JUST HOUSING

Community design is at the heart of good design, planning and resilience. At Etas, planning has shifted from focusing on individual plots to creating a neighbourhood where people, connection, and shared spaces matter most. Walkable streets, community hubs, and green corridors will foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

POLICY INNOVATION: AFFORDABLE 400 M² LOTS

One of the most significant lessons has been the decision to reduce minimum subdivision lot sizes from 1 000 m² to 400 m².

This reform makes land significantly more affordable, aligns with urban densification goals, and ensures that essential infrastructure can serve more families efficiently.

By rethinking the scale of urban living, the Etas model balances affordability, livability, and environmental integrity.

DESIGNING FOR CONNECTION AND ACCESS

Following good design principles, Etas ensures daily needs—markets, green spaces, and community facilities—are accessible by a short walk.

This encourages active living, reduces transport costs, and builds stronger social networks across the subdivision.

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

- Integrating planning, legal, and engineering processes under a single project improves efficiency.
- Involving communities early in design decisions builds ownership and local identity.
- Policy flexibility—such as adapting lot sizes and layouts—supports innovation and affordability.
- Demonstration projects create practical guidance for future private-sector-led subdivisions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Etas subdivision stands as a milestone for urban development in Vanuatu—proof that government-led experimentation can lead to enduring reform.

The insights gained will inform new policies, subdivision codes and policy, and housing models that ensure the next phase of Greater Port Vila's growth is affordable, inclusive, and resilient.

FEEDBACK & CONTRIBUTIONS:

We want your input!

Send your updates, suggestions, or stories to de@vars.vu by Thursday 3 PM for inclusion in next week's issue.