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Garden Route First — Research Document

Part One: Research Summary

The vision for South Africa from 2027 to 2032 centres on the **Garden Route First** initiative, a practical proof-of-concept model for community-driven governance. This movement aims to utilize the **Independent Ratepayers Association of South Africa (IRASA)** as the non-political establishment to represent their board members and parliament members, protecting independent councillors from political interference, as expressly permitted under South African law [1] [2].

Focused on the Garden Route District Municipality—encompassing seven local municipalities including George, Mossel Bay, Knysna, Bitou, Hessequa, Kannaland, and Greater Oudtshoorn—the plan unites the community under one vision: **7 Municipalities, 1 Vision, 1 Future** [3].

The initiative is supported by a formal response to the South African Government's White Paper on Local Government 1998 Review, submitted in 2025 by local property owners associations and endorsed at public meetings across the Eden District [1]. Key to this future is the partnership between civic associations and IRASA, championing "People Before Politics" and ensuring that councillors act as employees of the voters, funded by their rates and taxes, and committed to service delivery above partisan politics [2].

This model integrates advanced technological management through software like Novtel Business Process Management Software (BPMS), Sage, and Xero accounting platforms [4]. In the Garden Route alone, there are 90 councillor posts to be filled by independent, community-driven representatives for the 2027–2032 term [5]. This model serves as a beacon of hope, demonstrating that a partnership between the community, the IEC, and civic associations can save South Africa's local governance.

Part Two: Why it Matters to the Community

This vision of the future matters because it offers a practical, proven escape route from the current municipal crisis. It is a message of hope that your town can be rescued.

By supporting independent, community-elected councillors who use IRASA as a platform, you ensure that every rand spent benefits your neighbourhood. IRASA shields

these councillors from the influence and pressure of mainstream political parties, allowing them to focus exclusively on the needs of the ratepayers who elected them [2].

This means reliable services, economic growth, and a secure future for your children. The Garden Route First model proves that when the community unites to put "People Before Politics," you have the power to rebuild and govern your own destiny successfully. A partnership between the community, Garden Route First, the IEC, and Civic Associations—under the protective umbrella of IRASA—will save South Africa.

References

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- [2] Independent Ratepayers Association of South Africa (IRASA). (2024). A Decade of Independent Representation. Available at: <https://www.irasa.org.za>

- [3] Garden Route District Municipality. (2026). Understanding the Governance Structure of the Garden Route District Municipality. Published 19 June 2025. Available at: <https://www.gardenroute.gov.za/2025/06/18/12-june-2025-understanding-the-governance-structure-of-the-garden-route-district-municipality/>

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- [5] Garden Route First Facebook Group. (2026). Garden Route First — Grassroots Movement for Community Governance: 90 Posts to be Filled by Independent Councillors 2027–2032. Published 24 January 2026. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/201455085097060/posts/1444556830786873/>