Mapping the Urban Green Space Landscape in Gweru, Zimbabwe

Charles Paradzayi, Forward Dewa and Lorraine Mapungwana (Zimbabwe)

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SUMMARY

African cities are facing rapid growth both spatially and in terms of population. The growth is impacting negatively on the urban environment with large tracks of peri urban land being incorporated into the jurisdiction of these cities leading to losses of the urban green space. Urban green spaces are important to urban dwellers for various social, economic, environmental and health reasons. Such green spaces act as the lungs of the cities with green vegetation absorbing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen in return. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 11) promotes the creation of green public spaces as part of the city fabric. However, many urban green spaces are under threat the world over due to urbanisation and poor planning. In Zimbabwe, planning laws require that land developers earmark certain portions of land as green spaces. As demand for accommodation rises, some of the urban green spaces are being converted into housing developments. Generally, there is a lack of information regarding the distribution and amount of urban green spaces in Zimbabwe. Most cities lack digital information platforms for handling spatial data. The absence of urban master plans make even difficult to ascertain the adequacy of urban green spaces in most these urban areas. In its bid to provide a smart living environment, Gweru City Council has embarked on process to recraft its master plan. This paper presents an approach which utilised remotely sensed data and a GIS-based weighted overlay analysis to identify potential areas which could be set aside as urban green spaces under the proposed master plan.