

Kigali Mayor Samuel Dusengiyumva is urging local leaders to intensify efforts against illegal construction, warning that unchecked building and lax oversight threaten the city's long-term development and contribute to corruption in the permitting process.

Speaking Tuesday at a consultative meeting in Kicukiro District, Dusengiyumva told officials from the village level upward that they play a critical frontline role in explaining government programs and enforcing standards. He said many of the city's most persistent challenges including sanitation, cleanliness and unregulated construction stem from inadequate follow-up by grassroots leadership.

Dusengiyumva highlighted concerns about hygiene in homes, neighborhoods, schools and busy public areas, saying poor sanitation undermines Kigali's reputation and its ambitions to maintain high urban standards. But he placed particular emphasis on the growing problem of unplanned construction, which he said is often facilitated by lower-level officials who fail to enforce building regulations.

Despite the availability of designated, fully parceled residential sites, many remain undeveloped while structures are erected informally elsewhere. To counter this, the city has begun using satellite imagery to monitor construction activity. During an initial trial phase, the technology identified 4,800 houses that had been built in violation of the city's master plan. Some residents had construction permits but ignored the approved designs, while others built without permits.

Dusengiyumva said expanding the use of digital tools will help curb corruption by reducing discretionary decision-making in the approval process.

"A resident should not have to decide whether to pay a bribe," he said. "Technology does not take bribes. It does not care who you are. We believe it will reduce the corruption gaps we've seen among local leaders."

A 2025 corruption survey showed progress: bribery related to construction permits fell to 22.9% in 2025, down from 36.6% in 2024. Dusengiyumva said the decline demonstrates the importance of strengthening transparent systems.

He also expressed concern about idle residential sites that have been parceled but left undeveloped, warning that they can become sanitation hazards and undermine city planning. The mayor reminded local leaders to improve tax enforcement,

including property and rental income taxes that fund essential services.

Looking ahead, Dusengiyumva urged officials to familiarize themselves with Kigali's long-term vision for housing and public transportation and to communicate these priorities clearly to residents. He also called on them to provide timely information about developments in their areas to help authorities prevent crime and address emerging challenges.

He said sustained coordination between the city and community-level leaders is essential to maintaining order and guiding Kigali's continued growth.