2026 FEASIBILITY EDITION

Nairobi Apartment Development Cost Guide

> *A rate per square metre is the beginning of the cost plan, not the answer.*

PURPOSE	Early-stage cost planning for apartment development in Nairobi.
PRICING DATE	1 July 2026
MEASUREMENT	Gross floor area (GFA), unless stated otherwise.
CURRENCY	Kenya shillings (KES), nominal.
AUTHOR	Raphael Mwito / The Development Playbook

This guide is a decision aid, not a bill of quantities, tender, contractor quotation, or quantity-surveyor estimate. Replace its assumptions as project evidence improves.

01 / THE 2026 BENCHMARK VIEW

Start with a range, then define the building.

The bands below are Development Playbook working feasibility ranges. They are informed by published 2025 apartment anchors and the latest available construction-input context, but they are deliberately wider than a single benchmark because building height, basements, services, site conditions, specification, procurement, and programme can overwhelm a headline rate.

Apartment type	2026 working range	Planning interpretation
Standard low-rise	KES 70,000-85,000 / m² GFA	Efficient walk-up or limited vertical transport; ordinary site and standard finishes.
Mid-market multi-storey	KES 85,000-105,000 / m² GFA	Lifts, enhanced fire and services, urban logistics, and market-facing common areas.
Upper-market / luxury	KES 100,000-135,000+ / m² GFA	Higher facade, MEP, finishes, amenities, resilience, and common-area specification.

Published anchors

The Architectural Association of Kenya's 2025 built-environment report cites KES 68,837/m² for standard low-rise apartments and KES 90,013/m² for luxury apartment blocks, with the underlying study credited to Integrum Construction. KNBS reported the overall Construction Input Price Index moving from 120.15 in Q4 2025 to 119.52 in Q1 2026. Input stability does not remove project-specific pricing risk.

02 / DEFINE THE RATE

Comparable rates require comparable scope.

Before using a rate, write down exactly what it includes. A cheap-looking rate often becomes expensive only because part of the project has been parked elsewhere.

Include or define	Questions to settle
Measurement basis	GFA, construction floor area, or saleable area? Are balconies, parking decks, roofs, and plant rooms measured consistently?
Building works	Structure, envelope, MEP, lifts, fire systems, finishes, joinery, kitchens, sanitaryware, and common areas.
External works	Roads, drainage, landscape, walls, gates, utility connections, tanks, treatment, and off-site obligations.
Project costs	Professional fees, approvals, levies, contingency, escalation, insurance, testing, and commissioning.
Usually separate	Land, finance, tax, marketing, sales commissions, operating deficits, and developer return unless explicitly included.

Use the same denominator

If revenue is assessed on saleable area while cost is priced on GFA, show both. An 82% saleable efficiency turns a KES 100,800/m² GFA building rate into roughly KES 122,927/m² saleable area before external works and project costs.

The building changes the rate before the market does.

01 / HEIGHT AND STRUCTURE

Grid, transfer structure, vertical transport, facade access, fire strategy, and logistics.

02 / BASEMENT AND PARKING

Excavation, retaining, waterproofing, ventilation, fire systems, ramps, and temporary works.

03 / SERVICES AND RESILIENCE

Power backup, water storage, fire, security, metering, data, lifts, and plant redundancy.

04 / SPECIFICATION

Facade, kitchens, sanitaryware, finishes, joinery, amenities, and public-realm expectations.

05 / SITE AND LOGISTICS

Ground, slope, demolition, access, drainage, neighbours, delivery restrictions, and utility distance.

06 / PROCUREMENT AND PROGRAMME

Design maturity, packaging, bonds, insurance, currency exposure, lead times, and contractor appetite.

> *Do not add percentage uplifts blindly. Use them as prompts to obtain evidence, then replace them with measured quantities, quotations, or a professional cost plan.*

Move from building rate to development cost.

Step	Illustrative basis	KES million
Base building works	7,000 m² x KES 90,000/m²	630.0
External works and utilities	8% of building works	50.4
Professional fees	8% of construction subtotal	54.4
Statutory / approvals	2% of construction subtotal	13.6
Contingency	7% of construction subtotal	47.6
Total before land / finance / tax	Illustrative early feasibility	796.1

The worked example is intentionally simple

It demonstrates the cost stack, not a current tender opinion. At roughly KES 113,724/m² GFA, the all-in pre-land, pre-finance, pre-tax figure is materially above the starting KES 90,000/m² building rate. This is why feasibility should never stop at construction rate x area.

The accompanying workbook adds project-specific rate adjustments, package allocation, scenarios, sensitivity, and model checks.

05 / REBASE AS EVIDENCE IMPROVES

A useful cost plan has a date and an upgrade path.

At concept stage, uncertainty is managed through transparent assumptions. As the design matures, broad uplifts should be replaced by measured scope and market evidence.

Stage	Best available evidence	Action
Site screening	Published benchmarks and comparable projects	Use a wide range and test the land decision.
Concept design	Area schedule, structural and MEP concepts	Split packages and quantify abnormal items.
Developed design	Elemental cost plan and specialist input	Replace generic uplifts; align scope and programme.
Procurement	Contractor or supplier returns	Reconcile exclusions, risk, cash flow, escalation, and tax.
Delivery	Committed costs, changes, forecast to complete	Track variance against the approved control budget.

Minimum review questions

Is the pricing date explicit? Is the measurement basis consistent? Are external works, utilities, fees, approvals, contingency, escalation, tax, finance, and land separately visible? Are basements, lifts, fire systems, backup power, water storage, and amenities reflected? Is the programme tied to escalation and cash flow?

Traceable inputs, honest limitations.

The guide separates published observations from editorial judgement. The working ranges are not presented as an official statistical series.

Source	Use
Architectural Association of Kenya, Status of the Built Environment Report 2025	Published residential construction-cost anchors; report credits Integrum Construction for the underlying cost study.
Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Construction Input Price Indices for First Quarter 2026	Latest available official input-price movement used for context, not as a complete project-cost index.
KNBS Construction Input Price Index series	Future rebasing and trend context.
KNBS Residential Property Price Index, April 2026	Residential market context only; not used to set construction rates.

Method note

The Development Playbook ranges use the published 2025 standard and luxury anchors as reference points, consider Q1 2026 input-index context, and widen the intervals for common project differences. They should be replaced by a project-specific quantity-surveyor cost plan, contractor return, or supplier quotation as soon as such evidence exists.

Source links are embedded in the HTML guide and workbook source register. Source list checked 1 July 2026.

USE THE COMPLETE PACK

Read. Model. Stress-test.

The online guide is indexable and kept concise for decision-makers. The spreadsheet is the working instrument: enter project assumptions, inspect the adjusted rate and cost stack, review package allocation, run combined GFA/rate sensitivity, and clear the model checks.

ONLINE GUIDE	developmentplaybook.co.ke/resources/guides/nairobi-apartment-development-cost-guide-2026
EXCEL PLANNER	nairobi-apartment-development-cost-planner-2026.xlsx
RELATED TOOL	Construction Cost Sensitivity Calculator

Decision rule

Use this guide to ask better questions. Use a qualified project team to price the answers.

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