

R122m to keep state brass comfy

Ministerial makeover transforms flats

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CABINET ministers and their heads of department can look forward to a touch of luxury on their sorties to Cape Town.

The Department of Public Works is spending more than R122-million to turn a drab block of flats into ultra-

modern “prestige apartments” for the head honchos.

More than 200 workers are scrambling to meet a November deadline to transform the state-owned Rygersdal block in Rosebank into accommodation “suitable to the rank” of the high and mighty.

“To date, the total cost of the pro-

ject is R122.3-million,” said public works spokesman Thami Mchunu. The average cost of fixing up the 29 apartments will be slightly over R4.2-million.

Coega Development Corporation, the implementing agent, walks away with 5.5% of the pie.

Mchunu said factors like the

weather could delay completion.

“Ministers have official accommodation which is provided for by public works. Some of the heads of departments, including ministers, are temporarily accommodated in rented flats and houses.”

According to tender documents, the contractors are replacing lifts,

refurbishing plumbing, upgrading electronic systems like the CCTV cameras and building covered pedestrian walkways, among other things.

Outside, they are doing “soft landscaping”, installing planter boxes and constructing a braai area.

A construction industry expert, who declined to be named, described

the apartments as “deluxe luxury”.

A property agent in Rosebank said two-bedroom flats in the area fetched between R2-million and R2.5-million. “A good renovation for a two-bedroom flat, in my mind, would be R300 000. That would be a really nice renovation with nice fixtures,” the agent said.

“But for [about R4-million], that would be for super-high-end owners. That is if you want gold taps, crystal chandeliers, if you want high-end Italian marble floors, all the sort of stuff that can easily cost thousands of rands per square metre.

“Obviously, the sky is the limit with that kind of money.”

Property analyst Erwin Rode said the department might have gone overboard.

“There is the possibility that the Department of Public Works is over-capitalising, given the suburb. But this is by no means certain,” he said.

Mchunu, however, justified the expense. “An overview value analysis was carried out by the principal agent and quantity surveyor, including the area in which the apartments are situated, the size of all apartments, the security specified, off-street and underground parking, et cetera, which indicated that the amount to be spent was reasonable,” he said.

Raziek Rajah, director of Good Hope Construction, said the company started work at Rygersdal in May last year. “Everything is on schedule,” he said.

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GOING UPMARKET: Left, the Rygersdal flats as they once looked, and right, how they will look R122.3-million later

Picture: ESA ALEXANDER