

■ DEVELOPMENT

Department's plans for 104 Darling

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THE DEPARTMENT of Public Works has announced that it plans to renovate the dilapidated 104 Darling complex into an office space.

The announcement comes a few days after social housing advocacy group Reclaim the City vowed to put pressure on the department to ensure that it fixes the building.

"The department intends on using that site in particular for future offices," department spokesperson Thami Mchunu said.

Mchunu said that the department was still in the process of evicting people occupying the building.

"The department still intends evicting the residents, but will follow correct procedures to do so."

He also admitted that the department has not spent any money on maintenance on the building.

Many of the tenants who currently occupy the building are elderly or disabled. Last year, the building's roof caught fire and the damage has yet to be repaired.

The City has declared it a problem building, according to its by-laws.

Reclaim the City spokesperson Bevil Lucas said: "This is news to us. We have not heard of such plans before. But what's intriguing is the fact that they want to retain that site."

Lucas said that it doesn't really make sense that the department wants to use that space as office space.

"That's not a necessity. These people do not have any alternative place to stay and it's the duty of the state to provide alternative accommodation."

Earlier this month, residents held a picket outside the building due to the health and safety hazards.

Currently, 18 families are occupying the building that was leased out by the department.

Resident Sandile Ntsodo said: "We are worried about our building. This building was built in 1910 and it might collapse at any moment. People have been residing here for 30 years, including a women who had a stroke. The building is falling apart, our roof is leaking and we are robbed here everyday. We need the building to be fixed, starting with the basic services."