



A derelict building owned by national broadcaster, the SABC.  
| IAN LANDSBERG African News Agency (ANA)

# City facing problem buildings

*Derelict properties rack up costs*

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WHILE Cape Town is experiencing a boom in property development, the council is spending millions on dilapidated buildings. According to the City it's Problem Building Unit spent over R1.4 million in securing, cleaning and fencing 54 properties and only one was owned by it.

Since 2013, the unit had dealt with more than 3 646 buildings in various state of dilapidation and had opened 1 823 cases against some property owners.

Properties on the unit's list include those owned by private individuals, government, council and those whose ownership has not been established.

Privately owned buildings top the list and the number of unknown owners of these buildings stood at 114.

However, the director of safety and security, Richard Bosman, said not all derelict properties were declared "problem" buildings and these were in various stages of investigation in terms of by-laws.

"The City-owned properties are treated the same as any other property and are subject to any and all penalties if found to be in violation of the by-law," he said.

Bosman added that the Public Works department had been served with a contravention notice for a building in Somerset West and the case would now be escalated to the City's legal department for prosecution after the department failed to comply with the notices.

Another building in the CBD's Darling Street, also owned by national government, had now been declared a problem building after it was listed for investigation in September 2016.

In 2017, a site in Somerset West was handed over for demolition.

The property was left vacant for years and its condition had deteriorated as a result of illegal occupation, theft and vandalism.

Properties deemed derelict include those left abandoned because owners had died, were absent or whose owners could be established.

In terms of the building by-laws the unit is allowed to repair, renovate, repaint, alter, close, demolish and remove all refuse or secure any problem building, at the cost of the owner.

Reclaim The City said some of the government and council owned properties could be repaired and made available for affordable rental to people in need of housing as there was a huge demand for housing.

Spokesperson Bevil Lucas said derelict buildings attracted crime, made areas unsafe and were infested with rats.

"One of the buildings in Darling Street was destroyed by a fire last year, several years after it was left to deteriorate. But some people are staying there and have cleaned it up and are willing to pay rent if the authorities were willing to make it habitable," Lucas said.

The national department of Public Works did not respond to questions regarding its problem buildings.



A derelict building in Camp Street, Standfotein, where several crimes have been committed recently. | HENK KRUGER African News Agency (ANA)