

Roodepoort Northsider

Public Works property woes in Constantia Kloof

The poor state of this property was initially thrown into the spotlight last year

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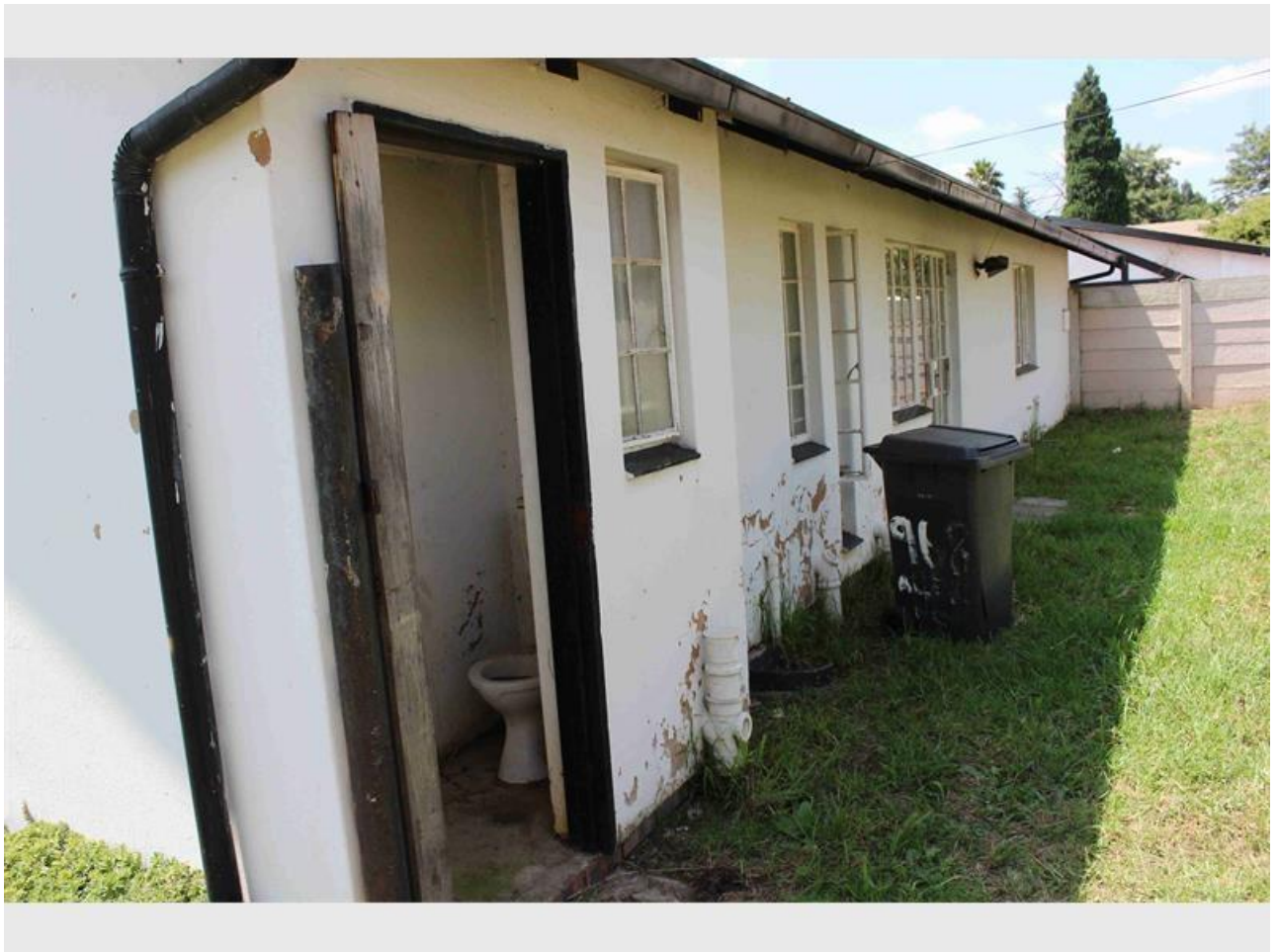
Bongiza Security guards Maureen Obusitse and Memory Sambo are contracted to look after the unoccupied Department of Public Works property in Constantia Kloof. Photo: Siso Naile.

Constantia Kloof is one of many upper-class suburbs in Roodepoort, with most properties boasting market values exceeding R1 million.

However, owners of properties on Bushbuck Avenue are concerned about their values, because of the existence of an unmaintained and deteriorating property in the area.

The property in question is 689 Bushbuck Avenue, which said to belong to the Department of Public Works.

This single unfenced property on the street with a grim white old painting on the outside wall has been an eyesore for a number of years, especially when there is an abundance of long grass surrounding it.



The back yard of the unoccupied property belonging to the Department of Public Works in Constantia Kloof. Photo: Siso Naile.

A neighbouring resident, Mark Brennan, complained during a recent Honeydew Sector 2 CPF meeting about the poor maintenance of the property, citing that it has caused an infestation of rats that cause damage to his property and scare his pets.

According to Karen Poole, the chairperson of Constantia Village Residents Association, the property has been unoccupied for the past five years. “The maintenance of the property has

been done by the Residents Association, which ensures that the grass is cut every two weeks,” she said.

The poor state of this property was initially thrown into the spotlight last year, when one of the privately contracted guards was killed inside the house by smoke inhalation after he brought fire into one of the rooms to keep himself warm during winter. The tragic incident happened as a result of property being without water and electricity.



The unoccupied property belonging to the Department of Public Works in Constantia Kloof. Photo: Siso Naile.

A Dowry Security reaction officer based in the area, Jaco van Dijk, relived the incident. “The deceased’s family was in tears when they visited the property and saw the conditions he worked under,” he lamented.

The property, consisting of three bedrooms, a kitchen, two bathrooms and a lounge is under guard to prevent squatting and hijacking.

The current security personnel contracted by Bongiza Security are still working under similar if not worse conditions. A duo who were on shift when the Northsider visited the property, Maureen Obusitse and Memory Sambo said they normally rely on the community to provide them with drinking and water to flush the toilet.

Karen queried why the Department of Public Works isn't selling the property instead of spending money on security services. "Technically, if this house has no use for them, why aren't they selling it instead of letting it become an eyesore?" she asked.

She also alluded to the fact that large amounts of money for rates and taxes on the property are owed to the City Council.

Ward 89 councillor, Amelia Bester, confirmed that the City has terminated all services as the municipal accounts are massively in arrears.

"I enquired about the outstanding rates and services accounts, and whether the ownership had indeed changed," said Amelia, clarifying claims that the property is under new ownership.

She also expressed her disappointment at the lack of action from national government. "We are wary of illegal connections and are disappointed with the lack of action by the National Department of Public Works," she criticised.

The Department of Public Works has been approached for comment.