

OTTERY

'Let us use the building'

NOMZAMO YUKU

 @NomzamoYuku

Ottery residents say they are prepared to bring about change with regards to the gang violence in the community but they accuse the government of denying them that opportunity.

They want permission to use the old Al Azr Primary School, which is on the same premises as the Lotus High School, for skills and small business development training.

Residents say that the school has been vacant for more than a year and is now being vandalised.

The Lotus High School side is currently occupied by two crèches, two churches and a few residents.

The Al Azr Primary which supposedly has a security system on site is being vandalised.

There have recently been reports about ill elements happening around these schools.

Grassy Park police raided the premises on numerous occasions and found nothing.

Station commander, Colonel Dawood Laing says: "A fine was issued for loud music, no evidence was found of other illegal activities. Regular searches will be executed at the premises."

In a recent community meeting, occupants denied that churches were involved in illegal activities and said the officers that raided the premises violated and humiliated them. Occupants said they were serving the needy, mentioning a soup kitchen.

Resident, Melanie Arendse says it is worrisome that the public works department is not giving a clue about the fate of the schools as the community wants to use them for various

projects. She says Ottery is one of the disadvantaged areas in the Cape Flats facing high unemployment and school drop-out rate.

Arendse says some people are interested in investing in youth through skills development programmes but do not have platforms to implement their ideas.

Another resident, who is a member of the Ottery Welfare Network, Christo Williams says they have tried on countless times to engage with public works on the matter to no avail.

"The only positive response we once received was that we should arrange three days for their visit, which did not materialise. They did not pitch," Williams says.

He says vandalism is worsening and is going to cause a loss for the community when they attempted to prevent what they have seen at vacant buildings which become hot-spots for crime.

Williams says the community has the manpower to turn things around and improve the economic status of the community.

He says they even presented a plan of how they would make their ideas a reality in the short, medium and long term should public works allow them to proceed.

He says they had no problem with following the due processes which according to the department would involve public participation, but there is no direction at this stage.

"They must let us use the building," says Williams.

Public works had not replied to a query sent to them by *People's Post* on Monday 22 July.

► What should the old government buildings be used for? Email your response to Nomzamo.Yuku@peoplespost.co.za.