

■ KWADUKUZA

# Protesters take to the streets over housing project

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THE halting of a R208 million housing project in KwaDukuza saw residents take to the streets in recent days.

Sakhamkhanya residents have threatened to intensify protests if the project does not resume.

The Sakhamkhanya Housing Project was meant to produce 2 273 houses. Only 350 houses have been built since the project started in 2016.

The latest threat follows months of protest action in the area where angry residents blocked roads and burnt tyres, demanding an explanation from the municipality.

In their memorandum, the residents claimed that R47m had been set aside for infrastructure, but nothing had

been done. One of the leaders in the community, who asked not to be named, said they could not understand why contractors had stopped building. He said they wrote to the municipality to ask for an explanation, but had been ignored.

“They said the project will start in June 2018 but nothing has been done. This is why the community wants to go (on the) rampage again.”

In November 2017 residents took to the streets, setting tyres and a truck alight, accusing a councillor of corrupt dealings in the housing project.

The community has asked Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Peggy Nkonyeni to intervene to fast-track the project.

KwaDukuza municipality spokesperson Siphon Mkhize said construction

on the project was ongoing.

Mkhize said delays had been caused by the contractor’s supplier failing to deliver materials on time. He said the contractor had put in place processes to urgently change the supplier.

“The community’s anger was sparked by confusion, not to agree that it is justifiable. However, we concluded that certain detractors used the slow pace of the delivery of materials to confuse the community and make this an emotive issue,” said Mkhize.

He said the R47m referred to in the memorandum was part of the total budget for the project installation of internal services which includes VIP toilets, stormwater control, and water reticulation.

“Due to the unavailability of a bulk sewerline and obstruction caused by

the construction of privately built houses not following the approved layout plan, the services cannot be installed and part of this budget is currently being used for VIP toilets. This budget is still available,” he said.

Mbulelo Baloyi, a spokesperson for the Department of Human Settlements and Public Works, said they were aware of the issues around the housing project.

Baloyi said the municipality’s leadership engaged with the Human Settlements MEC and requested to take over and resolve the issues.

“On June 28, 2019, a meeting was held with the community where the community handed the memorandum to the department and the municipality. The contractor is back on site after issues were resolved,” said Baloyi.