

## Chatsworth community up in arms over prefab homes flood families



Julian Moodley, a member of the Crossmoor Civic Association, stands on the site where temporary pre-fab structures are being built for shack dwellers affected by April's flood.  
Zainul Dawood

Durban - THE Crossmoor community in Chatsworth is up in arms over the building of "temporary" prefabricated homes for flood victims on their doorstep.

The homes are being constructed, with permission from the eThekweni Municipality, by non-governmental organisation Gift of the Givers Foundation. The recipients are people whose homes were washed away at the Bottlebrush informal settlement during a torrential downpour in April.

Part of the informal settlement is built on a floodplain.

Community activist Omi Nair said the Crossmoor Civic Association (CCA) and role-players were unhappy about the positioning of the homes and were labelled as being racist when they objected.

Nair said the property belonged to the Education Department as the site of the old M Padavatan Primary School was based there in prefab structures until its relocation to new premises 500m away.

“This property was earmarked for amenities like a community hall, library and clinic.

“The community of Crossmoor is 50 years old. Community facility funds, where a portion has been set aside from the rates revenue of the area, have been squandered,” Nair said.

eThekwini Municipality spokesperson Msawakhe Mayisela said affected families were initially provided with temporary accommodation in community halls, and then later moved to a tent less than 300m from their destroyed homes at the settlement.

“Many sponsors offered their help to the victims of the disaster and donated various contributions as their pledge, including Gift of the Givers. The formal housing process will still take place by the municipality,” he said.

Mayisela said the municipality would provide ablution blocks and pre-paid electricity to ensure residents had access to basic services and could live without the health and safety risks associated with living in a tent.

The prefab structures will be built behind seven Chatsworth homes situated near a sprawling informal settlement.

Work on the prefab structures was halted before the foundation could be laid, said CCA member Julian Moodley yesterday when he visited the site.

ANC Ward 71 councillor Previn Vedan said 54 prefab units would be built. He said the property was transferred from the Department of Public Works to the municipality.

“We had lengthy meetings with the community. It was transparent, but the meeting turned ugly when racial remarks were made, causing officials to walk out. This is not land grabs or new residents moving in,” he said.

Imraan Mahomed of Gift of the Givers said the displaced families could not be expected to live in a tent indefinitely.

“We only have one agenda - humanitarian work - and that is what we are doing by setting up the camp. Work should be completed by the end of the month,” he said.