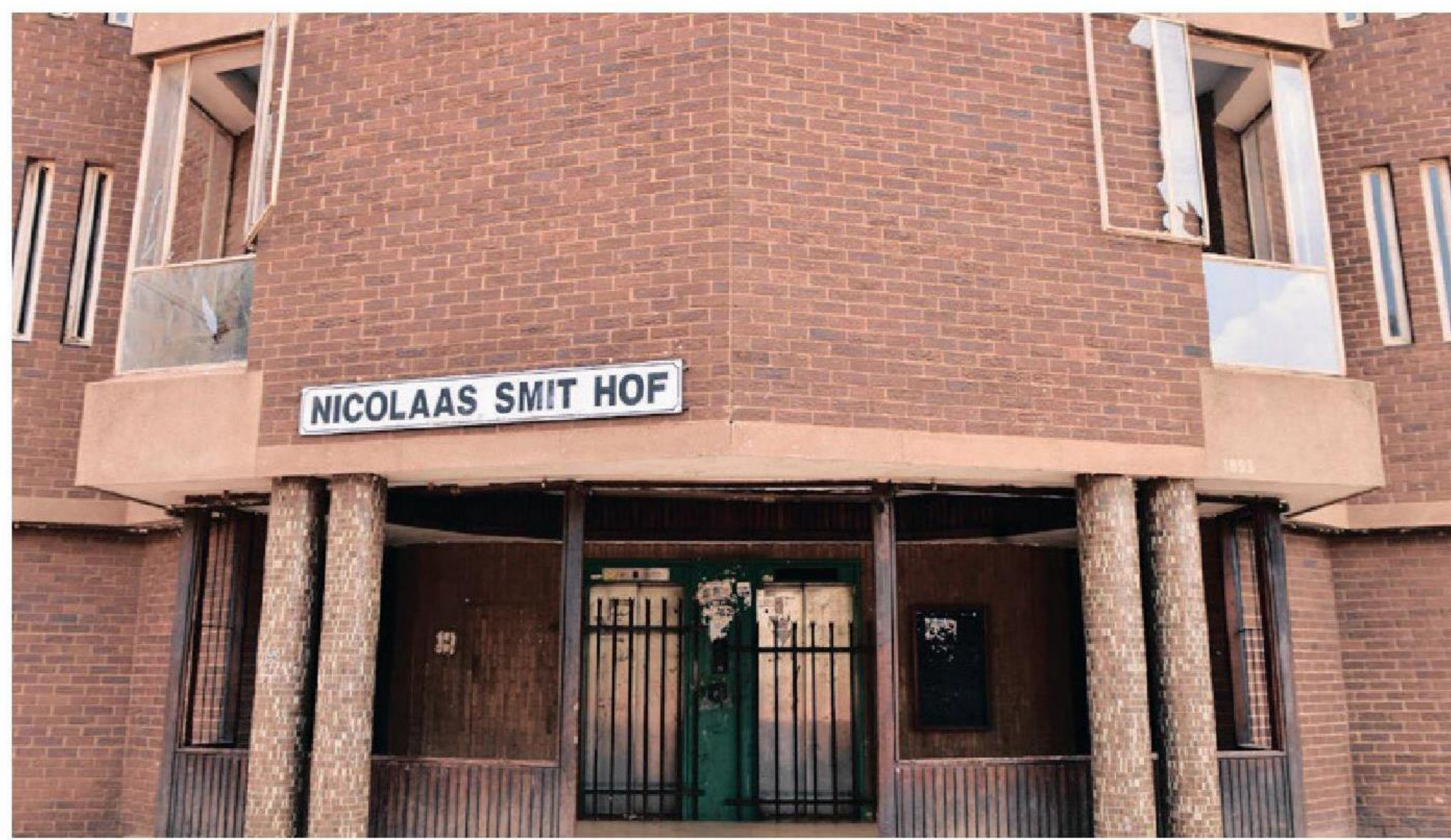


■ NEGLECT



BROKEN street lights are evidence of a Thaba Tshwane in desperate need of maintenance. | OUPA MOKOENA African News Agency (ANA)



THE Nicolaas Smit Hof flats in Thaba Tshwane are in a state of disrepair. | OUPA MOKOENA/ African News Agency (ANA)

Thaba Tshwane on road to ruin

Sewer bursts, potholes, broken lifts, but Public Works blames vandalism and tampering

LIAM NGOBENI
liam.ngobeni@inl.co.za

POTHLES with grass in them, dangling street lights and sewer pipe bursts are a normal sight in Thaba Tshwane.

The military area, says councillor Ina Strijdom, has been struck by a myriad of service delivery complaints.

Strijdom said there was an unwillingness from the Department of Public Works to maintain the area and its residences. "There is a budget but I do not know what they do with the money; all they say is that they don't have money. I don't know where they use the budget."

She said Christiaan Muller Hof which consists of three blocks of flats was the worst hit by the department's neglect. "No extensive maintenance is done, only temporary fixes, while issues such as a lift not working in one of the flats that houses elderly and frail people go unsolved for years."

An employee told the Pretoria News that the lift in one of the block of flats, which has eight floors, has not been working for over eight years. "The cleaners have it the worst. They have to use the steps to take down the rubbish from each floor.

"Sometimes overflowing toilets run to other floors and residents have to walk over that. They come and do temporary solutions."

Strijdom said safety within the flats was also a concern as there have been incidents of children falling from different floors, with some being fatal.

Another employee said the department did not care. "If there was a will to fix and maintain this place they would've done so long ago."

She said there was also a concern for safety in the area. "Security is weak and people's cars are being stolen.

"There is easy access for car thieves. Also, the youth here seem to be indulg-



THE Christiaan Muller Hof building is in bad shape. | OUPA MOKOENA/ African News Agency (ANA)

ing in drugs. Crime is rife around these flats and overflowing sewers a health hazard and concern for residents."

A resident who has been staying there for more than 20 years said complaining was futile as most problems had been there for years and have been reported. "They are not looking after this place at all; there are many health hazards. For the elderly and some people who are injured and sick the lift is a very big problem.

"The department does not even communicate what challenge it has in maintaining these buildings.

"There are many issues here. We cannot complain too much because we fear for our jobs but something must be done. They cannot say they haven't had a budget to fix this lift for the past eight years."

Department of Public Works spokesperson Thami Mchunu said a budget was available to maintain flats such as Christiaan Muller Hof, but vandalism was a headache.

"Regular complaints have been received for lift maintenance. However, there was rampant vandalism and tampering prevalent within the

flats and that is part of the reason the lift servicing the flat was barricaded."

He said this was the same with street lights that had been ripped off and some dangling. "The upkeep of the flats is a huge challenge because of tampering and vandalism."

He said the area was under the Department of Defence, which had an allocation to maintain and repair works below R100 000 such as maintenance on potholes.

Mchunu said the department was not aware of children having fallen from balconies.