

# Community debates use of public open space

## From page 1

said. Sub-council 3 manager Johannes Brand said the housing issue was urgent and should be tabled immediately for the relevant departments so that it could go to the portfolio committee.

“There should be a two-phased approach to this. The first phase should be to rehouse the people from these congested informal structures with the intention at a later stage to permanently house them in formal housing in the future,” he said.

Ward 113 councillor Joy McCarthy said there had been plans long ago to develop the Freedom Way corridor for permanent housing. The area runs along Freedom Way on the side opposite the Joe Slovo Sport and Recreation Centre and all the way to the taxi rank.

The piece of land identified for the temporary housing is a public open space at 4 Freedom Way and sits adjacent to Marconi Beam Primary School.

Mr Ngeyi said that there was interest from the province’s Public Works department to possibly allow the land to be used for extra prefab classrooms.

Mr Ngeyi said even though the land belonged to the City, he was caught between a rock and a hard place because both plans for the land were vital.

“We have an issue with schools in the area because there are too many children in one class. On the other, we need housing for the people. It’s a very difficult situation. Ideally, I would push for both projects, but we just don’t have enough land in the area,” said Mr Ngeyi.

Joe Slovo Crisis Committee member Noxolo Mayeki said she would

■ Ward 4 councillor Wandisile Ngeyi said that Erf 25066 is a good piece of land for temporary housing but could also be used to establish extra classrooms for Marconi Beam Primary.

not be holding her breath for either project to materialise.

“We have had these issues for a long time in this area, and we would be fools to think that anything will change any time soon. We have been sold dreams many times in the past, and I feel like this is just another pipe dream. I would love all our issues to be solved because our people and children are suffering,” she said.

Joe Slovo resident Nomathemba Mfikitsha said the land should be used for extra classrooms.

“We need more classrooms for our children so that they can learn in better environments. We can’t have a situation where our children are basically sitting on top of each other,” she said.

Joe Nkohla lives in one of the informal settlements in Joe Slovo and said he would rather see the land be used for housing.

“There are many people in South Africa in general who find it difficult to find housing. And our informal settlements are not safe. We risk fires starting because our shacks are so crammed next to each other and electricity wires just a foot above our heads. We need houses here,” he said.

Mr Ngeyi said that ultimately, the decision lay with those who allocated the money but he hoped both projects could somehow be accommodated.

