

North End residents plagued by shack dwellers and vagrants

‘After the school was demolished, public works came to put a sign up that no dumping and squatting was allowed. But ever since then, we have watched invaders occupying the space’

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For more than 10 years, North End residents watched helplessly as shacks went up one by one on a piece of land that used to have a school.

Residents, who say they have been trying to get public works to remove the shacks without any luck, are now suffering with crime.

Kumbulani High School was demolished after it caught fire shortly after the 2010 Fifa World Cup, and was never rebuilt.

Now irate residents say since people illegally moved onto the land, lawlessness has been the order of the day.

A resident across the street, Titi John, 70, said the neighbourhood was exposed to drugs and crime because of the vagrants living there.

“The life we find ourselves in is very disturbing,” John said.

“After the school was demolished, public works came to put a sign up that no dumping and squatting was allowed.

“But ever since then, we have watched invaders occupying the space.”

She said they were also faced with a rat infestation in most of their homes.

“Before Covid-19, we had mobilised to take full control of



UNWELCOME NEIGHBOURS: Shacks are being built on the grounds of Kumbalani High School in Leyland Road, North End Picture: FREDLIN ADRIAAN

what is happening.

“We have engaged with the department of education and were informed that the grounds were handed over to the department of public works.”

She said she had written several e-mails to public works officials asking for their intervention and was promised there would be someone to address the residents in May.

“We are now in July and no

communication has come forward on the way forward on the vagrants.

“We want them out as they are now posing a danger to us and no-one is doing anything about it,” John said.

A Ward 5 committee member, who did not want to be named, said they were trying to intervene.

“The situation is getting worse each day,” the woman said.

“When we informed

human settlements again early this year, they told us they removed them once and were not yet able [to evict them again] because of the lockdown restrictions.”

She said crime had been on the rise since their unwanted neighbours moved in.

“We have seen many people and cars stopping there, but no-one is really certain what is happening,” she said.

The woman said the vagrants the residents knew were

back on the street, but there were now other people living there.

“The situation is very sad-dening because what the community is faced with is too much, and we are scared of them.

“We cannot really go and chase them away ourselves,” she said.

Ward 5 councillor Sandile Rwexwana said he was aware of the matter but it was not within the municipal

jurisdiction.

He said he had tried to intervene in the matter but it was in the hands of public works officials, who had been promising to address the issue for years.

“The challenge I have is that it is not in our hands and the vagrants keep occupying the space.

“We had a meeting with public works because the issue has been affecting the residents,” he said.

When a Herald team visited the area, the invaders were breaking the walls and fixing their shacks.

Approached for comment, one of them uttered just two words, “*niyasidika yazi*” [loosely translated: you’re irritating us].

Public works acting provincial spokesperson Sisanda George said although the property was not officially handed over to them by the department of education, they

were looking at addressing the matter.

“The plan is to get the relevant stakeholders (department of social development, department of health services and SA Police Service) on board to assist with the removal of the illegal occupants.”

Provincial education spokesperson Malibongwe Mtima said Kumbulani High School was part of 1,142 properties they were going to hand back to public works.