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**Author:** Hein Kaiser



**SKELETON.** Now condemned, Martin School in Boksburg is home to many who have nowhere else to go. Pictures: Hein Kaiser

# Stench overwhelming

**RELOCATED:** HOMELESS SEEK SHELTER IN FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING

» No response received from two departments.

Hein Kaiser

**T**he stench is overwhelming and, stepping into what's left of Martin School in Boksburg, visitors must watch their step. There is human excrement everywhere, much of it freshly squeezed. The flies are plague-like.

Three weeks ago, *The Citizen* featured shackled-up residents of the condemned school who continue to live in its squalid conditions. An oversight visit of Ekurhuleni council members and a local resident shocked the living daylights out of the group. Everyone bolted back to their cars, scratching for Covid masks to ease the impact of the stench.

Martin School was founded by first principal Matthew Martin in 1909. It was eventually abandoned when the school moved to larger premises. Government subsequently allowed the property to become derelict.

Ward DA councillor Madelaine Muller hosted the visit. She said that the heap of bricks, faeces and waste has been unchanged for a dozen years. Her predecessor tried for years to get it demolished and the neighbourhood cleaned up. She has tried too. Muller said: "I have been petitioning, speaking to all the relevant departments ad nauseam and nothing has been done. It should be demolished and its residents accommodated by social services."

She said: "For people to live under these conditions is unacceptable. There is the most horrific smell of urine and faeces that's



**NO BREATHING.** Councillor Simon Lapping could not stand the bad stench.

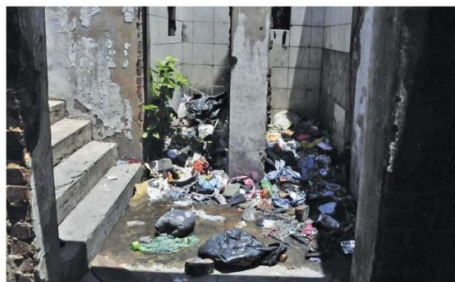
inside these this building. It's absolutely horrendous. And the dirt is disgusting. Nobody should live under conditions like this."

It's also become a neighbourhood haven for drug addicts and a criminal hideout. Ekurhuleni council DA whip for the area Simon Lapping commiserated with Muller.

Lapping said: "When I walked in here, it was absolutely disgusting. And I was actually warned not to come in here for risk of safety. It was just filth. Burned down walls, peeled paint, everything is rotten. And I don't even know how the homeless could call this home because conditions are so squalid here."

He added: "There's been shootings here and the property values in the area have completely dropped. This situation needs to be remedied quickly and soon as possible."

But Lapping does not hold out much hope. The property belongs to the province and the Ekurhuleni metro has no jurisdiction. He said: "That's where the problem comes in. So, the only thing that the municipality can do is to sustain pressure on the departments of public works and of education to take responsibility for the mess that they have created. So far, it's



**STINKING.** It's just a dump. Trash lines every corner.



**SAD REALITY.** Councillor Simon Lapping and former pupil Dan Steyn were horrified at the ruin of a once proud school.

all fallen on deaf ears."

Local resident Dan Steyn remembered Martin School when it was the pride of the neighbourhood.

He said: "This was a very proper school back in the day. It was a primary school, a modern school. It was [a] beautiful building. It was top-notch." He was saddened by the state that the property was left in.

Steyn said: "This is a metaphor for our government's incompetence,

ineptitude and the inability to grasp a wide range of problems that beset communities."

It was not their responsibility, Gauteng's department of public works, the body responsible for oversight on taxpayer fixed property assets, said, and pointed *Saturday Citizen* to the department of education instead.

In turn, the department of education first asked for a deadline extension and then never bothered to respond.