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Hotel in South Beach to be renovated to house displaced flood victims

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The abandoned Palm Beach Hotel in South Beach, Durban is being earmarked for renovations in order to house people displaced by the April floods.

This is according to a report presented recently to the eThekweni Municipality executive committee (Exco).

The hotel is one of several government-owned properties that the municipality aims to make available for flood victims to move into before Christmas.

The once iconic seaside hotel is a shadow of its former self, having fallen into dilapidation.

The building was bought by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements and Public Works for R7 million, with the intention of turning it into a social housing unit.

That idea never materialised and the building was occupied by squatters. In 2012, the building caught fire and two toddlers died.

Last year, members of uMkhonto



The abandoned Palm Beach Hotel in south beach Durban is one of 14 properties that eThekweni Municipality is looking into converting into accommodation for the April flood victims. **PHOTO: THABISO GOBA**

WeSizwe Military Veterans Association (MKMVA) and their families occupied the building temporarily before being forcibly evicted by the government.

Since then, the building has been heavily barricaded, with a security guard stationed at the entrance.

The hotel is one of 14 other government-owned buildings that the municipality will be considering "to be converted and refurbished in order to meet conditions for transitional accommodation," according to the report.

Beryl Khanyile, eThekweni's head of human settlements, said since the floods, the city has cut down its mass care centres for displaced people from 120 to 43.

This was because many families were relocated or have rebuilt their homes after being supplied with material by the city.

The municipality is also considering a R105 million rental support scheme for flood victims.

Under this scheme, the municipality will give R2 007 each per month

to 1 500 families, for a period of 24 months.

This money will go towards their rented accommodation, according to the Exco report.

Khanyile said these interventions were necessitated by the need to look at "other quicker methods" to relocate flood victims in Durban from mass care centres before Christmas.

This will be done in tandem with the provincial government's plan to build over 4 000 temporary residential units across KwaZulu-Natal.

"We are looking at buildings [that are] not being used and are contributing to crime and grime in the city.

"We are pursuing these buildings so that we can convert them to transitional housing," she said.

In response to questions over beneficiaries, Khanyile said the municipality has a database of all April flood victims who will benefit from these interventions.

She said large families, women-headed families, and old and disabled people will be prioritised.