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HOUSING

## Residents reject relocation plan

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RESIDENTS who are occupying the abandoned Helen Bowden Nurse's Home in Green Point have called out the provincial government for "wanting to move them to Wolwerivier and Blikkiesdorp".

According to Reclaim the City's Elizabeth Qoboka, the Western Cape government previously said it would move occupiers to two temporary relocation areas (TRA).

"To relocate us out of the city is out of the question, Blikkiesdorp has no transportation and it is unsafe and not a place for human beings. There is no water or electricity. It's a gangster-infested area.

"We won't move 5km from the city. This place is closer to work and schools.

"We went to Helen Bowden because it was vacant, and they started having issues. To relocate us out of the city and move us to Wolwerivier or Blikkiesdorp is out of the question, we will fight them," she said.

More than 200 people have occupied the building since March 2017 as part of their campaign for affordable housing due to the shortage of inner-city housing.

Infrastructure MEC Tertuis Simmers' spokesperson, Ntobeko Mbingeleli, said the province was busy with preparatory work, which would enable them to approach the courts for eviction proceedings.

"Helen Bowden is unlawfully occupied. The stated intention of the department of transport and public works is to redevelop this site, with a focus on inclusionary housing – as part of the Somerset Precinct re-development.

"The demolition of the current building will be a necessity. This can only be done once the unlawful occupants vacate the property.

To this end, we are busy with the preparatory work that will enable us to approach the courts for eviction proceedings," he said.

Mbingeleli said details, including where the residents would be relocated, formed part of the preparatory work.

Social justice group, Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) said the province had failed to have meaningful engagements with the residents.

NU political organiser, Ntombi Sambu said electricity and water in the building was cut.

"The government must come to the people and give time-lines of their plans, as well as listen to what the people have to say.

"People from the outskirts are already struggling, now they want to move occupiers there.

"The province needs to have a meaningful engagement with people," she said.

Last month, Premier Alan Winde took a swipe at the illegal occupants, saying that they were hindering efforts to deliver housing opportunities.