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DONATION

Public Works donates un-used buildings to City



WESTPOINT Lodge in Durban. | Sandile Makhoba

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THE Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) will donate all its problematic buildings in Durban to the eThekweni Municipality so that they can be converted into usable structures again.

This was announced by DPWI Minister Dean Macpherson, on Wednesday, during the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the DPWI and the eThekweni Municipality.

In the agreement, the three spheres of government will assist in conducting a comprehensive inventory of all DPWI buildings that are abandoned, hijacked, under-utilised and neglected within the municipality.

Macpherson said he was pleased to see that abandoned buildings will be converted into usable structures. He said that the KwaZulu-Natal DPWI will handover the West Point Building to the municipality.

Macpherson commended the municipality for being the first to

embark on this project.

"The days of state buildings standing empty, attracting crime and chasing away investment are coming to an end. The days of the state hanging onto properties it does not need - or is unable to maintain are coming to an end. This is indeed a big policy shift and gives truth to our vision to use public assets for public good. A technical task team will identify problem buildings across the city to work together to find solutions for these properties," Macpherson said.

eThekweni Mayor Cyril Xaba said the signing of this MOU confirms their commitment to strengthening partnerships with all government spheres and the private sector to ensure the government utilises state assets to promote economic growth.

"This marks the culmination of various initiatives the city has embarked upon to maximise public sector assets to drive economic growth. It demonstrates our plans to rejuvenate the city and improve public safety," said Xaba.

Xaba said the inaugural Prop-



THE POLICE building Excelsior Court on Ridge Road. | ZANELE ZULU Independent Newspapers

erty Conference held in Durban in April this year was to communicate the government's disposal plans for underutilised, surplus, and abandoned properties that are owned by organs of state.

Xaba further stated that the city and DPWI have identified a total of 149 properties for disposal, and already 91 have either been released or are currently out for a request for proposals. Xaba said the target for this financial year was to release 50 properties for reuse.

Prasheen Maharaj from the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed the MOU signing saying the

cooperation will revitalise the city. He called it a step in the right direction to reposition the city, adding that it will unlock the full potential of unused and dilapidated buildings.

The problem buildings have been a headache for the municipality after a hijacked building caught fire in Johannesburg, where many people died.

Some of the buildings that will be soon handed over to the municipality were the West Point building along Margaret Mncadi Road (formerly known as Victoria Embankment) and Excelsior Court on the Berea.

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