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Efforts stepped up to demolish problem buildings

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At least 46 problem buildings have been demolished by the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality since 2019, and a new action plan is to be presented at a council meeting to target the remaining properties.

The city's building inspectorate division has compiled a database of all problem buildings identified to ensure the issue is dealt with effectively.

A total of 104 problem buildings are listed on the database, with 65 cases described as resolved and 39 as pending.

These still need to be dealt with by the problematic buildings bylaw committee, which oversees the enforcement of the bylaw.

However, the non-attendance of members at committee meetings has led to delays while more buildings are identified by Ward 5 councillor Terri Stander, who has been vocal about the issue in her ward, which includes Central.

In response to questions from Stander, the Bay's human settlements executive director, Tabiso Mfeya, said: "The problematic buildings bylaw committee meetings are scheduled monthly, but have been hindered due to non-attendance by committee members from various directorates.

"The absence of the committee members has contributed to delays in finalising items on the database as we are unable to determine further contraventions in terms of their applicable legislative requirements."



TAKING STOCK: Citywide Security personnel recently visited several illegally occupied buildings in Central, Gqeberha, to notify the occupants that the premises would be bricked up. Paul Smook inspects an illegally occupied building in Hope Street
Photograph: WERNER HILLS

Stander filed a motion and questions about the derelict buildings in her ward that have been taken over by criminals who terrorise residents and vandalise municipal and private property.

"Our communities are under siege because the municipality is not actioning the available resources to fulfil its constitutional mandate to provide a safe and healthy environment," she said.

"Businesses complain they

have to shut down because vandalism of infrastructure cuts power for many days at a time, that their assets and equipment are being stripped, and that customers don't want to visit their premises due to safety concerns."

In a concerted effort to address the issue, formal letters are being written to officials in different departments to underline the importance of implementing the problematic buildings bylaw.

Under the directives out-

lined by the city manager's office, each department is mandated to appoint officials in positions of authority to take part in the committee meetings, according to the human settlements department report.

To bolster understanding of the problematic buildings by-

law, a workshop is scheduled to be convened in conjunction with the municipal court.

The aim is to provide officials with insights into the intricacies of the bylaw.

The safety and security department is also facilitating the acquisition of shoulder numbers for all officials who have completed their peace officer training.

Efforts are also under way to address staff shortages in the human settlements department. Expanded Public Works Pro-

gramme workers will also be used to identify problem buildings.

"Furthermore, a campaign programme through the corporate services directorate will assist in educating and informing members of the public and private sectors of the problematic buildings bylaw, and a meeting will be held with councillor Stander as some properties in the list supplied by her office do not comply with the criteria to be classified as a problem building," Mfeya said.

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