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# Frustrated East Street Hostel residents demand action

**NTOMBIZETHU NGCOBO**

Residents of East Street Hostel, frustrated by years of neglect of the building they call home, want to meet the City halfway by sharing maintenance costs.

However, Msunduzi Municipality denies owning the Masukwana Street building, as do other relevant government departments.

On paper, the property — now blighted by overflowing sewers and leaking water tanks on the roof — belongs to the provincial government.

However, its departments of Transport, Human Settlements, and Public Works have also denied ownership of the establishment.

"We are not refusing to pay," said hostel spokesperson Smiso Mncwabe, who has lived there for six years. "We want to pay so that the government meets us halfway by maintaining the hostel. They should make arrangements on how we can pay and when they will start maintaining the area."

"We want this place to be maintained so that it regains its former glory and is respected as it used to be. We need security and cleaners," he added.

Chairperson Zenzeleni Bhengu, who has lived there for 30 years, said the hostel was once well maintained and even had security guards.

"There used to be an office inside the hostel premises where we made our payments, but it was closed around 2006. Now, vagrants do as they please here. Staying in this place is no longer the same."

He added that no government de-



East Street Hostel spokesperson Smiso Mncwabe said they are forced to burn garbage as it often doesn't get collected.

**PHOTO: ZAMA MYEZA**

partment wants to admit ownership, with the Department of Human Settlements telling residents that the hostel belongs to Msunduzi Municipality, while the municipality claims otherwise. Bhengu sees this as "an accident waiting to happen".

"It also poses health risks. All we want is for the hostel to be maintained," he said.

Msunduzi Municipality spokesperson Ntobeko Mkhize said ownership and management of the hostel fall

under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements.

"There has never been a Msunduzi Municipality office at the hostel. Any office previously located there was likely operated by the KZN Department of Human Settlements."

"Msunduzi Municipality's Waste Management Unit provides regular waste collection services across the city, including the hostel. However, challenges persist, such as improper

disposal practices. Residents and users of the facility often fail to adhere to the scheduled waste collection dates, leaving waste uncollected."

She added, "Incidents of illegal dumping near and around the hostel further exacerbate waste management issues."

Department of Transport and Human Settlements spokesperson Ndabezinhle Sibiyi said the hostel belongs to the Department of Public Works.

However, Department of Public Works spokesperson Steve Bhengu said the hostel is listed in the Provincial Immovable Asset Register, inherited from the then Administrator-Natal, and is currently vested in the name of the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal.

"For the longest time, [the hostel] has been managed and administered by the Department of Human Settlements. There were previous engagements regarding the responsibility for the management of this facility, with the main challenge being the payment of municipal services and its effective and optimal use," he said.

Bhengu added that the Department of Human Settlements had cited challenges in paying for municipal services. "During the engagements, the Department of Human Settlements indicated that the Department of Public Works would have to dispose of this facility to Msunduzi Municipality."

"It was then resolved that the department, as the custodian, would initiate the disposal of the [hostel]. However, when it comes to the payment of municipal services, the Department of Human Settlements, as the user department, has the responsibility to pay for such services."

"The disposal of this facility to Msunduzi Municipality has already been initiated through our disposal section. The municipality has formally advised that the matter is currently awaiting a council resolution to acquire this property by way of donation from the provincial government," he added.

• ntombizethu@capitalmedia.co.za