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A resident, William Britz raises safety concerns about the derelict building on Jacana Road in Yellowwood Park. *PHOTO: Andile Sithole.*

Derelict house fuels crime fears

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A DERELICT property in Yellowwood Park has sparked public outrage as residents voice concerns over the increase in petty crimes.

A vacant house on Jacana Road has become a point of contention, as residents worry about the safety of their homes.

A resident, William Britz, called on authorities to demolish the building as it becomes the hideout for vagrants.

He claims that the vagrants have 'hijacked' the building to use it for criminal activities, however, the police have not confirmed if there were any illegal activities taking place.

Street patrols were conducted along Jacana Road recently to investigate reports of suspicious activity at the property in question.

However, the chairperson of the Montclair Community Police Forum, Rave Naidoo, said patrollers did not find any suspicious activities.

"Our street patrollers checked the property, but there were no occupants at the time. No signs suggested anyone was inside the building," said Naidoo.

Despite this, Britz insists the house has been overtaken by vagrants. "They arrive around 23:00 and leave before 05:00. By the time the street patrollers arrived, the trespassers would likely have already left," said Britz. He claims his home was broken into, with tools and other household items stolen.

"A cooler box, angle grinder and brush cutters were taken. I believe the perpetrators, who occupy the abandoned house, jumped over my fence and took the tools," he said.

When asked if he reported the theft to the police, Britz said, "Reporting it wouldn't make a difference. The authorities don't take action. I want the owners of the property to step forward and take responsibility. It's been abandoned for almost two years," he added.

When the SUN arrived at the property, a guardhouse stood empty just a few metres from the gate. A sign at the gate displayed contact information for a security company, which presumably once provided oversight for the property. The house is encroached by overgrown grass and litter. Inside the partially open garage, old blankets, sponges and various discarded household items lay strewn about. In the house itself, dusty old office papers were scattered across the rooms.

Attempts to reach the security company for comment were unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the KZN Provincial Government and eThekweni Municipality to issue requests for proposals for under-utilised buildings in the province.

According to the department, in the first round of requests for proposals issued in December, three national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure properties in Durban were included, with similar actions replicated for properties owned by the province and the municipality.