

Bid to spruce up city

TSHWANE: POISED TO ACT ON OWNERS OF NEGLECTED BUILDINGS

➔ 'All of them have been stripped of electrical wiring.'

Marizka Coetzer

A possible new bylaw to take action against owners who neglect or abandon buildings in the City of Tshwane is on the cards, according to the Tshwane MMC for corporate and shared services, Kholofelo Morodi.

After an oversight visit to some of the biggest dilapidated buildings, Morodi said their biggest concern was the safety hazard they posed.

Morodi said the bad buildings committee had identified 32 buildings between Steve Biko and Es'kia Mphahlele Drive that were either hijacked or bad buildings.

"Apart from the safety, they are attracting drug addicts and have become a crime hotspots. So we had to engage with the department of public works and provincial government to understand what their plans are, because you can't be transferring a building for more than five years."

"We can use our buildings; we don't have to rent because we are spending a lot on rentals, which the city is starting to move away from," she said.

Morodi said many of the buildings were structurally sound.

"As much as we want to fix the city, provincial and national governments should come to the party and help resolve the problem."

"Empty buildings contribute towards crime. All of them have been stripped of electrical wiring, which is a big concern," she said.

Morodi said this month they will be using the bylaw to take action against owners who abandon their buildings.

"Residents must participate in the passing of the bylaw," she said.

Morodi was joined by ActionSA MP Malebo Kobe, who



DERELICT. The abandoned Gauteng provincial government building in Pretorius Street in Pretoria. Glass panels regularly fall off the side, causing a hazard for pedestrians. A possible new bylaw to take action against owners who neglect and abandon buildings is on the cards. Picture: Michel Bega



ABANDONED. Schubart Park, a formerly state-sponsored mass housing project in Pretoria. Picture: Gallo Images

said dilapidated buildings had been a big issue for the party.

"Since the [government of national unity] came in for a year, it has done nothing. Especially the department of public works, being the biggest landlord. We are seeing empty buildings throughout the country," she said.

Kobe said the buildings could be repurposed to benefit the public.

"Telkom Towers has 28 floors and was supposed to

house the South African Police Service.

Now, because of public works' incompetence, it has been unable to house them. R1 billion has been spent on the building so far.

"There are facilities managers and security there that are being paid by taxpayers, yet the building seems to yield no positive results for the public," Kobe said.

She said there were major cost implications involved.

"Saps have indicated they cannot trust the department and want to do private leasing."

"They have pulled out of their lease and now there's an impasse between the department and the police, while some police officers have to work from home because they are not adequately housed at the department."

"The police have multiple leases, not just with the department but with the city, too, because they could not be accommodated into one space, which the Telkom Towers was supposed to serve."

Kobe said the abandoned buildings could also be used for student accommodation.

"As it stands, [the National Student Financial Aid Scheme] has a backlog of 500 000 beds for students and the number keeps growing yearly."

"But we don't have enough accommodation."

"It's not because there was a lack of buildings but, rather, we don't have political will and the competence from the department to ensure it uses and maximises the public buildings for public use," she said.

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