

# Council needs to step in over CITY WATCH derelict, abandoned houses



Hillcrest residents say the poor condition of the roads makes driving Picture: GCINA NDWALANE hazardous.

### Road conditions a nightmare

#### HILLCREST

#### SIBONISO MNGADI

MOTORISTS in Hillcrest are crying foul over road conditions they say are damaging their tyres, costing them

The problem area is about 600m, from the intersection of Crooked Lane and Old Main Road along the row of shops.

The road surface is uneven, has potholes causing puddles when it rains, making driving a bumpy experience.

Motorists said the road surface was a result of failure by the construction company to do final touch ups after the road was reconstructed three years ago.

They said despite numerous attempts over the past two years to have the problem fixed, nothing had been done.

Reynhardt van Rooyen said the road, which leads to tourist destinations such as the Valley of a Thousand Hills and Phezulu Safari Park, should not be left in such a condition.

"It is confusing that a central and busy road is in such a condition.

"It is not only residents who are affected, but also cyclists, athletes and tourists who use this road regularly.

"Our area is gaining popularity and the population is increasing. We are appealing to anyone responsible for this

On the other side of the road, residents raised an issue of traffic obstruction caused by minibus taxis.

to pay attention to it."

They claimed that before the road was expanded into two lanes, there was a bus stop allocated to taxis.

> Currently, there is no bus stop; taxis stop in the middle of the left lane, causing obstructions and accidents.

Motorist Nxumalo said his car was smashed while trying to avoid a taxi that suddenly stopped to pick up passengers.

"In a busy road we need a proper bus stop.

"It is difficult to go past here peak-hour traffic. Buses from surrounding areas use this road to pick up and drop off people.

"The accident could have been avoided if our roads met the demand of those who used

"We are grateful for the developments, but it seems that whoever was constructing the lanes did not complete the job – and we are suffering," said

Old Main Road is a provincial road under the KZN Department of Transport, which has had since Tuesday to reply to questions but failed to do so by the time of going

City's oldest bus shelter revamp

The oldest bus shelter in Durban has been restored as part

of the eThekwini and Florida Road urban improvement

enhance the experience and functionally of the transport

the first private horse-drawn tram service. It is now a bus

stop for the city bus service and mini bus taxis.

Built in 1880, the shelter was initially used as a stop for

precinct efforts to create quality public spaces which

## City drags its feet in dealing with property owners, reports Zimasa Matiwane

#### MORNINGSIDE

BANDONED properties in Durban suburbs have raised the ire of residents for many years. Not only are they unsightly, but are often used for illicit activities.

Morningside has its fair share of problem buildings, with one on Ninth Avenue being vacant for seven years.

ness owners said they were frustrated that the situation had been left to degenerate to an "unacceptable state of despair".

They said the property was home to vagrants who rummaged through rubbish bags, lit fires and defecated in the house. Although the property was empty when City Watch visited, there was a stench of human waste and rotting rub-

Residents said police had raided the premises and removed about 25 people, including children. But the vagrants had returned the next day and the cycle had continued.

Malcolm Lutge, a share-

holder in the company that owns the house, said a demolition and rebuilding process had been halted after they were duped by a contractor.

"We paid about R300 000 to demolish the house. Only the roof and some parts were taken out, then the contractor ran away.

almost in place and in two months we should begin demolishing and rebuilding. We have a guard at night to make sure nobody sleeps there."

Civic action group Save Our Berea said there had been no improvement on the buildings they had previously discussed with city officials and that one of the problem buildings, on Sandile Thusi Road, continued to be an eyesore.

Co-founder Kevin Dunkley said that when it started in 2013, one of the first issues they faced was buildings left to deteriorate to a point where they became a home for criminals and drug users.

"The situation has not improved. The municipality has failed to grasp the extent of the problem and it must shoulder the majority of the blame because it refuses to fol-



Frustrated residents want the issue of abandoned buildings dealt with decisively.

Picture: SIBUSISO Ndlovu

low the success of Cape Town and Johannesburg, where houses were taken over by the municipality after five years.

"The reason for this is purely political and we, the ratepayers, suffer at the hands of inept politicians who would rather do nothing than admit that other municipalities are doing things better."

But the issue is not exclusive to Morningside. City Watch counted seven aban-

the Berea and in Overport. Ward 31 councillor Chris Pappas mentioned the case of a property that was part of a deceased estate which had been left to fall apart, and was housing a number of vagrants.

"This property has been left to degrade and no one in the family wants to inherit it. It is an empty shell which belongs to someone, but no one wants to take it on.

"This is where the muni-

issue has been raised with the deputy mayor, and it has been prioritised."

Pappas said new town planning by-laws were put forward in the council at the end of last year.

However, when this went to the committee for approval, the legal department said it wanted to have another look at the by-laws as there were a few things it was not happy with.

eThekwini municipality

"The issue of abandoned buildings is a complex one and therefore the city could not apply a blanket approach in dealing with the cases.

"Some derelict buildings are owned by people who live abroad, some are leased or sublet to a number of tenants, some have been 'hijacked' and some are owned by people who are deceased.

"Closing down a building is a last resort once all legal doned houses on and around cipality should step in. This issued a statement that read: avenues have been exhausted."

## Illegal panel beating business must move

#### **BLUFF**

#### ZIMASA MATIWANE

THE peaceful neighbourhood of Treasure Beach on the Bluff has been plagued by an illegal panel beating business for over a decade.

The business is run by Aldrin Dawson from his home, and an irate neighbour, Leonard Rosenburg, who has been lobbying for the business to move, said it was inconsiderate that a business was being run at the expense of other residents.

"We have to endure spray fumes and constant noise from various types of machinery used in the repair and polishing of vehicles, seven days a

"Because I am adjacent to the property, I bear the brunt of it," Rosenburg said.

He said Peter Roberts from the city's health unit previously issued Dawson a R2 000 fine and indicated that the fine could be trebled if they had to visit again.

The business stopped



Vehicles in various states of repair litter the backyard of a seafront home Picture: BONGANI MBATHA on the Bluff.

briefly, but began operating again in October. Since then, his extensive correspondence with the city had yielded no

"My son was writing matric and found it difficult to study. Once again I lodged a complaint with city authorities and after numerous emails, the

problem still persists," he said. He said it appeared that the offender just sprayed more cars to make up for the fines imposed.

"The municipal enforcement section has an affidavit from the offender saying the activity will stop, but photographs show that it has not

"Meanwhile, residents like myself have to suffer and live with the pollution, let alone the harm to the environment with the toxic fumes on a daily basis," Rosenburg.

When City Watch visited Dawson there were 14 cars on his property, but he was not at home. There were four people working with no masks, goggles or any protection.

His son said the business was in trouble and his father was driven by financial difficulties to run it from home. City Watch spoke to Dawson on the phone and he admitted to operating the business illegally.

"Right now I am in Pinetown looking for a site to operate the business from. I have an affidavit that the municipality knows about, swearing that I will move the business in the next three months," he said.

Meanwhile, Rosenburg said he was having difficulty understanding why one irresponsible resident – and a repeat offender operating an illegal business in a residential area – could still be operating after city officials had been involved over a period of five months.

The city did not respond.

## City blamed for property's ruin

#### **BONELA**

#### ZIMASA MATIWANE

ACCUSATIONS of negligence have been levelled against eThekwini Municipality after allegedly unfinished work left two properties deteriorating.

Pensioner Komare Sadapal, 74, from Bonela said his problems started when the municipality did repairs on a storm water drain at a school bordering his yard in 2012.

"The municipality excavated the ground to install drain pipes. The trench was not filled and I was told a pond would be put in. Five years later, the trench has not been filled and there is still no pond.

"My fencing is now two metres below the property ground level. The municipality is liable for damage to my fence, but nobody wants to take responsibility," said Sadapal.

"We have no insurance, we have no money to do necessary repairs and we are worried that it will get worse, and the municipality has not been helpful."

He said his faith in the municipality diminished when he was told by the city to file an insurance claim in September, but has yet to receive a response. But his problems did not

stop there. Sadapal said his



Picture: NQOBILE MBONAMBI

stormwater maintenance unit yard was flooded during heavy rains as the removed overgrowth from a drains were blocked. stormwater servitude, located "The water has cracked within the Bonela Secondary my foundation and cre-School property.

that keeps expanding and eroding my paving. "I was told by the municipality to get three quotations from engineers and produce

ated a huge hole in my yard

documents that prove I am the "Quotations showed the damage to my property to be about R300 000. I have not received feedback from the

city," he said. Asked about the alleged damage to the fence, the eThekwini municipality said in a statement that the roads and

"This was in response to a

complaint from Sadapal when soil from his property was pushing against the boundary wire fence belonging to the school, resulting in the wall leaning over." The city maintained that

the roads and stormwater maintenance unit was not responsible for the damage to the fence.

Asked about repairs to the storm water drains, excavation and the promise to build a pond, the city said it had nothing further to add.

## Radical economic transformation actually a plan for radical corruption

ALBERT Einstein famously said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results".

It was with much interest that Philip Sithole proudly said last Sunday in this newspaper that there were "new plans by eThekwini Municipality to roll out a radical economic transformation programme' and that this had generated "much excitement, concern and hope".

One can only then wonder what the ANC government has been doing for the past 22 years and why only now, "excitement and hope" is being brought to

ltyView

Macpherson the fore and people of this

For far too long, the ANC and Sithole have governed like they have been in opposition, unable to change the economic environment for small businesses and entrepreneurs to make a living and contribute to our local economy.

All manner of excuses have been rolled out from



slowdown in world economic growth, electricity blackouts (under the watch of the ANC) and this year's catch phrase, "white monopoly capital".

The truth is that the ANC has the ability and, importantly, the majority to write policies, laws and by-laws to make it easier for small businesses to grow,

yet they have failed on every

I agree with Sithole's comments that small businesses are largely marginalised in the mainstream economy, however he fails to include the same marginalisation inflicted by the ANC government.

It is shocking to see the amounts of money being spent by government on supporting companies that import products from countries like China.

From tracksuits to badlyframed pictures of the mayor as gifts for councillors, ANC governments fail to support South

African-made products. It is therefore concerning

that eThekwini has simply refused to answer questions on its procurement and expenditure patterns that have been posed to the council dating back to October by the DA. I think I know why they don't want to answer them – they know the results will be abysmal.

The ANC and Sithole think by putting the word "radical" in front of "economic transformation" this will somehow make it more "radical". I believe tha the new-found commitment to "radical economic transformation (RET)" is actually a response to

pressure from the statecapture faction of the ANC. RET is the perfect excuse

to change procurement rules under the name of the "Framework for Accelerating Economic Transformation" as adopted by the eThekwini council, to allow for more tenders for cronies and wellconnected friends.

RET is actually a plan for radical corruption. The call by Sithole that subcontractors or service providers shall be selected from the wards where the service is being undertaken will be nothing but another opportunity for the ANC to further extend patronage.

One can only imagine

the local ANC branch executive "selecting" who these subcontracts will go to including MK veterans and ANC youth league members.

It is important we see this for what it is, nothing but legalised corruption and patronage.

The ANC government of eThekwini has been on the same road of selfenrichment, corruption, overseeing increasing unemployment and continued support for jobcrushing business red-tape, and now think by becoming "radical", they can float the sinking ship of their government.

eThekwini will keep doing these same things over and over, unable to change because the vested interests in continuing this system of patronage will not allow it to end.

If we want to see real economic growth, what we really need is to deregulate city by-laws and licensing to make it cheaper and easier for businesses to start and operate, as well as ensuring that all tenders are awarded in an open and transparent tender system like the DA has done in the metros where we govern.

Macpherson is DA spokesperson for trade and

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