

Summit highlights shortage of city housing

Chairman of the Built Environment Support Group (Bessg) Brian Bassett has called for a more regular public engagement between the municipality and its residents, especially on matters that have an immediate impact on them, such as housing.

Speaking on Monday at a housing summit hosted jointly by Bessg and the Msunduzi Municipality under the theme of "Changing cities and building opportunities for the people", Bassett said: "There needs to be a regular dialogue whereby the municipality addresses all the issues residents have

... Housing is a very complex issue which should be tackled by the officials who have the know-how on all the operations. Today, we just scratched the surface," said Bassett. The manager for housing in the municipality Ratha Gounden said the municipality had delivered about 22,000

housing units since 1996, but admitted that Msunduzi still fell short of delivering on its targets. "The problem with the development of housing is that most of the land, particularly Edendale area, is still privately owned, hence it is still quite difficult to take full ownership of it at the current stage," said Gounden.

Land ownership has been a contentious issue when it comes to the rollout of houses, with the municipality indicating that land expropriation may be the only way in which it can provide houses and other amenities. The

relevant areas under private ownership are in Vulindlela and the Greater Edendale. The municipality claims the inability to access the land has compromised its delivery targets.

But this is cold comfort to some of the city's residents still waiting for houses. One of these is Hlangiwe Ndebele of Ward 2 in Sweetwaters who attended the summit. Ndebele told Maritzburg Sun an Indiana promised her title deeds for a house, for a fee of R150, which she still has not received. Another delegate, who came from the same ward said that residents have been left in

the lurch as the city's political and traditional leaders scramble for power. "During the build-up to the last elections we were asked to register our names for an imminent housing project. Although we registered with izinduna and ward committee members, up until now we have not received any houses," said Sandile Ngcobo

Chairperson of economic development in the Msunduzi Municipality Eunice Majola applauded Monday's summit, saying

it had enabled a proper discussion among many roleplayers. "We need such summits to address all challenges. This could also enable us to work with other stakeholders," said Majola. She said there are still many housing backlogs that need to be rectified.

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