

Msunduzi housing shortage 'a timebomb'

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HOUSING in the city, or the lack of it, is a ticking timebomb.

A delegate said this at what is believed to be the first housing summit held in the city in more than a decade.

The summit, organised by the Built Environment Support Group (BESG), was held yesterday, the United Nations World Habitat Day.

Delegates bemoaned the slow

pace of housing delivery in Msunduzi and the fact that there were no housing waiting lists.

They said people who were waiting for houses were being displaced by people coming much later. When houses were eventually built they were poorly constructed from inferior materials. There was also the situation of raising false hopes, as sod turning ceremonies were held and houses only built more than five years later, and

what was eventually built was vastly different from what was promised.

Mushrooming informal settlements where new structures were going up daily showed the municipality had lost control of the situation, delegates said. An indication of this was the breakdown in environmental health and sanitation where raw sewage flowed freely through the settlements.

Chairperson of BESG Brian Bassett said the lack of communication on housing

matters was the most important message that came out of yesterday's deliberations.

He pointed to the number of councillors who were at the meeting seeking information.

Head of the Msunduzi Housing Association Radha Gounden conceded that housing suffered when the municipality's finances went under and the city was put under administration. Gounden said there was always a plan to hold a housing summit, but the municipality did not have the funds. He

thanked BESG for getting the ball rolling.

Gounden said the situation was changing and that Msunduzi had been prioritised by national and provincial government for an upgrading support programme for informal settlements and for social housing.

He said this meant that Msunduzi will shortly assess each informal settlement, to find out who was living there and the number of households. Officials will also be compiling a housing needs register.

BESG director Cameron Brisbane said a delivery agreement signed between the Ministry of Human Settlements and the Presidency — known as "Outcome 8" — committed Human Settlements to provide secure tenure and basic services to 400 000 households in informal settlements by March 2014.

"This represents a radical shift in mindset from the era and language of slum clearance," he said.

Brisbane added that while people were waiting for houses, they were still entitled to basic services such as a standpipe within 200 metres of a dwelling and on-site sanitation with no more than 20 families sharing a toilet.

'Wrong people getting houses'

THE R2 billion Vulindlela housing project came in for a drubbing at the housing summit.

Community members questioned why the project was building houses for rich people in the community, while the poor were still waiting for houses.

A representative from the KZN Department of Human Settlements, Petros Mkhize, said the problem lay with the people appointed to do the initial assessment to find out who needed houses. The team took short-cuts and did not visit all the homesteads in the vast area. This resulted in the wrong people getting houses.

Mkhize said his department was not paying for houses for people who were not supposed to get them.

Delegates called for more communication involving the project team, the community, councillors, the municipality and the Department of Human Settlements.