

Speech by the City's Executive Mayor, Patricia de Lille, at the full Council meeting on 29 July 2015

Good morning, goeie môre, molweni,

Mr Speaker,

Today the Council will be asked to approve the demolition of a problem building in Hout Bay, popularly known as 'The White House'.

Earlier this month, some residents took matters into their own hands and set the building alight.

There has reportedly been an upsurge of criminal elements, with the property known to be a base for criminal activity.

While I sympathise with some of the frustrations felt by residents, I must appeal to communities not to resort to taking the law into their own hands.

The fire left the building structurally unsound, but a greater concern is that the fire could have spread, putting lives and other properties at risk.

Residents need to use the available channels to communicate with authorities.

But this incident has shown we must take strong action in our own backyard.

I have also asked that all City directorates submit a report listing the problem buildings in their possession and what their intended use is with photographs included.

Once these reports have been submitted, I will be meeting with all of the Executive Directors and Mayoral Committee Members.

Thereafter, the leadership of the City will visit the listed buildings located across the city.

These steps are in keeping with a history of strong action that this government has taken to root out problem buildings across the city.

The City's Problem Building Unit was established to implement the Problem Building By-law promulgated in 2010 and to help the City identify, control and manage dilapidated and problem buildings.

This innovation to deal with problem buildings is unique to Cape Town and has allowed the City to address over 5 000 problem buildings reported to the City since the inception of the by-law.

This prompt action ensured that Cape Town arrested the urban decay being experienced by many inner-city CBDs and that we were able to avoid levels of urban degeneration before they reached a tipping point.

Problem buildings are properties that contravene national building regulations; are overcrowded or in a deplorable state; are the subject of numerous complaints; or are the sites of criminal activity.

The by-law makes provision for offenders to be fined and to face penalties of up to R300 000 or imprisoned for up to three years, or both.

Once a building or property has been declared in terms of the by-law, a monthly tariff of R5 000 is added to the rates and services account for the property.

This tariff escalates over time to ensure that the errant owners are held accountable for the problems caused by their slum buildings.

The Problem Buildings Unit is currently investigating 1 953 problem building complaints, with most of these cases involving privately owned properties.

Since its inception, the unit has had numerous successes, making steady progress in its efforts to address the issue of errant property owners.

In 2014 the City's Problem Building Unit closed 277 cases and racked up tariffs of more than R700 000 against errant property owners.

I urge communities to report problem buildings and any illegal activity taking place so that we can act.

We are committed to doing all we can to create a safe city and working with our communities to ensure that we keep the city safe.

Most importantly we need all property owners to take responsibility for their properties and ensure that they do not become a haven for criminals.

These initiatives serve to make our communities safer and arrest the numerous problems associated with urban decay and blight.

But our proactive measures must also extend to building integrated communities that are empowered by ownership to stake a greater claim in this city.

The handover of 213 title deeds in the historic Lourensia Park housing development in the Somerset West area is testament to the City's commitment to empowering our residents who were prevented from owning property under the apartheid regime.

The finalisation of the Lourensia Park title deeds is also part of a City initiative which aims to eradicate the backlogs pertaining to historic title deeds, some stretching as far back as 30 years.

In early 2012, the City started a project to make permanent staff and resources available to address historical transfer backlogs, where these could be completed.

Thanks to these efforts, more than half of the total backlog identified in 2012 has already been eliminated.

The Lourensia Park title deed handover marks the end of a chapter, but also the beginning of a new one as the City is getting ready to embark on the next phase of this project.

The Lourensia Park Phase 2 project is expected to deliver 151 housing opportunities.

The City and the Western Cape Government are currently addressing certain administrative matters before construction can commence.

These kinds of initiatives are complemented by our investment in existing infrastructure across the areas, especially in previously disadvantaged communities.

This month, the City officially opened the revamped St Vincent Community Health Centre (CHC) in Belhar.

This is in line with our commitment to building a caring city by providing residents with quality healthcare and facilities.

The facility has been providing health care services to the community for more than 25 years and has benefited from a refurbishment project that started in March 2013.

This investment of more than R8,2 million was spent on the addition of a paediatric wing, an upgraded TB section, and the complete renovation and upgrade of the reception area and adult curative services section.

In addition, we constructed a staff room and new ablution facilities for clients, replaced the old asbestos roof as well as the seating in the waiting areas, and repainted and retiled the entire clinic.

The upgrade of this clinic is part of our drive to build a caring city that helps those residents most in need.

In order to do that, we must extend our network of interventions to partners who can assist us in our communities.

I am proud to say that the City of Cape Town's Social Development and Early Childhood Development Directorate has made available R2 million in grant funding for this financial year.

Community organisations working in the same areas of focus as that of the directorate can apply for a portion of the funding, provided they meet the criteria.

The City of Cape Town has a well established grant-in-aid policy, but this is the first time that the Social Development and Early Childhood Development Directorate is disbursing funds.

The policy allows for funding to be made available to external organisations to help deliver services that fall within the City's area of responsibility, thus creating an enabling environment for community development and partnerships.

Community organisations working in the areas of early childhood development, street people, substance abuse, youth development, vulnerable groups and poverty alleviation will be able to apply for funding for developmental projects.

The minimum amount per project is R100 000 and the applications would need to include a detailed description of the project and a business plan with detailed breakdown of the project cost.

And this is not the only major intervention being spearheaded by the Social Development and Early Childhood Development Directorate this year.

For the past few years, the City has been the leading metro in creating some economic relief for people by creating short term job opportunities.

This financial year, we aim to increase our push targets even more.

We want to create 42 500 temporary employment opportunities through its Expanded Public Works Programme in the 2015/16 financial year – up from 40 000 in the previous financial year.

Since 2011, the City of Cape Town has created more than 140 000 temporary work opportunities for unemployed residents through this programme.

By the end of June 2016, it is envisaged that this number will increase to just over 180 000.

Of the 42 500 work opportunities set as a target for the 2015/16 financial year, more than 76% will be accommodated in Utility Services, Transport for Cape Town, Human Settlements and Community Services.

The EPWP formula, which was created by the National Government, has been agreed to by all parties at NEDLAC.

And at the broader level of opportunity, we remain at the forefront of driving innovation in local government in South Africa.

This month, the City formally engaged in a project to expand the availability of internet access to the public through the provision of Wi-Fi on all MyCiTi buses in the near future.

The City has issued a tender for a service provider to install and operate a Wi-Fi internet access service on all MyCiTi buses.

Our vision is that passengers will be able to connect their own devices to the internet using the Wi-Fi provided on MyCiTi buses.

We want the service to be available on every operating MyCiTi bus at all times whilst in service.

Basic use of the service will be free. This means that each passenger will have use of a limited amount of data for a limited amount of time each day at no charge.

The minimum no charge data allowance per day per passenger will be no less than 50 MB.

We anticipate that the tender process will be completed in the latter part of the year.

Thereafter, it is our hope that the successful service provider will operate the Wi-Fi access service on a pilot basis for six months, after which Wi-Fi will progressively become available on all MyCiTi routes and buses over the following six months.

Mr Speaker, we are doing what we must to fulfil the objectives of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in this final financial year of the Council in order to build: an opportunity city; a safe city; a caring city; an inclusive city; and a well-run city.

Achieving these goals will go a long way towards building a society based on freedom, fairness, and opportunity.

As we make the final push over the next 12 months, we owe it to ourselves and our communities to give everything we have in order to make Cape Town a better place.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Councillor Tony Ehrenreich on his re-election as the Provincial Secretary of COSATU.

I note that Councillor Ehrenreich's former union, NUMSA, has renounced COSATU membership.

NUMSA has done so on the grounds that COSATU no longer represents the interests of workers or the poor.

Given that Councillor Ehrenreich has no plans for the upliftment of the poor in Cape Town, he must feel right at home in COSATU.

Thank you, baie dankie, enkosi.