

The Mercury
18 September 2020
Page 1

For sale: RDP house - R190 000

Illegal sale offensive to thousands of shack dwellers waiting for homes

THAMI MAGUBANE
thami.magubane@inl.co.za

THE listing of houses from the Cornubia government housing project "for sale" has sparked an outcry and been described as offensive to the thousands of shack dwellers who are waiting to be allocated houses.

One of the houses in the eThekweni Municipality's flagship housing project was listed for sale on social media and priced at R190 000. Others have also been put up for sale in recent months.

Omi Nair, who posted about the recent sale, said: "Can someone ask the eThekweni Municipality to explain this? So, sell the house you were given and then (go) back to the shacks with filled pockets and again in line for another home. It's no wonder the housing problem does not come to an end."

The Mercury understands that the house in question was fairly new and no title deed had been issued, but the owner had documents stating the ownership.

Residents said many people in the area had sold their homes in Cornubia.

They said the homes were being sold, even without title deeds, with the help of attorneys and the use of ownership papers.

IFP councillor Mdu Nkosi said the sale of the houses was a criminal act.

"This speaks to the fact that this person fraudulently received the house because they claimed they were in need when in fact they were not. This affects the people who are desperate for houses but are not getting them.

"It is very concerning that houses in Cornubia are the ones that were being sold - that development is fairly new and it has not got to the point where people can legally sell the houses," he said.

DA councillor Zamani Khuzwayo, a member of the municipal housing committee, said he raised the issue after he learned of houses being sold in the Cornubia project.

"The response from the committee was that nothing like that was



THE 'for sale' ad on social media that sparked outrage.

happening, but I have faced numerous encounters with people claiming that they were cheated after buying houses in the Cornubia project. When you drill down to how they bought the houses there, they become unco-operative and evasive," he said.

DA caucus leader Nicole Graham said while people could sell the houses after a certain period, the sales in Cornubia were concerning as it was unlikely that the houses were within that period.

She said there was poor regulation over what happened to houses that had been transferred to residents, and the abuse of the system was widespread.

"Some people receive a number of houses and rent them out while living in an outbuilding. There needs to be some degree of control, otherwise the government is spending the money and not achieving the aim of providing dignified housing to those who need it," she said.

ANC councillor for the Cornubia area, Siyabonga Thango, said they had dealt with numerous allegations of people selling houses in the area.

"The majority have been people who are committing fraud by pretending to sell a house. People are coming to us to say they paid a deposit to a person, and that person has disappeared."

He said those who owned the houses should not sell them as there was a housing backlog, and they should give the

homes back if they did not need them.

eThekweni Municipality spokesperson Msawakhe Mayisela said people could legally sell their houses if they had the title deeds and five years had passed since they received those deeds.

"If, however, they decide to sell before the expiry of the five years, they will need to advise the city and we have a choice of buying it back from them or allowing them to sell through the proper channels."

Mayisela said they were aware of only a handful of sales, and that claims of illegal sales had been blown out of proportion.

"The government in all spheres is opposed to the selling of the houses, but each situation is assessed on its own merit as the owner of the house may have compelling reasons to sell.

"Illegal sales result in change of occupation before a title deed is issued, and this creates problems because when it is issued it will be in the name of the original owner, meaning the house will never be transferred to the buyer."

Human Settlements Department spokesperson Mbulelo Baloyi said illegal sales were one of the problems the department faced.

"It creates a revolving door where you find people protesting demanding houses, only to find that they have received a house and are renting it out to someone. Some people who live in informal settlements have houses that they rent out," he said. "We have seen these houses posted on social media. You find that we give people title deeds, and a week later someone has put the house with the title deed up for sale."

He said that last year about 400 people in Cornubia received title deeds and about 1 000 more title deeds were to be handed out this year.

"The department discourages such activity, but once a person receives a title deed, there is nothing the department can do. To many people, these are 'easy come, easy go'. People have no attachment to property they did not work for," Baloyi said.