



**Department of Human
Settlements and Public
Works**

**KWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINCE**

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The Program Director and Chairman of First Metro Housing Company, Mr B Sikhakane

The Deputy Mayor of EThekweni Municipality, Cllr L Naidoo

The Chairman of the Human Settlements Portfolio Committee, Mr J Vilane, MPL

The Chief Executive Officer of First Metro Housing Company, Mr I Khartib

The MD of Social Housing Foundation, Mr B. Moholo

Representative of National Housing Finance Corporation, Mr L Luhabe

Councillors present

Officials from local and provincial government

Residents of Howell Heights

Members of the media

All others present and all protocol observed

Shortly after the National Party ascended to power, the government that it led passed the Group Areas Act. This infamous Act ensured that South Africans were forced to live in racially segregated areas. There were, as we all know, forced removals and entire communities were torn apart. This area, Sydenham, became one such group area, targeting Coloured people.

However, since 1994, with the advent of the new government the situation has been changing and there has been a shift towards building a non-racial, democratic society.

People are no longer forced to live in racially segregated group areas although the legacy of apartheid is such that we do have people living in historically segregated group areas. The difference now is that they can choose to live where they please.

This project, which carries the features of a human settlement, is located in the heart of Sydenham, a robust multicultural community. There is access to health care - behind me is the multi billion rand, state of the art, King George Hospital which our Department of Public Works has extended to accommodate 450 more beds. This project is due to open shortly. There is easy access to schools, colleges, clinics, shopping centres and national roads. This complex is only 9 kilometres away from the city centre. Today we are witnessing a truly South African project, where the Department of Human Settlements and its partners have worked at creating a sustainable human settlement. This project is a reflection of a South Africa that we all strive for. A South Africa where people are free, irrespective of their race, religion or income, where they can live together in harmony where they please and where there are no laws that are designed to segregate and demean them.

I am happy to announce that the residents of this complex are racially and culturally diverse.

In 2003 the Howell Road Social Housing Project was completed and the first beneficiaries moved in. The project comprised of 213 two-bedroomed units developed to meet the demand for rental housing units. Many people were in

transit and most, as a result of their lower income, were denied access to banking finance.

The situation today is much the same. Many people cannot obtain bank loans to purchase a property and the recession has not made it any easier.

So the initial 213 units were not sufficient to meet the demand for quality rental accommodation. In July last year, construction commenced on the Howell Heights Project Phase 2, a solely rental project. It was by no means an easy task to build 48 2-bedroomed units on a rocky slope with limited space. Phase 2 consists of 4 blocks of 3 storey walk ups of an aesthetically appealing design.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements has facilitated the development of this project . I would like to highlight the fact that these units are really value for money. The rentals start from R750 for persons earning below R3500 and from R1500 for persons earning below R7500. Each unit is fitted with built-in cupboards in the bedrooms and kitchen and has a fully fitted bathroom. Additional facilities include secure parking, DSTV connection and a recreational/braai area at the park.

On arrival here I was struck by the beautiful lawns and well maintained buildings. I wish to urge the complex management and the residents to maintain the current excellent state of this complex.

Support services that the Department of Human Settlements offers:

As we all know disputes around rentals and related issues do occur. The Department of Human Settlements has established a Rental Housing Tribunal to address such matters as well as create awareness and provide information on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities.

Our Housing Consumer Education unit educate communities about the different types of housing products available, provides assistance with housing applications and also conducts an outreach program to engage rural communities via their local municipalities.

The Department of Human Settlements has heeded the call from our stakeholders and communities to engage with them on a regular basis. Therefore starting tonight at 20h00 on Ukhosi FM, the Department will be hosting a monthly show where various issues that affect our people will be tackled. I therefore urge all of you to listen to the show and make use of the opportunity to raise your concerns and to alert us to issues that require our attention.

This new administration led by President Jacob Zuma and the African National Congress is committed to doing things differently. The president has said that we must be a government that serves the needs of our people - we must be service-oriented – and we must ensure that we deliver the services that our people need effectively, efficiently and speedily.

This ANC-led government is a government of action. On Friday I visited the community of KwaMathukuza in Newcastle whose homes had been severely affected by heavy storms earlier this year. They had been waiting for their homes to be repaired for a very long time – too long a time in fact. However the Department of Human Settlements has been working with the Municipality and an amount of R25.6 million has been approved to repair these homes. The advertisement calling for service providers to tender for this project appeared in newspapers on Friday's paper as well as in today's Witness. I am happy to announce that in a month's time, work on the affected homes will begin.

This now brings me back to the reason that we are here. We have delivered and today we have 48 more families living in comfortable, quality housing. This project is not just about building housing units, it is about building a community, where children can play in the park on swings, slides and a play gym and residents are secure in the knowledge that they have 24 hour security while they are asleep or away at work. In addition services such as cleaning and gardening are included in the management of the project. This for me is what every housing development should be about, creating sustainable human settlements which we can be proud of. Indeed working together, we can do more.

Thank you.

