



10 March 2016

Press Statement: Reclaim the City rejects secret mediation on Tafelberg Site

*On Thursday the Western Cape Provincial Government offered to go to mediation on the future of the Tafelberg Remedial School site in Sea Point – **in secret**. Today, activists from Reclaim the City have responded: the time for secrecy is over. We demand transparency, accountability and public participation in the disposal of public land.*

There are thousands of black and coloured working class people living in basements, garages and overcrowded flats in Sea Point. Many live in squalid conditions, use separate entrances and amenities, and are invisible to their wealthier neighbours and employers. They know the struggle for decent housing in a city that is totally unaffordable. They face eviction, harassment and rent hikes.

Supporters of Reclaim the City are campaigning for the Province to meet its obligations to develop affordable mixed-income housing on well-located public land – that means keys, bricks and cement – not promises.

In February, we objected to the sale of the Tafelberg Remedial School, a prime property on Sea Point Main Road. The site was earmarked for affordable housing but the Province sold it to a private developer in late 2015 with no strings attached. The Province refused to stop the sale and refused to release information on how the property came to be declared “surplus”.

On 27 February, supporters resolved to interdict the sale and ask the courts to review whether the disposal was lawful. Was Human Settlements consulted? Is it reasonable to sell prime land in a housing crisis?

Yesterday, the Province offered mediation on the future of the site but tried to attach clauses of secrecy and confidentiality to the process.

This is unacceptable and against the principles of good governance. It is secrecy which allows for dubious backdoor dealings and elite capture of public land - the time of secret negotiations is past.

In her State of the Province Address, Premier Helen Zille announced a ‘game changer’ - the development of affordable mixed income housing on the Conradie Hospital site in Pinelands. The Conradie plans are encouraging, but they are not enough.

If the Premier wants to really change the game, she must commit to radical reform. That means opening up the evaluation, tendering and disposal of public land to public scrutiny – starting with the Tafelberg site.

Today, Reclaim the City supporters gave the Province until Friday to accept transparency in mediation, or we will move to interdict the transfer of the site.

For comment:

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