



**CITY OF JOHANNESBURG**

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A City of Johannesburg Press Statement by the Member of the Mayoral Committee for Development Planning, *Cllr Belinda Echeozonjoku*

## **Development Planning rocked by burglaries and vandalism of computers days apart**

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Release: Immediate

Member of the Mayoral Committee (MMC), Cllr Belinda Echeozonjoku, has expressed her deep shock and disappointment at the burglaries that have occurred at Development Planning offices.

This comes after Building Development Management staff, this morning, discovered that their office, on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Metro Centre in Braamfontein, had been burgled and 20 desktop computers vandalised.

Last week, a burglary took place at the Metro Link building on 14 January 2022, where the perpetrator(s) broke into the building and also damaged six desktop computers.

Both incidents followed the same *modus operandi* – a burglary resulting in the theft of hard drives, processing units and memory chips. Investigations are underway by the SA Police Service and the City's Group Forensics and Investigation Services.

These are not the first few burglaries to take place at Development Planning offices. In October 2020, 12 desktop computers were broken, and their hard drives stolen during a break-in at the Single Law Enforcement office on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Metro Centre.

A case of theft and malicious damage to property was opened with the Hillbrow SAPS. A suspect, previously arrested for the same crime, was arrested.

Cllr Echeozonjoku has described the destructive acts as criminal and sabotage, adding that the City will not be taking this matter lightly.

“These burglaries and acts of vandalism are a clear indication that there is a pushback from individuals who are against the digitisation of the building plan application process, recently introduced by Development Planning.

“I am even more disappointed to have received allegations from members of the public of internal staff who have expressed their dislike of the online application system,” Cllr Echeozonjoku said.

The Construction Permit Management System, which is currently being implemented by Development Planning, is a new web-based building permit system intended to modernise and streamline the current Site Development and Building Plan approval processes.

Through its implementation, Development Planning will enhance the operational efficiency and good governance of the Department, to improve on its service delivery mandates.

“We are aware that there are individuals who previously benefited from the inefficiencies of our processes, who are not particularly happy with the implementation of the digital platform,” said Cllr Echeozonjoku.

The digitalisation of the processes, added Cllr Echeozonjoku, will assist with the ease of doing business in the City, which will ultimately bring much needed jobs for the residents of Johannesburg.

“We want to send a strong message that all these acts of sabotage are only making us resolute to implement processes and controls that will stop graft in Development Planning,” she warned.

The online application system is only available for the use of architectural professionals who are registered with the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP).

Cllr Echeozonjoku further issued a word of warning to officials who continuously leak confidential information before any formal communication can be sent to residents and industry stakeholders, to refrain from doing so.

She said contingency plans were being made with Group ICT to replace the equipment with laptops or desktop computers, in the interim, to avoid any further delays on the examination of building plan applications that are already on the system.

“This kind of rogue and unlawful behaviour has rendered our officials without tools of trade, preventing them from effectively performing their duties. Management is working hand-in-hand with law enforcement authorities to bring the perpetrators to book”, added Cllr Echeozonjoku.

The user-friendly online platform can be accessed using the following link: <https://cpms.joburg.org.za>. For more information on the portal, architectural professionals can contact the following individuals:

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