

Soweto, suburbs part of land claims

One of South Africa's biggest shopping malls and a large portion of suburbs west of Johannesburg could be the subject of a land claim if Parliament presses ahead with plans to pass a draft bill on land restitution into law.



The Restitution of Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013, which proposes certain amendments to the Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994, was gazetted by Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform Gugile Nkwinti in May.

The bill is set to be tabled before Parliament's portfolio committee on rural development and land reform soon. If it is passed into law, the date for lodging land claims would be extended to 31 December 2018. The deadline was initially 31 December 1998.

Portfolio committee chairman Jerry Thibedi said the bill would be tabled before Parliament went into recess for the year.

The Westgate Shopping Mall, Horizon View Shopping Centre and Life Flora Clinic in Roodepoort are situated on land that was once the site of Juliwe location, which was also known as Roodepoort West.

"Life Healthcare has not been made aware of the submission by the relevant stakeholders but will follow the legal process of engagement as required," said Nicolette Mudaly, a lawyer for the company that owns Life Flora Clinic.

Black spot

The township was declared a "black spot" under the now repealed Group Areas Act. Its inhabitants were forcibly removed to Dobsonville in Soweto between 1955 and 1964.

The location's cemetery, now renamed Horizon View Cemetery, is still located near the Westgate Shopping Mall.

The Greater Dobsonville Heritage Foundation, a Soweto organisation representing more than 2,000 former residents of the location, is aiming to lodge a claim to the area. The foundation's secretary, Motsomi Mokhine, said they had already

collected more than 2,500 sworn affidavits from claimants. They have also made submissions on the draft bill to Nkwinti.

They are also planning to make oral submissions before Parliament. The claim will include Horizon View, Westgate and most of Roodepoort.

Mokhine, whose family was removed from the site at Flora Clinic, said they would also propose that claimants should benefit from proceeds of commercial activity.

In their submission to Nkwinti's office, the foundation indicated that current landowners and those dispossessed should be able to negotiate an acceptable settlement in a process regulated by government regulations. The foundation's deputy secretary, Sandile Ntwasa, said the majority of the claimants said they did not want to return to the land but would instead demand compensation of about R100,000 per family.

"We are dealing with old people who realise that it would no longer be practical to return to the land. "They just want to be compensated for their loss," Ntwasa said.

Source: Sowetan via I-Net Bridge

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>