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Harnessing small scale developers in the development of the inner city of Johannesburg

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2019

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29369

Chiwetu, David Ngonidzashe (2019) Harnessing small scale developers in the development of the inner city of Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/29369>

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Abstract

The strategic spatial plans of the City of Johannesburg have been centered on densification as a key spatial planning tool to address spatial fragmentation by facilitating development of affordable housing through the private sector. City of Johannesburg and Johannesburg Development Agency have developed a working relationship with TUHF Pty Ltd to co-promote priority areas for affordable housing development. TUHF is a financial provider that provides access to finance for entrepreneurs to purchase and subsequently convert or refurbish buildings in the inner cities of South Africa. The research examines the support being provided by City of Johannesburg, Johannesburg Development Agency and TUHF in supporting small scale developers in the inner city of Johannesburg.

One of the key concepts of the research is that of the small scale developer which is a slippery term to define. In order to ground the research and define a sample , small scale developers were defined at the inception of the research according to TUHF's recognition and support of emerging property entrepreneurs operating in the inner city. The conceptual framework explores the complexities of the interaction of the small scale developer with the municipal instruments to gain development approval and with financial institutions to access credit to finance developments. The research uses the inner city as a case study as it provide an ongoing site based application of initiatives that are supposed to support small scale developers. The research uses semi-structured interviews, participant observations and secondary data to examine how small scale developers are being supported. The main research finding is that there is no nuanced definition of the small scale developer from the perspective of the City of Johannesburg and TUHF. Small scale developers face administrative, technical and financial challenges in the property development process and the collaboration between municipal agencies and financial institutions plays an important role in the support of small scale developers.