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BASECAMP: The design of an inclusive urban tourist precinct in a developing world context; Johannesburg Case Study

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RESEARCH REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a key driver of Johannesburg's economic regeneration - a vital proponent in the growth and local job sectors. South Africa implements the European and North American approaches to tourism, intended to attract higher-income tourists with the misconception their expenditure is greater. These approaches exhibit weak trickle down effects and local participation rates. The failure of Johannesburg tourism to realise its potential is evidenced by the city being rated lowest by tourists for its leisure qualities. This has been attributed to the lack of cultural quarters or Central Tourism Districts that support the tourist experience. Lower budget tourists are internationally recognized as a viable economic resource. They tend to spend more, travel longer and extend to marginalized communities, thereby making use of local infrastructure and supporting small local businesses, their trickle down effects being far greater. This report aims to design a tourist precinct directed at these lower budget tourists – improving the tourism sector and implementing a more contextually-suited approach that benefits and supports local Johannesburg communities and small businesses. The research question asks: "What are the physical manifestations of the socio-economic qualities of an inclusionary tourist precinct in a developing country?" The research methods included a comparative study of the Urban Design qualities in various developing countries' tourist precincts and a case study to which the findings were applied, resulting in a precinct of interlocking streets and courtyards - establishing a pedestrian-oriented, walkable environment. This single city block consists of many smaller mixed use building typologies that concentrate tourist and locally-related businesses with active edges which enclose the street scape as a public space. The precinct is close to educational institutions, incorporating combined student and tourist accommodation as these communities are mutually beneficial. The design outcome is a tourist 'base' enhancing their experience yet supporting local growth and employment, realising a more inclusive urban landscape and tourism sector.