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Mitigation of displacement through rent control policy

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the study was to explore the use of rent control to mitigate displacement in the Johannesburg inner city which forms part of Region 8 and consists of the Central Business District, commonly called Johannesburg CBD. Johannesburg's Central Business District (CBD) was in a state of decay and in an attempt to rehabilitate it the City of Joburg implemented urban regeneration. The efforts have however, have resulted in the displacement of low income residents. The rejuvenation of the residential buildings attracted the middle and upper income population into the inner city and landlords responded to their influx by increasing their rents. The low income residents who have been residing in the inner city are as such no longer able to afford the rent and thus forcing them to find accommodation elsewhere.

The research asked the following question: Can rent control be used as a method to reduce the displacement of low income residents in the Johannesburg CBD? Establishing whether rent control can be used as a means to mitigate displacement in the inner city is imperative and the research sought to uncover factors that would encourage property investors and developers in the Johannesburg CBD to adopt rent control. Understanding how rent control could be used to mitigate the challenges of displacement caused by urban regeneration in the Johannesburg inner city becomes fundamental. This helps to assist in finding a balance in the dynamic nature of gentrification and displacement in the City of Joburg and the enforcement of rent control to protect the low income residents.

This research was conducted using the quantitative approach to explore rent control as one of the methods used to minimize displacement and the marginalization of residents as a result of gentrification and rehabilitation of the inner city from data gathered. The sample groups were 60 property investors and developers from the Johannesburg CBD. Data was collected through the use of closed-ended questions with multiple choice answer options and these were explored using quantitative methods.

The results indicate that the monitoring and lowering of expenses associated with rates and taxes could influence the adoption of rent control. The data further revealed that the relaxation of tax could be another motivating factor for the adoption of the implementation of rent control. Investors and policy makers should therefore strive for development that is

affordable and equitable and for all parties. The data further revealed the potential of rent control as a means of mitigating displacement in the Johannesburg CBD. It is the researcher's hope that recommendations made by this study, if implemented will improve the dynamic nature of gentrification and displacement.

Key words: Johannesburg inner city, Rent control, Urban regeneration, Gentrification, Displacement.