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Spatial planning and transportation in Soweto: tracking densification and land-use changes around Rea Vaya phase 1A stations.

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Abstract

The spatial transformation project in post-Apartheid South Africa aims to change the alienating urban form that resulted from planning policies based on racial segregation. Johannesburg's municipal government aims to capitalise on its investment on the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), through the principles of Transit Oriented Development (TOD), to catalyse densification and diversification of land uses along the Rea Vaya's corridors. This research sought to discover whether these objectives are being realised in Diepkloof and Orlando East, Soweto. In order to answer the research question, the results of a qualitative survey of people residing around these stations were analysed in conjunction with GIS data and records of Town Planning applications for properties located around BRT stations. The following findings emerged: the rate of densification has intensified but remains constrained mainly because of restricted access to finance; land-uses have remained the same but with increased activity levels. All spatial development strategies in the study area need to be aligned to the principles of TOD. This research hopes to achieve two things. Firstly, enrich the scarce literature on spatial transformation through transit investments, particularly the BRT in South African Townships. Secondly, guide spatial planning policies in similar contexts across the country.