

Professional Stakeholders Perspectives on Community Participation in Transit-Oriented Development Projects: A Johannesburg Case Study

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Abstract : Achieving densification around transit-oriented development projects has proven the most ideal way of facilitating urban sprawl whilst increasing the mobility of the majority of the urban populations, making parts of the city that were inaccessible, accessible. Johannesburg has undertaken TOD vision, which was initially called the corridors of freedom. The TOD, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 11, seeks to establish inclusive, sustainable cities and, in line with the Joburg Growth Development Strategy, aims to create an equitable world-class African city. Equity and inclusivity should occur from the onset of planning and implementation of TOD projects through meaningful community participation. Stakeholder engagement literature from various disciplinary backgrounds has documented dissatisfaction of communities regarding the lack of meaningful participation in government-led development initiatives. The views of other project stakeholders such as project policy planners and project implementors and their challenges in undertaking community participation are, however, not taken into account in such instances, leaving room for a biased perspective. Document analysis was undertaken to determine what is expected of the Project stakeholders according to policy and whether they carried out their duties) seven interviews were also conducted with city entities and community representatives to determine their experiences and challenges with community participation in the various TOD projects attributed to the CoF vision. The findings of the study indicated that stakeholder engagement processes were best described as an 'educative process'; where local communities were limited to being informed from the onset rather than having an active involvement in the planning processes. Most community members felt they were being informed and educated as to what was going to happen in spite of having their views and opinions collected - primarily due to project deadlines and budget constraints, as was confirmed by professional stakeholders. Some community members exhibited reluctance to change due to feelings of having projects being imposed on them, and the implications of the projects on their properties and lifestyles. It is recommended that community participation should remain a participatory and engaging process that creates an exchange of knowledge and understanding in the form of a dialogue between communities and project stakeholders until a consensus is reached.

Keywords : stakeholder engagement, transit oriented development, community participation, Johannesburg

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