

Ndifuna Ukwazi Press Statement:
Cape Town Municipal Planning Tribunal approves first inclusionary housing in Sea Point

At its regular monthly meeting yesterday, the Municipal Planning Tribunal (MPT) for the North West District (which includes the inner city and surrounds) approved a land use application for a new skyscraper in Sea Point and concluded that the development must include inclusionary housing.

Local developer, the Berman Brothers Group, together with investors - Hosken Consolidated Investments (HCI) applied to the City Cape Town's MPT to develop a 60m tall residential building at the intersection of Main Road and Kloof Road in Sea Point. Together, they put forward a proposal to retain 20% of the 140 apartments as 'affordable' housing. In effect, 28 new apartments, each between 35m² to 39m², will be reserved for rental to households whose monthly income is less than R18,000.

The City of Cape Town's planner's initial position was to oppose the application primarily because of the height - the proposed development towers surrounding buildings in the immediate vicinity.

At yesterday's oral hearing, Ndifuna Ukwazi disagreed with this position, arguing that this city requires dense, high-rise, and inclusive buildings across well-located areas to provide for affordable housing and to address spatial inequality and inverse densification. The MPT found favour with these submissions and approved the development application. The MPT added a proviso that the City's planners should return to the MPT with wording for a condition that will ensure that the inclusionary housing component can be secured.

This is the first inclusionary housing to be approved by the MPT for a new development in Sea Point. Two weeks ago, the MPT approved a contribution of 30% affordable housing in a development next to the Diep River station.

In addition to this application, Ndifuna Ukwazi has objected to numerous applications for exclusive developments across the metro where the proposed buildings would exclude the majority of Black and Coloured residents because of the high cost of access to housing in such residential developments, and would entrench an enclave of privilege. We have consistently argued that the City of Cape Town is empowered to, and must impose fair conditions on these development proposals to secure affordable housing. This is consistent with the City's obligations to advance a spatially just city.

However, the City of Cape Town (through its planners, the MPT and the Mayor) has been reluctant to proactively impose conditions that will foster access to truly affordable housing in new developments. Yesterday's MPT decision turned on a private sector actor providing a solution. Although significant, this is not a sustainable way to address the more systemic problem of spatial inequality and the need for more low-income housing in exclusive developments across the city.

The City of Cape Town must drive this process by engaging developers on the need to allocate a fair proportion of affordable housing in their developments. This is not impossible or unfeasible – the Kloof Street and Diep River station developments are examples of this.

We recognise that an inclusionary housing policy will go a long way in providing clarity and guidance to residents, developers and the City. However, we also recognise that this process is slow and overdue. While the development of a policy underway the City's planners, the MPT and the Mayor must act on their constitutional and statutory powers by proactively imposing conditions for affordable housing when presented with development applications that do not advance spatial justice.

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