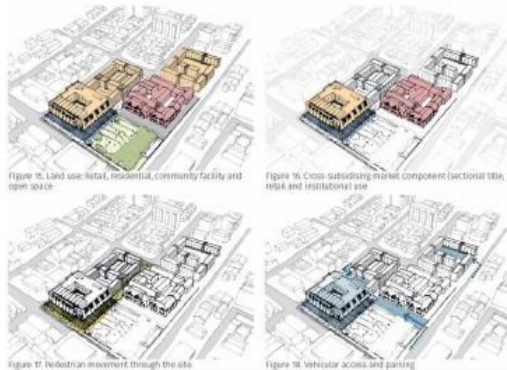


# Winning model for affordable social housing on Tafelberg site

Daneel Knoetze



**IN THE MIX:** Architects Ruvimbo Moyo and Loyiso Qaqane's impression of the proposed mixed-use and social housing development on the Tafelberg site, as seen from Sea Point Main Road.



**BIG PLANS:** Urban designer Azraa Rawoot's impressions of the proposed mixed-use and social housing development on the Tafelberg site. It was included in Ndifuna Ukwazi's submission to the cabinet.

TODAY Ndifuna Ukwazi publishes a visionary model for a social housing development on the Tafelberg site that will provide more homes at less cost while still giving the province a significant cash injection from the sale of the land.

This is a win for poor and working-class people, a win for the province, and an affordable precedent that the cabinet cannot reasonably decline.

In November last year, the Western Cape Department of Transport and Public Works published its model, which demonstrated that in principle social housing is feasible and affordable on the Tafelberg site.

It proposed a mixed-use development with 270 social housing units, a public park and space for shops, leaving the old school building for community use.

But social housing experts reviewed the model and found the numbers didn't add up.

In effect, the province hasn't taken into consideration the site's greatest value – the cross-subsidisation potential of its location.

This means the private sector can pay more into the pot, which will reduce the bill for government and allow more units and greater sustainability over the life of the buildings.

Today we publish our submission to the province, which demonstrates that 297 social housing apartments can be built on the site if they are subsidised by a development on Main Road with shops and 86 market-rate apartments.

Not only would the province secure 27 more social housing units and build the first mixed-income housing in the inner city, but the model would provide a whopping R75 million cash payment for the land.

That is over half the price the province intended to strip the land for, with no social benefit.

In fact, if province takes full advantage of the generous zoning on the site and builds up to seven floors, 121 market-rate apartments would cross-subsidise 316 social housing units and generate R76m for the cost of the land.

Both scenarios protect the heritage of the old school building, which may be leased or sold for use as a school or for another community use.

Both reserve a portion of the site as public green space to be enjoyed by all residents.

What is perhaps most promising about this alternative is that it presents a blueprint for a truly mixed-used site which maximises the cross-subsidisation of affordable housing in a high-income area.

This is unprecedented in South African cities.

We believe that this model could be applied to unlock highly valuable public land for affordable housing – from Sea Point to Sandton.

In so doing, we can begin to desegregate our cities.

Premier Helen Zille and the provincial cabinet are set to decide on the future of the Tafelberg site at a cabinet meeting on March 22.

Although various cabinet ministers have expressed opinions and preferences, it all comes down to the evidence on feasibility.

Legally, well-located land can never be surplus and sold when it is feasible to use it for service delivery.

Zille will now have to consider the thousands of objections to the sale of Tafelberg and this model for a truly visionary and just alternative for the site, and make a reasonable decision that can stand up in court, having taken into account all the arguments and evidence.

We believe that the cabinet is on the the brink of an unprecedented decision: to begin dismantling apartheid spatial design.

Considering the powerful vested interests in well-located public land, that will take political will and leadership. We believe that they will do the right thing.

Knoetze is the Ndifuna Ukwazi communications officer