

The Ability of the Local Planning Authority to Implement Zoning Regulations: A Case Study of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 2015

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Abstract

The Municipality of Jeddah adopted a 'smart growth policy' to address issues of urban sprawl and housing affordability that resulted in the adoption of new zoning regulations in 2007. The new regulations intended to generate urban intensification and vertical expansion. Jeddah Municipality have permitted six-storey dwellings with a parking level in areas of existing low rise detached housing, which have caused conflict between residents and developers over infringement of privacy. The implementation of zoning regulations has exposed inherent weaknesses at the Municipality level.

The aims of the research are: firstly, to explore the rationale of the Municipality of Jeddah in increasing building heights. Secondly, to assess the performance of the local government and to identify the critical factors that determines its performance.

Thirdly, to explore the impact of applying the new regulations and residents reaction. The research uses mixed-methods and case studies to collect primary and secondary data. The fieldwork includes the views of householders, city officials and professionals. The research uses descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse quantitative data and description and thematic text to analyse qualitative data. Furthermore, it draws on the UN-HABITAT Urban Governance Index (UGI) to evaluate the performance of Jeddah Municipality.

The main findings of the study are that there is a need to increase buildings heights to accommodate the increase of population and their future housing needs and demands but this need to be planned with greater sensitivity to neighbourhood context. There are deficiencies in the planning system at the local level specifically there is a lack of integration between urban planning, urban management and other stakeholders. Residents who have no recognised voice in the planning decision making process managed to overturn decisions. The study concludes that, in the Saudi context, a blanket mixing of building heights in residential areas is unacceptable.

Key Words: Urban Governance, Zoning Regulations, UN-HABITAT UGI, Jeddah Municipality, Municipal Council of Jeddah, Participation, Privacy and Jeddah.