

MANAGING URBAN LAND

a guide for municipal practitioners

Published by Urban LandMark, November 2011



In South Africa, most urban residents do not enjoy secure access to urban space for living or working. Understanding the way the urban land market operates is a crucial factor in improving our cities, particularly for their most vulnerable residents.

Access to land and housing is affected by how municipalities exercise their legislated functions. The constitutional mandate for government is to be pro-poor and developmental. Therefore, what a municipality sees as 'neutral actions' in interpreting the rules may actually have a negative impact on the lives of the poor.

To achieve optimal benefits for the most vulnerable residents and the city as a whole, the fundamental challenge for local government is to intervene in urban land markets to promote pro-poor outcomes while providing incentives which positively guide private investment.

The *Managing Urban Land* guide offers an array of tools and techniques to stimulate creativity and help officials to meet the particular needs of their municipality.

While few would dispute the importance of urban land markets, there is a generally poor understanding of how they work, or the opportunities land markets offer for effective public investment to improve life for the poorest.

For example, informal settlements are a complex challenge that government officials face. The *Managing Urban Land* guide provides a description of how informal land markets work and suggests tools that will enable municipal managers to intervene in positive ways.

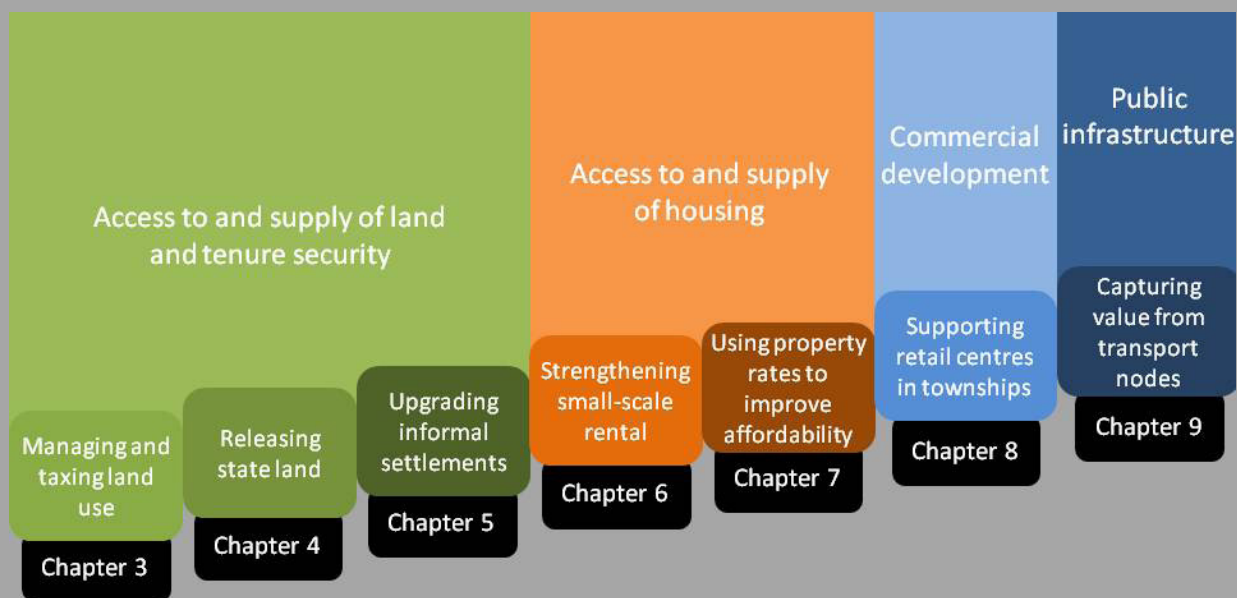
The principles behind the guide's techniques include:

- knowing the market
- balancing pro-poor objectives with growth and revenue aims
- acknowledging and building on existing innovative solutions from the poor
- managing direct interventions to minimise market distortions
- building institutional capacity
- recognising that inaction too has an impact.

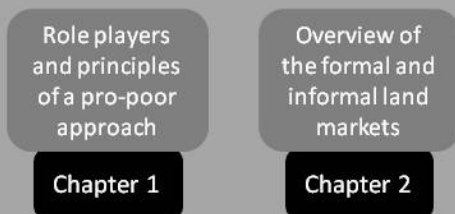
Smart, careful interventions by local government can enable market activity and provide other role-players with incentives to fulfil desired social outcomes. For example, land availability agreements are a specific tool that enables the state to release land to private developers while retaining some leverage over the development outcomes. Under such agreements, the land remains the property of the state until developments are completed and sold to end users, allowing private developers to avoid holding costs and other expenses while the municipality can ensure pro-poor elements are adhered to.

With the introduction of national legislation to guide spatial planning and land use management, the Urban LandMark guide comes at an opportune time. The tools and techniques described in the guide give planners a concrete way to pursue the principles that underpin government's responsibility in this field as described in policy – spatial justice, spatial sustainability, efficiency, spatial resilience and good administration.

MANAGING URBAN LAND: A VISUAL GUIDE



Governance of urban land markets



For more information or to request hard copies of the guide, please contact Lucille Gavera at lucille@urbanlandmark.org.za or Tel +27 12 342 7636. The guide is also available in electronic format at www.urbanlandmark.org.za