

## My Place in Yeoville

#### What is Yeoville Studio?

Yeoville Studio, is a partnership between the Wits School of Architecture and Planning and the Yeoville Stakeholder Forum (YSF), its supporting organisation Yeoville Bellevue Community Development Trust (YBCDT), and the French Institute in South Africa (IFAS).

The studio is located within the Wits School of Architecture and Planning – under the auspices of the Centre for Urbanism and Built Environment Studies (CUBES).

Yeoville Studio has been running since October 2009. It was launched in Yeoville on the 28 February 2010, with a series of workshops around four major themes: Urban Stories, African Diversity, Public Space and Housing.

Yeoville Studio aims to provide practical research that focuses on three aspects of sustainable livelihoods: street-trading, community restaurants and affordable housing in the area of Greater Yeoville (comprising the suburbs of Yeoville, Bellevue and Bellevue East), Johannesburg.

The objective of Yeoville Studio is to work closely with organisations in Yeoville to produce relevant and locally-adapted research; and to disseminate findings to Yeoville residents in a way that enables them to use it for advocacy and sustainable development. The project also entails training Architecture and Planning students to work with communities and to locate their professional practice in real-life situations.

### Learning from Yeoville: The Urban Infill Project

The design process was based on students' ability to see, read and record urban complexities and then to interpret those understandings into housing prototypes, within the larger concept of 'contextual urbanism.'

Therefore the project unfolded in 3 stages:

Stage 1 focused on fieldwork-based research in and about Yeoville along 6 different themes related to housing: 1) Urban Histories; 2) Housing Types; 3) Subdivision of Houses or Flats; 4) Renting and Subletting; 5) Vacant Lots and Abandoned Buildings; and 6) Other Uses of Residential buildings.

Stage 2 focused on the development and design of new models for urban living in Yeoville, based on findings in stage 1 and previous case studies.

Stage 3: The five most promising approaches were selected and entered for the national SHIFT housing competition. This will hopefully allow these ideas to be given greater visibility in policy circles.

These housing stories - My place in Yeoville - were collected through a housing workshop involving Yeoville residents and students and staff of the Wits School of Architecture and Planning, held at St Aidans Church, on 29th March, 2010.

The objective of the workshop was to understand how Yeovillites live - in order to propose spaces that can accommodate both private and community concerns. It was very important to understand some of the challenges and opportunities met by residents in their diversity and complexity.

Residents were asked to explain their housing conditions through conversations with students and staff. They were also invited to draw the places in which they have lived in Yeoville, as well as the places they might like to live in the future.

Using the basic equipment of an architect: a pencil, an eraser, a ruler, paper - as well as beds and mattresses in the form of paper rectangles - residents described the layout of their homes. The students then took the drawings and converted them into architectural conventions. Residents were also given a disposable camera and asked to take photos of their space.

### Yeoville Studio's dreams on housing

All experts, activists, policy makers and municipal officials agree that there is a gap in current housing policy as far as inner city housing is concerned. The absence of an inner city housing strategy that is able to provide households with affordable housing - while maintaining a balance between different income levels - leads to serious housing and urban challenges: over-crowding, slum-lording, living with limited or no access to basic services and urban decay.

As much as these dynamics need to be criticised and dealt with, they have been the only means to provide accommodation and access to jobs and livelihoods opportunities, to low-income and marginalized people in the central locations of the City.

Our aim is to imagine and develop - together with residents and local activists - proposals on various layers of housing design and policy. We hope that these proposals can be used for possible debate and implementation and thus positively impact on the future lives and livelihoods of Yeoville residents.

The re-design of an existing neighbourhood in a prime location next to the city centre could become a new South African prototype: multicultural and inclusive, dense, green, and respectful of its citizens - a neighbourhood that is fair and affordable.

This exhibition is the first step on that path.

#### photograph below

Where the search for accomodation often starts: Notice board with private rental ads in Yeoville, at Checkers supermarket, Raleigh Street cnr Bedford. The cars parked in front of the wall are informal moving companies and ready to transport any belongings of residents changing places.

...to understand how Yeovillites live - in order to propose spaces that can accommodate both private and community concerns...



The dream: the re-design of an existing neighbourhood in a prime location next to the city centre to become a new South African prototype: multicultural and inclusive, dense, green, and respectful of its citizens ...fair and affordable...



Housing workshop at St Aidans Church. Yeoville residents draw their places - past, present and future - with Wits architecture students.





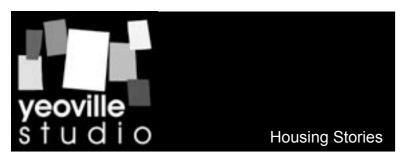




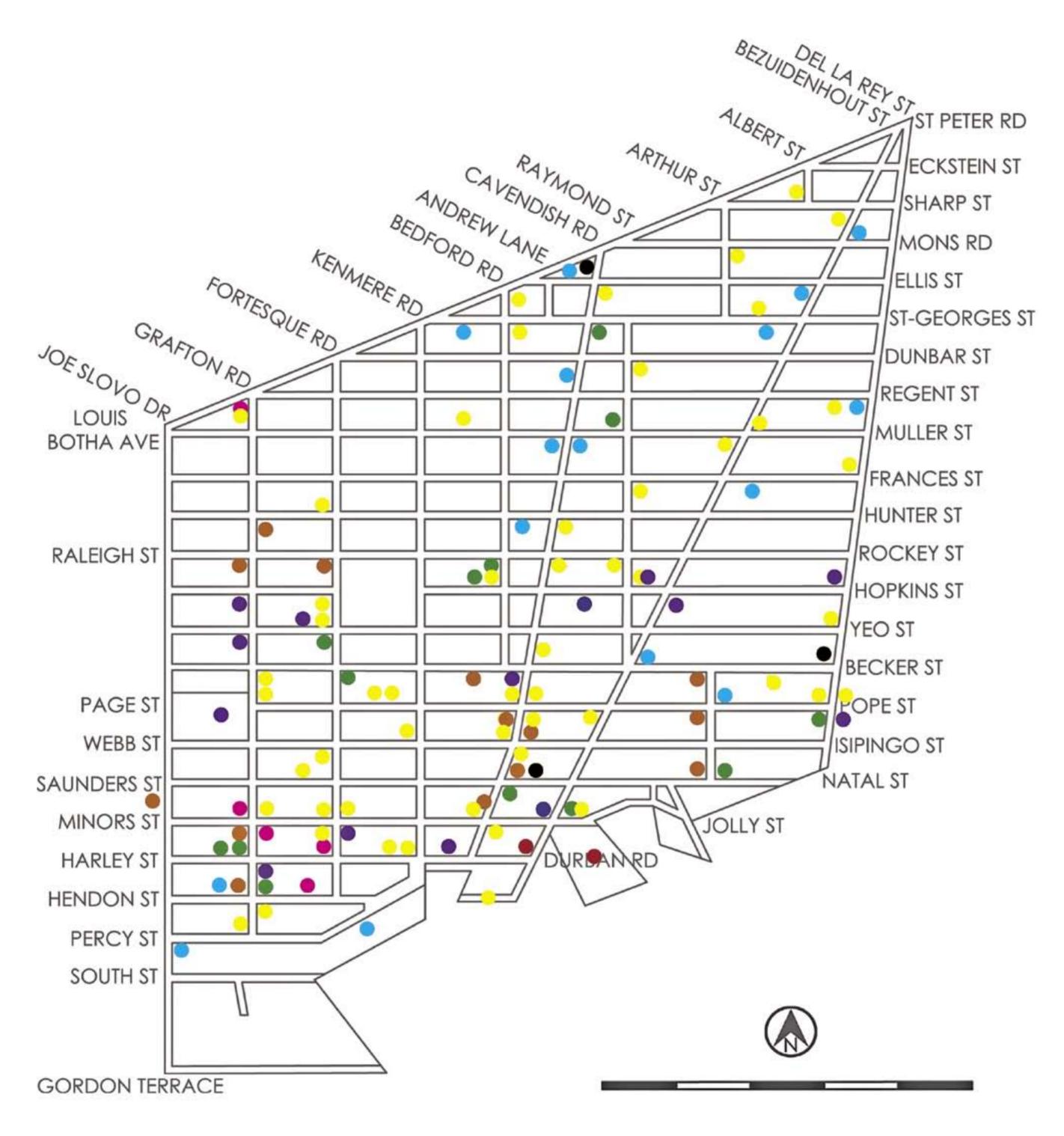








# Spaces/ Types Mapping



SHARE BED

SHARING A BEDROOM

BEDROOM

SITTING ROOM

ALTERNATIVE SPACE

COTTAGE

FLAT

Accomodation map based on data collected from 26 March-08 April 2010 on left half of the notice board outside Shoprite, cnr Raleigh and Bedford Str, Yeoville Compiled by Mike Flanagan, Rick Musiker, Anastasia Pappas, Jarred Pincus, Mat Robson, Francis Sadie as part of the Yeoville Urban Infill Research Studio







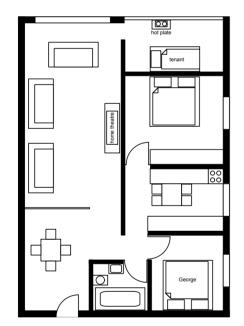




# George Lebone



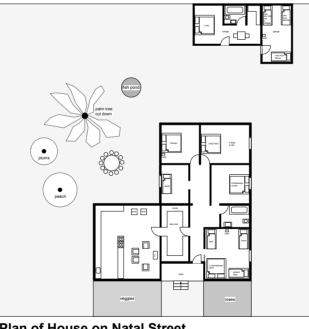
"I like the central location of my place. I relate a lot to Rockey Street. It gives me an advantage as a community activist. I see and understand the positives and the negatives of the street."



Plan of House on Webb Street

### Webb Street

The entrance of the flat opens on a large living room divided by a decorative iron grid. On the other side of the grid, the lounge, with music/TV system and big sofa's – lots of light due to large window. Then there is the late Themba's bedroom, the kitchen, and my bedroom. The balcony was converted into a room, sealed with corrugated iron sheeting, for the tenant who was staying there - using a single bed and a cooking plate.

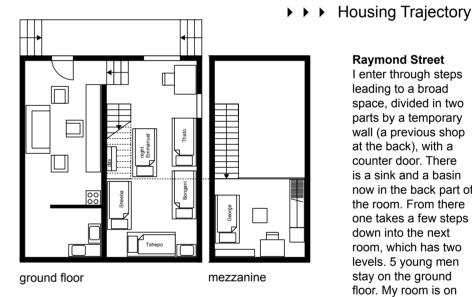


Plan of House on Natal Street

I lived in a large Lshaped house on a double stand. There

**Natal Street** 

was also a backvard garage converted into an apartment and a cottage, as well as a large backyard garden. There was a mix of people from South Africa and from the rest of the continent (Zimbabwe, Ghana, Zambia and Kenya).



Plan of House on Raymond Street

I enter through steps leading to a broad space, divided in two parts by a temporary wall (a previous shop at the back), with a counter door. There is a sink and a basin now in the back part of the room. From there one takes a few steps down into the next room, which has two levels. 5 young men stay on the ground floor. My room is on the top floor. It is a mezzanine separated

from the rest of the

apartment by a rail.

**Raymond Street** 

When I arrived in Yeoville in 1998, I lived in a block of flats called Toorak, in Webb street. I was staying in a flat owned by my friend Themba. We were sharing the flat with one tenant who paid a monthly rent of R200. Unfortunately, Themba passed on.

I moved to a house in Natal street. The house belonged to an old lady, Vicky - today she is 102 years old and we lived together like mom and son. A total of 11 people stayed on the stand. Vicky had 4 dogs, 3 cats, 2 parrots, and fish as pets. There was a wonderful garden and a fish pond. Vicky loved to do gardening; she had lots of flowers and fruit trees, in the front of the house as well as in the yard. We spent lots of time there, as well as in the TV rooms, and in the garage because although there was only a radio, it was nice to discuss with the people.

Some residents were paying rent and some didn't. Vicky was an extraordinary character. Every single day she was giving breakfast to destitute people: sandwiches and tea. I encouraged her to enter a competition and she was elected community worker of the year for Gauteng, and won a Presidential Award in 2004. Eventually, she had to sell the house. Her adopted "grand chil-

dren" thought that she needed to be nearer to them, because she was getting old. She sold it for R420.000 3 years ago, and like it there. I was supposed to move with her but did not, because there is still too much to do in Yeoville.

I then occupied the backyard cottage of Maurice Smithers for a while, before moving to Raymond Street.

Age

People/ Unit

Bio

Place of Birth Ceres, Western Cape **Occupation** Community Activist Work for Accomodation Rent

> 6 people (George on the mezzanine) George came to Johannesburg from Ga-Rankuwa and stayed in Meadowlands for a short time and then moved to Yeoville (1998).

He lived in a flat on Webb S treet for 2 years, then in a house on Natal Street for 14 years.

Thereafter he lived in a converted office on Raymond Street. George works for Yeoville community and for the ANC. I don't like my neighbour's patrons. It is a big tavern and patrons become rough and rowdy. Dis/likes about his place

> The block of flats that is next to the Green House is high and residents can see inside my yard. I don't like to have to walk downstairs to go to the toilet.

I would have preferred to have a more communal life. Yeoville is not quite a community.

This is a collection of people put together by desperation.

What I like about the place is the fact that it is so centrally located.





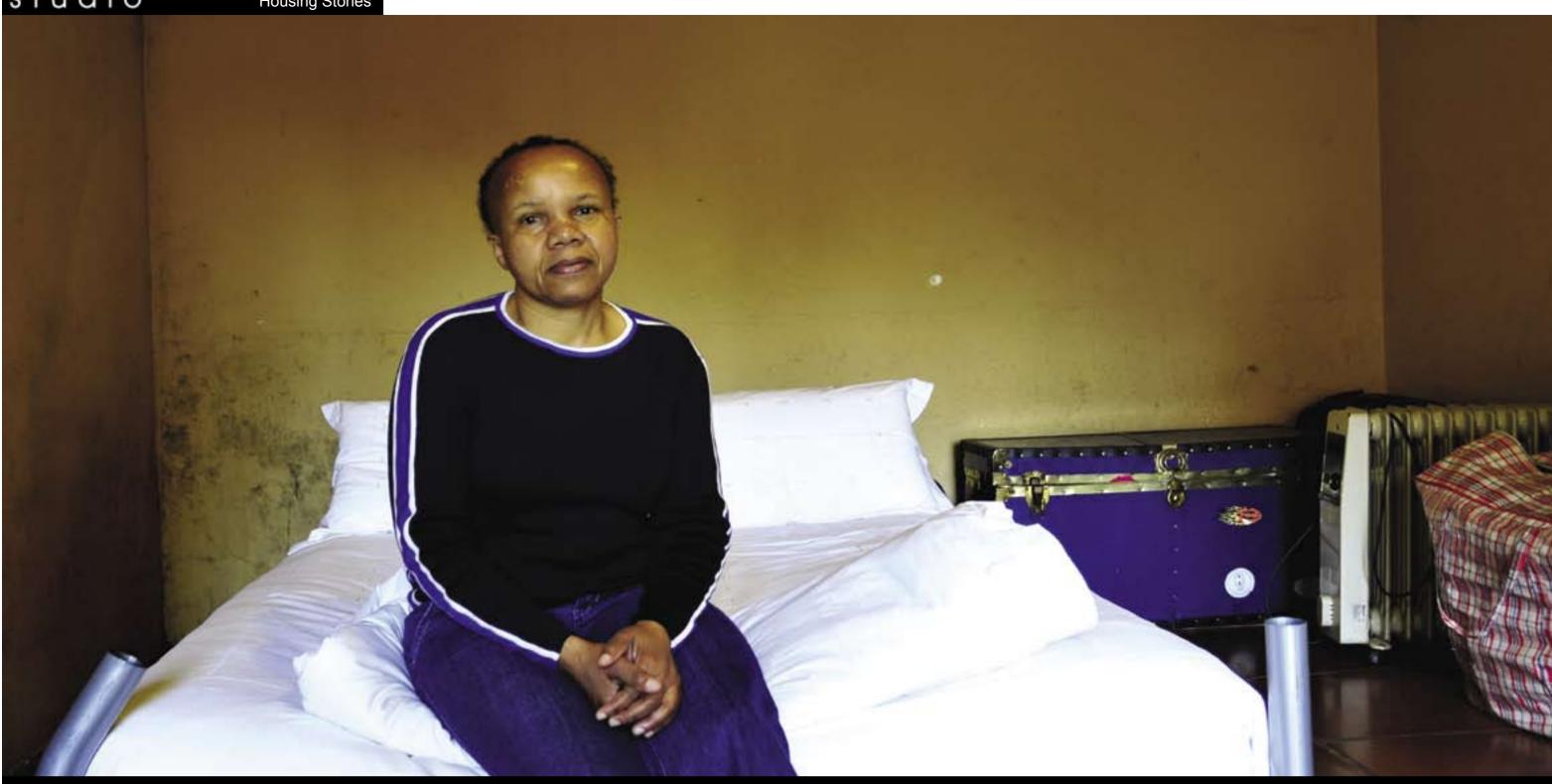




moved into a townhouse in the Northern suburbs. She does not



### Jackie

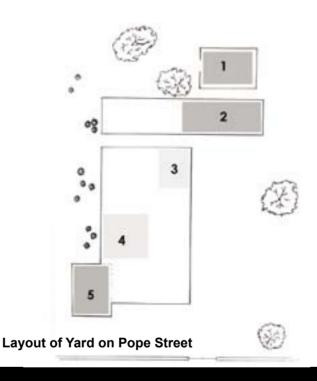


"I would not like to stay in Yeoville for long, I am moving away soon."



### Harely Street

The worst place I lived was on Harley Street. There were 21 people in the main house and we paid R1300 per room to the landlord. He was a nice man, but it was a very old house with wooden floors - nobody took care of the building. The kitchen was the most horrible place. The floor had holes and there was an old gas stove, there were big rats there. I used to cook in my room. I would only use the kitchen to wash my dishes.



1. Jackie's Cottage (1) 2.A man from Ghana. his South African wife and their 3 children. Moved in April 2007 moved out June 2008 due to disagreements with owner. (5) 3. Jackie's niece and her 2 children moved in, in 2007, moved out 2008 due to disagreement with landlord.(3) 4.Old Zimbabwean Lady moved in later 5.A woman from Zimbabwe, her Nigerian husband and their baby. Moved in 2007, moved out 5 months later due to disagree-

ments with landlord.



Plan of Cottage on Pope Street

▶ ▶ Housing Trajectory

Pope Street I live in a small cottage at the back of the plot with my son. My niece and children lived in an adjacent cottage. The main house has 3 bedrooms, which include 2 master bedrooms with separate bathroom attached and one guest room. There are 4 cottages around the main house (3 in the back, one in the front). At one time, a total of 24 people lived on the property.

I have a son who lives with his girlfriend in town, but otherwise I have no other family members up here. My niece moved into the main house in 2007, but left in 2008 due to disagreement with the owner.

I am very good friends with the original tenants of the house, but after last year the landlord started to kick everyone out. Others moved out due to having differences with the landlord's wife. The tenants of this house came from several other African countries (Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria). Most of them had jobs and were able to pay the full amount of rent (R1500-

R1800) every month in cash to the landlord, who does not live in the house. Currently 3 of the 4 cottages are empty. There is only me, and an old Zimbabwean lady in the main house. I wanted to open up a little tuck-shop but the landlord wouldn't let me. Now I work anywhere but home because of the poor condition of my house.

The best place I ever lived was a two storey house that belongs to a friend of mine, although I haven't seen her in a very long time. She rented out the outside cottages. It was a guest house, it still is. Every time I don't have a place to stay, I run to her

 we have been friends for 20 years. It's a beautiful house with seven bedrooms inside and 5 cottages outside. She made me feel at home – she'd never pressurize me with money for rent or food

I used to have a lot of things. I had a sewing machine that could do embroidery – but I lost it. Now I have only an old one. When you move from one place to another you lose your things.

Age 42

Dis/likes about her place

Place of Birth Port Elizabeth

Occupation Interior Decorator, Seamstress and Realtor
Rent R1500 Per month. The overall rent is R11, 200. The Care

R1500 Per month. The overall rent is R11, 200. The Caretaker collects rent per room every month. He lives on the property.

People/ Unit

1 in her cottage. A total of 24 people lived on the plot when it was full (house and 4 cottages)

Bio

I was born in Port Elizabeth and came to the city of Johannesburg at the age of 20.

I was born in Port Elizabeth and came to the city of Johannesburg at the age of 20.

I moved in Soweto for a few months. In summer 1993 I moved into Yeoville, but moved out in 1996.

In 2003 I came back to live in Yeoville, on Yeo Street.

I stayed there till 2007 and moved out to stay in the cottage in Pope Street.

Yeoville is too disorganized - empty lots are illegally occupied and overcrowding causes crime and disorder within the community.

The house □

It also has a leaking bathroom which is really tiny and barely fitted with all the bathroom features.

Since conducting this interview, Jackie has moved out of the cottage.

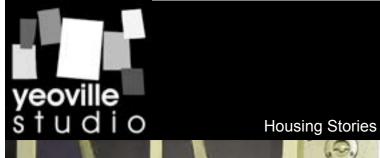










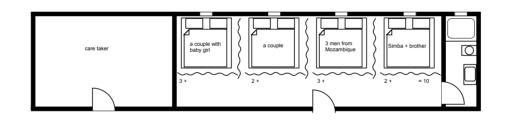


# Simba Sagide



"If I could, I would move out of Yeoville, maybe one day to Morningside, just because everyone needs an upgrade sometimes."





▶ ▶ ► Housing Trajectory

Regent Street

This was my first accommodation in Yeoville. It was on a rooftop. I stayed with my brother for free but the place was shared with 9 other people. The room was divided by Plan of Rooftoop Accomodation on Becker Street

**Becker Street** 

Plan of Cottage on Regent Street

I now live in the backstage dressing rooms for the stage at St Aidan's Church. I pay no rent, and no rates. I have hot water all the time. Two other adults share the cottage. They have to go through our room to go to theirs. I share my bedroom with a friend who works with me.The for of us share the bathroom and kitchen.

Plan of Room in Nyanga, Zimbabwe

I came to South Africa from Zimbabwe when I was 20. I had to leave because of political and economic hardship. I crossed the border illegally and I couldn't swim, so it was very scary. I lost everything in my backpack. But I walked from the border to Musina. Thinking about it now, I would never do that trip again. Never.

When I arrived in Yeoville, I needed to find my brother. I didn't have a contact number for him. So I looked for him as long as I could, then I found a place on the street to sleep. In the morning, I asked around, trying to find people who knew him and

someone told me that they sometimes saw him by the soccer field. So I went there and waited, and eventually I saw someone who knew where he was - someone from home that I recognized. So I went to live with him.

I didn't pay any rent there. But it was horrible to live there; very run down. We stayed on the roof in the old servant's quarters. It was always crowded, with no privacy. I shared a bed with my brother. There was never any hot water.

I moved lots of times in Yeoville, maybe six or seven in ten

years. The worst place I stayed was on Bezuidenhout Street. There were 18 people in the whole space. It was like a passage that was partitioned into 4 rooms. Then people put curtains up. It had one toilet, one shower, no hot water. It was a queue every time to go to the toilet, shared between men and women.

Now I am staying in the backstage room at the church with a friend. We enjoy it very much. It is a rewarding life.

Age

People/ Unit

Dis/Likes about his place

Bio

Place of Birth Nyanga, Zimbabwe Occupation Performance Artist

Care-taking on church grounds in exchange for room and board Rent

Room in Nyanga

best room so far.

This was my room in

Zimbabwe. It was my

4 (2 in his bedroom)

I fled Zimbabwe and moved to South Africa when I was 20. I was an undocumented immigrant between 2000 and 2006. I

spent those years running away from the police until I applied for political asylum.

I now teach acting to children in local schools and run drama workshops with them.

Living here isn't so bad. All the areas I need to access (work, groceries, entertainment, and friends) are in walking distance.

I like to relax with my friends at the Rasta House. But I hate that there is never any privacy, and that everything is all in the same room. I don't like that people have to go through my room to go to theirs, or to go to the bathroom.

I would like not to have to share my space with anyone unless I chose to.

I would like a separate kitchen, bathroom, lounge and bedrooms. These are simple needs that I feel I can achieve in the future.













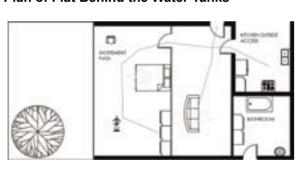
### Lerato Maduna



"I decided to stay in Yeoville because of the atmosphere and the availability of spaces to rent."



Plan of Flat Behind the Water Tanks



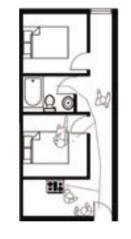
Plan of Flat on Becker Street

- which I do not do.

I found this place by word of mouth. I did not like sharing a bathroom with other people and the passage was too small.

**Becker Street** I shared the bedroom with a friend. There, I liked the open garden at the end of the house. I also liked the curtain wall; it was adequate for my work with photographs. We had to share the kitchen and bath-

Plan of Flat on Dunbar Street



I found this room in an apartment advertised on the wall next to Checkers. This was my worst accommodation. There was no space at all. I never went into the other tenants' room, so I don't know if there were any windows.

**Dunbar Street** 

▶ ▶ ▶ Housing Trajectory

Plan of Flat on De la Ray Street

pockets for the community.

comfortable. If I could, I would have my own bathroom.

De la Ray Street

My partner, baby daughter and I live in

this four roomed flat

on the second floor. The circulation is

good. My apartment makes up one of four

apartments on the second floor of the building. My daughter

has her own room

room as well. The

size of the house is

and we have our own

I stay with my partner and my daughter in a 2 bedroom apartment. I have a sleeper couch mattress that acts as a mattress. We pay between R3500 and R4000 in rent, including services. This allows us to have the whole apartment to ourselves. I believe the rent is so high because there is a general assumptions that sub-letting is the order of the day - in Yeoville especially

Currently, I hang my washing downstairs, which means I have to carry wet washing downstairs. There is a basic area where children can play, on a concrete slab.

I like my neighbours, I enjoy exchanging small talk with them and chilling out when I come back from a long day at work.

Then I cook or eat dinner prepared by my partner, tidy the house, play with my daughter and answer her numerous questions. In the evenings I do my freelance photography and other work, or I listen to music and relax.

I would move to my own house in Yeoville if I could – one of the original houses in Yeoville, with a garden and a verandah.

I never experienced crime here, except once when people tried to enter the garage at the bottom of the building. Overall I would love Yeoville to be greener, with many green

Age

Place of Birth Soweto, Gauteng Occupation

Archivist and Freelance Photographer R3500-R4000. Rent is collected by the landlady directly Rent

People/ Unit 2 bedroom flat/ 3 people (family) Bio

I came to Yeoville in 2004 to move out of my parents' house. I stayed with a friend in Yeoville. I then moved to Melville in 2006,

but was involved in a car accident and moved back to Soweto to be closer to my parents.

I moved with her partner and baby daughter to a place of our own in Yeoville in 2009.

The size of the flat is suitable and comfortable. Dis/likes about her place

If we could, we'd love a shower option in the bathroom - have both tub and shower,

as well as a garden in which our daughter could play.

Currently she plays inside or on the lawn next to the pavement.









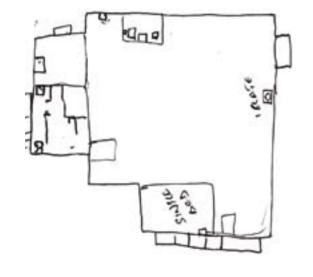




## Jephias Ndlovu



"I would live anywhere where I can find work...If I could, I would move to Sandton."



Jephias' Sketch of Store Room on Hendon St

### **Hendon Street**

This storeroom was in the basement of a 3 storey apartment building. We were let in by a security guard, a friend. I shared this room and 1 bed with 4 other people: each night some of us had to sleep on the floor. There was no window; the plumbing inside the room was noisy and sometimes leaked.

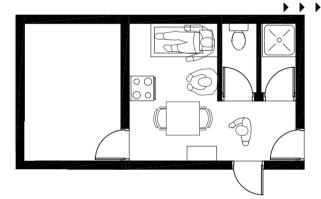


plug and no bathroom nor kitchen. The walls were turning white – like the paint is coming off. The room smelled. I was waking up finding flu every day. It was for free, but I was so pleased to move out of this

house.

There was a single

Plan of Store Room on Hendon Street



▶ ▶ ► Housing Trajectory

**Regent Street** I share a room with a friend who works with me on the church grounds. There are another two adults with us. We share the bathroom.

Plan of Cottage on Regent Street

as my daughter. But I have no emotional attachment to Yeoville and could move anywhere else. If I could, I would move to Sandton.

I live in a semi-detached house on the grounds of St Aidans Church, where I work. The church deducts the rent off my salary each month, including services.

In that space I have my bed, a single plate stove and a small table on which I keep my speakers and radio. They are my most prized possessions. Music is the part of my life that inspires me and gives me hope. One day I'll record my own music and I will become a celebrity.

I share my room with a friend; we sleep together head to toe in the single bed. The bathroom is shared by 4 people and is only supplied with cold water. The other two people sharing the bathroom live in the next room, which can only be accessed by my front door: they have the key to my room. I do my washing in the courtyard within the church grounds, but there is nowhere to hang it up except the playground.

In the mornings I work for the church tending the garden, and three afternoons a week I also go to a local school to teach the children. Most of my friends live within walking distance, as well

Age

Bio

Place of Birth Kwazulu-Natal

**Occupation** Pre -school assistant and church gardener Rent

People/ Unit

4 (2 in his bedroom). My room-mate is a keyboardist in the church, so he doesn't pay. I moved to Johannesburg to find work.

After 2 years in Yeoville, I went to Katlehong where my family stays, and remained in a shack which was my worst housing experience. I moved back to Yeoville, and requested the room for myself from the church. As they were looking for a gardener I took over the job.

I like Yeoville because it's a quiet place, unlike Hillbrow. At least we have police volunteers – they're cool people. Dis/likes about his place

If they can open the Recreational center, everything will be cool. We want Yeoville to be a place for children to showcase their true talent.

I like that my current place has a lot of windows and light, and that I can walk everywhere in Yeoville.

I don't mind sharing the kitchen but would like my own bedroom and bathroom. In my dream house, I would like a big, up-market house with large rooms, and space to entertain guests.

I don't like the sports bars on Rocky Street. They're dealing with drugs to corrupt people – even children.







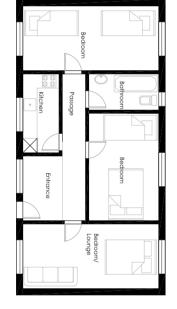




### Ndithini Mbali

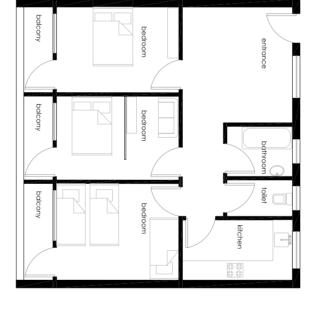


"Yeoville used to be a nice place, with lots of artists and celebrities. I don't know why they all moved out. One day, when I am big, I'll see the reason they've all moved out."



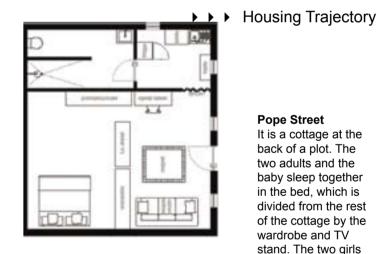
Plan of Flat on St. George

St George Street We had a big bedroom, and only 2 kids at that time. The owner was staying in the lounge, and there were 2 men from North Africa in the second bedroom. But the place was not safe. We got mugged in the flat, so we left.



Plan of Flat on Kenmere Street

**Kenmere Street** It was a very big, nice room with a balcony where you could chill out. But it was very cold there. I was pregnant and the landlady who was living in the next bedroom did not want us to use a heater. Then she was constantly raising the rent, it was becoming too expensive.



**Pope Street** It is a cottage at the back of a plot. The two adults and the baby sleep together in the bed, which is divided from the rest of the cottage by the wardrobe and TV stand. The two girls sleep together on the sleeper couch, the two

boys sleep on the car-

pet beside the sleeper

couch. During the day

the lounge acts as a

recording studio.

Plan of Cottage on Pope Street

When I left the Eastern Cape in 1997, Yeoville was the only choice for me, as my brother was the only family who could support me. After my brother made it big as a guitarist, he moved to Fourways. I stayed in Yeoville, but I could not settle in one place because of my irregular income as a musician. In the thirteen years I have lived in Yeoville, I have stayed in twelve different places.

However with my current fiancé, a music producer, my life has become far more settled with the additional income. I now live with him, our 4 month-old baby, my son and daughter from a

previous relationship, and my late sister's son and daughter.

I also live with my friend ("auntie") who is going through a personal crisis. There are 8 people living currently in the cottage.

We pay R2000 per month for rent to the owner of the house. Unfortunately, the home owner passed away last year, and there are issues about who should collect the rent.

We might need to leave soon.



Ndithini's Photograph

Age Place of Birth

Eastern Cape **Occupation** Musician R2000 Rent

People/ Unit One bedroom backyard cottage, 8 people (extended family and friend) Bio

I was born and grew up in the Eastern Cape. I came to Yeoville in 1997. I work as a freelance saxophonist,

recording music albums from our home music studio setup.

I also manage a small band- organizing their gigs.

I like the fact that Yeoville is in the center of Johannesburg. If I am wanted somewhere, it is easy for me to go. Dis/likes about her place

The problem is that Yeoville is not safe. It is so packed with clubs. I would not want my children to grow up here. In my dream house, I need privacy in my bedroom, but also lots of space for the family, like an open kitchen and a lounge,

a verandah with a braai place, a vegetable garden. I would like to own my house, as a way of saving and investment.

Since concluding this interview, Ndithini has moved out of the cottage.











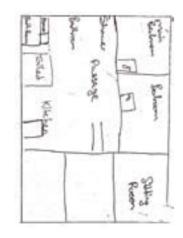
photograph©Lerato Maduna



## Mdala Skhula\*



"Yeoville was my ideal place to stay. Although the living conditions are not that good, I like the sense of community"

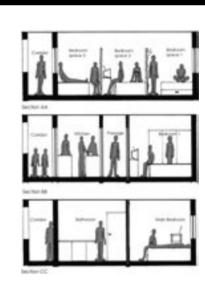


Natal Street
12 people live in the apartment. The flat is accessed from the kitchen and has two bedrooms and one sitting room. Bedroom 1 belongs to Mdala and his uncle. The other bedroom houses a family of 3. There are 3 families in the living room – which is sub-

divided by curtains.

The kitchen is used by all; Food is kept in people's personal

Plan of Flat in Natal Street



Section through Flat on Natal Street

Mdala's Photograph
The walkway functions
as a play area for children in the building. I
sometimes sit on the
steps to relax.

▶ ▶ ► Housing Trajectory

I moved to South Africa so that I could seek protection from political repression. My journey led me from Zimbabwe to Musina and then finally Johannesburg. I knew friends in the city in Hillbrow and stayed with them until I moved to Yeoville. I found Yeoville to be quieter and that there was a sense of community unlike Hillbrow.

In Yeoville, it is free on the streets. And the noise goes down in the evenings, unlike Hillbrow.

I have lived in the same place - on Natal Street- since I arrived in Yeoville two years ago. I rent a bedroom and share a bed with my uncle in an apartment block. I live with a total of 12 people.

spaces. The bathroom

is shared and used

on a first come first

served basis.

In the bedroom I share with my uncle, there is space for a TV radio and a free-standing wardrobe. The main bedroom belongs to a family of three, and has space for a TV, radio, built-in cupboard and a bed.

The walkway functions as a play area for children in the building. I sometimes sit on the steps to relax.



Mdala's Photograph

Age33Place of BirthZimbabweOccupationArtistRentNo Information

Mdala's sketch of Flat in Natal Street

People/ Unit 2 bedroom flat, 12 people (2 in Mdala's room)

Bio I have been living in Yeoville for 2 years.

I facilitate arts and culture at the local schools and shelters (poetry, dance and acting).

Dis/Likes about his place

Noise levels are very high. People living in the flat can open up their radio very early in the

Noise levels are very high. People living in the flat can open up their radio very early in the morning. I dislike the carelessness – some people don't clean the bath or kitchen. What I like in the flat is the landlord, who has a humanitarian approach when it comes to important issues.

If I had a choice I would stay in Yeoville, because I have a good relationship with people in and around Yeoville,

and this takes time to build. I would love a big, two- storey house with stone walls and thatched roof,

a big lounge on the ground floor for my big family and lots of children, and another big lounge with a bar, a big screen, for guests and visitors on the first floor.

Since concluding this interview, Mdala has moved out of the flat.

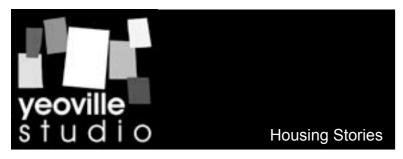
\*name has been changed



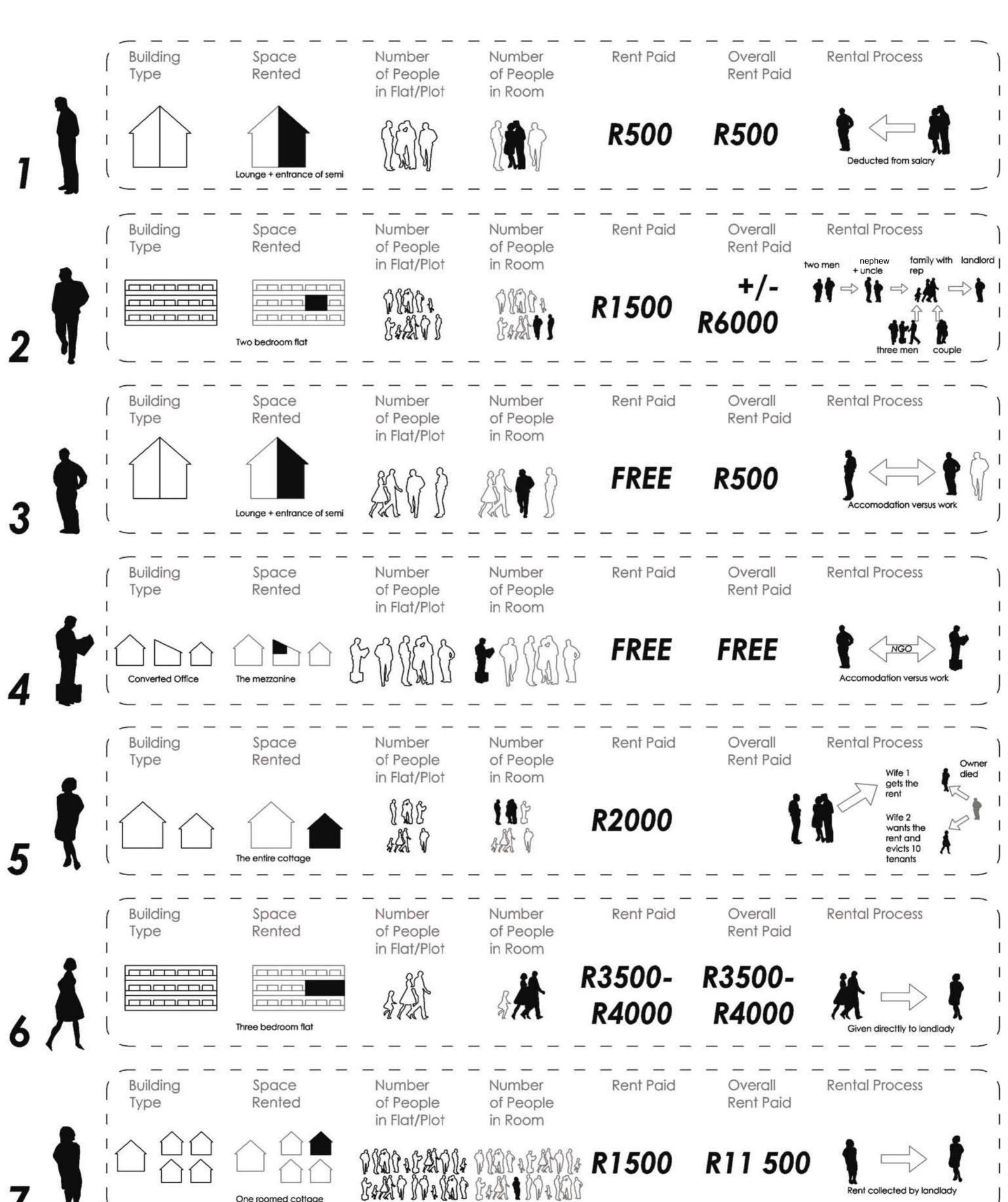








# Rent/Space Processes







One roomed cottage







Rent collected by landlady



## Lessons from Yeoville

Mobility is high in Yeoville - one is able to find accommodation for free - at least for some time. Participants of this workshop moved on average, once a year, but sometimes stayed only a few months in one place.

Rent levels can be low – between R500 and R1500 on average, if one is willing to accept difficult housing conditions, This level of affordability has not yet been provided by municipal or public housing that in general, aims at rents of about or above R1000. On the other hand, 'slum-lording' constitutes the private provision of affordable rent (R500-R1000) in Yeoville. This often takes the form of overcrowded buildings. (see Rent/ Space Processes diagram)

Therefore, although planning, building, providing and managing decent housing with shared facilities, at an affordable price, has started in some pilot projects in Johannesburg, they remain exceptional cases.

#### In Yeoville you can find places for free, for some time. It helps in periods of crisis.

Yeoville provides many temporary housing solutions to new arrivals to the City, or to people who might be going through a personal crisis (family, health or job), at least until he/she finds his/her ground. Therefore, one can often rely on dense charity and social networks that provide accommodation, even if the standards of such accommodation might be low.

Moving is often a response to a bad relationship between the landlord and tenant. Nevertheless, tenants can find alternative accommodation fairly quickly. However, this frequent relocation has its costs: it constrains the consolidation of tenants' rights.

The rights and duties of both landlords and tenants are unregulated and the lease agreements are informal. Therefore, this relationship between tenant and landlord tends to depend on personalities - which often leads to the abuse of rights.

Although landlords in Yeoville might provide affordable housing options for such a mobile population -landlords may also exercise economic exploitation over tenants, by charging exorbitant rents for small, unsafe, and overcrowded accommodation e.g. A two bedroom flat that is rented out to 10 adults and 2 children, for a total of R6000/month; or a house with 4 rooms rented to several families and individuals that brings an overall rental income of R11.500.

Landlords are able to impose a range of obligations on tenants: vacating their homes after only a few days' notice; prohibiting the use of a heater in the middle of winter and requesting unreasonable domestic chores from tenants.

However, the fact that other housing solutions are so readily available in Yeoville makes moving out an easier response to these abuses - rather than fighting for rights such as Notice for Eviction or in other cases Reasonable Repartition for Chores.

### A diverse, affordable rental system is important – it is highly adaptable to constant changes in family size and revenue flow.

Moving allows for changes in family size, structure and revenue, in a time when waged labour is increasingly uncommon and economic cycles condition income flow.

Renting also provides highly flexible housing solutions to nonwaged workers, in a context where the rental offer is wide.

### **Micro-Management of Overcrowding**

Residents design 'solutions' to share spaces with others on a daily basis.

However, this is not without negotiation and tensions. Private spaces (bedroom or bathroom) become collective spaces and collective spaces (living rooms, corridors, and staircases) are appropriated for private use.

Furthermore, loss of personal belongings, fear for personal

safety, the lack of privacy, noise, poor management of the en vironment and the impossibility of having guests or visitors, are some of the consequences of overcrowding.

Therefore, most residents long for privacy, 'my own bedroom', and rooms with designated and separate functions.

#### 'Everyone needs an upgrade sometime'

Most participants have improved their housing conditions over time. Nevertheless, crises do alter this path.

The bottom end of the housing trajectory would consist of sleeping in spaces not meant and not equipped for residential use (basement storeroom, the street, on the floor etc); or sharing spaces to such a degree that there is no room for privacy nor easy access to basic amenities.

In some cases, core families stabilize over time and residents tend to desire more privacy i.e. Sharing with relatives or friends instead of complete strangers; or finding a place suited for a nuclear family an extended family.

The Rent/ Space Processes diagram is a graphical representation of these findings and raise questions for further investigation:

- How can we create models of inner city housing that are sustainable, flexible and respectful of tenant's rights?
- What mechanisms are required for a housing system that is both flexible and affordable in the inner city?
- What are the challenges faced by landlords and tenants, in the management and maintenance of buildings?
- Can and should the renting process be regulated?
- What are the most appropriate building types and spaces to accommodate the needs and interests of the city, land lords and tenants?

This collection of housing stories is not representative of the whole of Yeoville. Nevertheless they do open up considerations of how Yeoville could be understood as a model for affordable rental housing.

In Yeoville you can find places for free, for some time. It helps in periods of crisis.



A diverse, affordable rental system is important – it is highly adaptable to constant changes in family size and revenue flow.

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