

Analysing Sustainable Housing Investment in Gauteng, South Africa: A Multidimensional Framework

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Abstract

Gauteng's housing sector is shaped by rapid urbanisation, spatial inequality, affordability constraints, and fragmented governance, all of which constrain efforts to mobilise housing investment in more sustainable and inclusive ways. This study aims to develop a multidimensional framework for analysing sustainable housing investment in Gauteng, South Africa. A qualitative desk-based design was adopted, combining a structured review of academic literature with qualitative content analysis of selected policy and governance documents from Gauteng, São Paulo, and Greater Manchester. The analysis was guided by Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Resource-Based View to examine how governance arrangements, stakeholder coordination, and strategic resource capacities influence housing investment outcomes. The findings indicate that sustainable housing investment in Gauteng is constrained by fragmented institutional mandates, regulatory uncertainty, weak intersectoral coordination, and limited mechanisms for meaningful stakeholder participation. In response, the study proposes a four-dimensional framework comprising institutional, financial, stakeholder, and spatial-equity dimensions. The paper contributes a context-sensitive analytical framework for assessing housing investment conditions and informing policy and planning debates on sustainable urban development in Gauteng.

Keywords: Sustainable housing investment, urban governance, spatial equity, stakeholder participation, qualitative content analysis,

1. Introduction

Since 1994, South Africa's housing and human settlements agenda has sought to expand access to adequate housing, promote spatial transformation, and support more sustainable urban development (Shiba, Walter, et al, 2025). Despite these policy commitments, Gauteng continues to experience persistent housing pressures linked to rapid urbanization, affordability constraints, spatial fragmentation, infrastructure deficits, and uneven coordination across national, provincial, and metropolitan spheres of governance (Turok et al., 2024; Khalil & Rubin, 2020). These challenges complicate efforts to align housing investment with broader goals of inclusion, resilience, and spatial integration.

Although sustainable housing investment is increasingly recognised in urban scholarship and policy discourse, existing studies tend to examine governance, regulation, finance and stakeholder participation in isolation. In the Gauteng, this limit understanding of how these factors interact to shape housing investment decisions and housing delivery outcomes. There is therefore a need for an integrated analytical framework that can explain the institutional, financial, stakeholder, and equity dimensions of sustainable housing investment in this context.

This study aims to develop a multidimensional framework for analysing sustainable housing investment in Gauteng, South Africa. Drawing on comparative insights from Gauteng, São Paulo and Greater Manchester, it addresses three research questions: -

1. What policy, institutional, and regulatory conditions shape sustainable housing investment in Gauteng?
2. How do stakeholder coordination, financial considerations, and risk management mechanisms influence housing investment decisions and delivery outcomes; and
3. What lessons from São Paulo and Greater Manchester can inform a multidimensional framework for Gauteng?

This paper adopts a qualitative desk-based design, combining a structured review of academic literature with qualitative content analysis of selected policy, planning and governance documents. Guided by Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, the Resource-Based View, the analysis proposes a four-dimensional framework comprising institutional, financial, stakeholder, and equity dimensions. The study contributes a context-sensitive analytical framework for research and policy debate on sustainable housing investment in Gauteng

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2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Sustainable housing investment is not only a question of capital allocation or housing output; it is also shaped by institutional, financial, governance, and distributive conditions under which housing is planned and delivered (Brown et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022; HRSC, 2024). In this paper, sustainable housing investment refers to investment conditions and practices that support financially viable, socially inclusive, spatially integrated, and institutionally durable housing outcomes. This framing is especially relevant in Gauteng, where housing delivery is shaped by rapid urbanisation, socio-spatial inequality, infrastructure pressure, and multi-scalar governance complexity.

Existing literature provides useful insight into factors influencing housing investment, but it remains fragmented. Studies commonly address regulation and policy, housing finance, participatory governance, or social outcomes as separate themes. As a result, limited attention has been paid to how these dimensions interact to shape investment decisions and delivery outcomes in unequal city-regions. To address this gap, the present study reviews the literature through four linked dimensions: Institutional-regulatory conditions, stakeholder governance, financial-resource arrangements, and equity spatial outcomes.

2.1. Institutional and Regulatory Conditions

First, institutional and regulatory environments shape the predictability, coordination, and implementation capacity required for housing investment (Scott, 2023; Mbambo, 2023). Research in South Africa shows that fragmented mandates, uneven state capacity, and weak intergovernmental coordination can delay planning approvals, constrain land release, and undermine alignment between housing, infrastructure, and spatial planning (Banda et al., 2022; Mhlongo et al., 2024; Turok, 2025). In this study, regulatory fragmentation refers to the misalignment or overlap of rules, mandates, and procedures across institutions involved in housing delivery (Cirolia & Berrisford, 2017; Smit, 2021). In city-regions such as Gauteng, these conditions influence not only project viability, but also which forms of development are prioritised and where investment is channelled.

2.2. Stakeholder Roles, Governance and Engagement

Second, housing investment is shaped by stakeholder relations, governance processes, and the politics of housing decision-making. Stakeholder participation includes the involvement of state institutions, private developers, financiers, community organisation, and affected residents in decision-making related to housing investment and delivery. While the literature suggests that inclusive governance can improve

legitimacy, reduce conflict, and better align projects with local needs, participation is often uneven and constrained by power asymmetries (Arnstein, 1969; Mitlin, 2008). In South Africa, formal consultation may remain procedural rather than substantive, limiting the influence of marginalised groups on investment priorities and project design (Smit, 2021; Rust & Napier, 2023; Modise, 2025). This makes stakeholder configuration a constitutive, rather than secondary dimension of housing investment.

2.3. Financial and Resource Arrangements

Third, financial and resource arrangements determine whether investment can be mobilised, sustained, and directed toward inclusive housing outcomes. These arrangements include public subsidies, grants, guarantees, concessional finance, blended finance, and other risk-sharing mechanisms intended to improve project feasibility (UN-Habitat, 2020; CAHF, 2023; IFC, 2023; Rust, 2023). Although such instruments can attract capital and expand supply, critics caution that finance-led approaches may privilege housing as an asset class over housing as a social good, with possible consequences for affordability and exclusion (Aalbers, 2016; Fields & Uffer, 2016; CAHF, 2023). In Gauteng, this issue is compounded by uneven access to formal finance, infrastructure backlogs, and uncertainty around land and service provision.

Sustainable housing investment, therefore, depends not only on the presence of funding instruments but also on the institutional and governance conditions that make them effective and equitable (Scheba, 2023; Mbatha, 2024).

2.4. Equity, Spatial Outcomes and Multidimensional Integration

Fourth, housing investment must be assessed in terms of its socio-spatial consequences. Equity in this paper refers to the extent to which housing investment supports fairer access to well-located, serviced, and opportunity-linked housing across different social groups. South African scholarship has shown that housing delivery can reproduce peripheralization and spatial inequality where investment is weakly aligned with transport, livelihoods and urban opportunity structures (Todes, 2012; Harrison & Todes, 2024). Similar findings from Latin America show that increased housing output does not necessarily translate into inclusion or resilience if projects reinforce segregation or expose households to new risks (Rolnik, 2019). This suggests that investment should be evaluated not only by delivery volume, but also by where development occurs, who benefits, and how risks and opportunities are distributed.

The study's theoretical framing integrates Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Resource-Based View. Institutional Theory explains how rules, norms and governance arrangements shape housing

investment conditions and implementation behaviour (Scott, 1995); the Resource-Based View draws attention to the strategic capacities and resource required to mobilise, manage, and sustain housing investment (Barney, 1991) including finance, land, technical capability, and implementation capacity; and Stakeholder Theory highlights how actor interests, power relations, legitimacy and coordination influence decision-making and delivery outcomes (Freeman, 1984). Used together, these theories provide an integrated basis for analysing how institutions structure action, how stakeholders negotiate priorities, and how resources are assembled and deployed in practice.

The literature review identifies a clear gap. Although prior studies offer valuable insight into governance, finance, participation, and spatial justice, fewer studies integrate these dimensions into a single analytical framework for sustainable housing investment at the city-region scale. This gap is particularly evident in Gauteng, where multiple governance actors, uneven capacity, affordability pressures, and socio-spatial inequality interact in complex ways. The present study responds by developing a multidimensional framework that treats institutional, financial, stakeholder, and equity dimensions as interdependent rather than separate explanatory factors. Comparative reference to São Paulo and Greater Manchester is used heuristically to illuminate how different city-regional arrangements shape investment conditions and outcomes.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study aimed to develop a contextually grounded framework for analysing sustainable housing investment in Gauteng, South Africa. More specifically, it examined how housing investment is governed, financed, and institutionally coordinated and how these dynamics shape progress towards inclusive and sustainable urban development in relation to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 11). In light of this aim, the study adopted a qualitative, theory-informed design located within an interpretivist paradigm. This approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how sustainable housing investment is framed, organised, and operationalized across different institutional contexts rather than to test causal relationships quantitatively. The analysis followed an abductive logic, moving iteratively between empirical material and theoretical interpretation. Two interrelated methods were employed. First, a PRISMA-informed structured literature review was conducted to identify and synthesise academic and policy scholarship on sustainable housing investment, governance, housing finance, and stakeholder participation. Second, a qualitative documentary analysis was conducted on selected policy, planning, legislative, and governance

documents from Gauteng, São Paulo, and Greater Manchester. These two strands were integrated during analysis to provide both conceptual grounding and comparative empirical insight.

2.2. Literature Review Procedure

The literature review was undertaken to establish the conceptual and empirical basis for the study and to clarify the main dimensions of sustainable housing investment. Searches were conducted in Scopus and Web of Science, with supplementary searches in Google Scholar to identify additional relevant sources. Grey literature was also purposively collected from the websites and repositories of key institutions, including UN-Habitat, the World Bank, the OECD, South African Departments, national and Gauteng provincial government departments, and metropolitan municipalities. The search covered literature published between 2000 and 2024 to capture contemporary debates on sustainable urban development, housing governance, finance, and SDG-related policy. Search terms combined concepts related to sustainable housing, affordable housing, housing investment, housing finance, governance, stakeholder participation and inclusive urban development. Additional searches were conducted using case-specific terms, including Gauteng, São Paulo and Greater Manchester.

Sources were included when they addressed sustainable housing, housing investment, governance, urban policy, or stakeholder participation in a way that contributed conceptually, empirically, or policy-relevantly to the study's aim. Included materials comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books or book chapters, official legislation, policy documents, strategic plans, and reputable institutional reports. Sources were excluded if they addressed housing only tangentially; focused narrowly on technical construction issues without relevance to governance or finance, lacked clear authorship or credibility; were duplicates; or did not meaningfully inform the research aim.

Records were screened first by title and abstract then through full-text assessment against the inclusion criteria. To strengthen rigour, the included sources were appraised for clarity of research purpose, methodological transparency, analytical depth, institutional credibility, and relevance to the study. A structured extraction matrix was used to record the author, year, geographical focus, source type, methodology, key concepts, governance arrangements, financing mechanisms, stakeholder roles, sustainability outcomes, and theoretical orientation. The review was synthesised thematically to identify conceptual convergences, divergences, and gaps relevant to framework development.

2.3. Documentary Analysis and Case Selection

Documentary analysis was used to examine how sustainable housing investment is articulated and governed in formal institutional practice. Gauteng was selected as the primary case because the study aimed to develop a framework applicable to that context. São Paulo and Greater Manchester were selected as comparator cases because they are metropolitan regions characterised by complex housing pressures, multi-level governance arrangements, and policy responses relevant to sustainable housing delivery. The comparison was analytical rather than statistical and was intended to generate transferable insights rather than generalisable findings. Documents were selected purposively based on relevance, authority, and information richness. Included documents were official or institutionally recognised texts directly related to housing, human settlements, spatial planning, infrastructure, finance, or governance in one of the three cases. The document corpus included legislation, policy frameworks, strategic plans, spatial development frameworks, housing strategies, public budget or financing instruments, and public-private partnership regulations.

The documents were analysed using qualitative content analysis. Coding combined deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive codes were derived from the study's conceptual and theoretical framing and included institutional coordination, regulatory instruments, financing mechanisms, stakeholder participation, accountability, implementation capacity, and equity-related outcomes. Inductive coding allowed context-specific themes to emerge from the documents, including intergovernmental fragmentation, land and infrastructure constraints, delivery bottlenecks, and governance innovations. Coded segments were grouped into broader categories and synthesised into cross-cutting themes, which were then compared across the three cases to identify enabling conditions, recurring constraints, and context-specific differences.

3.4. Data Analysis, Rigour, And Limitations

Analysis integrated findings from the literature review and documentary analysis through thematic synthesis. This involved comparing themes across both strands to identify convergence, divergence, and complementarity. Interpretation was informed by

Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Resource-Based View. Institutional Theory supported analysis of regulatory and governance arrangements; Stakeholder Theory focused attention on actor roles, interests, and power relations; and the Resource-Based View highlighted the strategic capacities and resources required to mobilise and sustain housing investment. Together, these lenses informed the development of the final multidimensional framework.

Several steps were taken to enhance trustworthiness. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation between literature and documentary evidence. Dependability was supported by explicit search procedures, defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a transparent coding process. Confirmability was addressed by grounding interpretations in documented evidence and maintaining alignment between the research aim, analytical categories, and findings. The study has limitations. Because it relies on secondary and documentary sources, it is better suited to analysing formal policy, institutional arrangements, and stated governance priorities than lived experience or implementation practice on the ground. The comparative cases were selected for analytical relevance rather than representativeness, which limits broader generalisation. In addition, documentary analysis cannot fully capture the gap between policy intent and implementation. These limitations are acknowledged, but they do not diminish the study's value as a framework-building exercise grounded in comparative and policy-relevant evidence. The study relied exclusively on publicly available literature and documentary sources and involved no human participants; therefore formal ethical clearance was not required.

3. Findings and Discussion

The literature review and documentary analysis identified four interrelated dimensions shaping sustainable housing investment at the city-region scale: (1) institutional and regulatory conditions; (2) financial and resource configurations; (3) stakeholder and governance arrangements; and (4) equity and outcome dimensions linked to SDG 11. These dimensions recur across Gauteng, São Paulo, and Greater Manchester, although their expression varies by context. Figure 1



Figure 1: Multidimensional sustainable housing investment framework for Gauteng (Phase 1 synthesis)

synthesises these findings into a multidimensional framework for Gauteng.

First, institutional and regulatory conditions emerged as a foundational determinant of housing investment. Across the literature and policy documents, regulatory clarity, policy coherence, and coordination across levels of government were consistently associated with stronger delivery conditions. Conversely, fragmented mandates, weak alignment between housing, land, and infrastructure planning, and slow approval processes were identified as major constraints. These challenges were especially evident in Gauteng and São Paulo, while Greater Manchester showed relatively stronger city-regional coordination. This finding underscores that investment depends not only on the availability of capital but also on stable and credible institutional arrangements.

Second, financial and resource configurations were shown to extend beyond access to finance alone. Sustainable housing investment depends on the interaction among funding mechanisms, land availability, infrastructure provision, administrative capacity, and risk management. Across all three cases, public subsidies, blended finance, and partnership-based arrangements were used to address affordability and feasibility pressures. However, the analysis indicates that financing instruments are unlikely to produce sustainable outcomes in the absence of supportive institutional and spatial conditions. Investment capacity therefore rests on the combined mobilisation of financial, organisational, and territorial resources.

Third, stakeholder and governance arrangements strongly influenced how housing priorities were defined and implemented. The evidence shows that state actors, private developers, financiers, and communities play unequal roles in shaping delivery processes and outcomes. While collaborative governance and partnership models are widely promoted, their effectiveness depends on accountability, transparency, and meaningful participation. In Gauteng and São Paulo, fragmented governance and uneven power relations often constrain inclusive decision-making, whereas Greater Manchester demonstrates more institutionalised coordination, albeit with continuing tensions between growth and inclusion. Governance quality is therefore central to how risks, responsibilities, and benefits are distributed.

Fourth, equity and outcome dimensions were critical to assessing whether housing investment contributes to sustainable urban development. The review and documentary analysis suggest that housing investment should be evaluated not only in terms of delivery volume or financial viability, but also in terms of affordability, spatial inclusion, access to services and

opportunities, and broader resilience outcomes. This is particularly important in Gauteng, where spatial inequality continues to shape housing delivery patterns. Similar tensions are evident in São Paulo, while Greater Manchester shows that stronger governance does not automatically resolve affordability pressures. Sustainable housing investment must therefore be assessed through socio-spatial and distributional lenses aligned with SDG 11.

The cross-case comparison highlights both convergence and divergence. All three city-regions face the challenge of balancing affordability, investment mobilisation, and spatial justice. However, the cases differ in the degree of institutional coordination and policy stability available to support these goals. Greater Manchester benefits from relatively clearer strategic coordination, while Gauteng and São Paulo face deeper fragmentation and land-use tensions. These differences suggest that the framework should be used as a context-sensitive analytical tool rather than as a template for direct policy transfer. Overall, the findings show that sustainable housing investment in Gauteng cannot be reduced to a question of finance. Rather, it is shaped by the interaction of institutional coherence, resource capacity, governance arrangements, and equity outcomes. The study, therefore, reframes de-risking as a multidimensional process involving not only financial instruments but also regulatory predictability, implementation capacity, and participatory governance.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how sustainable housing investment may be conceptualised in Gauteng in relation to affordability, spatial integration, and sustainable urban development. Drawing on a PRISMA-informed structured literature review and comparative documentary analysis of Gauteng, São Paulo, and Greater Manchester, it developed a multidimensional framework for analysing the conditions that shape housing investment and delivery. The study finds that sustainable housing investment is not solely a financial matter. It depends on the interaction of institutional and regulatory coherence, financial and resource capacity, stakeholder and governance arrangements, and equity-oriented development outcomes. On this basis, the article argues that de-risking should be understood as a systemic governance challenge rather than a narrowly financial one.

The main contribution of the study is the development of a four-dimensional framework for analysing sustainable housing investment in Gauteng. Although exploratory, the framework offers a structured basis for understanding how institutional, financial, governance, and socio-spatial factors interact in shaping housing delivery. It also provides a foundation for future

empirical research on housing governance and investment in Gauteng and comparable city-regions. The study is limited by its reliance on secondary and documentary sources and does not directly capture implementation practices or stakeholder perspectives. Future research should therefore test and refine the framework through primary empirical investigation

involving public-sector actors, private developers, financiers, and communities engaged in housing delivery.

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