

.9. CONCLUSION

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.9.1 SCOPE OF STUDY

This dissertation included research on a range of disciplines such as sociology, economics, marketing and branding, which are not traditionally associated with the field of architecture. However, this dissertation and design proposal proves that these disciplines serve to inform and support a convincing design proposal

.9.2 SUMMARY OF STUDY METHODS

In conducting the sociological study, informal interviews were held with the local community of Lydenburg, in order to determine their needs and also their general perception of the large-scale expansion that Lydenburg is facing. Sidewalk surveys were held to grasp the dynamics of the town and its workings. Observations were made regarding the general town layout and research was conducted into the developments proposed by the mining industry as well as the private developers and what they entailed.

The urban layout of Lydenburg was analysed in accordance to urban planning guideline publications. I relied heavily on existing frameworks of similar towns, but also on my own initiative and judgement.

In investigating the history of the town, visits were made to the local museum, informal interviews were conducted with an older generation of Lydenburg residents, and archive - and published material were consulted. The interviews conducted were based on a standard questionnaire in which general questions regarding the resident's view of the new developments were asked. The residents were also asked to determine elements of Lydenburg to which a particular sentimental value were attached. In this instance it was not the published material, but the constructed

memories of residents which proved to be the most valuable in the application of the study.

A study of economics was obligatory in determining the necessity, value as well as programme for the proposed Incubation Node. Published material on the knowledge economy was consulted and the local economy was observed and measured against global economic movement and trends. This was done through observing the general form of business in which the town's residents are engaged and in measuring it against criteria such as how it compared to a culture of lifelong learning, how human capital were nurtured and developed, and how these businesses can be applied in the emerging knowledge economy.

A study in branding, was a direct consequence of the research conducted on the economy. Branding specialists were consulted, as well as branding specialists in

the field of architecture. An inventory was made of distinctive qualities of Lydenburg through observation and consultation with members of the community. An inventory of the architectural character of Lydenburg was also essential in determining an identity for the town: a sidewalk survey was done and historical publications were consulted.

A botanical study was required in determining the species that are most suited to Lydenburg and the site. Site investigations were done and experts in the field of botany and landscape architecture were consulted on this matter.

The design investigation included an analysis of existing architectural features, an analysis of the site, an investigation into the local climate and research into the ideal building form that suits the climate.

.9.3 FINDINGS

The findings in the above mentioned research are as follows:

In observing the dynamics of the community of Lydenburg, it was concluded that the community is in need of a meeting place. The meeting place was to facilitate meeting per chance, through a program of a myriad of other functions and activities. A development in the form of an 'Incubation Node' was proposed as a catalyst in generating chance encounters between the different communities of Lydenburg. The term 'meeting place' in this particular case denotes an informal gathering of people, as formal meeting places exist within the town in the shape of the town hall and the school halls that are made available. The building was designed according to an ordering system of movement corridors and then pools of rest and social activities to accommodate this need.

An observation of the town's general workings and layout led to the conclusion that the Sterkspruit River and the Industrial area act as physical and economical barriers to the previously disadvantaged communities on the western side beyond the river. It was determined that the proposed developments will lead to the decentralisation of the CBD.

The historical study concluded that Lydenburg has a rich pre-historical and historical background that can and should be used to tell this town. It was during the course of this study that I stumbled upon the meaning of the indigenous name 'Masing' for Lydenburg, meaning 'place of the long grass' which played a decisive role in the branding exercise executed for the town. From interviews it was concluded that the older residents attached sentimental value to elements of the town such as the river and the water furrows which used to run next to the sidewalks of the town.

Through the research conducted in the field of global as well as the local economy that the value of a knowledge based economy was recognised. The research material indicated that the re-introduction of an industrial economy for Lydenburg is evident, and that to date no effort is made to phase in a knowledge-based economy. A sole dependence on the mining industry as a source of revenue for the town was deemed short-sighted and unsustainable.

The conclusion drawn from the study of the global economy necessitated the implementation of a branding strategy for Lydenburg. Out of the branding strategies researched, the phenomenon of 'destination branding' was found to be an applicable strategy to the dilemma that the town is facing. The branding experts that were consulted offered an objective view on how to differentiate the brand 'Lydenburg'. A strategy was developed hence forth.

The differentiation exercise in the marketing of Lydenburg as a brand led to the identification of the natural environment, specifically the grass species and the fact that Lydenburg was originally situated inside a nature reserve. The rehabilitation of the terrain is to include species that change seasonally, therefore signifying growth and change which is also to be part of the larger identity of the Incubation Node. Existing plant species, which include the exotic poplar forest in the bend of the river floodplain adds to the ambiance of the place, and is therefore retained. Qualities of the poplar forest are incorporated into the building.

The study made of the historical buildings within Lydenburg revealed that buildings of distinct architectural value should be protected and given importance. Very few buildings that had been built in the last thirty years have been found to be of a high aesthetic quality. The deduction was made that buildings of quality should be retained and that a new vernacular be developed that includes certain architectural

elements identified as distinctive in Lydenburg architecture: the stoep, or veranda, the raised plinth, the use of natural stone and the use of corrugated metal for roof cladding.

Having identified 'growth' and 'change' as a driving factor for Lydenburg's brand identity, it was deemed important to foster a culture of innovation within the Innovation Node, in order to create an adaptable environment which reacts positively to change. A part of this 'innovation' strategy is to be implemented into the new vernacular of Lydenburg and should manifest itself in the architectural character of the contemporary built environment. This is partly an acknowledgement to the wealth that the mining industry is generating towards the community and stresses a theme of progress that is generated by the current expansion.

Progress in the built environment has always been dictated by the strength of the

current economy. This connection between architecture and economics is manifest in programme of the built form. As a ‘witness to culture’ (Farmer 1993: 3) architecture remains the ever-changing mirror to our societal and economical structure.

.9.4 CONCLUSION

The outcome of this dissertation should be measured against the successful application of the material which was investigated. A distinctive and distinguishable ‘brand’ has been developed for Lydenburg, and manifests itself in the programme and architectural character of the Innovation Node. This brand is based on tactile knowledge and an inherent truth of the town’s cultural heritage, as well as the themes of progress and growth which developed from the expansion of the town due to mining activity. The programme that was developed for the Incubation Node grew from the application of the knowledge gained in the field of economics. The physical planning of this development is designed to not only facilitate change in the

economy of Lydenburg, but also to accommodate change in the physical form of the building in that the structure is based on a permanent order of solid construction (stereotomy) and a secondary, temporary order of filigree construction, which make part of openable and moveable elements which allow for change in the programme of the building.