

Dreaming Design

When Solomon had completed the Temple he prayed that God would accept it.

1 Kings 9:2,3 "I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before Me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting My name there forever. My eyes and My heart will always be there." (NIV, 1985:481)

God is a Father of Love and Abundance. He longs for fellowship with his children, His church. The Church building is where God's children meet for worship. This is indeed a special place. The designer is convinced that the appearance and experience of this development should be extraordinary. People must be aware of the glory and greatness of God upon entering the site and using the buildings. The architecture must reflect the Creator of the universe. This is indeed an impossible task for a human. No human will ever fully understand the true greatness and capacity of God. It is enough to know that He is ultimately in control and the only giver of ability and workmanship. God used Bezalel and Aholiab to construct the Tabernacle. The Spirit of God filled these two gifted men with the necessary wisdom and craftsmanship. They could not have done it without the guidance of the Spirit. God gives each human a unique set of abilities or talents. Christians believe that these abilities and heart's desires give an indication of where God wants to use this person to extend His Kingdom on earth. These abilities will reveal one's purpose in life.

When God wants to establish something on earth he shapes people with the "skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts to make artistic designs... and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship". The Bible says, " God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well." (Warren, 2002:242) And it also says that God equips one with all one needs for doing His will. The Designer strongly believes that God equips one for such a project as this.

This project has the potential of exploring qualities which will speak to one's senses, one's feelings and one's soul. God declares His might through creation and these buildings should do no less. Accompany the designer as I dream about this design...

There is a certain level of expectation in the heart of the person traveling to the Church whether to a service or other religious activity. The person need not be a Christian to experience something of the Living God. The person will enter the site with a specific purpose or activity in mind. The Spirit accompanies every Christian and reveals truths from God through Scripture or through someone else. The Word of God is powerful and no one can hear it without being changed to a certain extent. The Spirit prepares one for what is about to happen. Depending on the reason for the visit, the person would either visit the Auditorium, Chapel, Memorial wall and Biblical prayer garden, Coffee Shop or Bookstore.

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The approach to the buildings from the parking area should already point to the religious character of this site. It is important to mention at this point that after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God lives in the hearts of people and not in the Temple, as the people used to believe. God says that His children have become His temple. It will thus be in the gathering of believers that the 'temple' of God comes together. The ascent up to the buildings must be enriched with symbols in the form of materials, colour, art and biblical plants. Framed views and the path of movement will encourage the user to be aware of certain elements. This is also important upon leaving the site after an activity.

Upon reaching the top and entering the space between the buildings, the person must easily orientate himself. The harmony and balance between the various architectural elements must create a sense of order, but yet energy and creativity. Surprise elements will create a bit of healthy tension and heighten the intensity of experience. In other words the user must read the architecture and understand the circulation but encounter unexpected elements along the way. This will symbolize something of God's character. He is a God of order, but also a God of unexpected happenings and blessings. The Bible teaches that difficult times are used by God to form and mature our Spiritual lives. Many times in fellowship between Christians, they will share how the grace of God helped them in their weaknesses and hardships. The Bible says: "He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us." (Warren, :247) It will be in these unexpected architectural elements that one is reminded that God allows hardships but never leaves. These architectural elements can become points of gathering for small groups to share the grace of God.

The person's senses needs to be touched. These senses include seeing, hearing, touching and sometimes tasting. The composition of materials and form and relationships between buildings will either be pleasing to the eye or not. This is why it is worth the effort to use a proportioning system when designing, like the Golden Section for example.

Sound is an element not usually addressed in most architecture but a field of great possibility. The wind is a natural means of sound and can be used to create certain effects at certain areas. Rustling leaves and running water have the inert ability to create an ambience of peacefulness. This is an ideal way to calm a person just coming from the rushed rat race of life. God's House is a place of refuge and enlightenment and the person going there should find rest. Jesus says "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:29 (NIV, 1985:1458)

The choice of materials and planting must encourage people to reach out their hand and touch. Touch is such a powerful expression. God commands His children to love one another as they love themselves. One person touching another lovingly with a friendship love achieves more than words would ever do. The texture and finishes of materials can symbolize certain feelings. Christians are not super human beings; they are normal human beings living by the grace of God. They will also experience the same depth of happiness and sorrow as any other human. People, depending on their state of heart, will experience these different textures differently. Places of contemplation for the individual must be sensitively designed and include as many stimulants of the senses as possible. God works in wonderful and unexpected ways and reveals truths through the least expected elements. The designer can design and plan carefully, but will never understand beforehand the underlying possibilities, which God will only reveal. The designer is an instrument in the hand of the Living God and can only wait with great expectation to see God's plan unfold.

The interior of the buildings must likewise proclaim the presence of God. The interior finishes and spatial qualities will create a certain specific mood within each individual. The interior should facilitate social interaction. It is when Christians speak to one another about God and His wonderful doings that many blessings are exchanged. The atmosphere must be warm and welcoming. The Foyer will allow people to stand or sit during conversation. Free movement inside will facilitate comfort. Orientation to the various facilities must be obvious.

Establishing definite routes can enhance the movement between buildings. These routes can then contribute to the place making of the site as mentioned before. The movement between the Chapel and Memorial Wall must be handled thoughtfully. One must realize that people visiting the Memorial Wall are probably emotionally hurting. The nature of this space must be one of peace and hope. Material application and form can help to create privacy for a worthwhile visit.

The overall composition of the various facilities in the landscape must be organic in nature. Organic things have the ability to grow and similarly the house of God must grow. The dream of Moreletapark NG church is to grow even more and establish a huge Mega Congregation.

This is the dream of the designer's heart. In the following pages the design development, Baseline target setting and technical resolution will be discussed.

Spatial Planning

GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

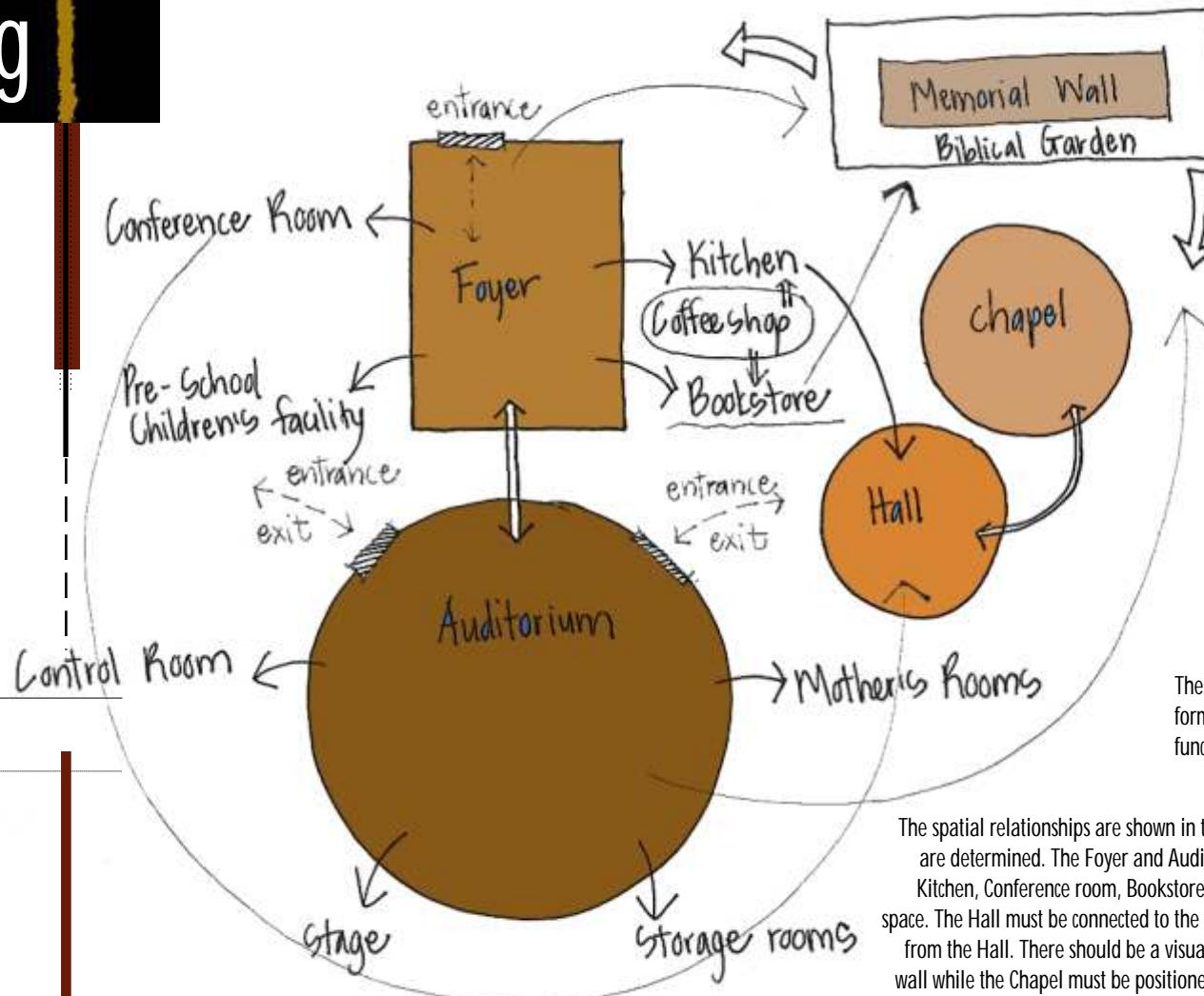
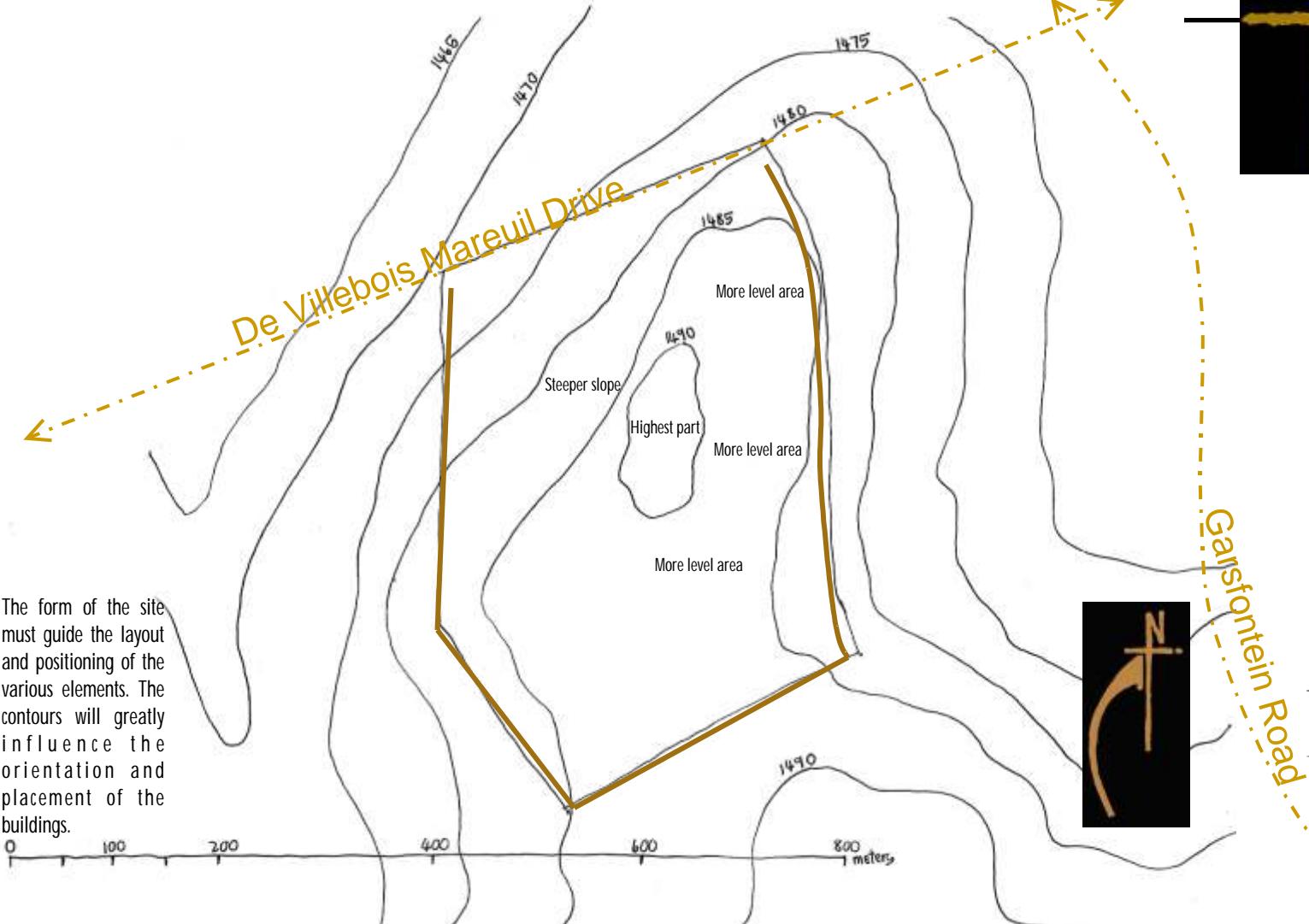


FIGURE 252: Bubble diagram of the different spaces.

The design starts with spatial planning in the form of a basic diagram representing all the functions and their relationships.

The spatial relationships are shown in the Bubble Diagram. Connections and links are determined. The Foyer and Auditorium must be situated together. Then the Kitchen, Conference room, Bookstore and Coffee Shop must flow from the Foyer space. The Hall must be connected to the Kitchen and the Chapel must not be too far from the Hall. There should be a visual link between the Foyer and the Memorial wall while the Chapel must be positioned closely to the Memorial Wall and Biblical Garden. The picture starts to unfold as the various functions are placed in their relative position to each other.



As roughly shown in the next sketch on the following page, the more level areas would meet the parking requirements and the steeper sloped parts would be ideal for the Auditorium. Visually, it would make a tremendous impression if the Church building and related facilities are situated on the highest part of the site, clearly visible to the passers by.

FIGURE 253: Identifying suitable areas on site.

Spatial Planning

GOD IS IN THE HOUSE

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These representations of the various areas of the facilities give an indication of the differences in scale. The footprint of the Auditorium will probably be smaller if one or two galleries are used inside. It is apparent that some of the smaller spaces might disappear in relation to the Auditorium.

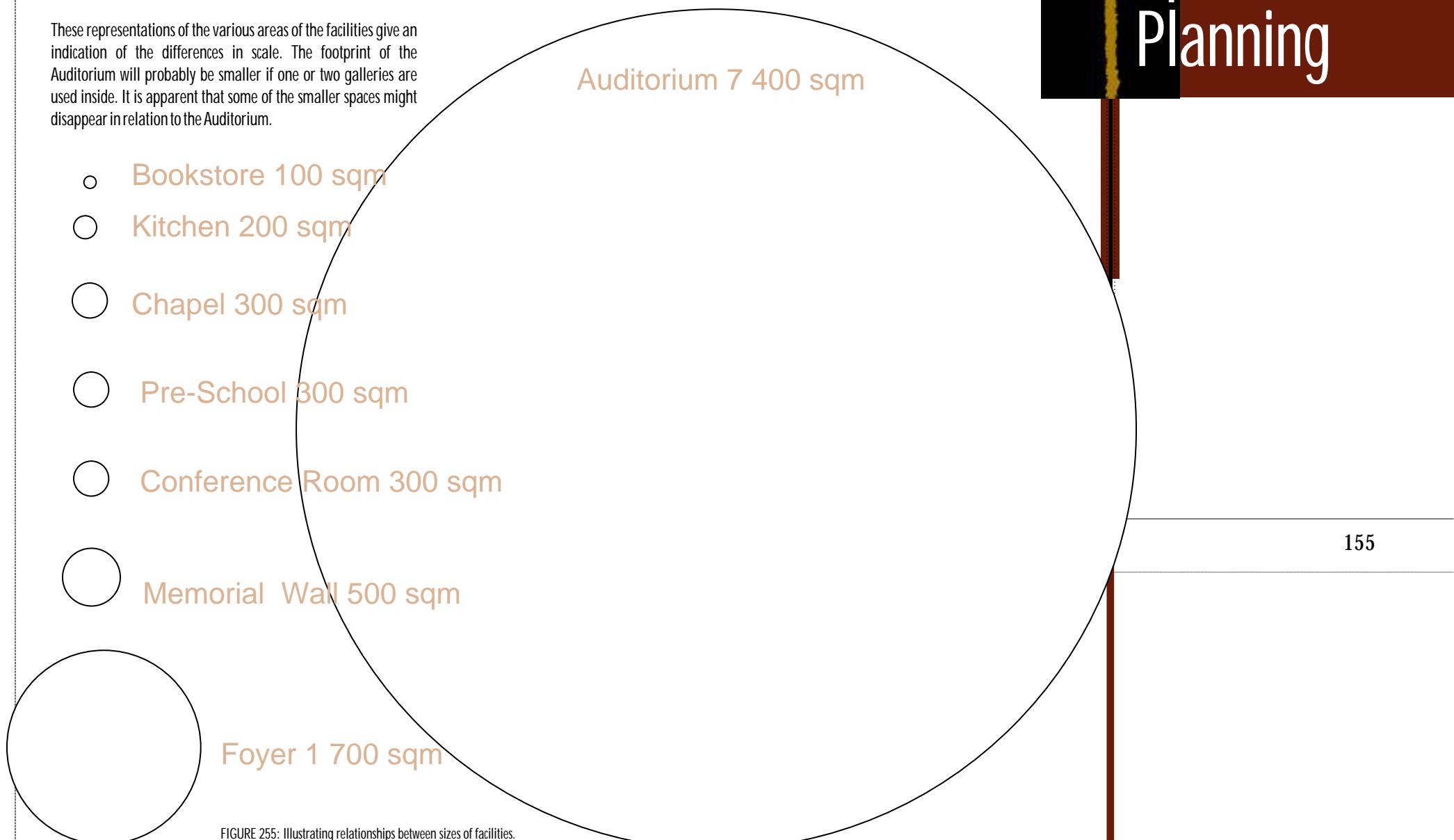


FIGURE 255: Illustrating relationships between sizes of facilities.

Proportions

Golden Section

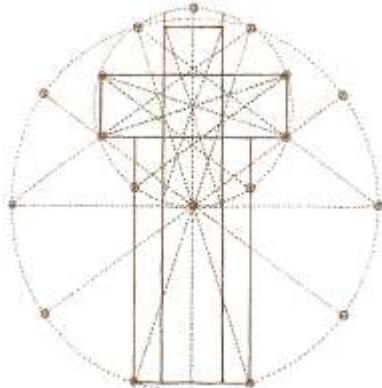


FIGURE 256 : Standard Gothic Plan according to the Golden Section.

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FIGURE 256 : Standard Gothic Plan according to the Golden Section. (Ching, 1996:289)

FIGURE 257: Proportional analysis of a Clouded Swallowtail. (Doczi, 1981:91)

If we look closely at natural and some man-made creations, we find a unity and order common to all of them. This order is evident in certain Proportions that appear repeatedly. The recurrence of this theme in all natural phenomena and in some harmonious works of man, points to the relatedness of all things. (Doczi, 1981:1) In his book, Doczi, explores these proportions in various natural phenomena including flowers, shells, fish, butterflies and the human body. Throughout his research it is shown that these specific proportions can be found in all natural phenomena, even the cosmos. These proportions are based on the principles of the Golden Section. From a Christian perspective, these similarities in proportions reflect the fingerprints of God onto His creation. Therefore it is worth the time to explore the implementation of these proportions into the design of the Church building.

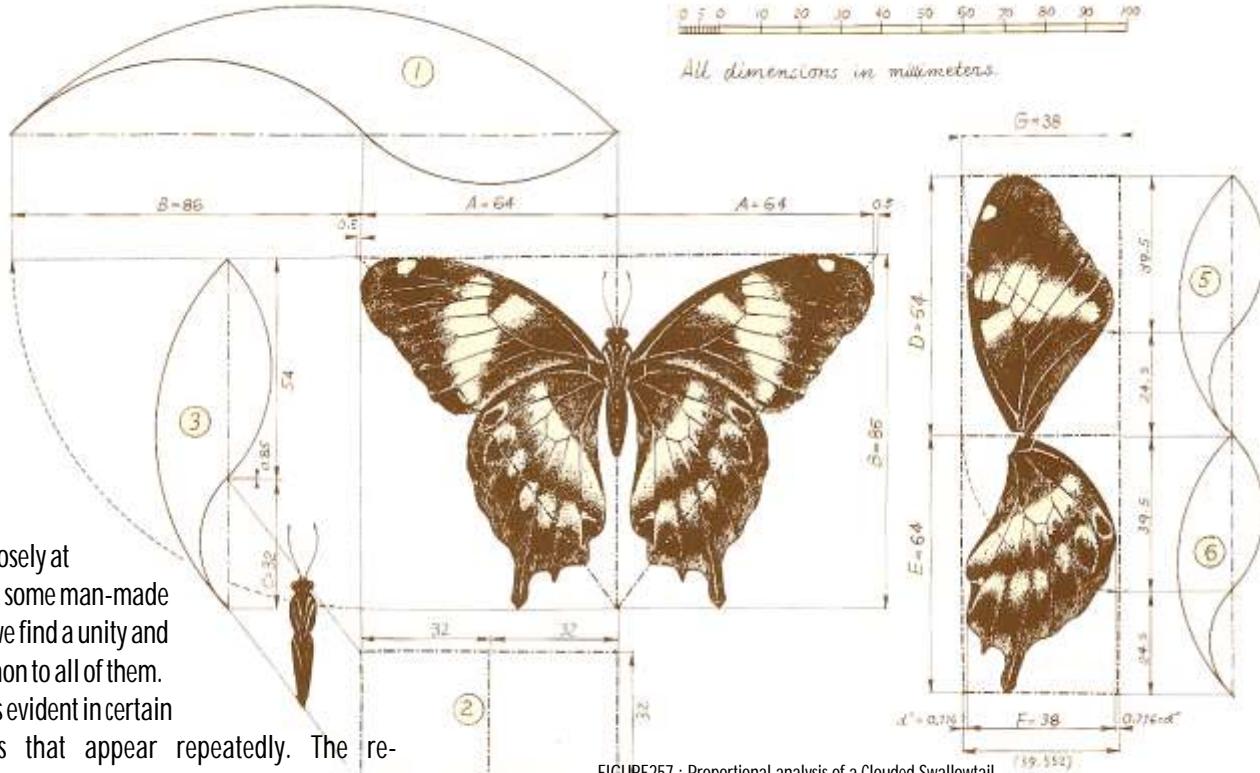


FIGURE257 : Proportional analysis of a Clouded Swallowtail.

Many historic designers, including the Greeks and Renaissance architects, have used the Golden Section. Le Corbusier based his Modular System on the rules of the Golden Section.

The Golden Section can be defined as the ratio between two sections of a line, or the two dimensions of a plane figure, in which the lesser of the two is to the greater as the greater is to the sum of both. It can be expressed algebraically by the equation of two ratios:

$$\frac{a}{b} = \frac{b}{a+b}$$



Proportions

Another progression that closely approximates the Golden Section in whole numbers is the Fibonacci Series: 1,1,2,3,4,8,13,21... Each term again is the sum of the two preceding ones, and the ratio between the two consecutive terms tends to approximate the Golden Section as the series progresses to infinity. (Ching, 1996:286)

Why will this be important for the design? One must realize that the design would not comply perfectly with the Golden Section, but it will give a sense of order. The user might not even be aware of the applied proportions but will instinctively experience an added quality to the space, similar to the quality of space in the old cathedrals.

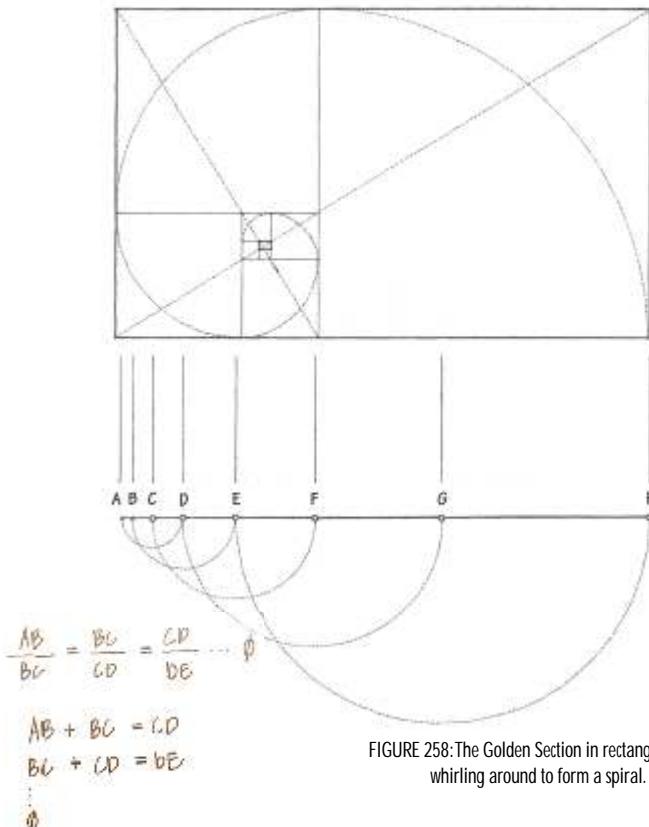


FIGURE 258: The Golden Section in rectangles whirling around to form a spiral.

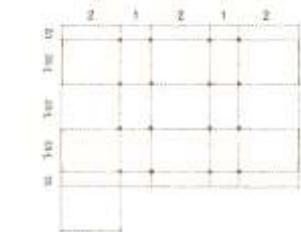
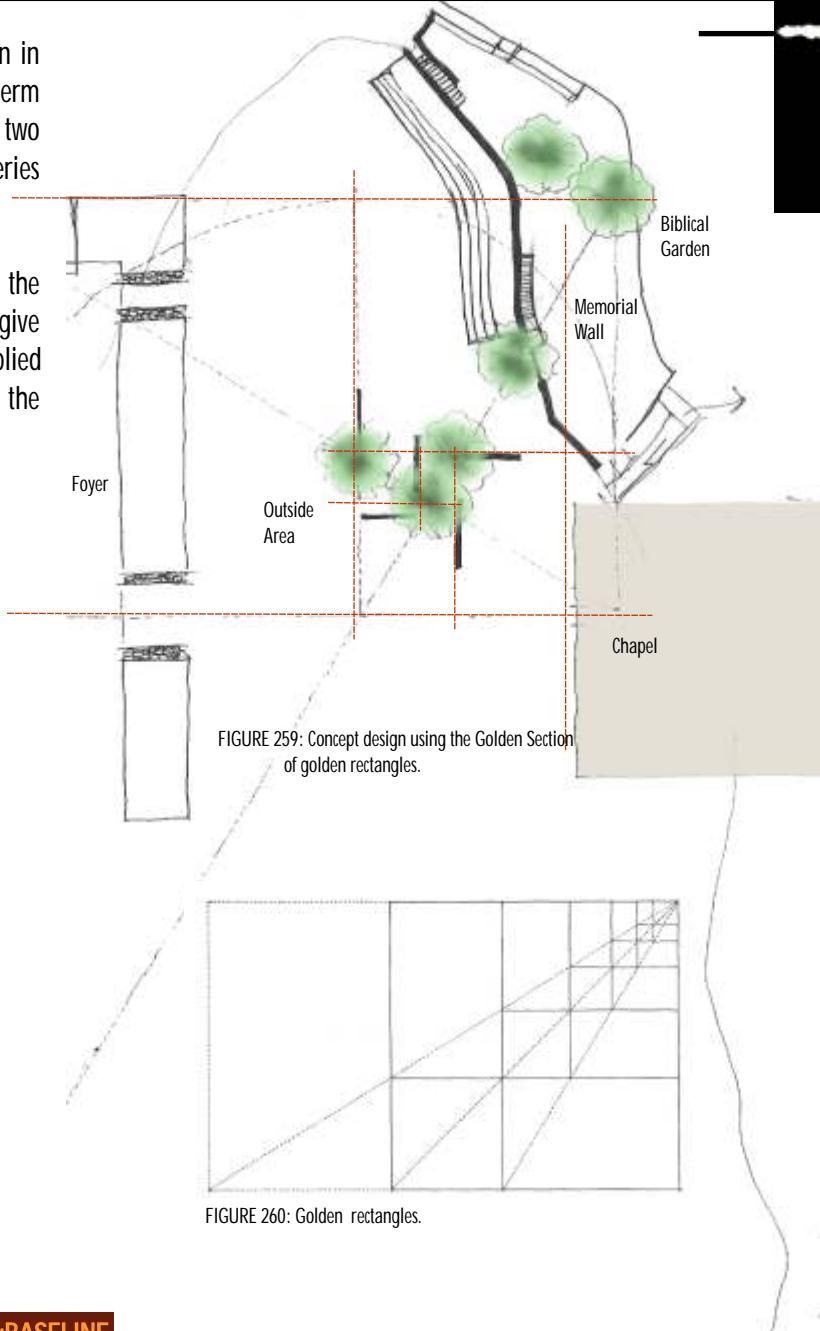


FIGURE 261: Villa Garches designed by Le Corbusier using rectangles.

FIGURE 258: The Golden Section in rectangles whirling around to form a spiral. (CHING, 1996:287)

FIGURE 259: Concept design using the Golden Section of golden rectangles.

FIGURE 260: Golden rectangles. (CHING, 1996:287)

FIGURE 261 : Villa Garches designed by Le Corbusier using rectangles. (CHING, 1996:291)