

1 INTRODUCTION

THE BRIEF REFLECTS A RESPONSE TO RE-ESTABLISH THE CALEDONIAN SPORTS GROUND AS A PUBLIC SPACE IN TSHWANE INNER CITY. THE PROPOSAL IS AN ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION AS DERIVED FROM A NEED IDENTIFIED AND A RESPONSE TO THE POTENTIAL OF THE SITE WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN CONTEXT.

The unique character of a city is rooted in the culture of its people, its past, and its natural environment. To retain this unique character that distinguishes a city, these qualities need to be conserved and cultivated. As Bewsher (2005:2) states:

South Africa's natural and cultural heritage resources are continually being threatened as a result of unsustainable development, urban encroachment, and a lack of urgency to protect habitats, species, heritage sites and values.

Tshwane has a large variety of open space resources, from protected areas, ecological and conservation areas, to recreational parks, resorts, sporting facilities, and cultural historical open spaces, which create the opportunity and the potential for developing a high quality environment (TOSF 2005:63). These environments fulfil the need for human connection to nature.

1.1 URBAN FRAMEWORK

The proposed urban framework has the pedestrian – the user of the city – as its core. Cities are experienced by the way people move through and use them. Open green spaces are used as the main ordering device for the city, developing within the city a network of green spaces. The Apies River is a prominent green spine, it serves as a natural border for the CBD (Central Business District) and connects the natural ridges. This framework is informed by the ISDF (Inner City Spatial Development Framework), MDCUIDF (Mandela Development Corridor Urban Design Framework) and the ARUDF (Apies River Urban Design Framework).

1.2 SITE AND USER

The selected site for investigation is the Caledonian Sports Ground, a cultural historical open space located along the Apies River and extension of the Lion bridge heritage site. The site forms a recreational node within the green open-space network. This natural landscape is seen as a primary asset.

The Caledonian Sports Ground is currently exclusively used by the Arcadia Shepherds Soccer Club. Geographically the site is located as a knot between the CBD, Sunnyside and Arcadia, forming an eastern portal into the CBD. The site is naturally closed off by two rivers, the Apies River (west) and Walker Spruit (east) and cut off from its surroundings by high traffic routes: Nelson Mandela Drive, Pretorius Street and Schoeman Street. The buildings that border the site turn their backs to the river and the site, disregarding its potential.

However, the significance lies therein that this site is composed of a natural environment enveloping a cultural event.

The potential exists to use the space to the advantage of the larger context. The site will be developed in the context of potential users. Arcadia lacks park facilities that serve a predominantly high-density housing area with a majority of young residents. There are numerous schools in the vicinity with growing numbers, with limited facilities for sports and or recreation. The site is ideally situated on main routes and a proposed Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) route and station.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The thesis aims to explore and interpret the relationship between the material world and the quality of human life through examining behaviour, experience, activity and meaning as they happen in the everyday context. Discovering why places are important to people and how architecture and environmental design can be facilitators in place making. Groundswell (2005:16) highlights this point:

An environment rich in texture and colour, enhanced by light and water to create meaningful places. Places that provide a connection to nature as well as social interaction and recreation, for unmanaged and unanticipated activities and places to do nothing. Spaces that are a reflection of our culture.

1.4 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The design proposal provides an infrastructure solution that can restore a site that has limited civic value, retaining the soccer facilities and combining them with a contemporary public place within the South African context. The solution aims to be a representation as derived from the everyday experiences of citizens as pedestrians, contributors to and inhabitants of the area. The solution provides an environment that is socially engaging and accommodates the changing demands of contemporary culture.

Working in an urban context entails that the project affects a part of the city that has already been constructed. Any intervention has to, in varying ways, relate and respond to what already exists, while establishing new relationships. The solution attempts to integrate what has become fragmented to re-establish connectivity to the urban surroundings.

1.5 THEORETICAL

The theory considers architecture that adheres to a Structuralist philosophy of “spatial possibility” in which architecture is used to provide a spatial framework through which users influence a building’s design (Sharp 1991:53). Architecture that is not an entity in itself but allows for growth, offering infrastructure that support possible programmes. The following architecture theorists will be investigated for ways of perceiving and structuring space and time: Johani Pallasmaa, Herman Hertzberger, Aldo Van Eyck, and Peter Zumthor.

Bernard Tschumi’s principles are used as an approach to work with programme that is not fixed but changes over time.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey method will be applied to analyse the site and surrounding environment, experiencing it physically at eye level. Activities will be identified and user groups interviewed. Precedent studies of both international and local projects will inform an appropriate working concept, models and methodologies.

1.7 PROGRAMME

The site is divided into three parts. Part one borders the Apies river towards the CBD. Part two is the existing soccer field. Part three borders Walker spruit towards Arcadia.

Proposed for part one is a contemporary public space that supports the following programmes:

- A multipurpose hall for sports and exercise, also equipped with an in- and outdoor stage. The hall can also be used for other organized activities such as lectures, meetings and functions. The hall is linked to the exterior spaces, an amphitheatre and river edge development which comprises cycling and walking routes, stage seating. The existing pavilion and clubhouse are upgraded to form part of this development.

Part two consists of the soccer field, which is kept intact and a new link to part three is established.

Part three is developed as a park with a public swimming pool including kiosk, change rooms, lockers and ablution facilities. This becomes a space for informal play without necessity of apparatus including walking, jogging, cycling, soccer, children's play area.

1.8 CLIENT

The project is financed by:

- Tshwane Municipality,
- Pretoria City Park,
- Contributions from business sector,
- Donations from local businesses, international corporations and the like.
- A Trust will be used to manage the funds.

FIGURE 2: (opposite page)

Image of Tshwane highlighting Green and Open spaces, including Caledonian Sports Ground and Apies River.

