

1

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

1.1 Real World Problem

1.2 Problem Statement

1.3 Delimitations and Assumptions

1.4 Design Approach

1.1 REAL WORLD PROBLEM



The intake of quality food strengthens the immune system. By living close to nature and according to nature's rhythm, the human mind and body is content. The singing of the birds in the morning greatly enhances the growth and quality of fruit growing on the specific tree. Nature and health go hand in hand.

I chose to compare China's social issues and economy to that of South Africa. China has one race and one culture, while South Africa is made up of a mix of races and cultures. Still, both countries face similar problems that need to be solved. By comparing the countries, the project obtains another perspective regarding the issues relating to Pretoria.

During the Great Leap Forward campaign of 1958 to 1960, China's leaders attempted to accelerate economic income and dramatically increased the pace of industrial production throughout the country, particularly in rural areas. The aim was to industrialise by making use of the massive supply of cheap labour and to avoid having to import heavy machinery. This campaign is now widely seen, both within China and outside, as a major economic disaster.

According to 1982 census data, the number of senior physicians per 1000 population was about 10 times greater in urban areas than in rural areas. State expenditure was more than -Y26 per capita in urban areas and less than -Y3 per capita in rural areas.

Further social issues include a widened income gap, employment difficulties, poverty, corruption, social contradictions due to loss of farmland, fast economic growth etc. The country is constantly faced with social and psychological changes (News Paper: People's Daily Online).

From these statistics, it can be followed that quality of life in the stressful urban environment leads to more health problems than in the rural areas. Urbanisation exerts pressure on the human body and nature. Food is chemically treated or genetically modified and the water and air quality decreases severely, all possibly contributing to global warming.

The urban lifestyle and expectations have a negative impact on the health of the body.

In China, traditional Chinese medicine is still preferred over Western medicine. This treatment type is in direct contact or balance with nature, focusing on herbal remedies and acupuncture and treating the meridians.

Very similar social and economic problems affect South Africa.

In the midst of a strong economic growth, post-Apartheid South Africa is faced with the stubborn reality of widespread poverty and growing inequality. Millions, both rural and urban, are trapped inside the multiple crises of unemployment, landlessness, homelessness, lack of basic services, HIV/Aids, food insecurity and unacceptable levels of crime and violence (Smith 2007: 1).

"I suggest that we should see this impact of crime on human quality of life as: human injury and destruction; psychological disruption and dehumanisation..." states Lauer (Makhanya 2007: 1). According to the SAPS, the murder rate in Pretoria Central is 87 per 100000 people, making it the third-worst affected area in Pretoria. (Figure 1)

What becomes evident is that, within the urban setting, technology improves,

pressure increases, the pace quickens and we, as humans, slip further away from ourselves. The ecosystem is broken. We become less in touch with our inner self, which results in a physical and mental imbalance. Our true identity is at risk, and our senses, absorbing all the surrounding information, are stirred negatively.

The above social struggles stretch all the way right down to the Pretoria city centre, Boom Street, the old State Museum, and the site chosen for this dissertation.

There is no one solution to the world's problems. Instead, ways in which to promote healing, and to restore balance and harmony to urbanity should rather be explored. This dissertation will investigate and facilitate a Healing Activities Centre.

"Optimum health results from living harmoniously, allow the spontaneous process of change to bring one closer to balance" (traditional Chinese medicine).

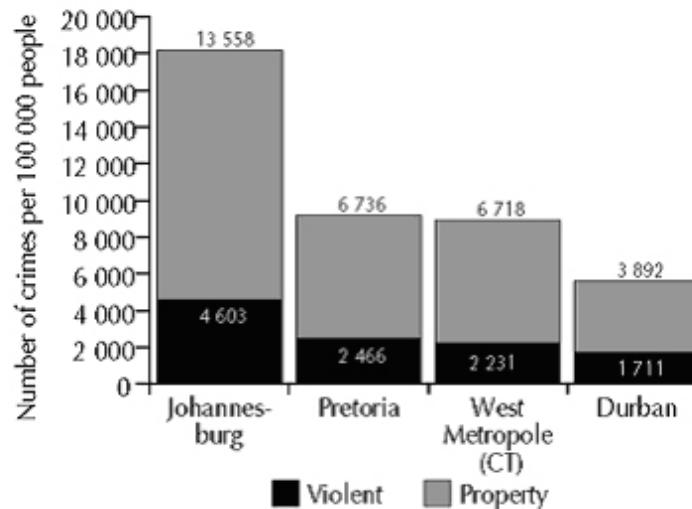


Figure 1: Proportion of assault, sexual offence and murder victims who knew the offender in some way

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of the project is to facilitate a 'Healing Activities Centre', where people can re-connect with nature to find harmony in their lives. Healing will take place by receiving sensory stimulation affecting creativity, intellect and social behaviour. Therapy types and facilities will be investigated in order to fulfil the requirements of the project. Furthermore, the project will fill the building with life and fill lives with hope for the future. The goal is to heal the wounded, to uplift their spirits and to equip them for life.

Therapy

The affected will be cured physically, emotionally and/or socially, depending on the situation.

Healing will take place through different therapy forms; namely, art therapy, music therapy, animal-assisted therapy, aromatherapy and bibliotherapy; a therapeutic garden and therapy by means of projection. Stimulation of the main senses (sight, hear, smell, taste and touch) will take place individually or simultaneously, conditional on the therapist.

Facilities and Requirements

The Centre will be in use during the day and in the evening, offering therapy sessions or activities, and house workshops or seminars. It thus offers activities for all age groups and will be open everyday of the week. In addition, accommodation is available to those who wish to book the centre for a specific time period. These accommodation facilities are also available to the public as 'backpacker' type accommodation.

Different healing types require different therapy aspects, such as room size, lighting, acoustics, etc. The building will respond to these needs by way of



play areas, music rooms, therapy rooms, communal spaces, gathering space, exhibition or gallery facilities, admin offices, a reception, a waiting area, a foyer, seminar space and storage facilities.

Overall, the building must act as a safe haven for people in need, and be easy to use and live in. The therapeutic value of the senses will be investigated in order to incorporate stimulants into the building. Light will play a fundamental role in creating the appropriate mood for activities. Smells of certain plants and/or animals will fuel healing. Textures, tactile or visible, will be taken in through the senses and arouse euphoric moments. Psychologically, the interaction and understanding between human and animal as part of therapy will play a major role.

Site

The project asks for a site that is easily accessible; central, yet quiet; and in touch with nature. The site I have chosen to work on is the 'old State Museum', situated along the London-Plane-lined Boom Street, past the National Zoo's main entrance to the east. (Figure 2) The building forms the focal end of the Andries Street axis. The front façade of the museum is swallowed up by the busy streetscape and the noise of the taxi rank diagonally opposite it, and thus, goes by almost unnoticed amidst everyday activities. However, the museum's front façade marks a monumental end to Andries Street.

The old museum is on the Pretoria Zoo property, allowing direct contact with animals and the garden, as well as other zoo facilities.

Apart from housing the healing activities, new life will be brought back to the old museum. Vibrancy will be restored with a new interior being added to the building as another layer, thereby respecting and working with the old, and

keeping what is important. The new interior will allow the building to share its history with the user; it will speak of old and new, and of time versus change. Scarpa says that the material in the building permits one to understand the building. (Scarpa 2001: 159) In so doing, optimal function, heritage material (see Building Evaluation) and building response will lead to a harmonious Healing Activities Centre.

The architecture of the building, its style, and its typology all contribute to the success of the centre. The beauty of the building touches the senses and art therapy goes well with the character and appearance of the building. The peaceful building interior, courtyard and surrounding zoo allow the users to concentrate on their senses.

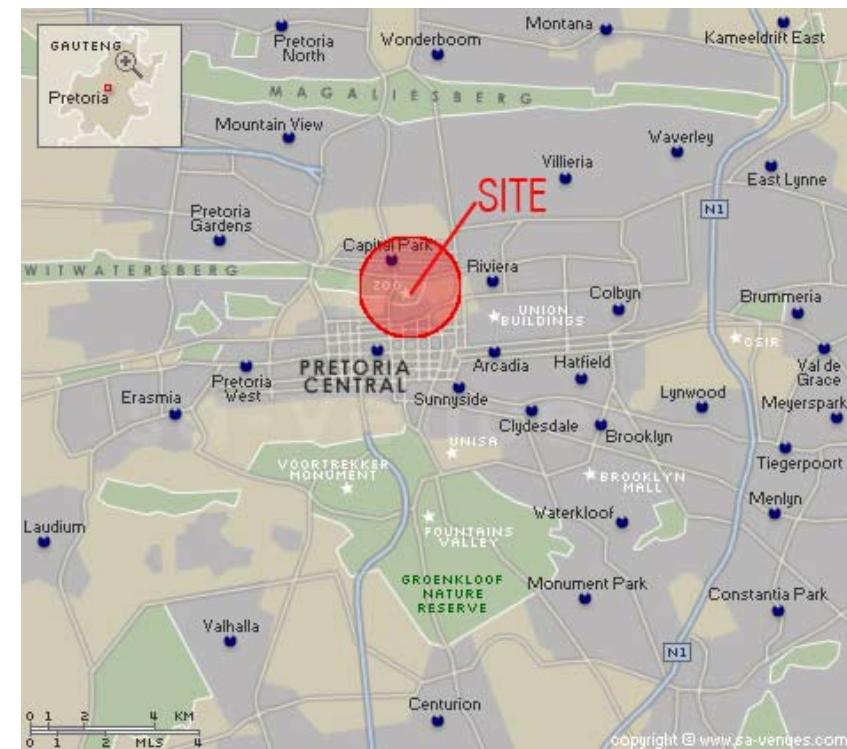


Figure 2: The location of the site in the Pretoria CBD

Marketing

Greater awareness of the building and its use will be achieved through marketing. A new brand will clothe the building, lending a new identity, new life and a positive change to the building. By creating an unforgettable sensory experience, users will be drawn back to the building. The emotional connection formed with the place in its own serves as a convincing marketing tool. Smell, being one of the most direct senses, will be stimulated in order to draw passerby's in from outside. Labels and flyers will be scented as well, etching the building into memory lane.

Further advertising could be done through magazines, news letters to schools, posters, etc. 'Therapy through projection' will be a strong advertising tool, which directly involves the community. (see also *Therapy Types*).

1.3 Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations

The centre is limited to treat patients only that are physically and sensory disabled. All age groups and races are welcome.

Seeing that English is the international language, therapy and activities will predominantly be offered in English. Afrikaans, a strong language in South Africa, will also be used as communication medium during therapy. In reality the language form depends on the patient and therapist's language proficiencies.

For therapy purposes the centre will be open from the morning until late afternoon. During these hours parents are unrestricted as to when to drop off their kid/s for a therapy session/s. The parent can either wait, or fetch the child/ren

later.

Functions, workshops, art exhibitions, therapy projections or the like will take place in the evenings. Depending on the activity, patients, customers, friends or the general public can join in. Such activities will roughly last until late in the evening, lending the building good, constant occupancy.

The accommodation and kitchen facilities run by separate management to the Activities Centre. Bookings purely for accommodation or meals should thus be done on a separate basis. If however, the centre is booked out for a time period, where the visitors make use of the accommodation and catering facilities in order to take part in therapy activities, the two management teams will correlate. The building will consequently be occupied on a 24-hour basis.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the currently proposed renovation of the building will be successful. All old water pipes should be removed from the building, as they are a risk. Old electrical cabling should also be removed, as it was a later add-on and detracts from the building's potential. Since the building is 105 years old already and in serious need of maintenance, it can be assumed that the roof structure needs to be renewed. Two obvious holes in the wooden floor make the stability of the floor questionable.

In conclusion, it will be assumed for the purpose of this project, that the floor and roof construction is safe and sound; and that water pipes and electric cabling will be removed to be newly installed.



1.4 Design Approach

Heritage

The former National Cultural History Museum is declared a National Monument, lending it its high heritage value. Any changes made to the building should thus be done with utter care and respect. Guidance as how to approach an old, historical building with heritage value is taken from the

Athens Charter: for Restoration of Historic Monuments

Venice Charter: international charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites

Burra Charter

Vienna Memorandum: Historic Urban Landscapes

In order to ensure a building's continuity of life, it needs to be in use. The old museum building has now been standing empty for 16 years already, explaining its derelict condition. To preserve the old building would thus firstly mean to bring back life into the building.

Furthermore, a building also needs change in order to survive all demanding time spans. Change however, should be carried out carefully. To conserve the building, the existing fabric and material should be respected, together with its use, associations and meanings. Valid contributions of all periods to the building should be treasured. These contributions could stretch from a particular civilization, to a significant historical event, to cultural or architectural significance. Change may also be necessary to retain cultural significance.

Historic buildings add value to the city by branding the city's character. The history of the building should remain readable, while continuity of culture through quality interventions is the ultimate goal. All valuable interior content, fixtures

or objects should be retained in place. The chandelier in the existing foyer, for example, has a particularly aged character, tells an ancient story and will therefore be kept. Modern materials and techniques can be used during renovation or revamp and can be either concealed or prominent, depending on the design decision. New work should never disturb or detract from cultural significance.

Design Philosophy

Spaces influence the subconscious; every room communicates a mood. It is vitally important to house a content person.

Designers have the power to influence the community by manipulating the effect of space on a person. It is therefore important to guide the indweller into a peaceful and positive being.

The building and inhabitant are caught together in a subject/object exchange of identity and location- a sense of place is formed. (Ingraham 2007: 202) An emotional connection furthermore grows between the human being and environment. A monument is inseparable from its setting and the history to which it bears witness. Associations with places and more importantly, the meanings people have for places strengthen their identity and social cohesion. Quality of life and production efficiency are enhanced by improving living-, working- and recreational conditions. A participant's life is enriched by giving him/her a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape. More information about the identity of the user is revealed; explaining the past, present future that has shaped him/her.

Architecture is inimical to certain issues of identity, which can be clearly seen on the front façade. Refer also to the context study. Colonial success involves the bulky and highly inefficient process of occupying territories, cities and buildings in order to occupy institutional and infrastructural life of the specific

culture. (Ingraham 2007: 204) Again, this can be seen on the front façade, which might almost push away a certain type of crowd, leading to its own downfall. The façade changes to become more inviting by opening it up, allowing the passer by into the building, connecting with the street. (see technical investigation: new front façade)

Goal

All the fabric inside the existing structure will be conserved and restored where necessary and possible.

Every new addition will be done in such a way as to touch lightly on the building. The old layer will therefore be respected, stay true and untouched. A new material layer is added to the building to full-fill its required interior functions. All new additions should be done in such a way, that they could be removed again, leaving the building unharmed. Lastly, the layer of life will be added, which consists of people, systems and displays. The approach to the historical building is thus respecting the old layer and cherishing it. A new, modern layer is added, which speaks of a different time. Different time layers can thus be read inside and on the building, telling a story of time and survival.

The emotional connection formed with the therapy center, achieved through sensory stimulation, is aimed to be positive. The sensory intake can speak louder than words. By having an unforgettable sensory experience throughout the building, a strong connection with place will be formed, in so to bring the users back to the building.

