



This thesis explored the possibility of healthy environments in an urban context. The design aspired to become an oasis in the city, which would cater to health of the mind, body and spirit.

The hypothesis argued that unhealthy building environments could be counteracted by enhancing the connection between people and the forces of nature. The focus was equally on the physical and the metaphysical characteristics of the architecture and the impact thereof on the user.

The site is situated in the Pretoria CBD on a quiet exit road from Church Square. It is in close proximity to many legal offices and law courts. Insufficient amenities aimed at the white collar workers in this area made this a convenient site for a vitality centre.

The internal quality of buildings in the area was investigated, and their environments were found to be artificial, generic and users had no control over their environment. The design proposed an alternative to this mechanistic approach, in which the elements of nature are invited into the building in order to facilitate a feeling of wellbeing in its users.

The design used six principles to create a healthy, tranquil environment: the use of natural ventilation and light; tranquil exterior spaces, with views onto them; the use of materials with sensory qualities; utilising the elements of nature; and allowing users control over their own environments. These principles were based on the theories by Ando, Pallasmaa and Kaplan and Kaplan, as well as on the results of a questionnaire which the author distributed. These objectives all contribute to creating a healthy environment, but the design would have to be experienced in order for it to be proven to be so.

The design should act as a precedent for establishing healthier environments, and should have a positive effect on the health of its occupants, as well as on that of the precinct.

