



THE FUTURE OF PRETORIA'S MODERNIST PAST

reintroducing the modernist drc burgerspark as a vessel for resilient community development in the pretoria cbd

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The Dutch Reformed Church Burgerspark is a Modernist church constructed in 1969 to serve the Pretoria inner city. The Daan Kesting design is a significant example of Pretoria Regionalism, albeit unknown to the users and wider community. The site sits opposite the historical Burgers Park on a street lined with religious and non-profit organizations. It now functions as Doxa Deo Tshwane Central.

The site suffers under the broader issues of misunderstood Modernism, an increasingly secular society and a decaying inner city heritage fabric. The divide between expert value and user value is significant, causing users to be unaware of their space's architectural value. Therefore, most of the interiors have been insensitively altered. The precinct is underutilized and removed from its surroundings.

The design will emphasize the universal language experienced and valued by all in Modernist church designs – the spiritual experience. This will manifest as a journey through various tangible and intangible thresholds, similar to those present in church layouts. The architecture of light in churches will also be drawn from to enhance the spiritual essence of the spaces. The progression will be handled as an atrium (public), a narthex (semi-public) and the church (private) – essentially extending Burgers Park and the street into the precinct. The simple structures will accommodate various programmes, ensuring longevity and adaptability. Outside, an event space will connect the street to the building, accommodating markets, functions, live music, a public green space and an outdoor classroom/meeting area. An educational childcare centre will operate in the consistory block. The main church space, with adaptable floor plan and gallery spaces, will function as an auditorium and a library with flexible workspaces.

The design follows a heritage strategy of attachment and insertion, while implementing the existing honest materiality in a re-envisioned, contemporary manner.

Thank you

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