

725 Arcadia Street in Pretoria: A Pretoria Case Study Focusing on Urban Acupuncture

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Abstract : South African urban design solutions are mostly aligned with European and North American models that are often not appropriate in addressing some of this country's challenges such as multiculturalism and decaying urban areas. Sustainable urban redevelopment in South Africa should be comprehensive in nature, sensitive in its manifestation, and should be robust and inclusive in order to achieve social relevance. This paper argues that the success of an urban design intervention is largely dependent on the public's perceptions and expectations, and the way people participate in shaping their environments. The concept of sustainable urbanism is thus more comprehensive than - yet should undoubtedly include - methods of construction, material usage and climate control principles. The case study is a central element of this research paper. 725 Arcadia Street in Pretoria, was originally commissioned as a food market structure. A starkly contrasting existing modernist adjacent building forms the morphological background. Built in 1969, it is a valuable part of Pretoria's modernist fabric. It was realised early on that the project should not be a mere localised architectural intervention, but rather an occasion to revitalise the neighbourhood through urban regeneration. Because of the complex and comprehensive nature of the site and rich cultural diversity of the area, a multi-faceted approach seemed the most appropriate response. The methodology for collating data consisted of a combination of literature reviews (regarding the historic original fauna and flora and current plants, observation (frequent site visits) and physical surveying on the neighbourhood level (physical location, connectivity to surrounding landmarks as well as movement systems and pedestrian flows). This was followed by an exploratory design phase, culminating in the present redevelopment proposal. Since built environment interventions are increasingly based on generalised normative guidelines, an approach focusing of urban acupuncture could serve as an alternative. Celebrating the specific urban condition, urban acupuncture offers an opportunity to influence the surrounding urban fabric and achieve urban renewal through physical, social and cultural mediation.

Keywords : neighbourhood, urban renewal, South African urban design solutions, sustainable urban redevelopment

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