site exploration: yeoville

01. Image showing street activity alongside the Yeoville market (by author)
GUY TILLIM - URBAN SLUMS IN THE JOHANNESBURG CBD

Photographs showing the living conditions of refugees and the urban poor in the 'Slums' of the Johannesburg CBD. (Tillim, G 2006)
yeoville contextual analysis
urban infill for the urban poor

Site Selection

In order to find a suitable site for the infill housing providing for the Urban poor and immigrants I needed to understand where refugees and asylum seekers live in the city. Since the 1990’s in the era since apartheid there have been radical changes to where people can live in the city. The areas that have been most affected are the CBD, Mayfair, Fordsburg and Yeoville. These areas were traditionally home to white migrants but today are home to Black Africans from South Africa and other parts of Africa.

Research by the Forced Migration studies programme shows that Refugees and Asylum seekers are more likely to live in the inner city than in township areas due to xenophobia and discrimination. They are also less likely to have social connections and the inner city represents a less hostile environment. The areas in which migrants have found housing begins to lead to area based exclusion and these areas become stigmatised. Census data indicates that refugees are mainly living within the Hillbrow, Yeoville, Berea and Bertrams areas. Research also indicates that refugees find it easier to find accommodation in these areas as landlords don’t ask for identity documentation for renting in these areas. Slumlords in these areas also rent flats and house to multiple people by subletting to multiple buildings leading to urban degradation. My intervention will look a an alternative to slums in the inner city. (Forced Migration Studies Programme 2008)

Site Background

The test site I have selected for my urban infill intervention is in the Yeoville area at the edge of the Johannesburg CBD in Sub Area 17 of the Regional Spatial Development framework 2006/2007. The area has been earmarked as a sustainable and viable residential neighbourhood. The main street through the area Rockey/Raleigh Streets and the adjacent precinct was historically an important residential, retail and entertainment centre in Johannesburg and is already subject to regeneration. The regeneration project aims to bring about a vibrant mixed high street with retail and entertainment facilities. (RSDF 2007)

The first phase is the development of the civic node at the existing Yeoville Police Station, Recreation Centre, Clinic and Public Pool area in the area bordering Fortesque Road, Raleigh Street, Kenmere Road and Becker Street. It also proposes the upgrade of the existing Park into Yeoville Square with the inclusion of sporting facilities. Recently there has also been the addition of a computer centre directly opposite the park area. This is a suitable area as it already accommodates a large immigrant community and would provide a suitable location for intervention to enable people to be integrated into the community. It would allow people to move through the facility into the surrounding suburban fabric once they have become self sustaining.

Maps showing development nodes and major transportation routes (After Gauteng Spatial Development Framework 2007)
The site for my proposed intervention is bordered by the roads Hunter, Bedford, Cavandish and Muller Streets. The site is directly opposite the Yeoville Market parallel to Rockey Street. The site is a disused sporting ground adjacent to the St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. Along with this site I have identified a series of brownfield sites in and around the industrial belt to the north of Yeoville at the edge of Louis Botha Avenue for infill. With the new proposed redevelopment of the Raleigh Street precinct and the close proximity to schools and churches the site is in sufficient proximity to commercial functions, transportation, jobs and social services in order for the intervention to be successful.

Yeoville - Historical Context

Yeoville has a long history going back to the last century where it was one of the first suburbs in Johannesburg. It is the early offshoot of early Johannesburg and is contained by the old Harrow Road (now Joe Slovo Drive) and Louis Botha Avenue. Its eastern boundary is rich in history and its Southern boundary is the natural drop of the Bezuidenhout Valley. The suburb continues to assert its eccentric self through community changes and the shift of street landscapes over time. (http://www.marieeve.alt-inter.net)

Yeoville Current Context

The suburb was in the latter part of the 1980's, South Africa's pre-eminent bohemian enclave, similar in energy if not size to New York City’s East Village, Amsterdam’s Camden, and London’s South End. The eclectic mix of races, backgrounds, and lifestyles that characterized Yeoville was in stark contrast to the social agenda of the country’s apartheid legislation. As might be expected, Yeoville in the late 1980s became a bastion of apartheid defiance, (http://www.hks.harvard.edu/case/yeoville/)

Since then the demographic profile of the community has rapidly changed. A prevalence of low-rent housing coupled with the community’s long tradition of openness to all kinds had made the area a natural magnet for new immigrants from within South Africa as well as other African nations. Yeoville offered an urban grip and at least the prospect of opportunity at a time when both were difficult to find even in the wealthiest country of the world’s poorest continent. It is the fusion of the old bohemian Yeoville with the new pan-African Yeoville that appears to pose the greatest challenge to Yeoville’s future. (http://www.hks.harvard.edu/case/yeoville/)

Yeoville looking at the St Francis of Assisi Church. (www.flickr.com :cited July 2008)
mapping of urban fabric of yeoville

Building Massing - Densification
Building Massing - Used Space
Building Massing - Road network
Open Ground Space
Block Layout and Unused Space
Unused Space

08. Maps of Yeoville (by author)
Images of formal trade in Yeoville
mapping of urban fabric of yeoville

Topography of Site

Major Traffic Flows

Major Pedestrian Movement

Crime Map of Yeoville

Major Public Transport Routes

Trees over the site

10. Maps of Yeoville (by author)
11. Images of street activity in Yeoville
(www.flickr.com :cited July 2008)(by author)
12. Maps of Yeoville (by author)
Yeoville Market

The Yeoville Market is an important community node catering for the large immigrant community in the area selling a variety of African foods and vegetables.
existing major roads

14. Maps of Yeoville (by author)

IMAGES

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sites of refuge site exploration - yeoville
existing commercial and formal retail

key plan
- Residential buildings
- Commercial / Formal Retail
- Public Building
- Schools
- Secondary Road
- Proposed Secondary Road
- Park Spaces

Images 15. Maps of Yeoville (by author)
existing public buildings
and green spaces
17. Maps of Yeoville (by author)
existing schools
From a series of interviews conducted, newspaper stories and experiences of refugees in Johannesburg and Yeoville, ultra individualised prototypes can be tailored and designed. People’s relations and boundaries can serve as a blueprint for the design.

Images of people in Yeoville (by author)