

https://dspace.org/

WITS JUNCTION – Student Housing and Heritage Adaptation

Hart, Brendan; Munro, Katherine

2013-05
PICASSO
http://hdl.handle.net10539/13513
Hart,Brendan and Munro,Katherine. 2013. WITS JUNCTION – Student Housing and Heritage Adaptation. p8-12

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/





WITS JUNCTION – STUDENT HOUSING AND HERITAGE ADAPTATION

ARCHITECT: **BOOGERTMAN + PARTNERS**

URBAN DESIGNER: **URBAN SOLUTIONS**

HERITAGE: **HENRY PAINE AND PARTNERS**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: **THE LANDSCAPE STUDIO**

BY **BRENDAN HART AND KATHERINE MUNRO - WITS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING**

WHEN IT COMES TO defining what makes a good student residence, cost and square meterage are usually defining standards. The minimum standards contained in the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) 2011 *Review of the Provision of Student Housing at South African Universities* adds safety to these requirements. Spatial quality, architectural responses to context, history and a sense of place are often secondary considerations – nice to have but not essential.

The geography and location of the Parktown site of Wits Junction, a new student residential complex developed by the University of the Witwatersrand, reflects Johannesburg's layered if short history. Laid out in the 1890s, Parktown was envisaged as a suburban environment for Johannesburg's affluent business and mining community who built gracious homes on its large stands. From the 1920s onward, with commercial pressures and the high costs of maintaining large properties, the suburb started to change. The culmination of this was the large-scale government expropriation and demolition of property in the 1960s for the establishment of the Johannesburg Teachers' College (now Wits Education Campus) and the Johannesburg General Hospital.

The Wits Junction site, a consolidation of nine separate residential erven all located along Junction Avenue, is located on the north-facing slope of the Witwatersrand ridge on the eastern edge of Parktown. Eight well-proportioned homes of early Johannesburg professionals, including well-known figures such as businessman Otto Lenz and architect Frank Emley, were built on the sites starting with Lenz's home 'Muzi Yami' built across two erven in 1894. In 1966 the state took ownership of the sites, which are effectively a buffer zone between the high-density Hillbrow to the south and the leafy suburbs to the north. Under state ownership, the properties fell into disrepair resulting in a number of buildings having been demolished by 1992 when the property was transferred to the University of the Witwatersrand.

WHAT IS WITS JUNCTION?

By the early 21st century, the university was under pressure to grow its student residential capacity to match the rapid growth in student numbers (up from 18 000 in 2000 to 30 000 today). Residences located at other campuses were either newly built or expanded and the Parktown site offered the unique potential for a sizeable investment and the provision of many new units, with a view to a 20% increase in residential capacity. The resulting development is a top-end self-catering student residential complex developed on the well treed consolidated suburban site of over 4,5 hectares.

Opened in phases from mid-2011, the development brief, which continued to