COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For generations, architecture has always driven the behavioral norms of a society. It is born out of problems faced in society that need to be solved and therefore always exist should the said problems continue to exist. The project in question today addresses those issues. It was born out of a necessity to curb the need for social, economic, and cultural development of a small village in the city of Maseru, Lesotho.

In a community ravaged by poverty, where the youth have given in to self-destructive behavior of alcohol and drug abuse; young girls becoming mothers and adults engaging in toxic behavior that does nothing to uplift the community, it was important to have a socially responsive facility in the area.

The proposed design is set to be a self-sustaining facility that houses a maximum of 40 people. The proposed project has educational facilities to help the youth learn skills that will help in their economic growth. Moreover, the program aimed at youth does not only offer this but can also help the youth busy themselves and thus stay away from toxic behaviors. In addition to this, the space has residences for people intended to care for the facility and for whomever may need shelter during a time of need. It also provides a large courtyard that serves as a meeting space and offers free flow between spaces.

Environmental consciousness and social responsiveness go hand in hand. That is to say, the building must do more for the environment than to harm it. Energy-efficient systems were put in place to counter-act the effects of climate change. A roof with and overhang was designed thus to act as a shading element in the hot summer months and as a gutter for rain-water collection. It has a mono-pitch oriented north for maximum solar harvesting as well as incorporating clerestory windows to allow for maximum sunlight and air circulation inside the building. To add on to this, a rammed earth wall was placed on sight due to its thermal properties and availability. It is because of this that little to no air conditioning or heating and cooling systems are required.

Similar to what has been previously mentioned, socially responsive architecture seeks to improve people’s lives and that is what the design aims towards. With all the systems in place, it is without a doubt that the proposed project will address the issues faced in the said community and become a catalyst for positive change.
Masera is one of the world’s most unpretentious capital cities. It spreads across Lesotho’s lower-lying western edge, framed by the Berea and Qeme Plateaus. It was founded by the British in 1869 as an administrative post, over the years the city has grown rapidly. However, the city’s growth has come with many challenges, increasing crime rate, increasing youth unemployment, political instability and climate change which is also a global challenge. This growth has hidden many of the once-visible scars of the 1998 political unrest.

The proposed site is based 10km south outside of the city at Ha Motloheloa, 15km from Roma. This is a small village framed by the Hills. The village is also facing challenges such as Increasing youth unemployment, lack of education and increasing drug and alcohol abuse.
We imagined the idea of a socially responsive architecture in Maseru as a place for community development and learning. Architecture that will give the community the information and ideas to create opportunities that will benefit the economy and the learning skills for self-development. Our idea was to design a community development centre that has learning spaces like library, a working space whereby people will get training in a new skill while also getting paid for work that they will be producing. The centre will also contain residential space for caretakers.

The whole concept is based on the idea of creating spaces based on the function of the space while responding to spatial relationships and controlling how these spaces will interact with the site features and general weather patterns. Key features of this scheme include large volume spaces with a courtyard, form that allows solar penetration depending on seasonal changes, building materials that provide thermal mass and environmentally responsible.
The proposed development centre is located at the top of the hill, overlooking the village. The proposed centre consists of three units of buildings, learning unit that has a library, and a multipurpose hall. Working unit has training studios, offices, and common spaces. It also has a kitchen that is used for catering lessons. Food that is cooked during training sessions is sold; another is donated. Third unit is a residential unit that have a caretaker's bedroom and rental bedroom and a shared kitchen and living room. The centre is surrounded by trees, with sitting spaces around. A central courtyard is used as sitting a space and as a theatre for outdoor activities.

The proposed centre is elevated from the ground by a build stone base, the walls are constructed with rammed earth, a roof structure is made of gum poles and covered with thatch. Materials are mostly natural, and it uses renewable energy sourced by solar panels. There are other sustainable applications incorporated in the building. Use and recycling of water from borehole, clearstory windows for natural light and ventilation.

The building aims to address the challenges faced by youth by providing necessary education and development for a sustainable growth of the economy and self-development to the adults of tomorrow.