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Motivation for Proposed Alterations to 171 Argyle Road, Durban

Upon initial inspection and study of the building, in terms of the only drawings we managed to source from the Municipality and owners, as well as the existing building on site, there are very few clues to ascertain the exact date of construction, however, there are features that definitely tell us that the building is older than 60 years. Judging from the original drawing (uploaded to SAHRIS website) there were at least 3 different stores (a combination of 2 showrooms and a restaurant) on site.

The Urban Context



An aerial image (above) highlighting the existing site and its immediate context whilst (below) is the building viewed from the corner of Montpelier Place ie the North East corner.



Argyle Road and surrounding areas is very close to the Florida Road Precinct and is therefore in a very historically sensitive context as can be seen with the immediate neighbour to the East, having a wrap-around verandah house. (below)



The neighbour to the west, (above) however, is a relatively later structure from the Modernist era and breaks the verandah streetscape that was probably what existed in the past.



This picture above illustrates that clearly the main facades of these buildings fronted onto Argyle Road and hence the 'verandah' streetscape does not have continuity along this road.



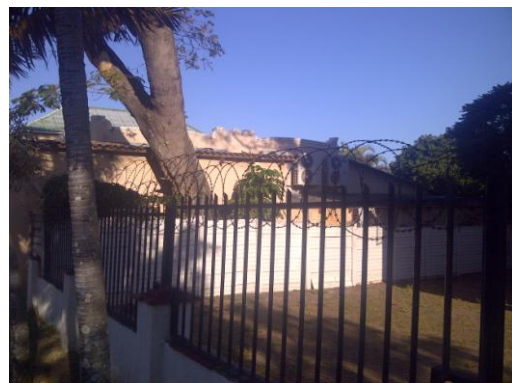
Further up the road (above white buildings), the Quarters Hotel is a continuation of the 'verandah' streetscape.

The Wrap-Around Verandah

The wrap-around verandah feature is still distinctly visible and is one of the main distinguishing features of major architectural and historical significance. Sadly, over the years and probably an exchange of several owners has resulted in several changes being made to the original design and this has made it difficult to determine exactly what the building looked like originally.



The essence of the building is the strong corner with the wrap-around verandah further enhanced by the double-storey (above) and the 'gable wall' off of which the verandah leans with its ornamental moulded capping.(below left and below right)



The ornamental moulded capping, is, in our opinion, possibly a later addition which does not conform to the traditional verandah house gable / upstand walls commonly used over verandahs.



Other architecturally significant elements on the building are the timber columns in the verandah (above right), as well as the quoining of the corner walls and the shutters on the windows (above left). All these features will be retained and unaffected by the additions and alterations.

Proposed Design Interventions

We propose the demolition of the several stepped ground floor slabs so that the entire footprint of the Ground Floor is on one level. This allows the flexibility in design for the internal layout for the butchery, bakery and coffee shop that the interior designer requires.

The main elevations are essentially the North and East Elevations which are prominent from the street and especially Argyle Road. The wrap-around verandah corner as well as the ornamental moulding has been retained.

The stepped roof is an extension of the roof from the East elevation and is carried through the entire breadth of the building on the top floor, however this is set back quite far into the building from the front and is not as visible from eye level, except from across Argyle Road but we believe this does not detract at all from the existing language.

The existing aluminium framed glazing and the low wall enclosing the balcony is demolished and will be replaced with frameless, butt-jointed glass, which we believe enhances the corner and allows the columns behind to be visible, thereby ensuring that the facades verandah is not lost. The frameless glass ensures the character of the verandah is retained whilst allowing the space to be enclosed.

We have decided to not add windows to these facades as the spaces behind are changerooms and prep areas (North and West Elevations too) which do not require natural light and will be mechanically ventilated.

The low pitched roof at the end of the East facade is similar to what was there previously and doesn't detract from the overall look of the elevation.

The South and West Elevations have insignificant architectural elements as they were added on and amended later and therefore the end walls have been demolished and the elements added do not detract from the existing language.

We believe that the design approach taken has been conscious and sensitive to the historical elements of the building and that the interventions proposed have enhanced the functions and the aesthetics of the building as a whole.

We look forward to your favourable response and approval in this regard.

For any queries, clarifications or more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Muhammed Naroth'.

Muhammed Naroth

Architect
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For and on behalf of Eminen Architects