



AMAFI APPLICATION

Proposed Development at 477 Musgrave Road, Durban

The proposed residential development at 477 Musgrave Road on Durban's Berea, is set over four Erf's (11/2178, 14/12/2178, R/12/2178, 13/2178) comprising 3 existing dwellings, under application to be demolished.

The new residential proposal comprising 22 apartments has been designed to complement the Musgrave Road precinct and streetscape, recognising its insertion into a transforming context of old and new residential buildings.

The ribbon of Musgrave Road reveals a range residential accommodation, of architectural styles, and scales, with few of any noteworthy architectural heritage quality. (Refer Annexure 1)

While, with very few facebrick exceptions, almost all of the dwellings are of plaster and paint, under clay roof-tiles, with the occasional flat roof.

Streetscape – Western Edge of Musgrave Rd (refer map Annexure 1)

Travelling from south to north along Musgrave Road, one finds the following array of buildings types:

#355 Modern very tall Multi-storey Apartment Block

#371 – A Modern Townhouse Development

#401 through to #443 – Ordinary, mostly large residential homes

443 Apsley Court – Berea Architectural Style

This is a noteworthy building and employs the 'between the two wars' style which are unique to Durban.

Local Architectural Historian, Em.Professor Brian Kearney, in the local Natal Institute of Architects Journal 3 / 4 of 1992 (Kearney, B. 1994) defines the Berea Style as *"an influence of Spanish Architecture and the kinds of structures to be found around the Mediterranean"*, and goes on to state, *"and are thus not entirely suited to the humid sub-tropics."*

The Berea style was borrowed from Syria. (Kearney, B. 1994)

Kearney states that local architects, in their search for a “villa-like architecture” made “distinct concessions to our hot sunshine”.

Immediate Neighbours on Musgrave Road

#473 Cape Dutch influence double storey dwelling set back on the site at a distance from the roadway

#491 Musgrave – Eclectic modern home with flying beams and a flat roof.

Streetscape – Eastern Edge of Musgrave Rd (refer map Annexure 1)

Generally large houses with brick under tile, some with Spanish influenced arches and balustrades.

390 - Post Modern style apartments

470 Facebrick townhouse development under tile

Findings

The assessment of both the macro and micro-scale contexts reveal varied architectural styles and scales. While there are predominantly large houses of brick under tile, there are also medium and high-rise apartment blocks and town-houses. Themes and features within the area also include Cape Dutch gables, broad eaves, tiled roofs, and some use of arches.

It is the view of the author that only the apartment block, Apsley Court, at 443 Musgrave Road has any architectural heritage merit, being classified as belonging to the Berea Style. It is also our view that in 2023 in South Africa, there is no merit in replicating the architecture from Colonial times, particularly one referenced as being inappropriate for the local climate. A modern translation of key architectural elements is appropriate.

There is however no consistent style in the area, and therefore it is motivated that the character and streetscape of the area is predominantly large houses set in gardens, and that modulation of the facades along the streetscapes, overrides any style.

Design Considerations

A) Reasons for the “Berea Style” not being appropriate for this application:

- 1) As per Professor Kearney (Kearney, B. 1994), the style does not suit Durban’s humid climate. This directly links to fenestration and the limited opportunity for cross ventilation, as the Berea Style utilizes small opening cottage-pane windows. The recommended solution is larger shaded openings for natural cross breezes;
- 2) The proportion and scale of the style, one attempting to portray opulence and villa-life of colonial expats, is not relevant in the modern African City;
- 3) The visual heaviness of the brick and plaster materials used to achieve the style have been replaced in the modern era, as witnessed with some successful interventions on the Berea, with the more appropriate framed infill, transparency and lightness.

B) Motivation for the proposed modern aesthetic and cues taken from the context:

- 1) Appropriate scale for the area – the proposed elevations sit comfortably within the landscape, expressing a strong horizontality within its medium-rise application (Refer Annexure 2);
- 2) In keeping with the ‘large house-open space’ rhythm along the Musgrave Road streetscape, the proposed elevations are modulated to reflect the changing planes of the street. (Refer Annexure 2), reflecting through the use of colours on the drawings, the various planes being set back or forth (Note that that modulated lines below the elevations reflect the modulated plan edges of the building);
- 3) The choice of a light painted colour for the elevations takes its cue from the adjacent context;
- 4) The upper limits of the elevations will have a broad overhang to emulate the eaves to be found in the area;
- 5) The flat roofs, partially planted, reduce the scale to the building, limiting any impositions on neighbouring properties;
- 6) The large fenestration is for natural ventilation, addressing Durban’s climate. It also addresses sustainability in an increasing context of power outages, affording adequate natural light.

Conclusion

We trust that you will agree that the proposed intervention is appropriate for insertion into the existing Berea fabric.

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Signed:



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