

BRIEF

The brief for this site is to provide a space within Christchurch for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) communities within the city. The space will provide an area of tranquillity, peace and stillness that these communities can enjoy. The space must provide a sense of familiarity for the ethnic community for whom it has been designed, whilst providing a connection to Christchurch and New Zealand.

The materials used in the construction of the site should be sustainable, therefore recycled and reclaimed materials should be considered as important in the design. Vegetation used within the design will provide a link to the ethnic regions through the use of representative plants found in the Christchurch area.

The space will provide a voice for the ethnic community, making the wider Christchurch community more cognisant of the community's presence and their culture.



TRANQUILITY

Tranquillity to me relates to the idea of being calm, serene and quiet. I believe that a tranquil or 'restorative' environment provides people an opportunity to seek solace and to take respite from periods of sustained adversity.

Although it is difficult to define tranquillity for a region as large and diverse as Africa, I believe the tranquillity for those from the region comes from community togetherness and familiarity with the natural environment.

Personally, the idea of African tranquillity brings back memories of overlooking the vast expanse of the African savannah. The extreme size of the area and the natural beauty of the environment provided me with an immense sense of peace.

CULTURE, PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUALITY IN AFRICA

Africa has an extremely rich and varied range of cultures, and is under-going constant change. African culture, like most regions throughout the world, has been impacted by both internal and external forces over a period much greater than many other communities.

Arts and crafts is one of the richest traditions in Africa, and is one of the most diverse in the world. The region is characterised by an extraordinary range of people, societies, and civilizations; each of these have a unique culture expressed in a range of ways including woodcarving, bead work, painting and leather art works.

The overriding philosophy of African people is one of community togetherness and connection with other people. The Africans term this philosophy Ubuntu; a focus on people's allegiances and relations with each other.

Nelson Mandela described Ubuntu as "A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?"

Other meanings of Ubuntu are:

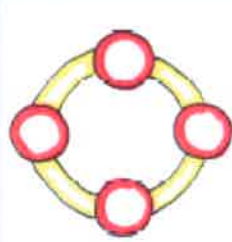
"To be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them."
 "If and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life"

African spirituality is deeply rooted in religion. Many African people and their descendants adhere to traditions passed down through the generations. African people from across the region place a great emphasis on religion, with most communities adhering to some form of religion.

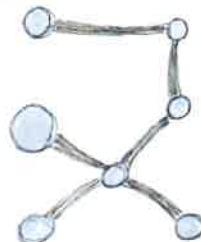
Although Africa has a great diversity of religions there are more similarities than differences in traditional African religions. Often, God is worshiped through consultation or communion with lesser deities and ancestral spirits. The deities and spirits are honoured through libation, and the sacrifice of animals, vegetables and precious metals.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

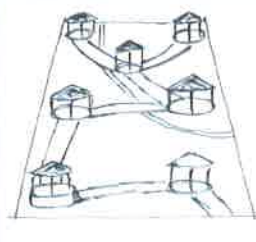
The following diagrams show the development of the spatial quality of the site relating to the expanse of the African region, and the development of the 'Ubuntu' Philosophy in the site design.



"Ubuntu" symbol



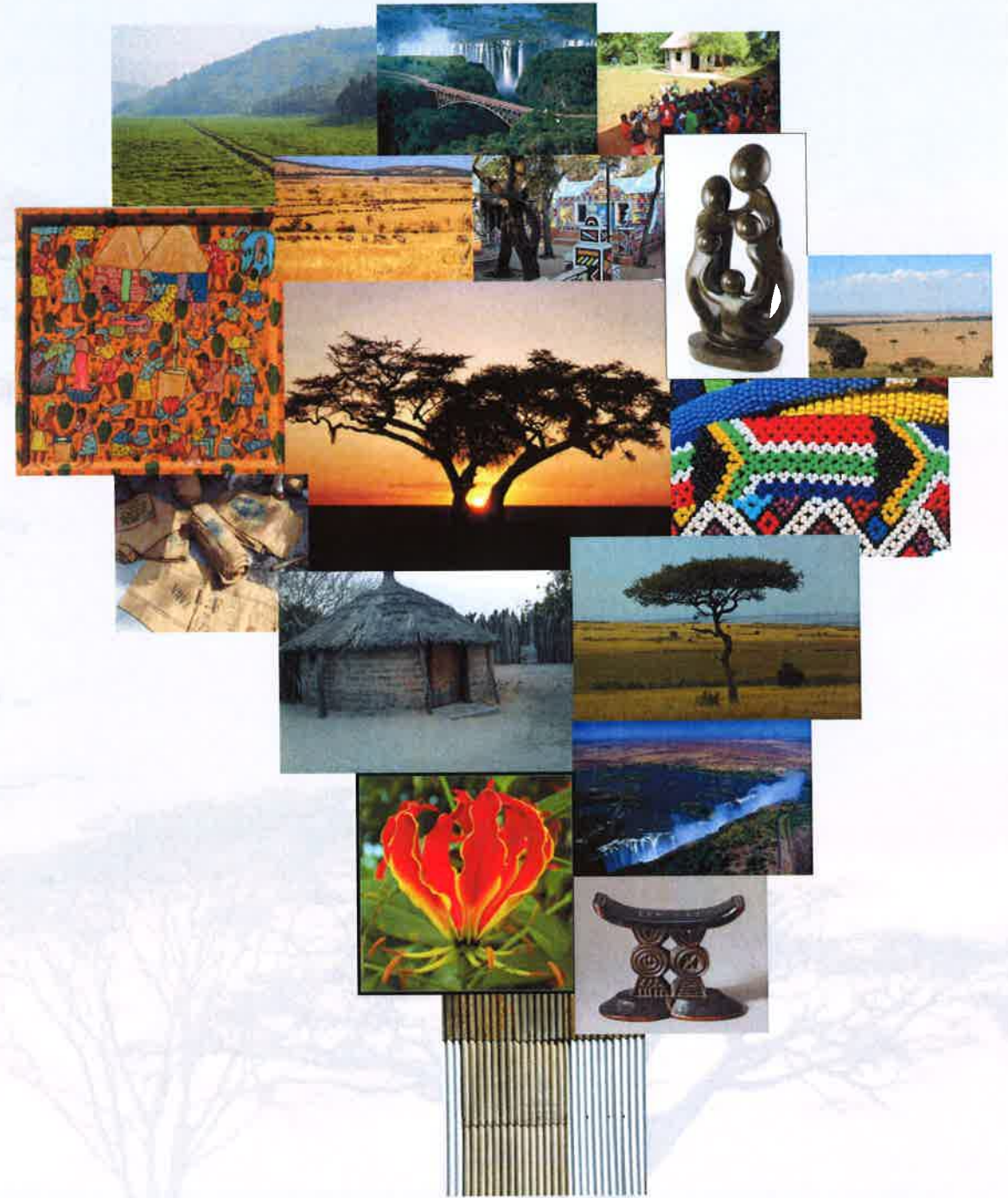
Site layout



Site perspective view

DESIGN INSPIRATION

The following images represent sources of inspiration that were used in the design phase of the project. They represent a range of natural and cultural values that I felt were important to include in the design.



DESIGN INTENT

The intent of the design for a "Garden of Tranquillity" is to provide a space that the ethnic communities of Africa can call their own.

Through the inspiration from research, in conjunction with my own experiences from visiting Africa, the site will be one that incorporates the theme of Ubuntu; that is to reinforce the importance of togetherness and the connection of communities. The site will encourage groups of varying sizes to interact or spend time alone as they wish. The site will pay particular attention to the natural landscape of the region, with vast expanses of open grassland combined with the use of vegetation representative of the area.

PLACES OF TRANQUILITY - AFRICA

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

The design of the site is inspired by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, promoting community togetherness and connection between people. The symbol of Ubuntu relates to people in a circle linking arms together to create a bond. The layout of the design provides a link to this philosophy through the network of pathways linking shelters together, where the shelters represent communities or families and the pathways represent the arms linking the communities together.

Shelters are a key component of the design to provide areas for groups of visitors to gather together. Shelters are a prominent feature in the African landscape providing the inspiration for the design. The varying sizes of these shelters relate to the varying community groups that are found across the African region. The pathways created represent the arms interlocking regional communities. These have been finished in crushed red brick as this is indicative of the soil seen across areas of Africa. Seating will be available within the shelters.

The "River of Beads" flowing through the site is a symbol of the importance of water to the livelihood of all Africans. Water allows crops to be grown, and is central to the circle of life in the region. There are numerous rivers running through across the continent, some of which are among the largest in the world. The river flowing through the site indicates the rivers and lakes across the region; this combined with the coloured beads provides a link to the arts & crafts that are of valuable cultural significance. The river of beads is a tactile river that can be enjoyed by the younger generations.

The raised viewing platform is designed to allow visitors to see a panorama across the entire site. This raised platform was inspired by my personal memories of seeing the African landscape; these memories were of a landscape of immense expanse. The views across the site created by the platform provide expansive views, reflecting the feeling I got when visiting Africa. The vista includes the shelters and the vegetation, both of which are a prominent feature in the regional landscape.

The screens around the shelters are a means of providing protection from the elements, as well as to provide privacy to those visitors within. The screens are created using corrugated iron, which is another highly valued material in the African region, used for building and shelter. The corrugated iron will be unpainted and will be left to weather naturally, as the iron found in Africa is used as it is found and received no special preparation or treatment.

The use of hessian sacks in the design was inspired by varied use of sacks in African society and is symbolic as they are valuable resources due to their durability. Within the design, these sacks will be hung inside the roof of the shelters providing a softening texture against the timber framing. LED lighting will be added to the roof to provide a gentle light source and to represent the stars that are clearly seen across African skies.

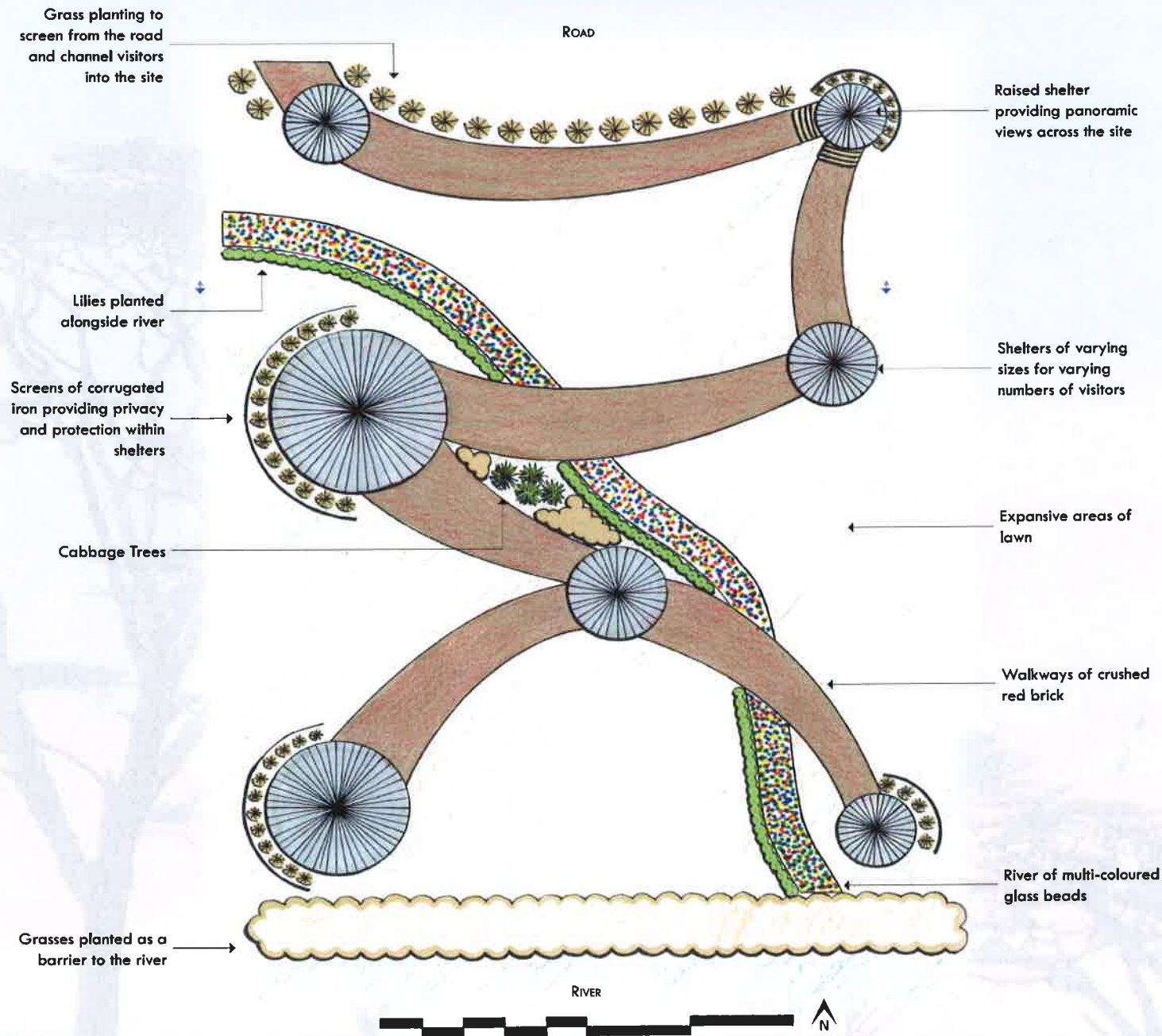


This image provides a perspective view of a shelter, showing the planting around the edge, and the screen of corrugated iron to the rear.



The section elevation provides a view looking through the site, indicating shelters and the planting alongside the "River of Beads".

DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN



MATERIALS

Cabbage trees have been used as they take on a form that is very similar to the Acacia Trees that are found across the African region.



Lilies provide a link to lilies that are common in the region. These plants also have a tropical appearance reflecting the climate of the central part of the region.



Grasses are used to signify the open, expansive grasslands, plains and savannah areas of the region.



Crushed red brick will be used to cover the walkways throughout the site.



Coloured beads are used to fill the river channel. Colours include red, yellow, green, blue and white.



Corrugated iron will be used in the site as roofing on the shelters, and as screening around several of the shelters.



Hardwood poles will be used to support the roof structures of the shelters. The poles will provide strength to the structures.



Hessian sacks are to be hung inside the shelters to soften the appearance of the wood framing inside the shelters.



The use of materials in this design are representative of the ingenuity displayed by the African people in making use of inexpensive recycled items.



This image shows an example of how the screens around the shelters may look, using varying sizes and types of corrugated iron.