

BROOKLYN HOUSE PHASE 3

Located 350 metres from the University of Pretoria's main entrance, Brooklyn House Phase 3 is the latest phase of the University Square precinct, a residential project comprising four inter-connected buildings. The development redefines the standards of contemporary student living, and students have access to all amenities and facilities within the precinct.



Project Team

Client/Developer: Mile Investments
Architect, Landscape Architect and Interior Architect: Boogertman + Partners
Main Contractor: Tri-Star Construction
Landscape Contractor: Karen Viljoen Landscaping

Ample planting softens the main courtyard on the first floor and provides a low green buffer to the units behind. Tree planters and decking benches are arranged along the main movement axis between the central stairs and the fitness centre. Artificial lawn is used here, due to the high traffic nature of the space.

The buildings of Phase 3 are arranged around the northern, western and southern peripheries of the site, creating a prominent central courtyard on the first floor. This acts as an anchor point for the eight storey north block, three storey south block, the fitness centre towards the west and the study centre of Phase 2. As such, the client required this space to be visually striking, with a grand, central staircase, large evergreen trees, a water feature, sculptures and a pickleball court.

Landscape design concept

Being a cohesive precinct, it was important that Phase 3 tie in with the formal landscape aesthetics of Phases 1 and 2. However the architectural language of each phase is slightly different and the landscape design therefore followed suit.

The landscape comprises several zones, each with their own function. On the first floor there is a large, central spill-out space, a pickleball court and a smaller, more intimate courtyard in the north block. On the ground floor, there is a spill-out space outside the fitness centre, which is a gateway to a training pool. The south block's ground floor units each have their own private gardens with built-in braais.

The central courtyard is arranged in a formal configuration, allowing for movement zones, seating and pause moments to view large sculptures commissioned by the client. In addition, planted buffers provide a sense of privacy for residents on the first floor directly facing the courtyard.

Due to the imposing scale of the eight-storey north block, it was vital to reduce this to a more human scale. Large trees have been arranged along a central axis, over columns to carry their loads, in facebrick planters that will allow sufficient space for root growth. This axis also acts as the main movement corridor for users, resulting in a formality echoing that of Phases 1 and 2.

Cutting into this central axis is a pause zone where a prominent sculpture has been placed, creating a sense of balance between solid and void, and allowing a change of direction towards the northern courtyard. The smaller northern courtyard features seating nodes, a tranquil water feature and another large sculpture.

To add interest and further break down the vertical scale of the space, lower planters were added towards the units, planted with taller plants to create a soft, green boundary between private and public space.



Ilex mitis and *Agapanthus praecox* in the planter alongside the pickle ball court soften the space and act as a permeable screen to the parking area of Phase 2



The client requested that base planting be supplemented with colourful annuals in preparation for students moving in. Warm colours were chosen to add energy and excitement to the space



Four large sculptures commissioned by the client are placed on the first and ground floors. A heart-shaped balloon signifies the good in all of us. In the pause zone, cartoon-like characters invite us to embrace the potential of our own personal journeys. Set against the water feature, the bold red lettering of 'life is beautiful' reminds us of the joy of living. The large blue bear is the focal point of the fitness centre on the ground floor, encouraging fun and playfulness.

City of Tshwane Regulations

Regulations by the City of Tshwane's Environmental and Agriculture Management Department on open space provisioning had to be adhered to. Due to the fact that all the shared recreational space was on the first floor and not on grade, this was considered a green roof and thus had to comply with the requirements set out by Council in the town planning stages of the project. This meant that a large surface area had to consist of planting, leading to a softer and more inviting space with social and environmental benefits.

Soft landscaping, planting and irrigation

The base planting palette includes evergreen perennials with strap-like leaves that provide structure and occasional splashes of colour.

It was important to take into account the changing micro-climates on site, especially in the central courtyard where sun exposure varies greatly between seasons. In mid-summer, this area receives several hours of sunlight per day, whereas there is no direct sun between April and September. *Dietsa bicolor* and *Crocasmia aurea* add height and structure to the low planters, and *Agapanthus praecox* create a soft border to the central pause zone and taller perimeter planters, looking attractive beneath the 500L *Ilex mitis* planted adjacent to the pickleball court.

Trachelospermum jasminoides trail against the safety fence, eventually creating a fragrant screen between the court and Phase 2. *Chlorophytum saundersiae* mixed with *Hemerocallis* hybrids complement the delicate texture of the fine leaves of *Afrocarpus falcatus* under which they are planted. Large planters in the shady northern courtyard contain *Trichilia emetica* and *Clivia miniata*, with *Liriope muscari* in the lower planters.

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A fully automated irrigation system has been installed, with ground floor areas consisting of pop-ups and standpipes. The entire first floor is a drip irrigation system, optimising water delivery to plant roots. Mulching over all plant beds and planters helps to reduce evapo-transpiration.

Hard landscaping

The water feature in the northern courtyard creates a tranquil effect while providing a focal point upon entering the space from the main courtyard. The acoustics of the space were taken into account, and because of the potential application of sound, the water feature design aimed to create a soothing, trickling sound that will not overpower the user. Water springs from bubblers that are sunken into black granite slabs, with recesses cut into their edges to create a rivulet effect. The feature forms a foreground for a sculpture placed in the planter behind it.

Four large sculptures were commissioned by the client. They are bold and colourful, and placed strategically on the first and ground floors. On entering the first floor from the study centre of Phase 2, a large heart-shaped balloon sculpture signifies the good in all of us. In the pause zone, cartoon-like characters invite us to embrace the potential of our own personal journeys. Set against the water feature, one is reminded of the power of the joy of living when reading 'life is beautiful' in bold red lettering. Finally, a large blue bear is the focal point of the fitness centre exterior on the ground floor, encouraging fun and playfulness.

Hardscape finishes complement the architectural materiality. Seating on the first floor comprises composite decking benches mounted against tree planters, and match the black brick of the architecture and planted walls. On the first floor, this is softened by artificial lawn, a practical and more appropriate alternative to natural lawn for the high-traffic nature of the space, which is interlaid with large stepping stones.

Information supplied by Megan Marais of Boogertman + Partners.

Photos by Franz Rabe/ Natural Photography/naturalphoto.co.za and Megan Marais.



'Endless Possibilities' in the pause zone of the central courtyard. The stairs behind link the space with Phase 2



The focal point of the northern courtyard is a playful sculpture juxtaposed against the formal Rustenburg black granite water feature



Parking along Brooks Street was arranged around the mature Jacaranda trees that characterise this part of Pretoria