JEDDAH'S INTERNATIONAL WRITERS HUB

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Abstract

In view of the Saudi vision of 2030, building an icon of local literature and a hub for writers for community engagement in an international city like Jeddah became an ideal and crucial requirement. This work presents a proposal to develop an international writers hub in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. For this work, three case studies were analysed to understand the important architecture requirement for developing a hub for writers. Based on the analysed case studies, for the proposed international writers hub, the estimated net floor area is 12160 m² and the estimated gross floor area is 15837 m². The proposed writers hub will incorporate several zones such as main entrance, theatre, shops, conference area, writing hub, service and amenities, library, administration, rental office, day care and writers residence. In this work, the proposed writers hub will be constructed at a site located at Al-Shati 3 district in Jeddah. Based on site evaluation analysis, this site has exhibited evaluation score of 137 and it is suitable location for developing the writers hub. This hub is expected to be a main point of attraction at Jeddah and it will contribute to the economy of Saudi Arabia.

Keywords-- writers hub, international, architecture, Saudi Arabia

INTRODUCTION

Writers hubs are public buildings where writers come together to create, collaborate and connect with the local community [1]. It is also a place of informal education as it offers many opportunities and programs to learn and develop in different writing disciplines. It also works as an innovation hub as it promotes writers’ products and literature to the public in different ways [2]. A writer hub usually includes some of the following facilities, such as social meeting spaces, writing spaces, theater and shops, research and learning spaces, and administration [3].

Specialized hubs for writers have emerged mostly in libraries and college buildings. Although there are many writing centers within knowledge hubs or as small studios, these hubs are mostly used for only educational purposes where writers have little interaction with the larger community [4].

Another type of writers hubs is those places where writers meet occasionally or periodically for networking, debate, discuss literary issues and plan collaborations [5]. Furthermore, some writing hubs actually enrich, produce and promote the work of unprofessional writers to their local community in a very professional manner, encouraging them to express themselves, receive direct feedback from the audience to gain experience and develop faster [6].

With the announcement of Saudi vision 2030, a new light is shed on investing in small businesses, especially for writers at Saudi Arabia as an alternative source of income for the country[7]. Hence, new creative hub projects are being initiated under the management of the government. Thus, this work proposes the development of international writers hub in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

CASE STUDIES

This work has analysed three case studies related to writers hub. The analyzed case studies are are:

a. University of Arizona Poetry Center
b. Casa da Escrita
c. 826 Valencia Tenderloin Center

University of Arizona Poetry Center

University of Arizona Poetry Center is located at Tucson, Arizona (Figure 1). This center was designed by architect Line and Space (LLC). The total area of this building is 5486 m². The poetry center at Arizona University is a landmark public building open to all those interested in poetry. It provides archiving, research, reading, teaching and contemplation facilities, it even has a children’s zone and a residence. The concept of the building followed a problem-based approach where the solution of functional problems inspired the shape and design of the building. Aluminum panels and glass dominate the exterior façade of the building, giving it a modern feel suitable for an educational facility and a landmark building. Extensive use of shading and shading equipment keeps important outdoor spaces protected from extreme solar radiation while providing ample daylight filtering through high plants and reflective surfaces. The fairly garden lines the library's exterior glass wall to create good views and outdoor reading options. The interior spaces imitate the simple modern exterior style. The spaciously designed spaces are flooded with filtered daylight creating a lively and simple environment suitable for reading and writing.

Figure 1. University of Arizona Poetry Center
Casa Da Escrita  
Casa da Escrita is located at Coimbra, Portugal (Figure 2). It was designed by architect João Mendes Ribeiro. This building has daylight design combined with the minimal design of white painted walls, simple furniture and wooden finishes that create a biophilic comfortable chaos-free productive environment ideal for writing and brainstorming. The new design focused on renovating the old building space and building an extension to accommodate the new functions in a flexible contemporary style. The architect intended to preserve the symbolic value of the building’s exterior while emptying it from the inside, using a minimalist approach to modernize and maintain the intimate atmosphere of the house using wooden finishes. The house is turned into an open archive, writing workshops, meeting rooms and a residence for temporary writers. It also has several multifunctional spaces to support different activities and interactions between artistic and literary programmes. Exterior view shows the façade of the building extension generally in the style of the old building. The building’s main highlight is the upper floor extension space. It is creatively designed to be a reading and writing space that meets the needs of single users and groups of different sizes with storage shelves and ample daylight. Daylight is enhanced by the white paint finish of the interior walls. Furthermore, the color, roof design and multiple openings make the space look bigger than it actually is. The daylight design along the interior’s simple wooden finish creates a very lively yet comfortable and intimate atmosphere. Other interior spaces include a meeting room, writing workshop spaces, and a room with convertible, rotating storage units. Most of these rooms are very adaptive that they can be easily converted to fulfill other functions and all follow the minimalist comfy design concept.

826 Valencia Tenderloin Center  
826 Valencia Tenderloin Center is located at San Francisco, USA (Figure 3). It was designed by Interstice Architects company. The building has a total area of 5200 m². 826 Valencia is a series of writing centers dedicated to supporting low-income young students with their writing skills and making them excited about literary arts. The tenderloin branch is another non-profit project they built with the support of the community and more than 50 other firms providing their services at cost to create radical positive neighborhood change. Highlights of the building are the reception desk and library, and the main writing lab. Furthermore, the entrance to the tree house leads to two small spaces that serve as nooks for reading. The administrative area upstairs contains a small lounge, meeting rooms and offices. The writing lab is the building’s main space where children practice writing and perform their pieces on stage. Filtered daylight coming from wall-sized windows fills the woodland theme space creating a warm, vibrant atmosphere. The exposed ceiling adds to the already wide space that ensures comfort for the large number of children that encourage fun and collaborative learning. In addition, there is one rectangular space at the reception desk and a wall filled with window openings of variable shapes and sizes, secret doors and entrances leading to the writing lab. There is also a mini library and a private supply store exists at the far end of the space, where children’s published books are exhibited and sold. The administration zone follows a harmonious style yet different finishes from the underlying public spaces, giving more of a private office feel. Furthermore, the small lounge is lit with daylight borrowed from windows overlooking the lab. The zone also includes meeting rooms and office spaces. The building’s exterior view shows a different cladding for the public ground floor, distinctly colored with a deep-sea theme, while the private upper floor elevation is left plain white and is neatly lined with windows.

**Figure 2. Casa da Escrita**

**Figure 3. 826 Valencia Tenderloin Center**

**PROGRAM SPACE DETAILS**  
For the proposed international writers hub at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the estimated net floor area is 12160 m² and the estimated gross floor area is 15837 m². Table 1 exhibits the zones of the writers hub. Based on Table 1, the writers hub has several zones, such as main entrance, theatre, shops, conference area, writing hub, service and amenities, library, administration, rental office, day-care and writers residence.

| Zones                   | Percentage (%) | Net Area (m²) | Gross Floor Area (m²) |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Main entrance           | 2              | 171           | 342                   |
| Theatre                 | 22             | 2729          | 5483                  |
| Shops                   | 3              | 327           | 606                   |
| Conference              | 9              | 1073          | 1570                  |
| Writing hub             | 14             | 1761          | 2238                  |
| Services and amenities  | 10             | 1087          | 1583                  |
| Library                 | 12             | 1565          | 1961                  |
| Administration          | 7              | 728           | 1112                  |
| Rental offices           | 6              | 683           | 869                   |
| Day-care                | 2              | 305           | 353                   |
| Writers residence       | 13             | 1731          | 2033                  |
| **Total**               | **100**        | **12160**     | **15837**             |

**PROPOSED SITE AND ANALYSIS**  
The chosen site is located on Al-Shati 3 district in between Al-Kurnaysh road and Prince Faisal bin Fahad street facing the new renovation of Jeddah’s waterfronts as shown in Figure 4. The site has an estimated overall area of 20000 m². The rating of the
selected site is shown in Table 2. The site was rated using weighting factors (WF) where WF=1 (not very important), WF=2 (important) and WF=3 (very important). The site was evaluated based on several criteria such as site capacity, shape, topography, access, noise levels, utilities, security and safety, visual quality, visibility, future development, demographic patterns, surroundings and views. Based on Table 2, the overall score of the chosen site is 137.

| Site Criteria          | Weighting Factors (WF) | Selected Site |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Site capacity          | 3                      | 15            |
| Shape                  | 2                      | 8             |
| Topography             | 1                      | 5             |
| Access                 | 3                      | 12            |
| Noise levels           | 3                      | 9             |
| Utilities              | 2                      | 10            |
| Security               | 2                      | 10            |
| Visual quality         | 3                      | 15            |
| Visibility             | 3                      | 12            |
| Future development     | 1                      | 4             |
| Demographic patterns   | 3                      | 15            |
| Surroundings           | 3                      | 12            |
| Views                  | 2                      | 10            |
| Total                  | -                      | 137           |

Figure 5 shows the detailed site info. Based on Figure 5, by reviewing land use, it is evident that the site is strategically located in a land strip of many hotels and high-end residential and office towers surrounded by a great diversity of people. Furthermore, potential users who can access the hub by walking include children from nearby schools, residents from the nearby medium - high-income residential district, tourists and hotel users, and diverse visitors to the new waterfront. In addition, it is directly and fully visible from the new waterfront that gives importance and impact to form and façade design that would attract the attention of visitors. Likewise, the site has a direct extended natural view of the sea and receives wind from the north-west along with western sea breeze. The land’s north-south orientation allows for proper day lighting with minimal heat gains, although dealing with direct western sunrays and sea views remains a major challenge for the western façade.

**PROJECT DESIGN**

This work has proposed the development of an international writers hub at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The most important characteristics of a successful writers’ hub fall under three categories that are the main objectives of Jeddah’s International Writers Center: First, creating and maintaining a productive writing environment by providing different options for writers in different group sizes, efficient day lighting design and climatic control, and the availability of all required services in one place. Second, attracting the public to literature, through an inviting inclusive design with strong identity in a pedestrian heavy public location, visible functions, easily accessibleadaptive spaces and promotional events. And the third objective is sustainability.

It is achieved through design by choosing environmentally friendly building materials and design techniques that ensures the building’s growth and availability for generations to come. Figure 6 shows the overall architecture of the proposed hub. Based on Figure 6, the writers hub was designed with simple forms, materials, and colors adaptive to the local climate. Furthermore, the design has incorporated easy access to all important functions from administration zone, large adaptive spaces, and a location surrounded by services, users, and important streets. Likewise, the building was designed strategically planned landscaping, access to daylight and natural ventilation for all functional spaces and it provides appropriate space for each function. Moreover, the building has been designed with handicapped accessibility. In addition, the building has minimalistic biophilic interiors that leave space for the writers’ ideas, zoning functions according to noise levels to ensure disturbance free environment, and making all important public functions visible through clear glass façade or a transitional inviting walkway through the site. Furthermore, the hub has incorporated outdoor gardens which will enables writers to have a peaceful environment to think and write.

Figure 6. Overview of the proposed international writer’s hub
CONCLUSION
This study has presented a proposal on developing an international writers hub in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. In this work, the estimated net area of the writers hub was 12160 m² and the estimated gross floor area was 15837 m². The writers hub consists of several areas including main entrance, theatre, shops, conference area, writing hub, service and amenities, library, administration, rental office, day care and writers residence. This international writers hub is expected to be the icon of local literature and contribute to the local community and economy of Saudi Arabia.

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