*Thought Leadership Piece / Op Ed*

*For immediate release*

**The importance of green and blue spaces is redefining**

**how people will choose to live and work in South Africa**

*According to Dr Ledivia Strauss, Integrative Medical Practitioner and owner of Revitahealth in the Western Cape, the connection between mental health and access to nature has long been established, but the extent to which green and blue spaces impacts our health and mental well-being is now being extensively researched. As part of Dr Strauss’ ongoing efforts to promote healthy living, she shares her insights on how a new development project in the Western Cape, through their prioritising of green and blue spaces, is encouraging metabolic health and potentially setting the benchmark for future mixed use property developments in South Africa for ideal living and working conditions.*

The BlueHealth2020 project, published in November 2020, was the largest study of its kind, analyzing data from 18 different countries, and found that people who lived within 1km of green spaces, such as parks or forests, experienced less anxiety and depression. One study of almost 20,000 people found that access to green spaces reduced the likelihood of depression by up to 26%. Other studies have shown that exposure to nature can improve cognitive function, reduce stress levels, and even lower blood pressure.

But it's not just green spaces that are important for mental health; blue spaces, such as rivers, lakes, and 1km of the coast reported better mental health than those who lived further inland.

I believe that the pandemic has highlighted the need for people to have daily access to nature. We have been stuck in our homes for too long, and we need to reconnect with the outdoors to boost our overall well-being. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of incorporating natural spaces into our daily routines, with even a walk in the park during a lunch break having the potential to improve one’s mood, blood glucose and productivity. This trend has the potential to make waterways the new highways and parks will become people’s new living rooms.

Ultimately, if we are not thinking about and focussing on how we can live as long as possible, in good health, then we are missing the point. And this is where the secret lies… to improve healthspan together with lifespan. That’s why I’m excited to be involved in a project that draws on the impact that blue and green spaces has on our every day lives. Squareturn Developments - the team responsible for the winelands’ latest development offering, Devonbosch - have designed a development around the benefits of holistic health through the onsite connection to blue and green spaces. With plenty of blue skies and natural green landscapes, a man-made lake and ponds rich in bird life, along with a multitude of mountain biking, trail running, eFoiling and other activities soon to be available at the heart of this development, Devonbosch is offering South Africans more than just an impressive array of recreational pursuits. This development aims to provide South Africans with an environment that epitomises healthy destination living through life and work unlimited offerings.

Through recognizing the positive change that can be created by a development being built around the advancement of holistic wellbeing, mental and metabolic health, the result is a village of the future. Blending small-town conveniences with big-thinking architecture and eco-designed open spaces, it also encourages walkability and sustainability, seamlessly weaving green living and nature into everyday life.

However, while Squareturn Developments is paving the way in Africa for its unapologetic stance on mental health and well-being in the development space – its not alone in recognizing the importance of blue and green spaces in our lives. Cities around the world are starting to prioritize green and blue spaces as part of their urban planning. For example, Paris has pledged to create 100 hectares of new green spaces by 2022, and New York City has launched the "Cool Neighborhoods NYC" initiative, which aims to increase the number of trees, green roofs, and other green infrastructure in neighbourhoods that are particularly vulnerable to extreme heat.

It's clear that the benefits of green and blue spaces on overall health and wellbeing are significant, and more and more people are recognizing the importance of incorporating these spaces into their daily lives. While more projects and efforts internationally are underway on how we can design our cities and communities to prioritize access to nature, its encouraging to see developments like Devonbosch on our homeground paving the way to provide a blueprint for how we can experience life and work in harmony with the natural world. After all, nature is our best antidepressant and we need to start treating it as such.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editor:**

***About Author, Dr Ledivia Strauss***

Revitahealth, based in the rejuvenating cape winelands, is a health-orientated organisation with anti-ageing, integrative, regenerative, and aesthetic medical services provided by Dr Ledivia Strauss.

Dr Ledivia Strauss is a general practitioner with a special interest in functional, integrative and aesthetic medicine. After completing her mbchb (medical) degree at the university of stellenbosch in 2004, she initially had an interest in anaesthesiology. After completing her post graduate diploma in anaesthesiology in 2007, her life took an unexpected turn when she moved to france with her husband who was a professional rugby player at the time.

After working in different health sectors in france and obtaining her two year post graduate diploma in mesotherapy at the university of bordeaux, she saw the ever-lasting need for women to become healthy from the inside out.

Dr Ledivia believes in helping people get to the root of their medical concerns and not merely masking symptoms. She has a passion for educating and empowering her patients with the knowledge and tools they need to become the healthiest they can be. Her greatest interest lies in the areas of healthy weight management, detoxification, gut healing, metabolic and hormonal health.

***About Devonbosch Development***

Situated near Stellenbosch in the Cape Winelands, Devonbosch’s unique location is easily accessible via the N1, Paarl, Somerset West, Cape Town and its Northern Suburbs. At Devonbosch, you will encounter the essence of connected living, with the outdoors as your playground and Stellenbosch lifestyle on your doorstep. Explore a vibrant and dynamic way of living where nature, sustainability and the environment are seamlessly intertwined. Cycle to your local market or amble along the brick-laid pathways surrounded by tree-lined green spaces, mountainous valleys of the Cape Winelands as well as stunning wetlands and a picturesque lake teeming with bird life.

Set within the greater Devonbosch Unlimited Lifestyle destination, Devonbosch also offers contemporary offices and studios that is anything but business as usual. With co-working spaces, internal courtyard forests, walkways leading to coffee shops, delis and fresh produce markets as well as access to the greater Devonbosch and all its state-of-the-art facilities - like eFoiling, biking park and running trails - it is a commercial opportunity unlike anything else.

***About SquareTurn Developments***

SquareTurn Developments is a South African property development company established by a prominent Belgian property group Square Group and local SA businessmen. Through meticulous investment strategies and high quality bespoke developments, both companies have established themselves as leaders in the European property market. SquareTurn Developments have invested in strategically desirable land holdings in the Cape. At SquareTurn, we believe that change is the driving force behind progress. As a progressive land developer and property investment firm, our mission is to create lasting change in communities in South Africa. Whether through innovative architectural designs, sustainable building practices, or groundbreaking urban planning initiatives, we are committed to pushing the boundaries of what is possible and shaping a brighter future for generations to come. With our global reach and diverse team of experts, we don’t just develop; we also create destinations with cutting-edge thinking at the highest level. **SquareTurn. we deliver change.**

For more information or visuals, please contact Janna Strang on janna@rainmakermarketing.co.za / 082 551 3865 or email tasha@rainmakermarketing.co.za