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i n t r o d u c t i o n



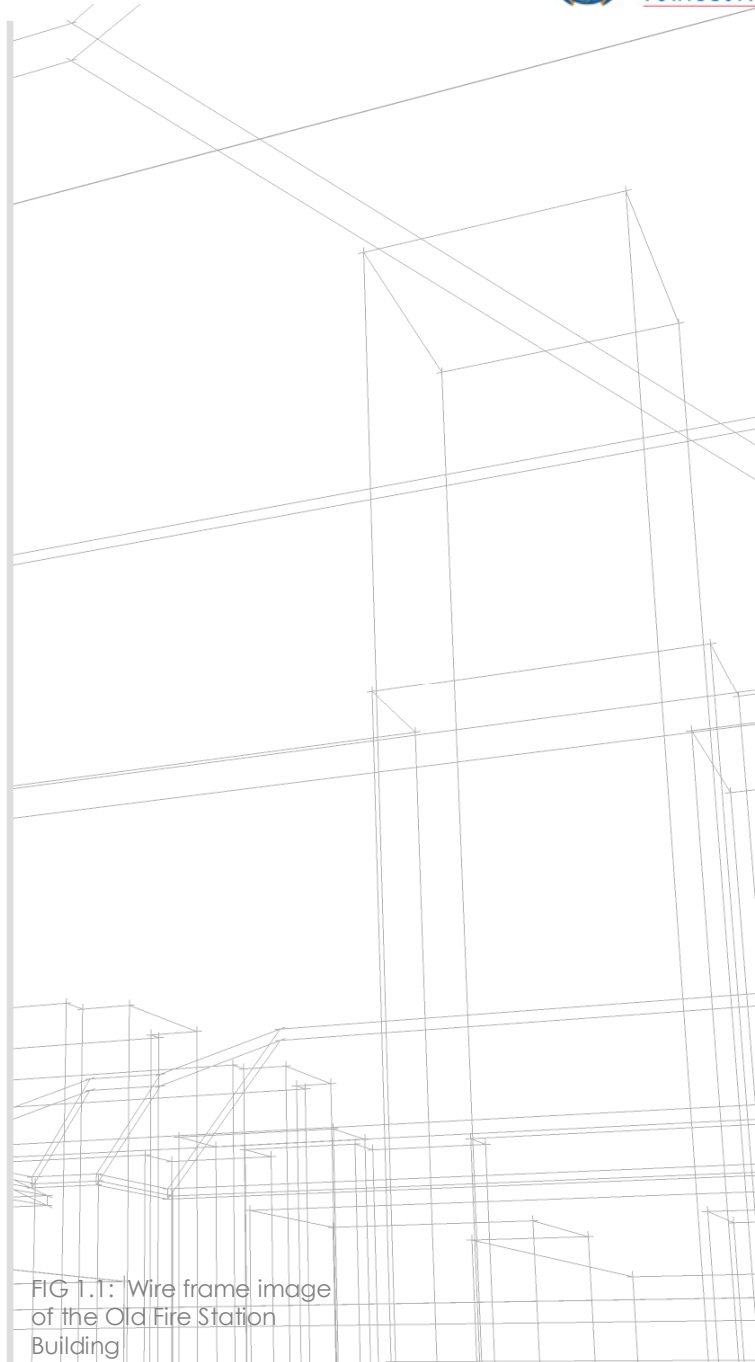


FIG 1.1: Wire frame image
of the Old Fire Station
Building

In an urban context, architecture and landscape architecture co-exist as part of the structure of the city. In the same manner, interior architecture exists as part of an architectural envelope, and product design as an integral part of the interior. This study explores the relationship between these design disciplines and their interdependence; none of them can be practiced optimally in isolation. As this thesis deals with interior architecture, the influence of and the response to other fields of design are considered and investigated, setting the parameters for the resolution of the design framework.

The objective of the thesis is to design a tourism and information centre for Tshwane. The shortcomings of the tourism industry in the city are identified in Chapter Two, and the tourism field studied in depth in Chapter Three. The conclusions from these chapters serve as generators for the functional design process.

The site of the Old Fire Station Building was chosen for both its potential and its inadequacies. Its physical attributes, historical importance and its critical role in the urban context of the CBD and the Museum Park District are discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five deals with the design philosophy and approach to creating a successful public space. Precedents are analytically examined in Chapter Six and alternatives are explored, setting up requirements and guidelines for the design intervention.



In Chapter Seven, design strategies are defined and consequently employed. The progression of the design from general concept to specific end product is illustrated visually. Attention is focused on two parts of the building: the information area (Portion A) and the café (Portion B). In Chapter Eight, Portion A is further developed on a technical and tectonic level, zooming in on the construction of the information reception box. The study concludes with the technical documentation contained in Chapter Nine.

The study relies throughout on the application of the concepts of placemaking through the layering, defining and containing of space, and contrast the existing with the proposed intervention.

“Pretoria is currently in a position of reformulation and rediscovery. Tourism wise Pretoria has the product, the people and the ideal location. Pretoria has what it takes to be an outstanding tourist destination. All that needs to be done now is to bring it all together.”¹

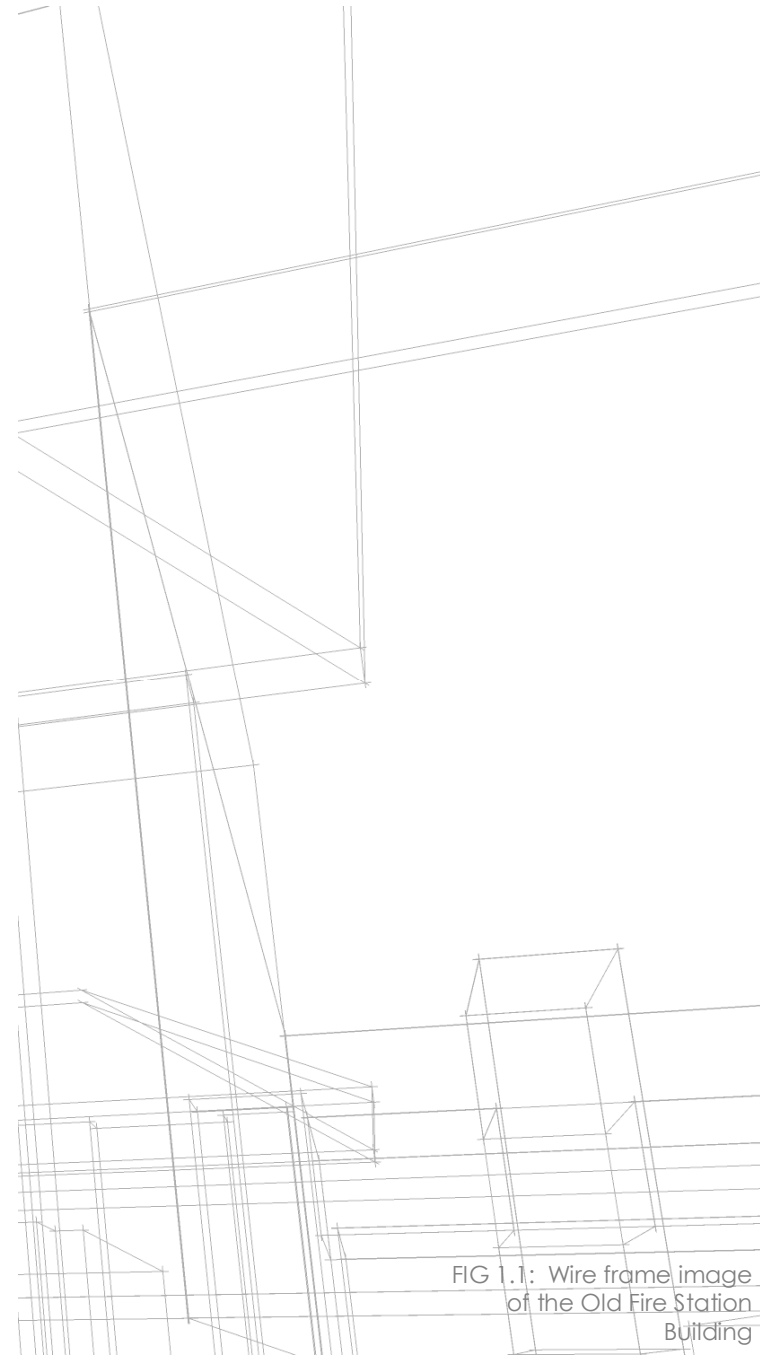


FIG 1.1: Wire frame image of the Old Fire Station Building

1 Nhlumayu (1998)



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t h e p r o b l e m



2.1 THE CURRENT SITUATION

Lonely Planet's¹ response to the tourist information centres in Pretoria:

"The Tourist Information centres are pretty useless and, astonishingly for a city this size, closed on weekends. You can still get maps and brochures when it is closed, but you're better off asking your hotel of locals for advice."



FIG 2.1: Old Nederlandsche Bank building on Church Square

FIG 2.2: Information signage in front of Old Nederlandsche Bank building



The tourist information centres that currently cater for the City of Tshwane and surrounding areas are inadequate. They are:

1. not easily accessible;
2. not efficiently operated;
3. not properly equipped;
4. not sufficiently funded.

There are two main information centres in the inner city of Pretoria:

Church Square Tourist Information Centre

The main tourist information centre of the city is situated in the historic Old Nederlandsche Bank building on Church Square. Entry is gained via a dark and obscure reception hall. Brochure stands with local information and advertisements occupy most of the waiting area. Smaller partitioned cubicles where personal assistance is given are lined up against a wall. At maximum capacity only four people can be helped simultaneously. There are no other supporting tourist functions (travel agents, tour operators, exchange facilities or accommodation).

Museum Park Tourist Centre

The entrance to this tourist centre, situated on the south east corner of the rundown Old Fire Station Building, is uninviting and poorly defined. It merely consists of a single room occupied by displays of free flyers and pamphlets. A maximum of two people can be helped at the same time. City tours can be booked here. Accommodation is also available on the premises, but facilities are extremely poor.

¹ Fitzpatrick, et al. (2006:431)

FIG 2.3:
The Information
Centre in the Old
Nederlandsche Bank
Building on Church
Square



FIG 2.6:
Museums Park
Information Centre's
entrance from
Minnar Street



FIG 2.4:
Entrance into Old
Nederlandsche
Bank Building:
waiting area for
information

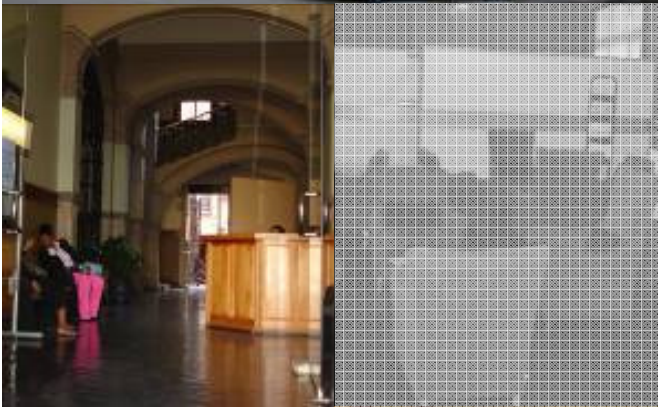


FIG 2.7:
Waiting area

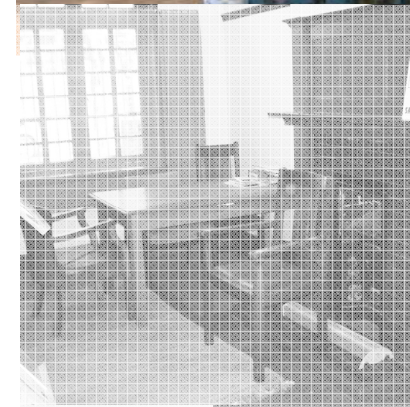


FIG 2.5:
Brochure display
stands



FIG 2.8:
Brochure display
stands



2.2 PROBLEM DEFINITION

The supplementary volume two of the addendum to the draft environmental impact assessment¹ states the following:

“Provision should be made for the development of a museum and related information centre in the area under consideration to accommodate all heritage-related aspects with regard to the development of the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link. Such a facility would need to illustrate how heritage issues came to be addressed within the context of the new development. It is also suggested that funding should be allocated for the development of a suitable railway heritage tourism node catalysed by the new station. This clearly meets current thinking in the development of guidelines with regard to the functional area around the Pretoria Station.”

In response to these facts the main objective of this thesis is to address the shortcomings of the current situation and create an environment that will provide diverse facilities to its users. This Information Node can be considered a fusion of activities, an anchor for the tourism and transport industry in the Museum Park context. The facility will enhance the user’s overall experience of his or her destination.



FIG 2.9:
Bosman Street view of the
Old Fire Station Building

Bennett² explains that:

“Today travellers are looking for greater freedom, more adventure and less formality. Travellers are also becoming more demanding when it comes to accommodation. They do not see accommodation as merely a ‘room to sleep in’ but as a total leisure experience, composing a wide range of services and emotional experience which together make up the holiday or business stay.”

1 Gauteng Provincial
Government
(2007: 24)

2 Bennett (2000:55)



OBJECTIVE
AND GOAL

2.3

creating
a place

The proposed project must act as a node to accommodate public city spaces that connect with the urban realm, as well as internal semi-private and private spaces. By opening up the street edge of the building on Minnaar and Bosman Streets, commercial activities can be accommodated to allow interaction with pedestrians at street level. In this way, access to and the visibility of the building will also be improved. Accommodation on the first floor amplifies the function of the node. The additional 24-hour activity thus created will also improve security in the surrounding area.

The interaction of the building with its surrounding landscape and other existing facilities on the site will reinforce the Museum Park concept and boost the tourism industry in the area. The building must be clearly visible to tourists and its function and facilities easily recognizable.

The idea of a 'tourist friendly city' can be implemented all over Tshwane and not just in one building. Smaller information stands (temporary or permanent structures) can be placed at strategic points to stimulate the tourism market as a whole and make the community more aware of available activities.

This thesis promotes the concept of a mixed-use community interacting in public space, by creating social gathering places, developing a sense of guardianship and providing places for community events. This can build in a strong sense of community for residents and workers in the area. Where public space goals and management strategies are concerned, the Node must reflect harmony between the development itself, the existing community and the public sector. A sense of place and a variety of destinations must be created, offering a wide-range of uses and activities so that the facilities are vibrant and well-used during all seasons and serve a variety of people of all ages, races and economic levels. The goal of such an information node must be well-integrated with the existing communities and its context.

2.4 CONSTRAINTS AND POSSIBILITIES

According to Whole Building Design Guide¹ the following points can be seen as guidelines for a project's design objective:



FIG 2.10:
Bosman Street: Original entrance of the
Old Fire Station building is not in use today

¹ National Institute of
Building Science
(2007)

1. Accessible:

Pertains to building elements, heights and clearances implemented to address the specific needs of disabled people.

- _Provide equal access.
- _Plan for flexibility.
- _Be proactive.

2. Productive:

Pertains to occupants' well-being, physical and psychological comfort, including building elements such as air distribution, lighting, workspaces, systems, and technology.

- _Integrate technological tools.
- _Assure reliable systems and spaces.
- _Design for the changing workplace.
- _Promote health and well-being.
- _Provide comfortable environments.

3. Aesthetics:

Pertains to the physical appearance and image of building elements and spaces as well as the integrated design process.

- _Engage the appropriate language and elements of design.
- _Engage the integrated design process.

4. Functional and operational:

Pertains to functional programming, spatial needs and requirements, system performance as well as durability and efficient maintenance of building elements.

- _Account for functional needs.
- _Ensure appropriate product or systems integration.
- _Meet performance objectives.

5. Secure and safe:

Pertains to the physical protection of occupants and assets from man-made and natural hazards.

- _Plan for fire protection.
- _Ensure occupant safety and health.
- _Resist natural hazards.
- _Provide security for building occupants and assets.

6. Sustainable:

Pertains to environmental performance of building elements and strategies.

- _Optimize site potential.
- _Optimize energy use.
- _Protect and conserve water.
- _Use environmentally preferable products.
- _Enhance indoor environmental quality.
- _Optimize operational and maintenance practices.

7. Historic preservation:

Pertains to specific actions within a historic district or affecting a historic building whereby building elements and strategies are classifiable into one of the four approaches: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction.

- _Apply the preservation process successfully.
- _Update building systems appropriately.
- _Accommodate life safety and security needs.
- _Comply with accessibility requirements.



FIG 2.11:
Minnaar Street: entrance of the Tourist Centre
in the Old Fire Station Building, Museum Park

2.5 THE CLIENT BODY AND USER GROUP



Successful public spaces make business sense if they are creatively used and properly managed. A vibrant square or active, pedestrian-friendly street contributes directly to the satisfaction of the client and improves the competitiveness and economic return of a building or mixed-use development, and of its tenants. A successful public space can push the rents of surrounding buildings upwards and reduce vacancy rates. Income can also be generated directly by the spaces themselves, by providing rental facilities for catering and events. To collaborate with tenants and the community on the use and management of the spaces will build strong ties with potential sponsors and investors, and will also help to offset operational costs.

Successful, active public spaces have been shown to increase the value of surrounding properties, and can have substantial positive long-term effects on the community and its context. Investment in new developments and the conversion of existing buildings around Pretoria Station and the CBD of Tshwane is an investment in preserving and enhancing the value of historical properties far into the future.

Developers, private investors and municipalities can work together to ensure that all public spaces in a new development are integrated into the fabric of the community, bringing life to all aspects of the development. The user group is the public. The proposed project must be a public space that can provide information to anyone, including tourists, travelers, local citizens and the disabled.

The processes and outcomes of urban design involve and affect users and their interests in different ways: as individuals; as members of local groups, communities, and society as a whole; as occupiers and users; and as members of present and future generations.

BUILDING
ACCOMMODATION

2.6

building
accommodation

- 1 _ Information Centre
- 2 _ Exhibition space
- 3 _ Tour operators and travel agents
- 4 _ Office space
- 5 _ Internet facilities
- 6 _ Coffee bar / Take-away deli
- 7 _ Restaurant and kitchen
- 8 _ Retail
- 9 _ Transportation
- 10 _ Accommodation facilities (small hotel)
- 11 _ Conference facilities / lounge / function venue
- 12 _ Theatre / cinema
- 13 _ ATM / foreign exchange
- 14 _ Dry cleaners
- 15 _ Medical and police facilities
- 16 _ Toilets
- 17 _ Lockers
- 18 _ Beauty spa
- 19 _ Luggage storage
- 20 _ Rental facilities: cars, laptops, phones.

It can be said that ...

...cities are like fragments of culture, social and historic fabric. They represent the history of a place, the society, and the culture of people. Cities are the interplay of spaces, places, cultures and people that have accumulated over time to become points of elaborate expression of urban form.

On arrival in a new, unfamiliar city, tourists normally want to obtain information to enable them to see as much as possible in a short time. Information centres give the first impression of a city's character.

This thesis focuses on the information required by people and the supportive facilities that can enhance the experience of visitors or local residents of the city. The conversion of the old fire station can accommodate some of these proposals.