

300 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The project area

- Site identification
- The Sammy Marks precinct
- Background of the South African State Theatre
- Movement patterns & network of green spaces
- Photographic/visual analysis

The study area

- Links to site analysis _pedestrian
- Links to site analysis _local and regional street network
- Preliminary street/block structure
- Land-use compatibility study
- Magnet intervention
- Legibility analysis
- The summary and precinct design concept
- The Strijdom Square intervention in relation to the chosen site



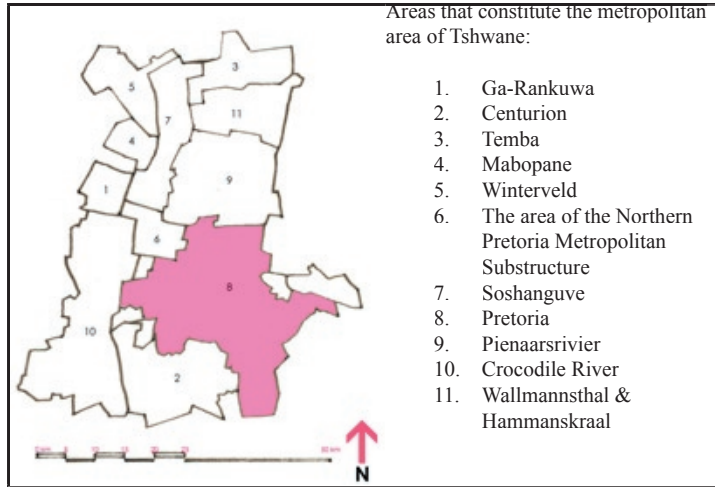


Fig 3.1: Tshwane Metropolitan Region

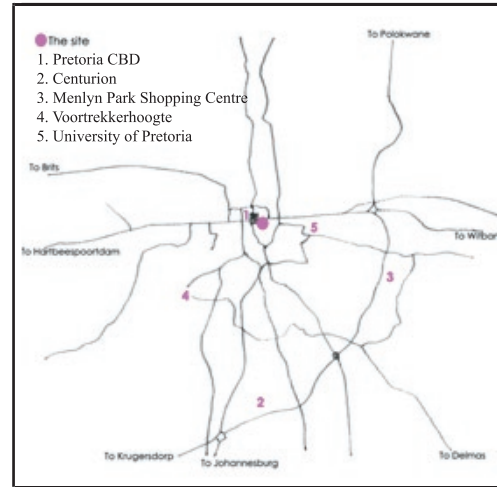


Fig 3.2: Map of the Pretoria area



Fig 3.3: The study area within the Pretoria CBD



Fig 3.4: The location of the site

Choosing the site

The chosen site is opposite the South African State Theatre, south of Pretorius Street. The site is 21m in width (east - west), and 69,27m in length (north – south) and is an undeveloped portion of ERF 3451. The site has been chosen for:

- its physical proximity and relation to the State Theatre
- its being an under-utilized portion of land which breaks the continuity of the built fabric along Pretorius Street.

The site is currently used as a parking lot.

The proposed project and vehicle for this thesis is the State Theatre Dance Centre which is anticipated to link into the South African State Theatre in various ways. The reasons for this is to strengthen the presence of both institutions within the city of Pretoria, to establish a relationship between them as well as creating awareness of how valuable artistic expression is within society. As seen in figure 3.8, the site is directly opposite the State Theatre.



Fig 3.5: Panoramic view from Pretorius Street

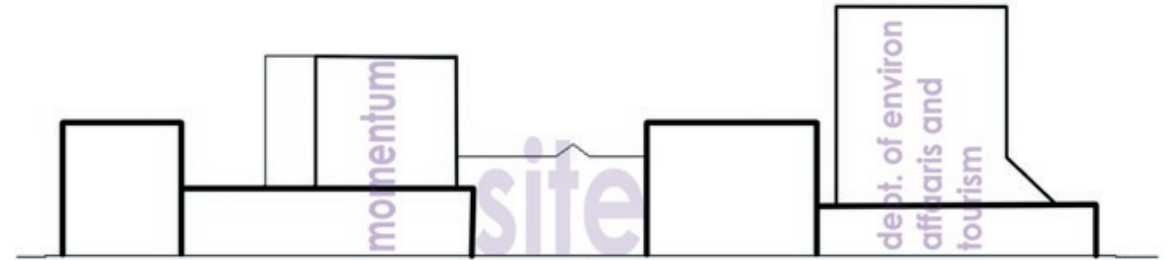


Fig 3.6: Street elevation of Pretorius Street (From Prinsloo Street to Van der Walt Street)

Two large buildings border the site on either side. The site to the east is occupied by the Momentum building, and the one to the west by the Pretmed building (on ERF 3451) and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Figure 3.6, the street elevation, shows the heights along Pretorius Street.

- Zoned as: General Business
- Max height: 28m
 - Max coverage: 80%
 - FAR: 5,5 m
 - ERF no: 3451
 - Width: 21 m
 - Depth: 69,27 m

Being vacant and unused, the site has no significant historical background. It is proposed as the location for the State Theatre Dance Centre, because of the possibility to link it with the South African State Theatre. The historical background of the State Theatre and the background of and future plans for the Sammy Marks precinct are considered for the purpose of understanding the context.



Fig 3.7: Looking into the site

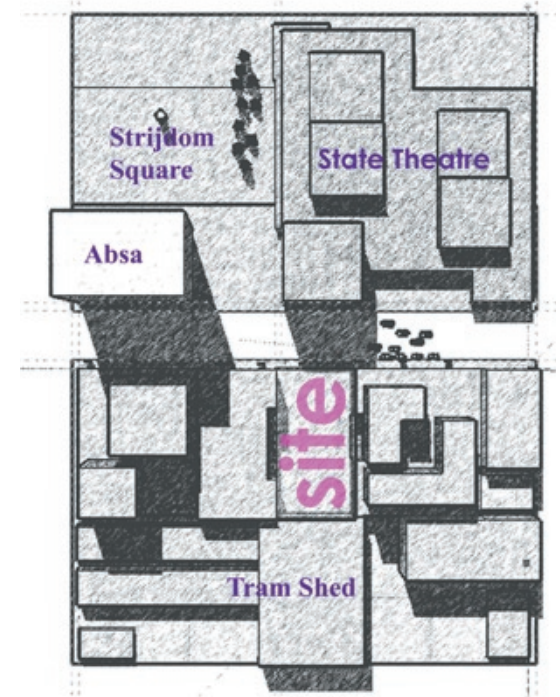


Fig 3.8: The chosen site



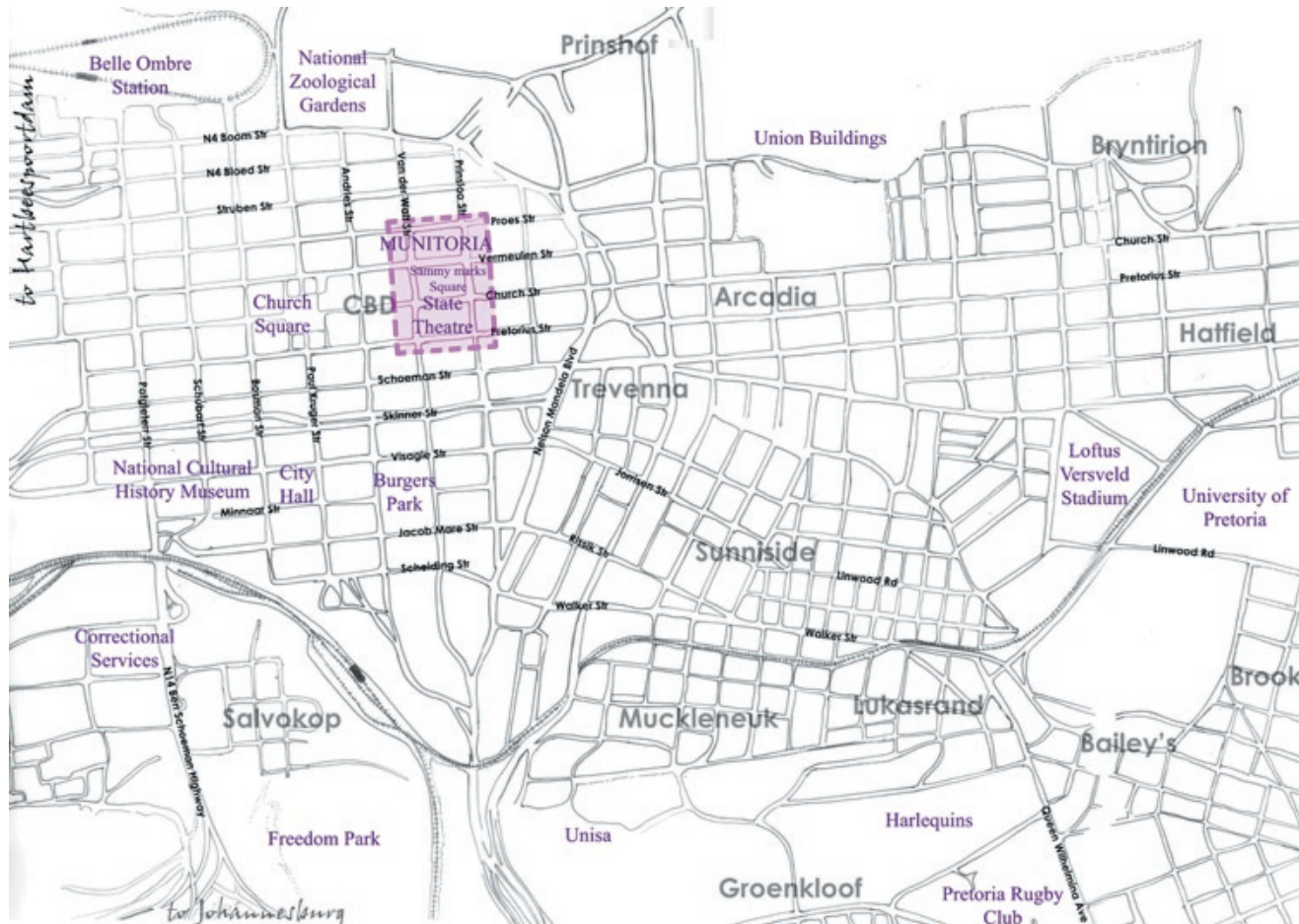


Fig 3.9: The study area indicated on the map of the city

Background and Future Plans: Sammy Marks / Motlollo Precinct

The precinct is defined by:

- Church Square precinct in the west
- Mandela Corridor precinct in the east
- The precinct extends to
 - Struben Street in the north
 - Du Toit Street in the east
 - Schoeman Street in the south
 - Andries Street in the west

The Sammy Marks precinct, according to the GAP analysis, marks the most densely developed area and current commercial core of the city.

Landmark buildings in the precinct include the MUNITORIA, the Reserve Bank, the Absa Building, and the State Theatre. The precinct is also host to three of the city's open public spaces. These are Sammy Marks Square, Strijdom Square as well as the State Theatre public space. It also boasts an active, established informal trade market along Church Street.

According to the GAP analysis, although the precinct is well used and developed, there is underutilized space and the precinct can benefit from densification.

Concept for the Sammy Marks Precinct:

It is anticipated that the precinct will become the core of the city for business and second economy.

“the consolidation of governance training and development, i.e. the management and training of government at all levels in an active environment close to what a city centre has to offer, an energetic meeting place and building on the current success of the precinct in terms of public space and controlled informal market activities.” (TICP SDF-phase 2: 169 & 170)

Main structuring elements within the precinct:

- Church Street corridor – dedicated to public transport
- Pedestrian and informal trading improvement of Van der Walt Street
- Tshwane Square – introduced at the MUNITORIA
- Upgrade of public space of the Reserve Bank – as an extension of Strijdom Square public space and informal market.

(taken from: TICP SDF-phase 2: 169)

It is described as the precinct where: “the people have taken ownership of the public space and have established it as a truly public space.” (TICP SDF-phase 2: 170)

Key concepts summarized:

- Capitalize on opportunities for managed second economy (informal trade).
- Improve pedestrian links to public transport arrival and departure points.
- Extend and integrate core public spaces.
- Tshwane Square.
- Create a forecourt justice college.
- Pedestrian enhancement of Church Street corridor.

“This is a densely developed area in the inner city and in general it is anticipated that the existing services will be capable of accommodating the impact of the proposed development.” (TICP SDF-phase 2: 178)

Modal transfer points are anticipated to be where Church Street intersects with Van der Walt Street, Prinsloo Street as well as Nelson Mandela Boulevard. Thus pedestrian accommodation needs to be highly considered in the re-shaping of the streetscapes and intersections.



The South African State Theatre

Construction of the State Theatre commenced in 1965. Only ten years later did the directorate of the Performing Arts Council of the Transvaal (PACT) move into the first completed part of the centre. The State Theatre was finally inaugurated on 23 May, 1981. The Theatre united the activities of the performing arts under one roof. These included administration, workshops, storage, stock, staff, refreshment facilities, rehearsal spaces and the performance facilities. It was a unique centre in the world of theatre and an unequalled and unforgettable experience in the short history of PACT.

The State Theatre lived up to its expectations, providing entertainment across the spectrum of the performing arts. Productions of drama, music, ballet and opera were immaculately organized and the artists and production teams could develop their skills by working under the guidance of only the best.

Interesting statistics of the Theatre's first financial year:

- Total expenditure in 1981 amounted to R11, 492 million. Projected to 2003 (at inflation rate of 11.20%) this amounts to R118, 768 million.
- Over 200 events took place in the Theatre. These included theatre productions.
- 428 performances were staged.
- 275 guided tours through the buildings took place.
- 322,260 people attended these events.
- 804 of the permanent employees were in the service of PACT.
- 690 freelance artists and stage technicians accepted part-time contracts.

(THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE THEATRE. Annual Report 2003. pg: 4)

More recent happenings:

The nineties came and brought with them allegations that the Theatre was being mismanaged. A bad investment made by the executive management in 2000 confirmed this. June 2000 then saw the retrenchment of the entire staff and the State Theatre was officially declared dormant. The general services of the Theatre were left in the care of a small number of employees.

In 2001 the re-opening of the Theatre as Playhouse was announced. The Theatre would no longer put together productions of its own, but would provide the facilities for private arts groups to host productions.

With the dark cloud of corruption still hovering over it, rebuilding of the Theatre to its former glory has been difficult. Nonetheless, this is carefully and patiently being achieved. One of the greatest obstacles was to invite patrons back to the Theatre since the misconception of the Theatre being closed prevailed.

The dormancy of the State Theatre also saw the degradation of the facilities and equipment into a state of disrepair. Funds have since been invested into upgrades, but this process is far from having the Theatre fully restored to its former state.

State Theatre Vision Statement 2003/04:

“To create a sustainable theatre complex which profiles the diversity of South African arts through quality programming, accessibility and accountability and encourages the development of artists, producers, technicians and audiences in South Africa and in Gauteng and Tshwane in particular.”

(THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE THEATRE – A CULTURAL INSTITUTION. Annual Report 2003/04. pg: 4)

“It is important to realize that the State Theatre can be the shop window of our cultural life, of the artistic and theatre achievements of this country and the creative spirit of our various cultures.”

(THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE THEATRE. Annual Report 2003. pg: 4)

The State Theatre – Infrastructure

Today, the theatre operates as a receiving house with six available venues, including the newest, the Intimate, equipped with a remarkable sound and lighting rig. The Theatre also houses function rooms, administrative offices and all the required facilities for staging opera, drama, ballet and music.

The venues of the South African State Theatre are:

- The Opera
- The Drama
- The Arena
- The Rendezvous
- The Momentum
- The Studio / Intimate

Functions rooms:

- The Arabesque 60 guests
- The Ensemble 80 guests
- Goldfields 12 seated guests
- The Garden Room 32 guests
- The Transvalia 100 guests

The State Theatre also houses three basement levels of parking. This facility can accommodate 1000 vehicles, and is also used by people other than theatre goers. The parking facility forms a vital part of the Theatre's monthly income. The facility is directly underneath the centre, thus offering safe access into foyers.

Other amenities:

- Satchmo's, the art lovers' clubhouse
- Legends, the staff canteen
- The internet café
- Sashebo Restaurant
- The Art Gallery
- Resident Works of Art
- The Art Lovers' Club

The South African State Theatre owned a number of other buildings in the city, but these had to be sold after the mothballing of the Theatre in 2000.

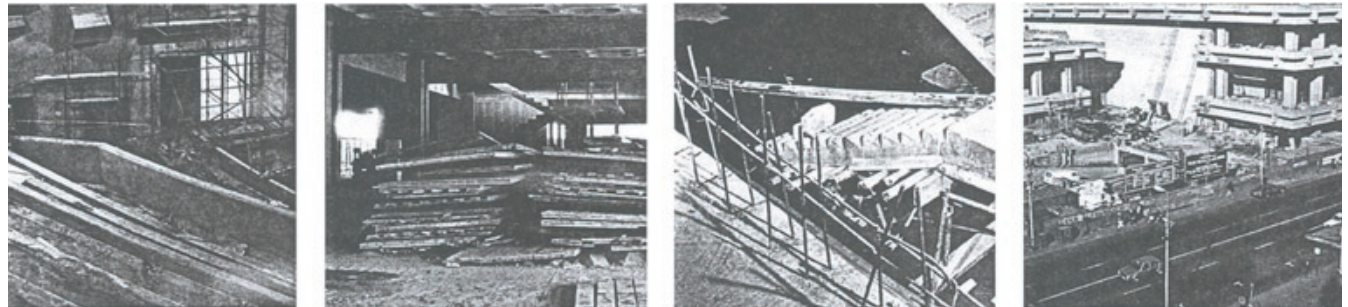
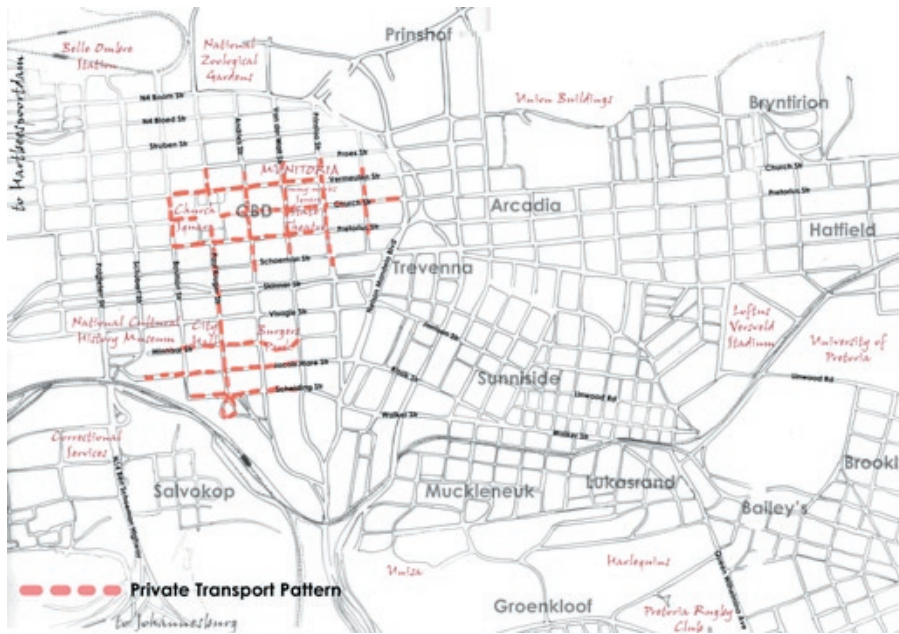


Fig 3.10: The construction of the South African State Theatre



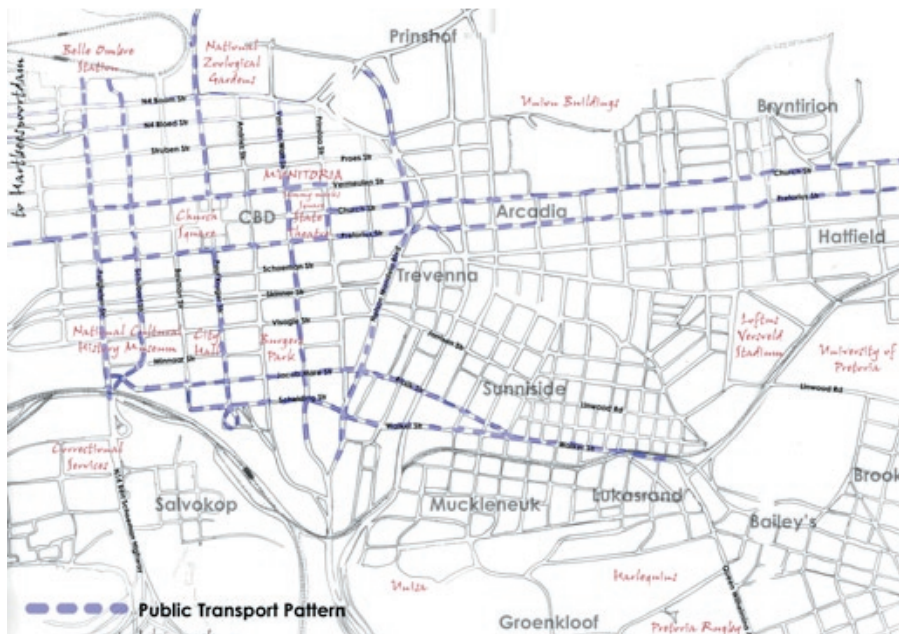
Fig 3.11: Pedestrian movement within the city scale



Identified Pedestrian Movement

Figure 3.11 indicates the strongest pedestrian energies within the study area. Movement through the area is supported by the commercial activities (formal and informal) along the indicated routes. The highest concentration of pedestrian activity is along Church and Pretorius Streets, followed by activity along Van der Walt and Paul Kruger Streets. Commercial activity feeds off these routes, into side streets running perpendicular, but slowly minimizes as one moves further from the above-mentioned routes. (This information is based on the authors own observation of activities in the area.)

Fig 3.12: Public transport movement within the city scale



Identified Public Transport Movement

The primary movement of public transport happens along Paul Kruger Street, Van der Walt Street, Pretorius Street, Vermeulen Street and Visagie Street. This is based on observing the pattern of the taxis as well as the bus-stop locations in times of peak traffic. It is Paul Kruger Street that connects the Pretoria Railway Station directly to Church Square which sits at the heart of the CBD. Visagie Street forms a direct link from the southern zone of the CDB into the eastern zone of the city – Sunnyside and Hatfield. Vermeulen Street as well as Church Street act as primary carriers of traffic out of and into the northern zone of Pretoria CBD. Via secondary roads it also connects to the Belle Ombre Railway Station north west of the city. Visagie Street, Pretorius Street, Church Street as well as Vermeulen Street are all directly connected to Pretorius and Schubart Streets that serve as two of the primary feeders of traffic to and from the N14 highway, which leads to the city of Johannesburg.

Identified Private Transport Movement

Roads used for primary movement of private vehicles throughout the CBD link with the public transport routes.

Amongst these are:

- Skinner Street (east-west), with a high load of private vehicular traffic at peak times
- Struben Street & Proes Street, (east-west), taking the N4 highway through the CBD
- Vermeulen, Church, and Pretorius Streets, (east-west), with Church extending to Pretoria West, as well as the eastern suburbs of the city
- Walker / Scheiding Street (east-west), connecting Sunnyside to the southern zone of the CBD at Pretoria Railway Station
- Jacob Mare / Rissik Street (east-west), connecting the south of the CBD to Sunnyside
- Visagie Street, (east-west), linking traffic from the south of the CBD, passing the City Hall towards Potgieter and Schubart Streets in the west
- Potgieter Street (north-south), feeder to from the direction of Johannesburg/Centurion,
- Schubart Street, feeder out of the CBD towards Johannesburg/Centurion,
- Nelson Mandela Blvd (north-south), to and from Johannesburg/Centurion,
- Paul Kruger, (north-south), connecting Pretoria Railway Station to Church Square, The Pretoria Zoo, as well as the northern suburbs of Pretoria

These roads, as well as those mentioned under public transport routes, all offer opportunities for commercial activities, institutions, governmental bodies or public amenities that require a high level of exposure to the public. They have, however, become very busy and in some cases, do not respond sufficiently to pedestrian movement. The roads where high levels of pedestrian activities have been recorded have in some cases become places of informal trade. These offer opportunities for formalizing the markets that constitute the secondary economy of the CBD. They are a great example of how city-spaces evolve and adapt due to the community taking ownership of the streetscape. Informal trade does, however, impose a much greater compression of human traffic onto the sidewalks. This has a negative effect on street-level as space has not been provided for such activity. It does however, offer opportunities to creatively solve and relieve this tension.

Fig 3.13: Private-transport movement

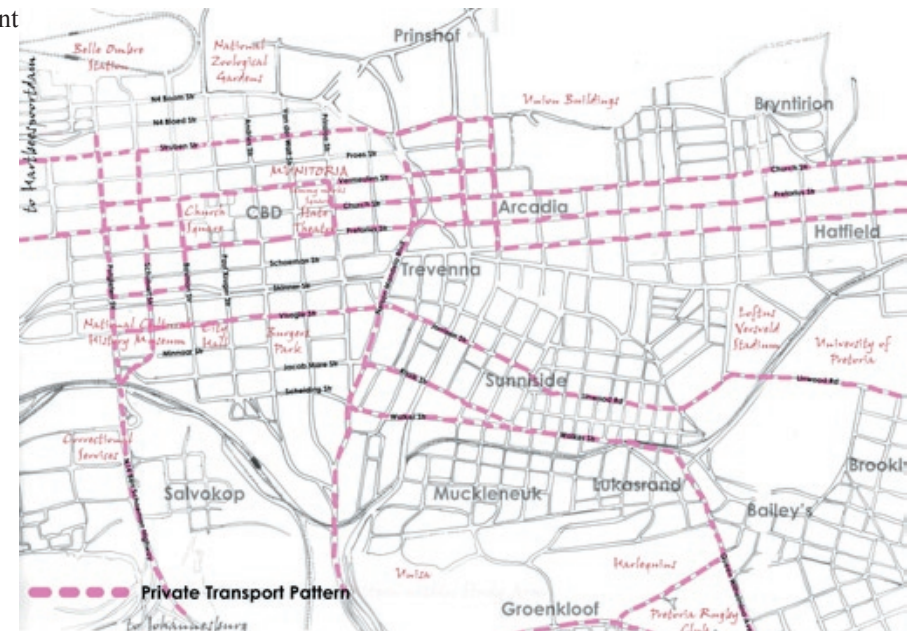


Fig 3.14: Identification of Green Network within the city





1: Strijdom Square - Taken from roof of State Theatre



5: The State Theatre



2: State Theatre offices. 3: Palm Trees along Pretorius



6: Cnr. Pretorius Str & Van der Walt Str. 7: Pretorius str.



4: Facing south from cnr of Pretorius & Van der Walt



Key map:

Fig 3.15: Photographs taken around the site

Photographic Analysis

The area around the State Theatre is maintained fairly well and offers many green and open spaces including:

- Strijdom Square
- The State Theatre Public Square
- Sammy Marks Square
- The Reserve Bank Garden and Public Space

Within some of the above-mentioned space there are fair amounts of soft landscaping. Along Pretorius Street, between Van der Walt and Schoeman Streets, palm trees have been planted on the sidewalk.

The buildings that surround the site are rather plain and repetitive offering little opportunity for personalization by their occupants.

The study area

Following on from the regional and metropolitan analysis, the focus for the analysis was turned to the study area.





Fig 3.16: Links to the site analysis_ local pedestrian connections

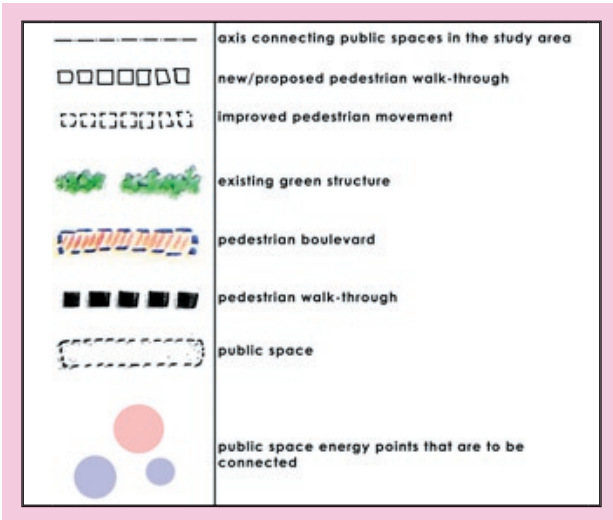


Fig 3.17: Legend for Fig 3.16

Existing Permeability Analysis _ pedestrian links to site

Figure 3.16 on the previous page indicates the pedestrian linkages to the site and study area. Within the study area there are four prominent open public spaces. This analysis also indicates how the walk-through lanes in the city centre act as feeders of pedestrians to these spaces. It can therefore be said that these walk-through lanes connect the network of public open space in the inner city. The connection to/from Strijdom Square to the Tram Shed public space (indicated in red) could be strengthened with the addition of another pedestrian walk-through, permeating the chosen site. It is anticipated that this movement of pedestrians through the site will promote interaction between the dance centre and the public.

Figure 3.18 indicates the position of the study area and site in relation to the rest of the city of Pretoria, as well as how the site is connected and linked to the city. From this analysis it becomes clear that the site is well connected on a city scale, as well as on a regional scale. The figure also shows that with the addition of an access ramp to the State Theatre basement parking along Van der Walt Street, Van der Walt Street (route G) as well as Schoeman Street (route H) could be classified as 1 and 2, respectively, on the rating system used in the analysis.

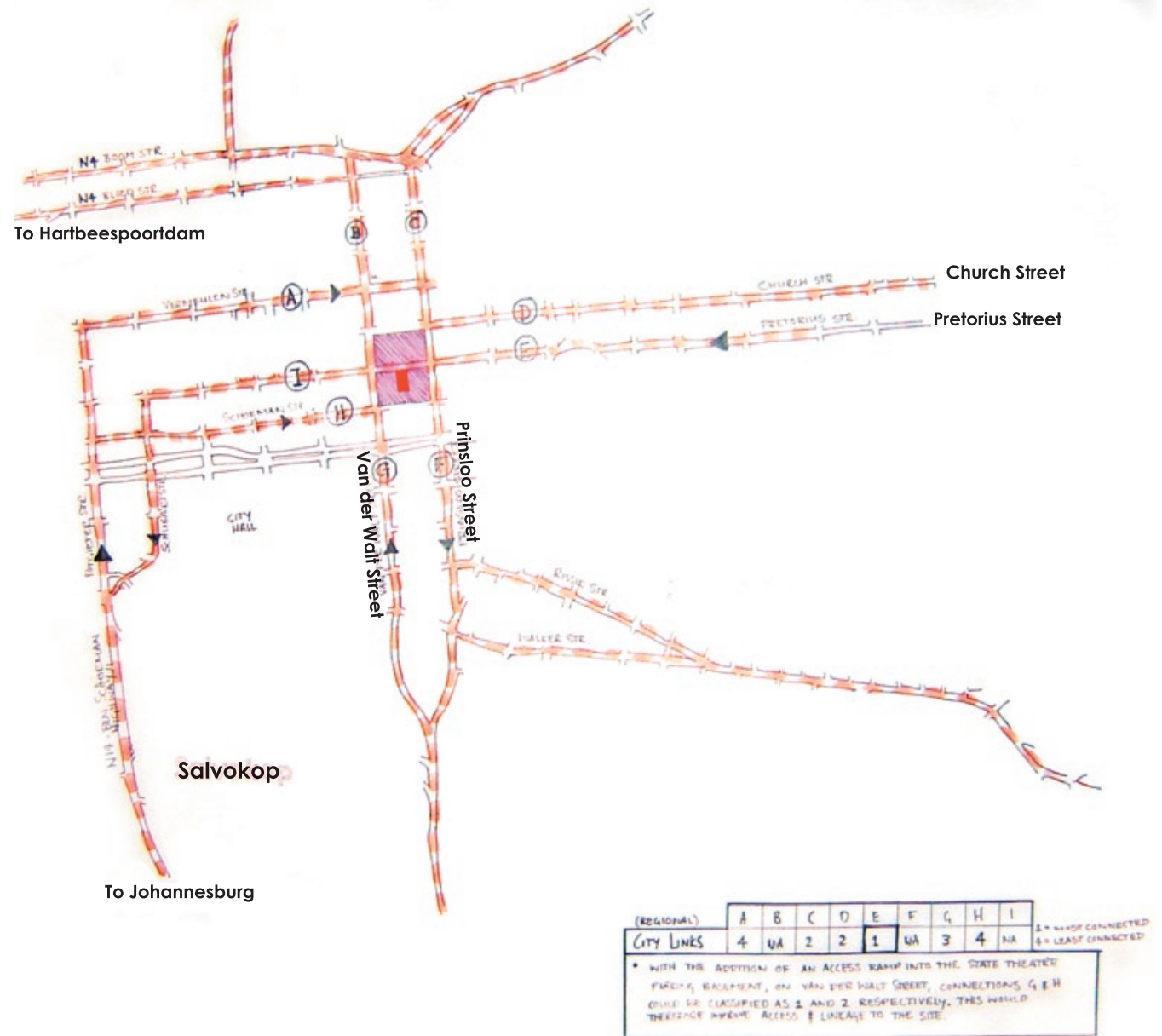


Fig 3.18: Links to the site analysis _Regional connections

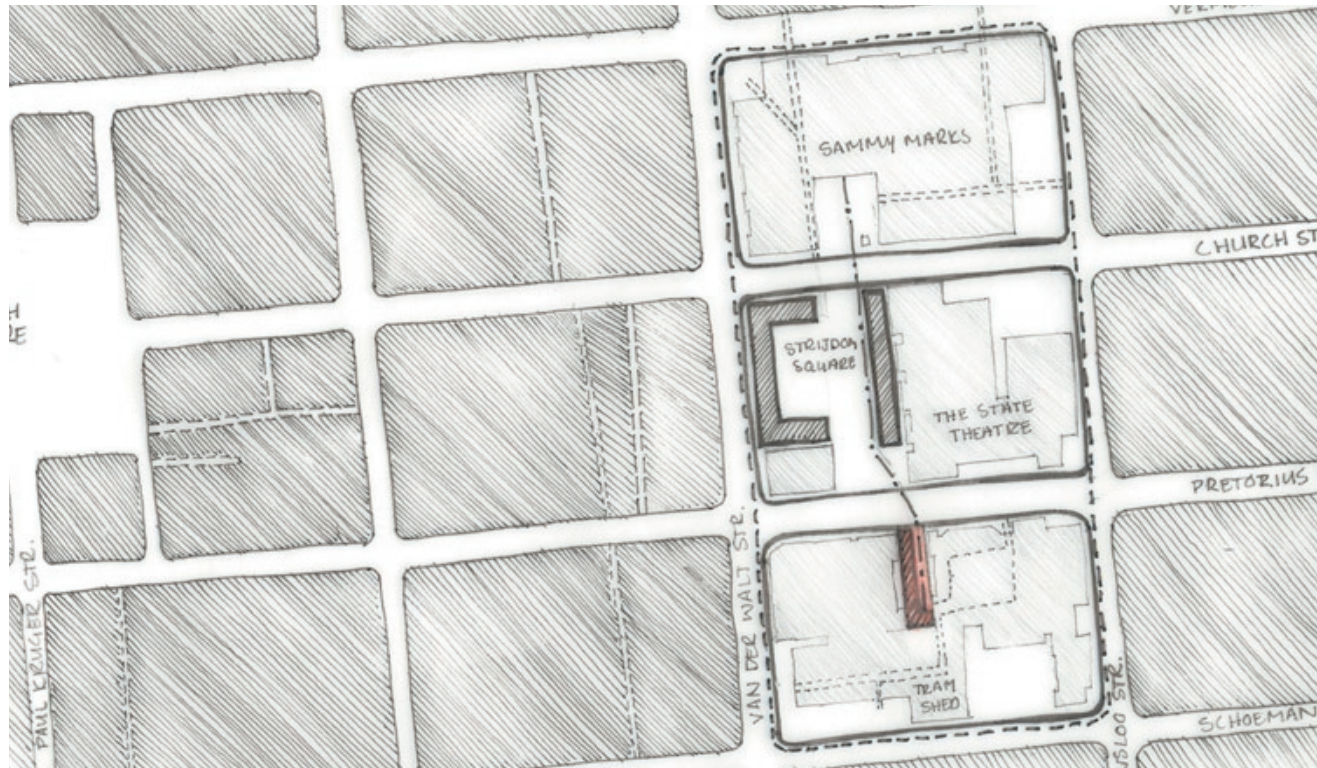


Fig 3.19: The Street / Block system applied to the study area (after Bently, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn, Smith: 1985)

The Street/Block System

From the analysis done on the links to and throughout the site, a preliminary structure has been set up in the study area. Figure 3.19 shows how this structure of built form focuses on Strijdom Square and the chosen site south of Pretorius Street. Built forms have been grouped on the four sides of the Square as all these edges need softening and defining. The current situation on the Square is that the southern and eastern edges are bordered by the Absa tower and the State Theatre. Both the above-mentioned edges are hard and do not communicate at a level relating to the human body. The north-western corner as well as the western edge of the Square are currently lacking in definition.

Land use compatibility analysis

A range of uses have been identified that were deemed appropriate and necessary for the scheme. These were checked for compatibility and then arranged amongst the new street/block structure. As discussed before, a need for a dance centre to link into and act as an annex to the State Theatre has been identified. There is also a need for an additional theatre as well as non-permanent accommodation of a higher standard than presently offered in the area, possibly a boutique hotel for theatre goers and guests of the State Theatre.

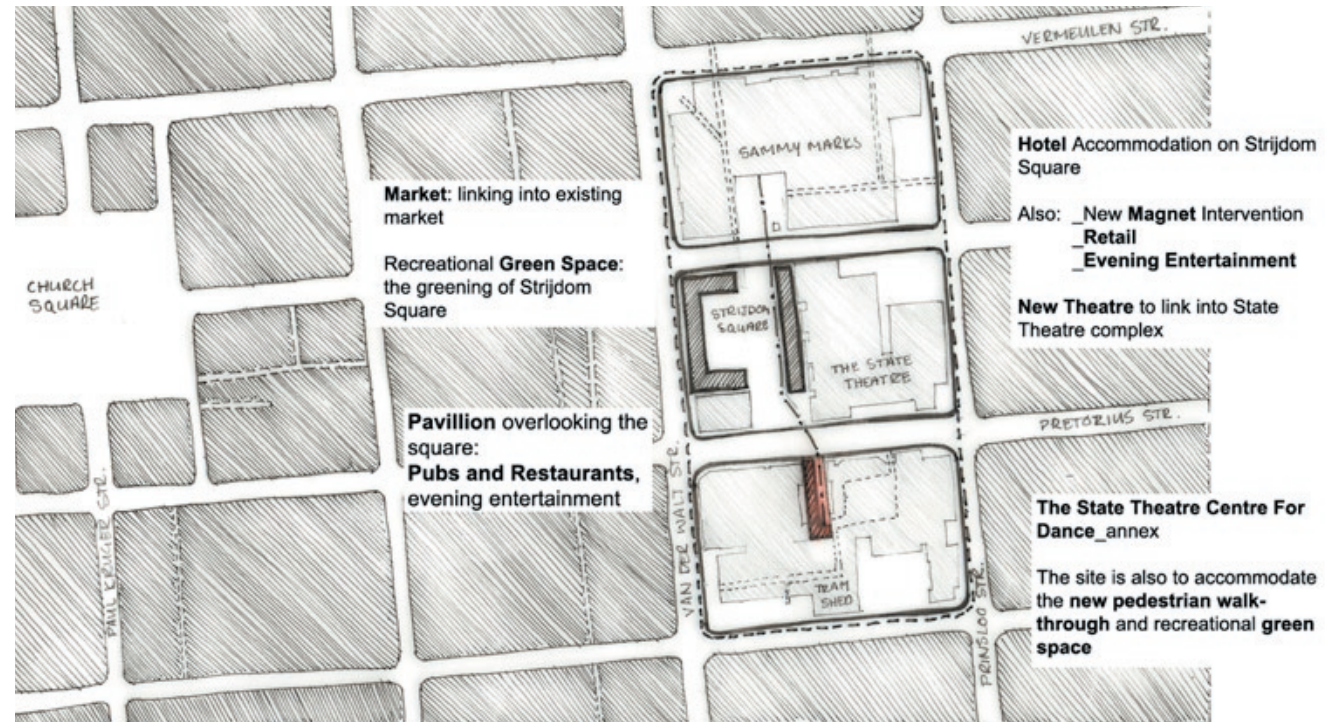
Other uses that were deemed appropriate are:

- Retail
- Evening Entertainment : Restaurants, Pubs, Lounges, etc.
- Market
- Quality Green Space



Fig 3.20: Land-use compatibility study

Fig 3.21: Strategic allocation of uses within street / block structure (after Bently, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn, Smith: 1985)



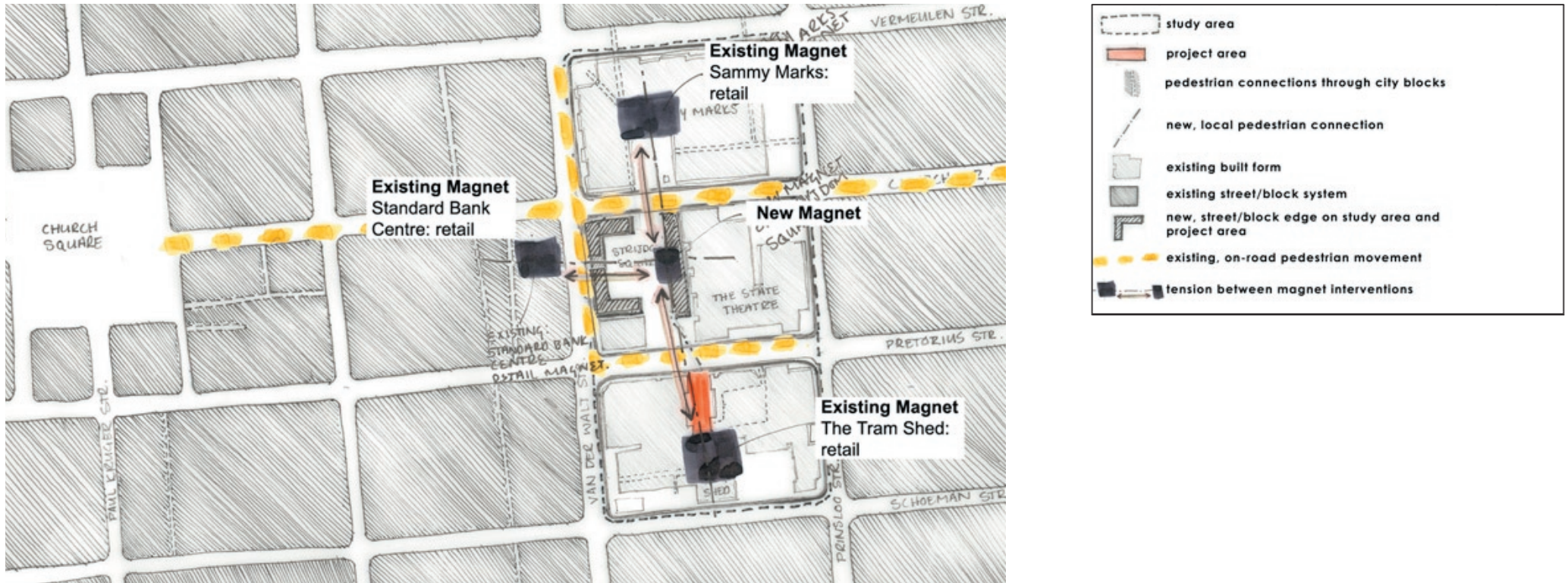


Fig 3.22: The magnet intervention in the study area
(after Bently, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn, Smith: 1985)

The Magnet Intervention

This part of the analysis established the strategic location of a high-demand land use or ‘magnet intervention’ within the scheme. This intervention is necessary to support pedestrian movement in all directions through the site. The proposal for the positioning of this magnet has been identified in Fig 3.22. It is anticipated that the magnet will move traffic onto as well as through the site.

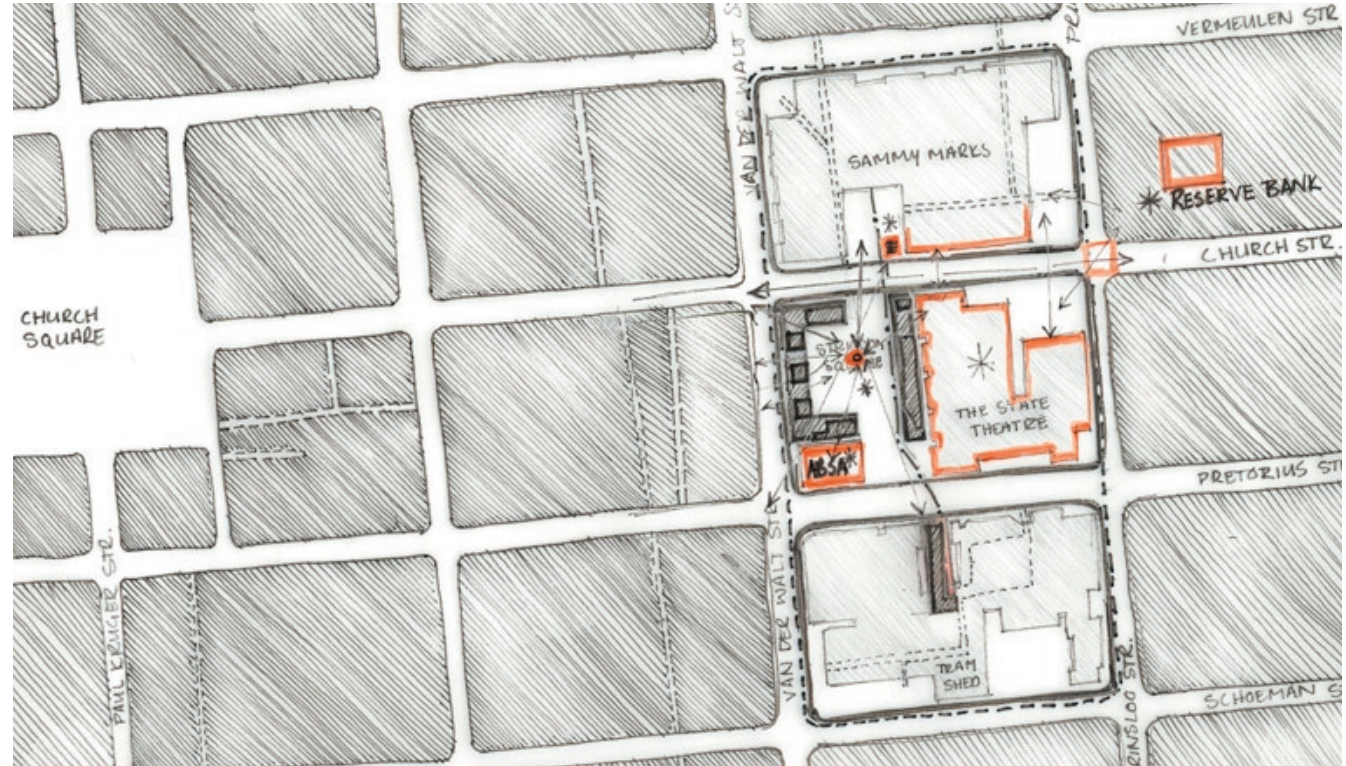


Fig 3.23: Legibility analysis of the study area (after Bentley, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn, Smith: 1985)



Fig 3.24: Legibility analysis of city landmarks

Legibility Analysis

The current legibility of the study area and its direct surroundings was analyzed. The Street/Block structure was adjusted to achieve legibility since the addition of the land uses.



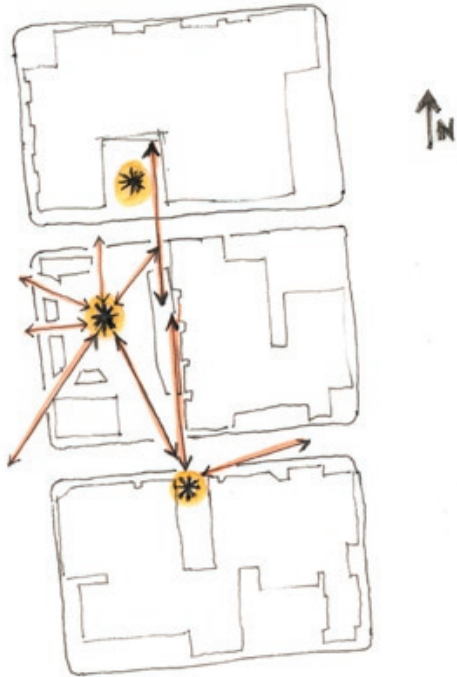


Fig 3.25: Axis and visual linkage (after Trancik: 1986)



Fig 3.26: Sequence of movement (after Trancik: 1986)

Summary and Solution for the Precinct Development

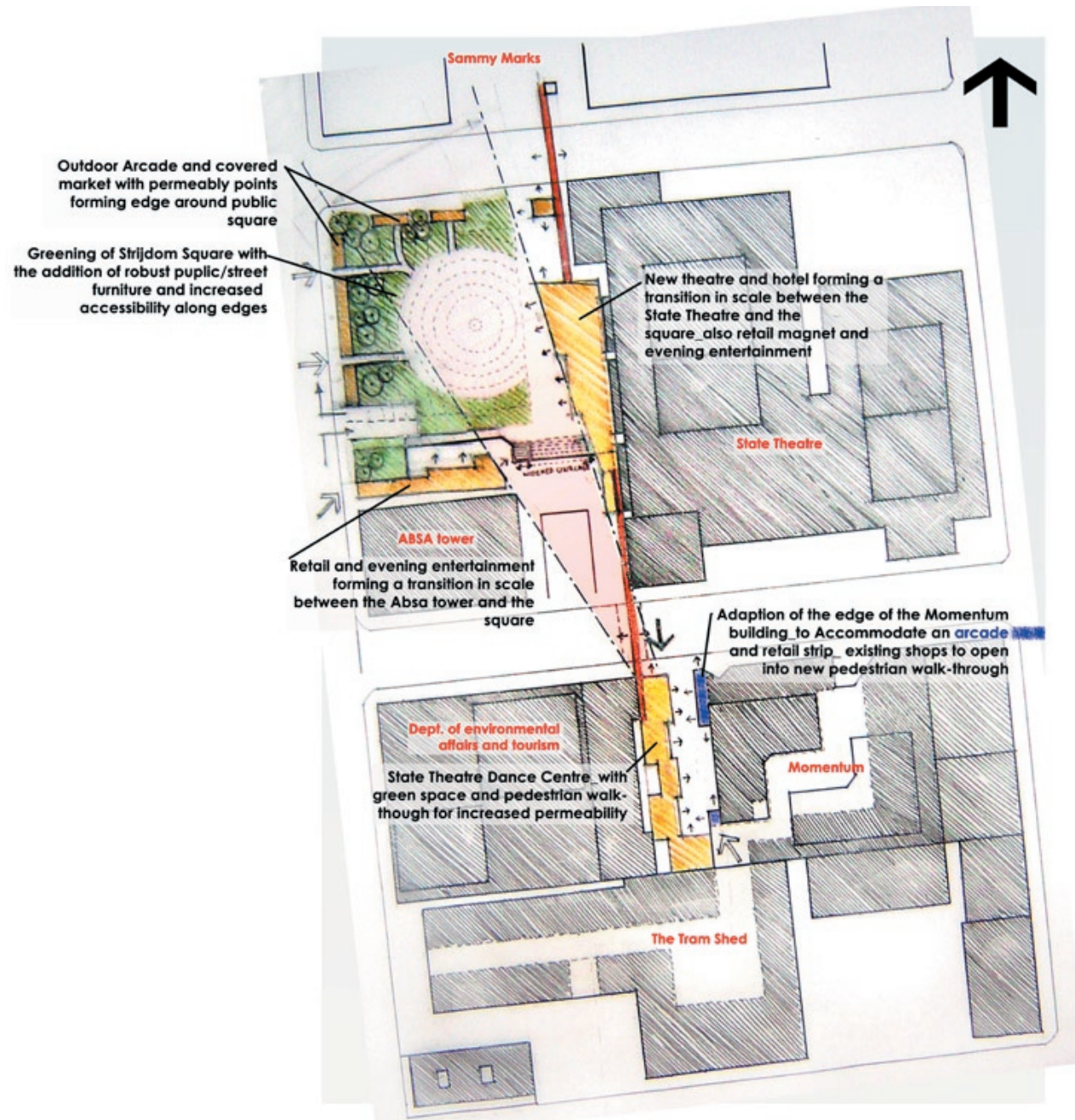
Following on from the analysis, it has been established where the connections to the site are currently found, and how these can extend into the scheme to achieve permeability. The analysis also highlighted a set of uses that could be accommodated in the scheme. These land uses were then carefully sited, bearing in mind where these uses could best be accommodated within the preliminary structure that has been set up.

The design saw the growth of a north-south pedestrian spine that would connect Sammy Marks Square to the Tram Shed, through Strijdom Square. Although Strijdom Square is currently a permeable site, the analysis aims to point out that movement is not fully accommodated through the Square. For instance;

- Wheelchairs are not accommodated at the level changes
- Moving toward the south-eastern corner, the staircase servicing the level change is badly defined.
- Access along the western edge is minimal and this impairs the permeability of the Square.
- Strijdom Square is very large, and does not contain defined boundaries.
- Greening is minimal. This creates a problem in summer when the city's temperature rises.
- Bordering buildings (The State Theatre and the Absa tower) are of a very large scale and do not relate to the human body. There are no elements that minimize the scale of these buildings.
- The Square has been identified as a walk-through since there are no fixed activities, except for the market which sits on the northern border along Church Street.
- The Square lacks public furniture, so people are not accommodated and persuaded to spend time in the space.

Fig 3.27:

The final layout after being adjusted to achieve legibility, permeability and variety



In the light of the above, it is safe to say that the Square has simply become a pass-through. It is the intention of this framework to initiate an upgrading of Strijdom Square so that it could become a destination within the city centre.

Principles concerning psychological and physical orientation deemed appropriate for the scheme are: paths, nodes, districts, edges and landmarks. These elements, as set out in *The Image of the City* (Lynch: 1960), aided the decisions that were made in creating a permeable, legible environment that offers variety.

In *Finding Lost Space* (1986), Trancik identifies six principles that aid in the design of physically integrated urban space:

1. Spatial order
2. Linking sequential movement
3. Lateral enclosure and edge continuity
4. Integrated bridging
5. Axis and perspective
6. Indoor/outdoor fusion.

Through analysis, the final precinct concept is anticipated to have addressed each of these principles to some degree. They could be further investigated in the design of the State Theatre Dance Centre.



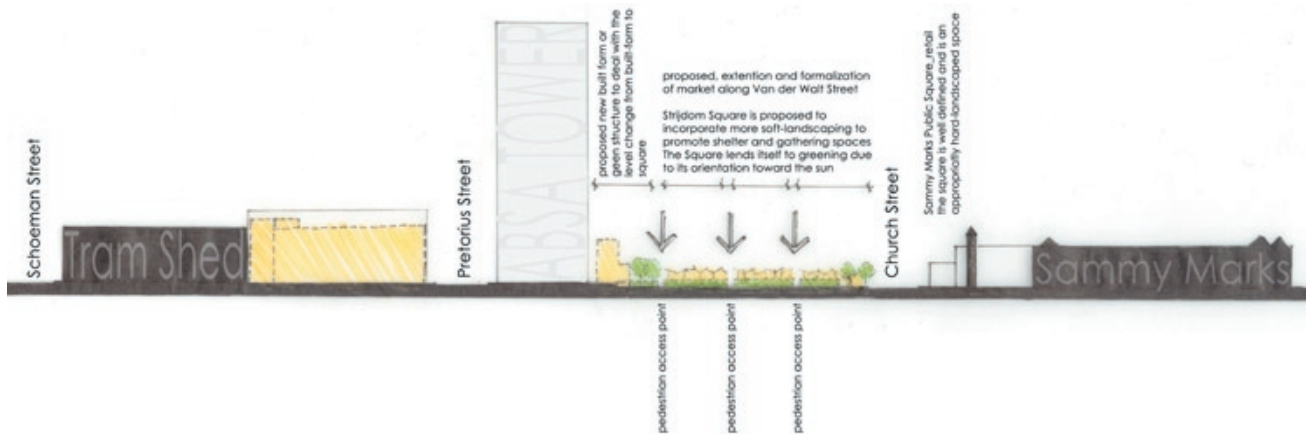


Fig 3.28: Section AA: Through Strijdom Square and chosen site_ showing the relationship between the square and the chosen site.

Strijdom Square Intervention

Issues identified on the Square:

1. The Square, although large, is dominated by the sheer size of the surrounding buildings, in particular the State Theatre and the Absa tower. This is due to the fact that there are currently no elements on the square that deal with the transition from building to Square. As a result, a very harsh and negative edge dominates the space.
2. There is a lack in soft landscaping as well as public/street furniture on the Square leading to the assumption that the Square does not accommodate pedestrians and human activity.
3. Movement across the Square from the north (Sammy Marks) to the south (between the State Theatre and the Absa tower) is badly defined with a very small staircase (in relation to the Square) servicing the level change. No wheelchair access is accommodated at this point.
4. The level change from Van der Walt Street to the Square is also badly defined and not efficient.
5. The edge of the Square is defined but very hard.

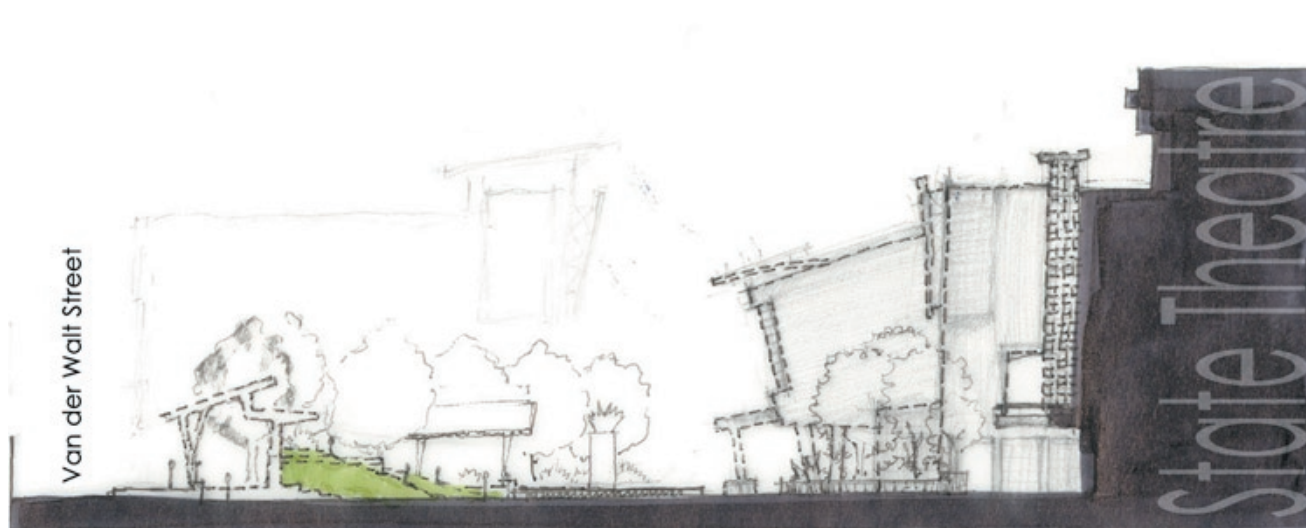


Fig 3.29: Section BB: Through Strijdom Square and State Theatre.

All the above-mentioned issues have resulted in an underused space within an otherwise vibrant part of the city centre. Figs 3.28 and 3.29 show the proposal for the Square in section. With the elements discussed on the previous page in place, the Square could certainly be a more habitable space offering variety, legibility, permeability, richness, as well as offer the users a degree of personalization for users.

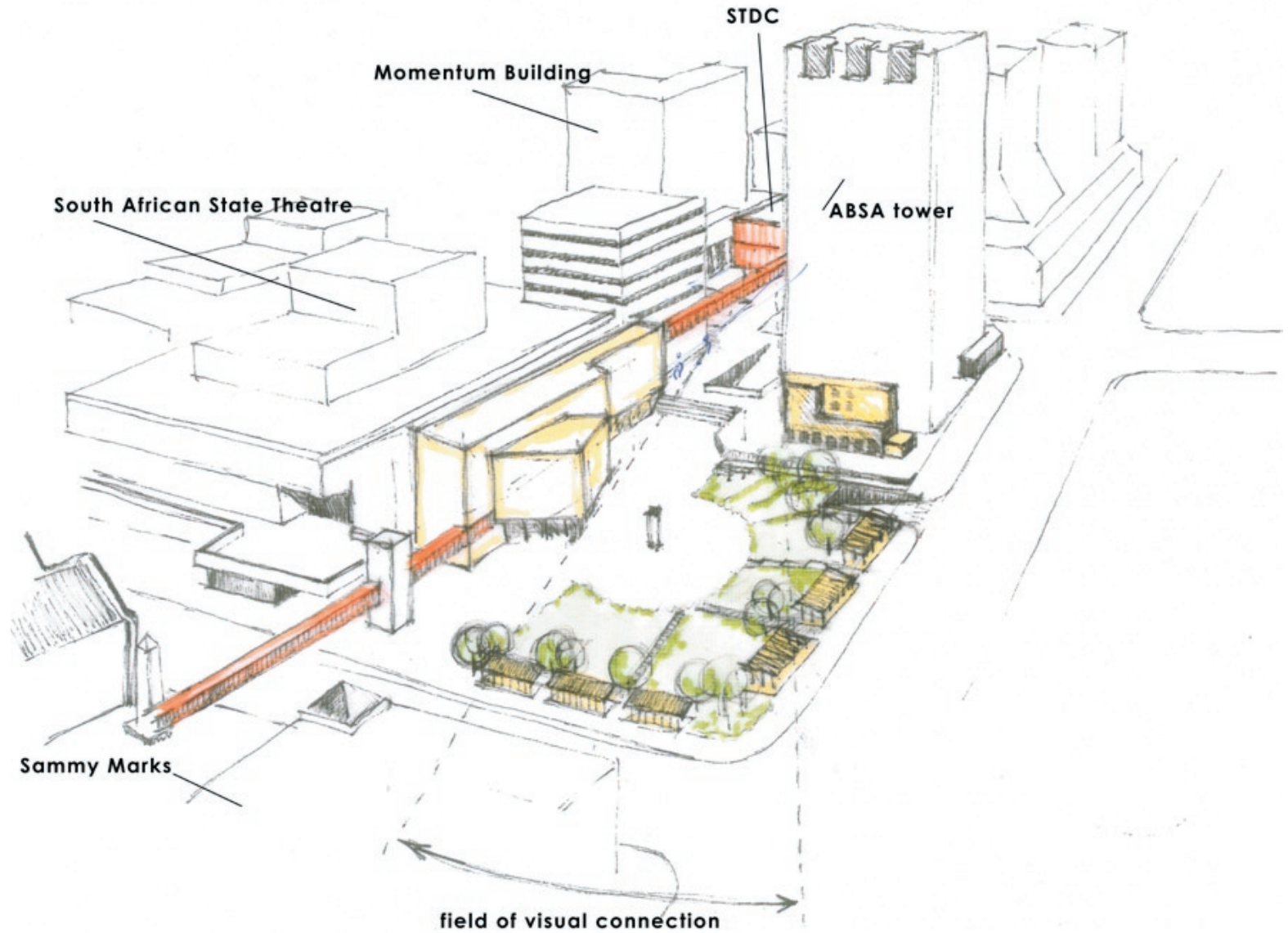


Fig 3.30: Strijdom Square with the precinct concept super-imposed.

