

Chapter 4 - Context Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Pretoria, the capital city of South Africa, is located in the municipality area of Tshwane, in the province Gauteng. The city is bounded by the Magaliesberg mountain range and has the Apies and Steenbok rivers as natural features that shape the city. The study is located in the north-east of Pretoria's central business district, a city block away from the city-splitting Apies River. The study area is fragmented and lacks identity. It is a mixture of government institutions, scattered houses, office blocks and an abundance of ill-defined dead spaces between several warehouse-type buildings. Pedestrian activity and movement is suppressed by several high-speed thoroughfares in both directions.

A Brownfield area in a city block in the north-eastern part of the city centre, bordering on the clear-cut edge that is the Apies River, is selected as the site for the study. The city block in question is split by Shepherd Street, which is one of only two streets in the inner city that split the massive Pretoria city blocks into two parts, the other being Brown Street two city blocks away. At the moment both streets serve simply as limited loading zones for warehouses on the city block, hardly a reason for existence for the streets. The street creates a potential movement axis but is currently not effectively linked to the pedestrian or vehicular grid that flows through the city, resulting in an unsafe environment. The linking of the street into the urban fabric of the city is therefore essential to the success of the precinct.

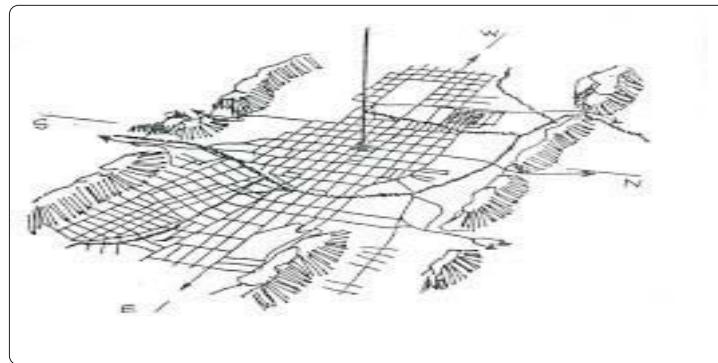


Fig. 4.1 The geographics of Pretoria



Fig. 4.2 Highspeed thoroughfare - Struben Street



Fig. 4.3 Vibrancy of the streets, a hat vendor

Fig. 4.7 Ill-defined dead spaces are scars in the urban fabric of Pretoria



Fig.4.4 Safety is an issue, depicted by the barbed wire keeping potential thieves from entering via the roof



Fig. 4.5 Prinsloo Street covered walkways, used by pedestrians moving towards the city centre



Fig. 4.6 Buildings are closed off and unresponsive to the street



Fig.4.8 Struben Street - dirty and wet, a pedestrian-unfriendly strip

4.2 The development at a macro scale



Fig. 4.9 The greater Pretoria context, scale 1:30000

4.3 The development at a meso scale



Fig. 4.10 The city and vehicles, scale 1:5000

4.4 Opportunities and threats

Towards the north of the study area is an abundance of educational facilities, the most significant being the Pretoria Hospital school and the Prinshof school. These institutions are however, cut off from the city centre by the physical barrier that is Dr. Savage Road. Of vital importance to the area is the Bloed Street taxi rank. This is a crucial artery that provides an influx of daily workers into the city from Tshwane's several scattered townships and suburbs.

According to a local vendor, pedestrians move downwards towards the city centre using Prinsloo Street, passing directly by the site. Several smaller and scattered informal taxi ranks exist in the streets of the inner city, attempting to gain first access to potential customers. The city centre ends abruptly towards the east, where the presence of the Apies river, combined with Nelson Mandela road, present a barrier to pedestrian movement. The implementation of the Nelson Mandela Development corridor (City of Tshwane, 2005); should improve this situation and the link to Arcadia. Also in the development framework, is a proposed recreation and entertainment precinct, within a block of the site. West of the site is the commercial success of the Sammy Marks square and the presence of several job opportunities.

To the south-east of the chosen city block, the Metro, a wholesale store on Du Toit Street, exists as a commercial node, and a new recreational node is proposed next to the Bloed Street taxi rank. There are also several religious institutions in the area, like the Mosque and several Christian churches. Bethesda church provides a strong influx of people into the area on weekends. In an interview with Mrs. Mpofu, the wife of Pastor Mpofu of Bethesda church, she stated that an average of 1500 people attend the church services on weekends, with the church regularly organizing inter-denominational soccer, volleyball and basketball competitions (Mpofu, 2007). The organization is also interested in establishing a business school in the area. Safety is generally a concern in the area.

The Caledonia stadium is in the vicinity of the site, yet the scale of the proposed intervention differentiates the two buildings. The Caledonia stadium is aimed at a city-wide scale, regularly hosting provincial soccer matches and tournaments. The new intervention proposed in this dissertation is aimed at a micro scale, providing recreation facilities and an urban park for the community and students of the immediate area.

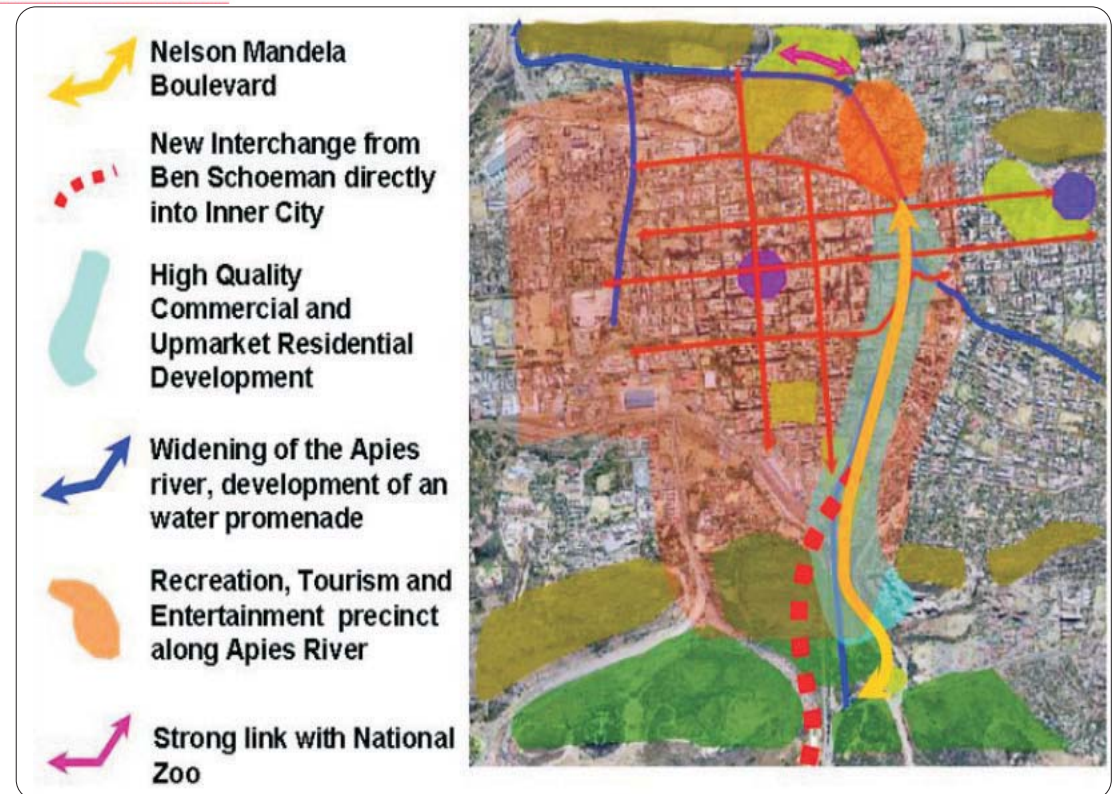


Fig. 4.11 The Tshwane inner city development framework

4.5 Users

The need for sufficient pedestrian movement through the site is important, as the proposed precinct requires the presence of a large group of people in the area to ensure the sustainability of such a precinct. In the study area there is an abundance of several educational institutions. Many are established educational facilities, including Confidence College, SA College, Tshwane North College, the TUT Arcadia campus and the TUT arts campus (see fig. 4.14). The Pretoria IDP (City of Tshwane, 2005); also suggests a revitalization of the former Justice College. Most have serious need of recreational facilities. An interview with Johan Roos (2007); Headmaster of Confidence college, which is present on the southern corner of the city block, revealed that the children need recreational spaces. He also mentioned that the idea to convert the piece of unused land that is the central theme of this dissertation, has in actual fact been entertained. A possible link with SA College is also advisable, providing that a stronger pedestrian link over the Apies River can be established.

There are several scattered housing developments that have a desperate need for social and recreational facilities and a new housing development is proposed on Struben Street (see 4.8 below). It has been proposed that a ring road tram system runs around the inner city, with stops at every 300 to 500 meters. Figure 4.14 shows the lack of defined public social spaces in the city, none of the existing ones falling within a 5 minute walking circle from the site.

The project as a whole will thus be aimed firstly at the students of the several existing educational facilities in the area (see fig. 4.14), secondly, at the community living in the residential areas and the newly proposed housing developments, and thirdly at individuals simply passing through the area. These individuals will be able to vent energy in creative ways, either through sport or via the presence of educational facilities in the building. For the community the project will provide a canvas for expression, a public precinct that creates opportunity, a stage for either big events or simply for daily life. There will be room for choice.

Funding for the project will be a public-private initiative, with funding obtained from the Department of Education, the Department of Sports and Recreation and the Sports Trust, whose beneficiaries include Engen and Coca-Cola. The Sports Trust will manage the precinct.

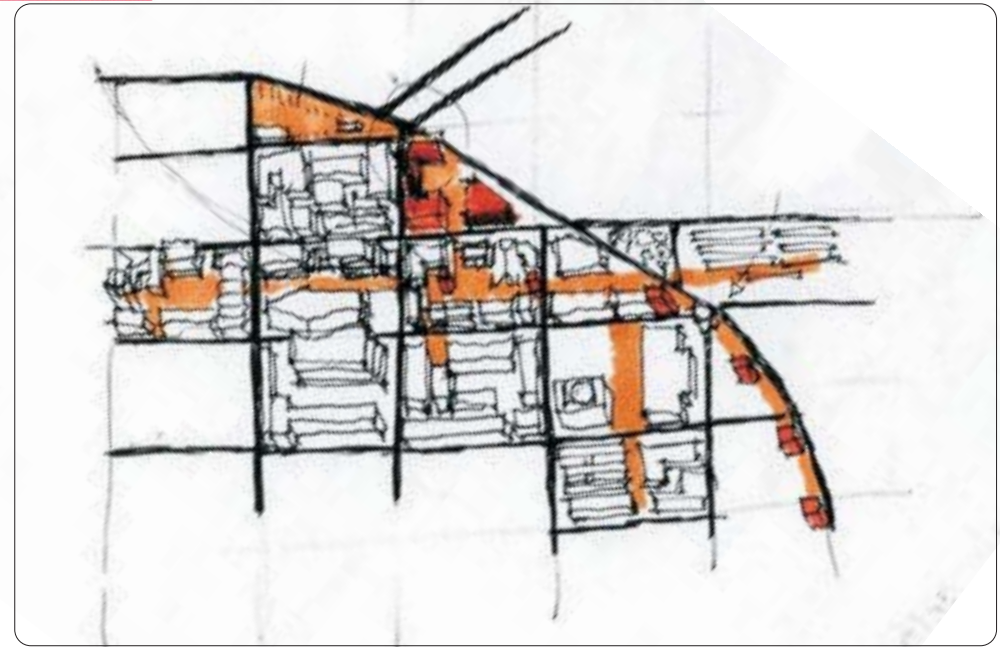


Fig. 4.12 Analysis of pedestrian routes

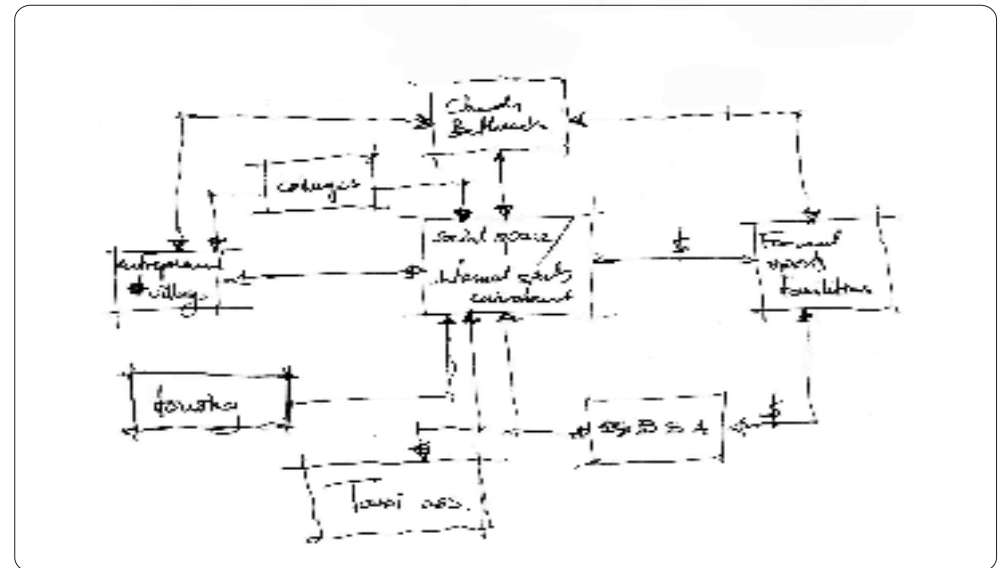


Fig. 4.13 Diagram depicting on-site agents and their relationship to the intervention

4.6 Extending the pedestrian network

An idea discussed by the class as an urban proposal for the area is to continue the existing network of arcades in the Pretoria CBD into the area. These arcades will not only connect the area to the CBD and reinforce some of Pretoria's rich history, but it will also provide alternative routes for pedestrians through the city in a less harsh environment. The idea behind the arcades is not to remove attention from the street environment, but to rather provide shortcuts for pedestrians and to provide opportunity within the city blocks for development. The arcade system continues towards the proposed Nelson Mandela Boulevard.

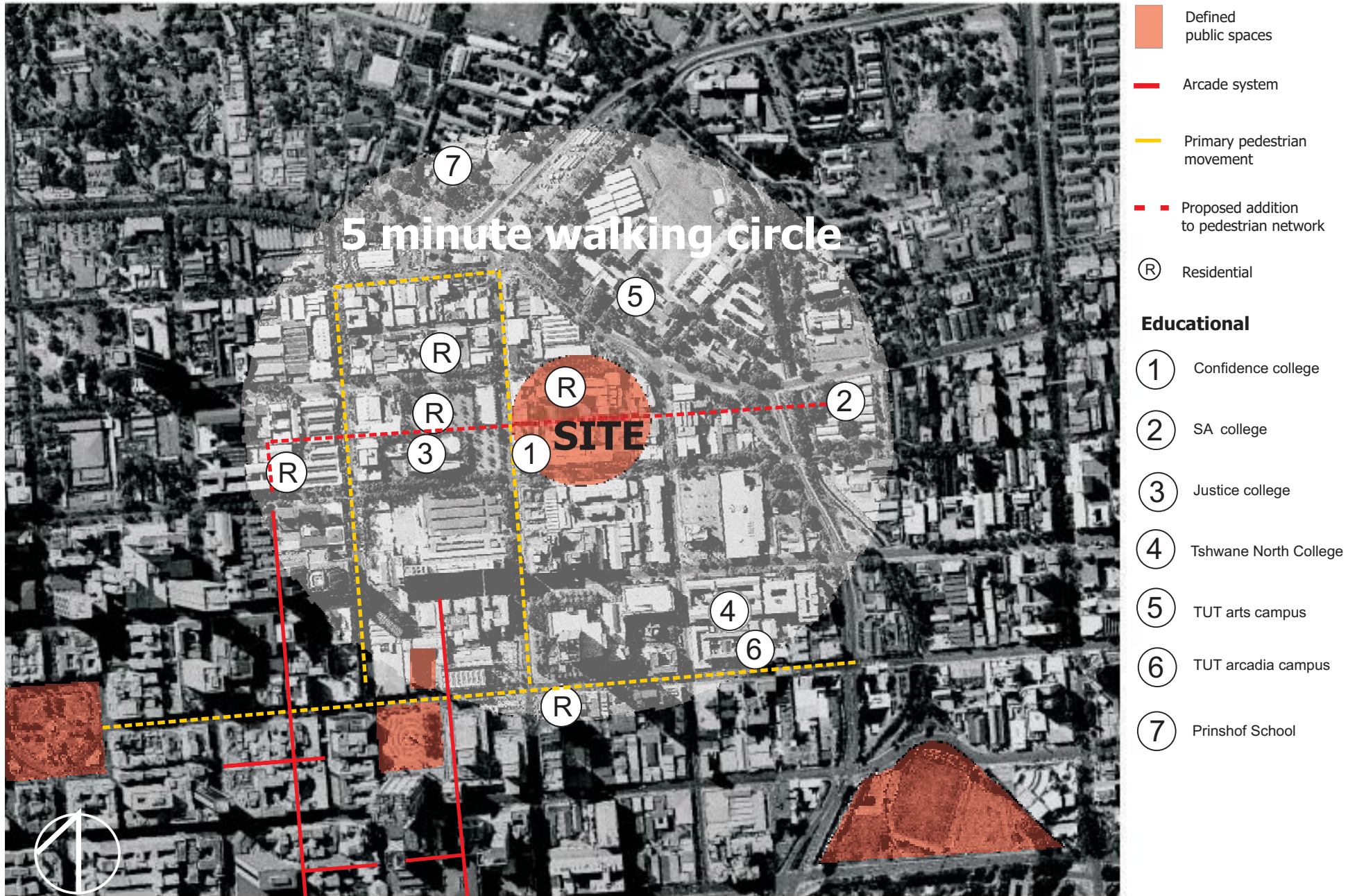


Fig. 4.14 The city and the pedestrian, scale 1:5000

Civitas

SAMBA building, former Justice college



Fig. 4.15 The city block and its immediate context



Restrictions as per the zoning certificate issued by the city council of Tshwane

Use zone : General Business

Purposes for which buildings may be erected, amongst others:

- Business buildings
- Places of instruction
- Places of public worship
- Residential buildings
- Retail industries
- Shops
- Social halls

Erected with special consent
Places of Amusement
Sports grounds

Density restriction : None

Height : 25 metres

Coverage : 60 percent

4.7 The development at a micro scale

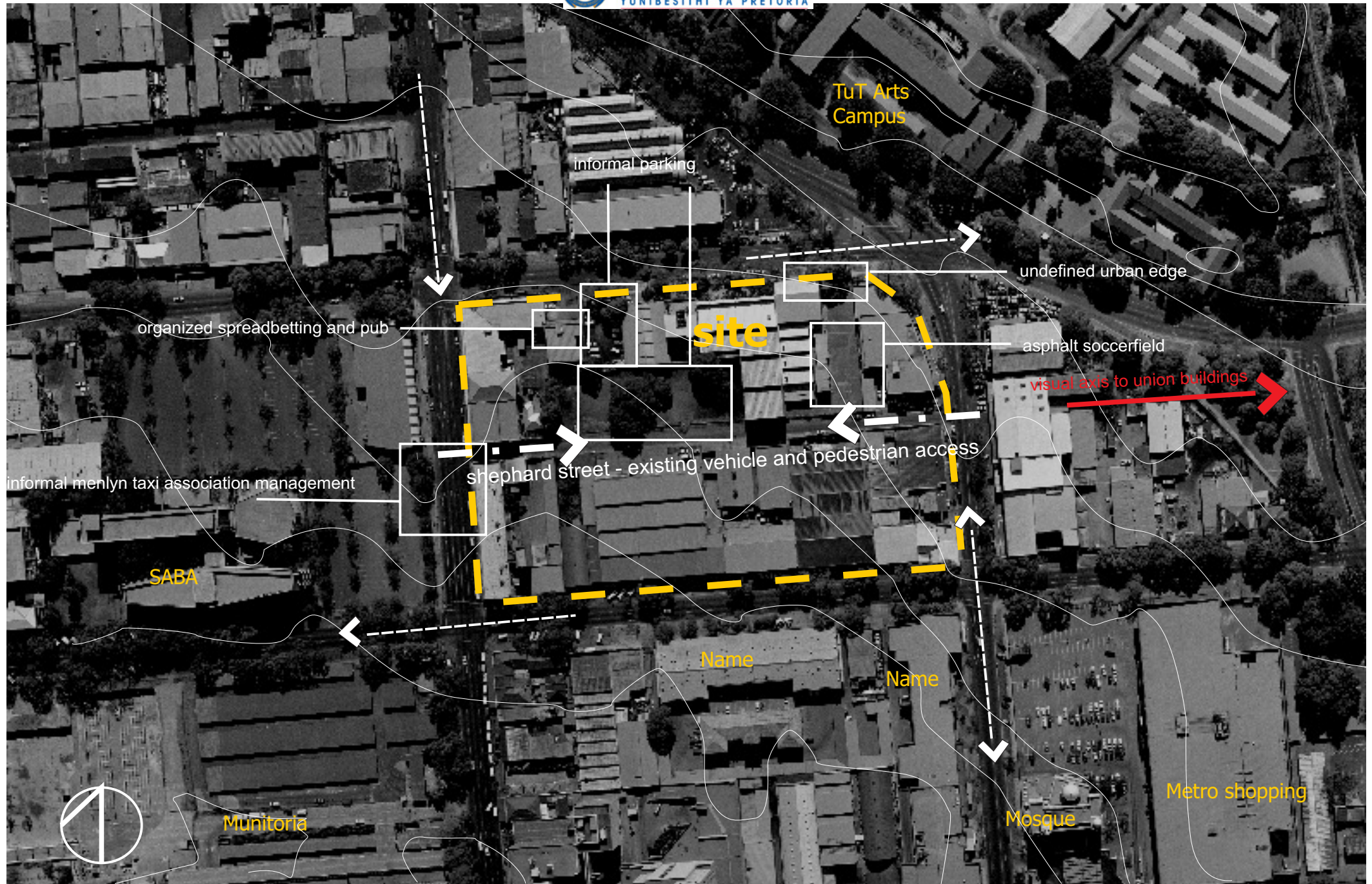


Fig. 4.16 Site and boundary conditions, scale 1:1000

4.8 Street conditions

Prinsloo Street

According to a local vendor, pedestrians move downwards towards the city centre using Prinsloo street, passing directly by the study area. Informal traders benefit from the pedestrian movements with their shops under the canopy that frames the walkways, which give the area some historic meaning. Menlyn Taxi Association have an informal taxi rank operating on the corner of Shepherd and Prinsloo Street.



Proes Street



Typical of the one-way streets of Pretoria, Proes Street runs from Arcadia through to Pretoria West. The northern side comprises of several informal shops, such as small cafes, informal car repair shops and even more churches. Between these are warehouses that are usually inactive, resulting in a sullen environment. The southern side is a far more hostile environment, with most buildings either fenced and abandoned or extremely unresponsive to the context.

Photos by author

Struben Street



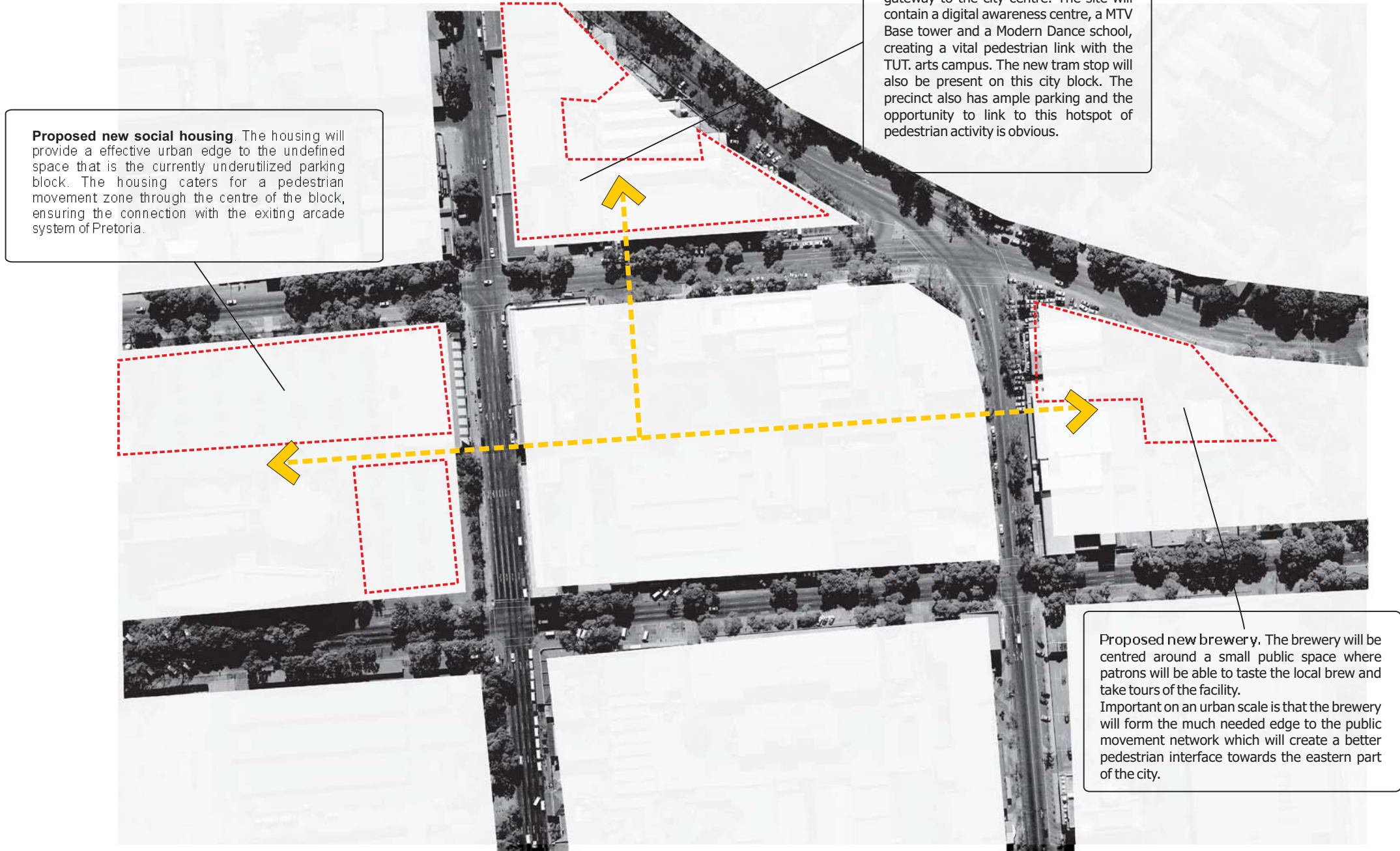
Struben Street is a busy vehicular street towards the east. A betting agent benefits from the canopy that frames the north-western corner and there is a lot of pedestrian activity up to this point, creating the opportunity for some informal eating and drinking places. Several trees line the street and create some shade for an otherwise harsh pedestrian environment.

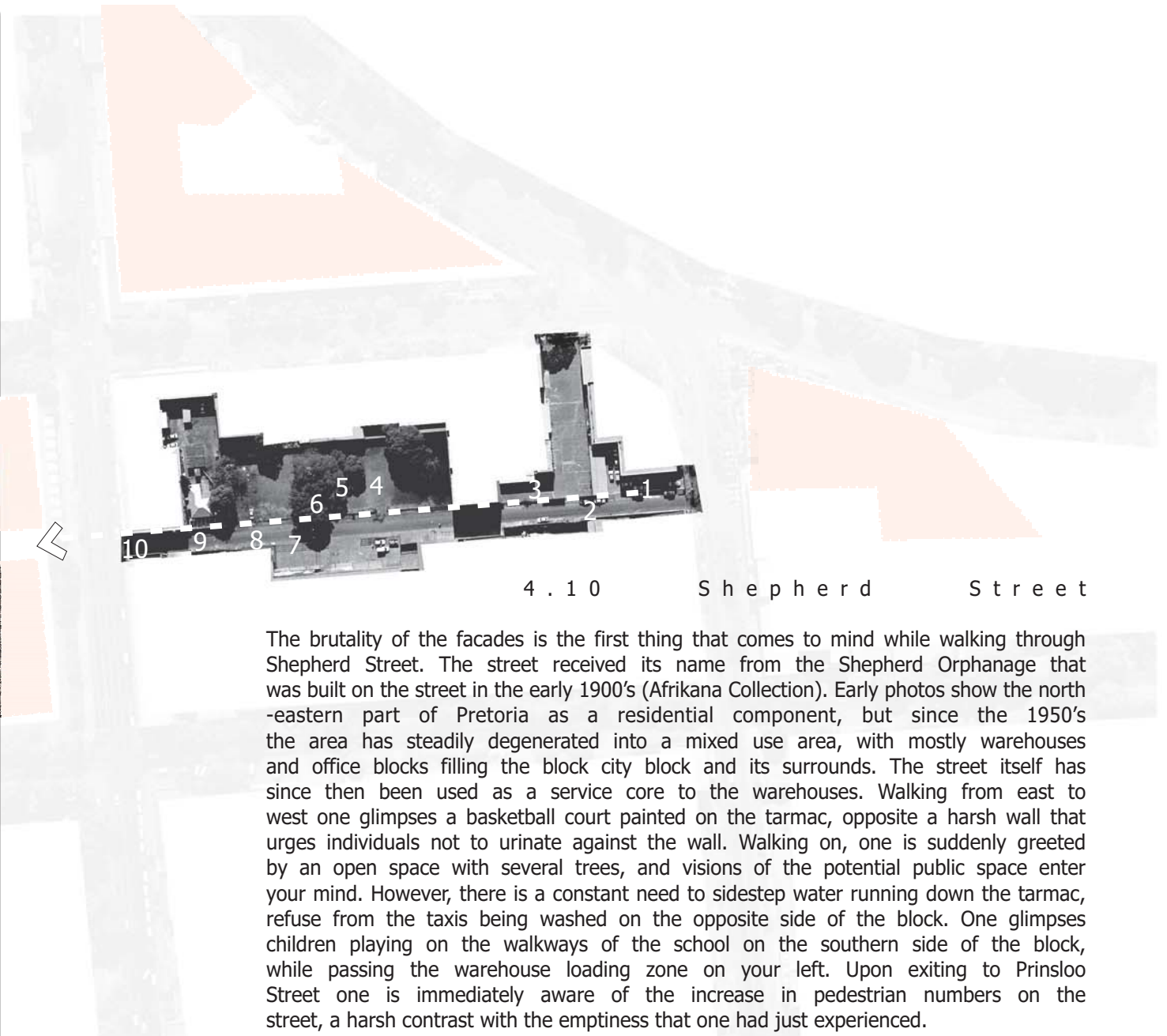
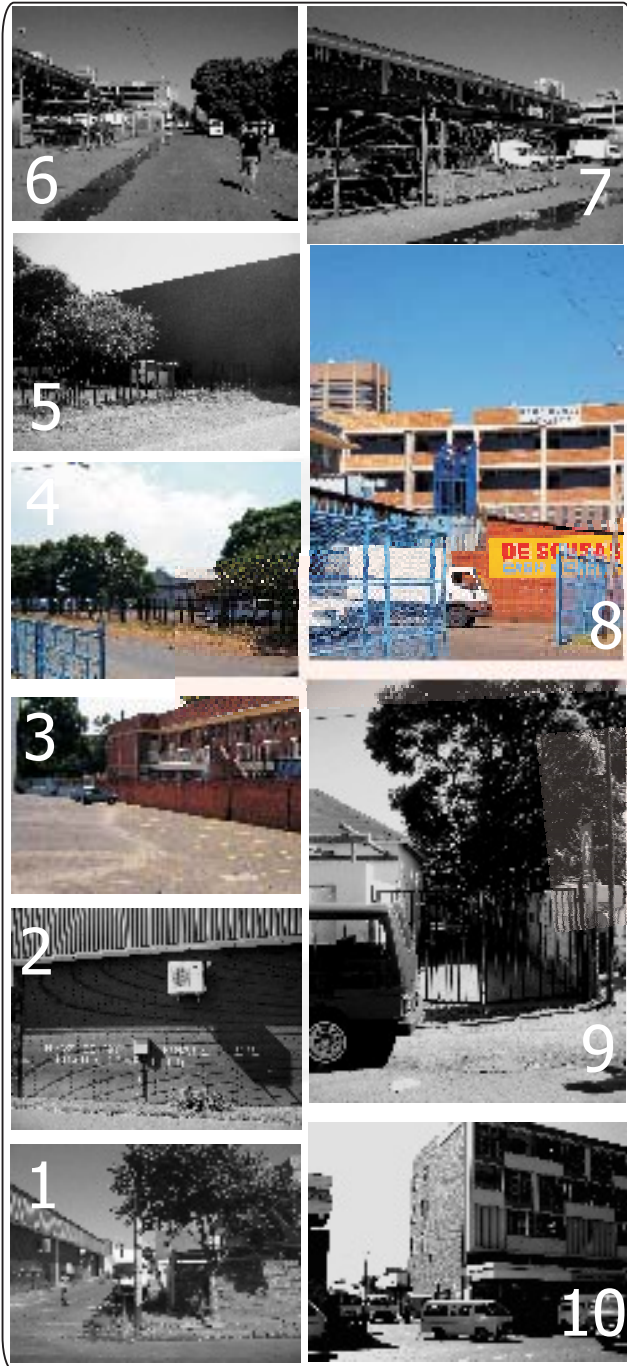
Du Toit Street

Lots of pedestrian activity on weekends due to the presence of Bethesda Church, other shops include a coffee shop and bookshop. The street links to several landmark buildings, including the Metro Shopping centre and a mosque.



4.9 Proposed new developments in the class framework





The brutality of the facades is the first thing that comes to mind while walking through Shepherd Street. The street received its name from the Shepherd Orphanage that was built on the street in the early 1900's (Afrikana Collection). Early photos show the north-eastern part of Pretoria as a residential component, but since the 1950's the area has steadily degenerated into a mixed use area, with mostly warehouses and office blocks filling the block city block and its surrounds. The street itself has since then been used as a service core to the warehouses. Walking from east to west one glimpses a basketball court painted on the tarmac, opposite a harsh wall that urges individuals not to urinate against the wall. Walking on, one is suddenly greeted by an open space with several trees, and visions of the potential public space enter your mind. However, there is a constant need to sidestep water running down the tarmac, refuse from the taxis being washed on the opposite side of the block. One glimpses children playing on the walkways of the school on the southern side of the block, while passing the warehouse loading zone on your left. Upon exiting to Prinsloo Street one is immediately aware of the increase in pedestrian numbers on the street, a harsh contrast with the emptiness that one had just experienced.

4.11 Historical Context

349 Struben



A corner building reflecting the style typical of the Bazaar era, creates a typology in conjunction with 355 and 352 Struben Street. The building is currently used as a street cafe.

355 Struben



Two corner buildings reflecting the same style typical of the Bazaar era. Buildings are rounded at the corners of the street, with projected verandas over pedestrian walkways, are of typological importance to the city (Le Roux, 1991).

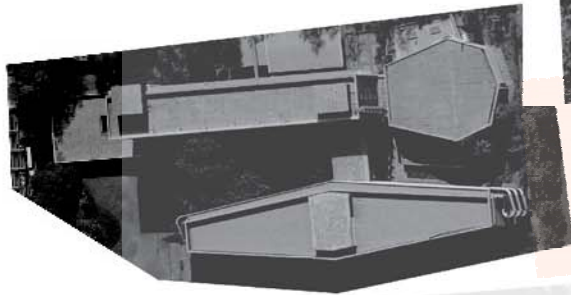
Both buildings are used as supermarket/street cafe's. 3555 Struben street has a second storey that is currently in disuse, but which can be reused as its original use, being housing.

352 Struben



Pretoria mosque and Metro

The building is a prominent beacon in the area, with its minarette functioning as a verticle needle. The building provides identity to the area and is located next to the Metro department store, which draws hundreds of people over weekends.

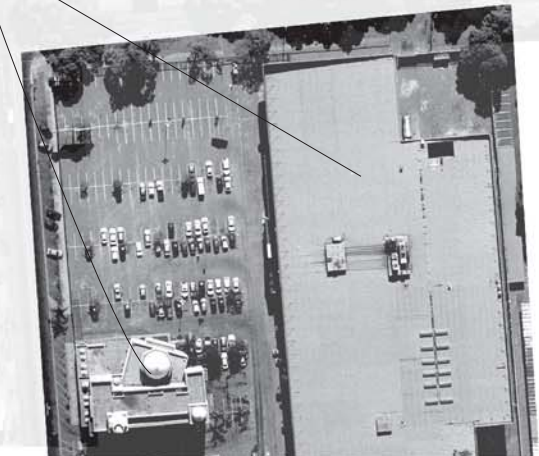


Justice college

This four-storey building, typical of the modernist buildings in Pretoria, was built in 1959 and was designed by Brian Sanrock. The building is typically raised on pilotis and has steel strip windows and a freestanding auditorium (Le Roux, 1991). Currently the buildings functions as the headquarters as SABA, but the TDF suggest a return to its original use.



Photos by author



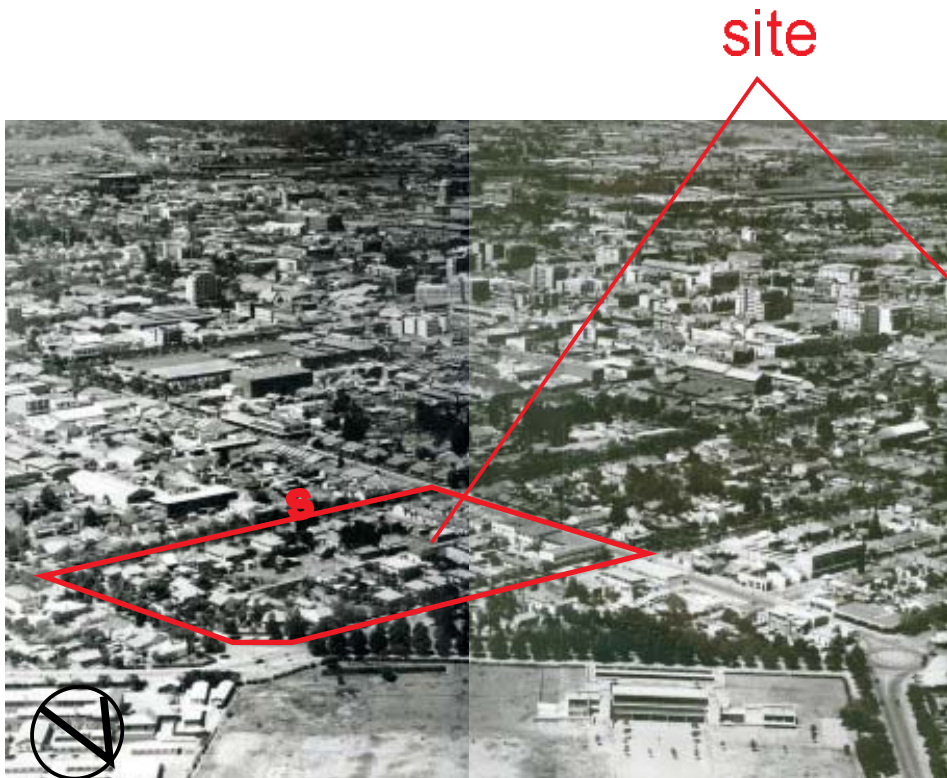


Fig. 4.17 Pretoria aerial photo



Fig. 4.18 Diagram depicting current density

4.12 Current on-site activities

Confidence college

Originally an office block, the Confidence College has been running since 1993. After the Apartheid Era, Model C schools started opening up in the cities, available to all students, Confidence College being one of them. According to Mr. Roos (2007); Headmaster of the school, the children are mostly of Portugese and African origin, and he estimates that 30% live in the city itself, residing in the flats being developed under the banner of urban regeneration. The rest of the children mostly come from the townships. Thus after-school care is often a problem for parents. The school is in serious need of recreation facilities for the children and has considered the possibility of purchasing and developing the open parking area in the centre of the block. Sports activities practised by the children include soccer, basketball and cricket.



Photos by author

Bethesda Church

The Bethesda church is an international organization, with the Pretoria Central branch having a membership base of 1500 members. According to Mrs. Mpofu (2007); the church draws strong crowds every Wednesday and Sunday. The church also regularly organizes inter-denominational soccer, volleyball and basketball competitions. Currently, informal recreational sport activities occur on the makeshift soccer field drawn on the asphalt paving behind the school. The organization is also interested in establishing a business school in the area.



Periti flats

The building generates a lot of activity from 5-8 in the afternoon and during weekends. The building houses TAB sports betting, a driving school and an insurance broker. The two top floors, consisting of office space, are currently in disuse. The building creates some pedestrian movement on Struben Street and the space in front of it is used as an informal eating place.



Photos by author



377 Shepherd Street

Warehouses built in Enrek Properties (PTY) LTD in 1964. The warehouses are currently in use, owned by Binins CC and G.L.Goldstein. The buildings serve as storage space to the companies from where goods are distributed to other parts of the city. The location is not a necessity to the program currently in the building, and the operation could easily be relocated.

359 Struben Street

An abandoned warehouse next to the Bethesda church, the building is insignificant from the outside, and extremely unresponsive towards the street. However, upon inspection, the sawtooth roof with clerestory windows provides an amazing space on the inside of the building. Until a few years back, the building had been used by another church group and is therefore still in good condition. The building will have to be opened up to the street if reused. It is currently in disuse.







4.13 Conclusion regarding on-site buildings



<p>1 255 Struben Use : Regular Condition : Average Heritage building</p> 	<p>2 TAB spread betting Use : Regular Condition : Good</p> 	<p>3 Freedom Fellowship Use : Unused Condition : Poor Demolition advisable</p> 	<p>4 Periti Flats Use : Regular Condition : Very good</p> 	<p>5 359 Struben Street Use : Unused Condition : Good Reprogramming advisable</p> 	<p>6 Ad hoc additions Use : Unused Condition : Random</p> 	<p>7 Bethesda Church Use : Regular Condition : Good</p> 
--	--	---	---	---	---	---



<p>13 Confidence college Use : Weekdays Condition : Good</p> 	<p>12 Adhoc shopping Use : Limited Condition : Medium Demolition advisable</p> 	<p>11 Biddums Warehouse Use : Storage Condition : Good Upgrade possible</p> 	<p>9 Enrec Warehouse Use : Storage Condition : Good Upgrade possible</p> 	<p>10 Du Proes Warehouse Use : Storage Condition : Medium Demolition advisable</p> 	<p>8 Adhoc shopping Use : Weekends Condition : Poor Demolition advisable</p> 
--	--	--	---	--	--