Chapter 6 - Urban Design Development

Fig. 6.1 The active pedestrian edge, New York

Fig. 6.2 Stadia framed by an active pedestrian edge, New York

6.1 Introduction

The city block is to be reprogrammed around a pedestrian strip(Shepherd Street) through the city block. The analysis of a sports stadium in New York was used as a point of departure, the project entails the use of a pedestrian walkway as an active edge to the sports field. Secondly a study of public precincts identified critical characteristics of such spaces, including the presence of passive surveillance, safety, permeability, visibility and a variety of program.

Factors considered will include the relationship between the existing buildings, new buildings and existing site forces to make informed decisions, driving the project towards the vision established in the problem statement.The development of the city block will inform the program and placement required of the building that is to facilitate the events.

The development of the city block is combined with additional research on urban design principles of an empirical nature, and the resultant process is mapped as it developed over three time-frames.

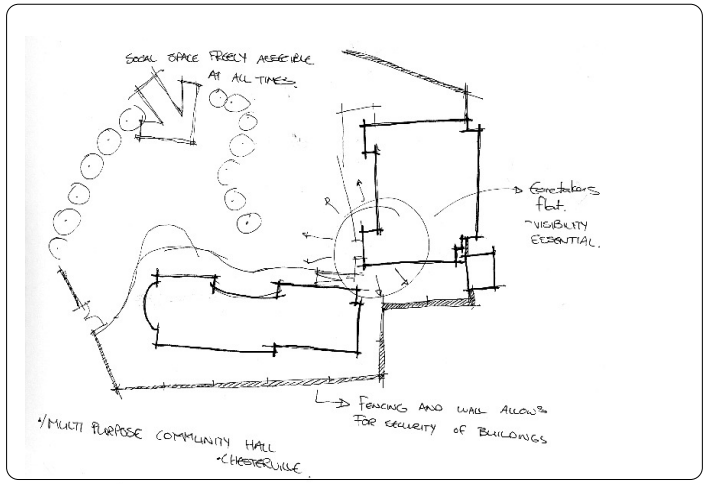

Fig. 6.3 Study of a public precinct, the Dorothy Nyembe multi purpose centre, KwaZulu Natal

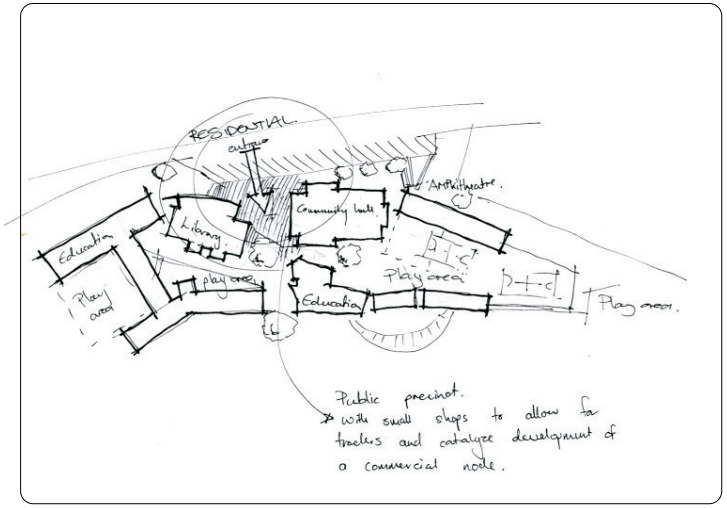

Fig. 6.4 Study of a public precinct, the Chesterville community centre, KwaZulu Natal

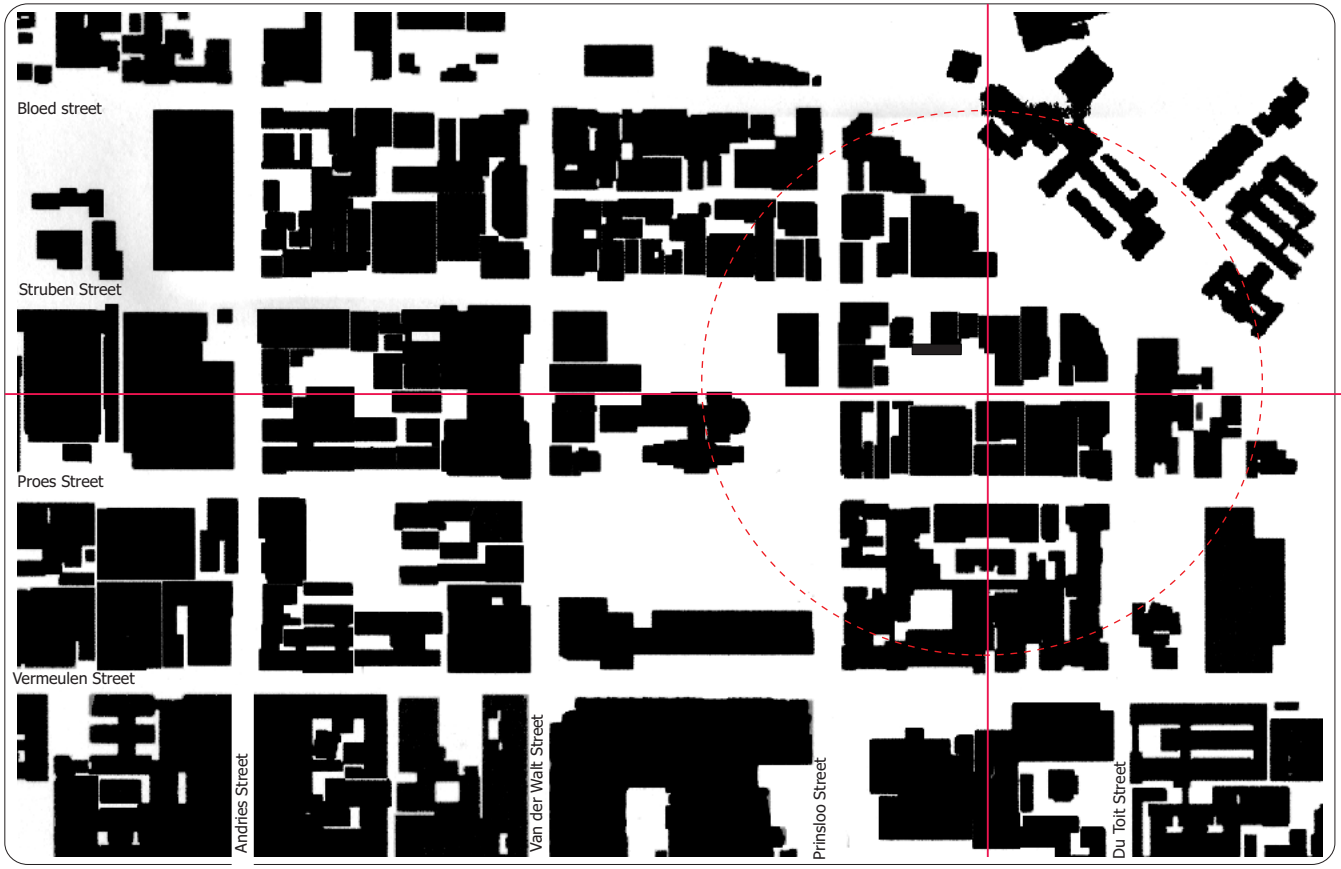

Fig. 6.5 Study area before intervention - scale 1 : 2500

Fig. 6.6 The Piazza di San Marco

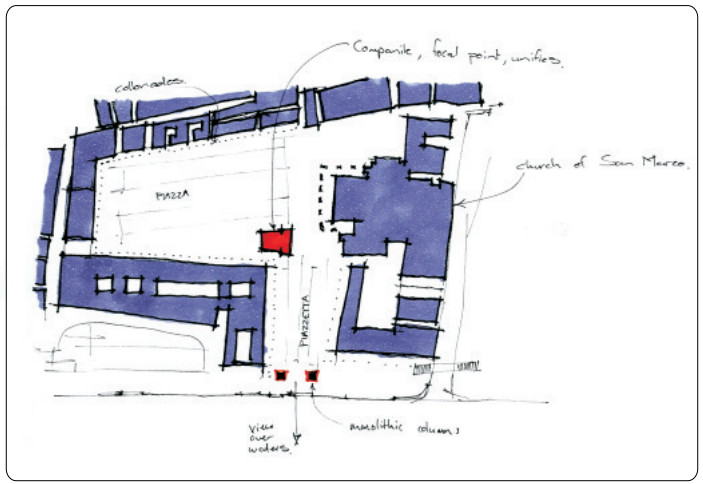

Fig. 6.7 Study of the plan of Piazza di San Marco

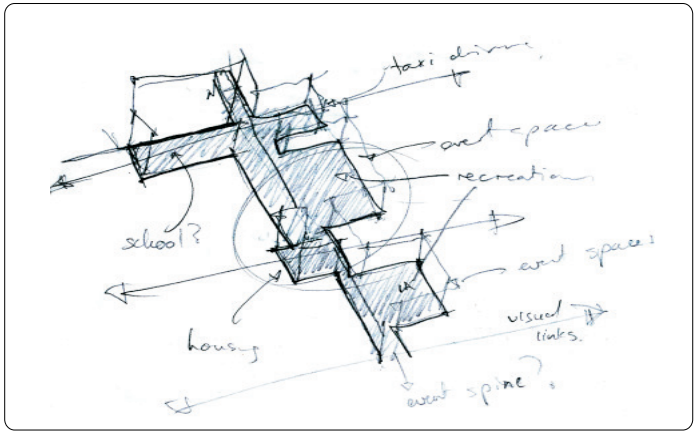

Fig. 6.8 Analysis of lost space in the city block

6.2 March - Lessons from the Piazza di San Marco

The piazza is an example of empiricist thinking, as the human senses are of main importance in the piazza. Over time, layering has created a space of choice and comfort. The square today provides " a living – and working – environment for thousands of people, a place of resort, a place to eat and drink, a place to listen to music, a place to shop" (Broadbent, 1990:49). The square found its origin as the frontage of the church of San Marco. It can be seen as a public boardroom, and provides the first in a series of public squares in the city of Venice (Broadbent, 1990:49).

The Piazza di San Marco consists of a Piazza and a Piazzetta, the two existing at an almost 90 degree angle to one another. Thus an extremely important element in the square is the Companile, a tower that "acts as a focal point that unifies the irregular plan of the Piazza and the Piazzetta" (Broadbent, 1990:50). Apart from the Companile, there are two monolithic columns of a smaller scale, which " hint at a screen which frames marvelous views to the South and prevent the space of the Piazzetta from leaking completely into the canal" (Broadbent, 1990:51). The Piazza appears to be the result of happy accidents over time.

A human scale is achieved in the Piazza by the presence of colonnades at the bottom floor of most of the buildings (each three stories high) framing the Piazza.

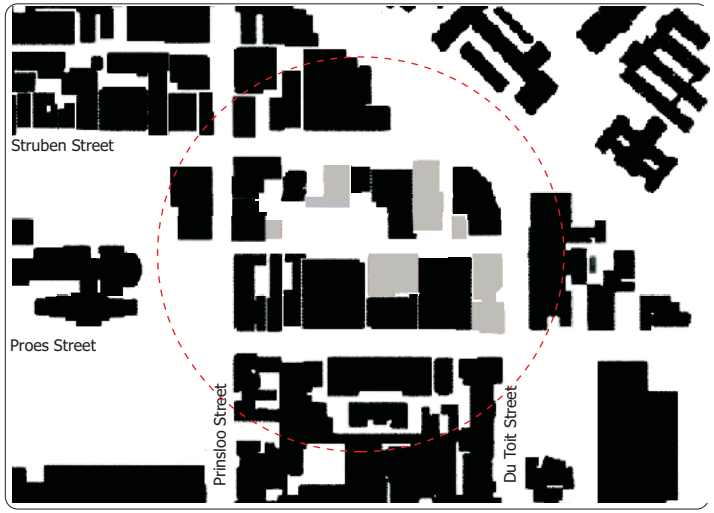

Fig. 6.9 Buildings to be demolished

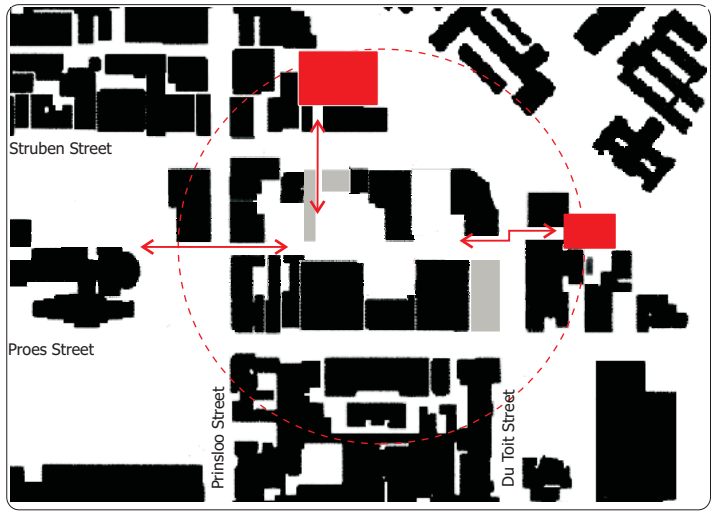

Fig. 6.10 Diagram showing the pedestrian network between social spaces

6.3 Application

The city block is to be a place of rest, away from the hussle of city activity. The terrain is thus viewed as an under-utilised space that can be positively redefined, to this end all present lost space is identified.
The proposed pedestrian network discussed in 4.6 creates the oppertrunity of establishing a square in within the city block that forms part of a network of public spaces in the city. The terrain and subsequently the public precinct, is however conceived as a strip rather than a square. The strip is defined along Shepherd Street, the new pedestrian strip, framing the view of the Union Buildings towards the East. The newly identified public space exists as unprogrammed space.
Emphasis is placed on strengthening the urban fabric on the street edge, while permeability is ensured by adding a third entrance. A new building is introduced to define this entrance and keep the space from spilling into the street. The addition of new buildings into the city block enrich the layers of Palimpsest on the site.
A tower element is integrated in the intervention, serving as a focal point in the event strip to attract more people into the site for social exchange. The tower functions as a vital pivot point around which all elements of the site are ordered.

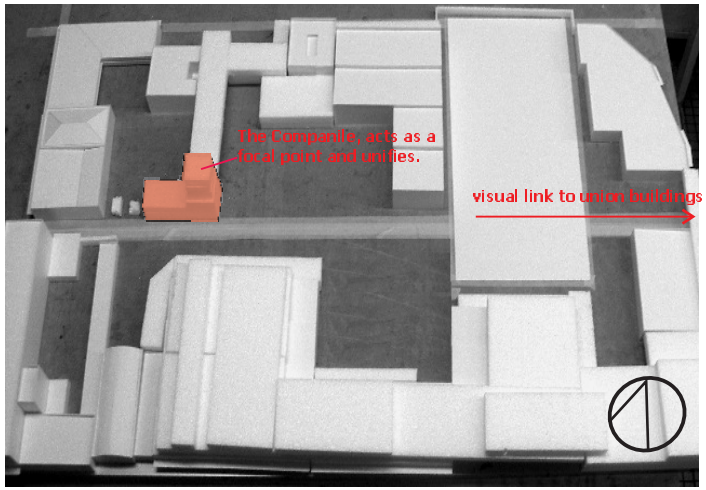

Fig. 6.11 The tower element and visual link to the Union Buildings

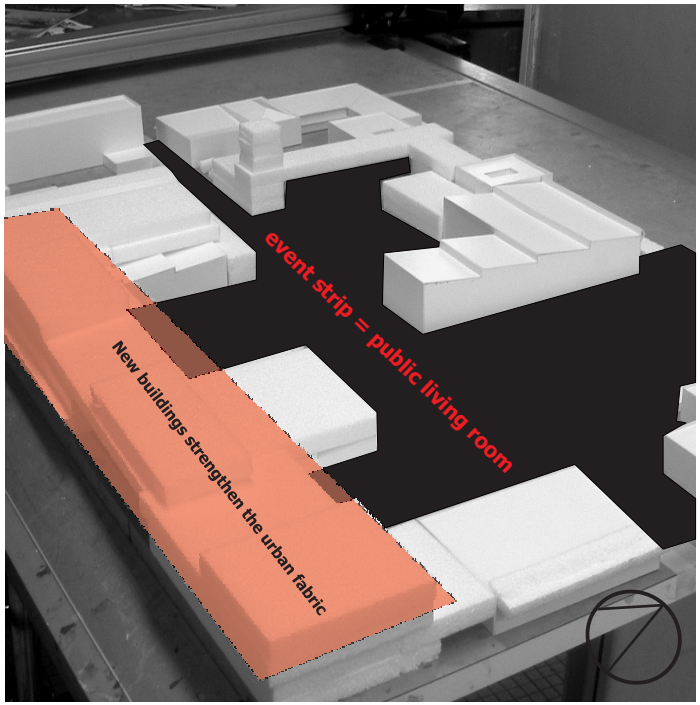

Fig. 6.12 Open space in the city block is visualized as a recreation spine, a place to shop,relax and play, spend some time with friends, get away from the frenzy of the street

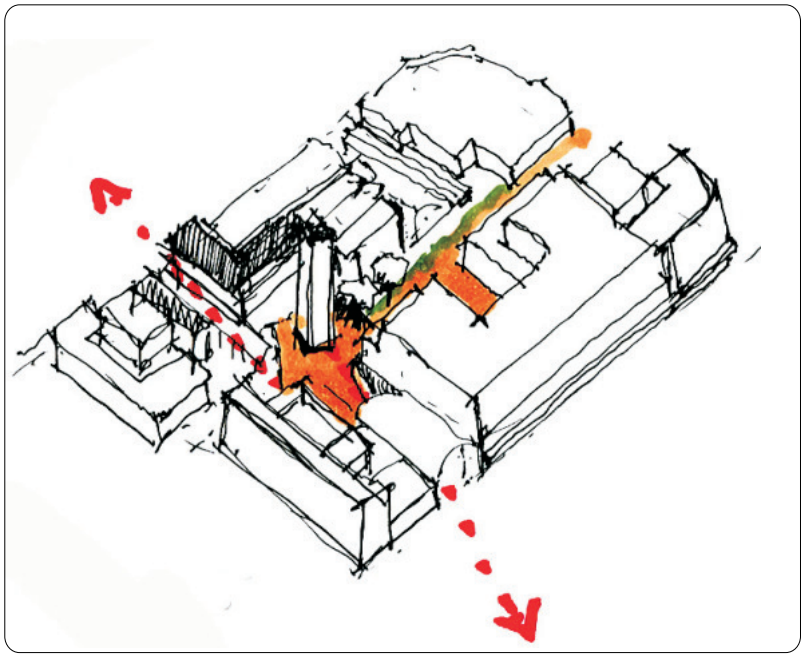

Fig. 6.13 Drawing exploring increased permeability into the site

Fig. 6.14 Jane Jacobs - Streets for living in

6.4 April 2007 - Jacobs and Newman

An empiricist thinker, Jane Jacobs found her inspiration for urban design in the streets and squares of villages, identifying the elements of a city that make it habitable and provide environments for urban living. She talks about the importance of passive surveillance and the network of control exercised by people that treasure their environment, and identifies elements that give a street liveliness (Broadbent, 1990:143):

1. Clearly defined public and private space
2. Passive surveillance
3. The presence of people outside their dwellings

Jacobs advocates the mixed-use principle and identifies the need for people to have choices, resulting in the advantage of having 24-hour use of a site. Thus Jacobs identifies diversity as being an essential ingredient for urban living and she identifies 4 basic rules for diversity (Broadbent, 1990:145):

1. The need for more than one primary function in a destination (e.g. working and eating) as this will ensure the use of the facility at different times.
2. A limitation on block length, roughly 300m
3. The co-existence of buildings of different ages, these allow for different economies in one area, the MacDonald's vs. the second-hand bookstore.
4. And lastly - a high concentration of people on the street.

Often in opposition to Jacobs, Oscar Newman backed his arguments up with statistical analysis. Newman was primarily concerned with defensible space (Broadbent, 1990:149). Defensible space, or appropriated space, is a space " which can be employed by the inhabitants for the enhancement of their lives, while providing security" (Broadbent, 1990:149).
Mainly, he argues that people need to take ownership of areas to make them safe, and for them to take ownership they have to be designed properly. Thus, Newman identified several design principles:

1. Intensify tenant surveillance of grounds
2. Differentiate clearly between public, semi-public and private areas.
3. Increase the sense of proprietorship felt by residents.
4. Remove the stigma of public housing.

Fig. 6.15 Buildings to be demolished or opened up

Fig. 6.16 Buildings added and event spaces defined

6.5 Application

An architecture of safety and security is explored. Another pedestrian entrance is added into the site via Proes Street, creating a safer environment both in the street and in the precinct. A new residential component is added onto the existing warehouses on Proes Street, increasing passive surveillance and adding community orientated program to the intervention. The introduction of housing into a multi-use public precinct should remove the negative connotation with public housing in South Africa. The structure of the warehouses are analyzed and deemed as sufficient (see Appendix C) These housing units provide passive surveillance on both Proes Street and Shepherd Street.

Additional program is introduced via a small soccer field and basketball courts into one of the abandoned warehouses, supported by a sports and education facility. More program defined in the problem analysis include incubation stalls that allow entrepreneurs to further their businesses. The warehouses onto which the housing units are added are ideal for this purpose as they are easily reprogrammable and provide interaction with pedestrians at ground level. Additional characteristics of adaptable buildings identified by Brand (1995:32), represented in these warehouses, are the six s's: adaptable skin, services, structure, site, space plan and stuff. These stalls activate the edge towards the street and into the public space.

Spaces in the event strip are defined, ranging from semi-private spaces for the newly added housing units to semi public spaces for general use. These spaces are deliberately kept unprogrammed to cater for the program that will happen here due to the presence of the several agents in the area.

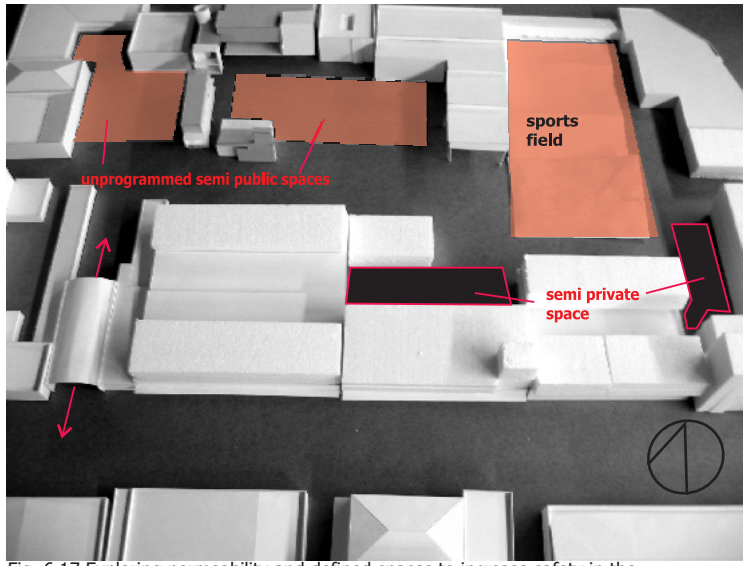

Fig. 6.17 Exploring permeability and defined spaces to increase safety in the block and the surrounding area

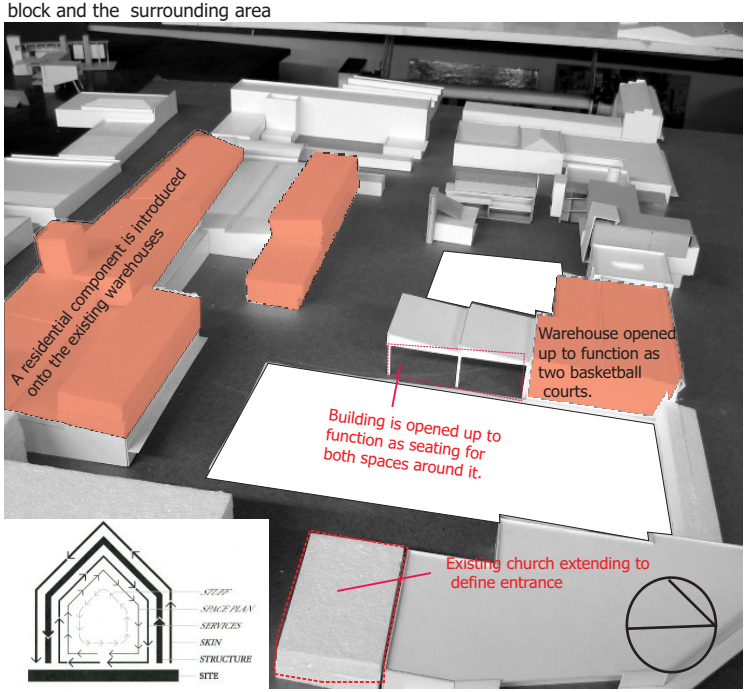

Fig. 6.19 New program is introduced

Fig. 6.18 The six s's

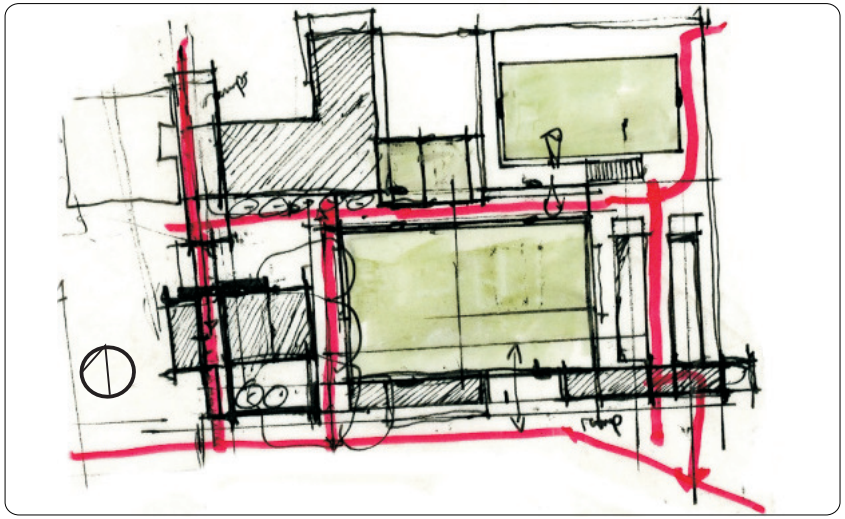

Fig. 6.20 Exploring routes that serve as movement spaces

Fig. 6.21 Conceptual drawing of shops as an active urban edge

Fig. 6.22 Usasaza Secondary School showing the active urban edge

6.6 June - Louw and Noero

Cooke (2005:32); refers to several parts of immense importance with regards to urban space making. In her interview with Piet Louw, the author discusses as a point of departure the creation of distinctive space.Distinctive space that has a strong sense of enclosure, yet strong openings or gateways leading to surrounding spaces or buildings. There are clear boundaries and movement edges.

Secondly there is a hierarchy and variety to social spaces, with each space relating to a different scale of urban phenomena. Different types of social spaces include in-between space and directional spaces (Cooke,2005: 33).

Thirdly the distinction between foreground buildings – these having distinct features of scale, articulation and form amongst others, yet conform strongly to context – and background buildings whose main roles involve defining spaces and edges. They create an overall rhythm and often bring into being those vital sociable zones that connect inside and outside (Cooke, 2005:33).

As an overall strategy, spaces need to accommodate the everyday, which is often as simple as providing public furniture in various forms and ensuring different spaces allow for different weather conditions and type of activities. These are in no way deterministic, but provide a platform for variety. Other factors include passive surveillance, density, and ensuring spaces deal with either movement towards a certain goal or stationary activity (Cooke, 2005:34).

In the Usasazo Secondary School, Joe Noero creates an active urban edge by framing the playground with a wall of shops. The shops are used to sell to pupils and pedestrians on the street.

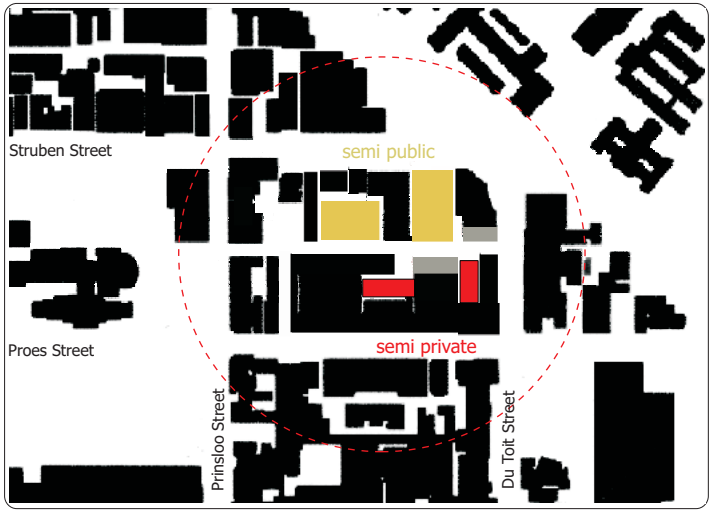

Fig. 6.23 Buildings added and spaces redefined

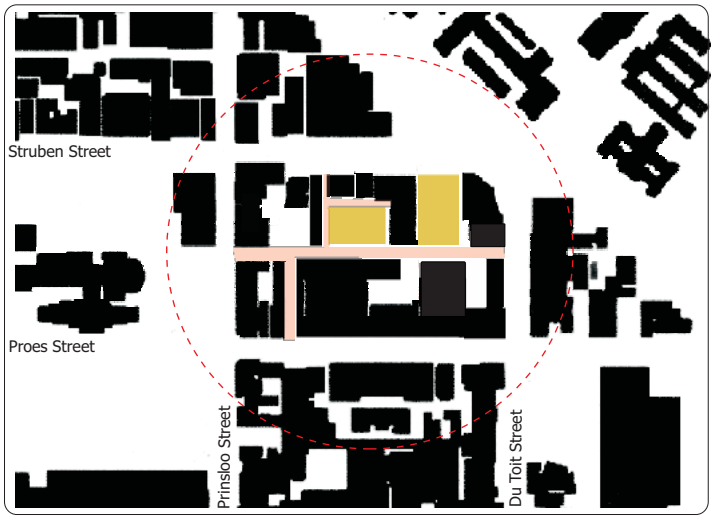

Fig. 6.24 Movement through the site

6.7 Application

The public spaces are defined more clearly, seating around the main public spaces serves to define the pedestrian walkway (Shepherd Street) and creates a stronger sense of enclosure for the public spaces. Adequate seating in both shaded and sunny areas are provided for different weather conditions.

The need for servicing new and existing buildings on-site is addressed by adding a service and parking space, yet the arrangement remains informal to maintain the idea of multi-use spaces. A climbing wall is added to the tower element, creating a gateway to the public space, creating a strong barrier to vehicular traffic.

The nature of the intervention is to promote sport at grass-root level, creating the opportunity for individuals to develop basic sports skills that function as a stepping-stone to bigger opportunities. To this end the soccer field is made smaller, as the program shifts to more urban sports activities. At this point the concept of multiple use sport fields is researched, resulting in the two public spaces being able to accommodate a wide variety of sports activities, including soccer, basketball, netball, hockey, touch rugby, cricket (six-a-side), hockey and volleyball. For most of these sports the public spaces combine to ensure more than one court is available for a specific type of game. This is done to ensure that sport events of a significant nature can be held at the site.

The field to the eastern side of the site is programmed as a sports field as such, fitted with Astroturf for easy maintenance, also serving as an artificial grass space. The western space is to remain a reprogrammable space, allowing for sports events but also for events that occur due to the site forces and agents in the urban fabric. Thus the development can cater for informal and formal events, music and sport events and church bazaars. As mentioned before, the design is to create options for the community and other potential users.

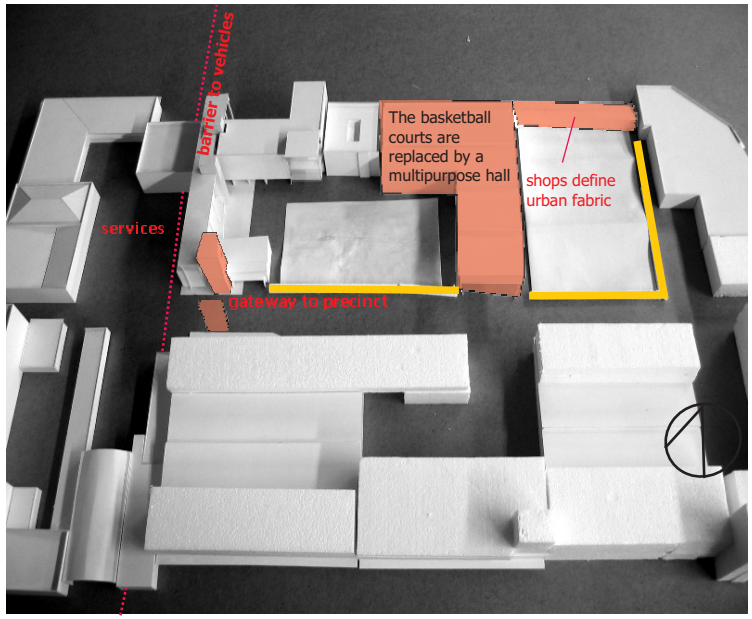

Fig. 6.25 The precinct is off limits to vehicles, except for the service area

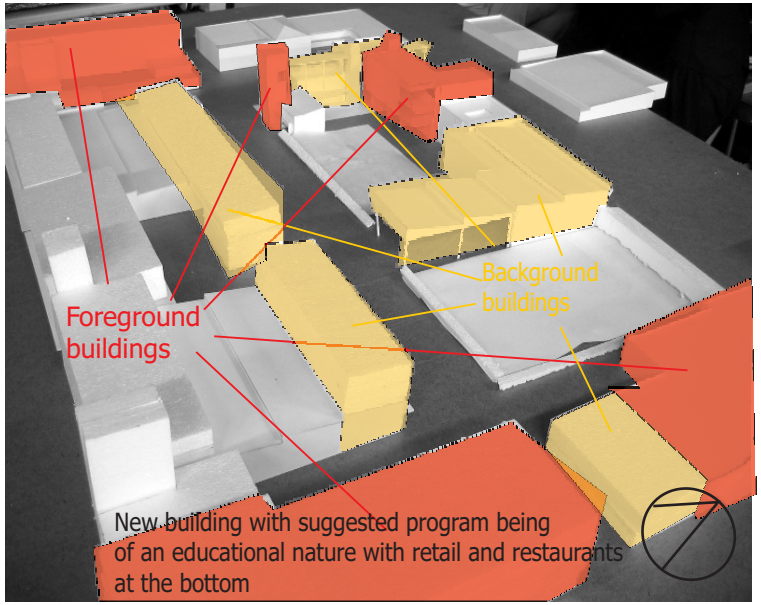

Fig. 6.26 Background and foreground buildings

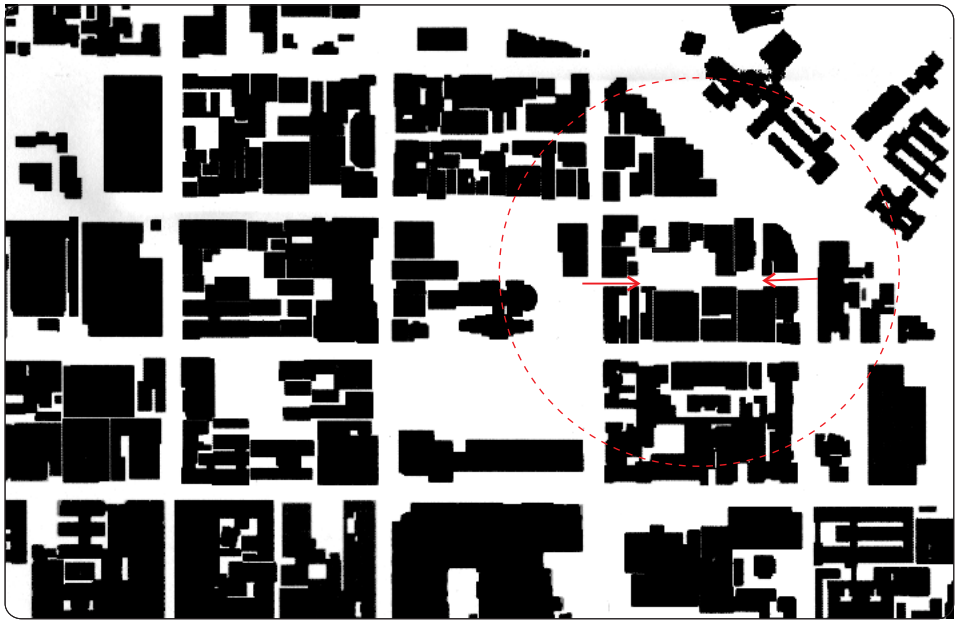

Fig. 6.27 Before intervention - scale 1 : 2500

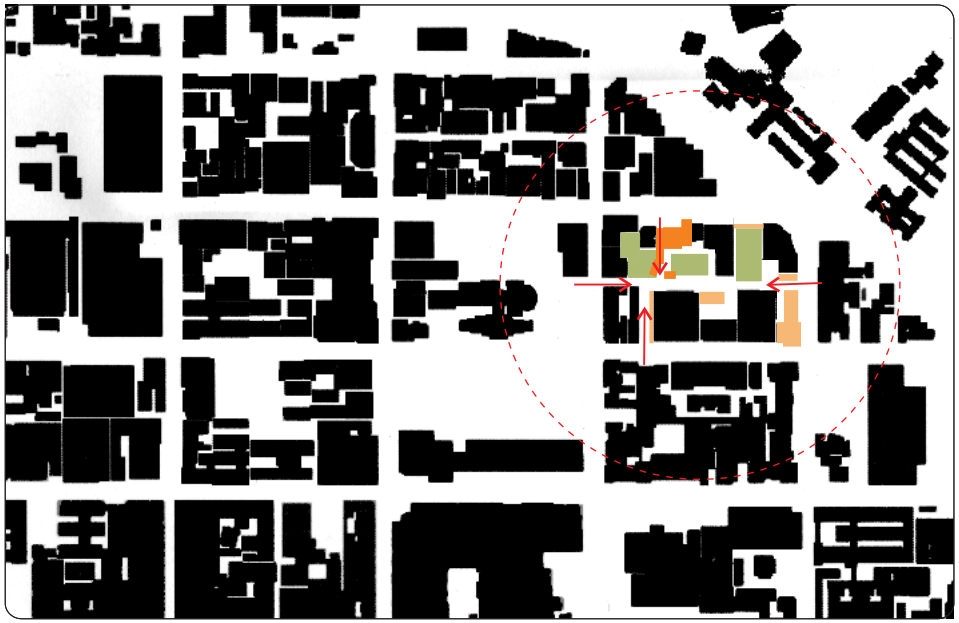

Fig. 6.28 After intervention - scale 1 : 2500

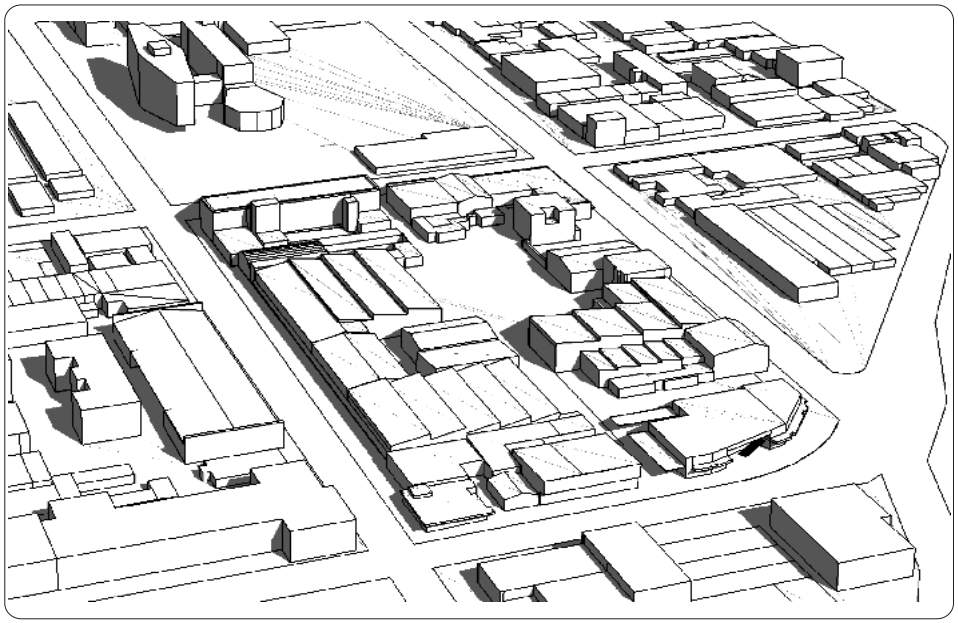

Fig. 6.29 Aerial Perspective before intervention

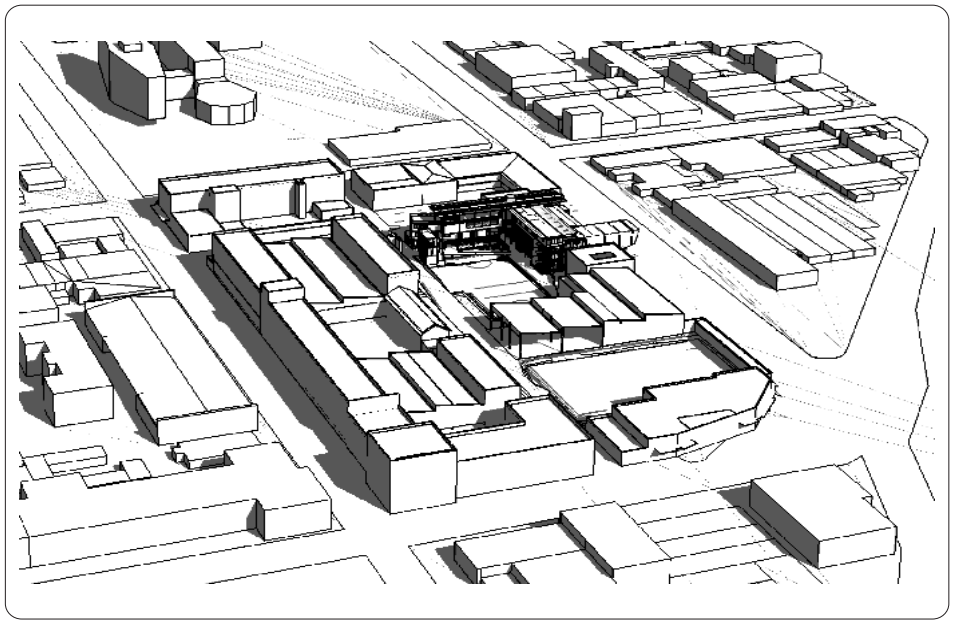

Fig. 6.30 Aerial Perspective after intervention

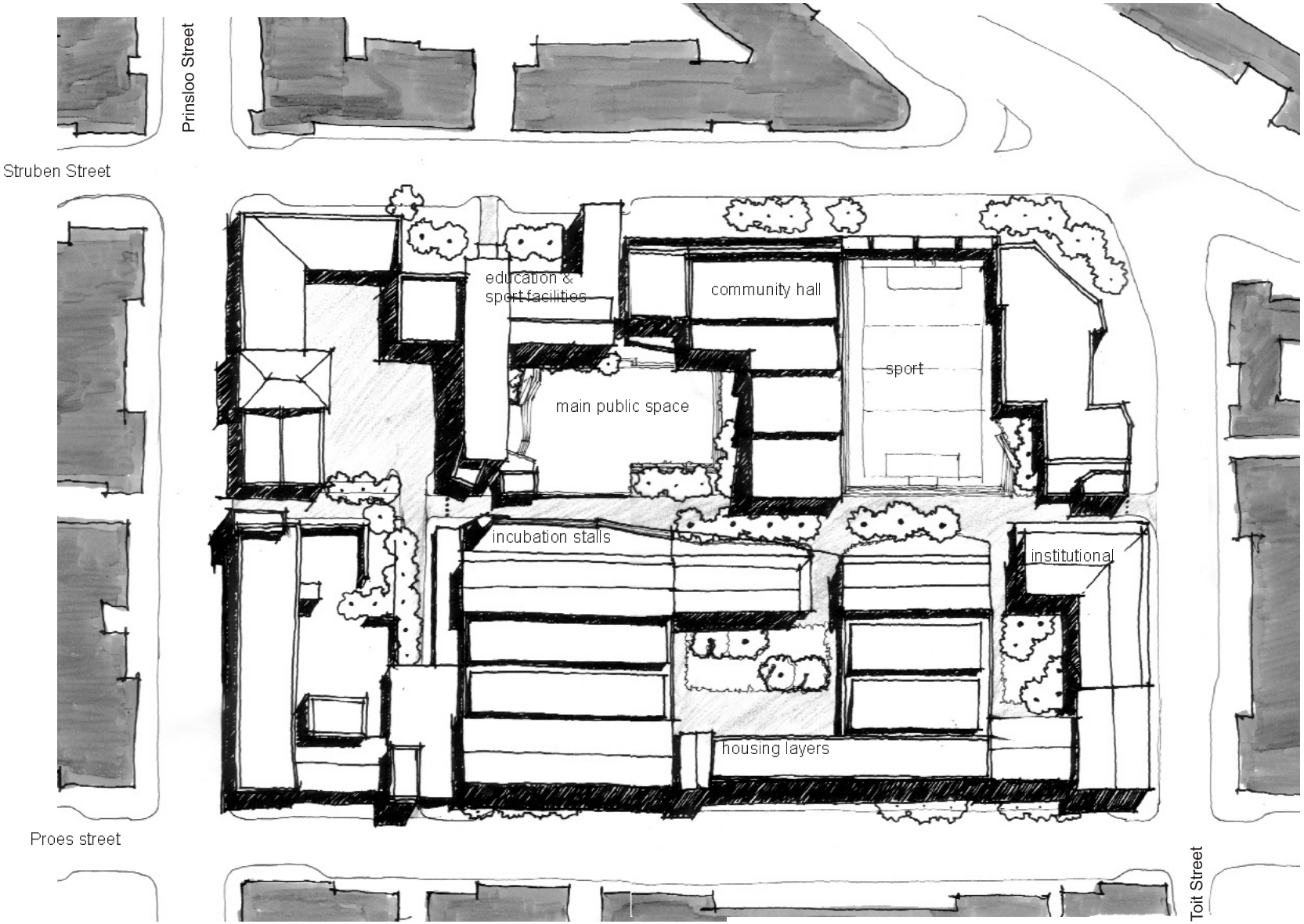

Fig. 6.31 Diagrammatic representation of city block