

The SITE and its potential as a place for "talking"/communicating

The site chosen for the proposed facility is situated on the North West corner of Paul Kruger and Struben st. It is currently a non-place. A "space destined to be passed through rather than inhabited"[Morteo,2006:56]. According to Morteo non-places represent the anonymous and globalized way in which we live. He speaks about giving sense back to the "vacuum of these spaces of passage" instead of masking them with superficial un-thought-through decoration.

The main cause he attributes to the creation of the vacuum is our modern technology and methods of communication [Morteo, 2006].

The way we talk and communicate has lost its depth and meaning. There is no beautiful richness in e-mail. The human connection is what creates meaning in communication. This needs to be encouraged and given space. As a society we need to re-learn to communicate. Understanding how we have communicated through history and the relationship between methods of communication and culture will help us to fill the vacuum.

The anonymity of the site is a condition of the city as a whole where physical space is dominant over social space [Da Costa, 2007]. Many opportunities exist in the area around the intersection of Paul Kruger and Struben Street. The place is significant in that it has visual axes to both the Union Buildings and Church Square.

The axis along Paul Kruger Street is further accentuated symbolically because of the alignment with Freedom Park.

The many important historical references give the place meaning to a diverse range of South Africans. A history of the country can be felt when standing at the intersection: the timeline described above can be followed through. Examining the mountains to the north, one can imagine how the valley would have looked in its natural state. Church square was the starting point to the development of the town and then city. The Union Buildings are a reminder of the people finding and claiming their independence in the early twentieth century. The old synagogue is reminiscent of how the newly independent people stamped their authority by discriminating against certain groups of the population. Remembering the trial and imprisonment of Nelson Mandela leads onto thoughts of the journey the marginalised groups went on to claim their equal status. The new buildings and government interventions are indicators of a new start and its vision for the future. All this can be acknowledged and recognised from one point in the city, yet it remains uncelebrated. So many stories and histories meet and converge in this place but the daily commuter is not given any indications of this. If they stopped to pause there for a moment, they might see the Union Buildings or notice the Synagogue. They may look at the Panagos building as more than just a corner shop and wonder how people lived when it was first built. And with some encouragement, they may start to tell stories about their past experiences or discuss their hopes for the future.

It is therefore an ideal setting to establish a place of human connection and meaningful communication.



UNION BUILDINGS

CHURCH SQUARE

FREEDOM PARK

Fig.21 Visual historical clues

Fig. 22 Panorama of view from site

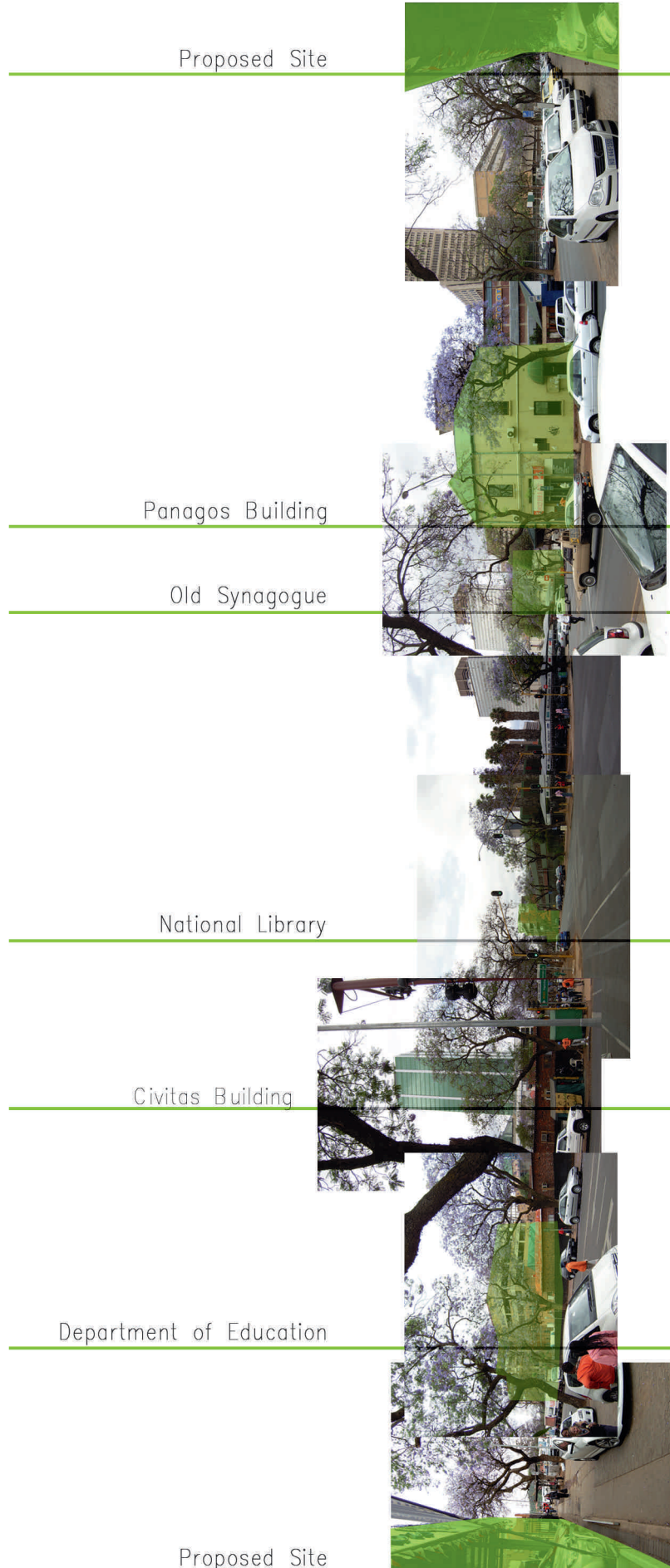




Fig. 23 South elevation of proposed site



Fig. 24 West elevation of proposed site



ANALYSIS OF STUDY AREA

Fig. 25 Proposed site



Fig. 26 Heritage buildings



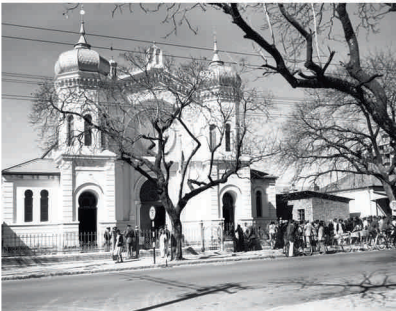


Fig. 27 Old Jewish Synagogue



Fig. 28 Panagos Building



Fig. 29 Jansen House

The significant heritage buildings in the vicinity of the proposed site are the Old Jewish Synagogue, Jansen House and the Panagos building.

In 1952 the property of the Jewish community including their Synagogue was expropriated by the national government and the Synagogue was converted into a special supreme court. This court was to deal with the rising 'black opposition movements'. The building was painted white and all stain-glass windows were removed. On 3 August 1959 the Treason Trials, of which the preparatory examination had begun in 1956 at the Drill Hall in Johannesburg commenced at the converted Synagogue in Pretoria. This strategic move on the government's part was to deter supporters of the accused. It was here that on 12 June 1964 Nelson Mandela and his seven co-accused were sentenced to life imprisonment. (Mandela 1994:231-446)

In 1977 the inquest into Steve Biko's death, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement began at the Old Synagogue. (Remmers & Schütte 2005)

The historical events that took place in the synagogue have given it significant heritage value to South Africans. These events shaped the way history unfolded.

Directly opposite the Synagogue lies the Panagos Building (architect, 1897) which is the oldest remaining commercial building in Pretoria. (Le Roux, 1991)

The Jansen house on Struben street is the only remaining built evidence of the residential component that was originally in the area. It is being restored as part of the new Department of Education building.

Fig. 30 Open spaces



Fig. 31 Active edges

 Fine grain commercial activity



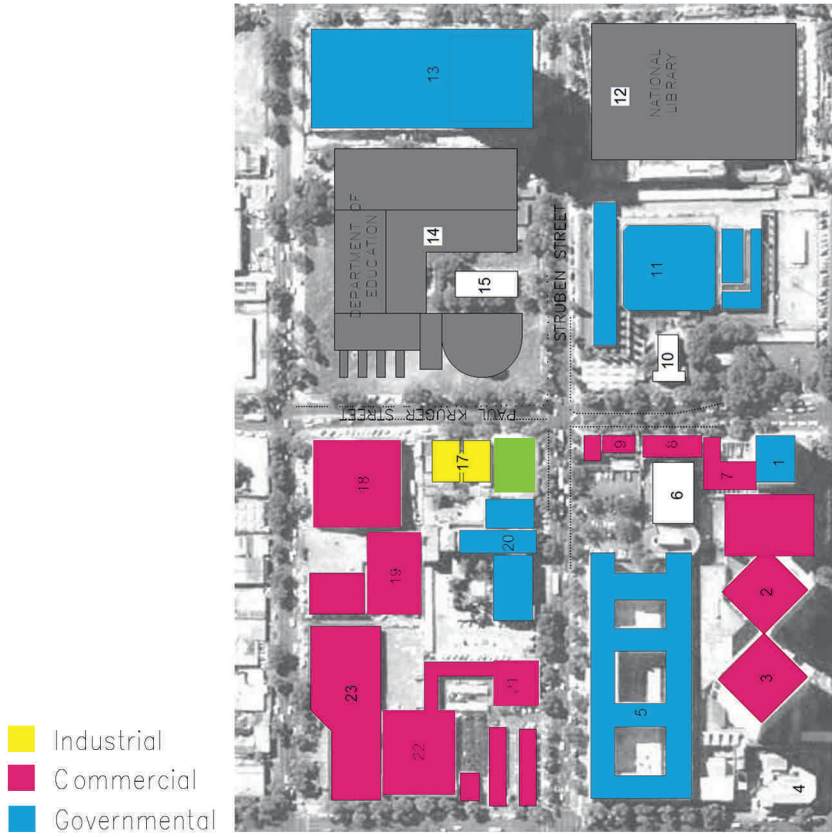


Fig. 32 Current usage

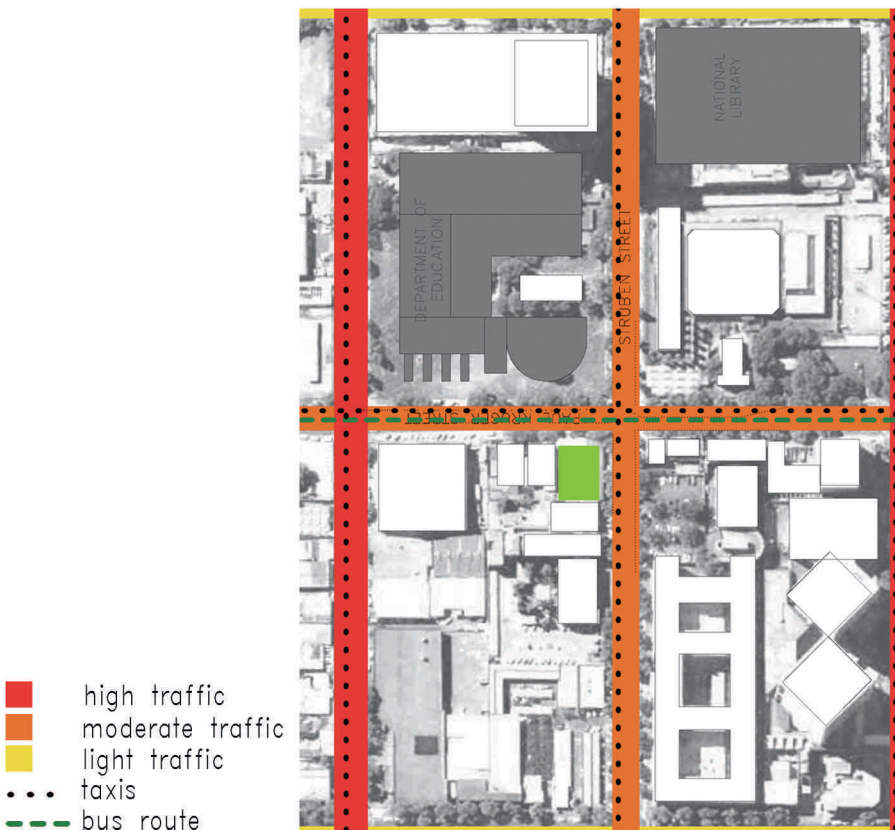


Fig. 33 Current traffic conditions

Fig. 34 Street condition around site

