

Context + Site

Chapter 5



Fig. 5.1: Site location

Context

The Site selected for the scheme is situated at the corner of Paul Kruger and Scheiding Street and forms part of the Burgers Park precinct within Pretoria CBD. The site forms part of a mixed use area and is identified as a potential gateway to the city that is currently neglected within the precinct.



Site
(corner of Paul Kruger and Scheiding Street)

Climate

The Pretoria CBD is classified as a temperate interior zone (South African National Standard, 2008). This zone is characterised by warm summer temperatures and relatively cold winters.

Pretoria winds are calm and moves predominantly in a north easterly direction in the morning and south easterly direction in the afternoon (Wegelin, 2009: 129).

Pretoria has high levels of direct sunlight and a low amount of cloud cover with an average relative humidity ranging between 29 and 75% (BBC, 2011)

Axis + Transport

The area of investigation forms part of the Paul Kruger axis which links the Pretoria Zoological Gardens to Church Square and Church Square to Pretoria station where the axis culminates in a transportation node.

The transportation node includes the metro train station, the new Gautrain main station, a major taxi node as well as long distance and short distance busses. The area is therefore characterised by high levels of pedestrian movement.

Historical Consideration

The Burgers Park precinct contains numerous buildings and heritage sites with historical value of which three can

be found within close proximity to the site. These sites include Pretoria Station, Station Square and the Victoria Hotel which should all be taken into consideration when designing on the selected site.

Pretoria Station + Station Square

The initial station buildings were constructed during 1892 as part of the NZASM (Nederlandsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappij) plan to connect Pretoria with Delagoa Bay (now named Maputu).

Due to the topography of the site, the railway lines could not fit into the orientation of the city blocks which

led to the railway as well as the initial station buildings to be built diagonal to Scheiding Street. The open area formed by the diagonal was later to be developed into Station Square (le Roux, 1993: 27).

The current Pretoria Station building was designed by Sir Herbert Baker in 1908 (le Roux, 1993: 27). On 19 February 2001 the station was set on fire by angered commuters which caused the destruction of the clock tower as well as the entire roof structure. Renovations to the building started in June 2001 and were completed during February 2002 (Davie, 2002).

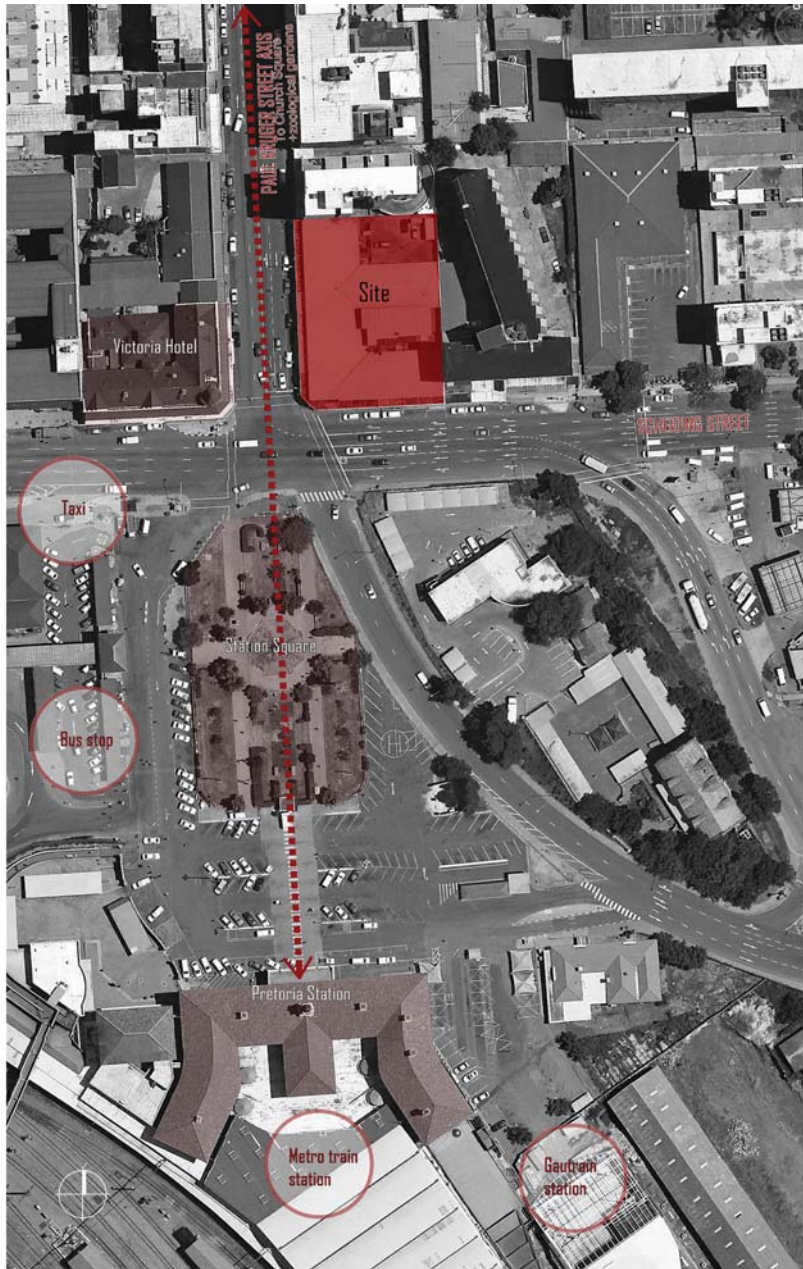


Fig. 5.2: Site plan indicating site location, axis, transportation nodes and historical buildings

Victoria Hotel

The site for the Victoria Hotel was bought from the Reformed Church by TW Beckett in 1890. Together with the neighbouring site, the site could be leased from 1894 on the prerequisite that hotels be constructed in order to provide overnight facilities to travellers entering the city (le Roux, 1993: 28).

Originally named the Hollandia Hotel (designed by an unknown Dutch architect in 1900), the Victoria Hotel was renamed by Lord Roberts in honour of the English queen. The Victoria Hotel is the oldest remaining hotel in the city and one of the few remaining Victorian buildings within Pretoria CBD (le Roux, 1993: 29).

Although numerous alterations have been made to the structure such as the addition of the second floor before 1902

and the removal of the cast iron balcony and balustrade in 1945 which has been replaced with the current columns and plastered wall, most of the fittings and structure remains original thereby adding to the historical value of the building (le Roux, 1993: 29).

Gautrain

With the addition of the Gautrain station to Pretoria Station it is estimated that Pretoria Station will become one of the main commuter nodes into Pretoria CBD (Gautrain, 2011). The station will have an important tourism role as it is to be the starting point for tours through the CBD and is expected to stimulate urban renewal within the rest of the city. The new station will increase the number of pedestrians in the area.



Materiality

Materiality within the precinct is one of the few elements contributing to identity and a homogenous environment. With the proximity of the train station, materiality and the application of materials are indicative of industrialism with a predominant use of prefabricated steel elements and the re-use of railway lines as pergolas and bollards.

Architecture within the precinct consists mainly of masonry construction with an exposed concrete structure and steel window frames. Masonry building envelopes within the liminal space are mostly in stretcher bond with few instances where the material is treated differently. In such cases exposed brick is often painted or plastered with

the introduction of changes in masonry bond and the creation of shadow lines.

Use of timber within the area is limited to the Victoria Hotel and the trader/food stalls on the southern side of Scheiding Street. Exposed timber window frames in the Victoria Hotel and exposed timber trusses in the vendor stalls are the only instances where this material is evident within the liminal space.

Additional materials used within the area include corrugated iron and mosaic tiles as well as limited use of sandstone and slate and roof tiles. Use of glass as building envelope has been added to the precinct with the construction of the new Gautrain main station.

Material Response to Typology

Use of material responds to a large degree to building typology and scale within the precinct.

Buildings under three storeys are at times plastered, such as the Victoria Hotel and the Police station. Lower buildings within the liminal space often have pitched roofs constructed of timber trusses and roof tiles.

Buildings higher than three storeys may have small plastered surfaces and mosaic tiles on the facade but as stated previously, are mostly masonry construction. Low pitched or flat roofs for taller buildings are common in the precinct. These roofs are predominantly flat concrete roofs with washing facilities or building services or are alternatively constructed using low pitched corrugated iron.



191 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.3: Railway line steel pergola



190 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.4: Masonry and mosaic tile facade



308 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.5: Masonry and exposed structure



Tafelberg building, 517 Paul Kruger Street
Fig. 5.6: Masonry and exposed structure



The Oval, 31 Loop Street
Fig. 5.9: Masonry and exposed structure



Vendor Stalls, 179 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.12: Sheet metal roof + exposed timber truss



Victoria Hotel, 200 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.15: Decorative plaster finish



Ceres building, 229 Jacob Mare Street
Fig. 5.7: Masonry and exposed structure



Manhattan Hotel, 241 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.10: Painted masonry and use of soldier bond



Victoria Hotel, 200 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.13: Timber window frames



Police Station, 588 Paul Kruger Street
Fig. 5.16: Smooth plaster finish and steel shading



179 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.8: Masonry and steel window frames



Colombo building, 230 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.11: Masonry and use of brick on edge bond



Vendor Stalls, 179 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.14: Masonry construction and shadow lines



308 + 218 Scheiding Street
Fig. 5.17: Building height and roof construction

Uses Around Site

The site is bordered to the north by a ten storey residential building and a six storey residential building to the east, both with retail space on ground floor. The neighbouring corner site to the west is occupied by the Victoria Hotel with Pretoria Station and Station Square across Scheiding Street to the south.

Along Scheiding Street more residential developments can be found with retail space and bars on ground floor to the west and little interaction with the sidewalk to the east as the precinct progressively becomes more residential towards Burgers Park. The Paul Kruger axis is lined with retail space on ground

floor with either residential or office space above. Pedestrian use of the area varies. Numerous people move through the liminal space on way to work, home or in-city destinations including shopping or entertainment.

Station square is most used by commuters, but serves the additional function of relaxation space, unsheltered waiting room and meeting place, whether waiting for transportation or social purposes. Numerous people can be found at the termination of the Paul Kruger axis during most portions of the day.





Fig. 5.18: Uses around site



Fig. 5.19: Panorama indicating site within context and building functions

Problems

Although located close to the traffic node provided by Pretoria Station and situated within a highly pedestrianized environment, the selected site is faced with numerous unique problems and design considerations. The problems include climate control and orientation, gateway formation, bridging the barrier formed by Scheiding Street and precinct identity.

Lack of Identity

The effects of a fragmented identity within the Burgers Park precinct are evident when nearing the end of the Paul Kruger axis at Scheiding Street. In

contrast with the residential environment around Burgers Park en the cultural, more pedestrian friendly environment of the Museum Park district, the area around Pretoria Station and Scheiding Street can be described as liminal. The liminal area is characterised by a lack of identity, being neither outside of the city nor within it, but resting on the boundary between inside and outside.

Barrier

Scheiding Street was originally the southernmost Street in Pretoria CBD from where its name was derived indicating the division between the

city and pastoral lands (le Roux, 1993: 27). Today, Scheiding Street remains a barrier, now dividing the outer limits of the city from the rest of the Burgers Park precinct.

The orientation of Pretoria Station with regards to the important axis along Paul Kruger Street completes the visual corridor forming a direct axial relationship with Church Square thereby making the Paul Kruger axis one of the few completed streetscapes within the city (le Roux, 1993: 28). When reaching Scheiding Street however, the disjunction of Pretoria Station and Station Square



Fig. 5.20: Site plan indicating problems identified within the liminal



liminal space

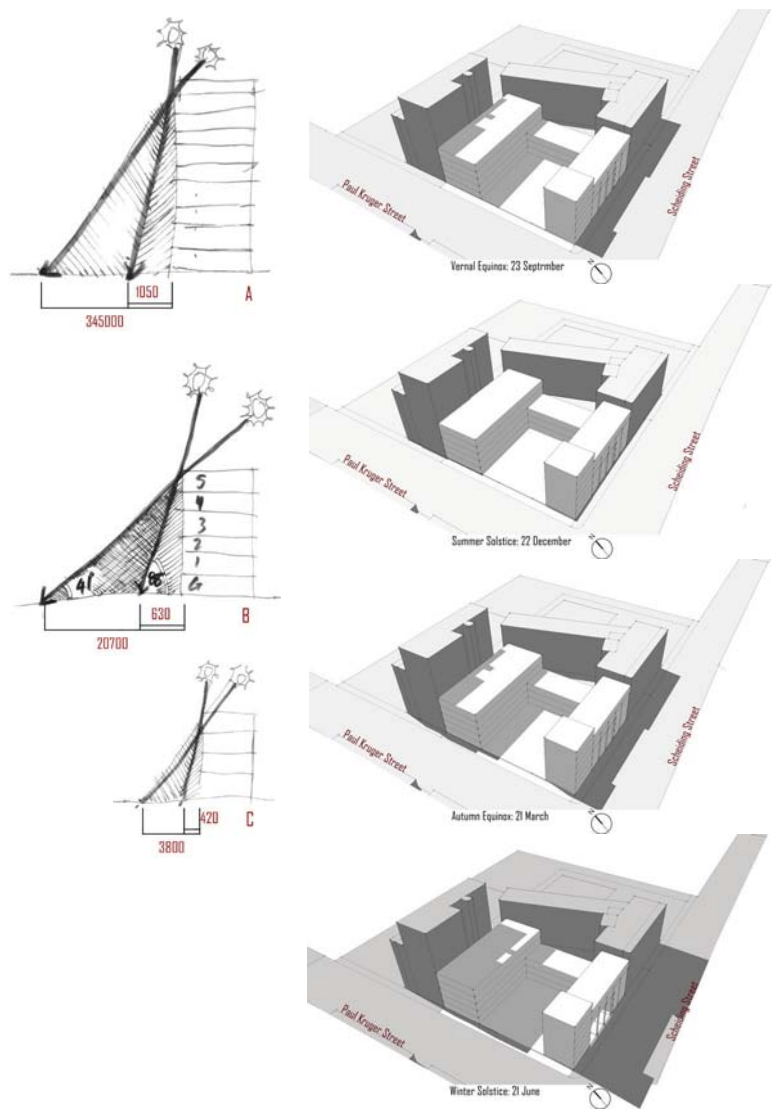


Fig. 5.21: Shadows on site

with the rest of the Precinct is evident. Station Square has recently been redesigned in order to address this problem, yet the square remains isolated from the rest of the precinct and therefore the rest of the city, thereby grounding it firmly within the liminal character around Scheiding Street.

The problem of liminal space can be solved by unifying the area around Scheiding Street with the rest of the precinct. This can be achieved by defining the Paul Kruger axis and extending the public space of Station Square, thereby bridging the barrier of Scheiding Street.

Site orientation

Being located on the eastern corner of Paul Kruger and Scheiding Street with an existing 6 storey building east of the site and the existing 10 storey Rosandra building bordering the site to the north, the corner site offers mainly opportunities for southern and western elevations, leaving the site with heat control and glare problems. Additionally the Rosandra building bordering the northern edge of the site blocks much needed sun throughout the winter months.

Alternative passive design systems suited for low solar conditions will need to be explored in order to ensure comfort within the internal environment of the building.

Gateway

The lack of a properly defined gateway to the southern side of the precinct deducts from the pedestrian nature and identity of the area. The current single story building at the corner of Paul Kruger and Scheiding Street nullifies the well designed visual termination of the Paul Kruger axis at Pretoria station. The lack of a properly defined gateway reduces Scheiding Street and Station Square to a mere traffic area through which orientation and access to the city becomes increasingly difficult.

Resting Space

Station Square is a highly used public space with activity evident throughout the day and well into the night. The Square does not however provide much needed functions such as sheltered resting space. Sheltered resting spaces as well as auxiliary functions such as communication and inclusive dining areas are in general absent within the liminal area of the precinct, thereby deducting from the social and public potential of the entire area

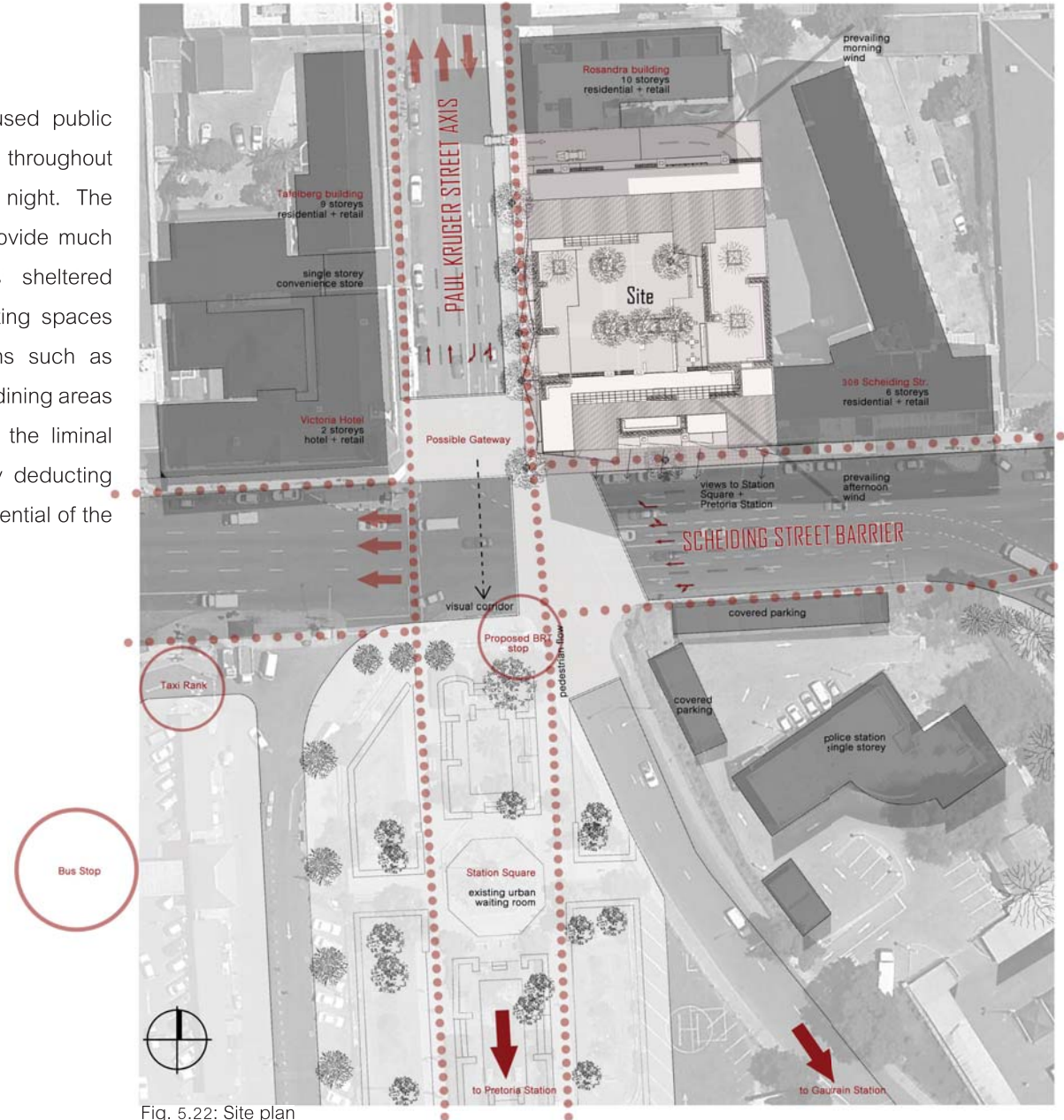


Fig. 5.22: Site plan

Conclusion

An appropriate gateway building is needed at the corner of Paul Kruger and Scheiding Street. The aforementioned gateway is needed to complete the space horizontally as well as vertically. This will symbolise entrance to the city while completing the skyline, establishing orientation and reclaiming as well as extending the public space of Station Square.

The gateway building needs to provide forgotten functions within the area. This will include sheltered resting space and highly public programs needed when entering or leaving the city.