

BYLAE 4: VOORSTELLE VIR DIE GEBRUIK EN ONTWIKKELING  
VAN DIE RIVIER EN SPRUITE VAN HEIDELBERG.

INTRODUCTION

The development of an urban trail for Heidelberg is a project undertaken by the third year BL students from the University of Pretoria as an exercise in trail design. The project should be seen as a proposal of what could be done in Heidelberg. The work was done in collaboration with architectural students who made similar proposals regarding the pedestrianization and upgrading of the central business district.

Heidelberg is situated sixty kilometers south of the P.W.V. on the Transvaal highveld. Today the small town remains a busy point on the main road from Durban to the Witwatersrand. The town retains its Victorian character although much in need of repair. The famous Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve is situated just north of the town.

An important need is in the field of urban landscaping and design. The success of the river trails and pedestrianization programmes of Johannesburg and Durban are examples of what is envisaged for Heidelberg.

The concept of a trail system was initiated by the Town Council of Heidelberg. Their suggestion was to design a system of trails through suburban and urban Heidelberg and the creation of open spaces. The brief laid emphasis on the recreational development and enhancement of the three spruits which flow through the town. The upgrading of existing Heidelberg was cited as the overall objective. The only limitations were that the proposals should be practical and economically viable, as funds for such a development

were limited. Furthermore, all development proposals should be made with consideration to the predominant character of the town.

The brief required the following factors to be considered and specific goals to be achieved:

- \*to generate interest in the town and the environment
- \*to upgrade, enhance and restore the open space
- \*to develop planning and design proposals that would unify the natural splendour of the surroundings with the historical qualities of the town
- \*to enhance existing conveniences, places of interest and the aesthetic potential of the area.

Proposals should:

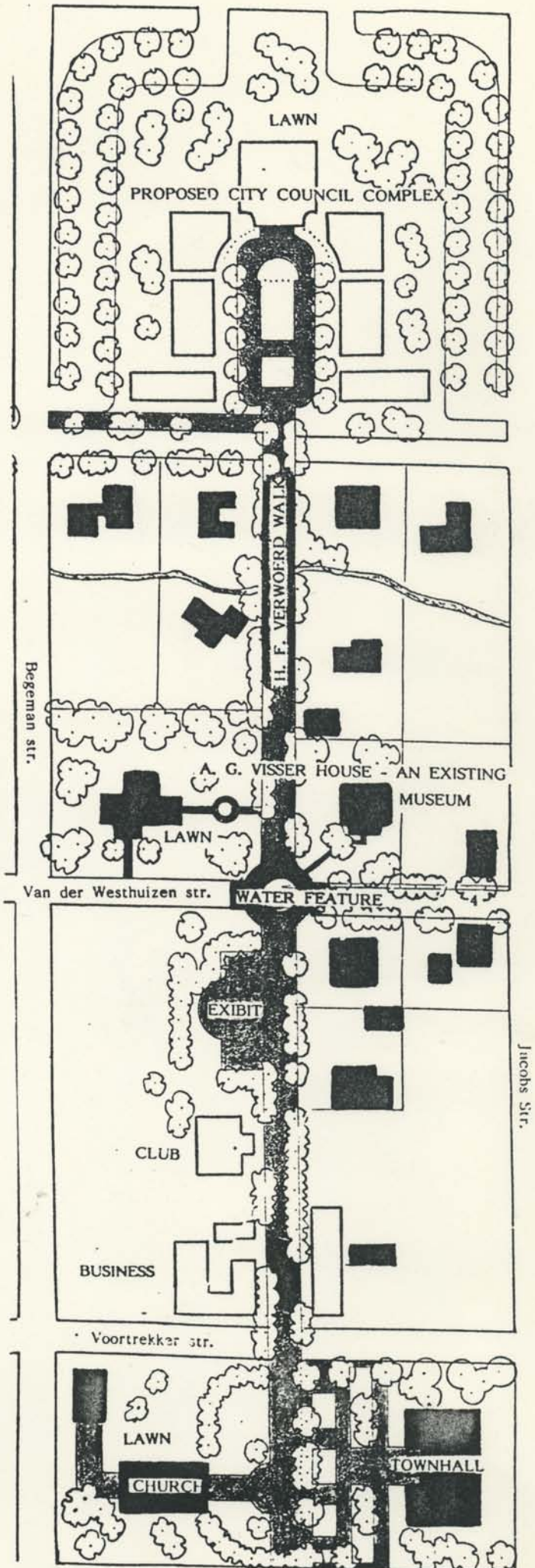
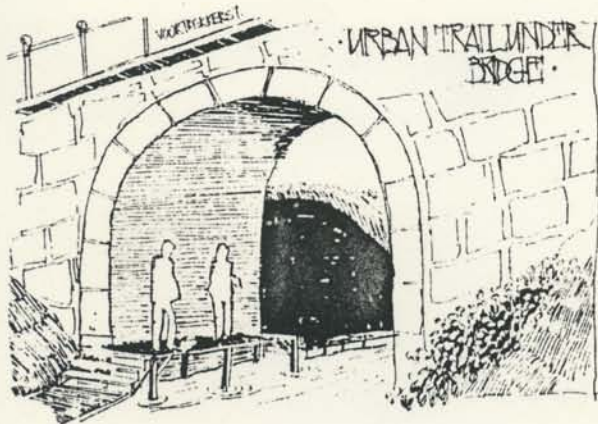
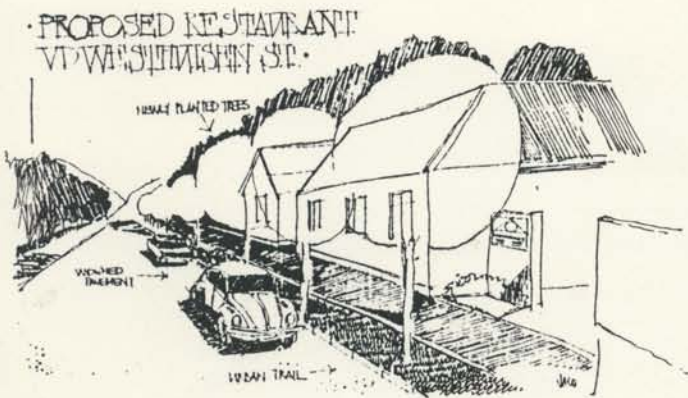
- \*create a safe, functional and aesthetically pleasing nature trail or walkway
- \*protect and conserve existing environmental resources.

It was also proposed that the development should have regional significance in that it should be able to tie in with a larger trail system proposed for the whole P.W.V. area.

#### APPROACH

A period of three weeks was allocated to complete the project. This involved a site analysis, concept design and master design. Each of these three steps were to be illustrated using plans, sketches and details. The approach was to divide the project into three sections, according to the three spruits in the town. Each section was undertaken by a separate group of

Proposal by architecture students for the possible pedestrianisation of Verwoerd street.



students. It was important that these three groups worked together so as to derive at a uniform proposal.

#### SITE ANALYSIS

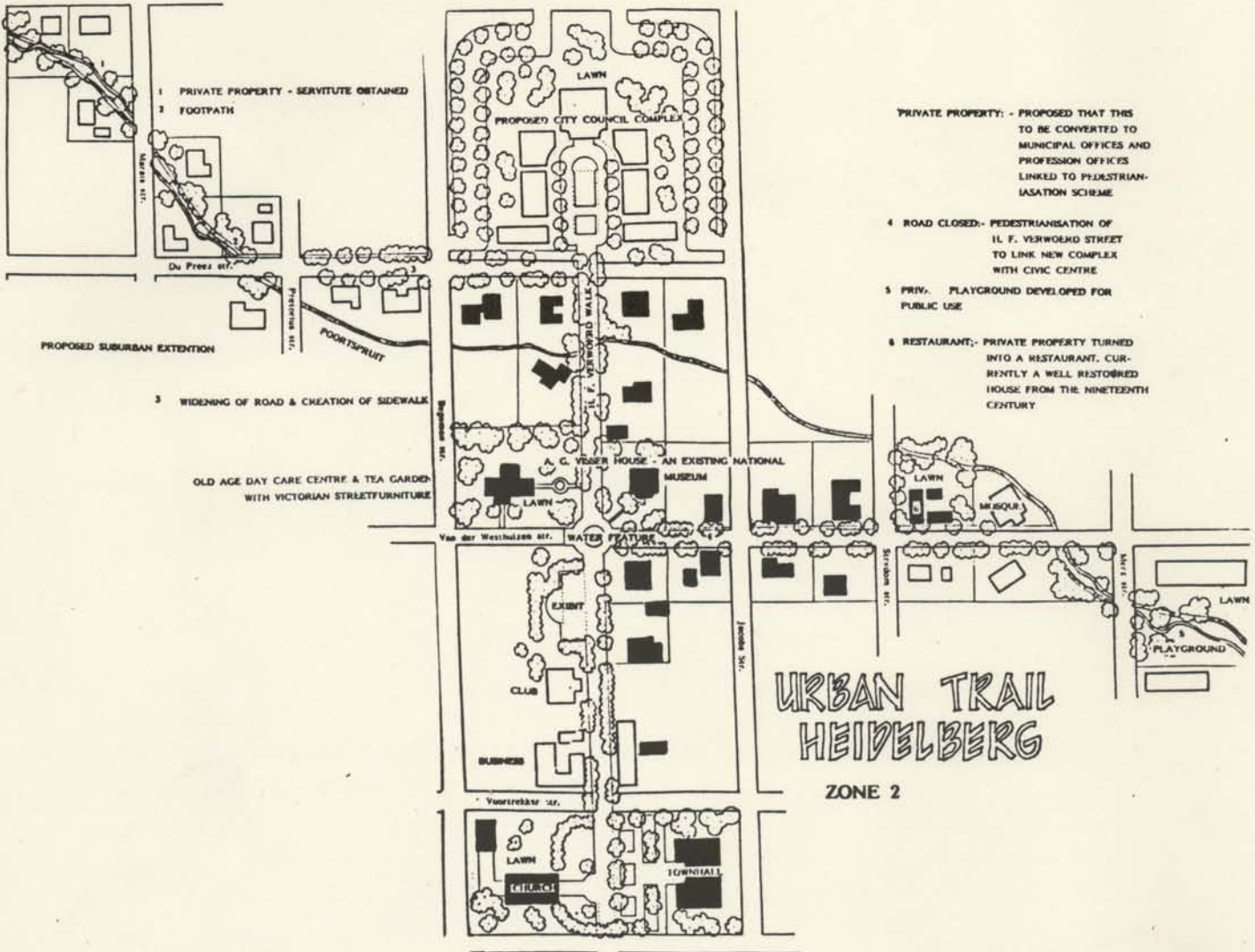
The purpose of the analysis was to identify existing characteristics and current uses of the three spruits and their surroundings, which could significantly affect the establishment of the trails. All rational development proposals were to be based on the preliminary site analysis.

Existing characteristics along the three spruits include environmental and historical assets unique to Heidelberg. Also, they include limitations endemic to the area which would have to be respected to avoid environmental degradation.

The site analysis is represented by way of plans, sketches and accompanying notes. Amongst the various facets analysed, were the physical characteristics of the area (hydrology, topography and vegetation types) and the site uses (land use, zoning, land ownership, circulation and utilities). Once the proposed area of development was established, it was divided into design zones, each of which were analysed individually:

#### Zone 1 - Upper Poortspruit

This zone differs from the next four in that it is situated outside the town and as a result it has natural characteristics which the other zones lack. The river water is relatively free of pollution and flows into a picturesque dam. Birdlife and diverse vegetation contribute to the aesthetic beauty of the area. The site analysis revealed negative characteristics such as:



PRIVATE PROPERTY: - PROPOSED THAT THIS TO BE CONVERTED TO MUNICIPAL OFFICES AND PROFESSION OFFICES LINKED TO PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME

4 ROAD CLOSED: - PEDESTRIANISATION OF IL F. VERWOED STREET TO LINK NEW COMPLEX WITH CIVIC CENTRE

5 PRIV. PLAYGROUND DEVELOPED FOR PUBLIC USE

6 RESTAURANT: - PRIVATE PROPERTY TURNED INTO A RESTAURANT. CURRENTLY A WELL RESTORED HOUSE FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1 PRIVATE PROPERTY - SERVITUDE OBTAINED

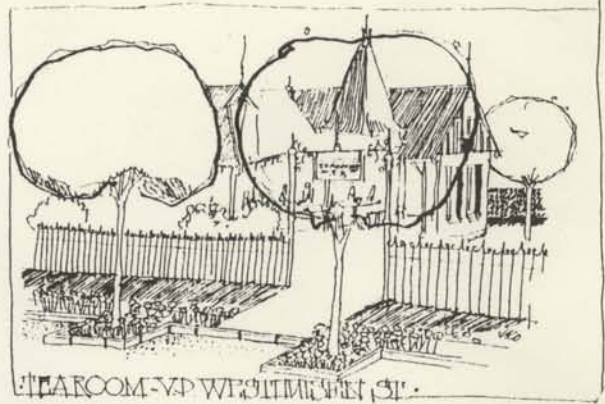
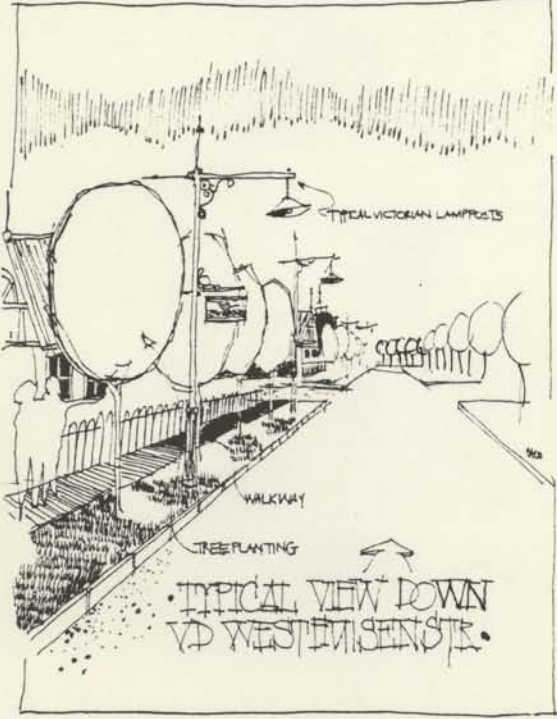
2 FOOTPATH

3 WIDENING OF ROAD & CREATION OF SIDEWALK

OLD AGE DAY CARE CENTRE & TEA GARDEN WITH VICTORIAN STREET FURNITURE

# URBAN TRAIL HEIDELBERG

ZONE 2



- \*the passing N3 highway which borders the terrain
- \*an unsightly security fence which crosses the river at two points
- \*a proposed suburban extension bordering the river
- \*sections of the river embankment which are too marshy for pedestrian access.

#### Zone 2 - Lower Poortspruit

Zone 2 transgresses urban and suburban Heidelberg. The analyses revealed the following negative aspects:

- \*much of the land bordering the spruit is privately owned, creating access problems
- \*roads and buildings were in poor repair and pedestrian circulation was not catered for
- \*the few green areas which do exist along the spruit are overgrown and have become illegal dumping sites
- \*an unsightly bus terminal borders the confluence of the Blesbok and Poortspruit.

Numerous places of historical interest and reminders of the Victorian era are to be found in this zone.

#### Zone 3 & 4 - Blesbokspruit

This is the larger of the three spruits and can therefore be used for watersports. A green belt runs the length of the trail. The illegal dumping sites along this green belt have ruined the area.

#### Zone 5 - Kloofspruit

The Kloofspruit flows from the Suikerbosrand kloof through the town and into the Blesbokspruit. The potential of this area lies in the various places of interest along the route. The route is predominantly through suburban Heidelberg and private land ownership

extends to the banks of the spruit, making access difficult in places.

#### THE CONCEPTS

The planning of the five zones is done according to the same conceptual principles, these principles being used as a basis to the masterplans. The concepts must be seen as the means of deriving at abovementioned aims and objectives. The design concept is represented by way of concept plans and graphic illustrations.

The conceptual ideas are summarised under the following headings:

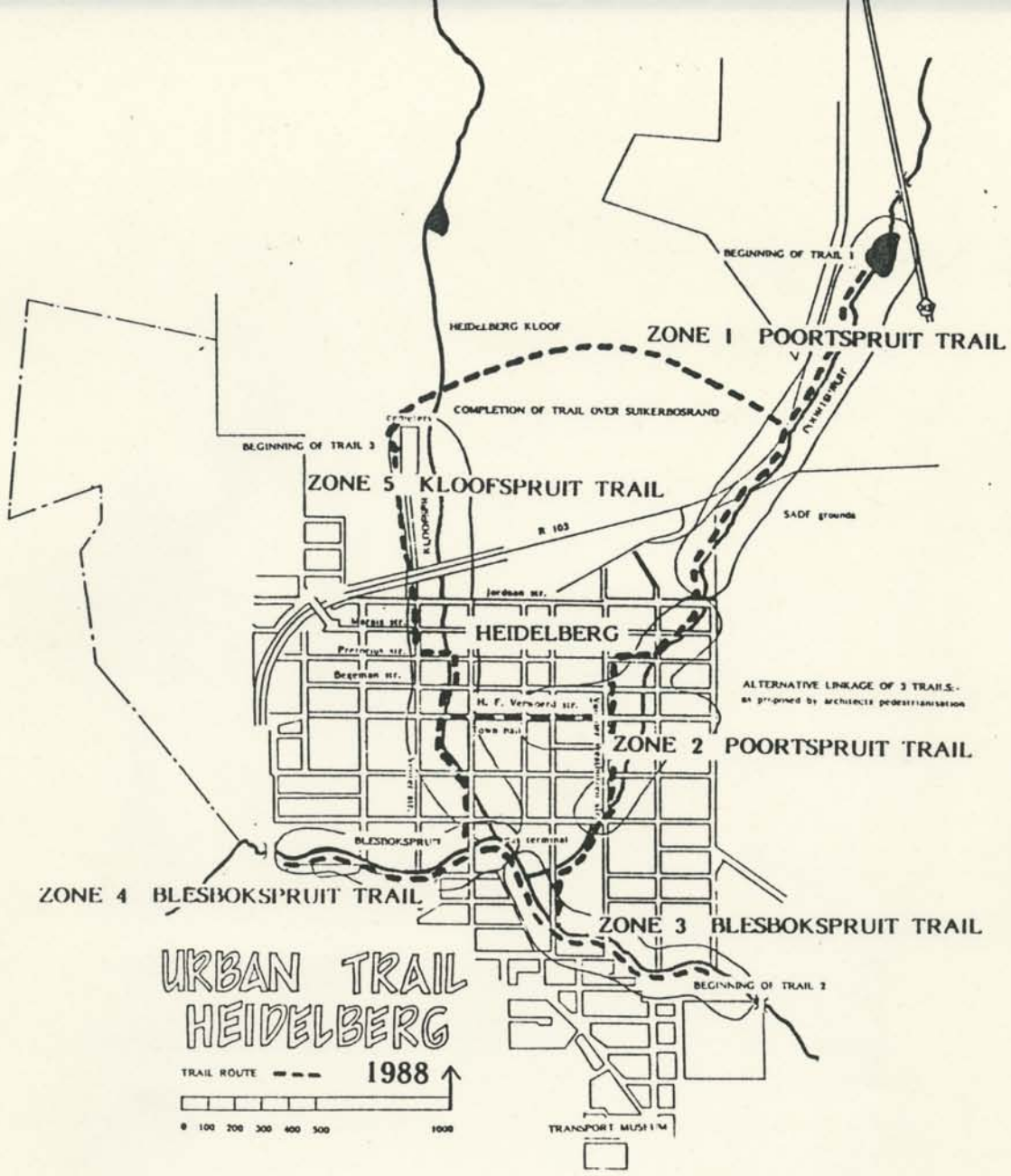
##### Unification:

At present, Heidelberg is a diverse assortment of details and planting, the predominant style being Victorian. The idea that the three trails should adopt a standard style of landscape development (Victorian) is a concept that will harmonize and unify street furniture, lighting elements and structures, with the Victorian character of the surrounding town.

A further concept is to physically link the Poort, Kloof and Blesbokspruit trails, the idea being to create a circular trail which would encompass the abovementioned three trails.

##### Multiple use:

The concept of the multiple usage of the trails is both a practical and functional consideration. The concept plans make provision for a wide spectrum of people, both residents and outsiders. It is envisaged that the development would cover many diverse





activities (nature trails, sport and recreation and education).

Enhancement:

The rural and urban environments of the spruits provide a diversity of land forms, historical sites and vegetation species. The trail development should be located to relate sympathetically to its surroundings. A practical concept decided upon would be to enhance and restore existing features and facilities rather than to add to or replace them.

The following concepts formed a basis to further enhancement:

- \*designs to limit, control and irradiate pollution and erosion within the trail area
- \*the creation of buffer zones to hide unsightly views and minimize noise
- \*renovate, restore and maintain the area's aesthetic quality
- \*the creation of visual nodes and focal points as a means of simplifying and emphasizing the trail route.

Regional significance:

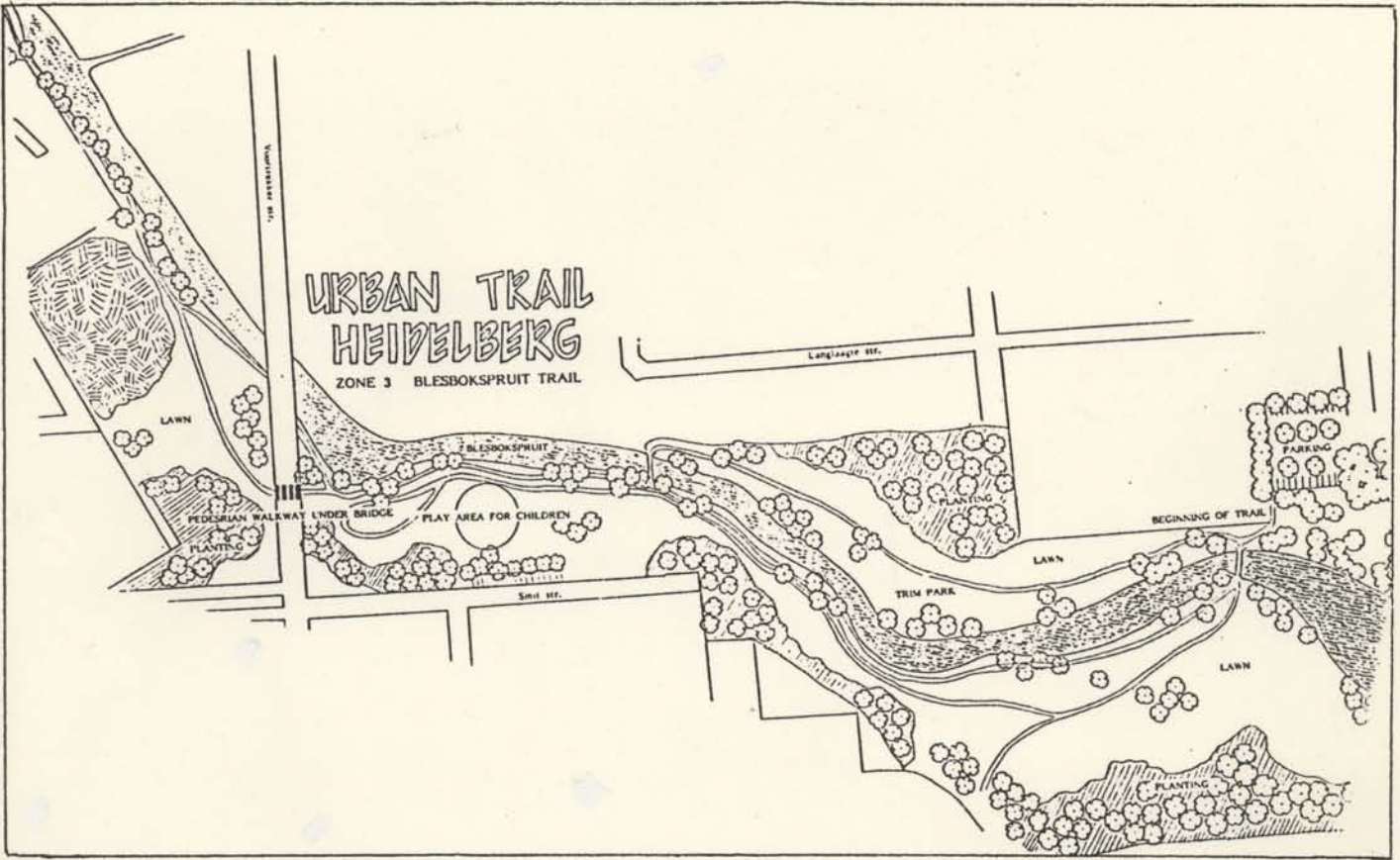
A long term concept would be to link this undertaking with a proposed P.W.V. trail development scheme. Facilities would have to be provided to accommodate such a link.

THE MASTERPLAN

The masterplan illustrates the proposed redevelopment of the Poortspruit (zone 1 & 2, trail 1), the Blesbokspruit (zone 3 & 4, trail 2) and the

# URBAN TRAIL HEIDELBERG

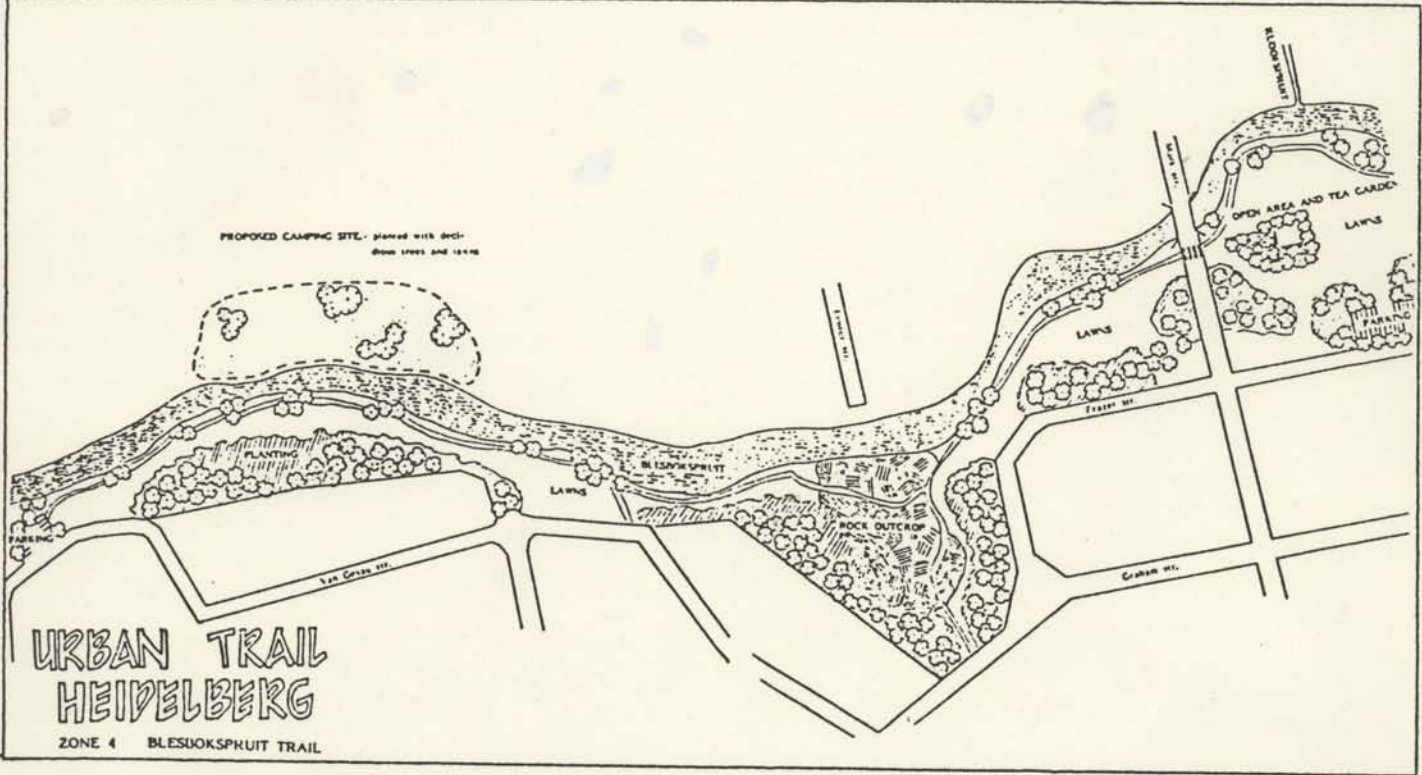
ZONE 3 BLESBOKSPRUIT TRAIL



PROPOSED CAMPING SITE - planted with deciduous trees and 12' x 16'

# URBAN TRAIL HEIDELBERG

ZONE 4 BLESUOKSPHUIT TRAIL



Kloofspruit (zone 5, trail 3). The design derives from the analysis of the problems and potentials to identify design opportunities. A summary of the masterplan design and design proposals are as follows:

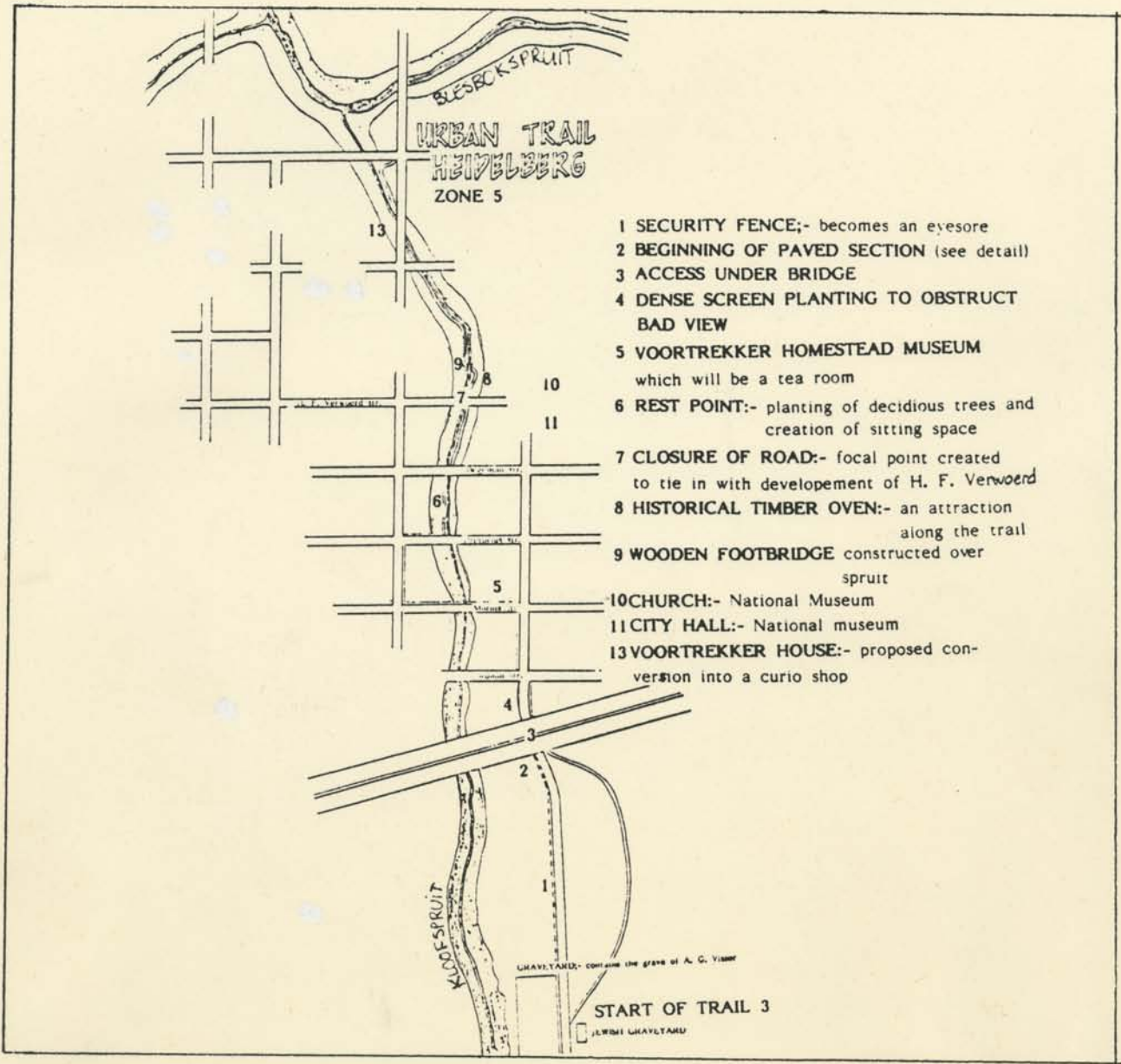
Zone 1:

The masterplan of this rural section of the trail involves the refining of the aesthetic qualities of the environment. A green belt of trees, indigenous to the region follows the trail along the river bank. Densely vegetated buffer zones obstruct any undesirable views. A small farm dam is the starting point of the trail and parking bays are provided.

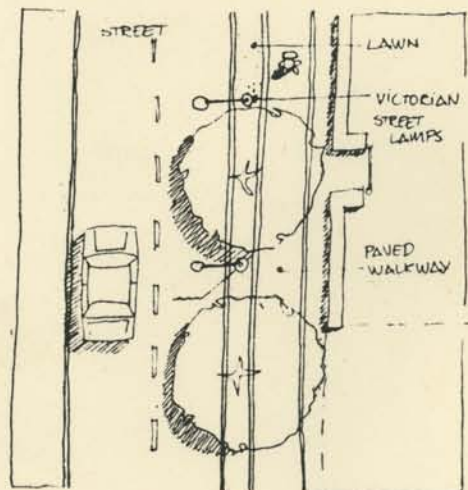
Zone 2:

This section of the spruit flows through the suburbs of Heidelberg as well as the central business district. Where access is possible, pedestrian circulation has been provided for by means of a paved walkway alongside the spruit. It is proposed that servitudes be obtained by the municipality to facilitate this access. Where access has become impossible, the trail is diverted down van der Westhuizen street passing the town's best examples of Victorian architecture. The house of the famous South African poet, A G Visser, is one of a number of national monuments passed by the trail. Where the trail passes through the C.B.D. it has been integrated with the pedestrianization of H. F. Verwoerd street as proposed by the architectural students. Tea rooms and picnic sites have been added at convenient intervals. Sidewalks, street furniture and renovations are all in keeping with the Victorian style of the town. This section of the trail is terminated where the Poortspruit runs into the Blesbokspruit.

Zone 3 & 4



Trail 3 - passing "sweepood" (?)



Detail of urban walkway

The Blesbokspruit lends itself to a suburban trail. These proposals exploit this potential. The lack of natural grass has been replaced by lawns interspersed with clumps of indigenous trees. Dense tree planting has been used on the perimeter of the trail area to screen the unsightly affects of urbanization. Stylized route indicators mark out the trail which winds through an existing trimpark, playpark and a series of scenic rock formations. Camping and watersport facilities are proposed so as to make this section of the development multi-functional.

#### Zone 5

The Kloofspruit trail is similar in design to the Poortspruit trail. The trail starts at the cemetary which houses the grave of A G Visser. Where possible, a green belt has been created along the banks of the spruit. Historical attractions such as the Voortrekker museum form an integral part of the urban trail. The trail links up with the proposed H.F. Verwoerd pedestrianization scheme before terminating on the bank of the Blesbokspruit.

#### CONCLUSION

This challenging project required a stimulating and successful interaction amongst the students. With limited time available, the design problems were resolved with zeal and imagination, culminating in a proposal that fully meets the brief.

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Department Landscape Architecture, University of Pretoria. September 1988.

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