

### 3.1 CLIENT AND USER PROFILE

#### 3.1.1 Client

The Melrose Arch site was first purchased by the Mine Officials' Pension Fund (Sentinel Mining Industry Retirement Fund and Property Partners). Their idea was to create a living, working and recreational space in a single development, something unique for South Africa. "The master plan is based on traditional town planning notions of mixed-use, connectivity, an integrated open street system and clearly defined public and private domains." (Arup et al, 2004: 1)

The entire development was recently sold to Southern Palace (Pty) LTD, a wholly owned subsidiary of Property Partners, a Cape-based equity finance and development company, which is planning to continue with the project and start phase 2 later in 2005. According to Stuart Chait, the CEO of Property Partners, they intend to maintain the standards and quality of the aesthetic integrity of the scheme. They will also be introducing more restaurants, coffee shops, cinemas and top grocery stores to the area. (Wilson 2005: 1, www.knowledgeplex.co.za)

According to an article in the 'Rapport' of April 10, 2005, Property Partner intends to sell part of the ground for some of the new projects to developers, but is also willing to collaborate with developers through the formation of joint ventures. (Van Rooyen 2005: 14) This cinema multiplex project to be developed as a prototype initiative, will be seen as a joint venture between Property Partners and Nedbank, who has sponsored projects like the IMAX in Menlyn, as well as the IMAX in Hyde Park that has since been closed.

A company like Numetro Theatres will be involved in the development of the project and the feasibility of the project.

### 3.1.2 User

Cinemas are one of the most universal art forms and communicators and the profile of the viewing public will encompass people of all ages and cultures, including young skilled professionals that work in the precinct to students, older people living in the Melrose area and children. By ensuring that buildings support sustainability and are inclusive, replication is avoided and changes in use are supported. Adequate facilities will be provided for disabled people, for example, lifts, adequate internal dimensions and appropriate toilet facilities. Although children under the age of 18 do not readily use Melrose Arch during the day, they will be exposed to the cinema multiplex for educational purposes that will be organised by their schools or visit the facility with parents or friends. The cinema will also attract teenagers during the evening and on weekends for entertainment purposes.

Although the multiplex can be used by everyone, the emphasis on the design decisions will be based mainly on the use of the multiplex by skilled young professionals, students and the disabled.

Edwin Heathcote (2001:49) stated that a new audience has been discovered in adults rather than adolescents and lowest common denominators that have been the ubiquitous targets of the marketing people for the last few decades. Bars and bookshops are as likely to be found in urban cinemas as arcade games and burgers

are in out-of-towners.

Visiting tourists will also form part of the user group and due to the fact the Melrose Arch is a mixed-use development, it will also cater for the residents of the Precinct.

A major goal for the outdoor cinema is to provide for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup as well as any other sporting and similar events, concerts and events of significant importance. According to speculations, tickets for the World Cup in 2010 will be expensive, due to the fact that they will cater for tourists, consequently the middle class South African will not be able to afford it. The outdoor cinema will thus provide an opportunity for these people to watch the games in an entertaining and vibrant setting.

### 3.2 MELROSE ARCH – URBAN DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The developers of the Melrose Arch precinct have established certain objectives that serve as guidelines for architects and designers working in the precinct. These objectives include:

- To explore the development opportunities that exist within the Melrose Arch precinct, by integrating the structure of the precinct proposal with its surrounding context. The surrounding global, as well as local, contexts are analysed in terms of their movement/economic potentials.
- To increase the accessibility of all elements of the precinct to be used over



Fig 9-10. Photos of current buildings in the Melrose Arch precinct

- a 24 hour period, a vital component to the sustainability of the proposal.
- To create an environment that is both safe and secure for tenants/residents and visitors alike. Urban form plays a vital role in attaining a safe and secure public realm in that buildings may be used to define public and private realms.
- To create an environment that promotes security by activity, public presence, and ownership of the public realm, as opposed to the conventional notion of security by isolation and separation.
- To explore development flexibility; ensuring a structure that may respond to changing markets and requirements.
- To include elements of a well designed city, which will contribute to the uniqueness of the precinct, and be the fulcrum around which public life will revolve.
- To ensure that the urban environment of the precinct is integrated with the natural environments that exist along and beyond its boundaries.
- To create an environment that promotes ease of movement for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.
- To test and make proposals for the distribution of existing rights (bulk) on the site. Distributing bulk areas across the site will enhance the urban nature of the precinct, and alleviate certain economic constraints that have arisen due to geo-technical problems within the site boundaries. (Arup et al, 2004: 2)

### 3.3 SITE – PHYSICAL LOCATION

#### 3.3.1 Site choice

After considering different buildings and sites in Pretoria CBD as well as within the Johannesburg area, a site in the Melrose Arch development, Phase 2, was chosen. (Fig 11) It complies with all the criteria mentioned above. This is largely due to the fact that it is centrally located and easily accessible. According to David Curry from Osmond Lange Architects and Planners, they are planning an entertainment area for Phase 2 of this development.

The framework for the buildings of phase 2 has been proposed but not finalized as Melrose Arch has been sold. Thus, there is currently no design for any of the buildings of Phase 2. By using the existing urban design canvas that has already been implemented throughout the precinct, a shell will be created for the purpose of this dissertation that will house the cinema multiplex.

The goal of this project is to design a cinema centre, which will appeal to its users and will complement the Melrose Arch Development.

#### 3.3.2 Location – Melrose Arch within Johannesburg

According to the Regional Spatial Development Framework of Johannesburg (RSDF) 2004/2005, Melrose Arch falls in Region 3 – Sandton and in Sub area 21 Melrose North. This region has a growing high quality tourism infrastructure,



Fig 11. Photograph of site from the south

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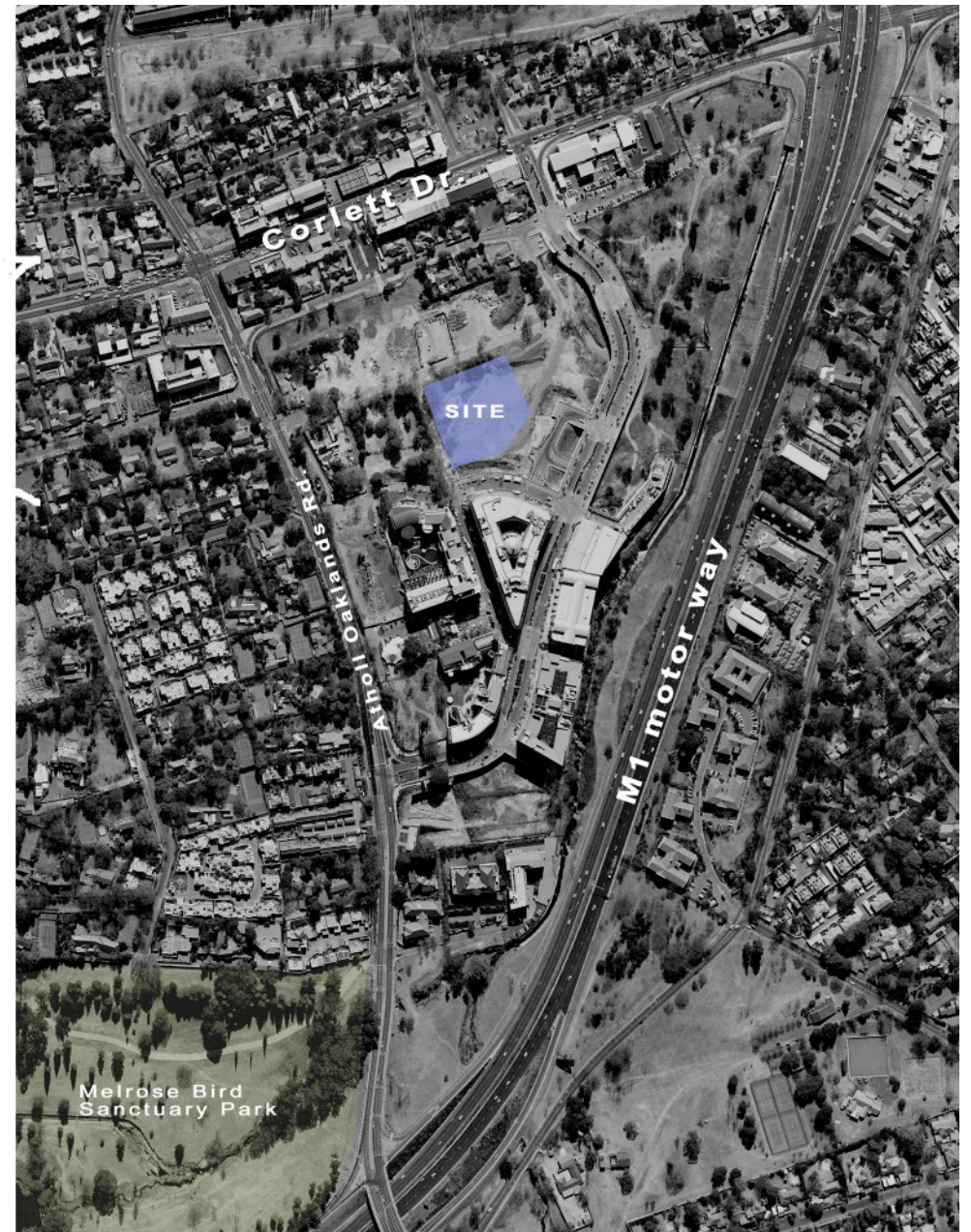


Fig 12 - 13. 12. Map of Gauteng. 13. Map of the Melrose and surrounding regions

Fig 14. Aerial photograph of Melrose Arch

which boasts some of the country's top hotels, conference facilities, shopping and entertainment centres and sporting and recreational facilities, added to the international pedigree. The Sandton region falls within an area of relatively high environmental quality comprising commercial and high-income residential areas. Various walking trails, parks and open spaces can be found in this Region, as well as streams associated with green areas and nature reserves.

“Road linkages in this region on the north-south axis are good, although there is a problem of congestion. The east-west linkages are less well developed. There is considerable traffic congestion in the area as a result of employment and entertainment opportunities.”(RSDF 2004/2005)

Melrose Arch is centrally located to the North-East of Johannesburg between Sandton and the Johannesburg CBD on the M1 motorway. (Fig 12-14) It can easily be accessed from Midrand and Pretoria. On its north side is Illovo and Birnam Park, on the east side Waverly, on the south side the Melrose Bird Sanctuary and on the west side The Wanderers Cricket Stadium. Corlett Drive bounds the site to the north and Athol-Oaklands Road to the left. Both of these roads have on and off ramps to the M1 highway making the flow of traffic more efficient.

Melrose Arch has been criticised numerously on its social context and related issues. Achille Mbembe, a research professor in history and politics at the University of the Witwatersrand stated in his article – *Fantasies of the metropolis* – that Melrose Arch can be defined as a synthetic spacetime, constructed tableaux on to which disparate images are grafted. Its architectural style is based on the recombination of borrowed imagery. It is marketed by private developers and property owners in contrast to an unravelling, chaotic city-centre besieged by swarming and inchoate crowds, incessant shouting and peddling, and a failure to contain disease, crime and pestilence. (2005: 28)

Melrose Arch forms a ‘utopia’, a new ideal city within a city, standing ignorant to the bigger picture. It can be seen as an elite space with the main focus on consumerism in contrast with Alexandra township’s indigence just a stone’s throw away.

On the positive side Melrose Arch promotes pedestrian and vehicle movement to co-exist. People feel safe and the precinct has a pedestrian scale, which adds to the vibrancy of the sidewalks.

### 3.3.3 Location – site within Melrose Arch

The entire Melrose Arch Development will consist of 37 buildings, lying on a two

level super basement. “Melrose Arch is sold to residents and visitors not as a theatre of consumption but as a social environment, a “community”, and a place where people can eat, dance, listen to music, enjoy a good conversation, drink coffee, interact and be entertained.” (Mbembe 2005: 24)

Developers planned Melrose Arch according to the Traditional Urbanism framework – “New Urbanism”. Characteristics of this framework include:

- “An interconnected system of streets
- Greater proximity of a variety of uses
- Daily needs within walking distance
- Sharing of infrastructure across a 24 hour period
- Supportive public transport
- A central focus: Local main street and public squares
- Density increased from the edge of the centre
- Buildings orientated to the public domain
- Clear distinction between public and private space
- Large open space on the periphery
- Small public spaces evenly spaced throughout.” (Arup et al 2004:3)

Perimeter blocks form the base of the Melrose Arch building development. (Fig 15) It defines both the public and the private realms. This is in contrast with pavilion buildings. “Pavilion buildings sit in indetermined spaces, retreating form the public realm of the interconnected streets.” (Arup et al 2004: 5) (Fig 16) Perimeter blocks sit on the edge of the street and right against each other with private domains as courtyards. By placing the building close to the pavement as well as by the use of

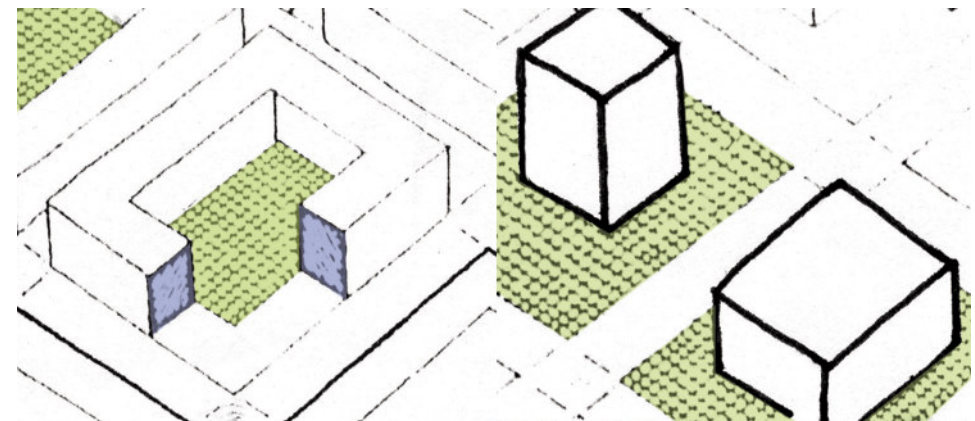


Fig 15. Perimeter block

Fig 16. Pavilion buildings

colonnades (covered passages), interest and safety are achieved. (Fig 17)

Melrose Arch will have three main roads when the development is complete. Only two of these roads have been built, Melrose Boulevard and High Street. The third one will be Whiteley Road. In the second phase of the development, High Street will be extended and it will run on the west side of the project's site. Whiteley will run on the north side. A minor street, Curve Street, will run on the east side.

According to the framework of Phase 2 of the development, they are planning a new formal square, The Melrose Square, which will be one of the focal points in the precinct. The chosen site for this project will form the west boundary of this square with a street separating the two. The building that will be designed together with the building on its north will form the gateway into the square. "Where a building site is identified as part of a gateway the architect must acknowledge both the significance of the gateway and the existence (if any) of other buildings relating to that gateway." (Arup et al 2004: 9) (Fig 18)

David Curry (an architect from the firm, Osmond and Lange which is involved with the Melrose Arch Development) stated that they have planned for the square to be used as an entertainment space for activities like public concerts, promotions and other events during all times of the day and week. A retail and entertainment axis will be created from the existing square, Old House Square to the proposed new Square, Melrose Square and the site for the cinema will form the middle point, node, of this axis. (Fig 19)

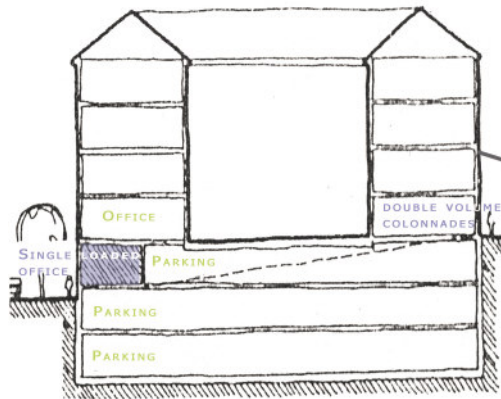


Fig 17. Single loaded office and double volume colonnade

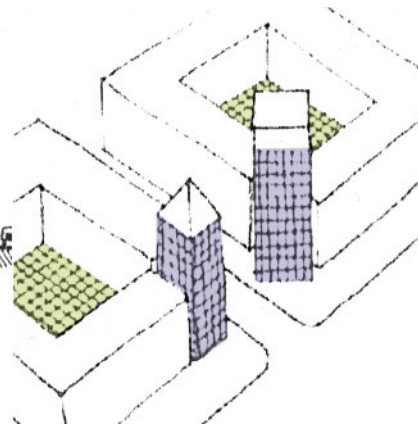


Fig 18. Gateway buildings

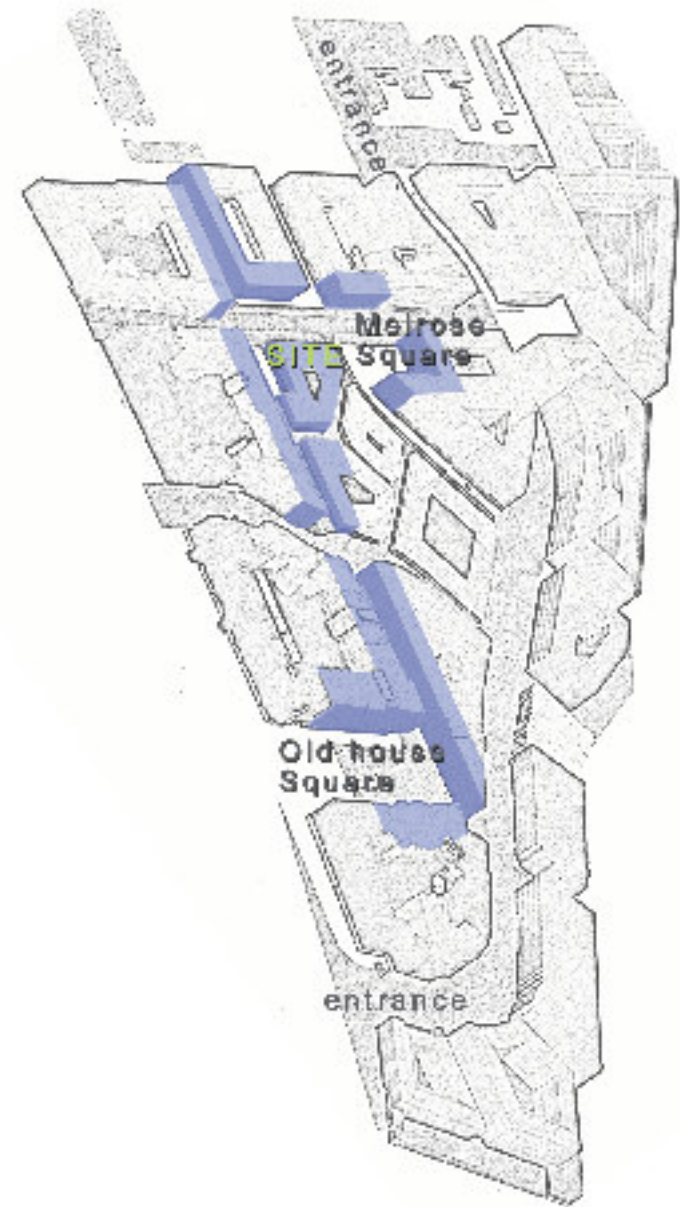


Fig 19. Retail zone and the two public squares in Melrose Arch

The super basement spans the footprint of the entire development and is used for parking and houses the services. At places where the entrance of a building is raised from the natural ground level and the slope of the site is of a certain nature, another level for parking would be added, like underneath the Virgin Active building. According to David Curry, the layout of the basement is a duplicate of the street system in the precinct – making it easier for users to orientate themselves.

Most of the services in the precinct as well as any elevator shafts, that serve as the entrances to buildings from the basement, are situated in the basement. Where the basement has been raised and faces the public streets, single loaded offices are used to hide it from the public eye. (Fig 17) Basement parking is accessed from minor streets so not to create traffic congestion in main streets. There is also possibility for on-street parking and this supports street life vibrancy.

Pedestrian movement is being encouraged in the whole precinct as mentioned in 3.3.2, for example by building large pavements, in some areas up to five meters wide. This is one of the key characteristics of Melrose Arch. Safety is an important aspect and is obtained in Melrose Arch, which also has an effect on the pedestrian movement. People feel safe and thus the streets are vibrant with activity.

Buildings that are right adjacent to the square will have continuous double volume colonnades, which will enhance the integrity of the square. “The Square of Melrose will be visually accessible from key positions in the grid, assisted by local landmarks within the square and surrounding architecture.” (Arup et al 2004: 8)

Excluding the design objectives mentioned above, the developers also established design guidelines for the buildings in the precinct. These guidelines will be used to form a framework from which the interior of the cinema and related facilities will evolve.

The building should be designed according to the perimeter block concept as mentioned above. A vital aspect to keep in mind is to retain the visual continuity of the street façade. (Fig 20) “A significant portion of the façade (80%) should be on the build-to line. Where setbacks and encroachments are incorporated it should not exceed 1,5 meters. Arup et al (2004: 11) comprise preferred building depths. For retail the depth is 17m, residential 10m and the depth of entertainment areas vary. “Multiple entrance must be created to encourage interaction between private and public areas, and to improve planning adaptability.” (Arup et al 2004: 12)

The proposed footprint and height, stipulated by Arup et al, for the building used in

this project is:

- Footprint: 3655.56m<sup>2</sup>
- Height: six stories

### 3.3.4 Noise

An important factor to consider is the fact that Melrose Arch is situated right next to the M1 motorway and thus noise may be problematic. This will be especially relevant in the design of the cinema auditorium, where acoustics are an imperative technical factor as well as in the positioning of the outdoor cinema in relation to the highway. There are also other factors that will contribute to the noise levels, such as the vibrant atmosphere created in the square with restaurants and performances that may take place any time of the day.

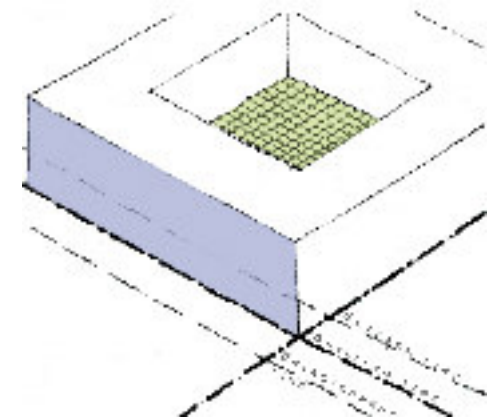


Fig 20. Build-to line

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