

## 2.1 Introduction

Different layers of context are investigated in this chapter: firstly, the proposed site as situated in an urban context; secondly, the existing buildings within which the project is situated. Furthermore, the proposed client is discussed, followed by different frameworks applied to the design.

## 2.2. Site analysis

The proposed site (fig.2.2) is situated in the heart of the Pretoria CBD, on Pretorius Street, a prominent, one-way road which feeds traffic into the city from the east. Although this is mainly a vehicular route containing cars, taxis and busses, large numbers of pedestrians also use it. This happens primarily on the sidewalks with canopies

# Chapter 2

# Context

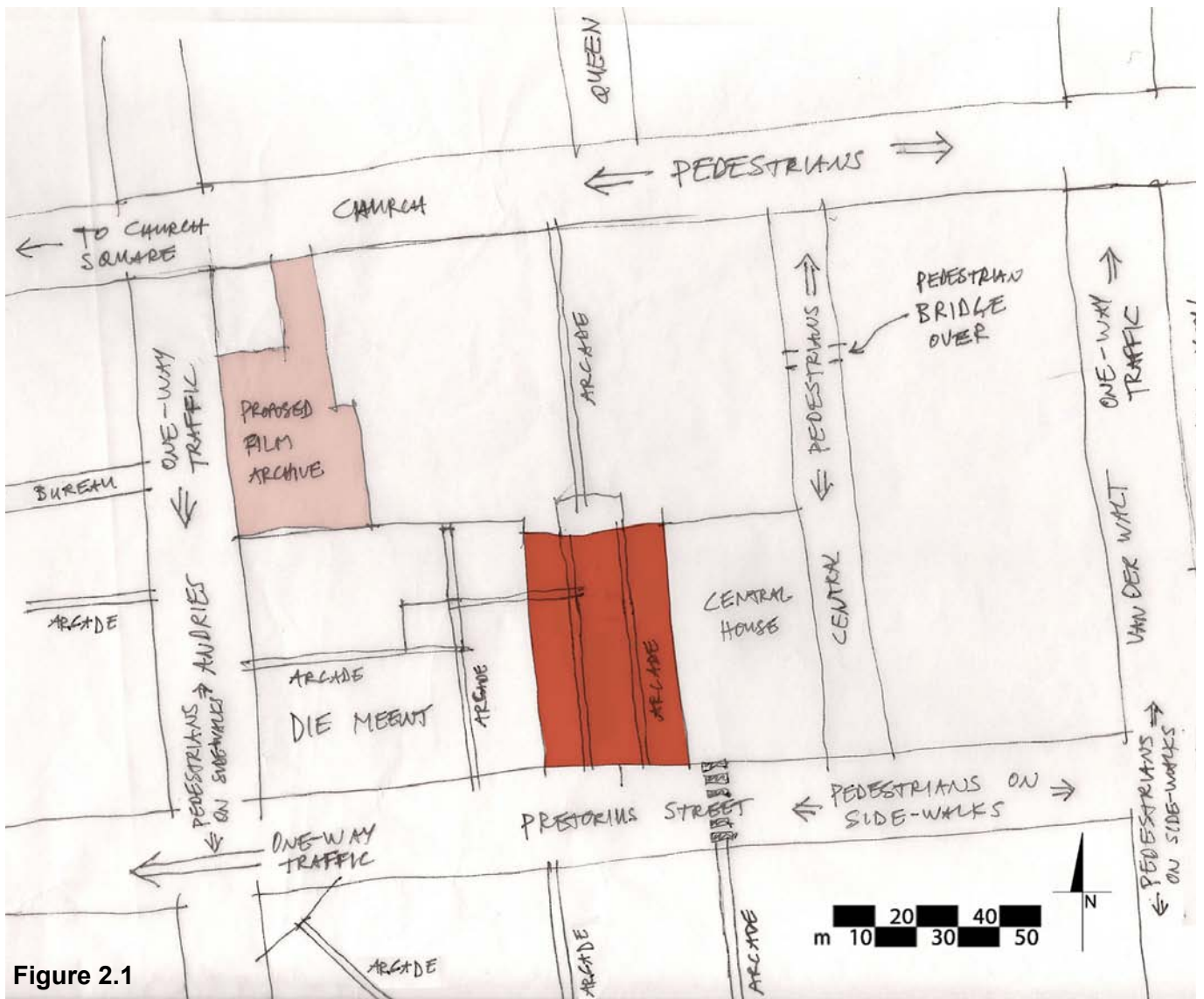


Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



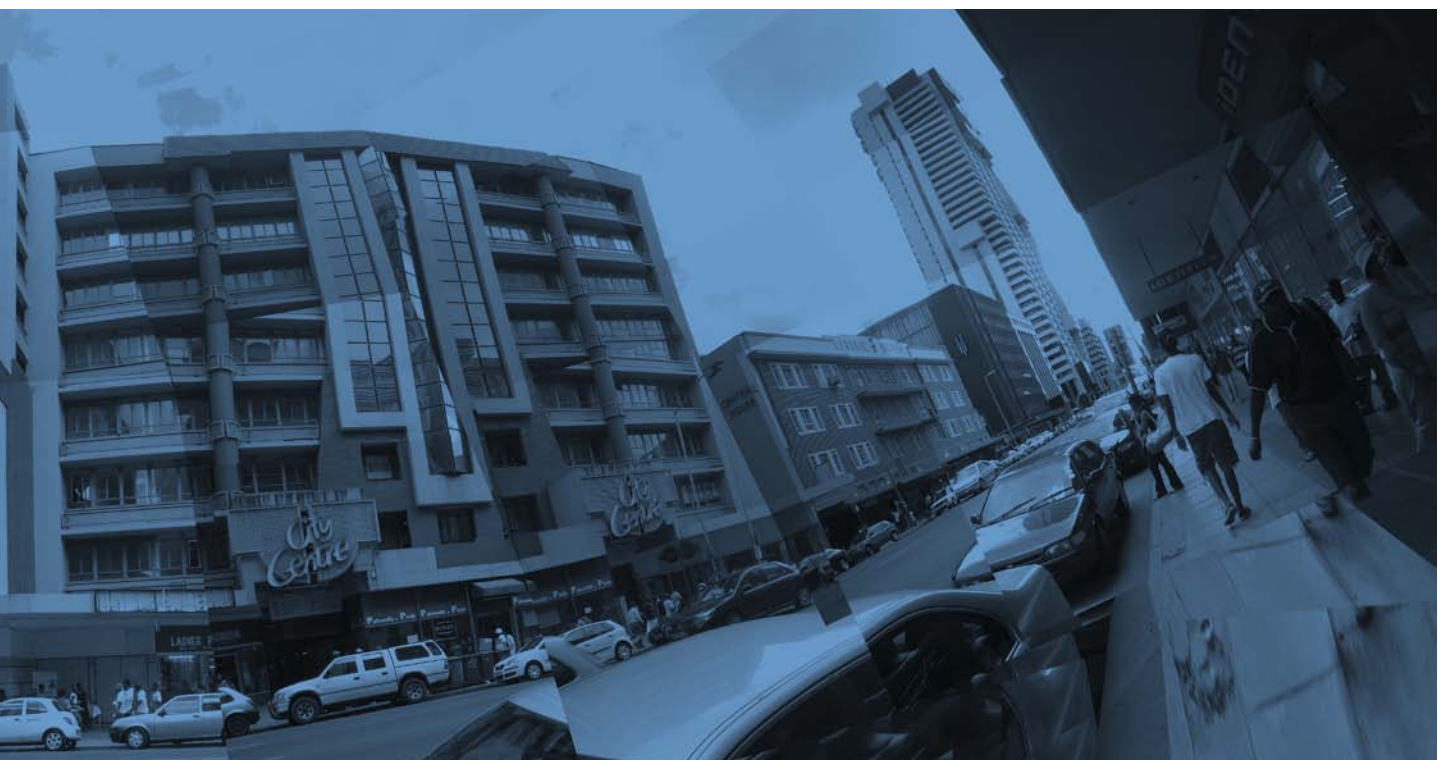
Figure 2.3

- Fig.2.1 - Sketch showing aspects of the proposed site (highlighted), in plan.
- Fig.2.2 - Multirama view of the proposed site.
- Fig.2.3 - 1947 aerial photograph of the Pretoria CBD with the proposed site highlighted.

projecting from the buildings, within arcades, and lastly, in dedicated pedestrian crossings with traffic lights (fig.2.1).

To the west of the site is Central House, a retail, office and apartment building that is significant, because of its Art Deco style (Le Roux 1990:91-92). It is also a historically protected building and thus over 60 years old, as evidenced on the 1947 aerial photograph of the region (fig.2.3). This is also the case with some of the neighbouring buildings (*ibid.*:88-95).

The city layout was originally based on the Roman city grid that was adjusted to the natural environment (Holm 1998:60, 62-63). Church Street is historically significant, because it is the *decumanus*, the main east-west street (*ibid.*:62). Currently it is the main pedestrian street in the Pretoria CBD connecting the two main open spaces of this area: Church







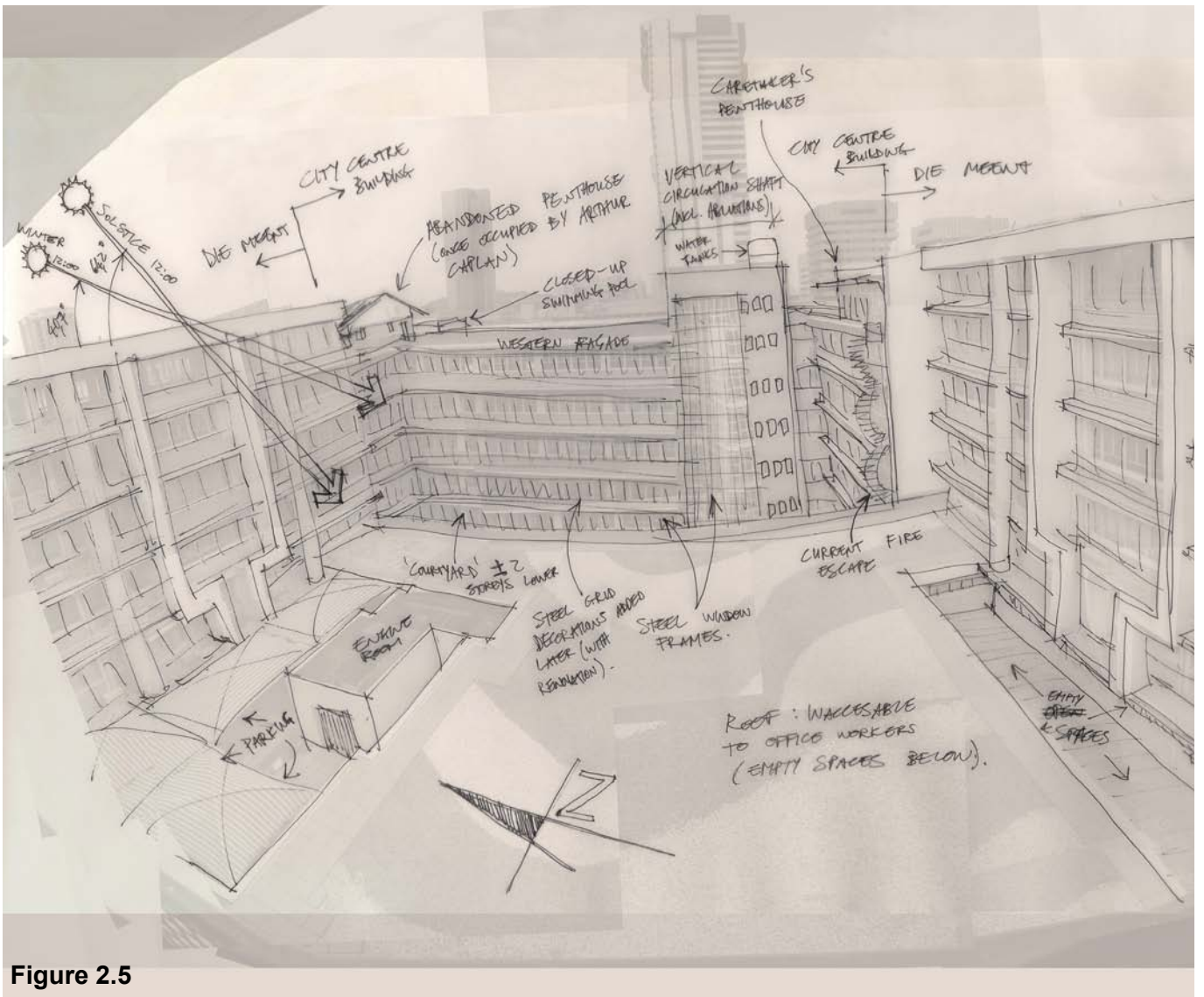
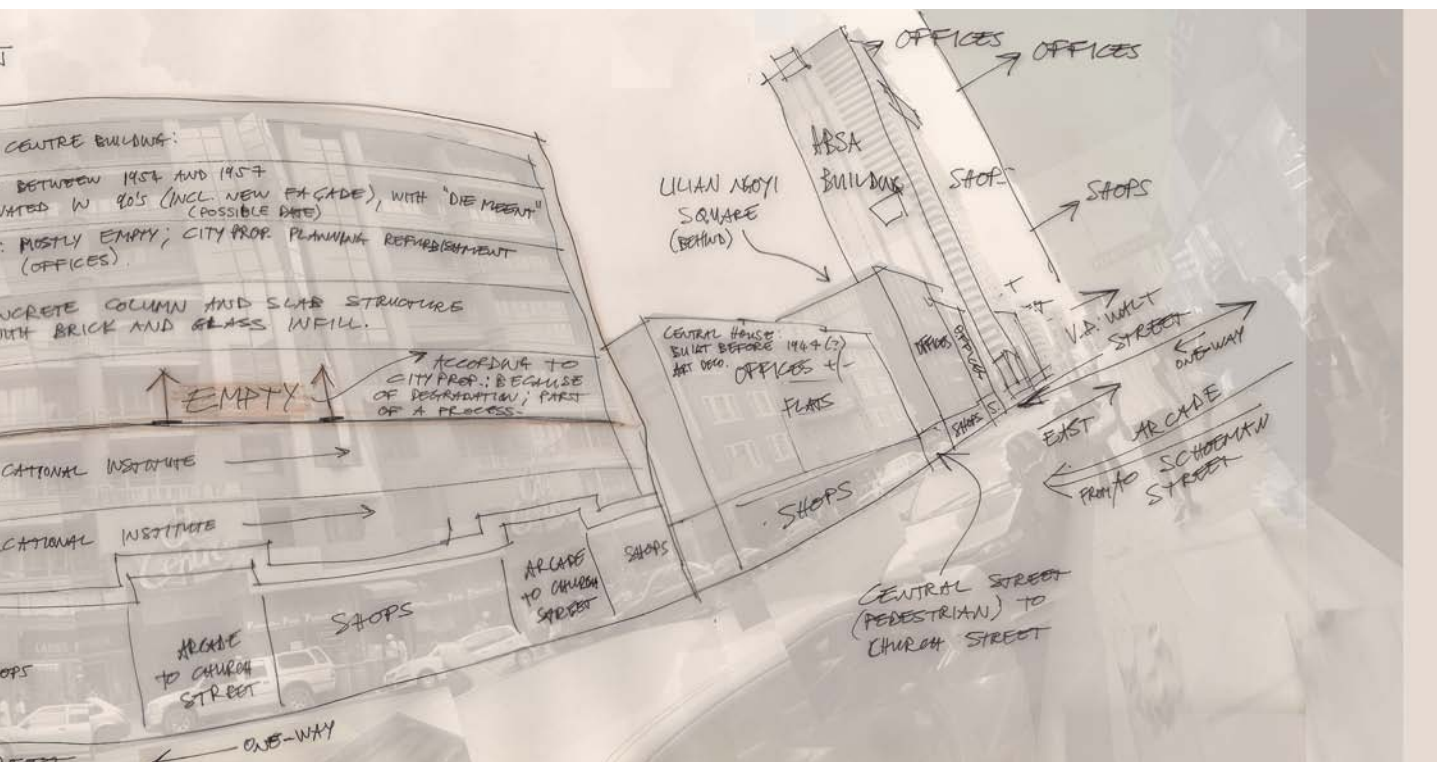


Figure 2.5







connect spatially at ground floor level, although they do share the same fire escape. City Property manages both buildings.

The City Centre building was built between 1954 and 1957. This is derived from old newspaper photographs of the Old Town Hall (figs.2.18 and 2.19, the latter having the original City Centre building in the background, the former with it not yet built). Fig.2.20 also shows the original modernist façade. Die Meent building was constructed on the Old Town Hall site in the 1970's, originally up to three storeys (Hoofstad 1975:24-25, fig.2.21) and later extended to its current size. Renovations were done on both buildings in the 1990's by Louis Peens Architects (van Rensburg 2009), which led to the buildings' current cohesive image. The façades on Pretorius Street of both buildings are a combination of painted and plastered surfaces,

**Fig.2.6 - Sketch of the eastern courtyard between the City Centre and Die Meent buildings, with characteristics indicated.**

**Fig.2.7 - Perspective rendering of the structure of abandoned spaces in the City Centre and Die Meent buildings, viewed from the eastern side of Pretorius Street:**

light grey - slabs and structural brickwork,  
orange - horizontal beams,  
blue - columns.

**Fig.2.8 - Perspective rendering of the structure of abandoned spaces in the City Centre and Die Meent buildings, viewed from the Central House building:**

light grey - slabs and structural brickwork,  
orange - horizontal beams,  
blue - columns.

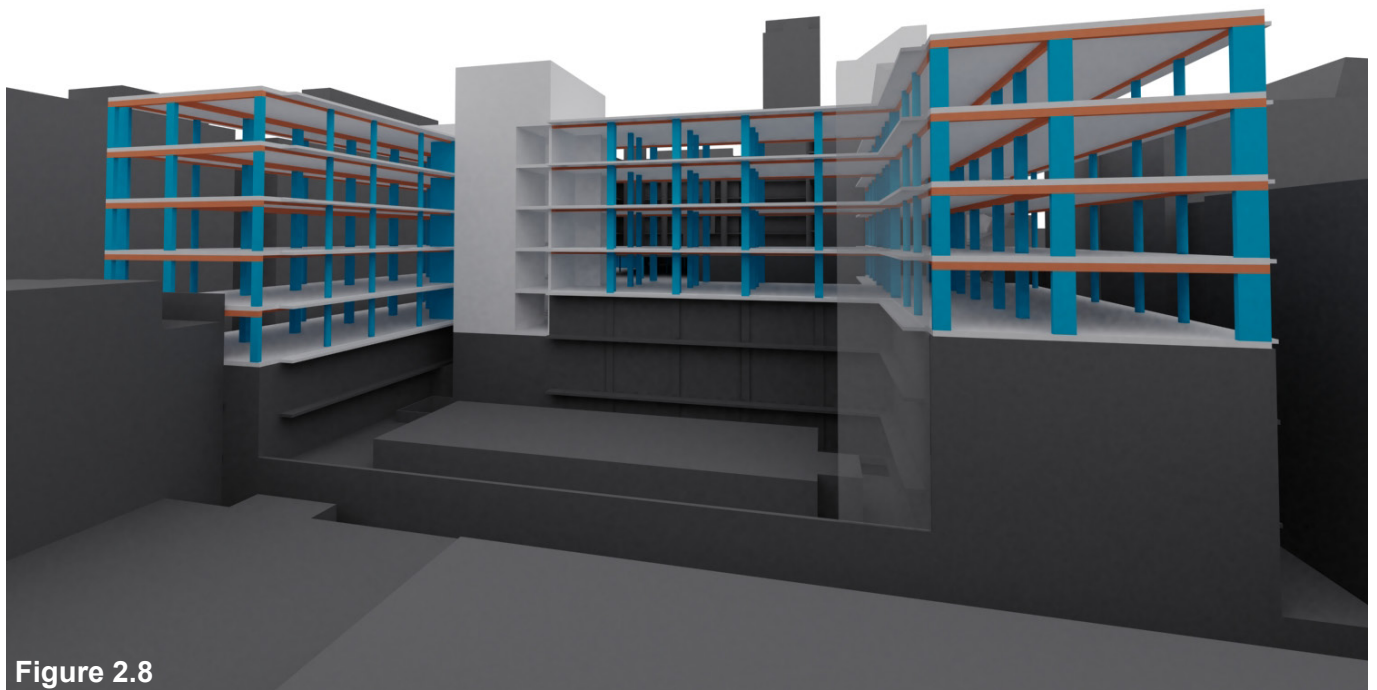


Figure 2.8





**Fig.2.9 - Multirama view of Pretorius Street from Die Meent building empty floor towards the east.**

**Fig.2.10 - Multirama view of the northern courtyard between the City Centre building and the luxury apartments building.**

**Fig.2.11 - Multirama view over Pretorius Street from Die Meent empty floor towards the south.**

**Fig.2.12 - View of the unused courtyard in between the empty spaces of Die Meent building.**

**Fig.2.13 - Multirama view of the Central House building and the eastern courtyard between it and the City Centre building, from the latter.**



**Figure 2.10**

**Figure 2.9**





Figure 2.11



Figure 2.12

face brick elements and steel decorations (figs.2.2 and 2.9). This theme is carried into the interiors of Die Meent building (fig.2.16). The City Centre building's façade remains unchanged, except for the same steel decorations fastened to the concrete cantilevering shading devices, and the brick infill façade of the western courtyard (figs.2.15 and 2.16). Both buildings' windows are made of standard steel window sections, together with concrete roofs and parapet walls.

The concrete frame structure of both the City Centre building and Die Meent building also consists of horizontal beams at some of the edges and in-between some of the columns (figs.2.7 and 2.8). Although this structure is restricting, it can be adapted slightly to aid in connecting the spaces of the two buildings. Due to level differences between the open spaces of these buildings, some parts of



Figure 2.13



Figure 2.14

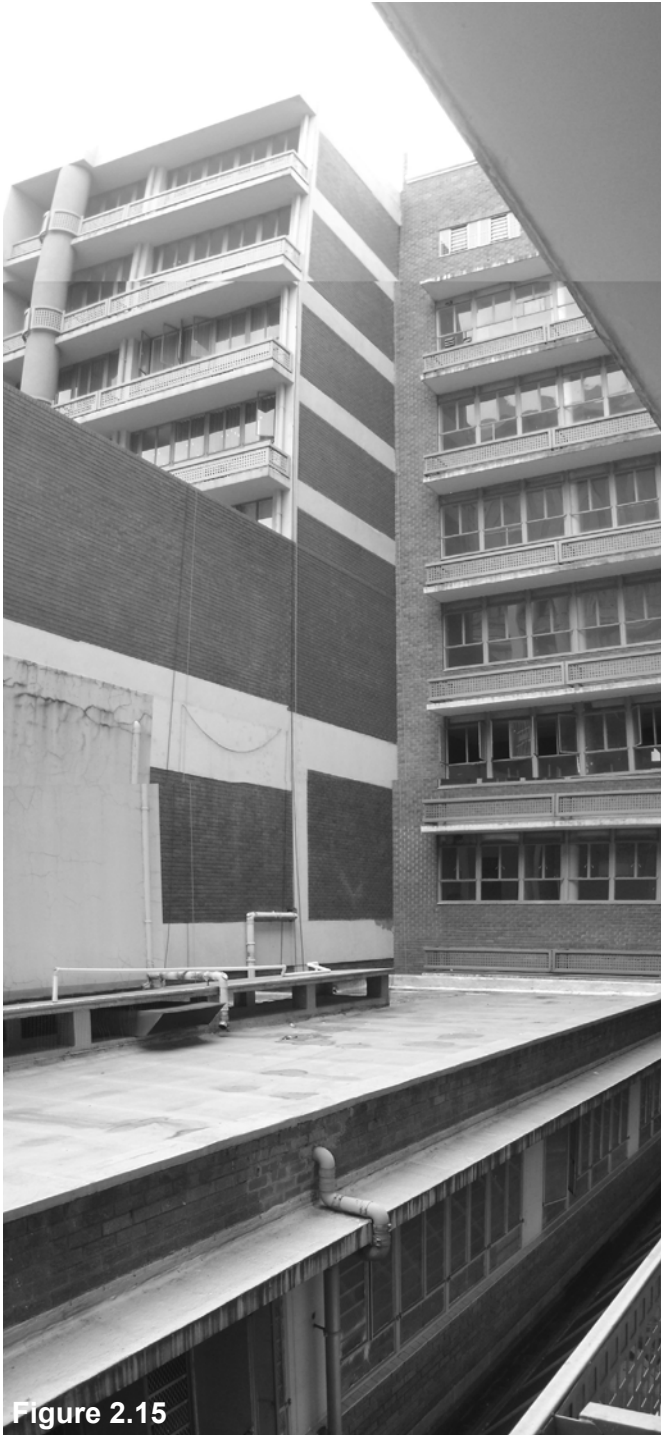


Figure 2.15

Fig.2.14 - Panorama view of the interior of an empty space in the southern block of the City Centre building.

Fig.2.15 - Vertical panorama view of the western courtyard of the City Centre building, with Die Meent building's largest courtyard to the left above.

Fig.2.16 - Multirama view from the northern block of Die Meent building towards the south to its largest courtyard, with the City Centre building to the left.





the slabs can be demolished, however removing a whole floor will be difficult and will generate too much concrete waste (Burdzik 2009).

#### 2.4. Client profile

City Property, the proposed primary client, currently manages City Centre and Die Meent buildings and is in the process of renovating their empty interiors, after which they plan to rent them out (Lalor 2009). Barnes Van Der Walt Architects handed a draft proposal to City Property during March 2009 (*ibid.*). The building will stay in its current state, until the shareholders approve the planned actions.

The proposed secondary client is MINI Space, an “urban initiative by MINI” ([www.minispace.com](http://www.minispace.com)). This team hosts events and competitions, with the





underlying theme of “creative use of space”. The principle behind the initiative is the original MINI motorcar and their events comprise of design competitions, parties, “the Young Directors Project”, etc. (*ibid.*). They promote many different fields of art and design, including architecture, photography, visual art and much more. Anyone can become part of this community via the Internet.

MINI Space also hosts physical events, such as the MINI Rooftop NYC, which was a social event hosted over a few days on the roof of a building in New York City (*ibid.*). MINI Space has not expressed the need for a permanent gallery and therefore this brief is hypothetical.

## 2.5. Application of group frameworks

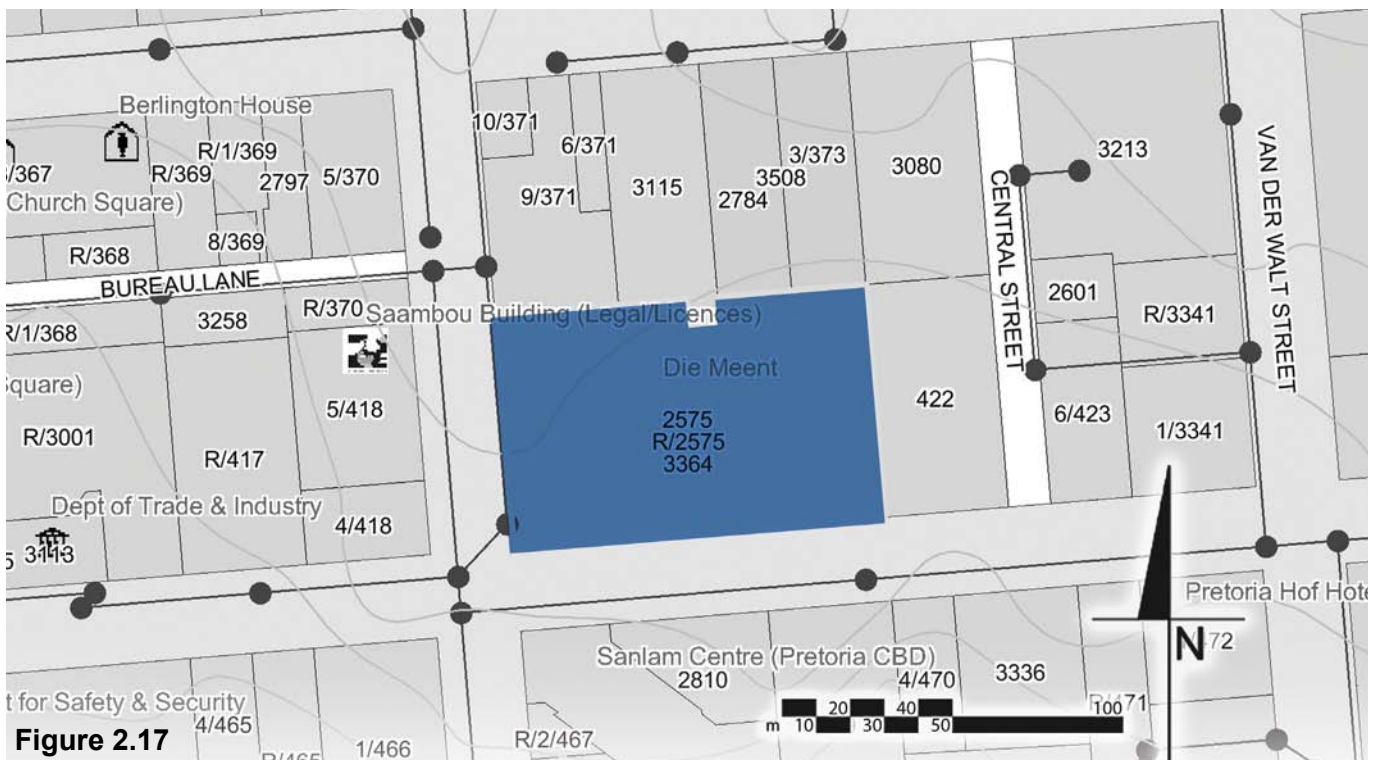
Fig.2.22 indicates how the project fits into the

different proposed frameworks together with the proposed film archive by fellow student J. Bruwer.

Pretorius Street is classified in the proposed Pretoria CBD Framework (see Appendix A) as a secondary street. Together with Schoeman and Vermeulen Streets it will have a character of movement, where traffic can either enter or exit the city. Chevron-shaped, rough surfaces will indicate the direction of travel and also slow down traffic (fig.2.23). No specific colour is proposed for this street, which thus allows for freedom in the proposed project.

The project incorporates the principles of the framework as follows:

- new façades to aid in the legibility of the city and accentuate the proposed gallery,
- the interface with the street is at pedestrian level, yet it leads to a higher space which





**Fig.2.17 - Plan indicating municipal erf boundaries with the City Centre and Die Meent buildings' site highlighted.**

**Fig.2.18 - Photograph of the proposed site published in the Pretoria News in 1954, with the City Centre building still unbuilt.**

**Fig.2.19 - Photograph of the proposed site published in the Pretoria News in 1957, with the City Centre building just visible in the background.**

**Fig.2.20 - Photograph of the proposed site published in the Pretoria Mail in 1970, showing the City Centre building's original façade.**

**Fig.2.21 - Photograph of the original Die Meent building, published in the Pretoria News in 1988.**





can be seen from below,

- this new building acts as an element of surprise and becomes a secondary pause space along a movement spine,
- the arcades are incorporated in the new design, with secondary routes on higher levels connecting the proposed gallery and the proposed film archive.

The second framework in which this proposal is grounded, focuses on the city block (see Appendix A). Together with the film archive (fig.2.1) this framework suggests a new way of looking at a cityscape, putting forward the idea of using forgotten roof or interior spaces and the consequent creation of secondary routes through buildings on higher levels in or on existing structures. These principles are evident in the scheme's questioning of site and the hollowing out of empty floors to create new

sites. The lack of a social framework in the city is also addressed in this framework and the project thus proposes the new multi-purpose gallery.

The third framework applied in this study, Schizocity, puts forward a new way of finding solutions to the urban issues of Pretoria (especially the CBD). It is a theoretical model rather than a set of specific guidelines. Its principles are also evident in the new way of creating sites and looking at the city block in a three-dimensional way (as with the City Block Framework).

## 2.6. Conclusion

- The principles of the arcades should be incorporated.
- Current and proposed pedestrian movement has to be considered.

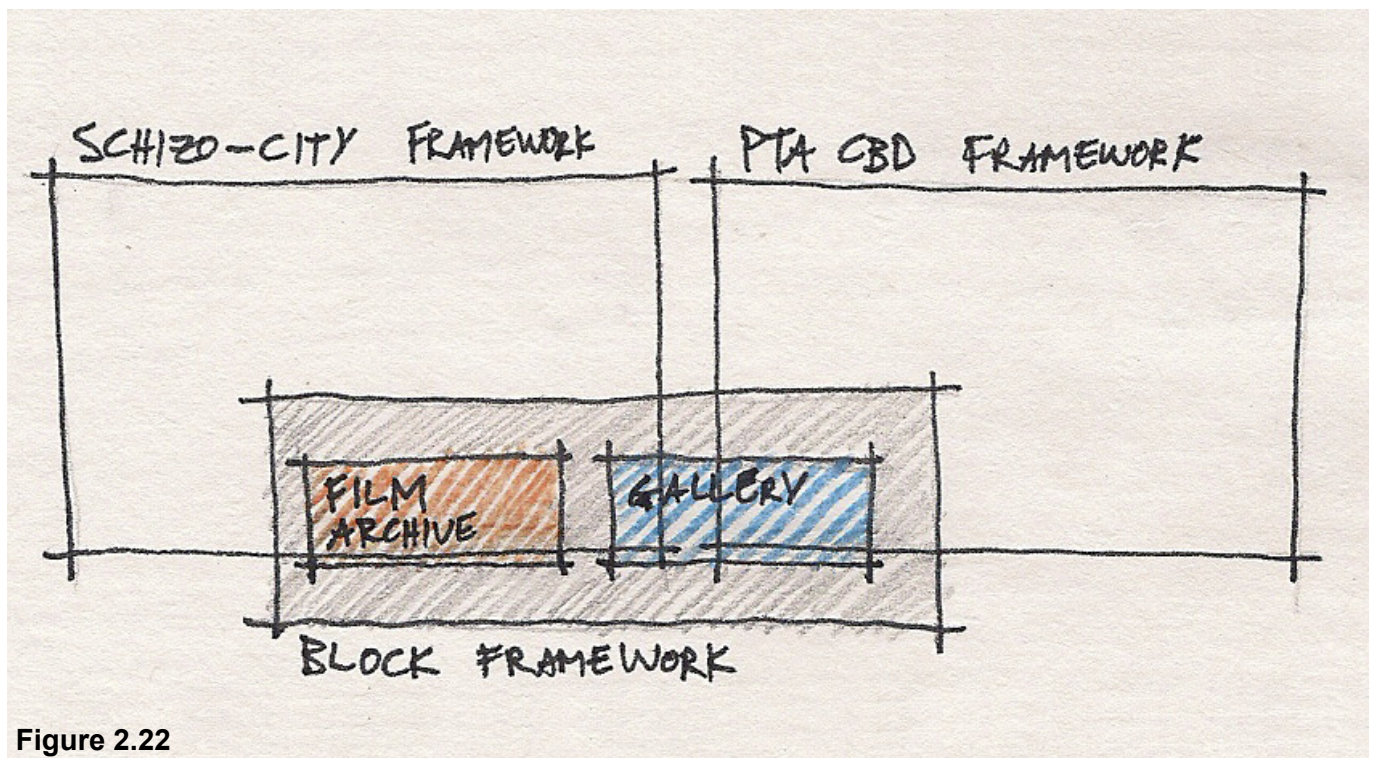


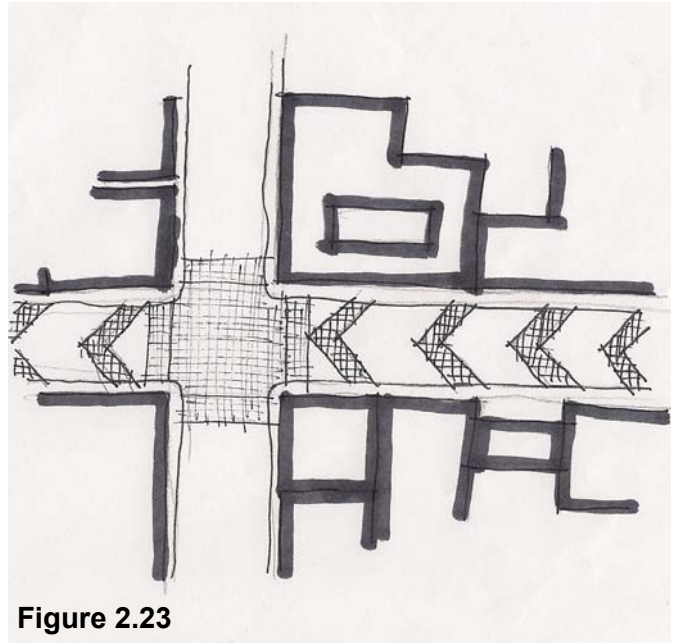
Figure 2.22



**Fig.2.22 - Diagram indicating how the proposed buildings are incorporated within the relevant frameworks.**

**Fig.2.23 - Diagram showing the proposed rough surfaces in Pretorius Street, in plan.**

- A movement link should be created on a higher level to connect the MINI Space Gallery with the proposed film archive.
- The existing structure must be used as another layer for the design of the gallery.
- Climatic and geographical factors should be incorporated.
- MINI Space's identity has to be used to establish the gallery as a destination point in the city.



**Figure 2.23**

