

context

positioning the investigation within the Burger's Park Precinct

context

The foundation of design is for us a question of context.

Bouroullec and Bouroullec (2005: 47)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to contextualise the proposed site. To gain an understanding of the programmes, buildings, transport networks, communities, religious institutions, the streets and pavements, parks and other urban public areas, and the people of the Burger's Park precinct.

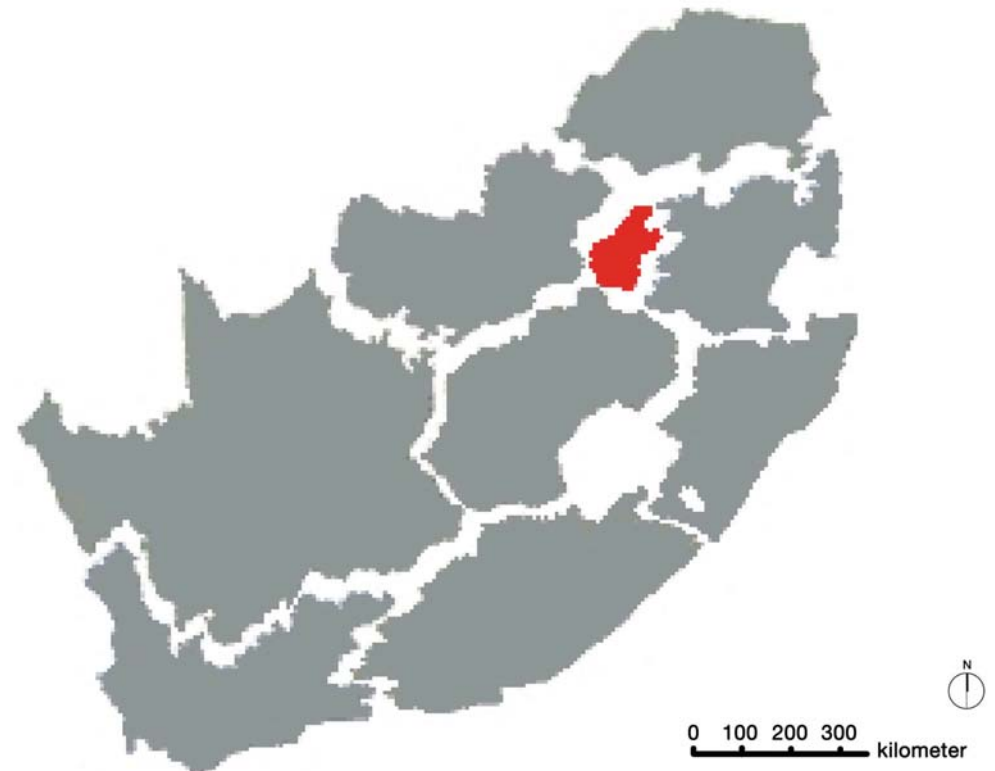
The context is approached on three levels; Macro, Meso and Micro. This chapter also intends to contextualise the Burger's Park precinct, in Pretoria, as well as the City of Tshwane Municipality.

Pretoria for the purpose of this study it refers to the city of Pretoria, including all suburbs. Tshwane refers to the Metropolitan Municipality (City of Tshwane, CoT) that encompasses a greater region, including places like Mamelodi, Centurion, Akasia and Shoshanguve. See illus. 4.2.

4.2 Site location

South Africa, Gauteng Province

Pretoria is situated in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Although Gauteng is the smallest province in area, it has the highest population per square meter. See illus. 4.1.

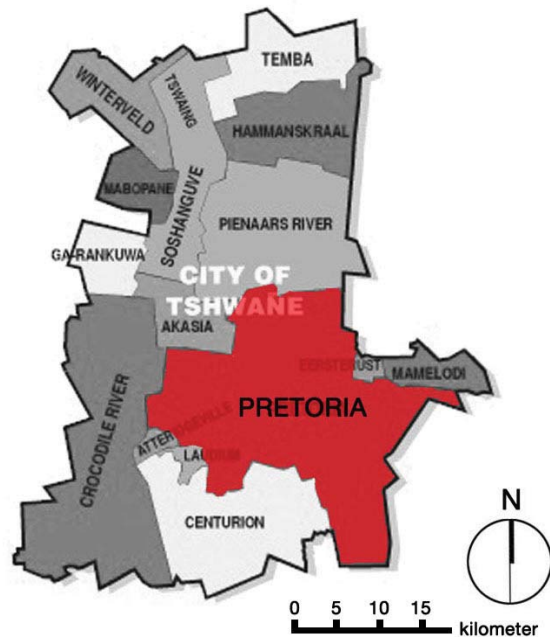


illus. 4.1 Exploded map of South Africa with Gauteng indicated in red

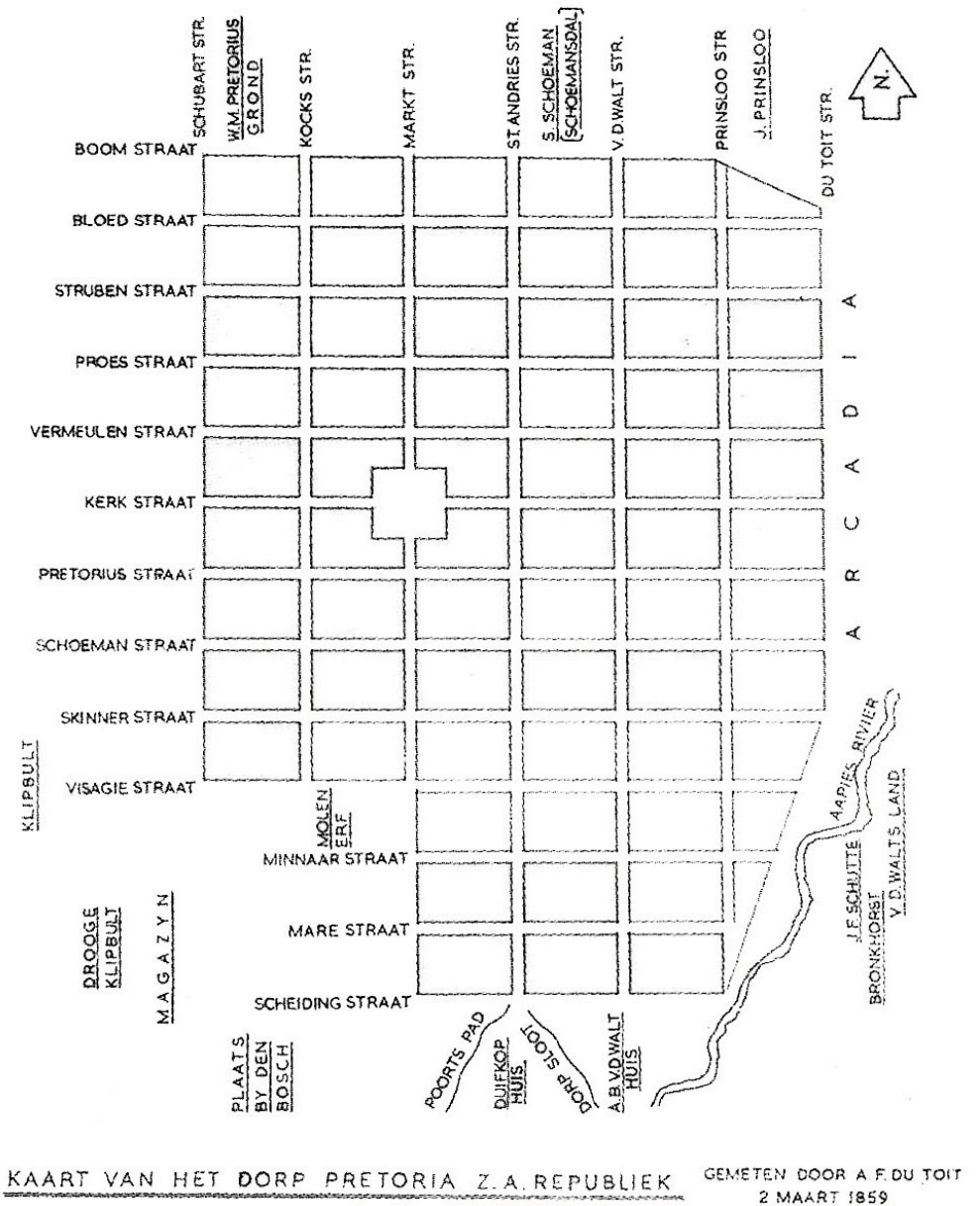
4.3 Macro Scale - Pretoria

4.3.1 Introduction

Pretoria is one of the three capital cities of South Africa (the others are Bloemfontein, the judicial capital city and Cape Town, the legislative capital city), Pretoria being the administrative Capital city. Pretoria was founded in 1855 (Allen, 2007:18) by Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (1819 - 1901), which he named after his father, General Andries Wilhelmus Pretorius (1798 – 1853). Pretorius was chosen as the first President of the Republic of South Africa in 1857 and moved to Potchefstroom. After Pretorius' departure the town was surveyed by Andries du Toit, the then landdrost of the town (see Illus. 2.5). The first map was drawn up after this survey, complete with street names and completed by du Toit in March of 1859 (ibid., 14-16). The area of the Burger's Park Precinct is not yet laid out on this map. It is also the first map to indicate the "Saint" Andries Street naming of Andries Street. The several stands that would later be Burger's Park was vacant for many years before the development of the park as a Botanical Garden commenced. See illus. 4.3.



illus. 4.2 Map of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality with Pretoria indicated in red



illus. 4.3 Map of old Pretoria town as drawn by du Toit in 1859

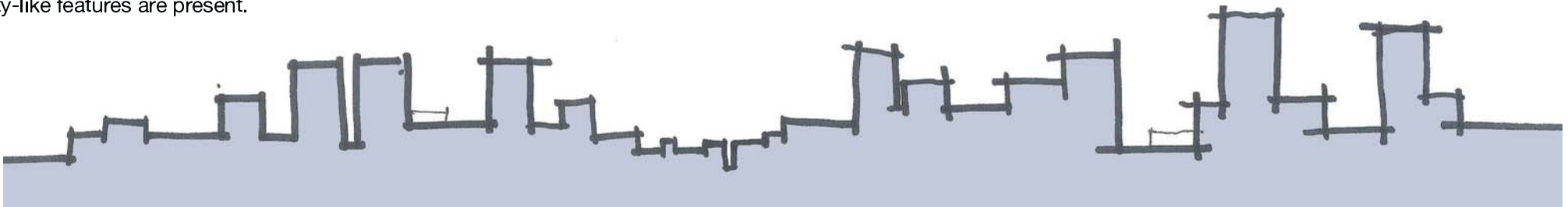
4.3.2 Pretoria the Post-town

The broad-spectrum character of Pretoria is similar to that of a town. Pretoria's developmental roots as a town on the original kerkplaats is still present today. The core of the city is still surrounded by the original buildings dating back to the origin of Pretoria. The height and scale of buildings in Pretoria's skyline is opposite to that of a city. The core of a city should be high rise due to the high value of land, this is not the case in Pretoria. Clear proof that Pretoria developed as a town, and grew into a city. In the case of Pretoria lower heights, with the old Raadsaal and Palace of Justice are positioned around Church Square, form the centre of Pretoria (Picton-Seymour, 1977: 273). Refer to Illustration 4.4.

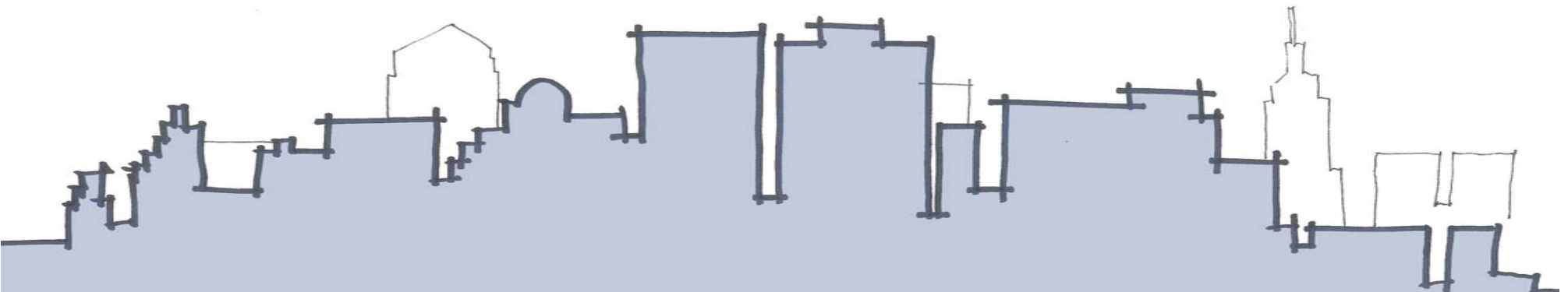
A comparison of the city section of Pretoria against that of a city like New York, which has its origins as a city, yields many differences. A comparison to New York would be relevant as the New York skyline is one of the most published and recognisable skylines in the world. Refer to Illustration 4.5. The city section differs greatly. Although Pretoria is a city, its scale and characteristics are town-like, with city-like features are present.

Pretoria does have high rise buildings, but none of them are situated in the core/ CBD. Therefore it is essential to see Pretoria as a post-town. This occurrence could be used to make future decisions of development. This occurrence is prevalent in many South African post-town cities. Many (historical) city centres have a strong identity; an identity framed by the heritage fabric at its core. These historical cores are mostly low rise buildings. Generally these centres would have been dominated by their town (city) halls; as is the case in Pretoria. These areas require a different, post-town, approach when future development decisions are made (Picton-Seymour, 1977: 273).

The post-town characteristics are a strong feature and identity of Pretoria. The presence of this 'old town' remains has divided the city into different sections of development. For instance, the Church Square area was largely left as it is, and development and redevelopment has occurred around the central core. Also the cardo-decomanus of Pretoria, Paul Kruger and Church Street, further divides the city into quadrants, a binding yet dividing factor. These quadrants have been severed by the Skinner Street redevelopment, and have divided the city on an east-west axis.



illus. 4.4 City section outline of Pretoria through CBD (not to scale)



illus. 4.5 City section outline of New York through CBD (not to scale)

4.3.3 Pretoria the fragmented city

Pretoria has been fragmented; Reasons exist for this fragmented state that it finds itself in. Some of them are:

- Apartheid; separation of people by skin colour and culture
- Natural edges of the city; river, ridges
- Incoherent development strategies; growth to the west was stopped and was promoted towards the east – reason for the east’s development, west has been stagnant since the 1970’s.
- Drastic interventions, like the widening of Skinner Street in mid 1990’s (Personal communication, Muntigh, Ferreira 4 April 2011) which has resulted in a highway-like road that bypasses the actions and activities of the city. Also the implementation of the one-way system in 1991 that was never completed resulting in areas of confusion.

4.4 Meso Scale – Burger’s Park Precinct

4.4.1 Introduction

This section precedes the immediate context of the proposed site; and serves as an introduction to the precinct. It discusses reasons for the forming of the precinct -one of the fragments of Pretoria- and the features and strengths within it. It concludes with an identification of the problems and opportunities the precinct is facing.

4.4.2 Precinct identification

The southern precinct (now referred to as Burger’s Park precinct) could be described as one of the fragments of Pretoria. The Burger’s Park precinct has over the past years grown into a suburb of its own. The area is separate from the main (northern) precinct. The main community functions are now no longer situated within one precinct. Refer to Illustration 4.7. However, the problem with this development is that many community needs are no longer being fulfilled in the Burger’s Park precinct.

The positive side is the generous public park (le Roux, 1990: 131) that the precinct has got its name from; Burgers Park. Situated on a large plot, it is there for the community’s leisure (Andrews & Ploeger, 1989: 18). The Burger’s Park Precinct also houses many churches, schools, the museum block, the City Hall, Melrose House, Barton Keep and the Pretoria Metro, Shozaloza Myel and Gautrain Stations.

4.4.3 Theoretical background to urban investigation

The mapping and analysis of the Burger’s Park precinct is based on, but does not prescribe to, the principles of Kevin Lynch’s principles as set out in Image of the city (Lynch, 1960: 47). The edges, landmarks, nodes, routes and districts form the foundation of the investigation.

4.4.4 Visual Introduction

This visual introduction firstly aims to show the architectural phases, the condition of certain areas and the barriers as well as openings to public areas that exist in the Burger’s Park precinct. Secondly, to illustrate some of the activities and users that visits the area. It also includes some images of the streets and sidewalks, surrounding the park to give an indication of the condition of adjacent buildings and edge conditions. See illus. 4.6.

Pretoria CBD with the Burger's Park Precinct indicated

4.4.5 Urban Mapping



illus. 4.7 Figure ground drawing of central Pretoria indicating study area: Burger's Park precinct

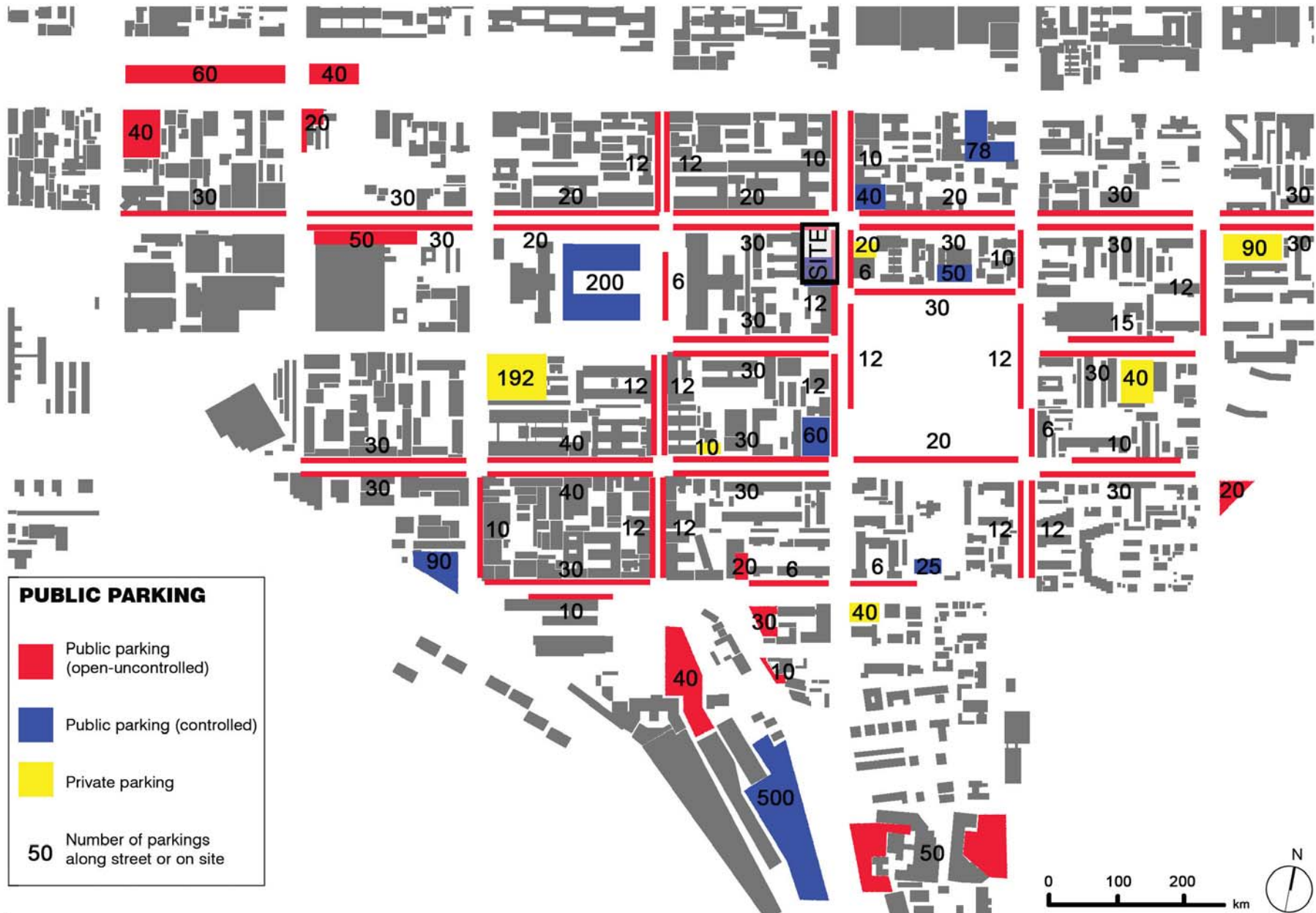




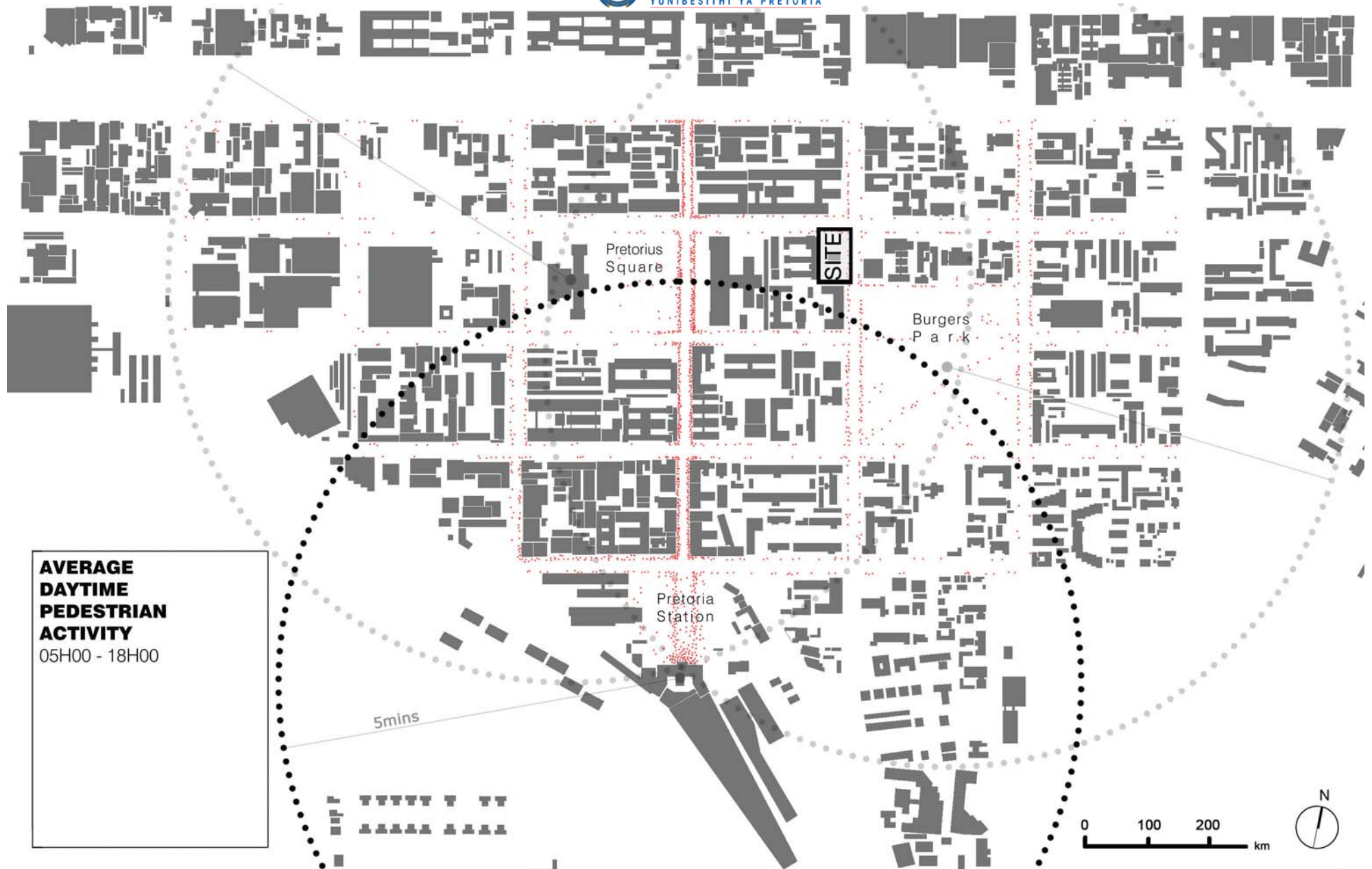
FUNCTIONS:

- Commercial
- Residential
- Offices
- Government
- Mixed Use
- Heritage & Cultural
- Educational
- Hotel
- Religious
- Clinic
- Transportation

Functions
Observation(s)_
 Diverse mixed use characteristic per city block within precinct. Lack of community facilities and functions. Existing museum buildings are not functioning optimally.
Proposal_
 Introduction of more community orientated functions. Reconsider museum exhibitions and role within precinct. Introduce resources and functions that directly addresses the community needs.



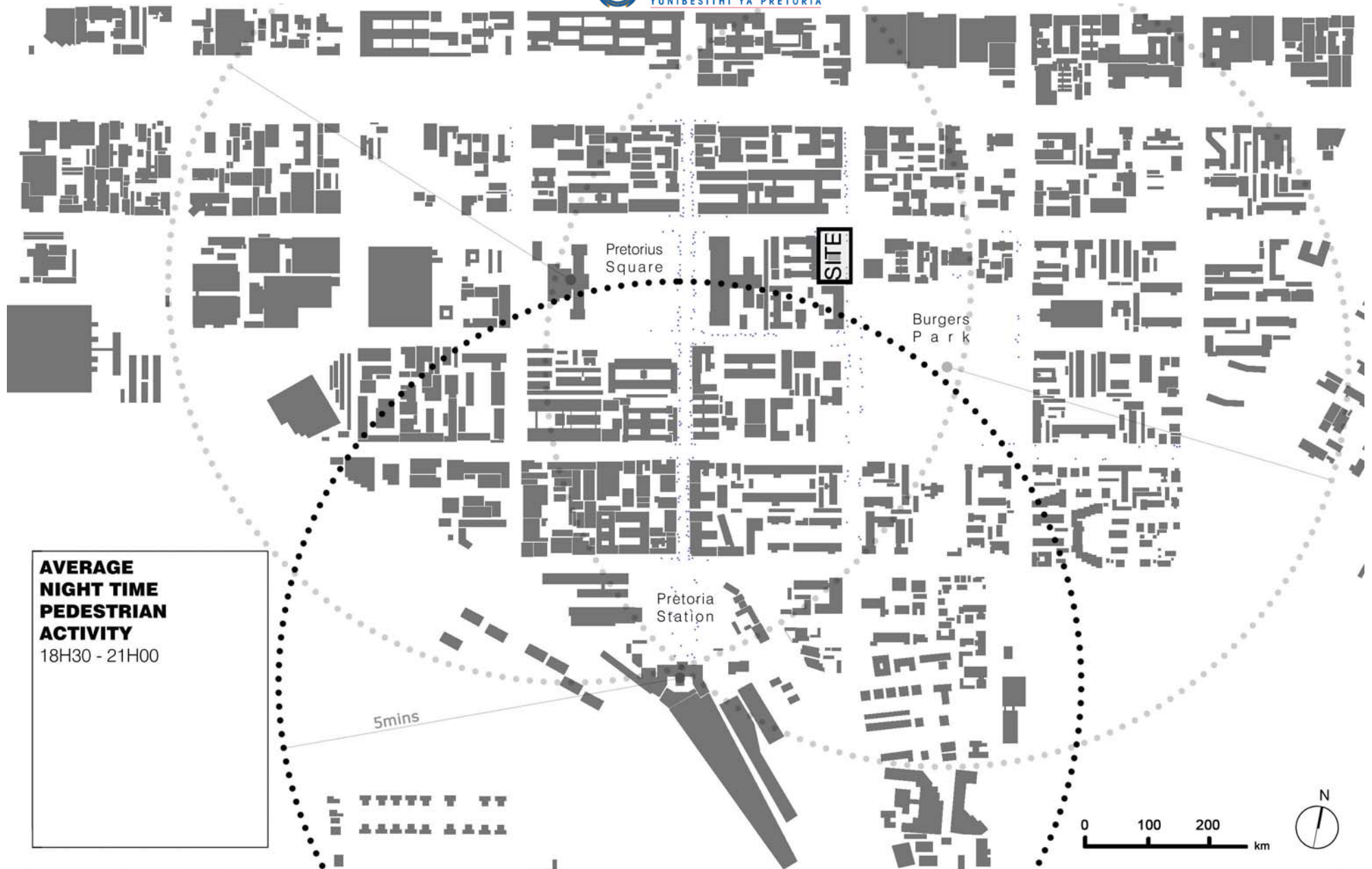
illus. 4.9 Urban Mapping. Parking quantities (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



AVERAGE DAYTIME PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY
05H00 - 18H00

Pedestrian Activity_Daytime
Observation(s)_
 Paul kruger street forms main pedestrian thoroughfare through precinct. Bosman and Andries street form secondary routes. Minnaar street is underutilized.
Proposal_
 Activate Minnaar street as main east-west pedestrian route within precinct, and provide additional sidewalk to 3 pedestrain routes mentioned above.

illus. 4.10 Urban Mapping. Daytime pedestrian activity (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



AVERAGE NIGHT TIME PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY
18H30 - 21H00

Pedestrian Activity_Night time
Observation(s)_
 Low pedestrian activity due to no '24hour' retaining functions within precinct, presence of prostitutes
Proposal_
 Increase pedestrian activity within precinct by introducing and altering functions to include night time and activating functions.

illus. 4.11 Urban Mapping. Night time pedestrian activity (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



Edges + Access

Observation(s)_




Fences instead of buildings articulate edges. Most public spaces are controlled by access gates and fences. Precinct is not inclusive, especially sidewalks and older buildings.

Proposal_

Removal of fences and boundaries. Introduction of universal access into buildings. Revisit sidewalk, pavement and street crossings.



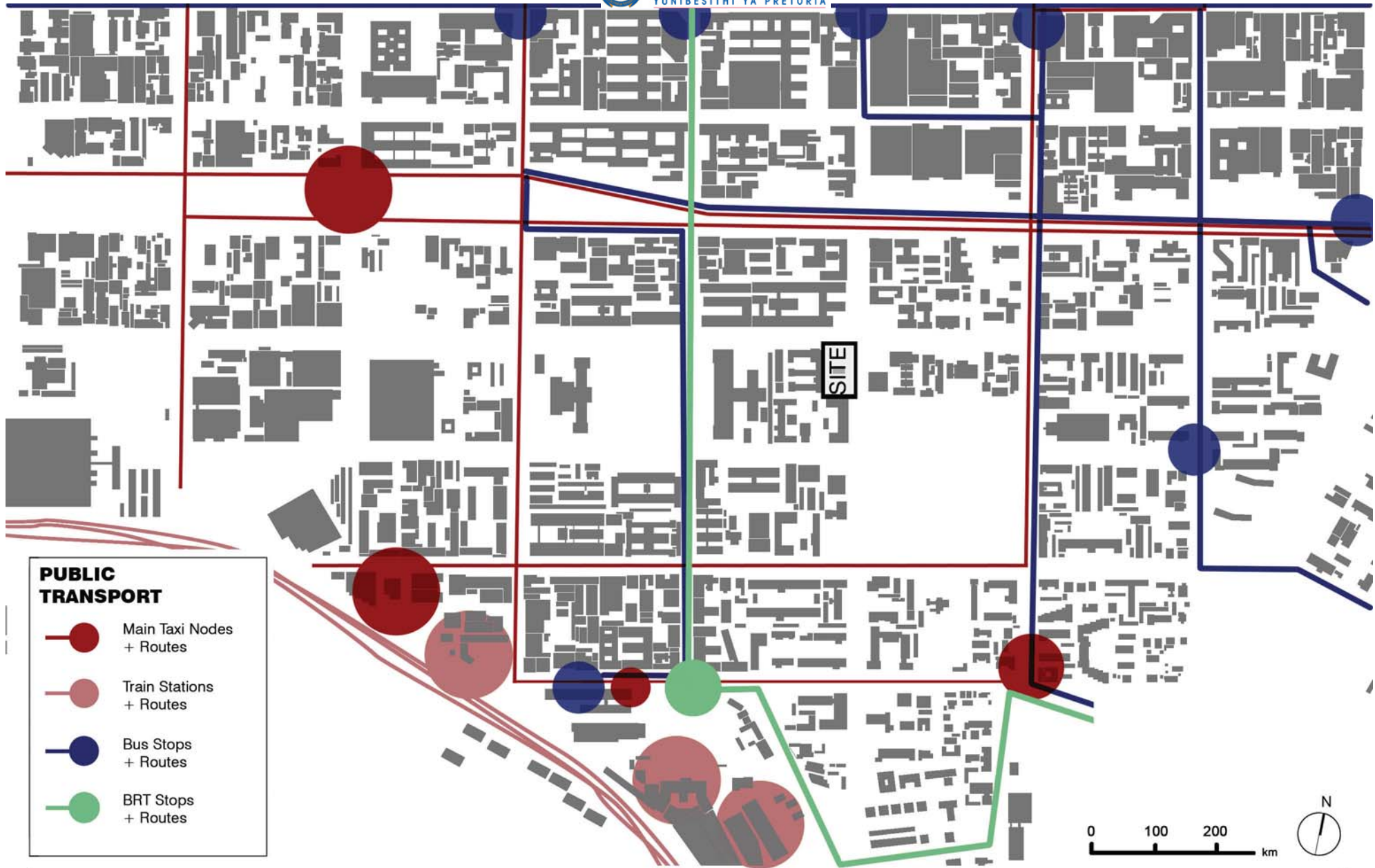
BOUNDARIES + NODES

-  Geographical
-  Physical
-  Major Activity Node

Boundaries
Observation(s)_
 Precinct has well defined boundaries, but boundaries are not accesible by pedestrians
Proposal_
 All boundaries and crossings to be made pedestrian friendly

Nodes
Observation(s)_
 Precinct needs anchor node on western edge, Burger's Park Node to get additional functions
Proposal_
 Establishment of new anchor and activity node at western origin of Minnaar street

illus. 4.13 Urban Mapping. Boundaries and nodes (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



illus. 4.14 Urban Mapping. Public transport; existing routes and proposed BRT routes (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



GAUTRAIN BUS ROUTES

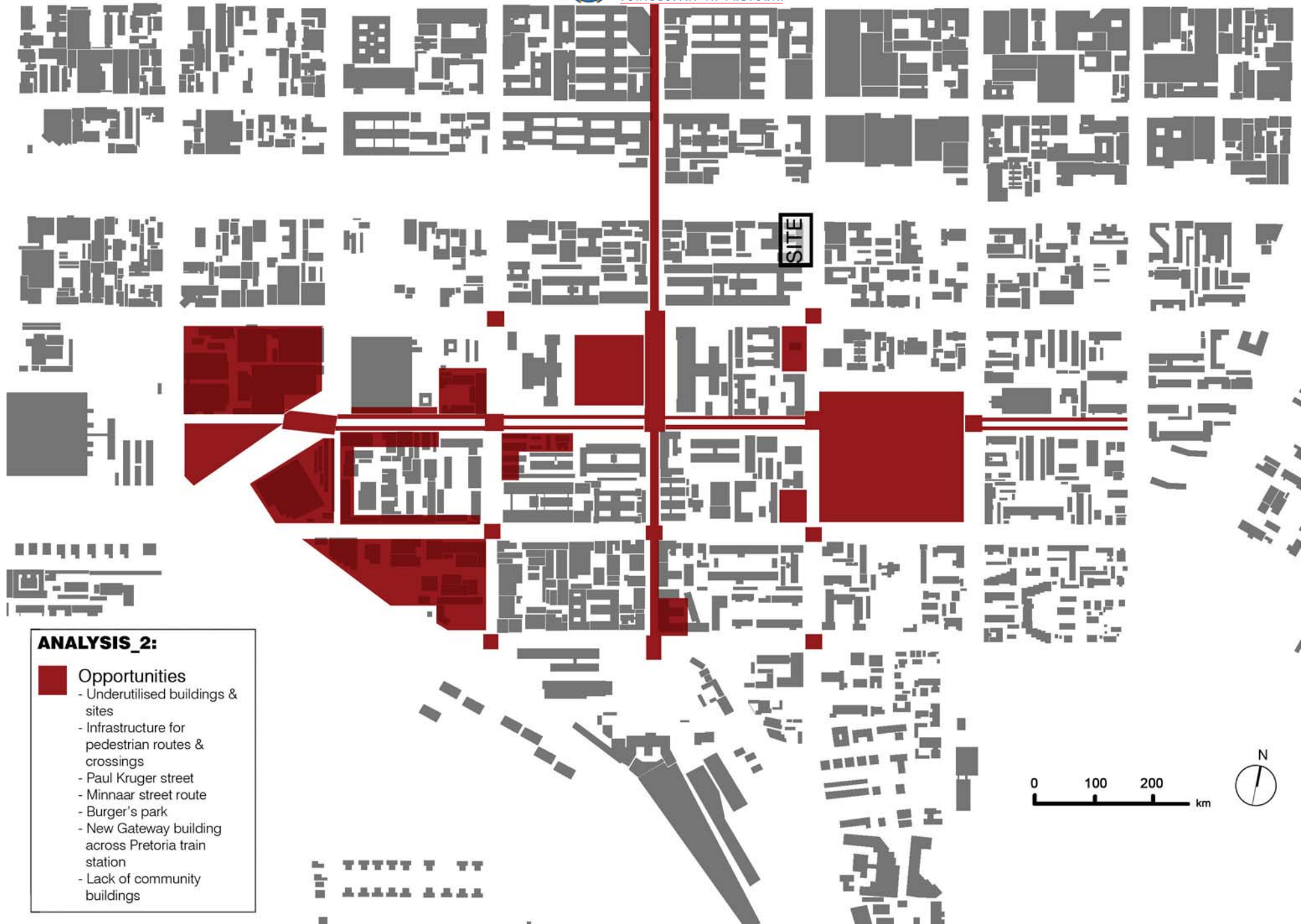
- Route Zone A
inner ring
- Route Zone B
periphery ring

Public Transport Routes and Nodes
 Observation(s)_
 Gutrain now providing additional public transport routes. Together with other existing and proposed routes precinct is well serviced.

illus. 4.15 Urban Mapping. Public transport; Gautrain bur routes (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



illus. 4.16 Urban Mapping. Analysis; Strengths, weaknesses and threats (Burger's Park Framework 2011)



illus. 4.17 Urban Mapping. Analysis; Opportunities (Burger's Park Framework 2011)

4.4.6 Summary

4.4.6.1 Macro Scale

The Pretoria CBD has been fragmented leaving areas of degradation. The CBD does have its own narrative to tell, and any intervention should adhere to and contribute to this narrative. The narrative of a post-town, capital city with many residents and lots of potential.

4.4.6.2 Meso Scale

The Burger's Park precinct has a lot of potential. All the makings of a community is possible, but rebranding and re-focussing of the museums, a safety improvement on all public transport routes and stops and an introduction of the lacking components to the entire precinct are necessary. Also the need for development of the western edge of the precinct will be crucial.

After compiling the above Urban Mapping (Illustrations 4.7-4.17) as part of the Burger's Park Group Framework (2011), the following can be seen as the problems that the Burger's Park Precinct currently faces:

- Lack of functioning public buildings
- Lack of public facilities, restaurants, services, shops and rest rooms
- Neglected and unfrequented museums
- Pedestrian unfriendly sidewalks along north-south axis
- Lack of balance to pedestrian, public and private vehicular movement.
- Undefined gateways
- Mainly a transitional space, not a destination
- Absence of precinct specific and appropriate community functions
- Unsafe and not inclusive public transport stops
- Prostitution at night time around Burger's Park

A precinct with such a strong identity and character like the Burger's Park Precinct is in need of well informed urban design and architectural intervention to realise its full potential. In this instance a reaffirming of its existing nodes, paths, edges and landmarks (Lynch, 1960); as well as a proposal for the inclusion of new features that will strengthen what is already evident.

4.4.7 Textures of the Burger's Park precinct

In this investigation of accessibility and inclusivity, the presence of textures, colours, and barriers are relevant. The following textural introduction to the precinct is there to give a feel for the tactile qualities that one can find in the precinct (Illus. 4.18).

4.5 Urban Framework

4.5.1 Introduction

The Burger's Park Group Framework 2011, is based on the area surrounding Burger's Park. The area was chosen because of its existing potential, the large existing residential community and the uniqueness of the urban problems, problems that are specific to the area and differ from the rest of Pretoria CBD. The Burger's Park Precinct serves as a transition zone and acts as a gateway for pedestrians and commuters going to the CBD. Modes of transport in the precinct are train, taxi and the now functioning Gautrain. Pedestrian movement, however, does take prevalence.

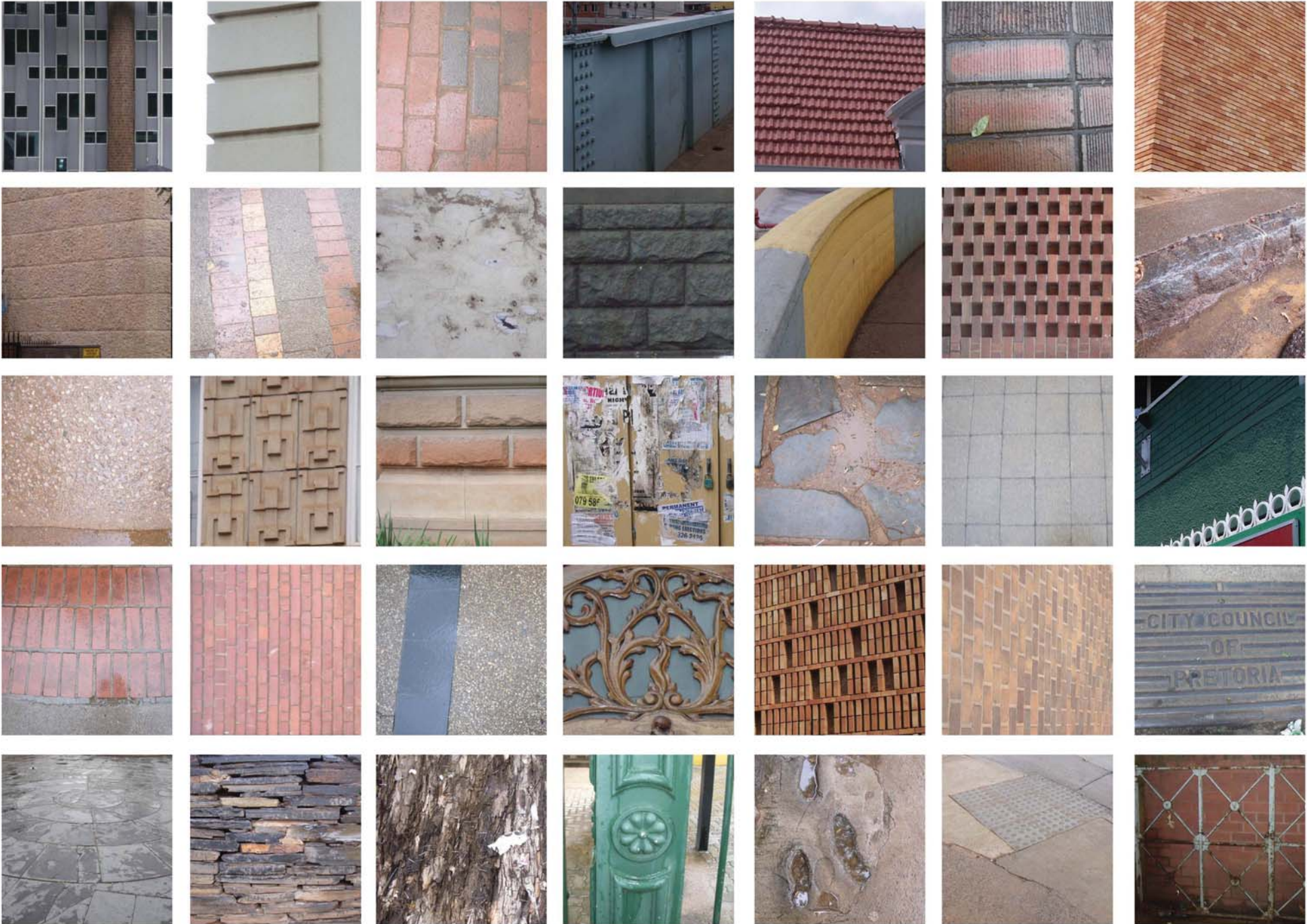
4.5.2 Problems identified

The problems identified in Burger's Park Precinct summarised and illustrated in Illustration 4.19.

4.5.3 Aims and vision

The Burger's Park Group Framework 2011 vision and aims are the following:

- A mixed use environment with a unique character that is identifiable.
- An environment focused on pedestrian movement in and through the precinct, through easy navigable, accessible and safe, routes and spaces.
- Introduction of community functions and public resources.
- Increased densities and infill of vacant and under utilised sites and buildings.
- Addresses the lack of public interface in office and governmental buildings.
- Updating of the existing museums by introducing new exhibitions
- Creation of a cultural, art and museum precinct that promotes these functions, which develops the visitors and residents simultaneously. (Burger's Park Group Framework, 2011)



illus. 4.18 Collage; Textures of the precinct

4.5.4 Precinct Proposal

The Burger's Park Group Framework 2011: Problems, is illustrated below (Illus. 4.19).

Urban Problems Identified within Study Area

- 1. Minnaar street termination**
Poor spatial beginning for prominent road within precinct
- 2. Minnaar street / Schubart street intersection**
Dangerous for pedestrians and unarticulated
- 3. Crossings within precinct**
Orientated towards vehicular use
- 4. Current museum buildings**
Severely underutilised and neglected
- 5. Palisade fences and brick walls**
Prevents urban and pedestrian amalgamation of space
- 6. Underutilized and vacant lots**
Degrades urban character of precinct
- 7. Taxis along Jacob Mare street**
Creates dangerous urban edge to street
- 8. Government Buildings**
All government, office and institutional buildings to have public interface ground floors
- 9. Block thoroughfares**
Poorly defined and severely under utilized arcades
- 10. Pretorius square**
Poorly functioning public space - no established hierarchy
- 11. Pretorius square / Paul Kruger street edge**
Edge not utilised
- 12. Paul Kruger street**
Street and edges need revision in order to improve pedestrian environment
- 13. Informal off-street parking**
Street edge definition and pedestrian environment compromised
- 14. Buildings close to Pretoria Station**
Densities too low to accommodate increased economic activities from Gautrain
- 15. Pretoria Station crossing**
Dangerous for pedestrians and unarticulated - lacks "gateway"



illus. 4.19 Urban Framework. Urban problems within precinct (Burger's Park Framework 2011)

Urban Design Proposal for Precinct

1. Minnaar street termination

Creation of a new pedestrianised anchor node. The node will include new landscaped areas as well as new cultural facilities.

2. Relocation

New site for additional Culture programme or museum.

3. Reprogram

Government Printers to be reprogrammed in order to interact with the new node as well as gain museum / educational functions.

4. Minnaar street / Schubart street intersection

Crossing to be paved in order to facilitate a change in texture as well as level.

5. Crossings within precinct

Crossings to be paved in order to facilitate pedestrian movement across intersections. Texture difference and level difference in order to indicate and allow for the predominance of the pedestrian.

6. Paul Kruger street

Sidewalks along Paul Kruger Street to be extended by one lane on each side in order to better facilitate informal trade as well as flow along the Paul Kruger axis. Boulevard to be created through the addition of a pedestrianised island in the middle of the road in accordance with the Re Kgabisa Tshwane framework. Landscaping to be dealt with as appropriate.

7. Block thoroughfares

Thoroughfares to be articulated as arcades. Building interfaces and landscape to be dealt with as appropriate.

8. BRT Station

Proposed BRT Station to be moved north one city block.

9. Buildings close to Pretoria Station Western block

Building densities to be increased and reprogrammed as mixed use high density development. Perimeter blocks to define street edge with a building height of 5-10 storeys.

10. Buildings close to Pretoria Station Eastern block

Building densities to be increased and reprogrammed as mixed use high density development. Buildings above 5 storeys to be considered for adaptive re-use.

11. Pretorius Square Parking Basement

New Basement Parking and cultural node to activate square. In excess of 1000 parkings to be provided for precinct.

12. New cultural / civic building

Existing structures to be demolished and unfertilized site to be developed. Program to be cultural / civic based and highly public in nature. Building height to be between 7 and 9 storeys.

13. Vacant / unfertilized lots

Vacant sites to be developed. Buildings to be highly public in nature with the building height in accordance with existing built fabric. New community functions around Burger's Park.

14. Melrose House

Bicycle rental facilities to be provided in tennis courts. Parking area to double up for adjacent public buildings.

15. Public Transport

All bus stops and routes to be facilitated in any new developments.



illus. 4.20 Urban Framework. Urban design proposal for precinct (Burger's Park Framework 2011)

4.6 Micro Scale – Site Surroundings

4.6.1. Precinct

The Burger's Park precinct is a patchwork of urban fabric, with patches of old, older, recent and new interventions. When studying old aerial photographs of the area, it is clear that the scale, uses and architectural styles have varied, and continue to vary (le Roux, 1990: 125). One aspect, however, has been a long-standing characteristic of this precinct, a very strong residential character concentrated around Burger's Park itself (le Roux, 1990: 130). Also, the strong pedestrian link from the Pretoria Station to Church Square, further north, remains a busy street with loads of activities happening alongside it. The precinct consists mainly of privately owned apartments overlooking Burger's Park, in close proximity to the Pretoria Station (Swart, 2010: 60). See illus. 4.21.



illus. 4.21 Site surrounds. Site highlighted in red, adjacent building and street names indicated



4.6.2 Adjacent Buildings

a) A.J.O. Sentrum

The A.J.O. Centre (235 Visagie Street, even 2798 and 735) is a losieshuis [lodging house] in an E-shaped floor plan (Illus. 4.22a). The original structure, before it was built on to towards the south, was designed by architect H. Vermooten in 1953. It is also an example of modern style with a strong functionalist approach (le Roux, 1990: 126). The building edges are appropriate and add to the street quality with garden space along the sidewalks, and a well looked after pedestrian path. See illustrations 4.22a,b,c.

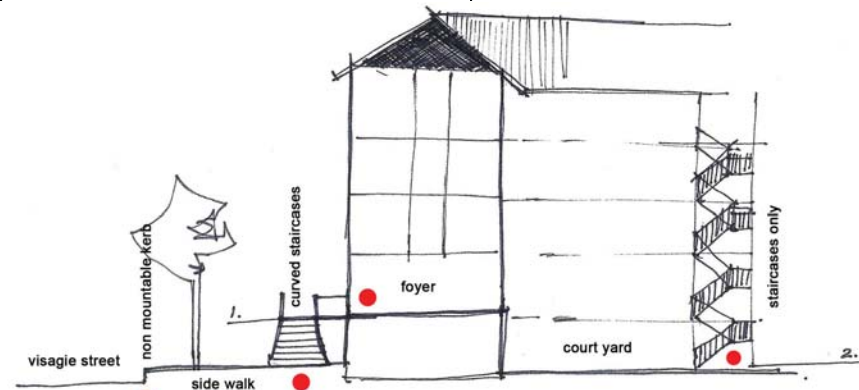


illus. 4.22a A.J.O. Centre. Eastern facade from site



illus. 4.22b A.J.O. Centre. Eastern facade from site

The entrance to the A.J.O. Centre has double, curved staircases to the main foyer space (ibid). Illustration 4.22c. This is the only access to the main foyer space from the street. The courtyards are level with the ground floor, because the courtyard spaces are at a lower level than the street access. Vertical circulation in the A.J.O. Centre is by means of staircases only. No lift is present in the centre. The central walkway provides access to rooms and shared spaces.



illus. 4.22c A.J.O. Centre. Physical barriers indicated with red

b) Stellenberg Apartments

South of the proposed site. The building actually consists of two structures, built at different times, which function separately. It consists of two L-shaped buildings, of which the north one was built first and the second completed later. Stylistically it is distinctly Modern and very pragmatically realised.

However, the use of the yellow-brown face bricks is unconventional, the expected finish would have been plaster with a white shade of paint (le Roux, 1990: 130-131). The block is well maintained, but the sidewalk has not been taken care of properly. Illustration 4.23a & 4.23b.

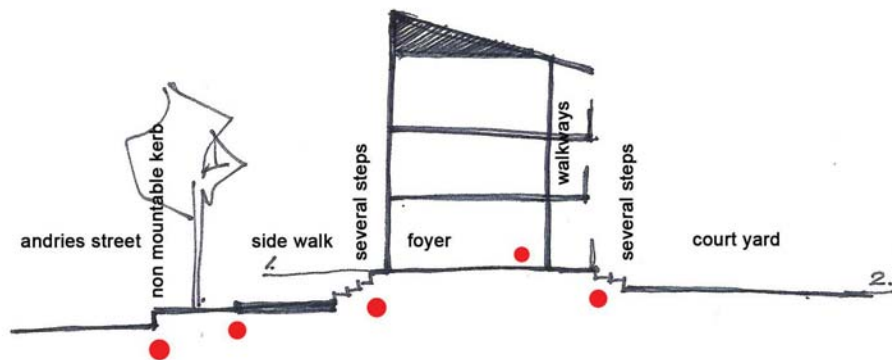
The main and central access to the apartment building from Andries Street has six steps leading up to the foyer space. Refer to illustration 4.23c. No handrails are present on either side of the staircase. Access from the west is through the vehicle entrance with three steps leading up to the walkways and staircases providing access to the apartments. Walkways as well as the courtyard are under lit. No lift is present, presumably due to the period in which building was completed.



illus. 4.23a Stellenberg. Eastern facade from site



illus. 4.23b Stellenberg. Eastern facade from site



illus. 4.23c Stellenberg. Physical barriers indicated with red

c) Burger's Park

Burger's Park (290 Jacob Mare Street, erf 3139) is a 4Ha plot that doesn't quite fit into the pattern of the Pretoria city block (le Roux, 1990: 131). The property was originally set to the Botanical Garden of Pretoria (circa. 1874). The park as it is today was laid out by George Hays (owner of Melrose house opposite the park) and was realised by the botanist James Hunter (Be my Guest, 1990: 17). The completion of the park was only realised in 1892, making it the oldest park in the city. This Victorian park with its Victorian Keeper's house (le Roux, 1990: 131), has asymmetrical walkways and abundant curves.

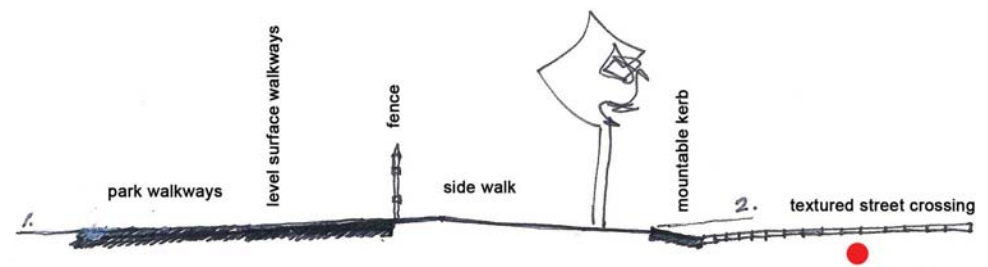
The florarium, kiosk and Band stand are of architectural value (Be my Guest, 1990: 17). It also houses a World War I memorial for the South Africans who died in battle as part of the Scottish Regiment (Visit Pretoria, 2010). The park is well kept and used; it is an escape from the busy city centre to the north. Many children and residents and passersby frequent the park daily (ibid). Illustrations 4.24a, 4.24b & 4.24c.



illus. 4.24a Burger's Park. Statue of Pres. Burger



illus. 4.24b Burger's Park. Playground area



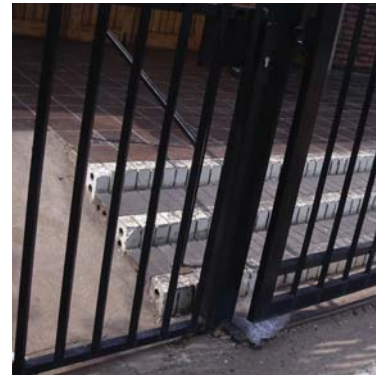
illus. 4.24c Burger's Park and sidewalk. Physical barriers indicated with red

d) Wesley Methodist Church

This church (251 Visagie Street, erf 2930) is located in Burger's Park Lane which forms a quiet barrier that separates the city from the park. The six-sided church was designed by Gordon Ellis and was completed in 1970 (le Roux 1990: 127).

The main structure, sitting on the six corners is exposed concrete columns and beams, with brick in fill. The main entrance is on Andries Street, and has several steps and two steep ramps leading to the entrance. The recently completed Yeast Social housing project is located east of the church. (Illus. 4.25a, 4.25b & 4.25c).

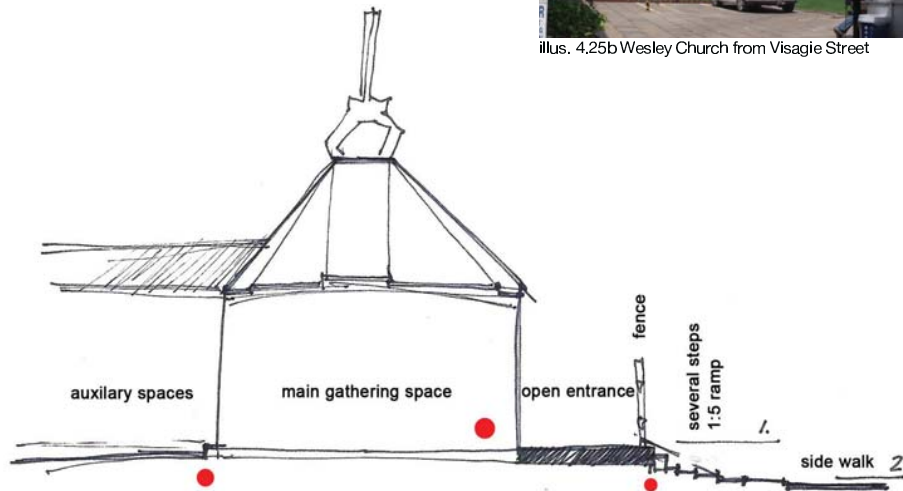
The main entrance to the church is fenced off from the sidewalk by a palisade fence. The ramp gradient is too steep and the steps do not have a handrail (Illus 4.25c). The entrance from the lawned parking lot has no steps, and most elderly people prefer the use of this entrance.



illus. 4.25a Wesley Church. Sidewalk main entrance



illus. 4.25b Wesley Church from Visagie Street



illus. 4.25c Wesley Methodist Church. Physical barriers indicated with red

e) Transvaal Museum

The Transvaal Museum is built in typical monumental museum style, complete with majestic staircase and symmetrical facade. This sandstone and brick building with its arched windows and heavy columns was completed in 1913 by the Department of Public Works (Le Roux, 1990:124). The Transvaal museum is yet another example of finely detailed sandstone work in Pretoria (ibid). The additions in the 1980's were done with sensitivity and mimic the proportions and detailing of the existing building, but in modern face brick finish. See illustration 4.26a.

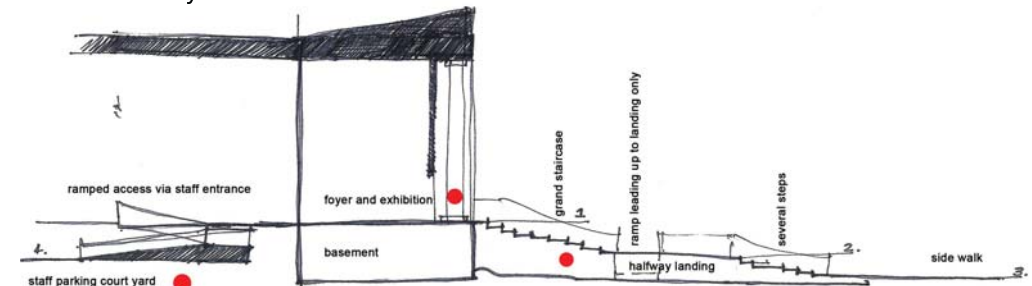
Access to the museum sits on the symmetry axis on the western facade by means of the 15 step entrance only. Handrails are provided and the finish of the steps allows for some definition in tread and riser identification. Access for unassisted elderly persons and those confined to a wheelchair or crutches is by means of the back entrance through the staff parking lot, with inadequate signage indicating this disabled entrance and parking (see illus. 4.26b). The front entrance is ramped (1980's addition) but only extends to the landing level of the main staircase (see illus. 4.26c). The Transvaal Museum is currently undergoing a rebranding exercise and will soon be called the Museum of Natural History.



illus. 4.26a Transvaal Museum. West facade



illus. 4.26b Transvaal Museum. Back entrance for disabled persons



illus. 4.26c Transvaal Museum. Physical barriers indicated with red

f) 455 Andries Street

455 Andries Street is situated on the corner of Andries and Visagie Street (erf 718 portions 1, 2, 3, 4). The current uses of this site is Lethu's Car wash occupying the shade ports and Sammy's Hair Salon operating from an old container. There is only a small permanent structure on the stand, which currently houses the offices and storerooms of the car wash (illus. 4.27a & 4.27c).

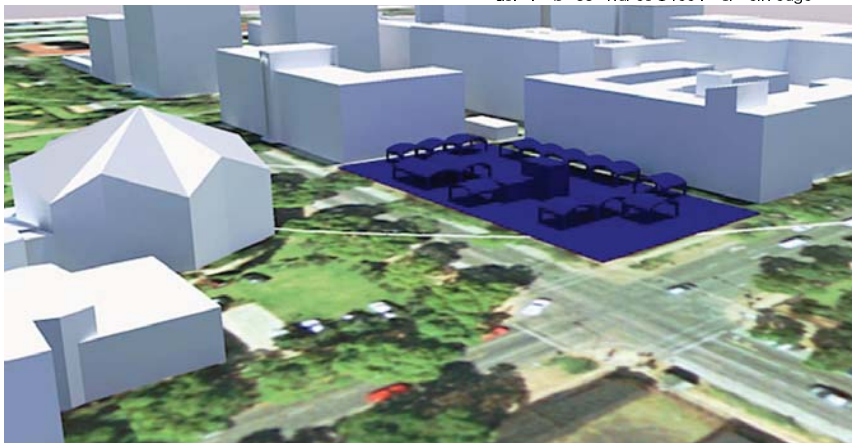
This erf is surrounded by four storey to six storey apartment buildings, and up to fourteen storey high office and departmental buildings. It is clear from the analysis of building heights and densities that this site is underutilised and underdeveloped. The underdeveloped state has left the crossing of Andries and Visagie Street with an undefined urban edge. The site is in need of development, to be incorporated into the existing character of the area. Illustrations 4.27a & 4.27b.



illus. 4.27a 455 Andries Street. From the South



illus. 4.27b 455 Andries Street. Northern edge



illus. 4.27c 455 Andries Street. Existing structures on the site



4.6.3 Micro Scale – Summary

The area surrounding the proposed site has varied building uses and typologies. The main focus would be on improving sidewalk conditions, street/walkway surface transitions, densification of open sites, proposing accessibility solutions to existing buildings and the need for improved public transport to Burger's Park itself.