

CHAPTER FOUR
**PRECINCT
VISION**



4.1//
PRETORIA
WEST

Rehabilitating the west

Evident in the developmental patterns of Pretoria, the majority of urban sprawl is rapidly growing towards the east. As a result, the western part of Pretoria is extremely neglected and is still considered the backyard of the city.

Apart from being known as the industrial mecca of Pretoria, it is also home to several mental institutions, prisons, old age homes and cemeteries. Due to high demand, developmental growth has recently sprawled towards the west of Pretoria and what used to be on the outskirts of the city is now actually in its proximity.

The perception of Pretoria West is evident in its social and economic drivers, which have not changed significantly over the past century. Although the West is still perceived as a place of poverty and exclusion, it is also rich in cultural and historical artefacts which should either be repurposed or celebrated as part of the city's unique historical fabric.

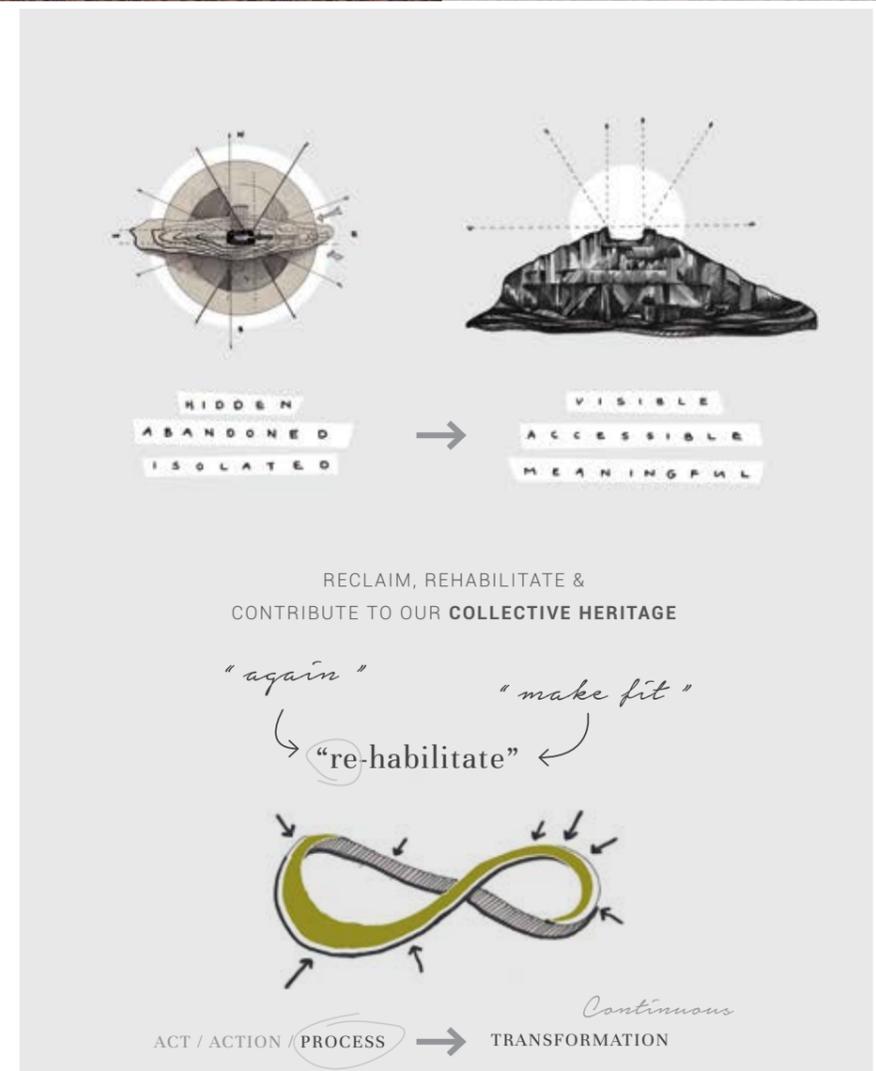
As part of a larger vision for the Pretoria West precinct, it is critical to establish potential nodes of catalytic intervention that aim to revitalize this marginal area, to instil developmental energy, and to re-establish a balance in the continuation of a sustainable city.

Understanding the brutal consequences of isolation and abandonment, it is alarming to see how the conditions at the Westfort precinct have only accelerated. With the main focus on the effective rehabilitation of the fort as well as the adjoining village, both will be included in the precinct vision as one holistic entity.

Rehabilitation is not a new term. It is well known that the word "rehabilitate" derives from the Latin prefix re-, meaning "again" and habitare, meaning "make fit". As an example, a person who underwent extensive surgery has to commit to and fully participate in a process of rehabilitation in order to heal. The same goes for architecture. The success of rehabilitation is always subject to time as it cannot be resolved by a single act. It is highly dependent on the process of healing that determines its new state of existence.

The vision for the Westfort precinct is therefore to rehabilitate the site to a new state of significance that represents a beacon of continuity and belonging. With emphasis on transformation through rehabilitation, the following criteria will be considered as the main drivers in allocating the appropriate programme: the current context and the future value, as well as the contribution to our collective South African heritage.

Figure 4.1: Precinct vision diagrams illustrating the potential strategy of the design interventions (Author 2016)



4.1

4.2// THE WESTFORT HERITAGE VILLAGE

The Westfort legacy

Given the initial intentions of the fort and institution to protect the greater public from possible threats, it only seems fit that the Westfort precinct should continue its legacy. However, now the intention must be to withstand a new modern threat of historical loss, isolation and fragmented memory.

In order for stakeholders to actively participate in averting this new phenomenon, it is important to first instil in them a collective interest, pride and awareness within and around the current Westfort community. All built fabric from the former Westfort institution will be restored to its original appearance but with the needs of the current community as main priority.

In order to secure the future value of this heritage village, it is of great importance to ensure the buy-in of the current inhabitants. The framework proposes an upliftment program with the main intention to restore the value of the Westfort precinct.

Managing change

It is a well-known fact that change is an integral part of life. Yet, in some cases, architecture still neglects to anticipate the process of change as a critical determinant in planning and building on the identity of a place, both tangible and intangible.

In order to successfully restore the value of the Westfort precinct, it is crucial to first determine the approach the project will take. The aim is rather to manage and assist both the defined and invisible stakeholders, each of whom has a different perspective on how to engage with the barriers of the project.

To achieve success in development practice, Nabeel Hamdi (2010:141) suggests four integral action points which question the capacity to provide, enable, adapt and sustain. As seen in Figure 4.2, Hamdi (2010:152) challenges the logic of project planning, and indicates how the lasting impact of any end result is subject to the process and approach to planning. By questioning the 'one-size-fits-all top down approach to design and planning', and advocating 'reasoning backwards' rather than over-planning, the process can be determined by good policy making and practice.

For the Westfort precinct a healthy balance should be maintained in its stakeholder participation. The formal stakeholders should facilitate the process (top-down) and simultaneously enable the Westfort community to take ownership of the process and improve their living conditions (from the bottom up).

A self-sustaining community

Cole and du Plessis (2011:1) argue that motivation for change lies in a paradigm shift of engaging and motivating social transformation by re-thinking stakeholder involvement to achieve holistic and flexible strategies.

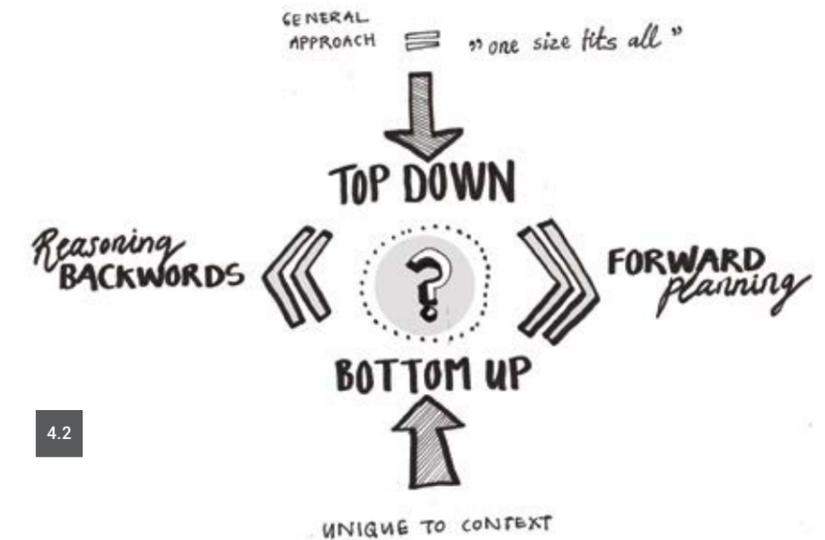
'Stakeholder participation' is critical in the process of participatory design. It encourages all participants in a project or programme to act in a partnership in which they are interdependent and equal owners of the project (Cole & Du Plessis 2011:4).

Apart from the identified or visible stakeholders, there are also the invisible stakeholders, the public, who are just as important in their role of participation (Hamdi, 2010:135). The question however is how flexible the model should be to allow for participation to happen on a comfortable and spontaneous level from both a bottom-up and top-down perspective.

The current occupants of Westfort Village will therefore have equal ownership of the site. The proposed shared project will depend on guidance by the Department of Public Works in an attempt to protect the heritage fabric and its future value, but to also allow for new interventions that will restore its value as a self-sustaining village.

Figure 4.2: Four integral action points as suggested by Nabeel Hamdi in project planning (Hamdi 2010)

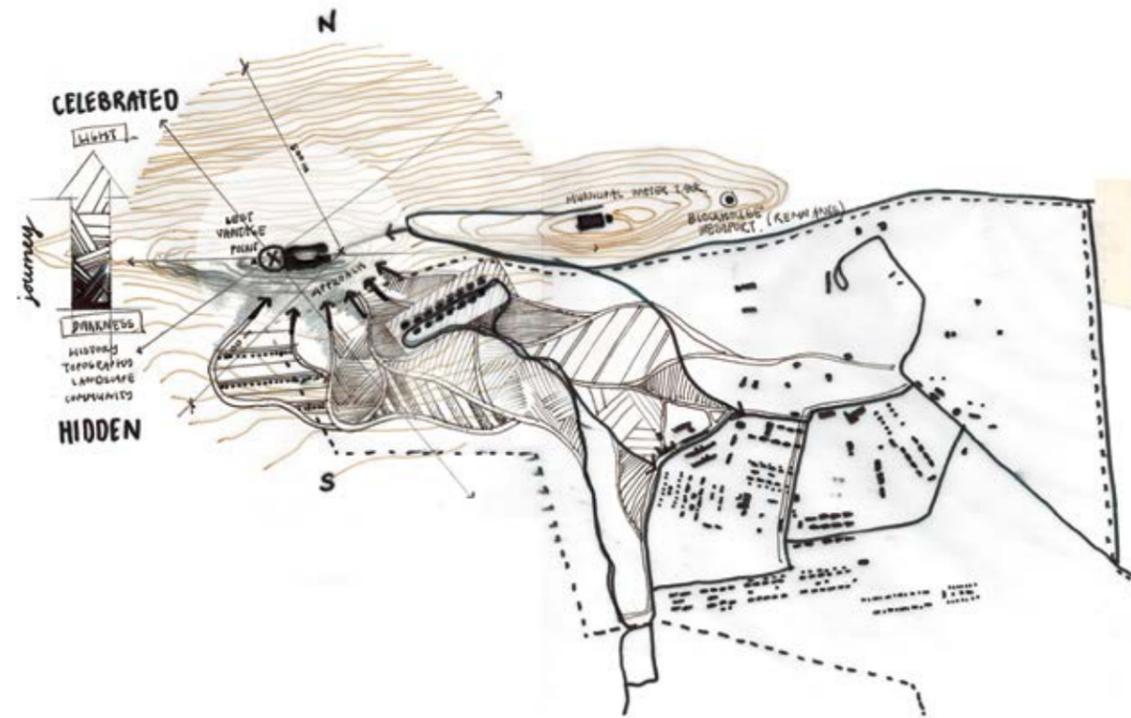
Figure 4.3: Collage of possible community integrated projects that encourages equal participation (Author 2016)



4.2



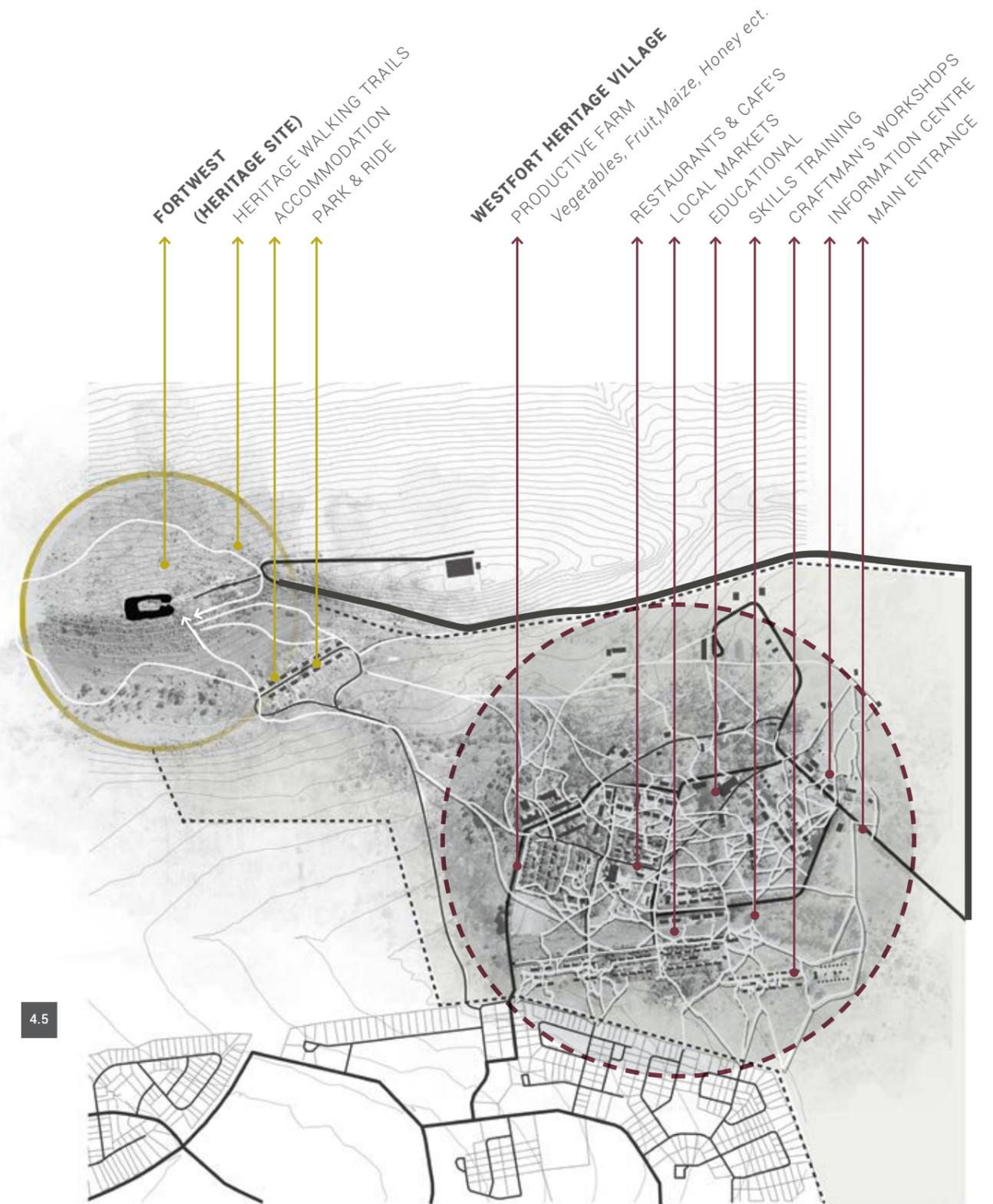
4.3



4.4

Figure 4.4: Conceptual exploration of integration possibilities between the Fort and the Village (Author 2016)

Figure 4.5: Conceptual master plan indicating the programmatic possibilities (Author 2016)

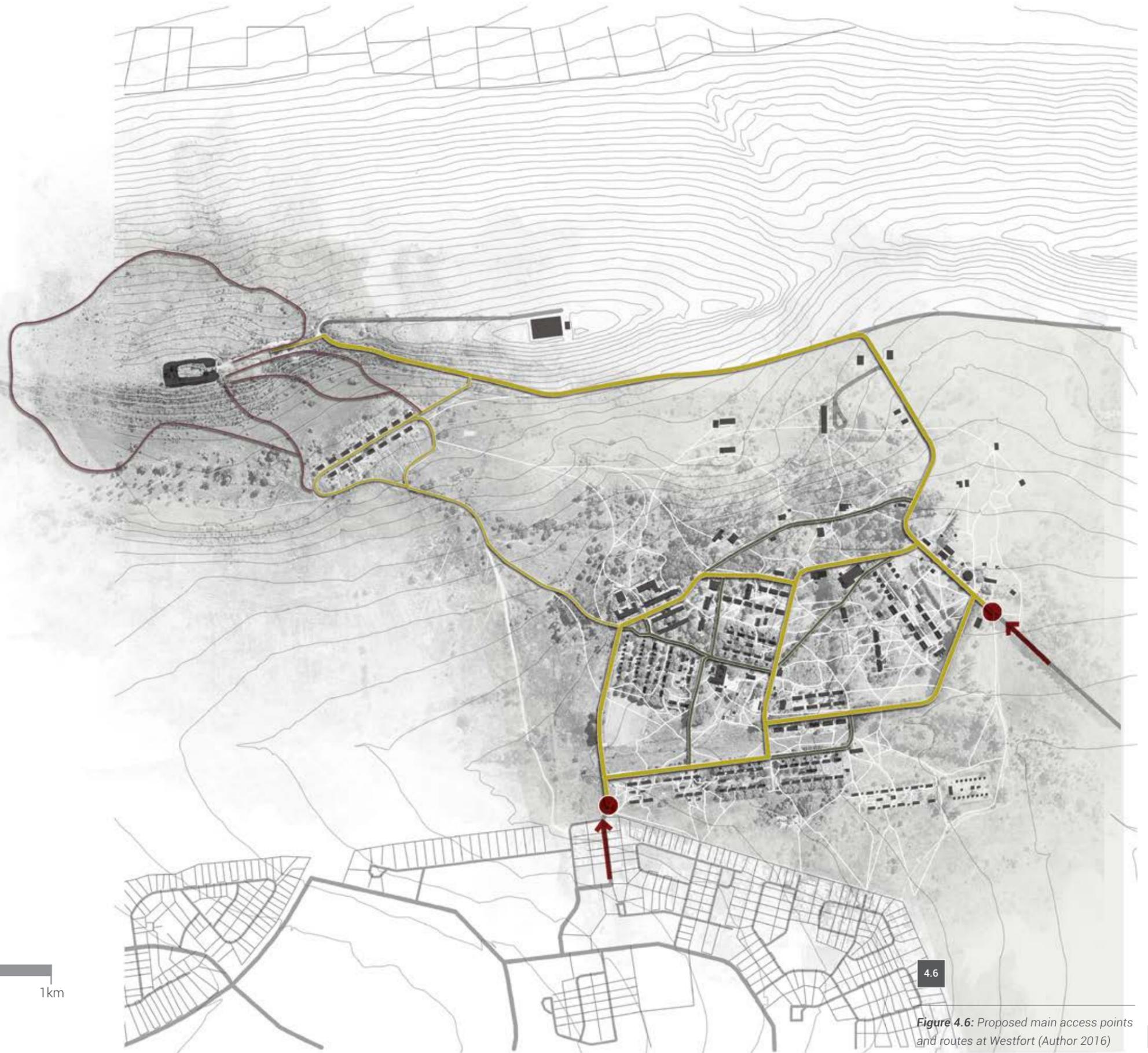
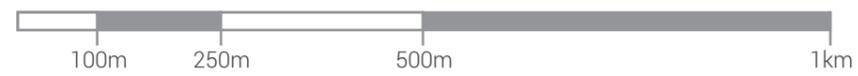


4.5

- Access points
- Main roads
- Secondary roads
- Walking trails



WESTFORT
ACCESS POINTS & ROUTES



4.6

Figure 4.6: Proposed main access points and routes at Westfort (Author 2016)

4.3// A BEACON OF CONTINUITY

With a clear understanding of both the historical and current context, there is no doubt that Westfort is in desperate need of a holistic intervention that will secure its future value, protect our South African heritage, and ensure a collective experience.

The theoretical exploration provided new insight into heritage value, heritage management, the celebration of the uniqueness of place, and how to design for a more engaging human experience through narration.

The vision for Westfort is to reintroduce the site as an anchor to protect our collective heritage. Although the inclusion of the Westfort heritage village is critical in its rehabilitation process, the design focus will be centred on re-appropriating the use and significance of the fort.

In order to enrich the position of the fort as a beacon of continuity, it is interesting to draw a metaphysical comparison between the architectural typology of a lighthouse and that of a fort.

Similar to the fort, the use of traditional lighthouses was soon outdated by modern navigation technology, leaving them redundant in modern civilization. Built on coastal heights, on protruding rocks or islands, lighthouses are meant to guide, to warn and to enlighten that which is so easily overlooked by man.

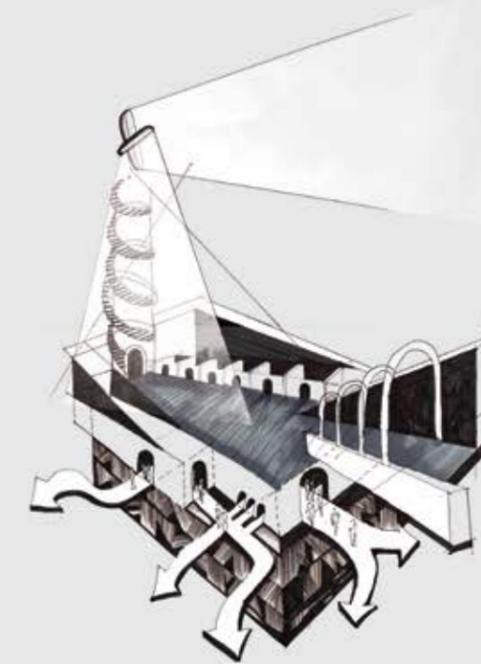
Steil (2010:4) suggests that, apart from their properties of physical guidance, they should be valued for their symbolic presence that offers possible narratives of morality and of organic integration between the man-made and the natural.

Lighthouses are also monuments of memory and of civilization. They celebrate the genius of place, virtues and events in the monumental mythology of mankind and of nature.

(Steil 2010:7)

The reality is that these fortified structures now only resemble the static memory of our progression as a society. The challenge, however, is to re-envision them as beacons that inspire a new contemporary function. Their value could be re-ignited by either their typological, poetic or metaphysical existence which alludes to a metaphor of continuity.

Figure 4.7: Metaphysical comparison between the typology of a lighthouse and a fort (Author 2016)



4.7

4.4//
HERITAGE
SIGNIFICANCE
& OBJECTIVES

Statement of heritage significance

Westfort exhibits a multiplicity of associated values that should inform and guide the design process. The National Heritage Resources Act (1999) sets out a list of criteria to determine its 'national' significance. The heritage significance of Westfort can therefore be broadly described under the following categories:

1. Historical significance

The site is associated with the establishment and protection of the capital city (Pretoria) as well as the history of medical services and the fight against leprosy in South Africa. The former institution is credited for its ability to meet the needs of its users by creating independent and sustainable living conditions.

2. Architectural significance

The Westfort Village represents various historical layers with different additions over time. The sensitive scale of the buildings allowed for an intimate experience for the inhabitants that suggested the familiarity of a neighbourhood in the city. Although much of the architectural fabric at the fort has been violated, the quality of the craftsmanship and technical achievement is still visually accessible for interpretation.

3. Spatial significance

The structural integrity of the fort as a submerged design is valued for its use of local materials and successful integration into the surrounding landscape. The fort is not visible from lower levels and therefore does not interfere with the sensitivity and natural ecology of the ridge.

The objectives of the project

Inspired by the metaphorical potential of the fort as an anchor of hope and a beacon of continuity, the following objectives will inform decisions throughout the project:

- To re-establish the discarded landscape of Westfort as a significant self-sustaining heritage village.
- To enable the current community of Westfort Village as critical stakeholders in the process of rehabilitation.
- To re-appropriate the fort as a dynamic beacon of continuity and belonging.
- To celebrate and preserve our shared heritage.

Figure 4.8: Conceptual collage of Westfort, inspired by the lighthouse metaphor as a beacon of continuity and belonging (Author 2016)

4.8

