



Above: the "new" and the "old" in Pretoria contemporary architecture: the former is at a human scale and the latter follows the bland format of the international skyscraper

Sammy Marks development, Pretoria, Phase 2

Facilities for the City of Pretoria

by Chris van der Walt and Jopie Becker

Translated from the Afrikaans and edited by Richard Holden

Professional Team

Architects

Studio 3 Architects cc (City of Pretoria component)

Project architects: D Henzen and J Becker

Stauch Vorster (Private sector component)

Interior designers

Julius and Company

Landscape architects

Gouws Uys & White

Quantity surveyors

C P de Leeuw (Pty) Ltd

Norval Wentzel Steinberg

Consulting structural and civil engineers

Lillicrap Crutchfield (Pty) Ltd

Pierre Badenhorst Chris Brand and Partners

Consulting engineers

Naas Olivier

Consulting mechanical engineers (airconditioning)

Richard Pearce and Partners inc

Consulting mechanical engineers (fire protection)

C A du Toit & Partners inc

Main Contractor

Murray & Roberts Buildings (Tvl) (Pty) Ltd

Representative of the City of Pretoria

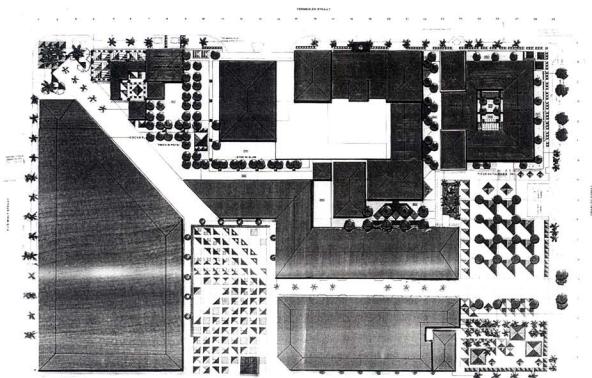
Town Planning Department: P Thiede

Developers and project managers

Murray & Roberts Properties (N.Tvl) (Pty) Ltd

The City Council of Pretoria initiated this project as portion of the redevelopment of the civic heart of Pretoria, which comprised three essential components:

- * the redevelopment of Church Square;
- * the pedestrianisation of Church Square;
- * the redevelopment of Sammy Marks Square.



Above: A legible configuration of pedestrian routes and civic piazzas at various scales

It was decided that the third component, Sammy Marks Square, would be the first area to be redeveloped as the property was readily available for this purpose and under the control of the City. Its location presented an ideal opportunity for joint public/private sector development as a feasible commercial development on the site was both possible and practicable. The latter was completed at the end of 1992 (see PLANNING 125, January 1993) and consists of a shopping centre and cinemas. The City Council portion of the development, which is the subject of this article, comprises four major departments, namely:

- mayoral facilities;
- a conference centre;
- city library
- city health department.

Brief

The brief which was presented to the architects by the City included the following:

- formulation of a masterplan for the project;
- development of a site development plan to the satisfaction of the City of Pretoria;
- detailed planning, design, technical and contractual documentation of all City Council facilities;
- site compilation of an integrated

development of both public and private sector amenities in such a manner as to form a meaningful integration with the broader civic context, including adjacent developments, in order to create a precinct which would serve as a "peoples' place" as well as an identifiable physical landmark in the heart of Pretoria;

- sympathetic integration of two historical structures - the Sammy Marks and Kynoch buildings in a "people friendly" context, without compromising their standing and civic presence.

The entire building complex consequently incorporates the following elements:

- a lettable retail component of 24 350m²;
- a lettable cinema complex of 1 520 m²;
- a lettable office component of 7 790 m²;
- two open-air civic squares with a total area of 2 100m²;
- mayoral suite and entertainment facility;
- a conference centre with catering facilities;
- VIP entertainment facilities and syndicate rooms;
- a new city library;
- a new clinic and city health department;
- an information centre and travel bureau for the city;
- a 5 star hotel of an international

standard;

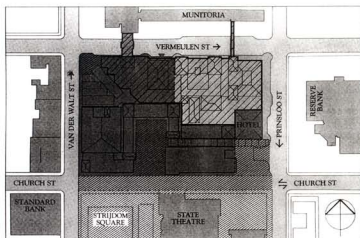
- parking facilities for 1 435 vehicles;
- a physical interface with the Munitoria complex by means of two interconnecting bridges;
- restoration of the historical Sammy Marks and Kynoch buildings.

The property is situated in the centre of Pretoria as a block in the central business district bounded by Church Street in the south, Van der Walt Street on the west, Vermeulen Street on the north and Prinsloo Street on the east.

Urban context

The western boundary of the site represents the busiest portion of the present CBD. Major institutional buildings (the Munitoria on the north, Reserve Bank Building on the east and State Theatre to the South have, until now, effectively contained the spread of retail facilities and activities in an easterly direction. The most active nodes of pedestrian and retail activity are therefore situated on the south-west and north-west corners of the site. In this context, it should be noted that the Strijdom Square and State Theatre mini-precinct enjoy considerable pedestrian movement and informal trade.

Traffic flow around the site occurs principally in a clockwise direction via Van der Walt Street (one-way from south to north), Vermeulen Street (one-way



 PUBLIC SPACE

 PRETORIA CITY COUNCIL PORTION

Reserve Bank would facilitate a gradual transition in scale from east to west across the entire development. The civic amenities are positioned on the northern edge of the development, allowing access by means of pedestrian bridges with the Muntoria Complex as well as direct linkages with the retail and commercial components of the project.

The establishment of an information centre as a central dispersion point and source of information for tourists in this type of centre was viewed by the architects as being a sensible and practicable innovation, particularly in view of the complete absence of such a facility in Pretoria at present. This facility has been located on the north-eastern

from west to east), Prinsloo Street (one-way from north to south) and Church Street which presently carries traffic in both directions. It is envisaged that Church Street, between Prinsloo and Van der Walt streets, will be converted into a pedestrian way which incorporates limited bus lanes. The surrounding streets carry heavy traffic, and the only sensible access to the site appears to be from Vermeulen and Prinsloo Streets.

A logical configuration of major building elements was derived from analysis of the context, in detail, general, functional and aesthetic terms. It was decided that the retail and commercial component of the project would be located on the western and southern edges of the site in order to facilitate appropriate connections with the existing CBD as well as the principal pedestrian routes. The open Sammy Marks Square faces Church Street on the south and forms a visual and spatial link with the existing Strijdom Square, the State Theatre and the proposed pedestrianised portion of Church Street. In addition, it makes the entire development physically and spatially accessible to the public.

The future hotel is intended to be situated on the south-eastern side of the development, which is a relatively quieter area, with porte cochere access from Prinsloo Street. The latter will also serve as an activity generator on the east of the development as well as being linked with the east-west mall which is directly to the north of the existing Sammy Marks building. In view of the scale and massing of the hotel, it was felt that its position adjacent to the

Below: Piazzas and the streetscape are those of a civic development





Above: Curved screens of glass bricks in the waiting and reception areas of the City Health Department

corner of the development, in close proximity to both Vermeulen and Prinsloo Streets, with appropriate bus loading and off-loading facilities at hand. There is a direct link with the eastern square, where the hotel is envisaged, by means of a set of escalators.

A visual focus for the development has been created in the form of a tower, situated on the corner of Vermeulen and Prinsloo Streets. Distinguishing signage can be applied to this element.

The information centre has a variety of facilities, namely a large exhibition area, video screen, TV monitors, automatic teller machines, public telephones, lockers, luxury cloakrooms, a coffee bar, information counters, marketing offices and lettable cubicles for associated activities such as motor vehicle hire and travel agencies. The contemporary approach to the design of this facility which has been adopted is intended to create an attractive, scintillating setting for the promotion of tourism.

Historical design considerations

Both the Sammy Marks and Kynoch Buildings have been declared National Monuments on account of their historical value and significance as buildings which date back to the earliest times of commercial development in Pretoria. Their orientation is such that both enjoy vistas over the Strijdom Square, which was constructed as Pretoria's marketplace in 1887/8. The square was originally the epicentre of commerce for the city. These two buildings are the sole survivors of the early days of commercial activity in and around the market square.

The Sammy Marks Building, which is the larger of the two buildings, is an example of a neo-Dutch Renaissance style of architecture. It is unique in that it is the only surviving example of this design paradigm in the Transvaal. Its unique character is further entrenched by its configuration as a series of three-storeyed, elongated buildings, each with its own gable and double pitched roof. It is undoubtedly this building which exerted the strongest influence on the design language which was developed

for the new development as a whole. The same romantic approach, as well as its distinguishing facebrick construction techniques, have been reinterpreted in order to facilitate a sympathetic relationship between new and existing buildings on the site.

The Kynoch Building stands to the east of the Sammy Marks Building, and was constructed between 1875 and 1884. This building reflects, in its mass, the smaller and more intensive detailed configuration of the original central business district. It is unique in that it is the oldest existing shop building in Pretoria and the only example of pre 1880 truly urban architecture.

Design language

A design language has been developed for the development which takes into account the complexities of maintaining a sympathetic relationship with the existing historical buildings on the site, whilst acknowledging contemporary movements in architecture such as "post modernism" and "contextualism". The prime objective was to create a sense of warmth and romanticism for the man-in-the-street, without sacrificing the civic dignity of the buildings. Architectural elements which were employed in the attainment of these objectives included detailed facebrickwork, mansard roofs, dormer windows, ledges, and colonnades (softened by the deployment of semi-circular arches. Particular attention was paid to the composition of the facades with respect to rhythm in both the horizontal and vertical planes through the use of a large-scale order at ground level which becomes finer as it progresses upwards to the intricate detailing of the roofs. Building masses which were functionally determined by virtue of the accommodation programme were aesthetically ordered within the total framework which had been developed for the complex as a whole.

Scale

The scale of the buildings has been related sympathetically to that of the existing Sammy Marks and Kynoch buildings. It is therefore limited to a

maximum height of five floors above ground level and is handled in such a manner as to maintain a consistently human scale, particularly in contrast with the bland, glazed vastness of the Munitoria complex to the north of the site. The pedestrian who makes use of sidewalk, as well as those people who move through the squares, are made conscious of their relationship with the total height of the buildings through articulation of facades and detailing which is particularly evident at eye-level. Curved copper roofs along the perimeter of the buildings are further points of visual interest which also reduce the overall impact of the mass of the buildings. A deliberate attempt has been made to sustain a sense of comfort with regard to scale, particularly as perceived by people at ground level: this is in keeping with the overriding intention of the City of Pretoria that this development should truly function as a "people's place".

Detailing

The detailing of the buildings has approached with the intention of both enriching and blending with the overall aesthetic impact of the design. The following means were applied to the achievement of these objectives:

- simplicity of materials is maintained through the selective application of a range of facebrick "specials" and precast concrete panels;
- further articulation and detailing of facades has been achieved through the use of precast concrete panels repeated in the form of windowsills, lintels and a heavy cornice respectively;
- Granite cladding of column bases as well as granite infill panels on the facebrick facades have been employed so as to achieve both a high quality of finish and durable details at street level. This also serves as a contrast in materials and appearance with the predominantly brick facades.

Design parameters established by the City

Spatial and accommodation requirements were identified and

tabulated by the various Heads of Departments in conjunction with the Town Planning Department. The programme of requirements for the conference centre was, however, determined by Studio 3 Architects in conjunction with specialist consultants in the field.

Quality control with respect to aesthetics and detailing was monitored by the City, and the following parameters were clearly established:

- durability;
- timelessness;
- consistency;
- sensitivity with respect to scale and the use of low-maintenance materials.

It was stipulated that the architectural style should be consistent with the characteristics that would normally be associated with civic architecture.

Budget

Cost estimates for the entire project were undertaken within the framework of a cost plan, which was carefully monitored at all stages by both the City and the quantity surveyors at monthly project management meetings. The project as a totality was initially negotiated with Murray & Roberts.

Construction and the requisite contract was drawn up.

Project programme

The actual commencement date for the project coincided with the sale of the various sub-components to financiers, as well as the mutual approval of the said financiers by the City of Pretoria. The City is therefore a shareholder in the development, together with the other parties who have contracted to finance the development in its entirety.



Above: Two examples of the design language for the development which takes both the architecture of the existing buildings on the site and contemporary movements in architecture into account

Documentation

The documentation programme was formulated on acceptance of all project approvals by the relevant parties. The latter programme was exceptionally "tight", and placed the professional team under considerable pressure as approval of the project took place at a stage when concept proposals formed the sole basis for documentation. The instruction to proceed with the project coincided with

the commencement of earthworks and related construction activities on the site. Special meetings were held with the project team, as well as weekly documentation control meetings with the main contractor on site, in order to facilitate the production and co-ordination of the vast amount of documentation required for a construction project of this nature. These meetings were additional to fortnightly site and progress meetings and

scheduled design and management meetings.

Construction

Construction commenced on the site in January 1991: the retail component of the project was scheduled for completion by the end of September 1992. The remaining portions of the works were scheduled for completion by the end of April 1993 in order to facilitate the functioning of the entire complex as a multi-activity development.

Editor's comments

The concluding comment from the project review of the retail component of this project, published in *PLANNING* 125, January 1993, bears repeating:

"...this development represents a renewed awareness of the need to nurture urban development at a human, rather than monumental scale. This is in keeping with the historic origins of Pretoria...(which)...must shed its image of "kragdadigheid" and function effectively as a city which serves people across the entire population spectrum."

Vital Statistics:

Gross building area:	
• City of Pretoria	51 800m ²
• Private sector	63 700m ²
• Total development	115 500m ²
Parking:	
• City of Pretoria	565 vehicles
• Private sector	870 vehicles
Project costs: R 220 million for the total development	□