

6.7 Recommendations and guidelines for spatial definition

The framework that has been used in the investigations for spatial definition serves as the criteria or guidelines to improve the spatial definition. This proved to be useful in the application for architectural and urban interiors and will be suggested for an improvement strategy for the Donkin Reserve.

The elements point, line, plane and volume serve as guideline criteria. The approach that is advised is one of creating people places within the static, physical model of space in the urban fabric that encourages social contact and interaction and allows for flexibility to grow over time.

6.7.1 Recommendation: Point

The Pyramid and Lighthouse on the Donkin Reserve can be identified as landmarks, due to the vertical emphasis and scale as point on the site. The position of these is not strategically incorporated in a holistic layout and planning. The opportunity exists to integrate these into an overall design of good organising principles.

Hierarchy is an ordering principle and should be applied as such. A stronger emphasis on the layout, focusing on these structures individually should be obtained. One can question the position of the support structure, the building that accompanies the landmarks and currently serves as tourist office. The function and value adding quality is not optimum and an additional location therefore could be identified.

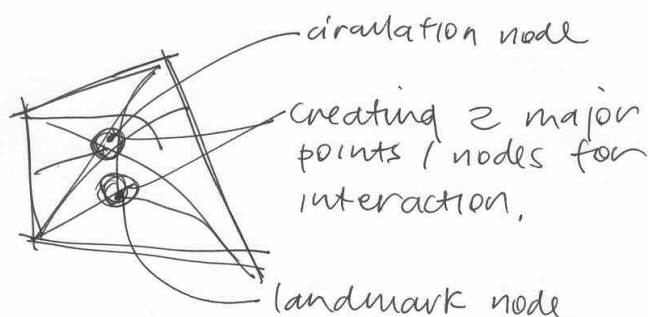


Fig 6-43: Improving point (Grobler 2005)

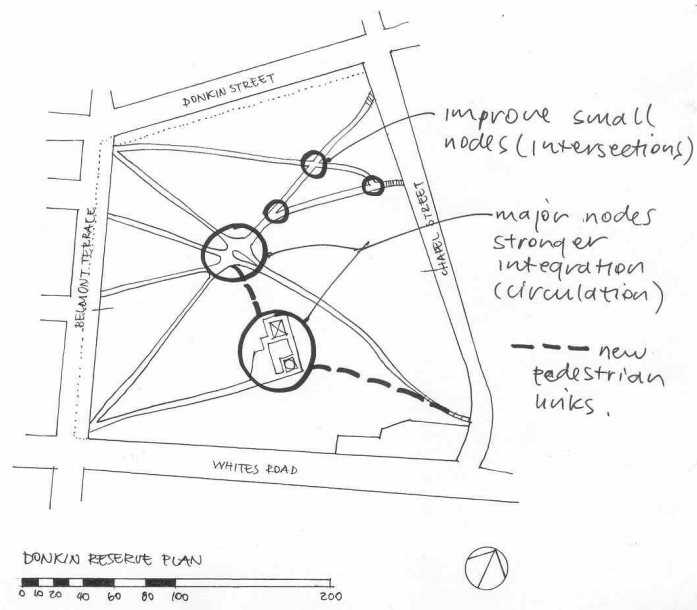


Fig 6-44: Improving nodes and links
(Grobler 2005)

The intersections on the circulation routes have potential to become points, or nodes, on the routes and to allow for social interaction. The location of furniture should be strategically decided in order to create points of conversation on the site and add value to the social dimension of the life on the Donkin Reserve.

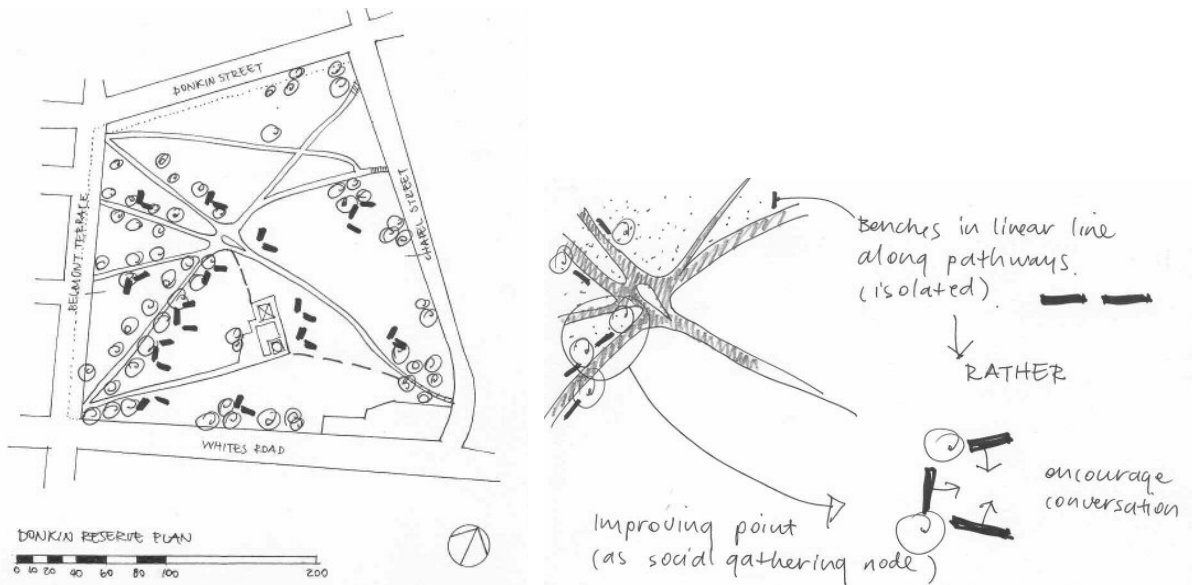


Fig 6-45: Improving nodes
(Grobler 2005)

6.7.2 Recommendation: Line

The strong linear elements on the site are the pathways that serve as circulation routes and seem to answer the directional movement requirements on and over the site. The physical quality of the paths and the choice of material can be improved to enhance an identity of place, instead of the tarred surfaces. This is further discussed under 'finish material' in this chapter.

The articulation of the routes could be further enhanced by the inclusion of vertical elements that follow the journey of the path. These elements can vary in height to create interest and vary in material, i.e. planting or low stone walls. Planting will include texture, colour, and a play on density. In creating an edge along the path, opportunities for seating are improved and the low walls could serve a dual function.

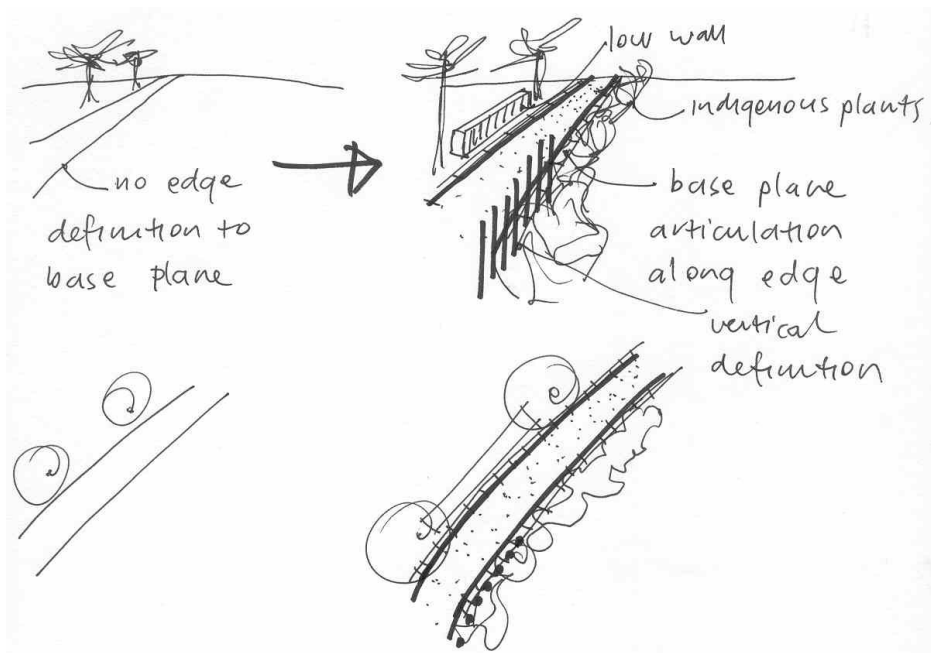


Fig 6-46: Improving line

(Grobler 2005)

6.7.3 Recommendation: Plane

The Donkin Reserve site offers opportunities to work with the gradient in achieving surfaces that are useful to human activities. This can be created in allowing the gradient to be terraced into various platforms for informal activities. In addition, the existing staircases are quite steep, and a more relaxed and comfortable climb could be achieved

by creating deeper treads that gradually reach to the top of the gradient. Again by doing this, extra seating space is produced. Vertical planes can be introduced to provide a 'backrest' to a seat when it is positioned on an edge.

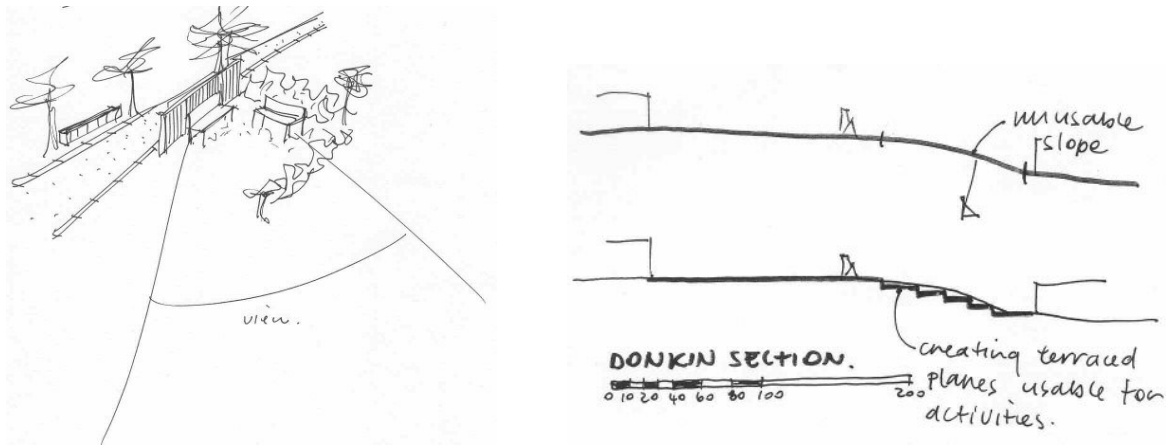


Fig 6-47: Improving plane (Grobler 2005)

The surface treatment is important in providing comfort and a 'sense of place' that will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.7.4 Recommendation: Volume

The creation of enclosures on the Donkin Reserve should be sensitive to the open space quality that exists, as the provision of protected edges can have a strong social impact on the space. With the addition of vertical boundaries, a volume can be implied, even when it is open to the sky or to the sides. These boundaries could serve the purpose of protecting the user of the space's back from the rest of the area, as well as giving a sense of privacy, an own space to use for the duration of the stay within the large scale of the Donkin Reserve as a whole. Visibility should be provided in view of the need for self-surveillance and security.

Vertical boundaries, as discussed earlier, have the potential to change character in the degree of density, the height and the finish material applied. The aim here is to create smaller defined spaces within the site that establish a sense of place, almost like different rooms within a building. The furnishing of these spaces should be appropriate and in harmony with the site. These articulations must blend in with the site and not dominate.

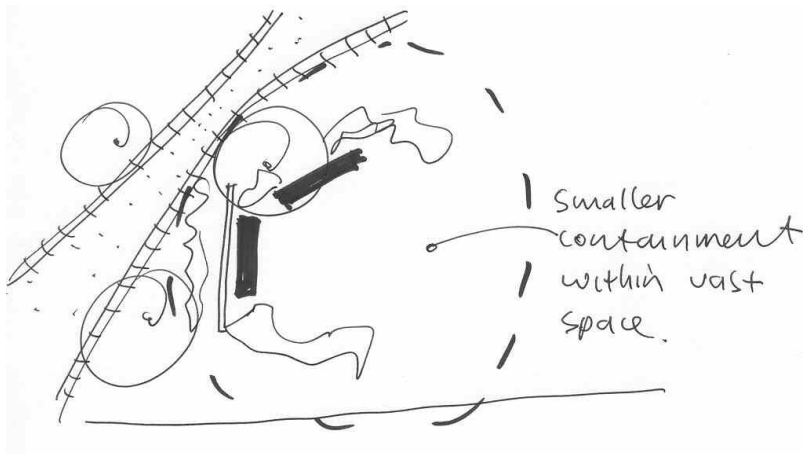


Fig 6-48: Improving volume (Grobler 2005)

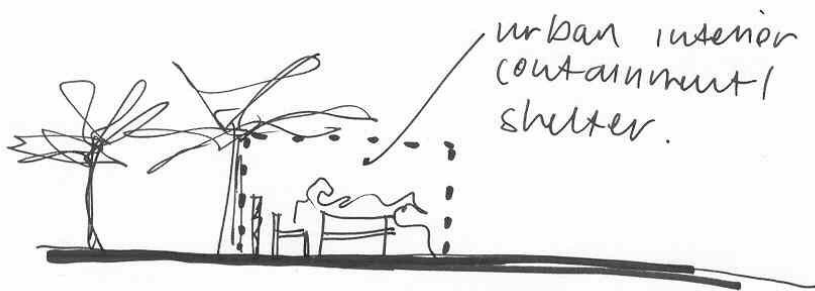


Fig 6-49: Improving shelter (Grobler 2005)

6.8 Recommendations and guidelines for enriching the spatial quality

With the articulation of a spatial framework, spatial modulation becomes possible with the application of variables to modulate the surfaces. Again, the criteria for this purpose are found in the framework that has been identified in the search for guidelines for the interpretation of spatial qualities. The variables are: shape and size, proportion and scale, colour, texture, finish material, light and shade, views and vistas that result in a sensory experience. In addition, sensory experience, activities and additional opportunities for the Donkin Reserve are discussed and suggested. The guidelines aim to combine all these aspects for the criteria to successfully create place-making.

6.8.1 Recommendation: Shape and size

The size and scale of the trapezoid shaped Donkin Reserve are vast compared with the surrounding grid of the city. This is true because of the “breathing” function of a public open space, the green zone in the city. The result is that the user of the space is overwhelmed by the size and does not relate to the space on a personal level.

The creation of smaller containments with lines and planes can allow for people to remain longer, because a defined or implied space is provided. This approach can further allow for the delineation of informal activity spaces that groups of people can use.

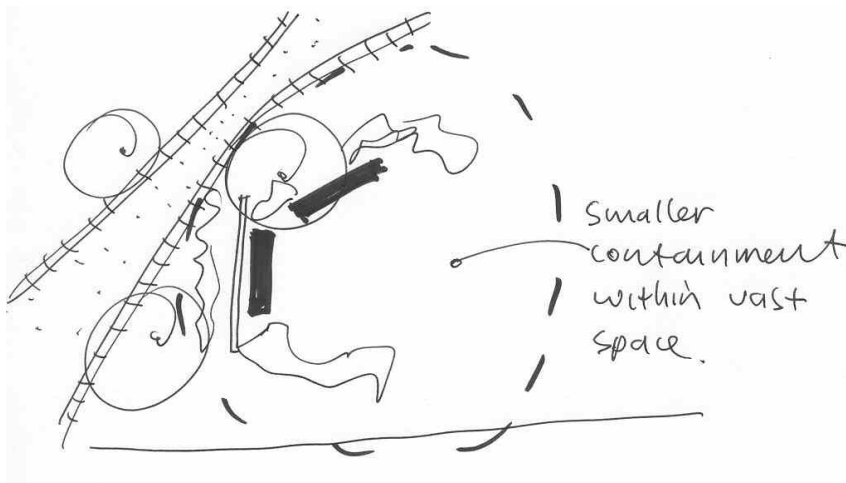


Fig 6-50: Improving size
(Grobler 2005)

These containments are not enclosed as such, but the definition is sensitive or even implied by the use and application other appropriate criteria.

6.8.2 Recommendation: Proportion and scale

Proportion and scale link with shape and size due to the dimensions of the site. The scale of the Donkin Reserve does not relate to human size, because of the vastness. The only way to create spaces that are more appropriate for individual or even group use is to delineate areas of smaller scale within the larger site. The aim is to produce human scaled areas, intimate enclosures, where one can feel comfortable and protected.

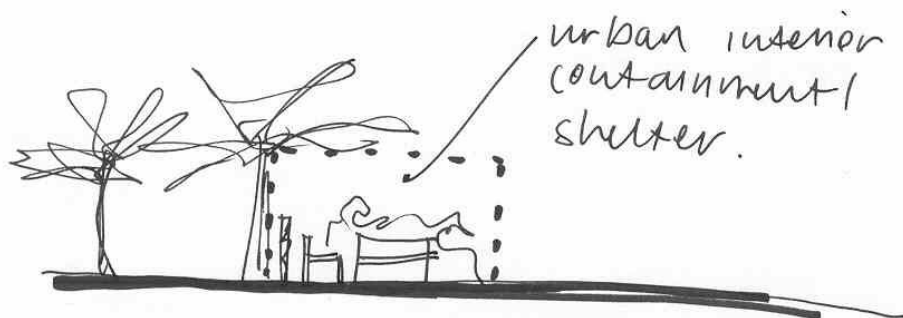


Fig 6-51: Improving scale and proportion

(Grobler 2005)

6.8.3 Recommendation: Colour

At present the site has limited differentiation in colour use that can be observed. The re-introduction of indigenous plants to the site can once again add to the richness and interest that is found in the colours of plants and flowers. As the name, Donkin Reserve suggests, there should be a degree of natural vegetation to justify such a name. The lawns do not provide variety and interest in the visual environment of the site.

In addition, the introduction of finish materials that are found in the Port Elizabeth area can add to the variety and interest. The materials in the pathways, low enclosing walls and furniture could add richness to the identity of the place.

6.8.4 Recommendation: Texture

Texture plays an important role in the visual and physical perception of spaces. The current situation is limited in the application of texture; planting and finish materials can surely add to the richness. A contrast between smooth and rough surfaces can become an effective tool in the creation of place if applied to the elements of spatial definition and made possible with the use of specific finish materials to delineate edges and lines.

6.8.5 Recommendation: Finish material

The site offers a great opportunity to combine materials local to the area. The combination of materials and finishes that have the appropriate qualities in being sensitive to the environment can be affectively applied. Durability and sustainability are

important in the longevity of materials and its performance in the public urban environment. A combination of stone, timber, pebbles and mosaics will have the capacity to enrich the environment with the intrinsic colours and textures it contains.

Previous investigations illustrated that communities have designed and made beautiful mosaics to surface planes. The inclusion of the community and the users of the space can be invaluable in the content and meaning that is added to the environment. The changing demographics of Central Hill allow for the integration of the once Victorian past with a strong African language in the aesthetics. This is illustrated by the surrounding buildings: the Edward Hotel is today situated next to a vibrant African restaurant.

A sense of place reflective of the current qualities and content of the area, the people, and the atmosphere can strongly determine the identity, experience and description of the place.

6.8.6 Recommendation: Light and shade

The modulation of the experience of the day has many possibilities in the movement through the Donkin Reserve. Existing trees cast shadows onto the lawn and pathways, but this goes unnoticed. This idea can be enhanced by the strategic placement of space defining elements or framed structures defining functional areas that can cast changing shadows as the day progresses. This creates an awareness of the movement of time and shapes the quality of the space with the intangible elements, light and shade. The inclusion of planting can further extend this idea from a natural application perspective.

6.8.7 Recommendation: View and vistas

Views and vistas on the Donkin Reserve are plentiful. These can further be enhanced if selected views are framed or elements as focal points are isolated. The Pyramid and Lighthouse are objects to view from all sides; once onto the site, the ocean and the horizon become the 180 degree view. This is a natural vista because of the location and gradient of the site in relation to the context and should be strengthened. Noisy and

unsightly back facades of adjacent buildings on the bottom end of the Donkin Reserve must be addressed in creating a positive experience.

The definition of areas for social containment can have the capacity to also frame strategic views onto the surrounding environment.

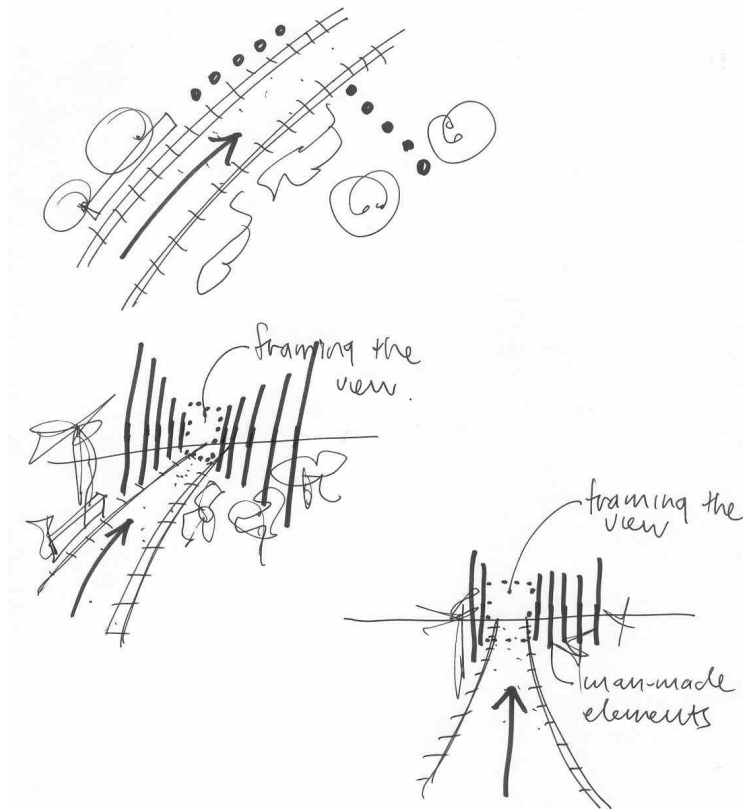


Fig 6-52: Framing the view

(Grobler 2005)

6.9 Sensory experience

The sensory experience is currently lacking on the Donkin Reserve; if one analyses the effect on the senses when using the space, only a limited observation is made. In terms of touch, the body feels the breeze of the climatic conditions on any specific day, however, tactility in terms of finish materials is lacking in the physical experience of the place.

The visual sense is represented by the natural state of the Donkin Reserve, but no interest or variety is created in the elements or selection of materials.

The only smells come from the surrounding areas and are sometimes unpleasant odours. The site has the potential in bringing forth plants and flowers that can add to the aromas and pleasant fragrances produced by nature. The space does not provide opportunities for the selling of food and therefore no enticing smells of food on-the-go exist. This then links with the sense of taste; if food were to be sold here, this sense can be satisfied.

When natural vegetation is re-introduced, indigenous birds and insects might return to the area. The sounds of birds and insects bring an added quality to any natural space, especially when in the city. The pigeons that are currently visiting the site might then even be joined by more species.

All the above senses combined can be enhanced by the kinaesthetic experience of the body moving through the space. The effect of all the spatial definition devices, together with the variables that modulate the space can add to the enriched experience of a person. The movement through time further strengthens this emotional feeling. The importance is that these aspects should be combined and active in order to have an effective influence.

6.10 Activities

The current situation in activities on the Donkin Reserve has not been strategically planned. At present the existing activities include sitting to admire the view, walking through a space of transit or informally playing soccer on the level section of the site.

The Donkin Reserve has the potential to be the hub of Central Hill and a vibrant place in the city at large, becoming a destination. The space is in the centre of a community, but is not utilised as a community or communal space. The site and location lend themselves to becoming an active part of the neighbouring communities. This could

become a forum for public speaking for members of the community; the space could be utilised as an open air performance and entertainment space if an amphitheatre could be included as part of the spatial framework. This would then provide an active link with the Opera House on the south-east corner of the site. The inclusion of ablution facilities can become the support space required.

In addition, art exhibitions could be facilitated on a monthly basis on the Donkin Reserve; also the permanent exhibition of local artists from the surrounding areas could add to the community function and visual interest.

This can strengthen the tourist attraction, with the relocation of the tourist information centre to a more convenient and strategically placed location. The inclusion of carts or temporary stalls, that sell various items, from food, crafts and products in demand by the users of the space, would also strengthen the tourist attraction.

These new possibilities can be realised if the management structures of the city are serious about the redevelopment and rejuvenation of the city centre and the precinct areas that are under the spotlight. These changes and improvements can lead to the identity of place, the enrichment of the Donkin Reserve by means of physical changes, planning and management, as well as the improvement of social interaction.

6.11 Additional opportunities

Neighbouring links with the surrounding buildings could be expanded as explained with the Opera House sharing an open air theatre, but at the same time there exist opportunities to link with other functions. The Edward Hotel for example could extend catering facilities onto the Donkin Reserve, maximising the urban interior of the hotel. The activities can flow outside as a public event to the benefit of all.

The same can be said about the restaurants, jazz and African music related activities that are present all around the site. Jazz events and music events, and lunch hour concerts will all bring the people of the surrounding areas back to the Donkin Reserve,

because of the wanting to gather, spend time there, interact, observe, be observed, and belong.

The place has the capacity to evolve over time, to transform according to the growth and development that takes place in the neighbourhood and the city at large. The space must be flexible in the manner in which activities can be sustained spatially as well as the longevity of the psychological reactions it elicits in the users of the space. The approach should be inclusive on all levels of activity and experience.

6.12 Sense of place

Integration of the above will ultimately result in a sense of place with physical elements and variables modulating the space, activities and social interaction. The historical content must be combined with current day qualities and events, creating a place that people will want to visit, because of the experience of the place as a whole.

What will make the place even more meaningful is the legibility of the layout and organisation of the physical aspects that the users of the space can comprehend. This organisation must be fed by the requirements that arise from the temporary activities that can be housed. The points of hierarchy, axis and datum achieved here as explained above must inform the planning process.

The inclusion of the community in this process can be valuable in identifying more activity and social interaction needs that may exist.

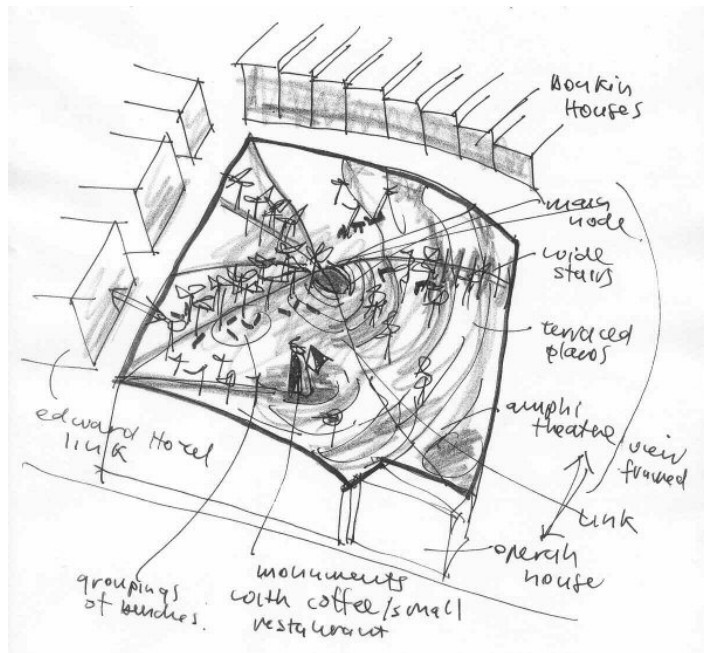


Figure 6-53: Visual overview (Grobler 2005)

6.13 Summary

The guidelines presented here were developed from the criteria identified in the previous chapter. The interpretation proved to highlight opportunities for improvements to the Donkin Reserve as a public open space in becoming a meaningful urban interior.

Suggestions were made with an informed understanding of the history, people and use of the space and aimed to address all in an integrated and holistic approach. The data gathered in the description and analysis of the Donkin Reserve established an understanding of the current situation and feelings of the users towards the place. The investigation identified the shortcomings and also strengths of the site in order to become a meaningful place.

The process of investigation indicated the need to integrate the historical past, the current developments of the area in terms of changing demographics and contextual content, with a strategic approach to the challenges of the future. The acknowledgement of all these data is critical in the creation of an appropriate place. The aspects must all be considered holistically.

6.14 Conclusion

The potential of the Donkin Reserve can be re-discovered by means of applying the guidelines to enhance the existing situation for the benefit of the users and the city at large. Improved structures for spatial definition with the inclusion of variables to enrich the space will ensure a place in the city that will encourage people to gather and belong. These recommendations can be used in the actual redevelopment of the urban rejuvenation proposed by the Madiba Bay Development Agency, in conjunction with local planners and GAPP Architects and Urban Designers. These findings are meant to inform the spatial definition strategy on a humanly scaled application, for places that add meaning to the environment and the users, such as the Donkin Reserve.