contents

list of illustrations

list of abbreviations

context study

brief

theoretical investigation

normative position

design investigation

technical investigation

conclusion

drawings

addendum a: constitution hill

addendum b: historical context

addendum c: informal

addendum d: precedent study

addendum e: accommodation schedule

addendum f: baseline document

addendum g: funding

list of references
What does the site want to be?
The designer sets out without preconception as regards a specific building project. Instead, a selected site is the point of departure and becomes the generator of a brief, programme and designed product.

To ask ‘What does the site want to be?’, or ‘What does the site want to become?’ is to assume an element of self-organisation, an inherent determinism which exists independently from the preconceptions of the designer. The designer attempts to understand that which is and has been so as to programme the site for a subsequent moment in a greater space-time continuum.

The outcome is an product of the context; grown from the site rather than imposed on it; an unpredictable response to a set of determinant relationships yet to be discovered at the time.

1.1. View down Twist Street, Hillbrow.
1.2. Aerial photograph: Johannesburg Metropolitan Area.
1.3. Road map: Hillbrow and surrounding areas.
1.4. Aerial photograph: Health Precinct.
1.5. 3D diagram: site and surrounding buildings. Levels indicate 1m contours.
1.6. 180-degree view of site.
1.7. Original Superintendent's Residence (a.) South Elevation (b). Southeast view.
1.8. Chapel, Hillbrow Hospital (a.) North Elevation (b.) West Elevation.
1.9. Vector Diagram: Health Precinct
When considering the study area (figure 10), Smit-and Wolmarans Street, both four lane one-way streets, are the best integrated into the existing road system and attract the highest levels of vehicular traffic; while Kotzé Street presents a secondary east-west connector with slower vehicular traffic and higher levels of pedestrian movement and sidewalk activity. King George, Twist and Wanderers Street run north-south and are also well-integrated. Joubert Street is high-speed, one-way regional connector effectively contributing to the lack of integration between Hillbrow and Braamfontein.

A number of institutional land-uses - the Civic Centre, Park Station and the Health Precinct - are located between Braamfontein and Hillbrow (figure 11a). These institutions are situated on large land parcels which fracture the urban grid. The landscaped areas around the Metropolitan centre are generally empty and windswept, serving only to showcase the Modernist architecture. Further green public open spaces are few and far between. The Health Precinct is highly inaccessible to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic (figure 11b). Pedestrian movement is discouraged by long walking distances between street corners. Institutional land-use thus creates a further barrier between Hillbrow and Braamfontein, effectively isolating Hillbrow and Berea from the Metropolitan Centre.

Joubert Park and Park Station are major activity nodes associated with high levels of pedestrian movement.

Constitution Hill has the potential to catalyse the development of the Health Precinct, which in turn may encourage the redevelopment of Hillbrow and its integration with Braamfontein. With hospital buildings along two edges and high-rise apartment buildings along the other two, the site represents a marginal position between institutional land-use and Hillbrow proper.

1.11.a. Vector diagram: institutional land-use.
1.11.b. Vector diagram: movement/access.
1.12. Figure Ground Study: Health Precinct.
a. View down Hospital Street.
b. Hillbrow Hospital Main Block, Leith 1936.
c. View down Smit Street.
d. View of site from Smit Street.
e. View up Klein Street.
f. View of Hillbrow Community Health Centre from Smit Street.
Climatic Data: Highveld (Holm 1996)
distinct rainy and dry season
average 11K difference between day/night temperatures
winter temperatures around 15K below comfort level
strong solar radiation
moderate humidity, low in winter
prevailing wind direction
summer: northeast
winter: northwest, some southwest

Microclimate
The site is very much an ‘urban’ site, with the microclimate seriously affected by noise- and air pollution, wind-channeling, shadows from surrounding buildings (fig. 1.17) and heat radiation from paved and tarred surfaces.

The site contains no endangered plant or animals species. Existing trees include specimens of Quercus rubra, Q. palustris, Jacaranda mimosifolia, Tipuana tipu and Juniper sp. Street trees are Platanus acerifolia. A vegetable garden is currently being maintained by hospital staff in the old Superintendent’s garden.

The site represents a green pocket in an otherwise largely barren urban landscape. Although the trees on site are exotic species, they can ameliorate the effects of noise, pollution and radiation while providing natural shading devices and increasing humidity levels. Also, they are part of a larger population of exotic species that is integral to the vernacular urban landscape and adds to the character of the site. Mature trees should thus be preserved where possible.

Seeing that the site is surrounded by buildings of between 2 and 19 storeys, it is assumed that geological conditions are not problematic and that no special foundations will be required.

The landscape rises from Johannesburg CBD to the northern suburbs. Because the site is located towards the top of Hospital Hill, it is assumed that the water table lies far below ground level and is not an issue of concern. No other hydrological matters are of special relevance.
summer solstice 21 december

equinox 22 march/22 september
winter solstice 21 June

1.17(i-h). Shadow Study: 21 June.
Johannesburg’s current town-planning developments are regarded as part of the context insofar as such developments are to shape the site’s urban environment in future.

The Johannesburg Development Agency was established in April 2001 as an initiative of the City of Johannesburg. It is a city-wide economic development agency that plays a leading role in the implementation of the City’s economic development strategy, Joburg 2030: In 2030 Johannesburg will be a world-class city with service deliverables and efficiencies that meet world best practice. Its economy and labour force will specialise in the service sector and will be strongly outward oriented such that the city economy operates on a global scale. The result of this competitive economic behaviour will be strong economic growth that will drive up city tax revenues, private sector profits and individual disposable income levels such that the standard of living and quality of life of all the city’s inhabitants will increase in a sustainable manner (JDA 2003: 1).

Project areas include:

_Constitution Hill [Addendum A]
_the Health Precinct
_Newtown
_Braamfontein
_the Jeppes town development
_the Faraday Precinct.
_The Fashion District [fig. 1.18].

Focus areas as identified by the Johannesburg Regional Spatial Development Framework 2003 [fig. 1.19] include Constitutional Hill(1), Park Station(2), Western Joubert Park(3), Observatory-Kensington-Hillbrow-Yeoville-Berea(4), Esselen Street(5) and Braamfontein(6). Generic poverty alleviation; social regeneration; skills development; employment opportunities and by-law enforcement - as regards informal trading, illegal uses, overcrowding, slum lording and sheebens - are relevant priorities (City of Johannesburg 2003).

The nature of development in the development precincts of both the JDA and the Metropolitan Council points towards a preoccupation with Joburg’s image and the stabilisation of decline. The general living conditions in Hillbrow - characterised by overcrowding and a thriving informal and illegal economy - raises a question as regards the potential of recent developments to empower the lower socio-economic classes. However crowded and unsafe, Hillbrow's urban landscape enables the daily survival of thousands of urbanites. Both the JDA and the town-planning department recognise Hillbrow’s problem as being primarily socio-political and beyond the scope of conventional town-planning measures (Badat 2004); and accordingly have so far been reluctant as regards planning for physical intervention. Hillbrow has become an island of underdevelopment between the wealthy suburbs to its north and the development precincts to its south.
1.20. Health Precinct: proposed interventions; OMM and Urban Solutions.
The Johannesburg General Hospital was officially opened on Hospital Hill on the 5th of November 1890 with 103 beds. The Main Block (Gordon Leith) was completed in 1936. When, in 1968, the Transvaal Provincial Administration commissioned the building of the new hospital on Parktown Ridge, the original Johannesburg Hospital became known as the Hillbrow Hospital (www.johannesburghospital.org/aboutus/history).

The development of the built fabric of Hospital Hill (now the Health Precinct) has taken place on an ad hoc basis over 100 years. The older fabric is primarily built along street edges with more recent buildings constructed as additions and connections between older buildings. The result is completely unintelligible. The older fabric has started to decay faster than is usual as a result of poor maintenance, vandalism and the ingress of stormwater, while a number buildings are underutilised or empty. A Scoping Study of the Health Precinct was prepared for the JDA by OMM Design Workshop and Urban Solutions. The Scoping Report represents the first step in a development process the aim of which is to create an accessible, people-oriented centre of medical excellence in the existing Health Precinct.

The Scoping Study proposes to integrate segregated areas of the city; ensure accessibility of public amenities, especially to the pedestrian, young and old; create a sense of place by providing public spaces that are surrounded by primary health functions; create a mixture of land uses to ensure a 24 hour life cycle, and identify catalytic projects.

Refer to figure 1.21. Interventions proposed by the report include the demolition of a number of buildings; the reinstatement of the street grid to ease vehicular and pedestrian movement, increase legibility and ensure accessibility to the public precinct; the development of a public open space network, and the insertion of new health-related and mixed-use buildings with public activities at ground level and private activities on upper levels.

The Hillbrow Community Health Centre is currently undergoing extensive renovations so as to house the Hillbrow Polyclinic, which will provide primary health care.

17 Esselen Street, previously known as the Colin Gordon Nursing Home (Pabst 1951) has been identified as a heritage building and is being developed to house an HIV/AIDS Research and Care Centre. Esselen Street will become the centre of the increasingly accessible and pedestrian-friendly Health Precinct.
Landmark buildings to improve legibility: Hillbrow Hospital, Metropolitan Council, 17 Esselen Street.

Catalytic projects: Constitution Hill Development, upgrade of Esselen Street, development of AIDS Research and Care Centre in 17 Esselen Street

Existing buildings: uses and heritage aspects to be documented; redevelopment and upgrading of facilities.

New mixed use development potential including commercial, retail and residential use.

New health-related development potential.

Centralised parking development.

The site on the corner of Smit and Hospital Street is earmarked for mixed use. The Scoping Study provides, firstly, an indication of the Metropolitan Council's intention to develop the Health Precinct; and, secondly, a framework; however speculative, for the intended spatial development of the precinct as a whole. Its guidelines are not prescriptive in terms of the particular site. Nevertheless, the design proposal forms part of the development of the Health Precinct as a whole and should fit loosely into the preliminary framework as regards increasing the accessibility of the Health precinct, creating a pedestrian-friendly environment with a network of public open spaces, and inserting mixed used facilities.

The streetscape around the site - currently barren and underused - should be turned into an active and inviting environment with respect for the human scale and pedestrian speed of movement.
Statistics
Hillbrow is South Africa’s most densely populated suburb. The majority of the population of this inner city neighbourhood is classified as black African. The 1996 census indicated a population of 30 000 people. A 2001 survey raised the number to approximately 100 000, a figure which doubles over weekends due to the influx of people to entertainment venues in the area. According to the 1996 census, 65% of residents are between 17 and 35 years of age. IsiZulu is the most common first language (39%), followed by English (15%) (Wooldridge 2002: 1). 25% of the population is unemployed and an estimated 40% are HIV positive. The majority of the population earns below R2000 per month (www.bs.cyty.com/elmbs/outr).

The Hillbrow Berea Regeneration Initiative (HBRI)
Beginning in March 2001, the IMBEWU Consortium embarked on a fourteen-month participatory planning process with the residents of the Hillbrow and Berea. The process was undertaken on behalf of the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council (GJMC) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The aim of the project was to inform the Council’s planning for the regeneration of the area through establishing and managing a project office for the HBRI, and engaging residents and stakeholders in participatory planning processes (IMBEWU Consortium 2002: 1). Interactive street theatre and the visual arts proved the most effective means of engaging residents from various age groups, cultures, language groups and degree of literacy in interactive, creative problem solving during the 14 month process undertaken by the Consortium (IMBEWU Consortium 2002: 16).

Problems indicated in the report are:
Unemployment / Poverty: Homelessness, street children, sex work.

Health: HIV/AIDS
Urban Environment: Litter, pollution and lack of maintenance of public facilities such as street lights and toilets.
Housing: High rent, neglect of buildings, landlord-tenant disputes, overcrowding.
Child abuse and neglect
Informal trade-related disputes
Pervading pessimism and unrealistic expectations of Government
Xenophobia

1.22 (facing page). Apartment Block, Klein Street, Hillbrow.
1.23. Alley between Ockerse and Kapteijn Street, Hillbrow.
The report further indicates a need for facilities for diverse recreational facilities; safe, multifunctional public open spaces, and theatres and performance venues.

**Frontier City**

Hillbrow is a predominantly residential area, but includes a small commercial and entertainment strip concentrated around Pretorius and Kotze Street. Prior to the Second World War, the suburb consisted largely of detached residential houses. In 1946 the Johannesburg City Council passed a revised town-planning scheme for Hillbrow which removed building height restrictions. By the early 1970s, most of the suburb’s detached houses had been replaced by high-rise blocks of flats. Today, up to 84% of Hillbrow’s population live in rented flats. The remaining portion lives in hotels, rooftop rooms originally built as domestic quarters, the few remaining detached houses or on the streets (Wooldridge 2002: 1).

Hillbrow is known to have become racially mixed prior to the abolition of the Group Areas Act. The mid 1970s saw a high vacancy rate, which Morris (in Wooldridge 2002: 2) attributes to a drop in suburban housing prices; the exodus of foreigners in the wake of the 1976 uprisings, and young whites’ staying with their parents or sharing accommodation to minimise costs during the recession. Around 1980, the lifting of rent controls and the introduction of sectional titles forced many of Hillbrow’s residents who were unable to buy their homes or pay the rapidly rising rents out of the neighbourhood. Landlords were able to exploit the acute housing shortage by charging high rents to ‘illegal’ tenants - initially predominantly Coloured and Indian people who were legally prohibited from living in Hillbrow. The provisions of the Group Areas Act were by-passed by using whites to sign lease agreements on behalf of non-white tenants. Nevertheless, illegal tenants remained vulnerable to police raids and eviction (Wooldridge 2002:2).

A landmark court case (State vs Govender 1982) - ruling to the effect that tenants could not be evicted unless suitable alternative accommodation was available - hastened the desegregation of Hillbrow. The Apartheid government did not have the fiscal capacity to provide alternative housing. Moreover, they faced a political dilemma as they were unable to conduct mass evictions in a neighbourhood prominent in the media while trying to woo Indian and Coloured representation into the tri-cameral parliament. Conservative elements viewed the inclusion of Coloureds and Indians in parliament as a retreat from the Apartheid doctrine.

Hillbrow came to symbolise the government’s unwillingness or inability to enforce strict racial segregation.

1.24. Lutheran Church (Schaerer 1912), Edith Cavell Street, Hillbrow.
The Conservative Party (CP) actively opposed the integration of Hillbrow. Morris (in Wooldridge 2002: 2) quotes a CP leader at a 1983 meeting in protest against racial integration in the inner-city: 

...Coloureds, Indians and Blacks are swamping these areas [Hillbrow, Berea and Joubert Park]... Whites are afraid to leave their flats for fear of being attacked; parks are occupied by unemployed Blacks; Indians threaten or bribe landlords to give them accommodation; landlords are allowing people of other race groups to live in their blocks of flats, to intimidate white protected tenants to vacate....crime is increasing, people of colour litter the area and urinate in public. The entire situation is forcing Whites to leave the area.

While foreign migrants* feature prominently in the social geography of Hillbrow, it is difficult to estimate their exact number. According to Wooldridge (2002: 3-4), 92% of the population counted in the 1996 census were South African, with 4% from SADC counties, 1% from the rest of Africa and the remainder from elsewhere. It is however likely that a large number of legal and illegal foreign migrants were not counted in the 1996 census and that the number has substantively increased since 1996. According to local organisations, Zimbabweans, Nigerians and Mozambicans are amongst the largest foreign migrant groups.

Until the mid-1980s, illegal tenants in Hillbrow remained predominantly Indian and Coloured. The number of Africans was limited by influx control laws, which required that Africans carry a ‘pass’. In addition, many landlords were blatantly racist and refused to rent to Africans. With the abolition of the pass laws came a massive demographic shift in Hillbrow’s population. In 1985, approximately 10% of Hillbrow’s residents were African. By 1993 the figure had risen to 62%, and by 1996 over 80% of Hillbrow’s population was African (ibid.).

1.25. View up Edith Cavell Street, Hillbrow.
* For the purposes of the study, the term ‘foreign migrant or ‘foreigner’ will be used in reference to any legal migrant, asylum seeker or refugee. Illegal immigrants are excluded.
Hillbrow once symbolised the breakdown of Apartheid through the relaxation of racial segregation - the frontier of the city where black and white could meet. Today, Hillbrow is known as an area with a prominent foreign population. The old dynamics of racism are overlaid with xenophobia. Social cleavages on the grounds of ethnic differences are becoming increasingly prominent. According to Soja (in Wooldridge 2002: 3), a new mode of 'social and spatial regulation' - based on ethnicity and informal and criminal economic networks - is emerging.

xenophobia, n. a hatred or fear of foreigners or strangers. (Gr. xenos: strange, stranger; phobos: fear)

1.26. View down King George Street from the site.
According to Wooldridge (2002: 21), the local spatial and social regime in Hillbrow is to a large extent shaped by national origin. Ethnic differences between South Africans are downplayed, while national differences are emphasised and given a spatial dimension. People of the same nationality typically cluster together in the same buildings/streets; and although this phenomenon is not specific to Hillbrow, the number of distinctions and spatial groupings within this small neighbourhood is remarkable.

A complex pattern of criminal networks and spatial control is nested within a context of general insecurity; the only social order being imposed by criminal networks, with the balance of power weighed towards the most organised groups - the gangs and cartels. While Council continues to deliver services to the area, the political problem is largely neglected. Residents of Hillbrow extend their trust mostly to church groups and small social networks comprised of people from the same nationality. There is significant social capital within migrant groupings, and numerous migrant associations exist, such as ‘the brotherhood’, the Self Help Christian Refugee Association, the Zimbabwean International Immigrants Confederation and numerous other informal groupings of Zambian and Nigerian migrants (Wooldridge 2002: 7).

**Employment**

It seems that migrants are not discriminated against in terms of employment opportunities. According to Wooldridge (2002: 15), foreign migrants who own local businesses are more likely to employ people from their home countries than South Africans. In many cases, foreign street traders from particularly West African countries are more educated, experienced and likely to have some capital than their South African counterparts (Gotz and Wooldridge in Wooldridge 2002: 15). Strong feelings of xenophobia exist against foreign traders: in September 1998, 2000 local hawkers marched the streets of Johannesburg to protest against competition from foreign hawkers (Weekly Mail and Guardian, 14 September 1998 in Wooldridge 2002: 16). Foreigners are believed to take jobs away from South Africans. The South African Migration Project; however, interviewed 70 immigrant entrepreneurs in inner-city Johannesburg and found that foreign business people create between two and four jobs each, and that at least half their employees were South Africans. They also invested most of their profits in South Africa (Weekly Mail and Guardian, 11 September 1998 in Wooldridge 2002: 16).

**Control**

Criminal networks operating in Hillbrow are stereotyped according to ethnicity - Nigerians are credited with the drug trade and Zimbabweans with housebreaking, hijacking and violent crimes. The success of the Nigerian drug trade is linked to tight discipline. Nigerian dealers are highly organised and generally refrain from using the drugs they supply. Each ‘drug hotel’ has a building committee, which elects a president, Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer and a task team. The committee's rules are binding on all Nigerians in the area - those who transgress the rules are fined. Fines are paid into a ‘legal fund’ to bail out members who are incarcerated. The presence of Nigerian drug cartels effectively reduces violent crime in the streets and buildings where they operate (Wooldridge 2002: 16).

This reliance on informal security networks extends to the sex industry, which centres around the daily accommodation hotels (Wooldridge 2002:19). Sex workers often turn to their hotel security rather than the police. The police themselves are regarded as being corrupt and deeply embedded in local criminal networks (Wooldridge 2002: 18). Many foreigners believe the police to be less likely to react when the victim of a crime is a foreigner. Also, foreigners suffer harassment
from policemen demanding identification documents and bribes regardless of the legality of the documentation provided.

**Marginalisation**
Many foreign migrants choose to live in Hillbrow for fear of victimisation in the townships, and because of its central location, the informal opportunities it offers for income-generation and the ease with which accommodation can be procured without references or credit ratings.

The anonymity of Hillbrow simultaneously provides social freedom and the security of living in close proximity to fellow countrymen.

Foreign migrants are more likely to use some public services - particularly health clinics and local schools - than local residents. According to Wooldridge (2002: 22), French-speaking immigrants (mostly West-African) make almost exclusive use of recreational facilities in Hillbrow, while Portuguese-speaking immigrants are likely to visit township areas.

Foreigners do not receive poorer service standards from the Council, but in the case of landlord-tenant disputes over payment and maintenance of services foreigners have less recourse than South Africans. Many foreign residents feel that landlords are less responsive to their needs and rights as tenants because they are a part of a vulnerable constituency (Wooldridge 2002: 10). Few migrants participate either individually or collectively in local government politics (Wooldridge 2002: 22).

It seems that the degree of spatial segregation is related to the perceived measure of *other-ness*. According to Short (in Wooldridge 2002: 21-2), the salience of a migrant group increases with its size (relative to the total population), residential concentration, number of newcomers and the degree of homogeneity as regards class and occupation within the migrant group.

---

**Urban Transformation**
Hillbrow may once again be a forerunner of urban change. Racial politics is being replaced by, or rather subsumed into, identity politics and xenophobia. The way in which 'otherness' is constructed and managed will play a critical role in the future of urban politics in Johannesburg. Hillbrow is a testing ground for Johannesburg's ability to manage what Chipkin (in Wooldridge 2002: 21) calls the 'new era of African trans-national migration' - the post-1980 wave of migration from African countries not traditionally associated with the migrant labour system. Given the emphasis placed on the 'integrated city' in metropolitan urban policy, the territorial dimension of ethnicity should come under consideration.
Counteraction

According to the South Constitution (Act 108 of 1996 Section 1.3), all citizens [which include asylum seekers and legal foreign migrants] are equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship. According to Section 2.31, persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community, to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society. Discrimination on the grounds of ethnic differences is a violation of human rights.

As a signatory to the UN and OAU Conventions on refugee protection, South Africa is obliged to provide protection to people who have well-founded fears of persecution due to race, ethnic origin, political or religious creed or membership of any particular social group.

A 1999 study of South Africans' attitudes towards immigration and immigrants found South Africans to have the highest level of opposition to immigration recorded in any country in the world where similar studies have been done (Peberdy and Majodina in Wooldridge 2002: 21). The rising tide of Xenophobia in South Africa has been addressed in a number of documents:

The Braamfontein Statement, which was released by the South African Human Rights Commission in October 1998, rejects irrational prejudice and hostility towards or exploitation of non-nationals and aims to eradicate xenophobia. (SAHRC 1998).

The Inner City Position Paper, released by the JDA in January 2001, states that, in order to develop and encourage the development of the inner city as a desirable location and incubator for SMMEs, it is necessary to develop programmes to counter xenophobia and create materially productive relationships between local and migrant entrepreneurs (JDA 2001: 11).

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, as adopted at the 17th plenary meeting of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, on 4 September 2002, includes the following statement: We reaffirm our pledge to... give priority attention to the fight against the ... conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people, which include: ... intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds [and] xenophobia (www.joburg.org.za/clean_city/johannesburgdeclaratl on).

The HBRI Report suggests the establishment of a cultural centre where residents from different nationalities can interact in meaningful ways; and a public education campaign which will create an understanding and tolerance of the reasons for the presence of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Hillbrow.