

004

Urban context:

*“The building of cities is one of man’s greatest achievements. The form of his city always has been and*

*always will be a pitiless indicator of the state of his civilisation. This form is determined by the multiplicity of decisions made by the people who live in it. In certain circumstances*

*urban study*

*these decisions have interacted to produce a force of such clarity and form that a noble city has been born”*

Bacon, 1978. p13



- |                       |                           |                         |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. SITE               | 5. BURGERS PARK           | 9. FIRE STATION         |
| 2. PRETORIA CITY HALL | 6. PRETORIA TRAIN STATION | 10. BEREA SOCCER FIELDS |
| 3. TRANSVAAL MUSEUM   | 7. BOSMAN TRAIN STATION   | 11. SALVOKOP PRECINCT   |
| 4. MELROSE HOUSE      | 8. AMBULANCE BUILDING     | 12. CULTURAL ART MUSEUM |

The urban context wherein the project is found forms part of the Pretoria Inner City Integrated Spatial Development Framework or “ISDF.” Within the framework, a few principle guidelines are introduced and discussed for the further development of the inner city and surrounding urban pockets. These guidelines are addressed and used to inform certain decisions concerning the design school proposal.

The important principles pertaining directly to the project are mentioned as follows:

- Support the development of a spatial structure of urban areas that promote “walkability” – shorter block lengths, finer grain built form, mixed uses, etc.
- Enhance the visual quality of pedestrian networks.
- Create a legible, integrated and accessible public transport system and maximise the opportunities provided by having close access to public transport services.
- Structure the interface between the surrounding land uses and the function of the streets.
- Minimise the impact of various transport and movement modes.

20

Fig 1. Aerial view of south-western quadrant of Pretoria CBD

004

- Allow for the development of multi-functional land uses.
- Develop places that can be used for a variety of uses and purposes (robustness).
- Enhance and strengthen the existing character of precincts through labelling, theme development and the definition of precinct boundaries.
- Reinforce the inherent differences that distinguish one precinct from another.
- Promote the functioning and aesthetic connection between buildings by combining compatible uses, separating incompatible uses and strengthening the interfaces between precincts.

[ISDF -?]

These are a few principles identified from the ISDF, the basis from which certain design decisions were made using the knowledge and understanding gathered from this development framework.

Throughout the design investigation it is understood that the design of the building is not as important as the design of the spaces that inform the development of a building programme. What is meant is that the understanding of the present urban spaces and form in and around the City-Hall precinct is the driving force for the design of the design school proposal.

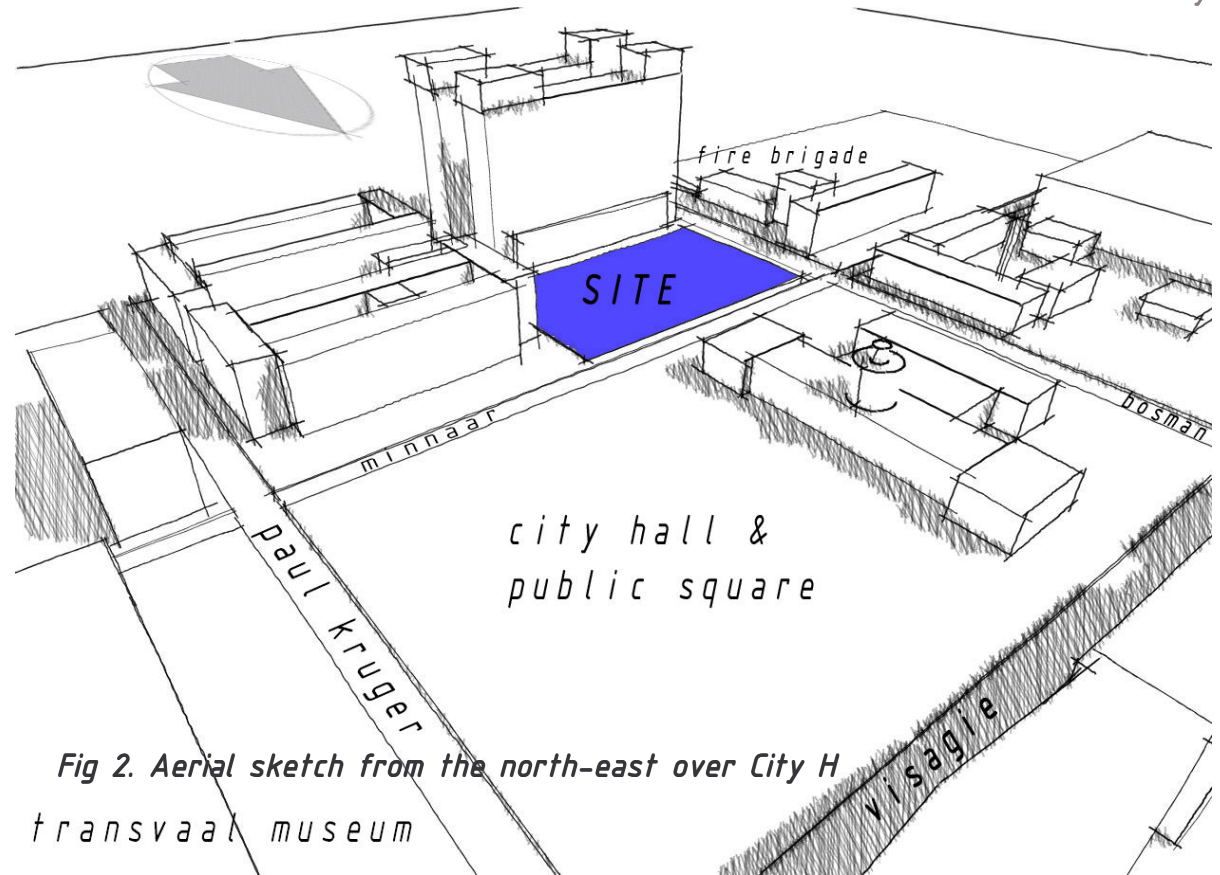


Fig 2. Aerial sketch from the north-east over City H

transvaal museum

Several existing factors are of importance to the design of the school:

Firstly, the City Hall is an isolated building on a city block. Very stately, the building is preceded by a formal water feature and this is surrounded neatly kept grass and followed by vehicular parking. The presence of the City Hall is made visible by a boundary of building

facades that line all four sides adjacent to the City Hall building. The proposed site is lacking this very important feature to the City-Hall precinct.

Secondly, the buildings surrounding the precinct are of formality in that they share a prominence in verticality. A study shows that all the buildings have some form of vertical design element on the façade facing the City Hall.

004

Thirdly, the City Hall precinct falls in a greater inner city precinct called the “Museum Park Precinct.” This precinct is tourist orientated and has been upgraded and designed to accommodate pedestrian traffic. Landscape furniture and the pedestrian walkways are identified through sameness in design theme; all furniture within this precinct is of the same design and language.

The importance of pedestrian movement is clearly visible through large walkways and pedestrian furniture. Large volumes of people move past the site daily.

Public transport is within walking distance of the site - train, bus and taxi facilities.

Presently people are using the City Hall lawns for relaxation and some individuals are trading informally in the

*urban study*

form of selling of food and photography.

This paper therefore aims to enhance the social architecture of the City Hall precinct by adding specific functions that relate to current activities on the City Hall precinct. The City Hall has a large urban green space in front of the building itself, this space is important to the precinct and therefore it is used to inform spatial development on the lower floors of the design school. The school becomes part of the urban room that extends into the CBD, the space within the precinct is important in the way that people experience the City Hall as well as the “Museum Park”. Socially the space can be divided into three pockets: public, private, and semi-private, and thus participators within the City Hall precinct are informed by the architecture as to what the space offers them.

Urban fabric in this precinct is relatively coarse as the buildings surrounding the City Hall are mainly tall with long continuous facades (refer to Figures 2, 3 & 4). The problem that arises from this grain is the interaction between urban fabric and user in this precinct, except for the Transvaal Museum, everyday pedestrians and users have specific destinations and do not interact directly with the built form that frames the City Hall. This is another reason for introducing a robust space close to the City Hall. A design

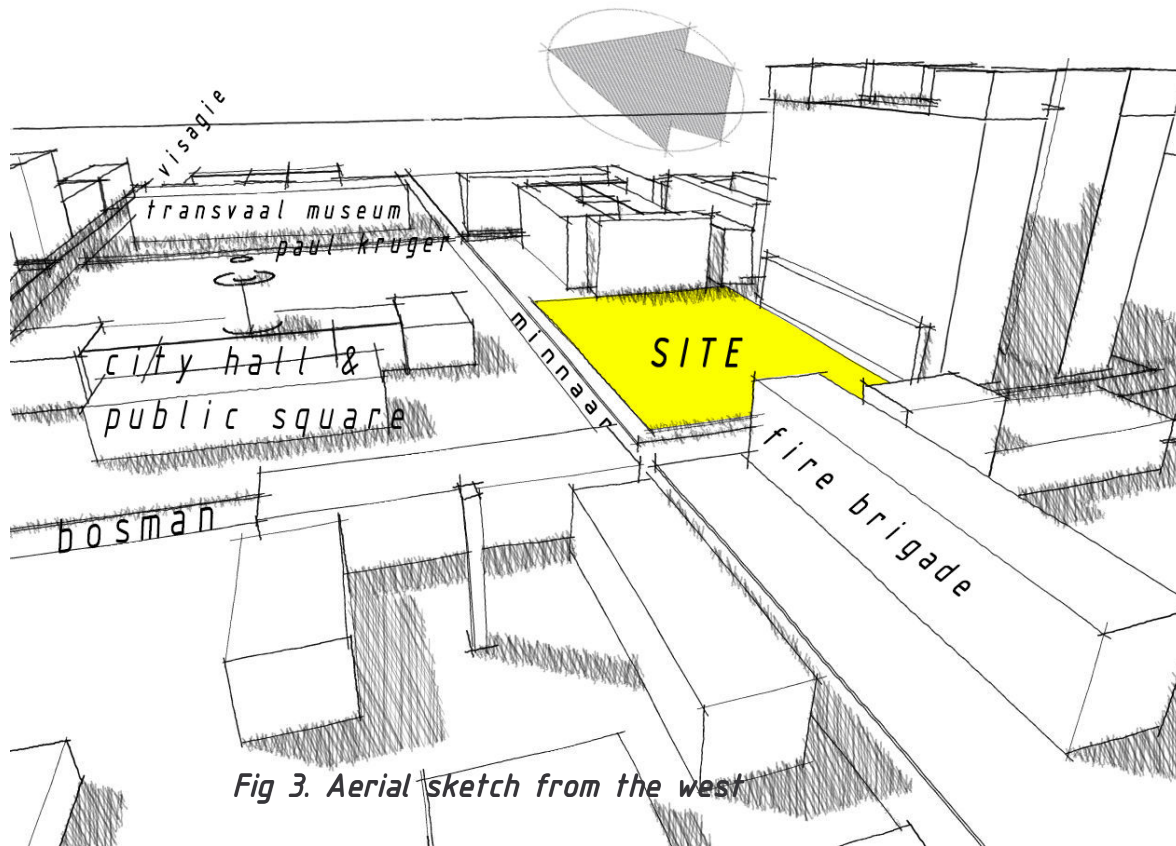


Fig 3. Aerial sketch from the west

004

school with multi-functional spaces allows participators within the precinct the opportunity to explore more of this urban room. Focal points are established and the design of this space is articulated to prompt curiosity.

In order to integrate public open space and pedestrian movement, the functions within the building and that of the City Hall precinct are overlapped. A restaurant and sandwich bar spills over the walkway towards the City Hall and the “City Hall boundary” is broken in this way to create a tension between the formal language of the precinct and the informal elements of the design school. An exhibition space also steps out onto the sidewalk and becomes an exterior exhibition space. Both of these ground level spaces serve the public, one serves meals and refreshments the second educates visitors in the process of product design and development. The spatial integration is in response to present circulation past the site. High pedestrian traffic is present both on Minnaar street on the north and Bosman Street to the west, identifying this informs the type of space required to initiate interaction with the design school and the public space outside.

This design school is not merely an isolated institution but is a response to the immediate urban context. The building incorporates the open space in front of the City Hall as an informant

and responds to add use and users to this precinct. In this way, the precinct is more active at different times of the day and promotes passive safety and a greater mix of spaces and use in the area.



Fig 4. Figure-ground and ground-figure study

