Site Investigation
Where it is done
Site Investigation

1.) Introduction
A building exists in a particular time, place and paradigm. The purpose of this chapter is to investigate these factors as they pertain to the development of the Mind Development Centre. Several factors are considered:
• The site and the reasons for choosing it.
• The neighbourhood and broader urban context.
• The history of the city and the area.
• The biophysical characteristics of the area.
All of these are investigated with the aim of informing the design and guiding design decisions.

2.) Site
2.1.) Location
“Tshwane exhibits the richest collection of high-level institutions in the country, including educational, medical and research institutions.” (City of Tshwane 2004 p.28). Pretoria provides a dense concentration of educational and research institutions. The city is the base for three universities, as well as the headquarters of major organisations dealing with research and thinking, i.e. the HSRC, the CSIR, SABS and others. As capital city of the Republic, it is also a centre of high-level thinking and decision-making. These considerations make the city an ideal choice to locate a mind development centre. The possibility of cooperation and sharing of facilities exists and a base of highly educated researchers and employees exist in the area. This has led to the decision to base the centre in Pretoria. Sites close to existing research facilities were considered and the decision was made to base the centre at 125 Church Street, between Bosman and Schubart Streets. It is situated on the northern side of the road, to the west of Church Square.

2.2.) The property
The property is currently used as a parking area. There is quite a proliferation of parking areas in the vicinity (see Fig.3.10), indicating that there is a need for parking facilities.

1 Speaking with users of the parking on site, it became apparent that the lower price of open parking is a benefit. The users also feel safer leaving their cars in an area where a supervisor is constantly watching the area, compared to the parking garages in the area where only the entrance is monitored. Parking tariffs in the area reveals that operators focus on short stay customers, while persons who park in the open areas work in the area and park for the day. Tenancy agreements might thus be possible.
A line of trees used to exist on the site. Most of the trees have been removed or were damaged during storms. Fig. 3.11 shows the trees that remain. Observation on site reveals that the podium building (Fig. 3.8) of the Peron Centre (See Section 3.2.) was lined up with one line of these trees. Several buildings have existed on the site over the years and have been demolished. No documentary evidence of what these buildings were could be found. Investigation of the foundations reveals at least three periods of development, including a courtyard with verandahs to the rear.

The original buigher erf was subdivided very early on as the Axel van der Beek family (Fig. 3.12). As seen in Fig. 3.10, open sites are often used for parking, but even this is not always the case.

3.3.3 Land use
The land use of the area, as of the site, is inconsistent and sporadic. Several open sites occur in the area (See Fig. 3.16). Some offices have been converted into apartments (Fig. 3.17), but other spaces remain vacant (Fig. 3.18).

The site is located within 350m from Church Square, which serves as central bus terminus for the city. The Pretoria Central Station is 1.6km from there, with bus connections. The Tafelboom Station is a central bus terminus for the city. The Pretoria Central Station is 1.6km from there, with bus connections. The Pretoria Central Station is 1.6km from there with distant areas of the city and with the rest of the province.

The proposed Gautrain station at Pretoria Central Station will link the area with distant areas of the city and with the rest of the province.

3.3.4 Pedestrians
Pedestrians are accommodated by wide pavements, usually with curbs separating them from rain and sun. Well-functioning traffic lights provide opportunity for pedestrians to cross streets safely at intersections. The long street blocks often make it easier to cross the street character dissipates.

The curved facade of the block was influenced by the curved wall of 268 Bosman Street, around the corner of Bosman and De Waal Street. The curved wall of 268 Bosman Street, around the corner of Bosman and De Waal Street, was the prime example of Post-Modernism in Pretoria (Le Roux and Botes 1993 p.13).

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Fig. 3.14

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Although traffic lights in Pretorius Street provide opportunity for pedestrians to cross streets safely at intersections, the long street blocks often make it easier to cross the middle of the block. Although traffic lights in Pretoria Street accommodate this, the same is not done for Church Street.
The Pretoria Inner City Spatial Development Framework describes the need for mid block pedestrian crossing, showing ways in which this might be achieved (Fig. 3.21). The streets of Pretoria are often tree lined. Although it can be seen (Fig 2.22) that this used to be the case for Church Street, this is not true in this part of the street anymore.

3.4.2.2.) Health

Doctors’ and dental surgeries exist in the Nedbank and Poynton buildings. The Pretoria Academic Hospital is located in Soutpansberg Road. The Sunnyside Clinic is located in Leyds Street. From Prinsloo Street and eastward many private hospitals and clinics exist.

It is clear that healthcare is available in the area and that any emergency can be dealt with.

3.4.2.3.) Education

The area is adequately provided with educational facilities. A Nursery School exists in Pretorius Street between Schubart and Potgieter Streets. Schools exist on the corner of Bosman and Proes Streets, at Loreto Convent in Skinner Street, in Paul Kruger Street between Skinner and Visagie Streets and on the corner of Schoeman and Schubart Streets.

The Tshwane College for Further Education is located on Church Street between Du Toit Street and Nelson Mandela Boulevard.

Public Library facilities are available at Sammy Marks Square and the State Library is located on the corner of Vermeulen and Andries Streets. The area houses a significant amount of museums and other heritage sites. These will not be mentioned individually.

3.4.2.4.) Community facilities

The central Post Office is located on Church Square, less than 300m away, providing the associated facilities. The area contains the Magistrates Court and the Transvaal Branch of the High Court, both within walking distance of the site. The Pretoria West Cemetery is also close by and provides some relief from the bustle of the city.

3.4.2.5.) Culture

Theatre is provided by the Little Theatre on the corner of Andries and Skinner Streets, the Breytenbach Theatre on the corner of Rissik Street and Nelson Mandela Boulevard and the State Theatre on Strijdom Square.

Cinema complexes are available at Sunnypark in Beatrix Street and Sunnypark in Jeppe Street.

3.4.2.6.) Shops and financial

The area is well provided with shops and the majority of needs can be filled within walking distance. Groceries are mostly provided by small cafés. The large chain supermarkets are not present in the area though.
The proposal calls for the Church Street Mall to be extended
into the part of Church Street West between Church Square and Bosman Street (SDF p.18).

This area is a city’s dead space used to park vehicles while traffic makes use of the stretch of road adjacent. The site is ideal for this purpose and implies a functional of shops and cafés on this part of the street.

The transformation of the proposal should not only benefit the square and the functions bordering it, but will also have a beneficial effect on the area by increasing the pedestrian domain close to the site and creating a more direct link with the neighbouring office establishments.

This area is currently a dead space used to park buses. The private vehicular traffic making use of the street results in traffic jams and creates a public nuisance.

This proposal will bring many people into the part of Church Street West between Church Square and Verwoerd Square, now Sammy Marks Square). Among these were the plans for the Kruger Square (Fig.3.28), particularly Skinner Street, Potgieter Street and Nelson Mandela Street. High-rise towers were constructed, the State Theatre was built and the great political squares were given form (Strijdom 1973:10).

4.1 City Vision

The idea of mixed development centres fits with the city of Pretoria’s commitment to strengthen the economic cluster comprising research, development, teaching and knowledge based institutions (City of Tshwane 2004 p.43). Church Street West is considered an important potential urban linkage between the Inner City and the University of Pretoria, which are located just east (City of Tshwane 2004 p.40). Paul Kruger Square is envisioned as a urban linkage to the northern townships and suburbs (BDF p.71).

5.1.1) Historical Context

5.1.3) The Kruger years

During the Kruger years (1882-1900), the Republic knew no borders. In 1882, Sir Theophilus Shepstone annexed the city for Britain. In 1889, the British forces entered Pretoria on the morning of the 5th of October with the declaration (Greyling 2000:26) that the British Empire refused to comply with the conditions of the Republics’ ultimatum, issued two days earlier. War was declared (Greyling 2000:26).

The First Anglo-Boer War

On the 11th October 1900, parliament heard that the Boers had declared (Greyling 2000:26) war. The Transvaal government left their territory, believing the war was over (Greyling 2000:17). It was to be almost two years before the peace treaty was signed (South African Municipal Handbook 1974:227-230).

The city centre saw great development after the nationalisation of power, particularly in the 60’s and 70’s. High-rise towers were constructed, the State Theatre was built and the great political squares were given form (Strijdom 1973:10). Industry has since played an important part in the city.

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The twentieth century

The Kruger years

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The Second Anglo-Boer War

During the war, the city centre continued to develop. The Parliament building was replaced in 1889 with the governmentsgebouw (Greyling 2000:13). In 1889, the Palace of Justice followed between 1896 and 1900. The British occupying forces used it as a military hospital during the war.

During this period, the city was under military occupation and governed by the British. It was to be almost two years before the peace treaty was signed though. It was to be almost two years before the peace treaty was signed though. It was to be almost two years before the peace treaty was signed though. It was to be almost two years before the peace treaty was signed though.

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housing scheme was completed and is faced with social problems, as is many modern housing schemes. The housing scheme was completed and is faced with social problems, as is many modern housing schemes. The ridges surrounding the city have had an important influence on the formation of the city, acting as an Eastern deflection of growth. The eastern expansion of the city has continued unabated and many residents and businesses moved out of the city. This led to a decline of the inner city.

5.2.) District History

In 1994, the Republic was divided into nine provinces and the Transvaal ceased to exist. Pretoria now fell in the Gauteng province. After the 1994 elections, the decision was made to move the provincial capital to Johannesburg. Pretoria retained its status as administrative capital of the Republic.

Moving the provincial administration out of the city led to a loss of tenants in the already protected inner city. A large amount of office space was left vacant. Many of these of spaces were currently being converted into flats and apartments.

For a while, it was argued that the country should have a single capital. There was much debate whether it should be Cape Town, Pretoria or somewhere else altogether. The decision has been made to move the provincial capital to Johannesburg. Pretoria has been part of the City of Tshwane since 1994.

Current planning trends in South Africa call for a mixed-use development. The executive Mayor of the City of Tshwane, Father Semahle Mokaba, is a proponent of the idea that Pretoria be changed into a variety of other functions at ground level. The Arcades also serve to accommodate the need of providing pavement canopies. The ISDF encourages the promotion of walkability through shorter block lengths and horizontal diversity as set out in the baseline document and the continuation of this tradition through the call for a pedestrian corridor.

7.4.) Geology

The Isdso calls for the strengthening of the arcade with a pedestrian route to the front (Church Street) and the rear of the city. The cibles were enforced by the needs for open spaces and greenery as set out in the baseline document, the need for contact with nature will influence many decisions in the design. The ISDF proposes that African Fauna and Flora be used to create the image of an African Capital City (p.16). The ISDF proposes that African Fauna and Flora be used to create the image of an African Capital City (p.16).

7.3.) Neighbouring buildings

The neighbouring buildings are currently low structures, but if the area is revitalised, they will most certainly be redeveloped as bigger structures. As the nature of these future developments cannot be foreseen, the neighbours are treated as if they were already built structures. The ISDF criteria were enforced by the needs for open space and greenery as set out in the baseline document and the continuation of this tradition through the call for a pedestrian corridor.

7.2.) Nature

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