

Chapter 3. Context



Figure 14: Large scale context

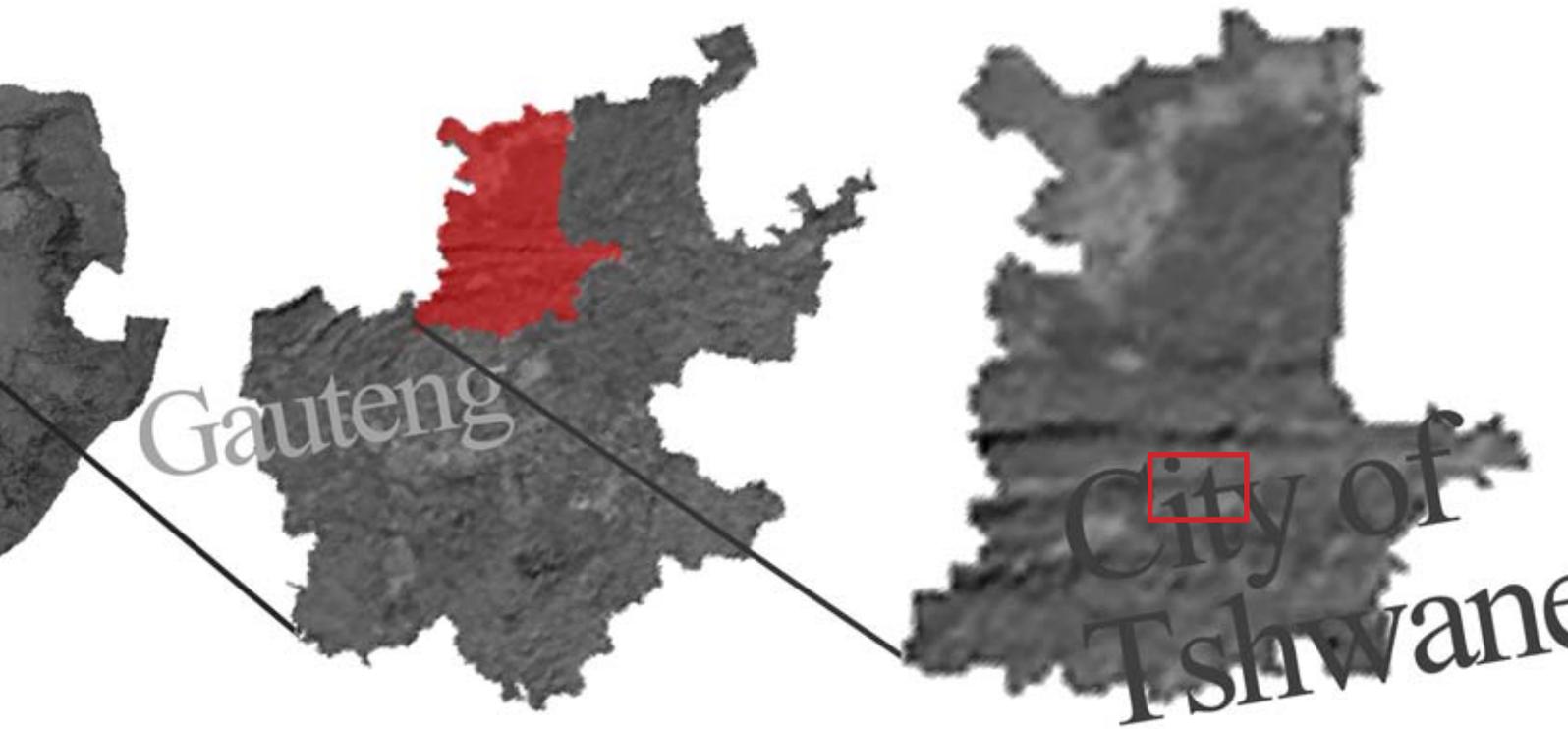




Figure 15: Urban location (top)
Figure 16: Block location (left)

The requirements initially set out for choice of site were:

- Accessibility - the site needs to be in close proximity to a public transport facility to ensure access to all citizens
- Visibility - visibility could be seen as a component of accessibility. Knowledge of the location of the department is crucial
- Symbolic significance - the dissertation poses that the approach of the democratic government with regard to the capital city has been to build on the existing. In this sense the contribution of new layers of meaning, added to existing symbolism is important.

The larger urban site that was chosen was the Pretorius Square area, which is located in proximity to Pretoria Station and Bosman Street taxi rank, which connects the central city to Atteridgeville and Mamelodi and is the main regional public transport connection to the east west and south.

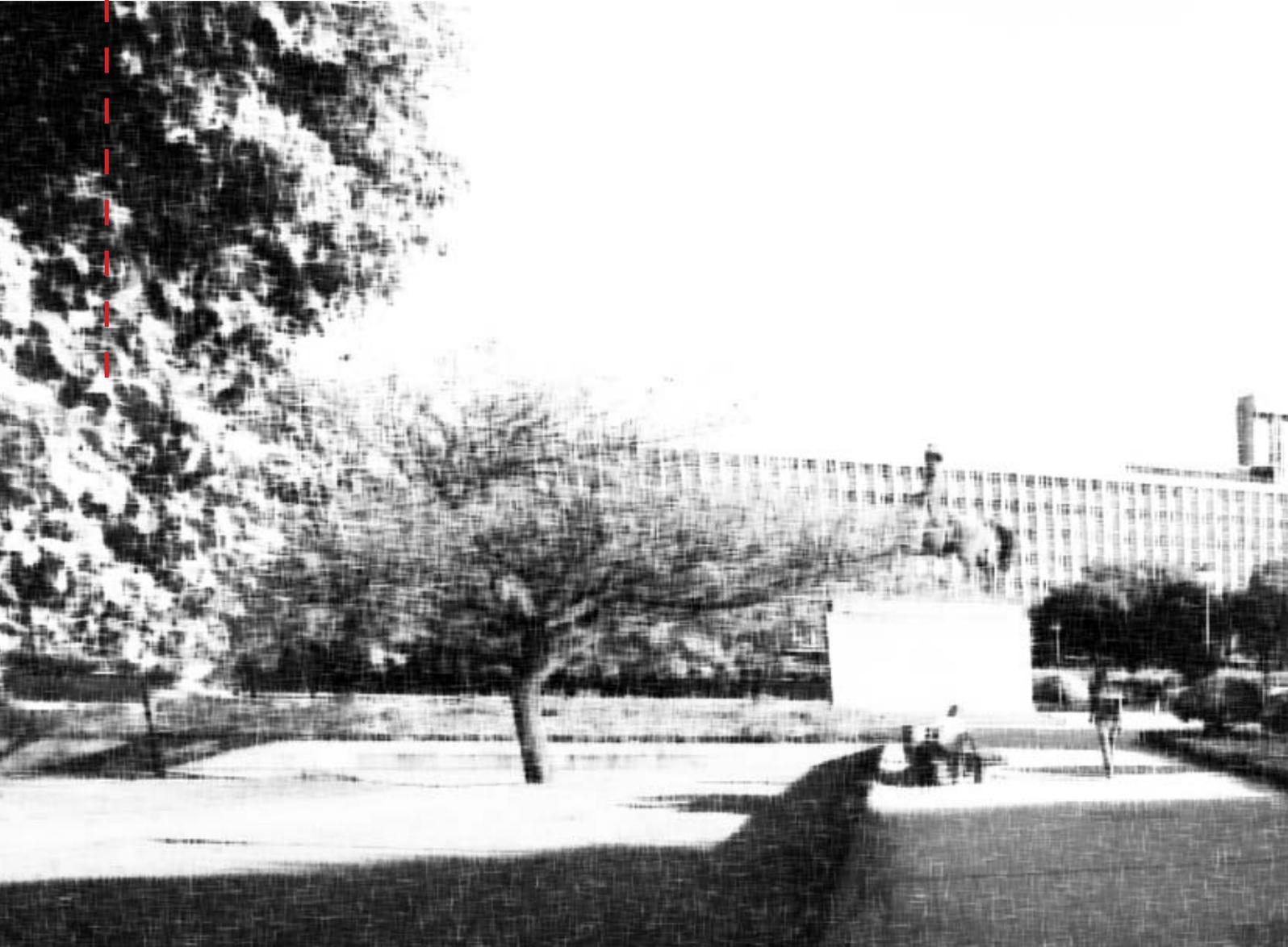
This urban site is located on one of the main axes of the city, Paul Kruger Street. Additionally, having Pretorius Square as central point increases awareness and prominence of the site, and therefore the visibility thereof. The site has a strong heritage component and symbolic significance that specifically centres around national pride and identity, namely the City Hall and Transvaal Museum.

Within this context the city block to the south of the square was chosen. This city block is government owned, and provides enough space for the consolidation of the Department of Home Affairs, one of the largest departments in the national government. Its direct relation to the square provides an opportunity for adding a new layer of symbolic significance to the urban fabric of the national capital city, in dialogue with the existing symbolic significance of the site.



Government Ownership

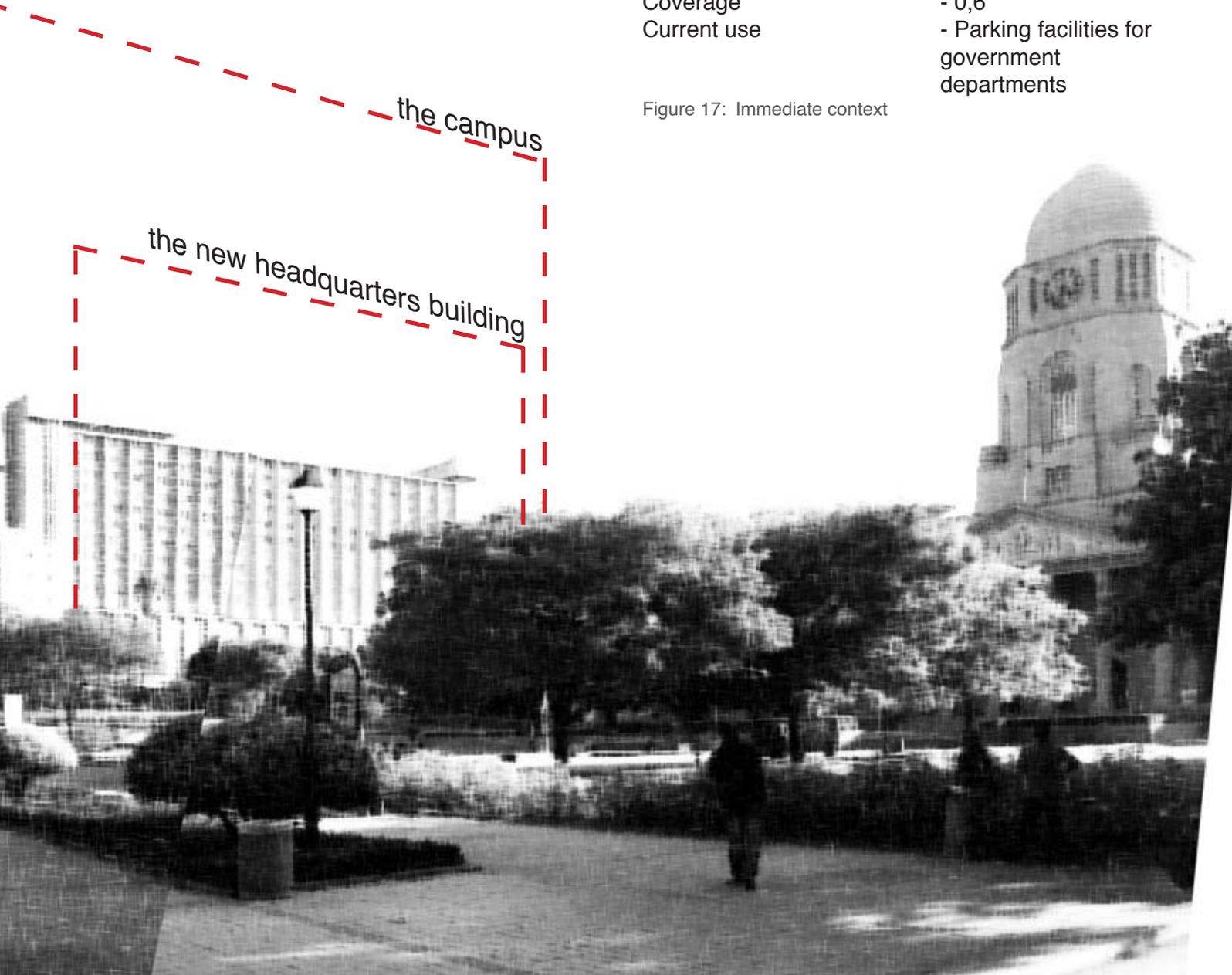
PRETORIA



i. Site information

City block	- 30 622msq
Headquarters building site	- 7,153msq
Zoning	- general business
Building lines	- 4,5m. 5m @ street
Height restriction	- 18 storeys
Coverage	- 0,6
Current use	- Parking facilities for government departments

Figure 17: Immediate context



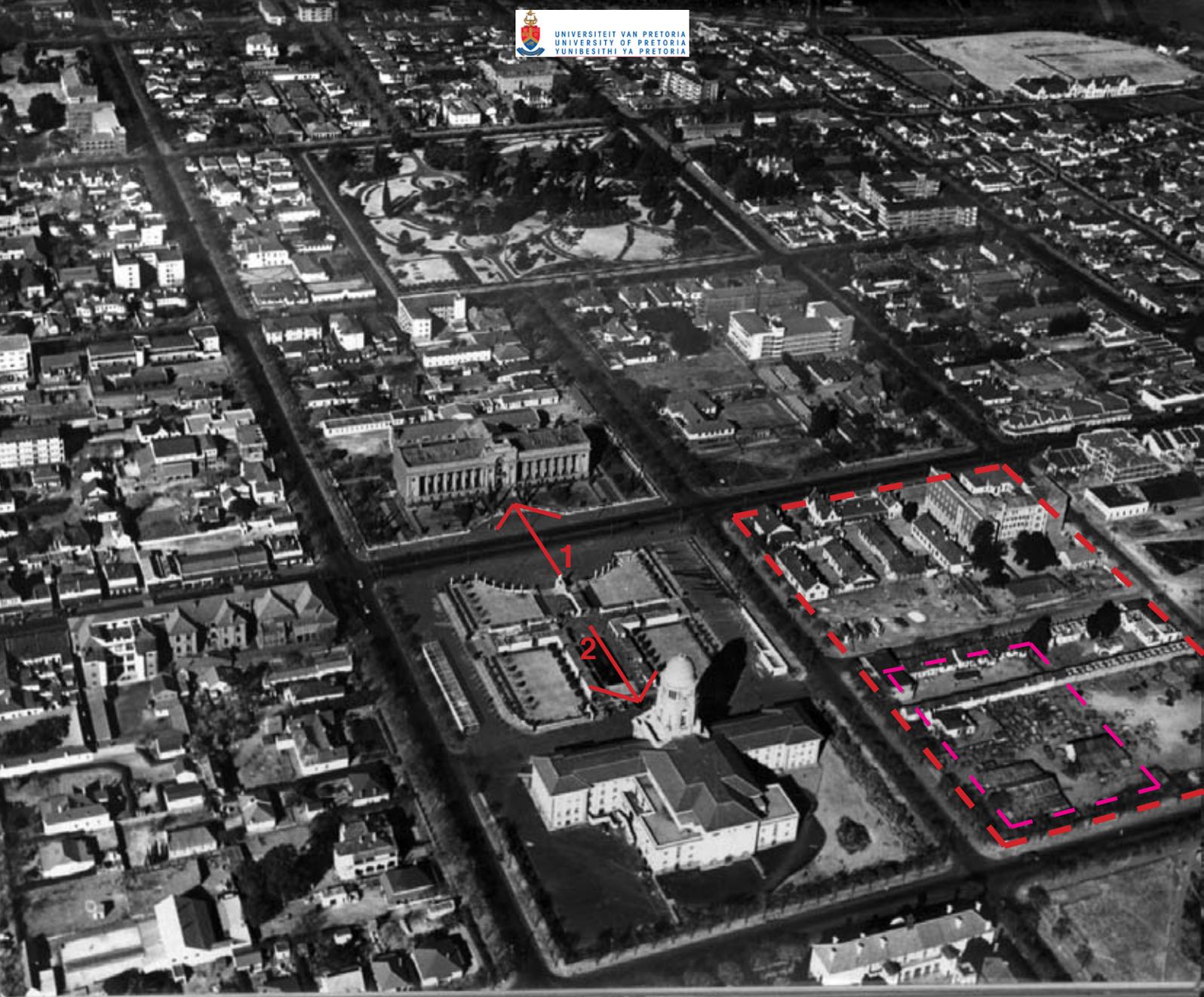


Figure 18: Aerial photo of pretorius square taken in late 1930s, looking in a southeasterly direction



Figure 19: Transvaal Museum
Figure 20: City Hall

2





Figure 21: Public spaces of significance
Figure 22: Local heritage assets

ii. Heritage elements

The immediate urban context of the site has a very strong heritage component.

The Government of the South African Republic decided in 1892 to found a state museum. The new museum building in Paul Kruger Street, Transvaal Museum, was only completed in 1914 (FitzSimons, 1951). According to FitzSimons, one of the most important aims laid down at the inception of the museum, was to foster a love of country, a national pride.

A competition for the design of the City Hall was won by FG Mackintosh and JL Hall in 1926. The building was finalised in 1935, and was used as city administration (Le Roux, 1993). The building also contains theatre facilities and due to the removal of the old church on Church Square became a focal point for national pride.

The square has largely served as an approach to the City Hall, with a formal route on the main axis between the City Hall and the Transvaal Museum. The formal route contains sculptural work and lily ponds designed by Coert Steynberg and installed in 1955 as part of centenary celebrations (Le Roux, 1993). Recently this space has become a popular gathering point for political meetings and mass gatherings, thus still retaining its character of national significance.

The approach of the time was that the construction of public buildings was strongly related to the construction of national identity. According to Freschi (2006) public buildings ‘expounded the cultural and historical virtues and triumphs of the nation’. Freschi (2006) quotes Christopher Wren, capturing this view: “public Buildings being the ornament of a Country; it establishes a Nation, draws People and commerce; makes the people love their native Country.”

At the time that these buildings were built, the urban fabric of the city consisted mainly of two or three storey buildings, or in some areas even single storey buildings. The combination of the City Hall and the Transvaal Museum around Pretorius Square resulted in a monumental space, where the nationalism that these buildings represented dominated the surroundings and inspired national pride. (See aerial photo on p22)

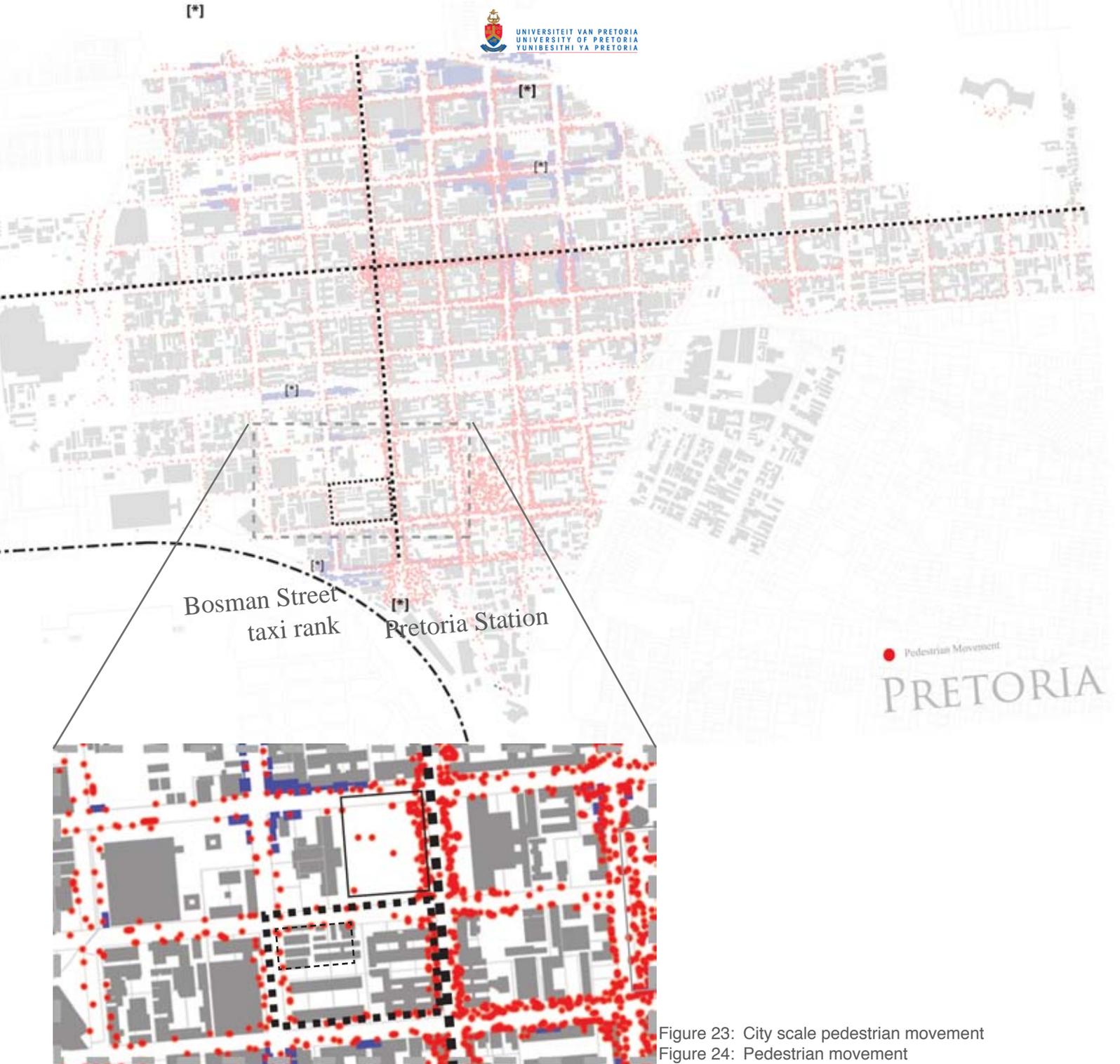
Legend opposite:

1. City hall
1931, F G McIntosh.
2. Transvaal Museum
1913, DOW (Cleland)
3. Pretorius Square
4. Old Corporation Building
1930s Eclectic Classicism
5. Pretoria Fire Station

Additional elements with value:

NZASM Building
1963, SPOORNET. (Value in definition of square)

[*]



Bosman Street
taxi rank

Pretoria Station

● Pedestrian Movement
PRETORIA

Figure 23: City scale pedestrian movement
Figure 24: Pedestrian movement

iii. Movement and access

As mentioned earlier the site is in close proximity to Pretoria Station and the Bosman Street taxi rank, which are the main regional public transport connections to Atteridgeville / Laudium in the west, Tembisa / Johannesburg to the south and Mamelodi to the east.

Pedestrian movement is predominantly in the north-south direction, moving from Pretoria station and Bosman Street taxi rank into the city. Movement filters along Bosman Street, through the square and along Paul Kruger Street,

In terms of vehicle traffic, Bosman Street (north/south) and Visagie Street (east/west) carry city scale traffic. The main metropolitan scale roads are Van der Walt and Andries Streets (north/south) and Skinner Street (east/west), which do not directly influence the site.

(See analysis on next page)

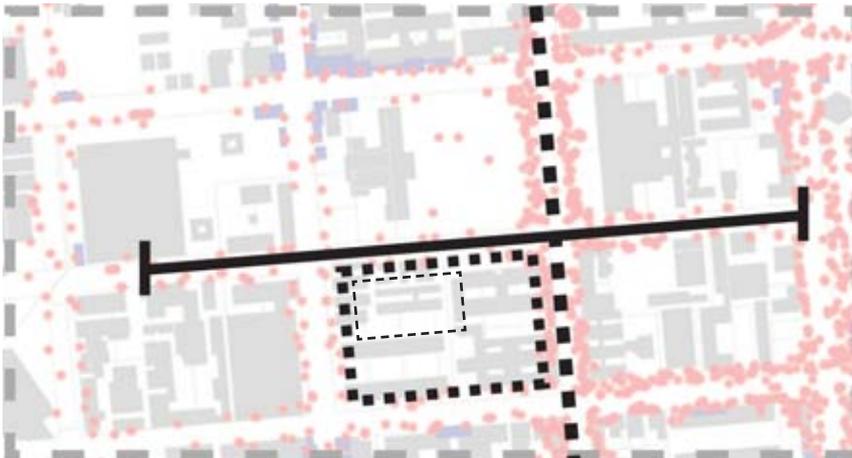


Figure 25: limited vehicular movement in Jacob Maree Street

A

City and metropolitan scale vehicular traffic
One way street, fast moving traffic
Little pedestrian traffic

Edge condition: definition varies, few entrances, little relation to the street

B

City scale traffic
Large amount of pedestrian movement
Active informal market

Edge condition: well defined, active edge, entrances, retail activity, informal trade

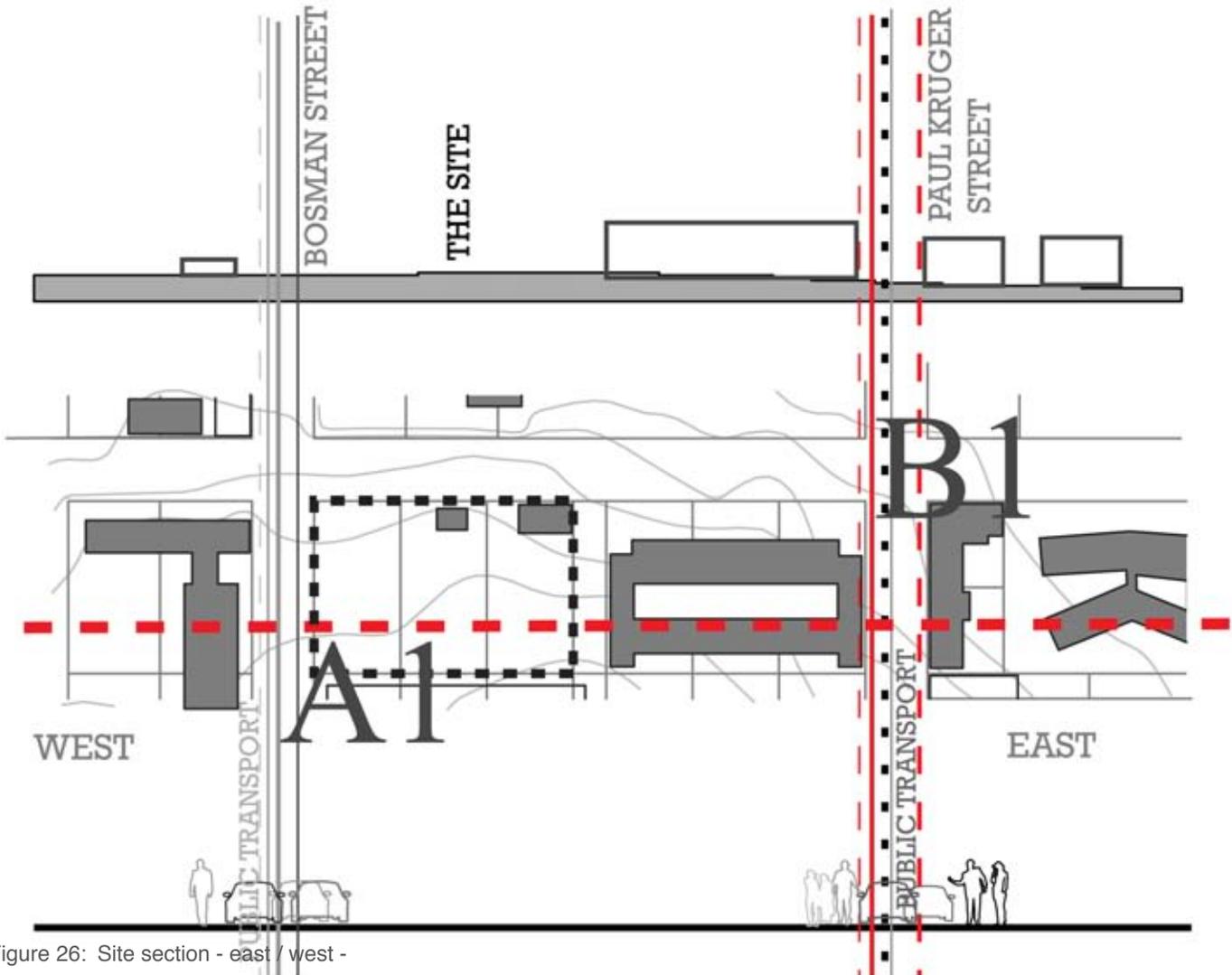


Figure 26: Site section - east / west -

C

Traffic limited, street cut off from circulation to both east and west

Land use does not generate pedestrian activity

Edge condition: well defined, but buildings do not related directly to street

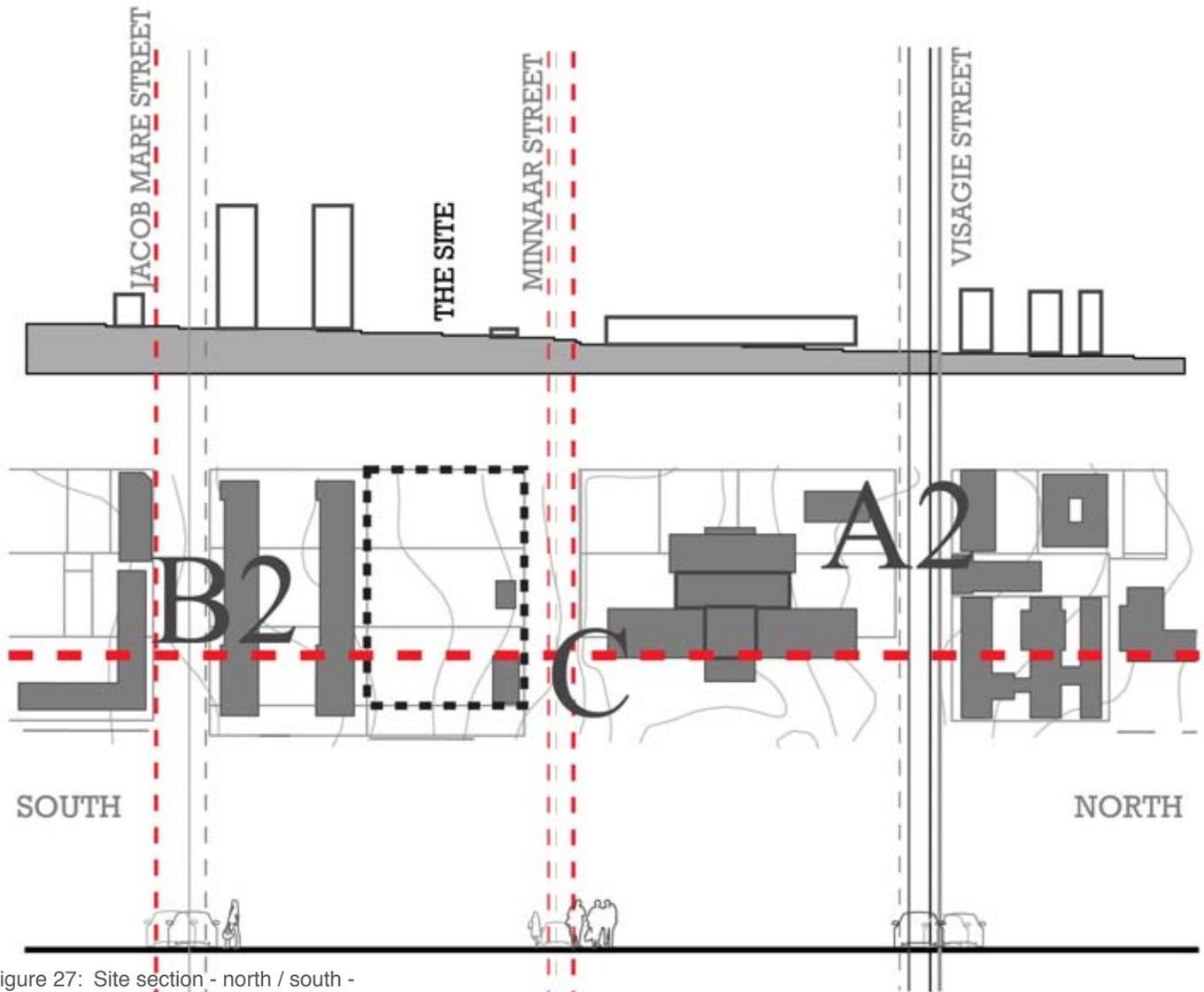


Figure 27: Site section - north / south -