

context study



University of Pretoria, etd - Human, M (2003)

Urbanism

Our relation to the past is not a simple one. As Henry James pointed out, *"We are divided ... between liking to feel the past strange and liking to feel it familiar; the difficulty is, for intensity, to catch it at the moment when the scales of the balance hang with the right evenness."*

In this age cities that grow obsolete can be rebuilt very quickly. Numerous cities in the old East Germany are currently going through this process. The German Democratic Republic's policy on conservation was to leave everything as is, in order to protect the past. What this brought about was that people who could afford to moved to newer suburbs outside the cities. The degradation of the inner cities grew to such an extent that they really became dead places.

About ten years ago the German government decided to review this policy. Since then immense restoration as well as many new projects were carried out in the cities. What this has triggered is that at the moment property in the inner city is rapidly becoming the most sought after and prized on the market.

Our problem in South Africa is essentially the same, but with a few key differences. The most important one is that, in our case, business and public services is are moving out but poor people are moving in. What this ultimately entails is that our inner city is filled with people without the necessary resources to sustain themselves.

If one refers to history, throwing money at buildings was one of the signs of a successful government. Today the government wants to make its mark with schools, institutions, hospitals and infrastructure projects, as long as there is no sign of "wasting" the taxpayer's money. So any building not achieved in the minimum construction time with the maximum amount of lettable space for the minimum cost has to be left out of the equation. For buildings to fit into this realm architecture needs to be reduced to only patterning up elevations and ensuring that everything conforms to the minimum standards set by the National Building Regulations.

In our case we definitely won't be able to rebuild whole parts of the city as is the case at Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. It would neither be feasible to attempt to rebuild portions of the past nor to merge scenes in a set of forms inspired by the past. But it is our responsibility to provide architecture that can offer tenderness and particularity, nobility and generosity - buildings that respect and enhance their location, the environment and community; buildings in which space, materials and resources are used with efficiency and imagination.

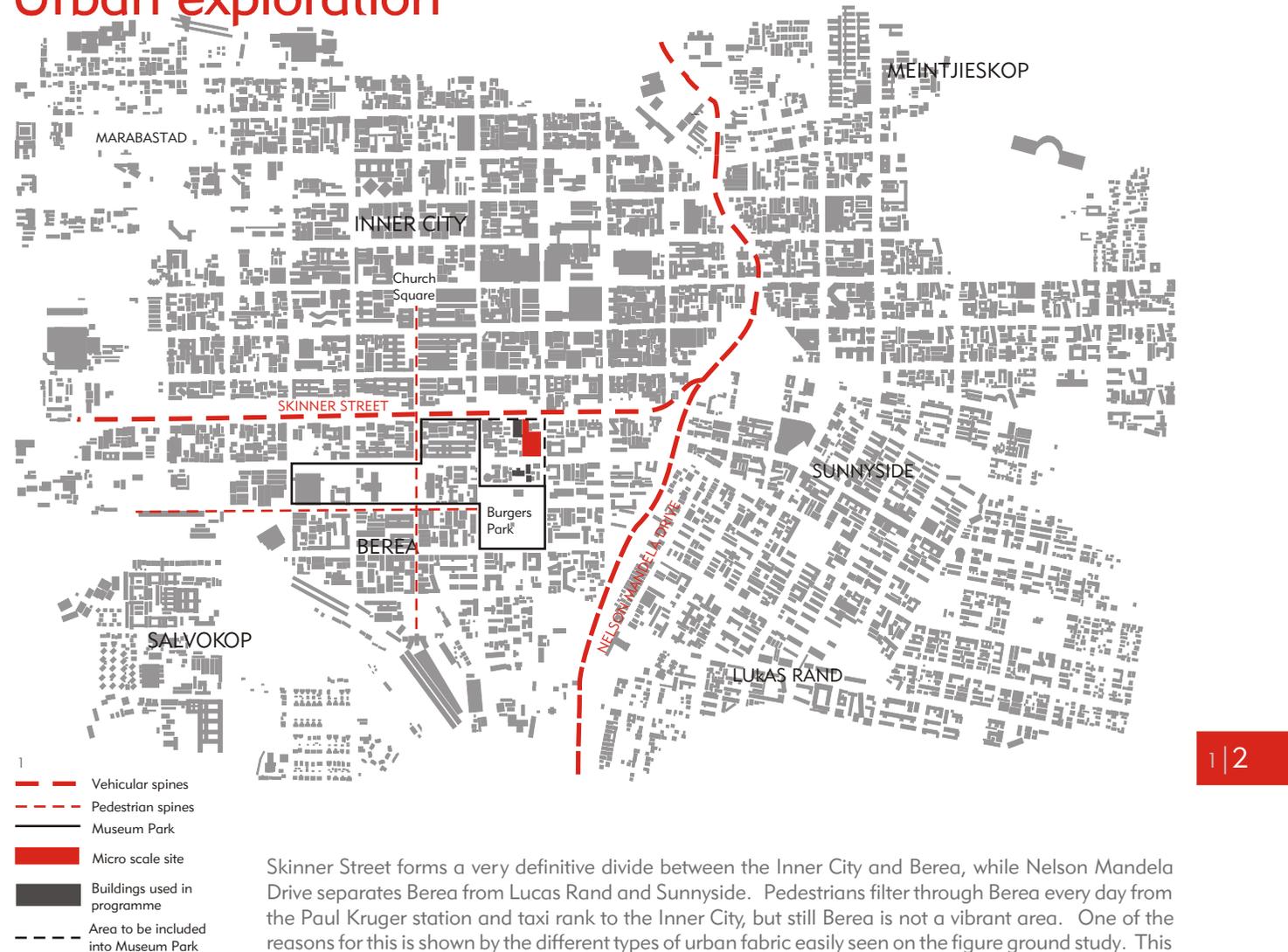


The chance of our government being able to invest such capital as is invested in Germany is really slim. This means that we will have to use other means to improve the quality of life in the inner city of Pretoria. The Pretoria Inner City Integrated Spatial Development Framework proposes design principles for the CBD.

The public realm is made up out of spaces that are used every day by the inhabitants of the city. To develop successful urban forms a high level of **congruence** is required between the various elements and components of the city. The primary aim should be to create a sustainable economical environment in the CBD. To achieve this, large numbers of people should be accommodated in the city. Most important is that they should be provided with all the necessary **public, social and institutional services** needed. By increasing the number of people, economical stability will be introduced into the system because of increased expenditure on goods and services. To achieve this it is important to realize that the profile of Inner City residents is changing to include people that are more dependent on public transport than before. The number of pedestrians has also increased.

This offers a unique opportunity to create a **vibrant activity node, that will be utilised 24-hours per day, 7-days a week**. In the past, South African cities were designed around private vehicular traffic with pedestrian use as an afterthought. It is important to design specific pedestrian spines in conjunction with lively activities, functions and facilities at street level. A multi-functional approach with robust building forms, vitality through diversity, and continuity of open space systems should be followed.

Urban exploration



Skinner Street forms a very definitive divide between the Inner City and Berea, while Nelson Mandela Drive separates Berea from Lucas Rand and Sunnyside. Pedestrians filter through Berea every day from the Paul Kruger station and taxi rank to the Inner City, but still Berea is not a vibrant area. One of the reasons for this is shown by the different types of urban fabric easily seen on the figure ground study. This problem needs to be addressed through selective densification of the Berea precinct.

Museum Park is the main feature of this precinct and this fact that it should influence any new development in the area. A proposal will be made for the area from Burgers Park Lane up to Skinner Street to be included into Museum Park. This proposal will not only be made because of the historical value of the Unisa Little Theatre, but also because of the educational nature of the proposed new development.

1 Figure ground, indicating influential factors

Inner City Development Framework

Vision:

To be the Hub of a World class City as the Capital of Africa by being a friendly and vibrant all-day-all-night People's Place catering for the social and human needs of all its people which proudly calls it Our City and Our Home (Capitol Consortium, 1999).

This Hub is to be supported and continually strengthened by sustainable economic growth and development, efficient service delivery and adequate infrastructure provision, as well as the political will-power and the institutional support to make it the best city in Africa.

It is further distinguished by a safe and clean environment, unique multi-cultural image and pleasing appearance, the unflinching preservation of its historical and cultural heritage, and the jealous protection and enhancement of its natural features.

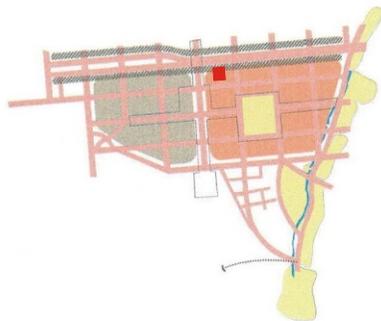
On an urban scale a high level of congruence is needed between the various elements of the city. To achieve this the design principles that are proposed primarily reflect a multi-functional approach towards streets and public spaces, robust building forms, vitality through diversity, sustainable neighborhood structures, continuity in open space structures and environmental management.

The development model will probably contain the following characteristics:

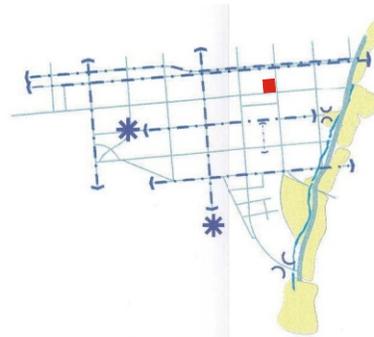
- Increase of mixed-use facilities
- Development of local urban centres
- Redevelopment of brownfield sites or open urban spaces to allow consolidation of urban form
- Selective increase in density of existing housing areas
- Promotion of the development of sustainable transport (cycle and pedestrian routes)
- Improvement of regional connectivity
- Participation and community involvement
- Improvement to the environment and green spaces
- Efficient maintenance of housing, improvements and mixes of tenures and types
- More efficient and accessible facilities and public services

In this design framework the city is divided into precincts according to the physical identity, activity and functionality of certain areas. The chosen site forms part of the Berea precinct.

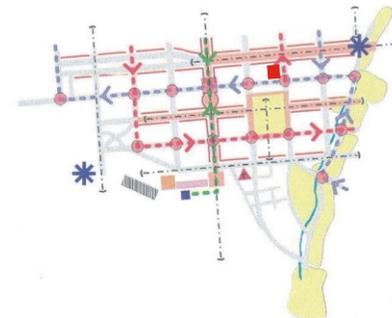
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The site is part of sub-functional areas 2.1 and 2.2 as per the ISDF, which is located to the south of Skinner Street, west of Nelson Mandela Drive, north of Scheiding Street and east of Potgieter Street. It is the Southern Gateway to the CBD from the Pretoria Station in the south. It contains low-density, "stagnant" land uses such as depots and high-density residential land use together with land uses related to the residential component, including parks/open space, churches/places of worship, educational and medical facilities. The most important attribute of this precinct is Museum Park.

Two edges of this area are major vehicular movement spines: Nelson Mandela Drive and Skinner Street. The ISDF proposes that Skinner Street be changed into a Boulevard. The traffic along these two routes mostly relates to external activities, therefore the traffic volumes are high and fast moving. Vehicular movement spines relating to internal activities are Visagie and Jacob Mare Street in an east-west direction and Van Der Walt, Andries and Bosman Street in a north-south direction.

Pedestrian movement is most concentrated in Bosman Street where the taxi rank and train station are situated, and to a lesser extent along Jacob Mare and Van Der Walt Streets.

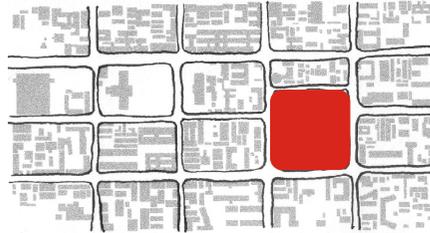
Implementation guidelines for the precinct according to the ISDF

- Maintain and uplift the cultural and historical elements in order to create a cultural precinct within the Inner City
- Integrate extensive land uses such as depots with extensive land uses and service industries to the west
- The nature of the area must respond to the transportation node to the south to cater for pedestrians and the informal sector
- Institute appropriate design and policy measures to effectively treat the interface between the cultural precinct and extensive land uses
- Provide social support services to cater for the residential population, and institute appropriate policies to maintain standards for these services
- Provide appropriate transportation planning and types, and re-evaluate the major traffic routes through the residential area
- Cater for pedestrians, in terms of facilities and pedestrian routes
- Integrate the Berea precinct with Sunnyside and appropriately relate the interface to the surrounding areas



Museum Park

Museum Park is the largest focus of cultural resources in Africa. It is a visual and structural grouping of museums, buildings, historical sites and open spaces in the inner city of Pretoria. There are facilities for functions and conferences as well as restaurants and museum shops. Parking is provided and pedestrian links promoted.



Burgers Park

- Green House for Exotic plants

The building is situated on the northern side of the park, facing Burgers Park Lane.

The plan is rectangular with rounded ends. With a concertina and single-pitched roof, constructed from wire glass protected with hail nets. The structure is a galvanized steel construction with red face brick exterior and interior walls (Le Roux, S. 1990; 143).

- Band Stand

A typical Victorian and Catalogue prefabricated by Macfarlane & Co in Glasgow. It has a decorated curved pitch roof supported on eight cast iron columns on a raised sandstone platform with a cast iron balustrade. The timber strip ceiling fans out from the middle. The roof is typical from the 19th century borrowing period and refers to the Chinese temples and Indian gazebos in Moslem gardens.

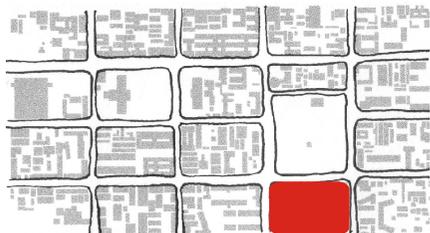
- Kiosk restaurant

In 1909 V S Rees-Poole were commissioned to design the kiosk because the 1897 design of Wierda were never realized because of financial trouble. The double-storey octagonal building is the central focal point of the park. The building consists of two rooms, one on top of the other, surrounded by wide verandas.

- Caretakers house

The house was completed in 1904, replacing the earlier "tuintmanswoning". It is designed by the city engineer, with a living room added in 1954 on the north eastern corner, designed by the city architect. In 1979 it was declared a National Monument. It is richly decorated with balconies and verandas with a steeple roof over the entrance. The roof is a shingle roof with ventilators. The exterior walls consist of large plastered and unplastered planes with stone- and plastered mouldings. The building can be classified as late-Victorian or early-Edwardian. It is an assembly of different building elements and a good example of the eclecticism of that time (Le Roux, S. 1990; 132).

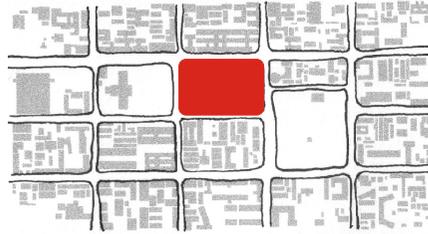
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Melrose House

This building was built in 1886 by Vale for George Heys and is a typical example of an exaggerated Victorian villa. The building is significant because it resembles the architecture of Sunnyside round the turn of the 19th century. The building creates the edge to Museum Park (Le Roux, S. 1990; 150).

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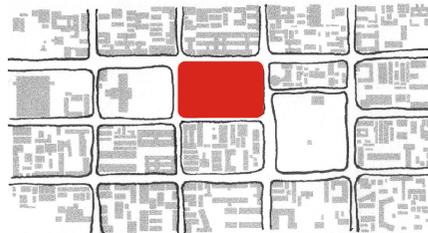


Transvaal Museum

The building was completed in 1913. It forms the eastern edge to Pretorius Square. The museum is set quite a distance from the street. It is a three-storey building with an oblong plan with a symmetrical façade. A plinth is used to compensate for the slope of the site. The original eastern façade is sandstone, with extensions done in 1998 by Jordaan Holm Architects, on both the northern and southern side in facebrick. On the eastern side a steel structure was added. Arched windows on the first floor and rectangular windows on the second is set back deeply behind massive sandstone columns, which carries the large roof overhang. A parapet wall conceals the roof (Le Roux, S. 1990; 130).

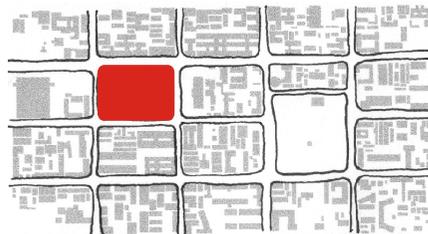
Geoscience Museum

The three storey building faces Skinner Street. The bottom two floors are set back, their glass façade protected by the overhang of the third floor and prefabricated panels on the western point. Walls are from terrazzo. The building is lifted on a plinth with a continuous staircase leading up to the entrance. It has a flat concrete roof (Le Roux, S. 1990; 121).



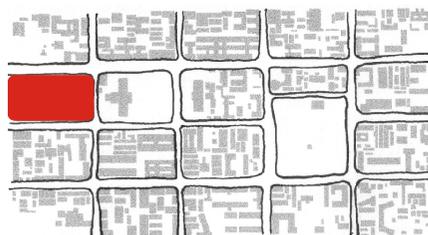
City Hall

It is three-storey building with two wings symmetrical around the clock tower, with a central porte cochère and ramp. Solid granite columns support a carved tympanum, by Steynberg. The plinth is of gray granite and the rest of the building is from concrete blocks with a granite gravel cover to give the impression of solid granite. The sides of the two wings are plastered. The roof is a clay tile hip roof (Le Roux, S. 1990; 130).



National Cultural History Museum

The Old Mint, which was designed in 1968 by Interplan with the last phase completed in 1976. The Mint House, which was occupied, by the Mint Director, and the Minnaar Street House, which was occupied by the Director of Works, and the out houses was built in the same year. The Mint House as a traditional building and was renovated at the same time as the development of the African Window. It was renovated with proposals to turn it into a restaurant, at present it used by an Environmental Centre. The Old Mint building was developed into an Arts and Culture Museum, The African Window by KWP Architects in association with Waterson Weyer Roon Architects (Le Roux, S. 1990; 22).



Old Firestation

The building is U-shaped with square opened to the west. The wing facing Bosman Street is symmetrical around the clock tower. The wings forming the north and south boundaries to square are identical. Cowin & Powers Architects designed the building in 1912. Currently the building is used as the Museum Park Headquarters as well as the, Tourism, Conference and Discovery Centre (Le Roux, S. 1990; 37).

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Unisa Little Theatre

Norman Musgrave Eaton was born in Pretoria on October 11, 1902.

Eaton entered the School of Architecture at Wits as a first year student in 1923, obtaining his degree five years later. During these years he worked in the office of Gordon Leith, whom he described as his "chief mentor". In 1930 he left South Africa to take up the Herbert Baker Scholarship at the British School of Architecture in Rome.

Early in 1933 he returned to South Africa and established himself in a private practice in Pretoria.

Most of Eaton's work can be found in Pretoria in the eastern suburbs of Brooklyn and Lynnwood and on the eastern ridges at Muckleneuk, Waterkloof and beyond. Here he developed his **modern regional vernacular style**: climatically responsive houses with small, well considered apertures that respond to the Pretoria climate, with projecting sun-hoods over windows and roof overhangs, sometimes up to a metre wide.

The **Children's Art Centre** was designed in the early 1940's, to accommodate extramural art classes for pre-high school children. The building consists of several large studio rooms, an office area, staff room and a library-cum-waiting room. The plan is U-shaped and double storeyed, with a semi-enclosed court, which was intended for outdoor activities such as large-scale sculpture. Facing onto this court is a covered veranda. In one of the studios a raised stage was included.

All the windows of the working areas face north and east, while the western facade is more solid with smaller windows. White-painted fascia boards mask gutters and the downpipes are incorporated into the walls. The roof pitches are at a low angle, which make them invisible from close by, and when viewed from a distance they relate to the overall horizontality of the design.

Smooth ochre coloured face-brick is used for all the external walls. Bricks with a smaller dimension are used in between the windows so that together with the windows a continuous band is formed. The vertical brick courses in the plant boxes relate to the two courses directly above ground level of the building, which are also laid vertical.

The north facades, which face Skinner Street, were given a considerable amount of interest through details like steps, plant boxes and projecting concrete hoods above the windows. These details are unfortunately lost to the public now, because the site is fenced.

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In 1994 MEG Architects were commissioned to do renovation and alterations to the Children's Art Centre and the Little Theatre. The only alteration that was made to the Children's Art Centre is the double volume exhibition space that was constructed by closing the courtyard. To do this, the existing window frames were removed and two new doors were added to connect the exhibition space to the studio.

The theatre itself, completed after years of delay, has been altered to the extent that it bears little resemblance to Eaton's original concept (Harrop-Allen, 1975; 97). The theatre is set at the back of the site, structurally connected to the Children's Art Centre on the northern side.

The approach to the theatre was added in 1950. Brick is used for both the walls and the pavement. The brick chosen is of a much rougher texture and darker colour than that of the Children's Art Centre. The brick is laid in long parallel bands following the direction of the pathway. In each band individual bricks and portions of bricks are laid in simple patterns. Curved patterns follow the contours of the boundary wall, and used to follow that of the circular pond, before it was replaced with a sculpture in 1994.

The wall is constructed mostly of vertically laid bricks with its convex sections closed and concave sections open. Two courses down from the top of the wall, the openings become twice that of the width of those below, forming a decorative band at about head height.

The curved wall was demolished and rebuilt because this was structurally unsound. The initial idea was to re-use the bricks but it was not possible. The wall is a replica of the original, with three differences. Firstly, the wall was shortened because the new approach to the Little Theatre was placed perpendicular to the wall. Secondly, instead of the original two courses at the top of the wall, there are now three courses, and thirdly, the openings - now three courses from the top - are of the same size as those in the rest of the wall.

The water feature in front of the Theatre was also removed. The client demanded this apparently because it required a high level of maintenance. It was replaced with a concrete plinth for a sculpture. Furthermore, exterior lights on columns were added, with the design strongly influenced by the column capitals inside the building.

In the interior the carpets were replaced with carpets of a similar type, and wallpaper was replaced by paint because similar wallpaper was not available. The timber floors were sanded down and linoleum strips were replaced. Original glazed tiles were replaced in the bathrooms.



- 1 approach to the theatre
- 2 main entrance
- 3 view from the parking area
- 4 view from Van Der Walt Street
- 5 view from the south
- 6 entrance from Skinner Street

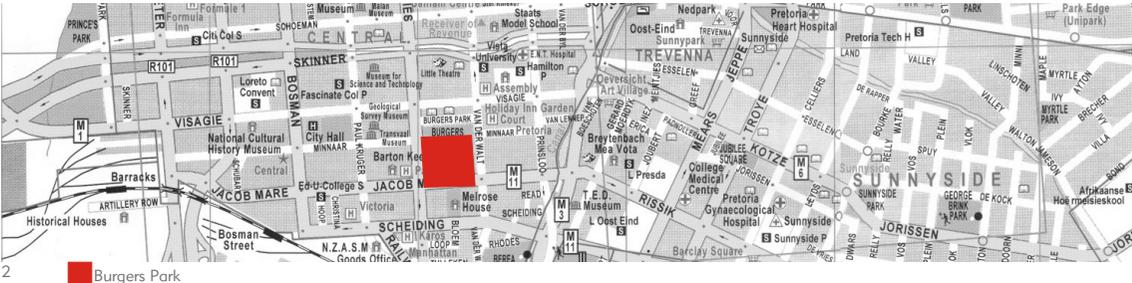
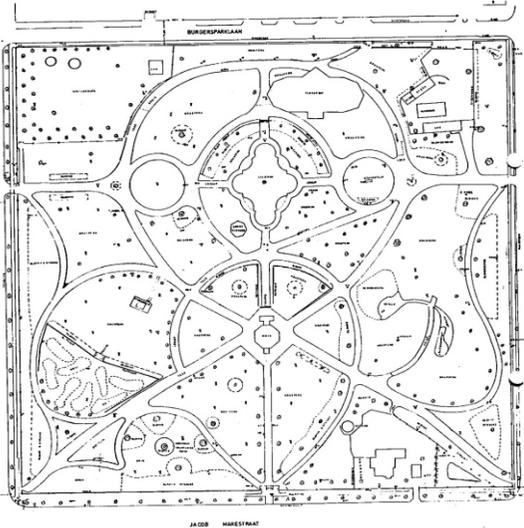
Burgers Park, Pretoria

Burgers Park is situated in the heart of Pretoria, in the Berea precinct, between Burgers Park Lane and Jacob Mare, Andries and Van der Walt Streets. It forms part of Museum Park.

The park is surrounded by medium-rise buildings and Melrose House to the south. However there is a need for a more defined vertical edge. Higher buildings on the surround that are fully occupied will ensure 24-hour informal surveillance of the park. In this way crime - which is currently a big problem in the area - will be reduced. The layout of the park is in Victorian style. Its organic forms create quite a few secluded spaces. Another way to address this particular problem is to attract more people to use the park. Proposals to address this will be made in the thesis.

The park, which is maintained by a 17 man team, is cleaned on a daily basis; structures and paths are repaired regularly; lawns maintained on a weekly basis; and planting of annuals, pruning and tree care done on a seasonal basis (Carol Knoll, 1998; 5).

Provision for pedestrians must also be made through and around the Park. This should include paved walking surfaces, street furniture and signage like those used in Minnaar Street.



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- 1 Site plan
- 2 Location map
- 3 Andries Street sidewalk
- 4 Secluded space
- 5 Undefined vertical edge

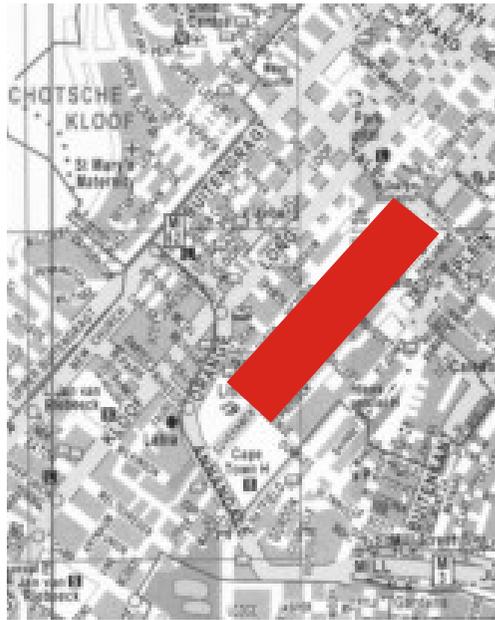


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Company Gardens, Cape Town



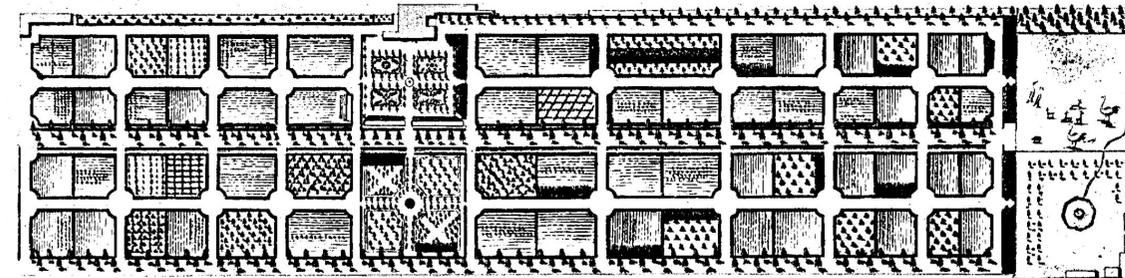
The Company Gardens are situated in the Cape Town inner city in the "museum belt" district. The Gardens form part of the redevelopment of the district.

The Gardens are flanked by three to nine storey buildings that accentuate the space they surround. The buildings form a hard edge, which is then softened by bringing the sidewalks down to a human scale. This is achieved by providing paved sidewalks with overhanging tree canopies and a human scaled fence surrounding the Gardens.

The Gardens are laid out in a square grid with circular focal points. These vistas are very important for orientation as well as for security. One of the main differences between the Gardens and Burgers Park concerns its safety, which is achieved through informal surveillance by the public using and living around the Gardens.

The Gardens are very well used because they are surrounded by educational and cultural facilities. Furthermore they are very well lit at night, well maintained, and street furniture is provided.

1 Company Gardens



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- 1 Location map
- 2 Site plan
- 3 Well defined edge
- 4 Vista
- 5 Focal point



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