



STREETS AS CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INTERIOR SPACES

chapter 3

INTRODUCTION








Life (feet) on the street, in essence diversity, tends to decrease with economic instability and leads to social inadequacy in the city. Urban sprawl caused the segregation of residential and commercial/functional environments resulting in a decrease in people entering the CBD. Communities are separated to the north, west and more apparent the east of the inner city of Pretoria and need to commute from far to enter the CBD but do not always have the financial means to do so (figure 3a). This results in less people within the cities and a decrease in security levels (fewer eyes to notice an illegal act).

Pretoria is a growing city (illustrated in figure 1b), yet has a number of vacant and/or dilapidated buildings as illustrated in figure 2a. A number of buildings are also becoming 'mothballed' with only street level activity keeping them alive. To address the current situation and to prevent another cycle of vacancies, the city needs designers to react to its existing structures without attempting to 'control' it.

STREET CHARACTERISTICS

According to the description of a 'Modernised' city given by Jan Gehl (2006:31), the CBD of Pretoria fits into this category. Characteristics include: multi-storey buildings, extensive automobile traffic and long distances between buildings and functions. In cities like this, vehicular movement is predominantly framed by non-interactive buildings, and public outdoor conditions are poor and impersonal. A site analysis conducted on 23 February 2010 along the northern quadrant of the Pretoria CBD (figure 3b), indicates large distances between street and building facades providing adequate space for public interventions along the sidewalks. These spaces provide adequate opportunity for public interventions along the sidewalks. However, currently such interventions do not occur in these spaces. This is due to a lack of activity brought about by non-responsive street interfaces (refer to figure 2g;h for an example of responsive street interface). At present, the outdoor environment has not much to offer and the few activity areas (recreation and informal markets) that do take place; are spread out in time and place. These activities are concentrated around Church Square, Lillium Ngoyi, City Hall and Berea Park as illustrated in figure 2d. Under these conditions, most people tend to use personal vehicular transport to get to their destination or rather just not commute at all. Compared to '*living cities*' (ibid 2006:31) where people would rather walk from destination to destination and be part of the experience of a social urban environment. A fundamental shift from streets as transport units to streets as 'places' (figure 3d) is required to change the face of Pretoria CBD.

TSHWANE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK 2010

-  gautrain lines
-  railway lines
-  national roads
-  nodes
-  major corridors
-  2009 urban edge
-  provincial boundary



0 3.75 7.5 15 22.5 30 kilometer

Figure 3a: in times of economic instability, less people commute to the city due to remote location and high travel costs, drawn by author

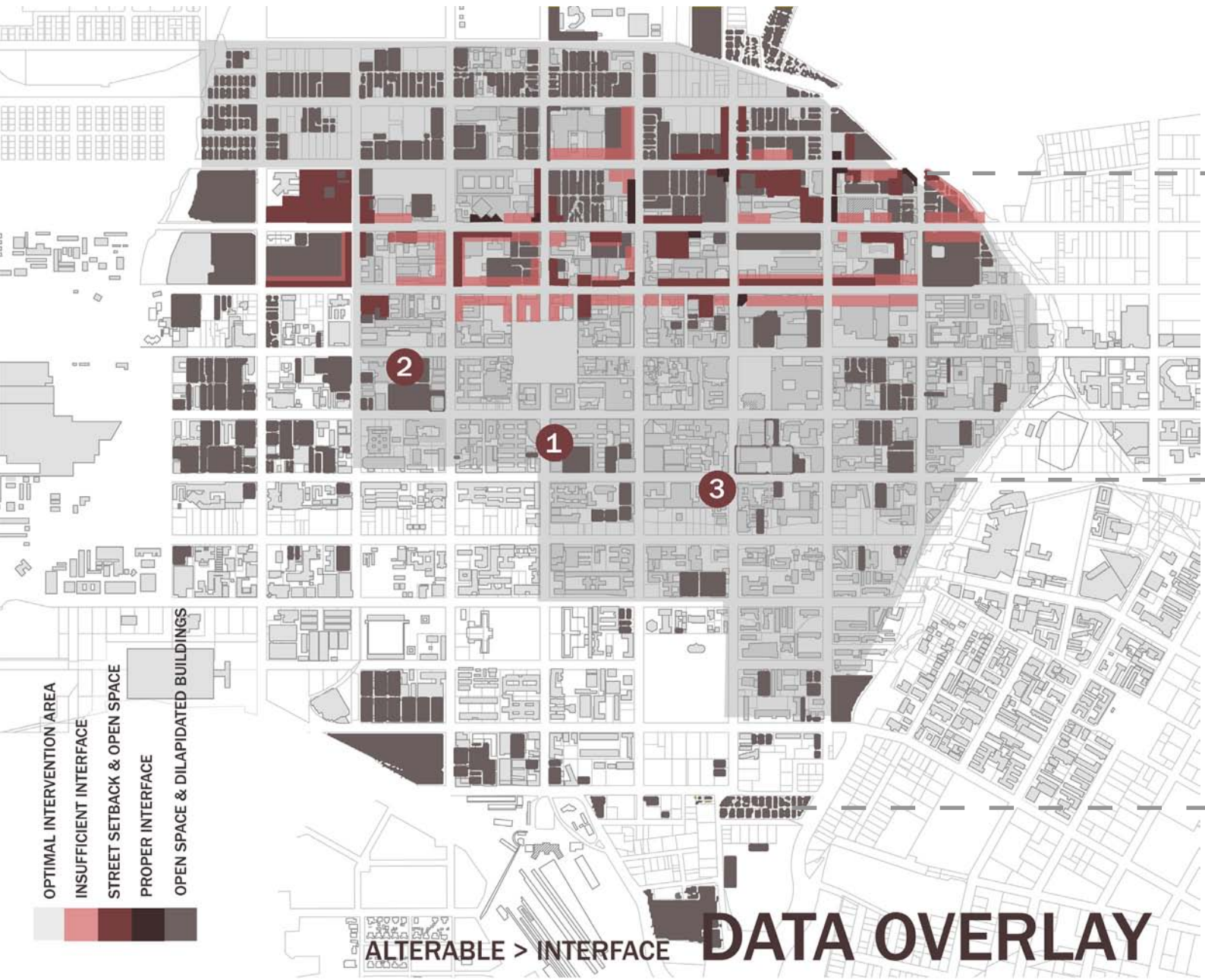


Figure 3b: Data overlay of CBD analysis including potential sites (figure 3d)

STREETS AS PLACES

According to PPS' (Project for Public Spaces) website, the single minded approach of streets being planned as car-centric, has encouraged urban sprawl and a larger ecological impact. It also has a crippling effect on social, communal and economical aspects .

Regarding streets as places has the advantage to improve human life and the environment rather than simply being a unit for vehicular transport (PPS [S.a.]a). Thus being a multifunctional space, streets can create diversity in the city in terms of people, visuals and utilization which ultimately regenerate the social influx.

an exaple done by PPS of an existing street in New York: (PPS [S.a]a)



Paul Kruger Street



current status of the street...



Church Street

proposed site



...if redesigned with community goals in mind



Van der Walt Street

a paradigm shift in street design: (PPS [S.a]b)

Old Paradigm	New Paradigm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large area planning • Arterials • Access to malls • Retail market area - large • Single family bedroom communities • Big roads, wide intersections, and parking lots • Big solutions (interstates/bypasses) • Standards-based (Green Book) • Performance is about mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small area planning • Boulevards • Access to corner markets • Retail Market area - small • Mixed residential/office/services with local businesses • Bike paths, sidewalks, narrow streets, and transit • Small solutions (road connectivity, context sensitivity) • Place-based • Performance is about access and sense of place

Figure 3c: Low-rise buildings (potential & proposed sites) in the CBD that are not fully occupied. See figure 3b for location.

“The street is the river of life of the city, the place where we come together, the pathway to the center.” - William H. Whyte

(ibid)

Figure 3d: streets as ‘places’ can contribute to creating social urban environments

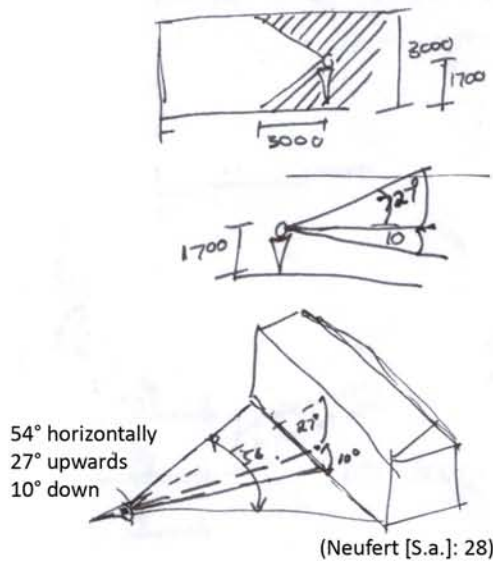


THE EYE: PERCEPTION

Parameters for the appropriate use of public and private space promote spatial usage. The parameters can be time based, aligned with social patterns, mobility and own personal choice, but most specifically: what the eye can perceive.

LAYERING OF EVENTS TO ACTIVATE THE STREETS

"A person walking on street sees practically nothing but the ground floor of buildings, the pavement, and what is going on in the street space itself" (Gehl 2006:63).

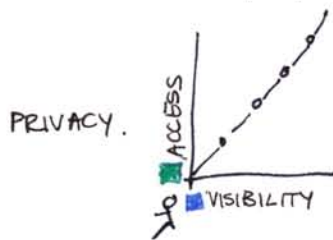


For Pretoria CBD to once again become a living city, pedestrian interest should be awakened on street level to encourage the public to move about on foot. To transform the city's streets into places, events are required that can activate the streets as social spaces. There is a need for layering of events (figure 4c) or social outdoor activities on urban scale. People are drawn to places where 'something' is happening. Events cannot take place in isolation, but should be linked with one another. Currently, events are only connected along the eastern section (figure 2c). The rest of the city's events take place in isolation and vacant buildings emphasize the 'anti-social' nature of the movement routes that do link events. Because life happens of foot, places are experienced on foot. The streets assume the character of its environments and should be treated with the greatest of concern.

the negotiation between public and private realms occur by views and desire lines

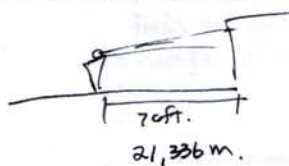
important factors to consider:
movement flows -
sight lines -
oblique open spaces -

Layers of events encourage slow and gradual progress towards each individual destination. These events increase the amount of usable public space (figure 3e). This process increases the lingering time, leading to the perception that more people are present along a space. Gehl (2006:77) believes that "slow traffic means lively cities". Events slow down the movement, and will increase the activity level.



To proceed with this transformation, a process of mediation between social changes through time and existing structures to secure occupation (re-use) should be established. Interrelationship between place and activity emerge on moderate scale, but the assembling of people and activities must be examined in context with their urban environment (refer to figure 1c).

human interface: people can see as far as 21m



(Alexander 1977:312)

"spaces that are not seen, are not used" (Gehl 2006:97).

bringing the outside in:
from Modernism - we construct sense out of the accretion of everyday activities that continually change our reality, rather than fixing a particular order onto things. the focus should be on small details, showing scenes several times from different angles

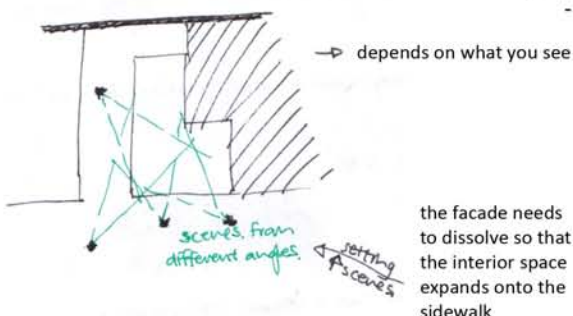
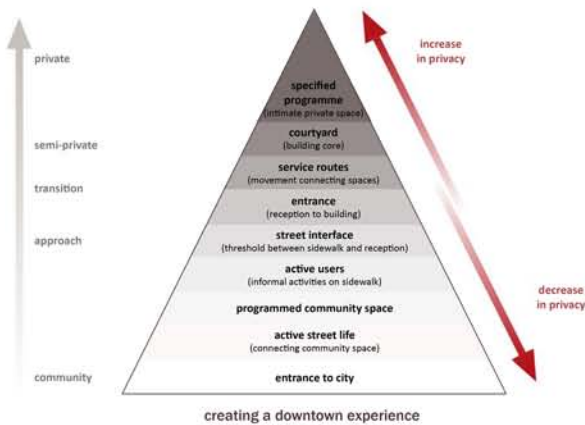


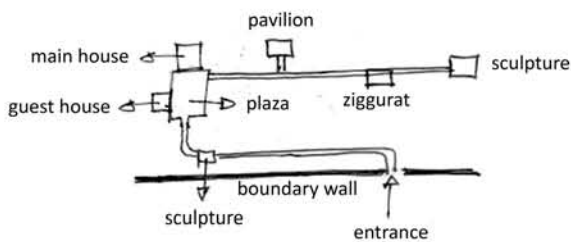
Figure 3e: interface of public and private space

Events are placed in a landscape or building in an order of importance to delay the movement from the entrance to the privacy of intimate spaces.



each event act as a filter.
it filters people out as to limit access to more private areas

In Gobbai House, Galwad, there is a specific purpose of each event, leading from public to private order:



Gobbai House, Galwad 1995-99 (Correa 1999:72)

Figure 3f: The study indicates how the implementation of a series of events filter the movements to private space

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SITE AND EXISTING STREET ANALYSIS

It is also important to investigate a site which holds the potential for moderate transformation. This document will specifically focus on **low-rise**¹ buildings in the CBD that are either vacant or underutilised. Currently, such buildings do not attract investors and therefore remain underutilised and directly contribute to a lack of social activity in the urban environment. These buildings do not contribute to the creation of a living city and require immediate design attention.

1 Low-rise buildings: limited between two to five storey buildings for the purpose of this study

1. CHARACTERISTICS ESSENTIAL FOR THE PROPOSED SITE

The site also needs to exhibit the social and physical characteristics that currently inhibit urban regeneration. The following five characteristics have been identified (figure 3g): (1) monofunctionality of programme and use; (2) public to private interface; (3) scale and (4) lifecycle of the building; and (5) whether the building in itself has the necessary potential to survive the flux in urban conditions.

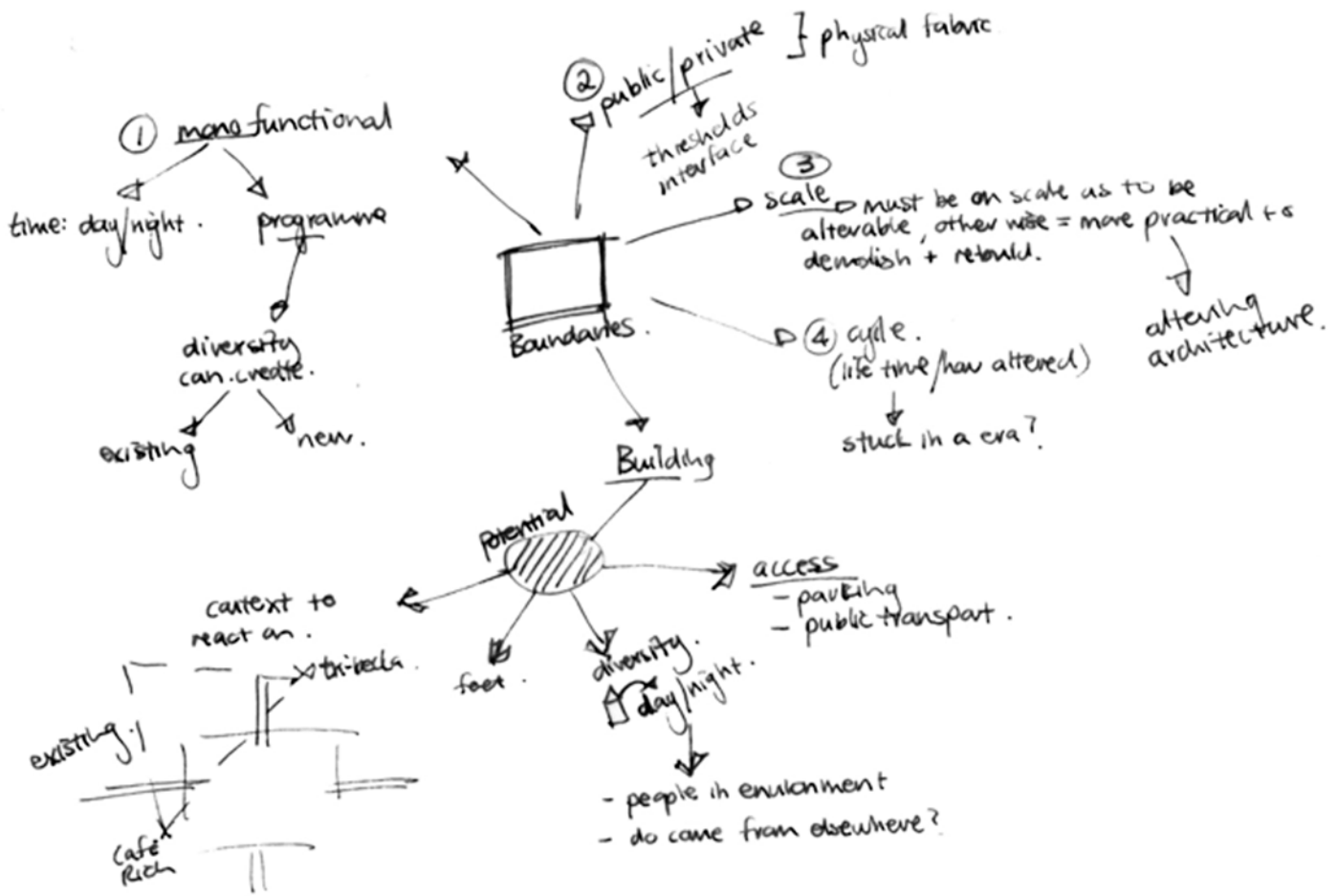


Figure 3g: Criteria for proposed site based on potential of street characteristics

1. **Use** during day and/or night
Programme: existing diversity within the context in terms of users and activity, does the site offer the potential for creating new diversity? (figure 3i; j)
2. Does the physical fabric act as a **threshold** to separate public (urban) from private (interior) space.(figure 3k)
3. The building must be of moderate **scale** to be feasible to alter, otherwise its more practical to demolish and rebuild. (figure 3m)
4. Has the building been altered over time or is it stuck in a previous era that does not promote contemporary use?
5. **Building** potential
 - Access - Existing or proposed parking;
 - Existing or proposed public transport in the approximate area. (figure 3j)
 - Diversity – hourly use
 - a. Are there currently users in the environment?
 - b. Do users commute from elsewhere? (figure 3j)
 - Feet – existing pedestrian movement (figure 3k)
 - Context – existing context to react on. (figure 3i; j)

According to these characteristics, the selection of the proposed site followed:
 121 Church Street, erf no. 336. Currently housing Budget Furniture.

2. SITE LOCALITY



Figure 3h: Context of proposed site



3. EXISTING PROGRAMMES:

Cities must have places that attract people into and not just have a 'nice promenade' to connect urban activity nodes. The nature of the existing programmes within the area allows the proposed site to plug into the surrounding activity and promote social influx.

Existing programmes include a variety of cultural foods and social venues.



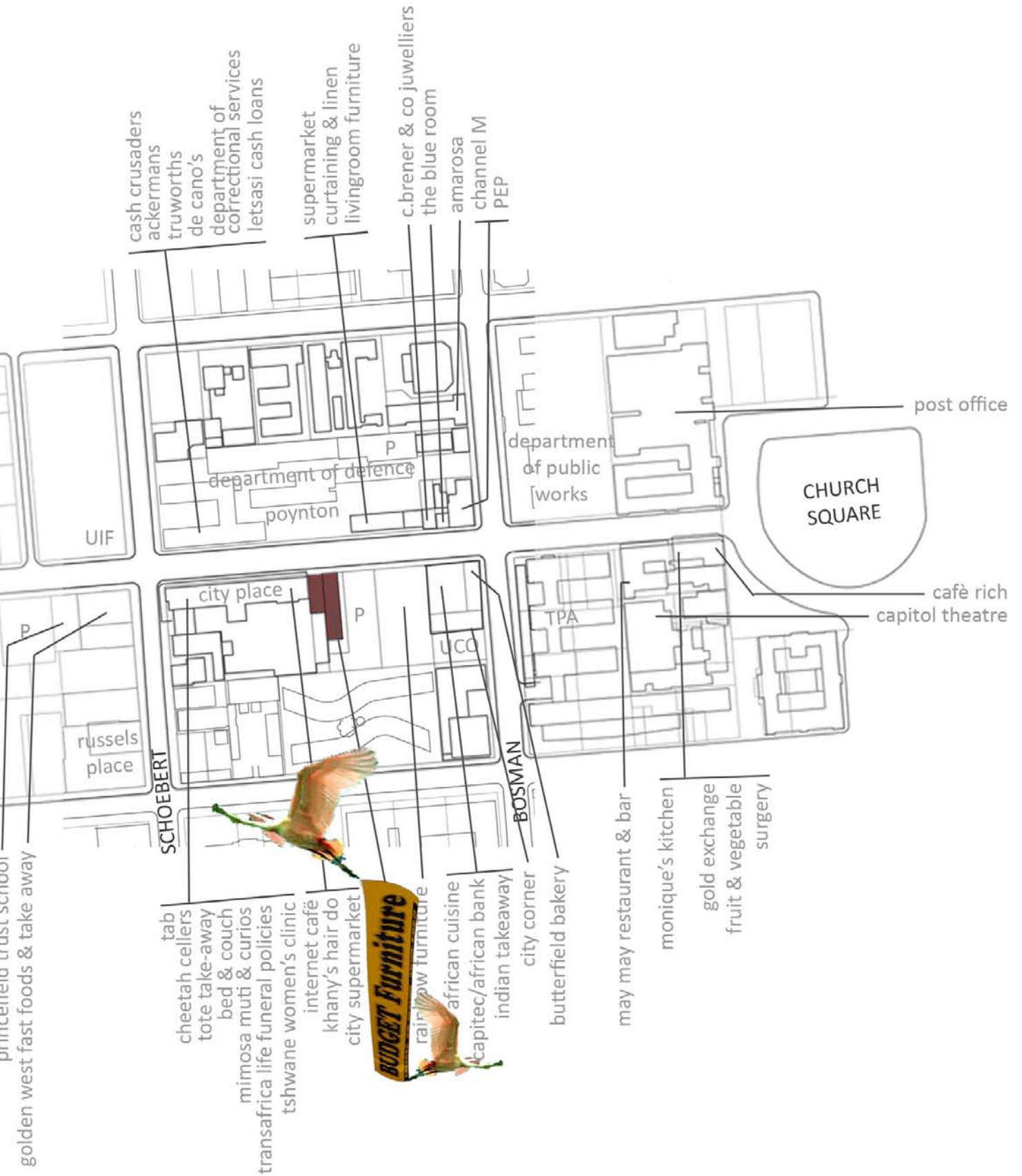
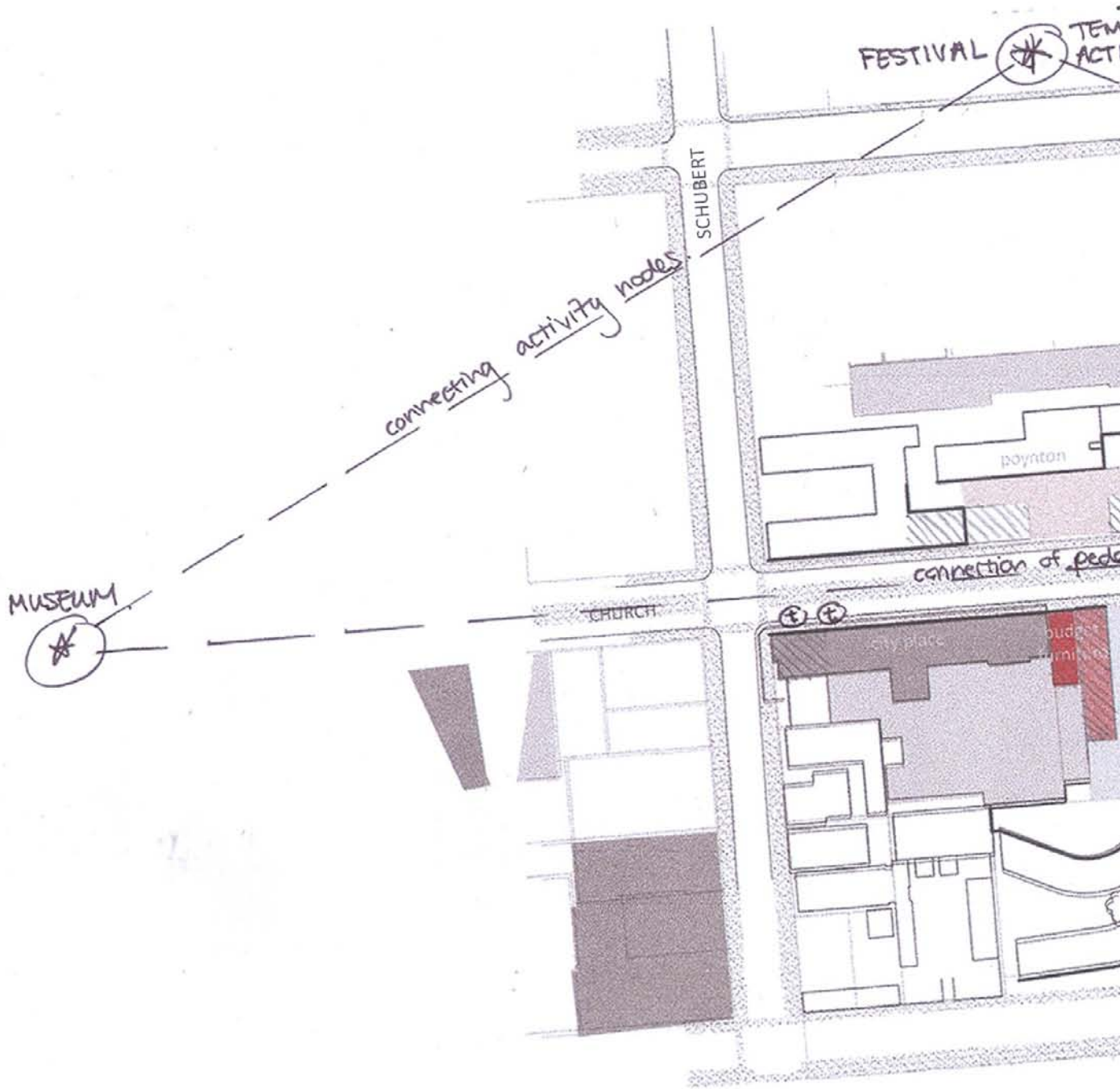


Figure 31: Existing activities along proposed pedestrian movement connecting the activity nodes



4. SITE INFLUENCE:

The site is centrally located within the CBD of Pretoria between two activity nodes of Church Square and Museum node, as proposed by Plug-In City Framework. Orientation of entrances in relation to the pedestrian routes and areas for interaction, are determining factors for the connection of space. Individual buildings can stimulate each other if attention is paid to access to opposite sites and buildings.



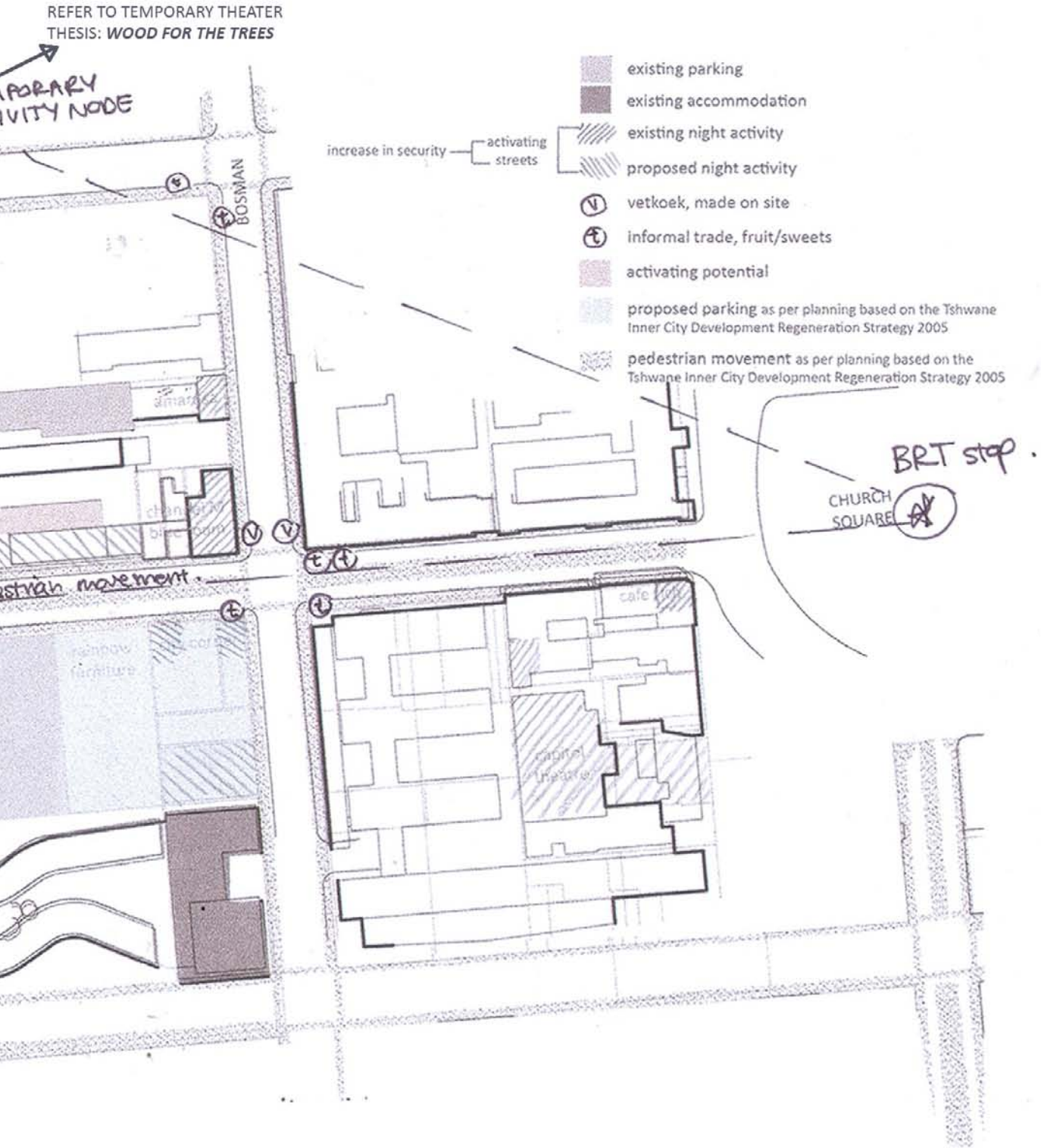
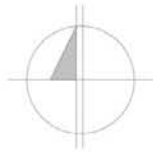
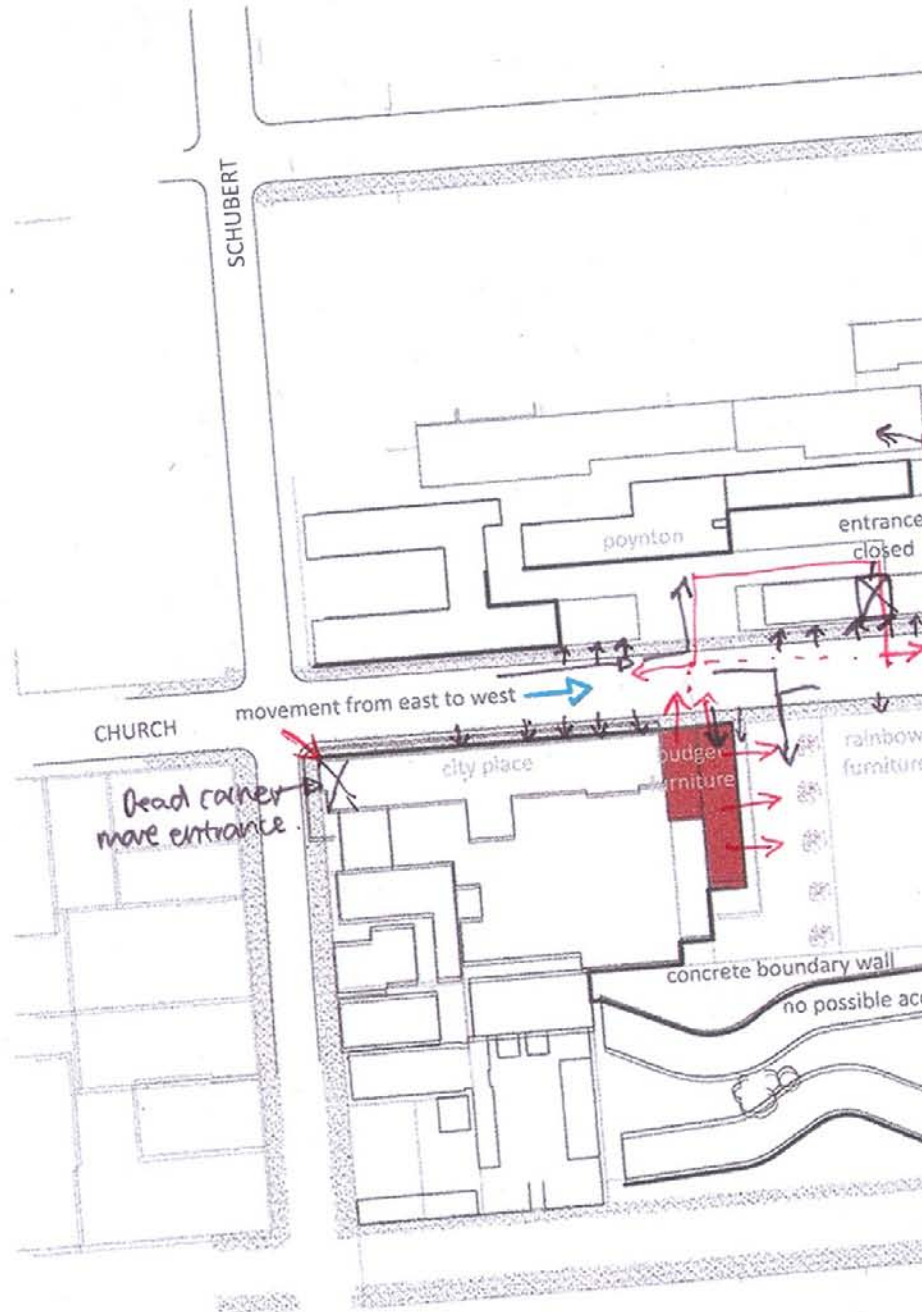


Figure 3j: Factors influencing the proposed site



5. MOVEMENT:

Vehicular movement is predominantly from North to South in Bosman Street. even during peak hours (site analysis from 7-8:30 am and 4-5:30pm), the four lane street of Church street is not fully utilised - this is unnecessary misuse of urban space that can be dedicated to redesigning 'streets as spaces' (figure 3c). There is an existing diversity of people moving on foot towards and from Church Square. This suggests further pedestrianisation of the city. There is adequate existing parking in the surrounding area for users who commute from elsewhere and a BRT stop on Church Square.



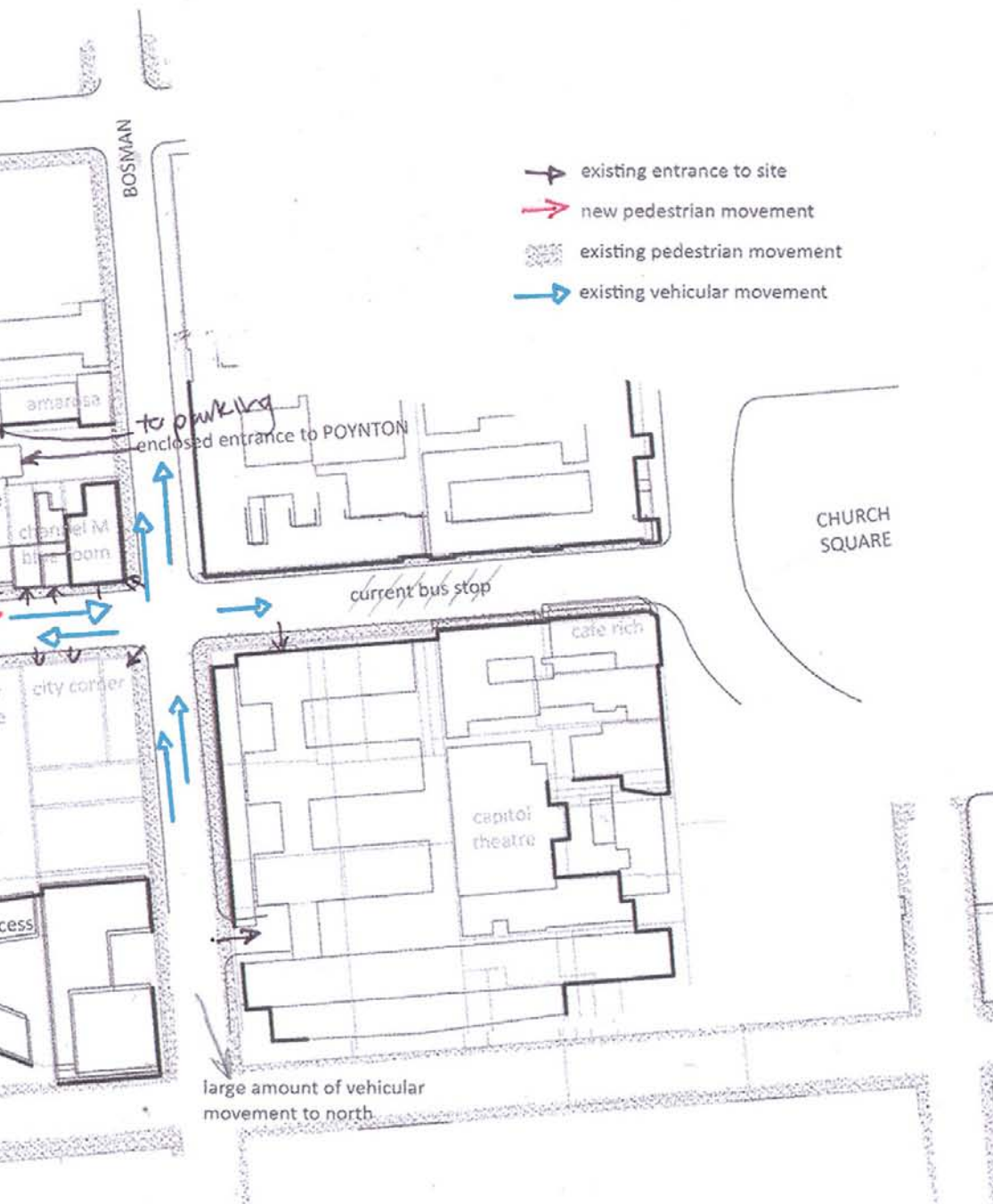


Figure 3k: Existing and proposed movement along the site



6. THRESHOLDS (INTERFACES):

Existing thresholds present in Church Street. Boundaries cause isolation of spaces and prevent access (physical and visual) which can lead to a decrease in social activity. Built fabric should not prevent social interaction but rather promote it and is therefore in need of alteration to rouse pedestrian interest.





Figure 31: Existing interfaces present in Church Street

7. STREET ELEVATION:

The building must be of appropriate scale to be feasible to alter, otherwise demolition and a new building is more promising

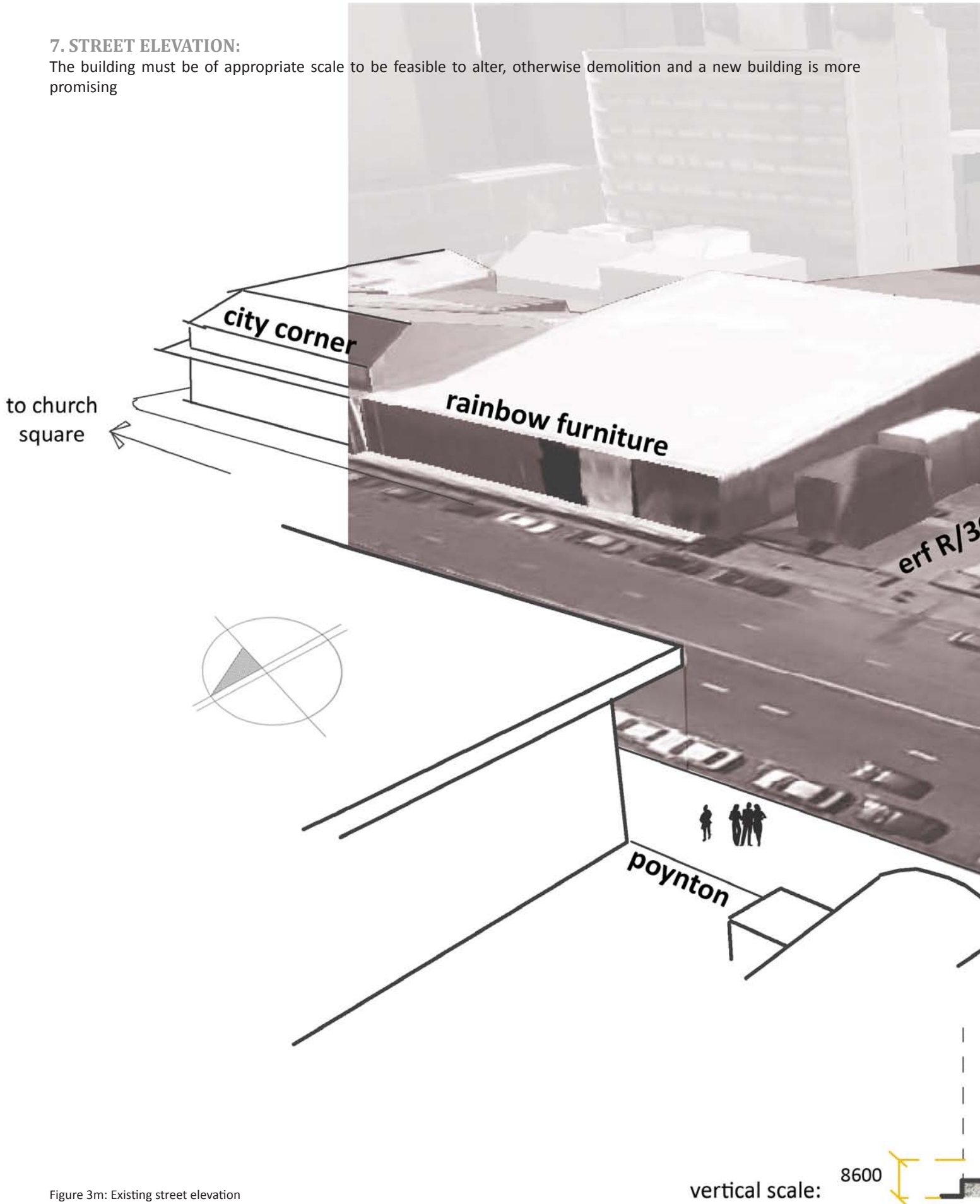
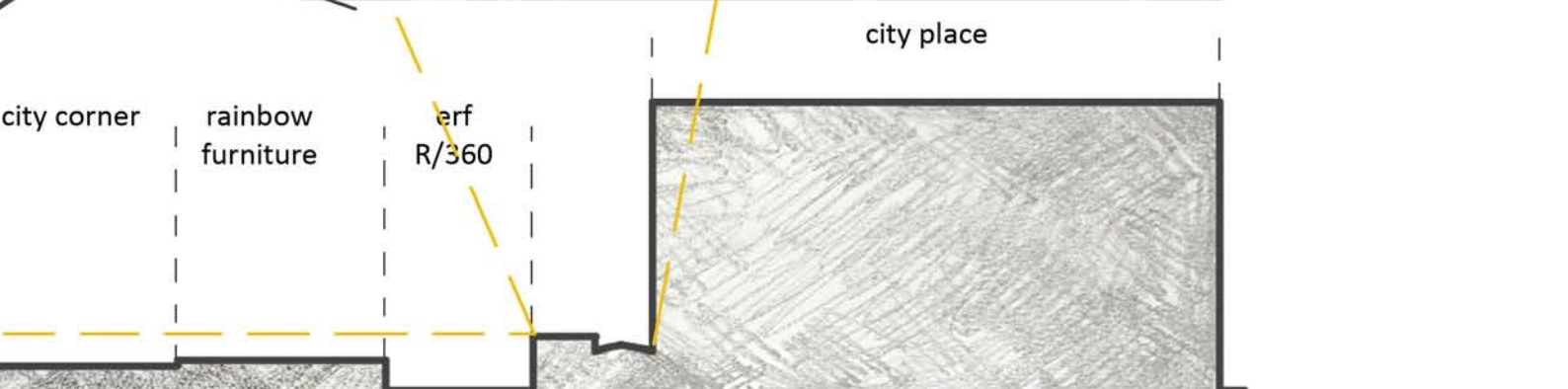
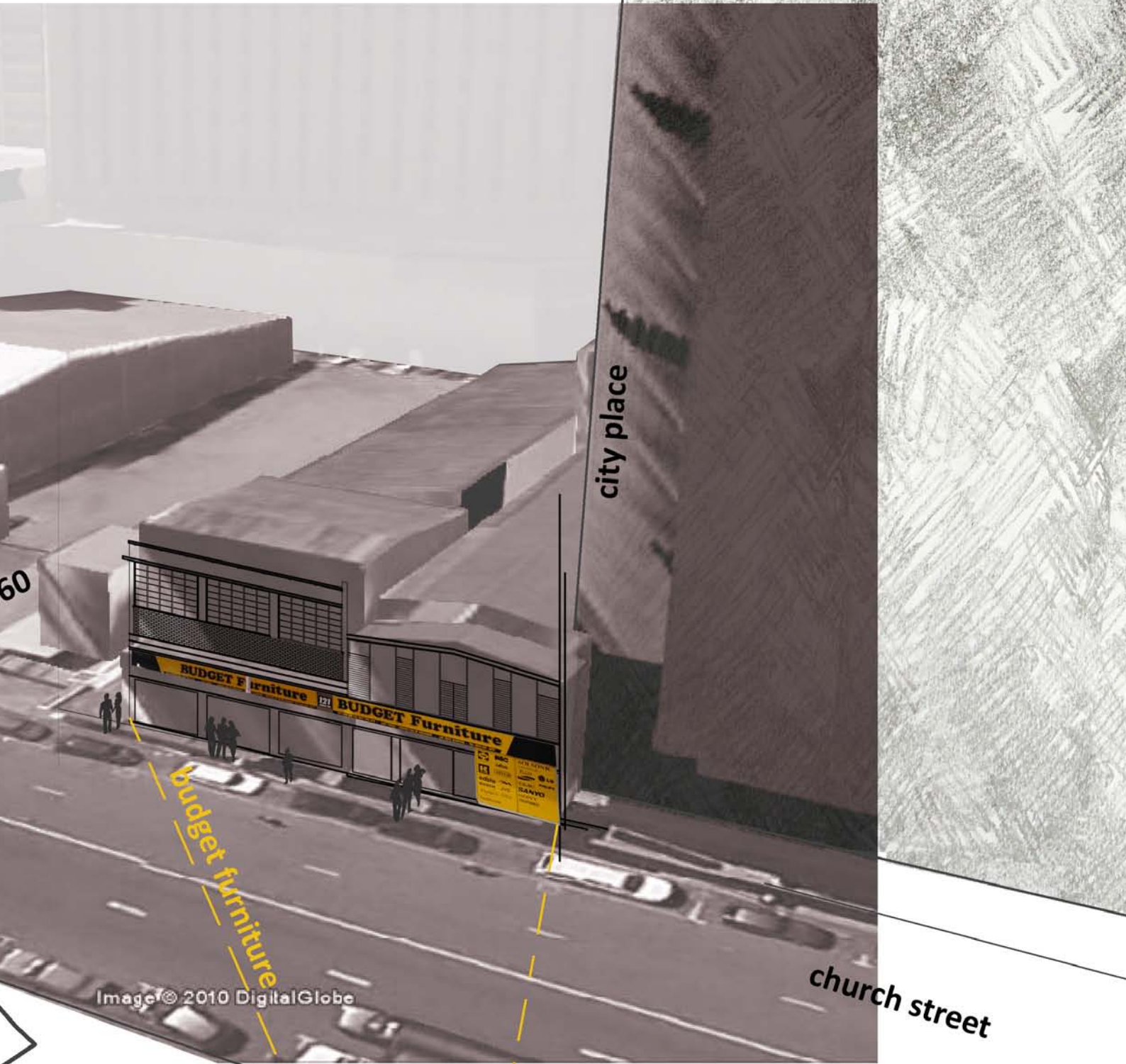


Figure 3m: Existing street elevation



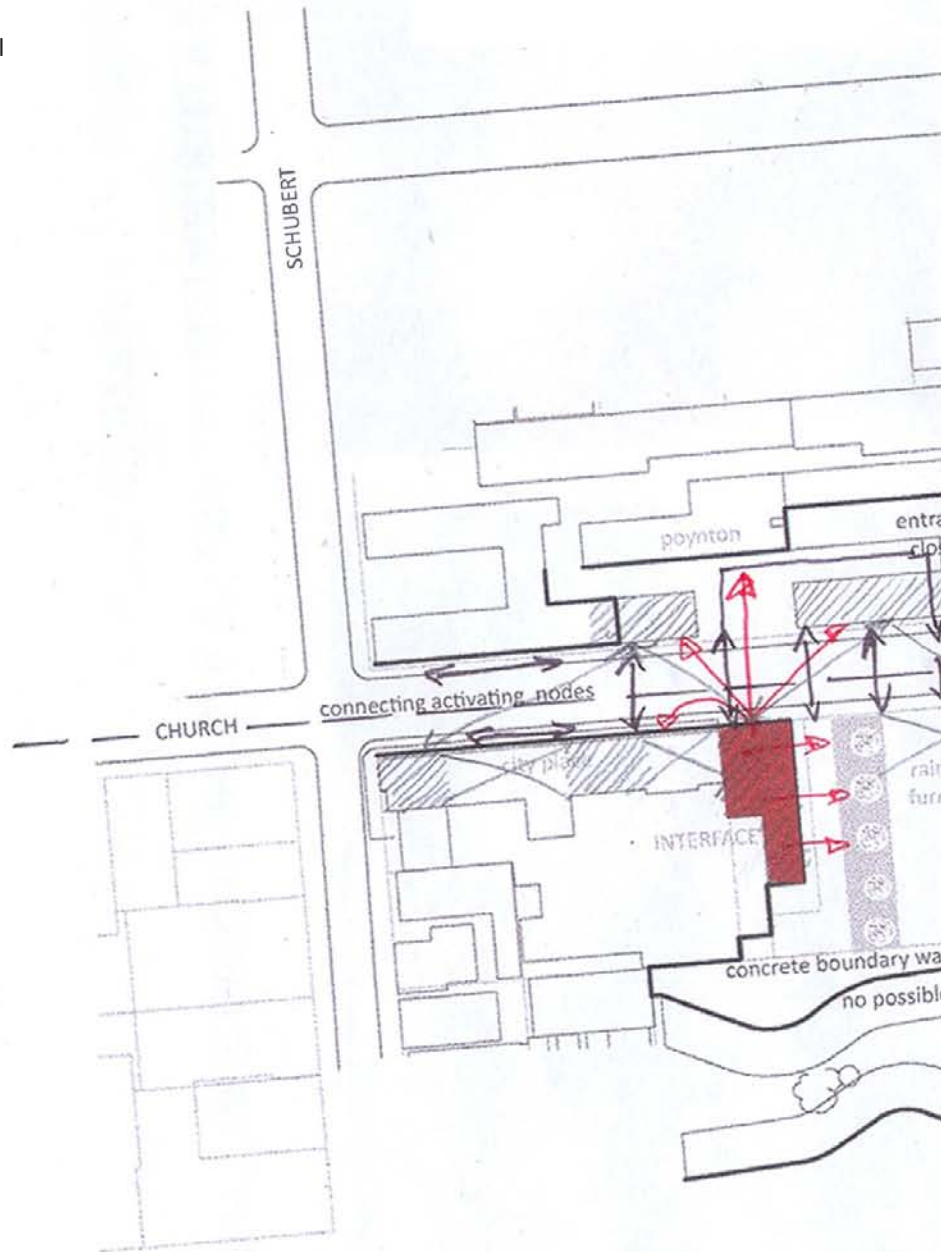


8. POTENTIAL/CONCLUSION:

There is a need for only day time programmes on a street to allow for dead facades in the evening to accommodate resting places for pedestrians (figure 3n), this prevents unwanted clustering in front of night programmes. The affective dispersal of events allow for movement between spaces.

List of possible programmes (public, semi-public or private nature) based on the potential of the site, taking into consideration day-night activities and the festival as proposed by the Plug-In Festival Framework:

- o restaurant – cultural food
- o artists’ studios and housing
- o music centre, -school, -instruments retail
- o nightclub
- o recording studio
- o radio broadcasting
- o dance studio



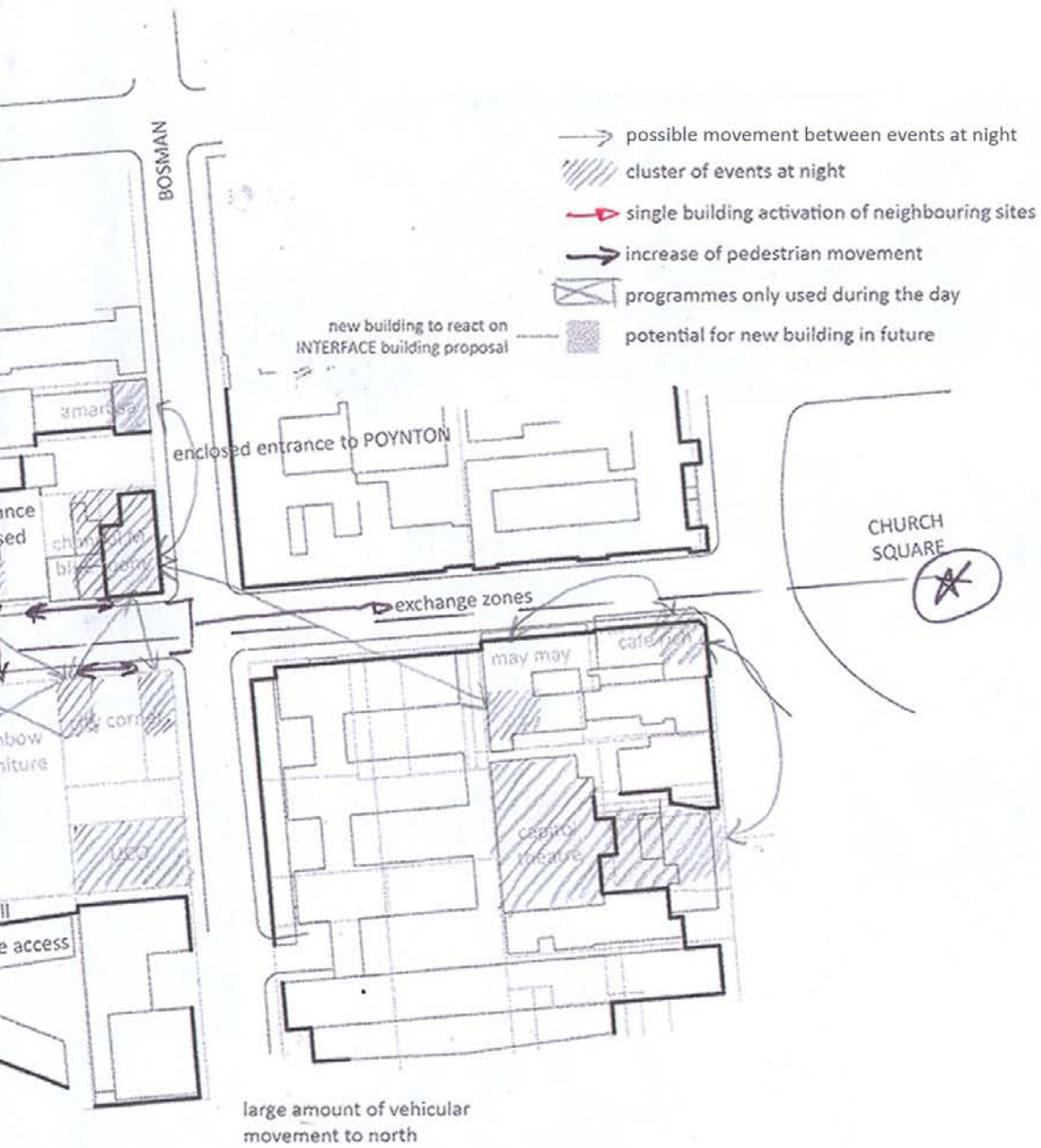


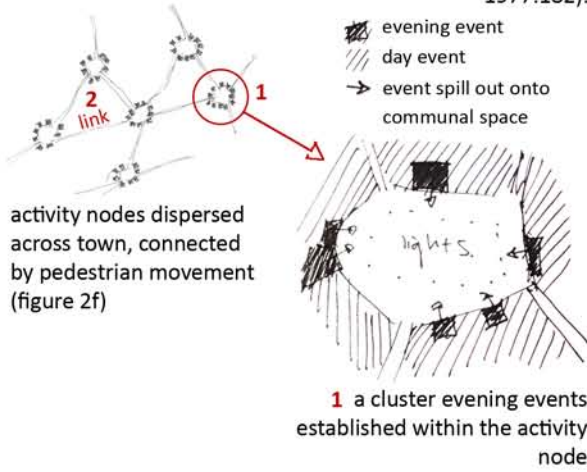
Figure 3n: Proposed site acting as catalyst in activating its surrounding environment



DIVERSITY OF PROGRAMMES (DAY-NIGHT)

“knit together shops, amusements, and services which are open at night, along with hotels, bars and all-night diners to form centers of night life: well-lit, safe, and lively places that increase the intensity of pedestrian activity at night by drawing all the people who are out at night to the same few spots in town. Encourage these evening centers to distribute themselves evenly across the town” (Alexander 1977:182).

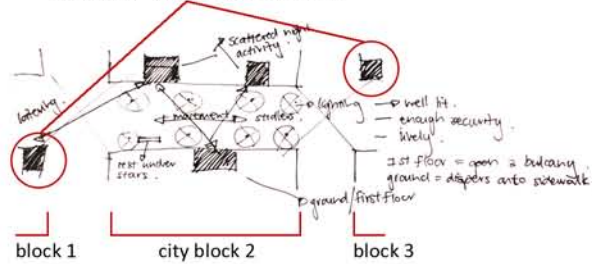
By adapting the interior of Budget Furniture with a more appropriate interface with the exterior space, the building can act as a catalyst (figure 3m), activating its surrounding environment. Because of an interior space’s humanistic nature (discussion in chapter 4), it can **improve the potential of social interaction on the street if the interior is continuous with the exterior pedestrian movement.**



activity nodes dispersed across town, connected by pedestrian movement (figure 2f)

1 a cluster evening events established within the activity node

2 translation into link



Three programmes of different nature – private (residential), semi-public (music centre) and public (retail centre) in no specific order - will be proposed to replace Budget Furniture. This will illustrate the utilization of spaces and the adaptability of the building.

CONCLUSION

The qualities of cities are measured on individual level, in how the pedestrians experience their environment on human scale. Yet the assembling of people and activities must be examined in context to its immediate environment **and** on an urban scale, but the interrelationship between place and activity is caused on a smaller scale. This small scale permeates into the bigger urban scale (Britz 2007:40). As indicated by Jan Gehl (2006:83) “preparation for successful work at this level must be made on all planning levels”. There must be an effective dispersal of people and events, whether it is in the whole city, a street of a city block or within a building.

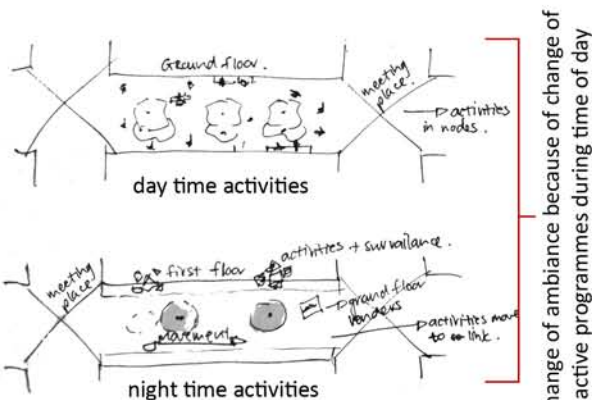
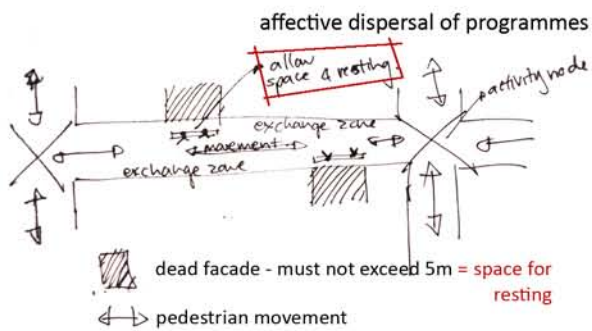


Figure 3o: diversity of programme and time schedule provide city dwellers with resting space

