



Figure 1.1: Local homeless man (Online).

01. Introduction

Background to the Study

The following investigation is derived from a deficiency identified within the urban context of South Africa namely, homelessness within its metropolitan areas. One reason for homelessness is evidently poverty. Out of South Africa's millions of poverty stricken people living in marginal housing conditions, the street homeless are the most vulnerable (Cross & Seager, 2010: 22).

According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) the estimated population of adult street homeless, in Gauteng, is between 6000 and 12 000, however because of the difficulties in obtaining accurate numbers of the homeless the number is likely to be much higher. A gap has been identified in the structure of grants available for the support of the homeless as the bulk of funds are aimed at supporting children, the elderly and the disabled. Cross (2010: 143) suggested that, although government subsidised housing grants have helped many to improve their living conditions, the grants have mostly helped people living in informal settlements, and not the most vulnerable people living on the streets. The question arises whether street homelessness is simply a result of unaffordable housing or whether there are more layers to the problem. It is suggested that one reason why available social housing does not cater for the urban homeless is because of the locations of the housing developments, which are most often found on the peripheries of cities.

The overall reason for street homelessness appears to be due to economic pressures and needs, which causes a degree of desperation due to limited resources. Although economic pressure is the main reason for homelessness, it in turn stems from the problem of the breakdown of the family structure and support. The main reasons for homelessness in South Africa are shown in the table below:

Table 1: Homeless respondents' main reasons for leaving original home

Street-homeless respondents' reasons for first leaving home prior to street homeless condition	Number of replies	Percentage of respondents mentioning
Employment factors (job search, employment, retrenchment, dismissal, income shortfall, other economic factors)	661	53
Family factors (deaths, disputes, marriage, divorce, family relationships, family influence, other changes in family situation)	665	53
Aspirational factors (seeking better life, independence, excitement, other life-improvement factors)	210	17
Shelter and housing (lack of housing, eviction or forced removal, other housing factors)	128	10
Abuse or violence (abuse, mistreatment, injury, other personal suffering)	111	9
Total	1775	

Multiple response distribution, percentage of respondents replying 'yes': number of replies may exceed total number of respondents.

Table 1.1: Reasons for homelessness (Cross, 2010: 147)

A GAP HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE STRUCTURE OF GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE HOMELESS AS THE BULK OF FUNDS ARE AIMED AT SUPPORTING CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY AND THE DISABLED (CROSS, 2010: 146)



Figure 1.2: Informal settlement in South Africa (Online).

Although government subsidies have helped, the grants have mostly helped people living in informal settlement, and not the most vulnerable people living on the streets (Cross, 2010: 143).

Within this marginalised adult group, women are the most vulnerable. South Africa has one of the world's highest rates of reported crimes against women. According to SAPS the unacceptably high numbers of incidences are still on the increase (SAPS, 2010).

“Violence keeps women in conditions of poverty, and fear of poverty keeps women trapped in violent situations. For abused women, lack of economic access dictates their physical mobility, their access to education, recreation, as well as access to each other”
(Artz, 2002).

Domestic violence is the primary reason why women end up homeless or in a situation where they need the services of a shelter. The statistics indicate that a large majority of women are homeless because of physical or sexual assault, most often occurring at the homes they eventually left (Brown, 2005: 24). Other reasons for homelessness among women are economic pressures, addiction or mental illness (Bunston, 1992: 150).

The average level of education for street homeless was found to be seven years. Twenty seven percent of homeless people were found to be temporarily employed but yet unable to afford housing or to live in peripheral areas where social housing is available.

“The homeless, in their own stories, appear cut off from their earlier networks in settled society, nervous about approaching government, suffering learned helplessness and friendlessness, often ashamed of their situation, vulnerable to exploitation, ill-health and injury, and living in fear as they drift in toward the economic centres of the country” (Cross, 2010: 153).

The following aspects have been identified as essential when dealing with the problem of homelessness: firstly the homeless must be helped to “gain control of their lives”; they should be helped out of their predicament with permanent independent housing or with assisted living; access to city centers and livelihoods are crucial; and ultimately measures should be taken to prevent the situation of homelessness before the fact (Cross, 2010: 146).

South Africa has a serious lack of support for homeless people (Cross, 2010: 145). The facilities available are also not specifically designed for people in crisis and do not promote healing and growth. International examples of spaces for healing do not relate to the context of South Africa and specifically, to Tshwane. For these reasons it is important to investigate suitable environments for the healing and reintegration of people in crisis in this specific context. The dissertation will focus on promoting empowerment by examining economic sustainability through the introduction of commercial activities into the centre. Commercial space will be rented out to private organisations, to generate income for the shelter.

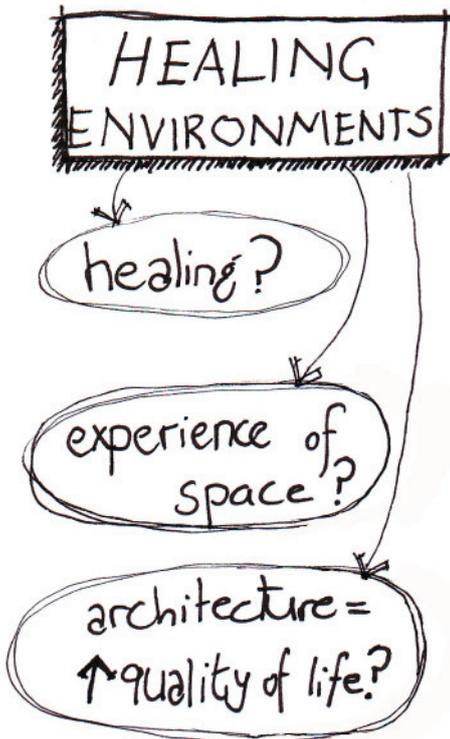


Figure 1.3: Research Questions
(Author)

Problem Statement

This dissertation investigates suitable environments for the healing and rehabilitation of people in crisis in South Africa, focusing on the human experience of space.

Research Question

How can architecture provide a suitable environment for healing and rehabilitation of homeless people within the context of South Africa?

Hypothesis

Architecture can enhance healing through a physical environment that fosters freedom of choice, social integration and meaning.

Sub Questions

What does the process of healing entail?

What is the human experience of space and how does space promote healing?

How does one design responsible, appropriate and meaningful architecture which ultimately improves quality of life?

The Aim of the Study

The aim of the project is to create responsible, appropriate and meaningful architecture which ultimately improves the quality of life, not only of the users of the project, but also of the users of the city (feasible, sustainable, significant).

The project becomes a vehicle to investigate a number of relevant issues in the current South African social milieu. The project creates an opportunity to examine the experience of the physical environment and the formation of meaningful space for South Africans. Flexibility and open building technologies as well as the typology of shelters will be investigated, which ultimately can become a home to their users. Responsible architecture that is appropriate within the context of Tshwane, South Africa, in addition to the underlying urban structures of the city will be explored. The context of Tshwane and South Africa plays an important role in the creation of meaningful space, as meaningful space within an urban context is bound to a positive identity of place. Identity of place allows its residents to associate and belong to the city. If a place has a personality and people can identify with it, in a positive manner, they are more likely to conduct themselves in a responsible manner (Tomas, 1996: 121).

SUBSIDISED SOCIAL HOUSING ONLY AIDS THOSE WITH LOW INCOME, BUT THERE IS LIMITED HELP FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE WITH NO INCOME.

Research Methods & Methodology

A mixed-method approach, that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative research methods, is used. The quantitative method refers to measurable aspects, namely the specific needs or amenities and their sizes required for this project. This list of needs is partially determined by surveys conducted with volunteers at shelters (See Appendix). The qualitative method refers to a holistic approach which investigates appropriate, sustainable, contextual, meaningful architecture with the main focus on the investigation of the emotional experience of space. This is presented as a thematic textual study, which presupposes a hermeneutic approach (Creswell, 2003: 219).

Methodological Approach

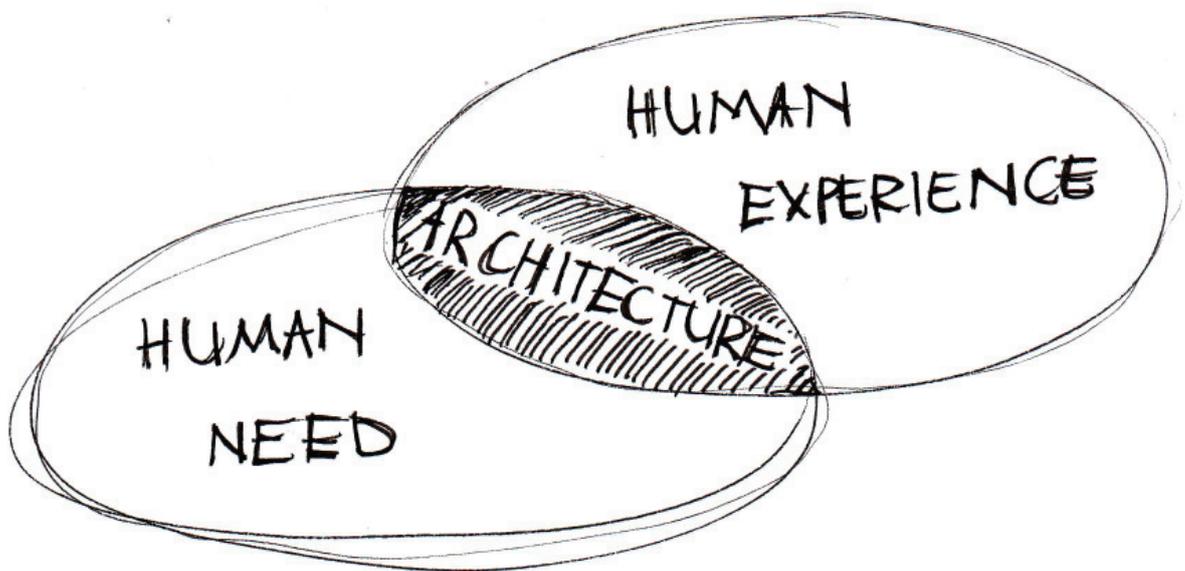


Figure 1.4: Approach to the study
(Author)

The study design is presented in such a way that Chapter 2 investigates and synthesises established theories on the human experience of space, specifically relevant in the design of an environment that promotes healing. The investigation aims to identify universal design aspects that should be incorporated in the creation of healing environments for people in crisis, specifically in reference to the design of a homeless shelter. Chapter 3 investigates the context of the project, focusing on the historical, social and physical conditions of the site within the context of Tshwane; the current situation of shelters in Pretoria Central; as well as proposing an Urban Framework for the area. Chapter 4 investigates the programme, determining necessary accommodations, after which an evaluation is presented in the culminating chapters in which the conclusions are summarised and synthesized.

**UNEMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE
ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

Client, Programme & Site

Client

A number of organisations could be approached to act as a partner to provide financial support for the project. This could be a public-private collaboration, for example through the partnership of the private entity, Tshwane Leadership Foundation, and the public Department of Social Development. Examples of similar projects that these organisations have mutually been involved in are The Potter's House, for women in crisis; Lerato House, for girls at risk; Akanani, an outreach programme and care centre for the terminally ill.

Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF) is a private organisation that was created in 2003 and strives for urban transformation.

The organisation is

“committed to help build healthy urban communities in places of struggle and/ or transformation, and wants to demonstrate that it is possible to strengthen urban areas in ways that are radically inclusive socially and economically” (TLF, 2010).

The Department of Social Development's core function is the

“management and overseeing of social security, encompassing social assistance and social insurance policies that aim to prevent and alleviate poverty in the event of life cycle risks such as loss of income due to unemployment, disability, old age or death occurring. The purpose is to create and provide social protection to the most vulnerable of society through the delivery of social welfare services, delivered via provincial government and NPO structures” (Department of Social Development, 2010).

Programme

The shelter can be defined as transitional housing for the adult urban homeless and their children. The shelter focuses on the healing and ultimate rehabilitation of homeless people, which includes the reintegration of these people into society and not merely a shelter which provides immediate relief but does nothing to improve the situation of the people in need. The healing of people in crisis will be achieved through the design of an appropriate environment which will focus on the experience of the user to encourage independence and empowerment, ultimately leading to a positive self-image. The centre will incorporate the following: individual as well as group counselling; training; apprenticeship; economic opportunity; accommodation; and opportunities for recreation and spiritual growth. The people in crisis will stay at the shelter for a period of **six months to one year**, which means the centre becomes more than a shelter; it becomes a home. A drop-in facility will also be provided for more temporary relief.

The significance of the project is that the development becomes a metaphor for the reintegration of people into society. The project facilitates people becoming contributing members of society and discontinues the cycle of destitution by improving the physical environment and by providing the opportunity of economic activity. The diagram on the following page illustrates the specific activities:

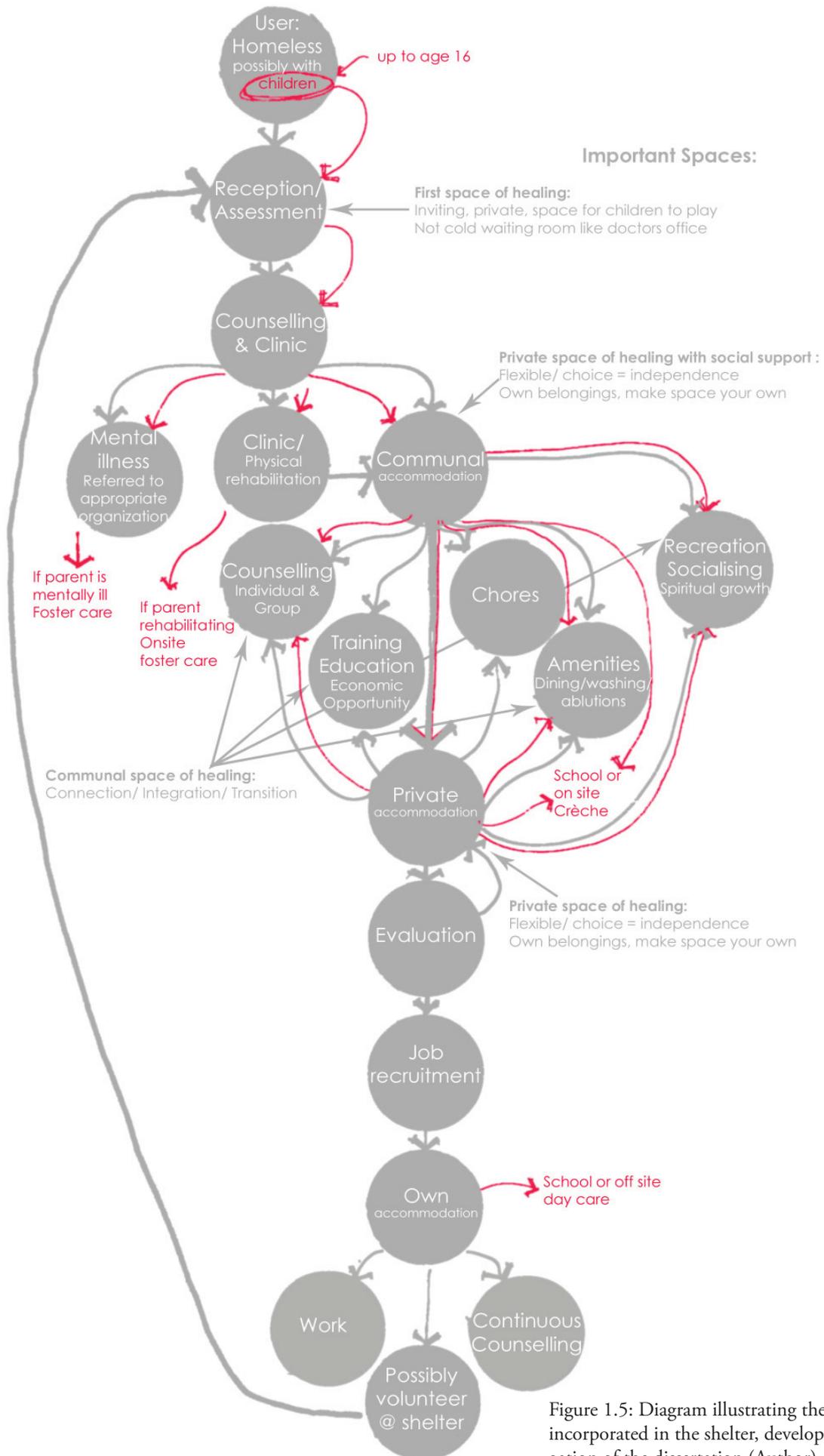


Figure 1.5: Diagram illustrating the process and activities incorporated in the shelter, developed through the investigation of the dissertation (Author).



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According to SHIFT, transitional housing is a form of social housing with shared facilities and it targets the income group of R0 – R100 per month. Transitional housing is defined as temporary, short-term accommodation of a maximum stay of 24 months. Transitional housing is similar to communal housing as facilities are shared, however communal housing does not provide life skills and training though it does provide a lease agreement for long-term stay. Rent for communal housing is also significantly higher than for transitional housing. The average sizes of rooms in establishments that provide transitional housing are 6m² for individual rooms to 12-20m² for shared rooms. Rental per bed is usually between R0-R165 per month, with the average being around R90 (SHIFT Resource Book, 2009: 223).

Definitions of different types of social housing according to SHIFT:

“Shelter is a housing intervention measure to assist the destitute and homeless. The focus of shelter is on social welfare services such as food, clothing and other social services. Normally, shelter is provided by welfare or faith-based organisations.

Transitional housing is temporary accommodation in and around the inner city for people who are in transition between homelessness and permanent accommodation. Short-term tenure and empowerment training are key characteristics of transitional housing. The accommodation is managed by an institution and subsidised through government housing subsidies.

Communal housing can be defined as an affordable rental form of social housing accommodation. Long-term tenure and shared communal facilities are key characteristics. Communal housing projects are subsidised through government housing subsidies and are managed by an institution.

Social housing is defined as affordable, high quality and well-located subsidised housing managed by viable, sustainable, independent institutions on participatory management principles. Social housing is aimed at low-to-moderate income families and provides different tenure options with the exception of immediate individual ownership” (SHIFT, 2009).

Figure 1.6: The Salvation Army, Pretoria West (Author)

Figure 1.7: Existing hostel, Mamelodi (Author)

Figure 1.8: N2 Gateway – Joe Slovo, Cape Town (SHIFT)

Figure 1.9: Brickfields, Johannesburg (Online)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT IS THAT THE DEVELOPMENT BECOMES A METAPHOR FOR THE REINTEGRATION OF PEOPLE INTO SOCIETY.

Site

The location of the shelter is of utmost importance to ensure all the criteria of the project are met. The selected site is on the corner of Church and Hamilton Streets, in Arcadia, Tshwane. The site is a transitional zone between residential and commercial areas which provide opportunities for integration. The established residential area to the east of the site means that the shelter can integrate into the existing community and prevent the isolation of the development. The location also allows access to the following necessary amenities: schools, churches, recreation, parks, jobs and commerce. The busy streets also provide an excellent opportunity to promote awareness of the current social problem and the support systems available.

At an urban scale the development provides an opportunity to develop underutilised space within the city through densification. The site is currently completely underutilised with a small single story building in the middle of the site surrounded by an excessive amount of parking. The present coverage is 16 percent with a FSR of 0.16 leaving 84 percent of the site open for parking. The site is surrounded by multi-storey buildings ranging from three to seven stories, with FSR ranging from 1.77 to 2.77, which emphasise the gap in the urban fabric. The proposed development will increase the density of the site by increasing the height and coverage. This densification counters urban sprawl and improves the quality of the city itself (Schoonraad, 2000: 220). The intervention will focus on defining the street edge and activating it through commercial activities. The building itself will also focus on passive surveillance and 24 hour activity to promote safety in the city. The current programme on the site is a fast food restaurant which will be retained in the new development activating the street and creating a buffer zone between the public street and the private shelter.

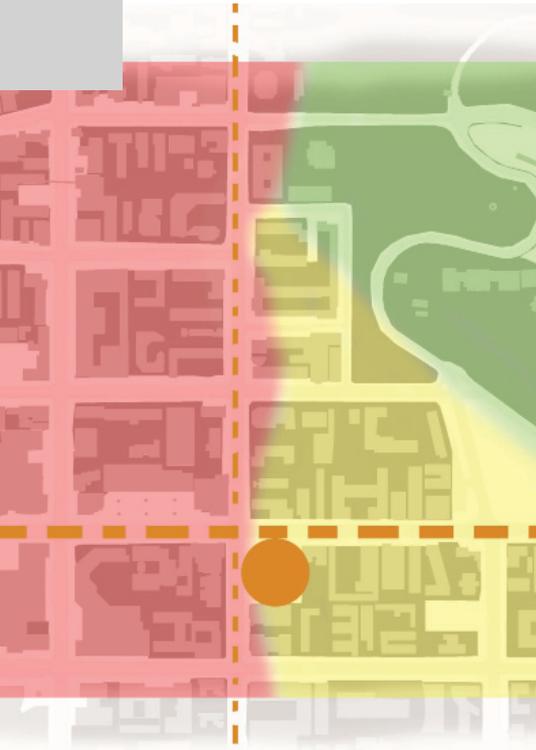


Figure 1.10: The site is a transitional zone between commercial (red) and residential (yellow) areas (Author).

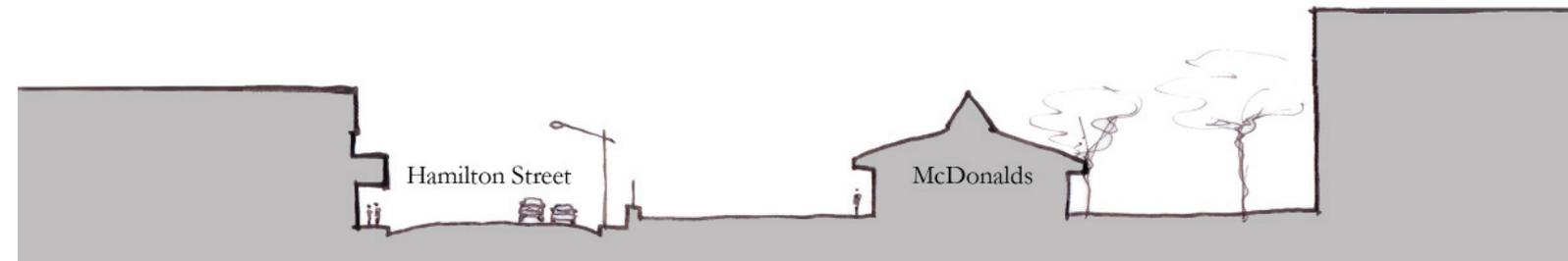


Figure 1.11: Section of Existing Site Condition (Author).

Figure 1.12: Plan of Existing Site Condition (Author).

