

CHAPTER 02
HISTORY

Architecture is the very mirror of life. You only have to cast your eyes on buildings to feel the presence of the past, the spirit of a place; they are the reflection of society.

- I.M. Pei (1978) -

02 | HISTORY

MARABASTAD TODAY - THE BUILT CHARACTERISTICS OF MARABASTAD

Before the forced removals from Marabastad, it was a vibrant, mixed-use, racially mixed residential area on the edge of the inner city. Today, despite devastating political events and extensive urban decay, Marabastad has retained much of its intangible vibrancy, characterised by economic activities and a large number of people passing through it on a daily basis. Marabastad is accessible because of the way it is situated in relation to surrounding places. It is within walking distance of the Central Business District (CBD), it is connected to surrounding settlements through the Belle Ombre train station and a future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stop will be implemented, which further strengthens its accessibility. Because of this influx of people on a daily basis, informal traders have set themselves up along the busy streets where taxis dominate the open spaces. Today, Marabastad is only seen as a place of income and people have little attachment to its social, cultural and historical existence. Yet, because of the presence of these factors, Marabastad has the potential to be developed into a truly integrated urban residential environment on the edge of the business district (Nkoane & Smit 2009).

The historical fabric and character of Marabastad holds significant value and should be preserved. Marabastad's existing fine-grained urban characteristic encourages pedestrian movement and therefore any intervention should acknowledge this condition and take on a similar form. Boom Street becomes a significant boulevard, as a large number of the original façades are still intact. An important historical characteristic of this street is the "stoeps" that extend onto the sidewalk and act as a transitional space from public to private areas. The well-defined streetscape has set the scene for "daily life, games, processions and, above all, trade" (Van der Waal 1998:15).



Figure 2.1 People of Marabastad. 1988. Photos by Richard Winstein.

ESTABLISHMENT (EARLY HISTORY) OF MARABASTAD

From 1871 to 1914, the growth of the mining industry and the period of industrialisation had many consequences, one being African urbanisation. The discovery of the Witwatersrand's mineral wealth was without a doubt the main attraction for a large number of male migrants to the former Transvaal. Due to Pretoria's proximity to Johannesburg, it developed on a much smaller scale and was often regarded as a temporary stay for migrants to get passes on their way to town looking for work (Friedman 1994:6-8).

By 1866, there was a large number of black labourers around Pretoria and the Berlin Missionary Society was looking for a mission station in Pretoria. For them, it meant an opportunity to spread Christianity to rural areas through the migrants passing through Pretoria. Schoolplaats was founded in August 1866 (Malan 1996:21). It was under the control of the Berlin Mission Society, which had a strict form of discipline and Authority (Friedman 1994:17). Schoolplaats comprised 98 stands and was bordered by the Apies River in the north, Boom Street to the south, Steenovenspruit in the west and farmland called Belle Ombre to the east (Malan 1996:22). Schoolplaats was divided into two plots. One plot was allocated to 100 families, each with their own house and garden, with rent to be paid to the mission. The other plot was assigned as agricultural land where the residents of Schoolplaats could farm (Malan 1996:23).

Accommodation was always a concern for migrants moving to the city. Schoolplaats offered them a place to stay and welcomed black labourers who were willing to subject themselves to the control of the Berlin Mission Society, to convert to Christianity and attend both school and church (Friedman 1994:23-24). This provided the

opportunity for the urban newcomers' families to stay together and their children to have a chance of education. The number of people living in Schoolplaats increased rapidly from 15 families in 1871 to 70 families in 1884. By 1887, there were 350 children living in Schoolplaats who had no ties to the rural areas because they were born in the urbanised area (Friedman 1994:25).

As health and sanitation conditions became harder to control and negatively affected the black community, the Squatter Law of 1887 was initiated. The Town Council of Pretoria and the Berlin Mission Society came to an agreement that an area would be set aside to the west of Schoolplaats that would be controlled by the Berlin Mission Society, but was to be maintained by the government. This new area became known as Marabastad; the first African location in Pretoria, named after Chief Maraba (Friedman 1994:31).

The number of migrant workers increased significantly when religion and education were no longer compulsory to newcomers. Between 1892 and 1893, an area was set aside for the growing Indian population that became known as the "Coolie Location", situated south of Marabastad. This area comprised 380 stands and was defined as the place where Indians could live and trade. The racially based segregation of townships was controlled by the Population Registration Act of 1950, which divided people according to skin colour, descent and language (Van der Waal 1998:10-12).

By 1890, a number of Cape Coloureds were present in Marabastad and the government set aside a separate area for the coloured community, an area known as the "Cape Location" or "Cape Boys' Location". The "Cape Location", consisting of 81 stands, was established in 1894 and formed part of the south of the "Coolie Location" (Van der Waal 1998:20).

At the start of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899, the population in Pretoria was quickly divided, and many fled the town, leaving Pretoria with a major labour crisis (Friedman 1994:20). On 5 June 1900, when the British took control, thousands of refugees began to infiltrate the town again in search of work. Because of insufficient accommodation in Schoolplaats and Marabastad, a number of informal settlements sprung up everywhere (Van der Waal 1998:7). In an attempt to control the overpopulated area, these informal settlers were moved to the empty land between Marabastad and the “Coolie Location”. This area became known as New Marabastad (Friedman 1994:7).

By the end of the Anglo-Boer War, the Marabastad area was classified by the government as a temporary settlement and black labourers could only be tenants on a monthly basis, otherwise they had to move to other sites (Van der Waal 1998:7-8). Although intended as temporary, the Marabastad area took on a permanent nature and became an addition to Pretoria’s townships in 1902. By 1906, both Old and New Marabastad were acknowledged as a new single township (Van der Waal 1998:7-8).

By 1904, the “Coolie Location” and the “Cape Location” were in need of further expansion. The “Coolie Location” was renamed the Asiatic Bazaar. The City Council expanded the “Cape Location” on a small portion of land between Bloed and Boom streets, which formerly formed part of the Asiatic Bazaar (Van der Waal 1998:8).

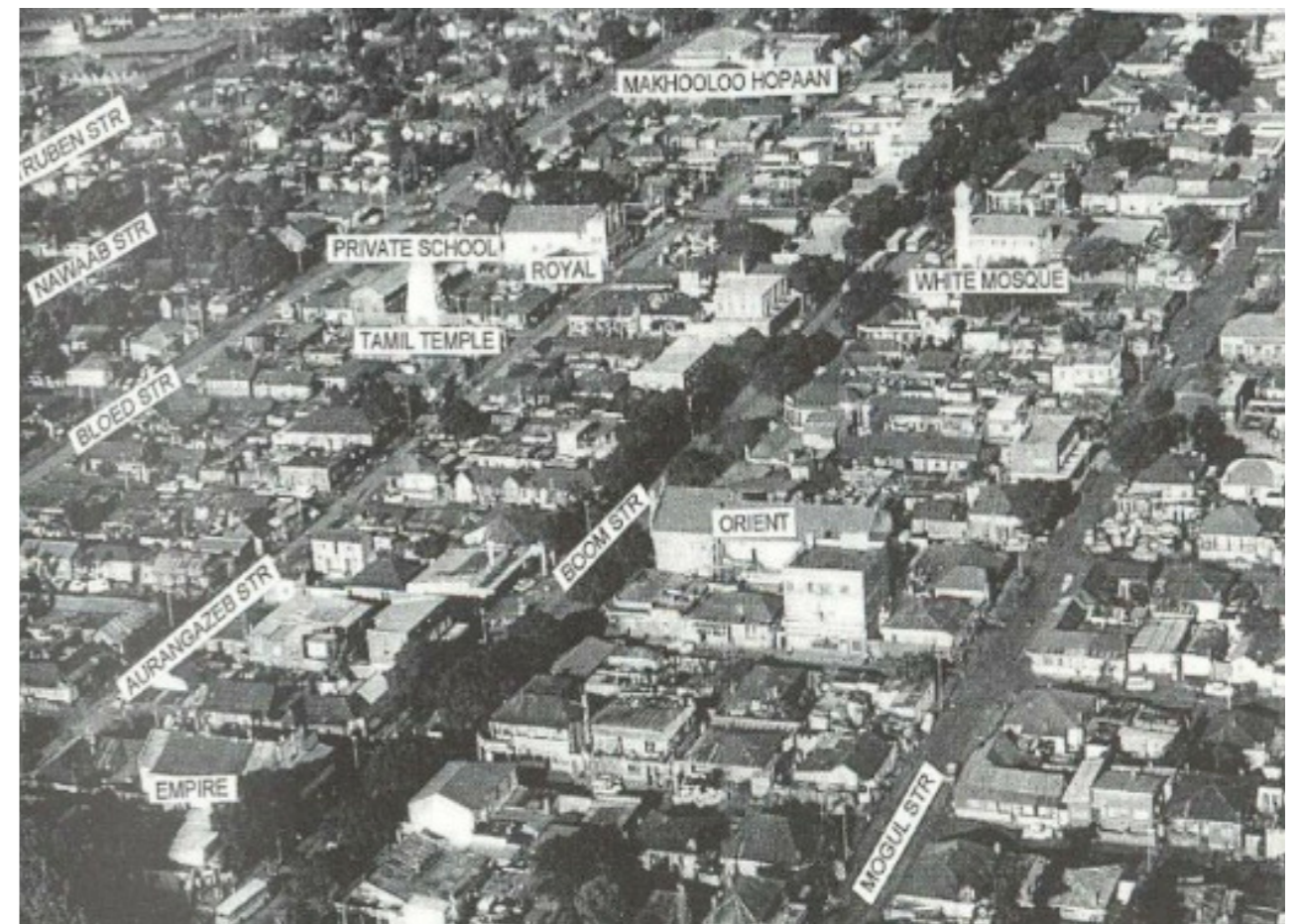
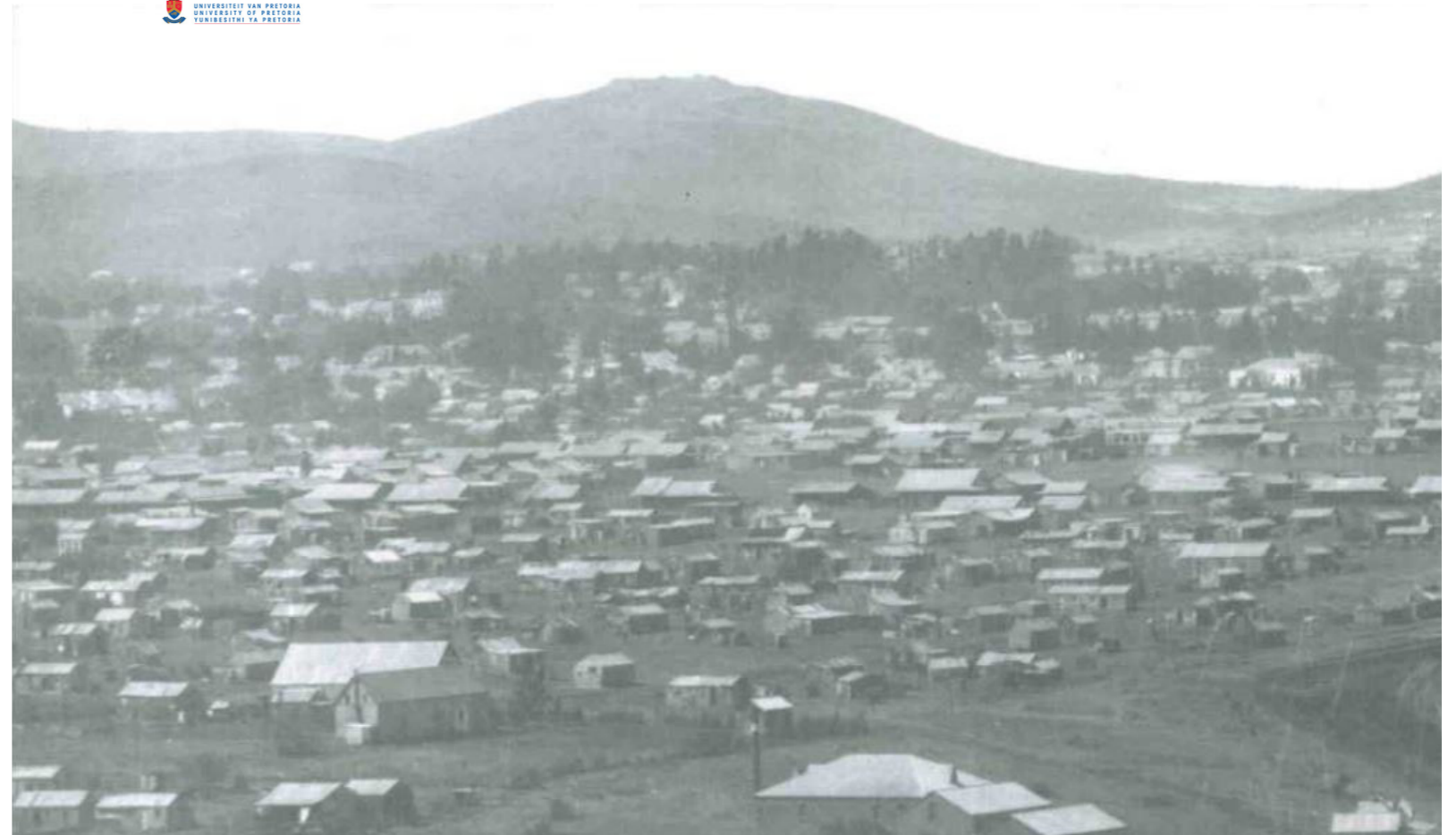


Figure 2.2 Top - Photo taken of Marabastad from Daspoort to the southeast. 1905 (Van Der Waal 1998:4)

Figure 2.3 Right - Bird's eye view of Aziatic Bazaar. (Naidoo 2007:8)

Figure 2.4 Left - One of the First photographs taken of Marabastad dating from 1950 (Good Shepherd)

DECLINE OF MARABASTAD

In 1904, a survey determined that the population stood at 4 138, of which 3 223 were black labourers. The City Council failed to deliver on a number of maintenance and control issues. This could be attributed to the general lack of Council interest, administration mismanagement and lack of infrastructural provision, such as water and sewerage, lights and paved streets (Van der Waal 1998:10).

As time passed, residents took advantage of the lack of civil presence and took in tenants and lodgers as an alternative means of income (Friedman 1994:80). The presence of women in the informal sector economy showed independence and resilience, which started to raise concerns for the City Council as this was the mark of a permanent African population. The City Council therefore began to relocate the people of Marabastad (Friedman 1994:80-81).

Two significant laws came into play: the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 and the Slums Clearance Act of 1934. The latter stated that local Authorities had the power to demolish areas regarded as slums after the clearance of residents. New Marabastad was evacuated and demolished under the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act (Van der Waal 1998:12).

In 1907, the land occupied by Old Marabastad was allocated as the site for a new sewerage farm, and the “New Location”, known as Bantule, was established in 1912 (Van der Waal 1998:8). The population of Marabastad continued to grow, however, and the area became overcrowded. Marabastad was regarded as a slum area in 1925: home to 4 649 people in 1930 that increased to 7 500 in 1938 at 18.1 persons per dwelling (Van der Waal 1998:9). Marabastad was bordered by sewerage grounds to the north (the former Old Marabastad), the Asiatic Bazaar to the south, which was also overpopulated, the former Schoolplaats to the west, which was a municipal area, and the construction of a new road through the Daspoort to the west. These borders made it impossible for Marabastad to expand (Friedman 1994:85).

1934



Image showing the fine grain, dense urban environment.

1947



The 1934 *Slums Act* gave the Council power to demolish rundown areas. The Black residents of Marabastad were relocated to Atteridgeville, Shoshanguve and Mamelodi .

1965



The *Cape Location* township was demolished and its residence were moved to Eersterus. The Indian residents were relocated to Laudium but Indian trade was still allowed.

1996



The Belle Ombre transport terminal was completed in 1981 and the bus depot was developed on the former *Cape Location*. Marabastad became an ideal transport interchange and the gateway to the city. The new Asiatic Bazaar became the shopping centre and is still relevant and used today.

Figure 2.5 Top series - Aerial photographs showing Marabastad precinct: 1934, 1947, 1965 and 1996 (ARUP, edited by Author). Figure ground series - showing the decline of Marabastad and change in urban fabric grain (Aziz Tayob Partnership, 2002, edited by Author).

FORCED REMOVALS OF THE MARABASTAD'S POPULATION

In 1939, a new municipal township was established, called Atteridgeville, where the black population of Marabastad was to be removed. The first group of black inhabitants was removed in 1940. The city council came to agreement with owners of the dwellings that for financial compensation they would be resettled in new houses on the outskirts of the city. Some tenants were happy to be able to live in a house and although small it had electricity, a small coal stove, sewerage services and a small fenced garden. Yet many were unhappy with the very low compensation, the distance they had to travel on a daily basis and they were not Authorised to own the houses, having to rent them. After the last group of black labourers was relocated in 1950, most of Old Marabastad was destroyed under the Slums Clearance Act of 1934 (Van Der Waal 1998:9).

By 1959 all Indian residents of the Asiatic Bazaar had to move away to two new settlements, Claudius and Laudium. The old township of Eersterust was declared as the area for the resettlement of the Coloured Group. Most of the buildings were demolished by 1962, leaving an empty dusty land to the southern side of the Asiatic Bazaar. By 1976 all Indian residents had left the Asiatic Bazaar. These forced removals were the most dramatic events to happen to the population of Marabastad (Van Der Waal 1998:13)

1912-1920	The removal of black residents of the Old Marabastad to Bantule
1934	The removal of the Schoolplaats residents to New Marabastad
1940-1950	Removal of all black residents in the Marabastad, Asiatic Bazaar and Cape Location to Atteridgeville
1960-1976	The removal of the Indian population from the Asiatic Bazaar to Laudium and Claudius location
1962-1965	The removal of the coloured population to Eersterust 1962-1965

Around the time of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, retaliation started over poverty and government laws. These were mainly driven by political activists, trade unions, independent church leaders and thousands of rural black inhabitants. The resistance against political oppression continued throughout till the 1980s and reached its peak in 1990 with the release of political prisoners, after which a tense period of negotiations followed that lead to the democratic elections of 1994 (Van Der Waal 1998:14)

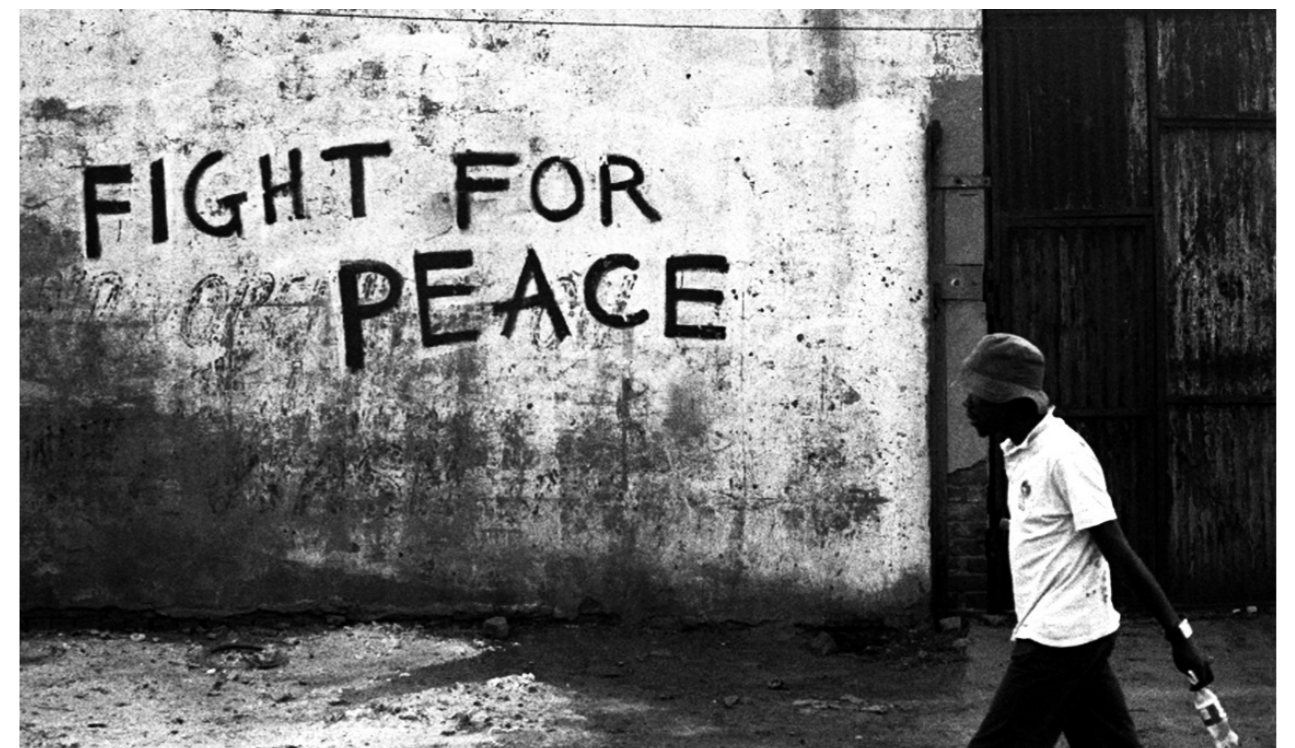


Figure 2.6 Fight for peace. 2008. Photograph by Sunshinestev on Deviant Art.



PLACE OF POTENTIAL - MARABASTAD VISION

The Marabastad area has been identified as part of the Tshwane Inner City Development. Situated to the north-west of the inner City, in desperate need for urban regeneration and large land pieces underutilised or vacant (Myeza 2013:49), Marabastad is ideally situated to become an integrated urban residential environment on the edge of the business district (City of Tshwane 2005: 15). Marabastad is within walking distance of employment opportunities in the city and through the existing public transport facilities, such as the Belle Ombre Train and Bus Station, connects the CBD with areas on the outskirts area (City of Tshwane 2005:15).

The proposed components of the Urban Regeneration Strategy developed for Marabastad by the Pretoria Inner City Partnership, includes the Tshwane Park proposed along the Steenhoven Spruit, residential development, infill business and social facilities, Marabastad Urban Village and Creative Industries/SMME's (Nkoane & Smit 2009). The common focus of all the components is to drastically change the perceptions associated with Marabastad and to create a vibrant urban area that is focussed on the people and their needs (City of Tshwane 2005:16).

The residential development component suggests high intensity urban residency with a variety of housing typologies with different price ranges to ensure an integrated diverse social group (Nkoane & Smit 2009). The Urban Regeneration development sees a fine grained residential development appropriate from a historic viewpoint, as Marabastad was a once a vibrant mixed-use residential area (City of Tshwane 2005:16).

Figure 2.7 People moving through Marabastad on a daily basis. 2015. Photographed and edited by Author.