



**Figure 4:** Palisade fence that segregates the gallery and the park.

# 4

## DISCONNECTIONS

There exist major physical and social boundaries separating JAG from the city and the park, as well as the park and the city. These are highlighted in this chapter.



Current page:

**Figure 4.1:** Unused carved out void in the ground creates a barrier between JAG and the park.

**Figure 4.2:** The frequent police presence creates an unwelcoming air.

**Figure 4.3:** The palisade fence.

**Figure 4.4:** A fence disconnects the park and the gallery along the length of the site.

Opposite page:

**Figure 4.5:** Fence over fence layering

## 4.1. THE FENCE BETWEEN JAG AND THE PARK

The relationship between the park and the museum

*“My early memories of the Johannesburg Art Gallery are not by any means flattering, but brought with them a sense of rejection and exclusion.” – David Koloane (2015: 182)*

Among some of the inhabitants of Johannesburg, feelings of resentment and exclusion from JAG still remain as remnants of an undemocratic past. These fissures have not been reconciled, even with the introduction of the south-facing extension. The gallery still does not offer much in terms of visual or programmatic connections with the park. Visually the extension still appears to be the backside or service portion of the gallery with a number of physical aspects that do not encourage welcoming connections.

The carved out void housing the (now dormant) water fountain creates a physical barrier, disconnecting the main axis of the building from the park and offering no real indication of where to enter the building. Furthermore, the entry ramps are hidden behind brick walls concealing them from the park. Once on the entrance platform, there is still no visual connection with the inner workings of the gallery. There are only two padlocked gates on either side of the security booth puncturing the facade. The building also remains closed and visually disconnected, offering no links between the art and the outside public, other than an Eduardo Villa sculpture on the main axis that overlooks the park.

The divide between the park and the gallery was made unavoidably tangible through the erection of the green palisade fence. The fence and the heavy police presence have had a large impact on visitors of the gallery, both from outside Hillbrow and from the neighbourhood. For the visitors from beyond the Johannesburg CBD, feelings of anxiety and unease prevail creating a diminished desire to frequent the area while those from the immediate context harbour feelings of separation, exclusion and intimidation (Murdoch et al. 2015: 154).

These physical pitfalls have not helped to represent the gallery’s mission of inclusion and reconciliation as described in its mission statement.

In terms of the attempted bridging of the extensive divide between context and the museum there have been many projects put in place with the aim of establishing interaction with the local community. Temporary installations implemented by the gallery such as the Art This Way advertising campaign attempted to create a recognisable and understandable indication of JAG’s function when it is seen from the park. There have also been multiple social projects implemented by various organisations and even individual artists, both locally and internationally. These installations/projects were temporary and considering the transient nature of Joubert Park, have been mainly unsuccessful. According to Antoinette Murdoch (2015: 177) JAG’s curator, the only project that has left a lasting mark are the photographic projects undertaken by Jo Ratcliffe and Terry Kurgan. The photographers of Joubert Park who still frequent the gallery to take photos of visitors are evidence of the success of these projects.

There have also been discussions regarding potential insertions of public art into the park by the JDA but these discussions were short-lived as interest in the project subsided.

GREEN PALISADE FENCE THAT RUNS  
BETWEEN PARK AND GALLERY

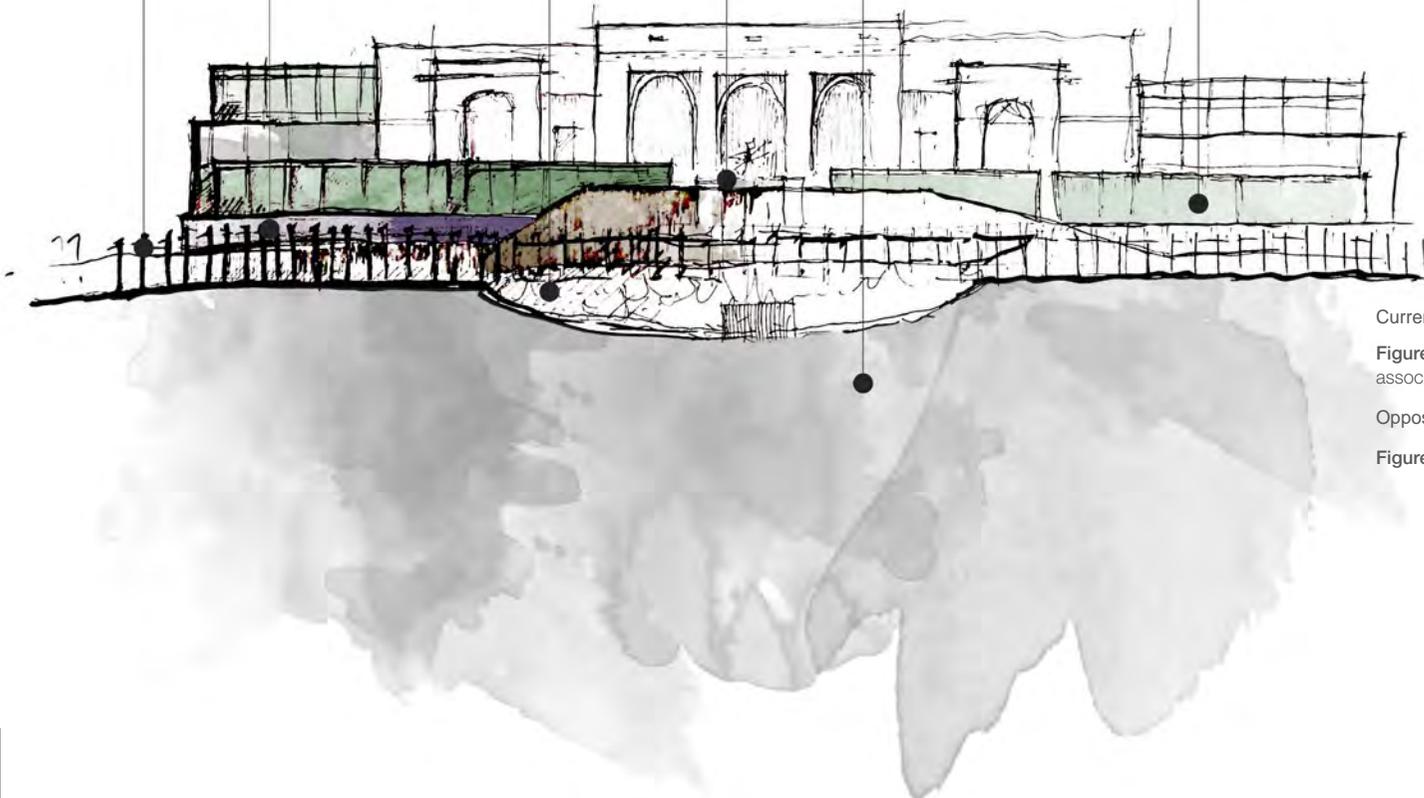
RAMP UP TO ENTRANCE PLATFORM -  
OBSCURED FROM VIEW BY BRICK WALLS

FLOWER BED AS ADDED PHYSICAL  
OBSTACLE

ENTRANCE PLATFORM REMOVED FROM  
GROUND PLANE - FEELING OF INTIMIDATION  
AND UNAPPROACHABILITY

SUNKEN TERRACED FOUNTAIN (NO LONGER  
IN WORKING ORDER) FORMS PHYSICAL VOID  
BETWEEN PARK PROMENADE AND GALLERY

COPPER CLAD ROOFS ARE  
UNRESPONSIVE TO THE EXTERIOR AND  
GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF A SERVICE  
SPACE

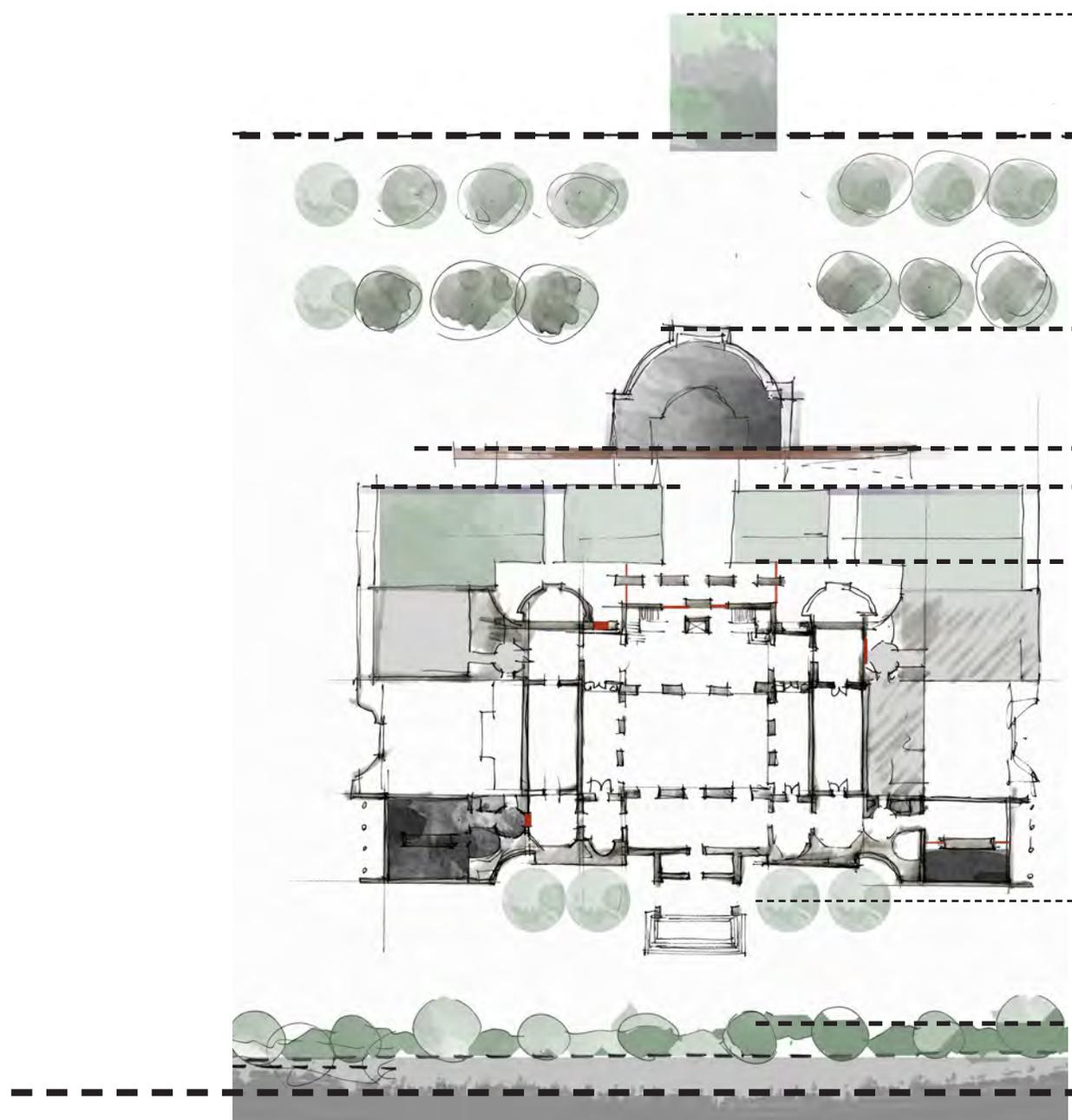


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**Figure 4.6:** Sketch indicating the northern facade of JAG and the associated physical and visual barriers.

Opposite page:

**Figure 4.7:** Sketch of first floor plan and surrounding barriers of JAG.



BARRIER 1 - Flower beds interrupt central axis of park and JAG

BARRIER 2 - Palisade fence

BARRIER 3 - low walls around void that used to house a cascading fountain. The space is now locked and unused

BARRIER 4 - walls obscuring entrance ramps from view

BARRIER 5 - retaining walls of basement do not respond to park (forms a dead facade)

BARRIER 6 - low vaulted roofs do not respond to park

**INTERNAL BARRIERS:**

RED - all closed doors

DARK GREY - unused and damaged spaces

LIGHT GREY - spaces not open for public use

BARRIER 7 - palm trees in front of facade create visual disconnection with other side of tracks

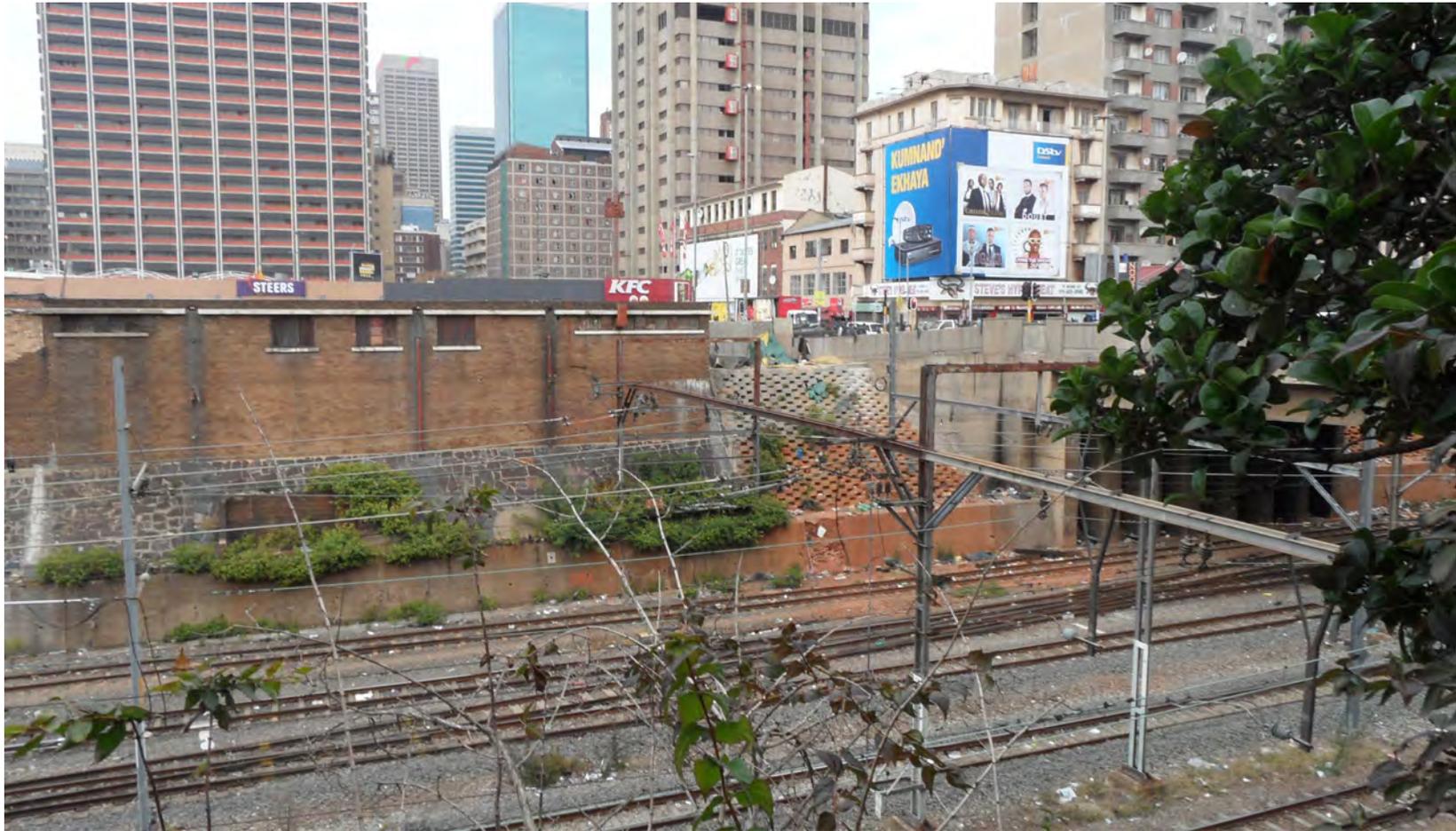
BARRIER 6 - more plants and trees create a larger visual disconnect with opposite side of tracks

BARRIER 7 - sunken railway tracks create a scar in the fabric, breaking all direct access to the gallery

## The barriers between JAG and the city

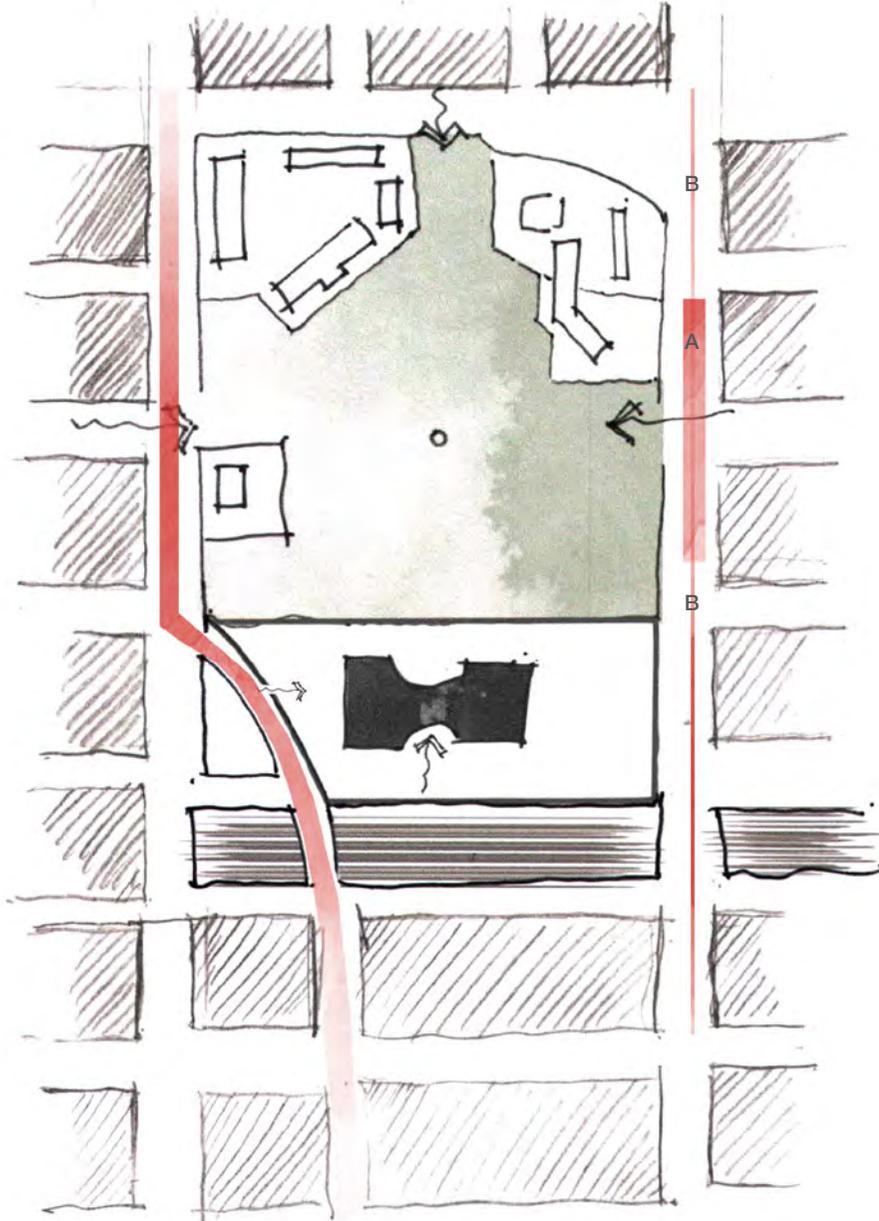


Figure 4.8: Series of photographs indicating the southern barriers between the gallery entrance and the rest of the city.



## 4.2. PHYSICAL BARRIERS AROUND THE PARK

Barriers around the park that are proving detrimental to the use of public space



BARRIER A - BRT station

BARRIER B - Concrete barriers and steel fences in the middle of the road

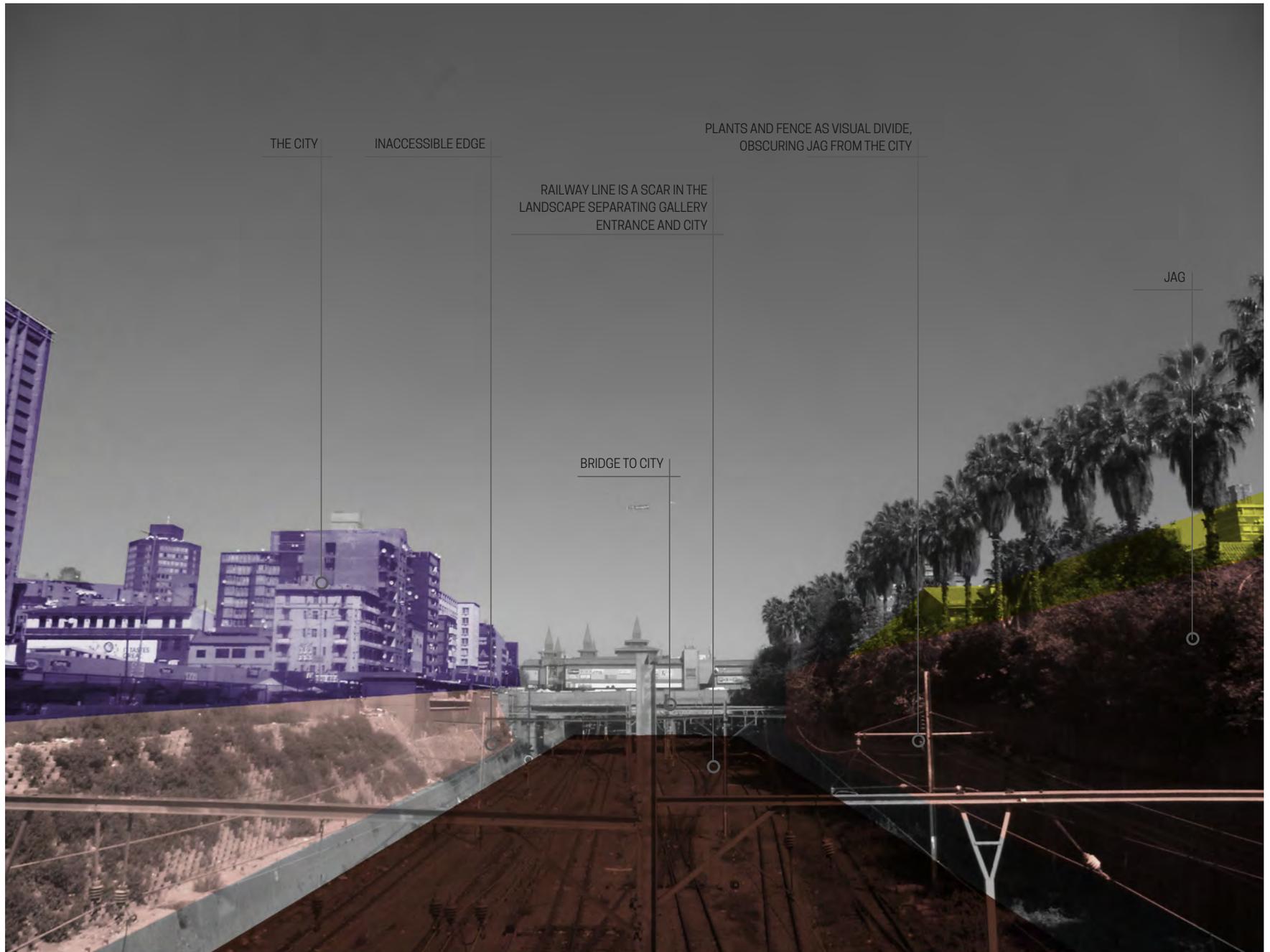
BARRIER C - Taxi congestion

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Figure 4.9: Diagram of physical barriers around Joubert Park.

Opposite page:

Figure 4.10: Diagram of proposed strategies to re-establish Joubert Park.





### 4.3. JOUBERT PARK TODAY

#### The park and related stakeholders

# JOUBERT PARK TODAY

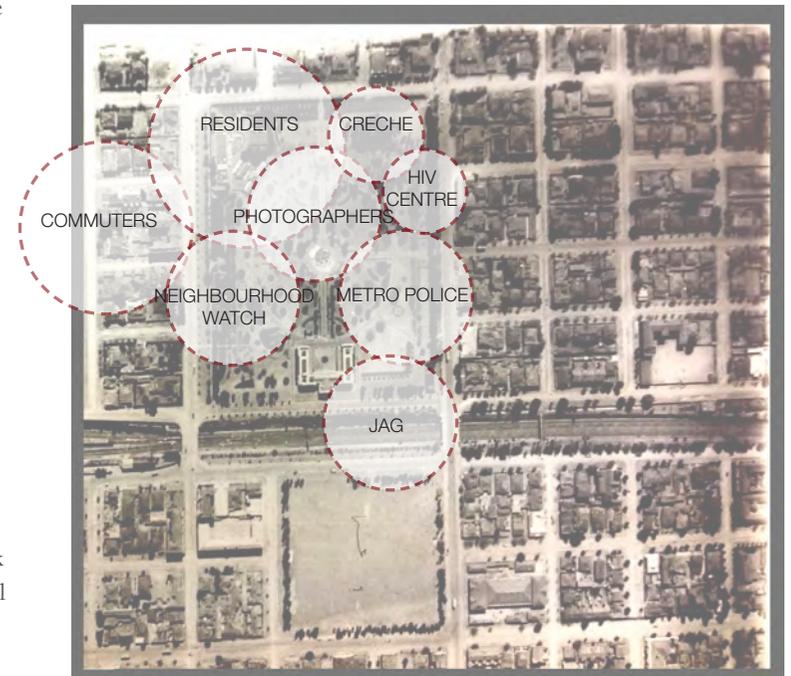
Today the park is a shadow of what it once was, with privatised functions resulting in fenced off areas around existing (the bandstand, now a crèche) and new structures (the HIV centre and the Greenhouse Project). This has drastically decreased the amount of accessible public space, which is a much needed and valued commodity in Johannesburg's city centre.

The strong emphasis given to transport within the inner city has caused the widening of streets for vehicles and the introduction of new modes of transport (including the BRT and bus systems), which have in turn eaten away at the periphery of the park. The park has, in many ways, become a glorified thoroughfare for commuters walking towards the various transport stations situated around the park.

The fast pace of the people moving through the site, as well as the continually shifting inhabitants of the area has led to a park that is more transient in nature rather than a fixed and appreciated public space. There are recreational and ritualistic happenings that occur in the park, including people playing chess, children enjoying the playground and church services on Sundays. These recreational activities provide the park with layers of activity, cultural investment and social interaction.

The relationship between the park and the gallery is minimal, as many of the inhabitants of the area do not know what is housed inside its walls. As discovered by Bongi Dhlomo- Mautloa (2015: 180) during a session of interviews with people she knew in the park, “very few of the residents knew that the building even housed art” and some think it houses governmental offices. Others even think it could be a prison or police station due to the heavy metro police presence (see figure XX) as officers congregate in the parking lot of the gallery almost every day (Murdoch *et al* 2015: 192). Furthermore, members of the management team of the gallery are also not from the area and have very little connection with the inhabitants surrounding it. The gallery and the park function almost entirely independently of each other, except when small projects are undertaken in an attempt to bridge the divide between JAG and its environment.

In 2015, the JDA put forward a statement regarding the erection of a temporary taxi facility during an estimated twenty-two month upgrading and rebuilding project of the Jack Mincer taxi facility. This announcement received uproar from the community and heritage associations (The Heritage Portal 2015) and the decision has, until now, been placed on hold while the JDA is reviewing alternative options for the site. The fact that Joubert Park is being considered, even as a “last resort” is eye opening (Johannesburg Development Agency 2015). Although the park has impacted on the development of Johannesburg historically and is currently being used by multiple stakeholders, including the Johannesburg Art Gallery, for everyday and special rituals, the JDA does not view this place as intrinsically part of the functioning of the city. For this reason it is important in this study that another view is established on the importance of this *memory box* of Johannesburg.



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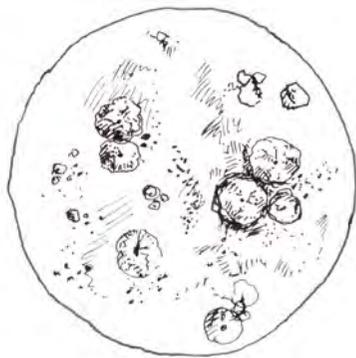
Figure 4.11: Functions as found in the park today (Bennet 2013)

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Figure 4.12: Current stakeholders of the park. (Base drawing from JAG Archive N.d.)

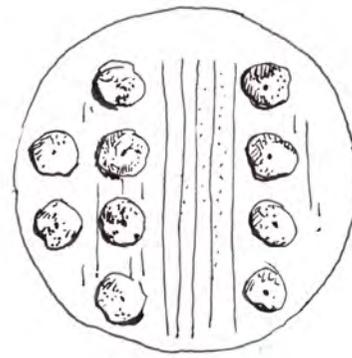
## 4.4. CHANGING IDENTITIES OF JOHANNESBURG

Diagrams of the physical changes of Johannesburg through its growth into a city.



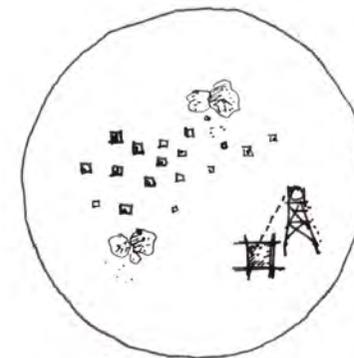
### NATURAL LANDSCAPE

This diagram represents the natural landscape of Gauteng before the discovery of gold in the area.



### FARM LAND

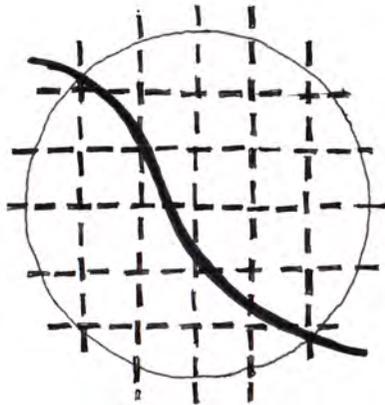
Prior to the discovery of gold the land that is now Johannesburg was made up of farms and spruits. These were divided into land parcels with inbetween, unowned spaces.



### THE MINING CAMP

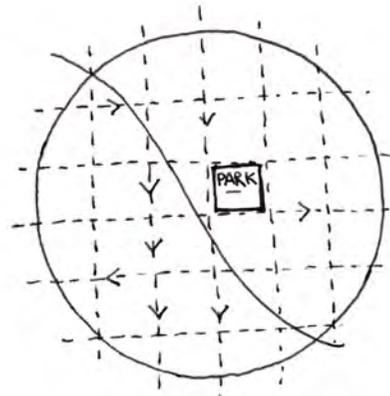
it was between these farms that the *uitvalgrond* existed. This was the triangular piece of land that was used as the point for establishing the mining caps and informal temporary support structures and functions.

Figure 4.13: Series of diagrams illustrating the basic evolution of Johannesburg. (JPJ 2016)



#### THE RAILWAY AND THE TOWN GRID ARE INTRODUCED

The introduction of a grid system and the railway bring order to the mining town. The first buildings were steel structures that could be erected quickly.



#### TOWN IS INTRODUCED WITH VARIOUS AMENITIES

prior to the discover of gold the land that is now Johannesburg was made up of farms and spruits. These were divided into land parcels with inbetween, unowned spaces.



#### THE MINING CAMP

it was between these farms that the *uitvalgrond* existed. This was the triabgular piece of land that was used as the point for establishing the mining caps and informal temprary tsupport structures and functions.

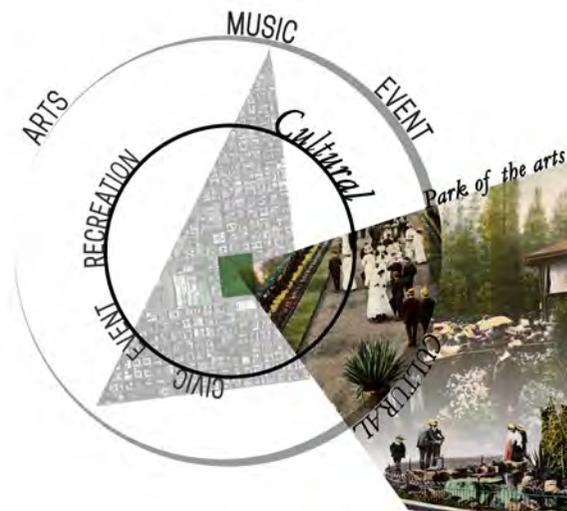
## 4.5. CHANGING IDENTITIES OF JOUBERT PARK

Shifts in the identity of Joubert Park and surroundings - influenced by both social and political fluxes as summarised by the Joubert Park Group



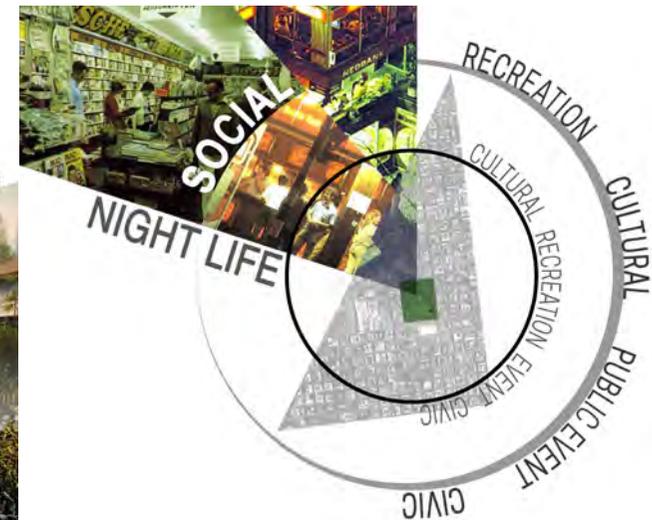
Paradise

The park as an open resting spot in the hustle and bustle of the mining town.



High culture

The insertion of culturally-directed infrastructure into the park creates the *respectable* landscape the Europeans desired.



Social life

During the 70's and 80's the city was roaring with underground scenes promoting local and international music acts and clubs and theatres drawing people into the public realm after dark.

Figure 4.14: Series of diagrams illustrating the JAG's division of the park's lifetime into various identities.



#### The unclaimed

With the fall of apartheid confusion and uncertainty swept through the city. At this point new more inclusive identities started to form.

Shifts in the identity of the park from inception as a recreational green space to the transport hub it is known as today. The evolution of the park was affected by changing stakeholders and priorities of economic growth. Evidence of these shifts was made evident spatially (See figure 71).

#### The pedestrian traffic interchange

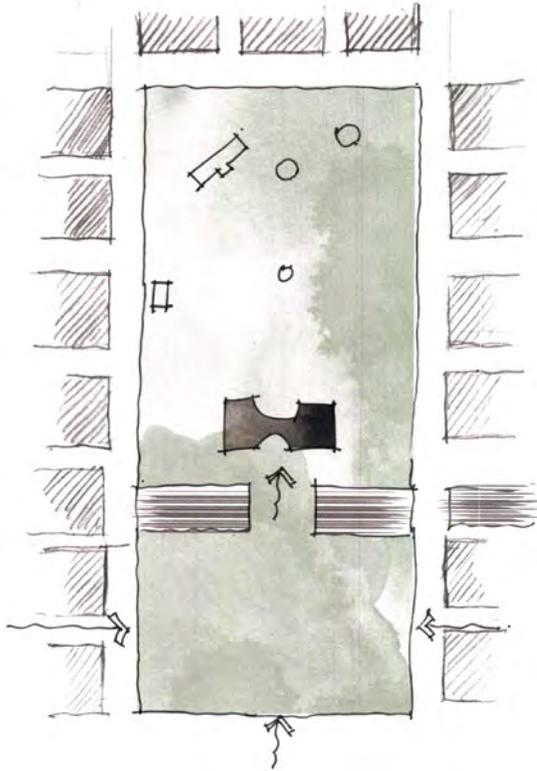
Today, as discussed, the site is catering for the commuters and the residents. Currently the commuters may potentially be favoured over the residents resulting in an unstable identity.

#### The art park

With the introduction of strategies that will be discussed in the following chapter the site has the potential to take on a new identity. This will utilise JAG as a resource for growth uplifting the status of Joubert Park to fulfill visions as set out by the JDA for a culturally strong Johannesburg.

## 4.6. DISAPPEARING ACT OF A HERITAGE PARK

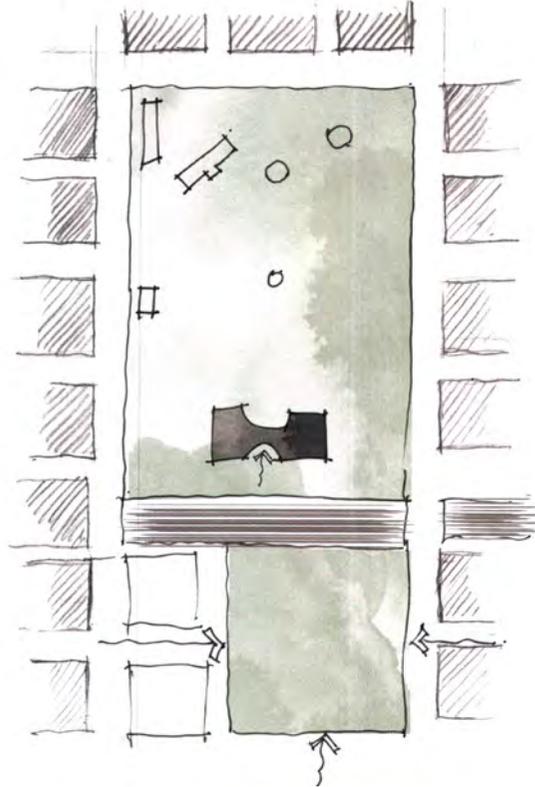
Physical degradation of public green space



### ARCHITECT'S VISION

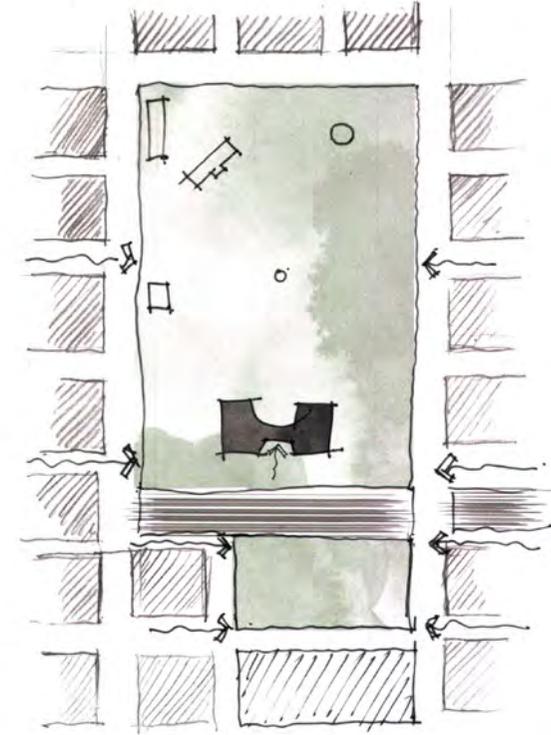
The gallery is the focal point within this large green space which was to be the heart of Johannesburg. The gallery is located as it was a symbol of sophistication in the new town and was therefore framed as an anchor point. The bridging over the railway would connect the main park to the north and a smaller section to the south (originally the Union Grounds).

In this scenario the southward facing entrance would be framed and accessible.



### CONSTRUCTED RESULT

The bridge was not built and the repercussion of this remains a problem today. The main entrance of the gallery faces a carved out scar in the landscape, making the celebration of the gallery in Johannesburg unsuccessful.

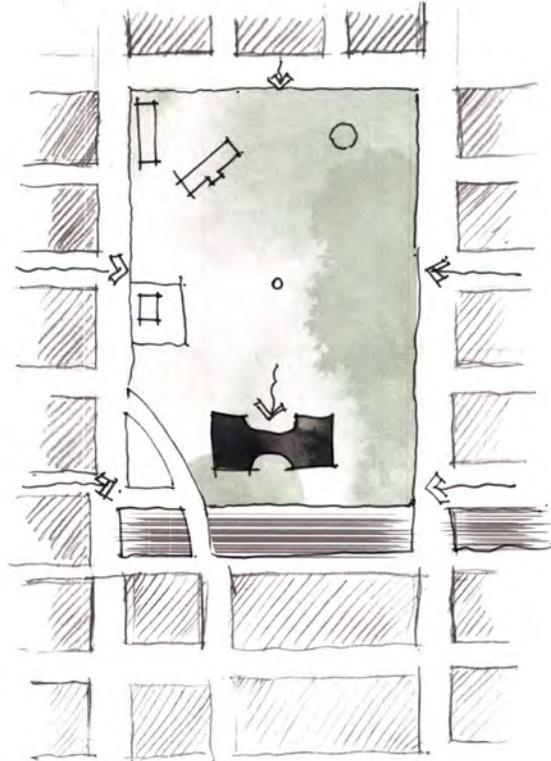


### THE ENCROACHING CITY

The southern portion of Union Grounds is replaced with a taxi rank, diminishing the prospects of one day fulfilling the architect's master plan.

This addition marks a shift in the priorities of a developing city.

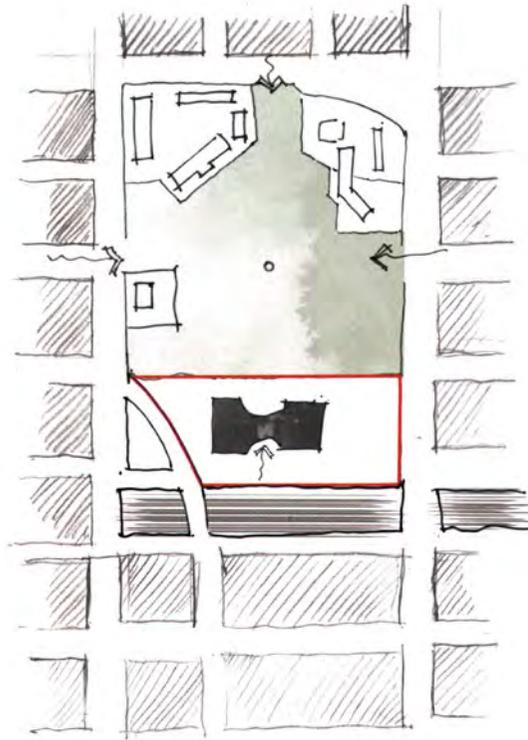
Figure 4.15: Series of diagrams illustrating the spatial progression of Joubert Park.



#### GNAWING AWAY AT THE PARK

Transport takes priority in city above Joubert Park as a green space. The edges of the park are pushed back to make way for widening lanes and two of the corners are cut back to make way for public transport lanes and the new bridge across the railway.

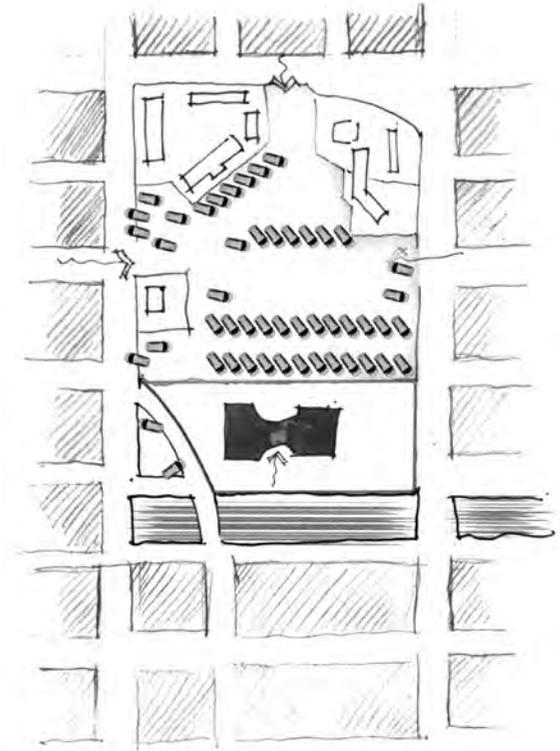
The Meyer Pienaar extension is constructed after the major physical cuts in the park. The entrance from the park into the gallery is then opened.



#### THE REMAINDER

A combination of the developing city transport system and the introduction of privatised functions into existing and new infrastructure on the site results in the inevitable fencing off of these spaces.

The result is that the park itself takes the form of the left-over space.

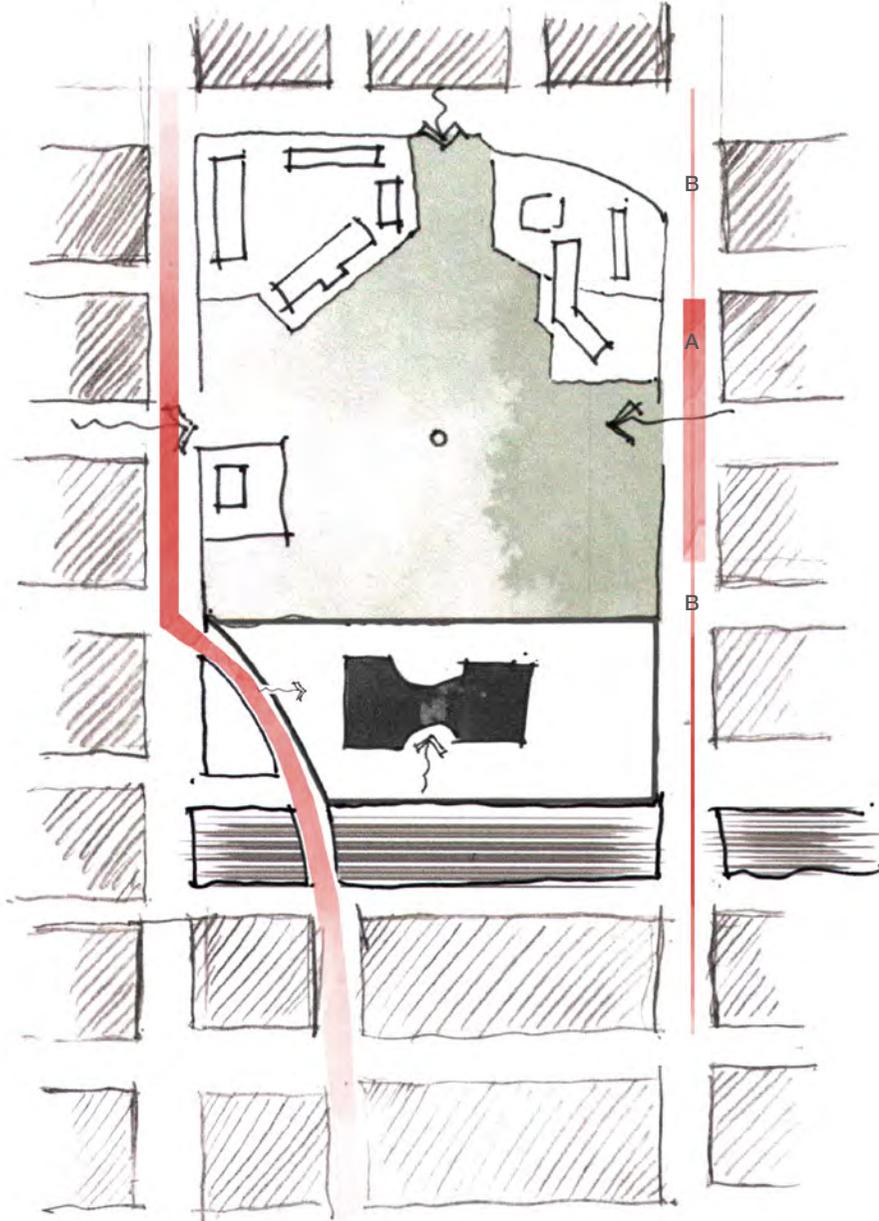


#### THE TAXI HOLDING

If the park continues to be under-valued by the authorities of Johannesburg the park may disappear entirely, leaving the area to develop solely as a transport hub, inevitably pushing out existing functions in the area.

## 4.7. PHYSICAL BARRIERS AROUND THE PARK

Barriers around the park that are proving detrimental to the use of public space



BARRIER A - BRT station

BARRIER B - Concrete barriers and steel fences in the middle of the road

BARRIER C - Taxi congestion

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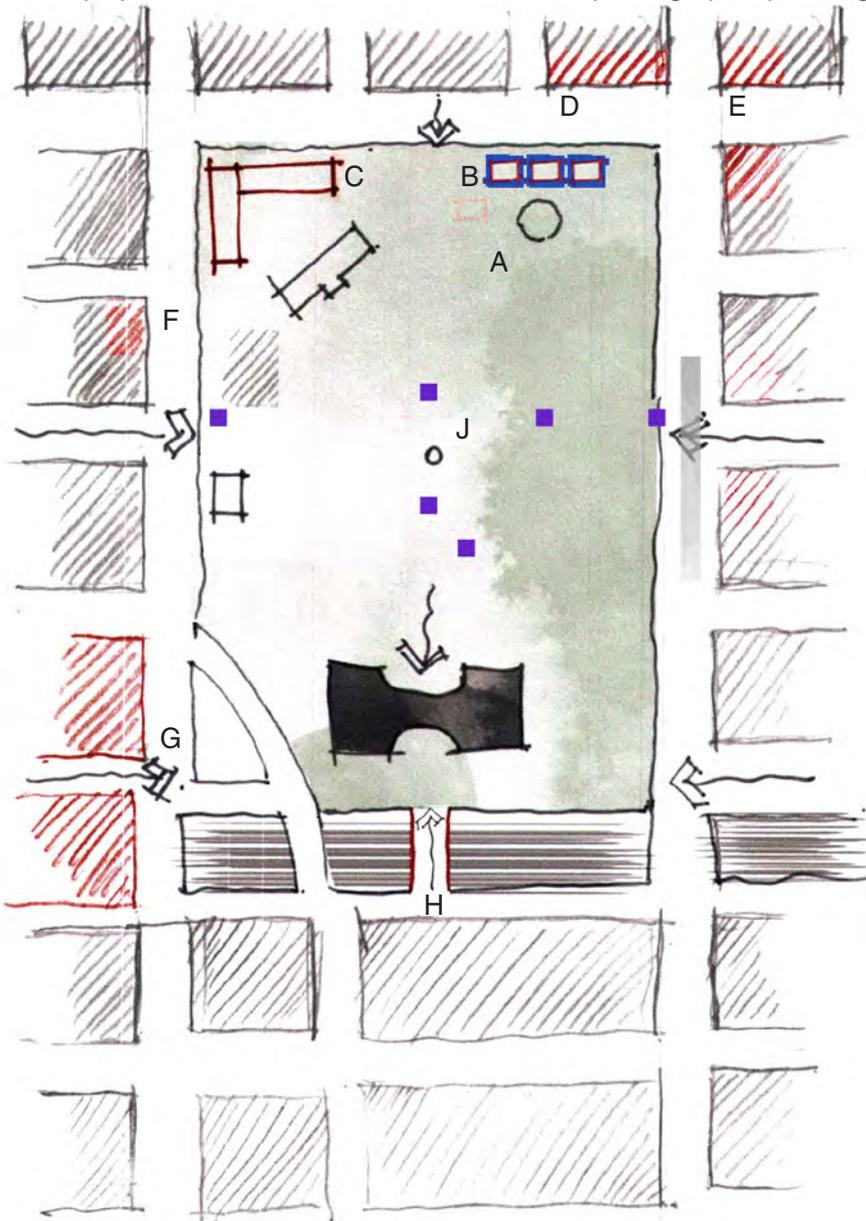
Figure 4.16: Diagram of physical barriers around Joubert Park.

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Figure 4.17: Diagram of proposed strategies to re-establish Joubert Park.

## 4.8. CONCEPTUAL STRATEGIES FOR RECLAIMING SPACE

Proposed physical shifts of functions and the opening up of public green space



- A - Re-establish bandstand with added seating
- B - Added infrastructure to support public space
- C - Community cultural center around observatory
- D - Relocation of creche into empty church
- E - Arts school and studios
- F - Theatre
- G - new pedestrian arcade from Park Station
- H - Bridge over the sunken railway tracks
- J- Art installations in the park to add to the creative identity of the park