

03

Heritage



Figure 3.1 Pretoria City Hall Tower (Author 2017)





3.1 - Statement of Significance

In the city centre of Pretoria, positioned along Paul Kruger Street between Pretoria Station in the south and Church Square in the north, is situated the prominent yet unused Pretoria City Hall. Constructed in 1926 to celebrate the recognition of Pretoria as the new capital city (Herring 1935) of South Africa, it now stands unoccupied, with its powerful eastern façade and single tower acting as a backdrop to a square mainly used as a parking lot. It serves as a reminder of the past and its presence in today's society. It acted as a public platform and seat of the Mayor, which established its position as a valued civic centre in the city; therefore, the heritage value not only relates to city hall's

physicality but also to its intangible contribution to civil society. For this reason, it is imperative that the lost function of the City Hall as a civic centre be reinstated.

Pretoria city hall was constructed during a period in history when the Afrikaner nationalist party was mandated to strengthen its position in the country as well as establish an institutional identity (Mabin 2012) to separate itself from the rest of the population. Although these intentions are no longer responsive to the current political climate, it is the use of the Pretoria City Hall in the representation of the political identity of the time and its ability to facilitate public interaction that is its most significant

Figure 3.2 Pretoria, the new town hall (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

heritage aspect.

The aspects which contribute to the heritage of Pretoria City Hall are those that facilitate the creation of the institutional identity, and include its use as a civic centre. These can be addressed through two 'lenses', tangible and intangible.

The most identifiable characteristic of Pretoria city hall is its single tower standing 47 metres above ground level (Picton-Seymour 1989). The significance of the single tower to both the City Hall and Pretoria is the conscious decision made to alter the original design, which contained two towers, to prevent these from competing with the two towers of the Union Buildings (Artefacts 2017). Presently the tower is no longer the tallest structure in the immediate context yet, the surrounding buildings do not dominate or reduce the towers presence. The retention of City Hall's vertical presence can be attributed to the main façade and its emphasis of the horizontal plane.

Given the significance of Pretoria City Hall in its recognition of the new capital city, it was designed to conform to the modern ideals of the time and adopt a Renaissance style (Herring 1935), as is evident in the simplicity and balance of its main façade. The main façade is the only façade constructed out of sandstone (Herring, 1935) which, through the sizing and laying of the sandstone blocks over its 108 metre width, emphasises its horizontality.

On the main façade is the porte-cochère and its ten solid

granite columns topped with hand carved capitals supporting a pediment depicting the progress of Pretoria (Herring 1935). The porte-cochère was embellished so as to correspond with the Renaissance style, as well as to emphasise its significance as both a threshold through which the user enters the building and the linking element of the tower to the rest of the structure.

Internally, the two most significant volumes contributing to the value of City Hall are the main hall and the council chambers. These two volumes embody that which City Hall was constructed to represent. The main hall, considered to be one of the largest rooms in the southern hemisphere (Hartdegen 1988), continues the influence of the Renaissance style and played an important role in the building as it was the place from which the public could express themselves through plays, symphony concerts, shows and dances.

The council chamber, situated on the first floor of the southern wing, played an important role in the political climate as it was the seat of the mayor as well as the space in which important political issues concerning the city were dealt with. Containing a gallery reserved for the public (Herring 1935), it was important as it facilitated the overlay between the public and politics. Furthermore, the council chamber was the only space within City Hall designed with stained glass windows which represent the iconography of the political powers of the time.

The intangible aspect of Pretoria

city hall contributing to its value is its internal adaptability to the programming of functions through which the building was able to facilitate public interaction at varying scales and for varying purposes. It is imperative that this intangible contribution be retained in order to adequately reinstate City Hall as an important civic centre.

Pretoria city hall is regarded as a valued heritage building and is subject to the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999) as it is more than 60 years old.

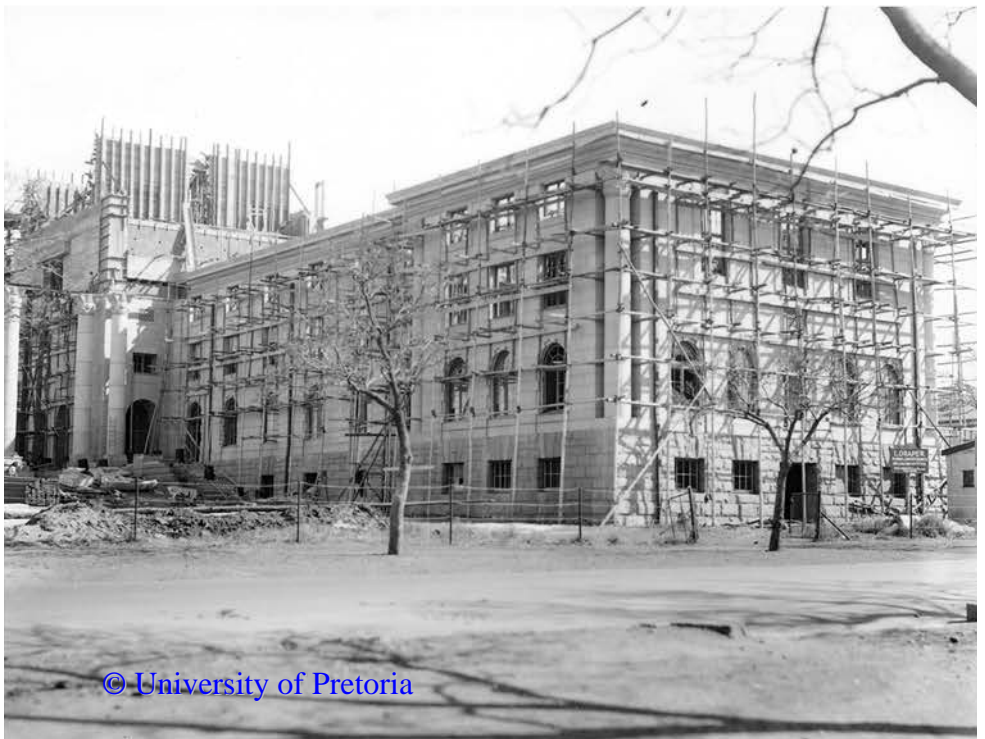


Figure 3.3 Aerial view of the new City Hall in Paul Kruger Street with the Transvaal Museum and the NZASM Head Office (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

Figure 3.4 An artist's drawing of the winning design submitted in the Figure competition for the new hall by Mr. J. Lockwood (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

Figure 3.5 The City Hall in Paul Kruger Street during construction 1934 (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

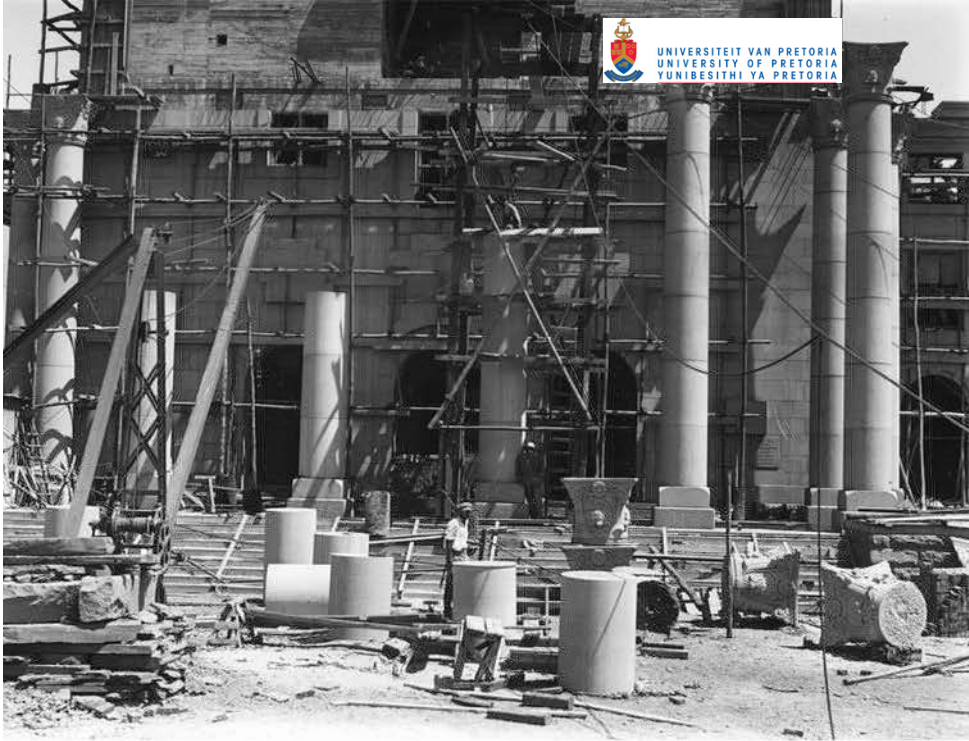


Figure 3.6 The City Hall in Paul Kruger Street during construction 1934 (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)
Figure 3.7 The erection of the equestrian statue of Andries Pretorius on Pretorius Square 1955 (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)
Figure 3.8 The official opening ceremony of the City Hall by the Officer Administering the Government, Sir Johannes Wessels (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

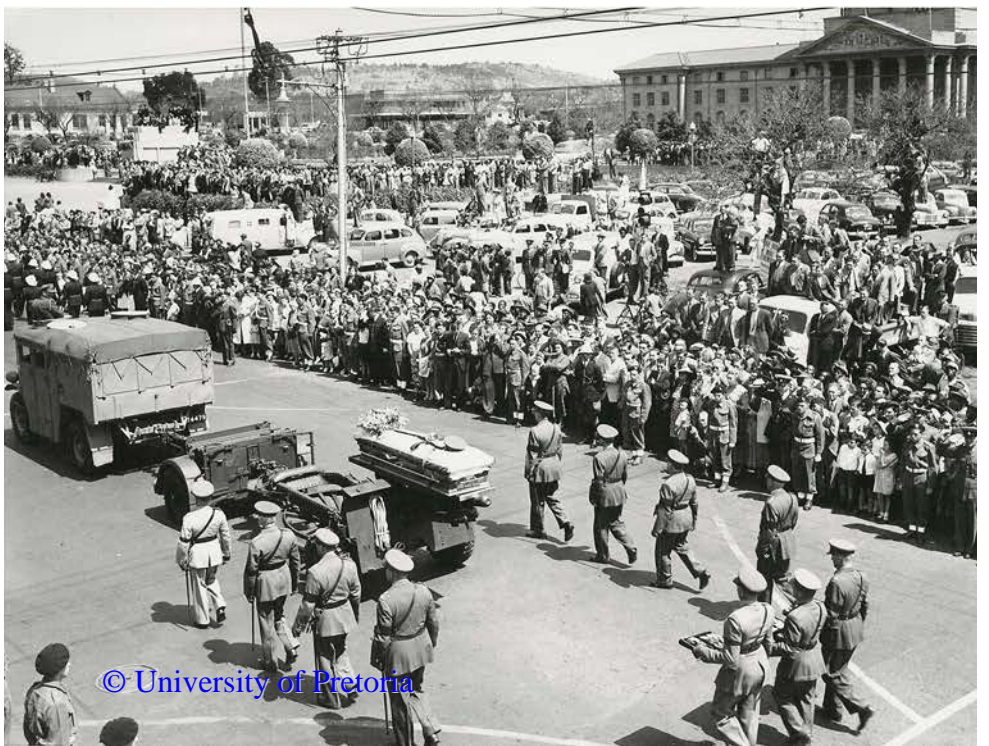


Figure 3.9 Municipal election 1955
(Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

Figure 3.10 50th jubilee of the
Pretoria-Lourenco Marques Railway
Line (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

Figure 3.11 322 Funeral procession of
General J.C. Smuts along Paul Kruger
Street on the way to the railway station
1950 (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

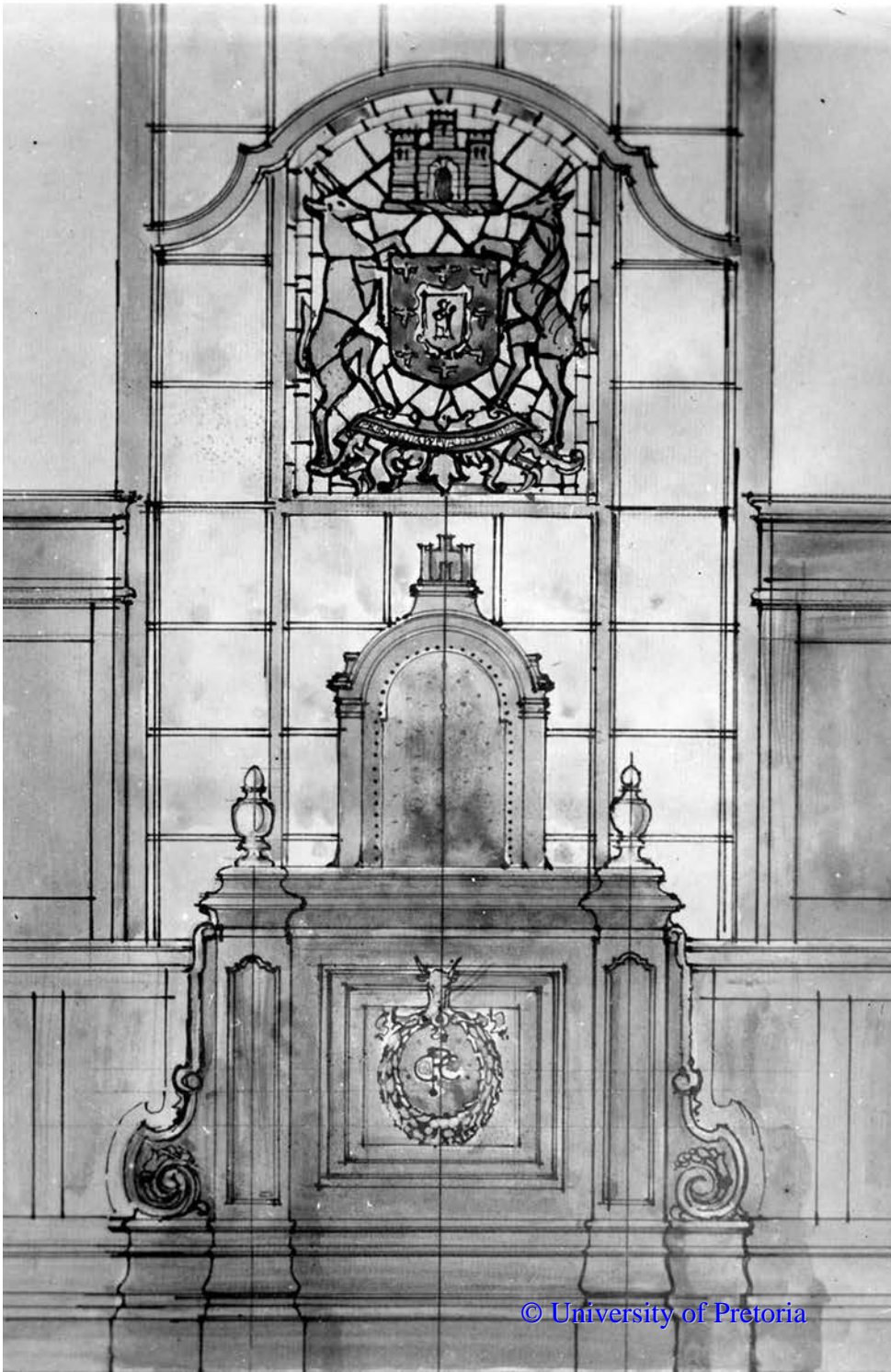
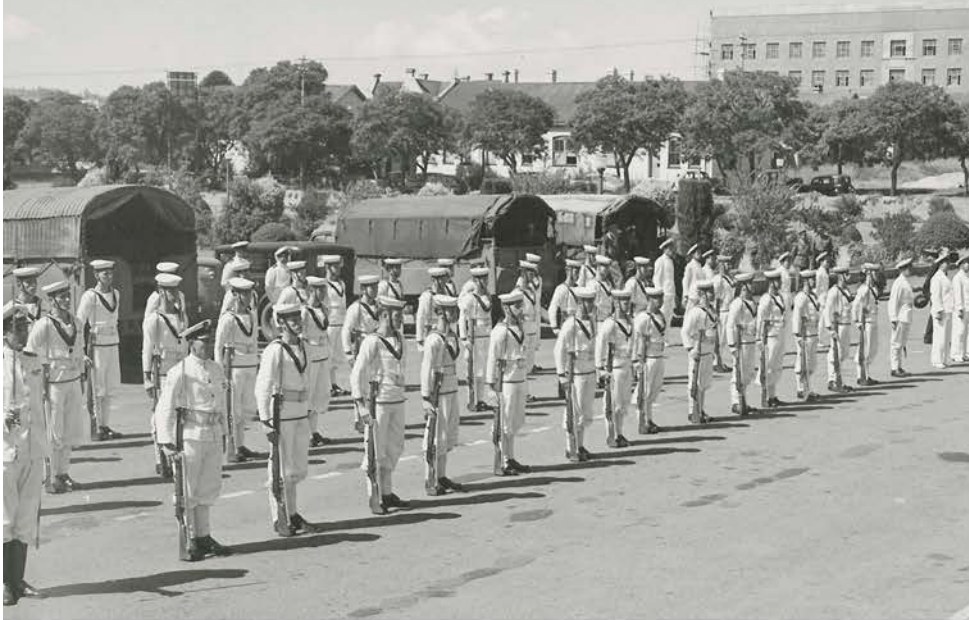


Figure 3.12 His Majesty's Ship Nigeria's crew and officers visit Pretoria 1947 (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)
Figure 3.13 Design of the seat of the mayor (Eskia Mphahlele Library 2017)

3.2 - Heritage Standpoint

The standpoint from which the thesis project has developed is that of questioning that which provides the building with significance, tangible and intangible, within the context of a democratic city.

As stated, the practise of adaptive reuse in architecture, as a strategy to preserve and respect its heritage, is considered important in the conservation of cultural heritage through the implementation of its three strategies namely typological, technical and architectural. In order to adequately respond to the City Hall, the typological and architectural strategies will be adopted so as to better respond to the building at both a physical

and programmatic level.

The architectural strategy for the rejuvenation of Pretoria City Hall is controlled by the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 5 of 1999) and The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (2013). Through an understanding of the cultural, social and political value of the Pretoria City Hall it is possible to establish a statement of significance.

Appropriate guidelines set out by the Burra Charter which will act as an architectural conscious for the design include:

Article 2. Conservation and management

Places of cultural significance should be conserved through the act of conservation with the aim to retain as much cultural significance of place as possible through careful management and be safeguarded and not put at risk or be left in any sort of vulnerable state (International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 2013: 3).

Article 3. Cautious approach

Conservation of culturally significant structures is founded on a respect for existing fabrics, uses, associations and meanings requiring a cautious approach to changing as much as necessary but as little as possible so as to not distort any contribution provided by the structure (ICOMOS 2013: 3).

Article 4. Knowledge, skills and techniques.

Conservation should make use of appropriate knowledge, skills and techniques which contribute to the care of the structure and celebrate, through the use of modern techniques and materials, by adding value to the significance of the structure (ICOMOS 2013: 4).

Article 7. Use.

Where the use or function of a place is of cultural significance, it should be retained to the effect that minimal changes to the existing fabric are made and new appropriate functions added on to ensure a continuation of the existing significance (ICOMOS 2013: 4).

Article 13. Co-existence of cultural values.

The co-existence of different values is always recognised, respected and encouraged through the conservation of past and present political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs where conflict has arisen through the adaptation of the structure (ICOMOS 2013: 5).

Article 21. Adaptation

Adaptations of the existing, while allowed, need to provide a contrast between the new and the old so to allow for legibility between the two, while maintaining minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place (ICOMOS 2013: 7)



3.3 - Existing Condition



Figure 3.14 Parking on Southern edge of square (Author 2016)
Figure 3.15 New fence put in to restrict access at Northern Wing (Author 2017)
Figure 3.16 Northern edge of city hall from existing parking lot. (Author 2016)





Figure 3.17 Back of city hall from Bosman Street (Author 2017)
Figure 3.18 Southern edge fence condition (Author 2016)
Figure 3.19 View up Minnar Street on the southern edge of Pretorius Square (Author 2017)



Figure 3.20 View from neighboring parking lot on Minnar Street towards City Hall (Author 2017)
Figure 3.21 Southern edge of Pretorius Square (Author 2017)
Figure 3.22 Main axis up Pretorius square with Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (Front) and Andries Pretorius (back) Statues (Author 2017)



Figure 3.23 Andries Pretorius on his horse (Author 2017)

Figure 3.24 Morning commute through Pretorius Square to church (Author 2017)

Figure 3.25 NZASM building from Pretorius Square (Author 2017)



Figure 3.26 Pretorius Square user
(Author 2017)

Figure 3.27 Pretorius Square Fountain
(Author 2017)

Figure 3.28 Landscaping in front of City
Hall (Author 2017)



Figure 3.29 Paved surface on southern edge of Pretorius square (Author 2017)
Figure 3.30 Access stairs from south blocked by fence (Author 2017)
Figure 3.31 Stairs up to main entrance from the north (Author 2017)





Figure 3.32 Existing condition of entry hall of Pretoria City Hall (Author 2017)
Figure 3.33 Office being used to store building equipment and materials (Author 2017)