

3 Context analysis and urban vision



3.0 Context analysis and urban vision

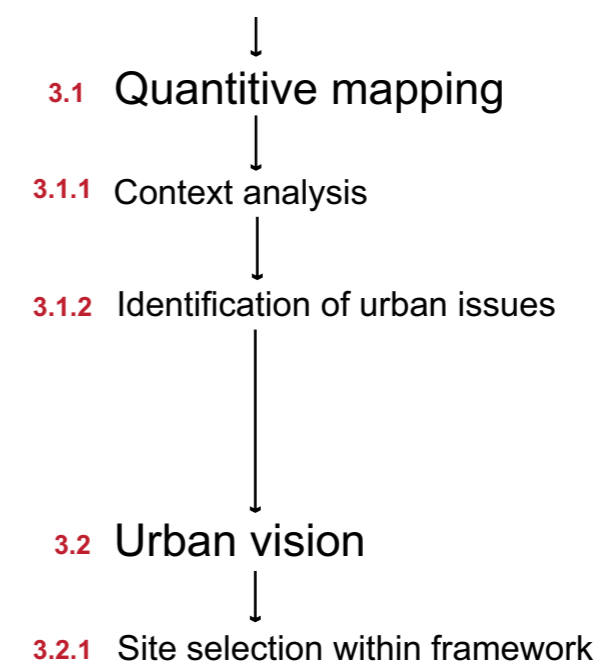


Figure 3.1: A flow chart of the chapter outline



Figure 3.2: Aerial photograph highlighting Pretoria West

Pretoria West

The discovery of abandoned industrial space, buildings, and objects currently occurs more frequently as urban space becomes very precious (Thomas 2003). The world is teeming with such spaces. The spaces compose a story of the past in a very intuitive way, spaces frozen in time waiting to inspire our imaginations (Thomas 2003). They are abandoned relics - creepers run up and down empty staircases, birds and other small animals mark it as their home, broken windows give nature free access. It is here where past, present, and future forcibly intersect in the form of memory (Thomas 2003). They stand as icons at the core of communities and are thus as much a part of our history as cathedrals, monuments, and artefacts. (Thomas 2003)

Globally, in many cities around the world, industrial areas were a precedent in terms of the technical resolution of the major level close to harbours because of their proximity to unskilled labour and railways.

Figure 3.3 shows that the Pretoria West region was allocated for industrial development along with a residential suburb serving the industrial area (Janse van Rensburg 2012). After the power station was relocated (from the inner city) to Pretoria West in 1922, industrial expansion was inevitable (Janse van Rensburg 2012). Residential densities could not satisfy these demands. Thus, additional labour from various locations was necessary to fulfil these economic needs. Over a period of time, the neighbourhood has changed from a residential to a mixed-use suburb consisting of restricted industry, commercial industry, retail, flats, and single-volume residential areas (Janse van Rensburg 2012).

Although these zones coincide, there is a lack of integration, which leads to a monotonous indefensible urban environment that lacks identity (Janse van Rensburg 2012)(Figure 3.4).

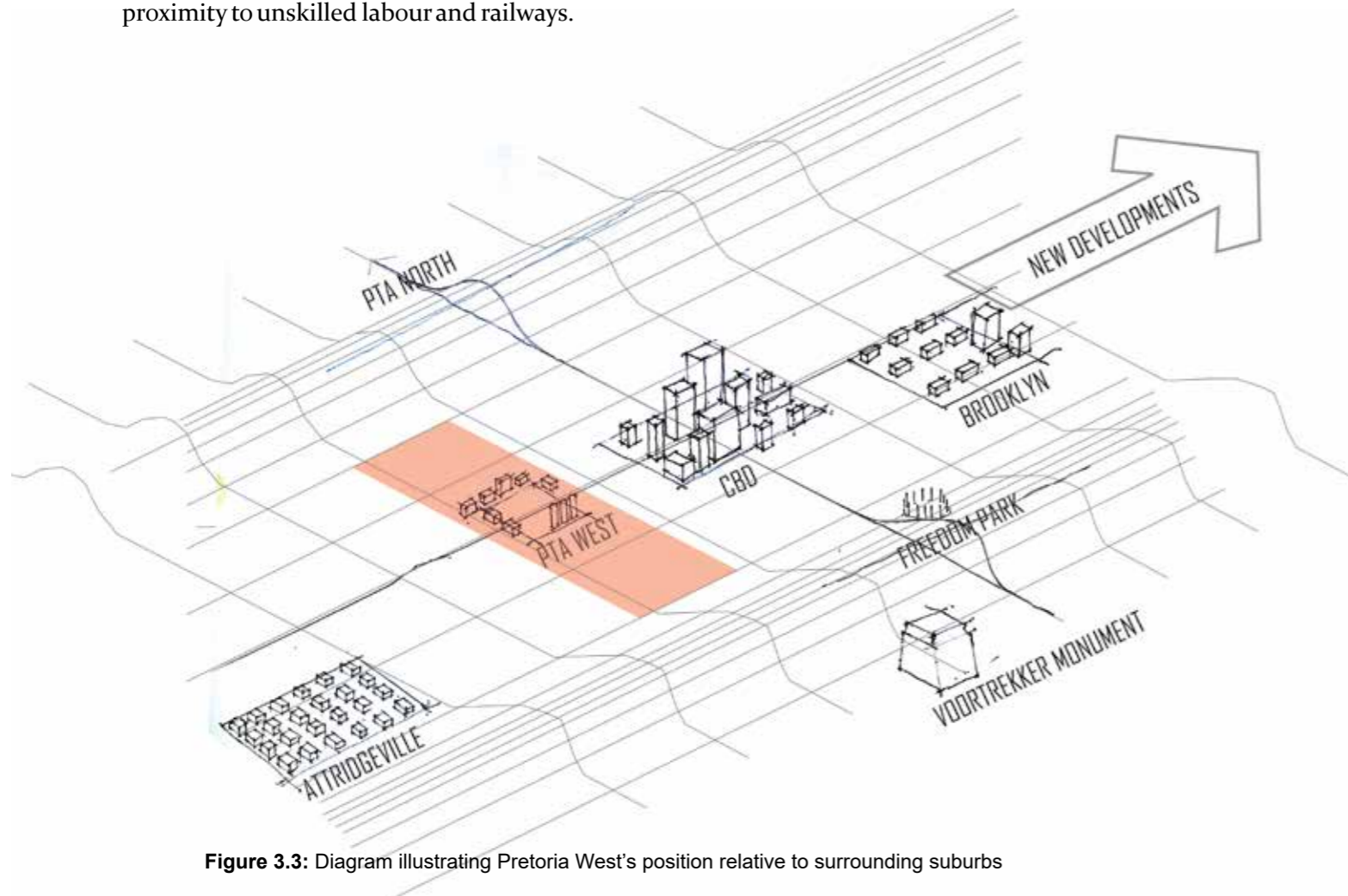


Figure 3.3: Diagram illustrating Pretoria West's position relative to surrounding suburbs

The Tshwane urban vision

“Only 27% of the 220 000 ha that constitutes Tshwane’s municipal area is built-up, leaving 73% as some form of open space. Of this 4.97% or 11 890 ha is managed by Parks and Horticultural Services. However only 13% or 1 596ha of that is zoned as parks. This means that only 0.73% of the total open space of Tshwane developed public is open space, such as parks and plazas. This highlights the lack of public open space within the city. Areas to the east of the CBD seem to have a healthier open space system. However, to the west there are very few - or no - well-developed public open spaces (Tshwane 2007: 12). Public open spaces have a direct impact on the quality of life of urban residents and is essential for mental, spiritual and physical well-being. It fulfils relaxation, recreation and place making needs. Open space is necessary in

order to give coherent structure and beauty to our cities and should guide urban growth. Open space is also important in maintaining vital ecological services such as air and water purification and the maintenance of biodiversity. Quality of life improves, through the development of parks, recreation facilities and open space systems, are critical components of any strategy to attract new economic development, as well as assisting business retention and expansion efforts.”

(Tshwane 2007: 12)

Although the city of Tshwane does have an existing open space framework, it is extremely passive in comparison other world metropolitans (Smit 2011). What the city names as their framework is actually mapping of green, brown, and blue areas in the city.

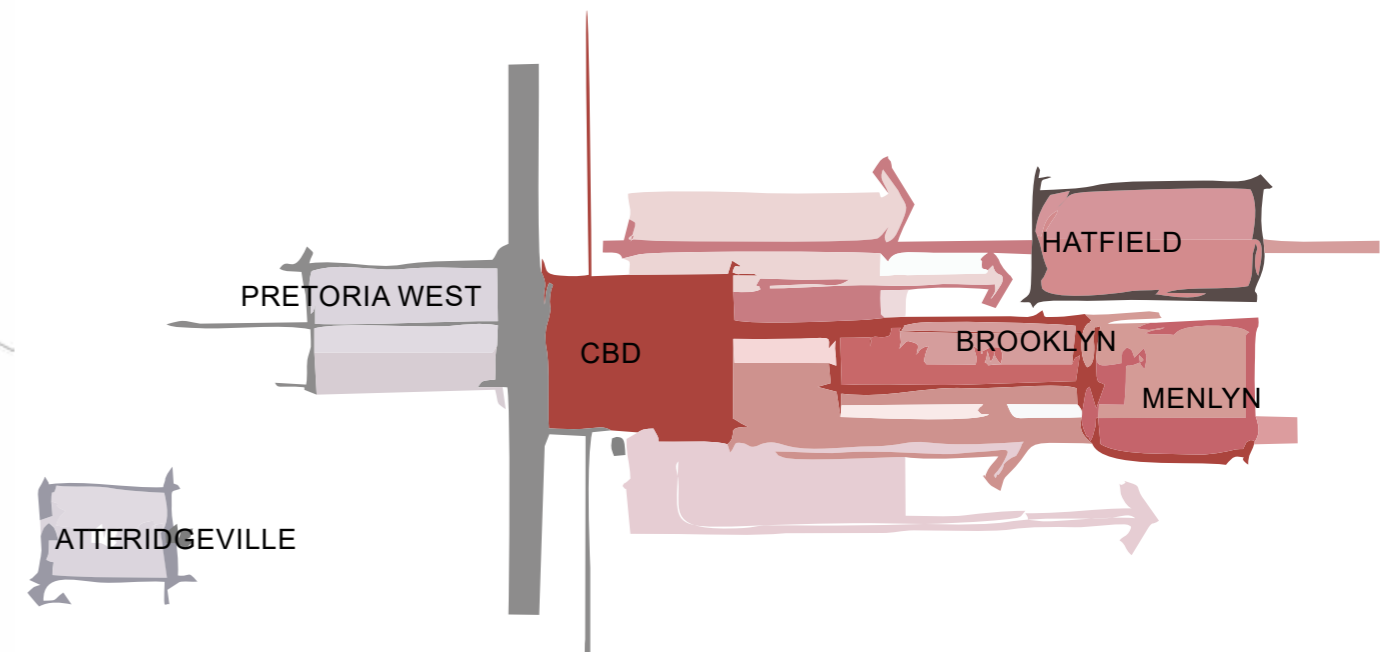


Figure 3.4: Diagrammatic representation of the energy of the city shifting to the east of Pretoria

3.1 Quantitative mapping

The following few pages consist of the mapping exercises conducted by the

author and two architecture students, forming the Pretoria West Urban Vision group.



Figure 3.5: Mapping of the public transport systems

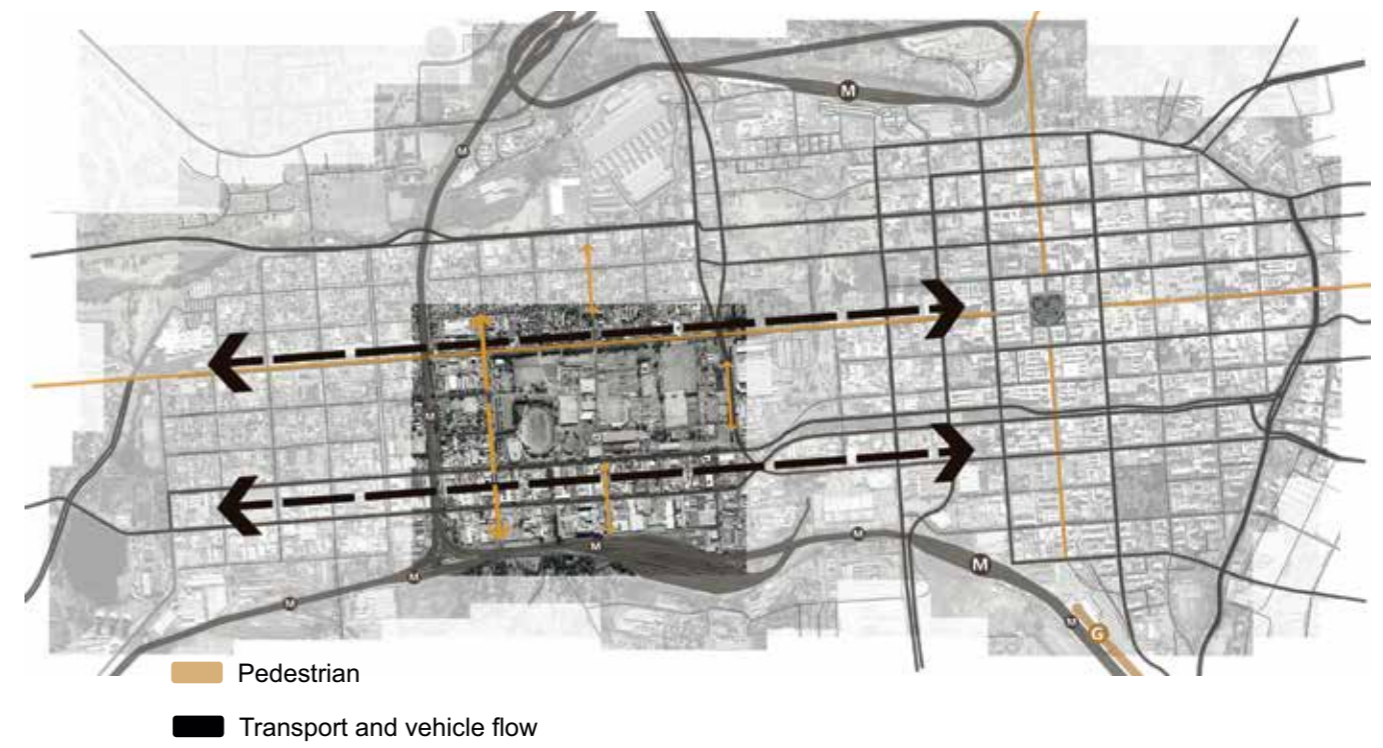


Figure 3.7: Mapping of the pedestrian movement



Figure 3.6: Mapping of low income households



Figure 3.8: Mapping of the Religious, healthcare and SAPS



Figure 3.9: Mapping of the population density

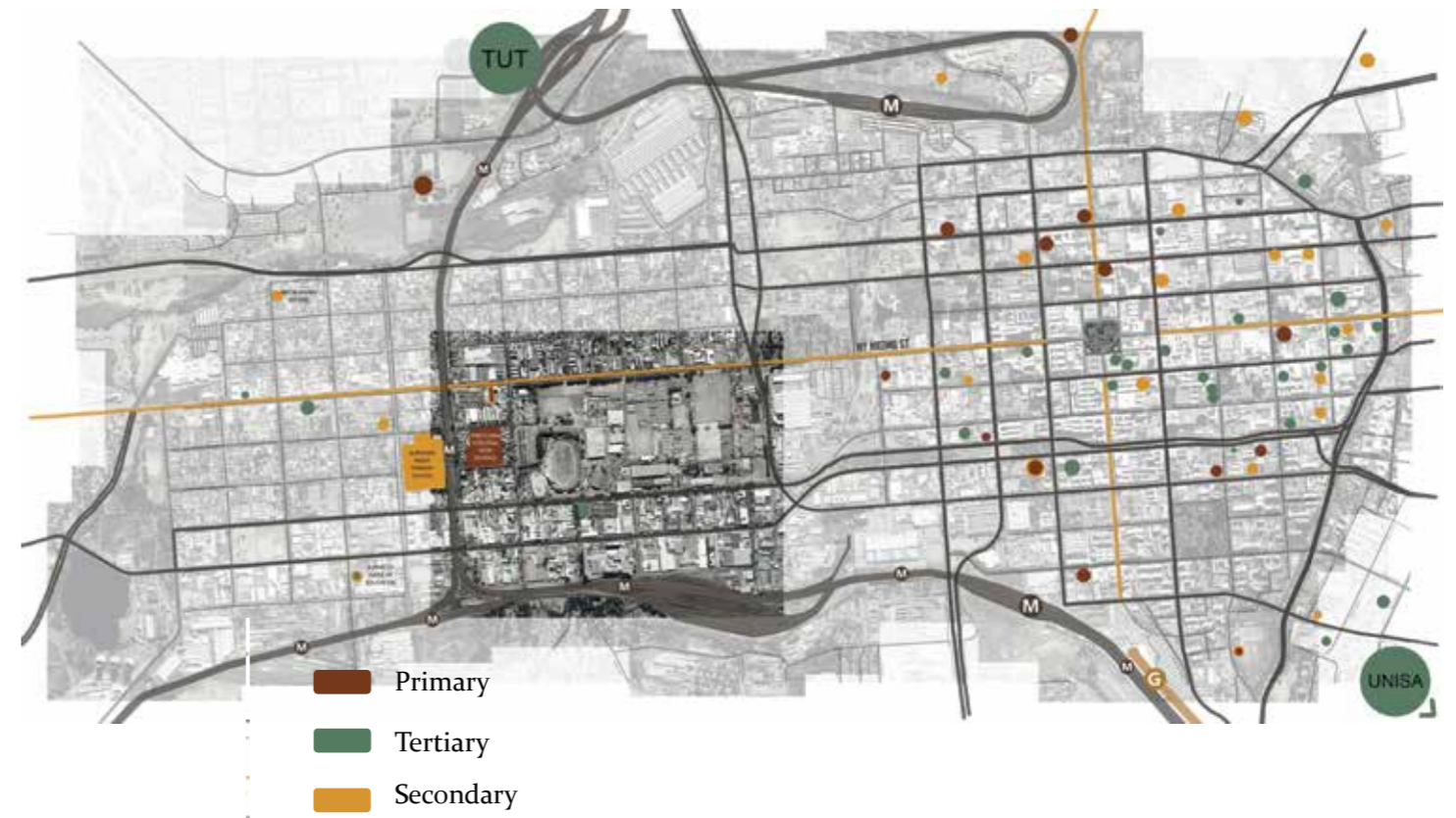


Figure 3.11: Mapping of the educational institutions



Figure 3.10: Mapping of the green spaces

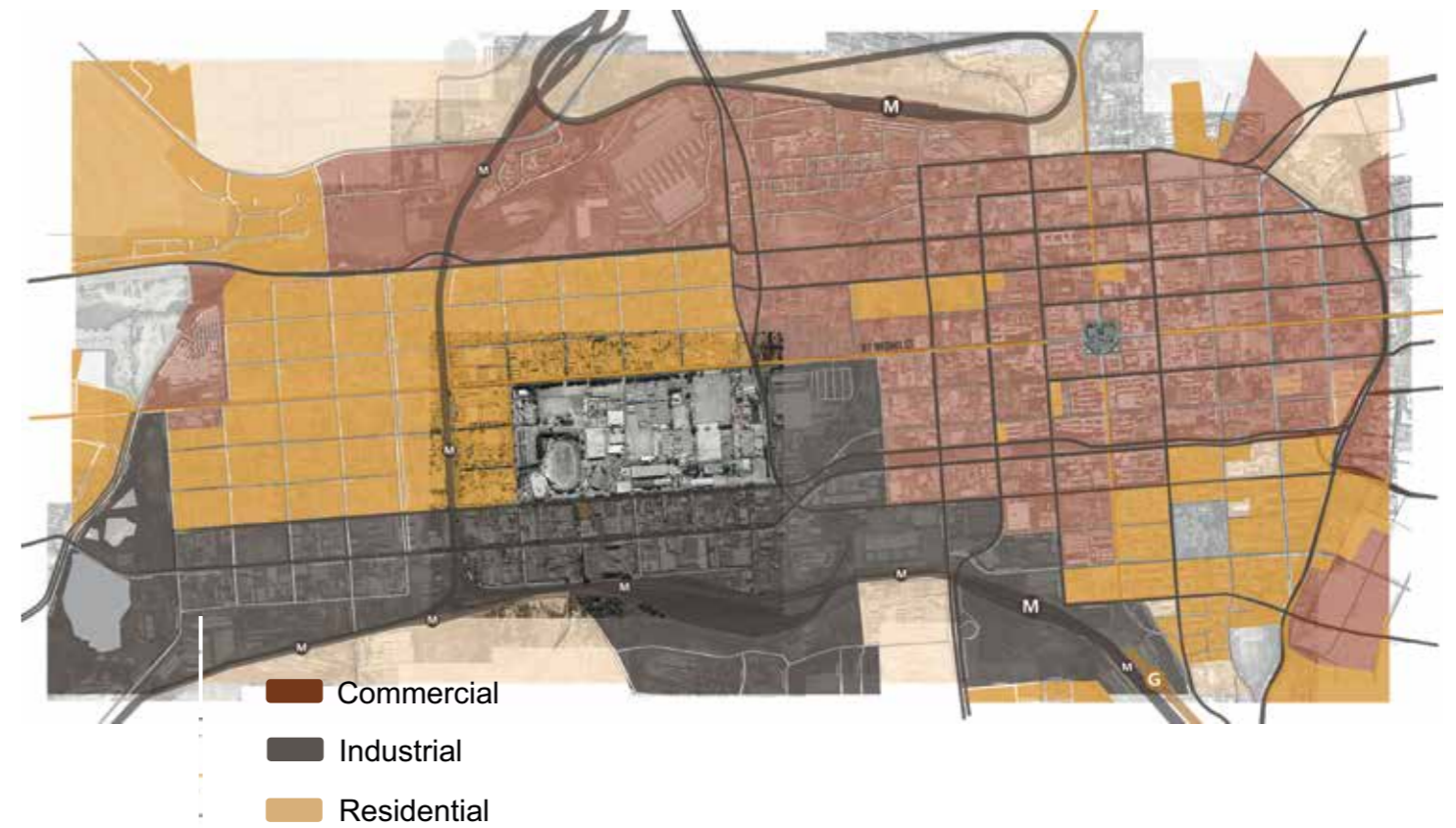


Figure 3.12: Mapping of the existing official zoning

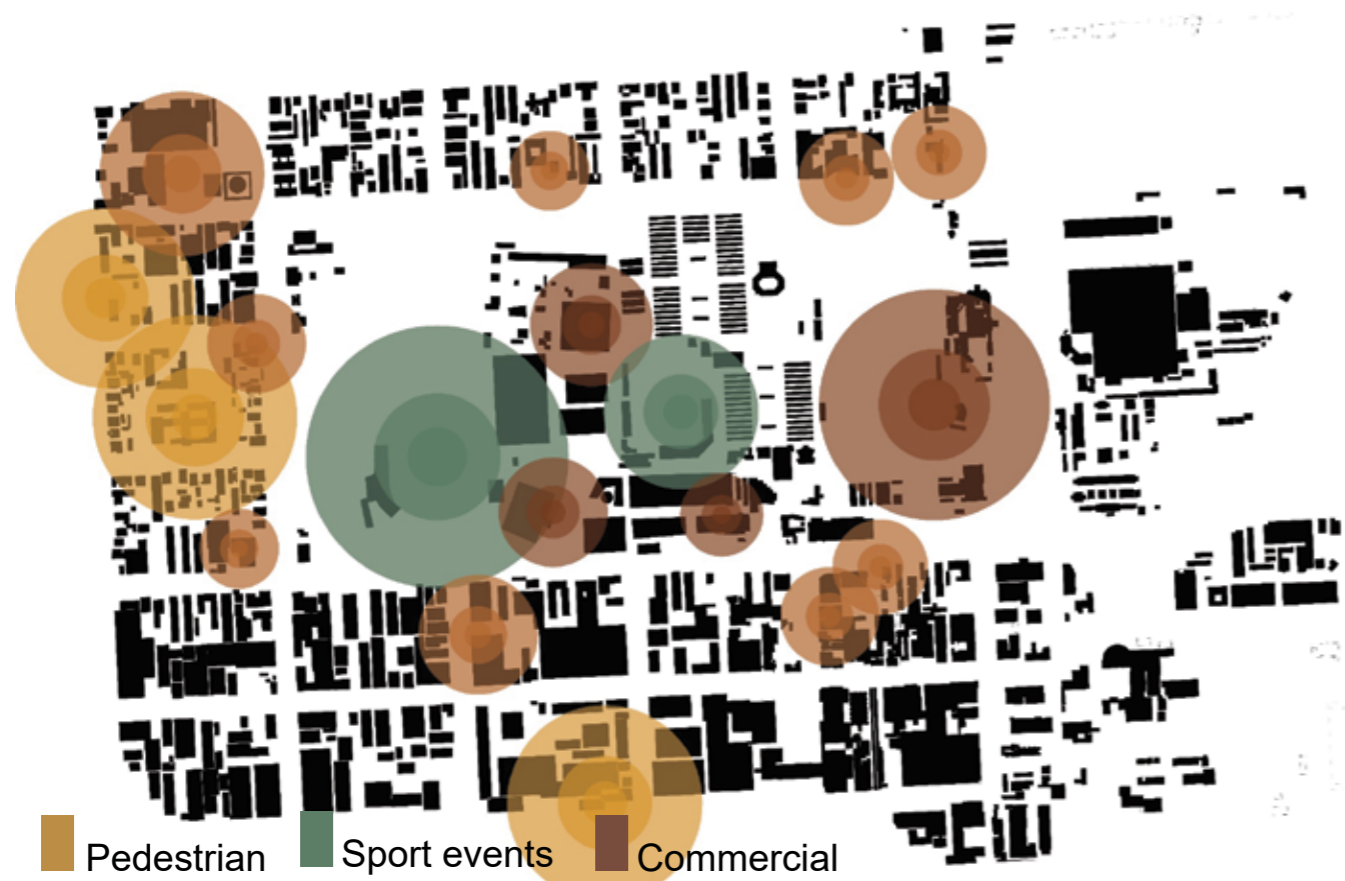


Figure 3.13: Mapping of the energy in Pretoria West

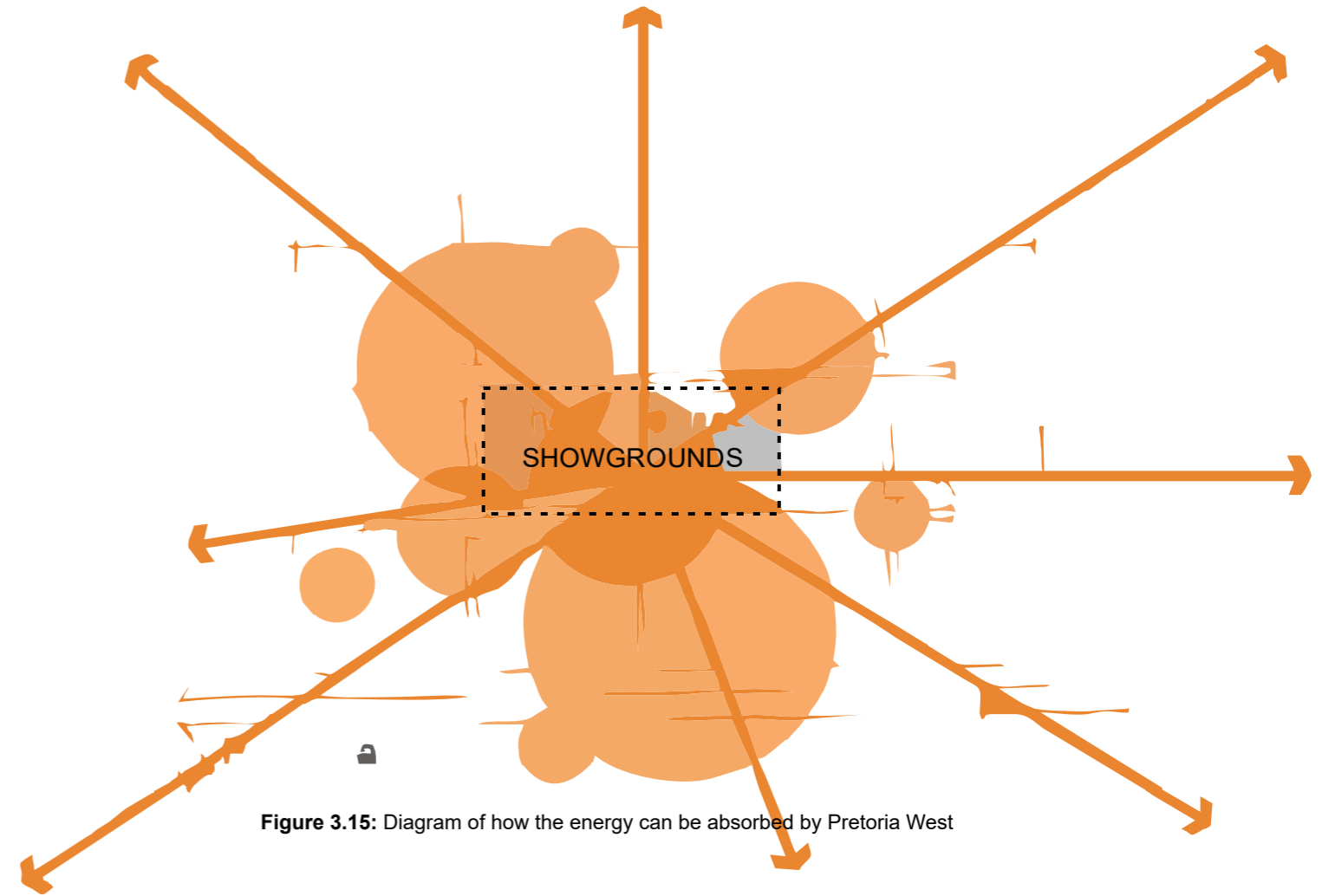


Figure 3.15: Diagram of how the energy can be absorbed by Pretoria West

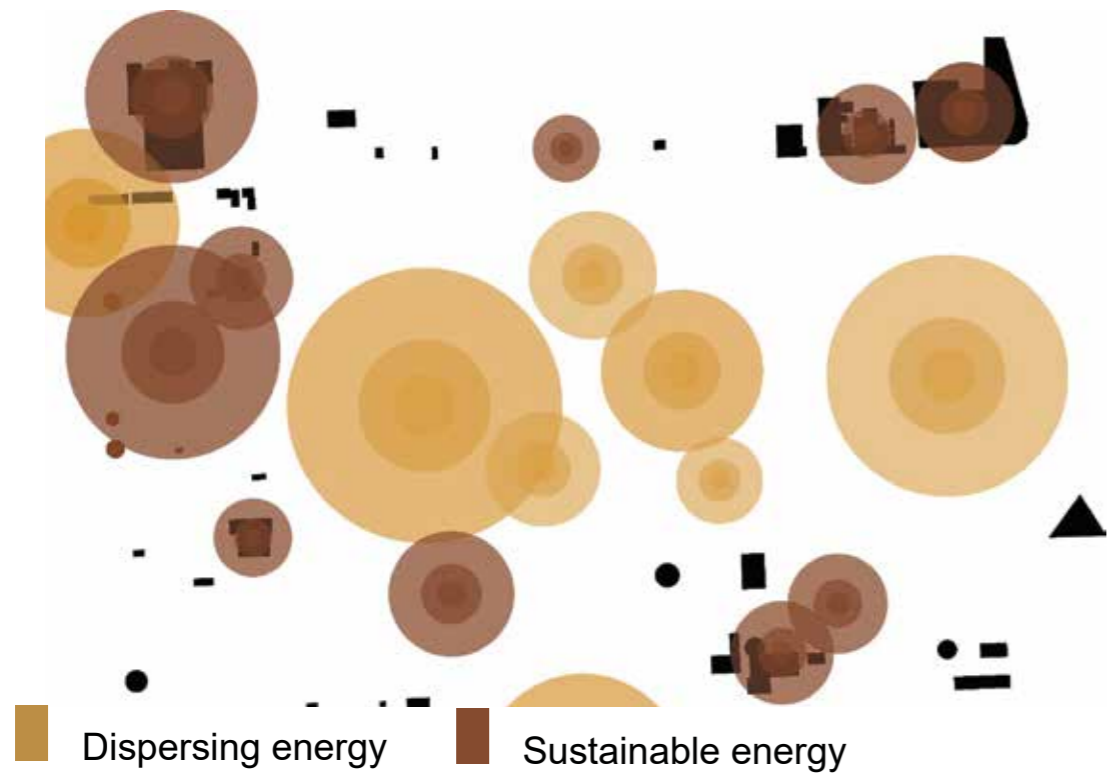


Figure 3.14: Mapping of the lost energy in Pretoria West

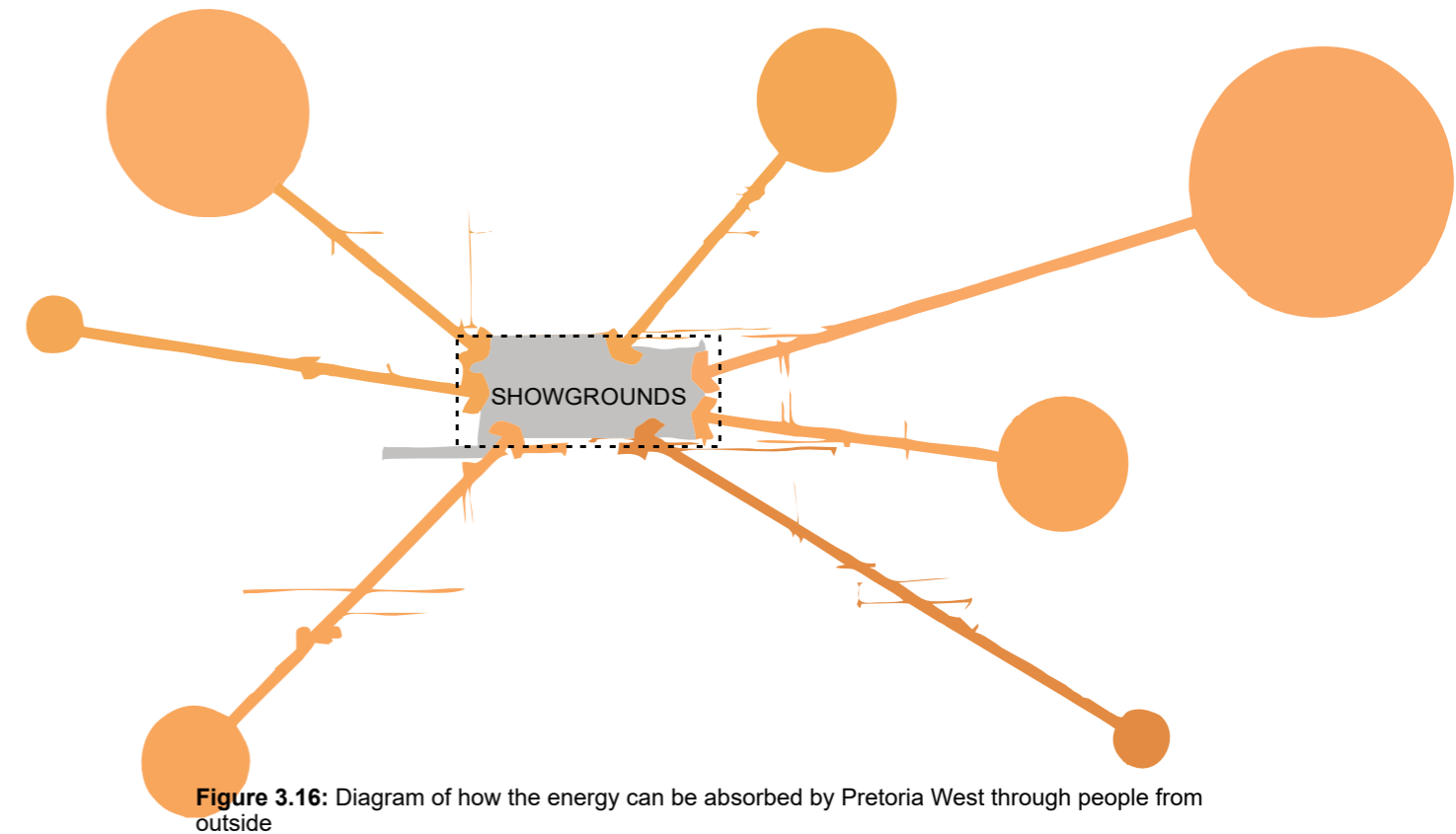


Figure 3.16: Diagram of how the energy can be absorbed by Pretoria West through people from outside



Figure 3.17 Spatial sketch of typical fourway crossing and streetscape



Figure 3.18: Spatial sketch of the train station

To many people the showgrounds characterize the whole of Pretoria West; in fact the showgrounds have hosted thousands of events since the first Pretoria Show in 1937, making it a historical and functional precious space within the suburb. The problem, however, is that the showgrounds sit as an impermeable membrane between the commercial/light-industrial zone and the more residential part of Pretoria West.

For years it catered for people coming from far as an event/exposition outside space and not at all catering for the local people of Pretoria West. As one can see on the diagrams (Figures 3.17-3.20), the showgrounds do attract a lot of energy, but none of which is absorbed by the greater precinct. At this stage the showgrounds of Pretoria West is identified as an opportunity rather than a constraint within the urban vision.

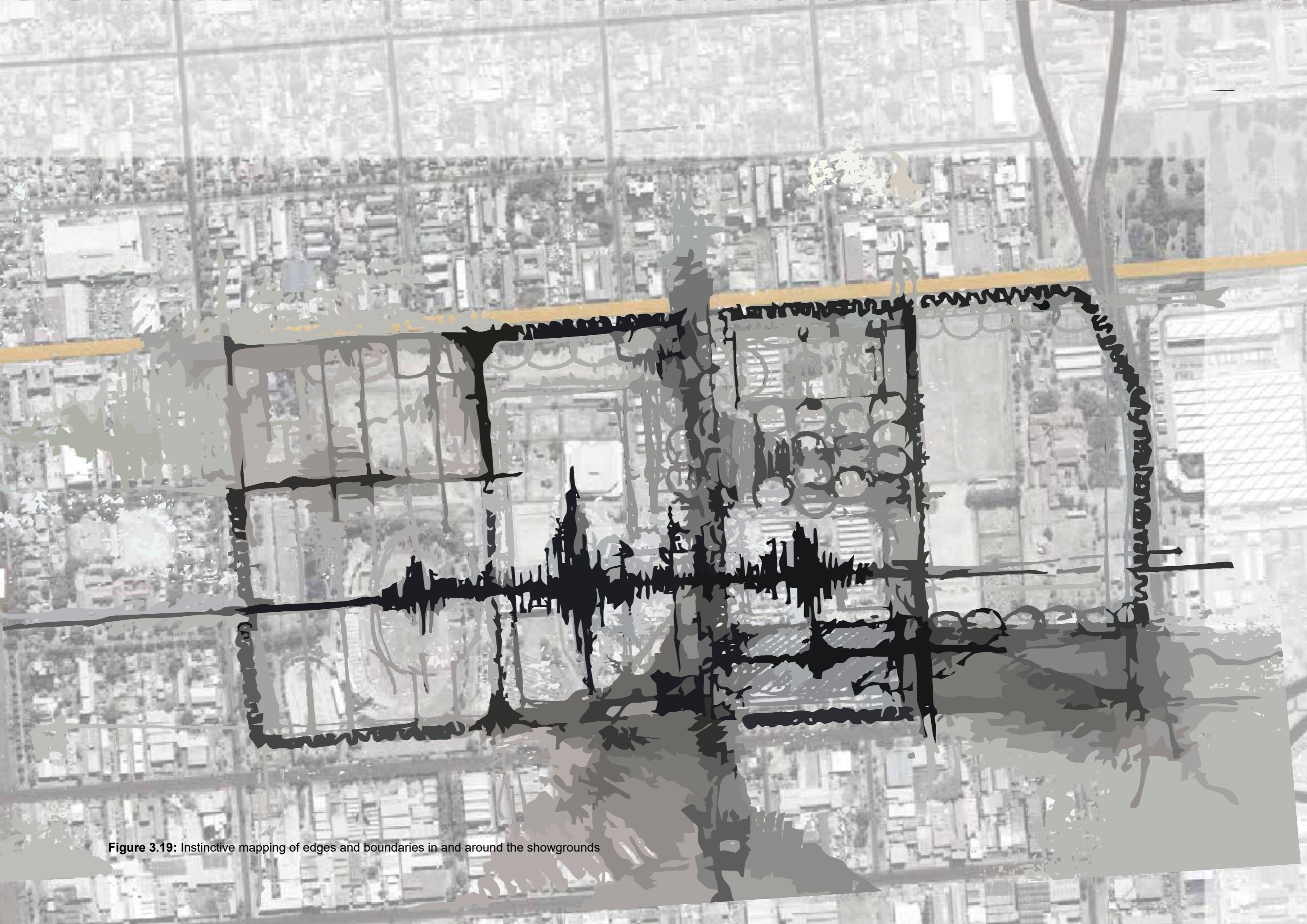


Figure 3.19: Instinctive mapping of edges and boundaries in and around the showgrounds

CARL STREET

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY		-9
PERMIABILITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
VITALITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
VARIETY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
LEGIBILITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
ROBUSTNESS	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	

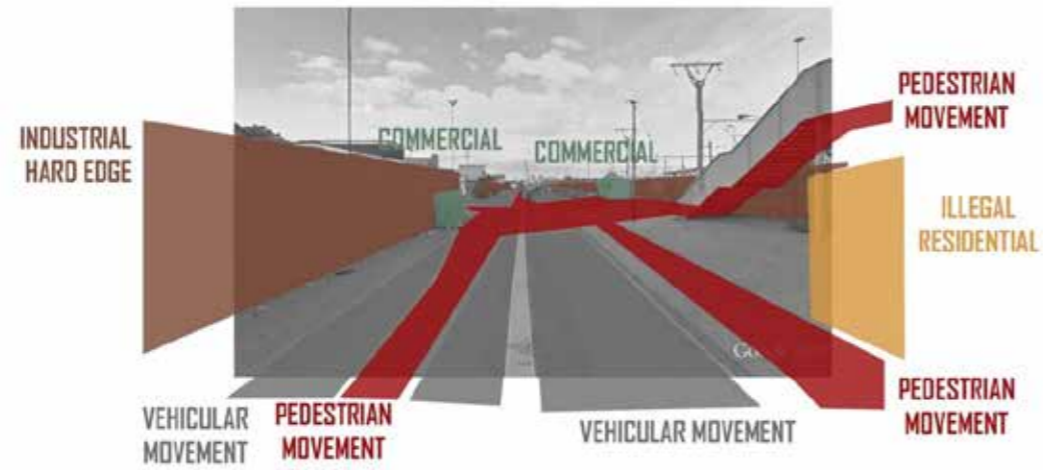


Figure 3.20: Urban sustainability of Carl Street

PRESIDENT BURGER STREET

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY		-7
PERMIABILITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
VITALITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
VARIETY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
LEGIBILITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
ROBUSTNESS	■ ■ ■ ■ ■	



Figure 3.21: Urban sustainability of President Burger Street



Figure 3.22: Typical views of Pretoria West's streetscapes



Figure 3.23: Group studio work



Figure 3.24: Group studio work



Figure 3.25: Group studio work

3.2 Urban problems

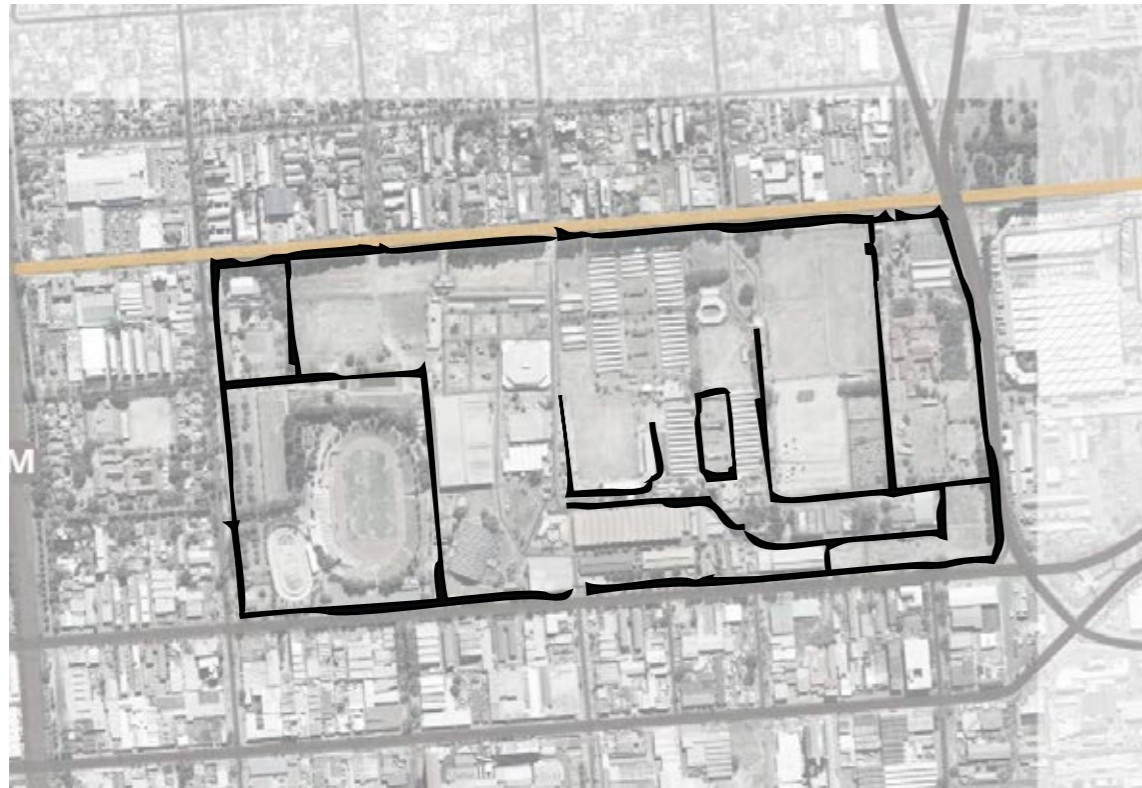


Figure 3.26: The showgrounds do not allow for people to flow through the site. It takes a pedestrian 20 minutes to walk around the showgrounds

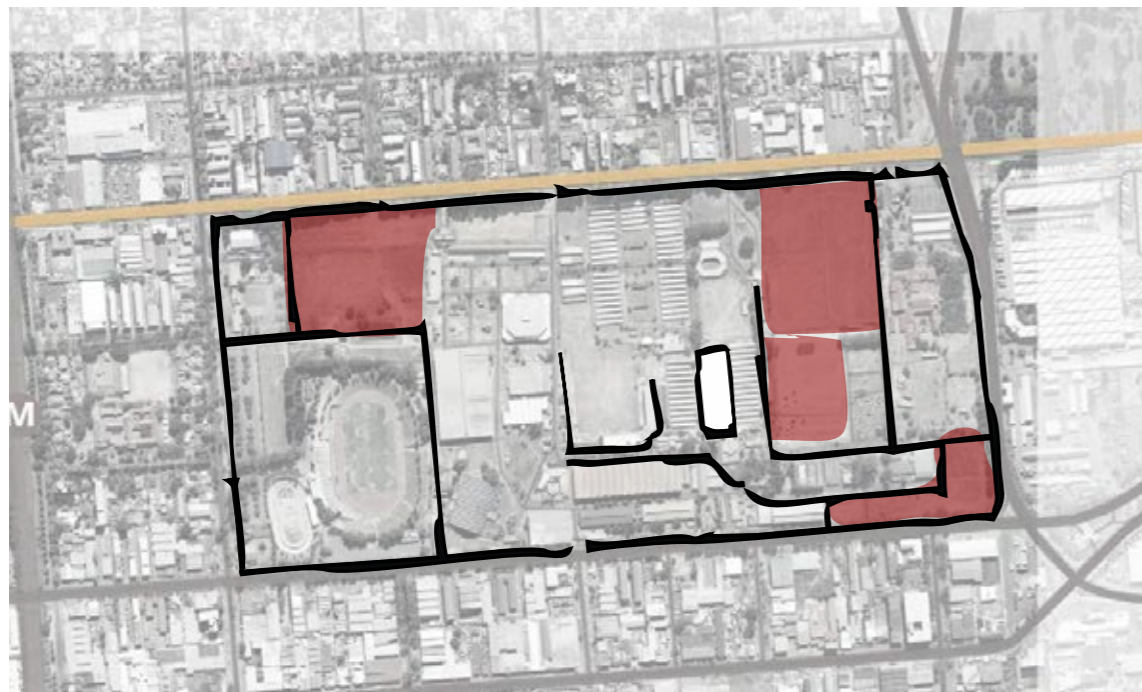


Figure 3.27: Large open spaces within the showgrounds are dormant 95% of the time, it is spaces consisting of short veldgrass only used as parking if there is an event happening in the showgrounds (4 times a year). It is thus extremely mono-functional



Figure 3.28: Whenever there is an event held at the showgrounds the entire space is lit up with people, commerce and an overall bustling atmosphere. The problem is that all this potential is lost once the event has finished, there is no sustainable destination for people.



Figure 3.29: By looking at the official zoning of the area, one can clearly see there is a need for mixed used spaces and streetscapes to allow for more humane interactions on smaller scales. There are little to no healthy signs of urban ecology present. The vegetation mostly consists of Jacaranda trees planted on the sidewalks in 15 meter intervals.

3.3 Solutions and urban vision



Figure 3.30: Impermeable edges surrounding the showgrounds are altered to create both spaces belonging to the street and new movement patterns inviting users into the showgrounds

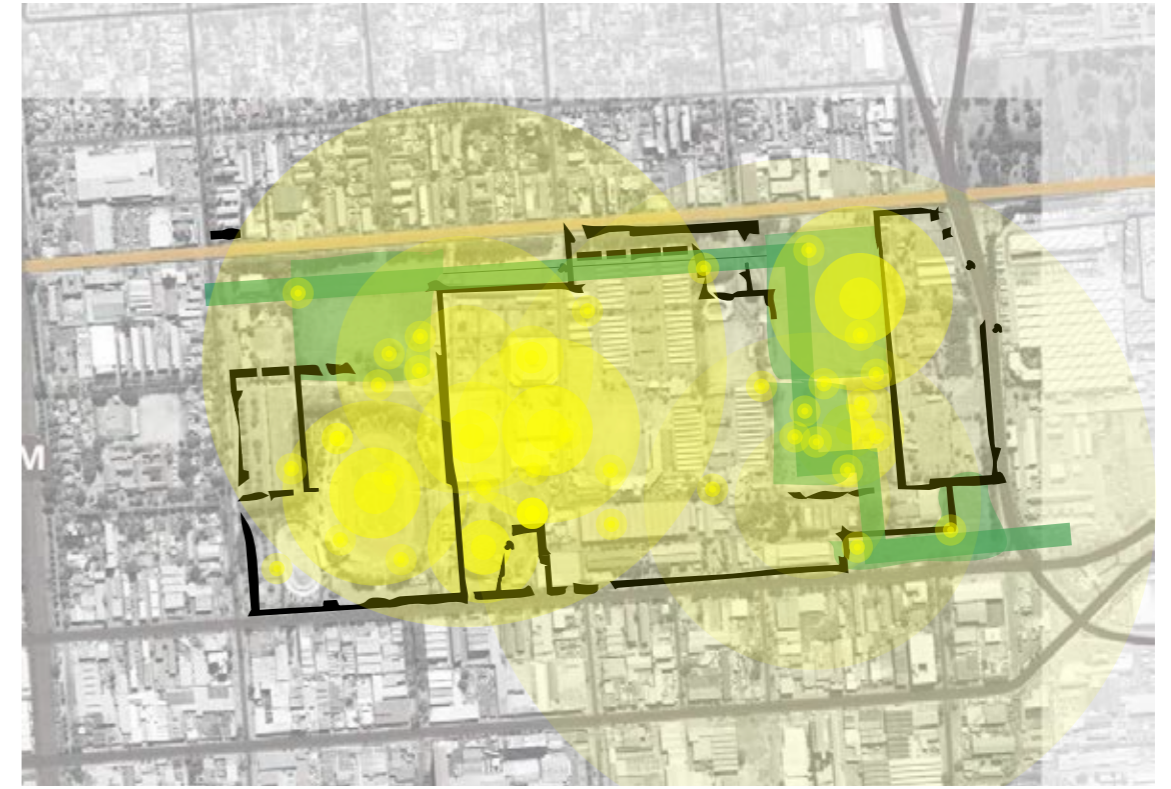


Figure 3.32: Various pockets are created to capture the energy emitted from the showgrounds in the case of events. These pockets will come in forms of spaces, activities, commerce etc. Essentially to introduce the users to new, exciting spaces within the showgrounds

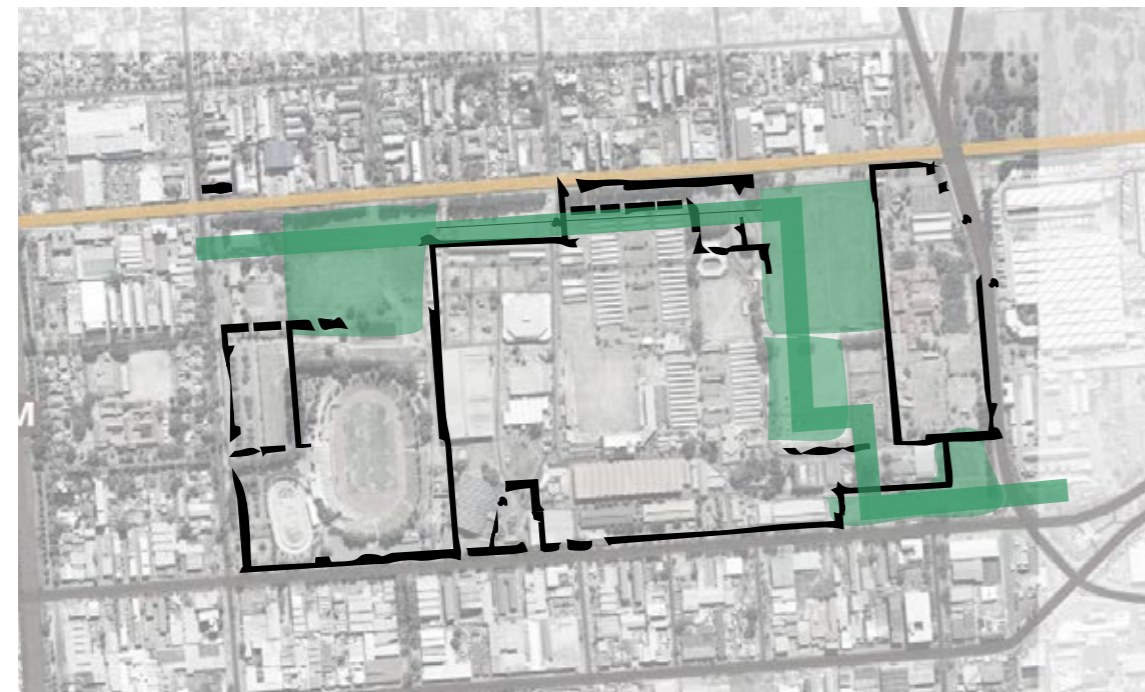


Figure 3.31: Large open spaces within the showgrounds are connected and re-imagined as multifunctional public spaces



Figure 3.33: Existing conference halls are transformed into multi-use buildings. Some will become low cost residential housing and others will become commercial nodes. The reason for this is to break up the monotonous zoning

The urban vision was thus centered on the show-grounds. As Pretoria West is a product of an apartheid town and regional planning, the residential, commercial, and industrial zoning are separated from one another. As time passed an interesting phenomenon has been witnessed in Pretoria West; more and more buildings are changing their function, integrating with the different official zones of Pretoria West and creating more mixed use blocks. All the streetscapes opposite the show-grounds show signs of buildings planned and erected, as residents are opening small kiosks and cafés altering the streetscape to become bustling pedestrian hotspots. The diagram (Figure 3.32) of the urban vision shows the proposed new functions/zoning of the buildings edging on the show-grounds.

3.4 Findings

The show-grounds are a rich palimpsest of historical layers. There is a very specific character that Pretoria West has developed over the past decades. Character can best be described as vibrant industries with welcoming street interfaces. The functional architecture is made up of tectonic structures mostly steel and face brick finished with bright yellow, teal, and brown-reddish colors.

The vision for the study area of Pretoria West was iterated and compiled by the group; thereafter specific parts of the vision were selected for each individual to conceptualize, design and refine the project. Although the urban vision resolves the issues mentioned earlier the overall vision is a coherent one, to allow for more pedestrianized, mixed use spaces to occur within the precinct. Within the urban vision a large mono-functional part of the showgrounds have been identified to be altered into a community park for the local people of Pretoria West whilst it will still cater as functional exhibition and show space. This project will be investigated further by the author and sculpted it into a relevant dissertation for the rest of the year (Figure 3.32). Although the urban vision resolves the issues mentioned earlier, the overall vision is a coherent one, to allow for more pedestrianised, mixed

use spaces, to occur within the precinct. Within the urban vision a large mono-functional part of the showgrounds has been identified. The existing large open spaces (Figure 3.29) will be altered into a community park for the local people of Pretoria West whilst it will still cater as functional exhibition and show space.

3.5 Linking theory to site

The urban issues and vision is stated. The findings of chapter two can be linked to the site. The following statements are simulations made about the design of the site in Pretoria West.

- 1.) The findings of chapter two stated that five out of the six landscapes had some sort of external exhibition attracting the people to the site. The site in Pretoria West does not have such external exhibitions to compliment it. The design will act as the exhibition itself; immediately shifting the focus of the approach to one focused on creation rather than making subtle site responsive decisions.
- 2.) The design intervention will be an abstraction of Pretoria West, capturing and celebrating the unique character of the immediate and greater context of the site. With the site being an abstraction, it will theoretically fit in seamlessly within its context.
- 4.) The design will result in a project that is within the strong dialogue of the profession of landscape architecture, whether it be praised or criticized.
- 5.) Although the site will be an abstraction of Pretoria West, to some extent it will stand in contrast to Pretoria West. The 'abstraction' referred to will be defined and refined in the following chapters.

The current urban tissue of Pretoria West is extremely monotonous in terms of urban ecology, the only natural features within the landscape consist of Jacaranda trees in the streetscape. This project will be a perfect opportunity to create intimate, natural spaces, for both the locals and visitors from far and wide. On the following page is a simulated in-fo-graphic of the intervention that will take place in Pretoria West.

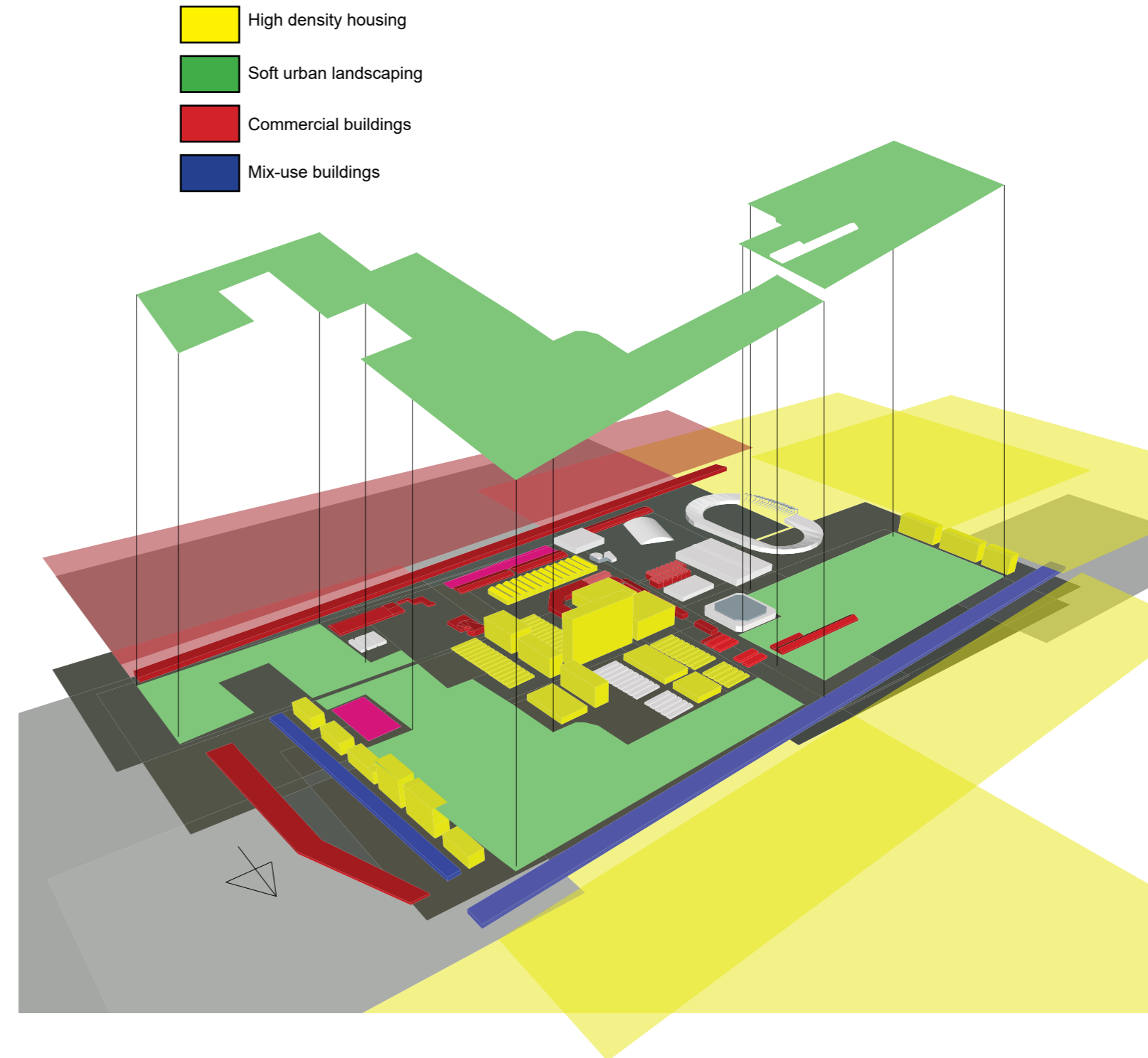


Figure 3.34: 3D concept diagram of introducing mixed use architectural fabric into the showgrounds and highlighting the focused study area