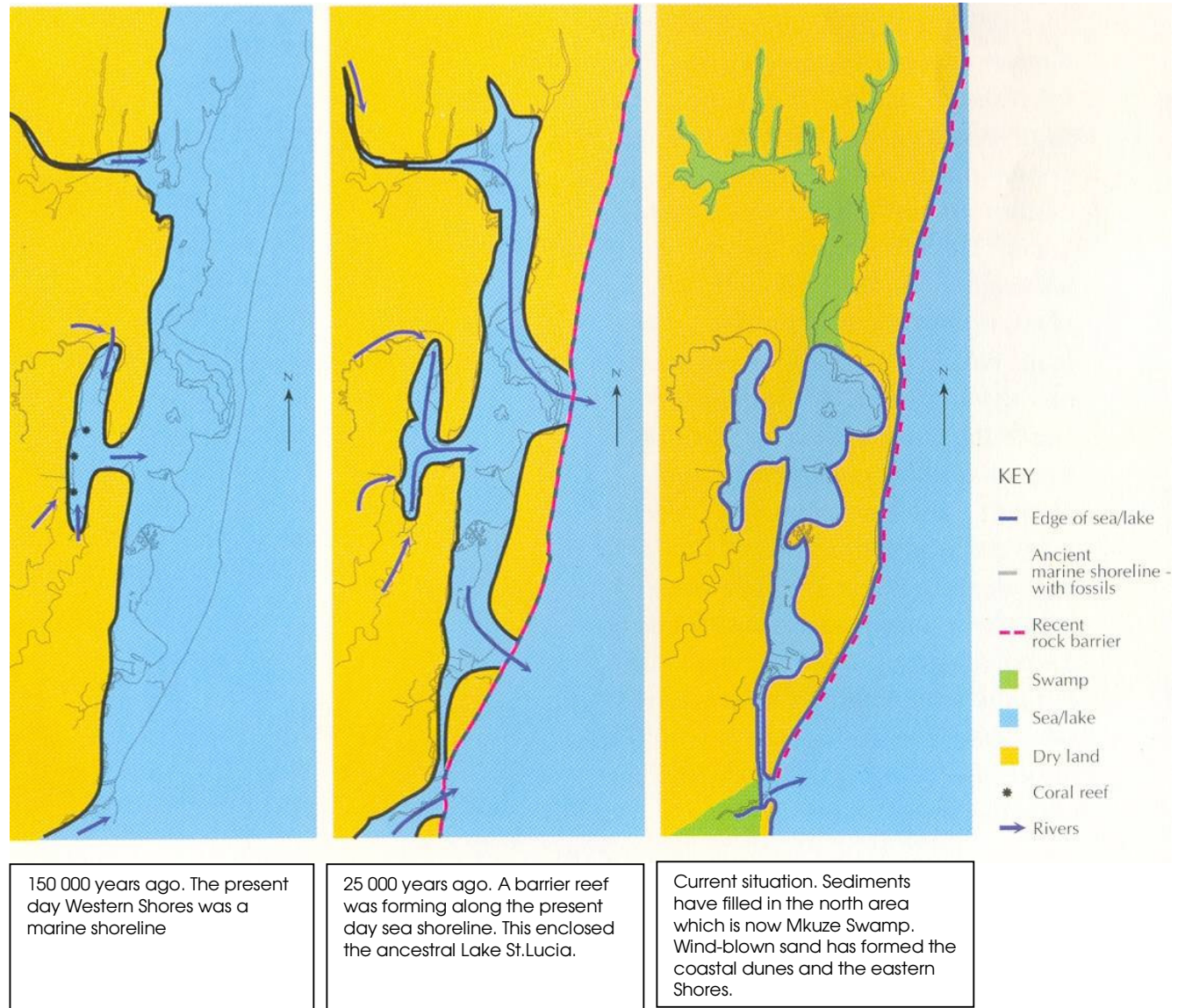


5.5 ST.LUCIA TOWN

5.5.1 Historical development and background

5.5.1.1 The geological formation of St.Lucia

The landmass that St.Lucia town is situated on was created during two stages:
 The first of these occurred in the Cretaceous era when what we now know as the Western Shores was a marine environment.
 The second stage of formation is a result of changing sea levels caused by various ice ages.
 Please refer to *The Origins of St.Lucia – A story of sea level changes, fossils and floods* (Taylor, 1991: 6)



5.5.1.2 The old St.Lucia

St.Lucia a hundred years ago was not one that embraced conservation. It was a place that had abundant natural resources for humans to exploit. Please refer to Figures 40 - 48.



41 Hunted pelican and crocodile (Bird, private collection)



43 Culling crocodile (Bird, private collection)



46 Women with caught crocodile (Bird, Private collection)



44 Recreational shark fishing (Bird, private collection)



47 "Percy sizing shot crocodile"(Bird, private collection)



42 "The mornings catch" (Bird, private collection)



45 Skinning crocodile (Bird, private collection)



48 Crocodile hunting party (Bird, private collection)

Within 10 years of the first fishing camp being erected, St. Lucia became a popular fishing destination that attracted fishermen from all over South Africa for cheap holidays.

Figure 48 was taken in the mid 1970's at the Estuary Mouth.

The result of Figure 48 was the town's economy being based on fishermen and local holiday makers. The urban design and development reflects this when taking into account McKenzie Street's proximity to the lake and that the predominant landuse was holiday accommodation. Please refer to point 5.5.1.3 for an aerial photograph documentation of St. Lucia towns development.

The only design consideration for any development was to be cheap and to accommodate as many fishermen as possible. No consideration was given to maintaining public access to the lake.

As more and more development took place private accommodation facilities started to create a buffer between the lake and the rest of the town, supporting the socio-economic problems we are facing now.



48 Fishing at the Estuary Mouth 1976

5.5.1.3 Photo documentation of the town's development
1937 - 2006



49 St.Lucia 1937. Before dredging activities in the lake









53 Aerial view of St.Lucia 1937



54 Aerial view of St.Lucia 1981.



1956 (Brits, private collection)



1972 (Williams, private collection)



2006

55 The development of McKenzie Street

5.5.1.4 CHANGING CONTEXT

“St Lucia is a town with an interesting historical context and a strong “sense of place”. Many South Africans have come here in the past 70 to 80 years for fishing, and more recently for nature conservation holidays. Nowadays, there are new pressures on the town imposed by the local and international tourists attracted by the World Heritage Site status of the area. The nature of St Lucia is changing, and this needs to be guided so that it does not, with unguided development, lose its character to become a tacky tourist venue.” (Taylor, 2006, Letter of Support)

5.5.1.4.1 World Heritage Status

With the community succeeding in stopping the proposed dune mining scheme, The Greater St.Lucia Wetland Park achieved World Heritage Site status.

This meant that St.Lucia now not only attracted fishermen, but a visitor that wanted to experience nature in a different way.

This opened up a new range of possible economic opportunities for the whole community.

This also meant that business owners, residents and visitors alike were encouraged to re evaluate their position towards nature.

5.5.1.4.2 Beach Driving Ban

Beach driving was a major role player in the local economy of St.Lucia. It was a privilege and luxury South African fishermen and 4x4 enthusiasts were prepared to spend a lot of money on.

When beach driving was banned in 2000, St.Lucia lost ninety percent of its target market with huge economic implication.

Business owners were forced to start and cater for a new target market. This target market was foreign tourists, interested in eco- tourism activities.

This implies that the infrastructure created to cater for cheap fishing holidays now does not suite the new context.

Compare Figure 56, showing the current situation regarding beach driving and fishing with Figure 48, to fully understand the changed context.



56 Fishing at the Estuary Mouth, December 2006.
(Compare this photo to Figure 48)

5.5.1.4.3 Foreign Tourism

Achieving World Heritage Site status meant that St.Lucia, rapidly, became a global destination attracting a variety of people.

Combining the World Heritage status with the beach driving ban and it becomes easy to understand that for a few years St.Lucia was almost entirely dependant on the new foreign tourism market for economic survival.

Businesses were forced to adapt to the changing context as a matter of continued existence. St.Lucia is competing against global destinations bringing with it new needs and pressures.

The lake that the town had turned it back to through previous planning and development and which was only utilized for recreational fishing was now looked at as a major asset in eco- tourism, catering to the need of the new type of visitor.

5.5.1.4.4 Current response to changing context

St.Lucia is a town situated within the Greater St.Lucia Wetland Park and is currently undergoing changes in response to the changing economical and social conditions.

The town is under pressure to sustain the local community and without guidance could very easily change into a "Tacky" tourist destination. (Taylor, 2006, Letter of support)

This concern is realized when the current response to the changing context is examined: Old establishment and businesses that used to cater to the outdated context are applying 'cheap camouflaging' to themselves in response to the changing needs. A "Las Vegas" style advertisement approach is being implemented without really addressing the socio-economic problems St.Lucia town is facing. This further strengthens the existing buffer between the town and the surrounding natural splendors through wildly colored signage, shallow ecological interpretations and exotic palm trees, further damaging the already wounded image of St.Lucia town.

Figure 57 is not the perceived image of a village situated within a World Heritage Site. Major economical opportunities are being overlooked and the local community is not benefiting



58 Ostentatious signage with pictures of animals

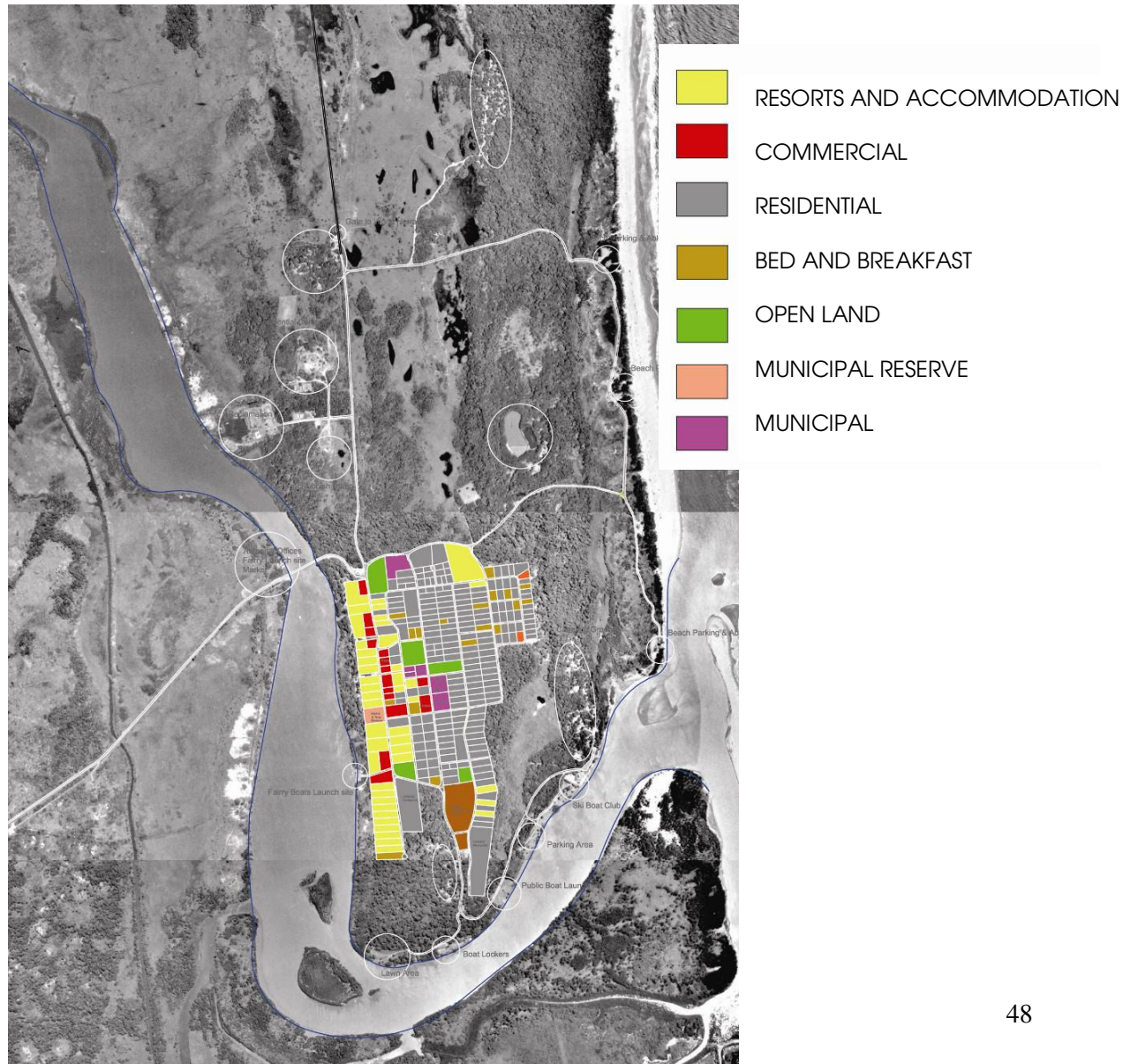


57 Not the image of a world class destination

5.5.2 LAND USE

St.Lucia consists mostly out of private residential property. Resorts, holiday accommodation and commercial ventures are all clustered along McKenzie Street, the heart of economic activity in St.Lucia. Please refer to the land use diagram Figure 59.

Although the town is situated within a World Heritage Site and McKenzie Street is situated only 100 meter away from the lake's edge – The town is not connected to the Lake. There are four municipal reserves that are intended to function as public access, connecting the town and the lake. However they do not succeed. For information regarding the reserves please refer to point 5.6.3.1 - 3.



59 Land use diagram for St.Lucia town

5.5.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUFFER SEPARATING TOWN AND LAKE

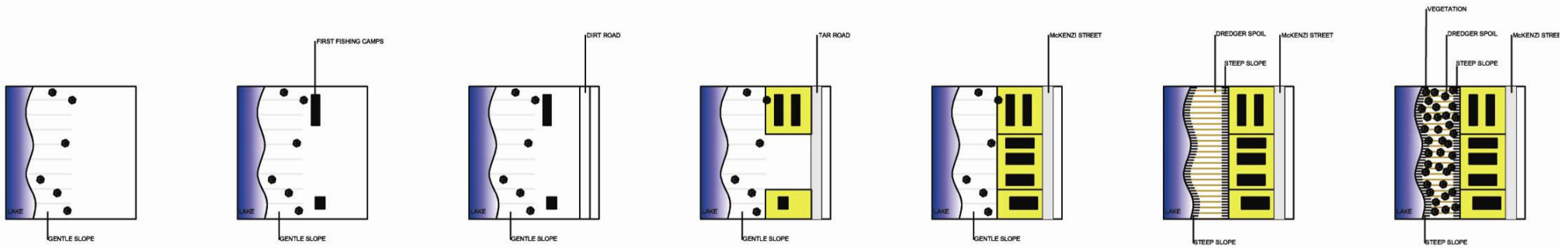


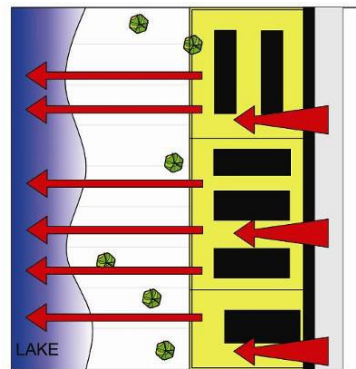
Figure 60 illustrates the development of the buffer that separates St.Lucia town from the lake.

The first buildings erected in St.Lucia were primitive fishing camps. They were placed in close proximity to the lake, just above the gradually sloping lake shore.

As news of the excellent fishing conditions spread more and more fishing camps were constructed. It was not long before these fishing camps turned into the first hotels catering to the need of exploiting fishermen.

The development of St.Lucia formalized with the addition of a road, McKenzi Street, and services being provided for the private property.

The rest of the town was connected to the lake, visually and other wise, because the private development were of such a nature that they were not dense but rather scattered over the landscape. Also the gaps in between the



60 Diagram showing the stages of the buffer development and current controlled access to the lake

property made it easy to filter through to the edge of the lake.

As time progressed the private developments became denser and brought with them walls and fences.

Access to the lake became more difficult for people not renting accommodation within the buffer.

The next stage in the development of the buffer was the dumping of dredger spoil all along the shore line. This resulted in the loss of the gradually sloping lake shore, covered in grassland, and replaced it with steep slopes and a swamp like base.

The exaggerated slopes and dredger spoil made access to the lake uncomfortable or impossible for pedestrians. The only way to access the lake from the private property was to construct elevated pathways and jetty structures.

The swamp like micro climate provided excellent conditions for plant to establish and was soon populated by woody plant and trees.

The tree screen and shrub undergrowth completely blocked the view of the lake and completed the total separation of the lake from the town.



5.5.4 Current Entrance

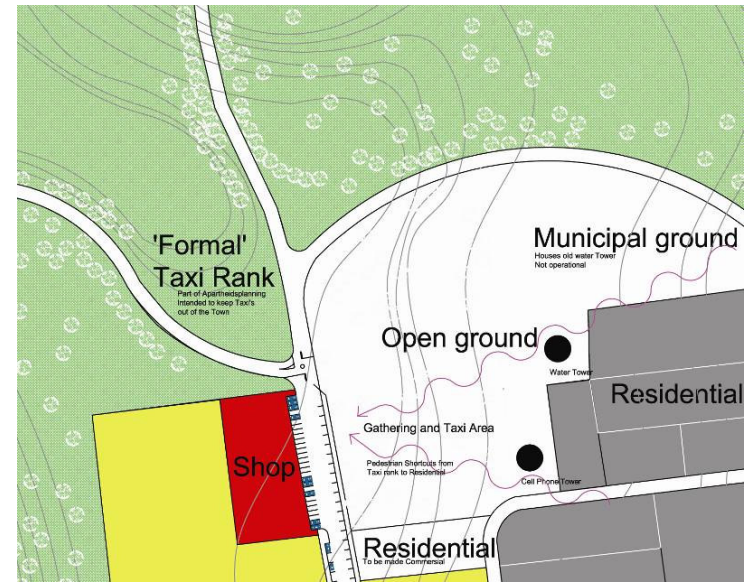
62 Photo of the entrance to St.Lucia town

Although the LSDI fails to recognize St.Lucia town as a lead project, refer to point 3.3.2, it does mention a potential projects involving the entrance of the town.

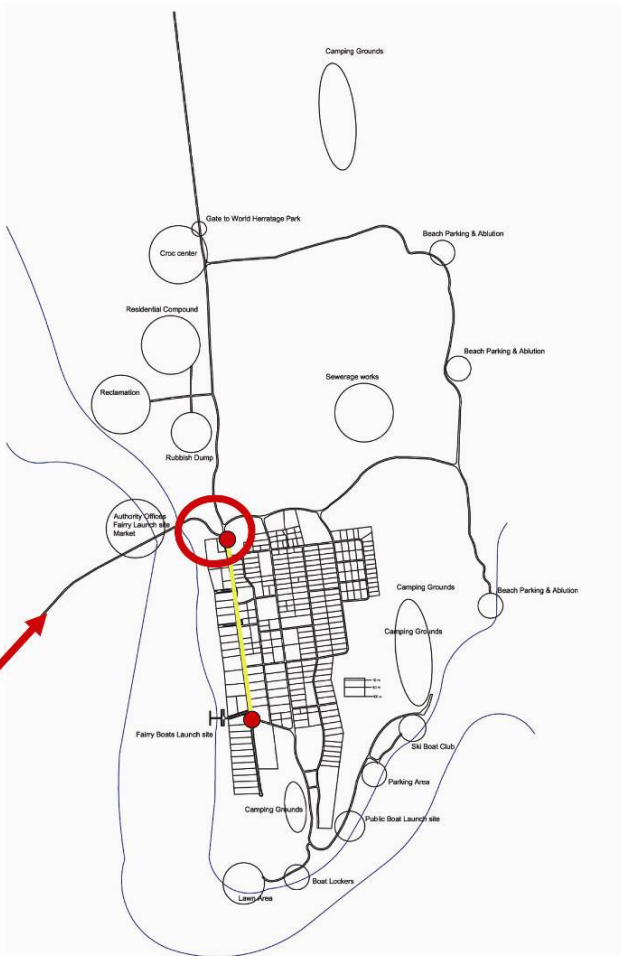
When taking into account that the only route to gain access to the Eastern Shores section of *The Greater St.Lucia Wetland Park* (GSWP) is through St.Lucia town it becomes clear that the entrance shown in figure 61 is not only the entrance to the town, but also the entrance to the GSWP. This emphasizes the importance of the entrance considering the GSWP is the anchor project within the LSDI to catalyze sustained economic growth within the whole north-east section of KwaZulu-Natal.

The LSDI describes the entrance as follows: "...an accommodation and cultural project at the entrance to St Lucia town, known as the Gateway Project. It is designed to provide significant benefits to rural residents." (Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, 2006, 23)

The entrance also has specific value for this thesis considering its proximity and potential influence on the study area.

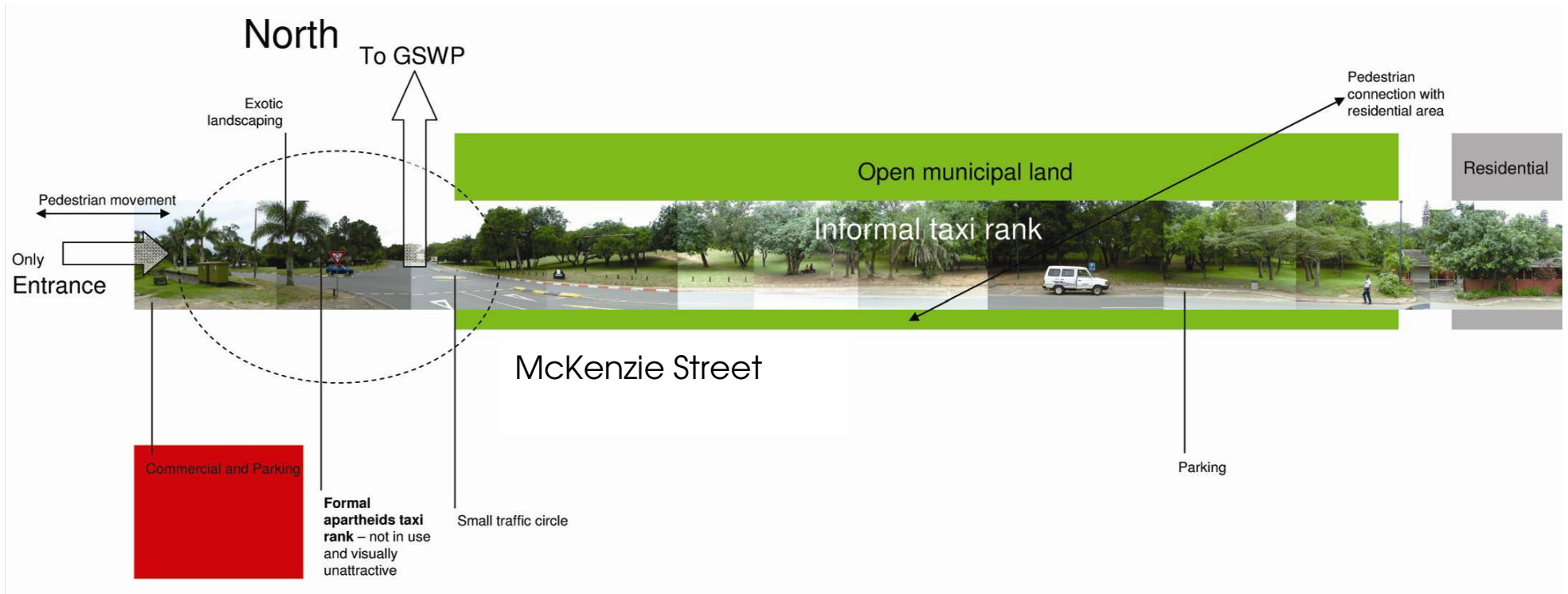


63 Plan of the entrance to St.Lucia town

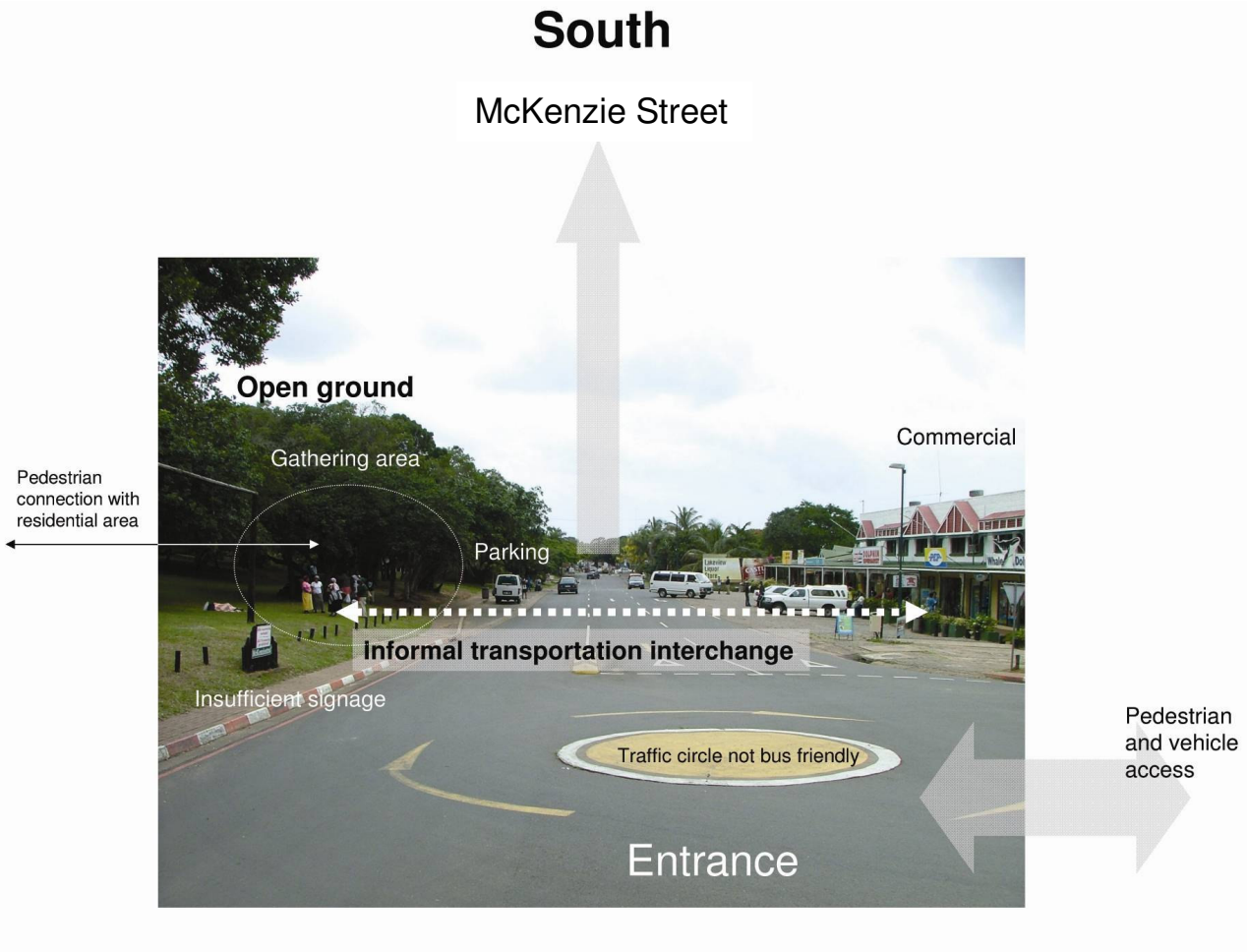


61 Diagram showing the single entrance point to St.Lucia. Also that the urban energy is held between two small traffic circles

5.5.5 Entrance analysis



64 Diagram analyzing the existing conditions of the entrance to St.Lucia



As illustrated in Figures 64 and 65 there is only one access road leading into St.Lucia town. The road is not only used by vehicles but by a large number of pedestrians moving between St.Lucia and Dukuduku.

The Entrance is used as a transportation interchange, especially for minibus taxis. The formal taxi rank is abandoned - It is not integrated into the urban fabric, constructed in the apartheid era, and was intended to keep taxis out of St.Lucia.

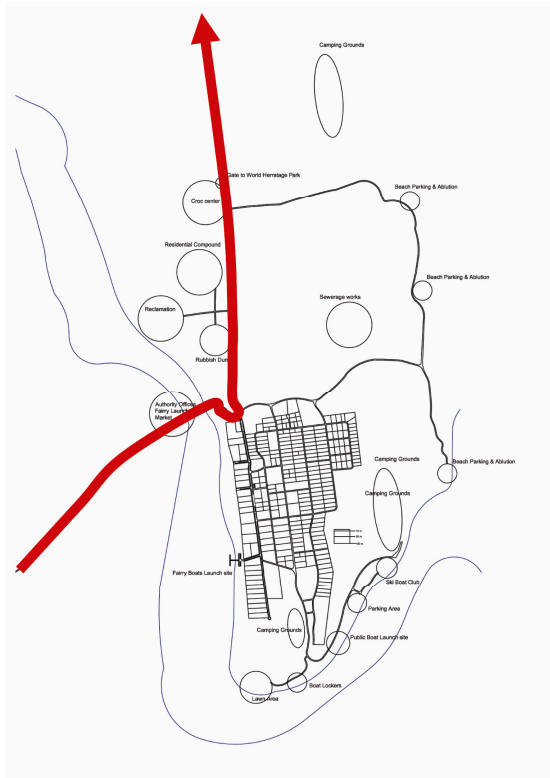
An informal taxi rank developed under the trees on a piece of municipal open ground. This area functions well. It is located across from a supermarket and pedestrians can easily filter through into the residential area via footpaths.

The landscaping consists of exotic palm species, insufficient signage and a traffic circle that is not bus friendly.

65 Diagram analyzing the existing conditions of the entrance to St.Lucia

5.5.6 Entrance concept

To GSWP

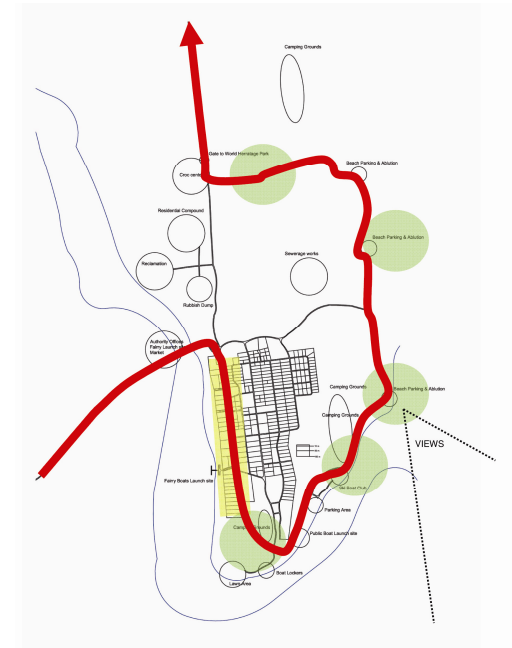


If the Gateway Project as mentioned in the LSDI is implemented without recognizing the development proposed by this thesis, the scenario illustrated in Figure 66 will develop, ignoring existing development potential within the town.

If however the whole town is perceived as being the gateway and the existing development potential is incorporated within a holistic framework, the scenario illustrated in Figure 67 will develop.

The model presented by Figure 67 maximizes the opportunities for economic growth and social development for the whole community. This model creates an 'entrance route' that takes the visitor, via all St. Lucia has to offer, to the GSWP. The 'entrance route' concept creates opportunities for eco-tourism projects to develop and attach themselves to the route. In so doing merging the natural and urban environment and reconnecting the town with nature.

To GSWP



66 Non-integrated approach to the entrance of St. Lucia

67 Holistic interpretation of the Gateway Project exploiting the development opportunities presented within the town



68 Proposed new entrance development. Compare with the current situation in Figure 63

Figure 68 proposes an intervention at the beginning of the 'entrance route'. A much bigger traffic circle that is bus friendly will regulate traffic and direct visitors. The circle respects pedestrians and their movement towards the beach and McKenzie Street. The open ground houses a tourist information center and a connection to the lake. A parking area acts as a taxi transportation interchange and respects the movement towards the shop and residential area

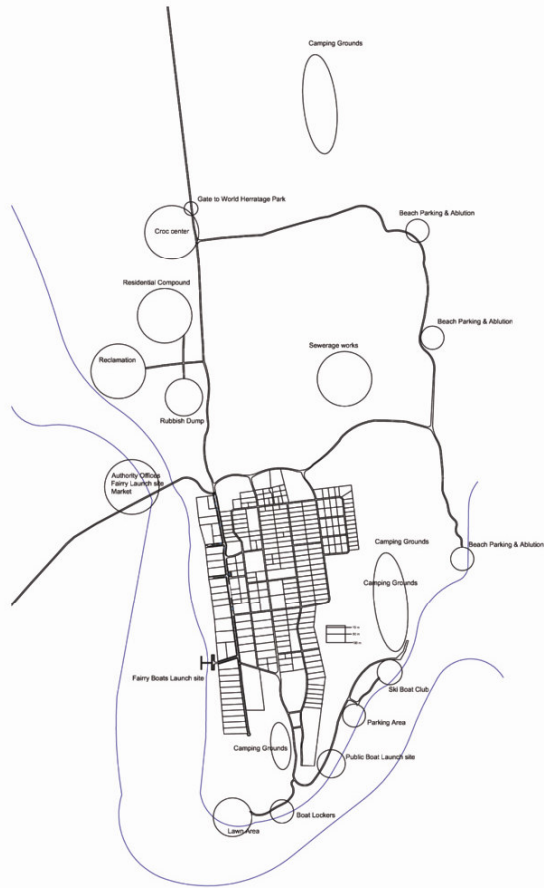
5.5.7 Proposed road connections

To execute the concept of St. Lucia town being the entrance to the GSWP the road network needs to be adjusted.

These adjustments are mainly two connections that will complete a double loop road network.

Currently the urban energy is held between two small traffic circles in McKenzie Street. Completing the double loop road network, as illustrated in Figures 69 to 71, will extend the energy generated by the commercial activities and circulate it in an eight pattern.

This will enable eco-tourism development to form along this route and in so doing help to reconnect the town with nature.



69 Diagram showing the road infrastructure of St.Lucia town with the municipal property boundaries



70 Gaps in the road network, creating problems with the energy flow within the urban fabric



71 Diagram showing the proposed road connections completing the double loop road network, in so doing extending the energy generated by McKenzi Street and circulating it in an eight pattern