



“One of the top 10 Zoos in the World needs a proper forecourt.”

(Prinsloo, J. 2010, during MProf. June exams)



figure 27. panoramic photo of zoo corner



chapter 3 the proposal



3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The entrance to the National Zoological Gardens' entrance lacks the presence and stature needed for a successful and international tourist attraction. The Northern gateway, defined by the Paul Kruger Street and Boom Street crossing is understated to the extent that visitors coming from the north might not even realize they have entered the city.

Paul Kruger Street chicanes over green hills

into the city and sets up for a majestic entrance, but the impact is quickly lost when natural elements turn into the degenerating Northern suburb of the CBD.

It is at this junction that one fully experiences the dissociation of the natural elements to the North and the built environment of the city. The Zoo lies between these green hills and the bustle of Boom Street. With only a few trees on the sidewalks, nature seems to be an afterthought in the region.

The architecture and layout of the entrance to the zoo completely blocks the view that visitors might have of the natural elements contained by the Zoo and its surrounding areas.

The portion of Boom Street in front of the Zoo also lacks pedestrian orientated activity on the sidewalks, as well as at the entrance to zoo. It is vital to add an activity factor to this area in order to turn it into a truly recognized tourist site.

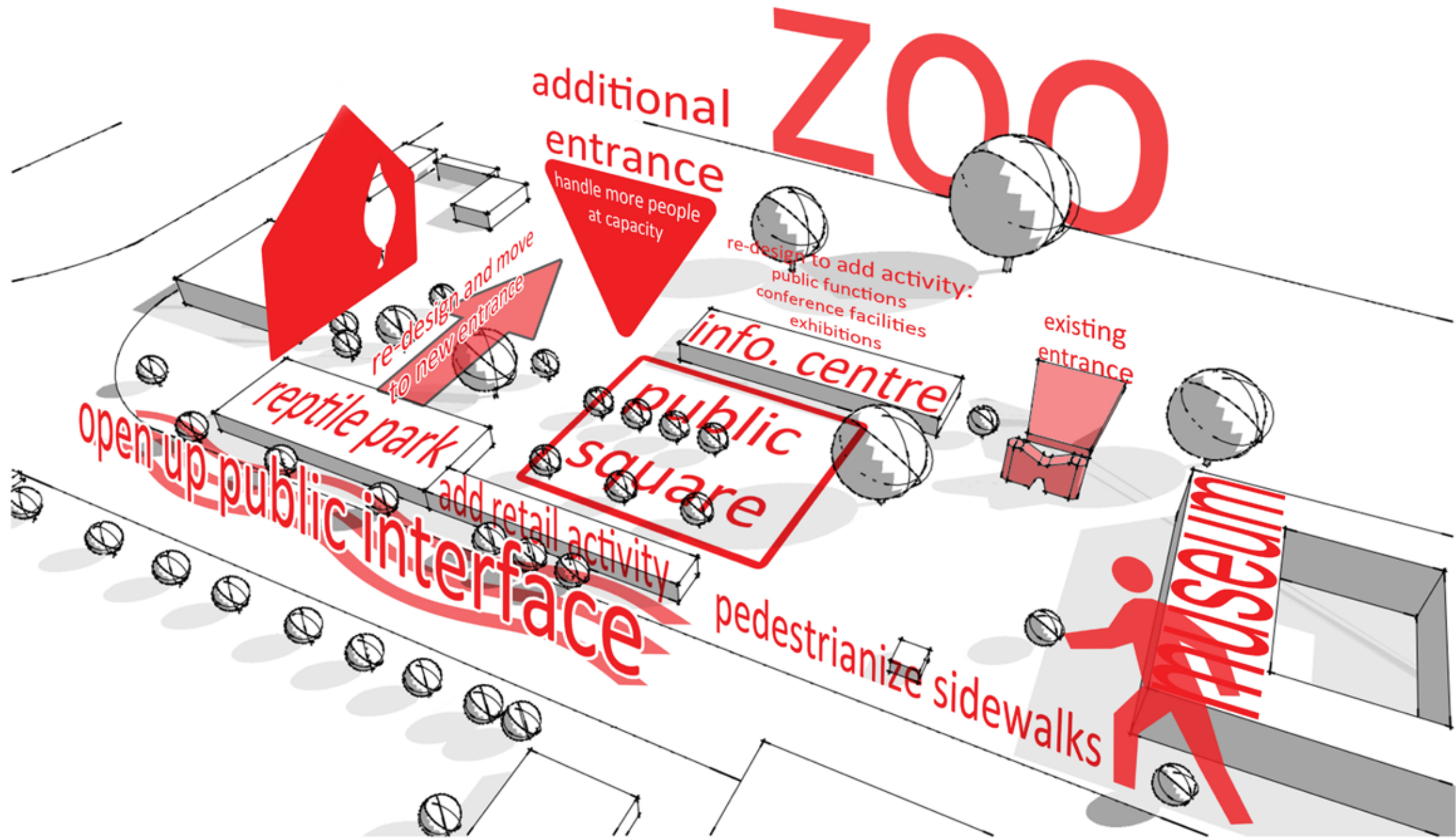


figure 28.

3d of proposed programme & intervention

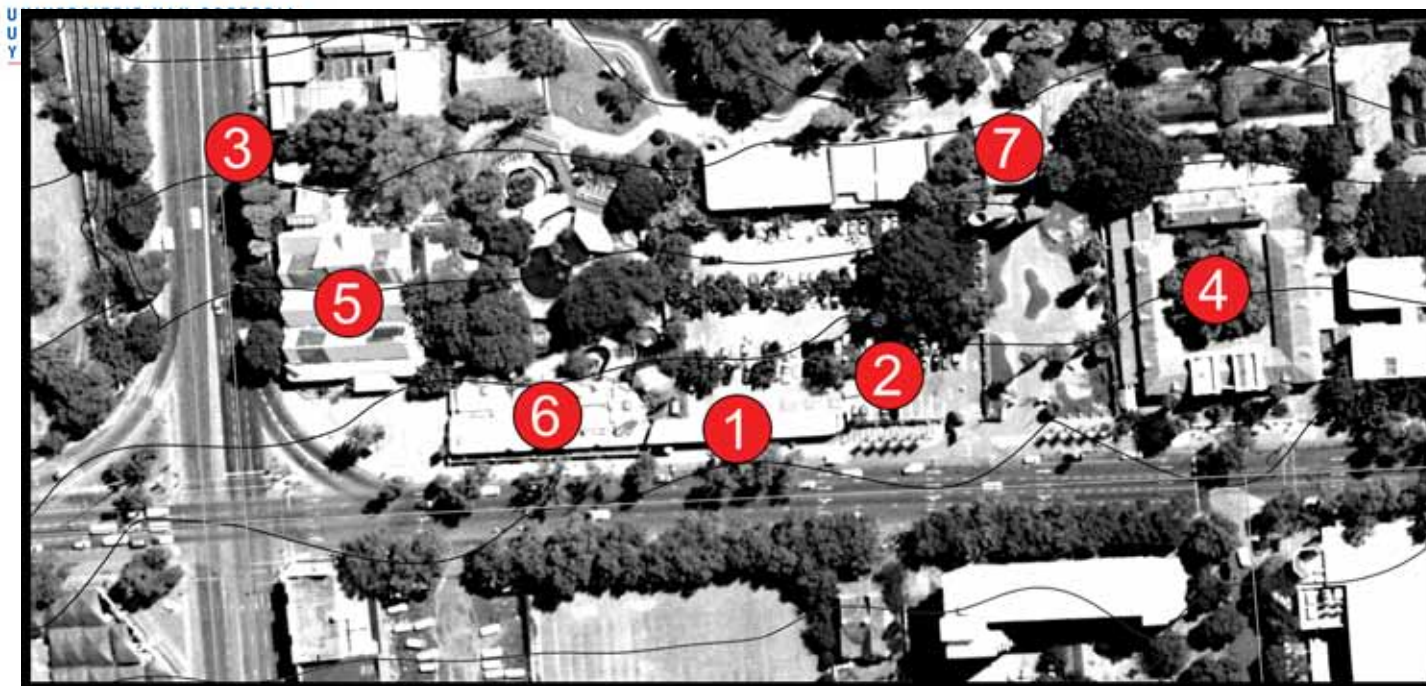


figure 29. location map of context



1. trade stalls



4. state museum

3.2.1 EXISTING PROGRAMME

Currently the chosen site hosts a series of buildings with different functions. All the buildings are associated with the Zoo and, except for the trade stalls (1), there are no public services or functions that are freely accessible from Boom Street. After paying the entrance fee, visitors have to pass through the gated entrance (2), in order to access any of the activities hosted by the Zoo. The Zoo is surrounded by a palisade fence (3), which evolves into the portal to the Zoo's parking (2). This is confusing for first time visitors.

An integration of its entries, coupled with pedestrian activity and public function, in this boundary serves a much better resolution than to use up space that can be better utilized by the Zoo.

The State Museum (4) is obscured by high walls and gates and serves no public function. The information centre, which is only accessible from within the Zoo, is greatly under-utilized. It only serves as an auditorium for the Zoo itself and houses a few administrative offices. The back of the information centre forms the largest

barrier between the parking lot and the zoo. The Aquarium (5) and Reptile enclosures (6), though both vital exhibitions at the Zoo, does a great injustice to the gateway into the city, as well as the Zoo. They are situated right up to the sidewalk against Paul Kruger and Boom Street, and forms a hard impenetrable edge that breaks down the legibility of the Zoo's entrance. The Zoo's main gate (7) is completely obscured by the Reptile enclosure, and also blocks any view of the natural softscaping that the Zoo offers.



2. vehicle gate & parking lot



3. palisade fence



7. zoo entrance



5. aquarium



6. reptile enclosure

- figure 30. aerial photo showing position of programme
- figure 31. photo of trade stalls
- figure 32. photo of vehicle gate & parking lot
- figure 33. photo of palisade fence around zoo
- figure 34. photo of state museum
- figure 35. photo of aquarium from boom street
- figure 36. photo of reptile park from boom street
- figure 37. photo of pedestrian zoo entrance

It is apparent that zoos all around the world are moving into a new paradigm in terms of the activities and functions they provide. Zoological Gardens were originally built to house animals for the public's viewing pleasure. It was almost an inhumane spectacle, as animals were trained to perform tricks, while the actual care of the animals was understated to their entertainment value.

In the early 1980's, with the emergence of animal protection groups, emphasis was placed on changing the manner in which

animals were treated at these facilities. In the past 30 years zoos have changed their focus to the conservation of the animals in their care and the protection of endangered species.

We are on the verge of yet another shift, as zoos start to engage in biological research and breeding programs to ensure the existence of thousands of animal species on our planet. More attention should be paid to public activities hosted by the zoos themselves, because these projects are only possible with the involvement of the public sector.

The NZG's Strategic Plan states that it is one of their biggest ambitions to educate the public in matters of conservation and ecology. This seems ambitious as this information is only available to the general public by paying to enter the Zoo. Restricting this information is counter-productive to the Zoo's goals. By making the information freely available it will create opportunities to attract interested parties to their goals. Public perception of the Zoo will improve and more people will be educated on matters of conservation and other vital ecological issues.



3.2.2 PRECEDENT STUDY

Architects: BAU Architects

Project: Urban Zoo

Location: Tokyo, Japan.

This precedent was chosen as a study in programme development.

“The zoo, as a place where you experience live animals, has gone from being a garden with caged animals to a cultural experience. Similar to scientific museums or public libraries” (www.b-a-u.dk).

BAU architects suggests that the traditional zoological gardens, that previously only functioned as a weekend destination for the family, will now change into being an integrated part of modern life. “The future zoo will become a centre of knowledge, actively interacting with the surrounding society” (www.b-a-u.dk).

The project proposes vertical structures that will become environmental landmarks with views of the modern city. Most importantly, the proposal combines holistic biotypes with changing exhibitions, new media and scientific research in an urban context.

Urban Zoo hosts a series of public functions, both educational and entertaining, in order to attract more people into the zoo. These functions ultimately create a better public perception of the goals and desires of the zoo. This motivates public sector investment and participation of the local community in projects that the zoo initiates on a smaller scale.



figure 38. artist impression of urban zoo



figure 39. sections of urban zoo

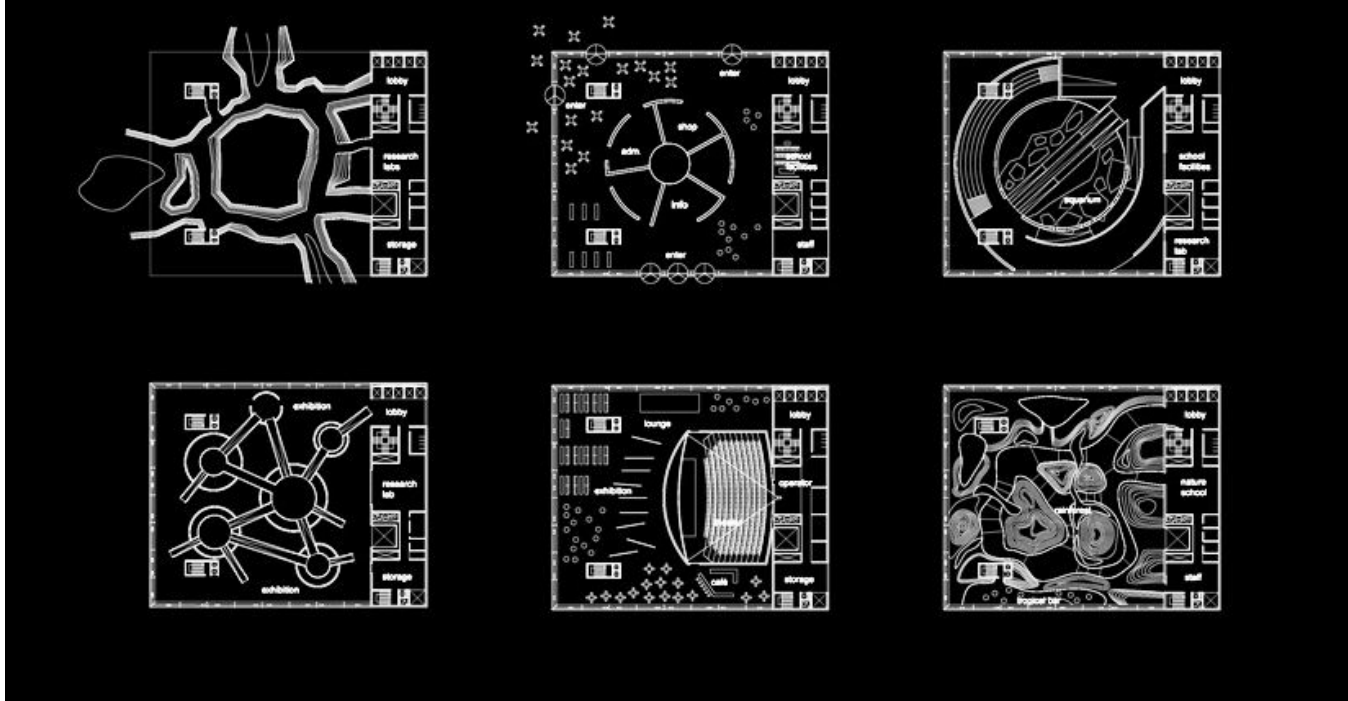


figure 40. floor plans of urban zoo

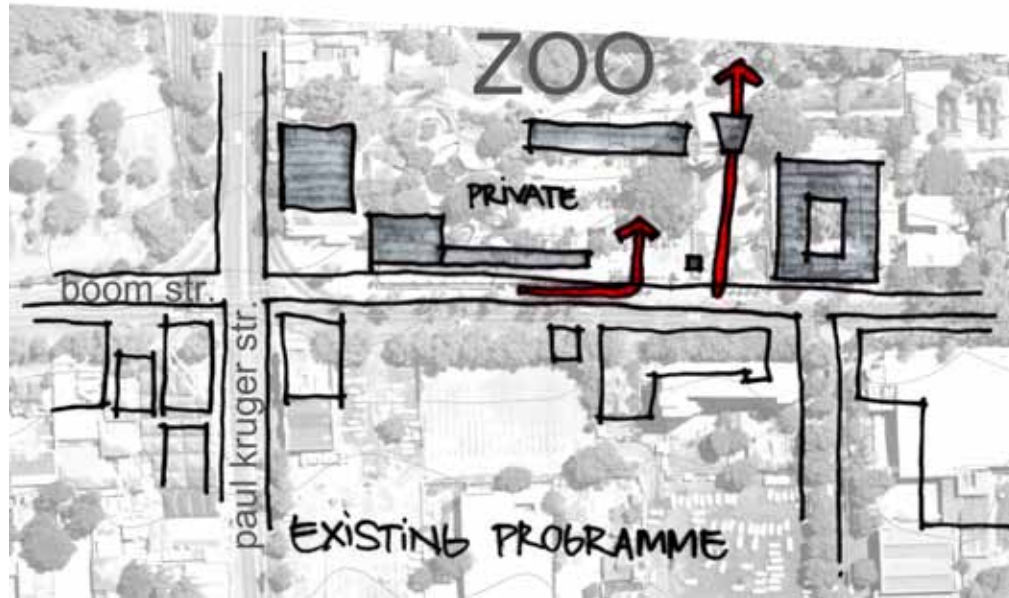


figure 41. existing programme with one entrance

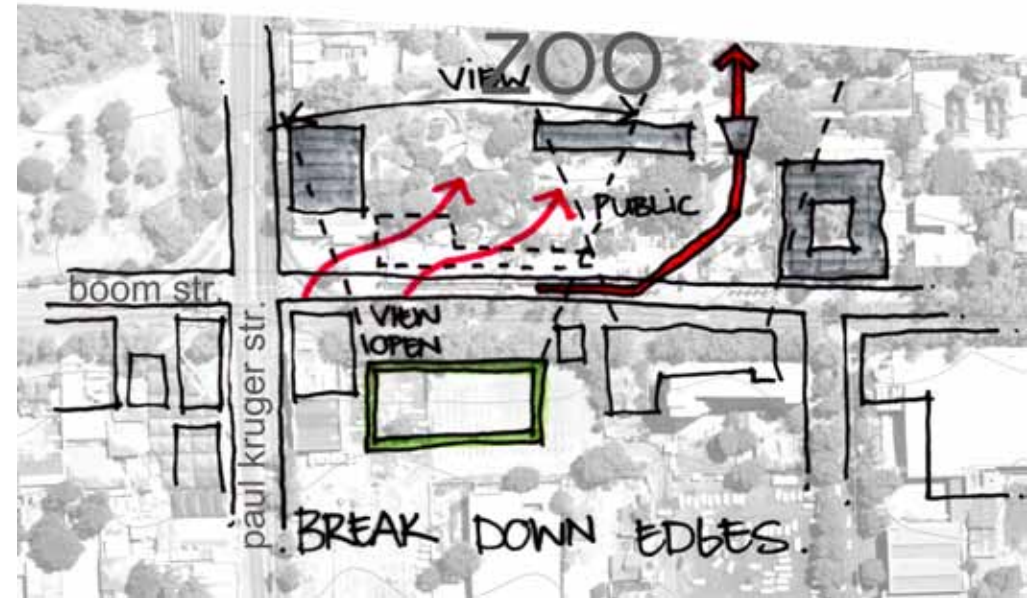


figure 42. hard edges removed. creates views for context buildings

3.3 PROPOSED PROGRAMME

The concern of the proposal deals with the issue of re-designing the “face” of the Zoo. This implies breaking down the hard edges, pronouncing the gateway to the city and the entrance to the Zoo, introducing 24hr public activities and publicizing the conservational aspect that the Zoo has at its core.

The Zoo is a landmark in Pretoria and the public interface should reflect that in an international way.

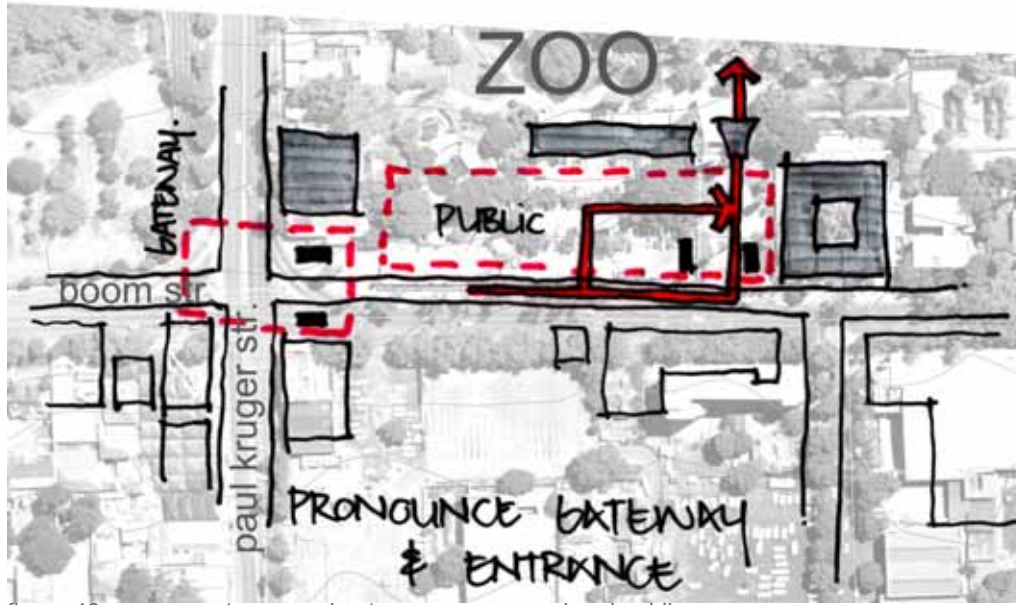


figure 43. gateway and entrance pronounced and public square added

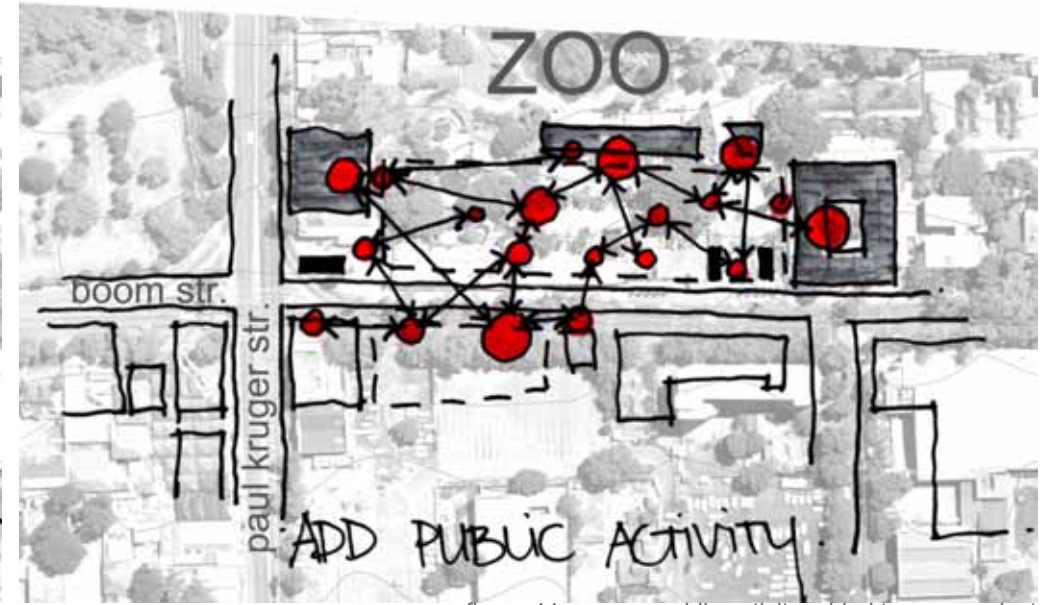


figure 44. public activity added to zoo precinct



3.3.1 THE PUBLIC FACE

As previously discussed, the public face of the Zoo along Boom Street lacks a pedestrian interface that is not only engaging, but will also draw people into the Zoo. Some informal trade happens on the Southern sidewalks, but the only trade activity offered along the Zoo's edge is the curios sales next to the existing zoo parking.

“The formalising of informal trade is pivotal in addressing South Africa's imbalanced first-third world existence. Without the ubiquitous mini-bus taxis”, and the trade activity associated with them, “our local economy would be grossly impoverished and the social and economical lives of the majority of South Africans severely curtailed” (Lipman, 2009, 10 Years 100 Buildings, p. 140).

The proposal introduces covered informal trade along Boom Street. This will engage the project with the general public, create income opportunities for the local community, and establish a pedestrianised interface to the entrance to the Zoo. The informal trade will be linked with new facilities for the curios sales. This will form a permeable entrance to the new retail square. All of these features will combine to create an open and inviting approach to the zoo experience.

On the South-Eastern edge of the Zoo's grounds, four empty greenhouses are situated between tall trees and protected by the Prinshof School to the South. These greenhouses create the perfect setting for a local community project to grow and sell their own fresh produce. All the

produce can be sold in the informal market at the Zoo, or to the restaurants and cafés in the public square. As an incentive to the Zoo, all the waste materials collected from the markets and restaurants can be used as feed for animals, or go back to composting at the greenhouses. This initiative will not only empower the community members involved in the project, but can also serve as additional exhibition space for school trips visiting the Zoo.



figure 45. public activity added to zoo precinct



3.3.2 THE PUBLIC ZONE

The transitional space between the hardscape of the city and the softscaping of the Zoo is a vital area in the proposal, and will greatly enhance the inclusion of public functions. An open public square and a retail component will attract more people into the area, and facilitate the public “face” of the Zoo. This will create opportunities for 24hr activity in the precinct, and increase the urban density of the area, as proposed by the urban framework.

When the public features are coupled with zoo functions, the public zone becomes more than a ‘stop-and-shop’ experience; it adds an instructive factor that benefits ecological awareness and the Zoo’s efforts to educate the community.

PUBLIC SQUARE

The public square forms the unifying element in the proposal, as all other interventions are accessible from here. More importantly; it is here that the public can gather to not only enjoy views of the natural environment in the zoo, but to relax and break away from the frantic city.

Various retail shops and restaurants will spill out onto the square, offering visitors a unique shopping and dining experience in the zoo environment. Ultimately the square will form the forecourt, that the Zoo so desperately needs, in order to create a change in public perception.

“Squares and plazas are now becoming more animated and are probably the most utilized type of public space, especially when they are inhabited by cafés, bars and markets.” (Gaventa, 2006, p.18)

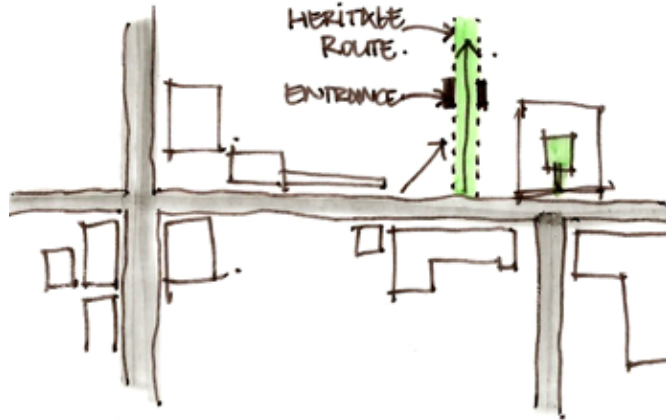
“In a global marketplace the image of individual cities is increasingly important. Governments are encouraging city authorities to work with the private sector to invest in urban design and regeneration, and new city squares are providing the focus for this activity.” (Gaventa, 2006, p.23)



figure 46.

artist impression of public square

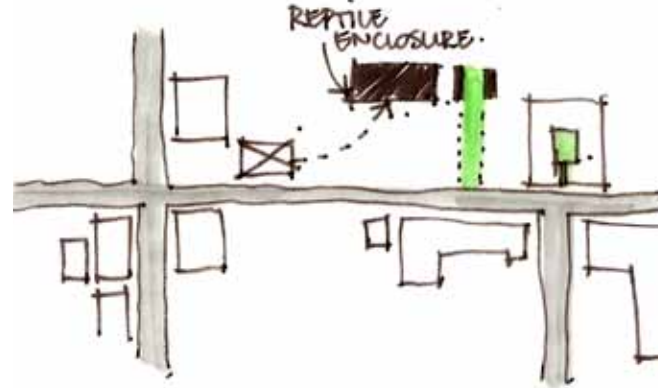
figure 47. entrance diagram



ENTRANCE

On peak days such as public and school holidays, the Zoo can receive up to 16 000 visitors a day. Even though this is extremely advantageous to the Zoo, a problem exists with handling the mass volume of people moving into the Zoo. The single entrance to the Zoo is unable to efficiently deal with the queuing of so many people, processing of ticket sales and security checks at the gates. The proposal introduces an improved centralized entrance, able to carry the maximum number of visitors, while offering them an entertaining experience. Visitors can choose to move through the reptile park that spills out onto the new entrance, or move through the square directly to the entrance. The entrance is situated on the Heritage route that has been present at the Zoo since its inception, and forms part of our development framework. It hosts heritage buildings and runs parallel to the State Museum.

figure 48. reptile park diagram

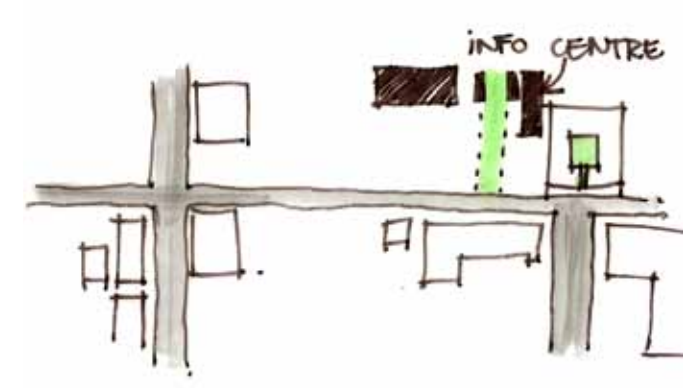


REPTILE PARK

The existing Reptile enclosure, situated next to Boom Street, will be demolished and new facilities will be proposed next to the new entrance. This will break down the built barriers that currently hide the Zoo's entrance from the public, and create a more open approach to the Zoo.

Recently, the Zoo built new penguin and seal enclosures, to a very high quality, that provides visitors an unprecedented experience in the Zoo. The new reptile park should equal this quality of exhibitions, and provide an unique and enriching experience to everyone. The new enclosure will be linked to the new entrance of the zoo, and will be freely available to the general public from the open square. This is done to create an inviting atmosphere that will draw people into the area and break down the preconceptions that the zoo is structured around making money by showcasing caged animals.

figure 49. information centre diagram



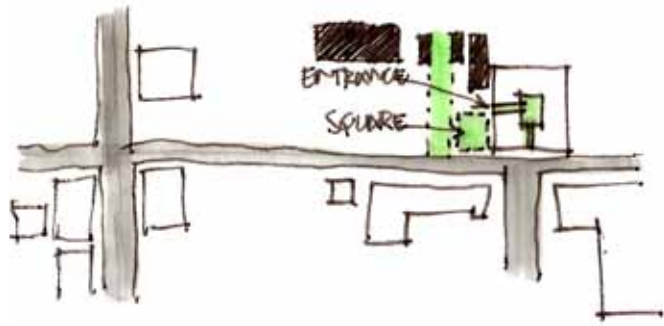
INFORMATION CENTRE

The new information centre will be located to the East of the entrance and is also accessible by the public.

The centre will host information on the exhibitions currently available inside the Zoo, but also on future plans and interventions that the Zoo will be involved in.

The aim is to attract and educate people in the ecological issues that the Zoo concerns itself with, and hopefully get them involved in these projects. The roof of the information centre, which links up with the restaurant and gallery space on the first level, will serve as a viewing deck for the public to relax on and enjoy views of the Zoo.

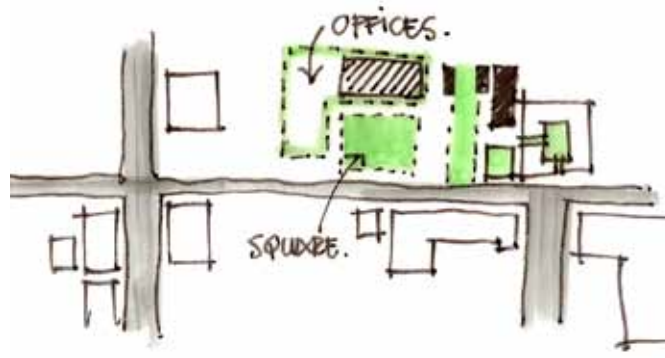
figure 50. state museum diagram



THE STATE MUSEUM

It is rumoured that a proposal to renovate the State Museum has been drawn up, and re-program it to serve as the new Life Sciences Museum. Unfortunately information on the proposal is very vague, and no clients responsible for the funding of this project can be identified. The thesis proposal responds to the Museum by proposing that a newer addition to the museum, along its Western edge, be demolished to expose the side entrance to the Museum. This entrance will lead directly into the public square in front of the new entrance. This space will serve as a heritage square, responding to surrounding heritage houses, routes, the museum, and the existing trees on site.

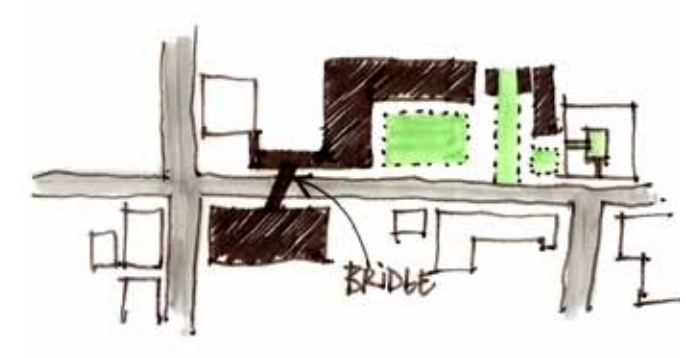
figure 51. offices diagram



OFFICES

The Zoo has a close affiliation with many governmental and non-governmental organizations associated with conservation, animal protection, ecological issues and research foundations. The proposal creates a platform for closer integration between the Zoo and these entities by providing office space for them on the premises. These offices can be integrated into the information centre, so that the general public can access information on them as well.

figure 52. linkage diagram



LINKAGE

Andries Haasbroek (MProf. 2010) proposes a city parking lot on the open lot South of the Zoo entrance with specialty parking for the Zoo. The parking lot and the new Zoo facilities will be linked with a pedestrian bridge crossing Boom Street.

The bridge will exit the parking structure on the first floor and re-enter the Zoo on top of the informal trade structures. Here visitors will be led over a walkway, with exceptional views of the Zoo, that lead into a restaurant and exhibition gallery in the main building, next to the public square. From here visitors can walk through the building to the information centre, or travel one floor down to access the retail and square facilities.

3.3.3 PRECEDENT STUDIES

Architects: Albonica, Sack, Mzumara Architects and MMA Architects

Project: Faraday Market

Location: Johannesburg CBD, South Africa

This precedent was chosen as a study in programme.

“The architectural intervention is a combination of existing and new structures”. “New and old have been combined with sensitivity, extending from mindful attention to the existing to independent, unobtrusive life for the new.” (Lipman, 2009, 10 Years 100 Buildings, p. 142)

The Faraday market functions as a mixed use development catering for all the needs of visitors, commuters, shopkeepers and the surrounding community.

Facilities include shelters for multi-traders, administration, storage, a semi-covered market and shelters for taxis and commuters. The site layout is logical and does not conform to a rigid grid, yet each building occupies its own territory and feel, while relating sensibly to the buildings around it.

It is a prime example of an urban market being used to the maximum of its capabilities, in order to create a place that is sensitive to South Africa’s culture, and at the same time expressing its own sense of place.

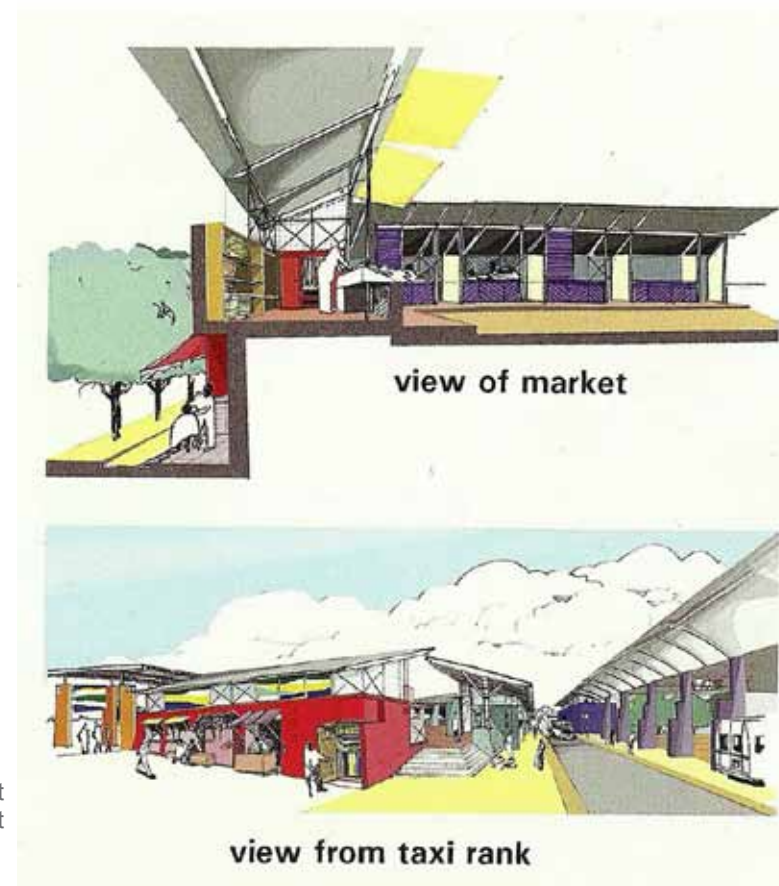


figure 53. artist impression of market

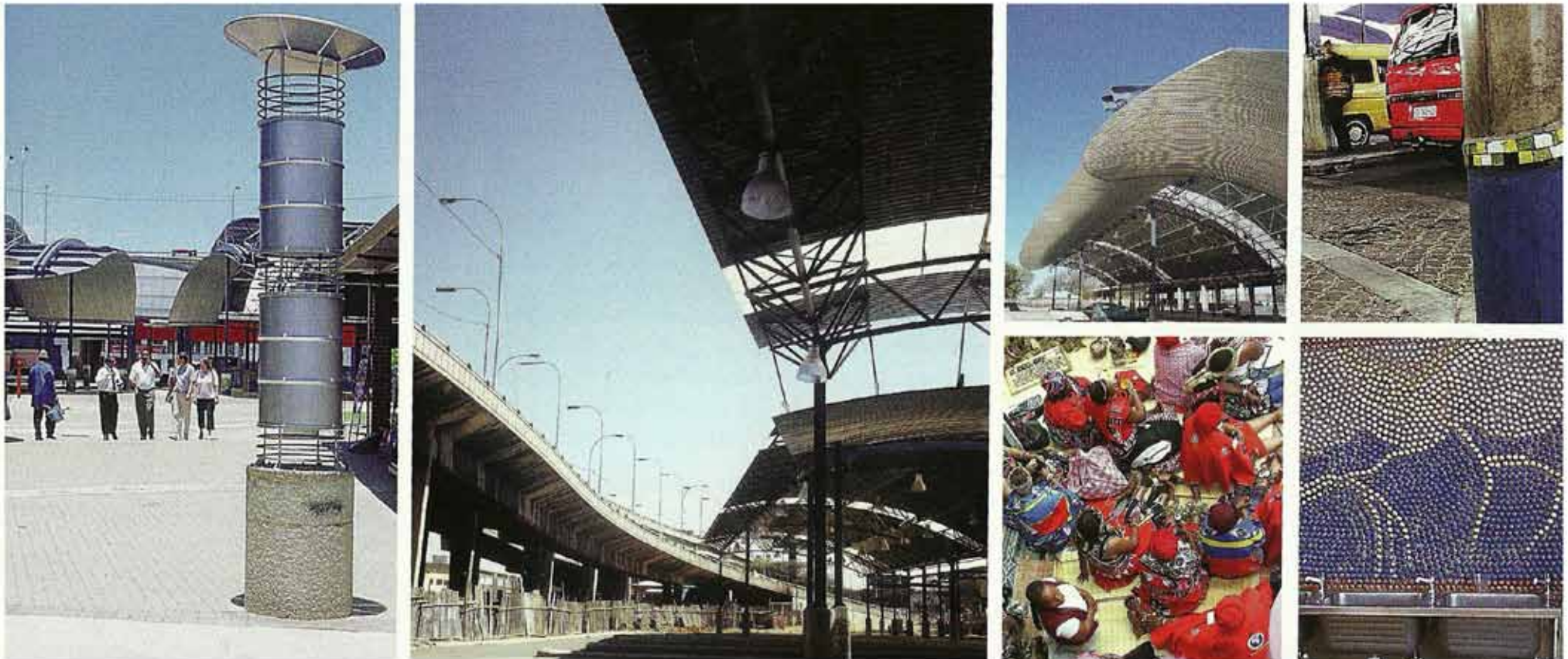


figure 54. photographs in and around market



Architects: LAB Architecture Studio

Project: Federation Square

Location: Melbourne, Australia

The precedent was chosen as a study in programme for urban squares.

“This has been a unique opportunity to create a new urban square in the heart of an already developed city. Its proximity to transport, tourist, and civic facilities has added to its popularity, as demonstrated by the fact that in the first year alone 6 million people visited Federation Square.” (Gaventa, 2006, p.18)

The project is a mix of galleries, cinemas, restaurants and venues in a cluster of buildings formed around an irregular civic square.

With its versatile sloping topography and raised planters, the square forms the focus of the development. The topography, planters, and surrounding cafés offer ample seating for people passing by, having lunch, or enjoying a music concert. The square is a formal events arena, and also caters to the needs of everyday users using the space as a stop between work and their personal lives.

The project acts as a catalyst for future developments, stitching back together two halves of the city that were previously disjoined by railway tracks that run across the squares current site.

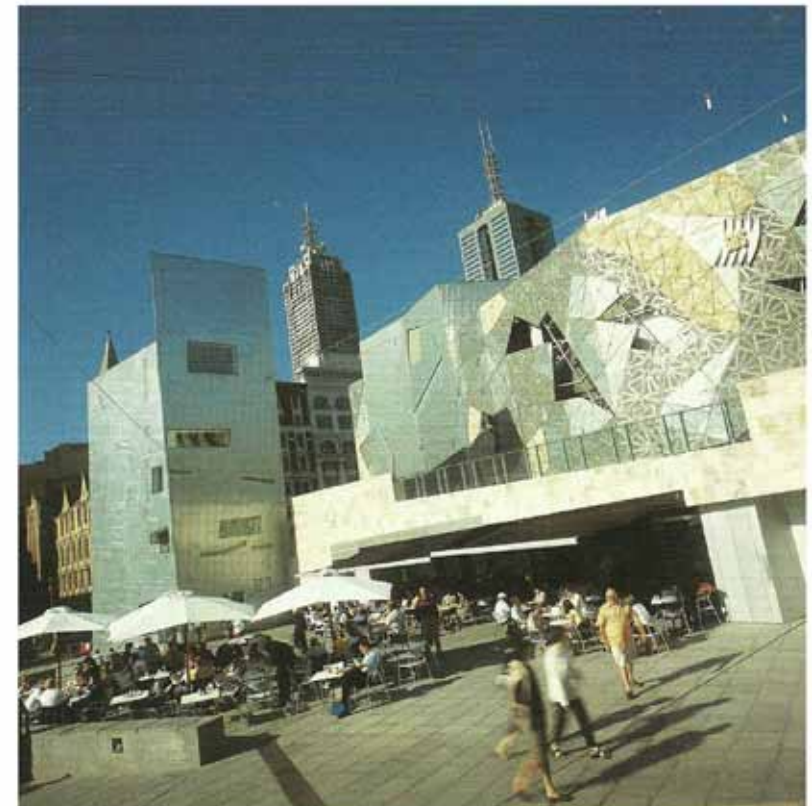


figure 55.

photograph of retail in square



figure 56. photographs of federation square