

TECHNICAL NOTE
DRAFT PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN
Central Area and CBD Extension Node Local Area Plan

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This technical note represents the Phase Two Deliverable for the Central Area and CBD Extension Node Local Area Plan.

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Urban Design Technical Note Prepared by
Sopna Kumar-Nair (Sopna.Nair@telkomsa.net)
Concepts Urban Design (Pty) Ltd



In association with



Glen Robbins
Yasmin Coovadia

Final Draft

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The purpose of this technical note is to assess the spatial and physical characteristics of the study area in terms of its natural, settlement and built form characteristics. The assessment synthesizes the current reality of the place in terms of the quality and character of the urban area and how it functions as a place for people. Focus is given to aspects relating to urban structure and form as well as public realm quality.

The intention of this situational analysis is:

- To develop an overall spatial perspective of the study area in terms of its natural and built context
- To assess key urban systems within the study area, with a particular focus on the character and quality of the public realm and built form as it relates to use by people.

The outcome will seek to highlight unique spatial qualities of the study area as well as its key development challenges with respect to the quality and character of the public realm, drawing out strengths, issues, problems, and potentials in terms of the above.

This technical note needs to be read in conjunction with the Planning Technical Note, which covers aspects of landuse and mix which is integral to the total understanding of the city as a place for people.

1.2 THE STUDY AREA

The study area is bound by the N3 to the east, Pine Street to the west, the Msunduzi River to the south, and the Railway Line to the north and west. The CBD Extension Node Situated northwest of the CBD includes a cluster of developed land parcels which include, Motor World; The Bird Sanctuary; Midlands Liberty Mall; and The Royal Agricultural Showground.

1.3 SECTORAL PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Current Spatial Policy informants at a District and Municipal level were analysed in order to understand the spatial & policy context of the study area. This was followed by a spatial assessment of the study area done predominantly through a visual analysis as well as a photo survey of the area.

The site survey confirms trends, issues, problems and potentials as they are currently and also assists in the critical analysis of recommendations that have emerged from previous studies.

The following documentation and sources were referred to in the investigation:

- Msunduzi Spatial Development Framework Review (July 2009)
- CBD, Ashburton and Eastern Areas Area Based Management: Spatial Development Review (March 2010)
- Managing change in the Pietermaritzburg Central Business District (September 2002)
- Local Development Plan for the Pietermaritzburg Msunduzi Central Area (August 1999)
- Msunduzi Municipality Inner City Residential Strategy & Prioritized Implementation Programme: Final Draft (September 2004)
- Pietermaritzburg /Msunduzi CBD Extension Node Development Framework Draft Document (July 2000)
- Proposed Environmental Management Framework for the Msunduzi Municipality: Specialist Heritage Resource Study (September 2008)
- Edendale / Northdale Public Transport Corridor Study (May 2006)
- Dorpspruit Waterway, Umosha Development (2003)
- Railway Station Report
- Pietermaritzburg, Church Street: A Space of Choice, A New Urbanity (June 2004)

2 POLICY ENVIRONMENT

2.1 LEGISLATION/POLICY

The legislative and policy context is elaborated in the Planning Technical note and sets the context for the urban design assessment.

2.2 SECTORAL PLANNING FOR STUDY AREA

The focus of the sectoral planning research is to identify the key spatial & public realm proposals developed for the study area.

2.2.1 MSUNDUZI SDF (2009)

The SDF identifies a hierarchal system of nodes for the Municipality based on existing levels and patterns of development, and the distribution of future development and transport linkages.

The CBD Node is identified as the heart of the City and consists of the core and the 'frame,' which refers to green edge and surrounding areas of the city. The SDF identifies the core as the area containing the full range of uses associated with a CBD, and the 'frame' as accommodating transitional uses at a lesser density. The CBD extension node, which includes the recently developed Motor World, the Bird Sanctuary Site, the Midlands Mall and the Royal Agricultural Society, is identified as a part of the CBD Node.

The Liberty Midlands Mall and surrounding area in the CBD extension node is identified as a Regional multi-use node due to its retail component which is between 75 000 m² and 120 000 m², attracting a regional populace.

The Dorpspruit Waterway and Waterfront along the Dorpspruit River north of the central CBD is identified as a potential area for catalytic redevelopment and upgrade.

The Alexandra Park on the southern edge of the study area is identified as a green lung for the city to be enhanced and maintained in order to continue providing multi-functional amenities to the city.

Camps Drift on south western edge of the study area is identified as is an underutilized asset within the city. The canal portion of the drift has developed into a canoeing area but there are large portions of under utilised land stretching from French road through to the weir. Opportunities for the establishment of a Waterfront development in this area have been debated for several years and could form the catalyst for the future development of this area.

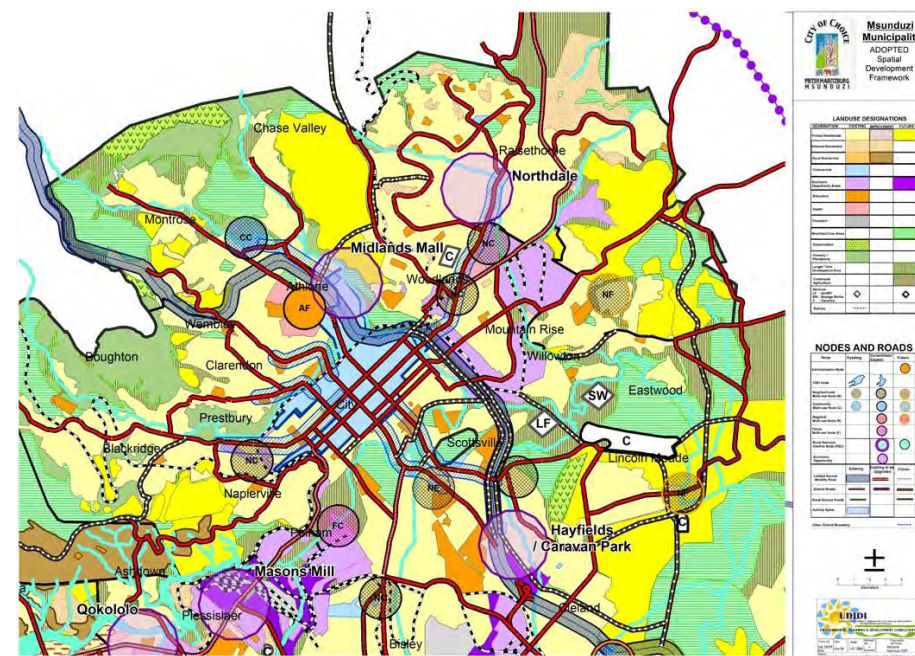


Figure i. Msunduzi Adopted SDF 2009

2.2.2 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR PIETERMARITZBURG - MSUNDUZI TLC – CENTRAL AREA (1999)

The spatial development plan proposed the following key urban design interventions & strategies:

Public transport:

- Upgrade and improve transport interchange nodes in the City
- Make the central area a pedestrian friendly space
- Promote mixed land use at public transport nodes
- Promote multi-functional use of streets
- Establish continuous connections to surrounding urban fabric.

Frame/ River greenbelt:

- Develop the Msunduzi River as a multi-functional open space which is integrated with the city's fabric

Urban Space:

- Develop catalytic urban spaces that will trigger a range of secondary projects including urban renewal

- Develop proper facilities for street markets such as stalls, ablution facilities, waste removal, water and storage facilities
- Develop Church Street Mall further
- Define an interlinked hierarchy of public spaces, precincts, squares, markets, streets, parks and promenades
- Utilise strong street layouts to create urban street spaces

Environmental and Landscape Strategy:

- Develop trails with educational stations through the central area
- Develop a riverside trail around the City
- Promote Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi as an eco-tourist city
- Integrate the city's parks with the central area
- Develop a signage policy
- Develop a metropolitan open space system linking hiking trails, watercourses, conservation areas, parks and cultural heritage resources.

Tourism Strategy Plan:

- Develop a tourist train ride from city boundary to city boundary
- Organize and encourage quality events in the central area
- Promote the city as a sporting destination: Comrades, Duzi Canoe Marathon etc.

Housing strategy:

- Promote conversion of vacant office and retail space for housing development where appropriate
- Revitalize traditional mixed use housing areas in central area
- Provide a range of housing types in the central area
- Promote quality housing environments
- The high value of central area infrastructure requires the provision of high quality housing.
- Develop accommodation for visitors and tourist.

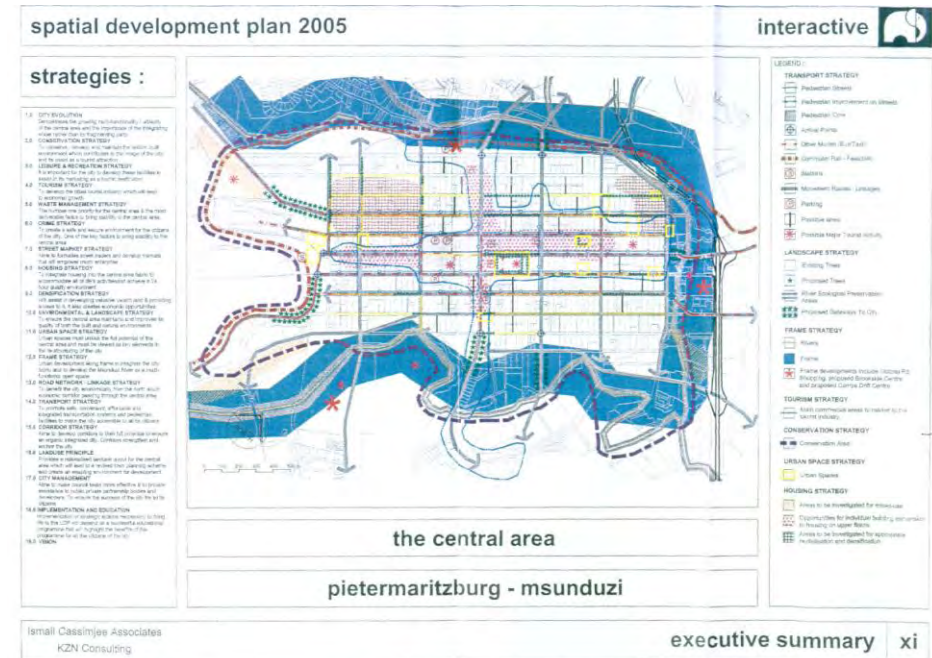


Figure ii. Local Development Plan for Pietermaritzburg

2.2.3 MANAGING CHANGE IN THE PIETERMARITZBURG CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (2002)

This study identified a number of key issues with strategies in terms of Access, Attractions, Amenity, and Action. Strategies identified which relate to urban structure, form and public realm quality and use are:

ACCESS: KEY ISSUES	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade existing public transport services and facilities and provide additional services and facilities Enhance corridors linking CBD with major nodes in surrounding areas Improve conditions for pedestrians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote road networks that link the city strongly to its corridors and nodes. Take advantage of the N3 and establish key linkages giving direct access into the Central Area. Promote linkages and accessibility within the CBD.
ATTRactions: KEY ISSUES	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the reuse of old /vacant buildings Promote the maintenance of existing buildings Provide availability of wider, improved range of government facilities and services. Formalise and support the informal trading sector. Upgrade existing public open spaces and promote environmental management Develop new attractions. Eg. Freedom Square, Dorpspruit Waterfront Promote tourism further 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote optimal use of vacant buildings and structures Facilitate necessary upgrade and maintenance of buildings Support SMME's emerging businesses and informal traders Promote environmental conservation and management Develop catalytic urban space projects including Urban Renewal Create sustainable human spaces / environments within the CBD. Identify CBD based attractions/sites that should be linked to the Freedom Square experience Develop a Gandhi presentation Centre Develop pick up /drop off site for heritage rail and railway enthusiasts Promote city as an events destination Develop a plan, which focuses on tourism management and destination marketing. Integrate various histories of the CBD and enhance the experience of each for the user.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless street children Develop a range of quality inner city housing opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide shelter for homeless people Facilitate the development of a range of housing from upper middle income with attendant amenities and mix of commercial uses to bring the central area to life. Promote conversion of vacant office and retail space for housing where appropriate. Retail and commercial core to be expanded focussed on the main central activity spine of the central area Promote the city as an eco-tourist, historic and Capital City Identify strategic precincts and develop these by preparing and implementing detailed plans Develop and promote leisure and recreation facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain existing commercial uses and encourage a wider mix and range of uses. Undertake CBD promotion and marketing Develop distinct precincts in relation to character areas Provide additional leisure and recreational/cultural facilities 	
AMENITY: KEY ISSUES	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve waste management Improve safety and security Upgrade existing and develop new convenient public facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good waste management would benefit the city and is the primary strategy for city development. Develop a zero tolerance crime strategy Upgrade and maintain existing facilities and develop new ones.
ACTION: KEY ISSUES	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an enabling environment – review policies, bylaws and financial incentives and review the planning scheme Enter into strategic partnerships with the private sector Encourage public participation in relation to CBD issues, provide information and undertake ongoing communication in relation to managing change in the CBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update LUMS and bylaws Encourage establishment of formal structures Set up public participation structures

2.2.4 EDENDALE /NORTHDALE CORRIDOR REPORT (2006)

The Greater Edendale-CBD-Northdale transportation corridor proposals consider the following key elements:

- Upgraded public transportation facilities and infrastructure,
- Public transportation vehicles given priority over private vehicles,
- Sidewalks and bikeways provided for pedestrians and cyclists,
- Urban renewal, community revival and job creation through the establishment of multi-purpose community centers.

A number of distinct precincts are identified in the central area. Proposals for the corridor within the CBD node include:

- The Station Node will comprise pedestrian oriented facilities and possible formalized informal activity areas. An intermodal facility with associated trading areas and a bicycle stacking facility are considered. As part of the facilities that comprise this precinct.
- Adjacent to the Station Node is a Residential Improvement Precinct for residential upgrading, densification, and potentially for social housing. This area will also comprise multi- and mixed-use development, consolidating, building and developing on existing activities.
- The Core Retail and Office Precinct require improvement and enhancement. Most of these interventions are linked to the partial pedestrianisation of Church Street and the associated improvement to street furniture and pavement treatment.
- The Renewal of the Lanes Project is a component part of the Core Precinct and demarcates another area requiring intervention. This involves the improvement and enhancement of the existing commercial developments of the area.
- The Institutional and Civic Precinct is to be consolidated and improved, with clear accessible pedestrian related spaces and routes within itself and with the adjacent precincts. The southern edge of the Civic precinct will be encouraged corridor as an Office Consolidation Precinct. This will seek to encourage the redevelopment of this area as an extension of the existing office area that will comprise mainly of government related offices that should be induced adjacent to the existing Natalia area and Civic Precinct.
- The Ancillary Retail and Residential Precinct adjacent to the Retail “hardcore” and Civic Precinct will be improved with clear pedestrian routes, public transport stops, and appropriate spaces and public areas for informal activities. This area will also be part of the semi-pedestrianisation of Church Street.
- The Waterfront Precinct comprises the redevelopment of the area into a mixed- and multiuse office, residential and recreational precinct.

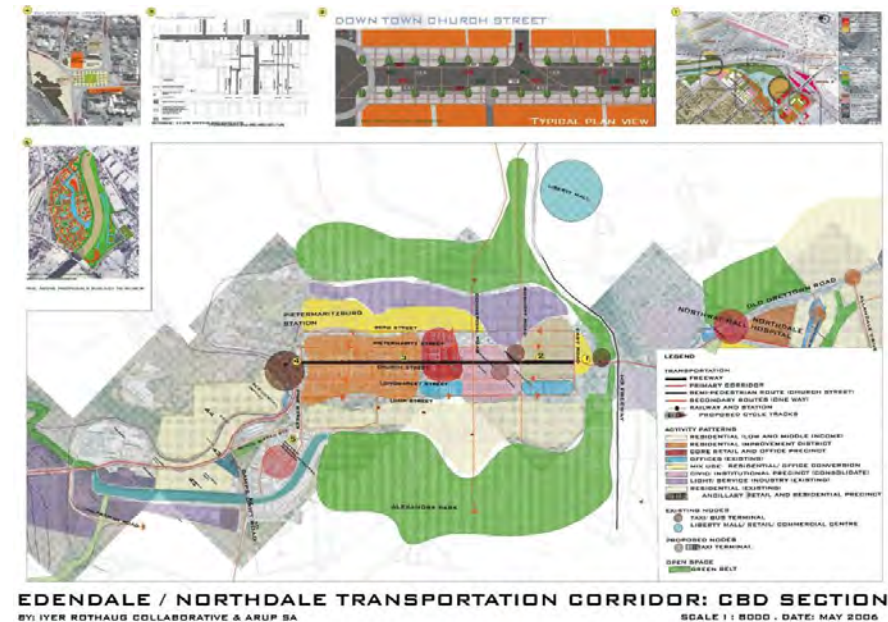


Figure iii. Edendale Northdale Corridor: CBD Section

2.2.5 RAILWAY STATION REPORT:

The report identifies a number of key strategies and interventions for the Railway Station Precinct of relevance to the study:

STRATEGY	INTERVENTION	ACTION
LINKAGES	Train commuter	Negotiate with Rail Commuter Services and re-establish the station as an inter and intra-urban commuter transportation terminus
	Traffic circulation	Distribute the inner city traffic networks from it's over concentration in the central city by creating bus and taxi stops in the vicinity of the precinct. Improve the pedestrian movement patterns with special reference to the link between Longmarket Street and Church Street through the Unisa Campus
	Taxis and busses	Re-establish the taxi and bus termini in the precinct

STRATEGY	INTERVENTION	ACTION
	People"s mover	Introduce a People"s Mover between the station and the Church Street Mall area
	Periphery linkages	Establish the linkages between the precinct and the surrounding areas with special reference to Fort Napier, Project Gateway and ESSE
ATTRACTIONS	Station complex	Redevelop the station complex as a tourism attraction with historical (Ghandi) memorials, restaurants, conference centre and events
	Public plaza	Create a Pubic Plaza in front of the Station Complex. The plaza serves as a traffic controller, linking the station to the rest of the precinct and activity centre
	Tourism attractions, tours and events	Make the station the point of departure for historical tourism trails, attractions and events
	Steam train	Introduce a steam trail attraction linking the available rolling stock at Mason"s Mill with Thornhill and Inchanga
	Renaming the station	Rename the station in memory of Ghandi to add to the tourism attraction of the area
LIVING ENVIRONMENT	Baverstock Block	Put the Baverstock Block on to public tender to be developed as a residential precinct
	Hostels and accommodation	Establish hotels in the existing buildings and renovate and re-establish the hotel buildings in the precinct
WORK ENVIRONMENT	Garment district	Establish a Garment district in the precinct
	Arts and crafts district	Establish a Arts and Crafts district in the precinct building further on the existing centres presence in the precinct
	Retail revitalisation	Revitalise the existing retail district through improved the improved taxi, bus and pedestrian linkages
URBAN ENVIRONMENT	Listed and other key buildings	Negotiate with the existing property owners for them to upgrade and improve their assets in the precinct



Figure iv. Railway Station Report Key Interventions

2.2.6 CBD EXTENSION NODE (2000)

The study unpacks a number of scenarios for the development of the CBD Extension node comprising of the Old Quarry Site, the Corobrick Precinct, the Bird Sanctuary and the Polo Crosse site. As per Scenario 1 in the report, the Corobrick Precinct has been developed as a regional shopping mall where the Liberty Midlands Mall is located. The Bird Sanctuary Precinct has also developed as a Car Showroom hub. The Polo Crosse Precinct located across the railway line between the Retief Road alignment and Boshoff Road is currently undeveloped.

The study provides movement, land use, urban form and landscaping guidelines for development in the precinct. Proposed landuses include specialised retail, offices, social and recreational functions.

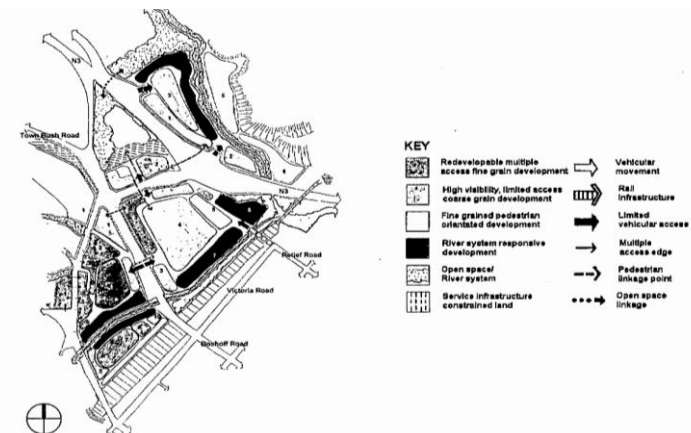


Figure v: CBD Extension Node Development Guidelines

2.2.7 DORPSPRUIT WATERWAY (2003)

The Dorpspruit Waterway is an urban revitalisation plan and strategy for the Dorpspruit area, which lies north study area between the N3 and Queen Street, north east of Masukwana Street. The proposed design is a mixed-use development that includes recreational activities, open spaces, conservation areas, educational and tourist facilities developed around the Dorpspruit River.

The mixed-use development proposes and supports an active and vibrant ground floor with retail and recreational functions such as restaurants, retail and commercial activity. The upper levels are encouraged to incorporate office and residential accommodation including flats and penthouses.

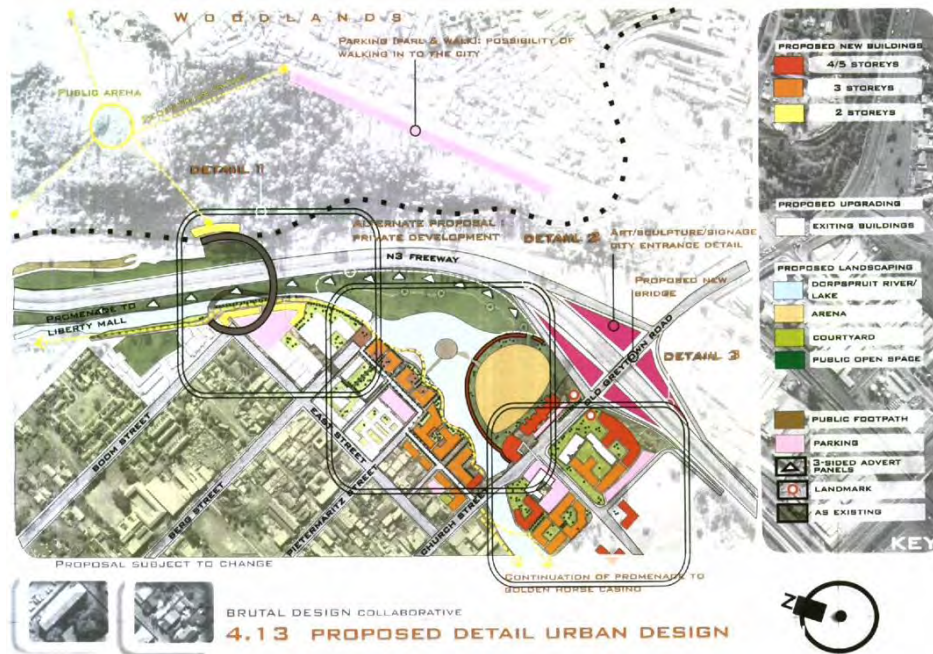


Figure vi. Urban Design Proposals for the Dorpspruit Precinct

2.3 KEY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES/DIRECTIVES

The following development and/or other principles are articulated across the key policies and legislation governing development in the study area.

PRINCIPLES	CHARACTERISTICS
Equity Promote an equitable city by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing infrastructure and service disparities redressing imbalances in the location of employment opportunities providing adequate, accessible and affordable housing opportunities promoting integration by linking and reducing distances between people, places and activities making the city work better for the disadvantaged (the poor, the disabled and women)
Efficiency Promote an efficient city by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting more compact development by encouraging higher densities where appropriate reducing the separation between places where people live and work optimising development in areas of greatest opportunity encouraging effective use of infrastructure and facilities promoting cost effective movement systems promote accessibility through improving relationships between people, places and activities promoting a well-managed spatial form
Sustainability Promote a sustainable city by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promoting optimal use of remaining land opportunities promoting the inherent value of the natural and built environment and introducing environmentally sensitive management of development alleviating environmental health hazards promoting total living environments retaining and enhancing positive qualities and productive assets of the Msunduzi Municipality
Urban Densification Compaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> urban densification refers to a process of carefully and meaningfully increasing densities in developed areas to ensure the most effective and efficient use of scarce resources. the process of densification needs to be carefully managed and applied in appropriate areas, as it cannot simply be applied across the city. urban densification can be regarded as a broader strategy of improving the urban environment whereby an area of work, live, and play is created.

PRINCIPLES	CHARACTERISTICS
Urban Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ideas of Urban Integration are similar to <i>Urban Densification</i> in that they promote the creation of an urban environment that integrates areas of work, live, and play. urban Integration also refers to the linking of poorly connected areas by improving the existing road network and public transport system. the objectives of Urban Integration include; ensuring that social and economic opportunities are equally accessible to all people of the city, and ensuring that there is a mixture of compatible land uses.
Redressing Imbalances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> redressing imbalances refers to the process of levelling the playing fields, with particular focus on previously disadvantaged areas. This means that future planning should seek to direct a large portion of public sector investments into areas that were previously marginalized.
Quality Urban Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning and development work should seek to create quality urban environments which provide opportunities and pre-conditions positive personal, social, and economic development.
Restructuring of the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a Polycentric City with a series of improved, upgraded and new nodes together with new economic opportunity areas, which will create new opportunities and alternatives throughout the city. Limited mixed-use activity spines between focus points. Redressing imbalances with improved infrastructure and new economic opportunities. Creating a road system matrix.

3 ASSESSMENTS

3.1 SETTLEMENT IN NATURE

3.1.1 GREEN SYSTEMS

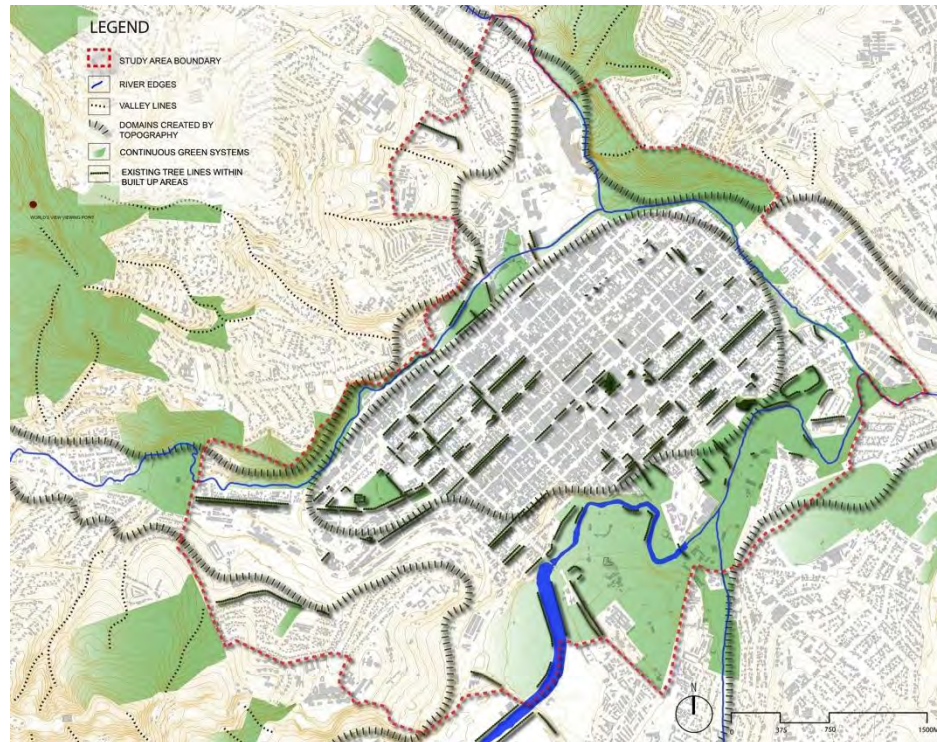


Figure 1: Green structure



Figure 2: View of the city looking east from the World's View viewing point

Bound by the Dorpspruit and Msundzi rivers and nestling under the Swartkop range of mountains– the city is surrounded by a natural edge which forms the interface of the central area with surrounding residential suburbs. The topography of the central area is flat with higher lying land to the west and south and the distant Table Mountain area to the east. The Dorpspruit River frames the north western edge of the town and the Msundzi surrounds it on the east and south. The green edges around the town as well as the surrounding mountains create a distinctive sense of place especially along the peripheral edges of the town.

A city has a number of green attractions including the National Botanical Gardens on the north western boundary of the study area, and the Dorpspruit and Green Belt hiking trails and Wylie Park to the west of the study area. The Royal Agricultural Society Showgrounds and bird sanctuary is located within the CBD extension node. Alexandra Park, which is a centre for international sports fixtures, provides cycling, swimming, hockey and soccer facilities. It is also a venue for cricket games, concerts and arts and craft related events and markets. Located within the southern green belt area, the park is a popular family destination for walks and outdoor activities. G

Though the river forms a continuous green edge around the city, open spaces along the edges of the river are discontinuous and in many instances, formal and informal developments are encroaching into the river system. Despite the magnificent natural setting of the city, the central area is visually disconnected from the green edges especially from a pedestrian point of view.

Historic treed avenues are found in western and eastern quadrants of the city as well as in the central civic area of the CBD. In stark contrast the northern and southern parts of the city are devoid of any greenery apart from the occasional tree clump, which is mostly located within private property.



Figure 3: Msunduzi River – Alexandra Park section (Source: Google earth)

3.2 URBAN SYSTEMS:

3.2.1 CITY BLOCKS, SUBDIVISION, BUILT FORM & GRAIN

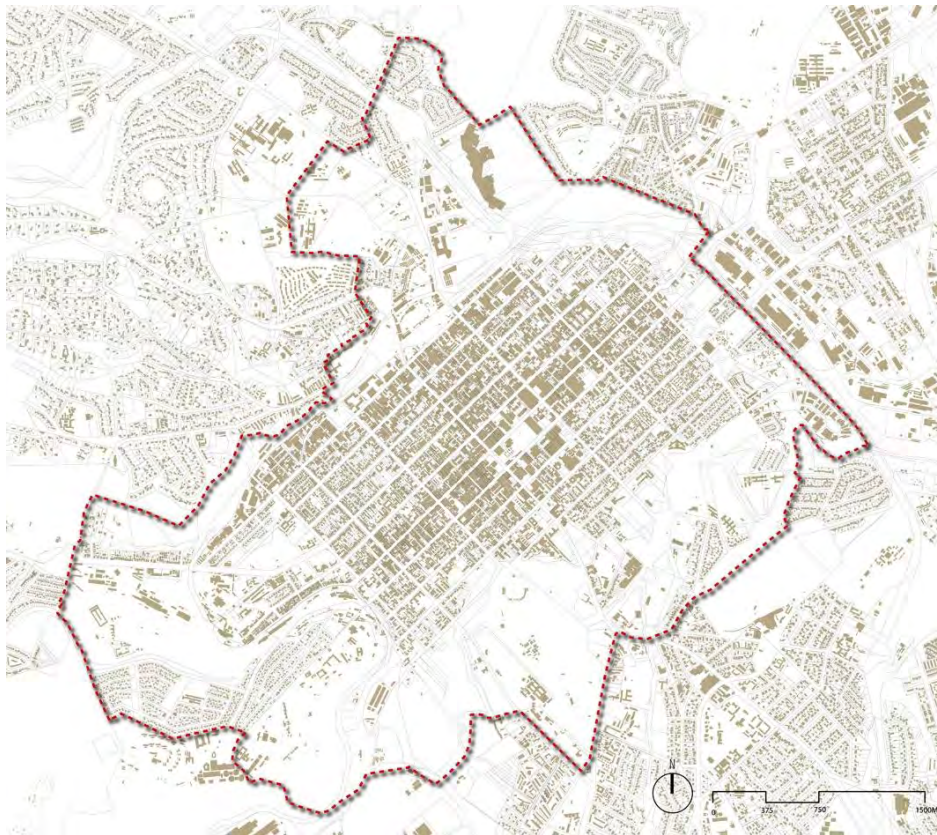


Figure 4: Settlement Grid & Urban Grain

The central CBD area is formed on a historic grid with the 480m X 150m block forming the basic super block. The city blocks in the central and south western parts of the city have high pedestrian and vehicular permeability with 3-4 vehicular lanes traversing each block. The blocks to the outer periphery of the CBD have fewer connecting lanes and are by virtue residential in character.

The central blocks of the CBD which house the majority of public buildings and public spaces have larger subdivisions, which often take up the full width of the block. Subdivisions are predominantly long and narrow, which has given rise to a fine urban grain. Intensity of

development is greatest along central Church Street spine spilling over into its immediately neighbouring streets. Retief Street and Victoria Road alongside the railway line also show greater development intensity. The outlying residential pockets of the CBD are of a lower density though still urban in character with a finer subdivision and urban grain.

Historically an evolved Victorian City, Pietermaritzburg is internationally renowned for its landmark buildings and architecture (Hillebrand 1988). The city is today a juxtaposition of Classical and Victorian architectural buildings, alongside stark and unsympathetic modern buildings, which have little regard for positive street interface or pedestrian shelter. Main Streets through the town are dominated by petrol stations and car centred developments, which have eroded the urban quality of the CBD. Davies states that countless historic buildings have been torn down and replaced by buildings, which are 'out of scale and sympathy with landmark buildings, which have survived' (Davies 1988).

This contradiction is also evident in the built form and morphology of Pietermaritzburg. The built fabric reflects an originally medium rise city, which has given way to high-rise modern residential flats and office buildings, which dominate the central part of the city. The older residential / commercial edges of the CBD are of lower densities, predominantly of single to double storey height. These areas still maintain a fine grain and urban character as a result of the historic long narrow subdivisions, which have allowed for flexibility and change in use over time.

Urban barriers such as the free way and railway line have created undefined pockets that have given way to car centred developments that are designed around vehicular access and movement. The CBD extension node of the city are characterised by such large-scale developments, which include uses such as industrial, office parks and shopping malls.

Undefined river edges to the eastern periphery of the study area have given rise to the development of informal settlements, which are characterised by temporary dwelling unit structures, which are not formally serviced with infrastructure.



Figure 5: Built form character: Central City



Figure 6: Built form character: lower density residential areas



Figure 7: High-rise residential flats within general low-rise residential area



Figure 8: Built form character: Ashe Informal settlement, south of the N3
(Source: Google Earth)

3.2.2 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

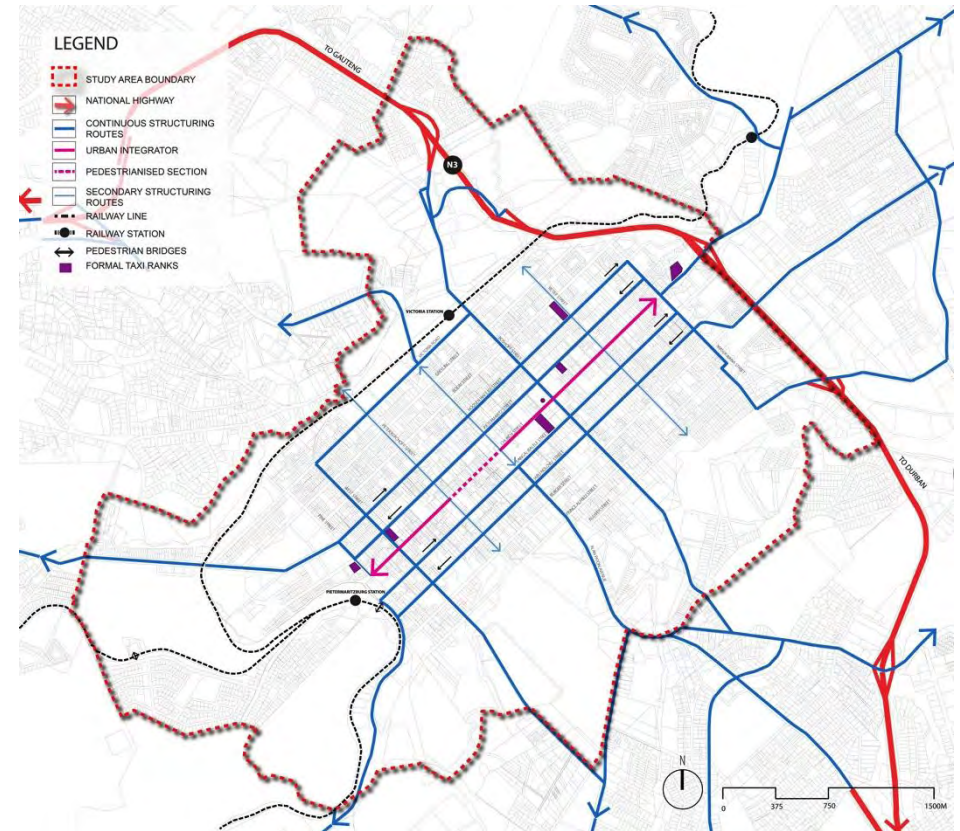


Figure 9: Access & Movement

N3 freeway on the eastern boundary of the site forms the strategic regional corridor through Pietermaritzburg and forms a barrier and edge to the study area. It is flanked by industrial uses as well as formal and informal residential areas on either side of the Dorpspruit River.

The railway line forms the other continuous barrier and edge to the study area on the north and northwest of the central area. Victoria Station and Pietermaritzburg Station on the northwest and southwest sections of the line form historic landmarks in the town. Though once a significant form of public transport, the railway line is currently only used for the transportation of goods (Railway Station Report).

Boshoff Street & Chief Albert Luthuli Street provide NW and SE connectivity to / from outlying areas of Pietermaritzburg. Jabu Ndlovu Street and Church provide connectivity to the western and northern areas of Pietermaritzburg respectively.

Church Street which runs through the middle of the town in the NE/SW alignment, forms the primary route which performs the role of a integrative seam bringing together pedestrians, traders and intense mixed use activity in the heart of the CBD. Church Street is also the main two-way street through the central part of town. A portion of it between Peter Kerchoff and Chief Albert Luthuli Street is pedestrianized with parking facilities. Pietermaritz Street and Langalibalele Streets on either side of Church Street and running parallel to it form secondary streets that support the central civic, commercial and mixed-use activities of the CBD.

The Railway Station Report states that 90% of public transport in the city centre consists of taxis. Formal taxi ranks, which serve the CBD are found on Church Street (Freedom square) and concentrated at various points along Pietermaritz Street. Ranks that serve the south western / railway station area, are found at the corner of Havelock and Pine Street, as well as the corner of Pietermaritz and West Street. Centrally located taxi ranks are found at Freedom Square, at the Symons Centre as well as on Pietermaritz Street between Boshoff and Retief Streets. Ranks serving the north-eastern part of town / downtown area are located on the corner of Hoosen Haffeejee and Retief Street as well as at the Greytown / Church Street Interchange. Apart from the formal taxi interchanges, taxis are seen to stop informally on street dropping or picking up passengers in a random manner.



Figure 10: Taxi Rank on Retief Street

Pedestrians form a significant percentage of users in the CBD and yet facilities for movement are primarily designed for vehicles. Sidewalks are narrow or unable to accommodate activities of both pedestrians and street traders at the same time. Similarly street movement is restricted on streets such as Pietermaritz Street, where market and trading activities have spilled over onto the road. This together with informal taxi ranking, deliveries and parking severely affect the connectivity and movement on this route.



Figure 11: Typical use of streets by pedestrians

3.2.3 PUBLIC AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

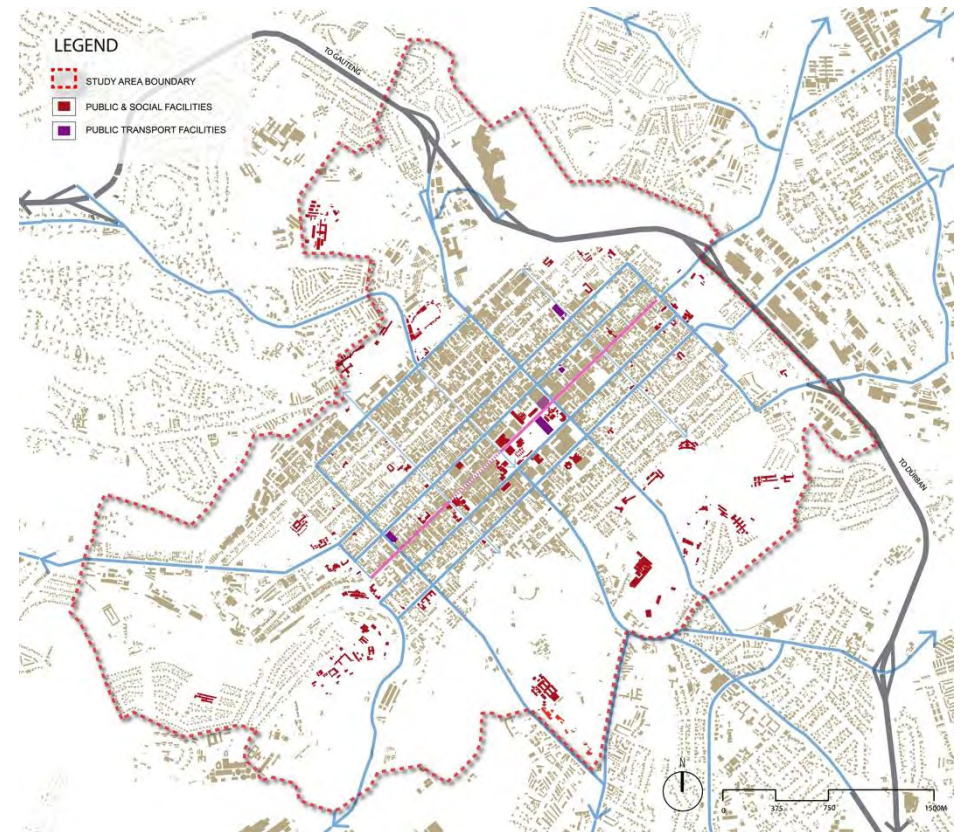


Figure 12: Public and Social Institutions in relation to key movement systems

Being the Capital City of the Province of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg is the seat of Legislature as well as the provincial administration centre. It is also the economic and administrative hub of the uMgungundlovu District.

Historically, the city is also home to a number of National Monuments and listed buildings, many of which function as public facilities. The architectural quality of existing historic buildings has been protected over time, reflecting the history of the town and its origins. However, with the changing socio-economic dynamics in a post-apartheid context, many of these public facilities now are in a state of neglect and disrepair. 'The movement of middle to higher income groups out of Pietermaritzburg city centre area has had a negative effect on social service provision in the CBD. Many facilities are not in use and others are dilapidated and neglected' (Railway Station Report, p27).

Despite the changes in racial composition of the city over time, social and religious facilities in the CBD reflect a unique combination of Churches, Temples and Mosques, which lend the city a strong multi-cultural character and cohesiveness.

The central CBD area between Boshoff and Albert Luthuli Streets forms the civic core of Pietermaritzburg. This area has the greatest concentration of public buildings such as City Hall, the Provincial Legislature Buildings, the Bessie Head Library, the Supreme Court, Provincial Department Offices and cultural attractions such as Voortrekker Museum Complex, Tatham Art Gallery and other historic buildings.

South of the civic core at the intersection of Church Street and Peter Kerchoff Street is a cluster of large churches. A cluster of religious facilities is found at the intersection of Langalibalele Street and Masukwana Street where a number of temples, a mosque and a madrasa are located. Community churches are found in various locations within residential areas. Schools are Hospitals are located in the periphery of the CBD along the green belt with school sports fields and open spaces forming part of the larger green system.



Figure 13: Public buildings as focal points in the townscape: View up Church Street to the Pietermaritzburg Railway Station (Source Google Earth).



Figure 14: Historic landmark: Pietermaritzburg City Hall built in 1893 located within the Freedom Square Precinct



Figure 15: Modern Landmark: Public Library located within the Freedom Square Precinct

3.2.4 STREETS & PUBLIC SPACE

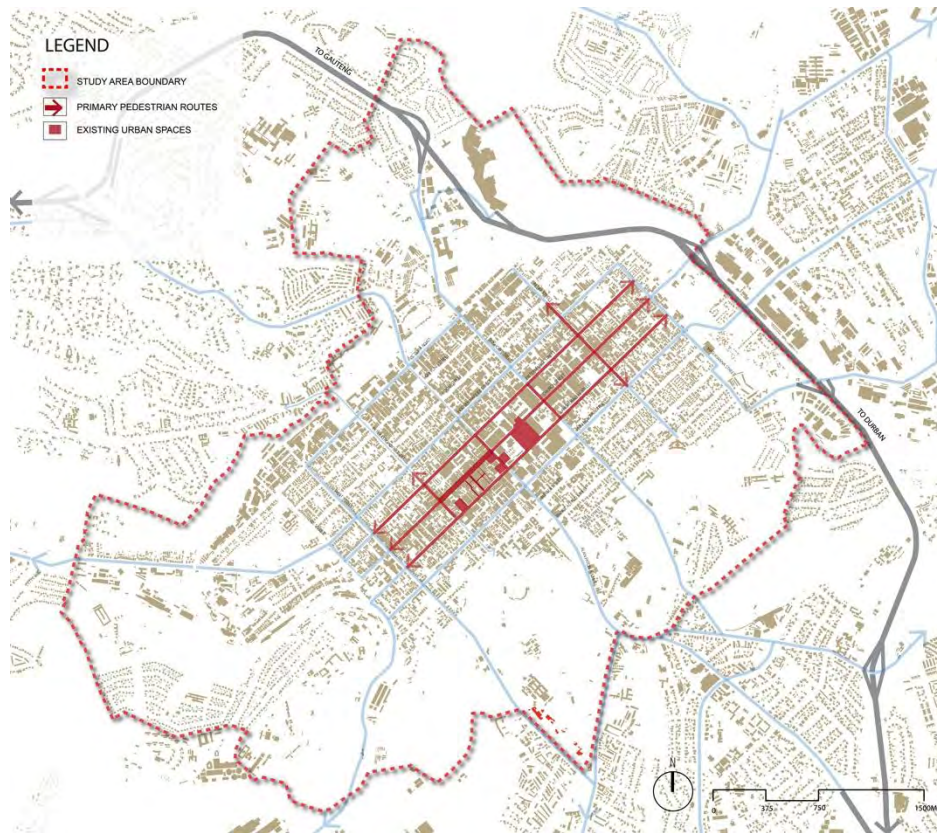


Figure 14: Pedestrian intense streets and public spaces

The quality of streets as it relates to use by pedestrians is varied within the CBD. Concentrated pedestrian activity occurs around the central blocks on either side of Church Street. The pedestrian scale and built form character is greatest on Langalibalele Street which functions as a high street in the CBD. The quality of the public realm generally decreases as one moves from the central area outwards to either end of Church Street. This degradation relates to the quality and attractiveness of built interfaces, as well as nature and quality of pedestrian facilities and spaces. Well maintained, colonnaded interfaces and articulated shop fronts give way to neglected buildings, dull interfaces and littered sidewalks as one moves further outwards from the central area.

Well functioning clean and neat pedestrian areas and sidewalks are limited to the civic precinct and commercial areas of the CBD. The quality of the public realm in the down town area of Pietermaritzburg is characterised by congestion, concentration of informal trade on sidewalks and severe littering which is exacerbated by informal activity. This area has a distinctly neglected character though pedestrian concentration is the highest.

The core civic area has the only formal public squares within the CBD with Freedom Square being the central space framed by the Church Street Taxi Rank and the Bessie Head Public Library on either side. A number of smaller urban spaces are found on Chief Albert Luthuli Street edged by the City Hall and the Tatham Art Gallery. The pedestrianized section of Church Street between Peter Kerchoff and Albert Luthuli Street is the other key public space / mall in the CBD. However, the pedestrian quality and ambience of the mall is severely hindered by the public parking and continuous vehicular activity within the mall. The mall is linked to a number of pedestrian lanes with give this part of the CBD high pedestrian permeability.

All other formal urban spaces in the study area are characterised exclusively by car parking lots, creating an overall experience of lost space and 'placelessness' as one moves through the city.

Tree lined avenues in the NE of the CBD and SW of the study area soften the edges of streets, create shade and enhance the quality of the public realm. In contrast all other areas in the CBD are devoid of greening and shade.



Figure 15: Church Street Mall



Figure 16: Langalibalele Street looking west



Figure 17: Pietermaritz Street looking west



Figure 18: Tree-lined Boom Street

4 KEY FINDINGS

4.1.1 ISSUES AND TRENDS

A predominance of car scaled development within the CBD area is leading to the gradual degradation of the character and quality of the built form of Pietermaritzburg. Poor urban design guidance has resulted in the creation of large setbacks and parking areas abutting main streets in the CBD, creating a sense of 'placelessness' on most routes running through the CBD. The setting of heritage buildings and historic sites is being compromised in this process of change.

The general trend of fine grained high end retail uses moving out of the city into regional shopping malls has had a negative impact on the diversity and mix of uses within the central CBD. The potential move of public institutions such as the Provincial Legislature into the CBD extension node will further negatively affect the strong symbolic image, significance and role of the central CBD as the heart of the city.

Neglect of the public environment and streets by users and lack of adequate refuse collection / removal is evident in the severe dumping and littering seen throughout the city. Pietermaritz Street at the end of a working day is covered in litter including vegetable wastes left behind by informal traders. The perception and dignity of the city is severely compromised as a result.

The concentration of urban squares and public open space amenities within the CBD core area with limited amenities / play parks within residential areas affects the level of attractiveness of the CBD for residential use.

Tourism assets, historic buildings, statues and monuments are lost in the general fabric of the city. Legibility and connections between these are poor / non existent.

The city shuts down after business hours and has no central attractions that can give the area life and activity, which is a key characteristic of a well performing city.

4.1.2 OPPORTUNITIES

The grid structure of the city, existing subdivisions, its streets and blocks serve as a permanent organiser of space. Positive change to the built form can be brought about through appropriate urban design and built form guidelines.

The energy, informality and bustling character of prominent pedestrian areas and streets present an opportunity for upgrade. Currently severe blockages are experienced as a result of vehicles, traders and pedestrians using street space at the same time. Linkages to taxi ranks and pedestrian facilities at existing taxi ranks are opportunities for improvement.

The civic, cultural and historic nodes and landmarks of the city are great assets to the city. Better connectivity, legibility and pedestrian linkages need to be created between these so that they can be adequately acknowledged and celebrated. These precincts and the surrounding built up areas need to be revived and improved. The Pietermaritzburg Railway Station Precinct, the civic hub in the CBD and the various religious clusters are examples of nodes that need to be revived and linked through clear pedestrian systems.

The Dorpspruit Waterfront Project is an opportunity to create a new attraction in the central area. The Campsdrift Mixed use Development and mixed use infill in the CBD Extension Node are opportunities to demonstrate appropriate urban structure and built form in a CBD environment close to a sensitive riverine context.

The city is entered on all edges through a series of bridges, which cross the river. The spatial quality and character of these gateways need to be enhanced and improved.

The legibility of green systems and parks in the green belt, entrances to the parks, urban interface and pedestrian connections are opportunities to enhance the character and quality of these. Pedestrian linkage from the inner city areas to the park system is vital to the city as other green amenities are lacking in the central area.

Urban greening of the CBD is an opportunity to enhance the 'Garden City' image of Pietermaritzburg. Ownership of vacant land parcels should be investigated for use as green relief space accessible to the public. This is particularly important for areas in the northern and southern parts of the CBD, which are lacking in parks / green amenity.

The river edges and its urban interface are neglected in most areas. An example of this is along Masukwana Street where informal settlement has occurred within the riverine area. Opportunities to formally accommodate residents in a qualitative and environmentally sustainable manner need to be investigated



Figure 15: Summary of Opportunities & Constraints

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