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Journal of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture

Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

KZ-NIA Journal • Issue 1/2005 • Volume No 30 • ISSN 0379-9301





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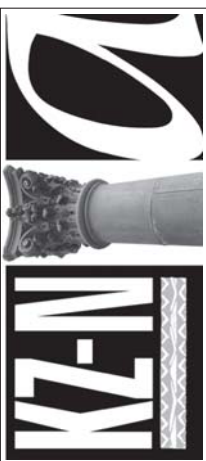
This journal, now in its 30th year of publication, has since its inception been sponsored by Corobrik.

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**News**

### KZ-NIA Vice-President

Ivor Daniel, National Director of Stauch Voster Architects, has been appointed KZ-NIA Vice-President for the two-year period 2004–06.



### UKZN School of Architecture

#### Head of School

Ambrose Adebayo, Professor of Architecture, has been re-appointed Head of the School of Architecture, Planning & Housing for a further 3-year term until 2007.

#### 2005 Prize Giving

At the function held in Shephson Building on Tuesday, 26th April, KZ-NIA President Bruce Clark awarded the following prizes for academic achievement during 2004:

#### Bachelor of Architectural Studies

Year 1 **Barrie Biermann**  
Prize: **Ryan Harborth**  
Year 2 **Gordon Small**  
Prize: **Devon Smart**  
Year 3 **Calvert McDonald**  
Prize: **Amy Sutton**

#### Bachelor of Architecture (Advanced)

Year 1 (4th) **Clement Fridjhon**  
Prize: **Angela Forbes**  
Year 2 (5th) **SN Tomkin**  
Prize: **Mizan Rambhoros**

Ms Tricia Emmett, SAIA President, presented both the *SAIA Award* and the *Lapel Pin of the SA Council for the Architectural Profession* for the Best Student in the professional degree in Architecture to **Mizan Rambhoros**; and the *David Haddon Prize* for the Best Student in the subject Professional Practice to **Poovashini Pather**.

In addition, Ms Emmett presented the

Biermann Library with a copy of the book *10·10·2 100 Architects 10 Critics*, in memory of the late SAIA-President Vivienne Japha who died tragically while in office in 1999. Funding for this annual presentation to each of the South African schools of Architecture was provided for by the Commonwealth Association of Architects.

Mrs Hazel Bond presented the *Sherwood-Bond Bursary* to Yr3 student **Billy Mwelase**.

Prof Ted Tollman, representing the Bernstein family and KZ-NIA, presented the *Brian Bernstein Travel Scholarship* to BAS graduate **Amy Sutton** who intends to embark on a tour of high density housing in Europe.

Prof Ambrose Adebayo, Head of the School, presented the *Plascon Prize* for Visual Communication to Yr1 student **Victoria Ramsden** and to Yr2 student **Devon Smart**; the *Garth Moyes Award*, which acknowledges the Yr4 student chosen by her/his peers who contributed most to good fellowship in the class of 2004, to **Josephine Kairaba**; and the *Geoffrey le Sueur Travel Scholarship* to Yr3 student **Rosalie Bloem** who in the context of environmental sustainability wishes to study straw bale construction.

#### UKZN Graduation, April 2005

At a graduation ceremony of the Faculty of Humanities, Development & Social Sciences held in Durban Exhibition Centre on Wednesday, 20th April, and in which the School of Architecture, Planning & Housing is now accommodated, 18 students graduated with the degree Bachelor of Architectural Studies, and 20 with Bachelor of Architecture (Advanced).



Prize Giving 2005, from left: Josephine Kairaba; Mrs Hazel Bond; Billy Mwelase; Poovashini Pather; Prof Ambrose Adebayo, Head of School; Rosalie Bloem; Ms Patricia Emmett, SAIA President; Prof Ted Tollman; Mr Bruce Clark, KZ-NIA President; and Mizan Rambhoros.



Corobrik Architectural Student of 2004. From left: Mthulisi Msimang; Peter du Treu, MD Corobrik; Jeremy Rose; Gerald Schulz; Reuel Khoza, Chairman Corobrik (Pty) Ltd; Malcolm Campbell, SACAP President.

Among the latter, the degree of Ms **Mizan Rambhoros** was awarded *cum laude*.

#### Corobrik Architectural Student of 2004

At a function held at Durban's International Convention Centre on Friday, 4th March, Gerald Schulz of the University of Pretoria was declared winner of this most prestigious award. He had chosen for the topics of his design dissertation a Tourism and Resources Centre for Maputo, called *DESTINATION M@PUTO*.

Schulz's dissertation was deemed the best of the 7 submissions, which for the first time included an entry by the Tshwane University of Technology. The assessors for this, the 18th national Awards programme, were Jeremy Rose of Mashabane Rose Architects, Johannesburg; Pieter-

maritzburg colleague Mthulisi Msimang; and SACAP President Malcolm Campbell.

#### OBITUARIES

##### Rosemary Haden 1939–2005

Readers will note with sadness the death of Rosemary Haden on 28th March of cancer. Rosemary had served as Secretary to five successive Heads of the Department of Architecture at the University of Natal for over two decades, beginning in 1974. Though retired due to ill-health in 1998, past and present staff gratefully recall the care she showed towards colleagues, and the professionalism and dedication which characterized all her work. Our thoughts are especially with "Charles and the boys", as Rosemary would affectionately refer to her family.

—Walter Peters

**John Bizzell 1937–2005**  
My first recollection of Eric John Bizzell was at the opening of Centenary Building, which accommodated the brand new School of Architecture of the University of Natal, a gift from the Durban City Council. John was placing seditious posters on the carefully arranged seats as the dignitaries approached, with Head of Department, Professor Paul Connell, scrambling behind him trying to remove them!

1959 was the time of the Extension of University Education



Roy Reed Photography

educational segregation at universities, marches, the apogee of the white, anti-apartheid Congress of Democrats, and some hastily concealed overhead pylon layouts in the Final Year Studio. An architect broadcasted the clandestine "Voice of the Resistance" from Pietermaritzburg.

Lecturers and students alike were swept along, with many eventually leaving the country. After working on internal operations of the African National Congress, John and his wife Maggie left South Africa in 1965. They were in exile for over thirty years with John first studying Urban Design under Jack Diamond at the University of Toronto, before joining the practice now known as Diamond Schmitt. But, politics drove John, and he rose to become full-time National Organiser of the Canadian Communist Party. It was the time of the Vietnam War with trips to the USSR, China, Cuba, Chile, and John always marshaled resistance against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

In 1997 John and Maggie returned to a small-holding at Drummond, outside Durban, politically active as ever, well evidenced by their living in interlocking rondavels and building a new double-storey residence for domestic helpers! He immersed himself fully in promoting emerging contractors, facilitating on-site sewage disposal schemes, addressing issues of health and safety, and promoting innovative technology. Maggie says practising developmental architecture was probably the happiest time of John's life. He managed to write the book *Blueprints in Black and White* (2002), a history of the built en-

vironment professions in South Africa, and found time to serve on the KZNIA Committee, the Umgeni Water Board, AMAFA Built Environment committee and, of course, the re-established SA Communist Party, all with great energy while contributing endless anecdotes from his zealous reading of English literature.

His enthusiasm for everything about him, as well as his unwavering socialistic commitment, will be sorely missed.

—Rodney Harber

#### Revel Fox 1924–2004

On 13 December 2004 the profession lost a senior statesman. Cape Town colleague, Revel Albert Ellis Fox, was born in Durban, spent his youth in Lüderitz, Namibia, and matriculated at DHS. He studied Architecture at UCT as a contemporary of Barrie Biermann (died 1991).

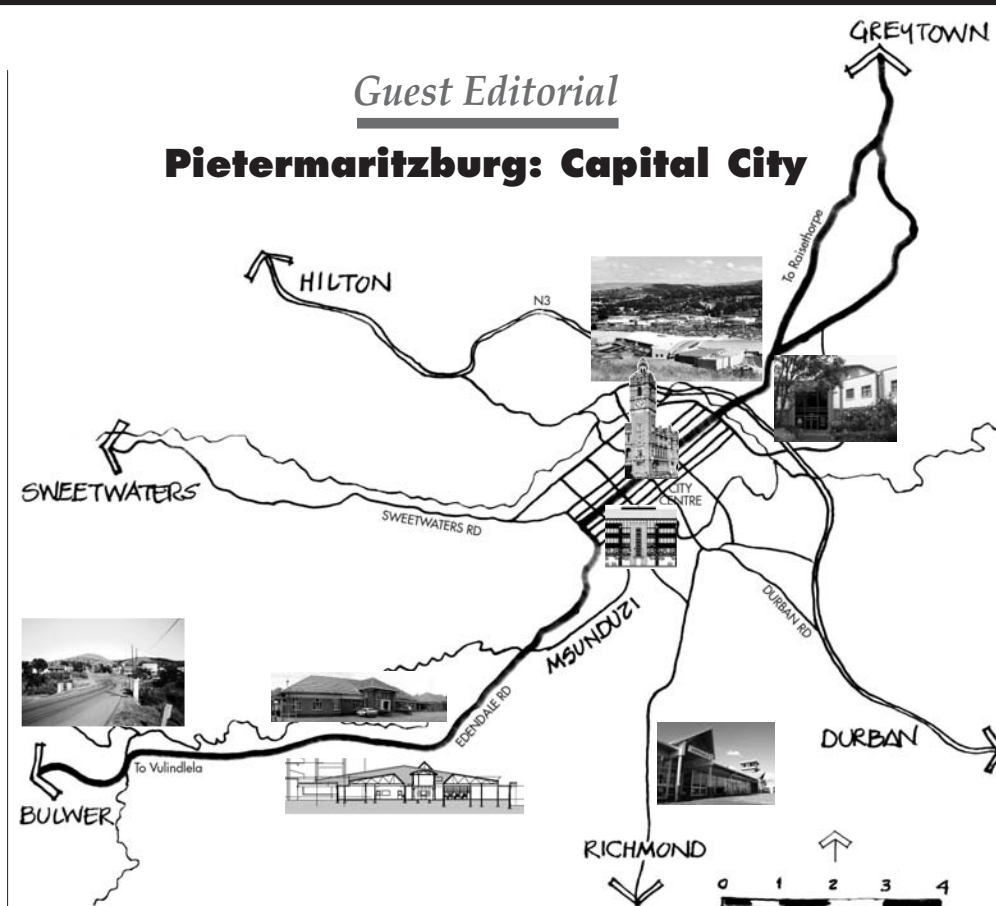
Revel Fox's architectural impact begun with his Mies-inspired 'Fox boxes' at Worcester in the 1950s, and the high standard of design and finish here demonstrated marked the whole of his oeuvre, rewarded in already 1977 with an ISAA Gold Medal. His special inputs in KZ-N were the Federal Theological Seminary at Imbali and his consultancy to the Durban Beach & City steering committee. In recognition of his life-long contributions, the University of Natal in 1993 conferred upon Fox his first honorary degree, Doctor of Architecture *honoris causa*.

What distinguished Revel Fox was his leadership in architectural design and conservation, and his visionary realism of the changing socio-political arena of South Africa.

—Walter Peters

### Guest Editorial

## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City



An issue of *KZNIA Journal* dedicated to Pietermaritzburg has not occurred in many years, largely due to the dearth of activity in the building industry until recently, and the unresolved issue of the Provincial capital which existed until the elections of 2004. However, in the last 18 months, this position has changed with a resurgence of work boosted by the announcement of Capital status, together with the upswing in the economy experienced generally. The city's architectural practices are so busy, in fact, they found it difficult to commit themselves to participating in this *Journal* edition, and to those who did, we thank you.

The work now occurring in the city embraces a range of building activities: brand new; industrial; themed housing projects; the refurbishment of both relatively recent and old buildings to accommodate the pressures of the enlarged provincial cabinet, and the relocation of 'motor town' to the periphery of the city, complementing a new urban node set up by the construction of the Liberty Midlands Mall. This latter is strengthened by the relatively rapid gentrification of the upper part of Victoria Road (on the periphery of the centre) and other streets such as the inner portion of Boom Street. The marked rise in property values in the city in recent months has perhaps contributed to this refurbishment of older properties, rather than the demolition and reconstruction that has characterised so much of our city since the 1994 elections.

Pietermaritzburg also boasts a rich and varied history, representative of a number of struggles during different historical periods.

The built fabric represents this, and new and old buildings stand alongside each other, generally in a comfortable relationship. Other new urban nodes proposed include the development of a waterfront at Camps Drift, and the redevelopment of the Market Square.

The format of this issue dealing with the Pietermaritzburg buildings suggests a sequence which binds together the form of the city. Beginning in an early part of the city, notably Georgetown in Edendale, where a missionary settlement thrived from the 1850s until relatively recently, it moves along Edendale Road northwards, encompassing large-scale projects in Edendale and on its periphery, then on to the city centre focusing on accommodation for the Provincial Government. The central area deals with refurbishments, restorations and new works, and the periphery on the node created by the development of the Liberty Midlands Mall.

Generally the challenges of design and production in the city have an air of resurgence resulting from the declaration of Capital status, marking another era in the architectural layering which comprise the City of Pietermaritzburg.

Debbie Whelan — Guest Editor

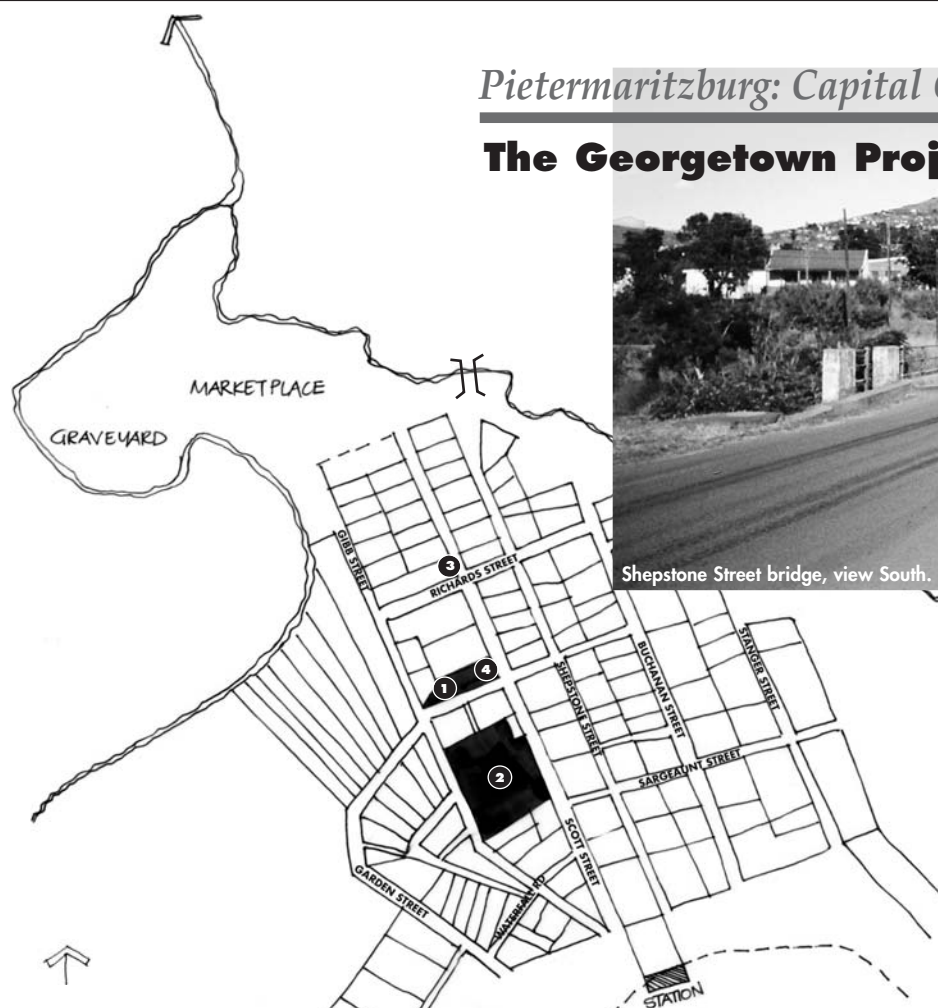
Mrs Whelan is a resident of Pietermaritzburg and Lecturer in Architecture at the Durban Institute of Technology (the merged former Technikon of Natal and ML Sultan). Her special interests lie in earthen, traditional and historic architecture. —Editor





## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### The Georgetown Project



Shepstone Street bridge, view South.

- 1 Old Manse
- 2 Edendale Methodist Church;  
Nichols Junior Primary School
- 3 Allison/Msimang House
- 4 Potofozi

Map c.1932 (Kay Nixon and Jo Walker)

Georgetown at Edendale is an historic mission station dating back to the early 1850s. It was originally the land grant farm 'Welverdiend' of the Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius, a reward for his part in the battle of Ncome (Blood River) in 1838. As was the custom, land grants were 6000 acres in extent. The majority thereof was acquired in 1851 by the missionary James Allison and shareholders. These were African converts [*amakholwa*, Swazi (seSwati) and Hlubi (seSotho) speakers] who followed Allison to Edendale from previous religious endeavours and who were invited to con-

tribute £5, thus gaining title once the land became bond-free. It is this title to land which makes the history of this area unique.

The mission was named Georgetown after Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape (of which Colony Natal was a dependency until 1856), who lent his support to the initiative. The early dwellings, based on the Victorian

cottages characteristic of the area, were built of mud brick, the mud having been obtained from the Msunduzi River adjacent to the precinct. The floors were of suspended timber, the roofs of corrugated iron sheeting with clipped eaves, and usually hipped gables but occasionally of the *wolve-end* type. The walls were plastered with mud or lime plaster, and painted with whitewash or distemper. The windows were timber sash or casement, the latter a distinguishing feature of the earliest buildings. Each extant house is markedly different from its neighbour, and this indicates the flexibility of concept and aesthetic permitted within the formality of Victorian development. At the end of the 1860s the church was built of fired clay bricks, and has retained the original Yellowwood pews on suspended Yellowwood floors.

"Georgetown became a self-sufficient mission community with profitable market gardening lots, a nearby tannery, and a mill and wickerworks, prolific in its day, selling its wares as far away as Cape Town. Trading with other areas was a viable source of income, and it was noted that big wagon trains of thirteen

or fourteen teams set off for the interior at regular intervals" (Etherington; 1978:126). Education was also an important aspect, with the technical college training blacksmiths, wagonmakers and shoemakers. Participation in national events was also evidenced in the formation of the Edendale Horse, a mounted unit of 60 volunteers who fought against the Zulus at Isandlwana, Ulundi, Khambula and Hlobane in 1879. An obelisk to their dead still stands in the church grounds.

Most importantly, the mission station at Georgetown boasted a successful integration of Africans, Europeans and Indians throughout its history. While the latter two groups were served with notices in terms of the Group Areas Act in the early 1960s, the properties remained in the hands of the landowners. Being a mission station offering a good education, as opposed to the generally low-grade available to Africans, learners came from afar, including such luminaries as Nobel Peace-Laureate Albert Luthuli; musician Caluza, the activist brothers Selby and Richard Msimang; authors Professor Nyembezi and RRR Dlomo, chiefs Dambuza and Mini, the artist Gerard Bhengu and environmental activist 'Treeman' Mazibuko. A quite extraordinary record of achievement!

Over time unrest struck and many of the original landowners moved away, leaving their properties in the hands of tenants. Houses fell into disrepair, and when repair did occur, it was cursory and usually with cement, which caused further degradation of buildings.

In 2000, members of the teaching staff of the Edendale Higher Primary School based in Georgetown, approached *Amafa aKwazulu-Natali*, the provincial heritage body, for assistance in repairs to a shale-constructed building attributed to Andries Pretorius, and known colloquially as *Potofozi* (see KZNIAJ, 3/2001). Many people are of the opinion, that despite the foundation stone, this building actually dates back to the 1840s. With funding from SANLAM, this building was repaired. The conditions of the corporate funding of repairs to

the Potofozi building meant that registered contractors had to be hired. Work went ahead, with much interest from the schoolchildren. Money left over from the grant was allocated to a separate maintenance fund, and was used to begin stabilisation work to the Old Manse, a mud brick cottage that is also on the School's property. This had the advantage in that the ownership was still vested in the Methodist Church, and that the precinct was secured by a high fence and 24 hour security, theft and sabotage being a primary reality. The roof was covered with new corrugated sheeting, and a tension rod with large spreader bars at each end was inserted to tie the gable walls together.

Work was then largely halted, until a submission to SAHRA brought results. The conditions of this funding was that it was to be used to pay community members, and not for capital investment, thus a new policy could be instituted, that of direct community participation and economic benefit. Work on the Manse could thus be commenced in earnest at the end of winter, in August 2002, and continued until the end of that year. Most of the materials were donated; lime and lime paint by *Limeco*; paint by a local paint supplier; and sash windows to replace the steel casements (inserted in the 1950s) by *Amafa*. Oregon Pine strip flooring and tongue-and-grooved ceiling boards were removed from a condemned building and installed by Morelands Developers. Most of the moneys were paid directly to competent local people on an hourly basis. What funds remain are designated for specialist repairs to timberwork.

The next project will be the badly degraded Msimang House, also known as Allison House, and characterised by its hipped gabled roof and truncated second storey. The house is in need of complete stabilisation which includes the removal of the chimney, the replacement of the roof, and maintenance of the plaster. Due to the complexity of the work, a firm of building contractors will probably have to be engaged.

The Georgetown Project seeks to connect this restoration with a city-wide historical tourism awareness route. To complete the project, further funding for conservation work will be required.

Debbie Whelan

#### Reference

Etherington, N (1978) 'Preachers, Peasants and Politics in South-East Africa, 1835-1880'. *African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand*. Royal Historical Society Studies in History Series No. 12.

### Nichols Junior Primary School, Georgetown

Once word got around that a new school would be built, the former Wesleyan Training College, which had long served that purpose, became subjected to a process of 'demolition by neglect'. With the acquisition of the site and funding secured from the Independent Development Trust, the new Nichols Junior Primary School could become a reality.

The concept has four terraces stepping down the site facing the desired north-east orientation. The classroom blocks are laid-out symmetrically about the cross-axis determined by the administration block located on the topmost terrace, from which entrance is given, and separated by the assembly area. Ablution facilities are positioned at the ends of the courts separating each the classroom blocks. The twenty-four classrooms accommodate some 900 learners with 28 educators. The project was completed in August 1995 and cost some R2 500 000.

Brian Servant Partnership





## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### Moses Mabhida Multi-Purpose Centre, Edendale

The brief commissioned by the Msunduzi Municipality was to design a new multi-purpose community centre (MPCC) in Edendale, which is the largest settlement in Pietermaritzburg. The MPCC would have to accommodate various departments to provide essential services to the community, in accordance with the objective of bringing government and services closer to the people.

Like many black settlements during the apartheid era, Edendale suffered from a lack of development. A primary focus for addressing this backlog is provided for in a project known

as the 'Greater Edendale Land Development Initiative'. This project is located along the 4km-stretch of Edendale Road in the vicinity of Edendale Hospital. It was significant that this MPCC was chosen as the pilot project to kick-start the Initiative.

A series of meetings were held with the local Councillors, Ward Committees and on a few occasions, with the community. This was in order to determine the requirements and to obtain input for the design of the centre.

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sion, with the community. This was in order to establish the requirements and to obtain input for the design of the centre.

Parallel to these consultative processes, an urban design was undertaken to ensure that the proposed individual components cohesed into a unified whole appropriate to the surrounding context. The urban design identified movement patterns and public spaces, providing guidelines for the development.

#### Design Concept

The MPCC was conceived as more than a collection of buildings housing the various services for the community. The design sought to fulfil the following additional objectives:

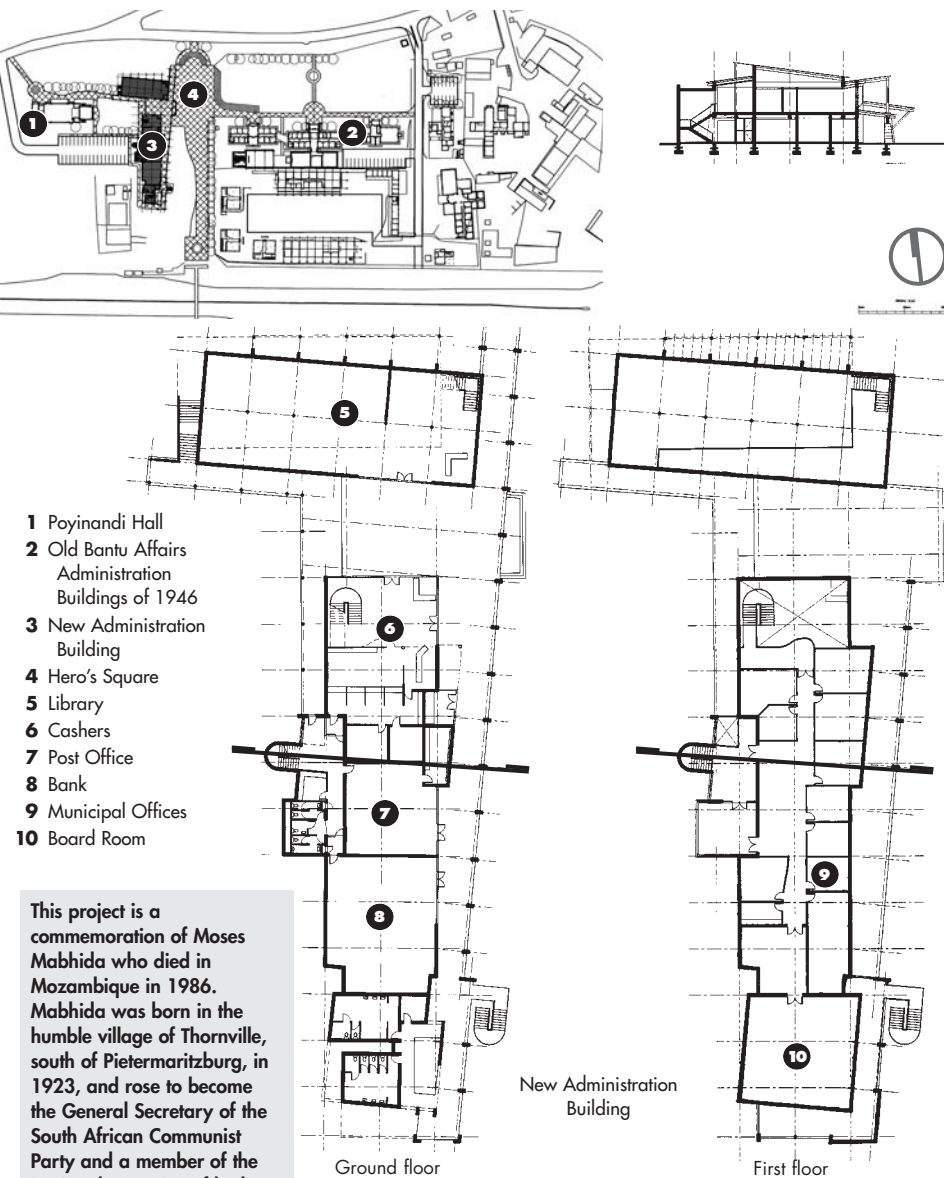
- the creation of a civic precinct as a venue for meetings, performances and the exchange of ideas;
- the development and empowerment of the community through training and education;
- the provision of economic opportunities; and
- the setting of the character for future developments within the area.

Because of budgetary constraints the development of the centre has been designed to be developed in four phases: *Phase One* consists of the new Administration building and the upgrading of some of the existing buildings, scheduled to commence at the beginning of April; *Phase Two* consists of external works, the Grand Pathway, Hero's Square, the outdoor theatre and the upgrading of the existing gardens; *Phase Three* will comprise the Library/Media Centre and the upgrading of the existing hall into a Hero's Museum; *Phase Four* will comprise a new taxi rank, integrated with commercial facilities, including the upgrading of the existing pedestrian bridge.

The overall design clearly separates pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Pedestrian traffic is given priority and located centrally with vehicular traffic being channelled through control-gates at either end of the site. The site is to be unified by the removal of fences and gates between the various buildings, and the unsightly block wall along the perimeter, is to be replaced with a palisade fence enabling visual connections with the surroundings. Further improvements include landscaping interventions, upgrading the existing park, formalising existing gathering places, and the construction of an outdoor theatre.

Mthulisi Msimang

Mthulisi Msimang Architects



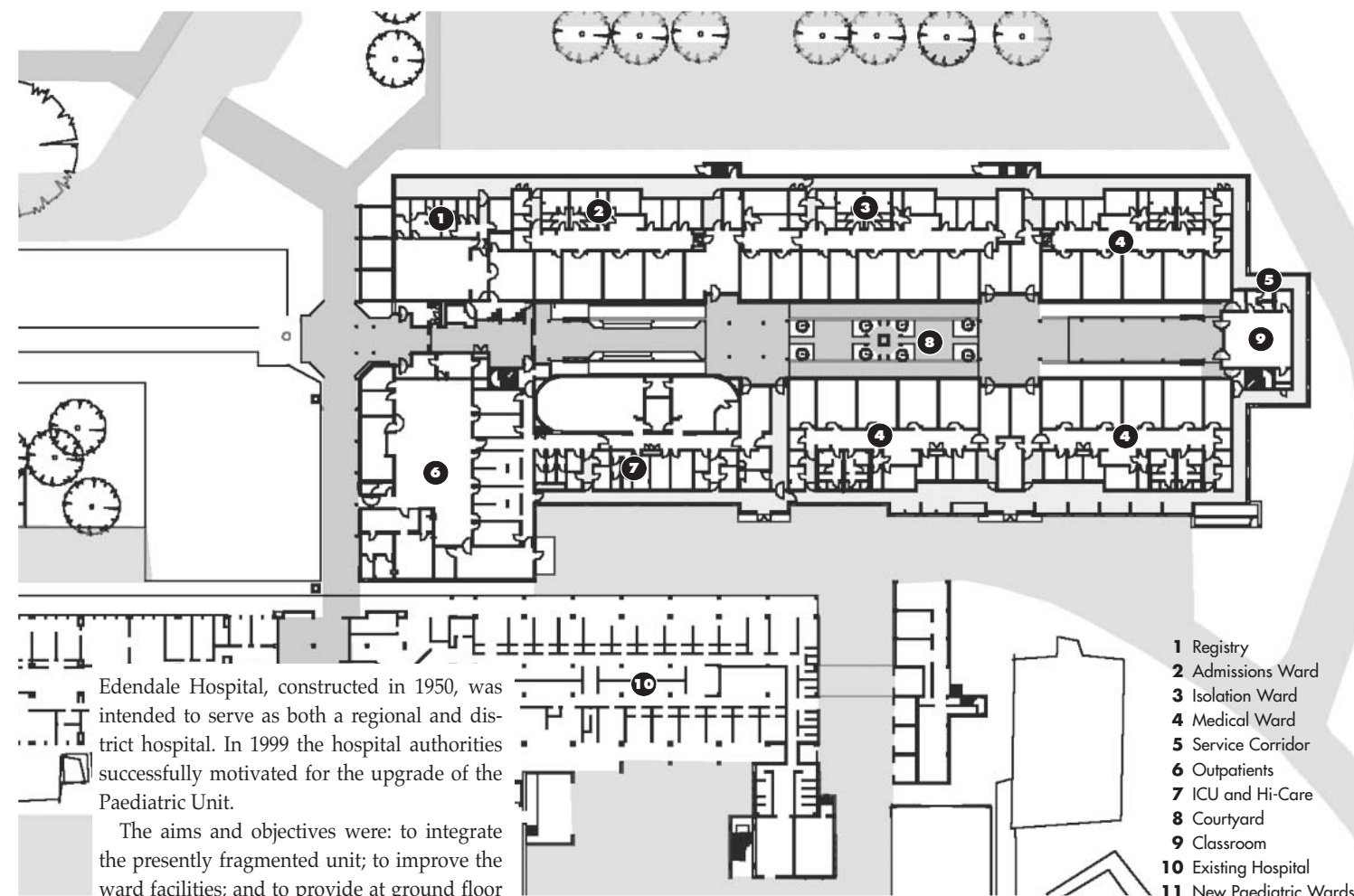
- 1 Poyinandi Hall
- 2 Old Bantu Affairs Administration Buildings of 1946
- 3 New Administration Building
- 4 Hero's Square
- 5 Library
- 6 Cashers
- 7 Post Office
- 8 Bank
- 9 Municipal Offices
- 10 Board Room

This project is a commemoration of Moses Mabhida who died in Mozambique in 1986. Mabhida was born in the humble village of Thornville, south of Pietermaritzburg, in 1923, and rose to become the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party and a member of the National Executive of both the African National Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.



## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### Paediatric Wards and Out-Patients' Department, Edendale



- 1 Registry
- 2 Admissions Ward
- 3 Isolation Ward
- 4 Medical Ward
- 5 Service Corridor
- 6 Outpatients
- 7 ICU and Hi-Care
- 8 Courtyard
- 9 Classroom
- 10 Existing Hospital
- 11 New Paediatric Wards

Edendale Hospital, constructed in 1950, was intended to serve as both a regional and district hospital. In 1999 the hospital authorities successfully motivated for the upgrade of the Paediatric Unit.

The aims and objectives were: to integrate the presently fragmented unit; to improve the ward facilities; and to provide at ground floor level, an environment more suited to children.

#### Planning for children

The intensive care, high care, admissions, medical and isolation wards are arranged around a partially covered courtyard so as to establish a clear circulation system intended to avoid confusion and to provide a user-friendly environment. The interior spaces are functional and informal, designed to promote privacy and dignity for young and elderly patients, many with incurable diseases. The wards are provided with a services corridor to facilitate access for routine maintenance.

The out-patients' department comprises a registry, X-ray facility, pharmacy, consulting rooms and various ancillary spaces.

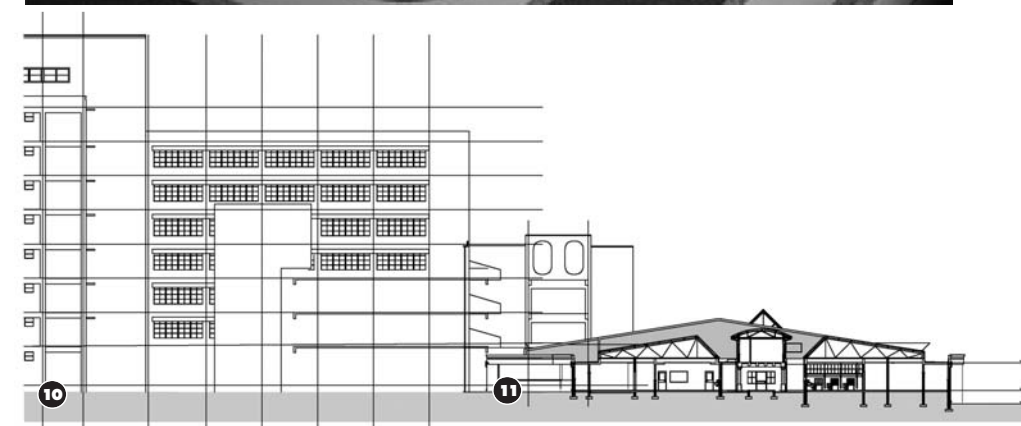
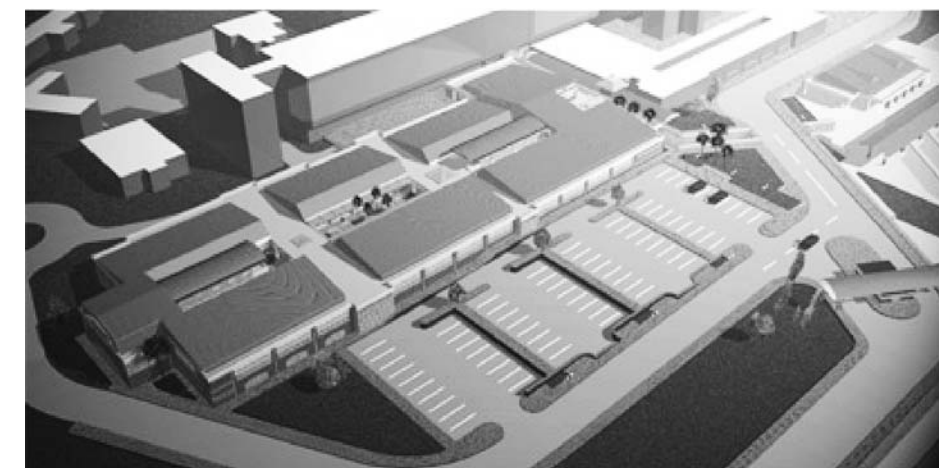
The form of the building is modular and its mass is articulated by solid and void elements to provide an environment sensitive to the scale of the child.

The administration and staff accommodation is located at first floor level and includes tea rooms, offices, seminar and duty rooms.

Construction of the first phase of the unit is scheduled to commence mid-2005.

Trevor Tennant

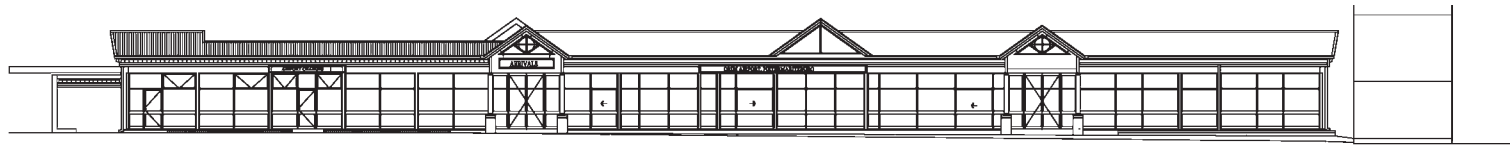
Tennant & Tennant cc





## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

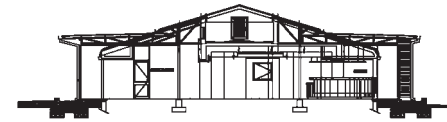
### Airport Extensions, Oribi



South West Elevation



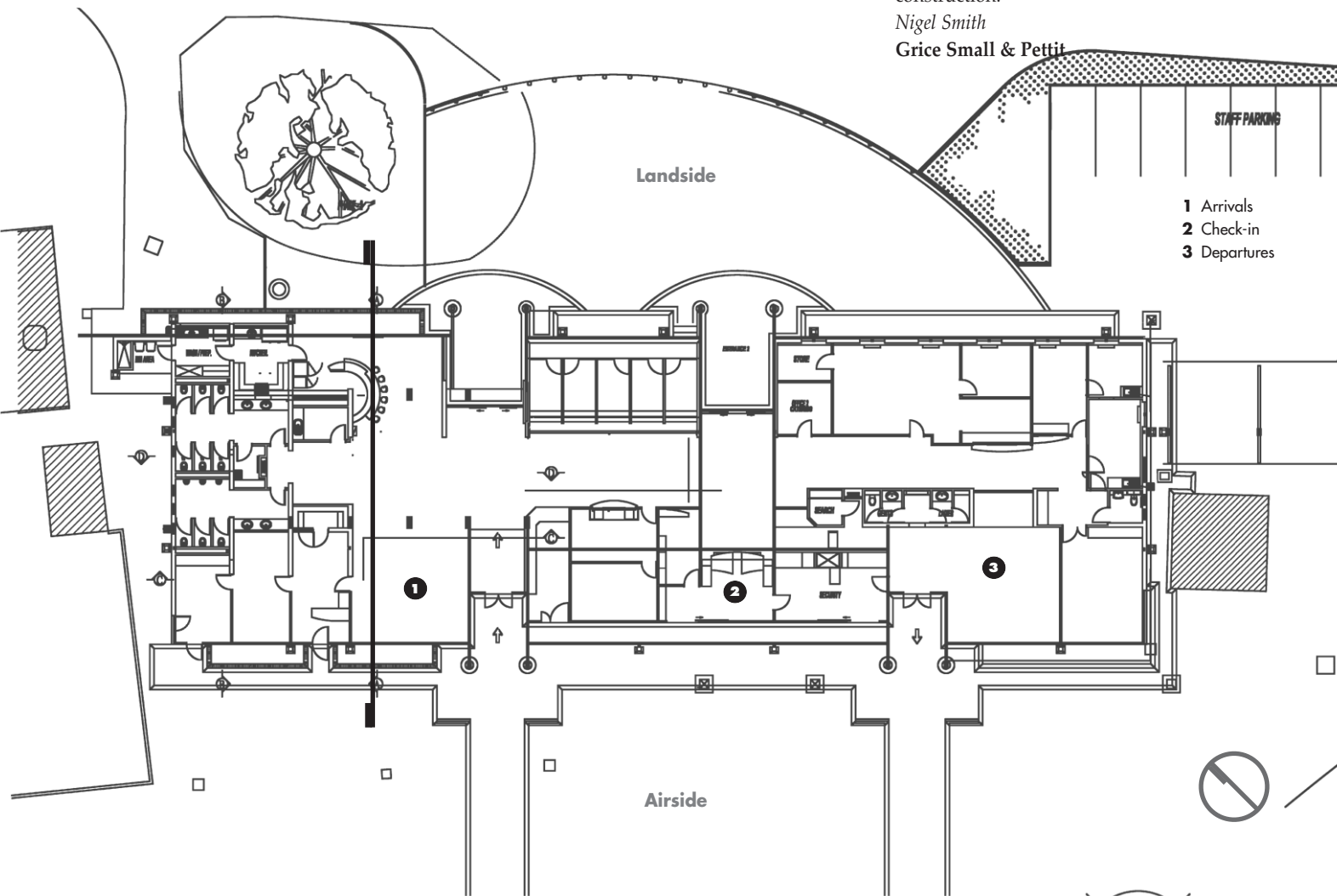
Mark Wing Photography



The alterations to Oribi air terminal were necessitated by the Air Safety Regulations passed in the wake of the events of September 11th, 2001, and involved a revamp and an expansion of the existing facility, and a new fire station and security building, commissioned by the Msunduzi Municipality.

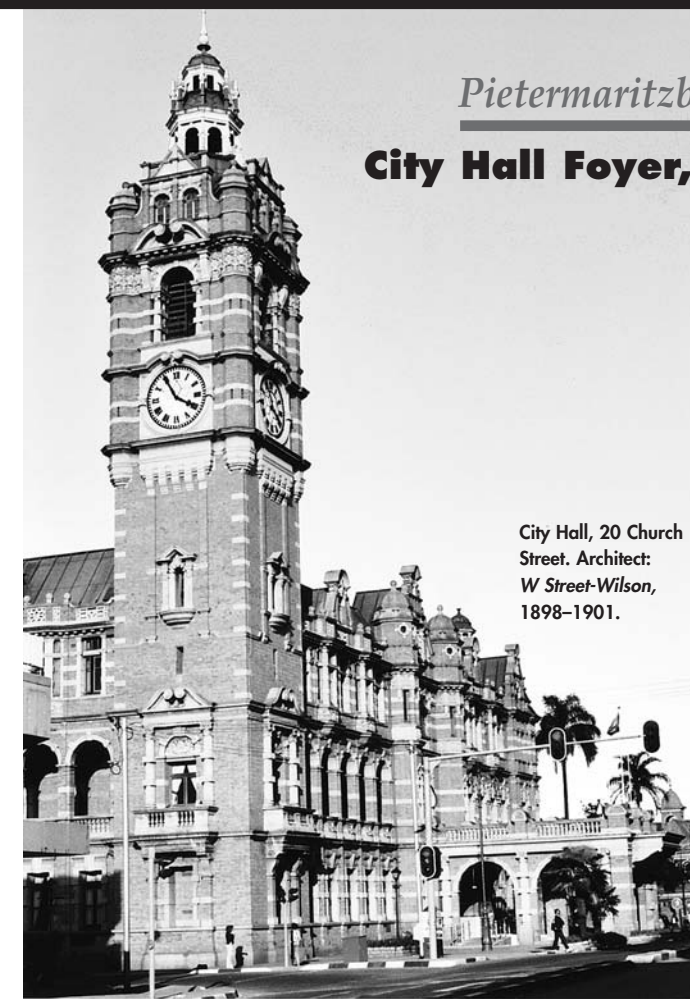
The concept has a concourse lined with offices bisected by two 'transepts', one each for departing and arriving passengers. Like the iconic veranda house, the section shows two lean-to structures astride the partly exposed steel trussed roof of the concourse, all covered in pre-painted corrugated metal. While the north-east elevation to the parking area is punctured, by contrast, the south-west elevation facing the aircraft is fully glazed. Work had to be carried out in phases to allow the airport to remain operational throughout construction.

Nigel Smith  
Grice Small & Pettit



## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

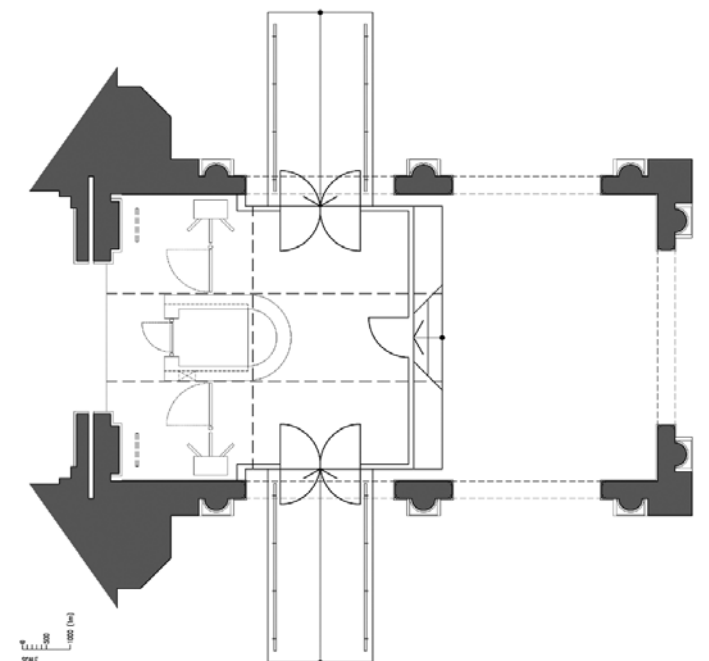
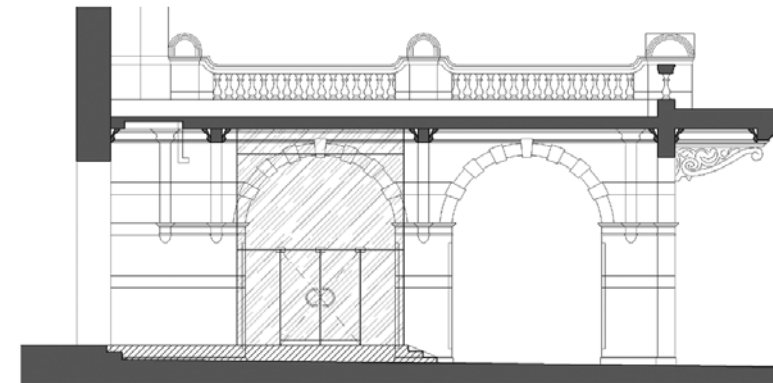
### City Hall Foyer, Commercial Road



City Hall, 20 Church Street. Architect: W Street-Wilson, 1898-1901.



COVER: View through the porte-cochère of the Pietermaritzburg City Hall to the Anglo-Zulu Memorial (1907) opposite, on the corner of Church Street and Commercial Road. (The photograph has been inverted for aesthetic reasons — Editor.)  
Photography: Mark Wing Photography.



With the increasing emphasis on safety and security, the existing foyer has proved to be too small. Thus the commission to enlarge the foyer.

In the past, the mayoral vehicle was parked in one of the double arches of the porte-cochère fronting Commercial Road. On enquiry, it was resolved to dispense with the use of the inner arch, and reserve the outer as the official mayoral alighting point. In so doing, the foyer could expand into the space of the inner arch.

The design saw the creation of a foyer defined by a glass curtain wall recessed from the extremities of the space, with entrances from the mayoral alighting point and from the ramps to either side, and turnstiles and gates astride a control desk.

Ivan Venter  
Interplan Architects





## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### Provincial Offices, KZ-NPA Dept of Transport, 172 Burger Street



The provincial headquarters of the KZN Department of Transport had for the last decade occupied premises which previously housed the nurses' quarters of the Old Grey Hospital in Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, located on the southern edge of the city grid. This area has increasingly been occupied by departments of State and Province; Public Works, Provincial Museum Services, and Provincial Library Services, forming a node of Governmental services on the edge of the city center.

#### The need

The Department of Transport's New Offices resulted from the need to provide appropriate facilities for senior management, and the task was to fulfill their spatial needs in addition to giving a physical and iconic focus to the Department's 'campus'.

#### The building and its context

The building is conceived as a focal point along Burger Street and a gateway to the 'campus', with a guardhouse and high-level bridge connecting with the existing offices. The bold symmetry results in a clarity of entrance, appropriate to the public nature of the building. This was also deemed important given the immediate streetscape from which the building recedes to gently dominate the skyline, yet respond to the scale of the context.

To relate to its much lower and more fragmented urban context, the mass of the 5-storey building was articulated into elements. The ground floor is open; the central bay is separat-

ed from the general structure of brick shafts and beams; and the whole is contained under the hovering hipped roof. This building boasts metal sunscreens where required, which together with the struts to the roof could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the historic Pietermaritzburg veranda detailing of fretwork or cast iron.

#### The programme

The ground floor of the building provides covered space for parking, but could on occasion hold a function for 300 people. The first floor accommodates a boardroom for 50 people on half the floor, and open plan offices on the other half. Floors 2, 3 and 4 accommodate executive office suites with central boardrooms.

The 600x600 ceiling module provided a three-dimensional co-ordinating tool, to enrich the language of the structure rather than merely

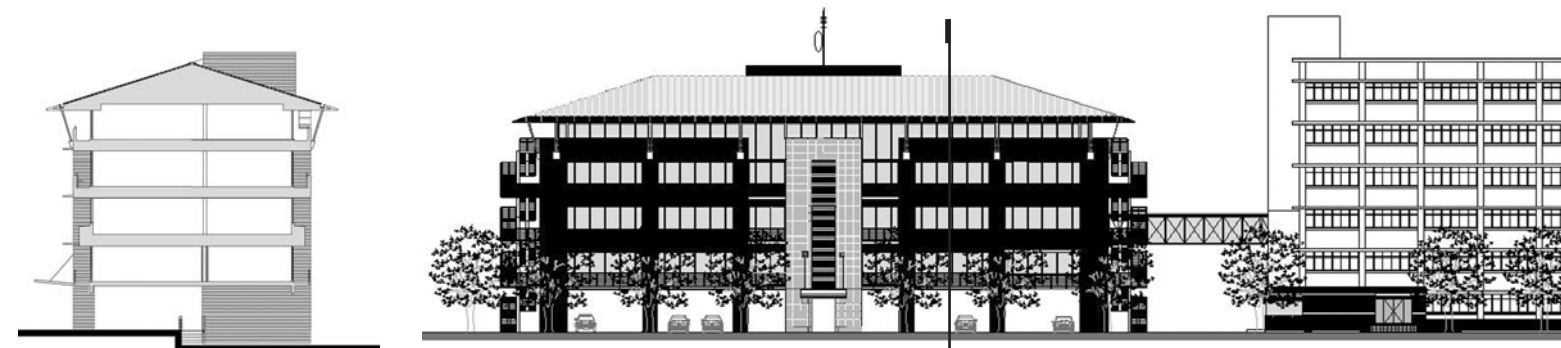
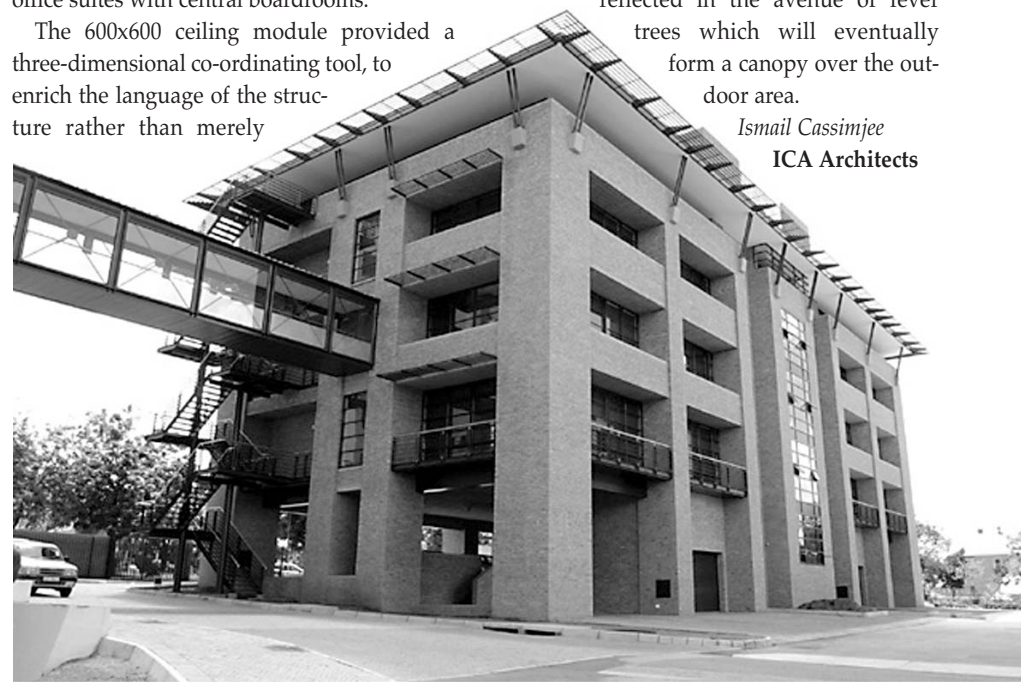
existing as a functioning reality, and created the basis for a modular system that runs through ceilings, window frames, handrails and sunscreens.

As the Department of Transport works with the transport industry, the security of personnel was a requirement of the design.

#### Materials

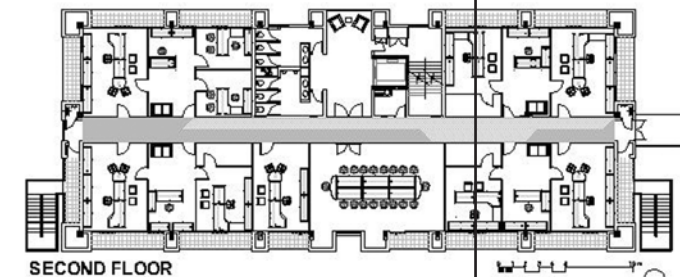
The building materials were kept simple and serviceable, and were limited to a few elements which relate to the urban context in both colour and material. The choice of a salmon face-brick and red paving, serves to reinforce the ubiquitous 'Maritzburg Brick' heritage. The green slate over the entrance should, over time, be reflected in the avenue of fever trees which will eventually form a canopy over the outdoor area.

Ismail Cassimjee  
ICA Architects

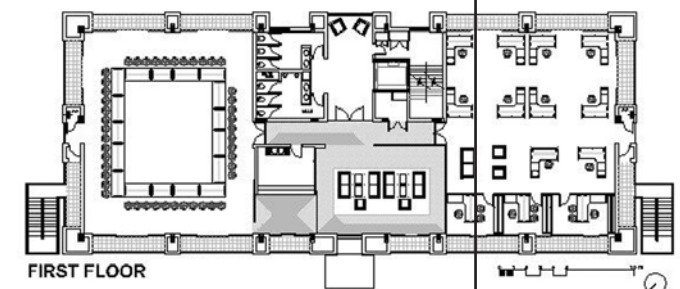


Elevation to Burger Street.

INSET, LEFT:  
Deep soffits of building.



SECOND FLOOR



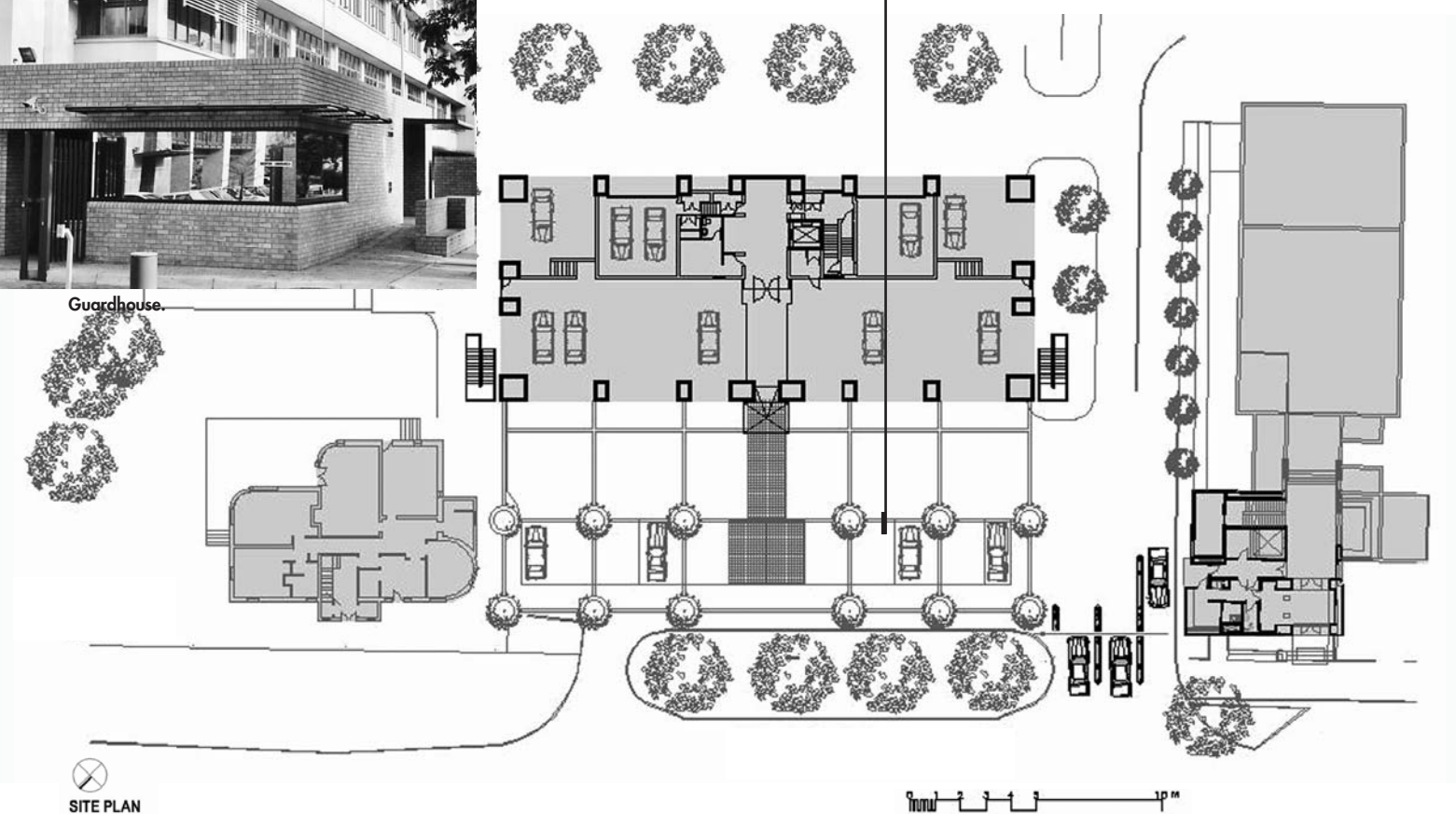
FIRST FLOOR



Bridge junction with existing building.



Guardhouse.



SITE PLAN





In recent years, the coherence and spirit of the city centre has suffered a variety of reverses. Firstly, the indecisive location of the Provincial Parliament and the uncertain Capital status of

built environment have been accelerated, not necessarily always for the better.

Fundamentally, as the seat of Provincial Government, the city centre of Pietermaritz-

## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### The City Centre

the city, resulted in local pride and enthusiasm vascilating with a reticence for new development, repair and general upkeep. Many studies were undertaken and areas of action identified. In the wake of the 2004 elections and the simultaneous declaration of Pietermaritzburg as Capital City, changes to the

burg has become the locus for the majority of the Parliamentary buildings; those related to the functioning of the Midlands region as well as those of the City Council. Thus the centre has received a variety of different protocols, ranging from ideas to rework the historical Market Square, refurbishing and changes of use to some of the existing inner city office buildings, and the location of high-powered cameras on roof tops and on poles to increase security.

Understandably, as with many cities undergoing active transition, Pietermaritzburg is debating alternative development options.

There is the need to accommodate increasingly large numbers of commuters resulting in the examination of the relocation of the central taxi ranks to more appropriate locations on the immediate periphery, raising concerns for the potential destruction of the historic built environment. The architectural fraternity is divided as to the means by which buildings should be

## Monumental Intervention

### Yet, it's just a step to the left...

The statue of 'Victoria. Queen-Empress', which has adorned Pietermaritzburg and provided the original Natal Legislative Council building with its external focus since 1887, is to be moved<sup>1</sup> to make way for a statue of King Cetshwayo (1826-1884). The latter is to be standing before the centenary of the Bambatha Uprising, the "last major resistance of traditional African society to the imposition of colonial rule"<sup>2</sup> in 1906.

Zulu leader Cetshwayo defeated the British armies at the battle of Isandlwana in January 1879. However, following his defeat and capture at Ulundi six months later, the Zulu state was reduced to subsidiary status under British control. Exiled at the Cape, Cetshwayo persisted that he had always regarded Britain as his friend and had fought only to defend his country. His frequent requests to be sent to "state his case" in England were granted in 1882, and Queen Victoria received him kindly<sup>3</sup>. After lunching with the monarch, "who found the occasion enjoyable"<sup>4</sup>, Cetshwayo was reinstated and allowed to return to his own kingdom, but unfortunately died soon afterwards.

Interestingly, to afford the statue of Queen Victoria, the original Legislative Council building, won by James Tippet in a competition in 1883, had to be deprived of its sculpture, and was thus realised during 1887-8 with a blank tympanum<sup>5</sup>. Yet, Camp tells us that the Pietermaritzburg

statue of Queen Victoria "in abundant royal robes, with sceptre in her right hand and an orb surmounted by a cross in the left", is, in fact, a replica of a statue in Sydney, Australia<sup>6</sup>. Camp also mentions the statue was valued then at £1125, which must therefore have been the cost of the sacrifice to the building. The statue of Queen Victoria was unveiled on 20th June 1887 by Sir Charles Mitchell, then Governor of Natal.

No details of the impending intervention are available, but opting to preserve the long-standing colonial statue and complement it with one of the contemporary Zulu king is a move to be applauded. This is a positive way of dealing with inherited monuments while giving recognition to an historical leader whose acknowledgment in public art is overdue.

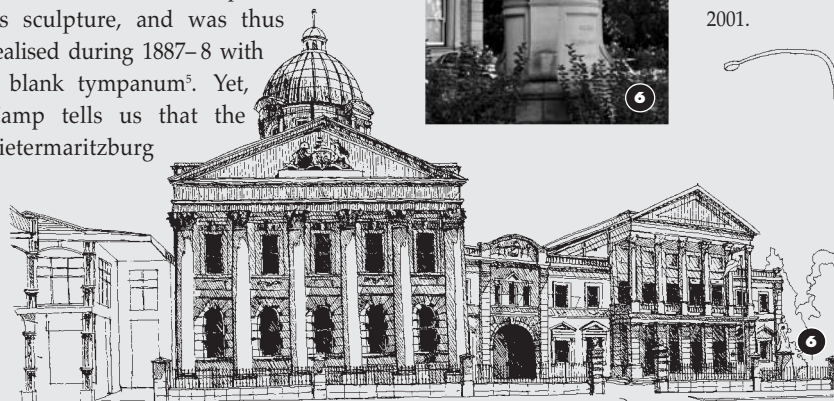
Walter Peters

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1. *Daily News*, 1 March 2005
2. Worden, N A *Concise Dictionary of South African History*. Cape Town: Francolin, 1998.
3. *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa*. NASOU, 1971
4. *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa*. Cape Town, 1988.
5. Hillebrand, M *Aspects of Architecture of Natal 1880-1914*. Unpublished MA (Fine Arts) Dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1975.
6. Camp, S *Historical Pietermaritzburg*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 2001.



Left: Later Legislative Council building with dome by PWD Architect AE Dainton, 1898-1902. Right: Original Legislative Council building (later Legislative Assembly building) with blank tympanum designed by Architect J Tippet, and built 1887-8.



incorporated into the new fabric, and to what level old buildings should be retained. Another challenge is the enlargement of the 19th century KZ-N parliamentary building, which by its nature and age is challenging.

Interestingly enough, the refurbishment of older buildings, particularly those belonging to the latter years of the last century, have been more prominent than the construction of new buildings. Recent examples of this genre include the reworking of the Brayleys Building next to the central post office as the offices for the uMgungundlovu Regional Council, and the adjacent Witness newspaper building as office accommodation. Also, the more recently erected Knappe building was the Reserve Bank, later housed Telkom, and is now being refurbished to incorporate the Premier's

Department, which has latterly been moved to Pietermaritzburg with the shifting of the Capital.

A new building that is surfacing behind its hoardings is the addition to another Knappe building, the Carnegie funded Children's Library that is being added onto the existing Natal Society Library block. This promises to create a new and dynamic addition to the building stock in the central area of the city as well as reflect the City Hall and the central surroundings in its glass façade.

In the words of Rob Haswell, the central area is seen as having huge potential for change in accommodating its new functions. "By mid-2005, Freedom Square (Market Square) will have two 'new' buildings facing onto to it (Library and Premier's Dept). It seems incon-



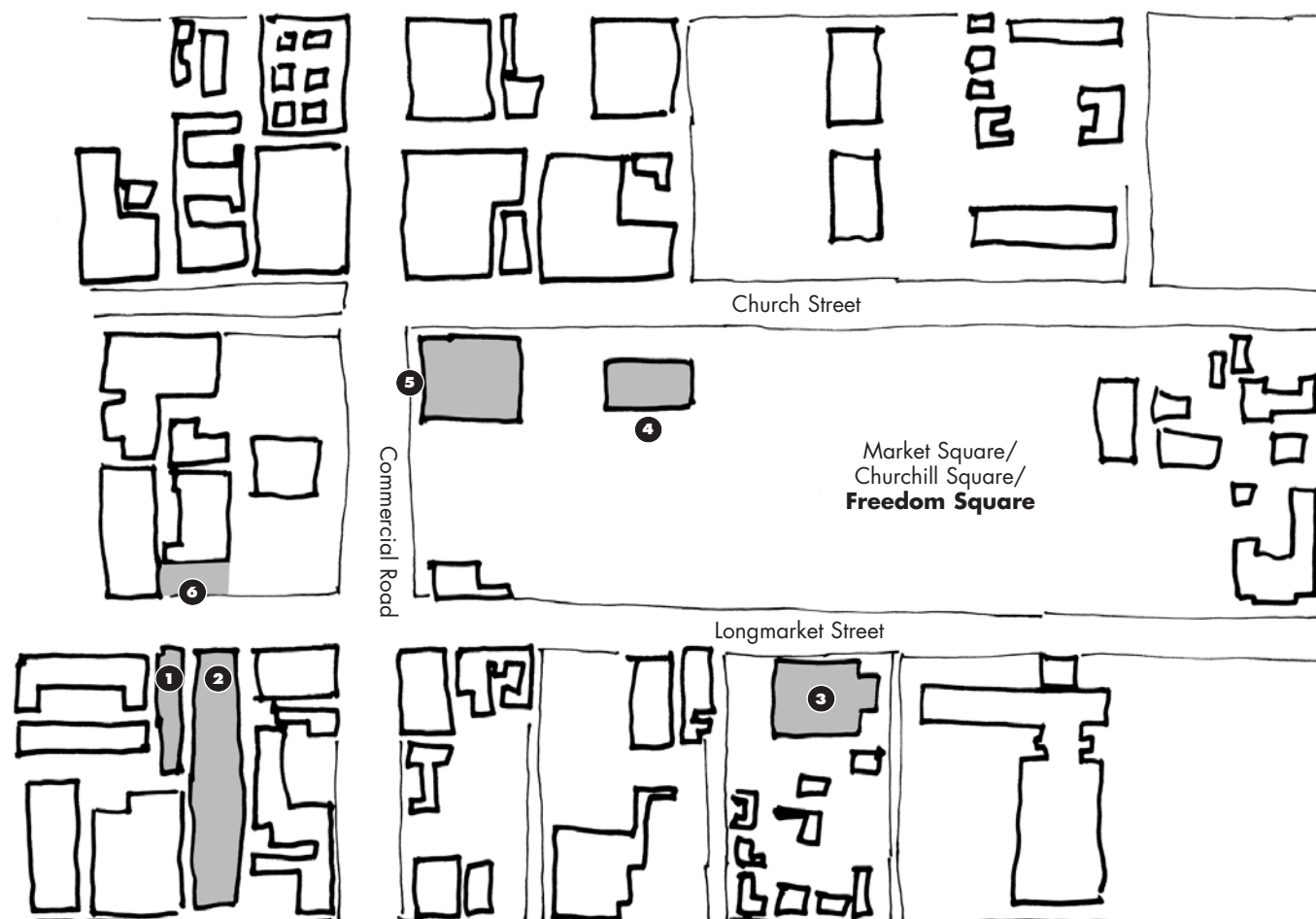
ceivable therefore that the rest of the Square, including Publicity House will not be similarly upgraded and given a face lift". Plans include the transformation of the area between the City Hall and the Library, into an 'African water-hole', around which people gather to hear story-telling.

Rob Haswell says further that "Our status as a capital in the new South Africa seems likely to trigger off a spate of public buildings, akin to what happened after our city became the capital of the Colony of Natal. Back then the status of our city necessitated the fitting of public buildings, and bequeathed to us a price-less set of Victorian and Edwardian structures, possibly the best in the world. Our public buildings then served a much smaller and restricted population. We have outgrown many of these, and our red bricks are no longer available. Clearly, then, we need to create safe and attractive places for locals and visitors alike, to take-in the sights and sounds of our new South African capital. That is the exciting and exacting challenge we should take up, rather than vainly wish for a return to colonialism, in either social or architectural terms". Debbie Whelan.

#### Reference

*The Mirror*, 23 February 2005.

1. **UMGUNGUNDLOVU DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY** (former Brayleys Building) 242 Longmarket Str *Llew Bryan Architects*
2. Former Natal Witness Building, 244 Longmarket Street, renovated at cost of R28.7m to accommodate staff and senior officials of **KZN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY** *David Hughes Architect*
3. Alterations and additions to **OLD RESERVE BANK BUILDING**, Architect *BRH Knappe*, 1978. Premier's Office, Longmarket Str *ICA Architects & Urban Designers*
4. **MSUNDUZI MUNICIPALITY** Extensions to Natal Society Library, 280 Church Street, Architect *BRH Knappe*, 1973-5. *Ambro-Afrique Consultants* in association with *SMS Designs Architects CC*
5. **CITY HALL** foyer, Commercial Road *Interplan Architects* (see page 7).
6. **QUEEN VICTORIA** statue









## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### The Witness, Willowton Road



share of the newspaper was sold to Media 24, a subsidiary of the media conglomerate *Naspers*. With their backing, the decision was taken to order a state-of-the-art *Comet* printing press from König & Bauer in Germany, which was to be the most modern of its kind on the continent of Africa.

At an early stage of the overall design, the client made it clear that the printing press should occupy a central and dominant position within the overall layout.

The (Natal) *Witness* headquarters building occupied a position in central Pietermaritzburg for 139 years. Over time, the challenges of running the printing operations and distribution network from a congested CBD caused management to consider decentralization. Hence, a large site was purchased in the Willowton industrial area, and in 1980, in line with newspaper publishing trends worldwide, the production facilities were moved out of the city centre. While solving various logistical problems, other difficulties emerged from the split in operations, and it was just a matter of time before the whole organization would again be under one roof.

The era of electronic communication and digital technology has changed the way news is gathered, printed and distributed. To remain competitive, *The Witness* needed to modernise and upgrade the printing operations. The opportunity to do so came in 2000 when a

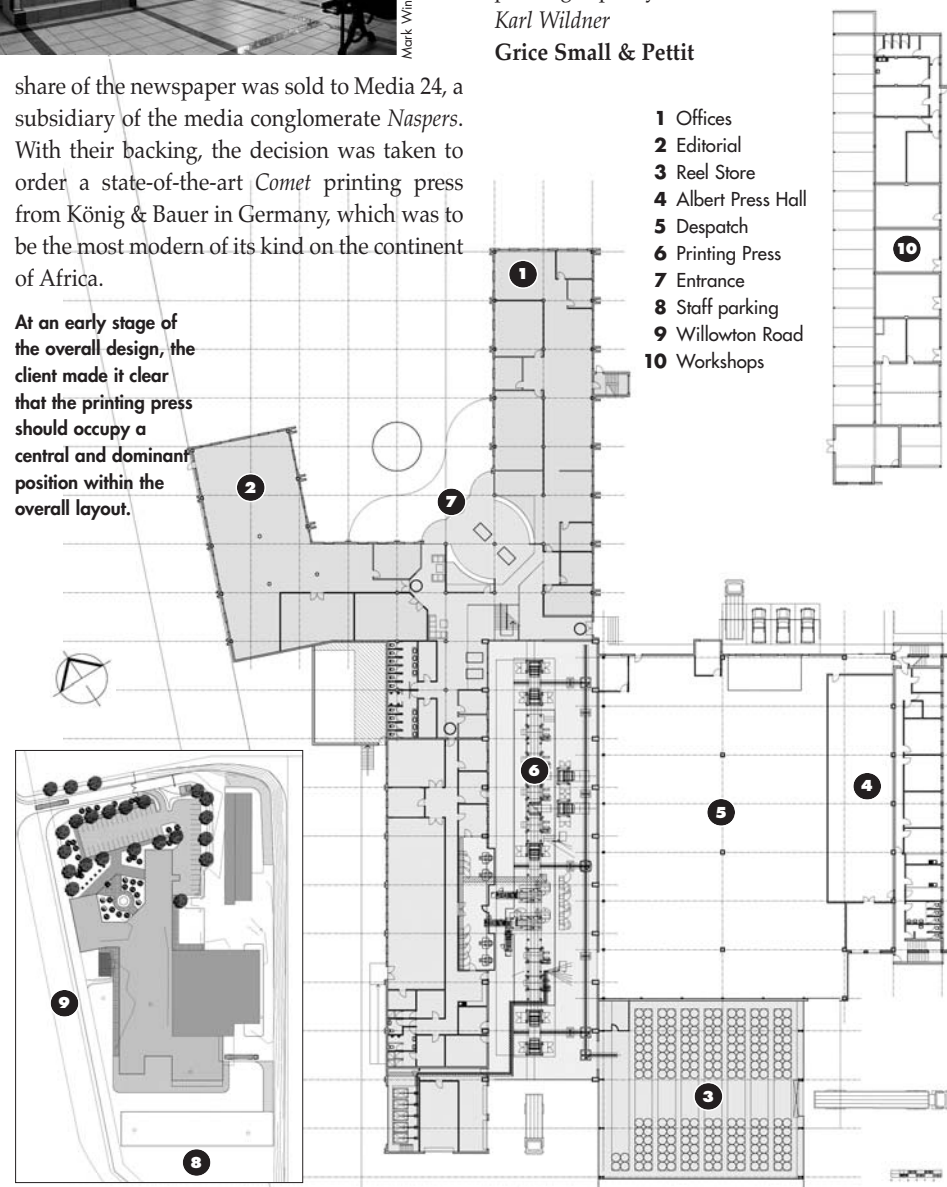
The client's brief was to develop the Willowton site in two phases. Phase 1 was urgent as the press had already been ordered, and involved the construction of a new Printing Press Hall to accommodate the 3-storey *Comet*, and the extension of the existing Paper Store to house up to 800 rolls of newsprint. Phase 2 involved the relocation of the entire journalism operation and management structure of the newspaper.

Extensive staff parking has been provided at the back of the building, while the public parking area has been laid out around a number of existing large trees, creating an (award winning) indigenous garden as a forecourt to the new building.

In total the development covers an area of 2962m<sup>2</sup> of floor space. The site has the potential for further expansion, and the south gable of the Printing Press Hall has been designed to be extended should *The Witness* require further printing capacity.

Karl Wildner

Grice Small & Pettit



## Pietermaritzburg: Capital City

### WANTED: A new vernacular for a variegated city



FROM TOP: Main Police Station (formerly Natal Government Railways Building), 231 Loop Street. Architect: EJ Welman, 1901-5; First National Bank (formerly Bank of Africa), 202 Longmarket Street. Architect: W Street-Wilson, 1903-4; Tatham Art Gallery (formerly Supreme Court), Commercial Rd. Architect: P Paterson (Colonial Engineer), 1864-75.

Now that the city of Pietermaritzburg – the greater city rather than merely the borough – is under the jurisdiction of a single municipality, Msunduzi, it is both possible and desirable to see the wood for the trees, to see the real city for the townships and for the tribal areas – and to call for more than just the conservation of the city's red brick Victorian vernacular.

Succinctly, the Msunduzi municipal areas covers 649km<sup>2</sup>, and is home to some 600 000 people, with approximately 200 000 living in each of three distinctive areas:

- i) the urbanized and developed central area and suburbs, which now occupies all of the townlands originally demarcated in the 1850s;
- ii) the urbanized but poorly developed townships of Edendale and Imbali, with the former also dating back to the 1850s, and the latter a product of the 1970s; and
- iii) the Vulindlela tribal area, which was set aside as such in 1848, but now contains both traditional rural settlements and 'urbanizing' areas.

"Imagine", if you can, a central grid laid-out by Voortrekkers but adorned by Victorian, as well as North and South Indian architecture, green parks and verdant suburbs, encircled by forests in the north and northwest. This is the part of the city in which Alan Paton was born and grew up, and of which he wrote "*Pietermaritzburg was to me the lovely city...my hometown was paradise...I am grateful for the opportunity to walk the hills of Pietermaritzburg.*"

In contrast, Martin Luther King Jr once said "*the ghetto begins where the sidewalk ends,*" and this is certainly apt as one enters the Edendale segment of the city. Poor housing – both formal and informal – and poor infrastructure dominate the denuded valleys of the Msunduzi River and its tributaries, with the brown and polluted water in the river symbolic of the neglect of the area. Monotonous, and seemingly unstoppable, low-income housing has in recent



years marched up almost every hill. The Vulindlela tribal area, which stretches from the edge of the 'city' for more than thirty kilometres to the west, contains glimpses of rural picturesque, but centuries of overcrowding and overgrazing have taken their toll.

Thus, tribal, colonial and apartheid ideologies manifested themselves in the townscapes and landscapes, which today constitute the variegated and quintessential South African city of Pietermaritzburg. It is a stunning yet disturbing tapestry of land and life.

Consequently, the main challenge confronting all of us – local government practitioners, planners, engineers, and yes, architects as well – is how to integrate, for the first time, this patchwork of a metropolitan system into a more efficient, equitable, livable and sustainable city.

A good starting point is to recognise the City's main spine, or corridor of activity, which extends for more than 15 kms from historic Georgetown in the south, along Edendale Road, through the central City, to Raisethorpe in the north. Other corridors, or branches, – such as the N3, Durban Road, Sweetwaters Road, Willowfontain Road and KwaPata Road – all feed into this main corridor, creating nodes of activity at their intersections, and imparting a decidedly radial shape to the city.

Clearly, then, it is this skeletal framework of corridors and nodes which has to be better integrated, if indeed a unified new South African city is to be created, and if the new Pietermaritzburg is truly to "belong to all who live in it, black and white".

The Msunduzi Municipality has taken the first step by identifying the corridors and nodes in its *Spatial Development Framework*, which gives expression in map form to its *Integrated Development Plan*.

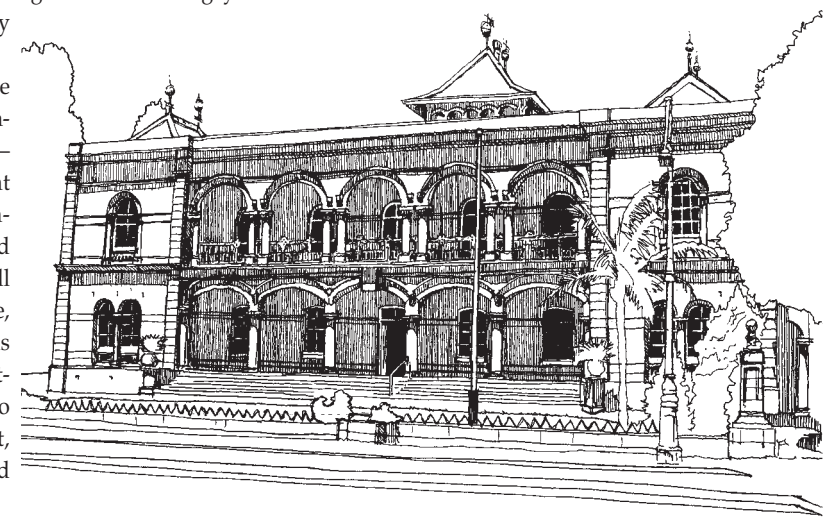
Furthermore, the municipality is beginning to focus its own developmental activities within this framework, by the construction of halls, clinics, recreational facilities and community centres.

Moreover, key parcels of land owned by the municipality, are being put out for development proposals from the private sector.

So the opportunity exists for us all – and especially architects – not just to create buildings but places of real meaning and character. Places which are distinctive yet related, harmonious rather than uniform, eclectic perhaps rather than slavishly stylistic, but nonetheless a product of this time in this place. In short, a new Maritzburg vernacular seems to be called for.

Rob Haswell

Mr Haswell is Strategic Executive Manager: Economic Development and Growth, The Msunduzi Municipality. –Editor



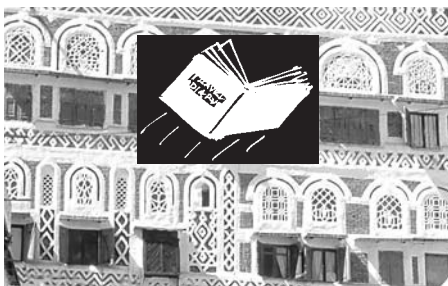


The iconic image of a group of tower houses in the desert was known to me, but the lectures by Ron Lewcock during his visit to South Africa in 1997, and the books under his authorship which he presented to the Biermann Architecture Library, remained on my mind. Thus, when the opportunity arose to attend a conference in Jordan in December 2004, I motivated for an excursion to Yemen. Ron kindly arranged for the issuing of an official invitation, as is required for a visa, and lined up contact persons to assist me during my short visit.

Yemen lies in the southwest corner of the Arabic peninsula. But for the former British controlled parts of southern Yemen, including the port of Aden, the country has been virtually inaccessible until the 1960s. Then, however the country became divided, with a Marxist state in the south which, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, could be constituted in 1990 as the Republic of Yemen, with a democratic constitution and voting rights for women. San'a, the capital, lies in the central western highlands at an altitude of 2400m, between the mountains and the desert. My visit was in winter with sunny, warm days and chilly nights.

I flew to San'a from Dubai, and the contrast could hardly have been greater. From the ostentation of Dubai and the preservation the tiny Bastakia wind-towered quarter of the original settlement, Yemen, by contrast, is palpably poor, with *inter alia* manually directed traffic intersections in the capital, yet the whole of the old town was declared a World Heritage Site in 1984. Yemenis speak little else but Arabic, and exchanging travelers cheques proved most difficult.

I was privileged to be invited by my host to supper in his home on two occasions, unusual experiences indeed. Shoes were left in the entrance area, and seating was offered on a low cushion, which lined the perimeter of the room. The wife was heard but not seen. The two children laid a plastic cloth in the middle of the floor and brought in the food, consisting of stews and unleavened flat discs of bread, which in lieu of



## A Travel Diary

### Yemen



TOP: View from the rooftop of the Arabia Felix Hotel with minarets piercing the sky and cavernous alleyways in the foreground. ABOVE: Lunch in Shibam. In this case food was set out on a low table. Note the height of the window sill in accordance with the seated activity of eating, and the richly traceried fanlight of gypsum above.

cutlery, were torn into pieces to scoop up dips or pick up meat, all consumed with water, while sitting on the floor. After supper, my host opened a small plastic bag with fresh *qat*, leaves which he had purchased at a dedicated *qat souq* (market) and chewed as a stimulant. The sight of veiled women with long, concealing dresses, and men with bowed daggers on their front, walking through town in the afternoon with one cheek stuffed with *qat* and masticating endlessly, is a characteristic of Yemen.

On Ron's recommendation, I stayed in the Arabia Felix Hotel, an assembly of tower houses around a court on the edge of the old town. My hotel room was accessible up 45 steps of high and mainly unequal risers. From the roof I had a commanding view of town, its labyrinth-like, cavernously narrow lanes, and some gardens. The latter survive as oases of active cultivation, behind high mud walls, with entries restricted through houses or mosques. There was a mosque opposite, one of a total of 34 in the old town, and the call of the *muezzins* broke my nights a few times.

The concept of the Yemeni house is best understood in the countryside. My hosts arranged for a talented guide, Yousuf Mohageb of *Arabian Eco-Tours*, to take me some 50km north-west of San'a to Shibam at the foot of the hilltown, Kawkaban, and on to Thula. With stunning landscapes en route, at my request we stopped often. It became clear that in the parched environment, whatever arable land there was, was cultivated, leaving only stony areas for houses, which by inference could have only limited footprints. Here the concept became clear: a ground floor of stone construction for structural and defensive reasons in isolated surrounds to accommodate animals and forage; and upper floors of mud bricks to accommodate a social/family floor, and the bedroom levels. The windows of the habitable rooms are at a low level with fanlights of coloured glass within a gypsum frame to allow light from atop once the curtains are drawn. In Shibam I visited a road-side stall for the manufacture of gypsum fanlights.

Within the originally 9-km long wall that envelops old San'a,

THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:

*Souq* in the foreground, cultivated gardens in the middle; and tower houses in the background;

Bab-al-Yaman gateway;

Yemeni tower house with *mafraj*, the room on top dedicated to looking out. The projecting perforated 'boxes' would have contained porous clay jars which, exposed to the air flow cooled both the water and the room within. The screened bay above the entrance door could have been a *mashrabiyyeh*, designed to allow the women views out without being seen.



partly restored with UNESCO funding, is contained a concentration of tower houses interspersed with a maze of pedestrian routes and minarets, the latter of which provide beacons for orientation. The houses are usually five and more storeys high, with bands of geometric decoration to distinguish each floor. The great mosque, the Al-Jamaa al-Kebir originates from the mid 7th century and is said to have been founded on the orders of prophet Mohammed during his lifetime. While San'a may have been founded by Shem, the son of Noah, some 2500 years ago, its houses date back some 800 years but because building traditions have altered little, a unity is experienced alongside others, merely of

100–200 years. The only area of single-storey construction is the *souq*, alongside and older than the great mosque. I was told that Ron had explained this as a translation of former tented structures, since the consolidated in mud, yet without rights for vertical expansion. The stalls of the *souq* are narrow and what struck me was the welcoming built-in feature for customer seating.

The *souq* terminates on Bab-al-Yaman, the only original gateway to the old town.

A wide and lowered carriageway, As-Sailah Street, divides the eastern and western parts of old San'a, littered with signs that warn of possible flooding. Here the whole road serves both as a conduit for transport as well as for flood-water, and is thus spanned with numerous bridges. The incorporation of services

infrastructure in the old town is indeed problematic and large metal pipes lie exposed, often at the peril of pedestrians.

I am most grateful to Michele Lamprakos, an MIT doctoral candidate then carrying out fieldwork in San'a; and especially to Jamal Majam. Without their help and hospitality, my visit to this undiscovered treasure of the Middle East would have remained at best a 'once over lightly'.

Walter Peters

