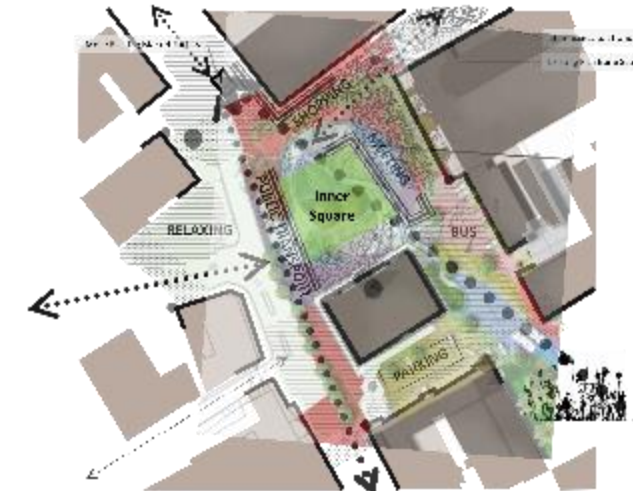




The Opportunities of (Micro) Places- A Reflection on Past and Current Projects

Debbie Wintermeyer

ILASA / IFLA AFRICA CONFERENCE 2025

REFRAMING THE AFRICAN LANDSCAPE



THE OPPORTUNITIES OF (MICRO) PLACES

Reframing the African Landscape calls for a critical re-examination of how local (micro) places are shaped by and situated within broader (macro) systems of inadequate infrastructure, development, and development control that often remain influenced by colonial and Eurocentric legacies.

It invites the creation of contextually grounded, inclusive and increasingly self-sufficient, future-oriented (micro) place alternatives.

This is to be explored through a critical reflection of two past projects and a future-facing statement of the opportunities of three current projects:

1. The Donkin Reserve – A Landscape of Memory.
2. Singapi Street – A street as a Landscape of Connection.
3. LIV Lukhanyiso Village – A new Landscape of Justice and Care.
4. Vuyisile Mini Square – A city square as a Landscape of Layers.
5. Gedult's Farm – A Created Landscape of Imagination and Healing.

Debbie Wintermeyer, architect and urban designer at The Workplace Agency, co-founded the practice in 2006 in Gqeberha.

She drives projects in public art, urban upgrading, revitalisation, stakeholder engagement, and heritage, ensuring a cohesive, big-picture approach to the built environment.



My Process

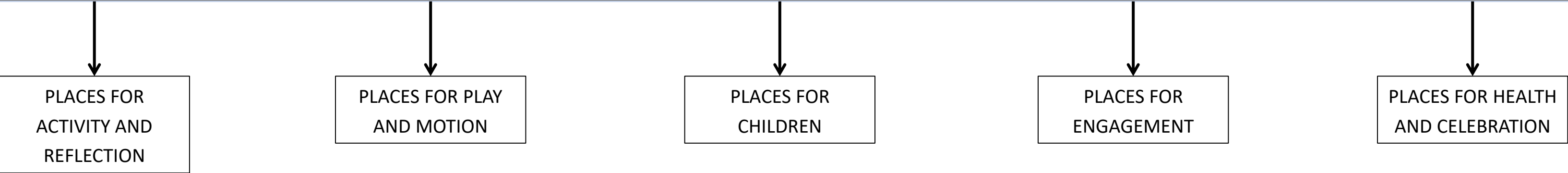
UNDERSTANDING THE SITE AT DIFFERENT SCALES - LANDSCAPES AND PLACES

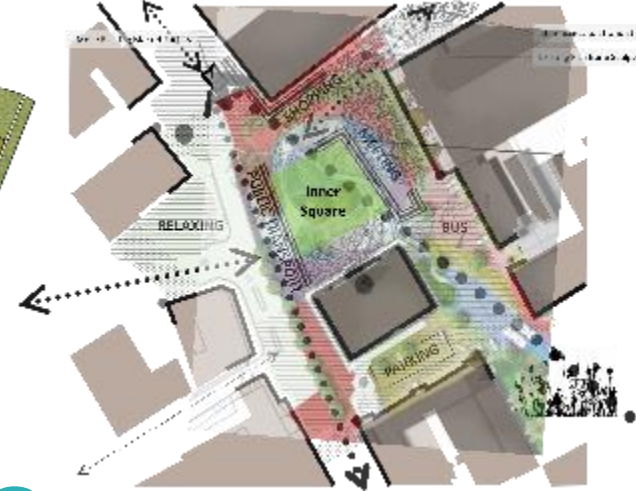
- Understanding the project at its various scales.
- Focus on the scale of the site.
- Description of projects in key terms:
A Landscape of...
A Place for

LANDSCAPE



PLACES





The Opportunities of (Micro) Places

1 DONKIN RESERVE:
A LANDSCAPE OF
MEMORY

2 SINGAPI STREET:
A STREET AS A
LANDSCAPE OF
CONNECTION

3 LIV LUKHANYISO
VILLAGE:
A NEW LANDSCAPE OF
JUSTICE AND CARE

4 VUYISILE MINI SQUARE:
THE CITY SQUARE AS A
LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS

5 GEDULTS FARM:
A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF
IMAGINATION
AND HEALING

PLACES FOR
ACTIVITY AND
REFLECTION

PLACES FOR PLAY
AND MOTION

PLACES FOR
CHILDREN

PLACES FOR
ENGAGEMENT

PLACES FOR HEALTH
AND CELEBRATION



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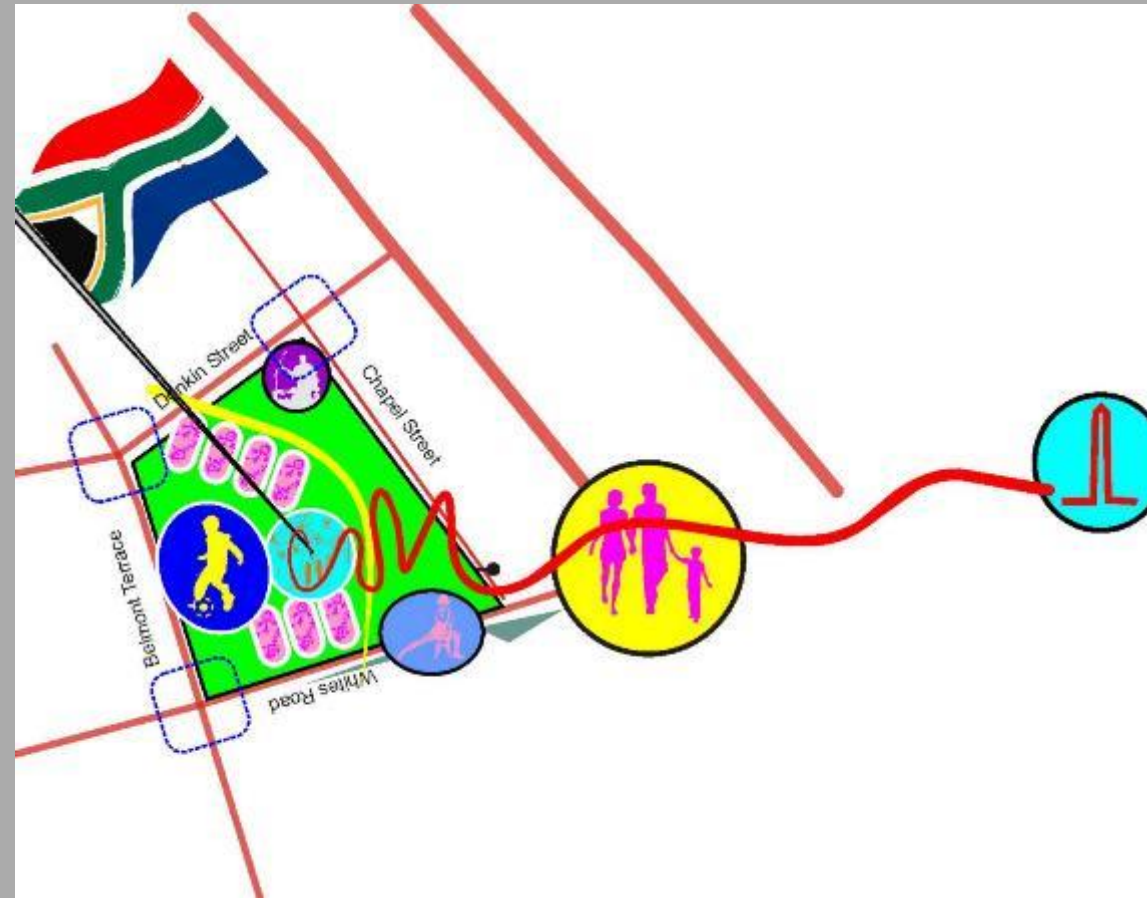
PLACES FOR
ACTIVITY AND
REFLECTION

DONKIN RESERVE

A LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY
PLACES FOR ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION

Central, Gqeberha
Mandela Bay Development Agency
2009 to 2016

- Redevelopment of Donkin Reserve in Gqeberha, a significant open space and former National Monument.
- Project included urban design, renewal, landscaping, public art, and heritage aspects.
- Extensive stakeholder participation shaped the process. Public engagement raised concerns about the Reserve's relevance and value to the Metro and its citizens.
- A conceptual framework was developed to redefine the Reserve. This aimed to align the Reserve with the broader Metro context.
- Goals included enhancing social relevance, tourism potential, and economic viability.



Initial Concept Diagram of the Proposals for the Site



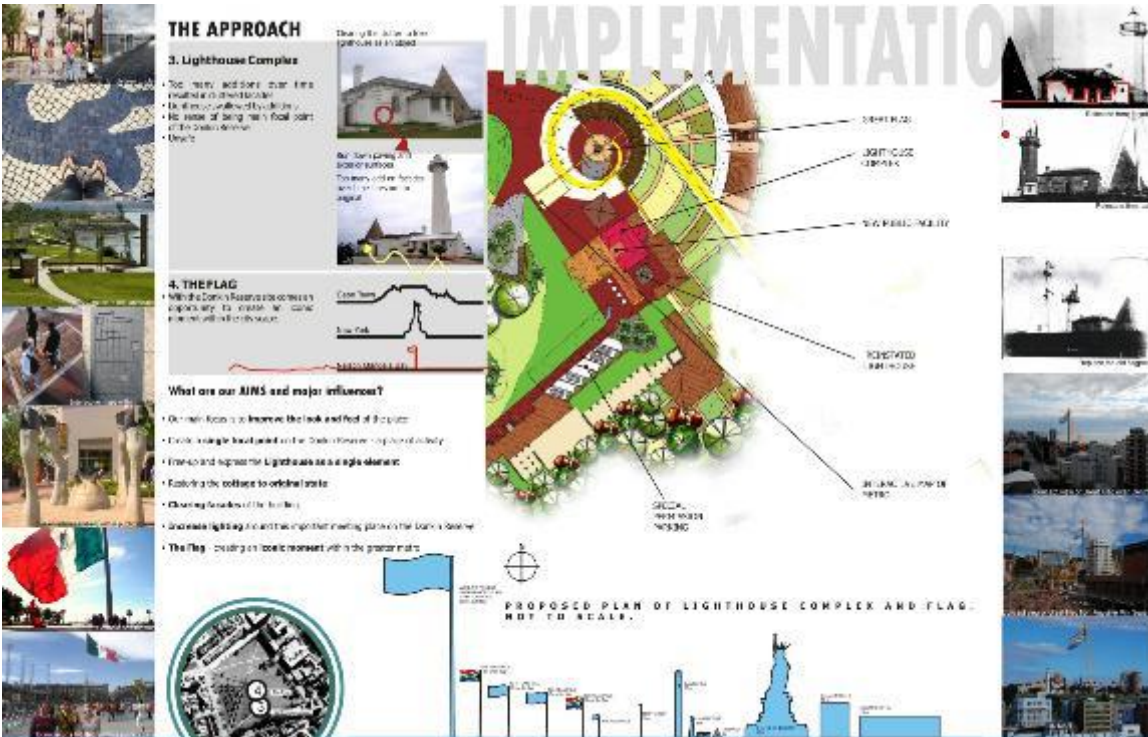
Aerial View of the Works Under Construction



Contextual Images of the Site at Completion of the Works

DONKIN RESERVE

A LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY
PLACES FOR ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION

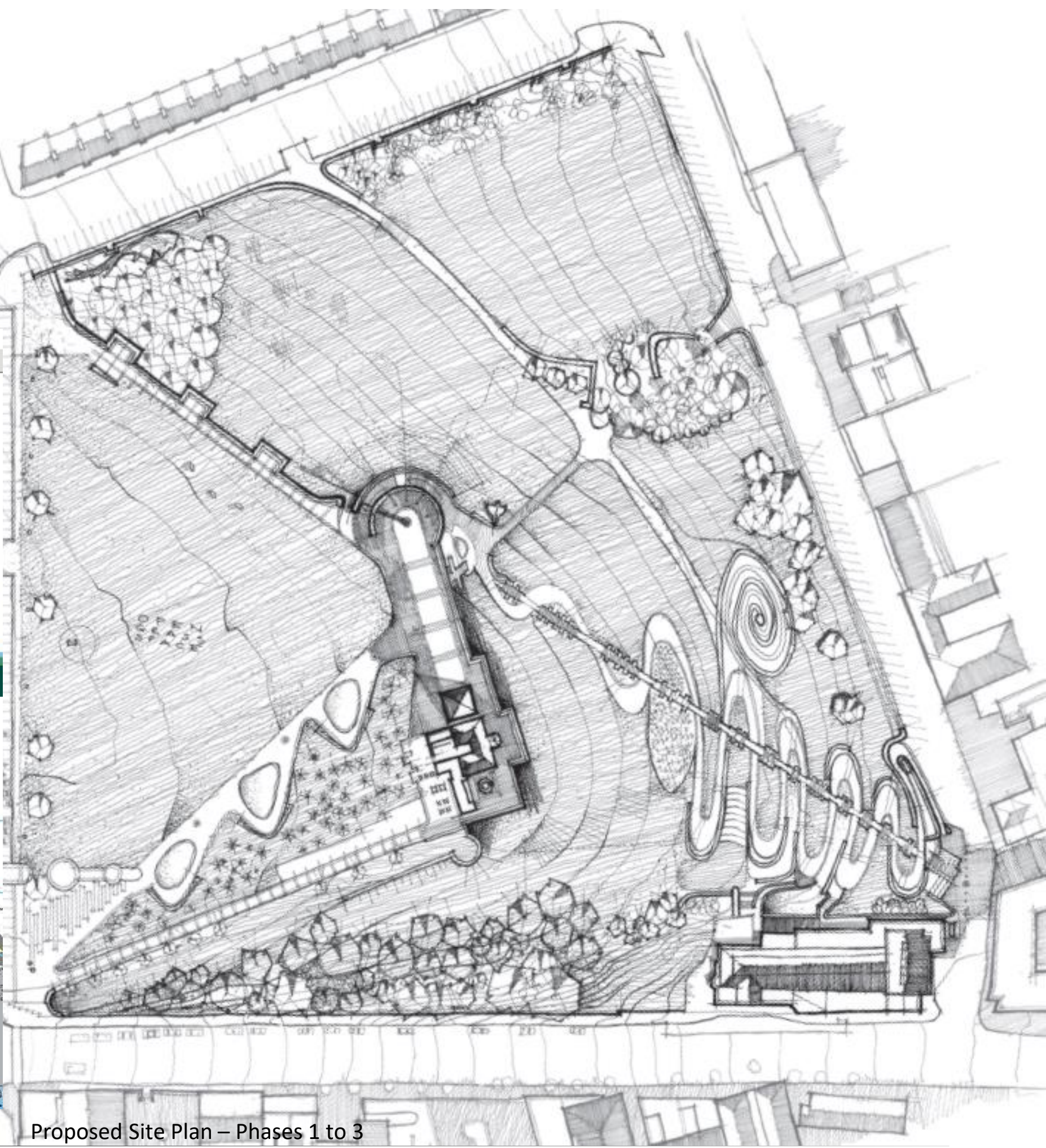


S_trengths	W_aknesses	O_pportunities	T_hreats
CURRENT STATUS • Open Space - increased with the new development • "Green spaces" - a good landscape for the city • Green spaces - a good landscape for the city • Topography and the surrounding landscape • "Access to the water" • "Access to the water" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city"	CURRENT STATUS • Not open to the city • Under used • Dangerous - lack of management and security • Lack of public space • Lack of public space • Lack of public space • Lack of public space • Lack of public space • Lack of public space	WHEN WE UPGRADE • High potential effect - access to the water • A vision • Capitalism or the city • Landmark or the city • Landmark or the city • Landmark or the city • Landmark or the city • Landmark or the city • Landmark or the city	IF WE DON'T UPGRADE • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city" • "A place for the city"

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WHAT DID THE PEOPLE SAY?



Design Development Panels Highlighting Process and Details.



Proposed Site Plan – Phases 1 to 3

DONKIN RESERVE

A LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY
PLACES FOR ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION

Places for Reflection – re-contextualised colonial monuments and a new big flag.



Places for Activity – public art voter queue reenactment, and skateboarding competition.

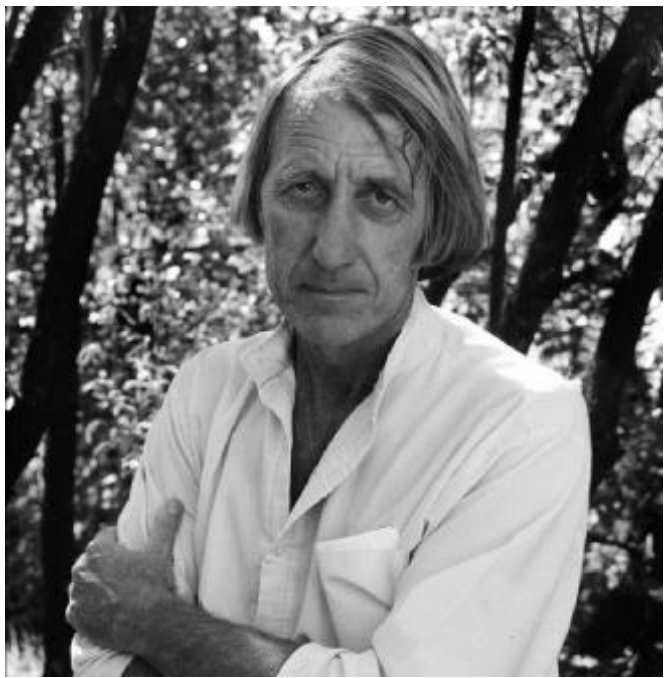


DONKIN RESERVE

A LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY
PLACES FOR ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION

Reorganising of existing Cycads on site.
Extensive new indigenous planting.

Landscaping concept by Landscape Architect Patrick Watson.





1 DONKIN RESERVE:
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AND HEALING



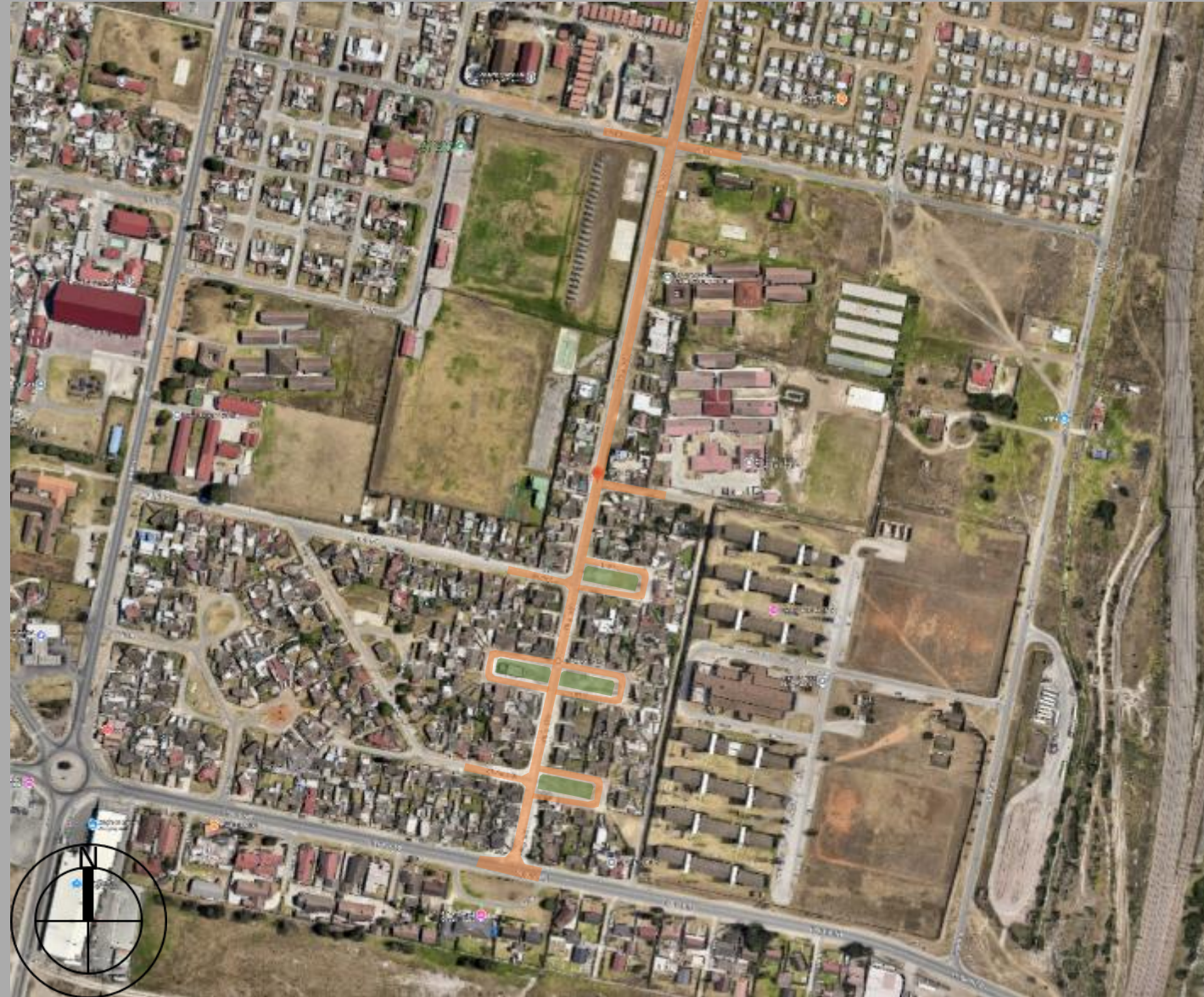
PLACES FOR PLAY
AND MOTION

SINGAPI STREET UPGRADE

A STREET AS A LANDSCAPE OF CONNECTION
PLACES FOR PLAY AND MOTION

New Brighton, Gqeberha
Mandela Bay Development Agency
2012 to 2018

- Phased environmental upgrade of Singapi Street, New Brighton, Gqeberha.
- Singapi Street is over 100 years old and serves as the main gateway to the Red Location Cultural Precinct.
- The street functions as a key space for interaction and daily life due to the limited household space in the area.
- Extensive public participation workshops shaped the design, incorporating the views of residents and Client bodies.
- Heritage and public art formed part of the engagement process.
- Outcomes included new infrastructure, upgraded pavements, and additional public facilities.



Location Plan Indicating the Extent of the Site of Singapi Street



Concept Diagram of Key Spatial Aspects of the Street and its Edges



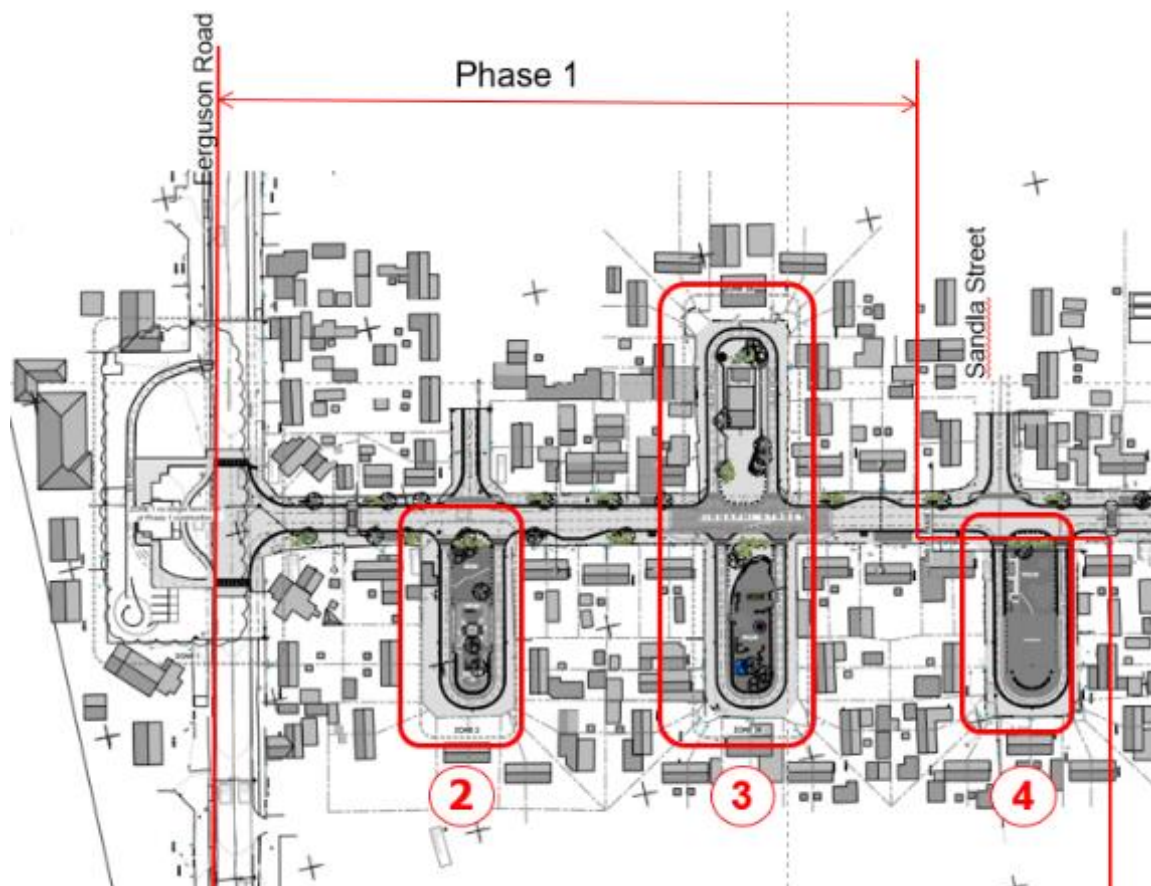
Site context images of the Completed Singapi Street Upgrade Project.

SINGAPI STREET UPGRADE

A STREET AS A LANDSCAPE OF CONNECTION
PLACES FOR PLAY AND MOTION

Key spatial principles include:

- Use what is existing and strengthen positive aspects of the street.
- Extensive stakeholder engagement on a range of issues is used as the basis for the concept design.
- The historical aspects of the area are incorporated into the proposal, including with the use of public art.
- Use of simple and repeatable urban elements such as purpose made concrete bollards and coloured pavers.



Design Proposal for the phase 1 of the Project Highlighting the 3 Community Spaces



Bench repair work underway on site.



Zone 2 construction



Zone 3B Play park construction.



Zone 3A park construction.

Images of some of the Street Furniture and Surface Finishes of the Project



SINGAPI STREET UPGRADE

A STREET AS A LANDSCAPE OF CONNECTION
PLACES FOR PLAY AND MOTION

Places for play and activity for children.



Public Art as part of the experience of the street.





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AND HEALING

PLACES FOR
CHILDREN

LIV LUKHANYISO VILLAGE

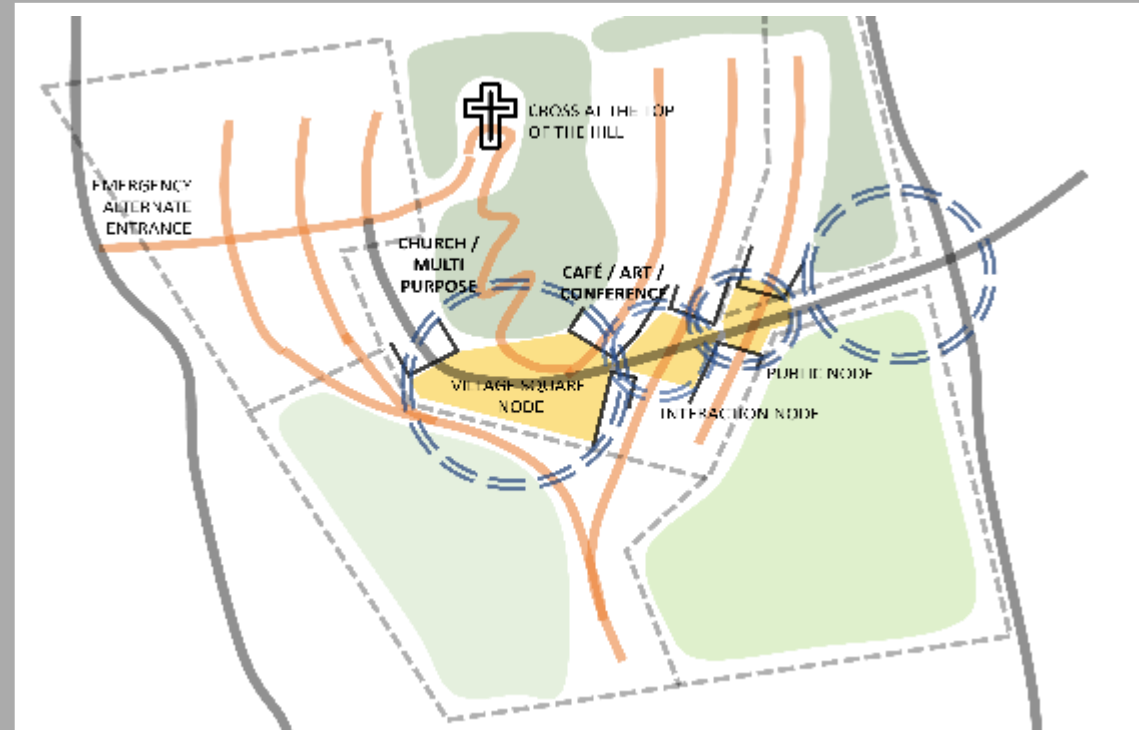
A NEW LANDSCAPE OF JUSTICE AND CARE
PLACES FOR CHILDREN

Makhanda, Eastern Cape

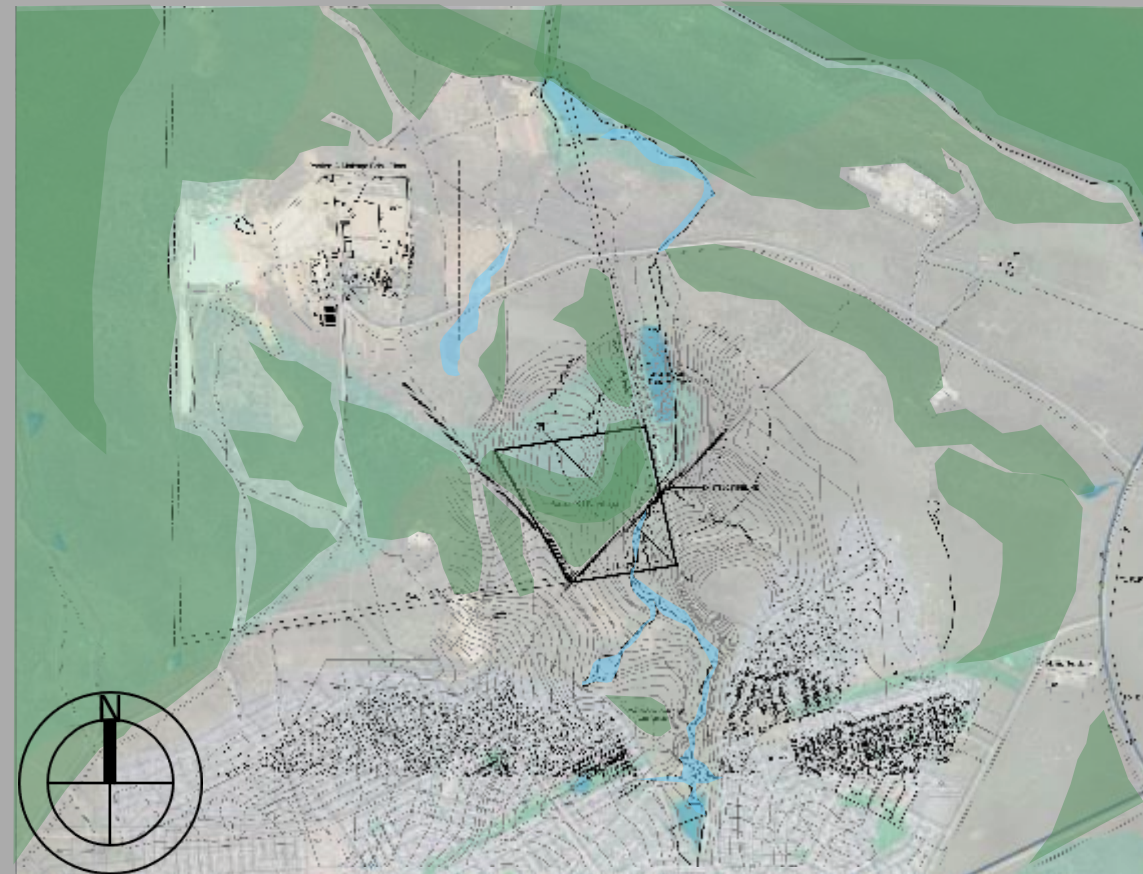
LIV LUKHANYISO

2021 to current

- Master plan developed for a new LIV facility near Makhanda to support the upbringing and education of vulnerable children.
- Design focused on specific client needs, site understanding, and establishing a strong sense of character.
- Emphasised green building principles and integration with natural site features.
- Proposed 15 compact “villages” within a larger community structure.
- Public spaces and careful material selection fostered a welcoming and cohesive atmosphere.
- Aimed to create a sustainable, healthy environment for children’s growth and development.



Concept Diagram Indicating the Key Spatial Relationships of the Site



Location Plan Indicating the Site in Relation to Makhanda



Context Photographs of the Site

LIV LUKHANYISO VILLAGE

A NEW LANDSCAPE OF JUSTICE AND CARE
PLACES FOR CHILDREN

Planted and landscaped courtyards form the centre of the proposal.

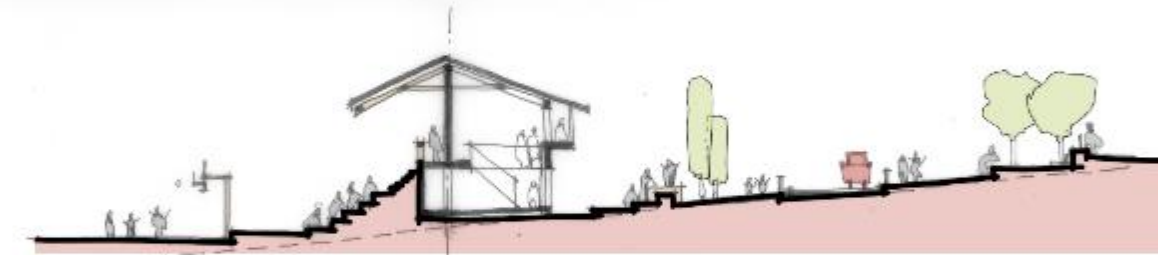
THE MAIN PUBLIC SPACE

Key spatial principles include:

- The site is composed of a series of compact “mini-villages” suiting functional and safety needs.
- Public space is created inside these mini-villages and formed between them and considers the change in levels.
- With very low car use, public spaces is understood as a single multipurpose space for vehicles, pedestrians and activities.



Site Section A-A



Site Section B-B



Site Section C-C

Concept Site Sections Highlighting Place-Making Elements

Detailed Site Plan of a Key Focus Area of Public Spaces at the Centre of the Development

ILASA / IFLA AFRICA CONFERENCE 2025: REFRAMING THE AFRICAN LANDSCAPE

02 OCTOBER 2025



LIV LUKHANYISO VILLAGE

A NEW LANDSCAPE OF JUSTICE AND CARE
PLACES FOR CHILDREN

THE RESIDENTIAL SPACE

Key spatial principles include:

- Mini-villages aligned to the sloping site for sun access and wind protection.
- Residential units are cost-effective, with a central living space and veranda facing the courtyard.
- Compact form with central courtyards ensures safe, usable spaces for children.
- Covered outdoor areas at courtyard edges provide shelter in hot or rainy weather.



Site Plan of the Phase 1 Residential Mini-Village



A residential “mini village” that is compact, scaled to the child and safe.

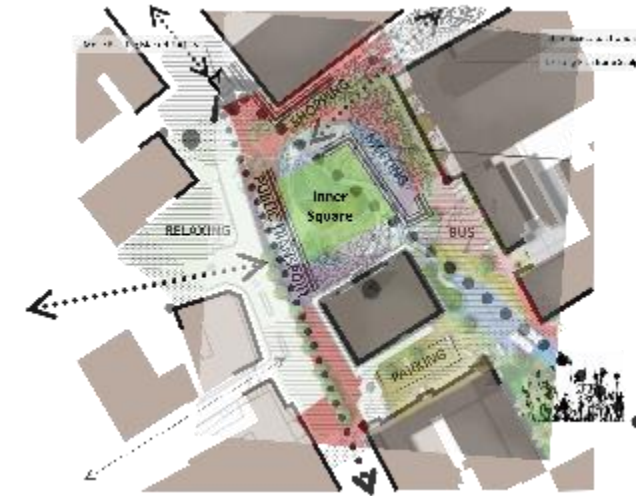


LIV LUKHANYISO VILLAGE

A NEW LANDSCAPE OF JUSTICE AND CARE
PLACES FOR CHILDREN



Concept 3 D View of the Proposed Development Highlighting the Compact Mini-Villages



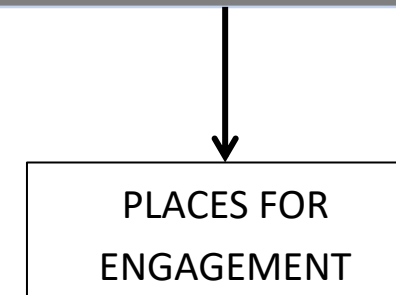
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A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF
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AND HEALING



VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS
PLACES FOR ACTIVITY AND REFLECTION

Central, Gqeberha
Mandela Bay Development Agency
2023 to current

Vuyisile Mini Square is the most important public space in Gqeberha. Its upgrading is directed at recognising its changes over time, its current demands and the dignity ascribed to its namesake.

- Redevelopment of Vuyisile Square into a central civic and cultural public space.
- Design improves accessibility, movement, and functionality while preserving historical significance.
- Emphasis on connectivity and inclusivity in the urban fabric.
- Upgrades public transport systems, positioning the square as a key city transport hub.
- Incorporates public art reflecting cultural and historical identity.
- Extensive public engagement with stakeholders, residents, and community leaders.



Location Plan Indicating the Site in Relation to its Context



Context Images of the Site

VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS
PLACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



The Mayoral Gardens at the centre of the square were well known



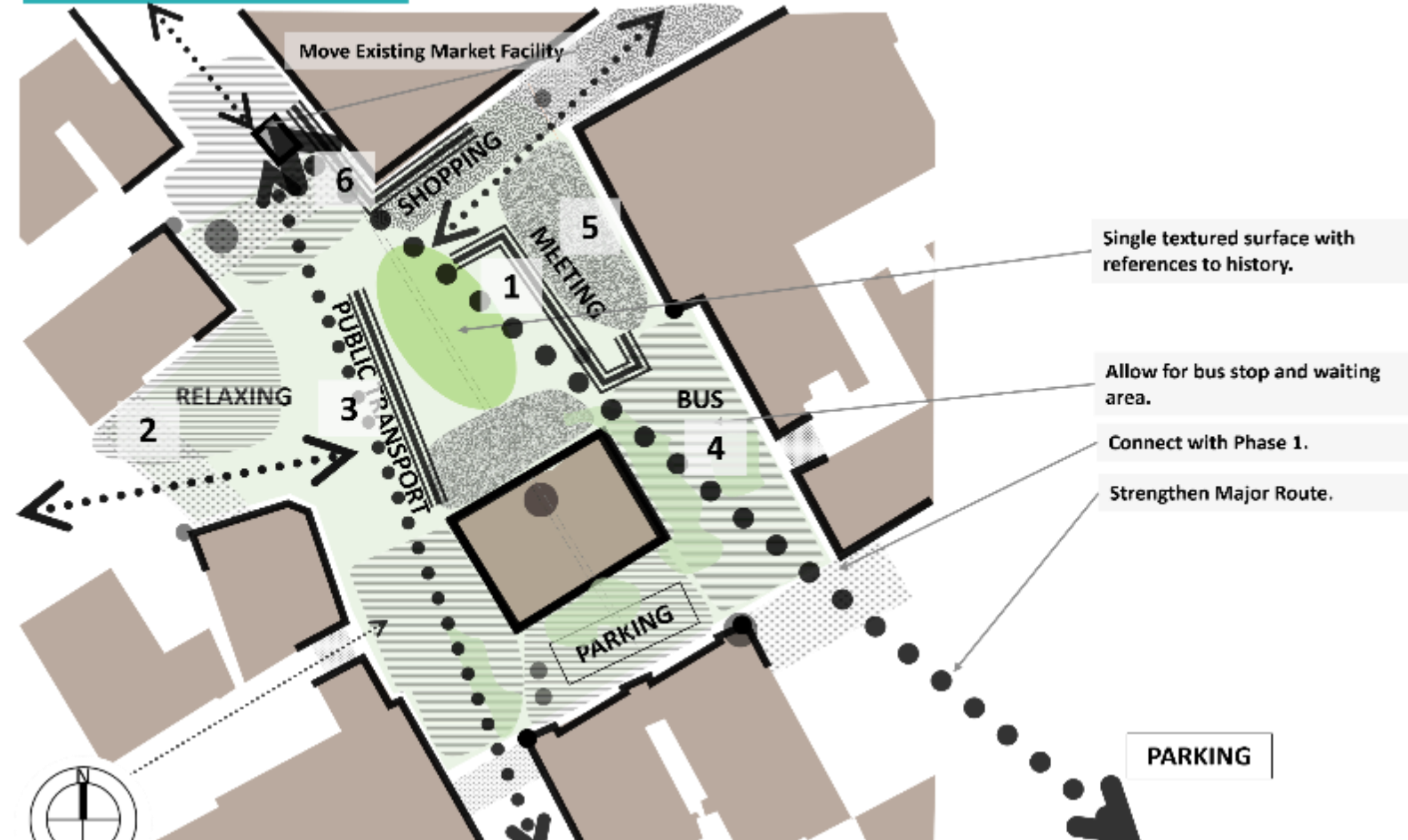
VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS PLACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Key spatial principles include:

- Understand the square as a larger space defined by buildings on the outer edge, with the Town Hall as a free-standing structure in the square.
- Reconnect traditional movement routes through the square, particularly to the currently disconnected southern areas.
- Take advantage of students and travellers using public transport in the area to re-activate the square.
- Minimise steps and other barriers that divide the space and disconnect the elements.
- Allow for various histories of the square to add a rich meaning to the space.

SUMMARY OF BIG IDEAS



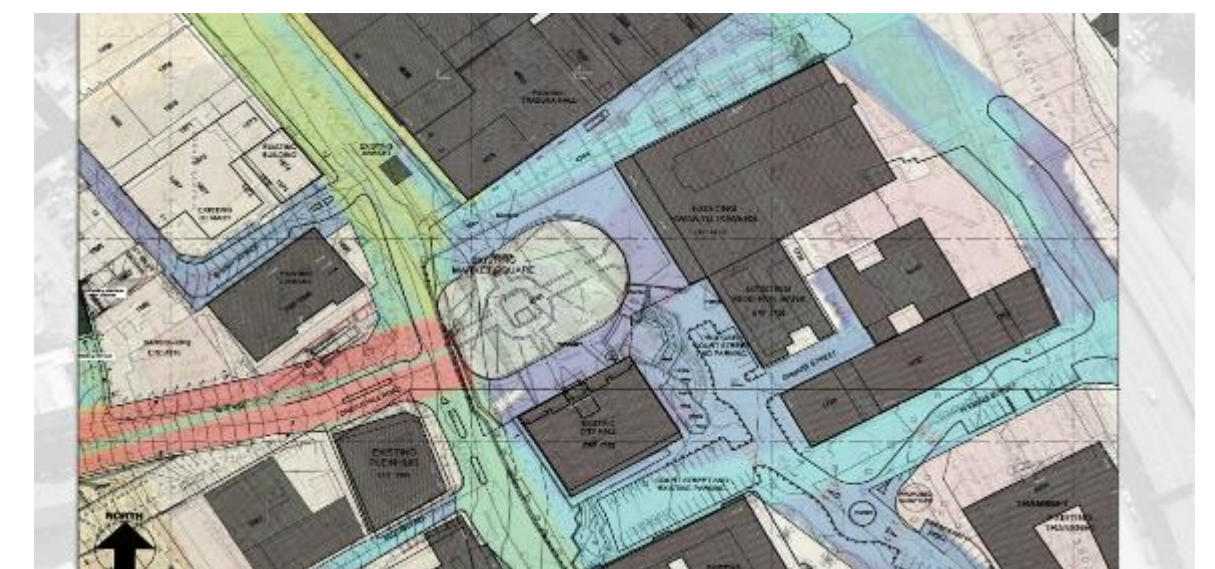
SUMMARY BIG IDEAS

Urban space as integrator of all heritages - market, maritime, struggle and the everyday.

Physical Elements of the proposal:

- 1 Stair/ Amphitheatre / Art Plinth element.
- 2 Large stepped grass waiting and relaxing area at existing public toilets.
- 3 Public transport node opposite waiting area, focusing on 14 000 students needing transport every day.
- 4 Dedicated bus area outside the Interscape office to encourage 250 000 people a year to move closer to square.
- 5 Propose changing underground shopping into underground parking.
- 6 Move the existing market facility to the side.

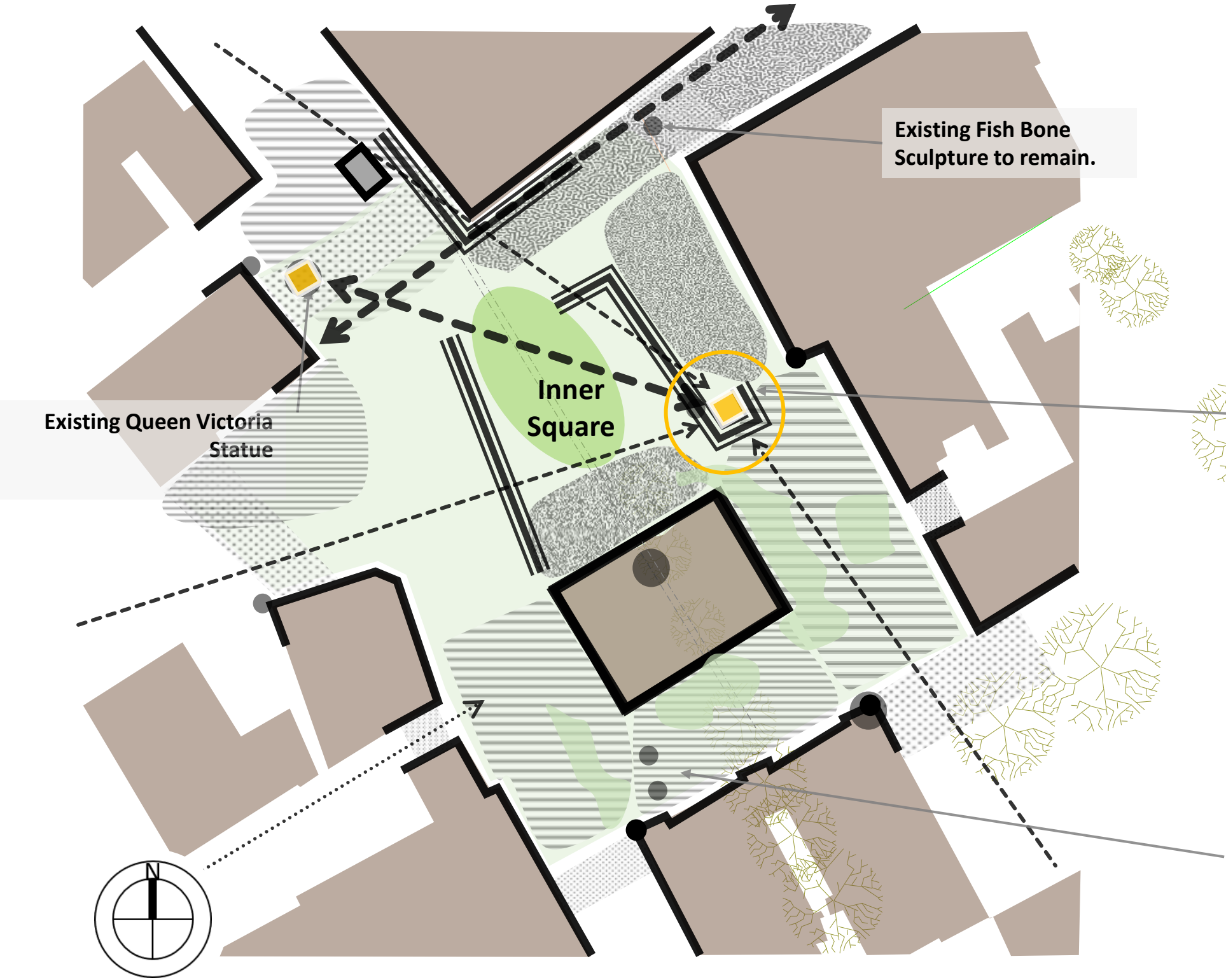
Site Plan Diagram Summarising the Key Physical Interventions Proposed for the Square.



Location Plan Indicating the Site and its Connectivity in Relation to its Context at Different Scales

VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS
PLACES FOR ENGAGEMENT



ALL DRAWINGS ARE NOT TO SCALE

INTERVENTIONS

- Creation of a plinth at a key interesting point of the Square.
- A plinth is a classical element of public space.
- The plinth becomes an ordering element for the Square.
- The plinth could be a position for a new Vuyisile Mini statue to be “in conversation” with Queen Victoria.
- Queen Victoria is to be taken off her plinth and turned to look towards Vuyisile Mini.
- Maritime Elements
- Connect the library to the harbour and to the Baakens Valley.
- Move the Diaz Cross replica to the rear of the Town Hall to the stairs next to Prester John.

LEGEND

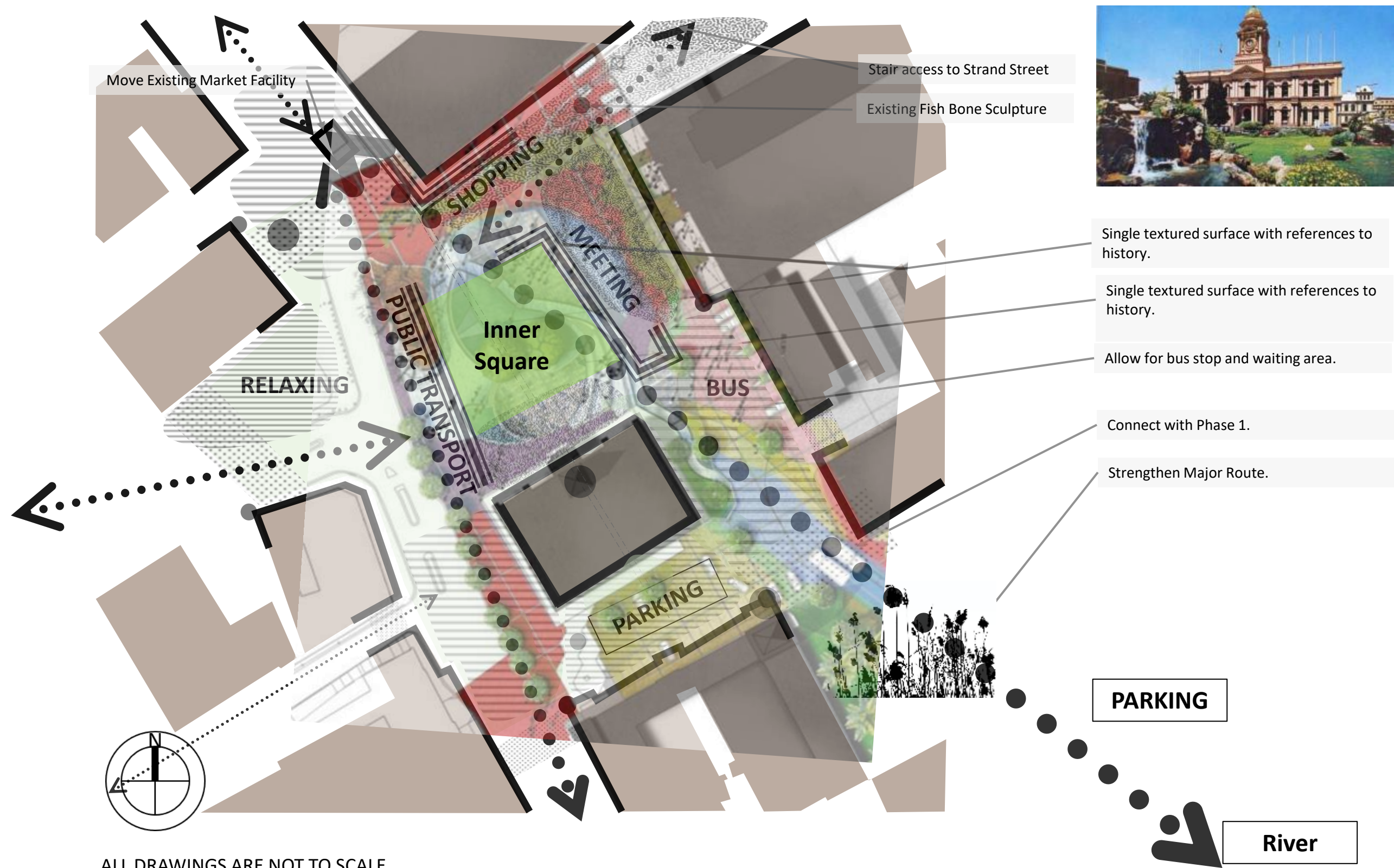
- Vuyisile mini on a plinth “in conversation” with Queen Victoria
- Mayors Gardens
- Pathways – Major
- Pathways – Minor
- Edges – Major
- Edges – Minor
- Edges - Transition
- Nodes – Major
- Landmarks – Major

Landmarks - Minor

VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS
PLACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The layers of the history of the square is recorded in the surface.



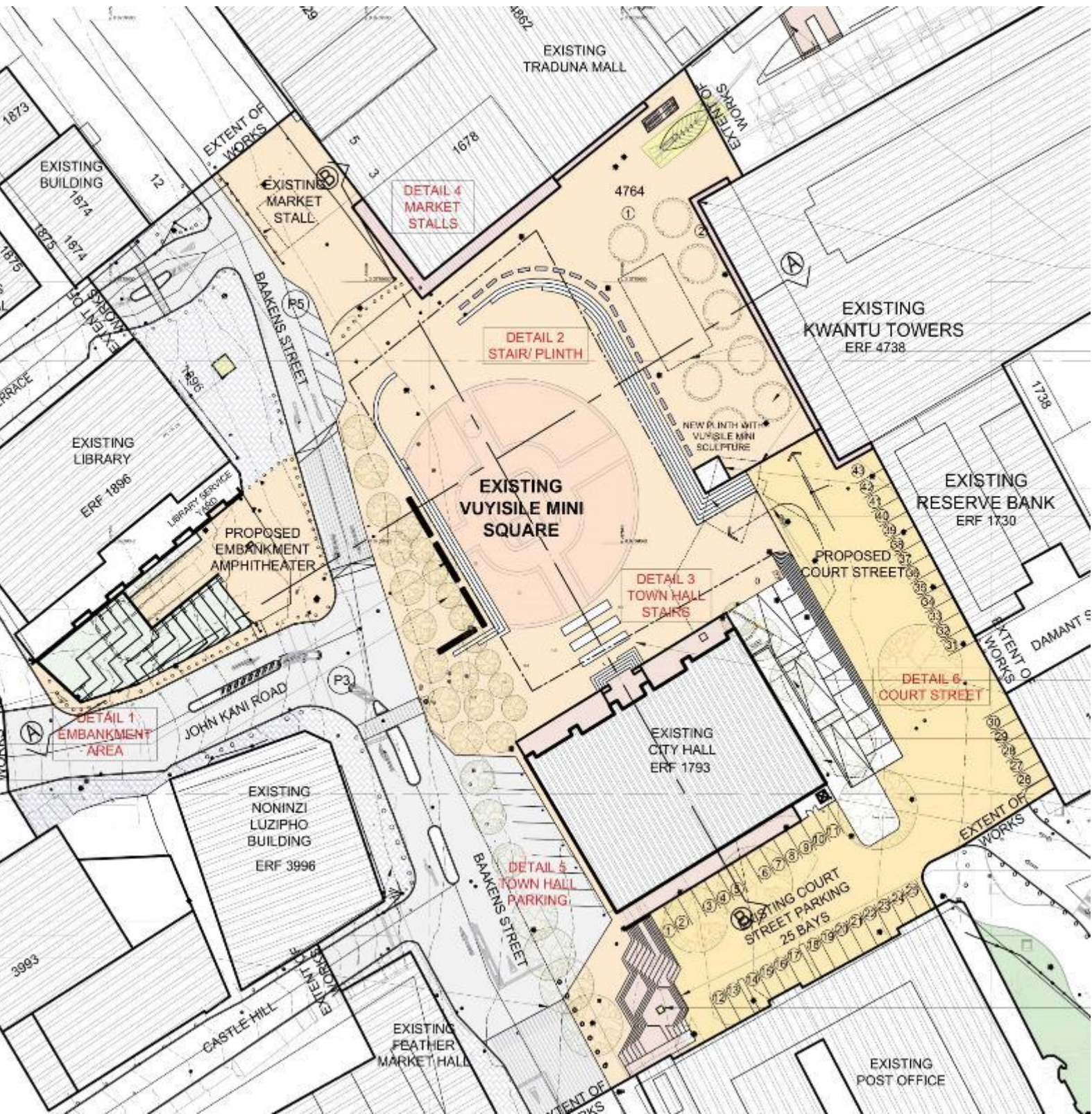
ALL DRAWINGS ARE NOT TO SCALE

LEGEND

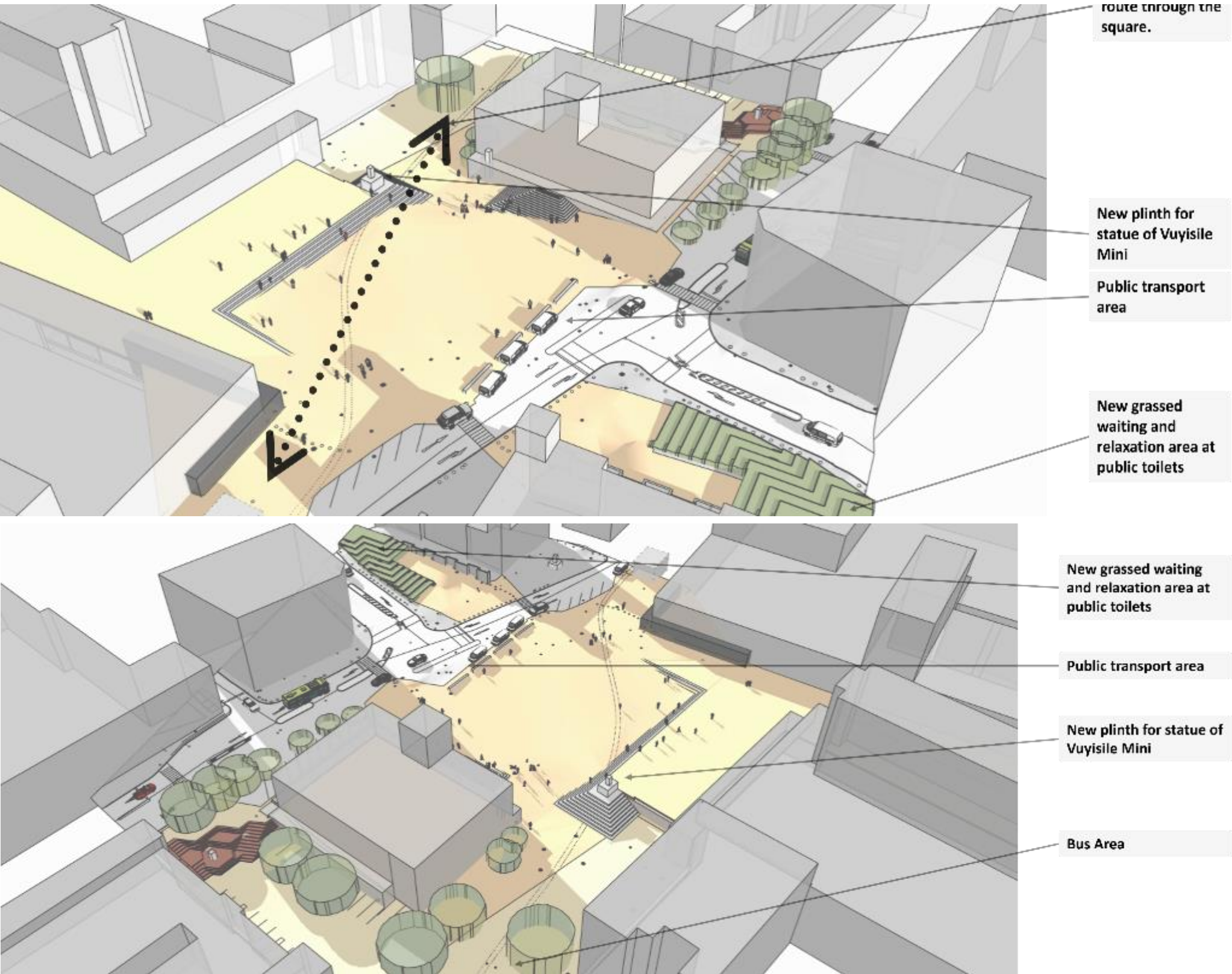
- Reed in paving
- "Mayors Gardens"
- Pathways – Major
- Pathways – Minor
- Edges – Major
- Edges – Minor
- Edges - Transition
- Nodes – Major
- Landmarks – Major
- Landmarks - Minor

VUYISILE MINI SQUARE

THE CITY SQUARE AS A LANDSCAPE OF LAYERS
PLACES FOR ENGAGEMENT



Site Plan of the Proposals for the Square with Key Interventions Identified.



3 D Aerial Views of the Proposed Upgraded Square.

1 DONKIN RESERVE:
A LANDSCAPE OF
MEMORY

2 SINGAPI STREET:
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A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF
IMAGINATION
AND HEALING

PLACES FOR HEALTH
AND CELEBRATION



GEDULD'T'S FARM

A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF IMAGINATION AND HEALING
PLACES FOR HEALTH AND CELEBRATION

Geduld't's Farm, Gqeberha

Sipamla Family Trust

2024

- New accommodation, training, and entertainment facility west of Gqeberha, north of the N2.
- Design inspired by “Wakanda,” structured around an active street with a central conference and wedding facility.
- Site features indigenous and exotic bush, oriented east–west.
- Afrocentric resort experience integrating cultural themes and diverse heritages.
- Provides immersive visitor experience with varied amenities for accommodation, training, and entertainment.



A degraded site with extensive growth of exotic vegetation.



Context Photographs of the Site

GEDULDT'S FARM

A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF IMAGINATION AND HEALING
PLACES FOR HEALTH AND CELEBRATION

The Phase 1 section is formed by the largest opening in the existing landscape and consists of several functions around a circular central garden element

Key spatial principles include:

- Variety of places for different activities connected by a common central street.
- New places and structures are placed in openings in the existing landscape in a way that creates more public common areas and more private concealed spaces.
- New structures are placed to respond to the central street and edge the existing landscape.
- The landscape is a key part of the development and highlights the Client’s business interests in medicinal plants.

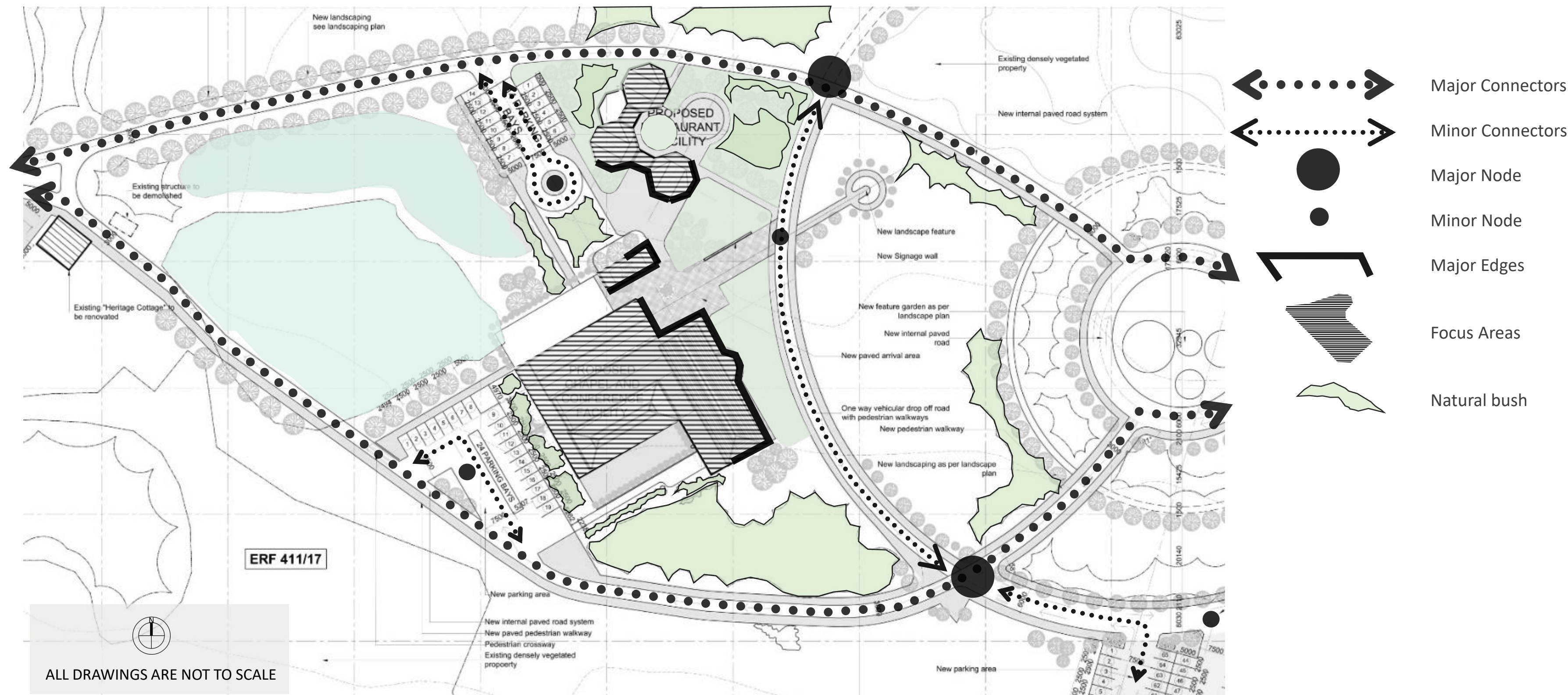


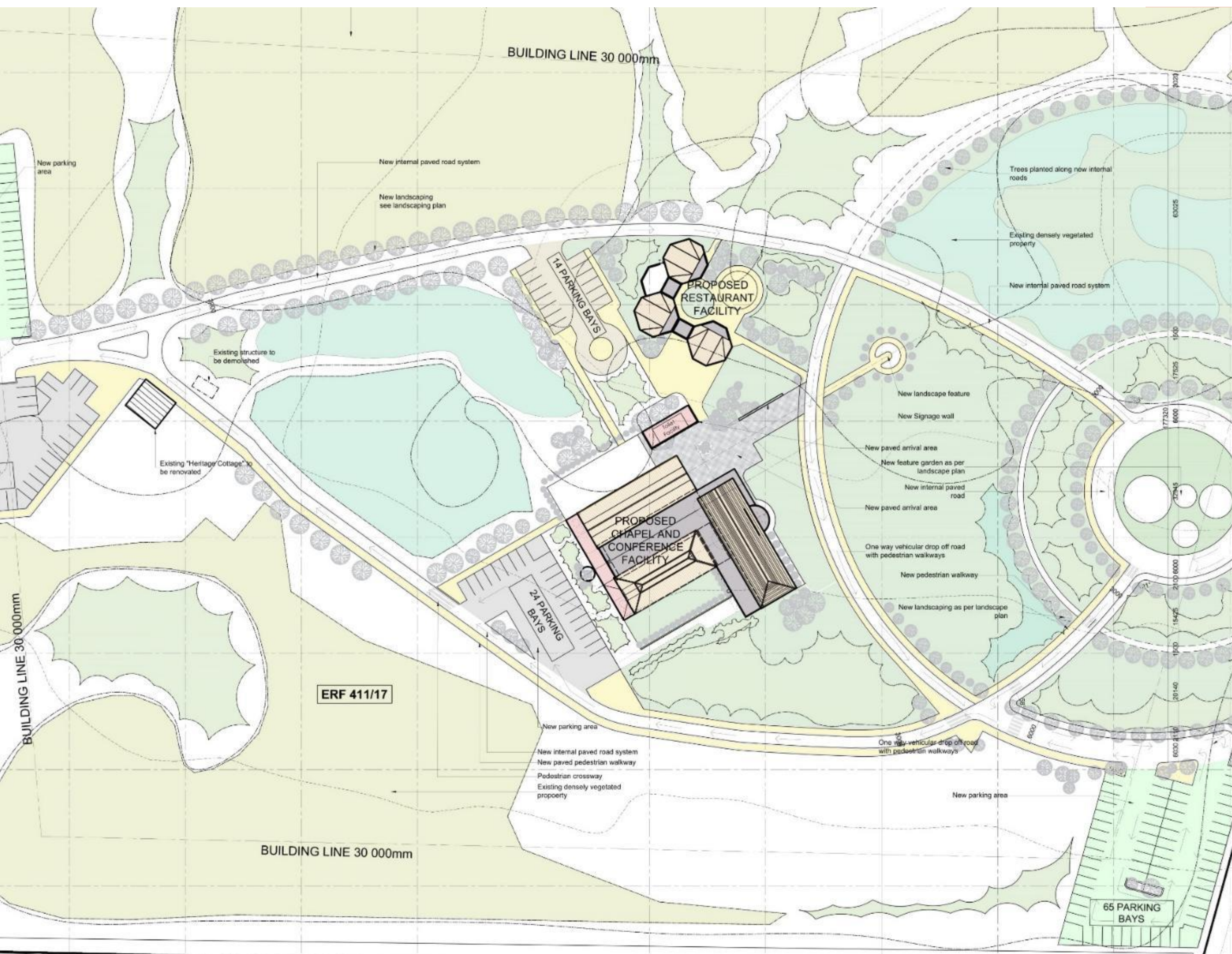
Reference images of medicinal plants and of a possible
“Wakanda” built environment



GEDULD'T'S FARM

A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF IMAGINATION AND HEALING
PLACES FOR HEALTH AND CELEBRATION





-  New Indigenous Trees
-  New Kikuyu Grass
-  New Indigenous Gardens
-  New Indigenous Planting
-  Existing Mixed Indigenous and Exotic Trees and Bush
-  Removal of Exotic Trees and Bush

GEDULDT'S FARM

A CREATED LANDSCAPE OF IMAGINATION AND HEALING
PLACES FOR HEALTH AND CELEBRATION



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CONFERENCE FACILITY



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CONFERENCE FACILITY

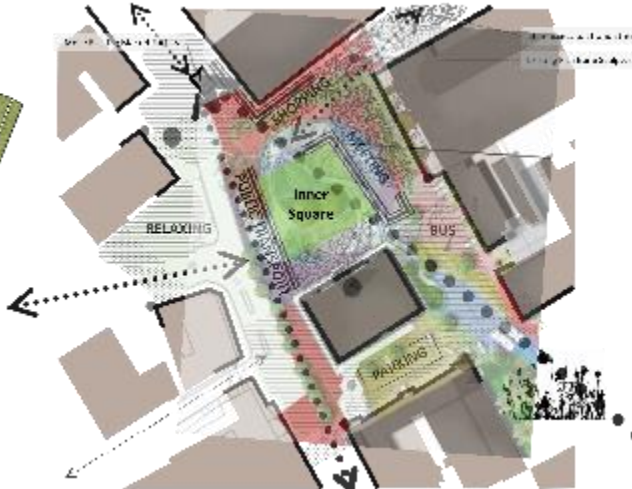


EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CONFERENCE FACILITY



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CONFERENCE FACILITY

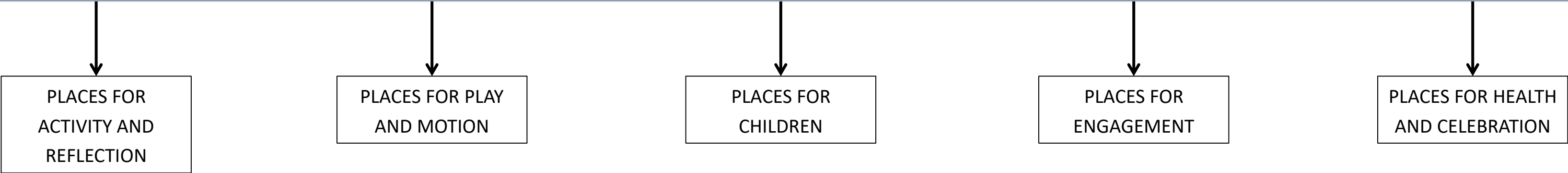
IN CONCLUSION



LANDSCAPE



PLACES



IN CONCLUSION



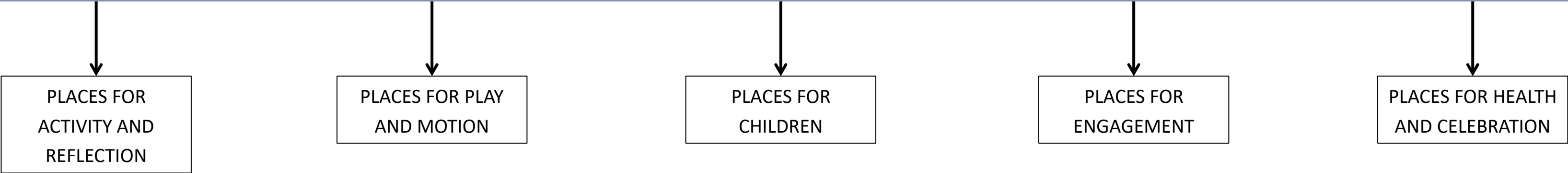
The Opportunities of (Micro) Places:

1. **Contextual grounding** — micro-places allow design responses that reflect local culture, climate, and everyday practices rather than imported models.
2. **Inclusion and equity** — they create accessible, human-scaled places that respond to diverse community needs, countering exclusionary legacies.
3. **Self-sufficiency** — micro-places can integrate food production, water management, energy, and social functions at a small and manageable scale.
4. **Resilience and adaptability** — they offer flexible, incremental interventions that can adapt to urban change and limited resources.
5. **Catalysts for transformation** — small-scale interventions can trigger wider urban renewal

LANDSCAPE



PLACES



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