1.1 Background and Context

Urbanisation is a phenomenon that has increased rapidly over the last fifty years. Just over half of South Africa's population is currently living in urban conditions. This number continues to grow rapidly as more and more South Africans gravitate towards the city in search of job opportunities, educational resources, medical services and government amenities (Dewar and Uytenbogaart 1991:10).

Currently, South African cities are not able to sustain the large influx of people that occurs each and every day. Cities at present can simply not cater for each individual's physical, social, psychological and sensory needs (Dewar and Uytenbogaart 1991:17). This has led to a negative perception of the traditional city CBD. Previously, the CBD of a city was considered to the heart of all economic activity. However, cities began to fragment causing the decline of the Central Business District (CBD). The edges became undefined, and low density urban sprawl stretched radially from the city center. The city became not only physically separated, but separated socially, culturally and economically too. An increase in poverty and racial inequality occur as a direct result of such trends. These various separations have lead to the formation of the mono-functional CBD district that occurs today. The city functions as a vibrant, interactive environment during the day, but is empty and intimidating by night (monofunctional). This results in a continuous 'expansion' and 'contraction' of the city each day. The areas most affected by this are those that feed people into and out of the city; hence, the major public transportation nodes. These nodes serve people that can not afford to live closer to the city or own a private car with which to travel to and from their various destinations. It is for these people that public transport amenities are inefficient. It most often occurs also that the public spaces surrounding these heavily utilized nodes are of poor quality, ill-maintained and crime-ridden. These unkempt public spaces give the commuter a first impression of a city and are therefore responsible for the initial experience that a person has on entering.

It has been proposed that densification of the city center, by promoting a layered 'live-work-play' environment, full of diverse choices, will aid in alleviating much of the pressure that South African cities are feeling at present (Dewar and Uytenbogaart 1991:16). This proposal however, needs to occur in conjunction with smaller proposals that will act as slighter urban catalysts; building blocks creating pieces of the greater picture.

The proposed 'i-hub' development aims to act as an urban catalyst in regenerating the urban fabric of the Pretoria Station Precinct. The project will be outlined further in the chapters that to follow.

Fig 1.1 PAUL KRUGER STREET – A view north, towards Church Square. (photo by author)

Fig 1.2 PAUL KRUGER STREET – An intersecting street in close proximity to Church Square. (photo by author)

Fig 1.3 INFORMAL TRADE IN THE PRETORIA STATION PRECINCT. (photo by author)

1.2 Problem Definition

Arriving at Pretoria Station for the first time on the Southern fringe of Pretoria's CBD is a disorientating experience. The existing urban fabric is fragmented, particularly on the site of the Station itself. Various different transport and service amenities are housed haphazardly and in different directions on and around the site. Important information facilities and points of reference are vastly dispersed and inconspicuous. The lack of orientating information at this entry point leaves a potential tourist/commuter feeling overwhelmed and uncertain within their new surroundings. This occurs particularly with regard to first time visitors, and will more often be the case with the introduction of the new GAUTRAIN terminal at the station, which will beyond doubt, bring more visitors to Pretoria's city centre.

The facility that currently caters for tourist and first time visitors is housed in the Old Nederlandsche Bank building in Church Square (See Fig 1.4 to 1.1.7 adjacent). It is a challenge to find due to the lack of signage defining its location. Althought the staff are friendly and helpful, the facility is inadequate as not many visitors can be helped simultaneously. There are no amenities that cater for a person waiting to be helped, directed or collected by a shuttle bus. There are also no facilities such as tour booking offices or travel agents which could aid a tourist in planning their visit. The center is able to provide maps, answer questions regarding the city and then direct a tourist to the necessary centers where travel arrangements can be made. The image that the centre's out-dated facilities portrays, leads to a negative perception, not only of Pretoria's tourism sector, but of the city as a whole.

The South African tourism sector, although functioning well in totality, is able to contribute so much more to the county's economy. It has the vast potential to create jobs locally and improve the perception of the country internationally. The i-hub project seeks to address the short-comings of the current facility, as well as provide a transitional environment in which a person visiting the area is able to orientate themselves before moving on. Trans-progamming with facilities such as shops, communication hubs, conference venues, markets, restaurants and cafes, will ensure that the new facility contributes positively to the Station Precinct every hour of the day.

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5

Fig 1.4 THE OLD NEDERLANDSCHE BANK BUILDING, located on the South-Western corner of Church Square, currently houses the Tourist Information Center for the Greater Tshwane Region. Although the building itself is prominent, its function can easily be overlooked by a new comer or passer-by. (photo by author)

Fig 1.5 SIGNAGE directing one to The OLD Nederlandsche Bank Building is inconspicuous and located in such a way that it only visible when entring Church Square from the South at Paul Kruger Street. (photo by author)

Fig 1.6

Existing Facilities

Fig 1.6 CHURCH SQUARE'S WESTERN EDGE. This image shows a view towards the North from the entrance of the Tourist Information Center. Church Square's Historically rich architecture is evident in the background. (photo by author)

Fig 1.7 THE HOP-OFF TOURIST BUS was introduced three months ago. Tshwane Tourism intends to use the period leading up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup to streamline this new service and add buses to their fleet. The buses take tourists around the city, stopping for brief periods of time at places of interest and relevance. (photo by author)

Fig. 1.8 CHURCH SQUARE. This image shows Church Square, towards the East, as seen when exiting the Tourist Information Center. The Statue of Paul Kruger can be seen in the middle distance. (photo by author)

Fig 1.7

Fig 1.8

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The 'i-hub' project will provide an engaging information and orientation facility for those visiting Pretoria. It will promote both the culture of Pretoria and South Africa as a whole and in so doing, contribute to the country's tourism sector. An information and orientation facility is the first place a visitor is bound to look for. It is therefore this particular place that will showcase the character of the city about to be explored. The 'i-hub' project should therefore:

· Honour and celebrate the rich layers of valuable heritage found in and around this area.

· Act as a catalyst in rejuvenating the existing urban fabric of the Pretoria Station precinct, in order to optimise the experience of it.

· Strengthen the spatial legibility of the Station site, by re-defining the historical garden edge, therefore improving public orientation.

· Establish a hierarchy of spaces of diverse character which stimulate an individual person's sensory responses.

· Create an environment that is rooted in the local context, but too caters for a variety of difference cultural needs and perceptions.

1.4 Research Questions

Considering the above aims and objectives, the following questions have been posed as a guide towards the final outcome:

a) How can an architectural intervention instil a coherent identity and aid in the efficient functioning of public transport nodes in and around the city?

b) What can be done to enhance the quality of public spaces surrounding these nodes, therefore rendering them safe and usable?

c) How would it be possible to ensure that the experience of entering a city is engaging, positive and rewarding?

d) In what way can the individual become part of the architecture, and therefore experience an environment on a personal level?

1.5 Research Methodology

The method used in collecting, investigating and drawing the conclusions found within this document is two-fold:

1.5.1) Quantitative Research
a) Data Collection and Analysis
This involved the collection and research of relevant writings, framework documents, historical papers and statistics.

b) Field Studies and Observation
This process involved spending time within the context of the proposed project, photographing, drawing and documenting what is seen, heard and experienced first hand.

1.5.1) Qualitative Research
a) Personal Interviews
Potential clients, current and future stake-holders, the municipality as well as a variety of existing users provided valuable information regarding the functioning of the area, as well as future aspirations for the Pretoria Station Precinct.

Collectively, the information gathered through an assortment of research methods provides a basis from which to make relevant design decisions. The research that has been collected, as well as the way in which it informs the design process is documented throughout this study.

The Study

1.6 Structure of the Study

This study begins by outlined the background and context of the project. The problem definition is then portrayed and the aims and objectives set. Research questions and methodologies are compiled in order to direct the study. Assumptions and Delimitations are mentioned at this stage.

The contextual relevance of the tourism industry, both globally and locally, is explored in order to orientate the proposed project within the current economic climate and substantiate the necessity for such a project. Particular places of interest within Pretoria and its direct surroundings are then illustrated.

The study goes on to investigate the city of Pretoria, specifically the Inner city. This is an important part of the research process as it provides much essential insight into the development and functioning of the city as a whole. The Pretoria Station Precinct is then is analysed in relation to its surroundings so as to fully grasp the way in which this very important southern gateway functions. A group Spatial Design Framework (SDF) for the precinct is then proposed.

Design influences and the theoretical premise are then outlined. This section consists of an explanation of the intended design philosophy, as well as principals that will be used as design generators. As the study progresses, it will become evident how these specific philosophies are to influence the development of the proposed project.

Precedent studies are then conducted. These studies have been divided into two categories; theoretical precedents and functional precedents. The selected precedents are then critically analysed and conclusions are drawn.

The client, user and programme are outlined at this stage. The proposed programme is outlined, and the accommodation schedule given. Following this, the specific site is investigated within the context of the Pretoria Station Precinct.

The process, from conceptualisation, to the project refinement is illustrated. The various different influences that impact the design decisions made are shown. The end product then becomes evident. Drawings and technical investigations are done in order to demonstrate the detailed design of the project's components. The application of various theoretical philosophies is also demonstrated here.

The study concludes with a financial report, as well as comments and insights regarding the final design.

1.7 Assumptions and Delimitations

Due to time constraints and the availability of information, the following aspects are either assumed or delimited:

a) It is assumed that the proposals put forward by the various development frameworks mentioned in the study are applicable.

b) An application for zoning, the consolidation of erven, as well as the demolition of existing structures (of no historical value) is assumed to have been successful.