Students Reinventing Cities

Church Square Precinct, Tshwane

Madiba Street, Pretorius Street, WF Nkomo/Helen Joseph Street (0002/Pretoria CBD)

Church Square, located in Tshwane Inner City, is a charming open space surrounded by notable buildings and monuments. It is one of the most significant historical sites in the City of Tshwane.

Established in 1855, Church Square was selected as a place to erect a church between the city of Rustenburg in the west and Lydenburg in the east; it became the anchor of what was later to develop into the town of Pretoria. A little over 150 years later, Pretoria expanded into what is now known as the City of Tshwane. At 298 km, Tshwane is the 3rd largest municipality in the world (in terms of size).

Apart from churches, various monuments were built and demolished until the site eventually became an open space with no defined infrastructure. It also lost its religious significance.

Today, Church Square is home to historically and architecturally significant buildings which are primarily occupied by various government functions. This includes the Palace of Justice, the Old Capitol Theatre, the Tudor Chambers, the Ou Raadsaal (Old Council Chamber) and the General Post Office, which are primarily occupied by various government functions.

The square has fully pedestrianised access, with parking on the periphery and a thoroughfare for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system known as A Re Yeng.

Church Square is a worthy destination both for residents of and visitors to the City. Optimal accessibility and the experience one has as they access Church Square is worth investing in. As such, the focus 'area' of this exercise is the streets that give access to Church Square.

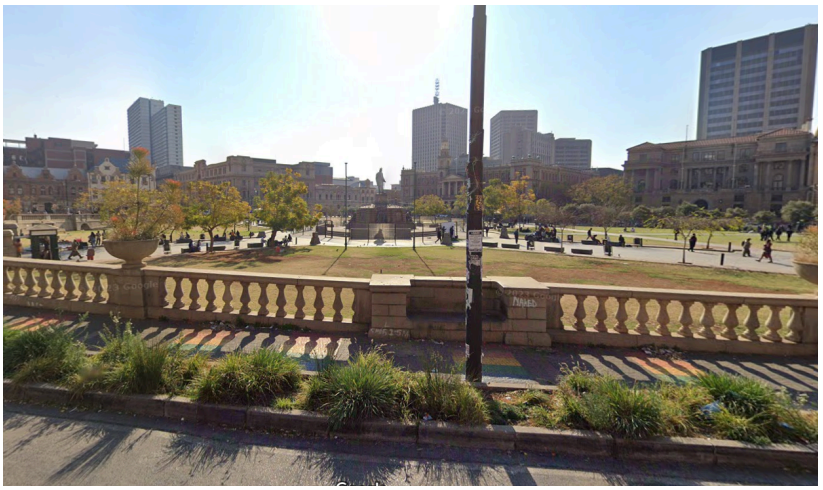

Figure 1 - Church Square Precinct, City of Tshwane

Approx. site area:
The access streets to Church Square are Madiba Street, Pretorius Street, and WF Nkomo/Helen Joseph Street. Cumulatively, these areas measure 1.3km in length.

Key Information:
Primarily surrounded by government offices, the site is a hive of activity during work hours. Young people and students use the space as a space to move through to their next destination. On occasion, tourists can also be found exploring the square.

Priority areas & main expectations:
Improve access to Church Square and the area's image by:

- Enhancing pedestrianisation.
- Cycle routes and/or solutions to provide overall movement and connectivity.
- Considerations around safety
- Beautification that is inclusive of landscaping and greening.
- Social spaces for the multitudes of inner-city workers.
- Climate consideration specifically around the urban heat island effect and reduced emissions

Presentation of the Site

Church Square is located within Ward 58 of Planning Region 3 of Tshwane, approximately 60 km from Johannesburg's city centre and the same distance from OR Tambo International Airport. Church Square is known for its well-maintained gardens and shaded walkways, making it a pleasant spot for both locals and visitors to relax. It's a place where history and daily life converge, providing a snapshot of Pretoria's rich heritage and vibrant urban environment.



Figure 2 - Paul Kruger Statue in Church Square, City of Tshwane

In contrast, the image of the Inner City - the precinct in which Church Square is located - is often not positive. It is a melting pot of history and activity but faces problems such as overcrowding, traffic jams, and crime.

The Inner City is dominated by residential properties, businesses and government/ state-owned properties. Church Square itself is surrounded by government buildings (both within and outside of the square). The government is one of the most significant employers in Tshwane. As such, this Church Square precinct is bustling with activity during work hours, with many workers and users of the associated government services moving through the space from Monday to Friday. After hours, though, the precinct 'goes to sleep' as there are no night-time activities that take up space in the precinct. Safety concerns also prevent tourists and visitors from spending time in this otherwise lovely open space.

The identified streets for this challenge - *Madiba Street (formerly Vermeulen Street), Pretorius Street, and WF Nkomo/Helen Joseph Street (formerly Church Street*) - provide direct access to Church Square. These streets contribute to the 'concrete jungle' image of the Inner City and face specific problems including:

- Harsh interfaces between the buildings and streets.
- Poor building design that does not support street safety
- Lack of car-free corridors that accommodate dedicated and connected biking paths.
- Lack of greenery
- Lack of street furniture

Through this challenge, the City of Tshwane is seeking ideas to improve the image of the Inner City and ensure the access routes to Church Square are more walkable and pleasant.



Figures 3 & 4 - Site (Streets) surrounding Church Square | City of Tshwane

Whilst first developed in 1855, in 1910 *(when South Africa became a Union under British rule*) it was decided to create a 'real' square to commemorate Trafalgar Square in London and the Place de la Concorde in Paris. For the first time, walkways were developed in Church Square in various axes resulting in four distinct quadrants. The square became the main transport terminus in Pretoria with vehicular movement restricted to the streets along the periphery of the square.

Whilst the Square is completely pedestrianised, its surrounding streets are the routes along which a number of public transport linkages (minibus taxi, bus, Tshwane Rapid Transit) are provided.

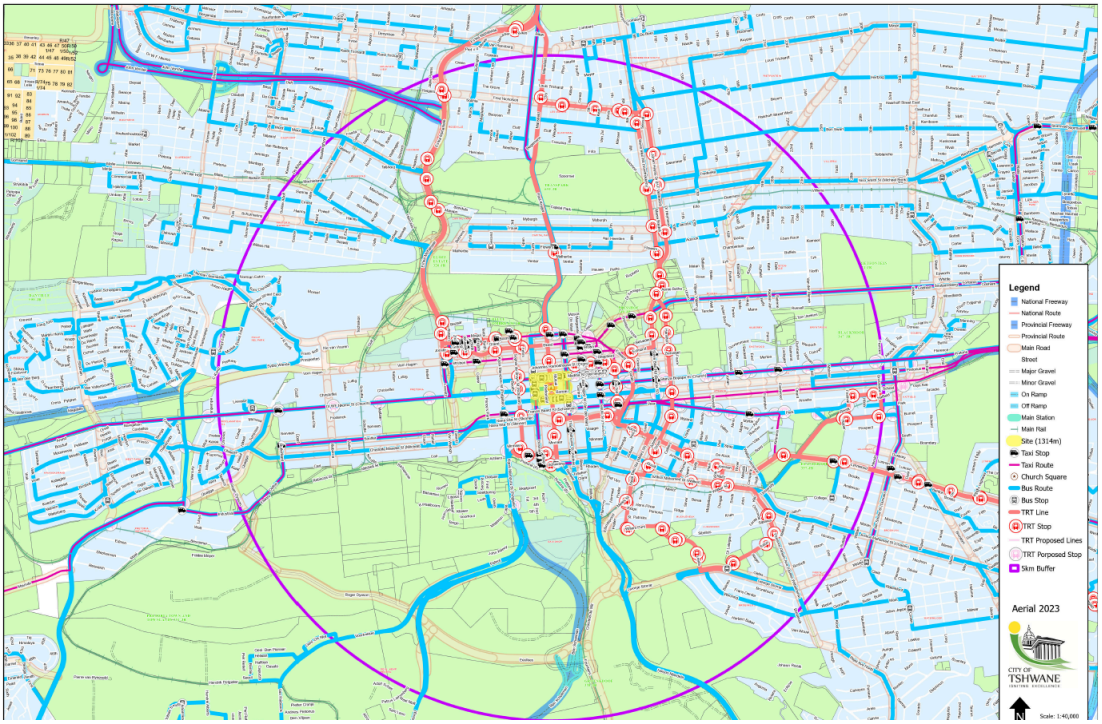

Figure 5 - Public transport linkages, City of Tshwane

Tshwane is South Africa's administrative capital city and home to the renowned Union Buildings. It is the diplomatic capital and home to approximately 135 foreign missions and 26 international organisations that are represented in South Africa. Tshwane has the highest concentration of medical institutions per square kilometre in South Africa and is the country's intellectual capital, housing several research and development institutions as well as public higher education institutions. Tshwane is also home to a range of higher-value functions, such as corporate headquarters, financial and business services, and high-order public services, such as national departments.

Pretoria Central Business District (CBD) is a suburb within the larger Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The inner city is referred to interchangeably as Tshwane Inner City or Pretoria Inner City/ CBD. From a spatial planning perspective, Pretoria Inner City is identified as the capital core because it is the city's first-order node among all nodes. In this context, a node is a defined area that has been identified for the focus of services, employment and social interaction in cities and towns. Nodes are where people shop, work, meet, relax and often live. Usually well-served by public transport, they range in size and intensity of use from local neighbourhood strip shopping centres to traditional universities and major regional malls.

The capital core must:

- be the focal point for housing government departments; and
- be developed to a higher-than-average density, supporting all principles of smart growth.

Development Expectations

In 2014, the City approved and initiated a revised multiphase plan towards the revitalisation of the capital core. This plan was encompassed in the Tshwane Inner City Revitalisation Strategy (TICRS). The document itself provides a framework *(available in the Dataroom)* in which projects were identified, including the following:

- Enhancing the image of the city through the beautification of the city's gateways and landmarks and through public art.
- Enhancing the integrated public transport network.
- Creating the "government estate" (a government boulevard and precincts that are attractive and functional) as the home to several national and local government departments.
- Reimagining the inner city as a desirable destination for investors, tourists and Tshwane residents, with a key focus on social spaces for the multitudes of inner-city workers.

Supporting interventions and actions include the following:

- Ensuring public safety
- Developing and implementing urban design guidelines

Because the TICRS is a framework document, there is still an opportunity to flesh out each of the proposed interventions further. The realisation of these initiatives will require political will and championship that transcends the political terms of office and a sustainable funding strategy.

Projects in this competition, that are in line with the vision of the TICRS and for which funding is available, could therefore be proposed for prioritised funding in order to realise the aspirations of the City.

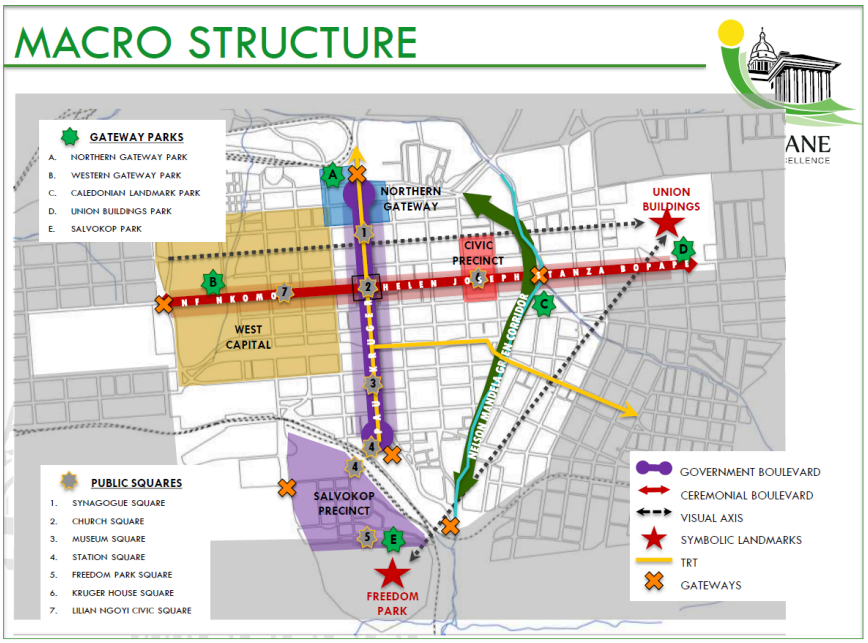

Figure 6 -Inner City Revitalisation Strategy, City of Tshwane

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City Climate Priorities and Specific Environmental Challenges

The ultimate vision of the Tshwane Climate Action Plan, 2022 (CAP) is to ensure that Tshwane is a net-zero carbon and climate-resilient city by 2050. The CAP includes a total of ten outcomes (under ten themes) with 36 programmes and 52 actions, which together will deliver a net-zero carbon and climate-resilient city by 2050. The intended outcomes of these programmes are:

- People and Communities: safe, healthy, prosperous and climate-resilient communities.
- Urban Planning: climate-smart urban planning and design
- Green Transport: resilient, efficient and climate-smart transport and transit-oriented- development
- Resilient Infrastructure: climate-proof infrastructure
- Green Buildings: Net-zero carbon, efficient and climate-resilient buildings and public facilities
- Natural Resources: climate-resilient ecological infrastructure and protected natural resources
- Water: access to clean and sufficient water with water security and water efficiency
- Energy: An energy-smart and secure city with sustainable access to clean, efficient and affordable energy for all
- Waste: A zero-waste capital city that promotes a circular economy
- Enabling Environment: Climate change is mainstreamed and institutionalised in the City

In Tshwane, temperatures have already risen by 1.8 °C since 1960. The City's climate is projected to get progressively hotter and drier, with up to 49 additional extremely hot days with a maximum temperature of more than 35°C) per year expected by 2050. The city is already experiencing climate impacts, such as more frequent and severe extreme climate events, particularly floods, fires and heat waves/extremely hot days. The Tshwane Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (GHGEI) revealed that contributors to Tshwane's emissions are the stationary energy sector (especially buildings, manufacturing industries and construction), the transport sector and the waste management sector. Mitigation actions to reduce emissions will need to focus on these sectors.

Due to Tshwane covering a vast area, commuters travel extensively, mostly by private car or road-based public transport (such as bus or taxi), contributing to the transport sector's large share of the total GHG emissions. In addition, emissions from vehicles contribute to poor air quality. Added to this, in most regions transport systems are vulnerable to climate hazards. Flooding and storms disrupt traffic and damage infrastructure. Heat stress causes the expansion of roads and railways and reduces their lifespan.

In transport facilities and terminals, high indoor temperatures result in heat stress and related health impacts. Building resilience in the transport sector requires the development of climate-resilient infrastructure, the promotion of the use of public transport for longer distances and non-motorised transport for shorter distances, and the promotion of cleaner vehicles (and any other initiatives) to reduce air pollution.

For purposes of this project, any and all of the above can be considered. The two focus areas, though, should be considerations specifically around combatting the urban heat island effect and ensuring reduced emissions.

Specific Planning Rules and Regulations

The most significant frameworks when considering regulations are the Tshwane Land Use Management Scheme (LUMS) and the Tshwane Town Planning By-law.
Teams may also wish to consider the following resources:

- Research Report: Lalela Freedom Speech Platform on Church Square, 2002 (available in Dataroom)
- Regionalised Spatial Development Framework: Region 3, 2018 (https://www.tshwane.gov.za/?page_id=40320)
- Municipal Spatial Development Framework, 2021 (https://www.tshwane.gov.za/?page_id=40453)
- Inner City Land Use Survey, 2022 (available in Dataroom)
- Tshwane Town Planning By-law, 2016 (amended 2024-https://www.tshwane.gov.za/?page_id=7469)
- Tshwane Land Use Management Scheme, 2024 (https://www.tshwane.gov.za/?page_id=15464)

Language Requirements

Proposals must be submitted in English.