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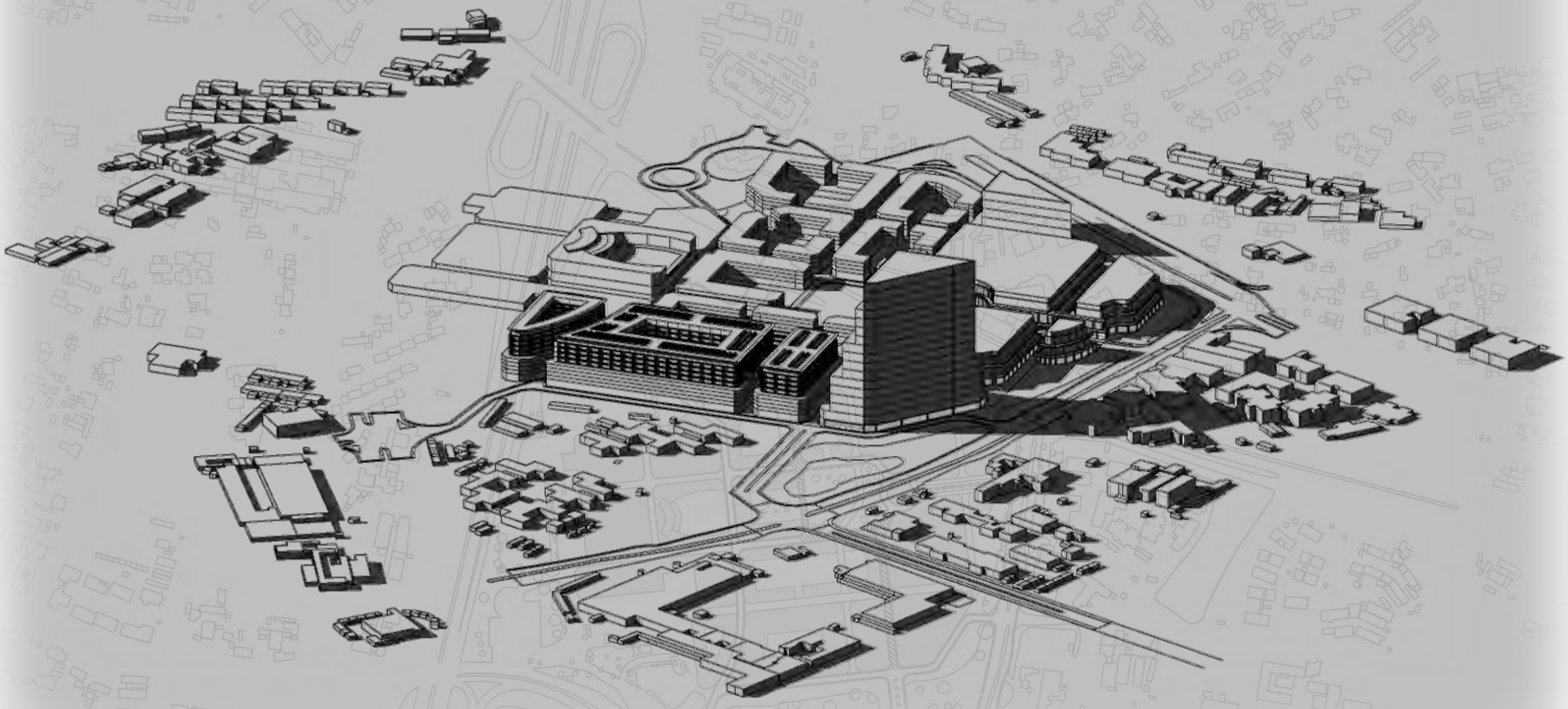
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Shopping Centres in South Africa: Urbanism Gets the Cold Shoulder.

The reimagining of introverted shopping centres into responsive urban environments through design: the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

Reuben Mentz | 2023

2627459



Declaration

I, Reuben Frederick Mentz, student number 2627459, am a student registered for the course Master of Urban Design in the year 2023.

I hereby declare the following: I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without permission and/or without acknowledging the original sources) is wrong. I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have stated explicitly otherwise. I have followed the required conventions in referencing thoughts, ideas, and visual materials of others. For this purpose, I have referred to the Graduate School of Engineering and the Built Environment style guide. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my own work.

This document is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree: Master of Urban Design at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, in the year 2023.



Reuben Mentz

October 2023

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research report to the individuals who have been instrumental in making this journey possible and meaningful. Their unwavering support, guidance, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout this research endeavour.

To my wife, thank you for all your patience and support throughout the last few years, you have been an absolute pillar in this process.

To my colleague and friend, Dr Marinda Schoonraad – thank you for your guidance and insights.

To Kevin Goncalves, my Research Supervisor – thank you for all the support and guidance that you've offered throughout this process.

Abstract

Shopping malls have nestled themselves into the urban fabric of cities, more specifically the suburban fabric, creating large non-interactive, introverted artifacts geared towards consumption and the maximisation of profits. These artifacts act as exclusive clubs where the membership requirements are money and a private vehicle.

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, a regional shopping mall neatly placed between three major regional roads and a national highway in the east of Pretoria, is no different. The mall, or rather the artifact, violates all principles of Responsive Environments and transforming the citizens of the city into customers.

The purpose of this research is to explore ways to transform the introverted Menlyn Park Shopping Centre into a more responsive urban environment, an environment that does not turn its back on citizens, but rather welcomes interaction and variety.

This overall objective is achieved by creating a research framework in order to create understanding of the nature of shopping malls in general, how they came to be, their functioning and the different types we encounter. An expert in the field of shopping mall design was also consulted, in order to provide some perspective on the future of malls and element to consider. This is followed by an analysis of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre itself, unpacking the different elements and how they relate to principles of responsive urban environments.

A conclusion is reached through an urban design framework, which proposes an alternative design for the shopping mall satisfying the principles of responsive environments.



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Introduction & Research Strategy

1. Introduction

For too long have cities been faced with the urban white elephants of suburban shopping malls who turn their backs on the surrounding urban environment, and the citizen of the city. The time has come to intervene in the redevelopment and design of these introverted artifacts into more responsive urban environments.

This report introduces the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre situated in Pretoria, a colossal regional retail mall with typical introverted characteristics associated with shopping malls. In order to provide context and background, a detailed literature review addresses the different terminology used in the shopping mall/mall realm, the evolution of the shopping mall/centre concept, the drivers of its success, the functions and activities it provides, the types and classifications of shopping malls, the mall versus the city and finally how the concept of the mall aligns with the principles of responsive urban environments.

The literature review is followed by a chapter focusing on the perspective of the City (City of Tshwane), and how the development principles, future visions and plans align with the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. To gain more insight into the design of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, an expert (refer to appendix) who is actively involved in the design process of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre was interviewed and consulted.

A detailed analysis of the mall was conducted through observations, spatial analysis of the existing movement networks, access points, built form, edge conditions and surrounding and internal uses.

The report concludes with a design solution that can be implemented on the site, that would transform the existing shopping mall into a more responsive urban environment linked to the seven principles of Bentley, *et al.* (2005).

1.1. Background

South Africa has embraced the American style shopping mall model as its primary market agora, creating inward facing islands isolated from the surrounding world. This design shift has resulted in dead edge, car orientated infrastructure mimicking the high street in an enclosed ‘safe’, ‘convenient’ and controlled space targeted at specific market groups to maximise profits. Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is the largest shopping mall in the City of Tshwane, rivalling the inner city in terms of retail square meterage. Together with the surrounding office and commercial developments it can be described as an edge city. Phelps and Ohashi (2020) loosely defines an edge city as freeway/exit ramp orientated, newly built, private sector orientated, agglomeration of economies and more office space than retail space.

Problem Statement and Rationale

Shopping centres have become synonymous with the decentralisation of retail space in South Africa, moving away from the traditional Central Business District serving the suburban city dwellers creating a ‘convenient’ space for commerce. Not all shopping centres are created equally, nonetheless the vast majority cater for an exclusive clientele and is designed in a specific manner creating distinct spatial environments. South Africa, arguably one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of social and economic aspects, cannot afford to continue driving a wedge between its citizens through the creation of introverted spaces catering for an elite few. In terms of social cohesion and the promotion of equal opportunities, the current shopping centre design does not comply.

The rationale behind this research report is to explore ways in which existing introverted shopping malls can be transformed into more inclusive and responsive urban environments in order to address some of the inequalities faced by citizens.

Aims and Objectives

The main objective of this proposal is to develop a set of urban design principles which can be applied to shopping malls to reimagine their character and functioning as a public (as opposed to private) urban (as opposed to suburban) place. This transformation is vital in order to ensure social, economic and urban cohesion between the shopping centre, the people and its surrounds. The test case will be Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in the east of Pretoria.

The main objective is supported by the following sub objectives:

1. To develop an understanding of the challenges surrounding the design of malls as an introverted private place of consumption
2. To develop an understanding of the urban design principles applicable to the creation of a responsive urban places
3. To provide a design review of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre and its immediate surrounds, with regards to monofunctionally, privatisation of public space, social exclusion, transportation, accessibility and adaptability to shopping behaviour in a time after COVID-19.
4. To develop a design solution for the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre to address challenges.
5. To extract lessons learned that can be applied to similar cases in South Africa

1.2. Research Questions

How can urban design be used to radically transform introverted shopping centres into responsive urban environments: the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in Pretoria?

Sub Questions:

1. Which urban design principles and guidelines are applicable to the transformation of shopping centres?
2. How has the development intent and aspirations and needs of users and developers changed over time?

1.3. Introducing the Site

The subject area, Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is located in the municipal area of the City of Tshwane, in north-central Gauteng. More specifically, the mall is strategically situated between two major intersections (Atterbury and Garstfontein Roads) to the east of the N1 national highway approximately 10km from the Pretoria CBD.



Figure 1: Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in Gauteng



Figure 2: Menlyn Park Shopping Centre looking towards the West

Although the name "Menlyn Park Shopping Centre" suggests that this development is a run-of-the-mill shopping centre, it is in fact a fully-fledged regional shopping mall complete with various anchor stores, restaurants and entertainment facilities reaching a GLA of over 177 000m^2 (Menlynpark.co.za, 2023). The mall was constructed by Bild Architects in the late 1970's, ownership was subsequently partially transferred to the investment company Old Mutal in 1988. Old Mutual initiated the first major re-design of the mall in 1998, by contracting an American company, the Development Design Firm (OfficePlace Commercial Property Brokerage, 2018). The Pareto Group, a South African development company acquired ownership of the mall around 2010, and subsequently initiating the last major redevelopment of the mall in 2016 making Menlyn Park Shopping Centre the largest mall in Africa at the time (Rivett, 2020).

This mammoth of a shopping mall has an approximate building footprint of 16ha, and measures 430m from north to south and 510m east to west. By comparison, this is the size of five Pretoria city blocks or almost half of the campus area of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

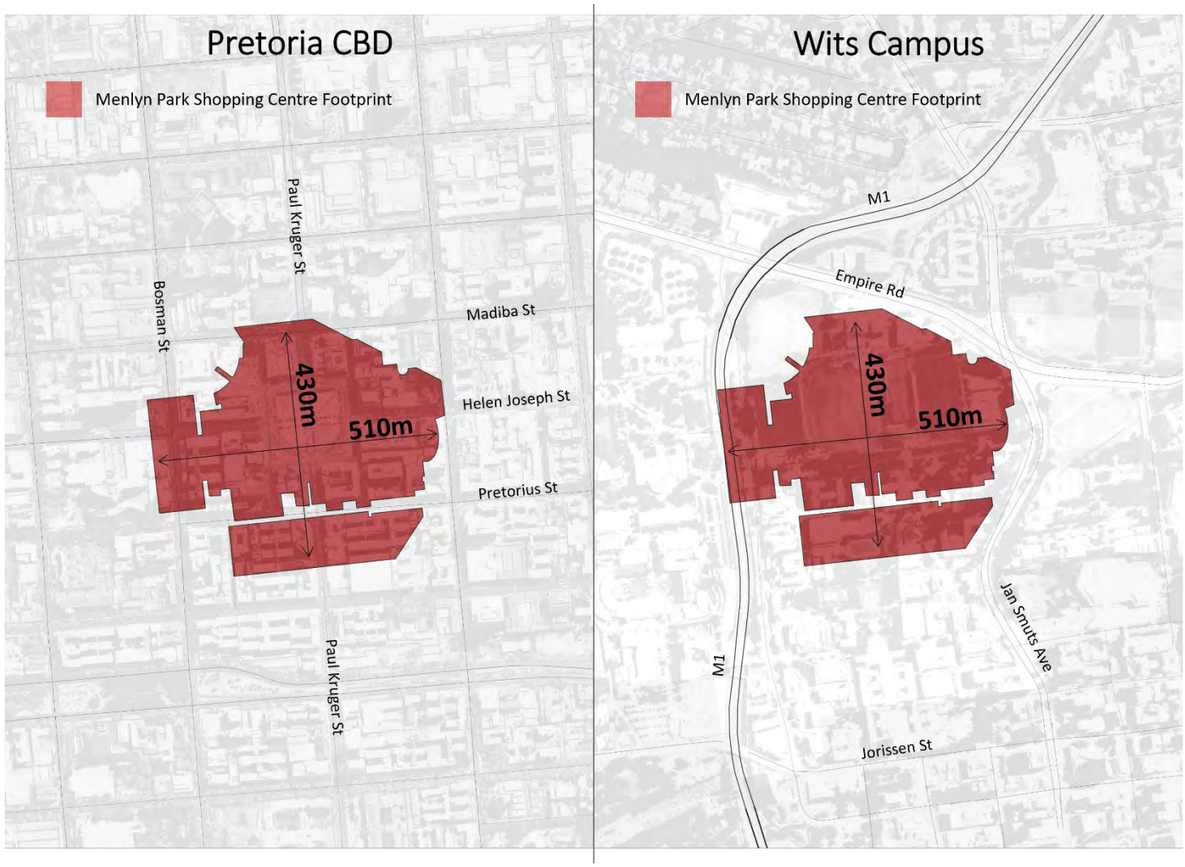


Figure 3: Scale Comparison of Pretoria CBD, Wits Main Campus and Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

2. Research Strategy

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Various design approaches and principles can be followed in order to transform existing shopping malls into more integrated and inclusive spaces such as the 'smart city' city approach which combines technology and data to improve efficiency, liveability and the sustainability of a space, or rather the 'human-centred design' approach which would in fact put people first and satisfy the research question to an extent. Alternatively, the concept of responsive environments is chosen to act as the lens through which a design solution is formulated as it acts an all-encompassing approach, meeting the needs of the various stakeholders whilst ensuring that people remain priority. Thus, the conceptual framework is based on the central concept of responsive environments as defined by Bentley, et al. (2005). The identified theoretical perspectives emanating from the central concept and literature review is the privatisation of public space, the seven key principles relating to the creation or responsive environments and the design logic of introverted shopping malls. The core constructs are identified as public space,

building design, social interaction, user perceptions and the maximisation of profits. Each of the core constructs relate to one or more theoretical perspective and to each other. Based on the identified relationships between the theoretical perspectives and core constructs, a research question is developed. The diagram below illustrates the relationships and interactions.

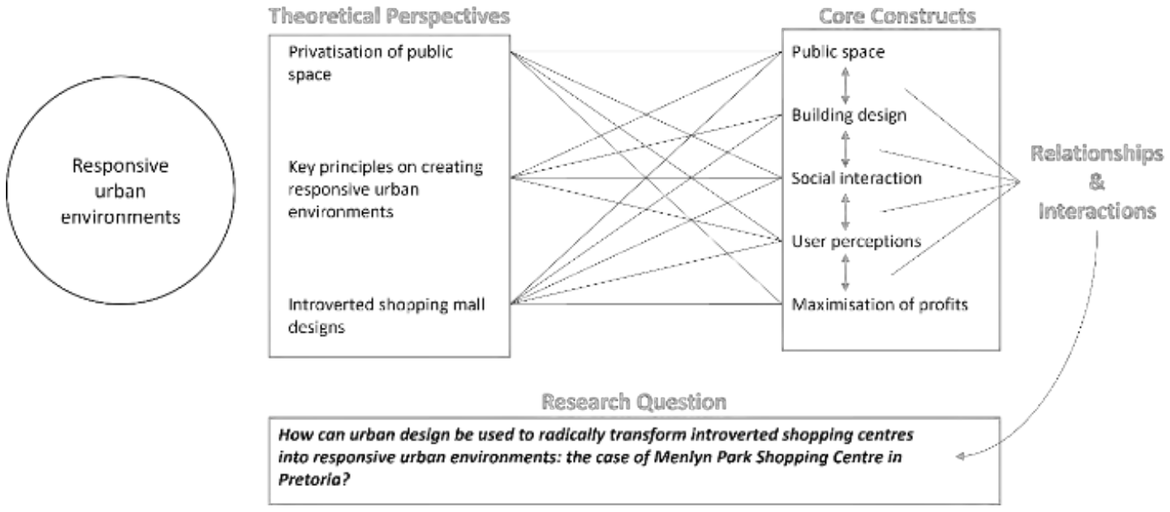


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework Diagram

2.2. Methodology

Paradigm

Considering this research report concludes with an urban design solution, a pragmatic and qualitative approach was followed. The approach consisted of site visits, policy and literature review and an interview with a designer currently working on the design of the subject with the ultimate goal of formulating a real-world solution to create a vibrant, inclusive and responsive environment for users while also taking into account the economic viability of the design. This gathered information was used to inform the design solution.

Research Design

The research design followed four main phases:

1. Site selection

The case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre was selected, as it represents the introverted shopping centre design found throughout South Africa. The Menlyn Park Shopping Centre also met international criteria, categorising it as a regional shopping mall.

2. Data collection

During the data collection phase, a multitude of data collection instruments was used to gather information regarding shopping patterns, challenges and preferences as well as future visions for the shopping centre.

Literature relating to South African shopping centre user behaviours and shopping centre trends were consulted together with observations and an interview with an active designer in the shopping mall design realm.

3. Data analysis and synthesis

The data analysis phase consisted of identifying commonalities found in the literature, identifying themes of challenges and preferences and compiling a vision supported by design objectives for the shopping centre design solution.

4. Recommendations through urban design (design solution)

The research report concludes with a design solution for the Menlyn Park Shopping centre. The design solution aims to address the challenges identified throughout the research process and also caters for user preferences while considering economic viability for the shopping centre owners.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments used in this research report are observation, and a semi structured interview with a designer involved in the current design of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

1. Observations

Observations included photographs, identification of the spatial organisation, movement and circulation patterns, gathering spaces of the shopping centre and the general interactions users have with the shopping centre.

2. Semi structured interview with expert

An expert which is involved in the current design of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre was interviewed (refer to appendix). The interview was a semi structured interview, with the idea of having a conversation steered by specific questions. The aim of the interview was to gather information regarding the future visioning of the shopping centre, and to gain an insight into the overall objectives of the owners of the shopping centre. This interview was concluded within an hour.

Sampling

With regards to expert interviews, only one expert was interviewed as the expert represents the interests of the owner and design team. The expert forms part of the design team currently responsible for the shopping centre design.

Analysis

The interview conducted with the expert was analysed together with observations and background literature to identify common and overlapping themes, these include common concerns, preferences and visions of the mall. The interview with the expert is unpacked and different themes are analysed. The results of the interview are compared to the results of the literature review. This provided two clear perspectives on the shopping centre.

Ethical Considerations

A full ethics application was submitted to the University of Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Non-Medical), and approval was received on the 23rd of August 2023. Engagements with any participants only commenced after approval was received from said committee. The main components of the ethics application are discussed below.

During this research process no persons under the age of 18 was interviewed, as well as no persons deemed 'vulnerable' as defined by the University of Witwatersrand. This research was classified as

‘minimal risk’ as the questions posed to interviewee only involved their day-to-day lives and excluded any personal or sensitive questions.

Limitations

The limitations to this research method include, the availability of reliable data, time constraints, complexity of the space and subjectivity.

Some assumptions were made due to the lack of available and reliable data. The data in question includes but not limited to existing plans and frameworks, municipal engineering data, land survey data, accurate demographic data and shopping centre tenant data.

Given the complexity and dynamic nature of the shopping centre, the available time might not have been sufficient to develop a fully comprehensive understanding of the shopping centre and its users. Thus, certain assumptions were made to compensate for this.

The researchers own biases and subjectivity was considered throughout the research process. Issues such as leading an interview was avoided in order to receive reliable responses.

Literature Review

3. Literature Review

3.1. Aim of the literature review

The aim of this literature review is to demonstrate a 'knowledge and understanding of the academic literature' on the topic of shopping centre and mall terminology, evolution and design within the context of privatisation and commercialisation. To that end, it covers the 'content of existing research, theories and evidence', as well as a 'critical evaluation and discussion of this content'.

The literature review will:

- Clarify the terminology surrounding shopping centres and malls;
- Give a summary of the evolution of the shopping centre;
- Define the shopping centre;
- Explore what facilitated the development of the shopping centre;
- Identify the functions and activities of the shopping centre;
- Explore the different types of shopping centres;
- Create an idea of the mall versus the city, public versus private;
- Highlight the principles of responsive environments.

3.2. The literature review framework

Four topics are addressed in the literature review:

- The terminology concerning shopping centres and shopping malls;
- The origin and evolution of the shopping mall;
- What exactly is meant by a 'shopping centre';
- What facilitated the development of the mall?;
- The functions and activities of the shopping mall;
- Types of shopping malls;
- The mall versus the city, or the private versus the public;
- The concept of responsive urban environments.

3.3. Terminology

There is often confusion between the words shopping mall and shopping centre and the two concepts are mostly used interchangeably. The collective term to use when describing shops clustered in one building/ structure is a shopping centre. It can range from a small number of shops to several and can include as different forms such as the neighbourhood/ community shopping centre to the retail centre.

The origin of the word "mall" can be traced to a 16th century alley game, similar to croquet, the word became more popular with the emergence of the famous National Mall in Washington D.C. which is a park with walkways linking several national landmarks (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Similarly, Abaza (2001) refers to the origin of the word as "the tracts for strolling".



Figure 5: National Mall in Washington D.C. (Highsmith, 2006)

A shopping mall is thus a form of shopping centre that is built around a walkway with shops on both sides. The walkway can be covered or uncovered. It can range in size from the local to regional scale.

The name Menlyn Park Shopping Centre adds to the confusion, as although it is a shopping centre per se, it is in fact a regional shopping mall.

3.4. The evolution of shopping centres

The marketplace has been around since the first semblance of human settlements and has had a marked impact on the spatial characteristics and functioning of the city through the ages. In this regard, Rao and Dovey (2021) state that "Shopping has been at the heart of urbanity since the earliest cities developed as sites of exchange".

In ancient Greece, around 800 BC Merchants have already used appropriated spaces such as the Agora in city centres to sell their wares (Regan, 2022). Mehdipour and Nia (2013) refers to the Grand Bazaar in Isfahan, established in the 1700s, as the beginning of the shopping mall, to some extent.



Figure 6: Ancient Greek Agora (Regan, 2022)

Consumers and their needs have always been the main driver in shaping the retail urban space, with their needs, wants and desires changing, the retail space promptly adapts (Cachinho, 2014).

The shopping mall is seen as the epitome of modern-day consumerism, the so-called cathedral of consumption. The marketplace, in contrast, historically the space functioned as much more than the trading of goods; they were places where people of all social classes and creeds met; where people were able to reflect and express their values, customs and traditions (Al-Sulaiti, 2022).

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact time when shopping malls began and the marketplace declined, Regan (2022) speculates that it was born in 1916 in the suburbs of Chicago. The modern shopping mall was very much an American invention but has adapted to new designs and tenant varieties to meet the changes in consumers' needs, desires, values, and lifestyles (Telci, 2013). It has led to a change in the urban structure that has seen the decline of the original marketplace, the inner city. In turn the development of internet shopping has led to the decline of the shopping mall. Today when purchasing most products, people have a choice: 'go to town or go online' (Rao, 2019).

1800s: the arcade and the department store

In the 1800's the arcade and the department store developed in Europe and America.

As Americans became more affluent in the late 19th century when the economy shifted from agriculture to industry, department stores like Macy's in 1858, Bloomingdales in 1861, and Sears in 1886 developed in cities in the US (Regan, 2022). The stores became fixtures of the American lifestyle, it became the place they would purchase items for their homes and spend time enjoying the entertainment services offered.



Figure 7: Macy's Department Store (Underhill, 1907)



Figure 8: Bloomingdale's Department Store (Gottscho-Schleisner, 1943)

The department store was much more than just a marketplace, it was a symbol of modernity and a status symbol for the city. Competition between cities already existing in the 1800s and the department store was often designed and constructed by renowned architects reflecting the wealth and modernity of the city (Lemarchand, 2021). The spaces were also used for exhibitions and lectures by famous people to promote the space.

Early 1900s: the first car-based shopping mall – the American choice

Although shopping malls are a common sight in almost all cities globally today, it was in America where it took off on a grand scale. The first 'modern' shopping mall, was, according to Jackson (1996), the Baltimore's Roland Park constructed in 1896.



Figure 9: Roland Park (Rosenthal, 1933)

However, the first modern concept of a mall as an outdoor shopping plaza with a number of shops interconnected and with communal facilities is regarded as the Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, in 1922. It consisted of a concentration of over 100 retail stores that were leased/managed by the building owner, thereby creating the first 'planned regional shopping centre'. Large parking areas were provided based on the assumption that customers will arrive by car. The free parking was not coincidental, it was part of the design (Jackson, 1996).

In this context, Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, although being an indoor shopping mall bears a striking resemblance to the Country Club Plaza, as it is owned and managed by a single entity, it caters for a regional market, large parking areas are provided for customers although the parking is not free it is ample.



Figure 10: Country Club Plaza (Tony's Kansas City, 2023)

The Arcade Providence, Rhode Island, which is considered as America's first indoor shopping mall as opposed to 'centre', shortly followed in 1928 (Al-Sulaiti, 2022).



Figure 11: Arcade Providence (Warren & Bucklin, 1933)

The development of this space of consumption and consumerism was facilitated by the development of the credit card. In the 1920s the first credit card (charge card) was made available to the shopper in America. In 1950, the Diners Club card became the first credit card that people could use at multiple establishments, this was followed by the first bank-run card from the Bank of America in 1958 (Wolters, 2000).

Late 1900s

Consumption and shopping malls developed hand in hand, as consumerism took hold in the 1960's, according to (Lemarchand, 2021).

> *"the consumer society took off in the 1960s, accompanying a few decades of economic growth and marked by the construction of a very large number of retail stores and shopping malls"* (Lemarchand, 2021)

The first major planned retail shopping centre in the world went up in Raleigh California in 1949. Cameron Village, also known as the Raleigh Project, was a complex development package for the time, a development that included apartments and single-family units intended to provide cashflow to cover the initial start-up costs (Beauregard, 2007).

Cameron Village has increased in density and land use mix over several decades, and that in a time when most malls are struggling due to changing shopper behaviour (Abrams, 2017). The multifunctional character of the mall could be the reason behind its resilience.

The Cameron Village can be seen in stark contrast to that of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, as it provided a mix of uses from the onset. Currently, Menlyn Park Shopping Centre functions as a mecca for retail and other related consumer driven uses with some recent introduction of social facilities.



Figure 12: Cameron Village (Abrams, 2017)

Another early form of shopping centre is Northgate in Seattle, which opened in 1950 on the intersection of NE Northgate Way and 5th Ave NE in Seattle (Wilma, 2001). It was designed in a dumbbell shape with an anchor store (department store) at the one end of a long open pedestrian walkway which was lined with several small speciality stores. Shoppers are thus "manipulated" to walk between the two anchors and 'shop their way to their destination' (Jackson, 1996). According to Rao (2019) this was contrary to the usual environment and experience where people stroll freely and have encounters.

The private vehicle played a significant role in its locality, on a major intersection, and its design with 4 000 parking bays surrounding the central building. It had a distinctive design, with parking areas surrounding the inward facing building.

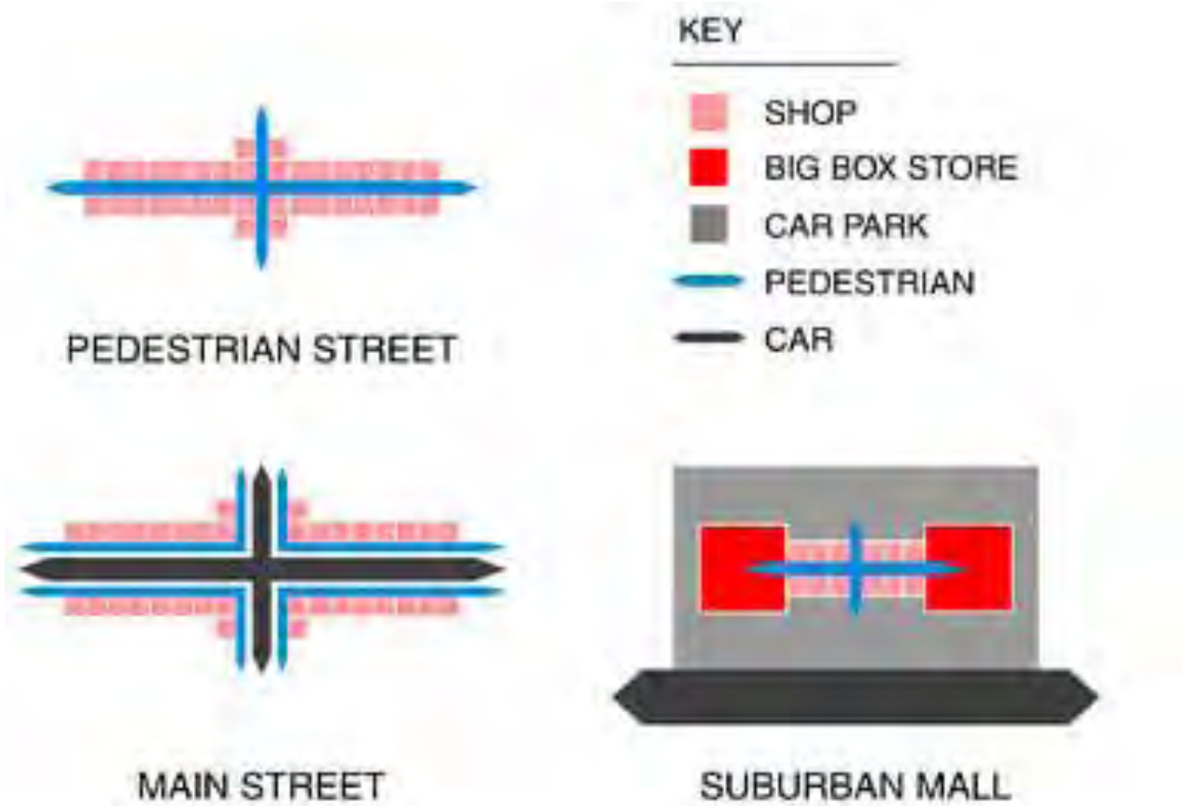


Figure 13: From the pedestrian street to the suburban mall (Rao & Dovey, 2021)

The notion of 'shop their way to their destination' is evident in the design of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, as the largest anchor stores (consisting of hyper-markets) are located at the end (west) of the mall, forcing shoppers to pass numerous stores before reaching their intended destination.



Figure 14: Northgate Shopping Centre (Martin & McNerthney, 2018)

In 1956 the first enclosed climate controlled indoor mall, Southdale, was built in Edina Minnesota. It resembled the shopping centre as we know it today (Regan, 2022). The complex was 60 000m^2 in extent and was later expanded to 125 000m^2. The mall included two department stores, acting as the anchors, 139 supporting shops and over 5 200 parking bays and a two-storey pedestrian walkway (Jackson, 1996).



Figure 15: Exterior of Southdale Centre Mall (City of Edina, Minnesota, 2018)



Figure 16: Interior of Southdale Centre Mall (Marshall, 2015)

The design of the mall was facilitated by two inventions: the elevator and the air conditioner. Escalators are designed to move people between floors in a more efficient and convenient way than stairs, thereby allowing the mall to stretch over two (or more) floors.

The air conditioning allowed for a large area to be covered and thus convenient in all weather conditions. The concept of providing air conditioning, creating climate-controlled environments, was wildly popular, and profitable, forever changing the way Americans shopped, lived and worked (Jackson, 1996).

Jackson (1996) states that shopping malls boomed and CBDs declined, the cause of this may never be known, however the cathedrals of consumption were negatively impacting on places of urbanity.

The effect of shopping malls booming, and CBDs declining is also evident in Pretoria, with the CBD shifting its focus to more institutional and governmental uses rather than retail, and the suburbs littered with local and regional shopping malls. This rise in fragmented retail nodes may be a reaction, cause or both to the shift of use in the CBD.

2000s: Which way now?

> *"The material shopping space is significantly threatened by the rise of online retailing: … the 'retail apocalypse"* (Rao, 2019)

Over the past decades however, the nature of retail has changed dramatically, in line with the change in the societal context: from bricks and mortar to internet shopping.

Shopping malls are losing visitors. The result is that there has been a decline in development of new shopping malls and in the use of existing shopping malls. Similarly to the initial development of the shopping mall , it is in America where this trend is most observable (Mason, et al., 2019).

On the one hand e-retailing is growing rapidly with figures suggesting a 31% increase in the US, 33% increase in Canada, 41% increase in Australia and a 58% increase in China between 2014 and 2016 (Rao, 2019). Initially people were sceptical about providing personal data and payment information online, however the introduction of the SSL security protocol in the 1990s helped to alleviate these fears (Regan, 2022), similarly to the introduction of the credit card decades earlier.

Ferreira and Paiva (2017) also note that, "although there has been a demise in shopping malls in Lisbon, the decline seems to be mainly isolated towards three types of malls. These are small shopping galleries, neighbourhood shopping centres and convenience malls which are all older type malls, hence those that would be viewed as reaching the end of their life cycles."

To some degree Menlyn Park Shopping Centre has survived the rise of e-commerce, which could be due to the fact that it acts as a regional shopping centre rather than a gallery, neighbourhood shopping centre or as a convenient mall.

Figures for the Global South & South Africa

On the other hand, shopping malls are having to adapt with greater and lesser success. The traditional shopping mall is hardest hit. In the USA, for example several shopping malls have seen a major decline in rentals, in some cases forced to close all together. Mason (2019) refers to figures to substantiate:

- At least 8 600 stores were expected to close down
- 50% to 25% of existing malls will still be operating in 2023

These figures are alarming for shopping centre owners. Regan (2022) states that the reason for this decline, may be due to emergence of e-commerce that:

- provides more convenience and efficiency to the shopping experience;
- enables shoppers to research, examine reviews, compare prices;
- allows the making of purchases at all hours of the day.

The decline of the mall is also linked to economic downturns and cities that are "over retailed". It seems that people have fell out of love with the shopping centre and has become bored of the universal character of the mall, the difficulty in finding one's way.

The shift towards e-commerce has been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. To some extent the pandemic intensified the underlying challenges of trading profitably for large anchor and department stores, large destination shopping malls suffered increased occupational costs making the spaces they occupy less profitable (The European Business Review, 2023).

According to Mason (2019) that although the rise in e-commerce and Covid-19 are global trends there are significant differences between developed countries and developing countries regarding factors such as business environment and consumer behaviour. In India for example, the number of shopping malls have increased as in Saudi Arabia. The reasons that are given include increased in disposable income and the role of the shopping mall as socialising space. In India, "shopping malls are offering Indian consumers an excellent shopping experience, along with providing the community with a central location where

entertainment and leisure activities are on offer" (Sadachar & Fiore, 2018). Shopping malls are increasingly used by women and the youth especially.

Although not as dramatic as in the US, 'In South Africa, shopping malls (especially larger malls such as Menlyn Park Shopping Centre) have also experienced a decline in foot traffic, especially during the week (News24Wire, 2017), with many malls having vacancies and new mall development declining (Mason, et al., 2019) .This is happening whilst there is an increase in retail sales. Mason (2019) refers to retail sales that increased from R939 billion to more than R1 trillion in South Africa in 2017'.

Reasons that are given in addition to e-commerce, are the economic downturn and "over-retailing" or specific areas that are 'saturated' with malls. The struggle of large South African chain stores, such as Edgars and Stuttafords, which usually acted as anchor stores also contribute to the failure of malls (Mason, et al., 2019).

Although many years ahead of South Africa in terms of e-commerce, the question remains whether South African shopping centres will follow the patterns observed in the US?

Rao (2019) warns that if bricks and mortar shopping declines, there could be weakening in urban public life. This is ironic, as the development of the shopping mall, together with the suburbs, are almost universally blamed for a lack of urbanity. This illustrates the changing function and character of the mall over time.

The rise of the retailtainment mega mall

Despite the decline in malls, both in number constructed and increasing vacancy rates, two new trends can be observed:

- The development of the mega mall; and
- The expansion of the activities in the mall beyond shopping into an entertainment centre that attracts not only shoppers but also tourists.

Often it is the combination of these trends that are shaping the new retail landscape. From there the term: "retailtainment" mega mall. While the regional mall is struggling the super-regional shopping mall is thriving.

Mason (2019) explains the development of the mall into an entertainment space: "Nowadays, shopping malls are transforming into cultural hubs, introducing art exhibitions, cultural performances, and community events into their spaces. These events not only benefit the visitor experience but also encourage visitors to come back again within the mall. With the integration of art, culture, and entertainment, malls can create a vibrant and dynamic atmosphere that caters to a diverse range of interests and preferences that might suit their shoppers." The combination of shopping with entertainment harks back to the department store of the late 1800s, albeit at an incomparable scale.

Visits to the mall has changed from a shopping experience to a social experience and is now attracting even tourists, local and international (Al-Sulaiti, 2022). The mall has moved away from serving the surrounding local populations to literally serving the world.

There is no better example than the Mall of America:

> *"Don't miss out on the Mall of America, which welcomes more than 40 million travellers annually from around the world. Shop at over 500 stores before refuelling at any of the 50 restaurants. That's not all; the kids will love the Nickelodeon Universe indoor theme park and SEA LIFE Aquarium. Wear good shoes as the mall is massive, with plenty of digital maps for ease of navigation."* (Tripadvisor, 2023)

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre has also embraced this shift from a pure shopping experience to a more social experience, investing in retailtainment, by introducing pop-up carnivals, go-cart tracks in the parking areas, roller-skate arcades and multiple 'food courts'.



Figure 17: Pop-up carnival in unused parking area of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

3.5. What is a shopping centre?

At its most basic, a shopping centre is defined by Pitt and Musa (2009), as.

- A group of shops;
- that are planned, developed, owned, managed (and marketed) as a single property;
- with on-site parking provided.

Mason (2019) states that in addition to the definition of a shopping centre, a shopping mall "can be described as a conglomeration of stores connected by means of walkways so that customers can move easily from store to store".

Mason (2019) further emphasises the sage and secure environment and the possible inclusion of leisure activities such as food courts and entertainment.

The shopping mall differs from the high street which developed organically, often through gradual conversion from other land uses and which is characterised by individual ownership and a lack of centralised coordination. The high street is also not a monoculture to the same extent as shopping centres (which contain only retail and leisure), as the bulk of its activities are residential, offices, leisure and community uses. Furthermore, it consists of many separate buildings which are varied in physical appearance (Guy, 1998).

The shopping mall is more than a shopping experience and it is ideal for comparison shopping as opposed to convenience shopping. Convenience shopping referring to as 'goods which the consumer usually purchases frequently, immediately and with a minimum of effort' (American Marketing Association, 1948). A convenience outlet should therefore attract shopping trips which are short in length and frequently made (Guy, 1998).

Comparison shopping on the other hand has traditionally involved an element of personal gratification: comparing goods between different shops is part of the process of choice, which is made on the bases of 'suitability, quality, price and style' (American Marketing Association, 1948). Comparison outlets are thus the destination for occasional shopping trips, often carried out in family or other groups, which are held to be more enjoyable than routine convenience shopping (Guy, 1998).

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is thus considered as an environment for comparative shopping, offering a wide range of products and services and not entirely intended for day-to-day excursions, although it also does provide for convenient shopping.

Lin (2002) describes the shopping mall as a place acting as the retail, service and entertainment node of suburban neighbourhoods, usually characterised by low densities that are unable to sustain a main street. Ardestani et al (2023) provides the following characteristics that can be attributed to a shopping mall:

- Shopping malls are indoor leisure and entertainment spaces, protecting users from elements such as the weather;
- Entertainment services such as cinemas and amusement parks may form part of the shopping malls;
- Shopping malls provide convenience amenities such as restaurants and an abundance of vehicle parking spaces;
- Shopping malls often provide an agglomerate of brands, offering purchasing variety to consumers.

3.6. What facilitated the development of the mall?

In the American instance (which for all intents and purposes is the origin and heartland of shopping centres) the following factors contributed to the development of shopping centres as derived from Jackson (1996) and Lemarchand (2021):

- Compared to property prices close to the CBD, land was relatively cheap to procure;
- Land use and zoning regulations have been typically weak in America to those of other nations;
- Vehicles were subsidised to some extent, channelling development towards shopping malls. With cars available to the majority of the population people relocated from CBD areas to suburbs;
- Shopping centres offered convenience such as security, convenience, variety and landscaping to some extent;
- Due to competition a major shift from mom-and-pop stores to big box retailers were observed.

To fully understand how the shopping mall came into existence as we know it today, as opposed to the smaller earlier versions discussed earlier, we need to explore the emergence of the 'suburb'. The modern suburb can be traced to post World War 2, 1950s America, where expanding residential areas usually consisted of low density plots typically measuring 15.2m x 24.4m (a density of approximately 27du/ha) connected by a vast network of roads intended for private vehicle movement (Isenstadt, 2020). The suburbs were targeted at people trying to escape the then perceived, dirty and overpopulated city centres of America to a space that is more open and clean. The machine or artifact that accompanied these newly created private plots is the shopping mall.

The modern mall is a design that stems from the 19th century arcade typology found in European cities moulded for suburban use. The shopping mall created a new lifestyle in which a simple shopping trip could transform into a whole day excursion by diverting the shopper's attention from an individual product to a whole range of consumer options. Isenstadt (2020) highlights the fact that the shopping centre is in sharp contrast to the residential suburban design, as it mimics the high streets of city centres, characterised by high density and concentration, although in a highly controlled environment aimed at commercial gain.

3.7. Functions/activities of the shopping mall

Proponents of shopping centres emphasise the positive functions of malls. According to a range of authors, as discussed by Mason et al (2019), the objectives for shopping malls are economical (financial benefit to the owner and contribution to the domestic economy), humanitarian (convenience and psychological comfort as well as creation of jobs), and cultural (lifestyles and tourism.).

Gilboa (2009) identified activities and grouped them according to the following categories:

- Consumption activities by shopping mall visitors: visiting coffee-shops/restaurants, gaining new knowledge regarding new products and trends, and window shopping (Gilboa, 2009);
- Participation in shopping mall-initiated activities by shopping mall visitors. According to Gilboa (2009), shopping mall visitors can visit shopping malls to participate in mall-initiated activities as part of entertainment. These entertainment activities include children's programs and cultural events;
- Social activities and entertainment. Social activities are activities that involve human interaction and include strolling; social meetings, sitting in public places, speaking with strangers and watching others shop.

Makgopa (2016), using the example of the Kolonnade Centre in Pretoria as a test case, identified a number of reasons why customers visit shopping centres in South Africa. Only 43% of visitors came for the sole function of shopping.

Table 1: Consumer reasons for visiting shopping malls (Makgopa, 2016)

Main reason for visiting current mall/centre		
Reason	**Kolonnade Shopping Centre**	
	N	**%**
Buying groceries	65	13
Buying clothing and accessories	80	15
Buying homeware	38	7
Buying speciality products	39	8
Eating out	72	14
Having a drink	45	9
Going to the movies	40	8
Meeting friends/socialising or celebrating	47	9
Meeting clients/work related purposes	12	2
Window shopping	36	7
Keeping up to date with trends in technology, clothing, homeware, etc.	25	5
Other (banking, cash withdrawal, ice skating and paying accounts)	19	4
Total	**518**	**100**

In the same study it was found that almost 20% of mall shoppers in South Africa visit the mall more than once a week and almost 25% once a week (Makgopa, 2016).

Shopping malls have become a way of life. “Shopping mall visitors indulge in consumption of experiences and shopping malls have become important meeting places, especially for young people” (Kuruvilla & Joshi, 2010). Shopping mall visitors can visit shopping malls to watch movies at movie theatres and watch soccer matches at different restaurants (Farrag, et al., 2010).

From the above it is clear that the function of shopping malls has gone far beyond that of merely shopping, and have turned into social entertainment centres.

Although the youth is more focused on internet shopping than shopping in malls, brick and mortar malls remain popular, if not for shopping purposes. Jooste (2016) established that in South Africa, most Generation-Y respondents shopped in a mall for a number of reasons, amongst others:

- As an escape: malls provide an isolated space to where people can escape and explore to satisfy their needs;
- Aesthetic stimulation: malls are built to be aesthetically pleasing;
- Exploration: malls often provide amenities such as Wi-Fi, providing access to social media platforms, along with a variety of traditional retail;
- Role playing: malls provide a platform for customers to act out certain roles
- Social interaction: customers often seek entertainment, thus the mall provides services such as cinemas, gaming areas, theme parks and ice-skating rinks

3.8. Types of shopping malls

There is a large number of types of shopping centres, with different names, indicating the scale, function and complexity of each. For the purposes of this study, the following types of shopping centres have been identified:

The neighbourhood centre

- Sometimes referred to as the local or Focused Centre or Local Centre
- built to serve surrounding neighbourhoods: population within a 2.4km radius.
- Destinations for convenience shopping,
- Consist of a supermarket, hypermarket or plus some (15 – 20) small shop units.
- Generally has a 4 700m^2 gross leasable area (GLA), although actual size may range from 2 800 to 9 300m^2 (Guy, 1998)

The shopping mall/suburban mall

- draws customers from a 8km radius
- is in effect contained in one very large building, although some of the internal spaces may not be roofed over.
- Its lower size limit is often taken to be 10 000 m^2 of gross retail area. (Ranging from 9 300 to 42 000m^2 of GLA, it is usually about 14 000m^2 (Graham and Bible, 1992).
- It includes one or more large ‘anchor stores’ (department or variety stores), several (often over 50) smaller retail units, and (in larger and more recent centres) a food court, and leisure uses such as cinema or ice rink.
- Small comparison goods shops selling clothing, footwear, leisure and luxury items are particularly important, and help distinguish the centre from retail parks and other types of centre.
- Such centres attempt to replicate the amount and variety of shopping space in long-established central shopping areas.
- while the suburban mall contains a pedestrian-only shopping path, it works differently from the pedestrian street. In a pedestrian street, people are attracted to the central street intersection, from which they can explore the surrounding community. In a suburban mall, however, people are manipulated to walk in between the anchors inside an enclosed quasi-public space
- The entrance/exit only leads to the car park (Guy, 1998).

The regional shopping centre

Derived from Guy (1998) and Makgopa (2016):

- 16 to 80km
- built in a free-standing position rather than as part of an existing central area.
- two or four major tenant stores in a building
- floor area between 23 000 to 75 000m^2
- 16 to 40 hectares land area
- typically enclosed
- usually built on two levels, in order to reduce the total land take of the centre and to shorten the amount of walking which shoppers have to carry out within the centre itself. In such a centre, the major stores will probably trade from both floors.
- can vary greatly in size (from 70 to 225 stores),
- offers business products, domestic appliances, a variety of services and entertaining equipment

The super regional centre

Derived from Guy (1998)

- City wide
- provides an extensive variety of general merchandise, apparel, furniture and home furnishings.
- must contain three or more anchors (department stores) of 9 300m^2 or greater.
- The GLA is typically 75 000m^2, but can range from 55 000 to 140 000m^2
- Site size:: 25 to 50 hectares
- Typical tenants are full-line department store, mass merchant, fashion apparel

Other forms include

The Factory Outlet Centre is similar physically to a relatively small shopping mall but has no anchor store. The outlets sell price discounted goods and are usually managed by manufacturing or wholesale organisations. The purpose is to sell surplus goods such as ends of ranges, outdated fashions, slightly imperfect specimens, etc. (Fernie, 1995; Fernie and Fernie, 1997). These are destinations for household and comparison shopping (Guy, 1998).

The Speciality Centre also called the fashion centre “is composed mainly of upscale apparel shops, boutiques and craft shops carrying selected fashion or unique merchandise of high quality and price. The physical design of the centre is very sophisticated, emphasising a rich décor and high-quality landscaping. These centres are usually found in trade areas with high income levels” (Pitt & Musa, 2009).

“The speciality centre is also sometimes referred to as a theme or festival centre which typically employs a unifying theme that is carried out by the individual shops in their architectural design and, to an extent, in their merchandise. This centre has the greatest appeal for tourists. This type of centre is generally

located in an urban area, tends to be adapted from an older, sometimes historic, building and can be part of a mixed-use project" (Pitt & Musa, 2009)

The 'power centre', also known as the 'retail park'/ outlet centre, incorporates a cluster of big box stores lining a central car park. The power centre has been defined as being sited outside the town centre, occasionally in a tourist area, and contain at least three retail warehouses, defined as single storey retail units of at least 930m^2. (Hillier Parker, 1994). Power centres are usually dominated by several large anchors, including discount department stores, off-price stores, warehouse clubs or stores that offer tremendous selection in a particular merchandise category at low prices. Some of these anchors can be freestanding (unconnected). These centres have only a minimum number of small speciality tenants). A strip configuration is most common (Pitt & Musa, 2009).

There is no pedestrian mall as the need to walk to/between the shops is reduced to a minimum as people are supposed to drive to each storefront. In the extreme case of the 'drive-through' of a fast food restaurant (a common power centre tenant), a customer drives around the store to order, pay, and get food without leaving the car. The power centre thus "frees people from the manipulation of mall anchors" and facilitates the efficiency of driving and shopping at the cost of face-to-face social interactions (Rao, 2019).

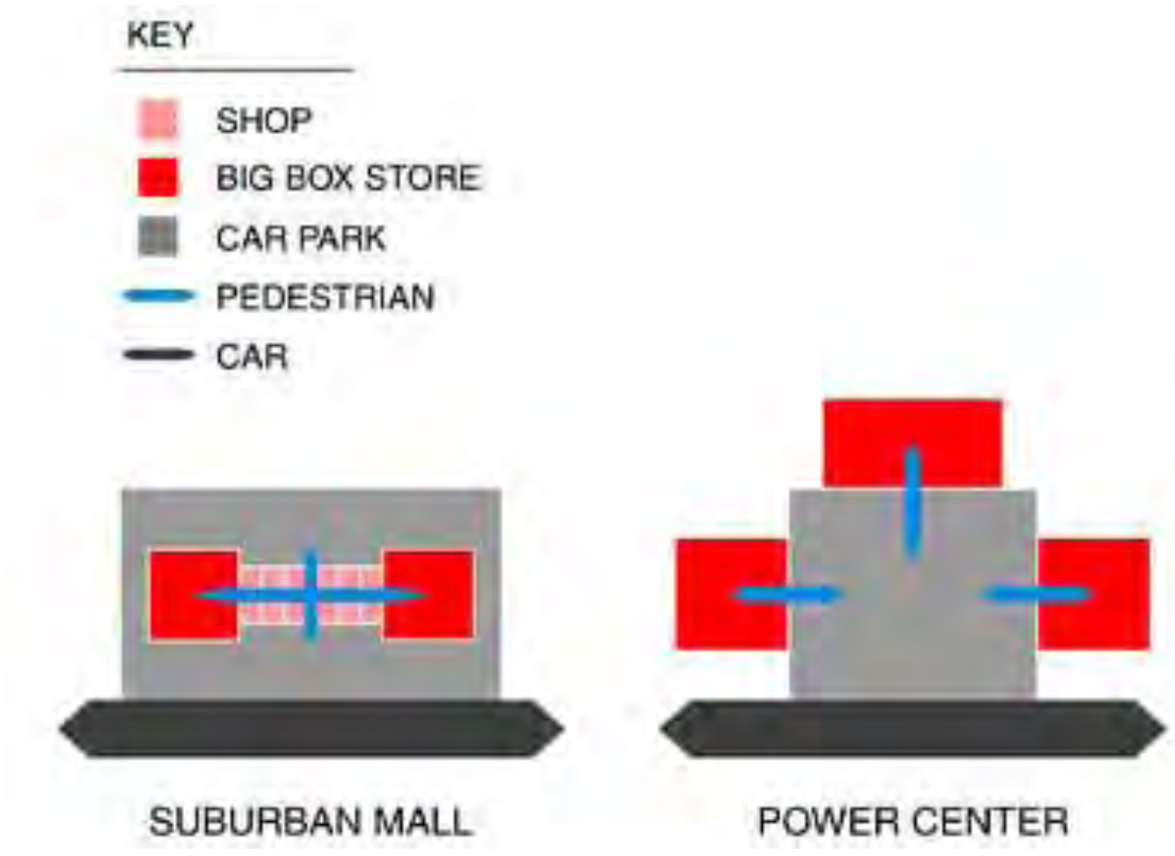


Figure 18: The suburban mall and power centre (Rao & Dovey, 2021)

According to this categorisation of shopping malls the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre can be considered as a Super Regional Centre with an astonishing 177 000m^2 of GLA.

3.9. The mall vs the city: private vs public

This section deals with the privatisation of public space, and the importance thereof. The privatisation of public space does not merely refer to the transfer of ownership or management from public to private, no, it refers to the major social and spatial implication of converting citizens into customers. In order to transform spaces to true public spaces, we need to understand what is meant by public space, what is meant by the privatisation thereof, what is the impact thereof and finally what is the relationship between public space and a shopping mall.



Figure 19: The citizen becomes a customer

What is public space?

To gain insight into the privatisation of public space, we need to define what is meant by the term public space and how Menlyn Park Shopping Centre fits into this definition. The definition of public space is based on that of Dahae Lee (2022), which explores public spaces and the management thereof in Seoul and Berlin. Although Lee (2022) focuses somewhat on the global north, the definition framework she provides is very much relevant to the South African context, and thus to the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

Lee (2022) recognises that defining public space may be a challenging feat, and that no simple definition may be excepted, however through her research on co-production and management of private owned public spaces she identified four main elements or dimensions in defining open space. The first element being ownership, which can be seen as the most basic form of public space, however this does not necessarily refer to the legal sense of 'ownership' but rather how the space is used and perceived. Lee (2022) further elaborates that spaces can be a mixture between privately or publicly owned and managed. This mix between public and private has become more popular in recent decades as people increasingly interact and gather on privately owned property such as cafes, restaurants and shopping malls.

The second element Lee (2022) refers to is management, which closely relates to ownership. Lee (2022) breaks management into three categories of cleanliness (how clean and well-lit spaces make the environment more inviting for users), provision of amenities (such as toilets and water fountains) and access control (by who and when can the space be used). Lee (2022) further states that over-management may also discourage the use of space, as it becomes less inviting and more controlled, thus a fine balance should be struck.

The third element being accessibility. Accessibility can be interpreted as access to a space for anyone in principle, but in practice it may not be the case, thus accessibility also refers to the amount of effort the public must make to access a particular space (Lee, 2022). Gates and pathways can also be seen as barriers

for accessibility and can deter the public from using spaces, which also refers to the previous section on maintenance and access control.

The fourth and final element inclusivity can be defined by the diversity of people using a space, thus a more diverse group of users equal a more inclusive space. Lee (2022) states that specific design elements of a space also impact on a space's inclusivity, these design elements may be geared toward increasing comfort, ability to interact, activities and the ability to express oneself. The successful implementation of these design elements creates spaces of spontaneity and vibrance which links to Garret (2015) who refers to a statement made by the sociologist Richard Sennett which describes private, or pseudo-public spaces as "dead public spaces" as it lacks spontaneity, encounters and to a sense chaos.

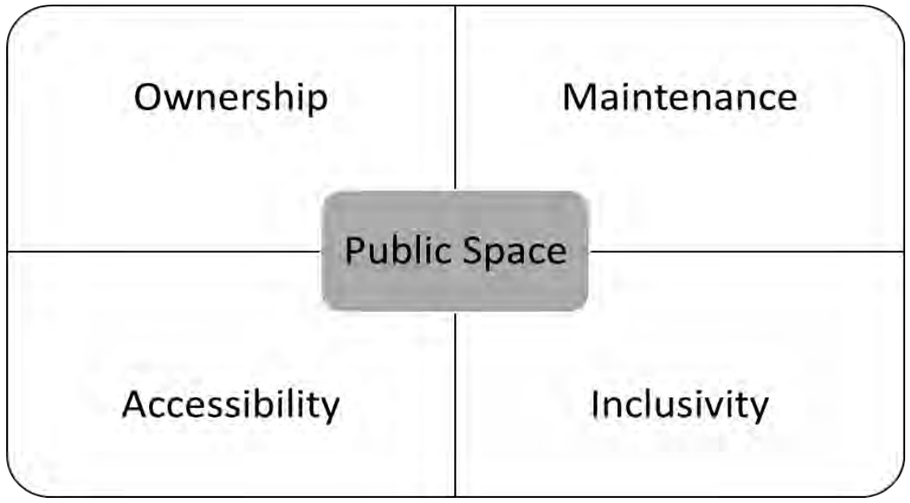


Figure 20: The four elements surrounding public space derived from Lee (2022)

The research conducted by Lee (2022) primarily focussed on Seoul and Berlin, but still has relevance to the South African context as the elements remain the same in defining what can be considered a public space. The Menlyn Park Shopping Centre can be analysed through the different elements described by Lee (2022) in order to determine what form of space it can be considered as.

Elements as defined by Lee (2022)	**Menlyn Park Shopping Centre**
Ownership	Privately owned by the Pareto Group
Maintenance	Maintained by the Pareto Group with monitoring and surveillance services supplied by LeapServe Security Services
Accessibility	Access to the mall is controlled by designated pedestrian entrances and boom gate parking lots for vehicles
	LeapServe Security Services are contracted to ensure overall safety of users
Inclusivity	Geared towards commercial gain, thus targeted toward potential consumers
	Generally lacks informal activity inside the mall, such as trading and loitering

Although Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is privately owned and managed, it does in fact cater for the public although in a highly controlled environment. Access to the mall, and maintenance of the mall is controlled by private entities with the main goal of creating a perceived safe and clean environment for users and enticing them to spend money. Access is controlled and the shopping mall itself can be closed to the general public at any given time or reason, dictating time and intention of use. According to the criteria set out by Lee (2022), defining the mall as either public or private as a whole is indeed not a simple feat, as Menlyn Park Shopping Mall contains both elements that can be regarded as public and private.

What does Privatisation of Public Space Mean?

By understanding what is meant by public space, the next step is to understand what is meant by the privatisation of public space and the reasoning behind it.

Landman (2016) uses the term 'pseudo-public places' to describe places that are not truly public in nature but rather exists to primarily improve and maximise profits. Values and elements such as accessibility and diversity are overruled by the drive of consumption and commercial gain through the privatisation of public space (Leclerq & Pojani, 2023). The privatisation of places often take place under the pretence of private entities such as large corporates and developers assisting public authorities in the development and maintenance of 'public spaces', but is ultimately aimed at financial capitalisation of the places. Furthermore, Landman (2016) states that commercialisation and shopping malls have been blamed for the privatisation of public space. Lin (2002) refers to quasi-public spaces rather than pseudo-public spaces and defines the terms as a place that is physically accessible to anyone but is dictated by economic exchange. In the case of the shopping mall, Lin (2002) points out that access to these pseudo-public spaces are controlled by gateways, doors, escalators and trading hours, thus the owner of the space can decide when and how the space should be used.

Referring to the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, we have established that there are no formal set of rules dictating who can enter the space, however, through privatisation certain aspects of the space are controlled such as the intention and the time of use.

3.10. Responsive Environments

The Elements of Responsive Environments

Referring to the concept of shopping malls are essentially places geared toward converting citizens into customers, we need a good base to transform spaces to places that keep citizens, well, citizens. The notion of responsive environments acts an excellent guide on how to re-integrate artifacts such as shopping malls back into the urban fabric by providing a base set of principles to consider. The notion of responsive environments is usually applied to a regional scale, indicating how a space functions within its surrounding urban environment. This review measures the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre against its surrounds and in some cases abides by responsive environments, although in an interior and micro level.

Referring to the book Responsive environments: A manual for designers (Bentley, et al., 2005), seven key principles are described on how to create responsive environments, each principle building on the previous. In this section the seven principles are dissected, and comparisons are drawn to the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

The first principle Bentley, et al. (2005) refers to is that of Permeability, which is seen as a key initial step in what can be considered as responsive places. Permeability refers to the promotion of accessibility and the flow of people. In the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, the perimeter is characterised by blank walls, fencing and parking with only a limited number of pedestrian and vehicular entrances resulting in poor accessibility as people generally do not walk through walls. Taking into account that the success of a shopping mall largely relies on the flow of people, or rather customers, the interior of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre can be described as a pedestrian heaven with wide walkways and blocks large enough to maximise shop frontage exposure without compromising walkability.



Figure 21: A controlled pedestrian entrance of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

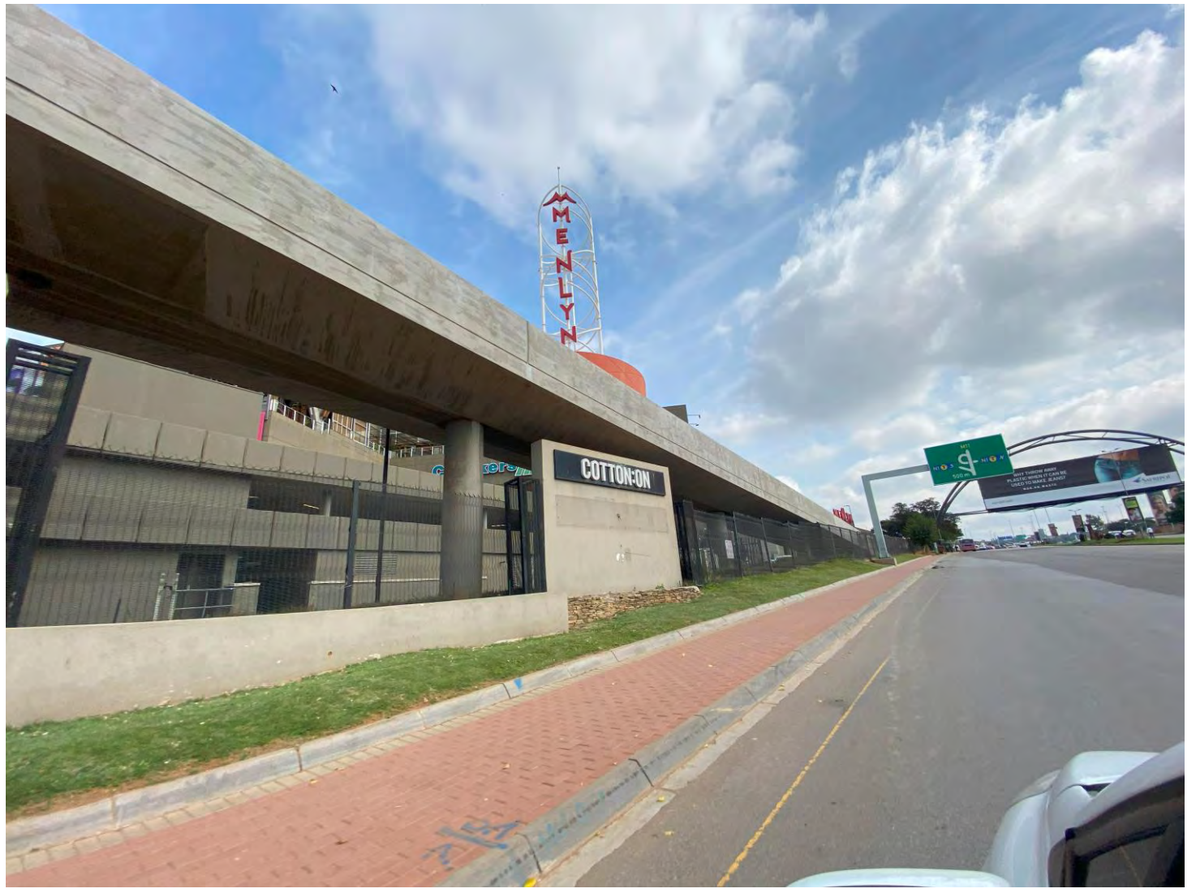


Figure 22: Typical character of the perimeter of Menlyn Mark Shopping Centre, which does not comply with the principle of permeability



Figure 23: Wide walkways of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre



Figure 24: Home Affairs Office in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

The second principle Bentley, et al. (2005) refers to is that of Variety which speaks to providing a mix of uses appropriate to a space. Considering that shopping centres are consumer driver, and the main objective being the maximisation of profits it is unsurprising to see a mix of retail, restaurants, and entertainment facilities with minimal governmental facilities or residential accommodation. This consumer driven mix is prevalent in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, although there is some attempt at introducing other, more social oriented uses such as a home affairs office, which opened in March 2023 (Mahope, 2023). The overall space can still be classified as a single use area, within the wider urban fabric and does not meet the principle of Variety as set out by Bentley, et al. (2005).

A permeable and diverse responsive environment should be supported by a layout that people can understand, thus Bentley, et al. (2005) introduces the third principle of Legibility referring to the provision of unique spaces that take into account factors such as human scale and building volume. Shopping malls are often seen as generic, a template that is duplicated in the suburban areas of cities, without character, uniqueness or sense of place. The overall architectural design of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre can be seen as generic, manicured, clinical and sterile but has become somewhat a major landmark and attraction in Pretoria, assuming the role of an epicentre of a metropolitan node with its main unique feature being its sheer size and presence but lacks legibility.



Figure 25: Typical manicured space in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre



Figure 26: The 'Great Hall', an indication of the building size and volume

The fourth principle of Robustness shifts the focus more towards the individual building, its design and use. Linking to the principle of variety, a building that is designed to cater for the widest uses viable is generally considered to be more robust and less vulnerable, especially against world events such as pandemics. Unfortunately, Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, as with the majority of malls, fell victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. From a political and public health perspective, ironically the fact that one can literally close a door to a major gathering space, made Menlyn Park Shopping Centre a true example of the importance of robustness. The mall still bares scars in the form of vacant retail space and the emergence of e-commerce.



Figure 27: Vacant Retail Space in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

Bentley, et al. (2005) introduces us to the fifth principle of Visual Appropriateness, which focusses more on the detailed design of specific elements rather that the appearance of the greater overall area. The intent behind the principle is to assign meaning to spaces and places which also links with the sixth principle of Richness. In the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, the developers have recognised to some extent of providing meaning to space, in the sense that they have constructed certain 'landmarks' such as the Grand Hall, Menlyn Tower and Menlyn Sky. The overall architectural style can still be regarded as generic and sterile.



Figure 28: Sterile generic environment in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

The sixth principle, Richness ties in closely with that of Visual Appropriateness as it focusses more on detailed design and providing character, texture and uniqueness to the artifact. Currently the mall does not create a warm lived-in atmosphere but rather displays characteristics of a cold and sterilised space.

The last principle of Personalisation can be seen as a synthesis of all previous principles. The principle refers to the notion of planning for people and people first, designers create spaces for other people to live, work and play in, thus active involvement with potential users is critical in creating a truly responsive environment. In the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, it is safe to assume that the rationale behind the design is not people first, but rather customers first. The space is strategically designed to maximise consumerism and time spent within the mall.

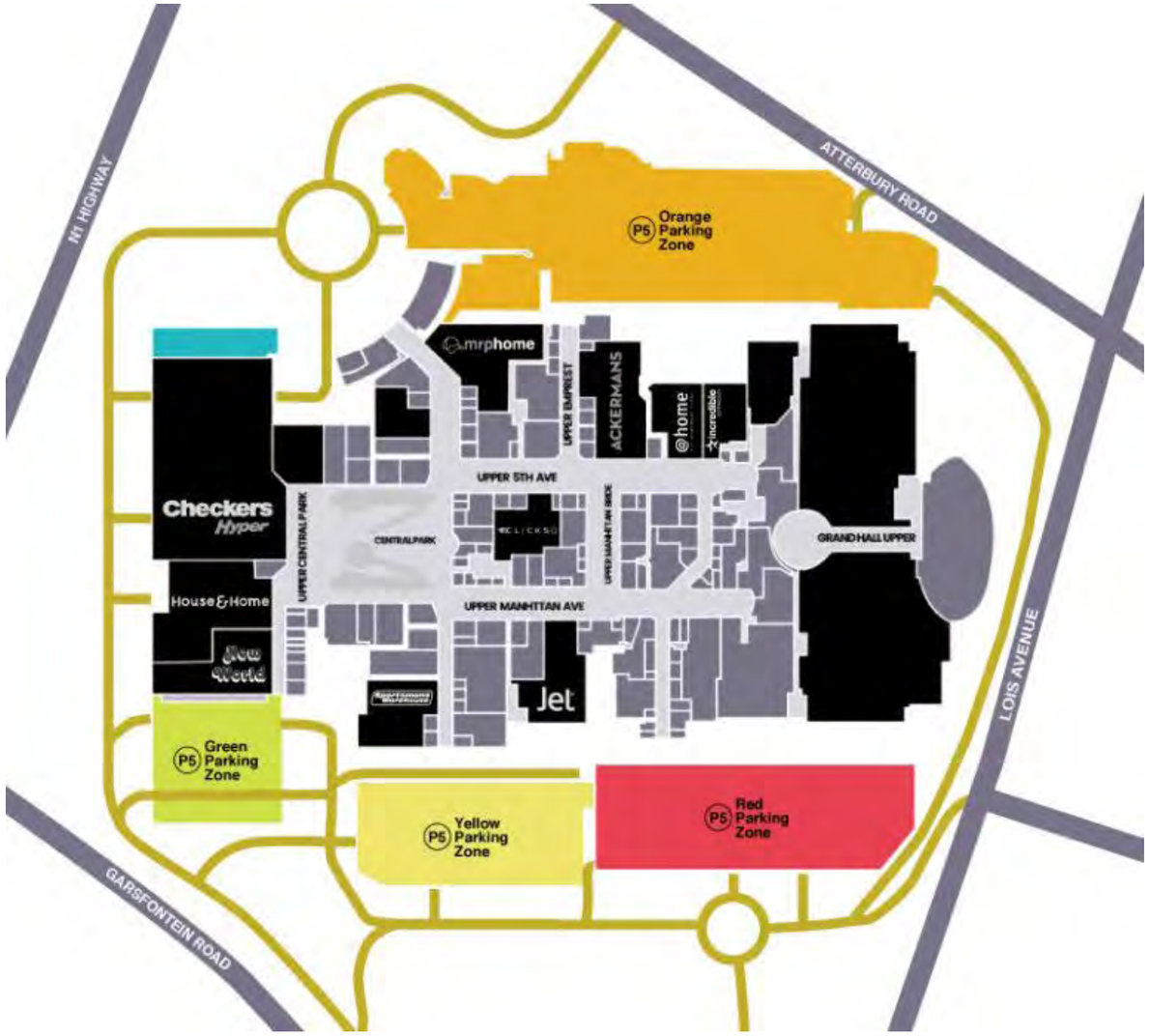


Figure 29: Menlyn Mall Map (Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, 2023)



Figure 30: Responsive Environments (Bentley, et al., 2005)

Perspectives of the City

4. Perspective of the City

4.1. Tshwane Regionalised Spatial Development Framework (Region 6)

The Regionalised Spatial Development Framework (RSDF) is a planning tool developed by the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality in accordance with the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013. The framework acts as a guide for development in the city, indicating desired land uses and residential densities. The RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) classifies the Menlyn area as a metropolitan node accounting for 2.4% of formal jobs within the municipal area, second only to the Pretoria CBD. The table below indicates the significance in terms of job opportunities the Menlyn node offers in comparison to other nodes in the east of Pretoria.

Table 2: Job Opportunities in Tshwane East (City of Tshwane, 2018)

Node	Formal Jobs	% of Tshwane
CSIR/Technopark	4 738	0.8
Lynnwood East	6 427	1.0
Menlyn	**14 836**	**2.4**
Atterbury	7 972	1.3
Eastern Suburbs	9 750	1.6
Armscor/Castle Walk	6 067	1.0
Waltloo/Silvertondale	34 180	5.5
Silverton	12 756	2.0
East Lynne	4 037	0.2
TOTAL	**99 803**	**16.71**

The RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) defines, or rather envisage a metropolitan node, as an urban core which offers a high degree of service specialisation and a wide range of services. The framework encourages the notion of Transit Orientated Development (TOD) in these nodes, focussed on providing a residential and commercial mix in conjunction with a major public transport hub to maximise transit usage. In terms of the framework, a TOD caters for pedestrians within a 500 – 800m walking distance from the stop, which the framework deems appropriate in terms of scale and walking distance.

"In terms of TOD it is important to provide a pedestrian-friendly environment, mixed use areas where the needs of the commuters and residents can be addressed in one place. Small business opportunities must be promoted around the stations and along the trunk route." (City of Tshwane, 2018)

The RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) acknowledges that the Menlyn area lacks the characteristics of the defined TOD. However, the framework also recognises the potential of the node to develop into a fully fledged TOD. The following key points are identified in the framework for Menlyn Park Shopping Centre and surrounds:

1. Infill development that should consist of high intensity mixed uses, including residential, from the N1 national highway in the west up to January Masilela Drive in the east.
2. Areas surrounding the node should also be considered for high density residential development.
3. Areas to the west of the N1 national highway should also be considered for residential densification.

The map on the following page illustrates the RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018), indicating the relationship between the historic Pretoria CBD (metropolitan node) and the Menlyn area from a spatial planning perspective. The 'development zones' or 'land use categories' affecting the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, as defined in the framework, are as follow.

The 'retail' zone, which is briefly defined in the RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) as areas that should have a concentration of mixed land uses with focus on retail development. Currently the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre falls within this zone.

The RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) allocates the 'mixed use' zone to the south of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre along Garstfontein Road. The mixed use refers to a wide range of office, commercial, residential, industrial, retail, entertainment and institutional uses, that should in turn promote accessibility and decreased distances to public transport. The RSDF recognises that the mix of land uses can be vertical or horizontal. Currently this zone is occupied by car dealerships toward the east, offices and a hotel to the west capitalising on the visibility of the N1.

The areas directly to the north and west is earmarked as the 'office' zone. The definition of this zone according to the RSDF (City of Tshwane, 2018) fringes on that of mixed use as it permits various uses ranging from office, retail, beauty salon, places of instruction and medical workshops. The definition, however, excludes residential and industrial and states that land uses should be in line with the character of the street/area. This area is currently characterised by offices, a boutique hotel and some single residential stands.

Keeping in mind that the future vision of the Menlyn area, includes transforming the space into a TOD, the City has developed a '500m walking distance' zone around the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. These transit promotion zones specifically focus on residential density, supporting densities of 200du/ha and up.

4.2. Department of Human Settlements

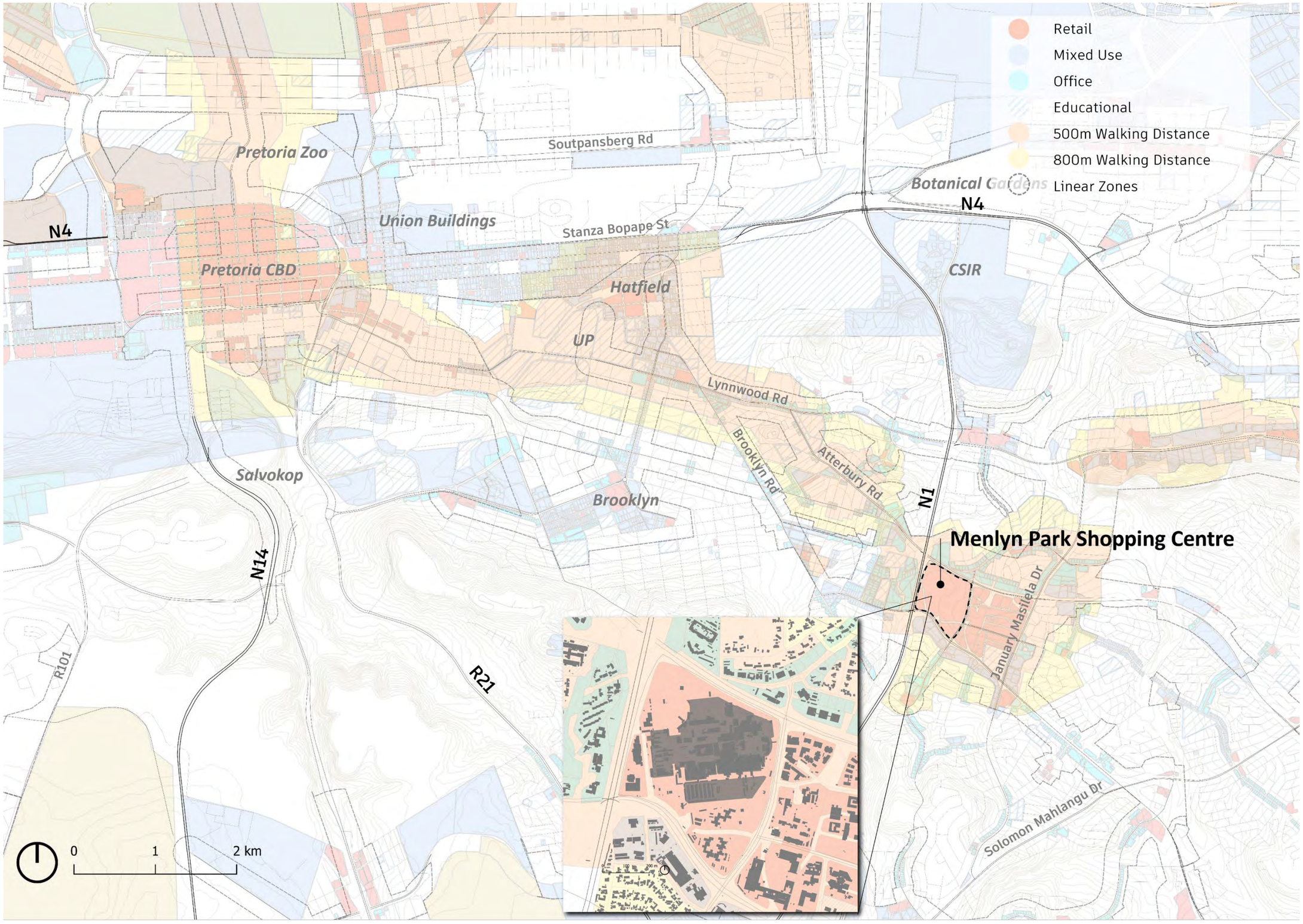
The Tshwane Department of Human Settlements, placed a notice in the Gauteng Provincial Gazette (Tshwane Department of Human Settlements, 2020) notifying that certain additional Restructuring Zones were identified. These Restructuring Zones included the planned BRT Routes along Atterbury Road, Lois Ave and Aramist Ave surrounding the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.



Figure 31: Restructuring Zones around Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

Restructuring Zones refer to areas where social housing is desired and supported, this should be taken into consideration if a residential component is suggested in the design.

Tshwane Regionalised Spatial Development Framework, 2018



Context and Analysis

0 1 2 km

5. Context and Analysis

As discussed in the introduction section, the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is located in the City of Tshwane, strategically located between the two major intersections of the N1 national highway, Atterbury and Garstfontein Roads to the east of the Pretoria CBD.

5.1. General Observations

1. Occupancy

Traditionally, the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is seen as a mall that caters for higher income users with various high-end clothes and jewellery stores. Shops include brands such as:

- Zara
- Polo
- Levi's
- American Swiss
- Brown's Jewellery
- Swarovski

The mall has since introduced a variety of consumer products, and is generally known as a place that 'has it all'.

Various entertainment facilities are provided in the mall which include, a temporary carnival, roller-skate skate rink, cinemas, live performance theatre, restaurants and a gaming arcade.



Figure 32: Roller-skate Rink in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

The Covid-19 Pandemic left shopping malls in dire straits, with Menlyn Park not being exempt. The scars of the pandemic is evident through the amount of vacant retail space throughout the mall, paper covered windows with advertisements are noticeable throughout the mall. In some instances windows of vacant stores are covered with advertisements for stores close-by.



Figure 33: Covered Windows of Vacant Shops

2. Users

Menlyn is a popular destination for consumers, with peak times being month-end and weekends. The influx of consumers creating extraordinary traffic disruptions along Lois Ave to the east and Atterbury Road to the north, as consumers rush to enter the mall. Weekdays and mid-month periods see a decline in users, with the mall creating an eery environment.

Restaurants tend to open their doors early (before shops), to serve breakfast to the users before they embark on their consumer journey.

3. Parking

As mentioned by Wood (2023), current council parking standards were not intended to be applied to massive shopping malls such as Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, thus huge structures of parking surround

the mall to meet these standards. Even during peak times, the parking areas are not saturated, and are merely extreme hard open concrete structures and spaces.

4. Pedestrian Entrances

There are two pedestrian entrances (refer to Figure 40) to the mall, one along Lois Avenue, acting as the main entrance and one along Atterbury Road. These pedestrian entrances are mainly used by taxi users, creating informal taxi pick-up and drop-off areas in the vicinity. Both pedestrian entrances forces the users to traverse parking areas before entering the mall. There is some attempt to activate the route through the parking areas through the introduction trade (see image below).



Figure 34: Some Activity along Pedestrian Entrance

5.2. Site Informants (Spatial Analysis, demography, traffic etc)

Movement – How do cars move?

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is boxed in by higher order roads, with Atterbury Road to the north, Lois Avenue to the east, Garstfontein Road to the south and the N1 national highway to the west. The mall is accessible via two vehicular entrances along Atterbury Road, two vehicular entrances along Lois Avenue and one vehicular entrance along Garstfontein Road to the south.

It should be noted that Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, just as traditional shopping malls, is very much car orientated.

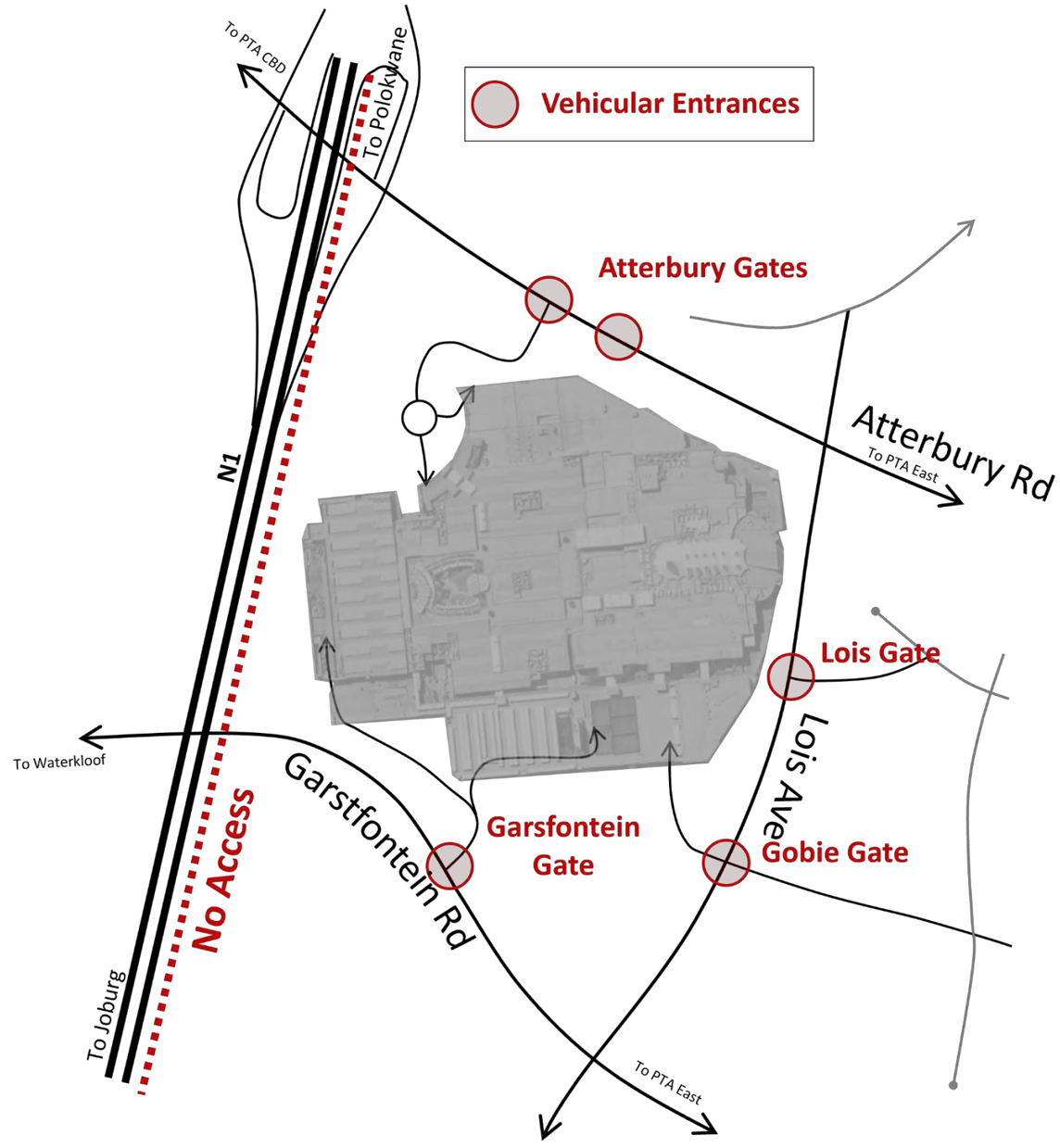


Figure 35: Illustration of Vehicular Entrances

Movement - How does public transport move?

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is located near the 'loop' of Line 2B of the Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system of Tshwane, A Re Yeng. There are two stops along Atterbury Road to the north of the mall, opposite each other and one stop to the east along Louis Avenue. Currently there are no formal stations along this route, but construction is expected to commence in 2024.

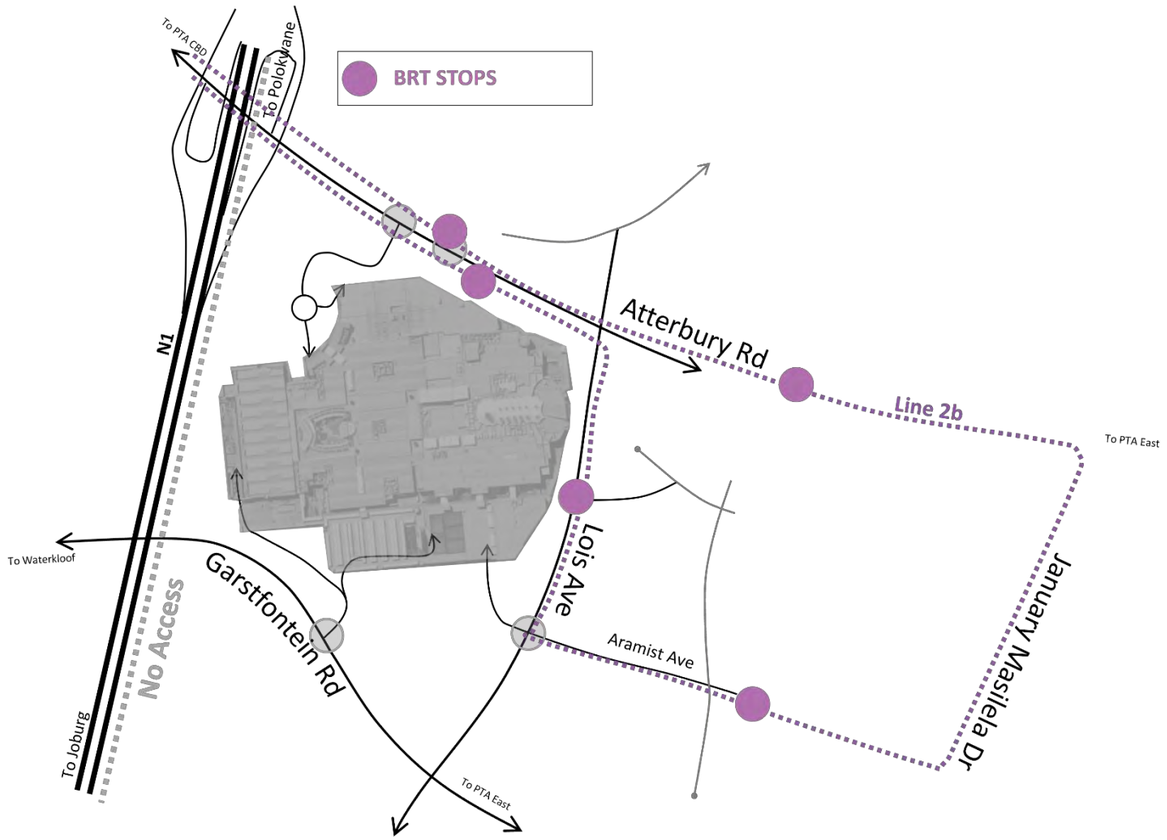


Figure 36: Line 2B of The BRT System (A Re Yeng)

Atterbury Road accommodates a taxi route connecting Menlyn Park Shopping Centre with the CBD towards the west and connecting with the taxi route on Lois Avenue to the east. The Lois Avenue taxi route connects with Garstfontein Road to the south which provides regional accessibility towards the east of Tshwane. Portions of Atterbury Road are appropriated by taxi's conglomerating close to the existing vehicular accesses although there is a formal taxi rank on Atterbury Road on the mall site, it is currently not utilised due to negotiations between the taxi association and the mall owner.

> In another matter affecting the area, last year the City of Tshwane facilitated a meeting between the management of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre and the Menlyn Taxi Association to come to an agreement for the taxis to use part of the mall for parking.
>
> This would solve the problem of taxis parking on the pavement outside the mall and the health issues associated with informal traders. The agreement was supposed to be signed in January 2023, but the mall management and taxi association have deadlocked over the payment for parking spaces at the mall and a few other matters.
>
> There have been enough delays on this matter and I have requested the MMC for Roads and Transport to facilitate a meeting between the mall management and taxi association to break the deadlock and come to an agreement.

Figure 37: Extract from Media Statement by the City of Tshwane Corporate and Shared Services Department

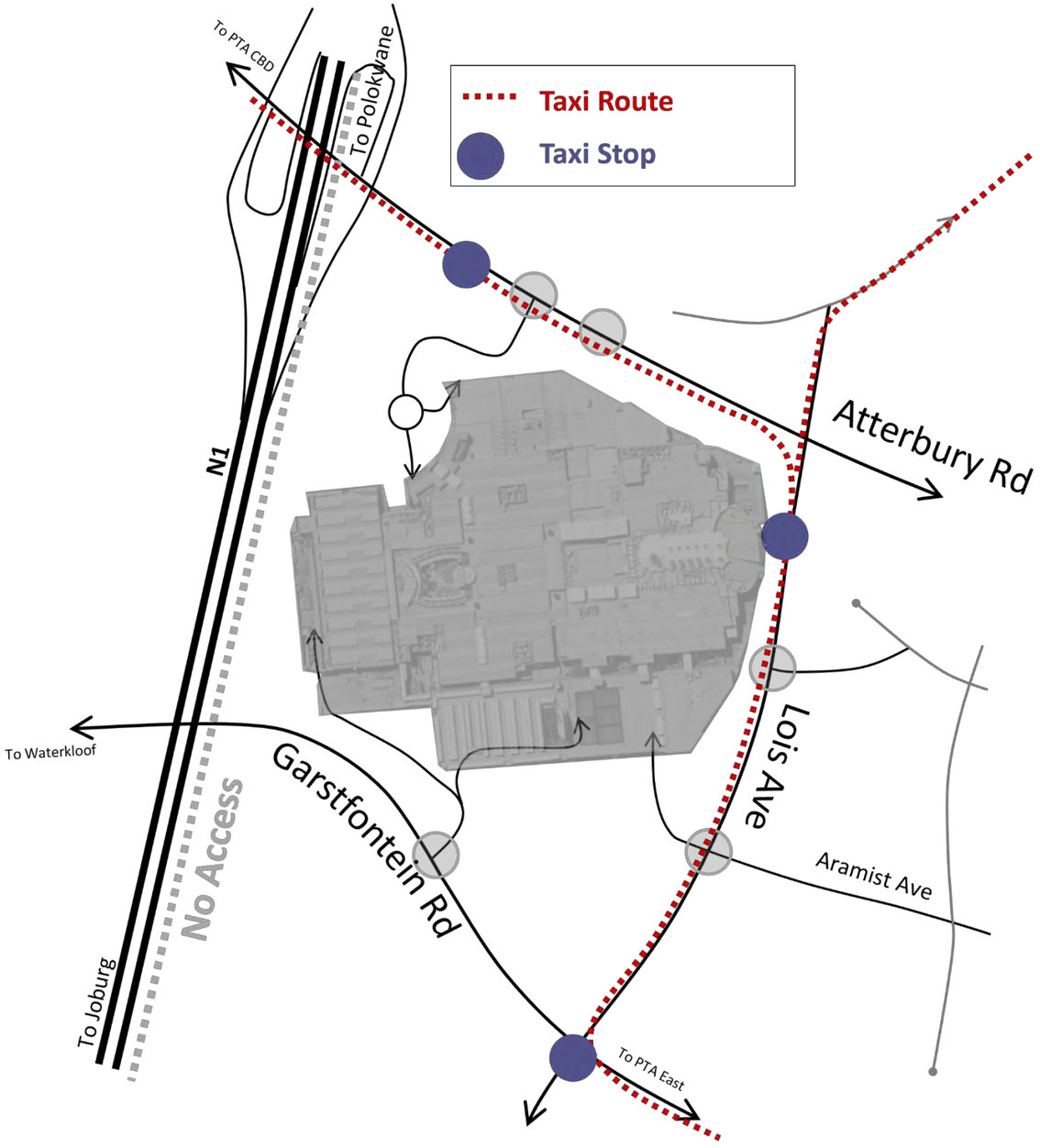


Figure 38: Taxi Routes Surrounding Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

The Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport has released preliminary route designations for Phase 3 of the Gautrain rail system. A station is proposed in 'Tshwane East', this station will most likely be at Menlyn Park Shopping Centre or in the suburb of Garsfontein.

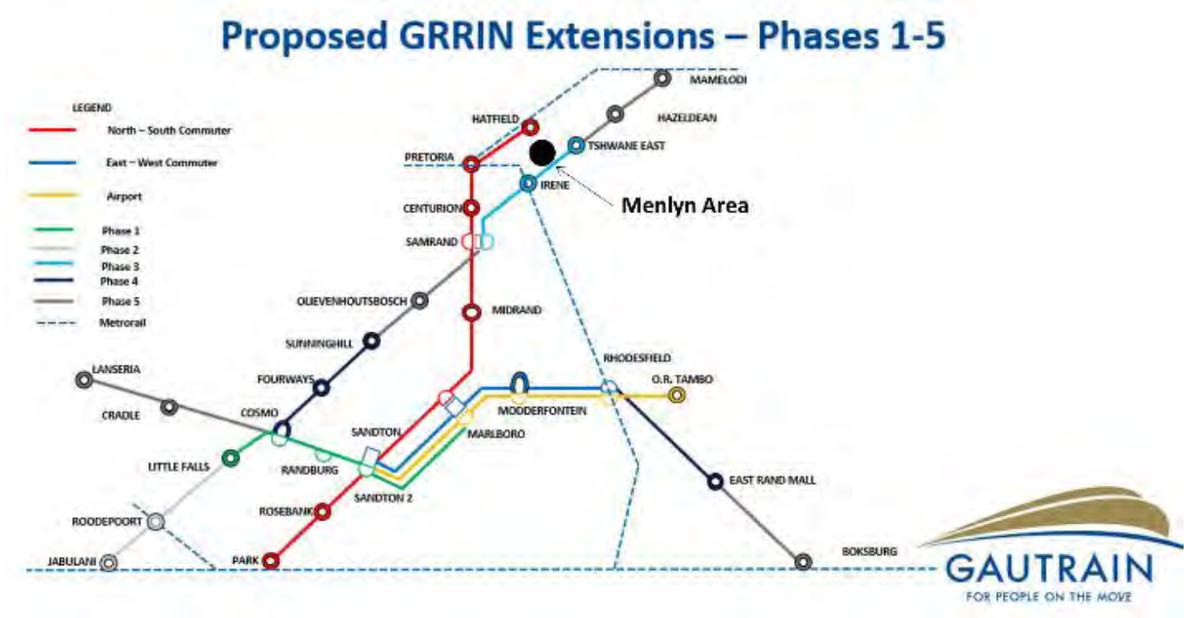


Figure 39: Proposed Gautrain Extensions

Movement – How do people access?

The current mall design allocates two pedestrian exclusive entrances. One entrance is located along Atterbury Road to the north, which to a degree is shared with a vehicular entrance, and an entrance along Lois Avenue. Both entrances forces pedestrians to cross covered parking before entering the shopping mall.

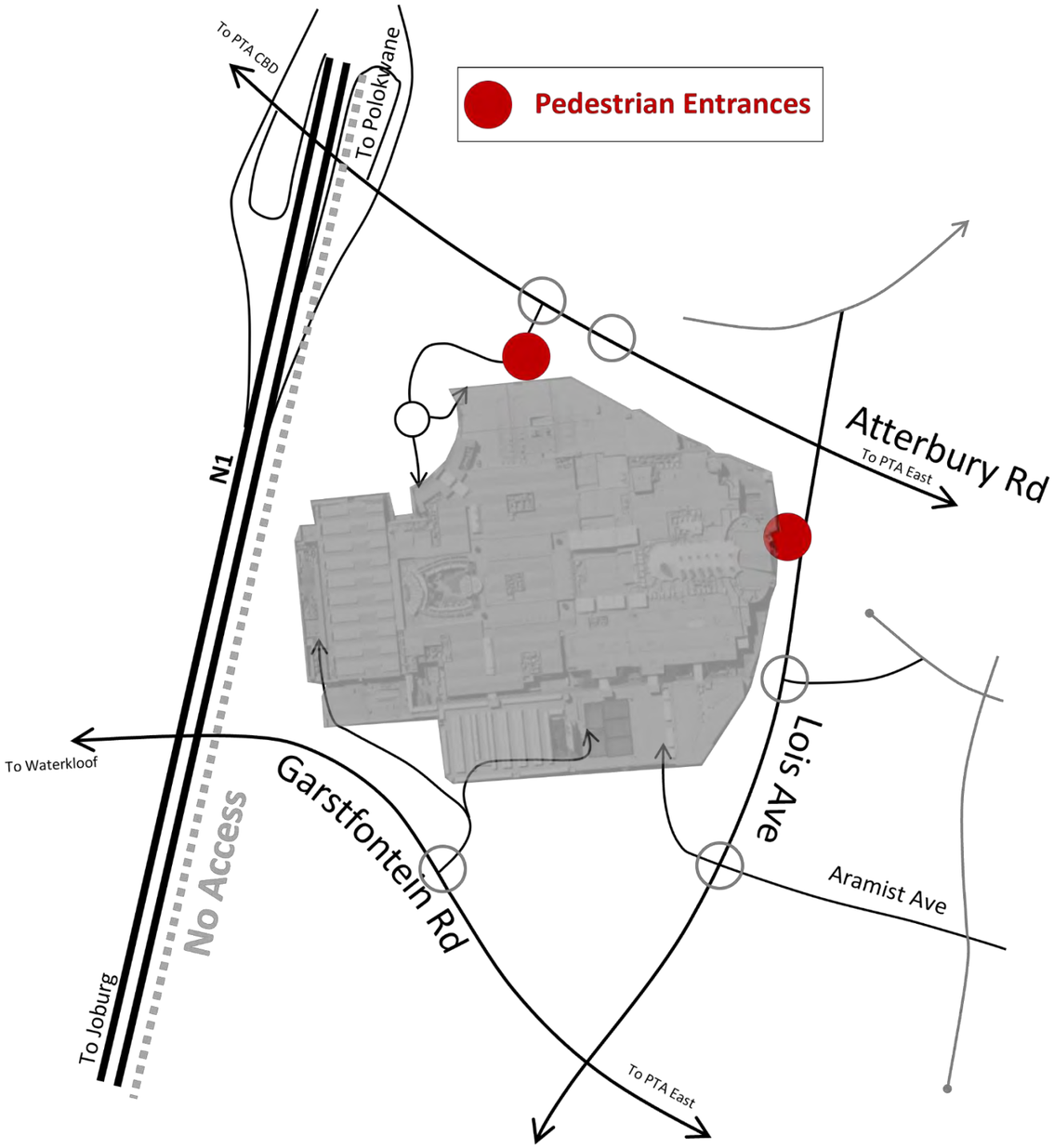


Figure 40: Illustration of Pedestrian Entrances

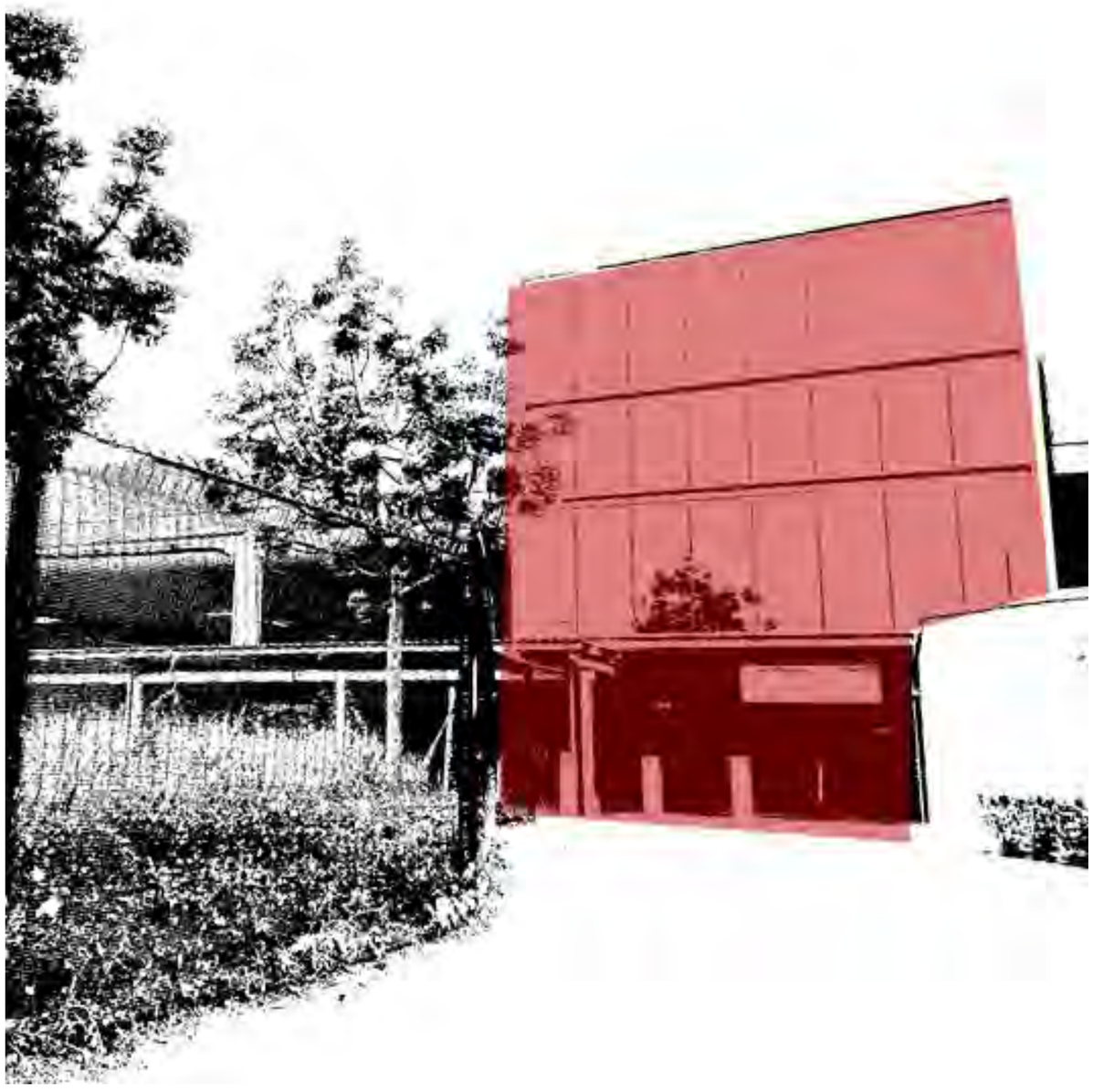


Figure 41: Pedestrian Entrance Along Atterbury Road



Figure 42: Pedestrian Entrance Along Lois Avenue

Structure – Built Form

The built form illustration truly illustrates the bulk of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. A finer grain is present towards the older surrounding residential areas to the north and south, with a coarser grain towards the east in the Menlyn Main area.

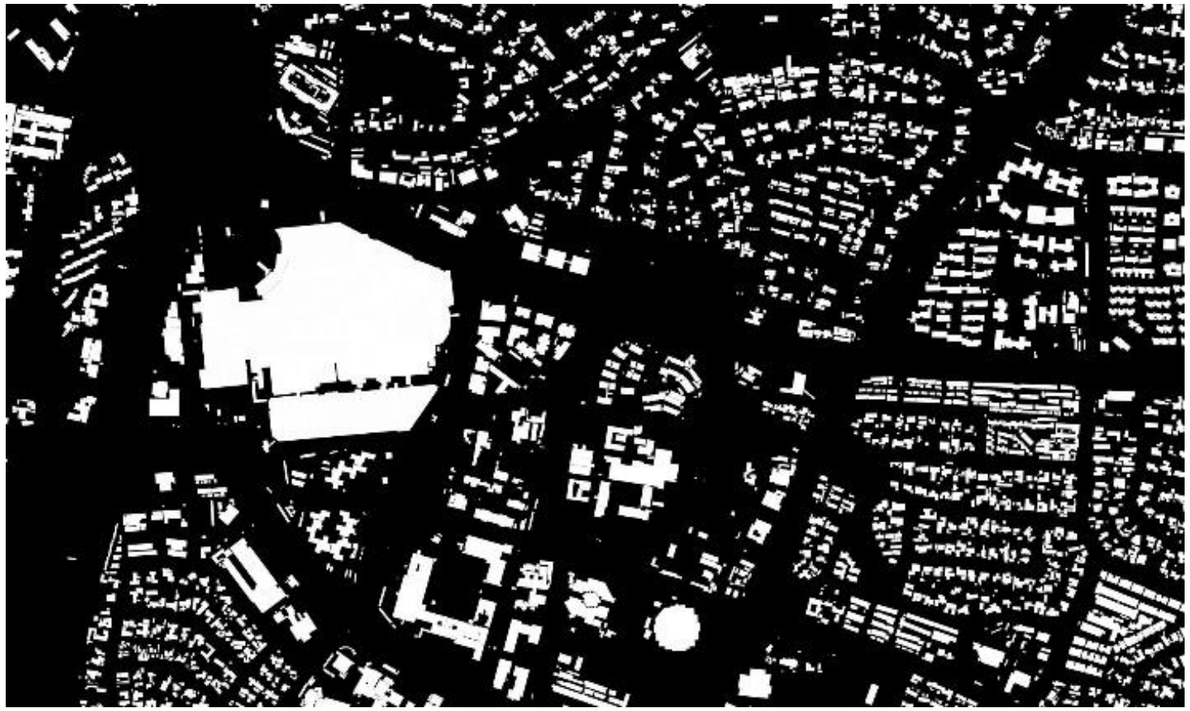


Figure 43: Built Form of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre and Surrounds

Structure – Green

The natural environment surrounding Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is generally of poor quality, especially along the pedestrian walkways. A wetland area is present to the south east of the mall, which according to Wood (2023) is probably due to human interference through the construction of Lois Avenue. The wetland area does not form part of a larger water network, and merely acts as an attenuation facility. The wetland area is acceptably maintained, with some traders appropriating the edges along Lois Avenue.

Structure – Edge Conditions

The edges are characterised by fencing and parking infrastructure to the north and north west along Atterbury Road, with some green edges along the southern portions of Lois Avenue where the wetland area is. The edge condition along Garstfontein Road is similar to that of Atterbury Road, fenced with minimal permeability. There is no interaction between the N1 national highway to the west and Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, this is effectively a dead edge.

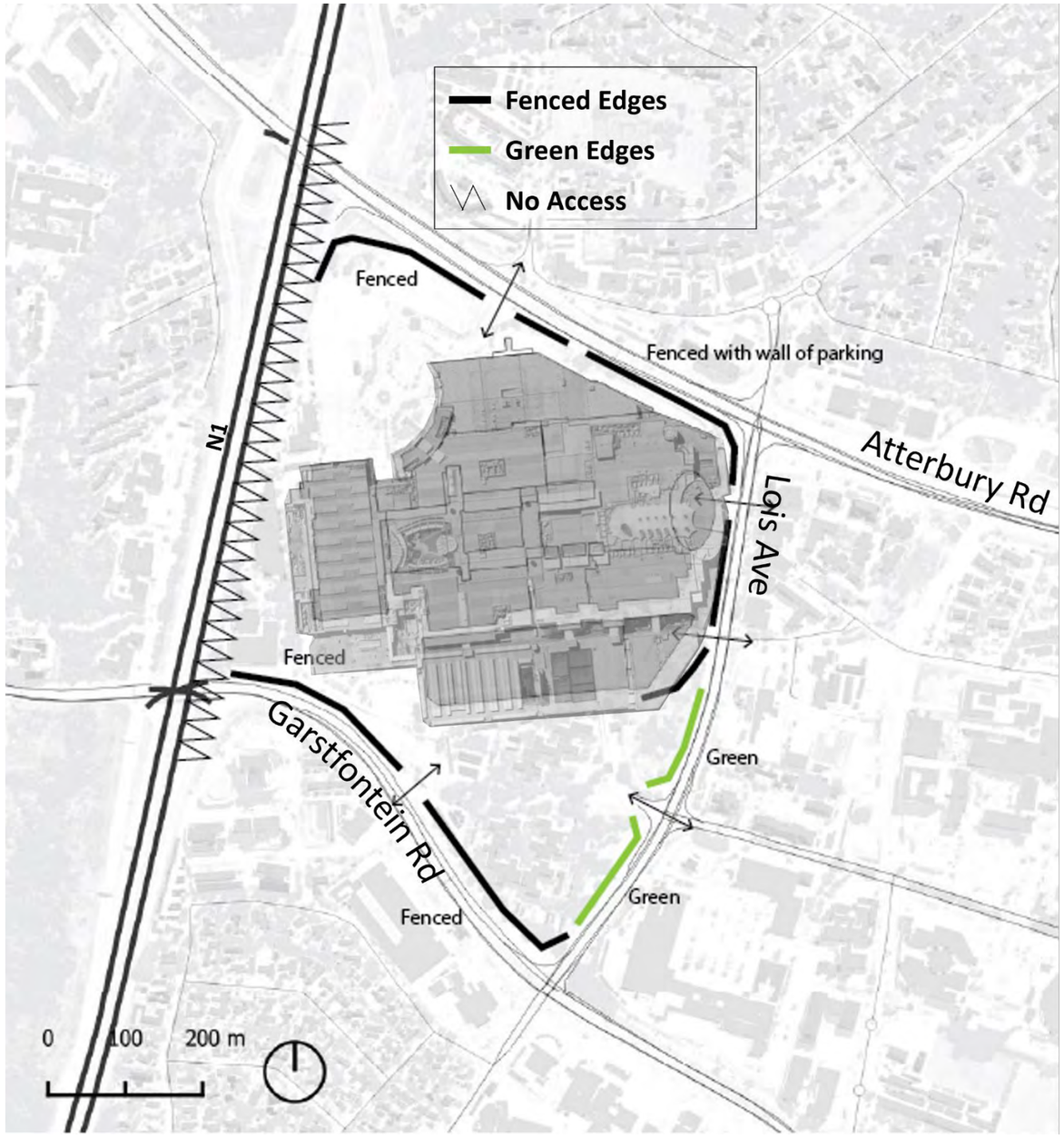


Figure 44: Menlyn Park Shopping Centre - Edge Conditions



Figure 45: Typical Edge Condition Along Atterbury Road



Figure 46: Edge Condition Along Lois Avenue

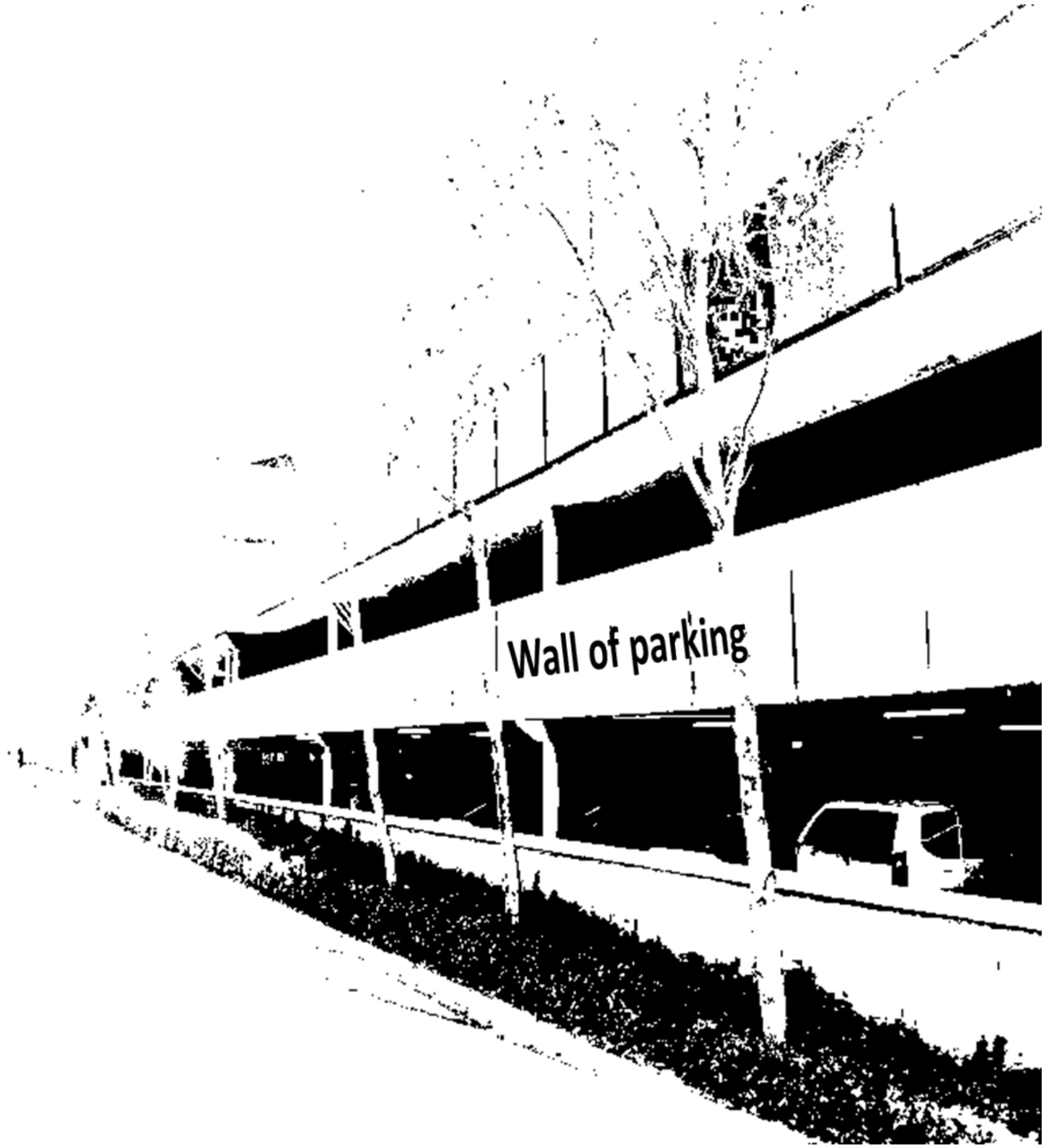


Figure 47: Walls of Parking

Activity – What is happening around Menlyn Park Shopping Centre?

The immediate surroundings of the mall are of a non-residential nature, with motor dealerships to the south, office blocks to the north, commercial and educational facilities to the west and mixed land uses consisting of education and retail to the east.

Informal trade is present mainly along Lois Avenue to the east, capitalising on the presence of taxi's and pedestrians.



Figure 48: Informal trade along Lois Ave

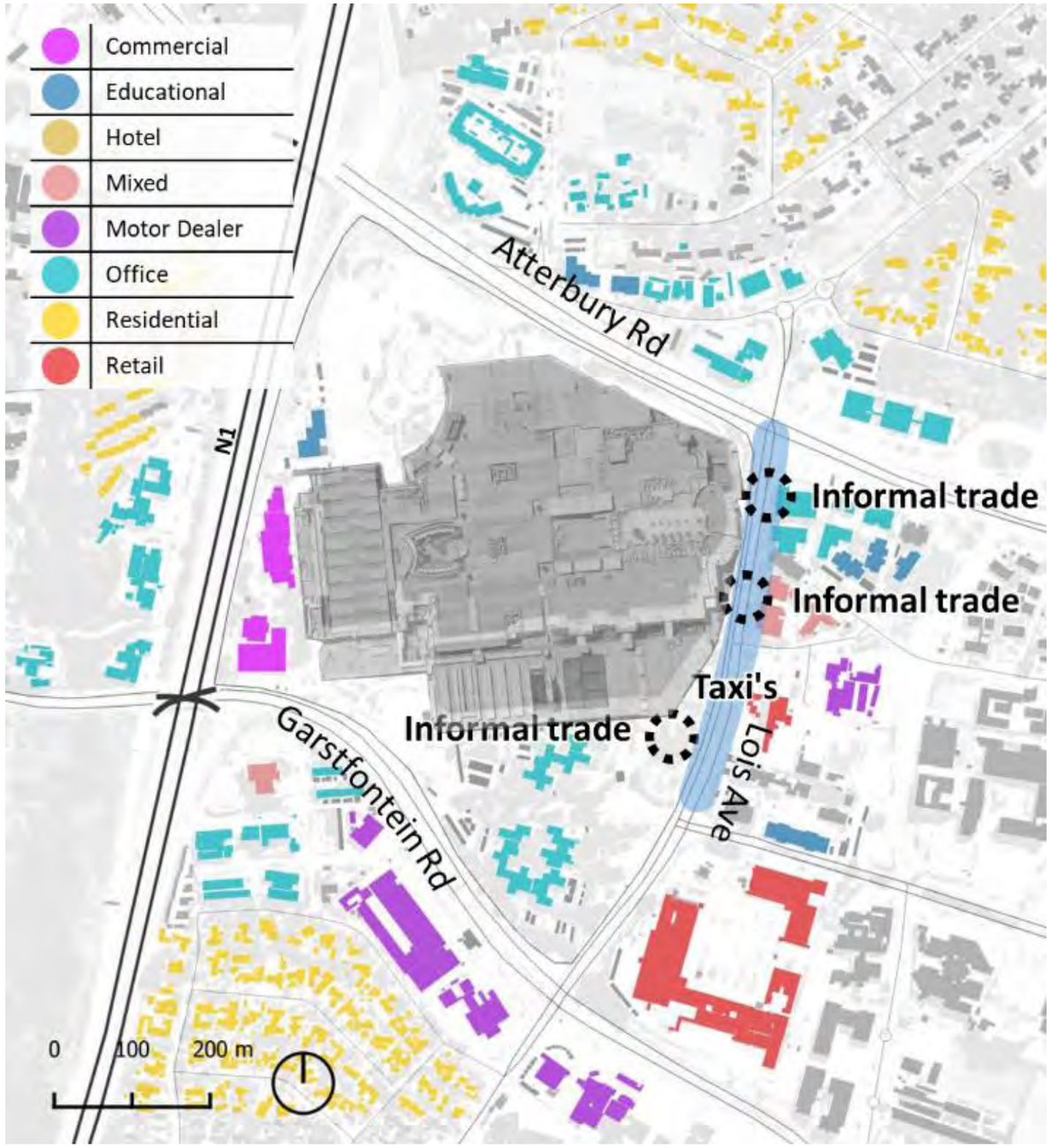


Figure 49: Building Uses Surrounding Menlyn Park Shopping Centre



Figure 50: Green Areas of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

Nature – How does the mall respond?

There are two prominent 'green' areas present on the site. The first area, Menlyn Sky is an artificial green area consisting of imitation grass and vegetation located on the upper floors of the mall. This space does not interact with the outside environment and is exclusively used by the mall users.

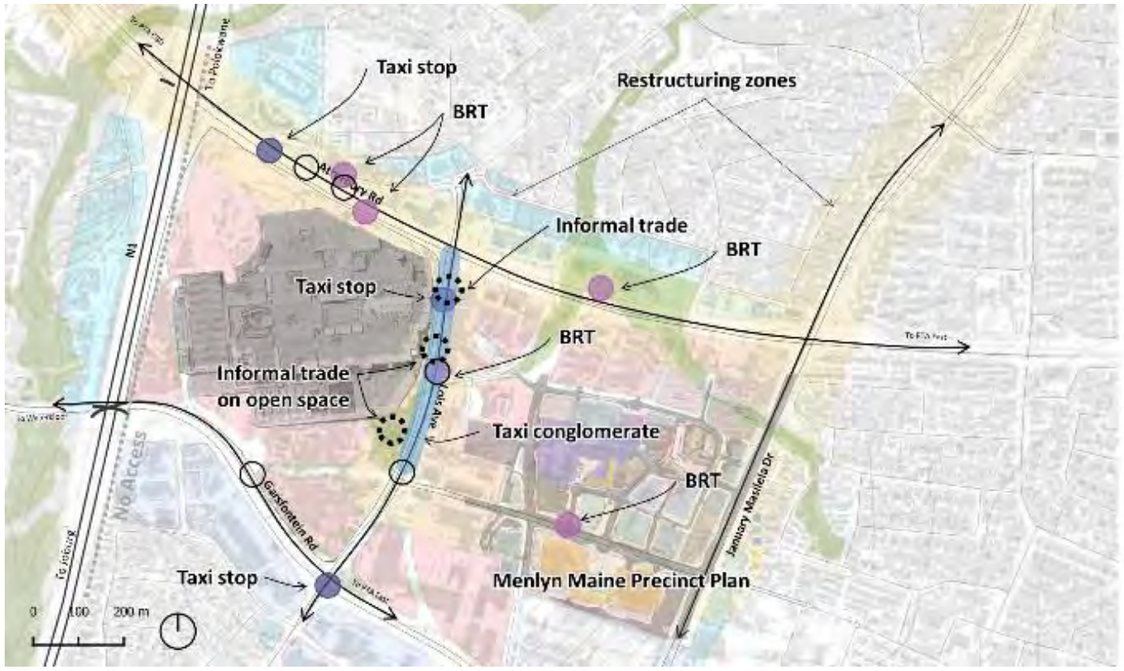
The second area is a natural wetland area to the south east of the mall along Lois Avenue. The site is protected from development and well maintained, but is also isolated from its surroundings. The site is currently used by some informal traders and pedestrians.



Figure 51: Informal trade on the wetland area

Synthesis

The synthesis of the site informants provide an overview of how Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is positioned in the urban fabric and how it functions to some extent. The Regionalised Spatial Development Framework (City of Tshwane, 2018) is underlaid to provide context in terms of future planning, together with the Restructuring Zones following the BRT lines.



5.3. Internal Structure and Use – Unpacking the mall

The site informants focussed on how the Menlyn Park Shopping Mall fits into the surrounding the urban fabric, this section deals with the internal structure and functioning of the mall.

A cross section (north-south) of Menlyn Park Shopping Mall and some surrounds, reveals a relatively flat slope of 0.5% across a 1 000m run. This slope is typical of shopping malls which usually do not take the surrounding development into consideration – the development is stamped on the terrain.

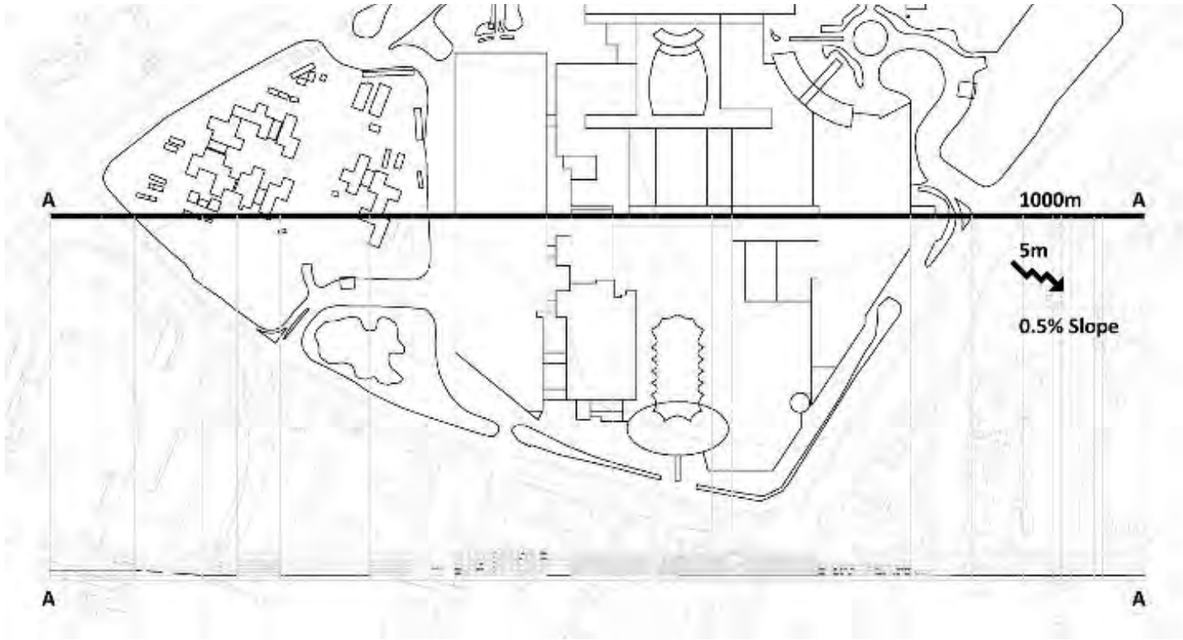


Figure 52: General Cross Section of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

An indicative cross section through the mall shows the pedestrian walkways and the surrounding shops. Walkways are stacked on top of each other with openings between the floors. The walkways are surrounding on each side with either shops or restaurants. In some instances, skylights are added to provide some natural lighting.

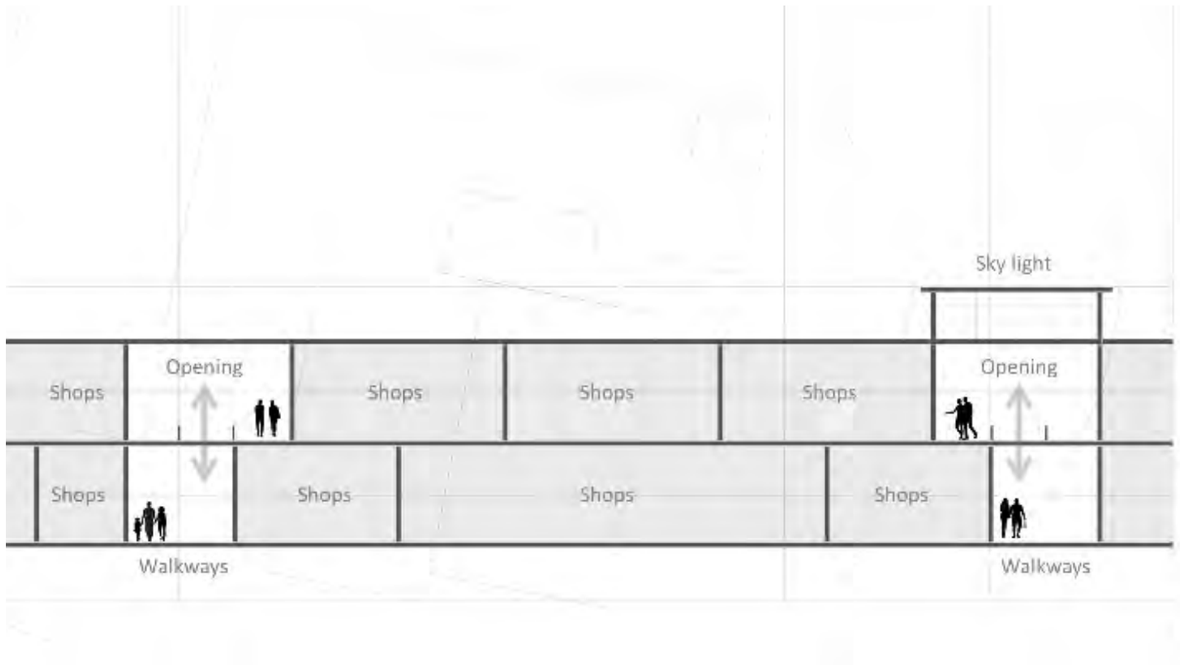


Figure 53: Typical Floor Configuration



Figure 54: Skylights along the roofline



Figure 55: Skylight at walkway intersection

The following section deals with each floor of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

Lower Ground Level

The lower ground level only occupies the north eastern portion of the mall. The main pedestrian entrance along Lois Ave penetrates the artifact through the wall of parking to enter the Grand Hall. This level accommodates a major big box store close to the pedestrian entrance, with smaller shops and restaurants lining the base of the Grand Hall.

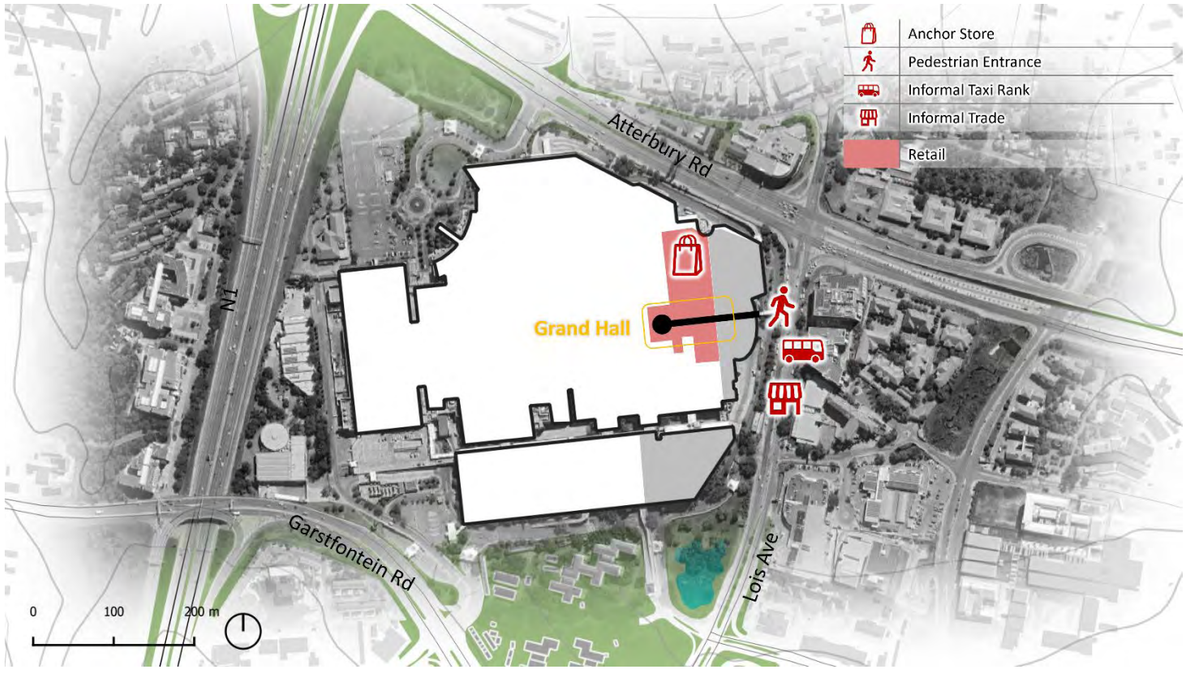


Figure 56: Lower Ground Level

Ground Level

The ground level occupies the full extent of the mall, accessible by the pedestrian entrance along Atterbury Road to the north, next to the non-functioning taxi rank, which once again penetrates a wall of parking before entering the mall. A secondary 'pedestrian' entrance is located to the north west, however this entrance does not connect the mall to the outside urban fabric but rather to more parking. This floor houses a number of anchor stores strategically distributed.

The Grand Hall is also present on this floor.

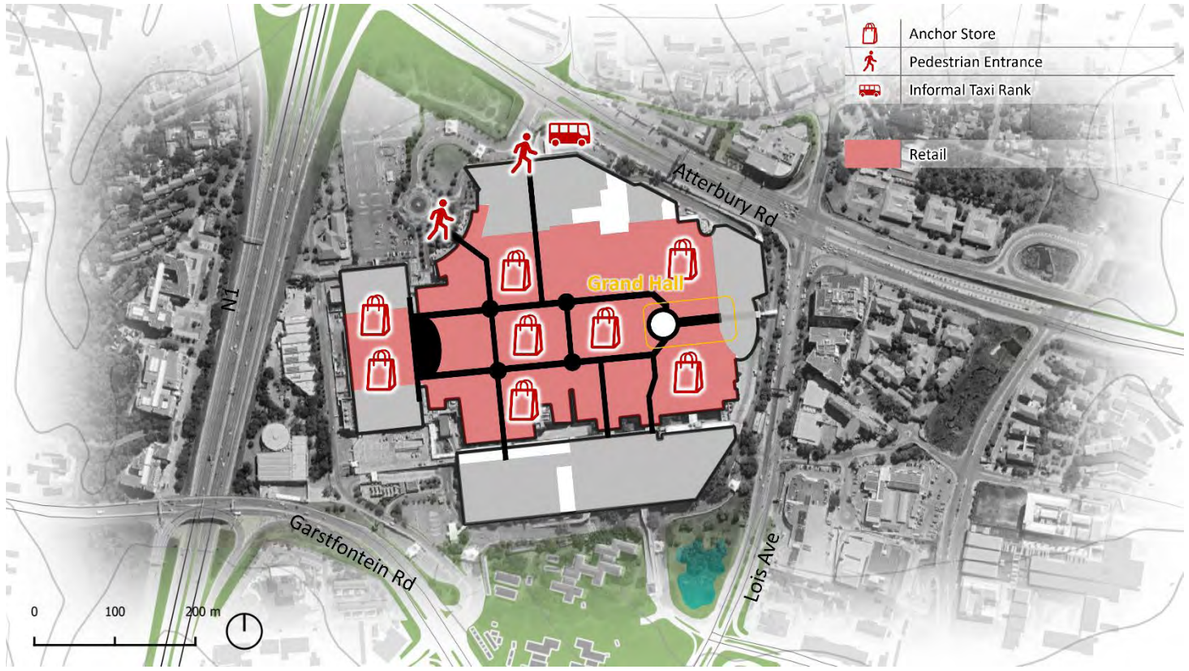


Figure 57: Ground Level



Figure 58: Secondary 'Pedestrian' Entrance (Citizen, 2017)

Lower First Level

The lower first level is also accessible via the second ‘pedestrian’ entrance. This floor is surrounded by the wall of parking to the north and south. The floor accommodates four anchor stores, with two being grocery stores in the west and clothing stores toward the east, the Menlyn Sky area and an arcade area (accessed from the upper first floor).

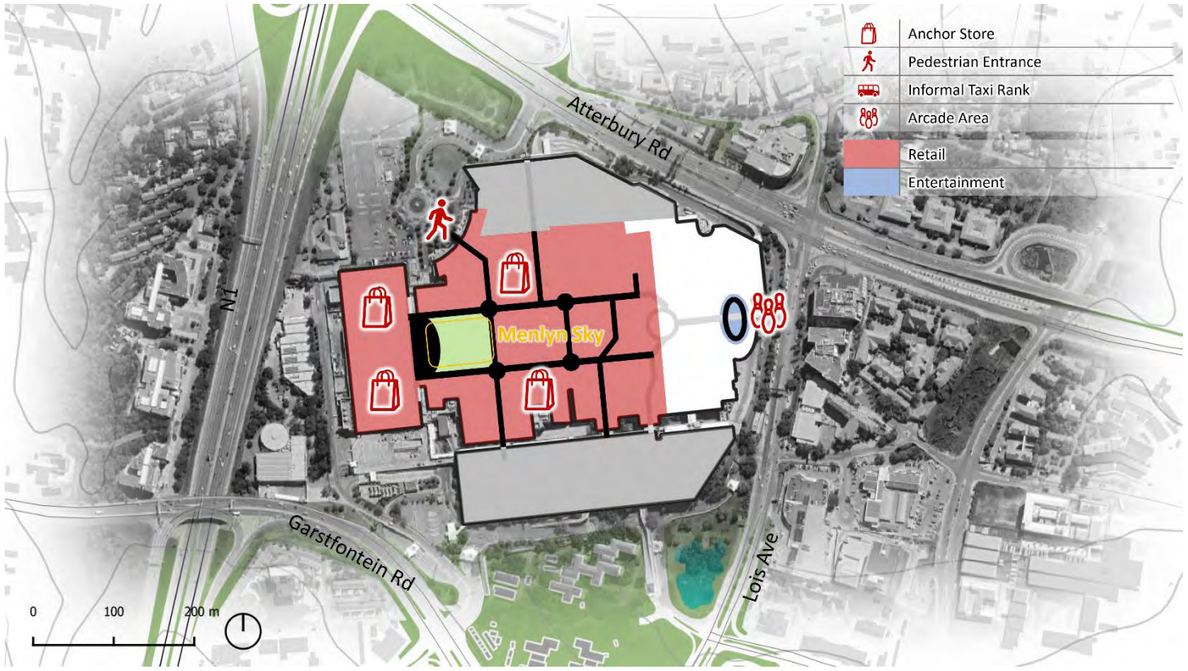


Figure 59: Lower First Level

Upper First Level

The upper first level occupies the eastern portion of the mall. This level mainly caters for the food court and the cinemas. A large glass wall forms the edge of the food court, and to some extent the edge of the Grand Hall. The window provides a view of the Lois Ave pedestrian entrance toward the east.

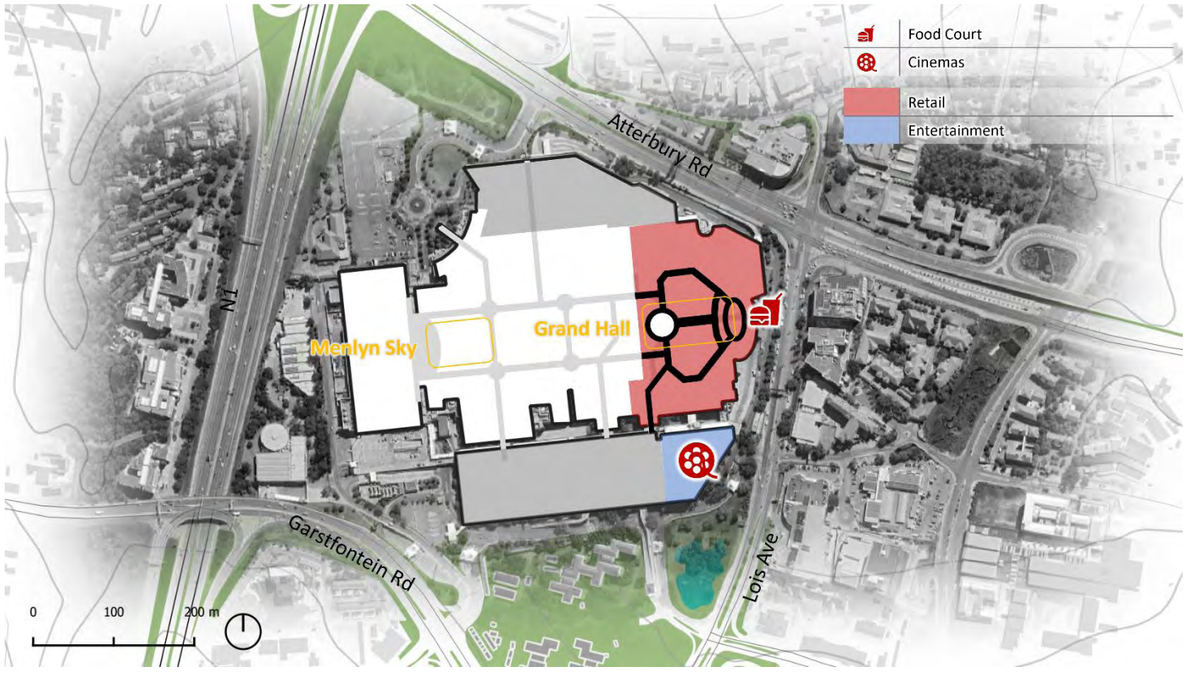


Figure 60: Upper First Level

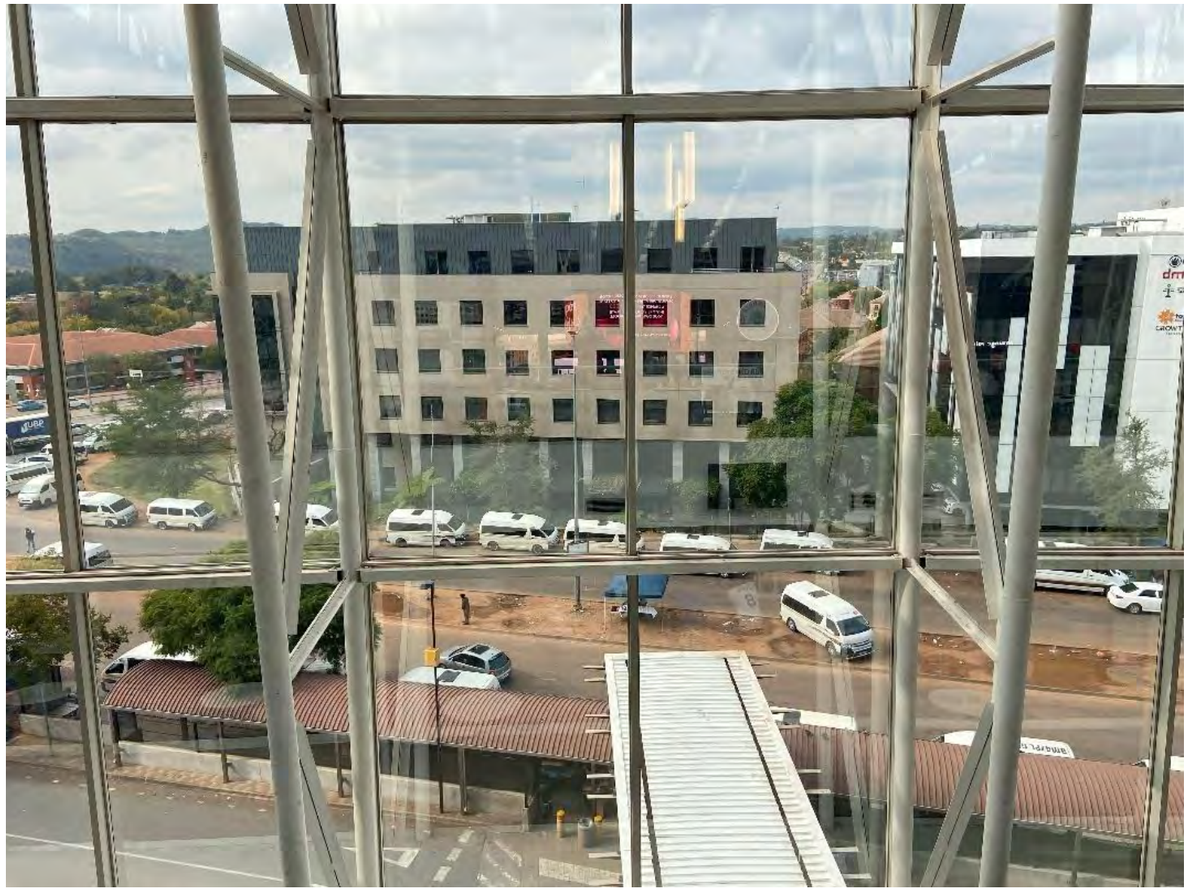


Figure 61: View from food court of Lois Avenue and Pedestrian Entrance

Roof Area

The roof area does not contain any uses aside from an action sports facility above the parking and cinema area. The Grand Hall is topped off with its iconic tent, enclosing the space from the outside. The Menlyn Sky area and the Grand Hall tent is visible from above.

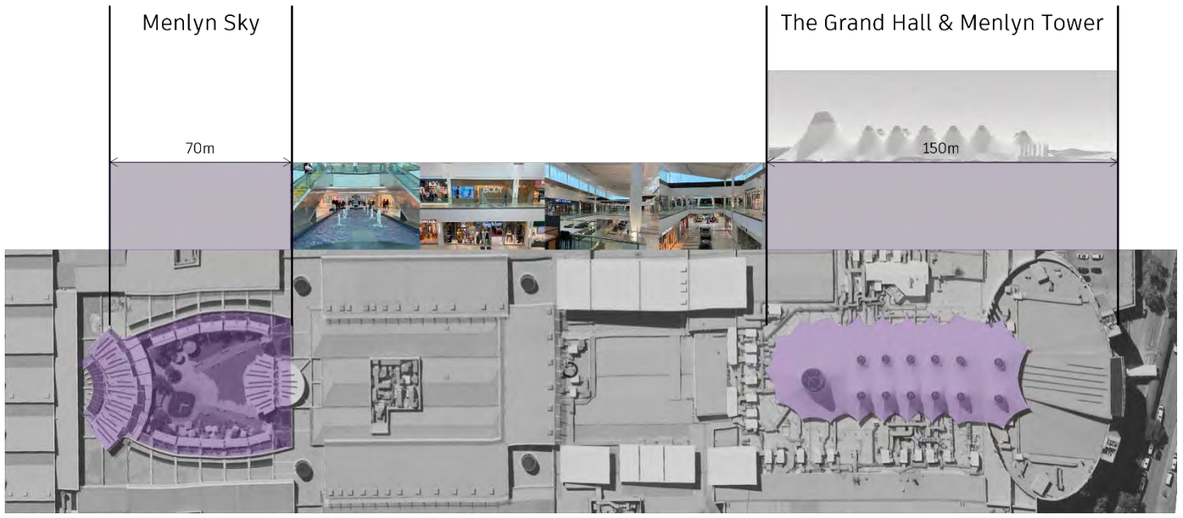


Figure 62: Menlyn Sky in the west (left) and the Grand Hall tent to the west (right) (Tshwane, 2018)



Figure 63: Tent covering the Grand Hall

Main Elements

The main elements of the mall can be summarised as:

- The west as the preferred grocery anchor store locations
- An axis from the northern pedestrian entrance towards the centre of the mall as a preferred clothing anchor store location
- The core of the artifact as a preferred anchor store location
- The eastern area as preferred locations for entertainment and food court

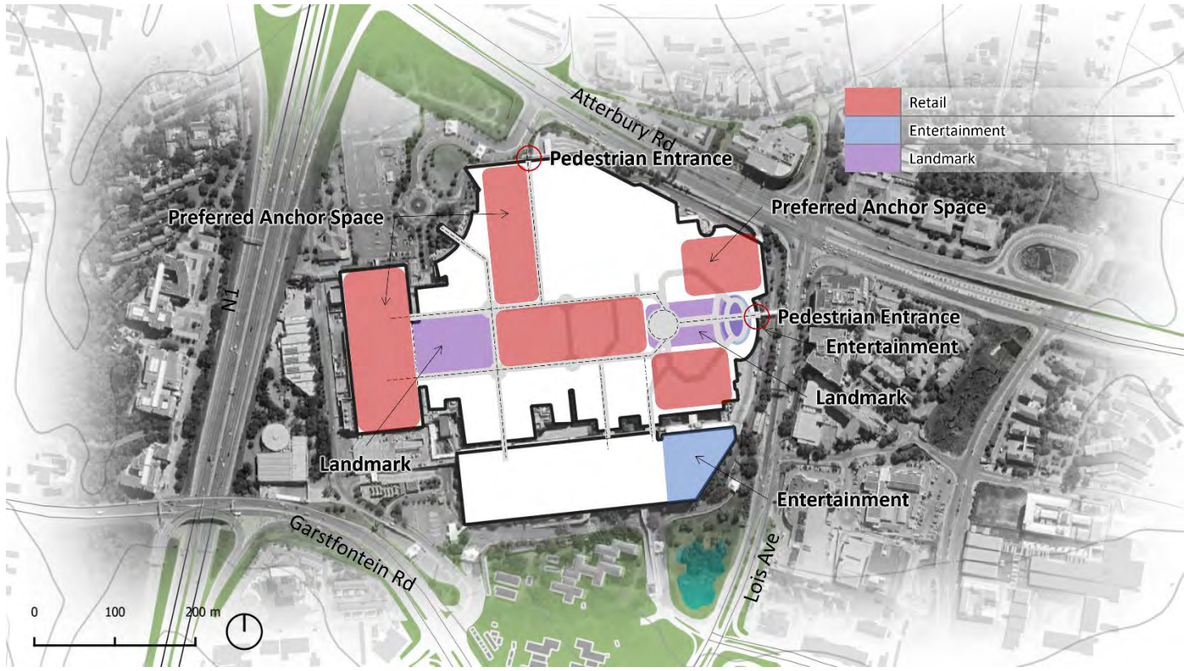


Figure 64: The Main Elements

5.4. The Landmarks

> "In Menlyn I've got to say, I think there are people who go in clean shaven but come out with very big beards several months later because they're still trying to find their car" (Wood, 2023).

Landmarks play an important role in wayfinding, it provides a sense of direction and location. In the case of Menlyn Park, the 'landmarks' are prominent features but are not visible throughout the mall. This section deals with the two main landmarks, the Grand Hall, including Menlyn Tower, and the Menlyn Sky.

The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower

The Grand Hall is a massive cavity within the Menlyn Park Shopping Mall, measuring almost 10m in width at its base and 20m on the top floor. The height of the cavity is more than 30m. The Grand Hall is lined with walkways and shops, with the central area providing space for escalators. The food court is the main focal point in the east with the Menlyn Tower being the main focal point in the west.

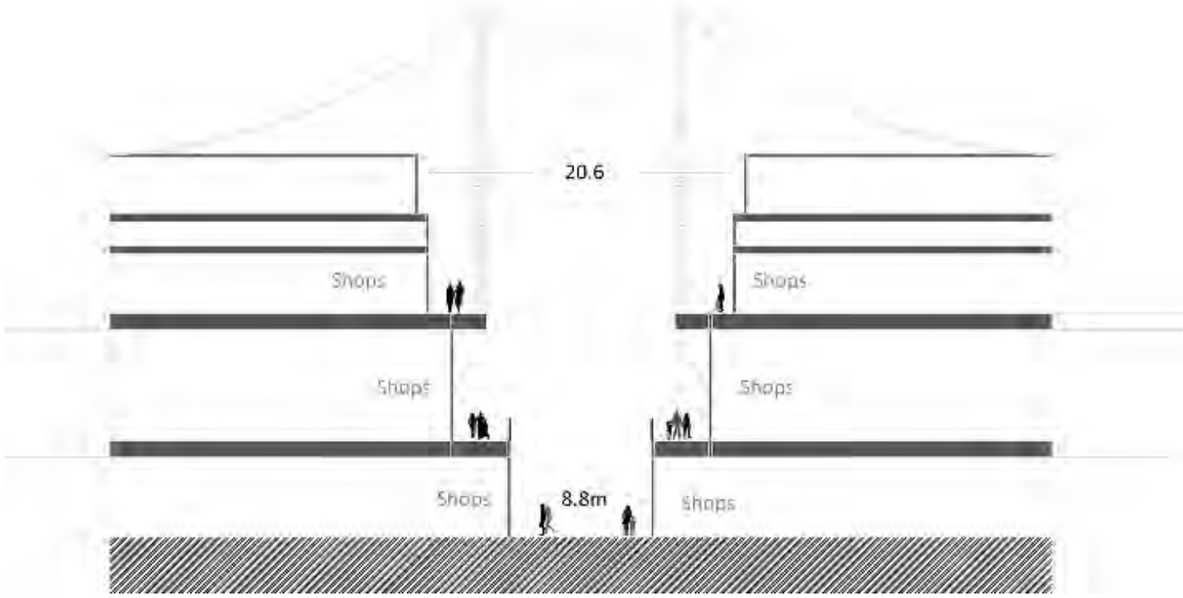


Figure 65: Typical Cross Section of the Grand Hall



Figure 66: The Grand Hall (looking west)



Figure 67: The Grand Hall (looking east)

Menlyn tower is a rough cylindrical structure approximately 20m high. The structure functions as an elevator shaft, transporting consumers between floors. The top of the structure is fitted with digital display panels showcasing new products and specials. Currently, it is an icon of consumerism.



Figure 68: The Grand Hall (Menlyn Tower)

Menlyn Sky

Menlyn Sky is an open area on the lower first level of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. The area is characterised by manicured artificial grass surfaces and paving and contains water features, a play park and a stage.



Figure 69: Menlyn Sky (stage area)

Various restaurants line the edge of Menlyn Sky, with seating available along the walkways.



Figure 70: Menlyn Sky – Restaurants and Playground

Although Menlyn Park Shopping Centre offers a range of ‘landmarks’, these are not real landmarks in the sense that they assist in wayfinding. The mall is strategically littered with intricate walkways for customers to get lost in, maximising store-front exposure.

Design Development

6. Design Development

The design development section focusses on a solution for the 'artifact', through the implementation of urban design principles derived from and related to the seven principles of Responsive Environments (Bentley, et al., 2005). A development vision is proposed which provides the 'ultimate goal' of the design, what it seeks to achieve. This is followed by the design principles which guides the design process and provides a framework in which further design development can occur.

The design approach is where the design principles are used to make the first design incision on to the artifact, creating the form and function that the vision intends to accomplish. The design approach is followed by an in-depth design guide guided by certain elements that should be respected.

6.1. Visioning

The Menlyn Agora, a vision for responsive urban environments.

In the heart of Pretoria east, the Menlyn Agora stands as a landmark of progress and social and economic integration. It has transformed from a shopping mall to an urban precinct redefining the urban landscape.

Imagine a dynamic urban hub that transcends its current form as a shopping destination. The Menlyn Agora aspires to be more than just a place to shop, it envisions itself as a vital metropolitan node, as expected by the City, becoming a bustling transport hub. A nexus of connectivity, where multiple modes of transport seamlessly converge offering local, regional and international mobility.

At the core of this vision lies permeability. The Menlyn Agora seeks to break down barriers, both physical and conceptual, to become a welcoming destination. It is a place where community thrives, where people of all walks of life converge to socialise, interact and connect.

The Menlyn Agora becomes a place to live and work. It aspires to be self-sufficient microcosm within the city, but still a part of it, seamlessly integrated. It is not an isolated urban island, instead it is a living, breathing part of its surroundings.

It has become a place where change is not only possible, but embraced, where the old and new coexists in perfect harmony.

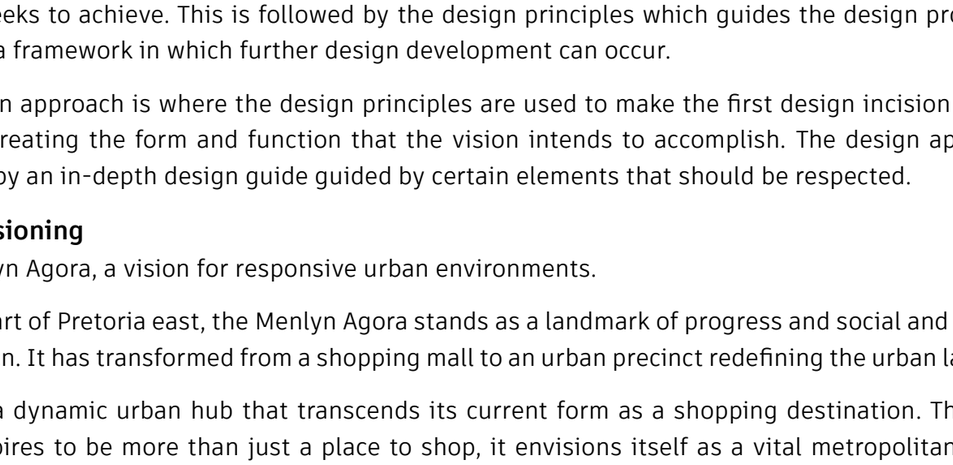


Figure 71: Change is Possible, a message from Menlyn Park Shopping Centre's parking pay-point

6.2. Design Principles

The design approach is based on five design principles which should ensure the successful transformation of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre from an introverted, isolated artifact into a well-integrated, accessible and inclusive urban environment. The five principles are:

1. Weathering
2. Amplifying Movement
3. Promoting Landmarks
4. Creating Place and Space
5. Providing Variety

Each principle is applied in the design approach, each having a direct link with one or more principles of Responsive Environments.

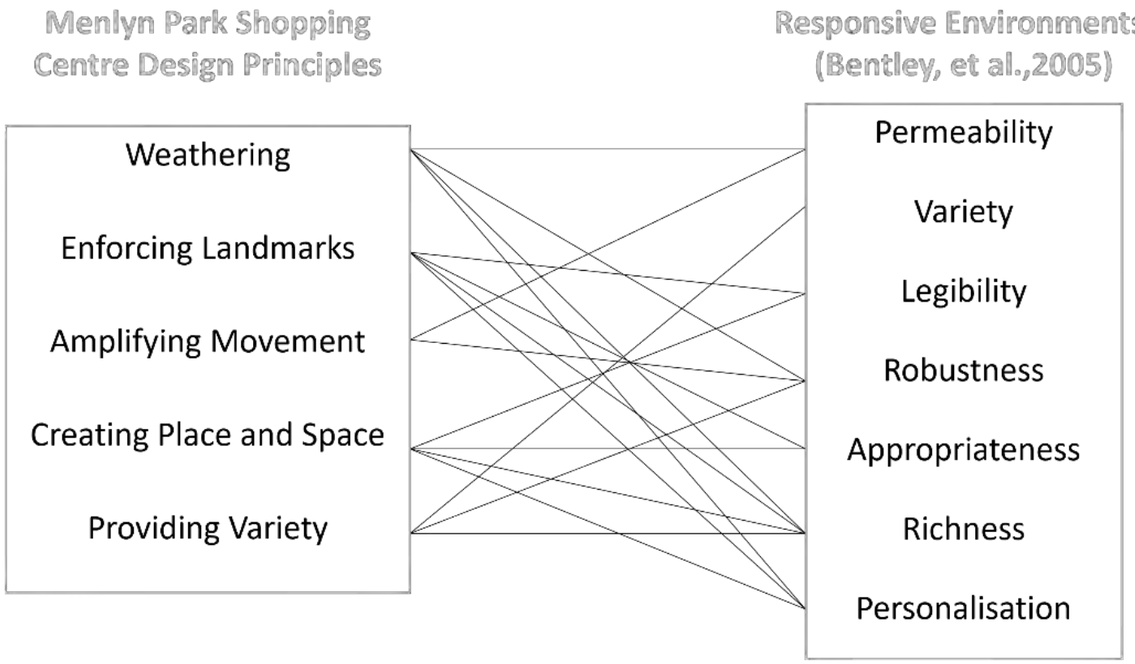
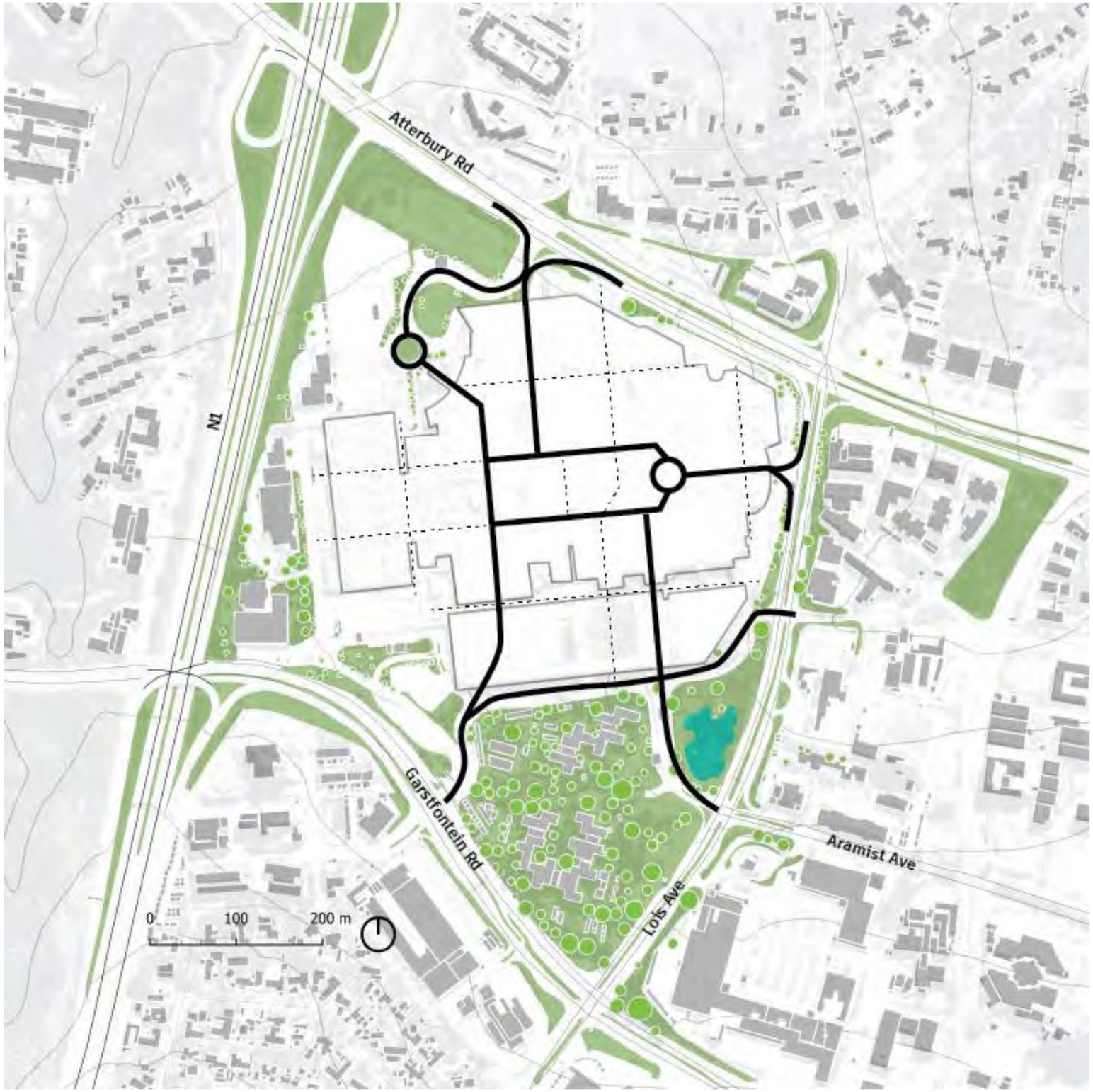


Figure 72: Interlinkages between the proposed design principles and the principles applicable to Responsive Environments

6.3. Design Approach

The five identified design principles are applied spatially in this section. The section is followed by a section addressing the specific design elements that should be considered.

Weathering



The concept of 'weathering' refers to the process of rocks being broken down into smaller pieces without changes their chemical integrity. As in the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, which has been identified as the artifact situated rock-solid in the centre of the ever-expanding Tshwane East, the logical approach would be to apply weathering essentially opening the artifact to the outside world, thus improving its permeability.

Permeability can be achieved by using the existing structure of movement networks, both internal and external, to connect to the surrounding urban fabric without compromising the existing integrity of the 'artifact'. A series of streets, that cater for both pedestrian and vehicular movements, are proposed along the main existing spines of the mall, creating a grid pattern. The proposed mixed-street grid will be complimented by a network of walkways increasing pedestrian friendliness and accessibility.

The entire proposed movement network will be open air, thus creating smaller development blocks based on the history of the mall.

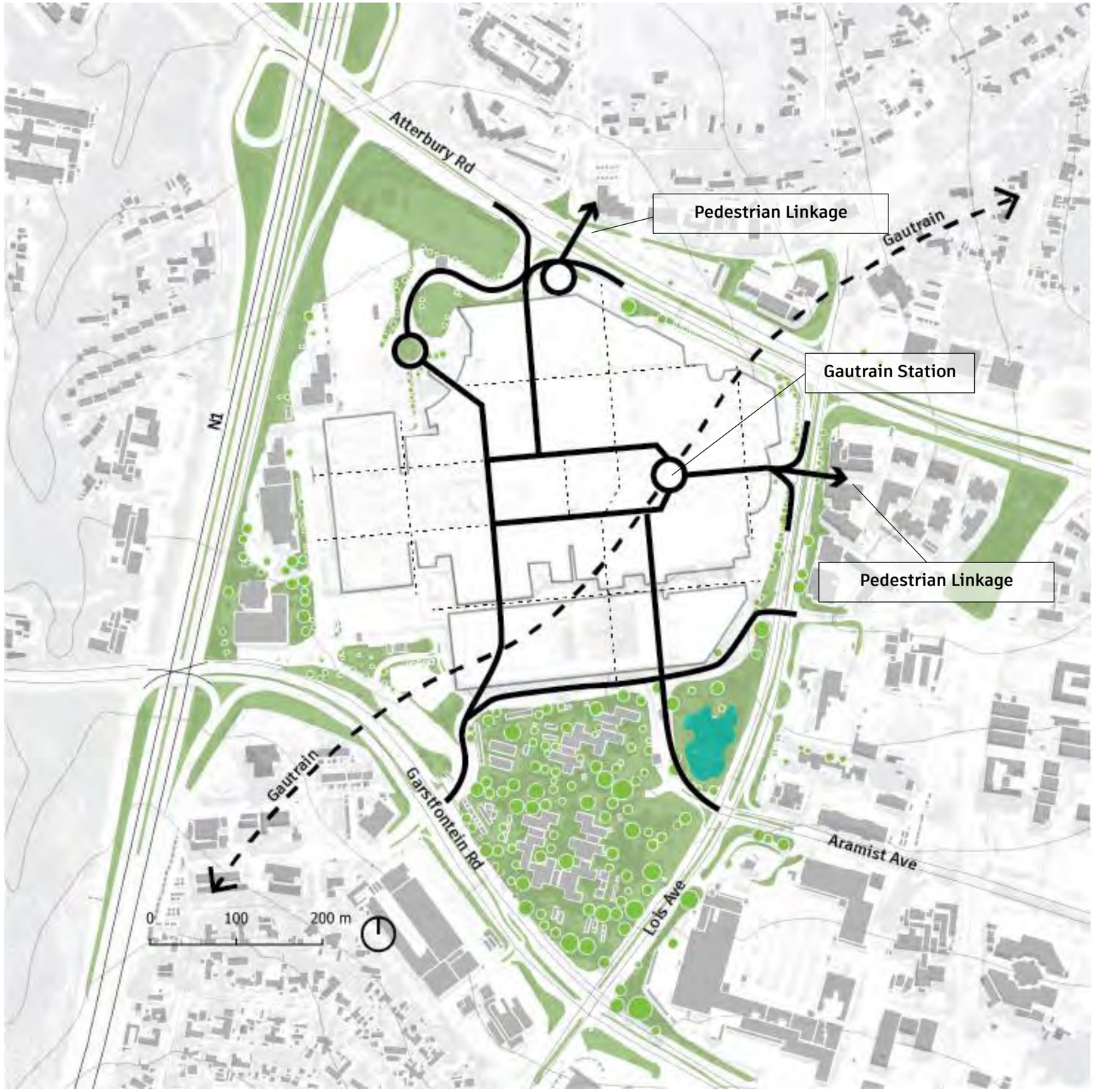
The higher order street network utilises the existing vehicular and pedestrian entrances, with a main east-west axis or Decumanus, originating from the Lois Ave entrance in the west and diverging into two separate streets where it meets the north-south axis, the Cardo.

The Cardo appropriates the existing vehicular and pedestrian entrance along Atterbury Road in the north and the vehicular entrance along Garstfontein Road in the south creating a linkage between the two. The Cardo diverges into two main streets from the north, the eastern street terminates at the northern street of the Decumanus, whilst the western stream terminates at Garstfontein Road.

A street is also proposed as a linkage and extension of Aramist Ave in the south east toward the southern street of the Decumanus. This linkage will encourage integration between the Menlyn Maine Development in the east and the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

The new street network creates the skeleton of the redevelopment, encouraging connectivity and integration to the outside world in terms of vehicular and pedestrian movement, thus linking directly to the principle of Permeability.

Amplifying Movement

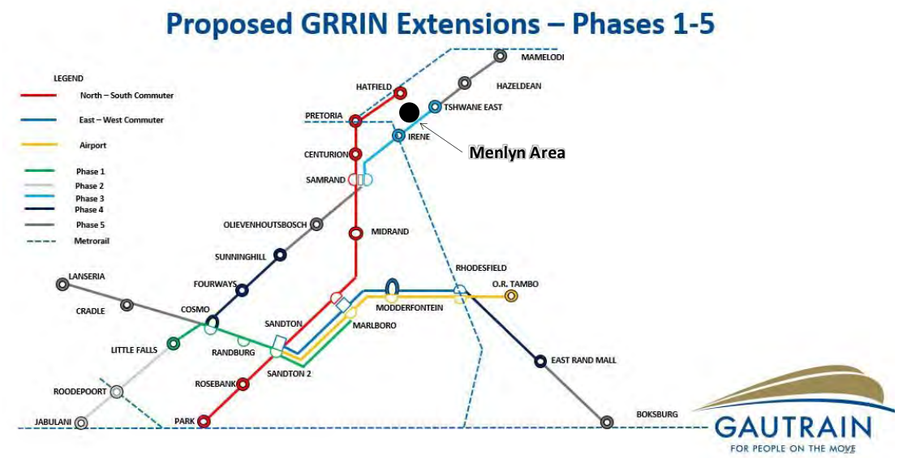


The main skeleton of the proposed redevelopment has been established on ground level, with the introduction of mixed-streets and walkways. External linkages are proposed to connect the new development to the office parks in the north (across Atterbury Road) and east (across Lois Avenue), these linkages will be pedestrian orientated and can be in the form of raised intersections or pedestrian bridges. The Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport has expressed interests in extending the existing Gautrain railway network toward the east of Tshwane, this has led to some preliminary planning initiatives which indicates a proposed route between Irene and 'Tshwane East'. The location of the 'Tshwane East' station has been up for debate during the past few years.

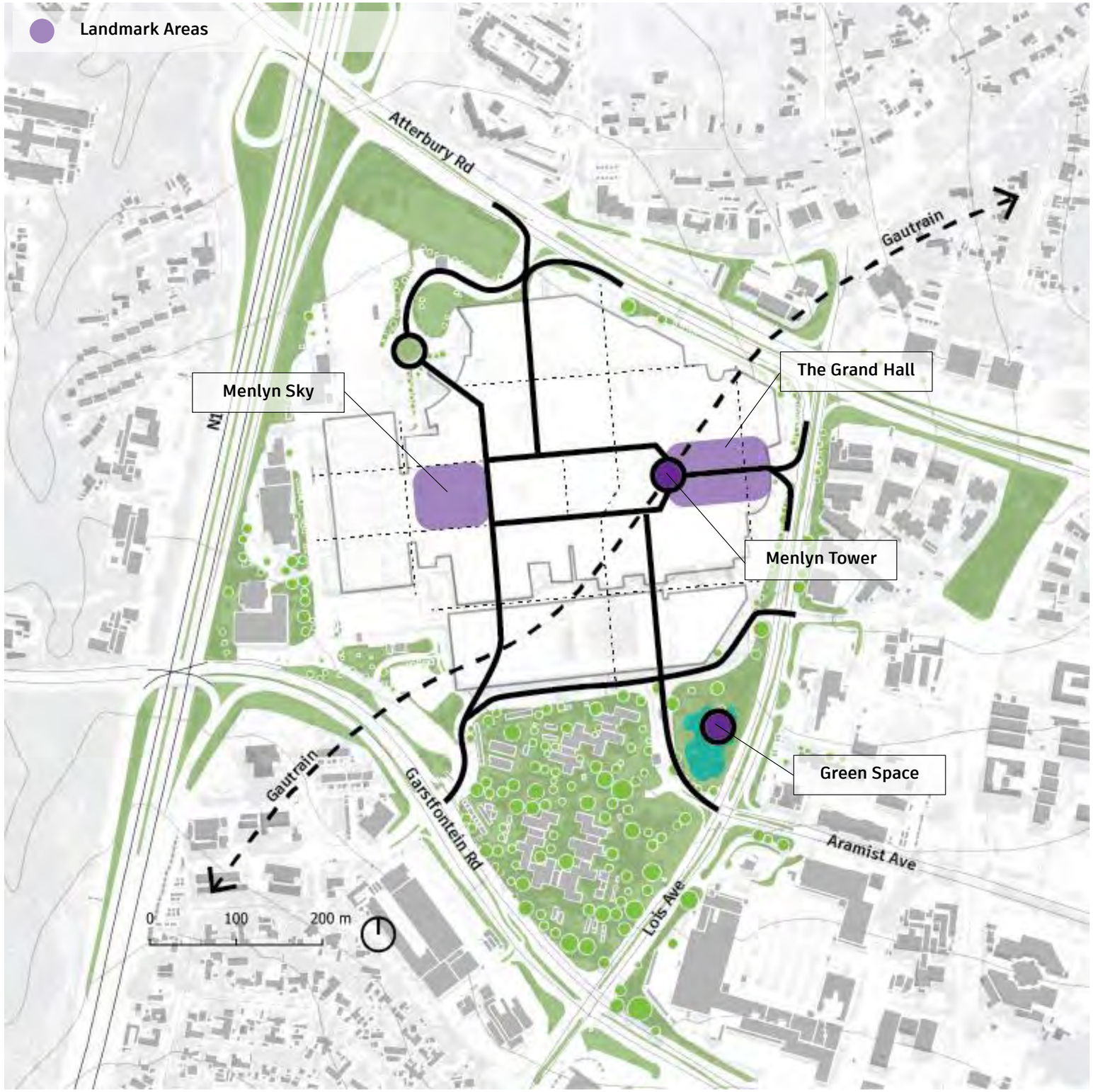
Taking into consideration that the Menlyn area is regarded as the second CBD of the Tshwane, and located in the east, it would be irrational not to include this node in the Gautrain route planning. Thus, this proposal proposes the incorporation of a Gautrain station, specifically located at the existing Menlyn Tower landmark.

It is proposed that the station be subterranean, in order to allow for other modes of public transport to operate on ground level. The Menlyn Tower landmark currently acts as a base for escalators and an elevator shaft for the mall, it is thus proposed that the Menlyn Tower becomes an icon of public transport, transporting people to the Gautrain station below and acting as a pivot point for other motorised public transport systems.

The introduction of the Gautrain railway system links directly to the principle of Robustness and Variety. The mall transforms from a retail and entertainment centre to a transport hub, servicing the whole of Tshwane East which should make it more resilient towards world events and shifts such as pandemics and e-commerce.



Promoting Landmarks



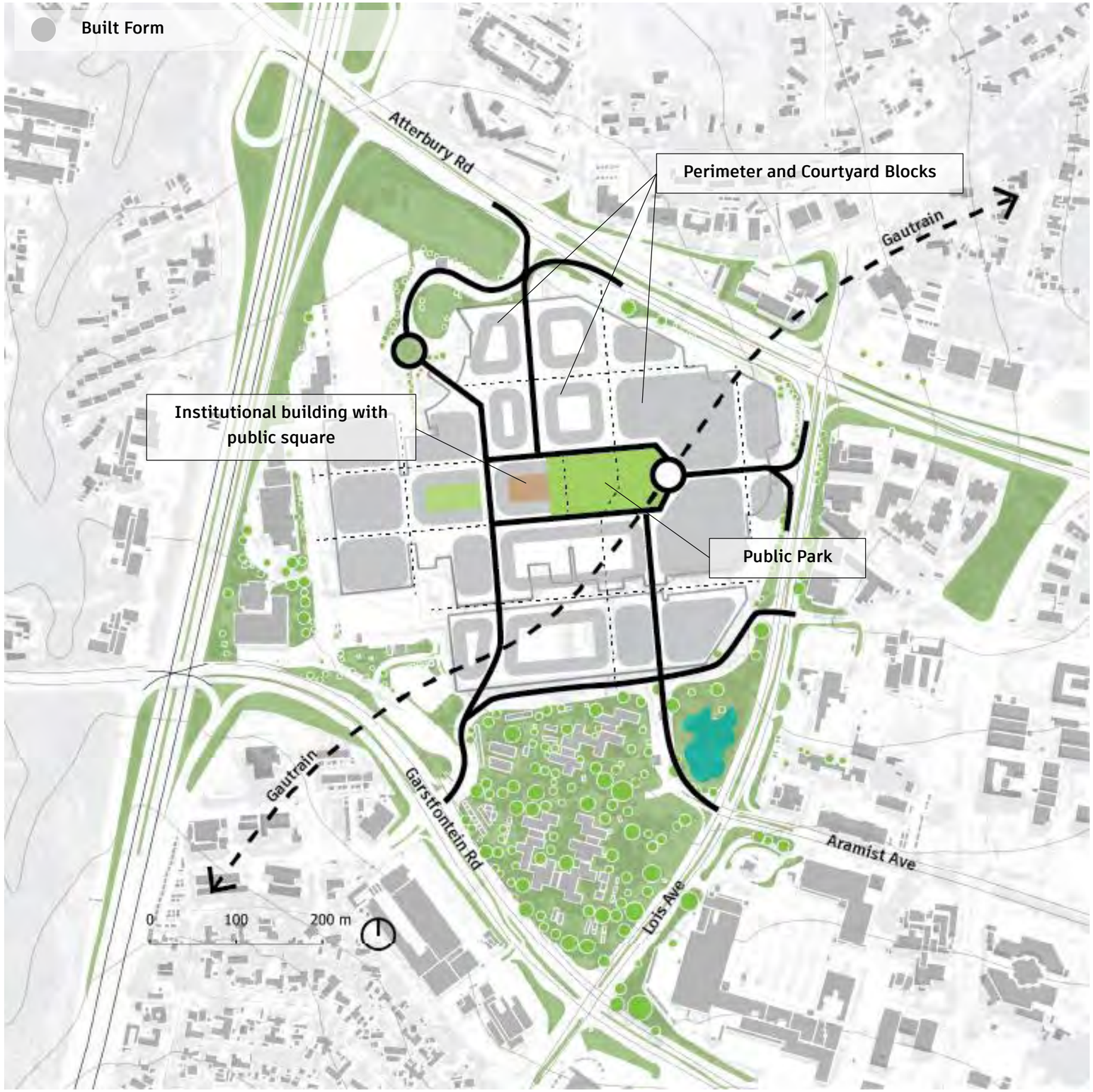
Currently, the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre does contain some noticeable landmarks. Firstly, the Great Hall, which is characterised by its sheer volume measuring on average 20m in width, 80m in length and 30-40m in height. This landmark is currently regarded as the central space of the mall, intersecting every floor and housing main uses such as the mall's food court and entertainment centre. This landmark also contains the second landmark, the Menlyn Tower.

With reference to the previous section, the Menlyn Tower currently acts as a base for escalators and a shaft for elevators, commuting shoppers to their next retail destination. Furthermore, the tower contains a massive digital screen, used to display various advertisement content. It is proposed that this iconic tower be preserved as a pivot point for public transport, by using the existing elevator shaft to transport users vertically underground to the proposed Gautrain station. The existing digital displays can be used to display travel information such as arrival and departure times. This pivot point will also cater for mini-bus taxis and the BRT bus system, integrating them into the development, rather than banishing them to the edges.

The fourth landmark is the Menlyn Sky area. The Menlyn Sky area is an attempt to imitate public space through the provision of artificial and imitation greenery. The space is located on the upper floor of the mall, enclosed by restaurants and shops. The space caters for a children's play area, water feature and a stage. Considering that this space is not on ground level, and may not be accessible to the general public, it can still be regarded as a major landmark and a structing element to some extent.

The fifth landmark to explore is the green space to the southeast of the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. This area is well maintained but lacks any integration to its surroundings. The area forms part of a larger historic green network that has been degraded through development. The proposed integration of this space is two-fold. Firstly, the space should not merely be seen as a 'protected green space', but should be fully integrated into the surrounding urban fabric. Secondly, it is essential that the space becomes an integral component of the existing natural green network. This integration is anticipated to initiate the development of an interconnected walkway system within the immediate vicinity, connecting various uses.

Two areas are identified as Gateway landmarks. Both areas will consist of high rise buildings, the northern landmark will be limited to a number of floors in order to allow natural light to penetrate the development, with the southern landmark dominating the skyline.



The introduction of built form essentially creates the platform for place and space, knitting together the skeleton of main streets and walkways with landmarks.

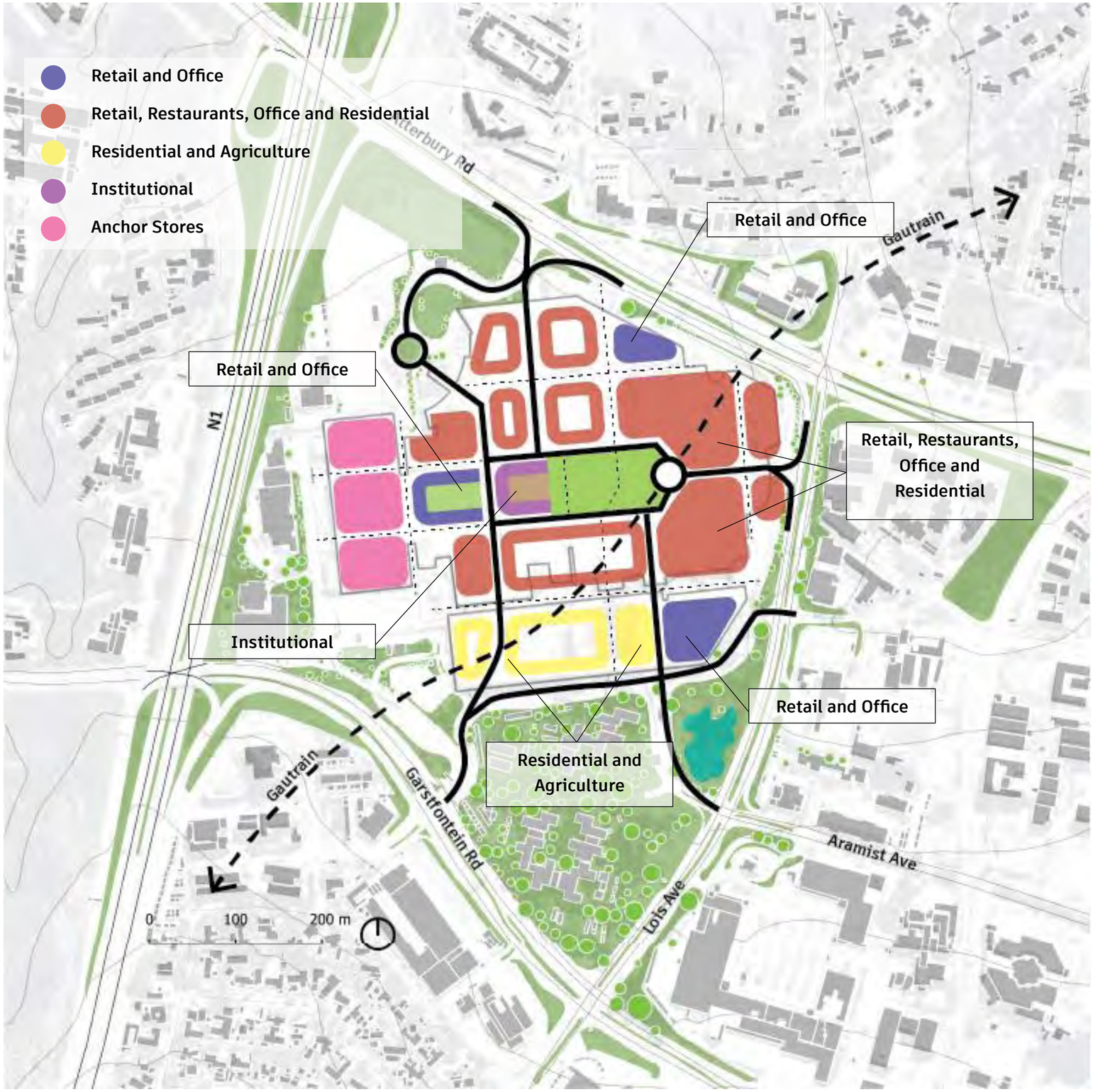
The proposed built form consists of a mixture between perimeter blocks and courtyard blocks, meant to define the newly proposed street network enhancing the exterior environment, but also allows for an inward facing space which could be regarded as more private.

A large public park is proposed west of the current Menlyn Tower, creating a central space for gathering and relaxation. This park will be lined with trees and furniture, and well maintained.

To the east of the central park area, a public square is proposed. This public square should be paved and of a high quality. The building encompassing the square is proposed to be of an institutional nature, housing facilities such as the home affairs office, banks, SASSA pay points etc. The square could be used by citizens to gather and express themselves; it should be regarded as fully public.

The overall proposed built form is based on the existing building footprint, preserving the memory of the artifact but enhancing place and space.

Providing Variety



The principle of variety is applied, linking to the Responsive Environments principles of Variety, Robustness and Richness. The proposed development is aimed at promoting a mix of uses, both vertically and horizontally. This mix of land and building use will ensure that the space becomes a 24-hour space rather than the 9-hour space it currently is.

The two newly proposed landmarks, the high-rise buildings, are designated as vertical mixed-use buildings, with active ground floor edges consisting of retail and restaurant space with office space on the upper floors. This “use” designation also applies to the building that houses the current landmark Menlyn Sky.

As mentioned previously, an institutional building is proposed in the centre of the development acting as a magnet inviting users inside the development. This building also provides the edges for the proposed hardscaped space.

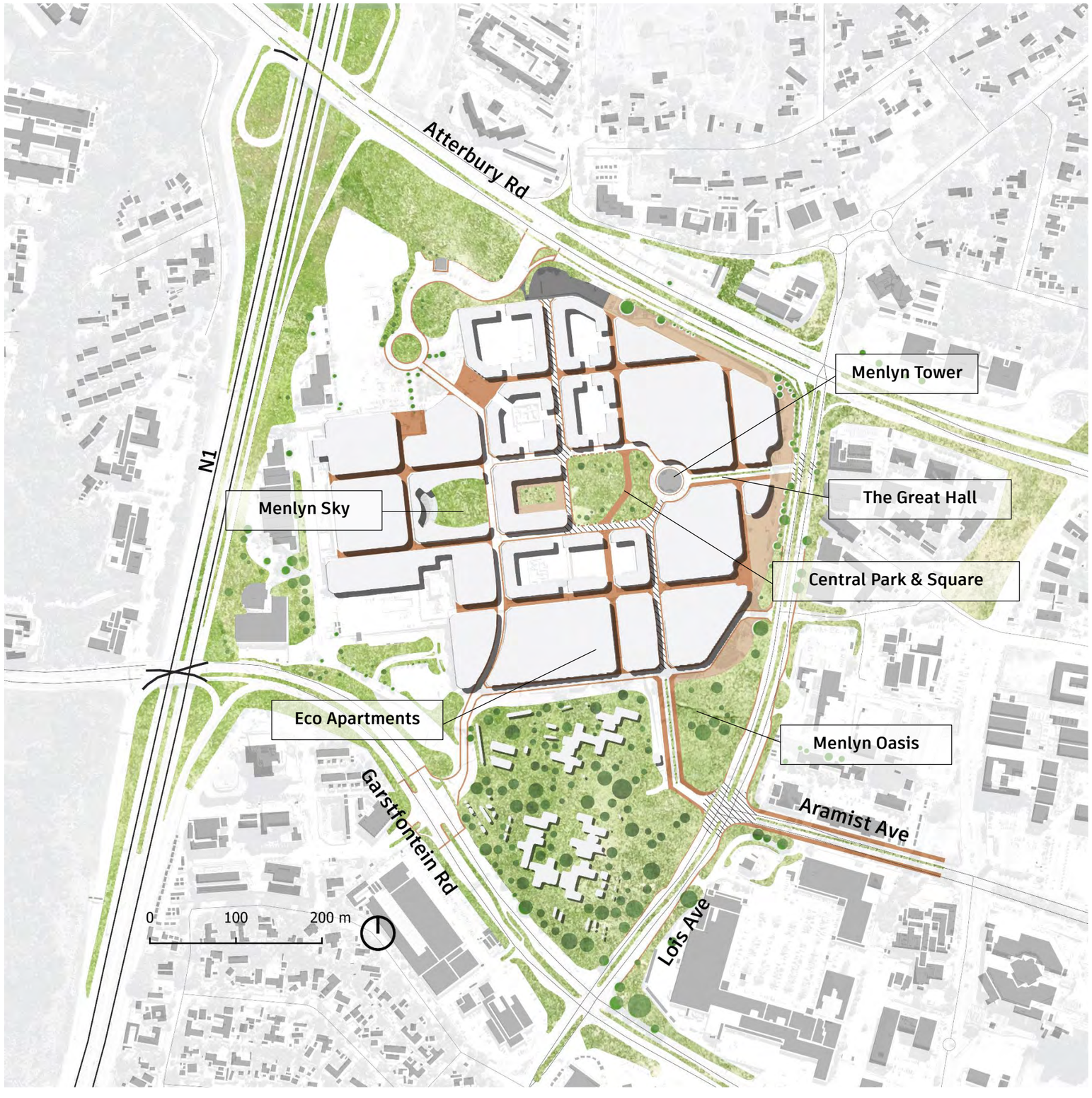
The network of buildings abutting the Decumanus, are designated as vertical mixed-use buildings accommodating retail and restaurants on ground floor, office space in the middle floors and residential on the upper floors.

The existing anchor stores to the west of the development, should be preserved. This preservation will ensure movement throughout the development.

The southern portion of the development which is currently a parking garage, is proposed to be redeveloped as a residential building. The redevelopment will consist of adding three to four stories to the existing structure complimented with an urban agriculture component on the roof.

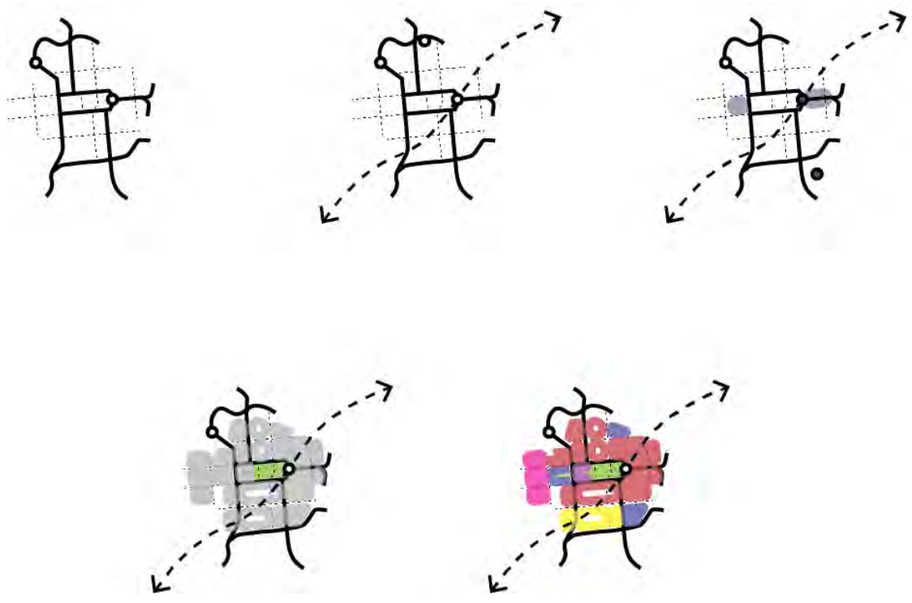
All buildings accommodating residential uses, will have a component dedicated to social housing, as large portions of the site falls within a Restructuring Zone.

Overall Design Concept



The overall design concept for Menlyn Park Shopping Centre attempts to satisfy all the principles associated with Responsive Urban Environments.

Permeability is addressed through weathering and providing outward linkages, the enforcement of landmarks and the creation of place and space supports the principles of legibility and personalisation, the introduction of a mixed building use and transport system addressed the principle of variety and richness, by weathering and creating a finer urban grain the artifact becomes visually appropriate steering away from being the urban white elephant.



7. Design Elements

The ‘mall’ has been broken, and the artifact shattered into human scale fragments. The skeleton of The Menlyn Agora has been created. The overall design concept discussed in the previous section provides a birds-eye perspective of the design rationale imposed on the mall, highlighting the main movement structure, built form and land uses. However, a successful design should delve deeper into the urban elements that complement the skeleton, creating a space where customers can become citizens, where they can live, work and play. Thus, this section addresses the detailed design elements, and how they interact with each other to truly create a responsive urban environment.

The design elements form the basis of detailed design guidelines, to ensure the successful development of a responsive environment. Each element is linked to the principles of responsive environments, showcasing their relevance and demonstrating how they play a vital role in shaping and enhancing the overall responsiveness of the environment.

The elements discussed are the pedestrian walkways, the street network, landmarks, edges, land uses, open spaces, and regional connectivity.

7.1. Pedestrian orientated Walkways

People first.

The design principle of weathering inevitably creates a more permeable environment, empowering the pedestrian through the creation of smaller blocks to penetrate and a larger canvas for edges.

The first of three levels of pedestrian walkways that are proposed within The Menlyn Agora, is the pedestrian exclusive walkway network. This network traverses the entire urban fabric of The Agora, linking the taxi rank along Atterbury Road in the north to the Eco Apartments in the south, Lois Avenue in the east to the anchor stores to the west. The network forms an overall grid pattern ensuring pedestrian connectivity.

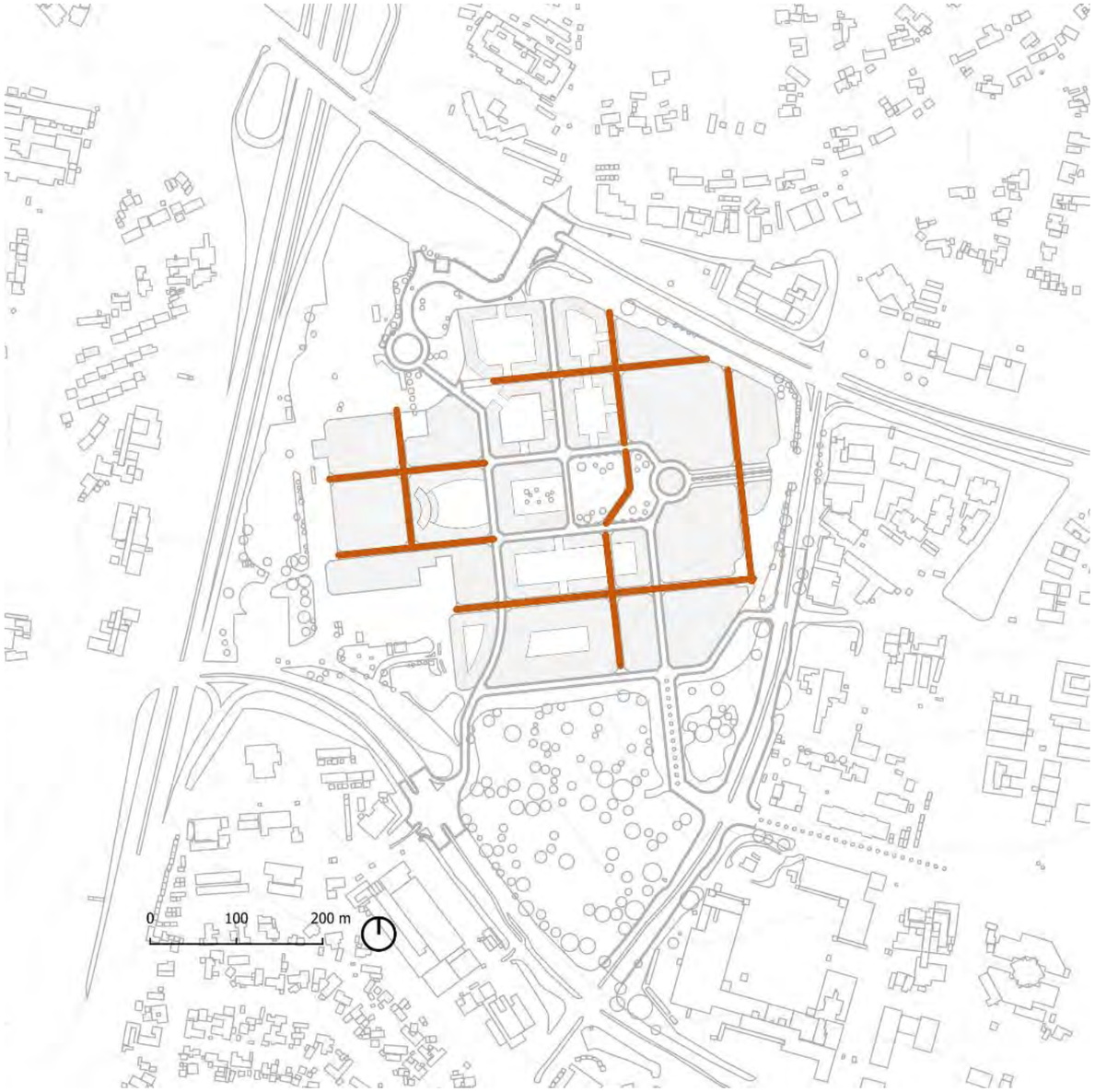


Figure 73: First level of pedestrian orientated walkways

Walkability does not merely refer to walking distances, but also to the condition of the walking environment, the experience, and the infrastructure thereof. The first level of pedestrian walkways will consist of the following essentials:

- High quality paving.
- Street furniture, which include benches, bicycle racks, dustbins, lighting and greenery.
- Adequate public lighting
- Raised and controlled intersections with vehicular roads
- Areas of shelter against elements

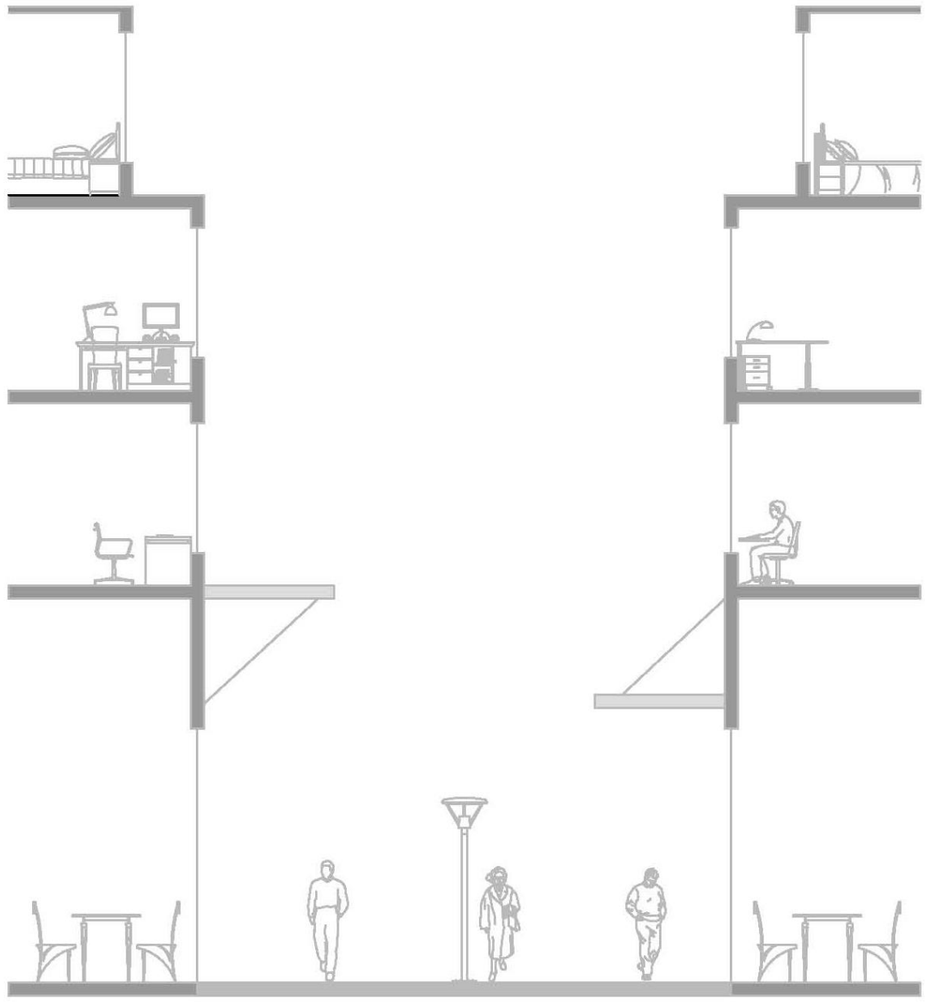


Figure 74: Typical section of first level pedestrian walkways

The second level of pedestrian orientated walkways is shared with the newly introduced vehicular street network. This network accommodates both pedestrians and motorised vehicles. This network is regarded as pedestrian a pedestrian movement network, and merely accommodates motorised vehicles. The network ideally accommodates services such as e-haling and metered taxis. The network forms a linkage between the Eco Apartments, Menlyn Tower and the taxi rank along Atterbury Road.



Figure 75: Second level of pedestrian orientated walkways

The second level of the pedestrian orientated walkways will consist of:

- A surface that is pedestrian friendly and deters speeding motorised vehicles.
- Well-lit with street furniture along edges.
- Integrated sidewalk and road surface, with no ledges.
- Awnings to provide some protection against the elements.

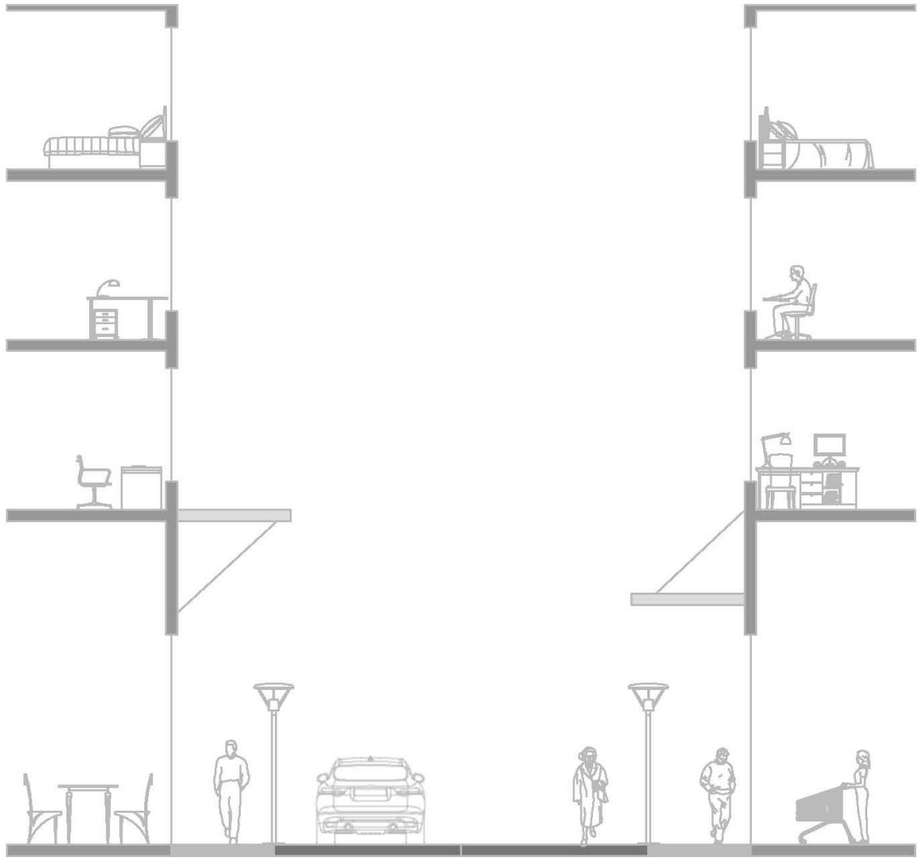


Figure 76: Typical section of second level pedestrian walkways

The third level pedestrian walkway network can be considered as a traditional sidewalk, thus is discussed in the next section.

7.2. Street Network

The overall design concept proposes a new mixed street network running through the artifact, the design intention of this network is to support motorised public transport and some private vehicles. The road surface (motorised vehicles) should be wide enough to accommodate minibus taxis and metropolitan bus services. However, the road will consist of single driving lanes separated by a median to deter speeding and ad-hoc stop and go's. All intersections with level one and two pedestrian networks shall be raised and textured.

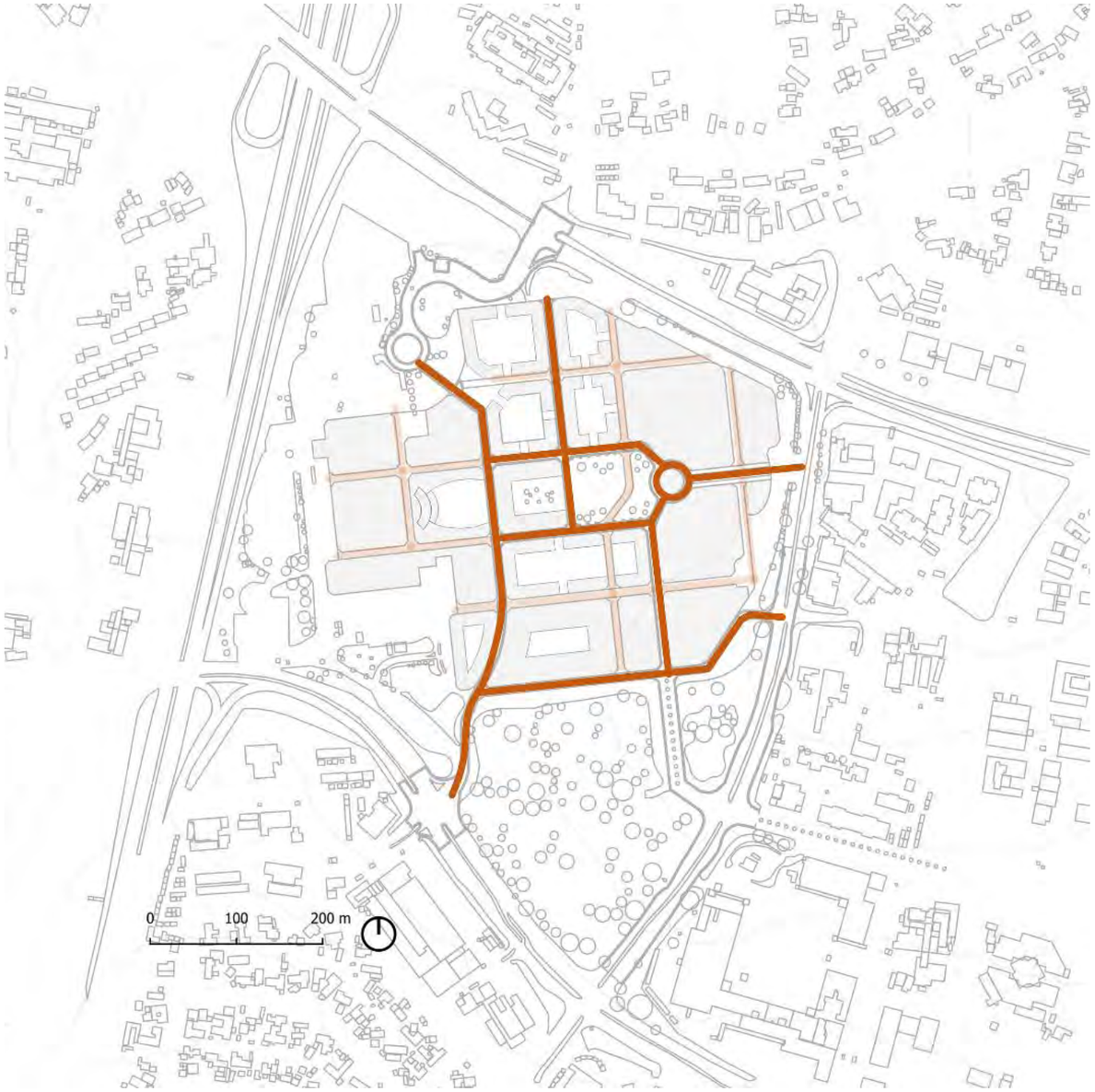


Figure 77:Road network and third level of pedestrian walkways

The road network and pedestrian walkways will consist of:

- Indented buildings to maximise the pedestrian walkway surface and to provide some protection against the elements
- Well-lit walkways and roadways
- Street furniture for pedestrians
- A green median with trees to provide shading
- Raised pedestrian intersections

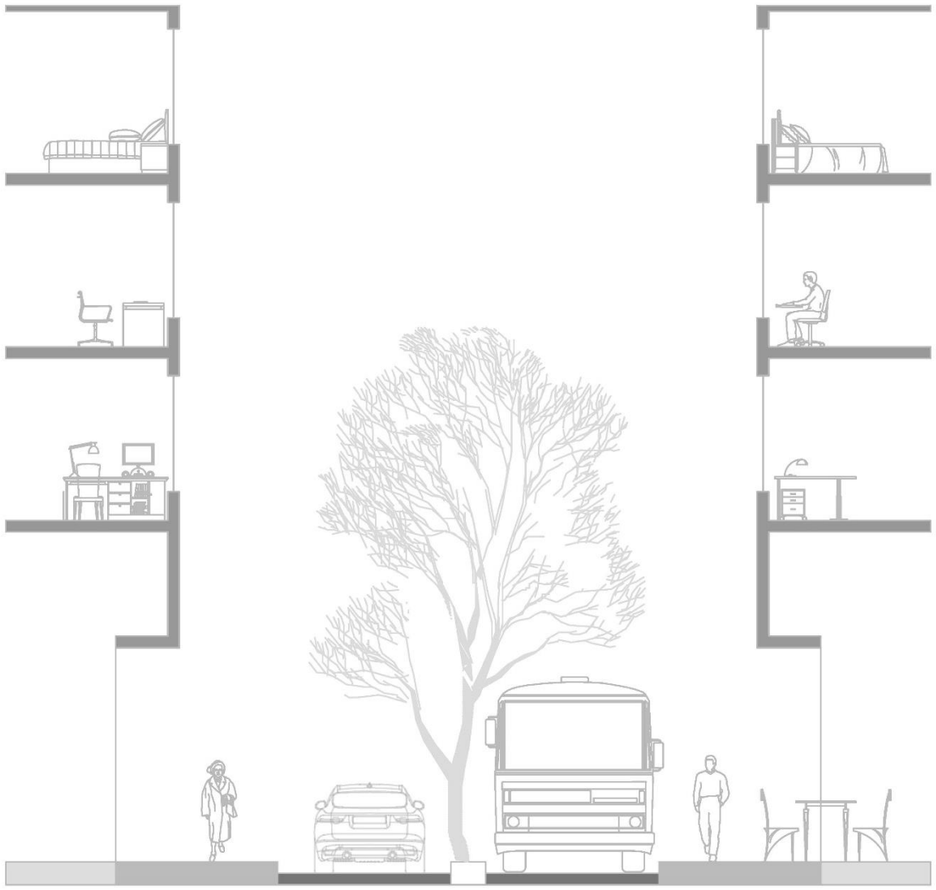


Figure 78: Typical section of road network and third level pedestrian walkways

7.3. Landmarks

The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower

The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower, both existing landmarks in the Menlyn Park Shopping Centre should be kept as such in the Menlyn Agora.

The Great Hall will be transformed into an open air area, accommodating uses such as informal trade and retail on ground level, retail on the second level, offices on the third level and residential on the upper floors. The existing mall walkways will be retained forming a series of 'skybridges' between the buildings.

The Menlyn Tower, once a symbol of consumerism, transporting customers between floors and advertising the latest tech products, will now be an icon of public transport. The existing elevator shafts will be used to transport citizens from the ground floor used by traditional motorised public transport to the subterrain Gautrain station. The digital display panels will provide a timetable for bus and train schedules, informing commuters.

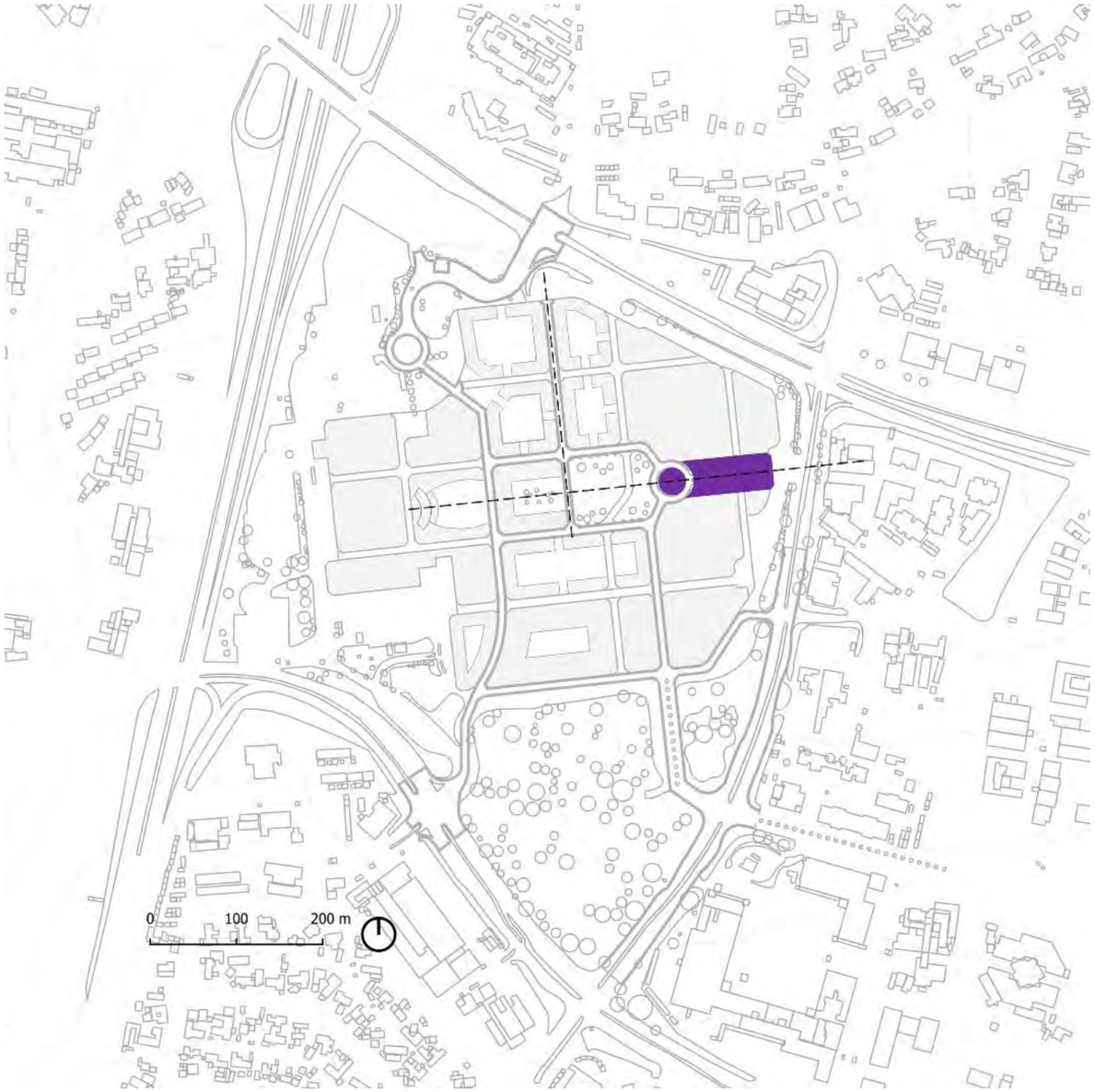


Figure 79: The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower

The Grand Hall will consist of:

- Integration of formal and informal trade on ground level, with space available for pop-up stores
- Adequate public lighting
- High quality textured paving for pedestrian walkways
- Median separating driving lanes with a tree line
- Additional walkways based on the existing mall walkways, on the second and third floors

The Menlyn Tower will consist of:

- A central point for public transport, above and below ground
- Escalators transporting citizen to the subterranean Gautrain station
- Digital display boards showing transport timetables

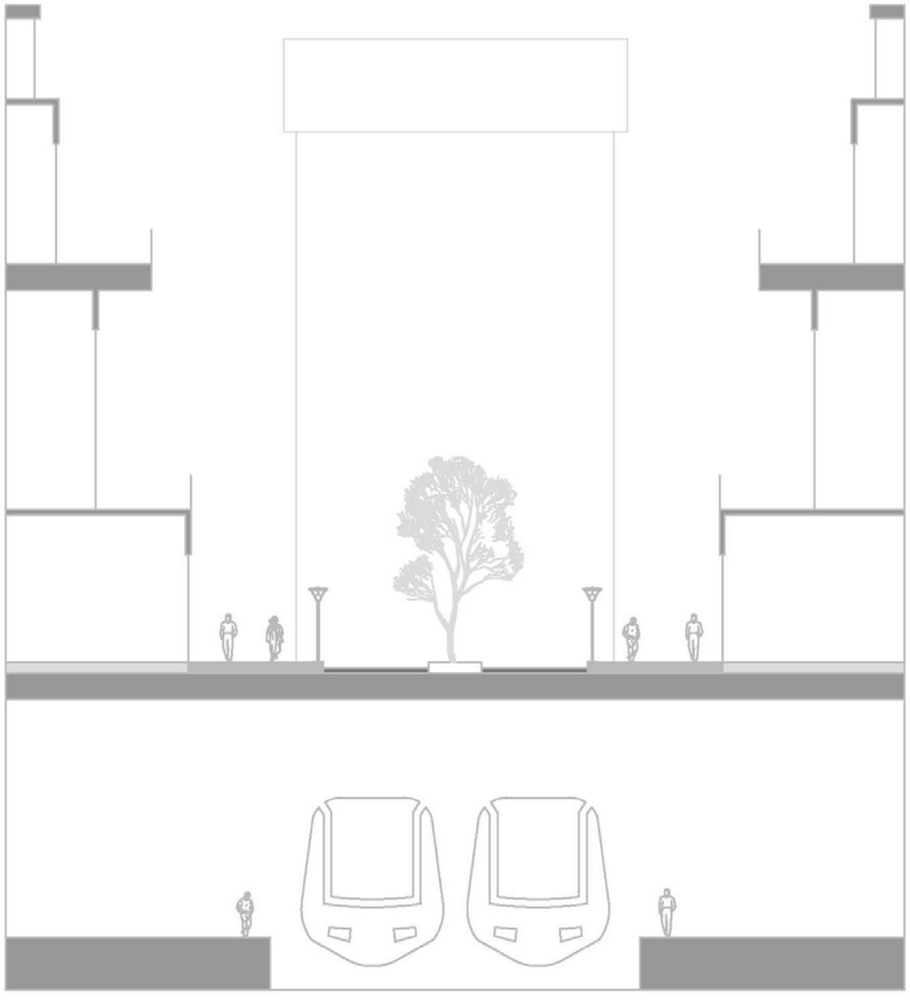


Figure 80: Section of the Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower with subterranean Gautrain station

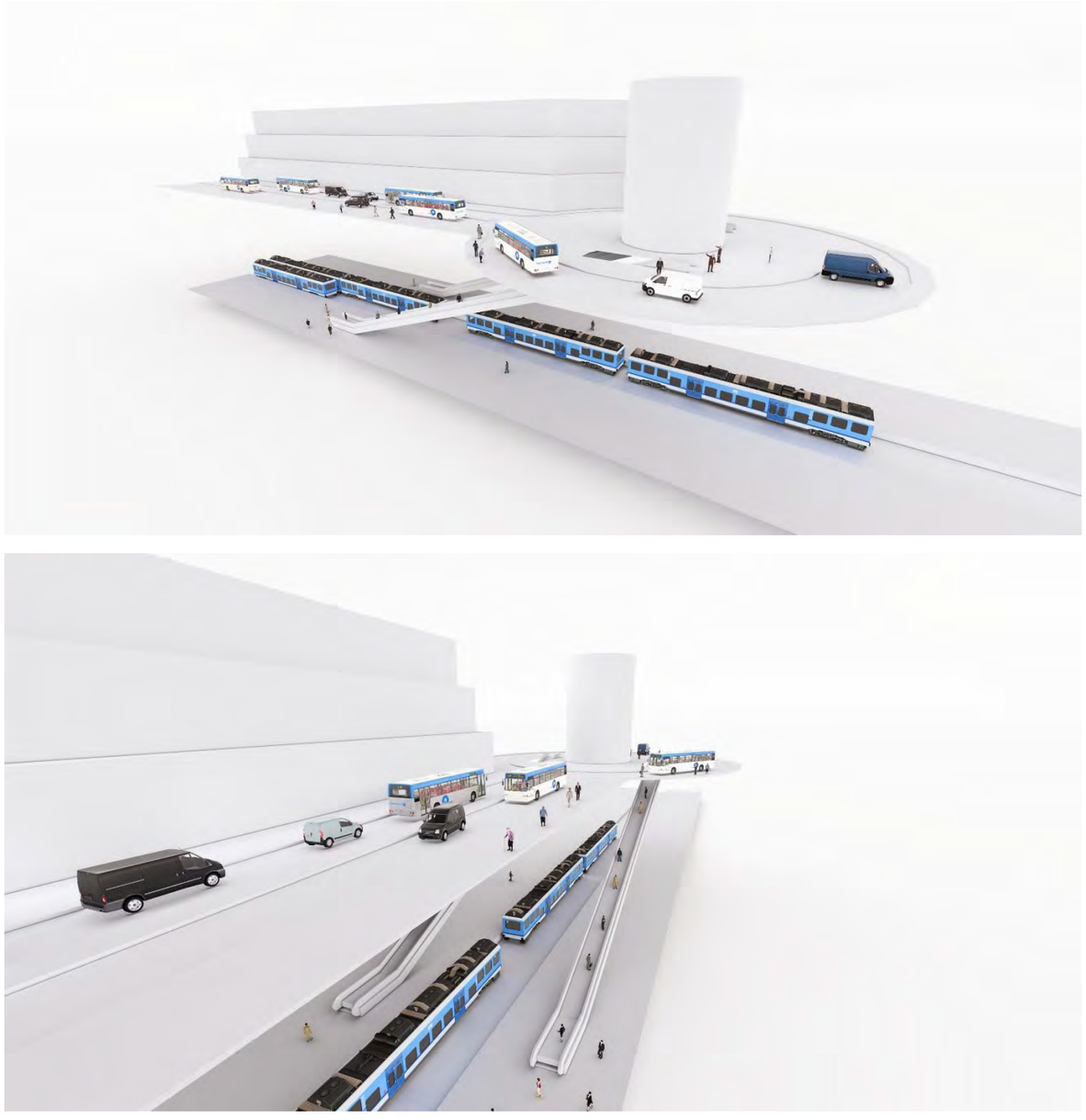


Figure 81: 3D Illustrations of the Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower

The Menlyn Tower has become the pivot point of public transport and vertical integration. The road surface on ground level caters for pedestrians, trade (both formal and informal), motorised transport, BRT systems and mini-bus taxis, the Tower transports commuters and users to the subterranean level where the Gautrain will station and line can transport people locally, regionally and internationally (OR Tambo and Park Stations).

Public Park and Square

Taking into consideration that the Menlyn Agora will be the second order metropolitan node after the CBD, a symbolic substantial green park is proposed. This park will be approximately 7 000m^2 which may seem excessive, however this is only slightly larger than some of the existing anchor stores in Menlyn Park Shopping Centre.

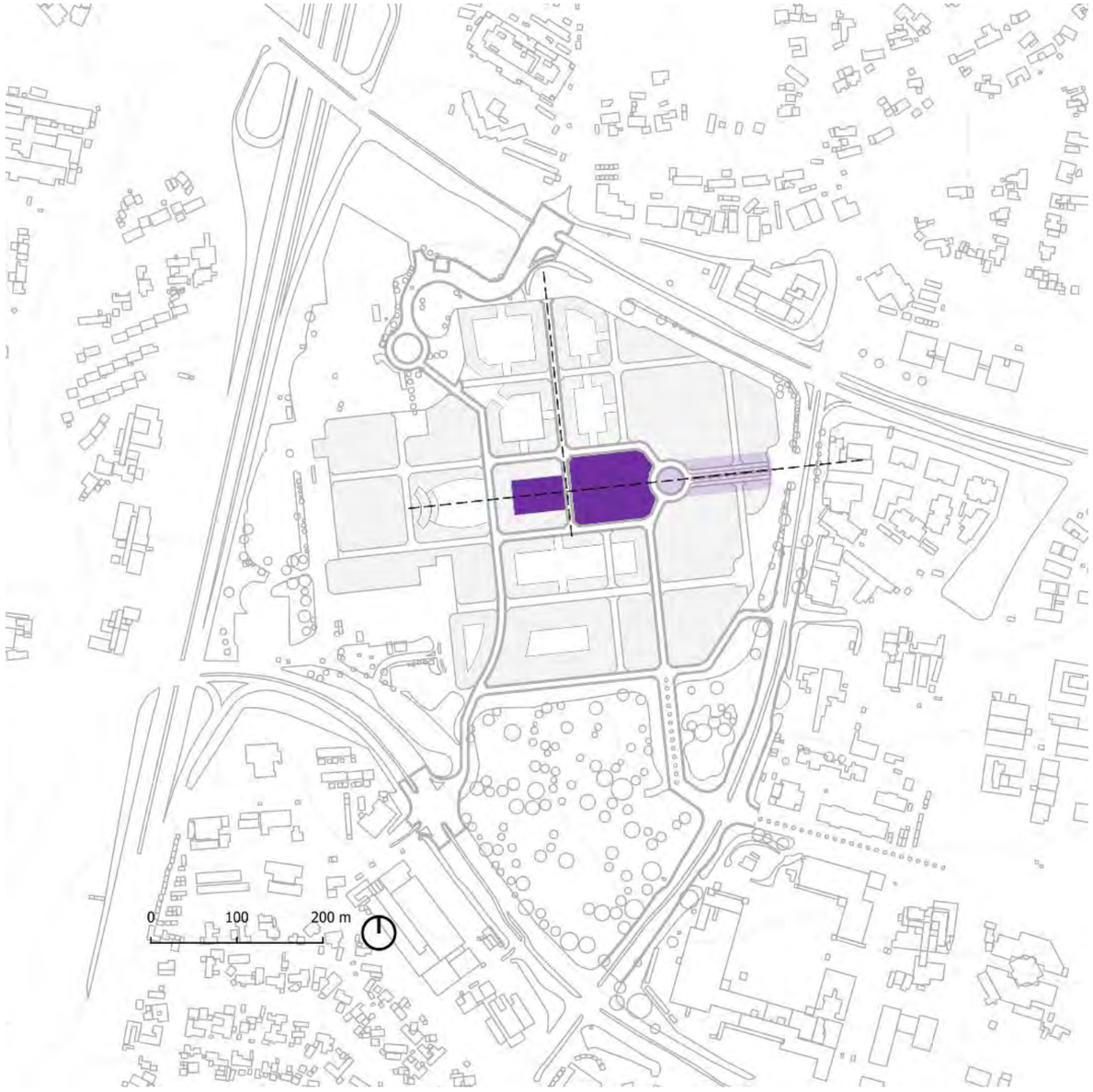


Figure 82: The Public Park and Square

The park will have the following features:

- Tree lines following the proposed cross-walkways
- Interactive furniture such as playgrounds, wayfinding boards and water features
- Dedicated space for informal trading and pop-up stalls
- A surface that allows visual and physical integration with the public square
- Full access to the public

The public square will be:

- A symbol of the transformation from ‘customers to citizens’
- Fully accessible to the public
- A place to gather, express and interact
- High quality hard surface with central green space

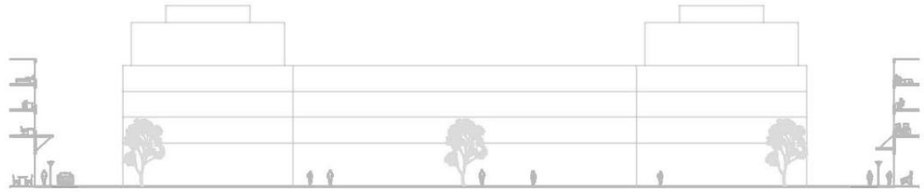


Figure 83: Section looking toward the west, Institutional building in background

Menlyn Sky

Menlyn Sky, similar to the Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower, is an existing landmark of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. In the Menlyn Agora, Menlyn Sky will be open towards the eastern side of the development, providing a clear line of sight of the public square, the public park and the Menlyn Tower. This space will act as a rooftop venue for concerts, lectures and seating for abutting restaurants.

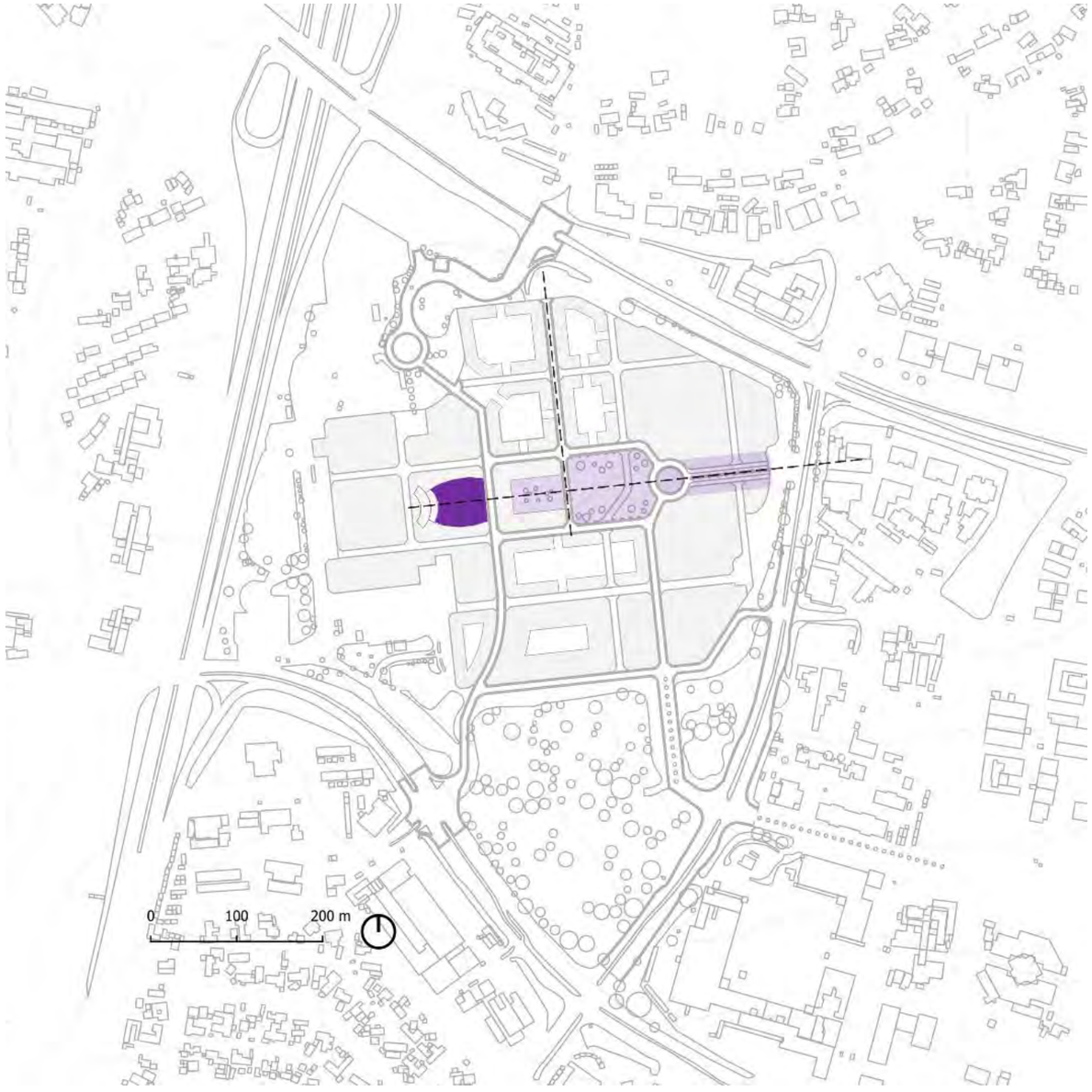


Figure 84: Menlyn Sky

The Menlyn Sky will consist of:

- A natural environment, steering away from artificial greenery
- A stage area fit for concerts and lectures
- A clear view line to the Menlyn Tower
- Restaurants lining the edges, similar to what is presently happening

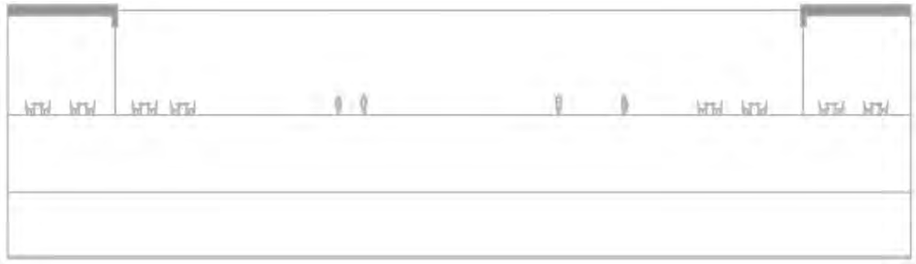


Figure 85: Section of Menlyn Sky

7.4. Edges

Unlike the blank interface created with a wall of parking, the edges of the Menlyn Agora will be an active and inviting space, moving away from a continuous dead edge to a fragmented, organic and active space.

The two major edges are along Atterbury Road and Lois Avenue both of which are major connector routes which is predominantly car-orientated with road reserves of 50m. The Menlyn Agora takes advantage of these massive road reserves, transforming them into spaces suited for pedestrians, restaurants, café's, trade, taxi pick-up/drop-off and lastly, cars.

This section deals with a typical cross section along any of the connector routes surrounding the site, and how they respond to the surrounding existing urban fabric.

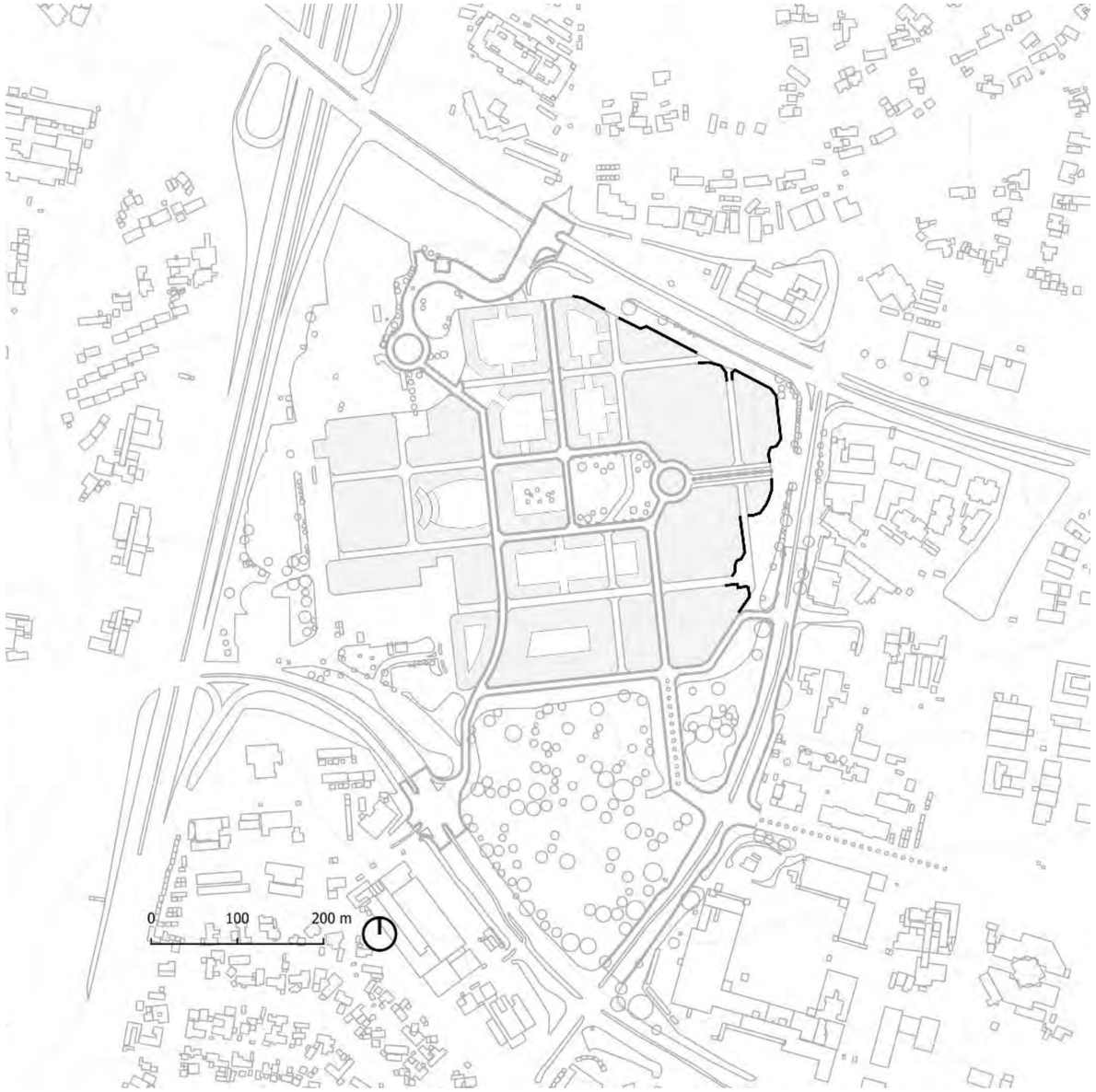


Figure 86: Relevant Edges

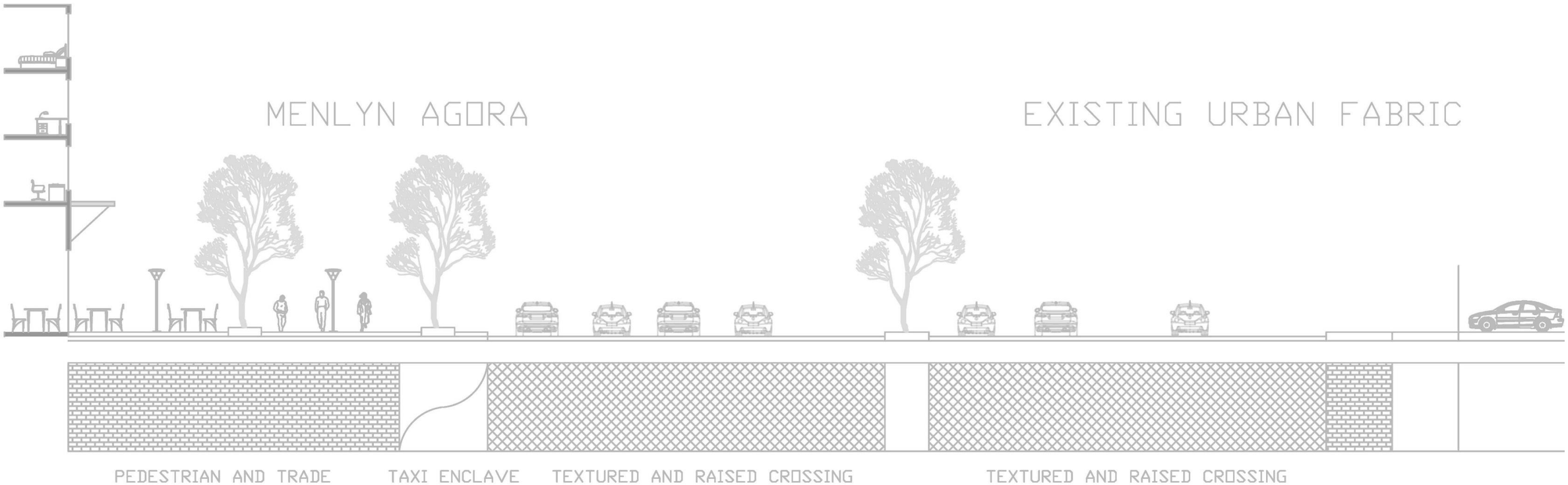


Figure 87: Typical section along Atterbury Road and Lois venue in the Menlyn Agora

Since the Menlyn Agora seeks to integrate into the surrounding urban fabric and maximise accessibility, the edge conditions respond appropriately by taking advantage of the existing road and associated reserve. The building-use along the outer edge of the Menlyn Agora consists of retail, restaurants and cafés on ground level activating the edge and ensuring continuous activity throughout the day. The proposed 'pedestrian and trade' area is designed to allow for restaurant and café spill-over, informal and popup trade, pedestrian walkways, street furniture including signage, lighting and green areas. Sections along the 'pedestrian and trade' area will have special enclaves aimed at efficient minibus taxi and e-haling pickup/drop-off facilities. Textured and raised surfaces that span the entire road surface are proposed at signalised intersections along the edge, slowing down vehicular traffic and increasing pedestrian safety. A green median is proposed in the centre of the road surface, which should be wide enough to act as a 'safe haven' for pedestrians crossing the connector routes.

The existing urban fabric opposite the Menlyn Agora, is characterised by similar edge conditions of the current Menlyn Park Shopping Centre. The implementation of formal pedestrian crossings, active edges and appropriate public transport facilities may motivate and inspire surrounding developments to follow due course.

8. Discussion

This section discusses how the final design of the Menlyn Agora has achieved its objects and how it satisfies the research questions by becoming a more responsive urban environment. Each element of responsive environments is discussed briefly.

Permeability

The first design principle of 'weathering' essentially takes the existing artifact and breaks it down into more manageable and human scale urban blocks. This fragmentation allows for more access points along the current dead edges increasing the permeability and accessibility. The newly cracked edges are aimed at pedestrian, rather than motorised vehicle accessibility – streets merely accommodate cars but are not necessarily designed for them. The proposed street network also provides the opportunity to integrate into the surrounding urban fabric by creating linkages between the Menlyn Agora and surrounding commercial activities, this design may entice other surrounding developers to follow suit satisfying the element of 'permeability' on an urban and regional scale.

Variety

The design principles of 'amplifying movement' and 'providing variety' address the element of 'variety'. The principle of 'amplifying movement' introduces an integrated public transport network that incorporate busses, e-haling services and mini-bus taxis on ground level which is vertically integrated with a subterranean rail network. Unlocking the area as a regional transport hub introduces variety, steering away from the current monofunctional shopping centre model. A variety of building and land uses are offered through the design element of 'providing variety', with specific focus on residential. The introduction of residential, offices and restaurants in the Menlyn Agora ensures that the urban space functions 24 hours a day rather than the traditional 8 to 10 hours of retail.

Legibility

Again, the design principle of weathering applies to the element of 'legibility'. The creation of more manageable human scaled urban blocks provides the opportunity for individual designers and developers to create unique buildings and spaces for citizens to use. The space has transformed from being a monotonous sterilised retail environment, to several unique places offering variety. Finally, by promoting landmarks a sense of identity and belonging is created, adding to the Menlyn Agora's legibility.

Robustness

With recent world events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of the element 'robustness' have become apparent. Robustness ties in with the element of 'variety' and the principle of 'permeability', in the case of the Menlyn Agora the introduction of variety lessens the reliance on a single use, but rather enables the space to function in different sectors. Together with variety, the principle of 'permeability' physically breaks the artifact into more manageable spaces and buildings, which enables smaller portions of the urban fabric to be isolated in the case of an event or disaster.

Visual Appropriateness

The current situation observed is a massive urban artifact placed within a fine urban grain, dominating two major intersections with little visual appeal to the outside world. However, the Menlyn Agora provides multiple canvases through the principle of 'weathering', for unique and appropriate architecture and design, as well as creating a more appropriate finer urban grain.

Richness

The element of 'richness' can be seen as a mixture of 'variety', 'robustness' and 'visual appropriateness' in the context of the Menlyn Agora. The mix of uniquely designed buildings with different uses, based on the original memory of the shopping centre creates a space that is aesthetically appealing and engaging in contrast to the current environment that serves the single purpose of maximising profits.

Personalisation

The implementation of the listed elements, results in a space that is truly designed by people, for people. The common goal of maximising profits may have been dampened, by creating spaces within the space, with various nooks and crannies where creativity and personalisation can be expressed and appreciated.

Although various design approaches can be followed to transform shopping centres into more interactive and inclusive spaces, the lens of responsive environments acts as an all-encompassing strategy to cover most of the principles relating to the creation of a successful and sustainable urban place. As evident in the design of the Menlyn Agora, each element of responsive environments link and ties in with the next, creating a stable base for a design approach for a site of this nature.

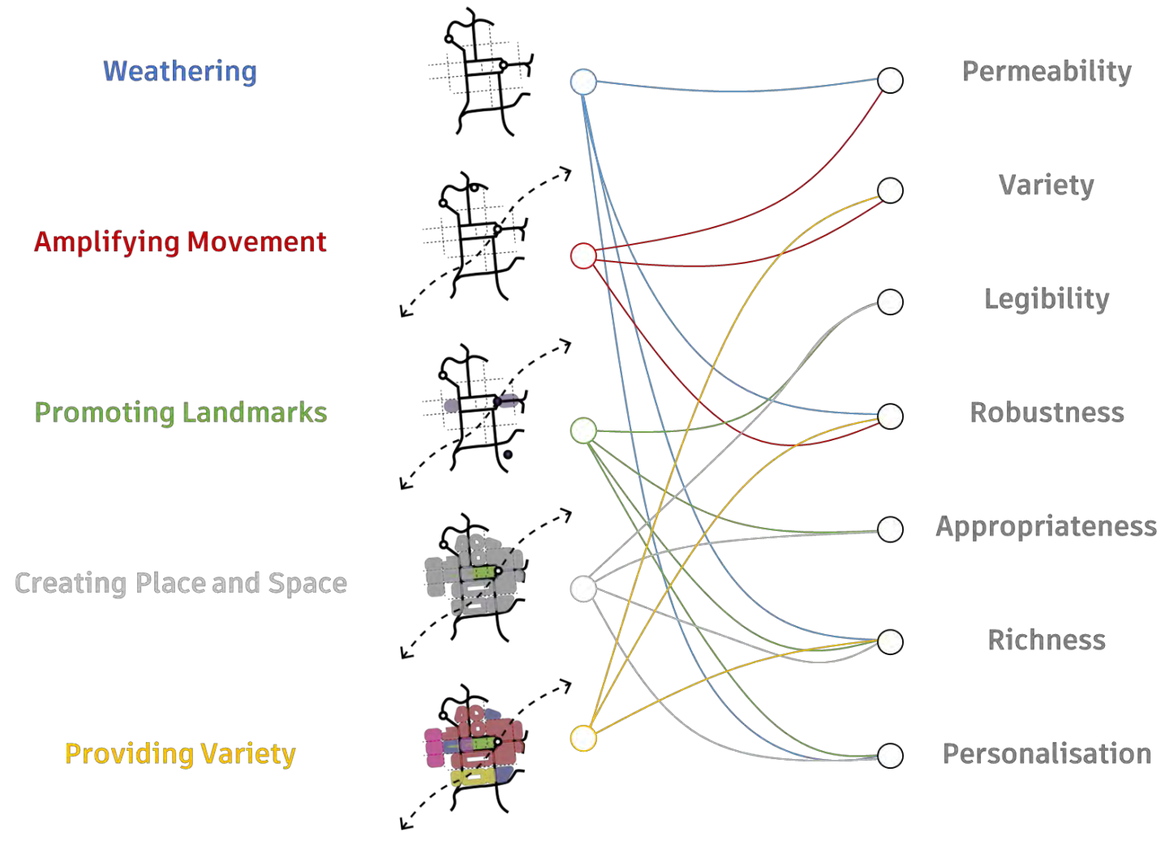


Figure 88: Design principles relating to the elements of Responsive Environments

9. Conclusion

The artifact has been destroyed, it is now successfully woven into the surrounding urban fabric and satisfies the seven principles of Responsive Environments as prescribed by Bentley et al. (Bentley, et al., 2005).

Through ‘weathering’ the artifact is broken into more human scaled urban blocks, therefore breaking down the wall that secluded the artifacts from the outside world. This action of weathering introduces a number of pedestrian connections and walkways, in the instances where private vehicles are accommodated, design elements are introduced to ensure priority is given to pedestrians. Permeability has been achieved.

By amplifying movement, the Menlyn Agora has taken on the role of becoming the ultimate transport hub, again without compromising pedestrian prioritisation. The Menlyn Tower is now a symbol of integrated transport, rather than a symbol of mass consumption. The introduction of a new Gautrain station connects the Menlyn Agora not only regionally, but also internationally. The space has now transformed from being a single use to a multi-use environment, this shift promotes variety.

The landmarks that once stood inside of a container, obstructed by walls of parking has been freed. The Grand Hall is now an outdoor corridor of activity it has become a grand entrance. The Menlyn Tower with its spire is located in the centre of the Menlyn Agora, visible from all angles as become a marker for wayfinding and a symbol of movement. The Public Park and Square, complimented by the institutional building is a symbol of unity, these are places where people can gather, express and interact as a public space should be used. The Menlyn Sky provides a stage to the Menlyn Agora, observing its transformation and complimenting landmarks, this is a place for entertainment, lectures and recreation. The re-introduction of these landmarks links directly to visual appropriateness, richness and legibility as the Menlyn Agora has become a real place.

The introduction of uses such as office and residential has enhanced the Menlyn Agora in terms of robustness and richness, it has become a place where people can live, work, shop and play. Customers are now citizens



Gallery

10. Gallery – The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower looking towards the west



11. Gallery – The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower with spire acting as focal point



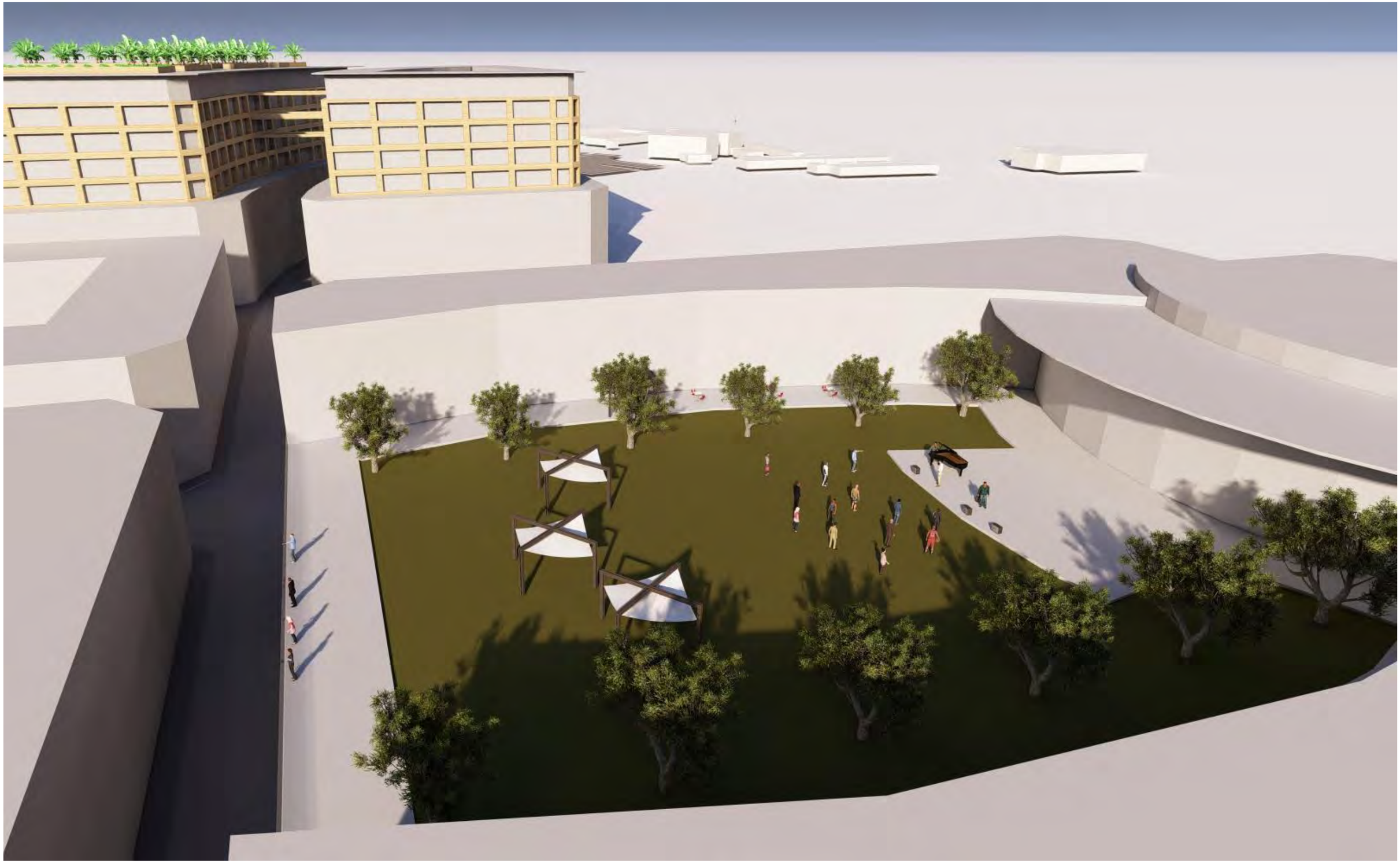
12. Gallery – The Grand Hall and Menlyn Tower looking towards the west



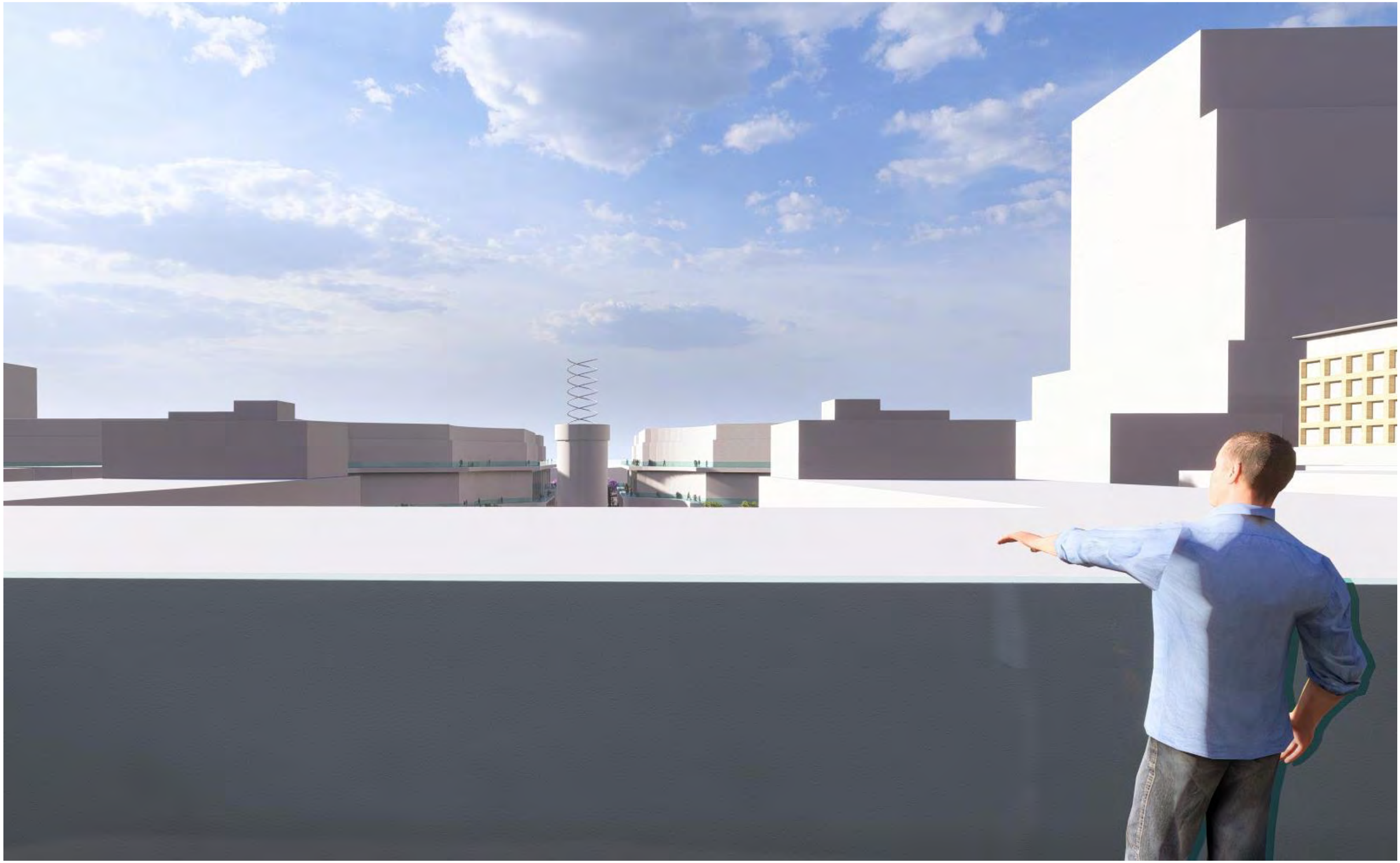
13. Gallery – Menlyn Sky looking towards the east



14. Gallery – Menlyn Sky looking towards the south, with residential building in background



15. Gallery – Menlyn Sky looking towards the east, with Menlyn Tower as a focal point



16. Gallery – Public Park and Square looking towards the west with Menlyn Sky in background



17. Gallery – Birds eye view of Public Park



18. Gallery – Public Square and Park looking towards east with Menlyn Tower in Background

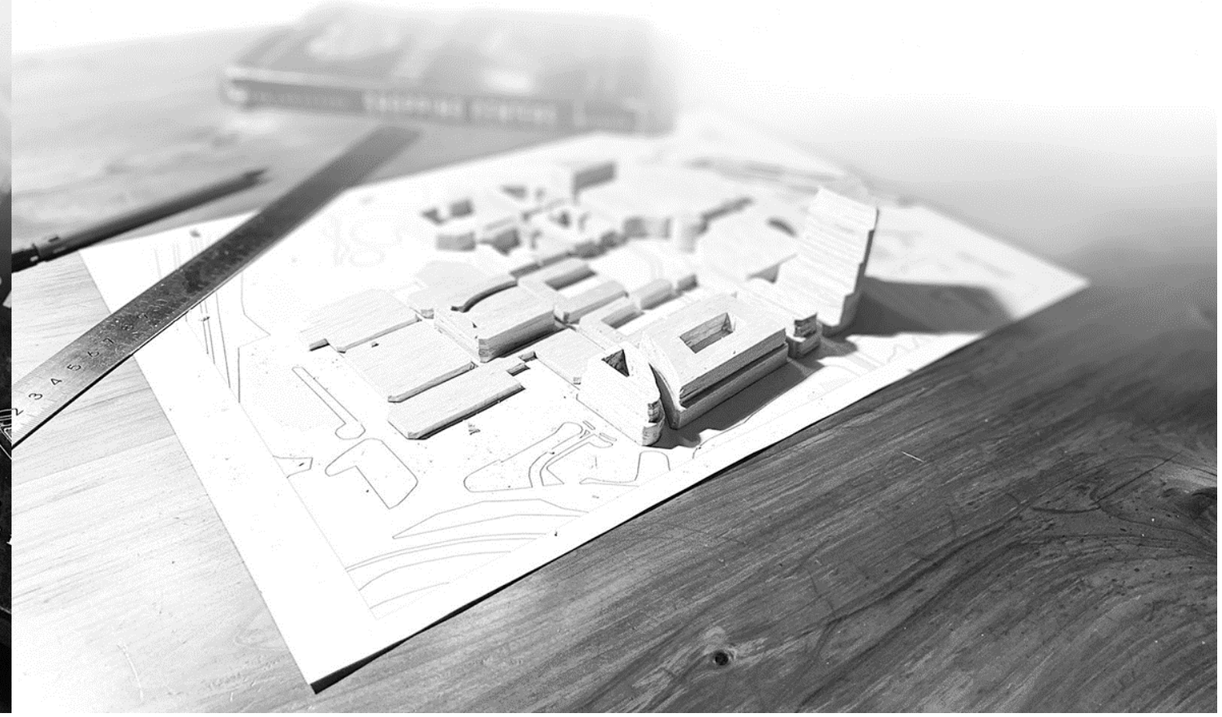


19. Gallery – Physical Model indication overall built form









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Appendix – Perspective of an expert

Appendix - Perspective of an expert

In order to gain an in depth understanding on the complexities surrounding the design and functioning of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, an expert designer, Mr Erky Wood was consulted and interviewed. The interview was structured around a broad interview guide focussed on the following themes:

1. The role of the designer

Mr. Wood was not involved in the initial design of the mall, and was only approach by the current owners, the Pareto Group, between 2017 and 2018. Mr. Wood representing Gapp Architects and Urban Designers at the time, was invited to participate in the redesign of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre into a new, real town centre through architectural and urban design interventions. The study area included all property owned by Pareto, bounded by the N1, Atterbury Road, Garstfontein Road and Lois Ave with the exclusion of the green space (owned by the City of Tshwane). This area created the canvas onto which a design can be proposed which includes the adjacent offices and not only the mall.

2. The key principles to follow in redesigning Menlyn Park Shopping Centre

There are numerous design principles that one should follow in the redesign of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, however they can be synthesised into 'crack it open', 'extroverting the shopping mall', 'avoiding anti-placemaking', 'create active edges', 'break down the medieval walls'.

By 'cracking the mall', essentially breaking the mall into smaller pieces permeability and accessibility is increased. A comparison was drawn between the mindset behind shopping mall design and that of an exclusive club, the membership requirement for a shopping mall is the ownership of a car. Menlyn Park Shopping Centre does however have a rather symbolic main pedestrian entrance along Lois Ave to the east, but still requires the pedestrian to pass through a wall of parking.

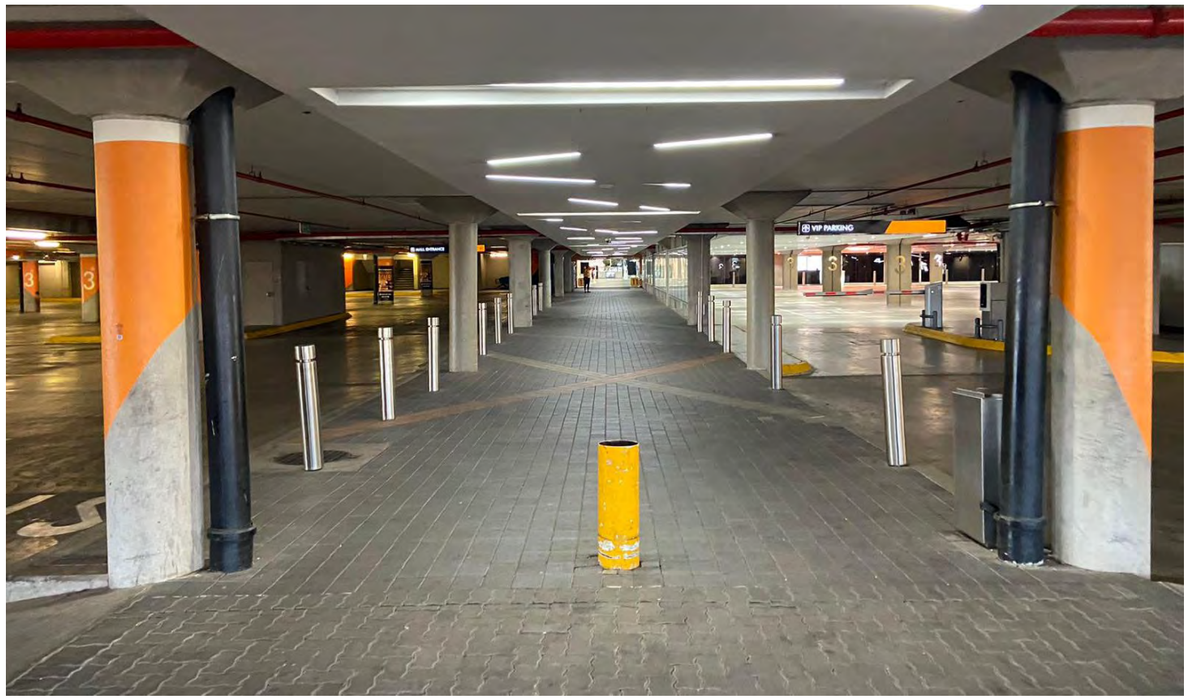


Figure 89: Typical Pedestrian Experience Entering the mall

Mr Wood indicated that in order for Menlyn Park Shopping Centre to be successful in achieving permeability it needs to provide pedestrian access to at least three adjacent sides. Realistically speaking, the three sides would be Atterbury Road to the north, Lois Ave to the east and Garstfontein Road to the south as the N1 national highway may be too ambitious, however a pedestrian bridge over the highway should not be out of the question.

How do you extrovert shopping centres? By nature, shopping centres are introverted that turn their backs on their surroundings creating a dead and uninviting façade. When this façade is penetrated, one is received into a whole new environment which is private and not considered as part of the city's public space network. The public space network can be seen as the armature of social and economic cities, thus shopping centres are excluded from this network. Ways to remedy this status quo is firstly to make it more accessible for pedestrians and make a gesture to the outside to become part of the public environment.

Linking to the principle of 'extroverting the shopping mall', is that of place making, or more specifically avoiding 'anti-placemaking' and 'creating active edges'. The Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is characterised by a wall of parking which every user, pedestrian and vehicle must penetrate in order to get to the actual mall. By turning the mall inside-out, one can create edges that link to the outside public network, be it sidewalks, parks, avenues and boulevards. This principle essentially links to that of responsive architecture, creating well designed, dignified and interactive sidewalks.

The final principle is seen as a synthesis of the previous, 'breaking down the medieval walls'. Shopping malls in general are characterised by buffers of parking areas separating the active part of the shopping centre and its surrounding public environment. This is especially valid in the case of Menlyn Park Shopping Centre as it is surrounding by multi-storey parking structures, sealing the mall off, of its surroundings and ultimately makes it impenetrable to pedestrians.

3. What are the main challenges that you can expect as a designer at Menlyn Park Shopping Centre?

According to Mr Wood, one of the main challenges working as a designer in a space such as Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, is working with teams of architects that have been there for several decades. The architectural teams have intricate knowledge of the design of the shopping centre, from the original building to all extensions and expansions that took place over the years. This intricate knowledge comes with a certain setback as they "can tell you exactly what you can't do" (Wood, 2023).

There is a sense of inertia, the shopping centre resists change. The designers are often reluctant to initiate small urban upgrade projects in fear that it may disrupt the current success and functioning of the mall.

4. What do you think will happen to Menlyn Park Shopping Centre in the future?

Menlyn Park Shopping Centre is the "big guy on the block", how do you reassert the notion? Menlyn Park Shopping Centre should embrace of the idea of being "Menlyn City", providing a more urbanistic atmosphere and create a strong linkage to the newly developed Menlyn Maine complex to the east. The integration between the two centres will be mutually beneficial.

5. General points to consider

The green space to the south east is largely neglected and unused, the space is most likely a result of road construction creating an artificial wetland.

Shopping centres have the tendency to drain energy from the urban fabric rather than to give back. They are not necessarily a catalyst for development, due to their isolated nature – there is little relationship between an individual and the shopping mall (artifact).

Parking standards put forth by officials was initially intended for small retail complexes and individual retail shops, the parking standards should be adapted to fit large scale malls such as Menlyn to prevent oceans and walls of parking.

Shopping centres in general have two scenarios moving toward the future, they can either integrate into the surrounding urban fabric or they can die as isolated artifacts.