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Contextualising Islam

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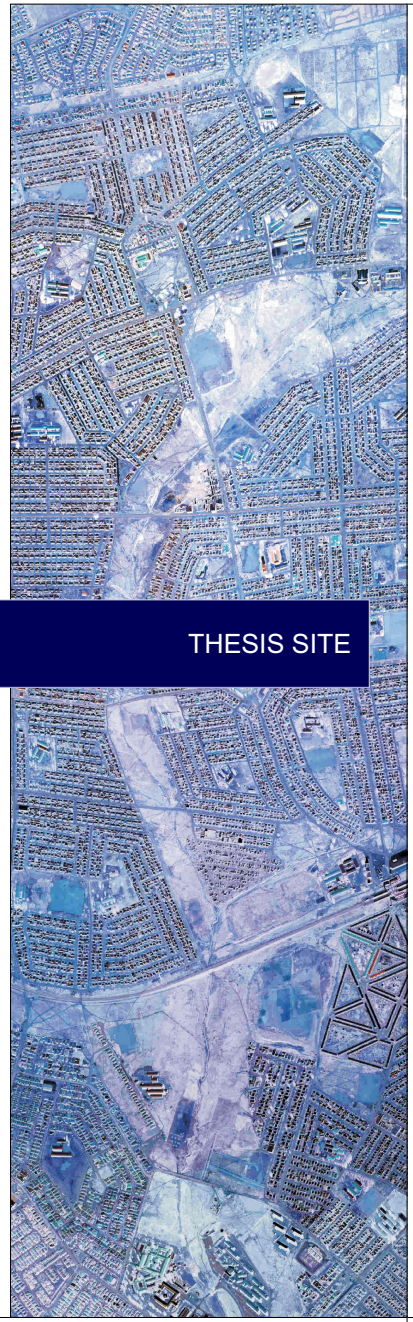

THESIS SITE


S O W


E T O

PERCENTAGE OF BLACK MUSLIMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As mentioned earlier post - apartheid South Africa has seen changes amongst its Muslim population, especially in the township areas. Black African Muslims make up 12% of the total Muslim population of South Africa today, a huge jump from the 1980s when they only made up 2.5% of the total number of Muslims. (G Vahed & S Jeppe in Multiple Communities; Muslims in Post Apartheid South Africa; www.hsrepress.ac.za) Africa as a continent has the largest number of Muslims world wide, North Africa is dominated by Islam, however Central, Eastern, and Western Africa is also made up of countries with a majority Muslim population, or significant Muslim populations.

REASONS FOR THE INCREASES IN BLACK MUSLIMS

The increase in the number of Black Muslims in South Africa is due a number of factors; firstly, during the 1980s many black youth in the townships made a conscious decision to embrace Islam(G Vahed & S Jeppe in Multiple Communities; Muslims in Post Apartheid South Africa; www.hsrepress.ac.za), to a certain extent this was a rejection of the Christianity that was practiced by their oppressors, and also many of the Afro - American leaders of the latter half of the 20th century practiced Islam. Leaders such as Malcolm X[1] had a profound effect on black consciousness, they also influenced thinkers amongst the youth and presented Islam as an alternative to white dominated Christianity.

Secondly, after the 1976 student uprising, many students went into exile to countries such as Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania, where they came into contact with Islam. Many embraced Islam or married Muslim partners, with the demise of apartheid they returned home bringing with them their newly found faith. Thirdly, the recent economic prosperity reached by South Africa, has attracted thousands of immigrants from all over Africa, even as far north as Tunisia, Mauritania, and Egypt.

1. Malcom X; a.k.a. Abdul Shebaaz, initially a member of Elijah Muhammed's Nation of Islam, and later after his trip to Makkah for hajj, disowned by the movement for reverting back to orthodox Islam and rejecting Elijah Muhammeds ideas.

This economic boom combined with new and far more stringent immigration law in European countries, has made South Africa a more suitable destination for many people. In most cases immigrants arriving into South Africa from African countries are Muslim. However these immigrants do not usually opt to settle in the townships, they rather live in Muslim suburbs such as Fordsburg and its surrounding areas, where Mosques and other Muslim institutions have already been established.

And finally Islamic propagation centers have also played their role in inviting many township dwellers to Islam, most notably The Islamic Propagation Center International (IPCI) founded by Ahmed Deedat, has played a major role in the increasing number of township Muslims. (GVahed & SJeppe in Multiple Communities; Muslims in Post Apartheid South Africa; www.hsrepress.ac.za)

Unlike their Arab counterparts Indian Muslims, who constitute the majority of Muslims in South Africa, were never able to **integrate** with the local population, instead they felt it necessary to distinguish themselves from the indigenous peoples, keeping Islam to themselves. Which is very ironic considering Islam was brought to them by Arab traders, this non - racist attitude which the Arab people had, played a major role in the adoption of Islam throughout Africa, the Indian Sub - Continent, and South East Asia. The Arabs inter - married with these people, teaching them their language, as well as their religion.

Unfortunately Indian Muslims in South Africa have been unable to rid themselves of the effects of the caste system practiced by their predecessors in India. This attitude has filtered into their Islam, resulting in a negative attitude towards Indians and Islam within the black community. Salama Motsoatose a Sotho woman who embraced Islam in 1971 told reporter Emika Nwandiko that there was a perception that Islam was an “exclusive coolie thing..... It is difficult to be Muslim because people thing we’ve been colonised by Indians.” (Mail & Gaurdian 05,03,99)

From what we have just mentioned, combined with the issues already discussed in the *Introduction,* and the *Context,* certain **criteria** for site selection can be extracted;

CRITERIA FOR SITE SELECTION

01. Target the Soweto area, where many young Muslim students come from, but due to **lack of facilities** are forced to stay in areas such as Lenasia where Islamic institutions exist.

02. The area should benefit from the Mosque and what it has to offer in terms of the *unity of society*, i.e. the **integration** of the Mosque with other everyday activities. The mosque needs to help create a better **understanding of Islam**. It needs to **promote** Islamic principles.

03. The site needs to offer other activities that can be **combined** with the Mosque to create a unique character, activities that are carried out on a daily basis.

04. There needs to be a number of Muslims already in the area.

05. The site needs to require spaces that could be described as **sacred**, places with water, trees, and shade.

06. There needs to be a potential **economic benefit** from the construction process and the end product.

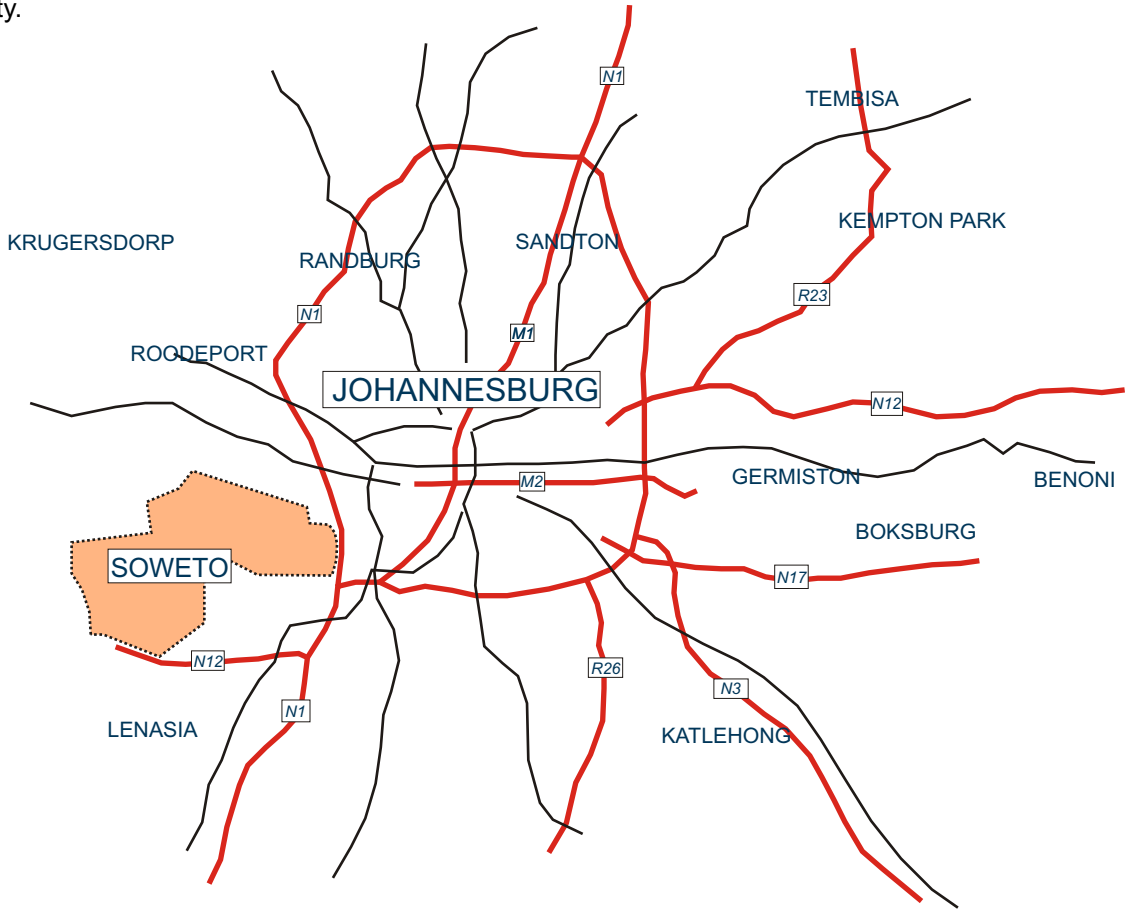
07. The site needs to have a close relationship to predominant modes of **transportation**.

08. It needs offer the opportunity for **contextualism**, in the manner that has already been discussed.

09. It needs to offer the opportunity to design a Mosque that is not the usual expensive Mosque architecture.

10. The mosque needs to **contrast** its environment, and not simply blend in, but rather **uplift** its surroundings and provide **diversity** in the township environment.

According to census data collated in 2001 Soweto with a population of 896 995 people is the largest black residential area in South Africa. Other estimates put the population of Soweto at 1,5 million and some as high as 3,5 million. Due its relatively close proximity to Johannesburg it has become the work force of the city.

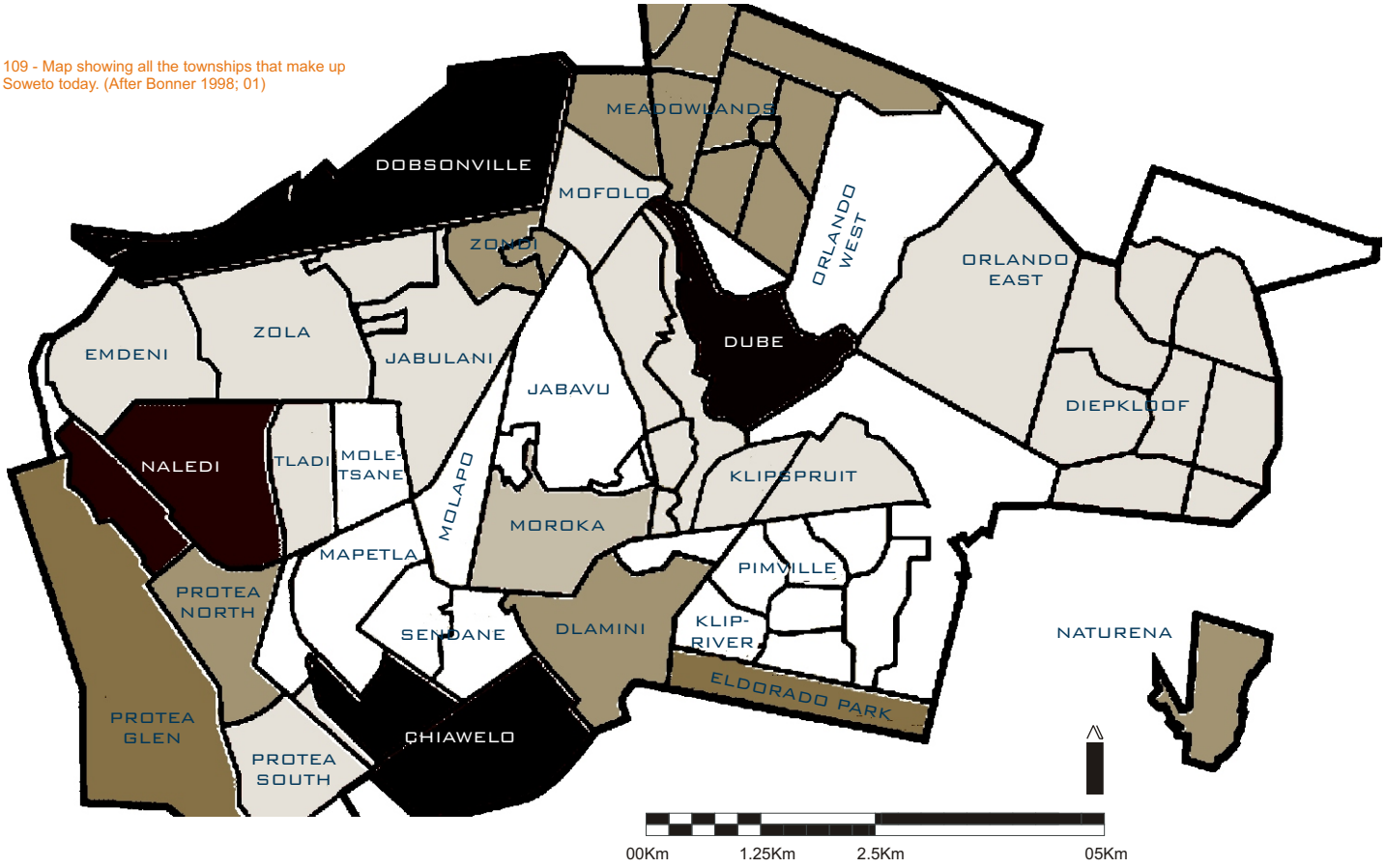


108 - SOWETO IN RELATION TO JOHANNESBURG
(adapted from Gauteng Tourism Authority map)

THE FIRST TOWNSHIP IN SOWETO

In 1904 Klipspruit was established, a black township that was to house black workers from the mines and other industries, the cities became white only under the Smuts government with The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 stipulating that, **" the Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas…when he is willing to administer to the white mans needs, and should depart from them when he ceases to so minister."** However this law was impossible to administer, resulting in an estimated 40 000 people living in slums and 27 000 in compounds in the 1940s. (Denis Creighton June 2003; Housing in Soweto)

109 - Map showing all the townships that make up Soweto today. (After Bonner 1998; 01)

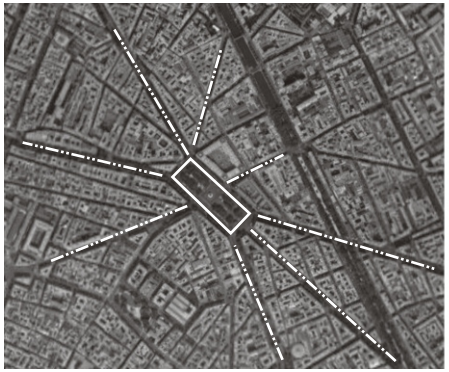


CITIES HOUSING COMPETITION

The city realising that there was a serious housing crisis bought a plot in Klipspruit Ext. 8, and set up a housing competition to “design the biggest and finest African township in the Union of South Africa.” The architect - engineer Hermann Kallenbach designed the layout of the township, that was to be named ‘*Orlando’* after the first Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee: Councilor Edwin Orlando Leake. (Denis Creighton June 2003; Housing in Soweto)

REALITY ON THE GROUND

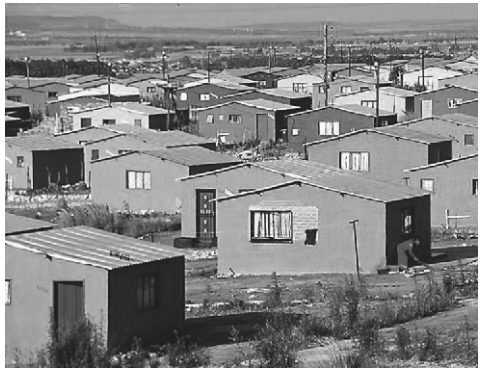
His design was based on a similar layout to the city of Paris, with long avenues of tree - lined streets leading to central nodes. The design was to create communities around these central nodes which housed all the community needs.(Wigget 2005; 27) Unfortunately the reality of what was eventually built was far from Kallenbachs intentions, “the two or three bed-roomed houses were identical, packed together and cheaply built and the term ‘matchbox houses' was used by the residents. Sewage was on a bucket system and the area was not electrified. Other community facilities were also poor, with a lack of parks, sports facilities and few schools. Distance from work opportunities caused many people to resist the move. The township clearly differed from the image of “paradise” painted by the Council.” (Denis Creighton June 2003; Housing in Soweto) The Soweto grid layout will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.



110 - Ariel Photograph of Paris
(google earth images)



111 - Ariel Photograph of Soweto
(google earth images)



112 - Soweto Housing

DLAMINI MOSQUE

Currently the only mosque in Soweto is the Dlamini Mosque, the heart of the Soweto Muslim community today. It was the scene of the first of nine bombs that rocked Soweto on 29 October 2002 (Mail & Guardian 30 -10 - 02), the bombs were planted by right - wing extremists bent on causing regime change.



113 - Minaret; Dlamini Mosque



114 - Prayer Hall; Dlamini Mosque

The blast shattered all the windows in the prayer hall, and caused similar damage to houses around the mosque. Unfortunately due to the blast the management at the mosque has now become overly cautious, access to the mosque as well information about it is restricted. The mosque is still being renovated by the Imam and his wife, who do most of the building work themselves.

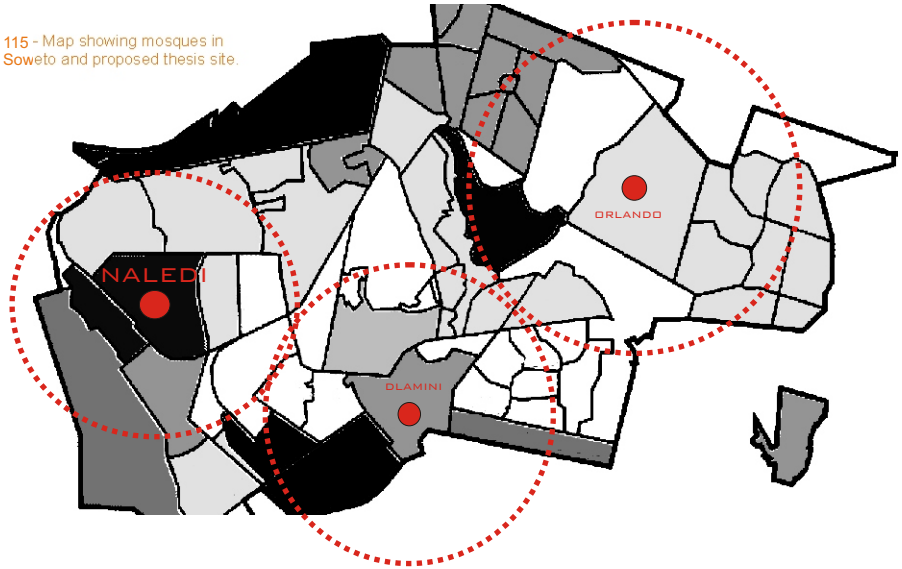
Bilal Motsau who converted to Islam in 1976 estimated the Muslim population in Soweto to be 10 000 in 2002 (Nicole Itano in an article for the Christian Monitor, *In South Africa many Blacks Convert to Islam*). Today the Imam of the Dlamini Mosque estimates the Muslim population in Soweto to be around 30 000.

WHAT ISLAM OFFERS TOWNSHIP DWELLERS

Many township dwellers see Islam as a way out of the drugs and gangsterism that is so rife in the township. Women who convert to Islam say the religion “offers refuge from early sex, AIDS, alcoholism and domestic abuse.” (Nicole Itano in an article for the Christian Monitor, *In South Africa many Blacks Convert to Islam)*

CONCENTRATIO N OF MUSLIMS IN SOWETO

The Muslim population in Soweto is very difficult to quantify or to map because most Islamic structures in Soweto are informal, however there are concentrations of Muslims in certain areas; **01** Dlamini, **02**, Orlando, **03**, Naledi/Tladi area. All three were possibilities as a thesis site, however as already stated there is a mosque in Dlamini, and in Orlando a Dar al Uloom[1] funded by the Jamiat Ulema[2] is in the pipeline. Thus the Naledi/Tladi area was chosen as a site for this thesis. Also as mentioned earlier, most of the students staying at Dar al Arkam center in Lenasia South were from Naledi, Tladi, or Zola.

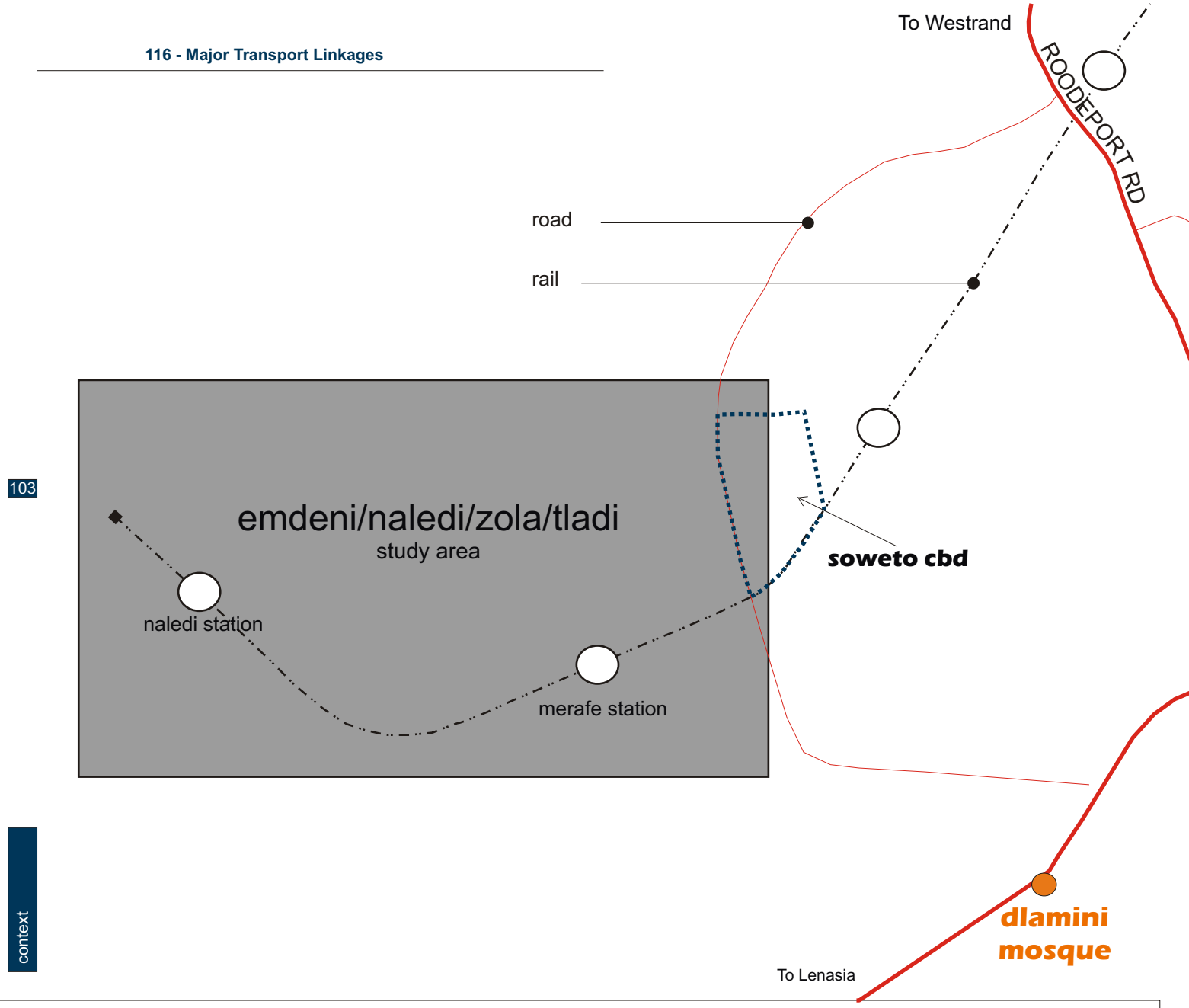


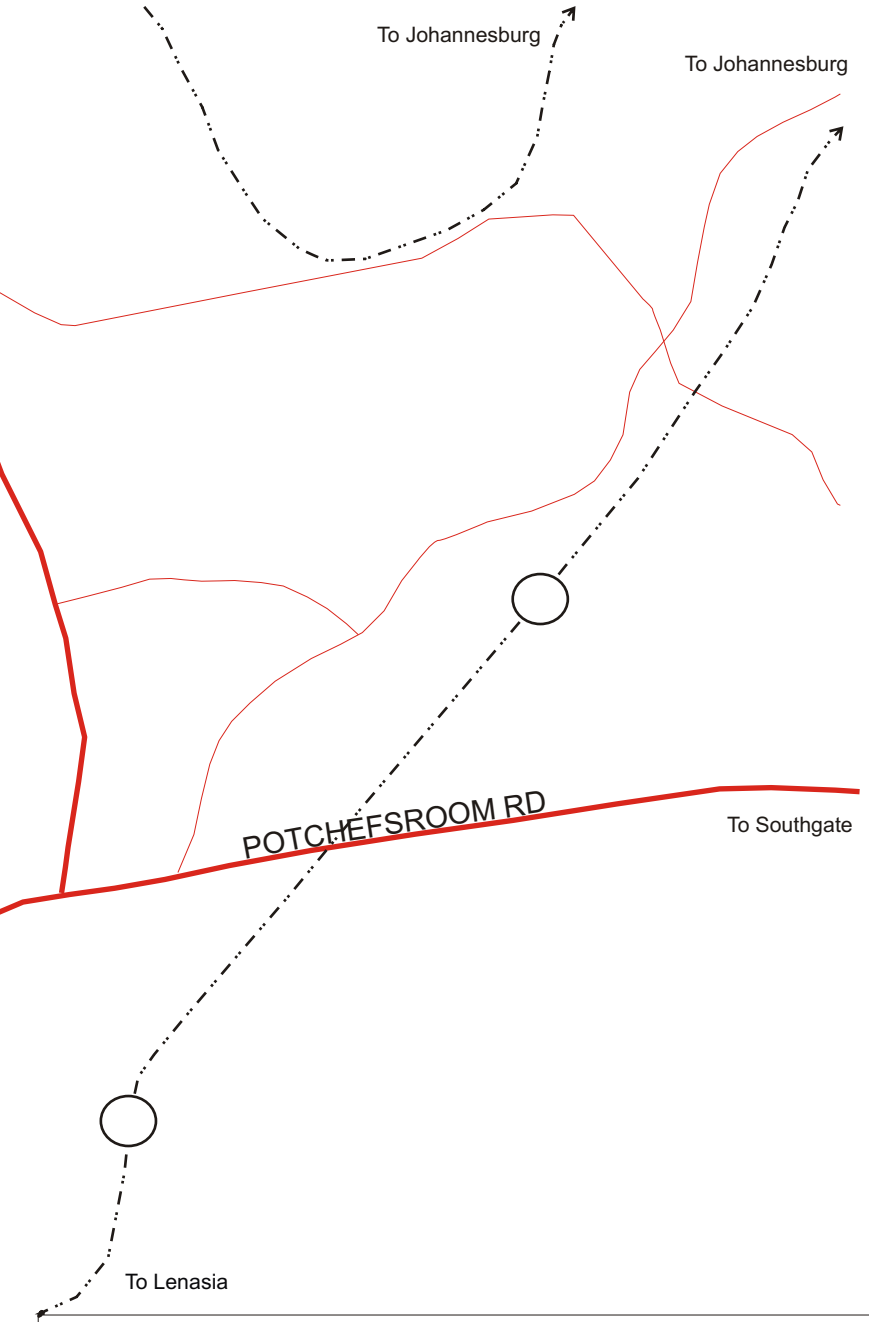
115 - Map showing mosques in Soweto and proposed thesis site.

The choice of Naledi/Tladi as a site ensures that the three mosques in Soweto are spread wide enough apart allowing their catchment areas not to overlap.

As will be seen in the following mapping Naledi's regional accessibility is greatly enhanced by the railway line that cuts through Soweto, with its last station being Naledi Station. It is also fairly close to Jabulani Mall and the Soweto CBD.

The pages that follow map different aspects of the Naledi, Tladi, Zola, and Emdeni area. The mappings were used to identify a suitable site for this thesis with the site selection criteria in mind. And to identify particular needs in the area, to be used as clues for the building program and design, keeping in mind the idea of *'progressive contextualism'*,


To Westrand
ROODEPORT RD
road
rail
emdeni/naledi/zola/tladi
study area
naledi station
merafe station
soweto cbd
dlamini
mosque
To Lenasia



Majority of Soweto's residents use public transport, the railway lines cut through Soweto in a north - south direction, becoming physical barriers to east - west movement. Stations and bridges along the railway lines are sparse, forcing many residents to cross the tracks at non designated and dangerous spots. The railway lines are vital arteries in the flow of traffic in Soweto, their volumes fluctuating according to peak times.

The main issue with regard to transport in Soweto is the lack of major linking roads along the east - west corridor, and few exit points out of the township that link up with Johannesburg's free - way system.

Besides for the trains, minibus taxis and busses play a vital role in the transportation of Soweto's residents, most of whom combine two or sometimes even three modes of transport to reach their final destination.

01. Extending Matshaya Road and linking it up with the R558 to the west of Naledi. The R558 links Kagiso, Chamdor and Witpoortjie to the north of Soweto with Old Potchefstroom Road in the South of Soweto. This intervention if completed will increase regional mobility in the western areas of Soweto, also since Matshaya Road leads directly to the Soweto Mall and CBD it will require upgrading to maintain traffic volumes.

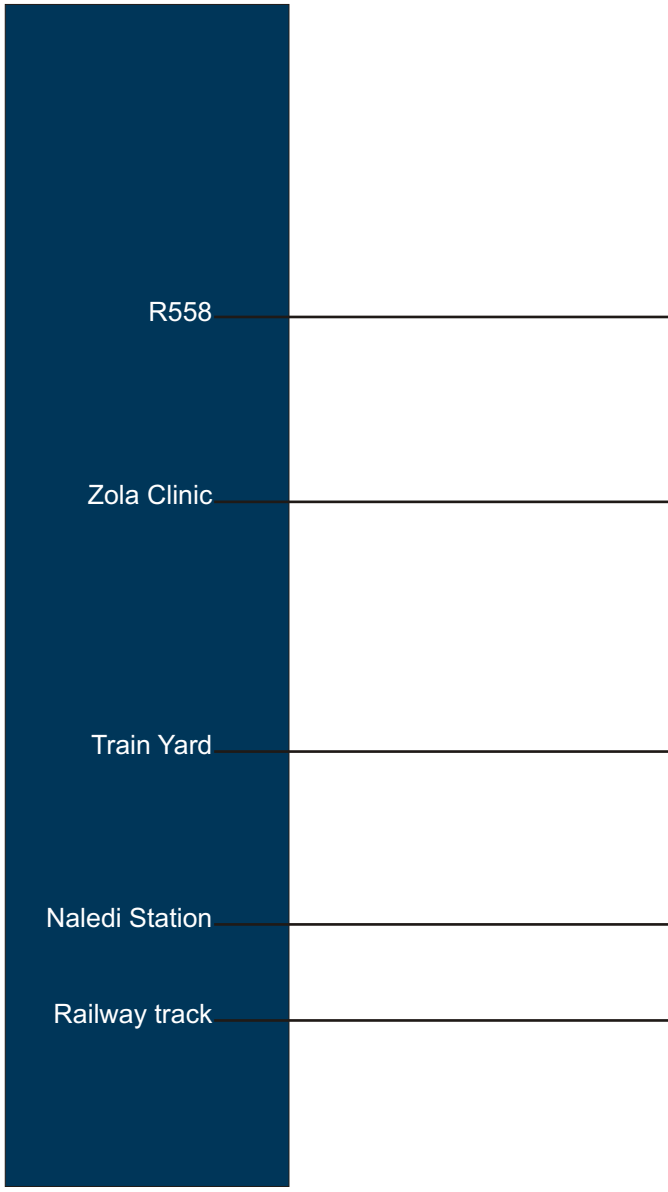
02. Linking Emdeni and Naledi with Protea N. by establishing a link across the railway lines along Kgarebe Street. There is currently no way of getting to Naledi from Protea N. by car, the only route available is to travel from Protea parallel to the tracks up until Koma Street in the Soweto CBD and then cross the tracks there into Moletsani, and then from Moletsani to Naledi.

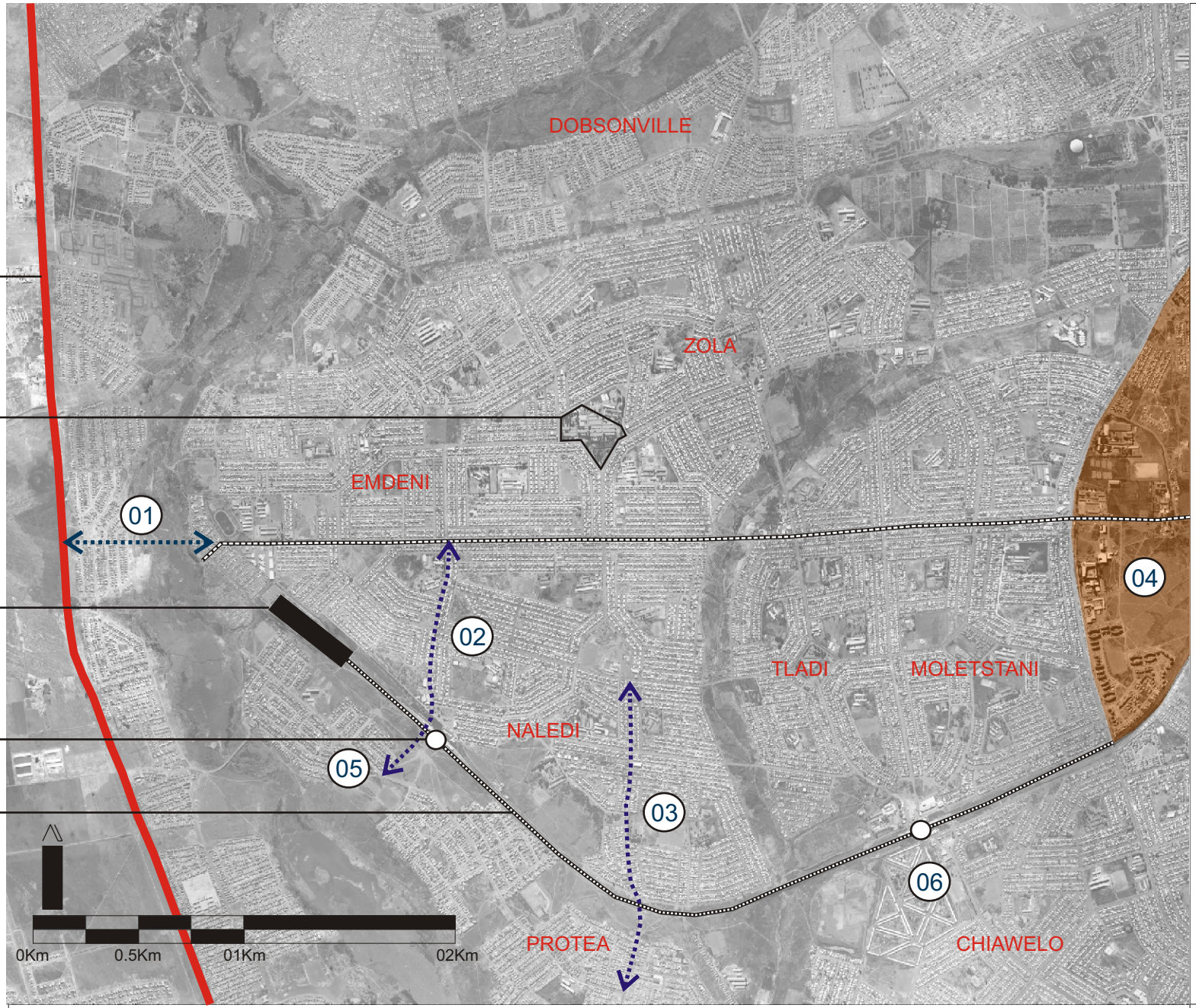
03. Establishing a link to Protea N. along Modutwa Street.

04. Establishing the Jabulani Pricint as a Regional Node.

05. Upgrading of Naledi Station.

06. Upgrading of Merafi Station.

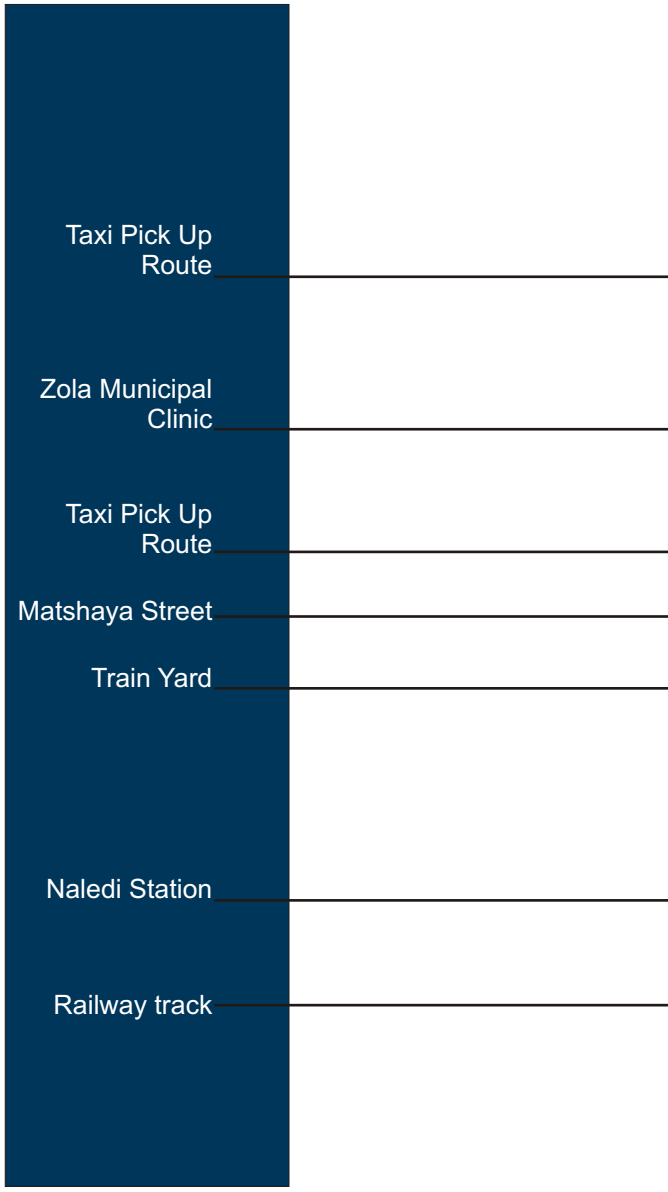


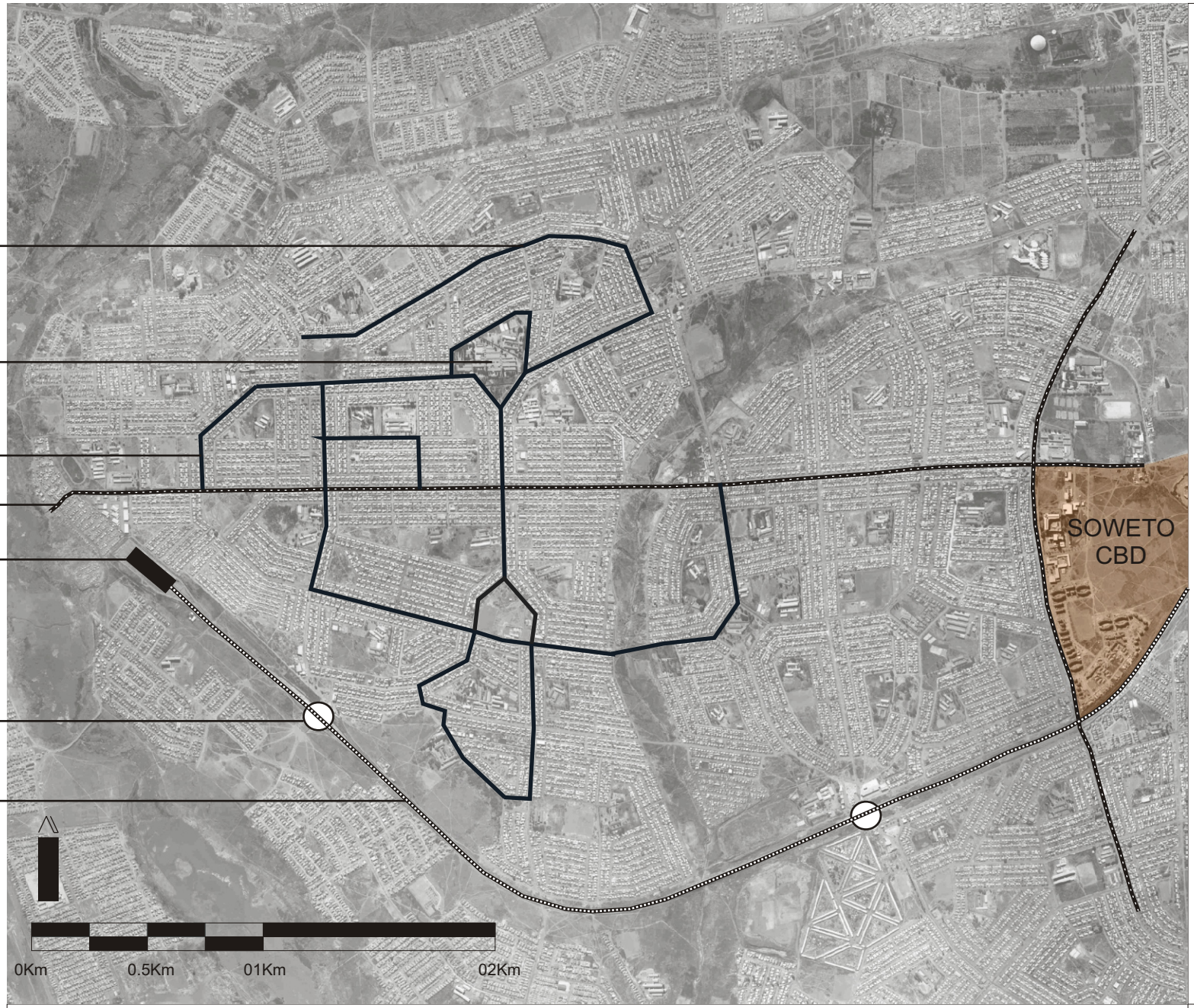

DOBSONVILLE
ZOLA
EMDENI
01
02
03
04
05
06
TLADI
MOLETSTANI
NALEDI
PROTEA
CHIAWELO
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

With the establishment of the Soweto Mall (in the CBD), Matshaya street has become an important artery, linking the suburbs of Emdeni, Naledi, Zola and Moletstane to the mall. It is a two lane dual carriageway, servicing many taxis and private cars. It also demarcates the border between the suburbs of Naledi and Emdeni (Naledi is to the south of the street).

Taxis filter either to north of Matshaya street or south of it looking for commuters, once the taxis are full they make their way back to Matshaya street and travel eastwards towards Soweto CBD and Koma street. From there they either travel north towards Roodeport Street and in the direction of the Westrand, or south towards Old Potchefstroom Road and then in the direction of Southgate Shopping Center and further on towards the Johannesburg CBD.

Naledi Station, the last station, comes alive at peak times as well as mid afternoon when school kids are arriving home. The position of the thesis site in relation to this station is important, since there is currently only one mosque in Soweto in Dlamini, this proposed Mosque would serve a greater area than just Naledi and thus regional access is necessary.




SOWETO
CBD
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

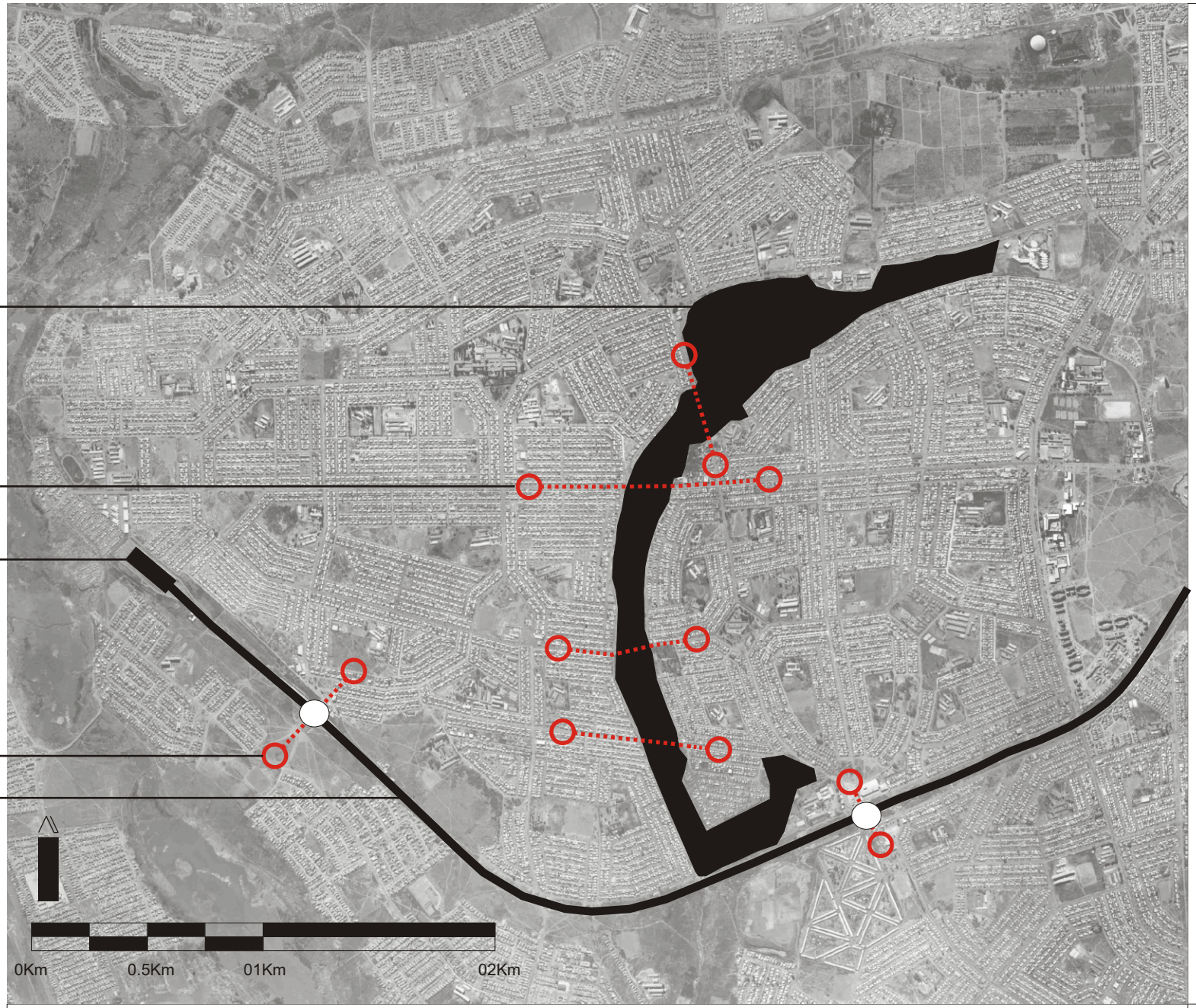
The railway line to the south of the thesis site forms a barrier between the suburbs of Naledi and Protea North. This barrier could also be viewed as a link, linking all the suburbs of Soweto, since the majority of residence in Soweto do not own private vehicles the railway line and the taxis are the only forms of transport that they use to navigate Soweto.

The railway line is broken by a number a train stations along the route, the last of which being Naledi Station as shown on the map. There are also a number bridges over the railway tracks at certain places.

The other major barrier affecting movement in this area is the wetlands as shown on the map. The river running through is nothing more than a stream but the grass is very high, posing a further security risk. There are a number of roads that cut through it linking Naledi with Tladi, however these roads are not pedestrian friendly and difficult to cross on foot or bicycle.

Due to it's urban layout Soweto is very difficult to navigate especially on your first visit, you are often able to see where you want to go, but not able to get there. However once you familiarize yourself with the main through roads it becomes easier to navigate.



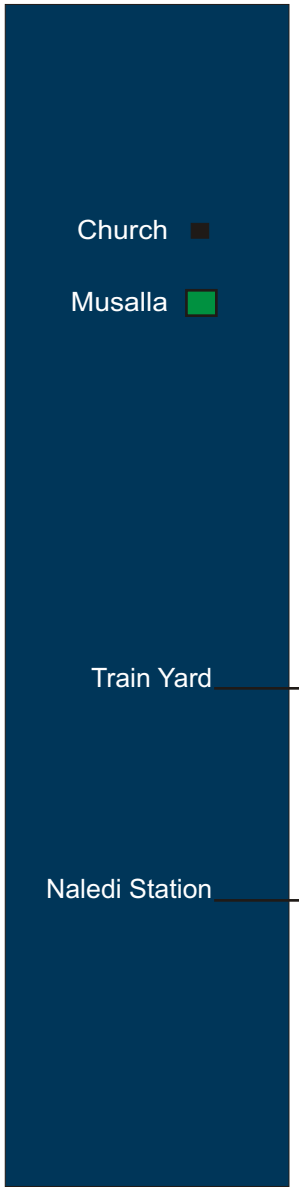

0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

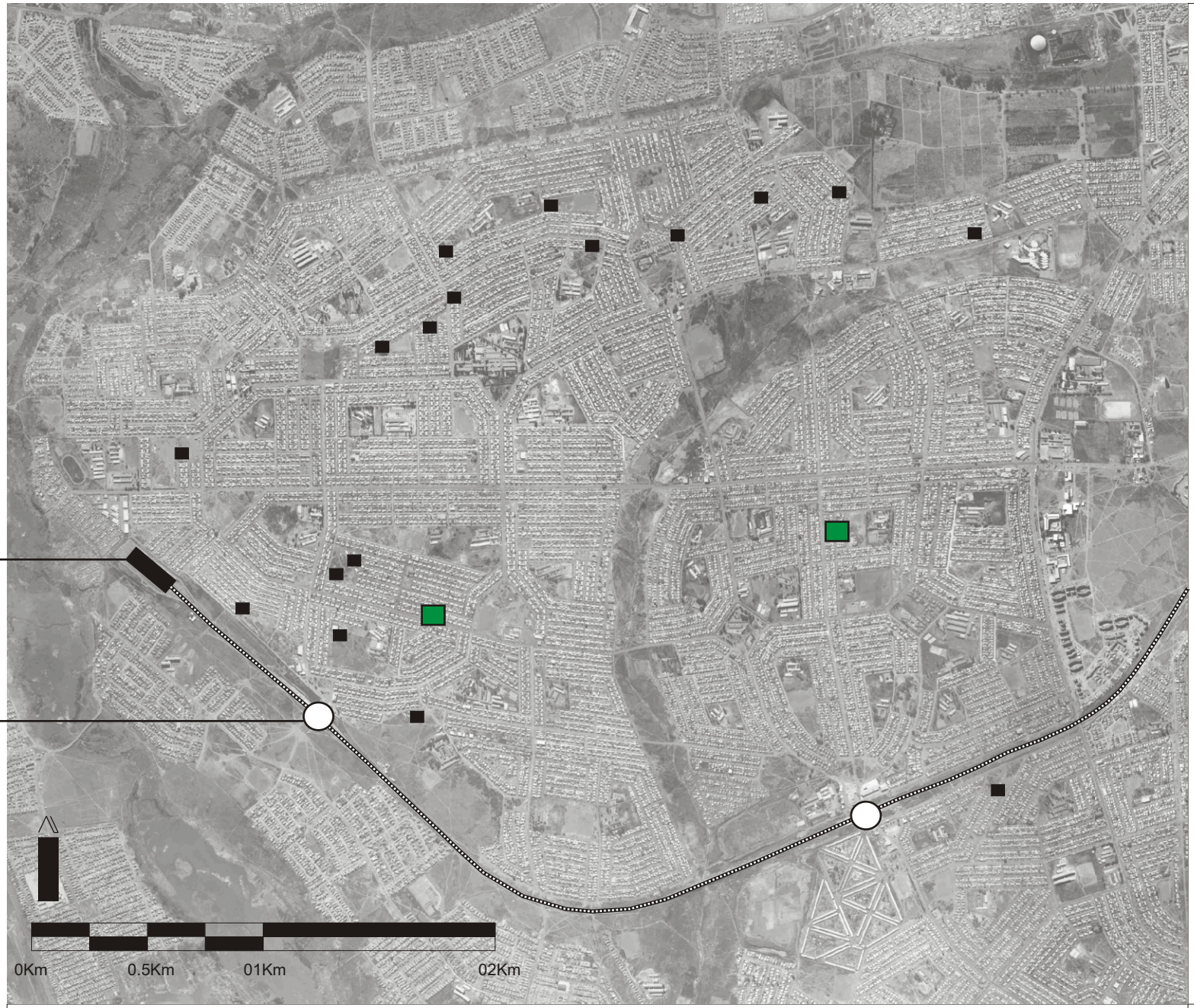
Due to the lack of Islamic facilities in the area most Muslims in the area perform their prayers at home, with a few making the trip to one of the two *Musallas* (garages that are used as prayer facilities) shown on the map.

On Friday the day of *Jum'a* the Muslims in this area all travel to the Kliptown Mosque to listen to the weekly *Khutbah* and perform the Friday prayer in congregation. The Friday prayer can only be performed in congregation, in a recognized Mosque.

As identified by this map there are number of churches in the area, however I am unaware of any real integration between these churches and the secular structures of Soweto, such as libraries, career centers, etc.






0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

The distribution of amenities in the area is very sparse and fragmented, and the problem is further expounded by the lack of a *'high street'* or a setting where resources can be concentrated.

When analysising the map one should bear in mind that the majority of people do not own a car, and that the roads in the area are not fit for high or even normal volumes of cars. With this in mind it is clear that there is not enough Post Offices, ATMs, libraries, information centers, etc.

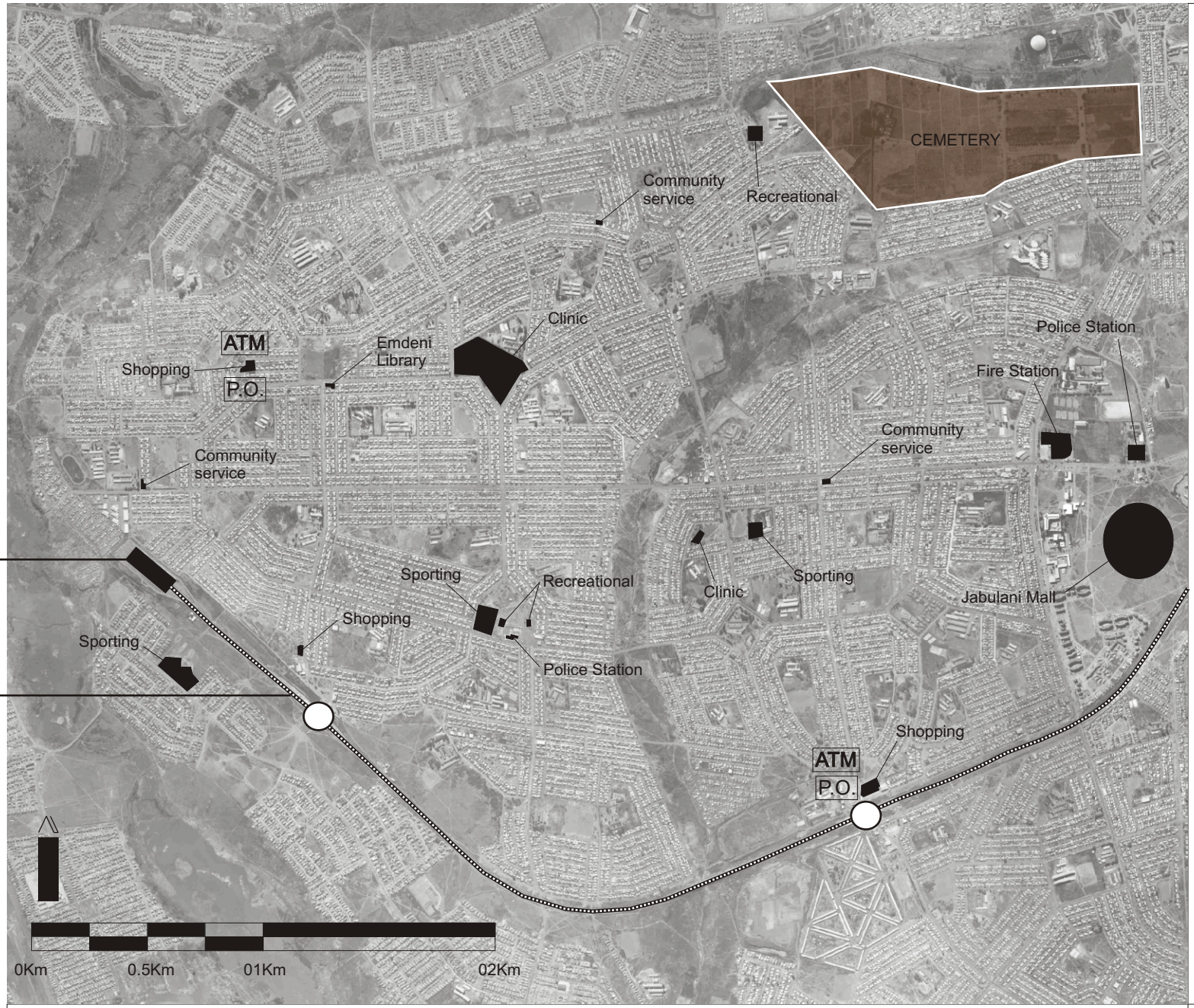


P.O. Post Oficce

ATM ATM

Train Yard

Railway track


CEMETERY
Community service
Recreational
Clinic
ATM
Shopping
P.O.
Emdeni Library
Police Station
Fire Station
Community service
Community service
Sporting
Recreational
Clinic
Sporting
Jabulani Mall
Shopping
Sporting
Police Station
Shopping
ATM
P.O.
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

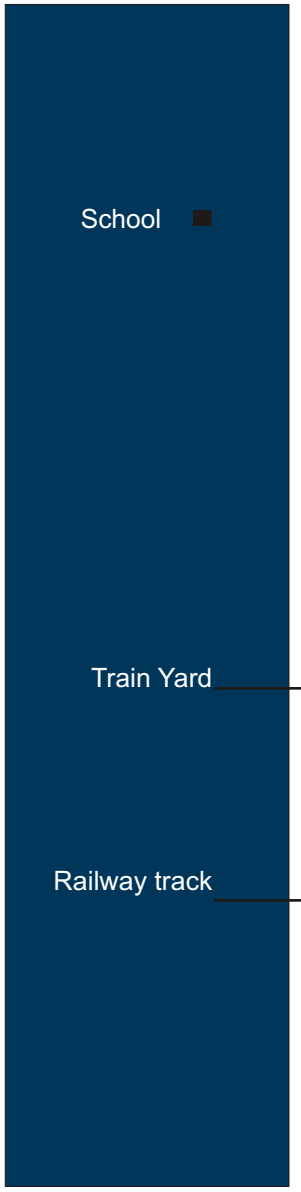
Out of all the schools that were mapped four were secondary schools, including Naledi Secondary School, where the June 16 student uprising of 1976 started from.

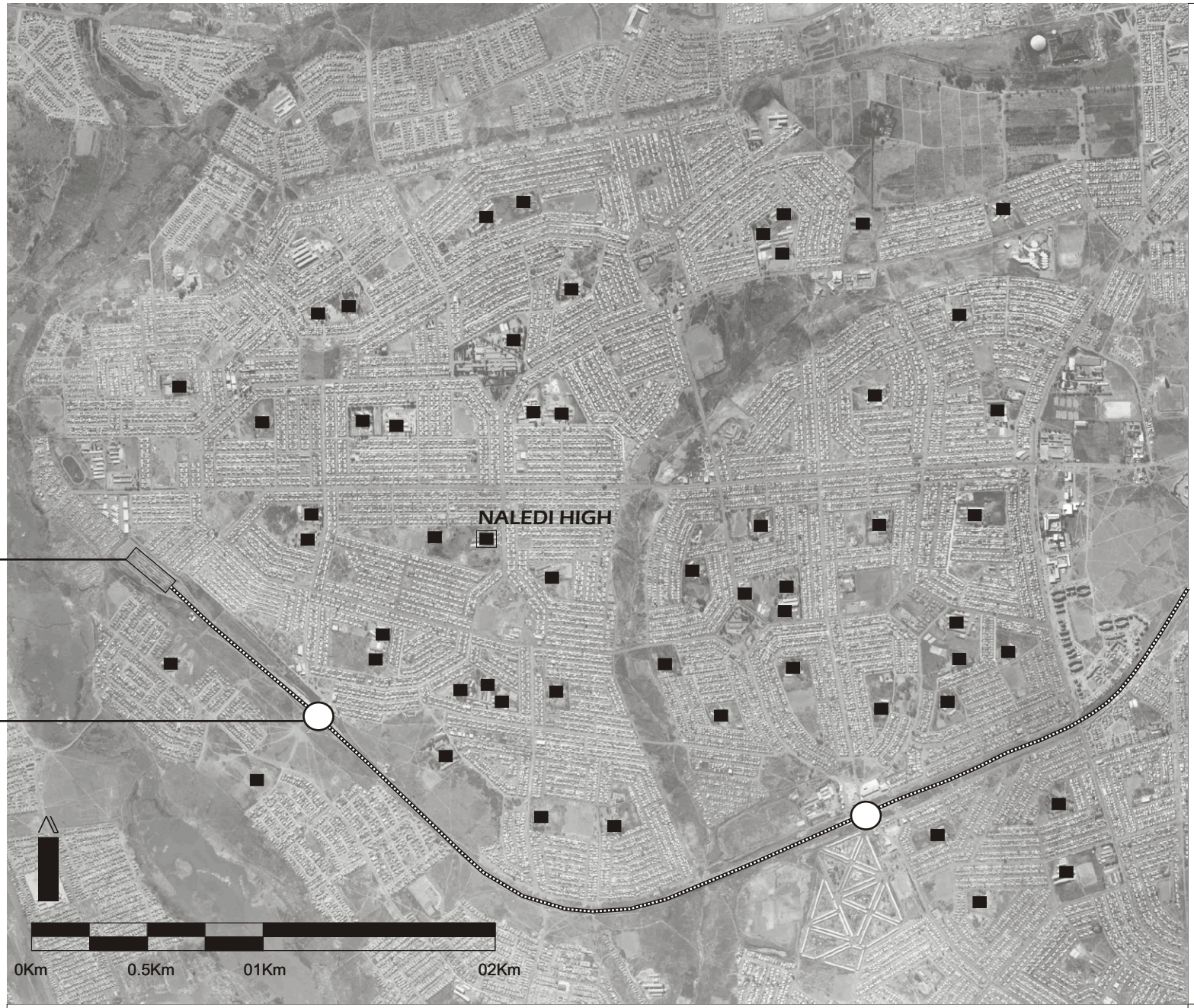
The main problem with all these schools is that once school closes or the children are on holiday the buildings are locked up and inaccessible. It is an unbelievable waste of resources. Also, the schools all look the same, and can basically be described as two rectangular blocks facing each other, with pitched roofs. Their positioning on their respective sites seems too haphazard and void of serious consideration, buildings on the same site have no relationship with each other and are fenced off from each other.

This thesis has identified that there is lack of facilities such as libraries, study spaces, and internet rooms that would work well with the schools, and will try to incorporate such facilities in the building program.







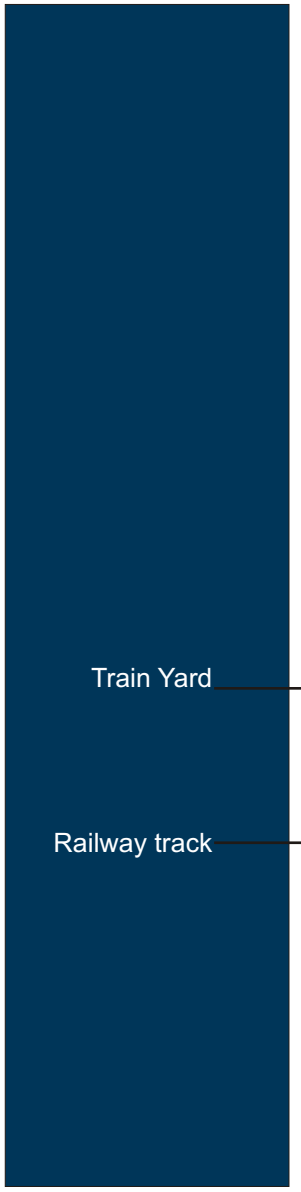

NALEDI HIGH
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

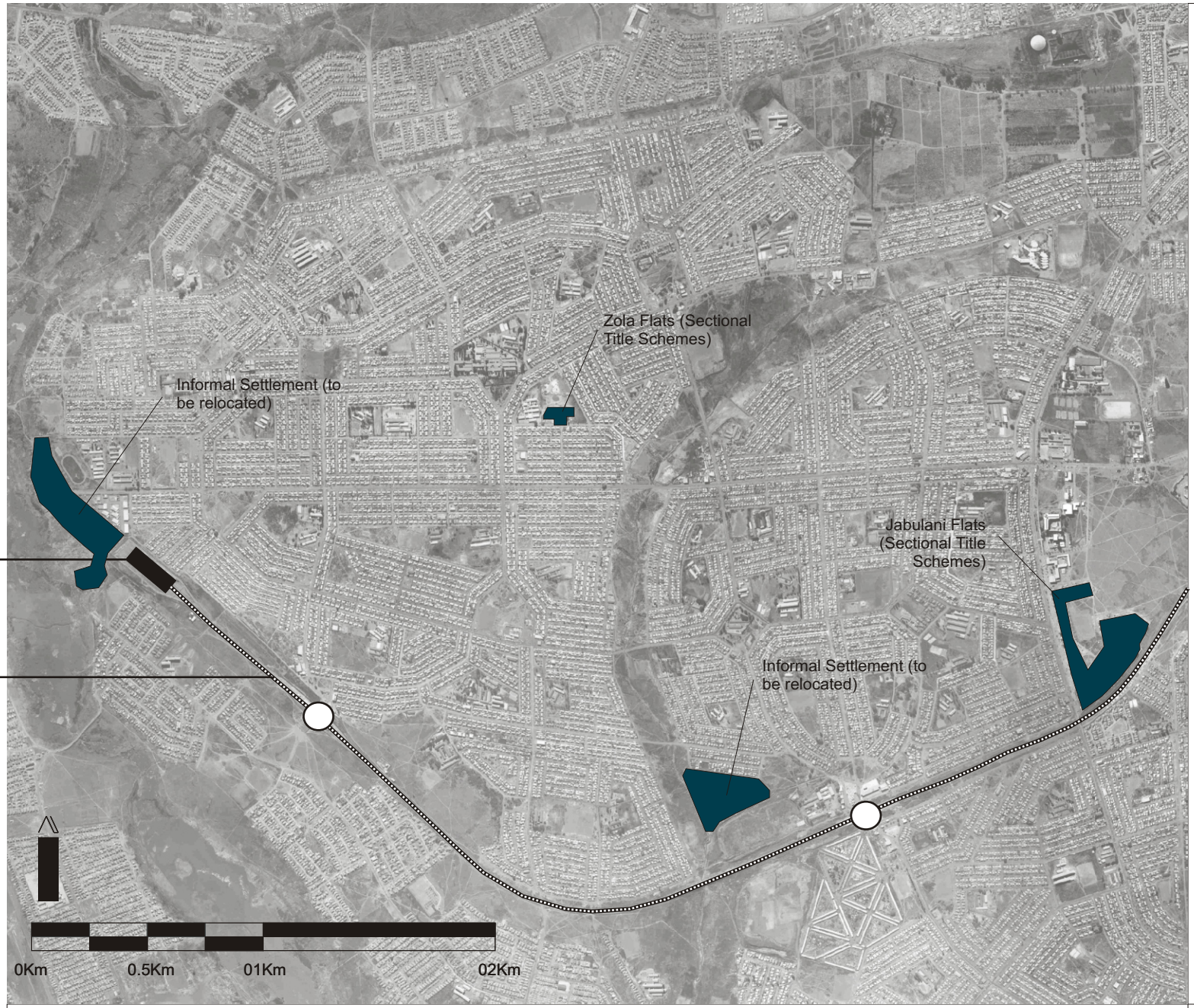
The most dominant form of land use in Soweto is housing, with the most common form of tenure being rental housing (flats, hostels, back-yard shacks). The number of informal settlements is always increasing and placing an even greater strain on the already aging infrastructure. These informal settlements are concentrated around environmentally unsafe areas, and lack services and infrastructure. (City of Johannesburg RSDF 2006 - 2007)

The city of Johannesburg has developed a “Top Twenty Township Program to rehabilitate existing settlements and upgrade backyard accommodation.” The suburb of Zola, to the north of Naledi has been “targeted for the piloting of the program.” Besides this program the city also embarks on relocation schemes and in - situ upgrades. (City of Johannesburg RSDF 2006 - 2007)

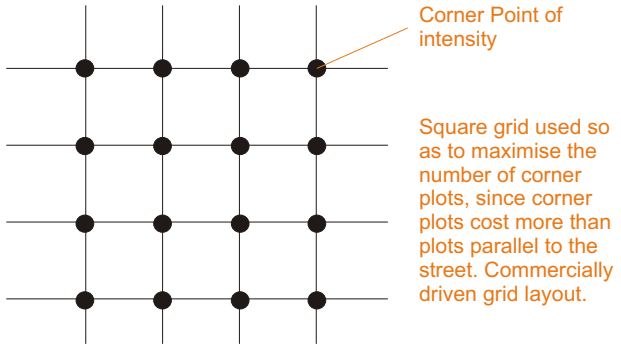


124 - Ariel photograph showing individual plots, original houses and back-yard shacks. (Google Earth Images)

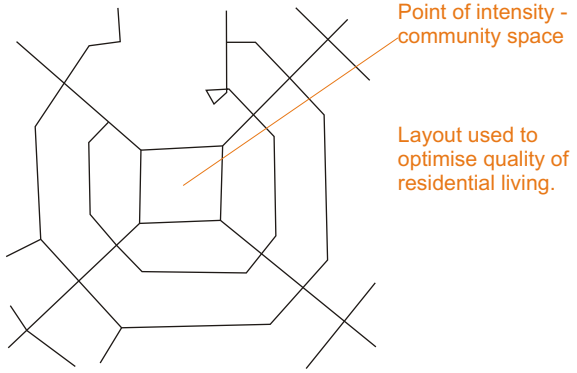



Zola Flats (Sectional Title Schemes)
Informal Settlement (to be relocated)
Jabulani Flats (Sectional Title Schemes)
Informal Settlement (to be relocated)
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km

As mentioned earlier, the urban layout of Soweto designed by Kallenbach was based on a similar model to that of Paris. Unlike the regular square grid of Johannesburg, Soweto's urban layout, at first glance reminds one of the Panoptic plan layout used in jails and mining compounds. However it is unlikely Kallenbach looked to mining compounds for inspiration, and far more likely that cities such as Paris influenced his design. Like Paris where long tree - lined avenues cut across the city leading to a focal point, Soweto too was planned with long tree - lined streets leading to community spaces, however the trees were never planted, and the focal points are mostly empty, or occupied by schools (all of which have almost the exact same plan through out Soweto).

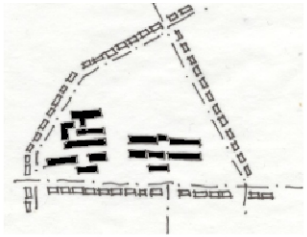


126 - Johannesburg City Grid

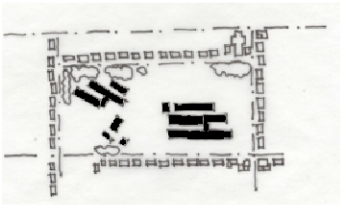


127 - Soweto Grid

The whole of Soweto is characterised by this layout, because council never provided banks, parks, community buildings, sporting facilities etc. these spaces remained empty. As the area grew and the need for schools and churches arouse, these points of intensity were used. The schools and churches built on these sites did not respond to the houses that surrounded them or to other buildings on site. There were simply built as objects in space.



01



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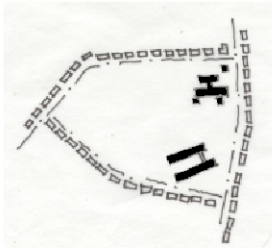

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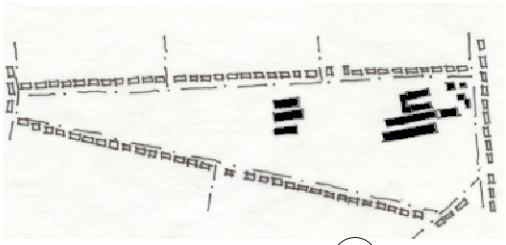


04

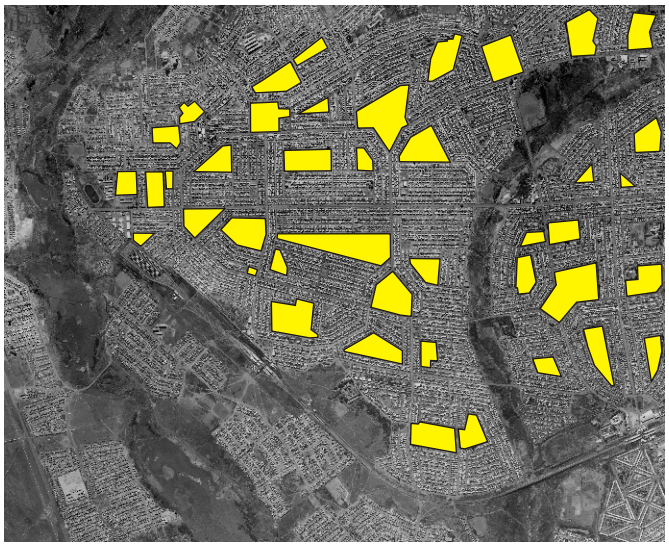
128 - 131 Sketches showing typical haphazard placement of buildings on site, with no relation to each other.



01. Community spaces

132 - The map shown is of the Naledi, Tladi, Zola, and Emdeni area, in keeping with Kallenbach's urban framework the site chosen would have to be on one of the many pockets of open space that form the intended community spaces of the township's suburbs.

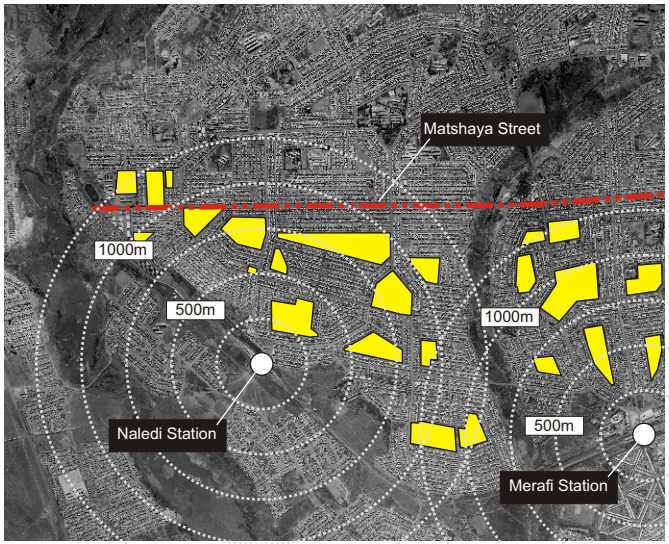
All the community spaces have been highlighted.



02. Accessibility

133 - The next consideration to be made was accessability, the site needed to be within walking distance to either Naledi Sattion or Merafi Station, making it regionally accessible. It would also have to be relatively close to Matshaya street, thus linking it to Jabulani Mall and the Soweto CBD.

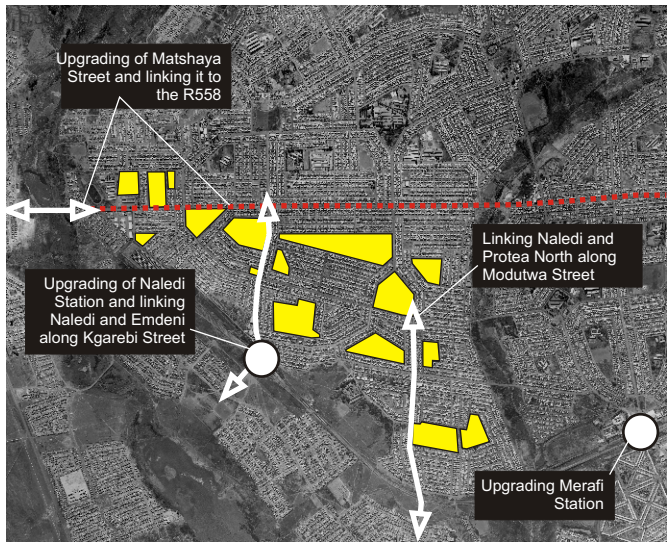
The community spaces that do not fall into the above category have been deleted. Remain areas are highlighted.



03. Cities development directions

134 - The City of Johannesburg's Development initiatives were the next criteria to be considered, the site would have to be part of the development directions, or be situated in a favorable position, ensuring that the intervention be viable in terms of the multiplicity of uses and users.

Sites that no longer fall within the desired framework have been deleted. Remaining sites are highlighted.



04. Land uses

135 - Finally the land usage on each of the remaining sites was considered with the concept; *'unity of society'* in mind. Unity of society meaning no division between the secular and the religious aspects of life. The site chosen needs to have different activities on site, that would combine with the Mosque to create a unique whole, promoting the Islamic concept of 'unity of society'. The intervention would also symbolise the concept of *unity* and *ubuntu* by being the binding element on site uniting the already existing '*objects in space'*.

Only one possible site remains that embodies all 4 selection criteria.

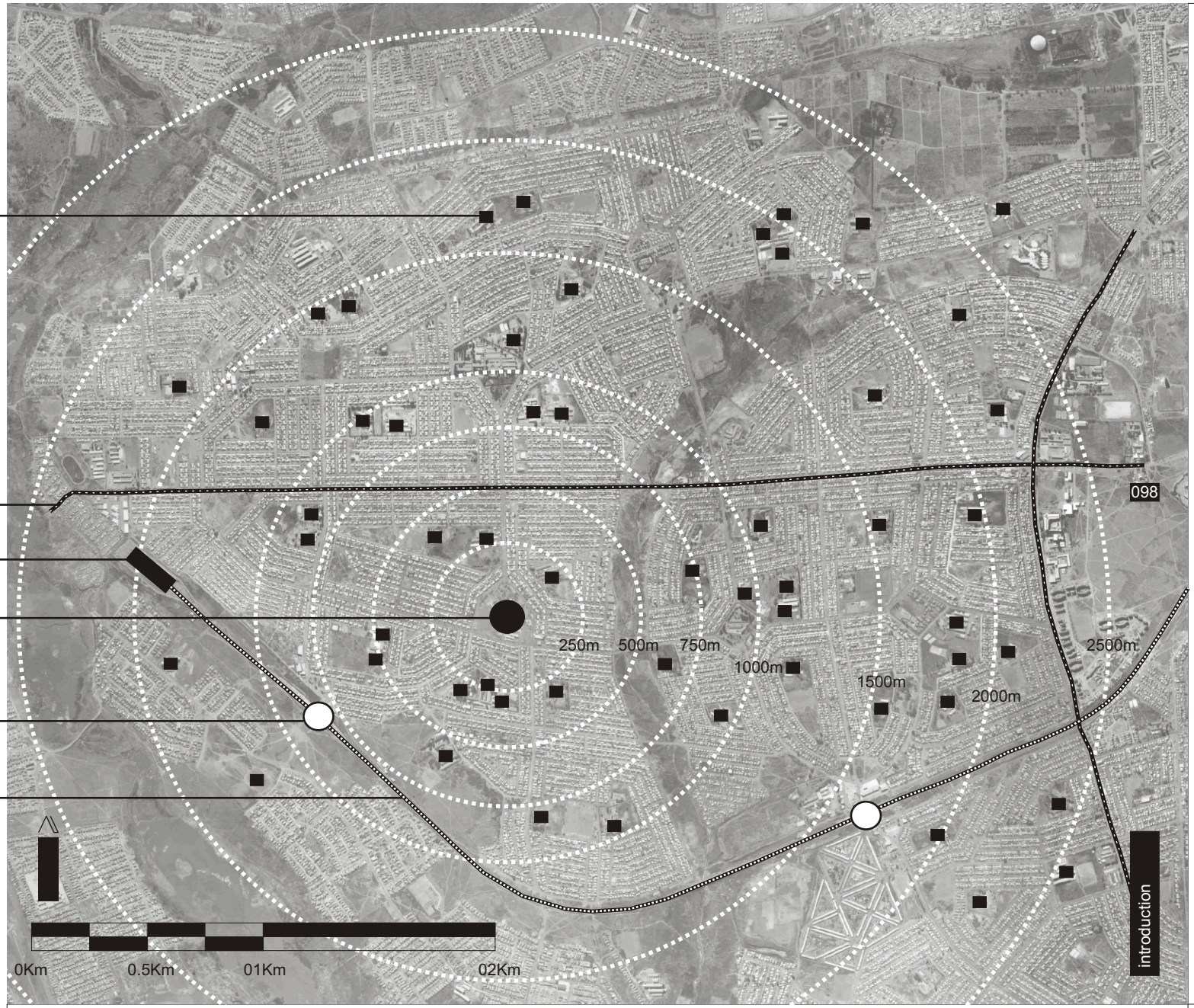


As is indicated on the map, the majority of the schools fall within a distance of 1500m of the site. If we estimate a walking time of 5mins for every 400m, then the majority of schools in the area are in a 20min walking distance from the site. We also notice that Naledi Station and Zola Clinic are in a 10min walking distance of the site.

The importance of Naledi Station to the site is that the mosque invariably becomes accessible to much more people in Soweto, and also the Friday Congregational prayer will attract a lot more worshipers. It also allows the mosque to be used for many other functions such as meetings, classes, fun days, etc. This will also impact positively on the other buildings on site as well as the community at large.

The reason why this mapping was overlaid with the position of schools in the area was to ascertain the feasibility of adding internet facilities to the program. This thesis is of the opinion that the above mentioned uses are greatly needed in the area and will add value to the site.




098
250m
500m
750m
1000m
1500m
2000m
2500m
0Km
0.5Km
01Km
02Km
introduction

137 - Ariel Photo of Site

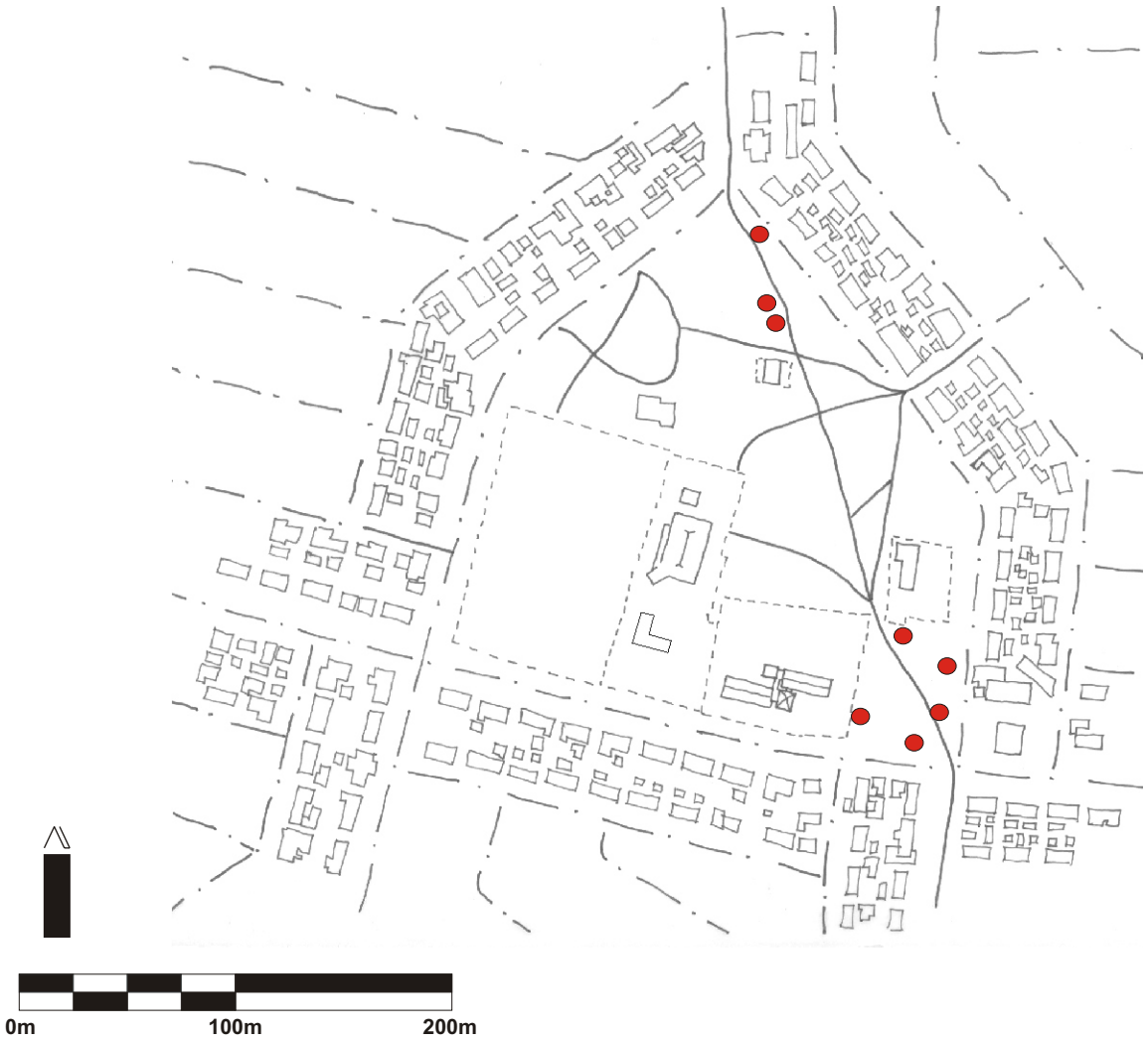


138 - Existing Buildings

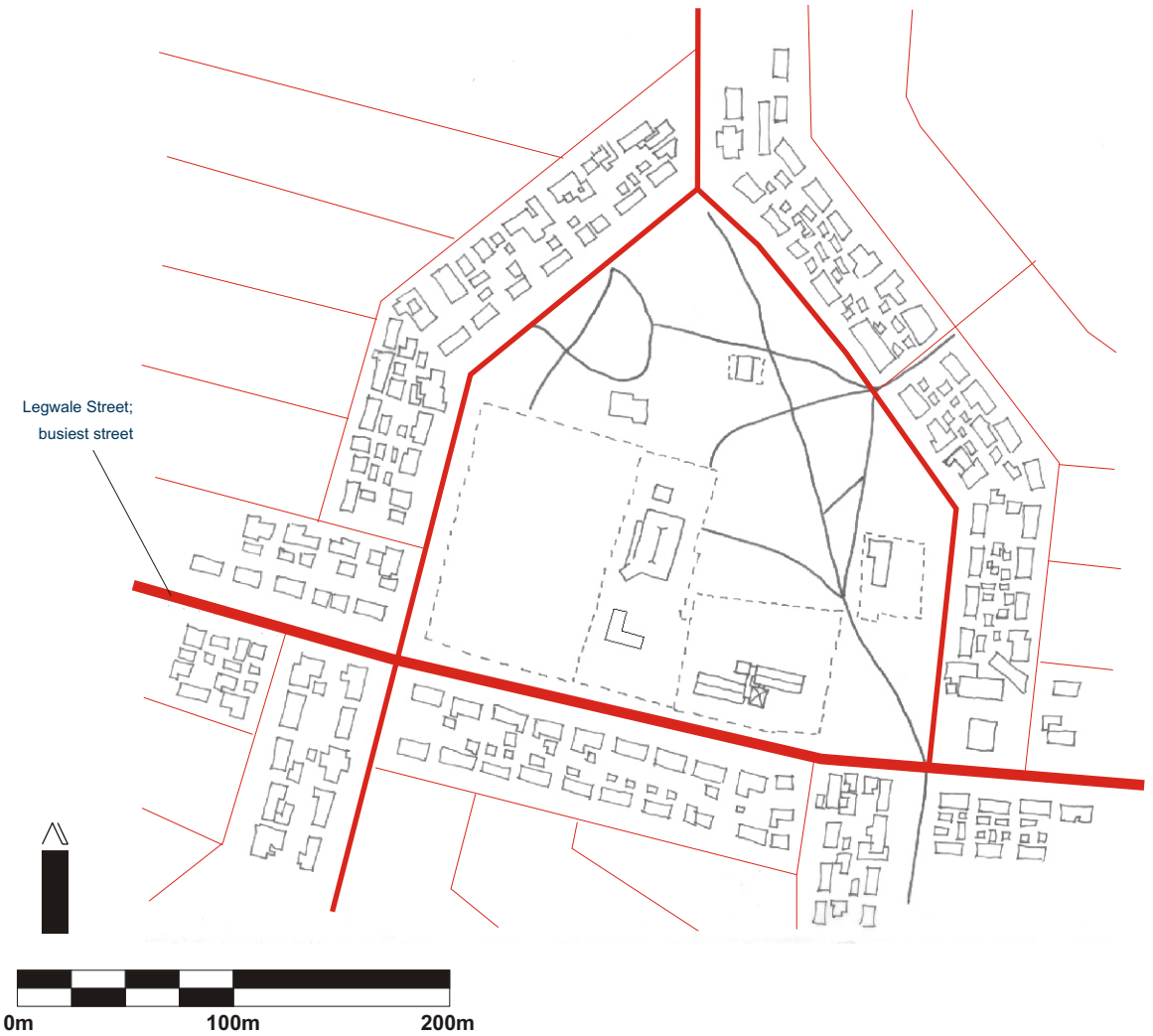


141 - Foot Paths




0m
100m
200m

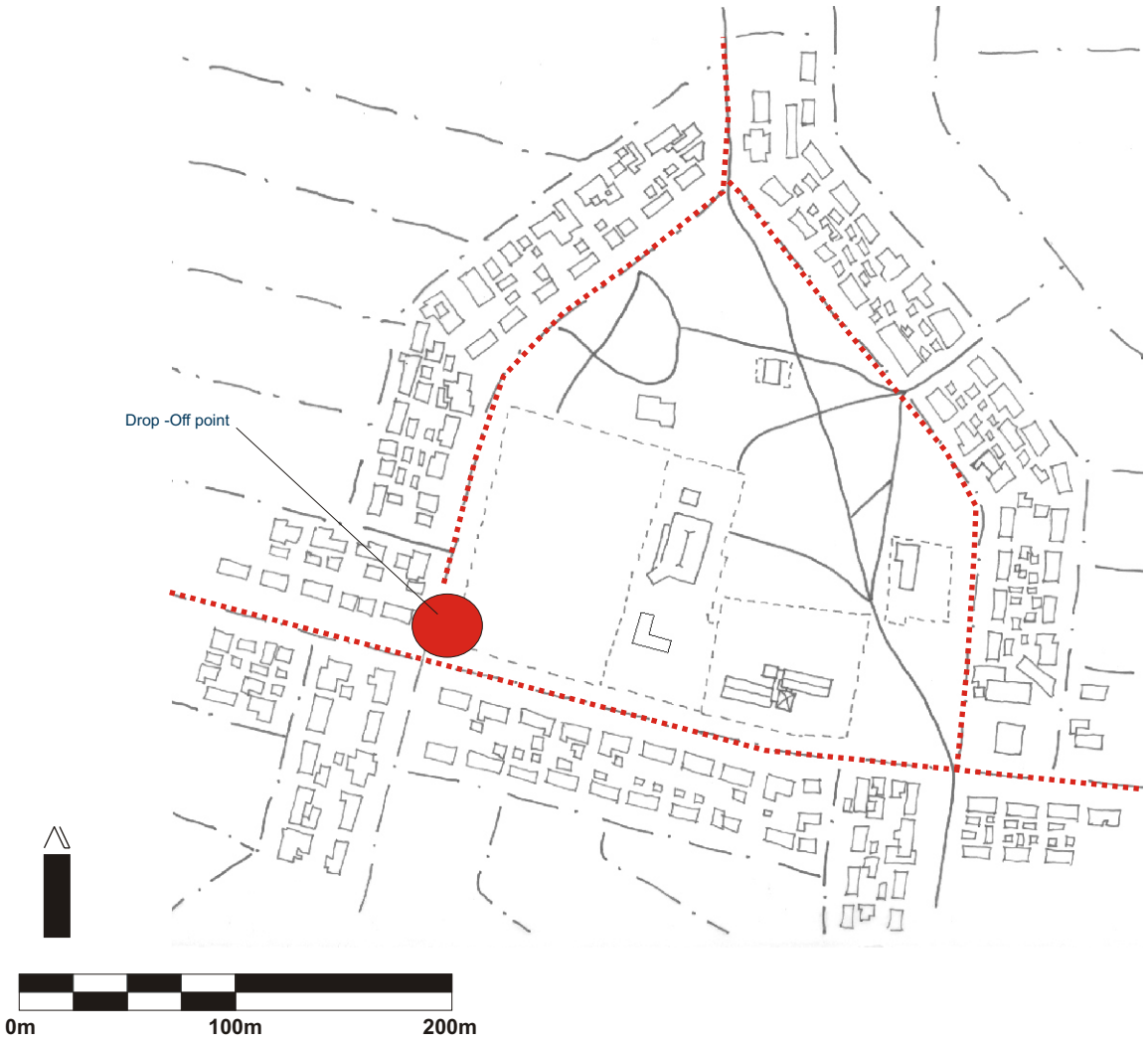
143 - Traffic Volumes



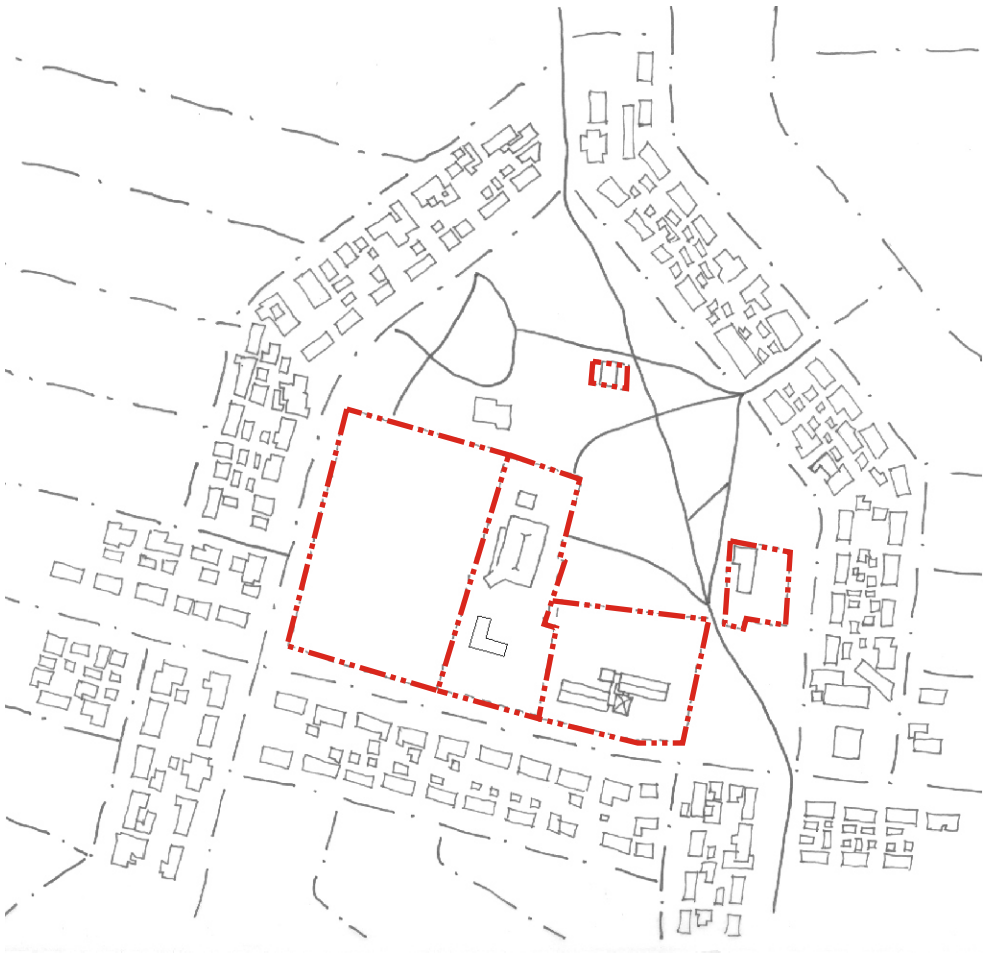
131

context

144 - Taxi Routes and Drop - Off Point



133



context


0m
100m
200m