BLUEPRINT

FACE OF THE PROVINCE

New Entrance for Provincial Parliament
Wale Street Cape Town

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1. INTRODUCTION

“The entrance must be placed in such a way that people who approach the building see the entrance or some hint of where the entrance is, as soon as they see the building itself.”

Christopher Alexander

“The position of the main entrance controls the layout of the building. It controls movement to and from the building, and all the decisions about layout flow from this decision. When the entrance is placed correctly, the layout of the building unfolds naturally and simply; when entrances are badly placed, the rest of the building never seems quite right.”

In the case of the entrance to 7 and 15 Wale Street, the home of Provincial Government, in hindsight designers clearly got it wrong. Not only is the entrance not visible at first glance, but even worse there are in fact two entrances! This duality, added to the understated location of the entrances, is problematic. (Figure 6,7).

This criticism should be put in context. For many years architects and urban planners where required to design government buildings with an austere front such as this. This was seen as an effective and efficient way to protect government officials and installations.

But then, few people even know where the Provincial Parliament is!
The following pages provide some insight into the location and urban context of the provincial precinct fronting on Wale Street.
The Historical context

HISTORICAL MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DEPICTING THE EROSION OF THE COMPANY GARDENS. OUR PROPOSAL IS TO RE-INFORCE THE MEMORY OF IT THROUGH THE PROVISION OF SQUARES, GARDENS OUTDOOR SCULPTURAL GALLERY

• IMAGE OF THE PROVINCE
• SECURITY
• RECYCLING

Figure 4 The Historical context

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Figure 5: The pedestrian route to Parliament from St Georges Mall

View 1

View 2

View 3

View 4

View 5

View 6

SITE ANALYSIS

WESTERN CAPE
PARLIAMENTARY
PRECINCT-ENTRANCE

EQUITY STUDIO
The approach to the building on foot is either via St Georges Mall and into Wale Street, or from Green Market Square along Burg Street. In neither of these cases is a ‘sense of arrival’ experienced. The entrance to this important building is quite incidental and obscure as the doors are hidden on the stoeps of the complex. Recently an attempt has been made to accentuate the building with the introduction of a large number of flags but without the desired effect. (Figure 4,5)

The Wale Street elevation displays six imposing double volume arches. The central two arches straddle the foot of Keerom Street giving access thereto, in effect, through the building. This plus the fact that it houses provincial parliament as well as other provincial departments has dictated the two entrances. As a result the building has two addresses and signage at both the no. 7 and no. 5 entrances is the same, creating confusion. (see figure 6,7).

The duality of entrances requires a duplication of police security, scanning equipment and access control to lift lobbies. Furthermore at both entrances there is very limited space between the entrance door and the security desks. Consequently, whenever more than 3 people are awaiting security clearance, an uncomfortable bottleneck situation develops. This is a regular occurrence and is most unwelcoming.

Figure 5: Pedestrian routes from Green Market Square indicating the proposed new squares in front of Parliament, at the back as part of the redevelopment of the Kampie and in front of the Mosque in Dorp Street

Figure 6 and 7: Both Entrances have the same names
The separation of power between legislative and administrative functions lies at the core of good governance. The visible separation of these functions is therefore desirable. For this reason Provincial Parliament some two years ago proposed that the building be separated vertically. This however has not happened due to the high cost and disruption involved. This solution will anyway not remove the confused entrance situation.

Another important aspect that gives identity to the Province is the landmark tower block building no 4 Dorp Street, which at 24 storeys, is a very prominent backdrop to the Wale Street frontage (Figure 9). It too straddles Keerom Street at the intersection with Dorp Street and also has two entrances. It was built in the early 70’s to house the expanded Provincial Administration and has a matching 7 storey wing on Long Street. Both wings link into 7 and 15 at several points.
Unfortunately the terrazzo plaster finish to the face of this building is failing and falling off (Figure 11). This has necessitated the construction of a temporary crash deck roof over the central courtyard between the buildings to stop falling plaster pieces causing damage. Provincial Public Works (PPW) has, after extensive specialist engineering investigation recently decided that the failing plaster finish must be removed and the facades of the building refurbished which is the subject of another major project that PPW has under submission.

This 4 Dorp Street Façade Refurbishment Project is clearly closely linked to the proposals to create a single and central entrance in Wale Street. So much so that the brief to the design consultants on the 4 Dorp Street Project was, in addition to refurbishing the façade; to improve the streetscape and interlinking courtyard spaces between the buildings on the site.

The Keerom Street’s route through the arches beneath the Wale Street building, across the now temporarily roofed courtyard in between, and
then under the tower block to the upper city and the Supreme Court beyond, was formerly open to vehicular traffic. Some 5 years ago in agreement with the City, this section was closed to vehicles and became a pedestrian route. As such this presents an ideal opportunity to use this large under-the-arches-area on Wale Street as a single arrival/entrance foyer point from where visitors can be directed on to the different Departments housed in the precinct. But it will also have to remain a public pedestrian route to the upper city.

**This was the challenge that the premier presented to Provincial Public Works general buildings.**

### 2. METHODOLOGY

In response to the challenges highlighted in the introduction, the department held a brainstorming meeting. This originated the idea of one single main entrance under the arches. The team of 2 consultant architect practices currently commissioned on the 4 Dorp Street façade refurbishment project (having had already undertaken an analysis of circulation in and around the precinct, particularly at the ground floor level) were requested to each present the department with sketches and concept design proposals.

Following a number of work-sessions between the professional teams and the departments own staff, as well as the input from the DG’s and the Speaker’s office; a number of key findings were made. These shaped the proposals received. (Figures 15–20 indicate some of the background information provided.)
Figure 14: Analysis of access through the arches and an artist impression of what it could look like
3. KEY FINDINGS

The professional teams agreed with the problem statement i.e. the issues of a sense of arrival and the duality of entrances as stated in the introduction. Clearly the current situation contributes to the bad public image. It was also agreed that the streetscapes were dull and uninspiring. The department’s proposal for a single entrance under the two arches over Keerom Street along with urban redesign work was therefore supported enthusiastically.

The problems created by the dual entrances permeate throughout the circulation of the precinct particularly at street level and indeed set the scene for some fairly drastic intervention. The key findings are as follows:

- The Wale Street entrance as the Face of the Province is not welcoming to visitors and the public at large. The two entrances with police security just inside the door further contribute to this and is confusing.

- There is a lack of sense of arrival in front of the building. A forecourt space needs to be created for the pomp and ceremony that sometimes accompany important events such as opening of parliament.
• As Keerom Street must remain a major pedestrian route through the provincial precinct it should be embraced contributing to the potentially friendly and caring face of the Province.

• Currently Keerom Street under the arches has a dark and dingy feel about it exacerbated by the temporary crash deck roof over the central courtyard. This is aggravated by the fact that it is sometimes used as a public toilet!

• Beyond the arches, in the temporary crash deck roofed courtyard area, service operations - occur in the heart of the complex. The associated delivery and refuse removal with service vehicles interfere with pedestrian flow.

• Access to the VIP parking and tower block garages also occurs in this zone with similar detrimental effect.

• The height of the tower block causes a vortex which accelerates the prevailing wind to gale force levels through the arches making it a very unpleasant pedestrian experience.

• The views through the arches are unsightly. They are obscured by the crash deck roof and focused on the builders’ yard in the ‘Kampie’ at the foot of Dorp Street where unattractive temporary fencing and contractors containers abound. (figure 21)

These findings require further interrogation and discussion.
Figure 23: Design Alternative indicating the entrance at the arches from the Dorp and Wale Street side as well as the redesign of the ground floor areas to make room for discussion and meeting rooms linked to the entrance. This sketch also indicates the relationship between the new entrance and the two lift lobbies.
4. Discussion

From the key findings it is clear that the Provincial Government does not have a distinct and definable “face”. There are unfortunately more negative elements than positive ones with the current situation. The absence of an arrival point must be addressed. Furthermore the duality and multiplicity of entrances to the complex should be consolidated or at least be arranged with emphasis on hierarchy and importance. As Alexander puts it, “when entrances are badly placed, the rest of the building never seems quite right.”

The two proposals received approached the problem from different angles. Both had innovative ideas and solutions. For the purpose of this report these were combined with the understanding that much work still has to be done. Certain similarities as well as many differences between the two schemes were observed. These are listed as follows
• The introduction of a public square in front of the Wale Street building at the intersection with Keerom and Wale was proposed. A hierarchy of squares was also suggested. Additional squares one at the intersection of Dorp and Long in front to the Mosque linking the 9 Dorp Street building and another at the foot of Dorp Street in a portion of the Kampie were identified as options for enhancing the streetscapes.

• Both schemes agree with the single entrance concept although they differed in the manner that access to the space under the arches and the pedestrian routes through the arches is handled. One proposal has a central reception desk between to two sets of arches keeping the full width open to pedestrians with individual security as one enters no 7 or 15 on either side of the space. The other has a single combination reception/security desk in the upper arch keeping the lower arch free for pedestrians. Beyond security users can enter no 15 direct, or rise up a ramp over the pedestrian route to arrive at mezzanine level of no 7. Both approaches have merit.

• Both schemes proposed a change of access to the parking garages to keep vehicles out of the Keerom Street thoroughfare. V I P parking will be accessed via the Kampie and tower block parking from Dorp Street. This is seen as a substantial improvement on the current situation.

• Concurrent with relocation of the entrances to parking garages delivery and refuse removal operations will be relocated to fully pedestrianise the Keerom Street thoroughfare.

• A further proposal (once the vehicles and the crash deck between the Wale Street and 4D are removed) is to cover the space with a sky dome. This will provide the opportunity for the creation of a wind free garden.
and other exciting spaces such as a cafeteria and/or large under cover public meeting places.

- These proposals will link the main entrance to a secondary entrance to the 4D tower block at the Dorp Street end of the Keerom Street thoroughfare.
- By closing up the spaces under the arches both in Wale Street and under 4D and by adding wind lobbies the problem of the wind vortex should be solved.
- Views up Keerom Street will be opened up once the crash deck is removed and proposed effective screening of the builders operation in the Kampie is in place. This solution is dependant on the extensive use of glass.
- In both solutions the pedestrian thoroughfare will vastly improvement on the current situation.
- One of the proposals sees the front stoeps of Wale Street being used as a open Art Gallery (Figure 28)
- Both proposals suggested opening up the high level flower boxes under the concrete canopy on Long Street for use by street vendors thus enhancing the streetscape with activity that has been prevented ever since the long street wing was completed some 33 years ago.
- One proposal shows a link from the Square at the Kampie to Queen Victoria Street through the Building housing the Department of Social Development.
- The two proposals differed on how level changes are handled and on the number of security turnstiles to be provided.
- Access to lifts was common to both proposals.
- Public meeting rooms will be provided on the ground floor to limit the number of visitors through security to upper floors.
- Provincial Parliament’s ground floor visitor’s centre is to be enhanced.

The call to the consultants was for concept design proposals only. They responded in a matter of days. Should the project proceed, considerable further design work will be done which will surely produce more innovative ideas and solutions.
Figure 29: Architect’s impression of the interior design of the proposed new foyer.

ENTRANCE FOYER
Figure 29: Architect’s impression of the interior design of the proposed new foyer.

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Figure 29: Architect’s impression of the interior design of the proposed new foyer.
5. CONCLUSIONS

The Province is without a single, prominent, main entrance - it is literally without a face. Christopher Alexander is correct when he says - when you see the building you must instinctively know where the entrance is, without having to rely on signs and maps. What is more is that the compromise solution that we have become used to, can be regarded as unfriendly and unwelcoming. This approach to building and urban design is a result of a long history of the way that government had withdrawn itself behind security installations and blank walls. All this is about to change.

Not only is it necessary to provide the building with a single entrance as proposed in this report but it is of critical importance that the streetscapes be redesigned to include a hierarchy of town squares that will link the front and the back of the government buildings and clearly define the government precinct. It is necessary to provide the province with a front door and from there a clearly visible hierarchy of entrances to the other government departments. This project also has to deal decisively with the upgrade of 4 Dorp Street.

The redesigned government precinct requires that at street level building interact with the city by making provision for commercial space. It will make a huge contribution to street life especially in Long Street. This is what the Mega Project for the revitalisation of Cape Town is all about.
The Architects involved in the 4 Dorp Street project have come up with a number of proposals. These will now have to be interrogated and a design brief agreed upon. Much work still needs to be done. One thing for certain is the need to move rapidly to deliver the first results. The project will therefore be developed in phases and executed over a number of years.

The proposal to design a new front door for Provincial Parliament has to go much further. It is not only about interior design and re-planning – it is much more than that. It has to provide the government with a face. It also has to provide the spark that will signify the government’s intention to play its part in the revitalisation of the CBD. From here this concept will spill over to the regional towns and precincts.
6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of the proposals contained in this report:

6.1 A new single main entrance is created on Wale Street under the arches straddling Keerom Street.
6.2 The proposals relating to urban design and the upgrading of the streetscapes are adopted. These are the following:

- Square 1 - Forecourt to the provincial precinct on Wale Street at the intersection with Burg and Keerom.
- Square 2 - Mosque Square at the intersection of Long and Dorp Streets.
- Square 3 - Redesign the Kampie and the spaces in front of the Court.

6.3 The ground floor of the Long Street wing is redesigned to make way for shops/trading kiosks under the canopy on Long Street.
6.4 Budget for Art on the Wale Street stoeps through community participation and or competition work by local artists is budgeted for.
6.5 An internal Court Yard is created once the crash deck is removed. This will be possible only once the failing façade plaster on the tower block is removed.
6.6 The Tower block façade is upgraded as an integral part of this Face of the Province project.
6.7 Parking entrances and service points are relocated to ensure that Keerom thoroughfare is vehicle free.
6.8 Sculptures, water features and landscaping to regenerate street life in the precinct is provided.
6.9 The implementation program and cost implication below is approved.
7. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

The proposals indicated above will be implemented in phases. The following is proposed:

Phase 1. Convert the area under the arches of the Keerom Street thoroughfare on Wale Street to new single entrance point to the Provincial Precinct. Access to 7 & 15 will be from this new foyer. Landscape work to area in front of new entrance to form forecourt at the intersection of Wale, Burg and Keerom Streets.

Phase 2. Stop all vehicular access in Keerom Street thoroughfare by relocating entrance to VIP parking via the ‘kampie’ and basement parking beneath the tower block off Dorp Street. Refuse removal delivery vehicle service point will also be relocated.

Phase 3. Landscape work to surrounding Long, Dorp and Keerom Streets to create user friendly environment and invigorate the streetscape.

Phase 4. After failing plaster to tower block has been removed, demolish crash deck and create covered central garden courtyard.

The steps related to Phase 1 are as follows:

7.1 Finalisation of user requirements and project brief - by 30 November 2009
7.2 Appointment of professional team - during December 2009
7.3 Submission of overarching master plan and concept document - by mid February 2010
7.4 Documentation of Phase 1 (Stages 1 to 4) - 6 months, 1 February to 30 August 2010
7.5 Tender period - September 2010
7.6 Tender adjudication and award – October 2010
7.7 Contract period - 12 months, November 2010 to October 2011
7.8 Phase 2-4 will be programmed during 2010 with a view of completing the project by end March 2013
8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The department will undertake this work with the assistance of outside consultancy firms and contractors.
8.2 The single entrance will require less security staff. However personnel relating to a friendly face and reception and guidance of visitors may be required.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 The two proposals indicated earlier in the document were estimated by the departmental quantity surveyor. Cost varies between R35 million and R135 million. The reason for this wide discrepancy is the difference in the scope of the work proposed. The cheaper project deals with the issues of the entrance exclusively. The more expensive proposals deal with the revitalisation of the urban landscape and the establishment of a definable precinct.
9.1.2 The general consensus is clearly favouring the more expensive project proposal.
9.1.3 The team also indicates that the works should be completed within a period of three years (Note: The CBD revitalisation project and the Dorp Street 4 upgrade may affect this project’s execution).

9.2 Implementation of Phased approach indicated above.

9.2.1 The cost estimates are based on very skimpy information and may vary as more information is made available during the planning and documentation phases.
9.2.2 Based on an average of the two proposals of R75m the cost for planning is estimated at R7.5 million to prepare tender documents and the remainder for construction. Should the high end solution be approved these costs and time frames could double.
9.2.3 The cost implications per financial year is as follows: 2009/10 R1 million, 2010/11 R30 million and the remainder during 2011/12.