

TITLE	New Wellington Police Station: Site clearance and design proposal
CLIENT	National Department of Public Works
DATE	2009 - 2011
AREA/EXTENT	1.3 ha
LOCALITY	Wellington, Western Cape

The Project Challenge

The need identified by the South African Police Service (SAPS) to construct a new police station for Wellington, aims to relocate SAPS from their current facility, which is fraught with spatial and programmatic issues relating to the smooth functioning of SAPS. This is largely as a result of insufficient space and the fact that it was never intended to serve its current function. The scope of work entailed consolidating their activities in one location, improving working conditions for personnel, improving the ability of SAPS to respond to emergencies and improving community access to the building. Applications for rezoning to Government purposes and closure of a thoroughfare were required to enable the site for development.

Principles and Approach

In light of SAPS' contemporary philosophy of engaging (rather than controlling) communities, one of the principle aims of the approach is to deinstitutionalise space to reinforce the notion of serving. The approach achieves this goal through making an easily accessible public entrance that is of a humane urban scale, with sufficient and comfortable space to sit, wait and relax in the street forecourt.

The area is characterised by undulating terrain and vegetated landscapes with beautiful panoramic mountain views. The approach aims to retain and enhance this character by minimising the building footprint and locating building programme across two floors. The design consideration also facilitates good cross-ventilation, sun-control measures and strategic oversight views from the first floor. A central garden court forms the focal point around which the building programme is wrapped. The garden court is a grassed space littered with hardy, water-efficient foliage and evergreen and deciduous trees that provide shade canopies in summer. The garden is visible from most parts of the building which facilitates a qualitative working environment and is well juxtaposed against the background of the natural mountainous landscape. The approach challenges the practice of maximising external hard surfacing with the introduction of the large garden court, which facilitates ground water infiltration and supports sustainable water collection and stormwater recharge.

In terms of built fabric, the area is characterised by low-scaled, pitched-roofed buildings with small footprints, some of which are of historic significance. The SAPS police station aims to be compatible to the fine-grained character of Wellington's urban edges by providing a predominantly walled architecture with careful consideration of openings. Reduction of the overall scale and massing of the proposed public building within the heritage context is addressed in the formal articulation of the buildings, which allows for visual permeability through the building and the penetration of natural light.

The urban edges mediate the demand for security by appropriately layering the building for better surveillance and definition of the ground plane to better define public and private space. The street widths and adjacent buildings have informed the scale of the building with the intention to provide a humane architectural character.

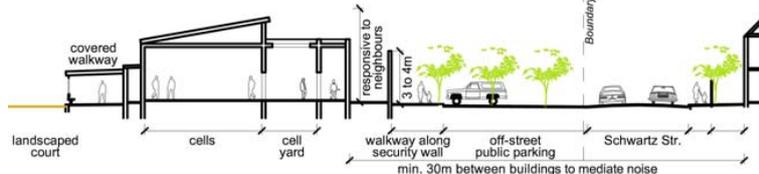
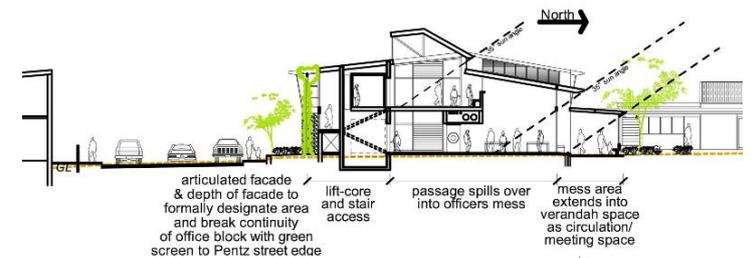
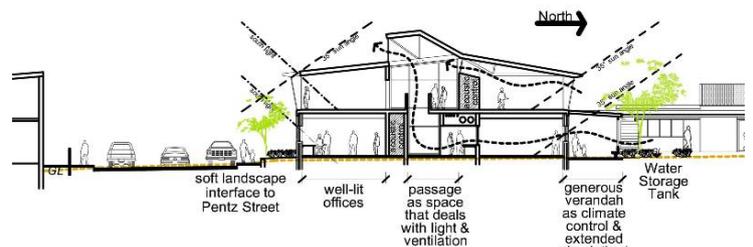
The site is organised in an L-shaped plan along the street edges and forming a public forecourt to the main entrance at the street corner. To the rear of the site, is a system of smaller buildings linked by a continuous white "werf" garden wall and organised around a central garden court. Wrapped around these buildings is a vehicular access route that facilitates parking for SAPS personnel. The narrative of a collection of related buildings is reminiscent of the farmstead. Difficult programmatic requirements that demand complex spatial relationships are mediated by a clear spatial hierarchy, clear access points and linear circulatory patterns, off which offices, cells, technical, service and storage spaces are organised. Wayfinding becomes apparent in the spatial organisation of the site.



Site Development and landscape plan



Proposed Formal massing (above); Role of the site (left)



Sections indicating environmental responsiveness and sensitivity to neighbours