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Accordingly, we request that you also submit a Sketch Plan proposal which should include a heritage impact assessment of limited scope. Our Heritage Resource Section requires that the assessment includes an outline of the architectural history of the building, an outline of the intentions of the Architect; as well as the identification of significant architectural details, spaces and outstanding objects and artworks. This heritage conservation study, including a heritage audit, will be used to assess the proposed development on the building. The proposed development proposals should be indicated on a drawing which depict the above mentioned information. The manner in which the building is affected, especially the features of heritage significance should be clearly depicted on an annotated drawing which depict the information of the heritage audit.

The HRS suggests the heritage conservation study should be undertaken by an architectural heritage specialist with expertise in Art Deco architecture.

As part of a limited consultation process of specialist interest groups we intend consulting with the following people / bodies.

- The SA Institute of Planners
- The Cape Institute of Architects
- The Institute of Landscape Architects of SA
- The Art Deco Society
- The Simon van der Stel Foundation
- Neighbouring property owners who may be affected by the bridge.

We suggest that you present the project in the Old Mutual Building to these parties at least ten days before the end of the advertising period. We will set these dates and once you have submitted all the necessary information.

In conclusion, we are, in-principle, most supportive of the proposal and look forward to your response and action.

Sincerely



Manager:

Land Use Management

PARLIAMENT STREET | SKYWALK

The Case for a Diagonal Pedestrian Bridge linking the Mutual Building (14-18 Darling St.) with 'The Adderley' Parking Garage (formerly the Foschini Building), across the intersection of Parliament & Longmarket Streets, Central Cape Town - *by Robert Silke of Louis Karol Architects*

WHAT MAKES THE MUTUAL BUILDING IMPORTANT

Built in 1939 on the eve of World War II, the Mutual building represents one of the last, and arguably most sophisticated and lavish Art Deco buildings ever built on the African continent. Constructed 'without a budget' by one of the most powerful financial institutions in the country, few buildings built anywhere at any time in South Africa's history (let alone during the Art Deco period) have been constructed with the same resources and sheer level of detail and design as the Mutual Building on Darling Street.

Having said that, it isn't just money which sets the Mutual apart as a highly-resourced local representative of a foreign architectural order : The Mutual is one of the only remaining South African Art Deco examples that are uniquely African in conception, design and detail : from the pyramidal roof tower, to the Paarl Granite facades, to the ethnic tribesmen and big five animal reliefs carved into the stone exterior, it's overt African-ness has attracted international attention in the form of articles in foreign architecture & design media, and most recently served as the opening venue and primary focus of attention for the 7th Annual International Conference on Art Deco, held in Cape Town last month.

This serves to further distinguish the Mutual Building as being one of the scarce examples of South African architecture that have an international reputation – making this not only a building of national, but international significance.

WHY THE MUTUAL BUILDING IS UNDER THREAT

In spite of repeated efforts to resuscitate the dilapidated East City, the loss of District Six, and the area's consequential lack of a residential hinterland, have resulted in these efforts achieving limited results. This, in spite of admirable urban regeneration initiatives on the part of the City, private investors and the Cape Town Partnership. We are of the considered opinion that the future of this part of Cape Town rests heavily on the re-instatement of District Six and with the brave new urbanites looking to make homes for themselves in the City.

The Mutual was built as a dedicated corporate headquarters for the Old Mutual, and since that company's decentralisation to larger premises in Pinelands in the 1950's, has been let out as commercial office space.

For the last twenty years, due to major suburban decentralisation by its traditional tenant base, as well as the deterioration of the City's public transport infrastructure, central city office space has become increasingly difficult to let.

The prestige buildings, offering A-Grade office space with adequate parking to cater for office workers (who no longer desire to use public transport) have managed to weather the storm, but older buildings – which were simply not built with these considerations in mind – have lost out to the likes of Claremont, Tygerberg and Century City.

The Old Mutual has spared no effort in attempting to make the Darling Street Building (of high sentimental value to the company) once again desirable as office space. 1989 saw a major revamp, restoring the building to its original, pristine condition. In addition, the lifts were overhauled, the air-conditioning modernised – and most pertinently to this document, the parking was increased from virtually nothing – to a figure of around sixty bays – by the conversion of old basement plant rooms into parking.

Despite the massive reinvestment, you don't have to be a mathematician to work out that the parking ratio for this 14000sqm building still falls pitifully short of the required 4 bays per 100sqm that are a pre-requisite for the vast majority of commercial tenants.

Designed in an age of large powerful organisations – and no motorcars – the Mutual stands as an exquisite, lavish, grand anachronism in a City undergoing fundamental change. Today the Mutual Building stands 90% empty, it leaks throughout from its Paarl Granite joints – and the murals in the

historically important fresco hall are starting to bubble and deteriorate – and there is nothing the Old Mutual can do about it :

The building is quite-rightly protected and could never be demolished and redeveloped – even if Old Mutual wanted to. There is no scope for providing additional parking inside the building, as all three basements have already been converted into garages, which are patently insufficient. In addition, neither the ground nor first floors can be converted into further parking – as the City's quite rational statutory protection of ground floor commerce, as well as SAHRA's interest in the grand, multiple-volume banking hall, prevent any encroachment of parking on or above street level.

WHAT OLD MUTUAL INTENDS TO DO ABOUT IT

Until recently, it appeared that the only available option remaining to the Old Mutual is to switch off the electricity, shut down the A/C plant, and to mothball the entire building – which loses the company hundreds of thousands of Rands each year. Final shutdown was scheduled for the beginning of April, until a radical new proposal was put to Old Mutual Properties by Louis Karol Architects, the firm who designed Old Mutual's flagship in the CBD, Safmarine House, and who have been working in the City centre for the last 50 years, whose attachment to the CBD is as strong as the Old Mutual's.

The proposal is to redevelop the generic office floors of the Darling Street building into 180 middle-income residential apartments, whilst preserving the sacred and publicly protected space of the Entrance Level, Banking Hall, Boardroom & Fresco Hall – and leaving the facades untouched.

While for 25 years there has been a glut of commercial office space in the Cape Town CBD, today we are in the unique situation – where for the first time in decades, there is an identifiable demand for residential accommodation in the City, and a rare window of opportunity exists to save Old Mutual Darling Street as part of a radical residential re-use initiative.

Old Mutual intends to invest around R100 000 000 in overhaul and restoration work, and while the returns are going to be limited at best (nobody's making millions here) – the company sees this as a critical investment which has the potential to revolutionise the heart of Cape Town's CBD, which has to date only attracted major investment on its periphery.

The timing is right, the residential property market is right, and the circumstances are unique, and we fear that if this development does get off the ground as a matter of urgency, this window of opportunity may not repeat itself for another 20, 30 years – and we will have squandered a critically-important opportunity to re-position central Cape Town, as a secure, mixed-use residential and commercial hub.

THE CATCH

Although a residential redevelopment is far less demanding of parking than commercial use, the Mutual building, with around sixty parking bays, still falls far short of the 180 bays (one bay per flat) required to make any apartment saleable. In another fortunate turn of events however, the last year has seen the construction of no less than 3 new dedicated parking garages in the immediate vicinity – all of which are prepared to sell parking space to our development. The nearest of the garages, The Adderley, diagonally across Parliament Street from the Mutual Building – and which has to date had trouble finding takers for its numerous parking bays, has at least 180 secure, undercover bays available – of which Old Mutual has taken an option on 90, with a view to taking more.

Our market research has shown however, that critical to breaking the resistance that the market has towards living in the very centre of town, is the provision of safe, secure, in-house parking, with secure direct access from garage to apartment. We have been warned by Mrs Golding of Pam Golding Properties, that there is no way that the market will tolerate having to cross an unsheltered, insecure public street at night in order to access their cars – in short, Cape Town is not yet ready for it – and we believe her ...

We have exhaustively investigated the options available to us for creating a direct link between The Adderley and The Mutual Building :

An underground tunnel beneath the intersection of Parliament and Longmarket Streets – While the Mutual Building has several basements, The Adderley has none. And while the excavation of a basement is theoretically possible at great cost (with probably the least impact on the streetscape), intersecting sewage systems under Longmarket and Parliament Streets prevent a tunnel from being dug

any less than 3 - 6m below street level, an exorbitantly costly undertaking which would destroy the viability of an already barely-feasible scheme.

Closing off (privatising) the intersection of Parliament & Longmarket Streets and providing a covered walkway at ground level – Potentially the most cost-effective solution, we nevertheless saw this as the least-realistic approach, defeating the purposes of reurbanisation, having the most profound and negative impact on the streetscape, and consequently having little chance of getting through Council.

A high-level Skywalk (Pedestrian Bridge) over the intersection of Parliament and Longmarket Streets – At a cost of around R500 000, we propose erecting a light steel structure connecting the existing parking garage to the proposed apartments. We view this as our last and only feasible, realistic opportunity to save this re-use project, and the Mutual Building from its gloomy, inevitable fate. Acutely aware of the impact such a bold intervention may have on a listed building in a delicate existing urban fabric, we called on Gabriel Fagan, arguably South Africa's most eminent conservation architect, to A.) Investigate the impact such a bridge might have in an historic urban context, and B.) In the event he were to conclude such an intervention were possible and/or at all desirable, to design the most appropriate route the Skywalk should take (diagonal vs. orthogonal), as well to design a formal solution befitting the status of the area and of the Mutual Building itself.

WHAT COUNCIL CAN DO TO HELP

We are very aware that we are not the first people to attach a high value to this part of town, and that this area and the buildings in question have been at the top of Council's priority list for a long time now. We are further aware of the resources and infrastructure invested into the East City by the Council in recent years, with specific reference to the resurfacing and upgrade of this particular intersection of Parliament and Longmarket Streets – which has singularly served to stave off the irreversible urban decay encroaching on this area.

We are therefore sensitive to Council's potential concerns over what impact the Skywalk may have on the public space constituted by the intersection of these two streets, in the light of the money Council has already invested therein.

We would like to draw Council's attention to the advanced state of urban decay now apparent on the intersection : the commercial shop-front to the rear of The Adderley on one of the affected intersecting corners has taken the longest to let, and has now been occupied by low-level retailers who have deemed it necessary to protect their premises with high-gauge 'prison-bars'. Diamond House, on an opposite corner, formerly the headquarters of American Swiss, is a crumbling eyesore and overcrowded slum accommodation for reportedly close on 100 illegal aliens, served by far fewer toilets. While Mullers hangs onto another corner, suffering regular break-ins and vandalism to its priceless Art Deco shop front.

The residential redevelopment of the Mutual Building has the potential to stop the clock and to truly reverse the decay. Our point is that if something radical doesn't happen very soon, the Council's investment in this intersection will have been for nought – and this could be the first part of the Cape Town CBD to truly degenerate in the path of South Africa's other major city centres – which would be an unmitigated disaster for all of us.

We are appealing to Council to see its way clear to taking a pragmatic approach, by allowing for the construction of what we see as an umbilical cord - a life-saving intravenous device which will allow for us to provide the critically-important (albeit banal) pre-requisites to the sustainable redevelopment of the Cape Town City Centre – safe, secure parking, without which we might as well all just stay at home.

PARLIAMENT STREET | SKYWALK

Urban Conservation Issues by Gawie Fagan of Gabriël Fagan Architects

Based on acceptance that a direct link, (other than at street level) is required between the Old Mutual and Foschini's to make the re-cycling into residential units of the Mutual building viable, a light 1,5m wide covered footbridge is proposed. The following considerations informed the design:

1. Floor-to-ceiling heights of the Mutual and Foschini differ, but the roof level of Foschini's is almost level with the 3th floor of Mutual, which is thus the most suitable level at which to link. Placing the bridge so high above street level in the relatively narrow streets, will keep it well above normal viewing height.
2. There are three possible routes that a bridge link could follow:
 - 2.1 Orthogonal to the street system, spanning Longmarket Street from Foschini's to J Muller on the Longmarket/Parliament Streets corner and then across Parliament Street, to the Mutual.
While the Foschini's building is a renovation of the Findlays Building of c1900 and now of no particular architectural merit, the Mullers corner on the other hand constitutes probably the finest Art Deco shopfront in Cape Town. A rare curved glass corner window on first floor and a projecting bay window on the second, topped by a steep tiled Mansard roof, make for an interesting building that is seen to good advantage over its full height because of its corner location. A bridge supported off and oversailing the Mullers building will severely detract from it, and is thus best avoided.
 - 2.2 Orthogonal to the street system, spanning Parliament Street from Foschini's to Diamond House and then across Longmarket Street to the Mutual.
Diamond house being some six storeys higher than the roof deck of Foschini's, a bridge springing from Foschini's will dogleg aesthetically very awkwardly into the rounded corner of Diamond House. Furthermore, the present state of decay, illegal occupation and consequent fire risk of Diamond House, render it an undesirable structural support for the bridge.
 - 2.3 Diagonally across the intersection of Longmarket and Parliament Streets, directly linking Foschini's and the Mutual.
This will reduce the bridge length by a third down to approximately 18m. The splayed corner treatment of the Foschini building on the Parliament/Longmarket Streets corner, lends itself well for the springing point of a diagonal bridge. By taking off at right angles to this splayed Foschini corner, the Mutual building is met not on its corner, but on the Parliament street façade at the first of the triangular bay windows, offering an appropriate entry point for a pedestrian bridge if the bridge is reduced to a single door width at the point of entry. This will avoid damage to the granite facings, and is easily reversible should the bridge not be required in future. As the Foschini floor level is some 300mm higher than the Mutual level, the bridge can be supported on the floor slab at the entry point, with two steps down, avoiding an external attachment structure. The aesthetic impact of a single diagonal bridge versus orthogonal bridges was considered:
The need to avoid oversailing Mullers or supporting off the Diamond House corner (as would be required by orthogonal bridges) has already been stressed, as also the fact that its great height relative to the canyon-like street width will keep the proposed bridge above normal viewing height.
The fact that the bridge is diagonal to the street grid is not seen as aesthetically undesirable, and looking down Parliament Street toward the diagonal façades of the Golden Acre, could be seen as a positive congruence.

The impact of the projected bridge cannot be compared with the unnecessarily clumsy bridge over the upper reaches of Longmarket Street, nor with the well designed but much larger (because of its pedestrian traffic load, length and lower height) bridge linking the Golden Acre and station deck.

Serving only as an internal link between the Mutual residential units and their parking garage, the bridge is to be 1,5m wide, sufficient only for two persons to pass. A light tubular steel oval sectioned structure with its partly glazed side walls as proposed, need not harm, and could in fact add interest and enhance the streetscape.