



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Towards New Universities in
Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape**

Recommendations on the Seats for the New Universities



June 2012

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1. Background and summary recommendations

In 2010 the Minister of Higher Education and Training appointed two task teams to investigate the feasibility and possible models for the establishment of Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces. The task teams engaged stakeholders in the provinces, and, taking into account provincial and national needs and imperatives, made recommendations on the type and size of the two new institutions; including information on possible sites for the institutions. The reports of the task team were submitted to the Minister in September 2011, and subsequently to the Council on Higher Education for their advice, as is required by the Higher Education Act. Technical work for the establishment of the two institutions began in October 2011.

Since November 2011, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has explored a range of issues relevant to the selection of the best sites for the new Universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. These include:

Understanding the nature, scale and possible academic content of the two institutions;

- Establishing a framework of selection criteria, defining the essential qualities of the host town and of the optimum site, a framework that supports objective decision making (see Annexure 1);
- Visiting and assessing the 18 sites put forward by a range of stakeholders in the two provinces (see Annexure 2).

This document summarises the recommendations on the most appropriate sites for the two new universities, namely:

- Mpumalanga – The government owned Lowveld Agricultural College in Nelspruit to accommodate 15000 students, with potential for further growth;
- Northern Cape – The inner city of Kimberly, based on the assembly and consolidation of a number of publicly owned sites in order to accommodate 5000 students, with some potential for further growth.

2. Key Criteria – a summary overview of decisive factors

At a **countrywide level**, the new institutions must advance the national goals for higher education, including enrolment growth and growth in teaching and academic capacity. As the first new universities in our post democracy, they must be inspirational and reflect the values we aspire to as a nation.

At a **regional and local level** the new institutions must:

- create a strong academic hub in each province, characterized by strong main campuses that elevate the regional focus on higher education;
- enable maximum access within the country, the province and, indeed, internationally;
- contribute to the economic growth and cultural development of the respective provinces;
- draw on the context, individuality and strengths of each province to develop a unique academic focus.

The selection of “the seat of delivery” must be based on the ability of the **selected town** to ensure the success of the new university, now and into the future. In this context, the town must provide an appropriate supporting fabric and environment for the university. The selected town must be accessible to the largest possible population, provincially and nationally. It must have attractive social, cultural and recreational amenities and be able to

attract and retain top academics. It must be economically and commercially vibrant, able to facilitate some student jobs and internship experience. The prestige and viability of the new institution would be enhanced by a town that is host to important government institutions, research institutes and other public entities.

Within the preferred town, the **selected site** must be well located. It must provide an iconic setting for the university with strong visibility and a prominent presence. It should be of suitable size and shape for current plans as well as future expansion over many decades. It should be able to be quickly and cost effectively serviced and should be unencumbered by complex environmental, land, legal or geotechnical constraints.

3. Mpumalanga - Lowveld Agricultural College, Nelspruit

With a total area of 76 495 square kilometres, Mpumalanga is the second-smallest province after Gauteng, taking up 6.3% of South Africa's land area and with a population of 3.6-million people (2010). A large portion of this population is located in the Lowveld agricultural region and is mainly concentrated in a band of settlements stretching northwards from the capital, Nelspruit, along the R40 Development Corridor.

3.1 Summary recommendation on the selection of the town

Nelspruit is the best placed city in the province to accommodate and support a new university with an estimated student population of fifteen thousand.

Nelspruit is the capital of the Province and the administrative and business hub of the Lowveld region. It is the most integrated town with respect to provincial and national road and rail infrastructure. The city is situated at the junction of 2 major development corridors, namely the N 4 and the R 40. The town boasts an international airport and is close, and en route, to the Kruger National Park and the capital cities of neighbouring countries, Swaziland and Mozambique.

As an established centre for tourism and recreation, Nelspruit also boasts growing commercial, manufacturing and business sectors and has the capacity to create livelihoods for students in various fields. A broad spectrum of housing opportunities is available for students and staff.

In summary, the city of Nelspruit:

- is a prominent growth point, located at the junction of two major development corridors – the R40 and N4 corridors;
- provides maximum access opportunities to high density populations along both these corridors;
- is further linked by rail and air;
- boasts an International Airport, providing ease of access for visiting academics and dignitaries;
- offers environmental quality – with excellent amenities for staff and students
- is a pre-eminent centre for tourism and recreation;
- is the Seat of Provincial Government;
- offers the most integrated urban system, particularly movement, infrastructure, civic amenities and green structure;
- boasts an established and growing commercial, manufacturing and business sector;
- offers student job and internship opportunities; and
- offers a broad spectrum of housing opportunities for students and staff.

3.2 Summary recommendation on the selection of the site

The existing Lowveld Agricultural College is situated on a 240 hectare property that is well established and well cared for. It is on a gentle slope facing south and overlooking the Mpumalanga Legislature and the City as a whole. The property is directly linked to both the N4 and R40 movement corridors and is highly visible and prominent. It currently offers 240 student places, with residences, sport amenities and administration buildings. It is owned by the Government with established bulk infrastructure, roads and services.

This site offers quick operational and academic establishment. It borders on the site of the Agricultural Research Council facility, which offers potential as an important academic partner. The site is also close to the Mpumalanga legislature complex and a rapidly developing commercial/retail node along the N4/R40 linkage. It is within close proximity to retail, commercial and recreational amenities. Building on existing regional and local infrastructure, the positioning of a University on this site will further strengthen the R40 Development Corridor.

In summary, the site:

- is sufficiently large to accommodate the new University, as well as the existing College and will allow for future growth over 50 year period and beyond;
- is well located adjacent to both the R40 and N4 corridors;
- is spatially linked to, and associated with, the Provincial Legislature and is also close to retail facilities;
- is government-owned land, supporting reduced development time and costs;
- has established bulk infrastructure, supporting reduced development time and costs (though the adequacy of the existing supply will need to be verified);
- has presence and prominence, overlooking the city and offering opportunity for an iconic development;
- provides sufficient land to create a new identity and expand the academic programme;
- provides opportunity for student and staff accommodation and sport and recreation amenities;
- offers quick operational establishment and conversion into a university campus.
- could be further augmented by the acquisition of small portions of adjacent private sector land, particularly along its ridge.

The site of the Lowveld Agricultural College responds positively to all of the criteria set for the establishment of a new university in Mpumalanga.

3.3 Considerations to be noted

It is important that the Lowveld Agricultural College remains viable. It is also important that as much farming land as possible is retained for academic purposes. In this context, the possible acquisition of some adjacent, privately-owned property is being explored.

4. Northern Cape – The inner city of Kimberley

The vast and arid Northern Cape is the largest province and represents up to nearly a third of South Africa's land area. Yet it has the country's smallest population, around 1-million people, and an extremely low population density of three people per square kilometre. After the capital city of Kimberley, the largest town in the province is Upington with a population of 75,000.

4.1 Summary recommendation on the selection of the town

In this sparsely populated and arid province, Kimberley, with a population of some 300 000 people, is home to one third of the population of the Northern Cape. It offers the best conditions and environment to support the establishment of a world class university with a student population of five thousand.

The city has the capacity to absorb many university activities into the existing town fabric and to offer livelihoods to students in terms of jobs and internships. The town offers a range of retail and community facilities and is an established tourism and recreation centre. It offers environmental quality to both staff and students.

Kimberley has a broad educational base, including well respected primary and secondary education, supporting the ability to attract and retain quality academic staff. The town has a well developed civic bulk infrastructure and the best offering of housing and student accommodation in the province.

Structurally, the town of Kimberley is well located within the national movement structure – on the Cape Town to Gauteng route – by both road and rail infrastructure. The town is also serviced by an airport connecting it to major cities in South Africa. Proximity to other regional centres and universities such as Bloemfontein (170km) and Potchefstroom (350km) will support the establishment phase of the new institution and will enable opportunity for ongoing academic exchange.

In summary, the city of Kimberley:

- provides maximum integration with national infrastructure – on the Cape Town to Gauteng route – by both road and rail infrastructure,
- it has an airport;
- is in close proximity to other regional centers and higher education institutions – Bloemfontein (170km), Potchefstroom (350km);
- has the greatest concentration of population, namely 30% of the total province;
- has a well developed civic bulk infrastructure;
- has a broad educational base, namely well respected primary and secondary education, which is important for staff retention;
- offers environmental quality – with good amenities for staff and students, and good potential to attract and retain staff;
- is the seat of Provincial Government;
- is an established commercial centre with a variety of retail and community facilities;
- is an established tourism centre and gateway to the province;
- offers student job and internship opportunities;
- has the best offering of housing and student accommodation in the province;
- will enjoy a measure of inner city regeneration, in the wake of decreased activity by the mining industry.

4.2 Summary recommendation on the selection of the site

Located in the very heart of the city and around the Oppenheimer Park the envisaged site lies at the junction of roads leading to Bloemfontein, Cape Town, and Gauteng.

The proposed University Seat is situated in a central location in the city, enjoying high visibility as an institution of national importance – with the ability to establish an iconic identity. The

location of the academic and administrative component of the university is focused around the established central civic open space of the city, with maximum accessibility to the city and surrounds.

The proposed site requires the acquisition and consolidation of publicly owned land adjacent to two properties occupied by the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE) plus two properties of the Further Education and Training (FET) College. There is a preliminary commitment from the City to provide municipal-owned land adjacent to the site as well as land within a 15 minute walk for student residential accommodation and for shared sport facilities. Furthermore, mining activity has diminished and there appears to be some extra capacity within the adjacent city centre, providing opportunities for staff and student accommodation.

The central location offers various existing amenities, which have the capacity to support the new university. Retail and recreational facilities are present within walking distance of the site. Established educational facilities including schools and training facilities are in the immediate vicinity. The presence of the Northern Cape FET College and NIHE provide the potential for quick academic establishment.

The development of a new Higher Education Institution on this site would strengthen the civic character of the city, make use of and enhance the existing infrastructure, make use of predominantly government owned land (national, provincial and municipal), activate urban regeneration within the city, and ultimately result in reduced delivery costs and time.

In summary, the consolidated inner city site:

- is in a central and highly visible location, with potential to establish an iconic identity with a focus around the central city park;
- is well located and integrated within the inner city;
- has surrounding support amenities and facilities (retail and recreation);
- has established education facilities in the immediate vicinity (schools, higher education and Further Education and Training facilities);
- provides potential for quick academic establishment, using existing buildings;
- supports the adaptive re-use of existing inner city buildings (NIHE);
- developed as a new Higher Education Institution would strengthen the civic character of the city;
- supports the enhanced use of existing infrastructure, supporting reduced delivery cost and time;
- is based primarily on government owned land (national, provincial and municipal), supporting reduced delivery cost and time.

4.3 Considerations to be noted

While the site offers very favourable potential, it is important that the additional government-owned land is assembled to enable a consolidated presence and future growth of the institution. The procurement of some privately owned land may be required for strategic long term expansion purposes but this option should be minimized to reduce costs and possible delays.

5. Way forward

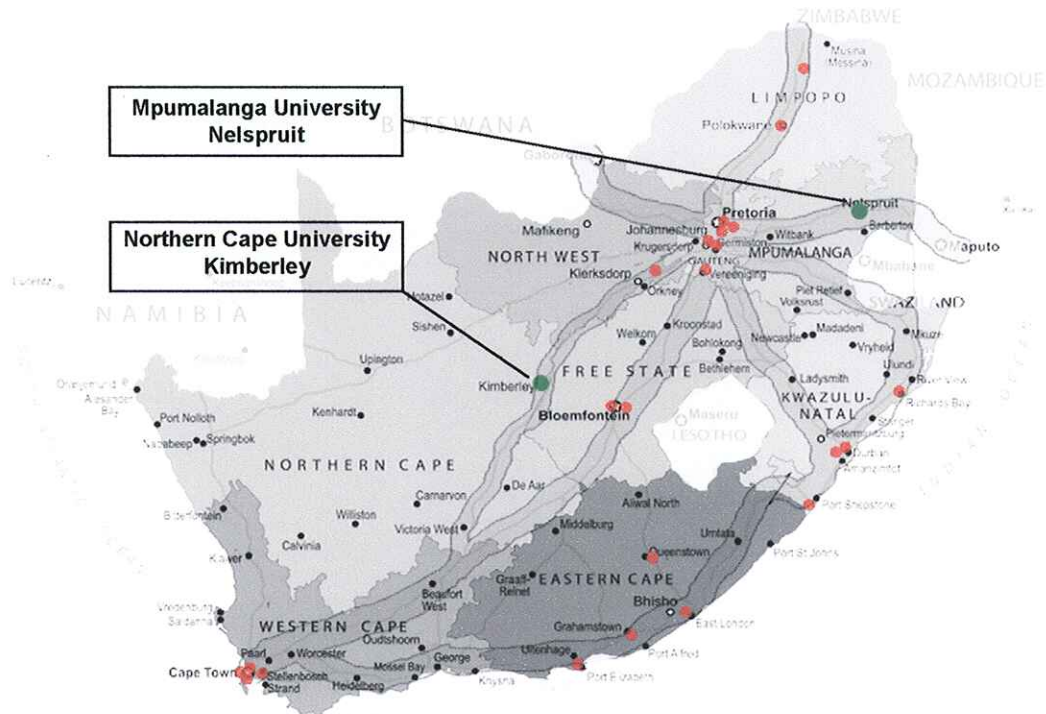
The immediate way forward depends on several key steps, which include:

- Consultation with Premiers of the Provinces and Mayors of the selected towns to establish partnership in the further development;
- Assembly of publicly owned land;
- Confirmation of the academic architecture for the two universities as the basis for detailed planning;
- Announcement of the Seats of the two Universities (July 2012);
- Detailed planning for physical and operational development.

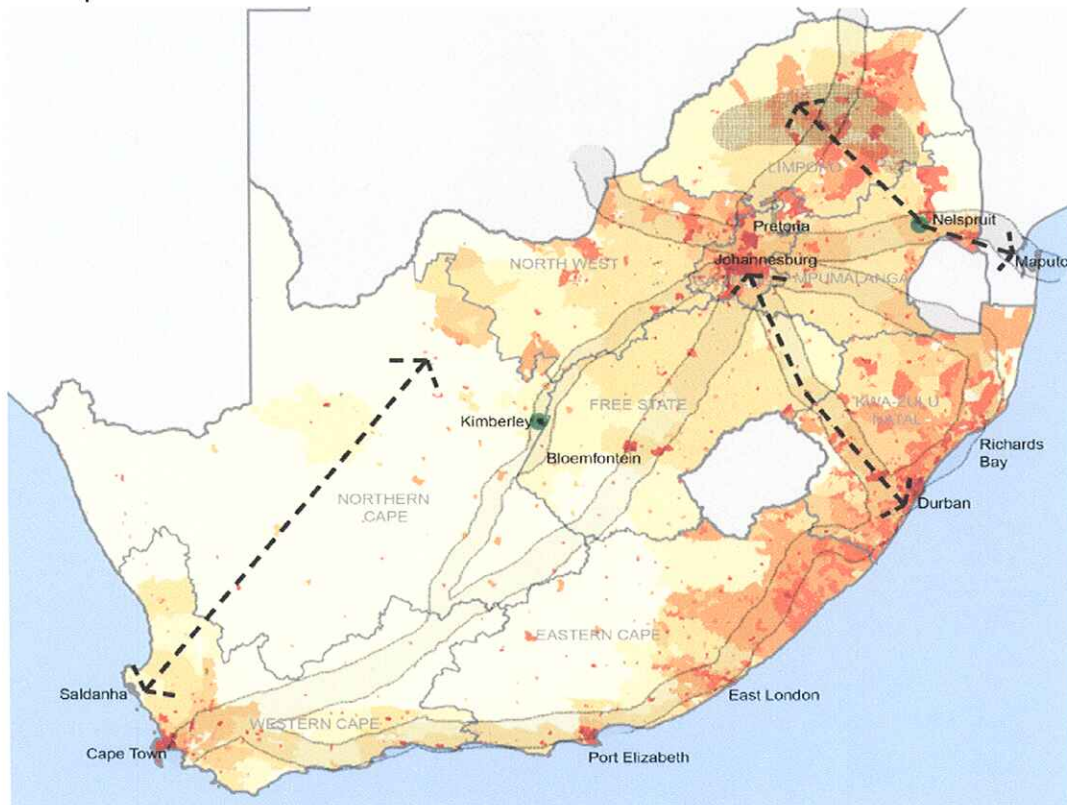
6.0 Illustrations: National and regional spatial considerations

6.1 National scale:

Integrating with National and Provincial Planning and Development Frameworks and Strategies.

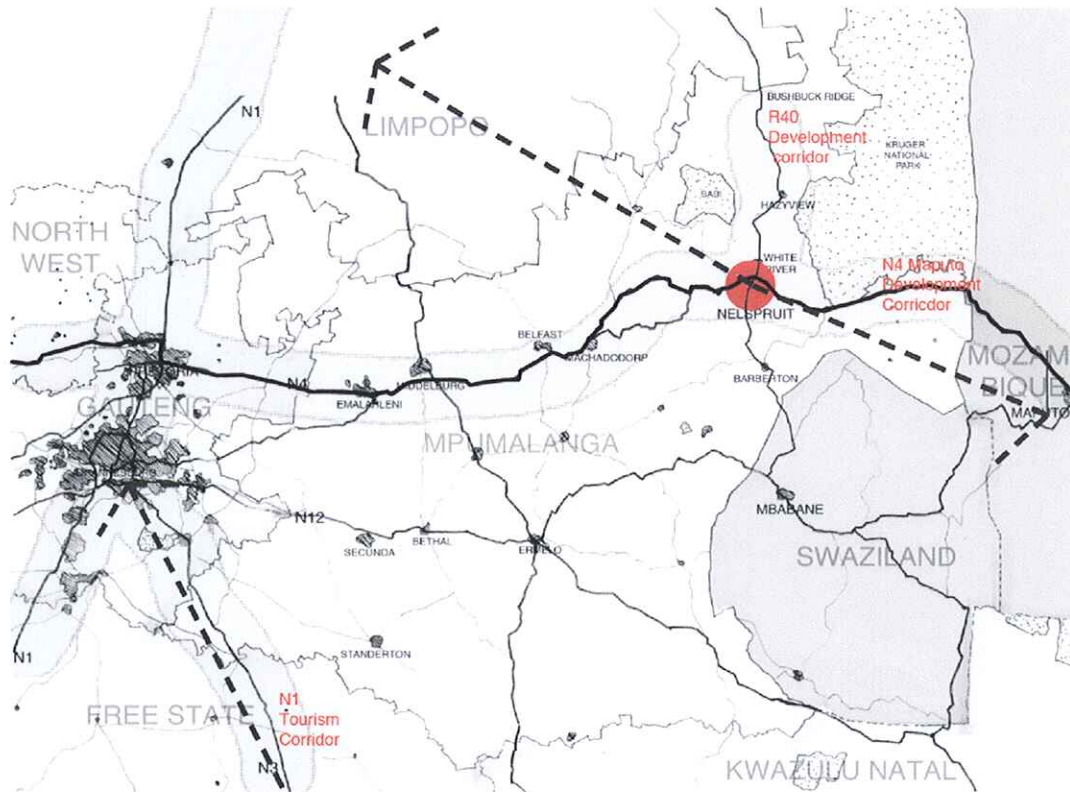


Location of existing and proposed new universities in relation to national movement and development corridors



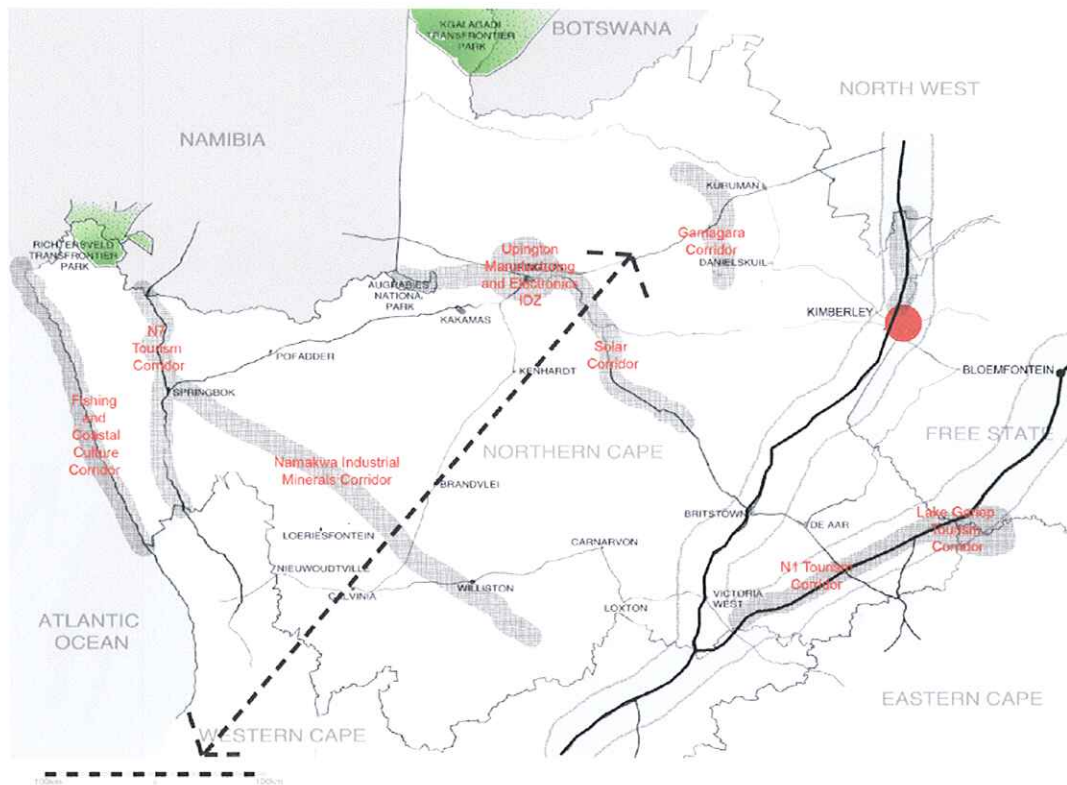
Location of new universities in relation to spatial development corridors and Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission Projects

6.2 Provincial and regional structural considerations



a. Mpumalanga:

- Integrating with Provincial Planning and Development Strategies.
- R40 and N4 Development Corridors



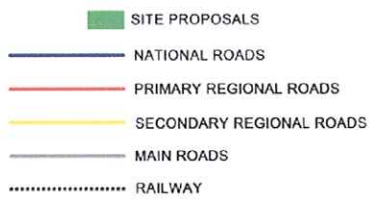
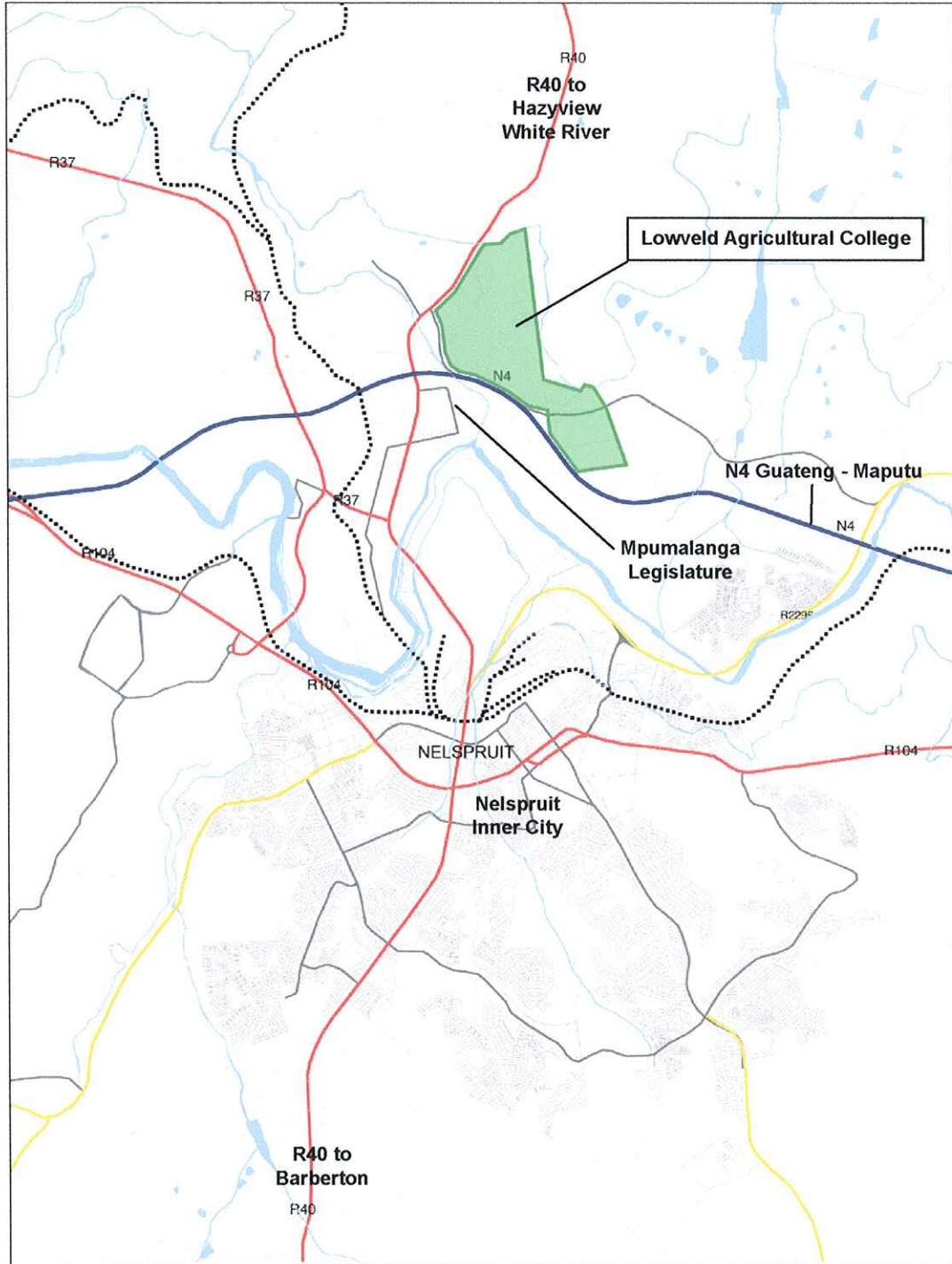
b. Northern Cape Province

N12 Corridor and focus on Industrial Minerals, Agriculture and Tourism

6.3 Urban spatial considerations

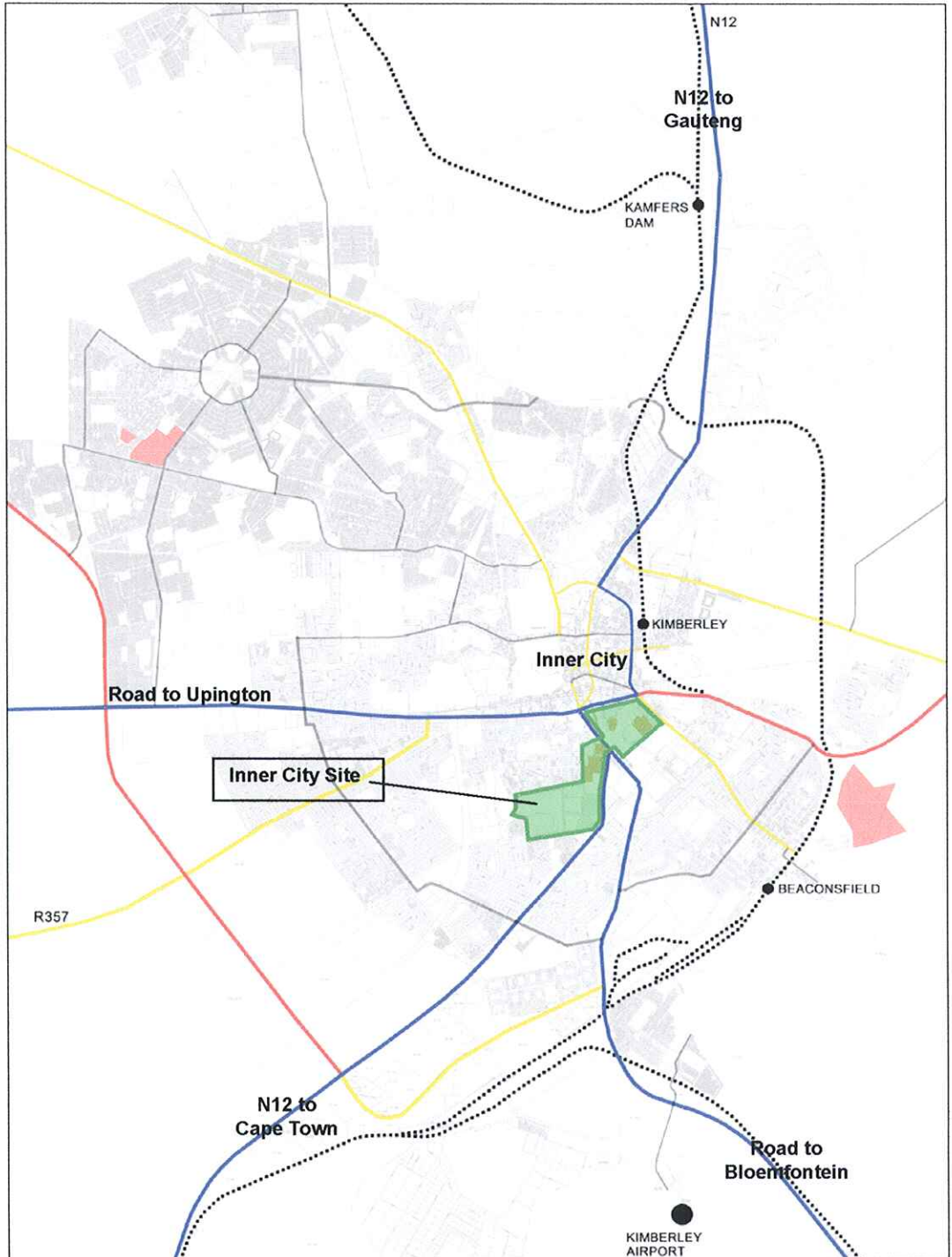
a. Nelspruit Mpumalanga

Location of the Lowveld Agricultural College in relation to movement corridors and important civic structures



b. Kimberley, Northern Cape

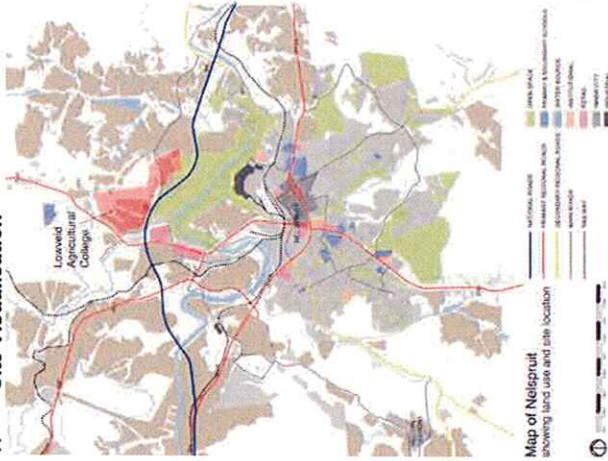
Kimberley Inner City Site in relation to dominant movement corridors, civic infrastructure, facilities and amenities.



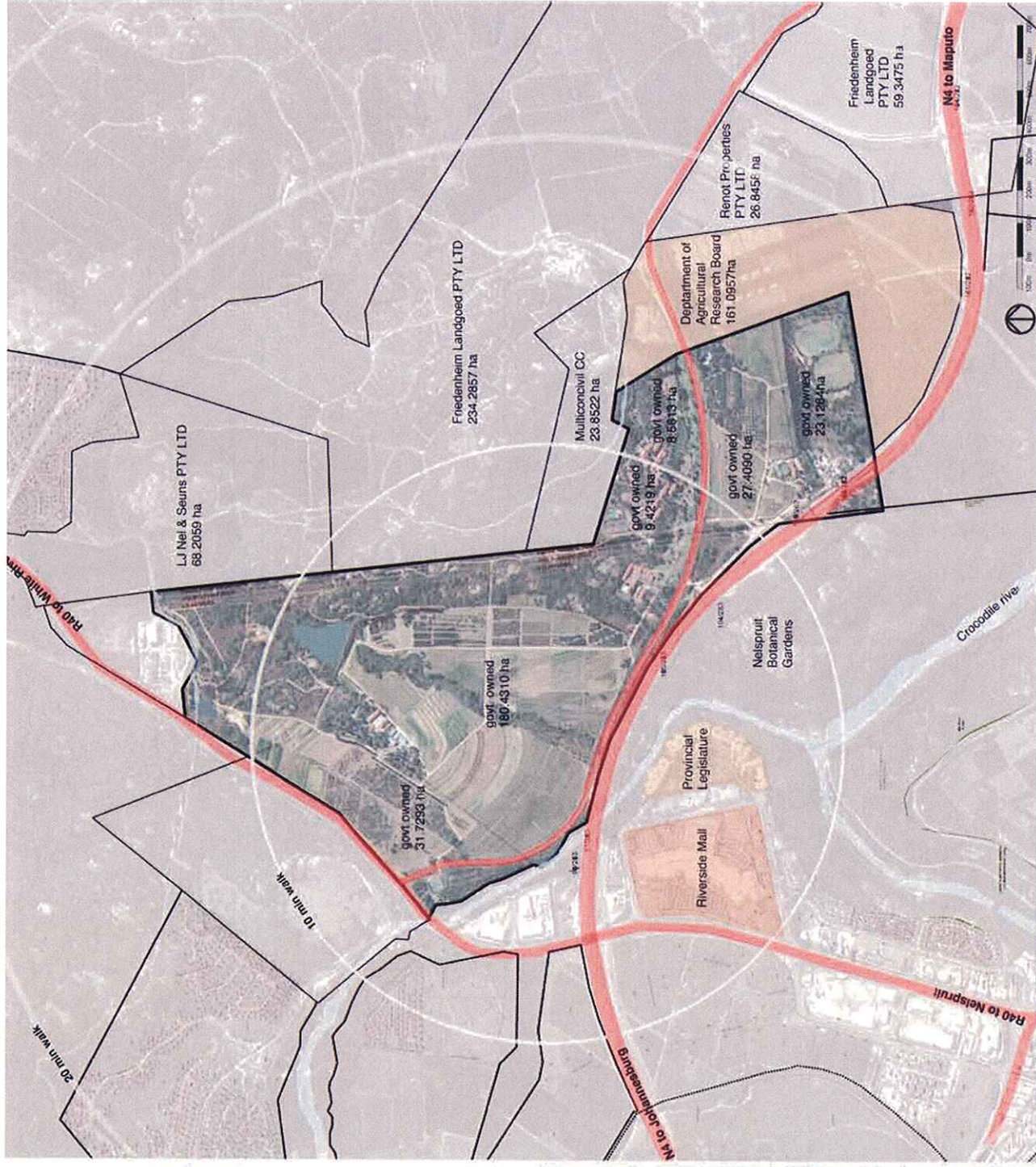
- SITE PROPOSALS
- NATIONAL ROADS
- PRIMARY REGIONAL ROADS
- SECONDARY REGIONAL ROADS
- MAIN ROADS
- RAILWAY



7. Site Visualisation



7.1 Lowveld Agricultural College Site Visualisation



Lowveld Agricultural College site and surrounding context

7. Site Visualisation



Entrance to the Agricultural College Great Hall



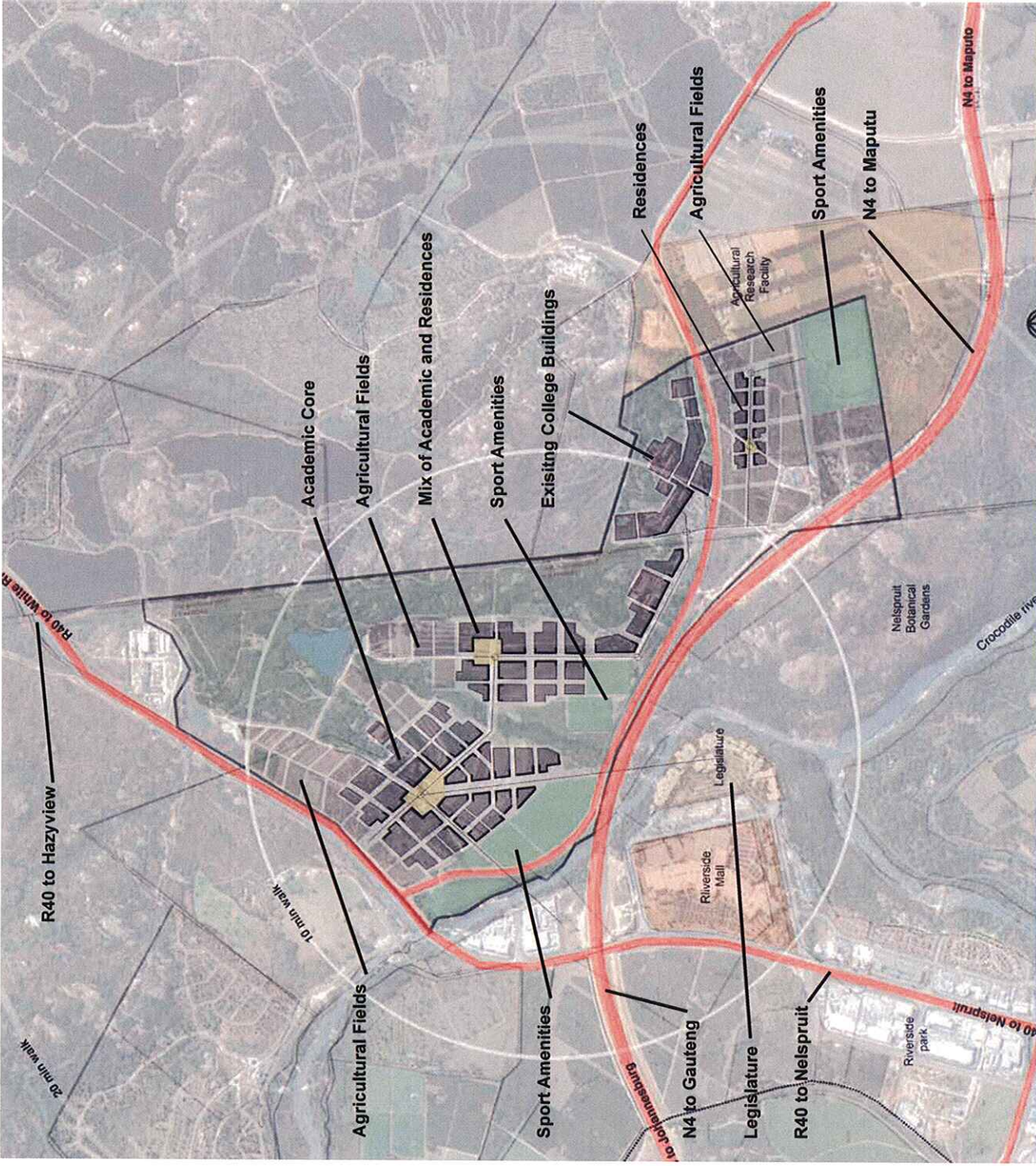
Agricultural College Fields, 240 ha, property



Aerial view of existing College buildings

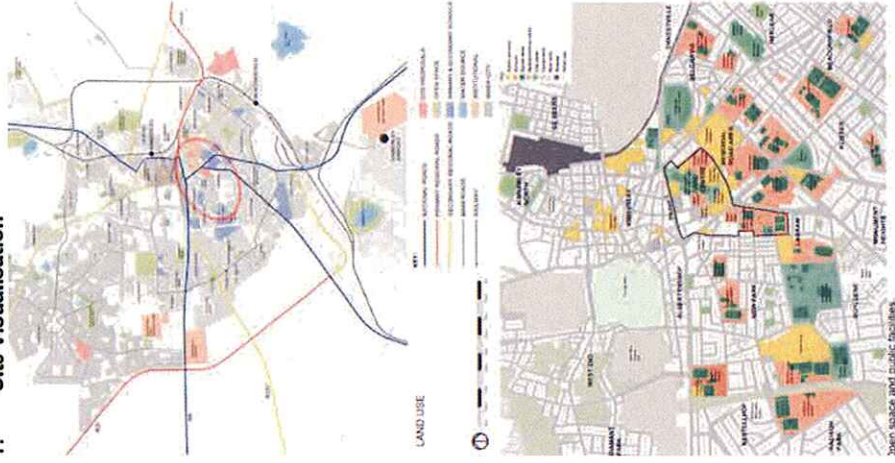


Entrance fore court to main Admin building

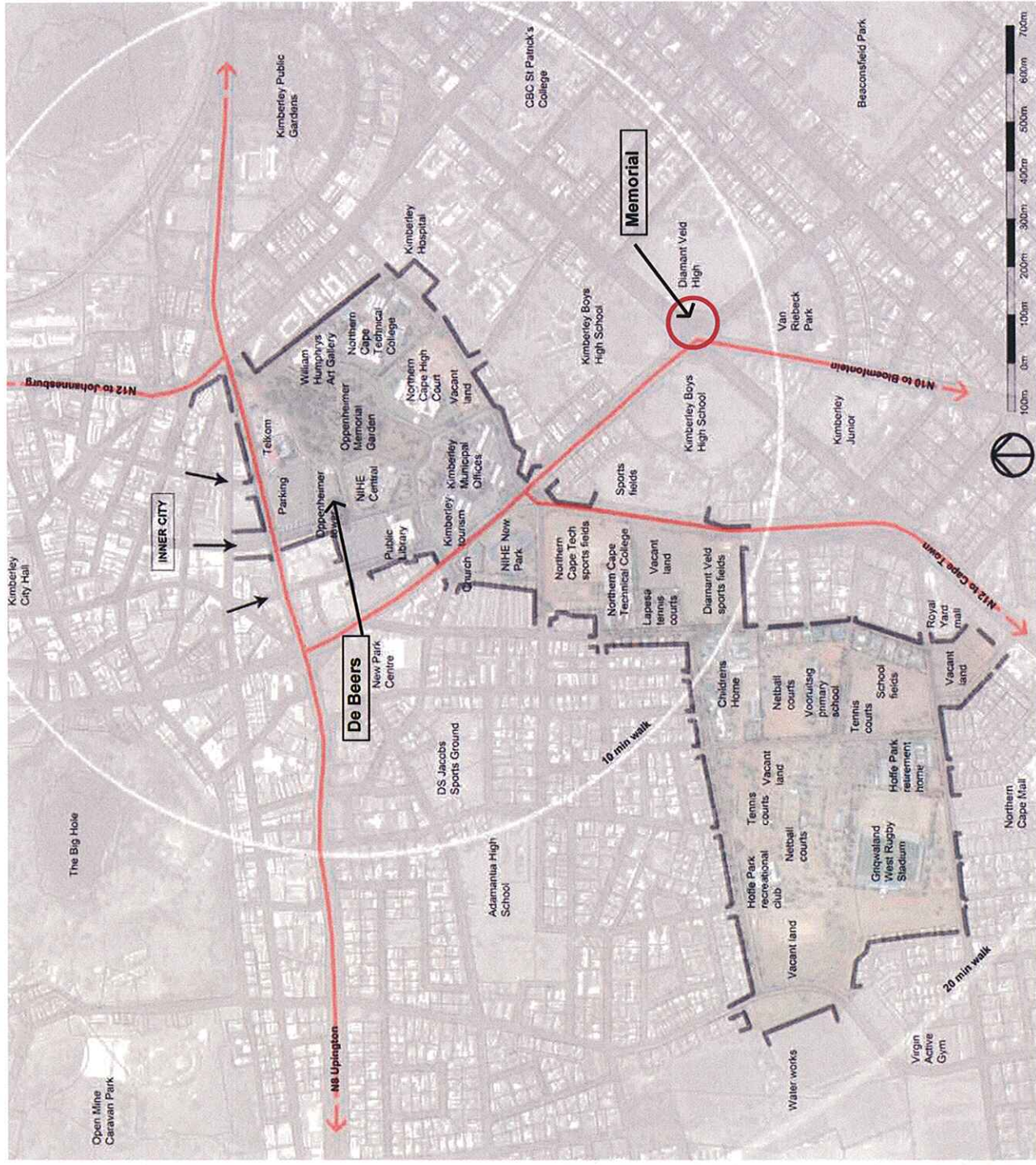


Possible Mpumalanga University Campus development proposal on the Lowveld Agricultural College property

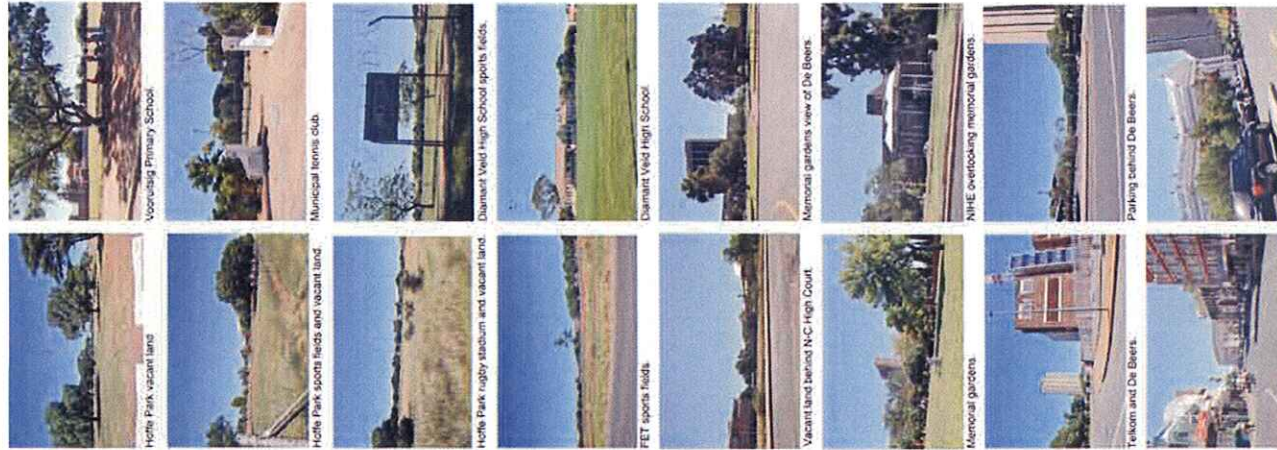
7. Site Visualisation



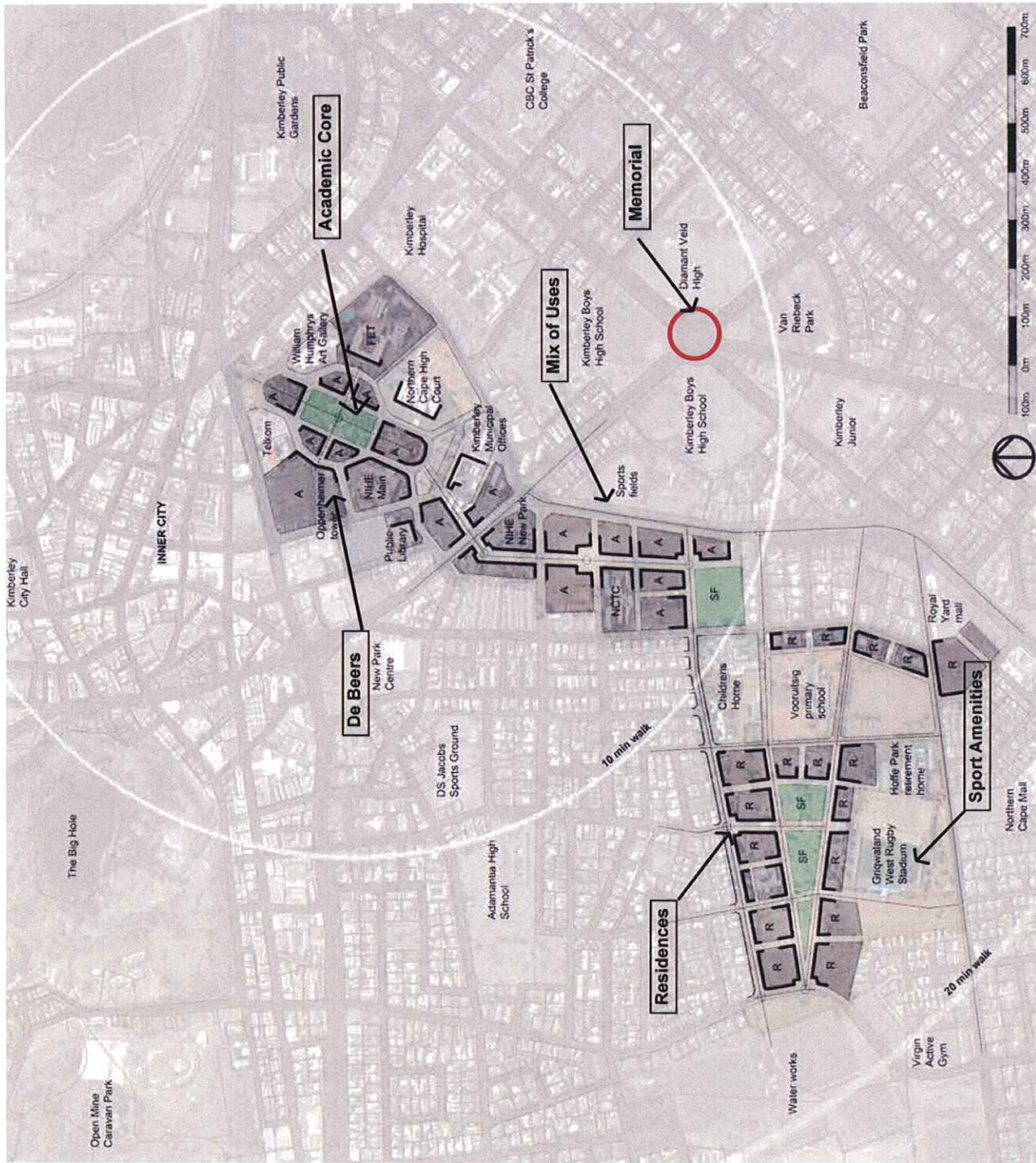
7.2 Kimberley Inner City Site Visualisation



Kimberley Inner City Campus Focus Area



7.2 Kimberley Inner City Site Visualisation



Northern Cape University Campus development proposal within the Kimberley Inner City