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Mediating Heritage through Design and Mobility: Nelson Mandela's Legacy in the Urban Landscape

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Note: this website link will be referred to during the presentation.
Scan to visit the archive at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory.



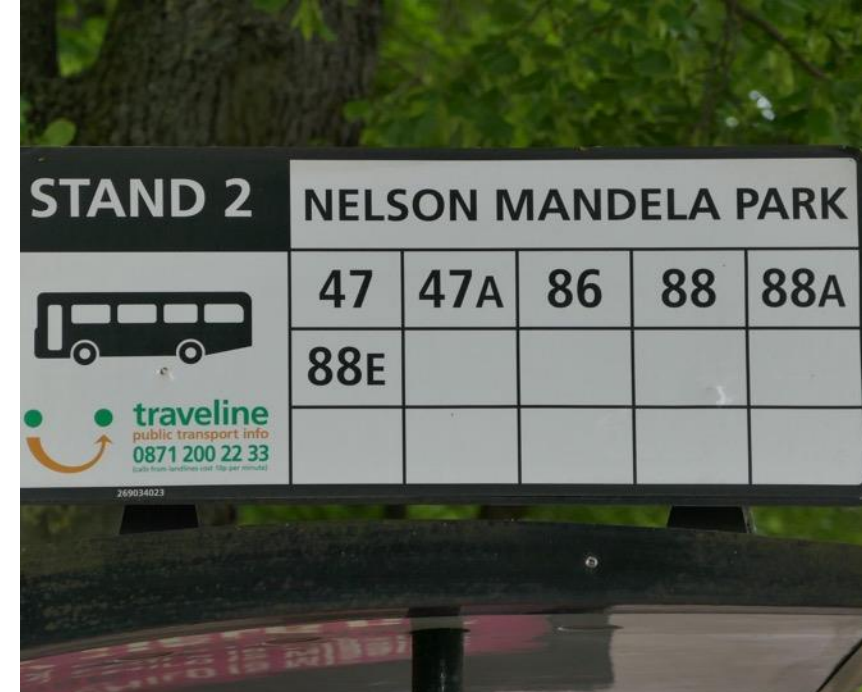
**Loughborough
University**

Question

How do you know you have arrived at your destination?



Nelson Mandela Park, Leicester
Image Credit: Rob Harland



Underpinning Research

- Named after Nelson [NaN] £70k (2023-24)
How can we create research for impact to contribute to graphic heritage, toponymy and topophilia?
- Mandela place-making through graphic heritage £35k (2022-23)
How can participatory design approaches enhance urban graphic heritage for greater social cohesion?
- Repositioning graphic heritage £250k (2018–21)
What new perspectives can graphic design contribute to design for urban heritage?



Introduction

Reframing Heritage through Design and Mobility

- Transportation planning and graphic design intersect.
- Inequalities in spatial access in South Africa.
- Mandela-named places hold symbolic value but differ vastly in:
 - Accessibility (e.g. transportation corridors)
 - Visibility (e.g. signs, wayfinding)
 - Narrative depth (as known from the underpinning research)
- Support the 'Just Cities' priority area and the "Memory for Justice" programme of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Mandela Village, Hammanskraal
Image Credit: Alet Pretorius



Reasoning

The Significance of Nelson Mandela in Urban Heritage

- A world named after Nelson Mandela
- Mandela-named places honour his legacy.
- Offer educational, commemorative and symbolic value opportunities.
- Powerful platforms for promoting inclusive urban narratives.
- Support local development by generating tourism.

Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton
Image Credit: Robert Harland



Places named after Nelson Mandela

An indicative list of places in South Africa

Eastern Cape

Madiba Bay Leisure Park (Gqeberha)
Mandela Street (Humansdorp)
Mandela Street (Motherwell)
Mandela Street (Grahamstown)
Mandela Village (Uitenhage)
Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality
Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium (Gqeberha)
Nelson Mandela Drive (Umtata)
Nelson Mandela Hall in Rhodes University
(Grahamstown)
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum
(Gqeberha)
Nelson Mandela Museum (Qunu)
Nelson Mandela Route (King Williams Town)
Nelson Mandela Street (East London)
Nelson Mandela Street (Jeffreys Bay)
Nelson Mandela University (Gqeberha)

Free State

Mandela Park (Phuthaditjhaba)
Mandela Road (Tabong)
Mandela Township (Parys)
Nelson Mandela Drive (Bloemfontein)

Gauteng

Mandela's House (Soweto)
Mandela Mining Precinct (Johannesburg)
Mandela Section (Bekkersdal)
Mandela Street (Soweto)
Mandela Street (Randfontein)
Mandela Street (Johannesburg)
Mandela Township (Khutsong)
Mandela Village (Hammanskraal)
Nelson Mandela Auditorium (Pretoria)
Nelson Mandela Bridge (Johannesburg)
Nelson Mandela Building (Johannesburg)
Nelson Mandela's Children Hospital
(Johannesburg)
Nelson Mandela Drive (Pretoria)
Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory
(Johannesburg)
Nelson Mandela Park (Pretoria)
Nelson Mandela Square (Johannesburg)
Nelson Mandela Street (Etwatwa)
Nelson Mandela Theatre (Johannesburg)

Kwazulu Natal

Madiba Hiking Trail (Transkei)
Mandela Drive (Mpophomeni)
Mandela Park (Mpola)
Mandela Road (Ladysmith)
Nelson Mandela Capture Site (Howick)
Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine
(Durban)

Limpopo

Mandela Park (Giyani-E)
Mandela Park (Matsulu)
Mandela Street (Bela Bela)
Mandela Street (Phagameng)
Nelson Mandela Drive (Modimolle)
Nelson Mandela Street (Musina)
Nelson Street (Siloam)

Mpumalanga

Dr Mandela Drive (Middleburg)
Mandela Street (Embalenhle)
Mandela Village (KwaMhlanga)
Nelson Mandela Street (Emalahleni)

North West

Mandela Street (Potchefstroom)
Mandela Street (Swartruggens)
Nelson Mandela Street (Rustenburg)
Nelson Mandela Street (Mafikeng)

Northern Cape

Mandela Road (Prieska)
Mandela Street (Calvinia)
Mandela Street (Douglas)
Mandela Street (Vioolsdrif)

Western Cape

Mandela Drive (Cape Town)
Mandela Park Township (Cape Town)
Mandela Street (Gansbaai)
Mandela Street (Plettenberg Bay)
Nelson Mandela Boulevard (Cape Town)
Nelson Mandela Drakenstein Prison House
(Cape Town)
Nelson Mandela Gateway to Robben Island
(Cape Town)



Nelson Mandela Theatre



Context

Heritage tourism in South Africa

- Heritage tourism in South Africa is expanding but remains unevenly distributed.
- Contribution to South African economy.
- Mandela-named places offer heritage tourism opportunities.
- Urban mobility remains shaped by apartheid-era spatial planning and urban sprawl.
- Crime statistics – high risk



Panoramic view of Cape Town
Image Credit: Robert Harland

Context

Transportation in Gauteng, South Africa

- Public Transportation:
 - Gautrain and Metrorail (formal)
 - BRT Busses and Public Busses (formal)
 - Minibus Taxis (informal)
- Private Transportation:
 - Private Vehicles
 - Uber, Wanatu, Bolt and other taxi services
- Other:
 - Sight Seeing Tours - Red Bus

Road signage for Gautrain
Image Credit: Robert Harland



Theoretical Framework

Framing heritage through mobility and design

- **Graphic heritage** is used as a conceptual lens to link spatial, visual, and narrative elements in Mandela-named places (Burger et al., 2024).
- **Public space** is understood not only as physical infrastructure but as a **narrative medium** where **visual communication tools** (e.g., signage, mapping, and storytelling) play a central role (Pesce et al., 2024; Gutsche, 2014).
- The study positions **mobility systems as cultural carriers**, where access to heritage sites becomes both a symbolic and material act of inclusion or exclusion (Jirón et al., 2010).
- This **interdisciplinary approach** integrates transportation planning and graphic design to foreground heritage justice, equitable access, recognition, and participation in shaping commemorative space (Adams, 2010; Childs, 2008).

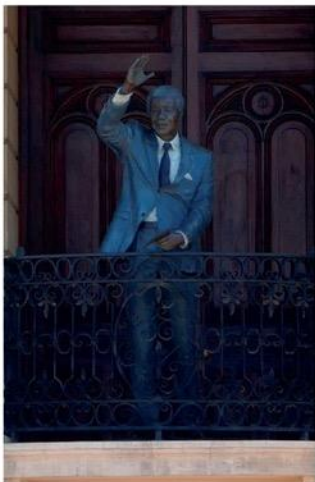
Graphic Heritage

Definition and contribution

- The 'graphic' in 'graphic heritage': Graphic images are ...
- **Abstract, Architectural, Diagrams, Graphs, Non-representational, Pictures, Statues and Structural** (Mitchell, 1986)
- Graphic heritage adds value by making intangible legacies visible through signage, storytelling, and spatial interpretation.



Architectural imagery



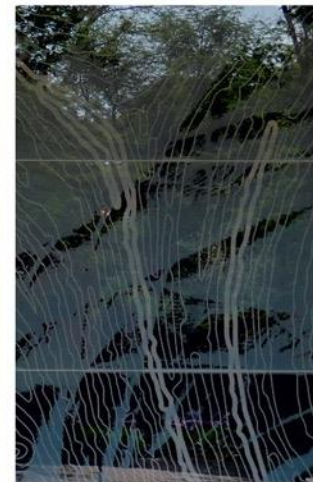
Statues



Designs



Abstract



Non-representational



[Infra]structural

Types of Graphic Images
Image Credit: Robert Harland

Methodology

Multidisciplinary and Spatial Analysis Approach

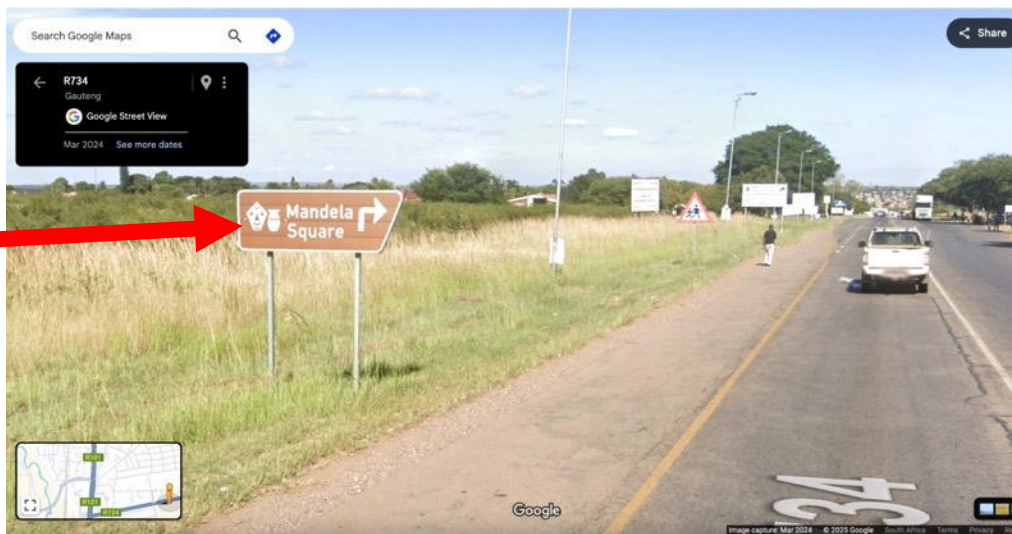
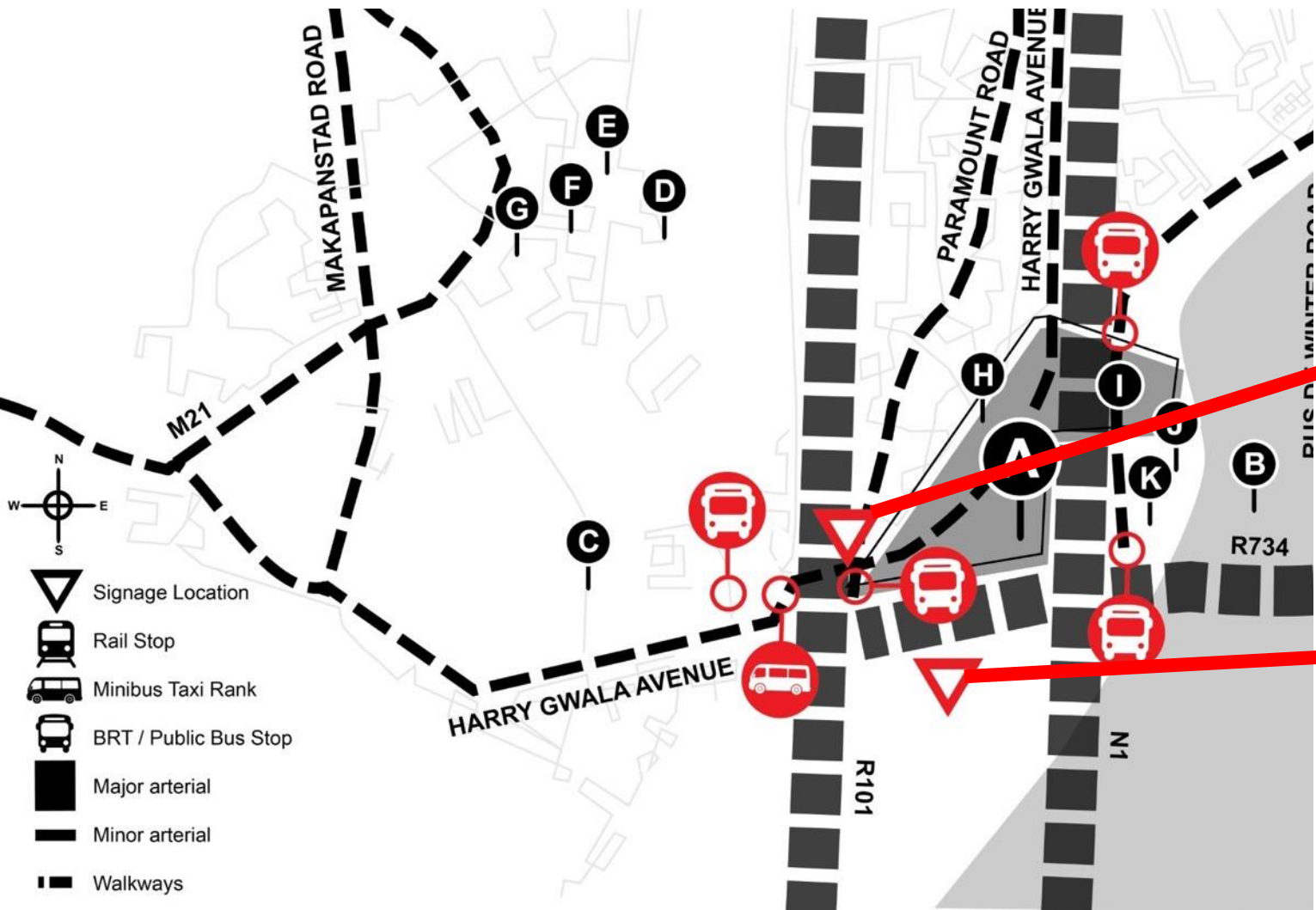
- Case studies selected from the **Archive at the Centre of Memory (ACoM)** of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, covering diverse geographies (Harland et al., 2022).
- **Spatial analysis** mapped:
 - transport nodes
 - access routes
 - surrounding infrastructure
- **Visual audits** assessed:
 - signage
 - storytelling features
 - graphic heritage elements
- **Fieldwork** spanned two years and incorporated recent updates in signage and transit.

Scan to visit the archive at
the Nelson Mandela
Centre of Memory.



Mandela Village, Hammanskraal

Peri-Urban Disconnection and Community Memory



Six locations



BUCO HARDWARE
BUILD WITH
HAMMANSKRAAL

012 711 2194 072 974 7090
hammanskraal@bucoco.co.za

PHOTO STUDIO
BIRTHDAY PHOTOSHOOT
CAKE SMASH
WEDDING PHOTOGRAPH
MATERNITY/PREGNANCY
MILK BABY BATH PHOTOSHOOT
FAMILY PHOTOSHOOT

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Soshanguve

HARRY GWALA AVE

Mandela Village

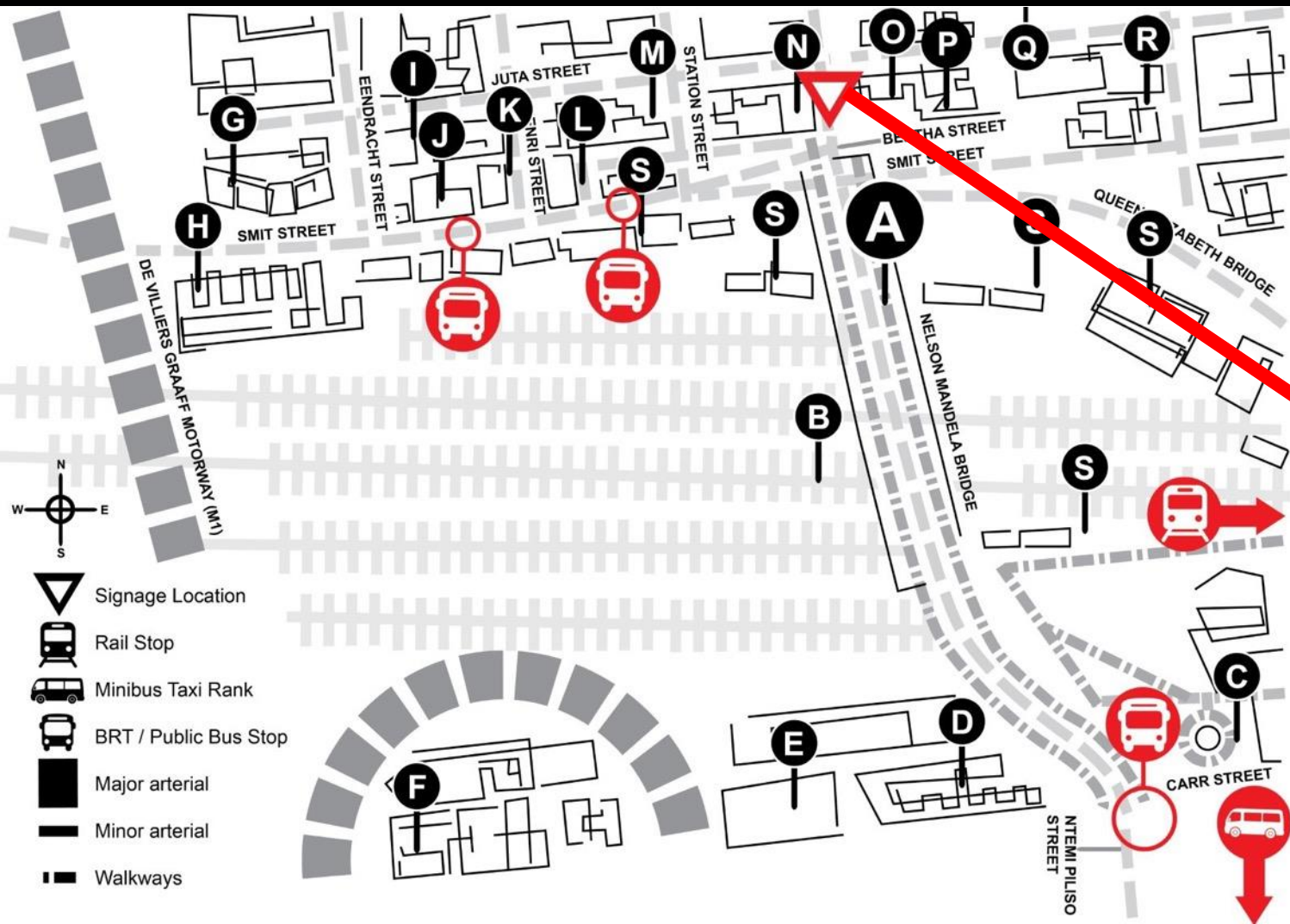
Chess board advertisement with a Mercedes-Benz logo.

Proline
MAXIMIZE YOUR POTENTIAL



Nelson Mandela Bridge, Braamfontein

Connectivity, Symbolism and Safety Gaps





NELSON MANDELA BRIDGE

M27

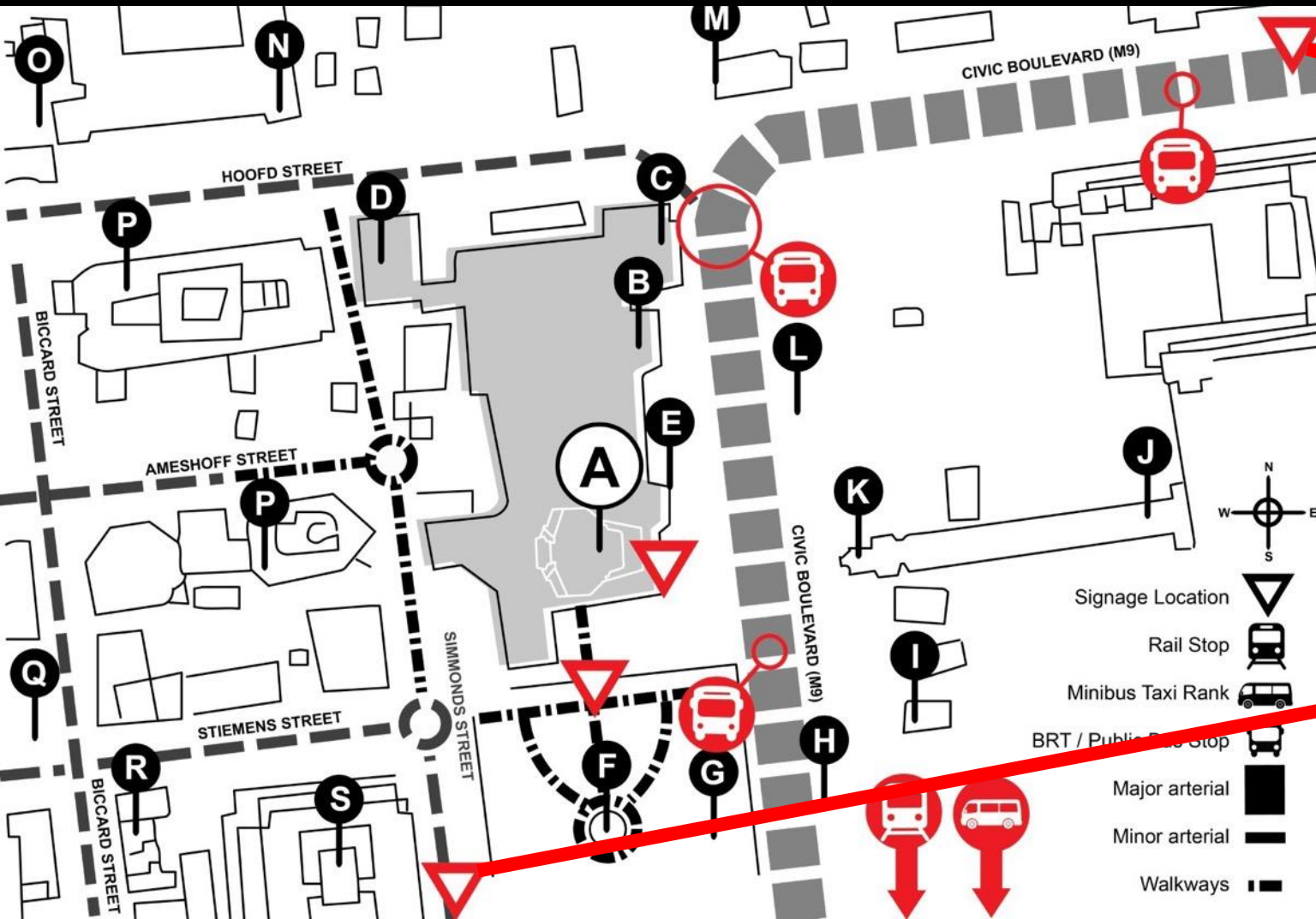
City



Newtown

Nelson Mandela Theatre, Braamfontein

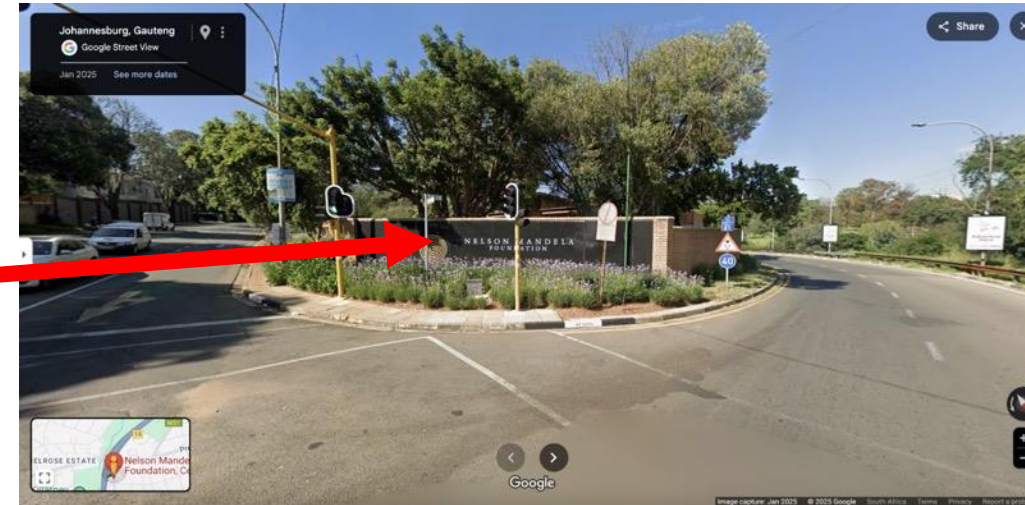
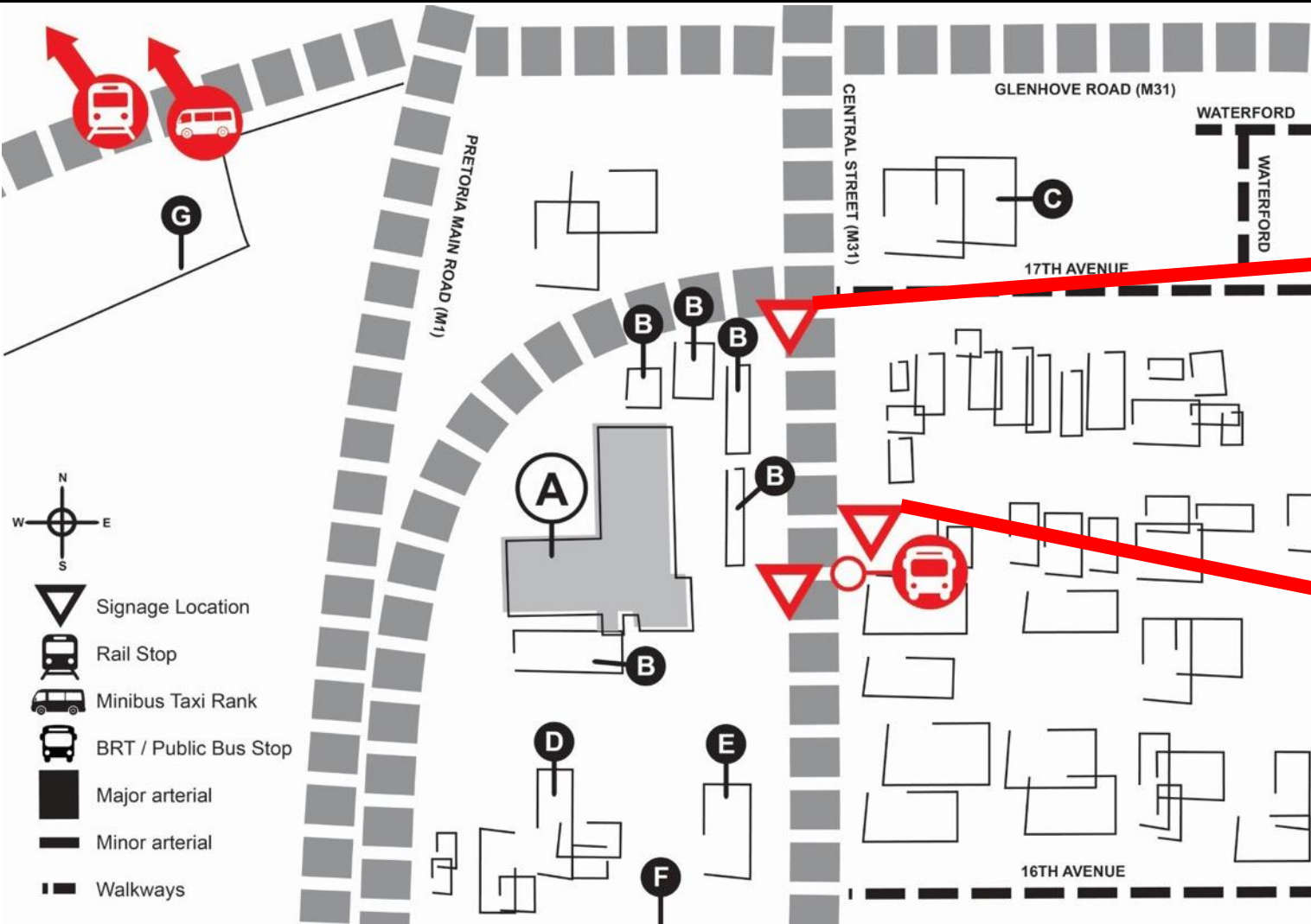
Cultural Landmark with Partial Visibility





Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, Houghton

Institutional Heritage in a Suburban Context



INVEST
TODAY
m-t.co.za



NELSON MANDELA
FOUNDATION

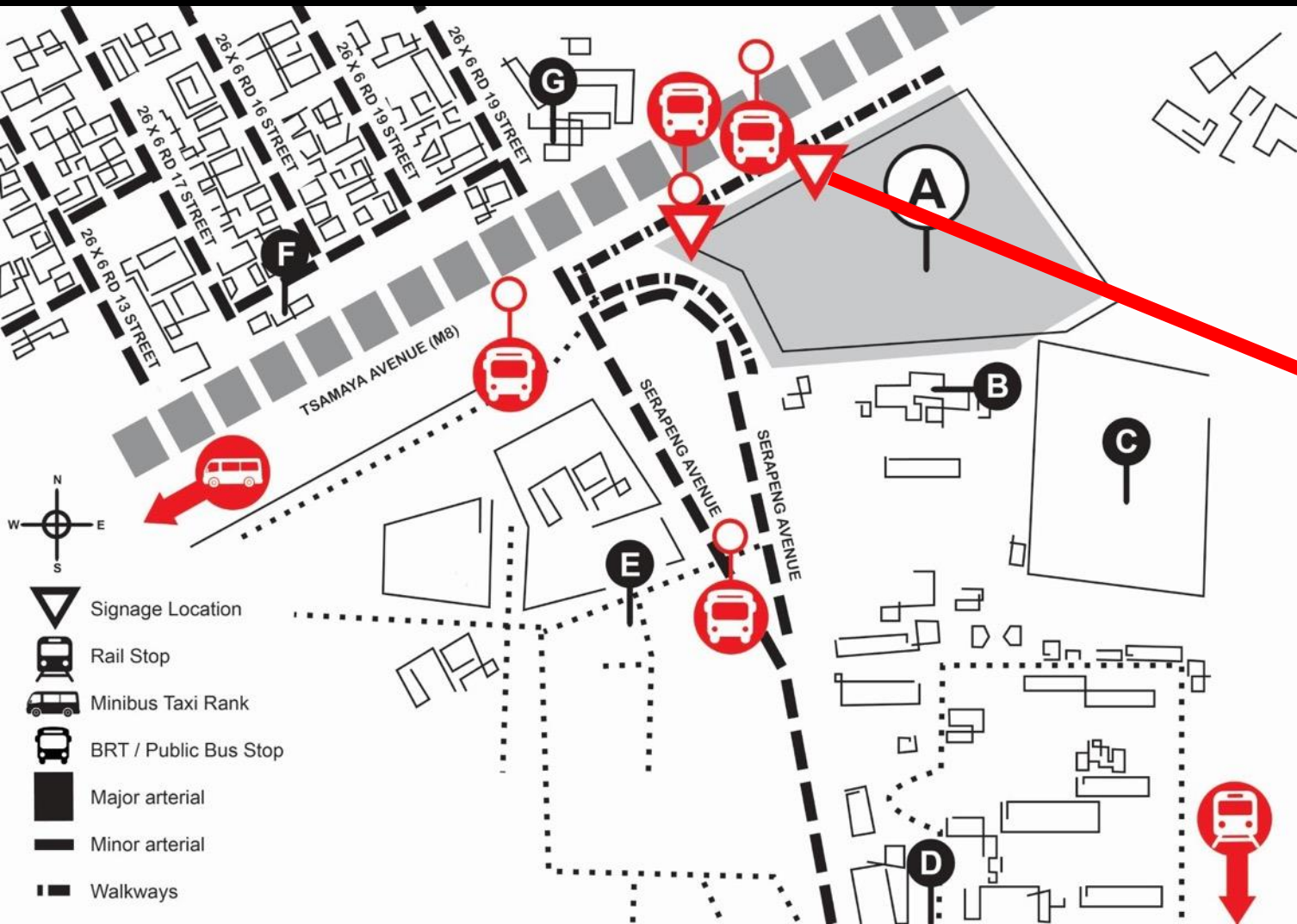
CENTRE OF MEMORY

CENTRAL STREET

MA. SOUTH

Nelson Mandela Park, Mamelodi

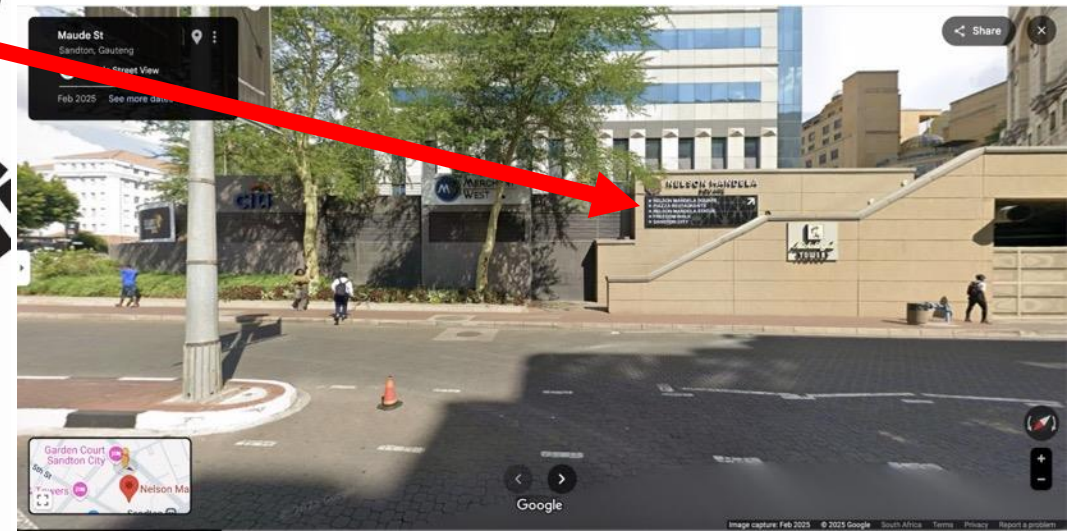
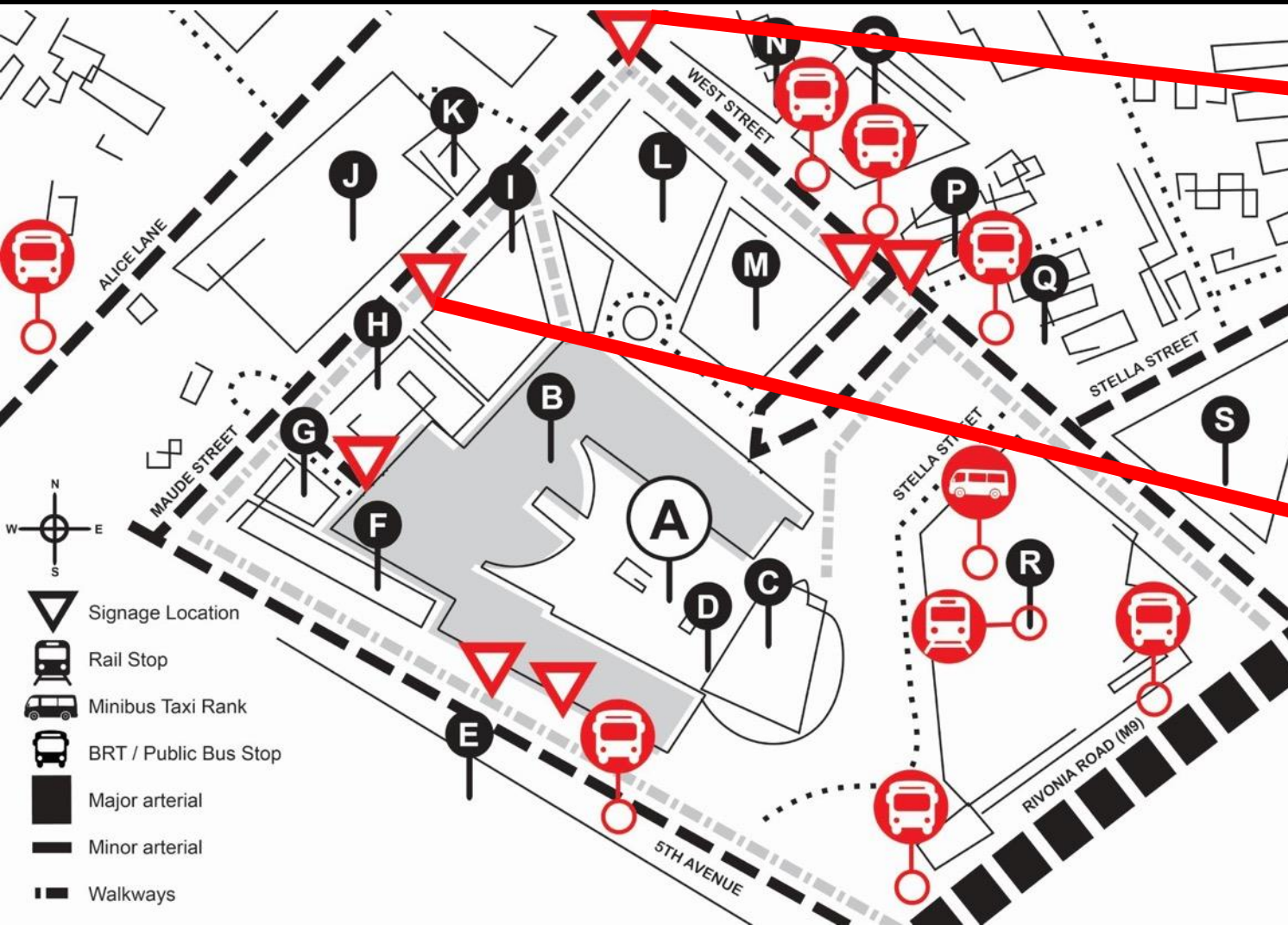
Embedded Community Space with Informal Access





Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton

High Connectivity, Symbolism and Visitor Access





NELSON MANDELA SQUARE

OFFICES & RETAIL
NELSON MANDELA STATUE
FREEDOM WALK ARTWORK
TRUE STORY MUSEUM SHOP
HOUSE OF MANDELA SHOP



Michelangelo
TOWERS

Key Findings

Heritage, Access and Urban Inequality

- Contrast between inner city and peri-urban environments.
- Spatial and infrastructural disconnects hinder equitable visitor engagement, especially where signage and transport links are weak (e.g. Mandela Village and Nelson Mandela Park).
- Heritage experiences are strongest where mobility systems and design converge as seen at Nelson Mandela Square.



Transportation corridor, Mamelodi
Image Credit: Fidel Mosupye

Recommendations

Towards Inclusive and Integrated Heritage Planning

- **Co-design** signage and wayfinding systems with local communities.
- Implement **universal design principles** in signage and infrastructure.
- Combine **planning practices** between transport and heritage sectors.
- Develop a **thematic Mandela Placemaking Heritage Trail** with consistent graphic identity, physical markers, and digital tools (e.g. ArcGIS Storymaps).
- Enhance **pedestrian safety** near key access routes.
- **Align** interventions with SDGs, Nelson Mandela Foundation mission and vision, and local Integrated Development Plans to ensure long-term equity and sustainability.

Mandela Community Hall
Image Credit: Alet Pretorius



Conclusion

Sustaining Mandela's Legacy through Mobility and Design

- **Mandela-named places** are powerful commemorative anchors, but their impact is uneven due to **disparities in access, visibility, and symbolic clarity**.
- Equitable heritage experiences require the **integration of mobility systems, graphic design, and community storytelling** into destination planning.
- **Transport corridors** can serve as **narrative routes**, not just conduits of movement but of meaning and memory.
- **Heritage justice** involves dismantling spatial barriers and enabling inclusive participation in the shaping of commemorative space.
- Cities that link **mobility and design** with dignity and access move closer to the democratic values Mandela championed linking to the **Just Cities** theme of Nelson Mandela Foundation.

Final Thoughts

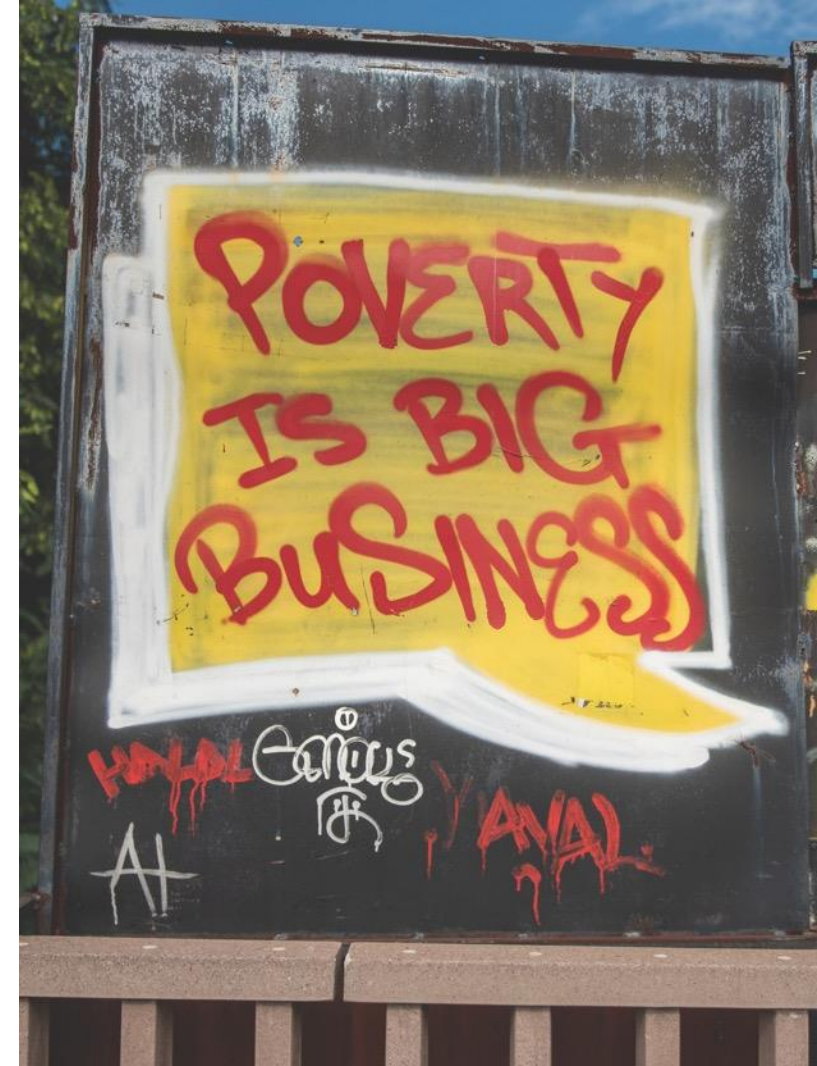
Link to the 'Just Cities' priority area

- Just Cities agenda of the Nelson Mandela Foundation:

"... there is a pressing need to address the transformation of urban spaces to make them more inclusive and accessible to the poor and marginalised." (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2024).

- Highlights the **inequitable access** that still exists.
- Focus on **inclusions and mobility** to support the priority area.
- **Assess** transport modes to shape the mobility of underserved populations.
- Moves beyond critique to offer **recommendations**.
- Support to make Mandela's legacy materially and symbolically accessible to all.

Graffiti near NM Bridge
Image Credit: Alet Pretorius



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Thank You

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