

# MARKS BUILDING : PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT : CAPE TOWN

ERF 3788

## HERITAGE STATEMENT

AUGUST 2013



PREPARED FOR:

CLIENT: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
ARCHITECTS: AFRICA CONSULTING ARCHITECTS

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# **MARKS BUILDING : PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT : CAPE TOWN**

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Cover: Marks Building, Cape Town, March 2013

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Stuart Hermansen of HB Architects for Africa Consulting Architects who have been appointed by the National Department: Public Works to undertake repair and restoration work to the roof and exterior facades of Marks Building, Parliament Street, Cape Town. National Department: Public Works is the current owner of Marks Building.

Marks Building is older than 60 years, and is therefore generally protected under Sect 34 of the NHRA. Comments from the City of Cape Town Heritage Unit, along with this Statement and a brief description of the proposed work, will be submitted to HWC for their assessment of heritage significance and proposed work before issuing a Permit.

Although the building clearly has heritage significance, the primary purpose of this Heritage Statement is to analyze, record and photograph any features that make it heritage-worthy, and simultaneously identify the elements and features that detract from it, or have no heritage significance. The building may then be accurately assessed for appropriate heritage significance, and this will inform the restoration response.

As the proposed project is limited to the roof and exterior only, this Heritage Statement will not cover any interior features, unless it has direct relevance to the exterior of the building.

## 2. DOCUMENT SEARCH

A request to D:PW Central Archives in Pretoria requesting copies of the plans was not responded to.

Marks Building features in 5 of the 8 maps in John Rennie's 'Buildings of Central Cape Town' published by CPIA in 1978. The building is noted as significant in the following maps:

### **'MARKS BUILDING**

#### **Category 2**

*Buildings which are rare or outstanding architectural examples of their period.*

#### **Category 3**

*Buildings which form a fine grouping of architectural merit.*

#### **Category 4**

*Buildings which by their presence contribute to a fine urban setting or lend character to a locality.*

#### **Category 5**

*Buildings which contribute to or enhance the quality of a square or other space of significance on which they abut.*

#### **Category 6**

*Buildings which represent the work of a pioneer or recognised master.'*

Description and details of the history of the building are expanded by Rennie in Vol 2 of the same series, the excerpt reading as follows:

**'Marks Building**

**Parliament Street, corner of Lelie Street**

Several builds, earliest c1900, architect Herbert Baker, 3 bay on Parliament, 8 bay on Lelie Street, 5 storey and attic. Refer Greig p75, Picton-Seymour pp93, 94. The Baker prototype is in a creamy striated stone (Transvaal sandstone?). Pitch-faced rustic base, banded rusticated first floor with bracketed balconies and wrought iron railings, crisp ashlar work, Ionic pilasters, cornices etc., (Lelie Street upper floors plastered), teak joinery, side hung small pane casements, louvred shutters, "Broseley" tiled roofs with dormers and chimney stacks. Entrance hall black and white marble floor, central pink marble column, teak, brass, plaster vaulting, green faience dado tiles, stairs with precast concrete tread construction. The PWD designed extension continues the Baker formula in a less attractive sandstone to a total of 27 bays on Parliament and 13 on Lelie Street, (Lelie Street presently being reduced to 7 bays as part of a demolition programme for Parliamentary office redevelopment). Interior: solid PWD-style, teak, granite steps, brass, terrazzo, panelling, battleship linoleum. Central lift date 1935. Deeds Office and Surveyor General lift 1932. ("Broseley" tiles replaced with asbestos cement slates during publication.)'

This brief description is further expanded by Graham Jacobs and Melanie Atwell in an unpublished report as part of the Parliamentary Precinct Conservation and Integrated Management Plan prepare by Holm Jordaan Architects for ND: PW circa 2008.

### **'Marks Building**

**(formerly the Tricameral House of Delegates' Building: now housing the offices of the Parliamentary Opposition Parties)**

#### **Preliminary Heritage Statement**

The Marks Building, originally built by pioneering industrialist, Sammy Marks, who later donated it to the state, occupies a strategic and visually highly sensitive position on Parliament Street directly opposite the NCOP (Old Parliamentary Assembly) building in the heart of the historic parliamentary precinct.

#### **Historical and Architectural Overview**

The Marks Building is the product of successive builds; the earliest being an 8-bay portion at the corner of Lelie Street, designed by Baker and Masey in 1903, and built between 1903 and 1905 (SAHRA National Database of Architects). The original Baker portion is faced with a light grey Vereeniging sandstone. (Howard 1908). Later extensions were by the PWD using the restrained architectural idiom of the original Baker portion as a prototype, but using less attractive sandstone compared to the original. The initial Marks building and subsequent extensions were built on the site of a series of 2 storied 5 bay structures in Parliament Street, dating from the late eighteenth century, originally residences and later used as government offices.

The additions were most likely completed by 1935. (The date in the central lift shafts date to between 1932 and 1935). Subsequent internal alterations were undertaken between 1984 and 1985 when the building was converted to house the then House of Delegates as part of the old Tricameral System of Government established in 1984 by the Nationalist

Government.

*The building's exterior consists of a series of classically tiered levels loosely based on Italianate palazzo design influences with rusticated lower levels, engaged colonnades and an oversailing cornice above the third floor windows. This is superimposed by a fourth floor with a square-dormered roof attic above. The Baker and Masey design employs restrained, but well proportioned and modelled architectural elements in the solid British Empire Style. Apart from a few internal exceptions, this building lacks the Cape Revival architectural devices for which Baker is most strongly associated in the Cape. It is considered one of Baker's most "restrained and modern buildings". (Fransen 2005).*

*External finished and materials are of a high quality and include, apart from the dressed sandstone, teak joinery and wrought iron balustrading. The 'Broseley' tile roof identified in the Rennie Survey (CPIA 2) has been replaced with what appears to be [asbestos] cement slates.*

*The interior of the building is characterized by long, uninterrupted perimeter corridors with two central assembly chambers occupying former courtyard space on ground floor level. The architecture is restrained, if not austere, with terrazzo floors and plain plastered walls taking up much of the remaining space. Some prominent and/or noteworthy features include: the main entrance hall with pink marble columns and pink marble floor (this appears to have replaced the original black and white marble floor, probably during the Tricameral conversion); groin vaulted and pillared stair foyers with tiled dado staircase in the 'Baker' portion; a noteworthy teak panelled first floor office with fireplace and inset panel depicting 'The landing of the first merchandise and specie in South Africa'; teak joinery including a noteworthy Cape Revival double entrance door and carved fanlight to the first floor committee room above the main entrance foyer; and various fittings including c1930's period brass chandeliers.'*

### **3. ANALYSIS OF SITE AND BUILDINGS**

#### **3.1. Location**

The building is located on the corner of Parliament and Lelie Street within the Cape Town Parliamentary Precinct. It is not open to the public as it currently houses the offices of the opposition parties.

The facade is built to the street edge, and forms an appropriate dignified backdrop to the National Council of Provinces building in the Gardens complex of parliamentary buildings opposite.

Behind the Marks Building is the grossly overscaled 120 Plein St Buildings [previously JH Verwoed Building] constructed circa 1978.

Marks Building abuts a slightly higher, largely nondescript office building outside the parliamentary precinct on the northern edge of the site.

Between the Marks Building and 120 Plein Street is a service lane with associated service yards.

Across Lelie Street is the overshadowing secondary wing of 120 Plein St.

### **3.2. Context**

As described, Marks Building is a fitting structure within the Parliamentary ensemble of buildings, and offers a dignified edge to the urban space around the old Houses of Parliament

It creates a suitable break between 120 Plein St and the much lower, but much grander Old Parliamentary building in the Company Gardens context.

### **3.3. Description**

As described in Rennie's Vol 2 except, the original 1903 Baker building consisted of a 5-storey, Classical Italianate stone-clad building, with 5 bays on Parliament St, and 8 bays [with lesser decoration] on Lelie St. The last bay in Lelie St was demolished to make way for 120 Plein, so the building now has an asymmetrical appearance on Lelie St, further emphasised by the plastered central bays above the rusticated ground storey with the corner bay clad in stone to the Mansard roof.

Entrance to the original building is via ornate entrance stairs and portico on Parliament St.

The building was extended by the Public Works Department up to about 1935, extending the building by 27 bays on Parliament St, the last five being a mirror image of the original 5-bay, except that due to the slope of the street, the last few bays have a basement level so the ornate stairs are omitted. A stone wheelchair ramp to the lesser door was built recently with mismatched stone and poor detailing.

### **3.4. Roof Configuration**

From street level, the roof appears to be Mansard roof above a storey above a ornate projecting cornice, with dormer windows repeating the bay arrangement below.

Above the steep sloping outer face of the Mansard roof is a series of flat, waterproofed timber roofs and corrugated steel and asbestos low-pitched roofs.

Three courtyards were roofed over, presumably in the 1980's refurbishment, two with copper roofs, and one with a vaulted polycarbonate roof.

### **3.5. Walls**

As described above, the facade facing Parliament St is clad in two types of local sandstone, with the Lelie St facade being partially clad in stone. The walls to the rear of the building are

plastered and painted.

Stone balconies project over Parliament and Lelie St, some with stone balustrades [some balusters are badly eroded and in need of replacement] and some with painted wrought iron balustrades with ornate gilded cartouche decorations.

### **3.6. Doors and windows**

The windows and doors facing Parliament St are Burmese teak, [some painted] generally in good condition, but in need of repair.

To the rear of the building, and facing the courtyards, are a collection of teak windows, and steel windows, those to the larger offices in a painted teak subframes, all original and in good condition.

Windows to the service courtyard in the original Baker building are painted Baltic pine, some of which need replacing.

### **3.7. Wrought ironwork**

The wrought iron balustrades and lamp-standards are hand-wrought mild steel, and riveted. There is considerable corrosion of the ironwork, especially where it has been set into stonework with lead. Vigorous remedial work is required to conserve the railings in particular.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUES OF MARKS BUILDING, PARLIAMENT ST

For method of establishing heritage values, see Annexure A, based on criteria listed in Sect 3.3 of the NHRA

Historical pattern	2	Slightly significant because it conforms to the development of Cape Town city architecture in that it is built to the cadastral line
Rarity	4	One of few largely intact Classical-style stone buildings in the city
Information eg archaeology	0	Site is fully developed, so sub-surface material is not available.
Typicality	0	Not a typical turn-of-20th-century city building
Aesthetic eg architectural	4	Good example of a Classical-style Italianate city building, with fine details and features
Technology, creativity	4	Excellent craftsmanship and high quality materials
Spiritual, cultural	0	N/A
Social history	4	Building first owned by Sammy Marks, an influential businessman at the turn of the 20th century. After being donated to the State, it has played a significant role in the evolution of South African politics.
Slave history	0	N/A

##### a. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The original Marks Building is a fine work by a well-known and respected architectural firm, Baker and Masey. It was carefully extended by PWD after Marks donated it to the State.

It is generally in good condition, and much of the fabric is original and intact, and is of a high standard of workmanship.

The building contributes significantly to the urban landscape, as the restrained classical architectural style is appropriate to its position within the Parliamentary Precinct.

It is intrinsically connected to the continuing evolution of South African politics.

##### 4.1.1. Grade

Given the high heritage values in a number of categories, the entire building should be given the grade of Provincial Heritage Site [Grade II].



## 5. PROPOSAL

The brief from D:PW to the consultant team is to effect repairs and restore the exterior fabric of the building: roofs and rainwater goods, stone-faced facades and stone details, door and window joinery including brassware/ironmongery, and wrought iron work.

To this end, the consulting team has prepared very detailed 'as-built' drawings with comprehensive door and window schedules in preparation for restoration work.

## 6. RECOMMENDATION

All work is to be undertaken by approved specialists in their fields, with regular inspection by conservation-competent professionals.

The following approach is proposed:

### a. Roofs

- Top level roofs: [pitched asbestos-cement and corrugated iron sheeting, and waterproofed flat timber roofs]: replace with long-span, secret-fixed pre-coated galvanised steel roof sheeting, all ridge cappings to be aligned and consistent;
- Facade [front] pitch of Mansard roof: Replace asbestos-cement slates with dark slate-coloured fibre cement shingle-type tiles;
- Dormers [roof and sides]: currently lead sheeting - restore if possible. Use appropriate fixings to prevent electrolytic reaction between non-ferrous metals;
- Copper roofs at courtyard infills: repair - lift all seams;
- Polycarbonate roof: repair and re-seal.

### b. Stonework

- To be undertaken by specialists, using best current practices;
- Principle to be followed: to do as much as necessary but as little as possible;
- Do not repair/reface where naturally weathered - it is part of the patina of age;
- Repair only where dangerously eroded, delaminating [eg sills], or allowing water ingress;
- Re-grouting between stonework is to be considered only where there is water ingress;
- Replace balusters where necessary;
- Lead flashings to be fitted to top surfaces of projecting mouldings [replace current torch-on flashings];
- Stone slabs to entrance porch: leave as is - if damp proof membrane is installed under the stone slabs, damp will migrate to walls, which will create a more difficult problem to solve. [Stone floors can reasonably be a little damp in an entrance foyer open to the elements].

### c. Wrought ironwork

- Carefully remove, shot-blast to grey metal, hot-dip galvanise, and epoxy coat. Refit with flexible gasket between wrought ironwork and stonework;
- Replace missing cartouches and decorative elements

**d. Windows and doors**

- Facades: Burmese teak: repair or replace where necessary. [Use afrormosia if teak is unavailable];
- Steel windows [some in timber subframes] are original: leave as is - in excellent condition [appear to be double-dipped galvanised in hot zinc - almost no signs of rusting]
- Some painted windows [Baltic pine?] may need to be replaced - replace with painted hardwood to match existing exactly.

**e. Glazing**

- Do not replace stick-on sunfilter film. Reglaze with appropriate e-value tinted glass.

**7. CONCLUSION**

The Recommendations described above are proposed as a broad outline to set the basis for the work required to repair and restore the exterior of Marks Building.

Heritage Western Cape is encouraged to scrutinise the Recommendations, and to add or amend as seen fit to guide the consultant team in performing their duties in conserving a valuable city building.

## LOCATION

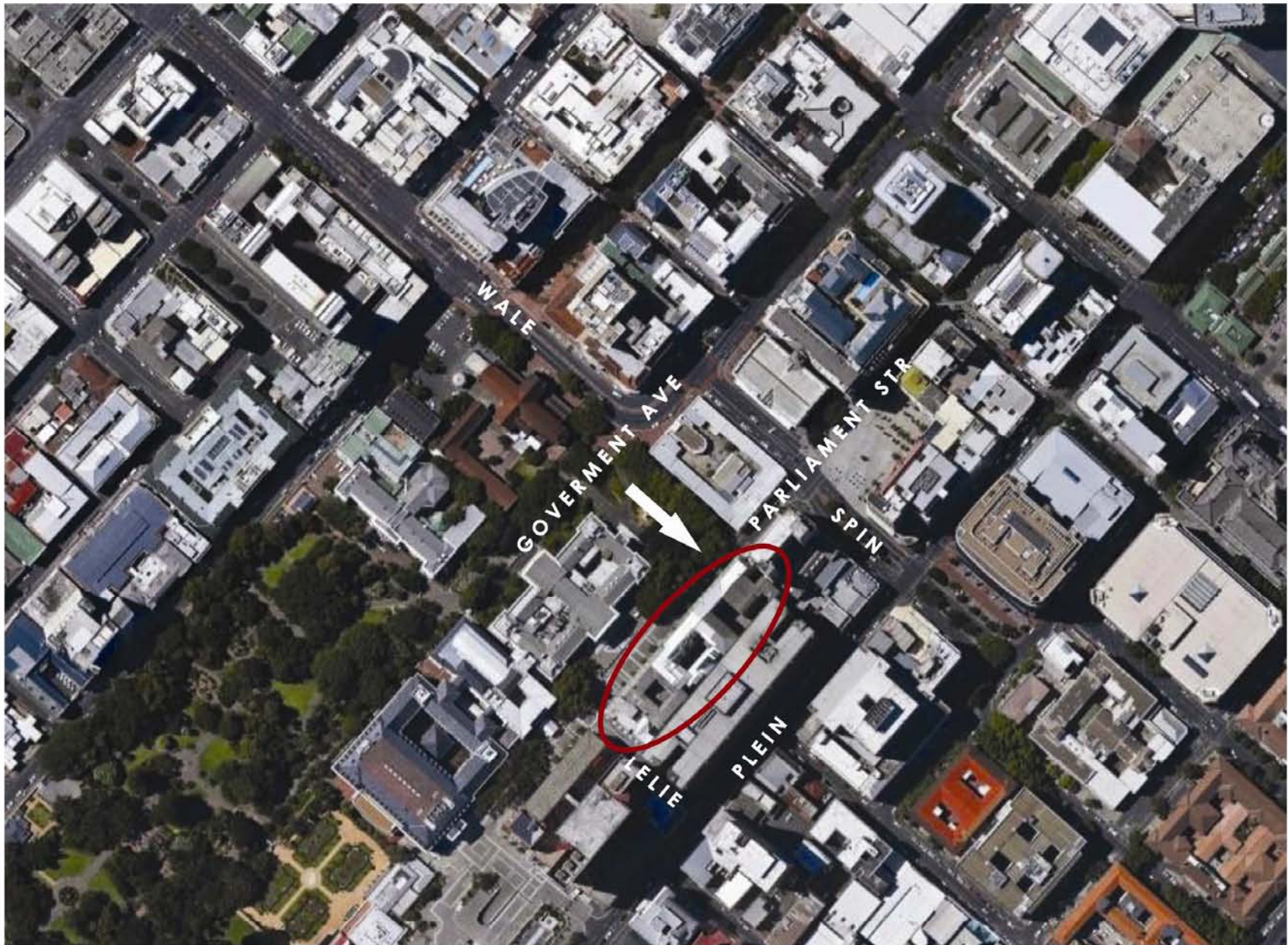


## LOCALITY

marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town

## CONTEXT





CONTEXT  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town

## PHOTOGRAPHS





EXTERIOR VIEWS  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





ROOF ELEMENTS : CORRUGATED IRON PITCHED ROOFS  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



FLAT ROOF  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



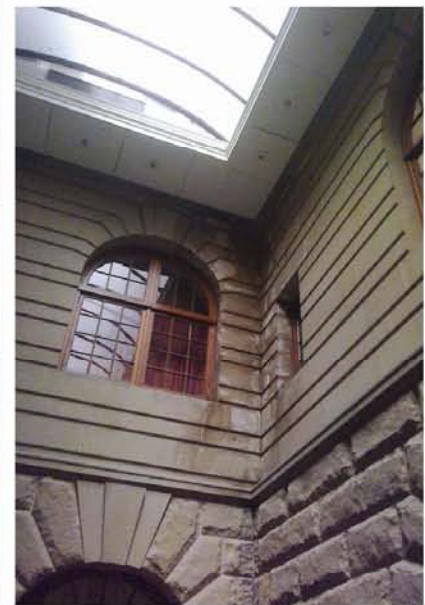


ROOF ELEMENTS : TILED  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



ROOF ELEMENTS : COPPER PITCHED ROOFS  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





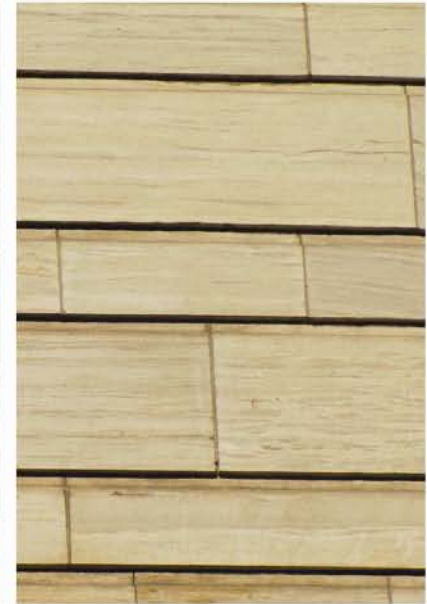
ROOF ELEMENTS : POLYCARBONATE ROOF  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





STONEMWORK : ROUGH  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





STONEMWORK : DRESSED  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



STONWORK : DETAILS  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



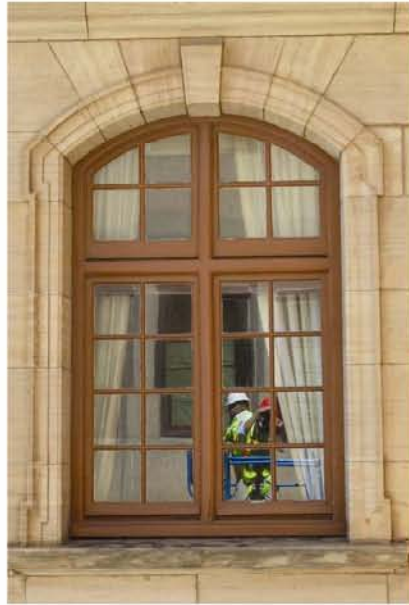


WROUGHT IRON : DETAIL  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





DOORS AND WINDOWS : TEAK  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



DOORS AND WINDOWS : PAINTED BALTIC PINE  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town





WINDOWS : DORMER  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town



WINDOWS : STEEL WINDOWS  
marks building : parliamentary precinct : cape town

## PROPOSALS













## **Annexure A: Method of establishing heritage values**



## **METHOD OF ASSESSING HERITAGE VALUES**

The assessment of heritage values is arranged in the form of a table using the following categories of significance from Section 3(3) of the NHRA.

### **1. Historical pattern**

Importance in the course or pattern of South Africa's history (e.g. associated with important events or developments)

### **2. Rarity**

Possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of SA's natural or cultural heritage

### **3. Information**

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of SA's natural or cultural heritage (study of the building fabric, archaeology, spatial arrangements and alignments, palaeontology, geology, patterns of flora and fauna, etc, may provide currently hidden information)

### **4. Typicality**

Demonstrates principal characteristics of a particular class of SA's natural or cultural places or objects (eg is a good example of a type of building or place)

### **5. Aesthetic eg architectural**

Exhibits a particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

### **6. Technology, creativity**

Demonstrates a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

### **7. Spiritual, cultural**

Has a strong or special social, cultural or spiritual association with a particular community or cultural group

### **8. Social history.**

Strong or special association with life or work of a person, group, organisation of importance in SA's history

### **9. Slave history**

A site of significance relating to the history of slavery in SA

**Degree of significance in each category is given a numerical value:**

5	4	3	2	1	0	-
Outstanding	Very significant	Significant	Some significance	Slight significance	No significance	No information on which to base an assessment

**10. Grade**

- 1 = Special national significance
- 2 = Regional (provincial) significance
- 3 = Local significance