

**JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT SURVEYING FORM**

Compiled by: Dr JJ Bruwer, 2002-07-29

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**NAME OF PLACE: FNB BANK CITY BUILDINGS**



Top left: the *FNB Bank City Buildings* in the distant background (approximately in the centre of the photo) as seen from the Mandela Bridge. Top right: photo taken at a distance from the corner of Bree and Fraser Streets.

**The authors were prevented by the bank security guards to take any meaningful photos of the buildings.**

Previous/alternative name/s :

**LOCATION:** Street : corners Kerk, Fraser and Jeppe  
 Street number :  
 : [Corners: Kerk, Fraser, Jeppe]  
 Stand Number : 5264  
 Previous Stand Number: by 1988 - 1173, 1174, 1175, RE/1181, 5020  
 Block number : AK  
 GIS reference :

**ZONING:** Current use/s :  
 Previous use/s :

**DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:**

Height :  
 Levels above street level :  
 Levels below street level :  
 On-site parking :

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS:**

Walls:

Roof:

Windows:

**SITE FEATURES:**

**ALTERATIONS:**

**INTEGRITY:**

**INSCRIPTION:**

**ARCHITECT:**

Revel Fox & Partners; RFB Consulting Architects; Gallagher Aspoas Polak Senior; Meyer Pienaar.

**BUILDER:**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE:**

Date on plans :  
Approval of plans :  
Completion date :

**BUILDING STYLE:**

Post Modern Neo Classical.

“Landmark: “Bank City, wheather [sic.] liked or not has become a landmark in the city. The use of space has been particularly innovative.” (Johannesburg Building, Space & Urban Feature Classification, 1998: Inner City).

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Shops to street, bank and office building.

**ENVIRONMENT:**

“...from the beginning of the 20th century the nature of building development in central Johannesburg was determined largely by economic interests. In recent years the chickens have come home to roost. The city centre is losing its identity and, to an increasing extent, people are alienated from the city.” (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...).

The last statement is only true to a point; the *FNB Bank City* development - covering four and a half city blocks – has resulted in a complete alteration of the environment in this part of the City. The Post Modern Neo Classical Style of the buildings is reminiscent of the huge commercial and bank buildings that were erected in the early 1900’s. Examples of these buildings are the *Third Corner House* (see E-1); the *National Bank Building* (see E-2) and certain elements of the *First National Bank* (see F-4) such as the huge columns so prominently displayed in the *First National Bank* and as a bonding factor in the *FNB Bank City Buildings*. This development would have been a perfect compatriot to the abovementioned buildings as well as the *Johannesburg Public Library* and Dr Beyers Naudé Square (see L-1) and the *City Hall* (see J-1) as its architecture could possibly be considered complementary to all the abovementioned buildings. Nevertheless, *FNB Bank City* Complex has given the city a new look (although it was done in the ‘old fashioned style’), thus adding confidence to the infra structure of the city and providing much needed safe havens in the form of interconnected protected open spaces within the complex of buildings.

The five *FNB Bank City Buildings* are Documents AI-1, AJ-1, AK-2, X-1 and X-2.

**CONDITION:**

Good.

**URGENT ACTION:**

**SAHRA RECORD REGARDING ALTERATIONS, RENOVATIONS, RESTORATION:**

**PROTECTION STATUS:** (under National Heritage Resources Act, 1999)

General protection:	Section 34(1) structure/s	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal protection:	provincial heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	national heritage site	<input type="checkbox"/>
	provisional protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
	heritage area	<input type="checkbox"/>
	listed in provincial heritage resources register	<input type="checkbox"/>

Relevant Gazette Notice:

Gazette description:

**FORMER PROTECTION STATUS:** (under National Monuments Act, 1969)

**NOTES:**

**DEEDS INFORMATION:**

Original ownership:

**PRE-HISTORY OF SITE:**

27 FRASER STREET:

"W. J. Bush & Company Limited "Essence Distillers For Over 100 - Essence Distillers for over one hundred years, the W. J. Bush Organisation is backed by the knowledge gained by the exhaustive research of an entire century in the manufacture and distilling of soluble and fruit essences, essential oils, floral ottos, perfumery compounds, synthetic and fine chemicals, harmless food colours, natural and concentrated fruit juices, bottlers' bases and a host of other products for the foods, beverage and allied industries, which had made the name of Bush synonymous with essence distilling industry the world over. W. J. Bush & Company Limited of Ash Grove, Hackney, London, was established in 1851 and has over the years built up an organisation with distilleries and depots that stretched from London to New York, and from Australia to Africa, supplying a complete service from the raw material to the finished product. Equally wide in its ramifications is the Organisation's associates, Potter & Moore Limited, Manufactures of the well-known Mitcham Lavender and Buisson range of perfumery. The wide technical knowledge and experience of the Bush Organisation was first made available to Southern Africa in the year 1920, when Mr. H. S. White arrived from London and opened up offices in Cape Town. Four years later, in 1924, a small office was established in Johannesburg, where Mr. White traded under his own name, as representative of the Bush Organisation. The scenes of his first activities was a small office at the corner of Fraser and Jeppe Streets. In 1928, when the scope of business had reached such large proportions warranting further expansion, a move was made to 27 Fraser Street, where new offices were opened and where trading took place under the name of W. J. Bush & Company, manufacturers of essential oils, aromatic chemicals and perfume compounds. A technician in the person of Mr. W. C. Bailey joined Mr. White in 1932 to take charge of the technical side of the new South African branch. In later years, due to considerable business expansion, more commodious premises were found to be desirable and in 1936 a move was made to 257/9 Main Street..." (Stark, F. [Ed.]: Seventy Golden Years...).

By 1954, S White Manufacturing Co, toilet requisites and manufacturing chemists occupied this building.

## HENRO HOUSE:

By 1954, *Henro House* stood at 9 Kerk Street.

Tenants by 1954: 2nd floor - Associated Book Clubs; Yellow Cabs (1938) Ltd.

## LIPWORTH'S BUILDINGS:

By 1954, the *Lipworth's Buildings* occupied the 120 Jeppe and 31 Fraser Streets corner portion of this site. The owner/s and occupants of the building were Alex Lipworth Ltd, Wholesale Chemist and Druggists.

## **HISTORY:**

### **GENERAL NOTES:**

Estimated cost of building :  
Estimated cost of drainage :  
Accommodation approved :  
Valuation at completion :  
Occupied : yes

"The high-rise buildings in Johannesburg were inspired by a number of factors. In the first place, they were symptomatic of the process of consolidation in commerce which was started in the 1890s and subsequently pursued on a larger scale. Larger buildings had to be put up for the major mining companies and commercial enterprises. These structures reflected the financial and commercial power of the companies – not only by their size but also by the use of an abstract white colour and heavy classicist building forms. This philosophy put a focus on the buildings which insulated them from the more personalised older buildings. This intensive land development was also related to the manner in which property was taxed in Johannesburg. Under the ZAR government the rating system for urban property was rather limited, partly because all community services were provided by concession. In fact, the separate tax on buildings and land introduced by Johannesburg's Health Committee in 1893 was the first efficient system in the Transvaal. This system of separate taxation for land and buildings was superseded by a combined tax system in 1902 which was applied until 1916, when a provincial ordinance decreed that land should be more heavily taxed than buildings, and gave town councils the option of abolishing tax on buildings altogether... In 1919 Johannesburg chose to abolish tax on buildings... Johannesburg's subsequent development may be partly attributed to the fact that the tax was levied on the market value of the property, not revenue from the property, as was the case in England. Valuation figures show that land was assessed at much higher values than the buildings...so that owners were obliged, for economic reasons, to put up larger and ever higher buildings. This also accelerated the 'turnover' of buildings. In view of the comparatively high land tax, smaller non-functional buildings could not readily show a profit. This system, reinforced in 1919 by the abolition of tax on buildings, is still the main reason for the intensive land development in the city. It also partly explains the never-ending process of demolition through which so many historical buildings have disappeared. Apart from the system of taxation, development was also affected by the system of property ownership. As pointed out before, stands in the centre of Johannesburg were sold on 99-year leasehold during the 1880s. In the beginning, when the future of Johannesburg still seemed precarious, this was regarded as a reasonably long period. This no longer applied after 1900. Buildings of up to nine storeys were built after the turn of the century and the government, possibly under pressure from private interests, granted freehold of stands on Government land (Randjeslaagte, Marshalltown, Ferreirasdorp and Braamfontein...thereby forfeiting any influence they might have had on the future development of Johannesburg. In fact, private interests were handed the freedom of the city. To a considerable extent, the fairly random development of the city centre and the painful absence of a city square and park may be ascribed to the fact that the authorities gave up their regulating role. This meant that from the beginning of the 20th century the nature of building development in central Johannesburg was determined largely by economic interests. In recent years the chickens have come home to roost. The city centre is losing its identity and, to an increasing extent, people are alienated from the city." (Van Der Waal, G-M.: From Mining Camp to Metropolis...). See also ENVIRONMENT.

CURRENT TENANT/S:

**SOURCES:**

*For additional illustrative information, see relevant supplementary photo album in electronic format.*

See SOURCES DOCUMENT for information on sources consulted with reference to this document.

**RECORDED BY:**

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Unless otherwise indicated photographs by Catharina JM Bruwer.

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