

Cairo Road

Urbanism &
Architecture





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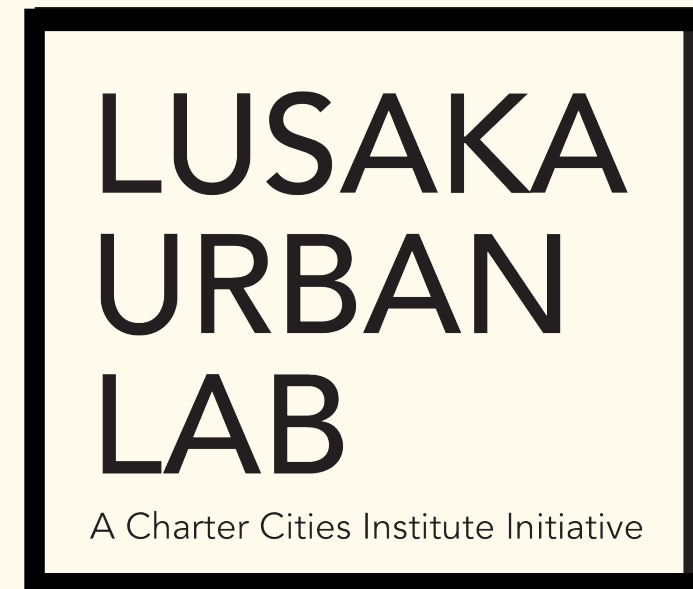


The Future of Development

Empowering new cities with better governance to lift tens of millions of people out of poverty.

The Charter Cities Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to building the ecosystem for charter cities by:

- Creating legal, regulatory, and planning frameworks;
- Advising and convening key stakeholders including governments, new city developers, and multilateral institutions;
- Influencing the global agenda through research, engagement, and partnerships.



The Lusaka Urban Lab is an initiative from CCI Zambia to generate new research and facilitate knowledge sharing on urban issues in Lusaka.

The Lusaka Urban Lab goals include:

- Drive conversations about urban challenges in Lusaka
- Bridge the gap between communities and policymakers
- Identify and implement solutions and partnerships.

Foreword

The documentation of the Cairo road urbanism and architecture is an important milestone in establishing historical heritage patterns that shaped the development of the iconic Lusaka city. The projects highlight the different schools of thought that independently worked on modern architectural designs, urban planning and building constructions have influenced how Cairo Road interact with the built environment.

The documentation of the Cairo road system provides lessons on the importance of streets as a connectivity matrix for the city, which is fundamental for urban mobility and urban economic productivity. The documentation shows how comprehensive and coordinated approach to street planning provides the matrix for the layout of urban basic services, mainly energy, water supply and sanitation, drainage, transportation and parking slots. The modern architecture, inclusion plazas and public gardens, are key elements that form personal interaction and communication among residents defining the cultural and political quality of the street and city life.

My sincere appreciation is extended to CCI for partnering with us in publishing the Cairo road urbanism and architecture brochure. It is my hope that, with the lessons learnt from the brochure will influence future developments that promote streets design with provisions for safe walkable spaces and designs that contribute to the quality of interactions of the city dwellers.

Garry Nkombo
Minister of Local Government and
Rural Development

Cairo Road is interesting for many reasons, from the bustling economic activities made up of informal street vending on the sidewalks of key public and private office buildings such as the Central Bank, Passport Office, Post Office, professional service firms, and various commercial banks, to arguably Lusaka's tallest skyscraper—FINDECO House. But beyond what we know and see at face value, this road has a rich history of interesting anecdotes, buildings, and nuggets that the project team brings to the fore, providing greater appreciation and understanding of the road's urban history and architecture.

This Cairo Road Project starts an important conversation on the relevance of buildings and roads to the development and evolution of cities, a conversation that becomes even more pertinent as the world shifts towards more sustainable city development. The project documents and publishes well-researched novel data and information about some of the city's iconic buildings, which is a rarity. Insights are revealed about Cairo Road's urban history from the first store in 1908 to the motivation behind the architectural designs and the civil rights walk-ins that occurred in-between—insights that can be used to support other economic sectors.

Cities are often synonymous with buildings—tall buildings in many parts of the world that form part of the rich culture of the city and are often experienced on city tours. This Cairo Road Project has the potential to inform the development of a guided city tour that explores the city's landmark buildings and architecture, thereby expanding Zambia's tourist activities in the capital city.

CCI is pleased to have partnered with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development on this innovative project that demonstrates the integral role of buildings in urban development and at the same time offers great promise to support tourism as well.



Mwanda Phiri
Africa Lead
Charter Cities Institute

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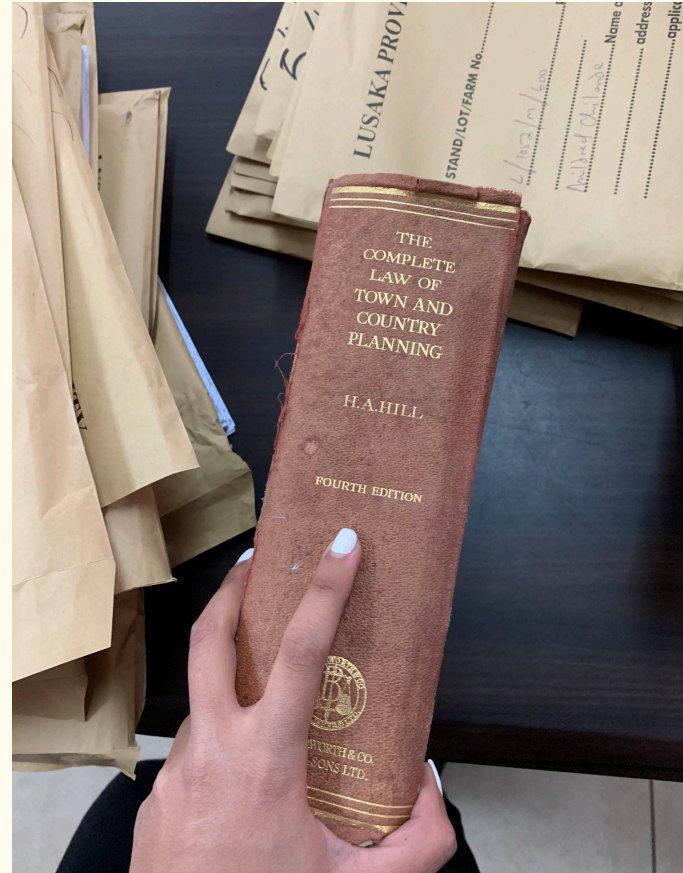
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Introduction

Fascinated by the striking, modern architecture of Cairo Road, the project team went on a journey to ask and answer questions on the history of one of the oldest roads in town. The main goal of this project is to document Cairo Road’s urbanism and architectural histories. The documentation led the team down rabbit holes of books, research papers, national archives, local libraries and lots of street walks. The team interviewed historians, professors and practioners to gather information and locate information sources. The project is part of the ongoing collaboration between the Charter Cities Institute (CCI) and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) on the future of urban development in Zambia.

The team is grateful to everyone who provided help, advice or a link to an important publication. The team hopes that this project will launch a much wider movement to document the urban and architecture histories of Lusaka and kickstart a much-needed discussion on Lusaka’s urban future.





Part One:

Urbanism

Building Lusaka

In 1934, the capital of Northern Rhodesia was moved from Livingstone to a more central location in present-day Lusaka¹. A professor from England, S.D. Adshead created a plan for a new city, Lusaka, a greenfield site, based on the Garden City principles to create a "generous, gracious city" every step of urban development is carefully regulated². The city materialized in accordance with Adshead's thinking and guidelines: spacious roads, lots of trees, massive private lawns, and backyards with a separation of residential and commercial units. The Adshead plan outlined everything from the specific location of different land uses to street widths to the placement of important buildings.³

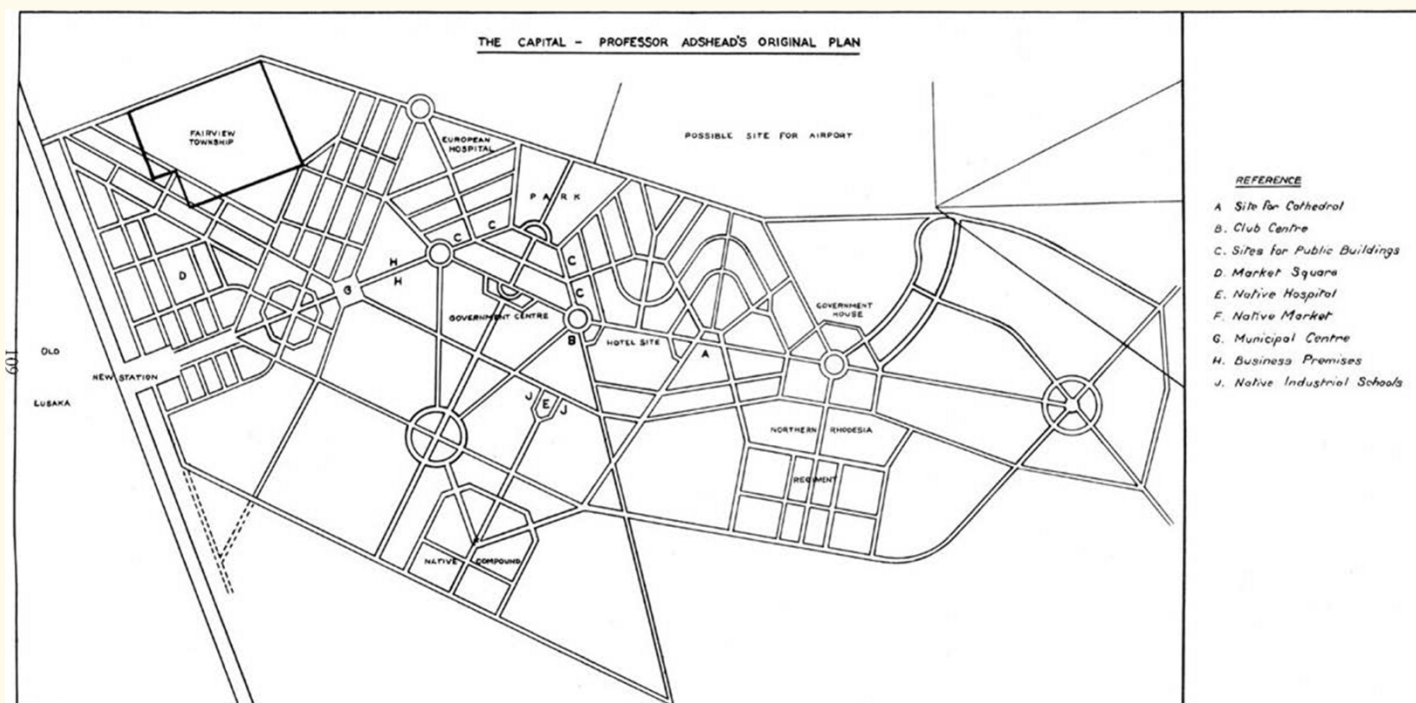


Figure 1: Adshead Original Plan
Source: (Bradley, 1935)

1 Mfune, C. e., 2015. The urban land question in Africa. Habitat International, 28(0197-3975), pp. 209-218.
2 Mukuka, P., 2001. Land Development, Control and Use in Zambia, Lusaka: University of Zambia.
3 Bradley, K., 1935. Lusaka, The New Capital of Northern Rhodesia. s.l.:Routledge.

Building the CBD

Lusaka Central Business Area—identified as the area from Kabwe Round about in the north to Kafue Roundabout in the south—is the oldest part of the city and is its main commercial area. Starting the 1930s, businesses, retail and offices flocked to this area of Lusaka to utilize its advantageous, central location⁴. Central Lusaka remains the busiest and densest area of the city. This publication will focus on Cairo Road, a main road in central Lusaka, exploring the history of its urbanism and architecture.

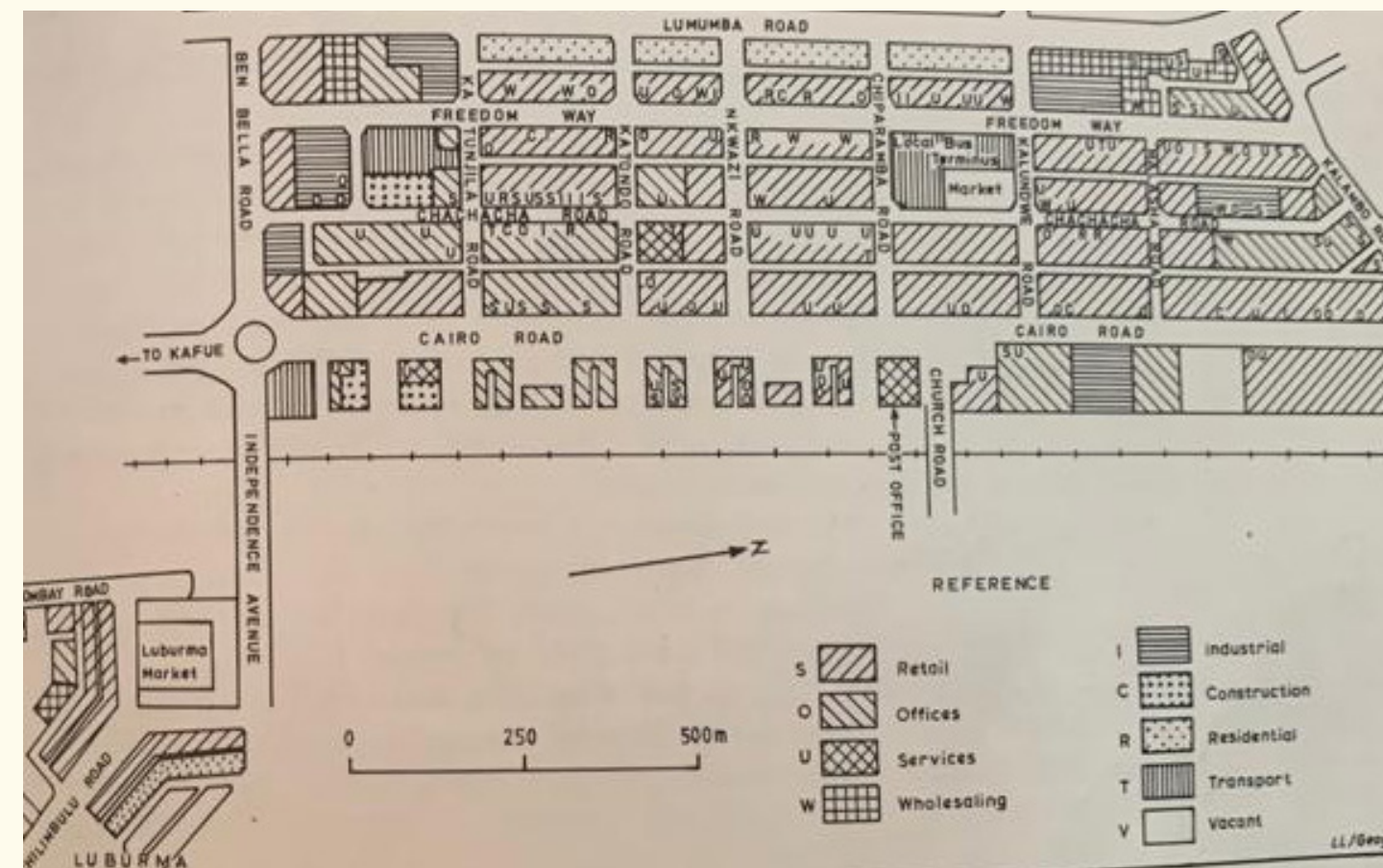


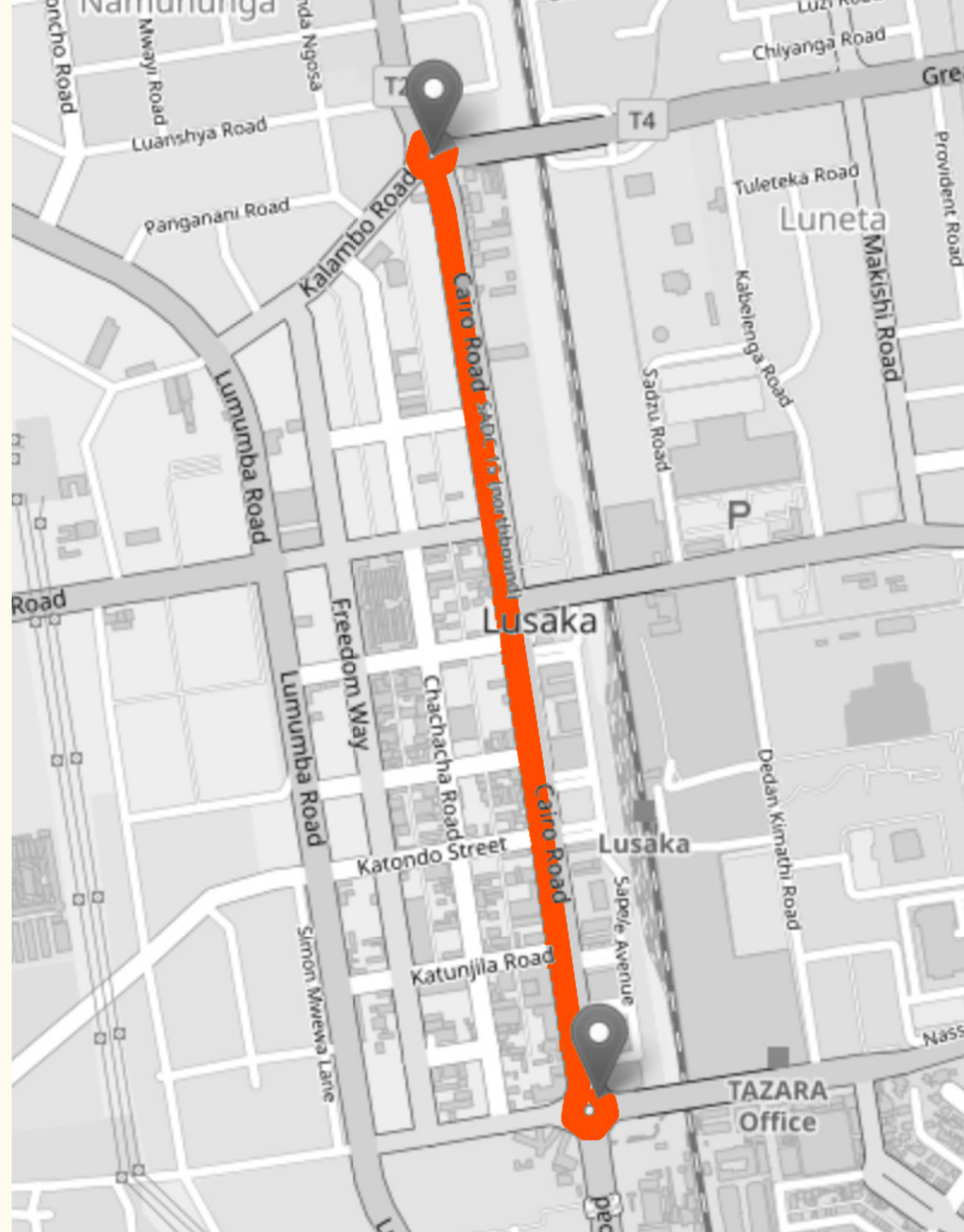
Figure 2: Landuse plan for central Lusaka (Downtown Lusaka)
Source: (Williams, 1986)

4 Williams, G, 1986. Lusaka and Its Environs: A Geographical Study of a Planned Capital City in Tropical Africa

Cairo Road

Cairo Road is one of the main roads in the central business district of Lusaka, and is considered to be the principal business, retail and services center of the city. Cairo Road runs 1.8km from Kafue Roundabout to Kabwe Roundabout⁵. The history of the road is as old as the city itself.

⁵ National Assembly of Zambia, 2022. "Roads and Road Traffic Act



“When people outside of Lusaka come to do business there, they often said “they were going to the streets of Cairo,” as Cairo Road means business and hustling.”

Bwalya Masabo
President
Zambia Institute of Architects

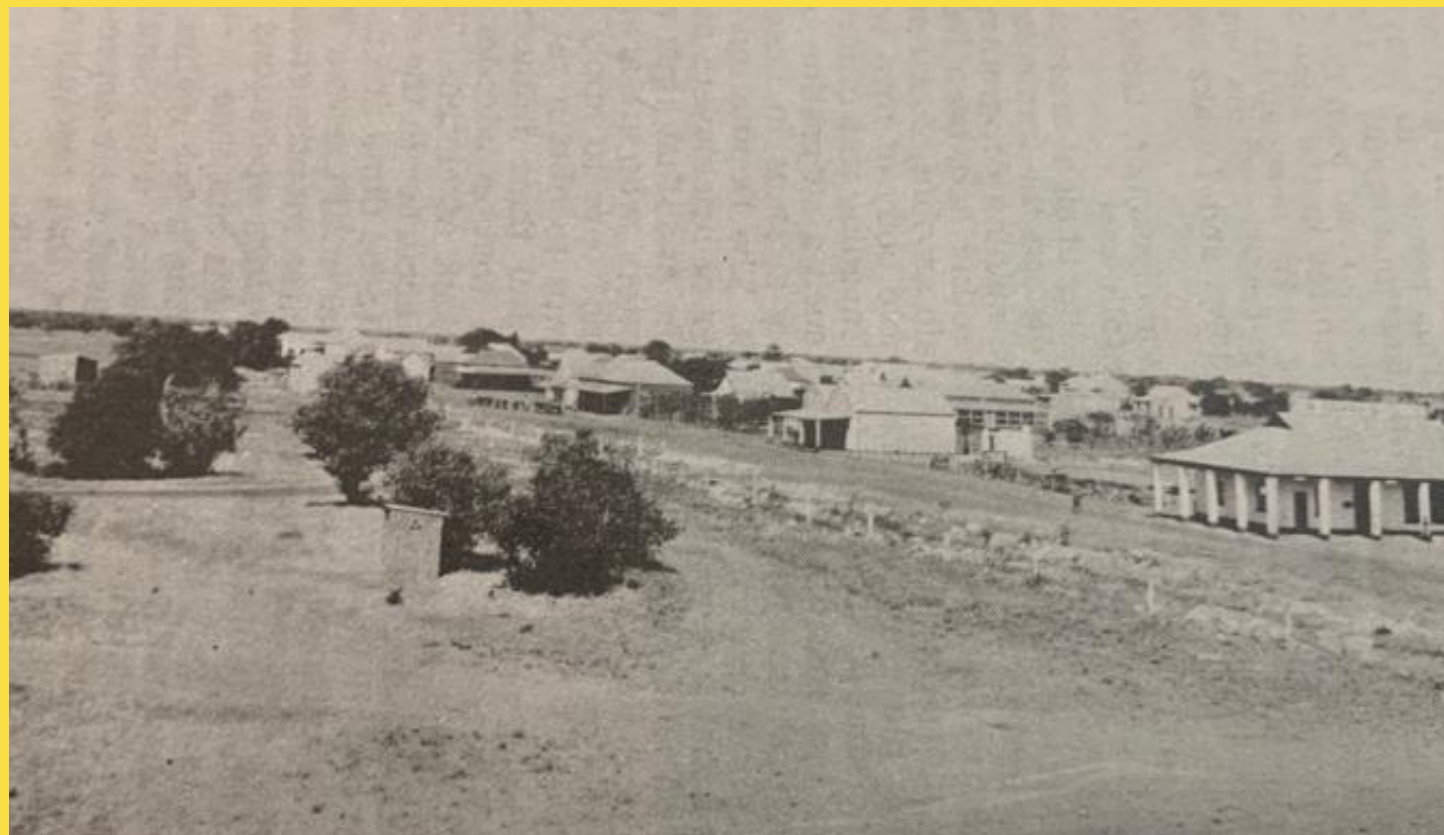


Figure 4: Cairo Road looking south, 1931
Source: (Williams, 1986)



Figure 6: Cairo Road at the junction of Katondo Road in 1955
Source: (Williams, 1986)

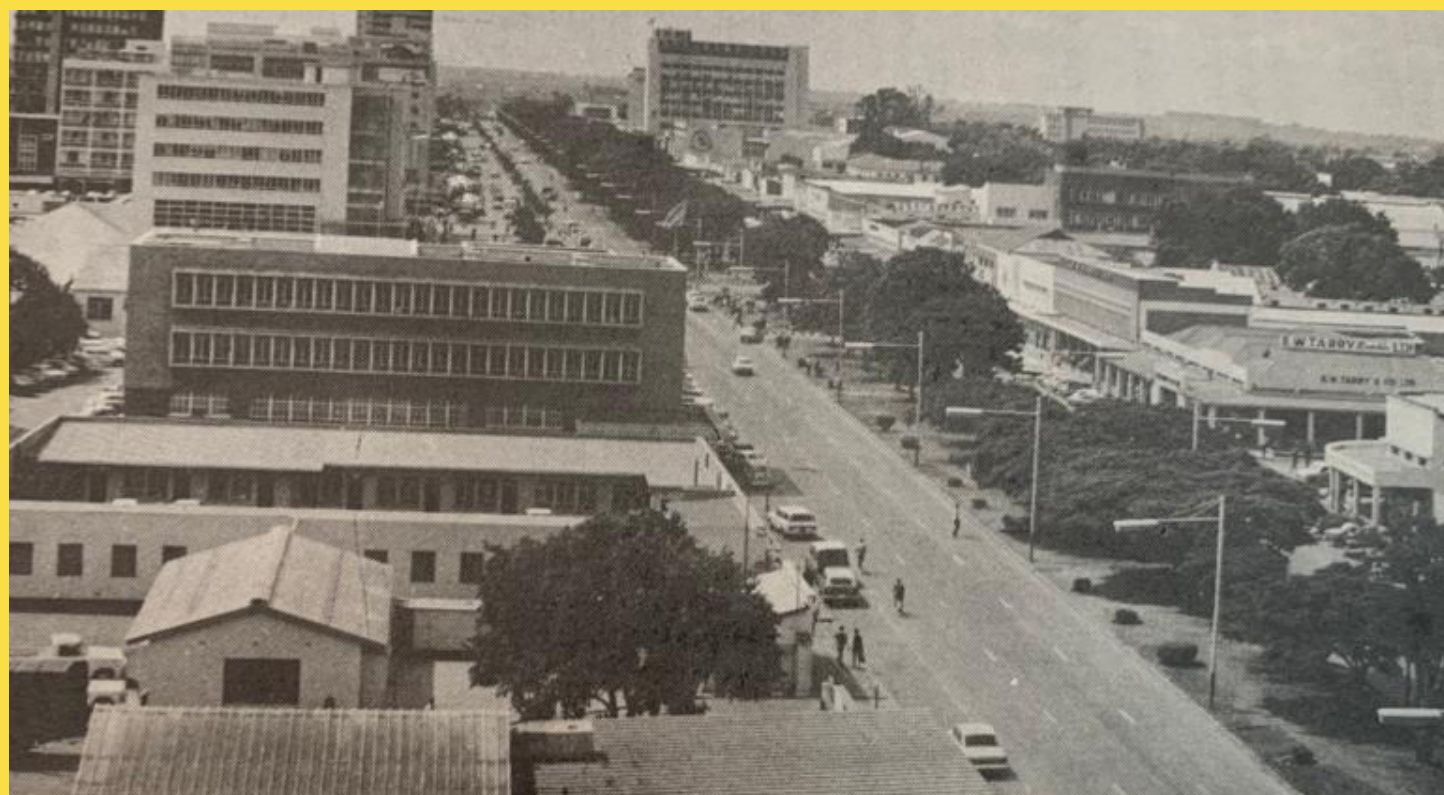


Figure 5: Cairo Road looking south, 1971
Source: (Williams, 1986)

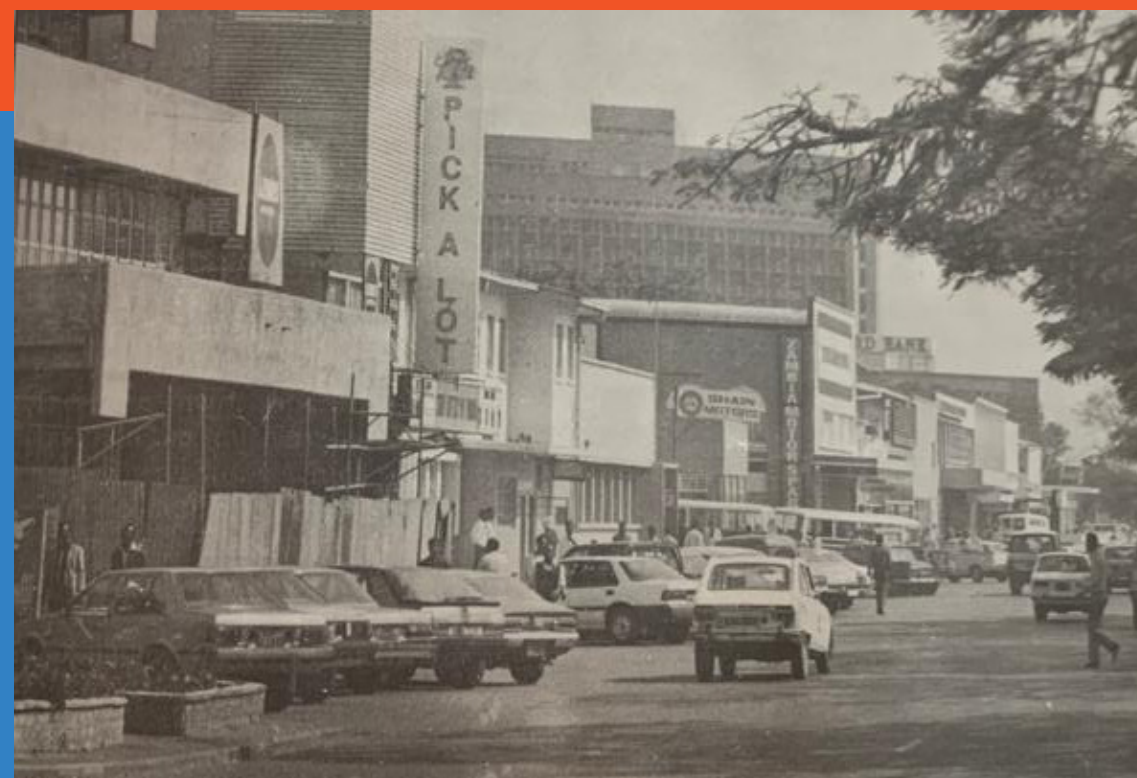


Figure 7: Multi-storey developemnt along the west side of Cairo Road
Source: (Williams, 1986)

Cairo Road

Timeline

1908

The first store was established on Cairo Road, which was then known only as “The Front Street”.

1920s

Several woodworking and iron shops open along Cairo Road.

1930s

The Lusaka Boma was established on Cairo Road.

1950s

Banks, government organizations and ministerial offices dominated Cairo Road.

1952

Reconstruction work on Cairo Road begins, with the facelift completed in 1956.

1957

The police station, power station and post office were established.

In 1924: The name Cairo Road was officially approved

Did You Know?

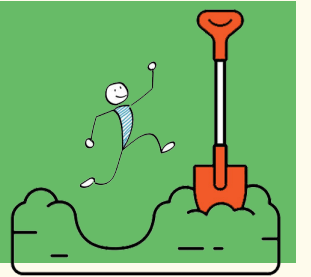
Cairo Road's name was almost changed⁶

In 1957, when Queen Elizabeth visited Lusaka, some people suggested renaming Cairo Road after the Queen, as it was the biggest and most important road in the city, to memorialize her visit. The Municipal Council decided that the name was to be changed to Queen Elizabeth or Queen Mother Avenue, but this decision was not well received by road investors or by city residents. The Council consequently reversed its decision and Cairo Road kept its name. While there is little documentation behind the original decision to name Cairo Road, Lusaka residents have since become attached to the name.

⁶ Sampson, R, 1971. So This was Lusakas: The Story of the Capital of Zambia to 1964.

Cairo Road
Cairo Road
Cairo Road
Cairo Road
Cairo Road
Cairo Road

Cairo Road had a huge ditch for 30 years⁷



Heavy rainfall in 1926 caused major damage in most of the emerging town, leading the authorities to construct the Cairo Road ditch to help curb rainwater runoff. Pedestrians would often fall into this ditch, especially at night. The ditch was finally filled in during roadwork in 1956.

Cairo Road was the site of civil right walk-ins⁸

In the 1950s, the zambian African National Congress, the only African political party at the time, organized walk-ins in the post office and various shops along Cairo Road to protest segregation between the European and native African populations in the city.

The 1st Multi-storey Building in Lusaka was built on Cairo Road⁹



In the early 1950s, the Lusaka Building Society redeveloped a plot on Cairo Road into a three-storey office building, named Permanent House. Permanent House was the first multi-storey building in all of Lusaka. The late 1950s and 1960s saw an increase in multi-story housing along Cairo Road, with the first high-rise structures built in the 1970s.

⁷ Williams, G, 1986. Lusaka and Its Environs: A Geographical Study of a Planned Capital City in Tropical Africa

⁸ Sampson, R, 1971. So This was Lusakas: The Story of the Capital of Zambia to 1964.

⁹ Sampson, R, 1971. So This was Lusakas: The Story of the Capital of Zambia to 1964.

Part Two:

Architecture

Modern Architecture

Modern architecture is an architecture movement that started at the turn of the 19th century and took off after World War One. Modern architecture was inspired by innovation in construction and engineering, and was impacted by social progress and the rising ideas about healthier living¹⁰. Modern architecture was also a response to increased immigration to cities following the World Wars as it provided functional and efficient spaces for residence, commerce and industry.

Modern architecture rejected the ornaments often associated with classic designs and was characterized with open floor plans, functionality in design, and use of modern and innovative materials in construction¹¹. Modern architecture evolved in many styles; the international style, Bauhaus, Brutalist, etc. Most of the buildings covered in this publication can be classified as modern brutal architecture, though they share elements with other modernist styles¹². From Mies Van der Rohe's Seagram Building, to Le Corbusier's The Cité Radieuse To Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum modern architecture is diverse and managed to reshape the world as we know it.



¹⁰ Rasid and Era, Modernity in tradition, Frontiers of Architectural Research Volume 4, Issue 1, March 2015, Pages 46-55

¹¹ Thomann, L., 2022. What is Modern Architecture.

¹² Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 2018. What is Modern architecture?

Brutal Modernism

Brutalism is one the more famous modern architecture styles that emerged in the 1950s. Brutal modernism is often used for institutional buildings to enforce the strong presence of the institution. Brutal architecture is often distinguished by strong lines, blocky appearance, rigid geometry and the use of raw material and concrete¹³.



¹³ Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), 2018. Brutalism in Architecture

Why Modern Architecture Matters

Searching for national identities¹⁴

In search of what is African architecture and what is the African dream, many postcolonial African governments chose modernism's strong lines and visuals to express their new national identities and physically build their national aspirations. In many African countries, the governments choose to build state buildings (eg: parliaments, banks, main offices and memorial structures) following modernist brutalist principles. From the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in Nairobi, to the independence arch in Accra, to the Fendco House in Lusaka, modernism represented a moment of hope for the newly founded nations and a statement of the strength of their governments. Modern architecture was used to build the state, the identity and the dreams of those rising nations and put their countries on the world map.

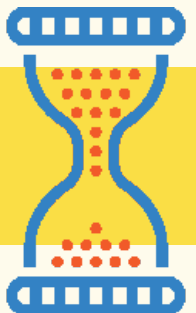
¹⁴ Spula, I, 2016, The History Behind 'African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence.

Non-Aligned Movement¹⁵



Zambia joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) following independence, a movement that focused on the independence of its members from the great powers. Yugoslavia was a major design and architecture influencers within the NAM and was able to export its modern architecture aesthetics to NAM member states. The influence of Yugoslavian architecture can be seen all over Africa and the Middle-East. One of the most iconic buildings of Lusaka and Cairo Road, Findeco House, was designed by Yugoslavian architects. Modernist architecture is an indication of the role post-independence African governments and cities played in global politics and their political and architectural influences.

Different Era/ Modern Lines¹⁶



The introduction of modern architecture in the early post-colonial period represents the first time Africans could build things of their own design, while simultaneously representing a colonizing attempt to modernize African cities. Modern architecture features strong, functional and simple lines which could easily be adopted by young nations and the colonial government intent on modernizing cities. The case studies included in this publication showcase examples of modern architecture in Zambia from both eras, highlighting how the colonial designs used more crisp and more minimal forms of modern architecture whereas post-colonial designs used a more brutal style with stronger and bolder lines. The lines of modern architecture represent the different aspiration of governments in both eras for the modernization of Lusaka.

¹⁵ Cvitanovic, Mojca, 2020. Tracing the Non-Aligned Architecture: Environments of Technical Cooperation and the Work of Croatian Architects in Kumasi, Ghana (1961-1970)

¹⁶ Folkers and van Buiten, 2019. Modern Architecture in Africa

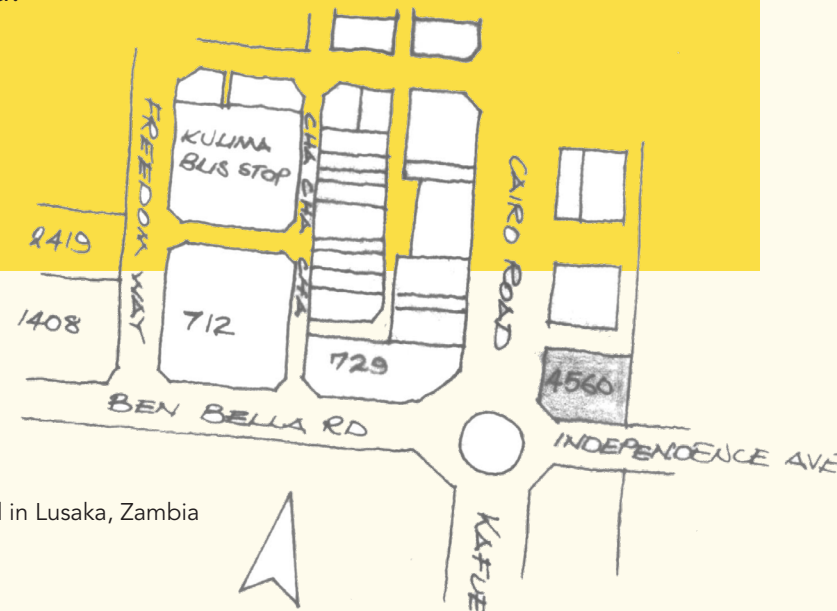
Building One

Findeco House¹⁷

Architects: Dušan Milenkovi and Branimir Ganovi

Year completed: 1974

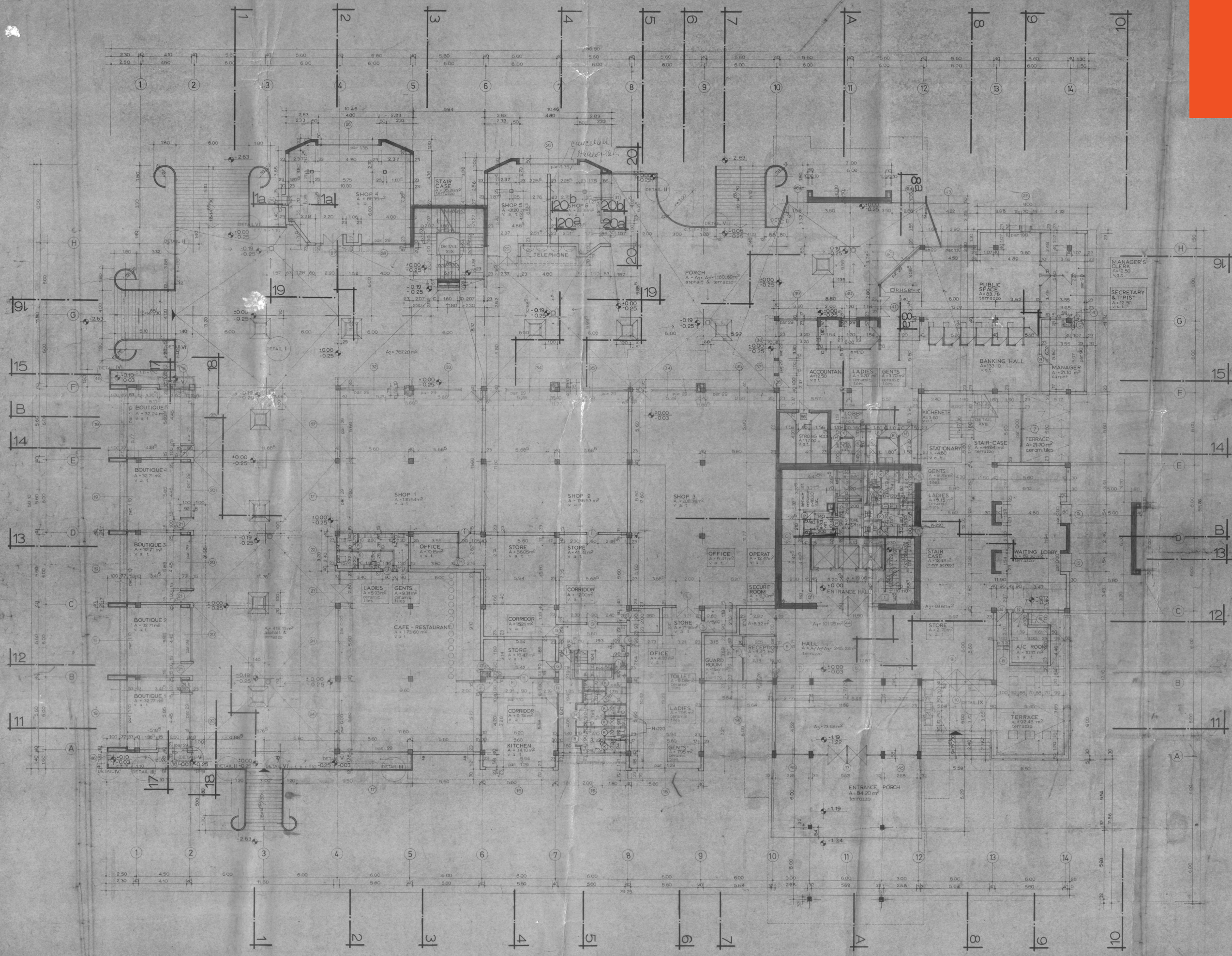
Description: The Findeco House is the tallest skyscraper in Lusaka at 90m. The name of the building comes from its original owners, who were the State Finance and Development Corporation. The building is unique in that its floors are cantilevered off of a central pillar, giving the structure a gravity defying appearance. This tower was built for Findeco at the height of Zambia's copper export trade (which the state corporation managed). Today the Findeco House largely operates as general office and retail space. In 2013, a huge Samsung sign was installed at the top of the tower. Efforts have been put forward in recent years to renovate and modernize the building, but so far, no such activities have manifested.



¹⁷ Marten, L, 2021. Findeco House on Cairo Road in Lusaka, Zambia



Findeco House- Working Plans



c.f.h — concrete fence height
+0.00 — finished floor level
-0.25 — concrete slab level

- C** NEW ARRANGEMENT SERVICE LIFT ENTRANCE
 - B** CHANGED ELECTRICAL DUCT
 - A** LIFTS
- REVISIONS**

Arch. B. Gandvic

PROJEKTOVANJE
"FINDECO" HOUSE
CAIRO E.D. (PLOT 1458)
CLON
ON LEVEL +0.00
ARCH. B. GANDVIC
TECH. G. STEVANOVIĆ
1:100 — 1/11/1972

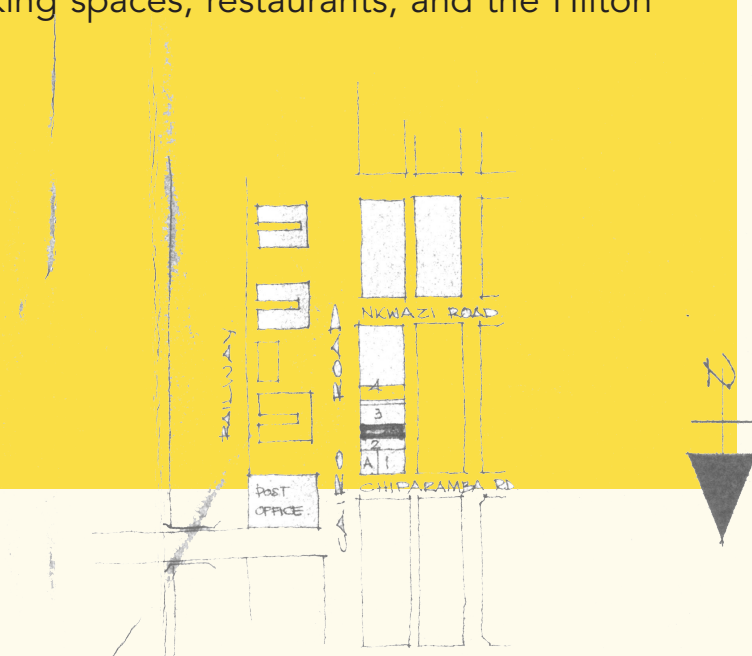
Building Two

Society House¹⁸

Architect (refurbishment): Robert Sike

Year Built: 1949 (refurbished 2010-2017)

Description: Society House is a 72.69m, 20-story tower located on west side of Cairo Road. The building's most distinct feature is the neo-oriental brutalist pagoda on top. The building caught fire in the 1990s and was not repaired until 2010. The renovations were done by a South African architect named Robert Sike of Louis Karol Architects, with renovations lasting from 2010 to 2017. Society House contains office space, multilevel car parking spaces, restaurants, and the Hilton Inn hotel.



¹⁸ Estateinte, 2019. Building Obsession: Society House, Lusaka- Zambia



Building Three

National Milling¹⁹

Architect: W. Anderson

Year Built: 1949

Description: The building covers five plots, approximately 1.25ha, on the east side of Cairo Road. The building contains a wheat mill plant, warehouses, workshop, and offices. Officially opened in 1949, the mill plant has gone through many changes since then, with various additions made over time. Currently, the plot is for sale as National Milling has moved its headquarters closer to Liyali area, south of Lusaka, after years of noise and pollution complaints from nearby residents.



¹⁹ OPENING OF THE FIRST COMMERCIAL MILLING PLANT IN LUSAKA, 2022, *Zambian History In Picture*

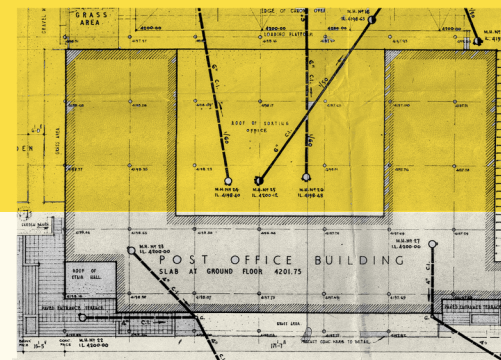
Building Four

Lusaka Post Office²⁰

Architect: Clifford Duke

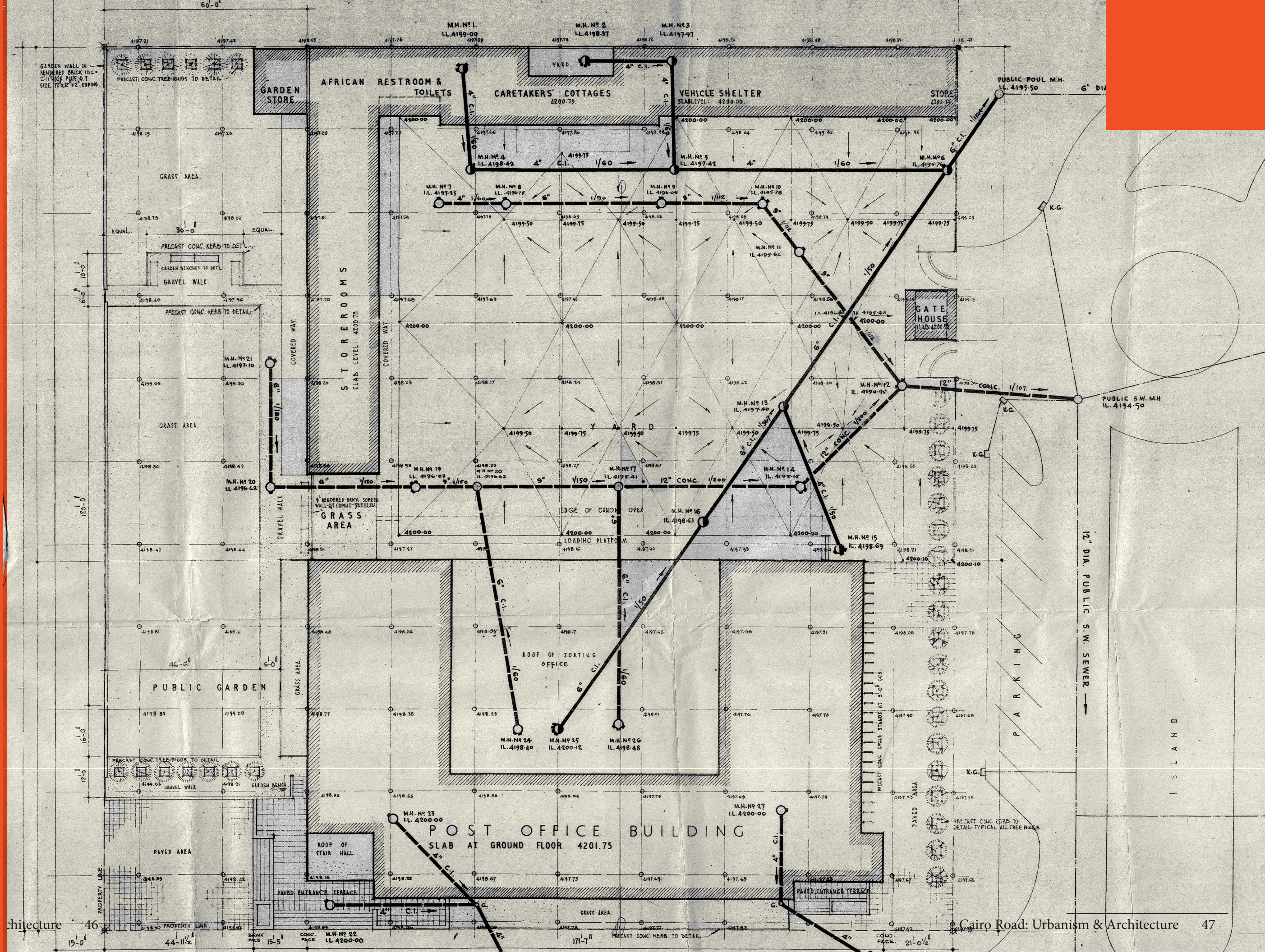
Year Built: 1955-1957

Description: Construction of the post office started in 1955 as part of the renovations to Cairo Road in anticipation of Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1957. The post office was built following a modern minimal style. The same time witnessed the building of the railway station and police station. Both the post office and the and the High Court building were damaged in bombings in 1976 and were renovated shortly after.



²⁰ Associated press, 1976.

Lusaka Post Office- Site Plan



Conclusion

Cairo Road's urbanism and architecture are landmarks for the city of Lusaka. Cairo Road, among other roads in downtown Lusaka, tells the story of a young city that is still being written. The architecture of Cairo Road takes us on a journey through recent history of Zambia itself. The modern design influences of the road reveals past modernization drives in pre- and post-colonial Lusaka.

The buildings covered in this publication represent various points in Lusaka's modernist urban story, from Zambia's role in the non-aligned movement reflected in Findeco House to the modern colonial construction of Lusaka's Post Office. Society House represents the once high land values of Cairo Road, while Lusaka's industrial history is represented by the National Milling Old Headquarters.

Telling the story of the urbanism and architecture of a street is crucial to think about its future. This publication documents the history of Cairo Road and intends to start the much-needed conversation about the future of Cairo Road. This publication and tour represent the first set of activities to raise awareness and document Cairo Road and the city of Lusaka. The second phase of the Cairo Road project will focus on actionable interventions and workshops discussing the usability and functions of Cairo Road moving forward. If you want to learn more and get involved in the future of Cairo Road project or future Lusaka Urban Lab activities, contact Heba Elhanafy, Urban Researcher at the Charter Cities Institute, at heba@cci.city.



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