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— FREE AREA GUIDE · PARKTOWN NORTH

Reading the Avenues

The Parktown North light & privacy playbook

In a suburb where the avenues run in every direction, the street tells you nothing about which way your rooms face. Here is what the Highveld sun actually does to a house on these stands — elevation by elevation, with the trade-offs written down rather than glossed over.

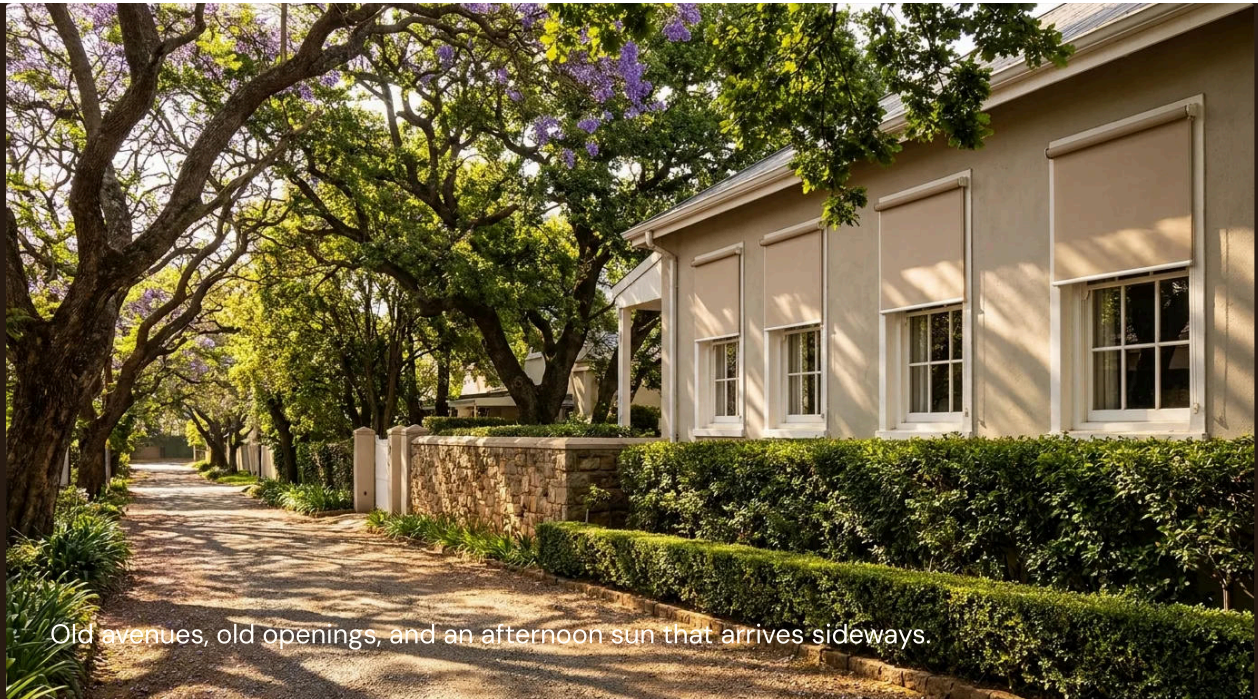
ABOUT 8 MINUTES TO READ

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FREE — NO EMAIL NEEDED

SOURCES AT THE FOOT

START WITH THE SUN



Old avenues, old openings, and an afternoon sun that arrives sideways.

IN THIS PLAYBOOK Why here is different What the light does Elevation by elevation
What we would fit, and the catch The 60-year rule What we would check on site
Your two ways forward

— 01 — THE STARTING POINT

Why a suburb with no grid needs its own shading brief

Parktown North was proclaimed a township in 1903 and advertised in *The Star* on the strength of fertile soil, beautiful views and an offer of 20,000 young trees to anyone building here.^[2] Those trees are now the suburb: a jacaranda and oak canopy over narrow avenues, with a great many century-old houses underneath it.^[2]

Then the layout does something no other suburb in this city does. Parktown North is **the only suburb of Johannesburg to have only numbered avenues with no numbered streets**, and it is not a grid — the avenues run in all directions.^[1]

That one sentence is why this playbook exists. In a gridded suburb you can read a house's orientation off its street name. Here you cannot: two houses on the same avenue, four stands apart, can face ninety degrees away from each other. So your shading brief has very little to do with your neighbour's, even where the same hand clearly built both. We work these avenues with a compass in the toolbox rather than an assumption in the head.

And old openings are not standard openings. The stock is described as many old colonial-style houses keeping a village atmosphere^[1] — in practice, original timber and steel frames, deep reveals that are rarely square, and proportions an off-the-peg blind will not flatter. Nobody bought here to close it all up, either. On a stand with that canopy over it, privacy and outlook are one decision, not two.

— 02 — THE LIGHT HERE

What the sun actually does over these avenues

Parktown North sits at roughly 1,620 m above sea level^[3] on a city at 26°12' south.^[4] The published solar figures for Pretoria — half a degree north of us — put the sun **87.7° above the horizon at solar noon on 21 December** and only **40.84° at noon on 20 June**.^[5] That forty-seven-degree swing splits the year in two over the same pane of glass.

In midsummer the noon sun is almost straight overhead, so a north window with any eave above it largely shades itself at midday. **In midwinter it sits at 40° and due north**, pushing light and warmth deep into the room — which, with June nights around 4.1 °C and the odd frost,^[4] you want.

The afternoon is where it goes wrong. On 21 December the sun sets on a bearing of 243°, about 27 degrees *south* of due west; in June it sets at 296°, about 26 degrees north of it.^[5] From roughly three o'clock it is low, western and arriving almost horizontally — and no overhang blocks a horizontal ray. The same study puts it plainly: afternoons on a western exposure run far hotter than mornings on an eastern one.^[5] West-facing glass here needs something *at* the glass or *outside* it, not above it.

Three more facts that change the specification

- **The canopy is seasonal, and it works backwards.** Jacarandas are deciduous — they drop their leaves in late winter and early spring and only re-leaf with the flowering that starts in late September.^[6] So the canopy is thickest in January, when a north wall is already largely self-shading at noon, and thinnest in June and July, when the sun is at 40° and coming straight in. The tree outside your window is doing the opposite of what the house needs.
- **Storms and hail arrive in the afternoon.** Johannesburg's summer, October to April, is hot days followed by afternoon thundershowers.^[4] Gauteng's severe-storm activity peaks in October and November, again in the afternoon,^[8] and South African hail concentrates along the Highveld, most frequent from mid-November through February with an afternoon peak.^[7] Anything that folds out over a stoep has to get back in quickly, which makes a wind sensor a specification item here rather than an upsell.
- **Altitude sharpens the UV.** Ultraviolet intensity rises roughly 10% for every 1,000 m of altitude.^[9] At 1,620 m, fabrics and finishes on the sunny side of a house age faster than they would at the coast — a reason to choose the west-elevation fabric on performance first and colour second.



Half past four, west elevation. An open-weave sunscreen holds the glare down without blanking out the garden — the compromise most west rooms on these avenues are actually looking for.

— 03 — ROOM BY ROOM

Elevation by elevation, and which rooms suffer

One house, four different problems. Work out which wall the room sits on first — and on these avenues, please check rather than assume.



North — protect in summer, open in winter

North is where the sun lives all winter: high enough in January that an eave does much of the work, then at 40° and pouring in by June^[5] — through a canopy that has just dropped its leaves.^[6]

Living rooms and studies here do best with a venetian: bounce high summer light off the ceiling, open the slats flat in winter. A blackout roller is a blunt instrument on this wall — up or down, and you give away the winter warmth you were entitled to.

VERDICT: adjustable beats absolute.



West — the elevation that costs you comfort

Low, near-horizontal afternoon sun from about three o'clock, arriving from 27 degrees south of west at midsummer.^[5]

If a west room is unbearable at four, it is because the glass itself is heating and radiating inwards. An interior blind fixes the glare at once and the heat only partly — once the sun is through the pane the energy is already inside, and a closed blind absorbs it.

VERDICT: exterior shading if the house allows it; a proper sunscreen if it does not.



East — glare first, heat second

The same geometry mirrored, but into a house that cooled overnight. Bedrooms are woken early through December; a kitchen takes an hour of hard glare and then it is over.

So the honest answer is usually two different products on one wall: a blackout in the bedroom, something you can still see through in the kitchen.

VERDICT: solve for glare and sleep, not for heat.



South — cool, even, and the one people forget

Almost no direct sun for most of the year, so these rooms hold the steadiest light in the house — and are the coldest of them in July.^[4]

Shading is rarely the problem on this wall. Heat loss through old single glazing usually is, and so is a neighbour or a garden path close enough to see in.

VERDICT: think warmth and privacy, not sun.

— OPTIONAL

Shall we mark a copy up for your own windows?

Tell us which rooms are the problem and we will send you this same playbook with your elevations noted against it — which windows we would treat first, and what we would be weighing up on each one.

It is an email, not a visit. Nobody phones you about it.

What we would fit here, and the catch with each

Every one of these is right somewhere in this suburb and wrong somewhere else. Tap "add to my enquiry" on anything that sounds like your room and it travels down the page with you.

Timber venetian blinds NORTH · HERITAGE OPENINGS

Under a canopy the useful control is angle, not coverage: the light is dappled, moving, and a different animal in July than in January.^[6] A venetian throws high summer sun onto the ceiling and opens flat in June to let the low north sun do its job. Timber also sits against an old painted reveal in a way aluminium never quite does.

THE TRADE-OFF

Heavier and dearer than aluminium, and a very wide opening has to be split across more than one headrail. Above a bath or sink choose aluminium instead — timber and steam age badly together.

Aluminium venetian blinds KITCHENS · BATHROOMS · STUDIES

The same tilt control in a material that shrugs off steam and cleans in seconds. On an east kitchen window it earns its keep in that one hour of hard morning glare, then opens completely for the rest of the day.

THE TRADE-OFF

More utilitarian than timber in a formal reception room, and slats can rattle in a draught on an old sash that no longer closes tightly.

Sunscreen roller blinds WEST & EAST · GARDEN OUTLOOK

One flat sheet of open-weave fabric on a tube — no folds, no stacking. It cuts the glare and a useful share of the solar gain while leaving the garden visible, which on stands bought for their trees is usually the whole brief. No more curtains drawn at four o'clock.

THE TRADE-OFF

It reverses after dark: lights on inside, and you are the one on display. Facing a walking route or a close neighbour, we would pair it with a blackout on the same window rather than pretend one fabric does both jobs.

Blockout roller blinds BEDROOMS · EAST

A single smooth sheet that sits inside an old reveal without fighting the frame's proportions. Against a December sunrise on an east bedroom window it is the most effective thing on this list, and the simplest to keep working for twenty years.

THE TRADE-OFF

Binary — down is dark, up is everything — so the wrong tool for a north living room. And without side channels, light always finds the edge of a reveal that is not square, which on stock this old is most of them.

Day & night blinds AVENUE-FACING · GARDEN PATHS

Sheer bands and solid bands sliding past each other, so a room holds privacy from the pavement and still keeps usable daylight. On narrow avenues, where a front room sits close to passing feet, this is often the honest answer.

THE TRADE-OFF

More mechanism than a plain roller, so more to go wrong across a decade, and never fully blackout. Not for a bedroom you want properly dark.

Cellular honeycomb blinds SOUTH · SINGLE GLAZING

The cells hold a layer of still air against the glass. On a south room with original single glazing and July nights near 4 °C,^[4] it is one of the least expensive thermal improvements you can make to a window without replacing the window — no permit, no builder, no change to the facade.

THE TRADE-OFF

A soft product, so not for a busy kitchen — and not a heat-rejection answer on a hot west window. The gain sits firmly on the winter side of the ledger.

External venetian blinds HARD WEST GLASS

Aluminium slats in side guides, outside the glass, tilting the sun away before it reaches the pane. On a hard west elevation we would specify these over an interior blackout roller: stopping the heat outside the glass keeps a room cooler than absorbing it inside, where the pane still warms and radiates. You keep a view through the slats too.

THE TRADE-OFF

It changes the facade from the avenue, which on a house of this age is a conversation to have first — see below. It costs more than the interior alternative, and it lives outside in a hail belt,^[7] so a motorised version should retract on a wind signal.

Folding-arm awnings STOEPS AND PATIOS

Turns a baking paved stoep back into a usable room through summer, then folds away so the low winter sun still reaches the house. Where the garden is genuinely the extra room — and on these stands it usually is — this is often better value than anything you could do to a window.

THE TRADE-OFF

Storms roll through most summer afternoons^[4] and Gauteng sits in the higher hail zone,^{[7][8]} so we would specify a wind sensor and a cassette that closes over the fabric. Projection is limited by what the wall above the stoep can carry — a site question, not a catalogue one.

Also on the list further down: **zip screens** to hold a stoep against wind without walling it in, **motorisation & automation** for the tall openings an old house puts out of reach, **concealed & recessed blinds** where a newer addition should show no hardware at all, and **vertical & panel blinds** for wide sliding spans onto the garden.



Stopped outside the glass. External venetian slats in side guides, tilted against a low west sun — the heat never reaches the pane in the first place, and you keep a view through the slats.

— 05 — THE LOCAL CONSTRAINT

The 60-year rule, and what it means outside

The suburb's residents' association states the position directly: Parktown North "has many beautiful homes that are over 60 to 100 years old", those buildings "are protected by the National Heritage and Resources Act", and plans to alter or demolish any part of one must be submitted for approval — through the association and the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority – Gauteng, before city building control.^[11]

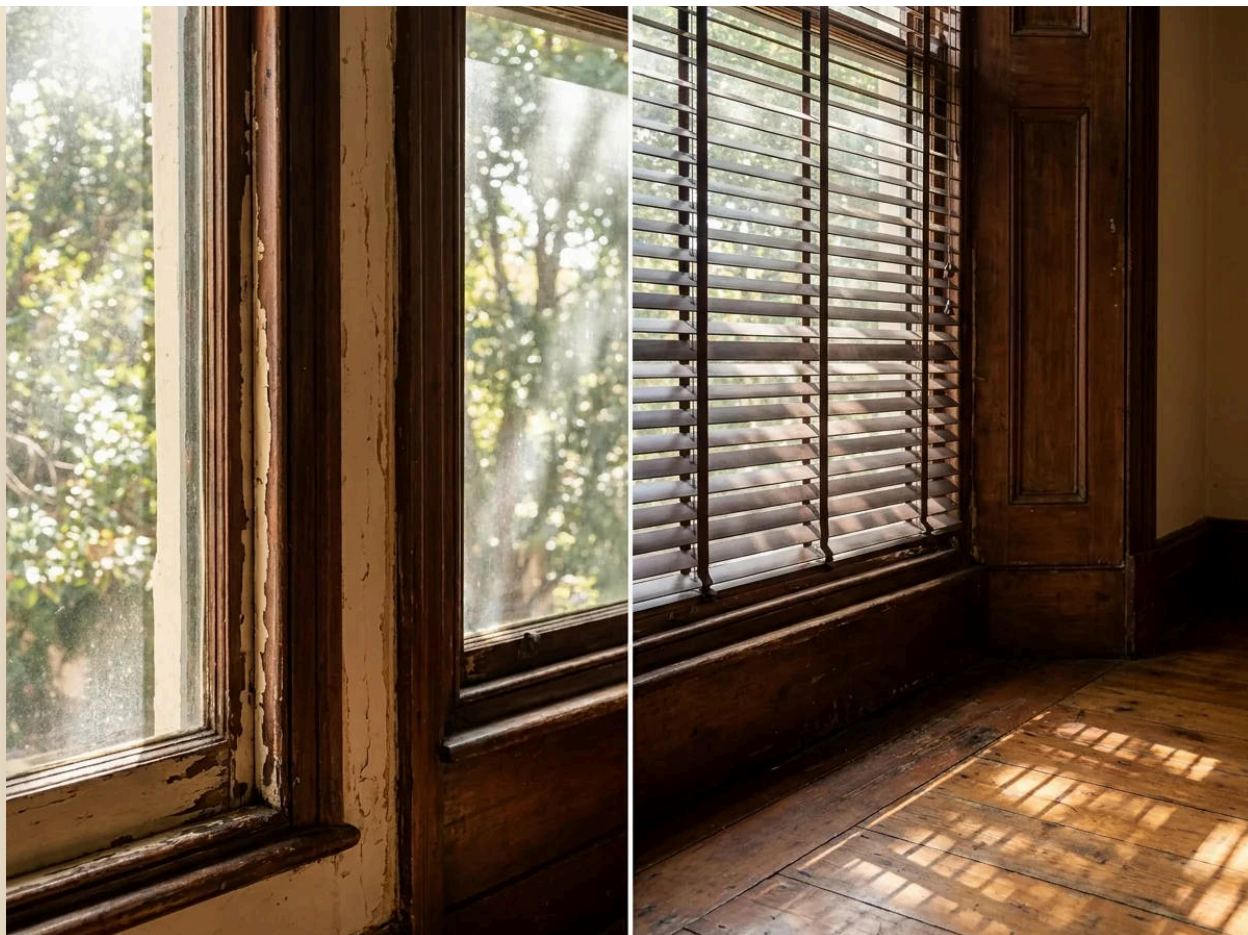
The underlying law is Section 34(1) of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999: no person may alter or demolish any structure, or part of one, older than

60 years without a permit from the relevant provincial authority. The Act defines "alter" broadly — any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place.^[10] Age alone triggers it; the house need not be individually declared.

- **Interior blinds** fitted into an existing reveal do not alter the structure, and change nothing from the avenue.
- **Exterior products** — awnings, external venetians, zip-screen channels — do change the appearance of the building, which on a house of that age is worth establishing before an order rather than after.

We fit blinds; we are not heritage consultants. At the measure we will say plainly which options touch the outside of the building, so you can take that question to the right people with the right information.

Renovating or adding glazing? SANS 10400-XA:2021 (Edition 2) requires a fenestration calculation once glazing exceeds 20% of floor area — it was 15% in the previous edition — and no longer distinguishes between west, north and east glass for solar heat gain.^[12] Worth asking your architect early how your shading is being counted.



Inside the reveal. An interior venetian works with the original opening, leaves the facade exactly as it was — and the state of that frame is precisely why we measure before we quote.

— 06 — THE HONEST LIMIT OF A GUIDE

What we would still need to check on site

Everything above is what we know about Parktown North. What no guide can know is your house — and five things decide the specification.

Which way it really faces

On avenues that run in every direction^[1] this is not a guess we will make from a photograph. We take a compass reading at each window, because twenty degrees moves a recommendation between west and south-west — and those are different products.

Reveal depth, and whether it is square

Depth decides whether a blind can sit inside the opening at all, and century-old openings rarely are square. A 12 mm difference top to bottom is ordinary here, and it changes how the blind is made.

What the wall and frame are actually made of

Plaster over brick, original timber, steel casement, or a later stud addition. What is behind the paint decides what can be fixed there — and for anything exterior, whether the job is possible at all.

What is growing outside the window

Half your shading is currently a tree, and half of that tree falls off in winter.^[6] We look out of every window, not just into the room: a jacaranda three metres from the glass and one across the avenue give completely different answers.

Where the power is, and how exposed the stoep is

For anything motorised, the route from a plug point to the head of the window is the real constraint in an old house — a walk-around with a torch, not a guess over the phone. Awnings and zip screens then live or die on wind exposure.



The stoep question. Projection, fixing height and wind exposure are all decided standing on the paving, with that sky in mind — never from a floor plan.

— 07 — TWO WAYS FORWARD

Book the free expert measure

A consultant comes to the house with fabric and slat samples, measures every window properly, takes the compass readings this suburb demands, and leaves you with a written quote per window. No charge for any of that, and no obligation once the quote is in your hands. If you would rather have a rough number first, the ballpark list sits inside the form below — quieter, and entirely optional.

- ✓ Free in-home measure and a written quote per window
- ✓ No call centre — a real consultant comes out to the avenue
- ✓ Nothing is made until you have approved the quote in writing
- ✓ Still deciding? Say so on the form and we will leave you be

Anything you added while reading is already carried into the form — you do not have to type it again.

— NEITHER, FOR NOW

Just take the playbook, marked up

Not ready for a visit or a number? Tell us which rooms are the problem and we will email you this playbook with your own elevations noted against it. Nothing is booked, nobody phones.

— WORKING OUT

Sources

Every climate, geography and legal claim above traces to one of these. Where we have reasoned rather than cited, we have said so in the text.

1. Parktown North — the only suburb of Johannesburg with only numbered avenues and no numbered streets, not laid out as a grid; many old colonial-style houses and a village atmosphere; the hidden spring and lake between three private gardens; 7th Avenue as the restaurant strip; suburb area 1.72 km². en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parktown_North
2. Parktown North neighbourhood guide — proclaimed a township in 1903, advertised in *The Star* with fertile soil, beautiful views and an offer of 20,000 young trees for new homeowners; many original houses now over a century old. [inyourpocket.com — Parktown North neighbourhood guide](https://inyourpocket.com/Parktown_North_neighbourhood_guide)
3. Elevation of Parktown North, City of Johannesburg — 1,620 m above sea level at -26.1394, 28.0303. [elevationmap.net — Parktown North](https://elevationmap.net/Parktown_North)
4. Johannesburg — 26°12'16"S, elevation 1,753 m; subtropical highland climate (Köppen Cwb); summer months October to April characterised by hot days followed by afternoon thundershowers; winter nights around 4.1 °C in June and July, occasionally dropping below freezing and causing frost. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg
5. "Sun, shade and natural daylight in South African town planning, with emphasis on Pretoria" — solar noon elevation of 87.7° on 21 December and 40.84° on 20 June, sunset azimuths of 243.35° and 295.76°, and the finding that western-exposure afternoons run far hotter than eastern mornings. [scielo.org.za — S2415-04952018000200005](https://scielo.org.za/S2415-04952018000200005)
6. "Jacarandas in parts of South Africa are flowering earlier" — jacarandas are deciduous, dropping their leaves in late winter and early spring and re-leafing with or just after flowering, which runs from late September to November. [theconversation.com — jacarandas flowering earlier](https://theconversation.com/jacarandas_flowering_earlier)
7. "Characteristics of hail hazard in South Africa based on satellite detection of convective storms", *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences* (2023) — hail concentrated along the Highveld, most frequent from mid-November through February, peaking in the afternoon. [nhess.copernicus.org — hail hazard in South Africa](https://nhess.copernicus.org/hail_hazard_in_South_Africa)
8. "Characteristics of warm season supercell thunderstorms over the Gauteng and Mpumalanga Provinces of South Africa", University of Pretoria — Gauteng's severe-storm frequency peaking in October and November, with activity peaking in the afternoon. [repository.up.ac.za — warm season supercell thunderstorms](https://repository.up.ac.za/warm_season_supercell_thunderstorms)
9. World Health Organization, ultraviolet radiation Q&A — UV levels increase by approximately 10% with every 1,000 m of altitude. [who.int — ultraviolet](https://who.int/ultraviolet)

radiation

10. Section 34(1) of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999, and the Act's definition of "alter". [theheritageportal.co.za — heritage processes FAQ](https://theheritageportal.co.za/heritage-processes-faq)
11. Parktown North Residents Association — the suburb has many homes over 60 to 100 years old, protected by the National Heritage Resources Act, with plans to alter or demolish any part of such a building submitted for approval via the association and the Provincial Heritage Resources Authority – Gauteng. [theheritageportal.co.za — PNRA](https://theheritageportal.co.za/PNRA)
12. SANS 10400-XA:2021 (Edition 2) — the fenestration threshold rising from 15% to 20% of floor area, and the removal of the west/north/east distinction for solar heat gain. [roosarchitects.co.za — summary of the revised SANS 10400-XA](https://roosarchitects.co.za/summary-of-the-revised-SANS-10400-XA)

Three honest caveats. The solar figures in source 5 are calculated for Pretoria at 25.733° south; Parktown North sits at roughly 26.14° south, so its own angles differ by well under a degree — we have quoted the published numbers rather than invent our own. The elevation in source 3 comes from a third-party topographic service, not an official survey, which is why we say "roughly". And source 2 is the only place we found the 1903 proclamation and the 20,000-tree offer together, so treat that pair as the suburb's own history rather than as an archival record.

— READY WHEN YOU ARE

**Now let's look at
your actual
windows.**

Free in-home measure, a written quote per window, and a consultant who takes the compass reading rather than guessing it.

BROWSE PRODUCTS FIRST