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First for Tembisa as Phumulani Mall Opens

By Elaine Young

The mall was born out of a vision of a 'one-stop community centre', providing for both secure shopping and social interaction in an area historically devoid of facilities for both

In Zulu, "phumulani" is an invitation to rest and relax. Phumulani Mall, the new community centre in Tembisa, northeast of Johannesburg, is exactly that: a place where people – till now deprived of the privilege – get to shop and 'hang out' in style in their own neighbourhood. The site is located to the north of the large Tembisa residential area and adjacent to the industrial area of Clayville to the north. Until now, residents in the area have hardly been spoilt for choice, with isolated shops in Tembisa and malls further afield in Midrand providing their only retail options. The burgeoning middle-income area was ripe for a one-stop shopping destination-cum-social hub when plans were announced in 2007 to build a R150 million (US $16.7 million) 'community centre' on the Olifantsfontein road, the main artery connecting Tembisa and Midrand.

Market analysis revealed the following characteristics of the proposed catchment area: the biggest proportion of residents was in the 20-34 age group; most relied on private transport; and most were employed in the manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade – especially in the Clayville industrial area. There was also a large contingent of people travelling daily to and from work in the area, usually by taxi. The 18,200sq m Phumulani Mall was born out of a vision of a 'one-stop community centre' – the first of such centres for the area – providing for both secure shopping and social interaction in an area historically devoid of facilities for both. The single-storey, 58-shop mall will be anchored by a 2,700sq m Shoprite supermarket store and a 1,400sq m Cashbuild hardware store, and supported by furniture and homeware stores, a significant fashion offering, banking facilities, and a strong fast food component. The development also includes in excess of 1,000 parking bays, including a taxi rank.

Design

According to Sue Clark of Equilibrium Studio Architects, the main initial design challenge was the site's triangular shape, which was dealt with by locating the bulk of the centre in the middle of the site, with wings to either side. To ensure the centre's accessibility to the residential area, the centre was oriented towards the south, with pedestrian and local taxi traffic entering the site from the south. Access to the main parking area, which cups the southern side of the centre, is from Olifantsfontein Road to the north.

Layout

The centre consists of a central air-conditioned mall, flanked by a 'value' retail wing to either side. Tenants include a furniture store, Cashbuild, meat and chicken outlets, food outlets and a pharmacy. The food outlets, which can continue operating after hours for the convenience of the neighbouring residential area, are located on the exterior of the south side of the centre, between the two entrances. Covered walkways connect the two wings to the central mall, unifying the building along its length. The two spacious, covered entrances to the east and west sides of the central block are designed to offer shelter and act as a gathering place for shoppers and commuters. Finally, says Clark, "over 120 trees will be planted around the Centre to soften the parking and provide shade and greenery".

Finishes

The mall's upmarket finishes, light and spacious interiors and air-conditioned shops and malls put it on par with other upmarket centres in South Africa. The shell of the building consists of a concrete structure, with "tilt-up" concrete panels providing the infill walls. Warm, vibrant autumn colours add depth to the elevations and are continued through the interior of the centre. "Beige, ochre and warm browns were chosen to create a contemporary feel with the emphasis on comfort," says Clark, "and are complemented by the main mall's colourful signage and coloured tile insets." Inside the mall, the dominant impression is one of space and light, with features such as custom-designed stainless steel light fittings and mosaic tile insets creating a sophisticated look. At the same time, a sense of intimacy is created by the use of colour and materials, such as timber panels.

Fast-track

For Clark, one of the project's major highlights was the tilt-up concrete infill panels. The system, which is rapidly catching on in South Africa, thanks to its speed of construction, involves wall panels being cast on the ground and then lifted into position by crane. Constructed in just ten months, between January 7 and October 30, 2008; the mall owes its speedy completion largely to excellent co-operation between the professional team and the main contractor, says Project Manager Bill McClatchey of W.T. McClatchey Associates. As the first of such developments in the area, there is no doubt, says McClatchey, that it will be a trendsetter in shopping/community centre design – both locally and beyond.

Project Team

Client:	Phumulani Mall (Pty) Ltd, represented by T. de Flamingh
Project Manager:	WT McClatchey Associates
Architect:	Equilibrium Studio Architects (Pty) Ltd
Quantity Surveyor:	Oudmayer & Associates
Structural Engineer:	Tony Smith Associates
Mechanical Engineer:	VMG Consultants
Electrical Engineer:	KKA Consulting Electrical Engineers
Fire Engineer:	H. Hamman Associates
Traffic and Civil Engineer:	Intragen
Town Planner:	Plankonsult
Main Contractor:	Vlaming

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We are proud to have been associated with this development as the Structural Engineers.
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