

Architectural elegance at Baywest Mall

Port Elizabeth's Baywest Mall incorporates architectural designs that will make it one of the country's most enjoyable and futuristic shopping centres when it opens on 21 May 2015.



Designed by dhk architects, its chairperson Derick Henstra explains the psychology behind building a mall that will excite and entertain, rather than confuse and disorientate. The firm's associate director Joe Struwig was lead design architect on the project.

"We have a fresher, newer approach to retail and the mall is one of those exercises. It is a futuristic mall. We wanted it to be a timeless piece of architecture," says Henstra.

"We had to make Baywest visually appealing. For malls around the world, one of the most important aspects is the element of flow. They are often not very legible or user-friendly, so we wanted to create a mall that is a pleasure to navigate.

"The uncomplicated design of the mall achieves two objectives: it ensures the mall detracts from its natural surrounds as little as possible, and keeps shoppers' attention on the reason they are there in the first place: the stores.

"The mall has a soft curve, so you can virtually see around the corner. It is also a tight racetrack, so it does not feel like you are walking for kilometres and kilometres. There is also a crisscross, so you can cross over from the one side of the mall to the other very easily."

The food court has one of the country's largest screens at 24m² and the restaurants have table heights to accommodate

shoppers in wheelchairs. Being aware of shoppers with special needs was an important part of the design brief and the mall is designed with lots of easy ramps for wheelchairs, making it friendly and easy for everyone to access.

An abundance of natural light and groundbreaking green building techniques are part of the centre's impressive features. Something relatively new to large malls in South Africa are prismatic diffusers, small openings in the roof that transmit large amounts of natural light into the centre without transferring the heat gain, meaning the air conditioning system is not strained. Another energy-saving technology, LED lighting, is also used throughout the mall.

"This is all paired with an intelligent air conditioning system that focuses on keeping the shops cool, with the spill-over cool air used to cool and ventilate the mall; it is a clever way of being energy efficient.

"The inclusion of a Fun Factory entertainment zone brings back the enjoyment of retail. Shopping is not just shopping; here is an element of entertainment. That's what Baywest brings together," he concludes.

Quick facts

- The mall size, 90,000m², is the gross leasable area and excludes the parking area for about 3,200 vehicles.
- The mall will feature a number of "firsts" for the region, including a Ster-Kinekor IMAX, Cine Prestige, fashion brands Dune, La Senza and River Island, with new eateries such as Cinnabon will excite the taste buds.
- The construction value of the mall is approximately R1.7 billion, with a further R300 million being spent on developing the road network in the area. The road network includes an interchange onto/off the N2 freeway, as well as the Redhouse-Chelsea arterial road, linking the suburbs of Sherwood and Rowallan Park/Bridgemeade via a road over the N2.
- The mall is central to the development of the greater Baywest City project, which will be similar in concept to Cape Town's Century City development.
- About 25% of the 320ha Baywest City site has been allocated for environmental preservation and will not be developed at all.

The Baywest development is a joint venture between Abacus Asset Management and Billion Group. Between them, the developers have over 25 years of experience specialising in retail, commercial and mixed-use developments. The developers have successfully completed malls such as Hemingways in East London, Eikestad Mall in Stellenbosch, Cape Gate in the Western Cape and Mooi Rivier Mall in Potchefstroom.

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