

New East London mall opens its doors

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Developers of the new multi-million rand shopping centre in Beacon Bay are confident of success, despite the gloomy economy.

This will be the second shopping centre slated to open in East London this year, with Hemingway's Mall scheduled for the end of the year. And today will mark the first day of trading for some of the shops at the new mall, called Beacon Bay Crossing.

While construction is not entirely completed, phases of the mall are gradually being opened and preparations are already in place to construct a traffic circle on the busy Bonza Bay Road.

Beacon Bay Crossing, located next to Nompumelelo township, will open seven stores tomorrow.

The first phase of the mall will be made up of Hi-Fi Corporation, Tekkie Town, Meltz, Altech Autopage, Outdoor Warehouse, Cash Crusaders and Dial-a-Bed.

Project manager Denis Peens, of Facilities Management and Design, said that despite the economic downturn, research indicated that East London, Mthatha and Queenstown shoppers required a destination shopping centre.

"It's the first time we've had these names in East London. We have been very selective of the tenants we chose," he said.

While Peens was reluctant to name the shops for the second part of phase one, to open in a month's time, he said they would be unique in East London.

"We are still negotiating to bring new blood to East London," Peens said.

Behind the centre is a valley which Peens said would soon be modified for enthusiasts of quad biking, BMX riding, mountain biking, and rope climbing.

"We're even going to have a place where concerts will be held," he said.

The location of the new mall has raised questions about its co-existence with Nompumelelo.

Last week residents who attended one of the Dispatch Community Dialogues in the township berated "businesses" for

failing to employ the community.

Peens said they were working in partnership with Nompumelelo residents. He said after a spate of thefts on site when construction began this time last year, a meeting was held at the home of community leader Andrew Dlamini.

Following the meeting, the thefts ceased and many people from Nompumelelo were employed, Peens said.

“We have to embrace [the community] because we believe that we will be generating income from them,” he said.

But Dlamini and fellow resident Alfred Daka both said they were approached by Peens to compile lists of unemployed residents, but nothing came from it.

“They need to consult all structures in the community ... there are very few people from the community working there,” a resident, Mpumzi Mpangalala, said.

Workers on site, however, refuted this, saying most of their colleagues were from Nompumelelo.

“There may be over 200 people from Nompumelelo working on the site,” said one worker, who did not want to be named.

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