

Tlhabane Square maximising community impact with local procurement, skills transfer

Tlhabane Square in Rustenburg is a new mixed-use precinct being developed by the Public Investment Corporation...



Tlhabane Square development in Rustenburg

Situated along the Swartruggens Road (R104) and bordered by Monareng Street and Motsatsi Street, the precinct consists of the following:

- A retail mall offering 31,000m² of GLA;
Offices: ±12,000m² of GLA (incorporating Home Affairs, SASSA, a Labour Department office and a hotel with conference facilities);
Ancillary buildings, including a police station at 10,000m² GLA;
New magistrate's court: 8,000m² GLA;
The refurbishment of the existing service station; and

A new taxi drop-off, tyre fitment centre and traders' market.

The retail mall itself comprises two levels of retail together with parking. In addition, direct on-grade open parking will be available throughout the precinct.

Preferential procurement

Not only is the success of the final project important – much emphasis has been placed on maximising community impact during the construction and development process, too. Preferential procurement criteria were set out by the client in the tender requirements, indicating that 30% of the work needs to be undertaken by local, 51% black-owned companies. George Honey, contracts manager for Trencon, explains that the joint venture drew up a procurement plan in the initial stages of the project which ensures that this requirement will be met. The majority of the unskilled labour being used on the general building work is local, as is much of the semi-skilled labour.

Because of the relative remoteness of the site, building materials are also procured locally as much as possible. “We passed on the same preferential procurement requirement criteria to our specialists subcontractors in a back-to-back contract. Meeting this requirement is not always easy, but so far everyone has stayed on target and our reporting reflects that,” says Honey. Local labour and construction materials have so far been used in a variety of areas, including civil works, electrical and plumbing work, reinforcing steel, concrete and formwork erection. The construction of a standalone Cashbuild on the site has been subcontracted to a Level 6 CIDB registered contractor.

Recruiting locals

In formulating a strategy for recruiting local people, the construction team has focused mainly on unskilled and semi-skilled people who can be upskilled. “We have a labour desk officer who was elected by the local community. He has a database of available people and we source labour through that database when needed,” Honey explains. A minimum wage, which is said to be well above the basic statutory minimum wage, was set in the initial stages of the project.

Active skills transfer is taking place on site, especially from the specialist subcontractors. People have been trained not only in construction skills, such as concrete placement, crane operation and scaffolding erection (to mention just a few), but in administrative tasks, including time and attendance management, health and safety administration, and even first aid and fire prevention. “If we have a post vacant, we identify someone within the local community and train them up in one of these skills,” Honey says. This includes giving them on-site training and formal training as required.

Building materials sourced locally

Local suppliers are being utilised extensively, with the bulk of the building materials being locally sourced, except for a few specialist capital and equipment items. All the sand, cement, bricks, concrete, mortar, reinforcing steel, filling material, plant equipment, stationery, provisional and general items, as well as Covid-19 sanitation items have been sourced from local suppliers. “While the use of local suppliers falls under our 30% procurement plan, it is safe to say that around 40% of our supply is included on what we report on, and some 60% falls under the subcontractors,” Honey notes.

The project is on track for completion around the end of July 2021.