

SANDTON IS BOOMING

From humble beginnings as green fields and farmland 50 years ago, Sandton has mushroomed into an opulent business and residential area in Johannesburg. Construction has become a dominant feature as developments sporting green technology are being built, housing South Africa's premium companies. Kabelo Khumalo looks at some of the new structures that form part of Sandton's skyline.

Sandton holds the distinction of being known as "Africa's richest square mile". In this space there is nothing to indicate that South Africa's economy is in a slow growth period; the magnitude of the buildings erected and the rapid pace of construction are evidence of the area's thriving economy. Sandton City, a large shopping mall, has been credited for kickstarting the transformation of Sandton. The mall was built in the early 1970s by property development company, Rapp and Maister, today known as Liberty Properties.

Elaine Jack, the city improvement district manager at Sandton Central Management District, says the area has made great strides by taking the lead in constructing environmentally friendly buildings. "Sandton Central is said to be the epicentre of green building in Africa, with what is possibly the highest number of certified green buildings of any business district. It is home to some of the continent's finest contemporary business buildings."

Jack adds that currently, Sandton's office space tallies up to more than 1.5 million square metres – up substantially from the 200 000m² of office space that was available in the 1980s.



01 An aerial view of Sandton with tell-tale signs of its constant development.

02 Sasol's new headquarters, Sasol Place.

03 The headquarters of tax and advisory services group EY.

SASOL PLACE

A spectacular new structure in Sandton is energy and chemicals company Sasol's new R2 billion headquarters, completed at the end of 2016. Called Sasol Place, it takes its striking 'S' shaped design from the company's logo and has brought together the group's 4 000 employees, who were scattered across 17 offices around Johannesburg. The 10-storey development is co-owned by Sasol Pension Fund and Alchemy Properties. Sasol has a 20-year lease.

Sasol Place was designed by Paragon Architects. The firm has designed a number of iconic buildings in Sandton. State-of-the-art technology characterises Sasol Place, particularly when it comes to reducing glare and heat inside the building, while letting in sufficient natural light to reduce the building's energy use.

The 67 000m² structure has been awarded a five-star rating – known as a Green Star South Africa – in the design category by the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA), in recognition of its environmentally sound design. The building is self-shading, and has LED lights and daylight sensors with specialised glass facades that regulate interior temperature.

The 11-storey, 47m tall office complex has almost 100 000m² of basement parking for over 3 000 cars, and more than 3 000m² of landscaping. It harvests and stores rainwater from roof areas for toilets and landscape irrigation to reduce water demand. Work meets play here, thanks to amenities such as a pastry shop, cafés, a fitness centre, an art gallery and a sculpture garden.

Fay Hoosain, the senior vice-president of strategic projects at Sasol, says the new offices are meant to allow employees to better deliver on their tasks. "Our new corporate head offices will transform the way we think about the work environment. Every aspect of the building is geared towards delivering an exceptional experience and to enable high performance."

A WORLD OF DISCOVERY

South Africa's financial services company, Discovery Limited, will be moving into its new head offices by mid-2017. The spectacular headquarters, estimated to cost R3 billion, will offer 110 000m² of office space. The building is a joint venture between Growthpoint and Zenprop, two of South Africa's most well-known property developers. Growthpoint

will own 55% of the new site and Zenprop the remaining 45%. Discovery is expected to sign a 15-year occupancy lease. The building will house more than 5 000 of its employees, many of whom are currently working in four different buildings in the Sandton central business district. All employees will be relocated by January 2018.

Modern and expansive, the building will consist of two wings with eight floors of offices, plus a ground floor and a feature roof level with sports facilities. It will also offer nine basements with more than 6 000 parking bays. Like Sasol Place, the designers of this building aim to meet all requirements for a certified five-star Green Star SA rating by GBCSA.

OTHER IMPRESSIVE PROJECTS

Another development currently under construction is 140 West Street, situated diagonally opposite the Gautrain Station and directly opposite Nelson Mandela Square. It will comprise 27 000m² of rentable space in a total area of 78 000m². Owned by Zenprop and designed by Paragon Architects, the building will offer 1 400 parking bays within its eight basements, seven of which will be housed below ground level. It will comprise



a 10-storey North Tower and 14-storey South Tower, constructed on a landscaped podium. The two towers will have a clear glass roof to give the feel of a floating pod. It will house international law firm Hogan Lovells among its prominent tenants.

The structure's energy and water consumption will be extensively monitored by means of a meter connected to a central automated monitoring system. The building is aiming for a four- to five-star Green Star rating.

Another iconic building is the headquarters of tax and advisory services group EY (formerly Ernst & Young). Developed by Eris Property Group, the

futuristic glass structure opened its doors in 2016. Measuring 38 000m², it comprises two towers of eight and fourteen work floors, respectively. Registered with the GBCSA for a four-star Green Star rating, the design focuses on preserving energy, water and waste, and integrates natural light from outdoor areas into the core of the building. Along with these high rises, the Sandton skyline is populated with cranes as no less than 10 buildings are currently under construction. Clearly, Sandton's status as Africa's premier financial district – with amenities aplenty close by – is being cemented in the most contemporary and iconic style. ■