

# Northgate Park redeveloped into A-grade office with green spaces

Northgate Island in Brooklyn, Cape Town, a former 'big box' retail development, is being redeveloped and upgraded into A-grade office space, with its own green urban park, and rebranded as Northgate Park. The redevelopment is scheduled for completion in March 2015.



It was originally developed in order to capitalise on the success of the Canal Walk retail traffic, however, the development was plagued with vacancy since inception. Subsequently, 85% of the 18,000sqm property was acquired for R110 million in a joint venture between Arbitrage Property Fund and Buffet Investment Services with the intention of repurposing the under-performing asset through conversion into an A-grade office park, focused on providing an affordable, well-positioned, attractive offering with ample parking. Cityscape views of Table Mountain complete the appeal.

The redevelopment project represents a further investment of R30 million by the development consortium. Allan Groll, one of the shareholders, has been involved in a number of successful development projects in Cape Town, including the conversion of factories into mixed-use commercial and residential at Wembley Square, the iconic Black River office park in Observatory and Boulevard Park, a 38 000sqm office development in Woodstock.

"It is an easy seven minute drive (against the traffic) from Cape Town city centre, only about 10 minutes from the Southern Suburbs and 20 minutes from the Northern Suburbs, making this one of the most conveniently located office developments in Cape Town," says Ilan Kaplan, MD of Arbitrage. "It's quicker to reach than Woodstock or Century City, with little to no congestion at the access and exit points on the highway. For staff using public transport, the location on Koeberg Road is ideal, as this is a prominent taxi zone and a planned MyCiTi bus route.

"Taking inspiration from the New York High Line, a landmark aerial greenway, which has revitalised a section of disused rail line, the complex of four separate blocks will centre round an innovative urban park, which will provide a wide offering of spaces for tenants to engage with.

"Incorporating what was formerly a delivery area, with pedestrianized spiral ramps extending several storeys high with an

atrium in the middle, these novel relaxation and recreation areas will include pause areas for breakaways, an interactive water feature, a beer garden, sculpture garden and pop-up art gallery. The latter will house a programme of varied pop-up exhibitions and art and design events."

The office accommodation will comprise large, expansive and open spaces with high ceilings, large floor plates with very few columns and floor to ceiling glass windows on each side, providing an abundance of natural light, within a trendy and modern, light industrial ambience. There is also the potential for the bulk of the redevelopment to be increased.

"Such is the favourable response from the marketplace that 60% of the space is already let. We have secured several large, blue-chip corporate tenants and have received brisk enquiries for the bulk of the available space. In addition, Moore Stephens has taken up 3000sqm of space, while Vide e Caffè is to occupy 1250sqm, which includes four different spaces comprising its head office, restaurant, roastery and coffee shop. Existing tenants include SA Home Loans, Dulux, Tile Africa and Homemakers Fair."

## **Green Star rating applied for**

The buildings will have fibre internet connectivity, access control with 24-hour security and a range of energy efficient features. Application for a Green Star rating is currently underway.

Stephen Whitehead, director of Boogertman + Partners Architects, says the extensive redevelopment and refurbishment includes transforming the facade by cutting back the roof overhang and placing a new fascia to provide a fresh identity. Lobbies are being extended and windows added to large swathes of blank walls of the blocks facing the N1 and Section Street. These front the N1 and a large portion of the Koeberg Interchange, creating major branding opportunities for tenants.

"We are creating a sense of movement and dynamism to reflect the energy from the activity on one of the best used highway junctions in Cape Town. The interiors of the buildings are quiet and conducive to productive workspace, with the natural light and spacious areas ideal for both creative businesses and corporate head offices. Northgate Park is set not only to benefit those using the buildings but should act as a catalyst for the further transformation of its environs."

## **Landscaping green space**

Mark Saint Pôl, of Gibbs Saintpôl, landscape architects for the project, has welcomed the unique urban place-making opportunity to transform an existing car park ramp into a multi-purpose meeting, recreational and event space, as part of the broader building refurbishment. "This spiral ramp structure forms the core of the long four-storey building. Until now, this district has been largely devoid of sheltered, human-scaled green open space. The developers identified the intervention as the perfect opportunity to counter this and further, to use the site as an example of innovative open space creation within the city.

"It was this landscape of horizontal features that gave form to the 'Skycatcher' concept - a consolidated façade of vertical greenery. Draping climbers and hanging plants wrapping the ramp structure create an eye-catching cylinder of green. A carefully engineered slice through the concrete ramp allows sunlight to stream down onto a large reflecting pool at the base of the structure, while an amphitheatre provides opportunities for gatherings alongside the reflecting pool. Here, visitors can experience the sky and the inner green-draped walls reflected in the pool.

"For those wanting to take a break from their office environment, seating areas along the ramp offer breakaway spaces for people to relax and have lunch while planted screens create 'Green Rooms' for gathering or informal meetings. The harbour-like ramp functions as an ambulatory or open-air gallery and opens up to reveal the sky above and panoramic views of Devils Peak and Table Mountain. The Skycatcher concept brings the outside in, and draws the inside out - creating spaces rich in sensory experience, and balances built and natural elements to create a valuable and unique urban place," concludes Saint Pôl.

For more information, go to [www.northgatepark.co.za](http://www.northgatepark.co.za).

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