

GVK-Siya Zama completes Fountain Road Advice Centre

For the youth of the Gqebera Township, near Walmer in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, a life of drugs, crime and alcohol had seemed the only option available to them, given the high levels of unemployment and lack of recreational facilities in the area. That was until the Fountain Road Advice Centre, with its state-of-the-art library, offices and informal trading space for the local community, was created.

Since 2011 specialist contractors GVK-Siya Zama have been hard at work constructing the Centre and now the doors are finally ready to open. The development is situated in the heart of the township and is encircled by low-cost housing and tin shacks. It was deliberately designed to have a contemporary look that contrasts with its surroundings so as to be inspirational and aspirational to the community. It is also intended to uplift and instil a sense of self-worth.

Resembling an African basket

"The work required the demolition of existing sub-let buildings and a post office attached to the community hall, after which we began construction of the Advice Centre which has been designed to resemble an African basket. The innovative design by architect Simon Patrellis of NOH Architects exudes a sense of harmony and balance," explains Mike Cawse of GVK-Siya Zama's operation in the Eastern Cape.

The double storey concrete structure boasts a semi-circular design and features off-shutter concrete structural columns and slender steel supports that hold a light metal sheeted roof. The columns, originating from the ground floor, are constructed in a V-shape at a sixty-six degree angle. The steel structure on the first floor is also set at sixty-six degrees with aluminium curtain walling enclosing the semi-circular façade, topped off by a semi-circular flat roof.

Timber joinery

The African theme has been continued on the exterior of the ground floor through the use of timber trusses and clay brick paving and walling. On the interior, timber joinery has been used in the construction of the reception counter and marmoleum floor finishes have been applied in the reception area and passages.

"It was a technically challenging project due to the radial design which meant that the concrete, structural steel, walls, rafters, glass panels and lights all had to line up from the centre of the circle and follow the same angled shape. The project, which is set to change the course of many young people's lives, was made possible by a R11.9 million investment from the National Treasury Department through its Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant," concludes Cawse.