

ADVERTORIAL



Westtown: the new city of the west

As construction work on the Westtown site starts to get into full swing, planning intensifies to ensure the new city of the west reflects the value of the open space and ecological assets that define this region

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A locally-driven initiative that connects people with spaces and experiences, Westtown, is a mixed-use precinct of urban and green spaces perfectly positioned off the N3 between Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

A new destination for living, working, shopping, business and recreational activities, Westtown is planned within a managed, urban environment that supports a range of amenities and facilities including the retail offerings of Westown Square and Westown Lifestyle, The West Private Hospital, residential apartments, a warehousing and logistics precinct, commercial and business activities and uses and an active green belt.

Led by Fundamentum Property Group, which has significant experience in property development, property leasing and property management, the new city of the west is anticipated to unlock the region's investment potential and generate some R15bn in new investment over the next 10 to 15 years, while increasing the value of home and property prices in the area.

"Our mixed-use development is guided by urban sustainability agenda – inclusive, environmentally sustainable, high-energy, safe and secure," says Fundamentum CEO Carlos Correia. "This includes harnessing the open spaces and ecological assets synonymous with the region such as horse riding, trail running, mountain biking, walking, birding and other outdoor pursuits."

Westtown's focus is on innovation, creating a legacy of interdisciplinary planning, engineering, architecture and place-making. Starting with the long overdue upgrade of Kassier Road, the commitment by the eThekweni Municipality to the funding of this infrastructure development has enabled Westtown to begin development.

This includes the road upgrade itself, the supporting bulk infrastructure (water, wastewater, electricity) and the development of Westown Square.

"We are grateful for the support and patience of our neighbours and stakeholders, including the Durban Shongweni Club and Polo Club, EnviroServ, Shongweni Farmer's Market and Denny Mushroom Farm, as well as the local chief, indunas and councillors of wards 7 and I03, who are working with us to ensure Westtown becomes a true asset for the area," Correia says.

DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Westtown is one of the largest infrastructural investments in Durban since the Soccer World Cup in 2010. The Fundamentum Property Group, through its development arm Fundamentum Dev Co, has acquired the development rights for Westtown from landowner Tongaat Hulett Property, who retains ownership of the land with Fundamentum owning the development rights with a rolling 99-year leasehold.

Development rights have been approved for about 517,000m² of bulk floor area across the retail offerings of Westown Square and Westown Lifestyle, The West Private Hospital, residential apartments, warehousing and logistics, commercial /business activities and uses and an active green belt.

These include:

- ± 1,600 Residential apartments/units
- ± 380,000m² Commercial, Business Park and Mixed-Use precinct with:
 - 135,000m² Retail / Commercial / Hospital
 - 170,000m² Commercial / Business Park (Logistics and Warehousing)
 - 1,200 - Residential units

Along with the Westown development rights, Fundamentum will be responsible for the planning and urban design, infrastructure delivery, management and operational aspects of Westtown, through the construction of its own buildings as well as in partnerships with other developers interested in the rights for the 2,800 residential units about the shopping experience.

ROADS AND TRIGGER ACTIVITY

The first phase of the development is the 48,500m² retail environment of



Westown Square. Construction began in September this year and is planned for completion at the end of 2024.

This development work runs in parallel to the much-needed upgrade of Kassier Road and the building of new road infrastructure, including two new bridges and a total makeover of the two-lane Kassier Road across the M13 and N3 into four lanes with a centre median. A new pedestrian bridge will also be added over the N3 along with a new access loop ramp and bridge over Kassier Road into Westtown.

In 2025, phase two of the road upgrade will start with Kassier Road being upgraded from Alverstone Road to the R103.

R733m will be invested in the road and services infrastructure to enable the Westtown development, R600m of which will be funded by the eThekweni Municipality. As the development of Westown Square progresses and the road network takes shape, the next phases and other mixed-use features of Westtown will come on stream. This includes the hospital, residential apartments and warehousing.

WESTOWN SQUARE

Primed to set the trend in retail shopping experiences, Westown Square is a world-class retail experience designed as a high street environment where indoor meets outdoor and the characteristics of the Shongweni green belt are reflected.

do things differently for the future. It's not simply town planning and we need to be aware of this to get it right. This is a place that will develop organically, and our mixed-use agenda puts people first, responding to their needs whether they are visiting, living or working here."

Westtown will be self-managed through a place management structure (Management Association) that delivers optimised functionality not only in terms of safety, greening and maintenance but critically water, waste and energy demand too.

The intention is for recycling to occur on a micro/site level, atop measures aimed at reusing and reducing waste as much as possible. Plans are in place to work with local waste management company EnviroServ, on a waste-to-energy facility that can generate economic and employment opportunities, complemented by energy reduction measures and micro-solar solutions. Water saving and reduction is also part of the development along with rainwater harvesting and reuse where possible.

THE ACTIVE GREEN BELT

The Shongweni area is well known for its character and history, its lush green belt and the numerous sporting and outdoor activities it offers, including horse riding, trail running, mountain biking, walking, and birding.

Capitalising on these unique attributes, Westtown, is a place that will develop organically, in response to the needs of the people that live and work there. It will connect people with spaces and experiences, bringing new opportunities to live, work and thrive, in the outer west, within a managed, urban environment that supports a range of amenities and facilities.

Guided by an urban sustainability agenda that is inclusive and innovative Westtown focuses on creating a legacy of interdisciplinary planning, engineering, architecture and place-making that promotes an environmentally sustainable, safe and secure destination.

What will make Westtown different to any other developments in the

province, are its location, ecological attributes and personality. The strong agricultural roots and country character of this place will be retained so that local communities continue to feel ownership of this new 'city of the west'.

WETLAND AND PLANT REHABILITATION AT WESTOWN

The Westtown site offers numerous wetlands making them important features within the landscape and an important element in the provision of ecosystem services directly related to water quantity and quality, as well as to the support of the unique biological diversity. Having been subjected to high levels of modification and destruction through sugar cane cultivation, agricultural road networks, alteration to water flow in the catchments, alien invasive vegetation, artificial drainage channels, overgrazing and residential and business infrastructure, saving the wetlands is a priority of the Westtown development team.

The project potentially allows for the recouping of functional wetland and vegetation habitats that previously were nonexistent within the landscape primarily as a result of the region's agricultural activities.

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