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Mall of dreams

The massive Mall of Africa in Waterfall City, Midrand, is the largest retail development in Southern Africa to be built in a single phase – and it opens this April. Here are some of the staggering statistics...

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BARRY GOLDMAN

As the massive Mall of Africa project neared completion, architect Tia Kanakakis of MDS Architecture gave us some of her valuable time to comment on the experience of designing the largest mall in Southern Africa to be built in one phase:

Q How do you tackle a project of this scale?

A I wanted the Mall of Africa to set a new benchmark in retail design that would set South Africa and the broader Africa on the map in terms of retail development. The

combination of excellent architecture combined with the leasing expertise on the project, all placed in a new urban framework was intended to provide the catalyst for a new CBD. The Mall of Africa has been designed and developed by Africans but I believe that it will stand proud with the most outstanding international retail centres globally. Therefore a project of this scale required a lot of intellectual property from the professional team's side, as well as that of the developer Atterbury, to "prepare, plan and programme" everything to the nth degree. There is a substantial amount of planning that goes in to the design phase and it is carried through to the implementation on site, procurement of materials for the project and includes the sprint to the finish to manage the tenant installations that take place in the last 20 - 30 days of the project. The 3 "P"s are paramount to the success of such a large scale project.

Q What has been the most tricky aspect of the Mall of Africa project?

A I would say that it has been two-fold. To hang on to the vision of the design of the

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mall that was set out at the very beginning of the inception with Atterbury and to marry this vision with the budget constraints that arise as the project unfolds. Atterbury wants to create a landmark development but at the same time must be mindful of the feasibility and the return on the project. At the end of the day we are appointed on the strength of being commercial and retail specialist architects and as such we must drive the design vision within the commercial aspects of the project. It is a very important factor when one has to remain focused on a single vision for over four years to bring such a project to fruition. Fortunately Atterbury is very involved in the day to day runnings and has a vested interest in streamlining the commercial aspects of the development.

Q What has been the most pleasant surprise?
A It is difficult to highlight one specific aspect. I can say that it was perhaps surprising that we landed up driving far more green initiatives than originally envisaged on the project. No architect can practise today without being mindful of sustainable design and technologies. At the time the concept for the mall was set out the retail tool had not been fully established in South Africa but we presented a strong argument to our client to follow 'best design principles' in this regard. This was supported by Atterbury and being mindful of sustainable technologies, has been a big focus on the project since its inception. As the design developed we were surprised how

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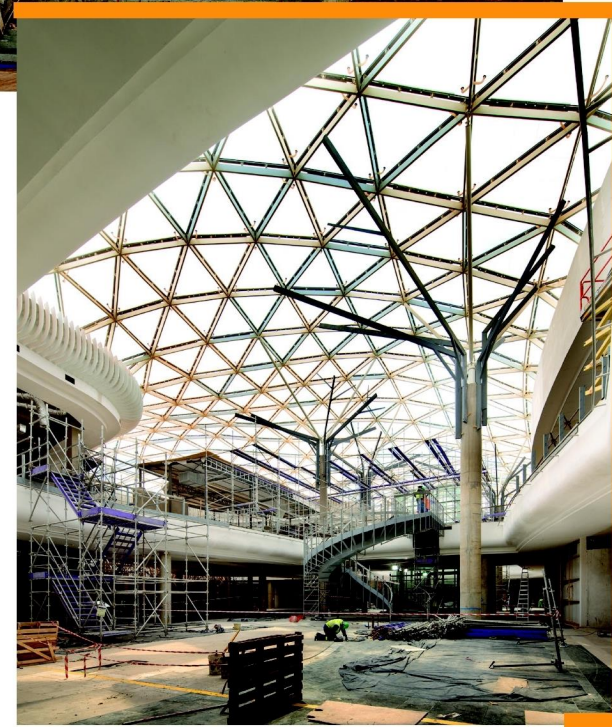


sustainable design could be implemented without over the top expense or extraordinary work. The project implemented multiple green technologies, some of which comprise of grey water harvesting to operate all of the nine public toilet blocks in the centre, for irrigation of the entire development as well as spare capacity to harvest water for the adjacent irrigation required of the large park next to the mall. The mall has a massive photovoltaic installation on the roof of the Mall of Africa. The installation will be the largest in South Africa and Africa and will provide 4.8MVA of sustainable power for the centre. Natural light has been maximised in the centre to provide a unique design environment and to minimise the use of artificial light. The main lengths of the mall have expansive double glazed roof lights that provide enough light not to run the lights in the mall on good sunlight days. Extensive solar studies have been undertaken to ensure that the comfort levels are maintained in the mall. This is just to name some of the major green design aspects

that are being implemented, therefore as the project unfolded we surprised ourselves how much could be done to make the centre more efficient and self-sufficient.

I can also say that it has been a pleasant surprise to work with a top professional team, retail leasing specialists and the developer, Atterbury, that have all remained passionate and focused for many years to bring such an iconic project to fruition. The day to day problems are not frowned upon but viewed as challenges to be solved and tackled with the utmost professionalism and dedication required on a project of this magnitude.


www.mdsarch.co.za



PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Developer: Atterbury Properties

Architect: Tia Kanakakis, MDS
Architecture

**Civil and Structural
engineers:** Aurecon

