



lead story Richmond Park



Richmond Park Communal Property Association committee members, Deputy Minister, Mcebisi Skwatsha (centre right), with project developers, answered the media's questions at the launch Q&A session.



A hallmark of community involvement and benefit

A former dispossessed community will win 'big time' in a fine example of a joint government and private business public participation project.

Photo credit: Gareth Griffiths Imaging

It seems appropriate that workers at the soon-to-be-developed Richmond Park mixed-use commercial area should enjoy the same stunning outlook as can be seen from De Grendel on the Graaffs Trust property – the launch venue on the hill above the project's location.

Announced at a special ceremony that included community representatives, the Richmond Park development claims to be the first commercially-based successful land restitution claim in South Africa.

Present at the ceremony, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Rural Development & Land Reform, Mcebisi Skwatsha, could hardly contain his enthusiasm about the outcome of the process, which began as far back as the mid-1990s. 'I am genuinely excited. This is evidence that South Africa is moving in the right direction,' he told media at a Q&A session. 'This is a benchmark for government in the future,' he added.

During the apartheid years of 1974 to 1984, 401 families were forcibly removed from the area adjacent to the Milnerton refinery to a new location in the developing industrial township of Atlantis, some distance up the West Coast. A number of community members also resettled in the Cape Flats.

A 1990's claim to have ownership of the land restored to its original owners in terms of the Restitution of Land Rights Act was approved and the land was officially transferred back to the Richmond Park Communal Property Association in December 2014. This was a 21-year journey for the community of now close to 5 300 people spread over five generations.

Commercial development

Richmond Park will be developed on 84ha of land as a landmark business park and mixed-use precinct consisting of retail, light industrial, commercial and warehousing property development. The property has bulk development rights of around 300 000m² over the next five to 10 years.

Principal developers, Atterbury Property, is undertaking the development in association with Cape Town partners, Bethel Property and Qubic 3 Dimensional Property. 'Well known for our Waterfall, and other key developments in Gauteng, Atterbury will be opening a fulltime office in Cape Town,' says Gerri van den Berg, Atterbury's development manager for its Western Cape developments.



Above: The greenfields site for the new development
Above right: To BUILD's editor, Gareth Griffiths, with Richmond Park Community leader, Richard Stuurman.

Full community participation

The development is based on a 99-year lease granted by the land owners represented by the Richmond Park Communal Property Association. The Association also fully participated in the decision making for the development. As income starts to accrue from the commercial success of the development, each family representing the original 401 community members will receive a significant annual income paid directly to them.

Richard Glass from co-developer, Bethel Property, remarks: 'During construction alone, some 15 000 jobs are anticipated to be created over Richmond Park's development period. This excludes the permanent jobs created by the commercial property tenants that will take up space and open businesses within the park.

'What's also crucial is creating employment and skills development opportunities for the Richmond claimants. Currently, some 50% of the claimants are unemployed and survive on state welfare grants. We want to change this situation and see this as a socially-conscious project and a catalyst for positive change.'

Van den Berg adds: 'Atterbury is proud to have landed the contract to develop this site and to be associated with this project. It has huge significance, both as a major new commercial development in Cape Town and from a socio-economic and community upliftment perspective, with the affected families benefiting through the community trust.'

Multi-tier governmental involvement

'The significance of this project has been recognised by all three levels of government, from the city and province, through to the national Department of Rural Development & Land Reform. We appreciate their support and assistance, which has been instrumental in getting us to this point to officially launch Richmond Park to the market. Besides being a catalytic project that will attract investment, this development will create jobs and skills development opportunities for local people,' van den Berg announced at the launch.

Detail and timing

With the commercial launch of Richmond Park, the installation of bulk services to the site is set to commence during 2015. Following the first bulk earthworks, construction of the initial top structures is planned for mid-2016, while the completion of the first buildings within the park is anticipated for the last quarter of 2016.

'The initial 300 000m² development phase of Richmond Park is anticipated to attract investment of up to R5-billion. This will make it one of the biggest new commercial developments in Cape Town,' says van den Berg.

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