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## *Bridge City's Pieces Coming Together*

*By Greg Arde*

The pieces of the jigsaw are fitting together and the picture is fast emerging. It is Bridge City, but if you didn't know about it, you're forgiven.

Eight years ago it was vast swathes of undeveloped land in between KwaMashu and Phoenix. The only notable feature on the roadside was the livestock outlet, comically named "Hyper Goat".

While Bridge City is much trumpeted, it was only really appreciated by a savvy few and state spatial planners. It is a joint venture between the eThekweni Municipality and Tongaat Hulett and the 60ha of land, about seven km inland from uMhlanga Ridge, will be undoing apartheid planning that kept the communities of Phoenix, Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu separate.

Massive road works there give an inkling of how big it will be. It will house the city's second biggest inter modal transport hub after Warwick Junction, with dedicated bus lanes into town, to Pinetown and uMhlanga/Cornubia.

Already a train station in the basement of the shopping centre sees 22 trains shuttle in and out every day. The intermodal facility will eventually cater for 100 000 commuters a day. The centre is already tenanted by big chain stores like Woolworths, SPAR and Checkers. Next door is the Ntuzuma Magistrate's Court, a colossal, futuristic architectural piece that has usurped "Hyper Goat" as the local landmark.

In between the centre and the court, a 500 bed state hospital is under construction that will be staffed by an army of medical personnel, including over 1000 nurses, from 2019.

Brian Ive, a development executive at Tongaat Hulett gives a sense of Bridge City's strategic location.

Ive helped develop KwaZulu-Natal's blue chip business park, Riverhorse, along the N2. Riverhorse, about five kms from Bridge City is sold out and, with space at a premium; the city is unlocking land for eThekweni's expansion along the northern corridor.

Bridge City is a key link. It is a stone's throw away from Cornubia, a flagship mixed use development on the inland side of uMhlanga. Nearby, the only big, vacant chunks of land have been bought by Investec and JT Ross, probably the biggest player in the KZN commercial market.

"The huge transport infrastructure that is going into Bridge City will bring it to life. Already we see thousands of people coming to the shopping centre and to the court daily. We've sold over a third of the sites in the town centre and there are only four sites left in the business park next door – which are new on the market."

Ive says the latest town centre building that has gone up, a three storey mixed use building with shops and eateries at street level and residential above, give an indication of what the area will look like.

“There is great potential for developers because we allow a lot of bulk, allowing them to go up nine storeys in areas. There will be a total residential capacity of between 4000 and 8000 apartments, depending on the affordability level. We’re looking at homes for between 17 000 and 27 000 people in the next three years.

“We have set up the precinct management model in Bridge City that we already run in areas like uMhlanga and Riverhorse, with additional street cleaning, crime prevention and with CCTV which will be installed in 2016.”

Ive says the infrastructural spend at Bridge City, excluding the city’s investment in the Bus Rapid Transport system, Prasa’s investment in the new rail station and line and national government’s allocations for the hospital and the court, is R205 million.

This is expected to attract approximately R10 billion private sector investments by 2020, including the shopping centre.

Bulldozers are clearing a site on the western edge of Bridge City for a R250million development that includes a petrol filling station and a six floor mixed use development.

Ive says both Bridge City and the Riverhorse Valley Business Estate are testament to the power of public, private sector partnerships (PPP’s) to deliver on industrial and mixed use developments. Tongaat Hulett is the project manager responsible for implementation of the project onto the ground as well as the mandated sales agent for Bridge City.

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