

City's urban renewal boost

Network Reporter

THE Bridge City mixed-use development, north of Durban, is offering key insights to how government's vision with the support of the private sector is being transformed into reality to positively impact citizens' lives.

The precinct-based development, a joint venture between eThekweni Municipality and Tongaat Hulett, provides an interesting perspective on how land can be developed in South Africa's urban areas (and particularly those areas situated within historically marginalised locations) to serve the needs of diverse local communities.

Brian Wright, managing director of UrbanMGT, which drives the Bridge City Management Association, said support for precinct management initiatives is one of the ways that government's spatial development policy is positively impacting the lives of ordinary South Africans.

Revitalise

He said the precinct management concept emerged from the need to revitalise degenerated city centres through municipal/private sector partnerships.

Based on the success of these partnerships, national and local government has recognised the value of entrenching precinct management principles in greenfields projects – like Bridge City – to support their sustainability.

National Treasury has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the SA Property Owners Association to create an enabling environment that supports inclusive growth and urban renewal.

Wright said success was heavily dependent on establishing a true partnership between property owners, precinct managers and municipalities.

He said this type of partnership was the cornerstone of Bridge City and had resulted in a unique approach that emphasised the development of facilities and spaces that served commercial and social needs in equal measure.

The Bridge City concept plan, therefore, centres on successfully



The Bridge City management team include: Nwabisa Mkhize, centre, Bridge City precinct manager; Hloniphani Mpanza, assistant precinct manager, left and Sizwe Nzama, security contract manager.

melding conventional and high-density housing, as well as commercial, retail and business facilities.

Brian Ive, Tongaat Hulett Development Executive responsible for Bridge City, said the key lesson for developers was to establish an overarching management organisation.

This body is responsible for representing the interests of the developer, investors, tenants, residents and the municipality, through the co-ordination and alignment of facilities, services and day-to-day operational requirements that ultimately create an environment that can be enjoyed by all.

Simple tasks such as keeping the precinct clean and safe are instrumental in creating a welcoming environment for tenants and visitors alike.

Wright said sharing responsibility for public realm servicing assisted the municipality to deliver services in newly developed areas. Apart from having dedicated resources to deliver supplementary services to that of the municipality, management bodies' motivations differ from that of local government.

Wright said precinct managers adopted a holistic approach to enhancing the users' experience of the

space through integrated service delivery. This flexibility to continually improve and direct resources where needed was reflected in the work done by Bridge City precinct manager Nwabisa Mkhize.

She said her overarching view of the Bridge City development had, for example, enabled her to expand the impact of the landscaping and street cleaning teams.

Beautification of kerbs and gardens, for instance, had been extended to the entry points to the precinct to ensure that visitors are presented with a positive image from the outset.