

Design Quarter Fourways: A transformed lifestyle retail hub

Design Quarter Fourways, Johannesburg's once premier décor and homeware destination, has been redeveloped as a holistic modern-living lifestyle retail centre.



Source: Supplied.

The phased redevelopment was designed by MDS Architecture for Investec Property Fund. Offering 24,570 m² of mixed-use development, Design Quarter is a curated, connected, convenient experience for surrounding residents completed in July 2023.

Donald McGillivray, partner at MDS Architecture, says, “Design Quarter is a secure, access-controlled precinct located on a prominent site along William Nicol Drive (now Winnie Mandela Drive). It is a convenient and sophisticated gateway to the greater Fourways node.”

New attractions as a lifestyle destination

A number of expansions and appointments have been added. The reconfiguration also facilitated the creation of a Food Street, a distinctive feature at Design Quarter. The double-volume industrial design concept creates a food area that spills out onto a new reconfigured and repositioned outdoor piazza strategically positioned alongside the recreational offering of The Golfers Club and Trek Bikes.

This north facing, open-air zone is unique in the local shopping area with a child-friendly piazza. It serves as the heart of the entertainment area with greater pedestrian access, landscaping, living sculptures and a water feature.

The lines between the indoor and outdoor areas are blurred through the use of clear stacking and folding doors. New Tivoli lights span across the piazza creating a magical night streetscape.

The piazza is geared to host regular events such as food festivals, markets and shows. In addition to offering a unique space to enjoy an alfresco meal, it is multi-purpose and multi-functional.

There are several trees which serve as focal points in the piazza. They are accentuated by additional greenery and wrapped in timber cladding to form inviting benches for pause and enjoyments.

Adding to the existing dining options of Mythos and The Rock is Bootleggers, one of Cape Town's most recognised and exciting coffee and eatery brands, Mozambik, with the existing Lupa Osteria migrating to the piazza food street precinct. An additional restaurant will be added to the new food street once confirmed.

The centre's convenience retailers include a new market concept Checkers' store, Checkers' Liquor and Checkers' new pet store concept, Pet Science, along with Clicks, Samsung and a newly refurbished Coricraft concept store.

Celebrating design

Design Quarter was launched in 2005 as a hub for design and interiors. The reconfiguration has improved circulation and flow with greater accessibility and connection between the covered parking area below to the new piazza, restaurants, new stores as well as existing stores. A new ramp down to the existing covered parking removes the need for customers to walk the length of the mall from the escalators and lifts at the far end of the centre. Instead, they can now park right under the piazza and access it directly via a vertical node of lifts, stairs and escalators.

The décor offering has been bolstered by Cielo Lifestyle's largest store in South Africa and the expansion of several other stores to create the ultimate lifestyle destination. Mr Price Home has been relocated within the centre and now is positioned between Coricraft and Cielo in the indoor section of the centre.



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The revamped undercover retail area in Design Quarter features original art, with sculptures lining the new repositioned and refurbished retail street. Overhead, hanging greenery softens the high-volume area bathed in natural light.

The retail street now includes several pause areas and planters, with colourful mall seating enticing shoppers to relax and enjoy all that is on offer at Design Quarter.

Timber cladding on the demising walls between shops brings warmth to the space, complementing the steel vertical columns. Additional sculptures, playfully placed at the water's edge in the piazza, appeal to shoppers and design aficionados.

The building also includes existing offices and showrooms located above the retail street at first- and second-floor levels.

Enhancing fundamentals

In addition to the reconfiguration and repositioning, the lifestyle centre was refurbished with new tiling, increased greenery,

new way-finding signage and upgraded ablution facilities to the office levels above.

Signage has received special attention, with prominent tenant signage conveying a cohesive and attractive attraction on the prominent façade facing William Nicol Road. Directional signage takes the form of a free-standing steel signpost with arrows in different directions, evoking European street signage.

Says McGillivray, “Our approach was to focus on the fundamentals of the building and identify areas that would encourage shoppers to explore what is on offer. The idea is to enjoy your time in the lifestyle centre without necessarily pinpointing one aspect that makes it a frictionless, pleasant experience. Vertical circulation and public connectivity to the covered parking was also a fundamental item that needed attention and this has been resolved with the new repositioning.”



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The undercover parking features additional lighting, vibrant colours and exciting graphic elements. At the top of the new escalator court linking the existing covered parking to the new food street and piazza is a double-volume abstract mural painted by a local artist which serves as a prominent visual feature.

At the escalators, exposed pipes lend an industrial feel to the space. There is an interplay between straight lines and more organic shapes throughout the Design Quarter, which plays out in smaller areas as well as in large spaces.

The existing open parking on the western side of the piazza has been maintained and revamped with new lighting and pedestrian walkways connecting to the piazza. This open parking offers convenience and easy access for those who wish to pop into their favourite stores.

Ambience within a secure environment

Design Quarter is unique as a social environment in that it has a single entry and exit point into the development. Being enclosed adds a welcome sense of containment and security. For businesses in Design Quarter, all these elements combine to ensure an inviting ambience and the opportunity to extend trading hours well into the evening with added security.

“Elegant dining meets convenience and a world of décor inspiration, to offer the ultimate lifestyle and shopping experience to this very competitive catchment area,” concludes McGillivray.

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