

Industrial area in downslide

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What was regarded as a booming industrial area in 2008 now faces an uncertain future as "To Let" and "For Sale" signs spring up around Fort Jackson.

In 2008, the *Daily Dispatch* reported on the then flourishing industrial area of Fort Jackson in East London, which saw rising occupancy rates and increasing interest in investment.

Three years later, a number of factories and manufacturers have closed down in the area.

Some businesses still remain optimistic about the future of Fort Jackson, however.

"Business is going all right here. It has its ups and downs and this year has been tough compared to the previous two years," said Impala Meats' Philip Minnaar.

"A lot of businesses have pulled out here and I'm not sure why but people are coming back slowly."

Companies relocate

Impala Meats moved into the industrial area last year, joining other factories which have been long-standing such as Rehau Polymer, First National Battery Operating and Cowie Trading.

Most of the factory buildings within the industrial area are owned by the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC).

The *Daily Dispatch* reported that between January and September 2008, approximately 16 companies relocated to Fort Jackson.

The ECDC then owned about 50 to 80 properties in the area.

A 95% occupancy rate was generating about R200 000 a month from Fort Jackson rentals.

The ECDC was unable to comment about the current situation.

Border-Kei Chamber of Business (BKCOB) executive director Les Holbrook said: "There is no question that there has been a decline in the industry, but if you look at places like Dimbaza, it's not as bad because at least Fort Jackson still has

reasonable tenant occupation."

Holbrook believes the appearance and state of Fort Jackson, although not completely dilapidated, could be better.

He contends that the industrial area should be made more attractive to industries and their owners.

Source: *Daily Dispatch*

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