

# Gateway Theatre of Shopping refurbishment a success, despite challenges

When Profica was appointed the principal-agent, project management, and tenant coordination services on the extensive renovation project of Umhlanga's Gateway Theatre of Shopping in KwaZulu-Natal, it was acknowledged that this would be a significant undertaking as one of the largest alterations, additions, and refurbishments of an active shopping centre in South Africa.



Gateway Theatre of Shopping

Peter Ferraz, associate director at Profica involved in the Gateway project, says, "This was a huge undertaking not only due to its size but also because the extensive work would be done in a live environment, meaning that it would be business as usual for shoppers and retailers. In these instances, safety and containment are a priority."

## Additional retail space

The client's objective for the project was to create additional retail space by adding new space and re-organising and repurposing existing space. To maintain the grand and open ambiance of the Gateway Theatre of Shopping, the mall's public space was to be increased in such a way as to ensure the new expansion works did not distract from this appeal. There was also to be a refresh of Gateway's look and feel by modernising various internal and external elements of the building. Additional parking bays and taxi rank space was developed to cater for the growing popularity of the shopping centre.

Ferraz says that there were various challenges with the project, which involved numerous stakeholders whose expectations and involvement had to be carefully managed. "Most of the stakeholders had never been involved in a project as large or as complex as this, which meant that our team needed to reassure them of the process and maintain consistent communication throughout to alleviate any anxieties."

A particularly critical aspect of stakeholder management, adds Ferraz, was to manage the often-conflicting priorities of the retailers, the centre management, the construction activities, and the public, while maintaining progress.

## Coordination through complexity

Another challenge was having to coordinate the designs of several architectural and engineering disciplines, necessary due to the complexity of the new scheme and lack of historic documentation. A major emphasis of the design was to minimise the disruption of the core business of the centre, says Ferraz. "As our highest priority was the absolute safety of the public, tenants, and workers, steps were taken in the design, coordination, and planning, and the implementation of construction works to keep the live shopping centre safe at all times." The overall project, successfully completed at the end of last year, has been closely followed by an extension of the Mr Price store which will be finished in September 2019.

Commenting on the project as the largest retail refurbishment in KZN, he says, "When completing a significant project like Gateway, there is always a huge sigh of relief when it successfully reaches its end. There is also a huge sense of accomplishment and pride in having been able to deliver an outcome that is highly satisfactory to the client through a process that was cognisant of all those involved in the project throughout its duration. At Profica, we are especially pleased with the final completed design from an aesthetic and engineering perspective which has significantly enhanced the shopper circulation and retail experience."

Finally, Ferraz commends the various teams participating in the Gateway project who were able to bring together the 'rolling wave' design necessitated by changing lease conditions and the many "unknown unknowns" which are inherent in a large 20-year old shopping centre redevelopment: "All was done without massively affecting the final completion and I think it is a fantastic achievement by the design and construction teams involved in this project. That shoppers and retailers were able to continue going about their business with the least amount of inconvenience during the build is also a huge accomplishment by the team."

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