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An icon renewed

The redeveloped Towers Main building in the Johannesburg CBD designed by AMA Architects for the Divercity Urban Property Fund is part of a larger spatial transformation that aims to rejuvenate the city and create lively, mixed-income communities and a top quality workplace in the inner city.

PHOTOGRAPHY JOGGIE BOTHA AND SUPPLIED





At 30 storeys high, the Towers Main building, rejuvenated by Divercity and designed by AMA Architects, is South Africa's 10th tallest building and a prominent feature of Johannesburg's iconic city skyline.

The Towers Main building, at 30 storeys high, forms an essential part of the iconic Johannesburg City Skyline. Completed in 1979, the building has stood unoccupied for several years, waiting for an extremely brave developer to breathe new life into South Africa's 10th tallest building.

In 2018, the newly launched Divercity Urban Property Fund became those brave developers, investing R2bn in the Johannesburg CBD as part of their strategy to create thriving mixed-use inner-city precincts. This investment, the largest in the Johannesburg CBD for some years, focused on the redevelopment of the iconic Towers Main building and Jewel City precinct adjacent to Maboneng.

The redevelopment represents a powerful manifestation of ongoing efforts to claw back the Johannesburg central business district from the socially and economically debilitating effects of neglect, grime and crime.

Social and economic transformation in South Africa is intimately dependant on the spatial transformation of our cities. By focusing on transforming our inner cities into lively, mixed-income communities, the regeneration of this tower in an established urban node allows for the creation of communities that reduce disparities in income by facilitating more frequent interactions between people that have means and people without.

This node also facilitates the activation of a rare public space in the city, enforcing the notion that streets are an extension of the living and working environment.

This truly mixed-used building enables Divercity and Absa to simultaneously consolidate their inner-city office space, while also fulfilling their vision of contributing to the community and providing an impetus for the rejuvenation of this part of the CBD.

Rather than catering for gentrified high-end luxury apartments, the scheme provides 20 floors of much-needed low-cost economic residential accommodation in Johannesburg. This translates into 518 apartments (ranging from 16m² studios to 51m² two-bed units) atop of nine floors of office space.

The public ground floor is activated with the commercial and residential receptions, coffee shop, recreational areas, a crèche and a public square with planted enclaves and integrated public transport facilities. The two mixes are deliberately integrated on this level to ensure an interaction between people of various means to allow for diversity, opportunity and prosperity. This high-end commercial and low-cost



Above: The existing façade had long surpassed its lifetime serviceability and a new world-class curtain wall system was designed for the commercial façade.

residential tenant mix is a completely unique situation, which will undoubtedly have a positive social impact on those living within the Absa precinct.

The ground floor also houses the Absa Art Gallery, containing many of South Africa's most prominent artists, with Absa also generously committing to installing several public sculptures throughout the piazza.

The rejuvenation of Johannesburg is largely dependent on activated public spaces where the streets become an extension of the home and office, and therefore the piazza is viewed as a 'Village Park' – an urban oasis that provides a variety of seating spaces, bleacher auditorium seating, planting, art and sculpture available to all citizens. The city's upgrade on Main Street further strengthens the success of the piazza by introducing much-needed traffic calming measures to create a comfortable pedestrian-friendly environment.

Residents have exclusive access to their own secure clubhouse on the 15th floor. Along with enviable views over the city skyline, this level offers occupants access to a fully equipped business centre, gym, playground and outdoor entertainment area. A rooftop laundry and drying yard completes the comprehensive list of services residents have access to in this mixed-use scheme.

Denser urban living residences nearer to work opportunities is highlighted as an essential strategy to ensure limiting carbon emissions.

Despite the challenge of providing cost-effective construction to ensure that low-income units could be provided, the development ensured that all new



systems were implemented with efficiency and long-term sustainability in mind.

Through the complete reuse and repair of the existing structure, the building has been radically transformed into a compliant and safe structure.

The existing façade had long surpassed its lifetime serviceability, and the new façades were carefully designed to be able to be completed without the use of scaffolding and still provide a compliant skin for the new occupants.

The commercial façade implements a world-class curtain wall system. For the residential façade, lightweight steel-framed panels were prefabricated to allow for eleven thousand square metres of façade to be completed within four months.

The pixelated vortex pattern of the residential façade is a fresh urban addition to the Johannesburg skyline, bringing colour and vibrancy to it.

The building completely reused an existing derelict and abandoned concrete structure – rather than demolition, this is the ultimate response to sustainability.

The Absa offices achieve a four-star design rating from GBCSA, with dedicated recycling areas, fuel-efficient parking bays, and new double-glazing replacing the outdated original façade.

Beyond the redevelopment of Towers Main, the scheme also fits into the larger Divercity Property Fund urban vision to integrate the Absa precinct with other key nodes in the city, including Maboneng and the recently completed Jewel City development.

Below: The building has been radically transformed through the complete reuse and repair of the existing structure.

Bottom: The public ground floor is activated with the commercial and residential receptions, coffee shop, recreational areas and a crèche.



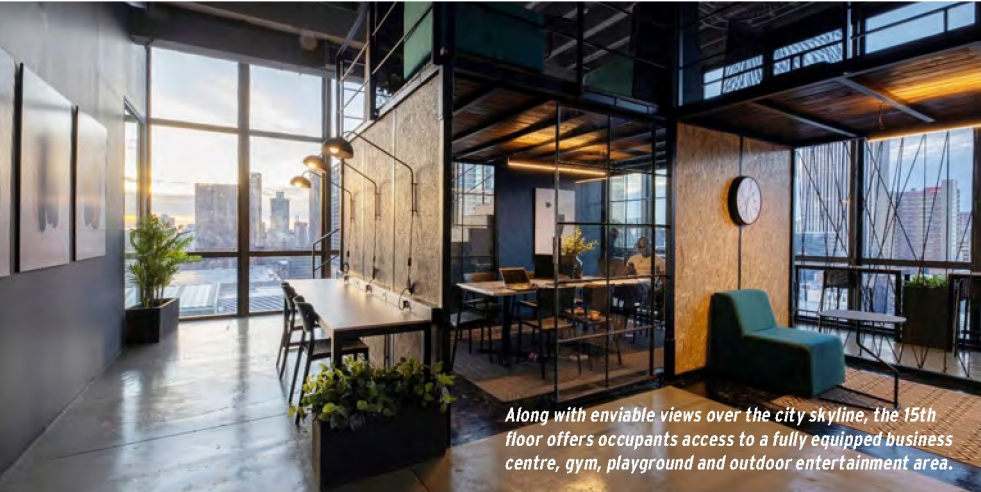
Through active involvement in the City Improvement Districts (CIDs), the CID Forum, the Inner City Partnership and the Johannesburg Property Owners and Managers Association, the links along the Main Street corridor to Carlton Centre and Ghandi Square have also been upgraded and strengthened.

As a result, the project is uniquely positioned to bring the success of Maboneng collaborative hub to the Absa precinct, thereby activating a much larger urban live, work and play environment.

PROFESSIONAL TEAM:

CLIENT: Diverscity Urban Property Fund **DEVELOPERS:** Ithemba & Atterbury **ARCHITECTS:** AMA Architects

QUANTITY SURVEYOR: Kaofela **STRUCTURAL & CIVIL:** WSP **MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, ELECTRONIC & WET SERVICES ENGINEERS:** WSP in Africa **FIRE ENGINEER:** Fenco **SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT:** WSP **LIFT CONSULTANT:** Solutions for Elevating **LANDSCAPING:** CPLD Landscape Architects **HEALTH & SAFETY:** Cairnmead **MAIN CONTRACTOR:** WBHO & MOTHEO Joint Venture 



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