

The pedestrianisation of Sandton Central

In keeping with leading cities globally, Sandton Central, South Africa's business capital, is taking steps to become more people-friendly by increasing its walkability and, at the same time, boosting the economy, health and environmental benefits for the people who work, live, visit, run businesses and have real estate in the area.



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Welcoming people on foot

This is having remarkable knock-on effects, with many of Sandton Central's new buildings responding with exciting new designs to welcome people on foot.

Traditionally, many of Sandton's buildings' main access points, regardless of how you arrived, were through parkades. Now, Sandton is seeing a new generation of innovative commercial properties with welcoming street-level entrances that invite pedestrians in.



Elaine Jack

Elaine Jack, city improvement district manager of the Sandton Central Management District (SCMD), which manages the public urban spaces of South Africa's cosmopolitan financial hub, comments: "Much of Sandton's road infrastructure was developed with only vehicles in mind, typical of the development of its time. Today, however, it is increasingly recognised that walkability is an important part of sustainable urban design."

Walkability is influenced by the quality and width of pavements, footpaths and other accessibility features that give pedestrians right of way. It is also influenced by safety and how accessible buildings are to people on foot.

Beyond the environmental and health benefits of a walkable city, there are also many economic benefits. Better walkability can promote tourism and increase property value. It can also result in cost savings to both individuals and the community, more efficient land use and increase the livability in the area, as well as economic benefits from improved public health and economic development. Jack adds: "Better walkability makes cities more appealing to people and to businesses."

The pedestrianisation of Sandton

Improvements that add to the walkability of Sandton Central can be seen mushrooming all around the city. Among the most visible are the latest changes underway around the Sandton Gautrain Station that connects vibrant street-fronted retail with people on foot. In fact, by bringing commuters right into the very heart of Sandton Central, the Gautrain has played a major role in growing pedestrianisation.

West Street's pavements were improved for last year's EcoMobility World Festival, hosted by the City of Johannesburg and held in Sandton. Now, these pavements are getting an additional makeover that will significantly improve access for pedestrians.

Situated above and adjacent to the Sandton Gautrain Station, Kgoro Central is a new mixed-use development that creates a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment with urban planning and design that supports a pedestrian-centric milieu. This smart and green development includes wide, demarcated walkways, cycle paths and facilities, desirable activated public space for 24/7 living, and a healthy lifestyle in open and safe surrounds. It is aligned with public transport to enable people to flow more freely, be exposed to greater choices, and connect in new ways.

Already, the outer face of the station has come to life with new coffee shops, eateries, and shops. Improvements to the adjacent pavement will make them superbly accessible with a wide pedestrian zone of 5.2 metres in most areas – a massive improvement on the small strip of pavement that were there until recently. The new pavement design, which includes trees and balustrades, will also create a more social space that is appealing to people.



Sandton Central

Urban design and green building

"The intention is to move Sandton into a much more slick, friendly, robust, and usable outdoor environment," says Diaan van der Westhuizen, urban designer at StudioMAS, who designed the look and feel around the Sandton Gautrain Station. And, it isn't only Sandton's streets and pavements that are becoming more human-friendly, its buildings are too.

Becoming more connected with the city, Sandton City added a new pedestrian-friendly entrance with its Protea Court expansion. The new entrance opens up to the corner of Rivonia Road and Sandton Drive and provides a welcoming connection point for the increasing street-level interaction in the area. In addition, the next generation of premium quality office buildings in Sandton Central is also being designed to welcome pedestrians.

Discovery is set to move to a new resource-efficient, cost-effective and environmentally-sustainable 87,000sqm global head office in 2018, developed in a joint venture by Growthpoint Properties and Zenprop Property Holdings. The developers are delivering a purpose-designed, ground-breaking green building at the gateway to Sandton Central, on the corner of Rivonia Road and Katherine Street, diagonally opposite Sandton City and a short walk away from the Sandton Gautrain Station. The

building also meets Discovery's brief to create an inviting space for its employees to do their best and features a striking street entrance to welcome pedestrians in.

Another prominent example is Abland's Alice Lane development, which will open out onto West Street and Alice Lane. The development will feature its own vibrant piazza, with ground level retail and attractions, creating a people-friendly setting that encourages pedestrian movement.

Jack says: "Sandton Central has always been an enterprising leading business and financial district. It is exciting to see it improving its walkability and transforming in line with the best cities in the world to provide an exceptional environment for all visitors."

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