

Exemplar's Edendale Mall undergoes phased reopening

Extensively looted and damaged during the July riots last year, Edendale Mall in Pietermaritzburg has now reopened. The centre is one of five assets owned by Exemplar that was severely impacted.



Source: Supplied

It is the last of the centres to reopen – Chris Hani Crossing and Diepkloof Square in Gauteng as well as Mandeni Plaza and Theku Plaza in KwaZulu-Natal were all rebuilt and trading by early December 2021.

“The reopening of Edendale Mall is a milestone we have all been waiting for,” says Jason McCormick, CEO of Exemplar. “About the only silver lining coming from the extensive damage is that it gave us a clean sheet to redesign the mall.”

First opened in 2011, Edendale Mall is located in Plessislaer, part of the sprawling Edendale township in Pietermaritzburg. Improvements to the centre include increased natural lighting, wider walkways and an updated tenant mix.

Previously spanning over 31,000m² of GLA, the new mall will be 29,656m² by April 2023 and will be anchored by both Boxer and Shoprite.



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5 Aug 2022



Phased reopening

“The phased reopening of the mall has been done to ensure we can address the most immediate retail needs of the community first,” explains McCormick. “The priority for phase 1 was food, healthcare and banking. Phase 2 and 3 will see the reintroduction of additional anchors as well as fashion tenants.”

Phase 2 will open in time to benefit from Black Friday trade later this year with the final phase set for completion by Easter 2023. Boxer, Boxer Liquor, Clicks, FNB, Standard Bank, Jam Clothing, Chicken Licken and Pedro's Chicken are among the tenants that opened this week.

In addition to the mall's new look, an updated logo and brand has been introduced. Previously known as Greater Edendale Mall, the name and logo received a creative refresh. "We originally used the word 'greater' to create a sense of pride and to talk to the aspirations of our shoppers but it became clear that the community only ever referred to it as Edendale Mall. We took the opportunity to update the name in order to connect with the market."

The new logo was created by a local designer as part of an artist search that was done in the early days of the rebuild. Designed by Siyabonga Gumede, the logo speaks to the historic branding of the centre through the colours and fonts that have been used. The imagery of the iconic tree in the food court continues to be the focal point but the final product is a modern, fresh logo that resonates with community members and shoppers.

Gumede has also been commissioned to bring some local personality to the overall aesthetic of the mall through the design of graffiti wall murals that have become synonymous with Exemplar shopping centres.



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Community skills upliftment

Damage to the centre totalled over R230m with an estimated 1,800 direct job losses. Local tenants were some of the hardest hit as a result of the damage inflicted. "Local first and skills upliftment continue to be a priority for us and we are happy to welcome back so many local tenants who were with us pre-riots as well as some new local brands," says McCormick.

"Local service providers have been appointed for the security, cleaning and refuse contracts at the mall and we are continually looking for ways to incorporate the community into the everyday running of the centre. Current initiatives being investigated include rooftop market garden co-operatives, an entrepreneurial hub and outdoor sports facilities for the youth in the area. We will also continue with the meal and dignity pack handouts during the SASSA grant day handouts."

Almost a quarter of Exemplar's total retail portfolio was damaged in the riots that took place last year. The reopening of the new, improved Edendale Mall is the final step in the rebuild process that will see the portfolio once again trading at full capacity.