

# Managing Construction Projects with Great Prowess and Prudence

Story by Vusi Shabalala with pictures by Solomon Mashatole

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The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works has been in the media limelight since the construction of a 'state-of-the-art' Conference Centre that is situated at eThekwin Region, Mayville in Durban. It has been almost three years in the making with the centre remaining a fully booked facility while all acclaimed conferences, meetings, workshops and events continue to be catered for.

The conversion of an existing workshop into a Dining Facility did not just come at a 'spur-of-a-moment' but required brilliance and prudence from the hardworking employees within the Professional Services component of the Department. The dining facility is built opposite the Conference Centre with its goal to have a permanent facility that will cater for all gatherings taking place at the centre. The use of the facility will offer significant reduction in the exorbitant spending, as reliance is currently on temporary dining facilities or tents through catering services. The conversion will therefore afford the facility to cater for 270-seated guests.

Great prowess and prudence from the Project Team, led by Solomon Mashatole, will come into effect when the existing roof, external envelope and internal divisions are demolished, with the steel frame and foundations remaining in place. The existing steel frame shall be galvanized and re-used and ancillary works are ongoing. The new dining hall will comprise of the main seating area with ablution facilities; kitchen, cold room, service stations; change rooms for catering staff with separate ablution facilities; walkway link connecting the Conference Centre and the Dining Hall; separate VIP eating section with ablution facilities and a beautiful landscaping and patio facing the Conference Centre. In response and adding value to the Department's Greening Policy, the project will adopt the green

initiatives, namely water harvesting using rainwater collection tanks, motion sensors in ablution facilities, energy saving light fittings, solar panels for external lighting and sustainable acoustic technology.

The project update and progress is that demolitions are complete with steel rafters removed and the remaining steel columns to receive extension to lift roof level. The VIP section is additional to the existing building footprint and foundation thereof is currently being excavated and prepared to receive rebar and concrete. The leadership of Mrs Nomcebo Lembethe has ensured that Mrs Thokozani Dumakude instils appropriate coordination of the EPWP participation to the project. There is complete community participation to the project with local labourers drawn from the community of Ward 30, eThekweni Municipality. It is worth noting that there is an established Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprising of the Ward Councillor, Contractor, EPWP officials, Community Liaison Officer and the Project Leader which of meetings are convened twice a month, with a view at resolving any existing and potential labour related issues on sites.



**Demolished external envelope and internal division, structural steel remaining in place**

The project benefits is that 12 job opportunities have been created for the duration of the project with more jobs to be increased as the project unfolds. Skilled artisans will ultimately transfer skills to the local labourers in the process. The project site is compliant in line with Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Department of Labour Ministerial Determination that include remuneration package, safety wear, contractual obligations and skills transfer.

Two (2) departmental interns, Sphamandla Duma (internship students) and Sanele Thusi (in-service trainee) are currently carrying out their practical training in the project. They are studying towards the professional registration (Pr. CPM) and qualification in Building respectively through the departmental internship programme and in-service training respectively. Both these young aspirants are under the mentorship of Solomon Mashatole, the Department's professional Contract Project Manager (CPM).