



Location: Hermanus, Western Cape
Size: 34,000m²

Hermanus is a seaside town, a 2-hour drive from Cape Town's CBD, and is situated in South Africa's Western Cape. Hermanus is internationally known as a whale-watching destination. This extraordinary attribute is what shaped the identity of the Whale Coast Mall, from the building silhouette to the playful floating public art work in the centre's expo court. Whale Coast Mall is situated directly off the main arterial connecting Cape Town to Hermanus and other towns along the coast, and it provides a well-positioned retail offering to the local shopper as well as holiday makers and travellers. Bentel Associates International and JLDdesign embarked on a joint venture to design and implement this shopping centre in the heart of Hermanus.

The brief from the Client, Dorpsstraat, to the Architects was to design and build a shopping centre to cater for a very specific market - as well as to create a development that does not compete with existing retailers, so as to allow for all developments in the area to benefit from different markets.

Rather interestingly, this shopping centre's original design was conceived as an open-yet-covered centre, and without air-conditioning. In practice, the weather in the area triumphed and, because of this, it became a necessity to re-think this concept. All design and build parties needed to work in unison and convert the building's design into a fully air-conditioned environment within the existing budget, aesthetic elements, finishes and ambience being compromised. This was difficult to achieve as the relatively small size did not allow for excessive aesthetic treatment - the cost of which is easier to absorb on larger projects. Still, this shopping centre holds its own in its strong appearance, given the budget.

SUPPLIERS:

Clay Bricks:

Claytile - 021 884 4589

Steel:

Safintra - 021 981 3130

Nurseries:

New Plant - 044 889 0055

Themba Trees - 083 419 0223

Shadowlands - 021 903 0050



Community

The main contractor, Isipani Construction, employed local labour, with great attention to works being undertaken by the community. The contractors set up a community project whereby children created glass mosaics for the male and female ablutions and the striking motifs in the centre courts. This was seen as a way to address community buy-in and has been a successful project in this respect.

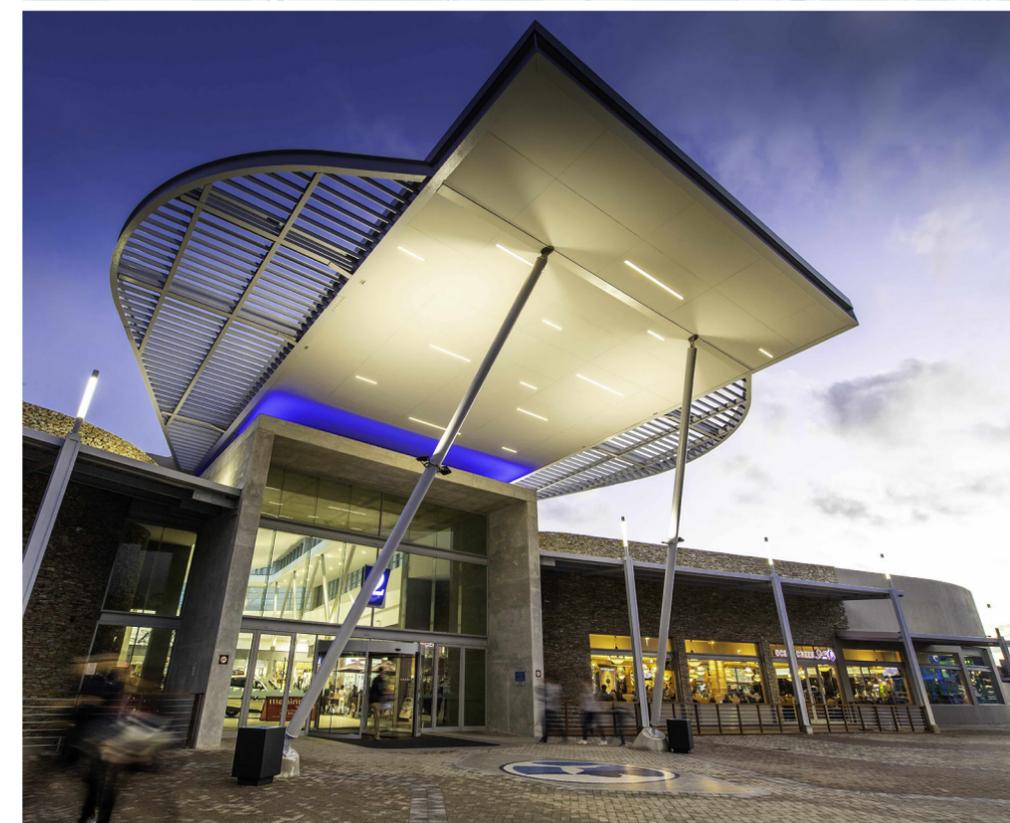
Design concept

The majority of the mall is on one level, with a smaller lower level, and encompasses a large area. It is defined by high volumes and an abundance of natural light to create big open airy spaces. The mall comprises 80 retailers with a rather diverse mix of tenants with the anchor brands being Woolworths and Checkers.

The building can be described as restrained, and sits inconspicuously between its surrounds. Due to the centre's location and also the town's appeal as the 'whale capital' of the coast, the design needed to respond to its situation, and certain elements and ideas were inspired by whales and theming from the sea. The dramatic facade of the building catches the eye and announces itself to the passing traffic with large features that could be interpreted as inspired by the tail of a whale without being literal. Motifs and details representing the sea are carried throughout the centre in mosaics, sculptures and representative artwork.

The flow and layout adhere to conventional retail principles, supported by contemporary and modern architecture and interiors. The mall also boasts a multi-use area of a large volume food court and a cinema complex which can be used as a theatre with a stage and dressing facilities for actors/performers. Interestingly, certain offerings of the centre, for instance the cinema area, was never provided before in Hermanus. The crucial factor was in providing an amenity that fulfils a need previously not catered for in the town, and the undoubted success of the development during its operating time has underlined this.

The combined facilities ensure the shopping centre offers safe shopping, combined with restrained contemporary architecture and striking visual focus points making it a fantastic place to visit in the Overberg region. With four easy access entrances, two lifts, two escalators, full facilities for the disabled and lots of convenient parking that shoppers are effortlessly able to navigate through the mall.





Environmental impact

Whale Coast Mall was constructed on a Greenfield site which meant it was imperative to accommodate a regenerative approach to surrounding ecology whilst ensuring that future retrofit and expansion is contained. When it came to the site, it had a large fall from one end to the other, and so the centre was designed around this to optimise the level changes, shaping the centre into the ground. This reduced the visual impact of the building in its setting, so as to fit into its surrounds seamlessly. In order to be energy efficient and eco-friendly as possible, the following measures were implemented: water saving fixtures, sensor lights and LED lights.

The use of natural light in as many spaces within the mall as possible meant that there was less electrical demand. Ultimately however, the main focus was to provide energy efficiency in proposing practical design solutions and the application of basic design principles, like good building orientation in relation to the sun, functional planning and allowing natural light to permeate into the interiors. During the design and construction phases, the costs and construction time management were strictly controlled to make sure that the project was to be ready on time and on budget and ready for the various retailers to take their occupation of their spaces for fit-outs prior to opening of the centre. With regard to the quality management, it was also crucial – during the construction phase in particular – to ensure that the consultant

team were playing a quality assurance and control function, making sure that the quality of the building construction was to an acceptable and high standard for future sign-offs and issuing the relevant completion certificates. This process was an iterative procedure of multiple site visits and quality control checks throughout the construction phase by the professional team and the contractor. It also meant the various professionals working on site had to band together to ensure the overall high standard of finish was achieved.

Risk management

Before building could commence onsite, a full report, feasibility and costing analysis was needed to be completed, and a pre-letting requirement for the retailers was put in place to make sure that the development was feasible prior to the start of construction. The client employed the services of a professional team, who had experience in the design and construction of a building –which reduced the risk for the client. Also, a large amount of the centre’s gross lettable area (GLA) is occupied by national tenants and national franchise offerings affording an extremely strong covenant and mix of tenants across the categories of retail offerings.

At its core, Whale Coast Mall seeks to attract a broader base of consumer, particularly those looking for national retail and 'bigger box' retail, and the mall fills a niche in the market previously

unoccupied. Because of this, it will retain those shoppers who would have typically travelled to Somerset West, or even further afield to Cape Town, to do their shopping. Overall, the mall has been very successful in its intention and continues to host an array of different shoppers.

MEET THE TEAM:

Client:

Dorpstraat
Shoprite Checkers
Sea & Shore Projects
HCI

Architects:

Bentel Associates International & JLDdesign (Joint Venture)

Main Contractor:

Isipani Construction

Landscape Architects:

J.D.V. Landscape Studio

Landscape Contractor:

CHB Landscaping & Irrigation

