

ABOUT US

The eZasegagasini Metro is the official eThekweni Municipality publication through which ratepayers and residents are kept informed about news, entertainment and perspectives in the greater Durban region.

It is also a forum for readers' views. It hits the streets fortnightly on a Friday, with 450 000 copies distributed throughout the region.

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A vote of confidence in the CBD

Developer to invest R127m

METRO REPORTER

THE city centre is to get another face-lift thanks to a R127-million expansion of a landmark building.

The Old Mutual Centre office tower, one of the City Hall's immediate neighbours, is to undergo alterations to make way for more parking and a new retail arcade.

The project, involves the demolition of two buildings in Gardiner Street.

Old Mutual Property Investments Business Development Executive Brent Wiltshire said: "The project reflects confidence in the CBD as a premier retail and office location.

"It addresses a demand for on-site parking which is a major requirement in the CBD and will enhance the retail offering."

The buildings involved are Mutual building in Gardiner Street, opposite the City Hall, and the nearby Gardiner House. In addition, 300 Smith Street, which forms a primary entrance to the retail arcade from Smith to West Street, is to be refurbished.

Mike Rodel, regional general manager of Old Mutual Property Investments, said the new design would create two exit lanes from Old Mutual Centre into Gardiner Street and two entrance lanes from Smith Street.

"The new retail arcade will link West and Smith Streets, the two main CBD streets, and Gardiner Street and Mercury Lane. The existing arcade passages will be widened and a food court will be positioned in the middle of the arcade."

City Manager Michael Sutcliffe applauded the initiative, saying it showed the growing confidence that

businesses had in the city.

"Our strategy to encourage inner-city regeneration is paying off. The business community is realising that being in the CBD makes good business sense," he said.

Sutcliffe said the city would continue strengthening the excellent partnership it had forged with business. "We have an excellent partnership with the

business sector and they are working with us and growing confidence in our city."

The project, due for completion in 2008, is the fourth major development in Kwa-Zulu-Natal announced by Old Mutual Property Investments in the past 12 months.

These developments include the R250-million extension at Gateway shopping centre, Umhlanga – to enlarge the south mall and parking facilities and add a Virgin Active health club at the northern end of the complex.



GOING: The Mutual building in Gardiner Street is to be demolished



MAKE-OVER: 300 Smith Street and its retail arcade is to be refurbished

Pictures: THEMBA KHUMALO



DOWN TO WORK: Front row – Councillor Nomzamo Mkhize, Mayor Obed Mlaba, Councillors Nigel Gumede, Siphon Khuzwayo, and Cyprian Mkhize mark the start of work on the new multipurpose centre in Umlazi

Picture: VERNON MCHUNU

Big changes for hostels

VERNON MCHUNU

HOSTEL residents can look forward to improved living conditions and a whole new lifestyle.

This was the promise from Mayor Obed Mlaba last weekend when he turned the sod on a new multipurpose centre – complete with social, sports, business and other municipal services – at T-Section, Umlazi.

The centre, which will benefit Unit 17 hostel residents, is part of a drive to

reshape hostels across the city into family accommodation, as opposed to the single-sex migrant worker shelters created by the apartheid government.

Thousands of residents joined the mayor, councillors and city officials, to witness what has been described as "history in the making".

Mlaba said: "This is a major improvement. We are providing a new lifestyle for our people." The services being provided are in addition to the physical upgrading of

hostels, which is already under way across the city.

Hostels now consist of double-storey family units, built by the city and the provincial Department of Housing.

Walter Ngubane, Project Executive for the hostel-upgrading programme, said the sports field for T-Section would be revamped at a cost of R860 000. He said the work on the hostel was expected to be completed by the end of the year.

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Rates arrears: time to pay

THEMBA NYATHIKAZI

THE municipality is taking action against ratepayers whose accounts are in arrears for more than 90 days and who owe less than R100 000.

Final demands have already been sent out and, after 14 days, summonses will be served.

Ratepayers who owe more than R100 000 have already been handed over to the municipality's attorneys.

Ratepayers are urged to make arrangements to pay, or face sales in execution.

Krish Kumar, Deputy City Manager: Treasury, said: "Defaulters have been given

more than three years to pay these monies.

"These arrears amounts have been budgeted for essential service delivery."

Kumar's warning comes as the municipality enters the final lap of completing the new property valuation roll.

The municipality is bound by the national Municipal Property Rates Act No 6 of 2004 which stipulates that municipalities must value all property within their boundaries for rating purposes at market value. This is now being done in eThekweni and the new valuation roll should be completed by July 2008.

It is not known what the

overall percentage increase in rates will be in the new financial year, but historically the total rates income a year has not risen by more than the inflation rate, Kumar said.

The fixed date of valuation is 1 July 2007 and the effect on individual properties will only be known when the valuation roll is completed in January 2008.

The rate randages will be published once this budgeting process is complete.

Each property owner will be advised of the value of his property in January 2008 and has the right to object and appeal.

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Mayor's awards mark 10 years of excellence

VERNON MCHUNU

THE effort by individuals and organisations to improve the city and the lives of its citizens is what the annual Mayoral Awards for Excellence seeks to reward.

The awards are now in their 10th year and Mayor Obed Mlaba said he continued to be heartened by the generosity of those who go the extra mile to help their communities – with no expectation of personal gain.

To commemorate the anniversary, a programme of

events is being planned, details of which will be announced later.

Since its inception, at least 160 individuals have been honoured at the annual event, which takes place towards the end of the year.

Awards are made in six categories: safety and security; promotion of tourism; wealth and job creation; clean environment; community development; and business.

Recognition is given for achievement by individuals, organisations, groups and

institutions in eThekweni.

"Awards of this nature give us an opportunity as the government to acknowledge the achievements of individuals and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to our city," said Mlaba.

Awareness

"The awards seek to raise awareness around sustainability and service excellence and promote pride in our people and our city. We hope the awards will continue to

create role models and promote sharing of knowledge and skills for the growth and development of our city.

"They are intended to send a powerful message that the people of eThekweni, black and white, will work together to overcome our divided legacy," Mlaba said.

Daniel Govender, Manager for Mayoral Projects, said previous winners would be invited to a workshop at which business opportunities would be presented.

"Experts from the South African Revenue Service, the

small business sector, tourism bodies and the tender processes will make presentations at the workshop to help past awards winners who would like to get into business," said Govender.

Nominations for this year's Mayoral Awards are now open. The public are urged to nominate individuals or organisations using forms available at Regional Centres or Sizakala Centres, Masakhane Road Shows, the City Hall and from their ward councillors' offices.

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