

52 KATHERINE STREET

MAKES BEST USE OF ITS
CENTRAL, SLOPING SITE



ANTHONY ORELOWITZ
Paragon Group director

As if designing the award-winning Sasol Place on a curving site in Katherine Street, Sandton was not enough of a challenge for the Paragon Group, client Alchemy Properties tasked the firm with designing a clearly differentiated building at 52 Katherine Street, directly in front of the iconic Sasol headquarters.

The 5 251m² P-grade office development is located at the corner of Katherine Street and Albertyn Avenue in the Sandton CBD, which gives it the advantage of a strong street-facing presence. An integral part of the rapidly developing Katherine Street Development Node, it enjoys close proximity to Sandton City, the retail floor at Discovery, and several significant arterial roadways and highways.

The corner is dominated by Sasol Place, which has a high basement to the west and south. “We had to create a design that was very different from Sasol, bearing in mind that 52 Katherine Street itself was only

three storeys and has Sasol basements as its backdrop,” explains Paragon Group director Anthony Orelowitz. “The main challenge was to design a building that did not obstruct or take away from Sasol Place in any way, but was able to have its own distinct identity.

“It is a difficult piece of land to develop because it is quite a sloping site. We selected a palette of materials that was significantly different from the complex glass façade of Sasol Place. We chose to clad the façade with large porcelain tiles, 3 000 x 1 500mm in size. These tiles look like Bianco Nero marble, which creates a contrast against the Sasol basements and differentiates the design.”

The marble and aluminium over-clad structure weaves along every storey, undulating to create balconies and overhangs. Three landscaped courtyards allow light and air to penetrate the floor plate, while large openable full-height windows allow user-driven habitation, natural ventilation and abundance of light into the various workspaces. “The courtyards were planned specifically to maximise the light on the western and southern aspects,” says Orelowitz.

The result is a building that is quite distinctive from many of Paragon’s designs.

The project is currently on hold as the construction industry itself had ground to a halt during the national lockdown imposed by the government. Completion is tentatively scheduled for early next year. The professional team includes Leadcon Civils, Orion Project Managers and Trencon Construction.

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