

PROJECT ONE

RIDGESIDE: UNIFYING AN IDEAL

Ridgeside is certainly one of Durban's most integrated and exciting development nodes. It is a 140- hectare site with four-precinct development's that will complete the Umhlanga Ridge. Here we look at the development of one of the last open sites on Umhlanga Rocks Drive in the Ridgeside precinct. It has afforded architecture and interior architecture company, Paragon, the unique opportunity to shape the landscaping as part of the overall design. Ochre Office Landscape Architect's consulted on this site with soft scaping implemented by Burgess Landscapes.

Total site area: 3875.374 m²
Soft landscaping & Water Features: 1074.518 m²
Hardscape (Paving/tiling/gravel): 1092.395 m²
Decks: 351.195 m²
Additional: Servitude landscaping area: 260 m²
Servitude hardscape (paving) & soft landscaping: 260m² (135 +125)

Total Project timeline (excluding excavation & piling):
 Start date - March 2017,
 Completion date - June 2018 (15 months)
Total landscaping timeline: Start date:
 February 2018, Completion date: June 2018 (4 months)

Landscaping cost: +- R 6 Million
Client: Shree Property Holdings
Location: Umhlanga Rocks, Kwa-Zulu Natal



SUPPLIERS

Main Building Contractor:
 Trencon Construction - (011) 451 8000

Architect:
 Paragon Architects
 Jurie Geldenhuys

Landscape Architect
 The Ochre Office
 Karen Marias



Landscaping Contractor:
 Burgess Landscapes - (031) 700 2767

Paving:
Bosun Brick
 Urban paver - 011 310 1176

Corobrik:
 Burgundy paver - 031 560 3111

Paving Contractor:
 Concept Paving - 031 563 4770

Timber decks and Timber seating:
 Truestyle Hard Landscaping Solutions
 (011) 768 1305

Water features:
 Malachite Pools - (082) 451 1750

Landscape Lighting:
 Regent Lighting Solutions - (011) 474 0171

Lighting Contractor:
 A&I Electrical Services - (031) 701 6510

Planter wall finish:
 Gamma Zenith applied finish - (011) 882 1600

Planter Coping:
 Wilsonstone cut stone copings
 (011) 616 7129,

Balustrades & Handrails:
 Mordt Engineering - 011 397 3860

Tiling:
 Supplier: LimeGreen - (021) 447 2254
 Installer: Steel Shopfitting Services -
 (031) 404 2906

Images: Alexis Diack & Paragon Architects
 Infrastructure Photographs



Known as Pran Boulevard, the development consists of two separate office buildings of three levels, each above ground floor, linked together on each level with enclosed glazed bridges. There are three parking levels providing about 250 parking bays, as well as a ground-floor podium level with timber decks, walkways, landscaping, and water features. The total building area, including the parking levels, is about 18 600m².

Paragon was commissioned by Shree Property Holdings to design the landscaping as part of the holistic design of the project. This meant using the building's design language throughout the landscaping. "The client gave us the design freedom to sculpt the landscaping to complement the buildings' angular and distinctive design," Project Architect Jurie Geldenhuys comments.

Calling on The Elements
 Six basic elements or materials had to be included throughout the design, namely fire, earth, water, metal, wood, and stone. Three separate external timber deck seating areas had to be provided in terms of the program: two areas for the two buildings, and one area for the public coffee shop at the pedestrian entrance to the buildings.

A 4-star Green Star rating was the target from the offset, which the project received in May 2018. Over and above these specific client requirements, Paragon also had to adhere to the very specific requirements of the Ridgeside Management Association (RMA) concerning the treatment of corner sites in the precinct, as set out in the RMA Design Guidelines Volume 0 & 1. These guidelines relate to planting types, which had to be presented and approved by the RMA Design Review Committee. The guidelines also include: planting recommended for use on specific streets; 90% of all planting is to be indigenous, and the landscaping plans are to list and motivate plant types to be used for approval.

A minimum of 20% of each site area is to be landscaped (the 20% is to be regarded as hard and soft landscaping areas); landscape designs are to take into account safety, surveillance, and defensibility of the public environment; in addition, corner sites have very specific requirements in terms of planting height and species, so as not to obscure or obstruct views. Another focus of the guidelines is the external horizontal surface treatment throughout the Ridgeside precinct, and the interface of the public surfaces with the surfaces used in the various properties.

In this regard, professional landscaping design firm Ochre Office of Johannesburg assisted Paragon in selecting and specifying plant types that would meet the requirements of both the RMA and Green Star throughout the design. Ochre Office also assisted in terms of the documentation of the paving layouts, timber decks, timber seating, and the water features.

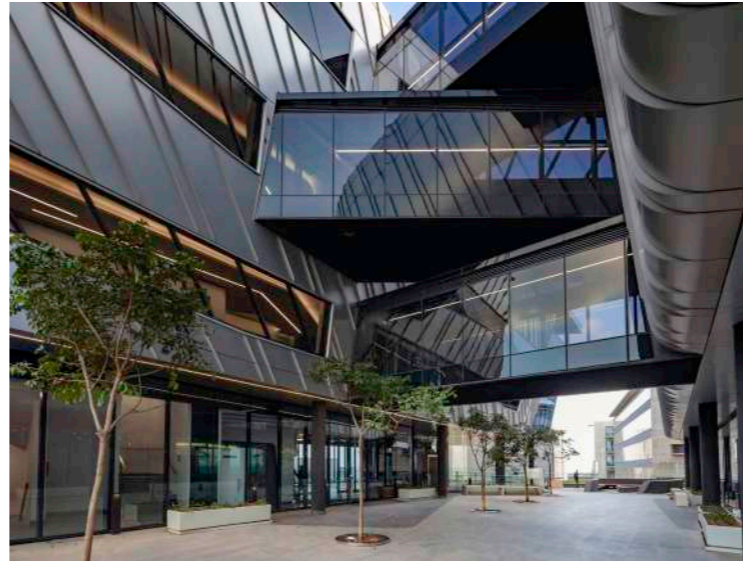
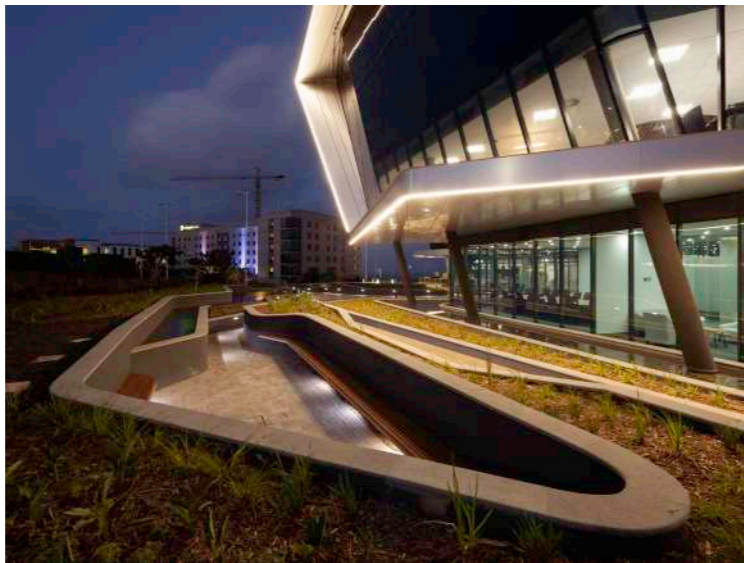
The site, situated on the corner of Umhlanga Rocks Drive and Ntusi Road, slopes away steeply from Umhlanga Rocks Drive towards the east, down Ntusi Road. The steep slope, combined with a maximum building-height restriction on the site, posed a major challenge in terms of maximizing the building height/office area, while also finding a median level to maximize pedestrian accessibility from the Umhlanga Rocks drive side, and vehicle access from Nokwe Avenue on the opposite side of the site.

There is a level difference of more than 1 m between Umhlanga Rocks Drive (the western side) down to the ground-floor podium level, while down Ntusi Road (the northern side), most of the first-level basement would have been exposed was it not for the cascading planters next to the stairs, which provide access from more than 1.5 m below the podium level.

The edge conditions of the landscaping on the site boundaries were designed to, where possible, join seamlessly with the adjacent RMA landscaping levels to soften the transition, to keep the natural slope, and not to impose the new landscaping on the area with hard edges. The RMA landscaping will, in future, tie into the project's landscaping as a natural extension of the design.

Pedestrian access to the site was designed with the pedestrian movement through the precinct in mind. From Umhlanga Rocks Drive, pedestrian access was introduced to the podium level through an accessible ramp and a stair down. From Ntusi Road, access is provided through a stair to the podium level, while on the corner, on-grade access was provided that could also be used for deliveries to the coffeeshop. The positions and angles of the various access routes were influenced by the buildings' shape, its axes created, and the relationship/position of the pedestrian routes around the site.

Another important element of the client brief was to keep the area between the two buildings as flexible as possible for future functions, and as a spill-out area for both buildings.



To that end, a row of trees was designed on the axis between the buildings, in combination with built-in and movable planters to create the necessary flexibility.

Sourcing Materials

The materials sourced for the project were a combination of materials which had been successfully implemented in other projects and included materials that were sourced to complement the colours used in the project to achieve continuity. Neither the building nor the landscaping should in anyway overpower the other. The materials selected are symbiotic to the building.

Pro Landscaper catches up with the Ochre Office's Karen Marais, who consulted on a few layouts and details regarding the exterior landscape.

With regards to irrigation, no irrigation was installed; however, hand-watering is taking place for the first 12 months following completion to ensure the planting establishes itself. As a requirement of the Ridgeside Management Association as well as the Green Buildings principles guiding the project, all plants chosen are indigenous, and defined as xeriscaping as they rely on the natural rainfall of the area and no additional irrigation is required.

The planting design is designed to be a massed mix of both soft, textured and structured planting. Bands of selected plants form extensions of the lines defined by the building planter walls, radiating out from the building to the sidewalk. Much of the planting selection was dictated by the Ridgeside Development Manual (Precinct Guidelines).

Hard Landscape Elements

As noted above, Ochre worked on the design and setting out of the paving – tying in with tiling alignment of the open atrium and of course finding that transition to blend into the existing sidewalk.

The timber specified for the decks and benches was Balau as this wood tends to weather well in the humid Natal climate.

Water Features

All water features operate from a central pumphoom in the basement and are designed to run as chemically-treated systems. The five features vary in their operation, some being reflection pools, and others incorporating foam jets or cascading spills.



ABOUT PARAGON

PARAGON ARCHITECTS

Paragon, established in October 1997, is an internationally-active African

design business, based in Johannesburg. It delivers commercial architecture, master planning, interior design, and space planning to visionary clients in all property sectors.

We are committed to Africa and believe in the future of its cities. Our roots are here. We have much to offer. We are able and agile, and actively participate in the continent's urban and human development. Paragon is flexible and diverse in its approach to design. Each project is unique and not driven by style, but by lifestyle and a response to user needs. Elegant and efficient planning form the core of our designs. We understand the needs of our clients and know how to generate ever new architectural forms in a competitive property market.

We are known for hands-on engagement with all opportunities present in the modern global building industry. The true measure of our skill is our ability to engage at all levels and with all players that make up the colourful world of construction and property development. Our buildings look forward. We embrace the future, because we will be a part of it – part of its problems and responsibilities, and part of its great freedoms and achievements.