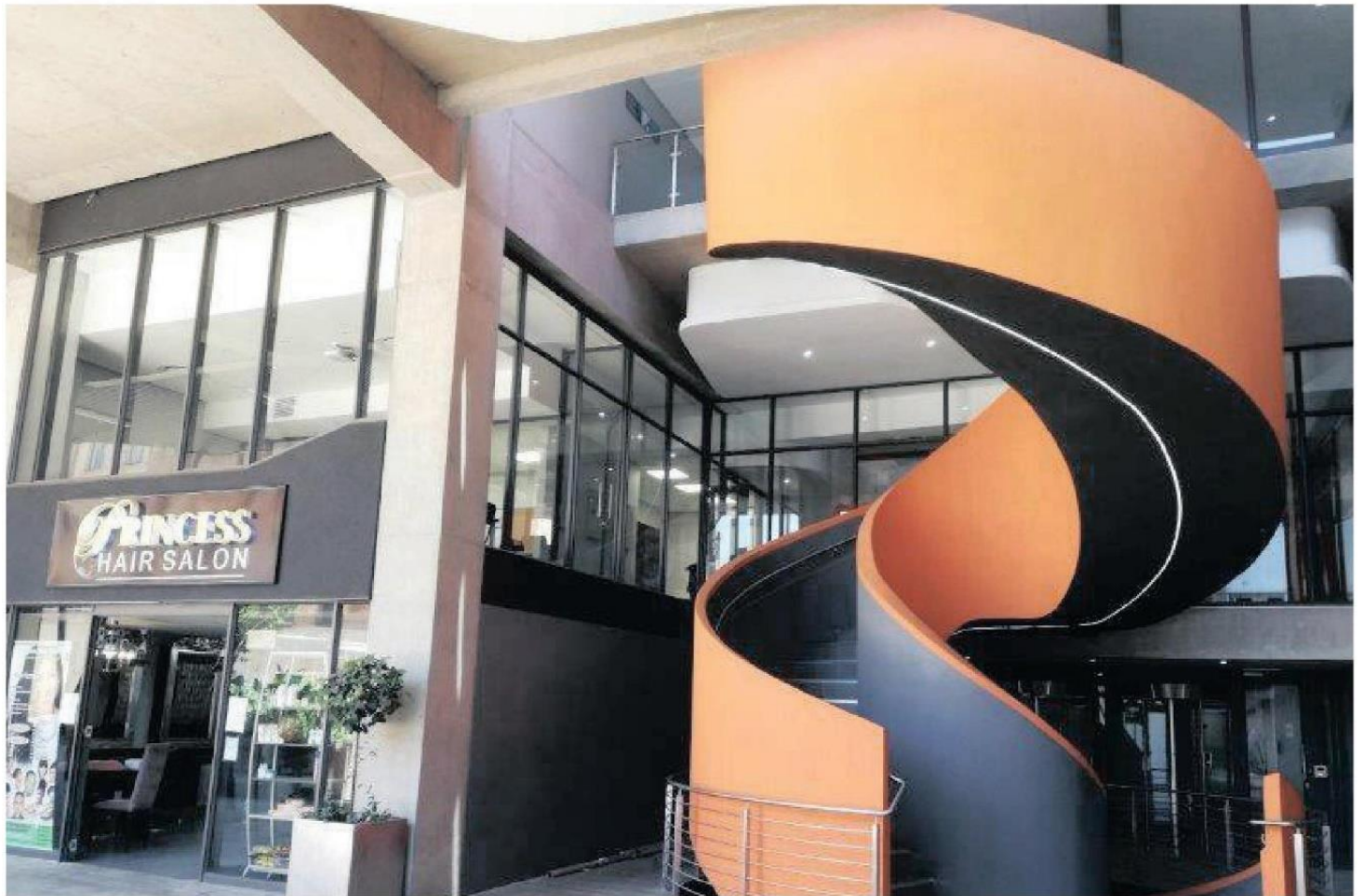


■ REJUVENATION



THE concrete feature staircase at the new-look Hatfield Square in Pretoria.

# Marked revival after developers step into Hatfield

**STAFF REPORTER**

THE capability of well-planned and contextualised architecture to rejuvenate an urban area is amply demonstrated by the Hatfield Square mixed-use student accommodation in Pretoria.

Designed by the Paragon Group for owners and developers Respublica and Redefine, it caters for 2 200 students in a variety of unit types.

It extends over 51 000m<sup>2</sup> (excluding basement levels), with 3 500m<sup>2</sup> of retail space and a mix of restaurants and line shops facing Burnett Street.

Since the completion of Block D, the final phase of the project, there has been a marked revival in the once-rundown area.

Paragon Group senior project architectural technologist Antoinette Kloppers believes the success of the project was due to the fact that the entire precinct was designed with a strong sense of community and pedestrianisation in mind.

"We decided to reconfigure the area entirely, creating a multifunctional space where students could live and play in a vibrant, village-like setting."

The project was completed in three phases. Blocks A and B are located closest to Hatfield Square, followed by Blocks C and D, the latter being the tallest building in the precinct, and completed last.

To enhance the sense of micro-communities, the four blocks were colour-coded, with each building's unique colour painted throughout its floor plates as well as on its façades.

With accessibility as the key driver, pedestrian walkways were introduced on either side of Block D, seamlessly connecting Hatfield Plaza and the Hatfield Gautrain Station.

These thoroughfares feature both stairs and ramps, and are wheelchair-friendly.

"With Block D completed, we are thrilled that the entire precinct is alive with hustle and bustle," Kloppers said.

"We shaped the space to cater for both students and the general public, encouraging flow and interaction.

"The line shops are consciously leased to tenants addressing student-specific needs, but also house a few restaurants. This mix has resulted in an extremely inviting and welcoming frontage."

To optimise the construction process and reduce the total cost, autoclaved aerated concrete blocks were used as the main building material. These are lightweight with improved thermal qualities and fire resistance. As a result, all of the internal walls are 110mm – as opposed to traditional 230mm brick walls – reducing structural loads while offering economic sensibility.

Communal eating and cooking areas are centrally located, and various levels are interlinked with novelties such as slides and hammocks. A variety of strategically-placed common lounges and study spaces encourage cross-pollination throughout the entire development.

The courtyard spaces act as spill-out areas where students can relax, study or socialise. Each courtyard has a distinct identity, ranging from a reflective and tranquil area to a braai area and a basketball court and swimming pool.

Rooftop spaces were also created to include niceties such as a laundry and a gym with a running track. A student back when Hatfield Square was the student social hub, Kloppers said she was proud to be



THE multifunctional space at Hatfield Square is vibrant and green.

associated with this project, which she said was close to her heart. She was equally excited at how it had rejuvenated the urban fabric in the area after the recent social decline of the area.