Durban's award-winning International Convention Centre (ICC), built 1994–97, is currently being added to on the southern end to Commercial Road. This article sets out the context for the additions. It is hoped that on completion full coverage will be provided to complement that of issue 1/1999. – Editor

New Arena

Ensuring the sustainability of the Durban ICC

The definition of sustainability used in this context, is “maintain or keep (something) going continuously”. Having been a key player in the original ICC, the eThekwini Municipality’s Architectural Department under the leadership of Jonathan Edkins, took on custodianship of the initiative to regenerate this facility to ensure its sustainability. Working with a range of stakeholders, specialists and professionals, the Department has facilitated the process of interrogation, brief formulation, and delivery of the new Arena extension.

The Durban ICC has been highly successful since its opening in 1997. It has been rated as one of the world’s top ten ‘Best Convention Centres’. With the subsequent development of similar facilities in Johannesburg and Cape Town has come the threat of loss of market share, and indeed this has affected the business of Durban’s ICC. In order to ensure its sustainability as a successful conference venue, and keep Durban on the map as a convention destination, there is a need for the facility to reinvent itself to stay ahead of the competition.

The challenge using Yin-Yang analogy, is to preserve the core but stimulate progress. In other words, understand and keep the formula that makes Durban’s ICC so successful, but at the same time anticipate and respond to new needs and future trends.

With this in mind, a process was embarked upon to interrogate what might be necessary to respond to the challenge. From a Value Management workshop evolved the idea of a ‘Trade Campus’, to reinforce a distinct precinct dedicated to the specialist activities synergistic with the convention industry. The concept was to extend the convention centre as a multi-purpose venue to accommodate additional conference, exhibition and banqueting space, but that the extension should be conceived as an arena. This would provide a venue for indoor sports and concerts, and incorporate the existing Exhibition Centre (opposite Walnut Road) in a way that could allow this facility also to be regenerated in the future; a tourist reception centre; new hotel accommodation; and an integration into the inner city network via ‘corridors of excellence’ and the proposed ‘people mover’ system.

Simultaneous with this process, economic research and analyses confirmed that the arena extension was a project of strategic importance to the city. Being a flagship project of the eThekwini Municipality, the ICC Durban (ICCD) Arena is required not only to expand the existing facility and accommodate a more diverse range of activities, but also to contribute towards the objectives of the Municipality’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Long Term Development Framework (LTDF). To this end, an analysis was carried out to establish the potential impact that this project could have on the economy, both locally and nationally. The analysis concluded that the following could be achieved with this project:

- between 12 953 and 15 324 new jobs in the construction phase;
- over 23 000 new sustainable jobs after ten years of operation;
- an estimated contribution to the South African GDP of R612m in the first year of operation; and
- a cumulative total contribution to the SA GDP of R21.6 billion by the tenth year of operation, with over R7 billion of this being newly generated foreign exchange.

Recommendations included the need for the project design and development to maximize the opportunities for securing indirect economic benefits for eThekwini, as well as the direct benefits associated with hosting major exhibitions, conventions, sporting events and concerts.

In December 2003, the eThekwini Municipality ‘gave the go-ahead’ for the implementation of the ICC Durban Arena at an estimated cost R395 million. The brief included providing a venue which would accommodate more conference space, exhibitions and indoor sporting and concert events, so as to enable ICC Durban (ICCD) to maintain its status as the host venue of its type in the country.
order to ensure that the broader economic impacts are maximised, it was agreed that the project should maximize and pro-actively create opportunities for new catalytic business development (in particular for local and previously disadvantaged communities) during construction and through events; and develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the promise of induced tourism is realized. Part of this imperative would be achieved through a revised approach to the context of the ICC within the social and physical fabric of the City. The development team decided that it was essential that all members of the eThekwini community should feel ownership of the ICCD Arena, and be able to “touch” and interact with the building in as unrestricted a way as possible.

**ICCD: THE STRATEGIC CONCEPT**

3. Integrating the ICCD through “Africa Square” into the City network so that it relates strongly and directly to other city experiences.

4. Creating and actively promoting small business opportunities on the boundaries of “Africa Square”.

2. Showcasing the arena as a part of the public realm by reducing visual and physical obstacles between the public outside and the activities inside the foyer.

5. The scale and nature of the development, strongly reflecting local culture and responding positively to the environment, should contribute to the iconic nature of the building making it a memorable landmark-experience for visitors to Durban.
Implementation of the above will be phased to allow for the associated urban development to integrate with the inner city development framework.

**New legislation**
During the late stages of design and documentation, it was established that new acoustic legislation had been enacted, which calls for the building fabric to comply with new sound reduction criteria. The design also had to take cognizance of requirements in terms of the Safety at Sports and Recreational Events Bill soon to be promulgated.

Incorporation of these new standards sets the ICC Durban Arena apart from all other facilities of this nature in the country, as it will be the only entertainment venue of this size that will be fully compliant.

**Procurement**
The ICCD Arena Procurement Forum was established to facilitate the procurement process during the construction phase. This forum was mandated to analyse and apply appropriate BEE (Black Economic Empowerment) targets to maximize new business opportunities for previously disadvantaged communities, and to assist with the transfer of information for the purposes of tracking and reporting on actual economic benefit to the local and national economy as a consequence of the development.

Tenders for the principal building contract were procured in two stages to ensure that all potential tenderers were able to participate, and that those which qualified on technical grounds were properly informed on empowerment criteria and requirements before submitting their priced tenders.

The contract was awarded in December 2004 to the Masinya Consortium for the contract sum of R356 986 440. The Masinya Consortium comprises the Masinya Empowerment Group (MEG) with a shareholding of 51%, and Group 5 and WBHO each with a shareholding of 24.5%. MEG is a joint venture between companies owned and managed by people from Black Priority Population Group and Women and Disabled People groupings.

The new arena will be able to accommodate 6 000 spectators for sporting events and 10 000 spectators for concert events and 25 000m$^2$ of net exhibition space.

Sports to be accommodated: Basketball 5 800 seats; Boxing 6 800 seats; Ice hockey 3 850 seats; Equestrian 4 320 seats. Badminton, football, gymnastics, hockey, karate, tennis, volleyball, wrestling and weightlifting will also be accommodated.

In terms of the conference facility, the new extension will provide the following in addition to that provided by the existing ICC: theatre seating layout: 4 182 seats; banqueting layout: 2 400 seats; classroom style seating: 1 000 seats; basement parking for 1 200 cars.

Operable walls enable the arena space to be subdivided to accommodate a range of different layout configurations. For concert type functions, the following configurations are possible: standing layout 10 000 places; end stage configuration 5 642 seats; central stage configuration 6 248 seats; and side stage configuration 5 328 seats.

Ken Froise

Mr Froise is a Senior Architect in the employ of eThekwini Municipality and Development Manager for ICCD Arena. –Editor

**ICCD Durban Arena architects:**
ZAI Consultants cc
Ruben Reddy Architects cc
OMM Design Workshop cc
Cox Architects & Planners