Mega mall ‘just the beginning’

VERNON MCHUNU

City construction head Obed Mlaba says the opening in two-weeks of a mega-shopping mall in Umlazi is just the beginning of big-ticket development in the city’s townships.

The R155-million Umlazi Mega City, also known as Imbali yaseKasi (“Flower of the City”), is almost complete. And main contractor Grinnerk LTA said confidence that deadlines will be met, and the centre will be open to the public on the weekend of 1-2 April.

Mlaba, a resident of Umlazi, said the mega-centre was “a long-held dream come true”. He said the development was part of the council’s bigger vision for the city’s townships – that “we should create suburbs out of these areas”. He said Umlazi or KwaMashu residents should not have to travel to Gateway or the Pavilion to buy anything “that should be available on their doorstep”.

“The Umlazi Mega City is actually only a sign of much bigger things to come,” Mlaba said.

The mall has been designed, engineered and built to provide consumers, particularly those from Umlazi and Lamontville, with “the ultimate shopping experience.”

Fred Petersen, the city’s economic development department, whose unit has been behind the project from day one, said: “Umlazi and Lamontville residents will experience a reduction in spending on transport, thanks to the centre’s convenient location.”

Major retailers and banks at the centre include Woolworths, Jet, Mr Price, Pep, NMI, CTI, Ackermans, Dis-Chem, Dawsons, Pick n Pay, Nedbank, FNB and Standard Bank.

The mall has proved to be a beacon of hope for hundreds of jobless people in Umlazi and Lamontville.

With the assistance of local councilors, a recruitment team was established to help retailers ensure that locals got preference. Once completed, the centre will have created at least 1 000 jobs, including jobs during its construction.

“Only a mega-bash will be capable of the opening,” said Mbonambi.

The entertainment will be fired by an SABC1 crew.

“The land of warm beer, sunburnt beaches and sedate morris dancing is about to reverberate to a distinctly African beat.”

A Durban cultural group is set to jet into England for a three-month visit, bringing with them the foot-stomping, high-kicking energy of the mighty Zulu ingoma.

The “Lions of Zululand” group has been invited to England by the African Cultural Exchange to perform traditional dancing (including the ingoma) and plays at primary schools, and to teach pupils about Zulu culture.

Group founder and director Fisane Mzikhe, 38, from Kwamashu L-Section, explained how he put together his troupe. “I targeted young people from rural and urban areas, including Kwamashu, Umlazi, Lindelani and Umhlangana, particularly those who had completed Grade 12 but could not get tertiary education owing to a lack of money.”

“All members come from disadvantaged backgrounds but are very talented.”

“They joined the Lions of Zululand three years ago, promoting African culture, fulfilling their potential and earning a livelihood to support their families,” said Mzikhe.

Shaka

Apart from performing for schools and church groups, the group will share information about Zulu cultural practices, teach the English how to speak a little of King Shaka’s language, and tell audiences about Durban and the beautiful province of KwaZulu-Natal.

“We will be wearing our traditional attire, carrying shields and spears, because we want to show them what we wear when attending traditional events. By sharing our history and telling them good stories about KwaZulu-Natal, we are trying to encourage them to come and see our province, which would boost our tourism.”

He said he was on a mission to turn ingoma into a profession and dispel a view held by many urbanites that it was a dance form only for uneducated people.

“This is our thing and we should be proud of it. What makes me sad is that people from other countries really enjoy it and show interest in our culture whereas we are ashamed of it.

“I am building a group that will go from strength to strength and will still be here in 20 years. I encourage the members to make a difference in their communities by sharing their skills with others,” said Mzikhe.

The Lions of Zululand will also travel to Scotland in August.

Watch out England, here come the Lions of Zululand!

IN BRIEF

The British Council and the Performing Arts Network of South Africa have started a four-day marketing conference in Durban from Monday, 27 March, to Wednesday, 29 March.

One of the aims will be to determine how to increase theatre and arts marketing in general in the country.

Two teams of specialists from the UK will share strategies and experiences with local workshop facilitators.

The cost ranges from R200 to R500 a delegate.

Contact Mlu Zondi on 011 2161 or at panuik@mposika.co.za.

Branching out into the Bible

EVERY wanted to know more about the plants mentioned in the Bible and their uses? The Nelson Mandela Bay Botanic Gardens is offering a fascinating 30-minute talk, followed by a walk through the gardens, on this topic on Sunday, 26 March, at 2pm.

Experienced guide Albert Tatsindisi will lead you from the Visitors Centre.

Tickets are R30 (or R10 for children under 12) and are available at the Botanic Gardens Info Centre.

Call 039 1170 or 202 5819.

Celebration of genius Mozart

“A CELEBRATING Mozart” concert will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday, 23 March, at City Hall as part of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government’s World Symphony Series Summer Season.

The concert is expected to be a musical treat with Jeremy Silver and the soloist will be his wife, soprano Sally Silver.

The programme of arias from the opera of Don Giovanni and excerpts from other Mozart works will be performed.

Contact Janet Welch on 369 5453 or at marketing@kmsco.co.za.