

THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CLAREMONT BOULEVARD

Thursday 19 February 2009



The Claremont Boulevard and Public Transport Interchange

Realisation of a Vision



Chris Drummond

The official opening of the Claremont Boulevard on 19 February 2009 marks a truly momentous occasion in the rejuvenation of the Claremont CBD. It is almost 3 years to the day since the official signing of the groundbreaking legal agreement between the Claremont Improvement District Company (CIDC) and the City of Cape Town on 23 February 2006, giving the R22 million project the go-ahead together with the construction of the new bus and taxi interchange.

The economic potential of the area had been hampered for many years by severe traffic congestion on the Main Road, inadequate public transport facilities, an unsafe and unattractive pedestrian environment, parking problems and unequal development on either side of the Main Road. The completion of the Boulevard project addresses these imbalances and is set to bring major relief to the area. Apart from offering an alternative route to Main Road during periods of congestion, it also forms a direct link to Lansdowne Road and gives access to destinations along the road, including the Interchange."

"The project has changed the face of Claremont," commented Chris Drummond, Chairman of the CIDC and Project Director of the Boulevard Project. "The idea is to re-direct traffic, making the Main Road more pedestrian and footfall-friendly and to generally improve the Claremont urban experience. Traffic on the Main Road will decrease now that the Boulevard is operational," he added.

The 2 to 4-lane Boulevard runs from Stanhope Bridge, parallel to the railway station, behind Stadium on Main and the new Pick 'n Pay in MontClare Place, under Campground Road Bridge, past the Southern Sun Newlands Hotel, joining the Main Road at the Newlands swimming pool intersection. There will be a major reduction in congestion on the Main Road as traffic is re-routed towards Letterstedt Road in the North and Stanhope Road in the South. Plans for the Boulevard have been on the drawing board for more than 40 years. Chris Drummond, who has spearheaded the project since 2001, joked "The original plan was probably printed on pigtin - it's that old," adding that the plan was first punted in the early 1960's.

The CIDC started negotiations with the City in 2001 to get the project off the ground again, launching the Boulevard concept under the banner of the CIDC project called the Claremont Vision. It was at its first public meeting on 1 March 2001, one year into its inception, that Drummond called for a holistic vision of the Claremont CBD and opened the floor to its stakeholders. Among the matters raised were the contentious Claremont bypass road (now known as the Claremont Boulevard) and the Public Transport Interchange. The proposal received a resounding "yes" from CBD stakeholders who overwhelmingly voted in favour of the project at a public meeting held on 4 August 2004.

Breakthrough partnership

After almost 4 years of negotiation, The City of Cape Town gave the vision its support and financial backing. It was agreed that R24m to construct the Public Transport Interchange would be invested by the City Council over 36 months, while a further R22m would be contributed by the CIDC, to be raised over a 15 year period through raised levies on commercial property owners. The City is therefore paying for the taxi rank (developed opposite Claremont station) and the bus terminus, while the CIDC is paying for the new road. The agreement symbolised a breakthrough partnership between the City of Cape Town and the CIDC.

The announcement that the Council of the City of Cape Town had unanimously passed the proposal to develop the Claremont Boulevard was made by Councillor Danile Landingwe, member of the mayoral committee responsible for Roads and Transport and CIDC Chairman, Chris Drummond at the Vineyard Hotel on 1 April 2004. Anthony Davies, Executive Manager of the CIDC, described the entire project as unique because "... never to the best of our knowledge in civic history has a group of private sector ratepayers funded a road or any other kind of urban infrastructure and given it to the City." He added that it was remarkable that all the role-players had bought into it so willingly.

Welcome relief for commuters

The new Claremont Public Transport Interchange with its modern facilities - the third largest in the metropole - serves close on 30 000 commuters daily. It interlinks with the suburban train services and has meant a complete overhaul of the former inadequate taxi and bus facilities. The new bus terminus has also been designed to accommodate larger articulated buses expected to come into service in the near future, while the taxi rank sports 66 loading bays and 35 holding bays.

Completion of this ambitious project provides a win-win situation for all the users of the Claremont CBD and once again establishes the area as one of South Africa's prime commercial and residential nodes. Commented Drummond: "All the role players have succeeded in making this transformation a huge success, with the greatest benefit being for those who commute to, live, work and shop in or simply visit Claremont."



The signing of the R22 million Claremont Boulevard project legal agreement between the CIDC, The City of Cape Town and the Claremont Road Bypass Company



The signatories and witnesses to the signing of the ground-breaking agreement

Positive spin-offs

- Reversal of the exodus once evident in Claremont
- Creation of several thousand jobs
- Revamping of informal trading facilities
- Injection of more than R1 billion of private capital into residential properties in the area.
- Construction and introduction of some 500 new residential units bringing residential life back into the area
- Revitalisation of the shopping precincts on both sides of the Main Road
- Development of four public squares (Warwick, Newry, Draper and Sanclare) as people-friendly open public spaces

A final phase of the project will include upgrading informal trading areas and the upgrading of Main Road through widening of pavements, landscaping and lighting. The completion of the Boulevard project not only signifies a coming of age, but the revolutionising of this major commercial and traffic thoroughfare.

Project milestones

- 20 November 2000: CIDC officially registered in accordance with City by-laws
- 01 March 2001: The Boulevard Project mooted at the CIDC's first public meeting
- 01 April 2004: City gives Claremont Boulevard the green light
- 29 November 2005: New Claremont Clinic opened in Stanhope Road
- 23 February 2006: Legal agreement finalising the R46 million development of the Claremont Boulevard and Public Transport Interchange signed by CIDC and City officials
- March 2007: Construction of Public Transport Interchange commenced
- July 2007: Construction of Claremont Boulevard commenced
- 30 August 2007: New taxi rank opened in Station Road
- 24 April 2008: Boulevard construction declared on track
- 22 October 2008: Newry Street Bus terminus officially opened
- 19 February 2009: Claremont Boulevard officially declared open by the Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Helen Zille



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CLAREMONT BOULEVARD

