



# JEWEL CITY

## AN URBAN SPACE STUDY

**Jewel City is an iconic project, a new vision for Jozi's CBD and an exciting urban redevelopment giving electricity to the idea of public space.**

Located in the east of JHB's CBD, the Jewel City complex consists of six city blocks of various industrial buildings, some dating back to the 1930s, that was closed off to the public in the mid-90s and has remained an isolated and forgotten node until now.

Jewel City includes the reinvention of this pre-existing industrial complex as an open, vibrant mixed-use precinct that introduces a more sustainable dimension (socially and economically) and new diversity to early inner-city rejuvenation projects.

To ensure the success of Jewel City's urban re-integration with its surroundings, GASS Architecture Studios collaborated with Daniel Rebel Landscape Architects. The relationship between urban landscapes and architecture was interrogated with the main objective being to create inclusive public spaces within the precinct.

### The city block's relation to Public space

The city relies on a strong relationship with its people to create a continuous and sustainable use of space. This makes public space as important as the buildings themselves and the two should therefore be better integrated.

Jewel City is seen as a catalytic project that will enhance the eastern CBD's urban potential, introducing crucial facilities that include new affordable residential space, a school, healthcare, and retail facilities such as pharmacies and a supermarket and other recreational facilities that help to sustain an inclusive, prosperous, and wholesome urban social, economic and cultural life in the inner city.

Jewel City has been envisioned as an opportunity to undo apartheid-era spatial divides and transform the inner city in a way that also addresses much needed access to resources and economic opportunities in the face of a dire need for housing.

### Public space as a tool for Integration

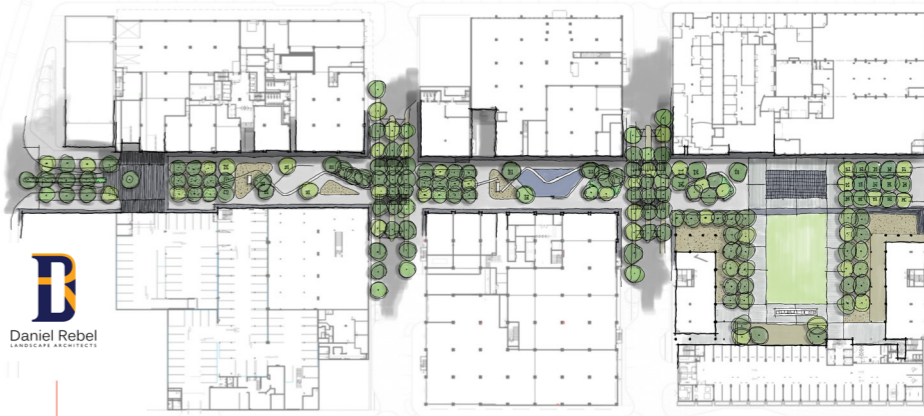
The Jewel City complex is reintegrated with the existing urban fabric with its main orientation focussing inwards to create and sustain a new pedestrianised section of Fox Street as its central axis. This urban intervention will help to support a safe, friendly and open pedestrian-focused public environment and urban infrastructure characterised by shared public space. All the buildings along the central axis on either side of Fox Street includes retail pockets to encourage activity along the spine from east (ABSA Gateway) to west (Maboneng link).

There is a major emphasis on the precinct's public and pedestrian realm however, for the precinct to function, provision for vehicle access at certain key points around Jewel City has been made which includes areas for deliveries, a school drop off and access for emergency vehicles amongst other things.

The quality of the public space and the broader architectural character of the precinct is designed not only to catalyse and support a greater diversity of people within the precinct, but also to invite and encourage further investment into the CBD. The peripheral areas and side-walks along the busy Commissioner and Main Streets have been repaired and upgraded, and additional lighting was introduced to create a cleaner, safer space around the precinct as well.



By Jacques Pansegrouw and Georg van Gass from GASS Architecture Studio



**GASS**  
ARCHITECTURE STUDIOS

More broadly, the development opens the potential for other key nodes of urban development such as Maboneng, the planned Absa Precinct and further developments along Fox Street to merge and form an integrated walkable city that is focused on public space.

At Jewel City, Public space was used as a tool for integration - an integration not only between the precinct's buildings but the various uses that are housed within the buildings with the aim to create a successful pedestrianised mixed-use precinct.

**Pedestrianisation of Fox Street**

In establishing a pedestrian-orientated boulevard linking the ABSA Precinct and Maboneng, culture, community and continued use can flourish. Through revitalising building frontages to allow businesses, restaurants, markets and cafes to live out onto street spaces, passive security, energies, & foot traffic become encouraged.

**SUPPLIERS:**

**Lighting:**  
Regent Lighting Solutions -  
011 474 0171

**Fives Futbol Sports Turf and Field Construction:**  
Turftech - 087 087 4168  
**Product used:**  
Rhino Turf PT45 Artificial turf

**Rubberised flooring:**  
Lifestyle Turf and Play - 011 660 2634

**SUDS:**  
Bera Gravel Fix and Grass Fix Eco -  
083 449 3954

**Pavers:**  
Corobrik - 011 871 8600

**Irrigation:**  
Installed Bidvest Top Turf, Design and supplied by Controlled Irrigation  
Product: Rain Bird

**Mature Trees :**  
Just Trees - 021 871 1595

**Plant Material:**  
Tshala Plant Brokers - 071 683 1177

**Photography:**  
Louis Van Zyl & Monograph



Minimising, narrowing and slowing vehicular movement serves to strengthen the quality of space within the Jewel City precinct, this was done to encourage foot traffic through public & commercial spaces, while still allowing for logistics & safety access to take place. The new single level sidewalk that spans between buildings serves to enhance the quality of the Precinct's ground floor and ultimately the public realm from transitional to social space, motivating any passer-by to want to spend time in & around Jewel City.

Other interventions such as artwork and murals created by local artists are introduced around the precinct and along Fox Street, not only to enhance the public space but to celebrate and introduce a layer of heritage within the urban fabric. The single level sidewalk has also been designed with the intention that the asphalt and cobbled surfaces can be used as a platform for artists to introduce new themes or to celebrate a specific season, once again involving the local artists. This approach is finished off with the addition of planters, outdoor seating, shaded areas, & sufficient lighting that further humanises the Jewel City streetscapes.

**Jewel City public square**

Through the introduction of a public square as an authentic and approachable public destination, civic life can flourish allowing people to gather for social, & cultural activities. With trees flanking the edge of the square, a threshold is formed where retail space is integrated as an active edge around the square.

A large open public lawn within the square is equipped to house various functions such as outdoor markets and carnivals, music festivals and sporting events, making it a flexible open space that can be enjoyed by families in various ways. The square is integrated with the Fox Street boulevard, essentially becoming an extension of the central axis and houses a zero-level fountain and interactive Jewel City sculpture where the two meet.

**Designing for children**

Through introducing amenities such as lighting, seating, play equipment and ablutions in and around the public spaces, Jewel City offers safe, comfortable, and family friendly public spaces. A very important part of urban design revolves around the inclusive design of not only a diverse mix of cultures and land uses but the inclusion of safe spaces for children. Spaces that are

child friendly and safe for families tend to add a deeper subconscious layer of safety and familiarity to public spaces.

Sustained by a belief in the transformative potential of urban design and architecture to catalyse economic and social energy, dignity and prosperity, Divercity (Client/Developer) and GASS Architecture Studios (Architects) has re-envisioned this all-but-defunct industrial complex into a series of thoughtful interventions that breathe new life into Johannesburg's CBD, while reminding respectful of its heritage and shifting the focus back to safe accessible public spaces.

**MEET THE TEAM:**

**Client:**

Divercity, Atterbury, Ithemba

**Architects:**

GASS Architecture Studio

**Quantity Surveyors:**

Matla Quantity Surveyors

**Wet Services Engineers:**

Izazi Consulting Engineers (Pty) Ltd

**Fire Engineers:**

Fenco Fire Engineers & Consultants

**Electrical Engineers:**

Eksteen & Le Roux

**Structural Engineers:**

Eds Engineers

**Building Contractor:**

Nomad Group, Wbho & Motheo Jr; Pentacon Civils

**Landscape Architects:**

Daniel Rebel Landscape Architects (Pty) Ltd

**Landscape Installation:**

Bidvest Top Turf

**Water Feature Specialists:**

Greenacres Landscapes

