

# Mall developments show no sign of a slowdown

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Emira Property Fund CEO James Templeton. Picture: RUSSELL ROBERTS

AS LONG as malls keep performing, developers will keep on building them, Emira Property Fund CEO James Templeton said on the sidelines of the South African Property Owners Association (Sapoa) conference on Wednesday.

Emira itself, which is over-weight offices, was looking for more retail opportunities. "Shopping centres are becoming the heart of communities — it is where families go," Mr Templeton said.

Developers continue to add more malls to South Africa's already well-supplied retail landscape, with yet another new super-regional shopping centre, the Billion Group's 75,000m<sup>2</sup> Forest Hill City, opening its doors in Gauteng this month.

The R1.5bn development near Centurion, south west of Pretoria, is one of at least 20 new malls expected to be completed in South Africa over the next two years, according to figures from the South African Council of Shopping Centres.

The opening of Forest Hill last week follows the completion of the 76,000m<sup>2</sup> Cradlestone Mall on the West Rand in November last year. The R1.3bn development is jointly owned by Sasol Pension Fund, developer Retail Africa and Pivotal Property Fund.

Cradlestone won the Sapoa retail excellence award on Wednesday as the most innovative mall for last year. It has a pleasing aesthetic and impressive entertainment areas, according to Sapoa.

In southern Johannesburg, near Kliprivier, Zenprop is building another super regional mall, the 65,000m<sup>2</sup> Mall of the South. In addition, in the north of Johannesburg, JSE-listed Atterbury, the development arm of JSE-listed Attacq, is developing the Mall of Africa.

At 120,000m<sup>2</sup>, the Mall of Africa will be the biggest new mall to be built in South Africa in the past 10 years.

The Billion Group's Bay West centre of 88,000m<sup>2</sup>, under construction in Port Elizabeth, is another mega mall expected to come on stream within the next 12-18 months. If all proposed retail projects go ahead, South Africa's tally of large community, regional and super-regional centres will boom from the current estimate of 155 to 180 centres, the council's figures show.

Besides the Mall of Africa, Atterbury has various other malls on its books. The company will open eight new shopping centres in S A, Namibia and Ghana before the end of October this year.

Atterbury Property Developments MD James Ehlers said opening eight new shopping centres was no easy feat. " (But) our team is up to the task. Many of these projects have been planned over several years to create quality assets for Atterbury and our partners.

"Besides developing ... shopping centres to benefit retailers and shoppers alike, completing these retail assets also creates new property income streams for Atterbury and our co-investors," he said.

Atterbury has long-term confidence in the viability of shopping centres and in consumer demand.