

Design, informatics hub planned for Cape Town

The proposed design and informatics hub, previously known as the East City Design Initiative, has been renamed The Fringe: Cape Town's Innovation District.

The Fringe is based on an urban 'science park' model, which requires a strong relationship between 'universities, R&D institutions, companies and markets' leading to 'incubation and spin-off processes, which provide other value-added services together with high-quality space and facilities' to stimulate economic growth. It will be benchmarked against other successful models, including 22@Barcelona, the Toronto Fashion Incubator and Design London.

The vision for the project has been to create 'the premier African environment for design, media and ICT innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship'. The project is heavily supported by the provincial government of the Western Cape's Department of Economic Development and Tourism through its Cape Catalyst Initiative, which has recognised the importance of various creative industry sectors for growing the provincial economy through relevant infrastructure.

The project is also supported by a number of departments in the City of Cape Town, The Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Faculty of Informatics and Design (CPUT's FID) and other civil society bodies. It is currently being project managed by The Cape Town Partnership through its Creative Cape Town programme and forms an important element of Cape Town's [World Design Capital](#) Bid for 2014.

Fringe area for projects

The key boundaries of the area are Roeland and Darling Streets, Buitenkant and Canterbury Streets, and the area also includes a strip of land which connects it to CPUT from Longmarket through to Tenant Street. It borders onto the proposed District Six development, and the area's often neglected 'edge' or 'fringe' relationship to the central city has given the project its new name.

The area's development will by necessity be a careful mix of public and private investments - the details of which are being researched currently. One of the more exciting initiatives proposed for the area is what is currently called the 'Temporary Incubator Hub'. Designed by award-winning Cape Town-based architect Luyanda Mphalwa with Ameena Desai from Design Space Africa, this entrepreneurial support hub, aimed at the design and media sector, will create a unique environment for young designers as well as an interactive networking environment.

Current, prospective tenants

The area is currently home to two sector bodies - the Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) and the Cape Fashion Council (both set up with government and private sector involvement to further sector development in the province). The organisations have jointly opened a new facility in Harrington Street that houses a Creative Enterprises Training Unit. The area is also home to Open Innovation Studios, a social entrepreneurship environment as well as a range of small- and medium-sized design and ICT firms.

The area is rapidly growing with The Granary, an important heritage building, currently receiving a makeover as a creative hub with key tenants the Bandwidth Barn (BWB) expected to take more than 2000m² from September 2011. BWB is a sector body which has been supporting the ICT sector since 2000 and is an internationally recognised and highly successful business incubation facility. This facility moving to The Granary will cement the environment as an important space for growing entrepreneurship and more incubators, sector service bodies and educational institutions will be attracted to the area over the next two years.

The successful Johannesburg-based Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking plans to move to the area later this year.

An important element of modern day science parks are cafes, bars and other venues for networking - which the area has, including The Field Office, Charly's Bakery, Dias Tavern, 38 Special, The Assembly, Que Pasa, The Book Lounge and the Kimberley Hotel to name a few.

Proposals for relevant public space improvements have been made to increase the potential for such an environment to work well in the interests of The Fringe mandate.

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