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Concor Buildings Showcases Flexibility On Makro Riversands Project

Visible Felt Leadership is a philosophy that Concor Construction drives and an excellent example of a project where this is reaping significant rewards is the Concor Buildings Makro Riversands contract.

Concor Buildings, previously known as Murray & Roberts Buildings, is part of Concor Construction which was recently acquired by a consortium led by Southern Palace Group.

This is an extremely busy construction site with activities on all faces with people and machinery moving everywhere, yet it does not seem congested and everyone seems to have a thorough knowledge of what needs to be done and why. It is apparent when one walks through the site that there is ongoing interaction between all levels of personnel on this contract and this high level of communication is ensuring the success of the project.

When completed the massive new Makro will be a 12 metre high single storey structure that includes the store, offices and outbuildings. Roadways and parking areas are also included in the scope of the contract.

The contract was awarded to Concor Buildings by Massmart in February 2017, however external issues outside of the contractor's control led to a delay in being able to start concrete casting.

This, according to contracts manager, Martin Muller, had a 41 day impact on the critical path of the baseline programme but also provided the opportunity to showcase Concor Buildings' flexibility and responsiveness to the changing needs of the project due to the delay.

"We were able to mobilise the necessary competent core team initially, and implement the necessary acceleration in the programme to bring it back on track to ensure that the newly agreed store opening would not be compromised," Muller explains.

He say that the original sequence of works had been to proceed from the east to the west but, because of the unprecedented delay, the programming was resequenced with construction starting from both ends at the same time.

This required a change in the level of resourcing on the project to accommodate the accelerated works programme.

“The resequencing and accelerating of the programme has crashed all the activities with some of these now completely out of sequence. This has put pressure on ensuring that all information is received on time and requires monitoring of all activities on site to ensure that everything is done correctly the first time,” Muller says.

One of the primary challenges on the project is to keep close track of the actual costs versus the budget especially because of the accelerated programme. Also important is the close management of people and productivity including sub-contractors. There are currently 565 people on site, but this is expected to increase to over 1000 at project peak.

Muller says that several initiatives have been implemented aimed at keeping rework and wastage to an absolute minimum. One of these is the daily monitoring of brick and concrete usage, while another is tracking of the labour cost to complete these elements.

“These are important aspects on this contract and have involved the ongoing education and training of both our people and sub-contractors. Often the focus is on construction methodologies only but we believe it is essential to empower all our people on site to understand the ramifications of wastage and rework,” Muller says.

Following site establishment, the contractor started on the foundation work while simultaneously procuring the long lead items.

The first concrete was eventually poured on May 3rd and shortly thereafter the structural steel and concrete structure activities began concurrently.

Significantly, on the Makro Riversands structure the complete perimeter walls are being constructed with brick and mortar as opposed to the use of conventional dry wall and sheeting above the three metre level.

Muller says that not only is this type of building activity more labour intensive, the height at which these construction activities is taking place has necessitated the use of additional access handling equipment to be able to access the full extent of the 12 metre structure. Increased focus has also been placed on all activities related to working at height.

Safety has also been a critical element of Concor Buildings approach to all projects, and this one is not different.

Muller explains that contractor has mitigated the risks with the high number of people on site, the accelerated programme and the fact that construction is being undertaken on more than one face, by increasing the number of safety officers and representatives on site.

“In addition to the daily site task instructions which are held every morning by the respective foremen and the weekly toolbox talk on site, there is a high level of interaction from supervisory level as well as management, and this visible felt leadership is paying huge dividends in terms of productivity, quality workmanship and safety,” Muller says.

A significant portion of the labour force on site is from the local community, and while largely unskilled people, wherever possible skills transfer is being done to ensure sustainability of the community.

In addition to this, there are a high number of interns on site as well. This is an extension of the existing Concor Construction programme with Go for Gold students and underpins the company’s commitment to supporting continued knowledge sharing, development and up skilling of graduates.

Commenting on specific construction activities, Muller says that the actual monolithic concrete floor which is an important element for Makro is on the critical path of the project. The floor is designed to accommodate the high levels of vehicular traffic and storage as well as the requisite load bearing capacity of the store.

Before the floor can be cast it is essential that the entire structure be completed; this includes the roof structure and all the perimeter walling and ensuring that the entire construction is watertight. The flooring itself will take about three weeks to be cast under stringent quality control measures, and this one of the reason why the contractor is pushing to complete the programme.

Once the flooring has been cast, access will need to be given to Makro so racking and other internal structures can be assembled.

Once completed Makro Riversands would have consumed a total of 1 million cement stock bricks, used 9 000 m³ of readymix.

Muller is ably assisted on this project by site agent, Andrew Kagaso and general foreman, Petrus Nthombeni.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 01 : Martin Muller, contracts manager for Concor Buildings, and Margaret Dube, health, safety and environment (HSE) coordinator, addressing labour on safety.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 02 : High level operations using a telehandler on the Makro Riversands project.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 03 : The main structure showing steel and brick construction progress.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 04 : Skylights have been installed to facilitate natural lighting.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 05 : The Makro signature barrel vault in progress.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 06 : Scaffold activities for brickwork and plastering.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 07 : Services and other trades working together to achieve the end date.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 08 : Electrical contractor installing temporary lights to facilitate night work.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 09 : Levelling off the external hard stands in preparation for concrete casting.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 10 : Formwork being stripped and stacked.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 11 : Petrus Nthombeni, Concor Construction general foreman on this project.

MAKRO RIVERSANDS PIC 12 : Facade work underway using scaffolding and access equipment.

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