

Use of precast slabs takes months off construction time at Madeira Isles

Elematic SA's precast hollow core concrete slabs have once again proved their worth when it comes to time-saving and efficiency on a building project. The Benoni-based manufacturer has supplied 30,500m² of concrete slabs for Madeira Isles – a massive housing project in Danville, Pretoria – and has helped reduce the construction time by six months.

Madeira Isles is a 500-unit development covering a total of 40,700m² of floor area. It is made up of 14 apartment blocks comprising four floors each. The apartments are divided into 56 three-bedroom units, 388 two-bedroom units and 56 single bedroom units. All units have been developed for the rental market. The project broke ground in November 2013 and is on track for completion at the end of April 2015.

Boutel Projects is the main contractor on the project and has been responsible for the contract as a whole on behalf of the client, ESS. Boutel has been in operation in its current form since 2013, but grew out of a large and well established plastering and tiling firm. By introducing experienced directors, management and staff, Boutel's founder – Americo Pimentel – positioned the firm to be able to take on medium sized commercial construction projects with a view to building a reputable construction company.

When Boutel was appointed to built Madeira Isles, the original plan was to use traditional concrete slabs for the flooring. "We were concerned about the speed at which the project had to be done," explains Pimentel. "For us to complete the project in the specified time period, we realised that we had to go the precast route – that was when we contacted ESA to get involved in the project negotiations."

He adds that the biggest challenge the contractors were going to face on site was that two other trades needed to complete their work first, in order for the precast slabs to work as intended. "There was brickwork to be done and the steel structure had to be completed to support the precast concrete. The biggest challenge with both of these trades was to maintain accurate measurements on each floor and to keep the building square," Pimentel continues. Because ESA's slabs are manufactured at its factory off site and are produced to exact tolerances, there was little room for error on site.

Despite these challenges, work progressed as planned and six months of construction time have been shaved off the original expected completion date. "Using ESA's products gave us substantial time savings, and the quality of the product is excellent," says Pimentel. This is the second project that Boutel Projects has completed with ESA, and the working relationship has proved mutually fruitful.

Craig Webber, director at ESA, says that his company's intention right from the outset has been to deliver a top-quality product and service to clients and to develop long-term working relationships. "We are proud to be able to take on a project of this magnitude and deliver benefits for our clients. We look forward to working on more projects with Boutel," he says.

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About ESA:

Elematic South Africa (Pty) Ltd manufactures precast hollow core concrete slabs for the South African market. Elematic is a well established international brand. The company was established in Finland in 1959 and has since set up precast production plants in more than 70 countries worldwide. As part of the Consolis Group, which focuses on research and development in cement and precast concrete products, Elematic is backed by extensive knowledge and experience. Elematic South Africa supplies the latest available technology in precast concrete products. Its state-of-the-art production facility on Gauteng's East Rand is ISO 9001 certified and all its products carry the SABS mark of quality.

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