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The cranes are back in Sandton

After years of stagnation, new residential and mixed-use projects are reshaping Sandton's skyline and signalling renewed development momentum.



The Astra (developed by Africrest), under construction on Grayston Drive on the site of the former City Lodge Sandton. Image: Supplied

For a number of years now, the skyline of Sandton – the economic heart of Johannesburg, if not the country – has stood still.

It has been suggested that this has been a symbol of Joburg's steady decline as successive administrations have mismanaged the metro. In more recent times, chaotic and fragile coalitions haven't helped.

A glut of office space in the node means it is extremely unlikely that any sizeable new developments will be undertaken any time soon.

Growthpoint, the biggest landlord in the country, says its vacancies in Sandton (which comprises 22% of its total portfolio) are at 16%.

This is higher than its vacancies nationally (14.6%), but lower than the Gauteng average of 18.5%.

Major projects underway

Within the Sandton CBD itself, there are two major projects underway.

The construction of AdvTech's new R420 million Emeris campus on Grayston Drive is all but complete, with contractors scrambling to apply finishing touches ahead of the annual builders' shutdown from mid-December.

Further down Grayston Drive, the site of the former City Lodge Hotel (on the corner of Katherine Street) has two visible cranes up at The Astra. The site is being developed by Africrest Properties and will see 260 residential to-let units added.

Africrest is busy with another larger project on the northern edge of Sandton at Charles Crescent (corner of Katherine and Marlboro Drive), called The Enigma, which will have more than three times the number of apartments as The Astra.

This, says Africrest director Justin Blend, is part of a "massive residential development wave that is bringing new life to the city's core".

Beyond the confines of greater Sandton, it has cranes up at projects in Oaklands (to the southeast of Sandton), Ferndale in Randburg, and in the Joburg CBD itself (7 cranes in total).

Residential boom

In all, Africrest's pipeline is set to deliver over 4 000 new rental apartments within the next 12 months, bringing its total portfolio across Joburg to over 10 000.

Its projects are a response to the evolving needs of the modern young professional seeking secure, facility-rich living, close to their workplace at an attainable price.

"By transforming vacant, centrally located office buildings into vibrant residential communities, the company is tackling Johannesburg's housing shortage – one crane at a time," says Blend.

"The impact reaches far beyond the skyline. Each construction site represents hundreds of jobs and millions of rands being spent in the supply chain, stimulating economic activity."

By Hilton Tarrant of Moneyweb , 10 Dec 2025